

# ZAMFIR INN, ION ROMÂNUL INN, SIMION INN. NOTES ON BUCHAREST HISTORICAL TOPOGRAPHY\*

Petru Mortu\*\*

**Keywords:** Bucharest, historic centre, urban topography, inns, Blănari St., Zamfir Inn, Simion Inn, Ion Românul Inn, Leon Manoach, George San Marin, Gheorghe Simotta, Paolo Belli.

**Abstract:** A large number of small inns which were present in the central area of Bucharest at the beginning of the 19th century have determined researchers to give this subject particular attention. Lacunar bibliography, incomplete archive sources and last but not least, the proximity of several inns produced frequent identification errors. Such is the case with Zamfir's Inn, Simion's Inn and Ion Românul Inn located on Blănari Street, which generated a great deal of debate regarding their owners and exact positions in the urban tissue. Historic topographical plans, images and written sources reveal new information and help clarify some of these problems.

**Rezumat:** Numărul mare de hanuri care erau prezente în zona centrală a Bucureștiului la începutul secolului al XIX-lea a determinat pe diverși cercetători să scrie despre acest subiect. Bibliografia lacunară, surse incomplete de arhivă și nu în ultimul rând apropierea unora dintre hanuri a produs frecvent erori de identificare. Un astfel de caz este cel al hanurilor Zamfir, Simion și Ion Românul situate pe strada Blănari, acestea generând dezbateri referitoare la proprietari și la poziția exactă în țesutul urban. Vechi planuri topografice, imagini și surse de arhivă dezvăluie informații noi și clarifică o parte dintre aceste probleme.

An exciting topic, subject to debate in recent time, is that of the inns of Bucharest, in particular the least known, scattered throughout the city centre and contributing to a picturesque atmosphere. Money changers, merchants and small landowners tried to find a place in proximity to areas where trade was intense, whether marketplace, lanes, princely or monastic inns. Proximity to these business areas offered the guarantee of success so that along the streets of Gabroveni, Doamnei or Blănari there were numerous such buildings (Fig. 1).<sup>1</sup> The plots almost fully built measured between 1,000 and 1,500 sqm, rarely falling below the former, since the program imposed that certain conditions be met that reflected the efficiency of the leased space.

Occasionally mentioned by the legal documents of past centuries or by the travellers visiting them, the exact location of these compounds within an urban texture in a continuous process of transformation can only be established after detailed analysis. Often the lack of continuity of some landmarks, the proximity of certain inns, the frequent changes of ownership, the wrong identifications perpetuated in various studies are just some of the causes that have generated a lot of controversy. Such is the case of the Inns of Ion Românul, Simion and Zamfir<sup>2</sup> Inn located on Blănari Street.

The first controversy concerns the identification of the position of Zamfir's Inn, one of the oldest in the city, built by Zamfir, who was the head of the merchants during the first decades of the eighteenth century.<sup>3</sup>

\* The present contribution represents a development of the paper *Hanul Zamfir, Hanul Ion Românul, Hanul Simion. Note de topografie istorică bucureșteană* given at the Symposium "Architecture. Restoration. Archaeology", 2010 (ARA 11).

\*\* Petru Mortu: "Ion Mincu" University of Architecture and Urbanism, Bucharest.

<sup>1</sup> In the nineteenth century Gabroveni lane was the location of the inns of Gabroveni and of Constantin and Tudor Hași Tudorache (the latter also known as the Commercial Passage), and by the end of the century, of the hotels "Bulgaria" and "Romania", probably former inns converted into hotels according to the customs of the time. Castrîșoaiei and Greceanu-Dedu inns were located on Mogoșoaia Street, at the intersection with Doamnei Street and adjoining the latter on the East side there was Golgota Inn, while farther on Colței lane, there was Gherman Inn and the inn of Colțea monastery. On Blănari lane the following inns could be identified: the inns of N. Lahovari (Arhivele Naționale, Direcția Municipiului București / National Archives, Bucharest Municipality Department – N.A. - B.M.D. / Technical Service, File 80/1847, tab 24), Ion Românul, Simion, Pleșoianu (N.A. - B.M.D., B.M.P. Fund, Alignment Service, File No. 52), Hanul cu Tei and Zarafi Inn, the latter developed on the plots of land reaching Lipscani lane.

<sup>2</sup> Even if its position is uncertain, Zamfir's Inn was located on the island delimited by the current I.C. Brătianu Boulevard, Lipscani Street, Șelari Close and Blănari Street, being probably one of the inns connecting Blănari and Lipscani streets.

<sup>3</sup> Potra 1985, p. 186.

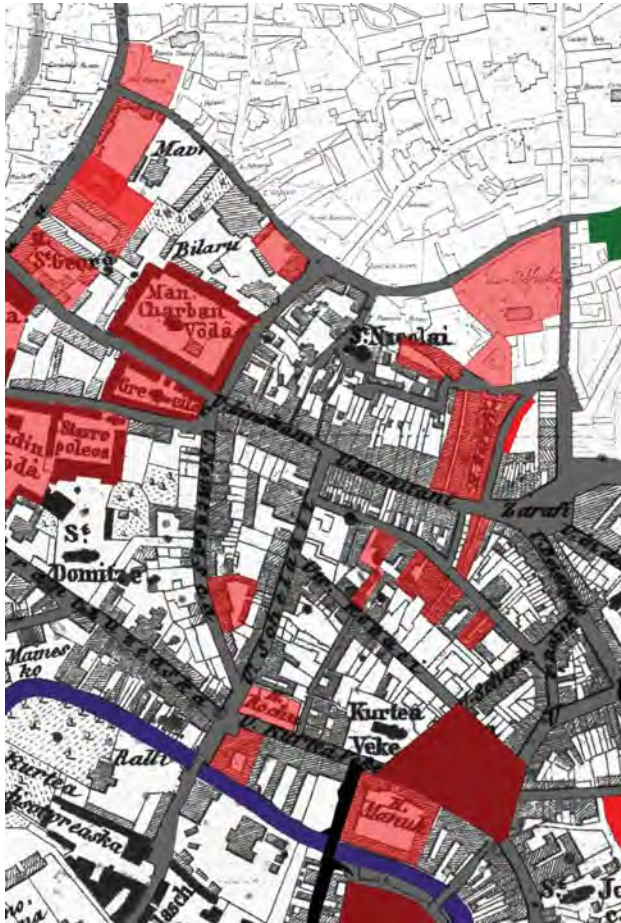


Fig. 1 Inns identification in the central area. (The plan coordinated by Rudolf Arthur Borroczyń).

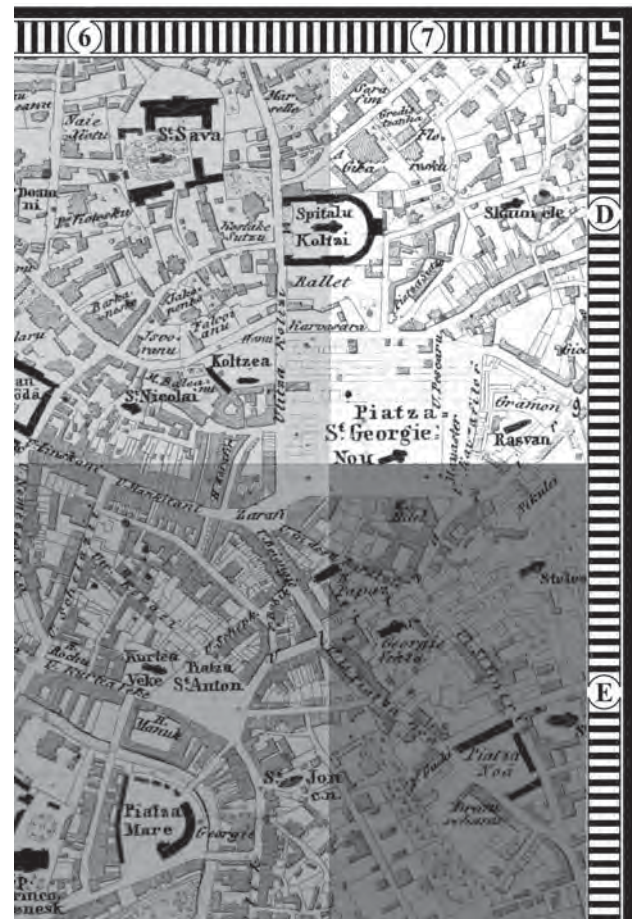


Fig. 2 Zamfir's Inn identification. (The plan coordinated by Rudolf Arthur Borroczyń - 1852 edition).

The inn is one of the most important in Bucharest during the early nineteenth century, for in the inventory of 1798 it is mentioned among the ten inns of Plasa Târgului<sup>4</sup> and Dionisie Fotino includes it in the category of “large inns without churches”.<sup>5</sup> A document written in 1830 which lists “the lanes to be paved with cobblestone” also indicates the lane where Zamfir’s Inn was located, which measured 110 fathoms, a considerable length for a street of the central district.<sup>6</sup> Bibliographic and archival sources indicate its location in an area with variable limits. The first entry appears in a deed written in 1734 by which Master Sterie of Cernavoda sold to “Ștefan, the son of Kir Mărgelar” a shop located in the large Șelari street delimited by the “big lane up to the wall of Zamfir’s Inn”.<sup>7</sup> Over the century sporadic information regarding the location of certain properties provides circumstantial evidence for the inn,<sup>8</sup> failing, however, to indicate its specific position.

<sup>4</sup> Georgescu 1966, p. 53. The fact that this inn is listed together with Sf. Gheorghe Nou, Colței, Șerban Vodă, Stavropoleos, Grecilor, St. Ioan, Zlătari, Constantin Vodă and Filipescu inns underlines once again its importance. In connection to the same inventory, Constantin Giurescu states that the inn gave its name to an entire neighbourhood area. Giurescu 1966, p. 321.

<sup>5</sup> Fotino 1859, p. 166.

<sup>6</sup> Ulița Nemțească is recorded with the same length. Vărtosu, Vărtosu, Oprescu 1936, p. 27.

<sup>7</sup> Georgescu, Cernovodeanu, Panait 1960, p. 89.

<sup>8</sup> Stoicescu 1961, p. 121.



Fig. 3 Ion Românu Inn and Simion's Inn. (N.A. – B.M.D., B.M.P. Fund, Alignment Service, File no. 52/1885).

Ionescu - Gion states that it is “located in the area where the back side of Simion hotel used to be until last year”,<sup>9</sup> Colonel Popescu-Lumină<sup>10</sup> asserts that it was situated on Blănari Street, while Ion Ionașcu suggests the intersection of I.C. Brătianu Boulevard and Blănari Street<sup>11</sup>, in front of Băcani Street, information which is however corrected by Nicolae Stoicescu, who, based on Major Pappasoglu's plan of 1871,<sup>12</sup> added that it was “near Colțea Inn, in the proximity of St. Gheorghe Nou church”.<sup>13</sup> A cartographic source which drastically restricts the area of study is the plan prepared by R.A. Borroczy in 1852

where the inn is presented as one of the most important in Bucharest. Even though it is the only one that has no name written on the plan, the legend indicates the letters DE in square 6 (Fig. 2), a position which invalidates the location of the inn to the North of Blănari street (Ionescu-Gion, Potra and Ionașcu).

The same George Potra subsequently quoted by other researchers,<sup>14</sup> indicates the location of Zamfir's Inn (which he calls Zamfir and Simion's Inn) to the East of St. Nicolae Șelari Church, on a plot of land which in 1885 is recorded as the property of Leon Manoach.<sup>15</sup> The information, corroborated with that presented by the same author when speaking about Ion Românu Inn shows that the illustrations published by Potra and identified as being those of Zamfir's (and Simon's) inn display in fact the configuration of Ion Românu Inn. The first sources indicate that it was at one time in the possession of Ion Eliad. In 1857 he sold the property to the merchants George San Marin and Leon Manoach who in 1855, following the death of their partner, Constantin Hagi Tudorache, are forced by the testamentary executors of the deceased<sup>16</sup> to dissolve the partnership. The relation of the two associates continues and, in addition to the inn on Blănari Street they acquired in 1858 two shops in Hanul cu Tei, whose ownership they continue to share for almost a decade. In 1867, George San Marin assigns the properties shared with his associate and buys Ciocile estate. Blănari street alignment plan approved by the Board of Public Works on July 25, 1885<sup>17</sup> (Fig. 3) identifies a property of Leon Manoach which matches the description presented by Vestitorul Românesc:<sup>18</sup> “It is near the church of Sf. Gheorghe Nou,

<sup>9</sup> Ionescu-Gion 2003, p. 487.

<sup>10</sup> Popescu-Lumină 2007, p. 278.

<sup>11</sup> Ionașcu 1941, p. 81.

<sup>12</sup> Pappasoglu 1871.

<sup>13</sup> Stoicescu 1961, p. 121.

<sup>14</sup> Radu Oltean, Emanuel Badescu, Radu Olteanu.

<sup>15</sup> N.A. B.M.D., B.M.P. Fund, Alignment Service, File no. 52.

<sup>16</sup> Gheorghe Hagi Tudorache, Nicolae Christu and Ștefan A. Hagi Panteli, Potra 1985, p. 185.

<sup>17</sup> N.A., B.M.D., B.M.P. Fund, Alignment Service, File no. 52.

<sup>18</sup> “Vestitorul Românesc” 284, 1843, *apud* Potra 1985, p. 141.



Fig. 4. Ion Românuł Inn and Simion's Inn. (Borroczyń plan made between 1844 and 1846).

premises. The access point, which was controlled by a metal gate, was on Blănari Street. The buildings facing North and West were endowed with porticos with circular and hexagonal stone columns that supported a number of flat arches. The empty areas of the ground floor of the South and West buildings were provided with



Fig. 5 Ion Românuł Inn. (Plan made by Geographical Institute of the Army between 1895-1899).

next to Simon's Inn, which has Zamfir's Inn on the other side". The Alignment Plan of 1885 indicates on the land of Mr. Manoach (no. 22, Blănari street) an architectural complex which is also represented in the survey coordinated by R.A. Borroczyń so that we can say that the building existed in almost identical form in 1846 (Fig. 4). It was located on a parcel adjacent to the West to Sf. Nicolae Șelari Church and included, as shown in the alignment plan and the plan drafted by the Geographic Institute of the Army between 1895-1899, three buildings, which followed the outline of the premises. The access point, which was controlled by a metal gate, was on Blănari Street. The buildings facing North and West were endowed with porticos with circular and hexagonal stone columns that supported a number of flat arches. The empty areas of the ground floor of the South and West buildings were provided with massive iron shutters that protected the goods of the merchants which traded here (Fig. 5).

The inn was demolished in 1933 and in its place George Simotta and the enterprise of Paolo Belli erected a new building which bears now numbers 14 to 16. The first intentions of the architect and of his client were to preserve the old structure and build over it several storeys. However, technical difficulties, and especially the proposal that did not comply with the street alignment completed in 1913,<sup>19</sup> led the authorities to reject the solution. The

<sup>19</sup> N.A., B.M.D., B.M.P. Fund, Alignment Service, File no. 52.



Fig. 6 The original shutters of the inn. (photo P. Mortu)



Fig. 7 Stone columns which had belong to the old inn. (photo P. Mortu)

stone columns and the shutters of the old inn were preserved and integrated into the new complex. “Thus only the stone columns and the shutters remained intact in the courtyard of the new building.”<sup>20</sup> In the middle of the courtyard there was a rectangular pool which had four carved frogs in the corners (Figs. 6-8).

**Simeon Arnăutuł's** Inn was located in the same area as Ion Zamfir's and Ion Romănuł's Inn, often used as a landmark for identifying the two and even mistaken for them. The building erected in the early nineteenth century, according to Nicolae Stoicescu, has a relatively modest patio, following a common pattern for that period. The Scottish pastors Andrew Bonar and Robert Mc. Cheyne<sup>21</sup> made a halt here in 1830 and found the place very clean. The plans drawn in the mid-nineteenth century by Austrian Major Borroczyn indicate the outline of the inn.<sup>22</sup> In the latter half of that century the building is turned into a *Hotel*,<sup>23</sup> and then later with the first street systematization operations it is demolished. Informal discussions support the existence of parts of the inn that are still visible from Blănarı street,<sup>24</sup> a hypothesis which brings forth a series of comments (Figs. 3, 4).

<sup>20</sup> Simotta 2003, p. 12.

<sup>21</sup> Iorga 2008, p. 205 and Potra 1985, p.193.

<sup>22</sup> On sketch no. 39 the inn is called “Simion's Inn” with Slavic letters.

<sup>23</sup> N.A., B.M.D., B.M.P. Fund, Alignment Service, File no. 52/1885.

<sup>24</sup> The building in case can be accessed from no. 14-16, Doamnei St., the former Carol Göbl printing house, currently the offices of the Romanian Commercial Bank – Doamnei branch.



Fig. 8 Plot no. 14-16 from Blănari street. The inner court. (photo P. Mortu)

the name of the hotel. The plan of the Geographic Institute of the Army, drawn up between 1895 and 1899 (Fig. 5), is relevant for the regularization of the course of Blănari Street officially established a decade earlier. On the land where the hotel had been until recently located, now owned by Mr. Alexandru Simionescu,



Fig. 9 Dead wall disposed towards near plot. (photo P. Mortu)



Fig. 10 Possibility used the old bricks. (photo P. Mortu)

there is only one building whose footprint coincides with part of the West side of the former inn. The part facing Blănari Street was demolished and the façade was rebuilt retreated a few meters, according to the city administration decision. Most likely the volume that can be seen now (Figs. 9-11) from Blănari Street was built during that period, using bricks from the former structure, the shape and size of the bricks confirming such a hypothesis. The restoration of the construction at the end of the nineteenth century can be supported by the presence on the East side of the building of a fire wall which practically would have matched the façade facing the patio, a layout which is atypical for an inn. The survey of the ground floor completed in April 2002<sup>25</sup> shows a functional layout

The plan drawn up between 1844 and 1846 indicates the two neighbouring inns - Ion Românul and Simion, the corresponding plots of land being separated by a small lot which, towards the end of the nineteenth century will become the property of Carl Göbl. In 1885 the alignment plan of Blănari Street shows the configuration of the three plots whose borders remained almost unchanged, except for that on which Simion's Inn is located, which is now divided in two and bears the numbers 18 and 20 - the first indicating

the name of the hotel. The plan of the Geographic Institute of the Army, drawn up between 1895 and 1899 (Fig. 5), is relevant for the regularization of the course of Blănari Street officially established a decade earlier. On the land where the hotel had been until recently located, now owned by Mr. Alexandru Simionescu,

there is only one building whose footprint coincides with part of the West side of the former inn. The part facing Blănari Street was demolished and the façade was rebuilt retreated a few meters, according to the city administration decision. Most likely the volume that can be seen now (Figs. 9-11) from Blănari Street was built during that period, using bricks from the former structure, the shape and size of the bricks confirming such a hypothesis. The restoration of the construction at the end of the nineteenth century can be supported by the presence on the East side of the building of a fire wall which practically would have matched the façade facing the patio, a layout which is atypical for an inn. The survey of the ground floor completed in April 2002<sup>25</sup> shows a functional layout

<sup>25</sup> Measurements taken by Ștefan Bălici, Andrei Ciuculete and Petru Mortu.



Fig. 11 Part of building which some researchers considers that belongs to Simion's Inn. (photo P. Mortu)

identify the plots of land where they were located and even traces of their existence. This leads to the elimination of a number of controversies regarding the position of these complexes often cited by those who focused on the city history.

which implies an internal circulation which questions the structural continuity of the walls of the old inn. Unfortunately the 2002 measurements could not be taken for the basement of the building,<sup>26</sup> too, an area which could bring additional information on the dating of the building under study.

Corroborating the information obtained from the archive with that provided by an abundant literature, topographical plans and *in situ* observations about the small inns of Bucharest scattered throughout the downtown area we can

#### Bibliographical abbreviations:

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Fotino 1859 –                    | D. Fotino, <i>Istoria generală a Daciei sau a Transilvaniei Țerei Muntenesci și a Moldovei</i> , translation by George Sion, III, București, 1859.               |
| Georgescu 1966 –                 | F. Georgescu, <i>Aspecte privind împărțirea administrativă și evoluția demografică din Bucureștii anilor 1831-1848</i> , in MIM III, Bucharest, 1966, pp. 53-88. |
| Giurescu 1966 –                  | C.C. Giurescu, <i>Istoria Bucureștilor din cele mai vechi timpuri până în zilele noastre</i> , București, 1966.  |
| Ionașcu 1941 –                   | I. Ionașcu, <i>Documente bucureștene privitoare la proprietățile mănăstirii Colțea</i> , Bucharest, 1941.  |
| Ionnescu-Gion 2003 –             | G. I. Ionnescu-Gion, <i>Istoria Bucureștilor</i> , Iași, 2003.   |
| Iorga 2008 –                     | N. Iorga, <i>Istoria Bucureștilor</i> , București, 2008.   |
| Papasoglu 1871 –                 | D. Papasoglu, <i>Centrul capitalei București, culoarea de roșu. Dedicat Dom<sup>sale</sup> Dlui V. Hiottu, prefectu poliției capitalei</i> , București, 1871.    |
| Popescu-Lumină 2007 –            | C. Popescu-Lumină, <i>Bucureștii din trecut și de astăzi</i> , București, 2007.  |
| Potra 1985 –                     | G. Potra, <i>Istoricul hanurilor bucureștene</i> , București 1985.   |
| Simotta 2003 –                   | Irina Patrușiu (ed.), <i>Arhitect Gheorghe Simotta</i> , București, 2003.  |
| Stoicescu 1961 –                 | N. Stoicescu, <i>Repertoriul bibliografic al monumentelor feudale din București</i> , București, 1961.   |
| Vărtosu, Vărtosu, Oprescu 1936 – | E. Vărtosu, I. Vărtosu, H. Oprescu, <i>Începuturi edilitare 1830 – 1832, Documente pentru istoria Bucureștilor</i> , I, București, 1936.                         |

<sup>26</sup> When the survey was made the legal status of the building was uncertain, each level belonging to a different owner.