

SUMMARY

EVOLUTION OF ADMINISTRATIVE INSTITUTIONS IN OLTENIA (1746 – 1929)

Popa Augustin – Romeo

The foundation of Romanian Country (Țării Românești) in 14th century raised the need of a good organization and the rulers started to search solutions to coordinate the commands from the center with the realities in the territory. From the very beginning, the lands over Olt will show an autonomous status throughout the feudal period and thereafter (until the first half of the nineteenth century), enjoying the "legacy" taken from the lands Banat of Severin, belonging to the thirteenth century.

Oltenian divisions in Oltenia region generally exhibit a long history, documentary sources implying that the certification of some counties had succeeded for a short time the foundation of Romanian Country. Following closely the territorial extension over time, as we approach the embryo that they developed from, they would come increasingly to be confused with the beginning of the first structures belonging to Romanian feudalism. The old Oltenian counties in the Middle Ages passed several stages of development, leading to the final result which is the five permanent territorial administrative structures found later: Dolj, Gorj, Mehedinți, Romania and Valcea.

Eventful history of the five administrative structures would attract many people eager to know it, the first chapter entitled *Historiography of institutional-territorial organization of Oltenia* giving pride of place on some of these deserving scholars and their writings. Various notes and papers that they left, have contributed to understanding the evolutionary process crossed by the counties, the studies of IC Filitti Ion Donat or newer Vladimir Osiac, Dinică Ciobotea, Nicolae Chipurici, Melentina Bâzgan etc. are well known. The interest

shown during the accumulation of knowledge had been marked by concerns about the certification, scope, and social structures in general everything in the history of Oltenia, the counties being considered as administrative entities in which Romanian society had taken its course over time. Many of the works are genuine instruments used in research today, highlighting the rich archival and historiographical material treated with great seriousness. About the beginnings of Dolj administration and its development, spoke Dinica Ciobotea, Nicolae Babalau and Ion Zarzara, their example being followed by Vasile Arimia, Pantelimon Manta, Nicolae Mischie for Gorj county and for the administration in Valcea area there were Cornelius Tamas and Smaranda Tana. We can not say that Mehedinti or Romanati county, did not benefit from analysis of administrative and territorial development in the middle of the eighteenth century and first half of the twentieth century. They exist, but they are not included in a cumulative study and this is one of the reasons urged us to try to deepen the subject in the present study.

From the beginning, the study went on the reconstruction of the administrative-territorial and institutional framework over Olt, the second chapter, called *Oltenia organization to Cuza's reforms (1864)*, starting with the first concepts up to the issuance of the Organic Statute (1831). After officially leaving of the Romans from the territory of Dacia province, the history reported the local people in search of solutions for the organization, its development in the area north of the Danube during the 3rd – 13th centuries being called, and rightly so, the "cradle" of the Romanian administrative initiatives adopted in later on. Now the meaning of the term *county* is completed, designating in the beginning the person responsible for running a certain party service (administrative, legal and military duties), eventually reaching to mean the subordinated territory.

The analysis of the *counties* in the administrative context of 14th -18th centuries bring into matter development and management concepts along with

some issues that concern sigillography field. The presentation of the lattet is quite beneficial, because it shows a new image of the Oltenian divisions, various county flags being mentioned along time in the contents of several seals of landlords, Caimacams or high clergymen.

The chapter also prepare an analysis made for each county separately, starting from the etymology of their name, followed by short considerations on the history of that land and bringing into question the first certification. The development of administrative divisions of Oltenia passed through more temporal phases, important for their analyzing being both documentary sources and the mapping (18th century), statistics and maps in the eighteenth - the nineteenth centuries, all contributing to the final determination of both the extent of the counties and the number of settlements related. These changes, occurring in demographic and territorial profile, will highlight the position of each county in an informal hierarchy, leaving us to appreciate that Mehedinti occupies the first position and Romanati the last.

During the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries each division is allocated a number of plain areas and rustic mountain lands. From the very beginning we wondered about the issue of the first certification of the administrative Oltenia area and after consulting several sources with related topic, I finally accepted the idea that the Austrians had been the ones who invented the plains and plai as sub-county lands, while their domination upon Oltenia.

Unfortunately, the cartographic material belonging to the eighteenth century gives us no possibility to locate the plain areas, but only the mountain areas, a special situation appears to be in the case of Mehedinti County. There were identified at 1780 seven such districts, the historiography believing that the reign of Constantine Mavrocordat was the implementation period of the plain areas model used by the Austrians in the Romanian Country too.

The return of Oltenia to the mountainous statute caused natural differences between the administration after 1740 and the one during the Austrian reign, all the circumstances that marked the late eighteenth century and the beginning of the next, leading to the initial findings. Firstly, there was discussed the fluctuating figure of the county subdivisions (compared to the region under Vienna ruling), the statistics showing for the first regulamentary year a number of 53 plain areas. Secondly, we deal with a significantly larger number of settlements (1226) and families (134 559), which led to the identification of Mehedinti on the first place among other Oltenian districts, followed in order by Vâlcea Dolj, Gorj and Romanati.

At the head of the counties, of the plain areas and mountain areas, there were named persons responsible of local administration, the Oltenian dignitaries operating in those times under the direct authority of the **ban**, based in Craiova. The administrative reform initiated by Constantine Mavrocordat had brought as county heads **ispravnici (rulers of counties from the middle of the 18th century to the middle of 19th century)**, persons designated as representatives in the territory of the royal throne. With this occasion the study presents some early impressions regarding the new ruling system, its charges and attitudes promoted at the time.

Year 1831 opened a new stage in the Romanian administration with the Organic Statute application, well known being both the replacement of the **ispravnici** with **ocarmuitorii**, dismantling the ruling of the chiefs of plain areas (substitute with subocârmuitorii) and the closure of Craiova Caimacams.

All studies noted the presence of 186 149 inhabitants at the beginning of the second half of the nineteenth century, set in the 32 Oltenian plain areas, 1760 localities represented by eight cities, four fairs, 1056 villages and 692 hamlets. Among the urban settlements Craiova was on top with the 3259 families, followed by Caracal, Targu Jiu, Cerneti, Severin, Ramnic, Calafat, and also the Valcean fairs as Ocna, Dragasani, Horezu or Baia de Arama in Mehedinti. The

number of settlements was the one which will determine the county hierarchy during the statutory period, when Mehedinti County remained on the first place with 474 settlements, the other positions being in the following order: Valcea county (422), Dolj (412) , Gorj (279) and Romanati (180).

The return to land properties in 1822, and especially penetration in rural areas of western concepts aiming at improving the administrative system on modern basis, would contribute to changing mentalities of the era.

This time was marked in particular by the emergence of youth groups with liberal views who wanted to fundamentally change the Romanian society, to remove the old medieval practice of putting in place strong modern principles. They offered programmes and projects containing reforms to a society which was full of customs and habits that stopped its development.

Within this period they would find many occasions to express their intentions like the days of the 1848 revolution or those days in which ad-hoc meetings were held. During the meetings held in this period of forty-eighters movement, or during the advisory meetings in 1857, voices were heard by the people who claimed the need of counties decentralization, but developments in this respect were only possible after the election of Alexandru Ioan Cuza ahead principalities.

Cuza's reign (Jan 24th 1859- Feb 11th 1866) was a period rich in reforms which will go to upgrading the old administrative structures such as counties (French framework), after 1864 law there were 33 counties and 163 "plasa"s in the United Principalities. This binding rule will provide counties and municipalities to a long-awaited legal personality, municipal mayors will also have well established functions.

It will soon be implemented the Prefect official function, the official who together with viceprefect of the "plasa" were the Government representatives in the territory. The administrative subdivisions, "plasa"s, will

not have the same fate as that of the municipalities, they are still placed without legal personality, benefiting only the status of mere administrative districts.

The year 1866 marked the major events in the Romanian history: in addition to Cuza's abdication on 11th february it was also noted the developing of the first Romanian Constitution. Trying to give consistency to this document and to create a compatibility with its provisions, polity makers will make more changes to the law of 1864(1872, 1874, 1875, 1876, 1885,1887, 1888, 1889, 1890, 1900, 1904, 1908,1910), one of these stipulating the appoitment of the mayors directly by the prefect.

The head of county government will be deprived in 1872 of the benefit for holding the Presidency of the Standing Comitee. Moreover in 1833 he will be even contolled by this body. At sub-county level, during 1864-1908, viceprefects will be in charge, after this period in accordance with the 29 April law, their place will be taken by administrators until 1923,whn they will also be replaced by petors or prim-pretors.

Changes that were spreading throughout the whole country at administrative level will pass over the five divisions belonging to Oltenia. In 1867 it was noted a first change that Dolj became the largest County, beeing followed by Mehedinți, Romanați, Gorj and Vâlcea. Studies on territorial component will be undertaken in the future (in 1890 and 1912), but without changing the above mentioned order, being recorded an increase in population from 662.139 inhabitants in 1852 to 1.484.706 inhabitants in 1922. Throughout the county there were 33 counties, 164 plasas, 3.080 communities and 7.402 villages and hamlets. Oltenia had in 1871 a number of 33 plasas, in 1893 it had 47, in 1904 there were 93, in 1922 thetr were only 43 left and after the enforcement of the 1925 law there were 45 administrative subdivisions like these.

The future will show that these figures are about to suffer changes, the policy makers being willing from one stage to other to try all sorts of

administrative formulas to harmonize the local situation. Each county was able to offer new and varied data which indicated Dolj county as the largest one and on the first position concerning the number of the inhabitants and the number of settlements and surrounding villages.

One of the administrative sides authorities will bend over was that which targeted the management areas. New institutions represented by the Prefectures and County Councils will be a novelty in Romanian society after 1864, but not as self-called terms but rather by what they expressed in administrative terms. If prefects and vice-prefects are the government representative in territory, the County Councils will be appointed as local forums, ment to protect the interests of people within their territories.

Powers and duties of prefects established by Cuza in 1864 will be adjusted in the future, for instance in 1892 these duties were included between articles 13 and 33, and the law itself was also a subject to interventoin in 1895, 1896 and 1904. The decision taken in 1925 on the unification of the administration, came as a response to the needs faced by the Romanian state after implementation of the Great Unification Act of 1918, this establishing the prefect as head of county government, being also obliged to implement decisions of the county and the Delegation permanent.

Properly analyzed the lists of those who occupied chairs of prefects in Oltenia relieve some members of the powerful boyar families, and after the events of 1877 - 1878 and 1916 - 1918, we can see that the prefects come from both political parties disputing power in Romania: liberal and conservative parties.

Having obtained broad powers to safeguard the interest of local citizens in 1864, the county councils were made up of members elected by the electorate. In the first session the members used to choose their president (Article 3 of the 1864 Act), whose tasks were included between Articles 30 and 70 of Chapter II. Ordinary session used to be held in autumn, but there were also cases where

counseling was usually a special meeting upon request, or when any problems required to be immediately resolved. During the period between sessions there was a Permanent Cometece functioning (Chairman of that body was Prefect until 1872), which consisted of three county councilors responsible for gathering material for the autumn meetings and leading the county with the Prefect.

The lists which included the most of Oltenia county councilors, highlights the concern of policy makers to always put the spotlight on the issues facing government. This was perfectly normal, if we think that the time elapsed between the reforms of Alexander Cuza and 1925, is considered to be most important in the organization, being established several principles that will underpin future Romanian administration.

Given the fact that the 1925 law did not solve all problems - its purpose being the implementation of legislation and administration in the provinces joined the Old Kingdom - it underwent further development to that of August 3, 1929.

Following administrative decentralization and local autonomy, the county government was due to the County Council and for now on the president of the Permanent Delegation, this becoming in fact the executive body of local government and the Council, in other words, the substitute of the prefect. Provisions of the 1925 will be held concerning the establishment and operation of county councils, but they brought clarification on the county delegation. This was used by the president as an advisory body and consisted of members of County Council and people with deliberative vote (county mayor, the presidents of the Chamber of Agriculture, Industry and Trade).

Towards the end of our considerations, if we were to associate all the data referring to counties of Mehedinti and Romanati, with adjustments and rearranging information outlining the developments in the rest of the Oltenian counties, we could say that our approach is a step toward understanding the realities of administrative-territorial Oltenia at institutional level. The fact that

Dolj, Gorj and Valcea still benefit by works that highlight trends at organizational level, urged us to do the same for the other two counties in Oltenia in order to render the place which they deserve in the history of the Romanian administration.