

ABSTRACT

THE CROWN DOMAIN

The period of the monarchy (1866 – 1947) represents a very important period in the historical evolution of Romania. This fact is proven by the transformations during this period and in all the aspects: political, economic, social, demographical, administrative and cultural. This historical age was marked by the personalities of the kings: Carol I (1866 – 1914), Ferdinand I (1914 – 1917), Carol II (1930 – 1940) and Michael I (1927 – 1930; 1940 – 1947). The four kings, that succeeded to the throne left their mark, each in their own way, on the evolution of the entire Romanian state and society.

The reign of Carol I (1866 – 1914) is the most important because during this time the achievements from Romania were truthfully impressive: the institution and the international recognition of the constitutional hereditary monarchy regime, the gaining of the Independence, the proclamation of the Romanian Kingdom, the consolidation of Romania's position in Europe and its appreciation as an equilibrium factor in the Balkan area, the assurance of an internal political stability after the alternation to the governing of the liberals and conservatives, the remarkable progress registered for the modernization.

However, there were still moments when the King Carol I had to face the contradictory opinions of the different political and social categories, but also of the European powers with certain occasions: his arriving in Romania after the removing of A. I. Cuza, the proclamation of the Romanian Kingdom

and of Carol as King (14th/26th of March 1881) – fact that generated vehement discussions inside and outside the country –, accepting in 1884 of the twelve agricultural estates offered by the Crown etc.

After the proclamation of the Romanian Kingdom, many political figures proposed, taking into consideration the new status of the country, to create a Crown Domain, made from estates that belonged to the state, which the King should administrate according to his desire. This Domain would have a status fundamentally different from the other royal properties, having the right to usufruct.

Thus, in 1884, was initiated this act with the purpose to establish a tighter connection between the Dynasty and the Romanians, the monarch belonging, along with the dwellers from this country, to the new life that included the agricultural aspect.

The preoccupations related to the understanding of what the Crown Domain now represents were very few. These were registered especially after 1989, when any kind of constraint disappeared and the access to information became available. Therefore, this subject turned into the focus point of those historians who studied the Romanian Monarchy period: Ioan Scurtu, Ion Mamina, Sorin Liviu Damean, Paul Lindemberg, but without seriously approach this theme. Feeble attempts to decipher the activities taking place on the Crown Domain could also be found in the articles elaborated by Anica Constantin, Nicoleta Ionescu – Gură, Radu Ionescu. More information regarding the way in which was done the exploitation of the estates were offered by the heads of the twelve administrations: Olimpiu Boiu, Alexandru Precup, N., Condurache, N., Marinescu, Florian Davidescu, Gheorghe, Manolescu, Gheorghe Codrescu, Eremia Medianu, Dumitru Popescu, Gheorghe Popovici, Ioan, Popovic – in the monographs edited in 1906.

An incursion in the Crown Domain history, for the period 1884 – 1947, hasn't yet been made. Starting from the desire of elucidate this problem that is still unsolved in our historiography, I decided to make my Ph.D. thesis on the "The Crown Domain" theme. The paper is the result of a research and documentation carried out during 2007-2010, at The National Central Historical Archives from Bucharest, The County Administration of the National Archives from Dolj and The Romanian Academy Library, The Neamț County Library "G. T. Kirileanu", The University Central Library from Bucharest, The Dolj County Library "Aman". The thesis presents a classical configuration, being structured on five major chapters, to which it is added the selective bibliography and the annexes.

In the first chapter, named *The legislation regarding the constitution of the Crown Domain*, I presented the parliamentary debates from the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, related to the institution of the Crown Domain law that, despite the numerous protests from the opposition, was voted on 10th/22nd of June 1884. Altogether, I've tried to evidence all the laws elaborated during the 63 years when this institution functioned.

According to the law from 1884, the estates from Sadova and Segarcea, (Dolj county), Rușețu (Brăila county), Cocioc (Ilfov county), Gherghița (Prahova county), Domnița (Râmnicu-Sărat county), Dobrovăț (Vaslui county), Mălini, Borca, Sabașa - Farcașa (Suceava county), Bicz (Neamț county) and Bușteni, with the mountains Clăbucetul Taurului and Caraiman (Prahova county) constituted the Crown Domain. These rural immobile possessions were declared inalienable and imprescriptible, couldn't be sold, changed, given, mortgaged or subjected to any other usage than that already established. They also didn't pay taxes to the state but they paid the county and the communal taxes. The contracts and the papers referring to their administration granted, also, the tax-exemption in all the situations, either to

the state, public institutions, different ministries etc., if the laws that led to the creation of a tax or a duty didn't refer to the specific disposition that the Crown Domain should be subjected to that or those taxes. The Crown Domain could be taxed only by the county or commune but only regarding the agricultural areas and the buildings. In 1940, through a decree-law from 14th of October all the exemptions and the reductions on the subject of taxes, duties and any contributions given to the members of the Royal Family, the Royal House and the Crown Domain. The personal real estates and those put into use, the mobile goods, any kind of income, the papers and the juridical facts had been subjected to the same fiscal regime as those of the private persons. Tax-exempted was also the civil list of the King Michael I and endowment of the Queen-mother Helen. The dispositions from this decree-law had been abrogated through the Law no. 45 from 1945. Through the decision no. 232 from 10th of March 1948, with retroactive effect, starting from the 1st of January 1948, were permanently abolished the laws that provisioned the exemptions or the reductions of taxes by which the members of the former Royal Family benefited, the goods that once constituted the Crown Domain being subjected to the fiscal regime that was referring to the state's possessions.

The actions of organization and modernization done by the 12 administrations realized under the guidance and the careful supervision of the six administrators: Ion Kalinderu (26th of December 1884 – 11th of December 1913); Barbu Știrbey (21st of December 1913-9th December 1919); Nicolae Mișu (9th of December 1919 – 15th of May 1920), General Ernest O. Baliff (15th of May 1920 – 13th of February 1941), General Alexandru Manolescu (15th of February 1941 – 11th of July 1942); Dimitrie D. Negel (22nd of July 1942-30th of December 1947) are treated in the chapter *Measures of organization and modernization of the Crown Domain*. The headquarters of

the institution was established in Bucharest being managed by a general administrator. The exterior service was divided in 11 districts, each managed by a chief agronomist or silviculturist, directly subordinated to the central administrator. The entire activity was structured on three sections: silviculture, agriculture and accountancy. To the attribution of the first two were designated the forest planning, meaning the making of agricultural exploitation and the control of the staff from the exterior service. The staff was appointed by addresses by the general Administrator and no decisions were taken without his consultation or accept. For the modernization must be mentioned that there had been made efforts in order to fit out the administrations with modern buildings for the employees, with modern agricultural farming stock, they embellished the villagers' households by giving them fruit and ornamental trees for free, they repaired and built schools, churches and health centers in all the administrations etc.

In chapter II, named *The organization and the exploitation of the Crown Domain (1884 – 1919)*, I presented the different aspects that were related to the organization, the labour and the agricultural exploitation – with all the connected branches – and the forestry exploitation of the 12 estates, from the moment the lease contract ceased (1898 - 1903) and until 1906. Unfortunately, the information for the period 1907 – 1919 is missing, the archive of the Central Administration and of all the other Administrations being destroyed during the First World War (1916 – 1918).

Chapter III, *The expropriation and its consequences*, treats the evolution of the Domains during 1921 – 1947. The agrarian reform from 1921 led to a reduction of the agricultural surface of about 46.400 hectares of agricultural field designated for the appropriation of the dwellers. The diminishing of the agricultural areas, including the number of estates, imposed the reorganization of the administrations: the Domain Domnița was

entirely expropriated; the Domains Borca with Sabaşa and Farcaşa and also Cocioc with Gherghiţa were administratively joined. The Union from 1918 led to the entering in the Crown Domain of a new estate from Basarabia, the Domain Româneşti (Orhei county). In the period before the War this estate belonged to the Russian royal family.

The economical crisis from 1929-1933 and the Second World War (1939-1945) negatively affected the activity on these estates. At the mountain administrations, where the main activity was the forestry exploitation, was registered a stagnation of the works and a great decrease in the sailing of the timber. The administrations from the field area registered reductions on the cultivated surfaces and in production.

Starting with 1934, the effects of the crisis had been attenuated and then liquidated by the ever increasing request of agricultural and forestry products, after the growth of the prices on the internal and external market. During 1934 – 1939 were registered requests for export, especially for the viticultural products and timber.

In 1938 were sent from the Segarcea Administration 14.000 bottles of Bordeaux wine in Switzerland, 55.300 bottles in Indies, 7.500 bottles in Argentina. Requests for wine were registered in Warsaw, Poland for the preparing of vinegar.

For timber were registered requests from Albania, Iraq but also from the Society BELROM S.A.R., as a representative of the concern Samac – Luxemburg – New York, announcing that it was willing to take in 1939, from the entire production of timber from Valea Bistriţei and the region Fălticeni of the Crown Domain, a quantity of almost 30.000 m³ of semi-finished and planed timber. The export was made only in trans-ocean countries, in the Eastern Asia, in Africa, in North, Central and South America and Australia.

The breaking out of the Second World War led to a new decrease of the activity. This is due to the fact that men were sent to the battle-front, were requisitioned materials and animals for the war needs, but was also due to the plunders and destructions caused by the Soviet, German and even Romanian armies.

The losing of the Domain Românești in 1945 meant the first step to the dismembering of the Crown Domain. Once the power was seized by the communist regime, the imminent disappearance of the Domain emerged. After the forced abdication of King Michael, on December 30th 1947, the Crown Domain became the state's property.

In chapter IV, *The Crown Domain at the national and international exhibitions*, I tried to realize a full picture of the exhibitions on which this institution took part. A great success the Crown Domain registered in 1906, at the Jubilee Exhibition from Bucharest, where there were commemorated 1.800 years from the arriving of the first colonists in the Romanian territories, 40 years of reign under Carol I and 25 years from the proclamation of the Romanian Kingdom. At this exhibition, the Domain showed to the visitors all the products obtained in all the administrations, from agricultural and forestry products to the industry items. Ion Kalinderu was awarded a special prize, representing a silver vase with allegorical figures, exquisitely made. This prize was offered by the king himself "to the most remarkable farmer".

On the international plan, a first important success was registered by the Administration at the Paris exhibition from 1900. This success is evidenced by the great number of prizes obtained: a great prize awarded to the administrator Ion Kalinderu for the entire activity in the service of the Crown Domain, two golden medals, 5 silver medals, one bronze medal and three mentions. For the period between the wars we have more information regarding the presence of the Crown Domain at the universal exhibitions. We

mention here the exhibition from 1925 organized at Lemberg, Ukraine, that from 1929 in Warsaw where there had been exhibited three different types of wines, grapes and other fresh or conserved fruit; from Brussels (Holland) from 1935. The exhibition from U.S.A. in 1938 was the last exhibition at which the Crown Domain took part.

In chapter V, *Social and cultural politics created through the Crown Domain*, we insisted on the social conditions created for the villagers, as the schools, churches and libraries building, providing the schools with publications and the necessary didactic material, work-shops and theatres. In each village were organized courses, were delivered lectures, were commemorated through a festivity the great moments or the historical personalities, were organized campaigns for gathering folklore, proverbs, sayings, old adages, were built museums and cultural societies.

Becoming advantageous, the Domains' Administration, through the benevolence of the sovereigns, annually offered money, products and timber to the people in need, scholarships for the poor pupils and students. Once with the end of the First World War, the Domain got involved in creating places for the invalid people, for the children orphan after the war and other charities. From the Crown Domain's funds was created the Institute for the study of history from the Superior Dacia University.

The Central Administration fought intensively against the immorality and misery, considered in all the respects, heading sometimes to pedantism.

An institution that struggled with the poverty, an important factor in the education and the culture of the villages through rational methods and activity, the Crown Domain constituted an example of what can be achieved, in a short time, in a country that was obliged to make large steps on the development ladder.

Taking into consideration the little information published on this theme, my work must be regarded as a first step in the studying of the Crown Domain history and, in the same time, a new step, meaning completion and continuation of the studies that concern this area.