

MEDIAEVAL ADMINISTRATIVE - TERRITORIAL STRUCTURES ON THE PRESENT TERRITORY OF ROMANIA¹

Radu SĂGEATĂ*

*Institute of Geography of the Romanian Academy, Dimitrie Racoviță Street, No.12,
023993, București, Romania, e-mail: radusageata@yahoo.com, radusageata@k.ro*

Abstract: *Mediaeval administrative-territorial structures on the present territory of Romania. After Roman's withdrawal from Dacia (A.D. 275), the Daco-Roman population stayed on and continued to live in the territory of the former Roman Province. It was organised into village communities and unions of village communities, which in time, would unite into larger political-administrative formations named *knezdoms*, *dukedom*s and *lands*, constituting the core of the future Principalities of Wallachia, Moldavia and Transylvania. Until their unification into one single national state, the three Romanian Principalities experienced various forms of administrative-territorial organisation.*

Rezumat: După retragerea romană (275 d. Chr.), populația daco-romană și-a păstrat statornicia pe teritoriul fostei provincii romane, fiind organizată în obști sătești și uniuni de obști sătești. Prin unificarea acestora, au luat ființă cu timpul formațiuni politico-administrative mai mari de tipul cnezatelor, ducatelor și țărilor. Acestea au constituit nucleele de formare ale celor trei principate românești care au cunoscut, de la formare și până la unificarea acestora, diferite organizări administrativ-teritoriale.

Key-words: *knezdome*, *voivodeship*, *dukedom*, *land*, *județ*, *present territory of Romania*

Cuvinte cheie: *cnezat*, *voievodat*, *ducat*, *țară*, *județ*, *teritoriul actual al României*

¹ The main administrative-territorial divisions: *district(e)* and *județ(e)* in Wallachia, *ținut(uri)* in Moldavia; administrative – sub-division (small rural districts): *ocol(uri)*, *plai(uri)*, *scaun(e)*, *caza(s)*, *căpitanat(e)*, *cerc(uri)*, *subcerc(uri)* and *pretură(uri)*; corresponding roughly to the English district, or arrondissement.



The establishment of the first Romanian political-administrative formations was closely dependent on the natural background. The shelter provided by depressions and the advantages of waterways, which were a safer traffic route than the inadequate and insecure roads, made people settle in such places, gather together into village communities which subsequently united and formed larger territorial entities such as *knezdoms*, *voivodeships*, *dukedom*s and *lands*. Some of these entities encompassed over 100 villages, covering up to 8,000 – 10,000 km² (*Bârsa* Land, *Maramureş* Land, *Făgăraş* Land, *Haţeg* Land, *Vrancea* Land, etc.).

The *Diploma* granted by the Hungarian King *Bela the Fourth* (1247) attests to the existence of five political-administrative formations south of the Carpathians, overlapping some relatively homogeneous natural regions: *Severin* Land (the *Banat of Severin*) in the mountainous regions between the Danube and the Jiu rivers; the *Knezdoms (Principality) of Ioan* (on the Lower course of the Olt) and of *Farcaş* (in the Oltenia Subcarpathians), the *Voivodeships of Litovoi* (on the middle and lower course of the Jiu) and of *Seneslau* (on the lefthandside of the Olt), extending in the mountainous and hilly regions of western Wallachia. These administrative structures had their own Romanian organisation, vassalage relations with the Hungarian king did not in any way influence the full right of the Romanian states to their own domestic organisation. In Romanian documents, the *knez* (prince) (Rom. *cneaz*, or *chineaz* as they used to be named especially in Transylvania) is also called *jude*, or *judeţ*, the term being subsequently assigned to the administrative-territorial unit under his jurisdiction. Since the majority of the Romanian population lived alongside river valleys, the afferent region would receive the name of the respective river, e.g. *Olt* Land, *Argeş* Land, *Prahova* Land, or *Ialomiţa* Land in Wallachia, names later transferred to the respective counties; the land across the Milcov River was named *Moldavia*.

As Anonymus, the *notary of King Bela* mentions, Transylvanian Romanians were organised into *knezdoms*, *voivodeships*, or *dukedom*s even before the Hungarians arrived and conquered the Province, e.g. the Dukedom (Voivodeship) of *Menemorut* (in Crişana, between the Someş and the Mureş rivers, capital *Biharea*); the Dukedom (Voivodeship) of *Glad* (in Banat between the Mureş and the Danube rivers, capital *Cuvin*) and the Dukedom (Voivodeship) of *Gelu* (in Transylvania proper, between the Mureş Defile and the springs of the Three Someş Rivers, capital *Dăbâca*). Such voivodeships (principalities) continued to exist also in areas (the so-called *lands*) which preserved strong Romanian autochthonous traits, mentioned by 13th and 14th cc documents: *Bârsa* Land, *Făgăraş* Land, *Chioaru* Land, *Almaş* Land, etc., fiefs of the Wallachian Ruling Princes; towards the end of the 15th century, *Ciceul* and *Cetea de Baltă* were feuds of the Moldavian rulers. These feuds contributed to strengthening even more the permanent and mansided relations among the Principalities of Wallachia, Moldavia and Transylvania.

Wallachia. This Principality was founded in late 13th and early 14th centuries by the Voivodes of Argeş who undertook the unification and organisation of the pre-state formations lying south of the Carpathians into one single political-administrative unit. From the very beginning of its foundation, two historical regions emerged: *Muntenia* in the east and *Oltenia* in the west, each being governed by a *ban*, the highest ranking official in the state after the

voivode. From an organisational viewpoint, each of the two regions included several *județe* (*Argeș, Prahova, Dâmbovița, Buzău* and *Râmnicu Sărat*, documented from the very beginning of Wallachia's foundation, and *Ialomița*, reported in 16th-century historical sources). The names of these units (*județe*) derives from the rivers crossing them. One century later documents speak about two more such units: *Ilfov* and *Olt*, extending as far as the Turkish possession (*Rayah*) of Turnu, which was recovered by the Romanians under the Adrianopole Treaty (1829), and part of its territory annexed to Teleorman *județ* (Oroveanu, 1986, p. 163).

Between Prahova and Buzău stood *Săcuieni*, a *județ* dismantled in 1845. Its name recalls the colonisation (begun at the time of the Teutonic Knights, 1211) of a population originating from Transylvania (Romanians and Szecklers) (Zaharescu, 1923). The evolution of this *județ* was intimately connected with the natural access route alongside the Teleajen Valley: as long as this valley was a major axis of communication between Wallachia and southern Transylvania, *Săcuieni* kept developing. At the end of the 18th century, when hydrocarbon resources were discovered in the Prahova Subcarpathians and started being exploited on a large scale, commercial fluxes to Brașov shifted from the Teleajen Valley to the Prahova Valley. So, the importance of the fairs on the old commercial route waned considerably, seriously perturbing the economy of this *județ* which was therefore dismantled. Thus, transition from a traditional economy, based on agriculture and handicrafts, to a capitalist industrial system obviously led to the disappearance of an administrative-territorial unit from the map, the moment its existence was no longer justified.

Another case is *Pădureț*, a *județ* which derived its name from the forested area (Rom. *pădure*) it was situated in, east of the Argeș River. The rich forests creating access difficulties and restricting the spatial development of a heavily populated area caused its dissolution and at the beginning the 17th century it merged with its neighbouring *județ*, Muscel. A proof that it had indeed existed is also the very name of the present *Pădureni Village (Lunca Corbului Commune)* in Argeș County.

A different situation led to the disappearance of *Brăila* from the map. This *județ*, which took its name from a major town which had been in place before Wallachia was founded, was seized by the Ottomans and turned into a *Rayah* (mid-16th cent.), but its name was preserved (Figure 1). In this case, external political factors were to blame for its temporary dissolution. The greatest part of its territory was incorporated into the *județ* of *Râmnicu Sărat* (May 6, 1646) and named *Râmnicu Sărat and Brăila* (Oroveanu, 1986, p. 163). *Brăila* was to regain its former *județ* status during the Russian administration (1806-1812) (Giurescu, 1942, III, p. 488; Oroveanu, 1986, p. 163).

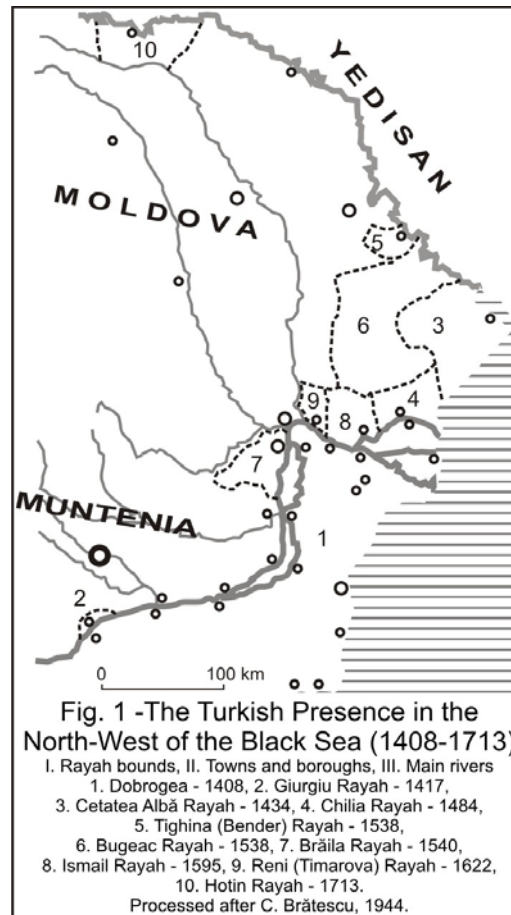


Figure 1: *The Turkish Presence in the North-West of the Black Sea (1408-1713).*

Vlașca (Slavic: *Land of the Vlachs*) extended on the territory of the present Giurgiu County from Mediaeval Times up to 1950. Its name has particular historical relevance, being a true toponymic document which attests to the existence of an old Romanian settlement in this plain north of the Danube before the arrival of the Slavs. Therefore, changing the name of Giurgiu into *Vlașca* or *Giurgiu-Vlașca* County would be welcome, moreover so, as the county capital has peripheral location.

In the beginning, the *județe* were not delimited precisely, wide transition strips existing between them. In time, they would overlap the diverging lines of demographic and economic

fluxes (Figure 2). He who decided on, or sanctioned the configuration of administrative units was the Voivode of the country, who was the absolute ruler.

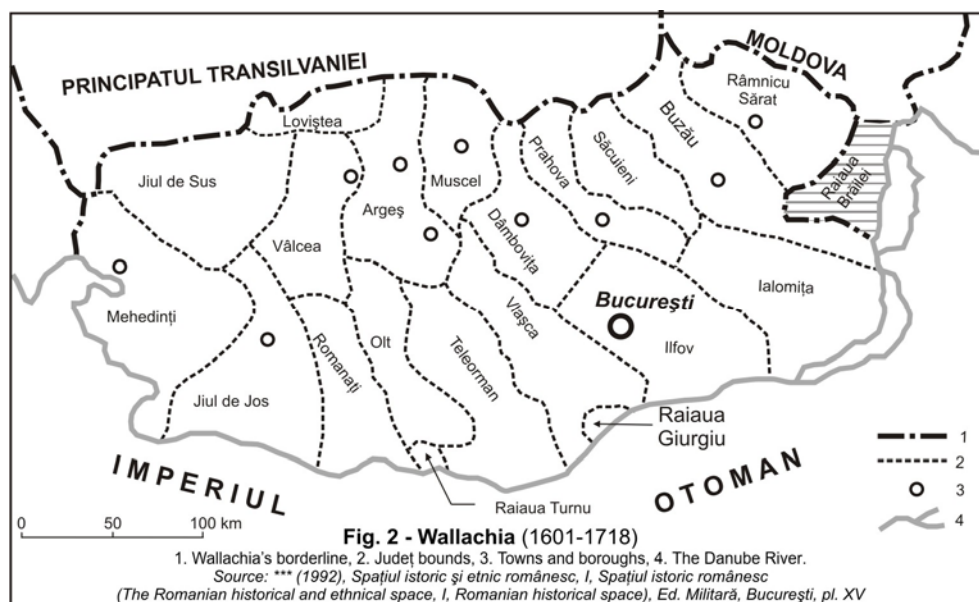


Figure 2: Wallachia (1601-1718).

Dobrogea. Tulcea *Sandgiac*, during Ottoman administration, it included 13 *cazas*: Chilia (Kilia), Mahmudia, Isaccea, Tulcea, Măcin, Sulina, Hârșova, Babadag, Küstendge, Medgidia, Cernavodă, Mangalia and Silistra (Negulescu, 1928). Dobrogea's capital-city was Tulcea.

Once the Romanian administration was re-established, "Regulations for the administrative division and organisation" were issued (November 13, 1878), separating Dobrogea into three *județe*:

- Tulcea, capital-city Tulcea, encompassing several *plase*: Măcin, Sulina, Tulcea and Babadag;
- Constanța, capital-city Constanța, including the *plase* of Constanța, Hârșova and Mangalia;
- Silistra Nouă, capital-city Rasova, with the *plase* of Medgidia and Silistra Nouă.

Two years later, the Administrative Law of May 9, 1880 divided Dobrogea into two *județe*: Tulcea, with 4 *ocol* units and Constanța with 5 such units.

Olenia. Historical documents (14th-15th cc) attest the existence of the following *județe*: Jaleș (1385), on the Jaleș Brook in the north of the present Gorj County; Motru (1415)

on the homonymous river, and *Balta* on the present territory of the Dolj and Mehedinți counties. Its name was associated with the large Danube Floodplain pools which lay on its area. In late 15th century, the place of these three *județe* was taken by another three: *Gorj* (on the Upper course of the Jiu); *Dolj* (on the Lower course of the Jiu) and *Mehedinți*. In early 16th century, the *județ* of *Gilort* is documented on the Gilort River, but later it also disappeared from the map. The oldest *județ* in Oltenia, whose administrative structure exists also today, is *Vâlcea* (January 8, 1394), while *Romanați*, established in the same period, lasted only until 1950, when an administrative-territorial reform dismantled it. It drew its name of great historical relevance, meaning “born in Rome” (*Roma-nati*), from the numerous Roman vestiges discovered on its territory (Oroveanu, 1986, p. 162). This is another toponym which proves that the north-Danubian plain had been heavily populated before the colonisation of South-Danubian Slav elements in the Early Middle Ages. Therefore, we fully support the view that this place-name ought to be rewritten on Romania’s administrative-territorial map.

The small rural district (*plasa*) ranked second to the *județ* and included several villages. They were ruled by *zapcii*. This type of administrative structure was recorded first in Oltenia², later extending throughout the territory south of the Carpathian Mountains. In the mountainous region, with a rough relief and scattered villages, the *plasa*-type was replaced by the *plai*-type governed by a *vătaf* (kind of sheriff).

Moldavia was founded in mid-14th century by the Romanian Voivodes of Maramureș (*Dragoș*, *Bogdan* and those of the *Mușat* family) who conquered successively the Romanian political formations between the Carpathians, the Dniester and the Black Sea. Just like in Wallachia, political and military considerations lay behind the division of the territory into two regions ruled by two brothers: *Țara de Sus* (Highland), including the territories north of *Vaslui*, between the Carpathians and the Dniester inclusive of Bucovina, and *Țara de Jos* (Lowland), which extended in the south. Since the southern part of Moldavia close to the Danube and stretching out between the Prut and the Dniester had previously been the property of Wallachian rulers from the Basarab family, it was named *Basarabia*. Moldavia as organised into *ținuturi* of which the oldest was *Putna*. A document dated May 12, 1591 mentions *Ținutul Putna and Agiudul*, the latter being incorporated by *Putna* towards the end of the 17th century (*Ibidem*, p. 165). The same fate had *Trotuș* and *Bacău*, which used to be mentioned separately in the 15th – 16th cc, and referred to as *Ținutul Trotuș and Bacău* in early 18th century; at the end of that century *Trotuș* was no longer mentioned. At the beginning of the 15th century documents speak about several *ținuturi*, e.g. *Covurlui*, *Tecuci*, *Horincea*, *Bârlad*, *Fălciu* and *Hârlău*. At the end of the 16th century, *Horincea* merged with *Covurlui* becoming a *plasa* and one century later *Bârlad* merged with *Tutova*, its neighbouring *ținut*. It was in this period that *Ținutul Chigheciu* was dismantled, so that at the end of the 17th century *Țara de Jos* lost four *ținuturi*: *Agiud*, *Trotuș*, *Bârlad*, and *Chighegiu* (*Ibid*, p. 166).

² When Oltenia was under Austrian domination (1718-1739) each *județ* included four *plase*: the upper *plasa*, the lower *plasa*, the middle *plasa* and the marginal *plasa*, governed by *subprefects* (Oroveanu, 1986, p. 173).

Țara de Sus had still preserved the following *ținuturi*: Suceava, Neamț, Roman, Vaslui, Dorohoi, Iași and Cârlișturii (the last one had a small but heavily populated area, capital-city *Târgu Frumos* (Figure 3). In *Descriptio Moldaviae* (1716), Dimitrie Cantemir describes Moldavia's administrative structure in early 18th century, showed Moldavia is shown to be divided in 23 *ținuturi* organised within three regions: *Țara de Jos*, with 12 *ținuturi*, *Țara de Sus* with 7 *ținuturi* and *Bugeac* with 4 *ținuturi*. In the 18th century, a number of additional *ținuturi* came into being, e.g. *Botoșani*, which broke away from *Hârlău*, which being left with a very small area, was dismantled in the 19th century, and *Herța* which detached itself from *Dorohoi* but was ceded to Soviet Russia in 1940 under the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact.

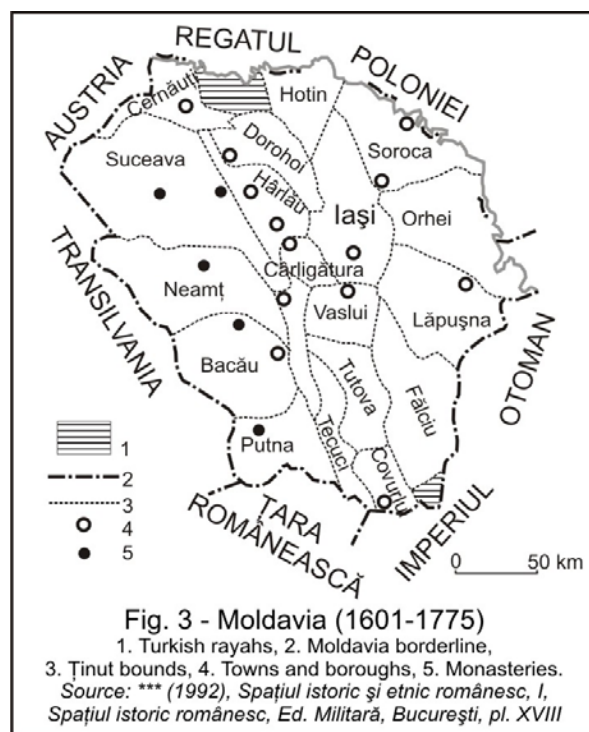


Figure 3: *Moldavia (1601-1775).*

Both in the lower and the upper mountainous regions, the *ținuturi* were formed of *ocoluri*. In Moldavia there were 16 *ținuturi* and 76 *ocoluri* (Figure 4)³. Subsequently the term *ocol* was replaced for *plasa* used in Wallachia.

³ *Karta teatra voini v Europe (1828-1829), godov, 1:420 000, Sankt Petersburg.*

So, Moldavia's *ținut* disappeared through mergers followed by the absorption of the smaller unit with fewer social-economic development prospects, by the larger one; the process of formation took place as part of the existing *ținut* broke away from the parent unit. However, this procedure was not a viable one as proven by the fact that the *ținut* which had yielded part of its territory to the formation of a new administrative structure was eventually dismantled.

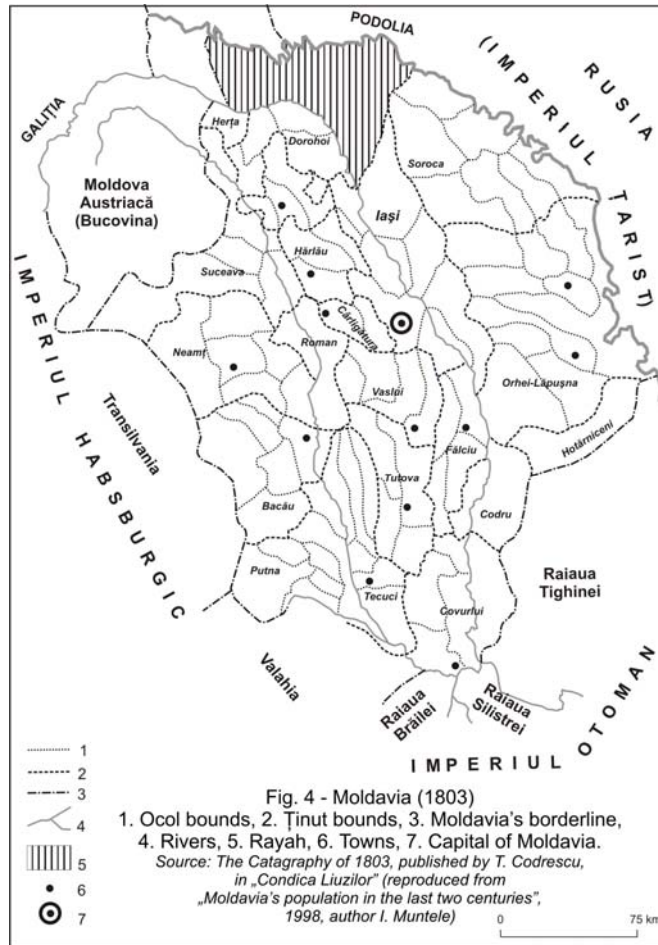


Figure 4: Moldavia (1803).

Bucovina, separated from Moldavia⁴ by the *Constantinople Convention* (May 7, 1775), fell under the military occupation of the Habsburg Empire; its organisation is shown on Jacob Adam's Map (1781)⁵. The province was divided in 10 *ocoluri*: *Berhomete*, *Câmpulung Moldovenesc*, *Câmpulung Ruscesc*, *Ceremuş*, *Cernăuţi*, *Nistru* (Dniester), *Prut*, *Suceava*, *Şomuz* and *Vâlcov* (Figure 5) (Băican, 1996, pp. 90-91) and absorbed into *Galiția* as its 19th administrative unit. In 1849, in the wake of the extended revolutionary movements of the previous year, it became a dukedom divided in 11 districts (Rom. *căpităni*)⁶ comparable in area to the Wallachian and Moldavian *plasa*. These divisions were to become the first Bucovinian *județe* (1918-1925) after the integration of the province into Greater Romania.

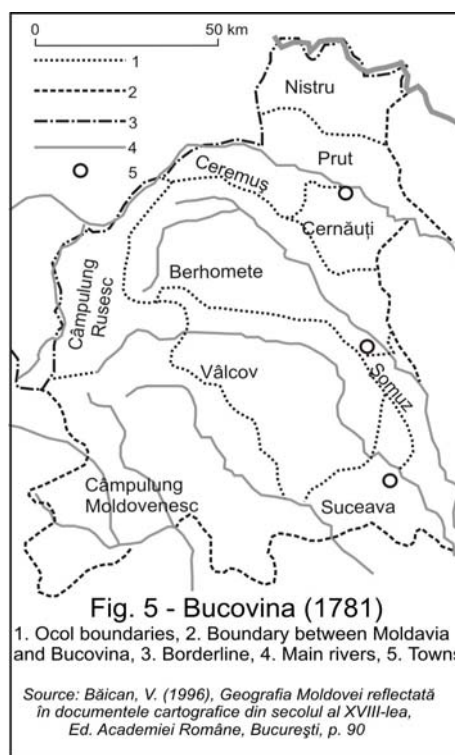


Figure 5: Bucovina (1781).

⁴ Within Moldavian borders, *Bucovina* was formed of *Cernăuţi* and *Suceava ținuturi*.

⁵ Adam Jacob (1781), *Mappa von der Buckowiner-District*, Wien.

⁶ These were: *Câmpulung*, *Cernăuţi*, *Coțmani*, *Gura Humorului*, *Rădăuți*, *Siret*, *Storojineț*, *Suceava*, *Văscăuți*, *Vijnița* and *Zastavna*.

Basarabia's old territorial administration (12 *ținuturi*)⁷ was preserved also after the province fell under tzarist administration (the Bucharest Peace Treaty of 1828, recognised its autonomy). However, this status was abrogated in 1828 and followed by the numerical reduction of administrative units, as well as by changes in their structure and configuration which left Basarabia with 8 *județe*: *Bălți, Cahul, Cetatea Albă, Chișinău, Hotin, Orhei, Soroca* and *Tighina*, and the urban district of *Ismail* (Arbore, 1904, pp. 32-33).

Transylvania. When the Hungarians arrived there (11th cent.) they found a compact Romanian ethnic bloc with knezdoms or voivodeships. These entities were maintained also after several individual regions emerged (*Transylvania proper, Banat, Crișana* and *Maramureș*). The *județ* was preserved as type of administrative-territorial unit until the 12th century, when the Hungarian administration changed it for the comitat and district type, and for the *scaun* in the areas inhabited by Transylvanian Saxons and Szeklers⁸. Likewise in Wallachia and Moldavia, territorial organisation varied in terms of political and social necessities. For example, in the 15th century, *Solnoc* Comitat, which extended from the Tisa River to the central part of Transylvania, was divided in four comitats: *Dăbâca, Solnocul de Mijloc, Solnocul din Afară* and *Solnocul Interior*. Similarly, *Bihor* comitat was divided into *Satu Mare* and *Crasna*, the present *Sălaj* County (Nistor, 2000, p. 89); on the territory of the *Bistrița-Năsăud Județ*, 13th- century documents mention *Rodna District*, later incorporated (1475) into *Bistrița District* (Oroveanu, 1986, p. 168). In the central part of Transylvania, we find *Târnava* comitat (documented in 1217) on the valleys of the two Târnave Rivers, while in its south-west were *Hașeg District* (part of Oltenia until the 13th century) and *Hunedoara Comitat*.

Banat had enjoyed broad autonomy from the Hungarian Kingdom until the 14th century. Its districts, *Almaș, Comiat, Bârzava, Caransebeș, Carașova, Iladia, Lugoj, Mehadia, Bujor, Fârdia, Jupani, Marginea, Mănăștur* and *Sudriaș* (Nistor, 2000, pp. 90-91) being referred to as "Romanian districts" (*oláh kerületek*) in the documents of the time (Nistor, 2000, pp. 90-91). But, as the political influence of the Hungarian feudal state increased, districts were turned into comitats: *Cuvin (Keve), Haran, Caraș, Cenad, Arad* and *Banatul de Severin*. The last one, which gave the name of the whole province, extended also on the south-eastern slope of the Carpathian Mountains, into Oltenia. West of the *Banatul de Severin*, the following comitats are documented: *Timiș* (1212), *Lugoj* (1391), *Torontal* (early 14th cent.), *Caraș* and *Cuvin* (late 15th cent.).

The Ottoman conquest (1526) destroyed *Keve* city and the comitats of *Caraș* and *Cuvin* were dismantled (Oroveanu, 1986, pp. 168-169). Here, like elsewhere, it was external political circumstances that changed the administrative-territorial organisation.

Incorporated into Austria (Passarowitz Treaty, 1718), Banat was organised in 11 districts: *Timișoara, Cenad, Ciacova, Becicherec, Panciova, Vârșeț, Palanca Nouă, Lipova,*

⁷ *Cetatea Albă, Chilia, Codru, Iași, Ismail, Greceni, Hotârniceeni, Hotin, Lăpușna, Orhei, Soroca* and *Tighina*.

⁸ The term *scaun* derives from the old Romanian *scaun de judecată (sedes iudiciaria)*, a traditional Romanian legal institution (court of law) which did exist when Transylvanian Saxons and Szeklers came to Transylvania.

Lugoj-Făget, Caransebeș and *Orșova-Almăj*. When it fell under Hungarian administration it was first organised into three comitats: *Caras, Timiș* and *Torontal* (1779) and later (1849) into 5 districts: *Timișoara, Lugoj, Becicherec, Neoplanta* and *Zombor* (1849) (Nistor, 2000, p. 92).

By its geographical position at the cross-roads between Transylvania and Hungary, **Crișana**'s political history was marked by the contradiction between Hungary's expansionistic aspirations and the endeavours of the Transylvanian authorities to exercise their jurisdiction over the whole territory. Thus, despite Hungary's repeated attempts at incorporation, the Imperial Deed of December 31, 1732 declared the 4 Crișana comitats (*Chioar, Crasna, Solnocul de Mijloc* and *Zarand*). *Partes reappliae (Partium)* (that is the parts reattached to Transylvania) and warranted their full independence from Hungary. Eventually, Hungary would seize them (1861) and proceed to dismantling them five years later (Păcățianu, 1930).

In the territories inhabited by Transylvanian Saxons, historical documents mention the successive presence (1302-1349) of the following *scaune*: *Cincu, Mediaș, Miercurea, Nocrich, Sebeș, Sibiu, Sighișoara, Șeica, Orăștie* and *Rupea* (Nistor, 2000, p. 92).

In mid-14th century, Szeklers lived in seven *scaune*: *Sepsi, Orbai, Kysdi, Czjk, Girgo, Marcuszeek* and *Aranyoszeek*⁹. In 1562 their number was reduced to five: *Arieș, Ciuc, Odorheiu Secuiesc, Târgu Mureș* and *Trei Scaune* (*Ibidem*, p. 93).

The **Maramureș** Voivodeship, located in the north, was one of the oldest Romanian state formations, documented at the end of the 12th century (1199). In the first four centuries it had enjoyed broad autonomy, only to be turned into a comitat in the 14th century.

This territorial organisation was abolished by Emperor Josef the Second on July 13, 1784. Until that date, Transylvania's 23 small administrative-territorial units were delimited by ethnical criteria as follows: 7 comitats: *Alba, Cluj, Dăbâca, Hunedoara, Solnocul Interior, Târnava* and *Turda*; 7 *scaune* of the Transylvanian Saxons: *Biertan, Mediaș, Orăștie, Sebeșul Săsesc, Sibiu, Sighișoara* and *Vințu*; 5 *scaune* of the Szeklers: *Arieș, Ciuc, Mureș-Oșorhei, Trei Scaune*, and 4 districts: *Bistrița, Brașov, Chioar* and *Făgăraș* (Meruțiu, 1929, pp. 15-17).

What emerged were 11 powerful comitats within modified boundaries, some of them being renamed and given other capitals¹⁰. However, the spirit in which this administrative reorganisation was conceived disatisfied the representatives of the privileged nations so that the Emperor had to reinstate the previous administrative system (1790). As permanent ethnic and social tensions were growing, the revolutionary movements culminated with the 1848 events, the situation destabilising the administrative-territorial organisation. Transylvania was first organised into 6 *districts* (1849)¹¹, later replaced successively by 5 *districts* divided in 36

⁹ Source: G.A. Reichersdorff, *Chorografia Transilvaniae*, Vienna, 1550, *apud*. V. Meruțiu, 1929. p. 16.

¹⁰ *Alba Inferioară*, capital-city *Aiud*; *Cluj*, capital-city *Cluj*; *Făgăraș* capital-city *Cincu Mare*; *Hunedoara*, capital-city *Deva*; *Odorhei*, capital-city *Odorheiu Secuiesc*; *Sibiu*, capital-city *Sibiu*; *Solnocul Interior*, capital-city *Dej*; *Solnocul Mijlocu*, capital-city *Cehu Silvaniei*; *Târnave*, capital-city *Târnăveni*; subsequently moved to *Târgu Mureș*; *Trei Scaune*, capital-city *Sfântu Gheorghe* and *Turda*, capital-city *Reghin* (Nistor, 2000, p. 94).

¹¹ *Alba, Cluj, Făgăraș, Odorhei, Reteag* and *Sibiu* (*Ibidem*, p. 96).

căpitănate (1851)¹², 5 *districts*, 28 *cercuri* and 109 *subcercuri* (1852)¹³, 10 *prefectures* with 78 *preturi* (1854)¹⁴, replaced in 1864 by 12 *comitats*¹⁵.

This period of relative liberal policy in matters of inter-ethnic relations came to a sudden end on February 5/17, 1867 when the dual Austria-Hungary Accord was signed and the Austro-Hungarian Empire came into being, a situation that had obvious and immediate consequences for Transylvania's administrative structures: the 1870 Administrative Law of Comitats in which the Romanians formed the majority (*Năsăud*, *Caraș* and *Solnocul Interior*) was abolished and the four Romanian comitats, the so-called *Partium* area, were attached to Hungary; moreover, the administrative-territorial reorganisation of 1876/1877 set up 26 comitats¹⁶ thereby erasing any trace of local autonomy for the Romanians and Transylvanian Saxons (Nistor, 2000, p. 105). In 1918, when the Romanian unitary state was formed, comitats were turned into *județe* (1918-1925).



Figure 6: Transylvania (1806).

¹² Alba Iulia, with 10 *căpitănate*; Cluj, with 6 *căpitănate*; Odorhei, with 7 *căpitănate*; Reteag, with 7 *căpitănate*, and Sibiu, with 6 *căpitănate* (*Ibid.*).

¹³ Alba Iulia, Bistrița, Cluj, Odorhei and Sibiu (*Ibid.*).

¹⁴ Alba, Bistrița, Brașov, Cluj, Dej, Odorhei, Orăștie, Sălaj, Sibiu and Târgu Mureș (*Ibid.*, p. 97).

¹⁵ Alba, Ciuc, Cluj, Făgăraș, Hunedoara, Năsăud, Odorhei, Reghin, Sibiu, Solnoc, Târgu Mureș and Trei Scaune.

¹⁶ Alba Inferioară, Arad, Bichiș, Bihor, Bistrița-Năsăud, Brașov, Caraș-Severin, Cenad, Ciuc, Cojocna, Făgăraș, Hunedoara, Maramureș, Mureș-Turda, Odorhei, Sălaj, Sătmar, Sibiu, Solnoc-Dăbâca, Timiș, Târnava Mare, Târnava Mică, Torontal, Trei Scaune, Turda-Arieș and Ugocea (*Ibid.*, p. 105).

Summing up we would say that the main characteristic feature of the administrative-territorial organisation of Transylvania prior to the Greater Union was the presence of several types of ethnic-based administrative structures. In this way, the ruling classes secured their domination, the comitats ranking higher in size and importance than the Romanians' *districts* and the *scaune* of the Transylvanian Saxons and of the Szeklers, a reality mirrored also by their structure and configuration: oversized comitats such as *Caras-Severin*, *Bihor* or *Hunedoara* (up to 11,115 km² and 468,184 inhabitants)¹⁷ stood side-by-side with very small Transylvanian Saxon *scaune* with a similar administrative status, but a population of only 15,000 people. Besides, some comitats such as *Turda*, *Dăbâca* and *Cluj* had a very elongated shape and disseminated structure (Figure 6), *Alba Superior* for example, consisted of 13 enclaves scattered over a vast territory between the comitats of *Alba Inferior* and *Târnavă*, or among the Szeklers' *scaune*. These were the tools which the nobility of the three privileged nations (Hungarians, Szeklers and Transylvanian Saxons) used to exert their supremacy. All in all, Transylvania had up to 186 first-rank administrative jurisdictions (*comitats*, Szeklers' and Transylvanian Saxons' *scaune*, free royal cities, privileged *opidae* and noblemen's towns (Retegan, 1979, pp. 78-82, pp. 242-244).

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¹⁷ The 1910 census figures: *Hunedoara Comitat* (336,206 inh.), *Bihor Comitat* (462,650 inh.) and *Caras-Severin Comitat* (468,184 inh.); surface-areas of the three administrative units: 7,695 km², 7,467 km², and 11,115 km², respectively.

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