

TERRITORIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE REORGANISATION IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE 19TH CENTURY: EXAMPLE OF ALBA DE JOS COUNTY

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ABSTRACT:

DURING THE 19TH CENTURY, SEVERAL MAJOR EVENTS HAVE AFFECTED THE DAILY LIFE OF THE INHABITANTS OF TRANSYLVANIA. THE MOST IMPORTANT ONE WAS THE REVOLUTION IN 1848-1849: BESIDES THE MILITARY CLASHES, IT PROVIDED THE ROMANIAN POPULATION LIVING HERE THE CHANCE OF SELF-GOVERNMENT. THIS "ROMANIAN LAND" STAGE TOOK PLACE UNDER THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE "PASOPTIST REVOLUTIONARIES" FROM TRANSYLVANIA. ALL THE SUBSEQUENT EVENTS IN THIS REGION WERE DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY RELATED TO THE SUCCESS OF THIS ENTREPRISE OF THE TRANSYLVANIAN ROMANIANS. THE SECOND HALF OF THE 19TH CENTURY WAS CHARACTERIZED BY TERRITORIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INSTABILITY AIMED IN DISLOCATING AND DISCOURAGING THE SUCCESSFUL, RISING ROMANIAN ELEMENTS. BOTH AUSTRIAN AND HUNGARIAN AUTHORITIES ACTED IN THIS DIRECTION, THEREFROM THE NUMEROUS DECISIONS OF ORGANISATION-REORGANISATION CONCERNING TRANSYLVANIAN PRINCIPALITY. THIS WAS EVEN MORE OBVIOUS IN THE ALBA DE JOS COUNTY, WHERE THE ROMANIAN POPULATION REPRESENTED THE UNEQUIVOCAL MAJORITY.

KEY WORDS: ALBA DE JOS COUNTY, TRANSYLVANIA, DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES.

INTRODUCTION

From administrative point of view, during the 18th and 19th centuries the present-day Transylvania consisted of the following "administrative-judicial entities with distinctive constitutional status"²: Principality of Transylvania, Partium, Banat and the Military Border area. The population of the Transylvanian Principality was divided into two main

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² "Ladislau Gyémánt, *Evoluția demografică a Transilvaniei între 1690-1847* [Demographical evolution of Transylvania between 1690-1847, in Romanian] in *Supliment al Masteratului de socio-antropologie VII. Populația României. Trecut, Present, Viitor* [Supplement of the Master in Sociology-Anthropology VII. Population of Romania. Past, Present, Future, in Romanian]. Proceedings of the conference "Populația României. Trecut, Present, Viitor [Population of Romania. Past, Present, Future, in Romanian]. Cluj-Napoca/Arcalia, 19-22 October 2005" (Cluj: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2006), 37".

categories: a privileged minority enjoying benefits, and a vast majority more or less depending on the first category³.

This paper focuses on the Alba de Jos County, administratively included in the Transylvanian Principality beside other counties, chairs and Saxon/Szekler districts. Our study is based on a comparative approach involving other counties during the second half of the 19th century, based on the populations censuses performed by the Habsburg, and then the Hungarian authorities.

1. THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE TRANSYLVANIAN ROMANIANS

During the “pasoptist” revolution in 1848-1849, the Transylvanian Romanians pursued into building their own organisation structures not only from military, but also from political-administrative points of view. This goal was proclaimed in the National Petition announced in Blaj in May 1848⁴. During the assemblage in Blaj, Romanians have proclaimed the “*National Assembly*”⁵, representing the basis for a “Romanian rule” in Transylvania. The means to achieve this ruling were political and administrative-territorial structures reflecting the Romanian population in a direct proportional way⁶. After ceasing the relations with the Hungarian revolutionaries, the Romanian militants have collaborated with the Austrian authorities for establishing the base of a “Romanian administration” in Transylvania. Thus, the *National Romanian Committee*⁷ was founded in Sibiu, and the previous counties were transformed into districts under the rule of *administraturi comitatense*⁸.

Accordingly, during the revolutionary years 1848-1849, the Alba de Jos County was also reorganised as “the Administrature of Bălgrad” (in Romanian, “Administratura Bălgradului”), being subdivided into the following inspectorates (“circles”)⁹:

- Campeni Inspectorate with the centre in Abrud, including Campeni, Abrud, Zlatna, Presaca Ampoiului, Bucium and Lupsa localities;
- Upper Ighiu (in Romanian, Ighiul Superior) Inspectorate with the centre in Ighiu, including Poiana Ampoiului, Ighiel, Galda de Sus, Ramet and Baia de Aries localities;
- Lower Ighiu (in Romanian, Ighiul Inferior) Inspectorate with the same centre, but including Ighiu, Telna, Bucerdea Vinoasa, Craiva, Cricau, Tibru, Benic, Cetea, Mesentea, Galda de jos, Coslariu, Galtiu and Oiejdea localities;

³ "Ionuț Costea, *Structuri sociale* [Social structures, in Romanian], in *Istoria Transilvaniei*, vol.II (de la 1541 pana la 1711) [History of Transylvania, 2nd volume (from 1541 to 1711), Coord. Ioan Aurel Pop, Thomas Năgler, Maghyari András (Cluj-Napoca: Institutul Cultural Român, Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2005), 207".

⁴ "Ionela Mircea, *Prefectura si prefecti. Institutia Prefectului Judetului Alba* [Prefecture and prefects. The Alba Prefecture Institution, in Romanian] (Alba Iulia: Altip, 2005), 33".

⁵ The National Assembly (in Romanian, *Adunarea Nationala*) was the political forum and the supreme representation body for the Transylvanian Romanians between 1848 and 1849. It consisted of the National Romanian Committee (permanent body), the Deputies linked to the Diet, and the Deputies linked to the Emperor.

⁶ "Georgehe Baritiu, *Parti alese din istoria Transilvaniei pe doua sute de ani in urma*, vol.II [Selected works from the history of Transylvania in the last two centuries, 2nd volume, in Romanian] (Sibiu: 1980), 619".

⁷ The Romanian National Committee (in Romanian, *Comitetul National Roman*) was the executive body of the National Assembly

⁸ "Liviu Maior, *Organizarea administrativa a Muntilor Apuseni ca Tara Romaneasca, de catre Avram Iancu 1848-1849* [The administrative organization of the Apuseni Mountains as Romanian Land by Avram Iancu between 1848 and 1849, in Romanian], in *Studia Universitatis "Babes-Bolyai"*, seria Historia, fascicula II, XVII(Cluj: 1972), 39-46".

⁹ "Mircea I., *Prefectura si prefecti* [The institution of the Prefect and the Prefects, in Romanian], 39-44".

- Aiud Inspectorate with the centre in Teius, including among others Iara, Cacova, Teius, Stremt, Geomal, Geoagiul de Sus , Aiudul de Sus and Poiana Aiudului localities;
- Alba Iulia Inspectorate with the center in Alba Iulia fortress, including among others Alba Iulia, Saracsau, Santimbru, Barabant, Micesti, Sard, Paclisa, Inuri, Vurpar, Acmar and Dealul Fiarului localities.

2. THE SECOND HALF OF THE 19TH CENTURY

One result of the *revolution/peasants* war in 1848-1849 was the appointment, on July 19, of a new governor of Transylvania, the Baron Ludovic von Wohlgemuth. One of the governor's first task was the administrative reorganisation of Transylvania¹⁰.

The first official decision on a new administrative division of Transylvania was issued on September 15, 1849 and started to be applied on September 21, 1849. As compared to the previous, and the following administrative reorganisation, this particular one had a distinctive military character. Accordingly, Transylvania was organised into five extended *military districts*¹¹:

- Sibiu Military District (Nagyszebeni Katonai Kerület) with 494,164 inhabitants
- Alba Iulia Military District (Gyulafehérvári Katonai Kerület) with 449,677 inhabitants
- Cluj Military District (Kolozsvári Katonai Kerület) with 423,069 inhabitants
- Odorhei Military District (Udvarhelyi Katonai Kerület) with 367,274 inhabitants
- Reteag Military District (Rettegi Katonai Kerület) with 273,699 inhabitants
- Făgăraș Military District (Fogarasi Katonai Kerület) with 65,754 inhabitants

The same reform promoted by Baron von Wohlgemuth concerned the further division of districts into circumscriptions, and of those further into circles¹²; thus, at the end of year 1849 the *Alba Military District* consisted of the following five *circumscriptions*¹³:

Blaj Circumscription (Balázsfalvi körzet) was composed of the following subdivisions ("circles"):

- Valea Izvoarelor (Buzásbesenyői alkörzet) with 32 localities
- Deal (Désfalvi alkörzet) with 21 localities
- Ghirbom (Gîrbói alkörzet) with 19 localities
- Cetatea de Baltă (Küküllővari alkörzet) with 23 localities
- Ocna Mures (Marosujvári alkörzet) with 32 localities
- Obreja (Obrazsai alkörzet) with 28 localities

Deva Circumscription (Dévai körzet) was composed of the following subdivisions:

- Batiz (Batizi alkörzet) with 34 localities
- Brănișca (Branyicskai alkörzet) with 27 localities

¹⁰ "Maier L., *Organizarea administrativa* [Administrative organization, in Romanian], 44".

¹¹ Concerning the number of *military districts*, in his foreword to the paper *Recensământul din 1850 Transilvania* [The census of 1850 in Transylvania, in Romanian], T. Rotariu mentions only five districts, Făgăraș district being not included as independent unit. In this presentation, besides the first five districts listed above, the two Romanian border regiments are included: the 1st Romanian Regiment Făgăraș (R. I. Román Ezred Fogarasi) encompassing areas from Făgăraș and Hunedoara, and the 2nd Romanian Regiment (R. II. Román Ezred Naszódi) referring to localities in Nasaud area.

¹² "Helmut Klima, *Guvernatorii Transilvaniei 1774-1867* [Governors of Transylvania 1774-1867, in Romanian] (Sibiu: 1943), 63-66".

¹³ "V.Meruțiu, *Județele din Ardeal și din Maramureș până în Banat* [The counties from Transylvania and Maramureș and over to Banat, in Romanian] (Cluj: 1929), 148".

- Deva (Dévai alkörzet) with 31 localities
- Dobra (Dobrai alkörzet) with 30 localities
- Chimindia (Kéméndi alkörzet) with 23 localities
- Iia (Marosillyei alkörzet) with 29 localities

Alba Iulia Circumscription (Gyulafehérvári körzet) consisted of the following subdivisions:

- Vințu de Jos (Alvinci alkörzet) with 36 localities
- Aiud (Nagyenyedi alkörzet) with 18 localities
- Cîmpeni (Topánfalvi alkörzet) with 27 localities
- Teiuș (Tövisi alkörzet) with 23 localities

Hateg Circumscription (Hátszegi körzet) consisted of the following subdivisions:

- Densuș (Demsusi alkörzet) with 36 localities
- Bretea Română (Oláhbrettyei alkörzet) with 28 localities
- Pui (Puji alkörzet) with 41 localities
- Hunedoara (Vajdahunyadi alkörzet) with 40 localities

To this last circumscription, aside from the “circles” also Alba Iulia town¹⁴ (Gyulafehérvár város) was affiliated together with two associated localities: Cetate (Festung) and Partoș (Marosportó).

Baia de Criș Circumscription (Körösbányai körzet) was composed of the following subdivisions:

- Brad (Brádi alkörzet) with 31 localities
- Baia de Criș (Körösbányai alkörzet) with 34 localities
- Hălmațiu (Nagyhalmágyi alkörzet) with 33 localities

This administrative organisation was used as basis for the 1850 census: the final localities count for Transylvania was 26 towns, 63 market towns, 2605 villages, and 50 hamlets. Of these, the Alba de Jos County included four towns, four market towns and only 39 villages and five helmets¹⁵, as a sign of its relatively high degree of urbanization as compared to the other counties of Transylvania.

A new administrative reorganisation of Transylvania followed in 1851, when the term “district” was replaced by “land” (“*ținuturi*”, in Romanian); the five “lands” were Sibiu, Alba Iulia, Cluj, Reteag and Odorhei. These lands were subdivided into 36 subdivisions (“*capitanate*”). For example, the Alba Iulia land was subdivided into 10 “capitanates”: Alba Iulia, Blaj, Uioara, Abrud, Cris, Deva, Hateg, Orastie, Orlat and Fagaras¹⁶.

On October 24, 1852, a new administrative regulation adds details to the previous territorial-administrative division in the period 1848-1850. Fagaras unit was embedded into Sibiu district, Bistrita and Reghin were united with Reteag district, and Orastie was embedded into Alba Iulia. As a result, only five districts remained: Sibiu, Alba Iulia, Cluj, Bistrita and Odorhei. The *districts* were divided into 28 “*circles*”, which in turn were subdivided into 109 *subcircles*¹⁷.

¹⁴ "Rotariu T., *Recensământul din 1850 Transilvania* [The 1850 census in Transylvania, in Romanian] (Cluj: Staff, 1996), 334".

¹⁵ "Rotariu, *Recensământ 1850* [The census of 1850, in Romanian], 24-29; also the 1993 edition, inner use, I-VII, 3-27, 275-281".

¹⁶ "Meruțiu, *Județele din Ardeal* [The counties of Transylvania], 148; I.S. Puscariu, *Disertatiune despre împărțirea politică a Ardealului* [Dissertation on the political division of Transylvania, in Romanian] (Sibiu: 1864), 43".

¹⁷ "Puscariu, *Disertatiune* [Dissertation...], 44".

A new regulation regarding the administrative division of Transylvania was issued on December 30, 1852. Accordingly, Transylvania was now composed of *prefectures* and *praetorships* (*pretura*, in Romanian). This new reorganisation led to the replacement of the previous “circles” and “subcircles” with six prefectures: Sibiu, Brasov, Targu-Mures, Bistrita, Cluj and Orastie, encompassing 79 praetorships. The same regulation stated that a commission would be established that would be responsible with the implementation. After only two years, in 1854, the number of prefectures was again modified, from six to ten, encompassing a total number of 78 praetorships as follows:

- Sibiu Prefecture with 11 praetorships and 320,266 inhabitants
- Brasov Prefecture with 10 praetorships and 274,709 inhabitants
- Odorhei Prefecture with 6 praetorships and 174,127 inhabitants
- Targu-Mures Prefecture with 6 praetorships and 194,533 inhabitants
- Bistrita Prefecture with 10 praetorships and 178,344 inhabitants
- Dej Prefecture with 8 praetorships and 193,793 inhabitants
- Salaj Prefecture with 6 praetorships and 178,981 inhabitants
- Cluj Prefecture with 6 praetorships and 178,891 inhabitants
- Orastie Prefecture with 9 praetorships and 213,118 inhabitants
- Alba Prefecture with 172,335 inhabitants, subdivided into the following six praetorships: Teius, Aiud, Blaj, Alba, Geoagiu and Abrud¹⁸.

Based on this new administrative reorganisation in 1854, a new census was conducted in the October 31–December 31, 1857 interval¹⁹. According to its results²⁰, *Alba Iulia Circle* (Gyulafehérvári kerület) included 193 localities organised into the following six *praetorships*:

- Abrud (Abrudbányai járás) with 24 localities
- Geoagiu de Jos (Algyógyi járás) with 32 localities
- Blaj (Balázsfalvi járás) with 33 localities
- Alba Iulia (Gyulafehérvári járás) with 37 localities, this included Alba Iulia under its German name Karlsburg
- Aiud (Nagyenyedi járás) with 40 localities
- Teiuș (Tövisi járás) with 27 localities

Nevertheless, this structure was not applied for long time: on March 25, 1861, a new regulation reinforces the previous territorial-administrative system existing in Transylvania before the peasants’ war in 1848-1849. This means a return to the 10 *counties* (*comitates*), 5 *districts* and *chairs* (*scaune*, in Romanian) of which five Szekler, and nine Saxon ones. The new census of 1869 was conducted in the frame of this territorial-administrative status-quo. Alba de Jos County is again subdivided into two *circumscriptions*, each including six “circles”²¹:

- Zlatna, including Aiud, Ighiul de Sus, Ighiul de Jos, Zlatna, Vintiu and Alba;
- Mures, including Ciumbrud, Ocna-Mures, Sangatin, Blaj, Pauca and Sanbenedic.

¹⁸ "Nicolae Josan, *Oameni si fapte din trecutul Judetului Alba in memoria urmasilor* [Past people and their deeds in Alba County for the memory of their offspring, in Romanian], 132-140".

¹⁹ " Ioan Bolovan, *Transilvania intre Revolutia de la 1848 si Unirea din 1918. Contributii demografice* [Transylvania in the Revolution of 1848 and the Union of 1918. Demographic contributions, in Romanian] (Cluj: 2000, 27-28".

²⁰ "Rotariu, *Recensamantul din 1857 Transilvania* [The 1857 census in Transylvania, in Romanian] (Cluj: Staff, 1997), 524-526".

²¹ "Consemnatiune comunitetilor in marele principatu Transilvaniei [Counties denomination in the great principality of Transylvania, in Romanian] (Sibiu: 1862), 1-5".

Following the *dual agreement* in 1867, new administrative modifications were ordered from Budapest. This time, their goal was the loss of autonomy for Transylvania, because of its political and administrative integration into Hungary; accordingly, the central structures of the former Grand Principality are terminated²². More precisely, in 1876 Laws XXX and XXXIII are issued, which cancel the former organisation into counties, districts and chairs; they are replaced with 16 new counties (*comitate*): Alba de Jos, Bistrita-Nasaud, Brasov, Ciuc, Fagaras, Trei Scaune, Hunedoara, Tarnava Mica, Cojocna (Cluj), Mures-Turda, Tarnava Mare, Sibiu, Solnoc-Dabaca, Turda-Aries, Odorhei, and Salaj.

Based on this reorganisation, Alba de Jos County encompassed the following eight *praetorships*²³, including the corresponding number of localities²⁴:

- Vintiu de Jos (Alvici járás) with 24 localities
- Blaj (Balázsfalvi járás) with 21 localities
- Ciumbrud (Csombordi járás) with 28 localities
- Sângătin (Kisenyedi járás) with 20 localities
- Ighiu (Magyarigeni járás) with 26 localities
- Ocna Mures (Marosújvári járás) with 24 localities
- Aiud (Nagyenyedi járás) with 24 localities
- Rosia Montana (Verespataki járás) with 7 localities

According to the same census, Alba de Jos County included the same four towns: Abrud (Abrudbánya), Alba Iulia (Ghyulafehérvár), Ocna Sibiului (Vizakna), with Aiud (Nagyenyed) as centre, the total number of localities being 178.

CONCLUSIONS

The assimilation of Transylvania into Hungary had significant consequences at both central and local administrative levels. Locally, the goal was to decentralize the administrative system and focus on the rule by communal and municipal bodies: counties and municipal towns). *Municipal towns* (törvényhatóság) and at a lower level *communes* (község) were acknowledged. The dual rule imprinted a modern approach on these units: *the municipal town of the county* (vármergyei törvényhatóság) and the *municipal towns* (törvényhatósági joggal felruházott város) were defined. In the case of the communes, they were subdivided into: *towns with local council* or *towns with a magister* (rendezett tanácsu város), large *communes* (nagyközség) and *small communes* (kisközség)²⁵.

²² as follows:

- on March 10, 1867, the Aulic office (*Cancelaria Aulică*) is terminated; the documents in progress are handed over to the Presidency of the *Council of Ministers*;
- the *Governorate* (*Guberniu*) is to be led by a *plenipotentiary commissioner* (representing the Hungarian government) for two years until the termination declared on April 30, 1869;
- the *Diet* had not been summoned since starting with 1865;
- The high-court (*Tabla Regească*, in Romanian) in Târgu Mureş was incorporated into the high court system of Hungary;
- the *Treasurer* office was terminated.

²³ "Lajos Benedek, *Az Erdély részek és Szilágy megye Helysévtára* [The administrative units of Transylvania and Salaj, in Hungarian] (Cluj: 1878), 3-20".

²⁴ "Rotariu, *Recensământul din 1869 Transilvania* [The 1869 census in Transylvania, in Romanian] (Cluj: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2008), 329-331".

²⁵ "Anton Dörner, *Administratia Transilvaniei in perioada 1867-1876* [The Transylvanian administration between 1867-1876, in Romanian] (Cluj: Inst.de Ist. „George Bariț”), 37".

The last three censuses organised by the Hungarian administration in 1880, 1890 and 1900 did not record territorial-administrative modifications. This shows that from administrative point of view, the last decades of the 19th century were relatively stable.

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