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## Summary. Political and Administrative Institutions of Banat, in 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century

A much clearer and accurate image on the Banat feudal society appears after knowing and analyzing the manner in which the medieval political-administrative institutions operated. Of course, despite several objections and grounding our arguments on the Romanian historiography, we took the liberty to use the term “Banat”, when talking about the entire province, naturally delimited by the Valleys of Mures, Tisa, Danube and the western peaks of the Southern Carpathians.

The sources acknowledge the fact that, starting with the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the land was known under the name of „Temeskuz” or „Temesköz”, a name which in Romanian is the equivalent of „Timișana”. However, there are no sufficient evidences to prove that the entire land, including the area between the Timis River and the Danube, was name as stated above. After the dissolution of the Kingdom of Hungary and setting up of the Eyalet of Timisoara, this toponym was no longer used and, once with the Austrian domination, a new name was given to the entire territory: “Timisoara’s Banat” or “Banat”.

The time frame which marks out our researches corresponds to the last political ascension period of the Hungarian Kingdom, when its internal institutions underwent different development stages which actually reflected the social metamorphosis of the East-European feudal society. Due to this vast area of research, our objective was to attempt to emphasize certain particular aspects and, if and where it was possible, to provide a detailed presentation of the political – administrative institutions.

For reaching this goal, I read and carefully examined the corpora of documents collected by Pesty Frigyes, Ortvy Tivadar, Nicolae Densușianu, as well as the medieval documents kept

by the Hungarian national archives from Budapest (MOL). I also used the following collections of documents, chronologically and thematically structured: *Documents concerning the Romanian History*, series, B, vol. I; series C, vol. I-IV; *Docuemnta Romaniae Historica*, series C, vol. XIII-XV; series D, vol. I; Feneşan C-tin, *Medieval Documents of Banat*, (1440-1653), Timișoara, 1981; *Documents concerning the History of Banat's Metropolitan Church*, I. D. Suci, R. Constantinescu, Timișoara, 1980; *Árpádkori új okmánytár*, vol. I-XII, Budapest, 1860-1874; G. Fejér, *Codex diplomaticus Hungariae ecclesiasticus ac civilis*, I-XI, Budae, 1829-1844; *Anjoukori okmánytár. Codex diplomaticus Hungaricus Andavensis*, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, I. Nagy, Gy. Nagy Tasnádi, vol. I-VII, Budapest, 1878-1920; *Anjou-kori oklevéltár*, vol. I-XXXI, Budapest–Szeged, 1990-2007; *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár*, vol. I-X, Budapest, 1951-2007; J. Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon*, X-XII, Pest, 1853-1857; Gy. Nagy, *A nagymihály és gróf Stáray család oklevéltára*, vol. I-II, Budapest, 1887-1889; *A zichi és vásonkeői gróf Zichy-család idősebb ágának okmánytára*, vol. I-XII, Pest, Budapest, 1871-1931; *Corpus Juris Hungarici, Magyar törvénytár. 1000-1526. Évi törvénycikkek*, edition Gy. Nagy, S. Kolosvári, K. Óvári, Budapest, 1899, etc.

Although the bibliography concerning the medieval Banat is quite vast, most of the works are just syntheses which approach broader areas. Both the history of the medieval Hungary and the history of Transylvania or the history of the Romanians describe series of events which somehow relate, by certain episodes, to the Banat area.

As for the political –administrative institutions, the historiographical sources are substantially limited. During the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the following century, the research thereto followed the pattern of the monographic study whose main goal was the exhaustive description of every individual institution, especially focusing on the accurate and fluent description of the political history. At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the researches knew a certain progress, especially due to the Hungarian historians and the Romanian literature being tributary to the object of study represented by the Romanian districts.

Among the early papers, the most important ones have been written by the same Pesty Frigyes, who dedicated a monographic study to each of the three main administrative bodies which operated in the province: the county, the Romanian districts and the Severin Banat. The Hungarian historian has treated every institution individually, trying to elaborate an exhaustive description thereof, but, unfortunately, his research neglected the administrative aspects.

In spite of the numerous studies dedicated to the Romanian districts, it was impossible to draw up a monograph on this theme; at the same time, most of the authors who did actually approach this subject focused their efforts to fight against the opinions which denied the

Romanian continuity at the northern Danube area. Nevertheless, the Romanian historiography acknowledged both the lack of the significant contributions and the scientific gaps of this considerable number of studies and articles.

The last period was characterized by the works signed by C. Tóth Norbert and W. Kovács András, who extended the knowledge on the political-administrative institutions, but however, their researches failed to take into consideration the Banat area.

Therefore, our contribution will consist in the description of the existing institutions, with reference to this area. Of course, we will also consider the three large administrative bodies, for which we will dedicate separate chapters where we will detail their interior mechanisms.

The first institution we described is the county. It covered the largest part of Banat. The six counties (Cenad, Arad, Timiș, Torontal, Cuvin and Caraș) have particularly delimited the plain area, and therefore, only a small part of the hill and mountain lands were actually comprised thereto.

After the introductory mentions on the county's functionality, we attempted to catch the exact moment when the former institution, namely the royal county was actually overwhelmed by the new features of the feudal society characterizing the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Unfortunately, we could not find an early age determination of the Banat counties, at least before the settlement of King Carol Robert in Timisoara, for setting up the nobiliary county. However, only for Arad we were able to find properly documented information attesting the existence of the nobiliary kniazes at the beginning of the second decade of the following century. However, the lack of the written sources thwarts the proper identification of this moment at the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

The superintendents of the new institutions were elected from the administrative counts and vice counts. If the office of county leadership was usually assigned to the great dignitaries from the king's court, the vice counts were recruited from the province nobility. Within the context in which the barons were satisfied by their financial retribution, the effective management of the administrative unit was assigned to the vice counts who, only in exceptional situations, were allowed to leave their duties.

Due to their geo-political position, at the South-Eastern border of the kingdom, the Banat counties were commanded by only one dignitary. Moreover, once with the danger caused by the coming of the Ottoman Empire, the office of the Timis count acceded to the distinction of great dignitaries. Therefore, the holder of this county became the baron of the county and thus, he turned out to be a reliable member of the royal council. This change was actually perceived during the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, when the other baronial dignity in the area, the seat of the Severin ruler, was vacated. In spite of this institutional metamorphosis, the chancellery

documents attested the presence of the Timis county among the dignitaries, after the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

The institution which conferred a new identity to the county was named by the Latin sources „*judex nobilium*”. The involvement of the provincial nobility in the administrative activities of the country was actually a consequence of both the Arpad dynasty intention as well as the realities determined by the familiarity, a feudal-type relation which brought together the same covenanters: the seigneur and the vassal. While the former was part of great nobility, the latter was the representative of the province nobility, undergoing a full process of consolidation. By means of these transformations, the administration of the county was split between barons and their representatives, and the middle nobility.

Moreover, the participation of the local nobility to the administrative county's life caused the occurrence of other institutions: the king's men, the men of the voivode, the men of the palatine and the simple people of the county. Their importance was to check and fulfill the orders of the central power, so that their activity was marked by the confirmation locations. Even from the beginning of the fourteenth century, their responsibilities have been clearly defined and their election was made based on the endorsement of the entire community.

In a separate chapter we intend to make a detailed presentation of the judgment seats, the county meetings and the general congregations. While the latter institution had a legislative nature, being rather one of the political institutions, centrals of the kingdom, the former represented institutions invested with judicial powers, being convoked at the local and provincial levels.

General congregations have avoided the area of the medieval Banat since these were organized mainly in locations of the central Hungary. The only convocation of its kind, which was held in the province of Banat, was the congregation organized in Timisoara in 1397. King Sigismund of Luxembourg chose this location in the context in which the entire southern border was under the imminent threat of the Ottoman invasion. However, the documents show no relevant evidences regarding such convocation, not even for the period when the main city of the county was located in Timisoara.

Unlike the congregations, the judgment seat was also an assembly, with jurisdiction upon the judicial matters but whose duties were mainly focused upon the county's territory. Its members were the vice counts and the nobiliary counts and the provincial gentry, duly represented by the county's people and the procurators, were allowed to participate to its meetings.

According to the historical sources, the judgment seats were convoked on a monthly basis, or once every two weeks or depending on the urgency of the matters to be judged; the judgments could be appealed to higher judicial bodies. Such higher body was the comitatense assembly which sometimes brought together the gentry of several counties. The importance of this institution was given by the dignitaries who provided its presidium. Of course, the highest authority was represented by the king, but many of the comitatense assemblies from Banat were presided by the palatine, and, on different occasions, other dignitaries were also present: the counts, the voivodes, the rulers. The meetings took place near the larger establishments, such as the market places and the cities, for the decisions to be disseminated to all inhabitants living in that area. As for the Timis county, we only managed to identify seven comitatense assemblies gathered near Timișoara. Also, the sources attested that other such assemblies related to this county took place near Cenad, being thus reunited the nobility of both administrative units.

In spite of the numerous studies and papers dedicated to the Romanian districts, the characteristics and the manner of operation of these institutions have not been fully clarified. We also see the lack of a monograph elaborated to cover this entire matter, within the context of the affinity of the Romanian historiography for this topic.

However, we admit that this subject is vast and therefore we will not go into details; we will reduce ourselves to the presentation of historiography and examination of the terminology used in connection with the Romanian districts. On the other hand, we want the identification of all such Romanian institutions and their delimitation from the real estate and private areas. The reconstruction of all phases afferent to the process of formation of the Romanian districts and the analysis of the administrative identity of the Caransebes district also represent our objectives. Successively located in Timiș county and Severin Banat by the evidences of different ascertaining establishments and legal institutions, the district was voided of an administrative identity. Therefore through institutions that we have found as operating in its scope of activity, we may conclude that the district itself was an administrative unit, and this aspect is obviously acknowledged by its own judgment place which was alternatively under the jurisdiction of the count of Timis or the ruler of Severin.

The last study was dedicated to the political status of the Banat of Severin in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Our objective was to emphasize the political affiliation of the homonym fortress, but, at the same time, we also outlined the relations between the Hungarian Kingdom and the Wallachia. Thus, we reached the conclusion that, during this century, the Banat of Severin was limited to the territory within the Timiș-Cerna chute, continued on the Danube bank up to the

inflow of Caraş River, to which there has been added the homonym fortress, along with its accessories.

Furthermore, the Fortress of Severin conferred the true identity to the border mark, because during the periods when it was under the control of the Romanian rulers or under the Ottoman authority, the ruler's seat was vacant.

From a different perspective the Banat of Severin represented an administrative micro-zone which brought together and controlled a part of the Romanian districts. This unity is accomplished by the ruler, as a prime-judge of the Wallach judgment seats.

When its office became vacant, the authority upon the entire territory controlled by the Banat of Severin, was transferred to the Caras Count. However, the Timis count held the full and permanent control upon the Banat of Severin. Sometimes, the Timis count was substituting the ruler's rank and this process did not involve the actual conversion of this function.

The administrative map of Banat of Severin will be redesigned more properly and accurately when the researches on the Romanian districts will have substantial outcomes. This will suggest the definition of the reports between the Romanian institutions and the baron ruling the Severin Fortress.

One of the conclusions of our research sheds light on counties' sizes, especially the dimensions of the counties located in the area of the Banat Mountains. A redefinition of the eastern borders is required at least for the Timis county. The large number of documentary information which attests the administrative identity of Caransebes district proves the fact that the institutions from the Timis county did not actually operate in the Timis-Cerna chute area. Moreover, even from the very beginning, the historiography took over the testimonies of the historical sources regarding the locations of certain settlements in this area, namely the Timis county, without actually conducting any further analyses of the documentary data. Even the strategic position of the medieval Banat, within the context of the imminent conflicts with the Ottoman Empire led to the development of distinct administrative and political realities compared to other territories of the Hungarian kingdom.

Of course, during this stage of our researches we won't be able to bring any further clarifications on all the issues that have not been elucidated in relation to the institutions located in the Northern Danube province. In the future, it is absolutely required the reconstitution of the dimensions of all other Romanian districts as well as clarification of their administrative identities. The more comprehensive study, corroborated with certain archeological findings are also needed for the reconstitution of these Romanian institutions.



Another research subject is represented by the territorial dimension of the Banat of Severin and the definition of its relations with the two neighbor counties: Caraș and Timiș. At the same time, it is required the reconstitution of the relations of this border mark with Wallachia, especially that the Romanian rulers owned the Fortress of Severin during certain periods from the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

As for the Banat counties, our subsequent researches will have to focus on analyzing the older hypotheses that claimed the disappearance of Cuvin and Caraș counties. In parallel, it is required the continuance of the studies on the institutions and their interior mechanisms, and on the manner in which their operability was provided. We consider that these aspects will be better clarified if we have a clearer picture on the familiarity relations between different types of nobility.