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Daily life of Roumanian Aristocracy from Bucharest between 1881-1914

Summary

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Summary

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The study of the daily life of the aristocracy in the Old Kingdom allows for the formulation of two research hypotheses: first, to what extent there was an aristocracy in Bucharest during the La Belle Époque comparable to that of Europe; and second, whether its daily life was distinct from that of Europe during the same period. To explore these two hypotheses, it is necessary to define the concepts of "aristocracy" and "daily life."

In ancient Greece, "the best people" held power based on criteria such as land ownership and the age of the family within the city-state, which was seen as a guarantee of moral qualities and leadership abilities. Thus, the term "aristocracy" often overlapped with "plutocracy," where "the wealthy rule." However, what defined this group, beyond wealth, was their descent from the founders of the city-state—families that, due to their often legendary origins, had led the community to prosper both demographically and economically. Frequently, "the best" were considered those "chosen" by the gods to lead others. For Roman civilization, aristocracy consisted of patricians, with nobility emerging from individuals enriched by services rendered to the state, typically in military or administrative roles. In the Middle Ages, the term "nobility" (from the Latin *nobilitas*) became more widely adopted through the general use of Latin and later carried into national languages. Today, in French and English historiography, the term is used to describe a landowning social category linked by feudal contracts to the monarchy and the state it represented.

In the Romanian Orthodox space, the term "boyar," of Slavic origin, was established during the Middle Ages as the equivalent of "nobility" in the Catholic realm. There remains a debate among Romanian historians regarding the origin of the boyar class. For instance, one perspective argues that this ruling, warrior class originated from the last waves of migrating peoples, particularly the Cumans[1]. The role of the boyars within the state was determined both by the size of their landholdings, confirmed through princely decrees, and by the administrative positions assigned to them.

The Romanian boyar class has been the subject of extensive studies and research, both in the 19th century and beyond. These studies have focused on its origins and characteristics, as well as on genealogical records. Notable contributors include Mihail Kogălniceanu, A.D. Xenopol, Nicolae Iorga, and Constantin Giurescu, alongside genealogists such as Octav-

[1] Vezi cartea lui Neagu Djuvara *Thocomerius–Negru Voda. Un voivod de origine cumana la inceputurile Tarii Romanesti*, București: Editura Humanitas, 2007 și cea a lui Matei Cazacu, *„Ioan Basarab, un domn român la începuturile Țării Românești*", București: Editura Cartier, 2013

George Lecca, Ioan C. Filitti, and Ștefan D. Greceanu. One of the most comprehensive, though unfinished, works on Romanian boyar families is Mihai Dim. Sturdza's *The Boyar Families of Moldavia and Wallachia.*

It should be noted that post-1989 historiography continues to predominantly use the term "boyars" to describe landowners, while also occasionally adopting the terms "elite" or even "aristocracy." The term "elite" is often employed in the context of the boyar class's role in modernizing Romanian society, independent of their hierarchical ranking based on administrative positions or landholdings. Nonetheless, the Romanian Explanatory Dictionary (DEX) defines "boyar" as "a person from the feudal aristocracy."[2] The Slavic influence on the term does not negate the existence of a feudal hierarchy in medieval Romanian society similar to that of Central and Western Europe. The designation persisted throughout the modern era until the establishment of the communist regime. Members of the ruling class and historians of the late 19th century used the term "boyar" more frequently than "aristocrat." In personal correspondence, members of this social category rarely referred to themselves as "boyars," opting instead for titles such as "prince" when addressing individuals from the Bibescu, Brâncoveanu, or Sturdza families. The term "aristocrat" appeared more commonly in French-language press and even in Romanian newspapers when referring to this social group.

One notable linguistic peculiarity is the absence of terms like "noble" or "nobility" in common usage. This might be explained by the boyars' interest in asserting their individuality in contrast to foreign elements settled in Romanian territory, often assimilated through marital ties. Nevertheless, the term "aristocracy" is employed in historiography that eschews the Marxist framework of analyzing the modern era in Romanian history, highlighting the similarities between boyars in the extra-Carpathian region and their counterparts in the rest of Europe.

The Romanian boyar class at the end of the 19th century, even though stripped of administrative ranks and hierarchies, conducted itself in cities like Vienna, Paris, or London as equals to dukes, counts, and princes, with whom they did not hesitate to establish marital connections. During their stays in European capitals, they were not only received in high society but also hosted their own gatherings in their apartments, houses, or even private villas, such as Prince Brâncoveanu's property near Paris.

Arguments supporting the existence of an aristocracy with a distinctive daily life in the capital, undergoing significant economic and urban development, are found in personal

[2] *Dicționar dexonline,* https://dexonline.ro/definitie/boier

archive documents, contemporary studies, published works, and, not least, the press of the time. Another research hypothesis emerges here: to what extent was the great boyar class aware of the dissolution process it was undergoing?

While in France, the nobility was largely dismantled by the revolution at the end of the 18th century and later supplemented by individuals ennobled during the Napoleonic Empire, Romanian boyars faced the fragmentation of large estates and even their loss, due to the poor productivity of their lands and inheritance practices. Examples include Zoe Bengescu and her daughter Mișu Văcărescu, who were known to sustain themselves by writing articles for the press, or General Radu R. Rosetti, who managed to make a family estate profitable through marriage. These examples raise the question: between 1881 and the outbreak of World War I, was it still appropriate to use the terms "boyar" or "aristocrat" within Romanian society?
Political articles in the contemporary press, especially those from socialist-leaning outlets, often used the word "boyar" with a negative connotation when discussing the need for land reform and improvements to the peasantry's economic condition. The term also appeared in parliamentary speeches by members of this social class, often in debates about peasant welfare in the context of the peasant uprisings of 1888 and 1907.

In 1920, historian Constantin Giurescu published a lecture he had delivered at the University of Bucharest in 1918, describing boyars as "the nobility of the Romanian people"[3] and stating that the title of "boyar" represented "a noble title."[4]

Although the ranks of boyars were abolished in 1858, the **"Annuaire Mondain de la Roumanie"** for the year 1903[5] still presents a hierarchy of the boyar class. This includes princely families, followed by old boyar families dating back to before 1600, first-class boyars, second-class boyars documented after 1650, and even families of foreign origin[6]. The publication of such a hierarchy nearly five decades after the abolition of ranks is a significant argument for the claim that this social class not only considered itself superior to others but also upheld a value system based on its antiquity and importance to society. This was despite being under constant "siege" from the newly rich. Alongside each family name, the year of its first documentation and its male living members are listed. Historian Mihai Dim. Sturdza, himself a descendant of a boyar family that produced two rulers in Romanian history, asserts that a boyar's son was also considered a boyar provided he had the means to adopt the same

[3] Constantin C. Giurescu, *Despre boieri*, București: Editura „Cartea Românească" S.A., 1920, p.5.
[4] Ibidem
[5] *Annuaire Mondaine de „La Roumanie*", București: Editura Minerva, 1903, pp.11-16.
[6] Ibidem, pp. 11-20

lifestyle[7] and ascend to a position befitting his rank. As a result of this practice—since rank inheritance was not legally regulated in Romania—those who could no longer afford the lifestyle befitting their rank were "forgotten,"[8] becoming *mazil* (dismissed nobles) and, in the best-case scenario, had to accept minor positions.

In the context of Romania's modernization and Europeanization during the last two decades of the 19th century, the term "aristocracy" no longer exclusively referred to the social class enjoying significant privileges due to their origin, wealth, and social position[9]. Expressions such as "financial aristocracy," "cultural aristocracy," or "industrial aristocracy"[10] began to emerge. From Victorian England, the term "labor aristocracy" spread across Europe, designating a category that held social and economic privileges distinguishing them from the rest of the middle and working classes[11] as a result of productive activities.

For modern Romania on the eve of World War I, the terms "boyar" and "aristocrat" seem synonymous, as they defined a social category not only as landowners but also as a group united by blood ties, aware of its traditions, which were not shared with any other group or individual they encountered[12], and possessing symbolic capital[13].

During the Old Kingdom, the everyday language of the political elite rarely used the term "boyar," preferring instead "landowner." However, when referring to their properties, the term *moșie* was used to emphasize their antiquity and the rights derived from such ownership. In this way, a sense of equality was established between the old, great boyar families and the newer, middle-ranking boyars, many of whom had settled in the Romanian territories during the 18th century. Consequently, the term "boyar" had more economic and social connotations, while "aristocrat" also implied political aspects, as the government and Parliament had more than half of their members from this social class.

In a constitutional monarchy like Romania between 1881 and 1914, as in neighboring states, one could speak of an aristocratic political regime adapted to the economic changes of the 19th and early 20th centuries. As a result, the terms "aristocrat" and "aristocracy," used even by representatives of this privileged class—likely under French, English, and German

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[7] Mihai Dim. Sturdza coord., *Familiile boierești din Moldova și Țara Românească*, vol. I, București: Editura Simetria, 2004, p.15
[8] Ibidem
[9] *Dicţionarul explicativ al limbii române*, ediţia a II-a, Bucureşti: Editura „Univers Enciclopedic", 1996, p.59
[10] Larousse en ligne, https://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais/aristocratie/5251, consultat 7.12.2022.
[11] Amanda Goodrich, *op.cit*., p.384.
[12] David Higgs, *Nobles in Nineteenth-Century France: The Practice of Inegalitarianism*.Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987.Project MUSE. doi:10.1353/book.67863; https://muse.jhu.edu/book/67863/pdf, p.XII, accesat 23.04.2021, 1.am.
[13] Pierre Bourdieu*, La noblesse: capital social et capital symbolique* în *Anciennes et Nouvelles Aristocraties*, *Didier Lancien, Monique de Saint-Martin,* Éditions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme, 2007. pp. 385-397

influence—better reflected the socio-political realities of the time. Not all representatives of the aristocracy were as vocal or visible in the press as those from the second rank of boyars, such as Petre P. Carp, Ion C. Brătianu, or Mihail Kogălniceanu, who were prominent figures according to the 1903 yearbook. However, this does not mean that the aristocracy did not hold various positions in the government or the military, nor that they did not occupy most of the seats in Parliament. Confronted by the "ciocoi"[14] (a derogatory term for parvenus), the Romanian aristocracy accepted alliances with second-rank boyars to preserve its privileges. Perhaps it is no coincidence that one of their representatives, Mișu Văcărescu, used the term *high-life* to describe the daily activities of this privileged social stratum.

The study of daily life gained prominence in historiography thanks to Marc Bloch, Lucien Febvre, Fernand Braudel, and the works of historians associated with the Annales School. For these scholars, understanding material civilization and the everyday lives of the masses[15], as well as the hierarchical social structures involved in economic activities[16], was essential. Thus, examining daily life became a way of explaining past realities, allowing for a much deeper understanding of history. Following the direction established by the Annales School, studying daily life requires a description of the geographical space and its resources.
In addition to the geographical space where a human community exists, human activities are organized into public and private spaces. The geographical scope of this study is limited to Bucharest, the capital of modern Romania—a city whose modernization accelerated after the proclamation of the Kingdom and, especially, where the political, economic, and cultural elite conducted their activities.

Thus, the first chapter addresses the modernization of Bucharest between 1881 and 1914, providing the context in which the aristocracy was present. The capital of the Kingdom underwent significant architectural changes, both in terms of public buildings and private residences. The city's systematic development also included improvements in comfort and, implicitly, living standards, through the provision of running water, gas lighting, and later, electric lighting. Elements of modernization are presented by domain, including economic or cultural activities, infrastructure, healthcare, administrative and territorial organization, and the population.

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[14] Ciocoi conform DEX – termen disprețuitor la adresa parveniților, a noilor îmbogățiți de la sate, arendași, vătafi, ciocoi - definiție și paradigmă | dexonline, accesat 15.12.2022.
[15] Anne Vézier, *La Leçon de Braudel, Récit et problème en histoire*, Le cartable de Clio, revue suisse sur les didactique de l'histoire, 2012, 12, pp.99-110, https://hal.science/hal-01145676/document, accesat 27.05.2024, p.4.
[16] Ibidem

The geographical space of Bucharest also includes the public space where the aristocracrats carried out their daily activities. Thus, the second chapter is dedicated to the public space in which the aristocracy was active, from political and cultural institutions to charitable organizations and leisure activities such as balls, theater and opera performances, or horse racing. During the late 19th century and up to the First World War, Bucharest, as the capital of the Old Kingdom, was a public space where not only descendants of old boyar families interacted but also wealthy bourgeois elements, civil servants, lawyers, doctors, teachers, small entrepreneurs, peasants, and workers. In this public space, the Romanian aristocracy was present in state institutions, in Parliament and government, involved in political life—mostly as members of the Conservative Party—but also in the press, charitable activities, exclusive clubs like the Jockey Club, and within the Romanian Academy. The image of the aristocracy's public activities is best reflected in the press of the time, both liberal and conservative. Speeches given at Parliament or during election banquets were reproduced in newspapers, both in Romanian and French. The press also featured aristocrats as directors or owners of publications, such as Nicolae Filipescu, Mihai Văcărescu, C.A. Rosetti, or George Em. Lahovari.

The Romanian Academy was another public space where aristocrats like D.A. Sturdza, Ștefan Fălcoianu, Ion Ghica, and Nicolae Kretzulescu were active alongside members of other social categories. Within this prestigious institution of culture and scientific research, aristocrats worked alongside figures such as Titu Maiorescu, Dimitrie Brândză, Grigore Cobălcescu, and Spiru Haret.

The Romanian aristocracy of Bucharest intersected with intellectuals and members of the bourgeoisie in another public space, namely the Jockey Club, as well as in casinos such as those in Sinaia and later Constanța, at the theater, or the opera.

The public space involved both subsistence activities and leisure activities, which included exclusive clubs and theater or opera performances in French, Italian, or German—largely inaccessible to a significant portion of the capital's inhabitants.

The third chapter offers an exploration of the private space of these old Romanian families or those settled since the 16th–17th centuries, who chose to identify with the civilization and aspirations of the people among whom they decided to live. Based on documents from personal archives and published or unpublished memoirs, the chapter describes their residences, furniture, and the costs associated with building, renovating, or maintaining the houses—and even palaces—owned by aristocrats in Bucharest or on their estates.

While some of these aristocrats built and decorated their homes following the latest Parisian fashions, others rented houses that, depending on their income, could meet the requirements of a social status inherited by birth[17]. In the Ghica, Sturdza, or Cantacuzino palaces, balls with dozens of guests were organized, whereas in the homes of Zoe Bengescu or Dimitrie I. Ghica, only close friends and family were received for tea or dinner.

The third chapter also explores the daily activities of the aristocracy, which were organized according to the changing seasons and the schedule of the royal family. Romanian boyars were caught between agricultural duties and their responsibilities in Parliament, ministries, or diplomatic missions, as well as their interactions with the royal family. Nevertheless, those with substantial incomes regularly traveled abroad.

Easter was often celebrated on their estates, as social activities in Bucharest slowed during this period, and the royal family would relocate to Sinaia. Consequently, the elite would also move to Sinaia, either staying in hotels or in residences they had built there. Before the casino was constructed, Bucharest's high society in Sinaia would spend their time walking through the surrounding forests or organizing and attending musical soirées in their own residences or at Peleș Castle. Shortly after Dobrogea was integrated into Romania, some aristocrats began spending part of the summer on the Romanian coast. The impetus for the boyar class to spend a brief period of the summer by the Black Sea came from Queen Elisabeth.

However, following the harvest on their estates and the resumption of political activities in the capital—typically in October or November—the aristocracy would return to Bucharest. Both in Sinaia and Bucharest, sports became a regular part of aristocratic life. In addition to horseback riding and hunting, they began practicing tennis, ice skating, and even bobsledding as a winter sport.

A special place among daily activities over approximately three months, starting with the Christmas holiday and until the beginning of Lent, is held by balls, which represent the case study of this work. True events of the year, the balls organized by King Carol I are not among the most favored by the old noble families because they are forced to accept alongside them elements of the bourgeoisie or the petty nobility who come to hold high public offices in state institutions. Consequently, after the January 1st ball organized at the Royal Palace, balls are organized by the Oteteleșanu, Ghica, Cantacuzino, or Sturdza families, to which

[17] Narcis Dorin Ion, *Elitele și arhitectura rezidențială în țările române (sec.XIX-XX)*, București: Editura Oscar Print, 2011 în care sunt prezentate multe dintre palatele din București și de la moșii, emblematice prin stilul arhitectonic pentru perioada în care au fost construite..

representatives of these noble families are invited. If balls can be classified as public space activities, musical or dance soirées can be integrated into the private space sphere. Firstly, because they take place with a smaller number of participants. Secondly, the hosts send invitations only to those people whom they consider worthy, in terms of social status and education, to participate in such soirées.

In Bucharest during the last two decades of the 19th century and up until the First World War, modernization and Europeanization were also present in the private sphere. Admirers of French culture and connected to the French aristocracy through matrimonial alliances or even settled in France, the Romanian nobility imitated and copied the French lifestyle in the private sphere as well. If in the public sphere this social category accepted members from the intellectual or business elite, with the obligation that rules and norms be respected, even more so in the private sphere, they maintained a certain lifestyle that ensured the preservation of their own identity. The private sphere is primarily represented by the home and its components. The urban changes in Bucharest during the 19th century are also reflected in the changing appearance of the aristocracy's homes, who settled here by leasing their estates and leaving behind the patriarchal life for the bustling and comfortable city life.

Most of the residences of the great nobility are renovated and have at least one floor, with large windows, a courtyard with a garden, running water, and sewage. Some of them are even palaces built in neoclassical or neo-Romanian style, with enough space for organizing balls, luncheons for 20 people, musical soirées or theater performances, reception rooms, a library, and work offices alongside bedrooms and bathrooms. The construction materials are of high quality, imported or produced by companies in Romania, and the furniture is brought from abroad. The houses of the great nobility are concentrated in the central area of the city, along Calea Victoriei and the adjacent streets, or along the new boulevards built that cross the capital from east to west and from north to south. Those who do not build a house in Bucharest rent one, so their addresses published in various directories often change from year to year. Others prefer to live in the capital in luxury hotels in the city center. Additionally, those who entered diplomacy were not all interested in building a house. This is the case of Alexandru Em. Lahovari and his wife Anna, née Kretzulescu. The interiors of the residences reflect the material status of the inhabitants. In the case of Gheorghe Grigore Cantacuzino, for the palace on Calea Victoriei, all the furniture was ordered from Paris, being in the Louis XV and Louis XVI styles. The incomes from leasing the estates were supplemented by daily allowances for mayors, an annual allowance, or various sums for those who practiced liberal professions such as lawyers, doctors, or architects. Teodor Rosetti, as governor of the

National Bank, received an allowance of 60,000 lei per year[18], which meant 5,000 lei per month. Those who held various state positions for a period of 10 years could apply for retirement. Alexandru N. Lahovari, born in 1840, was approved for retirement in 1896, and for the 10 years, 11 months, and 27 days worked, with a salary of 1,500 lei per month in the last three years, he received a pension of 450 lei per month[19], in accordance with the provisions of the 1890 law[20]. Doctor Nicolae Kretzulescu had a pension of 1,407.40 lei[21].

The aristocracy of the Old Kingdom was also involved in industrial enterprises. Constantin Argetoianu showed interest in oil exploitation, while Barbu Știrbei managed to establish a true industrial center on his property in Buftea.

The personal archives from the State Archives and the Saint-George Fund of the National Library include daily expense registers or various receipts, which provide insights into a certain standard of living as well as the prices of goods and services.

Christmas and Easter holidays were usually spent with family, either in Bucharest or on their estates, following Orthodox traditions. On holidays, they attended religious services at churches near their homes, estates, or at the Metropolitan Cathedral. They visited relatives and friends, and organized evening dances, balls, theater plays, and musical performances that showcased participants' artistic education and vocal or instrumental talents.

Other leisure activities included, in addition to balls and soirées, strolls along the boulevards when in Bucharest or around the estates, as well as in Sinaia. They enjoyed tennis matches, bobsleighing, ice skating, and, notably, hunting trips. Another significant activity was traveling abroad for relaxation at resorts in Italy and German territories, for medical treatments, or to enroll their children in various high schools and universities. During these trips, they visited museums, historically significant sites, as well as shops, cafés, or theater performances.

The major events in the lives of these descendants of Romania's great boyar families or ruling dynasties were often highlighted in the press of the time, accompanied by the pomp and ceremony befitting their status, or occasionally featured in personal memoirs. Correspondence rarely provides descriptions of these significant moments in anyone's life.
Marriages in "high society" bore almost none of the romanticism found in the literature of the first half of the 19th century. Even when love and passion were present, these sentiments were

[18] „Bucharest", 1er Année, No 254, 19 Novembre (1 Decembre), 1890, p.2
[19] Biblioteca Națională a României , fond Saint-George, Arhiva Alexandru N. Lahovari, Dosar CCLXXXIII/3l/ 1844-1859, fila 65
[20] Ibidem
[21] Serviciul Arhivelor Naționale Istorice Centrale, Fond Kretzulescu-Lahovari, Dosar/177/f.a, fila 28

criticized in aristocratic salons and circles, sometimes to the point of excluding individuals from the list of “agreeable” people to visit or host. Most marriages were arranged by parents or relatives, and the dowry system was of great importance. For example, the dowry contract drawn up by Alexandru Em. Lahovari and Ana Lahovari, née Crețulescu, for their daughter, Ana Nicula Lahovari, in her marriage to George Al. Plagino, documented the following: a sum of 150,000 lei, a trousseau worth 18,000 lei, an emerald necklace valued at 35,000 lei, a silverware set worth 2,000 lei, and two mortgages on parts of the parents' estates, which they committed to paying annually throughout their lifetime. The parents also included in the dowry contract specific conditions regarding how the future husband could use the wealth Ana Nicolae Lahovari brought into the marriage. For instance, the wife’s funds could only be used to purchase debt-encumbered real estate, government bonds, or securities issued by Creditul Funciar, provided these were transferred to the husband's name through a legal act that explicitly specified the intended use of the wife’s dowry funds. The document was authenticated at the headquarters of the Romanian Legation in Vienna.

A final chapter, the fourth, briefly presents an evolution, in alphabetical order, of these great noble families based on the list published in the 1903 Social Directory. Even though it is a simple "inventory" of noble families in which the founders attested in documents and those who, as of 1903, hold important state positions are mentioned without specifying these positions, this list primarily respects the criterion of rank. This final chapter is not a genealogical inventory of these nobles but rather an identification and presentation of arguments for why the research of such a vast domain of daily life was limited to these few families and did not also target a large part of the political or cultural figures much more present in historiographical works dedicated to this period.

The research methods used to identify arguments that demonstrate the correctness of the working hypotheses are those specific to history, particularly social history. This is because the field of study is history, and the description and analysis of historical facts based on documents identified in archives is the starting point for any historian. To these are added some methods from the social sciences, because the daily life of a group of people, and not just an individual or a political or cultural personality, involves the use of methods from sociology, cultural anthropology, social psychology, and mentalities[22].

The content analysis of documentary sources to answer the questions who?, how?, where?, and why? led to the need to create an inventory of the Romanian great boyar class,

[22] François Furet, *Atelierul istoriei*, București: Editura Corint, 2002, p. 5.

including its evolution up to 1914. Answering the question of how aspects of daily life are represented in memoirs, personal documents, expense registers, letters, journals, and, not least, the press of the time allowed the identification of arguments regarding the daily concerns and activities of these families and the manner in which they performed and perceived them.

As for the answers to the question where?, these enabled the spatial localization of the activities and interests of some members of the great boyar class. For instance, correspondence—whether between family members or acquaintances and friends—supports the assertion that most of them traveled at least once a year to major European capitals, sent their children to study abroad, especially in France, or accompanied the royal family to Sinaia. The why? questions were the most numerous. For example, why do most personal archives predominantly feature documents related to property deeds, property sales, and inheritance disputes, while there are very few receipts for the purchase of furniture, clothing, books, or payments for hotels during European travels? Moreover, why, during this period, did some of them choose to practice liberal professions, such as becoming lawyers, doctors, writers, or journalists, rather than limiting themselves to living off estate revenues, politics, diplomacy, or military service.

Even though the hypotheses underlying such an attempt to reconstruct a segment of life from the late modern era of Romanian history may be considered highly general, their validity can only be verified through a series of specific cases, by identifying the common elements characteristic of the aristocracy as a social elite that largely retained its political power in the capital of the Old Kingdom.

If until the mid-19th century there was a perception, even among contemporaries, that the boyar class leaned toward entertainment, card games, balls, and a social lifestyle, by the early 20th century, the great aristocracy was increasingly focused on lucrative activities. They invested in oil exploitation, like Constantin Argetoianu, sugar factories, and the capitalization of agricultural products obtained on their estates, as in the case of Barbu Știrbei. Others, such as members of the Berindei family, became renowned architects designing public and private buildings, while figures like Ioan Cantacuzino and Alexandru Șuțu distinguished themselves as prominent doctors.

Using primarily personal archives, journals, published and manuscript memoirs, along with the press of the time, one can outline a portrait of the daily life of the Romanian great aristocracy during the Belle Époque.

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