

History of public administration of Dobruja as part of Russia, Romania and Bulgaria (1878-1940)

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<https://doi.org/10.33542/VSS2021-2-02>

Abstract

The paper is devoted to give a schematic presentation of the administrative-territorial system of Dobruja as part of Russia, Romania and Bulgaria, more precisely between the 1878-1940 period. The study formulates as a primary goal describing the evolution and development of the above mentioned region as part of Romania. Also it formulates as a secondary goal the impact of the administrative reorganizations of Dobruja on the multicultural community living in the region. The aim is also to list and emphasize the strategies, procedures of assimilation, integration, respectively colonization of the region. At the same time, defining the most important events, signs leading to today's administrative-territorial division of Dobruja between Romania and Bulgaria. Although the historical nature of the study is indisputable, its focus is on the process of evolution of the regions administrative system.

Keywords: Dobruja, public administration, public administration history, Romanian administrative system, administrative-territorial reorganisation

Introduction

The main issues related to Dobruja are the ethnic composition as well as the sociology of the region, the Romanian nationalization historiography and its symbolic role in nation- and state-building process, and the administrative-territorial reorganization strategies in correlation with cultural and educational policies. Beside these issues the importance of the topic is to be found in the way in which a multi-ethnic area is administrated by different authorities, more precisely in the fact that it's appropriate management can ease and facilitate the cross-border cooperation of many different countries, respectively it's inadequate leadership can generate complex internal and external altercations. Analyzing the example of Dobruja, the constructive and at the same time the destructive aspects of this status are revealed to us, making the effects of significant historical events and decisions transparent, also formulating some clear lessons for the future generations.

In order to obtain the results of the research, a general-theoretical scientific method was applied, and within this, historical research method was included to some extent, using primary and secondary sources as well.

1. Historical background

Dobruja is a land between the Danube and the Black Sea that is geologically connected to the Balkans. In terms of its precise geographical delimitation, it is surrounded on the north and west by the Danube Delta and the Danube shore, on the east by the Black Sea coast and on the south by the boundaries of the Silistra and Dobrich counties on the Bulgarian mainland (Iordachi, 2000). In ancient times, the region called Scythia Minor (or Lesser Scythia) was located in approximately the same area as today's historical region of Dobruja, the total area of which is now divided between Romania and Bulgaria (Szabó, 2014). The area of North Dobruja, which now forms part of Romania and includes two counties is 15,570 km², while the area of South Dobruja (Cadrilater) including two counties, which are under Bulgarian jurisdiction is 7,565 km² (Cociu, 1993).

Thanks to the Greek colonies settled on the shores of the Black Sea, the first written record of people living in the region dates back to the 7th century BC. According to these accounts, its territory was then inhabited by Thracians, who were later re-identified as Getae and then as Dacians. The increased differentiation of the Geta and Dacian tribes from the Thracians may suggest that they were sibling ethnic groups (Pecz, 1984-1985), a hypothesis that may be supported by the existence of the same mother tongue (Bánosi, 1999). A century later, in the Greek sources associated with the area, Scythian ethnic groups appear as inhabitants of the region and then in the 3rd century BC, the Celts also appeared (Szabó, 2014). The centuries-long civil struggles between the Thracians (Ádám, 2016), the Getae (Ocheșeanu, 1970), the Dacians (Cserni, 2014), the Scythians (Tuplin, 2010), the Greeks (Marczali et al, 1990) and the Macedonians (Boór, 2012) were ended by the rapidly expanding Roman Empire (Faragó, 2017). They were subjugated by Roman general Marcus Licinius Crassus between 29-28 (Mcpherson, 2009), and according to our reckoning, the region was organized in 6 AD as a province called Moesia. Later, the province was divided into three lesser provinces, named Lower, Upper Moesia and Scythia, until, as part of the Byzantine Empire, the region was reorganized as a new administrative-territorial unit called Thema Scythia (Ostrogorsky, 2003).

After that, it became part of the first and second Bulgarian Empire, within the framework of which the feudal system began to form during the reign of Tsar Ivan Alexander (1331-1371). In itself we may think of a rudimentary form of feudalism, according to which a peculiar system of mutual private law relations between lords, vassals and servants who owned a given region and its lands began to develop. Attempts to establish independent principalities within the Bulgarian state were already observable at the end of the 12th century, but only from the beginning of the 14th century did the permanent autonomous states actually emerge: members of the Shishman House in Vidin, Smilec In Sredna Gora, Balik and his family in Dobruja. The Despotate of Dobruja or Principality of Karvuna got its present name after the name of its most

famous ruler, Dobrotitsa despot, who was already mentioned in 1357 as the local ruler of Scythia Minor (Ostrogorsky, 2003). Shortly after Dobrotitsa's death, in 1390, Dobruja became part of the Ottoman Empire, before which he was briefly part of the Wallachian principality. The region under Ottoman rule came under the reign of Romania and Bulgaria in 1878, when 70% of its population was still of Turkish-Tatar origin (Tóth, 2009).

2. The Consequences of the 1877-78 Russo-Turkish War

The 1877-78 Russo-Turkish war ended with the Russian victory. The peace treaty was signed by the parties in the Turkish San Stefano (today Yesilköy), a treaty that with a significant number of amendments was confirmed by the Congress of Berlin. The most important antecedents of this war were Russia's will for expansion and for increasing its influence in the Balkans and the Caucasus, the intensification of power struggles within the Ottoman Empire, the gaining of independence from the Ottoman state by Albania, Bulgaria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Greece, Montenegro, Serbia and Romania. By supporting the endeavours of these nations Russia quickly aligned them by itself and the same time against the Ottomans. The economic and social problems and the rebellions of the different nationalities within the Ottoman Empire have materialised in 1875 and became known as the "great Eastern crisis" (Márkus, 2019). This crisis culminated with the Russian declaration of war sent to the Ottoman Empire in April 1877 that became the first official step of the new Russo-Turkish war (1877-78) (Demeter et al, 2020). As a result of this process during the Congress of Berlin held in the summer of 1878 the map of the Balkan Peninsula has been redrawn (Balla, 1998).

As it has already been settled during the peace treaty from San Stefano, Dobruja was now confirmed to be partly included in the newly created Principality of Bulgaria and in the Russian Empire. The Congress of Berlin held in June 1878 has superseded the borderlines drawn up by the San Stefano Treaty, a fact that influenced the fate of Dobruja. As far as the territories were concerned although the North South Dobruja division was kept, instead significant modifications were put in place regarding their control. As a result of the initiative of Count Gyula Andrásy the control over Northern Dobruja was given to the new independent Romania, in exchange they surrendered South Bessarabia (Budjak) to the Russians. Most of the territories of South Dobruja have been given to the Principality of Bulgaria that was shortened during the congress (Raffay, 2010). At the same time, at the advice of the French representative the strip of land close to the port of Mangalia and the fortress Arab-Tabia viewing Silistra were annexed to Romania claiming that the population here was mainly Romanian. Romania also tried to claim the city of Silistra, and then a year after, in 1879, it tried to occupy it, but both the Congress of Berlin and later on the international committee have confirmed the authority of the Principality of Bulgaria over Silistra. The need for the Congress of Berlin can be found in the large-scale Russian expansion and military presence, regarding

which Great Britain, Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire have expressed their concerns (Diószegi, 1961). This driving force of the events is clearly reflected by the borderlines drawn up during the Congress, as well as in the confirmation of the newly formed principalities and monarchies and in the expansion of their territories.

In essence, the 1877-1878 Russo-Turkish War was a political game between Russia, the Ottoman Empire, and European states (Pinar, 2012). Regarding to British Consul A. H. Layard about the true motivations behind Russian war efforts, he explains that "Those who have watched the proceedings of the Russians can scarcely doubt their deliberate object has been to drive the Turkish race out of the provinces they have occupied and to replace it by the Slav. Such has been the policy of Russia in other countries which she has conquered" (Şimşir, 1989)." It is clear from this that Russia was not fighting exclusive for the territory of Dobruja or maybe for the people living here. This step was only the first in its longer-term strategy.

Practically Russia owned Northern Dobruja just half a year from 3 March 1877 to the signing of the Berlin Treaty in July 1878 resigning the territory very quickly (Pinar, 2012). Ceding the region to Romania in exchange for territories in Southern Bessarabia makes perfect sense, if we pay attention at the fact that by this move he secured a direct access for itself to the mouths of the Danube Delta (Thompson, 2022). Constantin Iordachi highlights that many Romanian politicians of the time were perceiving the province's geo-political location and multi-ethnic population as a danger to the country's ethnic homogeneity and political stability. Not to mention that in fact after the 1877-1878 Russo-Turkish war ended, Romania wanted to keep the regained territory of Southern Bessarabia (Budjak), resigning Dobruja (Iordachi 2002). All this means that in fact, the great powers forced Romania to cede Southern Bessarabia to Russia, for North Dobruja in return. Starting the region's integration process with this attitude it is clear that none of the administrative-territorial changes were made for the well-being of ordinary people living in the territory. Thus the inhabitants of the region gain their citizenships in 1878, they did not gain political rights. After the 1880 law came into force, theoretically they were able to exercise their political rights to. Practically from 1878 to 1908 the inhabitants of the region enjoyed only a local type of citizenship, but their political emancipation was only gradually validated in 1908-1913 (Iordachi 2002).

The independence of Romania as a monarchy was proclaimed on 13th March 1881, after which event the former prince (Karl von Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen) was crowned as Charles I, however the Romanian state based on a constitutional monarchy has started transforming the administrative-territorial system in 1878, even before the Congress of Berlin. The new, internationally recognised state borrowed its administrative-territorial, administrative, cultural and educational models from France, just as it has done the same during between 1859-1866 at the unification of the two autonomous principalities within the Ottoman Empire, Moldavia and Muntenia (Raffay, 1989).

3. The development of North and South Dobruja between 1878-1913

Before the territory of Dobruja was divided between the Principality of Bulgaria and the Kingdom of Romania, based on the 1864 administrative reform of the Ottoman Empire, the whole of the region was reorganised into the Danube vilayet that had two sanjaks, Silistra and Tulcea. Within the sanjak of Tulcea that was given to Romania, there were thirteen kaza (Kiliia, Mahmudia, Isaceea, Tulcea, Măcin, Sulina, Hârşova, Babadag, Küstendge, Megidia, Mangalia, Cernavoda and Silistra), and its capital was the town of Tulcea which also gave the name of the sanjak.

The Romanian administration with French roots, and which was to be implemented in the case of Dobruja as well, was created during 1862-64, respectively the former Moldavian and Muntenian administrative-territorial system was unified during this period. The country now called Romania was divided into counties (judeţ), the counties into districts (plasă, ocoale), and the districts into communes and villages. A commune was made up of villages and farmsteads, which were the smallest administrative units. In Muntenia the district system had a tradition, but not in Moldavia. Until now the mid-level settlements in Moldavia were the lands (ţinut). The head of a county was the prefect. In the districts at the beginning the vice-prefect was the leader, then starting with 1918 this role was taken over by the pretor, while the towns and villages were led by a mayor (primar). The members of the county and local councils were elected based on census. As this short presentation shows the constitution of Romania had very modern objectives, among which sharing of power (Ungureanu, 2009).

Based on the administrative-territorial system of Romania, on 28th-30th September 1878 in Dobruja three provisory counties (Constanţa, Tulcea and Silistra-Noua) are created, with a total of nine districts. Tulcea County with Măcin, Sulina, Tulcea and Babadag, Constanţa County with Constanţa, Mangalia and Hârşova, respectively New-Silistra County with Megidia and Silistra-Nouă. The seats of the counties were in Tulcea, Constanţa and Rasova. The Prefect of Tulcea county was Gheorghe M. Ghica, of Constanţa Remus Opreanu and of Silistra-Noua Grigore P. Cantilli. Immediately after the new administrative units, respectively their institutions have been created, the functioning of the Northern counties needed special procedures. First every village was deemed an independent commune, then in each of them, by the end of the year, the local council was formed and the mayors took their offices. According to Remus Opreanu, the prefect of Constanţa county, this was needed because the whole region was dominated by anarchy, the settlements were in a dilapidated condition, the population was starving and a great number of robbers were looting the villages. The derogation from the law and extension of control were necessary in order to ensure the stabilisation of these condition, to create living spaces, to ensure security and other basic needs. It is probable that due to the above causes the continuous changes were thought necessary by the authorities, e.g. both in the case of Tulcea and Constanţa the prefects were

replaced, the seat of New-Silistra County was moved to Cernavodă, then to Medgidia already before April, 1879 (Negulescu, 1928).

Based on a new law regarding the reorganisation of Dobruja promulgated on 9th May 1880 a new administrative-territorial division was implemented. In stead of the three counties only two were created, Tulcea and Constanța, the latter now also comprising the whole of New-Silistra county. Tulcea county was made up of four districts (Babadag, Tulcea, Macin and Sulina) and Constanța of five (Constanța, Mangalia, Medgidia, Harsova and Silistra-Noua). Within the districts both counties had seven townships, respectively Tulcea had 56 communes made up of 120 villages, and Constanța 72 communes of 301 villages. According to Dumitru Valentin Pătrașcu this administrative reorganisation and the preceding implementation of laws regarding justice, tax system and customs service, land and forest management, a system similar to the other regions of the state was created in only two years (Pătrașcu, 2011). After these measures, though the districts were reorganised several times (1892, 1897 and 1909) (Lahovari, 1902), the boundaries of the counties have not been modified (Negulescu, 1928).

Starting with 1879 the population of Constanța will be on the rise and in 1880 it has a population of 64,902, out of which 14,884 were Romanians, 14,974 Turkish, 22,584 Tartars, 8492 Bulgarians and 4000 other nationalities. Tulcea County shows a similar tendency and ethnic composition. In the same period the population of the latter county was 75,070. From 1881 onwards the population of Dobruja is mostly enriched with settlers from Romania's other regions and from the immigrants of other countries (Rădulescu et al, 1998), a process that was in line with Romania's planned, strategic considerations. The significant number of the settlers is also confirmed by the fact that new villages were created for them, e.g. Făgărașul Nou, Caramurat (Negulescu, 1928). Another important aspect was that especially during the early years of the new administrative system, the Principality of Bulgaria encouraged ethnic Bulgarians to move from Northern Dobruja to Southern Dobruja (Rădulescu et al, 1998). This would result in a drop in population, but it was not the case as the empty villages were almost immediately colonised with the newly arrived settlers. Starting with 1880 Italians from Friuli and Veneto have also settled in the northern regions of Dobruja, some have worked in the granite mines of the Măcin mountains, while others worked as simple farmers (Marian et al, 2008).

There were a great number of factors that defined the development of North Dobruja and its similar organisation to the rest of Romania's other regions. As it was many times underlined by the leaders of Tulcea and Constanța counties, Romania took over this region in 1878 in a state of dilapidation, where the lack of infrastructure, state authorities and basic resources were dominant, respectively the small number of people living here were battling disease and starvation. When the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78 broke out most of Dobruja's population was made up of Turks, Bulgarians and Tartars. However, during the war most of the Muslim population was evacuated into Bulgarian and Turkey (Rădulescu et al, 1998).

Similarly, part of the Lipovans and Ukrainians emigrated from the region, mostly to Ukraine. By the fact that the state's leadership brought settlers here large groups, communities from other Romanian regions, one can say that the state took the first step towards the colonisation of Dobruja. With the mobilisation of large material resources within two years state institutions are created with corresponding buildings, health centres, pharmacies, public baths, economic and cultural associations, banks, schools and churches are brought to life. A special attention was given to education, and though it seemed flexible and broad, one of the objectives was to aid the assimilation of the different nationalities. As an illustration to the above, the 19 newly built schools of Constanța County that operated between 1879-80 had courses exclusively in Romanian language, but also hiring Muslim (Turkish and Tartar) teachers. One could see this as gesture of good faith towards a community still in majority, but at the same time one could ask why none of these newly founded educational institutions were not exclusively made available for the Muslim community. Furthermore, it was a custom to send with scholarship pupils to Bucharest and Iași and on the day of their departure they were seen off by their colleagues and teachers while the anthem of Romania was played. The data regarding Tulcea County are scarcer, but the report of prefect Paul Stănescu shows that in 1885 in the county there were 105 educational institutions. It is probable that the practices detailed regarding Constanța County were valid in this case as well, as the strategies of the central power regarding Dobruja were based on a unified vision.

In 1881 on the territory of Constanța County 25 Romanian churches were built and in 1882 the cathedral of Constanța was also finished, and all these were financed by the state. During the same period the local Romanian leaders encouraged the Muslim population to build mosques, but there are no information regarding whether the Romanian state offered any financing, which leads us to the conclusion that there were none. According to the Bulgarian historians after 1885 the Romanian Church authorities have taken over the control over all local Churches, except two in Tulcea and Constanța cities that managed to retain their traditional Slavic Bulgarian liturgy (Kosev et al, 1963). In contrast with the 25 Romanian churches build over one year, between 1879-1900 the ethnic Bulgarians have built 15 new churches in North Dobruja (Rădulescu et al, 1998). Although the lands and other possessions have not been owned by a narrow layer of the local communities, these properties have still been reallocated among the native and settled populations in order to "ensure public welfare". Ultimately, in 1882 monuments that commemorated the region's annexation by Romania and the symbols of the state have been erected (Negulescu, 1928).

The process of rebuilding the region, its infrastructure and institutions was rapid in order to replace and reshape multi-cultural heritage of Dobruja, but also to quickly assimilate local minorities (Iordachi 2002). In addition to the massive colonization with ethnic Romanians of the region, four main reasons facilitated assimilate North Dobrogea: (1) the establishment of a

highly centralized political and administrative regime; (2) the exclusion of Dobruja's non-Romanian economic elites from political rights; (3) cultural homogenization; (4) nationalization of landed property (lordachi 2002). In this case, we can see a practical example of cultural homogenization attempt. Putting this strategy into practice, it is clear that in terms of the ethnic composition of the region, homogenization was the primary goal and not the preservation of diversity and multiculturalism. Although the increase in the population of the region can be attributed to those who moved largely from other regions of Romania, in terms of church construction directives and education policies, these strategies were primarily aimed at assimilating indigenous communities and not serving the newly arrived inhabitants.

By 1896 the population of Constanța County doubles in comparison with the numbers from 1880, numbering a total of 112,227 out of which 56,617 persons declared themselves Romanian. The number of the educational institutions has also risen at this time there were 83 schools. At the same time at the intervention of D. Bănescu the building of road system of the county, the infrastructure has also started. Regarding the development of Tulcea County details are to be found in the report of Luca Ionescu. Compared to the year 1880, here the population has also almost doubled by 1904, counting 136,213 out of which 51,442 considered themselves Romanians. Ionescu openly and clearly assumed the fact that in his opinion the most important achievement of the last 25 years was the population, colonisation of the Danube Delta with ethnic Romanians, as well as the total assimilation of the multi-ethnic population, namely the national, confessional, economic and political unification. The 1904 report of Constanța County has detailed similar results and directives, and according to this the population of Constanța at the time was 139,570 out of which 80,137 persons considered themselves Romanians. At the same time the prefect, Scarlat Vârnav, by expressing his thoughts on expanding the territorial possessions of the county, he also reveals Romania's simple strategy regarding Dobruja, i.e. his single and continuous activity regarding the region can only be the strengthening of the Romanian nation by growing the numbers of the population. In 1911 the population of Constanța county is 172,838, then in 1921 it increases to 176,989 out of which 119,304 declared themselves Romanian (Negulescu, 1928).

The administrative-territorial transformation of South Dobruja was slower compared to the North territories annexed to Romania. The bases for the development of the Principality of Bulgaria's state organisation have been done with the help of the Russian Empire and then in 1881 the framework and forms of administration are defined (Demeter et al, 2020). The territory of the Principality of Bulgaria was divided into 21 administrative units (okrug) out of which the territory of South Dobruja was covered by Silistra and Varna Counties. The counties were divided into districts (okolia), and these into smaller areas (obshtina). The small areas with local administration contained several farmsteads, villages and towns. Silistra had three (Bazaurt, Khaskovo and Silistra) and Varna five (Balchic, Varna, Pazardzhik - Dobric from

1882, Khadzhioglu and Dobrici) districts. The county system of Bulgaria was modified first in 1888 and then again in 1893, but none of these changes has a significant effect on the territory of South Dobruja. In the same time it must be underlined that in 1888 the three districts of Silistra are modified. The new district system was composed of Ak-Kadzhilar, Kurt-Bunar and Silistra, while the districts of Bazaurt and Khaskovo have disappeared. During 1900-10 a great number of administrative-territorial changes are implemented, this time affecting both counties from South Dobruja. Out of the three districts of Silistra one is going to be included into Varna and one into Ruse and the remaining one (Ak-Kadzhilar) is completely dismembered, abolishing its independence. Varna county loses one of its districts from before 1900, but being expanded with the Kurt-Bunar district of Silistra, its territory does not really change (Cannon, 2019). After this administrative-territorial reorganization the county of Ruse had 5 districts (Biala, Razgrad, Ruse, Silistra and Tutrakan), respectively the county of Varna also 5 districts (Balchik, Dobrich, Kurt-Bunar, Provadiia and Varna).

The next change that affects both North and South Dobruja comes about in the first years of the 20th century. The nations of the Balkans have organised different movements in a great number of cases and with different causes, the results of which were revolts, rebellions. Taking advantage of the fact that after the Italo-Turkish War of 1911 the Ottoman Empire was considerably weakened, Bulgaria, Greece, Montenegro and Serbia have created in 1912 the League of Balkans, having the objective the total liberation of the territories they considered their own.

They declared war to the Ottoman Empire in the same year and thus the the First Balkan War has started. Within six months the League of Balkans emerged victorious, but due to the dissatisfaction with the results of the Treaty of London regarding the territories, the League has broken up, and its former members completed with the Ottoman Empire and Romania have started the Second Balkan War against Bulgaria. The second peace treaty was signed in August, 1913 in Bucharest by Bulgaria, Greece, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia, putting a definitive end to the Balkan War. Under the provisions of the peace treaty Romania has obtained South Dobruja from Bulgaria, including the fortress of Silistra and the town of Balchik (Jelavich, 1996).

4. The Administration of Dobruja between 1913-1925

As a result of the signing of the 1913 Bucharest peace treaty that ended the Balkan Wars, the Cadrilater (Southern Dobruja) becomes part of Romania thus the number of the country's counties increases from 32 to 34 (Jelavich, 1996). The Romanian authorities reorganise the Bulgarian administrative-territorial system of the region in the same year, creating Dobrici County out of the former Varna okrug, and Durostor County out of the Silistra okrug. While Dobrici was reorganised under the Romanian authority without major territorial

changes, Durostor was expanded with the settlements of Constanța county's Ostrov district, thus increasing the territory it had under Bulgarian control. In Dobrici County three districts were created with a total of 233 villages (Balchik 72, Casim 63 and Ezibei 98 settlements), and its seat became the town of Dobrici with which the Romanian authorities have organised three townships (Dobrici, Balchik and Cavarna). The number of districts of the North Dobruja Constanța County was reduced to four from five, all except one being also renamed (Dunărea with seat at Hârșova, Mangalia with seat at Mangalia, Ovidiu with seat at Constanța) and Traian with seat at Megidia). The town of Ostrov and the neighbouring territories are reorganised into Durostor County. The latter will have four districts with a total of 195 villages (Accadanlar 48, Curtbunar 41, Silistra 63 and Turtucaia 43 settlements), its seat becomes Silistra and with it there is going to be three townships. On 1st April 1914, just before the outbreak of the WW I, both the name of Dobrici town and county were changed. The county shall be given the Greek origin Caliacra name, while the town will be called Bazargic. At the same time the administrative-territorial reorganisation has taken place in the region, similarly to North Dobruja a fierce Romanisation was started following the paradigms and practices detailed in the previous chapter.

In 1913 the population of the territory just obtained from the Principality of Bulgaria had roughly a population of 300,000, 2% (6000 people) of which considering themselves ethnic Romanians (Sweet, 1957). In the same year the population of North Dobruja that was under Romanian authority for 35 years, numbered 380,430 persons, out of which 216,425 (56.8%) declared themselves Romanian (Roman, 1919). Totalising these numbers, when Dobruja's territory was united under Romanian control in 1913, the region's population was just over 680,000 out of which only 222,000 persons, i.e. 33% of the population considered themselves Romanian (Boia, 2001). It must be mentioned that until the 1925 administrative reforms the territory of North Dobruja's counties and districts did not change.

Except for a few years, South Dobruja remained part of Romania during WW 2, with insignificant changes in the administrative-territorial makeup, up until the Treaty of Craiova was signed by Bulgaria and Romania on 7th September 1940 (Ciorbea, 2017). After Romania entered WW 1 as an ally of France and Russia, the Central Powers had occupied many regions of Romania, including the whole of Dobruja. Starting with 1916 in Romania under Germany's control a German military general governorate was set up, that until 1918 represented the highest power in state. Under the command of the general governorate there were three military governorates (Muntenia, Bucharest and Dobruja), one of which in Dobruja (both in the North and South) was working under Turkish, Bulgarian and German government (Balla, 2017). Shortly after the end of WW1, in accordance with the Treaty of Neuilly from 1919, Romania had regained its lost territories and within a few months had reinstated the administrative-territorial system from before 1916, a system that was changed only in 1925

when a new law for the unification of administration was adopted in the wake of Greater Romania.

5. The Administration of Dobruja between 1926-1940

In the period between 1926 and 1938 Romania saw only three short-lived administrative reforms, the contents, characteristics and consequences of which we have detailed in the previous study. Greater Romania's first administrative law adopted on 14th June 1925 was meant to unify the administration of the different regions abolishing their characteristics (Lua, Mo nr. 128, 1925). Although starting with the adoption of the new administrative law all regulations came into force, on 22nd December 1925 the Parliament introduced an amending law due to which the implementation of the first law happened only on 1st January 1926 (Lua, Mo nr. 283, 1925). In regards of Dobruja's four counties Tulcea suffered only minor changes, renaming the Sulina and Tulcea districts to Gurile Dunării and Topolog. At this time the four districts of Tulcea County included 155 villages (Babadag 27, Măcin 37, Gurile Dunării 57 and Topolog 34 settlements), its seat remained the town of Tulcea, respectively the number of the town's communes was reduced from seven to five (Tulcea, Babadag, Sulina, Isaccea and Măcin). In case of the other three counties significant changes were implemented. The four districts of Constanța were increased to seven, and one of them is renamed (Cernavodă, Dunărea, Ferdinand I, Mangalia, Megidia, Negru Vodă and Traian). At this time the seven districts of the county were made up of 202 villages (Cernavodă 15, Dunărea 26, Ferdinand I 37, Mangalia 24, Megidia 26, Negru Vodă 37 and Traian 37 settlements), its seat remained at Constanța, respectively the number of the town's communes is increased from four to eight. In Caliacra County a fourth district of forty settlements is created under the name of Stejarul. In case of Durostor County similar renaming is implemented, by dividing Silistra into two the district, Doimușlar with 33 villages and the district Ostrov with 30 settlements are created. As a result of the administrative-territorial reorganisations, the four districts of the newly created Caliacra encompassed 233 villages (Balchik 72, Casim 63, Ezibei 58 and Stejarul 40 settlements), its seat remained Bazargic and also retained the number of the communes. The five districts of Durostor County encompassed a total of 195 villages (Accadanlar 48, Curtbunar 41, Silistra 33, Turtucaia 43 and Ostrov 30 settlements), retaining its seat at Silistra and also the number of the communes.

The regulations regarding the unification of administration manifested in measures meant to facilitate the assimilation of national minorities. As an example, one can highlight the law regarding elementary education, adopted on 26th July 1926 that as in the case of the Szeklerland, did not favour Dobruja. Starting with the following academic year, paragraph 159

of the above law ordered the setting up of so-called “culture zones” in case of 20 counties¹ where the number of ethnic minorities was significant (Balogh, 1996). The essence of these provisions was to bring in ethnic Romanian teachers, offering significant financial aid for those who through their activities promoted the Romanian language and culture and worked in order to facilitate the assimilation of national minorities. The law ensured this financial aid for the teacher for a period of ten years, and those who settled in the settlements in question were given a complimentary ten acre property (Hamangiu, 1926). Beyond the sense of life resulted from this discriminative phenomenon (Tóth, 2009),² the indignation of the local communities was fuelled by the fact that the funds isolated for the building of schools was used only to build schools where the language of education was Romanian, respectively only those school building were repaired where the school was then transformed into a Romanian one.

With the coming to power of the Maniu government, the need for administrative reforms was again in the foreground, arguing that the provisions of the previous law were outdated. The second administrative law of Greater Romania that was concerned with the organisation of local administrations, was adopted in July, 1929, and then published on 3rd August 1929. One of the most important implementation was, in contrast with the unifying law of 1925, the creation of the seven ministry directorates (Loal, Mo nr. 170, 1929), which according to the government’s opinion, in these regions had taken into account the national composition, their historical characteristics and also the relationship system between the counties and the settlements.³ Dobruja was placed under the control of the Bucharest Ministry Directorate (Săgeată, 2013). Although administrative units created along the borders of the historic regions promised a certain autonomy, in fact they were under the control of the central power (Bajtalan, 2013). Consequently local administration, problem-solving were still not independent, e.g. regarding the use of minority languages the final decision belonged to the highest administrative council, which clearly signals the fact that the issues of language rights were not yet solved (Fábíán, 2018). The dissolution of the elected bodies, the interim committees, respectively the new elections that followed the adoption of the administrative law, will be discussed in detail in a following study. As these elections were held based on political considerations, their course in Dobruja was similar to that from the Szeklerland.

In 1936 a new administrative law was drafted (Mo nr. 73, 1936) and then adopted by Parliament on 27th March. The new legislation was based on the provisions of the Liberal

¹ 10 from Transylvania: Bihor, Sălaj, Maramureş, Hunedoara, Odorhei, Ciuc, Trei Scaune, Mureş-Turda, Turda-Arieş; 4 from Bucovina: Vişniţa, Văscăuţi, Cotmani, Zastavna; 4 in Bessarabia: Hotin, Tighina, Cetatea-Albă, Ismail; in South Dobruja (Cadrilater) 2: Durostor, Caliacra.

² In case of Romanians coming from other counties we are talking about positive discrimination, while the local Romanian, respectively ethnic Hungarian population was discriminated.

³ The Ministry Directorates got their names from the seats of the regions and were as follows: Bucureşti – Muntenia, Cernăuţi – Bucovina, Iaşi – Moldova, Chişinău – Bessarabia, Cluj – Transylvania, Craiova – Oltenia and Timişoara – Banat.

Party's 1925 administrative law (Mo nr. 73/2, 1936). This new law abolished the law of 1929 and its efforts of decentralisation. In the case of Dobruja it basically meant that the region's administrative-territorial system from 1925 was strengthened. Furthermore, the new law contained restrictive regulations regarding the national minorities, prohibiting the use of mother tongue during the meetings of the county and local councils. On 10th February 1938 the Goga-government resigned which also signalled the end of interwar Romanian democracy and the start of a royal dictatorship.

Before the Treaty of Craiova, Dobruja witnessed only one major reorganisation from an administrative point of view, and this happened in 1938. The new law of administration issued by Carol II was shaped around the new Constitution published on 27th February (Mo nr. 187, 1938). The author of this plan of reorganisation was Armand Călinescu who changed the bases of the country's political system.⁴ His goal was to create an administration that was independent of politics, thus operating administrative legislation in harmony (Mikó, 1941). Under the provisions of the new law Romania was divided into ten provinces⁵ that were headed by Royal Governors (so called Royal Residents). The law abolished the counties' legal personality as a result this level of administration along with the districts became insignificant.

During the shaping of the provinces, though in a negative sense, a significant attention was given to the country's historic regions, borders, in order to equally ensure the majority of ethnic Romanians in every province. Based on this, three of the territories of historic Dobruja were included in the Sea province (Ținutul Mării), and one in the Danube/Lower-Danube province (Ținutul Dunării). The Sea Province with its seat in Constanța was created by the merger of Caliacra, Constanța, Durostor and Ialomița counties. As Royal Governor Nicolae Ottescu was named and after that Traian Er. Grigorescu. The Danube/Lower-Danube province with its seat in Galați was created by the merger of Brăila, Cahul, Covurlui, Fălciu, Ismail, Putna, Râmnicu Sărat, Tecuci, Tulcea and Tutova counties. Governor was Victor Cădere, followed by Constantin C. Giurescu and then by Paul Goma.

Between 1938-40 due to the royal dictatorship's ideas regarding public administration the interim committees disappeared, in the same time as a result of ultra-centralisation the local elites were forced out of from the leadership of the administrative divisions. As during the two previous decades this time as well the interests of the central government prevailed over the interests of the local communities. A difference can be observed though, while under the previous governments there was a certain decentralisation and the national composition of the counties and communities was mixed, under the royal dictatorship everything was controlled from Bucharest, respectively the administrative representatives were exclusively ethnic

⁴ The new Constitution in No. 48 of 27th February 1938 of the MO, the law of administration in No. 187 of 14th August 1938.

⁵ 1. Argeși/Bucegi, 2. Nistru, 3. Dunărea/Dunărea de Jos, 4. Crișuri, 5. Mureș, 6. Prut, 7. Suceava, 8. Timiș, 9. Mării and 10. Jiu districts.

Romanians. Under the provisions of the Treaty of Craiova, signed on 7th September 1940, the Cadrilater, i.e. South Dobruja's two counties were returned back to Bulgaria.

Conclusion

Dobruja's administrative-territorial system after it was broke off the Ottoman Empire changed several times in order to acclimatize and maintain the Romanian rule above the region. The Romanian administration with French roots, which was to be implemented in the case of Dobruja was created during 1862-64 and meant a major change compared to the Ottoman administrative system in the above mentioned region. After Dobruja was annexed to Romania, the state's central powers started a rapid administrative-territorial reorganization to begin the assimilation process of the local ethnicities, named by them integration. By the fact that the state's leadership supported mass migration in the region by bringing settlers here in large groups, different communities from other Romanian regions, one can say that the state took the first step towards the colonisation of Dobruja. With the mobilisation of large material resources within two years state institutions are created with corresponding buildings, health centres, pharmacies, public baths, economic and cultural associations, banks, schools and churches are brought to life. A special attention was given to education, and though it seemed flexible and broad, one of the objectives was to aid the assimilation of the different nationalities within the region.

All in all, through the different segments presented in the study, we can follow the progression of a region with a unique feature (geographical position, geopolitical history, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural population), which develops from an undesired status into a symbol of national unity. Russia only uses Dobruja to gain other benefits by it, Romania does not initially want to own it's territory, but years later it is mentioned as an important part of the country. So initially the administrative-territorial changes were not made to improve the living standards for the inhabitants of the region, this goal was only formulated after Dobruja was partly colonized. Regarding the effectiveness of the reforms carried out by the authorities, one can say that they were successful from the point of view of the designated aims.

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