

THE ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANISATION OF PRESENT CLUJ COUNTY BETWEEN 1541 AND 1848

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ABSTRACT. *The Administrative Organisation of Present Cluj County between 1541 and 1848.* The administrative organisation is one of the most important spatial planning actions, because it directly determines spatial configurations and polarizing relations, while concentrating local government institutions into cities and towns which are becoming more prominent as a result of them being designated as administrative centres. This paper attempts to reconstruct the administrative divisions and the ranking of settlements of present Cluj County between 1541 and 1848. Included almost entirely in the Principality of Transylvania, the area of present Cluj County was mainly covered, from North to South, by the counties of Solnocu Interior (Inner Solnoc), Dăbâca, Cluj and Turda. The Szekler seat of Arieş covered a small part in the South and Bihor County (in the Kingdom of Hungary) covered a very small part in the West of present Cluj County. Their limits remained largely the same over a very long period of time. The counties of Solnocu Interior, Dăbâca, Cluj and Turda extended a lot to the West and East of present Cluj County, but their seats were all located here: Dej (Solnocu Interior County), Bonțida (Dăbâca County), Cluj and Turda, to which one may add Gherla, that had the highest status, just like Cluj, that of free royal city, and had an administration of its own. All counties were divided into two districts, an Upper District and a Lower District, and the districts, in their turn, were further divided into circles (smaller districts). Cluj, Gherla, Turda and Dej have retained their importance throughout several centuries up until today, and their historical heritage and prominence still plays an important part in the present regional framework.

Keywords: *Cluj County, administrative organisation, historical counties, districts, Principality of Transylvania.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

The territorial administrative organisation in older times has been the subject of history and historical geography and has been often neglected by current regional geographers, spatial planners, and administrative authorities, which are dealing with the realities of the present day, sometimes unaware of the links existing between certain historical administrative divisions and the current challenges in reforming the administrative system and applying a coherent and sustainable development strategy. Historians use to refer to the former realities without taking into account the present, while spatial planners conduct their research and analysis based mostly on current and recent trends. This paper is an attempt to cover such a gap between the two perspectives, putting together historical facts and current administrative and spatial realities. In the context of the new Cluj County Plan (NW Romania), a review of former administrative divisions has been performed. This study refers therefore to the present Cluj County, covering the period between 1541 (the setting up of the Principality of Transylvania) and 1848, when the Revolution triggered a number of changes, including administrative ones, in the entire Austrian Empire. This period of more than 300 years proved to be rather stable in terms of administrative divisions, which were changed only once, by Emperor Joseph II in 1783-1784, only to be changed back in 1790. More important changes occurred in the development of towns and cities, as Cluj and Gherla gained the status of free royal cities, and had their own administration, apart from the counties. Other towns also prospered and developed, especially those related to salt mines – Dej and Turda, which were also county seats, and to a lesser extent, Cojocna and Sic.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The paper is based mostly on bibliographical work and an attempt to transfer the information and data resulted from different historical documents (E. Fényes, 1839, E. Fényes, 1847, I.S. Puşcariu, 1864, D. Dányi and Z. Dávid, 1960, A. Răduþiu and L. Gyémánt, 1995, L. Gyémánt *et al*, 2009, L. Gyémánt *et al*, 2016) and specific scientific works (D. Prodan, 1991, T. Nicoarã, 2001, E.Á. Varga, 2002, Susana Andea, 2003, A. Dörner, 2008, I.A. Pop et al., 2008a, I.A. Pop et al., 2008b) into a map showing the administrative divisions at the beginning of the 19th century, as well as the main settlements, ranked according to the status they had at the time. Similar work has been conducted concerning other Romanian counties, like Mureş (R. Rusu, 2016), entire regions, like Banat (R. Rusu, 2007), and even administrative divisions in other countries, such as

Glyndŵr District in Wales, UK (R. Rusu, 2011), which amounted to a certain experience and guided the authors in this approach. In this respect, use has been made of many of the historical works and documents which make reference to this challenging historical period, especially those related to the administrative divisions in the present territory of Cluj County. The gathered information has been thoroughly analysed and interpreted in order to provide a synthetic image of the administrative realities during this period, between the 16th and the 19th centuries, materialized on a map showing the administrative divisions and the main settlements.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1. *Historical Context: The Period of the Autonomous Principality of Transylvania (1541-1690)*

After the death of Matthias Corvinus, the Kingdom of Hungary went into a deep domestic crisis. Following the battle of Mohacs (1526), the Turks entered the Pannonian Plain. The fights for the vacant throne of Hungary, between Ioan Zápolya (John Zápolya), the voivode of Transylvania, and Ferdinand I of Habsburg, gave the Turks the opportunity to set up the Pashalik of Buda (1541) in the very heart of Hungary. On the 4th of September 1541, the autonomous Principality of Transylvania was set up, under the suzerainty of the High Porte, incorporating the whole studied territory, without the medieval county-based structure being altered. The end of the Ottoman suzerainty over the Principality in 1551, following the abdication of Queen Isabella, who reigned on behalf of her minor son, John Sigismund Zápolya, in order to pass the throne to Ferdinand I of Habsburg, triggered a prompt reaction from sultan Süleyman Kanuni. However, the Austrian imperial troops were chased away from the Principality as late as 1556, when Queen Isabella returned, together with her son, John Sigismund Zápolya (I.A. Pop *et al*, 2008a). Since the latter was the son of the late king John Zápolya, he was referred as “prince” in the chancellery documents for a long time, and therefore, the territory which he administered got the name of “Principality”.

The Treaty of Speyer (1570) confirmed the *status quo*, which meant that the King of Hungary title was passed to the Austrian Emperor, while John Sigismund Zápolya had the prince of Transylvania title for good. The next princes also added titles such as chieftain of the Szeklers and ruler of the parts in the Kingdom of Hungary (*Partium*), i.e. the territories which had not been previously incorporated into the voivodeship of Transylvania, and which were assigned, however, to the Principality, because they were not part of the Pashalik of Buda or of Timișoara (I.A. Pop *et al*, 2008a).

The High Porte gave to the categories of people who had a privileged status in the Principality, i.e. the noblemen, the Szeklers and the Saxons, the right to choose their prince freely, provided that he is also confirmed by the Ottoman suzerain power.

The Princely Council was set up in order to lead the Principality of Transylvania, according to a European model. It was an advisory political institution, the role of which was to advise the prince in making important decisions for the country. After some wavering, the number of advisers was set at 12 (A. Dörner, 2008).

The Princely Chancellery was also one of the central institutions. It originated from the former voivodship chancellery. The chancellor was an extremely prominent person in the principality.

Another representative institution was the Assembly of Nations and Orders, that is the assembly of the three privileged “nations” (the noblemen, the Szeklers and the Saxons) and four acknowledged religions (Catholic, Calvinistic Protestant, Lutheran and Unitarian). The country’s Assembly was convened on an annual or bi-annual basis, or whenever it was necessary, and it could last between a few days and several months. In the absence of a fixed residence of the prince, the assembly was held in various towns or even rural localities. In many situations, the Assembly was held in Turda (a favourite town until the 17th century), Cluj or even Someșeni (today, part of Cluj-Napoca City).

The three “nations” were not equally represented. The noblemen’s “nation” (which later became the Hungarian nation) was by far the one which played a leading role. It was followed by the Szeklers’ nation, whose military power was bigger than the Saxons’ (Susana Andea, 2003).

The Princely Board was set up in the second half of the 17th century as the supreme court of the Principality. It was led by a president, on behalf of the prince (*in nomine principis*). All presidents, with one exception, were also princely advisers.

Counties, Szekler and Saxon seats had their own courts, consisting of the General Judgment Seat (*sedes generalis*), presided by the supreme chieftain in the case of counties and by the royal lord, in the case of seats. One notary and a variable number of assessing jurors were also part of the Seat. However, there were also judgment bodies for minor cases, or first instance courts, referred to as Partial Seats (*sedes partialis*). Finally, commoners could refer their matter to the Rural Seats, led by a rural lord (*judex pagi*), or to the Domain Seat, of the land’s owner (A. Dörner, 2008).

Counties, Szekler and Saxon seats did not change significantly in terms of territory.

Counties were run by the chieftain or the supreme chieftain, appointed by the prince from among the Hungarian prominent nobility, however, subject to a new condition that he had estates on the territory of the county. The chieftain was assisted by two vice-chieftains who were at the helm of the two “circles” or “districts” into which the counties were divided at the beginning of the 17th century. Most counties, and therefore the counties located on today’s territory of Cluj County too – Solnoc, Dăbâca, Cluj and Turda – were divided into a district referred to as “Lower” or “Inferior” and another district referred to as “Upper” or “Superior”. The general assembly of the county, presided by the chieftain who was assisted by the notary, the supreme lords, the noblemen’s lords, the two vice-chieftains and several deacons, used to meet periodically, several times per year (Susana Andea, 2003). It had important duties in fiscal, administrative and military matters. The county delegates in the General Assembly of Nations were also appointed during these meetings.

Counties, just like the Szekler or Saxon seats, had some autonomy, which allowed them to create, within the limits of the general regulatory framework of the Principality, their own regulations and bylaws, such as the bylaws of Cluj (1650) and Turda (1664) counties, which brought clarifications regarding the local implementation of laws.

After 1658, when the Turks created the Pashalik of Oradea, part of the Ottoman Empire, things got extremely tense in the western part of today’s Cluj County. Between 1660 and 1680, the Turks claimed that the pashalik should also expand into the upper basin of Crișul Repede, going therefore as far as Huedin and Izvoru Crișului, or even farther, up to Gilău, a situation which escalated to such an extent that armed conflicts took place in 1674 because the Ottoman and the Transylvanian authorities could not reach any agreement regarding boundaries. This was probably caused by the rather unclear situations existing in the past concerning the boundaries between Bihor and Cluj counties, as well as by the Ottoman intention to maintain some ambiguity, which would enable them to incorporate larger territories into the pashalik. Dăbâca and Inner Solnocu counties also lost some of their territories to the Turks (the Pashalik of Oradea), in their western part, located in today’s Sălaj County (I.A. Pop *et al*, 2008a). Things got better after 1683 when the Turks, defeated under the walls of Vienna, withdrew.

The Szekler seats did not change their organization to a large extent either. Since the title of chieftain of the Szeklers was held by the prince, a “substitute” emerged, i.e. the supreme general of the Szeklers, which reveals the Szeklers’ important military role in the principality. Each Szekler seat was originally run by the supreme captain of the seat, which was gradually replaced by the royal lord. The secondary seats were run by a royal vice-lord.

The General Assembly of the Seat played an important part in the Szekler community. It was presided by a royal lord, was convened several times per year and had multiple duties, such as administrative, military, fiscal and judiciary ones. The judicial powers were taken over by the General Judgment Seat.

The Szeklers too were concerned with creating their own regulations and bylaws in order to locally implement the general legislation of the principality. Originally, in the 15th and 16th centuries, “the Szekler nation’s bylaws” were established, and the bylaws of each seat were added in the 17th century, some of which having been drafted for prolonged periods of time (I.A. Pop *et al*, 2008a).

Certain cities, referred to as “free royal cities” (*civitas libera ac regia* or *liberae regiae civitates*) had a special status. Such was the case of Cluj and Gherla – the latter being particularly important after a large number of Armenians were colonized, for which reason it was also known as Armenopolis between the end of the 17th century and the beginning of the 19th century. The free royal cities had the same rights and freedoms as the counties, without depending at all on the counties. Therefore, cities used to send their representatives to the General Assembly of the country, were entitled to draft their own regulations and bylaws, valid on their territory, and elected their own ruling bodies, which had administrative, fiscal and judicial duties (A. Dörner, 2008). Legal issues were directly referred to the Princely Board. Cities were also entitled to issue documents bearing their own seal.

The right to participate in running the city was solely given to the people who had the capacity as citizens and were registered into the citizens’ registry. The registration was made based on the statements given by two citizens who had to testify that the future citizen’s financial status was adequate. A community of citizens was therefore created, who had certain privileges, but also helped in fulfilling the cities’ obligations (A. Dörner, 2008).

A primary lord or a supreme lord, elected on an annual basis, was at the helm of the city. He was assisted by 12 jurors, also referred to as senators, plus the assembly of the 100 men (*centumviri*), which was headed by a speaker (spokesperson). The town’s primary lord was usually the town’s representative in the General Assembly of the country (Susana Andea, 2003). The town’s magistrate, the lord and the jurors respectively, had administrative, fiscal, military and judicial duties.

An intermediate category consisted of the nobiliary towns (*civitas* or *oppida nobilium*), including Dej (since 1668) and Turda (Turda Nouă since 1616 and Turda Veche since 1668), which were also county seats and were named so because their citizens had freedoms similar to the ones specific to the nobiliary status. Their inhabitants also had several privileges, to an extent almost similar to the inhabitants of the free royal cities. Such towns were under the authority of the county, but could elect their officials freely (A. Dörner, 2008).

A lower category of towns consisted of tax-paying towns (*loca taxalia*) and boroughs (*oppidum*), which had an uncertain urban status, on the borderline between a town and a rural locality. Tax-paying towns (often referred to as boroughs) were named so because they paid an annual tax, however not on the basis of a number of taxation portions, as it was the case in rural settlements. They paid a set amount, directly to the princely treasury (A. Dörner, 2008). Some of these settlements, such as Huedin, were even given the right to send delegates to the country's diet. Other towns, Cojocna or Sic for example, were granted this status due to their salt mines.

3.2. Historical Context: The Period of the Habsburg Empire's Rule until the Revolution (1690-1848)

The Ottoman army's defeat under the walls of Vienna (1683) marked the end of the balance between the two big forces, the Habsburg Empire gaining more power. The Habsburgs launched a general offensive in the former Kingdom of Hungary. The failure of the diplomatic negotiations with Transylvania, vassal to the High Porte, resulted in the imperial armies' entering the Principality (1685). Extremely tough conditions were imposed on the Transylvanian people. Buda was conquered in 1686. The favourable course of the Austrian military operations did not leave to the Transylvanian people much room for negotiation. The principality was occupied again by the imperial troops who hardly faced any resistance at all. It was only in 1690 that the political and military context made it possible for the Principalities' relations with the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation (commonly referred to as the Habsburg Empire) to be regulated under the *Diploma Leopoldinum*, a document standing as a constitution. After several adjournments decided by the imperial forces, who were waiting for the circumstances to become favourable to them again in order to impose tougher conditions, the *Diploma* was finally approved on 4 December 1691 (I.A. Pop *et al*, 2008a). It was internationally acknowledged through the Treaty of Karlowitz (1699) and re-approved by the Nations, through the Treaty of Satu Mare (1711), which happened following the kuruc uprising.

Under the *Diploma*, Transylvania became a principality, however inside the Habsburg Empire, and was less autonomous than under the Turkish suzerainty. After the death of Michael Apafi (1690), his son, Michael Apafi II, should have succeeded to the princely throne. In fact, the latter has never had any princely powers, and no prince has ever been elected after his death in Vienna (1713). As a matter of fact, as early as 1691, the emperor conducted as a real prince and appointed a substitute for himself, as governor of Transylvania. At last, all the emperors were to take and hold the title of prince of Transylvania, and, starting

with 1765, that of grand prince (in keeping with the new name, the Grand Principality of Transylvania, which replaced the Principality of Transylvania). The imperial power consolidation was performed at the expense of the nobiliary power, which became increasingly useless (I.A. Pop *et al*, 2008b). The Transylvanian noblemen no longer had the authority to elect their prince, and after a while, not even the country's governor, who was also appointed by the authorities in Vienna. The emperor also appointed the supreme commander of the imperial army in the Principality, as well as its treasurer, at all times from among the people faithful to the Court in Vienna. The diet of Transylvania was getting increasingly limited in its functions, started to be convened less frequently and stopped being convened at all between 1762 and 1790 (I.A. Pop *et al*, 2008b).

The governor, later appointed president of the Gubernium (*Regium Gubernium praeses*), administered the principality on behalf of the emperor, being assisted by a Royal Gubernial Council (*Consilium Regium Guberniale*), which consisted of 12 members. All members were entitled, yet not obliged, to attend the Gubernium's meetings along with the governor, in a strictly regulated hierarchy, starting with the supreme general of the troops, followed by the provincial chancellor, the treasurer, the president of the Nations, the president of the Royal Board, the catholic bishop, the Saxons' chieftain, etc. The powers and the duties of the governor and the Gubernium, as supreme institutions of the Principality, covered all the issues unless they fell under the remit of specialized institutions (I.A. Pop *et al*, 2008b).

The headquarters of the governor and the Gubernium were originally established in Alba Iulia, and moved to Sibiu following the kuruc uprising (until 1790), in order to provide a better defence, since the headquarters of the Weapons' Prefecture and of the general commander of the Transylvanian imperial troops were also located there. As a matter of fact, the general commander also had to fulfill the governor's duties on a few occasions.

The Gubernium's headquarters were moved to Cluj from 1717 to 1731, and then in 1790, after the death of Emperor Joseph II (I.A. Pop *et al*, 2008b).

The supreme court in the Principality was the Royal Board (*Tabula Regia Judiciaria*), a successor of the former Princely Board, and played the role of an institution in charge with the cases referred to it by the General Judgment Seats of the counties, the Saxon seat and the free royal towns. It was headed by a president, who was also the lawful president of the Diet, and had the role of a gubernial advisor (I.A. Pop *et al*, 2008b). Three pro-notaries and 12 assessors were also members of this Board. After it repeatedly changed its venue, it established its residence in Mediaş in 1737, and starting with 1754, its permanent headquarters were in Târgu Mureş (with a brief interruption between 1786 and 1790).

The liaison between the central institutions of the Empire and the Transylvanian authorities was provided by the Aulic Chancellery, based in Vienna, which was originally run by a vice-chancellor in order to stress the subordination to the Gubernium and the country's Chancellery. However, in 1742, Empress Maria Theresa changed the name of this institution's head into chancellor, and the chancellor was solely subordinated to the central power, the supremacy towards the provincial chancellor being therefore guaranteed. Under his plans to simplify the State's structures, Joseph II merged the Aulic Chancellery with the Hungary's Chancellery in 1782, however, this reform, like all his other reforms, only lasted until his death in 1790 (I.A. Pop *et al*, 2008b).

The central institutions of the Principality also included the Diet (*Dieta*) which consisted of the delegates of the three privileged nations and the four acknowledged religions, plus the "royalists", who were specifically invited by the emperor. The Diet was led by the president of the Royal Board. Its role became less prominent as the central power was getting increasingly authoritarian (I.A. Pop *et al*, 2008b).

The counties, the Szekler seats and the Saxon seats hardly underwent any change before the Teresian and Josephine reforms. The first territorial change took place as late as 1765 and consisted in the separation of the two districts of Alba county into distinct counties, Alba de Jos (Lower Alba) and Alba de Sus (Upper Alba). A more dramatic change happened in 1783-1784, but only for a short time. By the rescript of 26 November 1783, following the indications given by reformist emperor Joseph II, the system of old counties, Szekler and Saxon seats, was abolished, and the territory was divided into ten counties and nine free cities, without any enclaves and without taking into consideration the "rights" of the three privileged nations. The representatives of the Transylvanian Gubernium objected, but were forced, in the end, to accept this split-up, on condition that one county is added. Thus, the final project, including 11 counties, entered into force under the rescript of 3 June 1784 (I. S. Pușcariu, 1864). The counties were: Alba, Cluj, Făgăraș, Hunedoara, Odorhei, Sibiu, Solnocul de Mijloc (Middle Solnoc), Solnocul Interior (Inner Solnoc), Târnava, Trei Scaune (Three Seats) and Turda. They were grouped together into three districts, Cluj (its counties being Cluj, Solnocu Interior, Solnocu de Mijloc and Turda), Sibiu (with Sibiu, Alba, Târnava and Hunedoara counties) and Făgăraș (with Făgăraș, Odorhei and Trei Scaune counties).

Cluj district was the only one of the aforementioned counties that was located on today's territory of Cluj County and incorporated Cluj, Solnocu Interior, Solnocu de Mijloc and Turda counties. Dăbâca County disappeared for a short time, being incorporated into the two neighbouring counties, Solnocu Interior (in the North) and Cluj (in the South). The Szekler seat of Arieș also ceased to exist temporarily, merging with Turda County.

Such organization by districts and counties only lasted until the edict of restitution of 1790, when the situation preceding the reforms was reinstated, the old counties, the Szekler and the Saxon seats being re-established (I.A. Pop *et al*, 2008b).

Each county was run, as before, by a supreme chieftain who was now appointed by the Gubernium and was the Gubernium's representative in the territory. After 1763, when the Continuous Judgment Board was set up, the supreme chieftain also became the president of this board. He was assisted by a vice-chieftain, elected by the County' Assembly from among the noblemen. The General Assembly of the county, the members of which were noblemen only, used to meet twice a year. In the aftermath of the Teresian and Josephine reforms, the number of vice-chieftains was increased and one deputy vice-chieftain was added. The noblemen's lords, vice-lords and the royal preceptors were subordinated to the vice-chieftains and they altogether formed the jurors or the assessors. A notary, assisted by a vice-notary, who were supported, in their work, by secretaries and scribes, were in charge with the activity of the county (I.A. Pop *et al*, 2008b).

The Szekler seats had a demilitarized organization after the kuruc uprising, and the kuruc too supported this type of organization. It resembled the one of the counties, the only difference being that the person holding the supreme function was called a royal lord, and not a chieftain. He was assisted by several royal vice-lords and royal preceptors, who formed the assessing jurors, as well as by a notary, a vice-notary, secretaries, scribes. Like in the case of the counties, each seat had its General Assembly. Judicially, one general judgment seat, assisted by a secondary one, was in place in every seat until the set-up of the Continuous Judgment Boards (I.A. Pop *et al*, 2008b).

Although the Josephine reforms were largely correct and, in some instances, went well beyond the spirit of the time, anticipating reforms that were to be implemented later, the emperor did not understand the need to negotiate such reforms with the representatives of the privileged nations. In January 1790, on his deathbed, the emperor revoked most of his reforms, including the administrative ones, the previous system being therefore reinstated.

Thus, in the first half of the 19th century, the administrative organization of the Principality of Transylvania was mostly similar to the one that was in place in the Middle Ages. Due to the larger number of written sources and documents, this organization can be looked at in a much more accurate way.

3.3. Administrative Divisions and the Main Settlements

During the first half of the 19th century, today's territory of Cluj County was mainly part (from North to South) of Solnocu Interior (Inner Solnoc), Dăbâca, Cluj and Turda counties. A small portion in the extreme west was part of Bihor County. Another portion, in the South, was included into the Szekler seat of Arieș.

Solnocu Interior (Inner Solnocu) or Belső-Szolnok County, the northernmost county of Transylvania, comprised the northern part of today's Cluj County, also expanding to the west (in today's Sălaj County), north (in today's Maramureş County) and east (in today's Bistrița-Năsăud County). The main urban centres were **Dej**, which also had the town status (*mezőváros*), and **Gherla**, which had a higher status, of free royal city (*szabad király város*). Like most Transylvanian counties, it was divided into an "Upper" district (*Felső kerület*) and a "Lower" district (*Alsó kerület*), which were divided, in their turn, into smaller rural districts or circles (*járás*).



Fig. 1. Administrative divisions and the main settlements at the beginning of the 19th century. *Source: authors' own creation.*

The **Upper District** of Solnocu Interior County was located in the northern part of this county, north of Someșu Mare and of Someș, up to Țibleş Mountains and Breaza Summit. In today Cluj County, it was represented by two

circles: **Reteag**, which also incorporated today's communes Cuzdrioara and Chiuiești, and **Cățcău**, further West, which comprised the villages located north of Someș belonging to Cășeiu and Cățcău communes.

The **Lower District** of Solnocu Interior County expanded more into today's territory of Cluj County, being represented by four circles: Vad, Dej, Bobâlna and Unguraș. **Vad** circle, which is the smallest on today's territory of Cluj County (it also stretched up to the territory of today's Sălaj County), only incorporated the villages which are now part of **Vad** commune and the Peștera village (which is today part of Dej City). **Dej** circle was broader, it stretched from Cetan and Dej, in the North, to Livada (Iclod commune) in the South, incorporating all the villages on the left (western) bank of Someșul Mic and on certain tributaries, up to Tărpiu, Șigău, Corneni and (part of) Aluniș, therefore comprising Jichișu de Jos (Lower Jichișu) commune, and villages such as Nima, Bunești, Pintic, Orman or Băița. The border between Solnocu Interior and Dăbâca counties seem to have been established here right on Măr valley, which is a left tributary of Someșul Mic. Further West, there was **Bobâlna** circle, centred on the valley catchment of Olpret (today's Bobâlna commune), and also incorporating several villages in the upper basin of Șimișna valley, such as Escu, Ciubanca, Ciubăncuța, Osoi. The border with Dăbâca County was established on the biggest heights of Bobâlna Hill, on the separation line between Olpret and Șimișna valleys, part of Solnocu Interior, in the north, and Lonea (or Luna), Cubleș and Lujerdiu valleys in the south, inside Dăbâca County.

East of Someșul Mic, in the Transylvanian Plain, Solnocu Interior (Inner Solnocu) County had only one circle, **Unguraș**, that incorporated all the settlements located South of Someșul Mare, in today's Mica and Unguraș communes, as well as East of Someșu Mic, in the South, up to the city of Gherla (inclusively), therefore comprising Mintiu Gherlii too. The southern border of the county was on the line that joins Gherla, Fizeșu Gherlii and Ceaba localities, including them. Therefore, the basin of Fizeșu was part of Dăbâca County, except for Fizeșu Gherlii village.

Dăbâca County stretched, in its turn, from West to East, and was divided into an "Upper" district and a "Lower" district, the boundary between the two being the valley of Someșul Mic. The county seat was Bonțida. Unlike Solnocu Interior County (where districts are located in the North and in the South, respectively), but similarly to Cluj County, the Upper District in Dăbâca County was located on the western side, more precisely in the Someș Plateau and Cluj and Dej Hills, whereas the Lower District was located on the eastern side, in the Transylvanian Plain. The difference resides in the fact that the Apuseni Mountains were located to the West of Cluj County, which explains the "Upper" district's name, whereas the Cluj and Dej Hills are hardly any higher than the Transylvanian Plain. As a matter of fact, Dăbâca County was the only one in Transylvania that did not encompass any mountain areas.

The **Upper District** of Dăbâca County included, from today's territory of Cluj County, three circles: Panticeu, Iclod and Răscruci. **Panticeu** circle comprised, from today's territory of Cluj County, the upper basin of Lonea (or Luna) valley, upstream of Panticeu, centered on today's communes Panticeu and Recea Cristur. The middle and lower basin of Lonea valley, downstream of Dârja, as well as the valleys which are parallel to Lonea valley to the North, i.e. Lujerdiu and the valley of Măr (the right side only, in the water flow direction), were comprised in **Iclod** circle, the eastern boundary of which is the valley of Someșul Mic. Its territory was much the same as the territory of today's communes Iclod, Dăbâca, Cornești and (partially) Aluniș. Further South, there was **Răscruci** circle, which stretched along the basin of Borșa valley, up to the springs of Borșa, totally or partially incorporating today's communes Așchileu, Vultureni and Borșa, as well as Răscruci village (Bonțida commune), or Sânmărtin and Satu Lung villages (Chinteni commune). Here, the southern border of Dăbâca County coincided with the separation line between the catchment of Borșa valley, in the north, having a flow direction mostly from West to East and being part of this county, and the valleys in the south, such as Valea Mare, Popești, Chintău, Valea Caldă, Feiurdeni, with a flow direction roughly or mostly from North to South, which were part of Cluj County.

Districtul de Jos (The Lower District) of Dăbâca County stretched East of Someșul Mic valley, in the Transylvanian Plain. Two circles, Sic and Buza, were located in what is today Cluj County. Most settlements were part of **Sic** circle, which stretched on the right bank of Someșul Mic, from Bonțida, in the South, to Silivaș and Hășdate (which today belong to Gherla City), in the North. It comprised, in its central and eastern part, the settlements located in the middle and lower basin of Fizeș, down to Nicula (inclusively), the only exception being Fizeșu Gherlii village (located in Solnocu Interior County). Sic village was located in the centre of the circle. In the South it expanded to Coasta, Tăușeni, Băgaciu, Sucutard villages, and in the North-East, to Năsal, Diviciorii Mici, Târgușor, Sânmărtin, Sâmboieni and Cutca villages, including today Țaga commune. Further East, there was **Buza** circle, and the only villages included in this circle from today's territory of Cluj County were Buza, Geaca, Feldioara, Copru and Lacu.

South of Dăbâca County, there was **Cluj County** which also largely stretched from West to East, from the Apuseni Mountains to the Eastern Carpathians. Like the other counties, it was divided into an "Upper" district (in the West) and a "Lower" district (in the East), the boundary between the two being almost next to Cluj City, which had the highest possible status at that time, i.e. free royal city (*szabad király város*).

The **Upper District** was located in its western part, which coincided with the mountain area (Bihar-Vlădeasa Mountains, Meseș Mountains, Gilău Mountains and partially Muntele Mare Mountains), and some basin areas (Huedin

Basin, part of Almaş-Agrij Basin), hills or plateaus (Păniceni Plateau, parts of Cluj and Feleacu Hills).

Thus, the westernmost circle was **Bicălatu**, which comprised the villages that are today part of Ciucea, Poieni, Săcuieu communes and partially of Sâncraiu commune (Alunişu and Brăişoru villages), as well as certain localities in today's Sălaj County. **Bihor County** stretched from west of Ciucea and included Negreni and Bucea villages which are part of today's Cluj County. It was not part of the Grand Principality of Transylvania, but was part of the Kingdom of Hungary. Although both of them were part of the Habsburg Empire, they had different administrations and separate sets of laws.

East and South of Bicălatu circle, there was **Huedin** circle, the centre of which was located in the town (*mezőváros*) of the same name. It largely expanded South of Huedin, on the territory of today's (partially) Sâncraiu, Călăţele, Mărgău, Beliş, Mănăstireni, Râşca and (partially) Izvoru Crişului communes. **Almaşu** circle was located a little further to the North, mostly in today's Sălaj County, but also comprised a locality which is now in Cluj County, i.e. Nadăşu (Izvoru Crişului commune). **Gilău** circle largely expanded to the East and South-East of Huedin circle. It comprised almost the entire upper basin of Someşul Mic, incorporating the valleys of Someşul Cald (downstream of Beliş), Someşul Rece and Căpuş, the slopes and the plateaus between them (which are specific in Mărişel or Măguri-Răcăţău communes), as well as other smaller tributaries starting from Păniceni, Mărişel and Măguri in the West, to Cluj-Napoca town (inclusively), in the East. It therefore comprised today's Mărişel, Măguri-Răcăţău, Căpuşu Mare, Gilău, Floreşti communes, Vlaha and Stolna villages in Săvădisla commune, Feleacu village and the greatest part of today's Cluj-Napoca City (excluding Someşeni district, which was a stand-alone village at that time).

Further North, **Baciu** circle comprised the largest part of Nadăş valley catchment, which almost coincided with the territory of today's Aghireşu and Gârbău communes, as well as the largest part of Baciu commune. East and North-East of it, there was **Feiurdeni** circle, which comprised the whole territory of today's Sânpaul commune, as well as the largest part of Chinteni commune and some villages in Baciu commune (Coruşu, Popeşti). Like in the case of Baciu circle, the circle's centre was in the easternmost locality (Feiurdeni); these two circles, Baciu and Feiurdeni, covered parts of Cluj Hills, but did not comprise any mountain areas.

The **Lower District** of Cluj County stretched to the East and South-East of Cluj City and Feleacu Hill, exclusively to the South and East of Someşul Mic valley, inside the Transylvanian Plain, and comprised three circles that are today part of Cluj County, i.e. Cojocna, Mociu and Pălatca. The westernmost circle was **Cojocna**, the centre of which was in the town (*mezőváros*) of the same name. It comprised the villages located East and South-East of Cluj, including

Someșeni (today's district of Cluj-Napoca City), Gheorgheni, Aiton, most of the villages in Apahida commune (Apahida, Sânnicoară, Dezmir, Pata, Corpadea) and in Cojocna commune, up to Iuriu de Câmpie (inclusively). **Mociu** circle was located further East and roughly coincided with the territory of today's Frata, Mociu, Suatu and Cămărașu communes. In the East, it stretched beyond the border of today's Cluj County. **Pălatca** circle was located North of Mociu, it stretched from West, in the valley of Someșul Mic, including the villages which are part of today's Jucu commune, to East, up to Cătina, also comprising, between these borders, villages which are part of Căianu, Pălatca or Mociu communes (Ghirișu Român and Chesău).

Like Cluj County, **Turda County** had an elongated shape from West to East; however, unlike Cluj County, the **Upper District** included the area located in the East, towards the Eastern Carpathians, whereas the Lower District comprised the catchment of Arieș Valley, from West (Apuseni Mountains) to the point where Arieș spills into Mureș.

Consequently, the part of Turda County which is now on the territory of Cluj County was solely located in its **Lower District**. This, in its turn, was divided into several circles including Lupșa, Trascău, Săvădisla, Câmpie and Arieș which are located on today's territory of Cluj County.

Lupșa circle comprised the largest part of today's communes Iara (except Buru and Borzești), Valea Ierii and Băișoara (except Săcel), and was centred on Iara Basin and Iara valley. It also covered Arieș valley, upstream of Lungești, on today's territory of Alba County.

Trascău circle was located East of Lupșa circle, comprising the villages of Petreștii de Jos (Lower Petrești), Petreștii de Mijloc (Middle Petrești), Petreștii de Sus (Upper Petrești), Săndulești, Borzești and Buru on today's territory of Cluj County, as well as other villages located in today's Alba County.

The most important circle, expansion-wise, was **Săvădisla**. It covered a large area, centred on Hășdate Basin and the western and southern slopes of Feleacu Hill. It comprised the villages of Săvădisla commune (excepting Vlaha and Stolna, located in Cluj County), the entire Ciurila commune, Săcel village (Băișoara commune), several villages in Petreștii de Jos commune, Vâlcele village (Feleacu commune) and all the villages in Tureni commune, stretching, in the South-East, to Copăceni (Săndulești commune), close to Turda.

The **Transylvanian Plain** circle stretched from Turda and comprised two towns (*mezőváros*): Turda and Viișoara. It expanded mostly to the North and to the East of these towns, on the territory of today's Tritenii de Jos and Ceanu Mare communes, and further, into today's Mureș County.

South-East of it, there was **Arieș** circle which comprised today's Câmpia Turzii City, called Ghiriș at that time, which had the status of town (*mezőváros*), as well as the villages which are part of Luna commune. This circle too expanded into today's Mureș County, to the East.

The **Szekler seat of Arieș** was located South of Turda County, at times also having the shape of enclaves inside this county. It was one of the smallest Szekler seats, and the only one somehow isolated from the others which were located in the eastern part of Transylvania. The Szekler seat of Arieș was also divided into two circles (*járás*); it was too small to be divided into districts, however the circles' names complied with the district designation "rule", and therefore there was an "Upper" circle and a "Lower" circle, depending on the villages' localization. The **Upper Circle** of Arieș seat was mostly located on today's territory of Cluj County and comprised Mihai Viteazul, Moldovenești, Cheia, Cornești, Plăiești, Bădeni, Pietroasa and Stejeriș villages, all of them situated West and South-West of Turda town. The **Lower Circle** of Arieș seat only comprised three localities of today's Cluj County, i.e. Călărași, Poiana (today, a district of Turda City) and Podeni.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The analysis shows a remarkable stability of the administrative divisions in the current Cluj County for a long period of time, more than 300 years. In fact, some of the administrative divisions, like counties, were inherited unaltered from the previous period. Therefore, it is noticeable that at least the counties stayed almost unchanged since their setting in the Middle Ages until the 19th century with the advent of modernism and the Industrial Revolution. This has also implied that the county seats have acquired and maintained for a long time an administrative function, which enabled them to establish spatial configurations within the counties, triggering polarizing relations, centred on them as seats of local government.

It is therefore not by accident that the most important cities during this period of time, Cluj, Gherla, Dej and Turda, remained the most important cities in Cluj County today. The only former county seat which did not reach urban status is Bonțida, but this was also due to the movement of the county seat to Gherla and then the disappearance of Dăbâca County during the second half of the 19th century, when it was merged mainly with the neighbouring Solnoc Interior County, forming Solnoc-Dăbâca County. On the other hand, it is also true that, despite the county seat status, Bonțida was less developed than its counterparts even then.

The administrative function helped the county seats to become market towns, and to acquire further urban functions, which led to their continuous development. Cluj, Gherla, Turda and Dej have retained their importance throughout several centuries up until today, and their historical heritage and

prominence still plays an important part in the present regional framework. The loss of county seat status in the case of Turda and Dej during the 20th century had a certain negative impact on these cities, whose attraction areas have shrunk. At the same time, Cluj-Napoca managed to increase its importance and to become a regional metropolis.

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