

Rulers and Their Influence on the Boyars' Landed Estates in Wallachia during the Second Half of the 16th Century

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Abstract: This study aims to understand the modalities within which the boyars of Wallachia managed to extend their landed estates in the second half of the sixteenth-century. The selection of this period is determined by the internal and external changes that took place in Wallachian politics and society. Wallachia experienced growing political instability, reflected in short-lived reigns. At the same time, a large landed estate meant prestige for a boyar, a status that could be displayed for example in the churches he founded. The extension or the limitation of the boyars' landed estates was influenced by their relations with the ruler. Therefore the following questions are worth asking: How did the boyars manage to acquire villages? What were the uses these properties were put to? During which periods of time did the boyars receive villages from the rulers or on the contrary lose them?

Key words: nobility's land, politics strategy, prestige, enrichment, poverty

Rezumat: Domnii și influența lor asupra domeniilor boierești din Țara Românească în a doua jumătate a secolului al XVI-lea Studiul de față își propune să surprindă căile prin care boierimea din Țara Românească și-a extins domeniul în a doua jumătate a secolului al XVI-lea, o perioadă dominată de schimbări interne și externe care au afectat atât viața politică, cât și cea socială. Țara Românească traversează o perioadă de accentuată instabilitate politică, ilustrată de domniile scurte. În același timp, un domeniu extins reprezenta pentru un boier prestigiu, un statut care putea fi reflectat de bisericile pe care le-a fondat. Însă, extinderea sau dimpotrivă pierderea unor proprietăți a fost foarte mult influențată de relațiile boierimii cu domnia. De aceea, studiul de față încearcă să răspundă la câteva întrebări: Cum au reușit boierii să achiziționeze sate? Cum au folosit aceste proprietăți? Care au fost perioadele în care boierii au câștigat sau au pierdut sate?

Cuvinte cheie: domeniu nobiliar, strategii politice, prestigiu, îmbogățire, sărăcie

Ever since the beginnings of Wallachia as a political unit,

documents made reference to the rulers' close collaborators, who assisted these voivodes in acquiring and holding on to power. This study undertakes an in-depth research of boyars as the social class of the landed gentry. Over the course of time, this class has enjoyed the attention of other historians, too. In his work *Domeniul domnesc în Țara Românească* [*The Voivodal Estate in Wallachia*], Ion Donat analyses the ways in which voivodes could acquire or lose villages. In the context of his research, this historian also highlights the changes that affected the ruler and the boyars in the second half of the 16th century and that also influenced their landed estates.¹ These changes are also addressed in Paul Cernovodeanu's study "Clanuri, familii, autorități, puteri" ["Clans, Families, Authorities, Powerholders"]. This historian approaches the boyars' relations with the ruler during the 15th-16th centuries, noting the landed gentry's growing interest in acquiring positions and securing close relations with the voivode. The relations between the ruler and the boyars are also addressed in Nicolae Stoicescu's study "Legăturile de rudenie dintre domni și marea boierime (...)" ["The Kinship Ties between Rulers and the Great Boyars (...)]."² This researcher compiles a list of high dignitaries from the 15th-18th centuries who were related to the voivode, emphasizing the importance of such kinship ties for both the ruler and the boyars. The subject of the Wallachian landed gentry is also analyzed in Andrei Pippidi's work *Tradiția politică bizantină în țările române în secolele XVI-XVIII* [*The Byzantine Political Tradition in the Romanian Countries during the 16th-18th Centuries*]. The researcher demonstrates the transition of the boyars from a "social class" to a "political class" by means of obtaining political functions.³ Such a change is also approached by Marian Coman in his study *Putere și teritoriu* [*Power and Territory*]. In analyzing this aspect, the historian shows that the role of boyars underwent transformations in the second half of the 16th century. There occurred a transition from landed gentry

¹ Ion Donat, *Domeniul domnesc în Țara Românească (sec. XV-XVI)* [The Voivodal Demesne in Wallachia (15th-16th centuries)], (București: Enciclopedică, 1996), pp. 92-115.

² Nicolae Stoicescu, 'Legăturile de rudenie dintre domni și marea boierime și importanța lor pentru istoria politică a Țării Românești și Moldovei (secolul XV- începutul secolului al XVIII-lea)', [The kingship ties between Rulers and the Great Boyars and their importance in the political history of Wallachia and Moldavia (15th-18th centuries)] in *Danubius*, 5 (1971).

³ Andrei Pippidi, *Tradiția politică bizantină în țările române în secolele XVI-XVIII* [The byzantine political tradition in the Romanian Countries during the 16th-18th centuries], (București: Academia Republicii Socialiste România, 1983).

whose main role was military to a class of boyars who were interested in political functions.⁴ Although this class has been a subject of interest for historians, the analysis of the boyars' landed estates in connection with the voivode represents a topic that has not been considered in a thorough manner by the existing research. In this study therefore, I will focus on the boyars' landed estates in Wallachia during the second half of the 16th century. The selection of this period is determined by the internal and external changes that took place in Wallachian politics and society. Although the Romanian Countries initially had a special status, being solely tributary to the Porte, in the second half of the 16th century they increasingly began to be considered a part of the Ottoman Empire. The financial difficulties of the Ottoman treasury brought about an increase in the tribute the Romanian Countries owed the empire. With it, the voivodes' obligations to the sultan also increased. The Turks' violation of the Romanian Countries' autonomous status became a practice in the second half of the 16th century. Although the ruler had, up to that time, been elected by boyars and confirmed by the sultan, during this period the Turks became increasingly involved in the appointment of the voivode. The Sultan offered the reigning insignia to that ruler who was compliant with the Ottoman policy and who paid the highest amount.⁵ In such a context, Wallachia experienced growing political instability, reflected in short-lived reigns. Whereas until the second half of the 16th century there were 61 reigns and 35 voivodes, in the latter part of the century there were only 15 reigns and 11 rulers. Essentially, towards the end of the 16th century almost every reign was represented by another ruler. Three of the 11 voivodes ruled repeatedly: Mircea Ciobanul three times, Alexandru II Mircea twice, and Mihnea Turcitul twice. By contrast, in the previous centuries, almost every ruler had two or three reigns.⁶ This demonstrates not only the instability of

⁴ According to Marian Coman, the "horse-tax" (*darea calului*) revealed the military role of the boyars. This tax was encountered with lesser frequency in the second half of the 16th century. See Marian Coman, *Putere și teritoriu: Țara Românească medievală (secolele XIV-XVI)* [Power and territory: Medieval Wallachia (14th- 16th centuries)], (Iași: Polirom, 2013), pp. 33-36.

⁵ Constantin Rezachevici, *Cronologia critică a domnilor din Țara Românească și Moldova, Partea I. Secolele XIV-XVI* [Critical chronology of the Wallachian and Moldavian rulers. Part 1, 14th-16th centuries], (București: Enciclopedică, 2001), p. 25.

⁶ Ioan Aurel Pop- Ioan Bolovan (eds.), *Istoria României: compendiu* [The history of Romania: compendium], Second revised edition, (Cluj-Napoca: Academia Română, Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2007), pp. 716-717.

central power, but also that of the dignitaries. The coming of a new voivode to the Wallachian throne entailed the fact that the dignitaries who had been close to the deposed ruler were sent into exile.⁷ Besides facing exile, the landed gentry also experienced certain changes that affected their duties in the second half of the 16th century. Initially, the boyars formed a social class whose primary concern was military service. Their relations with the ruler consisted mainly of the military service they rendered to the voivode. In exchange for this, they received land from the ruler or were exempted from certain obligations, which did not include military service.⁸ The documents of Wallachia present a change that took place during the reign of Mircea cel Bătrân, when the ruling council gained contour. Originally the ruling council was composed of boyars without political functions. In the second half of the 15th century, however, there was an increase in the number of high dignitaries who were members of the ruling council. Securing a political office brought social prestige to a boyar, all the more so since a political function demonstrated his close relationship with the ruler. Both the ruler and the boyar were interested in such a relationship. The ruler wanted to have loyal boyars by his side, to assist him in all his actions. The voivodes' interest in maintaining these relations grew during the second half of the 16th century, due to the influence that the landed gentry could exert on the enthronement of a ruler.⁹ Not infrequently, however, the documents recorded the existence of tense moments between the boyars and the voivode. Most cases of this kind were encountered during the reigns of Mircea Ciobanul and Alexandru II Mircea.¹⁰ These conflicts were fueled by the ruler's aggressive policy

⁷ Camil Mureșanu- Ioan Aurel Pop- Teodor Teoteoi, "Instituții și viață de stat," [Institutions and life in administration] in Ștefan Ștefănescu- Camil Mureșanu- Ioan Aurel Pop (eds.), *Istoria Românilor*, vol. 4. *De la Universitatea creștină către Europa "patriilor,"* [The history of Romanians. Vol 4, From the Christian University to the Europe of nations], (București: Enciclopedică, 2012), pp. 199-200.

⁸ *Documenta Romaniae Historica* (hereinafter DRH), B. Țara Românească, eds. Andrei Oșetea et al. (București: Academia Republicii Socialiste România, 1966), vol. 1 (1247-1500), pp. 50-51, 80-82.

⁹ A. D. Xenopol, *Istoria Românilor din Dacia Traiană* [The history of Romanians from Dacia Traiana], (București: Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1988), vol. 3, pp. 459-462.

¹⁰ The statistic refers to the reigns from the second half of the 16th century. It has been compiled on the basis of the internal documents preserved. Of course, the number of cases may change depending on new documentary discoveries. In any case, they were mentioned during the reigns of rulers who adopted a harsh treatment towards the boyars. The voivodes who adopted such a policy in the

against the boyars. In order to bring such a policy to an end, the boyars requested support from the sultan. Although they could influence the enthronement of the voivode, the boyars wanted to have close relations with the ruler. Such relations could ensure their growing economic power. The wealth of some boyars consisted in money and precious objects, as well as in landed estates. Land played an important role in the medieval and early modern world, as boyars were interested in owning estates that were as large as possible. A large landed estate meant prestige for a boyar, a status that could also be displayed in the churches he founded. Building places of worship and contributing to their maintenance through donations reinforced the prestigious image of boyars, as reflected in the murals of their churches. This led to the formation of what Răzvan Theodorescu calls “new men,” people who wanted to display their luxury, power and prestige. This power was also reflected in their vast landed estates, from which boyars made donations to the places of worship.¹¹ What other uses were there for the boyars’ estates? According to more recent studies on the economy of the Romanian Countries, Wallachia and Moldavia were not major producers of grain. The main occupation here was animal husbandry, animals being traded off.¹² Animals were also used for the payment of certain taxes, when coins were not sufficient,¹³ but also in battles, like in the case of horses.¹⁴ Thus, land was used mostly for grazing and less for agriculture. Used for various purposes, for increasing economic power

period studied were Mircea Ciobanul and Alexandru II Mircea.

¹¹ Răzvan Theodorescu, *Itinerarii medievale* [Medieval Itineraries], (București: Meridiane, 1979), pp. 43-69.

¹² Bogdan Murgescu, *Țările Române între Imperiul Otoman și Europa Creștină* [The Romanian Countries between the Ottoman Empire and Christian Europe], (Iași: Polirom, 2012), pp. 175, 207-212, 240-243, 246-250. See also his studies *Circulația monetară în țările române în secolul al XVI-lea* [Monetary circulation in the Romanian Countries in the 16th century], (București: Enciclopedică, 1996), pp. 249-252 and ‘Comerț și politică în relațiile româno-otomane (secolele XVI-XVIII)’, [Commerce and politics in the Romanian-Ottoman relationships (16th- 18th centuries)] in *Revista Istorică*, VIII, 9-10 (1997): 576-577, as well as Iolanda Țighiliiu, *Economia domanială. Creșterea animalelor în Țările Române (secolele XIV-XVII)* [Domaniac economy. Animal farming in the Romanian Countries (14th-17th centuries)], (Târgoviște: Cetatea de Scaun, 2009), pp. 85-87, 132.

¹³ Murgescu, *Circulația monetară*, pp. 188-189.

¹⁴ Ruxandra Cămărășescu, Coralia Fotino, ‘Din istoria prețurilor. Evoluția prețului cailor în Țara Românească (sec. XV-XVII)’, [From the history of prices. The horses price development in Wallachia (15th-17th centuries)] in *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie* (hereinafter SMIM), 6 (1973): 226-229.

or for displaying prestige, land continued to be an economic source of interest for boyars. The extension or the limitation of the boyars' landed estates was influenced by their relations with the ruler. If the relationship was favorable for the boyar, his estate could be extended through donations (*miluiri*) from the ruler and through invasions (*cotropiri*).

Donations (*miluiri*)

For fidelity to the ruler both in battle and in diplomacy, boyars received villages from him. In the documents of Wallachia, the term *miluire* meant both donation and confirmation. Confirmation was issued following the grievance a boyar presented to the ruler. While the reinforcement of ownership over an estate did not necessarily attest a very close relationship between the boyar and the ruler, the same thing did not apply in the case of donations. A voivode could grant villages to a boyar following the latter's "just and faithful services" rendered to him. Documents do not always make clear what service a particular boyar rendered to the voivode, but this can sometimes be learned from the ruler's policy, correlated with the moment of the donation. Analyzing documents from the second half of the 16th century, we may notice that most of the princely villages granted by the ruler to his boyars date from the period of Mihai Viteazul's reign. Even if we take into account the margin of error caused by the lack of information as to the owner of a particular village or the gaps in the documents from the second half of the 16th century, we can say that most of the princely donations date back to the time of Mihai Viteazul. Of course, this is based on the larger number of documents available to us, but the duration of his reign should also be taken into consideration. Mihai Viteazul had, indeed, the longest uninterrupted reign in the second half of the 16th century. The fact that this was a continuous reign fostered the creation of close ties between certain boyar families and the ruler. The vast demesne Mihai Viteazul had owned since the period in which he was a boyar may represent another reason for his multiple donations.¹⁵ The larger number of donations should also be analyzed in the context of the military and diplomatic policy pursued by the

¹⁵ Documents compiled after the reign of Mihai Viteazul mention numerous cases of invasions perpetrated by the voivode, via the forced purchase of some villages. These villages became part of the voivodal demesne and represented an economic source used by various rulers who succeeded Mihai to the throne to reward some boyars. See Ion Donat, *Domeniul domnesc*, pp. 206-210.

voivode. He granted estates mostly to the boyars who had stood by his side in battle. By giving villages to these boyars, the ruler wanted to strengthen his ties with them. To cope with the military conflicts and changes in the political arena, he sorely needed the support of the boyars. In some cases, the boyars who received princely donations were referred to in documents as “belonging to my reigning house.” This syntagm shows the close relationship between the boyars and the voivode. In her work *De bono coniugali*, Violeta Barbu associates this term with three connotations:

- 1) “It designates the extended family (both consanguineous and by alliance), led by the head of the family, and its servants”¹⁶
- 2) The term “house” also has the meaning of “ilk” or “ancestry,” i.e. the totality of those who have a common ancestor¹⁷
- 3) “House” also means the totality of the individuals placed in someone’s service.”¹⁸

This notion, encountered in documents of the 15th-16th centuries, has been the research subject of the historian Marius Liviu Ilie. Like Violeta Barbu, he understands the term “house” in the sense of family, which could “include, in addition to blood relatives, also spiritual ones.” It “could comprise the dignitaries who rendered certain personal services at the ruler’s court.”¹⁹

The close rapports between a boyar and the voivode were not predicated solely on the performance of a gesture of loyalty by the boyar, but also on the formation of family alliances. Thus, donations are also encountered in documents in the sense of a wedding or baptism gifts. Those whom the ruler bestowed with donations were relatives of the voivode. For instance, Chamberlain Vlad (*postelnic*) received a village from his baptismal godfather, Voivode Alexandru Mircea. This represented in fact an aid that the voivode offered his relatives to increase their domains, as well as a means for the ruler to draw closer to

¹⁶ Violeta Barbu, *De bono coniugali. O istorie a familiei din Țara Românească în secolul al XVII-lea* [De bono coniugali. A family history of Wallachia in 17th century], (București: Meridiane, 2003), p. 21.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Marius Liviu Ilie, ‘Domnia și ‘casa domniei’ în Țara Românească. Etimologie și semnificație istorică (secolele XIV-XVI) [Rulers and ‘home rule’ in Wallachia. Etymology and historical significance (14th-16th centuries)], in *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie “George Barițiu” Cluj-Napoca*, 48 (2009): 27- 45.

his relatives in order to remove the “peril” of treason.²⁰ Wedding or baptismal gifts consisted in land or jewelry, or both.²¹ Donations represented not only a means of emphasizing the close relationship between the boyar and the ruler, but also a means for the boyar to display his prestige.²² Which were the princely resources that enabled the voivode to grant so many donations? The origin of the jewelry or of the villages granted was diverse. They could enter the royal treasury via the confiscation of assets belonging to the traitorous boyars,²³ through purchases²⁴ or through exchanges of estates.²⁵

Invasions (*cotropiri*)

A frequently encountered way in which boyars increased their domains during this period was invasion (*cotropire*). An invasion meant taking possession of a village without any right to do so. It is significant that boyars invaded villages adjacent to their own estates. This was the case of Radu from Golești, who occupied the villages of Hareș, Cheiani and Căpățâneni.²⁶ All these villages were in Argeș County, just like the other estates Radu possessed.²⁷ Of course, there were also cases, few in number, in which the invaded villages did not belong to the same county as those owned by the boyars.²⁸ We should take into account the difficulty with which nobiliary estates could be formed in their entirety, as well as the lack of information regarding the moment when these boyars invaded other estates. Thus, it is difficult to determine whether a particular village was owned before or after the invasion of a neighboring settlement. The invasion strategy can be more clearly traced in the case of

²⁰ DRH, B. *Țara Românească*, (eds.) Ștefan Pascu et al. (București: Academia Republicii Socialiste România, 1985) vol. VI (1566-1570), pp. 301-302.

²¹ DRH, B. *Țara Românească*, (eds.) Ștefan Pascu et al. (București: Academia Republicii Socialiste România, 1988), vol. VII (1571-1575), pp. 118-120.

²² In this case, monasteries enjoyed the boyars' attention, villages being granted to them for redemptive purposes. See DRH, B. *Țara Românească*, (eds.) Mihai Berza et al. (București: Academia Republicii Socialiste România, 1975), vol. XI (1593-1600), pp. 80-82.

²³ DRH, B. *Țara Românească*, (eds.) Ștefan Pascu et al. (București: Academia Republicii Socialiste România, 1983), vol. V (1551-1565), pp. 202-204.

²⁴ DRH, B. *Țara Românească*, vol. VII (1571-1575), pp. 159-160.

²⁵ DRH, B. *Țara Românească*, vol. XI (1593-1600), pp. 577-578.

²⁶ DRH, B. *Țara Românească*, vol. V (1551-1565), pp. 125-126.

²⁷ DRH, B. *Țara Românească*, (eds.) Ștefan Pascu et al. (București: Academia Republicii Socialiste România, 1981) vol. IV (1536-1550), pp. 138-139, 166-167.

²⁸ DRH, B. *Țara Românească*, vol. V (1551-1565), pp. 139-140.

the large boyar estates, confirming the hypothesis formulated above.²⁹ It is clear that boyars aimed to consolidate their land ownership in a given region, only the petty gentry owning scattered villages. When they owned an estate that was situated at a greater distance from their domains, boyars most often exchanged tracts of land with those who owned estates closer to their villages. For example, Vintilă the Steward (*vornic*) from Cornățeni attempted to consolidate his domain in Dâmbovița County. To that end, he exchanged land with Dealu monastery, giving the village Drugănești in Ilfov County in exchange for the village Conțești in Dâmbovița County.³⁰ He is also mentioned in the documents as having invaded, together with Drăghici the Steward, Albu's land in Dobrița, a village that was also located in Dâmbovița County.³¹

Invasions also referred to a boyar's ownership of a village as a result of a forced sale, "by throwing them a few coins (*aspri*) for their land against their will."³² Invasion was not practiced only by boyars, but also by the ruler. Many villages were invaded through forced purchases by Mihai Viteazul. This may explain the multiple donations granted by the ruler to his boyars. Mihai Viteazul's practice of offering rewards to some of his loyal boyars, in the form of purchased villages, was also adopted by those who succeeded him to the throne.³³ The establishment of boundaries without witnesses was also considered an invasion.³⁴ A document from the time of Alexandru Mircea states that for setting the borders of the village Colareți, the ruler sent some of his boyars, together with "24 boyars, so that foreigners could be there, besides the relatives."³⁵ The stipulation that relatives should not be among those who drew the boundaries shows the voivode's intention to avoid

²⁹ For instance, the Buzești boyars invaded the village Izlaz, which neighbored on their estate. See *DRH, B. Țara Românească*, (eds.) Andrei Oțetea et al. (București: Academia Republicii Socialiste România, 1965) vol. XXI (1626-1627), pp. 201-206.

³⁰ *DRH, B. Țara Românească*, (eds.) Mihai Berza et al. (București: Academia Republicii Socialiste România, 1975), vol. III (1526-1535), pp. 169-170.

³¹ *DRH, B. Țara Românească*, vol. V (1551-1565), pp. 15-16.

³² *DRH, B. Țara Românească*, vol. V (1551-1565), pp. 97-98.

³³ *Documente privind Istoria României* [Documents concerning the history of Romania] (hereinafter *DIR*), *B. Țara Românească*, (eds.) Ion Ionașcu et al. (București: Academia Republicii Populare Române, 1954), veacul XVII, vol. IV (1621-1625), pp. 107-108, 178-180.

³⁴ Florența Ivaniuc, *Instituția hotărniciei în Țara Românească secolele al XIV-lea-al XVIII-lea* [The institution of the property grants in Wallachia: 14th-18th centuries], (București: Academia Română, 2003), pp. 39-43.

³⁵ *DRH, B. Țara Românească*, vol. VI (1566-1570), pp. 207-208.

fraudulence. Drawing boundaries without consulting all the neighbors was not only a strategy of boundary invasion, but also a practice of abusive estate expansion. Invasion took place mainly during reigns that were favorable for the boyars. For example, during the reign of Voivode Vintilă, Șerban the Steward from Izvorani drew the boundaries of the village Izvorani "from Mărăcineni and Vierăș, unbeknownst to the owner of these villages, Mărăcineni and Vierăș."³⁶ The complaint about this invasion was made by Radu from Golești and his wife, Caplea, during the reign of Voivode Pătrașcu. The documents from the second half of the 16th century mention the largest number of invasion cases that are known of and that were solved during other reigns. Filing a lawsuit during the reign of another ruler gives us information about the connection that existed between the ruler and the boyar whose estate was invaded or who invaded another estate. Șerban from Izvorani was High Steward during the reign of Voivode Vintilă. In this capacity, he was involved in boundary setting trials.³⁷ His high prerogatives enabled him to abusively enlarge his domain. Radu from Golești was a close associate of Radu Paisie,³⁸ the father of Pătrașcu cel Bun, who married him to Caplea.³⁹ The end of Radu Paisie's reign was a tumultuous period, full of riots, which led to the voivode's replacement with Mircea Ciobanul. During the latter's reign, Radu from Golești was forced to go into exile. He returned to Wallachia during the reign of Pătrașcu cel Bun, when he filed a complaint against the invasion perpetrated by Șerban from Izvorani. Therefore, his closeness to the voivode helped the boyar not only to increase his estate, but also to regain some of his violated rights.

It was not just a boyar's high office that assisted him in abusively expanding his domain, but also his close relationship with the voivode.⁴⁰ Such was the case of Ivan Noroceă, who invaded the village

³⁶ DRH, B. *Țara Românească*, vol. V (1551-1565), pp. 124-125.

³⁷ Nicolae Stoicescu, *Sfatul domnesc și marii dregători din Țara Românească și Moldova (sec. XIV-XVII)* [The royal council and the high officials of Wallachia and Moldavia (14th-17th centuries)], (București: Academia Republicii Socialiste România, 1968), pp. 124, 187-188.

³⁸ DIR, B. *Țara Românească*, (eds.) Ion Ionașcu et al. (București: Academia Republicii Populare România, 1951) veacul XVI, vol. II (1526-1550), pp. 294-295.

³⁹ DRH, B. *Țara Românească*, vol. IV (1536-1550), pp. 91-92.

⁴⁰ One example is that of *Sluger Drăgoiu* (Master of the Larder), who received from Baico, "of his own accord," an estate in Agești. After Drăgoiu removed it from tax obligations, Baico seized his estate back. The wrongdoing occurred "in the days of Voivode Mircea, Baico being in Voivode Mircea's house." See DRH, B. *Țara Românească*, vol. V (1551-1565), pp. 59-60.

Cernătești during the reign of Petru cel Tânăr. Ivan was the ruler's brother-in-law, having married Stana, the sister of Petru cel Tânăr.⁴¹ The high dignitary owned the village until the reign of Alexandru Mircea, when the voivode confirmed that the village was in the property of Glăvăciog Monastery, because it was "the just inheritance of the holy monastery."⁴² The fact that some invasions were discovered during the reign of another ruler could mean the lack of control on the part of the voivode, whose weakness was exploited by the boyars so that they might get rich. At the same time, it demonstrated the consolidated power of the boyar who was related to the voivode, a power that decreased as soon as his "protector" lost his throne. The arrival of a new ruler on the throne did not automatically entail the elimination of injustices produced during the previous reigns, as each voivode and his boyars followed their own interests. In order to reach their goals, they sometimes violated the law. Neagoe Basarab did so when, together with the Craiovești boyars, he invaded the village Tismana, giving it to Bistrița Monastery. They were able to invade it "because they were strong and powerful at that time." The moment they lost power, they also lost this village. This happened during the reign of Petru cel Tânăr.⁴³ Although there were cases of invasions perpetrated by the ruler, the latter stipulated, in the documents confirming ownership over certain estates, "that no one should dare take the above said pond, or the great ban, not even one of our highness's boyars, for that man will receive bad words from our highness."⁴⁴ Most invasions attested in the 16th century date from the reign of Mircea Ciobanul. This may also explain the lack of control exerted by the voivode, despite his authoritative policy, as well as an increase in the economic power of some boyar families who were close to the ruler.

The enrichment of some boyars who were close to the voivode led to the impoverishment of the aristocratic class whose members were hostile to the ruler. They could lose villages under various circumstances.

⁴¹ Nicolae Stoicescu, *Dicționar al marilor dregători din Țara Românească și Moldova (sec. XIV-XVII)* [Dictionary of the high officials from the Wallachia and Moldavia (14th-17th centuries)], (București: Enciclopedică, 1971), p. 66.

⁴² DRH, B. *Țara Românească*, vol. VI (1566-1570), pp. 184-185.

⁴³ DRH, B. *Țara Românească*, vol. VI (1566-1570), pp. 3-5.

⁴⁴ DRH, B. *Țara Românească*, vol. V (1551-1565), pp.173-174. Invasions were condemned by the Patriarch of Constantinople, Jeremias II. See DIR, B. *Țara Românească*, (eds.) Ion Ionașcu et al. (București: Academia Republicii Populare România, 1953), veacul XVI, vol. VI (1591-1600), pp. 41-42.

Treacherous conspiracies (hiclenii)

The desire to place on the throne of Wallachia a ruler who was close to them or even to occupy the throne themselves caused some boyars to rebel. One such case was that of Stanciu Benga, who went into exile in Transylvania after the death of Pătrașcu cel Bun. From there, he returned with an army, rising against Alexandru Mircea, who defeated him at Boian. In this respect, we should mention the kinship between Stanciu and Pătrașcu cel Bun, the former serving as the latter's High Chamberlain (*postelnic*). Stanciu was the husband of Steward Calotă's niece; Calotă was the father-in-law of Cîrstina, who was the sister of Pătrașcu cel Bun.⁴⁵ Thus, Stanciu was a member of the faction that was hostile to Alexandru Mircea, the enemy of Pătrașcu cel Bun. For this reason, Stanciu was forced to go into exile and his return with an army against Alexandru Mircea was regarded as proof of his treason, which is why his estates were confiscated.⁴⁶ The estates that were confiscated from exiles could be regained when a new favorable ruler came to the throne or, sometimes, during the reign of the same ruler.⁴⁷ The villages of exiles belonged to the ruler,⁴⁸ and those who wanted to buy them without the consent of the voivode risked being killed. During the reign of Petru cel Tânăr, Oprina bought a village from Radu, who was in exile in Transylvania.⁴⁹ In response to this deed, the "late Pătru Voivode imprisoned Oprina and wanted to hang her, for she had bought land from exiles."⁵⁰ The estates confiscated from exiles were used by the ruler for donations to the boyars who were loyal to him. It should be noted that most of the estates confiscated from some boyars were granted by the voivode to other boyars. Beyond this, we cannot have a

⁴⁵ Stoicescu, *Legăturile de rudenie*, p. 124.

⁴⁶ DRH, B. Țara Românească, vol. VII (1571-1575), pp. 45-46.

⁴⁷ Some boyars retrieved their estates during the reign of the same voivode, who "reprieved the wanderers from the death penalty." For example, Dragomir from Cîrțuclești got his estate back during the reign of Alexandru Mircea, who "called on those boyars, in good faith." See DRH, B. Țara Românească, vol. XI (1593-1600), pp. 230-231.

⁴⁸ Valeria Costăchel, Petre. P. Panaitescu, Anatol Cazacu, *Viața feudală în Țara Românească și Moldova (sec. XIV-XVII)* [Feudal life in Wallachia and Moldavia (14th-17th centuries)], (București: Științifică, 1957), p. 280.

⁴⁹ Radu's exile to Transylvania was also caused by his kinship to Pătrașcu cel bun. Radu was the nephew of Bogdan from Popești, the brother-in-law of Radu cel Mare (the grandfather of Pătrașcu cel Bun). See Stoicescu, *Legăturile de rudenie*, pp. 122-123 and DRH, B. Țara Românească, vol. VII (1571-1575), pp. 338-339, 359.

⁵⁰ DRH, B. Țara Românească, vol. VII (1571-1575), pp. 338-339.

comprehensive view of all the acts of treasonable plotting (*hiclenii*) committed in Wallachia, as a land confiscated on this account was reported only when the ruler bestowed it upon other faithful boyars.⁵¹ This form of treason represented the way in which a boyar exhibited his intention to install a ruler faithful to his policy on the throne. When it was discovered, the boyar lost his estates to the voivode.

Theft

The boyars' hostility toward the voivode and their concern to increase their fortune could also manifest themselves through theft. Although it was intended to ensure the boyar's welfare, theft from the royal treasury could entail the loss of his estates.⁵²

Although the means through which certain villages could be gained or lost by the boyars, depending on the ruler enthroned, were also encountered during other periods, these cases multiplied in the second half of the 16th century. This was due, as seen above, to the short reigns, to the growth of the boyars' interest in holding offices, as well as to their influence on the enthronement of the ruler. From the 16th century on, with the enthronement of Neagoe Basarab, there could be sensed a change at the level of the voivode and the boyars. The ruler was no longer required to be of "princely blood." The boyar family that enthroned a ruler had great economic power. It is clear that since the boyars could influence the enthronement of some rulers from among their own or other families, they enjoyed, at the time, greater economic power, which was also reflected in the expansion of their landed estates. The influence exerted by boyars on the enthronement of the voivode grew in the second half of the 16th century. This was due to the growing financial needs of the Ottoman Empire. Having access to economic resources, a boyar could bribe the sultan to enthrone a voivode who was favorable to him. If this treasonable plot was discovered by the voivode in office, the boyar risked losing his life, and his landed estate was confiscated. In compiling the statistics concerning cases of

⁵¹ Donat, *Domeniul domnesc*, pp. 98-101.

⁵² Among these was Manda - a tax collector in Rîmniceu-Sărat, who fled with the tax money across the Danube. "So Manda fled with the ruler's *aspri* (coins) for the tribute, 88,000 across the Danube, to Voivode Mircea," "during the days of the late Voivode Petrașcu." See DRH, B. *Țara Românească*, (eds.) Ștefan Pascu et al. (București: Academia Română, 1996) vol. VIII (1576-1580), pp. 358-360 and Damaschin Mioc, *Despre modul de impunere și percepere a birului în Țara Românească până la 1632* [About the ways of imposing and perceiving tribute in Wallachia until 1632], in *SMIM*, II (1957): 96.

donations, invasions and treacherous conspiracies from the second half of the 16th century, we have used mainly internal documents. Of course, this statistic may undergo changes with the discovery of new documents. It is attached to the study for a better understanding of the relations between boyars and their voivodes during the second half of the 16th century and the way in which those relations affected the boyars' landed estates. It should be noted that as regards donations, we took into account cases of voivodal donation and not the confirmation of boyar estates by the voivode. The main reason is that confirmations did not expand a boyar's landed estate, but merely confirmed his ownership rights over a particular village or another. We have not counted the villages used in donations, but the cases themselves. If the same village was given to several brothers, just one donation (*miluire*) was taken into account. Boyar landed estates represent not just a topic of economic history, but also one of social and political history. Examining this topic will contribute to better understanding the relationship between boyars and voivodes in different periods.

Reign	Donation	Invasion	Treacherous plot
Mircea Ciobanul	11	13	10
Radu Ilie (Haidăul)	-	-	-
Pătrașcu cel Bun	4	6	4
Petru cel Tânăr	3	9	1
Alexandru II Mircea	11	2	7
Vintilă	-	-	-
Mihnea Turcitul	6	7	1
Petru Cercel	1	1	-
Ștefan Surdul	1	-	-
Alexandru cel Rău	-	1	-
Mihai Viteazul	20	10	4
Nicolae Pătrașcu	3	1	-
Simion Movilă	-	3	-