

NEAMT COUNTY BOYARS - PART OF THE MOLDAVIAN ELITE (THE XV-TH TO THE XVII-TH CENTURY)*

Paul Daniel Nedeloiu,
„Al. I. Cuza” University, Iassy, Romania

Rezumat: Prin studiul de față ne-am propus identificarea trăsăturilor defnitorii ale boierimii moldovene, dacă acestea corespund cu realitățile din Europa acelei vremi, sau în ce măsură diferă. Pentru aceasta, am luat drept reper cazul boierimii din ținutul Neamț în secolele XV-XVII, urmărind atât identificarea posibilelor trăsături distinctive ale acestei categorii social-politice, cât și pe acelea comune spațiului moldovean, dar și european.

În urma demersului nostru, am constatat că boierimii moldovene medievale, inclusiv celei nemțene, îi corespund următoarele trăsături: pe plan juridic – membrii acesteia erau oameni liberi; în plan social erau stăpâni de sate, țărani și robi (țigani sau tătari) și dispuneau de privilegii oferite de domnii Moldovei, câtă vreme aceștia îi slujeau cu credință. Trădarea, numită hiclenie, ducea la pierderea averii și, după caz, a vieții celui ce se făcea vinovat, aspecte semnalate și în ceea ce privește boierimii din ținutul Neamț.

În plan politic, mulți dintre boieri (inclusiv nemțeni) erau cooptați în conducerea statului, ocupând diverse dregătorii, mai mult sau mai puțin importante, în funcție de încrederea de care beneficiau din partea domnului țării.

Sub raport cultural, mulți boieri erau știutori de carte. Din rândurile acestora erau recrutați diecii și grămăticii, membrii cancelariei. În spiritul vremii, unii dintre boieri au fost și ctitori sau miluitori ai unor lăcașuri de cult, precum marele vornic Nestor Ureche.

Prin trăsăturile ei defnitorii, identificate în acest studiu, se poate conchide că boierimea din ținutul Neamț s-a integrat perfect restului boierimii moldovene, neexistând indicii că ar fi alcătuit o categorie distinctă în rândul acesteia din urmă.

Abstract: In this study we proposed to identify the defining features of Moldavian boyars, if they correspond with the realities of Europe at that time, or to what extent differ. In order to do this, we took as reference point the case of Neamț boyars in the XV-th – XVII-th centuries seeking both to identify possible distinctive features of this socio-political categories, as well as those common to Moldavian space, but also in Europe.

Following our approach, we found that the medieval Moldavian boyars, including Neamt, corresponds to the following characteristics: at legal standpoint - its members were free men; in social terms they were masters of villages, peasants and slaves (Gypsy or Tartars) and had the privilege offered by the rulers of Moldavia, as long as they served him faithfully. Betrayal, called „hiclenie”, lead to the loss of property and, where appropriate, the life of someone who was guilty, issue also available for boyars in Neamț county.

Politically speaking, many boyars (including those in Neamt) were co-opted in the leadership of the state, holding various positions, more or less important, depending on the confidence of the country rulers. From the cultural point of view, many boyars were scientists. Diacs and grammars were recruited from these boyars, in order to become Chancellery

* This work was supported by the European Social Fund in Romania, under the responsibility of the Managing Authority for the Sectorial Operational Programme for Human Resources Development 2007-2013 [Grant POSDRU/88/1.5/S/47646], to whom we thank once again !

members. Following the tendencies of the Middle Age, some of the boyars were founders or donors to churches, such as the great governor Nestor Ureche.

By its defining characteristics identified in this study, it can be concluded that nobility of Neamt county Moldavian boyars to rest perfectly integrated, there is no indication that it formed a distinct category among the latter.

Keywords: Boyar; Hiclenie; Ocină; Ruler's Advice (Ruler's Council); Vecin; Voivode

European medieval society, including the Romanian, was characterized by a great diversity, local characteristics¹ as a defining feature, even in the same state. Nevertheless, across Europe, medieval world had a number of common features. Among these features, one can mention the deeply religious spirit of the medieval man², the predominantly rural life (at least until by XI-th – XIII-th centuries, when cities began to develop³), struggling with shortages (famine, drought) and disasters of all kinds, dependency relations (both between nobles and between nobles and oppressed peasants) or strict hierarchy of society. Only in the XII-th century Europe is beginning to have an economic boom⁴. Thus, the bishop Laon of Adalberon, wrote a poem in the eleventh century, to show that the society of his time corresponded to three social „orders”⁵: „oratores” (clergy), „bellatores” (nobles) and „laboratores” (peasants). The last order supported, through his work, the entire social edifice. But current research showed that the tripartite organization of society was exceeded even in the time when the above mentioned bishop noted in his poem, because there were other social categories, impossible to be integrated in this narrow scheme. On the other hand, if we compare Western Europe realities to the Romanian space, it appears that they do not overlap completely⁶.

¹ Ioan Aurel Pop, *Geneza medievală a națiunilor moderne (Secolele XIII-XVI)* [Medieval genesis of modern nations (XIII-th – XVI-th centuries)], Bucharest, Romanian Cultural Foundation Publishing, 1998, p. 194.

² Jacques Le Goff (coord.), *Omul medieval* [Medieval man], translated by Ingrid Ilinca and Dragos Cojocaru, afterword by Alexander - Florin Platon, Iasi, Polirom, 1999, p.7.

³ Idem, *Pentru un alt Ev mediu. Valori umaniste în cultura și civilizația Evului Mediu* [For another Middle Ages. Humanistic values in the culture and civilization of the Middle Ages], Volume I, Introductory study, notes and translation by Maria Carpov, Bucharest, Meridiane Publishing, 1986, p. 165.

⁴ Idem, *Banii și viața. Economie și religie în Evul Mediu* [Money and lives. Politics and religion in the Middle Ages], translated from French by Ecaterina Stănescu, Bucharest, Erasmus Publishing, 1993, p. 39.

⁵ George Duby, *Cele trei ordine sau imaginarul feudalismului* [The three orders or feudalism imaginary], translation by Elena Tanasescu, Natalia Ionescu and Constanta, Bucharest, Meridiane Publishing, 1998, p. 25.

⁶ As shown, in the Romanian space there was not a classical feudalism, like the Western model, which would have meant the existence of suzerainty-bondage relations between monarch and nobles and between nobles and themselves, crumbling feudal, centralized, feudal anarchy, manorial reserve etc. - see Dinu C. Giurescu, *Caracteristici ale feudalismului românesc* [Characteristics of Romanian feudalism], in „Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie «A.D.Xenopol» Iași” [“Yearbook of the History and Archaeology

Mastering land was the economic basis of the nobility in medieval Europe⁷ and the essential criterion of political ascent. Parallel to training land, the two social categories of the medieval world arose: the nobility (for the Romanian space - boyars) and dependent peasants. Understanding the origin of nobility depends on the way the manorial field was made up. Historians who have agreed to the local origin of European nobles relied upon the process of disintegration of village communities in the mid third millennium AD, when part of the congregation members "usurped" the rights of other community members (IX-th –XI-th centuries)⁸, appropriating, in various ways, the best land and, gradually, increased their wealth and became famous nobility.

Other historians who have dealt⁹ with this issue agreed to the allogeneic origin of the nobility, considering that this social class was made up after the penetration of migratory peoples, as conquerors, in the borders of the former Roman Empire, enslaving the conquered populations. Finally, other historians agreed to the theory of the double origin of the medieval nobility, namely, that this is the result of both local and migratory conquerors and they overlap the ruling stratum of village communities, in the process of disintegration.

The Romanian historiography was no exception to the three theories¹⁰ mentioned above; in the XIX-th – XX-th centuries, many Romanian historians engaged in this debate. Beyond the idea disputes arising between Romanian historians on account of the origin of nobility, that are not covered by this study, one considers

Institute <<A.D. Xenopol>>-Iași”], Tome XV, Academy Publishing, 1978, p. 395-402. Next, we use the abbreviation “AIIAI”.

⁷ Radu Manolescu (coord.), *Istoria medie universală [The Medieval Universal History]*, Bucharest, Didactic and Pedagogic Publishing, 1980, p. 6.

⁸ Idem, *Societatea feudală în Europa Apuseană [Feudal society in Western Europe]*, Bucharest, Scientific Publishing, 1974, p. 50.

⁹ Recently, Cosmin Popa-Gorjanu wrote a study of medieval European nobility historiography that emphasizes the wealth of this area, but also the variety of methodological and thematic approaches and - see Cosmin Popa Gorjanu, *Repere în istoriografia nobilimii medievale europene [Highlights in the historiography of medieval European nobility]*, in “Annales Universitatis Apulensis. Series Historica”, 13, Alba Iulia, University “December 1”, 1918, 2009, p. 99. About European land owners see Thomas N. Bisson, *The Medieval Lordship, the “Speculum”*, Vol. 70, no. 4 (October 1995), p. 743-759.

¹⁰ Indigenous origin of Romanian boyars was agreed, among others, by N. Iorga – see *Constatări istorice cu privire la viața agrară a românilor [Historical findings on agrarian life of Romanians]*, Bucharest, 1908. The foreign origin (Slavic) of the Romanian boyars was upheld in particular by P.P. Panaitescu - see *Interpretări românești. Studii de istorie economică și socială [Romanian interpretations. Economic and social history studies]*, second edition, Bucharest, Romanian Encyclopedic Publishing, 1994, p.31. At last, Xenopol claimed that Romanian boyars were formed after the foundation of Romanian medieval states, through acts of donation of the rule against local boyars (indigenous or foreign - the last survivors of migratory nations) - see *Istoria românilor din Dacia Traiană [History of Romanians in Traian's Dacia]*, Third Edition, Volume III, Bucharest, 1930, p. 171-172.

the distinctive features of this medieval social categories in the Romanian space to be of most importance. In order to highlight these features, at least in Valachia and Moldavia, we took as a reference point Neamt county, between XV-th and XVII-th centuries. The main information sources of this study were provided by the national collections of medieval documents¹¹ and the internal funds of National Archives - County Service Iași¹².

The term "boyar" is derived from the „Bolear”, of Turanian Bulgarian origin, being acquired in Romanian, from the South Slavs¹³. This would be likely to give some satisfaction to those who upheld the allogeneic origin of Romanian boyars¹⁴. The historian I.C. Filitti has shown in his work - *Social classes in Romanian past*¹⁵ - that, what distinguished the Romanian nobility from the feudal nobility of Western Europe, was the fact that the letter considered the noble rank as an attribute of the person, which could exist without possession of a feudal domain, and would not be lost with land possession, whereas the boyar status in Valachia and Moldavia was achieved through land donation by the ruler, and not by becoming a knight. As the historians Gheorghe Platon and Alexandru Florin Platon stated, the destiny of this social category was „attached to land ownership structure”¹⁶.

In addition, in these Romanian states that have been already mentioned, we can not talk about a military nobility¹⁷ (knights) as the one in medieval Spain and Portugal, which was made up on be occasion of the Reconquista, or in Hungary - where barons, at least at the begining of the XI-th century, had their origins in ancient nomadic warriors, this having been noted by Elemer Malysz, Hungarian history: „those who have fought on the battlefield on equal terms, lived in the same way in peace”¹⁸. He is wrong, though, when he considers there were no radical differences¹⁹

¹¹ *Documenta Romaniae Historica (DRH)* and *Documents regarding Romanian history (DIR)*.

¹² Next, we use DJIAN logo.

¹³ Alexei Agachi, Igor Cașu, Demir Dragnev, *Dicționar de istorie [History Dictionary]*, second edition, revised and enlarged, Chisinau, Publishing Civitas, 2007, p. 57-58.

¹⁴ P.P. Panaitescu, for example, says Romanian boyars are of Slavic origin - see *Interpretări românești. Studii de istorie economică și socială [Romanian Interpretations. Economic and social history studies]*, second edition, Bucharest, Encyclopedic Publishing, 1994, p.31.

¹⁵ I.C. Filitti, *Clasele sociale în trecutul românesc [Social classes in Romanian past]*, Bucharest, 1925.

¹⁶ Gheorghe Platon, Alexandru Florin Platon, *Boierimea din Moldova în secolul al XIX-lea. Context European, evoluție socială și politică (Date statistice și observații istorice), [Boyars in Moldavia in the XIX-th century. European context, social and political development (Statistical and historical data)]*, Bucharest, Romanian Academy Publishing, 1995, p. 131.

¹⁷ Anne J. Duggan, *Nobles and Nobility in Medieval Europe: Concepts, Origins, Transformations*, The Boydell Press, Woodbridge, 2000, p. 6.

¹⁸ Elemer Malysz, *Hungarian nobles of medieval Transilvania*, in *History and Society in Central Europe*, vol. 2: *Nobilities in Central and Eastern Europe: Kinship, Property and Privilege*, by Janos M. Bak, Budapest - Krem, 1994, p. 26.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

between the nobles across the Hungarian kingdom, being known that, the Romanian Transylvanian nobility, compared to the Hungarian, enjoyed far fewer rights, suppressed by Ludovic I's Diploma, of 1366²⁰, with the introduction of official religion (catholicism). By that measure, only those people who enjoyed a royal diploma degree were still nobles, thus few Romanians managed to be maintained among the noble class (Drăgoșeștii, Cândeștii or Hunyadi)²¹.

Therefore, as the historian Nicolae Stoicescu²² showed, at least until the XVII-th century, the Romanian boyar ranks were not granted by a personal title, but by the possession of fields, whose ownership was guaranteed by the ruler, the master of the whole country. This way, a boyar was actually a state „employee”, and his noble title was also a function of the state, in fact of the sovereign and not an attribute of the person. Since the XVII-th century, the term „boyar” is often associated with the meaning „official”, as a result of the fact the boyar status is increasingly conditioned on the employment of a position in the state²³, the so-called „governor nobility” („boierie de dregătorie”)²⁴.

However, despite the differences between Western nobility, compared to the Romanian nobility in the Middle Ages, the latter represented, unquestionably, the social and political elite. What were the features of this elite? The Italian sociologist Vilfredo Pareto wrote in 1919 that the elite is a social category consisting of individuals with the highest rate of appreciation in their branch of activity²⁵. Later, Pareto would nuance this idea, adding that, besides its social connotations, elite has a political connotation, considering that it consists of individuals who exercise managerial functions²⁶. Another Italian sociologist, Gaetano Mosca, noted that the elite is characterized by monopoly and it carries the authority and power²⁷. These ideas are valid for the Romanian space where, as unknown, aristocracy held both political and social prestige because its members were appointed by the ruler in

²⁰Romanian Academy, The Department of Historical and Archaeological Sciences, *Istoria românilor [Romanian History]*, Volume IV, *De la universalitatea creștină către Europa „patriilor” [From the Christian universality to "homelands" Europe]*, the editorial board of volume: Acad. Ștefan Ștefănescu and Acad. Camil Mureșanu, publisher, prof. Dr. Tudor Teoteoi secretar, Bucharest, Encyclopedia Publishing House, 2001, p. 133.

²¹*Ibid.*

²²Nicolae Stoicescu, *Sfatul Domnesc și marii dregători din Țara Românească și Moldova (sec. XIV-XVII) [Ruler's Council and great officials of the Valachia and Moldavia (XIV-th-XVII-th century)]*, Bucharest, Academy Publishing, 1968, p. 55.

²³*Ibid.*

²⁴Iolanda Țighiliu, *Boierimea din Țara Românească (secolele XIV-XVII). Componentă și evoluție structurală [Boyars in Valachia (the XIV-th – the XVII-th centuries). Composition and structural changes]*, in „Revista Istorică”, New Series, volume II, no. 11-12, November-December, 1991, p. 651.

²⁵Larousse, *Dicționar de sociologie [Dictionary of Sociology]*, translated by Mariana Țuțuianu, Bucharest, Encyclopedic Universe, 1996, p. 100.

²⁶*Ibid.*

²⁷Cătălin Zamfir, Lascăr Vlăsceanu, *Dicționar de sociologie [Dictionary of Sociology]*, Bucharest, Babel Publishing House, 1993, p. 215-216.

various central government and local dignitaries (counties²⁸). It can also be said that during the Middle Ages, nobility exercised monopoly over government in the Romanian Principalities.

The most important characteristics of nobility were: on a legal standpoint, its members were free people and on the social standpoint they mastered land. Therefore, one of the key features of Romanian boyars was possession of land area. This was the main criterion for social differentiation. Mastery of the land, though, was conditioned by the boyar's faithfulness to the ruler who, theoretically, was the master of the whole country. Betrayal („hicienia”) automatically meant confiscation of property of the boyar who was guilty of this. In Neamț county we can mention the cases of two Great Chamberlains, one of the early XVI-th century (Cozma Șarpe), and one of the early XVII-th century (Dumitrache Chiriță). Cozma Șarpe, holding two villages in county Neamt, Șcheia and Zbârcești²⁹, betrayed Ștefăniță voivode, and he was forced to refugiate in Poland, the voivode confiscating him the whole property. Dumitrache Chiriță was the master of the village Vânători³⁰ given by the voivode Constantin Movilă on October, 10-th, 1608, and confiscated by Radu Mihnea for treason on October, 17-th, 1616³¹.

Although possession of land was not complete, as we understand by the concept of property in Modern Age, the ruler was, in fact, mastering "de jure" the whole country, land owners holding multiple rights, including the one that they could dispose the land by sale, donation, inheritance or pledge. However, when the land was sold, the protimisis right prevailed³², that is, the relatives of the one who made the sale had priority in the purchase of the land area for sale, phenomenon which is found not only in the Romanian space, but also in Western Europe, and was reported by the French historian, Marc Bloch since the Interwar Period³³. In this regard, for Neamt county history, the document of July, 30-th, 1604³⁴ is edifying, through which the grandchildren of the boyar Ciolpan („the Old”) received from the Moldavian ruler, Jeremia Movilă, a legal document that empowered them to redeem any part of the

²⁸ N. Grigoraș, *Instituții feudale din Moldova I. Organizarea de stat până la mijlocul secolului al XVIII-lea* [*Feudal institutions in Moldavia. I. State organization by the middle of the XVIII-th century*], Bucharest, Academy Publishing, 1971, p. 7.

²⁹ *DIR, A. Moldavia*, XVI-th century, Volume I, doc. no. 41, p. 46- 47.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, XVII-th century, Volume II, doc. no. 240, p. 182-183.

³¹ *Ibid.*, Volume IV, doc. no. 83, p. 56-57.

³² Henri H. Stahl, *Contribuții la studiul satelor devălmașe românești* [*Contributions to the study Romanian free villages*], the second edition, revised, Volume II, *Structura internă a satelor devălmașe libere* [*Internal structure of free villages*], Bucharest , Romanian Book, 1998, p. 66-67.

³³ Marc Bloch, *Societatea feudală* [*Feudal Society*], Volume I, *Formarea legăturilor de dependență* [*Formation of dependency links*], translation by Cristiana Macarovici, afterword by Maria Crăciun, Cluj, Dacia Publishing, 1996, p. 159.

³⁴ *DIR, A. Moldavia*, XVII-th century, Volume I, doc. no. 250, p. 175.

village Bodești which would be sold, with or without their knowledge, because this village, was for them, as shown in the document mentioned above, „right legacy”³⁵.

Faithful service in the advantage of the ruler was generously rewarded, noblemen were often rewarded with villages, dependent peasants, slaves, mills, or other advantages. The first known document which refers to such a situation in Neamț county³⁶ dates since Iuga voivode (1399-1400)³⁷.

We talk about a document written between the years 1398-1400³⁸, through which this Iuga gave three villages to Șarban Hândău, that is, Solomonești, on Topolița River, Pântecești and Munteni, on Cracău River, „for jobs accomplished in the service of previous rulers”³⁹. The document presents, therefore, one of the ways in which nobility received land ownership - in this case, acts of donation from the ruler of the country as a reward for various services. After the analysis of documents related to Neamț county land possession, we discover that there is a certain hierarchy, even within this elite, meaning that some boyars could master several villages, while others held only parts of a single village. In Romanian historiography this was reported, the classification being: the great boyars, the middle boyars and the little boyars⁴⁰.

It is very difficult to say which was the share of this social category in the population of Neamț county between the XV-th – XVII-th centuries. First of all, not every boyar who owned lands in Neamț county was necessarily local. Many boyars, who had their residence or place of origin in other lands, held areas in Neamț as well, this being normal at the time. Therefore, when we refer to the nobility of Neamț county, we understand that political and social elite that has ruled over villages in the administrative-territorial unit, no matter if its representatives have also had land ownership in other counties and other, because land ownership⁴¹ was the main criterion according to which nobility was distinguished from other social categories, at least until the mid XVII-th century. Although studies regarding the demographic structure of population in the Middle Ages are very poor, because there was no

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Because Neamț county is documentary certified only later, in 1466 (see *DRH, A. Moldavia*, Volume II, Volume prepared by Leon Șimanschi and collaborators, Bucharest, Academy Publishing, 1976, doc. no. 134, p. 190.), for the period before that date, we prefer to use the expression “Neamț area” instead of “Neamț county”.

³⁷ Constantin C. Giurescu (coord.), *Istoria României în date [Romania's history data]*, Chisinau, Minor editorial-Printing Works “Crai Nou”, 1992, p.379.

³⁸ *DRH, A. Moldavia*, Volume I, Volume prepared by C. Cihodaru, I. Caproșu and L. Șimanschi, Bucharest, Academy Publishing, 1975, doc. no. 7, p. 9. The document was not was not kept in the original form, but only as a late summary, of 1855.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Dinu C. Giurescu noted that most boyars areas were composed of 1-2 villages (lower nobility), less of 3 - 4 villages (middle nobility) and the fewest of more than five villages (the great boyars) - see Dinu C. Giurescu, *Caracteristici ale feudalismului românesc [Characteristics of Romanian feudalism]* in “AIIAI”, Tome XV, Academy Publishing, 1978, p. 401.

⁴¹ Gheorghe Platon, Alexandru Florin Platon, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

census, only scattered information, its is generally accepted that the share of nobility (for Romanian space - boyars) did not exceed 5% of all inhabitants of a country⁴².

Among the great boyars who held land areas in Neamt county in the first half of the XV-th century, Baico can be mentioned. This boyar, possessed seven villages: Dolhești, Negresti, Almășelul, Horaița Roșcani, Almaș and Dobreni, according to a document given by the voivodes Ștefan II and Iliăș on the 12-th of April, 1436⁴³. Unlike Șarban Hândău, who received villages for „jobs” accomplished in the service of the voivode, this Baico had already possessed villages as an inheritance from his ancestors. At that time, the two voivodes confirmed Baico’s possessions („ocini”), for the services to the reign, as well, Alexander the Good and his sons - as stated in the document. Thus, voivode confirmation was another way the boyars kept their villages which they inherited from their predecessors. When changing the rulers, the boyars went to the royal throne to obtain confirmation of their possessions from the new ruler⁴⁴. This aspect reinforces the fact that country's entire land belonged to voivode, that he could distribute it, or to confirm it for his subjects. However, he may seize it, in cases of treason.

In the XV-th century great masters⁴⁵ in Neamt county were: „pan” Mic Crai⁴⁶ (with following villages: Budești, Mălești, Glodeni, Crăești, Obârșia, Bahna, Hlăpești), Ivan Porcu⁴⁷ (with following villages: Porcești, Sârbi, Arămești, Românești, Știubeești, Cornești, Tulești, Căciulești, Bârjoveni, Secuieni, Seliștea lui Manuil, Volosenii, Neburtești, Săseni, Grozești and Mălure), Zeaico⁴⁸ (with following villages: Urecheni, Rătești, Davideni, Curticești, Ceahlăești, Alexăndreni and Huși), „pan” Gostilă⁴⁹ (with following villages: Gostilești, Negoești, Obadia, Făurei,

⁴² If we would use the analogy (although this is not a rigorous method), we could compare the Romanian territory to the Hungarian and Polish space, countries that kept better statistics on population. Thus, in Poland in the second half of the XVIII-th century, the great nobility represented 1.25% of the total population, while small and middle nobility held 3%; therefore, about 4.25%, in line with the average across Europe - see Gheorghe Platon, Alexandru Florin Platon, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

⁴³ DRH, *A. Moldova*, volumul I, doc. no. 147, p. 202.

⁴⁴ C. Cihodaru, *Forme de proprietate feudală în Moldova [Feudal ownership in Moldavia]*, in “Studii și Cercetări Științifice”, Year VI (1955), no. 3-4, p. 11.

⁴⁵ Because in the Middle Ages, few Romanian boyars held more than five villages (of those over 150 boyars who ruled in Neamt, for example, in the XV-th century, only about 30 of them held more than five villages), we considered that the great masters were those boyars who owned more than five whole villages - also see Daniel Nedeloiu – *Mari proprietari funciari în ținutul Neamț din secolul al XV-lea până la jumătatea secolului al XVIII-lea [Grand landowners in Neamț county of the XV-th century until the middle of the XVIII-th century]*, “Magister”. Romanian History Teachers Association Magazine. APIR-Clio, no. 4, Craiova ARVES Publishing, 2007, p. 50-52.

⁴⁶ DRH, *A. Moldova*, Volume I, prepared by C. Cihodaru, I. Caproșu and L. Șimanschi, Bucharest, Academy Publishing, 1975, doc. no. 250, p. 353.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, no. 282, p. 403.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, Volume II, doc. no. 12, p. 13.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, doc. no. 87, p. 124-126.

Bârzotești, Mănești, Bran Cneaja, Vorovești, Balotești, Hășnaș, Spătorești and Gheuroești), and Toader Lucaș⁵⁰ (with following villages: Lăslăoani, Șerbești, Mohorâți, Drăgotești, Petrești, Plăcinteni, Oprișești, Cârna and Răchitiș). It was written that the latter was the nephew of Laslău globnic, as it was found in a document in of Stephen the Great's reign (22 January 1495)⁵¹.

Also, another great boyar who held, inter alia, land areas in Neamț county was Michael chancellor. He ruled the village Vânători in Neamț and other villages in various counties, especially in Suceava, Cernăuți and Hotin in the middle of the XV-th century⁵².

It is noted that some of the names of these boyars have a foreign resonance. In the Interwar Period, the philologist and linguist August Scriban noted that the Romanian name suffixes such as “-is”, “-uș”, “-ău”, or “-aș”, in our case Hândău, Lucaș or Laslău, are of Hungarian origin⁵³. This is likely to confirm his theory of “import” nobility, but it is no less true that some of the boyars who ruled in Neamț had Romanian names - such as Ivan Porcul, Michael chancellor or Gostilă. The presence of these “foreign” names of local boyars can be explained on the one hand, because of the Hungarian rule over eastern-Carpathian area in the mid XIV-th century⁵⁴, but, on the other hand, because of the Romanian intake from Maramures, which came together with the “founders.”

Another observation would be that, although the boyars possessed many villages, only few of them, Michael chancellor, and Ivan Porcul treasurer, held governorship, which leads us to conclusion that land ownership did not automatically give political functions, at least in the first half of the XV-th century.

Internal documents indicate among the land owners both the boyars and the knezes. Ioan Aurel Pop considers that, in fact, both the boyars and the knezes were two layers of the same social class, the boyars being richer and politically influential, while the knezes were the small holders of a few villages⁵⁵. In Neamț county, we can mention, on this occasion, knezes Litu and Șărban, who had been masters of Munteni Scutași village, donated by Alexander the Good on 2-nd of August, 1414⁵⁶.

Another matter concerning the social prestige of the boyars, besides holding villages, and, with them, dependent peasants, (who worked for the boyars, paid “the

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, Volume III, doc. no. 172, p. 314-316.

⁵¹ *Ibid*.

⁵² *DRH, A. Moldavia*, Volume II, doc. no. 33, p. 46.

⁵³ August Scriban, *Dicționarul limbii românești [Romanian language dictionary]*, first edition, Iasi, Institute of Graphic Arts "Good Press, 1939, p. 39.

⁵⁴ Constantin C. Giurescu (coord.), *op. cit.*, p. 69.

⁵⁵ Ioan Aurel Pop, *Instituții medievale românești. Adunările cneziale și nobiliare (boierești) din Transilvania în secolele XIV-XVI*, [*Romanian medieval institutions. Cnezial and noble meetings (boyar) from Transylvania in the XIV-th to the XVI-th century*], Cluj Napoca, Dacia Publishing, 1991, p. 40.

⁵⁶ *DRH, A. Moldavia*, Volume I, doc. no. 36, p. 51. Ioan Aurel Pop wrote 1417, instead of 1414, see Ioan Aurel Pop, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

census”, and gave metayage⁵⁷), is that some of these potentates of the time possessed slaves, as well, especially gypsies, grouped into shelters, but also tartars, grouped into huts⁵⁸. Such a boyar is the already mentioned Michael chancellor, who received Vânători village, on Bistrița, “below to Piatra lui Crăciun” and six “gypsy camps” from Ștefan II on the 25-th of January, 1446⁵⁹. In general, however, in the XV-th century gypsy slaves belonged especially to the monasteries and, less to the boyars⁶⁰.

Socially speaking, another sign of differentiation of Romanian people in the Middle Ages (and beyond) was the tenement. Archaeological discoveries in recent decades in Neamt county confirm that boyar houses in the Middle Ages differed very much from those of peasants, both in size and construction material used and in space organization and comfort⁶¹. Archaeologists Lia and Adrian Bătrâna found a boyar residence of the second half of the XIV-th century, during excavations made in the 80's of the last century in the area of Netezi village (Grumăzești commune, Neamt county). The main elements of this house were: the building itself – situated on the surface of the earth, made of stone, with two overlapped rooms, tower-like, a small church, also made of stone, located about 135 meters north of the house⁶², and household structures⁶³. This house belonged, according to the mentioned archaeologists, to the boyar Bratul Netezul – who can be found in Advice Council Room of Moldavia between 1392 and 1399⁶⁴. Unlike boyar homes in the same period, most peasant homes were half-buried and less huts⁶⁵ (buried houses), as shown by the archaeological research in the years 1954 to 1958 in Traian village (Zănești

⁵⁷ *Documente privind relațiile agrare în veacul al XVIII-lea*, [Documents on agrarian relations in the XVIII-th century], Volume II, A. Moldavia, edited by Vasile Mihordea, Ioana Constantinescu and Corneliu Istrati, Bucharest, Academy Publishing, 1966, no. 107, p. 173.

⁵⁸ A document from the 8-th of July, 1428, refers to the fact that at that time the ruler Alexander the Good endowed Bistrița Monastery, among others, with 31 gypsy shelters and 12 Tartars huts - see *DRH, A. Moldavia*, Volume I, no. 75, p. 110.

⁵⁹ *DRH, A. Moldova*, Volume I, no. 260, p. 368-369.

⁶⁰ See the cases of Bistrița Monastery - *DRH, A. Moldavia*, Volume I, doc. no. 75, p. 110, Monastery of Glade - *DRH, A. Moldova*, Volume I, doc. no. 133, p. 186, Moldovița - *DRH, A. Moldova*, Volume I, doc. no. 132, p. 185, etc.

⁶¹ Lia Bătrâna Adrian Bătrâna, *Reședința feudală de la Netezi (jud. Neamț)* [Feudal residence of Netezi (Neamt county)], in „Studii și cercetări de istorie veche și arheologie”, No. 4, Tome 36, October-December 1985, Bucharest, Academy Publishing, 1985, p. 297-315.

⁶² Nicolae Cristian Apetrei, *Reședințele boierești din Țara Românească și Moldova în secolele XIV-XVI* [Boyar residences in Valachia and Moldavia in the XIV-th – the XVI-th centuries], Brăila, Brăila Museum, Istros Publishing, 2009, p. 96.

⁶³ Lia Bătrâna, Adrian Bătrâna, *op.cit.*, p. 298.

⁶⁴ *DRH, A. Moldavia*, Volume I, no. 2, p. 3, no. 4, p. 6, no. 8, p. 10. See also Constantin Burac, *Ținuturile Țării Moldovei până la mijlocul secolului al XVIII-lea* [Moldavian counties until the middle of the XVIII-th century], Bucharest, Academica Publishing, 2002, p. 35.

⁶⁵ Gh Bichir, *Urme de locuire din epoca feudală la Traian – Zănești (r. Piatra Neamț, reg. Bacău)* [Traces of habitation from medieval times to Trajan - Zănești (r. Piatra Neamț, reg. Bacău)], în „Studii și Cercetări de Istorie Veche”, no. 2, Tome 18, 1967, p. 317.

commune, Neamț county⁶⁶). This discrepancy was also noted after the excavations in the necropolis near the mentioned church, where 177 graves were discovered, of which only 22 contain different clothing accessories or footwear, coins, religious objects, jewelry and iron objects, sign of the social importance those people held⁶⁷.

Politically speaking, as we have already mentioned, some of the boyars, including those holding land in Neamț county, joined the Advice Council Room or held various dignitaries in the central or county government⁶⁸. Such a boyar was Bratul Nedetul, in the late XIV-th century⁶⁹, who, although did not hold a political dignitary, participated in the Advice Council Room of the voivodes Roman I, Ștefan I and Iuga. The boyar Vlad from the White Creek is in the same situation at the beginning of the XV-th century. Vlad, although did not hold a political dignitary, is present in the Advice Council Room between 1414⁷⁰ and 1418⁷¹ during Alexander the Good's reign. This can be explained due to the fact that these boyars enjoyed prestige and authority among the communities from which they came, their presence in the Advice Room, being a result of the fact that they were well known, without necessarily holding a political dignitary⁷².

Among the important dignitaries who owned large areas in Neamț county, one can mention Michael chancellor, who ruled Vânători village – among other villages - in the mid XV-th century, this village being located on Bistrita River, near Pietra lui Crăciun fair. In the XVI-th century⁷³, Andrew chancellor and Neamț fortress commander can be mention, as well. Andrew, possessed an impressive land area, located in the counties Hotin, Soroca, Iasi and Neamț, in 1586⁷⁴. In Neamț, this boyar

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p. 313-326.

⁶⁷ Lia Bătrâna, Adrian Bătrâna, *op. cit.*, p. 305.

⁶⁸ In addition to “small and great boyars”, mentioned in internal documents, a large military class appears in the XIV-th and XV-th centuries, consisting of “the brave” or “courtiers”, invested by the ruler with land, necessary to support themselves - see also Gheorghe I. Brătianu - *Sfatul Domnesc și Adunarea Stărilor în Principatele Române [Ruler's Council and the Assembly of States in the Romanian principalities]*, Bucharest, Encyclopaedic Publishing House, 1995, p. 46. In Neamț, such a boyar that was Dragoș Viteazul (*DRH, A. Moldavia*, Volume I, doc. no. 10, p. 15.), sometimes called “Dragos from Neamț” (*Ibid.*, doc. no. 22, p. 31.), Dragoș, even though he didn't hold any dignitary, appeared in the Ruler's Council between 1392-1431.

⁶⁹ *DRH, A. Moldavia*, Volume I, doc. no. 2, p. 3.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, no. 36, p. 51.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, no. 41, p. 60.

⁷² In Valachia, these influential boyars in the political life of the state were known as “vlastelini”, some descending from old boyar families, some being relatives of the voivode himself - see Iolanda Țighiliiu, *Boierimea din Țara Românească (secolele XIV-XVII). Compoziția și evoluție structurală*, [*Boyers in Valachia (the XI-th – XVII-th centuries). Composition and structural changes*], in „Revista Istorică”, New Series, volume II, no. 11-12, November-December 1991, p. 660.

⁷³ *Ibid*, Volume II, no. 33, p. 46.

⁷⁴ *DIR, A. Moldavia*, XVI-th century, Volume III (1571-1590), Bucharest, Academy Publishing, 1951, no. 374, p. 308-310.

possessed an area which included the following villages: Căcăceni, Broșteni, Lălești which had belonged to Piatra Fair, but sold by the ruler.

In the XVII-th century other high officials would master villages in Neamt county. Thus, between 1602 and 1613, Toader Boul treasurer would take possession of the villages: Frățești⁷⁵, Săcurinți, Răspopești, Tălpălăești⁷⁶, Rătești, Rădeni and Davideni⁷⁷. A similar fact occurs with the Great Governor Nestor Ureche who, between 1604 and 1617, through successive purchases, took possession of the villages: Petricani⁷⁸, half of Ilești, Târpești, Jurjești, half of Siești, Tâmppești⁷⁹, Liești, on Topolița⁸⁰, and half of Dragomirești.

In his turn, the Great Chancellor Nicoară Prăjescu, by various purchases, held 16 entire villages and 10 parts of villages in different counties, including Neamt, where he ruled Razboieni village⁸¹, in 1617. In the second half of the XVII-th century, the strong Cantacuzino family arises with the two brothers Toma and Iordache Cantacuzino, being known for the family's numerous land ownership rulers (both in Neamt and in other counties) but also for the important dignitaries they occupied. These boyars, of Greek origin⁸², were married local girls, thus gaining Moldavian citizenship, and through it, the right to buy estates. First, the Great Treasurer Iordache Cantacuzino, mastered, as shown in a document of 1662⁸³, 18 parts of villages, as follows: Șerbești, Cutujani, Broșteni, Cârliști, Căciulești, Strâmbi, Plopești, Cărbunești, Tâmppești, Potlogeni, Țibucani, Peletiuți, Ungureni and Vârtop, all in Neamt county, not to mention other villages in different counties. His brother, Toma Cantacuzino High Steward and then Great Governor of the Upper Country, came to own a considerable fortune, not less than 16 parts of villages Bodești, Verșești, Căndesti, Negritești, Porcești, Budesti, Buciumi, Tupilați, Popesti, Sârbi, Mărișești, Fedeleşiani⁸⁴, Dăncești⁸⁵, Lăslăoani⁸⁶, Tulești and Galbeni⁸⁷, all in Neamt county.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, A. *Moldavia*, XVII the century, Volume I, no. 49, p. 32-33.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, Volume II, no. 192, p. 150-151.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, Volume III, no. 201, p. 126-128.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, Volume I, no. 241, p. 170.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, Volume IV, no. 183, p. 144-146.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, Volume I, no. 340, p. 255.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, Volume IV, no. 175, p. 135.

⁸² Costandin Sion, *Arhondologia Moldovei. Amintiri și note contimporane. Boierii Moldovei [Moldavian Gentlefolk. Recollections and contemporary notes. Moldavian boyars]*, selected text, glossary and index - Rodica Rotaru, Mircea Anghelescu preface, afterword, notes and comments by Ștefan S. Gorovei, Bucharest, Minerva, 1973, p. 97. See also - Octav-George Lecca - *Familiile boierești române. Istorie și genealogie (după izvoare autentice) [Romanian boyar families. History and genealogy (as authentic sources)]*, with annotations, additions and drawings by Mateiu Caragiale, Alexander Condeescu edition, Bucharest, Romanian Literature Museum, 2000, p. 187.

⁸³ Gh Ghibănescu, *Ispisoace și zapise [Ispisoace and zapise]*, Volume III, Part II, Iasi, Dacia Publishing, 1910, doc. no. 20, p. 29-30.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, no. 49, p. 73-76.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, Volume II, Part II, no. 23, p. 43-44.

It is noted that the dignitary had a very important role in terms of increasing personal wealth, through financial resources that it generated, mostly the period when land areas were bought coinciding with the period when that boyar held positions in central or county administration. This can be found in the case of boyars who owned smaller dignitaries, for example, Ionașco of Obârșie, Neamt county, who bought many areas in the White valley, , as long as he served as chief of the small treasurers in the years 1596⁸⁸ and 1609⁸⁹. After 1609, with the loss of the dignity, he is only mentioned as a witness in different setting boundaries, in some litigation⁹⁰, or when the voivode confirmed the principalities acquired by then⁹¹. He is not mentioned as a land purchaser anymore, as before, when he was the chief of small treasurers. Beginning with the XVII-th century, by nobility we understand dignitary gradually, the ruler Dimitrie Cantemir himself, discusses the concept of rank⁹², not of land ownership, regarding the boyar status.

Symbolical speaking, power ideology was reflected by the heraldic coat of arms that some boyar families possessed, like Krupenski family⁹³ in Neamt county, family that would acquire estates in this part of Moldavia beginning with the XVIII-th century. Octav George Lecca describes the family coat of arms as follows: in a red field, shield-shaped, a white rose with five petals and five leaves and another similar rose above the helmet and the crown⁹⁴. It seems that this rose species was Polish, Krupenski family, who obtained Polish citizenship, thus preserving the reminding of the good relations they had with this country since the XVII-th century.

Culturally speaking, in addition to literacy, proven by the fact that many boyars appear as witnesses in the land ownership documents, signed or drafted⁹⁵; they were often familiar to old Slavic, the language in which they wrote chancellery documents between the XIV-th and the XVI-th centuries. As it is known, monasteries played an important role in terms of laic education⁹⁶, boyar sons following courses in monastic schools because they intended to learn writing and mathematics. In close connection to the Church, seen as the dominant institution⁹⁷ in the Middle Ages, the Ruler

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, no. 17, p. 32-35.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, Volume III, Part I, no. 21, p. 31-33.

⁸⁸ *DIR, A. Moldavia*, XVI-th century, Volume IV, no. 183, p. 144-146.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, XVII-th century, Volume II, no. 328, p. 253.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, Volume III, no. 207, p. 132-133.

⁹¹ *Ibid*, Volume IV, no. 419, p. 335.

⁹² Dimitrie Cantemir, *Descrierea Moldovei [Moldavia's description]*, translation of the original Latin text by Gh. Guțu, introduction by Maria Holban, N. Stoicescu historical review, mapping study by Vintilă Mihăilescu, Ioana Constantinescu index, with a note on the D.M. Pippidi edition, Bucharest, Academy Publishing, 1973, p.279.

⁹³ Octav George Lecca, *op. cit.*, p. 372.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*.

⁹⁵ National Archives - County Service Iași, *Documents*, no. CDLXIV / 21.

⁹⁶ Liviu Pilat, *Între Roma și Bizanț. Societate și putere în Moldova (secolele XIV-XVI) [Between Rome and Byzantium. Politics and power in Moldavia (the XIV-th - the XVI-th centuries)]*, Iași, "Al. I. Cuza" University Publishing, 2008, p. 253.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*.

institution, we find the acts of piety of some boyars, who are founders of religious places (churches and monasteries), together with voivodes; they are also found among those who make donations to such places. For Neamt county this available for the Great Governor Nestor Ureche, which founded the Secu Monastery dedicated to the Beheading of St. John the Baptist⁹⁸ in the autumn of 1602. Secu Monastery, with Neamt and Bistrita Monasteries, had a famous school which trained both clergy and laity, becoming an important cultural center⁹⁹, an important role being acquired by its founder, Nestor Ureche, who has endowed it with all necessary.

Another cultural aspect is what we call today “geneological consciousness”, namely the consciousness of belonging to the same family, which is easily noted from the mere reading of medieval internal documents that refer to land ruling. In these documents there are often mentioned all relative heirs of the land areas the family was endowed with, but also the list of their predecessors. Even if in the period we refer to, this zeal in mentioning all predecessors came from a rather strict necessity (the need to justify the domination of the earth, the main wealth of medieval man), yet, in time, it will lead to the crystallization of a real genealogical consciousness. In his work, *Moldavian Description*, Dimitrie Cantemir fully illustrates the boyar genealogical awareness in the early XVIII-th century, Cantemir being a boyar himself: “Boyar families, as they are mentioned in Moldavian history, all survived until today and, by some miracle of fate, no old Moldavian boyar family has perished so far”¹⁰⁰, the former Moldavian ruler listing then the 75 “Moldavian noble families”.

One of the features of the documents we mentioned is that they reported “the property development”¹⁰¹, the predecessors who held land ownership, both blood and marriage relatives¹⁰², being reminded. The cases when this sequence of forerunners appears in documents referring to boyars in Neamt county, are numerous, so there is no need to insist upon them. We will give an example here, which seems self-evident: a 1619 document referring to Șerbești and Belcești villages, these being held at the time by “Toma, Andriica’ son, his sister Anița, and Dochița, Nastasa’s daughter,

⁹⁸ Alexandru I. Gonța, *Un așezământ de cultură de la Alexandru Lăpușneanu pe Valea Secului înainte de ctitoria lui Nestor Ureche. Schitul lui Zosin [A cultural institution in Secu’s Valley from Alexandru Lăpușneanu before Nestor Ureche’s foundation. Zosin’s Hermitage]*, in the volume *Studii de istorie medievală [Studies of medieval history]*, text selected and prepared for printing of Maria Magdalena Szekely and Ștefan S. Gorovei, with a foreword by Ioan Caproșu, Iasi, Dosoftei Publishing, 1998, p. 212.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 227.

¹⁰⁰ Dimitrie Cantemir, *op. cit.*, p. 281.

¹⁰¹ Mihai Dim. Sturdza (coordinator and author), *Familiiile boierești din Moldova și Țara Românească. Enciclopedie istorică, geneologică și biografică [Boyar families from Moldavia and Valachia. Historical, genealogical and biographical Encyclopaedia]*, Volume I, Abăza - Bogdan, Bucharest, Symmetry Publishing, 2004, p. 4.

¹⁰² Blood relatives who descended from a common ancestor have been called in speciality literature “descendants”, while alliance relatives have been called “afins” - see C.C. Harris, *Relațiile de rudenie [Relative relationships]*, translation from English by Antonia Oprîță, introduction of the Romanian edition by Maria Voinea, Bucharest, DU Style, 1998, p. 27.

Andriica's niece, Crăciun Belcescu's granddaughter"¹⁰³, all these persons being in litigation with their relatives, Toma Brae and Pătrașco. Crăciun Belcescu is first and last mentioned to be alive in a document from 1414¹⁰⁴, during the reign of Alexander the Good. However, he remained in the "conscience" of his family for over 200 years because his descendants have kept the voivodal documents!

Marriages between boyar members took almost always place within this social category, we can rarely find deviations from this principle. Otherwise, the one who chose his or her pair from a lower social class, risked the lost of inheritance. Alexander I. Gonța quoted, in this respect, Irina's situation, disowned by her father, Grigore diac, because she had married a peasant ("vecin")¹⁰⁵.

Although regarded by the Church "bodily poor and emotionally unreliable"¹⁰⁶ and that "she must always be male subdued"¹⁰⁷, the woman is often met in many medieval documents: in order to establish parentage, as seen in the document quoted above, in 1619, as heir of the deceased husband or parent, as "ocini" purchaser, but also endowing monasteries with villages, in the spirit of Christian piety, of that time. A good example is lady Maria, the widow of Dumitrache Chiriță, ex-Grand Chamberlain, who gave Bisericanî monastery Vânători village, situated on Bistrita River, on the 14-th of April, 1620¹⁰⁸, "hoping to receive an eternal reward", as specified in that document.

The historian P.P. Panaitescu observed that in Moldavian women had equal rights with men in terms of inheritance, aspect that represents a Moldavian law particularity, unlike Valachian law, where the community was made up only of men¹⁰⁹. Studying this interesting case, Alexandru I. Gonța concluded that this situation is not found in the law of Moldavia's neighbour countries (Poland, Russia, Hungary, and The Byzantine Empire)¹¹⁰. Everywhere in these countries the inheritance right belonged only to men, and solely when there were no men descendents, the inheritance right could be applied to women. In Medieval Moldavia women came to inherit with their brothers or, where appropriate, with their children. Alexandru I. Gonța believed that this feature of Moldavian is explained due to the influence exerted by the Visigoths in the first centuries AD; these Visigoths have

¹⁰³National Archives - County Service Iași, *Documents*, no. CDLXIV / 29.

¹⁰⁴*DRH, A. Moldavia*, Volume I, no. 38, p. 53-55.

¹⁰⁵Alexander I. Gonța, *Satul în Moldova medievală. Instituțiile [The village in Medieval Moldavia. Institutions]*, Bucharest, Scientific and Encyclopaedic Publishing House, 1986, p. 256.

¹⁰⁶George Duby, *Doamnele din veacul al XII-lea [The Ladies of the XII-th century]*, translated from French by Maria Carpov, Bucharest, Meridiane Publishing, 2000, p. 277.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*, p. 276.

¹⁰⁸*DIR, A. Moldavia*, XVII-th century, Volume IV, doc. no. 583, p. 463-464.

¹⁰⁹P.P. Panaitescu, *Obștea țărănească în Țara Românească și Moldova: orânduirea feudală [Peasant community of Valachian and Moldavian space: feudal ordering]*, Bucharest, Academy Publishing, 1964, p. 177-178.

¹¹⁰Alexandru I. Gonța, *op. cit.*, p. 252.

lived in the present Moldavian area, and their law offered women equal rights to those of men in terms of property heritage¹¹¹.

Such an example in Neamț county is Bilăi's Singlitichia, mentioned in documents of the first quarter of the XVIII-th century, as a possessor of Roznov village, where she is half sharing the property, with her son, Ionașcu. It seems that this village was originally a part of the Târgul Piatra possession, then it was dislocated from the courtyard, being given to Bistrita Monastery by Alexander the Good, according to a later document, dated the 1-st of June, 1595¹¹². At one point, after he had confirmed the village as belonging to the already mentioned monastery, the voivode Petru Șchiopul withdrew the decision, selling it for 500 Tartar zlotys and 8 horses to the High Governor Bilăi, as shown in a document given by the voivode Miron Barnovschi on the 20-th of March, 1627¹¹³. This a surprising decision, because a ruler would rarely withdraw the gift already given to a monastery, and would almost never sell it later! This incident has generated a real dispute between the monks of Bistrița Monastery and Bilăi Governor's widow, Singlitichia, for Roznov village. The two sides have tried during the rulers Radu Mihnea and Miron Barnovschi, and the monks came to the ruler's throne with false documents. Thus, Singlitichia, and her son, Ionascu Bilăi, who had been the fortress commander¹¹⁴, won the trial. On the 21-st of May, 1617, Radu Mihnea voivode gave Ionașcu Bilăi the right to master Roznov village and to bring back his dependent peasants who had fled from the village, "wherever he would find them in my reign"¹¹⁵, as the document stated.

On the 4-th of December, 1619, Gașpar voivode wrote to the mayor of Piatra Fair to leave Bilăi's wife Roznov village aside, because, as the document noted, it "had belonged to Neamț county since Petru Șchiopul's reign". The ruler, Gașpar, ordered that Savin sulger should settle the conflict arisen between Ionașcu Bilăi from Roznov and Crâstea from Mastacăn, concerning an area of Soci village¹¹⁶. Four months later, on the 22-nd of March, 1620, the same voivode reconfirmed Roznov village as belonging to Bilăi's wife, with appropriate space to build a mill on Bistrița river¹¹⁷. It seems that her son, Ionașcu, died shortly afterwards, because Singlitichia Bilăi gave her fortune, that is Roznov village and another village in Tecuci county, to her nephew, Great Chancellor Dumitrașco, in order to take care of her, for the rest of her life¹¹⁸. Another possibility would be that she disinherited her son, Ionașcu, in case he was still alive.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 253.

¹¹² *DIR, A. Moldavia*, XVI-th century, Volume IV, doc. no. 156, p. 125.

¹¹³ *DRH, A. Moldavia*, Volume XIX (1626-1628), prepared by Haralambie Chirca, Bucharest, Academy Publishing, 1969, doc. no. 168, p. 211-216.

¹¹⁴ *DIR, A. Moldavia*, XVII-th century, Volume IV, Bucharest, Academy Publishing, 1956, doc. no. 206, p. 167.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, doc. no. 527, p. 409-410.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, doc. no. 567, p.436-437.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Volume V, doc. no. 429, p.323-324.

Contemporary documents analyses, and historiographical approach of the problem, reveal that boyars in Neamț county, along with the rest of Moldavian boyars, was the most valuable social class in Romanian medieval society. In the period we dealt with (XV-th–XVII-th centuries), this social class represented, as shown, the political elite of society, both locally (on the county level), and centrally, through the presence in the Ruler's Advice or by holding high dignitaries.

By its defining characteristics, mentioned in this study, it can be concluded that the boyars of Neamt county have perfectly integrated to the rest of Moldavian boyars; there is no evidence that they formed a separate group within the already mentioned boyars.

Meanwhile, in the spirit of the age, Neamt county boyars have enjoyed not only the socio-political elite status, but also the cultural elite rank, a position which conferred them an important role in the building and maintenance of religious sites, Secu Monastery for example, but also in terms of being present in the Ruler's Chancery, where chancellors¹¹⁹, grammars and diacs¹²⁰ were employed, recruited among those the litterate.

¹¹⁹ The most important chancellors which have owned villages in Neamț county, the following can be mentioned in this study: Costea chancellor, holding Gocimănești village on the 24-th of February, 1442 - see *DRH, A. Moldavia*, Volume I, doc. no. 218, p. 306; Michael chancellor, master of Vânători village, on Bistrita, on the 25-th of January, 1446 - see *Ibid*, doc. no. 260, p. 369; Sima chancellor, about whom we know, from a posthumous document, that he received from the rulers Iliș and Ștefan II, Soci and Dușești villages, situated between Cracău river and the springs of White Creek - See *DIR, A. Moldavia*, XVI-th century, Volume I, doc. no. 278, p. 312.

¹²⁰ Some examples in this regard are: Roman diac, son of Stanislav from Neamt, mentioned on the 19-th of February, 1412 - see *DRH, A. Moldavia*, Volume I, doc. no. 32, p. 46, Nechita diac of Vârtop, noted in a document dated on the 1-st of February, 1610 - see *DIR, A. Moldavia*, XVII-th century, Volume II, doc. no. 365, p. 277, Gheorghe Boțul, diac of Dolhești, (on the 4-th of November, 1616 - see *Ibid*, Volume IV, doc. no. 88, p. 60) or Luchian, diac of Vârtop (on the 5-th of April, 1634 - see *DRH, A. Moldavia*, Volume XXII, doc. no. 100, p. 112).

*Annex: Krupenski family coat of arms*¹²¹



¹²¹ Octav-George Lecca, *Familiile boierești române. Istorie și genealogie (după izvoare autentice)* [Romanian boyar families. History and genealogy (authentic sources)], with annotations, additions and drawings by Mateiu Caragiale, Alexander Condeescu edition, Bucharest, Romanian Literature Museum, 2000 p. 372.