

ECONOMIC REALITIES REFLECTED IN THE HERALDIC SEALS OF THE MEDIAEVAL MOLDAVIA*

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The two extra-Carpathian Romanian Principalities, Moldavia and Wallachia, due their presence on the map to the mediaeval trade route of Lviv – route designated within the Romanian historiography under the name “Moldavian road”. This overland route was associated with the XIVth-XVth centuries, a favourable period in the history of Romanians, as Petre P. Panaitescu writes – “...then, and only then, the international based trade routes passed across our lands...”³. This “Moldavian road” started from the North of the continent towards the South-West till Chilia by the Danube river and Cetatea Albă (Akkerman) by the Black Sea (now the

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³ P. P. Panaitescu, *De ce au fost Țara Românească și Moldova țări separate?*, and idem, *Interpretări românești. Studii de istorie economică și socială*, 2nd edition, curated by Ștefan S. Gorovei and Maria Magdalena Székely, București, 1994, p. 103.

town of Kiliya, respectively Bilhorod-Dnistrovskiy, both in the Odessa province situated in southwestern Ukraine). The route reflected the interests of the Hanseatic League in trading with Poland on the one hand and of the Italian cities of Genoa and Venice that had colonies in the Near East and by the coasts of the Black Sea, on the other hand. The exchange of goods between these two groups of commercial powers took place at Lviv or Cetatea Albă.

In the same time, the cities of Halych, Lviv and even Krakow found commercial opportunities accessing the harbours of the Black Sea, this "...explaining the sudden development of the Romanian principalities in the second half of the 14th century, given the significance of these harbours (...) for the European commerce...", as explained by Gheorghe I. Brătianu⁴. The idea of a trade route was the set foundation for a new state as formulated back in 1912, by Nicolae Iorga afterwards being amplified by the next generation of his followers⁵ (already mentioned). It is not a coincidence that "...the struggle for controlling the international trade route concurred in the final stage of creating the Moldavian state..."⁶.

Following the death of Jani Beg (Djanibek) Khan in 1357, the dissolution of the Golden Horde increased so that missionaries and merchants were forced to abandon the safe area for traveling towards the Central Asia and the Far East known to have a regime of a true *pax mongolica*.

The disruption of trade in the region, between 1343 and 1347, came along with the lack of wheat and salted fish in the Byzantine cities, products brought from the Black Sea by the Italian merchants. As the growth of the Islam became visible, the habitual religious tolerance of the descendants of Genghis Khan gave place to the Muslim fanaticism. The Berke Khan prosperity times (mid-13th century) reached its end. That

⁴ Gheorghe I. Brătianu, *Marea Neagră de la origini până la cucerirea otomană*, revised 2nd edition, translated by Michaela Spinei, curated, introductory study, notes and bibliography by Victor Spinei, Iași, 1999, p. 336.

⁵ For the entire problematic, see Șerban Papacostea, *Începuturile politicii comerciale a Țării Românești și Moldovei (secolele XIV-XVI). Drum și stat*, in idem, *Geneza statului în Evul Mediu românesc. Studii critice*, București, 1999, p. 163-220.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 217.

times of the Golden Horde empire with the Sarai capital, alongside the Volga river, which provided "...a well done transport and stands services on the major continental roads, raising the international trade opportunities to an unimaginable level hitherto...", remained only a souvenir⁷.

Therefore, the disruption of commercial trade through the Mongol territory "...led to some commercial activity in the profit of the Danube regions..."⁸. The "Tartarian road" of the Polish cities directed towards the Kipchak steppe linked Krakow and Lviv with Kaffa (Feodosia) and Crimea and went through Podolia and Ukraine. In the same time, a much more direct commercial connection with the Danube Mouths and the sea was opened, passing by the parallel valleys of Siret, Pruth and Dniester rivers, on the Moldavian land. The old "Tartarian road" subsequently gave place to the "Moldavian road" towards Chilia (on the Northern Danube's distributary channel) as well as towards Cetatea Albă (on the Dniester estuary, leading to the Black Sea). This new route provided "...the convoys and stands safety together with the control of an organized state: this road was undoubtedly the one to determine in the last analysis the foundation and development of the Moldavian state, from its cradle between the Carpathian Bukovina to the «Great Sea», [a point] which the princes [of the realm] declared they have reached in 1392..."⁹. Also, the Turkish author Halil Inalcik recorded that in the 15th century, the commerce of Cetatea Albă and Chilia brought prosperity to Moldavia, because "...the old commercial route, from Kaffa, Cetatea Albă and Chilia to Poland passed through Moldavia so that Suceava, in Moldavia, and Lviv (Lemberg), in Poland, developed as rich warehouses..."¹⁰.

The cereals were not an item for export of Moldavia, as resulting from the privileges issued by the princes of Moldavia, on commercial relations with Poland. The local trade was focused on cattle, animal skins and wax hence the importance of the Moldavian trading road resulted from

⁷ Gheorghe I. Brătianu, *op. cit.*, p. 310.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 383.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 386.

¹⁰ Halil Inalcik, *Imperiul Otoman. Epoca Clasică, 1300-1600*, edition and introductory study by Mihai Maxim, translated by Dan Prodan, București, 1996, p. 234.

the transit goods¹¹. Also, the wheat was not listed between the products exported to Braşov (Kronstadt), the commerce with cereals of both Moldavia and Wallachia with Transylvania having a casual occurrence charged by famine and war¹².

Instead, among the Moldavian products exported to Braşov, the fish had the largest share by far. For example a register¹³ covering the period between the 21st of May 1480 and the 26th of March 1481, mentioned 214 records of commercial products traded between Moldavia and the city of Braşov, from which 115 operations referred to fish and fish derivatives, followed by 41 operations on fish and other goods, along with 17 other transports of cattle and less numerous transports of pigs, fur, wax and so on. In detail, the exported fish products compounded: 104 transports of carp, 94 of catfish, 43 of pike, 42 of codfish and so on.

Fish as trading item was mentioned in the commercial privilege conferred upon the merchants of Lviv the 8th of October 1408. After buying their fish in Brăila (upon Danube), these merchants were expected to pay a tax to the customs located in the towns near the southern border of Moldova: Bacău or Bârlad¹⁴ in order to obtain the right to freely transport their carts until the main custom at Suceava. The next tax on fish was paid at Siret and Cernăuţi (now Chernivtsi, in the homonymous province of the Ukrainian part of Bukovina).

The importance of the fish commerce for the southern part of Moldavia was illustrated symbolically by the three fish of the coat of arms of Bârlad¹⁵

¹¹ P. P. Panaitescu, *Drumul comercial al Poloniei la Marea Neagră în Evul Mediu*, in vol. cit., p. 88.

¹² Ştefan Andreescu, *Din istoria Mării Negre (genovezi, români și tătari în spațiul pontic în secolele XIV-XVII)*, Bucureşti, 2001, p. 69-70.

¹³ Gernot Nussbächer, *Un document privind comerțul Braşovului cu Moldova la sfârşitul secolului XV* (III), in *AIIAI*, XXIII/1, 1986, p. 325-342. Here, only the analysis of the document; the first two parts were also published in *AIIAI*, XXI, 1984, p. 425-437 and XXII/2, 1985, p. 667-678.

¹⁴ Mihai Costăchescu, *Documentele moldoveneşti înainte de Ştefan cel Mare*, vol. II, Iaşi, 1932, p. 635-636.

¹⁵ Laurenţiu Rădvan, *Oraşele din Țările Române în Evul Mediu (sfârşitul sec. al XIII-lea - începutul sec. al XVI-lea)*, Iaşi, 2011, p. 489.

(Fig. 1)¹⁶. At the beginning of the year 1495 the townspeople of Bârlad obtained the reconfirmation of tax exemption on goods, excepting the fish for which they were expected to give “...one fish from one *majă* (about 100 kg, A/N) and also one fish from a wagon...”¹⁷.

The commercial routes crossroad (Iași – Vaslui – Danube with Roman – Vaslui – Danube) equally determined the development of the Vaslui town¹⁸. The 15th of October 1491, the Vaslui townspeople received a reconfirmation for tax exemption on goods, excepting the same symbolic “...one fish from one *majă* and from a wagon [also] one fish...”¹⁹. In this case, as well as for Bârlad, the fish commerce helped the civic development, especially after the beginning of the Moldavian rule over Chilia upon the Danube, in 1426. Therefore, it should not be a coincidence that two fish were displayed in the old civic seal of Vaslui; attested in the year of 1641²⁰, but having a Slavic inscription: “the seal of the town of Stephen voivode”. The impression (Fig. 2), even if used during the reign of Vasile Lupu, recorded the memory of an older prince Stephen. It is important to mention that Vaslui was for the first time attested in the year of 1435, during the time of Stephen the Second. Later on another homonymous prince, Stephen the Great, was particularly attached to the same town, augmenting the civic property with the surrounding estates and “...settling

¹⁶ D. Ciurea, *Sigiliile medievale ale orașelor din Moldova*, in *SCSI*, anul VII (1956), fasc. 2, p. 161, pl. III, fig. 14.

¹⁷ *DRH, A. Moldova*, III, ed. C. Cihodaru, I. Caproșu and N. Ciocan, București, 1980, nr. 151, p. 282.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 591-592.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, nr. 96, p. 190.

²⁰ Sorin Iftimi, *Reprezentări faunistice în sigiliile Medievale ale orașelor din Moldova*, in vol. *Lumea animalelor. Realități, reprezentări, simboluri*, curated by Maria Magdalena Székely, Iași, 2012, p. 483-484, fig. 21, p. 493. The marking seal appears on a document of the 1st of September 1641, published in *DRH, A. Moldova*, vol. XXVI, curated by I. Caproșu, București, 2003, doc. nr. 242, p. 200 (together with a facsimile at the end of the volume). We find the same seal, better impressed, on a deed dated the 20th of November 1668 (*Colecția Dr. Constatin I. Istrati. 1429-1945. Inventar arhivistic*, compiled by Nicolae Chipurici and Tudor Rățoi, București, 1988, nr. 179, p. 85; Mehedinți National Archives, Drobeta-Turnu Severin, *Colecția Dr. C. I. Istrati*, II/58, doc. orig.; we kindly thank Dr. Sorin Iftimi for printing this document along with Vaslui town's seal).

here a preferred residence...²¹. In this context, it was presumed that Stephen the Great reconsidered several of the civic seals, offering thus to Vaslui a matrix²². During the reign of the same prince, the fish export to Transylvania increased considerably as previously mentioned, the commercial trading between Braşov and Moldavia being dominated by fish, which could only come from the southern part of the land. It is not a coincidence that seals of Galaţi (Fig. 3)²³, Vaslui, Bârlad towns had fish upon their seal emblems²⁴ (given the premise that, upon the mediaeval inner documents „...the unique institutional symbol was the civic seal...²⁵).

During the XVIIth century yet another seal appears with two bees embedded upon. The honey provided important income in a forested hilly area so the bees have now become the symbol of Vaslui town. Nowadays Vaslui's seal emblem carries the two fish which were originally issued on the town's medieval seal along with the flying around the hive bees of the old hinterlands. These symbols were reinterpreted into the Princely Court's tower; therefore instead of being flanked by medieval weapons²⁶ the tower is guarded by the two ancient bees.

During medieval ages the cattle were the symbol of wealth. Iaşi town was the last custom house towards the Golden Horde prior to the Moldavian Principality's establishment; the governor here had to collect the tribute and then to pass it on to the Mongol rulers²⁷. Countless cattle were passing through this custom house being nevertheless the most traded goods. Due to this reason we can not exclude the possibility that Iaşi town's

²¹ Ştefan S. Gorovei, *Lumea animalelor în heraldica teritorială a Moldovei Medievale. Reflecţii neconvenţionale*, in vol. *Lumea animalelor. Realităţi, reprezentări, simboluri*, p. 503.

²² *Ibidem*, p. 502.

²³ D. Ciurea, *op. cit.*, p. 161, pl. III, fig. 16.

²⁴ Ştefan S. Gorovei, *op. cit.*, p. 503; see also Sorin Iftimi, *op. cit.*, p. 493, fig. 20 (Bârlad, 1608 – three fish around), fig. 19 (Galaţi, 1642 – two fish).

²⁵ Ştefan S. Gorovei, *op. cit.*, p. 500.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 499.

²⁷ Renate Möhlenkamp, *Contribuţii la istoria oraşului Iaşi în secolele XIV-XV*, in *AIIAI*, XXI, 1984, p. 69; see also Elena Gherman, *Un domeniu feudal din ţinutul Cârlişului*, in *CI*, XXIV-XXVI, 2010, p. 164 (about villages and followers of Stoian Procelnic).

old seal had cattle embedded upon (Fig. 4), later on replaced with a white horse as symbol of power (Fig. 5)²⁸. During the same time Orhei town, situated across Prut River, near Iași area also had a horse embedded as its seal (Fig. 6)²⁹. Reason for that is why it is kind of difficult to admit that these two towns situated in a comparative area had the same sealing embedded symbol³⁰. Also, cattle was used as the old heraldic symbol of the former county of Fălciu (Fig. 7), being recently included in the coat of arms of today's county of Vaslui³¹. The latter composition is an example of contemporary achievement reflecting economic realities, because also including the fish taken from the achievement of the former county of Tutova (Fig. 8), as well as the beehive of the old county of Vaslui (Fig. 9).

The bestiary depictions portray about 80% within all the sealing emblem symbols of the Moldavian towns during the XV-XVIth centuries³², reflecting the reality of the old ages and the mindset of the people in those times. The presence of the fish on the seals used by the old people of Bârlad, Galați and Vaslui towns certifies that the seal holders were greatly proud to bear and exploit the natural riches of their land into doubtless economic outcome. Some of the livestock as the horse, the ox or the goat convey the same deed' thus voicing the pragmatic nature of the Moldavian sigillographic system³³.

The seal of Neamț belong to the old Moldavian sphragistics, having an inscription in Latin; an impression of it was identified by Ștefan S. Gorovei upon a document dated the 25th of January 1599. The image displays a schematized grapevine with four bunches and two leaves³⁴ (Fig. 10). A grapevine stick with two bunches appears upon a seal impression from the XVIIth century. It may look odd to see that, placed in

²⁸ Sorin Iftimi, *op. cit.*, p. 469.

²⁹ Silviu Andrieș-Tabac, *Heraldica teritorială a Basarabiei și Transnistriei*, Chișinău, 1998, p. 22, fig. 18.

³⁰ Sorin Iftimi, *op. cit.*, p. 470.

³¹ *Decision of the Romanian Government nr. 60 of the 19th of January 2006 on the approval of the coat of arms of the County of Vaslui* (MOF, nr. 87 of the 31th of January 2006).

³² Sorin Iftimi, *op. cit.*, p. 486.

³³ Ștefan S. Gorovei, *op. cit.*, p. 505.

³⁴ Idem, *Am pus pecetea orașului*, in *MI*, anul XII, nr. 2 (131), februarie 1978, p. 37.

the submountain area, the Princely fortress of Neamț and its adjacent borough used as symbol a grapevine. However, the documents are attesting that vineyards were present in the area until the early XVth century, so on the terraces of the submountain hills, the viticulture was still possible in the XIVth century. Two centuries later, in 1641, the Catholic missionary Peter Bogdan Bakšić was clearly recording that in Neamț there were no vineyards³⁵. However, in the same period, the seal still in use by the local authorities was displaying the grapevine, as a souvenir of the distant time of Moldavia's foundation.

Placed in the alpine area of the country, the settlements of the miners reflected in the seals their main activity. The typical hammer is to be found in the 1650 seal of the community of the borough of Troțuș, depicted as hold by a right hand (Fig. 11)³⁶, and also in the one of Târgul Ocna – a miner's hammer³⁷.

The same pragmatic nature – previously referred to – was confirmed by the very first written sources on the Romanian territorial coats of arms. For instance, the economic abundance reflected by the arms of the counties of Oltenia was clearly indicated, from cultivation of cereals to arboriculture and from pisciculture to beekeeping, and even hunting, into a 1719 *Report* of the Austrian administration on the situation of this province, part of the Wallachian Principality, temporarily annexed by the Empire (1718-1739)³⁸

³⁵ *** *Călători străini despre țările române*, vol. V, ed. Maria Holban, M. M. Alexandrescu Dersca Bulgaru, Paul Cernovodeanu, București, 1973, p. 241.

³⁶ D. Ciurea, *op. cit.*, p. 161, pl. III, fig. 13.

³⁷ Dan Cernovodeanu, Ioan N. Mănescu, *Noile steme ale județelor și municipiilor din Republica Socialistă România. Studiu asupra dezvoltării istorice a heraldicii districtuale și municipale românești*, in *RA*, anul LI, vol. XXXVI, 1974, p. 9, 11.

³⁸ Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki, *Documente privitoare la Istoria Românilor, publicate sub auspiciile Ministeriului Cultelor și al Instrucțiunii Publice*, vol. VI, 1700-1750, București, 1878, p. 328: county of Vâlcea (“...habeat cum signo Arboris, qui apracaeteris magis fructiferest...”); county of Romanați (“...sit Manipulus frumenti, su quidem abundant frumentis...”); county of Dolj (“...Piscis propter abundantiam piscium et paludum...”); county of Gorj (“...Cervus obferarum copiam et venationem...”); county of Mehedinți (“...Alveare propter abundantiam apium et mellis...”).

(Fig. 12)³⁹. Without knowing further instances in which the territorial symbols were clearly explained, we can easily realize that a good share of the county emblems which encircled the state coats of arms of the extra-Carpathian Principalities were containing symbols linked with economic activities. Although these county emblems appeared all together only by the end of the XVIIIth century – the beginning of the XIXth century, namely in Wallachia, upon the 1797 great seal of the prince Alexander Ipsilanti (Fig. 13)⁴⁰, and in Moldavia, upon the seal of the Council (“Divan”) of the Principality, used between 1806 and 1812 (Fig. 14)⁴¹, the profile literature admitted that these emblems pre-existed the moment of their first recording⁴². Focusing on the territorial symbols in Moldavia, we can find hints on the *agriculture* – the haymaker of the county of Botoșani, the reaping of the county of Soroca (?), the plants of the counties of Roman and Greceni (?); on the *silviculture* – the trees of the counties of Hârlău and Suceava; on the *transportation* – the boat with an anchor of the county of Covurlui; on *resources of the soil* – the salt block of the county of Bacău; on the *livestock* – the horse of the county of Iași, the cattle of the county of Fălciu, the sheep of the county of Codru (?); on the *hunting* – the wolf of the county of Cârlișău, the stag of the county of Neamț; last but not least on the *viticulture* – the grape of Tecuci and... the god Bacchus seating upon his barrel, of the county of Putna. All these symbols were illustrating, without any doubts, the activities which were specific, in the old times, to the mentioned districts. Generally preserved by the Moldavian authorities⁴³ (and in parallel, by the Russian authorities – speaking about the symbols of

³⁹ Dan Cernovodeanu, *Știința și arta heraldică în România*, București, 1977, pl. CXVII.

⁴⁰ The seal was used upon a document dated the 10th of October 1797 – Laurențiu-Ștefan Szemkovics, Maria Dogaru, *Tezaur sfragistic românesc. I. Sigiliile emise de cancelaria domnească a Țării Românești (1390-1856)*, București, 2006, p. 148, fig. 248.

⁴¹ Silviu Andrieș-Tabac, *op. cit.*, p. 30-32, fig. 23.

⁴² Dan Cernovodeanu, Ioan N. Mănescu, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 25 and the following.

the counties of Bessarabia, between 1812 and 1918)⁴⁴, all this heraldic patrimony was considered and re-approved after the accomplishment of the Great Union.

For the first time in the development of the Romanian territorial heraldry, the same principles were applied to all the coats of arms: the traditional symbols were respected and drawn according the rules of heraldry, excepting the symbols unacceptable, given the interwar political state of affairs⁴⁵. From the legal point of view, established by a newly-appointed Heraldry Consultative Committee and approved by the monarch, all these coats of arms were published in the “Official Gazette”, the legal text including also their meaning. Several coats of arms linked with the territory of the old Principality of Moldavia were explained from the point of view of their past or present economic importance: the scythe of Botoșani symbolized the county’s “wealth of cereals”, the fir tree and the stag of Câmpulung symbolized the county’s “wealth of woods and wildlife”, the vine of Cetatea Albă symbolized the county’s “viticultural wealth”, the anchor of Covurlui symbolized the county’s “the large river trade” and so on⁴⁶. All these arms remained in use until the fall of the monarchy, in 1947.

Three decades ago, the researcher Dan Cernovodeanu was writing about the heraldic symbols of the yesteryear communities, which offered “...the information about the social psychology and mentality, as well as about the cultural, political and economical influences specific to a period or another...”⁴⁷. In fact, this fragment brought in an analysis of the county and municipal coats of arms instituted in the Socialist Republic of

⁴⁴ Silviu Andrieș-Tabac, *op. cit.*, p. 58 – the author concludes that, from the total of county symbols, only Akkerman and Orhei were illustrating the local wealths, and only Bălți conserved the souvenir of the initial emblem of the county of Iași.

⁴⁵ More on this issue in the *Memoir* of the Heraldry Consultative Committee, published as an annex to the *Royal Decree nr. 2079 of the 1st of August 1928 on approving the county coats of arms*, in *MOF*, nr. 222 of the 6th of October 1928.

⁴⁶ *Royal Decree nr. 2079 of the 1st of August 1928, passim.*

⁴⁷ Dan Cernovodeanu, *Éléments héraldiques communs dans l'armorial municipal et de district des pays de l'est Européen (XX^e siècle)*, in vol. *Genealogica et Heraldica, Report of the 16th International Congress of Genealogical and Heraldic Sciences in Helsinki*, Helsinki, 1984, p. 282.

Romania in 1972⁴⁸; having a specific pattern given by the gears, high-voltage masts, cooling towers, retorts and other symbols of the industrial growth, these achievements were a part of a trend initiated in the Soviet Union during the Sixties and rapidly followed by other Socialist “satellite” states⁴⁹. On the other hand, this heraldic series was mirroring the same conception as the State emblem – improperly called “coat of arms”⁵⁰ (Fig. 15) – a composition typical for lots of states placed behind the Iron Curtain⁵¹. The economic message of the Romanian state emblem was obvious, being popularized by the propaganda authors of the period, such as Mihai Beniuc and Cicerone Theodorescu. Of those who learned before the 1989 Revolution (as were the authors of this study), who can forget the lyrics of the latter’s *Stema țării*:

“...On the fields you can find
Different kind of wealths.
You can see here, all around,
A heavy crown of ears.
Ears, mountains, forests and scaffolding
Are the wealth of my realm...”⁵²

As a conclusion, at the eve of the present democratic regime, the achievements of both the state and the local authorities were displaying symbols illustrating the resources of the soil, as well the industrial and agricultural growth of the country. Implicitly, these official symbols were indicative of the worker-peasant alliance, of the Socialist ownership of the people over the means of production, as well as over the underground wealth, the land, forests, waters a.s.o., in the terms of the *Constitution* of 1965 (Art. 2, 5-7, 9 etc.) Without any other comments, we are reproducing

⁴⁸ *Decree of the Council of State nr. 302 of the 25th of July 1972 on approving the coats of arms of counties and municipiums* (BOF, nr. 127 of the 16th of November 1972).

⁴⁹ Dan Cernovodeanu, *op. cit.*, 1984, p. 286.

⁵⁰ *Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Romania* (BOF, nr. 1 of 21st of August 1965), *Decree of the Council of State nr. 972 of the 5th of November 1968* (BOF, nr. 141 of the 5th of November 1968).

⁵¹ Jean N. Mănescu, *L'héraldique d'État de la Roumanie contemporaine contemporaine de 1918 à nos jours*, in *RRH*, XXXII, 1993, 1-2, p. 137-139.

⁵² “...Dar mai afli pe câmpii/ Fel de fel de bogății./Vezi, de-aceea-n jur, aice,/ O cunună grea de spice./ Spice, munți, păduri și schele/ Sunt averea țării mele...”.

the arms of several communities previously mentioned, in order to offer a better image of the development of the local heraldry, notably the symbols having an economic meaning (Fig. 16).

Abrogated after the political changes of 1989⁵³, these coats of arms were replaced by a new patrimony of public symbols, conceived upon different legal premises; thus, the enactment in force⁵⁴ stipulates that "...The coats of arms of the counties, municipalities, towns and communes (...) shall symbolize, as a concentrated image, the historic traditions, the local economic and social-cultural realities, which are specific to each administrative-territorial authority...". Closely following the text of the 1st Article of the Decree of the Council of State nr. 503 of 1970⁵⁵, the mentioned legal formula leaves enough space for including symbols having an economic meaning in the arms of today's communities.

Conclusions

Met with upon the documents of the XVIIth century⁵⁶, the seals of the local communities were having older origins. Several mediaeval matrixes were still in use, while others were probably renewed, but after older – and then lost – mediaeval originals.

Excepting the symbols as the ones displayed in the achievements of Roman (head of a boar), or Roman (St. Hubertus' stag)⁵⁷, the mediaeval seals were depicting charges inspired by the everyday life, such as the fish of the boroughs of Vaslui, Bârlad and Galați (item having a particular significance within the commercial relations of the region), the grapevine of Neamț, the arm holding a mining hammer of Troțuș etc.

⁵³ *Decree - law nr. 149/1990 of the 11th of May 1990 (MOF nr. 66 of the 12th of May 1990), respectively Law nr. 120 of the 7th of July 2000 (MOF, nr. 324 of the 12th of July 2000).*

⁵⁴ *Decision of the Romanian Government nr. 25 of the 16th of January 2003 on the methodology of elaboration, reproduction and usage of the coats of arms of the counties, municipalities, towns and communes (MOF, nr. 64 of the 2nd of February 2003).*

⁵⁵ *Decree of the Council of State nr. 503 of the 16th of December 1970, on instituting the coats of arms of counties and municipiums (BOF, nr. 143 of the 16th of December 1970).*

⁵⁶ We should mention the exception of the seal of Baia, attested upon a document issued by the municipality in 1590 – Dan Cernovodeanu, Ioan N. Mănescu, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 8, 10.

The district heraldry respected, in Moldavia as well as in Wallachia, the same idea of mirroring people's main activities: agriculture, silviculture, transportation, viticulture, hunting and so on. Attested in the early XIXth century sources but having undoubtedly older origins, the arms of the Moldavian districts were all conceived to illustrate these activities. Made official by use, the district arms were approved – together with all the symbols of the counties of the Kingdom of Romania – through royal decrees, the project being conceived by the Heraldry Consultative Committee. Published, for the first time in the history of the Romanian heraldry, in the “Official Gazette”, the district and municipal arms were all accompanied with explanations – of which a large number illustrating the past or present economic importance of the concerned communities.

The same pragmatic nature of heraldry was taken into account while conceiving the “socialist” armorial, in 1972. The mediaeval symbols were completed with objects and buildings inspired by the industrialization. In the same time, the newly established coats of arms included symbols illustrating the culture of the soil, as well as the underground resources. A similar way of thought was taken into account for the State emblem, a composition typical for the states belonging to the Soviet sphere of influence.

After the year 1990, the democratic régime put an end to the entire system of symbols previously in use. Abrogated by the law, the “socialist” coats of arms were replaced by new achievements, lesser inspired by the economic present, and fortunately giving a better place to the traditional symbols.

The present study encompassed the evolution of the heraldic symbols of several communities, from their first documented presence to our days. Starting from several particular achievements, the text focused on the economic reason of each period – from the vinegrape of Neamț (showing the viticultural activities still possible during the XIVth-XVth centuries), to the symbols of the industrial growth of the XXth century.

The present legislation allows the local communities to re-assume their traditional symbols, also adding their today's best.

*REALITĂȚI ECONOMICE OGLINDITE ÎN HERALDICA SIGILARĂ A
MOLDOVEI MEDIEVALE*

(Rezumat)

Principatele românești din afara arcului carpatic, Țara Românească și Moldova, își datorează apariția, într-o mare măsură, rutei comerciale a Liovului, denumită în istoriografia românească „drum moldovenesc” (secolele al XIV-lea – al XV-lea). După cum scria Petre P. Panaitescu, „...atunci, și numai atunci, au trecut prin țările noastre drumuri de negoț de importanță internațională...”, astfel încât întreruperea traficului prin imperiul mongol a deturnat, prin regiunile dunărene, o parte a activității comerciale. S-a deschis o rută comercială mai directă spre gurile Dunării și litoralul Mării Negre, de-a lungul văilor paralele ale Siretului, Prutului și Nistrului. „Drumul tătäresc” a fost dublat de „drumul moldovenesc” spre Chilia, cetate aflată pe brațul nordic al Deltei Dunării, și spre Cetatea Albă, la vărsarea Nistrului, care asigura securitatea convoaielor și a popasurilor datorită controlului statului moldovenesc recent întemeiat. Analiza privilegiilor emise de domnii Moldovei, prin care era reglementat comerțul cu Polonia, precum și cel cu Brașovul, dovedește că cerealele nu erau un articol de export al Moldovei, comerțul local fiind cu vite, piei de animale și ceară. Aici, poate fi identificată explicația motivului pentru care sigiliile orașelor Galați, Bârlad și Vaslui (precum și a ținutului Tutova), conțineau ca simbol peștele, pe când sigiliul orașului Iași avea, în faza inițială, reprezentată o vită; de asemenea, în sigiliul ținutului Fălciu este reprezentată tot o vită, simbol inclus în actuala stemă a județului Vaslui, alături de cei trei pești ai Tutovei și stupul cu albine al vechiului ținut Vaslui. Ocupațiile economice, surse primordiale de venit pentru orașele moldovenești medievale, se regăsesc, de pildă, reprezentate și în sigiliile localităților Troțuș și Târgu Ocna, respectiv ciocanul de minerit. Ultima parte a studiului a fost dedicată reprezentărilor heraldice oglindind realități economice, în stemele comunităților de până în secolul al XX-lea inclusiv.

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Fig. 1. Seal of the town of Bârlad (1635)



Fig. 2. Seal of the town of Vaslui (1641)



Fig. 3. Seal of the town of Galați (1643)



Fig. 4. Seal of the city of Iași (1649)



Fig. 5. Seal of the city of Iași (1712)



Fig. 6. Seal of the town of Orhei (1655)



Fig. 7. Medallion displaying the heraldic symbol of the former county of Fălciu, in the church built by Constantin Corbu in Mălăiești-Vaslui (1884-1885)



Fig. 8. Medallion displaying the heraldic symbol of the former county of Tutova, in the church built by Constantin Corbu in Mălăiești-Vaslui (1884-1885)



Fig. 9. Medallion displaying the heraldic symbol of the former county of Vaslui, in the church built by Constantin Corbu in Mălăiești-Vaslui (1884-1885)



Fig. 10. Seal of the town of Neamț (1599)



Fig. 11. Seal of the town of Troțuș (1650)

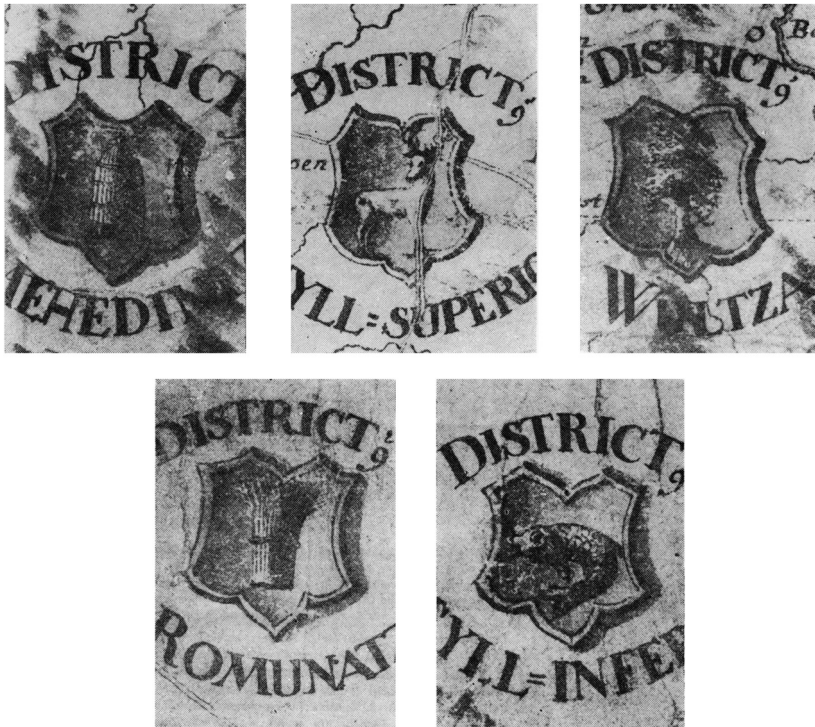


Fig. 12. Coats of arms of the five counties of Oltenia (Mehedinți, Gorj, Vâlcea, Romanați, Dolj), under the Austrian rule (upon a map by Fr. Schwantz, 1722)



Fig. 13. Great seal of Alexander Ipsilanti, prince of Wallachia, with the symbols of the counties around the princely coat of arms (1797)



Fig. 14. Seal of the Council of the Principality of Moldavia (1806-1812)



Fig. 15. Coat of arms of the Socialist Republic of Romania (1965-1989)

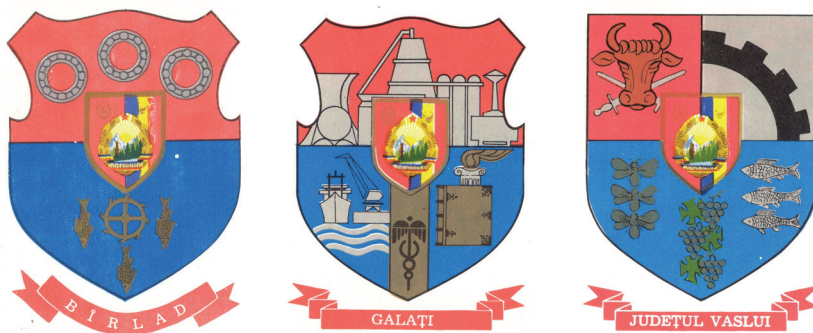


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