

The Regime of Land Property in Southern Dobrodja (1913–1924) A Decade of Maximum Instability

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THE NOTIONS of “progress” and “regression” are often used in the historiographical contributions that bear the mark of an analytical spirit and tend to leave behind the narrative and the facts. In principle, the territorial expansion of a state is considered progress, whilst the diminishing of the territory is regarded as regression. In fact, the problem of the relationship between progress and regression in the evaluation of the evolution of political and territorial changes has always been a complex one. “To conquer is not hard, it is more difficult to keep what has been conquered,” as the Romans used to say. Modern nation states have striven harder to achieve cohesion and homogeneity than political entities from Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Therefore the examination of concrete progress brought by the increase in territory and population of the respective state necessitates the consideration of further parameters (geographical position, natural resources, means of communication, technological level and, above all, the capacity and rate of integration of new territories), as was noted by Pierre Renouvin and Jean Baptiste Duroselle.¹ For the modern nation states of southeastern Europe, the possibilities of integrating the territories gained *grosso modo* after the decline of the Ottoman Empire were defined mainly by the ethnic and the religious composition of those provinces (regions), with consideration given to the importance of cultural factors (ethnical, linguistic and religious) in the forming of the modern nations.

Within this context, a good example of success is the integration of Northern Dobrodja into the political, economical and cultural life of the Romanian state. This was a complex and laborious process, which lasted for three decades, from the conclusion of the Berlin Treaty in 1878 to the granting of the right of direct representation in the Romanian Parliament to the Dobrodjan inhabitants in 1909. During this period, the development of the towns (in 1912, Northern Dobrodja was the most urban province of the Romanian Old Kingdom) and their means of communication (Constanța Harbor, the Constanța-Cernavoda railway and particularly the Cernavodă-Fetești bridge) on the one hand, and the operations for rendering the territory valuable on the other hand (the draining, reclamation and turning of the soil), were used as a solid background for a successful colonization of this region. At the time it was annexed to Romania, the region

was inhabited by a rare and very mixed population with a relative majority of Turkish language speakers.²

The Romanian authorities played a particular role in creating the conditions for the colonization of Old Dobrodja with ethnic Romanians because of the way in which they chose to administer the problem of Ottoman juridical inheritance in the matter of land property. The Romanian laws on the organization of Dobrodja issued during 1880–1884 foresaw the possibility of the nationalization of some farming lands that before 1878 were in the *miri** regime, which according to the Ottoman legislation and tradition, is given to the cultivators only to *use*. The right of *nude* or *unilateral* property belonged exclusively to the state, embodied by the Sultan. The Romanian laws of 1880 and 1882 stipulated the transformation of the *miri* property into full property, in exchange for a ransom paid to the state for 15 years. Article 14 of the 1880 law was not modified until later and provided the possibility of nationalizing those *miri* lands for which the re-buying tax had not been paid for three consecutive years. This provision was inspired by the Ottoman Land Code of 1858, which in article 68 specified the confiscation of the *miri* lands that remained uncultivated for three consecutive years.³ The 1884 law extended the re-buying term for the right of *nude/unilateral property* from 15 to 20 years, thus lowering the sum of the rates to be paid. It also took into consideration the possibility of nationalizing one third of the *miri* lands as an alternative to the payment of rates to the state.⁴

Altogether, the Romanian state gained an area of 165,142 hectares (about 1/9 of the Old Dobrodja land area) by repossession for a number of reasons and not only through total and partial confiscations of the *miri* lands, out of which 60,592 remained in its possession, the rest of which (about 2/3) was distributed to the colonists⁵. Despite the fact that the predominance of the Bulgarians in the socio-economic life of Northern Dobrodja decreased in the decades after 1878, it was not matched, according to many sources, by a similar demographical predominance. Thus, according to Vasile M. Kogălniceanu (1863–1921), quoted three decades later by the Bulgarian propagandist Ivan St. Penakov (1883–1971) in Tulcea County, in 1906 there were 9,742 Romanian rural households with a area of 97,000 ha (on average, 10 ha for each household), compared to 5,794 Bulgarian rural households, amounting to 85,504 hectares (on average, 14.75 ha for each household).⁶

Almost four decades after 1878, this transdanubian province was fully integrated into the Romanian national edifice; the Ottoman land system and the *miri* category were completely outdated. In addition to that, after the Bucharest Peace Treaty (28 July to 10 August 1913), a new and even greater challenge loomed before the Romanian administration, *un banco di prova* (A. Basciani).⁷ This was the integration of Southern Dobrodja, a territory obtained from Bulgaria at the end of the second Balkan war, a region named *Cadrilater* (*Quadrilater*) due to its quadrilateral shape.

* In this article we have used the form *miri*, well-established English historiography in regards to the local conditions in the Ottoman and Post-Ottoman world. In addition, in French, Romanian and Bulgarian, the conventional form of the term is *mirié*, which is derived from the collective noun *miriye* in Ottoman Turkish.

The population from Southern Dobrodja had also undergone considerable transformation; the preponderance of the Turkish speaking Muslims, the majority of the province in 1877, dropped continuously. In 1910, the Bulgarian authorities organized a census. During the following years, three different interpretations of the census' data emerged concerning the territory gained by Romania in the summer of 1913. According to a memoir released by the "Dobrodja" Society in mid 1914, at the end of 1910 in the future Romanian Southern Dobrodjan Quadrilater, there were 307,618 persons, out of which were 46.7% Turkish Tartars (143,635), 44.3% Bulgarians (136,439), 2.4% Romanians (8,532) and 2.3% Gagauts (8,215).⁸ In 1915, when Bulgaria's involvement in the war was imminent, Professor Stojan Romanski released another interpretation of the data collected in 1910. The Bulgarians' preponderance in Southern Dobrodja, which had become Romanian territory, had reached 47.6%. Furthermore, there were also 1.7% Bulgarian speaking Gagauts. The other ethnic groups were: 37.8% Turks, 4.3% Gypsies, 4.2% Tatars and 2.3% Romanians out of a total of 282,007 inhabitants.⁹ Finally, a third interpretation was made public in 1923. This indicated a total of 308,413 people, out of which were 140,897 Bulgarians (45.7%), 124,844 Turks (40.5%), 17,396 Gypsies (4.4%), 11,841 Tatars (3.8%) and 6,428 Romanians (2.1%).¹⁰

Besides the three late and incongruent findings of the 1910 census, there is yet another statistic from 1912, also from a Bulgarian source, published in the summer of the next year. It showed that in 1912, 282,207 people lived in the Romanian Quadrilater; 48.1% were Turks-Tartars, 43.1% Bulgarians (including Bulgarian speaking Gagauts), 4% Muslim Gypsies, 2.3% Romanians and in lower numbers, Lipova Russians, Greeks, Armenians, Jews, etc.¹¹ These data have been extensively quoted by Romanian historiography, because they state the superiority of the Turkish speaking Muslims in relation to the Bulgarians. The statistical data are largely confirmed by a pro-Bulgarian North American source that in 1919 gave the following figures: 122,000 Turks, 112,000 Bulgarians, 10,000 Tatars and 7,000 Romanians out of 260,000 inhabitants.¹² However, the Bulgarians were more numerous than the Turks in Caliacra County, where almost all the Gagauts from the province lived, and the Romanians did not exceed 1% compared to 4% in the Durostor County.¹³

We think that it is most likely that despite their numerical inferiority compared with the Turkish Tartars, the Bulgarians from the Southern Dobrodja territory gained by Romania in 1913 dominated the socio-economic life of the region with authority. According to Ivan Penakov, ethnic Bulgarians owned $\frac{3}{4}$ of the farming land and they almost exclusively controlled the more elevated economic sectors, such as industry, commerce and the banks.¹⁴

The ratios regarding the population density were also inconsistent with those released 35 years before. In 1880 the average density of the Northern Dobrodjan population was under 10 inhabitants per km² (about 150,000 inhabitants in 15,623 km²),¹⁵ compared to 40 inhabitants per km², the average density for Romania¹⁶. In 1912, the average density of the population in the future Romanian Southern Dobrodjan Quadrilater was 36.6 inhabitants per km² (282,000 inhabitants per 7,700 km²),¹⁷ compared to 25 inhabitants per km² in Old Dobrodja.¹⁸ In 1919 in the "Greater Romania," the

average population density was 55 inhabitants per km², and in the Old Kingdom (the territory of the Romanian state in 1914 together with Southern Dobrodja, but without Basarabia, Bucovina and Transylvania) it was 62.5 inhabitants per km², according to Keith Hitchins.¹⁹

In conclusion, from 1913 onwards, the scarcity of the population did not characterize Southern Dobrodja as much as it characterized, and partially continues to characterize, Northern Dobrodja as part of the Old Kingdom, and later of Greater Romania as a whole and completed country. Such a status objectively narrowed the possibilities for a Romanian colonization of Quadrilater similar to that which had been successfully achieved in Old Dobrodja.

By comparison with their kindred from Northern Dobrodja in 1878, the Southern Dobrodjan Bulgarians were defined in 1913 not only by their superiority in number, density, demographic and socio-economic majority, but also by stronger ties with the national Bulgarian state. As Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea noted, the Bulgarians from Old Dobrodja had exchanged the Ottoman administration for that of Romania without experiencing the reality of belonging to their Fatherland, and this restrained their irredentist manifestations.²⁰

From the juridical point of view, an element of vulnerability for the Bulgarian farmers in Southern Dobrodja was demonstrated by the *non-explicit* abrogation, conditioned or unconditioned, of the distinction between the full private property (*mülk*) and the private long leasing one (*miri*) by Sofia lawmakers during the period 1879–1913. “The law concerning the lands, assets and servitudes” adopted by *Săbranje* in February 1904, and which was in force when Southern Dobrodja was lost (in 1913), had been reinterpreted by various Bulgarian and pro-Bulgarian media, but the *mülk-miri* problem had remained unsolved.²¹ After 1913, some Romanian authors would quote decision no. 172 of 25 June 1910 of the Supreme Court of Sofia, in which an explicit reference was made to a *miri* property subject to other regulations and terms regarding the prescription, comparing it to the *mülk*²² properties. Practically, by the non-explicit abrogation of the *miri* regime, the Bulgarian state kept a crushing majority (according to Miletiči’s estimates, over 77%, compared with 16.5% Bulgarian ethnics)²³ for the entire period of time 1878–1913, which was a substantial maneuvering margin as far as the Muslim minority that had formed in South Dobrodja on the eve of the Russian-Turkish war of 1877–1878 was concerned. After the conclusion of the Bucharest Peace (28 July to 10 August 1913), the judicial weapon generated by the ambiguity of the of land property regime, together with Southern Dobrodja, passed into the hands of the Romanian state and its authorities, who were the lawful successors of the Bulgarian state, thus taking over *all* its rights in that territory.

The conservative government led by Titu Maiorescu (1840–1917) did not make use of any judicial subtleties deriving from the *mülk-miri* distinction; it tried to take advantage of the trend towards emigration that was evident in Southern Dobrodja immediately after the instauration of Romanian administration. Consequently, the Government introduced the right of pre-emption of the state for the sale of assets, and it created an *ad-hoc* fund. Also, it established a special commission under the leadership of the President of the Senate, Lupu Costache. For three months (September–December

1913), this Commission received and approved offers amounting, according to a Southern Dobrodjan Bulgarian source from 1938, to 50,000 hectares of farming lands and forests from the local resident Bulgarians (Turks) who were about to emigrate²⁴. Eight years later, the Macedo-Romanian liberal lawyer Achile N. Pineta (1882–1953) would consider the conservatives' initiative from the fall of 1913 a missed opportunity.²⁵

In December 1913, on the eve of the fall of the conservative regime and at the request of the then Prime Minister and leader of the Liberal National Party Ionel Brătianu (1864–1927), the Minister of the Agriculture and Dominions C.C. Arion announced that he would present a draft law regarding the colonization of Quadrilater. The project was based on the following: 1. the settling of colonists in those areas where the land was expensive. The example of the Oltenia area was offered, where the price for a hectare of land was 2,400 lei, compared with 800-900 lei in Moldavia; 2. Giving subsidies and other advantages to the newcomers so that they could farm their land efficiently; 3. Setting a minimum lot size limit of 15 hectares lot, so that they were economically viable.²⁶

The change of government in January 1914 put an end to this initiative, even before being launched in an institutional framework. The new Ministries Council elaborated a complex law, regulating all aspects of social life in Southern Dobrodja, including the land problem. In this last domain (approached in Chapter VI), the liberal governors started with the idea of keeping the *mülk-miri* distinction, which they wanted to implement.²⁷ In practice, all farming lands were included in the category *miri* except for a small number of properties, which private persons had obtained directly from the state by direct purchase or by public auction.²⁸

Items 117-118 of the “Law concerning the Organization of New Dobrodja” of March 1914 re-established the principles of the laws regarding Old Dobrodja of 1880–1884. Therefore, in exchange for the recognition of the right to full ownership, the *miri* landowners would have to either cede 1/3 of the respective land to the state, or pay the state a re-buying right, which was arranged for 15 years and whose sum was to be settled by some agrarian commissions. The non-payment of the installments for three consecutive years resulted in the land's confiscation. Items 120–123 regulated the exercise of state's right to pre-empt the real estate sales, while item 124 stipulated that they had been and would remain in the possession of the state; not only those assets that belonged to the Bulgarian state, but also other categories of assets such as forests and village ponds, lands belonging to schools or churches, the National Bank and the Agricultural Bank of Bulgaria, the mines and mineral waters, ponds and lakes and those lands for which the owners could not provide the proof of their possession with deeds or witnesses.²⁹ The law did not mention the colonization of this territory as a consecutive stage in the nationalization process explicitly mentioned.

The operation of checking the property titles and implicitly delimiting the *mülk* and *miri* lands carried on slowly and had not been completed by the time of Romania's entry into World War I from 15 to 28 August 1916. Therefore, items 117 and 118 of the law regarding the expropriation of *miri* land areas had not yet been implemented. However, other dispositions of the law regarding nationalization could be applied, so by September 1916, when the army and the Romanian administration left Southern Dobrodja after the Mackensen offensive, according to N. P. Comnen (1881–1957), the Romanian

state had accumulated 97,000 hectares of forests, to which were added 80,000 hectares of farming land and grazing land.³⁰ This balance included the purchases made by the Lupu Costache Commission during the last months of 1913.

In the first three years of Romanian administration, the ethno-demographic changes in Quadrilater were minor. There had been some non-systematic attempts at settling colonists on the left side of the Danube (peasants without land, veterans from the 1877–1878 war, refugees from Transylvania etc), but being without any moral and financial support in a foreign and hostile place, many preferred to return.³¹ Much more stable and ambitious proved to be the Macedo-Romanian families which had settled in this territory before 1913.

Among the individuals of Macedo-Romanian origin (Aromanians and Megleno-Romanians) present in the Southern Dobrodjan towns during 1913–1916 we can mention the traders Tache Nibi, Vasile Zeona, Nicu Tanașoca and Stere Caranica, the pharmacists Tașcu Pucerea (1872–955) and Sterie Șunda, the lawyers Achile N. Pineta and Vasile Covata, and also the philologist Pericle Papahagi (1872–1943).³²

In conclusion, one can state that during the years 1913–1916 certain phenomena were present within Quadrilater's administration, especially concerning the land problem, which would come back full circle during the interwar period. The first phenomenon was the incoherence and inconsistency of the politics of the various governments over the problems specific to Southern Dobrodja and the absence of a long term action plan despite the agreement between liberals and conservatives on the annexation of the area in 1913. Paradoxically, the conservatives based their financial projects in Quadrilater on the effective realities of the area, putting aside the judicial theories subtleties that the liberals had just invoked in 1914. In addition, from now on we notice a different attitude of the Daco-Romanian colonists, particularly the Macedo-Romanians, who were characterized much more than the former by an offensive and perseverant attitude.

The declaration and the development of the Romanian-Bulgarian hostilities from 1916–1918 complicated the situation in Southern Dobrodja, which was lost *de facto* by Romania in September 1916 and regained completely three years later after the signing of the Neuilly-sur-Seine Treaty. For more than two years, from September 1916 until the end of 1918, Romania could not exercise any kind of sovereignty over Quadrilater. In the context of the retreat of 1916, the Romanian authorities dispatched to Russia, together with the thesaurus of the national Bank, the documents regarding property ownership in Southern Dobrodja. In exchange for these, the local inhabitants received some brief receipts that only stipulated the existence of the ownership documents and the land area (not the neighbors). After the war, the Romanian Law Courts did not recognize these receipts.³³

Apart from the fact that the documents dispatched to Russia disappeared, the suspicion and the resentment that characterized Romanian-Bulgarian relations were amplified due to the hostilities from 1916–1918 and the acts of violence against the civil population. (Here one is reminded not only of the hard stance taken by the Bulgarian administration towards the Romanians of Old Dobrodja, but also the preventive transportation of more than 15,000 Dobrodjan, Bulgarian and Turkish hostages to Moldavia in 1916, many of whom died as a result of the precarious hygienic and sanitary conditions).³⁴

For the Romanian authorities, the retreat to Moldavia also meant a phase of preparation of the great reforms (agrarian and electoral) that would transform the social physiognomy of the country in the interwar period. By revising item 17 of the Constitution in mid 1917, the path was cleared for the partial expropriation of large areas of land, with the purpose of offering land to the peasants that did not have enough land particularly the combatants and their families.³⁵

Land appropriation for the inhabitants of Quadrilater was out of question, as Bulgarians and Turks were a large majority, and Romania was at war with both Bulgaria and Turkey. However, some estimative calculations on the expropriation possibilities of large South Dobrodjan properties were carried out. According to the expert Creangă there was an expropriable area of 30,000 hectares, to which were added another 30,000 hectares, which belonged to some large properties not included in the Bulgarian statistics from 1908.³⁶ During the parliamentary debates of April 1922, the liberal deputy Leonte Moldovan (1865–1943, President of the Senate from February 1934 to November 1935) broke protocol by interrupting his party colleague, N. P. Comnen with a phrase which was dubious in meaning, or perhaps typed wrongly in the stenograph record: “We considered 300,000 hectares in Iasi (in 1917, our note) that could be expropriated in New Dobrodja, with a view to (sic!) expropriation.”³⁷ Of course, the expropriation could not be carried out simply with a view to expropriation, as is shown in the stenograph record, but with a view to appropriation, or most probably, with a view to colonization. It is still hard to ascertain whether the sum of 300,000 hectares included the *miri* areas marked for confiscation, or only the parts over 100 hectares of the large properties in the area, to which were added those 180,000 hectares already nationalized in 1916 which Nicolae Petrescu Comnen mentioned.

The restoration of the Romanian administration in Southern Dobrodja in 1919 encouraged many important Aromanians to reopen the discussion regarding the opportunity to start operations to colonize the territory, which was obtained by Romania in 1913 and regained six years later. Among the Aromanian instigators of these initiatives during the period 1919–1920, Tașcu Pucerea and Pericle Papahagi³⁸, deputy and senator in Durostor respectively, stand out in the brief consecutive legislature of the elections of November 4 1919. The idea echoed in civil and military Daco-Romanian circles of Dobrodja and in the rest of the country. Therefore, Ioan N. Roman (1866–1931, mayor of Constanța in 1910) and the geographer Constantin Brătescu (1882–1945) released a brochure in which it was proposed that some Romanian groups from the Balkans and across the Dniestr river be brought into Quadrilater. The precursory condition for this immigration was most certainly the maintaining of the provisions of the law of April 1 1914, namely the *mülk-miri* distinction and the possibilities of the nationalization of some private lands³⁹. General Ion Vlădescu, commander of the 9th Infantry Division of Caliacra, drafted a memoir dated 25 September 1921 recommending the strengthening of the southern borders of the country through the colonization of Quadrilater by Romanian Transylvanians and Macedo-Romanians, without considering the land issue for such an operation.⁴⁰

The tendency towards initiating expropriations as a starting point for colonization in Southern Dobrodja was, however, in dissonance with the general trend associated with the

enactment of the agricultural reforms, the eradication of medieval and post-medieval elements such as long term leasing, and the partial expropriation of large properties for the benefit of the large number of small agricultural owners (or even proletarians). The agricultural reform of 1921 had two different effects on the land situation in Southern Dobrodja.⁴¹

From a chronological view, the first (and immediate) consequence was a theoretical one and consisted of the explicit abrogation of the long leasing regime by means of total expropriation to the benefit of the cultivators, as stipulated by item 7, paragraph d of the law. This disposition was reiterated, equally as explicit, in item 82. The direct consequence of such regulations was the transformation of the *miri* properties into private full property, without compensation to the state, in its capacity of *nude-owner*. Relevant to the general tendency shown by the Romanian authorities regarding the land situation in Quadrilater is the content of a sentence included in the quite delicate item 9: “In Dobrodja, no property will be colonized, either through a voluntary exchange or a forced one,” without differentiating between the two periods of the history of Dobrodja.

A second consequence, visible in the long term, has its origin in the regulations of item 8 of the law regarding expropriation, which were applied only after 1924, corroborated by the dispositions of the law of 22 April 1924 regarding the land regime in Southern Dobrodja.

As far as the polarization of land property is concerned, at the beginning of the 20th century Southern Dobrodja occupied a mid position between the rather equalitarian Bulgaria and the strikingly contrasting Romania. The historian Petăr Todorov identified the phenomenon of polarization in the beginning of the 20th century in the future Romanian Quadrilater concerning the agricultural properties. Thus, between 1905 and 1913 the number of properties larger than 100 hectares increased from 187 to 401. Their average surface area at the time Bulgaria lost the region was 444 hectares compared to 400 eight years before. According to the same researcher, 10% of farming landowners ended up controlling more than half of the arable area of Southern Dobrodja⁴². In view of this tendency towards polarization, one can understand why some of the large properties in Quadrilater in the period 1913–1916 did not appear in the Bulgarian statistics of 1908.

The implementation of the dispositions concerning expropriation contained in the agrarian laws of July 1921 and April 1924 and the settlement of colonists in Southern Dobrodja, mainly after 1925 in parallel with the Turkish emigrations, led to the change from the tendency towards polarization to one of division into smaller properties, more obvious in Durostor County than in Caliacra. Thus, at the end of interwar period, only 4% of the cultivated area of Durostor County was grouped into properties larger than 100 hectares, compared to a percentage of 11% in Caliacra.⁴³ In comparison, we note the fact that in Romania in the years 1930–1935 the properties larger than 100 hectares amounted to 27.7% of the agricultural total area, and a thousandth of the owners (who each owned properties of over 500 hectares) possessed 1/6 of the agricultural surface area of the country.⁴⁴ In Bulgaria, after the agrarian reform implemented by the government of Al. Stamboliiski (1919–1923), the maximum limit for land property was set to 30 hectares. With rare exceptions, the triumph of small properties was almost absolute.⁴⁵

Only a few days after the enactment of the agrarian reform at the level of the entire Old Kingdom, the two Chambers of Romania’s Parliament adopted a special law

regarding Quadrilater, also initiated by the government of the People's Party (1920–1921) led by Alexandru Averescu (1859–1938). In fact, the real initiators of the law were the governmental deputies Ion Cămărășescu (former P.N.L. prefect for Durostor in 1914–1916) and Constantin Georgescu-Vâlcea. In a brochure published in 1921, they argued that when Southern Dobrodja had become part of Romania, the *miri* land regime no longer existed, neither *de facto* (which was not contested in the Romanian media, our note), nor *de jure*.⁴⁶

On 20 July 1921, without any debates (open confrontations of ideas and opinions), the Deputies Assembly and the Senate, each parliamentary Chamber with a large majority (111 against 1, respectively 70 versus 3 votes) adopted the “Law concerning the organization of New Dobrodja.”⁴⁷ In the presentation of the given motives, the excerpt corresponding to chapter VI of the law dedicated to the land property regime stated that the 1914 law had not relied on the “rightful knowledge and interpretation of the Bulgarian laws” in this regard. Among the signatories of the draft of law was Eugen Zamfiroiu, who had defended a completely different point of view two years earlier.⁴⁸

In the matter of the land regime, the 1921 law did not change the legal stipulations of 1914 concerning the right of the Romanian state to occupy the lands that had previously belonged to the Bulgarian state. This included the forests, meadows, village ponds, school grounds, church plots etc. (item 10), and lands without an owner (item 11). In addition, the state continued to enjoy the right of pre-emption regarding any land sale, respective of monopoly, if the owner had emigrated within one year of the processing of the documents (items 103–105, 106).⁴⁹

The essential modification was contained in the items 89–91, where no *milk-miri*, distinction was made; the two words were not even mentioned, but it was stipulated that the property titles would be distributed within a maximum of a year, granting *full* property rights to those possessing “property documents *of any kind*” (our underline).⁵⁰

Overall, chapter VI of the law, which was published in “Monitorul Oficial” on 26 July 1921, tipped the balance in favor of the Bulgarian (and Turkish) pretensions in Quadrilater. However, this concession was mitigated by (also) relating it to the ambiguous situation existing in Bulgaria before 1913. Thus, the possibility of other revisions based on the reinterpretation of the same ambiguous situation were maintained, at least at judicial level, which would happen anyway after less than a year. Much more advantageous, from a judicial perspective, would have been if the principle of cancellation of the long leasing regime had been invoked in favor of the inhabitants in the dissertation of the reasons, as stipulated expressly in the law for agrarian reform. This had been adopted a few days before and had not yet been published in the official gazette “Monitorul Oficial.”

However, the enactment of the July 1921 law was enthusiastically welcomed by the Southern Dobrodjan population and in particular the Bulgarian economical elite of the region.⁵¹

The P.N.L.'s rise to power in January 1922, followed (not preceded) by the organization of parliamentary elections two months later, naturally awoke certain concerns. In order to appease the population in the two Quadrilater counties, the new governors and organizers of the elections promised during the election campaign in February,

among others, not only to keep the law of July 1921, but also to abolish the procedure for checking the property titles and recognize the existing land situation *de facto* in Southern Dobrodja.⁵² The result of the March 1922 elections was greatly in favor of the liberals. They won all the deputy and senator seats corresponding to the two counties, which were held by the deputies N. P. Comnen, Șerban Callos, Kiril Manolov, Suleiman Kekeli (Durostor), Achile N. Pineta, Mustafa Hagi Mehmet, Vasile Covata and Vasile Holevici (Caliacra), and the senators Mehmet Fermi Mustafa, Gheorghe Teodorescu (Durostor), Ermil Pangratti and Andrei Mușev (Caliacra).⁵³ Besides, in the entire interwar (and ante-war) period in Romania, governments were first given power by the sovereign, only then did they organize the elections, which they also won with a consistent and often massive contribution by the Ministry of Home Affairs. This general characteristic was even more visible⁵⁴ in Durostor and Caliacra counties due to the exceptional status existing there.

Neither the generous promises recently made to the Southern Dobrodjan electorate, nor the notable presence of Bulgarian and Turkish leaders from the two counties of New Dobrodja inside P.N.L. local organizations discouraged the new governors from modifying the land regime in Quadrilater shortly after the establishment of the legislative bodies. On April 3 1922, The Romanian Senate, followed 5 days later by the Deputies Assembly, adopted a legislative document of only two articles referring to the real estate property regime in New Dobrodja. The first item abrogated *in integrum* chapter VI (items 83-116) of the law from the 26 July 1921 and annulled all the rights obtained which were based on it. The other article also entirely re-enforced chapter VI of the 1914 law with the same objective.⁵⁵

The transformation of the *miri* property into absolute property was again conditioned by sacrifices on the part of the cultivators (the payment of a tax or the ceding of 1/3 of the land that was granted for use). The way in which the corresponding fragment of chapter VI of the 1921 law was formulated, from the clarification of the reasons of the respective law, did indeed leave open the possibility of revoking the rights granted. In 1921, the lawmaker started with the idea that in 1914 the Romanian authorities had misinterpreted the Bulgarian judicial inheritance in the matter. In 1922, the same lawmaker revised the law, invoking the correctness of the 1914 interpretation and the incorrectness of the 1921 interpretation regarding the same ambiguous judicial situation inherited from the Bulgarian state in Southern Dobrodja.⁵⁶ On the other hand, the 1922 law contradicted item 7, paragraph d of the Law for the agrarian reform in the Old Kingdom adopted in July 1921, which stipulated the eradication of the long term leasing for the benefit of long lease tenants.

Before the Parliament enacted the law that sanctioned the return to the land regime established in 1914 in Southern Dobrodja, but mainly after April 1922, many arguments were brought about to justify this document. Still, they had no connection with the judicial substance of the *miri* problem. It was therefore argued that the methodological norms for the application of the July 1921 law finalized two months later were very complex and confused⁵⁷, or that after 28 July 1913 (as before), the ethnic Bulgarians would have profited from the lack of information and judicial culture of the Muslims, purchasing land from the latter at low prices⁵⁸. In such cases, it would have been reason-

able for the Romanian authorities just to conceive clearer methodological norms and to verify (even annul) the transactions made after 28 July 1913, in parallel with the start of a campaign to inform the Turkish speaking Muslims.

More specifically, the politician and national publisher Constantin Hentzescu invoked the “state rationality,” which consisted of the establishment of some reserve lands destined for future colonization. Yet Hentzescu did not criticize the decision made in 1921, when he contended the justness of the change of 1922. According to Hentzescu, the Romanian state had made a gesture of goodwill towards the Bulgarian minority in Southern Dobrodja, but the answer of the local Bulgarians had not been the one the authorities had expected.⁵⁹ If the author was taking into consideration the integration of the ethnic Bulgarians into the Romanian nation, the interval of July 1921 to April 1922 was too short to analyze it from this point of view. However, if as suspected he was referring to the turmoil and attacks made by the *commitadjies*, then one needs to say that the above mentioned period was a quiet one compared to the first period of 1921. This development was due to the vigorous action taken by the commander of the ninth Infantry Division, general Ioan Vlădescu; a tendency towards recrudescence was still felt in the first three months of 1922.⁶⁰

The parliamentary debates of April 1922 revealed some paradoxical situations. The governmental deputies from Caliacra, Vasile Covata and Achile Pineta, opposed the law project. N. P. Comnen had shown some doubts too, while some deputies of the opposition (I. Măgură etc.) backed it.⁶¹

A first effect of returning to the dispositions of the law from spring 1914 consisted of the annulment *ipso-facto* of all agricultural land transactions concluded or carried out after 28 July 1913. This reversion of the situation affected not only the interests of the Bulgarians in Quadrilater, but also those of many Turks, Greeks and even ethnic Romanians. The Bulgarians were not always the buyers and the others the land sellers. Furthermore, some of the transactions were concluded from July 1921 to April 1922, when the law did not restrict them.⁶²

Before putting into practice the dispositions referring to the partial nationalization of the *miri*, the legislative modifications of April 1924 intervened. Two contradictory tendencies in this regard were obvious at legislation level in 1923. On the one hand, the principle of canceling the long leasing for the benefit of the leasing tenants was included in the Constitution adopted in March by mentioning article 7, paragraph d of the law for the agrarian reform in the Old Kingdom, which stipulated this fact explicitly in article 131.⁶³ On the other hand, during the second half of the year, the idea that the holders of the *miri* lands would be forced to cede one third of the lands to the state in exchange of recognition of the right of full ownership was often mentioned inside the P.N.L. This eliminated the alternative to the payment of an amount of money.⁶⁴ The purpose of creating a state land reserve designed for an eventual colonization was becoming more transparent.

Besides this, the establishment of some small settlements of colonists, former combatants that had fought in Dobrodja, was also started in 1923 under the leadership of General G. Rasoviceanu. The decision published in the Journal of the Council of Ministries on 3 November 1922 was beginning to be put into practice, according to which

each family received 25 hectares of farming land, and the heads of the colonies received an additional 75 to make a total of 100 hectares. By 1925, 13 such colonies had been established, including 458 families and 12,500 hectares within an area in the Caliacra County, which was bordered by localities Bazargic, Balcic, Şabla and Ciairlichioi.⁶⁵

By 1922, the preponderance of Romanians in the two Southern Dobrodjan counties had increased noticeably, because some militaries and official clerks of the Romanian state had been sent, and some Aromanian families had settled voluntarily. In addition, some ethnic Bulgarians left the region, willingly or unwillingly, and some Christian gypsies adopted Romanian names. Consequently, almost three years after Romania regained Quadrilater, the number of ethnic Romanians in the area reached 21,808 out of 315,588 inhabitants (6.91%). The Romanian presence was stronger in Durostor, where 11,524 ethnic Romanians accounted for 7.41% of the total population of the county, which amounted to 155,367, compared with 6.41% in Caliacra (10,284 Romanians out of 160,221 inhabitants).⁶⁶ Because of the Rasoviceanu colonization, in 1925 the rate of increase of Romanian preponderance was rising, mainly in Caliacra, where the percentage of Romanians was higher than that in Durostor before the arrival of the first organized groups of Macedo-Romanian colonists (see next Table).⁶⁷

THE POPULATION IN DUROSTOR, CALIACRA AND SOUTHERN DOBRODJA IN 1925

Ethnicity	Durostor County		Caliacra County		Southern Dobrodja	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Romanian	17,489	9.45	16,426	11.75	33,915	10.44
Bulgarian	73,449	39.71	59,618	42.67	133,067	40.98
Turkish Tatar	91,208	49.31	50,442	36/10	141,650	43.63
Others (including Gagauts)	2,815	1.52	13,216	9.46	16,031	4.93
TOTAL	184,961	100	139,702	100	324,663	100

SOURCE: Constantin Tudor, *Administrația românească în Cadrilater (1913–1940)* (Călărași: Agora, 2005), 213.

The P.N.L.'s increasingly offensive policy in Quadrilater was disapproved of by some individuals and political groups from the Opposition, mainly the left parties, which tended to be closer to the Southern Dobrodjan Bulgarians. Therefore, at the General Congress of the Peasant's Party (Iași, 26th–28th November 1922), the delegation from Durostor brought the agrarian problem into the discussion, assuming it would be solved by an unconditioned recognition of the full property right of the land held in use.⁶⁸ In return, both then and later, the liberal media in Durostor accused Stefan Penkov and other top Bulgarian politicians in the county of farmland speculations.⁶⁹

A new legislative act for the revision of the land regime in Southern Dobrodja was adopted by the Senate and the Deputies Assembly on 3 and 6 April 1924.⁷⁰ The complete text of the law was published in the "Official Gazette" on 22 April the same year. In the justification of the document signed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Dominions,

Alecu Constantinescu, the changes of more articles (111–117) of the “Law concerning the Organization of New Dobrodja,” chapter VI, were explained by the necessity to correlate the respective law with the law regarding the agrarian reform. It was believed that in granting farmers of *miri* land a chance to be able to gain full rights to those lands by money payments, there would not be enough land to fulfill the requirements of the agrarian reform law. The ultimate solution was one of partial expropriation (1/3) of the *miri* lands, with the condition that the future owner would not possess less than five hectares, upon which he should have full rights.⁷¹

According to the new legislative settlement, the verification of all property titles was the task of the same commissions, whose organization and functioning was regulated in item 37 of the law regarding the agrarian reform. Implicitly, a limit of 100 hectares was imposed on the large manors, the rest of the property being subjected to the expropriation procedure.

As a consequence of the modification of item 113, aspirants to ownership statute needed to file a written statement in three copies, with quite complicated rubrics (from “a” to “k”), within a 90 days term since the law’s promulgation (that is, by 22 July 1924). If documents were missing, written evidence or witnesses were requested in order to prove that the owner or the family had possessed the land that was claimed for at least 10 years before September 1904 (the date of the coming to force of the Bulgarian land law adopted in February of the same year). It was mentioned that the prescription started under Bulgarian law had not been in place on the date when Southern Dobrodja had become a part of Romania. In its new form, item 117 stipulated the transformation of the *miri* property into full property, *only* in exchange of the partial union (1/3) of the land towards the state, stipulating that a minimum of five hectares not be expropriated.

In practice, the Romanian lawmaker combined, to the disadvantage of many land cultivators in Quadrilater, the expropriation dispositions of the general law of agrarian reform and in particular, the previous law regarding the organizing of Southern Dobrodja. The real finality of such juridical artifices becomes transparent if we read item 129 of the law. This opened the way for the start of systematic work towards the colonization of the counties Durostor and Caliacra: “On the lands in its possession, and also on the lands in its patrimony, the state may have brought about colonization and alienation on small plots by means of the Central House of Appropriation, based on a Journal of the Council of Ministries.” In any case, the liberal Ministry of Agriculture and Dominions, Al. Constantinescu, had a lively correspondence with the promoters of the Macedo-Romanians immigration movement to Romania during the period 1923–1925.⁷² In the Senate, the project for a legislative modification got 51 votes in favor and 8 votes against, none of the senators having asked for the right to speak.⁷³ Furthermore, in the agenda of the meeting on 3 April 1924, there were six other law projects aiming for different aspects, from sericulture to the establishment of a judicial commission for the members of the university didactic staff.⁷⁴ The Deputies Assembly unanimously voted in favor of this law project, that is all 102 parliamentarians who were present, after the speeches of Vasile Covata and Achile Pineta.

Surprisingly, if we consider the position of these two individuals in April 1922 regarding the restitution of the *mülk-miri* distinction, both deputies of Macedo-Romanian

origin were now supporting a much more radical project than the one from 1922. Covata only asked if the pre-emption right of the state also applied to the farming lands stipulated in item 113 (the answer of the undersecretary Cipăianu was affirmative), while Pineta openly praised the law project and its authors for applying the principle of safeguarding the right that was gained.⁷⁵ The possibility cannot be excluded that, two years earlier, the real reason for the discontentment of the two Caliacra Macedo-Romanian deputies had been the very lack of regulations regarding the future colonization of Quadrilater. In this regard, the chance was granted to the Southern Dobrodjan natives in 1922 (in fact, in 1914) to buy back the *nude property* right of the state over *miri* lands in order to avoid their expropriation. Anyway, we do not consider less important the fact that, in the debates of April 1922, Achile Pineta brought the developments in Old Dobrodja up for discussion. During the period 1880–1913, the majority of ethnic Bulgarians preferred to pay the conversion of the *miri* regime into *mülk* in installments rather than give up a part of the lands they had. Many even succeeded in increasing their land estate.⁷⁶

After the adoption and the first stages of implementation of the 1924 law, the word “third” gained a concrete and pragmatic meaning regarding Southern Dobrodja. The legal dispositions enacted in April 1924 were strongly contested by some Bulgarian and pro-Bulgarian authors, including Romanian publicists and politicians. A first category of contestations against the existence of the *miri* regime in Bulgaria in 1913 can be summed up in the following words by Ivan Penakov: “Without being explicitly said that this *miri* property is abrogated, in reality, this fact emerges from the entire new legislation (the Post-ottoman Bulgarian legislation, our note).”⁷⁷ In response, some Romanian authors started to hunt for remarks about the *miri* regime in the legislation, particularly in the Bulgarian jurisprudence, and they were not lacking in results (see *supra*, page 291, note 22). The Southern Dobrodjan lawyer Todor Tošev pointed out the contradictions between the 1924 law and the Constitution adopted one year earlier.⁷⁸ The propagandist Ivan St. Penakov accused the multitude of formalities, “ingenious, complicated and lacking in logic, so that it is impossible not to transgress them”⁷⁹ and the anachronism of the 1924 land law. Penakov focused on the resemblance between the Romanian concept of the *mülk-miri* difference and the concept applied by colonial France in the Maghreb area from 1830 to 22 April 1863,⁸⁰ compared to other states (Kemalist Turkey, 1926) that gave up unconditionally their rights of *nude* property over *miri* lands in favor of the tenants.⁸¹

The appraisal that, of all southeastern European states successors of the Ottoman Empire, only Romania would have invoked the *mülk-miri* distinction, imitating the Maghreb French example, was asserted by the prestigious international expert Albert Geouffrey de Lapradelle (1871–1955), quoted by Petăr Todorov.⁸² The assertion of the famous legal adviser did not correspond with the facts and concrete developments in the post-ottoman area. In all Balkan states, the agrarian reforms after World War I were thought of and applied in a discriminatory manner for the Macedo-Romanian communities.⁸³ Therefore, between 1924 and 1928 the Bulgarian state confiscated all mountain grazing lands in Pirin Macedonia, which was a hard blow dealt to the rights and interests of Aromanian shepherds in the area. The Bulgarian authorities substantiated this

conduct by invoking the same Ottoman juridical inheritance which had been adopted in 1913 (the year Macedonia was split by the Bucharest Peace), i.e. the distinction between the *mülk* goods and the *metruké* goods, the latter only being *used* by a community, their rightful owner being the state. This was the case for the roads, bridges, fairs, forests and grazing lands. Nevertheless, before 1913 (in 1838 etc), the Ottoman state, and the Sultan himself, had explicitly recognized the Macedo-Romanian villages in the area in official written documents and their right of full property *mülk* over the grazing lands where their forefathers used to take the sheep herds.⁸⁴

The adoption of the April 1924 law and the start of the real colonization operation of Quadrilater one year later put an end to a period of 11 years (1913–1924) of legislative instability. This was caused mostly by the absence of a national project agreed by all main political parties to integrate the region in the edifice of the Romanian state, but also partially by external circumstances (World War I, with all its direct and indirect effects). This status of incertitude was also maintained because of the largely incoherent and inconsistent manner in which Romania's successive governments and their representatives applied the stipulations of the law and related them to the colonization operations until the final loss of this territory in 1940.



Notes

1. Apud Constantin Iordan, *România și relațiile internaționale în sud-estul european (1919–1924): Probleme ale păcii, securității și cooperării* (Bucharest: All, 1999), 11–12.
2. For the evolution of Northern Dobrodja (Old Dobrodja) between 1878 and 1913, mainly from an ethno-demographic point of view, see: William Miller, *The Ottoman Empire and its successors* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1927), 392–393; *Istoriya na Bălgarite (1878–1944) v dokumenti*, T. I (1878–1912), second part, *Bălgarite v Makedonija, Trakija i Dobrudža*, ed. Veličko Georgiev, Stajko Trifonov (Sofia: Prosveta, 1996), 561–586; Adrian Rădulescu, Ion Bitoleanu, *Istoria Dobrogei*, 2nd ed. (Constanța: Ex Ponto, 1998), 352–379; Constantin Iordache, “Rumînskata Kalifornija: integriranjeto na Severna Dobrudža v Rumînija (1878–1913),” *Istoričeski Pregled*, 57, (2001), 63; Žeko Popov, Petăr Todorov, “Severna Dobrudža (1878–1912),” in *Istoriya na Dobrudža*, T. 4 (1878–1944), eds. P. Todorov, Blagovest Njagulov (Veliko Turnovo: Faber, 2007), 61–135; George Ungureanu, *Problema Cadrilaterului în contextul relațiilor româno-bulgare (1919–1940)* (Brăila: Istros, 2009), 34–43.
3. Ioan N. Roman, “Proprietatea imobiliară rurală în Dobrogea,” *Analele Dobrogei (A.D.)*, IX, vol. II: *Dobrogea—50 de ani de viață românească (1878–1928)*, director Constantin Brătescu, secretary I. Georgescu (Bucharest: Cultura Națională, 1928), 285; *Izvori za istorijata na Dobrudža*, T. I (1878–1919), eds. Ž. Popov, Kosjo Penčikov, P. Todorov, (Sofia: Bălgarska Akademija na Naukite, 1992), part I (1878–1913), doc. 34, 45.
4. Roman, “Proprietatea imobiliară rurală,” 286.
5. Toma Ionescu, “Asupra proprietăților și colonizărilor în Dobrogea,” in *Dobrogea—50 de ani*, 278.
6. Ivan St. Penakov, *L'entente bulgaro-roumaine. Prémisses* (Sofia: Imprimerie T.F. Tchipeff, 1939), 20–21; see also Ž. Popov, “La situation et les luttes des Bulgares de la Dobrudja de Nord (1878–1912),” *Bulgarian Historical Review*, 19 (1991): 16.

7. Alberto Basciani, *Un conflitto balcanico. La contesa fra Bulgaria e Romania in Dobrugia del Sud (1918–1940)* (Cosenza: Periferia, 2001), 97.
8. Izvori za istorijata na Dobrudža, T.1, second part (1913–1919), doc. 22, 260; see also Stefan Ančev, “Rumînskoto zakonodatelstvo v Južna Dobrudža sled Bukureštijat dogovor ot 1913 g.,” in *Bukureštijat dogovor ot 1913 g. i sâdbata na Južna Dobrudža-Naučna Konferencija, Dobriči, 21 sept. 1993*, ed. Antonina Kuzmanova (Dobrich: History Museum, 1994), 43.
9. I.St. Penakov, *Le problème de la Dobroudja de Sud. Un aspect économique et social* (Sofia: Imprimerie T.F.Tchipeff, 1940), 25; see also A. Kuzmanova, *Ot Njoi do Krajova. Vâprosât za Južna Dobrudža v meždunarodnite otnošenija (1919–1940)* (Sofia: Dâržavno izdatelstvo nauka i izkustvo, 1989), 24, 28.
10. P. Todorov, “Socialno-ikonomičesko razvitie v Južna Dobrudža (1878–1912),” in *Istorija na Dobrudža, T.4 (1878–1944)*, eds. P. Todorov, Blagovest Njagulov (Veliko Turnovo: Faber, 2007), 9.
11. The Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania, fond *Tratatul de la Craiova*, dossier 1, leaf 261; Simion Mehedinți, “Observări asupra Dobrogei,” *Convorbiri literare* LI (1919): 78.
12. Apud Basciani, *Un conflitto balcanico*, 43–44.
13. Alexandru P. Arbore, “Caracterul etnografic al Dobrogei din epoca turcească până la 1938,” in *A.D. XIX* (1938), II: 118.
14. Penakov, *Le problème de la Dobroudja de sud*, 26.
15. Robert Stănciugel, Liliana Monica Bălașa, *Dobrogea între secolele VII–XIX. Evoluție istorică* (Bucharest: D. C. Promotions, 2005), 203.
16. Keith Hitchins, *România (1866–1947)*, trans. George G. Potra and Delia Răzdolescu, 3rd edition (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2004), 163.
17. Ungureanu, *Problema Cadrilaterului*, 54, 69.
18. Rădulescu, Bitoleanu, *Istoria Dobrogei*, 360.
19. Hitchins, *România (1866–1947)*, 331.
20. Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, *Conflictul româno-bulgar* (Bucharest: Tipografia cooperatistă “Poporul,” 1913), 28.
21. Leon de Launay, *La Bulgarie d’hier et de demain* (Paris: Hachette, 1907), 404; Ivan St. Penakov, Introduction to *Le régime de la propriété foncière rurale dans la Dobroudja de Sud. Opinions et constations roumaines* ed: I. St. Penakov (Sofia: Union Bulgare pour la paix et pour la Société des Nations, 1929), ix.
22. Achile N. Pineta, *Chestumi dobrogene* (Bazargic: Gutenberg, 1925), 113–114; Roman, “Proprietatea imobiliară rurală,” 293.
23. Ungureanu, *Problema Cadrilaterului*, 38–39.
24. *Minoritățile naționale din România (1931–1938). Documente*, ed. Ioan Scurtu (Bucharest: Arhivele Naționale ale României, 1999), doc. 98, 498.
25. “Dezbaterile Adunării Naționale Constituante. Adunarea Deputaților,” 8 April 1922, “Monitorul Oficial” no. 20, 30 April 1922, in *Sesiunea ordinară 1921–1922* (Bucharest: Imprimeria Națională, 1922), 347.
26. Cătălin Negoită, *Țara uitată. Cadrilaterul în timpul administrației românești (1913–1940)* (Craiova: Scrisul Românesc, 2008), 166–167.
27. “Dezbaterile Adunării Deputaților,” 27 March 1914, “Monitorul Oficial,” no. 30, 29 March 1914, *Sesiunea ordinară 1914* (Bucharest: Imprimeria Națională, 1914), 360.
28. I.St. Penakov, *La minorité bulgare de Dobroudja de Sud* (Sofia: La Bulgarie, 1931), 8; Rădulescu, Bitoleanu, *Istoria Dobrogei*, 406.
29. The complete text of the Law in “Dezbaterile Adunării Deputaților,” 27 March 1914, 359–385 (chapter VI, 382–385); the translation of the main articles of chapter VI of the law into

- Bulgarian in *Istoriya na Bălgarite (1878–1944) v dokumenti*, T. II (1912–1918), ed. V. Georgiev, S. Trifonov (Sofia: Prosveta, 1996), 364–367.
30. “Dezbaterile Adunării Deputaților,” 8 April 1922, 341.
 31. Stoica Lascu, “Împroprietărirea românilor balcanici în Cadrilater,” *Dosarele istoriei* (D.I.), VII, no. 1(65) (2002): 28.
 32. Lascu, “Împroprietărirea românilor,” 29.
 33. Nicolae Cușa, *Aromânii (macedonenii) în România* (Constanța: Muntenia, 1996), 28.
 34. Ungureanu, *Problema Cadrilaterului*, 61–62.
 35. Apostol Stan, *Putere politică și democrație în România 1859–1918* (Bucharest: Albatros, 1995), 345–349.
 36. “Dezbaterile Adunării Deputaților,” V. 3, *Sesiunea ordinanță 1921* (Bucharest: Imprimeria Națională, 1922), 2144–2146.
 37. “Dezbaterile Adunării Deputaților,” 8 April 1922, *Sesiunea Ordinanță 1921–1922*, 341.
 38. Constantin Tudor, *Administrația românească în Cadrilater (1913–1940)* (Călărași: Agora, 2005), 180–181.
 39. I.N. Roman, Constantin Brătescu, *Probleme actuale dobrogene: toponimie și colonizare* (Cernăuți: Glasul Bucovinei, 1921), passim.
 40. Romanian Military Archives—Pitești, fond *Divizia a 9-a Infanterie*, dossier 513, leaf 252 and the previous.
 41. The complete text of the “Law for the Agrarian Reform in Oltenia, Wallachia, Moldavia and Dobruja (of the Old Kingdom),” in “Monitorul Oficial,” XXXIX, no. 69, 30 July (1921): 3622–3633 (the law was adopted on 14th July 1921).
 42. Todorov, “Socialno-ikonomičesko razvitie,” 14.
 43. S. Lascu, “Înfăptuiri românești în Cadrilater,” *D.I.*, VII, nr. 1 (65) (2002): 47.
 44. Hitchins, *România (1866–1947)*, 378; Bogdan Murgescu, *România și Europa. Acumularea decalajelor economice (1900–2010)* (Iași: Polirom, 2010), 229.
 45. Ivan Ilchev, *The Rose of the Balkans. A Short History of Bulgaria*, trans Bistra Roushkova, (Sofia: Colibri, 2005), 321; Krăstjo Mančev, *Istoriya na balkanskite narodi*, 2nd edition, T. 3 (1918–1945) (Sofia: Paradigma, 2008), 43.
 46. Ion Cămărășescu, Constantin Georgescu-Vâlcea, *Dreptul de proprietate asupra bunurilor imobiliare din Dobrogea Nouă. Regimul creat prin legea de la 1914 față de regimul bulgar în vigoare la data anexiunii (28 iulie 1913)*, (Bucharest : n.p., 1921), 11; this point of view was strongly contested in Roman, Brătescu, *Probleme actuale dobrogene*, 17–26, and the text, translated in French, was reproduced in I. St. Penakov (ed), *Le régime de la propriété foncière rurale dans la Dobroudja de Sud*, 1–8.
 47. “Dezbaterile Adunării Deputaților,” 19 July 1921, “Monitorul Oficial,” 16 March 1922, in *Sesiunea Ordinanță 1921*, V. 2, (Bucharest: Imprimeria Națională, 1922), 4549–4557; “Dezbaterile Senatului,” 20th July 1921, in *Sesiunea Ordinanță 1921–1922*, V. 3, (Bucharest: Imprimeria Națională, 1922), 3873–3881.
 48. Eugeniu Zamfirolu, *Evoluția proprietății imobiliare rurale în Bulgaria* (Bucharest: Tipografia Librăriei Stănciulescu, 1919), 152.
 49. Romanian National Archive (R.N.A.), fond *Parlament (1900–1930)*, dossier 1902, leaves 7–9.
 50. R.N.A., fond *Parlament (1900–1930)*, dossier 1902, leaf. 8.
 51. See the contents of some articles in the newspaper “Dobrogea Nouă,” Bazargic, in July 1921.
 52. Apud “La Bulgarie,” 7, 15 March 1929, 1.
 53. Tudor, *Administrația românească*, 223.
 54. Matei Dogan, *Analiza statistică a democrației parlamentare românești* (Bucharest: Editura Partidului Social-Democrat, 1946), 30.

55. R.N.A., fond *Parlament (1900–1930)*, dossier 1955, leaf 178.
56. “Dezbaterile Adunării Deputaților,” 8 April 1922, 338.
57. Rădulescu, Bitoleanu, *Istoria Dobrogei*, 406.
58. Negoită, *Țara uitată*, 229.
59. Constantin Hentzescu, “Colonizarea în Cadrilater,” “Țara Noastră,” 7, 1 (1926): 21–25 and 11 (1926): 349–350.
60. Ungureanu, *Problema Cadrilaterului*, 174–175.
61. “Dezbaterile Adunării Deputaților,” 8 April 1922, 337–351.
62. R.N.A., fond *Reforma Agrară din 1921—județul Caliacra*, dossier 6, passim.
63. Aurelian Stroe, ed., *Constituția din 1923 în dezbaterile contemporanilor*, (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1990), 634.
64. Negoită, *Țara uitată*, 230.
65. Ion Vlădescu, *Cadrilaterul—ce este și ce trebuie să fie. Colonizarea Cadrilaterului* (Constanța: Institutul de Arte Grafice al ziarului “Dobrogea Jună,” 1927), 57; Vasile Th. Muși, “Un deceniu de colonizare în Dobrogea Nouă (1925–1935),” in *Vlahuria—țara din vis*, ed. Ion Vulpe (Bucharest: Semne, 2005), 104–105; Rădulescu, Bitoleanu, *Istoria Dobrogei*, 433.
66. Tudor, *Administrația românească*, 182.
67. Tudor, *Administrația românească*, 213.
68. Valentin Ciorbea, “Organizațiile din Cadrilater ale partidelor politice,” *România de la Mare*, III, no. 3–4 (1994): 41.
69. “Legea proprietății în Dobrogea Nouă,” *Viitorul Silistrei*, V, no. 9–10 (1924): 3.
70. R.N.A., fond *Parlament (1900–1930)*, dossier 2062, leaf 340.
71. “Dezbaterile Senatului,” 3 April 1924, “Monitorul Oficial” no. 59, 9 April 1924, in *Sesiunea 1923–1924* (Bucharest: Imprimeria Națională, 1924), II, 1073. The complete text of the law, in R.N.A., fond *Parlament (1900–1930)*, dossier 2062, leaves 338–340.
72. See *Vlahuria*, passim.
73. “Dezbaterile Senatului,” 3 April 1924, II, 1073–1081.
74. “Dezbaterile Senatului,” 1063–1092.
75. “Dezbaterile Adunării Deputaților,” 6 April 1924, “Monitorul Oficial” no. 89, 19 May 1924, in *Sesiunea 1923–1924* (Bucharest: Imprimeria Națională, 1924), II, 2429–2435.
76. “Dezbaterile Adunării Deputaților,” 8 April 1922, 347.
77. Penakov, Introduction, ix.
78. Teodor Toșev, *Memoriu asupra articolelor din “Legea pentru organizarea Dobrogei Noi” care vin în contradicție cu Constituția* (Bazargic: Tipografia Gutenberg, 1925), passim.
79. I. St. Penakov, *La législation sur la propriété foncière rurale en Dobroudja de Sud* (Sofia: Union Bulgare pour la paix et pour la Société des Nations, 1929), 1.
80. Penakov, *La législation sur la propriété foncière rurale*, 5–31.
81. Penakov, Introduction, vii–viii.
82. Apud. P. Todorov, “Stopansko razvitie na Severna Dobrudža (1878–1912),” in *Istoriija na Dobrudža*, T. 4, eds. P. Todorov, Blagovest Njagulov (Veliko Turnovo: Faber, 2007), 71–72.
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Abstract

The Regime of Land Property in Southern Dobrodja (1913-1924): A Decade of Maximum Instability

In 1913, after the Second Balkan War, Romania gained Southern Dobrodja (7,700 km²), a region inhabited by Turks and Bulgarians, the former clearly dominating the socio economic life. The rural regime established during the Ottoman Age, was rather unclear in distinguishing the state and the private land properties. This article focuses on the Romanian legislature's rather inconsequent manner of dealing with such a complex inheritance, between 1913 and 1924. The period includes no less than four major changes (in 1914, 1921, 1922 and 1924) and two years of war between Bulgaria and Romania. (1916-1918). Because of this prolonged initial incoherence, the consequent Romanian attempt to colonize Southern Dobrodja was a failure.

Keywords

miri, miilk, project, land law, colonization, nationalization