

### The boyar mansion house in the second half of 19th century and beginning of 20th century

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#### SUMMARY:

*In the second half of the XIXth century, major changes occurred in politics, in the context of turkish-russian wars, which led to an opening towards the economical and cultural values of Western Europe. This opening had a reflection in the attitude towards dwelling which had a spatial and functional impact in the organization of the mansion houses.*

Key words: mansion houses, history of architecture, boyar life style, architectural influences

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

In the second half of 19th century, mostly after promulgation of the Organic Statute, visible changes occurred in the life of the nobility. The spectacular and rapid evolution of Romanian Principalities is immediately reflected in functional and architectural pattern according to which the boyar mansion houses were organized: „Since the times of the Organic Statute, it dates the erection of most of the large boyar countryside settlements [...]”. [1]

The youth of yore, trained at the beginning of 19th century in Western schools and universities that reached by now the maturity age, abandon the slow and excessively Epicurean life style of their parents, old boyars “with caftans and hookahs” and start on their estates a systematic economic activity, based on the knowledge of the specialist in the field. The big temptation of the moment, the desire of representation by house luxury and richness and by the luxury displayed by clothes reaches a high quota unthinkable until then and drives important expenses that need higher earnings.

The intensive agriculture on estates starts to be promoted.

If, from the account of Radu Rosetti, we find out that in 18th century and at the beginning of 19th century, on large estates, such as of his grandfather, the hetman Răducanu Rosetti, a small surface was cultivated, the reminder being used as hayfield, on Balș family estate, in the second half of 19th century, the state was



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completely different. „Everything was cultivated, manufactured, harvested on the estate that had its own handicraftsmen: a cartwright, a cooper, a saddler, an ironsmith, a carpenter etc. These personnel, including the gardeners, were mostly of German origin, inherited at the same time from the estate from «aunt Balș»”[2]

Although everything was manufactured on the estate, the handicraftsmen were not, as in the 18th century, gypsy slaves, but free, qualified people, mostly of German origin.

Regarding the changes of the life at the big boyar mansion houses occurred at the end of 19th century, we could make an image from the enumeration of more important occupations of the period made by another member of the Eminovici family, the captain Matei Eminescu, the brother of the poet.

„«The following belonged to the Balș family personnel, (if you are interested): general administrator, lawyer and private counselor (Hofrat) was Costantin Hurmuzachi, well-known politician (brother of historian Doxaki), who had an annual salary of 2000 ducats. Enacovici, the father of the lawyer of Botoșani, of Alecu, senator or deputy, currently he was the chief of the guard (watchmen and foresters). Sireteanu’s father, former magistrate, I don’t from which Court, was hairdresser and barber. The father of lieutenant Hacman (in fact Hauptmann, confusion of Matei Eminescu) was stahlmaster (stable manager). Sotir Zamfiropol, boy servant; Karl Hein was the chief of the distillery (brandy factory). The house doctor was Holtztreger, the ancestor of your colleague, Alexandru Frank, also president in Moldavia. [...] My father (the administrator Gheorghe Eminovici) administrator of Dumbrăveni [...]. There, hundreds of small servants ».”[3]

M. D. Sturdza also enumerates in his work a series of employees of the Balș boyar, mentioned in the administrator’s letters published by Flaviu Sabau and by Ovidiu Papadima.

„At Dumbrăveni there were also employed a secretary, Alexander von Bizay, and a «Her Direktor von Hayn». The Jew Miron Altmann was supervising the distillery for producing rye and potato brandy. A certain George Guranda was «Grossarchitekt», managing, among other things, the erection of a church at Simnicea [...] a «Kupferschmidt» (boiler maker) Durak [...]”[4]

Comparing this enumeration of staff with the list of mansion house staff of Bohotin from the beginning of the same century, the rapid passing is remarked that was carried out from an archaic, medieval life style to a mansion house full of servants, simple people, mostly gypsy slaves, practicing various trades, to a personnel formed by trained office holders who carried out the administration of the estate in a modern way.



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## 2. CHANGES IN THE MANSION HOUSE ORGANIZATION

All these changes should be reflected in the way of organizing the mansion houses of the estates, resulting in transformation of the old aspects.

The increase of agricultural production should need the development of storing capacities. New barns with larger surfaces shall be erected.

In the memoirs book of Radu Rosetti there is a fragment in which the author presents the changes of **Răducăneni** additional buildings in 19<sup>th</sup> century: „outhouses [...] located along the wall [...] increased and enlarged”.[1]

Partly of the mansion houses in which additional buildings were preserved, newer buildings can be observed, erecting in the second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century and even at the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Within the enclosure of **Dagăta** there are visible differences of arranging the Medieval construction with a wood structure and wattle and beaten clay walls of a former large stable and other two constructions serving as storing room whose construction system of perfectly cast brick walls and details of wood element processing technically belongs to the second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century and beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century.

At **Miclăușeni** mansion house, after the structure presented in the land surveys and after the elements observed on the site, old additional buildings are distinguished, two units with thick walls, one with cellar made of cradle arched stone, from the new ones, with thinner walls and details in Neo-Romanian and Neo-Gothic styles.

Dimitrie Sturdza (1756 – 1846) during his 65 years of ruling the estate of Miclăușeni had an important contribution in organizing the mansion house. He erected in 1823 – 1825 the church and built the “monumental stables”[5] of the estate.

Alecu D. Sturdza is the one who, after 1831, organized the mansion house based on a “severe discipline” and a “minutely book evidences” and increased the agricultural production by clearing part of the forest lands. There is information about the household structure at the time, where from we find out the variety of the activities run here. “The boyar household of Miclăușeni had many workshops: cooery, barrel workshop, carpentry, cartwright shop, saddler workshop, shoe workshop, linen, workshops were «rug makers», «straw mattress makers», «saddlers», etc. – many run by German masters specially brought in this respect [...]. The gardener receives various grafts, the flower shop has greenhouses, there were also: laundry, ice cellar, milk shop, dovecot, distillery, preserves shop, living room, kitchens”.[6]



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In other words, the changes occurred in organizing the boyar mansion houses do not affect the activity system providing its economical autonomy, system that is perpetuated until the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century.

A survey of the way of distribution of various functional areas reveals the concern for carrying out a division into judicial functional zones – phenomenon noticed also in the case of Wallachian mansion houses.[7]

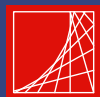
As in the case of the existing relations between various functions of the residence, also the networking of the existing ones within the mansion house developed in time. In this respect, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it is characteristic for the boyar mansion houses the existence of three main functional zones that are presented in the writings of the time.

In 1932, G. Călinescu published [8] for the first time the manuscript of a “social novel” name “The Nobility of Yore”, in fact a draw of social novel of M. Eminescu that “seems to be based also on family memories regarding Balș’s mansion house of Dumbrăveni”, where the poet’s father, the administrator Gheorghe Eminovici, worked as manager of the estate, while the owner was Constantin Balș”. In this writing, the poet presents with accuracy the structure of the mansion house of Balș boyar of Darabani: „«[...] in front of the mansion house there is a large half-round yard, surrounded with shingled fence, shadowed by poplars, acacias or nut trees. On the right of the mansion house which is called «up», there are in general stables and barns, on the left – additional buildings for the kitchen and servants, called «down», and behind the mansion house, the orchard, the flower shops, the vineyard and the apiary are located in a square with ditch.

This is the stereotypical arrangement of villages and mansion houses, without taking into account the accidental modifications that individualizes each of them.”[9]

A functional solution is reached intermediary between the old service organization variant in separated buildings, located at some distance from the mansion where only the representative and dwelling rooms of the boyars existed, and the modern house that integrates in the same volume all the functions necessary for living. The solutions consist in merging the auxiliary spaces into a building adjoining one of the corners of the residence – area directly connecting the two constructions. The servants are not staying in the mansion’s hall waiting to run at the boyar’s clapping, and they are now living in the additional building. The poor and unhealthy buildings where the gypsy slaves lived are abandoned and the mansion house gets a civilized aspect.

This new formula is encountered at the mansions of **Cozia**, **Miroslava**, **Maxut** and existed also to the one of **Popești**, where the additional building was recently demolished.



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At the **Maxut** mansion, the enclosure modernization by remaking and rearranging the additional buildings contributed, due to the adopted architectural solutions, to confer a peculiar aspect of the receiving mansion house – a frame built in compliance with the special quality of the residential building.

At the residence of **Miroslava**, according to the information received from the school management that presently occupies the former mansion house, the additional building adjoined to the mansion in the presented formula, was built in 1922 –1927.

At the mansion of **Cozia** the same formula is used, with the difference that the additional building is perpendicularly developed on the opposite side of the entrance, towards the household area, being a more modest building in size and architectural construction, a long peasant house, with a verandah covered by an eaves supported by simple wooden poles, in fact in compliance with the popular style architecture of the mansion.

At the **Dagăta** mansion house we can see a new solution that, although finished probably at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, comes near to the modern dwelling: a part of the services related to the boyar dwelling was placed in a portion of the house specially built on the side from the household yard, on three levels built in the same total height with the two levels of the rest of the house.

At the residences of **Miclăușeni** and **Deleni**, the old solution is maintained from the medieval period, with the service spaces of house located in separate buildings, but at a small distance from its service access.

### 3. CONCLUSIONS

At the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century and beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century, the household processes are modernizing. The kitchens and the laundries should benefit of the technical progress, the old buildings, kitchens and laundries being abandoned and being endowed with ovens and large brick kitchen ranges.

At the same time, the servant personnel status is changed, which is not made of old gypsy slaves, running all over the mansion house in rain and mud. From now on, the employees are trained people, respected by their masters. Consequently, the conditions in which they live are changing by erecting buildings with a civilized aspect where they have a decent life.



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