The Relation of Sălaj with Transylvania in the Middle Ages

Abstract:

The question how the Middle Szolnok and Crasna (today's Sălaj county) counties related to late medieval Transylvania has generated new scholarly opinions during the last two decades. This study aims to answer this question whether the two counties belonged to the voivodate of Transylvania or to Hungary proper by focusing on the analysis of administrative relations in the period 1200-1424. The results of the examination are leaning towards the second hypothesis. From the point of view of ecclesiastical organization, the region was in an ambivalent situation. The area of Sălaj was part of the diocese of Transylvania and the archdeaconate of Szolnok extended not only over Sălaj, but included some territory in northern Transylvania. As concerns the jurisdiction of the bishop vicars, the area of Sălaj fell within that of the vicar from the area west of Meseș, and not under that of the general vicar from Transylvania. From the point of view of fiscal administration, the two counties were administered by the chamber count of Satu Mare/Oradea, and not by the chamber count of Transylvania. The study focused on the differences between the administrative organization existing between the counties from Hungary and those of Transylvania (namely, the palatine vs. voivode's jurisdiction, the assemblies of the estates, the number of noble magistrates, the number of assessors, the rank of the county counts). As concerns Crasna county, the results of the analysis did not supports the idea of its similarity with Transylvania. In regard to Middle Szolnok, until 1446 this county was under the authority of the voivode of Transylvania. This authority seems more like a personal union rather than as institutional incorporation. Here the voivode exercised his authority as a county count, and organized the county congregations as a deputy of the palatine, distinct from those that he organized in his capacity of voivode. The number of the noble magistrates, as well as that of the assessors, is also supporting the idea that Middle Szolnok was part of Hungary proper. The contemporaries' perceptions were routinely differentiating between the villages from Sălaj and those located in the "Transylvanian parts," except for a few villages belonging to Middle Szolnok county located east of the Meseș Mountains. Since Meseș Mountains were not an administrative border until the turn of the fourteenth century, representing however the north-western limit of Transylvania, the latter should be seen primarily as a geographical notion rather than as a administrative-political unit.

Keywords: *Sălaj, Transylvania, Hungary, church administration, chamber-counties, Szolnok county, jurisdiction, voivode.*