

SOCIAL-LEGAL TERMINOLOGY REGARDING THE SOCIAL CLASS STRUCTURE OF THE MEHEDENTIAN MOȘNENI IN THE WORK OF ION IONESCU DE LA BRAD

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Summary: *The information selected by Ion Ionescu de la Brad is relevant to the as yet unwritten social history of the Romanians, especially in detailing some scientific issues that clearly differentiate the landed gentry as a social class: the share of landlords owned by landlords, the ranking of landlord categories, the condition of the landed gentry, the social-political condition of the landed elite, etc...*

Ion Ionescu de la Brad's conclusion, after an inventory of the landed villages in Mehedinți, was that, in 1864 (a year of fundamental changes in Romanian society), the landlords and landed estates in this part of the country still represented only about 25%¹ of what they had been previously. Nevertheless, the "moșnenia" was a dignified social-historical state, of social freedoms, for which the emancipation and the vitality of the Romanian nation were being fought for. It is still alive today in the public consciousness, especially in the mountain counties of Mehedinți, Gorj, Valcea, etc..

Keywords: moșnean, moșnenie, "landlord", squalor, indivision

In the social dynamics of the Middle Ages, as the differences between the social classes deepened and the landed estates of the nobles, lordships and monasteries were created at the expense of the freeholders landed estate, the area of the latter landed estate shrank, reaching, however, an appreciable extent until the great social reforms during the reign of Alexandru Ioan Cuza, who restored the social classes of the previous centuries.

The map of the spread of landed estates drawn up on 19th century statistical sources (1831, 1838, 1855, 1864/1899, 1912) shows their share in relation to the land ownership of the other two main landholders, the landlords and the monasteries. While in Oltenia the landowners accounted for 32% of the population in 1899, in Muntenia they accounted for only 13%. In Oltenia, the landed estate extended geographically over the Getic Platform, the Subcarpathians and the

¹ Ion Ionescu's assessment was confirmed as accurate by the statistics of 1899-1900, when the largest landed estates, in relation to the area, were in the mountain and hill counties; Gorj – 52,51%, Muscel – 51,13%, Vâlcea – 36,33%, Olt – 25,86%, Argeș – 25,34%, Mehedinți – 24,88%, Prahova – 19,56% și Buzău – 17,57%. Sub un procentaj mediu pe țară erau județele Dolj – 10,89%, Dâmbovița – 7,97%, Romanați – 7,76%, Râmnicu Sărat – 5,26%, Teleorman – 3,53%, Vlașca – 2,55%, Ialomița – 2,49%, Ilfov – 0,14% și Brăila – 0,02% - Cf. Dinică Ciobotea, *op. cit.*, p. 67, 75, 102-112