

THE CROWN DOMAIN AT THE INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITIONS (1884-1948)

Narcisa MITU

“C.S.Nicolăescu-Plopșor” Institute for Studies
in Social Sciences and Humanities
minarcisa@yahoo.com

Abstract: Through the participation at exhibitions, the Romanian products issued from the Royal Estate had the chance to enter and be known on international markets. It testified by so many requests over time for acquiring some products, especially wooden products and wine. The international exhibition from Paris in 1900 has been a success for the Royal Estate of Romania, as it evidenced by the receipt of 21 medals. Starting with this year, this institution has been regularly present to all international exhibitions where Romania was invited to exhibit. We could note in this regard the exhibitions from Lemberg - Ukraine (1925), Warsaw - Poland (1929), New - York - SUA (1938).

Keywords: Romanian Crown Domain, the international exhibitions, Paris, New York.

The Romanian presence at the international exhibitions was registered starting with the second half of the 19th century. Preponderantly agricultural country, but having important performances in this economic branch and also in the traditional household industry, where Romanian made itself noticed at the Brussels exhibition from 1897 when it was, because of the awarded prices, on the 17th place among the countries in Europe and on the 25th place in the world classification¹. Among the main commercial partners of Romania we must mention Belgium, France, Austro-Hungary, Italy, England, Turkey, Germany, Russia, Holland and Switzerland. Starting with this year, Romania became a constant presence at the international exhibitions organized during the between-wars period, both on the European continent and in the United States of America.

The exhibition from Paris, at the end of the 19th century, the first international exhibition the Crown Domain attended, paved the way of this institution for the international and universal exhibitions where, not few times it was noticed.

¹ Laurențiu Vlad, *Propagandă și identitate. România la Expozițiile universale belgiene, 1897-1935*, București, Editura Arta Grafică, p. 34.

Instituted through a presidential decree, emitted on July 13th 1892², the exhibition organized at the confluence of the two centuries, wished to be a “synthesis” of the 19th century and a landmark for the evolution of the new century. The inauguration was made on April 15th 1900 by the president of France, Émile Loubet and reunited, on a surface of 230 hectares, 41 countries, from four continents³ (see Figure 1).



Fig. 1. General plan of the exhibition

Romania received the invitation to participate in 1895, but the refusal of Ioan Kalinderu to be appointed General Commissar, delayed the official answer until 1898. Yet, The Crown Domain Administrator was a member of the Consultative Central Commission of the exhibition.

On March 1898, the Parliament voted the law through which the Agriculture, Commerce, Industry and Domains Ministry authorized the spending of 1.300.000 lei for the participation of our country to the exhibition and organized, through a Regulation of the public administration, the special service for the preparation of the activities. Article 2 from the regulation stipulated the organization of exhibitions of the Crown Domain' Ministries and of different public administrations by each Minister or administration.

² Laurențiu Vlad, *Imagini ale identității naționale. România la expozițiile universale și internaționale de la Paris (1867-1937)*, 2nd edition revised and enlarged, Iași, Institutul European, 2007, p. 135.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

The initiative regarding the participation took place in the same time with the continuous dispute between the conservatives and the liberals, the firsts being discontented by the too large sums of money that was supposed to be spent and the liberals arguing that “the participation to the exhibition was requested, first of all, by the common sense of answering to the demand of a friend-country and then by the political and especially economic interests, being necessary to bring foreign capital in our country”⁴.

The exhibition was structured on 18 groups: *I – Education, Enseignement; II – Oeuvres d’art; III – Instruments et procédés des lettres, sciences et arts; IV – Matériel et procédés généraux de la mécanique; V – Electricité, VI – Génie civil. Moyens de transport; VII – Agriculture; VIII – Horticulture. Arboriculture; IX – Forêts. Chasse. Pêche. Cueillettes; X – Aliments; XI – Mines. Métallurgie; XII – Décoration et mobilier des édifices public et des habitations; XIII – Fils. Tissus. Vêtements; XIV – Industrie chimique; XV – Industries diverses; XVI – Economie sociale. Hygiène, assistance publique; XVII – Colonisation; XVIII – Armée de terre et de mer*⁵.

From the total number of 18 groups, Romania entered in 17, most of the Romanian exhibitors being registered at the agricultural, alimentary and clothing sections.

During the exhibition, The Crown Domain constituted a special group in the upper gallery of the Royal Pavilion (see Fig. 2), in the cupola from the end of the left gallery of the first floor, along with the sections: stationery, public industry, public assistance and hygiene. The participation was made on the expense of the Domain Administration. In this pavilion were exhibited all the agricultural and industrial products, arranged on different domains, miniatures of the schools, buildings and forestry operations, furniture and rural houses, birds and animals that lived in the forest of the Domain, fishes from the waters of the Domain, the products of the stone and granite quarries, ceramic pieces, pottery art, cotton, woollen and silk woven materials realized in the rural schools, a plan in relief of the Bicaz Domain, a collection of stuffed animals and birds, agricultural tools, graphic paintings, maps, albums etc⁶ (Fig 3).

The cultural part was represented through many brochures and books from the Administration’s library, studied and appreciated by both the jury and public, as C. Ollănescu mentioned.

Taking advantage of the presence at this exhibition, in order to promote the image of the Crown Domain, the Administration edited, in French language, a brochure named *Notice sur le Domaine de la Couronne de Roumanie* (Notes on the Romanian Crown Domain) that was given free of charge to the French

⁴ Dimitrie C. Ollănescu, *Raport general asupra participării României la Expoziția universală din Paris (1900)*, București, 1901, pp. 23-24.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

authorities, the cultural, agricultural, industrial and commercial institutions from France and to all the General Commissariats of the participant countries. The book contained information regarding the situation, activity and the results seen from the establishment of the Domain until that moment.

Giving such works (in different European languages) about Romania was absolutely necessary in order to allow the other states to better understand our society and economy. This measure was initiated by Dimitrie C. Ollănescu who often dealt with the insufficiency or the wrong opinion about our country of the foreigners and with the ignorance of the Romanian people who, in such cases, considered that “the French people don’t know geography”⁷.

The juries, appreciating the activity, the effort and the results obtained in such a short time, awarded the Crown Domain with 21 prizes. These prizes proved to be important for obtaining the 8th place in the classification.

The Crown Domain Administration was rewarded with:

- **10 big prizes** for: the realisations from education; the dairy produces, butter and cheese installations from Cocioac; the studying of the land from the agricultural point of view, presented as analyzes, field samples in vertical section (2 m height), agricultural statistics; the complete collection of cereals; a railway installation and a cable railway for wood transportation, arrangements plans, the mechanic saw from Mălini, a miniature, unique model of a forest range, the plans in relief of the Domains Bicaz and Mălini with the installations for the exploitation of the resinous essences, postcards presenting forestry installations; for the products of forestry exploitation and industry (there had been presented in an album different types of forestry essences – leaves and buds, leaves and fruit, resonance pieces of wood in different shaped board, planks, piano backsides realized by the Gaston Eichler factory from the Domain Mălini and the factory owned by Mr. Torok and Compani from Bicaz), the miniature of a resinous seeds drying house, the section made on a fir tree representing the annual growths of the tree, the birch tree trunk representing the debit manner of the tree, a 95 years old fir tree trunk, wooden works, species of wood used for matches, packing wood, kitchen objects (two-handled tub, barrels, staves), a miniature cart with tree trunks, boards for Venetian shutters, wooden chests made in Dr. Havel’s workshop from Bicaz, doormats; mine exploitations and quarries;

- **1 big prize** awarded to the administrator Ioan Kalinderu for the entire activity at the Crown Domain;

- **2 gold medals** for products belonging to different rural exploitations, postcards presenting constructions and hunting products (bear, fox, squirrels, wild boar, wild cat, stag head and the horns, chamois horns, eagle, pelican, mountain cock and hazel hen, partridge, raven, awl, bugles, bag and other hunting related objects);

⁷ Laurențiu Vlad, *Imagini ale identității naționale...*, p. 141.

- **5 silver medals**⁸ for: the school library publication; for the non-alimentary agricultural products (flax, hemp); the national carpets, linen and hempen threads and woven materials, different types of ropes, gymnastic instruments, belly bands, strings, cloth, halters etc., for the section of laces, embroideries, haberdasheries (silk threads and wooden materials, cocoons, white and yellow, school workshops); baskets, bottles, canteens, furniture, osier and mace reed doormats, hats;

- **1 bronze medal** obtained for the ceramic objects⁹;

- **3 mentions** for: the seeds collection; cheap and luxury furniture (different pieces of furniture and works used in a village house); embroideries, made on silk and regular cloth, and the national industry.

The success that this institution enjoyed in Paris is proven by the prizes mentioned above and by the appreciations published in the French press. For example, “Le Temps”, remarked the exemplar exploitations from the Crown Domain and the effective realisation from the cereals domain¹⁰.

Among the numerous visitors of the Romanians pavilions was also the president of France, on June 15th. Referring to this moment, Dimitrie C. Ollănescu, remembered that, when the president had came in the Crown Domain compartment “he had stopped for a long time in front of the beautiful cereal samples, pieces of wood and forestry exploitation installations, woven materials and he had been indeed impressed by the beauty of the wild boar and birds”¹¹.

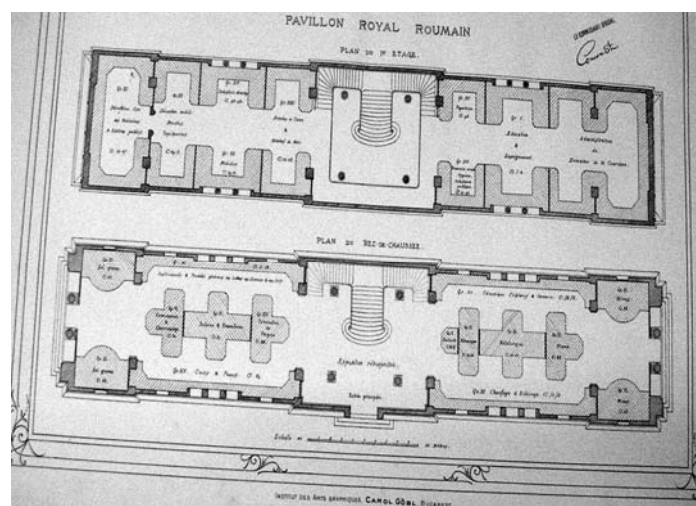


Fig. 2

⁸ Dimitrie C. Ollănescu, *cited work*, pp. 442-444, 447.

⁹ *Ibid*, p. 443.

¹⁰ Laurențiu Vlad, *Imagini ale identității naționale...*, p. 174.

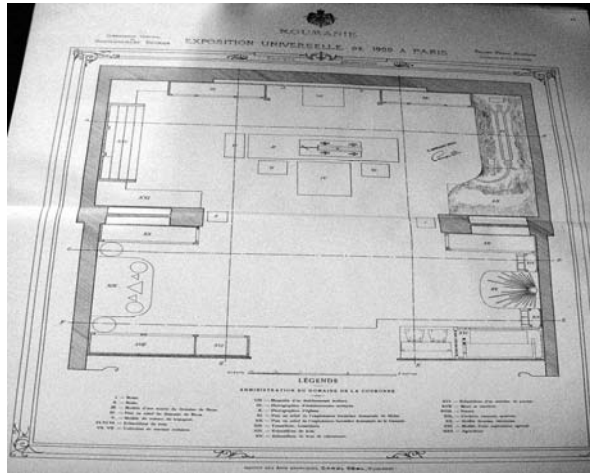
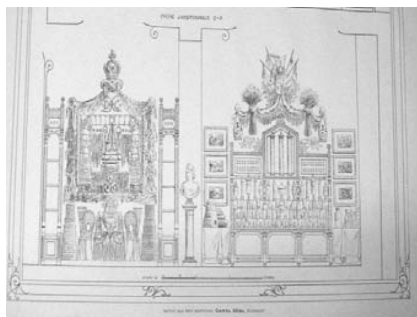
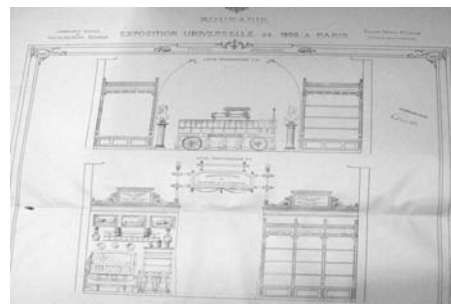


Fig. 3.



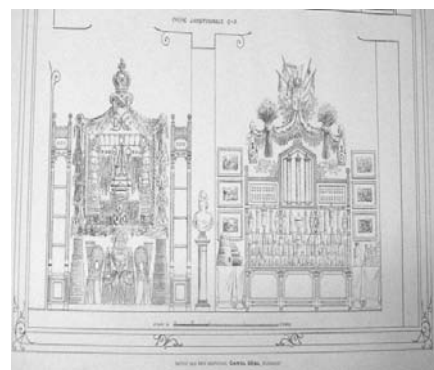
(Fig. 4) The transversal facade A-B



(Fig. 5) The transversal facade C-D



(Fig. 6) The longitudinal facade I-K



(Fig. 7) The longitudinal facade G-H

¹¹ *Ibid.*

A new international exhibition on which the crown Domain participated is that from Lemberg, Ukraine, in 1925, on which there had been presented the same types and quantities of products as those from the exhibition organized at Chişinău, as we shown before, in the same year¹².

After the commercial convention concluded with Poland, the leading circles organized, in 1929, at Warsaw, a wine, grapes and other fresh or conserved fruit exhibition. Accepting the invitation, Segarcea Crown Domain, of which wines enjoyed international appreciation, was expected to send until November 10th 1929, $\frac{3}{4}$ wine bottles with the next sorts: 5 bottles of the wine Negru de masă (dark red table wine) from 1927 and 1928, 5 bottles of Crâmpoşie wine from 1928 kept in barrels, 2 bottles of Alb Superior (superior white) wine from each year 1920, 1921, 1922 and 1923, 2 bottles Riesling wine (both 1921 and 1923), 2 bottles of Frontignon (1921-1924), 2 bottles of Fetească (1921-1923), 2 bottles of Tămâios (1919 and 1923), 2 bottles of Bordeaux (1920-1923), 2 bottles of Pinot Noir (1920-1923), 2 bottles of dark red wine (1922 and 1924) bottled; but also wine kept in barrels, the next quantities: 2 bottles of Alb superior (superior white) (1924-1926), 2 bottles of Riesling (1924-1926), 2 bottles of Fetească (1924-1926), 2 bottles of Tămâios wine (1925 and 1926), 2 bottles of Bordeaux (1924-1926), 2 bottles of Pinot (1924-1926). Along the wine there had been exhibited 2 bottles of brandy, made in 1922 and 1929 at Sadova Domain¹³.

In 1935, with the celebration of the Belgian state of 100 years from the inauguration of the first continental railway and 50 years from the creation of the independent state of Congo, took place the universal exhibition from Brussels. Placed on a surface of 125 hectares on the Osseghem plateau, near Laeken Royal Park, was inaugurated in the presence of King Leopold III, on April 27th 1935¹⁴. The exhibition lasted 194 days, housing the stands of 8.930 exhibitors from all continents countries. The exposed objects and products were grouped in 9 sections and 167 classes: I. *Sciences et arts*; II. *Produits du sol et du sous-sol*; III. *Industries de transformation*; IV. *Production et utilisation de l'énergie*; V. *Génie civil Moyens de transports*; VI. *Edificies public set habitations*; VII. *Vêtements et accesiores*; VIII. *Economie générale. Activité des nations*; IX. *Tourisme, sports, jeux*¹⁵.

Receiving the invitation on July 1934, the government Gheorghe Tătărescu officially accepted Romania's participation to the Brussels exhibition¹⁶. The presence at this exhibition was under the patronage of King Carol II, initiative due to the Committee leaded by Ion Manolescu Strunga, the

¹² National Archives, Dolj, fund Segarcea Crown Domain, file 4/1925, f. 308.

¹³ *Ibid*, file 2/1929, f. 483

¹⁴ Laurenţiu Vlad, *Propagandă și identitate ...*, p. 74.

¹⁵ *Ibid*.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 78.

Minister of Industry and Commerce. General commissary of the exhibition was appointed Cezar Popescu. The Romanian pavilion, with a surface of 1.000 m², situated at the junction of the streets Avenue de Bouchout and Avenue du Gros-Tileuil, built in a sober style that merged perfectly the elements of the classic architecture with the modern one, was the work of the architect Constantin Moșinschi. Three from the four facades of our pavilion were decorated with incised drawings, representing scenes from the every day life of the peasants and in the centre of the main façade was situated the equestrian statue of Carol II¹⁷.

In the pavilion there had been organized sections for agriculture, transportations, textile products and ancient, religious and rural art. We find the Crown Domain at the agrarian section, exposing different samples, along with the Institute of agronomic researches, The State Farm Zorleni, Jean Cămărășescu, The Viticulture School from Chișinău etc¹⁸. The exhibition was marked by the artistic dimension. The awarding ceremony of the participants to the exhibition, organized on October 15th 1935, offered to Romania 97 rewards, placing it on the 15th place¹⁹.

The last participation of The Crown domain, at some universal exhibitions, was that from New York in 1939. Its presence was facilitated by the election of the first president of the American confederate nations. It was called one of the most grandiose exhibitions in the entire history, having 44 million visitors. It took place at Flushing Meadows – Corona Park, in two seasons, 1939-1940, and named “Building the World of Tomorrow”²⁰.

Romania presented two very beautiful and imposing edifices – The Romanian Pavilion and The Romanian House, both plated with marble, very luxuriant, presenting architecture that maintained the characteristic of the Romanian style. The interiors were decorated with statues made by Milița Pătrașcu, Ion Jalea, C. Medrea, frescoes, mosaics, bas-reliefs, friezes. The Pavilion was the creation of the architect G. M. Cantacuzino and the Romanian House, the work of the architect Doicescu²¹.

Among the exhibitors from New York was also the Administration of the Segarcea Crown Domain, with a new presentation of wines. The range of wine exposed here were the noble ones internationally recognized: dark red wine (Bordeaux) from 1929, 1930 and 1934; Pelin wine from 1934; Riesling from 1930, 1934 and 1937; Alb Superior (superior white) from 1936, Fetească

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 85-86.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 93.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 101.

²⁰ Idem, “New findings on Romanian’s participation to the New York world’s fair (1939-1940)”, in *Arhivele Olteniei*, New Serie, no. 20, București, Academia Română, 2006, p. 104.

²¹ I.A. Roceric, Horia Oprescu, “Expozițiile”, in *Enciclopedia României*, IVst vol, Economia Națională, circulație, distribuție și consum, București, 1939, p. 323.

from 1934 and 1936, Frontignon²². The total number of wine bottles that went to America was 15.240²³. Besides wine, there were sent 400 bottles of brandy and 200 bottles of sterilized must of grapes²⁴. These drinks could be tasted and bought from the restaurant-pavilion.

All these exhibitions offered the opportunity for our products, obtained in the thirteen administrations, to be recognized and appreciated. Thanks to this possibility of promotion, many requests had been registered for our wines and wood products, the proof being the contracts concluded with different foreign societies.

Images from the international exhibition from Paris, France, in 1900



The wood industry – forestry products



*Stone quarries – ceramic – Woven materials
– ropes, knitted work – furniture*



*The agriculture section. Land plans and
models of administrative houses*



*Carpets, household industry, school
workshops, the mechanic saw from Mălini,
hunting, cereals, agrarian and forestry
exploitations*

²² A.N.I.C. Bucharest, fund The Central Administration, file 96/1939, f. 46.

²³ *Ibid*, file 268/F.D., f. 23.

²⁴ *Ibid*, file 96/1939, f. 50.

