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**HISTORY OF TÂRGU JIU  
(1877-1914)  
- Abstract -**

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## ABSTRACT

A topic which was rarely tackled by the gorjeanian historians is the modern history of the town of Târgu Jiu, more precisely from the second half of the XIX-th century until the first World War. Except the paper „The History of Târgu Jiu” which became classic, no paper was written till now, about the evolution of the town in the modern age.

This paper is an attempt for the cover a gap in the local historiography, more precisely the evolution of Târgu Jiu in „La belle époque”, an age of the economic and cultural progress which was present in the capital of the Gorj county. The existence in the deposits of the Gorj county services belonging to the National Archives, of an archive which belongs to the Town Hall of Targu Jiu, was a strong argument for a scientific research, being the unic archievistic fund which was wholely kept. The fact that this archieve contained many new pieces of information corroborated with the lack of a paper about this subject was the main argument for achieving a such of scientific study.

Many funds of the school institutions (Liceul „Tudor Vladimirescu, Școala Primară de Băieți nr. 1, Școala Primară de Băieți nr. 2, Școala Tehnică Profesională de Fete și Școala Inferioară de Ceramică) where researched and the archives of some justice institutions (Tribunalul Gorj), of same religious institutions (Protoieria Gorj) and of same economic institutions (Societatea „Unirea” Târgu Jiu).

The main source of information were the new archive documents which were correlated and completed with data from the journals of the time, the memories of some contemporany persons, the laws of the studied period, documents collections and, also, published paper whose topics speak about general aspects met in our study. When the Organic Regulations was adopted, a new stage in the history of Târgu Jiu began, characterized by a slow but continuu progress in the economic, demographic and cultural field. First of all the education was reorganized by eliminating those schools organized by the churches, and by setting up Normal Schools led by teacher Constantin Stanciovici in 1832. The first measures for the alignment of the streets and fences, where taken, the hospital wis set up in 1844, and in 1846 the streets of the town were illuminated by 40 lamps. In 1845 a private pension was set up for girls, and in 1847 a terrible fire distroyed an important part of the town.

The first ceramic factory in the country was set up in Târgu Jiu, in 1832 by Frederich Drexler, the leader of the Austrians citizens, who set up the first pharmacy in the town. In june 1848, the Organic Regulations and the boyard’s privileges were burnt by the citizines on the field Obreja, in procession with flags and muzicians. From the demographic viewpoint the town registred a smaller increseang in comparision with the other towns: from 2275 in 1835 it reached 3661 inhabitants in the

year 1859. In 1856 a Public Garden was set up, on the bank of the Jiu river, and in 1860 the telegraphic office. In 1854, the mixed school from the town was divided in a school for boys and a other for girls, and in 1870 a real school was set up which, later was transformed in the Normal School, for preparing rural school masters. The building of the Administrations Palace started in 1874 as a school construction, but later it became center for prefecture and for the County Law Court.

During the four decades between the Independence War and the First World War, the town of Târgu Jiu knew radical transformations in the filed of demography, economy and the urban development. This was the period when the patriarchal town from the banks of the river Jiu was transfomed, slowly but surely, in a modern town, when the progress appeared and the traditional customs coexisted with the western manners. „La belle epoque”, how it was called the pre-war period, was for Târgu Jiu a period of achievements in all the fields, from building of public edifficies and the pavements of the streets to the network of railway and the electric illumination. The population of the town increased with 400% in this period reaching nearly 10 000 inhabitants in 1912, especially due to the migration from villages. From ethnic viewpoint most of the inhabitants were Romanian, but there were also small communities of Germans, Jews, Hungarians, Italians and Serbs. As industrial establishments in Târgu Jiu, a beer factory, two workshops for candles, two mills and a tannery functioned, but the agiculture remained the main job and source of income for the inhabitants.

The fire command counted a leader and 20 firemen who, beside the extinction of the fires, were used to clean the streets, to take care of the roads and other public utility work. At the begining of the XX-th century, the Town Hall adopted the first regulations concerning the circulation of the automobiles and bikes in town and the coachmen threatened with strike because of the competition done by the new means of transport.

The first chapter is dedicated to the Gorjeanian soldier's participation to the Independence War and to the efforts of the civil population for supporting the Romanian Army by offering them armament, bullets, food, clothes and medicines. The Gorjeanian peaseants contributed with the most work days in the benefit of army and the cavalry squadron from Gorj was covered by glory in the fights from the south of the Danube. At the some time civil society committes were set up for gathering donations fot the effort of the war. Thus the Gorjeanian cleryman set up a local committe let by the archpriest Ștefan Nicolaescu and the ladies of the high society set up the society „Gorjiu”, who could gather by public subscriptions 677 lei, shirts, bandages, and cotton wool for the wounded soldiers. In a atmosphere of patriotic enthusiasm the Gorjeanian school masters donated 830 lei from their salaries and the Communal Council voted, in unanimity, the donation of the sum of 3000 lei from the town

budget for the Romanian Army to buy guns. Donations for buying arms come from the inhabitants of the villages even if they hadn't a prosperous material state. All in all the inhabitants of the Gorj county donated 37 466 lei for the army but the most important contribution was the blood sacrifices. From the 4000 soldiers who lost lives for the conquering of the independence of Romania, 241 were from Gorj.

The second chapter refers to the role and the importance of the Communal Council in the administration of the town and the political life, dominated by liberals and conservatives and by the financial scandals connected with the management of the public money. After the resignation of the government and coming to power of the opposition, the Communal Council was dissolved and the directing of the town was named a temporary commission which had to organize the local elections. These elections were always won by the candidates of the party which was at the power, and the councillors elected as mayor the president of the temporary commission. Generally, the leader of the party was not elected mayor. He preferred to be prefect or deputy. An appropriate of him or a relative was elected. Thus, Toma Cămărășescu, the leader of the conservative democratic party (takist) managed to put Vasile Popescu and Eugen Pârâianu-Cuca, mayor of Târgu Jiu, both of them were brother-in-law. The liberals were represented at the level of the county Gorj by personalities like Athanasie Moscuna, Vasile Lascăr, Nicolae Iunian, Iancu Carabatescu, Dincă Schileru, dr. Dimitrie D. Culcer, Titu and Numa Frumușanu brothers, Grigore Iunian and the conservatives by Toma Cămărășescu, Iancu Săftoiu, Constantin Stanciovici, Ion Constantin Mongescu, dr. Ion Frumușanu, Gheorghe Stolojanu and captain Emanoil Pârâianu. Our county was represented in parliament by politicians of the first rank like Ion C. Brătianu, Ion I.C. Brătianu, Petre S. Aurelian, Eugeniu Stătescu and Titu Maiorescu and, also, by former mayors of Târgu Jiu like Vasile Lascăr, Nicolae Iunian, Vasile I. Popescu, Titu D. Frumușanu and Gheorghe Stolojanu, elected after they were mayors.

An other deputy of Gorj, Ion I.C. Brătianu didn't forget his electors and in his quality of minister of public works, sent the necessary money for building the metallic bridge over the Jiu river, for a dam which to protect the town against floodings and for the pavement of Victoria street, being considered a national road. Generally, between the mayors and the councillors a harmony dominated, the suggestions brought by the mayors being voted in unanimity, but there were some disputes too, the most important conflict taking place in march 1891, when the majority of the councillors refused to vote the budget. This conflicted ended with the removal of the mayor Ion C. Mongescu. Hot debates took places in the Communal Council in the years 1911-1912 on the problem of the extension of the public electric illumination in town, but the mayor Gheorghe Stolojanu imposed his view point in front of the councillors led by captain Emanoil Pârâianu, who were in minority.

We considered profitable the introduction of a subchapter about the house properties of the Town Hall of Târgu Jiu, the way they were got administrated and sold. The streets of the town had names which were often modified by the communal councillors. Few of them kept their names to the present day.

Until the beginning of the XIX-th century, the public illumination of the town of Târgu Jiu was achieved by lamps with gas cought on cast iron or wooden poles, whose maintenance was given by public auction to an enterpriser for several years. The unefficiency of this kind of illumination obliged the Communal Council to branch the town to the most modern discovery of science and symbol of the progress: electricity. For building electric powers and a network for the public illumination, the Town Hall of Târgu Jiu borrowed 300 000 lei from the House of Credit and on the 28-th of march 1906 the conservative mayor Eugen Pârâianu-Cuca signed the contract with Vereinigte Elektricitas Action Gesellschaft from Viena for the sum of 217 246 golden franks who received the right to branch the citiziens to the electric network of the town. The hurry with which they signed the contract, the disadvantages stipulations and especially the decision that the electric power to use wood as fuel, and not the water of the river Jiu, had a devastating effect for the budget of the Town Hall.

The building of the power station was build by Toma D. Costescu in the summer of 1906, and two years later the Town Hall brought him to trial, because the rain was dripping into the engine room because of poorly made roof tiles which were also incorrectly placed. The power plant, located in the Public Garden, had at ground floor the boiler room, the engine room, where the electricity switch was installed and also the battery, whereas at the first floor were the rooms for the personnel. Until october 1906 electric lighting was installed on the majority of the city`s streets, including the ones located far from the city center, like Morilor Street, Ferentari, Vocea Jiului and on the Obreja field up to the 5-th Artillery Regiment`s barracks. Up to the year 1910 the majority of public institutions and banks had been connected to the power grid, together with 132 private individuals which shows that the general public had been rapidly convinced of the superior qualities of electricity over other forms of lighting from the past.

After havind examined the equipment and after studying the files in the Town Hall`s archive, engineer Delescu had written a report in which he accused the firm responsible for building the power plant of having made law quality work at outrageously high prices. Therefore, the Town Hall sued the builder and the Law Court named a commission of experts which drew the conclusion that the electric illumination was well done because in the two years of working for power station, it wasn`t out of order. After the appeals lodged by the both parts, the trial continued till the 8-th of october 1911, when

the Appeal Court from Craiova obliged the Town Hall Târgu Jiu to pay the sum of 157 247 lei equivalent in gold plus 6% percents interests and judging expenses to the Austrian society of 6000 lei. They also paid 10 000 as material damages, besides of amounts paid until then. In spite of the trial, in the years 1912-1913 the Town Hall Târgu Jiu agreed new contracts with the austrian firm for the extension of the electric network in the town and for the modification of the power station to use oil and fuel oil as fuel and providing metallic poles to the public illumination. The electric power station and the network represented, from far, the biggest investment in the infrastructure of the town achieved by the Town Hall Târgu Jiu and the exorbitant costs couldn't be covered without borrows from the County Credit House.

The day of the first of july 1888, when the railway station from Târgu Jiu was inaugurated, marked the begining of a period of prosperity for the economic and social level but expecially for the public workings. In the year 1894 the communal slaughterhouse was finished. It was situated on the Mills street where the animals destined to marketing were sacrificed with the obeying the sanitary regulations. In the year 1895 the new county hospital was inagurated with 45 beds and the preventive arrest, built by the local authorities. In march 1894 the old wooden bridge was replaced with a metallic one, which was inaugurated on the 3-rd of july 1897. This bridge, over the river Jiu, was named „Prince Ferdinand” where the population from the Târgu Jiu stopped the invasion of the german troups on the 14 of october 1916. Begining with the year 1885 the War Minister began the building of military barracks for nr. 18 Gorj and 5 Artillery regiments on the field donated by the Town Hall at the eastern edge of the town. In 1897 the Minister of Public Workings paid the pavement with pieces of rock of the Victoria street and for the construction of the dam from the left bank of the river Jiu, which will become the favorite place for walking. On the 22-nd of august 1898 the prince Ferdinand layed the first stone at the basement of the Communal Palace, which will be finished at the end of the year 1901.

In october 1898 the minister Spiru Haret inaugurated „Tudor Vladimirescu” Secondary School, set up in 1890, and in November the statue of the gorjean hero was risen at the suggestion of a committee of students. In the year 1896 the construction of the chapel from the orthodox cemetery which was sainted by the bishop of Râmnic in 1910, and in the year 1901, the Church Cathedral, the most important house of cult, was restored. In the year 1906 the town of Târgu Jiu had a paved with pieces of rock, 15 streets were paved with stones and 10 streets became roads, 13 streets unpaved, 2 chanel and 3 rivers. However the Town Hall received numerous petitions from the citizens which pleased him to pave their streets because they were unpracticable because of the pools and mud.

In the year 1878 the Sanitary Service of the town had 40 beds and a staff consisting of a physician, a suburgeon, an intendent, a priest, two nurses, two servants, a cook and two washer-women. In 1894 the new building of the county hospital from Unirea street was inaugurated. It had five pavilions with 45 beds, a pharmacy, a dwell for the doctor, officer, washroom etc. Between 1891-1907 Adrian Poenaru was doctor and director of the County hospital. He graduated the Faculty of medicine from Bucharest. He introduced the electric illumination in hospital, he organized the room destined to operations, equipped the hospital with the necessary sets and he was the first doctor who effected surgery operations and amputations. In the year 1900 the Sanitary Service consisted of a doctor, a veterinarian, a sanitary agent and vaccinator and two midwives. At the beginning of the XX-th century disease like tuberculosis, malaria, typhus, syphilis, pellagra and scarlet fever were very spread. In the year 1903 the number of sick people housed in the hospital was 872, 49 of them died. Free consultation were given to 7831 sick people, 5846 of them received free medicine.

After Adrian Poenaru's transfer to Craiova, the hospital from Târgu Jiu was led by the surgeon Nicolae Hasnaş (1875-1966) who set up a pavilion for surgery and births, a pavilion for internal medicine and a pavilion for catching diseases. In the year 1914 two pharmacies functioned in Târgu Jiu, a druggist's shop, three medical units, one of them in hospital, another one in the Communal Palace and the last one belonged to the Trade Corporation. The staff of the Sanitary Service of the town consisted of a sanitary doctor, a veterinarian, a midwoman, two sanitary agents and a cattle inspector.

On the 9-th of september 1890 the inauguration of the new gymnasium from Târgu Jiu took place. At the beginning it was housed in a hall from the Administrative Palace and later in other buildings rent from the town. In the year 1894 Iuliu Moisil was named to lead the gymnasium. He developed an energetic activity both on the didactic level and especially an economic and cultural level. He improved the prestige of the gorjanian school and was taken as a model for other gymnasiums from the country. On the 23-th of june 1896 the basement stone to the building of the gymnasium was put and on the 4-th of october 1898 the inauguration of the construction took place, where the minister Spiru Haret participated. Local authorities, numerous citizens, many of them school masters and priests from the county also participated. The new building housed school and cultural institutions like the Gorj Museum, the ceramic school, the notary school and bookkeeper school which prepared bookkeepers for popular banks. All these led to a deterioration of the building. A serious problem was the interruption of school for weeks and for months because of the epidemic of flue, scarlet fever, measles which affected the pupils.

The main problem of the primary education was the lack of own buildings for the two schools for boys and girls. This problem remained unsolved all this period. The Târgu Jiu Town Hall rented buildings from different owners which, very often, were small and dirty. However the number of the pupils increased constantly, the primary school from Târgu Jiu being attended by numerous children from villages. Thus, from the forms of the boys they set up in 1901 the primary school for boys nr. 2 and in 1914 they set up the primary school for girls nr. 2. In spite of some financial shortcomings the schools from Târgu Jiu knew a progress, the number of the pupils increased, the endowment with furniture and didactic materials was improved too and the teachers became better and better. At the end of the school year the Town Hall awarded prizes to the hard-working pupils and the poor pupils received free books and textbooks. Among the teachers Alexandru Ștefulescu was remarked as the director of the school from 1888 to his death in 1910, with a break between 1900-1905, when he was school inspector. As a director he did his best to endow the school with didactic materials and the necessary furniture. He also assured decent conditions for learning.

Beside the state schools, private school functioned, the most important of them was the vocational school for girls, the ceramic school and the school for church singers. The last one began to function in 1896 and was based on the pupil's taxes and on the subventions received from the Town Hall and county authorities and the didactic staff consisted of priests. Set up in 1899 by a private initiative the vocational school for girls passed to the administration of the Târgu Jiu Town Hall in 1905 and later it was subordinated to the Minister of Cults and Instructions. In this school functioned a tailoring and broderie workshop and a section where the young ladies were thought how to cook. In the year 1900 they set up in Târgu Jiu a ceramic school in the building of the gymnasium where the pupils learned how to model the pottery, to enamel and to burn them.

In the year 1889 the five churches from were organized in two parishes: the Cathedral Church having as subsidiaries the churches „Sf. Apostoli” and „Sf. Nicolae” and the second parish had as subsidiaries the church „Sf. Împărați” and the church „Sf. Treime”. Although every church was administration by a group formed by a priest, a representant of the government and a representant elected by citizens, the Târgu Jiu Town Hall had a strict control on the fortune of the churches. Thus, the budgets of the churches had to be approved by the Communal Council, which reduced the salaries of the staff and gave small sums for repairing the churches though these churches were in an advanced state of degradation. However, without these subventions no a church from the town could function because their own incomes were not enough.

Except the Cathedral Church which had a forest in the village Călești, 130 acres in the village Șomânești and ten booths in the central market of the town, the other churches had only few small agricultural fields. Beside the the Cathedral Church and the church „Sf. Împărați” they set up religious chors, subventioned by the Town Hall, and parish libraries. At the end of the XIX-th century they built a chapel in the orthodox cemetery and they set up in Târgu Jiu a school for church singers, having as a teachers the priests from Târgu Jiu. In the year 1903 the society of the gorjean clergy called „Lumina” was set up. The society will type the magazine with the same name and would organize conferences and cultural circles where the priests took part. By the occasion of the national holidays and the honour of the royal family’s anniversary at the Cathedral Church religious celebrations took place. The county authorities and numerous people participated. Here they developed religious services against the droughts and the bishop of Râmnic celebrated the liturgy when he visited the town.

In cultural field, at the end of the XIX-th century, the first newspapers and magazines appeared in Gorj county, many of them having a short existence. They also set up the first county museum from Romania, the Gorj Museum, after the suggestion of the historian Alexandru Ștefulescu, whose books were awarded by the Romanian Academy. By the occasion of the national holidays, especially in the 10 may day, school performances, religious services, banquets and parades took place where beside the officials a numerous people participated. On the scene of Milescu theatre, numerous theatral troupes performances. Conferences, performances and concerts of great personalities like Nicolae Iorga and George Enescu took place. The first banks appeared, some of them subsidiaries of great banks from București and Craiova. Economic societies of mutual help for the middle classes from the town also appeared.

The marketing activity knew the biggest development, many shops, restaurants, coffee shops and hotels appeared mainly on the Victoria street and Tudor Vladimirescu street, situated in the center of the town. The paradox is that the agriculture remained the main occupation of the inhabitants from Târgu Jiu, who cultivated the fields around the town and bred animals just in the yard of their house. New progress are registered in the field of sanitation, the pools disappeared, the streets were paved, the rivers are channeled, but the rubbish and the cleanliness remained an unsolved problem in spite of the efforts directed to these by the mayors of the town.