

## OLTENIA IN THE 1899 CENSUS

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**Abstract.** *The census is a living document, is the nation's living archive, which has to be consulted. In Wallachia, the statistical sources on which the number of the population can be established and partly it's social structure were fiscal or religious catagrafii. The first census in the modern sense of the term was carried out in Wallachia in 1838, being purely statistical. He was followed by the 1859 census, which despite difficult conditions that he occur, it was considered a successful census up to the one from 1899. 1899 census was organized and executed entirely by the General Statistics Department. Analysis confirmed that these figures are close to reality, marking a breakthrough census sensitive to earlier.*

**Keywords:** *census, population, marital status, age, religion.*

Census began in Oltenia, as well as in the rest of the country on 1<sup>st</sup> December 1899, ending on 10<sup>th</sup> December 1899. By the address of the Ministry of Finance no. 63543/09 September 1899 were sent instructions for conducting the census:

- In rural areas, for the proper conduct of the census two committees were formed:

1. *plasa*<sup>1</sup> commissions, which included sub-prefect, head of Forest, tax inspector, county medic, school inspector;
2. village commissions, which will be establish in every village in the enough number, by need and condition of the locality (Dolj County Department of National Archives, fund Prefecture of Dolj County, file 145/1899, f. 15).

These committees would be convened in the first days of November.

- In urban areas, census committees were composed of two persons. It was necessary that the committees to be established in large number, for easy operation and be able to finish soon. On this regard will be taken into account the number of houses, their size and distribution on each street, and the density of the population (Dolj County Department of National Archives, file 145/1899, f. 15). Committee members could be recruited among city hall and county clerks, priests, police officers or tracking agents.

In addition to census committees, were to operate controls commissions with similar tasks like as *plasa* commissions.

At the end of this census, Oltenia recorded an increase of 45% from the 1859 census, the number population being 1,181,243 and total area was 25,028 km<sup>2</sup> (COLESCU 1905, XX). A greater increase in population occurred in lowland areas (Dolj - 365,579 residents, Mehedinți - 249,688, Romanați - 203,773), while the mountain counties did not have a very big increase of population number (Vâlcea - 190,903, Gorj - 171,300) (COLESCU 1905, XX). The population density was 47.3 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>, the highest density being in Dolj County (55.7 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>) (COLESCU 1905, XXV).

Diagram 1. Population of Oltenia.

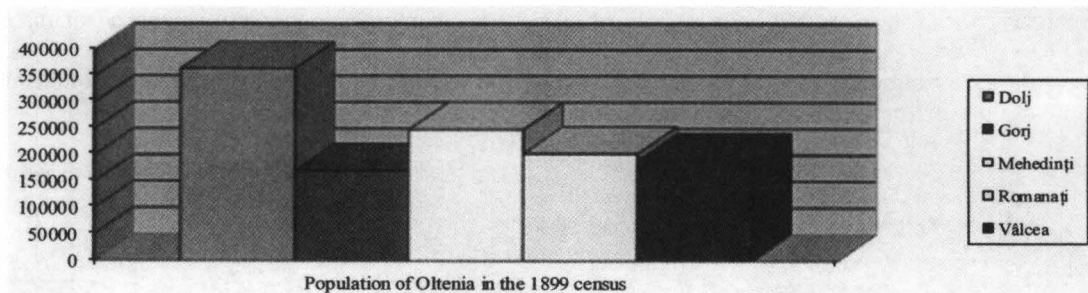
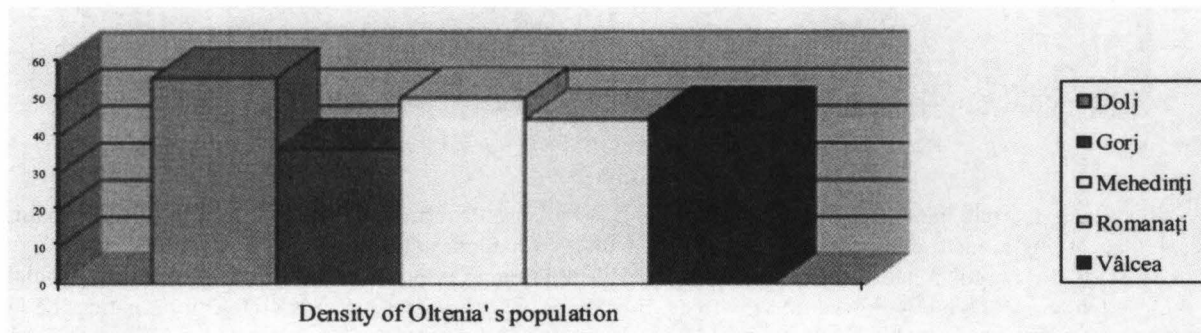
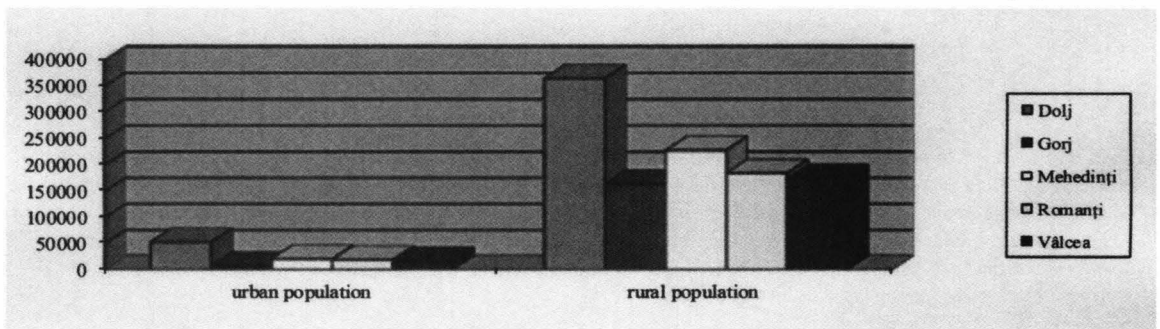


Diagram 2. Density of Oltenia's population.



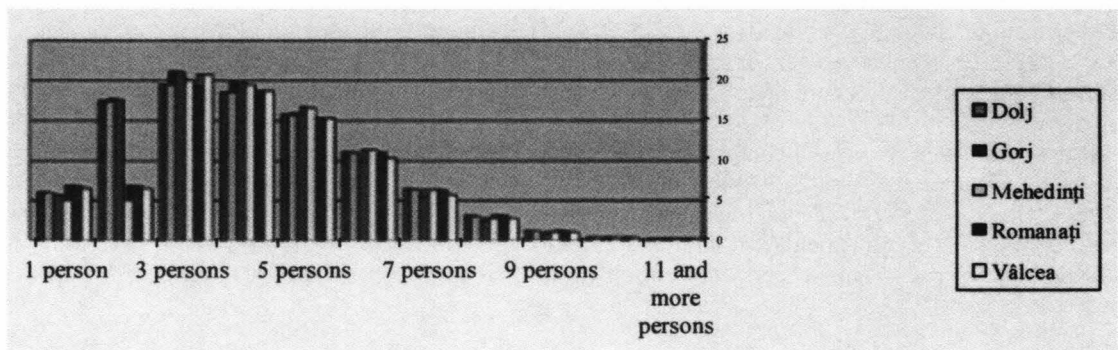
<sup>1</sup> *plasă* means Subdivision of a county.

Diagram 3. *The urban and rural population of Oltenia.*

The lowest percentage of population was registered in the Gorj County, Târgu-Jiu having only 3.9% of the country population.

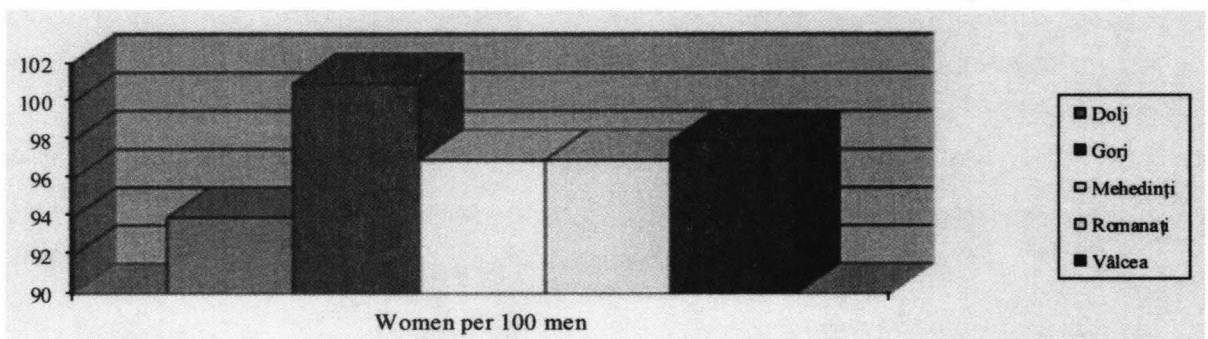
Percentage of people in the cities of Oltenia is much lower, reaching only 10%. In the five district capitals lived 40.1% of the country population, which represents 100,435 inhabitants, and in other urban communes 9.9% of the country population, namely 13,145 inhabitants. In the 17 urban communities existing in Oltenia, two had a population numbering less than 2,000 inhabitants, two had between 2,000 and 5,000 inhabitants, 11 had a population of 5,000 to 20,000 inhabitants, one city had between 20,000 and 100,000 inhabitants.

*Menagiul* is the unit that the 1899 census was based on. *Menagiul* means a group comprising one or more persons related by affinity or not, living under one roof and heaving a common life (COLESCU 1905, XXVIII).

Diagram 4. *Distribution of households by number of persons.*

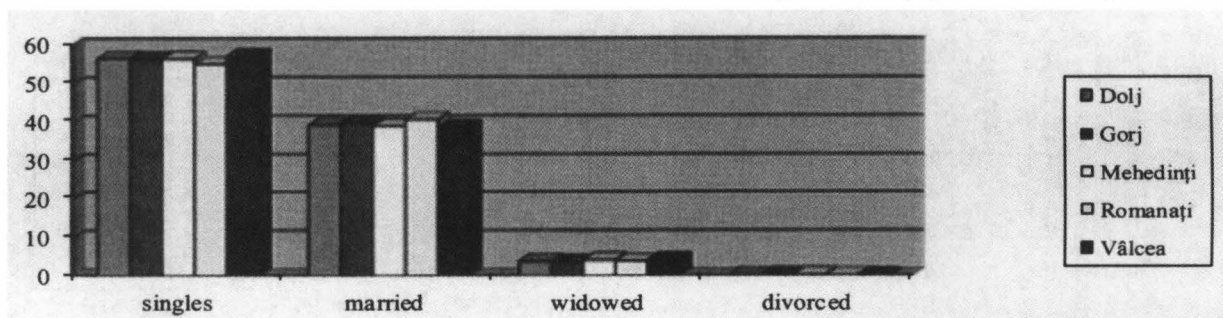
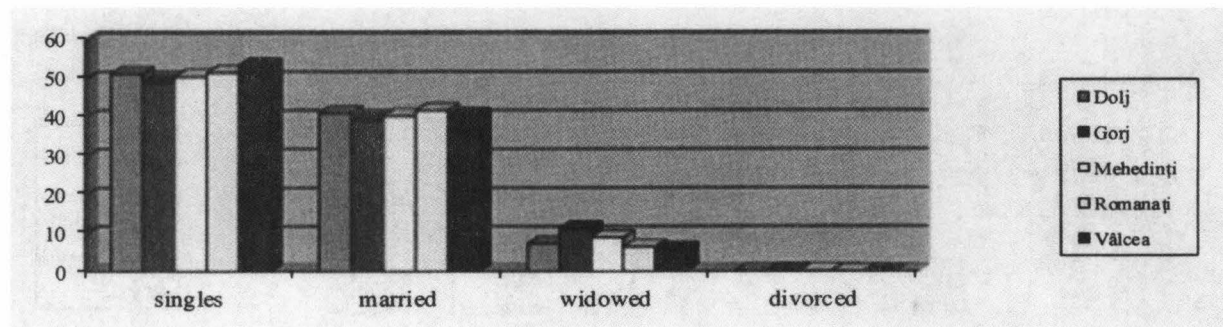
Analyzing the results of 1899 Census, can be observed that most *menaje* were composed of three persons (20.1%) and four persons (19.0%) (COLESCU 1905, XXIX).

Regarding distribution by sex, at the level of Oltenia, the share is almost equal, while men dominate in urban areas, because of the garrisons, but also due to immigration.

Diagram 5. *Women per 100 men.*

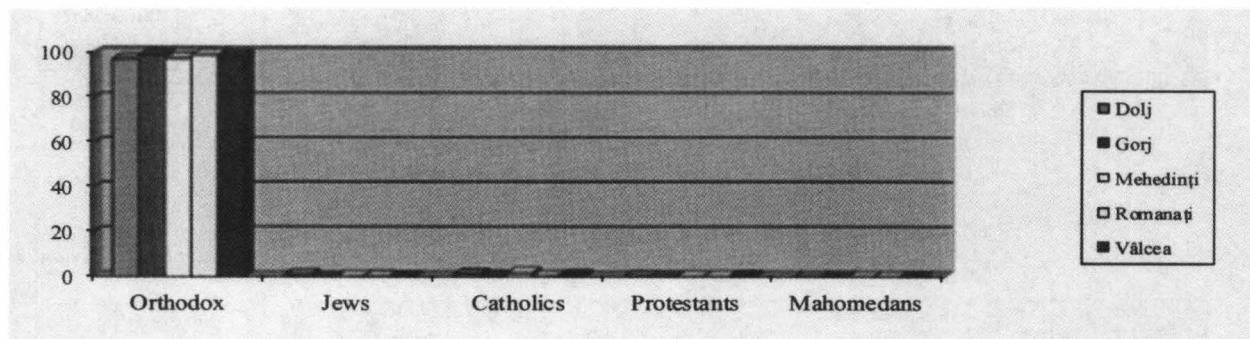
Regarding marital status, records are quite safe. A small problem arose at the registration of the cohabiting couples, but according to instructions, they were recorded with their real marital status.

Most of the population of Oltenia, which included children, was not married (53.6%), married population being 40.0%, while 6.2% were widowed and divorced only 0.2% (COLESCU 1905, XXXII). Can be notice the large number of widowed women (8.6%), indicating a higher rate of living for women, but may also be a distortion of the truth, many women reached to a certain age were declaring them self's widows, even if were never married.

Diagram 6. *Male population divided by marital status.*Diagram 7. *Female population divided by marital status.*

The 1899 Census records data regarding the age of population. These records may be suspected of distortion of the truth, on the one hand because of tendency of women to hide their true age, and secondly because the elders can not remember their birth year and they were trying to restore it according to certain events. Therefore, the recordings were made year by year for persons up to 20 years of age, from five to five years for persons up to 60 years of age and every ten years for persons over 60 years of age.

Census form also included questions regarding religion. Oltenia's dominant religion was Orthodox (98.6%), followed by Catholics (0.9%), Jews (0.4%), Protestants (0.1%) and Mahomedans (0.1%) (COLESCU 1905, XLV). In cities, the situation is slightly different because it decreases the number of Orthodox and the jews increases, these being present mostly in urban areas.

Diagram 8. *Proportion of the Oltenia's population by religion.*

Another question from the census form was about citizenship. According to the results from the total of 1,181,243 people, 1,149,124 were Rumanians, 14,160 Austro-Hungarians, 910 Germans, Bulgarian 1,240, 65 French, Greek 1,159, 1,396 Italians, 37 Russians, 2,616 Serbian, 3,540 Turkish, 694 foreigners and 4,187 Jews under Romanian protection (COLESCU 1905, LII).

The large number of foreigners in Oltenia is due to the Municipal Act provisions which prohibited foreigners to establish them self in rural areas without the consent of the Municipal Council.

In the 1899 census form was introduced a special section for disabled. These were grouped into three categories: blind, deaf and other infirmities which were included idiots, handless and cripple. Number of disable people from Oltenia is 6,611, the highest number being recorded in Dolj (1804, from which 3.5 % represented other infirmity COLESCU 1905, LXV).



Diagram 9. *Proportion of the Oltenia's population by citizenship.*

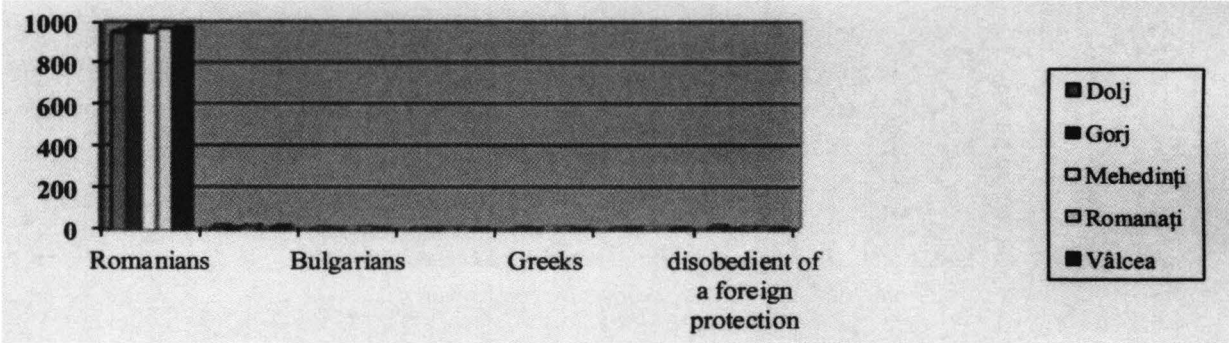


Diagram 10. *Proportion of the Oltenia's infirms.*

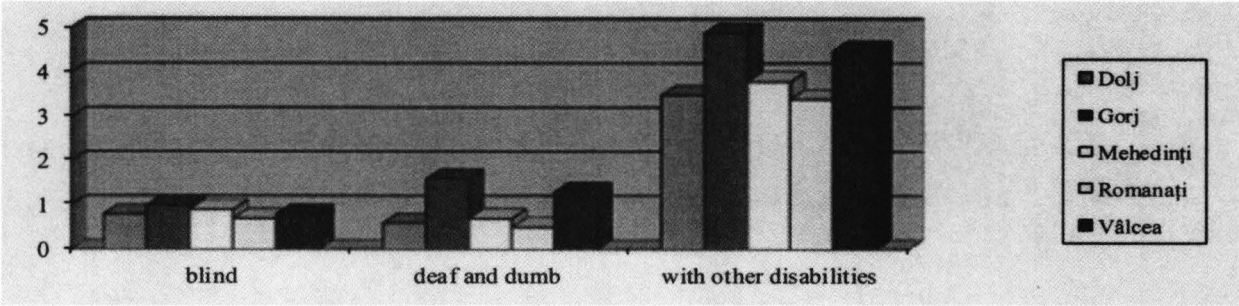


Diagram 11. *Proportion of female population by instruction (%).*

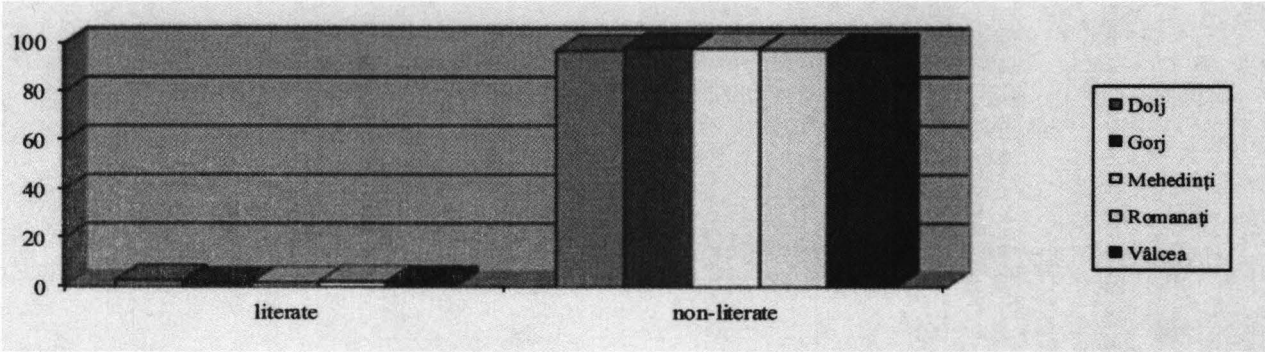
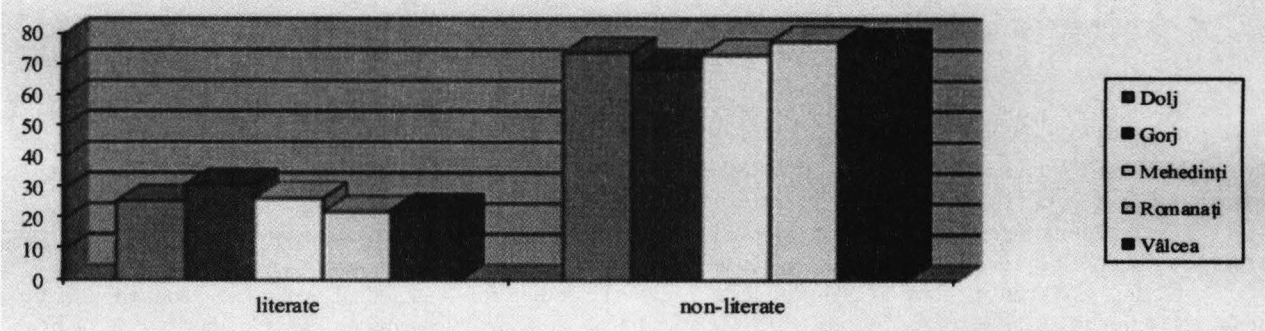


Diagram 12. *Proportion of male population by instruction (%).*



Analyzing the diagram, it can be noticed that the school education was poorly developed

From what can be observed this census, like ones before it, gives as poor and dry data, following the traditional line on fiscal census.

Population growth was a result of developments in agriculture, but also because social and economic changes which have heightened living standards. Therefore should be remained the introduction of Organic Regulation, which decided the increase of peasants' land, setting fixed proportions of the two sides; one third for the owner and two-thirds for *clăcași*<sup>2</sup> peasants, rural reform from 1864 and peasants allotment, the passage from agrarian-pastoral structure to cultivate mainly cereals, replacing traditional means of working with some modern ones and the conquer of the independence (COLESCU 1905, XXVII).

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<sup>2</sup> clăcaș means peasant bound to work on boyard's estate.