HISTORICAL PROFILES / Romania

The precursors of the Romanian state

At the beginning of the 19th century, a state comprising all the Romanian population inhabiting the territory of present-day Romania did not yet exist: Wallachia (in the south) and Moldavia (in the east) were under Ottoman sovereignty; Dobruja (in the southeast) was a province of the Ottoman Empire; Transylvania (in the centre), Banat (in the southwest), Partium (in the northwest) and Bukovina (in the northwest of Moldavia) belonged to the Habsburg Empire; and Bessarabia (the eastern part of Moldavia) was annexed by Russia in 1812. The basis of the Romanian state was laid in 1859 through the union of Moldavia and Wallachia, which was possible as a consequence of the Ottoman Empire's decline that had started at the end of the 17th century after the defeat in the Great Turkish War (1683–99) against the Holy League.



18th century map – Moldova, Valahia and Transilvania are in the left

1782



Map of Romania and the neighboring states

After 1878 – before 1913

Wallachia and Moldavia between the Ottoman Empire and the Great European Powers

Wallachia and Moldavia were tributary states of the Ottoman Empire from the 16th century until the 19th century, which meant that they paid an annual tribute, had to align their external politics with the Ottoman one and to direct most of their exports to the Porte, especially cereals, cattle and sheep. However, they maintained their internal organisation, as well as their political and religious institutions. In the 19th century, the political changes that occurred in Europe to the disadvantage of the Ottoman Empire resulted in its having to share the control over Moldavia and Wallachia first with Russia, and then also with other European powers, such as the UK, France, Piedmont and Prussia, until eventually losing its sovereignty over the two Romanian countries.



Theodor Aman – Tudor Vladimirescu, leader of the Valachian Revolution in 1821

1873



C. D. Rosenthal – Revolutionary Romania (1848)

1850



Carol Popp de Szathmari – Members of the commission for the reorganization of the Danubian Principalities (lithograph)

Second half on the 19th century

The birth of Romania

The institutional and administrative unification of Moldavia and Wallachia under the same ruler, with the recognition of the Ottoman Empire, was achieved by the Romanian political elite between 1859 and 1861. Several years later the next important objective, the independence of the new state, which was called Romania, was also attained. Then, at the beginning of the 20th century a consolidated Romania, which had become a kingdom in 1881, added to its territory southern Dobruja, which belonged to Bulgaria, after getting involved in the second Balkan War. Finally, the creation of Romania was completed after World War I, when the provinces of Banat, Bukovina, Transylvania, Partium and Bessarabia united with the Romanian Kingdom following the disintegration of Austro-Hungary and tsarist Russia.



Carol Popp de Szathmari – Alexandru Ioan Cuza, the first ruler of the United Principalities of Moldova and Valahia

1859–1866



Carol Popp de Szathmari – Prince Carol of Hohenzollern, Romania's first king

End of the 19th century



The Attack of Smârdan

1885