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Romanian noble families

History and genealogy (according to authentic sources)

Octav-George Lecca

Năsturel (Herescu) 1389 (Wallachia) Noblemen of Ilfov and primarily of Bucharest, bans from father to son.

Among the oldest and greatest Romanian noble families, the Herescu or Năsturel family played an important part in the history of this nation, its origin and that of the Basarab princes being closely interwoven. (*Noblemen of Ilfov and primarily of Bucharest, Bans from father to son*; note Mateiu Caragiale²)

Speaking about the beginnings of the city of Bucharest, colonel Papazoglu referred to a *tradition* of this nation: „One of Romanians’ biggest tycoons, Năsturel by his name, while looking for a place to build a church (I’m not sure whether he was count Henrih or **Heré Năsturel**, whose name is borne by the Herești estate on the way from Bucharest to Oltenița), found the most beautiful location on the Dambovița’s left hill, where the famous town of Pinum once stood, with a view in the valley over the big lake of Broșteni and the forest surrounding those two big hills. On that hill Năsturel built a Holy Church under the patronage of Annunciation on Buga’s estate, which had started to be populated with the noble families moving from Târgoviște. The church exists even today, under the name of „Dobroteasa“, in Văcărești Street. Behind the church Năsturel built large mansions, the ruins of which lingered until 1855, then they disappeared“ (Around 1450).

The old estate of that family is Herești, which we’ve mentioned above and which gave the name „Herescu“ to the members of the Năsturel family. D. Xenopol says that during the rule of Mircea the Great, the latter „sent two envoys to Poland in 1389, boyars Manea and **Roman Herescu**, who, while crossing Moldavia were joined by Dugoiu, envoy of Petru Mușat, ruler of that province, and thus the three of them headed for Poland to see Vladislav Jaghello. Mircea struck a bond of friendship with king Vladislav, providing for mutual aid, against the king of Hungary...“ (*Istoria României*, vol. II, p. 95). The envoys are evoked by Doghiel in *Codex Diplomaticus regni Poloniae* (vol. I, p. 597), naming that boyar „Roman Heritzki“.

A boyar „Filea ot Fierești“ is mentioned in 1568 together with his wife Stanca and his brothers Partenie and Neagoe. Undoubtedly, they are members of the Herești and Năsturel families, given the specific name of Fierea or Hierea. **Șerban**, the chancellor of Fierești (or Herești, it’s all the same), is proved in 1622.

Under the rule of Mircea the Shepherd (1546-54), the chronicle makes the first mention of **Udriște Năsturel** who died in battle. No sooner had Mircea acceded to the throne than he started killing the boyars; thus „he slaughters Coadă the Magistrate, Drăgan the High Steward, Stroia the Spatharus, Vintilă the Equerry and many others, tormenting them for their fortunes. The nobles who escaped death fled to the

² **Mateiu Caragiale** (born in Bucharest on March 12/25th 1885, died in Bucharest on January 17th 1936), a foremost Romanian writer, poet and historian of heraldry.

Hungarian land, where they raised an army. Two years later, they waged war with Mircea in Periș and ruling prince Mircea defeated them, Udriște Năsturel and Ban Teodosie losing their lives“. (See Constantin Căpitanul, *Chronica* I, p. 176 and Xenopol, *Istorie*, vol IV) (1547).

This descendant of Năsturel Herea of the 15th century had the following successors:

Radu Năsturel, the boyar of Fierești, as a document from 1620 calls him; in 1624, an old man, he was High Chancellor. He had three children:

Lady Elina, ruling prince Matei Basarab's wife and lady of the country. Her brother:

Oreste or **Udriște Năsturel** of Herești, the High Chancellor, was one of the most learned men in the country in his time. He greatly assisted his brother-in-law ruler Matei, in important state paperwork, also running many of the monasteries built by the latter. He also manages the first printings that started out for the first time in the country in Govora, promoting religious writing. He translated into Romanian the book that remained a manuscript „The Life of Our Fathers Varlaam and Iosofat“. He was a chancellor under Matei Basarab's rule (1633-54). [...]

His younger brother was **Seneschal Cazan Năsturel**, High *Subprefect* in the capital Bucharest.

Great Ban **Radu Năsturel**, Udriște's son, was High Chancellor in 1669, and after 1674, 80, 81, Ban Grigore Ghica became Ruler in 1673: „right away did they send message to Grigore Băleanu, so that he might know he was ruler now and that he could catch chancellor **Radu Crețulescu** and **Șerban Cantacuzen's** brothers, who were in Bucharest. And Gheorghe Băleanu arriving at night, they gathered the court's secretaries in charge of correspondence, the captains, the servants and the nobles that happened to be there, **Radu Năsturel** and others, and as they got together, they sent **Radu Năsturel** and the servants, going round their houses and summoned them to the court...“ [...]

Documents of 1681 and 1679 also name **Radu Năsturel** Great Ban. Starting with 1674, the documents of the court make mention of „Fierescu the Treasurer“. Ban **Radu Năsturel** had two sons, one of whom, Toma, is mentioned around 1663-1665; the other one:

Seneschal Șerban Năsturel Herescu, mentioned and documented as seneschal by the sources in 1703, and purveyor in 1713; in 1717 he is mentioned as Lord Steward among the nobles of the princely court. We sometimes find him only as Șerban Năsturel, some other times just as Șerban Herescu. His son was:

Constantin Năsturel the Great Ban in 1757; in 1731 (May 30th) he was Great Cup-Bearer, his signature being found next to those of other boyars at the princely court. He repairs the Dobroteasa church in Bucharest: „300 hundred years following boyar Năsturel's death, Constantin the Seneschal, son of Șerban Năsturel the Great Ban, seeing that the church founded by his ancestors was derelict, he restored it in 1730 (check the stone engraving above the church door) and left a woman who was said to descend from that illustrious and noble Năsturel family in the care of his relatives that lived in the houses behind the church until 1840.“ (Col. Papazol, *Istoria orașului București*, p. 7)

Radu Herescu Năsturel, his son, is mentioned before 1799 as cupbearer. His son was:

General **Constantin Năsturel Herescu** (born in 1798, died on December the 30th 1879, Bucharest) is the last member of the family who had the rank of Great Ban (and one *Constantin*; n. M.C.). In 1823 he joins the Russian army, serving as officer in a lancer regiment. Back home in 1827, he was appointed Alexandru Ghica's adjutant. Treasurer under prince Bibescu's rule; during Știrbei's rule, he enlists again, being appointed Great Ban and army Spatharus. He set up a fund accounting for half of his fortune that was to be used for awards as legacy to the Romanian Academy.

On the family tomb in St. Friday church in Bucharest there is a very interesting inscription

featuring the family tree, which we shall transcribe as an annex to the history of this family. There are four sides of the marble column following the weapons etched in stone, bearing the engraving in golden letters:

„The Năsturel family descend from the Romans: they indulged in the rank of counts bestowed on them by the Emperor of Austria Louis I in 1370, therefore the first member of the family was Count Henrihi N. and his sons and grandsons who remained in Hungary and the traces of *buițații* whom were left behind, bear the same name of counts: D. Ioan Năsturel mentioned in 1661 in the peace treaty signed by Hungary with the Poles under Ioan Sobieski. One of Count Henrihi Năsturel's grandsons, **Udriștea Năsturel**, Count ILIE Năsturel's son and Count Henrihi Năsturel's great-grandson, Great Ban over the Banat and army commander back then, gets expatriated from Hungary as early as 1518. He died in 1526 and was buried at the Argeș monastery, being born in 1436. Settling down in Walachia, they also bought the Herăști estate back then among many other estates, as shown by the legacies left behind by his great-grandsons to the Cotroceni, Văcărești, Pantelimonul and Gruiu monasteries, attested by the monastery papers, and were called Năsturel of Heresco ever since. They built their monastery of stone slabs on that estate in 1520, where the family blazon is engraved:

Two Romans hold a two-headed eagle. There is a lion standing on a cannon within the emblem, holding a cross in its paws, battling a snake rising against it, carrying the Latin dictum Honor et Patria.

This Udriște Năsturel gave birth to Ban **Ion Năsturel** in 1524, who died in 1590, and who also had a son:

Ban **Radu Năsturel**, born in 1582, died in 1652. His son was:

Ban **Toma Năsturel**, born in 1628, made count... in 1664 by Leopold I, the Emperor of Austria, died in 1693, and he had a son:

Ban **Șerban Năsturel**, born in 1659 and died

in 1731, and his son Ban **Constantin Năsturel**, born in 1682 and died in 1752. The latter had a son:

Radu Năsturel, born in 1750, who became Cup-bearer at his baptism and died in 1804, still cup-bearer, being... and a lonely figure due to his lust for high positions and posts at that time. His son was D. Logofătu **Constantin Năsturel** in 1798, who served in the Russian army and participating in two campaigns against the Turks, he was granted kavalars and a golden sword for acts of bravery, and for the services to his country he was honoured with Turkish cavalry and the rank of Great Ban. „

We've seen most of the members of the Năsturel family reiterated above, as they were illustrated in history, apart from those at the marginal branches of whom this genealogy makes no mention, marking some filiations incorrectly, as well as from information on the older members, of particular interest to this family who was perhaps the first family in our country ever to receive the rank of „count“ (Graph) of the Holy Empire.

Năsturel of Herești, in Walachia: without enamel. In the background...with a lion in profile raised on a dismounted gun, with its mouth turned towards the right side of the shield, holding a cross in its paws with which it battles a monstrous snake on the wide band in the middle of the shield. The two-headed eagle of the Holy Empire holds the shield on its chest right in the middle. Two feudal warriors in full armour sustain it. Above, there is a helmet attached to the count crown, with a two-level tower on top of it. The dictum: Honor et Patria. Improvised blazon. (e.n. in French in original)

