

# HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF SETTLEMENTS IN THE PĂTÂRLAGELE DEPRESSION: THE EARLY CARTOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE

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**La géographie historique des établissements de la depression subcarpatique de Pătârlagele: evidence cartographique pour la période jusqu'a c.1850.** Nos recherches pour clarifier l'histoire de développement rurale (espécialement les villages) avec regard pour l'evidence documentaire a trouvé beaucoup d'assistance grâce a les cartes historiques – meme les exemples avec une petite échelle exécutées pour la Valachie pendant les dix-huitième et dix-neuvième siècles. Il est possible d'identifier quelques villages mais naturellement les premières cartes de grande échelle sont plus importantes pour établir une système primaire: par exemple la carte russe (1853) at la carte de Szathmary (1864), spécialement avec l'assistance d'autres types d'evidence. De temps en temps les cartes donnent la première épreuve d'existence, mais on dois attendre les collections topographiques au fin de la dix-neuvième siècle pour obtenir une impression complète.

## INTRODUCTION

Although settlement in the Subcarpathians is considered to be long-established – in line with archaeological evidence and the long-held belief in the sheltering of the indigenous population during the migration period – documentary evidence is quite scarce but we have found cartographic sources very useful in our studies of the Pătârlagele Depression: a small area lying close to the boundary with the Carpathians proper where settlement on the terraces of the Buzău valley is complemented by use of the hillslopes (extensively affected by landslides) and the higher structural surfaces (Petrescu-Burloiu 1977). Although many of the older maps (frequently using Cyrillic script) provide only small-scale coverage of relatively large areas, there are several useful documents available from the late eighteenth century providing evidence that can be combined with other sources (such as the construction dates for village churches) to establish a primary network for c.1800 to which more modern development can be related (Muică & Turnock 2009). In this paper we examine the sources available up to c.1850 in relation to the settlement history and economic development of the area. This is a period when there was very little native involvement in the cartography and instead we have a range of foreign contributions mostly by Germans and Italians.

## THE PRIMARY SETTLEMENT NETWORK

Considering first the small-scale maps, we have examined about 30 which fall into the period 1770-1830 and generally cover the entire Buzău valley to its confluence with the Siret, including the town of Buzău and the major tributaries. They show only a few settlements from the study area although most include Pătârlagele, albeit with many variations in the spelling, including several that use the 'Peter' element (e.g. Peterlasty in 1771, Peterlas in 1777 and Peterlatz in 1781). We highlight the map by Dirvaldt (1810) which shows the Buzău valley with some accuracy including major tributaries such as the Bălăneasa (joining the Buzău at Măgura) while omitting the important right bank tributary of the Bâsca Chiojdului with a confluence only 10 kms south of Pătârlagele which effectively marks the southern boundary of the district close to the village of Cislău. The author does not show Pătârlagele itself but does mention the important village of Sibiciu de Sus (Sibicse) and two others – Racos and Radenesti – which lie close to the confluence but do not exist today (Fig. 1). The earlier map by Ruhedorf (1788) also shows

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these three settlements although Sibiciu de Sus is called Sibiesel. Since these are the only two maps that mention Racos while no other document refers to it (and there is no oral tradition either) we conclude that Racos is a pure invention by Ruhedorf later copied by Dirvaldt. In the case of Radenesti however there are 11 mentions between the first in 1774 (as Redeni) and the last in 1828 (Rednesti and Redenesti) and we conclude from the location close to the Buzău-Bâsca Chiojdului confluence that there may have been a flood disaster with settlement shifted to a safer site nearby where the present village of Gura Bâscii (Poienile de Jos) developed.



Fig. 1 - An extract from the Dirvaldt map of 1810 showing 'Sibicse' (Sibiciu) and 'lost villages' of Racos and Radenesti.

It is worth adding that several maps at this time also mention a third 'lost' settlement – Nikova – which could relate to the hill of Nicovanu shown in a map of 1812 and again as Nicoveanu in a large scale map of 1900. The site seems to lie just outside our area (close of Cislău) and so we have not pursued this reference in depth. But it highlights the nodality of the the river confluence which evidently attracted settlement to sites vulnerable to flood and historically there has been a tension between this area (administered from Cislău) and Pătărlagele which gains nodality through a bunch of tributaries including the Mușcel, Pănățau and Sibiciu streams. The point also has significance in the context of the historic county of Saac which was divided in 1845 between Buzău and Prahova (Zaharescu 1923). With a caput at Văleni (i.e. Vălenii de Munte), Saac included the upper Buzău valley (from a boundary between Magură and Viperești). In this context it is significant that the Dirvaldt map appears to show a major route from Ploiești (shown as Ploești) running north to the frontier via Văleni at a time before the Prahova valley was widely used. But there is another route (lying to the east and clearly visible in the extract in Fig. 1) that appears to enter the hill country between Ploiești and Buzău; passing along the east side of the Cricov valley to cross the Buzău river on a southwest-northeast alignment at Nikova which is actually portrayed as a place of some nodality in contrast to Cislău (Csislov) lying just to the south. It should be restated however also that the major tributary (Bâsca Chiojdului) is not shown on the map, while the distance

between Nikova and Radenesti is greatly exaggerated since they must have been in close proximity to each other.