

# HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF SETTLEMENTS IN THE PĂTÂRLAGELE DEPRESSION: THE CARTOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE FROM THE LATE NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURIES

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**Les établissements ruraux de la dépression de Pătârlagele: la géographie historique pendant la période depuis 1850 avec regard pour l'évidence cartographique.** Généralement on a supposé que les établissements situés dans le paysage subcarpatique sont assez vieux, mais sans beaucoup de preuves. Pour clarifier la situation nous avons discuté l'évidence cartographique pour la période 1700–1850 à une échelle assez petite (Muică & Turnock 2009a). Maintenant notre exercice se continue avec quelques autres cartes pour la période depuis 1850, mais spécialement pour la période d'un demi-siècle avant la Première Guerre Mondiale, quand les grandes collections topographiques se sont développées (à une échelle assez grande) pour utilisation administrative et militaire. On prend en considération neuf cartes et quelques remarques sont présentées en conclusion pour les deux articles, y compris celui antérieur (*Revue roum. de géogr.*, t. 53, no. 2, 2009).

## THE IORGULESCU AND PAPPAZOGLU MAPS

Resuming our examination of the map evidence for our research on the historical geography of the Pătârlagele Depression (Muică & Turnock 2009b) our first example for the late nineteenth century takes the work of a local historian whose geographical studies provide a wealth of detail for the area which is quite unique in terms of the placename evidence (Iorgulescu 1892). But 11 years earlier he produced a map (Iorgulescu 1881) showing a slightly less authoritative grasp of the local geography. He uses neat hachuring to focus on the main valleys and hills but with considerable inaccuracy (Fig. 1). A tributary stream is shown between Valea Rea and Chirleşti (which are effectively the same) but there is no valley further south between Valea Rea and Valea Lupului. The Muşcel, Pănătău, Sibiciu and Vii valleys are all invisible while the village of Valea Sibiciului is well out of position in the hills close to Gornet and Valea Muscelului (without a diacritical) uses the commune name rather than the correct village name of Muşcel. There is also some inaccuracy with regard to the proximity of settlements to the Buzău river. While both Mărunţişu and Pătârlagele appear to lie on hillslopes overlooking the river (valid for the original site of Mărunţişu on the edge of the forest but certainly not for Pătârlagele), Râpile (as Ripile) is very close to river without any hint of a commanding position on steeply-rising ground. However what impresses most about the map is the road along the right (western) side of the Buzău valley with no complement on the left (eastern) side beyond Ruşavăţ. Roads are shown negotiating the hills south of Cislău (to Crăciuneşti, Glod and Lapoş) and from Vipereşti to Tisău in the Nişcov valley, but no links are shown from the main valley route to serve the Mlăjet, Pănătău and Sibiciu areas that had to wait for the railway and the connecting bridge at Pătârlagele (provided just before the First World War); likewise there is no hint of communication along the Bâsca Chiojdului valley.

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Gornet to reach the hill villages of Colți commune via Muscelu Cărmănești. But although it is shown prominently in all three editions of the map, there is no mention of this route in the written history of the area and its evident disappearance during the twentieth century points to the increasing relative isolation suffered by Gornet during this period. Rather different was the Punga road that was used until the communist period as a short cut to Măgura for peasants travelling by cart to their land in the plain (awarded under the 1923 land reform), especially for villages on the eastern side of the Buzău valley. However it is surprising that the Austrian maps do not show the access from Pătărlagele to Mușcel and Chiojd extended by the latter's connections with Ploiești via Vălenii de Munte, although the village name 'Calea Chiojdului' at the far (western) end of the former Valea Mușcelului commune testifies to the existence of such a route.

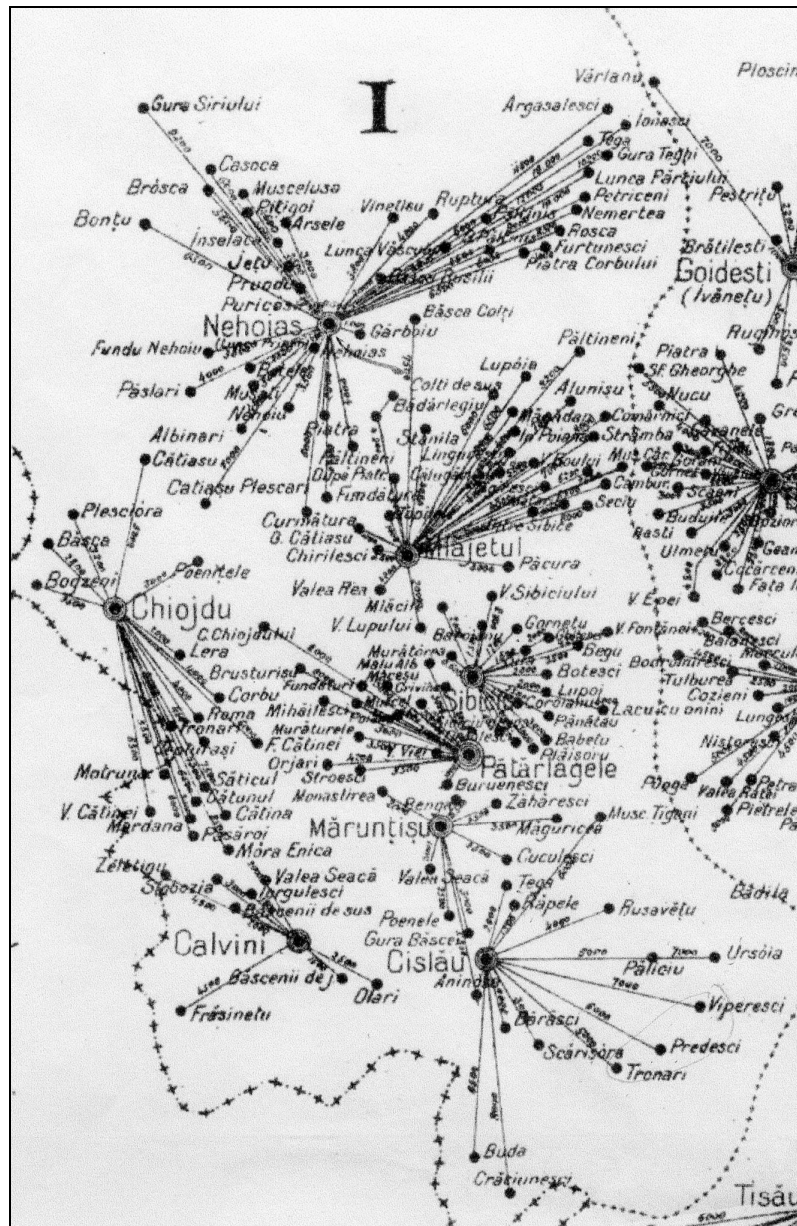


Fig. 3 – The Austrian 1:300,000 topographical map of 1867.



Fig. 4 – The Interior Ministry map of 1904 showing a proposed division of Plaiul Buzău.

Interior Ministry maps are useful for showing administrative arrangements for each ‘plai’ in terms of its constituent communes and villages. The 1904 map shows the actual pattern for Plaiul Buzău with 159 settlements: the communes of Colți and Nehoiășu (as Nehoiăș) with 17 other villages, Cătina with 13, Gura Teghii (as Gura Teghi) with 12, Pălțineni and Pănătău with 11 each, Mlăjet (Mlăjetu) and Pătârlagele (Pătârlagele) with nine, Calvini and Mărunțișu with eight, Valea Mușcelului with six, Chiojd (Chiojdu), Cislău, Rușavăț (Rușavētu) and Sibiciu with five each and Viperești with two. However a subsequent version (Ministerul de Interne 1904) provides for an additional ‘plai’ based on Cislău to include the communes of Calvini, Cătina, Chiojd, Mărunțișu (now spelt Mărunțișu), Rușavăț and Viperești (as Viperesci) (Fig. 4). This would have been wholly at the expense of Plaiul Buzău, based on Pătârlagele): reduced to the eight outlying communes of Colți, Gura Teghii, Mlăjet, Nehoiășu, Pălțineni, Pănătău, Sibiciu and Valea Mușcelului (Valea Mușcelul). Including all the commune centres this would have given the proposed Cislău ‘plai’ a total of 53 settlements and Pătârlagele 106. The plan was never implemented and no documentation has been found to cast any light on its rationale or any discussion relating to it. However the relevant map is much clearer than its predecessor and the distinction made between ‘sat’ (village) and ‘cătun’ (hamlet) is quite obvious with the lower status for Babețu, Baroianu, Brusturișu, Buruenești, Calea Chiojdului (as C.Chiojdului), Crivineni, Cuculești (as Cuculesci), Ghilești (as Ghilesci), Măceșu, Malul Alb (as Malu Alb), Mlăcile, Murăturile, Sila and Valea Rea – plus another 15 outside our study area (11 in Colți, four each in Cătina and Nehoiășu and three each in Gura Teghii and Pălțineni).

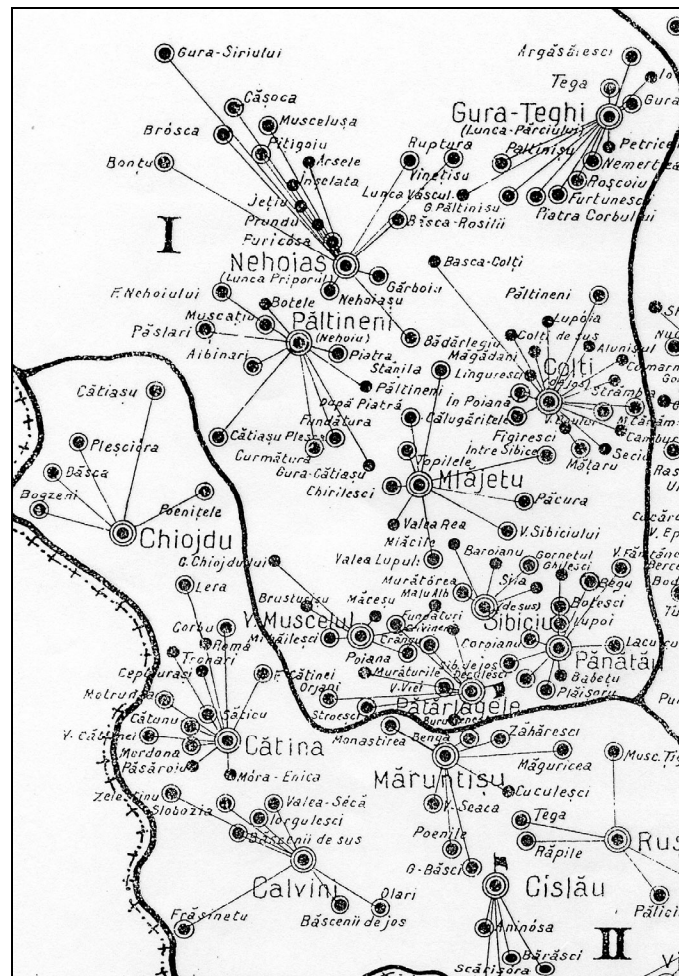


Fig. 5 – The Interior Ministry map of 1908 showing the proposed commune reorganisation for Plaiul Buzău.

A further map (Ministerul de Interne 1908) indicates a different type of administrative reform: retaining the 'plai' boundaries but reducing the communes. Within our study area the main change would have been the elimination of Pănătău and Valea Mușcelului communes and their absorption by Pătârlagele and Sibiciu respectively (while Valea Sibiciului village would have transferred from Mlăjet to Sibiciu commune) (Fig. 5). Elsewhere Nechoiașu would have absorbed Gura Teghii and part of Păltineni (the rest going to Mlăjet), while Chiojdu would have absorbed Cătina and Cislău would have taken in both Rușavăț and Viperești. There would have been a big difference between the northern communes (Nechoiașu and Mlăjet with a total of 70 settlements; averaging 35 each); Pătârlagele and Sibiciu with 36 (averaging 18) and Calvini, Chiojd, Cislău and Mărunțișu with 53 (averaging 13.25). Distances from the commune centres would have been quite considerable in the case of Nechoiașu with some 15kms to reach Gura Teghii and Siriu while Mlăjet would have been a similar distance from Aluniș and other villages like Comarnici, Muscelu Cărămănești, Păltineni and Strâmba in what is now Colți commune. Meanwhile Pătârlagele and Sibiciu stand out as highly compact communes with the greatest distances being some six kilometers from Pătârlagele to Calea Chiojdului and Sibiciu to Lacu cu Anini and Valea Fântâni. In the south Cislău would have been eight kilometers from Crăciunești, Muscelu-Țiganu and Viperești, while Chiojd would have been a similar distance from Cătina. But once again the proposals were not acted upon and after the First World War there was, if anything, an increase in communes in the area with the appearance of Tega. The proposals

were even more radical than those implemented under communism in 1968 for although Mlăjet, Păltineni, Rușavăț, Sibiciu, Tega and Valea Mușcelului disappeared at this time, Cătina, Colți, Gura Teghii, Pănătău and Viperești were all retained along with Siriu in the far north.

### ROMANIAN TOPOGRAPHICAL MAPS

By now the topographical maps have greatly improved in detailed and accuracy and the first Romanian series are being issued. The provisional map series (Institutul Geografic al Armatei 1900) includes intricate drainage system and contouring systems as well as portrayal of the main wooded zones and the settlement morphology with linear structures most evident along the main route on the western side of the Buzău valley (Fig. 6). Very striking is the appearance of the planned settlement of Satu Nou complementing the older village of Benga on the rising ground; although Mărunțișu has evidently achieved the same adjustment to the main line of circulation by retaining a single unit of settlement through a eastward extension downhill from the church built on the edge of the forest. However we also present an extract from the subsequent definitive map (Institutul Geografic al Armatei 1906) (Fig. 7).

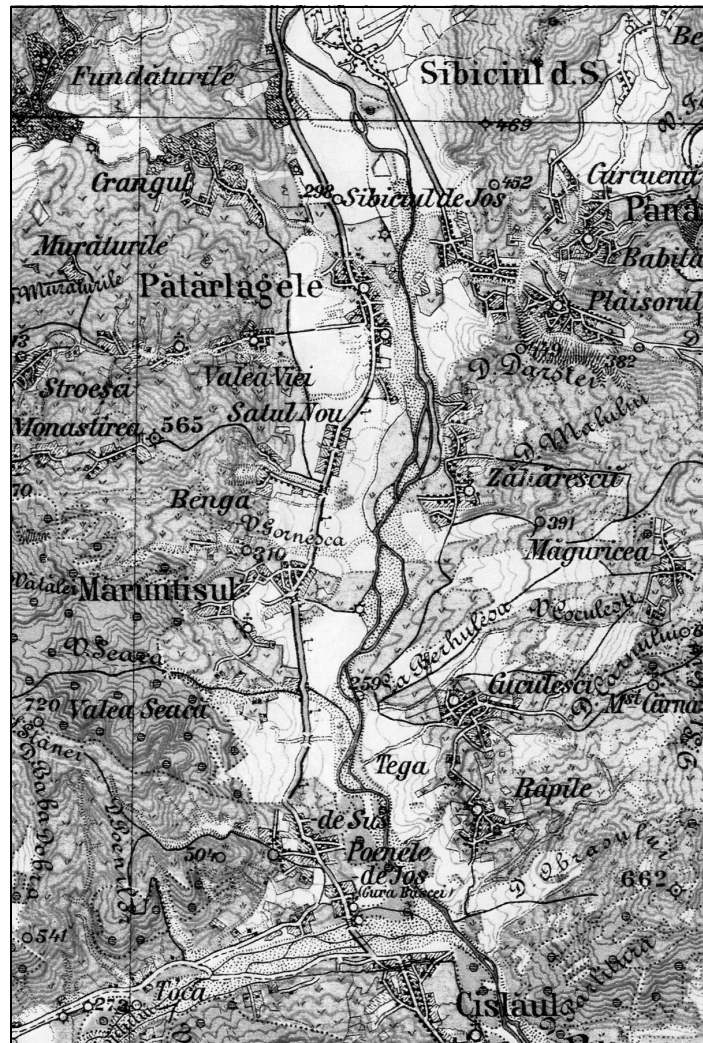


Fig. 6 – The Romanian 1:50,000 provisional map of 1900.

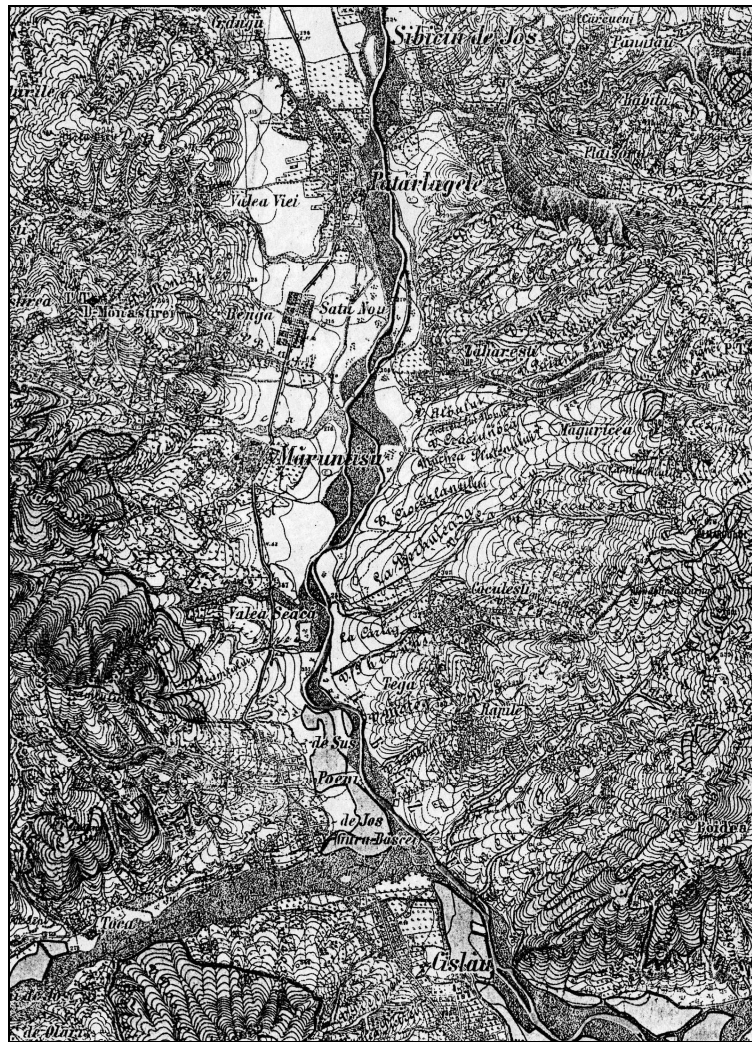


Fig. 7 – The Romanian 1:100,000 topographical map of 1906.

All the official villages are shown along with topographical names and the main land uses. However our black and white representation does scant justice to the extremely attractive map with dark green colouring for the main wooded areas (most extensive to the west of Mărunțișu and Valea Seacă) and a lighter green for the grassland areas. The evident late nineteenth century focus on the more marginal lands is brought out by the prominence of the Pănătău valley with an expanding core of settlement extending almost continuously from Sibiciu de Jos to Pănătău, Plăișor and Corcoianu. It is not clear to us why settlement at Sibiciu de Jos and Pănătău is emphasised by black shading while Sibiciu de Sus is in yellow only (apart from the house symbols).

These two maps may be complemented by other contemporary productions, most notably an official communications (Ministerul Lucrărilor Public 1911), showing the modern system of transport involving the newly-constructed railway as well as the road along the western side of Buzău valley, with a key bridge at Pătărlagele now in place (Fig. 8). Valea Mușcelului's 'Calea Chiojdului' is also shown (along with the more northerly route to Chiojd from Mlăjet via Curmătura and Poienițele) as is the direct route along the Sibiciu valley leading to Păltineni (Colți) and Gura Teghii that had presumably been important historically for Sibiciu's transhumance activities generating the links with Gura Teghii documented in the late Medieval period. There were also other options in this area

through links through Valea Sibiciului with the Bâsca Rosilii valley at Gura Păltinişului via Lupoia and with Bozioru in the Bălăneasa valley via Muscelu Cărmăneşti: the route to the latter via Gornet (mentioned above) does not appear although the army map shows paths over Vf. Fulgoiu. Meanwhile the Punga/Lunca Frumoasă route between the Buzău and Bălăneasa valleys is not clearly shown – and neither is the connection between Valea Fântânii and Bălăneşti (though it appears on the army map) – but there is a connection via Lacu cu Anini and Nistoreşti and also a link from Zahareşti to Ruşavăţu (for Pârscov and Măgura) via Măguricea and Muscelu-Țiganu.

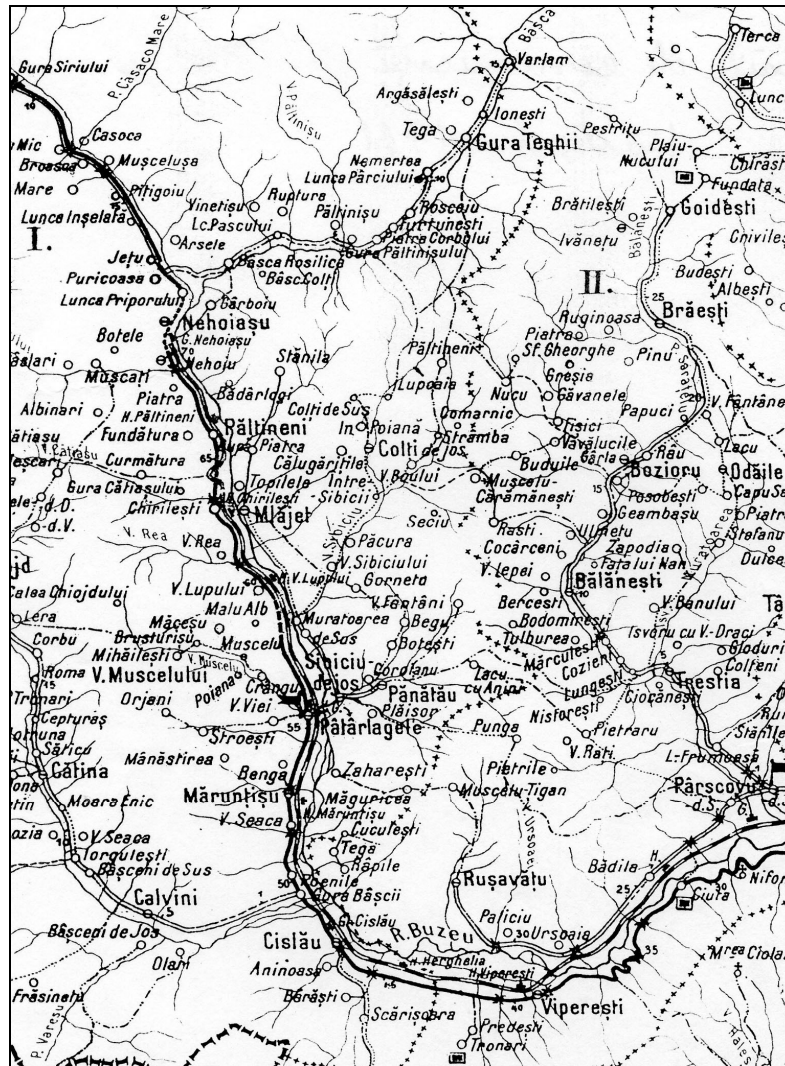


Fig. 8 – The Public Works Ministry communications map for 1911.

The topographical series of the communist period (Direcția Topografică Militară 1961) shows more advanced survey methods for the contouring; with more detailed and portrayal of settlement, landuse and communications (including a high density of paths which earlier maps show in a highly-selective fashion) (Fig. 9) made possible by a scale of 1:25,000 compared with 1:50,000 for 1906 and 1900 and 1:300,000 in 1867. Land use contrasts can be seen through the larger, more widely-spaced open circles (for individual trees scattered across pasture and areas with a bushy vegetation) and the smaller one (for fruit trees); while arrowheads indicate exploited woodland, dashed lines on small plots

show cropping and unshaded areas indicate grassland ('pajiște'): both grazings and hay meadows. The decline of settlement at Orjani, Mânăstirea is evident (but also Murăturile, Orjani and Stroești just beyond the limits of the specimen area) with all but Stroești then lacking roads good enough for regular vehicular access) in contrast with the main valley axis through Crivineni, Pâtârlagele (now Pâtârlagele), Lunca (the renamed Benga/Satu Nou settlement) and Mărunțișu. At the same time the extremely loose concentrations of settlements (reflecting the smallholding basis of most dwellings) seem to anticipate the 'sistemizare' projects of the 1970s–1980s which greatly under-estimated both traditional values and economic necessity underpinning subsistence farming outside the main rural growth points of which Pâtârlagele itself became an outstanding example. The map invites comparison with Figs 6–7 which are rather denser and less easy to read although not without its aesthetic qualities. However the 1961 map generates some conflict with local conventions since the name Valea Seacă is misplaced (it should relate to the houses on the main road to the southeast) while the name for Valea Gorneasca shown south of Mânăstirea should be shifted down-valley because the various headwaters are known locally under separate names.

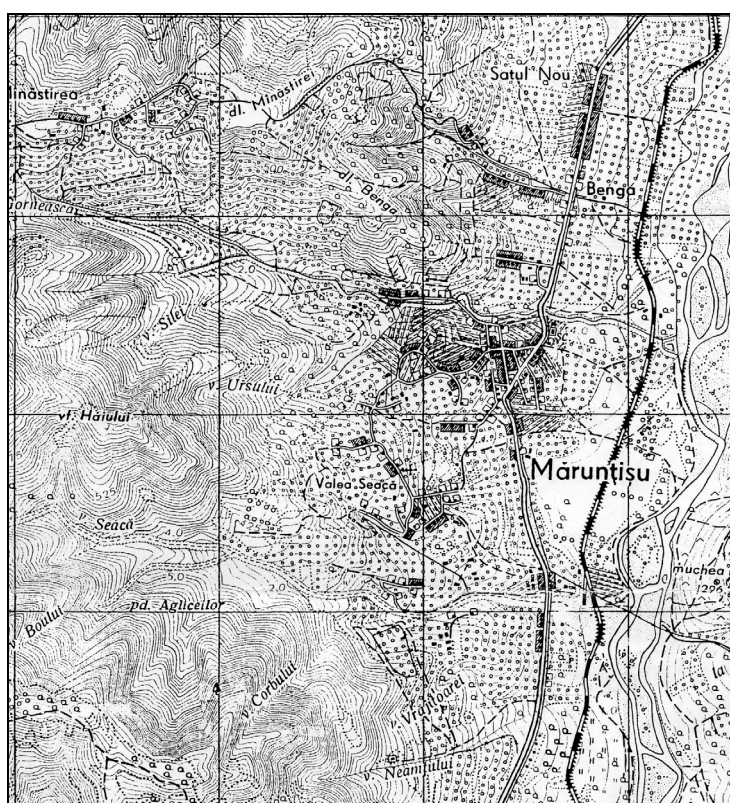


Fig. 9 – The Romanian Army 1:25,000 topographical map for 1961.

### CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

Our study area was not selected on the basis of the cartographic evidence and we presume that the material available is fairly typical for rural areas of Romania, with coverage by large scale maps at reasonably regular intervals from the mid-eighteenth century; while since c.1900 there has been a steady succession of quite detailed maps including (though not until the topographical series can the maps be regarded as fully accurate or inclusive and other sources may be needed to obtain a clear picture.

However in the absence of other documents we were able to take the Specht map of 1790–1 – along with Bauer (1778) – and the first Romanian topographical series (1906, but based on 1895–8 data) to assess the settlement changes of the nineteenth century, with the Harta Rusă (Anon. 1853) as a basis for splitting the century into two halves. Other evidence is very helpful where available e.g. the dates for the consecration of new churches. Collectively the maps help to determine the age of villages which are consistently shown. Thus while a ‘clăcași’ community may indeed have taken root at Valea Seacă during 1830–60 (after Iorgulescu 1892, p. 317), the Specht Map of 1790–1791 is proof that the village is older. And although Râpile is thought to have existed from the sixteenth century, the first documentary evidence is a symbol (though not a name) on the Specht map. Of course, the absence of a settlement from a map is no reliable evidence that it did not exist unless the map is large in scale and provides a comprehensive topographical picture.

Some major inaccuracies have been noted e.g. names for pairs of settlements are sometimes transposed and mistakes may be uncritically copied by one map from another: hence the village of Racoș – about which nothing is known – is shown by Ruhedorf (1788) and then seems to have been ‘copied’ by Dirvaldt (1810). No other documentary mentions are available and no structural evidence has been found in the relevant area and we therefore conclude that this settlement never existed. Map content may reveal different names for the same village and some (still) inexplicable cases when names were transferred from one village to another. This can create great confusion even though the period in question seems to be restricted to a part of the nineteenth century when Zaharești was known as ‘Tega’, while the present Tega was known as ‘Prăvățești’. And again, Mărunțișu carried the name ‘Pătârlagele de Jos’ during 1833–64 when the present Pătârlagele was differentiated as ‘Pătârlagele de Sus’; yet at other times the present Pătârlagele has itself been divided into upper (‘de Sus’) and lower (‘de Jos’) sections. Specific names have often arisen in connection with sectors or quarters of certain villages. The name ‘Tega’ may have been used for merely a part of Zaharești (Iorgulescu 1892, p.488), although the quarters of this village are normally recognised by residents as: Bejani, Bogdănești, Linia (or La Linia) and Pe Muchie. Meanwhile Poienile breaks down into Poienile de Jos (or Gura Bâscii), Poienile de Sus and Țoca; Râpile comprises Luntari, Pâslari and Pe Față; and Măguricea’s sectors are Gorlani, Panaieți and Pe Pisc. These sections of villages may be seen as distinct because of a physical feature e.g. the northern part of Gornet is known as Peste Izvor which means that it lies ‘over the little brook’.

Some other names relate to the former social status and in particular the distinction between ‘clăcași’ and ‘moșneni’ households: it would appear that at Zaharești a large area in the centre arose as a ‘moșneni’ settlement associated with arrivals from Transylvania; while ‘clăcași’ settlements were added to the north on the land of Vărbila monastery and to the south on the land of Crețuleasca family according to authoritative local opinion although another idea suggests that only the southern part comprised a ‘clăcași’ community. Finally, confusion may also arise in the case of placenames that occur more than once in Buzău county and even in the area quite close to Pătârlagele e.g. with ‘Mușcel’ which occurs not only in Valea Mușcelului but also in the case of Muscelu Cărmănești in Colți commune and Muscelu-Țiganu in the old Rușavăț commune (now Viperești). Although the local ‘Mușcel’ is differentiated by the diacritical marking this is not necessarily applied consistently. Some quite invalid interpretations arise from confusion over placenames and their location. For example, some regard Benga (now officially Lunca) as a very old settlement (pre-1545) because of the reference by Manolescu (1965, pp. 259–303) to its medieval trade contacts with Brașov. But the village in question was in Buzău district (‘raion’) whereas any settlement in the Pătârlagele area would have been part of the Cislău district at the time (Benga in this district is credited with a trading relationship with Brașov in 1550). However our experience indicates that although there are many difficulties careful study of the documentary and oral evidence (and especially the map evidence) can contribute to the development of more detailed and accurate historical geographies of rural Romania.

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