

## SETTLEMENT AND TOPONOMY IN THE PĂTÂRLAGELE DEPRESSION: THE BUZĂU VALLEY SETTLEMENTS BETWEEN VALEA LUPULUI AND POIENILE DE JOS. PART ONE: SETTLEMENT HISTORY

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**Abstract: Settlement and toponymy in the Pătârlagele Depression: the Buzău valley settlements between Valea Lupului and Poienile de Jos. Part one: settlement history.**

The Subcarpathians are known as a region that has been well-settled since early times, but it is also evident that many settlements are relatively modern and reflect the expansion of subsistence farming from the major valleys on to the hillsides during a period of acute population pressure and economic restructuring in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This phase of growth is investigated in the context of the Pătârlagele Depression, concentrating on the settlements on the western side of the Buzău valley, with particular reference to the toponymy emerging from large-scale maps, key texts (especially Iorgulescu's epic works of 1885 and 1892) and very rich oral evidence. The paper pays particular attention to the river terraces and the adjacent landslide areas that were also attractive to pioneer peasant farmers on account of their soil fertility and moisture context at a time when the terraces were being used more exclusively for a market economy. Some areas used today for hay, pasture and plum orchards were well cultivated until cereal lands were acquired in the Bărăgan under the 1923 land reform and economic diversification accelerated after 1945. Toponymy will therefore be presented in a second paper as a major source for understanding an important phase of rural settlement. But while the placenames contribute much of interest in terms of ecology and environmental potentials in the light of survival by extended families and other small communities there is little reliable information on the origins of settlement.

**Key words:** agriculture, colonisation, historical geography, Pătârlagele, rural settlement, Subcarpathians, toponymy, Măruntșu, Poienile de Jos, Valea Lupului

### Introduction

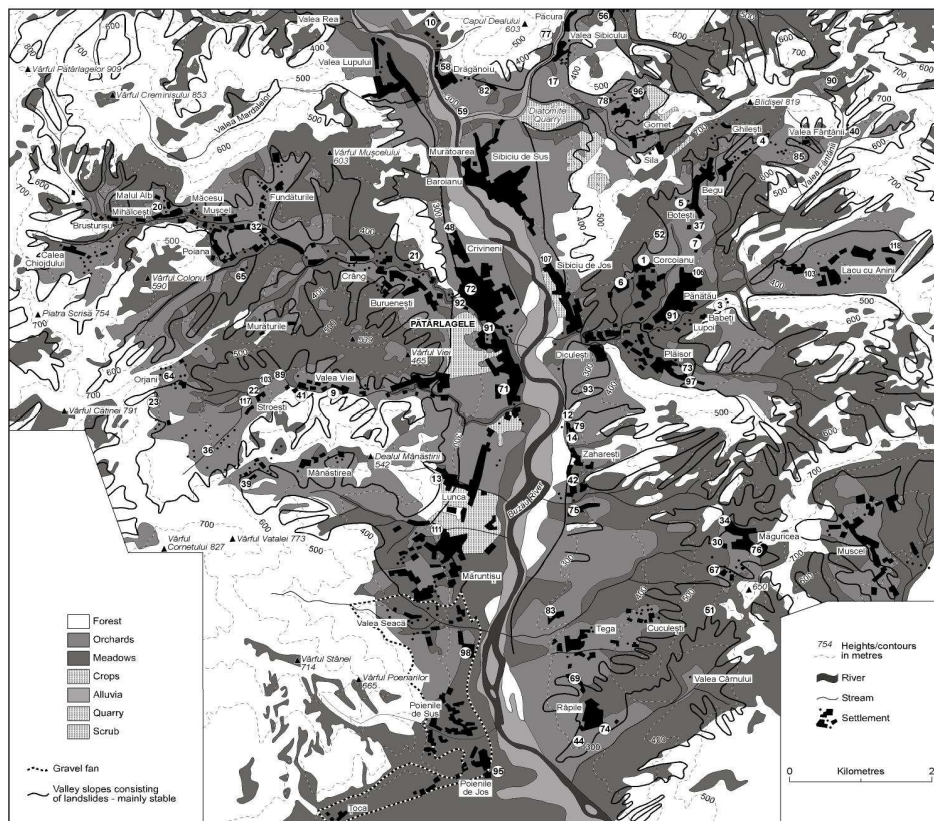
One of the projects started in the 1990s under a research agreement between the Romanian Academy's Institute of Geography and the Department of Geography at the University of Leicester (UK) concerned the human geography of the Pătârlagele area, having in mind the rural restructuring process (N. Muică & Turnock 1997) and the problematic nature of much of the terrain prone to landslides and mudflows (C. Muică & Bălțeanu 1995; N. Muică & Turnock 1994). Historical investigation into this topic was encouraged by the wider studies in Buzău County (Nancu & Alexandrescu 1993), giving rise to case studies of nineteenth century rural strategies of pluriactivity (N. Muică et al. 2000a, 2000b; N. Muică & Turnock 2000). We have continued our historical research into the problems of village origins and toponymy and this paper discusses our findings against a background of knowledge emphasising the historical continuity of relatively dense settlement in the Buzău Subcarpathians as a whole (Petrescu-Burloiu 1977, pp.139–40) although the Pătârlagele Depression was part of Saac county before 1845. We find that the great majority of settlements date back only to the nineteenth century while proof of settlement continuity is extremely sparse for earlier periods (N. Muică & Turnock

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2008). The full study area comprises the communes of Pănătău and Pătârlagele, with the latter now an urban area which has always been the centre of the district. It comprises not only the Buzău valley but also adjacent Subcarpathian hill country drained by a number of tributary valleys, including the Pănătău and Sibiciu valleys on the eastern side as well as V. Mușcelului and V. Viei lying opposite (Figure 1). The larger settlements occupy the main Buzău corridor system but are complemented by smaller villages and hamlets in the hills with their extensive landslide surfaces attractive for small-scale agriculture (though problematic for settlement) and complement the ‘țarină’ lands on the low ground which offer a much better basis for capital investment.

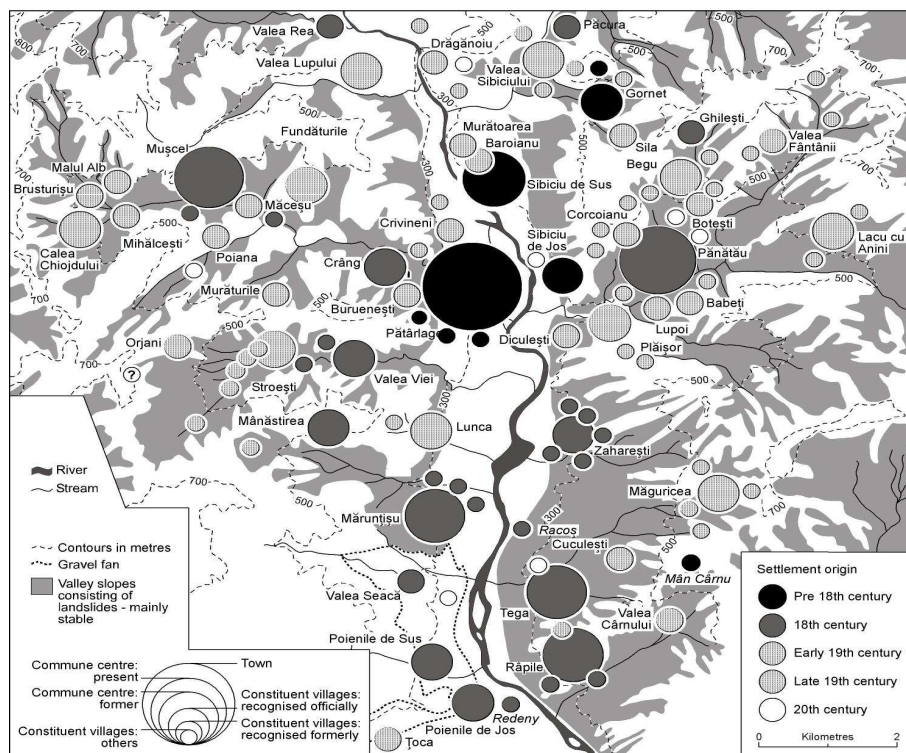


**Fig. 1.** The landscape of the Pătârlagele Depression

Named settlements are those with a history of official existence in administrative handbooks since the late nineteenth century. Those coded by numbers are dependencies of which those in the study area are listed in Table 1. The key for the other is as follows: 1 Arvunești; 3 Băcioi; 4 Băia; 5 Băicuș; 6 Băjăni; 7 Balea; 9. Bărbulești; 10 Bășcureț; 12 Bejani; 14 Bogdănești; 17 Burdușoaia; 30 Dubrovești; 20. Cătunul Bisericii; 21 Cetate; 22 Chelărești; 23 Copăcelul; 30 Dubrovești; 32 Gârla; 34 Gorlani; 36 Ivănești; 37 La Cătină; 39 La Mănăstire în Țigănie; 40 La Odae; 41 Lemărești; 42 Linie; 44 Luntrari; 51 Mănăstirea Cărmu; 52 Mărăcineni; 56 Mățara; 58 Mlăcile; 59 Moara Sibicianului; 62 Murea; 65 Păcle; 67 Panaieți; 69 Pâslari; 73 Pe Crivină; 74 Pe Față; 75 Pe Muchie; 76 Pe Pisc; 77 Peste Gârlă; 78 Peste Izvor (Gornet); 79 Peste Izvor (Zaharești); 82 Podul Viei; 83 Poduri; 85 Poiana; 89 Potorăști; 90 Predeal; 91 Pripor; 93 Racos; 96 Robu; 97 Rotărie; 102 Slabi; 103 Șoghiorani; 105 Țarină; 106 Țarină de-din Jos; 117 Vasilo; 118 Vlăcești.

This paper deals with settlement history on the western side of the Buzău Valley using the local toponomy to supplement the documentary record (Table 1). The study area comprises a belt of terraces and hills extending for some 10kms north-south from Valea Lupului through the town of Pătârlagele to Lunca, Măruntșu, Poienile de Sus and Poienile de Jos (otherwise known

as Gura Bâscii). The area is roughly two to three kilometers wide, from the Buzău river across the terraces to the hillslopes, although north of V. Mușcelului and south of V. Viei (where there are no hill settlements) it extends for more than four kilometers to the main watershed between the Buzău and Bâsca Chiojdului at Vf. Stânei (967m) and Vf. Pătărlagelelor (909m) in the north and Vf. Cornetului (827m) in the south. We make extensive use of cartographic evidence. The 'Harta Topografică' by Serviciul Geografic al Armatei (1906) – based on 1895-8 data – provides a picture for the end of the nineteenth century while the end of the eighteenth century is covered by Specht's 'Militairische Carte' (1790-1) and von Bauer's 'Mémoires Historiques' (1778). Out of a total of 119 settlements throughout the Pătărlagele Depression (including many that are merely neighbourhoods within larger villages) only 41 can be convincingly dated to the eighteenth century or earlier (N. Muică & Turnock 2009) (Figure 2).



**Fig.2.** The origin of settlements in the Pătărlagele Depression according to the earliest documentary evidence **a** households; **b** total population; **c** employment in agriculture (percent). For gender the figures are the female percentages (taking the average for 1912, 1930, 1941, 1956, 1966, 1977, 1992 and 2002). The totals relate to (i) the study area, less Gura Bâscii which was transferred to Cislău commune in 1925 and (ii) the entire Pătărlagele Depression.

\* refers to settlements with official recognition today as components of communes or towns. Dependent hamlets are listed as follows with differentiation between those with official status in the past but not today (+) and others that are recognised unofficially as distinct (named) quarters or small detached settlements. Primary settlements (in existence by 1800) are asterisked. Numbers refer to locations in Figure 1

\*GURA BĂSCII [Poienile de Jos][87]: \*Redeștești[95], +Țoca[108]

LUNCA[Satu Nou][43]: Benga[Bărbila Ungureni, Benga Veche][13]

\*MĂRUNȚIȘU [53]: \*Mărunțușu Jitianu[54], \*Mărunțușu Sibiesc[55], Satu Nou[98].

\*Valea Gornetului [Gorneasca, Kornet, Valea Cornetului][111] \*Valea Seaca [Sekui][114]

\*PĂTĂRLAGELE[70]: +Burueștești[18], +Crivineni[26], Malul Alb[48], \*+Pătărlagele de Jos[71], \*+ Pătărlagele de Sus[72], \*Prundeni[92]

\*POIENILE[Poienile de Sus][86/88]

VALEA LUPULUI [112]: \*+Valea Rea [Hărădău/Hărhădău, Walere][113]

(Sources: Census returns and administrative handbooks. Also Anon 1892 for 1831-2 data).

Population 1832-2002

Table 1:

Main Villages*	1831/2a	1912a	1912b	1941b	1966b	1966c	1992b	2002b	Gndr.
Lunca	0	65	295	385	430	52.8	451	427	51.3
Măruntîşu	53	190	778	944	1148	64.4	1156	1144	51.2
Pătărlagele	92	189	798	917	1453	11.6	2667	2544	51.1
Poenile de Sus	67	77	332	369	347	62.1	377	355	50.9
Valea Lupului	48	90	415	458	446	73.4	543	520	52.3
Total (i)	260	611	2618	3073	3824	n.a.	5194	4990	51.4
Total (ii)	1167	2536	10994	13162	12911	65.4	11778	11179	51.2.

Of course some settlements may well be much older, but a key point is the apparent focus on the lower ground (and especially the Buzău terraces) with only temporary/seasonal use of the higher ground, which could easily include an element of monastic settlement in the form of hermitages that provide a possible origin for Cârnău monastery in the southeastern part of the depression. The latter is known from the sixteenth century along with a cluster of the three leading settlements beside the Buzău river: Pătărlagele, Sibiciu de Jos and Sibiciu de Sus. At the same time a comparison can be made between the two halves of the nineteenth century thanks to the Russian map or 'Harta Rusă/Rusească' of 1853 (Anon 1853). It is evident that the study area maintained a share of about a quarter of the total population until 1966 when the growth of Pătărlagele accelerated. From 23.3% of the wider area in **1941** the share increased to 29.6% in 1966, 44.1% in 1992 and 44.6% in 2002. For households the figures were 24.2 % for 1831-2 and 24.1% for 1912 (Table 1).

#### The local terrain

As the basis of a countryside of depressions and rolling hills at 300-900m, the complex geology embraces Miocene and Pliocene rocks that vary greatly in their resistance to erosion: ranging from clays and marls to limestones and sandstones. The landscape is remarkably youthful because of the vertical uplift of about 1,000m during the Quaternary which continues today at the modest rate of 0.5-1.5mm per annum. Rivers have become ever more deeply incised in an area of steeply-inclined (sometimes near-vertical) strata while valley deepening also results in a massive and continuing transfer of material from the slopes to the channels. Indeed, mass movement occurs throughout the extensive 'flysch zone' of the Carpathians, given the great instability arising from lithological variety as well as tectonic and structural fragmentation conducive to a dense river network. Sedimentary rocks include clays, marls, sands and gravels intercalated with more resistant cemented rocks: sandstone (calcareous, siliceous or otherwise depending on the binding material), limestone, gypsum and even conglomerate which may be steeply-sloping or even vertical. Level ground is to be found on the Buzău alluvial lands comprising well-developed terrace systems appearing as steps beginning just 3.0-4.0m above the floodplain; complemented by fragments of mature relief on the higher ground as well as unstable landslide surfaces comprising many of the hill slopes. The fossil soils of the former (e.g. brown soils found on sands, sandstone and young rendzinas) and the more immature but moist soils of the latter support pastures and hayfields today with ample traces of former cropping activity as well. Whereas the alluvial lands comprise the best land in the area (7.3% of all land in the Pătărlagele Depression) – while the worst comprises damp river banks, stoney hilltops, precipices and salt marl deposits (7.8%) – there are three intermediate categories that have played an important role in the development of the area.

The high terraces of the Buzău and other rivers have cut across geological layers of varied resistance and inclination. On the western side of the Buzău on the hill of Mș.Pătărlagele, above C.Crivinenilor, terrace fragments at 180-200m carved in vertical geological layers comprise a gently-inclined 3-5deg. surface facing the Buzău valley and provide a striking legacy of the old, developed relief. There are also fragments of old terraces

(limited by steep slopes) on the east-south-eastern part of the Dl.Viei summit, although there is no surface of uniform inclination here but rather some near-horizontal areas of agricultural value separated and dominated by small summits transversally orientated (reflecting the vertical geological layers with varied resistance to erosion). Another example concerns the eastern part of Dl.Mânăstirii (south of V.Viei) where the remnant of an old surface appears as a slope between two old terraces: although very limited in extent, mature soil is visible in some 'precipices' that form parts of this slope. And in the western part of Dl.Mânăstirii there are also remnants of Villafranchian gravels; some of them in a highly modified form with a reddish or reddish-brown colour. In the context of human settlement 'the mosaic-like Subcarpathian landscape facilitated a multitude of soil uses as forest largely disappeared (C.Muică et al.1993, p.137). The new mosaic pattern reflected the main scarp and dip slope features linked with a succession of *cuestas* – with woodland and agriculture – further differentiated by scarps and terraces on the dip slope giving rise to small areas of woodland, with orchards, grazings and hayfields. There may be an alternation of sandstone and marl outcrops across a sloping surface: introducing a corrugated pattern with minor *cuestas* and contrasting landuses of woodland/scrub and pasture. An exception to the mosaic landscape can be seen on Dl.Viei and the ridge to Orjani. This is an anticlinal structure occurring between the sandstone of Blidişel and the area south of V.Viei. The area is affected by salt and gypsum/sulphate and is not good for crops or trees. Some oak has been found on salty ground (rare enough to warrant consideration for a nature reserve): fruit trees survive where there is only a little salt but growth is retarded.

But much emphasis must be given to landslides ('*pornituri*') which are very characteristic of the Curvature Carpathians where the instability of the hill slopes – comprising most of the agricultural land – has always posed risks for settlement. And these hazards have become more significant today in the context of increasing investment in housing and infrastructure (Bogdan & Bălteanu 1986). However landslide material varies considerably in character. The main ingredients are clay, marl and sandstone, but the proportions vary as does the amount of lubrication (for heavy rain may well provoke sudden changes in the speed of advance), while fragments of hard rock may occasionally predominate. The depth of the landslides varies considerably: most are quite shallow (0.4-0.8m) but some reach as much as 10.0m and occasionally more. The shallower landslides tend to be the more extensive – emanating from amphitheatres (formed by partial slumping of the hillside) to occupy as much as two-thirds of a hill slope: as material is torn away to form a landslide source area a quite large steep-sided 'detachment cup' may be created to resemble a glacial cirque. Clearly landslides have great significance for agriculture because their fertility and moisture content is enhanced by a natural 'churning' process. The lack of extensive smooth surfaces with easy access – so important for commercial agriculture – is no great handicap for subsistence farming when people are able to live in close proximity. Since they offer moisture retention (particularly valuable during dry periods) and remove salt from the soil, even the shallowest landslide tongues ('*limbi de pornituri*') have been widely used for agriculture (maize, fruit trees and hay) in contrast to the pasture and forest prevailing elsewhere. Many landslides have stabilised and could have been active as long ago as the prehistoric period (indicated by the level of soil development).

#### **Settlement history: the primary phase**

Our research has revealed an important distinction between a relatively old settlement pattern consisting of places established by 1800 and a very extensive secondary settlement – developing mostly in the nineteenth century – when population was increasing and the estate owners were trying to use more of the fertile terraces to produce for the market. They established new settlements for their '*clăcaşi*' tenants (feudal dependents) while free '*moşneni*' households (some of them '*Ungureni*' from Transylvania) were also occupying the marginal

land previously used on a predominantly 'conac' basis for grazing and woodcutting. However in the main valley the secondary settlement has been relatively limited while the primaries comprise five basic units or clusters: from north to south these are Valea Lupului, Pătârlagele, Mărunțișu, Poienile de Sus and Gura Bâscii (Poienile de Jos). There is considerable speculation over the age of these (and other) settlements with interesting speculations (Burlacu 1979; Petrescu-Burloiu 1977, Fig.45) complemented by local opinion (e.g. in Valea Lupului insisting on a Medieval origin during 1200-1400). But there is no proof for such assertions and the earliest evidence is available appropriately for Pătârlagele for which we have 1637 as the date for the 'boiar' church of Sf.Trei Ierarhi in Pătârlagele de Sus, which raises the possibility of a separate parish church before we hear of the rebuilding in 1780 when the two may well have been combined. But there is also a reference to the Căndescu-Pătârlăgeanu family by the local leader ('vornic') Mihalcea (1600-1632) referring to their origin in the Căndești area (specifically Brad in the forested Nișcov valley) and their transfer to Pătârlagele where they assumed the name Pătârlăgeanu (Gâlmeanu & Ionescu 2002, p.70). The family is also mentioned by Stoicescu (1970, p.474).

Pătârlagele also features in sixteenth century records with a reference in 1584 to the estate of Mihnea Postelnicu: 'să le fie Pătârlage partea lui Mihnea Postelnicu' (Roller et al. 1951, vol. 1, p.169) while earlier documents for 1554 and 1557 mention the village of Pătârlaci (Ibid, Vol.3 p.18) and 'văful Pătârlăgelului' in 1584 as the hilltop i.e today's Vf.Pătârlăgelor (Ibid, Vol.5 p.169). There is also the document from the reign of Radu de la Afumați (1523-1528) relating to the purchase of 'jupân Bălaur logofăt de la Sibin vornic (assumed to be Pătârlagele) și de la jupânița Stana (Ibid, Vol.1 pp.178-9). We also hear about Pătârlăgele in a list of witnesses in a legal process: 'Cega din Pârscov... din Negoștina, Crăițu... din Pătârlaci, Fălcea și Stoica... din Cosobești, Tatomir' (Ibid, Vol.3 p.18). But other historic details are pure speculation, as when Gâlmeanu & Ionescu (2002, pp.68-70) link the name with 'Peterlager' and the presence of Teutonic Knights ('Cavaleri Teutoni') from Țara Bârsei during 1221-1241 after the Hungarian King Albert gave them part of Cumania (situated on the eastern side of the Carpathians). The name Peterlacz was recorded by Specht (1790-1) and eight other cartographers from 1771 to 1790 used variations including Peterlasty, Peterlas, Potirlas, Piterlas, Prteslas and Peterlatz. It is also worth noting that Patarlagele is traditionally divided for ecclesiastical purposes into upper and lower sections (i.e.Pătârlagele de Jos/Sus) while a small portion of the settlement lying across the Mușcel stream is known as Prundeni. We believe that all three elements can be deemed primary settlements established by 1800.

In the case of Mărunțișu we have a name that has been taken to refer to a sum of money; suggesting a possible link with the Ottoman administration in the context of a Turkish 'office'. But any notion of periodic visits to collect tribute relates to 'tents' which seem to have been pitched – logically – in the Gura Bâscii area. And a documentary mention in 1584 for Valea Seacă (lying a short distance to the south) concerns the valley rather than the settlement. However we do have Specht's (1790-1) reference to 'Mourunczisa' as well as two other hamlets in the vicinity: 'Kornet' (for Valea Gornetului) in a forested area on the left side of the Gorneasca stream (which became Valea Tornetului on the Russian map of 1835/1853) and 'Sekui' (for Valea Seacă) to the south. So while Iorgulescu (1892, p.317) thought that this village did not originate until 1830-60, we believe that the map references are crucial and that we have a core represented by 'Mourunczisa' and 'Kornet', eventually (as indicated below) with a church on the edge of the forest and expansion downhill to incorporate Valea Seacă by the end of the nineteenth century. We also include the 'clăcași' quarters of Jitianu and Sibiesc although there is no way in which these constituent units can be reliably dated.

Gâlmeanu & Ionescu (2002, p.70) claim documentary evidence for Poienile in 1523 and indeed Roller et al. (vol. 1, 1951, p.179) mention Poiana Aldei and Poiana lui Gâltea, although without making it clear if these names relate to villages. Hence we discount these

references and work from the 'pisania' that provides evidence of a church at Poienile (de Sus) finished in 1770, while Specht (1790-1) subsequently referred to 'Pojen' and other maps of 1781 and 1790 use Poieni and Kornet respectively. Meanwhile the church at Poienile de Jos is dated 1859, but Gura Bâscii appears, crucially, on the Specht map although Iorgulescu (1892 p.317) again preferred a later time (1830-60). However, very close by we hear of the 'lost village' of Redeny: mentioned seven times between 1774 and 1797 (though not on Specht's map) with four further references during 1809-28. These involve a range of other names (Redeni, Radenesti, Redenesi, Redenesti and Rednești) but the locations all cluster close to the Buzău-Bâsca Chiojdului confluence. We may have a precursor of the Gura Bâscii village which was perhaps abandoned due to a flood and relocated (with a new name) on slightly higher ground. While the confluence of the Buzău and Bâsca Chiojdului was an obvious focal point – demonstrated by the Dirvaldt map of 1810 showing a road junction at Nikova (another lost village just to the south of Redeny) while the later map of Pappazoglu in 1865 showed a major junction at Râpile on the eastern side of the Buzău (almost certainly an error) – an unrecorded flood disaster could well have resulted in some readjustment involving the abandonment of Redeny and the simultaneous emergence of Gura Bâscii. Finally, in the case of Valea Lupului we have no firm evidence until 1817 when the church was built, but von Bauer refers to 'Walere' as a small village community (otherwise known as Valea Rea or Hărhădău) hidden in a narrow well-wooded valley from where settlement appears to have migrated gradually towards to the confluence with the Buzău to become the new Valea Rea (on the northern side of this stream where a group of houses forms part of the village of Chirlești now lying within the town of Nehoiu). But part of this expansion extended southwards across the river (known as V.Lupului or V.Mardalelor) where the separate village of Valea Lupului was recorded with 68 families in 1831-2. As already noted, an earlier origin for this village (linked with pastoral farming on higher ground south of the river) cannot be proven by documentary or archaeological evidence.

#### **Settlement history: the secondary phase**

As regards the secondary settlement there is relatively little to add except that the Pătârlagele cluster was enhanced at the northern end by Buruenești, Crivineni and Malul Alb while Țoca emerged in the Basca Chiojdului valley just 3.0 kms above Gura Bascii and Satu Nou (a single habitation near Valea Seacă) has a recent origin through relocation from Tega (on the eastern side of the Buzău valley) due to landslide damage. The most complex case is Lunca, known originally as Benga. Indeed there is a document for 1550 (Manolescu 1965, p.291) relating to commercial links with Brașov but this is now believed to concern another village of the name that exists in the Cislău area to the south and hence we follow the cartographic evidence for an early nineteenth century origin, linked with the local tradition of a Roma community since Iorgulescu (1892, p.317) declared that Roma at 'cătun Benga' belonged to Vărbila monastery; albeit disputed by some local historians, despite 'beng' meaning evil in the Romany language. However, Petrescu-Burloiu (1977, pp.144-6), suggests that additional settlers were accommodated here and he uses the term 'roirile' to indicate migration by 'swarming' as the mechanism for the founding of new villages, seeing this as a rare example of 'roirile agricole' compared with the much commoner process of 'roirile pastorale' on the higher ground. Although it seems unlikely that new holdings would be carved out on some of the best agricultural land in the area where an estate system might have seemed more logical, the village was evidently identified as one where young families could receive a house and garden under Cuza's reform of 1864. In this way the community became socially more diverse while the Roma families seem to have relocated on higher ground at Mânăstirea by the end of century: this could represent part of a widespread dispersal of 'clăcași' families to a marginal site comparable with the shift from Zaharesti to Măguricea on the eastern side of the valley. But while one interpretation sees a new community being formed at 'Satu Nou' in 1883 by families

moving as free settlers ('însurăței') from nearby villages such as Orjani, Pănătău and Valea Viei – with viable family farms being made available for selected occupiers – there is an alternative view insisting that it was not newcomers ('venetici') but only existing villagers who received land. There has also been confusion over the name of the village after the original settlement was distinguished as Vărbila/Bărbila Ungureni in the 1870s (and loosely as Benga Veche) in contrast to Satu Nou (or Benga Nouă) that was used sporadically from 1894 to 1961 to emphasise the separateness of the new planned settlement; not to mention documentary references to Benga/Lunca as Valea Viei Ungureni (1872-3) and Bărbila Ungureni (1876) with the latter considered erroneous, although it occurs in an official document which could have been influenced by Frund'escu's (1872) formula 'Valea-Viei-Ungureni ved'i Benga'. Eventually Lunca was adopted officially in 1968 as a means of achieving unification after Benga (Lunca) was quoted in 1941.

Evidently complex movements were taking place during the nineteenth century and it is difficult to reconstruct the patterns with any detail and clarity. Petrescu-Burloiu (1977, Fig.46) presents a complex scenario unsupported by any evidence. It is not impossible that some settlers at Lunca came – as he suggests – from Cătina commune to the west in the Bâsca Chiojdului valley; just as Mărunțișu may have attracted people from Benga, Poienile and Valea Seacă; likewise Valea Lupului from Valea Rea; while some Pătârlagele people may have gone to Valea Viei. But there is no proof of large-scale movement and while there was doubtless a steady trickle of individual family movements between villages we do not regard any of these as significant enough to create the named settlements from scratch. Meanwhile, at Valea Lupului there are traditions concerning the in-migration of families in the nineteenth century that concern both the Buzău mountains (Gura Teghii) and the lowlands (around the contact at Istrița) although both seem unlikely sources in the context of substantial migrations. It is evident from the population figures (Table 1) that the main settlements were expanding as commerce took root in the most accessible places. In Pătârlagele pre-1914 developments culminated in the railway station and the adjacent road bridge across the Buzău river in 1911. Pătârlagele was expanding its service base with a hospital in 1892 (moved to a new building in 1908) as well as a doctor, nurse, pharmacy, and sanitary agency. The trade school of 1903 became the 'gimnaziu teoretic' in 1910, while there was also a courthouse, fiscal office and post/telegraph service as well as a military detachment (given the proximity of the frontier) plus banking services, milling and the inevitable taverns. Earlier in the century a new church was built at Pătârlagele de Jos (1821) while the church at Pătârlagele de Sus was rebuilt in 1836. The primary school network was also expanding to reach all the larger settlements (Damé 1894).

Expansion was also occurring at Mărunțișu which was almost as large as Pătârlagele in 1912 (and slightly greater in 1941): it was only in the communist period when the industrialisation of the district ('raion') centre produced the major disparity evident from 1966. Mărunțișu's expansion is linked with the growth in the number of tradesmen (especially lathe workers and wheelwrights) which is evident in the local toponymy (as noted below) but is marked by a significant adjustment in situation from the higher ground on the edge of the forest (if not actually within the forest) where the first church was built in 1853 (and rebuilt in 1877 after a fire) towards the main road and railway closer to the Buzău river, with the absorption of Valea Gornetului and Valea Seacă completed in the process. Periodic fairs, though most numerous at Pătârlagele were also held at Mărunțișu and Poienile. However the name of the village remained in contention because Mărunțișu is credited with the name Pătârlagele de Jos in the 'Hartă Rusească' (Anon 1853) although this name had previously been used almost simultaneously (1819, 1832, 1839 and again during 1872-1927) for the lower part of Pătârlagele in contrast to the adjacent upper part of Pătârlagele de Sus (deemed to relate to the whole of Pătârlagele when Pătârlagele de Jos was applied to Mărunțișu). This arrangement, which is acknowledged by Frund'escu (1872, p.289) and officialised by *Indicile Comunelor* as



'Mărunțișu (Pătârlagele)' (Anon 1892), may have arisen from an attempt to associate the two villages with the potential to become the core of an extensive district (Plaiul Buzău) although this was evidently a temporary strategy since the two villages became separate commune centres.

Of course this was a time of growing centralisation when alternative models for local government were being considered. Against the 'Greater Pătârlagele' theory we have the Minsterul de Interne (1904) map which anticipated the division of the district into a southern half based at Cislău and a northern half (presumably based at Pătârlagele) with the boundary drawn between Pătârlagele and Mărunțișu communes. Finally, as we have seen, adjustment was taking place away from the wood-pasture zone at Valea Lupului where the new church of 1817 was a great asset to the growing community in avoiding long journeys to worship at Aluniș (then in the same commune of Mlăjet) or even Cârnu monastery, as tradition dictated. The new village is recorded in the documents from 1832 in preference to old name of Hărădău, although Iorgulescu (1892, p.298) unfortunately mixed the two together inappropriately with his designation 'Lupului-Valea (Hărădău)'. Meanwhile there were evidently movements into the hills as the subsistence farming community was substantially displaced in a process that is now largely invisible apart from the toponomy as this and other papers can demonstrate (N. Muică & Turnock 2008); although we do hear of the relocation of 'clăcași' families from Pătârlagele to Fundăturile in the Mușcel valley where the old feudal association was emphasised for a time through the name Vallea Paterlaci. The result was a polarisation between islands of capitalism in the main valley, with settlements expanding and modernising, and an extensive periphery with a large number of new hamlets scattered across the hillsides – despite the inevitable difficulties for house building – according to the agricultural potential.

### Conclusion

The paper has outlined the settlement history of a section of the Pătârlagele Depression comprising the western side of the Buzău river. This involves a number of large settlements including Pătârlagele itself which is now a town. Moreover most of these settlements are well-established and comprise part of the primary network established by 1800. But in the tributary valleys (especially Valea Mușcelului and Valea Viei which converge on Pătârlagele) most of the settlement dates to the modern period. Hence the presumption that Subcarpathian villages are very old is not universally valid and while some settlements are probably much older than the documentary evidence suggests, there is clearly much relatively recent (secondary) colonisation – especially on the landslides and high structural surfaces – which correlates with population growth and capitalist economic structures in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Documentation for this relatively recent settlement is again limited, although we have found the cartographic sources very helpful. But the toponomy is also very revealing: both the settlement names and other names used for hills, valleys, other physical features as well as miscellaneous locations of agricultural significance. A second part of our work will investigate this evidence in detail as a convincing evaluation of a challenging environment.

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