

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF THE RURAL SETTLEMENTS FROM BÂRGĂU VALLEY

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Abstract : Bârgău Valley is remarkable in the collective folk consciousness due to the novel of the Irish writer Bram Stoker published at the end of the 19th century.

According to the geographical conditions of placement and to those of socio-historical evolution, the rural settlements of Bârgău Valley can be categorised into: settlements of Bârgău corridor; settlements of the mountain area.

Along the entire valley, the villages have developed on a linear track, onto the morphohydrographic axe Bistriţa-Bârgău and also as a real dwelling valley-side belt, wherein the houses were scattered. The characteristics of the peopling of the county consisted in the early occupation of the local people of the whole Bârgău area, thus becoming an impressive dwelling center, due to its length (over 30 km) and also due to the perpetual move of the houses in between the valley-sides of Bârgău Mountains and Călimani Mountains and the field areas and terraces found along the main valleys.

Key words: rural settlements, morphohydrographic axe, dwelling center, typology

Bârgău Valley is defined as a unitary rural area, with a profound cultural identity and with an extremely interesting physiognomy from a habitat point of view. It was put into the light of the collective consciousness due to the novel written by the Irish writer Bram Stoker at the end of the 19th century.

Bârgău Valley is the generic name given to the Bârgău canyon and Tiha depression, which enters as a gulf in between the two imposing rows of Bârgău Mountains. Between this depression and the volcanic peaks that surround it there is an impressive level difference of 1000-1100m that occurs on a very tight distance. The stream that crosses it is simultaneously called Straja and Tiha (sometimes Bârgău) and towards its origin springs the local people call it Şendroaia. The village Bistriţa Bârgăului is associated with this area, although not from the point of view of its belonging to the Bârgău Valley. This is also suggested by the name of Bârgău given to the village that spreads along Bistriţa stream, upstream of the junction with Tiha river.

Short history

The morpho-hydrographic and habitat axe around Bârgău Mountains is known from ancient times under the name of Bârgău Valley. In 1992, Bârgău Valley, long before

considered as a unitary habitat area celebrated its 675 anniversary from its first documentary certification. As the maximum limit of the Roman Empire was at the east of Livezile, Bârgău Valley belonged to the free Dacians and stayed out of the written annals for a long time.

The first document to hint to Bârgău area dates from 1317, when the Bârgău Mountains were divided between the two noble families of Bethlen and Apaffy. In 1390 the existence of two small villages is mentioned, both with the name of Bârgău (“In duabus villis utrisque Borgo nuncupatis”), which, in 1547 and more often later will be called Borgo Inferior and Borgo Superior, in other words Bârgăul de Sus and Bârgăul de Jos. A few years later it was mentioned that the villages of Bârgău belonged to Ioan Heniul, the one that gave his name to the highest peak of the Bârgău Mountains.

The continuity of living in the Bârgău Valley was confirmed in 1396 by the fact that Grigore Bethlen, knight of the king Sigimund of Hungary, participated with soldiers from his domains (including that of Bârgău) to the battle against the Turks from Nicopole (September 1396), alongside Mircea cel Bătrân, the ruler of Țara Românească. Bought from some of the feudal owners by some of Transylvania’s lords and bought back from these (during the 16th century) by the descendents of the feudal owners, Bârgău domain under the rule of Petru Rareș (when it was a part of the German District of Bistrița). During all the Medieval age, the borders between Bârgău and Moldavia (Bucovina) made possible permanent relationships between the Romanians of the two regions, facilitated by the meadows and the alpine pastures full of agro pastoral lodges, connected by numerous paths and passes and a road that made the link between Bârgău Valley (through Tureac) and Țara Dornelor (up to Ștampa Glade). Being a feudal domain at the edge of the country, placed between Rodna and Bistrița districts, having free people, Romanian and German – called sași – slavery on Bârgău Valley was a very small issue, and it became smaller and smaller after Someș villages became neighbours, in 1762, and those from Budac, Șieu and Mureș in 1764. Many Bârgău people moved here and they influenced the decision of those left to claim the militarisation of the area with the aim of getting the status of free people.

The year 1784, when the militarisation of Bârgău Valley finalized, marked the beginning of the process of the returning the lands, forests and mountains from Bârgău geographical area to the native Romanians. The occupation of Bucovina by the Austro-Hungarian Empire represent a highly important matter in the subsequent evolution of this area. From that moment forward, the administration from Wien beginning showing a large interest into the lands from the eastern border of the empire. On December, 16th, 1783 there was a festive inauguration of the incorporation of Bârgău county to the Romanian II Border Regiment district, which led to a certain autonomy of Bârgău villages. At the same time, the road of Bârgău, that made the connection to Moldavia, documentary mentioned into a letter from 1557 sent by the ruler Alexandru Lăpușeanu to the Bîrgău people, was cast in stone between 1813-1817, after it had been modernized between 1780 and 1790. Thus Bârgău Valley began to get a high importance and to overcome Someș Valley, due to the easier circulation that it offered. The growth in importance of this area is illustrated by the economical boom, based mainly on wood’s exploitation, which determined the prolonging of the railway from Bistrița to Prund and Bistrița Bârgăului in 1898. Meanwhile, narrow railway appears, destined to forest exploitation.

Particularities of the settlements

The settlements on Bârgău Valley can be divided into two categories, according to several classification criteria:

Physical-geographical conditions of the genesis and evolution of the human settlements;

- Particularities of the relief in the genesis and evolution of the human settlements
- The specificity of the hydrographic network and its influence upon the settlements

Genesis, documentary certification and the spatial dynamics of the homes of the settlements.

Thus it means that the class of the settlements that appeared way back, whose homes had organized along the main hydrographic axe and the class of the newly constituted settlements (that have acquired the quality of villages in 1956), with homes spread on the mountain sides.

SETTLEMENT	Documentary certification year
JOSENI BĂRGĂULUI	1547
MIJLOCENII BĂRGĂULUI	1733
RUSU BĂRGĂULUI	1733
PRUNDU BĂRGĂULUI	1386
SUSENI BĂRGĂULUI	1547
TIHA BĂRGĂULUI	1386
MURESENI BĂRGĂULUI	1835
BISTRITA BĂRGĂULUI	1317

SETTLEMENT	Documentary certification year
TUREAC	1956
PIATRA FÂNTÂNELE	1956
CIOSA	1956
STRÂMBA	1956

Piatra Fântânele spreads its homes at a medium altitude of 1100 m, being crossed by the national road at 1097 m. It appeared as a result of an imperial initiative and its organization and foundation was the task of the II Board Regiment. In spite of all these efforts, the new settlement would appear later, after the raising of the new monastery in 1929 and of the school that opened in 1939.

Alongside the whole valley, the villages appeared on a linear trace, along the morpho-hydrographic axe Bârgău-Bistrița, as well as under the form of a real lodging belt around the mountain, where the homes were spread. Although in the earliest documents the human settlements of Bârgău Valley were included under the name of Bârgăul Inferior and Bârgăul Superior, the lodging nucleuses of Bârgău homes shaped from an early period. The particularities of the oecumanisation of the area consisted in the early peopling of the whole Bârgău trace, thus forming an impressive lodging axe, from the point of view of its length (over 30 km) and also of the scattering homes in-between the sides of Bârgău and Călimani mountains and the areas of river flat and terraces placed along the vallies of Bârgău and Bistrița. The homes of the Bârgău villages from the first category scattered from early times along the valley, the peopling stream working from upstream downstream (the names of Bârgău and Bistrița testify for the settling and then the assimilation of groups of Slaves that crossed Tihuța), and also from downstream upstream, especially when the conflicts

between the native Romanians and the Germans that colonized the area around Bistrița forced the natives to move their homes towards the mountains, in less hospitable but more secure places.

Among the homes that were an exception to the rule of settling along Bârgău axe are Joseni, Mijloceni and Susenii Bârgăului, which appeared in the place they are today through the complete removal of the initial homes that had been placed inside the depression niches under Heniu mountain, on an area spread between Strâmba and Valea Muntelui. A significant contribution to the spatial development of Bârgău settlements was brought by the immigration phenomena, determined by the dispossession of the native Romanians of the fertile lands that were given by the authorities to the Germans that had come here and by the arrival of small groups of people from Moldavia into the same area.

In 1750 appeared for the first time, in that year, the names of the eight Bârgău villages, and they appeared as they find themselves in the territory, from upstream to downstream, thus: Rusu Bârgăului (Ruschi Bergeului), Josenii Bârgăului (Zsoseny), Mijlocenii Bârgăului (Misloceny), Susenii Bârgăului (Zsusseny), Prundu Bârgăului (Prund), Tiha Bârgăului (Tycha), Mureșenii Bârgăului (Sztrimba), Bistrița Bârgăului (along Besztercze).

Analyzing the typology of the settlements (dimensional, physiognomic and functional), we can resume a few important aspects. Thus, as for the physiognomic typology (form, structure and texture of the home), there is to be noted an evolution from the scattered type to the development of a process of gathering of the homes in more compact centers, along the main or secondary morpho-hydrographic axes. This process originated in a few imperial orders through which the Romanians scattered along the borders were forced to gather to these centers in order to be educated more easily, to increase the rate of sociability among them and especially in order to be at the hand of the imperial authorities. Even though, in most of the cases, the scattered homes were kept with a status of season homes (field homes), towards the end of the 18th century the centers were clear, the majority having a physiognomy of scattered homes. Analyzing the Austrian topographic maps from the second half of the 19th century it is clear the centers had acquired a shape very much similar to the actual shape, becoming mostly scattered with spaces that presented tendencies of agglomeration. The difference to the actual spaces consisted in the smaller amount of the homes and in their more reduced density.

The morpho-topographic features of the main and secondary geographical axes, the necessity of the land exploitation with the aim of improving the living conditions and also the demands towards the collective security generated a particular type of habitat on Bârgău Valley. We are talking about the Bârgău-type habitat, represented in space by linear scattered centers, with numerous nucleuses of compact gathering. Even more interesting is the fact that there appears a Bârgău-type habitat axe, impressive in its length of over 30 km and especially in the tendency of unification of the eight villages, generated by their spatial expansion.

From a functional point of view, the villages are important through the existence of a very strong connection with the geographical space and its economical resources and also through a relative reorientation of the social-economical activities by the authorities of the time.

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