

## TRADITIONAL FORMS OF ORGANIZING GEOGRAPHICAL SPACE IN TRANSYLVANIA. "THE LANDS"

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**ABSTRACT.** — In our case, „the lands“ represents a specific model of economical occupying and exploitation of the territory with very well defined cultural traditions. The economic functions of these „lands“ are predominantly agricultural and they represent the most illustrative examples of continuity of the ancient population on these territories.

In Romania, but mostly its province — Transylvania — land has a special significance. It means not a political entity but it has obvious geographical significances given by natural and social-historical factors. All the „lands“, without any exception appeared and developed in depressions favourable to tilling the land from the point of view of natural conditions. So they have a significant geographical motivation. They are also hydrographic convergence areas, where main lines of communication have later overlapped. „Lands“ represent a specific way to occupy and economically exploit the territory. Eco-geographically the „land“ notion was created and today it is partially used in the oral and written language by the populations from the adjacent mountainous regions. For these populations „land“ represents the nearby depressions with their good for agriculture fields. Lands have appeared and developed for a very long time, becoming specific by their way of occupying and exploiting the territory, by folk costume and traditions handed down to nowadays.

„Lands“ are mostly placed in mountainous depressions and on the inner and outer outskirts of the Carpathians. Most of „the lands“ are characterized by language and dialect community. During the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries foreign populations coming from the west penetrated into Birsa and Secui Land. These populations were colonized in order to protect Carpathian passes against Eastern invasions. The great diversity of „lands“ from the point of view of ethnographic culture and individual character is due, besides orographic elements, to the „buffer“ stretches created along with the penetration and sedentarization of foreign populations which also constituted different „lands“ (for example „Secui Land“), according to native territorial models that they originally developed along centuries. Foreign populations have never succeeded in becoming geodemographically predominant against the background of native Romanian population all over Transylvania.

The main functions of „lands“ are connected to tilling the land, further on developing their influence area by commercial functions of periodical fairs. The eco-geographical effect of land management was „the land“. The essence lies in agriculturally exploiting the territory.

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“Lands” functionally diversified along the centuries, some of them developing craftsmanships, becoming territorial irradiation nuclei (for example “Bîrsa Land”). The great positional and ethnographical diversity of the “lands” was a barrier among themselves, but on the contrary it stimulated communication and exchange, which is proved by practising similar craftsmanships handed down to nowadays (pottery in “Oaş Land” and “Secui Land”, woodwork in “Secui Land” and “Maramureş Land”). The “lands” created by the foreign populations had positive effects on the general economic frame by transmitting and implementing original practices of habitat organization, space management generating specific landscapes (Szeckler landscape, Saxon landscape).

The significance of “land” has been preserved until nowadays in spite of effort and insistence to level culture and material life for almost 50 years (1947—1989).

Today we are witnessing a fashionable use of the old “land” concept for a new spatial organization based on unchanged traditions. “Lands” have been and are generators of civilization and they represent, in my opinion, eloquent, authentic areas. In Transylvania 15 “lands” have been identified. These are Maramureş Land, Oaş Land, Chioar Land, Lăpuş Land, Năsăud Land, Beiuş Land, Zarand Land, Moţi Land, Haţeg Land, Almăj Land, Tîrnave Land, Amlaş Land, Făgăraş Land, Bîrsa Land and Secui Land.

Maramureş Land lies in the north-west of Romania in the depression with the same name the Vişeu and the Iza left tributaries of the Tisa, flow throught it. It is bordered on the south by the volcanic chain of the Gutii and Ţibleş Mountains, by the crystalline ridge of the Rodna Mountains and on the north by the Maramureş Mountains. The whole land gravitates towards its only big town which is Sighetu Marmăţiei.

Westward Maramureş Land, at the foot of the Gutii and Oaş Mountains there is the picturesque Oaş Land. Having developed in a small depression, this “land” is noticed for its exceptional picturesque its vigorous Romanian population renown for its diligence and unsurpassingly exquisite folklore. The center of the “land” is the town Negreşti-Oaş.

The Chioar Land situated between the river Someş and its tributary the Lăpuş concentrates few villages, the most important one being Şomcuta Mare. Lăpuş Land is situated eastward Chioar Land, on the river with the same name, westward the Ţibleş Mountain.

Beiuş Land is westward the Apuseni Mountains, by Zarand Land. It borders on the heights of the Bihor and Vlădeasa Mountains to the east, the Pietra Craiului Mountains to the north and Munţii Codru Moma to the south. The Crişul Repede and its tributaries flow through it east-west ward and it communicates with Criş Plain westward. Through Vîrtop Pass, over the Bihor Mountains it communicates with Moţi Land eastward, upstream the Arieş. The latter (Moţi Land) is famous for its woodwork, mining and just, steadfast, demographic element. This “land” gave the leaders of the great peasant rebellion against Habsburg exploitation in 1784, Horea, Cloşca and Crişan as well as Avram Iancu, one of the greatest leaders during the 1848 revolution.



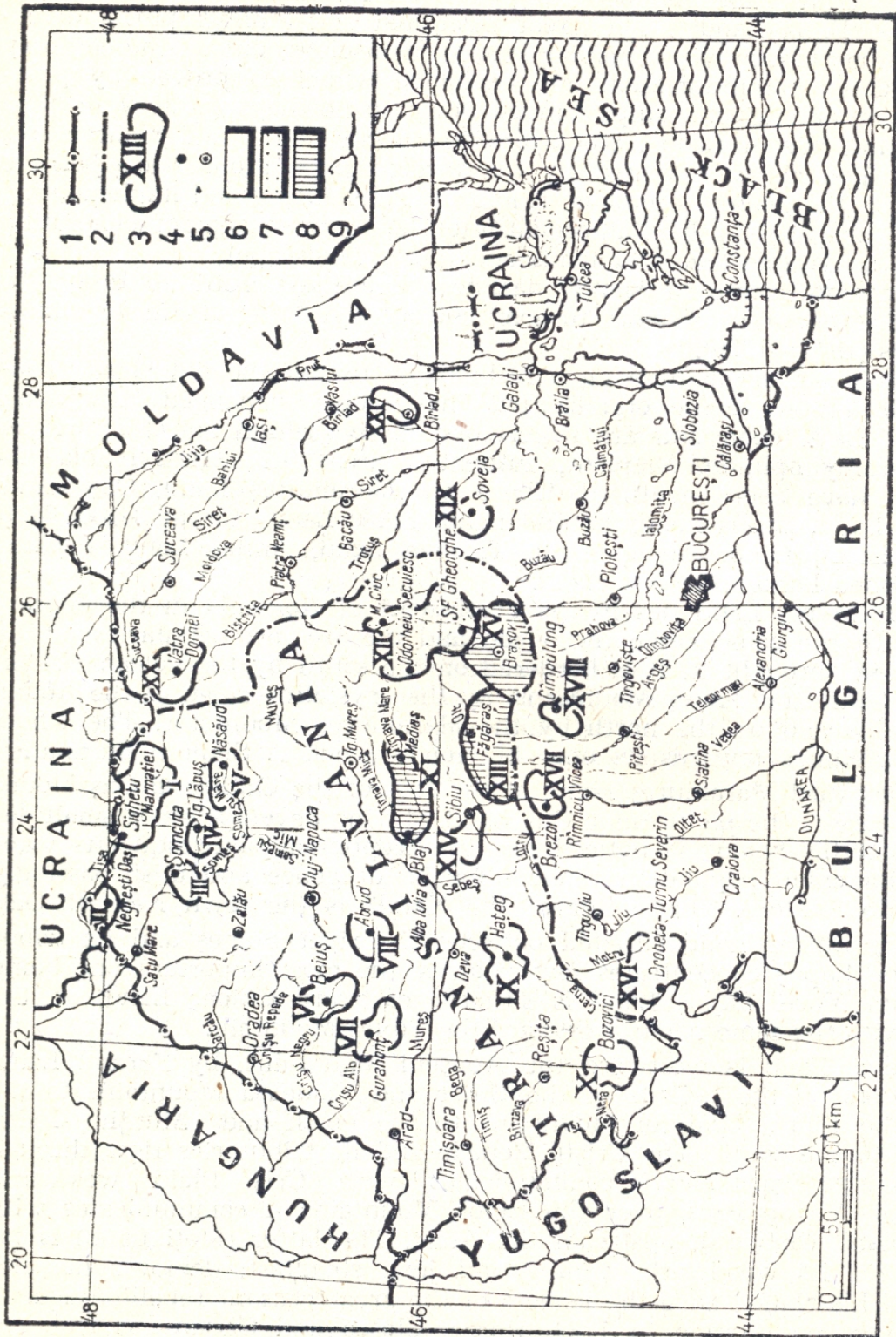


Fig. 1. Romania. "The Lands". 1. Political boundary; 2. Transylvanian boundary; 3. The boundaries of "the Lands"; 4. Convergence centers of "the Lands"; 5. Other cities; 6. "Romanian Lands"; 7. I. Maramureș, II. Oaș, III. Chioar, IV. Lăpuș, V. Năsăud, VI. Beiuș, VII. Zarand, VIII. Moși, IX. Hațeg, X. Almâj, XIV. Amlaș, XVI. Severin, XVII. Loviștea, XVIII. Cimpulung, XIX. Vrancea, XX. Dorna, XXI. Birlad, 7. "Secui Lands"; XII. (Szecklers and Romanians); 8. Tirnave Land, XI. Făgăraș Land, XIII; Birsă Land XV, (Romanians, Germans). Rivers.



The Zarand Land is situated between the mountains with the same name to the south and Codru Moma to the north. Being flown through by the Crişul Alb, it has several convergence centers, the most important one being the town Sebiş.

Almăj Land is situated within the Banat Mountains, its main locality being Bozovici. It is the birthplace of the Banat folklore.

Haţeg Land is the cradle of the Romanian people, with remains of old cities from ancient Dacia, including the capital of the Dacian state Sarmizegetusa Regia.

Năsăud Land is upstream the Someşul Mare at the foot of the Rodna and Ţibleş Mountains. This land has given birth to the most numerous scholars on area unit in Romania, the most important ones being George Coşbuc, the peasants poet, the novelist Liviu Rebreanu and the mathematician Grigore Moisil.

Tîrnave Land, situated downstream the two Tîrnavas, the Tîrnava Mare and the Tîrnava Mică, is also called the Vineland because of its large vineyards. The vinescape nicely matches the Saxond habitat landscape with compactly structured settlements and well-managed households, many of them abandoned because of the massive emigration of this Germanic population.

Amlaş Land stretches on a small area, at the foot of the Cindrel Mountains, being almost identical with so-called "marginime" of Sibiu. It is noticed for typical moving sheep raising and, in connection with this, authentic sheperd folklore.

Făgăraş Land is situated between the ridges of the Făgăraş Mountains to the south, the river Olt to the north and the Perşani Mountains to the east, being also known as the Olt Land. It is noticed to the geometrical spatial arrangement of settlements, which is in connection with the economic complementarity of the depression to the neighbouring mountaineous area.

The Bîrsa Land is within the internal curve of the Carpathians, on the hydrographic convergence of the Bîrsa, Timiş and Rîul Negru with the Olt. In the middle of the Bîrsa Land there is Braşov, the second demographic and industrial center of the country and its first touristic center. The aspect of the settlements is influenced by the Saxon specific, with compact households, tiled and guttered roofs and original architecture.

The Secui Land stretches as a compact areal east to the Bîrsa Land upstream the Niraj, comprising Baraolt and Odorheiul Secuiesc depressions. It continues the Giurgeu Depression flowed through by the upper stream of the Mureş to the east and the Ciuc Depression and the Olt Gorges at Tuşnad to the south. This large stretch was gained by the gradual assimilation and elimination of the ethnic, native Romanian element, the depression areas being organized according to the "Romanian land" model. The Szecklers, as minority ethnic group in Romania, are characterized by diligence, tenacity and a profoundly exclusive



character. It is here that the eco-geographic meaning of "land" has been falsely interpreted lately, giving it a purely ethnic interpretation.

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