



The Geographical Premises of the Rural Settlements Appearance in Crişurilor Plain

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Introduction

Each settlement must be regarded first of all as a result of the totality of physical and economic – geographical factors to which, undoubtedly, other factors, such as social, historical, political, administrative a.s.o, must be added.

The appearance and development of human settlements are linked not only to a natural evolution of the natural factors, but also to certain historical surroundings or political interference with a great impact upon this process.

The Natural Premises

Natural premises, among which: the terrain morphology, the hydrographic net, climatic factors, vegetation, had an important contribution to the appearance and development of the settlement in Crişurilor Plain.

The archeological research, the medieval documents referring to land marking and properties between villages and fairs, besides a series of data regarding the land and pastured prove the fact that the population settled houses, at the beginning in the upper regions of the loess formations at the contact with the closest hill zone. This fact emphasizes the role of the relief in establishing human settlements.

This territory was populated gradually from East where the grate part of the settlements lies today, towards West. The Eastern part of Crişurilor Plain, favored the appearance of the most numerous settlements, those being protected against floods, while the Western half corresponding to its lower part, with altitudes of about 100 or even below this values at the beginning was avoided by population for the construction of stable settlements, due to the floods provoked by the three rivers. This shortcoming had lasted till 19th century, when in this area some important activities helped man to influence the texture of villages. The linear shapes were replaced with the concentrical ones, and this way some surfaces were adapted to agricultural needs.

Favorable conditions to settlement appearance existed also at the contact between the lower plain and the upper plain especially due to some easier possibilities of water supplying. One must mention that towards the end of the 19th century a link channel was built here between Crişul Negru and Crişul Repede named Crişurilor Channel.

Therefore, due to this facility, a series of localities may be identified today in this area, such as: Roit, Sânicolaul Roman, Inand, Homorog, Tulca, Batar, Talpoş, Berechiu, Apateu, Şepreuş, Chereuş, a.s.o.

The favorable conditions of the rural settlements appearance also existed at the contact of upper field with primonatal hills. The settlements in this area are favored by not only by the complex availability of employing the agricultural terrains, but also by the possibility of building some road networks, especially longitudinal, which have facilitated the bridging of different localities.

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Examples of settlements situated at the contact area of the two unities, are: Apateu, Şititelec, Husasău de Tinca, Ucuriș, Craiva, Chișlaca, Lunca Teuzului.

The Hidrographical Premise

The hydrographical *net* represents another natural premise that stood to the base of settlement appearance and development in The Field of Crișul, since man has always looked for being as close to the water source as possible.

Even if a great part of the inferior courses of the three Crișuri cross-alluvial fields had been avoided, at the beginning, because of other inundation floods, however these river courses hadn't constituted an obstacle in the settlement appearance, since this could be remedied by works of. In the higher part of field, at the border of this with mountain hill of the neighborhood, the settlements have had the advantage of being kept apart from the danger of often overflowing water. On the other hand the inhabitants possessed large grassy areas for animals, and they could deal with agriculture in the neighborhood regions crossed by rivers, as they could find water for animals, puddle abandoned puddle, river bed and channels, rich in fish and wood.

At the same time, the water courses (especially the Three Crișuri and heir's tributains) influenced the evolution direction of Field Crișurilor settlements, this being a linear one. People who had oriented themselves after the water courses, erected their houses along the river course and build roads for communication net. This way the one large-street villages were born, with a valley along the large street. In Talpos region people avoided to settle localities, because they wanted to avoid the danger of overflowing waters. The presence of some thermal water at the contact of mountain hills with Field Crișurile encouraged some of the settlements appearance and development, which have today an important tourist function (Baile Felix) or agro – touristic.

Together with relief and weather, *climate factors* have had a special implication in the human settlements. Unlike relief, the climate represents a component part of natural environment with an important dynamic. The orographic onfiguration of Crișuri Fields determines favorable climate conditions for the settling of the population and at the same time of the settlements in this environment.

This means that the average annual temperature are approximately 10,5° C, the winters are milder with less powerful winds, summer are the less droughty due to the widespread of the west air masses. The rainfall a yearly average equals around 550-600 mm/year and are generally distributed all over the plain zone as a result of the protection offered by the Apuseni Mountains in the est and the large opening to the midspread of the wet air masses in the west.

The resources of *natural vegetations* and especially the *forests*, the pastures and natural grasslands (hayfield) have constituted resources of main significance for people in the area. On the one hand they have offered raw materials (wood) for building houses and heating. On the other hand the grasslands and natural pastures which were sufficiently extended till 19th century, contributed to the feeding of animals (one of the main occupation of the inhabitants was breeding the animals, therefore the natural vegetations determined in this case a better stability of population in zone).

Long time ago, the forests occupied vast area in Crișurilor's Field, so that on the basis of examining old maps, approximately 200–250 years ago, forest occupied important area here which could be estimated to more than twice the present areas.

At present, as the consequence of massive deforestation, mainly in the 18th and 19th centuries – in order to get new agricultural areas - the forest areas in Crișurilor's Field noticeably decreased, covering approximately 4,5 % from totally area in this zone.

The role of forests in human communities from Crișurilor's Field can be traced to many toponyms of the villages estates after the deforestation, for example: deforestation (forest section), good-for-nothing (forest) clearing, burning and so on.

At the same time, the old oaks, widespread on the surface of field, writhe placenames (La Poiana, La Arini, La Pădure, and so on) show once more the existence of forest areas.

Another argument for the existence of forests in Crișurilor's Plain is represented by the type of settlement. In this case we remember the place Susag, which is a scattered polinuclear

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type settlement. Each nucleus of the settlement is represented by the group of houses from glades of old forests which occupied this zone. After deforestation there remained only a patch of land named Dumbrava, but the village in the field had a scattered settlement character. The narcissi which inhabited the glades of forest, after deforestation and agricultural actions drew back to wet grassland by the side of (along) the river Ierul, to west of village till Collector Canal, making today "Poiana with Narcissi", placed at an approximately 120 m altitude.

The Layers of the Soil Lands

The layers of the soil lands have also been important resources for development of the population and of the human settlements. In this way the fertile soils, which are part of the category of the cernosioms have permitted the agricultural practice since the Neolithic period, caring the crops being the main occupation of the inhabitants. From the yellow land agriculture until agriculture in parloaga, which had been practised since the ancient time until the 10th and 11th century, there was a passage from a cultivated field agriculture, which has an increased extensive character, to an intensive agriculture, especially revision/over haunting from 1771-1772.

Because of this, it can be mentioned, as a special form of employing and using of the grounds, the agricultural ground. This is an element which has imposed itself strongly in the landscape in the region traversed by the three rivers named Crişuri.

The agricultural using of the grounds has been reflected in a very rich and vast agricultural toponymy, which we encounter all over the Field of the Crişuri. Some of these toponyms are: starina, mălăiste, cânepişte, fânaş, prunişte, fruit gardens, islaz, ţelina, ogezi, pârlomagă, ocoale, ovezişte etc, which are actually parts of the grounds of the villages went for a certain agricultural using.

We can infer that the natural premisses have been very important in the appearance and in the development of the settlements. They have contributed to a certain permanence of the population, and to a steady inhabitation of the Crişurilor Field area.

The geo-economical premises along with the natural ones were important for the development of the settlements. In this way the commercial change from different natural areas, but also from the medieval long commercial roads, which were linking Hungary with Ardeal and with the close regions, created change knots which later become fairs and town, which maintained, along with their industrial and commercial character, an important agricultural and pastoral aspect.

As a part of the rural settlements, the economical factors have brought a special contribution to the way of organising the settlements and of course to the economy. In the bigger part the rural settlements are characterised by an agrar economy of areal culture/crops and of live stock brooding and at the contact between hilly and field zones, where thermal water springs appear, rural settlements have appeared, based on an agro-touristical economy (Tinca), or prevalent touristical (Băile Felix).

The villages until the systemising action, initiated in the first half of the 19th century were generally small with a poorly aspect, the irregular settlements seated at the base of the hills, between them there are spread fruit-tree, vegetable and cereal gardens. The passage to the gathered village can be seen specially in the localities with Hungarian population, to which the ownership of that period has given them the most favourable lands for agriculture.

In the so-called field, the prevalent form is the gathered village having the tendency of passing from the dense phase of the most numerous gathered villages with irregular forms and seated at considerable distances between each other. The tendency of the south, in the north zone the gathered villages are characterised by an irregular enclosure and as we move to the south the geometrical degree is more and more evident presenting certain shaped of cross (Palota, Livada de Bihor), or of a square (Sintea Mare, Olari, Siclău, Grăniceri), or of rectangular shape (Nadab, Cinteş, Chereluş, Iermata, Vârşand, Avram Iancu etc).

The geometrical degree is very well seen especially between Crişul Alb and Crişul Negru, where the most important systematising works have been made starting with first half of the 19th century, period that is the same with an important colonising period of the Hungarian population.

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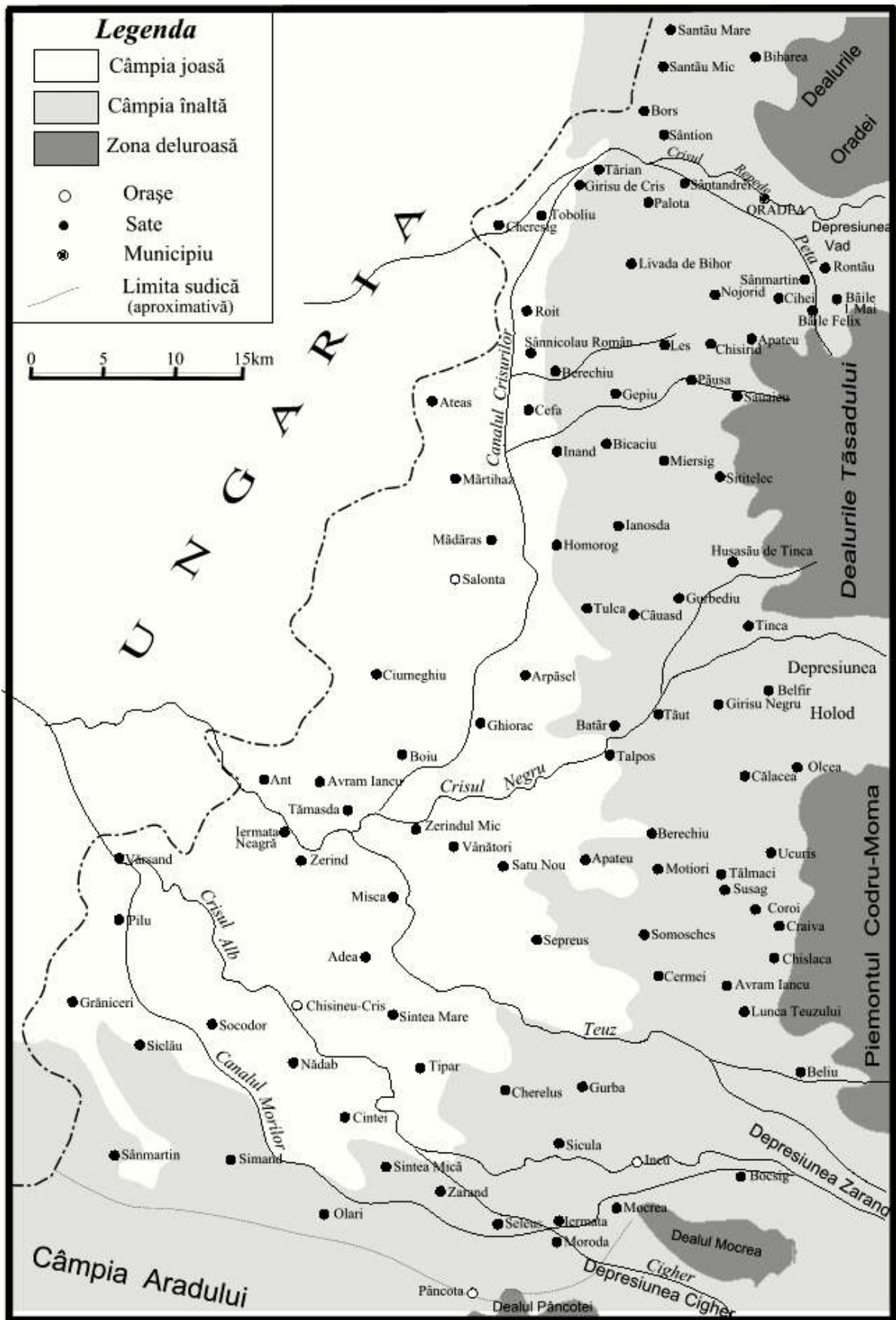


Figure 1. Position of settlements to the main morfological units of Crişurilor Plain.

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Due to the fact that the distances between the gathered villages from this region were very big, this determined the developing of the so-called stables or settlements, spread on the entire surface of the Crișurilor Field and being the most numerous in the Tisa Field.

This means that the process of villages gathering has given birth not only to the passage phase to the dense, compact shape. It has also produced an irreversible phenomenon such as the scattering of the rural settlements under the shape of living places, manners, mansions, hamlets spread all over the surface of these fields.

This process of scattering was specific for the 19th century, when extended surfaces occupied by pasture lands were been formed in arable grounds needed for the cereal production asked more and more by the European market.

As a conclusion to those that have been said this land flower through by the three Crișuri has been populated since ancient times, which old settlements to the appearance of which have contributed the physical factors but also the economical and geographical ones.

The most encountered shape of settlement in the Crișurilor Plain is the rural one, which is in a tight connection with the aspect of the relief, with the developing of the hidrographical system and with the vegetation zones. The economical, historical and administrative factors have brought a special contribution the increase of the number of the population, creating and developing this kind of settlement with specific forms developed on the entire surface of this field.

The systematising of these settlements, mainly of the rural ones, even undergone step by step from south to the north, is characterised by a geometrical shape, with more and more stressed tendencies of passing to the gathering compact form. Many of these rural settlements, due to their internal possibilities of development, are characterised by a very fast degree of development, tending to town settlements.

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