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THE GATEWAY OF MARAMUREȘ LAND: GEOSTRATEGICAL IMPLICATIONS IN SPACE AND TIME

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ABSTRACT

The Maramureș Land represents a territorial entity of the "land" type mentioned in documents from the Middle Ages under the name of Terra Maramorosiensis, comprising the territory covering the upper region of the Tisa River, upstream of the Hust defile. Currently, the southern area of Tisa belongs to Romania while the northern region is part of Ukraine. The entire area is drained by the tributaries and sub-tributaries of the Tisa River, the course of which also represented the leading axis of the whole region, a major means of communication with both the exterior and the side valleys. The advantages that result from mutual cooperation between neighbouring states, according to the model offered by the European Union, result in the approaching of the old Maramureș Land as a unique functional system as a whole, by being jointly managed by Romania and Ukraine with the goal of cultural, social and economic development for the benefit of both countries. In order to develop a performing management system in the area, a foray on various levels and directions is necessary, with the aim of understanding the functional system which was in existence before the separation.

Key words: Maramureș Land, Romania, geostrategical gateway

PUNTO D'ACCESSO ALLA REGIONE DI MARAMURES: IMPLICAZIONI GEOSTRATEGICHE IN TEMPO E SPAZIO

SINTESI

Il Maramureș è una regione storico-geografica ed etno-culturale, citata nei documenti medievali come Terra Maramorosiensis, che si estende lungo il corso superiore del fiume Tibisco, a monte della gola di Khust. Oggi il bacino meridionale del Tibisco Superiore appartiene alla Romania, quello settentrionale all'Ucraina. Tutta la zona è bagnata da tributari primari e secondari del fiume Tibisco, il corso del quale una volta rappresentò anche l'asse principale della regione, il più importante mezzo di comunicazione sia con l'esterno sia con le valli laterali. I vantaggi che valorizzano la fruttuosa collaborazione tra la Romania e l'Ucraina, instaurata secondo il modello proposto dall'Unione Europea, derivano dall'approccio all'antico Maramureș come a un sistema funzionale unitario, amministrato unitamente dalla Romania e dall'Ucraina con lo scopo dello sviluppo culturale, sociale ed economico a vantaggio di ambedue gli stati. Al fine di sviluppare un sistema amministrativo funzionante dell'area è necessario fare incursioni in vari livelli e direzioni con l'obiettivo di capire il sistema funzionale che esisteva prima della divisione.

Parole chiave: regione di Maramures, Romania, punto d'accesso geostrategico

INTRODUCTION

Data used in the study

This study is based on a large amount of information of various types and sources as follows: topographical maps, ortophotoplans, historical maps, historical papers, data collected from archaeological digs (information either published or obtained through observation and field analysis), publications issued over time (both old and new), statistical data and field observations.

Research methodology

After the processing of existent information a number of maps were formed in 2D, 2,5D, 3D and 4D, with information organized in layers with explanatory graphic elements. Analysis of the maps, combined with spatial and temporal correlations on all attained information helped to establish the hypotheses. It is important to note that the conclusions of this study could be subject to future debate due to new and currently unforeseen results of archaeological excavations, archive research and the use of more advanced technology than is currently available. The results of this study were obtained by the use of a combination of methods, among which we mention the following:

- *Cartographic methods* - transforming the information of any kind in cartographic representations, in either electronic or printed versions;
- *The layer method* - information of the textual, statistical, photographic and cartographic type is transformed into visual material under the form of layers placed one on top of the other in a certain order, being overlapped at the same time with other graphic elements. Based on visualizing, spatial correlations and analyses, several key points were identified, axes, interfaces, connections, crucial points, decisional centres, barriers, etc.;
- *Statistical methods* - Processing systematic statistical data and graphic representation;
- *Visualizing methods 2D, 2,5D, 3D and even 4D* - observing the spatial correlations by visualizing cartographic representations and photo-video materials. An example of 4D visualizing: simulating the visibility area from strategic points (citadels, valley corridors hills or mountain peaks etc.);
- *The method of cartographic reconstruction of the territorial context in which certain past events took place* - example: the Tisa's oscillating watercourse within the river meadow area in proportion to the elements of interest (citadels, apiaries, roads, and metallurgical centres).

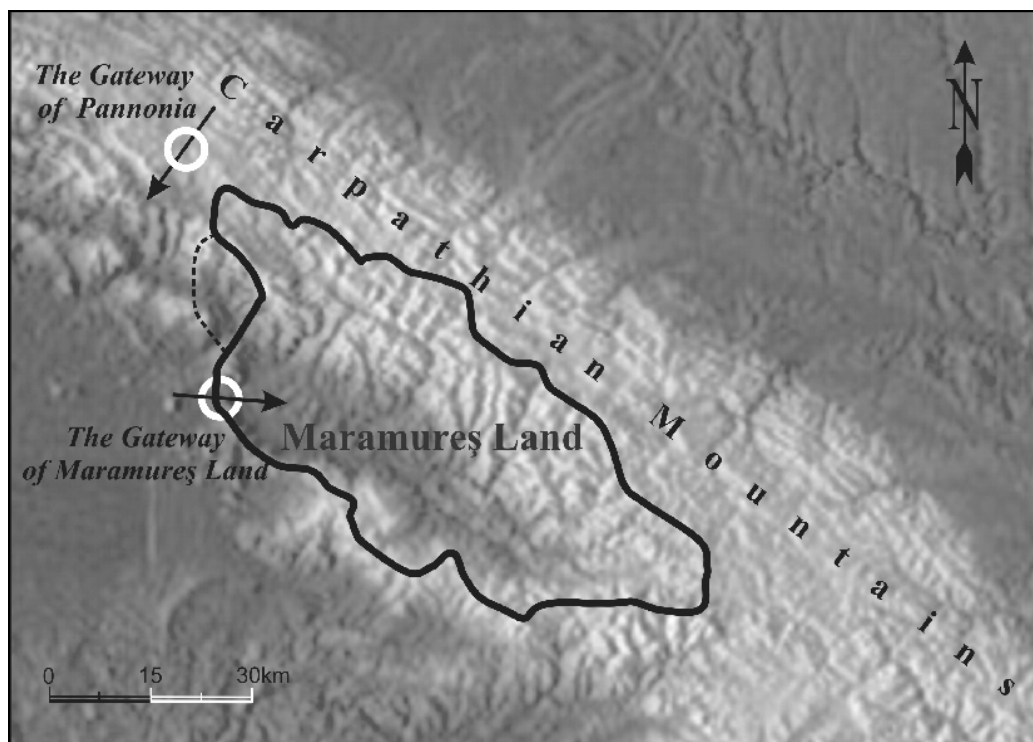


Fig. 1: Maramureş Land in the international context of the Middle Ages.
Sl. 1: Pokrajina Maramureş v srednjem veku v mednarodnem kontekstu.

Present context of the research

Based on the fact that the intensity of the socio-economic development of a territory is strongly related to the free movement of people, ideas, goods and money, the importance of the area's interfaces with the exterior is clearly understood. The configuration of Maramureș Land, as well as its position as part of the Carpathian area, focuses the interest on the so-called entrance "gates", among which of major importance is the western one, called the Hust "Gate". A proper understanding of the importance of this region can be accomplished through a geostrategic analysis in time and space (fig. 1).

It is known that after the Second World War, the population and the authorities on both sides of the territorial entity known as The Maramureș Land had forgotten the way they used to function together as a single system, and the awareness of each part of the other had become more and more obscure and nonexistent.

Actually, for more than 60 years after the separation of the Maramureș territorial system, the two resulting parts have registered an extremely slow evolution in cultural and socio-economical development. It is therefore the case that the town of Sighetu Marmăției, with a population of almost 40.000 inhabitants during the in-

terwar period, has only 42.000 inhabitants in 2009, even though several neighbouring rural areas have been annexed. On the right side of the Tisa River, none of the old towns such as Hust, Vișc or Teceu have succeeded in becoming centres with the strength to polarize the entire upstream region of the Hust defile. Under the circumstances, instead of developing a strong regional metropolis capable of polarizing the entire upper region of Tisa, we have two areas with small or medium sized towns without any superior administrative status.

The present situation of the two sides of Maramureș from the point of view of the population and territory is shown in fig. 2.

In order to identify and understand the premises that represented the basis according to which this space had functioned as a system, it is necessary to have an approach focused on internal "tools" and their exchange of energy, substance and information, on interfaces with other systems as well as on the ways of functioning as a system incorporated within superior systems.

One of the aims of this study is represented by the so-called Hust "Gate", the main entrance to Maramureș Land, from Antiquity up until 1918, the moment when the region was split in two parts by a border drawn along Tisa River, which had become an impenetrable barrier after the Second World War.

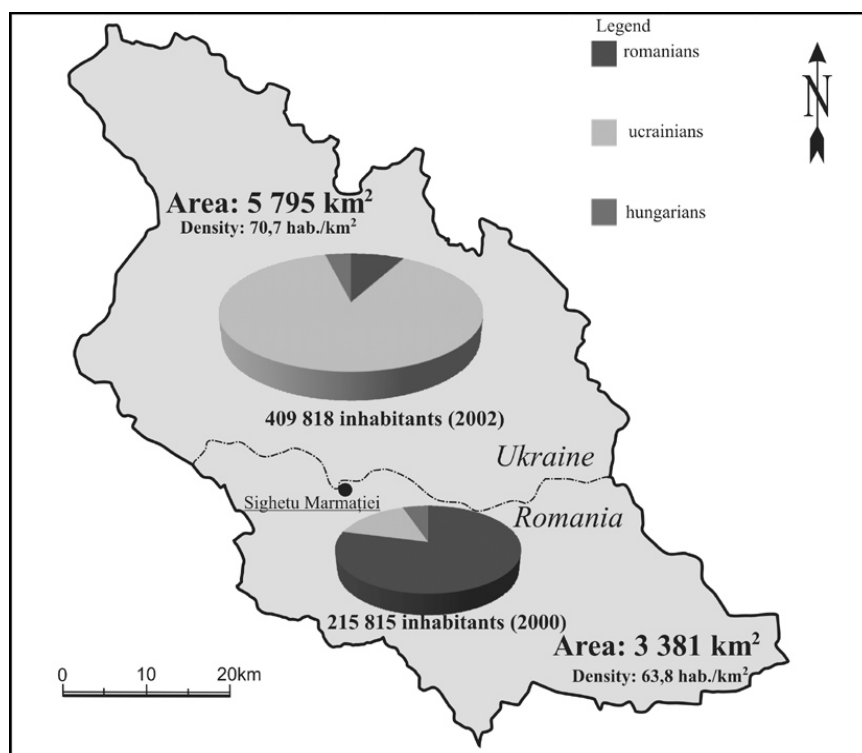


Fig. 2: Maramureș Land, population and territories (2002).
Sl. 2: Pokrajina Maramureș, prebivalstvo in velikost ozemlja (2002).

MARAMUREȘ LAND

The political, socio-economic and military premises of Maramureș Land

An extremely important stage in the evolution of this space was registered during the period of the 14th – 16th centuries, when the socio-economic, military and political changes had reached their highest peak. Maramureș Land was an independent state during the 14th century, having military and political relations of its own with its neighbours. *"The political and administrative independence of Romanian people from Maramureș clearly results from the terms of documents dating back to the 14th century, so that when referring to Maramureș, the term "Comitatus" was not used but has been consistently called "Terra Maramorosiensi" and the "Olahorum" situation (Mihalyi of Apșa, 1900, 14) has been mentioned. A document from 1336 mentions Hungary and Maramureș as two separate, autonomous provinces, specifying the existence of a road leading from Maramureș to Hungary ("transit guandam Stratam publican de Maramorysio versus Hungariam ducentem") whereas a document from 1365 suggests a parallel between "Terra Maramoro-*

siensi" and "Terra Moldauana", leading us to understand that during that period the political connections between Maramureș and Hungary were identical to those existing between Moldavia and Hungary" (Filipașcu, 1940, 38).

Using the information currently known regarding military fortifications represented by citadels, apiaries and naturally occurring structures, two groups can be identified when referring to Maramureșul Land:

- The Hust "Gateway" with the citadels at Hust, Nea-lab, Setidava (currently Ukranian Malaja Kopanja), Seleușu Mare (Hungarian Nagy-Szollos, Ukranian Vinogradov) and the apiary system from the narrow path sector as well as the configuration and the course followed by the Tisa River. Part of the fortification system is also the Bărnica Citadel (Bronka) on the Bărjava Valley or even the Vișc Citadel on the Cămârzana corridor of the Oaș Land (Ilieș, 2006a).*
- Sighet Area with the citadels of Sighet-Solovan, Slătina, Sarasău, Apșa de Jos (Cremnița), represent an area of hydrographic confluence and movement, being a region capable of stopping or controlling circulation between the Upper Voievodship and Lower Voievodship.*

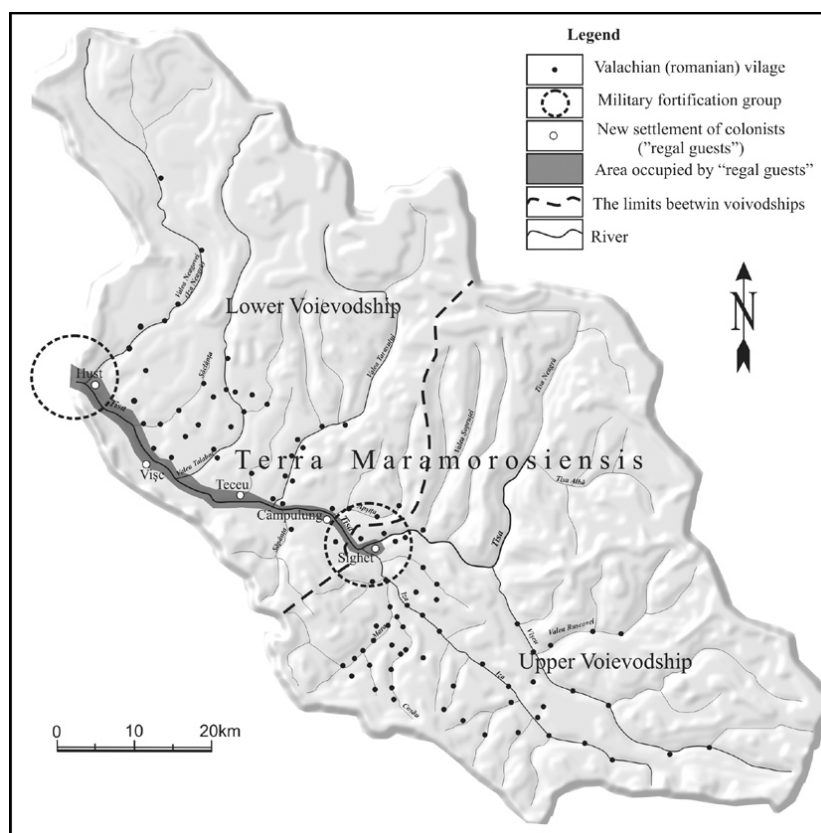


Fig. 3: Maramureș Land in the XIVth Century, the entrance of the "royal guests" inside the region.
Sl. 3: Pokrajina Maramureș v 14. stoletju, prihod "kraljevih gostov" v Maramureș.

There were two defence systems because Maramureș Land possessed two divisions in the 14th century. "... Maramureș was divided in two voievodships, the inferior and superior ones, which created borders at the confluence of the Iza and Tisa rivers. The residence of the Lower Voievodship was at Sarasău and was held by Solovăstru, mentioned in 1345. The residence of the upper Voievodship was at Cuhea where Ștefan Voievode resided, having been mentioned in 1326" (Filipașcu, 1940, 38).

The main aim of the gradual break of Hungarian authority on the Tisa River course was to take away the defence system from the Maramureș people, which permitted separation at any time. This fortification system, as well as the military abilities proven by the Maramureș people in the numerous wars fought alongside Hungarian kings was one of the reasons why the Maramureș Land held on to its independence in relation to the Hungarian crown. The placement under the form of an infiltration of the so-called "royal guests" on the Tisa axis, who reached Sighetu Marmăției without mingling with the native population, allowed for the transformation of Maramureș into a *Comitatus* in the 15th century, extremely late in comparison to all the neighbouring territories (fig. 3).

The cartographic representations created with the aim of spatial visualization of the correlations among various types of information allows for the identification of a series of completely new aspects in the knowledge of certain realities in space and time.

The international context of Maramureș Land in the Middle Ages

The territorial entity known as Maramureș Land (fig. 4) benefited over time from a favourable geographical position as it was protected on the eastern and north eastern side by a high and wide mountain chain, on the southern and south eastern part by the Oaș-Igriș-Gutâi-Lăpuș-Țibleș-Rodnei mountainous chain with high passes and defence citadels and on the west which is the lowest section from the altimetric point of view but also the most easily threatened by complex military fortification systems (Ilieș, 2007, 37). Not by accident was Maramureș Land frequently compared to a natural "citadel". One aspect worthy of being mentioned is related to the fact that the renowned Verețchii defile on the Latorița River (currently Ukraine), the entrance "gate" of the Hungarians to Panonia, was situated at only a 10 km distance from the borders of Maramureș and approximately 50 km away from the Hust "Gate", the main access way to the ancient and medieval Maramureș. Historical documents mention both the battles fought in that area by the Hungarians against the native Vlachs and Slavs (in the year 898 AD, "the Russian chronicler Nestor talking about the arrival and settling of the Hungari-

ans in Panonia, mentions the peoples they encountered here: "coming from the east they crossed the high mountains later called the Hungarian mountains and started fighting wars with the Vlachs and Slavs who lived there" (Manciulea, 2001, 54), and the defence system of the "apiary" type, similar to those in the Hust defile but also to those from Transylvania: "The existence of the fortified defense system also used in the 13th century is also attested to by the archaeological research done in Hungary and northern Bucovina, where such defense systems had been analysed, systems that were destroyed in 1241 when the Mongol invasion took place in the Verecke and Ciornivka Passes (Ukraine)" (Spinei, 2003, 402).

Population and flow through the systems of strategic military fortifications

During the period of the 3rd century BC to the middle of the 1st century BC, the area was populated by Dacians and Celts, having reached an advanced stage of economic development (metallurgy, pottery, agriculture etc.). "The cohabitation of the local population with the newly arrived one is exemplified by the archaeological materials discovered in establishments, necropolises and isolated tombs, findings being made regarding the emergence of complex mixed funeral rituals (Thracio-Celtic)" (Kotigoroșko, 1995, 188).

After the Celts were chased out by the Dacian King Burebista in the second half of the 1st century BC, a new wave of Dacians established themselves in the area, whereas development follows an ascending evolution. "In the economic field, the events from the year 60 BC didn't register significant regressive effects. The region was finally annexed to the already accomplished Dacian structure and continued to inspire socio-economic development, and in this prosperity a series of factors played an important role: the ethnic unity of the local tribes as well as that of the newly arrived ones, Burebista's unification policy, the higher development level of the Dacians and the preservation of the economic habits from the La Tene stage" (Kotigoroșko, 1995, 188).

After the conquest of Dacia by the Romans, a third wave of Dacians appeared within the region, probably the most warlike Dacians who had no desire to live under Roman occupation (see the fragment regarding the military qualities of the Maramureș people).

Beginning with the middle of the 2nd millennium AD and following the intensification of the circulation among the migrating peoples who had become more and more dangerous, the process of forming territorial entities of the "land" type had begun. The northern Dacians underwent a separation giving birth to smaller state organizations such as the "lands" of: Maramureș, Oaș, Bereg, Chioar, Codrul, Lăpuș, Năsăud, Dorna, Câmpulung, Sepeniț, Volohoveni, and perhaps even

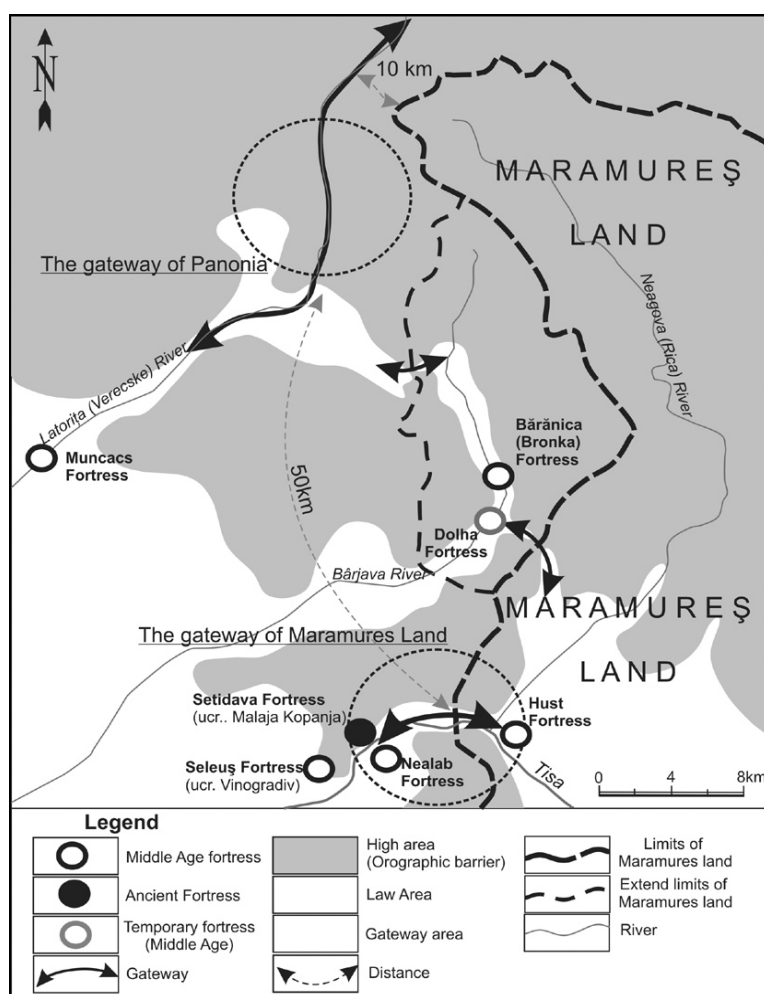


Fig. 4: The Gateways and the military fortifications in the western part of Maramureş Land, in Antiquity and the Middle Ages.

Sl. 4: Vrata in vojaške utrdbe na zahodnem delu pokrajine Maramureş v antiki in srednjem veku.

others in the farther north and north western regions. It seems that these lands were formed mainly according to the naturally occurring conditions, in the lowlands which were much easier to defend.

What is interesting is that these state organizations were led according to certain rules (*jus valahorum*) which were almost the same in all "lands". Although these "lands" were spread out over a very large area all over the territory, these were systems which survived until the 15th century AD. The inhabitants were known as Vlachs (valahi, valachi, volohi, vlahi, blachi etc.). According to studies done by numerous researchers the conclusion has been reached that "Each cultural ethnic group follows after the preceding ones in various degrees of descent, each present country preserves the memory of lost ethnic groups, often restricted to a single name: Ilyrians, Thracians, Dacians in the Balkans, Sumerians and Asirians in Mesopotamia etc. many of whom perpetuated through descendants who currently bear a

different name and who have gradually adopted the language, traditions, and names from the population that has become prevalent" (Breton, 1981).

Therefore, in the territory of today's Maramureş Land, as well as in the neighbouring regions, from the 1st millenium BC until now and from an ethnic point of view, the following peoples were mentioned in the historical archives: Thracians → Dacians → Walachians (Vlachs) → Romanians, Celts, Hasdingi Vandals, Goths, Gepids, Slavs, Hungarians, Germans, Rutherian (Ukrainians), Slovaks, Poles, Czechs, Jews, Gypsies. The existence or even coexistence of some or other ethnic groups can be distinguished by approaching periods.

For the period between the 6th and 10th centuries AD, alongside the Walachian population, the presence of a Slav population is also mentioned in a series of documents: "The Russian chronicler Nestor, in talking about the arrival and settling of the Hungarians in Pannonia, mentions the peoples they encountered here:

"Coming from the east they crossed the high mountains later called the Hungarian mountains and started fighting wars with the Vlachs and Slavs who lived there" (Manciulea, 2001, 54). It is important to know that the Slavs mentioned in the documents together with the Vlachs are not ancestors of the later Ukrainians, who also settled in the upper Tisa region after the 14th century AD. After the 10th century these Slavs are not mentioned again alongside the Vlachs, probably for having been almost entirely assimilated though still keeping numerous elements related to their presence, especially in the linguistic area, toponyms etc.

Before the 14th century the population from the Hust "Gate" area was Walachian. Only after that was the presence of German and Ukrainian "royal guests" recorded as they settled there after Bogdan's (of Maramureș) having settled in Moldavia. Under the circumstances, the documents of that period make a clear distinction from an ethnic point of view between the northern part of Ugocea and the southern part: *"From the 16th century till now, in the Hungarian papers the land is called 'Olahsag', unlike 'Oroszsag', which designated the Ruthenian villages over Tisa. In the ancient papers these villages beyond Tisa are also mentioned as 'valachales'"* (Scurtu, 1942, 192). Ugocea is a county situated west from Maramureș Land, downstream. Its eastern border is with Maramureș Land, and is crossed by the Tisa.

Of major importance is the fact that the stream enclosing the Setidava citadel, a tributary on the right of the Tisa River, was, until recently, called "The Village" whereas the hills where the Dacian cemetery and citadel are situated is even now called "Gorodiște" by everyone including the Ukrainian population. From this point of view it is necessary to notice the similarity with the village called Grădiștea de Munte near the Dacian capital Sarmisegetusa Regia, from the Orăștie Mountains.

Military skills of the Maramureș population

As this study mainly focuses on the military fortifications of the Maramureș "gates", some specifications are necessary regarding the military skills of the inhabitants. As elements of reference regarding the *military qualities of the Maramureș population* the following must be mentioned: the reason for and the role of the Roman Limes, migration flows in the nearby areas, and the ways in which distribution of power among differing ranks and leaders was organized.

The Roman Empire had established its northern limes exactly on the edge of the mountains surrounding Maramureș, which provides clear evidence of their force to react and defend, a fact that had even occurred, until the Romans' retreat towards the south.

Walachians are encountered as fighters in the "gate" towards Panonia, in the Wooded Carpathians. *"The Russian chronicler Nestor, in talking about the arrival and*

settling of the Hungarians in Panonia, mentions the peoples they encountered here: "coming from the east they crossed the high mountains later called the Hungarian mountains and started fighting wars with the Vlachs and Slavs who lived there" (Manciulea, 2001, 54). The above mentioned events were taking place in 898 AD, in the Verețchii Defile (the Valley of Latorița River) in the Wooded Carpathians, 10 km away from the border of Maramureș Land, 30 km from the "gate" towards Maramureș through the corridor of the Bărnica citadel (Bronca) and 50 km away from the military fortification system of the Hust "gateway" (fig. 4).

People of Maramureș Land were present with an army having played a major role in all the conquest campaigns of the Hungarian kings from the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries, the Maramureș papers of Dr. Mihalyi of Apșa abound in such information (Filipașcu, 1940).

The people from Maramureș Land, led by Bogdan, a strong ruler, founded and strengthened Moldavia, enlarging the territory. Even the most important voievode, Stefan the Great (1457–1504) was directly descended from a Maramureș family.

The fact that the Walachian leaders from Maramureș distinguished themselves in numerous battles on behalf of the Hungarian kings, and after settling in Moldavia, were awarded possession of large territories going far beyond the borders of Maramureș demonstrates the fact that military skill had continued in this area (Filipașcu, 1940).

Although all the territories from the west and south of Maramureș had already been transformed into Hungarian counties, Maramureș maintained its independence until the 14th century. Actually, Maramureș had only been annexed to the Hungarian kingdom after Bogdan settled in Moldavia and after the Hungarian kingdom took possession of the military fortification lines, a situation facilitated by the systematic intrusion on the Tisa axis by the so-called "royal guests" (Ilieș, 2006b, 66).

In the 14th century it is mentioned that the king of Hungary threatened the Poles that if they continued to plunder his territories, he would order Maramureș to invade Poland. The following question arises: What army did Maramureș need in order to attack Poland on its own? (Filipașcu, 1940).

The weakening and fall of the traditional defense system

The contact between autochthonous population and other (at that time) foreign populations with different religions and ethnicity, became closer. This, in addition with some geostrategical and economic interests, eroded the internal cohesion of the people in Maramureș. The establishment of some "royal guests" with numerous facilities at Seleușul Mare, Hust, Vișc, Teceu, Câmpulung, and Sighet, weakened the role of the local population.

This, in conjunction with taking possession of the military fortification sections led to the control of the circulation on the Tisa axis by inserting "royal guests".

Religious implantation started with the placement of some religious buildings and the disposing of authority and vast properties inside the region (Remeti), the inclusion of the territory under the religious jurisdiction of certain authorities from outside the region, of a different ethnic group and religion (Munkacs, Agria) (Ilieș, 1998, 156). The process was finished with the religious conversion of various leaders of Maramureș, as a compulsory condition for attaining a high position in the leading structures of the Hungarian Kingdom.

The social impact of the larger politics at all levels was important by the giving away of large estates within Maramureș to persons close to the king of Hungary, but foreign to these lands; Therefore, voivodes from Maramureș were coerced into participating in wars on behalf of the Hungarian kings with greater frequency and with their own armies. In the mean time, an edict appeared with interdiction of building stone structures for the native Walachian population in Maramureș (Ilieș et al., 2009, 205). Also, Bogdan's settling in Moldavia led a significant part of the army and inhabitants out of Maramureș Land (Filipascu, 1940).

THE HUST "GATE" OR THE WESTERN "GATE" OF MARAMUREȘ LAND

The term "gate" is used to designate an easier access way through a lower section, towards an area of low-land and valley surrounded by mountains which are difficult to cross. Maramureș Land, as a geographical re-

gion of the "Land" type, from the category of state territorial entities grafted in intra and sub-mountainous depressions along the Carpathian Mountain chain was the biggest and most powerful of these (fig. 5).

The entire territory of the region corresponds to the upper region of the Tisa River, the watercourse of which goes out of the region towards the Panonic area through the upstream defile of Hust, between the mountains of Oaș and Bârlava. The corridor of the Tisa River has a narrow part, 7 km long, 1 km wide (in a section upstream from the confluence between Tisa and Rica) and 2.8 km wide near Velika Kopanja. Upstream of this defile there is the opening of Tisa's "bay" extending towards Vinogradovo, flowing in the direction of the Tisa River. In fact, over a 16 km distance there is a sequence of military fortifications and natural "barriers".

Fortifications in the western "gate" of Maramureș Land

The *Setidava Citadel* (fig. 6) is the citadel from the *Gorodiștea Hill* near *Malaja Kopanja* and was identified as the Dacian Citadel called *Setidava* mentioned by Ptolemy (in the 2nd century BC). This occupies a hill situated near the Tisa River, with an absolute altitude of 221 m and a relative altitude of 80 m in respect to the river level. The citadel was at one time fortified with six defence waves; it belonged to rich and warlike Dacians according to the archaeological inventory identified by Ukrainian researchers (Kotogoroko, 1995) and had a strategic position due to the very good visibility towards both Tisa's "gulf" and to the Hust defile, as well as benefiting from the Tisa's position at the foot of the hill.

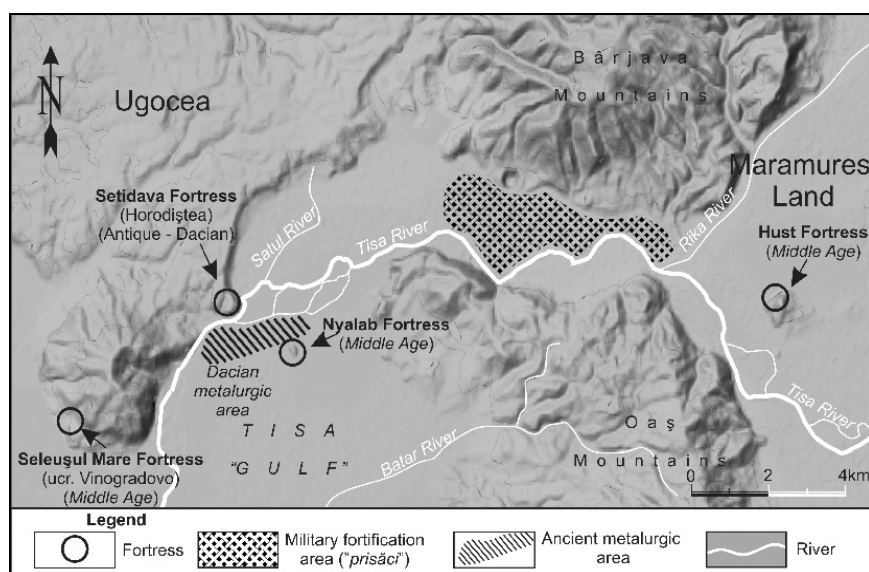


Fig. 5: Maramureș Land, The Hust Gateway in Antiquity and the Middle Ages.
Sl. 5: Pokrajina Maramureș, Hustovska vrata v antiki in srednjem veku.

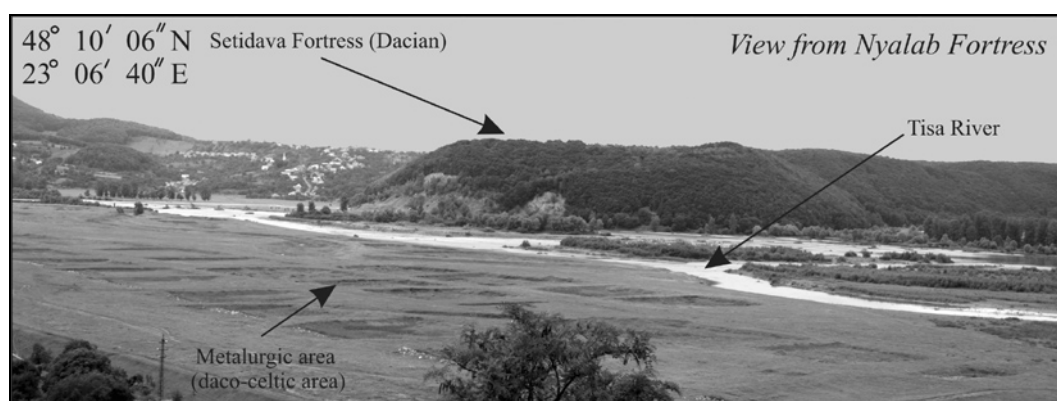


Fig. 6: Setidava Fortress near Malaja Kopanja (photo: M. Ilieș).
Sl. 6: Utrdba Setidava v bližini vrha Malaja Kopanja (foto: M. Ilieș).

The *Nealab Fortress* is a stone fortification built in the 12th century AD on a hill situated in the meadows of Tisa at approximately 2 km south east of the Setidava Fortress. A *metallurgical complex* is situated between Setidava and the Nealab fortresses dating from antiquity with an extension of 10 x 2 km, being the most extended in the region.

The *Hust Fortress* is a stone fortress built in the 14th century AD on a hill situated on the upper Tisa defile with good visibility to the west.

The existence of settlement lines of the citadel type is confirmed also in Transylvanian chronicles which refer

to events during the 10th – 11th centuries and even up to 13th century documents (DIR, C, 1951; Tiplic, 2002).

The apiary system sector in the Tisa Defile

The term "prisacă" (ro: apiary) is used today for the places where bee hives are placed. However, in the past they were a kind of "fence" formed by torn down trees and used for blocking military access to certain territorial entities on which bee hives were placed and which were specific to the Middle Ages and possibly to Antiquity (fig. 7).

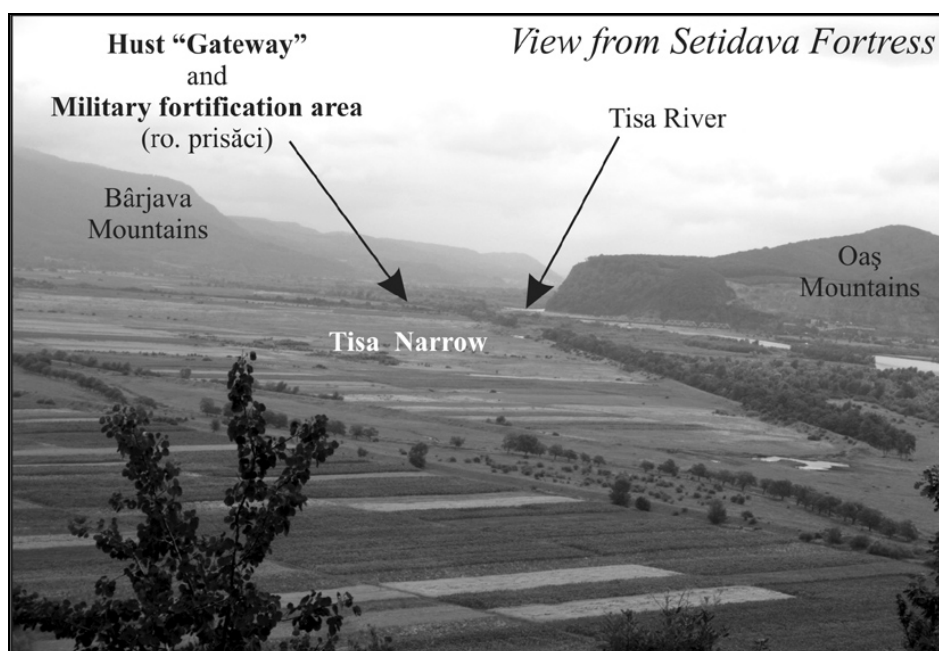


Fig. 7: The View from Setidava Fortress to The Hust Gateway (photo: M. Ilieș)
Sl. 7: Razgled z utrdbе Setidava na Hustovska vrata (foto: M. Ilieș).

Apiary systems are mentioned in documents of the 13th century AD in a document dating back to 1272 in which "guests" of Felzaz are granted the 'apiaries' of Maramureș forest, starting from the limits of their land they have the right to fish anything in the Tisa (Țiplic, 2002, 159). Building methods were presented as well as typology "A border type defensive system made up of massive palisades – prisăci – was settled by King Bela the IVth in Verecke passage (Russian Gate) around 1241" (DIR, 1951, 151; Spinei, 2003, 402–403). From these documents, corroborated with the one referring to the border of the royal daniel by the Teutons, it is obvious that the main modality of 'apiaries' edification was the creation of a vegetation curtain in association with an uninhabited area in front of it" (Țiplic, 2002).

There are also documents concerning this uninhabited area, very uncommon for the features of this region. "At Hust, in front of the Tisa as it flows into the Neagova Valley, the apiaries are in front of each other cutting perpendicular into the Tisa Valley. Here there were "indagines vilvae maramarosi" mentioned in 1271" (DIR, 1951, 145).

The Tisa River flow

As a form of protection, the Tisa River blocks the defile entrance from above in a perpendicular manner right at the base of the Setidava Fortress (approximately 3800 m in length).

Although these military fortifications belong to different historic periods, the settlements and the spatial rapport between these denote the same functions, namely that of surveillance and protection of the main access gate in Maramureș.

Spatial analysis

Spatial analysis of the information confirms a series of conclusions and results. Considering the maintenance of metallurgical ovens between Castrum Nyalab and Tisa, it is the case that the Tisa River registered a variation of maximum 500 m during the last 2000 years. In conforming with the configuration of the major water basin of the Tisa River, it is obvious that a part of the area with a metallurgical oven was destroyed by the Tisa River waterflow variation.

The Setidava Fortress had a very good view of the region. From there, the Tisa River Valley could have been surveilled up to Oas Land through the Tisa Gulf as well as down to the Hust Fortress (fig. 7). Also, Nealab Fortress could have been observed and vice-versa (there is evidence that below the medieval fortress there are older ruins, thus far insufficiently studied).

Two geomorphological structures block the access on both sides of the Tisa River. Between Setidava Hill (Măgura) and the south eastern extremity of the (Măgura) Vinogradov Hill, the Tisa River flows at the foot (base) of

the structure blocking direct access. Between the Tisa-Rica confluence and the Vreătea stone carrier, the Tisa River flows at the base of the abrupt hill on the southeast bank, blocking the access as well. There is a chance that Vinogradov Hill (Măgura) was used as an observation point in the direction towards the open area of the Panonia Hills.

Swampy sectors and open rivulets appear between Hust and Vinogradov due to the reduced angle flow. The Tisa River had an entangled flow; the altitude of the Tisa River is 156 m at the Tisa-Rica confluence, 147 m near the Setidava Fortress and 139 m in front of Vinogradov Hill (Măgura). Under these conditions a difference in level of only 17 m is registered over a 17 km length resulting in an average inclination of 1 m/km.

Correlating the genetic types of soils and vegetation types

It is the case that 2000 years ago the forest limit was approximately 20 km west of Vinogradov inside the Pannonian Field. In comparison, according to archaeological digs, the Tisa Gulf displays a strongly humanized area (settlements, fortresses, metallurgical ovens, and a significantly large workforce), due to a sheltered climate. In support of this idea there are indications from elements of the fauna such as the turtle (*Testudo hermani*), and various tree species such as the sweet chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) and the walnut tree (*Juglans regia* L.), and among the agricultural crops such as vineyards. Vineyards are very old in this area; tools and biological material from Antiquity have been discovered: "A traditional occupation in upper Tisa was keeping vineyards as indicated by the discovery of knives for cleaning vineyards at Gallis-Lovacka, Malaja Kopanja ... Wild vineyards of a forest type, which according to specialists was the oldest of the cultivated species, was discovered near the town of Vinogradovo" (Lazorecko, 1979, 73, cited in Ilieș, 2006a, 105).

A weak point was discovered while analysing the orographic barrier represented by the Bârjava Mountains to the north of the Hust Gate (fig. 4). The sector of reduced altitude was crossed by a road even during the Middle Ages, and it is possible that the fortification system was annulled by this vulnerable sector, situated 20 km north.

Historical information

Looking for historical information on this sector, a series of aspects was selected. This secondary gate was permanently in view of the Maramureș people, being expressly mentioned by historians. "In the middle flow of the Neagova River and the villages around Dolha, in the middle of Bârjava, there is an area of lower peaks, like a communication corridor between Maramureș and Bereg" (Filipașcu, 1940, 40). The lower sector is a direct link to the Bârjava Valley but also a direct transit from

Veretichii Defile, "gate" to Pannonia, an access route for numerous migrating people. Not by accident was there a fortress on the Bârjava River that blocked direct access from this passage of the Carpathians towards Maramureș, a fortification such as the Bărănica Fortress (Bronka).

The fact that Maramureș had been annexed to the Hungarian kingdom only lately, results from the permanent struggle of the Maramureș people to control this area. For the excellent outcome in the battles fought on behalf of the Hungarian kings against the Turks, the royal family in Dolha was subsequently rewarded five villages outside Maramureș: *Dolha, Mărgineni, Rotunda, Coșna and Bărănica* (Filipașcu, 1940). By this action, the Bărănica Fortress was controlled by the people of Maramureș and it represented an important piece of fortification of the western sector which was the most vulnerable.

The intention of the Maramureș people to control the "gates" continued even in the 15th century, but the process of annexing and controlling the Hungarian crown was too advanced, as made clear by the next quotation: *"The faithful companion of Matei Corvin in all his wars*

was Ambroziu, the son of Seneslau in Dolha, to whom, in 1460, the king granted the special favour of building a stone house in Dolha (cf. Ib. No. 252. Instead of this, Ambroziu built a fortified castle, that by the decision Art. L.XXIX of Dieta in 1471, Ambroziu was forced to demolish this castle, receiving as a reward the exemption of taxes payment to the state that he should have paid for his huge fortune)" (Filipașcu, 1940, 66).

In conclusion, the military fortifications built by the people of Maramureș during Antiquity and the Middle Ages clearly underlines the importance of naturally occurring defenses but also the way in which the human component can influence the evolution of a geographical region that has internal cohesion.

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VRATA V POKRAJINO MARAMUREȘ: GEOSTRATEŠKI POMEN V PROSTORU IN ČASU

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POVZETEK

Pokrajina Maramureș je "deželna" teritorialna enota, ki jo v srednjeveških dokumentih najdemo pod imenom "Terra Maramorosiensis". Obsega ozemlje ob zgornjem toku reke Tise, natančneje ob zgornjem delu Hustovske tesni. Osrednje polarizacijsko središče regije je bilo mesto Sighetu Marmăției, ki je bilo svojčas glavno mesto dežele Maramureș. Po letu 1918, ko so maramurško ozemlje razdelili na dva dela, je bil razvoj družbeno-gospodarskega in kulturnega področja obeh novonastalih enot še več kot 60 let izjemno počasen.

Lažjo dostopno pot skozi spodnji del tesni, ki vodi proti depresiji, obdani s težko prehodnimi gorami, imenujemo vrata Kot geografska regija "deželnega" tipa z depresijami med karpatskim gorovjem je bil Maramureș največja in najmočnejša državna teritorialna enota.

Zaradi njegove konfiguracije in lege na območju Karpatov so avtorji članka osrednjo pozornost namenili tako imenovanim vhodnim vratom, med katerimi so najpomembnejša zahodna, imenovana tudi Hustovska vrata. Pravega pomena regije se zavemo, ko izvedemo geostrateško analizo njenega vpliva v času in prostoru. Glede na dejstvo, da je stopnja družbeno-gospodarskega razvoja nekega ozemlja močno odvisna od hitrega pretoka ljudi, idej, dobrin in denarja, je očitno, kako pomembna je povezava pokrajine z zunanjim okoljem.

Eden od namenov članka je predstaviti Hustovska vrata, skozi katera je vodila glavna pot v pokrajino Maramureș od antike pa do leta 1918, ko so regijo razdelili na dva dela, in sicer po toku reke Tise, ki je po drugi svetovni vojni predstavljala neprehodno pregrado.

Na podlagi poglobljene analize ter prostorskih in časovnih korelacij med različnimi informacijami smo zastavili delovne hipoteze in izpeljali sklepna spoznanja. Kljub temu je treba imeti v mislih, da se predstavljene zamisli lahko spremenijo, če bodo arheološka izkopavanja, odkritje ali dešifriranje novih dokumentov ter uporaba novih tehnologij prinesli nova spoznanja. Članek temelji na izredno raznovrstnih informacijah, virih in področjih preučevanja.

Na podlagi do sedaj pridobljenih spoznanj o vojaških utrdbah oziroma citadelah, čebelnjakih in naravnih razmerah lahko določimo dva obrambna sistema v pokrajini Maramureș: Hustovska vrata in sighthetsko območje. Ker se študija večinoma osredotoča na vojaške utrdbe, je bilo treba navesti določene podrobnosti v zvezi z vojaškimi veščinami prebivalstva.

Ključne besede: pokrajina Maramureș, Romunija, geostrateška vrata

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