

A GEO-HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON RÂU DE MORI

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Abstract: *The historical presentation of the commune of Râu de Mori.* The aim of this study is to present the fact that the commune of Râu de Mori has an rich historical and cultural past which makes it interesting and unique not only in the county of Hunedoara, but also at the national level. Besides this cultural and historical richness, the comune, in itself, represents a tourist attraction also because of the diversity of the natural setting. From the historical and cultural point of view, the commune of Râu de Mori is almost the only one in the county of Hunedoara to have a rich history and cultural and historical objectives which conserved almost entirely over the years. The main aims of this article are those of presenting the historical importance of the village, its importance for the economic development, the historical evolution of the commune since its first documented mention till the present day and that throughout the time historians and geographers mentioned its name in different specialized studies or they did scientific research in some areas of this commune. For the elaboration of this study I consulted several bibliographical sources, statistical data, cartographic and photographic materials, and even just simple tales of inhabitants of different villages of the commune of Râu de Mori, which has resulted in the present study.

Rezumat: *Prezentarea istorică a comunei Râu de Mori.* Scopul acestui studiu este acela de a prezenta faptul că, comuna Râu de Mori are un trecut istoric și cultural bogat, ceea ce o face interesantă și unică la nivelul județului Hunedoara, dar și la nivel național. Pe lângă această bogăție istorică și culturală comuna, în sine, reprezintă un punct de atracție turistică și datorită diversității cadrului natural. Din punct de vedere cultural-istoric, comuna Râu de Mori, este aproape singura comună la nivelul județului Hunedoara care se poate bucura de o istorie bogată și de obiectivele culturale istorice care s-au păstrat aproape intacte de-a lungul vremii. Ca și obiective principale mi-am propus să demonstrez importanța istorică a



comunei și importanța sa asupra dezvoltării economice, evoluția istorică a comunei de la prima atestare documentară până în prezent și faptul că de-a lungul timpului istoricii și geografii au menționat numele comunei în diferite studii de specialitate sau au făcut cercetări științifice în anumite areale ale comunei. În elaborarea lucrării am consultat mai multe surse bibliografice, date statistice, materiale cartografice și fotografice, chiar și simple istorisirii ale locuitorilor din satele comunei Râu de Mori.

Key words: commune, historical and cultural development, touristic potential, economic development, uniqueness.

Cuvinte cheie: comună, evoluție istorică și culturală, potențial turistic, dezvoltare economiă, unicitate.

1. INTRODUCTION

I chose to realise this study because I live in one of the villages that make up the commune of Râu de Mori and I wanted to demonstrate that by its historical, cultural, touristic and also natural richness, the commune of Râu de Mori is one of the most beautiful and interesting localities in the county of Hunedoara and even in the country. Another reason why I chose this topic is that Râu de Mori is the only commune in the county of Hunedoara which has on his territory four massifs, three major forms of relief, posses the most significant reservation of the biosphere in Romania and also the oldest National Park in the country. In addition to the natural richness, the commune of Râu de Mori has also an interesting cultural and historical one, which makes it unique and worth to study and visit.

2. METHODOLOGY

The present study aims to analyse the (positive and negative) changes that occurred in the commune of Râu de Mori from the natural, cultural and historical point of view. The study method used is the one specific to any geographical research. Therefore, I get through several stages and for each one there were used several research methods.

The preparatory stage consisted in the operationalisation of the concepts, in the gathering of the bibliographical sources and in the precise delimitation of the studied area. The familiarisation with the concepts that are going to be studied represented a support for the following stage. The field research stage was based on the direct observation method, on statistic documentation and on the description of the natural phenomena on the spot, to which was added the direct dialogue with the local people. At this stage, taking pictures on the spot, in order to demonstrate through images the changes that have occurred in the rural world due to the phenomenon of tourism, had a great importance. The final stage consisted in the analysis and interpretation of all data, in confronting them with other theoretical elaborations and in the selection of the most important elements able to illustrate the realities on the ground.

The main methods used during these stages were: *The historical method* used to analyze the evolution of the villages that make up the commune of Râu de Mori until reaching the present stage, that of a commune; *The analysis method* was used to highlight the economy and infrastructure of the area, considering its positive and negative aspects. *The direct observation method*, the best method to study the rural life, represented the base for this study. It is what gave objectivity to the whole study consisting in the analysis of the primary information (from the field) and then of the secondary one (offered by other researchers).

3. GEOGRAPHICAL POSITION

The commune of Râu de Mori, part of the Hațeg Country, is located in the south-west of Hunedoara county, at the intersection of the parallel of $45^{\circ}30'$ north latitude and the meridian of $22^{\circ}55'$ east longitude. Located at the boundary between the high plain and the hillock that announce the mountains, the commune covers 38 782 ha, being one of the largest communes in the country. More than half of the commune surface is covered with forests belonging to the three mountain units that are found here: Țarcu Mountains in the south-west, Godeanu Mountains in the south and Retezat Mountains in the est.

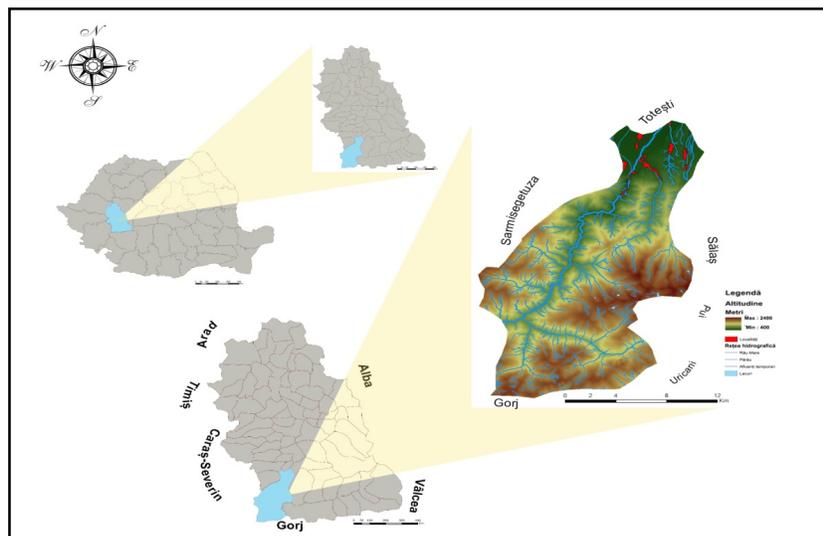


Figure 1: The geographical position of Râu de Mori

The area is clearly defined to the surrounding mountainous regions by unevenness of hundreds of meters (the remarkable elevation of 600 m on the southern side, represented by the northern side of Retezat). Besides forest areas, on the surface of the commune, also stands out the great expansion of fields, sloping from south to north and covered with crops.

The presence on the territory of the commune of the major glacial lakes in the Retezat Mountains (Bucura, Zănoaga) and the Retezat National Park, represent the main advantage of its geographical position, which is actually crucial in initiating tourism activities in the area. In addition, the geographical location makes it an area with moderate continental temperate climate with beneficial influences for several types of activities, including tourism. The area has also a rich hydrographic network, most of the villages being located along the valleys of the rivers, and the most important are: Râul Mare, Sibișel and Râul Mor.

The commune communicates with other regions through NR 68, from which starts a series of county and communal roads: CR 685 and CR 686 from which again start others roads: CR 79, CR 80, CR 81 and CR85. The commune is made up of 11 villages, the communal residence being the village of Râul de Mori. The administrative limits of the commune are: in the east -Sarmisegetusa, in the north -Totești, in the east - Sălașul de Sus, in the south-east Petrosani Depression and in the south is the county of Gorj, the southern boundary of the village coinciding with the southern boundary of the county of Hunedoara.

4. RESEARCH HISTORY ON STUDIED AREA

The county of Hunedoara has always offered, thanks to his exceptional physical conditions, a predilection for human settlements. It is difficult to separate the historiography of the commune Rau de Mori from the one of the Country of Hațeg and, consequently, of the one of Hunedoara county. Therefore, a history of the research on the area will also include works on Hunedoara county or on the Country of Hațeg, the commune of Rau de Mori being an integrant part of both.

The studies on this area can be grouped in: historical studies, language studies and geographical studies. To these ones we can add studies on various aspects of rural life (economic, organizational, etc.).

1) Historical Studies. We distinguish "*Diploma Cavalerilor Ioaniți*" from 1247, where we find the first documented mention of the Country of Hațeg. The first historical monograph of the Country of Hațeg is found in a paper by Jozef Benko dating back to 1780, work that refers to the entire county of Hunedoara. Between 1853 -1854 Dean Stefan Moldovan, writes in a series of "Annoațiuni" published in the Brasov journal *Sheet for mind, heart and literature* about the medieval monuments in the Country of Hațeg. In 1887, the historian Csanko Dezso published a study about the county of Hunedoara and Corvin family in the annex of the *Szazdok* journal, and in 1913 the same author published in the last volume of his work "Historical Geography of Hungary during Corvin family" one of the most important documents on the Country of Hațeg. On the same year, Iacob Radu published in the city of Lugoj the work called "The history of Greek-Catholic Vicarage of Hațeg" the author being a good connoisseur of the villages and the traditions of the area. A reference work for the enrichment of the knowledge about the territory of the Country of Hațeg is that of Radu Popa, published in Cluj in 1988 and called "In the early Romanian Middle Ages – the Country of Hațeg" an excellent monograph of the historical Romanian life in the area. The Country of Hațeg was a great attraction for Romanian historians: B. P. Hașdeu, A. D. Xenopol N. Iorga, N. Densușianu. All works cited so far refer to the Country of Hațeg or to the county of Hunedoara, not leaving out smaller administrative units such as

communes or villages. Regarding the area on which this paper focuses, namely the commune Râu de Mori, it appears in all these works, with reference more or less detailed, but there are also works that deal specifically with this area. Traces of habitation on the territory of the commune of Râu de Mori can be dated back in prehistory. On the hydropower station side of the commune of Râu de Mori, in Binder's orchard were discovered pottery fragments and two flint chips belonging to the Neolithic and the Bronze Age. In the village of Suseni, in some gardens from the Colții Castle side was found a settlement in which Neolithic pottery were collected.

In medieval documents, the town is mentioned for the first time in 1359. Then, at the orders of the king of Hungary, the widow of Michael Căndea takes back Râu de Mori, Nucșoara and Sibișel. The Căndea Family is the oldest family of Romanian leaders mentioned in documents in Transylvania. The nickname of *Kende* under which the members of the Căndești family appear in documents, during the 9th and the 10th centuries, had the meaning of "head" and later became a proper name. In 1868 Karoly Szabo published a study on Căndesti family from the commune of Râu de Mori called *Kendefiek*, in which the author treats the surroundings of Râu de Mori. These are actually works on Căndesti family, highlighting the fact that there were no other families able to prove their seniority on those lands. In the interwar period appears another study on Căndesti family, study realized by Victor Montogna.

2) Language Studies. Most studies realized in the twentieth century had as favorite theme the toponymy. A genuine monograph of the Country of Hațeg speech and one of the few works of this kind in our country was written by Ovid Densușianu in 1915 and called "The dialect of the Country of Hațeg".

In 1968 Ion Conea published his work "The Country of Hațeg -geography, toponymy, history." In 1972 the same author and several collaborators (L.badea, D.Oancea) published "Historical conclusions in the light of some place names in the Country of Hațeg". In 1980 M.Homorodean published "Old territory of Sarmizegetusa in the light toponymy". Studies of toponyms were done by linguists and geographers (Crețan and Frațila, 2007). In the second volume of "The Historic Dictionary of localities in Romania" published in 1968 there are references to the names under which we find the commune of Râu de Mori over time:

- in 1773 „Reul de Moare” according to Klein Conscription
- in 1750 „Riul dye Moreszuszueny” according to Arm Conscription
- in 1839 „Reugie Mora, Riu-gye-Mora, Ruu-gye-Moara” according to Geographisch-topografisch-statistisch-hydrographisch und orographisches Lexicon, vol.IV, Viena, 1839
- in 1850 „Malomviz Szuszeny or Riu de moare din Szusz” according to the statistics of Transylvania from 1830 and 1850
- in 1854 „Malomviz, Malomviz-Szuszeny” according to the historical archive of the Romanian Academy

In 1963 a team formed from *V.Giuglea, M.Homorodean si I.Stan* published the study „*Toponimia din comuna Râu de Mori*”.

3) Geographical studies. The geographical approaches are the most numerous and they have physical geography and also human, economical and social geography. In the studies of physical geography we can include most of the papers about the Retezat Mountains starting from the papers of *Emm. de Martonne* about "the Transylvaniei Alpes" and continuing with the paper of *Cornelia Grumăzescu* „*Depresiunea Hațegului-studiu*

geomorfologic” published in 1975. Further references to the physical geography of the area appear in the “*The Geography of Romania*” vol.I; and then in the paper „*Unitățile de relief din Depresiunea Hațegului*” written by Cornelia Stăncescu that studies the main characteristics of the relief from this area. Petru Urdea (2000) had a special contribution to in the study of the Retezat Mountains, through its numerous studies that refer to the glacial relief from this area. The same author has some of the most recent papers that refer to Retezat: „*Munții Retezat-Studiu geomorfologic*”.

The studies of human geography are more numerous and they have especially papers regarding to the economical geography and the geography of the population and the localities. Regarding the more recent researches about the rural localities there is an important study made by Nicolae Popa regarding the transformations of the system of localities from the Hațeg Depression that appeared in 1994. Then, in 1999, the paper „*Potențialul de dezvoltare al așezărilor omenesti din Țara Hațegului*” is published and this paper is making a synthese of the human geography knowledges that were gathered until now about this region and the paper also proposes to gather a usefull tool for the ones that are interested by the atropogeographic theme of the Hațeg area (I.Velcea, 1999); a year later, the same author publishes the paper „*Tipuri de așezări în Țara Hațegului*” a paper that deals with the relations of the local communities with the natural environment and also with the functionalities of the antropic components of the rural environment (I.Velcea, 2000). Next to these, there can also be mentioned „*Județul Hunedoara*” from the series „*Județele Patriei*” and the paper of O.Floca: „*Hunedoara-ghidul turistic al regiunii*”, and also „*Enciclopedia geografică a României*”.

4) Other studies are the ethnographic and antropological ones. From the first cathegory are the papers of I.Conea: „*Nedei, păstori, nume de munți*” (1936), „*O nestemată a pământului românesc-Țara Hațegului, Locuințe și forme de adăpost în Țara Hațegului*” (1938). From the second cathegory it can be mentioned the study made by Șt. Milcu and H. Dumitrescu: „*Cercetări antropologice în Țara Hațegului- Clopotiva*”. I.Conea dedicated to the village Clopotiva in 1936 a monography „*Clopotiva -un sat din Hațeg*”. The paper deals with all the aspects, starting with the physical geography because I. Conea says “the person who wants to understand a village must firstly know with its geographical environment” and continuing with the simplest aspects of the social life.

In the recent period, there were fewer studies regarding the area, there are no more studies regarding only the area of Râu de Mori, but also studies that deal with the Hațeg region and refer also to the area of Râu de Mori. Regarding the historic of the researches upon the theme, there are few papers that study the social impact of the touristic activities at national and regional level. Regarding the area of Râu de Mori, some refferences regarding the geographical impact of the tourism appear in the paper „*Țara Hațegului-potențialul de dezvoltare al așezărilor omenesti*” (N.Popa, 1999). The same author makes a classification of the settlements according to their touristic potential in the paper „*Tipuri de așezări în Țara Hațegului*”. In the both papers, there are mentioned the villages Râu de Mori, classified after the types of existing touristic potential.

5. THE HISTORY OF THE COMMUNE RÂU DE MORI

The Râu de Mori commune is one of the most famous communes from Țara Hațegului, it has a reach history due to the Cârdea family from Râu de Mori, an important family from the Hațeg region in the Middle Age, and also to the other noble family Ladislau from Ostrov . In 1359, it appears the first documentation about the Principality of Râu de Mori, that was under the authority of the Cârdea family and that had in its componence eight villages .In 1459, the Cârdea family adds other twelve villages to their domain (Rusu, 1984, p.558). The oldest member of the family is Nicolae also named Cârdea, that lived untill 1300. The Cârdea family becomes a nobiliar family in 1439 and they separate from the authority of the Romanian principalities from Hațeg and they enter the authority of the Hunedoara Hunedoara. Thus, the Cârdea family became known in the XV century due to its fourth and fifth generation of the family that lived in the 1438-1456.

Just as other noble families fro the Hațeg region, the Cârdea family from Râu de Mori supported Iancu de Hunedoara in his fights agaist the turks. Even before the cooperation with Iancu de Hunedoara, the Cârdea family was considered as being noble. Untill that moment they were vasals of the Hațeg principality. As a privilege of being a noble man, there is the right to have a coat of arms (*“it is kept untill today as a shiled on which there is a crown with three thorns from which it appears a man with long hair an a bow and an arrow*), a spear with a flag and a private tent in the expedition ” (Rusu, 1984, p.565).These take part together with other nobles from the Hațeg region to the gatherings of the principalities in the centuries XV-XVI (Pop, 1991, p.61) and in the XVI century the Cârdea family maintains its proeminent position in the are. Because Transylvania was occupied by Hungary, many nobles had to adopt hungarian names and to become catholic or protestant in order to maintain their privileges and territories.

From the end of the XV th century, the Cârdea family has been split in two branches that are going to have hungarian names (Drăgan, 2000, p.155).So, Ladislau, that remained in Râu de Mori, becomes the founder of the Kendeffy family and his brother that took the name Cârdeț Ion established in the Satu Mare county and then at the court from Buda founded the family Kenderessy. At the end of the XV century , the Cârdea family has built a fortification on their land named the Colț citadel or the Râu de Mori citadel.

Next to the citadel, the Cârdea family has built a nobiliar court (1352); a reformed chapel (1660), the church from Râu de Mori and the monastery Colț (built between 1377-1447); the nobiliary court from Colț(1501), etc (Popa, 1982, p.57; Rusu, 1997, p.281). A special importance in the history of the Râu de Mori commune have the other two villages that were not a part from the principality of the Cârdea family from Râu de Mori. The village Ostrov is mentioned for the first time in 1360 when the priest Petru from Ostrov became the dean of the Hațeg region and participated to some trials in the Hațeg municipality. This is divided in two distinct villages: Upper Ostrov and Lower Ostrov. Also in 1404, Stanciu and his son Tatul are the first rulers of the Ostrov principality (Popa, 1988, p.108-109). In 1439, the ruling family from Ostrov is against the entrance of the village Unciuc uder the rule of the Cârdea family. During the rule of this family it has been built the church from Ostrov in the XIV century.In 1360, the village Clopotiva is mentioned for the first time because the romanian priest Zampa from Clopotiva is also a judge in the Hațeg principality but was in the cathogory of the *“ordinary people”* (Popa, 1988, p.92).

Only in 1439 we have the first documents about the principality from Clopotiva when their rulers have participated on the fights against the Turks. Also, they appear in many historical documents as neighbors of the Căndeia family from Râu de Mori when they occupied certain villages from the Hațeg county. Since the XV-XVI the rulers from Râu de Mori receive lands from Iancu de Hunedoara and his son, Matei Corvin. So the two villages from the commune, Ostrov and Clopotiva, that had their own leaders, enter under the rule of the Căndeia family.

Starting with The XVII-XIX century, the Căndeia family has an important role in the economy of the area because they had important crops from their lands. The crop was divided between the rulers and the peasants and the rest was given for trade in the regions of Gorj and Banat. Beside this fact, the Kendeffy family had the greatest military power from the Hațeg region and defended the area against the turks.

When the communists took the power in Romania in 1947, many noble families were forced to leave their lands and their fortunes in Banat (Cretan, 2006) and Transylvania. This also happened to the Kendeffy family that had to give up in 1947 to 12000 ha of forest from the commune Râu de Mori and all their other properties in the commune so that the communists can make intensive agriculture. In these conditions, the family had to go at the nobiliary court from Sântămărie Orlea. From here they were forced to move to Hațeg. The last descendent of the family that remained in Romania during the communist regime was Gabor Kendeffy who died in the 11th of may 1962. Most of the members of the family emmigrated in Hungary, Austria and London. Today it is estimated that the Kendeffy family had 50000 ha of land. The descendants of the Kendeffy family Vilmos Pongracz (the daughter of Miklos Kendeffy) and Maria Kendeffy (the wife of Gabor Kendeffy) are claiming their lands..

Astăzi se estimează ca averea familiei Kendeffy a fost de circa 50000 de ha de teren. Descendenții familiei Kendeffy, Vilmos Pongracz (fiica lui Miklos Kendeffy) și Maria Kendeffy (soția lui Gabor Kendeffy) își revendică teritoriile care au aparținut familiei lor.

6. CONCLUSION

When I made this study, I tried to demonstrate the cultural and historical importance of the Râu de Mori county for the Hunedoara county. Also I analyzed the historical or geographical studies that were made about this area and I wanted to show that the Râu de Mori commune was the starting point for some historical or geographical studies. Also the historical research upon the area evidentiates that the commune cad be categorized as a national touristic objective being an important area for the history of Romania. The Râu de Mori commune has a rich history that left behind some touristic and cultural objectives of national importance that are considered by the local people an important part of their identity

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