

CONTRIBUTIONS ON THE STUDY OF SETTLEMENTS IN THE UPPER BASIN OF CRIȘUL REPEDE RIVER

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ABSTRACT. – **Contributions on the Study of Settlements in the Upper Basin of Crișul Repede River.** The present study aimed to research the settlements in the upper basin of Crișul Repede River considering two factors. A first aspect focused on carrying out a settlement ranking based on the number of inhabitants (population size), while the second considered the first documented reference of the settlements. The two-folded research was performed by having as model the scientific literature in the field. In order to better understand the long-lasting and the continuity of habitation in the studied area, we used statistical data taken from the National Archaeological Record of Romania (RAN). We conclude that there is an increase in the number of small-size settlements throughout the 20th century and at the beginning of the 21st, at the expense of the medium-sized and large settlements. This points to a process of depopulation of the studied area. In spite of this process, we can emphasize the habitation continuity and settlement in the upper basin of Crișul Repede River.

Keywords: *settlements, Crișul Repede River, population size, first reference in documents.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The studies that focus on human settlements divide them into different categories, based on various criteria. The present study aims to analyse human settlements in the upper basin of Crișul Repede River taking into consideration two criteria: the population size and the date they were first mentioned in documents. Throughout the 20th century, people and settlements in the area have been impacted by the two world wars, and then by the socialist period. Because of these historical events, human settlements and population in the studied area have been influenced in a positive way – as new settlements have

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been established, but mainly negatively as the population decreased, which led to an increase in the number of the settlements with a small number of inhabitants. The upper basin of Crișul Repede River was inhabited even from prehistoric times, the first traces of human living being discovered in the caves of the karstic area belonging to Pădurea Craiului Mountains. These first clusters of population were followed by others throughout various historical periods (Neolithic, Eneolithic, Roman) – a demographic continuum.

Human settlements and population have been subjects of research and study for specialists due to the critical periods that are part of their history and mainly due to the methods employed in order to adapt to new historical and geographical circumstances (wars, epidemics, glaciations and climate changes). The first studies on human settlements in Romania that considered the habitat and demography date back from the socialist era. We have to emphasize mainly the ones of the 1970s (Popescu, 1972, Rusenescu, 1973, Nițu, 1978, Vofkori, 1979).

More recent studies on the settlement size and their first reference in documents have focused on mental spaces of the “land” or district” type, among other geographical units (Pavel and Barta, 2011, Darlaczi, 2014, Covaci, 2014, Chita, 2017).

The upper basin of Crișul Repede River spreads over two Romanian counties - Cluj and Bihor (fig. 1). The northern part of the basin overlaps Huedin Depression and Crișul Repede Floodplain, while the southern parts are towered by the mountain ranges of Vlădeasa and Pădurea Craiului Mountains. This area comprises 48 settlements at present, yet their number varied in time.

2. METHODOLOGY

The methods employed for the present study involved studying the existing research in the field (Horváth, 2008), which concluded in marking the limits of the basin on morphological grounds. After studying the existing research in the field (Suciu, 1967-1968), we gathered up data on the first reference in documents for each settlement in the area.

The following step was to mine for the statistical data on the population size of the settlements in the area. For this, we worked with the 1900 census, then with the 1930 census which dates back to the period between the two world wars. Then we used the data from the second census of the 21st century - namely the one in 2011. Once we had these statistical data, we started to create the database. The numerical data has been processed through Arc GIS 10.1, resulting maps which make up the ranking of the settlements based on population size. Charts have

also been created and analysed in order to emphasize the shares of each type of settlements considering the data from each census. The periods when the settlements have been first mentioned in documents (first reference in documents) have also been processed and a cartographic projection was generated comprising the date (the century) when each of the settlements has first been mentioned in documents. Two studies represented the model for the settlement ranking based on population size; they both date back to the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st (Nicoară, 1998; Vert, 2001). In order to support the habitation and its continuity in the area, we employed data from the National Archaeological Record of Romania (RAN).

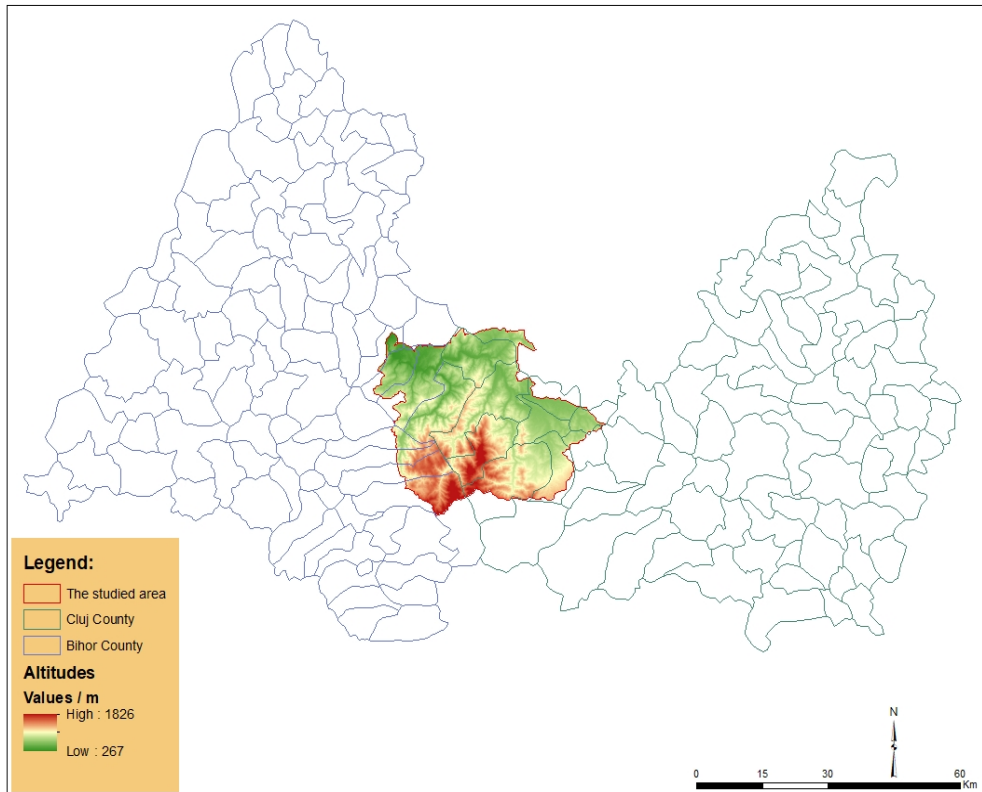


Fig. 1. Crișul Repede Upper Basin - location

3. SETTLEMENT RANKING BASED ON POPULATION SIZE (NUMBER OF INHABITANTS)

We studied the population size of the settlements in the area starting with the 19th century and considering the data in three censuses, 1900, 1930 and 2011. Four ranges of population size have been employed in order to classify the settlements based on the total number of inhabitants: under 500 inhabitants – small settlements; 501-1,500 inhabitants – medium-size settlements; 1,501- 4,000 inhabitants – large settlements and over 4,000 inhabitants – very large settlements.

In 1900, there were 42 settlements with a total population of 50,599 inhabitants in the upper basin of Crișul Repede River. The largest settlement – the only one to be part of the very large settlements group, with over 4,000 inhabitants, was Huedin with 5,313 inhabitants. Seven settlements had population under 500 inhabitants (Horlacea, Domoșu, Brăișoru, Finciu, Ciuleni, Șaula and Vânători – with a total of 2,761 inhabitants). 26 settlements had between 501-1,500 inhabitants, with a total of 23,446 inhabitants. The large settlements group (1,501- 4,000 inhabitants) included eight settlements (Bulz, Vadu Crișului, Delureni, Valea Drăganului, Răchitele, Mărgău, Negreni and Văleni), with a total of 19,079 inhabitants (fig. 2).

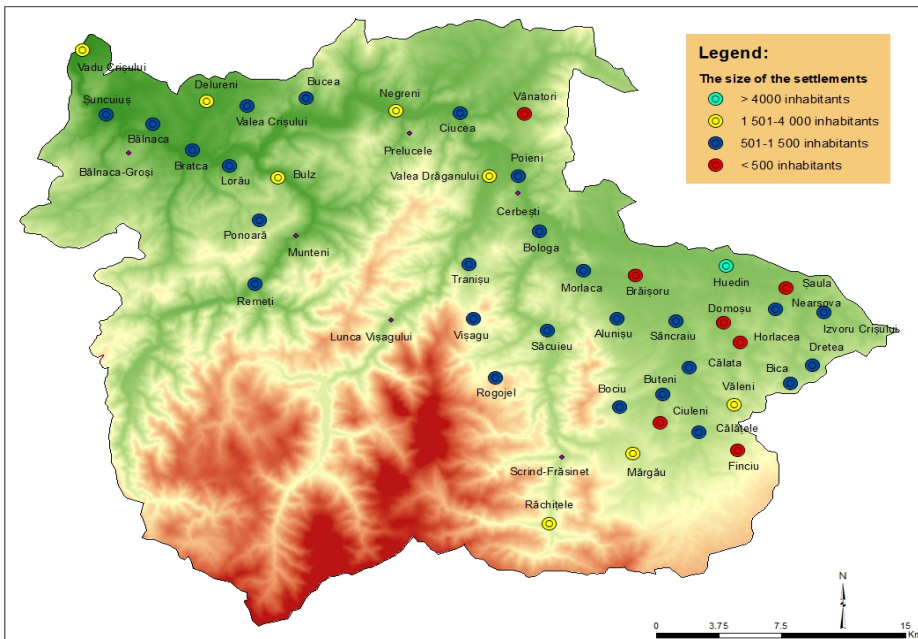


Fig. 2. Upper basin of Crișul Repede River - settlement ranking based on population size in 1900

Considering the share each group of settlements had at the 1900 census, the medium-size settlements (501-1,500 inhabitants) are on the top of the list with 62% (fig. 3). At great distance in this ranking, they are followed on the second place by the large settlements group (1,501-4,000 inhabitants) with 19%, while the settlements under 500 inhabitants are represented by a share of 17%. The smallest share, 2%, belongs to the very large settlements (over 4,000 inhabitants).

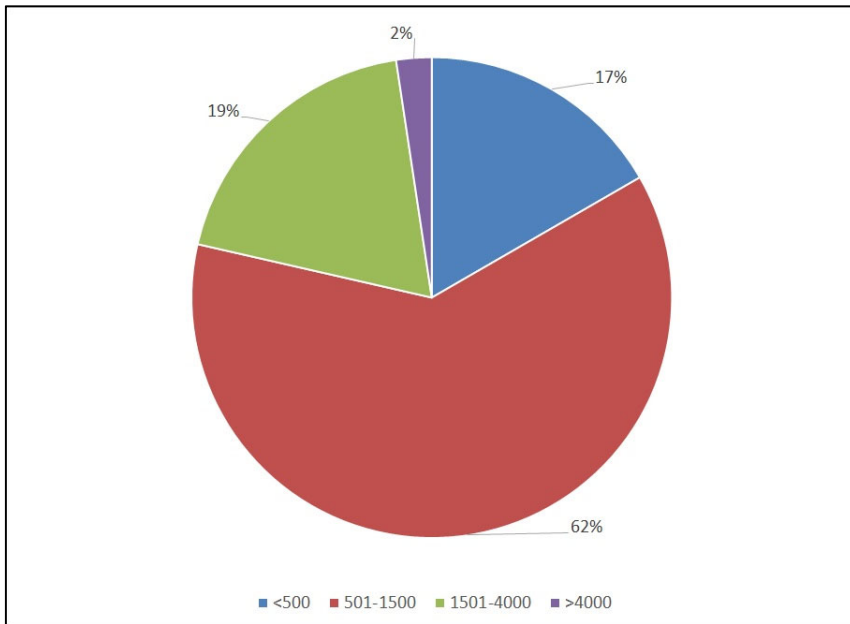


Fig. 3. Shares of types of settlements according to population size in 1900

At the 1930 census performed between the world wars, the number of settlements increased to 44, as two new settlements have been established: Scind-Frăsinet and Lunca Vișagului. The population of the 44 settlements was 59,734 inhabitants, 9,132 more inhabitants than in 1900. The three decades passed from the 1900 census were marked by changes in population size, following World War I and the establishment of Hungarians in Huedin area. At the 1930 census, the first census between the world wars, the number of small settlements (under 500 inhabitants) was six (Finciu, Șaula, Bica, Domoșu, Horlacea, and Nearșova) with a total of 2,388 inhabitants, registering a decrease by 373 inhabitants as compared to the 1900 census. There were 24 medium-size settlements (501-1,500 inhabitants), with 20,788 inhabitants. The greatest increase in population number was registered in the case of large settlements, as they amounted to 13 settlements, compared to nine in 1900. Population number increased by 10,527

as compared to 1900, reaching 29,606 inhabitants. The share of the Hungarians in the area increased in the period between the two censuses, as no less than 53% of Huedin population was Hungarian in 1930, Romanians representing only 21%. At the same time, Sâncraiu and Izvoru Crișului were other two settlements where Hungarians had a majority. There were 57% Hungarians in Sâncraiu and 65% in Izvoru Crișului. Population in Sâncraiu increased by 3,037 inhabitants - namely fourfold - in the 30 years between censuses. This is the largest increase in population in the upper basin of Crișul Repede River throughout this period.

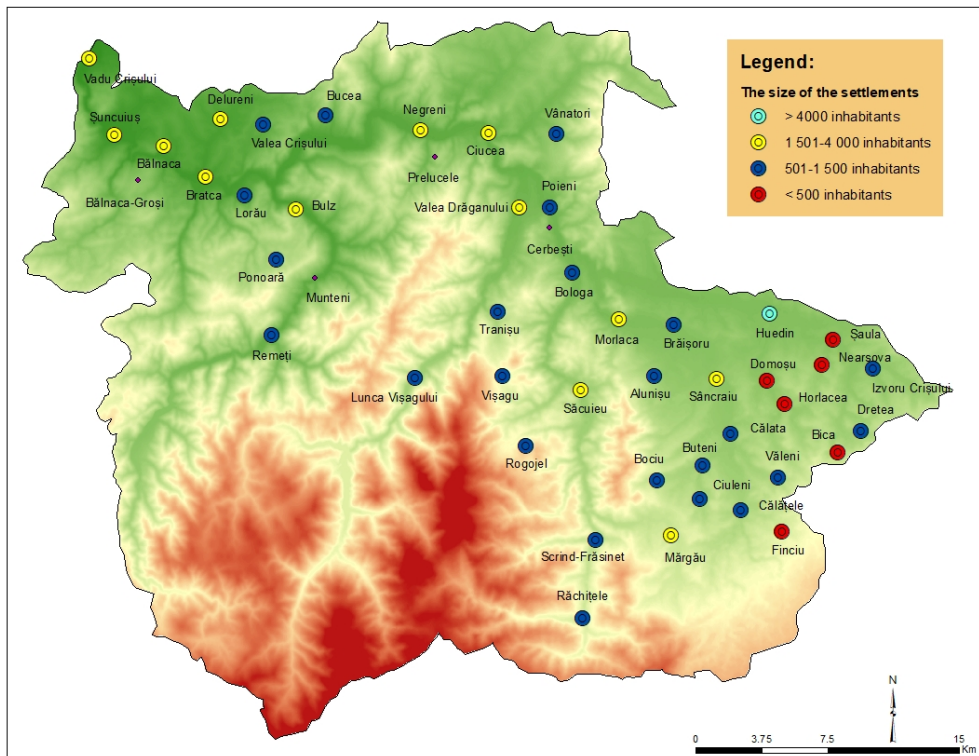


Fig. 4. Upper basin of Crișul Repede River – settlement ranking based on population size in 1930

Considering the share each group of settlements had at the 1930 census, one concludes that 54% of all the settlements are medium-sized, registering a decrease as compared to 1900; 30% are large settlements, registering an increase as compared to 1900 and 14% are small settlements, registering a decrease as compared to 1900. The share of the very large settlement group (over 4,000 inhabitants) was 2% - the same as in the case of the 1900 census.

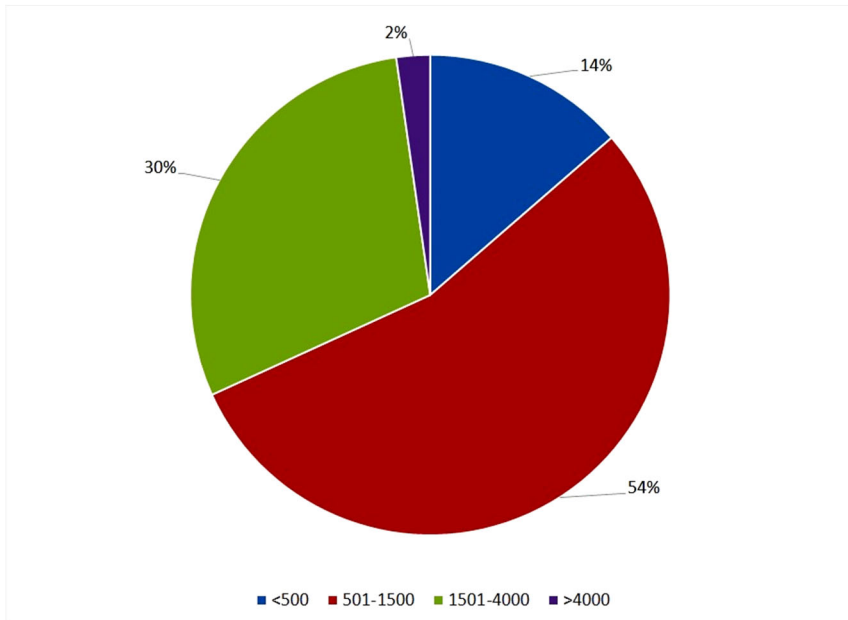


Fig. 5. Shares of types of settlements according to population size in 1930

The period following World War II was marked by changes in the settlement network of the upper basin of Crișul Repede River, as new settlements were established. The second census of the 21st century numbered 48 settlements, with a population of 38,110 inhabitants. Due to risk phenomena affecting mainly the population in rural areas, the number of inhabitants decreased by 21,624 as compared to 1930, which represents 36%.

Four new settlements (Munteni, Bălnaca-Groși, Prelucele and Cerbești) were established around 1956. These were very small villages, of the hamlet type, which were established through the migration of population from the matrix village. The four settlements amounted to 845 inhabitants at the 2011 census, and Munteni was the largest one with 558 inhabitants. The following two villages had under 150 inhabitants each (135 inhabitants in Bălnaca-Groși and 121 in Prelucele). The 2011 census registers Cerbești as the smallest settlement – only 31 inhabitants, while Huedin remains the only settlement with over 4,000 inhabitants. Huedin received town status in the 1960s – thus becoming the first and the only town in the upper basin of Crișul Repede River. If the 1930 census numbered more medium-sized settlements in the studied area, in 2011 there was a totally different situation: 25 out of the 48 settlements were small, seven of these with a population under 100 inhabitants (Dretea,

Bica, Brăișoru, Cerbești, Ciuleni, Buteni, Bociu – 508 inhabitants in total). The studied area is characterized by major dysfunctions, as it included seven settlements with a total population of 508 inhabitants, a number which represents little more than the amount specific for a small village. At the same time, the number of large settlements decreased from 13 – in 1930 – to only three – in 2011.

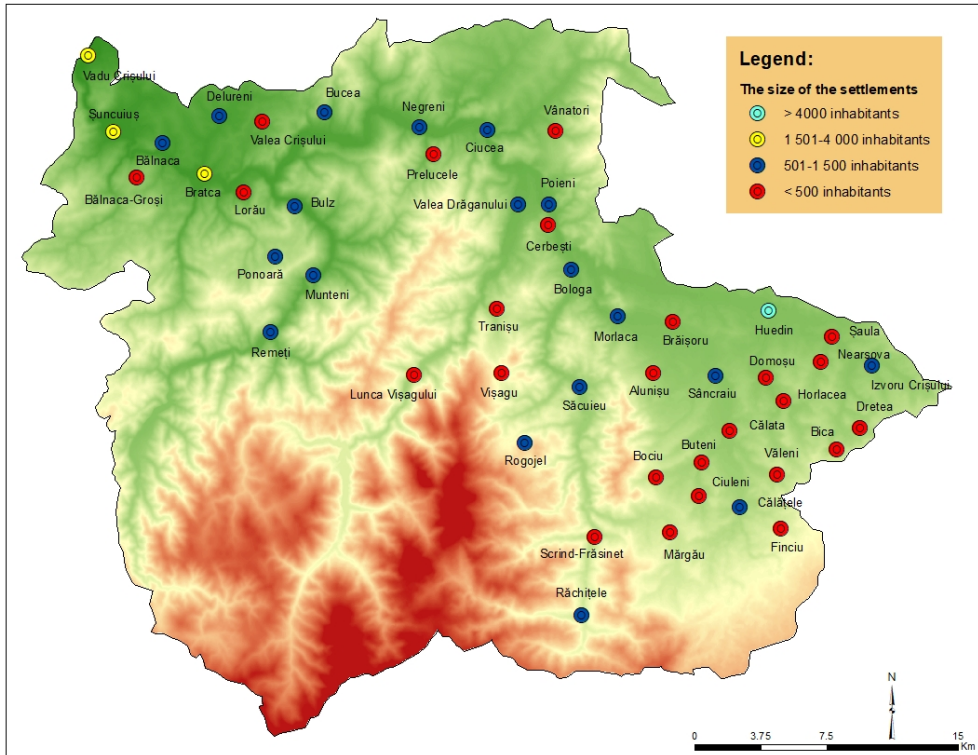


Fig. 6. Upper basin of Crișul Repede River - settlement ranking based on population size in 2011

The 2011 census brought about a different situation concerning the shares of the settlements according to population size as compared to the 1900 and the 1930 censuses. At the 2011 census, small settlements registered 52% - they formed the majority, due to the depopulation processes taking place in rural areas during the socialist period. After 1989, there were also other reasons for the population decrease. Starting with this year, population migrated towards towns and cities (internal migration) or to other countries (external migration), in order to find a more secure and better paid job. Following closely the small

settlements group, medium-size settlements account for 40% - they also registered a decline in the number of inhabitants. Large settlements account for 6%, the lowest figure in the entire studied time range. Huedin continues to be the largest settlement, with a population under 10,000, yet it has also experienced demographic risk phenomena, namely the migration of the young population due to the lack of jobs.

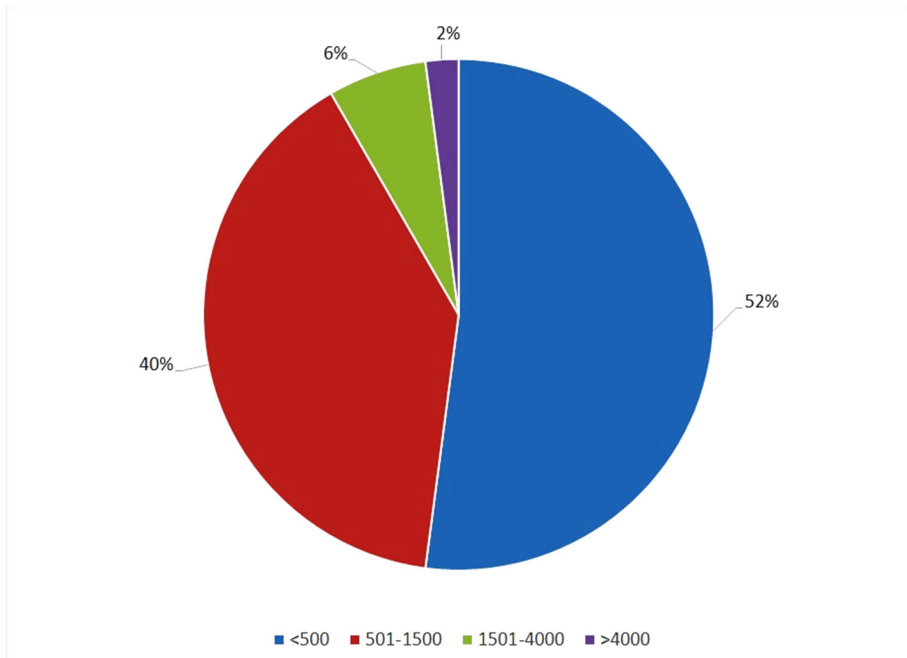


Fig. 7. Shares of types of settlements according to population size in 2011

4. SETTLEMENT RANKING BASED ON THE FIRST REFERENCE IN DOCUMENTS

The upper basin of Crișul Repede River has been inhabited since prehistoric times. Following archaeological research, traces of habitation have been discovered and they date back to various historical periods, starting with the Neolithic and going throughout the Roman period. The best known archaeological site within the studied area is the Roman fort located at Bologa. This was an important strategic location during the Roman period, as it aimed to keep out the invaders in Ciucea Pass. The fort was built in order to billet the Roman soldiers of the *Hispanorum* II Cohort which was meant to defend the borders of the Roman

Empire (Gudea, 1973). Thus, it blocked any attempt of invasion from the Barbarians. In order to consolidate the limes in Ciucea Pass, the Romans have built outposts in Poieni, Vânători and Negreni, yet they have not been preserved as well as the construction in Bologa did.

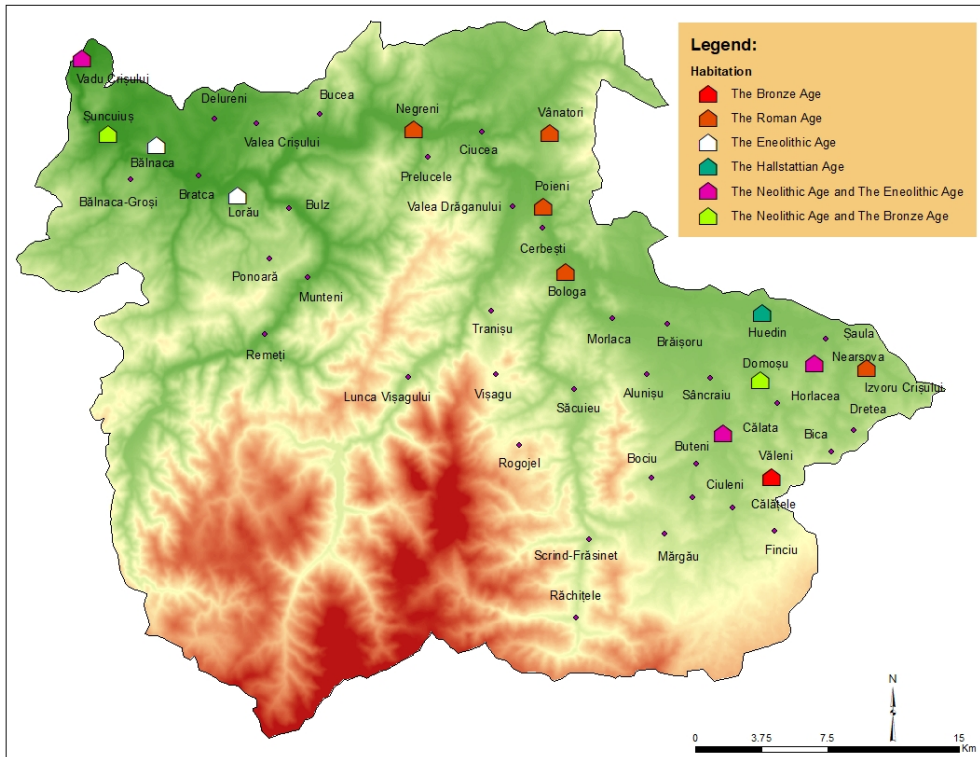


Fig. 8. The beginning of habitation in the upper basin of Crișul Repede River

The first references of these settlements in documents were in the 13th century, when eight settlements (Vadu Crișului, Șuncuiuș, Șaula, Izvoru Crișului, Dretea, Călata, Văleni and Buteni) were mentioned in documents (fig. 9). The next century registered eight new settlements in documents (Valea Crișului, Ciucea, Bologa, Huedin, Sâncraiu, Nearșova, Horlacea, and Bica). The largest number of settlements was registered in the 15th century, as 16 villages were first mentioned in documents (Bălnaca, Delureni, Bratca, Lorău, Bulz, Negreni, Valea Drăganului, Morlaca, Săcuieu, Alunișu, Domoșu, Bociu, Ciuleni, Călățele, Finciu, and Mărgău). The 16th century was poor in new settlements as only two were mentioned (Poieni, Brăișoru). Other seven settlements were mentioned throughout

the 19th century (Bucea, Remeți, Vânători, Tranișu, Vișagu, Rogojel and Răchițele) and other seven were established during the 20th century (Bălnaca-Groși, Ponoară, Munteni, Prelucele, Cerbești, Lunca Vișagulului and Scind-Frăsinet). The most recent ones are those mentioned after World War II, in 1954-1956.

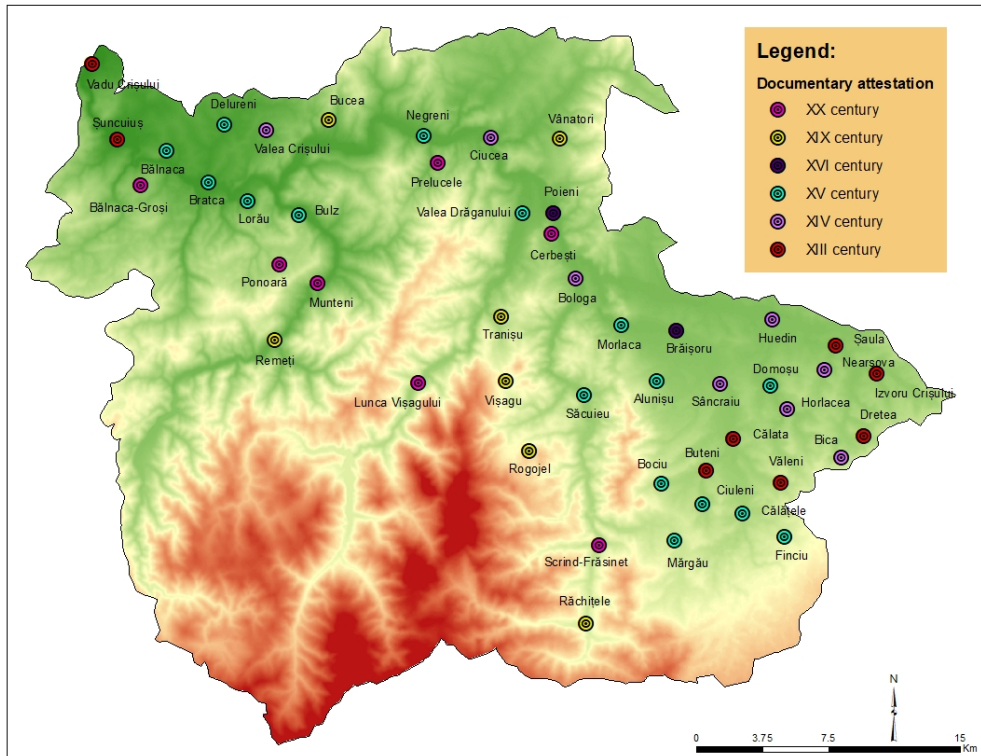


Fig. 9. Settlements of the upper basin of Crișul Repede River – first reference in documents

5. CONCLUSIONS

The population size of the settlements in the upper basin of Crișul Repede River was marked by continuous changes during the 20th century. If the previous century was characterized by a high number of large settlements, the 21st century was marked by their decrease. The settlements that form the majority are small-sized ones, as one can conclude by analysing the data from the most recent census, in 2011. Therefore, it results that the area is affected by

a process of depopulation of the rural space, which started in the socialist period and continued after 1990. The oldest settlement references in documents date back to the 13th century and the newest are from the 20th century. The largest number of settlement first references in documents was registered in the 15th century. The continuity of habitation in the area is due to the geographic location of the basin which has been inhabited since prehistoric times. There are habitation traces dating back to the Neolithic and continuing through the metal age, the Roman period, until the modern and contemporary periods. Even though population decreased in many villages and the number of small settlements increased, the studied area is characterized by the continuity of habitation. This was also due to other factors, for example the transport infrastructure, as the area is crossed by major roads which date back even to the Roman times.

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