

HISTORY OF RESEARCH ON THE LAND OF FĂGĂRAȘ

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ABSTRACT. – **History of Research on the Land of Făgăraș.** The aim of this study is to analyze the scholarly papers and the cartographic documents which mention the Land of Făgăraș as a geographic region. This study is based on detailed consultation of the specialized literature. It reviews the last two centuries of research on the Land of Făgăraș. The importance of our research consists in unveiling the main sources which consider the regional space as a whole and which refer to it as a space that generates identity in different modes. In the last 20 years in Europe we witness a rise in the significance of the cultural region, especially the “land” type entities. They frequently appeared in the countries that share a Latin past. French specialists in territorial planning have adopted a law that confers them the title of project regions because they provide characteristics such as social and economic cohesion leading to sustainable development. Investigating these spaces as well as investigating their former approaches can prove to be very successful for the future purpose of focusing on their competitive advantages in the process of regional planning.

Key words: *research, cartographic documents, regional identity, Land of Făgăraș, history.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The present paper catalogues the manners in which the Land of Făgăraș is presented in the specialized literature, in the opinion of Romanian as well as foreign researchers. By means of this paper we seek to contribute to the framing of the main points of view that followed in the scientific debate regarding the land, especially those that emphasize unitary characteristics.

The Land of Făgăraș represents one of the geographical mental spaces, one of the “lands” in Romania. These spaces appeared in the process of conserving the ethnographical values and they have a particular land use. The common binder is the awareness of belonging to the same lineage (Cocean, 2011; Ilieș, 1997). Mental space in the opinion of Cocean (2010, pp. 61-63) is composed of perceived space [*l' espace perçu*], lived space [*l' espace vecu*] and imagined space.

In the last decades, the research of the “lands” as geographical regions and mental spaces comes to complete the studies that focused on detailing and describing some components of the whole. Particularly, the Land of Făgăraș is the object of investigation of several plans, during one century and a half, but has not benefited yet

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from a systemic, regional approach that could foster its existence as a territorial system and as a mental space- in the context in which Ilieș claims that “there must be conclusive evidence if the lands are geographical regions or not, without any possibility of opposite arguments” (Ilieș, 1999, p. 44) and in accordance to the new emerging regional geography which “treats regions as continually shifting products, not just units that need to be understood” (Murphy and O’Loughlin, 2009, p. 242).

2. LOCATION OF THE LAND OF FĂGĂRAȘ

For this paper we took into analysis the Land of Făgăraș, a region located in Romania, southern Transylvania, which is also known in the specialized literature and in the common speech of its inhabitants as the “the Land of Olt”.

Many have been the considerations whether or not the Land of Făgăraș stretches also on the right bank of the Olt River; some of the scholars had strong arguments of delineation such as the ethnographic criterion (Irimie, 1956,1957,1958) or the economic criterion (Dragu, 1970).

Nevertheless, we believe that from the administrative viewpoint the Land of Făgăraș comprises two parts of two neighboring counties, Brașov County and Sibiu County and integrates 29 administrative units. In what concerns the natural environment, the region belongs to the category of „slope lands”, partially due to the strong asymmetry between the depression and the northern slope of the Făgăraș Mountains (Cocean, 2011).

2. METHODS OF RESEARCH

We realized the study with the aid of documentary sources such as the edited collections of documents (Pușcariu, 2006), books, research papers and cartographic representations between the 16th and the 21st century.

In order to reveal the foremost “steps” made by researchers in understanding the region, we needed to evaluate the significant contributions brought by scholars into this area. To investigate the issue posed above we searched for books, articles and maps in the ROLiNeST National Collective Catalogue and the “Lucian Blaga” Central University Library Catalogue. To be included in the analysis, a source had to contain the expression “the Land of Făgăraș” or “the Land of Olt” in its title. The sources that did not contain the exact phrases but had clear reference to the region in other forms of representation were also considered for examination.

Each study was introduced in a database and color coded according to the field of research (history, economy, social sciences, etc.) (Table 1).

Literature database sample for the coding of the sources

Table 1

Author/ authors	Year of publication	Title of the study	Publishing house	Location of the publishing house	Domain of study
Pușcariu, S.	(1904)	Despre boierii din țera Făgărașului	Tiparul Tipografiei Archdiecesane	Sibiu	history
Minea, I.	(1914)	Din trecutul stăpânirii românești asupra Ardealului: pierderea Amlașului și Făgărașului	Editura „Poporul” Institutul De Arte Grafice, Editură și Librărie	București	history
Bărbat, A.	(1938)	Desvoltarea și structura economică a Țării Oltului: cu un plan de organizare	Tipografie Națională	Cluj-Napoca	history
Meteș, S.	(1935)	Situația economică a românilor din Țara Făgărașului, vol. I	Tipărită cu cheltuiala lui Ștefan Boier și Octavian Stoichiță	Cluj-Napoca	economy
Roșculeț, G.	(2002)	Țara Oltului. Orientări de valoare dominante	Editura Fundației „Școala sociologică de la București”	Făgăraș	sociology

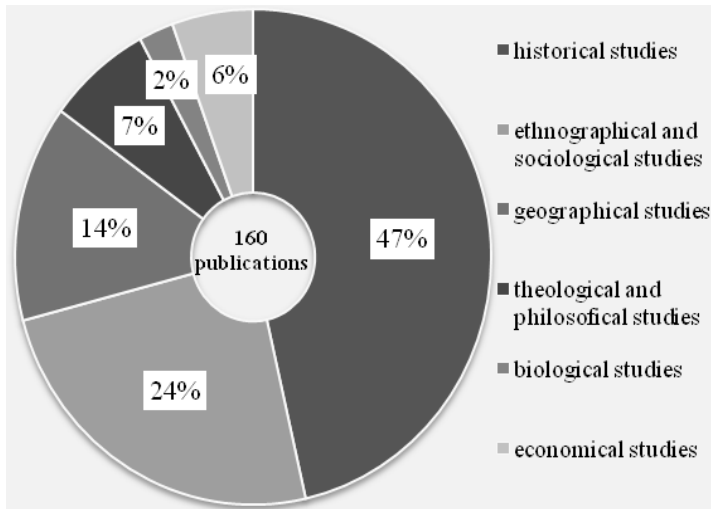


Fig. 1. Categories of studies that analyze the Land of Făgăraș as a region

Eventually, we found a total of 160 written and 13 cartographic documents which corresponded to the inclusion criteria.

Further more, we chose to take into consideration and analyzed only those that debated the main points of view regarding the land.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Historical studies. The first study published as a book that uses the denomination “the Land of Făgăraș” was carried out by Nicolae Densușianu in 1885. Moreover, the merits of formulating and claiming amongst the first, based on historical sources, the idea of the region’s identity as a “Romanian country” (Răduțiu, preface, 2006) belongs to Pușcariu (1904) with his book named “Despre boierii din țera Făgărașului” [Historical fragments. About the boyars from the Land of Făgăraș].

Based on these assumptions, we ought to mention the fact that the historical investigations of the region registered substantial progress starting with the ninth decade of the 20th century, moment that coincides with the transition from reproducing official and informal documents to explaining situations and regional phenomena.

The paper “Țara Făgărașului în Evul mediu (secolele XIII-XVI)” [The Land of Făgăraș in the Middle Ages - 13th to 16th century] joins the ranks of the volumes dedicated to the medieval lands which existed prior to the formation of the national state. The author specifies the right set of circumstances for the scientific initiative as being highly demanding because “the scarcity of historical sources until the 16th century, with direct allusion to the pre-state history of the Land of Făgăraș, is enlightened only by the aura of the legends” (Lukács, 1999, p. 7). He makes a relevant description of the region’s historical sources and arranges them chronologically. The study is a monograph which takes into consideration the entire territory during the Middle Ages. It is considered to be the first research that regards the region as a whole. The same author (1996) notifies about the forged documents circulated in historical times, in the volume entitled “Miscellanea in honorem Radu Manolescu emerito”, explaining that they were used as means of appropriating the lands.

In 1979 the Land of Făgăraș came to the attention of Vâja who elaborated his dissertation that is entitled “Instituții de drept din Țara Făgărașului în secolul XVI” [Juridical institutions in the Land of Făgăraș in the 16th century]. Vâja insists upon the idea of administrative, juridical and fiscal independence of the land. Despite the fact that the land was part of several different forms of political administration, the internal organization and the customary law have not been altered at all. On the other side, in 1943 Literat and Ionașcu publish their work “Orașul și Țara Făgărașului. Cetatea Făgărașului” [The city and the land of Făgăraș. The fortress of Făgăraș] in which they portray aspects from the society of those times.

A significant number of papers deal with the situation regarding the boyars [boieri] from the Land of Făgăraș, such as Prodan (1967) who wrote “Bojaren und <vecini> des Landes Fagarasch im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert” [Boyars and neighbors in the Land of Făgăraș in the 16th and 17th centuries], along with the extraordinary collection of old documents gathered by Pușcariu and published in 1904 in Sibiu, later edited by

Borza de Vișt (2006), or the discourse held by Bunea Augustin on the occasion of entering the Romanian Academy. This lecture was intended to describe the Romanian seniors of the Land of Făgăraș in the interval 895-1713; the discourse was published posthumously in 1910.

Other pieces of research call attention to critical points in the national history as well as in the historical events in the Land of Făgăraș, such as the 1848 revolution, the reluctance of the Făgăraș people to pay the Hungarian royalties, the Great Unification of the Romanian lands in 1918, the Memorandum movement and the spread of the plague: Mușlea (1929), Mândrea and Miklos (1973), Popa Valentina (1977), Mândrea and Megheșan (1980), Ciupea (1992), Mândrea (1980).

Dragu (1969) and peculiarly Boamfă (2007) focused on toponymical researches. Boamfă (2007) chose to study the region for his dissertation entitled “Țara Oltului-studiu de geografie istorică cu privire specială asupra relațiilor cu toponimia” [The Land of Olt - a study of historical geography with special regard to the toponymy] in which he employed complex methods of research in the field of toponymy.

The strength of the paper lies in the field survey through which data was collected and analyzed in chapters that explain the bond between the ethnical, professional structures and the toponyms in the environment. Thus, the author does not annotate his preference for using the “Land of the Olt” expression, nor does a toponymical interpretation for it. To sum up, historians’ studies weighted more in individualizing the Land of Făgăraș as a historical region. Therefore we can consider that its historiography it is one of the most documented and clarified chapters in the history of the Romanian people (Răduțiu, preface, 2006, p. XV)

3.2. Theological and philosophical studies

Theological references are defining for the Land of Făgăraș. The region is an important well-known orthodox center (Figure 2). Therefore, one of the highly



Fig. 2. „Brâncoveanu” monastery, the spiritual center for the Land of Făgăraș (source: the author, 2011)

consistent papers regarding this subject was written by Malene in 2009. The study “Muzica bisericească în ținutul Făgărașului” [Ecclesiastical music in the Land of Făgăraș] makes an introduction into the history of the religious music from its origins until the 18th century. Furthermore, Malene deals extensively with topics like diverse interferences and influences within the ecclesiastical chants. In 2007 Grid Modorcea makes a contribution towards the spiritual life of the Land of Făgăraș (Table 2). In his book

named “Țara originilor. O monografie gridophanică a Țării Făgărașului” [The land of the origins. A gridophanic monograph of the Land of Făgăraș] he argues that “the Land of Făgăraș is the land of the origins; whatever river meadow you would walk along you would find an altar or an old and long-forgotten crucifix. Everything here breathes sanctity, like in Jerusalem” (Modorcea, 2007, p.131). Certain monographs emphasize the orthodox life in the region (Meteș 1930) while other dissertations (Busuioc-von Hasselbach, 1998) enlighten on the role and importance of the Cistercian monastery from Cârța, in the 13th century.

3.3. Geographical studies. The geographical perspective is offered by Popescu (1990) with his valuable geomorphological study on the Făgăraș depression where he affirms that in this area the Olt and its tributaries shaped one of the most extensive depressions- the Land of Făgăraș (Popescu, 1990, p. 9). Descriptive studies precisely indicate to the area of research, for instance those of Mihăilescu (1950, 1966), the two volumes of Iorga (1977) “Pagini alese din însemnările de călătorie prin Ardeal și Banat” [Selected papers from the journey journals in Ardeal and Banat], but also the collection of land records edited by the historian Prodan between 1970-1976 comprising land use documents, agricultural and economical statistics, proven to be one of the most complete sources of inventories from the 16th century onward.

3.4. Socio-demographical studies. Against the background research in this subfield we discovered the existence of several scientific studies that captured interesting aspects of the regional specificity. Solcan wrote her dissertation in 1994. Afterwards her concerns aimed at a research related to the demographics of the Land of Făgăraș between the 17th and 18th centuries. Nevertheless, the study discusses not only demographic features but also the influence of the economic and cultural environments exerted on the society. She states at the beginning of her writing “the inhabitants of this region drew the attention due to their historical, social, political characteristics, keeping their cultural traditions and their lifestyle nearly intact” (Solcan, 2010, p. 7).

An outstanding image of the Land of Făgăraș is strongly connected to the fight against the communism. This image is illustrated by Motoc (2011) in the novel “Întoarcerea partizanului. Brazii Făgărașului vorbesc” [Return of the partisan. The fir trees speak], likewise, the seven volumes of Gavrilă- Ogoranu entitled “Brazii se frâng, dar nu se îndoiesc” [Fir trees break but do not lean]. Three out of seven (1993, 1995, 2009) display the anti communist resistance in the Făgăraș Mountains, under the aegis of the Carpathian Group. The Carpathian Group [*Grupul Carpatin Făgăreșean*] was part of the Foundation “Fighters of the Armed Resistance against the Communism” and its objective employed hiding in the mountains until the outbreak of the 3rd world war, which they considered inevitable. Having Ogoranu as its leader for seven years, the group made of partisans confronted the regime since 1947.

Due to the collapse of the agricultural collectivism in Romania, the American researcher Kideckel (2006, 2010) delivers the investigation on socialism and economic changes produced after 1989 in the Land of Făgăraș. As an expert on the region, he makes a comparison between the workers from Făgăraș and those from the Jiu Valley, presented in the study “România postsocialistă. Munca, trupul și cultura clasei muncitoare”

[Postsocialist Romania. Work, body and culture of the working class]. Another book, originally named “The solitude of collectivism: Romanian villagers to the revolution and beyond” outlines the main observations obtained in the field as a result of the surveys undertaken in the ‘70s, offering detailed information about regional identity issues corroborated with social and economic attributes.

Identity characteristics of the Land of Făgăraș, reflected in the specialized literature

Table 2

<p>“simplicity and robustness, this is what betrays the characteristics of the Land of Făgăraș folk costumes. This impression is given by the straight lines of the costumes, the thick material, the length and the grayish or blackish color combined with the snow-white color of the [sarice] or [bubon]”¹</p>	<p>“as a result of the environmental conditions, the ethnical homogeneity, the common history there is a feeling of regional identity that develops for the Romanian people who are around 65 years old [...] they call themselves [făgărășeni] after the city of Făgăraș or [olteni] after the river that crosses the region”²</p>	<p>“a cinematographic view on the Land of Făgăraș will reveal that this territory has no center [...] it is rather an array of villages [...] maybe that is why this land has a rural aspect, has the characteristic of a margin land, from where it gets the appellation „land of the origins”³</p>	<p>“the hard work they had to do home, the difficult conditions in which they were cultivating the land shaped the inhabitants of the Land of Făgăraș to be industrious [...] this proved to be helpful when they were working in America because the employers preferred them and their immunity to the political propaganda”⁴</p>
<p>“all the important roads were leading to Făgăraș or were coming from Făgăraș. There, was The City. [...] as a matter of fact, I have never seen the city [...] so I have been dreaming year after year of a completely personal Făgăraș”⁵</p>	<p>“keeping intact the Romanian element is a result of the [Țara Românească] possession of the Land of Făgăraș for nearly one hundred years [...] not one part of our lineage was so reluctant to the foreigners as the Romanians from the Land of the Olt”⁶</p>	<p>“dear Senators, many properties were taken from the Romanians in the Land of Făgăraș [...] so the diligent land worker has to cross the Olt river on [Ardeal] to ask for a piece of land from the Saxon villagers in order to cultivate it”⁷</p>	<p>“the denominations Land of Făgăraș and Land of the Olt are used according to researchers’ purpose; their meaning will be different, but the limits of the region will be approximately the same”⁸:</p>

¹ Irimie, 1956, p. 9; ²Kideckel, 2006, p. 23; ³Modorcea, 2007, p. 20; ⁴*** 1991, p. 113; ⁵***, 1991, p. 3; ⁶Metes, 1935, p. IX; ⁷Borzea de Vișt, 1925, p. 96; ⁸Dragu, 1970, p. 5.

Last but not least, a study published in 2009 written by Grecu, Nicoară and Funariu exhibits the personalities of the Land of Făgăraș in order to render homage to them. The book is composed of an array of biographies, the pride of the Land of Făgăraș, who increased the prestige of the region and of its residents.

3.5. Ethnographical, ethno-linguistic, folkloric studies. The sociological school of Bucharest deserves the merits of initiating an extensive research, primarily for Drăguș village. The initiative belongs to professor Dimitrie Gusti who supervised a group of scholars. Herseni Traian was one of his disciples, a leading sociological theorist who delineated for the first time specific “land” type regions as ethnographical areas. Therefore, the Land of Făgăraș in his opinion is an “ethno-cultural, ethno-historical nucleus territory”, “a social life entity” (Herseni, 1997, pp. XXIV-XXV).

The work “Dealul Mohului. Ceremonia agrară a cununii în Țara Oltului” [Mohului Hill. Agrarian ceremony of the crown in the Land of the Olt] written by Ionică (1940) surprises with the complex discourse on aspects like regional repetitive facts used for determining the regional identity. The author pleads for the sociological direction- study case the Land of Făgăraș- and expresses himself in favor of the holistic interpretation of the “lands”.

Irimie (1956, 1957, 1958) compiles three papers on the folk costumes. What is obvious is that the „land” is divided into three parts (Avrig area, Făgăraș area and Perșani area) that could not have been included in the same material as a result of the richness in diversity within the folklore (Irimie, 1956, p. 5). Moreover, based on direct investigations on field, but also on documents, numerous drawings, photographs, Irimie believes that the diversity is, in this case, a consequence of the influences exerted by the Hungarian and German population in the western-eastern margins of the region.

3.6. Biogeographical studies. Ardelean et. al. (2001) analyzes the ichthyofauna and presents the aquatic habitats in the Land of Făgăraș. In the first part of the research, a monographic character is imposed; in the end they debate problems related to the anthropogenic pressure. Moreover, groundwork observations on the avifauna are elaborated in 1998 with the aim of introducing them in a systemic catalogue. In this context, Ardelean urges to caution of human activities which have negative impact on bird population. Finally, Drăgulescu (1995) catalogues the flora in the Land of Făgăraș in the study “Botanica populară în Țara Făgărașului” [Folkloric botanic in the Land of Făgăraș].

3.7. With regard to the **economy**, in addition to the references mentioned above (Solcan, 2010; Prodan, 1970-1976; Literat, 1943), Dragu publishes his thesis in the interwar period with the scope of firmly proposing the economic criterion for delimiting the Land of Făgăraș. This paper reflects the realities of the fifth and the sixth decades of the 20th century. Introducing concepts such as “fringe zone” for the industrial centers of Făgăraș, Victoria, Mârșa, perishable goods, road and railway access (transposed on isochronous maps) and the frequency of railway transportation, the thesis provides a touch of novelty in processing the data.

3.8. Evidence of cartographic data was found in the historical-geographical atlases as well as on old maps extracted from the special collections at “Lucian Blaga” Central University Library in Cluj-Napoca. Two conclusive guides offering indications to medieval maps are “Atlas istoric- de la Dacia la Imperiul Roman și România” [Historical atlas- from Dacia to the Roman Empire and Romania] (Crăciun and Zbucnea, 2006) which appeared on the occasion of 1900 years since the ending of Roman-Dacian wars-

106-2006 and the beginning of the genesis of the Romanian people, and “România. Atlas istorico-geografic” [Romania. Historical and geographical atlas] published under the aegis of the Romanian Academy.

Popescu-Spineni (1938) claims that the most important contributions in mapping Transylvania were brought by Ioan Honterus in his document “Chorographia Transylvanie” (explains the origin of the Saxons, Transylvania is divided from the administrative viewpoint into lands: Burzenland, Althland, Land vor dem Wald, Weinland, Nösnerland), Georgius Reichersdorffer, Ioan Sambucus, Mathias Cinthius, Gerhard Mercator-Kremer. The latter published in 1594 “the Atlas” introducing the method of thematic descriptions (e.g. the geography of Transylvania is categorized into settlement network, soil resources, fauna, a less usual characteristic to be mapped for that period- human mores, etc.).

Maps of Transylvania, between the 16th and 18th centuries

Table 3

Map	Author	Publication year
Transilvania. Siebenbürgen*	[Unknown author]	1566
Per Gerardum Mercatorem cum privilegio. Exusum apud Hondium Atlantis. Amstelodami*	Mercator G.	1590
Principaute de Transilvanie*	Lazius W., Sambucus I., Mercator G.	1664
Mappa della Transilvania, e prouitintie contigue nella quale si vedano li confini dell Ongaria, e li componenti fatti dall armate cesaree in queste ultime querre. Ddedicata all Augusto Regio Maesto di Gioseppe Primo, Re di Romani, e di Ongaria da fio Marando Visconti supre mo insegegniere per S. M. Ces. in Transilvania	Visconti Marando G.	1669
Mappa geographica magne principatus Transilvaniae in usum Exatoratus Caes. Regii Provincialis uniti	Neuhauser F. J. G	1788
Generalkarte von Siebenbürgen. Nach geometrisch gemessenen Karten, und andern zuverloessigen Hilfsmitteln verjüngt, und graduirt von Herrn A. von Wenzely. Herausgegeben von F.A. Schraemll	Schraemll F	1798
Principatus Transilvaniae in suas quasque Nationes, earumque Sedes et Regiones cum finitimis vicinorum Statuum Provincum accurate divisus	Homanni Baptistae I.	[Unknown year]

**maps on which the Land of Făgăraș appears under the name of “Altland” or “Althland” source: Special Collections of the “Lucian Blaga” Central University Library Cluj-Napoca*

As mentioned above, “Lucian Blaga” Central University Library in Cluj-Napoca possesses one of the richest repositories of maps and atlases in Romania. Hence, the Land of Făgăraș appears on several maps under the name of “Altland” or “Althland”, even if in the larger context of mapping Transylvania (Table 3).

From the early 18th century the Land of Făgăraș does no longer appear in the cartographic sources as a “land”. Instead, it appears as the district of Făgăraș amid the political and administrative changes on the territory of Romania. Although the maps of the medieval ages do not set the exact coordinates of the “lands”, the cartographers have the merits of individualizing these entities as ethnical and geographical regions (Popescu-Spineni, 1938, p. 141).

4. CONCLUSIONS

A great impact on researching the Land of Făgăraș was generated by historians, starting with the 19th century. If by that time the region exists only as an allusion in the chancellery documents, land records, papal bulls and diplomas, after 1800 research intensifies with the scope of advocating for its historical personality. Narrative sources exhausted aspects concerning formation, documentary affirmation, the situation of the Romanian boyars and later on evolved to studying environmental characteristics. Some authors introduced new methods of investigation of the society (Kideckel 2006), while others expressed themselves in favor of clear delineation criteria (Popescu, 1990; Dragu, 1970).

Nonetheless the Land of Făgăraș appears on cartographic representations as a „terra” entity in the context of mapping Transylvania. It is well known that the medieval maps were often influenced by the church, without a solid scientific ground (Popescu-Spineni, 1938). Thus, the region’s limits are not drawn on maps or its coordinates are altered. The limited number of cartographic representations contemporary with the formation of the Land of Făgăraș does not diminish though the enthusiasm some might have had in writing about it.

In conclusion, the research made so far assure at least a partial perspective on the state of affairs of a “land” type territory. Bearing this in mind, we wish to bring our contributions with an integrative study that will further explain how peculiar characteristics intervened in the formation of this geographical region.

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