RELATION BETWEEN SETTLEMENT SYSTEM AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT IN CIUC-BASIN IN THE LAST SEVEN CENTURIES

Tibor ELEKES

University of Miskolc, Department of Geography, Hungary

Abstract: In Ciuc-basin the evolution of settlement system is a centuries-old process. In 1567, 42 villages were registered. The evaluation of today’s settlement system lasted till the 20th century. In the years of 1950’s and 1960’s the scattered settlements and detached farms were declared villages. During centuries the town system had changed little. Near Miercurea-Ciuc, which had performed administrative duties for a short periods, Băile Tușnad was declared to town in the middle of 20th century. The evaluation of settlement system, administration and environment are illustrated as a process on the 18 maps, made by myself. In this paper there are published three of them. They give a historical and stop-gap summary. Mass of facts, relating with settlements, regions, environment, administrative units placed in space can represent a base to the organising microregions in the last few years. In the same time old-centuries processes can be traced back: the natural environment was receded step by step with the evaluation of settlement systems.

Keywords: settlement system, natural environment, maps.

Introduction

In the Carpathians the settlement-systems of intermountain basins had come into being after certain stages of development. In the process of changing settlement systems not only the role of natural features, economic and social factors are determinant, but political decisions are also important. The knowledge of the evaluation of settlements system, changing of administration and settlement-environment system plays an important role in the evaluation of settlement system and in resolving of environmental problems.

Geographical position, natural features

The Ciuc intermountain basin encircled by the mountain chains can be found in the centre of Eastern Carpathians. The western border of this area (Harghita Mts. 1800 m) is the inner volcanic range of the Eastern Carpathians, which came into being in the Tertiary and Quaternary period. The Ciuc Mts. lies down on the eastern border, composed of crystalline schist in north and „fliș” in south.

In the north direction the Ciuc-basin is connected to the Giurgeu-basin across Izvorul Mureșului-pass (891 m), in the east direction to the Trotuş valley across Ghimeș-pass (1159m). Across the valley of the Olt River (Tușnad) it is joined to the Brașov-basin and across the Vlăhița-pass (985m) it is linked to Transylvanian-basin.

The Ciuc basin is one of the most characteristic intermountain basin of the Eastern Carpathians. It is similar to Giurgeu-basin and Brașov-basin. It is 50 km long, 12 km wide, where more hundreds wide marine and lacustrine sediments deposited during upper Tertiary and fluviatile deposit filled up the basin during Quaternary. The Olt river follows the stream gradient in N-S direction. It evolved five terrace surfaces: 2,5-5 m, 8-12 m, 15-20 m, 32-45 m, 60-70 m (Tővissi, 2006). The tributaries of the main stream cuts up mostly the estern part of the Ciuc-basin.

The mean annual temperature of Ciuc-basin is 5,5-6°C. The average temperature in July is under 16,9°C, in January is around -7,6°C. In winter there’s often -30°C. The anual rainfall is 700 mm on lower surfaces and 1000-1200 mm on the mountains. In winter, spring and autumn the thermal inversion is characteristic in this basin. The natural vegetation is made up of beech-trees till 800 m height above sea level, above it there’re pine-wood till 1700-1800 m height. (Geografia României, 1987).

The Olt river and its tributaries had an important role in the establishment and evaluation of line of communications in the settlements of the studied area.
The traditional sectors of the economy are animal husbandry (cows and sheep), wood cutting, wood-working industry and potato production in Ciuc-basin, as in other region of the Carpathians (Elekes, 2008).

During centuries, the areas of pasture-, grasing-, and plough-lands were evolved mostly to detriment of wood and marshlands in the „county of wood” (Gyenizse et al, 2005).

The geographical position of Ciuc-basin is favourable near the level of today’s traffic. The closeness of passes, gates could establish significant communication and commercial roads. Here an intersection of the roads came into being. Here meet the roads, coming from the Moldova, Giurgeu-basin, Braşov-basin, or Transylvanian-basin. The most important line of communications follow the valley of the Olt river.

**A historical outline of settlement system development and administration changing**

In the papal memorandum, in the first written documents from 1332-1335 can be identified 15 settlements in the Ciuc-basin (Documente…, 1954; Vámszer, 2000; Egyed, 2006) (fig.1). The settlements belonged to the archdeaconry of Telegd. The development of settlement systems of this region was slowed down owing to the cold climate and the extensive marshland and woodland.

![Map of Ciuc-basin settlements](image)

**Fig. 1. Settlements in Ciuc-basin mentioned in 1332**

The assessment of taxes from 1567 made mention about 42 villages and one town of Ciuc-basin (Székely Oklevéltár, 1976) (fig. 2). Miercurea Ciuc had become a market-town in 1558. The settlements were established along the Olt River and on the alluvial fan of the left side tributaries of the Olt. In the 16th century half of settlements system had existed in the region of today’s Ciuc-basin. In this period the development of the region was due to wood cutting, conversion of timber, animal husbandry and cultivation in a lesser extent.
Villages with favourable geographical situation and easy of access had developed more rapidly as the others, their population number increased. The economic and social role of the significant commercial centers was revalued, which were situated on main lines of communication. These towns are Cărtă, Dănești, Siculeni, Frumoasa, Sâncraieni, Tușnad etc.

During the reign of Joseph II, the administrative registration included 38 registered villages. In 1784 the most populous settlement of the region is Frumoasa with 517 inhabitants. During the first national census (1784-1787) there were registered 100-510 inhabitants in the villages of the region (Magyar népszámlálás…). The settlement system hadn’t changed till 1806.

On the Lipszky J’s map (1806) one town and 51 villages can be found in this region. In Lenk’s first place-name dictionary (Lenk, 1839) the number of Ciuc-basin’s settlements were 52 (Wagner, 1977). Between 1806-1839 the increase of settlements were more significantly in Ciuc-basin, than in Gheorgheni-basin and Brașov-basin.

In 1850 the most populous settlements were Sândominic with 2070 inhabitants, Dănești with 1907 persons, Frumoasa with 1899 inhabitants and Ciucșangeorgi with 1818 dwellers. There were more than 1000 inhabitants in Sâncraieni, Sânsimion and Siculeni.

The settlements of Ciuc-basin, which were established in earlier periods, had more thousands inhabitants even then. Settlements, which came into being in 18th and 19th centuries, the number of population was below one thousand.

The natural vegetation was receded with the evaluation of settlements system. In the end of the 19th century the construction of railway had a beneficial effect on the development of the economy, especially on the woodcutting, woodworking (wood-mill) industry. The expanding economy, the changing society, the railway, the extend of telecommunications influenced this area and the communities in different way.
The settlements, situated in the Olt valley were connected to national railway system. There were built then the recent predecessor of the number 12, 12A, 11B and 13A main roads. In Miercurea Ciuc the role of economic- and society organization had strenghtened.

In 1900 Sândominic was the biggest settlement of the region with its 4430 inhabitants. In Ciuchsângeorgiu had 3600, Miercurea Ciuc and Frumoasa 2800, Dânești 2400 dwellers. (Recensămintele…)

Most of today’s settlements of Ciuc-basin had already existed at the beginning of 20th century.

In 1950 new administrative structures were established according to the new economic sector theories (Raionarea…, 1950). The economic configuration determined the territorial division of society; so the economic sectors became the new administrative territorial units: provinces-rayons-commune. In the history of the region it was the greatest reorganization in the administration. Miercurea Ciuc rayon became the northern part of the Stalin Region, where Brașov was the chief town of the province. In 1952 Miercurea Ciuc rayon became the estern part of the Hungarian Autonomus Region. The reorganization of 1956 brought little administrative change in this region (Raionarea…, 1956).

After II. World War the extensive industrialisation of 1950 was related with the so called socialist cities and county towns, in contrast with Miercurea Ciuc, to where industrialisation arrived lately, but it resulted significant changes. Tușnad became town in that time. In this way it came into being the new aspect of today’s settlements system of Ciuc-basin. The centuries-old evaluation of settlement system had finished then. In 1956 Miercurea Ciuc was the biggest settlement of the region with its 14000 inhabitants. Sândominic had 5600, Siculeni, Dânești, Sânsimion, Ciuchsângeorgiu and Sâncrăieni had 2100-2700 dwellers (Recensămintele…).

In 1968 due to reorganization, which are valid even today, provinces were reorganized to counties. The whole of former Ciuc rayon has become part of Harghita-county since 1968.

The economic and social processes, lasting from II World War till 1990 led to the development of the towns and settlements with favourable facilities due to the extensive industrialisation.

After the events of 1989 a new politic, economic and social changes had started in Romania. These transformations took place mostly in cities and towns changed by the industrialisation (Miercurea Ciuc), in the touristic center (Bâile Tușnad) and in villages situated along main lines of communication.

In small villages ageing, small economic productivity has become characteristic; a kind of social degradation can be observed in these settlements.

The greatest population number was registered in 1990 in whole Romania and in Harghita-county, too. In 1992 the most densely populated settlements were Miercurea Ciuc (45 769 persons), Sândominic (6676) and Siculeni (2811) (Recensămintele…).

In 1990’s a population decrease started in Romania, which was felt mostly in cities and towns. In 1997 a new region arrangement was made, according to that Harghita county was placed in the Central Region.

In 2002 the most populous settlements were Miercurea Ciuc (41 852 inhabitants) and Sândominic (6401 persons) (Anuarele statistice…) (fig. 3).
Conclusions

In Ciuc-basin the evolution of settlement system is a centuries-old process. The evaluation of today’s settlement system lasted till the 20th century. During centuries the town system had changed little.

In the same time old-centuries processes can be traced back: the natural environment was receded step by step with the evaluation of settlement systems.

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Contact data
Tibor ELEKES: University of Miskolc, Faculty of Earth Science and Engineering, Department of Geography, 3515 Miskolc-Egyetemváros, Hungary; e-mail: ecoeti@uni-miskolc.hu