

THE POPULATION OF THE UPPER PRAHOVA VALLEY WITH SPECIAL CONSIDERATION ON THE TOWN OF SINAIA¹

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Das Bevölkern des oberen Prahova tals mit bestimmtem Akzent auf die Stadt Sinaia. Im diesem Studium beabsichtigten wir die Ursprünge der rumänischen Gebirgsstadt Sinaia zu erklären. Um dieses Ziel zu erreichen, haben wir eine interdisziplinäre Untersuchung der historischen Dokumente, der geographischen Faktoren, der Toponymie und des Folklores unternommen.

Die Schlußergebnisse, die wir erreichten unterscheiden sich von denen der Vorgänger. Aufgrund der historischen Dokumente wurde bewiesen, daß in der Zone des heutigen Stadt Sinaia, noch aus der Bronzezeit (ungef. 2200 v.u.z.) ein Dorf existierte.

Aus den Dokumenten ging hervor, daß dieses Dorf im Jahre 1369 den Namen „Podul Neagului“ trug. Im Laufe des Mittelalters entwickelte es sich langsam, da es ein Rastplatz an den Handelswegen, welche die hanseatische Stadt Braşov und Țara Românească verband war. So widerspricht dies dem Beweis, daß sich der Ursprung der Stadt Sinaia ausschließlich dem befestigten Bau des Klosters Sinaia im Jahre 1695 zu verdanken ist. Das befestigte Kloster Sinaia war nur einer der Faktoren, der zur weiteren Entwicklung der zukünftigen Stadt führte. Zu der Entwicklung der Siedlung Sinaia trugen verschiedenartige Ursachen bei: das Vorhandensein der Handelswege, der Bau des Klosters-, die geographischen Faktoren-, die Wahl des Ortes als internationales touristisches Zentrum. Dementsprechend hat sich die Siedlung Sinaia rasch entwickelt und sich vom Dorf „Podul Neagului“ getrennt. Im Jahre 1865 bildete sie ein eigenes Dorf, welches 1880 eine Stadt wurde. Seitdem Sinaia als Stadt gilt, ist sie die hervorragendste Stadt des Prahovatal und setzt ihre Entwicklungsmöglichkeiten weiter fort. Deswegen trägt das Studium zu einer besseren Kenntnis der rumänischen Gebirgszivilisation bei.

Looking at the map of human settlements in Romania, we can easily notice that along the Comarnic—Predeal—Timiș passage (Fig. 1)², the most important town is Sinaia, justifiably and suggestively called 'the Pearl of the Carpathians. Naturally, the question that immediately arises is what has determined the progress and the spectacular rise of this settlement whose past, viewed in evolution, could contribute to the elucidation of some problems of the Romanian alpine civilisation³.

We shall discuss the trends of the historical development of Sinaia in close connection with the factors of the geographical environment, since the answer to our question can be given only by an interdisciplinary approach⁴.

We affirm this because mediaeval documents, which could have been of use to us, are not available. Therefore, we shall approach our sub-

¹ Paper presented at the national symposium "The Geography of Land Use", 30—31, October, 1976.

² All the sketches of this article have been drawn by Adrian Cioacă, geographer at the Institute of Geography.

³ Cf. R. Șt. Ciobanu, *The origins of Sinaia town*, in "Hronic Prahovean", A journal of the Prahova County Council and Art Committee, Ploiești, 1971, p. 13.

⁴ Cf. Jacques le Goff, *Western mediaeval civilisation*, (in Romanian), București, 1970, Edit. științifică, p. 30.

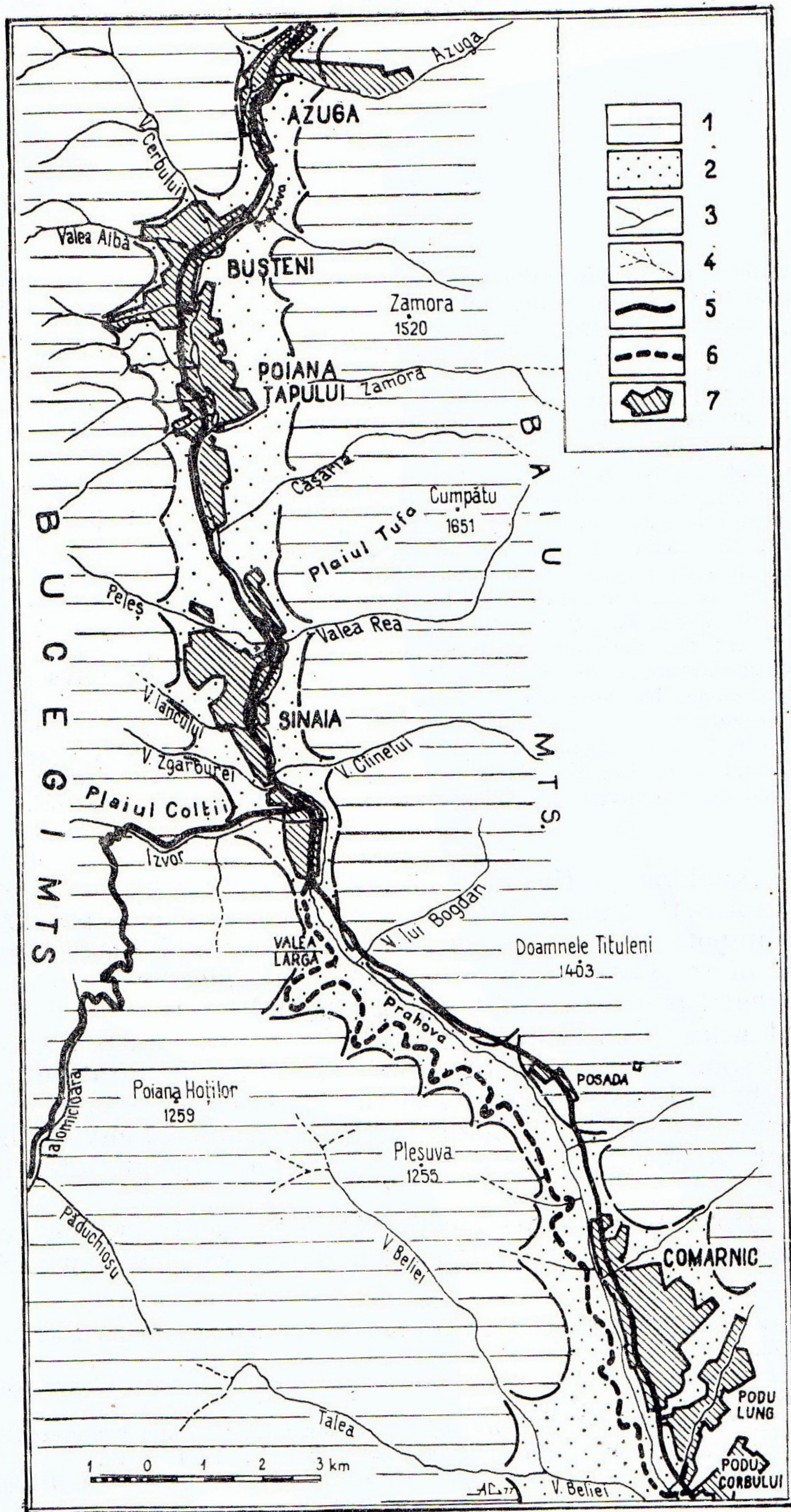


Fig. 1. — Human settlements in the Prahova passageway.

1, mountain area ; 2, the Prahova passageway ; 3, permanent water courses ; 4, intermittent water courses ; 5, modernized roads ; 6, other roads ; 7, human settlements.

ject in the spirit of interdisciplinary researches, as their results have been unanimously acknowledged in the field of alpine civilisation studies, or in those approaches termed "new", whose themes and key problems could be elucidated only on such grounds.

Generally speaking, the authors who have studied the past and the present of Sinaia, have asserted that the generating and polarizing nucleus of the town would have been the monastery by the same name⁵. This affirmation was based upon the document issued by the High Stewart Mihail Cantacuzino-Colţan in 1697: "we laid the foundation and built a small, secluded convent named Sinaia, much like the great Sinaia . . . , on the Prahova river, on waste land under the Bucegi mountains, where abodes had existed before this convent was built"⁶. The expression 'on waste land' has been taken ad literam, without critically investigating the context of the document, without corroborating it by other sources⁷.

In an earlier paper⁸, discussing whether the lay settlement at Sinaia was prior to the ecclesiastical one, we drew the conclusion that the former, i.e. the village itself, had appeared long before the monastic establishment⁹. Our assertion is supported by the very old passageway along the Prahova River, which crossing Predeal at Sinaia, connected Braşov with Comarnic and also by the historical evolution of the human settlement of Sinaia.

The road which links Bîrsa County to Comarnic, dates back at least to the Age of Bronze, to the time of transhumance¹⁰. Archaeological finds at Sinaia¹¹ and Predeal¹² have revealed bronze axes belonging to the tribes of Protothracian shepherds who had passed through the area¹³. The two mentioned localities lie along the pastoral road, marking halting places situated at distances that could be covered within a day's walk¹⁴. Since the bronze axes served for exchange purposes, they were probably buried by their owners, under extraordinary circumstances, with a view to getting them back when times would change for the better.

⁵ Al. Gălăşescu, *A history of Sinaia town*, Bucharest, 1903, Edit. Socec, passim; Idem, *Sinaia and its surroundings*, Bucharest, 1903, pp. 7—22; Serafim Georgescu, *Sinaia, a general monograph*, Bucharest, 1936, F.E., passim; Milton F. Lehrer, *Sinaia*, Bucharest, 1967, Edit. Meridiane, pp. 11—19; C. Buşe, *Sinaia monastery*, 1967, Edit. Meridiane, pp. 6—8, etc.

⁶ The Library of the Romanian Academy, Romanian manuscripts, Doc. No. 1055.

⁷ See footnote 5.

⁸ Cf. R. Şt. Ciobanu, *op. cit.*, pp. 13—14.

⁹ Ibidem.

¹⁰ Cf. V. Pîrvan, *Dacia*, Bucureşti, 1959, Edit. ştiinţifică, p. 15; *A history of the Romanians*, vol. 1, Bucharest, 1959, Edit. Acad. R.P.R., p. 97, 118; D. Berciu, *Historical beginnings in the Carpatho-Danubian Area*, Bucharest, 1967, Edit. ştiinţifică, p. 30; E. Condurachi, V. Dumitrescu, D. Matei, *An archaeological map of Romania*, Bucharest, 1972, Edit. Meridiane, chart 8.

¹¹ Ibidem. At the end of the last century, a group of workers discovered at Sinaia, in Poiana Florilor street, today Cuza Vodă St., a repository of 26 bronze axes dated approx. to the years 1800—1700 B.C.

¹² Ibidem; At the beginning of the 20th cent., another repository of bronze axes dated to 1200—800 B.C., was discovered at Predeal.

¹³ Ibidem; R. St. Ciobanu, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

¹⁴ In Antiquity and the Middle Ages the roads were divided into stages (the distance between two halting places). The length of such a stage that could be covered in a day's time, was of 12 leagues, that is about 30 kms, representing the distance between the two places, where the archaeological discoveries mentioned above were made. (Cf. Armando Saponi, *I Mercatori*, Milano-Firenze, 1968, F.E., p. 82.

Presumably, events took a different turn and the bronze axes remained a proof of the earliness of the mountain road, called the Prahova Road, ever since the Middle Ages. The presence of the votive axes proves that ever since the Bronze Age the Prahova Road (like the Mureș river valley during the same period) crossing Sinaia, served also as a route along which metal was brought for the forging of weapons and tools and not as a shepherds' road only.

The complex utilization of this road suggests that the area in which the future town of Sinaia was to be erected, was a halting place, propitious for the building of a village. Since no studies of rural archaeology are available, we could not discover those villages termed "lost villages"¹⁵, in English, therefore any thesis on this distant historical epoch is hypothetical.

Reliable data on the subsequent use of this mountain road and of the area of the present town of Sinaia are provided by mediaeval sources. The name of Posada, still in use today, represents a first proof in this respect. We believe that this name dates back to the 7—11 th cc., that is to the period when the Romanian people completed its formation, when the migratory peoples forced sometimes the autochthonous population to withdraw to safer places (woods¹⁶, valleys and mountain glades¹⁷) in order to defend itself and its possessions. The Prahova valley and its surroundings, the mountainous region of Sinaia—Posada county, were rich in grazing fields propitious to animal breeding, in wood for building works and various handicrafts. Being connected with other inhabited areas through easily accessible paths, it offered favourable living conditions for its small human community at the beginning of the turbulent Middle Ages. In those days the inhabitants of the present territory of Sinaia continued using and profiting from the mountain road that crossed their village: the name of Posada undoubtedly reflects this state of things.

As common noun, this toponym usually designates a mountain place where a human community was or still exists. In most cases, also a place where a road crossed a pass, custom duties were collected and a halting place was established¹⁸. This toponymic element, orally transmitted to this day, documents the continuous existence of the Romanian population in these parts, attesting to the presence of a permanent human community in the area. It is hard to say whether the mountain road¹⁹, which ran along the Prahova river, had any connection with the campaign of the Hungarian king Charles Robert d'Anjou who attacked Walachia during the autumn of 1330 and whether Posada, close to Sinaia is the place where the Hungarians were defeated by Basarab I the Founder, on Novem-

¹⁵ Cf. J. le Goff, *Western mediaeval civilisation*, Bucharest, 1970, Edit. științifică, p. 32.

¹⁶ Cf. C. C. Giurescu, *A history of the Romanian forests from times immemorial to this day*, (in Romanian), Bucharest, 1976, Edit. Ceres, p. 32.

¹⁷ Idem, *The formation of the Romanian people* (in Romanian), Craiova, 1973, Edit. Scrisul românesc, p. 135.

¹⁸ Cf. *A dictionary of the modern language* (in Romanian), Bucharest, 1958, Edit. Acad. R.P.R.

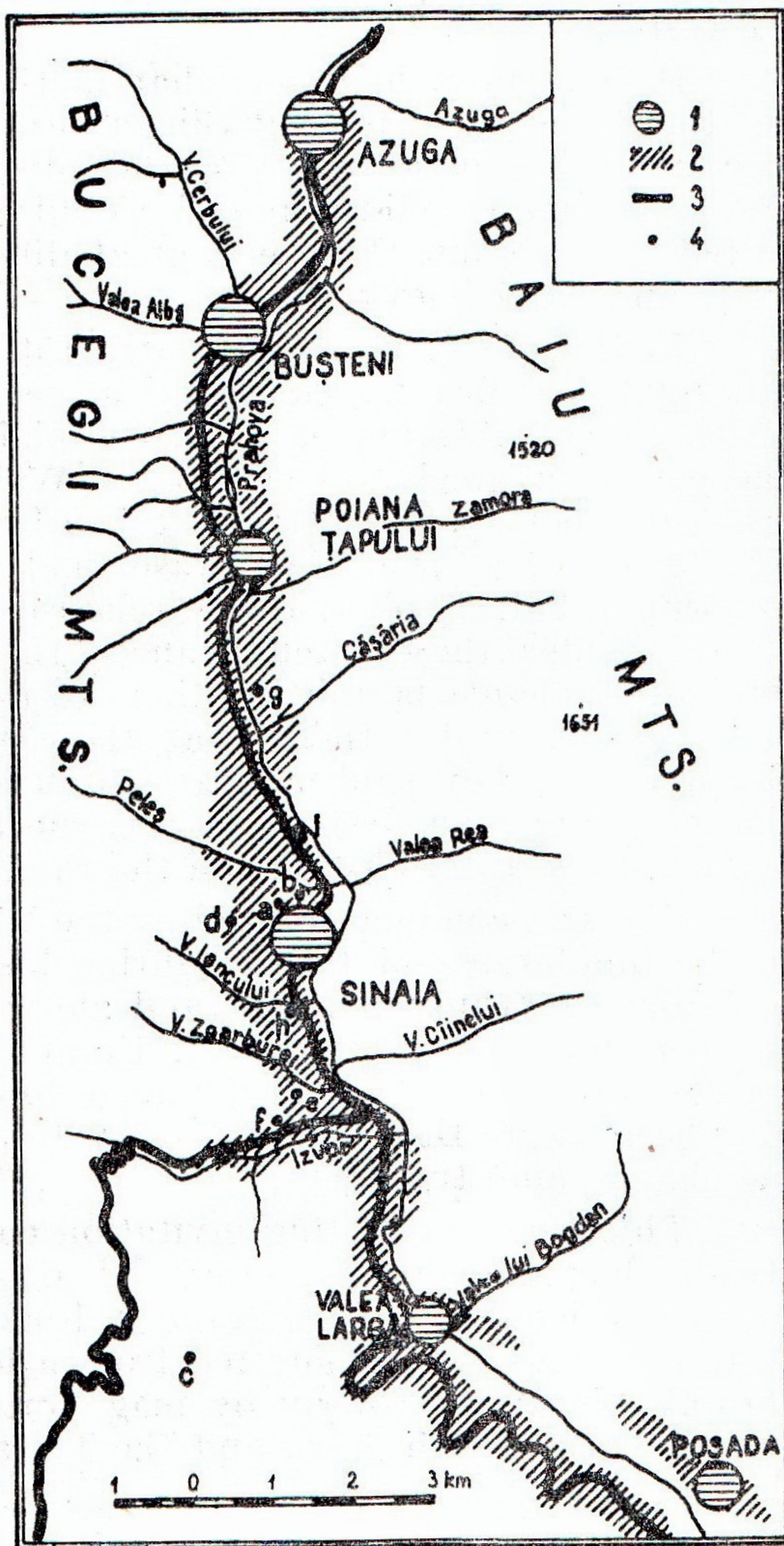
¹⁹ In the Antiquity and the Middle Ages the geographical environment of the Prahova Valley did not favour a cart road. As geomorphological maps show, crossing the Predeal—Posada pass, was an extremely difficult matter. Those who travelled along the Prahova Valley had to walk or ride and the goods could only be carried on pack animals. We are indebted to the late Vintilă Mihăilescu for this suggestion.

ber, 9, 1330²⁰. But, what we can assert for certain, is that shortly after those events, in 1369, this mountain road was mentioned on the occasion of the campaign launched by Nicholas Látkffy, the voivode of Transilvania, against the Walachian prince, Vladislav I Vlaicu (1364—1375?)²¹.

Up to now, all the investigations have proved that this document, not [studied in this light so far, mentions for the first time the name of Podul Neagului village (Fig. 2). The information in the written document thus attests the presence of a human settlement at Sinaia. We know that during the Middle Ages, the homesteads of Podul Neagului village were scattered along the Prahova valley, south of the present town of Predeal up to the north of Comarnic (Fig. 2)²². The absence of conclusive written documents made us appeal again to auxiliary disciplines. Judging by the plan of the settlement which indicates that the dwellings were disposed along the valley much like a 'longo-campo' typical of the Romanian settlements, we can infer that the village was founded and inhabited by Romanians. So, our hypothesis holds.

Fig. 2. — Podul Neagului map drawing, reconstitution based on historical and cartographical documents.

1, Present-day localities; 2, Podul Neagului village area; 3, mountain road; 4, historic places attested by document (a. "La Cruce" plateau; b. Sinaia monastery; c. Poiana Hoţilor; d. Brîna with 8 sycamores; e. Zgarbura Valley; f. Izvorul Dorului; i. At the Shepherds' Cross Inn).



²⁰ A History of Romania, vol. 11, Bucharest 1952, Edit. Acad. R.P.R., p. 154; C. C. Giurescu, *Looking on the map of Posada, Rovine, Vicina*, in "Magazin istoric", V, 1 (46), January, 1971, pp. 52—56; Idem, *Controversial problems in Romanian historiography* (in Romanian), Bucharest, 1977, pp. 157—162.

²¹ Cf. Ioan de Turoczi, *Cronica Hungarorum ab origine gentes*, in secta simiel Chronica Ioannes Aschidiaconus de Kükülew, ed. I. G. Schwandtner, *Scriptores Rerum Hungaricarum Veteris, ac, gemini, Tyrnaviae*, 1765 pp. 311—312.

²² R. St. Ciobanu, *op. cit.*, pp. 14—15.

Although this information was found in a written document ²³, which permits us to affirm that the mountain road was still in use in the 14th century and that it served for military purposes beside commercial ones, we cannot accept, in the present state of investigations the inference that the Basarabs possessed a fortress at Sinaia, built by order of Mircea the Old ²⁴.

It is certain, however, that in the late 14th and the early 15th cc. on the place where present Sinaia lies, there existed the same small village and a hermitage with a few hermits, probably refugees from Athos ²⁵. The lay peasants and the monks would offer shelter to the travellers who halted there ²⁶, but there is a great difference between this small settlement and a mediaeval fortress.

In the late 14th and the early 15th cc., the Prahova mountain road was relatively heavily circulated as revealed by a document of 1390 in which the inhabitants of Sibiu complained that the Brașov authorities had permitted goods to be carried to Walachia, a permission that incurred losses for them ²⁷. The attitude taken by the inhabitants of Brașov had a solid ground: at that time Brașov had limited possibilities to exert the function of halting place and warehouse ²⁸, that is of trading goods themselves. Under these circumstances they collected transit duties from foreign merchants permitting them to trade their goods south of the Carpathians. Naturally then, that these merchants preferred the city of Brașov, were they paid no customs duties to enter Walachia; they used the mountain road, because it was shorter and hidden from the tax collectors of the Bran customs on the road to Rucăr ²⁹.

The safe-conduct granted by the Walachian prince Vlad the Impaler to the inhabitants of Brașov during his third reign (1476) invited them to Walachia "through Rucăr and along the Prahova and the Teleajen valleys and through Buzău"³⁰. From the language of the document it results that the road was well known to the people of Brașov who had long been aware that the Prahova valley was inhabited and circulated by merchants and travellers.

This is an interesting invitation considering that the inhabitants of Brașov had transitory commercial disagreements with the Walachian princes which led to the Prahova Road being temporarily closed. This state of things can be inferred from a letter addressed in 1480—1482 to the inhabitants of Brașov by magistrate Cazan asking them to open to traffic "both the Prahova and the Teleajen, because our country cannot

²³ See footnote 21.

²⁴ Cf. G. Coșbuc, *From the land of the Basarabs*, Bucharest, 1904, p. 24.

²⁵ Cf. S. Georgescu, *op. cit.*, p. 26; R. St. Ciobanu, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

²⁶ Ibidem.

²⁷ Cf. Radu Manolescu, *Trade relations between Walachia, Moldavia and Brașov in 14th—15th cc.* (in Romanian) București, Edit. științifică, 28—29.

²⁸ Ibidem.

²⁹ Cf. Dinu C. Giurescu, *Walachia in the 14th-15th cc.* (in Romanian) Bucharest, 1973, pp. 187—192, 196.

³⁰ I. Bogdan, *Documents on the relations between Walachia, Brașov city and Transylvania in the 15th-16th cc.* (in Romanian) Bucharest, 1905, p. 97 (no. LXXV). The document is dated October, 7, 1476.

be left with two roads only, that is *the Rucăr and the Buzău roads*³¹. The text of this document shows that in the 15th century this road had a great importance, even though it could not be used by carts.

In the 16th century, an outlaw, named Nicolae Grozea that had become a hermit, built a wooden hermitage at Sinaia³², on the 'La Cruce' plateau, (Fig. 2), which lay in the centre of the then settlement. The ruins of the wooden hermitage were still in view during the last century and its presence was recalled by an inscription lost today³³.

At the end of the same century in 1599, Michael the Brave took the Prahova Road when he went to Transilvania³⁴ uniting that province with Walachia. The fact that a numerous army carrying cannons and military equipment went along the same road, proves once again that it was well known and used whenever the need arouse and although it was a more difficult way, it remained the shortest one between Walachia and Transilvania. The High Stewart Mihail Cantacuzino-Colţan escaped along the same road, probably in 1675, during Gh. Duca's reign³⁵ and not in 1672, at the beginning of Grigore Ghica's reign³⁶, as has been supposed so far. After he passed Posada and got to the hermitage erected by the outlaw Nicolae Grozea, the High Stewart, tired but sure that he had escaped his pursuers, stopped there to rest. Being quick-minded, he immediately realized the advantages offered by the place for the building of a fortified monastery: it had a dominant view of the road, was a good halting place and was not far from his estates, whose value would have increased as merchants were drawn there, and besides it lay in the Prahova Valley, which was close to the road to Tîrgovişte (Fig. 2). In building the monastery, he took into consideration the fact that the end of the 17th century and the beginning of the 18th marked a period of population rise in Walachia³⁷, whose effects were obviously felt by the inhabitants of the settlement we are referring to. The monastery built between 1690—1695 by order of Mihail Cantacuzino, was named Sinaia because, as the founder himself confessed, the place reminded him "of the great Sinaia"³⁸ (Fig. 3A). The monastery dedicated on August 15, 1695, in the presence of Prince Constantin Brîncoveanu (1688—1714), was painted by Pîrvu Mutu, the Painter³⁹.

³¹ Ibidem, p. 287 (no. CCXXXII); The news is confirmed by the document issued in Piteşti on August 16, 1481: "when you see this letter of mine, you are to let those Saxons of Transilvania go home along the Prahova and the Teleajen and every man may go hither and tither, without guards or others stopping them on their way..." *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, vol. 1, 1247—1500, Bucharest, 1966, Edit. Acad. R.S.R., pp. 285—286, doc. No. 176.

³² Cf. Al. Gălăşescu, *Sinaia and its surroundings*, op. cit., p. 8.

³³ Ibidem.

³⁴ Cf. R. Şt. Ciobanu, op. cit., p. 15; *A history of Romania*, (in Romanian) Compendium, III, Bucharest, 1975, Edit. didactică şi pedagogică, p. 157.

³⁵ Cf. *Walachian Chroniclers*, ed. M. Gregorian, vol. II, Bucharest, 1961, Edit. pentru literatură şi artă, p. 65.

³⁶ See footnote 5.

³⁷ Cf. Ş. Papacostea, *A contribution to the problem of the agrarian relationships in Walachia in the first half of the 18th century*, (in Romanian) in "Studii şi Materiale de istorie medie", III/1959, p. 255—256.

³⁸ See footnote 6.

³⁹ Cf. C. Buşe, op. cit., pp. 18—20; Teodora Voinescu, *Pîrvu Mutu, Zugravu*, Bucharest, 1968, Edit. Meridiane, passim.

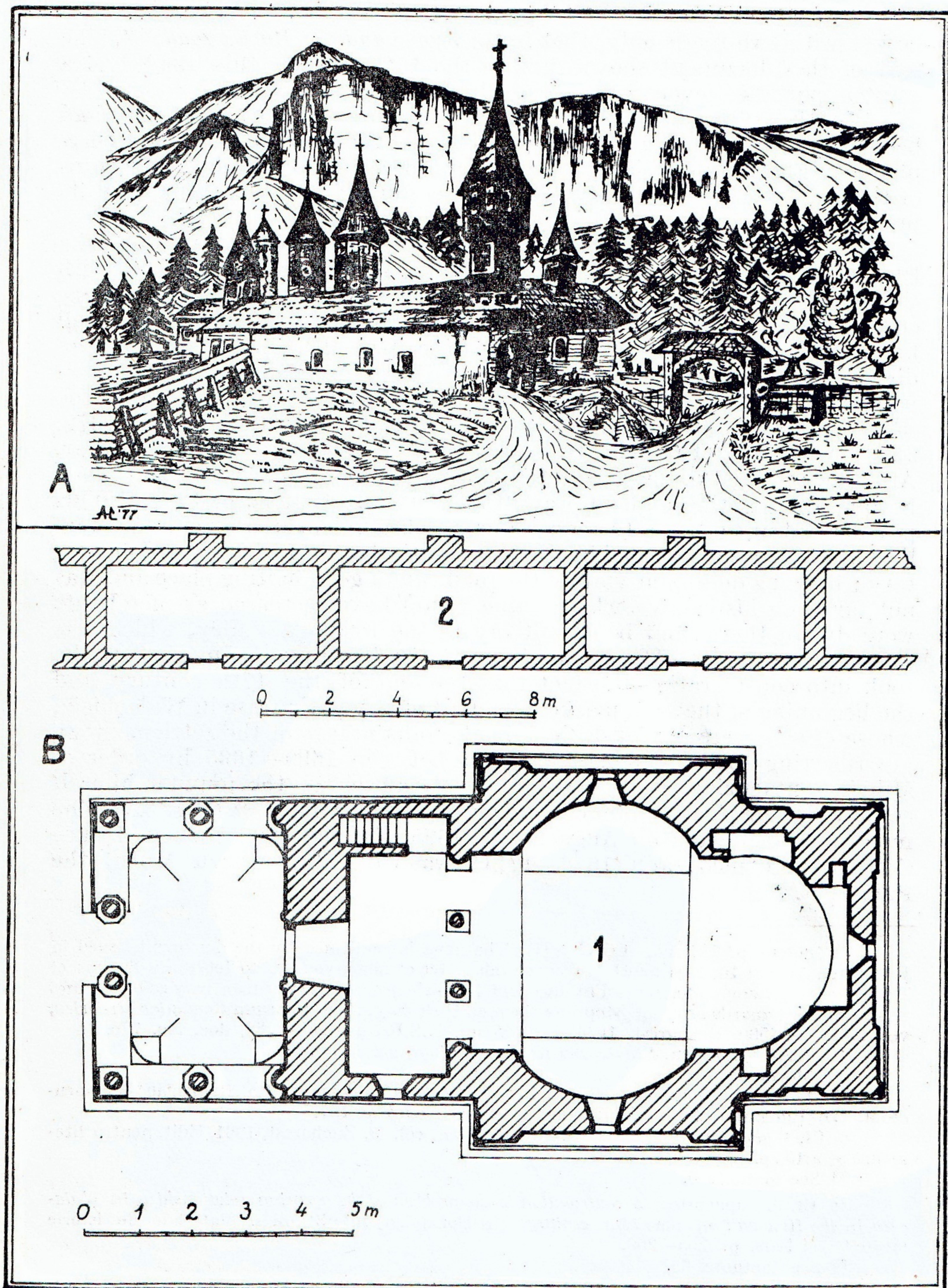


Fig. 3. — Sinaia monastery.

A — Reconstitution after 18th century stamps and engravings. B — The plan of the monastery (1. church ; 2. fragment of the precincts).

From the very beginning, it was surrounded by a strong enclosure provided with small cells for monks and travellers who stopped there (Fig. 3B). The monastery was certainly built for travellers because it was a suffragan monastery, which served the purpose of sheltering people passing through the place. That is why it was built close to the intersection of the Prahova with the Tîrgoviște road in an epoch when commercial cart roads were developing⁴⁰. At the end of the 17th and in the 18th centuries, the documents show that a human community was set up on the territory of the future town of Sinaia. This settlement named "Izvor" (Spring), mentioned in a document of March 7, 1701⁴¹, consisted initially of 40 fusilier peasants exempted from taxes who, as the document stipulates, helped to defend the monastery. But, their having settled at the crosspoint of the two roads, at a relatively great distance from the place that was to be defended, about 3.5 km a far, a distance difficult to cover in bad weather, would indicate that the settlement was aimed at defending the traffic on the commercial highway crossing Sinaia.

It was absolutely necessary that roads be guarded, since towards the end of the 17th century and during the following one, outlaws like Ion Fluieraș, Stanciu al Bratului, who camped in the vicinity of Sinaia, used to attack landowners, money lenders and merchants and made justice in the name of the people.

The presence of outlaws in the area is attested both by documents⁴² and toponyms: Poiana jefuitorilor, (Plunderers' glade) very near to Zgarburei Valley, Poiana Vînturiș, near Izvorul Dorului or Poienile Hoților (Thieves' glades) on Furnica Hill, Brîna with 8 sycamores. According to documents and to the geographical reality, the outlaws could have settled in the surroundings of Sinaia long before the building of the Monastery: for one thing, the place was convenient for their attacks on the rich travellers and immediate retreat to their dens; and for another, they found an ever increasing community willing to feed and shelter them.

Another evidence in support of the presence of human settlements at Sinaia, of the interdependence between its evolution and the development of the commercial highway is the setting up of inns. Towards the end of the 17th century, before Mihail Cantacuzino-Colțan built the monastery, two inns had been erected on the spot where Sinaia lies now. One of them, called Iancu's Inn, was situated at the confluence of "Iancu's Valley" with the Prahova, where Păltiniș sanatorium is today, the other at the "Shepherd's Cross", on the road to Poiana Țapului⁴³ (Fig. 2, h.i.). These inns contributed to the development of human settlement as they were not only halting places but also warehouses, handicraft centres and places for many dealings. This led to a primitive accumulation in the area surrounding Sinaia and helped polarizing new inhabitants. The fact that the road was known and used at the end of the 18th century, immediately after the monastery had been built, is confirmed by a series of documents. During the Austrian-Turkish war of 1716—1718, several great landowners, on

⁴⁰ Cf. Șt. Ionescu, Panait I. Panait, *Constantin Vodă Brîncoveanu*, Bucharest, 1969, Edit. științifică, pp. 91—106.

⁴¹ The Library of the Romanian Academy, *Romanian Manuscripts*, Doc. No. 1057.

⁴² Cf. Sava Iancovici, *Outlawry in Romania* (in Romanian), Bucharest, 1968, Edit. științifică, *passim*.

⁴³ Cf. S. Georgescu, *op. cit.*, p. 35 and sq.

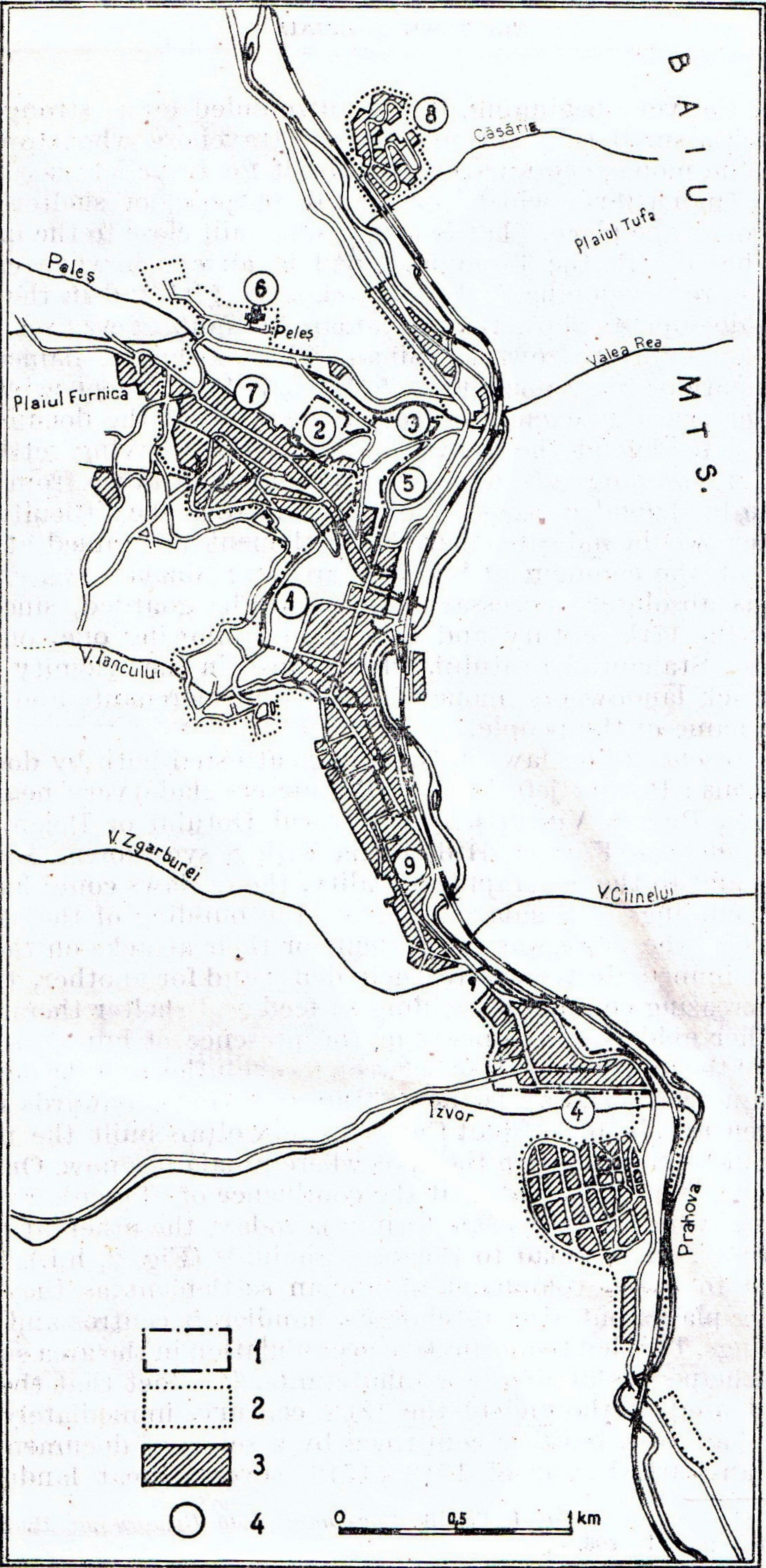


Fig. 4. — The town of Sinaia — historical evolution.

1. Area until the 18th century ; 2. extended area in the 19th century ; 3. present-day area ; historic places marking the historical evolution of the town (1. site of votive axes ; 2. "La Cruce" plateau where traces of the first hamlet were found ; 3. Sinaia monastery ; 4. Izvor district ; 5. Eforie Hospital ; 6. Peleş Castle ; 7. Furnica district ; 8. Cumpătul district ; 9. newly built area).

their way to Braşov, found shelter at the monastery. The arrival of boyard coaches and the presence of inns where carts halted is indicative of the width of the mountain road and the probable extension of the settlement. An inscription found at the entrance of the old monastery of Sinaia reads: "Abbot Dionisie had it repaired during Nicolae Mavrocordat's reign, in the year 7288 following Adam" (1720), March, 20)⁴⁴. The inscription confirms our thesis: the monastery had to be quickly restored, because it was situated in the middle of a human settlement, at the junction of two commercial highways, along which traffic became constantly heavier. In the mediaeval administrative acts, Sinaia is shown to belong to Podul Neagului village⁴⁵, attested as early as the 14th century. That village was scattered along the Prahova valley, from the north of Comarnic to Azuga. This extended village remained one single administrative unit, though it grew demographically during the 16th—17th centuries. The community of Sinaia, which evidently was the nucleus of the village, was not specified or signaled out from the rest. The documents mention either the monastery⁴⁶ or the inns, but seldom the village. Hence, the people living in their vicinity were ignored. Had not a permanent and relatively numerous community resided there, neither the monastery nor the inns would have developed the way they did.

The propitious conditions offered by Sinaia — halting place, junction of commercial highways, good pasture lands, etc. — favoured from the early beginnings of this human settlement up to the 19th century a slow but constant development which compelled recognition before all the other settlements that had made up Podul Neagului village (Posada, Poiana Țapului, Buşteni, Azuga).

The 19th century brought about a series of new factors favourable to the development of human life at Sinaia. That this was so, is conclusively proved by the documents of the time which constantly mention the settlement and the ever greater interest taken in it. The Prahova road, which from a mountain road had turned into a cart road at the end of the 17th century, could no longer meet modern 19th century transport requirements. In 1843, Prince Gheorghe Bibescu visited Sinaia and decided to modernize the road to Predeal. Consequently, in 1846⁴⁷, he gave the order for the road to be widened and paved. The works began only in 1865 (Fig. 1,3).

Simultaneously with these modernization works, Sinaia came to be visited by holiday-makers and turned into a health resort⁴⁸. Grounds for the building of rest homes were in great demand and when the curative qualities of the natural environment were acknowledged, the Civilian Hospital Guardians had a sanatorium-hotel built there (Fig. 4)⁴⁹. The evolution of the settlement, the prominent place it came to hold in the Prahova Valley area was reflected in administrative acts, too: in 1865 this

⁴⁴ The original Slavonic text of the inscription is found on the stone plate above the entrance to the precincts of the old monastery of Sinaia.

⁴⁵ Cf. R. Şt. Ciobanu, *op. cit.*, pp. 15—16.

⁴⁶ Cf. Al. Gălăşescu, *op. cit.*, *passim*; C. Buşe, *op. cit.*, *passim*, etc.

⁴⁷ Cf. *A history of Romania*, vol. III, Bucharest, 1964, Edit. Acad. R.S.R., p. 979.

⁴⁸ Cf. Arh. Stat. Ploieşti, file 157, F. 25—26.

⁴⁹ Idem, file no. 158, F. 2—3.

community separated from Podul Neagului village and took the name of Sinaia, after the fortified monastery lying on its territory ⁵⁰.

The beauty of the place, the qualities of its environment, the direct connection with Bucharest turned preferences to Sinaia instead of Cîmpulung-Muscel city, the former becoming a summer state residence ⁵¹.

On the 10th of August, 1875, the Peleş Castle began being built ⁵² and on the 10th of June, 1879, the Predeal—Ploiești railway ⁵³ was commissioned.

The Peleş Castle and the construction of the railway attracted numerous workers, some of who settled in the town ⁵⁴. This construction boom led in 1895 to the building of factories—timber, nails and lime⁵⁵. The nail factory is in a way the precursor of the Fine Mechanics Plant functioning in this town today.

The natural consequence of the population rise, of the spectacular expansion of the settlement, was that Sinaia formally acquired the status of town in 1880. Henceforward Sinaia continued its rapid growth and became the most important mountain resort in the Prahova Valley. All the facts presented above demonstrate that the fortified monastery of Sinaia had never been the decisive factor in the birth and growth of the human settlement of Sinaia. In relatively close centres — Comarnic, Cheia, etc. at least as old and as important monasteries did exist, but none of them determined such an impressive evolution of a human settlement. It is evident and we are certain, according to present-day knowledge, that the lay village was a permanent nucleus of inhabitation previous to the monastery, and that the actual town has originated from it.

Neither could the road by itself account for the spectacular development of Sinaia. So, in the specific conditions of Romania, we can say that the tempting theories of the Belgian scholar Henri Pirenne ⁵⁶ are not altogether valid as the monastery or the roads alone could not lead to the appearance of the rural settlement and later of the town of Sinaia.

The genesis of this town, whose origin should be sought in remote historical periods, is not due to a single element, but to a complexity of factors.

Its development was accelerated by the existence of commercial highways which joined there, the monastic establishment, the inns, the curative qualities of the place, the construction of the railway, etc., which must be correlated with the people's ability to turn the land to good account.

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⁵⁰ Ibidem.

⁵¹ State Archives, Ploiești, file no. 1 57, F. 25—26.

⁵² Ibidem.

⁵³ Idem, F. 15—16 and ff.

⁵⁴ Idem, F. 30—31.

⁵⁵ Idem, F. 45—46.

⁵⁶ Henri Pirenne, *Histoire Economique et Social du Moyen-Age*, Nouvelle édition revue et mise à jour par Hans Van Werveke, Paris 1969, P.U.F., passim.