

VÂLCAN GORGE - A BRIDGE BETWEEN THE CARPATHIAN PROVINCES

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ABSTRACT: *Situated in the Southern Carpathians of Romania, Vâlcan Gorge was, from the Antiquity to the end of the XIX-th century, the main connection between southern Transylvania/Hațeg County and northern Oltenia/Gorj area. Under the circumstances, the area situated at the source of the Jiu Rivers, generically named the Jiu Valley and crossed by the road coming from Crivadia and going up in Vâlcan Gorge, sometimes benefited from being a transit area for those who traveled from one side of the Southern Carpathians to the other, but it was also always in the way of invasions that lasted up to the beginning of the modern age. Today, this road seems to regain the attention of local authorities as a possible touristic route, losing its initial role at the end of the XIX-th century when, on September 4, 1894, the present road through Jiu Gorge was inaugurated.*

KEY WORDS: *the Southern Carpathians, Vâlcan Gorge, the Jiu Valley, Transylvania, Southern Romania.*

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The Jiu Valley, the generic name for the geographic, social and economic area in southwestern Transylvania is, from a morphological point of view, a narrow and deep depression, one of the few in the Southern Carpathians¹.

The Jiu Valley, lying along the two sources of the Jiu, has the form of a triangular asymmetric syncline, oriented towards ENE-WSW, with its point to the west and its base to the west; it covers 137.6 km², having a length of 45.6 km, and a width of 2 km to the

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¹ Enea Giurchescu, *Valea Jiului*, Anuarul II al Liceului de stat pentru băieți din Petroșani pentru anul școlar 1920/21, Jiul Cultural, Petroșani, p. 3.

west and 9.6 km to the east, with a maximum at the confluence of the Eastern and the Western Jiu².

The bottom of this depression is relatively high: 556 m altitude at the entrance in Surduc Gorge, where the Eastern and the Western Jiu meet, and 800 m altitude towards the eastern and western borders; it is a high depression surrounded by mountains, which accounts for its relatively cold climate and poor agricultural activities. The depression is surrounded by three massifs, namely: the Retezat Mountains to the NW and W; the Vâlcan Mountains to the S; the Parâng Mountains on the other side of Surduc Gorge³.

Situated in the inner area of the Southern Carpathians, the depression is apparently inaccessible. Lucian Blaga stated that “throughout the Middle Ages, the Carpathians were the axis, the spine that sustained and strengthened our people’s unity”. The mountains surrounding the Jiu Valley, covered by vast deciduous and coniferous forests, are crossed by natural and man-made gorges and roads connecting the areas of the depression with one another and with other regions in Transylvania and south of the Southern Carpathians. Initially, most of the circulation was limited to routes known only by the local people.

From a historic, social and economic point of view, the Jiu Valley was mostly dependent on Hațeg County⁴, which calls for the building of transport routes meant to facilitate the contact with this region and, implicitly, with Transylvania. At the same time, the Jiu Valley was a transit space of strategic and, later on, of economic importance, being a gate to the Gorj area and, implicitly, to Southern Romania or to the north, to Hațeg County and Transylvania.

The road through Vâlcan Gorge, situated at 1,621 m altitude, connecting Schela commune in Gorj with present Vulcan municipality was the main road between the territories situated south of the Southern Carpathians and Transylvania until the end of the XIX-th, when the present road through Surduc-Lainici Gorge was officially inaugurated on September 4, 1894⁵. This road met another road going from Vulcan, through Crividia and Dealu Babii Gorge (931 m altitude) to Hațeg County, which still exists, its use being limited to local pastoral needs. On the Western Jiu, the road met the main transcarpathian road - Transalpina - between Novaci and Sebeș⁶, the highest road in Romania - 2,145 m altitude, in Urdele Gorge, which connects northern Oltenia, across the Parâng Mountains, with south-western Transylvania.

In the modern period, the following were built: the railway through Banița-Merișor Gorge (755 m) on the top of the massif separating the basins of the Jiu and the Strei

² Bujor Almășan, *Exploatarea zăcămintelor minerale din România*, vol. I, Editura Tehnică, București, 1984, p. 72.

³ V. Tufescu, C. Mocanu, *Depresiunea Petroșanilor*, Editura Științifică, București, 1964, p. 11; Societatea Petroșani, *Monografie*, Editura „Cartea Românească”, București, 1925, p. 5.

⁴ Mircea Baron, *Legături social-economice între Țara Hațegului și Valea Jiului în zorii epocii moderne. Contribuția la popularea Văii Jiului și la constituirea sistemului de așezări din această zonă*, Annales Universitatis Apulensis, Series Historica, 13, 2009, p. 255-271.

⁵ Sebastian Stanca, *Monografia istorico-geografică a localității Petroșani*, Editura Fundației Culturale „Ion D. Sîrbu”, Petroșani, 1996, p. 62.

⁶ Lucian Badea, *Valea Jiului*, Editura Științifică, București, 1971, p. 89-92.

Rivers (1868-1870)⁷, which called for the modernization of the road entering the Jiu Valley from the east, through Crivadia and Bănița. These two were prolonged to the south, through Jiu Gorge, by the completion in 1890-1894 of the road, and in 1948 of the Bumbești-Livezeni railway⁸; the Petroșani-Livezeni-Lupeni railway (1891-1892)⁹, extended in 1956 with industrial purposes, towards Uricani Mine; the roads within the Jiu Valley, meant to connect dwellings and economic objectives, etc.

The road through Vâlcan Gorge is so old that it was certainly used by the Agathyrsi and the Greeks in the Antiquity and, later on, by the Romans in their attempt to conquer Sarmizegetusa Regia during the Dacian-Roman wars. Hadrian Daicoviciu states that, in 102, during the first Dacian-Roman war, “Lusius Quietus, Moorish chieftain in the service of the Romans and a high dignitary in Traian’s time, attacked with his horsemen, entering Transylvania either through Turnu Roșu, or Vâlcan Gorge”¹⁰. Possibly, this was the moment when the Dacian city of Bănița was destroyed. During the 105-106 war, some of the Roman troops attacked “probably through Turnu Roșu or Vâlcan Gorge”¹¹. The Romans continued to use this access - the Jiu Valley not being passable - as a connection with the road from Drobeta to Transylvania, which was intensely circulated towards the capital of the province, Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa, and towards Apulum¹².

In “Franz Joseph’s Topographic Elevation” („Josephinische Landesaufnahme”), drawn up by the Habsburgs between 1764-1785, and for the area in question between 1769-1773, we can follow the route of the wagon road from Hațeg, which passes from Merișor through Dealu Babii Gorge (944 m), descends along Crivadia creek and, crossing the Western Jiu, gets to Vulcan Pas, the hamlet where in 1855 there were eight houses, nine families and 30 inhabitants¹³ and where the empire officials and the border guards lived together with their families. The customs point and the horse changing post were also here; from here, the road climbed to Vâlcan Gorge, passing by the winter post, the summer post, Radu’s Fountain and getting as far as the top (Adler) at 1621 m¹⁴. From this point, the road descended to Gorj, through Buliga hamlet and Vama Veche, to Schela and farther to Târgu Jiu¹⁵.

The condition of the road in Vâlcan Gorge is described in *The Final Report on the Journey in Transylvania* which the future Habsburg emperor, Joseph the II-nd (1780-1790) undertakes in 1773, occasion on which he also visits the Jiu Valley on May 22, 1773. He writes that „there are two roads, one crossing a steep mountain

⁷ Vâlceanu Constantin și colectiv, *125 de ani de la inaugurarea liniei Simeria-Petroșani și a depoului de locomotive Simeria*, Editura Gutenberg, Deva, 1995

⁸ Dionisie Daniel Ardelean, Mircea Dorobanțu, *Lucrări de artă feroviară în defileul Jiului. Linia Bumbești-Livezeni*, Editura Măiastra, 2013.

⁹ A. Schreiber, *Valea Jiului. 1840-1926*, Montanistică și Metalurgie, VI, 1927, nr. 5, p. 6

¹⁰ Hadrian Daicoviciu, *Dacii*, Editura pentru Literatură, București, 1968, p. 256

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 263

¹² *Istoria Românilor*, vol. II (Daco-romani, romanici, alogeni). Coordonatori Dumitru Protase, Alexandru Suceveanu, Editura Enciclopedică, București, 2001, p. 193

¹³ Adrian Andrei Rusu, *Un manuscris inedit a lui Ștefan Moldovan privitor la Țara Hațegului la mijlocul secolului al XIX-lea (II)*, Sargetia, XXI-XXIV, 1988-1991, p. 274

¹⁴ Wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/ff/Iosephinische Landaufnahme_pg.265.jpg

¹⁵ Octavian Floca, Victor Șuiaga, *Ghidul județului Hunedoara*, Tipografia Județeană, Deva, 1936, p.416-417.

called Dealu Babii, and the other through the so-called Hungarian Jiu, which gets very difficult to circulate at flood time. The roads converge to the customs, from where the resulting road leads on a very long route across the Vulcan Mountain, on whose top lies the border. Except one short section, this road is accessible, and circulated by many carts but, owing to its narrowness, it is not without danger, and we assume that, in extreme cases, it can be life threatening. The narrow road can be managed or even destroyed if necessary. The road goes farther to Valahia where I covered it in a three quarters of an hour's ride...¹⁶.



Figure 1. Franz Joseph's Topographic Elevation, chart 265

¹⁶ Ileana Bozac, Teodor Pavel, *Călătoria împăratului Iosif al II-lea în Transilvania la 1773*, vol. I, Centrul de Studii Transilvane, Cluj-Napoca, 2007, p. 717.

Johann Lehmann, the director of a theater company in Bratislava, traveled in Transylvania in the 80s of the XVIII-th century and, in a writing printed at Leipzig in 1785, points out that „the second pass is Vulcan Gorge, starting from the threefold border (between Transylvania, Oltenia and Muntenia) and extending to the point where the Olt river leaves Southern Romania. The road is passable only two thirds of the year because of the heavy snow. To rivers, both named Jiu: the Hungarian and the Romanian Jiu, unite here. Beyond this point there used to be the Germans' defense line. The gorge itself is naturally so strong that it can easily do without artificial fortifications, which are actually quite scarce¹⁷.

Friedrich Schwanz von Springfels, military engineer in the Habsburg imperial army, in his comments on his own map of Oltenia and the regions bordering Transylvania, Southern Romania and Bulgaria, submitted to the imperial authorities in Viena on April 30, 1723, shows that „in the past, communications between Transylvania and this province (Southern Romania - n.n.) were very slow because of the high and rugged mountains, the only access being through Vulcan Gorge (Vâlcan, Rothen Thurm, Terzburger Pass), Turnu Roșu and Bran. Only a path from Hațeg valley crossed the Vulcan Mountains, and there was no cart road and no possibility to build one, both because of the high and massive mountains, and because of the storms, as the high mountains, which one was forced to cross, are in such a way that if a storm catches someone on the top, it almost smothers people and animals and, and throws them down in the valley among the rocks, of which there are unfortunately plenty of examples, as not one year passes without claiming the lives of people and animals...”¹⁸.

Throughout the history, Vâlcan Gorge served both as a connection between Transylvania and Southern Romania, and as a gate for invasions, most of which being initiated by the Turks.

Thus historian Téglás Gábor from Deva believes that, on their way to the gold deposits area in the Apuseni Mountains, passed either through the Olt Gorge at Turnu Roșu, or from the Istru, to inner Dacia, along the Jiu. The Greeks' passage through the Jiu Valley is proven by the discovery in Vâlcan Gorge of a gold plated bronze bust featuring a warrior with helmet and shield, probably a representation of the war god Ares or of Alexander the Great, the work supposedly being attributed to Lysipus (sec. IV î.Ch.)¹⁹.

Discovering the Dacian gold separators, the Romans probably continued this activity, which is attested by the discovery in 1884 and 1914, as a result of diggings in the former gold separators at the foot of the Vâlcan Mountains, of two bronze busts,

¹⁷ *Călători străini despre Țările Române*, vol. X, partea I. Volum îngrijit de: Maria Holban, M.M. Alexandrescu-Dersca Bulgaru, Paul Cernavodeanu (redactor responsabil), Editura Academiei Române, București, 1998, p. 615.

¹⁸ *Călători străini despre Țările Române*, vol. IX. Volum îngrijit de: Maria Holban (redactor responsabil), M.M. Alexandrescu-Dersca Bulgaru, Paul Cernavodeanu, Editura Academiei, București, 1997, p. 48.

¹⁹ Téglás Gábor, *A dacziai bányászat legegőbb bizonyítékai, tekintettel a Zsilvölgy s különösen a Vulkánhágó bányásztörténelmi jelentőségére*, Bányászati és Kohászati Lapok, XXXVI, vol. II, octombrie 1903, nr. 19, p. 499.

representing Roman gods²⁰, of Roman monetary treasures, and of remains of a local craftsman's shop at Vulcan-Crividia²¹.

It is possible that the first inhabitants of Câmpu lui Neag village, lying in the northernmost area of the Jiu Valley came on this road from northern Oltenia. Iacob Radu, Greek-Catholic vicar of Hațeg states at the beginning of the XX-th century that "by virtue of the local tradition, the name [of the village] comes from an outlaw named Neagu who, at the beginning of the XVI-th century, hiding from the Turks with a group of companions, took refuge in these deserted mountains in the place known today as Dosul Pribeagului and, later on, they built permanent dwellings on the wide open banks of the Jiu, their settlement being named after their leader, Câmpu lui Neag."²²

It is known that, in the first half of the XVI-th century, in 1528-1529, Transylvania's ruler, Petru of Perény, builds the defense and survey city-tower at Crivadia, a round stone building, on several levels, with a diameter of 13.50 m, which guarded the road from the Jiu Valley to Hațeg County, being apparently meant to collect toll from the carts that passed through Vâlcan Gorge and to protect the travelers coming from the south²³.

Franz von Gerstorff, in *Information on the Mining in the Great Kingdom of Transylvania*, elaborated at Sibiu in 1768, showed that "in the Great Kingdom of Transylvania there are several separators, known almost exclusively by their names, usually at Bran (Törzburg), in *Vulcan Gorge on the Jiu* ..., but fewer attempts have been made with all these in recent years"²⁴.

Also in relation with the 1773 journey of emperor Joseph the II-nd to Transylvania, we find out from the data gathered by Baron Samuel von Brukenthal, head of the Province Chancery at the time, that "Vulcan Gorge and the customs station here serve the travelers from Valahia to Banatul region for summer jobs during crop made gathering and hay making months. The coalmen (the ones who made charcoal-n.n.) in the service of Hunedoara rulers in Zlatna Region also come from Valahia. That is why the Imperial Chamber was in favor of removing this customs, which, as the situation presented itself in 1770, was not crossed by a large quantity of goods. The buildings are all made of wood on stone foundations, and the whole area lacks a water source"²⁵. Even the emperor concludes that the customs in Vâlcan Gorge "is poorly built, with the wooden shacks in front, inhabited by 30 immigrant border guards, some of whom from Transylvania, and most from Banat and Arad regions; they lived here together their women and children, after they had been in Valahia for a few years, from where they returned as beggars with no money left"²⁶.

Goods traffic intensity through Vâlcan Gorge is unknown, but it is obvious that the Habsburgs were dissatisfied with their scarcity in 1770 and, implicitly, with the

²⁰ Téglás Gábor, *Hunyádvármegye története*, Athenaeum, Budapest, 1902, p. 22.

²¹ Ion Poporogu, *Pe urmele căutătorilor de aur din Valea Jiului*, Steagul Roșu, XXVIII, 1971, nr. 6633, p. 2.

²² Iacob Radu, *Istoria vicariatului greco-catolic al Hațegului*, Tipografia Gutenberg, Lugoj, 1913, p. 176-177.

²³ Ștefan Pascu, *Voievodatul Transilvaniei*, vol. II, Editura Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 1979, p. 302-303.

²⁴ Ileana Bozac, Teodor Pavel, *op. cit.*, p. 413.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 393

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 585.

amount of perceived taxes. However, it is known that after the half of the XIX-th century, perhaps under the influence of the Customs, commercial and navigation convention between Romania and the Austrian-Hungarian Empire on June 10/22, 1875²⁷, 60-70,000 cattle passed through Petroșani annually, going to Budapest and Viena, and the coal in the Jiu Valley found a market in the territories south of the Carpathians²⁸.

In this context, the statements of ethnographer Valer Butură are very interesting, emphasizing the connections between the Jiu Valley and Gorj region, across the mountains, supposedly established through the road in Vâlcan Gorge: “in Hațeg County and Petroșani Depression houses on two rows appeared and developed under the influence of those in the neighboring Gorj. Actually, older building are also alike, due to the permanent contact between the villages on the two sides of the mountains, facilitated not only by the Jiu Gorge, but also by the paths winding from the top to the foot of the mountains, crowded with villages, some of which settled by immigrants from Transylvania, named *ungureni* by the locals. The striking resemblance of newer houses in the west of the Depression with the ones in Gorj is also due to the fact that the former are usually built by craftsmen from Oltenia”²⁹.

As we have already shown, Vâlcan Gorge was also a gate for invasions, since the Antiquity. The most relevant data in this sense refer to the Turks’ incursions in this region and the battles against them.

Thus, in 1439, the king of Hungary Albert of Habsburg (1437-1439) renews, by issuing a diploma, the donations from king Sigismund of Luxemburg (1387-1437) to the family of Romanian rulers Căndeia (by the Hungarian name Kendeffy) at Râu de Mori, in Hațeg County, including estates in the Jiu Valley; the previous diploma and, implicitly, the possessions, had been lost as a result of the Turkish invasion in 1438. Nicolae Căndeia/Kendeffy, who had been rewarded with estates 1439, confronted the Turks with his own army in 1442, “in Alpibus Wolkan” (Vâlcan Mountains - n.n.), and died in this battle; the serfs of the Căndeia family also fought against the turks at Varna in 1444 and later on in 1446 and, as a result, the family was awarded villages and their pertaining estates - Iancu of Hunedoara, and later on, in 1462, the king of Hungary Matei Corvin (1458-1490) mentioning the battle of 1442 - reinforcing their privileges³⁰.

Clergyman Iacob Radu, states that “it was to the memory of this battle (of “Alpibus Wolkan” - n.n.) that the History Society in Deva (the History and Archaeology Society of Hunedoara County - n.n.³¹) erected in 1896 a commemorative monument” at Vulcan, at the entrance in the Gorge³², which was to be demolished in the 80’s of the XX-th century under the pretext of urban management, and whose trace was completely lost. It should also be mentioned that a similar monument was erected by the same Society, in

²⁷ Maria Mureșan, Dumitru Mureșan, *Istoria economiei*, Editura Economică, București, 1998, p. 148-150.

²⁸ Sebastian Stanca, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

²⁹ Valer Butură, *Străvechi mărturii de civilizație românească. Transilvania-studiu etnografic*, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, București, 1989, p. 113.

³⁰ Sebastian Stanca, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

³¹ Vezi, Petre Dan, *Asociații, Cluburi, Ligii, Societăți. Dicționar cronologic*, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, București, 1983, p. 160-161.

³² Iacob Radu, *op. cit.*, p. 341.

the same year, at in the area of the Iron Gates of Transylvania, to commemorate the victory of Iancu of Hunedoara against the Turks in 1442³³.

Also connected with the military confrontations in the area is the episode narrated by Nicolae Iorga, according to whom Mihai Viteazul, the ruler of Southern Romania, who firstly unified the Romanian Provinces may have passed through Vâlcan Gorge, from Oltenia to Transylvania, together with 7,000 warriors, in November-December 1600³⁴. Regarding this episode, it is worth mentioning that the 70's-80's of the XX-th century was predominated by the idea that the respective was actually dedicated to the latter passage, as a result of a confusion with the monument erected on September 25, 1932, at Schela Gorjului, and which is mentioned by the distinguished archaeologist dr. Octavian Floca, in 1936³⁵.

The last Turkish invasion of the Jiu Valley took place in 1788. There are documents that attest this moment, which forces the end of the first stage in the population of western Jiu Valley. There are documents that attest this moment that forces the end of the first stage in the population of the Western Jiu Valley with people coming from Hațeg County.

The Turkish invasion in 1788 is also mentioned in the November 1855 manuscript of Ștefan Moldovan, the Greek-Catholic vicar of Hațeg; Sebastian Stanca, in, *The Historical-Geographical Monography of Petroșani*, shows that the Turks attacked the Jiu Valley in 1782 when they reach the villages on the Romanian Jiu. General Laudon had erected defense walls in 1778 in Vulcan area and had set on fire an entire coal hill to scare off the invaders, the fire burning for fourteen years and probably being the source of the name Valea Arsă (the Burnt Valley). The Turks attacked again in 1788 and set fire to Uricani, Bărbătenii de Sus, Lupeni, and Iscroni; the settlements of Petroșani, Livezeni, and Petrila remained untouched, not being in the invaders' way, who followed the "main road" that went from Vulcan, through Dealu Babii, to Merișor³⁶.

It should also be added that Vulcan Gorge, as a customs point and borderline area, owing to the neighboring buildings, had an important role in the emergence of Vulcan town as we know it today. Clergyman Iacob Radu states that "the old Romanian village consisted of two small hamlets: Crividia and Vaidei, Vulcan being the name - in the latter half of the XVIII-th century - a small colony of official clerks, settled here to serve the customs and to guard Vâlcan Gorge, to which a few peasant houses were added"³⁷. After the Turkish invasion in 1788, the survivors gathered from all the valleys and built a church in 1791, and those who stayed together around this church formed a community named Crividia. In 1855 the village held 48 houses, with 58 families and 279 people, and in Vulcan-Gorge there were eight house, nine families and 30 inhabitants³⁸.

³³ *Ibidem*, p. 343-344.

³⁴ Nicolae Iorga, *Istoria lui Mihai Viteazul*, Editura Militară, București, 1968, p. 378.

³⁵ According to Octavian Floca and Victor Șuiaga, *op. cit.*, p. 417, "there are many historic memories regarding Vulcan Gorge. Invaded by the Tartars and the Turks, fierce battles were waged here. Mihaiu Viteazul passed through this gorge with his armies, in memory of which a monument was erected here".

³⁶ Sebastian Stanca, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

³⁷ Iacob Radu, *op. cit.*, p. 340-341.

³⁸ Adrian Andrei Rusu, *op. cit.*, p. 274.

Then, in the last quarter of the XIX-th century, the industrial revolution, the existence of coal in Vulcan area, mentioned by emperor Joseph the II-nd himself³⁹, the building of the Petroșani-Livezeni-Lupeni railway in 1891-1892, and capital infusion are the factors that turned the hamlets mentioned earlier into the present modern town.

At the same time, the building of the Simeria-Petroșani railway (1868-1870) and of the present road through Surduc-Lainici Gorge, completed in 1890-1894⁴⁰, Vulcan Gorge entirely loses its role as a main connection between the Carpathian provinces.

It should also be mentioned that parts of the old road through Vâlcan Gorge, and even its extension through Dealu Babii Gorge to Merișor still exist, and that a series of projects have been initiated for the rehabilitation of the road and for the reopening of the old connection, at the beginning only for touristic purposes, between the territories north and south of the Southern Carpathians.

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³⁹ “The Valley, which split Crivadia into two, was fairly covered with woods, and at the end of this valley a mound was discovered from where brown coal was dug out, not very valuable, however, in a country rich in wood... Near to the narrow gorge, among the afore mentioned rocks, (in Vâlcan Gorge- n.n.), one can still see the mine hole dug by prince von Lobkowitz, covered though by old trees, but also by younger forest” (Ileana Bozac, Teodor Pavel, *op. cit.*, p. 585-586).

⁴⁰ From Sebastian Stanca we find out that, after 1874, understanding the huge perspectives of coal mining in the Jiu Valley, the Hungarian government drafts the layout of a wide and solid road through Vulcan Gorge, which was to allow general commerce, and mainly the selling of coal to the areas south of the Carpathians.

The idea of such a project had existed as early as the beginning of the XVIII-th century, when the Habsburgs received, as a result of the Passarowitz Peace Treaty, the Bana of Timișoara and Oltenia. Friedrich Schwanz von Springfels shows that, due to this reality, the Habsburgs aim at “seeing and finding out if there is a possibility to find and establish uninterrupted communication across the mountains... And it was discovered that there was a possibility to establish access along the Jiu River upwards, across the mountains, from Bumbesti to the Jiu plain, precisely where the Jiu Rivers meet in the mountains, as seen on the maps... From the Jiu plain on, there is no difficulty whatsoever, as one follows the old road from the Vâlcan mountains through Crivadia valley across the Tartar’s Mountain at Baru, where there is the first customs in Transylvania, situated in Hațeg valley; the Tartar’s Mountain is not hard to climb, since the peasants cross it with loads of hay; but even this one could be avoided by going round Merișor, through Crivadia valley, to the Hungarian Jiu. If it were possible to build a road along the Jiu, it would be wise and necessary to abandon the path in the Vâlcan Mountains...” (*Călători străini despre Țările Române*, vol. IX, p. 59-61).

The building operations are started in 1870 by the Company of Brașov but, because the project could not be rapidly carried from the Romanian side, they are interrupted; they are resumed in 1879, and in 1880 a Romanian-Hungarian commission establishes the trajectory of the road through the Jiu Gorge, officially stating the involvement of both states. The six km sector of the road that belonged to the Hungarian side was finished soon after, whereas the longer segment to be built by the Romanians was completed only in 1890; the official inauguration took place on September 4, 1894 (Sebastian Stanca, *op. cit.*, p. 62).

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