

## Geografy

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### Geography

Our first glimpse of the area is from (the 19<sup>th</sup> century author) Balázs Orbán, the most prominent 19<sup>th</sup> century Székely chronicler of local history in the region. He saw the settlement, approaching from the west: „From the neck of the Turzon Mountain a surprising view appears, a beautiful valley which is surrounded in all directions by an amphitheater of mountains and forests. The green valley is carved by the majestic and slowly moving Olt River with Mátéfalva's reflection in the water; in the east, Alsórákos with its four radiant towers, and the ancient fortified castle on the bottom of the Hegyes Hills (the name of the red hills in the area) gives a surprisingly magnificent view



The water of the Olt river carves across the Persányi Mountains at the eastern border of the village, forming a picturesque gorge. From here on there is a more gently sloping hill whose western border is Turzon Mountain.

The settlement was part of White County until 1775, then part of Upper White County. Afterward, until World War II, it was part of Nagyküküllő County, then it became part of Brassó. The village is 444 meters above sea level on the railroad line between Bucharest and Nagyvárad, and is 10 kilometers (6,2 miles) from the international highway. Its neighboring communities are Mirkvásár, Székelyzsombor, Felsőrákos, Ágostonfalva, Ürmös, Datk and Mátéfalva.

„On the northern border of the geographical region called Barcaság, by the crossing of the Olt at Alsórákos and Felsőrákos, as well as at Barót, the ethnic group of the Petchenegs used to live, based on a document from 1421", concluded József Árvay. Barna Imreh's research of the Székely Archives found that Alsórákos was already a Petcheneg settlement before 1276, and was destroyed by the Tartars in 1241. The castle ruins, ford towers and trenches suggest that in ancient times the place was an important military post. Balázs Orbán refers to this several times in his writings.

(Editor's note: The Petchenegs were an Asian people who drove the Magyars westward in the



century. Later on, they themselves were pushed to the west by other tribes. Some of them found refuge in Hungary in the 11<sup>th</sup> century.)

## Maps

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