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FACULTY OF HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

PhD THESIS

Summary

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HABITAT IN THE NORTH-EASTERN TRANSYLVANIA DURING CENTURIES VII-XV

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Cluj-Napoca, 2011

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Keywords: habitat medieval centuries VII-X D. CHR, settlements, medieval houses , early pottery in early medieval settlement from Șieu Odorhei , XI-XII centuries D. CHR, Early medieval settlement from Vermeș, the medieval village, centuries XIII-XV, the medieval town, city, church.

INTRODUCTION.

North-eastern Transylvania - the area under study, is mainly overlapping with the hydrographic basin of Someșul Mare River. This represents a relatively distinctive, but still heterogeneous geomorphological unit consisting of various altitude stages that descend from the slopes of Călimani, Bârgău, Rodna or Țibleș Mountains to the hills and highland area. The landscape is similar to an amphitheatre opened from the Eastern Carpathians towards the Someș Plateau, the so-called "Transylvanian Plain". The crests, reaching between 1500–1800 m (Țibleș Peak is 1839 m high) decrease in altitude from S to SE and towards the central parts of Transylvania down to 800 m or even 500 m in the neighbourhood of Mureș hydrographic basin (e.g. the "Cetate" site at Viile Tecii, near Teaca, 512 m). The whole area consists of a succession of hills and depressions with various altitudes, varying in Bistrița area between 400 and 681 m (e.g. Cetății Hill, 2 km. NE from Bistrița town).

The average density of the Someșul Mare basin fluvial network is 0.60 km/km², which is larger than that of the Someșul Mic basin. The length and the area covered by the right-hand effluents, originating in Rodna Mountains, progressively increase westwards, along Someșul Mare River. Except for Sălăuța, they have their sources in the alpine stage of Rodnei Mountains, at altitudes ranging between 1500–1900 m, mainly represented by glacial circles and valleys. All these effluents show steep flows towards the Someșul Mare corridor. From the left -hand area, i.e. from the Someș Plateau, the river collects important effluents such as Șieu, Budac, Bistrița, Dipșa or Meleş, either directly or as streams associated to other effluents. The landscape diversity in Someșul Mare hydrographic basin is clearly visible when separating geo-morphological units with distinct features, a framework that provided specific influences on the human habitat during the centuries. The *Someș–Mureș inter-river* territory can be assigned to the same north-east Transylvanian patterns.

In the context of a new approach on Middle Ages history, the *understanding of the human habitat* becomes a significant issue: human settlements – villages or towns -, dwellings, necropolis, fortified castles, ovens for burning ceramics... all represent proofs that *outline a whole universe: thus, archaeological research cannot be restricted to the study of historical monuments (churches etc.)*. This new perspective on Middle Ages also requires an interdisciplinary approach involving sociologists, ethnologists, psychologists, experts in demography, and economists among others. They may all contribute efficiently to shift the level of understanding beyond the limits of the irrelevant particular aspects towards synthetic overviews. Under these circumstances, medieval archaeology can bring an essential contribution. It is an advantage that the study of medieval habitats can rely also on written documents. However, in the case of the centuries at the transition between the two millennia of the Christian era, thus for early Middle Ages, we are forced to admit the scarcity of written documents, or even their absence. Nonetheless, systematic archaeological investigations or accidental findings outline a very complex picture of the reality and human habitat for this chronological horizon. It is difficult to proceed with historical reconstructions especially because the whole complexity of the situations is revealed at the same time as the information accumulates. In this stage of research on understanding the human habitats during the period under study it was essential to collect as much archaeological information as possible, but in the same time to value and publish the current results. These observations are valid also in the case of a restrained area such as north-east Transylvania, especially that here only a very few investigations were *focused* on archaeological sites chronologically related to that period. In most of the cases, early Middle Ages archaeological remains have been practically unearthed in the circumstances of systematic diggings that were investigating other time periods, or on the occasion of some rescue diggings. On other times, such remains were only mentioned in the specialized references.

Our research proposes a much larger temporal framework for the realities of the medieval habitats in north-eastern Transylvania at the end of the first millennium of the Christian era, i.e. from the 7th century AD, to the beginning of the second millennium, until the last decades of the 15th century.

In the last decades, systematic archaeological investigations allowed a closer understanding of the realities of the first half of the 1st millennium after Christ in north-east

Transylvania, including the 6th century AD Studies on early Middle Ages in north-east Transylvania are also recent; in general, this historical period is not really well-known, however the interest it raises is continuously increasing.

Thus, establishing the lower chronological limit for this study took into account the changes that transformed the Carpathian area at the beginning of the early Middle Ages, after the rule of Gepids – that functioned in Transylvania for a while – declined, and following the end of the Avar khaganate. These were followed by the consequences of the dissolution of the Avar rule and by the connected new developments. The references mention significant changes concerning the habitat and the material culture at the level of this chronological horizon (end of the 7th century), at regional scale. The 7th century was, in fact, marked by a process that was manifest on large areas on Central and South-Eastern Europe: the influence of Slavic populations.

The selected upper chronological limits for this study took into account the first signs and the crystallization of the urban habitat in this area, this representing a process of major importance for the meanings of Middle Ages in Transylvania. At the end of the 15th century, Bistrița had grown into a fortified town, one of the most important urban centres in Transylvania. Additionally, other arguments contributed in selecting this upper limit: for example, the 13th century represented the time of the last Arpadians, of Tartar invasions, as well as the time of expansion of the major fortified cities after two decades from the great Tartar invasion. The social context was coagulating based on the largest demographical restructuring process in the “century of the Golden Bulls”. These represented the starting points for transformations that could have been recognized centuries afterwards. Around the years 1300 Saxons have reached a geographical maximum in peripheral areas, towards the Eastern Carpathians, including north-eastern Transylvania. As mentioned in the references, this century also represented the birth time for the network of rural churches. Based on numerous systematic archaeological studies it was remarked that essential transformations took place at this chronological horizon level concerning habitat and material culture. Thus, the archaeological approach of a medieval village during those times is meant to compile the fragmentary information provided by documentary sources. For example, in the case of ceramics, in that period the usage of the potters’ wheel with slow speed or of conservatory shapes is terminated. Iron – or metal in general – is now more often used. Coins are more

intensely circulated. In the same time, urban environments record their beginning in this period, in this area. The first stone dwellings in Bistrița are mentioned in documents at the beginning of the 15th century. In the second half of the same century, the stone house turns into a familiar presence in Bistrița town. This feature marks now the local medieval habitat. The end of the 15th century – the upper time limit selected for our study, marks the genuine crystallization of the urban habitat; this represents a long-term process started in the 13th century. At the end of the 15th century, Bistrița fortified medieval town was real, an important presence in north-east Transylvania. Mining activities in the neighbouring areas represent also a remarkable feature for the region.

Systematic archaeological investigations in the last decades *allowed a closer view on the realities of the first half of the 1st millennium AD in north-east Transylvania, including those during the 6th century AD* Recent finds have clarified some of the peculiar features of the evolution of this area in the interval after the Aurelian retreat till the transition between the 6th and 7th centuries of the Christian era. Thus, the archaeological map of north-eastern Transylvania illustrates an intense inhabitation in the 5th-6th centuries AD. Specialised references indicated 63 archaeological sites for that time interval. For example, the proofs from the graveyards from Archiud, Bistrița, Galții Bistriței, Fântânele point to a longer presence of the Gepids, extended also to the first decades of the 7th century. The archaeological sites assigned to the populations characterising Sântana de Mureș culture have been also identified and studied. In north-east Transylvania also a consistent level of living for the 4th-6th centuries AD has been documented.

EARLY MEDIEVAL HABITAT TO THE END OF THE FIRST MILLENNIUM OF THE CHRISTIAN ERA, DURING THE CENTURIES VII-X AFTER CHRIST IN THE NORTH-EASTERN TRANSYLVANIA

Research on early Middle Ages in north-east Transylvania focusing on *the last centuries of the first millennium of the Christian era and the beginning of the second one* is of relatively recent interest; in general very little is known about this period, which on the other hand presents a gradually larger interest.

We have identified and studied archaeological sites in north-east Transylvania dated as belonging to the last centuries of the 1st millennium AD and from the beginning of the second millennium of the Christian era, i.e. 9th-10th centuries. The archaeological map of this area indicates that the last decades registered a large number of finds; systematic or

incidental finds allowed to outline the habitat at this chronological level, but we are far from having a detailed understanding. The most important issue in the current stage of research is represented by the fact that no datable necropolises have been identified at this chronological level, fact that represents a serious handicap in having a more detailed knowledge on the habitat in those times, as well as in drawing some historical conclusions.

The unknown parts of the human habitat for those centuries are not easy to define. Under these circumstances, the intensive research of some micro-regions represents a method in itself that gains more and more ground in the archaeology of early Middle Ages – this because it allows the understanding and careful examination of local realities and trends within a larger archaeological context imprinted by local trends and characterized by a wide diversity. North-east Transylvania and even the micro-regions included in this area are of interest for this type of research. As a general remark, one can mention that *the end of the 7th century records significant changes concerning the human habitat*, in the larger landscape of Transylvanian habitat of that period. In the studied sites located in this chronological level we could notice the termination or decreased usage of the ceramics manufactured with the fast potters' wheel; in some sites we could notice the exclusive presence of hand-processed ceramics or of ceramics manufactured with the slow wheel. These details are considered as significant in the difficult process of formulating historical, demographic etc. conclusions in general, and not only at this chronological level. For example, the discussion related to the ceramics obtained at the fast wheel is interesting in this context. A change of the material culture during the 7th century has been already defined also in the north-east Transylvania by archaeological research in the last decades, as already mentioned above.

There is little research focusing on archaeological sites chronologically-assigned to the 7th-9th centuries AD; in most of the cases, the archaeological remains of that period have been identified as “side products” of systematic research focusing on other periods, or on the occasion of some salvation diggings. Such remains originating from field studies or from incidental finds have been recorded only in the specialised references.

The study of archaeological material and sites located in this area, assignable to the last centuries of the 1st millennium AD represents a difficult approach also because of the numerous, very similar or even uniform items, that are located on vast geographical areas and which contribute in a significant way to the understanding of material culture of those

centuries. This aspect has been recorded by the specialised references. From methodological point of view, this complexity has led to the conclusion that understanding archaeological documents of the 7th-10th century, their assignment and precise dating is based on a complete recovery and the analysis of wider inhabiting complexes, especially of necropolises. Another important aspect is represented that historical conclusions have to be based on a detailed dating of the archaeological sites and material. This approach is difficult mainly because most of such material is represented by ceramics. The analysis of ceramic material is many times difficult also because of its fragmentation. Under these circumstances, it is more and more accepted that the classical macroscopic methods used in the study of ceramics have to be corroborated with physical, chemical, X-ray methods etc. *Evidencing the details and particular features* involves a constant and rigorous effort based on a suitable methodology. The dwellings identified in north-eastern Transylvania and assigned to this chronological level are located on terraces of the rivers included in the Someşului Mare Basin, or on slight slopes in the vicinity of water flows, in sunny places. For example, one of the terraces of Şieu hosts the archaeological site from Şieu Odorhei. After a systematic investigation, this site provided important elements for a better understanding of the habitat from north-eastern Transylvania at the border between the 7th-8th centuries AD in this area. Other contemporary sites show similar locations: at Arcalia on the second terrace of Şieu, at Beclean on one of the terraces of Someş or at Archiud on the southern exposure slopes on the right bank of Fundătura Brook. At Bistriţa similar dwellings assigned to the 8th-9th centuries have been identified in the eastern side of the town, outside the fortifications of the medieval burg, on a terrace of Bistriţa River.

In a similar way as in other parts of Transylvania, the typology of the identified and studied buildings from north-east Transylvania is restricted to the presence of *huts– dwellings fully dug in the soil layer* - , of *dwellings partly dug into the soil*, and of *surface dwellings*. As a rule, cottages were present on large geographical areas (in Transylvania, towards Rhine or Elba, or in Moldavia and Muntenia) during that time interval. *The majority* of such complexes identified and studied in north-east Transylvania are represented by dwellings only slightly (-0.40–0.80 m depth) dug into the antique soil. In spite of their deepening into the soil layer, these dwellings cannot be considered as *huts*. Such dwellings have been identified at Archiud (two such buildings), at Căianul Mic (one dwelling), at Coasta, at Fântânele, at

Ocnița, at Stupini “Fânațele Archiudului” or at Stupini “Vătaștină”. Most of the studied dwellings in the Șieu Odorhei site area also partly assignable to this type. However, in north-eastern Transylvania there are also buildings that can be assigned to the cottage type (they are deepened into the soil with -1.20 m to -1.80 m from the current stepping surface). Such buildings have been identified in the site from Șopteriu. Their ground plan is rectangular, with rounded corners. Also worthy to mention are the dwellings from Ciceu Corabia, or from Dipșa sites. *The horizontal plan of the investigated dwellings* is typical for Transylvania of those times: rectangular buildings with rounded corners, rectangular and rarely oval ground plans are common. In the 8th–10th centuries this typology was extended on vast areas in the whole Transylvania and beyond its limits. In the study area we could also register surface dwellings, which were more difficult to identify, based on the colour of the soil at their ground level (gründriss) and on the higher concentration of archaeological material (ceramics, rock fragments from broken ovens etc.).

Concerning the method of construction of these early medieval complexes, interesting information could be retrieved from the study of the diggings for the poles that supported the roof, as well as, if still identifiable, the rests of the diggings for the poles that were located at the corners, or along the sides of the walls. Almost all the buildings contained rectangular fire places outlined by broken river pebbles or sandstones. In the studied locations, such fire places were located in one of the corners of the rooms. As internal decoration, we could identify in some of the dwellings belonging to this horizon a floor board made of beaten clay or a sand-made similar floor board.

In the studied sites, for the last centuries of the 1st millennium AD ceramics constitutes the great majority of the recovered artefacts. The typology is very simple: only a few shapes have been identified (jugs – without handles, circular plate, and earthen shells for bread baking). At this chronological level, the jug represented the most frequently used ceramic object. Three types of jugs have been identified: hand made, and processed by slow vs. fast potter’s wheel. They show various sizes; based on the ratio between the opening width, heights and base diameters, on the curvature of the shoulders, their shape, the maximum diameter area, as well as the profile of the opening several types have been defined. An important criterion for studying and classifying the artefacts is represented by the modelling technique. References for the investigated archaeological sites in north-east

Transylvania point to some specific features for this category of artefacts. Concerning modelling technologies, hand made vs. fast/slow potter's wheel ceramics have been identified in various ratios in various studied sites. Thus, the ceramics from Şopteriu is in most of the cases processed by hand; they represent 70 % of the total. The ceramics modelled by fast wheel identified in the same locality preserve the tradition of Romanic pottery. Besides also slow wheel objects were identified (containing a sandy paste showing a decoration with fascicules of waiving or parallel incised lines). An important number of fast wheel processed vessels has been noticed, pointing to a relatively earlier dating backed-up by the presence of a large number of marginal alveoli-decorated jug openings rests.

Ceramics processed by hand is also separated based on criteria resulted from the macroscopic investigation of the artefacts, as well as the microscopic one. In many cases – such as the sites from Şirioara or Şieu Măgheruş, coarse ceramics with archaic aspect processed by hand, containing large amounts of carelessly-modelled broken ceramoclasts as flux was dominant (in the above-mentioned sites this ceramics was almost the only type identified). Additionally, there is another type of hand-processed ceramics that is more compact and shows thinner walls, in spite of its coarse aspect.

In the dwellings recovered from Archiud site both hand- and slow wheel-modelled ceramics has been identified. Here also a rarer shape for north-east Transylvania – a shell for bread baking – was also unearthed.

Hand-processed coarse ceramics with archaic aspect and a large number of ceramoclasts and lithoclasts in the paste, and the one worked with fast/slow wheel are the most typical types identified and assigned to this chronological interval in this space. The frail paste with the large amounts of ceramoclasts is typical for a large number of ceramic fragments found at Şirioara, Şieu Măgheruş, or Şieu Odorhei. Decorated slow wheel ceramics of superior quality was identified in significant amounts at Ciceu Corabia.

References point out that the ratio between these categories of ceramics is significant, being a basis for conclusions related to a better chronology of the studied sites.

Considerations on the ceramics and chronology of the studied Early Medieval settlements

As indicated before, when dating the interesting sites for this chronological level, ceramics plays an important role. The typology and nature of the ceramic material led to the

conclusion that the only settlement belonging to the early Slaves assignable to the 7th century in north-east Transylvania is that from Șopteriu.

The analysis of the recovered material from Șieu Măgheruș, Șirioara or Șieu Odorhei allows dating these sites in the 7th-8th centuries.

In some cases, the small number of investigated complexes and the fragmentary nature of the archaeological material did not allow formulating conclusions that could more closely help assigning the studied sites. The dominance of ceramics modelled with slow wheel justified, in some cases, the assignment to the 8th century. This is the case with the sites from Archiud, Dipșa, Ocnița, Stupini "Vătaștină", and Fântânele. However, these sites contained also ceramics resembling the "Praga"-type vases that, as a rule, are dated as belonging to the 7th century.

The settlement from Stupini, "Fântânele Archiudului", has been also dated as 8th-9th centuries; the arguments were related to both the nature and the typology and ornamentation of the recovered ceramic material. A later stage has been identified in the site from Ciceu Corabia. This latter material is similar to that recovered from Albești, but also later-dated materials were present.

The dwelling from Coasta seems to be more recent, the settlement being chronologically assigned to the 8th-9th centuries based on the similitude with materials assigned to the horizon of the tumuli necropolis of Someșeni Nușfalău-type.

EARLY MEDIEVAL CERAMICS RECOVERED FROM THE ȘIEU- ODORHEI SETTLEMENT, BISTRIȚA-NĂȘĂUD COUNTY

In the last decades, systematic or accidental archaeological findings in northeast Transylvania have pointed to several settlements chronologically assignable to the end of the 1st millennium A.D. Some of these findings have resulted from surface research, others have been evidenced tens of years ago, during rescue excavation that meanwhile were partly destroyed during agricultural works or land planning activities, the resulting archaeological material being thus only partly preserved. However, some of these sites were also submitted to systematic archaeological investigations.

The sites in north-east Transylvania belonging to this chronological horizon are open-type settlements. The most significant issue when studying such archaeological sites is represented by the need for an exhaustive investigation. In the current stage, even their

structure *i.e.* planimetry is not yet fully elucidated. *In order to know the structure of the early medieval settlements, one needs to perform a complete or at least detailed investigation so that the results could gather in a coherent interpretation of the topic.*

The open settlements identified in north-east Transylvania dated from the VIIth–VIIIth centuries A.D. are located on terraces of several rivers in the Someșul Mare Basin, or along slight sunny, “frontal” slopes in the vicinity of water.

One of the systematically investigated early medieval settlements in the area is the *Șieu-Odorhei site*. Șieu-Odorhei village is located in the water meadow of Șieul River, on its left side. The archaeological site stands on a low terrace of Șieul, in the area locally known as “Șomoștauă”. The surface that hosts early Medieval archaeological findings is located on the meadow of the left slope of Șieul River, next to Șintereag locality.

A relative simple stratigraphy characterises the area investigated for its archaeological content: the cultural layer is in average 0.50–0.70 m thick, with vegetal soil developed on its top. The layer practically consists of rests chronologically assigned to the Bronze Age. A considerable prehistoric level is omnipresent, so that in some areas within the settlement two stages of prehistoric inhabitancy could be identified, one assigned to the Wiettenberg Culture, the other one to the Late Bronze Age. No cultural layer that could be properly assigned to the early Middle Ages could be separated; it was probably destroyed as a consequence of intense agricultural works. However, under these circumstances, a series of slightly deepened complexes have been identified and recovered from the prehistoric level, representing dwellings that could be assigned to the end of the VIIth and the beginning of the VIIIth century.

As in the case of many other similar early medieval settlements in northeast Transylvania, the recovered archaeological material exclusively consists of ceramic fragments and a few reconstructible pots. Therefore, ceramics represent the main artefacts that can be used for dating the investigated site.

The fact that most of the recovered material was fragmented enhanced the intrinsic difficulty of the investigation, especially concerning the ceramics` typology. Only a few vessels could be reconstructed and it was even difficult to define the original number of items that produced the total amount of fragments. A few vessels could be defined: a pot without handles, a circular pan and a bread baking pot (represented by a single fragment). In

this chronological level, the handleless pot represents the most frequently used ceramic object. Three types of handleless pots have been identified: hand-processed, processed by using the slow and respectively the fast potters' wheel (the latter type also present as a single ceramic fragment).

One common feature of the ceramics recovered from the investigated complexes from the Șieu-Odorhei settlement is the presence of ceramoclasts in the ceramic mixture. Some of them are large, almost reaching 4-5 mm. Besides, other components of the paste are: lithoclasts (rock fragments), crystalloclasts or bioclasts (fossil rests). The size, combination and ratios of these ingredients give the overall aspect of the ceramics; the quantitative distribution (%) of the components and of their combinations reveals the presence of some distinctive subcategories within the coarse ceramics, hand-processed type. In fact, these differences are noticeable from the initial macroscopic investigation of the samples. Additional to the macroscopic study, several fragments have been submitted to physical-chemical analyses that are relevant for archaeometry. The selection of these samples has been based on their representativity for the types of ceramics defined for the Șieu-Odorhei settlement. Interesting conclusions could be drawn up: for the ceramics from Șieu-Odorhei, calcareous clay was used as raw material. The *mineralogical and petrographical study of this ceramics* led to the conclusion that based on the mineralogical composition and on the amount of flux, three classes could be defined:

A-type ceramics

B-type ceramics

C-type ceramics

The A-type ceramics contains about 4–13 % ceramoclasts and 1–2 % lithoclasts used as flux, embedded in the clay matrix. Thus, the main flux materials are represented by ceramoclasts. In the case of the B-type ceramics, the flux is mainly represented by lithoclasts (8 %). C-type ceramics is based in the exclusive usage of lithoclasts (about 5 % of the mass) as flux materials. The grain size and relative amount of the clasts define the fineness of a ceramics. The laboratory investigation of the selected samples has proven that they contained a high-quality clay matrix. Only a few amount of clasts was originally present in the clay mass; most of them were added subsequently, as technological ingredients (flux materials). The coarse aspect of the ceramics is a consequence of the size of the clasts: 6 % are

larger than 2 mm in diameter and 2 % range between 0.06– 2 mm in diameter. The identification and analysis of these ingredients contributes to pointing out some very useful aspects related to the chronology of the settlement and to similarities that can be observed in the frame of the same cultural environment but on large areas. The firing temperatures for the studied ceramics range between 750–800° C.

Concerning the forming technique, in the case of the early Middle Ages ceramics recovered from Șieu-Odorhei, the *dominant* amount points to hand-processed ceramics. In spite of a first impression that this ceramics is homogeneous, under the microscope specific features could be noticed such as the type of flux materials in the clay matrix (ceramoclasts, micro-pebbles, and lithoclasts), their amounts, their association, and their ratios. It is worthy to mention that the clear coarse feature of some of the vessels may be due not only to larger clasts (some even with sizes up to 4 mm) but also to the fact that the clay matrix has been processed in an unsuitable manner. Within this hand-processed ceramics type, a coarser subtype is defined based on thicker ceramic walls and porous textures (with numerous elongated pores up to 2–3 mm in length and 0.5 mm in width). The smoothing process was also not suitably finalized in this case. The ceramics is not firmly bound, thus friable, and in many cases the bottom of the vessels is thicker than their walls. However, some fragments of hand-processed vessels show a different quality. Even macroscopically, one could observe that in general, the usage of higher amounts of lithoclasts as flux led to a more compact ceramic paste as compared to the cases when relatively large ground older ceramics (ceramoclasts) have been used. When sand was used as flux, the lithoclasts being smaller in sizes and the ceramoclasts less represented, the effects were opposite. In such cases, the walls of the vessels were thinner.

Concerning firing, in most of the cases it is semi-oxidative; in general the outer surface of the ceramic fragments is brown-reddish, yellowish-reddish and the inner surface is grey, black-greyish. However clear conclusions are not easy to be drawn, because secondary firing or the burial conditions might have modified the original aspect of the ceramics.

Among the ceramic fragments recovered from the studied settlements, some could be used for the reconstruction of several hand-processed pots. The typology of the handleless pots that were processed by hand is relatively poor: in the settlement from Șieu-Odorhei,

only the *handleless pot* and the *circular pan* type could be identified. Nevertheless, the handleless pot type shows several versions.

Besides the hand-processed ceramics, in the settlement from Șieu-Odorhei also ceramics obtained by using the potter's wheel has been identified. This is an important fact, when taking into account that, according to previous works, the presence of such ceramics type is a factor used for dating the sites at this chronological level. Quantitatively, in the early medieval settlement from Șieu-Odorhei the latter type of ceramics is clearly subordinate to the hand-processed one. The recovered fragments originate from vessels processed by using the *slow (rotating) wheel*; they are represented by handleless pots that were carefully formed, they show a good smoothing of the surface, and they consist of a compact ceramic matrix with lithoclasts and small pebble clasts used as flux. These fragments are ornamented with bands of incised lines in parallel or undulated patterns. Concerning the fast wheel-processed ceramics, only one fragment has been identified in the studied site. Thus, among the identified ceramics obtained by using the potters' wheel, the *paramount* is represented by that resulted from the slow-turning wheel.

Based on the characteristics of the ceramic material, *i.e.* its typology and the complexes identified, we can state that the settlement from Șieu-Odorhei is similar to other sites located in the lower basin of Șieu River, such as the settlements from Șirioara or Șieu-Măgheruș. The dominance of hand-processed ceramics built-up of a friable, not hardly-bound paste and containing a relatively high amount of ceramoclasts, as well as the similitude with the studied material from Lăpușel, Poian, Cernat or Sălașuri are all arguments for chronologically assigning the early Middle Ages settlement from Șieu-Odorhei to the VIIth–VIIIth centuries A.D. Based on potentially more precise evidence, one could assume that the beginnings of the settlement could be temporally related to the last decades of the VIIth century A.D.

EARLY MEDIEVAL HABITAT DURING THE CENTURIES XI-XII AFTER CHRIST IN THE NORTH-EASTERN TRANSYLVANIA

Recent archaeological investigations in the last decades provided interesting contributions also concerning the medieval habitat at the beginning of the 2nd millennium of the Christian era. Thus, open **settlements chronologically assigned to the 11th–12th centuries have been also often identified in Transylvania.** The missing part of such research is the

result of the lack of *complete studies* on such sites. In many cases such chronologically-assignable sites are only cited in references, others are only partly studied. Among the studied sites, some provided interesting examples: Şirioara – located in the close neighbourhood of the contemporary fortification, Vermeş, Şintereag, Archiud, Ocniţa, Sânmihaiul de Câmpie, Sângeorzul Nou, Bistriţa, or Şieu Măgheruş. The recovered and studied artefacts from such sites are mainly ceramic fragments. As a consequence, the only arguments in the investigation of the villages during the 11th–12th centuries can be based on the study of ceramics. Besides the lack of an *exhaustive approach*, the dating of these artefacts is even more difficult because of the scarceness of recovered metallic objects assignable to this chronological interval. However, references mention a few metallic objects identified at Vermeş (settlement dated in the 11th–12th centuries based on ceramic artefacts): an iron knife blade or a circular iron bracelet with open ends with rectangular cross-section, thinned through beating. Doubtlessly, one of the most interesting early medieval metallic recovered objects is represented by the spur identified in the settlement from Bistriţa “Han”. The spur shows a pyramidal spike. The object was assigned to the Polish area type and dated as belonging to the second half of the 11th century till the second half of the 11th century, this dating being considered acceptable also for the intracarpethian area during the Arpadian period. The most appropriate similar artefacts for the metallic spur were identified at Lechinţa de Mureş, Bratei, Vinţu de Jos, Sighişoara etc. Besides ceramics, the identified spur has allowed the chronological assignment of the settlement.

Systematic archaeological studies on the early medieval settlement from Vermeş allowed outlining, even in a fragmentary manner, the image of an early medieval settlement from north-east Transylvania during the 11th–12th centuries AD.

We have now geoarchaeological and archaeometric data on the Early Medieval (XIth–XIIth centuries A.D.) ceramics recovered from Vermeş. The eleven ceramic samples have been investigated macroscopically and by polarising microscopy, and X-ray diffraction.

The ceramics from Vermeş site was obtained by processing silty, poorly calcareous polymictic clay (containing illite, kaolinite and smectite) and flux material (consisting of washed and sorted river sand). The arenite content varies between 18 and 38 %, accordingly the samples being assigned to the coarse ceramics field.

The ceramics' fabric corresponds to graywacke transformed into hornfels given the obvious parallel orientation to the ceramic wall. Based on the grain size, the ceramics can be defined as lutitic-arenitic-siltic (64 % of the samples), and lutitic-siltic-arenitic (36 %) respectively.

The studied ceramics was modelled using the potter's wheel, while firing took place in the de 800-950 °C interval (most of the samples being fired at around 900 °C).

The findings at the Vermeş site did not reveal the presence of a pottery centre. Thus the ceramics must have been obtained elsewhere. We presume two distinctive workshops as source: one located along the upper course of Someşul Mare River (most of the samples) and one where alluvial sand originating from Bârgău Mts. (Ilva and Someşul Mare Rivers), or Călimani Mts. (Şieu or Mureş Rivers) was used.

By analysing the types of dwellings and fire places identified in the open 11th – 12th century settlements, one can notice that they are similar with the landscape of material culture of the contemporaneous fortified Transylvanian settlements. Cottages, dwellings partly dug into the ground or surface dwellings have been identified in all the studied settlements in north-east Transylvania, for example at Vermeş, Bistriţa "Han" or at Ocniţa. The rectangular or oval fire places, dug into clay or build of stone, with the fire place surrounded by river pebbles or ceramic fragments are located in one of the corners of the rooms.

An important issue when the habitat in north-eastern Transylvania of those times is considered is that of the early medieval fortifications. This is even more obvious, when the debate on the occurrence of fortifications in Transylvania has connected this fact to the installation of some territorial structures that started to define their authority. Fortifications existed in this region, and the effort for constructing them might have been related to specific military, political, administrative or other concrete realities. The phenomenon of the occurrence of earthen and wood castles represented a feedback to some realities present at this chronological level in a wider geographical context, towards Transylvania, Hungary or Central Europe. It is well known that at the end of the 1st millennium AD in Transylvania numerous fortifications with a ditch, earthen protecting walls and wood palisades. Some fortifications were indicated in some documents but the field identification was in most cases difficult. At the border between the first two millennia AD they were a common presence in

the Transylvanian habitat. The fortified areas of those times showed some common features: their location on high plateaus that were difficult to access – as in the case of the fortification from Viile Tecii, as well as on the endings of hills or on the upper river terraces. This is the case with the Şirioara castle: due to its strategic position and to the steep slopes that run down to Şieului Valley, this location represented an undefeatable obstacle. This castle represents one of the relatively few studied fortifications in north-eastern Transylvania. It is one of the earthen castles identified in this area, a castle that was operational at the border between the first two Christian millennia. The references have highly debated the age of this settlement, especially focusing on its start. A first conclusion that can be drawn is that this fortification is not enough studied via archaeological methods. The clarification of the construction stages and their precise dating involves not only the use of previously uncovered information (*anyhow not very extended*) but also the exhaustive research of the site and the publication of the research results.

New information on the early medieval fortifications from north Transylvania was provided through archaeological investigations that focused on the **fortification from Viile Tecii**, an earthen castle dated in the 11th century. The fortress is located along the Dipşa Valley, in the left part of the road connecting Bistriţa with Reghin, at the exit from Viile Tecii locality to Teaca, on a relatively higher and forested highland area. From here it was possible to survey the access from Mureşului to Bistriţei Valley and to Şieu, and then further to Someş Valley. In the context of the discussion on the (north-eastern) Transylvanian habitat *at the beginning of the 2nd millennium AD*, the fortress from Viile Tecii represents an interesting case study especially due to the fact that here, archaeological investigations could evidence an earthen fortification that could be chronologically-assigned to this horizon. In the last years, the fortress was systematically studied, in spite of the fact that currently the site is forested. Archaeological research allowed some stratigraphical observations to be made; based on them, the outline of the evolution of the fortifications could be drawn along a long period of time when they were used almost without interruption: from prehistory to the Dacian stage and then to the early Middle Ages. Later, during the Middle Ages proper, also here a stone wall was erected. The site possesses a remarkable strategic importance: the fortified area is situated on a highland (512 m altitude) that is extremely difficult to access, along Dipşei Valley. The early medieval fortification is extremely interesting.

The stratigraphical observations and the archaeological material recovered from the study of the plateau as well as of the earthen wall allowed us to establish the main features of the succession of fortifications. This was hindered by the fact that later reconstruction works, represented by the medieval stone wall and its contemporary complexes have disturbed in many areas the previous fortification units. In the current stage of research it can be stated that the inhabitation took place especially on the margins of the fortified plateau, where the deposits are locally deeper than 2.30–2.40 m from the current level of the soil. The oldest archaeological horizon is represented by Coțofeni level, overlapped by the Dacian one. The fortification systems corresponding to both levels could not be clearly outlined because of the disturbing medieval subsequent additions. However, the previously-mentioned levels (and especially the classical Dacian one) could have been identified based on the locally very consistent depositions, rich in archaeological material.

The more recent, medieval level (20-30 cm thick), located close to the vegetal soil level contains relatively large amounts of ceramic fragments. This level is however capping, towards the margins of the plateau, what was preserved from the old fortification that could be assigned, based on the archaeological recovered material, between the first two millennia of the Christian era: the early medieval castle. The recovered archaeological material and the planimetry of the early medieval fortification with its constructive system allowed us to assign it to the 11th century AD. When analysing the stratigraphy, one can notice a consistent deposition of fired material on the top of two parallel ditches that are deepened into clay; there we could identify the traces of the foot of the pillars that consisted the framework of the structure erected over the stepping level, the structure representing the palisade. The fired material level was probably the result of a strong fire that affected this site. Toward the interior of the plateau, behind the palisade, we could identify – also beneath the layer of fired material – a compact and well-levelled clay construction. Beneath it we could identify the level chronologically assigned to the 11th century, as a dark earth, porous level, 40-50 cm in width, containing a relatively high amount of ceramic fragments. These fragments allowed us to date this cultural level.

The construction system of this fortification is revealed by the fingerprint of the two parallel ditches filled with fired material, which are more than one meter wide and about – 1.65 m deep as compared to the current soil level. The distance between the ditches is of

about 2 m; sometimes imprints of pillar feet, or vestiges of the wooden and earthy suprastructure of the fortification could be identified. The trajectory of these ditches that supported a wooden supra-terranean structure could be identified in most of the sections dug in this area of the plateau. Based on the constructing elements, this fortification can be assigned to the palisade-type built on a floor made of longitudinal wooden beams locally supported by vertical pillars and probably consolidated with other transversal beams leading to the creation of compartments filled with beaten earthy material. However, we *could not identify in situ* proofs for documenting the transversal beams for this structure, as it was the case of the fortification from Şirioara. At the same time, subsequent rebuilding lead to the flattening of this fortified wall.

MEDIEVAL VILLAGE (centuries XIII-XV)

Information on medieval archaeology are essential in the better understanding of medieval village, especially that in the 13th century significant changes took place concerning the habitat, while documented sources point to interesting political, administrative and other aspects of reality. For a better knowledge on the rural medieval habitat in north-east Transylvania at this chronological level, archaeological sources are of importance, but the real context of those times underlines the significance and value of written documents, and makes valuable the corroboration of the two types of sources. Little is known from archaeological point of view on rural settlements from Transylvania in the 13th and 14th centuries, but a series of investigations could provide significant information on their material culture. Another issue in understanding medieval villages in the 13th and 14th centuries is represented by the need of an *exhaustive research of such archaeological sites*, or at least their uncovering on areas large enough as to allow drawing documented conclusions on their extension and structure. In north-east Transylvania, an example in such type of research is represented by a deserted village, a *praediu* located on a high terrace of Bistrița River, downstream from Bistrița town. The deserted village Cighir located on this terrace was attested in a document (related to village borders) in 1243/44, under the name of “villa Chuger”; in 1394 it was mentioned, together with Caila village, under the name of “*praedium* Chyger”.

Archaeological research of deserted villages is promising in the perspective of a better understanding of medieval village in north-east Transylvania.

The image of medieval habitat in north-east Transylvania of those times cannot be outlined in the absence of an important segment: the church. Documentary sources, medieval ecclesiastic architectural monuments still preserved and archaeological research are all sources for the study of medieval habitat. However, one has to keep in mind that during the 13th and 14th centuries, the wall architecture started to become a generalized feature for all representative constructions: churches and fortifications. This phenomenon was generalized in Transylvania of those times, leading to the assimilation of Roman and Gothic elements in the rural settlements environment. An interesting coordinate of the landscape of medieval habitat for those times in north-east Transylvania was represented by the fortified gothic churches. The end of the 15th century was marked by the presence of a chain of gothic churches in this area, some representing remarkable architectural and artistic outcomes, as it is the case with the Evangelic church from Tărbuiu. For sure, these monuments reflected the increase of economic strength of the respective communities, as well as the more demanding aesthetic needs of the sponsors. The corresponding building activity is illustrated by the results of **archaeological research at the Evangelic church from Tărbuiu**, a study made possible in the frame of the restoration works for this late Gothic architectural monument in north-east Transylvania, a spectacular monument as a village church for this area. *Investigations inside and outside the current church* provided a coherent and interesting image on the constructive activity from Tărbuiu from the end of the 13th century to the first decades of the 16th century. Two phases prior to the current monument – whose erection started towards the end of the 15th century – could be identified.

The archaeological investigation of the Evangelical church from Tărbuiu, Bistrița Năsăud County was performed in the framework of the restoration project focused on this later Gothic monument from north-east Transylvania, a spectacular village church in the region. Archaeological excavations evidenced pre-existing frameworks for the current monument and allowed the identification of the main construction stages.

In 1977, the first archaeological probing was related to the beginning of the initiative concerning the monument's restoration and the emergency intervention that had saved, for more than 15 years, the building - then facing severe deterioration. Even if, under the given circumstances, the research work was limited, several pieces of information on the region's stratigraphy were retrieved, and the hypothesis of pre-existing construction stages could be

stated. When the Historical Monuments Direction has been dissolved, the restoration work and the archaeological investigations to this building were also stopped. Finally, when the restoration works were resumed in the '90es, the systematic research of the Evangelical church from Tărpiu could be performed.

Tărpiu (Germ.Treppen, Hung. Szásztörpeny) locality is emplaced in north-eastern Transylvanian area that was colonised by Germans; it is located at only 12 km away from Bistrița municipality. The arrival of the German colonists in this area probably took place at the end of XIIth – beginning of XIIIth centuries. Administratively, during the Middle Ages, this locality was part of Bistrița District. Undoubtedly, the proximity of this town has positively influenced the economic, as well as the urbanistic development of the locality.

Geomorphologically, Tărpiu belongs to the Valea Rosua Depression, which is outlined by Bistrița Hills.

The locality was mentioned in historical documents relatively late; the first mention is to be found in the *Registele de dijme papale* (Eng. *Pope's Tax Records*) emitted between 1332–1335, where it is mentioned under the accounts of the Tylegd and DĂBÂCA archdioceses. Under these circumstances, the name of the vicar Petrus from Tărpiu (de Cupinio) is indicated, who in those times was contributing with a large amount, i.e. a mark according to the Alba weight standard. It is remarkable that the amounts contributed by Tărpiu vicariate are close to the total sum contributed by the plebeians from Bistrița.

According to its blueprint, the monument in Tărpiu can be assigned to the group of hall-type churches lacking the western tower. It was constituted as a fortified church with an inner yard proper that included a tower, similarly to the Evangelic church from Lechința. The inner wall, reinforced during the Middle Ages with the gate tower along the northern side, is still standing, in part, as well as the gate tower.

For a rural community, the stone-built construction is impressive as sizes are concerned; it consists of a nave and a polygonal sanctuary (with two bays, one rectangular and one polygonal ending in three sides). The chancel consists of two bays, one rectangular and one polygonal, ending in three sides. The bays are cross, pointed-arched, the arches intersecting in keystones decorated with shields. The choir vault are supported by conical or polygonal consoles, richly articulated by a succession of profiles. Along its northern side, the chancel is connected to a vestry, while on its northern side to a staircase tower. The broken

arch-shaped portal of the vestry shows a simple profile. Along the northern side of the quire a Gothic tabernacle with rectangular opening is present, framed by two thin columns and a crowning consisting of a brace arch decorated with leaves. Tabernacle is decorated with a relief representing Christ. Beneath the figure of Christ, on the lintel an engraving reads the year 1504. It is a late Gothic tabernacle.

The nave consists of two bays with stellate vaults supported by overlapping semicolumnar pilasters, by brackets decorated with standing lions – in the corners facing the triumphal arch, and respectively, in the south-western corner with a relatively flat antiquated, phytomorphic human mask. As in the case of the portal of the tower from the fortified courtyard, the brackets with lions were intended to guard the entrance towards the quire, and respectively to the churches' cemetery. The separating arches are supported by pilasters finalized by semicolumns ending with capitals outlined by talons located in-between the listels. The vault system of the nave outlines two bays. The separation is achieved through the two pilasters located at the middle of the northern and southern walls in order to support the vault. A special place in the architecture of the nave is represented by the pulpit. Its emplacement should mark the end of the construction stage.

Light enters the church through five Gothic-type bipartite windows located on the southern side – two in the nave and three in the chancel. These are high windows, worked in detail, with slender mullions; the upper part is decorated with flamboyant and polylobed moldings. The sixth window, still realized in Gothic style, is located on the western façade and it provides light to the rostrum. As compared to the previous ones, it is shorter and tripartite, but the decoration is similar, with flamboyant moldings.

Along the western façade, a portal in broken arch with reverse profiles towards the doors' interior is noticeable; it is decorated with a keystone showing a heraldic coat of arms. On its external side, the portal is framed by a curly arc that continues in the lower part with a vegetal decoration represented by a simplified creeping stem. On the top of the portal, a short tripartite window showing late Gothic moldings was inserted in order to illuminate the rostrum.

On the south facade is a Renaissance portal with rectangular decorated stone frame with rods turned inwards at the bottom. The northern façade is perfectly concatenated with the southern one; it reproduces the portal with Renaissance-type profile, however here the

windows are missing. The façades of the church are articulated with slightly stepwise abutments, which logically follow the internal supporting elements of the vaults, *i.e.* three along each side of the nave and one in each of the corners of the chancel, except the northern side of the latter, where they are replaced by the vestry.

The church from Tărpiu is a monument characterising the transition from the Gothic to the Renaissance styles that is remarkable by the precision of the architectural, sculptural and pictural details.

Research work inside the present-day church allowed us to draw a coherent and inedited picture on the construction activities in Tărpiu from the end of the XIIIth century to the first decades of the XVIth century. The stratigraphic situation revealed by the current investigations in the chancel and the nave of the present-day monument has documented intense constructing activities in this space spanning the whole Middle Ages.

The investigations on the chancel evidenced two phases prior to the construction of the current monument, recognized due to the identified *in situ* foundations that belong to some older buildings.

The first phase is represented by a chancel ending with an apse identified based on the *in situ* foundation. It was not possible to recognize the blueprint of this first church that has functioned on the site of the current monument, because the only remaining vestiges are represented by the foundation of this chancel with a semicircular ending. The foundation is preserved fully only along the eastern side (semicircular apse) and partly along the northern one, being cross-cut by a construction representing the second phase in the construction activities from the church in Tărpiu. This is the first churches choir that worked here.

The second phase in the building activities from Tărpiu is represented by a rectangular chancel, which has been already mentioned, proved by the *in situ* identified foundation. The foundations of the rectangular chancel enclose the semicircular foundation intersecting it along the southern and northern sides. The southern side of this second phase chancel is leaning against the foundation of the southern side of the current chancel, while the northern side is partly overlapped by the foundation of the current chancel.

It is worthy to mention that we have identified *in situ* also a fragment of the altar table corresponding to this second phase; it consists of a masonry piece consisting of broken stone embedded in mortar that overlays a small portion of the foundation of the semicircular

apse. We have also identified the stepping level of this second, rectangular chancel: two fragments of brick flooring have been identified along the northern and southern sides of the rectangular chancel.

Within the current vestry, we have also identified the *in situ* foundation of the old vestry, corresponding to the second phase. When we have drawn the outline of the church with rectangular chancel, we could notice that this second phase is represented by a hall-type church consisting of a rectangular chancel, a vestry along the northern side and a single nave. The foundation walls of this nave are, at their turn, leaning against the foundations of the current nave. They have been identified on small distances, in two of the sections through the present-day nave; however, the imprint of the ditch used for their systematic demolishing could be followed. The western wall of this second church could not be identified; it probably is located in the area of the pillars that support the current rostrum (an area disturbed during its construction). This older church had a vaulted rectangular chancel. In the south-eastern corner and in its southern median side, *in situ* stones were identified, which probably represented the bases of some columns.

The chronological assignment of this construction was possible due to the fact that the thin mortar layer on one of these stony bases (the one already mentioned from the median area of the southern side of the chancel) contained a coin minted in Ragusa after 1372 - 1421; the coin could have been placed there when the rectangular chancel was built. We can state, accordingly, that this second church was erected in the last decades of the XIVth century.

The investigations in the inner space of the current church evidenced that the stratigraphy is disturbed by several successive burials that took place in both the nave and the chancel of the present-day monument. In spite of that, their oldest level could be identified; it is represented by dislocated, slightly deepened into the clay tombs, preserving fragments of human bones and wood rests but only very rarely whole skeletons in anatomic position. In the few locations where undisturbed skeletons could be identified, no archaeological material was present that would have allowed dating these burials. This situation is the result of the numerous successive burials and of the intense construction activities in this place.

During the construction works of the present-day monument, fragments from older walls of the second phase have been preserved in the area of the triumphal arch.

Archaeological research conducted outside the church have provided information on its fortification system and on the stratigraphy of the area under study. The investigated sections allowed us to outline the plan of the stone enclosure; thus, it can be stated that, following the local particularities of the ground, the construction is relatively oval in shape, and it gets very close to the south-western corner of the present-day church. The studied sections along the southern side of the monument have permitted the *in situ* identification of the foundations of the enclosing walls.

Additionally, investigations in the area of the current tower, located on the northern side of the precincts allowed identifying rests of some previous stages of the fortifications system. One of the oldest buildings in the area of the current tower is represented by a 7.50 m. long rectangular construction with abutments that is overlapped by the south-eastern corner of the above-mentioned tower and cross-cut by the precinct wall. We have *in situ* identified foundations of this building. Even if its northern side is cross-cut by the precinct wall, we could determine a 4 m. thickness for the width of the construction.

MEDIEVAL FORTRESS

A very special presence in the medieval habitat for those times was represented by the medieval fortress. For example, in north-east Transylvania earthen fortresses are known from that period, representing a type of fortifications that is very little understood. They have relatively small sizes; they are completed with walls, ditches and palisades. One can assume that the fortification and resistance elements in this case could not be limited only to the earthen walls, which must have been still very vulnerable. They must have had a kind of crowning, a wooden structure, like a palisade. However the information is neither enough, nor complete. At the same time, we probably do not know yet the whole list of such castles. Under these circumstances, it is hard to define their role, taking into account that also their archaeological investigation is not complete, and also that their dating is currently based mainly ceramics, and much less on metallic pieces, on coins. The limited archaeological research provided a series of information on these fortresses. Some of them were also mentioned in older references, but there was no indication on the way they were constructed

or on their dating, as in the case of stone castles. The presence or absence of the stone curtains could not be established based on surface observation only.

Some examples can be illustrative for these realities: for example, the castle from Şieu Măgheruș was studied from archaeological point of view; the research was limited but however, it provided interesting information. This represents the best-known fortification of its type in north-east Transylvania.

The presence of royal castles in north-eastern Transylvania has also to be mentioned and interpreted in the context of the changes related to strategy and administration, as well as to the political relationships and "status": references point to the fact that starting with the 12th century the castra were neglected; the castra structures start to degrade and in the same time, the human structure of the comitatus. The assigned jobs for those who maintained them had to be redistributed. The strategic concept on the protection of the kingdom was also changing, so that the interest moves toward the bordering areas, and only to a much lesser extent some internal sites are still of interest. However, the phenomena related to the forts, their owners or to those who contributed to their erection have to be understood in the context of some new crystallizing relationships that transform and affect large areas (Hungarian Kingdom, central Europe etc.). Nevertheless, they represent important features for the medieval habitat at this chronological level. It was noticed that, starting with the 13th century, it was considered that the apiary alignments did not provide anymore the requested physical protection, so that there was a need for building *border forts* that gradually took over the respective tasks (K. Horedt). This process was also noticed along the western border of Hungary and it was reflected in the documents related to the Teutonic cavaliers, who were allowed to build stone forts as compared to the earthen ones. Fortifications are located at the feet of the mountains, on the crest of the first row of hills that are rising on the top of the highlands: some consist of a simple room surrounded by walls connected with mortar. To such category we can also include other castles located along the Western and Eastern Carpathians: from Anieș-Rodna, Bistrița and Șumuleu near Miercurea Ciuc to those located further, above Tușnad and Malnaș spas. To the same type one can assign the castle from Tâmpa, over Brașov, as well as the one from Codlea.

Urban civilisation in middle Ages represents a complex dimension for the structure and development of feudal world. Even in the framework of urban life in medieval

Transylvania, the history of the Bistrița town represented an important dimension. Located along the middle course of Transylvanian Bistrița River, in a hilly area, at the feet of the Călimani Mountains, Bistrița registered eight centuries of history. Besides Sibiu, Brașov, Mediaș or Sighișoara, it represents one of the oldest and most interesting towns of Transylvania.

The context of evolution for the urban development in the Bistrița area has to be evaluated in a wider geographical context, i.e. that of Transylvania as a whole, and central and eastern Europe, during the first centuries of the second Christian millennium.

A specific coordinate of the occurrence and development of medieval towns in this area is represented by the **presence of the German colonists**.

The region from where the German colonists originated from, as well as the time when they moved into the Rodna and Bistrița areas represent well-known issues in the specialized references. The timing is hard to define, given the fact that a strict chronology related to this event is missing. There were some hypotheses relating the German colonisation in northern Transylvania to the 11th century; however the arguments – mainly based on toponymy are not convincing. The 12th century seems to represent, most probably, the period when the Saxons have arrived in this area, but no more detailed information is available. Some researchers have considered that Bistrița and Chiraleș areas have been colonised even before the rule of Geza the IInd, a statement that is hard to prove. It was considered that *Nösnerland* was probably colonised before the *Altland*, the latter located in the neighbourhoods of Sibiu (Irina Băldescu). The large number of colonists that defended Rodna against the great Mongolian invasion in 1241 (the numbers registered by the chronicles being nevertheless debatable) points to the possibility that the arrival of the Germans in the region was prior to that event, probably during the previous century. It is also worthy to consider the hypothesis that the first *hospites* have reached north-east Transylvania at the beginning of the 12th century, related to the silver mines from Rodna. *One can not ignore also the military reasons for the Saxons colonisation in the region*, when considering that during the 13th century, Bistrița and Rodna areas represented a genuine border enclave (A. A. Rusu, 2005, p. 401-412)

There is currently no consensus also concerning the area of origin for the first German colonists. There is, however, a general agreement that they originated from the Mosela

Valley (Franconia Moselei), Lotharingia and Luxemburg. The arguments are mainly of linguistic origin related to toponyms, structural features of the settlements or in aspects related to the history of ecclesiastic architecture. As in the case of many other territories in north-east Transylvania, the German colonists have arrived in successive waves, from diverse areas. Thus, even if their language has been considered as originating from the above-mentioned provinces (Gustav Kisch), it is in fact the result of several, mixed, dialects this being a typical feature for colonisation processes (Th. Nögler). The exact location of the areas from where these *hospites* originated has become a difficult – if not impossible – investigation. In Bistrița area there are toponyms that may support, for example, the idea of the Walloon origin for some of the colonists, as well as the hypothesis that a francophone group was located and established here even from the beginning of the colonisation process. However, the German-speaking communities were numerically dominant in the region. Some toponyms (Deggendorf, Tekendorf -Teaca-) seem to point also to some Bavarian influences among the colonist groups in this region, as indicated by Karl Kurt Klein. The example of the locality Baiersdorf (Villa Bavarica) is also suggestive in this respect.

THE MEDIEVAL TOWN IN TRANSYLVANIA NORTH - EAST

When is the exact moment when it can be considered that Bistrița had turned into a town? This is a difficult question. First evidence for this is that, during the 13th century, as in the case of Rodna, the locality was recorded in the current documents as *oppidum* (starting with 1241). This has to be considered, nevertheless, with caution: such records from medieval documents concerning the assignment of some localities to the urban status have to be considered with circumspection. The reason was that a real urban status involved specific economic and social structures, institutions, fortifications etc. It is clear that the mention *civitas* was not always supported by such realities. This mention is also valid in the case of Bistrița locality, even if, as in the case of other Transylvanian medieval towns, the 13th century was bearing the order of its urbanistic evolution (as indicated by the sum of the entire available documentary, archeological and other types of information). One has to mention that the references pointing to synchronous evolutions on large areas indicate that in medieval Hungary of the 14th century, the towns did not yet represent a strong support for the royalty (A. A. Rusu, 2006, p. 134). The evolution of urban life in the Nösnerland of medieval Transylvania has also been influenced by its location close to the periphery of the

respective area, close to the Eastern Carpathians, toward the eastern border of the Hungarian Kingdom. Besides, this represented an access to an important mountain pass, towards the east, starting from Bistrița and Rodna via Rotunda Pass and reaching Dorna on the other side. This pass through the Carpathians placed Bistrița town in the larger context of the important continental commercial routes from Central and Eastern Europe: it was connecting the Baltic Sea with the Lower Danube area, and from this on, with the Middle East. The border from Vama at Rodna was strictly regulated since early times.

The occurrence at the end of the 15th century of the fortifications system – towers, walls and gates – *has outlined the aspect of the medieval town for the next centuries, turning it into a castle proper, i.e. a real medieval burg.*

The main square (Marktplatz) represented the main point in the urban network; starting from here, a full medieval street texture has been structured and finalised. This development took place along the south-west – north –east axis, thus westwards and northwards from the parish church; gradually, new lots were added towards the southern and northern ends of the main square.

Studies on fortified medieval towns from Central Europe – such as some towns in Poland, have shown that it was also a practice to outline the external borders, followed by the main square with its adjacent lots; thus, the areas towards the periphery were temporarily left vacant. References point to such a possibility also in the case of Bistrița, where the direction of the main streets (towards the Main Square) was sketched even before their proper establishment, towards the further locations of the main town gates, to be. In the vicinity of such places, toward the end of the 14th century, monastic orders were established.

The structure of the fortification system imposed major consequences for the urban texture in the intra muros area. The fortification system imprinted for sure a specific aspect to the town, but its structure, as well as the medieval urban texture – as it crystallized during the following centuries, has been left unchanged. As a consequence of the presence of the stone wall belt was the occupancy of the intra muros area according to a pattern that led to gradually narrower front spaces and a gradual expansion of the dwellings towards depth.

To summarize, in Bistrița the construction activity has started some hundred years ago. The old town preserves some two-storey buildings erected at the end of the 15th century. Sugălete row is a typical example. The vault of the entrance of the carriageable gate from the

Evangelic parish house is dated 1480. Archaeological investigations provide information on the older stages of the monuments that were preserved in the old town, which were transformed during the following centuries (as stages in the history of these buildings). One can also gather information on older constructions that existed prior on the site of the current historical monuments. Old stepping levels can be identified in the medieval town, as well as medieval artefacts (ceramics, stove tiles etc.). The results of the archaeological research contribute to the current image on the medieval town. Their summary adds to an interesting page on the urban history of medieval Bistrița. It is worthy to mention that, besides Sibiu, Brașov, Sighișoara, Mediaș, Bistrița has represented one of the most important medieval towns of Transylvania. Even today, it preserves a corresponding built heritage. All this information is important for restorers. The projects focusing on monuments restoration or interventions on such constructions have to take into account all these elements, besides the information provided by walls face studies, or art history elements etc.

A special place in the series of archaeological findings of medieval ceramics in Bistrița is represented by the two burners for ceramics located close to the new Palace of Justice. These finds were related to some current urbanistic works. The locations are situated outside the walls of the medieval wall but very close to it, as well as to one of the old gates of the town, the Hungarian Gate, located at the end of the present-day N. Titulescu street. Besides the ceramic material that was recovered from these sites, of major importance was the identification of a coin from the times of Ludovic I of Anjou. Thus, this is a fortunate situation of medieval ceramics dated based on a coin. This find brought important elements in the discussion on urban medieval ceramics from Transylvania right before the 14th century.

Important elements in the knowledge on wall ecclesiastic architecture in urban environments in medieval Transylvania were provided by the archaeological investigations at the Evangelic church from Bistrița, on the occasion of restoration works. Rests of previous construction stages have been identified. Archaeological research has confirmed the hypotheses on the presence of potential previous stages in the church's construction. The current construction is represented by a hall-type church with an elongated chancel ending in three sides, with a vestry clinging to the northern wing; this is a late Gothic monument, showing also a series of Renaissance elements due to the contribution of the Italian master

Petrus Italus of Lugano (Ghe. Mândrescu, *Activitatea lui Petrus Italus de Lugano*) who has restored the building towards the middle of the 16th century.

For example, inside the church, older foundations have been identified, related to previous construction stages (one perpendicular to the southern side of the southern nave, the other parallel to the northern wall of the church. Specialised investigations concerned both the inside, and the outside parts of the monument. Such investigations require persistency and a great effort invested. Our current results suggest that by integrating all the information, the current and the future ones, one could have a clearer picture on the evolution and the stages in the construction works in the area of the most important monument in the town. Archaeological studies at the Evangelic church have provide data on the intense construction works that was initiated in this area; from this point on, east- and westwards the medieval town will develop, most probably towards the end of the 13th century.

Along the middle course of Bistrița River in Ardeal, surrounded by a hilly area at the bottom of the Călimani Mountains, the city of Bistrița has known eight centuries of history. Bistrița is considered one of the oldest and most interesting Transylvanian cities, alongside with Sibiu, Brașov, Mediaș or Sighișoara. It was the center of the most important area of the German colonization of north- eastern Transylvania: Nösenland. The origins of the Transylvanian Saxon colonists and the specific time of their arrival in the Rodna and Bistrița area have been the main concern of the specialized literature for a long time. Related to this subject, certain data are missing, therefore the arrival moment of the first colonists in north- eastern Transylvania is difficult to establish. The 12th century seems to be, with utmost probability, the moment of arrival of the Transylvanian Saxon in this land. Nevertheless, it is very difficult to specify with accuracy the period of the century when they arrived. The large number of colonists that had opposed the big Mongol invasion in 1241 (although the dates advanced by the chronicles are still a question of debate), leaves the possibility to establish that their arrival in this area were previous to the assumed time. Opinions about the origins of the first colonists that had settled on this ground also differ. As in many other regions, in the north-eastern part of Transylvania, the massive colonization of the Transylvanian Saxons came successively from different areas. It has been agreed on the fact that these areas are: the valleys of Moselle (French Moselle), Lotharingy and Luxembourg. So, when exactly did

Bistrița become a town? This is a very difficult question to answer. It is named *opidum* in 1241. As in the case of Rodna, archival sources of the 13th century reveal the fact that Bistrița was an important settlement in Northern Transylvania. In 1241 Bistrița is mentioned in a document that belongs to canon Rogerius from Oradea, *Carmen Miserabile* (song of sorrow), among the important cities of Transylvania which had suffered during the big Mongol invasion.

Soon other documents of those times will make reference to Bistrița. In 1264 it is mentioned even in a letter of the Pope: Urban IV was asking Stefan, son of the Hungarian king Bela IV, to return to his mother, the queen, a series of possessions including Rodna and Bistrița. In the middle of the 13th century the evolution of Bistrița towards the status of township, was more and more obvious due to the emergence of a wealthy nobility, willing to do commerce and trade and get involved in the profitable occupations or mine-work exploitation in Rodna. The evolution of the urban life in this area of medieval Transylvania – Nösnerland was influenced by the marginal position of this space, close to the Oriental Carpathians, to the eastern border of the Magyar kingdom. This was very important, as it could offer a way to an important pass through the mountains to the east, passing Bistrița and Rodna over the Rotunda pass and moving down to Moldova. This way over the Carpathians offered the possibility to locate Bistrița in the history of the important commercial ways of Central and Eastern Europe, integrating it within the network of the big routes of continental commerce. At the end of the 13th century, Bistrița is devastated by the Tatars again. It is greatly damaged but the royal court intervenes several times to help in overcoming the consequences of destructions: "...because our inhabitants from Bistrița were devastated and damaged by the massive attack of the Tatars, we decided to receive the third part of Bistrița's debt", says a document emitted in 1291. In the first decades of 14th century, the city receives a lot of important privileges and liberties. Through a document released on the 29th December 1330 by Queen Elisabeth the citizens and guests of Bistrița are granted the right not to be judged by any magistrate of the kingdom this right being the privilege of the Queen, the chief district judge and city judge, "chosen by the people from their midst". In the middle of the same century, in April 1353, Luis of Anjou offers to the citizens of Bistrița the privilege to organize a free annual market, "untouchable by any right to be judged that belonged to the barons ...especially to the ruler of Transylvania or any of his replacements".

The document specifies that the fair from Bistrița was organized “in the same way as the fair of Buda ...” Nobody has now the possibility to receive any duty tariffs from any merchant coming to this fair from far and beyond, in this time of August 24th – September 7th when it was organized. This document significantly states the fact that “all the cases that might occur during this fair” fall under the competence of the city jurymen. In 1366 the townspeople of Bistrița ask the king for the right to choose their own annual rulers. The document released on August 17th 1366 grants to the citizens and guests, inhabitants of the city the right and way of choosing the ruler and the jurymen from among themselves. The royal document provides that “... the right of inhabitants to elect every year their own ruler and jurymen by common consent policy” be observed. As to the district ruler, it was decided that he can judge different causes but the first court of appeal would be in Sibiu. Thus the inhabitants of Bistrița obtain “the Siban liberty”, which consolidates the privileges and liberties obtained in 1330. The city has now all the distinctive signs for such a status: its own herald and seal. In 1453 for his war exploits, Ioan of Hunedoara receives the city and the district of Bistrița and is invested with the dignity of its everlasting district ruler. He confirms his privileges in 1453, on July 22nd, by a document released with a lot of diplomacy and ability in Bistrița (“*perpetua libertatem donandam et confederandam*”) granting the right to the city to take part in the annual assembly of the seven Transylvanian Saxon and nobiliary thrones: “*in colloquium tractatus sextem sedium saxonicales et nobilium*”. Bistrița is also granted its own flag and seal as well as the right of appeal to the Court in Sibiu alongside with the establishment pecuniary duties.

After the death of Ioan of Hunedoara, before Matthias Corvinus ascends to the throne, Bistrița passes through difficult moments as the conflict with Mihail Szilagy, his son-in-law, which displeased the inhabitants of Bistrița with repeated abuses. The mere existence of a lifelong district ruler overshadowed the status of Bistrița as a free city, being a potential threat, as shown by the tragic events that actually happened after the loss of John of Hunedoara. In the 15th century Bistrița was represented by 12 jurymen and a chief commissioner (Stadtrichter) and also an assembly of those one hundred (centumvirate). The chief commissioner was elected annually. He had the obligation to give an annual report on the 21st December and, after an approval of the report of the centumvirii through a triple pronouncement, he had to surrender the signs of power (seal and sword) to a jurymen. At

the end of December and the beginning of January the election of the new chief commissioner and the new senate took place. Slowly but surely, the documents of those times show us that Bistrița started to have an urban life. The birth of the fortification system, at the end of 15th century (walls, towers and gates) outlined the medieval aspect of the city for the future centuries, transforming it into a fortress, into an authentic medieval Burgh. Documents, cartographic sources, archeological sites, architectural monuments, provide us with an image, although fragmented, of what the town was like in those times. Some of the important constructions of those times set in a scenery that will gradually become an urban one, tell us about the importance of the place. Among these, the first were monastic establishments. At the end of the 13th century, in Bistrița were two monasteries, a Franciscan and a Dominican one. In the north-eastern part of the old city, the Franciscan monastery was erected and documentary certified in 1268. The minority monks (Franciscan monks) have been present in Bistrița since the middle of the 13th century. In the western part of the town was situated the old hospital, documentary certified in 1295 (founded by the monks who had probably arrived before this date). Very soon the Dominican convent emerges, too, which is mentioned alongside with the most important monasteries of the Dominican province Hungary, estimated to have been founded in the year of 1245, after the big Mongol invasion. The first document that certifies the presence of the Dominicans in town, dates back to the year 1309, when Friar Christianus, prior of the Dominicans, is mentioned as a witness of a dispute in the Transylvanian diocese involving some of the Saxon deaneries. At a first analysis of the old maps that picture medieval Bistrița, we can notice that the monastic establishments are placed very close to the key elements of the future fortification system set up on the verge of the 15th century: The Franciscan monastery close to the Timber Gate, the hospital close to the Hospital Gate and the Dominican convent close to the Hungarian Gate and Coopers' Tower. The well-known locations of these constructions are the proof of the approximate limits of the medieval town. This territory will be surrounded by the inner wall, an essential element of the fortification system erected by the end of the 15th century.

The Fortress

The emergence of the fortification system at the end of the 15th century (a well-defined structure made up of walls, towers and gates, with defense system) outlined the aspect of the medieval town for the next centuries, transforming it into a fortress, into an authentic

medieval Burgh. The image of the city had become special, and the descriptions of the foreign travellers who outlined the picture of a wealthy medieval fortress. "Six miles away from Beclean, you can find the beautiful, rich, populated and powerful town of Bistrița, situated on flat land, in a happy valley, surrounded by the streams that water the whole region to the west until the very high mountain, away from the city walls by over 1500 feet, the other three sides of the city partly bathed by the waters of such streams, also bordered by a moat that can be filled up with water- all these made the city unconquerable. Its shape is oval. The smaller sides are directed one to the north the other to the south; the next two sides are directed, one to the east and the other to the west. Straight streets are intersected by the little water courses resulted from the springs which flow through the entire city being of great use to the inhabitants and stirring the admiration of those who watch them. And on each of those places you can find a main gate with many windmills along the moats, set into motion by the springing water and capable to mill more than the needs of the city. The streams that flow through the city merge at the southern borders of the city, where they overflow in the northern part, 14 miles away. It has a beautiful church rebuilt by a master from Bergamo with the city's own money". (Giovani Andreea Gromo, 16th century). Whether the city had fortifications earlier than those times is difficult to say, a hypothesis of the kind having failed to be archeologically sustained, though obviously plausible. The older historiography maintains that not even before the stonewalls were built was the city vulnerable and that there was a mound with palisades that was enclosing the old Burgh, yet unable to sustain anything precise about this. In a discussion about the existence of a fortress at Bistrița previous to the fortification system in the last decades of the 15th century, a well-known document of Queen Elisabeth dating back to 1438, December 20th, must be mentioned since it referred to a fortification that was built here at the time and drawing the citizens' attention to its state of decay and the necessity of renovation works. Anyway, an older fortress had existed at Bistrița, but 3 km away from the city, in an almost inaccessible location, The Fortress of the Burgh. The fortress had walls made of rough stone, moats and defense mounds, was oval in shape, elongated, following the shape of the ground. It had impressive dimensions. Decades ago, it was researched by archeologists.

An interesting episode of the history of the fortress seems to have taken place during the reign of Ioan of Hunedoara in Bistrița, when the documents of those times mention about

the owners of the castle inside the fortress. Who are these owners? Ioan of Hunedoara offered as a gift a house of the city to the “castelanorum castris nostri Bistriciensis”. The relationship between the inhabitants and the new rulers is also explained by the documents of the time. The people of Bistrița were apprehensive about their designation, therefore Ioan of Hunedoara felt obliged to explicitly mention that those city rulers will not have prerogatives that could diminish the privileges of the city: “castellani etiam in castro nostro Bistriciensi...nullam potestatem super dictam civitatem nostram et pertinentias suae habeant...”.

After the death of Ioan of Hunedoara the city falls victim to the abuses of one of the rulers. Therefore in 1457 the inhabitants rise against him. They besieged the fortress on the “Burgh” and the end of their endeavour was marked by a terrifying image of the town in flames. From now on the fortress as well as the rulers will be regarded as a threat. This fire had important consequences over the architectural aspect of the city at the end of the 15th century. Matthias Corvinus mentioned in a document from the 4th of July 1464, kept in the archives of the city, that the king sold the fortress to the inhabitants of Bistrița for the sum of 6000 golden fl. After several years the inhabitants ask the king for permission to demolish it and to use the resulted material for the construction of stone fortification of the city. Using diplomacy and ability, the people of Bistrița argue their claim by stating that: “it is impossible that people, without becoming poor, build walls with expensive materials brought from far away”. In the last decades of the 15th century the city increased the defense system by, building stone walls with towers and gates and their defense was left in the hands of the different crafts guilds.

Trade, commerce, different working activities made the city powerful. The account books of medieval Bistrița are living proof of an unbelievable financial effort made by the community for transforming the town into a powerful fortress. These documents allow a chronological order in the steps taken to build the fortification. From an architectural point of view there have been exceptional achievements in the structure of this fortification system, such as the old seals of the city: The Hospital Gate, Wood gate, The Hungarian Gate. The Coopers’ Tower and a fragment of the stone wall that once surrounded the town, still offer us an incomplete image, of course, of what these fortifications meant in the Middle Ages.

The Wood gate None of the gates has been preserved, but concerning the Timber Gate, beside a print in which it is represented, there is also a detailed plan devised in May, 1862. Older drawings of this gate show an impressive accomplishment of military medieval architecture in Bistrița. The most important piece of the ensemble was the fortified tower of the gate: an impressive construction of 16.5 meters high to the eaves, with a strong and steep roof, measuring alone 11.75 m, and a height of over 28 meters. Under the roof there was an important passage and observation point with consoles and crenels, 1.60 m wide. The embrasures and the leakage opening for tar and hot water were also part of these efficient defense arsenals of the town during a certain stage of military technique. A city plan from the mid -18th century illustrates a series of designs meant also to improve the defense of the gate. There are no specific data about the interior structure or the height of the floors. Accessing these parts of the tower was most likely done with the help of a stone ladder. Concerning the upper floor it was probably designed as residence for the Tower Guards.

The Hungarian Gate

The Hospital Gate and The Hungarian Gate were built following the same style, still having their own peculiarities. The Hungarian Gate had a tower that outdistanced the surrounding wall, with an interior structure and dimensions resembling probably those of a wooden tower. There were also a series of structural improvements to the defense system: a second smaller tower situated in front of the gate, a drawbridge, as well as access ways, designed to slow down the potential sieges. Besides the three main gates, there were also two smaller ones (Krotentor and The Butchers' Gate) with mobile defensive bridges and a tower. The first one was an exit to the south, the other one to the north.

The Cooper's Tower

Besides the mentioned gates, there were many towers with a defense purpose:

Seilerturm – The Ropers' Tower

Tischekerturm – The Woodworkers' Tower

Goldschmiederturm – The Goldsmiths' Tower

Fleischerturm – The Butchers' Tower

Sattlerturm – The Sadlers' Tower

Schmiederturm – The Blacksmiths' Tower

Schneidererturm – The Taylor' Tower

Riemerturm – The Harnessmakers' Tower

Wagnerturm – Wagner Tower.

Fassbinderturm – The Coopers' Tower

The Butchers' Tower also had a smaller gate that took to the hill of the fortress. The Taylors' Tower had the most special position, for it was set inside the inner wall, "*in der alten Burg*". This wall was also known as "the fortified tower". Built in a relatively short time, the towers that sustained the location, achievements of military Gothic architecture, were very much alike. The Coopers' Tower, the only one existing today, can still offer a picture of what they used to be. Stages and diverse works of the fortification system. The account books of the city mention that in 1487 the excavations for the defense system in front of the wall were already completed. The same documents give us data about the expenses that were necessary for work on the peripheral wall or the Wooden Gate. At the Hospital Gate a "bell" had been installed, which meant of course that the construction had already been finished. Also in the case of Bistrița, a solution to improve the efficiency of the fortification system, were lakes and ponds surrounding the fortress. These were in fact part of the defense system. They also had economic importance being registered in the Account Books as profitable.

The modern world of the middle of the 19th century meant for the old medieval town the demolishing of the walls, gates and towers. Therefore, at the end of the 19th century, close to the Coopers' Tower and the partially demolished wall, after draining the muddy areas, the city park was arranged. A first alley surrounded by lime trees was named "the dam beyond the fortress". "The dam", part of the old system of fortification, became then a promenade place (Aleegasse -Promenade- as written in the city plan from 1913).

In its urban aspect, Bistrița preserved the structure of a medieval town, its old streets, the passages and the atmosphere of the former burgh, just as in the case of Brașov, Sibiu and Sighisoara. The church of the old Franciscan monastery, nowadays Orthodox, is the oldest monument of the city. Topologically, this construction is part of the "hall" churches, with massive ante-room in the western front side decorated with the ship supported by tall buttresses and a chorus ending in a polygonal apse. As an artistic achievement, the church of the Franciscan monastery in Bistrița is part of Cistercian culture from Transylvania, containing characteristic elements of early Gothic. The chorus is in fact the key element that

proves the income of specific Cistercian architecture from Charta towards north-eastern Transylvania, dating back to the second half of the 13th century.

The Franciscan monastery wasn't the only monastic establishment in Bistrița in the 13th and the 14th centuries. There was also a Dominican convent, built in that period, celebrated on the day of The Holy Cross (Ad Sanctam Crucem). The church of the Dominican monastery no longer exists; still we find a building that was part of the structure of the old convent (now a sanatorium for old people). Regarding the town planning, the last decades of the 15th century and the first of the 16th have been blossoming times for Bistrița. Trade, commerce, the mines of Rodna and the privileges given by Matthias Corvinus had a big contribution to the city's prosperity that will later on reflect in the artistic and urban aspects of the place.

The forceful rebirth of Bistrița after a great fire in 1457 is suggestive for the atmosphere of the time. The city will change its appearance. The number of houses made of stone increases and late Gothic gains ground. The buildings of 'Sugălete' are proof to this fact, the old Marktplatz, situated in the north of the Central Square are today the most valuable part of the old city. It is an ensemble of Gothic constructions, houses of masters and merchants of Bistrița. The oldest ones date from the last decades of the 15th century, picturing an interesting stage of urban evolution of the medieval city: the construction of the first two-floor houses. Some of them still preserve Gothic elements, other borrowed Renaissance or Baroque structures. The element that defines the urban aspect of the whole ensemble is the portico – an open-vaulted gallery. One of the most interesting buildings is the parochial house of the Evangelical Church, located in the Central Square nr. 13. It is the first of the 'Sugălete' buildings, a Gothic two-floor construction, one of the most important houses of Bistrița's architecture, from mature and late Gothic. The stone structure of the gate, dated 1480, is just one of the valuable Gothic architectural elements that this building still has.

House In The Medieval Town

The Peterman House

Another construction from the 'Sugălete' line, the Peterman House, 15, Central Square, is also among the oldest and most interesting Gothic constructions in the central area of the medieval burgh and the image of the lifestyle of local patricians at the end of the 15th century. Probably built after the devastating fire in 1457, it preserves many elements of the

original construction. The Peterman House is another argument for supporting the idea that two-floor houses were built from the 1480 onwards. The dating of the building is based on the presence of a door structure with round upper corners, characteristic to late Gothic, dated from 1480.

The Andreas Beuchel House

Known also as Ion Zidarul House, is another interesting and important construction, representative for Bistrița's urban history and illustrating the passage from Gothic to Renaissance. This building constructed at the end of the 15th century, was a veritable patrician house; at the beginning of the 16th century it was owned by Andrea Beuchel. The history of the house and its owners is itself an interesting chapter of Bistrița's urban life in the first half of the 16th century. Its restoration in the 70's was an opportunity for a punctilious research which outlined the stages of construction, and the discovering of an interesting archeological site from the 13th century. At the beginning the house was dominated by Gothic style, and then interesting elements of Renaissance were added by the owner Andreas Beuchel. Analyzing the decorative elements reveal the presence of characteristics of late Gothic, for instance, a Gothic window in broken arch, pointed out by the restoration. Before the structure of half-rounded windows, the ground floor had ample Gothic windows. In the thickness of the wall there were cut stone benches directed to the windows. One of them still exists. The intervention of Andreas Beuchel added a big Renaissance influence to the building.

The Silversmith's House, situated at 5, Dorna Street, is a representative construction for the 16th century architecture of the patrician house. It also represents civil architecture of the Transylvanian Renaissance. The building has several particular things that show us the preoccupation of the owner for the comfort, outlining the inner spaces. It has an elegant and balanced front side. It has an outstanding work, belonging to the Italian master Petrus Italus of Lugano. He restored the Parochial Church from Central Square in 1563. He had some great solutions for the western portal of the church. The emblems from the facade tell us that this house had belonged to a master who worked in gold and silver.

The Silversmith's House illustrates the way of civil constructions built in the second half of the 16th century at Bistrița.

CHURCH IN THE MEDIEVAL TOWN

The Evangelic Church, through its proportions, importance and artistic achievement is the most important monument of the old city. Actually from the old square, where it is located, the entire urban structure of medieval Bistrița had been developed. This church is built in late Gothic style combined with elements of Renaissance. Petrus Italus of Lugano had a big impact on this monument interposing the spirit of Renaissance. It has three naves of equal height with a pentagonal choir and a vestry on the north side. Above the lateral naves and the west portal it has rostrums. During the centuries the church has been changed many times. In the Middle Ages it was in a deplorable state and needed to be repaired many times and the periods of restoration had a deep influence on the evolution of the monument. The present day image of the church is owed to Petrus Italus of Lugano who ended this work in 1563 leaving upon it the mark of his personality and traces of the Renaissance. Outwardly, in the north-western corner, stands the imposing and slender outline of the Tower. The entire city is to this day dominated by the Evangelic Church and the verticality of its Tower like it used to in medieval times.

In Bistrița, in the historical centre, medieval archaeological vestiges were identified many times; the oldest ones can be placed chronologically in the 13th and 14th centuries. They come either from fortuitous discoveries, or from systematic investigations, occasioned by the restoration of some historical monuments. Many times surveys of relatively little extent.

In the area occupied by the historical centre, the consistent depositions revealed by the archaeological investigations and by the geotechnical studies are the result of the intense constructive activity developed hundreds of years in a relatively little space, surrounded by the precincts wall of the medieval city under the circumstances according to which Bistrița was early an urban settlement. A special place in the series of the archaeological discoveries which brought to light the medieval ceramic in Bistrița is occupied by the two ovens for burning ceramic identified near the new Palace of Justice, on the occasion of some works of public utility. Under these circumstances, the research of these ovens made the object of a salvation digging.

There are two simple ovens, without grill, full with medieval ceramic.

Concerning the structure of the material in discussion the usual ceramic is represented. There is present the reddish and brick-coloured ceramic but also the grey species. The

overwhelming percent from the total of recovered fragments is owned by the reddish and brick-coloured ceramic, burned therefore in an oxidant way.

It is a well worked rough, compact enough, good quality paste. The present forms are the pot without ears, the decanter with lobed mouth, the tureen, the pitcher, the little tray. The date of the material is assured by the coin from Ludovic I de Anjou, at the middle of the 14th century, discovered on the fireplace of one of the ovens

	<p>rele Naționale Cluj-Napoca, fond 44, Primăria Orașului Bistrița, seria I</p> <p>rele Naționale Cluj-Napoca, fond 44, Primăria Orașului Bistrița, seria IV, socoteli alodiale</p> <p>er Albert, <i>Urkunden-Regesten aus dem alten Bistritzer Archive bis 1526</i>, în <i>Program des ev. Obergymnasium in Bistritz, Bistrița</i>, 1892 și urm.</p> <p>ori străini despre Tarile Române, II, București, 1970.</p> <p>mente privind istoria României, seria C, Transilvania, veacul XIII și veacul XIV</p> <p>uzzaki, E., <i>Documnte privitoare la istoria românilor</i>, vol. XV, <i>Acte și scrisori din arhivele orașelor ardelene (Bistrița, Brașov, Sibiu)</i>, 1911.</p> <p>ernann, P.; Werner C., <i>Urkundenbuch zur geschichte der Deutschen in Sibenbürgen</i>, I, Sibiu, 1892 și urm.</p>
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