

# The Archaeology of Noble Residences in Transylvania

## The Residences of the Transylvanian Saxon Elite (12<sup>th</sup> Century–First Half of the 13<sup>th</sup> Century)

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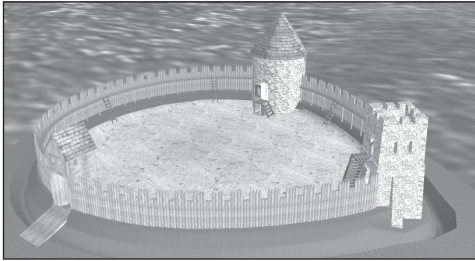


Fig. 1. Orăștie. Proposed virtual reconstruction of the noble residence: cca 1150 (conceived by M. Crîngaci ȚIPLIC based on data from Z. K. PINTER)

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**I**N ORDER to have an overall perspective upon the subject, some specifications are needed: having in view that in Transylvania the archaeological research of fortified as well as unfortified noble residences belonging to both the lesser and the middle nobility of the Arpadian and Angevin periods is only just beginning,<sup>1</sup> by way of the present research we wish to present the current state and level of research in Romania in this particular field, to identify and

This work was possible with the financial support of the Sectoral Operational Programme for Human Resources Development 2007–2013, co-financed by the European Social Fund, under the project number POSDRU/89/1.5/S/61104 with the title “Social Sciences and Humanities in the Context of Global Development—Development and Implementation of Postdoctoral Research.” As this research has become too elaborate, I had to divide it in two parts. The second part will be a distinct analysis entitled “The Residences of the Transylvanian Saxon Elite between the Second Half of the 13<sup>th</sup> Century and the First Half of the 14<sup>th</sup> Century.”

define the Transylvanian Saxon elite, as well as their residences, and finally to outline the background regarding the Transylvanian Saxon residences resorting to official documentary resources, to the existing archaeological research, and to the comparative method, by relating them to the investigations of other historiographical fields in Central Europe.

## The Current State of the Research Regarding the Elite of the Transylvanian Saxons

**I**N THE documents dating from the abovementioned period, the most notable members of the Transylvanian Saxon community are commonly mentioned in the context of several military actions and of political or diplomatic decisions or lawsuits. In the documents from the 13<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, they were granted lands (a donation from the Arpadian kings/King Charles Robert, as a reward for their outstanding military skills) or were dispossessed (because of disloyalty or outrages against the king), received recognition of ownership rights, were involved in sales and purchases, land exchanges or inheritances. Although these members of the military and political elite, who also had judicial prerogatives, can be identified in documents under different Latin titles (*miles, comes, seniores, nobiles, judex, juratis, senatores, potiores*), historiography uses the term counts (*Gräfen* in German). This title was transmitted orally and translated into the Hungarian chancellery language as *geréb, Gräf, Gräve*; “both the German and the Hungarian version are dated for the first time in Transylvania in a document from 1364: *comes vulgo greb*.”<sup>2</sup>

The German and Transylvanian Saxon historiographies have been dealing for more than two centuries with the presentation of this social category; nevertheless, the interpretations are still contradictory regarding the origins of the counts and uncertain with respect to the function, the authority and the role of the first generations of counts; this difficulty comes from the fact that documents are missing for more than one century from the period of the German colonization in Transylvania and the following years. We shall briefly mention here one of the main theories widely circulated in the specialist literature. It belongs to V. Werner and was published in 1902. Werner studied the social structure on the settled territory and drew attention upon the German *ministeriales*, assuming that “the ancestors of the Transylvanian Saxons must have been peasants, accompanied by warriors, members of a new knighthood made of *ministeriales*.” Therefore, the counts played an important role during the settling of the Transylvanian Saxons, comparable to that of the *locatores* during the German colonization of other ar-

eas.<sup>3</sup> After World War II, K. K. Klein<sup>4</sup> and Thomas Nägler<sup>5</sup> thoroughly analyzed the issue of the origin of the counts and their initial role, endorsing Werner's idea. A new approach to the study of the Transylvanian Saxon elite was introduced by G. Gündisch<sup>6</sup> and K. Gündisch.<sup>7</sup> In their analysis, they also adopted the theories of their predecessors related to the origins of the first leaders of the community, according to which at least a part of them must have been knights, belonging to the category of *ministeriales*. In documents they are named *comes*, which means *Gräf* in Transylvanian Saxon, and are often referred to as judges in rural communities, and later on as judges and jurors in towns. Their economic power must have derived from trade privileges, the possession of lands that were in the vicinity of towns, of larger estates in rural areas, of houses, households, mills, as well as from the right of managing inns.<sup>8</sup>

## The Current State of the Research Regarding the Residences of the Transylvanian Saxon Elite

FOR TWO centuries, historians have focused their attention mainly on the social category itself, and less on identifying the residences of the Transylvanian Saxon elite. Generally speaking, the issue of noble residences in Transylvania between the 12<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century has been unsatisfactorily approached and investigated. It has been frequently touched upon, but in the context of researches on medieval fortifications, or from different perspectives, such as that of the arts historian or of the architect; thus, we have a series of studies regarding the donjons.<sup>9</sup> In what concerns the unfortified noble residences, historical and archaeological researches are by far less numerous.<sup>10</sup> Having in view that the archaeological research regarding the noble residences (courts) in Transylvania is much too inconsistent, the issue of their chronology remains unsolved<sup>11</sup>—especially when we consider that at Sânnicolaul de Beiuș (Bihor county) there has been discovered a noble court which dates from the 12<sup>th</sup> century<sup>12</sup> and was attributed to the Borsa family; also in Streisângeorgiu there was discovered a noble residence which belonged to a Romanian family of knezes and which dates from the first half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century;<sup>13</sup> in Orăștie there is also a fortified noble residence which dates from the same century and was attributed to a German knight (*locator*).<sup>14</sup> Since the archaeological researches have not indicated the existence of unfortified noble residences (courts) in the German colonization area of Transylvania between the 12<sup>th</sup> century and the 13<sup>th</sup> century, we shall further refer particularly to the fortified noble residences belonging to the Transylvanian Saxon counts, which are

archaeologically or/and architecturally documented and consist of three peculiar elements: a donjon, a chapel and an enclosure. Documentarily, we shall make use of the terms *domus*, *curia* or *fundus curiae*,<sup>15</sup> which semantically cover a place of residence, but with no architectural or archaeological connotations. The documents record that some of the counts, most likely the richest ones, had several residences, among which at least one was located inside an urban area (Sibiu, Cisnădie, Sebeș).

## The Elite of the German *Hospites* and Their Residences in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century

THE SETTLEMENT of colonists in Transylvania organized by the Arpadian kings started early in the first decade of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, in the context of the crusades. The first settlements with German inhabitants were founded between 1100 and 1150, around the episcopal seat in Alba Iulia (Ighiu, Cricău, Bărăbañ) and Orăștie.<sup>16</sup> The archaeological researches at Orăștie prove the aforementioned theory. Researchers discovered a rotunda (*Doppelkapelle*) showing strong Western influences and which was part of a noble complex dating from the first half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, attributed to Anselm of Braz; he had emigrated to Hungary in 1103.<sup>17</sup> A second stage of the German colonization, much more complex, took place during the reign of the Arpadian king Géza II (1141–1162). Starting with this period, researchers have repeatedly tried to determine the chronological order of the founding of villages in the so-called *Fundus Regius*. The theory according to which the Transylvanian Saxons settled between the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century and the early 13<sup>th</sup> century in the province of Sibiu—“formerly a small area including from two up to four villages, and later, during the 13<sup>th</sup> century, it extended with new settlements in the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, between the Two Saxon Seats and the Saxon seat of Sighișoara”<sup>18</sup>—is partially disproved by the recent archaeological investigations done at Feldioara, Moșna, Sighișoara, Drăușeni, and Mediaș, which revealed cemeteries with anthropomorphic graves (the so-called graves with *fosse anthropomorpe*), attributed to the first German *hospites*, dating from the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century; this indicates a process of colonization simultaneously affecting the Land of Bârsa (Burzenland), the seats of Mediaș and Șeica, and Sighișoara, respectively.<sup>19</sup>

Various social categories, such as knights, priests, peasants, craftsmen, tradesmen, took part in the German emigration, all called up by the Arpadian royalty. As the Transylvanian Saxon historians have repeatedly emphasized, a consider-

able number of warriors came together with the peasants and craftsmen, and they were “members of a knighthood made up by *ministeriales*,” one of the purposes they were called up for was the defense of the borders, but there were also economic reasons.<sup>20</sup>

As to the 12<sup>th</sup> century, when the German colonization took place, we have no documentary evidence mentioning the name of a ruler or a member of the newly-founded settlements in the south of Transylvania. In the course of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, an elite category can be identified through the analysis of medieval names, or by way of anthroponomic and etymological researches. In the table below we notice how some settlements were given the name of the *locator*/the colonizing count/the founders.<sup>21</sup> Just like in the West, these particular settlements with names deriving from the eponymous hero allow us to assume that the knightly members of the Western *ministeriales* were the rulers of the communities of the German *hospites*, at the same time playing the role of *locatores*.<sup>22</sup> Even though the archaeological evidence is absent in most cases, the settlements whose names derive from those of the eponymous rulers can be considered noble residences founded by the elite of the newly arrived communities of the German *hospites*, namely, the *locatores*/counts or their descendants.

Table 1. PROPOSAL FOR THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE NOBLE RESIDENCES BASED ON THE ANALYSIS OF THE NAMES OF THE SETTLEMENTS AND OF THE NAMES DERIVING FROM THE EPONYMOUS HERO

Name of eponymous hero	Name of place/settlement (Lat.–Germ.–Rom.)	Noble residence
Bagin/Bachin	Bägendorf–Benești	rotunda + donjon
Braz?	Broos–Orăștie	+ enclosure
Christian?	insula Christiana–Großau–Cristian	chapel?
Eppo/Eberhard	villa Epponis–Neppendorf–Turnișor	donjon?
Gerhard	insula Gerhardi–Gierelsau–Bradu	
Hagin/Hago/Hening	villa Henndorf–Henndorf–Brădeni	
Held?	villa Heltwen–Heldsdorf–Hälchiu	
Hening/Henric	villa Heniungi/Heningfalva–Henningsdorf–Henig	
Hermann	villa Hermanni–Hermannstadt–Sibiu	rotunda + donjon? + enclosure
Hetzil/Hazil	villa Echelini/villa Heclini–Hetzeldorf–Ațel	donjon
Humbert	villa Humberti–Hammersdorf–Gușterița	
Jacob/St. Jacob?	villa Jacobi–Jakobsdorf–Iacobeni	donjon?
Konrad	villa Conradi–Konradsdorf–Poenița	
Martin	villa Martini/Martunfalva–Martinsdorf–Metiș	

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Table—*Continued*

Name of eponymous hero	Name of place/settlement (Lat.–Germ.–Rom.)	Noble residence
Michael	Myhalfalwa–Michelsdorf–Boarta	
Peter	villa Petri–Petersdorf–Petrești	the fortress of Săscior?
Richwin	villa Richvini–Reichesdorf–Richiş	
Rather/Rad	villa Retheri/villa Militum–Retersdorf–Retiş	
Tobias	villa Tobiae–Tobsdorf–Dupuş	
Valentin?	Felsendorf–Filzendorf–Vilsendorf–Florești	
Welmer?	villa Welmer–Felmern–Felmer	

During the first decades after the settlement of the German *hospites* in the south of Transylvania, the role of the counts/*locatores* is much more difficult to define, but it is likely that the difference between them and the other *hospites* (peasants, craftsmen) came from their social status as nobles (see the already mentioned noble complex with chapel and donjon) and from their wealth, which must have included larger landed estates (more lands than just the outskirts of the village), houses, yards, the right to run mills and particular economic privileges (trade rights throughout the Kingdom of Hungary, exemption from the payment of customs duties).

In the earliest stage of German colonization in Transylvania, meaning at the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, in the middle basin of the Mureş River, more precisely in the area of Orăştie and north of Alba Iulia, the only “leader” of the Western *hospites* that we know by name and who possibly played the part of *locator* is Anselm of Braz, the castellan of Logne, the one who intended to emigrate together with his sons to Hungary.<sup>23</sup> The document does not specify exactly where he settled in Hungary. However, it is assumed on the basis of etymological research<sup>24</sup> that he settled at Orăştie, and the archaeological evidence supports the idea that he or his family initiated the building of a rotunda with a strong Western influences and of a donjon (see Fig. 1); all have been dated to the 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>25</sup> It is uncertain whether the noble court at Orăştie was the only one built in the area during the earliest stage of colonization (the first half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century) or if Anselm of Braz came together with other knights.

As for the second stage of the German colonization, initiated by Géza II during the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the existence of noble residences is also uncertain given the absence of the evidence required for a precise dating and identification. Nevertheless, it would be hard to assume the absence of noble fortified residences in the case of the already mentioned *locatores*/knights coming from parts of the Holy Roman Empire where such architectural elements built

by *ministeriales* were quite widespread. We do not know for certain whether the fortification of Sibiu, with many elements from the early stage of construction missing, was formerly a noble court<sup>26</sup> or/and the main stronghold of Sibiu county.<sup>27</sup> The uncertainty is caused by the discovery of a rotunda<sup>28</sup> placed within the former fortified precinct of Sibiu and dating from the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Given the presence of some planimetric similarities with the rotunda at Orăștie, researchers have assumed that this rotunda was also initially a double chapel that functioned as a noble chapel. Z. K. Pinter considers that the founder could have been a knight coming from the West, who assumed the role of *locator* during the Transylvanian Saxon colonization. Consequently, he may have been the Hermann who founded the settlement bearing his name, villa Hermannii.<sup>29</sup>

There is a major question about the fortress of Sighișoara, where it is assumed that the first stone fortification was built in the southwestern part of the fortified city (*Bergkirche*), and that it also had a smaller enclosure, with a few towers, a Romanesque chapel and a donjon.<sup>30</sup> The fortress is mentioned for the first time in 1280 (?).<sup>31</sup> However, the situation becomes more complicated as a result of the archaeological investigations conducted between 1998 and 2001 at the *Bergkirche*, which led to the discovery of fragments from a circular chapel without an apse. The rotunda was dated back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century and the archaeologist D. Marcu Istrate believes that both the cemetery with anthropomorphic graves and the graves with no mortar pigments in the padding of the hole, discovered inside the present-day church and on its south side, belonged to this peculiar chapel; the graves were attributed to German colonists.<sup>32</sup>

Historiography has also recorded other possible rotundas at Saschiz, Cisnădie, and Gârbova-sat (Gârbova-village), but none of them has been the object of archaeological research; therefore, no chronological assumption can be made. As for the rotunda at Saschiz,<sup>33</sup> the similarities with the rotundas recently discovered at Orăștie and Sibiu or with the one identified within the chancel of the *Bergkirche* of Sighișoara made the researcher date this building at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century and ascribe it to the first German colonists.<sup>34</sup> At Cisnădie,<sup>35</sup> in the southwestern corner of the Romanesque church, there is a center-planned, double-leveled chapel within the defence tower of the fortification, dating from the 15<sup>th</sup> century; in the basement of this chapel there is a circular room with a vault supported by a central pillar; right there, an ossuary half filled with bones and skulls was discovered in 1911, during some restoration work. Underneath it there was discovered a 12<sup>th</sup> century processional cross.<sup>36</sup> In the absence of any accurate field research, it is hard to determine the function of the already mentioned buildings at Saschiz and Cisnădie, namely, whether they were chapels of noble residences, parish churches, cemeterial chapels, or simply had the function of ossuaries.

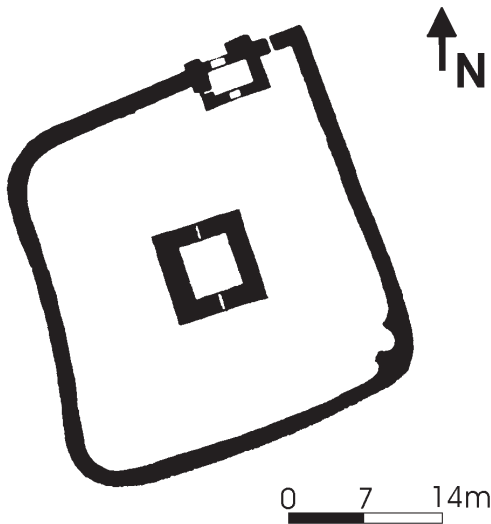


Fig. 2. Gârbova. The plan of the noble fortress: 13<sup>th</sup> century (redrawn by M. Crîngaci ŢIPLIC based on documentation by ANGHEL, 120)

At Gârbova, in the middle of the village,<sup>37</sup> there is a small fortification belonging to a Transylvanian Saxon count; in its southeastern corner lie the remains of a chapel with a semicircular apse, covered by a rough-stone semi-calotte. Given the size of the arc segment, this could indicate the existence of the rotunda's apse.<sup>38</sup> The donjon, the chapel and the enclosure (see Fig. 2) were dated to the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century and the early 14<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>39</sup> despite the absence of any archaeological investigations.

It is difficult to establish how these small noble fortresses relate to the creation the royal counties (*comitatus*) or of the Transylvanian borders counties (*marchia/comitatus confinorium*) from

the 12<sup>th</sup> century. It is possible that they originally played a dual role, for a short period, as seats of the counties and noble residences for the leaders of the German communities (*locatores*), who initially might have also fulfilled the function of *comes*, given that by 1224, according to the *Andreanum* Diploma, the territory between Orăştie and Baraolt (called *Fundus Regius*) had been divided into several counties. In 1224, these were abolished and merged into one county, called Sibiu county.<sup>40</sup> We do not have any knowledge about the seats of the counties mentioned in the *Andreanum*, we can only make assumptions given the present state of the research. Thus, it is also possible that Orăştie, Sibiu and Sighişoara were initially three such county seats.

If we were to make a comparison with the medieval society of the early 12<sup>th</sup> century in the Arpadian kingdom, the status of those who possessed such small fortresses, people like Anselm of Braz, must have been similar to that of royal castle warriors (*iobagiones castri*), with extensive privileges, among which full personal freedom and legal immunity. The *iobagiones castri* were part of the privileged elite, enjoying a status of “conditional freedom.”<sup>41</sup> They “had landed estates that they owned in a hereditary way like any nobleman,” and their possessions could not be taken away by the king himself; their main privilege was exemption from taxation, but in exchange “they were compelled to fight . . . and there was no limit to their military obligation, in contrast to real nobles whose service was voluntary.”<sup>42</sup> We tend to believe that Anselm of Braz, originating



from a region where the vassal-seigniorial concepts were highly regarded, preserved his knightly status in his new “homeland,” or at least its equivalent within Arpadian society, later known as *servientes regis*.

## The Elite of the German *Hospites* and Their Residences during the First Half of the 13<sup>th</sup> Century

**S**TARTING WITH the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, we find the first documentary references containing the names of the German community leaders in southern Transylvania. After having analyzed all the documents, we can say that until 1241 they were mentioned several times as *miles*<sup>43</sup> (Johannes Latinus), once as *comes* (*comes Iwachinus of Cibinio*), and once as bailiff (*pristaldus Andreas* from *villa Vratotus*).

Beginning with the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the institution of the royal servants (*servientes regis*) became increasingly common throughout the Kingdom of Hungary,<sup>44</sup> gradually replacing the unsatisfactory services of the *iobagiones castri*.<sup>45</sup> A part of the Saxon elite (the counts, the knights) joined the category of *servientes regis*,<sup>46</sup> gaining remarkable economic and legal advantages in exchange for various military services to the crown. Relevant in this respect is the document dating from 1204 and issued by King Emeric to *Johannes Latinus inter Theutonicos Transilvanenses in villa Riuetel*, to whom the king granted the right to freely enter the court in exchange for his services to the crown; it generally exempted him from the customary Saxon obligations and from the payment of any of kind of taxes. In exchange, he was obliged to participate in military operations.<sup>47</sup> The document further states that King Emeric (1196–1204) had granted these privileges to other people like Johannes the Latin. In 1206, King Andrew II expanded the privileges of Knight (*militis*) Johannes Latinus previously granted by Emeric, by giving him and his family members (*famuli*) the right to be tried only by the king or the *comes palatines*, the right to travel freely without paying customs duties, and offered him an estate, *terra Cwezsfey*. It is interesting that the *Cwezsfey* (Váleni) given to Johannes Latinus had belonged to *pristaldus Andreas filio Teutonici Martin de villa Vratotus*, the testimonial land being taken by the king from Andreas because of the latter's lack of loyalty.<sup>48</sup> It can be said that Andreas was guilty of felony, and was consequently dispossessed of his lands.

The presence of these *servientes regis* among the Saxons counts, designated as *miles*<sup>49</sup>/*milites* (soldiers/knights)<sup>50</sup> in the documents from the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, remains uncertain. The document from 1204 offers reliable evidence regarding the existence/formation during the early 13<sup>th</sup> century of an elite of

counts based upon military merit, whose members obtained special privileges and landed estates outside the Royal Saxon territory, in the noble lands. We must consider that the privileges of Johannes Latinus had been obtained long before the year 1222, when the Golden Bull was drafted, or before 1224, when the *Andreanum* was issued.

The sons of Johannes Latinus, Corrad and Daniel, who are referred to in documents as *militēs nostri Saxones Ultrasilvanos*,<sup>51</sup> together with Fulkun the Saxon (*Fulkun Saxo*), who died in 1241 after fighting the Mongols and whose abandoned land called *terra Zek* was given by King Béla IV to *comes* Vincencius, son of Szekler Akadas,<sup>52</sup> must have belonged to the same social category of *servientes regis*.

Although we have only few documents available, we can say that among the southern Transylvanian Saxon *hospites* a privileged group was constituted as early as the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, mentioned in documents as *militēs/militēs Saxones*. They are those *servientes regis* who, in exchange for their military services, were granted estates in the noble lands and a series of privileges, usually greater than those of the Saxons from Sibiu county.

*Comes Iwachinus de Cibinio*, the son of *comes Bech*, held an unusual position within the Saxon elite of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, as King Andrew II made him “head of the army” during the military campaign against the Bulgarian Vidin. For this military expedition, *comes* Iwachinus “has gathered Saxons, Romanians, Petchenegs and Szeklers.”<sup>53</sup> This character is even more interesting because he was *comes* of Sibiu county before 1224, while we know that by then the counties mentioned in the *Andreanum* Diploma had been abolished and merged into the single Sibiu county.

The most important political achievement of this elite was to secure a set of privileges in 1224, known in historiography as the Saxons’ golden privilege diploma, or the *Andreanum* Diploma. The privilege from 1224 states that the merchants of the German *hospites* had the right to trade freely within the Kingdom of Hungary, without paying custom duties.<sup>54</sup> It is possible that these merchants mentioned in the 13<sup>th</sup> century by the *Andreanum* were the counts themselves.<sup>55</sup> They negotiated the granting of new privileges or the confirmation of older ones; they were the ones who acted swiftly against those who tried to limit the rights of the inhabitants of Sibiu (*Libertas Cibiniensis*), as for example in 1277, when the Saxons led by Count Gaan from Ocna Sibiului attacked the diocese of Alba Iulia, or in 1308 when the *comites* Gobelinus and Nicolaus acted similarly during the conflicts between the Saxon dioceses and the bishopric of Alba Iulia—namely, Voivode Ladislaus Kán—or again in 1324, when the Saxons led by *comes* Henning from Petrești organized a military expedition in response

to the measures taken by King Charles Robert, the battle taking place near Rupea fortress.

While the elite category from the 13<sup>th</sup> century is documentarily attested, the situation is inconclusive in terms of the field identification of their residences. Unfortunately, excavations have identified only one such residence, at Viscri (Braşov county). The archaeological researches carried out there between 1970 and 1971 uncovered a relatively small church, dated in the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and a donjon dated some time during the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century (see Fig. 3). During the 13<sup>th</sup> century the two buildings were surrounded by an oval precinct wall.<sup>56</sup> Unfortunately, those who had commissioned the construction remain anonymous, considering that the first document to attest the village dates from 1449.<sup>57</sup>

It is possible that Knight Johannes Latinus also had a noble court in his village of Ruetel, between Cîsnădie and Cîsnădioara, a settlement that no longer exists. In this area there were mentioned in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the traces of a medieval chapel dedicated to St. John (Johanneskapelle), and the place is still called *Gehones* (*Johannes*).<sup>58</sup> We have made a connection between the gravestone (13<sup>th</sup> century) that was discovered near that place—and which is kept in the Lutheran church in Cîsnădie—and Johannes Latinus.<sup>59</sup>

Both the dating, in the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and the initial function as donjons of the bell towers at Turnișor and Ocna Sibiului remain uncertain. Different opinions were expressed regarding the church tower at Turnișor,<sup>60</sup> for instance that the tower would be older than the original Romanesque basilica and that it had been a donjon,<sup>61</sup> or that it dates from the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>62</sup> Archaeological surveys conducted in 1986 confirmed quite the opposite, i.e. that the foundation of the tower and that of the “transept” are connected, being dug at the same depth and made of the same material.<sup>63</sup> The situation is equally uncertain in the case of the donjon at Ocna Sibiului,<sup>64</sup> as its dating varies from the first to the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>65</sup> the tower being built over chancel of the the Romanesque church, which still preserves important architectural and artistic elements specific to the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The

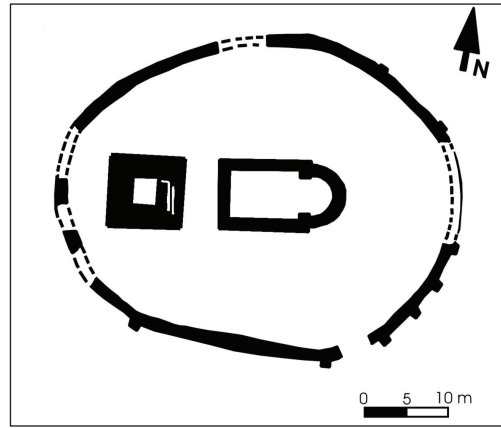


Fig. 3. Viscri. The plan of the noble fortress: the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century (drawn by M. CRÎNGĂCI ȚIPLIC based on documentation by DUMITRACHE, 36)

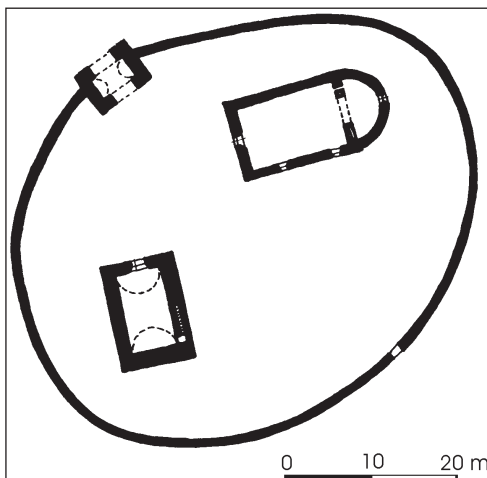


Fig. 4. Călnic. The plan of the noble fortress: the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century (redrawn by M. CRÎNGĂCI ȚIPLIC based on documentation by FABINI, 344)

south portal is the most special one, featuring in a semicircular stay a relief depicting “the tree of life between two affronted felines.” A similar relief lies in the tympanum of the Vurpăr church portal. The specialist literature dates this edifice from before the Mongol invasion, based on the similar relief style and the heavy forms of the construction.<sup>66</sup> The issues of the date and original functional purpose of these towers as donjons will remain unsolved until more complex field research is done.

In the present state of the research we cannot support any theory regarding the distribution and presence of small noble fortresses in southern Tran-

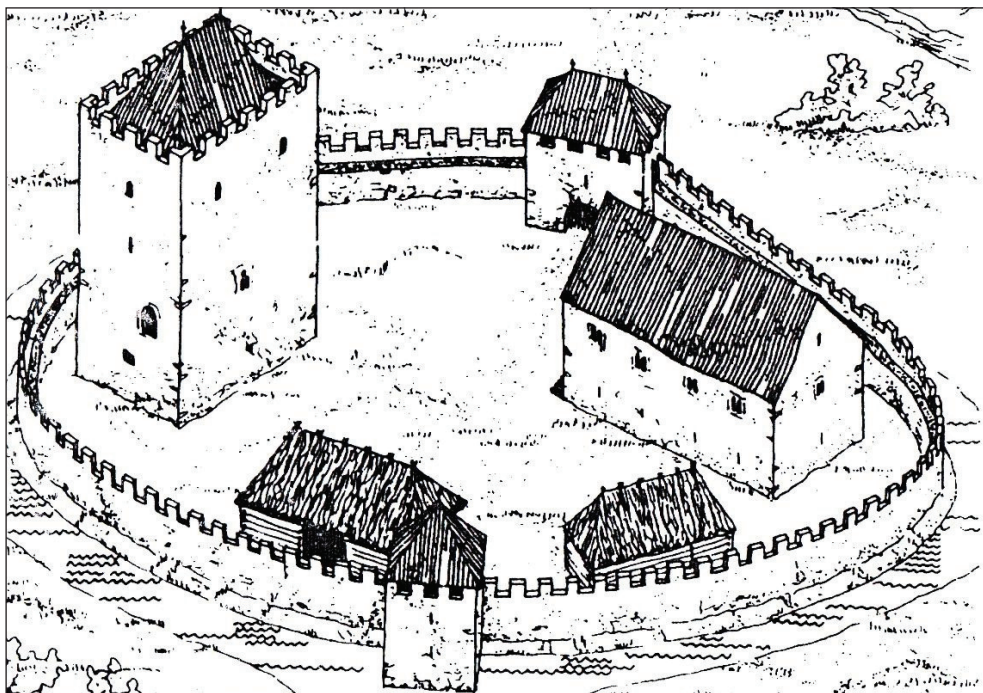


Fig. 5. Călnic. The proposed reconstruction of the noble fortress at Călnic: the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century (acc. to NIEDERMAIER, 222)

sylvania, such as at Viscri, or of the donjons which were part of noble residences. We have neither documentary, nor archaeological proof for the existence of any unfortified noble residence during this period. Furthermore, we do not know to what extent the small noble fortresses were affected by the prohibition of stone constructions inside the voivodate by Andrew II (1205–1235) and then by Béla IV (1235–1270).<sup>67</sup> However, it is not unlikely that they were built during the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century in southern Transylvania, if we take into account the fact that King Andrew II supported the Western-style feudal system or that those *servientes regis* of German origin were associated with the *ministeriales*, who were known for building small fortresses within the Holy Roman Empire. One has also formulated the idea that the defensive structure of southern Transylvania during the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century was based on these small noble fortresses,<sup>68</sup> and within the Land of Bârsa on the fortifications raised by the Teutonic Knights, a fact which would at least partially explain the difficulties encountered in 1241 by the Mongols in Transylvania, especially in its southern areas.<sup>69</sup>

Relying on the information mentioned above, we believe we have enough arguments to outline a possible evolution of the fortified noble residences during the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries (see Figs. 1–5).



## Notes

1. Unfortunately, Transylvania still awaits a systematic archaeological investigation of its medieval monuments or sites. There was one such an initiative belonging to archaeologist Radu Popa, partially carried out in Hațeg and Maramureș: Radu Popa, *Țara Maramureșului în veacul al XIV-lea* (Bucharest, 1970); id., *La începuturile evoluției medii românești: Țara Hațegului* (Bucharest, 1988).
2. Konrad Gündisch, *Das Patriziat siebenbürgischer Städte im Mittelalter* (Cologne–Weimar–Vienna, 1993), 101; Franz Zimmermann, Carl Werner, and Georg Müller, eds., *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte der Deutschen in Siebenbürgen*, vol. 2 (Hermannstadt, 1897), 207, no. 804; *Documenta Romaniae Historica, C. Transilvania*, vol. 12 (Bucharest, 1985), 220, no. 234.
3. Victor Werner, “Ursprung und Wesen des Erbgrafentums bei den Siebenbürgen Sachsen,” in *Geschichtliche Untersuchungen*, [vol. 1], pt. 2 (Gotha, 1902), 14–15; see also Thomas Nägler, “Wesenszüge des sächsischen Gräfen­tums in Siebenbürgen,” *Muzeul Brukenthal: Studii și comunicări: Arheologie-istorie* (Sibiu) 19 (1975): 90; K. Gündisch, *Das Patriziat*, 103.
4. Karl Kurt Klein, *Transylvanica: Gesammelte Abhandlungen und Aufsätze zur Sprach- und Siedlungsforschung der Deutschen in Siebenbürgen* (Munich, 1963), 226–255; id., *Saxonica Septemcastrensis* (Marburg, 1971), 105–116, 160–167.

5. Thomas Nägler, *Așezarea sașilor în Transilvania*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Bucharest, 1992), 216–219.
6. Gustav Gündisch, “Patriciatul din Sibiu în evul mediu,” in *Transilvania și sașii ardeleni în istoriografie: Din publicațiile Asociației de Studii Transilvane Heidelberg* (Sibiu-Heidelberg, 2001), 127–145.
7. K. Gündisch, *Das Patriziat*, passim.
8. Konrad Gündisch, “Patriciatul orășenesc medieval al Bistriței până la începutul secolului al XVI-lea,” *File de istorie* (Bistrița) 4 (1976): 148–150; G. Gündisch, “Patriciatul din Sibiu,” 130.
9. Kurt Horedt, “Zur siebenbürgischen Burgenforschung,” *Südost-Forschungen* 6 (1941): 606–609; Walter Horwath, “Der Frauendorfer Berchfrit,” *Korrespondenzblatt des Vereins für siebenbürgische Landeskunde* (Hermannstadt/Sibiu) 48, 8–11 (1925): 90–91; id., “Der Neppendörfer Berchfrit,” *Korrespondenzblatt des Vereins für siebenbürgische Landeskunde* 49, 4–5 (1926): 48–49; Radu Popa, “Cetățile din Țara Hațegului,” *Buletinul Monumentelor Istorice* (Bucharest) 41, 3 (1972): 54–66; Gheorghe Anghel, *Fortificații medievale de piatră din secolele XIII–XVI* (Cluj-Napoca, 1986), 23–27; Adrian Andrei Rusu, *Castelarea carpatică: Fortificații și cetăți din Transilvania și teritoriile învecinate (sec. XIII–XIV)* (Cluj-Napoca, 2005), 184–194; Marius Porumb and Ciprian Firea, *Cetatea Călnic* (Bucharest, 2007).
10. The first author to present an overview of the noble courts in Transylvania was G. Entz; he believes that the first documentary evidence dates from 1316: Géza Entz, “Mittelalterliche Edelhöfe in Siebenbürgen,” in *Forschungen über Siebenbürgen und seine Nachbarn: Festschrift für Attila T. Szabó und Zsigmond Jakó*, eds. Kálmán Benda, Thomas von Bogyay, Horst Glassl, and Zsolt K. Lengyel, vol. 31 of *Studia Hungarica: Schriften des Ungarischen Instituts München* (Munich, 1987), 241–252.
11. See the case of Slovakia, where thanks to the numerous archaeological investigations and to the abundant documentary evidence, A. T. Ruttkay managed to outline the significance and the various functions of the royal courts (*curia regalis/königliche Herrenhof*) and the possibility of dating the noble courts as early as the 12<sup>th</sup> century (*curia/curti, Höhengitze/Herrenhof/Adelssitze* etc.); see Alexander T. Ruttkay, “Zum frühmittelalterlichen Hof-, Curtis- und Curia regalis—Frage in der Slowakei,” in *Frühmittelalterlicher Burgenbau in Mittel- und Osteuropa*, eds. J. Henning and A. T. Ruttkay (Bonn, 1998), 405–417; Alexander T. Ruttkay, “Mittelalterliche Klein- und Mitteladelssitze in der Slowakei,” in *Motte-Turmhügelburg-Hausberg: Zum europäischen Forschungsstand eines mittelalterlichen Burgentypus: Beiträge zur Mittelalterarchäologie in Österreich* 23 (Vienna, 2007), 277–288.
12. Radu Popa and Nicolae Chidioșan, “O reședință feudală în secolele XI–XII la Sânnicolau de Beiuș, pe Crișul Negru (jud. Bihor),” *Materiale și cercetări arheologice* (Bucharest) 16 (1986): 225–234.
13. Popa, *Țara Hațegului*, 62–63, 224.
14. Zeno Karl Pinter, “Rotonda de la Orăștie,” in *In memoriam Radu Popa: Temeiuri ale civilizației românești în context european*, eds. Daniela Marcu Istrate, Angel Istrate, and Corneliu Gaiu (Cluj-Napoca, 2003), 263–286.

15. The documents seem to indicate that the elite of the Transylvanian Saxons had several places of residence. For instance, at the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century *comes* Nicolaus of Tâlmăciu held over 14 villages in the south of Transylvania, see Franz Zimmermann and Carl Werner, eds., *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte der Deutschen in Siebenbürgen*, vol. 1 (Hermannstadt, 1892), 342, no. 368 (hereafter cited as *Urkundenbuch*); *Documente privind istoria României, C. Transilvania, veacul XIV*, vol. 1 (Bucharest, 1953), 330–331, no. 375 (hereafter cited as *DIR C, veacul XIV*), one house (*domus*) in the town of Cîsnădie (*Urkundenbuch*, 1: 371, no. 400; *DIR C, veacul XIV*, 2: 63–64, no. 141), a mill and a manor (*curia libera*) in Cristian, some vineyards not far from Orlat (*Urkundenbuch*, 1: 373–374, no. 404; *DIR C, veacul XIV*, 2: 72–73, no. 167) and so on and so forth. In addition to these possessions, it is assumed that he also owned a small noble fortress, similar to that from Călnic, from which no element has lasted until today.
16. Năgler, *Așezarea*, 130–131, 138–139.
17. Pinter, “Rotonda,” 271.
18. Năgler, *Așezarea*, 140–141, 160–163.
19. Adrian Ioniță et al., *Feldioara–Marienburg: Contribuții arheologice la istoria Țării Bârsei/Archäologische Beiträge zur Geschichte des Burzenlandes* (Bucharest, 2004), 58; Maria Crîngaci Țiplic, “Oaspeții germani” în sudul Transilvaniei: Istorie, arheologie și arhitectură (Bucharest, 2011), 130–135.
20. K. Gündisch, *Das Patriziat*, 101–102; id., “Autonomie de stări și regionalitate în Ardealul medieval,” in *Transilvania și sașii ardeleni în istoriografie*, 43.
21. K. Schünemann, “Die Stellung des Südostens in der Geschichte der mittelalterlichen deutschen Kolonisation,” *Siebenbürgische Vierteljahrsschrift: Korrespondenzblatt des Vereins für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde* (Hermannstadt–Bistritz) 57 (1934): 1–16; Năgler, “Wesenszüge,” 97; id., *Așezarea*, 181–193; K. Gündisch, *Das Patriziat*, 113, note 36.
22. K. Gündisch, *Das Patriziat*, 109–110, 113.
23. Năgler, *Așezarea*, 74–76.
24. Anselm of Braz is considered to be the possible founder of Orăștie (germ. Broos), see Năgler, *Așezarea*, 130–131, 138–139; Pinter, “Rotonda,” 271.
25. Pinter, “Rotonda,” 271.
26. Zeno Karl Pinter, “Die mittelalterliche Rotunde am Huet-Platz in Hermannstadt/Sibiu,” *Forschungen zur Volks- und Landeskunde* (Hermannstadt/Sibiu) 55 (2012): 32–57.
27. Rusu, 291–292; Ioan Marian Țiplic, *Organizarea defensivă a Transilvaniei în Evul Mediu (secolele X–XIV)* (Bucharest, 2006), 33.
28. As to the dating of this chapel, expert opinions are divided between the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century and the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century; see Petre Munteanu Beșliu, Nicolae Rodean, and Adrian Georgescu, “Cercetări arheologice de salvare în Piața Huet din Sibiu,” *Apulum* (Alba Iulia) 37, 1 (2000): 471–484; Zeno Karl Pinter and Ioan Marian Țiplic, “Sibiu, jud. Sibiu. Punct: Piața Huet–Rotondă,” *Cronica Cercetărilor Arheologice: Campania 2002* (Bucharest) (2003): 284–285; Daniela Marcu Istrate, *Sibiu. Piața Huet: Monografie arheologică*, vol. 1 (Alba Iulia, 2007), 44–50; Pinter, “Die mittelalterliche Rotunde,” 50.

29. Pinter, “Die mittelalterliche Rotunde,” 50.
30. Paul Niedermaier, *Städte, Dörfer, Baudenkmäler: Studien zur Siedlungs- und Baugeschichte Siebenbürgens: Als Festgabe zum 70. Geburtstag* (Cologne–Weimar–Vienna, 2008), 270–271.
31. G. Nussbächer considers that this document dates from between 1319 and 1325, the year 1280 being a mistake of the copyist from 1453, see Gernot Nussbächer, “Zur Datierung einer Urkunde über einen Grund- und Mühlenverkauf (1280?), *Urkundenbuch* 1, no. 197),” *Forschungen zur Volks- und Landeskunde* (Bucharest–Sibiu) 23, 2 (1980): 119.
32. Daniela Marcu and Ioan F. Pascu, “Sighișoara, jud. Mureș: Punct: Biserica din Deal,” *Cronica Cercetărilor Arheologice: Campania 1999* (Bucharest) (2000): 96–97; id., “Sighișoara, jud. Mureș: Punct: Biserica din Deal,” *Cronica Cercetărilor Arheologice: Campania 2000* (Bucharest) (2001): 228. P. Niedermaier dates this rotunda shortly after the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century, see Paul Niedermaier, *Atlas istoric al orașelor din România, Seria C. Transilvania, Fascicol 1, Sighișoara* (Bucharest, 2000), VI.
33. The settlement is first mentioned in a document from 1309 (*Urkundenbuch*, 1: 240, 245, 247, 251–252, 275, 288–292, no. 314; *DIR C, veacul XIV*, 1: 94, 101, 104, 109–110, 139, 155–156, 158–160, no. 103).
34. Iosefina Postăvaru, “Biserica fortificată din Saschiz: Studiu istoric și architectural,” *Arhitectura religioasă medievală din Transilvania* (Satu Mare) 3 (2004): 142–145.
35. The settlement is first mentioned in a document from 1323, where it is already referred to as a town (*Urkundenbuch*, 1: 371, no. 400; *DIR C, veacul XIV*, 2: 63–64, no. 141).
36. Juliana Fabritius-Dancu, *Cetăți țărănești săsești din Transilvania* (Sibiu, 1983), 4; Hermann Fabini, *Atlas der siebenbürgisch-sächsischen Kirchenburgen und Dorfkirchen*, vol. 1 (Heidelberg–Hermannstadt, 1998), 40, 42.
37. The settlement is first mentioned in a document from 1291 (*Urkundenbuch*, 1: 179–180, no. 247; *Documente privind istoria României, C. Transilvania, veacul XIII*, vol. 2 (Bucharest, 1952), 372–374, no. 407 (hereafter cited as *DIR C, veacul XIII*). In the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century the name of a count/*comes* is not mentioned in any documents.
38. Anghel, 119–120.
39. *Ibid.*, 119–121.
40. *Urkundenbuch*, 1: 32–35, no. 43; *Documente privind istoria României, C. Transilvania, veacul XI, XII și XIII*, vol. 1 (Bucharest, 1951), 208–210, no. 157 (hereafter cited as *DIR C, veacul XI, XII și XIII*).
41. Attila Zsoldos, “Modificările conceptului ‘nobilime’ pe parcursul secolului al XIII-lea în Regatul Ungariei,” in *Secolul al XIII-lea pe meleagurile locuite de către români*, ed. A. A. Rusu (Cluj-Napoca, 2006), 88.
42. Pál Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen: A History of Medieval Hungary, 895–1526* (London–New York, 2005), 71–72.
43. Francisc Pall translates the word *miles* as knight, brave person, as a social category, see Francisc Pall, “Diplomatica latină cu referire la Transilvania (sec. XI–XV),” in Francisc Pall, *Diplomatica latină din Transilvania medievală* (Cluj-Napoca, 2005), 124.



44. The designation of this category refers to the fact that, due to the new status, the *servientes regis* “were not subordinated to any *comitatus castri*, but they served the king directly.” Their rights were stated in the Golden Bull of 1222. A. Zsoldos emphasizes the idea that due to the fact that their status “offered them privileges similar to the traditional nobles, those appointed by the royal court as *servientes regis* were considered noble,” Zsoldos, 89–91.
45. Tudor Sălăgean, *Transilvania în a doua jumătate a secolului al XIII-lea: Afirmarea regimului congregațional* (Cluj-Napoca, 2003), 34–40.
46. The concept of *serviens regalis* within the medieval Hungarian society is almost identical to that of *ministeriales* in the German society of the German Empire; for details see K. Gündisch, *Das Patriziat*, 108.
47. *Urkundenbuch*, 1: 7–8, no. 15; *DIR C, veacul XI, XII și XIII*, 1: 28–29, no. 46.
48. *Urkundenbuch*, 1: 7–9, 54–55, nos. 15, 16, 63; *DIR C, veacul XI, XII și XIII*, 1: 28–29, 32–33, 254–255, nos. 46, 54, 212.
49. *Urkundenbuch*, 1: 8–9, no. 16.
50. This was what the 500/100/50 soldiers were called in the *Andreanum* Diploma of 1224; they would have participated to the royal military expeditions inside or outside the kingdom (*Urkundenbuch*, 1: 32–35, no. 43).
51. *Urkundenbuch*, 1: 54–55, no. 63; *DIR C, veacul XI, XII și XIII*, 1: 254–255, no. 212.
52. *Urkundenbuch*, 1: 78–79, no. 86; *DIR C, veacul XIII*, 2: 5–6, no. 5.
53. *DIR C, veacul XI, XII și XIII*, 1: 338, no. 292.
54. *Urkundenbuch*, 1: 32–35, no. 43.
55. In this respect, the case of Johannes Latinus is quite eloquent; in exchange for certain military services he and his people gained the right to *be free and exempted from any payment requirement or customs tax* (*Urkundenbuch*, 1: 7–9, nos. 15, 16; *DIR C, veacul XI, XII și XIII*, 1: 28–29, 32–33, nos. 46, 54).
56. Mariana Dumitrache, “Archäologische und baugeschichtliche Forschungen in der Repser Gegend (Viscri-Deutschweiskirch),” *Forschungen zur Völk- und Landeskunde* 21, 2 (1978): 35–53.
57. Gustav Gündisch, ed., *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte der Deutschen in Siebenbürgen*, vol. 5 (Bucharest, 1975), 284, no. 2688.
58. Sabin Adrian Luca, Zeno Karl Pinter, and Adrian Georgescu, *Repertoriul situurilor arheologice și monumentelor istorice din județul Sibiu* (Bucharest, 2003), 82.
59. Crîngaci Țiplic, 48–51.
60. The first documentary attestation of the settlement dates from 1327 (*Urkundenbuch* 1: 414, no. 458; *DIR C, veacul XIV*, 2: 235–236, no. 472).
61. Horwath, “Neppendörfer,” 48–49.
62. Virgil Vătășianu, *Istoria artei feudale în țările române*, vol. 1 (Bucharest, 1959), 25–26.
63. Helmut Klima, Hermann Fabini, and Martin Rill, “Turris Neponis—zur Geschichte und Baugeschichte der Kirche von Neppendorf,” *Forschungen zur Völk- und Landeskunde* 30, 1 (1987): 65–81; Fabini, *Atlas*, 512. Unfortunately, the results of the excavations are not accompanied by photos or drawings in order to confirm the mentioned hypothesis.

64. The first documentary attestation of the settlement is from 1262–1263. Zs. Jakó considers that the authenticity of the mentioned documented is doubtful, see Zs. Jakó, ed., *Erdélyi Okmánytár: Oklevelek, levelek és más írásos emlékek Erdély történetéhez*, vol. 1, 1023–1300 (Budapest, 1997), 205, no. 237.
65. Rusu, 194, 273, 526.
66. Vătășianu, 27, 152.
67. Țiplic, 105, note 636.
68. *Ibid.*, 81.
69. Sălăgean, 34–40.

### **Abstract**

The Archaeology of Noble Residences in Transylvania:  
The Residences of the Transylvanian Saxon Elite  
(12<sup>th</sup> Century–First Half of the 13<sup>th</sup> Century)

The author offers a new interpretation on the elite of the German *hospites* and their residences in southern Transylvania. After a brief survey of the current state of the research concerning the Transylvanian Saxon elite and their residences, on the basis of the existing archaeological discoveries, analyses of medieval names, anthroponomy, and documentary resources, the paper reviews the theory of the chronology of fortified noble residences as formulated by some specialists, introducing a new proposal for the chronology and for the possible evolution of the fortified residences belonging to the Transylvanian Saxon elite during the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. Thus, despite the absence of documentary evidence, it is possible that among the southern Transylvanian Saxon *hospites* a privileged group was constituted as early as the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, mentioned in documents as *militēs/militēs Saxones*. They are those *servientes regis* who, in exchange for their military services, gained estates in the noble lands and a series of privileges, usually greater than those of the Saxons from Sibiu county.

### **Keywords**

Transylvania, 12<sup>th</sup> century, 13<sup>th</sup> century, noble residence, German *hospites*, elite