

Péter Levente Szócs

Medieval Studies on the border

[A stampa in *Fifteen-Year Anniversary Reports*, a cura di M. Sággy, “Annual of Medieval Studies at CEU” (Central European University, Budapest), ed. by J. A. Rasson and B. Zsolt Szakács, vol. 15 (2009), pp. 287-296 © dell’autore – Distribuito in formato digitale da “Reti Medievali”].

MEDIEVAL STUDIES ON THE BORDER

Péter Levente Szőcs

The County of Satu Mare (Szatmár) is the northwesternmost region of today's Romania, on the border with Hungary and Ukraine. It was not part of any historical region of Romania (Maramureş or Transylvania) therefore historical interest in Satu Mare has remained on a local level. This is the reason why national or regional historical projects, among them studies of medieval history, have neglected this area and little institutional support from the central level can be detected even today. Local organizations (the county museum and the county library) had to take on additional tasks in order to recover local history and connect to regional or national issues. The particular position of Satu Mare conferred a peripheral situation in terms of historical geography and determined a special set of tasks for local historical research.

A few days after I graduated from Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Kolosvar, in 1997, I was employed as a medieval archaeologist at the County Museum of Satu Mare. I discovered in a short time that little I had learned at the university was useful in daily tasks. Handling the inventory, work in the curation storage, so-called "scientific evidence," and the organization of an exhibition were new challenges. Field work and research, in which the university trained graduate students, comprised only about 15% of the job. Adapting to the new challenges was aggravated by a lack of older and experienced specialists. The educational policy of the 1970s and 1980s did not favor the humanities; therefore, there was a shortage of skilled archivists, librarians, archaeologists, and museum specialists in Romania in the 1990s. After 1990 the universities focused on these disciplines and the lack was gradually compensated for after 1995, when young graduates started their careers. This trend, however, resulted in overproduction, causing new problems after the year 2000.

Thus, I had a strong feeling of periphery in Satu Mare in 1997 caused by the relative strangeness of the museum tasks, the regional specificities, and the lack of skilled colleagues. This feeling was reinforced by the underdeveloped research infrastructure, the situation of the local libraries being the most eloquent in this sense. I had not expected to find international periodicals or publications, but it seemed reasonable to expect to find complete series of the most important Romanian archaeological, historical, and ethnographic journals (the main fields of

the museum's activity). Instead, I discovered that these series were incomplete and even the simplest task of finding a proper reference presupposed bibliographical research in Cluj or another center. There were various reasons for the lacks in the library, the most joyless being the lack of funds for postage. This situation more and more resembled the peripheral provinces of the Roman Empire in the fourth and fifth centuries.

Certainly there was no collapse and disintegration, rather a period of small-scale cultural and scientific revival started from the year 2000, following the economic rebirth of Romania. Meanwhile, the peripheral position of Satu Mare turned out to be an advantage; it favored cross-border relations, established both on institutional and personal levels. These contacts compensated for the weak interest of national or regional organizations in the area, and conferred a possibility for the County Museum of Satu Mare to be a bridge to Hungary and Ukraine. Medieval history, particularly the problems related to medieval monuments, proved to be issues of common interest, generating common projects. A series of workshop was started on "Medieval Ecclesiastical Architecture in Transylvania," first held in Satu Mare in 1998; the sixth such event was organized in Nyíregyháza (Hungary), by the "Jósa András" Museum, the partner organization, in 2008. The papers presented at these workshops have been printed in four volumes and the fifth will be issued shortly. Parallel to this, a group of scholars from Cluj and from the Institute of History of The Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest, started a journal on the medieval history of Transylvania: *Mediaevalia Transilvanica*. The main task of the journal was to establish a common location for Romanian and Hungarian scholars to present and debate their results. The County Museum of Satu Mare provided the secretariat for the editorial board and the financial support for the printing. At present, a number of other research projects have been implemented with partner institutions in Hungary and Ukraine, and the field of common projects has been enlarged, covering prehistoric and antique archeology, modern history, and ethnography.

Apart from the geographical specificities and the differences caused by the various types of research organizations (i.e., universities, research institutes, museums on central, regional and local levels), medieval studies in Romania is also divided along various methodological approaches. The traditional historical research is based almost exclusively on written sources, incorporating in a rather limited measure the results of archeology and art history. These three fields of studies had parallel developments regarding education, institutions, and research projects. There are few interdisciplinary approaches, in spite of the fact that the relative

poverty of medieval sources on Transylvania, and on Romania more widely, can be compensated for by combining all types of available data and methods. The fate of medieval archeology is particularly peculiar. While several research institutions and museums employ one or more medieval archaeologists, there is no university background for this specialization. Medieval history departments focus on written sources, while archaeological departments cover the periods from prehistory until the first millennium A.D. Medieval archeology, therefore, falls between the two departmental areas; specialization in this field must be gained through volunteer field work, optional seminars, and personal contacts with senior researchers.

The need for properly trained archaeologists specialized in the Middle Ages, however, is large. Several rehabilitation projects are being implemented on medieval monuments, while a great number of archaeological sites dating to the Middle Ages have been identified and rescued due to large scale investments before development. As in other neighboring countries, the largest rescue excavations have taken place during highway projects. The huge scale of these research projects generated a renewal of excavation techniques and the improvement of the research infrastructure. The great amount of data gathered at these sites required the implementation of computer-based information management, while the large number of finds recovered caused problems related to storage and conservation. The lack of skilled human resources, however, proved to be the greatest problem during these large-scale projects. These great rescue projects multiplied archeological information on the Middle Ages. The most significant development can be seen in research into Late Antiquity and the Migration period (fourth to tenth century). A few years ago our knowledge on this period was based on isolated discoveries and partially researched sites. The large surface of the rescue projects permitted almost complete research on sites, therefore they provide an accurate chronology and detailed picture of material culture.

Parallel to investments in new infrastructure, the rehabilitation work on architectural monuments saw an additional impulse in the last decade, sustained by the increasing interest in national heritage and their incorporation in tourism. Extensive restorations have been made at the most important monuments in the country, preceded in most cases by archaeological and art historical research. National funds have been directed mainly to the world heritage sites (the wooden churches of Maramureș (Máramaros), the monasteries of Moldova and Bucovina), and the monuments of national history (the princely courts in Suceava, Curtea de Argeș, etc.). Excavations on the Late Antique and Byzantine sites of the Lower Danube and Black Sea coast have been carried on in the last decade, completed

with the partial conservation of the ruins revealed. A number of churches have been restored by individual communities, using the partial help of public or private funds. It is significant to note that both Hungarian and German organizations with interests in the medieval Hungarian and Saxon populations, have assumed important roles in financing and managing the rehabilitation of architectural monuments related to these ethnic communities. The parish churches of Sighișoara (Segesvár, Schänburg and Sibiu (Nagyszeben, Hermannstadt) and the cathedral of Alba Iulia (Gyulafehérvár) are the most important examples of this. The rehabilitation of historic city centers has offered chance to conduct research in the most important medieval urban centers of Transylvania, like Sibiu, Cluj-Napoca (Kolozsvár, Klausenburg) and Baia Mare. Some of the manor houses of noble families have been restored through private investment, as is the case of the houses of the Apor family in Covasna County. Compared to other types of monuments, castles have somehow remained neglected. Being mostly in ruins they do not offer convenient avenues of re-use; some rehabilitation projects, however, are being implemented at a more or less intense pace. The rehabilitation of the castle of Oradea, started in early 1990s, has been partially finished. The castle of Râșnov was more or less restored through the aid of national funds, while the nearby castle of Bran (Töröcsvár, Törzburg) had remained in good state and has proved the most popular tourist spot in the whole country based on its association with Count Vlad Dracul. The restoration of Deva (Déva) castle was started recently, a good example of effort by the community to rescue the local cultural heritage. As in the case of large-scale archaeological rescue work, the increasing number of research projects at the most important medieval monuments in the country has caused a significant shift in methodology and conceptual approaches. The preference for synthetic works (characteristic for Romanian medieval studies of the second half of the twentieth century) has changed in favor of case studies and detailed analyses of particular issues. The results of recent research (mainly rescue projects) and their publication shows a significant renewal of medieval studies and makes most of the debates of the last decades obsolete.

The presence of multiple ethnic and confessional communities on the territories of present-day Romania from the Middle Ages confers a particular aspect on medieval studies in this country. The German and Hungarian communities have created a network of research organizations which focus on the past of these ethnic groups, the regions they inhabited, and institutions related to their communities (churches and governing bodies). For historical research in Hungarian the Transylvanian Museum

Association (*Erdélyi Múzeum–Egyesület*) plays the central role, while the German-related work is coordinated by the Association for Transylvanian Research (*Verein für siebenbürgische Landeskunde*). Both organizations focus on the written sources of their pasts, each creating its own historical archives by gathering documents of ethnic organizations and significant persons. In the case of medieval studies both organizations play a special role. In the eastern and southern provinces (Moldova and Walachia), Cyrillic script was used during the Middle Ages, while Latin was used in Transylvania and the western parts of the country. The series of *diplomataria* (the two most important being the *Erdélyi Okmánytár* and *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte der Deutschen in Siebenbürgen*) initiated by the Erdélyi Múzeum and the Verein, complete the series of national corpuses of sources. Both organizations have established research groups specialized in Latin paleography and their contribution has been crucial for research on medieval Transylvania. These efforts at source editing are well completed by several rehabilitation projects on monuments related to the German and Hungarian communities.

The number of geographical, institutional, methodological, and language divisions create a more or less fragmented impression of medieval studies in Romania. It is difficult to identify the central debates or main trends, all the actors becoming “peripheral” in one way or another. The contacts and debates among the scholars involved in medieval studies remain insufficient, although they are the basis of all kinds of cooperation. Beyond the beneficial effect of diversification, the enrichment of viewpoints and the great number of recent research results suggest the start of a re-structuring and rebirth of medieval studies.

Selected Bibliography

Archaeology

Andronic, Mugur. *Teritoriul nord-est carpatic în a doua jumătate a primului mileniu creștin* [Northeastern Territories of the Carpathians During the Second Half of the First Millenium A.D.]. Suceava: Istros, 2005.

Batariuc, Paraschiva Victoria. *Căble din Moldova medievală. Secolele XIV–XVII* [The Medieval Stove Tiles of Moldova, Fourteenth to Seventeenth centuries]. Suceava: Muzeul Național al Bucovinei, 1999.

Benkő, Elek, István Demeter, and Attila Székely. *Középkori mezőváros a Székelyföldön* [Medieval Market Towns in Szekler Land]. Kolozsvár: Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület, 1997.

Benkő, Elek. *Erdély középkori harangjai és bronz keresztelőmedencéi* [The Medieval Bells and Baptismal Fonts of Transylvania]. Budapest–Kolozsvár: Teleki László Alapítvány, 2002.

———. *Kolozsvár Magyar külváros a középkorban* [The Hungarian Suburb of Cluj in the Middle Ages]. Kolozsvár: Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület, 1997.

———. *Középkori udvarház és nemesség a Székelyföldön* [The Medieval Manor House and the Nobility of Szekler Land]. Budapest: Nap, 2008.

Crișan, Ioan. *Așezări rurale medievale din Crișana (secolele X–XIII)* [Medieval Rural Settlements of Crișana, Tenth to Thirteenth Centuries]. Oradea: Muzeului Țării Crișurilor, 2006.

Cosma, Călin. *Vestul și nord-vestul României în secolele VIII–X d. H.* [Western and Northwestern Romania in the Eighth to Tenth Centuries A.D.]. Cluj-Napoca: Neremia Napocae, 2002.

Corbu, Emilia. *Sudul României în Evul Mediu timpuriu (secolele VIII–XI). Repere arheologice* [Southern Romania in the Early Middle Ages, Eighth to Eleventh Centuries]. Brăila: Istros, 2006.

Curta, Florin. *Apariția slavilor. Istorie și arheologie la Dunărea de Jos în secolele VI–VII* [The Advent of the Slavs: History and Archaeology on the Lower Danube in the Sixth and Seventh Centuries]. Târgoviște: Cetatea de Scaun, 2006.

Dragotă, Aurel. *Aspecte de multiculturalitate spirituală. Rit și ritual funerar în Transilvania și Europa Centrală și de sud-est (sec. IX–XI p. Ch.)* [Aspects of Spiritual Multiculturalism. Funerary rituals in Transylvania and South-East Central Europe, Ninth to Eleventh Centuries]. Alba Iulia: Altip, 2006.

Edroiu, Nicolae. *Formațiuni statale pe teritoriul României (secolele VIII–XI)* [State Entities on the Territory of Romania, Eighth and Ninth Centuries]. Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 1999.

Iambor, Petru. *Așezări fortificate din Transilvania (secolele IX–XIII)* [Fortified settlements of Transylvania, Ninth to Thirteenth Centuries]. Cluj Napoca: Argonaut, 2005.

Istrate, Angel. *Piața Mare. Cercetări arheologice* [(Sibiu), Piața Mare: Archeological Research]. Alba Iulia: Altip, 2007.

Lukacs, Antal. *Țara Făgărașului în Evul Mediu. Secolele XIII–XVI* [The District of Făgăraș in the Middle Ages, Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries]. București: Enciclopedică, 1999.

Marcu-Istrate, Daniela. *Cable din Transilvania și Banat de la începuturi până la 1700* [Stove Tiles of Transylvania and Banat, from the Beginnings to the Seventeenth Century]. Cluj-Napoca: Accent, 2004.

———. *Sacru și profan într-un oraș european (1150–2007). Piața Huet, o punte peste timp* [Sacred and Profane in a European City (Sibiu): Huet Square, a Bridge beyond Time]. Brașov: Hieronymus, 2007.

———. *Sibiu. Piața Huet: Monografie arheologică* [Sibiu, Huet Square: Archaeological Monograph]. Alba Iulia: Altip, 2007.

———. *A gyulafehérvári római katolikus székesegyház és püspöki palota régészeti kutatása (2000–2002)* [Archaeological Research on the Roman Catholic Cathedral and Episcopal Palace of Alba Iulia, 2000–2002]. Budapest, Teleki László Alapítvány, 2008.

Pinter, Zeno, Ioan Marian Țiplic, Maria Emilia Țiplic, ed. *Relații interetnice în Transilvania (secolele VI–XIII)* [Interethnic Relations in Transylvania, Sixth to Thirteenth Centuries]. București: Economică, 2005.

Pinter, Zeno. *Spada și sabia medievală în Transilvania și Banat (secolele IX–XIV)* [The Medieval Swords of Transylvania and Banat, Ninth to fourteenth centuries]. Reșița: Banatica, 1999.

Protase, Dumitru. *Cimitirul slav de la Ocna Sibiului (secolele VII–IX)* [The Slavic Graveyard of Ocna Sibiului, Seventh to Ninth Centuries]. București: Economică, 2005.

Rusu, Adrian Andrei, ed. *Cetatea Oradea. Monografie arheologică* [Cetatea Oradea. Archaeological Monograph]. Oradea: Muzeul Țării Crișurilor, 2002.

Spinei, Victor. *Marile migrații din estul și sud-estul Europei în secolele IX–XIII* [The Great Migrations in Southern and Southeastern Europe in the Ninth to Thirteenth centuries]. Iași: Institutul European, 1999.

Stanciu, Ioan. “Gepizi, avari și slavi timpurii (secolele V–VII p. Chr.) în spațiul vestic și nordvestic al României” [Gepids, Avars and early Slavs (Fifth to Seventh centuries) in the western and northwestern parts of Romania]. *Ephemeris Napocensis* 12 (2002): 203-236.

Țeicu, Dumitru. *Banatul montan în Evul Mediu* [The Mountain Area of Banat in the Middle Ages]. Timișoara: Banatica, 1998.

Țiplic, Ioan Marian. *Fortificațiile medievale timpurii din Transilvania (secolele X–XII)* [Early Medieval Fortifications of Transylvania, Tenth to Twelfth century]. Iași: Institutul European, 2008.

Art History and Architectural Monuments

Batariuc, Paraschiva Victoria. *Cetatea de scaun a Sucevei* [The Voievodal Castle of Suceava]. Suceava: Bucovina Istorică, 2004.

Cantacuzino, Gheorghe. *Cetăți medievale din Țara Românească în secolele XIII–XVI* [Medieval Castles of Walachia, Thirteenth to Sixteenth Centuries]. București: Enciclopedică, 2003.

Entz, Géza. *Erdély építészete a 14–16. században* [The Architecture of Transylvania, Fourteenth to Sixteenth Centuries]. Kolozsvár: Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület, 1997.

Floareș, Dan. *Fortificațiile Moldovei din secolele XIV-XVII* [The Castles of Moldova, Fourteenth to Seventeenth Century]. Iași: Universitatea “Alexandru Ioan Cuza,” 2005.

Kollár Tibor. *Középkori falképek Erdélyben* (Medieval Frescoes of Transylvania). Budapest: Teleki László Alapítvány, 2008.

Machat, Christoph. *Denkmaltopographie Siebenbürgen. Kreis Kronstadt. Thaur b. Innsbruck, Sibiu: Wort und Welt – Thausib*, 1995.

———. *Denkmaltopographie Siebenbürgen. Stadt Hermannstadt. Cologne: Rheinland*, 1999.

Móré-Heitel, Suzana. *Abația de la Pâncota și vestigiile ei* [The Abbey of Pâncota and its Remains]. Cluj-Napoca: Mega, 2006.

Rusu, Adrian Andrei, ed. *Bibliografia fortificațiilor medievale și premoderne din Transilvania și Banat* [Bibliography of the Medieval and Early Modern Fortifications of Transylvania and Banat]. Reșița: Banatica, 1996.

———, ed. *Dicționarul mănăstirilor din Transilvania, Banat, Crișana și Maramureș* [Dictionary of the Medieval Monasteries of Transylvania, Banat, Crișana, and Maramureș]. Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2000.

———. *Castelarea carpatică. Fortificații și cetăți din Transilvania și teritoriile învecinate (sec. XIII-XIV)* [The Castles of Carpathian Territories: Transylvania and the Surrounding Territory in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries]. Cluj-Napoca: Mega, 2005.

Sinigalia, Tereza, *Arhitectura civilă de zid din Țara Românească în secolele XIV–XVIII* [Secular Architecture in Masonry in Walachia, Fourteenth to Eighteenth Centuries]. Bucharest: Vremea, 2000.

German and Hungarian Contributions to the Medieval Studies of Transylvania

Demény Lajos, ed. *Székely oklevéltár, Újsorozat, IV–VI, Székelynépességösszeírások, 1575–1653* [Szekler Diplomataria, new series, vol. IV–VI, Census of Szeklers 1575–1653]. Bucharest: Kriterion, 1998–2000.

Fejér, Tamás, Etelka, Rácz, Anikó Szász. *Az erdélyi fejedelmek Királyi Könyvei, I, 1569–1581* [The *Libri Regii* of Transylvania, I, 1569–1581]. Kolozsvár: Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület, 2003.

Gündisch, Gustav, Herta Gündisch, Konrad Gündisch, and Gernot Nussbächer, ed. *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte der Deutschen in Siebenbürgen. VII, 1474–1486*. Bucharest: Kriterion, 1991.

Jakó, Zsigmond, ed. *Codex diplomaticus Transsylvaniae. Diplomata, epistolae et alia instrumenta litteraria res Transsylvanas illustrantia, I–III*, Budapest: Magyar Országos Levéltár, 1997–2008.

Kovács, András *Gyulafehérvár város jegyzőkönyvei* [Protocols of the Town of Alba Iulia]. Kolozsvár: Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület, 1998.

Nussbächer, Gernot, and Elisabeta Marin, ed. *Quellen zur Geschichte der Stadt Kronstadt, IX, Zunfturkunden 1420–1580*. Kronstadt–Heidelberg: Aldus, 1999.

Vlaicu, Monica, ed. *Quellen zur Geschichte der Stadt Hermannstadt, II, Handel und Gewerbe in Hermannstadt und in den Sieben Stühlen 1224–1579*. Hermannstadt–Heidelberg: Hora, 2003.

W. Kovács, András. *The History of the Wass de Czege Family*. Hamburg: Edmund Siemers Stiftung, 2005

———, ed. *A Wass család cegei levéltára* [The Archives of Wass Family in Ţaga]. Kolozsvár: Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület, 2006.