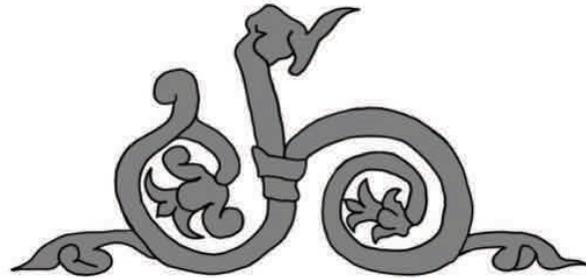


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Elements of Fortification of the Medieval and Early Modern City of Sibiu. The Tower Gate and the Gate's Bastion. Historical and Archaeological Considerations*

Anca Nițoi, Claudia Urduzia

Abstract: The article presents the latest rescue archaeological excavations performed in the perimeter of the fortification system of Sibiu of the late Middle Ages. Through these researches we were able to identify the exact location of the Tower Gate and Gate's Bastion, components of the last two fortification belts of the city.

Keywords: fortification system, urban archaeology, Middle Ages, Sibiu.

Introduction

The construction of the fortification system of medieval Sibiu was performed in stages, over several centuries, including, in the period of maximum expansion, both the Upper Sibiu and the Meadow of Cibin, part of the Lower City. The bibliography related to these construction stages, mainly to the fortification elements of the Upper City¹ is vast, so as we believe that a general presentation of the topic is more than sufficient.

As for the development of the fortification system of the Lower City, the situation of inter-disciplinary researches changes radically. Thus, the archaeological researches performed mainly starting with 2000² have revealed a series of details on the location of some parts of the defence wall and on the correct location of the towers and bastions that doubled the walls starting with the 16th Century.

The preventive excavations performed during 2012 and 2013 can be subscribed to this context; they targeted the area of the Cibin Square and of the Tower Gate and Gate's Bastion and were triggered by rehabilitation works on the infrastructure of the city of Sibiu, namely of the Tower Street³.

Historical development of the fortification system of the Lower City

In the beginning of the 15th Century, the community of Sibiu was one of the wealthiest communities in southern Transylvania. This significant advantage was also a great disadvantage, as the city was placed in the first line of conflict between the two great powers that controlled this buffer area: the Hungarian Kingdom and the Ottoman Empire. The latter was at the peak of its development and desired to expand its borders towards the heart of Europe. These considerations made the Magistrate of Sibiu think of fortifying the spots he considered weakest in the city's defensive system, the most important among them being the area known as the Lower City (Pl. 1/1).

The latter represented the area located between what was generally labelled as the Upper City, strongly fortified during the previous period, and River Cibin and its meadow. Located therefore between the recently dried out marshy area (Pl.1/2) and the hilly area, the fourth defensive belt started from the Soldish Bastion and followed the river bed of Cibin, along the streets of Pânzarilor, Croitorilor, Rotarilor, Blănarilor and then joining the third belt near the Ursuline Church⁴ (Fig. 1). Due to the existing natural elements and to the fact that the area was facing the inner part of Transylvania

* English translation: Ana M. Gruia.

¹ Avram, Bucur 1999; Luca *et al.* 2003; Marcu Istrate 2007; Istrate 2007; Pinter 2013.

² Luca *et al.* 2007a; Luca *et al.* 2007b; Beșliu, Munteanu 2008.

³ The presentation of the preventive archaeological researches performed along the entire route of Tower Street was the subject of a study published in *Brukenthal. Acta Musei*. See Nițoi *et al.* 2014, 109–124.

⁴ Abrudan, Sontag 1974–1975, 125.

from where no military danger would normally appear, the local Magistrate did not consider the fortification of this area to be a priority.

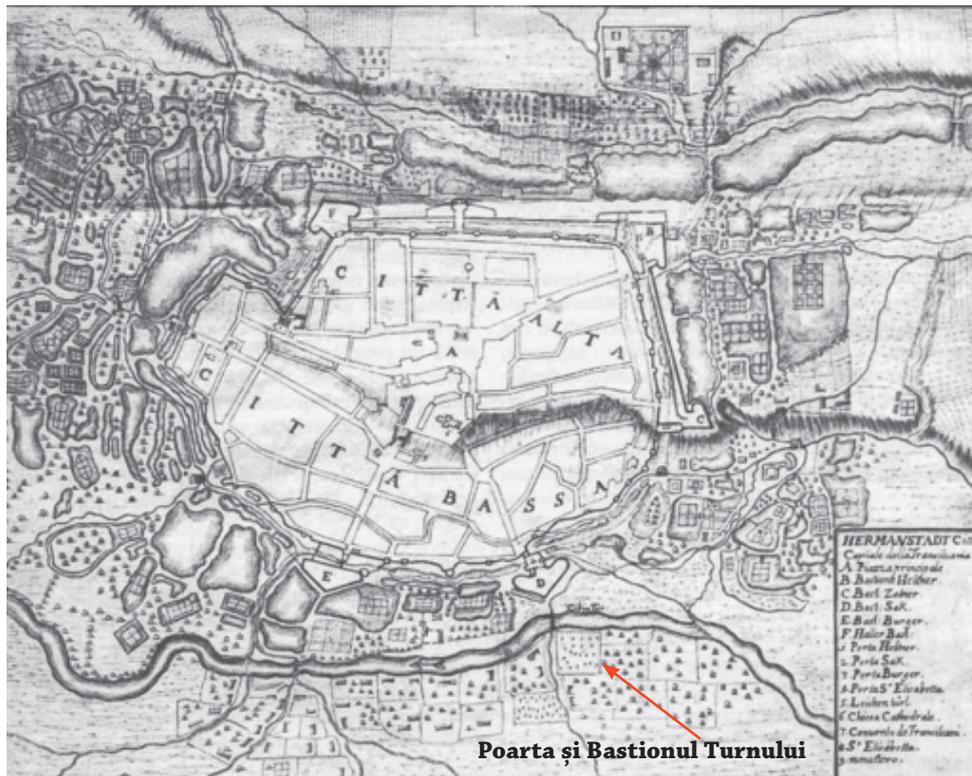


Fig. 1. Ground plan of the city as seen from the north-west in Giovanni Morando Visconti's *Mapa della Transilvania* (1699) (taken from Avram, Bucur 1999).

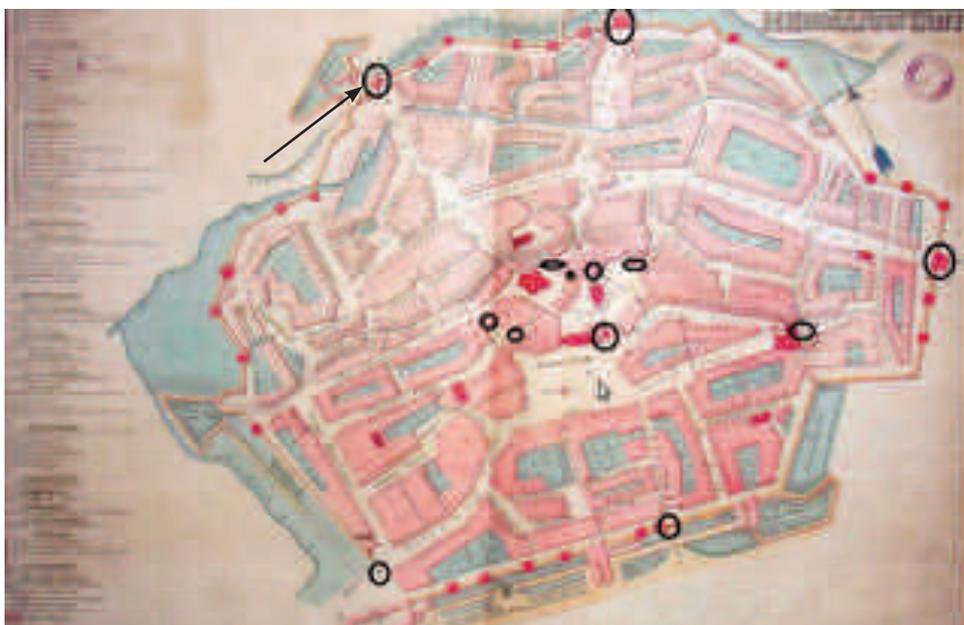


Fig. 2. Location of the Tower Gate and Gate's Bastion on the ground plan of the fortifications performed during the 19th Century.

Still, with the beginning of the 15th Century, aided by the coffers of the Transylvanian voivode and especially those of the king of Hungary, the building of the fortification was rushed and soon, a significant number of the city's populace could be sheltered against danger in case an enemy army was to halt under the city walls.

This fortification added three new gates that channelled the flux towards three roads: *Elisabeth Gate* connected Sibiu to the road leading towards Braşov and Sighişoara, *Ocnei Gate* led towards Tg. Mureş and Cluj, while the *Tower Gate* led towards Alba Iulia (Fig. 2).

The Tower Gate and Gate's Bastion

The Tower Gate (Fig. 3) connected the fortification from the Stairs Tower, over a wooden footbridge and then, along Turnişorului Road, with Miercurea Sibiului, Sebeş and Alba Iulia. It was completed in 1457, when written documents record the fact that the Tailors' Guild was appointed to maintain and defend the gate⁵. The choice proved very inspired, as attested by another document, dated 1556⁶, that mentions the fact that the gate would continue under the administration of the tailors, naming two of the guild's representatives: Michael Hermann and Simon Myles, as captains of this sector.

Initially built as a tower, with a ground floor and three levels, plus the roof framing, the gate had no extra fortification elements precisely since no major threat came from that area. Nevertheless, a bastion was added in 1569. The construction of the bastion has been attributed to master Blasius Rhaw, to whom the Magistrate paid, between March 11th and August 15th 1569, the sum of 1300 florins in several instalments⁷ (Fig. 4).



Fig. 3. The Tower Gate besides the Bastion on the depiction dated around 1780.

The first major attack upon the gate took place during Gyorgy Rákóczy II's siege of 1660. The documents mention that most of the fighting took place before Ocnei and Tower gates⁸ (Fig. 5). After that the existence of the gate was peaceful until 1852⁹ when the Magistrate decided to demolish the Bastion. The gate was most likely demolished during the 1870s, alongside the other fortifications of the Lower City, in order to open the medieval fortification and to allow better communication with the other neighbourhoods.

⁵ Sigerus 2011, 13.

⁶ Abrudan, Sontag 1974–1975, 127.

⁷ Abrudan, Sontag 1974–1975, 126 cf ***Arhive, 184.

⁸ Sigerus 2011, 24.

⁹ Sigerus 2011, 50.



Fig. 5. The Tower Gate – seen from the inside and from the outside (aquarelle by J. Böbel – 19th Century).

Buildings for the use of the imperial armies were later erected in the area of these demolished fortifications, as in the case of the Hanved barracks that was completed in 1897¹⁰.

Despite the fact that both the gate and the bastion were dismantled, they remained in collective memory and the medieval names of the area were preserved, as one can note in 1878 when the vicinity of the Sagtor Gate was mentioned, including eight streets¹¹.

The preventive archaeological researches

In this context, the excavations performed between December 2012 and September 2013 in the Lower City – *Tower Street* (Pl. 2), city of Sibiu, aimed at documenting all evidence of these two large architectural edifices of special historical importance that have been disturbed and partially destroyed by contemporary works.

The Tower Gate

The Tower Gate is located in the end of Tower Street, at the entrance into the parking lot in front of the current Pim factory. The gate was included in the fourth fortified precinct, built during the 15th Century. Just like the other gates of that precinct, it was used as access gate into Sibiu for more than 200 years, connecting it to the roads coming from Alba Iulia and Cluj.

Grid cell 2 (Fig. 6) allowed the research of the NE corner of the tower and of part of the wall of the fourth precinct of the city. The tower has a foundation measuring 1.50 m, made of quarry stone mixed with mortar that supported the base of the tower that measures 1.05 m in length and is made of cut quarry blocks followed by bricks placed in five or six rows. The wall of the Tower Gate, made of bricks connected with mortar, raised on top of this base. Attached to the tower we have also identified one fragment of the access gate wall, allowing a way into the precinct. It measured 1.20 m in width, was identified down to a depth of – 1.45m, and was built in an identical manner to the gate wall (Fig. 7).

¹⁰ Sigerus 2011, 63.

¹¹ Hochmesiter 2006, 114.



Fig. 6. Structure of the Tower Gate foundation.

The same construction method can be encountered in the case of the Elisabeth Gate, where one can observe the massive structure consisting of stone blocks connected with mortar¹².



Fig. 7. Corner of the Gate's foundation near the entrance wall.

The uncovering of the carriageway for modernizing works has allowed for archaeologists to clear a wider area of the wall of the Tower Gate, **Z 05** (Fig. 8), located along the current route of the street (Fig. 9); this makes us hypothesize that the tower of the Saag Gate was located on the current route of the street and that access to the city was possible through the present-day parking lot of the PIM company.

As for the configuration of the tower's wall, the latter was oriented E-W, was made of stone and brick connected with mortar (Fig. 10), and the eastern end displays a continuation performed in a very different manner, out of just stones connected with mortar. The analysis and comparison of the two

¹² Luca *et al.* 2007 b, 315.

construction methods led to the conclusion that there were two building stages (Fig. 11), one medieval and the other modern. The same manner of positioning of the gate, out of the normal axis of the fortification wall, can also be noted in the case of the other preventive researches performed on Cîsnădiei Gate¹³ and Elisabeth Gate¹⁴.



Fig. 8. Alignment of the Tower Gate.

In order to verify the hypothesis related to the existence of two construction stages of the Tower Gate, a grid cell was opened in the southern part of the discovered walls, i.e. **C 5** (Fig. 12), measuring 1.5 m × 1.8 m. The emptying of the cell has revealed a succession of filling layers (lenses of sand and pebbles mixed with bricks, succeeded by layers of black soil, rarely including animal bone fragments). The south-eastern part the stratigraphy has been destroyed by the sewerage system, by water pipes, and by those of the E-on Gaz. In fact, as one will note in the case of the other archaeological researches performed in the close proximity or inside the planimetry of the Bastion, the archaeological material is missing in its great majority; the only elements of material culture that can be retrieved are late modern pottery fragments and contemporary construction materials. All these observations make us state that the existence of medieval materials is almost impossible, taking into consideration the frequent utility works performed in the area under discussion. At the same time, the location of these objectives on a commercial road, as entry gate into the fortification, is one further argument, and the performed works have decisively contributed to the situation described above. When the removal of the old asphalt layer in the pedestrian area was decided, for the remaking of the curbs and the rehabilitation of the area, it was deemed necessary to verify the situation noted so far through the opening of a grid cell (Fig. 13) that could confirm the trajectory of the Tower Gate and that would identify its medieval phase.

The trench was located in the proximity of the wall identified during the previous winter (**Grid cell 2**). As in the previously encountered situations, the entire surface was strongly disturbed by utility works performed over the past century. Even so, we were able to note the existence of several ground levels (Fig. 14); one that seems to be medieval is superposed by a division wall placed somewhat obliquely.

As for the rest, the research of the grid cell has revealed the existence of several walls, the trajectory of which indicates the fact that they were not constructed during a single stage; the way in which they are built and their thickness supports the idea that they functioned as division walls.

¹³ Luca *et al.* 2007a, 331.

¹⁴ Luca *et al.* 2007b, 315.



Fig. 13. Grid cell C06 – The Tower's Gate.

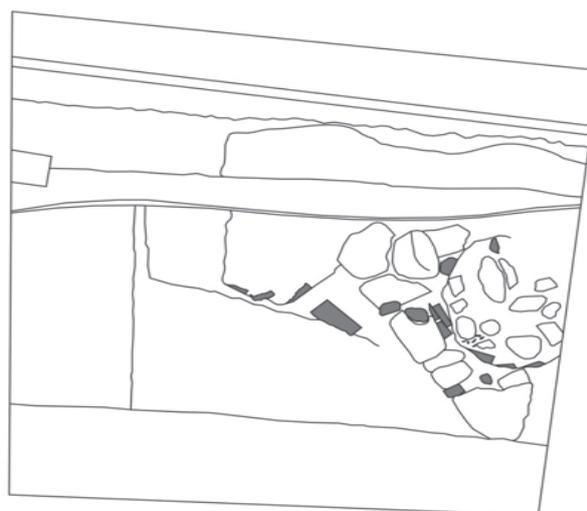


Fig. 14. Ground plan of grid cell C06 – the Tower Gate.

The Tower Bastion has been the object of several partial preventive archaeological researches triggered by several infrastructure works in the area. Thus, between 2003 –2005, during works for the construction of a hall for meat and dairy products the foundations on the south-western part of the heart-shaped bastion that defended one of the entry gates into the Lower City was discovered. A series of test trenches were performed in 2006, during works for the modernization of Cibirg Square.

During the current research, the trajectory of the wall and those of other compartmenting walls were discovered and researched through several grill cells.

Grid cell 1 (Fig. 15) has identified part of the Tower Bastion wall on the occasion of the introduction of the sewerage network. The wall was identified transversally inside the grid cell, down to the depth of –3.60 m; it measured 2.90 m. in width. Its one-meter foundation is entirely made of quarry stone mixed with river stone connected with mortar, placed on a layer of black soil on top of which one can note a layer of pebble and sand. The wall is made of stone and brick, connected with mortar. The stratigraphy inside this cell indicates, at 0.40 m, a layer of asphalt and sand, followed by a layer of debris mixed with soil that ends at 0.94 m, where the bastion wall starts (Fig. 16).



Fig. 15 Detail of the foundation.



Fig. 16.

Grid cell 3.

Grid cell 3 (Fig. 17, 18, 19, 20) was performed on the carriageway, at the intersection of Tower Street and Cibin Square, running across it. The wall and the foundation have been destroyed by the utility works performed in the second half of the 20th Century, most probably before 1989. The research has revealed that the wall is oriented NW – SE, measures 80 cm in width, as wide as the trench. The length is of 3.90 m.; the upper part is made of brick, 0.50 m is part of the Bastion wall and the remaining 0.80 cm down to the depth of – 1.30 m is made of river stone mixed with quarry stone, connected with mortar. The stratigraphy of the grid cell can be thus described: one layer of asphalt, of 0.20 cm, followed by a layer of sand mixed with pebble (0.20 – 0.48 cm), and a yellowish-brown layer of sandy clay (0.48 – 0.73 cm). The subsequent layer consists of debris and it descends to –2.50, ending in the ground water.



Fig. 17.



Fig. 18.



Fig. 19.



Fig. 20.

Grid cell 4.

Grid cell 4 (Fig. 21, 22, 23, 24) was performed on the occasion of the works on the upper part of a wall that seems to be, most probably, a compartmenting wall; its position is somewhat perpendicular to that of the Bastion wall analyzed in the third grid cell described above. With a width of 1 m, the cell measures 6 m in length; the sole of the foundation wall was uncovered at -2.80 m. The wall is made of bricks connected with mortar and the foundation consists of river and quarry stones mixed with fragments of bricks and connected with mortar.



Fig. 21



Fig. 22



Fig. 23



Fig. 24

Grid cell 6

Grid cell 6 (Fig. 25, 27, 28) was opened in parallel to grid cell no. 3 and was determined by the creation of the sewerage network. The wall of the Tower Bastion was uncovered over a surface measuring 9.20 m in length and 1 m in width. The wall was uncovered down to the depth of 2.55 m (Fig. 26), with one of the outer sides plastered with mortar. The wall descends to -2.30 m and is made of bricks connected with mortar, followed by a foundation of river stones mixed with bricks and connected with mortar¹⁵.



Fig. 25.



Fig. 26.

¹⁵ It is important to mention the fact that all the preventive archaeological researchers that were performed on that occasion could only be made in those parts of the street that could be excavated to greater depth, to allow the introduction or change of utility network routes.



Fig. 27.



Fig. 28.

During the final stage of the works performed on the carriageway corresponding to Cibin Square, we have eliminated the layer of asphalt in order to allow for the final infrastructure works and for the setting the final layer of asphalt. On that occasion we could uncover a significant part of what was the compartmenting part of the Tower Bastion (Fig. 29).



Fig. 29. General image of a part of the walls of the Tower Gate Bastion.

For a better chronological identification, two grid cells were opened on two of the wall's sides (grid cells 8 and 9), measuring 2×2 m, located in the SE and the NW corners.

Grid cell 8 (Fig. 30) has led to the identification of some of the compartmenting walls of the Tower Gate Bastion. The grid cell was researched down to the depth – 2.60 m (Fig. 31) and it captured the structure of the wall down to the foundation sole. One can note that the wall is entirely made of bricks placed on top of a cut limestone block and that the foundation is completely made of river boulders, connected with mortar (Fig. 32).



Fig. 30. Grid cell 8.



Fig. 31. Structure of the wall.



Fig. 32. The NW profile.

Grid cell 9 – was located in the NW part of the wall (Fig. 33), having the same dimensions. As in the previous case, one can note the same structure of the layers (Fig. 34); we should observe the fact that the numerous works performed in the area have disturbed the original situation and that, in fact, like in the case of the Tower Gate, the stratigraphy fails to provide data on the historical context of the period when the two structures were built.



Fig. 33. Stratigraphy of the northern profile.



Fig. 34. The structure of the compartmenting wall – C09.

Conclusions

The preventive researches triggered by the infrastructure works performed on Tower Street in Sibiu have allowed us to identify some of the elements of fortification of the Lower City, i.e. the Tower Gate and Gate's Bastion. On that occasion we were able to locate them correctly, as one knows of the previous general discussions on the issue. Unfortunately, the short time and the conditions imposed by the constructor, i.e. to locate and research the discovered elements only during the infrastructure works, have not allowed for the identification of the entire archaeological context of these objectives. Also, the successive interventions caused by the introduction of the various utility networks, especially during the first part of the 20th Century, have led to the destruction of some important parts of the objectives; the medieval context was destroyed to a proportion of 90% and it was impossible to recover archaeological materials.

Nevertheless, the researchers performed on this occasion have allowed for the completion of data on the defensive system of late medieval and early modern Sibiu.

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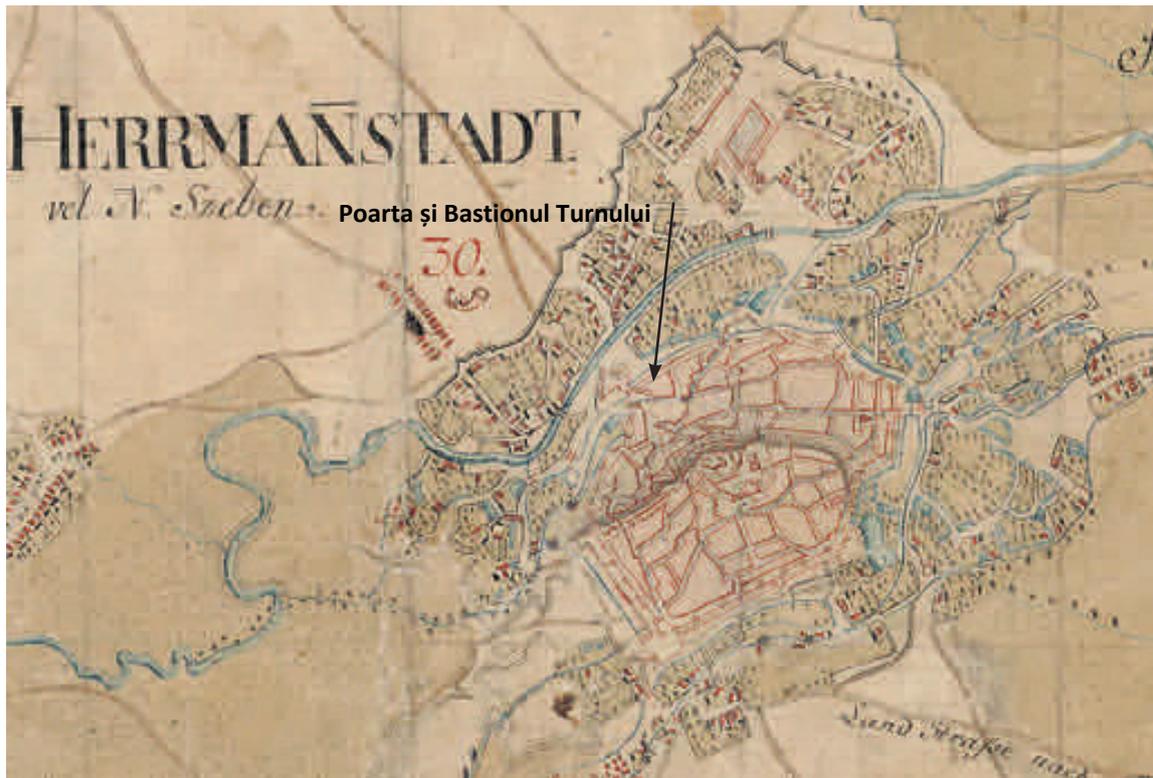
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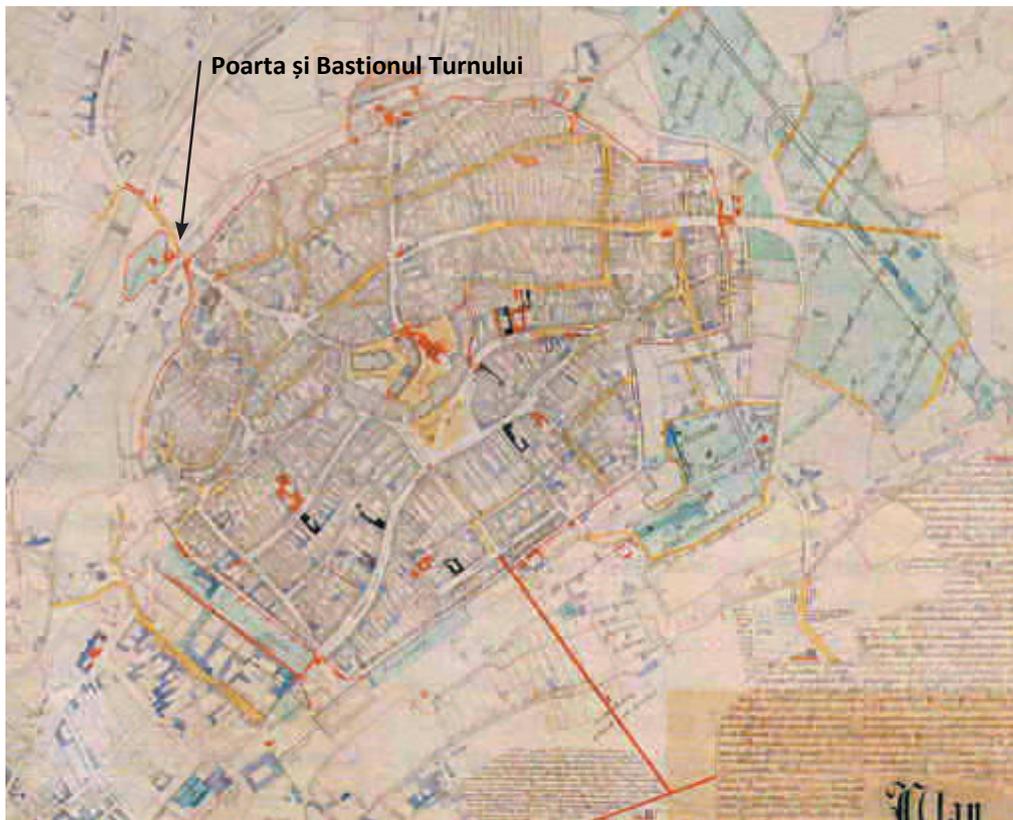
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1.



2.

Plate 1. 1. Location of the Tower Gate and Gate's Bastion of the Josephine topographical survey; 2. City ground plan – 1875, aquarelle by Johann Böbel.

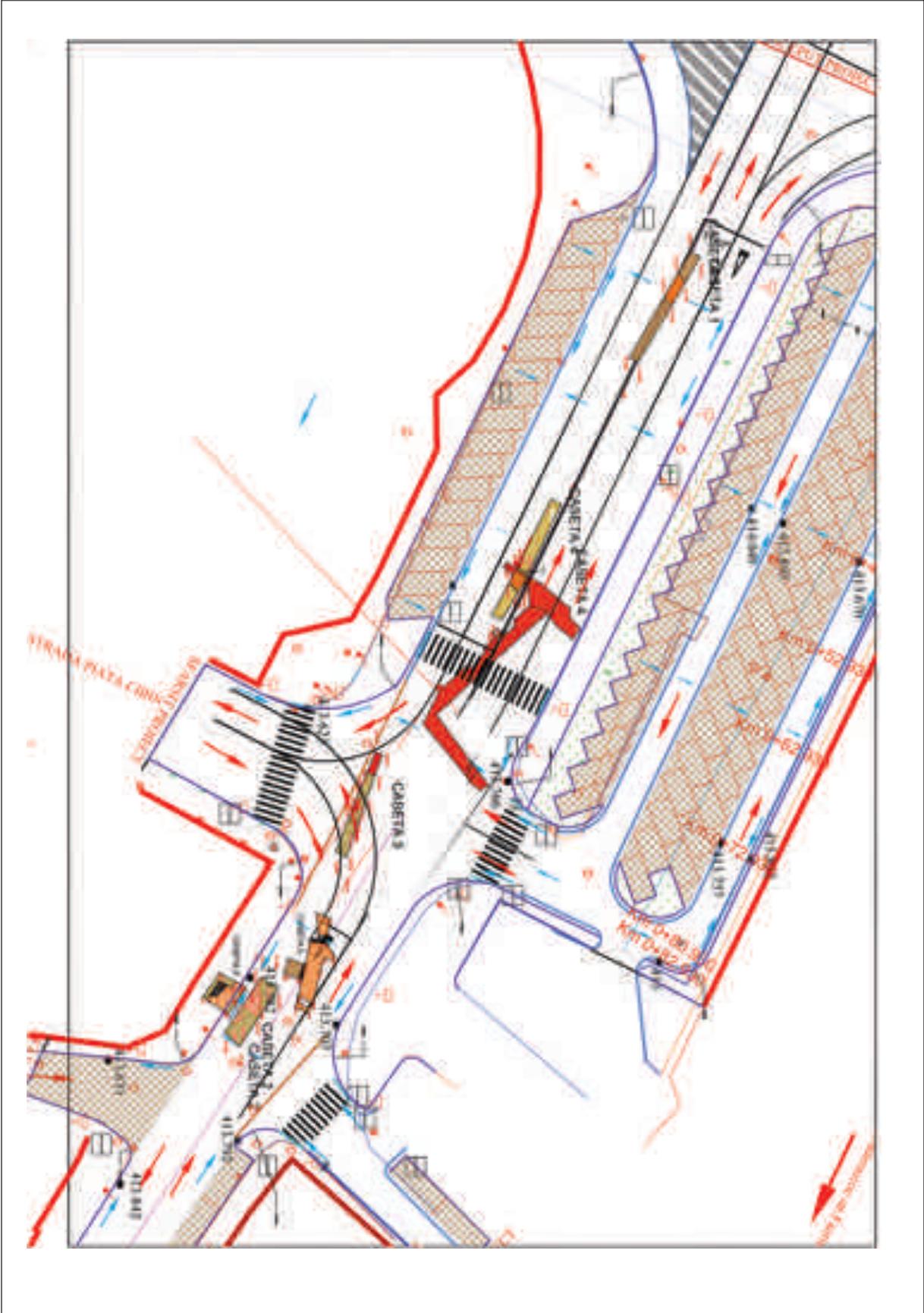


Plate 2. Location of the grid cells opened during the archaeological researches performed in 2012 and 2013, according to the topographic surveys.

Abbreviations

ActaArchHung	Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae. Budapest.
ActaHist	Acta Historica. Szeged.
Acta Siculica	Acta Siculica. Sfântu Gheorghe.
Aluta	Aluta. Revista Muzeului Național Secuiesc Sfântu Gheorghe.
Alba Regia	Alba Regia. Annales Musei Stephani Regis. Székesfehérvár.
AMN	Acta Musei Napocensis. Cluj-Napoca.
AMP	Acta Musei Porolissensis. Muzeul Județean de Istorie și Artă Zalău. Zalău.
ATS	Acta Terrae Septemcastrensis. Sibiu.
AISC	Anuarul Institutului de studii clasice Cluj Napoca. Cluj-Napoca.
AnB S.N.	Analele Banatului – serie nouă. Timișoara.
Apulum	Apulum. Alba-Iulia.
AÉ	Archaeologiai Értesítő. Budapest.
Areopolisz	Areopolisz. Történelmi- és társadalomtudományi tanulmányok Odorheiu Secuiesc / Székelyudvarhely.
ArhMed	Arheologia Medievală. Iași.
ArchRozhl	Archeologické Rozhledy. Praga.
ArhVest	Arheološki Vestnik. Ljubljana.
Banatica	Banatica. Muzeul Banatului Montan. Reșița.
BHAUT	Bibliotheca Historica et Archaeologica Universitatis Timisiensis.
BAR International Series	British Archaeological Reports, International Series. Oxford.
BAM	Brukenthal Acta Musei. Sibiu.
BMMK	A Békés Megyei múzeumok közleményei, Békéscsába.
CAH	Communicationes Archaeologicae Hungariae. Budapest.
Cerc. Arh.	Cercetări Arheologice. București.
CIL	Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum.
CIMRM	Corpus Inscriptionum et Monumentorum Religionis Mithriacae.
CCA	Cronica Cercetărilor arheologice din România. București.
Crisia	Crisia, Muzeul Țării Crișurilor. Oradea.
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DissArch	Dissertationis Archaeologicae (Budapest).
Dolg	Dolgozatok. Szeged.
EphNap	Ephemeris Napocensis. Cluj-Napoca.
EL	Erdővidéki Lapok. Barót/Baraolt.
EM	Erdélyi Múzeum. Kolozsvár/Cluj-Napoca.
Isis	Isis. Erdélyi Magyar Restaurátor Füzetek. Cluj-Napoca / Kolozsvár.
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MCA	Materiale și Cercetări Arheologice. București.

MFMÉ StudArch	A Móra Ferenc Múzeum Évkönyve. <i>Studia Archaeologica</i> . Szeged.
MFMÉ MonArch	A Móra Ferenc Múzeum Évkönyve. <i>Monumenta Archeologica</i> . Szeged.
OpArch	<i>Opuscula Archaeologica</i> . Zagreb.
OpHung	<i>Opuscula Hungarica</i> . Budapest.
Pontica	<i>Pontica</i> , Constanța.
PZ	<i>Prähistorische Zeitschrift</i> . Berlin.
RMM-MIA	<i>Revista Muzeelor și Monumentelor – seria Monumente Istorice și de Artă</i> . București.
Sargeția NS	<i>Sargeția NS. Deva</i> .
SlovArch	<i>Slovenská Archeológia. Nitra</i> .
Soproni Szemle	<i>Soproni Szemle kulturtörténeti folyóirat</i> . Sopron.
StudCom	<i>Studia Comitatus</i> . Tanulmányok Pest megye múzeumaiból. Szentendre.
ŠtudZvesti	<i>Študijne Zvesti Arheologického Ústavu Slovenskej Akademie Vied</i> . Nitra.
Stud. și Cerc. Num.	<i>Studii și Cercetări de Istorie Veche și Arheologie</i> . București.
SCIVA	<i>Studii și Cercetări de Istorie Veche (și Arheologie)</i> . București.
StComSatuMare	<i>Studii și Comunicări. Satu Mare</i> .
Thrac-Dacica	<i>Thrac-Dacica</i> . București.
VMMK	<i>A Veszprém megyei Múzeumok Közleményei. Veszprém</i> .
VTT	<i>Veszprémi Történelmi Tár. Veszprém</i> .
Ziridava	<i>Ziridava, Complexul Muzeal Arad. Arad</i> .