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STUDIA ARCHAEOLOGICA

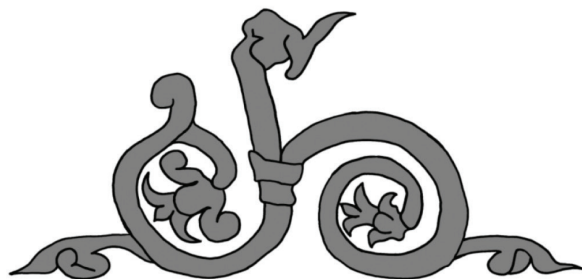
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# Contributions to the Medieval Ecclesiastic Geography of Arad County. State of Research<sup>\*</sup>

Florin Mărginean

**Abstract:** The article aims at being a contribution to the stage of research regarding the medieval ecclesiastic geography of the county of Arad. My approach shall be limited to a series of relatively recent discoveries, the result of classical field researches, the research of the written sources, geo-referencing the data, scanning the sites through non-intrusive methods, but also checking local oral sources. These discoveries continue and complete a rich repertory of medieval ecclesiastic monuments that are already known in specialized literature. Even though specialists have not shown a constant interest in such monuments, antecedents of their researches date to the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the historiography regarding the repertory of churches and monasteries has gradually increased. Archaeology played an important role in this, as through specific methods it managed, especially over the last decades, to bring to light new data regarding medieval ecclesiastic edifices. The level reached by archaeological researches or by the non-intrusive field evaluation researches remains nevertheless modest, as compared to the total number of such repertoried sites; I shall attempt to show this through a simple statistical analysis.

**Keywords:** ecclesiastical geography, churches, monasteries, Middle Ages, Arad County.

**Brief history of research.** Ever since the 19<sup>th</sup> century people showed an interest in medieval ecclesiastic geography in the area of Arad due to the significance and great number of monuments built in this region ever since the dawn of the Middle Ages. Historiographically speaking, the beginnings are marked by the contributions of Gábor Fábíán<sup>1</sup> and Sándor Márki<sup>2</sup> that the majority of researchers of the topic turn to until today. In the present study I shall only briefly mention the research antecedents of the envisaged area, as there are ampler synthesis works focusing on the topic<sup>3</sup>. I hope that through the newly identified sites I can contribute to the repertory of already known medieval ecclesiastic monuments in a territory once included in the dioceses of Cenad and Eger, today inside the administrative borders of the county of Arad.

Unfortunately, until relatively recently the archaeological research of such monuments did not go beyond the stage of trial excavations. Most often archaeological researches were not part of coherent projects and were thus not published in an appropriate manner. My statistical analysis is suggestive if compared with the data regarding the inventory of the ecclesiastic edifices that once populated the medieval landscape of the area under discussion, reconstructed either through the preserved written sources or through the results of field researches. Except for a relatively short period in the very first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, systematic archaeological researches of medieval ecclesiastic edifices were limited timewise. Such researches were often performed part of restoration programs<sup>4</sup> or due to the fact that the main focus was on sites from other eras that had been overlapped by medieval monuments<sup>5</sup>.

For the area of Arad, the Romantic and Positivist periods were marked by the pseudo-researches

<sup>\*</sup> English translation: Ana M. Gruia. The present article is the modified and completed variant of a presentation delivered during the conference – *Arhitectura religioasă medievală din Transilvania (Medieval religious architecture in Transylvania)*. The 8<sup>th</sup> Edition, Satu Mare 2013.

<sup>1</sup> Fábíán 1834.

<sup>2</sup> Márki 1892.

<sup>3</sup> Rusu, Hurezan 2000, 7–54; Koszta 2000, 41–80; Vesa 2000, 4–12; Heitel 2010.

<sup>4</sup> This was the case in the 1970s and 1980s when a series of reused medieval monuments were selected for restoration, such as the monasteries of Hodoș-Bodrog and Bezdin, and the old churches in Hălmagiu and Dezna. From a more recent period one should mention the preventive archaeological researches performed on the currently Reformed church in Iermata Neagră (v. Mărginean *et al.* 2014, 137–150).

<sup>5</sup> One could include here the sites in Cladova or Vărădia de Mureș, where village churches were localized, but also of the site in Bulci where a medieval monastery was in fact identified on the site of a presumed Roman burgus.

in Pâncota “Cetatea Turcească”<sup>6</sup>, Bulci “La Mănăstire”<sup>7</sup> and those connected to the uncovering of the chapel inside the fortification of Șoimoș<sup>8</sup>; the subsequent period was less prolific from the perspective of the archaeological research of the ecclesiastic edifices and nothing notable can be mentioned under this respect until the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. From a historiographic perspective one cannot nevertheless overlook several contributions connected to the ecclesiastic landscape of Arad<sup>9</sup>. Subsequently, based on the existing documentary and historiographic accumulations but without using applied researches or new approaches, the synthesis works signed by V. Vătășianu<sup>10</sup> and R. Teodorescu<sup>11</sup> left a strong mark on those who have approached the topic under discussion. G. Lanevschi<sup>12</sup>, E. Gluck<sup>13</sup> and H. Medeleanu<sup>14</sup> gradually published a number of works, referring strictly to the area of Arad, but they did not go beyond the era’s stereotypes. R. Popa also had an impact over the area of Arad through his archaeological researches, such as the ones in Hălmașiu, and through his historiographic contributions. Nevertheless, the deadlock imposed by Communist censorship could not be overcome. After the 1989 Revolution, priest P. Vesa’s synthesis works brought a fresh perspective and a much more applied approach, having a major contribution to the knowledge of ecclesiastic patrimony, though his major focus was on the periods subsequent to the medieval one.

E. Dörner was the first archaeologist from Arad who attempted to analyze the ruins from Vladimirescu both from a historical and historiographic perspective and starting from what has been preserved on site. This was probably the preamble of the first archaeological researches performed in Vladimirescu almost half a century ago<sup>15</sup>. The period of the 1970s–1980s saw the start of researches that have taken out of anonymity or have contributed to the better knowledge of certain medieval ecclesiastic monuments (among which one can mention Cladova<sup>16</sup>, Vărădia

<sup>6</sup> Heitel 2006; Heitel 2010, 113–158.

<sup>7</sup> I mainly envisage Fl. Romer who researched the area of the ruins in 1868.

<sup>8</sup> Rusu, Hurezan 2000, 138–139; Feld 2000, 585–592; Lupescu 2010, 856–857, fig. 46–47.

<sup>9</sup> Juhász 1927; Dragomir 1920; Lupșa 1929; Ciuhandu 2005 (reedited).

<sup>10</sup> Vătășianu 1966.

<sup>11</sup> Teodorescu 1974.

<sup>12</sup> Lanevschi 1979.

<sup>13</sup> Glück 1985.

<sup>14</sup> Medeleanu 1986.

<sup>15</sup> Very few written mentions have been preserved regarding the old provostry. Two sketched plans, one made by Pál Molnár in 1873 and the other, better known, created by Sándor Márki in 1882 are insufficient to recreate the planimetry of the entire ecclesiastic complex the ruins of which are still visible in the center of the present-day municipality of Vladimirescu. The systematic archaeological researches performed in 1969–70 and 1983–1984 by a team consisting of M. Barbu, M. Zdroba, and G. P. Hurezan have only envisaged the inner area of the church and very little of the area outside it. Even if only three sections were excavated, the results proved interesting regarding both the monument’s planimetry and its development. Unfortunately the obtained results were only partially published and did not bring a major contribution to the knowledge of the complex. The presentation in the volume entitled *Biserici medievale din județul Arad* [Medieval Churches in the County of Arad] (authors A. A. Rusu, G. P. Hurezan) was unable to go beyond the standstill of the lack of wider systematic researches. Nevertheless, the observations made on that occasion, much more clearly presented and systematized, have allowed for the identification of an earlier phase on the church, smaller and practically included in the western half of the church erected in the first half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, based on the analysis of the general excavation ground plan. T. O. Gheorghiu was also interested in the ruins from Vladimirescu, but he brought no new contributions to the already available data. An analysis performed by the late Suzana Heitel reveals slightly more nuanced perspectives on certain planimetric details as compared to the previous considerations, using especially the information provided by the written sources.

<sup>16</sup> The existence of ruins in Cladova on “Dealul Carierei” has already been signaled by the Hungarian historians of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. M. Moga has coordinated the first archaeological trial excavations in 1966 and R. Păiușan performed subsequent ones in 1970. The results have remained unpublished and the technical documentation has been lost in time. In 1976 V. Boroneanț initiated the systematic research of the site. The researches continued there with small interruptions until 2003; G. P. Hurezan, P. Hügel, S. Oța, F. Mărginean have subsequently completed the research team. As this is a complex site, with several levels of habitation, only certain data from various historical periods have been published in wider reports, articles, and studies. Unfortunately, discoveries dated to the Medieval Period of the village church discovered there have not yet been entirely processed and published, but the team hopes to complete the task in the near future. In the same context one can also mention the 1955 discoveries made on the spot called “Biserica din vale”. During a single archaeological campaign, the same team that also excavated on “Dealul Carierei”, managed through a single section to delimitate the foundations of a building oriented west-east, measuring 20.75 m in length. 14 graves were researched inside. The attribution and location here of the Pauline monastery mentioned by the written sources ever since the end

de Mureș<sup>17</sup>, Bulci<sup>18</sup>, and Frumușeni<sup>19</sup> along the lower course of River Mureș, or Hălmagiu<sup>20</sup> and Dezna<sup>21</sup> in the valley of River Crișul Alb). The majority are known either from brief reports and articles published after they have been researched or from recent studies that reevaluated some of the monuments. In the case of some of them one should mention the fact that the archaeological excavations were not due to targeted projects that envisaged them from the beginning, but were discovered during campaigns that have focused on other historical eras (the case of Cladova might be the most relevant to this, but Vărădia de Mureș and Bulci also fall in the same category). From the perspective of scientific valorization, this had a rather negative impact.

The situation did not change radically after 1989 and the only 1990s researches worth mentioning are those performed by R. Heitel and S. Móré Heitel<sup>22</sup> in Semic “Hăblău”, where they located *Ahtumonostor* (Ahtum’s Monastery). Even if the research only consisted of two archaeological campaigns, one can state that the discoveries have taken the old medieval monastery out of anonymity. The recorded contexts have revealed the presence of wall foundation lines where architectural components were also discovered<sup>23</sup>. The only grave discovered during the two campaigns not only had a rich inventory<sup>24</sup> but it also preserved traces of a coffin, an aspect rather rarely identified in similar sites from the region under discussion<sup>25</sup>.

This research segment was only resuscitated after the publication of volumes and articles on the topic<sup>26</sup>. Besides, this was also the preamble that triggered the start of targeted systematic archaeological researches on a series of objectives of great importance to the history and topography of medieval ecclesiastic topography of the area of Arad and to other areas as well. Once the repertory of the ecclesiastic monuments had been set, the second stage consisted of their archaeological research. One should thus mention the archaeological researches initiated after the year 2000 in Pâncota<sup>27</sup>, Frumușeni<sup>28</sup>,

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of the 13<sup>th</sup> century is worthy of being taken into consideration (v. Rusu, Hurezan 2000, 79–80). The continuation of the researches, even if through non-intrusive methods, might clarify this aspect.

<sup>17</sup> The four archaeological campaigns performed between 1971 and 1974 on the spot called “Cetate” located south-east of the municipality, near the Arad-Deva road, by a team consisting of M. Zdroba and M. Barbu have allowed for the research of a multi-strata site where a consistent medieval layer and an Ottoman layer have been documented. Part of a church surrounded by a cemetery (14<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century), recently republished (v. Mărginean *et al.* 2016) was also uncovered on the central plateau.

<sup>18</sup> During the 1976–1989 period, Șt. Ferenczi and M. Barbu have completed several archaeological campaigns. A general plan sketch preserved in the archive of the Museum Complex in Arad indicates that eight sections and fourth other trenches were opened. They can only be partially identified on site today, as the entire site is covered in thick vegetation. In a future study, that already envisages the publication of all the data preserved in the archive of the museum in Arad, I shall provide more exact data on the discovered archaeological material and the description of all sections opened during the archaeological researches.

<sup>19</sup> In 1981, on the border of the municipality of Frumușeni, on the spot called “Fântâna Turcului”, a team of archaeologists led by M. Rusu in collaboration with M. Barbu and G. P. Hurezan started the first systematic researches at one of the most important Benedictine abbeys in the Lower Mureș Valley. Art historian S. M. Heitel and archaeologist A. A. Rusu share the merit of taking up again the research on the spot of “Fântâna Turcului”, on the basis of data provided by M. Rusu and benefiting from the favorable conjuncture created by George P. Hurezan, director of the museum in Arad at the time. Systematic archaeological researches started exactly two decades later, in the autumn of 2001, on the spot of “Fântâna Turcului”, now “Mănăstirea Bizere” in Frumușeni (see Rusu *et al.* 2002, Hurezan *et al.* 2003, Hurezan *et al.* 2004, Rusu *et al.* 2005, Rusu *et al.* 2006, Rusu *et al.* 2007, Rusu *et al.* 2008, Rusu *et al.* 2009, Rusu *et al.* 2014). Over the ten archaeological campaigns (2001–2009, 2014) they uncovered the vestiges of the old Benedictine abbey of *Bizere*. The architectural components, a very diverse material culture, and the cemetery precinct (with 298 graves) were preserved from the abbey church, besides a large part of a floor mosaic of clear artistic value (see Burnichioiu, Rusu 2006).

<sup>20</sup> Căpățână 1976.

<sup>21</sup> Greceanu, Munteanu-Trucă 1980.

<sup>22</sup> Heitel 2010.

<sup>23</sup> Parts of the foundations of stone constructions are still visible when the level of the Mureș is low in the riverbed, but also in the eroded bank. Because of this, all attempt at researching the monument is futile.

<sup>24</sup> Oța, Comșa 2017, 229–246.

<sup>25</sup> Heitel 2010, 67–68.

<sup>26</sup> Rusu, Hurezan 2000; Vesa 2000; Heitel 2000; Heitel 2001.

<sup>27</sup> The archaeological researches extended over five campaigns and the research team consisted of D. Marcu Istrate, G. P. Hurezan, S. More Heitel, I. F. Pascu, F. Mărginean, C. Neațu, C. Toma, and Zs. Kopeczny. The researches have led to the rediscovery of the church of the medieval monastery identified on the spot called “Cetatea Turcească” and to the uncovering of a rich archaeological material connected to architectural components, elements of material culture, and funerary contexts (see Heitel 2006).

<sup>28</sup> Rusu, Burnichioiu 2011.

Tauț<sup>29</sup> and Bulci<sup>30</sup>. One must also note the completion of preventive researches on monuments that were still in use, such as those in Iermata Neagră<sup>31</sup> and Lipova<sup>32</sup>. The results of several campaigns of archaeological research, valorized through reports or synthesis studies, have opened new perspectives on the medieval ecclesiastic landscape of Arad and have certainly contributed to the knowledge of the other aspects derived from it as well. I envisage mainly the recovery of certain data connected to the architectural dowry of the monuments, but also to the research of cemetery precincts. Analyzed through specific methods, such elements shall contribute to the knowledge of the ecclesiastic edifices.

The economical crisis, but also the context of preventive archaeological researches part of large infrastructure works have stopped, for the moment, such systematic researches. Nevertheless, stray finds or discoveries made during field researches still contribute to the reconstruction of the medieval ecclesiastic landscape of the area of Arad. I shall henceforth attempt to show this by presenting some simple field evaluations, so that the current approach makes strict reference to classical research methods, checking the written sources, geo-referencing the data, scanning the land through non-intrusive methods, but also checking the local oral sources.

In the present study I shall discuss five possible locations of medieval village churches, but also of monasteries only attested so far by the written sources and never identified on site. In the same context I shall try to signal several discoveries made during edilitary works or monument restoration works that somewhat complete the architectural patrimony of the area.

During the period between the Middle Ages and the Modern Period, which coincides in this area with the period of Ottoman rule, most of the ecclesiastic edifices, either simple village churches or monasteries, were abandoned. Once the villages were abandoned, most of the monuments were not only physically destroyed but they were also forgotten. Even if these monuments disappeared in time, after they were abandoned and the remains spoiled of building materials, their exact on-site location is nowadays more difficult to find. For the area under analysis, quite a few of the cases raised problems in the location of the old medieval edifices. The case of the monastery of *Bizere*, initially presumed to have stood on the spot of the old medieval chapter house of *Orod*, is the most relevant case, and the confusion persisted for more than half a century.

I shall attempt to present below several such monuments on the location of which only imprecise data have been available so far. It is the case of two monasteries that were in use in or were strongly connected to the settlement of Ineu, and several possible locations of village churches.

**Monasteries.** As a sub-discipline of ecclesiastic history, monasteriology has attracted the interest of specialists due to the diversity of approaches that can open from the research of one of the most important medieval ecclesiastic institutions. Considered a special field of study, with antecedents ever since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, monasteriology was more clearly defined starting with the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>33</sup>. As for the Romanian historiography, interest in the research of medieval monasteries was not constant, at least not until the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>34</sup>. Related to our area of interest, one can state that notable progress in the archaeological research of certain objectives was only recorded in the final three decades of the century.

Today one knows that a significant number of medieval monasteries functioned on the current territory of the county of Arad (Fig. 1 with the annexed table), repertoried and analyzed in several

<sup>29</sup> Mărginean 2007, 95–114; Mărginean, Rusu 2010, 893–914; Sarkadi 2010, 915–934.

<sup>30</sup> There was a plan to take up the research again in 2005, but a single campaign of archaeological excavations was performed by a team consisting of P. Hügel, G. P. Hurezan, F. Mărginean, Zs. Kopeczny and D. Țicu (see Hügel *et al.* 2006, 108–109). A single section, opened in the NWW part of the earthen precinct, has led to the discovery of the remains of a brick pavement, several triangular floor tiles made of white marble, elements of material culture elements, and three graves.

<sup>31</sup> Mărginean *et al.* 2014, 137–150. Another archaeological campaign was performed in 2016; the team, that included F. Mărginean, T. Emödi, B. Burkhardt, and Eszter Bedő, has investigated the inner area of the present-day church. The team was thus able to observe two phases in the construction of the medieval church, the first attributed to the Romanesque, with a semicircular altar, subsequently overlapped by the Gothic phase reconstruction, with a polygonal altar.

<sup>32</sup> Unfortunately, the results of the researches performed in 2018 at the Orthodox church in Lipova did not manage to bring much clarification to the planimetry and chronology of the monument *per se*, as the research discretely “avoided” this very aspect (see Gindele *et al.* 2018).

<sup>33</sup> Romhányi 1999, 9.

<sup>34</sup> Rusu *et al.* 2000, 5–14.

smaller or larger studies<sup>35</sup>. From a historiographic perspective the data progressively collected ended up forming well-structure databases, but the stage reached by the archaeological research of these monasteries cannot be considered satisfactory. There are several causes for this, but I do not wish to detail them here. The statistic presentation below reflects clearly enough the present state of research and this state shall not be surpassed soon considering the absence of coherent research programs and the too few specialists with an interest in the matter (Fig. 1).

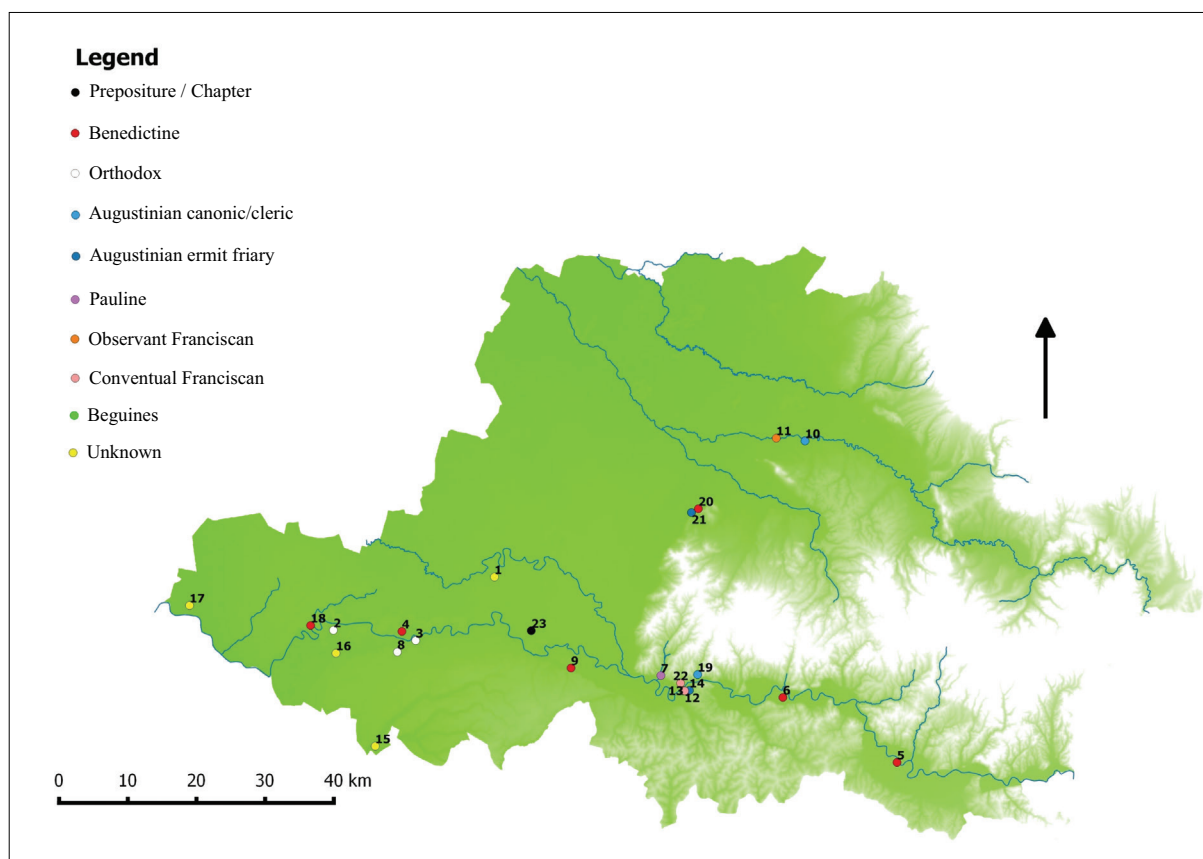


Fig. 1. Map with the geographic distribution of medieval monasteries in the county of Arad. Data regarding the medieval monasteries attested by written sources, archaeological researches, or on-site localizations.

Medieval monasteries from Arad County – attested by the written sources, archaeologically researched or spotted

No. Crt.	Current location	Medieval name	Dedication	Rite / Monastic order	Mentioned in the written sources	Archaeologically researched	Spotted
1	Arad	<i>Gyelid</i>	Unknown	Unknown	1177 – 1233	-	-
2	Bezdin	<i>Bezdin</i>	Presentation of the Virgin / Dormition of the Virgin	Orthodox	1526	1971 R. Heitel	
3	Bodrogu Nou	<i>Hodosbodrog</i>	Dormition of the Virgin	Orthodox	1380–1420	1976/77 L. Munteanu	
4	Bodrogu Vechi	<i>Hudusmonostura</i>	St. Apostle Peter	Benedictine	1177 – 1293	1980 M. Zdroba, M. Barbu	•?
5	Bulci	<i>Buls, Bulch</i>	The Virgin	Benedictine	1225 – 1542	1976–1989, 2005 Ş. Ferenczi, M. Barbu, G. P. Hurezan, D. Ţeicu, F. Mărginean, Zs. Kopeczny	

<sup>35</sup> Karácsony 1905; Juhász 1927; Lupşa 1929; Dávid 1974; Romhányi 2000; Koszta 2000; Rusu, Hurezan 2000; Rusu *et al.* 2000; Heitel 2001; Hervay 2001; Ţeicu 2007; Heitel 2010.

No. Crt.	Current location	Medieval name	Dedication	Rite / Monastic order	Mentioned in the written sources	Archaeologically researched	Spotted
6	Chelmac	<i>Eperies, Eperyes</i>	Unknown	Benedictine	1177 – 1230	-	-
7	Cladova	<i>Kalodva</i>	In honor of the Virgin Mary	Pauline	1272–1290, 1541	1995 G. P. Hurezan, P. Hügel	?
8	Felnac	<i>Fellak</i>	St. Nicholas	Orthodox	15 <sup>th</sup> c.?	-	-
9	Frumușeni	<i>Bizere</i>	Virgin Mary	Benedictine	1183 – ca.1522	1981, 2001–2009, 2014 A. A. Rusu, G. P. Hurezan, P. Hügel, F. Mărginean, Zs. Kopeczny, I. Burnichioiu, O. Toda	
10	Ineu	<i>Dienesmonos-tor</i>	Holy Ghost	Augustinian canonic/cleric	1199–1502	-	F. Mărginean
11	Ineu	<i>Jenő</i>	Virgin Mary	Observant Franciscan	1387–1395, 1415	-	•?
12	Lipova	<i>Lippa</i>	St. Louis of Toulouse	Conventual Franciscan / Observant Franciscan	1325, 1492, 1551–1552	-	•
13	Lipova	<i>Lippa</i>	St. Elisabeth chapel	Beguines	1531	-	-
14	Lipova	<i>Lippa</i>	Unknown	Augustinian canonic/cleric	15 <sup>th</sup> c.		
15	Mănăstur	<i>Zákánymonos-tor</i>	Unknown	Unknown	15 <sup>th</sup> c.	-	F. Mărginean, V. Sava •?
16	Munar / Sânpetru German	<i>Isou?</i>	Unknown	Unknown	1233	-	-
17	Nădlac	<i>Kenezmonos-tor, Kenez</i>	Unknown	Unknown	1192 – 1233	-	S. M. Heitel
18	Semlac	<i>Ahtonmonus-tura</i>	St. John the Baptist	Benedictine	1325 – 1329	1993–1994 R. Heitel, S. M. Heitel	
19	Șoimoș	<i>Solymos</i>	The Virgin	Augustinian ermit friary	13 <sup>th</sup> c, 1542–1551	-	-
20	Pâncota	<i>Pankatha</i>	The Virgin	Benedictine	1177–1565	2000, 2002, 2004–2006 D. M. Istrate, S.M. Heitel, G. P. Hurezan, I. Fodor, F. Mărginean, C. Neațu, C. Toma, Zs. Kopeczny	
21	Pâncota	<i>Pankatha</i>	Unknown	Augustinian ermit friary	1473	-	-
22	Radna	<i>Máriaradna</i>	The Resurrection	Franciscan	1522, 1551	2009 A. A. Rusu	
23	Vladimirescu	<i>Orod</i>	St. Martin	Prepositure / Chapter	1141, 1156–1552	1969/70, 1983/84 M. Zdroba, M. Barbu	

Beyond these aspects, in the present case I shall bring into discussion the situation of two medieval monasteries that were active near or in the present-day settlement of Ineu, located in the basin of River Crișul Alb. Lying in the north-eastern part of the county, one can say that from the perspective



of its importance the area was somewhat peripheral, as compared to the Lower Mureş Basin. Possibly because of this as well, the great majority of the researches envisaged vestiges located along the Lower Mureş Basin, while the basin of River Crişul Alb is almost unknown. Still, at least for the Medieval Period there are a number of objectives that would have deserved more attention.

From an administrative perspective, during the Middle Ages the area under discussion here was included in the county of Zarand, but from an ecclesiastic perspective it belonged to the arch deanery of Pâncota, subordinated to the diocese of Eger<sup>36</sup>.

The early history of Ineu is connected to the edification of Dionisie/Dienes/Dyenus' Monastery (*Dienesmonostora*)<sup>37</sup> north of Crişul Alb; one can add a series of small settlements identified through field walks in its vicinity, some very likely belonging to the monastery (*villa Dienesmonostora*, *villa Monasterii Sancti Dyonisii*)<sup>38</sup>. In this context it is worth mentioning that documents dated to the 12<sup>th</sup> century mention the monastery of *Dienesmonostora*<sup>39</sup>, an important family monastic foundation in the eastern border of Ineu, on the right side of the road leading to Bocsig<sup>40</sup>. Until the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century the monastery was frequently mentioned in the written sources<sup>41</sup>, as it was an important ecclesiastic institution in the era's medieval landscape<sup>42</sup>. The end of the monastery is suggested by the fact that the establishment was in ruins in 1502<sup>43</sup>. This has also contributed to it being spoiled of construction materials used for the edification of the new fortification located in the central part of Ineu. Architectural elements attributed to the Romanesque style were discovered ever since the time of Péter Atzél's repairs, in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but nobody thought they might have originated from this monastery<sup>44</sup>. The fact was confirmed by the wall face researches performed in 2016<sup>45</sup>, that showed that several blocks (column bases, capitals, door and window frames, decorated blocks and even glazed floor tiles etc.) had been massively used in the construction of the SE and NW towers, but also on the western side of the present-day precinct (Fig. 2/g-i)<sup>46</sup>. Some of them can be clearly attributed to the Romanesque style, while others can be dated later and it is not excluded that they originate in the Franciscan Friary that seems to have been destroyed during the Reformation<sup>47</sup>. The mentioned *castrum de Macra* might have been also connected to the area of the monastery<sup>48</sup>. The existence of earthen ramparts around the monastery, suggested by the markings in the third Habsburg military survey on the only plan known from Márki<sup>49</sup>, but also on the current satellite images might be connected to that mention in the written sources (Fig 2/a-f)<sup>50</sup>.

<sup>36</sup> Kovács 1987, 48.

<sup>37</sup> According to some, the origin of the settlement's name is connected to the founder of this monastery (Dyenus) – v. Sorbán 1934, 102. Nevertheless, the issue is far from solved, as other interpretations are possible (see Drăganu 1928, 11–13, 83; Tripa 2007, 15–21), but I choose not to discuss here.

<sup>38</sup> Pottery fragments attributed with certainty to the Arpadian Period were found in several spots in the perimeter of the present-day settlement. I mention those signaled by Mr. Nelu Ursan, to whom I am grateful, on the spot called "Gheţărie" located west of the city, between the road leading to Şicula and Crişul Alb; others were found on a spot east of the city, between the road leading to Tămand and Crişul Alb. I can add several such fragments recovered in "Pusta Bălucana", where I have located the monastery of *Dienesmonostura*. The distribution of the mentioned spots is suggestive for the mobility of habitation areas of the different types of settlements during the Arpadian Period in the area of Ineu.

<sup>39</sup> CD II, 1829, 374–375; MonEcclStrig I, 1874, 160–161; DIR, C, I 1951, 17–18.

<sup>40</sup> Márki 1892, I, 85–86; Heitel 2003, 40.

<sup>41</sup> Heitel 2003, 55; Romhányi 2000, 20.

<sup>42</sup> Koszta 2000, 51–60.

<sup>43</sup> Rusu, Hurezan 2000, 174.

<sup>44</sup> Heitel 2003, 54 (with the indicated comments and literature).

<sup>45</sup> Weisz, Kovács 2016 (manuscript).

<sup>46</sup> Mărginean *et al.* 2017, 243–245.

<sup>47</sup> Rusu, Hurezan 2000, 183.

<sup>48</sup> Rusu, Hurezan 2000, 173–174.

<sup>49</sup> Márki 1895, II, 441–443.

<sup>50</sup> It is worth mentioning in passing that the mention of this *castrum Macra* has caused some confusion among some of the authors that have turned to the history of Ineu during the recent period, as it has been erroneously connected to a Roman fort. Some have thus erred into attributing the present-day ruins from the fortification located in the center of the city to such an ancient fortification. As the region around the city of Ineu was never included inside the borders of the Roman Empire, any discussion of the topic is useless (see also Gheorghiu 2017, 163).

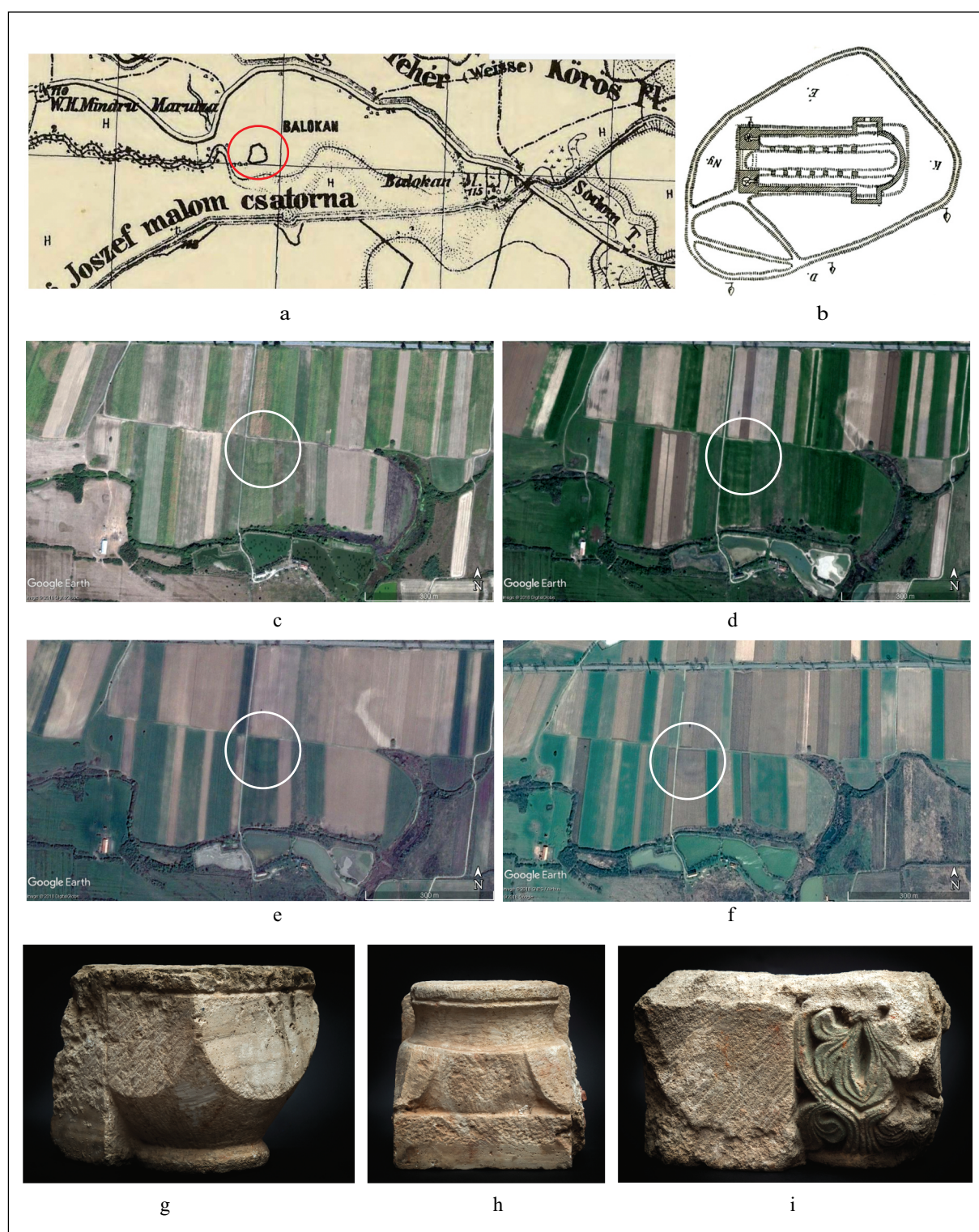


Fig. 2. Location of Dionisie/Dienes/Dyenus' Monastery (*Dienesmonostora*): a. On the third Habsburg military survey (1869–1877) – taken from: <http://mapire.eu/en/>; b. Ground plan of the Church of Dionisie (taken from S. Márki); c-f. Satellite images – taken from: Google Earth; g-i. architectural components (Photos by Nelu Scripciuc).

Today one can reach the spot where I have located the monastery on a stone-paved road that breaks off the Ineu – Bocsig road and leads to “Pescăria Lui Sandu”. On satellite images recorded in 2012, 2013, 2016 and 2018 one can identify an anomaly that describes an approximately rectangular precinct with rounded corners, measuring ca. 100 × 100 m. This somewhat resembles the planimetry on S. Márki's drawing. Naturally, in the absence of land scans through modern geotechnical methods I do not wish to turn to more speculations. What is certain is that field walks in that area have led to

the identification of pottery materials (tableware but also stove tile fragments) and numerous remains of construction materials (especially bricks and sandstone blocks fragments)<sup>51</sup>. The research team has also noticed several fragments from small columns made of white marble and this strengthened ever further the suspicion that the monastery could have been located on the spot<sup>52</sup>. Human bone fragments were recovered north of this precinct and almost up to the national road, also during field walks, and they provided another indication connected to the monastery's burial ground.

Another monastery that was active in the medieval context of Ineu had been founded by the Losonczy family in the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Interest in the fate of the monastery of the Observant Franciscan Friars that functioned in Ineu can be noted ever since the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>53</sup>. Other historiographic contributions to the history of the convent have been subsequently published<sup>54</sup>, reaching a rather consistent number today<sup>55</sup>. Due to this I shall not present here again the historical data published in various works and studies connected strictly to the Franciscan Order or to medieval ecclesiastic geography.

Still, the location or position of this friary in the landscape of medieval Ineu remains unknown. As the written sources provide no clues as to its traces, I believe that the issue can only be solved through archaeology. In this case as well, there are impediments to such researches, the most important ones connected to the fact that the present-day settlement has extended over the old center of the medieval market town that grew around the castle, preserved today in the central part of the city. This is anyway the only landmark one can currently use in attempting to reconstruct the structure of the settlement during the Medieval Period. The preserved plans and maps provide no clue on the location of the convent. Thus, certain stray finds might provide to a certain degree indications on the planimetry of the medieval market town and, why not, on the spatial distribution of some ecclesiastic monuments.

In the present case I wish to contribute with two sites relatively recently found through edilitary works<sup>56</sup>. The first was identified during the taking down of a utility pole in the yard in front of the Mihai Viteazul High School, located west of the castle (Fig. 3/a). Human bones have been disturbed by the works and thus signaled on the spot. One should state that the location of the discoveries can be identified today on the basis of a 17<sup>th</sup> century plan inside the fortification built by Gabriel Haller in the new Italian style. As other indications and clearer contexts are missing, I naturally do not wish to speculate on the possibility that the Franciscan Friary was located here, but one can consider this a landmark related to the funerary areas of the medieval market town.

Another case was the result of works for the introduction of a new sewage network in the city. Performed, as usually, according to the traditional fast-forward style, without obtaining the required approvals issued by the responsible institutions, the works have nevertheless managed to "touch" the foundations of a stone building located in front of the current BCR bank (Fig. 3/a). The massive foundations, made of unfinished stone blocks connected with mortar, had been raised on wooden piles very likely due to the unstable soil (Fig. 3/b-c). This was often the construction manner of choice of medieval buildings in the plain area, an aspect increasingly often documented during archaeological researches in Romania as well<sup>57</sup>. Although it is located on the southern bank of River Criș, the building seems to have been out of the ordinary. The discovered foundations suggest it was a massive building that could also be considered a benchmark in the investigation of the planimetry of the medieval market town. On that occasion I was able to find out that other works performed in the park from the same area had disturbed human remains; this should be at least an element to remember.

<sup>51</sup> Valentin Silaghi, whom I hereby thank, shared the information that during agricultural works on the plot where I have located the monastery he broke his plough against what I believe could have only been stone foundations. One should also note the fact that the plot in question is slightly higher than the surrounding fields and that it has revealed on ground surface many brick fragments and various remains of sandstone blocks.

<sup>52</sup> I wish to hereby thank my friend Nelu Ursan from Ineu, passionate of local history, for the pieces of information he has kindly provided.

<sup>53</sup> Fábíán 1835, 80–84.

<sup>54</sup> Karácsonyi 1923–1924; Sorbán 1934.

<sup>55</sup> Romhányi 2000, 33; Rusu, Hurezan 2000, 182–183; Rusu *et al.* 2000, 154–155; Romhányi 2017.

<sup>56</sup> To the two presented situations one can add older ones collected over time from the testimonies of various local inhabitants who spoke of such discoveries. Graves from a cemetery were uncovered for example during the construction of the former telephone palace on the southern bank, near the bridge leading across Crișul Alb, but no further data are available today on the chronological identification of the features.

<sup>57</sup> Rusu 2005, 148–149 (see the indicated bibliography); Țeicu, Mărginean 2008, 247.





Fig. 3. a. Location of the two spots in the city of Ineu where discoveries that can be attributed to the Medieval Period have been made; b-c. Traces of foundations built on wooden piles.

These finds and pieces of information are part of a series that might reveal, under closer inspection, new clues related to the inner structure of the most important medieval market town of the area. Unfortunately, due to the little interest displayed by the local authorities, such an initiative remains limited to the civic consciousness of a few local inhabitants who are passionate about their local history.

**Churches.** The exact number of medieval churches cannot be established due to the limitations of the written sources<sup>58</sup>. In this case, before presenting the five objectives I wish to discuss a simple up-to-date statistical analysis regarding the state of research of village or parish churches on the territory of the present-day county of Arad (Fig. 4 with the annexed table). At first, compared to the estimated number of churches during the Medieval Period, the level reached by archaeological research can be considered modest. In this case as well one could list numerous causes, but this would not be of much help for the current initiative.

<sup>58</sup> Rusu, Hurezan 2000, 16–19 (Fig. 1).

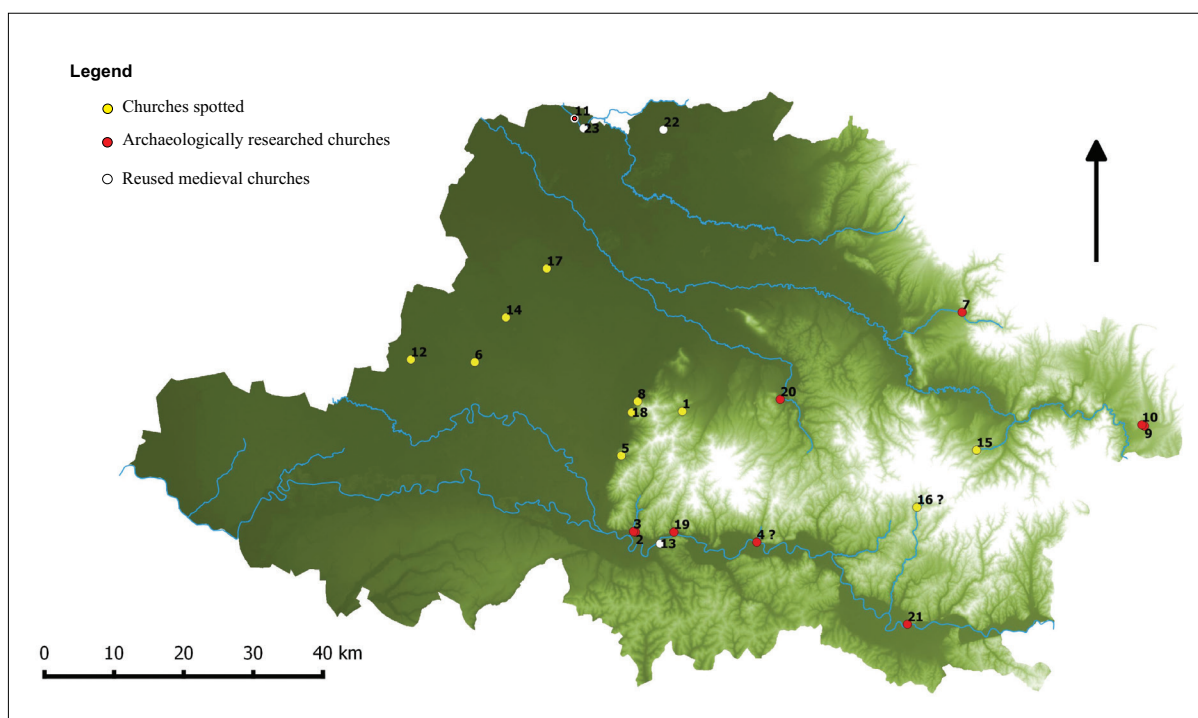


Fig. 4. Map and table with the geographic distribution of medieval churches in the county of Arad that have been archaeological researched or located after field research.

Medieval churches in Arad County – reused, archaeologically researched or spotted

No. Crt.	Current location	Toponym	Mentioned in the written sources	Archaeologically researched	Spotted
1	Agrișu Mare	<i>Bisericuță</i>	1332	-	A. Berzovan
2	Cladova	<i>Dealul Carierei</i>	1332	1966, 1970, 1976–2003 M. Moga, H. Medeleanu, R. Păiușan, V. Boroneanț, G. P. Hurezan, P. Hügel, F. Mărginean	
3	Cladova	<i>Biserica din vale</i>	-	1995 G. P. Hurezan, P. Hügel	
4	Conop	<i>La Cotărci / La Pătul</i>	-	1970/71, 2018 V. Boroneanț, D. Demșea, F. Mărginean, V. Sava, P. Hügel, M. Urak, A. Ursuțiu, N. Kapcsos	?
5	Covăsânț	-	1333–1335	-	
6	Curtici	<i>Holumb</i>	1519, 1553	-	F. Mărginean
7	Dezna		1332	1977 E. Greceanu, L. Munteanu Trucă	
8	Galșa	<i>Curtilici</i>	1334	-	
9	Hălmagiu	<i>Biserica voievodală</i>	Sec. XIV	1974 R. Popa, D. Căpățână, V. Eskenasy	
10	Hălmagiu	<i>La Criptă</i>	Sec. XV	1974 R. Popa, D. Căpățână, V. Eskenasy	
11	Iermata Neagră	<i>Biserica reformată</i>	1241, 1332–1336	2008, 2016 G. P. Hurezan, F. Mărginean, V. Sava, T. Emódi	
12	Iratoșu	-	-	-	E. D. Pădureanu, L. Dorogostaisky

No. Crt.	Current location	Toponym	Mentioned in the written sources	Archaeologically researched	Spotted
13	Lipova	<i>Biserica Ortodoxă</i>	15 <sup>th</sup> c.	2018 R. Ghindele, C. C. Roman, P. Colțeanu	
14	Șimand SV	<i>Pusta Toviseghaz</i>	1433, 1471	-	F. Mărginean
15	Secaș	<i>Biserica Turcească</i>	1552	-	F. Mărginean, P. Hügel, A. A. Rusu, I. Burnichioiu, G. P. Hurezan,
16	Slatina de Mureș	<i>Holumb</i>	-	-	E. D. Pădureanu ?
17	Șimand	<i>Dombul Berăriei</i>	-	-	RepArh 1999
18	Șiria	-	1332, 1403	-	
19	Șoimoș	<i>Cetate</i>	15 <sup>th</sup> c.	1892 G. Czigler	
20	Tauț	<i>La Cetate / Cetatea Turcească</i>	1334	2002–2007, 2009 G. P. Hurezan, F. Mărginean, P. Hügel, Zs. Kopeczny, A. A. Rusu,	
21	Vărădia de Mureș	<i>La Cetate</i>	1479	1971–1974 M. Zdroba, M. Barbu	
22	Vânători	<i>Biserica reformată</i>	1333, 1335–1337	2008? T. Emódi	
23	Zerind	<i>Biserica reformată</i>	1332–1337	2008? T. Emódi	

Local sources, but also field researches have revealed possible locations of religious buildings, in this case village/parish churches, the location of which had been forgotten after they were abandoned and that could no longer be identified in the field. I have thus identified the location of certain churches in the plain area, the sub-hilly area, but also in the mountain area. Some sources mention the rite to which some of them belonged, i.e. Catholic or Orthodox, but such differentiations can only be guessed in the case of others.

This initiative envisages the discoveries made in the territory of several settlements on which the written sources are anyway too poor to provide indications for on-site identifications. The changes after the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, when the area was conquered by the Ottoman armies, followed by the changes brought about during the Modern Era by ample Habsburg reorganizations, have led to the relocation of some habitation areas and thus to the abandonment of some religious buildings. Such changes have led to the degradation of the buildings in question, most often demolished for the reuse of the construction materials. There are countless examples, and from the large number of monuments recorded by preserved documents, only few stand as evidence, with a few preserved broken walls (v. Șiria, Gașa, Covăsânț etc.).

**Curtici.** The existence of a medieval church in Curtici is mentioned relatively late by the written sources, i.e. only in 1519. One should note the translation of its names preserved in the sources, *Kurteghaz* (The Short Church) in 1519 and *Kurtafejéregyház* (The Short White Church) in 1553. They could only envisage the fate of the church of the community that had abandoned the village most likely during the 16<sup>th</sup> or the 17<sup>th</sup> century, as we shall see below in the case of *Tövisegyház*.

To these few written mentions one can add a series of stray finds that suggest the possible on-site identification of ecclesiastic constructions. A note found in one of G. P. Hurezan's notebooks preserved in the archive of the museum in Arad reveals that on October 14<sup>th</sup> 1986 the institution was informed of discoveries made in the eastern border of the city. On the spot identified as "La Dîmbă" by two local inhabitants, P. Horge and G. Gaic, Hurezan was taken to a mound located east of the settlement, where the discoveries had been signaled. The location was estimated as ca. 2 km east of the Orthodox church in the settlement and the estimated diameter of the mound was 70/80 m. One should mention another aspect recorded in the diary, i.e. the fact that a geodesic pillar was placed on top of the mound



and the spot of discovery was at a level difference of 10–20 meters from it<sup>59</sup>. A pit was excavated on the northern side of the mound by amateur archaeologists or treasure hunters. It measured 2 × 1.5 m and 0.8 – 1 m in depth and it disturbed 3 or 4 graves that seem to have lacked an inventory. Other human bones were observed on top of the mound, mixed by plowing. The rim of a small cauldron, dated by the authors of the discovery to the 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries, was recovered from the excavated soil. Pottery fragments dated to the Early Bronze Age were also collected from the base of the mound.

In 2007 S. Albei from Curtici donated a silver temple ring to the museum, indicating as place of discovery the mound from “Holumb” located 3 km SE of the city. According to the author of the discovery, the item was recovered from the skeleton of a child. Based on the context of discovery and on analogies, the item was inventoried (inv. no. 17338) and dated to the 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>60</sup>.

Based on these pieces of information, in 2013 I have performed an on-site field evaluation and a topographic survey, and subsequently I have also created a 3D model of the mound<sup>61</sup>. The field evaluation has revealed a possible religious building and an accompanying cemetery. As the identified spot has been intensely exploited agriculturally, the preserved shape is a small rounded hillock/earthen mound standing out against the flat surroundings. On topographic maps the place is marked with the toponym of “Nagy Halom” or “Holumb” (v. Fig. 5/a-b). The indications that suggested the presence of an ecclesiastic edifice were the recovery from ground level of not only human bone fragments, but also fragments of sandstone blocks and mortar in the plowing (Fig. 5/e). In association, the latter two elements can only indicate the existence of a church. An archaeological trial excavation would clarify the issue in this case as well, or it would at least confirm or contradict the existence of a church and its possible stages of construction.

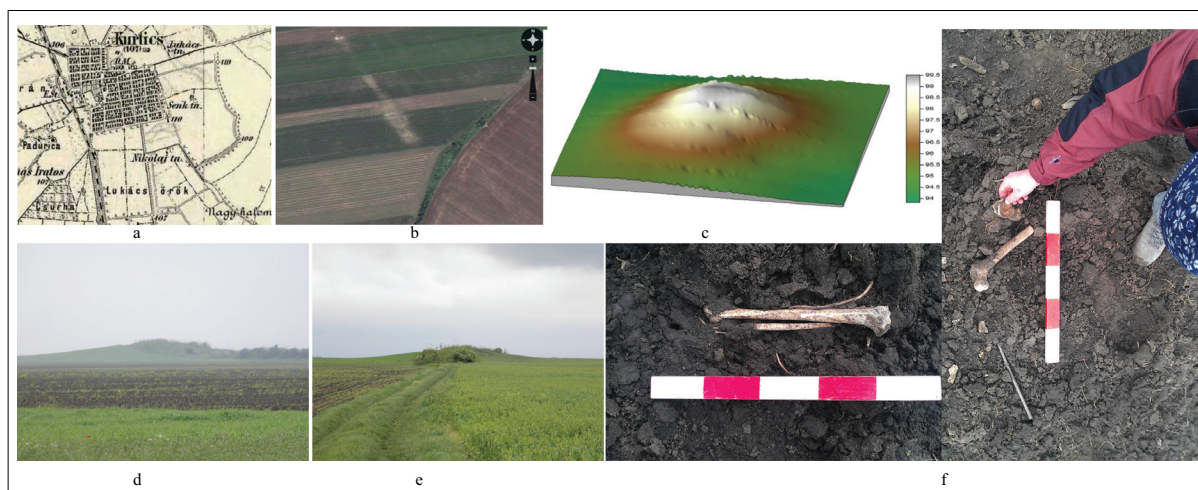


Fig. 5. Location of the site: a. On the third Habsburg military survey (1869–1877) – taken from: <http://mapire.eu/en/>; b. Satellite image – taken from: Google Earth; c. 3D model of the mound where the site was located; d. Images of the mound from the western and southern sides; e. Human bones discovered in the plowing layer.

Nevertheless, the few pieces of information in the written records on the history of this medieval habitation area only allow for a hypothetical attribution. Thus, *Kurteghaz* (The Short Church), as it is mentioned in 1519, or *Kurtafejéregyház* (The Short White Church) recorded in 1553 could provide clues for the location that I am suggesting here. The toponym “Bisericuță” (The Small Church) or “La bisericuță” (By the Small Church), is signaled 2.5 km SW (my discovery is located SE of the city), towards “Cuțaș” or “Cutoș”, where ruins were presumably preserved by the first half of the twentieth century<sup>62</sup>. In this case as well, my suggestion is a working hypothesis.

<sup>59</sup> According to my measurements, the mound has 90 m in diameter and the level difference is of 6–8 m. The geodesic pillar has disappeared and only remains of its base have been preserved (Fig. 5/c-e).

<sup>60</sup> Mărginean 2015, 146–147, pl. 31.

<sup>61</sup> I would like to thank my colleagues Adelina Stoenescu and Norbert Kapcsos for their support in obtaining and processing the topographic data.

<sup>62</sup> Rusu, Hurezan 2000, 84.

**Iratoșu.** The analysis of the satellite images from the ESE part of the present-day village of Iratoșu has allowed for the identification of certain anomalies; according to their shape, they have been identified as an old area of medieval habitation<sup>63</sup>. This is a small precinct surrounded by a triple ellipsoidal structure (ca. 110 × 90 m), located at the intersection of two linear structures measuring ca. 1000 m in length and 130–150 m in width. Inside the central precinct the authors of the satellite analysis have collected from ground level several pottery fragments, fragments of bricks with traces of mortar and construction stones that clearly indicate the existence of a building. This is also suggested by the anomaly visible on the satellite images that has with the estimated dimensions of 25 × 10 m and is oriented west-east. A recent field evaluation shows that human bone remains were also discovered on the same spot and this suggests even more strongly the function of this feature (Fig. 6/a)<sup>64</sup>. These data, collected on site, can only indicate that this is the location of a church and corresponding village. Taking into consideration the proximity of the present-day village of Iratoșu, set following the reorganization during the Habsburg Period, one can state that this was most likely the old church and the medieval territory of the village. In the repertory of medieval churches in the county of Békés (Hungary) I. Szatmári included Iratoșu among the village the medieval churches of which had not been identified<sup>65</sup>. As for the possible location here of the monastery of *Vizesmonostor*<sup>66</sup> things have already been clarified, i.e. it could not have been located inside the borders of the village of Iratoșu. The monastery in question has been localized in the village of Dombegyház (Hungary) and researched archaeologically in the 1960s<sup>67</sup>.

The first written sources regarding Iratoșu only date to 1418 – under the name *Belsevyratos*, 1446 – *Irathws*, 1453 – *Irathos*, 1455, 1484 – *Nagh-Iratos*, 1498, 1503 – *Iratos*, 1506 – *Dombyrathos*, 1516, 1537 – *Nag Iratus*, 1553, 1555, 1560 – *Dombyratos*, and 1561, 1650 – *Nagy Iratos*<sup>68</sup>. One notes the fact that despite the numerous written mentions of the church village, the documents are not very rich in details regarding the ecclesiastic edifice. The importance of the village can be inferred from its very name. The way it features in documents, “festett, tarka, kicifrázott” / “painted, multicolored, decorated” might provide clues related to the fact that the village church had been decorated with wall paintings<sup>69</sup>.

Considering all these pieces of information, I believe that an archaeological trial excavation could bring a major contribution to the knowledge of several aspects connected to the development of the entire complex. Even if the authors of the discovery have already provided (one could say that they did so without much judgment) multiple possible functions of the objective<sup>70</sup>, out of which, in theory, everyone could pick what they like, I believe that the location of a village church here seems the most plausible explanation based on on-site data, the written mentions, and the analogies. Despite the early stage of research, the primary analysis of the planimetry that can be observed on the satellite images allows me to include this objective in a series of similar sites, some only identified<sup>71</sup> and others partially researched in areas in its geographic proximity<sup>72</sup>. Regarding the function of such complexes, different authors have expressed different views: that they were meant to isolate or protect the cemetery precincts<sup>73</sup> or, more recently, that they were places of refuge during or maybe after the Mongol Invasion<sup>74</sup>. Some archaeological investigations have revealed evidence supporting this latter

<sup>63</sup> Pădurean, Dorogostaisky 2016.

<sup>64</sup> I thank Mr. Alexandru Hegyi for sharing this piece of information. In this context, it is worth mentioning the investigated objectives in the Banat area of Mașloc, Satchinez and Mănăștur (see Hegyi *et al.* 2018, 1–12). In the absence of archaeological research, we believe that it is difficult to provide arguments in terms of dating and at the same time the functionality of these objectives. Our caution is due to the fact that the Banat territory, like Crișana was affected both during the Mongol invasion and at the end of the Middle Ages following Ottoman domination, being at least two major stages that could provide the motivation to raise such structures.

<sup>65</sup> Szatmári 2005, 127.

<sup>66</sup> Pădurean, Dorogostaisky 2016, 20–21.

<sup>67</sup> Szatmári 2005, 153–154.

<sup>68</sup> Roz, Kovách 1997, 136–137; Szatmári 2005, 127.

<sup>69</sup> Hévízi 1999, 277; Szatmári 2005, 127.

<sup>70</sup> Pădurean, Dorogostaisky 2016, 19–20.

<sup>71</sup> Szatmári 2018, 86–88.

<sup>72</sup> Szabolcs 2018, 186–188.

<sup>73</sup> Szatmári 2005, 62–64; Szatmári 2018, 89.

<sup>74</sup> Szabolcs 2018, 186.



hypothesis<sup>75</sup>, that can only be accepted as a new possibility for the time being, in the absence of a series of similar results<sup>76</sup>. In the case under discussion, the lead should be followed in the case of churches researched in Vărădia de Mureș, in the Mureș Valley, or Tauț north of the Zărand Mountains (Fig. 6/c-d). In this context one should also mention the situation in Vinga (Fig. 6/b), where a circular precinct was identified, though it was very large (ca. 500 × 500 m)<sup>77</sup>.

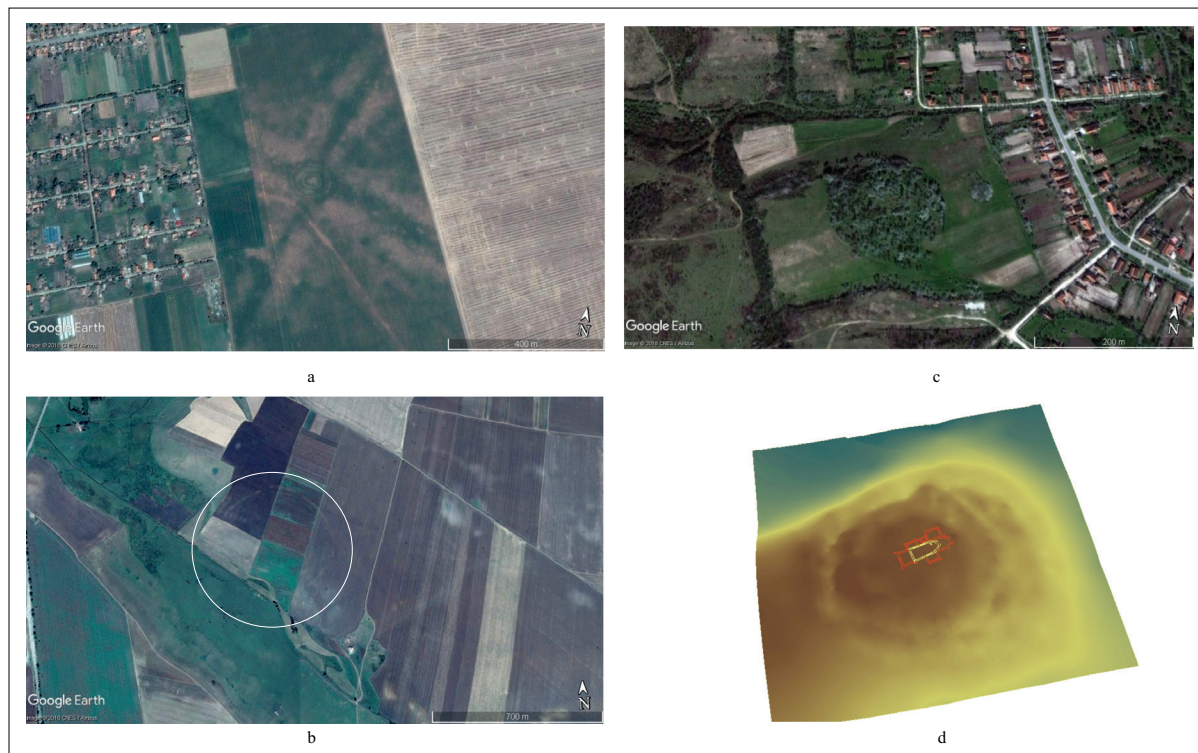


Fig. 6. Satellite images with the objectives in: a. Iratoșu, b. Vinga and c. Tauț (taken from Google Earth). d. 3D model with the Tauț site.

Regarding this aspect, I can only say that all of the signaled objectives are located in a territory more or less affected by the Mongol Invasion, envisaged mainly according to the writings of monk Rogerius. Interpreting archaeological discoveries as consequences of the Mongol Invasion must be, nevertheless, done with much caution. Still, I believe that archaeology can bring a significant contribution to the matter, as long as the research and implicitly its results are correctly collected and subsequently analyzed, corroborated with complementary analyses<sup>78</sup>. Such cases have been published in recent studies from an area in the close proximity of that under discussion here<sup>79</sup>.

<sup>75</sup> Szabolcs 2018, 186–188.

<sup>76</sup> I hereby thank professor J. Laszlovsky for suggesting this possibility for the system of ramparts and ditches around the medieval church in Tauț as well, during a discussion we had in 2017. Unfortunately, the archaeological research performed in Tauț only partially touched this system of fortification that surrounded the medieval church, that was considered so far as a previous fortification. I hope that the data recorded during the seven campaigns, hopefully corroborated with a trial excavation of the system of ramparts and ditches, and the collection of samples we prove if such a very plausible theory checks out.

<sup>77</sup> Pottery fragments attributed to prehistoric, but also to medieval periods have been recovered from this spot through field researches performed during different periods by D. Miclă and L. Măruia (2006) and by F. Gogăltan and V. Sava (2015). Based on these data, but also those provided by the written sources, S. Forțiu, whom I hereby thank for his collaboration and suggestions, locates here the medieval village of *Kerekwynga* (Round Vinga). The present case somewhat differs from those indicated above, especially regarding the area covered by the entire precinct. In the absence of investigations, even geotechnical ones, for the time being I would rather simply mention this interesting site.

<sup>78</sup> I envisage both the analysis of satellite images and obtaining aerial images that can help in the location and delimitation of such sites. Even if these aspects are completed by geotechnical measurements, the success of an archaeological research can only consist of positive results. Subsequently, on the basis of found and recorded contexts, the use of complementary analyses such as radiocarbon dating can provide a rather believable basis for supporting arguments.

<sup>79</sup> Szatmári 2018; Szabolcs 2018.

**Şimand.** Located south of Şimand, “Pusta Tövisgyház” has preserved until today the memory of a medieval village and its church *Tövisgyház*. The written sources have not recorded the exact moment when church and village disappeared from history, but one can guess that the moment in question is connected to the frequent conflicts during the period of Ottoman conquest. The etymology of its recorded name betrays the existence of an ecclesiastic edifice (The Church with Thorns). The village is mentioned late, only in 1433 (*Thwiseghaz*), then in 1462 (*Thywseghaz*) and in 1561 (*Thws eghhaz*)<sup>80</sup>. The written sources suggest that it was a rather rich village, including during the period of Ottoman rule<sup>81</sup>.

Various iron and bronze objects, some of which can be dated to the 15<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries, were recently discovered on a spot located 6.5 km SW of Şimand and donated to the museum<sup>82</sup>. Today one can reach this spot on a road recently paved in stone that starts from the Curtici – Sântana county car road. The place is on the terrace of a secondary branch of Mureş river, currently channeled with ditches that probably drained the marshy areas during the Communist Period (Fig. 7/a).

For the present study I am interested in several items and the information collected on site.

Three small crosses seem to be equally interesting found on this site, varying in size and fitting system. The only difference between them is the shape; all three are cast out of lead, probably in one-part molds. The first small cross, the smallest of the three, measures 2.1 × 1.2 × 0.4 cm (Fig. 7/b). It is cast and the horizontal arm (*antenna*) is uneven, i.e. shorter on the left side. The vertical arm (*patibulum*) seems broken in the lower part and this might suggest the fact that the item was once attached to some type of support and did not have a hanging orifice as would have been the case with a pectoral cross. The second small cross has almost equal arms 3.7 × 3.4 × 0.5 cm (Fig. 7/c). In the upper part of the vertical arm it has been broken in the place where it was probably attached by some orifice. It is possible that the partial perforation made on the back was an attempt to reuse it due to the deterioration of the original fixing system. The third cross, the largest of the small group, measured 5 × 3.1 × 0.6 cm (Fig. 7/d). It seems to be the most interesting as well, considering its slightly off-balanced shape, with a fixing orifice placed in the longer part of the vertical arm. The small crosses had also been cast, even if in an even more rudimentary manner. Considering the production technique, I find it hard to believe that they could have been created in a center specialized in the production of such artifacts, making it more likely that some objects of lay or liturgical Christian use were produced on site. In the absence of clear contexts of discovery, I choose not to speculate on the functions of these small crosses, except those suggested by their shape: small pectoral crosses or elements of artifacts decorated with such Christian signs.

Despite the fact that the presence of such crucifixes is a rarity in the analyzed area, they have been signaled on a rather wide geographic region of the intra- and extra-Carpathian Basin. Somewhat similar shapes have been signaled among the finds ever since the Avar Period, under the influence of Byzantine Christianity<sup>83</sup>. The number of small crosses increased in the Moldavian area starting with the 6<sup>th</sup> century, just like the molds in which they were cast<sup>84</sup>. Items similar in shape, production technique, and primary material feature in funerary contexts during the 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> centuries, such as those in Ikervár-Virág u. (Hungary), where one item was discovered in the grave (no. 112) of a little girl (pl. 45, 112/1 and pl. 97/17)<sup>85</sup>. The author signals a similar item in Várpálotá-Semmelweis u. (Hungary), attributing these lead crosses to children graves in general; this seems to have been an influence from the Byzantine Christian environment<sup>86</sup>. Closer to our region one can mention the discovery from the cemetery in Szeged-Algyőn, grave 105. The item there is a simple small cross, with straight arms and no depiction, made of lead, discovered in the area of the thorax. The end of the vertical arms, where the fixing orifice once stood, had been deteriorated, indicating the fact that the cross was worn around the neck. An analogy has been signaled in Kecskemét-Városház (Hungary). Both

<sup>80</sup> Blazovich 1996, 306.

<sup>81</sup> Káldy-Nagy 1982, 325–326.

<sup>82</sup> It seems that habitation there covers several historical periods; other items are published or under print (see Mărginean 2015, 350; Kapcsos – in press).

<sup>83</sup> Kiss 2000, 74. See also Garam 2001, 57–59, Taf. 40.

<sup>84</sup> Teodor 1991, 86–91.

<sup>85</sup> Kiss 2000, 74

<sup>86</sup> Kiss 2000, 74

items have been dated, based on the discovery contexts, to the 10<sup>th</sup> century, and have been attributed to the influences received, most likely, from the Christian Byzantine environment<sup>87</sup>. In this repertory one could also include the discovery from Moldova Veche – “Ogașul cu spini” / Grave 1<sup>88</sup>. The artifact found there is a simple small cross, made of cast lead, measuring 3.8 × 3.5 cm<sup>89</sup>. Lead items, more or less carefully made, were found in Transylvania in Alba-Iulia, dated during the 10<sup>th</sup> century<sup>90</sup>.

In Moldavia, simple cast lead small crosses have been signaled in Hlincea<sup>91</sup> and Pepeni (Sângerei)<sup>92</sup>; like in the case under discussion here, they could have been produced by local craftsmen.

Much more such little crosses, either simple or containing relics, were found in the area of Dobruja, such as those in Dinogetia<sup>93</sup> or Păcuiul lui Soare<sup>94</sup>. Those that can be considered here as analogies have been dated to the 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>95</sup>.

In the case of the three little crosses, the absence of discovery contexts does not allow for a very precise dating. Nevertheless, under this respect, the harness items can be dated to the 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> centuries and were very probably part of funerary contexts<sup>96</sup>. Based on the indicated analogies, one can think of the possibility that the items once belonged to such a context<sup>97</sup>. In the case of the fragment from the hand of a crucifix, considering its function<sup>98</sup>, it might point to the existence of a church ever since the Arpadian Period. The presence of this type of small crosses in this area has been connected to Byzantine influences. In specialized literature they have been attributed to missions focusing on the conversion and submission of the locals to the Eastern Church<sup>99</sup>, but also with an obvious diplomatic purpose<sup>100</sup>, i.e. to discourage attacks from the Pannonian area after the Magyars had settled there.

One of the artifacts stands out: it is hand-shaped, with a central perforation (L = 1.7 cm, thickness = 0.2 cm), and seems to have been cast out of metal alloy. It has been perforated from the inside out. The fingers are clearly rendered, though rather rudimentary, through four grooves. The preserved part can only belong to the left arm of a depiction of the crucified Christ (Fig. 7/e). This element probably broke off the rest of the object and away from the initial support (*crux capitata* or *crux ordinaria*) through some mechanical action.

Even if just a small part of the initial item has been preserved, its production technique makes it similar to the crucifixes discovered in Petneháza and Napkor (Hungary), preserved in the collection of the Jóna András Museum of Nyíregyháza<sup>101</sup>. The items have been attributed to the Hungarian type Kalocsa Group crucifixes that Zsuzsa Lovag has dated to the 12<sup>th</sup> century<sup>102</sup>. One should mention, in

<sup>87</sup> Kürti 1978/79 (1980), 326–327 (fig. 3, pl. I/15).

<sup>88</sup> Oța 2008, 101, pl. 9/9, pl. 89/1.

<sup>89</sup> Țicu, Bozu 1982, 393–394, fig. 1.

<sup>90</sup> Dragotă 2016, 91, fig. 5.

<sup>91</sup> Teodor 1991, 91, fig. 17/3.

<sup>92</sup> Tentiuc 1996, 149, fig. 36/5.

<sup>93</sup> Barnea 1967, 357–366.

<sup>94</sup> Diaconu, Baraschi 1977/II, 125–129.

<sup>95</sup> Barnea 1967, 357–366, fig. 191/16; Diaconu, Baraschi 1977/II, 125–129, fig. 99/15, 17.

<sup>96</sup> Mărginean 2015, 350, fig. 7/1–3.

<sup>97</sup> I hereby wish to thank again my colleague I. Szatmári for the information he has warmly provided on the topic of the present article.

<sup>98</sup> Rusu 2008, 60.

<sup>99</sup> Madgearu 1994, 148 (see the indicated literature). The author remained true to his initial ideals, approaching again the topic of localizing a Byzantine bishopric at the confluence of the Tisa, Mureș, and the rivers Criș in several recent studies (see Madgearu 2008, 134; Madgearu 2010, 87–88). Other researches, corroborated with more recent discoveries have brought new evidence on the location in Alba-Iulia of an important center dated to the early stage of implementing Christianity over a mosaic of populations identified there through the different funerary areas they used (see Dragotă 2016). The 2011 archaeological researches performed in the area of the Roman-Catholic cathedral have revealed the foundations of a church with the ground plan following the shape of an inscribed cross, dated during the interval between the middle of the 10<sup>th</sup> century and the middle of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. The dating, provided by the recorded contexts, could be considered one of the most important discoveries in the debate regarding the location there of that first Byzantine bishopric center north of the Danube (see Marcu Istrate 2014, 119–120).

<sup>100</sup> Kovács 1983, 133–154. The author believes that the presence of Byzantine coins in the Pannonian area is the result of the subsidies granted to the Magyar leaders especially during the reign of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus. More recent interpretations come with nuances related to the role and presence of the Byzantine coin in the Carpathian Basin (see Langó 2012, 52–54).

<sup>101</sup> Jakab 2006, 263–269, Fig. 2–3, Fig. 4–5, Fig. 6–7.

<sup>102</sup> Lovag 1979, 12.

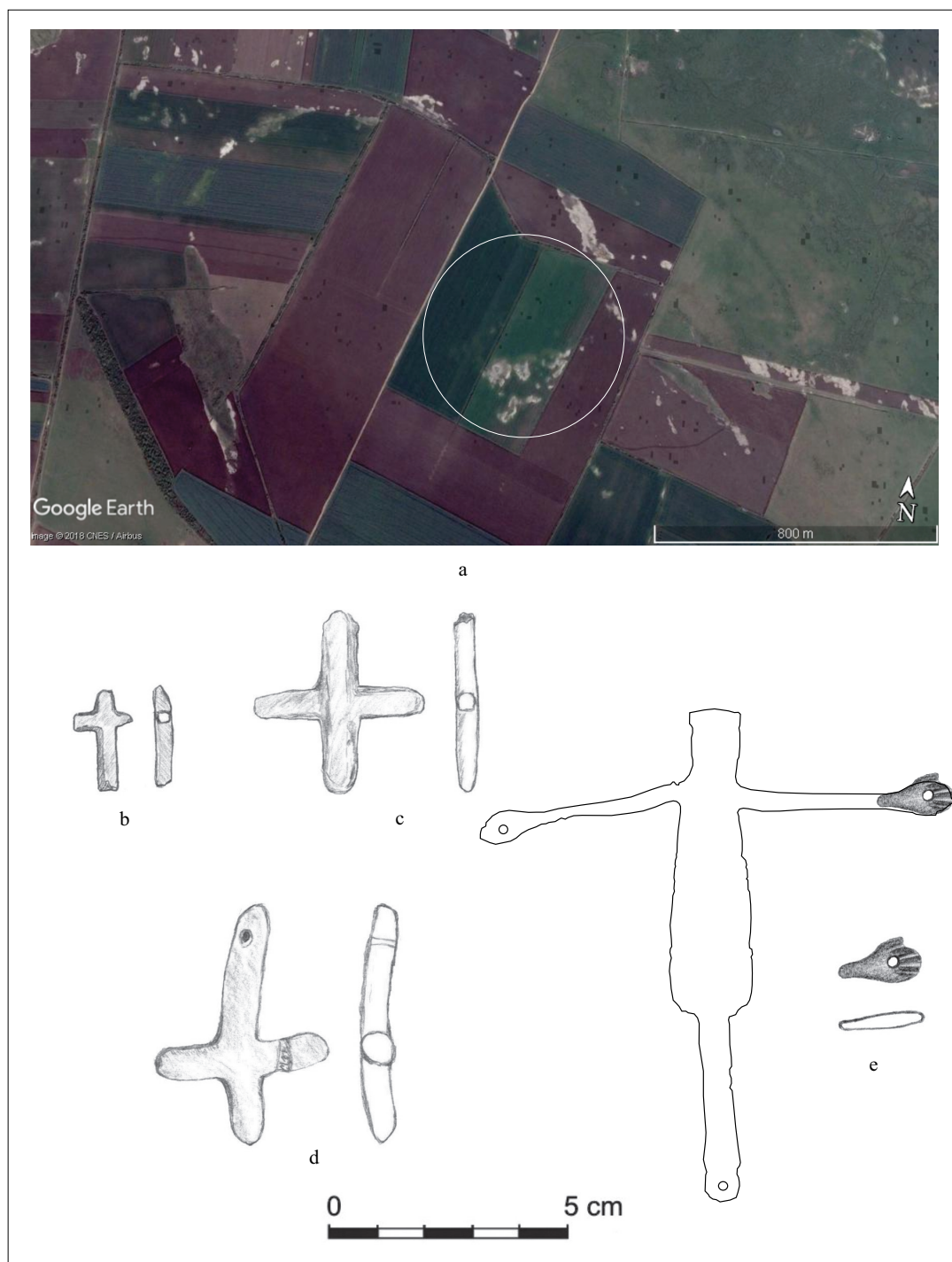


Fig. 7. a. Site location – taken from: Google Earth; b-d. Small crosses; e. Part of the left arm of a *Corpus Christi* and suggested reconstruction.

the same context, the crucifixes in Békéscsaba-Fenyés (Hungary), donated to the museum in 1999<sup>103</sup>. They somewhat complete the repertory of seven other such discoveries made in the same county of Békés<sup>104</sup>.

Nevertheless, the crucifix fragment under discussion here cannot be attributed to any center of production in particular. In this case, besides including the fragment in a poor repertory of such *Corpuses*<sup>105</sup> in Roumania, the item is yet another clue connected to the liturgical inventory of what I believe to have been the church of the village of *Tövisgyház*, abandoned in the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>103</sup> Szatmári 2001, 368–371 (Fig. 4–5).

<sup>104</sup> Szatmári 2001, 365.

<sup>105</sup> Rusu 2008, 57–60.

It is worth mentioning that metal remains, discarded items, and finished bronze and alloy artifacts were also found on the same spot, clearly indicating the existence of a craftsman and implicitly of a workshop there. Still, it is difficult to decide if the hand-shaped item, special in its own way, was produced on the spot. The fact that from the 14<sup>th</sup> century onwards specialized guilds<sup>106</sup> in cities and their lay officinae fulfilled orders for liturgical inventory items could be another argument supporting the idea that the item under discussion could have been bought from there. In the present case this nevertheless seems little likely, considering its attribution to the Arpadian Period.

An archaeological research could clarify the aspect, considering the fact that the etymology of the name under which the village features in documents betrays the existence of an ecclesiastic edifice, though one knows it was not included in the papal tithe records.

Besides these items, human bones and fragments of bricks with mortar were also found in the ploughing layer, indicating rather clearly the existence of a masonry building. Areas with concentrations of pottery fragments are visible in the plowing layer around the presumed building, over a rather wide area, and they can suggest the location of dwellings / households (Fig. 7).

The 1567 and 1579 censuses mention 43 and respectively 45 households, during a period when the village seems not to have been affected by the Ottoman rule<sup>107</sup>. Things seem to have changed dramatically towards the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, maybe in the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, as the village ceased to be mentioned. Its destruction and abandonment were sudden and violent, as evidenced by the great quantity of items recovered from ground surface. The church was also abandoned and the old village was not repopulated during the Modern Period; only the toponym “Pusta Tövisgyház” has been preserved.

**Agrișu Mare.** The settlement is mainly known in the specialized literature due to the ruins of an old *castellum*, an important noble residence, that can still be seen today on Cioaca Hill, in close proximity of the village<sup>108</sup>. Data available on the settlements attested here are few and generally brief regarding the social or religious organization. The current settlement seems to have been created from the merge of two settlements, one up and one down river: Almaș, located at the feet of the hills along the valley with the same name, and Egreg, today located as one exits leaving towards Dud, on a high terrace of the same valley. Egreg is probably the village mentioned by the written sources in 1215; the subsequent mentions of it only date more than a century later. The latter written sources record the existence of a church during the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, when a certain priest John is mentioned in the papal tithe records paying 4 Groschen<sup>109</sup>. One also knows that in 1406 the church was included in the rights of patronage of the domain. There is also mention of the fact that the church was built out of stone (*ecclesie lapidee*)<sup>110</sup>.

Due to the probable unification of the two medieval settlements (*Almas* and *Egreg*), corroborated with the transformation of the landscape ever since the period of Ottoman conquest and then from the Habsburg Period until today, the old habitations have been forgotten. Field walks and old traces preserved at ground level can be useful in the location of these villages and implicitly their churches. The researches started in the area of the fortification in Agrișu Mare, as it is known in the literature, have allowed for investigations in the territory of the village<sup>111</sup>. Making use of the data provided by the local inhabitants, I have reached the SW part of the village, in Almașului Valley, on the spot they call “Bisericuță”. Satellite images seem to suggest the planimetry of a single-nave church, small in size (L±15 m, l±8 m). Once there, I was able to observe the existence of an earth rise that is most probably the result of a stone church fallen into ruin (Fig. 8/a). On the basis of the topographic survey I was able to create a 3D model of the objective (Fig. 8/c-d)<sup>112</sup>. Other clues, besides the shape visible on satellite images, that might support my hypothesis in this stage, might be the remains of bricks and mortar

<sup>106</sup> Rusu 2008, 61.

<sup>107</sup> Káldy-Nagy 1982, 326.

<sup>108</sup> Mărginean 2011, 167–168.

<sup>109</sup> *DIR*, C, XIV, III, 249–251.

<sup>110</sup> Csanki I, 1890, 730.

<sup>111</sup> I thank Mr. A. Berzovan for the pieces of information he has kindly provided.

<sup>112</sup> I hereby express my gratitude to my colleagues – the late G. P. Hurezan, V. Sava, and A. Stoenescu for their support in performing the topographic survey and N. Kapcsos for the 3D processing of the topographic data.



fragments collected from ground level (Fig. 8/b). In the current conditions, as the area is not ploughed, I found nothing indicating the presence of a cemetery, so its existence remains a supposition.

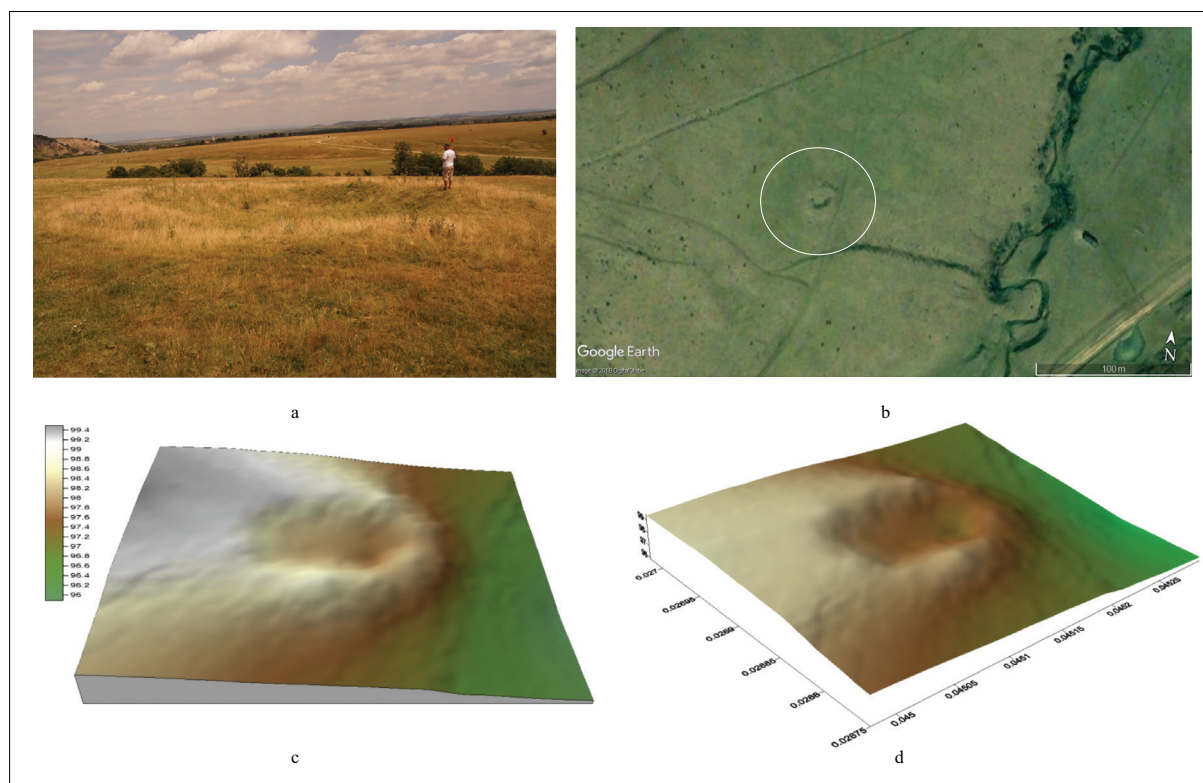


Fig. 8. a-b. Image and location of the site in Agrișul Mare based on satellite images; c-d. 3D model of the objective.

In the absence of archaeological research, I can only suggest the existence of a medieval church here, preserved in local collective memory under the toponym “Bisericuță”; it might also belong to the village of *Almas* (*Almos*)<sup>113</sup>, a settlement that belonged to the arch deanery of Pâncota, attested through a priest (Dominic) in the papal tithe records (1334), that was subsequently included in the present-day village of Agrișu Mare.

**Secaș.** A new spot that might complete the picture of stone ecclesiastic edifices, besides the already recognized churches in Hălmațiu, Ribița, Criscior and Căpâlna, has been recently identified in the mountainous landscape of Țara Zarandului. In 2006, following an official notice from the town wall of Brazi reporting the discovery of a stone with Christian symbols, I traveled to the indicated spot to elucidate the mystery.

The place of discovery of this stone led me to the old location of the medieval church of Secaș, a place located upriver at the confluence of valleys Maraska/Mărașca and Ferice (Fig. 9/a-b). Once there, I was able to notice that the remains of a construction (sandstones) could still be seen on the surface of a hill end (ca. 1700 m<sup>2</sup>) located on the right side of the valley. Besides, in local folklore the place is known under the toponym “Biserica turcească”<sup>114</sup> (The Turkish Church) or “Satu Bătrân” (The Old Village), and human bones have been periodically recovered from it, probably from the cemetery once in use around the church (Fig. 9/c). One only knows that the church had a porch and a semicircular apse<sup>115</sup>.

Unfortunately, nothing has been preserved from what priest Dr. Roman Popa saw and presented in a brief article in 1942<sup>116</sup>. The image he published shows a bell tower (P+2) in an advanced state of degradation (Fig. 9/d). He also states that the church served seven villages<sup>117</sup>, all of them located in

<sup>113</sup> *DIR*, C, XIV, III, 249–251.

<sup>114</sup> Marki II, 753.

<sup>115</sup> Marki I, 443; see Rusu, Hurezan 2000, 130–131 erroneously place it in the village of Secaci (municipality of Beliu).

<sup>116</sup> Popa 1942, 50–51.

<sup>117</sup> Fábíán 1835, 221.

the surrounding villages. Popa also records the fact that the church was made of “stones broken off the bedrock, connected with hydraulic lime”, and this is partially confirmed by what has been preserved at ground level. Still, he did not indicate the existence of any architectural components. Chronologically, he placed the church during the same period as the churches in Ribița, Criscior, Hălmagiu and Căpâlna. The same author claims that the church was in use until 1837 when the present-day church in Secaș was built. One should also remember the evidence connected to the traces of a building’s foundation that can no longer be seen on site that Popa attributes to the parish house that had been made out of large blocks of cut stone.

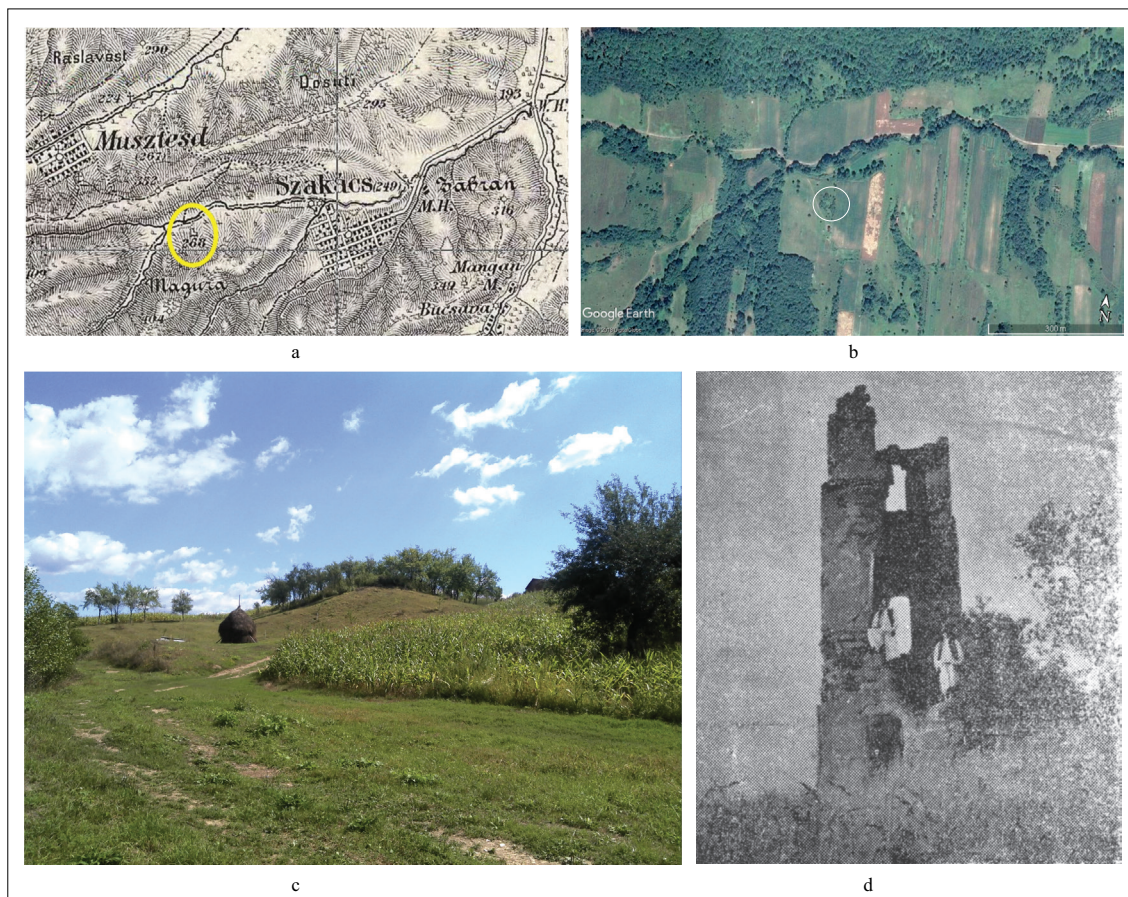


Fig. 9. Site location: a. On the third Habsburg military survey (1869–1877) – taken from: <http://mapire.eu/en/>; b. Satellite image – taken from: Google Earth; c. Photo from the western side; d. Image showing the church tower in 1942 (taken from R. Popa).

The absence of written sources could be, in this case as well, compensated by archaeological excavations. In these conditions I only wish to mention and place this church in a not very rich and apparently too little researched medieval ecclesiastic landscape. Its archaeological research would certainly enrich the lot of available data on the churches of the Romanians in this region<sup>118</sup>.

**Conclusions.** The few objectives presented here are part of a repertory of medieval ecclesiastic edifices already known from the written sources and the existing bibliography. As many of them disappeared during the Early Modern Era, in this case the Ottoman Period, their on-site identification has faced, until today, certain difficulties, due to the transformations of the last 300 years. For this reason, the information preserved in the written sources must always be corroborated with analyses performed through various complementary methods. Most of the objectives presented here are the result of relatively recent discoveries made through classical field researches, the research of the written sources, the analysis of old maps or present-day satellite images, georeferenced data, ground scanning through non-intrusive methods, but also collecting local oral sources. The use of modern scanning

<sup>118</sup> Mărginean *et al.* 2013.

methods on these sites, but also archaeological trial excavations will provide much more data on the planimetry and maybe the cemetery precincts of each objective. As such cemetery precincts were ubiquitous during these early modern times, archaeological researches might bring significant contributions connected to those who used them.

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