

LIVING AMONG RUINS: THE MEDIEVAL HABITAT IN THE ANCIENT SETTLEMENT OF POROLISSUM AND IN ITS SURROUNDINGS*

Abstract: After more than century of archaeological research and thousands of artefacts discovered in the Roman age settlement of *Porolissum*, the rare medieval finds were not given much attention. Also the preoccupation of studying the roman ruins was, justly predominant at the expense of the few medieval sites that can now be sketched on the map of the Roman age settlement. The medieval artefacts found in *Porolissum*, dated from different periods of the Middle Ages indicates us that the same geographical features that made humans inhabit that specific area since Prehistory, through the Iron Ages and culminating in the Roman Era, made the medieval people to live among the ruins.

Keywords: *St. Margret of Meseș, medieval roads, basilites, Porta Mesesina, salt trade.*

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In contradiction to the alluring subject of studying the medieval habitat near the old Roman ruins in Transylvania, the interest shown by the modern historiography is, with a few exceptions, extremely poor. Even if the most important medieval settlements in Transylvania were born over the ruins of old Roman fortifications and settlements like *Apulum* – Alba Iulia and *Napoca* – Cluj-Napoca, the preoccupation of archaeologists and historians fades comparing with the importance of this subject. However the few historians who approached the subject they did it either as an understatement¹, some were not thoroughgoing about their finds², others barely scratched the surface in studying this historical phenomenon while observing the lack of interest of contemporary archaeologists and historians³. A more recent study reviews all the medieval and premodern artefacts found in the Roman *castrum* from *Potaissa* – Turda. The author, a Roman age specialist, investigates with succes the history of the Roman fortress from the Late Antiquity to the Modern Ages⁴. Despite the reduced literature, the existing ones are inspirational. Those few articles pave the road for future research.

In more than a century of archaeological investigation in the ancient site of *Porolissum* (map.) and after thousands of artefacts being discovered,

^{*}We thank Dan Matei, PhD. for the constructive comments and language correction in the process of writing this paper.

¹ POPA 1984, 7-25.

² HOREDT 1984, 51-64; LAZĂR 1995, 267.

³ RUSU 2010.

⁴ BĂRBULESCU 2015, 331-342.

the overwhelming majority being of Roman era, the small amount of medieval finds along with the few medieval monuments did provoked historians in the past, unfortunately limited by the level of knowledge and the amount of medieval finds of that time⁵.

Today, after discovering more medieval finds and locating a medieval fortress on *Măgura Moigradului*, the most prominent hill in the area (map), we still have missing links in seeing the whole picture. Thus summing up all the data we have so far, we know that at latest until the 12th century, Greek monks⁶ settled in the vicinity of *Porolissum*. Latter they were substituted by Roman rite monks who founded the St. Margaret of *Meseș* Abbey over the ruins of the Roman city, along the Roman road. We also know that the important pass towards central Transylvania called since the Middle Ages *Porta Mesesina* was guarded by a fortress situated on top of the *Măgura* Hill. Around these major establishments, scattered through the Roman ruins, medieval people reused Roman walls for shelter. A glimpse at the medieval charters indicates us that the pass named in the middle ages *Porta Mesesina* was not only the main entrance in Transylvania from the north-west but also an important artery of the salt trade. The first medieval document that attests the St. Margaret abbey describes the privileges of the monastery in taxing the salt trade⁷.

At the beginning of the 20th century, right before the Great War, the Hungarian archaeologist Buday Árpád brought to light the ruins of a Roman building with hypocaust system, eastward from the Roman *castrum* on *Pomet* Hill (Rom. *Dealul Pomet*) in *Porolissum*⁸. The foundations were superposed by medieval tombs, some having brick cist or others with simple pits (Fig. 38-40). In the same area were discovered fragments of medieval stone work (Fig. 41, 43-45)⁹, a 14th century iron spur (Fig. 42)¹⁰ and up to 10 medieval coins found as oblation in tombs or just scattered through the debris¹¹. Some of the tombs were misdated the 4th century while other tombs along with the rest of the medieval findings were associated with the lost St. Margaret Monastery. All the medieval findings were dated between the 12th and 14th century¹².

Decades later Mircea Rusu highlighted the opinion that it was Búday who found the presumed 4th century remains and also dated the features of a prehistoric fortification¹³ on the nearby *Cămnin* Hill (Rom. *Dealul Cămnin*) between the 9th-11th centuries¹⁴. He also talks about two 8th-9th century earrings (Fig. 4-5), a fragment of *Kiev type* pectoral cross (Fig. 6), dated in the 12th and 13th centuries and presumably¹⁵ discovered in *Porolissum*, and the

cave monuments that exist near *Porolissum* dating them in the 13th century (Fig. 30-36)¹⁶. The article signed by the late Mircea Rusu constitutes the prelude for future studies. Since then, the above mentioned medieval age small finds were published more than once¹⁷, or they have been published as Roman Age artefacts (Fig. 3, 11, 12)¹⁸.

Some of those artefacts were not archaeologically discovered; they came from the former private *Wesselényi-Teleky* collection currently in the custody of the local museum, so that the provenance of the objects can be questionable¹⁹. Even so, the latest medieval objects discovered in archaeological context offer solid arguments in believing that the *stellar type* earrings (Fig. 4-5), the *lyre type* buckle (Fig. 3), the fragment of the *Kiev type* pectoral cross (Fig. 6), the spur rowel and the spur fragment (Fig. 11-12), but also some Late Medieval stove tiles originated from *Porolissum* and its surroundings²⁰.

The *stellar type* earrings have been published numerous times before²¹. Other finding from the same *Wesselényi-Teleky* collection must be discussed in this present paper. The 10th - 11th century bronze casted buckle (Fig. 3) was initially catalogued as a Roman age piece²². Such types were used mostly as harness accessories but also as clothing accessories in the 10th -11th or even the 12th centuries in some cases. Some authors relate this category of artefacts with the migration phenomenon in the Carpathian Basin²³ while others "blame" fashion as an explication to their spreading in this part of Europe²⁴. Similar findings are rare in the Romanian archaeological landscape. Some specimens were found in different content at Târgșor, Dinogetia²⁵, Alba Iulia - *Stația de salvare*²⁶, Capidava²⁷, Spinoasa-Erbiceni²⁸, *Sighisoara and Blandiana*²⁹. Dating this object with absolute

¹⁶ RUSU 1974, 268-269.

¹⁷ MATEI 1979, 479, Pl. X: 1-1; GUDEA 1989, 672, 673, Pl. CCXIX/31-32, Pl. CCXX/23 (The earrings were published as *pendants*).

¹⁸ GUDEA 1989, 676, Pl. CCXXII/26.

¹⁹ In 1958 entire collection of thousands of small finds was donated by Ana Teleki, the descendant of a noble family. We know for fact that Petronella Andrassy, the sister of Baron Bela Wesselényi, received artefacts as rent from her peasants from Jac (GUDEA 1989, 22, footnote 22). We can only presume that the medieval artefacts from the collection all came from *Porolissum* since there were no further written data about the context of discovery accompanying the artefacts.

²⁰ Because we could not find all the medieval objects in question in the Museums deposit, such as some spur rowels and stove tiles and thus impossible for further analysis, we decided not to republish them in this paper. However more objects that are susceptible to be of medieval origins were published as Roman artefacts. Besides the two spur rowels (GUDEA 1989, Pl. CXXXII, 10, 11) and the fragments of the stove tiles (GUDEA 1989, Pl. CXII), we believe that some other artefact found in *Porolissum* and published as Roman artefacts could actually be medieval. For instance a medieval scabbard chape (GUDEA 1989, CLXXVI, 9) and a medieval spur fragment (GUDEA 1989, CLXXVI, 3).

²¹ RUSU 1974, 267, Fig. 3; MATEI 1979, 479, Pl. X, 1, 2; TEODOR 1981, Fig. 19:6, 8; GUDEA 1989, 672, Pl. CCXIX:31, 32; MESTERHÁZY 1990, 102; COSMA 2000, Pl. 153:1-4; BĂCUEȚ-CRIȘAN 2014, 92, Fig. 44 a, b.

²² GUDEA 1989, 676, Pl. CCXXII/26.

²³ RÉVÉSZ 1989, 513-541.

²⁴ HEITEL 1986, 241.

²⁵ HARHOIU 1972, 417-425.

²⁶ CIUGUDEAN/PINTER/RUSTOIU 2006, 111/98, 116/20; DRAGOTĂ 2006, 104.

²⁷ The iron buckle was found in a tomb (FLORESCU/FLORESCU/CEACALOPOL 1961, 579) or other two bronze pieces (FLORESCU/CHELUȚĂ-GEORGESCU 1974, 431, Pl. IV, Fig. 4).

²⁸ NIȚU/ZAHARIA/TEODORU 1959, Fig. 6.4.

²⁹ HEITEL 1986, 241, footnote 28.

⁵ RUSU 1974.

⁶ The term reveals a member of the oriental rite, latter known as Orthodox, not to be understood the as ethnical meaning.

⁷ DIR C, XI, XII, XIII, 8.

⁸ BUDAY 1915, 52-111.

⁹ BUDAY 1915, 102-103.

¹⁰ BUDAY 1915, 105, Fig. 29.

¹¹ BUDAY 1915, 101

¹² BUDAY 1915, 110-111.

¹³ The plateau of the *Cămnin* Hill was fortified in the Late Bronze Age. In Roman times, the slopes of the hill served as stone quarry and later cells were carved, probably serving as Late Roman Age tombs (see note 38).

¹⁴ RUSU 1974, 266-267.

¹⁵ RUSU 1974, 267-268.

certainty is impossible. In adding up the shortage of data regarding the proper archaeological context of the object is a parallel situation from Kána, a perished medieval village from Hungary. In a 12th century child's grave a similar type object was found as clothing accessory. The author concluded that the buckle was heirloom piece, and proposed that such objects reappeared in the Carpathian Basin between the second half of the 11th century and the beginning of the 12th century and could be connected with the Pechenegs³⁰.

Another important artefact that originates from the *Wessellényi-Teleky* collection is the fragment of a bronze casted encolpion. As all the rest of that collection, the pectoral cross was also published before³¹. Until now such artefacts were rare in Transylvania, but not in Moldavia were the large number of such objects suggests that there were popular there in the High Middle Ages³². Close analogies for this fragment of the *encolpia* were recently found in Dej³³ and Herina³⁴. Also the National Museum of Transylvania from Cluj-Napoca has such a piece in its collection³⁵.

More recent finds enrich our understanding about the medieval habitat in *Porolissum*. In the late 1990's a medieval tool deposit was discovered in the periphery of modern day Moigrad (Fig. 1-2). The content of the deposit consisting of multiple iron tools was initially dated as belonging to the Iron Ages. It was only after restauration and the appearance of some incised marks that it was clear that it could not be but of medieval origins³⁶. Unfortunately we had access only to three of those items: an axe, a sickle and an adze (Fig. 15-17). The axe has a capital "M" like incision on one of its sides. The place of discovery does not hold-up any archaeological burden besides the medieval objects that were buried in a small pit.

During the archaeological diggings of the Roman Age house known in literature as *LM3*³⁷, in the superior layers, between the inside walls of the structure many medieval items were discovered from a wide timeline. The earliest objects consist of an iron axe that can be dated largely between the 10th and the 11th centuries (Fig. 20), a half rounded buckle and some chain links (Fig. 19, 25). In an upper layer other iron objects were discovered: one buckle (Fig. 21), a wide edge axe (Fig. 18) and a 14th century rowel spur (Fig. 22). Analysing the context in which the objects were found we realize that there were multiple upper layers. For instance the early medieval axe, the half rounded buckle and the chain links were found at 0.5 m depth, and the wide edge axe, the small rectangular buckle and the spur were found at depths between 0.15-0.35m. In other words there were at least two layers from different time laps. Unfortunately we did not have the opportunity to analyse the pottery discovered inside the walls of *LM3*. A dedicated analysis of the findings corroborated with stratigraphy information could give us more information about the usage of the ruined Roman

house in the Middle Ages. At this point we could only assume that the walls of *LM3* were still standing in the Middle Ages and reutilised in two different timelines, sometime in the 10th-11th centuries and in the 14th century.

MONKS, HERMITS AND MONASTERIES

Probably the most enigmatic structure that could be found around *Porolissum* is the complex of the carved cells, which is believed to have been Anchorite dwellings. No written source mentions them and at this time we have no archaeological evidence related to those structures. Two different locations have carved cells (Fig. 2) both in the vicinity of modern day Jac village, at a considerable distance from each other.

The first location is at the base of *Cămnin Hill*³⁸ in a Roman Age stone quarry (Fig. 2). The quadrilateral entrance of the cell from *Cămnin* is extremely small, no more 1m high and probably around 1.5m wide (Fig. 30). Preceding the empty of the small entrance, the carvers cut out from the mass of the rock a door imprint for a double frame (?). The semi-circular tympanum over the rectangular emptiness of the entrance has astonishing resemblance to Romanesque as it was highlighted before³⁹ (Fig. 30). Inside, the ceiling follows a semi-cylindrical shape over a small rectangular shaped room. Opposite to the door, which is on the eastern side of the room, lays a bolted tall niche. Next to the northern wall is a small built trough in the shape of a cist (?). The whole structure and the niche on the western wall suggest that the cave served as a sacred place, and until now the rock-cut cell was believed to be a part of an anchorite monastery⁴⁰. The discovering of the paleo-Christian *graffiti* made on a Roman brick and that of the cist (?) also the small and impracticable entrance and the small chamber⁴¹ indicates that the whole structure could not function as hermits cell or church. Until now all the evidence suggests that it may have been a paleo-Christian funerary monument. Surely there must be other carved spaces in the old Roman sandstone quarry, nowadays covert and concealed from our eyes.

Another site is located more 1.7 km south-west from *Cămnin* in a place called *Jac's Vineyards* (Rom. *Viile Jacului*) (Fig. 2). The monument called by locals *Monu's Cell* (Rom. *Pemnița Monului*) has two chambers with niches that enrich the inner walls. The entrance is located on the north steep of the ridge, is considerably larger and thicker than that of the *Cămnin* cell, and it has a semi-circular arch. In its thickness some perforations are remains of a massive door frame and the imprint of the door on the inside and the vertical carving of the doors pivot on the inside (Fig. 32).

Both rooms have rectangular layouts, being divided

³⁰ VARGHA 2013, 70-72, table 11/6.

³¹ RUSU 1974, 266-267; GUDEA 1989, 673, Pl. CCXX/23.

³² SPINEI 1992, 126-127, 134-138, 451, Fig. 17.

³³ ISAC 2008, 77-84, Pl. L/1-2.

³⁴ MARINESCU 2014, 197-212.

³⁵ ISAC 2008, 80, Pl. LI/1-2.

³⁶ We give our gratitude to archaeologist Dumitru Gheorghe Tamba, PhD. for the valued information.

³⁷ TAMBA 2008, 247.

³⁸ In the summer of 2015 one of the cells was archaeologically investigated. The main find consists in a Roman age brick wearing Christian symbols scribbled on one of its sides. The authors of the dig proposed the dating of the graffiti between the 4th and the 6th centuries AD invoking analogies for the monument in Cappadocia in a press communicate: <http://www.magazinsalaje.ro/rural/pe-urmele-primilor-crestini-din-salaj-noi-descoperiri-arheologice-la-jac.html>.

³⁹ RUSU 1974, 268.

⁴⁰ RUSU 1974, 268.

⁴¹ The details of the 2015 dig were presented openly at the *Ancient History and Archaeology Students Group meeting/Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca* (Cercul de istorie veche și arheologie. UBB Cluj-Napoca) on March 4th 2016 by Dan Băcuț-Crișan, PhD. and Adrian Martin, PhD. candidate.

from each other by a sculpted wall. The access from the first room into the second one is being made through a large vaulted door way. The same wall separates the rooms; the hermits carved other two similar niches, one ending up as a window. The first room is the larger of the two. On the southern end lies a carved block as table and next to it two rectangular small niches arranged on top of each other. The background of the prismatic table is rough and has the appearance of a large unfinished carved niche, or maybe just a large arched niche that has been broken in time. The west wall has aligned horizontal perforations that probably sustained a wooden panelling (?). The same wall has a beam imprinting near the corner on the south extremity of the space. On the floor, along the wall lies another beam imprint. The girder mark could have served as a support for the wall panelling as well for the board floor.

The second room, follows the same layout, but of smaller size in plan and height. The south extremity of this chamber has also a big vaulted niche and it was not carved to the ground level. The top of the eastern wall has also a small cavity serving probably as a support for a candle or maybe for an icon.

Similar manmade caves exists in Tihany Peninsula from the Balaton Lake in Hungary⁴², the hermit caves from Nagymaros in the vicinity of Visegrád⁴³ and those of Szentkút⁴⁴ near today's border of Hungary with Slovakia. The similarity between those caves is that the networks of chambers carved in rock or even natural crevasses were linked by masonry walls. The amplex of future archaeological diggings might prove that such walls existed in the case of the *Monu's Cell* monastery. The quoted analogies were dated largely anywhere between the 10th and the 14th centuries as eastern rite monasteries⁴⁵, but the dating of the caves from Jac could be narrowed down considerably. The existence of such places of worship in *Meseş* area in the vicinity of the ruins of ancient *Porolissum* was not random, as are not the other medieval finds.

If we give credibility to historians like Gyula Moravcsik there were circa 600 Byzantine monasteries in the Arpadian Kingdom until the Mongol invasion in 1241⁴⁶. Other historians like István Baán even suggested a Byzantine archbishopric created in early 11th centuries in Kalocsa (Metropolitan area) which controlled 3 bishoprics: of Transylvania in Alba Iulia (Hung. Gyulafehérvár), another one in Cenad (Hung. Csanád), and that of Biharea (Hung. Bihar)⁴⁷. Scholars like Ioan-Aurel Pop submit to the idea that in the 11th-13th centuries Hungary the majority of the confirmed places of worship were actually of Byzantine rite⁴⁸. Another Romanian historian used a new method of research: the analysis of clergyman onomastics in the Early Arpadian Period. The results of his scientific incursion were surprising⁴⁹.

A much more sceptic perspective gives us the

historian László Koszta who questions the theory of a proper Byzantine church administration but admits that Byzantine monasticism occurred in the first two centuries after the Christianization of Saint Stephen (Hung. Szent István)⁵⁰. In any case Byzantine monastic life existed in the early days of the Hungarian Kingdom, especially in Transylvania where literary sources mentioned a Byzantine bishop, *Hierotheus*, since the second half of the 10th centuries⁵¹, literary sources reinforced by recent archaeological discoveries in Alba Iulia (Hung. Gyulafehérvár)⁵². In today's Banat region, in Cenad initially was founded a Greek monastery until 1030's when the Benedictine monk, Gerard was anointed as bishop. The same Gerard became later a martyr and Catholic saint. After 1030 that Greek monastery founded by dux *Ahtum* in his *urbs Morisena*, later called Cenad was transformed into a Latin religious centre of the diocese of Cenad⁵³.

The complexity of the subject and the abundance of the published studies gave us a large amount of material for a detailed future study about the monuments near today's *Jac* village. Future archaeological investigations will give us new data and help unveiling more of the story behind the monument. *Monu's Cell* is not the only one such establishment in today *Jac's Vineyards* hamlet. Other such monuments could be hidden underground near *Monu's Cell*, and thus having a complex of cells.

Referring at the cases of Kalocsa, Cenad and even Alba Iulia, the fate of the cave monastery near the ruins of *Porolissum* seemed to follow the same pattern. From the 12th centuries we have the first written evidence: the Catholic monastery of St. Margaret of *Meseş*. In 1165 Hungarian king Stephen III offered privileges to the monks of the St. Margaret monastery that was built during the reign of the duke *Almus* in *Meseş*. The charter dictates that all the salt traders that will be passing through the *Meseş* Gate would be taxed by the monastery⁵⁴, all the salt exploitation in that period being under royal monopoly. From the written sources we know that the abbey functioned in the 14th century⁵⁵.

In the 19th centuries and even in the early 20th century scholars disputed over the localization of the famous St. Margaret monastery of *Meseş*. Voices like Bunyitay Vincze's identified in the ruins of Cheud (a village situated more than 40 km north-east from the *Meseş* Mountains) the remains of the medieval abbey of St. Margaret. Petri Mór subscribed to his antecesor having the conviction that those ruins were the remains of the St. Margaret abbey⁵⁶. No long after Petri

⁵⁰ KOSZTA 2014, 127-143.

⁵¹ ZAHARIA/TEODOR/THEODORESCU 2001, 296; POP 2010, 49-64; SĂLĂGEAN 2010, 65-68; MADGEARU 2010, 69-94.

⁵² In 1975 the late archaeologist Radu Heitel claimed that he found the ruins of an older church that the ones dated in the 11th century that were found earlier underneath the floors of the cathedral. The older church was named *Cathedral I. a* (The *Cathedral I.* is known in literature as the ruins of the basilica under the floors of the standing monument). The *Cathedral I. a* was not published properly with a plan, pictures, drawings, etc. – see: HEITEL 1975, 346. However in 2011 those ruins were rediscovered and unearthed integrally and documented properly. The plan of the old church follows a Byzantine layout and was dated in the 10th-11th centuries – see MARCU-ISTRATE 2014, 93-140.

⁵³ ZAHARIA/TEODOR/THEODORESCU 2001, 296-297.

⁵⁴ DIR C, XI, XII, XIII, 8.

⁵⁵ DRH C, XI, 438.

⁵⁶ PETRI 1901, 580.

⁴² ESZTERHÁS 2012, 236-239.

⁴³ ESZTERHÁS 2012, 240-242.

⁴⁴ ESZTERHÁS 2012, 242-244.

⁴⁵ ESZTERHÁS 2012, 235.

⁴⁶ POP 2010, 50.

⁴⁷ BAÁN 1997, 67-73.

⁴⁸ POP 2010, 50.

⁴⁹ TURCUŞ 2011, 65-79

Mór wrote his monography of Sălaj county⁵⁷, the Hungarian archaeologist Buday Árpád conducted diggings on the *Pomet* Hill și in 1914. There, among Roman Age structures and finds he also brought to light medieval cist tombs (Fig. 38-40) and fragments of medieval decorative stonework (Fig. 41-43-45), a spur (Fig. 42) and up to 10 medieval coins found as oblation in tombs or just scattered through the debris⁵⁸.

The precise location of the 1914 digging campaign was lost until the late archaeologist Alexandru V. Matei, installing a topographical landmark in the vicinity of the place named *Sub/La Bisericuță*, found fragments of a human skull, in this way identifying in fact the site in which Buday conducted his research a century before⁵⁹. The toponym *Sub/La Bisericuță* (Eng. *Chapel's Place*) is mentioned on the *First Austrian Survey*, thus being dated at least in the second half of the 18th century (Fig. 37). In the same area medieval coins were randomly found. The oldest pieces were minted in the time of Béla II (1131 - 1141), other ones being dated in the time of Béla III (1172 - 1196), Béla IV (1235 - 1270) and Carol Robert (1307 - 1342)⁶⁰.

In 1999 during the systematically archaeological research in the vicinity of the *porta principalis dextra* of the Roman *castrum* on the *Pomet* Hill there were found some pits that contained medieval pottery as some fragments were identified in the deposit (Fig. 14). In the preliminary report a late 10th-12th century habitation level was mentioned⁶¹. Some authors suggested that a lost medieval settlement existed somewhere near *Porolissum*. The assumption was made based by multiple written sources that the presumed settlement was mentioned several times, first in 1281, after that in 1363 as *Monasterium Mezespatak* and finally in 1385 as *possessio Monusturpatak*⁶². Prudence is required when operating with written sources. Not always the term *possessio* describes a medieval village, sometimes is just a piece of estate, of land that in this case, probably belonged to the abbey. The brief information about the results of the 1999 diggings does not allow us to draw any bold conclusions regarding the existence of a medieval village near the *porta principalis dextra* of the Roman fort.

In 2008 the Babeș-Bolyai University debuted with the project *Necropolis Porolissensis* that comprised all the burial sites known at the time. Among other ones, a sector was dedicated to the medieval burial site. A small 4x4m trench uncovered a stone slab cist containing a skeleton along with other bones from previous burials arranged in on each side in the interior of the cist (Fig. 48). In the same trench other 19 skeletons were found leading authors to believe that the human remains belonged to victims of pestilence⁶³. In the next year in the same trench another 17 skeletons were found but only one had a 12th century coin (Stephen III) as oblation⁶⁴. The conductors of the diggings suggested with no real argument that the medieval burial site was a mass grave. The successively burials have left archaeological traces. New

tombs disturb old ones, situation absolutely visible (Fig. 46-47).

About the localization of St. Margaret Abbey, rounding up all the data we have, the clues indicates that the abbey functioned near the Roman road west of the Roman *castrum* from *Pomet* Hill in the *Chapel's Place* (Rom. *La/Sub Bisericuță*) as the toponym suggests it at least since the 1700's. The 1914 diggings⁶⁵, the coins founded randomly⁶⁶, the 1999 diggings⁶⁷, the two research campaigns: 2008-2009, and even the *Monasterium Mezespatak* term mentioned in 1363 and then as *possessio Monusturpatak* in 1385 complete the image of the St. Margaret Abbey functioning among the ruins of ancient *Porolissum*.

THE FORTRESS

Despite the amplitude of the archaeological campaigns undertaken on the *Măgura* Hill top we do not know much about its medieval past. Most of the archaeological results regarding the medieval period remained unpublished and hidden in the archaeology deposits of the County Museum of History and Art from Zalău (Rom. Muzeul Județean de Istorie și Artă Zalău).

In 1979 Mircea Rusu, one of the many archaeologists who studied *Măgura Moigradului* mentioned nothing about traces of its medieval past. He proposes, after some archaeological investigations, that the nearby *Cămnin* Hill was fortified in the Early Middle Ages⁶⁸. It is probably only later in the 1980's or 1990's that the first medieval traces were found.

We do not know anything about the size of the medieval fortress on the *Măgura* plateau. The primary interest was always directed towards the Dacian and Roman Age discoveries. Unfortunately after so many archaeological campaigns we could not tell which of the fortification features are medieval, or how much of the plateau was fortified. A cistern was discovered, but the debate about dating it in Middle Ages or in the Roman Age is still open.

The archaeological objects that are preserved in the deposits of the County Museum of History and Art from Zalău are dated in the 11th-14th centuries. For the moment only a few artefacts were accessible for this publication: a pseudo-Arabic copper coin (Fig. 8) minted by Béla III (1172-1196)⁶⁹; a bronze war flail end (?) (Fig. 9), an iron sickle (Fig. 10), an iron buckle (Fig. 7) and a fragment of a hand-made kaolin clay jug painted with red stripes (Fig. 13). Excepting the jug which can be dated in the 14th century, all the artefacts are dated in the 11th-13th centuries. A dedicated research of the documentation and of the finds from *Măgura Moigradului* would definitely resolve the chronological issues and the layout of the medieval establishment.

⁶⁵ BUDAY 1915,

⁶⁶ PRIPON 2010, 683-700.

⁶⁷ MATEI/BĂCUEȚ-CRIȘAN 2000.

⁶⁸ Mircea Rusu investigated the hilltop with two trenches in 1958, declaring that the few pieces of pottery discovered were too corroded and thus useless for precise dating, but he suspected that fortification might have been built in the Early Middle Ages (RUSU 1974, 266-267). Latter in 1994 another archaeologist, Călin Cosma continued the research. He concluded that the fortification could be dated between the 10th and the 11th centuries using planimetric analogies with other 10th-11th century fortifications as sole argument (COSMA 2000, 462, 472-475; Fig. 5; COSMA 2002, 201; Pl. 152, 280).

⁶⁹ UNGER 1974 I, 71, 115 (101).

⁵⁷ PETRI 1901-1904.

⁵⁸ BUDAY 1915, 52-111.

⁵⁹ This information was given by Alexandru V. Matei himself.

⁶⁰ PRIPON 2010, 687-688.

⁶¹ MATEI/BĂCUEȚ-CRIȘAN 2000.

⁶² SUCIU 1968, 372.

⁶³ GUDEA 2009, 153.

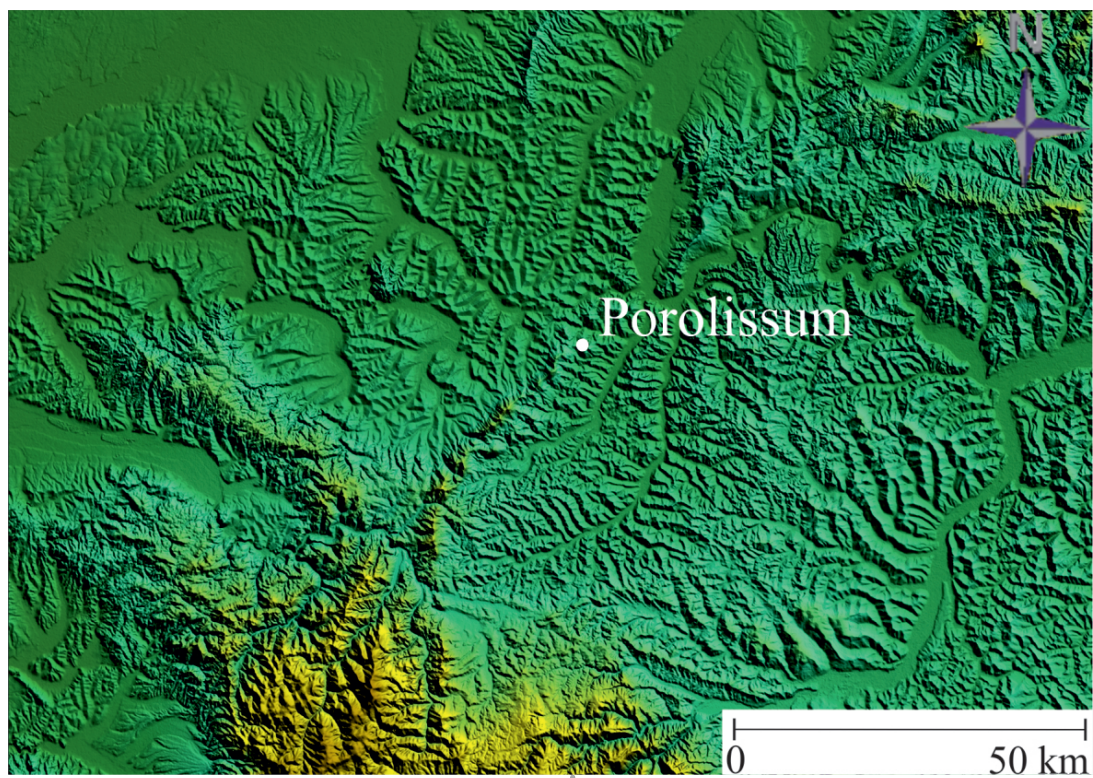
⁶⁴ GUDEA 2010, 104.

The existence of the medieval abbey and the contemporary fortification on the nearby hilltop was not accidentally. Today we have an idea about the importance of the *Meseş Gate* since Prehistory till today⁷⁰. Clearly the pass had to be watched and guarded. We also know that it was crossed by royal armies chasing Cuman raiders towards Chiraleş in 1068⁷¹ and later by the Mongols at the half of the 13th century. Recently studies suggest the reuse of the old Roman Roads through Middle Ages until the Late Modern Age⁷². The 1165 document give us a good perspective over the economic aspect of medieval life surrounding the Roman ruins. The discovery of a segment of paved road and of a stone-built Roman bridge south-east of *Porolissum* towards today's Jac village suggests the main way towards Cluj and from there to Turda or Cojocna, two important centers of salt exploitation in the Middle Ages. The existence of another medieval road that pierced along the Ortelec Valley, the so-called *Meseş Gate*, is suggested by a charter from 1359. It was probably the same road that slips south parallel to the *Meseş* chain and was mentioned in 1359 as *magnam viam, per quam solent deferre sales*⁷³ and probably intersected in or near Zalău with another one *viam Zenthpeter*⁷⁴. Mapping these features we realize that the fortification from *Măgura Moigradului* was guarding the *Meseş Gate* not only as pathway but more as a crossway of old reutilized Roman roads (Fig. 2).

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- ⁷⁰ RUSU 1974, 265-280; CSÓK 2010, 641-648; BĂCUEȚ-CRIȘAN 2015.
- ⁷¹ IIR, XI, 176-177.
- ⁷² FODOREAN 2006, 353-359.; TODA 2013, 55-64; TODA 2015, 253-275.
- ⁷³ DRH C, XI, 438.
- ⁷⁴ In the 1359 document another road was mentioned – *viam Zenthpeter*. The village Bozna across the *Meseş* had until the Late Modern Period also the name of St. Peterfalva. The matter of the medieval roads and paths that existed in the medieval Crasna (Hung. Kraszna) and Solnoc (Hung. Szolnok) counties is a subject that would deserve a more elaborated and dedicated study.

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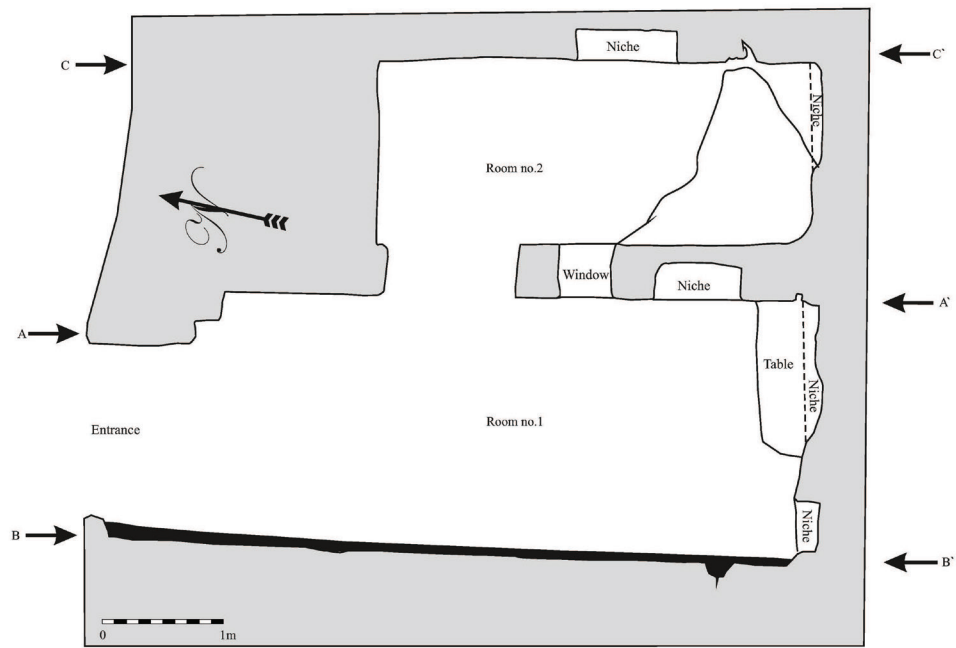
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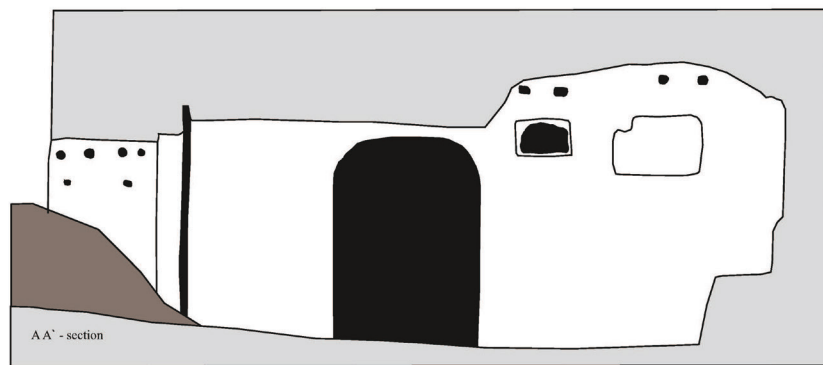
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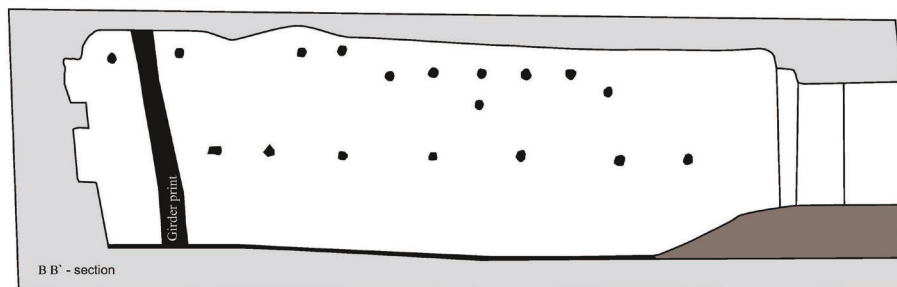
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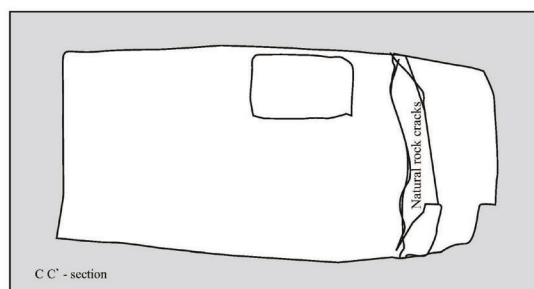
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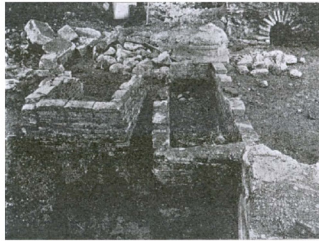
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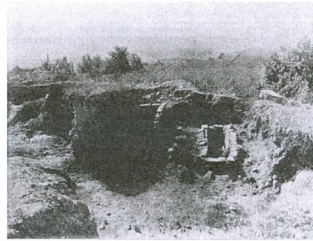
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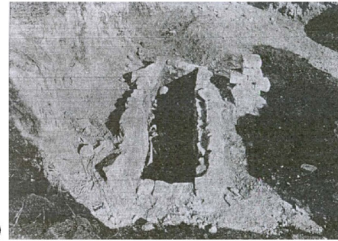
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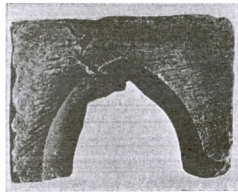
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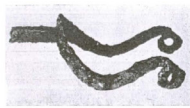
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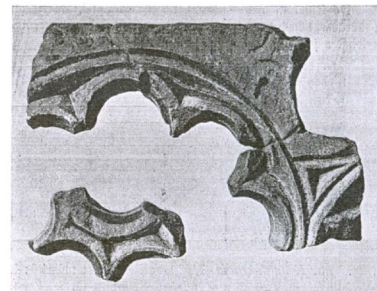
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