

*Examining Transylvanian Saxon Fortified Churches from the  
13th to the 16th Centuries*

**The History and Archaeology of the Saxon Rural Church in  
Romania: Roles and Identities**

**Volume I**



**Dealu Frumos fortified church and complex**

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## Abstract

**Title:** *Examining Transylvanian Saxon Fortified Churches from the 13th to the 16th Centuries; the History and Archaeology of the Saxon Rural Church in Romania: Roles and Identities.*

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This dissertation provides a multi-layered analysis of Saxon rural fortified churches from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries in Transylvania. By examining the histories and archaeologies of these poorly studied but prominent medieval survivals, the thesis explores the processes by which the Church transformed Saxon social structures and considers how far structure and form reflect that society and its evolving identities. The timeframe spans the primary Saxon colonization of Transylvania until the occupation of the region by the Turks after 1526. Critically, almost all of the Saxon villages and churches originated and were subsequently fortified during this period and many have remained relatively unaltered since. Three major research strategies are employed: (1) a quantitative analysis of data for the representative regions of Braşov and Sibiu Counties; (2) detailed analysis of the form and function of the built units; and (3) detailed assessment of two major case studies. Data were collected from published and archival reports and sources, plus interviews, newspapers and site surveys. Core to the whole is the creation of a Gazetteer of Saxon sites in Braşov and Sibiu Counties.

The thesis considers Saxon fortified complexes in their site and landscape setting, but first reviews medieval to modern Saxon Transylvania, evaluating the impact of events on the Saxon peoples, and then details the nature of Saxon rights, privileges, and administration in their lands and settlements. The roles and development of the Saxon fortified churches are next explored, assessing topographic, defensive, material and economic considerations and evolutions. The final part of the thesis analyses the morphology, domestic, cultural and social life of the Saxon fortified church and village, through which we may assess other angles of evolving Saxon identity. In addition, the thesis has considered the heritage of complexes – how viewed, how maintained, issues of access, of decay – and their recognition by UNESCO and European Union departments.

The thesis reveals a specific Saxon colonial form which adapted to a near constancy of threat and uncertainty. The survival of so many components of this distinctive past requires far more attention from scholars to appreciate fully the Saxon contribution.

## Acknowledgements

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Core to this thesis, I extracted stories, data, and histories from the German Saxon communities in Braşov and Sibiu counties that welcomed me on so many occasions. It took me four years to produce this final text (ahead of time, however!), and much of this time was spent thinking and talking and thinking and trying out ideas, stealing precious time and energy from two wonderful friends and writing partners, Elvira Palffy and Antal Nagy from the Székelyföld in Csíkszereda, Romania; both helped immensely in translating some of the secondary literature written in Hungarian and Romanian. I lived in Csíkszereda on a Fulbright program in 2002 and 2003 and thus began my fascination with the Saxons and Székely peoples of Transylvania. I know that without you two this wouldn't have happened—without your encouragement, translation support and sincere involvement, I might have given up, who knows. I will always remember our group emails and frank discussions over coffee in Tuşnad, Biertian and Codlea.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

Transylvania still evokes an almost mythical place to most of us today. While the world continues to rapidly change in the twenty first century, not enough is known about this region of Romania outside the countries that border it. It has long been fictionalized with macabre and horrific tales told by persons without any connections to first hand knowledge of the area. While more attention is being paid to Transylvania today, more needs to be done. Those that do travel through the region, find it steeped in history, the medieval most prominent in this regard with many well preserved structures but much more can be discovered.

Transylvania is a hilly region situated in the center of Romania and it represents a very special cultural landscape. Bearing the mark of a centuries-long mingled life of Germans, Saxons, Romanians, Hungarians and other ethnic groups, it has a unique feature: nowhere else in the world are there to be found, preserved, in such a compressed area, so many reinforced fortified medieval churches, signifying such a varied material expression of faith and secular defense. The origin and development of these fortified churches are undoubtedly linked to the troubled history of the region, beginning with German settlements along the borders of Latin Christendom in the twelfth century and the Tartar invasion of the thirteenth century, through repeated Turkish forays and occupation after 1526 to the modern period of the Balkans.

The primary colonization program in Transylvania instigated by the Hungarians was in the thirteenth century and resulted in large areas being settled by various groups across a 100 year period. The Saxon German population remains the largest and most enduring of the Transylvania settlement groups. Fredrick Barth's (1979) history of the Saxons provides an important account of the life of these peoples. The Saxon settlements concentrated around easily defended regions and created large towns, small villages and numerous sub-communities.

These German settlements were encouraged by the Hungarian King Géza II and they formed the nucleus of the seven judicial districts of the Saxons. King Géza II used these as manpower reserves for defense and as a method to legitimize the Transylvania region land claim by Hungary. From the 1100s until the 1990s, Braşov and Sibiu counties became the center of the Transylvanian Germans, with the capital at Sibiu. This region was not merely an uninhabited border region but a large royal-land where no previous group had had property rights or claims. These districts came to be allocated by Hungarian Kings to foreign colonists, who governed themselves in return for loyalty to the King and protection of the Hungarian Kingdom's southern border. The Saxons, having these privileges, formed a strong unified community, which gave birth to the so-called 'Nationsuniversität' or Saxon Nation. It is in the context of this nation which was not a country but a protected ethnic class that we see the emergence and evolution of the Saxon farms, villages, towns and even cities.

There is a need to expand and add new knowledge to the history of Saxon fortified churches which remain partially reconstructed and studied. A study of selected Saxon villages and churches will fill in gaps of knowledge from the period; specifically, we need to question how these churches formed the basis of the population and transmitted a sense of community that survived for over eight hundred years during some of the most repressive times in human history.

Much of the current information about these churches is disjointed and un-synthesized. Several sites have been designated as UNESCO World Heritage Sites (see section 1.6.3) even though they are relatively unknown outside Romania. Investigating the history and development of the Saxon Church within the context of religion, society, economic and social interaction is the central research question of this thesis. How and

why did these fortified churches and their communities originate and then evolve and, indeed, survive? How successful was the Saxon village church in moderating and mediating the ethnic interaction between German, Hungarian and Romanian communities?

The current settings and existence of the Saxon Fortified Church, as previously stated, have no complete explanation. I see this as the core of my research, seeking to analyze and explore these areas. The research is important because it will highlight the value of these sites, properly question their form and context, and will develop a working framework that may allow future scholars to direct their thoughts and research in this area.

## **1.2 The Thesis Timeframe**

My research concentrates on placing the Saxon fortified churches of Transylvania in their settlement context between the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries, using analytical frameworks to establish hierarchy and relationships and then testing this by exploring the roles and identities of the Church in its varied settings. The timeframe encompasses the primary Saxon colonization and subsequent building phases until the occupation of the region by the Turks after 1526. Critically, almost all of the Saxon villages and churches originated and were subsequently fortified during this period and many have remained relatively unaltered since. The post-sixteenth century represents a continuation of the culture but not a significant alteration of design and purpose of the structures themselves. In order to sample and record a sufficient amount of these unique structural complexes, I have selected the counties of Braşov and Sibiu containing some 74 and 162 specific Saxon settlement sites respectively. These two counties represent the largest portion of the remaining Saxon settlements and heritage in the region. With Soviet occupation of Transylvania in 1944, many Saxons outside of these counties escaped to return to Germany and abandoned their homeland. Sibiu and Braşov counties therefore represent a robust cross section of the Saxon villages that remained after 1944. These sites are typically small rural villages with less than 50 church members; however, there are also several urban centers in each county with larger Saxon groups. Finally, selected fortified

churches, as specific case studies, will be placed in their landscape context and then evaluated.

The thesis is intended to widen knowledge of the region by investigating the roles and identities of the Saxon Fortified Church. The thesis will examine the documentary data, the architectural and archaeological evidence, village morphology and other sources relating to the time period. Historically, the essence of the Saxon community is predicated on the past and those events that shaped and formed Saxon society before its arrival in Transylvania in the mid-twelfth century. This thesis focuses on the fortified churches in several communities and is designed to examine and define the differences between the churches in their style, materials, method of construction and defensive schemes employed to protect the population. Are these regional or cultural differences? Do 'Saxon' identity and Church identity vary in each county and if so, why? By looking at the relationships of the communities with each other, the surrounding Saxon and non-Saxon communities and the church within the framework of the community one can evaluate the importance and function of the fortified church in its social context. Key to the whole thesis is the compilation of an extensive Gazetteer in English, enabling a full listing of crucial data for each site across the counties under study.

### **1.3 The Research Problem**

What are the roles and identities of the Saxon Fortified Church as they relate to the processes of colonization and the attainment of a stable presence and identity in Transylvania? The thesis looks at Saxon fortified complexes in their setting and then evaluates their importance as centers of refuge in times of danger, their importance as a part of the landscape; it then compares these values with others such as administrative, religious, ethnic and economic aspects. The research problem is addressed in four parts. The first is a review of medieval to modern Saxon Transylvania, evaluating the Saxon peoples as they were influenced by the major historical events of Central Europe from the thirteenth through to the twentieth centuries. Second is an assessment of the settlement role of the Saxon population including rights, privileges, and administration and the nature of their defensive fortifications designed to protect their culture and society. The

third part will be to define the roles and development of the Saxon fortified church. These buildings became a part of wild and dangerous landscape of this unsettled region. What were the topographic considerations of church building, what were the original requirements that went into locating and then building the structure and how did it change over time? This section will explore the how and why these churches developed as military fortified structures and their subsequent roles in the context of the surroundings. The fourth part of the thesis considers the morphology, domestic, cultural and social life of the Saxon fortified church and village, through which we might be able to assess the basic nature of the Saxon identify in Transylvania over time.

#### **1.4 Thesis Methodology**

An integrated multiple aspect approach is employed for the thesis. The methodology includes in-depth archival research, documentary analysis, and site survey research culminating in a Gazetteer and in several case studies. Qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection have been used in order to examine the different aspects of the fortified churches and villages and thereby to seek a complete investigation of the related research questions.

As part of the research, I conducted a site survey of each Saxon village in Sibiu and Braşov counties detailing its GPS location, current status and ownership, along with a substantial photographic record of the condition of each site. In many cases, access was difficult due to unimproved and unmarked roads with many impassable to automobiles. This proved to be much more time consuming and a greater hindrance to data collection than expected. Once arriving on site, gaining access proved again to be more difficult than anticipated. Beginning in 2005, many sites have been secured with locks that no one seems to be able to open. Bureaucratic organization is not clear and often after traveling for more than 30 km over unimproved roads, one finds that the keys and access permission is elsewhere and one has to re-trace the route to acquire the proper documentation and permission from another village. This is also complicated by ownership being split between the government and church authorities (abandoned churches are the purview of the Romania Government but the churches that have Saxon

populations but no preachers are opened on occasion for services and for specific events are maintained by the Saxon Church of Romania. Of the 236 sites, many churches have been abandoned and their records removed. Depending on the classification, the government may have the records or the records may have been moved and are being maintained by the Church in a different location. There remains no centralized record keeping system to ascertain where or who has current ownership of the materials.

While the Saxon populations have left, new ethnic groups have moved in and began altering the landscape to suit their particular needs. This activity includes renovations, salvage and in many cases destruction of Saxon structures.

With too much material, too many variables in the topic and of course too much controversy in Balkan politics it became evident that to do true justice to the topic, several important questions had to be held for later study. Namely; current site ownership, political sensitive topics in reference to the initial habitation of the region by ethnic groups and nationalistic assertions on heritage and rights are not included in this study. In addition, topics including the current political EU accession issues with the Romanian Government in reference to national minority's status and rights are also not included. Intentional omissions and oversimplifications of complex events may be dissatisfying but necessary. With this in mind, the author apologizes in advance for seemingly to ignore important evidence and knowledge of the Saxons in Transylvania. He will leave those issues to others (or myself) for some future time.

## 1.5 Thesis Structure

In outline, the thesis comprises eight main chapters. Chapter Two provides



Figure 1.01: Collapsed church choir at Velt.

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the research methodology of the thesis. Chapter Three reviews the current literature on the subject of medieval (thirteenth century) to modern (twentieth century) Saxon Transylvania and the initial historical context from the Hungarian origins and conquest in the ninth century through to the Saxon origins, movement and colonization of Transylvania. Chapter Four examines the settlement characteristics of place and space including topography, settlement patterns and distributions, rights, privileges, administration and defense. Chapter Five investigates the development of the fortified church under various scenarios, for example: the administrative functions of the church in Feldioara when, in 1281, it was constructed by the German Order of the Teutonic Knights. In addition to the administrative functions, Chapter Five examines the various defensive church elements and types of building in the church complex and their layout as well as the parts of the complex that are evidence of permanence based on function such as storage and living spaces. Chapter Six focuses on Saxon church plans and forms as ecclesiastical structures including the survival of the various complexes in the form of religious elements that are identifiable via documentation and / or physical observation. Chapter Seven examines, through selected case studies; settlement identities of the Saxon fortified church including the morphology, architectural development building construction and framework of the fortified church using specific examples well-preserved and studies churches at Cristian and Prejmer. Chapter Eight will provide the conclusions, outline the archaeological deficiencies and offer a view on the current condition of the fortified churches in the study region in terms of security management and future.

## **1.7 Current Status**

Finally, as will be discussed in detail in Chapter Eight, the Saxon experience in Transylvania is a unique one. Currently settlements are disappearing at an alarming rate. Many of the sites in Sibiu and Braşov are completely abandoned or have few Saxons remaining. Of those populations that do remain most are over the age of 65 and ageing rapidly. The status of the villages after this current generation is, I feel, thus very much in doubt. Thus, I very much hope that my research will not only record the sites as they

currently are but raise awareness of their value as well. We need to stop the decay evident in churches like Velt (figures 1.01 and 1.07) and to encourage wider scholarly recognition and analysis.



**Figure 1.02: Interior of collapsed church at Velt open to the elements since 2004.**

## CHAPTER TWO

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the scope of the research problem, methodology and design along with the purpose, objectives and underlying principles of the need to initiate a detailed analysis of the Saxon Fortified Church. The Saxon Fortified Churches of Transylvania are the manifestations of a people whose needs for defense and survival span some nine centuries. These structures represent unique features that are found nowhere else in the world, preserved, in such a concentrated territorial region. The study



Figure 2.01: Abandoned Saxon Fortified Church Complex at Tapu.

frames the rationale underlying the criteria used to select the case study areas and describes the sample areas researched. The chapter goes on to describe the delimitations and limitations of the study, the types of data collected, and the methods and equipment used to acquire and analyse these data.

## 2.2 Scope, Justification and Sources

The scope of this thesis is to investigate the form and character of the Saxon Fortified Church in an ethnically diverse region within the context of time, religion, economy and



Map 2.01: Southeastern Europe in c. AD 1444 including the Transylvania region.

social interaction. Specifically, using a topic analysis (Davis and Parker, 1997: 81), it examines how the Saxon German Fortified Church and community relate to the Hungarian and Romanian populations in Transylvania. Besides an historical and documentary survey of the churches, the study focuses on defining the different patterns

of interaction – i.e. roles and identities of the fortified church between the religious and military requirements of the Saxon communities. In an historically troubled region (Pal, 1992: 1-3), this successful interaction among the Saxons and between Hungarian and Romanian communities was invaluable and a close study will further our understanding of ethnic and religious diversity in the Balkans and Balkan history and politics (MacKenzie, 1984: 7-8; Prodan, 1992: 1-7). By looking at the relationships of the communities with each other, the surrounding Saxon, non-Saxon communities and the church within the framework of the community one can evaluate the importance and function of the fortified church in the community.

This project and thesis focus on the fortified churches in several communities in order to examine and define their forms and identities in terms of style, materials, method of construction and defensive schemes. The evidence of all sites surveyed are drawn upon in the analysis (see Chapters Four to Six), but with particular emphasis on two illuminating case studies in Chapter Seven.

So far, there has been no systematic study of these churches within the Transylvania region in the West (Halecki, 1980: 510-15; Harrison, 2004: 1). Past literature from the West has mainly concentrated on genealogical aspects of Siebenbürgen Germans who left the region since the 1990s and in reviews designed to increase tourism in the region (Tanase, 2005: 21-3). Peculiarly, whilst there is a substantive amount of literature and research on the history the Saxon population in Transylvania, there is a very limited amount of data on the role and identity of the fortified village church and its relationship to the population (Oprescu, 1961: 5-6; Rudofsky, 1977: 13, 221-4). Although a wide variety of sources in multiple countries are available for research, a limiting factor is the lack of English documentation available: primary sources are in Germany with the Siebenbürgen archives, in Hungary with the State Library and Archives (Csóka, 2004; Gecsényi, 2002) and in Romania within both regional and National Archives (Anonymous, 2008). The few English-speaking reviews are primarily translations of older existing documents and papers. For literature review, see Chapter Three below.

### **2.3 Research Problem and Hypotheses / Research Questions**

The problem of the Transylvanian Saxons is in understanding their origins in context within the roles and identities that they assimilated from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries. The Saxon urbanization and settlement program in Transylvania began in the twelfth century and resulted in multiple settlements and villages through the Carpathian basin. The research problem centers on a comprehensive study of the archaeological, cultural, social and historical evidence for the development, form and function of the fortifications of the Saxon churches and towns during the period when they were of the greatest social, political and economic importance to the Saxon villages of Transylvania. It is my aim, therefore, to explore the relationship between the activity of colonization and the attainment of a stable identity by means of a regional study of the Saxon Fortified Church in Transylvania. Where and what are these sites in terms of their landscape and designs? What is the nature of their defense and of the churches themselves and how uniform are they? The research is articulated in five parts. The first, in Chapter Three, reviews the historical context of medieval to modern Saxon Transylvania; incorporated into the review are the Saxon peoples as they were influenced by the major historical events of Central Europe from the thirteenth through the twentieth centuries. Second, in Chapter Four, is the settlement role of the Saxon population including: topology, rights, privileges, and administration and defense. The third part, in Chapter Five, will delineate the development of the fortified church to include typology, site building strategies, functional analysis and secular fortified elements including: towers, barbicans choirs, gateways, and wall defense elements of both church and complex. Chapter Six addresses the archaeological developments and the ecclesiastical typology of Saxon church plans and forms. The final section, in Chapter Seven, will examine the settlement identities of the fortified church, and the military architectural development and comparison through specific case studies.

## 2.4 Research Methodology

An integrated approach of inquiry involving the use of multiple methods and sources of data collection has been used for examining the roles and identities of the Saxon fortified church in Romania from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries. The study employs both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection, including in-depth archival research, document analysis, site survey research and case studies. Qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection have been used in order to examine the different aspects of the study and for offering as full an investigation of the questions raised as possible.

A qualitative inductive research methodology has been utilised. Section 2.2 outlined the scope and section 2.3 introduced the view that the research problem(s) were not clearly identifiable at the outset and it can be noted that the focus of the research converged over time as the study developed. A founding hypothesis was formulated and augmented by a set of questions, which were thus refined and revised as the research progressed and as the author developed a clearer understanding of the situation.

A number of different research techniques was sought in order to obtain well-triangulated results (Leedy, 1997: 1-20). Elaborating on the discussion in Section 2.7, data collection and analysis in the sample areas used qualitative and quantitative techniques. These techniques included events analysis (Olzak, 1989: 120-1), archival research of Sibiu and Braşov Counties (see Map 2.02), site survey of selected villages and global positioning satellite (GPS) mapping.

A simultaneous narrow focus on the case study villages and a broad view of developments in Sibiu and Braşov county settlements in greater Transylvania is essential. The aim is to strengthen the validity of both the research context and the research questions. The research thus involves both GPS mapping and archival research conducted in each of the case studies, where possible. These provide snapshots of the individual case studies at particular stages of the development cycle from informal to formal rights in each settlement, within a broader environment of a region undergoing transformation. These data sets attempt to measure behaviour and trace beliefs, attitudes and behavioural intentions, plus

norms and controls using the evaluative framework developed in section 2.7 and discussed fully in Chapter Six. In the author's opinion, to gain a valid portrayal of the relationships between roles and identities of the Church and the Saxon community, each data set needed to be augmented by further data obtained through archival research in Germany and Hungary. Consequently, for both Braşov and Sibiu Counties, the study areas were monitored by periodic site visits and ongoing archival research. Moreover, in addition to studying two specific case studies, the author interviewed community officials who work in the villages and in the local authorities which administer the various Transylvanian Institutes.



**Map 2.02: Transylvania Region with Braşov and Sibiu Counties highlighted.**

The nature of the problems that might be expected in the case studies, plus hypotheses, and research questions were formulated initially upon a review of existing work in Romania and Hungary. For example, in Kupiszewshi (1997: 9-12) the key indicators and variables provide insight as to the formation of the data collected. Furthermore, as data came to be acquired and analysed in each successive area, it became possible to draw comparisons

between the case studies and to establish if particular explanations for a particular type of village church development applied to the wider Saxon communities in Transylvania.

## 2.5 Delimitations of Scope and Key Assumptions

To what degree are delimitations and limitations imposed on the study? Here, delimitations describe the data to which generalizations may be safely made. Limitations, in the context of the research proposal, refer to the limiting conditions or restrictive weaknesses of archival research without conducting on site archaeological fieldwork. There are times when all factors cannot be controlled as part of the study design and this thesis is no exception.

The thesis is delimited in the following ways:

1. The study focus was medieval and thus restricted to the timeframe between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries.
2. The Braşov and Sibiu county fortified churches were the sole source of data used in the study.
3. For the data analysis, a random sample of thirty sites was used. This sample, thus medieval because of the time of migrations of the Saxons and the founding of the sites, was representative of all the villages in Sibiu and Braşov counties although there were enough villages in the sample to make generalizations concerning Saxon fortifications and defenses. The sample sizes for other type data such as settlement roles were too small to use for this purpose.
4. No access was available to records, reports, and correspondence of several of the other villages because of the demise of Saxon populations since 1990. These records are in fact most often widely scattered among the living relatives in Germany and Austria and both time and financial limitations make it very difficult, if not impossible, to include these in the research. Important documents are located and accessible in the archives Sibiu and Braşov counties. The Archivists of these counties have been very helpful.
5. The study was restricted to two major case studies at Cristian and Prejmer. The case studies are large Saxon fortified churches, serving approximately 5,000 or more Saxons prior to 1989 with medieval structures intact and substantively unaltered since the sixteenth century.
6. An attempt is naturally made to be factual and accurate in reconstructing data sets. The research attempts to triangulate information, using multiple sources whenever possible, and to refrain from stating assumptions based on little or no evidence. The research is not merely a history of Transylvania Saxons and therefore

references will be made to historical events only to highlight an action or event in study of the fortified church.

The thesis was limited in the following ways:

1. The limitations of the study are related to the timing of the study, the population, and the reliance on the chosen documents.
2. Site survey results and tasks were developed within the framework of research questions.
3. The archival data and the resulting documents were prepared and presented to the researcher by numerous archival facilities. Consequently, the thesis and data sets relied on the facilities to accurately provide all requested archival data without restrictions based on political or ethnic considerations and implications.
4. All of the data, the tasks, the results, and successes were reported by the researcher. There was no independent verification of the information provided.
5. The project is specific to a 300 year period of time, and to the involvement of a Church body with a distinct theological and mission position, in a country that was experiencing unique historical events. This unique mix will probably never repeat itself, and to some extent the findings will be site specific.

However, certain patterns and themes, notably regarding the roles and identities of the Saxon Fortified Church, will most certainly add to the general body of knowledge of Central European medieval history. Despite necessary limitations in data imposed by the character and location of some sites, the research is important, providing valuable information from the study that is nevertheless valid, useful and has been considered during the formulation of the study.

## **2.6 Case Study Selection Criteria**

The initial phase of the research was an instrumental collation of a Gazetteer followed by detailed case studies of two individual village church sites. The two sample cases as defined in the Gazetteer were used for identifying and understanding the origins of the processes where:

1. Saxons in time of war would flee their villages and shelter in fortified churches with their families and most prized possessions.
2. The community / communal identity influenced their building methods and defense construction styles.
3. Saxon villages surrounded a central church in the best defensible land. The fortified churches were then walled and provisioned in a communal style with

the village essentials. The identity of the church was then blended into the cultural identity of the Saxon community.

4. The Church's role developed over time and in context with the periodic invasions of the Mongols, Turks and others.
5. The interaction between the church and the community with regard to military concerns and needs; military priorities and their influences on fortified church development and the influence of the fortified church on village development.

The case studies have been used to qualitatively interpret and evaluate results, as well as to clarify the trade-offs that faced Saxon communities trying to improve their security and culture in what was always largely a frontier area. In addition, attention is given to the topography, geography and landscape of the villages.

The case studies enable closer analysis of a series of issues. In particular, I will focus on understanding how the churches, roles and identities of the villages determined the character of the Saxon communities in Romania between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries, as well as their survival across and beyond the study period. How static were these sites and communities? How much can a study of form, topography and evolution guide us on this?

Case studies are still considered provisional in some areas. The most common criticism of the case study is that its dependence on a single case or a small population of cases renders it incapable of providing a generalizing conclusion. Determining a representative site is not an easy task but provision of the fuller Gazetteer will help show the degree of representativeness. While a delimiting factor discussed in section 2.5, these factors are considered within the research design and therefore acceptable within the established objectives of the study (Yin, 1994: 33-7). Nonetheless, the case studies illustrate how data can be collected from a variety of sources in order to explore the history and context of the Saxon Fortified Church and to provide analysis. This leads to a number of important lessons for researching roles and identities of the Saxon communities.

Case study research with these characteristics provides a unique opportunity for learning if the roles and identities of the church appropriately represented and / or influenced the communal quality and lifestyles of these villages between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries. Identifying cases of strong continuity and survival of form, instances of mass modification, or in some cases destruction, notably with the changes in

demographics brought on by the demise of the Saxon populations and investing of these villages with Romanian and Roma populations after 1989 and through lack of maintenance and investment and unchecked looting of materials. In sum, within the stated research parameters the following fundamental questions will be addressed generally and via each case study specifically:

- What value did the village provide to the region?
- What were the most important issues facing the village?
- What were localized apparent village problems?
- What were the processes where Saxons in time of war would flee their villages and shelter in fortified churches with their families and most prized possessions?
- What were the characteristics of the village environment that greatly influenced their building methods and defense construction styles?
- What were the characteristics of the church that was in the village?
- What was the role that the church developed in context with the periodic invasions of the Mongols, Turks and others?
- How did the village church compare with other similar village churches in architecture and style?
- What was the interaction between the church and the community in regards to military concerns and needs?
- What were the military priorities and their influences on the fortified church?
- What was the influence of the fortified church on the village and what village industries were active from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries?

A final point to note is the hope that this thesis research could indeed be beneficial in raising awareness of this heritage and guiding conservation in this.

## **2.7 Data Collection and Analysis**

Data in this study were collected using different methods. The main ‘instrument’ used in the qualitative process of data collection was the researcher; the ‘instrument’ most

used in the quantitative process of data collection was archival research and case studies. Data collection started in September of 2003. At that time, preliminary investigations were conducted with the Braşov and Sibiu county administrators of Archaeology and Culture, trying to identify the model rural Saxon village to use for conducting the research. The original intent was to carry out a historico-archaeological study of Saxon fortified churches little studied and documented in the West. The study sought to provide a full or good photographic record of the sites in the wake of the demise of Romanian Saxon population and culture in the post Communist era of Romania.

The core value of the statistical and research methodology in this case is its ability to assist in inferences about a large group (Saxon Fortified Churches) based on observations of a smaller subset of that group. In order for this to work correctly, the sample had to be similar to the target population in all relevant aspects; and certain aspects of the measured variables must conform to assumptions which underlie the statistical procedures to be applied. Sampling of Saxon church case studies therefore needed to be representative of the target population in order for inferences to be valid. Of course, the problem comes in applying this where the sample is chosen by selecting the case studies at random, with each member having an equal probability of being selected for the sample. Barring this, one usually tries to be sure that the sample parallels the population with respect to certain key characteristics which are thought to be important to the investigation at hand, as with a stratified sampling procedure.

Qualitative data analysis, as in most interpretive studies, started as soon as data collection began and continued to the end of the study. Much of the qualitative data collected was transcribed, stored electronically, and organized around the issues of the study as required; in instances, another round of data collection was undertaken to enhance and amend records. The analyses were interpretive. ‘Member checking’ was used for verifying the facts and interpretations made by the researcher. Transcriptions and written interpretations are available for confirming the accuracy of quotes and descriptions. Quantitative data analyses took place after collecting the information from the individual case studies. The Global Positioning System (GPS) satellite-based navigation system used to collect data was a Garmin portable eTrex GPS receiver. This

model must be locked on to the signal of at least three satellites to calculate a latitude and longitude position accurate within 15 meters.

The methods used, the length of the time devoted to data collection on site, and the use of multiple sources of evidence were organized for understanding and redefining the issues of the study if needed. As data are analyzed, issues are refined, and the design of the study as required; in some instances, another round of data collection was undertaken to enhance or amend records.

The research methodology was developed, tested and adjusted to meet the requirements of the study in 2003-4. In constructing the data analysis a common site classification was derived using confirmed historical and archaeological records to form the site classification for the study. The site survey categories created are the following: 1) Saxon fortress town with church, 2) Saxon village with nearby fortress refuge, 3) village with unfortified church in a fortified complex, 4) village with fortified church in a fortified complex, 5) village with Saxon remnant, 6) village with Saxon fortified complex remnant and 7) former Saxon village with no Saxon remnants.

## **2.8 Summary**

The scope of the thesis to investigate the roles and identities of the Saxon Fortified Church within the site survey categories has been established and the methodology verified. Within the special context of time, religion, economy and social interaction, the study remains valid to explore the Saxon German Fortified Church and community with the specific Counties of Braşov and Sibiu in Transylvania. The following Chapters comprise the discussion of the data from the archaeological and historical documentary survey of the churches, but Chapter Three will first provide the historical context to the sites and materials and identify the status of related research on the Saxons in the study zones.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter offers an overview of scholarly literature on the subject of the Saxons, and their settlements and structures, whilst detailing the academic research and current concepts beginning with mid to late twentieth century scholarship. A full range of primary and secondary sources is examined, to identify levels, qualities, access, gaps and problems in these (sections 3.2 – 3.7). Finally, this chapter reiterates the objectives and academic rationale for the study.

#### **3.2 Primary and Secondary Data Sources**

Within the context of this thesis, primary sources are documents such as official reports, church records, speeches, letters and diaries by participants, and eyewitness accounts; also included are materials such as physical objects like photographs, painted altar pieces or buildings along with various related archaeological artifacts. Generally the written sources, are narrative, diplomatic or ecclesiastical documents. The last category of primary source documents are the archive catalogue source books used to collect original documents and organize them into specific categories. For this thesis I have chosen to use primary and secondary sources as defined thus by Loyola University in Chicago, Illinois (Loyola, 2006: URL).

**Primary Source:** ‘A primary source is firsthand testimony or direct evidence concerning a topic, an event, a person's life, original works of literature, and historical facts. It consists of original materials that have not been filtered through interpretation, condensation, evaluation or any type of commentary. Primary sources are usually the first formal appearance of results and offer an immediate picture of the topic under investigation.’

**Secondary Source:** ‘A secondary source is information about primary or original information, which usually has been modified, selected, or rearranged after the fact, for a specific purpose or audience. It can be a description, an interpretation, an analysis, a commentary and an evaluation of an historical event or phenomenon, or the original writing of an author.’

In Braşov and Sibiu counties, their archives maintain catalogue source books that have a long tradition of assisting in research and publication, such as photocopied original documents alongside Romanian, German and Hungarian translations. Access to these primary sources has offered essential input into the research topic, providing contemporary voices to the sites and structures examined.

### 3.3 Braşov County Documents

Braşov County archives are generally located in three repositories: the Braşov National Archives and the archives of the B rzenland chapter of the Saxon Nation co-located with archives of the Saxon German Lutheran Church. The latter two archives are maintained by the church of Saint Mary's, also known as the Black Church in Braşov.

In addition to the archives, many village churches have, since 1991, begun depositing their records in the German Lutheran Church archives as the Saxon population has left or been depleted. In some cases, churches, on an individual basis, store their valuable materials in other churches for protection from thieves. This is especially the case for churches with small Saxon populations with intermittent services and elderly caretakers. For example, the church at Buzd, prior to its closing, lent its seventeenth century collection of Turkish rugs to Mediaş for display and protection. Since then, Buzd has completely closed and the church at Mediaş has maintained and protected these artifacts while what is left of the church materials remain without protection. While visiting the site in August, 2006, a local non-Saxon individual was living in the church. While

conducting a site visit, I was offered a sixteenth century altar piece on wood for a mere \$100.00. I naturally declined and informed the police afterward; the case is still pending. The cost of security systems remain beyond the capabilities of almost all of these sites. Unfortunately, the trafficking of stolen art and materials has dramatically increased since 1996 and thieves have been looting sites on an ever re-emerging basis. Village records for Braşov County are either maintained in the original church or have been moved to the German Lutheran Church archives for protection. Finally, information is not readily accessible to determine where churches have their records. As most churches do not have phones or mail addresses, the only method to determine where records are is to visit the individual site and speak to local officials if available.

The British Library has completed a project called the ‘First Grants from Endangered Archives Programme’ awarded grant called ‘Securing of the medieval and early modern archival material (14th to 17th c.) of Braşov and the B rzenland region’. This project, 100% complete, contains digital copies of medieval manuscripts, texts, photographs, official records, audio tapes, music, rare indigenous scripts, suppressed and neglected transcripts from the Braşov National Archives. The digital copies are now available to researchers in the British Library (British Library, 2005a: URL) and also to the Brasov archive where they are stored on a central server. The Program principal objectives to contribute to the preservation of Braşov’s documentary heritage and to help foster professional standards in cataloguing, preservation, etc. and so assist in safeguarding the longer term availability and accessibility of heritage collections worldwide. The Braşov holdings can be found on the website: [www.honterus-archiv.ro](http://www.honterus-archiv.ro)

### **3.3.1 Braşov National Archives**

The Braşov National Archives have been in existence for more than two hundred years. Up until the nineteenth century the archives were used by city officials as a repository of public records. In the latter part of the nineteenth century, the archives were opened for research and historical documentation. In 1880, the city published its first catalogue source book as an index of the archives material and from 1886 until 1926 some eight volumes appeared detailing the years between 1475 and 1800. The

cataloguing and evaluation of documents have continued since 1989. Currently, guild documents from 1420 are being completed as a ninth volume.

The Braşov municipal archives were re-named the Braşov Branch of the Romanian National Archives in 1966. In Romania, under Communism, the national archives were a branch of the Ministry of Interior, together with the Police, Fire Squad, etc. Reorganizing and streamlining the archives required cataloging materials in specific areas. The following catalogues represent the archives' main collection available for use:

1. *Catalogul Documentelor Româneşti din Arhivele Statului de la Oraşul Stalin (Braşov)*, (Catalogue of Romanian public records and documents for Braşov), Volume I, 1521 - 1799, Bucharest, 1955.
2. *Catalogul Documentelor Româneşti din Arhivele Statului Braşov*, (Catalogue of Romanian language public records and documents for Braşov), Volume II, 1800 - 1825, Bucharest, 1975.
3. *Arhiva Magistratului oraşului Braşov*. (Archives of municipal authorities of Braşov), Volume I, Bucharest, 1959.
4. *Arhiva Magistratului oraşului Braşov*. (Archives of municipal authorities of Braşov), Volume II, Bucharest, 1961.
5. *Catalogul Documentelor Greceşti din Arhivele Statului de la Oraşul Stalin (Braşov)*, (Catalogue of Greek language public records and documents for Braşov), Volume I, Bucharest, 1958.
6. *Catalogul Documentelor Greceşti din Arhivele Statului de la Oraşul Stalin (Braşov)*, (Catalogue of Greek language public records and documents for Braşov), Volume II, Bucharest, 1959.
7. *Industria Textilă din Braşov şi Ţara Bîrsei. Catalog de documente*, (Document catalog of the textile industry in Braşov and the Bîrzenland). Volume I, 1413 - 1820 Bucharest, 1960.
8. *Braşovul şi independenţa de stat a României (Braşov and the national independence of Romania)*, Braşov, 1977.
9. *Filiala Arhivelor Statului Judeţul Braşov (The public records archives of Braşov)*, Bucharest, 1981.
10. *Relaţiile Ţării Româneşti şi Moldovei cu Braşovul 1369 - 1803. Inventary arhivistic 12 (The relations of Walachia and Moldova with Braşov 1369 -1803]* Bucharest, 1986 (Catalogue of the Slavic and Romanian documents from the Stenner archives).

### **3.3.2 The German Lutheran Church Archives of Braşov**

The German Lutheran Church archives of Braşov contain as its core the books, documents and writings of the Kronstädter Honterusgymnasiums (Honterus Saxon

School of Braşov) Library. During the last year of the Second World War the Library moved its contents to the church for storage and safe keeping. After the Honterus School was nationalized by the Communists in 1948, control of the library's historical papers was transferred to the Braşov public records of the municipal archives. Today, the archives and research room facility are located in the city parsonage building and museum specifically designed for the archives. The British Library is currently digitizing this collection. (British Library, 2005b: URL)

The archives are organized into five sections:

- I. Bürzenland Chapter archives until 1765
- II. Bürzenland regional archives 1766 – 1854
- III. Bürzenland regional archives since 1855
- IV. Saxon Nation Archives of Braşov County
- V. Honterus Library Collections of Braşov

### **3.4 Sibiu County Documents**

Sibiu archives documents are generally combined collections and housed in the Romanian National Archives of Sibiu and consist primarily of medieval records including guild archives, documents and registers of guilds, the collection of Saxon Nation documents, the Brukenthal Museum collection and collection of Saxon Lutheran Church archives of Sibiu County. As in Braşov County, many Sibiu County village churches have begun depositing their records in the Sibiu Archives as village Saxon populations disappear.

#### **3.4.1 Sibiu National Archives**

The Sibiu archives contain a rich collection of documents and materials. Extensive materials on medieval economic data are at their heart. Sibiu, as well as being the center of the Saxon nation, was the center of trade and commerce. Archives on the guilds and commerce in medieval Transylvania are extensive and well maintained. The archives and catalogues supply a basis for the economic history of the seven districts of the Saxon Nation. The Sibiu municipal archives were, like Braşov, re-named the Sibiu branch of

the Romanian National Archives in 1966. The following catalogues represent the archives' main collection available for use:

1. Documents of the Histories of the Germans:
  - a. Saxon guilds and their relationships outside of Siebenbürg prior to and during Turkish rule linking trade from Vienna to the Danube delta.
  - b. Privileges, right confirmations, arrangements, statutes, contracts, letters, etc.
  - c. Documents from 1224 to 1453 written in Latin and translated into Romanian.
  - d. Documents from 1453 to 1770 written in the Saxon German dialect, Hungarian and Romanian.
  - e. Documents from 1770 to the present.
  - f. Documente privitoare la istoria Românilor (documents for the history of the Romanians) and the Codex Diplomaticus Hungariae Ecclesiasticus AC civilis (of Fejér).
  - g. Guild documents 1520 - 1680. Sibiu guilds contained some 25 trades in 19 distinct guilds. In 1376, these 19 guilds were in Sibiu and other Saxon towns and cities. The importance of these guilds is comparable to major German cities of the time.

All of the catalogues follow the following format: any remarks, interferences into the original text, corrections, text gaps, errors in the original, read uncertainties, etc. are in notes accompanying the catalogue. The documents are arranged in chronological order, following the current number of the document, is the date and place of execution. The date is indicated as based on the present designation of the modern calendar. The catalogues contain short summaries in Romanian followed by a modern German translation and then following the complete document text. Below the document text is the archival marking, under which the catalogue number is derived and any additional copies or translations are also noted.

The guild documents remain the core of the material available and are more than just economic and trade documents: Royal decrees regulated conditions between the different guilds, settled disputes between guilds, secured working craftsman and protected the guilds against outsiders.

The Saxon Nation confirmed the guild statutes, adding more weight to their importance by incorporating them into the Sibiu Advice Laws which, were the most important laws passed by the Saxon Nation. The Sibiu Guild structure became the model

for guild statutes in the other Saxon cities of Transylvania. After the guilds transitioned into unions between 1539 and 1582 Saxon guilds were assigned with the permission of the Saxon Nation through the Sibiu Guild. Guild documents provide aspects of everyday life and the organization of the guilds still reverberates through all Saxon villages.

Indeed, the power and influence of the guilds through their executive committee cannot be underestimated. Through the regulations of 1539, their role was not only limited to the economic component in the context of an urban society. Numerous guild articles contain exact regulations over obligations and participation of their members in church, political, military and social life.

### **3.5 Historical and Secondary Analysis**

The study of fortified churches and villages relative to a wider contemporary environment is a largely neglected area of research. Significantly, academic literature has tended to view medieval fortification and ecclesiastical building processes as segregated components without considering the interdependence of one upon the other. This circumstance is further emphasized by the lack of scholarly research on the roles and identities of medieval ecclesiastical institutions and their influence on contemporary fortification construction and vice versa (Bonde, 1994: xiii). Specifically, the development of medieval fortification scholarship within ecclesiastical studies is clearly lacking in Transylvania as almost all of the Saxon Fortified Churches were balanced within a series of political and cultural interactions, whilst in social terms these Churches were a means of expressing faith within an environment requiring extraordinary defenses in order to survive (Ogden, 2000: 7). Specific aspects within academic discussion are identified here which have combined to ensure the re-evaluation of Saxon Fortified Churches' contexts.

- (i) Historical accounts of military settlement roles and church evolution.
- (ii) Ecclesiastical and military views of the fortified churches' purpose and design.
- (iii) Education and the role of the Church in a society surrounded by other, far different cultures and societies.
- (iv) The integration of religious and secular areas of interest as part of the unique situation and geography of these settlements.

Recently, a modest portion of academic literature has begun to address, in a limited sense, the subject of church architecture along with fortification construction as a unified concept. Unfortunately, the bulk of scholarly literature continues to treat the subjects as separate and unrelated (Harrison, 2004: 1). Predominantly, literature has tended to concentrate upon architectural aspects of church design without regard to the military, political and / or cultural considerations of defending the religious structures (Bonde, 1994: 1; Rudofsky, 1977: 12-5). Exceptions to this outlook are Bernard Rudofsky, Sheila Bonde, and, more recently, Peter Harrison. While Rudofsky's work in the 1970s, bringing attention to peasant architecture, was in many ways exceptional, Bonde in particular added to our understanding of the evolution of ecclesiastical building, plans and defenses in medieval France and Western Europe. Within Eastern Europe, the narrative continues to focus on military (fortification) architecture with little explanation or contemplation of the religious aspects of influence. While a strong point defense or the concept of fortifying the settlements of frontier regions in a concerted method in Central and Eastern Europe is most strongly noted by Kaufmann *et al.* (2001: 95), social, economic and religious priorities are relegated to obscurity and sometimes considered as an afterthought.

Some of the pre-eminent work on medieval military defense was in fact written in the nineteenth century and earlier. Thus, George Clark (1884: 14-35) in the later nineteenth century produced an outstanding work on English military architecture: his definitive 1884 treatment of pre-gunpowder fortifications analyzed the advent of early to late medieval fortifications in a succinct and exceptionally cognizant manner. Much earlier, Bernard and Ville (1689), in a remarkable book on Vauban's study of the science of fortifications as a military and engineering study, emphasized that fortification building is "integrated into political realm of the nation state without mentioning religious considerations" (cited in Langins, 2004: 426-7). Ian Hogg's 1975 work on ramparts and palisades gives a precise explanation as to why defenses became suitable refuges for communities and how, eventually, communities may spread and coalesce within the landscape. A strong point defense implies retention of terrain with the purpose of stopping or directing enemy formations away from their objective. Strong points can be used in villages to protect people and critical supplies. The construction of strong points

involves a considerable engineering and communal effort and an extensive amount of time, equipment, and materials. The result is that all but the most determined attackers will be turned away. Hogg effectively argues that, ultimately, when a key stage is reached within a medieval community, such as the accumulation of wealth and property, where a strong point defense is required, the castle structure building process begins. The example most often given for this first phase of construction is the Motte and Baile type of fortification. Examples are plentiful in England but many Saxon fortifications have the same elements (Hogg, 1975: 11-5). Yet, despite clarity on the secular fortifications, Hogg does not consider ecclesiastical structure influences and building processes in his examination. Throughout his study, almost all aspects of fortification are examined except those tied to the impact of religion. This perspective of integrating ecclesiastical structures within the wider physical manifestations of fortifications in associated landscapes thus still remains to be accomplished (Creighton and Higham, 2005: 1-7).

The second area lacking study is in the body of knowledge specifically regarding ecclesiastical fortifications. Particularly in the case of Saxon Fortified Churches, the lack of any integrated study of ecclesiastical defense design has resulted in the segregation of church and settlement landscape as non-unified entities. This secular fortification emphasis originated with the Enlightenment and in mid-nineteenth century writings on aspects of military functional architecture (Kaufmann and Kaufmann, *et al.*, 2001: 21-2). Also, the predominance of non-militarized ecclesiastical terminology was employed by those who funded the constructions. Many of the actual builders and architects of these structures are not known, much less any of their ideas and rationale for understanding the construction (Kaufmann and Kaufmann, *et al.*, 2001: 295-7). The books and manuscripts produced in the late eighteenth and the entire nineteenth and twentieth centuries achieved a systematic separation between military and ecclesiastical construction and terminology into discrete, subject areas, morphing views of a unified function again into separate entities. The authors usually examine fortifications exclusively as if they were influenced by military considerations without making an allowance for religious concepts or beliefs impacting on these. Today, study of fortification construction and history is continuing to underrate the interplay between the religious and secular domains. Thus, whilst Sidney Toy, in his works on castle construction and history, forcibly states that military

architecture cannot be clearly understood without considering [the more broadly based] concepts of space and region - he states, “ Since the design of the fortifications, the details of structure, and the methods of attack and defense employed were, in essence, the same...” - yet, he tends to downplay the influence of religious thought on the development of the art of fortification building (Toy, 1984: xiii-xiv).

These arguments are not solely applicable to fortification and ecclesiastical architecture. In particular, general studies of medieval castles still focus on their military significance in war and as instruments of political policy during peace. Phillip Warner drew heavily on the perceived influence of the military castle on life during the Middle Ages; his outstanding grasp of society during this time enables him to carefully weave his analogies of military works and thought into the fabric of the evolution of the castle structure and building process (Warner, 2001: 71-7). Whilst much work still needs to be done on the development, appearance and functions of ecclesiastical defensive design in Central Europe, the variety of forms also remains imperfectly understood by scholars: clearly academic interpretations of the term ‘fortification’ have obscured their functions as centers of both civil and religious life and administration. To date, it is rare that fortification and landscape archaeology incorporate insights from ecclesiastical influences into their topographical settings (Aston and Rowley, 1974: 145-9).

As an exception, the scholarly inquiry of warrior knights and their fortifications do often include the detailed examination of religious and defense construction and design. The Crusader castles built in the Baltic regions of Latvia and Estonia balanced equally spiritual ecclesiastical architecture and physical defense as a specific priority in the design and construction of the stone castles. Some examples include the convent courtyard and roof design at Rauna in 1500 (Turnbull and Dennis, 2004: 27-30). Although scholars assert that the Teutonic Order was granted the privilege of building wooden fortifications to protect against the Cumans, the origins of fortified religious structures were a natural by-product of the Order and not based on a specific threat (Papacostea, 1998: 40-1). Within the framework of the medieval landscapes of Central and Eastern Europe, fortified churches played a key role in population survival especially during the Mongol invasion. In particular, the structure of Spinei’s work on the Great

Migrations in Eastern Europe stands out for its consideration of the key disturbances throughout the region by various invasions (1999: 53-9). As Warner (2001: 8) reiterates:

The castle system became useful when populations became settled, but conquerors were still likely to be on the move. It was therefore the aim of the castle strategist to place his fortification at a point where it would either enhance a natural obstacle or create an entirely fresh one in its own right.

This ‘fortification-landscape’, defined as a position or place that can be defended, in relation to various migrations in the Ponto-Caspian area, needs to be taken into perspective. While archaeological investigations led to the discovery of numerous military artifacts defining specific defensive locations, the defensive context of these locations in an overall sense remains lost or hidden in the chaos of the Mongol invasion. The rapid conquest and disintegration in Hungary of the Arpadian Kingdom proved that broad semi-autonomous landscape defense was at best inadequate to cope and more probably non-existent in many places (Carpini, 1996: 90-3). An exception is in Transylvania where King Béla IV in the late twelfth century began fortifying strongholds along his Carpathian border in a linked sense, bringing in Saxon merchants and colonists (Spinei, 1999: 424-6) (see below). The unresolved questions revolve around the fortification types, purposes and significance within the Magyar Kingdom defense system.

The third area lacking study concerns the roles of fortified ecclesiastical structures in medieval villages and towns. Specifically, what was the role of the Church in areas such as education and economy and how did the Church both influence and keep alive the culture of the communities? For most of the twentieth century, research on fortified sites in Transylvania largely ignored the social aspects of the villages. As an example, Grigore Rusu (1992: 4-9) examined Transylvania in linguistic terms and produced a book detailing village language similarities and characteristics but he did not consider how or why these similar linguistic terms came about. As Edroiu and Puscas note (1996: 14-7), even in Transylvania, where ethnic tensions run high, many scholars agree that there is a lack of analysis regarding German fortified ecclesiastical structures in medieval villages and towns.

Lastly, and more positively, the trend of integrating the religious and secular area of interests as part of the unique situation and geography of these settlements on the frontier of Latin Europe is growing. National and regional settlement studies of Saxon communities have traditionally emphasized their function as a form of privilege and not seen them as significant settlement roles in the areas of religion and economy (Edroiu and Puscas, 1996:16-7; Salagean, 2003: 28-30). Yet, until the early 1990s, academic trends studying Saxon Fortified Churches by Saxon scholars such as Ernst Weingärtner (1988), and Tomas Nagler (1979) maintained a circumspect approach, looking at and separating the physical archaeology of the fortified church even though there is no fundamental reason why fortified churches should be separated from the workings of wider landscapes including Saxon education and economic activity.

Undeniably, it was not until the post-1989 revolution that Saxon Fortified Church sites and Romanian sites truly began to be examined as an integral part of Transylvania's settlement and not as units divorced from the region's history (Romocea, 2004: 162-6). It is thus ironic that, as Ogden (2000:18-9) has pointed out, the glossary of Fortified Church architectural studies owes more to the study of medieval fortifications than to a true understanding of the fortified church as a cultural artifact of the period.

### **3.6 Current Scholarship**

Beginning with the work of George Oprescu in the early 1960s, Saxon scholarship began to coalesce into the academic study focus that we see today. Oprescu (1961) used the foundational materials supplied by nineteenth century historians and geographers to produce a book that detailed work on several Saxon fortified churches. Key works that influenced his scholarship include Ignaz Lenk's (1839) three volume lexicon on the geography, topology statics and hydrology of Saxon Transylvania. Juliana Fabritius-Dancu followed in the 1970s and 1980s with multiple books and articles (1976, 1978, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1983 1985 and 1986) on the Saxons in Transylvania culminating with her (1983) limited survey of some forty Saxon fortified churches with detailed schematics and architectural drawings, but the most prolific and detailed researcher on the subject of Saxon history architecture in Romania is Dr. Hermann Fabini (1986, 1989, 1990, 1998,

1999). His multiple works and architectural renderings on Saxon fortress and village churches of Transylvania remains today the cornerstone of definitive scholarship on the subject. I have included a variety of schematics and architectural renderings from all of these authors in the thesis and gazetteer. Dr. Fabini was most helpful in his assistance and support in this process.

While my study focuses on integrating the archaeological data with the historical research completed by these scholars, much of the scholarship is inexorably intertwined. The work of this thesis and gazetteer is to build upon that scholarship and thus fill in the gap between the archaeology and historical research of Saxon fortified churches. I have updated much of Dr. Fabini's and Ms. Fabritius-Dancu's works in the gazetteer by adding site directions using Romanian place names and European Union road numbering designations, GPS survey data, current conditions of the sites and a detailed photographic record of the complex structures. Most importantly, all of the completed and ongoing archaeological excavations to date have been integrated with the historical research to produce a complete picture and provide a focus for future work in the area of Saxon fortified churches.

### 3.7 Summary

In the mid-twentieth century, the Saxon Lutheran Church remained the sole surviving institution of the Transylvanian Saxons. By the 1960s, the Saxons shifted from a primarily agrarian society to an urban workforce (Laun and Diestelkamp, *et al.*, 1957: 37-49). This transition brought finality to the end of the special relationship Saxons had had with the land and their connecting claims to it (Nagler, 1998: 529-531).

The beginning of the Ceausescu era brought some policy reforms and reassessments but his idea of a socialist state included eliminating villages by moving peasants to cities and enforcing industrialization (Lazar, 1996: 162-65). He ended the use of non-Romanian names for places, cities and locals. The State dropped the non-Romanian aspects of their history as well as taking possession of all assets within Romania.

From the 1950s on, the exodus of Saxons to the West increased. These emigrants provided a basis and contact for others to follow out of Romania. When Romania and

West Germany established formal diplomatic relations, visits to relatives were possible. The 1978 agreement between Germany and Romania accelerated the Saxon emigration and by 1989 some 150,000 Saxons had emigrated to West Germany (Gabany, 1994: 89-94).

At the beginning of the 1989 revolution some 90,000 Saxons lived in Transylvania, but within two years of the fall of the Ceausescu government only 25,000 Saxons remained. Currently the remaining Saxon German population is isolated and ageing. They inhabit some 280 villages with some with many villages having only a few families left; many villages are completely abandoned with no Saxon population at all and even more have less than 50 Saxons remaining. Most that do remain are over 60 years old and many are in their 70s and 80s. The Democratic Forum of Germans in Romania founded in 1989 along with the German government and the Saxon church has attempted to stabilize the population exodus from the country. This has not stopped the Saxon youth from leaving (Bolovan and Bolovan, 2000: 79).

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **SAXON SETTLEMENT: PLACE AND SPACE**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

Saxon medieval settlement patterns are complex and, until recently, undervalued. Understanding rural and urban settlement roles in context is critical to understanding the study region, since temporal and spatial analyses of sites in Braşov and Sibiu counties demonstrate the ability of the Saxon settlers to create and then maintain what we can term a ‘Saxon-defined’ landscape. This chapter will address several questions including settlement strategies and processes of colonization including impositions of settlement characteristics; temporal and spatial analysis; urban and rural settlement; Saxon centers and their administration and defense; the history of site fortifications; and the presence and role of the Saxon Church. The geometry of Saxon settlements has yet to be studied to any extent. The need for measuring these patterns using nearest-neighbor analysis or settlement spacing in relationship to the services of the settlement will be broadly addressed in the conclusions but details left to additional studies in the future.

Settlement roles comprise the material remains of the past, present activity and the perceptions and interpretations that allow for understanding settlement distribution over time. These roles are determined by the purpose of the site, whilst form and context determine how well the roles were supported by the site. Questions are: what were the processes of rural and urban Saxon settlement in Transylvania? What administrative control was extended over the Saxons and how was it organized? What were the regional population distribution, ethnicities, rights and privileges of the people? How was

settlement divided in Braşov and Sibiu counties? What freedom existed, if any, in siting and defining these Saxon centers of population and defense? Indeed, what factors determined the Saxon population units and how secure were these sites in terms of a supporting rural environment within Transylvania?

This chapter will draw upon a variety of data to examine these questions. First will be the characteristics of site distribution and relationships to roads, rivers and urban centers, territorial borders and royal seats. Second will be the documentary data relating to populations, hierarchy and administrative structures. Then I will consider in detail the physical sites and settings – their topography and context – examining first the rural and then the urban sites in Braşov and Sibiu counties. Here the physical sites emphasize the relations between the spatial distribution of settlement and the environment. The structures provide one aspect of study and the environment provides another.

Sibiu and Braşov counties between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries saw development along geographic lines. Chronologically, the settlements were first made based on the environment of the landscape followed by adjustments necessitated by invasions and war with political and then ethnic considerations. Following these developments, rural and urban patterns began to diverge. The Saxons settled within the allocated spaces based on a number of factors, including availability or quality of land, relationship with other settlers, and the desire to live as their customs dictated. I will explore these aspects below.

When discussing settlement patterns, a definition is appropriate. For this study I concur with this comment:

“The term ‘settlement pattern’ is defined here as the way in which man disposed himself over the landscape on which he lived. It refers to dwellings, to their arraignment, and to the nature and disposition of other buildings pertaining to community life. These settlements reflect the natural environment, the level of technology on which the builders operated, and various institutions of social interaction and control which the culture maintained” (Willey, 1953: 1).

In a larger sense, the Saxon Fortified Church became an administrative center for settlement management and a central place within village settlements for social and economic development. Considerations of military viability were of the utmost importance to the village leadership; furthermore, it was the church’s management of the

village landscape which supported Saxon maintenance of power at the local level. In an ethnically diverse region such as Transylvania, this may suggest that the church's relationship with the village landscape as a political and religious entity strengthened its importance. These various roles and identities therefore reflect upon medieval Saxon society as a whole (Rudofsky, 1977: 224-5).

In defining population centers, language plays an important part of the frame of reference. Only in English are many of the classifications of population densities used. Thus, there is not a straightforward division between village and town: 'town' tends to be an English term, whereas in German 'Stadt' is usually applied to urban centers of all sizes. 'Dorf' or village is applied when political and cultural concepts are taken into consideration rather than the size of population. For the purpose of this study, 'villages' [Sînpetru] are described as permanent collections of architectural structures with some kind of planned organization based on function and / or topography. In Transylvania, villages are not necessarily a smaller, precursor of a town and towns do not necessarily evolve from a village. 'Towns' [Agnita] are a legal definition distinguished from other types of settlements and based on recognized rights and privileges, forms or functions as recognized by the Hungarian King. 'Cities' [Medias] in Saxon Transylvania, meanwhile, denote key regional urban centers with a particularly important administrative, legal, or religious status and high population which differentiates it from a town (Makkai, 2002: 478-81).

## **4.2 Settlement Characteristics, Temporal and Spatial Analysis**

After the disastrous defeat of King Béla IV and the Hungarian army at the battle of the Sajó River in April 1241, the Mongols invaded Transylvania (Spinei, 2003: 422). When the Mongols unexpectedly withdrew from Transylvania in 1242, King Béla launched a vigorous reconstruction program of settlements across the region. He invited more foreigners to settle Transylvania and other devastated regions of the kingdom, granted loyal noblemen lands, and began building stone fortresses that coincided with the arrival of foreign colonists (Morgan, 1990: 138-41; Salagean, 2003: 403-5; Spinei, 2003: 425).

Nucleated Settlement Pattern	Linear Settlement Pattern	Dispersed Settlement Pattern
Multiple settlement buildings are interspersed and close together.	Settlements develop along either natural or man made linear features.	Individual structures such as homes and farmsteads are dispersed.
Settlements are located within easily defended terrain such as hilltops and river bends for protection.	Settlements develop and follow along a river or stream.	The land is geographically restrictive such as narrow, hilly and steep contours.
Settlements that group around different types of water sources.	Settlements develop and follow along a road or trail.	The land contains few natural resources for human subsistence.
Settlements patterned along flat ground of little geographic definition.	Settlements develop and follow a cross-shaped pattern along a road intersection.	The soil is of poor quality and in parts uncultivable.
Settlements that develop around or near transportation routes without following them in design.	N/A	Local weather conditions are extreme and not conducive for productive / stable agrarian societies.

**Figure 4.01: Settlement Patterns Types and Features.**

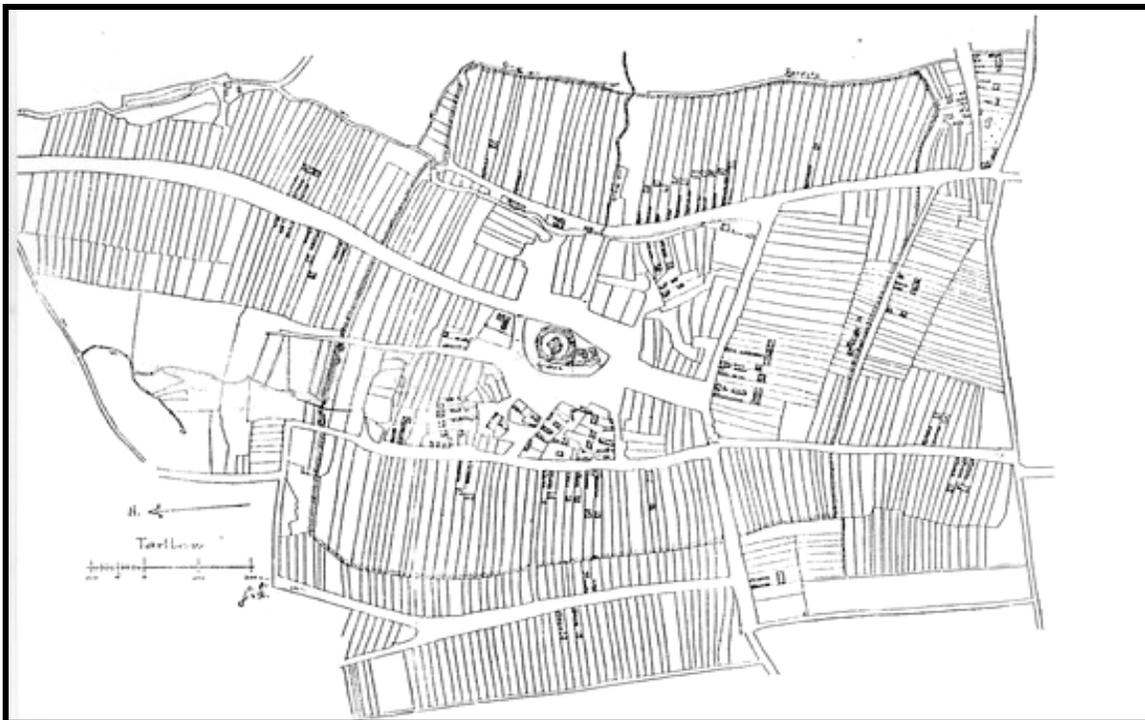
The Saxons received *hospes* privileges from the outset and developed their settlements accordingly. The German manorialization system including common field agriculture, and specific peasant customs became a significant factor in regional nucleated settlement design. Peasant building and settlement in the medieval period expanded and contracted as circumstance dictated and the Saxons took their planned villages and ideas of planning with them when they moved into the region in the 1200s (Cheyette, 1977: 183-4). The areas of lower elevation and along stream and river courses were occupied first, and then the Saxon settlers usually ventured progressively into the uplands. Settlements were linked through the movements of goods, resources and people and this led to the beginnings of networks of cities, towns and villages (Pakucs, 2004: 177). Urban-rural linkages and patterns were of crucial importance for the sustainability of Saxon settlements in Transylvania.

Analysis of the settlement patterns, distribution and spacing of settlements, the relationship between settlements of different sizes and the form and morphology of sites

are critical in understanding the Saxon presence. These general patterns or forms can be recognized, if with variations of settings and organization, as dispersed, nucleated, and linear, or a combination based on specific circumstances of the individual settlements. The majority of settlement patterns fall within these categories (Hudson, 1969: 365-6).

Thus:

- (i) Nucleated settlements such as Prejmer and Feldioara in Braşov County — tend to comprise compact dwellings or clusters of dwellings focusing on a central point, like a church or marketplace. In Braşov and Sibiu counties, the locating considerations of a nucleated settlement, in addition to soil quality and remoteness comprise scope to help defend the site, close to a water supply or location along a transportation and trade route. The Saxon settlements most often exhibit a pattern where defense is a priority, such as selecting high ground or the bend of a river where protection is enhanced by the natural surroundings. The Braşov settlements of Bürzenland most closely follow this pattern. Many nucleated settlements expand over time into large villages, towns or cities.



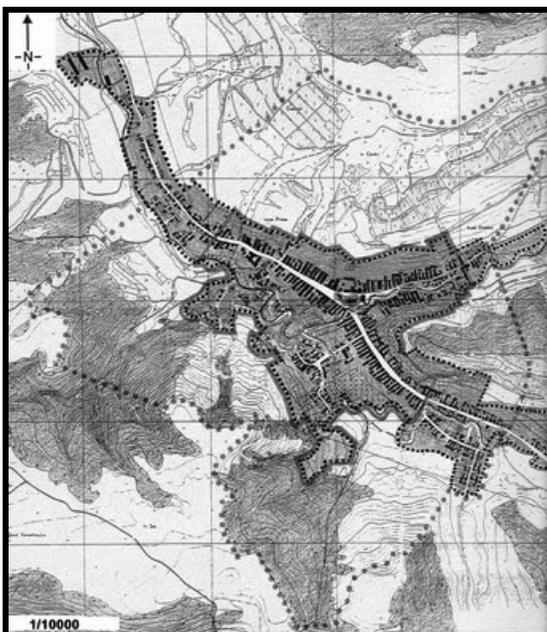
**Figure 4.02: Schematic of the nucleated settlement of Prejmer with church complex in the center of the village.**

- (ii) Linear settlements such as Aţel and Valea Viilor in Sibiu County are normally set along streams or roads and develop when growth is restricted by factors such as mountains, hills, valleys or rivers and in rare occasions by political considerations such as royal land boundaries.

- (iii) Dispersed settlements, such as that of Curciu and Zărnești in Brașov County, are usually found in areas where land is generally poor or geographically divided in a way that requires a large amount of acreage for successful population sustainment. Family dwellings tend to be far apart from one another and the villages are small. These factors produce isolated and relatively small settlements and isolated farmhouses, cottages, or dwellings. Various Saxon settlements along streams and tributaries in remote valleys in Sibiu County are examples of this type of settlement.

The evolution of Saxon settlement patterns is based on physical geography, economic factors and political factors. The spatial distribution of buildings in their villages is but a part of the impact that the Saxons made on the landscape (Hudson, 1969: 365). The physical geography was the most influential for the initial settlements. Factors such as climate, water, soil quality undoubtedly drove the locations of the settlers. Economic factors such as mining and transportation routes played an important role since many of the Saxons were merchants and artisans as well as farmers. Lastly, political factors such as security, safety and adherence to the laws and desires of the King and his representatives were just as important. Markets, fairs and religious centers in Transylvania would ultimately determine the size and importance of the Saxon settlements over time.

Over time, some villages in Transylvania began as these categories and morphed or transitioned into other forms. Some settlements such as Cobor in Brașov County may



have begun as isolated farmsteads followed by other buildings and eventually formed a village. Some villages such as Agnita in Sibiu County began as dispersed settlements and transitioned into nucleated towns. These patterns are difficult to observe and access. Like the Czech and British discussions on time analysis for rural settlements, the Saxon landscape in the thirteenth century has not been

**Figure 4.03: Schematic of the linear settlement of Valea Viilor.**

systematically analyzed (Gojda, 1990: 104-6). Unlike the settlement patterns of Hungary, the Saxon settlers arrived within a short period of time that is well documented. Their settlement process is not therefore as confusing, even though the Saxons were, as stated before, not a homogeneous group of people from the same region of Europe. Unlike Hungarian settlements such as Eger, Saxon settlement types were not intermingled but were uniform throughout the area (Kubinyi, 1990: 104-7). Like the Hungarians, the Saxons built centers that were designed for specific purposes. Outside of defense, commercial priorities drove the design of the Saxon town plan as many Saxons were in fact merchants. Even though ecclesiastical or royal towns were designed, they were not built physically different from the commercial town plan for these reasons. Arguably, Saxon design differences remain geographical in nature and not religious or political (Hudson, 1969: 367).



**Figure 4.04: Schematic of the dispersed settlement of Curciu.**

Perhaps surprisingly, the Saxons initially settled in villages or farmsteads that were mostly unfortified, but in 1241-42 the Mongols devastated most of the Saxon settlements in Transylvania, and in the aftermath of the invasion, many Transylvanian settlements were fortified with stone castles and / or walled fortified churches. The latter usually lay in the center of the village surrounded by homes, stores and workshops and then fields (Teutsch, 1857: 3-5) (see chapter 6 and 7).

Importantly, the political unity derived from the Hungarian method of administration after the 1324 peasant rebellion in Transylvania resulted in the Saxon Count, appointed by the King, officially recognizing the market towns and urban centers (Makkai, 2002: 481-3).

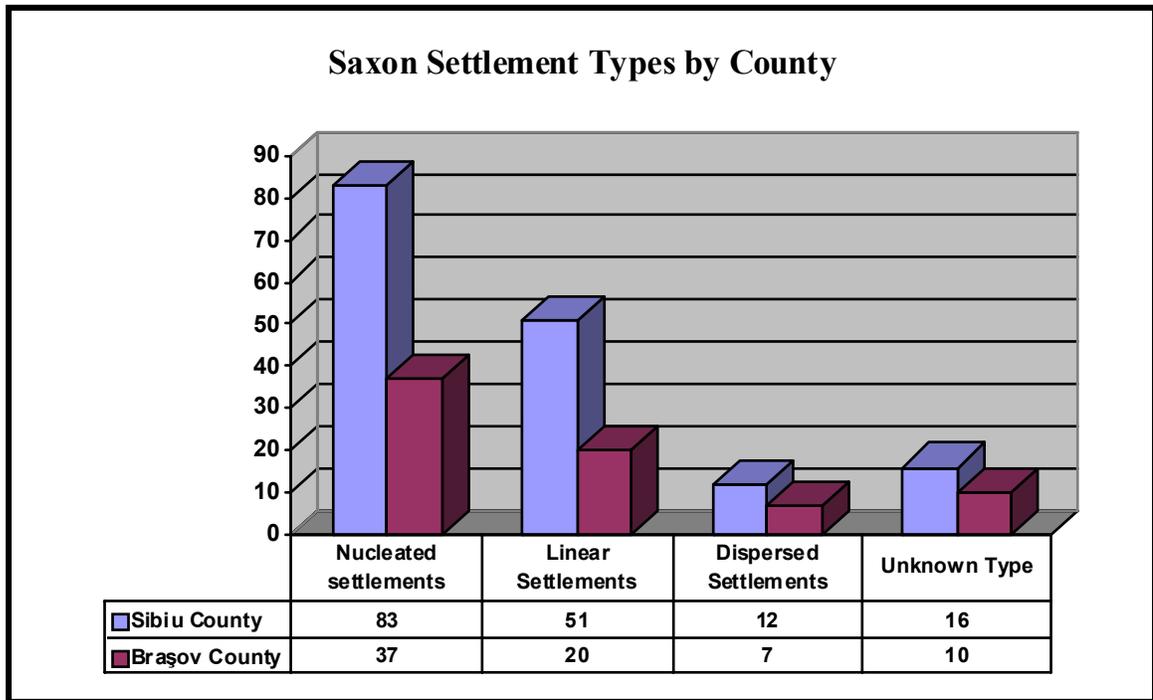


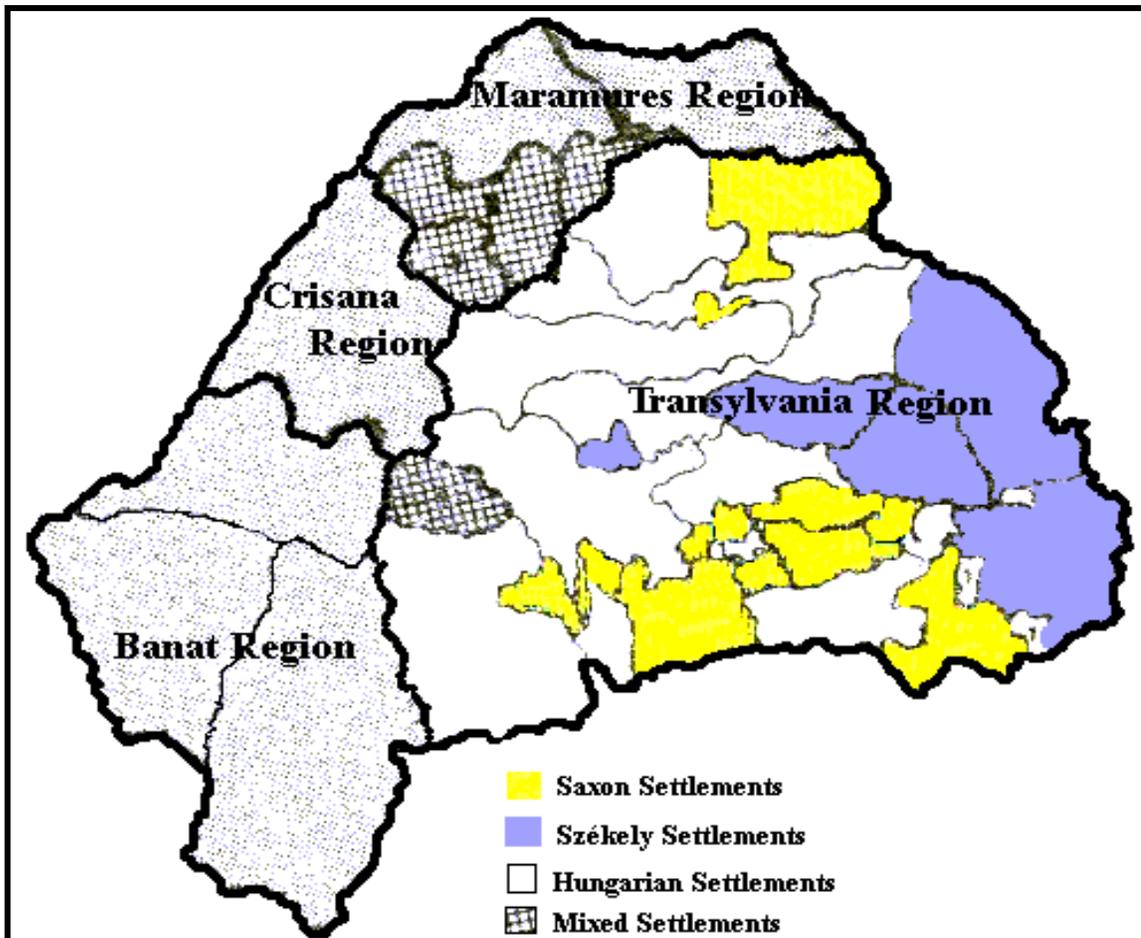
Figure 4.05: Saxon settlement types for Braşov and Sibiu Counties.

### 4.3 Topography and Site Placement

Generally, when Saxons began to arrive in the region they discovered lands with natural protective barriers virtually surrounding the settlement zone. The mountains along the north, south, east and west surrounded a basin with fertile lands drained by the Mures, Olt and Someşu rivers. This region had few passes along the east and south and was so easily defended when needed – clearly the Carpathians didn't help that much against the Mongols. In today's Braşov and Sibiu Counties, the South Carpathians formed their southern boundary. The elevation of villages and settlements is between 250 meters and almost 900 meters in the counties. These mountains, also called the Transylvanian Alps with a maximum height of 2,000 meters, were the border of Hungarian claims in the twelfth century (CIA, 2004: 205). These counties were heavily forested over gently rolling terrain with several rivers providing drainage and access. Minerals and especially salt deposits added to the richness of the region in the twelfth century. Historian George Teutsch (1857: 4-8) eloquently described the region thus:

“Originating at the high alpine borders, rows of mountain ranges mostly majestically crowned with forests, cross the land in all directions. The land

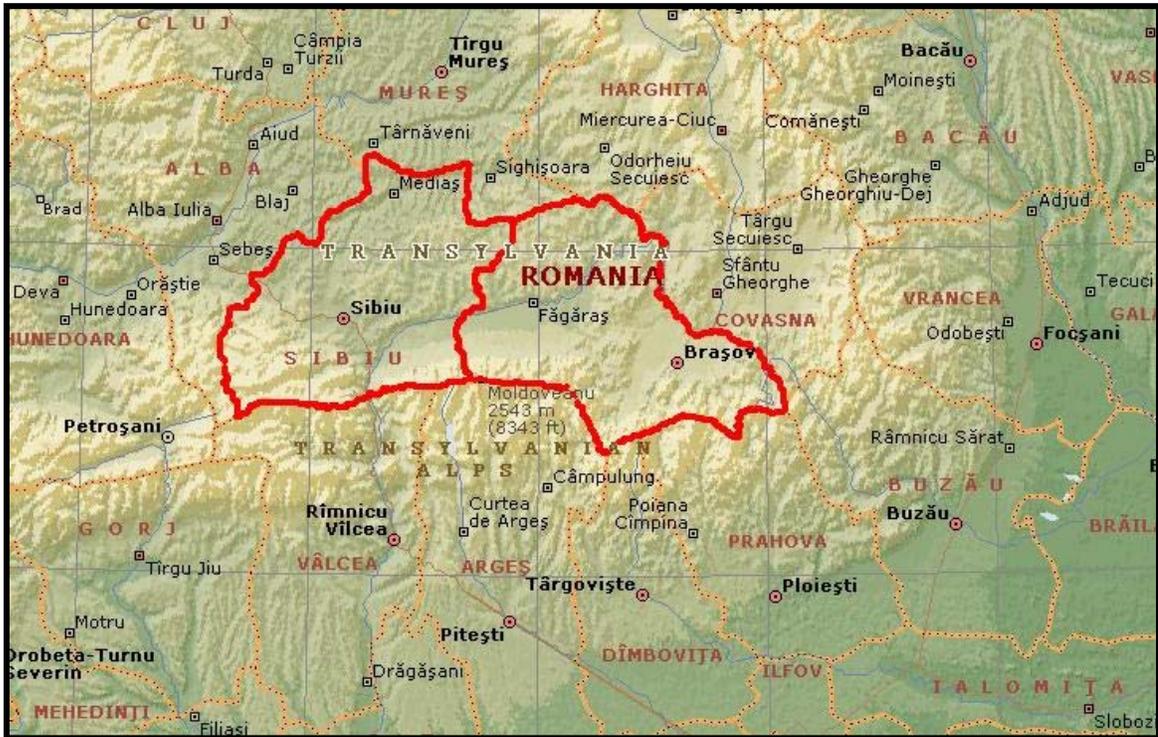
hides salt and precious metals of all kind in surprising abundance. From the iron which shields life to the gold that corrupts it. Innumerable thermal and mineral springs flow from earth's bosom, creeks and rivers beautify and water the land everywhere. On sunny slopes the grape glows and the sumptuous fruit tree blooms. Wheat fields wave in the valleys, wild animals roam the forests, domesticated animals are in abundance. This is the land of Transylvania and should the people lack something, it's mostly their own fault...."



Map 4.01: Transylvanian ethnic population distribution in the thirteenth century.

The counties' features are intertwined with the drainage system of the basin. The rivers drain into the Danube system at various points and are important for transportation, defense and agriculture. In Sibiu County, the main rivers are the Tîrnava, Olt and the Hârtibacui rivers with smaller streams feeding into these rivers. Braşov County shares the Olt with Sibiu County and has smaller streams feeding this.

The climate that the Saxons encountered was more seasonally defined than their home region so near to the sea. Even so, Transylvania's climate is moderate and continental with hot summers, cold winters and mild falls and springs (CIA, 2004: 203-207).



Map 4.02: Transylvanian topography showing Braşov and Sibiu Counties.

### 4.3.1 Topographic Considerations of Saxon Villages

When discussing rural settlement, the questions of continuity, adaptation and change over time are central. While the case studies in Chapter Seven will address these in detail, a preparatory description is presented here. Rural Saxon villages by and large followed the same pattern from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries: with the exception of specific local geographical limitations, villages generally comprised two rows of buildings facing each other across an open space representing a common or green. As seen in figure 4.06, the medieval village plan has been preserved with the church complex in the center, south of the main road with yards, barns and the village boundary observable from the ground and air. The original village topographical structure, including the street network and land plot system, reflected the political, social, and religious history of the Saxons. The villages are integrated in the landscape as a



**Figure 4.06: Aerial view of the village of Lovnic with clearly preserved medieval boundaries.**

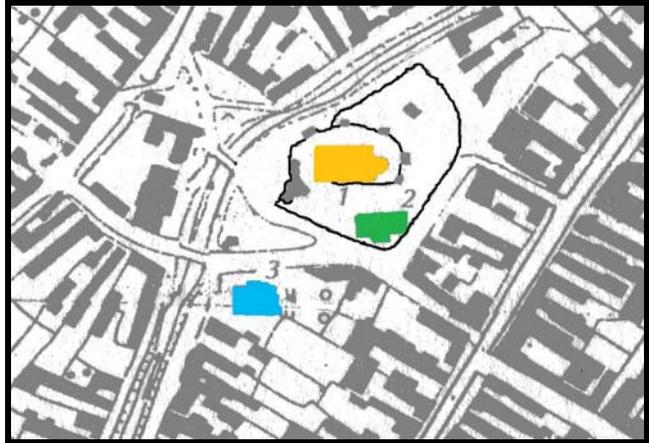
result of the roles assigned by the traditional human activities in the places where they are founded. The village church site design and placement are similarly integrated within the village street network, with compact house fronts alternating the façades and the high surrounding walls, contributes to the definition of the cultural pattern and role of the Saxon Fortified Church (UNESCO, 1990: 19246.5).

The original German-Saxon settlement concept was in the form of homesteads with common areas surrounding them (Löscher, 1929: 11). Saxon lands chiefly developed from what Thomas Nägler (1979: 47) refers to as a ‘Waldhufendorf’ - literally translated as a ‘forest hide’ (homestead) village. Here, the common land was distributed to the settlers in ‘Hufen’, meaning hides, for which a tax was paid. Normally, the first year was a ‘free year’ where no tax was paid. Hufen lands were limited because they were required to be cultivated by a farm family. In Poland, German settlers used the larger French hide, about 24 hectares, rather than the Flemish hide of nearly 16.8 hectares used by the Saxons. As in Poland, the most frequent village shapes used were called the ‘Strassen’ or road, ‘Anger’ or village green, ‘Marschhufen’ or alluvial, and ‘Waldhufendorf’ or forest (Rogell, 1993: 20-3).

Customarily Saxon villages were compact, with the church located in the center of the village in an easily defensible position, usually on elevated ground. The elements of

fortifications found in the urban centers were then adapted to the villages. Some fortifications include observation towers and some church towers were tailored to the needs of a fortress. Traditional materials such as stone, brick and red clay roof tiles were used in the construction of these structures. Different fortifications were constructed based on individual topography but normally included a small enclosure around the church, a line of fortifications around the church or a nearby fortress with multiple fortification walls sheltering the church. Saxon village churches were adapted to their defensive duties and initially the churches were either Romanesque or Gothic style modified by defensive requirements.

**Figure 4.07: Cristian village site plan showing the fortified church complex including precinct walls, (1) fortified church, (2) Saxon school and (3) chapter house just outside the precinct wall.**



Near the church, the main square is where the social life of the village revolved. The only buildings near the fortified precinct wall of the church complex were common buildings such as the town hall and school. The chapter house, along with wealthier villager homes, would typically be located next along with the storage buildings used for storing communal supplies.

Individual Saxon house plots had barns at the end of the yard. This was followed by a fence that marked the end of the hide that once linked with the neighbor's



**Figure 4.08: Commanding view from the fortress of Rîșnov and village below. Fortified in the thirteenth century, Rîșnov typifies Saxon fortress construction.**

plot. The fence usually surrounded the village and was used as a village demarcation point, but these demarcation lines were not designed to be a defense for the village. Saxon villages protected themselves by constructing fortress refuges if the nearby topography allowed. Examples of these Saxon villages with nearby fortress refuges include Slimnic, Făgăras, Rupea and Rîșnov. Most, but not all villages, prior to the Mongol invasion of 1241, used a simple ditch and palisade surrounded by earthworks where the landscape permitted and providing the local inhabitants a modicum of protection when danger threatened. Future village locations would then be predicated on this topographic requirement for nearly all of the Saxon villages. The following sections – 4.4.2 and 4.4.3 – will detail the considerations for these villages in Brașov and Sibiu counties.

Saxon villages were well known for their agricultural proficiency: in 1358, a royal archivist wrote that Hungary's richest lands were in Transylvania where Saxon centers expanded through commerce and the farmers produced good wine, fat cattle, and plenty of grain for bread. The land around a Saxon village normally comprised four agricultural sections: arable land, meadow land, fallow land, and the village proper. Each section had a specific purpose and together they allowed the village to function as a unit (Wass de Czege, 1977: 15-6).

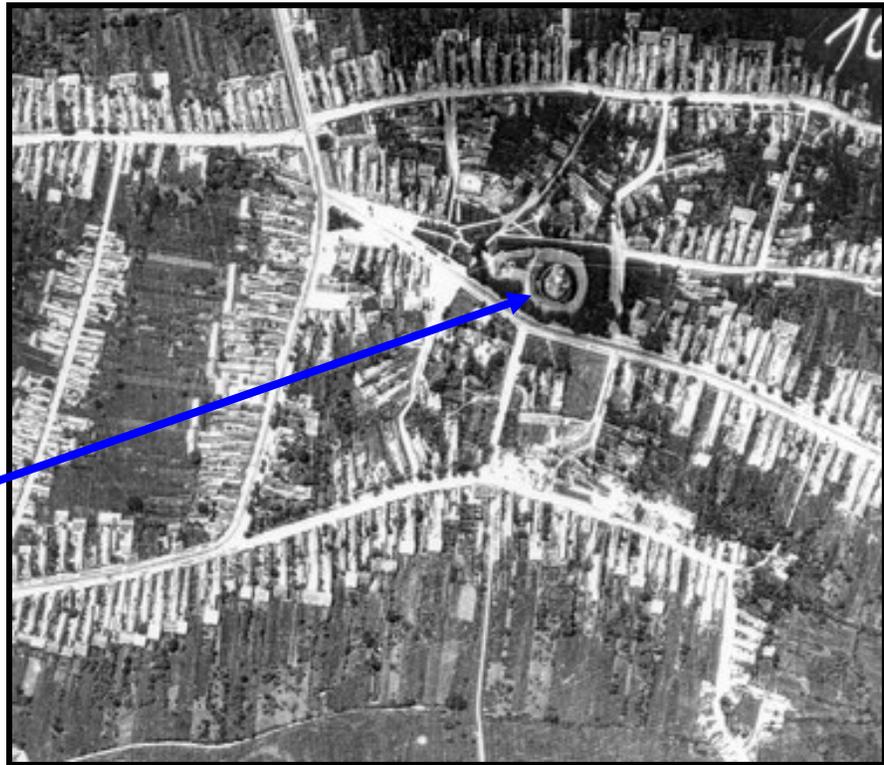
The 1999 excavations at Voila confirm the typical medieval layout and construction techniques of Saxon villages in Transylvania. The excavations focused on the civilian structures of the village and the design of the Brâncoveanu family village incorporating the topography of the site. Raluca and Sergiu Iosipescu's work (1999) established that the Brâncoveanu family building techniques were prevalent throughout the region at the end of the sixteenth century. The June 1999 excavation also identified the types of crops grown and the field system used by the family, enabling an image of village life from the late fourteenth century through to the late eighteenth century.

The Voila excavations began with a site survey designed to confirm the plan and phases of construction of the site. Initially postponed due to funding constraints, the excavations instead concentrated on systematic planning and vertical landscape data collection. Initially, the existing aboveground structures were identified and dated to the late sixteenth century. An 8 meter long and 1.5 meters wide trench was dug parallel from

the west façade of the building and uncovered foundations approximately 1.20 meters high consisting of interior brick and irregular stone blocks parallel to the sixteenth century structures. Between the two parallel foundation walls at -0.20 meters below the surface was building materials of Saxon origin confirming the association between the uncovered foundations and the Brâncoveanu family buildings. Archaeological strata material recovered provided the data on agricultural practices of the village and Brâncoveanu family (Iosipescu and Iosipescu, 1999: 42361.01).

The arable land of the Saxon villages was utilized by the three-field rotation system which prevailed in most of Europe at the time where there was year round plowing, except when the ground was frozen or at harvest time. Lithuania, according to French (1969: 121-5), with its large arable fields is another example where the fields were left fallow every third year and common grazing was customary in the arable fields thus making maximum use of the moldboard plow. Records in villages indicate the number of plows and teams of oxen possessed by farmers (Gerard, 1888: 37-42; Langdon, 1986: 9ff), where each individual hide strip was about .2 hectares in size and it took about one day to plow a single strip. Crops and peasant field assignments were scattered in three

**Figure 4.09: Aerial view of Prejmer with the fortified church complex visible in right center section of the village. The village plan includes fields and individual yards as well as the village boundary at the bottom.**



fields throughout

the village with plowing and planting fixed by custom as well as uniform cropping, meaning that innovation was limited if not impossible (Jordan, 1996: 23-7, 124-29).

Most Saxons farmed the soil and lived cooperatively. To Saxon villagers, meadow land was as important as arable land, used to feed the draught animals. Records do not indicate that sowing and harvesting hay to feed the animals was customary at the time and so fodder shortages do appear as a constant concern (Orwin and Orwin, 1967: 64-8). The fallow land was used for summer pasture for animals of the villagers and it provided wood for fuel and building materials; in addition, it offered an additional and key food supply: nuts, berries, honey and small game (Gerard, 1888: 37-42). These supplements led to villages that were sustained in relatively small clearings among large stretches of forest and fallow lands.

The typical Saxon village was usually located in the center of the arable land, as seen at Prejmer and Harman, somewhere near a convenient water supply. Buildings where the inhabitants lived were made of mud brick reinforced with straw and had earthen floors and thatched roof. Usually they consisted of single rooms not very large in floor space or height. There were usually small adjoining gardens where some vegetables and fruits were grown (Gerard, 1888: 40-3). Here again archaeology has been limited, and not focused on medieval structures in the village except for surveying for inclusion on the list of historical monuments. Almost all excavation work by Florea Costea (1996a: 41676.02, 41676.03, 41676.05; 2004a: 41676.13) has been concentrated on the Roman and pre-Roman site nearby.

### **4.3.2 Topographic Considerations in Braşov County**

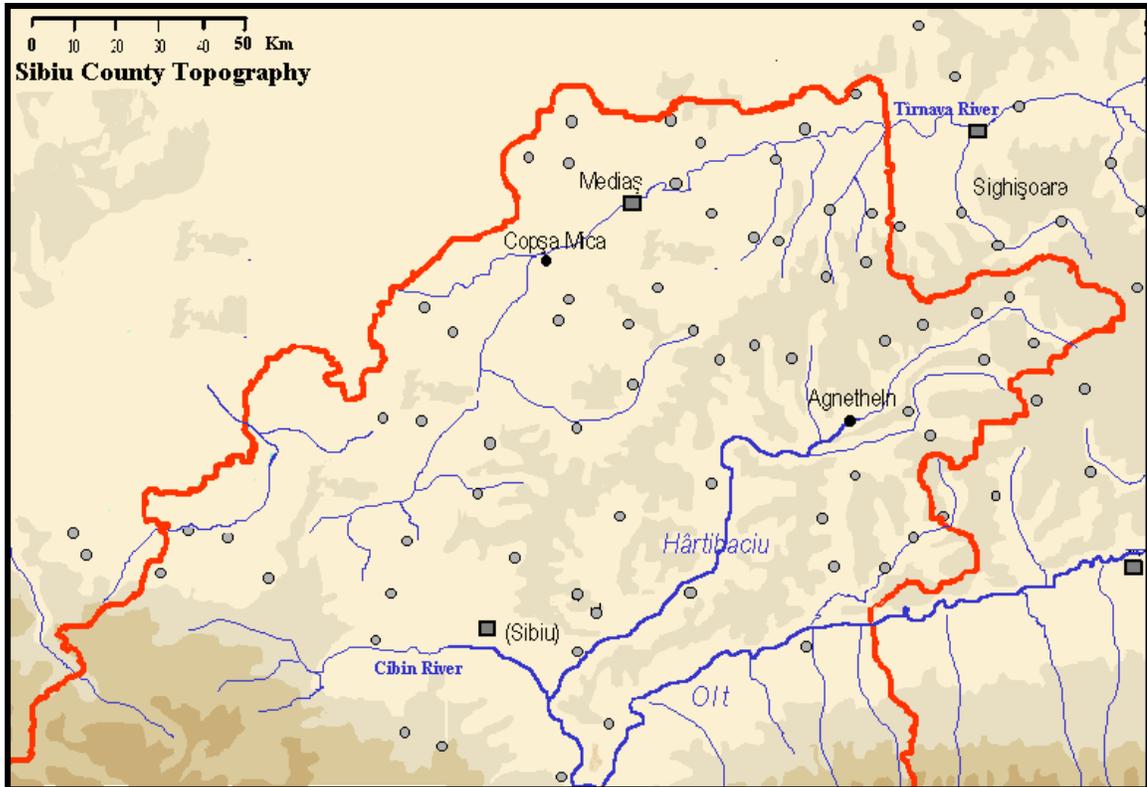
In Braşov County, settlements clustered initially along the south bank of the Olt River and north of the Făgăras Mountains in what is termed the Făgăras Depression. Major settlements also lay along the Bârsa tributary that flows into the Olt River. The region was known as the Bürzenland and was bordered by north by Feldioar, Râşnov in the southwest and Prejmer in the southeast; Braşov, founded in 1211, roughly centered in the Bürzenland became the major city in the region. A most distinctive feature of the settlement pattern of the Braşov area was the extreme dispersal of mixed farming encountered in the western extreme of the county to the north and south of Zarnesti: the Bran and Poiana Marului areas.



Map 4.03: Braşov County topography, showing relief and drainage systems.

### 4.3.3 Topographic Considerations for Sibiu County

Topographic considerations necessitated settlement foundation along rivers and streams. In Sibiu County in the twelfth century, settlements were initially along the Cibin River followed by secondary or later settlements at the beginning of the thirteenth century along the Hârtibacui River and tributaries east and north of Sibiu. By 1224, the Andreum officially recognized Sibiu County's settlements in documents that lent stability to the region. Many factors — agriculture, transportation, industry, cultural ties and natural resources — contribute to Sibiu's regional characteristics. Even today, with the exceptions of mining and lumbering settlements, most of the villages in Sibiu County continue to follow the course of the Cibin, Olt, Tîrnava and Hârtibacui Rivers.



Map 4.04: Sibiu County topography, showing Saxon village locations, relief and drainage systems.

#### 4.3.4 Topography and Site Placement

The most common way to examine topography and site placement is to conduct a complete survey of the location. Sites are constructed based on several factors, including spaces such as homes, lots, fields, yards and common or public buildings; these spaces may contain structures and may be populated. In other words, the site design could be rural or urban depending on the time period of the site. In researching and analyzing the site we need to remember that each site is unique, and although the general principles of medieval settlements are universally applicable, the way they are applied varies depending on the site. In examining rural topography, climate, soils, water, flora, fauna, and infrastructure are some of the aspects that need to be examined. Survey work and excavation can increase much of the knowledge about rural settlement housing, possessions, and environment. The distribution and layout of rural settlements give insights into Saxon social structure, order and planning, and the division between public

and private areas. The factors affecting rural settlements – population increases and decreases, war, disease, abandonment and re-occupation of sites, politics, commerce and household life affected many villages and homesteads and consequently promoted changes in house, village and regional elements – demonstrate the dynamic forces at work during the period.

Saxon medieval settlements in Braşov and Sibiu counties from the twelfth to sixteenth centuries will have ranged from the temporary huts occupied by shepherds, to the leaders of the Saxons' residences. Most consist of farmsteads and villages, encompassing related features such as field systems, roads, enclosures, boundaries, woods, mills, manor houses and churches. Many of the settlements occupied by c. AD 1400 are still inhabited, but a proportion has been abandoned and in some cases the sites are occupied by newer settlements and other ethnic groups. Strikingly, most of the Saxon medieval settlements dating from c. AD 1300 retain their medieval site plan and many of their building structures but also include crop and soil marks that can be clearly recognized from the air.

In Braşov and Sibiu counties, the Saxon emphasis was on the countryside, and much of their social material culture remains albeit intermixed with post-medieval materials. Three types of villages dominated the Saxon countryside in Braşov and Sibiu counties: linear, nucleated and dispersed — as defined in figure 4.01. Hills, woodlands, rivers, sun and prevailing winds affected village layouts. These villages were characterized by their physical layout and in turn this was determined by the type of soil. The linear arrangement is the most common type with the buildings set in lines along the bank of a lake or river, or along side a road. Nucleated villages occur in the most fertile areas such as river valleys. Dispersed villages were found in mountainous regions southwest of Sibiu near Rod and along the high ground in the west to northwest of Braşov county. Common to all of the villages was the unfenced farmland surrounding the village. Some areas surrounding urban centers such as Sibiu were divided into closed rectangular plots where families were more independent, with less sharing of resources among the villagers than in the rural areas.



Figure 4.10: Aerial view of Merghindeal with the fortified church complex visible in the lower left demonstrating the linear village and typical homestead layout.

Saxon settlements characteristically grew garden crops, fertilized with manure, and these more heavily cultivated land whenever possible. Saxons also had open land, the ‘out-field’, which they farmed for a year or two and then abandoned for another patch.

Saxons rarely obtained more than a four to one yield but averaged three to one yields for most fields. This was above average for the medieval period when compared to data from Britain and other areas (Campbell, 2007: [www](http://www); Gerard, 1888: 37-43).

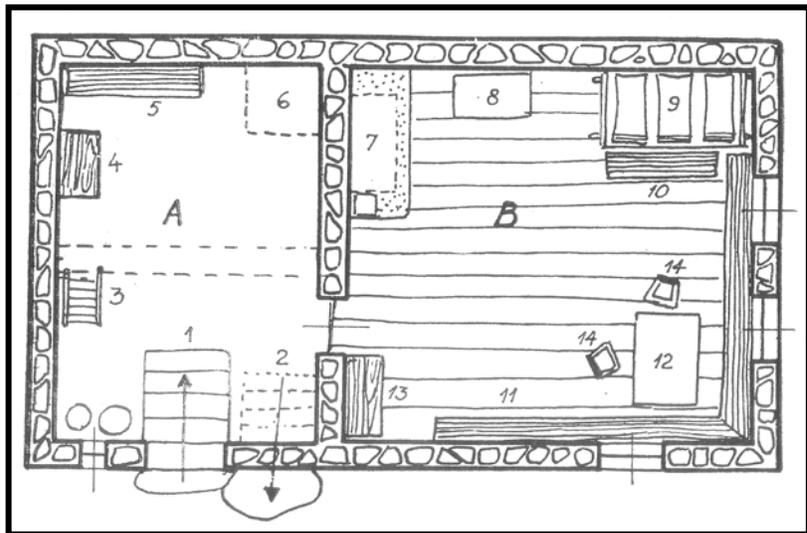


Figure 4.11: Two room Saxon house plan of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Saxon typical homesteads varied greatly in size, but averaged 6.5 hectares in both counties. Most

houses had a garden with a few fruit trees; strips in the fields, a share of the hay crop, and the right to graze its animals in the common pasture. Saxon villagers plowed together, reaped together and threshed together,



**Figure 4.12: Saxon house floor excavation showing remnants of homestead fire pit and debris materials at #11 Piata Enescu in Braşov.**

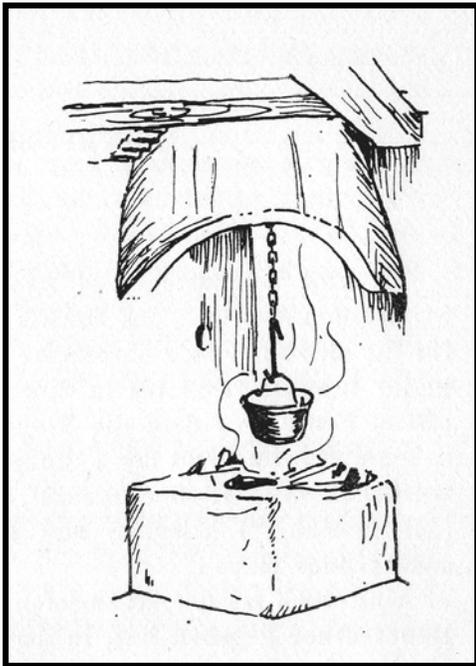
sharing labor and work animals and tools. Some tasks were handled by specialists, such as the village herdsman who looked after everyone's stock. Generally, Saxon villages consisted of wooden houses, the church, mills, storage sheds and other outbuildings spaced to prevent the spread of fire. Fencing, repairs, storage sheds and crafts workshops were often grouped at the edge of the village. Crafts were often done communally (Baur-Heinhold, 1967: 4-7; Maurer, 1862: 195). In 1994 Dan Lazar (1994: 145328.01) excavated an industrial site in Sibiu uncovering the only archaeological verified pottery and metalworking site used by the Saxons. His discovery of a combustion chamber for melting glass whose side walls were build of refractory materials - bricks (0.15 x 0.10 x 0.04 m) followed by rooms that were covered with silica residue. In the northwest section, terra cotta and coal was uncovered along with pot and glass fragments and containers of various shapes and sizes. Iron and metal fragments indicate an iron working site nearby that yet to be uncovered to date. Overall, the site is the only of its kind discovered so far Romania and future campaigns are planed to reveal the construction and complete layout of the site.

Local Saxon pottery production was abundant and patterned after pottery found at Delf and Strasburg and generally coated with enamel in various colors (Oprescu, 1929: 150,

166, 174) and Saxon metals were found as far as Poland (Kocka-Krenz, 1982: 42) but again little field work has been done in the study area.

The typical farmstead was made up of the house, a barn, a hay barn, and the kitchen garden. The outbuildings were arranged to form a yard, enclosed by a low fence of sticks or woven twigs. The houses were constructed of logs and were not very variable in layout, but they did have special architectural features that could be embellished. These included the ridgepole of the roof, the gable ends, the horizontal board that separated the triangular pediment from the square base of the house, the vertical boards at each corner, and the frames of windows and doors. Decorative plant and animal forms, or initials and dates were among the personalizing motifs (Capesius, 1977: 7-9; Gross, July, 1997: 3, 5).

Archaeological investigations of a house in Braşov dated the structure to the twelfth



**Figure 4.13: Saxon fire place and kitchen system of the fifteenth century.**

century and included the discovery of rare fragments of Saxon brick and ceramics from the period. The materials were probably recycled and used to provide foundation fill for the building. Archaeological data confirmed that black stone, lime, ceramic and brick fragments mixed with some mortar was used in foundation reconstruction in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries as well. The two room house dimensions were determined to be 3.0 meters by 5.0 meters with the walls being approximately .35 meters thick. The threshold of the house was

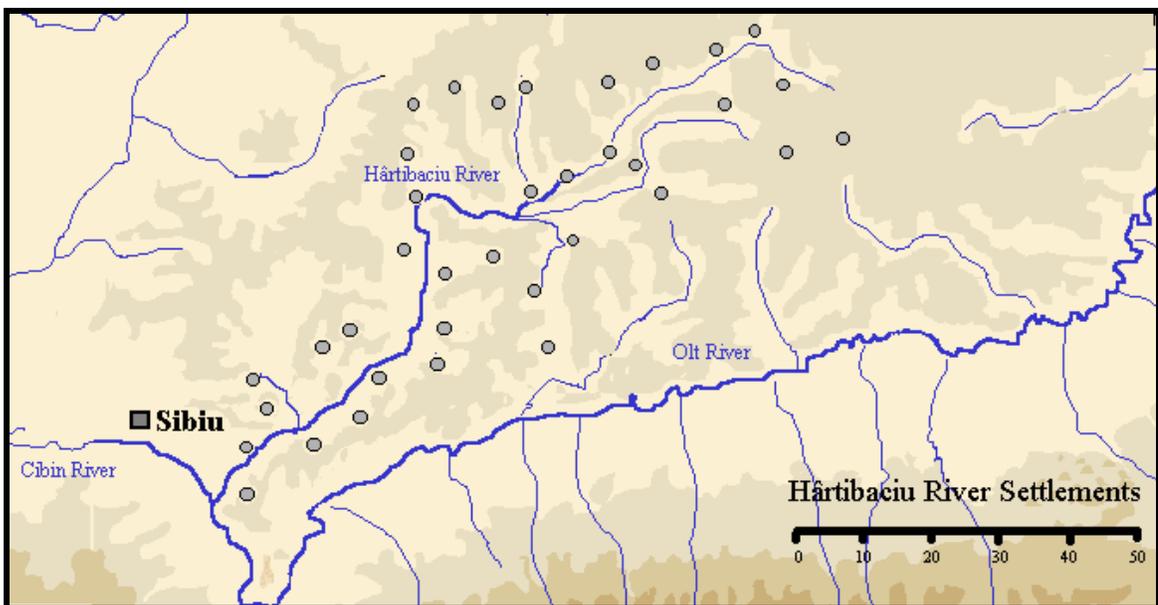
made from a wooden beam, with the oldest traces of house belonging twelfth century. A fire pit structure with stones in figure 4.12 was discovered in room two belonging to the same period but dig restrictions prevented a definitive function analysis (Istrate and Istrate, 2004: 40205.16).

Wood, during the study period, was the most common building material as metal was valuable and seldom used in nails for buildings. Mostly, parts of the building were cut and joined using a hand axe and saws were rarely used (Salzman, 1952: 294, 303-4). For



#### 4.4 Saxon Rural Settlement and Land Use

In Transylvania, economic life revived quickly after the Mongol invasion of 1241-42. As well as more defenses, new farming methods including crop rotation and the three field system is said to have boosted crop yields (Makkai, 1988: 24-5). Craftsmen formed guilds as artisans flourished; gold, silver, and salt mining expanded; and money-based transactions replaced barter. Though townspeople were exempt from feudal obligations, feudalism expanded and the nobles stiffened the serfs' obligations. The serfs must have resented the higher payments: since some fled the country, while others became outlaws (Giurescu, 1998: 244-5). In 1437 Romanian and Hungarian peasants rebelled against their Hungarian masters (Prodan, 1990: 3-5; Rady, 1992: 97-9). This uprising gathered momentum before the Magyar, German, and Székely nobles in Transylvania united forces and, with great effort, successfully quelled the revolt. Afterwards, the nobles formed the Union of Three Nations, jointly pledging to defend their privileges against any power except that of Hungary's king (Castellan, 1971: 52). The document declared the Magyars, Germans, and Székely the only recognized nationalities in Transylvania; henceforth, all other nationalities there, including the Romanians, were not officially recognized. The nobles gradually imposed even tougher terms on their serfs. In 1437, for



Map 4.05: Saxon Hârtibaciu River settlements northeast of Sibiu.

example, each serf had to work for his lord one day per year some 52 days as decreed and at harvest time without compensation; by 1514 serfs had to work for their lord based on servile labor determined by the lord and needs of the manor (Kiraly, 1975: 269; Prodan, 1990: 5). These events helped shape settlement policies for new settlements and reinforced settlement patterns in both Sibiu and Braşov counties (Peter, 1992: 7-8).

Many of the initial Saxon rural settlements faced overwhelming obstacles that included a lack or an inadequacy of economic opportunities and of infrastructure and services, particularly those related to defense, communications, transportation and manufactured goods. The benefits were land and opportunity in terms of farming, self-sufficiency, raising families and local freedoms that were missing in their homelands. Settlement types and development addressed opportunities and limitations (Beresford and St. Joseph, 1958: 3-7).

When discussing rural settlement, the questions of continuity, adaptation and change over time are central. While the case studies in Chapter Seven will address in detail these topics with specific examples, a general description is presented here. Rural Saxon villages generally followed the same pattern from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries. With the exception of specific local geographical limitations, villages generally comprised two rows of buildings facing each other across an open space representing a common or green. Unlike their Romanian counterparts, the village common was not enclosed but behind the rows of homes were tofts or individual house land allotments and

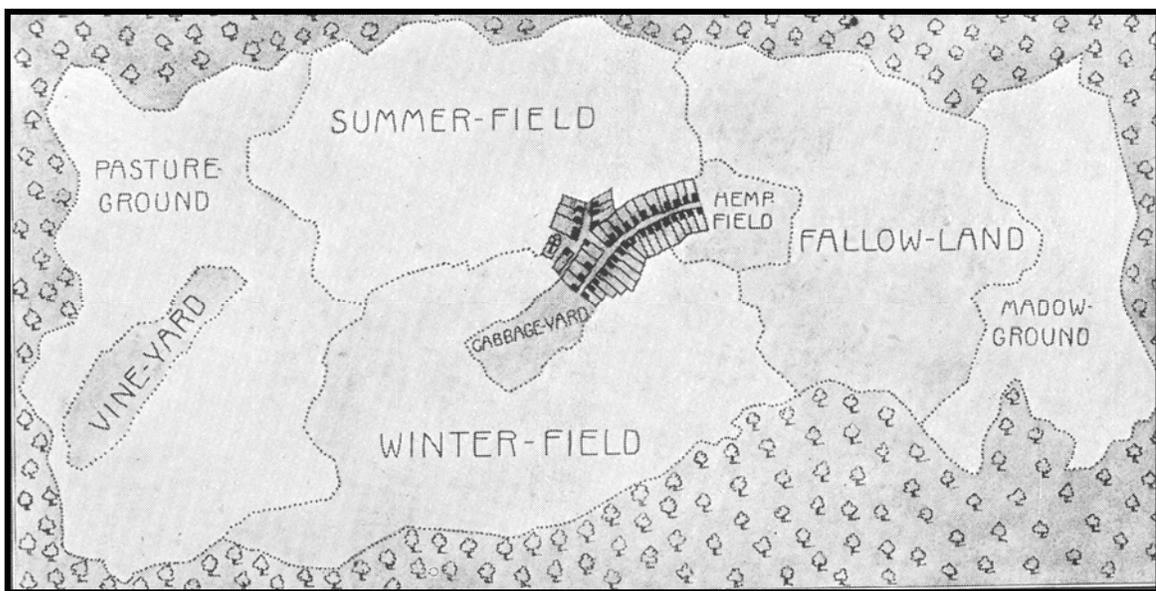


Figure 4.16: Sketch design of a Saxon traditional village layout and land use.

then common village enclosures. These physical settlement patterns were brought with the colonists and adapted to the new environment they occupied. Along with the physical layout of the rural settlement, the social structure of the village including views on governance, king, estate, church and laws were also brought in and adapted. These elements define the settlement patterns that evolve over time within the rural village setting. The patterns of Saxon rural settlement consist of individual elements of settlement including, but not limited to, cottages, farms, community building and the rural fortified church or church complex. In Sibiu and Braşov counties, these rural settlements still very much preserve the medieval landscape created when the Saxons arrived.



Map 4.06: Transylvanian topography including Sibiu (Hermanstadt) and Braşov (Kronstadt) area trade routes, rivers, valleys and mountains.

Colonization also provided a possible explanation for the physical identity of the settlements in the residence areas of the Saxons. Farmsteads that made up the rural Saxon settlements are characterized by broad lots, with the part towards the public circulation area destined to the principal house and its annexes, and the back to buildings with farming-related purposes, the vegetable garden and the orchard. The farming land proper is situated outside the settlement. The short sides of these buildings also face the street, while constructions at the back often have their long side parallel with the street axis.

#### 4.4.1 Settlement Types; Patterns and Distributions

King Géza II settled the initial Saxon colonists along the southern reaches of the Cibin and Hârtibaciu rivers. Later settlements began along the Tîrnava and Olt Rivers and followed the same pattern as the Hârtibaciu river settlements (Bóna, 1994: 180-1).

The Hârtibaciu and Cibin Rivers were concurrently established as parallel transportation routes in the region. Development of settlements along these navigable routes differed significantly in some cases. When the settlements began, water was the major means of transportation. Initial Braşov and Sibiu County settlements were easily accessible by water and this helped in establishing trading centers such as Sibiu, Mediaş and Braşov during this period. The realization of overland routes made some sites more accessible and desirable. The Hârtibaciu and Cibin river settlements followed the course of the rivers and the low-land areas within the floodplains (Map 4.03 and Map 4.04). In the Tîrnava and Olt rivers areas the settlements followed the ridgelines and higher valleys above the floodplains.

To provide the context for analysis, rural settlements can be grouped by counties and then subdivided into broad categories based on their geographical location and, to some degree, common conditions. Settlements are grouped by county and then by river region below:

<b>Braşov County</b>	
The Bîrsa River	Bartolemeu, Braşov, Bod, Bran, Codlea, Cristian, Dumbrăvița, Ghimbav, Hălchiu, Hărman, Krizbav, Rîşnov, Satu Nou, Sînpetru, Tohanul Vechi, Vlădeni, Vulcan, Zărneşti
The Olt River	Apaşa, Beclean, Boholţ, Cincul Mare, Cincşor, Calbor, Cobor, Crihalma, Dăișoara, Dopca, Făgăras, Feldioara (F), Feldioara (M), Felmer, Galaţi, Hălmeag, Hoghiz, Măieruş, Părău, Rotbav, Rodbav, Rucăr, Şecaia, Şoarş, Şona, Ticuşu Vechi, Ticuşul Nou, Toarcia, Ungra, Veneţia de Jos
The Homorodul River	Beia, Caţa, Dacia, Drăuşeni, Fişer, Homorod, Ioneşti, Jibert, Jimbor, Lovnic, Mercheaşa, Paloş, Rupea, Văleni, Viscri
The Tatrau River	Budila, Săcele, Prejmer, Teliu
The Tîrnava River	Bărcut, Buneşti, Criţ, Grînari, Meşendorf, Roadeş, SeLiştat

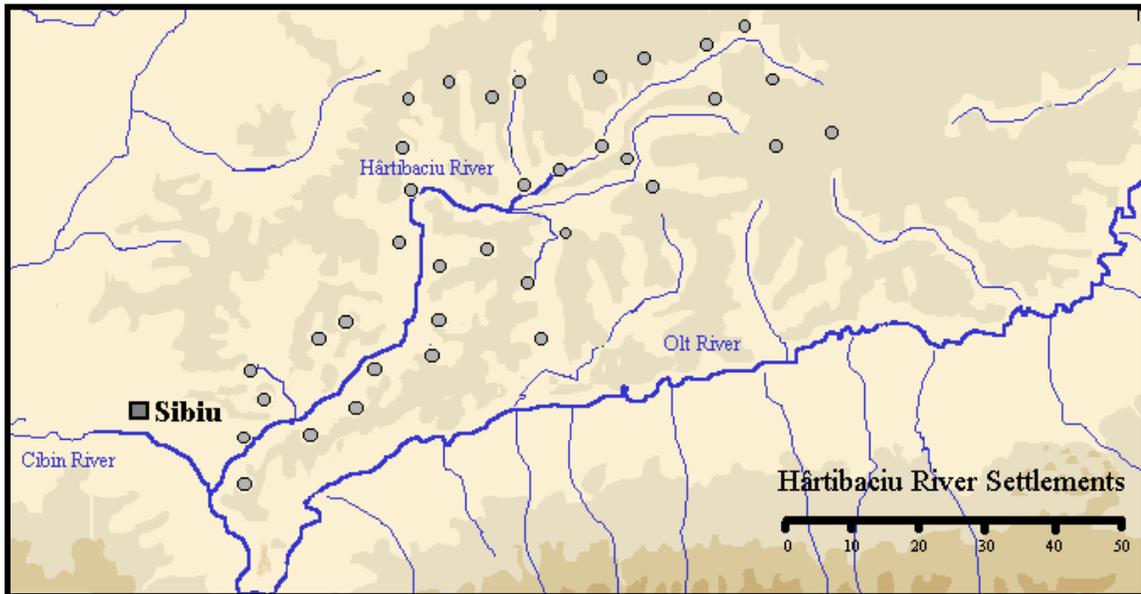
<b>Sibiu County</b>	
The Cibin River	Apoldu de Jos, Apoldu de Sus, Bungart, Csnădie, Csnădioara, Cristian, Dobîrca, Fîntînele, Gura Rîului, Guşteriţa, Hamba, Jina, Ocna Sibiului, Orlat, Păuca, Poplaca, Presaca, Răşinari, Sacel, Sadu, Şelimbăr, Sibiel, Sibiu, Şura Mare, Tălmăcel, Tălmăciu, Tilişca, Turnişor, Vale, Veştem
The Olt River	Avrig, Boiţa, Bradu, Bruiu, Chirpăr, Cîrţa , Colun, Gherdeal, Glîmboaca, Mohu, Noul Roman, Poenita, Racoviţa, Rod, Roşia, Sacadote, Sălişte, Săsăuşi, Sebeşul de Jos, Şomartin, Turnu Rosu, Turnul Rosu
The Hârtibaciu River	Agnita, Alţina, Amnaş, Apoş, Axente Sever, Beneşti, Bîrghiş, Brădeni, Caşolt, Cornăţel, Coveş, Fofeldea, Galeş, Ghijasa de Jos, Hosman, Ighişu Nou, Ilimbav, Lacobeni, Marpod, Merghindeal, Movile, Netuş, Nocrich, Noiştat, Noul, Nucet, Pelişor, Ruja, Soroştin, Stejărişu, Ţeline, Vărd, Vecerd, Veseud, Vurpăr, Zlagna
The Tîrnava River	Agârbiciu, Alămor, Alma Pe Tîrnave, Alma Vii, Aţel, Biertan, Boarta, Bratei, Buia, Buzd, Calvasăr, Chesler, Copşa Mare, Copşa Mică, Curciu, Daia, Dealu Frumos, Dîrlos, Dumbrăveni, Dupus, Ernea, Floresta, Giacăş, Haşag, Hoghilag, Lasela, Loamnes, Ludoş, Malancrav, Mediaş, Metiş, Micasasa, Mighindoala, Mihăileni, Moradas, Moşna, Motiş, Nemşa, Nou Săsesc, Păucea, Petriş, Prod Răvăşel, Richiş, Roandola, Ruşi, Salcău, Şaroş pe Tîrnave, Şeica Mare, Şeica Mică, Slimnic, Smig, Şoala, Stenea, Şura Mică, Ţapu, Tîrnava, Tîrnăvioara, Vaichid, Valea Viilor, Veseud
The Mureş River	Aciliu, Armen, Bazna, Blăjel, Boian, Gusu, Miercurea Sibiului, Poiana Sibului, Ruscior, Sîngătin, Ţichindeal, Topîrcea, Velţ

**Figure 4.17: River systems settlements and villages.**

As elsewhere in Central Europe, forested areas in Transylvania were rapidly cleared for agricultural purposes during the mid-thirteenth century. Both the settlement and clearing patterns were influenced by geographic features and the few previously established transportation routes as seen in map 4.06.

The single overland transportation route as depicted in map 4.06, may have contributed to the impermanence of settlement and agriculture in these higher locations, while farming persisted along the river floodplains (Anonymous, 1994). Until medieval roadways were established, only trails were in place for travel to the remote areas away from the rivers and tributaries. Later, when farm settlements occupied the valleys and floodplains, new arrivals found higher-elevation remote areas to settle and cultivate

(Bóna, 1994: 188-9). Paths and trails were established and later roads developed to tie the communities together.



Map 4.07: Hârtibaciu River settlement topography and villages.

Examining the interpretation that site locations, functions and types, and artifact distribution features of the landscape are associated is helpful in defining Saxon settlement roles. The Saxon patterns suggest the deliberate establishment of farmstead boundaries not predated by prior settled cultures to the Saxon arrival in the region (Robinson and Legen, 1933: 620-1). The Cumans, Pechenegs and Gepids existing in the region when the Saxons arrived were tribesmen who wandered with herds and at best maintained scattered homesteads in accordance with their traditions. Upon arrival of the Saxon settlers, with the support of the king, these tribes were displaced south and the land adapted to the customs of the Saxons (Spinei, 2003: 128-30). These cooperative Saxon communities of freemen initially formed nucleated and linear villages such as Laslea (Figure 4.18) along with more dispersed villages such as Paucs (Curta, 2006b: 361, 368-9).



Figure 4.18: Plan of the Saxon village of Laslea, showing linear development with field system.

#### 4.5 Saxon Urban Settlement

The established and institutionalized medieval Hungarian state, with its focused political, administrative, economic, social, and religious machinery in Transylvania was centered on the urban settlements of the Saxons in the twelfth century. The founding of Sibiu and its subsequent development into the most important urban centre of the medieval Transylvanian Saxons exemplifies the Saxon urban settlement (Fabini and Fabini, 2003: 43-5).

A salient manifestation of Transylvania's recovery after the Mongol devastation in the thirteenth century was the rise of towns and the development of a new business and commercial class. This Saxon development was to lay the foundations for their continuity and survival as a distinct ethnic and privileged group. These developments occurred in

the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Urban settlement played an important part of the Saxon medieval culture, just as the rural settlements with increased agricultural output provided the means of survival for new town dwellers. The Hungarian kings realized that without a rise in population, there would have been no one to people the towns. Without a minimum of peace and political stability, merchants could not have transported and sold goods.

Early medieval society in Transylvania was traditional, agricultural, and rural. The emergence of a new class that was none of these constituted a social revolution. The new class—Saxon artisans and merchants—came from the peasantry. Most historians believe that they were landless younger sons of large families, driven away by land shortage. Or else they were forced by war and famine to seek new possibilities; they were unusually enterprising and adventurous, curious and willing to take a chance. Of the various theories used to explain the origins of European towns, the evidence suggests that Saxon urban centers began as boroughs—that is, as fortifications erected during the initial settlement. This view proposes that towns were at first places of defense, into which farmers from the surrounding countryside moved when their landscape was attacked. This is especially true for the Saxon settlements; even the rural village settlements built their fortified churches to this end.

Merchants were attracted to the fortifications because they trafficked in commerce and economically desired to be near their customers. But most residents of early towns made their living by farming outside the town. Belgian historian Henri Pirenne (1937: 80-4) maintained that towns sprang up when merchants who engaged in long-distance trade gravitated toward attractive or favorable spots, such as a fort. Usually traders settled just outside the walls, in the faubourgs or suburbs - both of which mean ‘outside’ or ‘in the shelter of the walls.’ As their markets prospered and as their number outside the walls grew, the merchants built a new wall around themselves. According to Pirenne, a medieval town consisted architecturally of a number of concentric walls, and the chief economic pursuit of its residents was trade and commerce. Concentrations of people accumulated, as towns came into being (Szelenyi, 2004: 7-10).

Sibiu originated in the later twelfth century with the settlement of colonists of German extraction into the Transylvanian Voivodate which was a geographical and administrative component of the medieval Hungarian kingdom; the settlement of Sibiu finalized the boundaries of the Hungarian realm. Its population - that would be later referred to as Saxon - consisted of several stages and waves of colonization. The main purpose of the Hungarian kings was to ensure not only the military protection at the exposed borders on the Carpathians and also the further conversion to the catholic faith in the regions beyond the mountains (Bethlen, 1934: 396).

The establishment of Sibiu was believed to have been by one Hermann from Nuremberg, who founded the town in 1160. Little is known of him except his name and its location. The settlement was often referred to as *villa Hermanni* in surviving documents from the fourteenth century (Albu, 2002: xii; Soterius, 1504: 11). The political and administrative evolution of Sibiu into a recognized town –one of only three in Saxon lands in the fourteenth



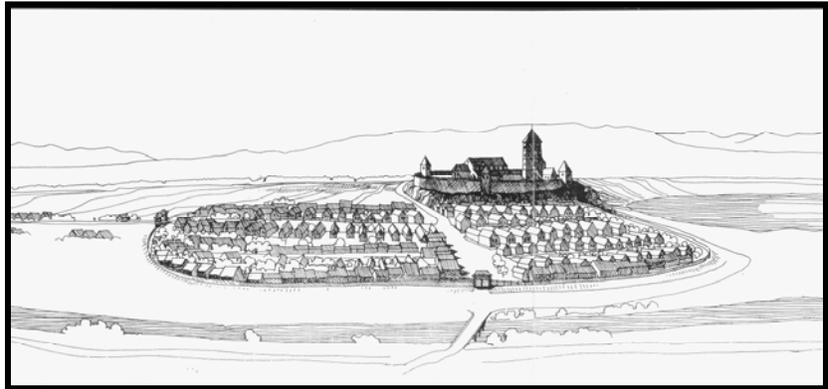
**Figure 4.19: Plan of Sibiu in 1380 showing the lower town surrounding the upper town in the center.**

century- typifies the urban organization of the Saxons. The town became the center of a province, which formed the administrative, juridical and ecclesiastical core of all Saxon inhabited territories and of the different groups of colonists. Some historians believe that the leadership role of the town was designed from the beginning based on the specific topography, layout and type of settlement employed in Sibiu. The original land parcels were of smaller lots of only 500-1100m<sup>2</sup>. This was significantly smaller than other villages but the overall size of the settlement was again larger than all other villages in the area. This indicates that Sibiu was planned and constructed differently than the other Saxon settlements (Pakucs, 2004: 177).

Since its early phases, Sibiu was configured into an upper and a lower town

(Niedermaier, 1976: 132). The upper town was built around the Provost, and was probably surrounded by wooden fortifications. The lower town eventually grew and was combined with the upper town in the second half of the thirteenth century because of the extension of the lots. Building strong fortifications for the town was an aim pursued with much effort and consistency all throughout the medieval period: stone walls, towers and bastions surrounded first the inner part of the city followed by the lower town as it expanded and grew. The construction of these strongholds was partly commissioned by the Hungarian kings, and partly a local policy of the Saxon community.

**Figure 4.20: Plan of Sibiu in the 1300s showing the lower town surrounding the enclosed upper town in the center.**



The majority of published archaeology and historical works on medieval urban centers is on the city of Sibiu. Work has been undertaken elsewhere but little has been published, and in fact most archaeological research is not of the medieval period but of the Roman – Dacian period. Of the few investigations completed, almost all have been of ecclesiastical sites. For most sites, there is a lack of excavated data so we know very little of food production, living conditions and building structures that no longer survive. Although they have been inhabited, and, therefore, have evolved under the impact of the specific social and economic mutations, the villages have a real archaeological, ethnographic, historic and artistic value. With a few exceptions, the original functions of the Saxon building in Sibiu and Braşov counties have been preserved. While the Institute for Cultural Memory (CIMIC) in Romania maintains the archaeology reports of all activities in Transylvania, few pertinent excavations have been conducted within the study period. I have included these individual archaeological reports where used within the text. I will discuss specific excavations in case studies in Chapter Seven but the existing overall the medieval archaeological data is thin.

#### 4.5.1 Rights, Privileges, Centers and Administration

In the words of the Greek poet Alcaeus, “Not houses finely roofed or well built walls, nor canals or dockyards make a city, but men able to use their opportunity” (Lopez, 1967: 33). That is fundamentally what Saxon medieval towns meant - concentrations of people for other than agrarian purposes. The Saxons settled on the king’s land and had to secure permission to live and trade. Hungarian aristocratic nobles and churchmen were generally suspicious of and hostile to the Saxon urban class. They soon realized, however, that profits and benefits flowed to them and their territories from the markets set up on their land.

The history of Saxon urban growth from the eleventh through thirteenth centuries consists largely of Saxon merchants’ efforts to acquire liberties. This meant special privileges. For the urban dweller, liberties included the privilege of living and trading on the king or lord’s land. The most important privilege a medieval townsman could gain was personal freedom. It gradually developed that an individual who lived in a town for a year and a day, and was accepted by the townspeople, was free of servile obligations and status. During this period, Saxon towns fought for, and slowly gained, legal and political rights. Since their arrival, they had held courts with jurisdiction over members of the town in civil and criminal matters. After the chaos of the Mongol invasion the Saxons developed courts that dealt with commercial transactions, debt, bankruptcy, proof of sales, and contracts. These law merchants were especially suitable to the needs of the new bourgeoisie. Gradually, towns across Saxon Transylvania acquired the right to hold municipal courts that alone could judge members of the town. In effect, this right gave them judicial independence (Pirenne, 1937: 53).

The shifting military and political situation in the thirteenth century redefined the roles of the Saxons in Transylvania. After the Mongol invasion and the extinction of the Cuman Empire, the Saxons had lost their primary purpose as military protectors for the Hungarian Nation. Saxons’ protector meant that the Saxon lands became an important manufacture and commercial foci for the Hungarian King. This transition was strongly and consistently promoted and supported by the new economic and defensive policies of the

Kings of the fourteenth century. For the Saxons, this resulted in a sum of special commercial and trading privileges provided by King Louis the Great and then Sigismund of Luxemburg. They encouraged the trading activity of frontier cities in southern Transylvania. For Sibiu, this resulted in a number of privileges that granted the staple right - a system of trade and taxation used during the medieval period in Hungary - where trade in certain goods be transacted at specific designated market towns. In Sibiu, merchants were required to submit their goods to inspection, and to pay a levy to the Crown on goods. This promoted and encouraged merchants to trade freely all throughout the Hungarian kingdom to Vienna and to Dalmatia in spite of Buda's staple right (Bóna, 1994: 182-3; Pach, 1975: 5-15).

Although disputed in early twentieth century historical writing, now it is established the one of the major Levantine trade routes passed through Wallachia and the Saxon towns of southern Transylvania, and that these roads played an important role in providing Central Europe with oriental goods, especially spices (Szelenyi, 2004: 11). The Saxons of Sibiu and Braşov traded with Wallachia and the Romanian Voivodes; Romanian merchants found in Sibiu a rich market and source of liquidity; however, the town was also a refuge for escaping rulers and nobles (Bóna, 1994: 189-91; Pach, 1980).

By the late fourteenth century, especially in the towns of Sibiu and Braşov counties, the leaders of the merchant guilds were already quite rich and powerful. They constituted an economic force in Sibiu, Braşov, Mediaş and Agnitha, often even bargaining with kings and lords for political independence (Fara, 2004: 347; Szelenyi, 2004: 20-1). Full rights of self-government included the right to hold a town court, the right to select the mayor and other municipal officials, and the right to tax and collect taxes.

Within the Saxon community as a whole, Sibiu preserved and strengthened its leadership. Continuing efforts to fortify the town brought about many positive consequences: the minting chamber of Transylvania was transferred in 1427 to Sibiu due to the Ottoman threat, and this fact again had crucial influences in the economic growth of the town. The mayors of Sibiu eventually monopolized the office of the minting chamber in the period between 1444-1499, and even started to farm out intermittently the minting of the coins (Huszár, 1995: 9-11, 17-24). By the mid-fifteenth century, the Saxon towns began to delegate the *regalia* - the customs, the coin minting - within the framework of the Saxon

Nation (Vlaicu, 2003: 162).

## 4.6 Presence and Role of the Saxon Church

In 1190, King Béla III founded the Saint Ladislas Provost in Sibiu, structuring the ecclesiastical community of the Saxons in a medieval charter (Zimmermann, 1892: 2-3). Alba Julia was designated the Episcopal seat with various chapters through out Transylvania with the exception of the Saxon lands. In the 1224 *Andreanum*, King Andrew II compiled the rights and the duties of the Saxon guests, which were to become *unus populus* under the jurisdiction of the Sibiu Provost (Zimmermann, 1892: 32-5). King Matias Corvinus in 1486 confirmed the privileges in the *Andreanum* and instituted at the same time the autonomous juridical and legislative unity of the Transylvanian Saxons, the University or Sächsische Nationsuniversität (Gündisch, 2001b: 41-4). The Saxon University combined the religious and political realms into one institution that represented the interests of the entire Saxon nation and for centuries guided the destiny of the Saxon people. The Universities' sphere of authority included the administration of justice, the management of the Saxon economy, and the working out of internal regulations. The University was headed by the Count of the Saxons (*Sachsengräf, Comes Saxonum*), who was freely elected and whose seat was in Hermannstadt. The Saxon Assembly (*Sachsentsag*) was both an advisory and an executive body. The parochial system, in existence since the twelfth century, was subsumed into the organization (Daniel, 1980: 111) .

### 4.6.1 The Saxon Parochial System

The Saxon parochial system has its origins in the twelfth century and retains almost intact a picture of the chronology and density of Saxon settlements in Transylvania. It demonstrates which ones were the principal centers of population and which ones were the satellites or sub-communities of the twelfth through fifteenth centuries. Hungary, after its Christianization had classified churches according to Hungarian custom and church law. Unlike the English, the Saxons did not maintain a complex classification of churches such as minsters, manorial or private churches with burial rights, and field

churches or dependent chapels in outlying settlements (Barlow, 1963: 183-195); the Saxons maintained a simpler division between the dorf or village church, chapel, and the town church. However, like the English classification, the Saxons used an administrative structure in their stühles or chairs or to define and place the churches in a hierarchy. These stühles were a territorial-administrative unit common in the Hungarian Kingdom, forming autonomous regions, independent from the feudal system; their autonomy was granted in return for the military services they provided to the Hungarian Kings.

Due to the geographical and the political system, eventually seven stühles would emerge within the Saxon lands. The Saxon seven stühles, as they became known, represented the central or mother church and all of the outlying churches in the villages represented the subordinated churches beholdng to the mother church within the stühles. The village church did not, as a rule, make payments or tithes to the mother church of the stühl but often did receive money and support from the mother church. Pension paying churches are virtually unknown in Saxon settlements. Monies collected through the social structures sufficed, since the Saxons had a unified social, religious and political system. So, money flowed from outlying settlements, just not in the typical western European form of the church. Saxon settlement patterns evolved into a recognized shape where the stühles or mother church were in valleys or on flat, accessible sites, with dorf churches in clearings or along remote areas of the river system followed finally by chapelries even on less favorable lands such as the upper slopes of hills and remote mountain valleys that fed the river system drainage.

Overall, secondary Saxon settlements were on relative marginal lands or else isolated lands that were difficult to access. The general pattern emerging suggests that other than physical geography, settlements were fairly uniform based on religious structural uniformity, Hungarian custom and followed governance from the Saxon University. This brought authority, administration of justice and economic systems of behavior within all Saxon lands.

Along with the Hungarians and Székely, the Transylvanian Saxons were members of the Union of the Three Nations agreement of 1438. The Union preserved political rights for the three groups and excluded the Romanians from any recognized rights (Daniel, 1980: 111; Daniel, 1981: 174-5). During the Reformation, most Transylvanian Saxons

converted to Protestantism (Castellan, 1971: 53). As the semi-independent Principality of Transylvania was one of the most religiously tolerant states in Europe, the Saxons were allowed to practice their religion (Miko, 2006: 34-7).

#### 4.6.2 The Monastic System

The monastic system within Braşov and Sibiu counties was represented by foundations of two orders. First the Cistercian Order formed an abbey at Cîrţa, followed by the warrior monks of the Order of the Teutonic Knights being established in the B rzenland in Braşov County.

Bernard, the founding abbot of Clairvaux Abbey, the Valley of Light in Burgundy, was one of the most influential Church leaders in 1100s. His influence

increased when his student apprentice was elected Pope Eugene III in 1145. Abbot Bernard's preaching in support of the Second Crusade (1145-1149) provided the opportunity and foundation for the establishment of the Abbey at C rţa via crusaders passing through the Transylvania region (B na, 1994:143; Spinei, 2003: 424).

C rţa lies 47 km east of Sibiu and dates from 1202 when first mentioned in royal documents from Eger, Hungary. In 1223, the abbey was confirmed by King Andrew: however, the monastery was destroyed by the Mongols in 1241 and again in 1264 (Curta, 2006b: 403-5; Zimmermann, 1892: 27, 94).

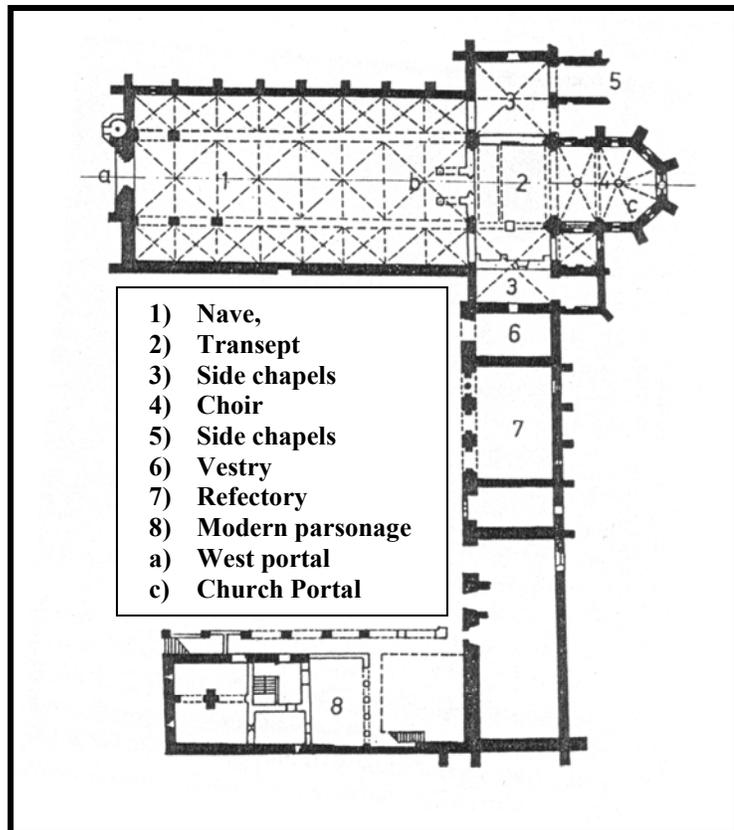


Figure 4.21: Schematic of the Monastery ruins of C rţa showing the major structures.

Despite this, Cîrța Abbey became one of the largest and richest of Central Europe. Here, a group of reform-minded monks arrived to pursue a purer, more disciplined way of monastic life. As so-called White Monks, they built extensively, including a Precinct, church, cloister, sacristy and infirmary. Amongst its rich holdings, in 1322 King Charles I noted that the monastery owned the villages of Criș, Meșendorf, Cloașterf, Apos, Cisnădioara, Feldioara, Colum, Glamboaca and Cîrța Romaneasca along the Olt and Tîrnava Rivers (Géza, 1963: 3-5).

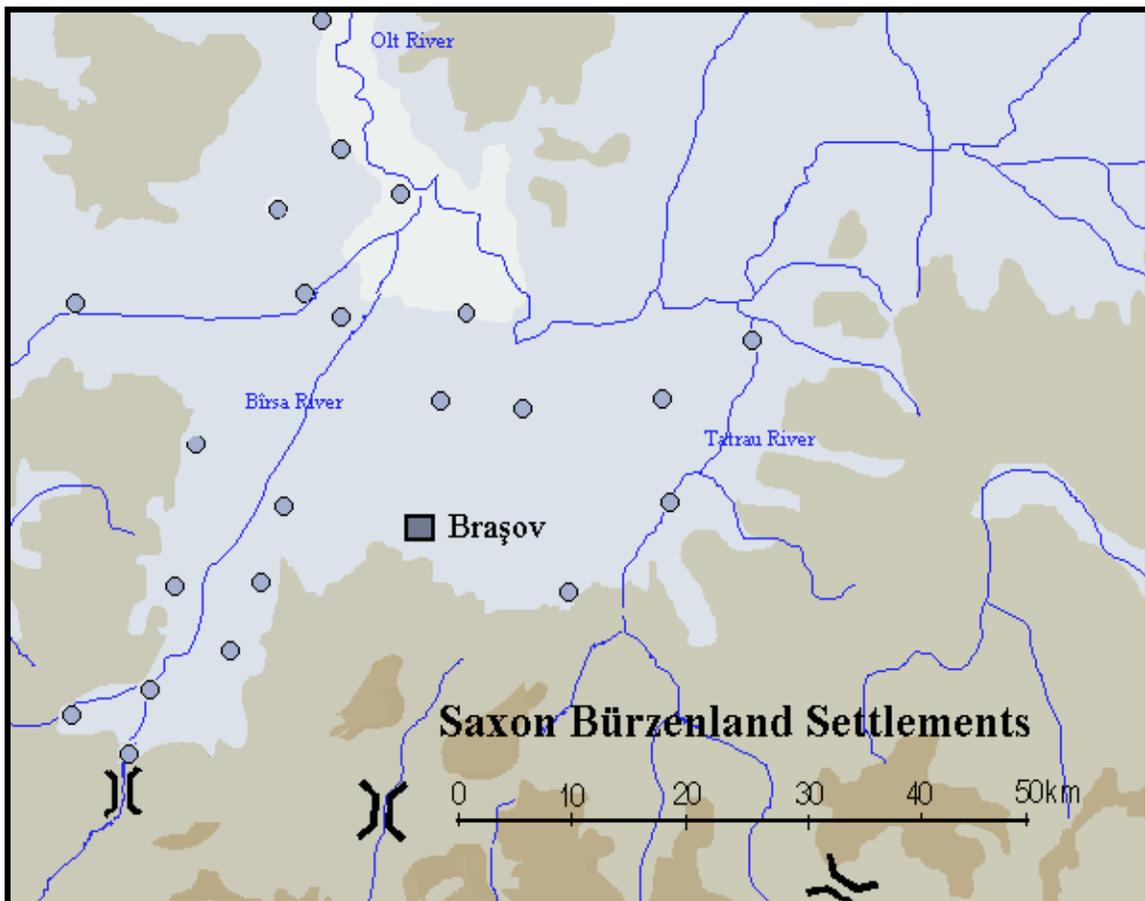
**Figure 4.22:**  
Monastery ruins  
at Cîrța from  
the south east.



The Abbey saw rebuilding under King Sigismund in 1427 (Gündisch, 1983a: 323-4), but in 1474 King Matthias ordered its dissolution and its possessions were transferred to the Saxon church in Sibiu (Gündisch, 1987: 6; Reissenberger, 1894: 16, 30). The twelfth and thirteenth century expansion of the Cistercian system was met with decline at Cîrța as elsewhere when the Abbey could not respond to the needs of a changing society in the Saxon Lands of Transylvania. The rules and laws of the chapter frequently had to yield to the realities of the surrounding lands and societies. Before its dissolution in 1474, the monastery played a major role in the political, economical and cultural history of Saxons in the area. However, the rules and laws of the Order simply alienated the local population at a time when they no longer needed the Abbey and instead sought spiritual support from the Saxon Nation (Berger, 1999: 27-33; Lekal, 1977: 93-5).

The Teutonic Knights arrived in Transylvania in 1211, invited by King Andrew II and given rights and privileges to settle in what is today Braşov County. The Knights were later expelled for not supporting their obligations to the King. It is widely believed but not proven that the king was jealous of their growing power and may have posed a threat to the region (Pop, 1994: 169-70).

The Knights started building stone fortresses and castles to guard the Carpathian passes in the southeast of Transylvania. The region was known as the B rzenland, named after the B rsa River valley (Laszlovszky and So s, 2001: 321-2, 327-8). The Knights invited Saxon settlers from the Sibiu area, referred to as the Altland, as well as German settlements in eastern Hungary (Papacostea, 1993: 32-5). However, the Knights and their order were expelled from the B rzenland in 1225 by the King and then moved to Poland and Prussia. Yet, the colonists invited to the B rzenland remained and joined with the Saxon Nation administrative structure (Banescu, 1926: 13, 15; Seward, 1995: 98).



Map 4.08: The B rsa (B rzenland) River settlement topography and villages.

The Bürzenland is bordered by Apața in the north, the toll station and fortress of Bran in the south, and the village of Prejmer in the east. Brașov was the only medieval town in Bürzenland and was specifically built by the Knights as their center of trade and commerce. Some 26 villages in total were constructed and / or controlled by the Knights here; eighteen villages including Bartolemeu, Brașov, Bod, Bran, Codlea, Cristian, Dumbrăvita, Ghimbav, Hălchiu, Hărman, Krizbav, Rîșnov, Satu Nou, Sînpetru, Tohanul Vechi, Vlădeni, Vulcan, Zărnești were located along the Bîrsa River, and four villages along the Olt River including Apața, Feldioara (M), Măieruș and Rotbav; the last four villages of the Bürzenland included Budila, Săcele, Prejmer and Teliu, located along the Tatrau River as shown in map 4.08.

The fortresses and villages of the Bürzenland were garrisoned by warrior monks who led lives that were both military and religious. Unusually, the fortress and fortified church complex at Feldioara were also known as a convent at the time due to its religious nature and the fact that women were also present. The battle Master who led the knights into battle and planned the military campaigns and strategy of the order was titled the Marshall; he was part of the seven man council that ran the day-to-day operation of the colony (Bradford, 1999: 26, 29-31). Each fortress village site was led by a commander and area decision-making was decentralized and generally delegated down to each commander. The village commander was responsible for collection of taxes and supervision of justice when needed. He also had the added task of provisioning the complex with stores enough to withstand a two year siege and providing refuge to villagers in time of danger or attack.

The monastic life of the village centered on the fortified complex and church or chapel within it. Daily religious services were performed by the knights in their roles as monks. The knights ate communal meals together and were well known for showing hospitality to outsiders (Seward, 1995: 32-35, 129).

The Bürzenland Teutonic Knights embraced economic commerce in the region. Their economy was based on agriculture, trade and taxes. Control of trade was one of the reasons that Brașov was built as the only trade center and given the title of town in the entire colony (Zimmermann, 2000: 42-5, 64-7).

### 4.6.3 The Political Role of Saxon Ecclesiastical Clergy

In the twelfth century, ecclesiastical organizations closely related to monasticism, - the chivalric orders of Hospitallers, Templars and Teutonic knights - arrived in Transylvania. While a product of the crusades, these orders all established with various degrees, a presence in Central Europe. Mendicant orders such as the Franciscans focused their efforts in cities, whilst Dominicans focused on evangelism and preaching especially in areas such as Transylvania where large populations of pagan Cumans and Petchenegs settled. In Central Europe, this led to the development in the 13th century of religious houses founded by princes and lesser nobles by the Templars (Borchardt, 2001: 235-6). In Transylvania, many of these families funded churches in villages they owned. This mix of royal lands, noble lands and Saxon lands led to a unique development of ecclesiastical political structures throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

The Saxon Church, like much of medieval Europe, was the center of knowledge and culture in Saxon Lands. The introduction of monastic orders in the late twelfth century brought with them an addition to the region: the beginning of teaching orders with an emphasis on education of lay people. This religious role and idea of importance was a byproduct of Hungarian medieval monasticism. The Benedictine Pannonhalma Abbey school founded in A. D. 996 is considered by many as the origins of Hungarian education history with the name of the first known Hungarian schoolboy (Bencze, 1996: 67). This allowed the Benedictines and other orders such as the Cistercians and the Dominicans to increase literacy in Hungary and the spreading of a Latin culture throughout Hungarian lands including Transylvania (Pál, 2000: 123-5).

One of the specific features of this development was the development of Hungarian legal institutions with the rights of 'notary', the majority of which were in monasteries and church related offices. As previously mentioned in Chapter Three, these medieval legal institutions based on royal order prepared and copied charters and diplomas; in case of litigation these documents were recognized as authentic and binding. Pannonhalma and Székesfehérvár were two of the most important Benedictine institutions that had the authorization to prepare these documents for the Hungarian Nation. In Saxon Lands,

these monastic documents provided the legal basis of their existence (Csóka, 2004: http) but how this system created and what were its origins?



Map 4.09: Saxon Archdiocese of Esztergom delineating Saxon lands in 1192.

After conquering and settling Southern Transylvania in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Alba Julia - Gyulafehérvár in Hungarian - became the new Episcopal seat under the king's authority. The bishop's authority extended over almost the entire territory of Transylvania with the exception of the Szeben or Saxon region under the authority of the archbishop of Esztergom. The Sibiu region shown in white in map 4.09 above was known as the Altland and was designated by King Géza II in 1192 as the Saxon Lands to distinguish it from other royal lands under the Transylvanian episcopacy (Pascu, 1982: 25-9). The bishop of Alba Julia received a large portion of his wealth from regional tithes and he robustly defended his rights and authority in the area in order to protect his income. He undermined the Bürzenland Teutonic Knights and Saxon Gräfs

who tried to draw Saxon villages outside of the Altland (along with their tithes) under the jurisdiction of the Saxons (Laszlovszky and Soós, 2001). In the ensuing years, conflict broke out in several villages until the Saxons attacked and burned Alba Julia in 1277; the Bishop escaped and later returned to begin to rebuild the town, thus these continuous rivalries fragmented the Church's spiritual and moral authority throughout the fourteenth century (Kessler, 1990: 11-8).

A shift in function began that resulted in a change in the social and political functions of the clergy. Hungarian kings over time tasked the clergy leadership with diplomatic and military assignments, while local chapters and select monasteries were designated as 'responsible institutions' and given notary functions. Since the designation of 'responsible institutions' nationwide dates from 1231, it is likely that Transylvanian church institutions began issuing official charters before the Mongol invasion (Makkai, 2002: 530-34).

Autonomous Saxon institutions began in the late twelfth century. The leader of the Szeben Saxons was the Gräf (Bruckner, 1926: 10-13). The charter issued by Hungarian King Stephen in 1271, granted legal standing to the '*Universitas Saxonum*' or Saxon University (Kessler, 1990: 10). The 1271 charter also reconfirmed and clarified the privileges of the Saxons. The Saxons and the Count or Gräf were an independent community under the king's protection, whose privileges included Judiciary independence, hunting, mining, fishing, forestry, and control of the sales of their products; their ecclesiastical rights included the right to collect tithes as they saw fit and the right to elect their own priests. In return, they paid an annual land tax of 500 silver Marks and they had to pay chancellery revenues once a year. In time of war, 50 men were required to be available to the king (Gyula, 1994: 618-9; Rohbock and Hunfalvy, 1856: 60-1). In 1317, King Charles Robert I of Anjou added new privileges to the old ones. By the fourteenth century, the Saxons obtained full self-government when King Mathias allowed the Saxons to elect the Royal Judge and the Saxon privileges were extended to all other Saxon areas (Szász, 1999: 15-7; Wagner, 1981: 16-9).

Saxon ethnic autonomy in Transylvania began in the fourteenth century and from its establishment, the '*Sächsische Nationsuniversität*' or Saxon Nation was the most important center of legal authority and also the most significant educational center in the

region. The Saxon Nation was an outgrowth of the earlier Saxon University and incorporated many of its provisions but most importantly, the Saxon Nation codified the social and ecclesiastical functions of the Saxons. The institution was the legal and judicial representative of the Saxons within the Transylvania. The Saxon Nation created a legally recognized self-governing communal political and religious society whose population maintained the German language, values and ideas within the society. The Saxon Nation represented the Saxon people in the Transylvanian assembly which included Hungarian aristocracy and the Székely homeland. The Saxon Nation in the medieval period was a class distinction as the organization only represented Saxons living on the Saxon lands as defined by the king and not Saxons living on lands belonging to aristocrats or non-Saxons living on Saxon lands such as Hungarians and Romanians (Kessler, 1990: 10-2).

In 1583, as an Autonomous Principality under the control of the Ottoman Empire, the Saxon Nation brought together the existing ancestral common laws which were complemented with clauses of the Roman law and had these revised laws approved by the ruler prince Stephan Báthory, who was also the king of Poland: "The Statutes of the Saxons in Transylvania or their own Common Law" (*Der Sachsen in Siebenbürgen Statuta oder eygen Landrecht*). The law guaranteed all members of the Saxon Nation personal freedom, proprietary right and equality before the law, and remained in effect until 1853 (Gündisch, 1990: 91-3; Gündisch, 1998: 24-31).

#### **4.6.4 The Social Roles of the Church**

The Saxon Nation as an ecclesiastical and political structure protected the Saxon language and culture throughout the centuries by administering, schools, and church structure. Local villages elected their pastor as this was the privilege of every Saxon community. Churches collected tithes, kept part of it for the church and the rest was used by the community. Since the battle between the Transylvanian bishop and the Saxons over tithing was lost by the Saxons, they tried to maintain their religious independence from the Hungarian ecclesiastic organization by developing independent deaneries.

Finally, at the time of the Reformation, most of them opted for the Lutheran religion that granted them organizational independence (Pop, 2003: 116).

The social roles of the Church were related to the secular powers of Saxon Nation and the more or less equal powers of the university in secular and ecclesiastical matters. Social roles of the church were defined by the administration of the courts on royal Saxon lands and the formations of policy in Saxon affairs. The ten chapters of the university in the medieval period formed the ecclesiastical section of the university. This fee-paying church association represented the Saxons at Alba Julia. These representatives determined social policies within each chapter and the chapters generally followed similar policies. Post-Reformation, these chapters became the Saxon synod for the clergy, lead by the bishop who was elected. The ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the synod influenced the secular functions in areas of Lutheran doctrine that influenced everyday life (Binder, 1990: 46-9).

The Decrees of the Torda National Assembly in 1557 protected the Saxons by guaranteeing religious freedom and administrative privileges to the Saxon Nation. This supported the social roles of the church (Kessler, 1990: 14). The Saxon Nation, along with the Hungarian nobles and the Székely lands, also protected personal aristocracy privileges (Kessler, 1990: 15). By the late thirteenth century, the legal and religious rights under the Saxon Nation were extended to those Saxons living in free municipalities on royal lands. The Seven chairs of the Saxon Nation and recognized Saxon *civitates liberae* or free cities represented themselves in the Transylvania Assembly, called the federal state parliament by the Saxons. The Saxon Nation retained Saxon privileges such as ‘without their consent no federal state parliament resolution was valid’. The right of self-government on royal lands within the framework that the Saxon Nation was a historical development of Saxon autonomy in Transylvania as formulated by the Saxon Nation. This system was both secular and religious within the Transylvanian estate system (Tontsch, 1990: 30-3).

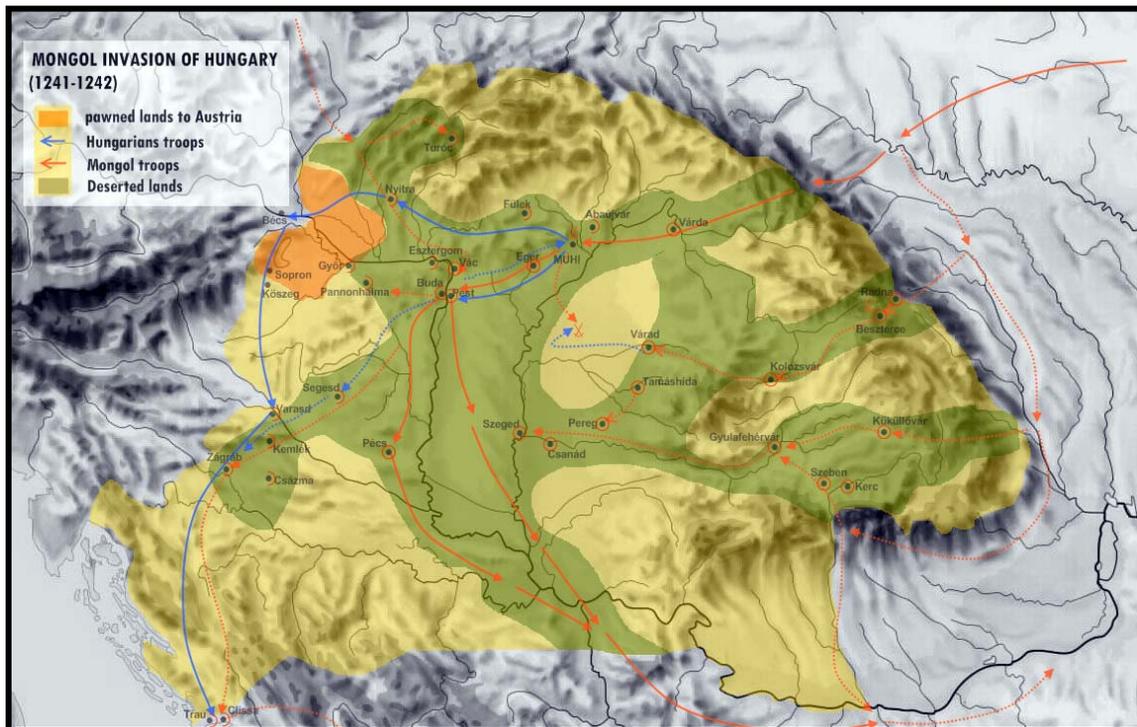
The key component of the Saxon community was the preeminence of their social and political autonomy; the ability to create laws and having the legal jurisdiction to project and safeguard their existence. Culturally and linguistically Saxon autonomy affected the public organizations and structures that managed the affairs of the population. The laws

of the Saxon Nation and their legal standing provided the political basis of the Transylvania Saxon community and its existence.

Central to the success of this independence was Saxon court sovereignty, maintained by controlling appointments of judicial officials, and the upholding of judicial rulings by the population. The *Andreanum* disconnected the Transylvania Saxon court from the Hungarian system. The direct connection of Saxon autonomy certified by the king with rights of appeal through the Saxon Nation structure and the Transylvanian Gráf strengthened organizational stability for the Saxons. The successful defense of these rights and privileges in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries against the Hungarian aristocracy ensured Saxon independence and survival into the twentieth century (Tontsch, 1990: 37-9).

#### 4.7 Defense, Warfare and the Saxon Fortified Church

Initially, the primary role of the Saxon colonists was military: in the late twelfth and the beginning of the thirteenth century, the territories south and east of Transylvania were under Pecheneg and Cuman influence; the military protection of the far eastern and



Map 4.10: The Mongol Invasion of 1241 showing the devastation of Saxon Lands near Cırța.

southeastern borders was insured by the Saxons together with the Szeklers who inhabited the Eastern Carpathians. Sibiu was chosen as the residence of the Union of Gräfs who were the leaders of the Saxon communities (Gündisch, 2001a: 128). This aggressive policy of the Hungarian Kings against the Cumans was also strengthened in the first decades of the thirteenth century by arrival of the Teutonic knights in Bürzenland as discussed in section 4.6.2 above. The fortifications built by the Teutonic order and their effective military actions combined with the Mongol invasion, forever reduced the power and influence of the Cuman Empire. (Papacostea, 1998: 32-5).

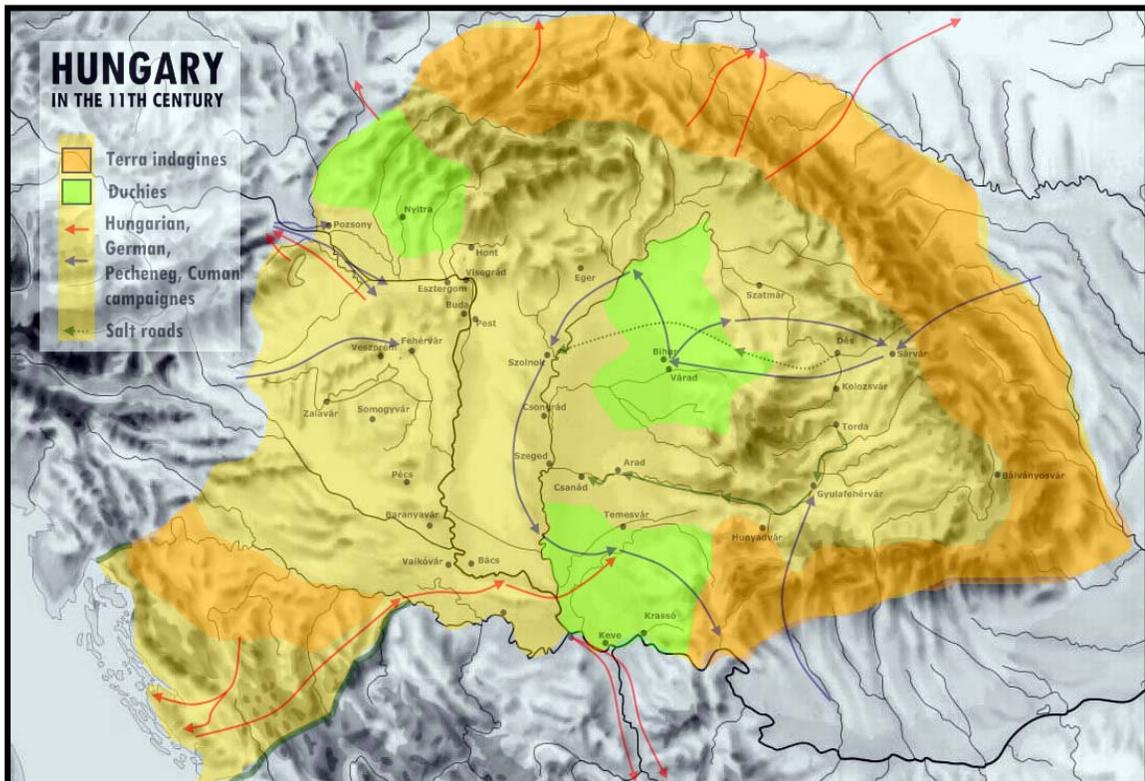
When the Mongols invaded the Hungarian kingdom in 1241 (Stefanescu and Muresan, 2001: 32), their raids initially affected Transylvania and the Saxon inhabited territories including Sibiu (Map 4.10). As suddenly as they appeared, the Mongols retreated after a year from Hungary. The brutality of the Mongol invasion in 1241 had a positive effect on the development of Sibiu: the invasion reduced oversight of the Saxons by the Hungarians and eliminated the Cuman threat in the area (Pop, 1994: 171-4; Spinei, 2003: 424-6).

#### 4.7.1 Fortifications

Prior to the Mongol invasion of 1241, Transylvania had achieved the legal status of “*Regnum*” with an autonomous legal and political system; the nobility had obtained the control of most of the economic resources and political control of the entire region (Salagean, 2003: 403). Many of the nobles were instrumental in defending the region through earthen and timber fortifications called ‘gyepű’. Several have been dated prior to the Mongol invasion of 1241 (Ferenczi and Ferenczi, 1972: 309-12).

Marian (2002: 147-64) postulates that there were three time periods where defensive systems were present in the region: first, between the ninth and tenth century, the remnants of the old Roman *limes* system were used in places such as Mediaş; second, from the eleventh through early twelfth centuries (Map 4.11) when the Hungarians used the Pechenegs and Székely to build and defend the Arpad Dynasty gyepű system of point border defense outposts from wood in for example Harghita and Covasna counties. The third stage in the thirteenth century was to fully develop the gyepűelve or “*indagines*”

marches or border zones in conjunction with the *gyepű* fixed point defense outposts where stone replaced wood fortifications. The *Gyepű* was a strip of land that was specially fortified or made impassable, while *gyepűelve* was the mostly uninhabited or sparsely inhabited land beyond it. Sections of the *gyepű* were usually guarded by tribes who joined the Hungarian nation and were granted rights for their services at the borders, such as the Székely (Györffy, 1943: 88-9, 108-9). An example of this buffer zone surviving is at Döbröntére, some 45 km from Veszprém, Hungary. This eleventh century *Gyepű* was originally made of wood but later fortified in the thirteenth century with stone (Ferenczi and Ferenczi, 1972: 306-9). Believed to be part of the overall Hungarian defense system, these outposts were designed to provide early warning and defense in depth from any attack from the east (Spinei, 2003: 424-6).



Map 4.11: Eleventh Century map portraying the *indagines* or borderlands along the Hungarian borders.

After the destruction and withdrawal of the Mongols, reconstruction began in the Saxon lands. The Saxon river settlements in Braşov and Sibiu consisted of settlements along some eight river systems. Their distribution in figure 4.17 shows the name of the river system and the villages associated with each system. In these regions, the size and

pattern of the Gemarkung or unit of land / border use was identified with each village. The Saxons were able to select the best areas for settlement and land use, leaving less desirable sections unoccupied until the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (Marian, 2002:

147-8). In this area, no pre-Saxon medieval fortifications are known. On the other hand, the settlements have a great number of fortified structures in the settlements. Most



beginning structures **Figure 4.23: Gyepű runis at Döbröntére, Hungary.**

were either of the Motte-and-bailey type or a moated site / farmstead. The gazetteer provides the place name and settlement history that shows that these structures are closely connected with the settlements. All of these fortifications were an integral part of the settlement structure because their origin and existence were related to the settlements. These structures were intended to provide security and prosperity to the settlement. These differing types of fortifications were intended for refuges for the population of the surrounding area or as the repository of survival materials (foodstuffs and grain) in times of danger. From this point of view, these various types of fortifications must be interpreted by function in context of the settlement structure (Harrison, 2004: 130-1).

The fortified churches are connected with the medieval clearing and land cultivation period shortly after the initial colonization period of the late twelfth century. They also provide an idea of the groups who provided the impetus for the land clearing and cultivation. Instead of the nobility, as was the case in England and Western Europe, it was the Church and unique Saxon social structures that lead the process of colonization in Braşov and Sibiu counties.

We can see this from two settlements where fortifications of the motte-and-bailey type have been excavated at Bazna and Feldioara (Adrian, 1995: 40964.10; 1998: 40964.05). In both cases, at the time of construction in the thirteenth century, there was a Saxon settlement and the people lived together in one place. In these cases, the

settlements were founded in desolate places far from other Saxon communities or other ethnic groups. The settlements were founded in river valleys where it initially took enormous work to prepare the land for cultivation and build homes in one of the last primeval forests in Europe. So the prototype of the motte-and-bailey type structure seems to be a settlement in a cleared area which was founded by Saxons and their families. The later development from the motte-and-bailey structure to a fortified church complex began with the arrival of the clergy and ecclesiastical control thus separating the Saxon farmers and religious and civil authorities. These separate classes lived in separate parts of the settlements depending on their position and status.

#### **4.8 Conclusions**

When looking at the river settlements in the two counties it would be incorrect to assume that all of the settlements existed in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Recent scholarship is now moving from rural landscapes to examining size, types and nucleation of permanence as the focus (Roberts, 1996: 5-11). The scales and forms of settlement as articulated by Roberts are an excellent example of how landscape settlement is proceeding in the few sites being examined in the region. Borrowing from Roberts, the chronology of each settlement is listed in the Gazetteer entry for each site, which shows the main documentary evidence of these settlements is in Church records and town records within the villages in the county. Royal charters are another source of documentation that while problematic contains some of the most useful information available. For example, the charter boundaries normally were not specifically delineated other than by natural terrain features such as rivers and hills. When we find settlements that are built across these boundaries the assumption can be made that the settlement is not as old as the boundary and is therefore a later settlement authorized after the original charter date.

Another element in these settlements is the differences in some of the settlement names, which may result from the impermanence of the sites but in the case of the Saxon sites, most are as a result of ethnic movements after specific events such as warfare or plague. Most village sites did not move or disappear but the Saxons moved out or into a

site and displace other ethnic groups or were themselves replaced by these groups. Records refer to locations where most modern Saxon villages exist today and can be traced back to the fourteenth or fifteenth century. There are but a few examples of settlements that moved within areas suited to settlement that fundamentally altered the village layout over time. In the case of Saxon settlements, most were designed as militarily defensible first so most villages were not originally set in poorly defensible places. These alterations most likely occurred based on the way resources were used and needed. These changes were probably based on modifications as woods were cleared and turned into pastures and ploughland.

Many documents show that the large estates were well developed and contained many resources that were quickly exploited. The persons that worked these estates helped expand the settlements in size and importance. Most of the Saxon settlements mentioned in documentation from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries remain today. The view that the Saxon settlements by gradual colonization of the peripheral regions from initial centers that were established in the initial stages of regional Saxon History is generally confirmed.

Saxon settlement features were a specialization of function between differing elements of each place. The allocation of resources between the lord (in the case of estates), the free tenants and the serfs, and a highly organized system of services due from both free and non-free people within the community determined these features. The later Saxon settlers carved out small free settlements for themselves, clearing village by village for themselves out from the main centers along the river systems in the region. Whilst not within the scope of this paper, the 'clean slate' theory of settlement of the Saxons has yet to be accepted by some scholars. The conflicting perceptions based on ethnicities remains an obstruction that is slowly but perceptively changing. Currently scholars are paying more attention to the time scale involvement and the surviving recorded place names that belong to the earliest settlement dates as well as the place names that were established in later times. Continuity of habitation in a particular location but not necessarily by the same ethnic people is now being explored; such continuity, with ethnic and linguistic intermixing is implied for those areas along trade routes that have survived in a small percentage of settlements. Some of the settlements

have place names of Cuman or Pecheneg origin even though these populations have long since vanished (Marian, 2002: 147).

Establishing an acceptable chronology for Saxon settlement in Transylvania has been accomplished through field archeology, in combination with linguistic and documentary evidence. Though not complete, it is clear that the settlement was complex and gradual from the late twelfth through the fifteenth centuries. The early Saxon settlers were highly selective in their search for permanent habitation, concentrating on areas best suited for their own habits of agriculture. Generally, they avoided high hill country and instead concentrated on somewhat more level areas near the rivers. Saxon boundaries remain as distinguishing features of early settlement. Settlement boundaries are the primary guide to the scale and distribution of settlement units across the landscape. The Saxon *Gemärkungs Grenze* or village boundary is mentioned prominently in village historical documents and court records when used as a point of contention between villages such as Motiș and Valea Viilor (Müller, 1906: 216; Nussbächer, 1994: 66). These boundaries also draw attention to ecclesiastical arrangements and royal properties in villages such as Moșna and Mighindoala respectively (Gündisch, 1983a: 156; Gündisch, 1983b: 305, 12). Gradual colonization of the river valleys and wooded uplands is reflected in the distribution of churches and chapels in that the oldest settlements have the earliest rights of baptism and burial. These sites correspond to the oldest and most populated centers in the Saxon lands as illustrated by the documentary evidence. This makes it possible to establish a chronology of internal colonization in the earlier medieval period of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in Transylvania. To complete this line of inquiry, a separate study needs to be conducted incorporating soil classifications alongside analysis of place-names and distribution of ecclesiastical sites according to status and type.

Archaeologically, the well-stratified deposits complement the substantial environmental and artifact evidence comprising pottery, coins, glass fragments, metal working slag, animal bone, plant remains, and grave goods in excavation records. The publication of the results of these excavations such as Rotbav's Paleolithic excavations (Vulpe and Stefan, *et al.*, 2005: 40982.02) and Sibiu's medieval excavations in (Istrate and Urduzia, 2005: 134469.02) have crystallized research into the social, economic, and cultural characteristics of these vital Saxon settlements.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DEVELOPMENT OF THE SAXON FORTIFIED CHURCH

#### 5.1 Introduction

According to Bonde (1994: 1), “The records of church councils bear witness to the presence of *ecclesiae incastellatae* across the medieval landscape”. Since the roles of the medieval Saxon Fortified Church continuously evolved, understanding Church roles within the Saxon settlements is essential. Temporal and spatial analyses of these buildings in Braşov and Sibiu counties demonstrate the importance of the Church in maintaining the ethnic Saxon identity throughout the study period. Saxon ecclesiastical fortification considerations and methodology are critical and so this chapter will address several aspects including, firstly, topography and site placement; and secondly, building strategies and capabilities of the fortified church. Transylvanian ecclesiastical fortifications are unique but not singular in the study region: Orthodox fortifications also played an important role in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. These fortified churches have both similarities and differences to the Saxon structures, but - and more importantly - a lesser influence on the history of the Romanian peoples who built them as the Romanians were politically integrated into the Hungarian Kingdom’s defenses without the focused use of the church complexes (Papacostea, 1998: 228-31). The roles of the Saxon Church remain as the focal point of the stability enjoyed by the Saxon peoples throughout the past 800 years. What were the building processes of the Saxon churches in Transylvania? What types of churches were built and was there a common

pattern for construction? What roles determined the type of construction to its localization? How was construction divided in Braşov and Sibiu Counties?

<b>Confirmed Archaeological Data</b>		
<b>Typology</b>	<b>Chronology</b>	<b>Anchor Points</b>
Church Donjon Towers	Mid-thirteenth Century	Feldioara, Bărcut , and Axente Sever (Capatana, 1999: 40964.11; Ionita, 1998: 40964.05; Ionita and Marcu, 1999: 42138.02; Munteanu-Besliu, 2002b: 144125.01)
Fortified Choir	Mid-fifteenth Century	Mediaş and Boiţa (Cantacuzino, 2005: 145845.02; Marcus, 1983-92: 143628.07)
Machicolations	Fourteenth Century	Brădeni (Munteanu-Besliu, 2005: 144385.01)
Loopholes	Fourteenth Century	Cisnădioara, Şeica Mică Cisnădie (Anonymous, 2004b: 143744.02; Anonymous, 2004c: 143753.01)
Hoardings	Fourteenth Century	Braşov, Cristian, Valea Viilor and Bărcut (Anonymous, 1996a: 143496.02; Cosulet and Bauman, 2005 : 40205.04)
Communications and Stairways	Thirteenth Century Fourteenth Century	Prejmer, Hărman and Micasasa (Costea, 1996a: 41676.02; Mitrofan, 1994: 145006.01)
Precinct Walls	Twelfth Century Thirteenth Century	Rîşnov, Roadeş, Sibiu and Cisnădioara (Rusu and Simina, <i>et al.</i> , 1998-01: 40376.03), (Costea, 1995 :40740.01) (Pascu and Toma, 2005 : 40401.01)
Battlements	Twelfth Century Thirteenth Century	Rîşnov and Laslea (Marcu-Istrate and Istrate, 2001: 144768.01; Rusu and Simina, <i>et al.</i> , 1998-01: 40376.03)
Precinct Towers	Fifteenth Century	Rîşnov, Caţa, Criţ, Biertan and Ighişu Nou (Istrate and Fedor, 2005: 40376.01)
Precinct Gate	Fifteenth Century	Rupea Hosman, Valea Viilor and Prejmer (Heitel, 1995: 484-53)
Interior Space, Storage and associated Structures	Mid-twelfth Century Thirteenth Century	Sinpetru, Prejmer, Hărman, Vulcan and Feldioara (Ionita and Capatana, 1999: 40964.10), Braşov in Racoş (Costea and Costin, 1999: 41710.03)

Figure 5.01: Saxon fortification site typology chart.

Figure 5.01 above represents a chronological chart of confirmed archaeological fortification data supporting the historical scholarship on Saxon fortified structures.



**Figure 5.02: Romanian Orthodox fortified church at Slatina.**

While limited, the archaeological record is far from complete and often has yet to confirm the historical accounts and timelines of defensive element construction. The chart is useful in illustrating the need for more archaeological work in this area.

Over time, two general types of churches emerged: 1. unfortified churches within a fortified complex, and 2. fortified churches in a fortified complex. The role of the church within the settlement is both a physical and political phenomenon. The physical role plays out in time, space and physical mass within the Saxon



**Figure 5.03: Interior of precinct wall of the Slatina Orthodox fortified church.**

role plays out in time, space and physical mass within the Saxon communities; the socio-political role, whilst just as important, is more subjective and well within the realm of the historian but can be inconclusive to the archaeologist. Yet, measuring the political role of the church is an integral part of focusing on the changing Saxon community portrait from the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries.

## 5.2 Types of Fortified Churches

In Transylvania, fortified ecclesiastical sites include monasteries and churches designed to prevent incursion into the core of the settlement complex and to defend the community's religious treasures. Churches were an important resource for the local peasant community having many functions beyond spiritual comfort; in unsettled areas this included short-term defense against raids. In Braşov and Sibiu counties, I have classified sites based on topography and construction (see Gazetteer). Archaeological typology here is constructed using observation combined with principal component analysis (Hill and Evans, 1972: 239-45); variation in site form and attributes generally is based on geography and raw material availability (fig. 5.03). For this chapter, Saxon settlement types are classified as: 1) fortress town with church, 2) village with nearby fortress refuge, 3) village with unfortified church in a fortified complex, and 4) village with fortified church in a fortified complex (fig. 5.04).



Figure 5.04: View of Nemsă church with remnants of the buttressed precinct wall.

Village Fortified Site	Form of Defense and Classification	Topography / Site Placement	Construction Raw Materials
<b>Braşov County</b>			
Braşov	Type 1	Center –Level	Quarried Stone
Făgăras	Type 2	Center –Level	Masonry
Jimbor	Type 2	Center –Level	Stacked Stone
Cincul Mare	Type 3	Center / high ground	River Stone
Hălmeag	Type 3	Center / high ground	Masonry
Codlea	Type 4	Center / high ground	Stacked Stone
Hărman	Type 4	Center / high ground	Quarried Stone
<b>Sibiu County</b>			
Mediaş	Type 1	Center –Level	Quarried Stone
Sibiu	Type 1	Center / high ground	Quarried Stone
Slimnic	Type 2	Outside of village	Quarried Stone
Turnul Rosu	Type 2	Outside of village	River Stone
Cisnădioara	Type 3	High ground outside of village	Stacked Stone
Boarta	Type 3	High ground outside of village	Masonry
Axente Sever	Type 4	Center –Level	River Stone
Boian	Type 4	Center / high ground	Stacked Stone / Masonry
Classification Type			
Type 1 Fortress town with church			
Type 2 Village with nearby fortress refuge			
Type 3 Village with unfortified church in a fortified complex			
Type 4 Village with fortified church in a fortified complex			

**Figure 5.05: Site examples of various defensive typologies. See individual gazetteer for detailed source documentation.**

(1) Regarding fortress towns with a Saxon church, in all known cases, these churches began as unfortified structures and were fortified after the Mongol invasion of 1241–42 or began as a fortified structure after 1242. Fortified church complexes were strengthened or constructed also around 1500 as a response to the Ottoman threat in the Balkans. Prior to the beginning of the seventeenth century many were modified, altered, demilitarized, or rebuilt as an unfortified structure with the town walls with the communal fortifications supplanting the fortification needs of the church. Examples include the churches in the cities of Sibiu, Braşov and Mediaş.

(2) Villages such as Slimnic, Făgăras, Rupea and Rîşnov (Gazetteer pages 315, 41, 84, 76) had fortresses constructed on higher ground within a kilometer of the village alleviating the need for a fortified structure in the settlement. In these cases, topography

allowed for the defensive functions of the church to be transferred to the fortress from the beginning of the settlement, negating the need for fortifying the church.

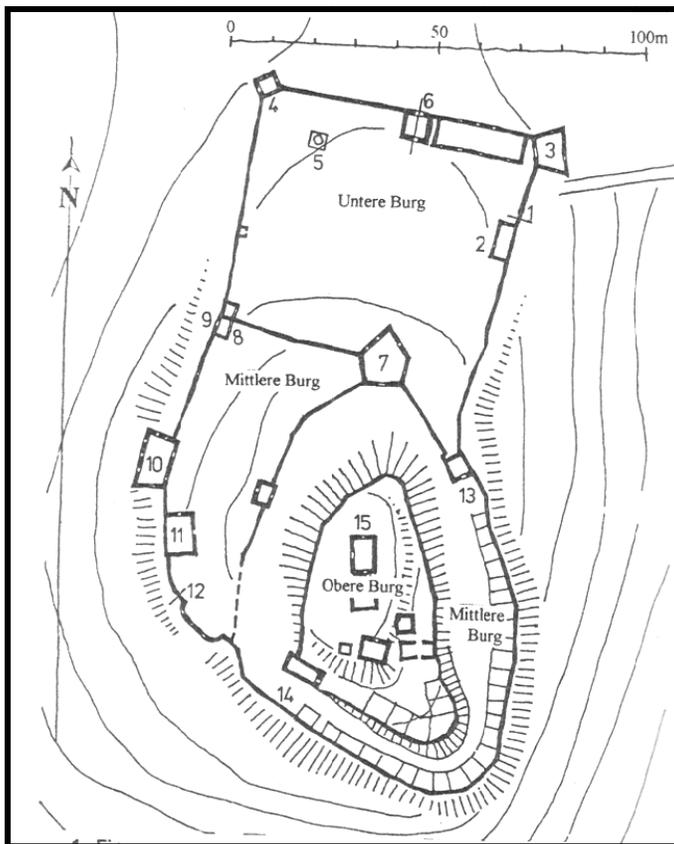


**Figure 5.06:** Computer generated view of a typical Saxon type 4 fortified church and complex.

For example, the village of Rupea is overlooked by a fortress that was first documented in 1324 and which by 1332 is confirmed as officially administered as a royal fortress (Zimmermann, 1892: 388, 454), without the village church receiving any defensive fortifications during the period. According to research by Juliana Fabritius-Dancu (1981: 129-31), the fortress was rebuilt after its destruction in 1421 by the Turks but this has yet to be confirmed by archaeology. The excavations carried out by Ioan Pascu and Toma Cătălina (2005: 40401.01) was a preventive intervention archaeological excavation that gained information about the status and depth foundations of the site but did not confirm Fabritius-Dancu's assertion through archaeology. The locals rebuilt the central courtyard, chapel and east pentagonal gate tower again in 1643, along with adding a five meter high rectangular curtain wall in the north thus connecting the entire complex by some ten towers (figure 5.07). Fabritius-Dancu (1981: 129) also notes that,

“Rupea villagers and their government, living in a remote village had no protection from hostile forces along the borderland so because of sudden and unexpected attacks sought protection within the fortress. For example, because, like everywhere in Transylvania, Saxon settlers were forced by three centuries of the Turk and Mongol incursions to build fortified complexes in order to survive. The starting point and core cell of the military system was the church, as it was the only solid stone building in the village, large enough for the entire community to shelter”.

The topography of the fortress site of Rupea was well suited to the locals as a refuge (Pascu and Toma, 2005: 40401.01), being a steep hill some 200 meters above the surrounding the farmlands.



**Figure 5.07: Rupea fortress schematic with the village located some 500 meters southeast of the fortress.**

(3) The majority of the villages were of the last two types, either an unfortified church in a fortified complex or a fortified church in a fortified complex. The differences were generally based on the date of construction – prior to 1241 or post- 1241 – or the local topography of the site. For example, in cases such as Mercheaşa (Braşov County) and Şeica Mică (Sibiu County), where

the village was relatively flat with no defensibly valid terrain, the churches tend to be fortified along with the complex (Kröner, 2003: 158; Teutsch, 1857: 157-9). At Nemsă, where the church and village complex is located in easily defensibly terrain, the complex tends to be fortified but the church is not (Berger, 1894: 787; Wagner, 1977: 374) (fig.5.03). Section 5.2.1 below details this analysis.

Effectively, the types of Saxon fortifications appear based on careful analysis of the topography in choosing a site, followed by the function of the settlement and, finally, the function of the church and complex within the site. Saxon settlements which have similar functions have many of the same features and these can be shown as a general model, depicted in figure 5.06, representing a typical fortified church within a fortified complex (type four). The accompanying Gazetteer details each site and type of structure found within each site.



Figure 5.08: The Rupea fortress from the south.

### 5.2.1 Building Strategies

Throughout the medieval period, many religious structures were surrounded by a wall or ditch. Churches often had crenellations, iron-barred doors, fortified gates, and other elements of military defense (Bonde, 1994: 11; Harrison, 2004: 1-2). In the twelfth century, when the influence of the Church of Rome was still dominant, churches, cemeteries, and other consecrated sites received formal rights of protection for those in need. The strategy of permitting fortification, including the method and type of fortification was a complicated process: the church clerics generally did not make those decisions as permission as well as funding had to be obtained by royal or at least local

authority (Miko, 2006: 34-40). Saxons sought permission from the King if based on royal lands and from the Saxon Nation if on Saxon land. In the case of the B rzenland, the Teutonic Knights made the decisions regarding fortification; thus, when in 1222 Andrew II renewed the privileges accorded for the Teutonic Order he did not specifically give them permission or scope to build stone castles. The Order began to build stone fortifications because the wooded castles were not effective against the Cumans even though wooden fortifications were still standard for border defenses (Andreescu, 1998: 78-80; Laszlovszky and So s, 2001: 321,322,326-8).

Fortification was both expensive and problematic. Permanent architectural solutions were sought by the Saxons after the Mongol incursion of 1241-42 which must have required vast input of resources, money and manpower to plan, prepare and build. The widespread construction of precinct walls, reinforced doors, and upper floor defensive elements such as at Me endorf (Gazetteer pages 69-71) was perceived as essential to help maintain security and law and order both on and inside the frontier (Anonymous, 1635:7-9).

Religious fortifications, especially those sited along the frontier, could have been designed with the intent of offensive operations as well as defensive protection. The layout of the fortifications in B rzenland by the Teutonic Knights may well have been considered for future support operations south of the Carpathian Mountains (Andreescu, 1998: 84-5). In this case, the fortress-churches have not been completely analyzed but may have been planned to consolidate control as centers of Teutonic Knight administrations in future Christianized acquired territory. If the Teutonic Knights had planned to use the strategic frontier posts of Prejmer (Gazetteer page 74) and H rman (Gazetteer page 56) for their southward expansion of territory to the Danube River, evidence has yet to be corroborated. The Hungarian Kingdom frontier system may have been garrisoned with soldiers but the civilian population and community seems to have been an important priority in assuring the continuity of Hungarian rule and sources of revenue (Fabritius-Dancu, 1979: 131-4).

In Transylvania, church fortifications followed specific patterns and styles. As noted, the Saxon Nation played a key part in the decision to fortify the churches, and the common system of governance made building and fortification construction competition

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between settlements unlikely. Since the Saxons were organized around the Saxon Nation, fortifications as a point of political control were unnecessary, so fear of external attack remained the primary motivating force. Periods of invasions and localized warfare had an impact on ecclesiastical as well as secular fortifications.

The distribution of fortified churches shows not only protection for local populations but an overall defensive structure for the region made up of many point defense strongholds supporting the Hungarian border from incursion. The number of fortified churches tightly concentrated around the river valleys – eighteen churches in the Bűrzenland alone - and transportation lines may have been designed as a regional response to external threats (Marian, 2002: 148-55). The documentary records do not directly address motivations for ecclesiastical fortifications in Saxon lands but loyalty to the king must have been a motivation for the Hungarian crown to allow such construction (see sections 3.7.2 and 3.7.3) even after King Andrew III ordered church fortifications to be torn down (Gündisch, 1983b: 174).

The Mongol invasion and devastation brought ecclesiastical fortifications to the forefront when rebuilding began. As villages sought to protect themselves from the Mongols, churches and their complexes were transformed to provide refuge, supplies and defense for villagers if attacked. Fortified churches were designed to be effective in their resistance with towers and platforms. The massive stone precinct walls and topographical placement of many churches in their villages enhanced their defensive capabilities. The commanding high ground and quick access by villagers in times of attacks strengthened the military suitability of these churches, whose thick walls could withstand the fast moving raids of mounted warriors before the advent and widespread use of gunpowder (Morgan, 1990: 5-13). Church tower fortifications, in villages such as Cristian (Gazetteer page 193) in Sibiu County, whose positions commanded the surrounding terrain and would provide early warning, were more likely to survive fast moving raids if constructed to withstand a short attack. Textual sources for many villages reveal that churches were also designed as supply depots for stockpiling foodstuffs, water and other necessities, which may have inadvertently made them the target of attack (Gerard, 1888: 44-50; Müller, 1934: 159-64). Thus, a lucrative supply point attracting the enemy is one aspect of the unintended consequences of fortifying the church.

Finally, here we can note that from the mid-thirteenth century, church fortification paralleled secular defense in the use of technology and concept such as curtain wall design and tower construction. As villages expanded and towns began to arise and fortify so did churches. Church forms had commonalities just as secular fortifications and municipal town walls (Bonde, 1994: 17; Pál, 2000: 124-7), as will be highlighted below.

### 5.2.2 Commonalities

Similarities in building fortifications and churches may not be readily apparent yet commonalities exist. Some are easily discernable such as physical construction techniques and materials and some are much more subtle such as approaches and placement and concern for the psychological impact on both the local populace and potential enemies as well (figs. 5.09 and 5.10). The fortified church and complex at Biertan is but one example: here, the fortified complex is on high ground in the center of an unfortified village,

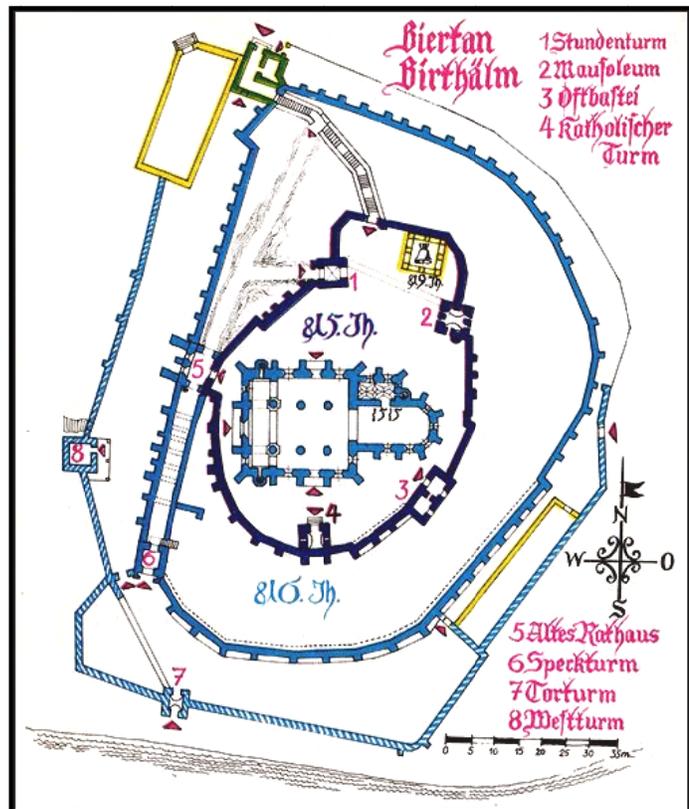


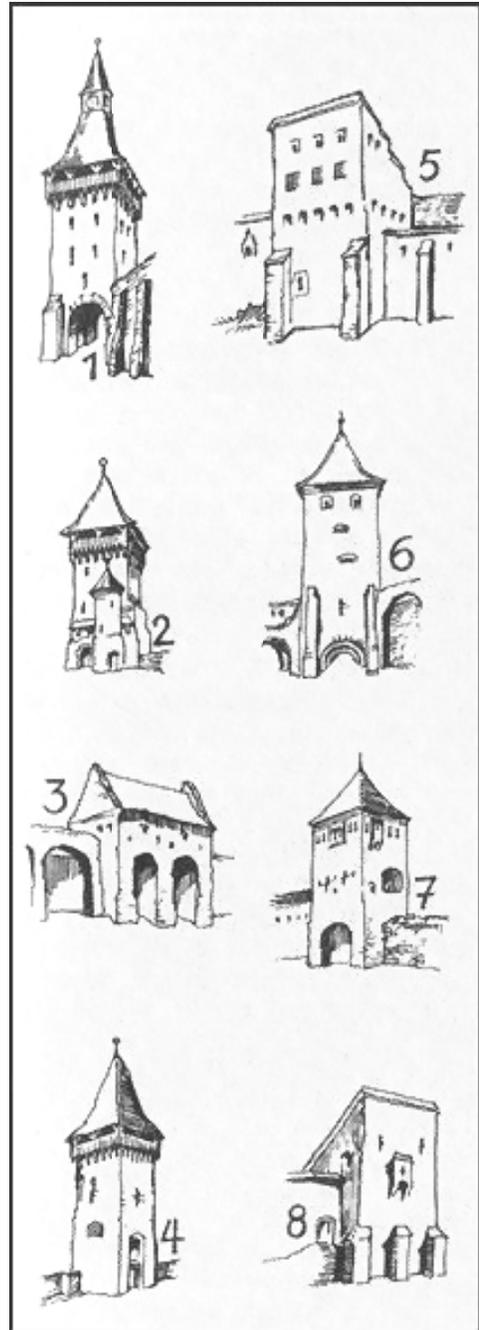
Figure 5.09: Biertan complex schematic. The main channeled entrance is from the north.

meaning that as the best defensible terrain it is also the first part of the village visible from a distance. Imposing to a potential enemy and reassuring to the villagers, the psychological importance can be recognized. As in castle fortifications, approaches to the complex and the route of entry into it were designed to maximize the feeling of security to the populace inside and menacing of potential adversaries. The indirect route of entry leading from outer through inner precinct walls and towers aligned in a layered

defense sent a signal to all about the permanence and influence of the structure. Similar to the ideas of the ordering of a medieval castle, the ordering of the fortified church complex was equally meticulous (Johnson, 2002: 54-7).

At Biertan, one can observe the complex fortifications in layers surrounding the high ground with the church in the center (see figure 5.09). The inner precinct wall is circular with the exception of a bulge on the north side. The wall is 1.5 meters high along the inside but is over 10 meters along the outside of the wall due its construction over a vertical rock outcropping. The north bulge contains the church courtyard and is protected by three towers. A covered wooden staircase is the entry point into the courtyard and begins in the village square along the northwest side of the complex. The towers consist of yellow sand stone cut into rough masonry blocks and contain five defensive floors overlooking the inner wall, as depicted in figure 5.10 where each of the different towers are portrayed.

Tower 2 on the north side of the church is known as the Mausoleum Tower - so named because the tower contains gravestones and plaques of personages; a stone shield gravestone dated 1520 is the oldest tombstone here. An exterior staircase on the south wall connects the upper floors and battlements; shooting loopholes are throughout the tower on every floor. Along the south side of the inner precinct wall are two bastions that overlook the village. Bastions 4 and



**Figure 5.10: Biertan tower schematics showing the differing array of construction for the complex.**

5 both contain shooting loopholes, windows and fireplaces complete with chimneys.

Similar to secular fortifications, Bertian (Gazetteer pages 144-6) provides the evidence that the bastions were inhabited.

Texts tell us that the second circuit wall was constructed in 1504 when a second entrance gate was added and named the Bacon Tower – tower 6 - that opened a narrow lane between double walls that contained seven arches that bridged the lane allowing troops to cross between the walls. Bastion 8 contains shooting loopholes and casting oriels that provided protection along the west side of the complex. The entire southern section of the outer wall was constructed of brick with arches supporting the wall walk and designed to allow archers to shoot over the wall – which is lower down the hill. The differing heights of the walls allow for greater archer support in the defense. The third wall extends along the western and southeastern sides of the complex and is parallel to the stream that passes along this side of the complex. A fourth three story tower – tower 7 – was built here to protect the wall and in the seventeenth century a gate was added to allow entry from the west.

**Figure 5.11:**  
Biertan view  
from the west  
approach to  
the village.  
The initial  
view from an  
approaching  
enemy of the  
complex and  
west wall as  
seen from the  
road.



Apart from psychological considerations, the physical commonalities are siting (noted above), materials, technological advances – these latter all brought from western Europe as the Saxons migrated into Transylvania and then modified as need and circumstance arose.

In terms of materials used in construction, these varied but only as a result of the geographical locale and availability. Prior to the age of gunpowder from the mid-

fourteenth century, materials supported defensive concepts rooted in defeating massed formations and siege devices or fast-moving raids by organized mounted warrior groups. Fortifications and church structures commonly would be encircled with a palisade of wood as an obstacle (Sibiu Gazetteer pages 111-3) to any attacker who succeeded in crossing the ditch and scaling the rampart. In the west, this Motte and Bailey type of construction was of a rounded mound or ‘motte’ delimited by the ‘bailey’ surrounding the mound and normally enclosed by palisade and ditch, however, motte construction was sometimes enlarged to allow for masonry construction. In castle construction, the bailey later transitioned into the living area for servants as well as a general refuge (Crosse, 1878: 178-9; Hogg, 1975: 13; Kenyon, 1990: 3-9). Fortified churches such as Boian (Gazetteer pages 150-1) and Hărman (Gazetteer pages 156-7) are constructed with these features including the outer precinct walls, enclosures or the ‘bailey’ protected by moats, palisades and ditches. The interior spaces also contain supply storage units common to fortifications of the period (Anonymous, 1999: 22-8; Gerster and Rill, 1997: 102,174; Gheorghiu, 1985: 1, 13).

Materials to build these structures included earth, timber and, after the Mongol invasion of 1241, stone and / or brick (Tiplic, 2001a: 148-51). These expensive materials



**Figure 5.12: Hărman complex with filled-in moat and defensive ditch in foreground.**

were mostly funded communally and as a result, it became a project with collective protection in mind. Towers, gates and precinct walls built of masonry demanded comparatively vast sums of money that dictated the pace of construction and, in the case of the Saxon population, consensus of

the Saxon Nation which helped fund it, (Newman, 2001: 76-7; Vatasianu, 1959a: 12; Werner, 1971: 60-4). The masonry structure thus marks the first major step in

fortification of the church structures themselves, with an expanded use of technology in construction. How to build and what to build became a priority for all of these structures, how much money vs. how much benefit had to be addressed in all of these sites. Since many of the Saxon churches were at least partially funded by the Saxon Nation, rivalries between villages over church construction styles and form were generally not a factor. Evidence of conflicts between villages such as Chirpăr and Nocrich (Gazetteer pages 170-2 and 260-2) over land and rights in 1543 does imply competition, even though not documented specifically for churches, it suggests villages competed to see who had the better rights, privileges and influence with the Saxon Nation (Niculescu and Motei, *et al.*, 2005: 41097.02; Teutsch and Teutsch, 1925: 221-3).



**Figure 5.13: Original communal storage areas within the interior of the Hărman outer precinct wall, dating from the early fourteenth century.**

The technological innovations centered on adaptation and modifications: precinct walls and towers protected the defenders to an extent but technological innovations permitted the defenders to project power and made a much more coherent defense. Thus improvements such as shutters for embrasures, complex masonry crenellations and wooden hoardings introduced in the twelfth century, allowed defenders to launch projectiles from the top of the walls, whilst machicolated arches and walls, hoardings and

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portcullises among others afforded extra protection (Kaufmann and Kaufmann, *et al.*, 2001: 40-3).

### 5.3 The Fortified Church Site

Bonde (1994: 1-4) argues that churches and secular buildings were often closely related and shared, among other factors, a common technology and design. Indeed, many defensive features are often shared by different types of buildings as would be the case when one fortifies a cow shed or hay barn; here, a wall walk around a battlement on a hay shed looks and functions much the same as a wall walk along a castle. This being the case, one observing church structures from a military or defensive perspective can readily see the similarities in site selection. The Saxon communities suffered many attacks between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries; Prejmer (Gazetteer pages 74-5), for example, was attacked some fifty times, though only sacked once (Harrison, 2004: 132). Evidence of this association is often found in village records along with the soldiers who defended the fortifications and their pay: again, in the case of Prejmer, records indicate how many full-time soldiers were in the village – six in 1521 - but not the number of local militia and trained village townspeople who supported them (Anonymous, 1999: 258-65). Many of the Saxon church builders were also responsible for secular fortifications nearby; indeed, powerful families such as the Apafi family in Mălăncrav are noted for building both types of structures in 1340 (Oprescu, 1961: 40-4; Siegmund, 1931: 23-5). Mălăncrav (Gazetteer pages 236-7) is an example of a Saxon village with a surviving fortified church and complex next to a noble unfortified manor house and the remains of several contemporary secular fortified structures (Gheorghiu, 1985: 187). While the chief builder's name is unknown, the similarities of the structures in terms of building materials, plans and defensive elements could indicate that they were designed by the same person or persons. The fortified church, as argued by Bonde (1994: 1-4), integrates secular defensive elements with the church so the church and complex can be viewed as a single architectural entity. Whether Romanesque or early Gothic, these fortified complexes remain fully integrated within the landscape as they form a single unit.

The siting of the fortified church was core to the construction process. Common Saxon site locations include positioning the church complex in the center of the village whenever possible: nearly all of the late twelfth-century sites near Sibiu were positioned this way. For example, the villages of Vaichid, Sînpetru, Petriș Ruscior and Șoars (Gazetteer pages 344-6, 92-4, 278, 294, 95-6) all have central churches, located on the most defensible terrain possible implying that the church was one of the oldest structures of the village. A few exceptions appear to be based on terrain considerations such as at Cisnădioara (Gazetteer pages 180-3), where the Romanesque church and heavily defended complex were sited on a commanding hill overlooking the village to the north. Villagers determined that protection depended on topography and the church location was ideally situated to defense and observation for great distances. Even today, as figure 5.14 shows, the commanding heights are spectacular. The forms and techniques of the single-nave plan, three aisle Romanesque church were successfully based on the location and defensive siting of the complex (Mittelstraß, 1961: 55; Vatasianu, 1959a: 16, 27-9).



Figure 5.14: Aerial view of Cisnădioara site with village along the north flank of the fortified hill.

Once settlement sites are chosen and arise, the use of the space is divided between usable and unusable, depending of course upon the function. Unusable space generally was land that was of poor quality and not arable and used for common purposes such as pasture and midden heaps. As stated earlier, the fortified complexes such as at Rotbav (Gazetteer page 81) were first a place of defense; as such the location would depend upon the type of defense required and integrating the topography of the site into it.

Fortified church space allocation and use followed the same requirements as the village settlement. Using natural topography often enhanced the site with minimal effort and expense. Biertan for example used the rock outcropping for the building of the inner precinct wall.

Villages that acted on these considerations usually had a better survival rate than those that did not. Examples of villages such as Șercaia (Gazetteer page 91) in Brașov County that did not include these elements were often abandoned or moved at a later date – thus Șercaia, moved in

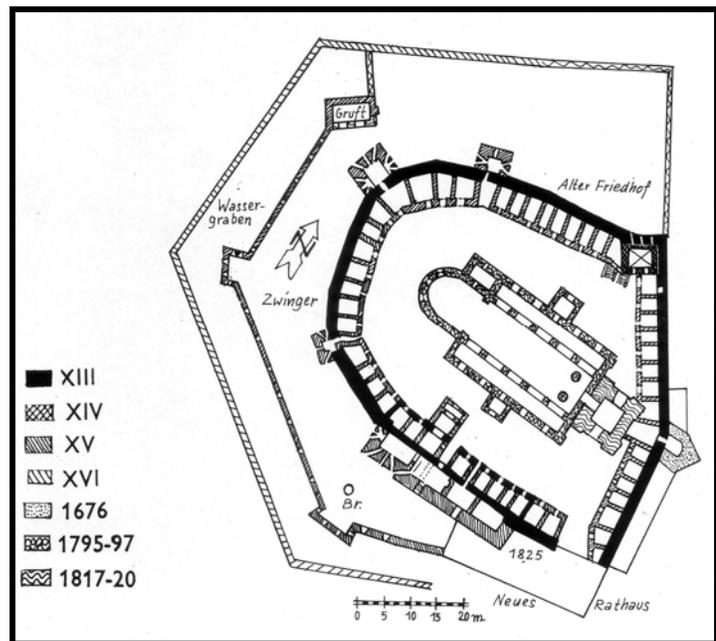


Figure 5.15: Sînpetru – schematic of the thirteenth century wall and storage rooms plan.

1694 due to flooding – to the expense of the villagers (Györffy, 1987: 451-3; Zimmermann, 1892: 72).

### 5.3.1 Functional Analysis

The functional analysis of the fortified churches comprises the development, construction and alteration of the complex, totalized by survival of architectural details, ground plans and, in many cases, documents. Within the scope of this study, there are ecclesiastical, domestic, social and defensive functions within the fortified church

complex. Often, the site plan is a reflection of the basis of construction and so analysis of forms and spatial alterations helps identify a complex's original purpose and subsequent modifications to its roles. No doubt, elements represent purpose, but in many cases elements may represent multiple purposes in a specific timeframe. For example, at Sînpetru (figures 5.15 and 5.16), the location of storerooms inside the complex could



Figure 5.16: Sînpetru – view from the east of the village storerooms along the inner precinct wall.

represent the social status of the individual 'domestic' as well as the physical importance attached to the materials 'defensive' within the storeroom (Gazetteer pages 92-4). Only one storeroom has been dated to the mid-thirteenth century with a name attached to it: the name of the *Burgermeister* or mayor is associated with the most prominent storage room next to the entrance gate. Records now housed in the Braşov Country Museum indicate that a shipment of ink and writing material from Braşov was to be sent to the church for storage with the mayor in 1252 (Anonymous, 1252: 69-14500).

The comparative analysis between ecclesiastical and secular form and function as suggested by Bonde (1994: 1-4) remains relevant. Saxons unified their structures both ecclesiastical and defensive as hybrids, as evident in many of the elements still visible today. The concurrent need of both types in the medieval period is well documented as these fortified structures incorporate more than defensive and ecclesiastical needs by including political and commercial realities as well. This understanding of the interaction

of these distinct functions of Saxon sites in Sibiu and Braşov counties has wider implications for scholars.

### 5.3.2 Spatial Analysis

The idea of a society's cultural aspects being embedded in the physical design setting of their environment is not new. Spatial analysis (Hodder and Orton, 1976: 65; Tiplic and White, 2007: 157-9) aids in understanding the medieval Saxon fortified churches within the set of laws that made up the Saxon social structure which was also expressed in the physical make-up of Saxon villages and towns. The Saxon Nation's traditions and financial support of village construction projects directed or at least influenced what each village decided to do in the area of defense and religious focus / form. Standards and regulations existed for both building structures and social mores as to accepted practices and building concepts. This myriad of rules and customs was manifested in the physical space of the village and specifically the fortified church complex. Gabor Viragos' comments



**Figure 5.17: Copşa Mare church with external prop columns or buttresses used to reinforce the walls with machicolations between the columns of the choir.**

when discussing Hungarian medieval noble residences, are applicable to secular and ecclesiastical sites of the time period elsewhere:

“Buildings were built for a definite purpose, also including hidden expressions of power and social status. Buildings can be associated with social functions and (on a more general level) architecture is basically a social setting. Groups of people (counting one or many members)

negotiate rights over the space inside of a building. This is valid for any space from a shepherd's hut to the royal palace" (Virágos, 2006: 94) .

With much of the physical form surviving, the understanding of Saxon structures from a physical point of view is achievable, indeed probably easier than most medieval sites today. The patterns of density, geography, location and change over time are as much a result of the social and political interplay of the times as the defense and religious requirements were. The spatial distribution of various buildings, settlements and fortifications is expanded when the sites are analyzed as a group within the time and space of medieval Europe. The remainder of this chapter will therefore aim to analyze the fortified church complex within these themes.

#### 5.4 Fortified Church Elements

In the next sections we analyze the physical components of the fortified church elements, beginning with structural reinforcement and then donjon towers, choirs, machicolations, loopholes and hoardings, followed by communications and stairways.



Figure 5.18: Copșa Mare west donjon church tower with entry door.

### 5.4.1 Structural Reinforcement

Defensive reinforcement of the church structure itself could include reinforced walls and doors, and provision of donjon towers, defensive floors above the choirs, machicolations, plus hoardings, loopholes and the communicating systems of stairways.

In a few sites such as Buzd (Gazetteer pages 166-7), churches were initially, if temporarily, built of wood but followed shortly thereafter by stone with the foundations going down to bedrock. Only at Sibiu's Asylum church and Cisnădioara (Gazetteer pages 311-13) have traces of an earlier wood structure been



Figure 5.19: Buzd donjon church tower with external circular stairway and machicolations.

found (Besliu, 2002: 143469.03). At Homorod, where there is a square keep of the mid-twelfth century standing on high ground, the foundations of the keep are set into bedrock (Oprescu, 1961: 60-1; Vatasianu, 1959a: 579). In many cases the church tower was square and set to one side of the church, usually the west, built independently and later attached against or astride of the church. Examples include Copșa Mare (figs. 5.17, 5.18); where the five storey massive tower itself formed the keep or stronghold of the church as well as the bell tower (the bells ringing added in a warning to the people in times of threat); Cincul Mare (Kröner, 2003: 82) and Bărcut all have west donjon towers independent of the church but later attached (Köpeczi, 2001: 412-13; Porkolab and Rheindt, 1998: 7-22).



**Figure 5.20: Buzd from the northwest with high ground behind.** (Nussbächer, 1996: 62; Vatasianu, 1959a: 123, 590; Wagner, 1977: 374). At Merghindeal, the church was built as a three aisle Romanesque church with separate bell tower in the thirteenth century. The church central aisle was 19 m long and 7 m wide. The church was fortified in 1500 when a tower was built over the choir and the walls reinforced through the use of external prop columns or buttresses. The choir tower contains four floors with battlements and a pyramid style defensive roof. The bell tower was also fortified with floors and battlements. At the same time, windows in both the towers and church were bricked up and the walls reinforced to allow for additional loads required for the military design (Gheorghiu, 1985: 128; Lenk, 1839c: 114; Letz, 1970: 47).

Another example of structural reinforcement is evident in the church of St. Mary or Marienkirche at Buzd (figs.5.19, 5.20). This small hall church contains a choir that has three raised defensive floors that dominate the area. This church was an exception to the siting rules that most settlements followed as, for some unknown reason, the church is on the side of a hill and is therefore vulnerable to enemy fire from the hilltop. The Saxons raised and reinforced the choir to compensate and therefore control the hill and surrounding area. Completed between 1491 and 1495, the base of the choir was 3 meters

Structures at Alma Vii, Apoş and Axente Sever, all dating from the thirteenth to early fourteenth centuries, consist of a freestanding donjon tower and a hall-style church with reinforced walls (buttressed) and doors. Over time, many of the churches have incorporated the tower into the church itself such as at Bratei and Ruşi

thick so the Saxons added external prop columns, machicolations as well as casting oriels and a side stair tower to connect all three floors (Oprescu, 1961: 42-3).

Church doorways and entrances were also reinforced and fortified. Similar to precinct wall gates, these structures were designed for strong defense. The church doorway at Copșa Mare, for example, is located under the bell tower at the west end of the church (figure 5.18). The tower provided maximum protection by channeling attackers between the prop columns (or buttresses) of the west tower some four stories in height, which projects a wall-walk battlement with a hoarding incorporated into it to further protect the doorway. Outside the entrance arch, the passage through is spanned by round machicolated arches. The door itself was closed by a two-leaved door and iron or timber bolt; loopholes above provided archers with firing positions along all three upper floors.

#### **5.4.2 Donjon Towers**

Knowledge of the western European stronghold of the rectangular keep or donjon tower was brought to Transylvania by the Saxons. The donjon was a strong point within a fortified complex that was the most defended structure in the complex. Most donjons contained important stores to enable survival while under attack. Like their western counterparts, Saxon donjon towers were rapidly accessible and secure (Toy, 1984: 66-7). Saxons began using the same structural design in the mid-twelfth century, generally building donjon towers – square not circular – next to the church as a standalone element or else incorporated the donjon elements into the bell tower of the church itself when it was built. There are also numerous examples of the unfortified church being fortified at a later date with a donjon tower added to the structure. These church donjon towers have reinforced walls generally between 2 – 5 m thick at the base, prop columns either internal or external, and are from two to four stories tall; each storey often being divided into defensive positions for archers, and with an external battlement on the top floor (Oprescu, 1961: 64-7). The entrance to the upper floors of the donjon is usually reached by a ladder through a trap door or a stairway built against the inside or outside of the tower. Access to the ground floor stairway was always from the inside of the church tower.



**Figure 5.21: Boian fortified church with fortified choir machinations.**

Saxon tower roofs were generally pyramidal shaped and tiled. Unlike England and France where the walls of the tower were extended above the roof in order to screen it from attack, the Saxons used the steep pyramidal form to make objects roll off and so prevent the burning of the roof (Toy, 1984: 69). Some of the best examples are today Copșa Mare and Boian as shown in figures 5.18 and 5.21. George Oprescu (1961: 66) also notes that the mono pitch roofs were made of tiles and had much the same purposes as they decreased the fire danger and allowed the front of the tower to be even higher to face the enemy.

### **5.4.3 Choir**

Saxon Gothic and Hall churches were initially built with polygonal choirs, for example (figure 5.22); here the church was enlarged eastward in 1420 when the Margarethenkirche expanded and extended the choir and added six prop columns to carry the vaulting and fortifying of the choir (Plajer, 2001: 3).



**Figure 5.22:** Above is a computer generated view of the unfortified choir with external prop-columns.



**Figure 5.23:** Right is a computer generated view of the same choir after fortification with two defensive platforms added.

Church choirs were fortified in several ways. Mostly they had one or more defensive platforms (figure 5.23) added above the vaulted ceiling with loopholes strategically placed and arched machicolations between external prop columns. The church at Boian (figure 5.21) had a heavily fortified choir with machicolations that served as the donjon. This particular structure contained no west tower but incorporated the defensive elements into the choir. Later renovations bricked up the defensive floor above the vaulted ceiling and covered them up on the outside as well (Gerster and Rill, 1997: 102, 174; Lenk, 1839a: 126).

#### **5.4.4 Machicolations, Loopholes and Hoardings**

The entrances and sides of the church were generally protected by machicolations, which pass up through arched walls and were commanded from the upper level under the roof. These fortification elements are masonry projections from the church wall or tower

supported prop columns or corbels with opening in the floor through which rocks, boiling water or arrows could be rained down upon attackers. Machicolations often protected the gates from burning by attackers by pouring water on any combustibles put against the door; they could also help repel any mining along the base of the wall. Machicolations were generally constructed of wood as they were sometimes extended over the wall of the church in the form of battlements or hoardings. These timber machicolated platforms, extending out over the donjon tower remained even after stone arches were being built along the church walls. By the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, machicolations of stone built between external prop columns were in general use, as seen at Brădeni (figure 5.25).

Hoardings and loopholes were integrated throughout the fortified church structures, and examples such as Valea Viilor in figure 5.26 clearly show loopholes built all along the walls covering the choir and west tower.



Uniquely for Saxon churches the fortified floor above the aisles contained loopholes built into the church defense. Loopholes, also known as meurtrières or arrow loops, were narrow slits in a curtain wall or tower from which to fire arrows or firearms; they generally are attested on Saxon structures from the twelfth century (Fabritius-Dancu, 1985b: 83-9).

**Figure 5.24: Șaroș pe Târnave – remnants of a chapel built into the precinct wall dating from 1280.**

Loopholes allowed Saxons to shoot at any attacker while protected. Initially for arrows, after the introduction of gunpowder, loopholes were altered by adding a circular opening at the bottom of the loophole to accommodate firearms as seen at Seica Mică (figure 5.27), modified in the fifteenth century. When installed in the wall of the church,

loopholes were intended as an external narrow linear slot with a splayed inner frame to allow the archer to cover a wider area of the wall. Examples are those in the churches at Seica Mică and Axente Sever, both constructed about 1300. At Seica Mică, the loopholes were modified sometime in the fifteenth century to accommodate firearms. The round bottom of the loophole was created to allow a gunner to move and aim a firearm at wider angles. The loops are in the church walls below the corbelled machicolated battlements between the external prop columns around three sides of the choir (Fabritius-Dancu, 1979: 50; Gerster and Rill, 1997: 203; Oprescu, 1961: 31; Wagner, 1977: 374). The types of loopholes sometimes varied in design. Spatially, loopholes were uniform, approximately 0.7 meters high and 0.3 meters wide, throughout Saxon lands (Vatasianu, 1959a: 95,116,588; Zimmermann, 1892: 301, 331).



**Figure 5.25: Brădeni fortified hall church with gatehouse and precinct wall.**

Hoardings are distinctive elements that helped define the unique look of the church. Covered wood-framed positions that extended over the wall of the church and protected the defender from projectiles were defined as a hoarding. The Saxons tended to construct these all around the top of the donjon tower of the church. Hoardings were generally of

two types: most were built at the level of the parapet, some 1.5 meters high, where soldiers could lean over the parapet and protect the base of the wall without exposing themselves to enemy fire; the other method was to build the wooden hoarding on top of the wall with wooden supports extending from the wall itself. These were also supplemented by bretèches built along sections of the church wall. The fortified church at Barcut is a good example of the latter (Köpeczi, 2001: 412-14).



**Figure 5.26:** View of Valea Viilor fortified church with the stone machicolated platforms on external prop columns extending over the choir, west tower and the side aisles of the church.

#### 5.4.5 Communications and Stairways

Communications routes within the churches were also defensive. Generally, as noted, the west side of the church had either a donjon tower as a part of the church or as a separate structure next to the church but usually with two to three meters from the entrance. The donjon tower is normally between three to four stories high and brick vaulted.

The ground floor was often a forehall and entrance if the tower was part of the church. The ground level of the forehall contained passage into the church and a steep flight of steps or a circular stairway that led up to the next floor. Some of the churches, such as Prejmer, contained mural passages or stairways. Churches such as Prejmer and Hărman contain internal galleries that lead around the walls of the upper part of the church and connect to the defensive floor above the vaulted ceiling (fig.5.29). In churches with spiral stairways, the stairways run from the ground floor to the upper defensive floors and battlements. The passages open along loophole positions from the defensive floor along the side aisle of the church and lead to the battlements of the church. The passages open along loophole positions from the defensive floor along the side aisle of the church and lead to the battlements of the church.



**Figure 5.27: The fortified choir at Seica Mică with loopholes and corbelled machicolated hoardings.**

The passages open along loophole positions from the defensive floor along the side aisle of the church and lead to the battlements of the church.

## 5.5 Church Complex Defensive Elements

The defense of all fortified locations through history was centered on the walls and battlements, gateways and towers, dictated by the specific character of the site. If there were two precinct walls surrounding the church, then a ditch was constructed all around



**Figure 5.28: Moșna curtain wall with corner and recessed mural towers, note the hall church and separate west donjon / bell tower.**

the fortified complex and sometimes between the precinct walls and the church itself. In exceptional cases, again dictated by terrain, the church stands outside the precinct wall, as at Șaroș pe Târnave (Hienz, 1960: 414; Treiber, 1971: 192). At Dupuș, the church is exposed on one side in the centre of a long and relatively narrow precinct wall.

Common fortified complex elements, excluding the church itself, include: precinct walls, gates and towers, gateways, donjon towers, loop holes, battlements, embrasures and roofs. The precinct wall physically defines the site and features towers, gates, gate towers, wells, moats and / or ditches (Virágos, 2006: 87). After the Mongol invasion and destructions of 1241-42, the village defensive posture was substantially changed. Pre-1241 sites defended against Cuman and Petchenegs threats, which were not overtly mobile or exceptionally destructive to the people as most damage was in crop raiding and livestock theft. The Mongols were of course so mobile and destructive to Saxon society that new defensive measures had to be taken. It was from this destruction that masonry fortified

churches begun evolving. At Hamba, the masonry donjon tower dates from the mid-thirteenth century and was originally separate from the church (Fabritius-Dancu, 1983: 9; Nussbächer, 1996: 321). Few Saxon sites, at present, have evidence of an outer ditch surrounding the settlement or a bailey. Documentary dates suggest that several sites such as Sibiu and Cisnădioara contained these types of defenses but only Cisnădioara has been confirmed through archaeology. There is ample evidence that after 1241-2, defensive structures were replaced by stone precinct walls with towers, wall-walks and, in many cases, a stone donjon or keep incorporated into the church tower such as at Hamba. Saxons tended to develop and extend the shell keep concept, probably imported from the West. Stores were often built against the outer precinct wall between towers. Most living areas were temporary and so are not visible today. A few sites such as Sînpetru, Cisnădie, Hărman and Prejmer feature built living quarters against either the walls of the church itself or adjacent to the inner precinct walls of the complex. Subsequent development of elements such as hoardings, machicolations, firing loops and portcullises was more evolutionary than revolutionary: precinct walls were expanded, thickened, built higher and the towers more elaborate. Technological innovations in war drove these changes as well as the political evolution of the region (Fabritius-Dancu, 1983: 40; Teutsch, 1862: 228).

Various Saxon villages developed specialized enceintes, walls and towers taken as a group, to defend their village. Most of these enceintes followed a uniform pattern. For the purposes of this study I will discuss the individualized aspects of these fortifications



such as towers, walls and gates while realizing that the development of one is predicated on the development of the other.

**Figure 5.29:** View from the east of Sînpetru communal store rooms along the inside of the precinct wall.

### 5.5.1 Precinct Walls and Battlements

Community survival was a primary consideration, and due / in response to the Turkish threat, a reinforced complex precinct wall became commonplace in the fifteenth century throughout Saxon lands. Prior to that time, from the twelfth through the fourteenth centuries, churches were fortified and smaller earthen walls and palisades surrounding the church were common (Anonymous, 1550: 1326.13; Papacostea, 1998: 168). Today the precinct walls, a majority of these sites in Sibiu and Braşov counties, survive, even if in variably altered states. These precinct walls generally followed the topographical contours of the land surrounding the complex, mostly irregular, but, when permitted by the terrain, the precinct walls tended to be with straight sides in a rectangular layout such as at Homorod and Cobor where the precinct wall consists of four sides with a corner mural tower at the intersecting points. Whereas western urban sites such as Carcassonne in France and Avila in Spain show surviving examples of massive defensive wall construction (Hogg, 1975: 16), the Saxons adopted the more technical



Figure 5.30: Cristian in Braşov County showing combination of precinct wall and stream defense.

aspects of individual fortification in response to their unique non-urban defensive requirements. The precinct walls surrounding the complex of the early fourteenth century church were often 1 – 5m thick and plain with no defense other than their battlements, as at Feldioara (Marienburg) in Braşov County (Anonymous, 1926: 191). Spatially over time many were strengthened with square projecting mural towers, generally between 10 – 12m meters high, at calculated points along the wall. At Homorod, all of the corner towers were built with multiple floors and pyramid roofs. By the fifteenth century, mural towers were either spaced evenly around the precinct wall, as at Sînpetru in figure 5.16, or specifically focused on vulnerable approaches to the complex as at Caţa in figure 5.31 and Drauseni in figure 5.33. Good examples of this technique are seen at Criş and Cobor (Anonymous, 1909: 437; Berger, 1894: 67).

Wall placement was almost always dependent upon the terrain and technology as the threat continually changed over time. Where permitted, precinct walls were protected with natural features such as rivers and streams but often supplemented with man made moats such as at Vaichid and Cristian in Braşov County (figure 5.30). Natural terrain such as steep sides from the high ground and / or rocky outcrops was fully integrated into



**Figure 5.31: Caţa outer precinct wall with recessed mural tower complete with battlements and wall walk.**

the precinct wall defense, as at Biertan, where the less naturally protected side was artificially strengthened by towers and occasionally, water filled moats (Gheorghiu, 1985: 177; Hienz, 1960: 442).

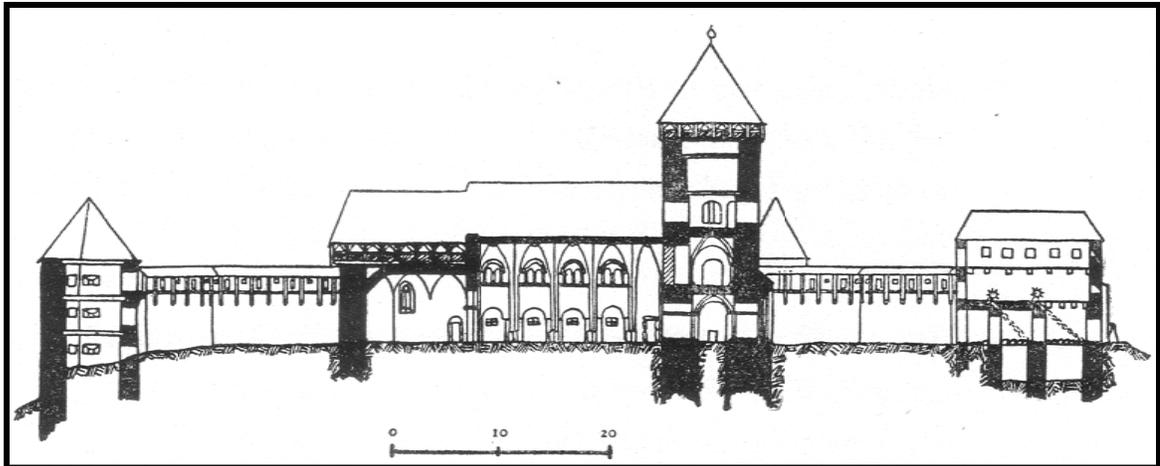


Figure 5.32: Drauseni elevation schematic from the north showing typical precinct walls and battlements with corner mural towers on each side.

Precinct walls were not constructed to withstand a long siege by a determined and organized army but to face loosely organized and mobile groups without the ability to launch and hold a protracted siege. Layered types of advance fortifications such as

constructed in the west at Chateau Gaillard, France in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were often alien to the Saxons (Toy, 1984: 116-18). The Saxons needed fortifications that could be manned rapidly, centrally



Figure 5.33: Drauseni from the north with projecting mural tower and precinct wall defensive elements.

located for easy and rapid access by the immediate community, and sufficient to hold off an attacking force for a short time – thus these were all much more compact.

A central location for the refuge was key to counteract the mobility of the enemy. This being the case, the best defensible terrain considerations were often secondary to the speed at which the villagers could occupy the complex ahead of the raiders. Early

warning was a critical aspect of the efficacy of the defensive precinct. Saxon fortified church complexes were not residences of the lord or nobles of a feudal society but essentially the first and often last line of defense and refuge of the entire village. Precinct walls tended to be easily manned from inside with multiple access points along the wall. The design of the wall often led to battlements along it capable of using flanking fire to protect the base of the wall. A major threat was the battering ram, and while walls were still designed to withstand sapping, wall walks, battlements, bretches, loopholes, machicolations and crenellations were emphasized more due to the nature of the threat. As noted above, some villages such as Prejmer and Hărman even had intramural gallery passages within the precinct wall to add mobility to defensive threats anywhere along the wall.



Figure 5.34: Moșna wall bartizan in foreground.

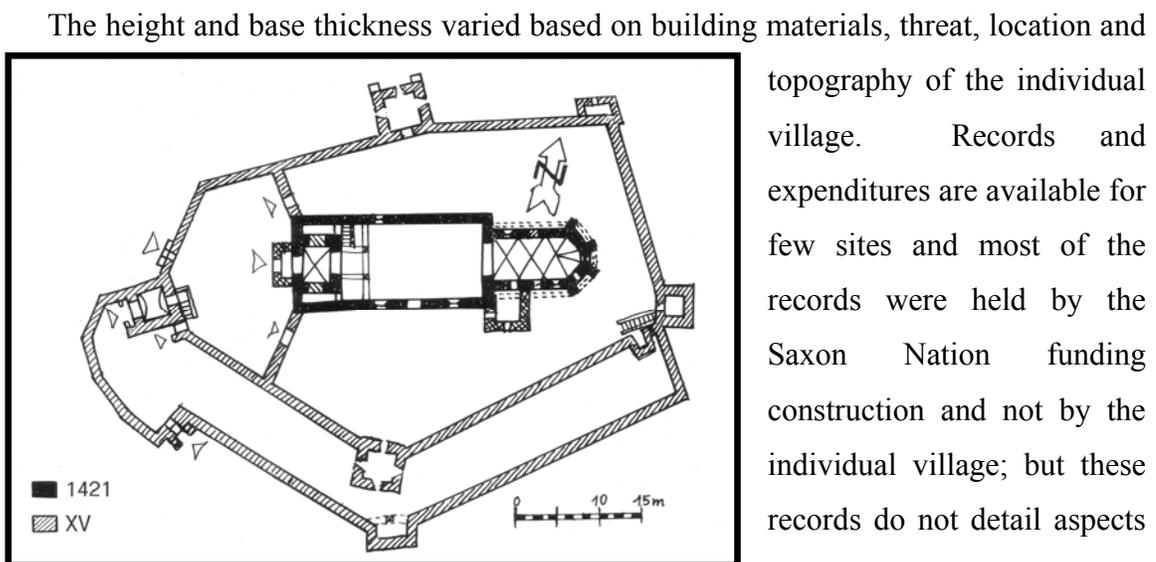


Figure 5.35: Cincsor schematic of inner precinct walls such as wall thickness or developed in the fifteenth century.

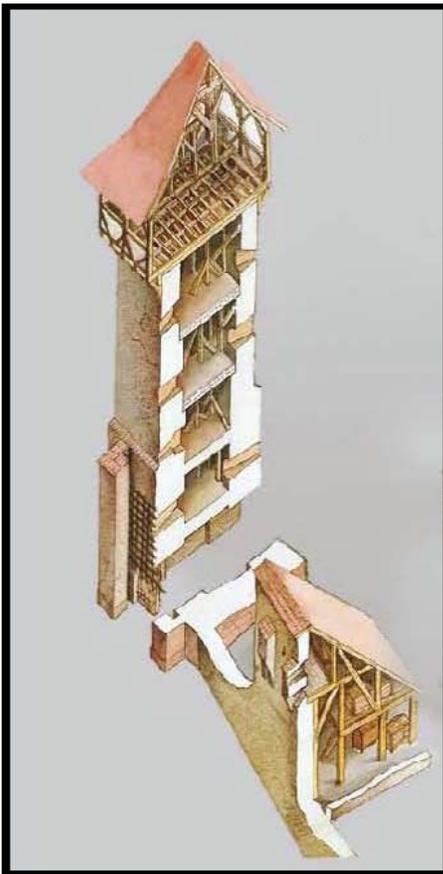
The height and base thickness varied based on building materials, threat, location and topography of the individual village. Records and expenditures are available for few sites and most of the records were held by the Saxon Nation funding construction and not by the individual village; but these records do not detail aspects

materials. The construction of the defensive plinth or splayed base reinforcement of the

Fortified Site	Machicolations	Crenellations	Wall Walks	Hoardings	Loopholes
Biertan	—	—	Y	Y	Y
Cisnădioara	—	—	Y	Y	Y
Sînpetru	Y	Y	—	Y	Y
Hărman	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Brădeni	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

Figure 5.36: Sample variations in wall construction defensive elements.

curtain wall was not undertaken in Saxon lands. Common in the thirteenth century for much of Europe, the nature of the village defense negated the need and additional expense of reinforcing the walls for long sieges (Kaufmann and Kaufmann, *et al.*, 2001: 34-6). Saxon precinct walls were seldom more than 2 meters thick and 6 meters high. Even though stone machicolations and crenellations were replacing wooden hoarding in



the west by the fourteenth century, the Saxons continued to use the hoarding along the wall well into the sixteenth century. By the mid-fourteenth century, most precinct walls were of masonry or stone obtained locally. Saxon wall bartizans are rare – one of the few examples remaining is at Moșna (figure 5.34) – however, numerous loopholes throughout the course of the wall are the most common, and the few bartizans that were built are corbelled at the angle of curtain walls to cover blind sections of the wall.

Figure 5.37: Schematic computer generated section of a gate tower with portcullis and a three story flush mono pitch tower.

Saxon battlements along the wall were designed as a wall walk with fighting platforms in line with the outer wall face. Wooden hoardings were built out over the front of the parapet, and the support holes can often still be seen. Sample sites as in figure 5.36 illustrate how different elements were used through Saxon sites.

Several villages built interior curtain walls within the complex. As in the west, when the village grew in size and importance, continuous construction advances allowed for a layered defense with inner precinct walls at vulnerable points in the complex, such as the south side of Cincsor (figure 5.35).

The wall walks on the curtain wall between the towers and on the towers themselves were defended by low crenellated walls on the inside. The merlons, while rare for Saxon fortifications, were sometimes built along the wall walk and were secure from direct attack; periodic embrasures were deployed where defenders could loose arrows, missiles and stones.

### 5.5.2 The Fortified Complex Tower

We can observe a strengthening of precinct walls in the late fourteenth to early fifteenth century, when different types of towers were built at different times along the curtain walls of complex. In the few cases where multiple precinct walls existed, the outer wall was usually given priority for tower construction. Examples like Ighișu Nou yield documentary evidence such as costs and payments of tower construction within the inner precinct wall but this appears to be the exception rather than the rule (Dancu and Dancu, 1975: 165). Biertan contains examples of multiple towers of various styles along inner and outer walls over time (fig. 5.10). However,



**Figure 5.38: Biertan precinct tower number two with external stairway.**

the mainstay of the Saxon construction was the rectangular multi-storied tower. Saxon

complex tower typology includes mural, free-standing and gate towers; shapes of the towers include square, round, semicircular, and polygonal ones later. Generally containing three or four floors and some 10 to 12 meters high, these towers were between 1.5 and 2 meters thick at the base and 5 meters wide along each side.

Several complexes, such as at Ighişu Nou, contained open rear towers, sometimes



**Figure 5.39: Ighişu Nou circular bastion with open back.**

referred to as bastions, with and without roofs. Styles of towers also include the standard types of corner, flush or recessed, and most often projecting. The entrance doorway of most of the towers such as at Biertan in figure 5.38 was located on the second storey, via external stairs that could be easily defended. Many of the towers contained machicolated parapets that generally date from the fifteenth century such as Nocrich (Fabritius-Dancu, 1983a: 77). Towers generally were between two and four stories high

and featured either pyramidal or flat rearward sloping mono pitch roofs such as at Ghimbav and Vulcan (Horwath, 1929b: 137-9). These towers commonly were not fitted for living quarters but did contain communal storage, essential supplies and critical stocks for the village on the lower levels. At Cristian in Sibiu County, an octagon mural tower was designated as a smoke tower for meat in the fourteenth century and is still referred to as the Bacon Tower by local villagers. Uniquely the gate tower at Aţel

Fortified Site	Flanking	Recessed	Projecting	Flush	floors
Biertan	Y	—	Y	Y	3-4
Buzd	Y	—	Y	—	3
Valea Viilor	Y	—	Y	—	3
Moşna	Y	—	Y	Y	3-4
Caţa	Y	Y	Y	—	3-4

**Figure 5.40: Sample of variations in Saxon tower heights and construction type.**

contained a garderobe (toilet) and a bartizan still in existence that date from the early fourteenth century (Wolff, 1881: 53).

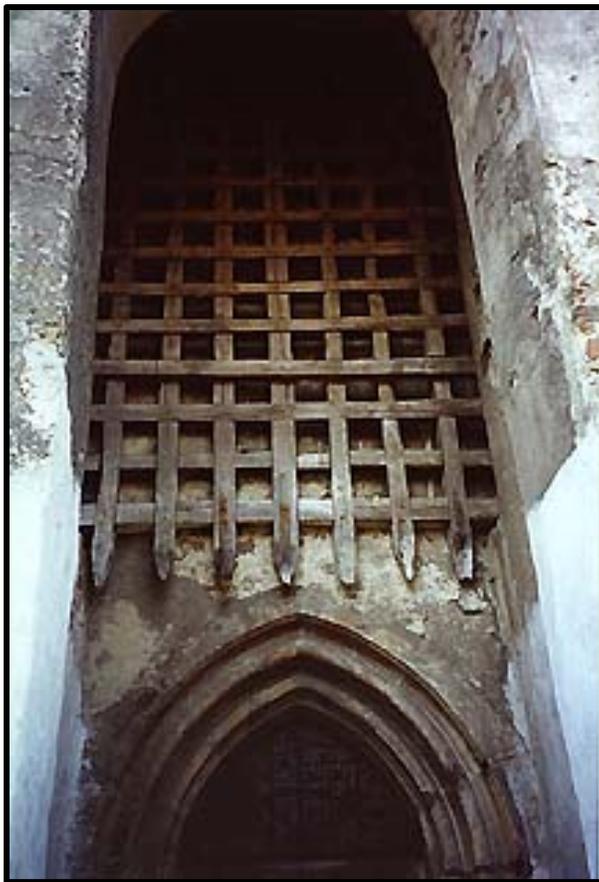
The fortified complex at Bruiu contained an inner and outer precinct wall in the shape of an oval. The inner wall contained a singular defensive tower on the south wall; while the outer wall featured four bastions and a square tower that were flush (even) with the curtain wall. Shooting loopholes are still visible along the north wall but the three levels of battlement walkways have been removed. Storage sheds for the villagers' food supplies were installed along the outer wall (Horwath, 1940: 56; Kröner, 2003: 56; Roth and Alexander Rosemann, *et al.*, 1934: 135). Towers had access from floor to floor via ladders or trap doors (Unknown, 2004) and generally did not contain windows, latrines or fireplaces. The top floor may contain a flight of steps up to maintain the roof system or battlements if in existence. In the fifteenth century and later, towers were built over exits or postern gates on the outer face of the tower. Most of the early tower details have been altered or destroyed and pre-fifteenth century towers would need to be examined in greater detail to confirm the exact details of their earlier construction form. In order to protect the precinct wall between towers, smaller turrets or mini-towers were often built; Biertan has an exceptional example of this later construction, even though the wall has been removed. Open-backed bastions were often installed in the latter part of the fifteenth century. These bastions were cost savings alternatives to villages but for the Saxons, a suitable substitute based on the nature of the threat.



Figure 5.41: Hosman portcullis and three floor gate tower.

### 5.5.3 The Precinct Gate

Key to each complex was of course the main (often the sole) gate in the fortified circuit. Necessarily, much effort went into securing and defending this portal. Normally of single access design, the precinct gate of the complex was positioned based on the speedy access of the rural population and the best defensible position within the precinct wall. In general, the weakest point in a fortification was the entry point. If the gate fell



**Figure 5.42: Valea Viilor portcullis and doorway.**

to attackers, generally there was no escape. Most were in the form of a gate tower in the precinct wall; much effort went into the design and subsequent defense of these (Toy, 1984: 171). Unlike castle structures, gates opened directly into the interior of the precinct. Few sites channeled access into courtyards or other enclosures that contained a second inner gate. Some complexes such as Hărman appear to have attempted to confine an assault long enough to destroy the attacker. The Saxons did however have complicated entrances complete with portcullises, draw bridges across moats, machicolations and or bretèches over the gate. Some exceptional examples of these entrances include Hosman, Prejmer, Hărman and Valea Viilor.

Precinct gate towers were normally three stories tall, the entrance being defended from tower battlements and all of the defensive elements incorporated into the tower. The passage, much deeper than the circuit wall thickness, normally under the tower

contained a portcullis followed by an iron bound double door. Saxon portcullises generally were of oak, plated with iron, and moved up and down in slots carved into stone channels. They were operated with ropes, chains, and pulleys, from the gate tower above or a room to the side if a tower was not in place. Machicolations opened out in the roof of the gateway between the portcullis and the defended door. Hosman originally had a portcullis on the external side of the gate tower of the outer precinct wall and was defended by the right angle of the wall under the protection of a wooden hoarding. The entrance was further protected by loopholes in the walls along the side; above the portcullis entrance, now removed, was a bretèche and immediately above the bretèche was a fighting platform which flanked the inner opening of the passage.

The gateway at Prejmer was defended at the entrance by a moat, followed by a barbican with a portcullis and machicolation,



**Figure 5.43: Prejmer -- third portcullis with machicolation behind followed by last door.**

second portcullis, door, third portcullis and, finally, a full width two-leaved iron-strapped door. Built during the latter part of the fourteenth century, the gatehouse was linked to a bridge over the moat. The tower gateway and interior passage opened to a small court approximately ten meters in circumference between the gatehouse and the inner precinct wall. The passageway proceeds straight through without turning and is defended by one portcullis at the entrance to the gate tower and by a two-leaf iron plated oak door at the end of the gate tower wall. There were also two sets of machicolations, one on the inner side of the first portcullis and one in front of the oak door (Anonymous, 2002: 256-60; Harrison, 2004: 130-2).

#### 5.5.4 Interior Space, Storage and Associated Structures

The interior spaces for these complexes did not normally contain permanent living quarters. Unlike castles and secular structures, Saxon ecclesiastical fortifications were meant to be for a temporary, specific event – i.e. refuge – and not a permanent residence.



**Figure 5.44: Miercurea Sibiului: movable communal storage bin for wheat with dispensing chute, rebuilt several times. Documents indicate the bin dates from the mid-fifteenth century.**

The interiors therefore contained storage, supplies, emergency provisions and, in some cases, worksites for production such as smokehouses and carpentry materials considered valuable and non-portable. The interiors were essentially a temporary but critical last defense of the village. The design and layout were therefore important and noted in records as to the priorities assigned to them. Families generally were allotted a single cell of about 4 meters square. At Cisnădie, each village family had a storage area and task associated with the survival of the village (Gheorghiu, 1985: 49, 185-90). Unlike other

structures of the time, there is no evidence, in either documents or archaeology, that the Saxons built kitchens or other domestic spaces in the fortified complexes. Saxons, like other medieval societies, combined spaces based on need and not on a social definition and understanding (Virágos, 2006: 87).

Storage facilities for most Saxon complexes have yet to be archaeologically investigated. Some villages produced wood bins that were movable and able to be stored outdoors; these bins normally stored grains and seeds for future plantings; several remain that date from as early as the fourteenth century. Examples at Sînpetru, Miercurea Sibiului (figure 5.44), and Prejmer are noteworthy: foodstuffs including vegetables such as onions, leeks, and cabbage were stored in family storage units allotted by the church.



**Figure 5.45: Prejmer: communal storage facilities constructed against the inner precinct wall.**

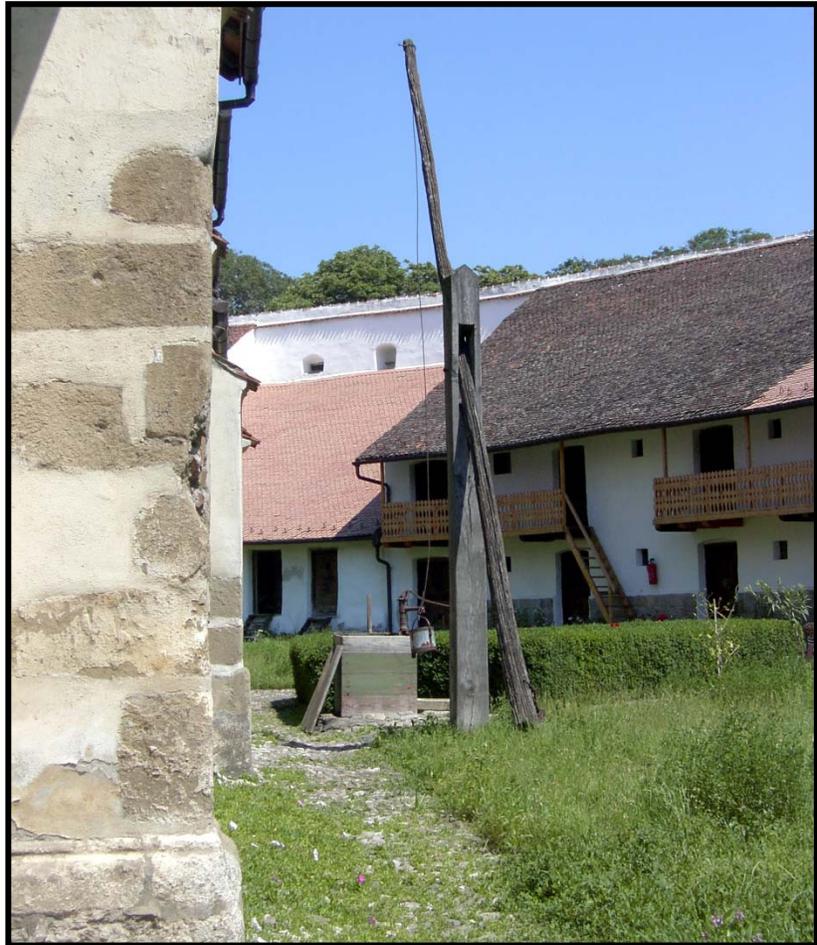
Of value is the 1888 description of such storage:

“Also the habit of keeping provisions stored up within the fortified church-walls, to this day extant in most Saxon villages, is clearly a remnant of the time when sieges had to be looked for. Even now people seem to consider their goods to be in greater security here than in their own barns and lofts. The outer fortified wall round the church is often divided off into deep recesses or alcoves, in each of which, stands a large wooden chest securely locked, and

filled with grain or flour, while the little surrounding turrets or chapels are used as storehouses for home-cured bacon, ... This storing up of provisions is a perfect mania among the Saxons, and each village has its own special hobby or favorite article,... Each article, case, or barrel is marked with the brand of the owner, and the whole placed under the charge of the church-warden” (Gerard, 1888: 70-3).

Many villages had a well installed within the fortified complex for church and emergency use. Rarely were complex cisterns built except in fortresses associated with specific villages, and even here, most cisterns were simple structures with direct access and not structurally elaborate or expensive to maintain. Again, based on the perceived nature of the threat to Saxon villages, there was no need for expensive structures such as complex cisterns with filtering systems like those used in castles or fortresses where a prolonged siege was possible.

Finally, the Saxons’ political structure and unique relationship with the kings of Hungary meant that the Church and physical church structure in many ways subsumed the function



**Figure 5.46: Well next to the church and within the protection of the precinct wall of the fortified church at Hărman.**

of the medieval secular castle. Considering this, the parallels between secular and ecclesiastical fortifications become even more obvious.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **CHURCH PLANS AND FORMS**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter will address several aspects of the Saxon churches of the study zone in terms of their archaeological developments and investigations, ecclesiastical and architectural typology, plans, structural forms and evolution. It will seek to show distinctive characters and borrowings, and also outline regional variations.

#### **6.2 Archaeology – Developments and Status**

As detailed in Chapter Three, from 1900 to 1949 field archaeology was almost non-existent in Transylvania: World Wars I and II and the subsequent reordering of Transylvanian society precluded almost all research during the period. The war years also destroyed or scattered pre-1900 research and field results. Subsequently, Romanian archaeology was until 1990 subservient to the political climate of the Socialist regime in Bucharest that forced drastic changes in the field. The focusing of projects and research to encompass the Romanian Socialist State political agenda with directed thematic research was consolidated and controlled (Paunescu, 1991: xi-xv). Thus, beginning in 1952 the Materials and Archaeological Researches regarding the ancient history of the Popular Republic of Romania (RPR) began directing and publishing archaeological field work for the State; later this organization became the Institute for Cultural Memory (CIMEC). CIMEC now administers all archaeological excavations and documents in

Romania under the auspices of the Ministry of Interior with one exception: currently, in conjunction with CIMIC, the Institute of Archaeology ‘Vasile Parvan’ of the Romanian Academy oversees the National History Museum Antiquities where some archaeology reports still reside with their collections. Their field indexes provide a deeper understanding of archaeological investigations or the lack of them in specific areas (Angelescu and Vasilescu, 2008: 1-20). For example, from 1982 to 2006 some 52 excavations took place in Braşov County and some 84 excavations in Sibiu County compared to 3,042 excavations in all of Romania (Bogdan, 2006: vi-x). The types of excavations varied from preventative to systematic and the targeted periods were from the Paleolithic to medieval and modern. Figure 6.01 summarizes all study area excavations in 2007 and provides a positive trend for future excavations. Nonetheless, the lack of data and directed archaeological research into Saxon medieval churches remain.

Archaeological Excavation Type	<i>Braşov County</i>	<i>Sibiu County</i>	All other Counties (42)	Total
Systematic Excavation	5	4	123	132
Preventative Excavation	9	2	471	482
Structural investigation	12	8	441	461
Surface Site Survey	1	2	43	46
Total number Sites	27	16	1078	1121

Figure 6.01: Total Romanian archaeology investigations for 2007.

An example of excavation work in the study area of Sibiu between 1982 and 1993, began as a systematic research and rescue excavation: the Old Town Hall building at Sibiu itself was determined to be built between 1470 and 1490 and the excavation identified the remains of some thirteenth to fourteenth century buildings with wood floors and casting stubs for church bells (Belu, 1983-92: 143469.04). Previous research by Năgler (1989: 23-29) indicated that the same site had had a garbage burn pit in the seventeenth century as well as a storage area for glass and ceramics from the fifteenth through to the eighteenth centuries.

Belu’s excavation at the Asylum church or ‘Spitalkirche’ during the same timeframe revealed that the church dates from the fourteenth century and that a building overlay the

original church with three overlapping brick pavement lines that was subsequently traced to construction outside the church in the fifteenth century (Beliu, 1983-92: 143469.04). Human remains were found overlapping all construction phases; however, the results as of August 2008 have yet to be finalized. Another nearby parish church was also excavated, revealing the plan of the original church as a three aisle Romanesque church that was actually finished as a two aisle church. The church was abandoned in the seventeenth century and the choir then used for public storage. Investigations along the 9<sup>th</sup> of May Street in 1987 exposed medieval city fortifications of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries with the recovery of wooden structures indicating precinct wall foundations as well as the structure of the fortifications surrounding the city based on strata levels uncovered and documented (Beliu, 1983-92: 42-6, 45-9).



Figure 6.02: The Spitalkirche at Sibiu as seen from the air.

### 6.3 Ecclesiastical Typology

The Saxons' architectural imprint, especially on vernacular dwellings and ecclesiastical churches, is pronounced. By and large, the peasant immigrants kept their

traditional Germanic house and farmstead plans, in particular the ‘Frankish court,’ a plan in which farmstead buildings are tightly grouped around an enclosed farmyard (Hamerow, 1994: 168-72). They did so at least partly in order to retain the customs of their old homeland. After settling on new lands, the Saxons, drawing upon such traditions, began building half-timbered structures known as Fachwerk (Föppl, 1892: 4,6): typically, wattle-and-daub and fired brick fill the sections of half-timbered structures, and builders tended to use stonework on the ground floor of the house, and half-timber in upper levels as was also their practice in America in the nineteenth century (Brett, 1997: 56). But in roofing of churches and common buildings, the Saxons departed radically from their western European tradition; whilst some early thatching appeared, shingling prevailed by the 1500s in Sibiu and Braşov Counties.

Saxon Archaeological Typology / Plan	Braşov County	Sibiu County	Tower	Patron Gallery	Choir	Nave	Apse
Romanesque	25	44			XX	XX	XX
Gothic	10	20	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX
Gothic Hall	15	47		XX	XX	XX	XX
Total Number of Sites	50	111					

Figure 6.03: Saxon church ecclesiastical typology and elements by county.

When the Saxons began arriving in Transylvania, in the early 1100s, they most likely brought with them the architectural prototypes of the churches of the west. Whilst the Transylvanian borderlands had precipitated there the development of fortified religious sites, Saxon ecclesiastical architecture was centered on the village church. In their simplicity, the Saxon churches neatly presaged the later religious buildings and sanctuaries erected in Transylvania over time.

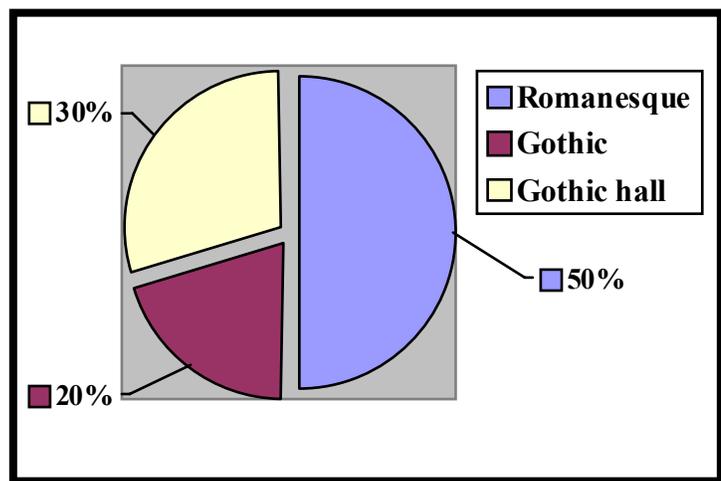


Figure 6.04: Braşov County Saxon church type by percentage.

The Saxons must have brought with them from their homelands the knowledge of how to cut, quarry stone, make strong, uniform bricks and how to use them in construction as was needed after the Mongol invasion in 1241. Thus, in Sibiu, the settlers began building the second precinct wall of Stone without assistance from outsiders. (Roth, 2006: 7-11).

Several architectural styles have dominated the Saxon church landscape. Key are Romanesque, the Gothic vernacular, built either in stone or masonry, as a Gothic hall or traditional Gothic with bell tower. Typology classification for this chapter will be categorized as Romanesque, Gothic or Gothic hall churches. Generally, the variation in church form and attributes is seen as a consequence of the differences in raw material properties or individual church construction technical competences. Among the most outstanding Saxon examples in Braşov and Sibiu Counties are the churches of Hălchiu, Curciu and Hălmeag (see respective entries in gazetteer); also noteworthy are the masonry Romanesque churches at Copşa Mică and Cisnădioara. Some truly spectacular interior and exterior decorations remain at Prejmer, Homorod, and Moşna, as will be discussed. Overall, the major ecclesiastical elements within these typologies we can consider include the church plan, tower, patron gallery, choir, nave and apse.

Even in the most isolated areas the church grew correspondingly with the size of the community, and for this rural society, the church and the village were nearly synonymous. Building came under the clergy's supervision, and they no doubt, but as yet confirmed, based their plans on memories of German or

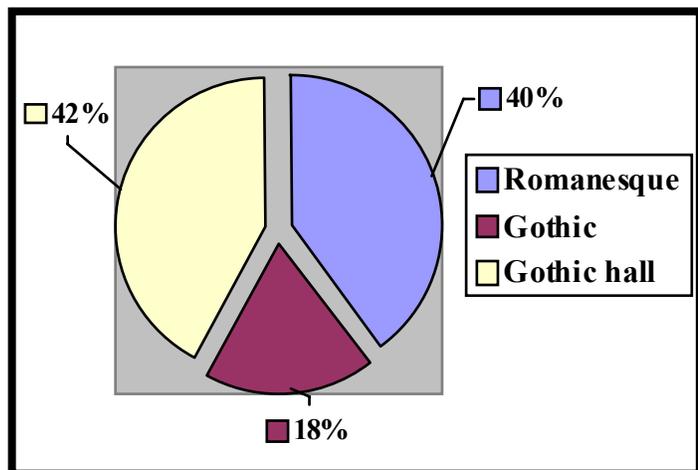


Figure 6.05: Sibi County Saxon church type by percentage.

western European ecclesiastical prototypes, but drawing upon the expertise of military engineers or civilian builders (Miko, 2006: 36-9). In one documented instance, the 36 meter tall church tower in Saschiz (Roth and Alexander Rosemann, *et al.*, 1934: 117), begun in 1493, had a foundation depth of 3.9 meters; it was designed by the same builder

who built the 36 meter tall gate tower in Sighsaora (Marcu, 1999: 119215.02).



Figure 6.06: Saschiz church with Lindau-type defensive donjon tower.

Noticeably, the 37 meter tall Mangturm tower in Lindau, Germany, has similar design and construction to Sighsaora and Saschiz (figure 6.06) but was constructed in the 1200s. Few records of such possible formalized transmission of architectural ideas as this one remain, however, and by the mid-fourteenth century the Saxons were producing noteworthy architecture by resident designers. The sophistication of an

architectural idea and its methods of realization varied with the period and the place in which the church was built. We can duly observe a high investment by villagers and groups in these buildings.

### 6.3.1 Saxon Romanesque Architectural Elements

In the twelfth century the Saxons answered both liturgical and societal callings with church construction. The church served as a sanctuary that signified the Christian presence in the ‘land beyond the forest’ and at the same time, Saxon architecture itself served as an instrument of faith, a structure of scale and splendor sufficient to create an

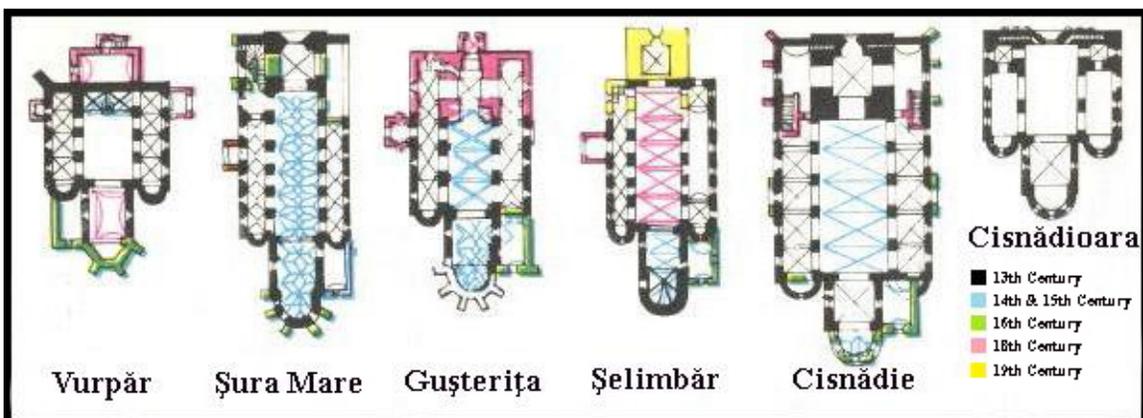


Figure 6.07: Saxon Romanesque church schematics with construction phases.

appropriate sense of awe and respect for religious doctrine (Fabini, 1983: 31-5; Ogden, 2000: 1-7). Most of the Saxon churches in Braşov and Sibiu Counties have been modified over the centuries and many villages have records of churches that existed but are now lost. However, enough data survive to provide a coherent typological sequence. Thus, initially, the Saxons adopted the Romanesque style church which was prevalent in Hungary in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.



**Figure 6.08:** Cisnădioara three aisle Romanesque church clearly showing the semi-circular apse and rectangular chancel construction style.

The oldest known Saxon church of this type was constructed for the specific purpose of religious services at Cisnădioara and was a relatively modest, single-nave wood structure measuring about 8 meters by 25 meters, its apse articulated as a smaller semi-circle (Marcu, 2004: 12358.2). In twelfth century Transylvania, a church consisted primarily of a nave to shelter the congregation and an altar at which the priest could celebrate the mass. The scale of the church was circumscribed by need. Wood walls could only be practicably constructed to a height of about 5 meters, stone to perhaps 5 meters higher. The width of the nave was fixed by the length of the wood beams available in the relative vicinity. Modifications to the archetypal building plan developed as a response to the particularities of the site, the availability of building material, and the desired height of the walls. Soon after its initial construction, the Cisnădioara church was rebuilt of stone and is in form as we see it today in figure 6.08.

The triple-aisle church with transept and elongated semi-circular apse became the framework for later Romanesque churches. These triple-aisled churches as shown in figure 6.07 were uniquely a Saxon style and not normally found outside of Saxon lands in Transylvania. The Hungarians and Székelys preferred Romanesque single aisle or nave churches and, for these groups, post-1241-2 did not mark a major change



Figure 6.09: Cisnădioara interior typical flat ceiling style below pitch.

in church construction style, except in the Hungarian chancel design that moved to an oblong ending in the apse. Narrow, rounded arch windows with an entrance porch containing few decorations were the norm for the time (Fabritius-Dancu, 1979: 130-3).

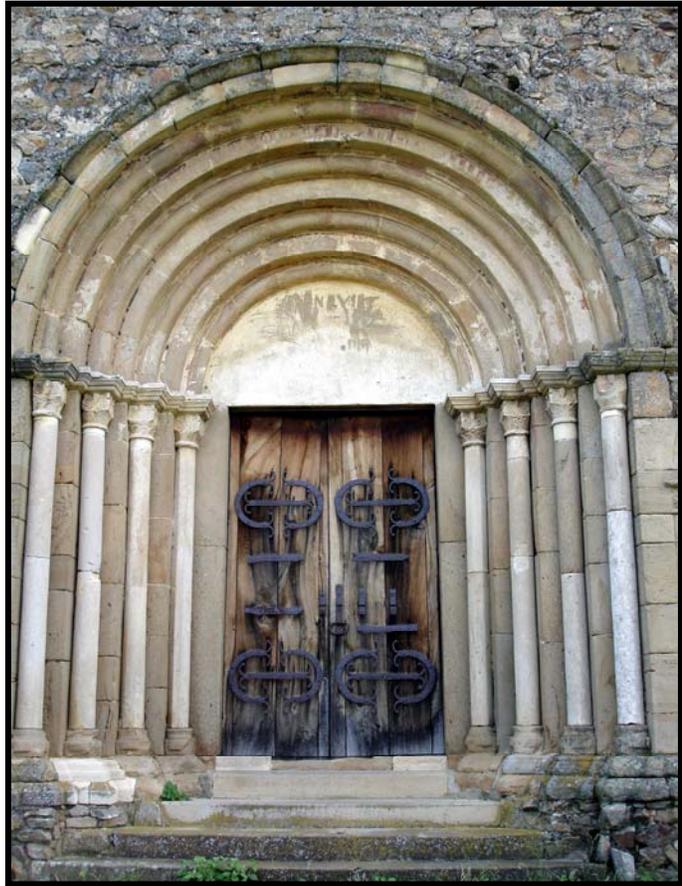
After the Mongol invasion and withdrawal, church rebuilding and new construction



Figure 6.10: West portal and towers at Ják.

began in stone. The famous chapel at Ják in Hungary has been credited with leading this rebuilding style. Ják's polygonal, early Gothic chancel and west portal, begun in 1270, was finished in 1287 and contains Renaissance and Gothic chapels and carvings, that reflects various styles (Anonymous, 1650: 4-9). In Saxon lands, the post-1242 style introduced a square apse and a tower over the west section of the nave. In the wake of the Mongol threat, towers were distinctively defensive in nature. Such towers were built throughout the region, but in 1291 King Andrew III decreed that "any towers or fortifications

built with hostile intent onto churches or in any other place must be torn down” (Gündisch, 1983b: 174). It remains unknown how many church towers were destroyed on his order, but what is known is that most churches did not have towers until after the Mongol invasion and many churches maintained towers even after King Andrew’s decree of 1291 (Fabritius-Dancu, 1979: 132-5; Makkai, 2002: 552-8). As noted, Cisnădioara is the oldest of the known Saxon churches, it is a classical Romanesque, three aisle church with semi-circular apse and a rectangular chancel or choir (figure 6.08). Originally designed to have twin spires, as became



**Figure 6.11: Cisnădioara west portal with multiple carved door arches.**

to have twin spires, as became common in Hungary, they were never built. The west door has an exceptional multiple lines of carved arches with blind arcades on either side. Interestingly, the church lacks a tower, but this may be due to the exceptional hill topography that the church occupies as seen in figure 5.13 on page 149. With the exception of Prejmer, Viscri, and Homorod in Braşov and Sibiu Counties, all the Saxon Romanesque churches were triple-aisled, in which the nave had a flat ceiling, and the aisles barrel-vaulted ceilings, followed by a west tower with or without loft overlooking the nave.

The stylistic evolution of the chancel in Saxon churches followed the Hungarian pattern of a rectangular form and was small in relation to the nave and transept. While the earliest churches from the mid- to-late- twelfth century at Cisnădioara, Şura Mare, and Cristian (Sibiu) had rounded apses, some had square-ended sanctuaries. The Saxon churches’ ornamented and arcuated portals follow different models. The west portal style

of Cisnădioara is subsequently found at Cisnădie, Cața, Cincul Mare and Avrig. The Hungarian Ják style portal is found at Drăușeni, Toarcia, Ungra and at Hălchiu (figure 6.12). In sum, Saxon thirteenth century late Romanesque church plans and ornamentation were unique in having fortified towers over the nave (Makkai, 2002: 560).

### 6.3.2 Saxon Gothic Architectural Elements

The main shift to the Gothic style occurred when the heavier Romanesque style architecture transitioned from the solid stone vault, to the lighter, elevated Gothic style based on the use of the pointed arch and cross-ribbed vault (Bony, 1983: 31-42). The transition in Transylvania coincided with widespread rebuilding particularly after natural disasters, or when churches had been destroyed by raids and attacks (Pöschl, 1926: 380-89; Schöller, 1989:



Figure 6.12: Quadri-partite vault in east aisle of Ocna Sibiului. 13-9). It is thus rare to find unmodified Romanesque style Saxon churches, as the majority saw continual updating.

By the later thirteenth century – a century after being introduced in the west – Saxons were using the groined vault over the barrel vault and were beginning to add ribs in support of the weight of the vault. The much thinner cross-ribbed vaulting as at Prejmer and Biertan, was generally popular in Saxon churches, and became increasingly complex and saw the development of more varied forms such as the quadri-partite vault and the

sex-partite vault in churches such as Biertan, Prejmer and Ocna Sibiului (Armi, 2004-8; Fitchen, 1961: 178-90; Makkai, 2002: 548-60).

The Cistercian monastery at Cîrța was founded in 1200 with construction on the church begun around 1230, as a typical early Gothic, three-aisled tower-less church with transept. The monastery at Cîrța is believed to be the oldest Gothic Saxon structure and perhaps set the new architectural agenda (Makkai, 2002: 560).

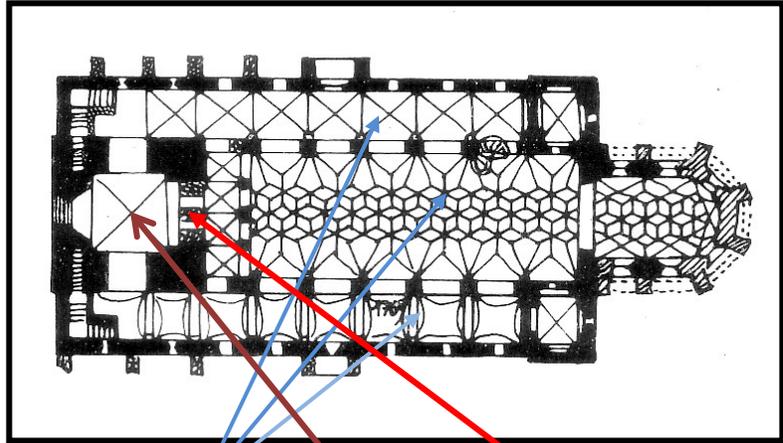


Figure 6.13: Sex-partite vault of Biertan nave.

### 6.3.3 Saxon Gothic Hall Architectural Elements

The Gothic hall church first emerged in the thirteenth century in Bavaria and Westphalia of present day Germany with the highlight of development was in the sixteenth century. These hall churches generally had a square plan that was common for parish churches in Germany. Hall churches tended to be simpler and easier to build than traditional churches as they contain no clerestory and have a lower architectural profile thus requiring less materials and expertise in construction. Other differences include a single saddle roof over the entire structure, no crossing and an apse that extends across the entire width of the structure (Anthony, 2007: 41-52).

By the early 1400s, in Saxon lands there emerged a unique Gothic style in churches that were fortified against the Ottomans. By the late 1400s we see Gothic hall churches with fortified complexes. These Saxon Gothic hall churches



**Figure 6.14:** Schematic of a Saxon Gothic hall church at Cincul Mare showing 1) three aisles, 2) west tower and 3) patron gallery.

usually have a single nave without aisles, or when they have aisles, they are the same height as the central nave and lateral light exposure occurs only through the windows of the outer walls. Hall churches do not contain west towers or spires as an integral part of the initial construction process.

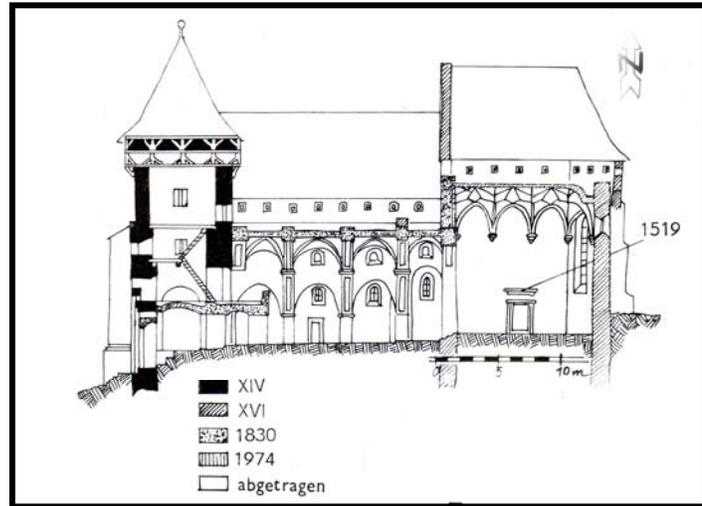


**Figure 6.15:** The abandoned hall church at Apos with separate bell tower.

Standing evidence shows that the Saxons built these hall churches with separate towers and integrated many of them into the church at a later date with renovations and or reconstruction (Fabritius-Dancu, 1979: 135-41). The Cincul Mare church schematic in

figure 6.15 and the abandoned church at Apos with separate bell tower figure 6.16 are examples of the variations in hall churches.

One of the first Gothic hall churches in Germany was St. Elizabeth's in Marburg, built 1235 when St. Elizabeth of Hungary was canonized (Leppin, 1999: 6-14). Transylvanian Saxon hall churches follow strikingly similar designs and the spatial construction lends support to the idea of a correlation between them, perhaps suggestive of a borrowing of architects?



**Figure 6.16: Schematic of the tower and raised choir with saddleback roof of the hall church at Copsa Mare.**

### 6.3.4 The Tower



Saxon church towers are characteristic of the Gothic form but uniquely are almost always a single tower and positioned as a separate structure even though subsequent modification often attached the tower to the church. The Black church in Braşov was designed for two towers but only one was built. The church tower at Prejmer is an octagonal tower built over the crossing. Generally, along the facade of the west front the Saxons decorated their towers modestly if at all; Gothic designs to impress worshippers are not generally found and were

**Figure 6.17: The west portal façade at Dîrlos.**

probably not needed. The façade and small window above the west portal at Dîrlos in figure 6.18 are unexplained exceptions. The Saxons did decorate the main portal, often flanked by blind arcades and with detailed arch decorations and multiple line moldings. Rarely are there other carvings or figures around the portals. Another difference is the lack of a large window, which in other countries is generally known as a rose window. Since the towers were fairly standard for the Saxons, so the reasons are still to be determined.

Saxon towers of course were subject to local influences, budgets and the technical competence or lack thereof, of stonemasons and artisans, who traveled between cities and villages (Miko, 2006: 36-40). Saxon ecclesiastical towers characteristically are simple, clean and relatively unadorned; but they almost always contained bells as an integral element of their role. At Moşna, for example, the bells date from the fifteenth century and one contains the inscription ‘O rex glorie veni cum pace’; a second bell dates from 1548; and the last bell dates from 1789. Today, the new bells in the tower date from 1913 and original bells are in the church museum (Müller, 1861: 214).

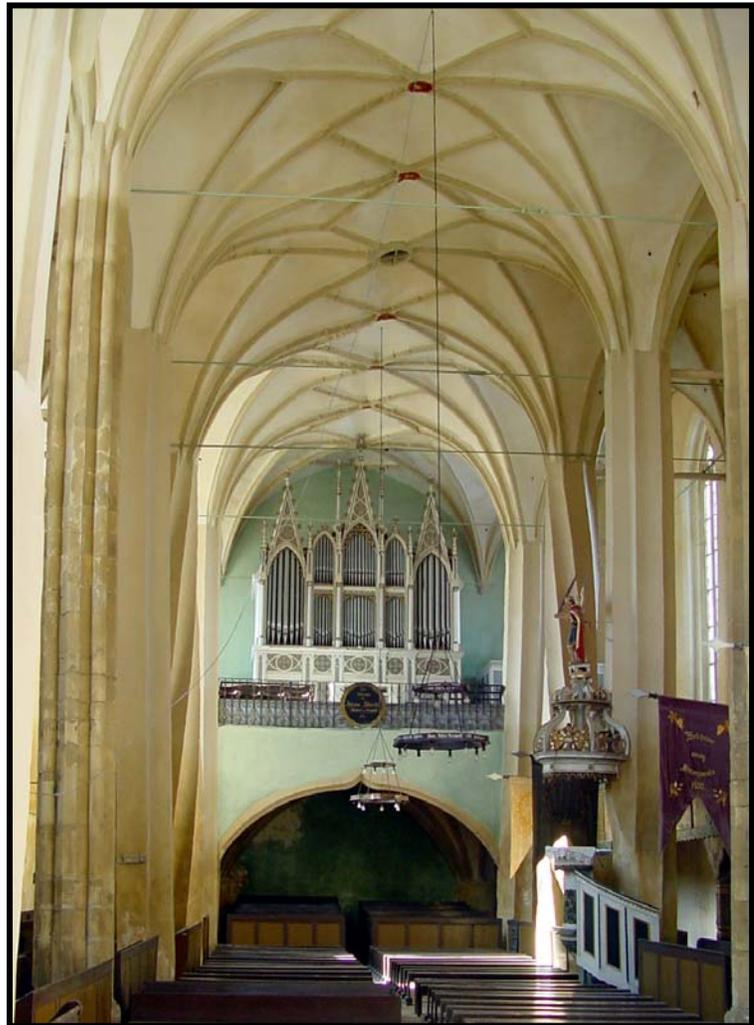


Figure 6.18: Original patron gallery at Moşna converted to an organ loft in the 1700s.

### 6.3.5 The Patron Gallery

Church towers did not follow patterns traditional to Romanesque building construction: for example the addition of the patron's gallery in the tower above the nave were uniquely Saxon features in Transylvania, with the exception of Miercurea Sibiului where the Saxons followed the Hungarian style of no gallery. Immediately inside the church overlooking the central nave was the patron gallery or loft, which often extended along the east interior of the tower wall to form a balcony or gallery.



Figure 6.19: Patron loft with designs and decorations at Buzd.

The gallery is, in itself, evidence of the leading role played by Saxon nobility in church construction. The nobility were separated from the congregation in the tower-gallery churches at Drăușeni, Cața, Feldioara (Földvár), and Cristian (Sibiu). This gallery space was normally in the west tower or end of the church. An exception is at Viscri where in the latter part of the fourteenth century the west gallery was built by a local Gräf who also built a residential tower in the outer wall of the complex precinct; his tower was some 4 meters from the west portal of the church (for the protection of his family).

Typically a window, centralized in the main facade and vaguely recalling the rose window of the Gothic cathedral, illuminated the loft but in Saxon churches, the window was bricked up or left out as a military necessity. When bracketed by two towers in the Romanesque style, this balcony also created a basic narthex that served as a loose transition to the sanctuary proper. Although the patron gallery loft was consistently at the rear of the nave, access to the platform was not necessarily evident. In many instances access to the loft was by circular stairway or ladder, and in the case of Cristian the manner of entry was a corridor that led over the aisle from the choir.

The patron gallery was built with the same techniques used to construct the roofs and towers. Like the complex defensive towers, donjon pillars extended across in a large pointed arch that was embedded in the walls at both ends. In many churches the arch over



**Figure 6.20: Homorod interior with typical decorations painted on wood.**

the center aisle reinforced and helped support the loft and the church patrons. The floor of the patron gallery was normally built of stone but some churches used wood beams and construction depending on the type of church construction. The railings of the balconies, like the corbels supporting the beams, could be plain or elaborately worked, and at times they were carved with intricate geometric patterns, biblical scenes and floral designs – see figures 6.19, 6.20 and 6.21.

### **6.3.6 The Choir or Chancel**

The Saxon high Gothic choir or chancel is a distinctive feature of the churches in Braşov and Sibiu counties. By the late thirteenth century, square or rectangular choirs began replacing earlier semi-circular choirs and apses throughout Saxon lands and, as an exception, single-aisle nave churches were only built at Viscri and Homorod (Makkai, 2002: 558-9).

Introduced around 1340, the Saxon choir resembles that of the medieval architecture in the choir of St. Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna that dates from the mid-1300s. The

5/8<sup>th</sup> choir, so common in Saxon churches, is when the end of the church choir is in a graduated polygon perimeter that is a 5/8<sup>th</sup> proportional scale of the nave and side aisles of the church. Cross-ribbed vaulting on columns were standard for the Saxon churches supported by simple external terraced prop columns (Anonymous, 2004b). Saxon churches began reinforcing the choirs when the west tower donjon was deemed inadequate. The early Gothic church at Prejmer, in the shape of a Greek cross, influenced by the monastery at Cîrța, contains an excellent example of the Gothic choir. At Biertan, the choir was also defended by a second tower with side entrance nearby that was not part of the structure (figure 6.22).

When in the mid-fourteenth century, many Saxon churches were fortified due to the advancing Turkish army, choirs were secured by adding additional floors for military defense and aisles either blocked up or had machicolations and loopholes installed along the length of the church. The fortified choir became the second tower that is so distinctive in Saxon churches. The best surviving examples include Buzd in figure 5.19 on page 155, Cislădie Șomartin, Cincul Mare, Viscri, Biertan, and Ațel (Dragut, 1979: 72-84).

Saxon choirs used the Gothic arch window. This window improvement is where the diameter is larger than the width of the arch and the center of the window is the center of the arch. The point of the arch is normally built within a rectangular space and



**Figure 6.21: Biertan fortified complex with Gothic hall church with first tower on the right and second tower on the left.**

between external prop columns in the choir. The pointed arch was better able to assume the static load of the weight of the vaults and roofing than the Romanesque round windows of prior constructions (Fletcher, 1996: 426-41). The arched window was used

extensively in Gothic and Gothic hall churches by the Saxons but also inserted in Romanesque churches when repaired. Unfortunately, many of the churches blocked up the windows in anticipation of the Turkish advances into the area, and while some have been restored, most remain plastered over as at Copșa Mică and Velt.

### 6.3.7 The Nave and Apse

The nave, its transepts, and apse, complete the Saxon church form. This completed the religious portion of the church, but the Saxons also required facilities to store critical materials and foodstuffs, live and work when under siege – these will be detailed in the next chapter. In Saxon churches, the nave is the space where worshipers gather and is normally divided into sections between four pillars is called a bay, yoke or a transverse section. Saxon churches often contained three bays for each church. The nave vaulting went diagonally across between the piers of each bay. Naves are varied and contain subtle differences based on the number of aisles and whether the church has a tower or transept. Generally, however, the common elements of the Saxon Gothic architectural style retain clerestory windows between the ribs of the ceiling vaulting and the vault ribs go down onto pillars, which relayed to the floor and are supported via external prop columns. Gothic flying buttresses are not found outside the church which leads to window walls being unobstructed. As in traditional Gothic styles, the light in the church combined with the height and openness was a method of bring the worshiper closer to God.

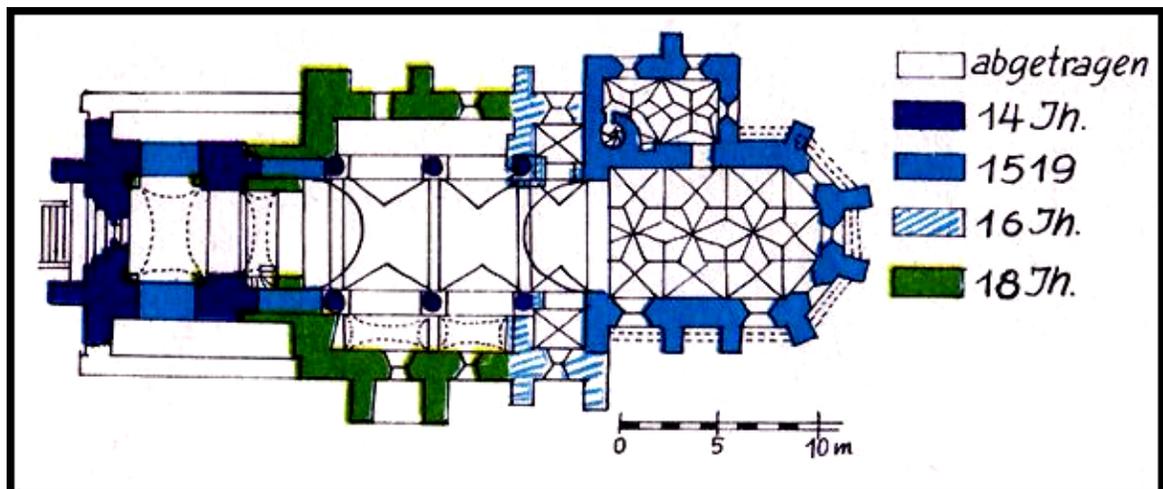


Figure 6.22: Schematic of Copșa Mare church with west tower and three bays of the central nave.

The apse in Saxon churches also provided a heightened sense of depth when proportioned correctly. The 5/8<sup>th</sup> ratio of the apse may have been created for optical effects but most likely it merely distinguished the chancel, evident at Copşa Mare. A more reasonable explanation for the ratio and rounded apse might be that it is also found through out Germany and was brought along with the Saxons. Although the hemispherical apse was the architectural precedent and aspiration in the Romanesque form, the 5/8<sup>th</sup> rounded form was considered as a golden form and was thought to be divine proportions by renaissance builders and was an improvement and reasonable compromise with the Gothic style (Brett, 1989: 29-31; Jeep, 2001: 319, 425, 559). The oldest Romanesque Saxon churches are either towerless or have a west tower, which is opposite the choir. The nave and aisles if present are usually separated by three or four large circular arch arcades opening with groined vaults and secondary apses at the east end of the side aisles. (Fabritius-Dancu, 1979: 130-33)

During the thirteenth century, as the architectural advances of the Gothic period allowed greater and greater openings to be created for cathedral and church windows, the size of arched windows increased until they reached their greatest dimensions. The transition from Romanesque to Gothic architecture tended to be gradual and later in Saxon lands where an open space was to dominate services of village



**Figure 6.23: Velt – ruined nave from the east showing the patron's gallery and blocked up windows above along the west tower wall.**

populations in a communal setting. The three-aisled Gothic hall churches were constructed with the choir or chancel the same height as the nave and aisles. This construction, combined with Gothic vaulting, led to an openness that must have appealed to the Saxons, as it became the dominant style for the next three centuries based on the high number of new churches constructed (Plajer, 2001: 1-3).

## CHAPTER SEVEN

# SETTLEMENT IDENTITIES OF THE FORTIFIED CHURCH

### 7.1 Introduction

When discussing rural settlement, the questions of continuity, adaptation and change over time are central. These settlement identities through the specific examples of the case studies are addressed in detail. The rural Saxon villages of Prejmer and Cristian generally followed the same pattern from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries. With the exception of specific local geographical limitations, the villages generally have similar experiences and development: morphology; architectural comparisons and development; military architectural development; and rural settlement patterns all are considered and examined in the case studies.

The human settlement identities of fortified village churches have two separate but related components: the way in which the land and building space is divided among its inhabitants and the way in which the inhabitants arrange the space within the confines of the complex. The case studies of Prejmer and Cristian identify several examples of distinctive patterns of fortified churches. Normally the form of the fortified church is based on its initial construction and purpose but can change over time. The case studies provide clues as to the development of Saxon settlement identities in Transylvania as each location represents a typical instance of the fortified church, but also includes unique aspects based on other factors as well.

In determining and selecting the individual case study sites for this project, understanding the purpose of and parameters for each selected site is needed. The two fortified churches of Prejmer and Cristian represent different fortification and

architectural building styles; each site represents a different period of construction and Braşov and Sibiu Counties are each represented. Both sites have been studied prior but a complete examination is as yet incomplete. The case study sites have been purposely selected to provide different aspects of fortified church research and study. These sites are not comparable with each other but rather represent examples of numerous other sites within Braşov and Sibiu counties within the timeframe of the study period.

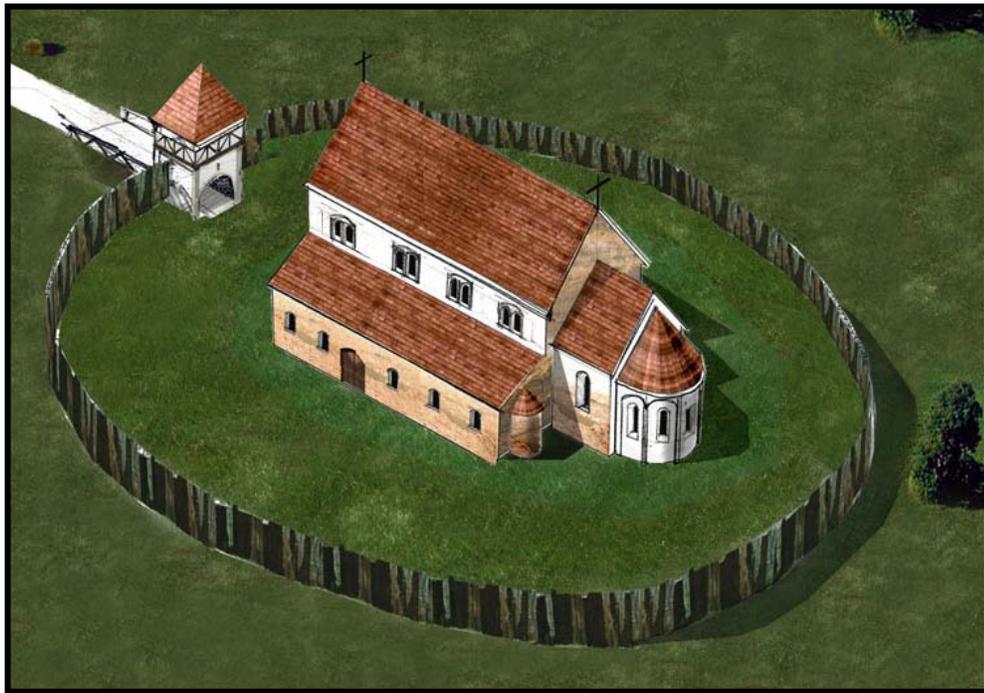
## 7.2 Morphology of the Fortified Church

The churches of the Transylvanian Saxons represent vernacular communal architecture at its best (Rudofsky, 1977: 220). In Braşov and Sibiu Counties these sites have established common and symmetrical traits that can be studied and expanded. These traits generally revolve around the complex central space dedicated to worship and are common to all of the sites. In 1878 Andrew Crosse (1878: 178-9) observed the morphology of Saxon complexes when he stated:

“In every village of the Saxons in the south and east of Transylvania the church is also a fortified place, fitted to maintain a siege if necessary. The construction of these buildings varies according to circumstances: the general character is that the sacred edifice is surrounded, or forms part of a strong wall with its watchtowers; not infrequently a second and even a third wall surround the place. In every case a considerable space of ground is enclosed around the church, sufficient to provide accommodation for the villagers; in fact every family with a house outside had a corresponding hut within the fortified walls. Here, too, was a granary, and some of the larger places had also their school-tower attached to the church. It happened not unfrequently that the villagers were obliged to remain for some weeks in their sanctuary.”

First is the sanctuary, both as a religious and physical place of refuge and protection. These medieval dualist ideas are evident throughout the architecture of all of the sites. The Saxon fortified church complexes emerged as the place for community refuge in time of danger (Rudofsky, 1977: 244). Symbolically, these fortifications seem to also precisely define in a visual manner the defensive limits of the religious complex and space. Locals often say that their lives and spirits are heartened by attending service in the complex (Harrison, 2004: 130-1).

Second, as a frontier settlement, the sites were geographically elevated as they were situated on high ground to be visible to the settlers as well as to be visible to God. The church complex kept the spirits of the people as well as physical protection (Ogden, 2000: 17). These fortified churches were outposts as a bulwark against the Mongols and Turks as the first line of frontier defense of Latin Christendom and the Saxon fortified churches were designed to defend a Christian *limes* along the Carpathian Mountains against these forces (Marian, 2002: 147-8; Rudofsky, 1977: 225; Spinei, 2003: 425). Frontier psychology appears manifest in the type of protective architecture specific for the fortified churches of Transylvania. An all around defense with minimal windows that are shaped by defensive needs not by the requirements to light inner spaces is visibly seen. Entry and access to and inside the precincts is controlled and guarded by defensive elements and occasionally, secret communication systems. The building materials are solid and the architecture is monumental and reduced to essentials.



**Figure 7.01: Computer animated view of a Saxon unfortified Romanesque church from the late twelfth century.**

Third, the unique pattern of the church complex encompasses both the defensive and religious nature of the Transylvanian Saxons. The fortification is an integral component that defines all of the types of Saxon churches. Uniformly, the outer precinct wall is

fortified in one or several belts or the precinct wall and the church itself may be fortified and incorporated into a multi-layered defense (Harrison, 2004: 6-7). Yet the individual element repeats the degree of complexity in relation to the defensive purpose of the complex. In the church, the exterior wall, the patrol course in the church roof, the donjon tower itself, as a rule situated above the narthex, was designed as a final retreat and refuge as well as a communication network between various defense positions. Even the sophisticated locks and doors were integrated into the defensive system, repeating in detail the complexity of the site.



**Figure 7.02: Computer animated view of the same Saxon church in figure 7.01 showing its morphology to a fortified church surrounded by a fortified complex from the fifteenth century.**

For the Saxons along the frontier, it was a natural part of the landscape. Both mentally and physically, the Saxons defined their lives within the site and presence of the fortified structures that Oprescu (1956: 12) said, “Thus, the citadel church represented at the same time a religious abode dedicated to the life of the soul, as well as a civil monument dedicated to the daily material life.” He noted that it was a normal life between the intervals of attacks or while awaiting an invasion, each member of the community prolonged within the life lived “without”. In this way, the sites were seen as a

settlement in time of peace with all that was needed in life and a refuge in war under the protection of God.

This dualism defined the architecture of the Saxon sites throughout their history. Rebuilding or new construction often came as a result of devastation and destruction, and represented the faith and resilience of the Saxons in the landscape. At the same time reconstruction also means the chance of an architectural ‘updating’. Thus the Romanesque gives way to the Gothic and then to later styles. Such spatial transitions add additional elements, and this collection of elements turns a church into a unique collection of Saxon heritage. At the same time the tragedy of such devastation provides the opportunity to add another stratum to the settlement complex with modifications based on special changes in needs and technology. In a morphological sense, construction and destruction are symbiotic and feed off each other. Spatially, we in the present see the 800 year-old process of existence and not a specific single design and construction decision. Today, the unskilled tends to not understand that the architecture has been altered over time for often specific but lost reasons that were sound for those individuals making the decisions at the time.

Saxon communities were commonly dispersed settlements throughout Braşov and Sibiu Counties. While constructing compact center villages in the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries, villages served as a geographical center and an articulated settlement ideal incorporating the benefits of the Saxon identity and privilege (Harrison, 2004: 131). Saxon tradition, settlement ideal, and vision is an interpretation of a range of village landscapes put in context with archaeology data and scholarly texts. The Saxon landscape was shaped by invasions and privileges and the case study sites of Cristian and Prejmer are epitomes of the Saxon settlement ideal. These sites are models for the morphology and constant reconfigurations of Saxon villages during the study period. Whilst not within the scope of this initial study, a thorough and complete case study using modern techniques exemplifies the potential to investigate the social history using scientific and archaeological sophisticated analyses of Saxon church records made possible by the advent of computerization. These techniques and analysis could provide a more consistent case study analysis and more grounds for comparison of the different fortified church arrangement. Determining the relative condition of the fortified church complex

using the legal, religious, and material circumstances would account for the morphology over time in the study area.

Certainly the medieval circumstances in Transylvania had a seminal morphological influence on the Saxon settlement landscape much like James Vance (1977: 8-11) describes in his contemporary urban landscape in America where they formed various urban sites, which had complex and subtle economic, social, and political relationships with one another. Among these settlement experiences and influences, the Saxon fortified church complex, has a special standing in Saxon cultural history and geography. In the collective Saxon mind, the Saxon village with fortified church complex represented a new beginning or second chance. It is, according to Oprescu (1961: 5-9), the archetype of medieval settlement, standing for continuity in an uncertain world on the edge of Latin Christendom in a time of strict religious, economic, political and social discipline, and stability. The idea of a frugal, thrifty, industrious, and hardworking Saxon laboring to subdue the wild reaches of Transylvania and establish a landscape of wealthy, self sustaining communities was an idea perpetuated until the fall of communism in Romania in 1989 (Harrison, 2004: 131).

The Saxon village was the setting for an emboldened people who settled a wild and pagan land, making it as an expression of the geographical iconography of the Saxon Nation and political independence in the middle ages. As discussed in previous chapters, the Saxons maintained independent ecclesiastical societies, academies, and schools, giving them a quality of cultivation and discernment: the village church school-house and the village church are the monuments of Saxon identity and independence. It could be argued that the village was the high point in Saxon social and political evolution prior to the Augsburg Confession and conversion to Protestantism (Leppin, 2005: 10-13). This utopian community has been viewed as a symbolic landscape that carries connotations of continuity, as the cultural ideal of a place-seated, pastoral community.

Historians and geographers have conventionally defined the village; as a nucleated settlement in which inhabitants were linked by a set of complex interpersonal relationships (Rutman, 1986: 163-9). This perspective, in which settlement form and social organization were intimately interconnected, is important to be certain, but as conventionally expressed it confuses sentiment and settlement, failing to appreciate the

material nature of the place as both shaped by and shaper of those social relationships (Wood, 1991: 34-5).

In Braşov and Sibiu Counties, the transitional timeframe of the study period was an era of great change. In Transylvania, the formation and implementations of Hungarian land claims, the introduction of Christianity, the emergence of a monetary economy and towns are, together with an increasing population, the most prominent political, societal and economical changes of the period. For the Saxons, this transitional period corresponds from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries.

Archaeological and historical research in Braşov and Sibiu counties concerning rural settlement has also brought to light major changes in this period. In short, the Saxon settlement pattern is characterized by settlements that seldom changed their location within limited areas followed by a period that was characterized by the stable nucleated medieval village. Research by Fabritius-Dancu (1980) Fabini and Fabini (2003) and Nussbächer (1996) have contributed much to this picture, but many other researchers have tackled the question of the transition from one system to another and its significance in the history of the period from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries.

The case studies represent sites with a history of continuous development amid gradual changes and regional variations over time. This continuity for the purpose of the study is to examine the fortified church complex and not the surrounding village and territory. At Prejmer and Cristian, limited archaeological and substantial historical research has made great progress. The village morphology has been examined by other scholars such as Juliana Fabritius-Dancu (1980) and George Oprescu (1961) using a retrogressive analysis of maps and surveys in the written record along with the source records and archaeology where possible. The case studies explore the development of the village and fortified church complex backwards as far as possible. Through this approach it should be possible to gain information from the study period landscape, but also to use reconstructions as a basis for bringing together archaeological, historical and linguistic sources into their common spatial context.

The case studies are focused on continuity to understand the links throughout the period. Saxon villages and fortified church complexes were not static but changed and adapted throughout the period. The case studies are thus not to show that the sixteenth

century fortified church was identical with the thirteenth century church, but rather to follow the dynamics of change over time backwards to the initial construction and purpose. Developing a retrogressive analysis using the combination of different facts such as crop rotations, field divisions, settlement arrangements, physical structures and remains, field-names, land-use and soil quality lead to conclusions that combined with the interpretations of the reconstructions, other historical and archaeological sources brought into the analysis of the case studies indicate that the topic is indeed complex and unfinished.

The case study area consists of two sites within the larger area of Braşov and Sibiu Counties covered by the project as a whole. These two sites-settlements have a long and relatively complete history. There is evidence of continuous settlement through all of the study period and up to the present. Archaeologically the area is not well investigated. Although they are almost equal in size, the site of Prejmer consists of an un-fortified church in an extensive fortified church complex and the site at Cristian consists of a fortified church in a fortified complex and both complexes lie within the central zone of the village.

In both case study sites, the village ownership was mixed, and no village was totally dominated by a single owner. Village farms varied in size and there are no signs that they had earlier been equal in size or capability. Around 1700 the fields were divided according to medieval principles. In most villages it is possible to recognize the hides division. In some of the villages the hides covered almost all the fields. In other cases the core area of the infields was divided differently. In these cases morphological and metrological differences between the core area and the periphery are also distinguishable. In no case did the hides reach the tofts, although they were part of the commonly-enclosed fields. This could be interpreted as different chronological stages of organization and reorganization.

For this study, fortified church complex morphology is assessed in terms of three zones; i.e. the central church building, auxiliary buildings, and precinct wall / defensive periphery. It is in this reference that the case studies have been framed to focus on the settlement identity of the fortified church. Saxon villages, in general, had been insular and self-contained, but the recent reordering and government intrusion after World War I

and World War II brought in radical changes in the social, political and economic fabric of these village communities. The study of the Saxon church morphology is about understanding the fortified complex and how the different components of the complex are interrelated and connected. While the use of terms over time is problematic especially when spanning several centuries it is still acceptable and indeed preferred when constructing case studies. In any study of Saxon fortified church complexes, settlement interest extends from the church and outlying clusters created by human activity. The church patterns, the overall distribution of these churches within the landscape can lead to determining what combinations of factors including, natural, cultural and economic in fact created each particular church site.

### 7.3 Architectural Comparisons and Development

The architectural development of Saxon structures during the study period has two aspects represented here; one is worldly or human, and one side is the religious or divine. Saxon architectural development closely follows a delicate balance between the two seeming contradictory worlds. Religiously, Saxon structures reveal God's plan of infinite wisdom, justice, and mercy in the order of space and the eternal happiness of mankind. In the worldly sphere, the church architecture is a sort of biography of the Saxon race, and the gradual development, of all its physical, intellectual, and moral forces to its eternal rewards and punishments.

These ideas of church architecture were incorporated into the construction of these churches. For example, an archaeological investigation by Drew Pinter (2002: 143469.05) confirmed the existence of a Saxon church apse that dates from the late-twelfth century. With an



Figure 7.03: Saxon church apse excavation in Sibiu from the twelfth century.

interior diameter of 7.20 meters, wall thickness of 0.90 to 1.20 m the uncovered structure parallels characteristics and dimensions of other Saxon churches in Sibiu County.

This architectural development of the Saxon fortified church history recognizes the service to God and the Saxon community. The development attempts to place the church in a local and social context and then endeavor to appreciate the church as a human institution. It is a narrative and interpretation of the church's development and a candid analysis of its changing circumstances. Because this history is the spatial history of a people and a congregation, church architecture presents a collective portrait and does not glorify individuals.

Architectural characteristics of fortified church are typical of the timeframe in which they are created. From the Romanesque to Gothic, the basic floor plan of the church followed that particular building style. In a few cases, especially those structures originally built as Romanesque, the Gothic elements are decorative rather than structural.

Built of local rough-hewn stone, in tones of brown and grey, the facades of Saxon churches tend to be symmetrical, a characteristic of both Romanesque and early Gothic. The Saxon Gothic churches are dominated by a square west bell tower and a west portal entry door, pointed arched or lancet windows in the towers. As an example, the Asylum or Spital church investigations at Sibiu revealed the traces of the oldest Saxon wooden building construction yet found. Malformed skeletal remains documented the burial areas of the church (figure 7.04) and revealed the symmetrical external plan of the complex (Pinter and Tiplic, 2002: 143469.03).

The case studies of Cristian and Prejmer show how the architectural changes in the fortified complexes occurred in response to changing

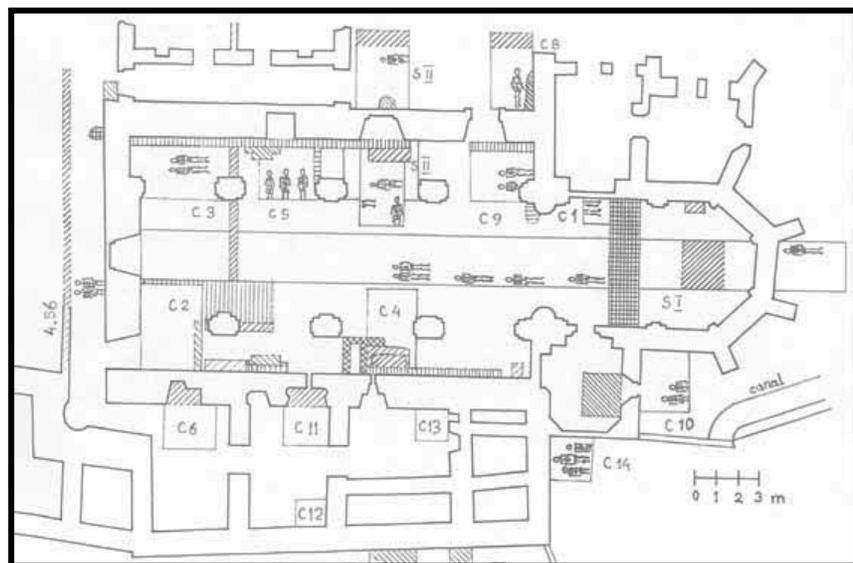


Figure 7.04: Spital church schematic showing burial locations and symmetrical plan of the structure.

liturgical and defensive needs of the villages from the thirteenth through the sixteenth centuries. The original plans built in late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries reflected a Saxon communal interior design, which satisfied the heart of worship at that time. During this period, the main focus of the worship was the mass and the spoken word. Therefore, architecturally, the central focuses of these sites were the choirs and aisles. The Romanesque three aisle church style was the prominent design of most of the churches in the areas where the Saxons migrated from. Because the Eucharist was not the central act of worship during this period, there was no need to design a space in which the central focus would be the altar or the Eucharist. Later, the exterior design of Saxon churches sought to distinguish themselves from the neighboring Hungarian and Romanian churches. In the period leading to the sixteenth century, Saxon churches in Transylvania had developed from the Romanesque style to the adaptation of Gothic hall church architecture, particularly influenced by the defensive requirements with the pending threat from the Turks. Spatially, the Saxons made the choice of adapting limited decorative gothic elements and state of the art defensive elements, allowing them to develop an architecturally distinct identity from the rest of Europe with the possible exception of southern France (Bonde, 1994).

For the Saxons, a major change in celebration of the liturgy can be seen from the architectural change which took place after the Reformation. Removal of and redesign of church elements reflected the change in the focus of the liturgy from the sermon to the Eucharistic celebration. Placement of the choir and organ in relation to the chancel area continued to be a traditional architectural arrangement of medieval liturgical spaces. The replacement of the altar against the back wall, and addition of the carved wooden triptych (figure 7.26) served to refocus the architectural space on the liturgical emphasis of the Eucharist.



**Figure 7.05: Cristian pulpit dating from the Reformation.**

These changes were motivated by the theology transition resulting from the Augsburg Confession and the subsequent adoption of the Lutheran faith. This system of thought was developed and promoted by the Saxon Nation. The theologians of the Saxon Nation valued the influences of Protestant worship on religious architecture and ritual as the true embodiment of the teaching of the church (Leppin, 2005: 8-10). Their philosophy reflected the Protestant worship beliefs, and the design of churches emphasized close proximity between the congregation and the minister. To this end, Saxon Protestant architecture would over time develop the pulpit space, which was often framed by a side niche or podium. Other characteristics included galleries along the sides and back, omission of side aisles, and natural light from clerestory windows. These characteristics were evident in the plan of the churches built or rebuilt after the Reformation. Today, many Saxon churches represent a prime example of Gothic hall styles that embodies in their history the sixteenth century dialogue between pre-reformation and post-reformation architecture (Zach, 2005: 70-1).

#### 7.4 Military Architectural Development

The texture of Saxon settlements was dominated by the church. Initially, this was ordinarily based on the spatial characteristics of the period when it was erected. Most often, the church was situated within a sacred space defined as such by a central location within the village on high ground. In 1395, the first organized forays of Turkish forces entered Transylvania. Throughout the next century, faced with this Turkish threat, the Saxons erected sophisticated urban defense



Figure 7.06: Cristian church centered in the village.

systems. Having fewer options, the villages adopted another solution, based on a fortified point defense, capable of protecting the life and most precious assets of the community (Rudofsky, 1977: 224-5).

The church was the logical and ready made solution to how the village could shelter the entire population of the village. As a result, the fortified church complex was altered so as to be used as a refuge in case of an attack. By the late fifteenth century, the church also presented an additional advantage in relation to the pattern of Turkish inroads. Similar to the Mongols of the mid-thirteenth century, small and extremely mobile groups, the Turks charged so fast that it was impossible for the villagers to withdraw to a fortified place situated at a distance from the settlement. Lying at the core of the village, the church location represented therefore a point easy of access in a relatively short amount of time (Ogden, 2000: 18-9).



**Figure 7.07: Merghindeal fortified church with typical double defensive towers.**

The means used to fortify the churches were not uniform. The Saxons used several principles that varied based on terrain and circumstance to fortify every component of the church. Thus, the belfry, traditionally situated in the western part of the church was turned into a defensive tower with ports for firing arrows / arms and a watch course. In its

turn, the choir was sometimes raised or elevated and reinforced as a defensive tower. In other situations, based on the geography, the fortification of the choir was doubled by the defense level built over the altar, with ports and loopholes. The churches were often provided with two defensive towers — the former belfry in the west and a newly erected tower above the choir. Finally, there are also numerous examples when all the three major volumetric components, the belfry, the narthex part and the altar apse were transformed, a unique and comprehensive defense level often existing across the extrados of the vault in the median part of the church.

### 7.5 Case Study of Cristian (Sibiu County) Fortified Church and Complex

**Figure 7.08:**  
Cristian complex  
from the southwest  
along the Cibin  
River.



The Saxons, who built and kept the church ensembles from the thirteenth century till 1989, gave birth

to some of the most important personalities in Saxon Transylvanian history and culture. Due to their efforts, the medieval village of Cristian came to exercise great influence in the Saxon lands especially in guilds, crafts and architecture. The complex consists of the church, chapter house and Saxon school within the setting. The church complex has interconnected towers and gates, which developed as one architectural whole around a chapter house courtyard. The church and church complex became important prototypes, which marked the development of architecture throughout Saxon lands in Sibiu County and beyond. The village of Cristian (Romanian) is also known as Großau (German) and Kereszténysziget (Hungarian).

### 7.5.1 Location and Geography

The Saxon village of Cristian is located some ten kilometers west of Sibiu along highway E68 and along the bank of the Cibin River. The fortified church and complex is in the center of the village along the left bank of the river. Cristian's latitude is 45°78'30" N and longitude is 24°03'30" E. The elevation of the village is approximately 449 meters above sea level. Cristian was one of the larger settlements in the Sibiu area. The Geography of the area was rolling hills with fast moving rivers and streams fed from the southern Carpathians. The topography of the area is indicative of a natural farming region with all of the necessary means to make a successful settlement.

### 7.5.2 Site History and Chronology

Archaeology has confirmed the presence of a rural Roman settlement from the second century at the site. Little documentation survives from the thirteenth century due to numerous fires and war. However, in 1223 a surviving document mentioned the village of *Insula Cristianâ* as the first recording of Cristian (Zimmermann, 1892: 27).

Throughout the fourteenth century, the village grew in importance and wealth and surviving records indicate that

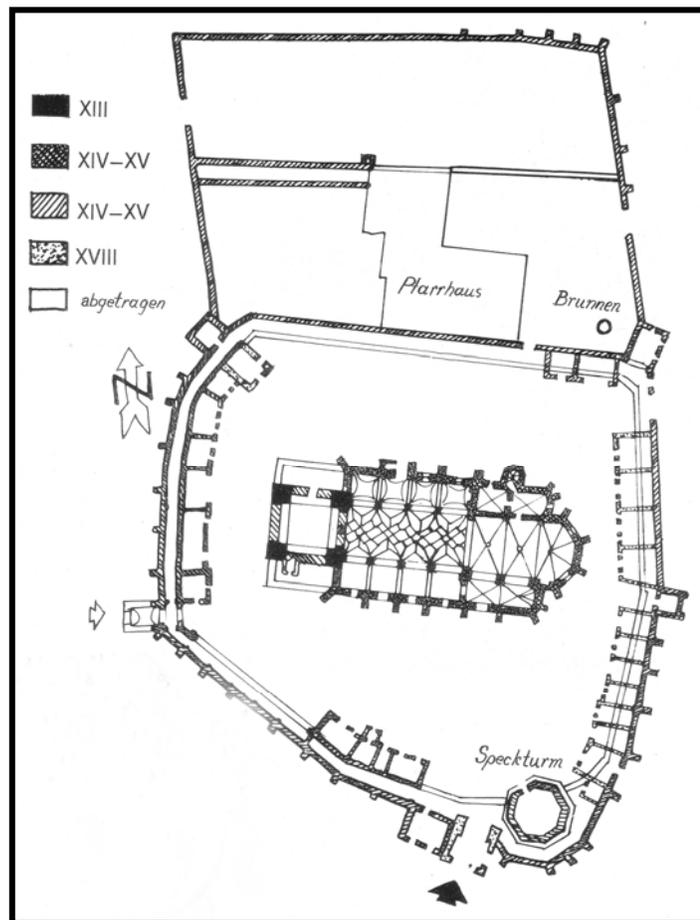


Figure 7.09: Schematic detail of the Cristian complex showing the southern and western entrances.

four nobles living in Sibiu originally lived in Cristian and were mentioned by name in a 1323 document (Zimmermann, 1892: 374). Local municipal records list several nobles between 1332 and 1329. These documents indicate a powerful group of nobles involved with Saxon affairs lived in Cristian. By 1359 a judge of the village was also a member of the Saxon Nation court. A peace treaty between Saxons and Romanians was signed in Cristian in 1383 (Werner, 1900: 58-9, 174, 564-6).

In the fifteenth century, Cristian continued to grow and develop into an influential village in Sibiu County. In 1449, Cristian fixed the boundaries between itself and the neighboring village of Orlat (Gündisch, 1983b: 282). By 1468, the village had acquired town status with over 200 homes and was the second largest community in the chapter after Heltau (Anonymous, 1886: 26). The Romanian settlement of Gura Raului was awarded to Cristian in 1476 and demonstrated the influence and status of a town in the Saxon lands (Zimmermann, 1892: 85-7). The town was completely burned by the Turks in 1493 and all except the church complex was lost (Nussbächer, 1994: 83).

The sixteenth century continued to be a time of turmoil and strife. The advancing Turks heavily influenced Cristian and the surrounding Saxon settlements in Sibiu County. A local named Bojaren Dragan incited an army mutiny in Cristian in 1529. Records are unclear as to the nature of the mutiny or as to the origins of the army in question. While it is clear that the army was not a Saxon force, it could have been one of the Walachia armies that were in the area during the time frame (Teutsch, 1925: 227-8). Cristian did change its allegiance to Prince Zápolya in 1531 and this was followed by relative calm and peace for most of the mid-sixteenth century (Müller and Müller, 1881: 291-9). Local boundary disputes were somewhat common for this period between local villages. The first dispute between Cristian and Turnișor was settled by the Saxon Nation in 1548 followed by later disputes between Săliște and Cristian and then Ruscior. All of these cases were over the settling of boundaries of communal lands where the village or town had interest. The Saxon Nation influenced but rarely officially intervened between the municipalities (Csallner, 1906: 37; Csallner, 1908: 114). The plague followed by a Cholera epidemic occurred in 1553 whereas the town erected a plague monument within the church complex. In 1592, the Transylvanian Parliament met in the church complex led by Prince Steven Báthori. The end of the century saw civil strife when soldiers of a

Prince Michael killed the local minister named Matthias Heintzius in the church vestry in



**Figure 7.10: Cristian church tower revealing remaining Romanesque elements and construction.**

1599 (Henning, 1940: 46-7; Teutsch, 1925: 344). In 1608 Prince Gabriel Báthori attempted to consolidate power and pacify the countryside. In 1610 he surprised and occupied Cristian with some 20,000 soldiers, using the village as a

base for forays into the Danube plain (Roth, 2006: 87-92).

The seventeenth century records were lost and only fragmentary documents remain from the early part of the century. In 1631 the town was burned and the cause was unknown. In 1658, the main Ottoman Army left Alba Julia and Sibiu County. Sometime afterward, an altercation between Turkish troops, Romanians and Saxons resulted in a drunken brawl and the burning of the church. Saxon records from Sibiu indicate that the Romanians – possibly supporting the Turks- took the complex and burned the donjon tower with some Saxons inside. Afterward, the Romanians then burned the entire town and church complex down. Most of the town records were lost in the fire. The town was rebuilt and by 1690 the Transylvania Assembly again met in Cristian and proclaimed Emner Toekoely as the Prince of Transylvania (Henning, 1940: 47-8; Kröner, 2003: 68).

The eighteenth century began with an attack on the town by marauding Kurgans. They plundered homes and farms but did not attack the fortified complex in the center of town. By 1721 most of the homes were made of stone but only 73 were inhabited and 32 were abandoned. Protestants from Austria emigrated to the town in 1734, 1735 and between 1752 and 1756 (Henning, 1940: 49).

Records concerning the town in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were all lost during World War II. With the exception of the tax record from Sibiu of the construction of the Protestant community center in 1898 no other known records survive.

### 7.5.3 Building Construction and Framework

The church dates from the thirteenth century and was constructed as a three aisle Romanesque church with a west tower. The church was dedicated to St. Severus and first mentioned in a correspondence in 1444 (Gündisch, 1983a: 130-1) . In 1480 the church signed a contract with one Andreas Lapidica from Sibiu to remodel and repair the church. He completed his work in 1495 in the late Gothic-style (Kröner, 2003: 68; Vatasianu, 1959a: 534). Through his work, the east end of the church has three parallel choirs where the side choirs are opened and connected to the main central choir through large Gothic arches. The 18.3 m long nave consists of four rectangular connected vault sections that is a sexpartite ribbed vault supported by columns. The choirs have ribbed cross vaults supported by corbelled pillars (figure 7.30). The nave and choir have high Gothic arched windows without any tracery (Müller, 1857: 267). Lapidica also worked on the church at Mediaş where letters were found referring to the church at Cristian (Fabini, 1977: 32).



Figure 7.11: West tower detail of Cristian Romanesque door elements.

In 1570 the vestry was built along the north side choir. This was the last major construction phase of the church other than periodic repairs in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries.



**Figure 7.12:** Cristian Rococo organ still in use dating from 1719.

The fortification complex began in 1500 and the main entrance to the complex was through the south gate tower with a secondary entrance through the west gate tower. The precinct double wall construction was in the shape of an irregular pentagon with the distance between walls approximately three meters. Square defensive towers were built along approaches to the complex and shooting loopholes were installed along the walls (Oprescu, 1961: 25). In 1550 two forecourts north of the complex were constructed and stables built inside the walls. A large octagonal tower was

**Figure 7.13:** Southeast octagonal Tower used to smoke meats.

The square bell tower walls are 2.7 m thick and 11 m high. The round Romanesque windows were bricked up in 1495 and the upper floors of the tower were fortified with battlements. An upper floor had two Gothic arched windows that overlooked the church roof. The tower was heavily damaged in an 1802 earthquake and subsequently repaired. The church contains a baroque altar from 1719 and a stone baptismal font that dates from the same time period. The church continues to use the Rococo style organ that was installed in 1776.





**Figure 7.14: Cristian interior western precinct wall and east tower as seen from the church.**

built in the inner wall along the south-east side of the complex next to the river bank (figure 7.13). Recently, the inner walls in the north and east have been demolished whilst the western gate tower was undermined by the Cibin River and collapsed. Again, According to George Oprescu (1961: 24-5) the church complex resembles that of Heltau in construction and style.

#### **7.5.4 Archaeological Data and Archival Sources**

In describing and evaluating the archaeological evidence of Cristian, the site itself is defined in two segments; the northern subdivision encloses a rectangular precinct with squared corners containing the chapterhouse, well and stables; the older southern section is somewhat circular– more precisely oblong trapezoidal – in shape. Here, the central complex encompassed the church and group of attached storage rooms with open space enclosed by a double precinct wall (figs. 7.14 and 7.16).

An archaeological excavation by Dr. Steinburg (1883-4: 11759) and noted by Walter Horvath (1931: 83-6) determined that the church was originally thirteenth century Romanesque with remaining elements consisting of: the lower floor of the tower, several



**Figure 7.15: Cristian interior with Gothic hall elements.**

bays with arches along the side aisles and traces of a semicircular window (figure 7.10). The remainder of the church was modified into late Gothic style. The double existent walls and fortifications were one unit and constructed during the third building phase in 1500. The material and thickness of the walls, the filling material and the finds in the church tower are the same or very similar. All contained river stones, pottery shards and broken clay tiles fragments. The floors of the towers were of stone slabs or tamped dirt but the location of a blacksmith's workshop is as yet unproven. Remaining ceramics recovered in 1884 consist of a clay cup that has yet to be dated and other small

undetermined finds located in the Sibiu Museum –inventory numbers; 5307, 13199, 13203. The excavation bibliography, materials and all appendices have been lost.

The second archaeological excavation at Cristian occurred in 2004 (Anonymous, 2004a) and focused on a Roman era settlement in the second and third century near the church complex. Major archival sources include (Dragut, 1979; Fabini, 1998; Fabritius-Dancu, 1983a; Gerster and Rill, 1997; Henning, 1940; Kröner, 2003; Lenk, 1839b; Oprescu, 1961; Roth and Alexander Rosemann, *et al.*, 1934; Teutsch, 1862; Teutsch, 1925; Vatasianu, 1959a; Wagner, 1977; Werner, 1900; Zimmermann, 1892).

**Figure 7.16: Remnants of the double precinct wall along the east side of the complex as Cristian.**



## 7.6 Case Study of Prejmer (Braşov County) Fortified Church and Complex

Prejmer's fortified precinct walls and early Gothic church is one of the best surviving examples of Saxon medieval fortified church complexes (Harrison, 2004: 7, 130-1). Closely connected with the complex in Feldioara and the Cistercian abbey of Cîrţa (Oprescu, 1961: 12); Prejmer dates from the time of the Teutonic Knights, and many of the details of the church are believed to be based on Teutonic Knight construction practices. The oval outer precinct wall, enclosed by an eight meter wide moat, was up to 12 m high and 4.5 m thick at the base with gate towers, barbican, and forecourt. Inside the fastened complex are more than 250 multistoried supply and living quarters where the villagers would flee in times of need (Rudofsky, 1977: 225). The Prejmer village and surrounding farmsteads were destroyed 50 times by Mongols, Turks, Valachs, and the Cossacks. The fortified church itself was captured only twice and never destroyed (Rudofsky, 1977: 221-5). Extensions of the castle complex in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries strengthened the complex even further. In 1962 and again in 1970 extensive repair work took place and since 1992 Germans from the Munich area have supported the upkeep and restoration of the complex and have applied for addition to the



Figure 7.17: Prejmer complex from the south west with barbican and entrance on the right.

UNESCO list of the world cultural heritage sites. The village of Prejmer (Romanian) is also known as Tautlau (German) and Prázsmár (Hungarian).

### 7.6.1 Location and Geography

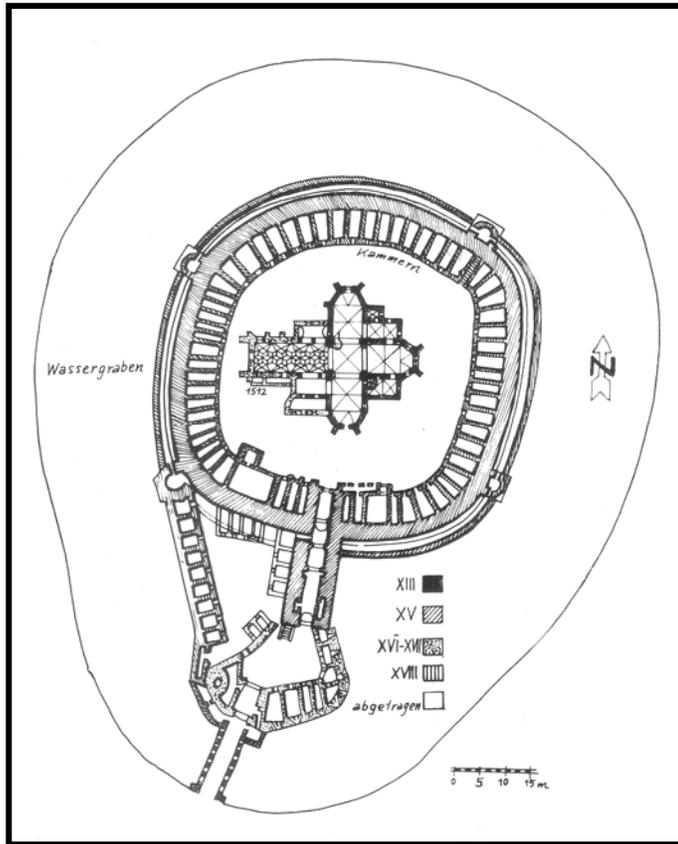


Figure 7.18: Schematic of Prejmer church and complex.

Prejmer is located 9 kilometers northeast of Braşov, latitude is 45°71'70" N, longitude is 25°76'70" E. Elevation is approximately 519 meters above sea level. The church utilizes the slightly sloping high ground east along the E577 highway toward Sfântu Gheorghe to provide long range observation of the surrounding countryside in all directions. Prejmer is the southeastern most German settlement in Transylvania; along with Braşov and Hărman, it formed the southern border of the German settlements in Transylvania.

### 7.6.2 Site History and Chronology

Prejmer has a confirmed history of human habitation, beginning with Bronze Age cultures; the site was also inhabited by Dacians, Romans and an unconfirmed post-Roman people prior to the twelfth century. A Bronze Age site and Roman coin cache was discovered in 1876 and artifacts from the Schneckenberg culture were discovered and added to in 1996 (Costea, 1996a: 41676.02, 41676.03). Post-Roman remains were



**Figure 7.19: Prejmer portcullis dating from 1501 with original iron strapping.**

determined to consist of semi-rectangular huts with tools and pottery fragments (Costea, 1996a: 41676.05). The documented settlement history of Prejmer dates from the thirteenth century. The Andreium in 1211 first noted the border of the Teutonic Knights as the river Tortillou where Prejmer is located and draws its German name of Tautlau. In 1213, the village of Prejmer was first mentioned as an outpost of the German Teutonic Knights under King Andrew II of Hungary (Zimmermann, 1892: 12). It was not until 1240 that Prejmer was again mentioned as a part of King Belá IV's authorization of the four Búrzenland villages of Feldioara, Sînpetru, Hărman and Prejmer to be put under the control of the Cistercian order.

The villages were ordered to pay a silver Mark annually to the Cistercians for each chapter house and forbidden to build any additional churches, chapels, alters or cemeteries. The village was burned in 1278 and records indicate it was an act of arson (Kröner, 2003:49; Zimmermann, 1892: 19, 64-8).

In the fourteenth century, Prejmer developed from a Teutonic Knight outpost into a settlement of sizable importance. Documents from 1360 noted the importance of the village elders in affairs of the Saxons and in relations with the Székely villages north of Prejmer. Examples of this growing importance were the integration rather than the subordination of the Prejmer court and legal system with the courts of Braşov and other Búrzenland municipalities in 1377 (Zimmermann, 1892: 75, 479).

The fifteenth century saw the expansion of the importance of Prejmer both physically and politically. This importance was instrumental in the improvement and expansion of the complex and village as well as the transfer of the village to new ownership several times throughout the century. In 1409, the Pope ordered the church and lands of Prejmer transferred from the Cistercian Monastery at Cîrţa to one son of Simon (Teutsch, 1900: 99). The sale was witnessed in 1415 (Müller, 1906: 665) but finalized in 1420 under

another name who was one Nikolaus from Tortelaw of the B rzenland district (G ndisch, 1983a: 131). Documents from the early to mid-fourteenth century indicate that the village was growing in importance as numerous records provide insight as to the village's political strength and influence. Among the most important events was the settling of border claims with neighboring villages and various recorded judgments that were favorable between village elders and Braşov town councilors over rights and trade (G ndisch, 1983b: 212, 288, 595).



**Figure 7.20: Prejmer modified barbican interior as seen from the south.**

By 1454, the village and church was owned and deeded to a noble named Thilmanus Nicolai de Neen and his family and heirs. De Neen was from nearby Teliu (Kreuzburg) and the village elders from Prejmer evidently feared losing their independence to another village. From the documents of 1454, it is evident that a rift between the elders of Prejmer and this noble family of Teliu was a serious political issue. On one occasion Teliu was ordered to pay some 100 gold guilders for damages incurred in an incident relating to crops and a dam Teliu put upstream on the Tatrau River (G ndisch, 1987: 448). In 1466, another controversy over this same dam erupted between Prejmer and the village of Dob rl u some twelve kilometers to the northeast in present day Covsna County. Records indicate that Prejmer was asserting that the dam in question was damaging forest, meadows, and fishing downstream in Prejmer's territory. The complaint and case went all the way to King Matthias for judgment, and he ruled the

same year that the dam had to be modified or removed so as not to obstruct the river (Gündisch, 1987: 263). These incidents seem to verify the importance and political strength of the village during the mid-fifteenth century. Prejmer continued to win court cases in the late-fifteenth century of which two stand out as prime examples. In 1469, Steven the Great, Prince of Moldova successfully held Prejmer as a legal claim in order to force Braşov to pay off some debts owed to him, and in 1471, Prejmer was designated a market town (Gündisch, 1987: 373, 483). By 1484, Prejmer became embroiled in another court action to prevent the inhabitants of a village called Tatrangbach – which no longer exists today – from setting up a mill operation in the village. Voivode Stephan Báthori sided with Prejmer, and the mill was not built (Csallner, 1930: 351; Gündisch, 1989: 371).

The sixteenth century began with Prejmer buying, in 1501, a house opposite the fortified church complex. The house belonged to the Adeis family, and the purchase was approved by the king as long as the house was restored. The fact that documents show that King Ladislaus II was personally involved lends weight to the importance of the town at that time (Csallner, 1930: 39). Over the next decade, Prejmer was involved with several disputes with neighboring Teliu and Budila. Records indicate



Figure 7.21: Prejmer individual communal storage area.

that the cases most often involved border claims over forests between the villages. In 1508 and 1509, Prejmer has brought a case to the Saxon Nation for judgment, and the court has appointed judges from Braşov to conduct the court in Prejmer. The Transylvanian Voivode Johann Zăpolya split the decision and awarded the forest in dispute between Prejmer and Budila to Prejmer forever and the forest area in dispute between Teliu and Prejmer to Teliu. Accordingly, this was the first time on record that Prejmer had lost a land claim.

The size of Prejmer in 1510 was large for a market town at the time. Records show that the village had some 230 landlords, 4 new settlers, 11 widows, 8 soldiers, 3 millers, 1 clockmaker, 12 shepherds, and 6 servants. The town tax records listed 16 abandoned plots, a school, church, and complex and a common pasture (Teutsch and Teutsch, 1899: 229). The Béldy family from Teilu continued to own property and influence in Prejmer. Sometime in 1511, the Prejmer elders complained to Voivode Johann Zăpolya that Paul Béldy was abusing the village and violating the land agreement between the town and villages over the disputed woodland. Interestingly, a relative, Peter Béldy was murdered in 1513, and Prejmer was blamed for his death. For the next decade various court battles ensued with the outcome finally resolved in the 1530s when Prejmer bought out the Béldy family for 100 guilders but never admitted guilt for the death of Peter Béldy (Nussbächer, 1981: 304).

In 1529, Prejmer was attacked when Romanian Prince, Voivode Petru Rare invaded the Bărzenland and burned the town. The town fortified church complex was used by Voivode Johann Zăpolya against the Romanians, and money was provided for strengthening the site defenses. In 1552 the Romanians destroyed the precinct wall and burned the complex down except for the church itself (Anonymous, 1886: 53, 107, 514).

As was common in the medieval period, fires ravaged the town during the latter half of the Sixteenth century. Especially severe fires raged in 1561, 1562, and again in 1571. During the 1561 fire, the church complex also burned and was heavily damaged. At the same time, records show that the town was becoming wealthier and in 1556 could pay the minister and schoolmaster an annual salary. In 1586 Transylvanian Voivode Báthori moved in and set up his headquarters in the church complex at Prejmer. Several years later, in 1599, the troops of the Romanian Voivode Michael the Brave captured the town

but were unable to take the church and complex. Unfortunately, according to the records, the attack was so swift and sudden that many of the townspeople were not able to take refuge in the complex and were captured and killed (Anonymous, 1886: 54, 433).

The seventeenth century continued to witness the periodic battles between the Romanians and Saxons in the area of Prejmer. The village was fought over continuously between 1600 and 1610. Numerous accounts verify atrocities and deaths throughout the period. Villages were laid waste, burned down, and villagers had their eyes put out as a favorite tactic of the Romanians who did not outright kill those they captured (Anonymous, 1886: 65, 164, 343).

In September, 1611 the region faced a new threat that was to consume the area for the next century. The Turks again invaded and were so mobile that at Prejmer they took some 80 townspeople prisoners that failed to seek refuge in the church complex fast enough. The town fell but the church and complex held out against the Turks. With the withdrawal of the Turks, Prejmer again became embroiled with internal Saxon class uprisings as well as continued fighting between the Romanians and Saxons. For the rest of the century, Prejmer would face fires, attacks and devastation (Anonymous, 1886: 27, 55-6). To add to the problems of the town, in 1653, the town lost another legal battle against the Bélydy family and was fined some 15,000 guilders to be paid to the family and an additional 5,000 guilders fine that was to be



**Figure 7.22: Prejmer unfortified church in the form of a Greek cross with central octagonal tower and Gothic elements.**

paid to the Braşov treasury. Records are unclear as to the nature of the incident or if in fact the village actually paid the judgment. It is however, an extraordinarily large amount of money for the time and indicates the wealth of the town (Anonymous, 1886: 344).

The later half of the seventeenth century was a time when the Turks again besieged the town on numerous occasions. In 1658 a force of Turks, Moldovans, Valachs, and

Cossacks attacked the Bürzenland burning and pillaging as they went. They attacked Prejmer in 1662 and 1663 demanding food, and cattle, and then decided to use the town as a base of operations even though they did not capture the fortified church complex (Horwath, 1929b: 561). The Austrians arrived in 1688 for the first time and set up command of the region in Prejmer. These events help illustrate the importance of the town even though it was physically much smaller than Braşov and more remote.

In the early eighteenth century, the Kurgans attacked, plundered and burned the town. They took a local judge prisoner and ransomed him off for gold. In 1718 -19, the town was visited by the plague that devastated the population and records indicate that some 181 homes were left uninhabited (Anonymous, 1886: 70, 255) . Fires and the plague continued to visit the town through the century but especially hard years were 1756, 1758, 1765 and in 1767. The first local history of the town was written in 1755 by the town minister, but the document is lost today and in 1793 a notary was employed by the town (Anonymous, 1886: 65-8) .

The nineteenth century was Prejmer's the most stable century when the town opened a municipal land registry in 1832 and hired the town's first physician, one Franz Navara, who was fully employed and paid by the town (Anonymous, 1915: 189). Cholera struck in 1848 and in 1864 a new weekly market privilege was awarded. The town opened a post office in 1862 followed by a pharmacy in 1867 and then closed out the century by installing public lighting with gas lamps in 1886 (Anonymous, 1918: 102,4,6-8).

The twentieth century, sometimes known as the bloodiest century in history and may be debated, but it was definitely a dramatic and tumultuous time for Prejmer. The village like almost all of the Saxon towns and villages has monuments to the fallen of the Great War. Saxon men from all of the villages were deployed along the front lines and served in the Austro-Hungarian Army, mostly along the Italian and Romanian front. The loss of life from Prejmer was not exceptional from the averages that the Saxon Nation lost but in a real sense, it devastated the town. After the war the Saxons found themselves a part of the nation of Romanian, and the 800 year relationship with Hungary was severed. Prejmers' attempt at normalcy was short lived but productive throughout the 1920s and 1930s. The treaty of Trianon in 1920 was the beginning of the end of the Saxon Nation communal land system and the funds that supported the Saxon parochial school system.

This system that was taught in German was a fundamental building block that kept the Saxon culture alive for centuries.

When the victorious Romanians voted in 1918 to allow total national freedom including education, administration and administration of justice in its own language, by their own people in Transylvania, the Transylvanian Saxons made their 'Mediascher Abschlusserklärung' or declaration of Mediaş on January 8, 1919 and declared themselves Romanian citizens. In November of the same year, the Saxon Assembly met to demand the creation of a special constitutional law the right for all Germans in greater Romania "to fulfill their particular cultural, national and economic purposes to organize themselves freely as an independent nation". In 1921 the Romanians, proclaiming agrarian reform, began redistributing land within the country. This act affected the Saxon Nation and the Saxon parishes on the former royal lands. There, the common land - mostly forest and pasture- made up on the average more than a quarter of the whole arable land and it was an important basis for the small farmers and the village tax system that funded the German schools. Subsequently the income of the Saxon Nation declined and by 1937 the Saxon Nation itself was dissolved.

After World War II, the borders of Transylvania were restored to its pre-1938 limits. Prejmer and most of the Sibiu and Braşov County Saxon villages' population consisted mostly of children and old people. Prejmer men, called up to the German army, had been killed, were missing or had been taken as prisoners. The majority of women between 18 and 35 years and the men between 17 and 45 years, who remained home, had been displaced as forced labor to the Soviet Union. Few managed to escape, so altogether the number of Saxon from Transylvania declined from 700,000 in 1930 to less than 345,000 by 1948. German schools were nationalized and their associations and unions were dissolved. Against all expectations, the German minority had at least not been deported from Romania. After a period of uncertainty, their political rights were restored, of course only within the limitations of the Stalinist system.

In Prejmer, the school system was allowed to continue where German was used as the as the primary language of instruction and scheduled German programs were allowed for TV broadcasting, German newspapers were permitted and books and cultural events in German language were sanctioned. Under Nicolae Ceausescu, who came into power in

1965, the beginning of the end of German rights began with a gradual reduction of collective minority rights. In May 1966 Ceausescu declared that Romania was no longer a multi-ethnic country and all German rights and privileges were abolished.

These events gradually changed the village makeup of Prejmer as the share of farmers working in the private or collective sector declined less than 30 percent of the town workforce. Some 70 percent of the town workers worked in the town or had other non agricultural jobs. This change in employment structure had far-reaching effects on the life of Prejmer. The population of Prejmer aged rapidly as young people moved out to where jobs were available. Saxon traditions in Prejmer lost their importance and the traditional community life got lost. Under these circumstances it is not surprising that ethnic Germans took the first best opportunity to leave their homelands forever.

The arrival of the Romanian communists began a re-writing of Saxon history giving them a second-rate citizenship status within the context of the communist invented Daco-Roman myth system. The Saxons were labeled latecomers and were considered colonists who settled later than the Romanians. Under Romanian Socialist ideology they were considered to be the instruments of exploitation of previous regimes (Deliman, 1973: 21). All previous rights and privileges were lost



**Figure 7.23: Original walls of Prejmer made of river stone with tuff addition shown in white.**

to Prejmer, and the village was forced to integrate with ethnic Romanians based on Government policies through the post cold war period. With the fall of communism in 1989 Prejmer lost 90% of its Saxon population as Germany allowed Saxon resettlement

in Germany with refuge status. A small portion of the Saxon population of Prejmer remained and the church and fortified complex is under their care.

### 7.6.3 Building Construction and Framework

The fortified structure of Prejmer contains a Greek cross-shaped church surrounded by 12 meter high extant double walls. These walls have a round layout and were protected by stockades, water moat, four towers and two advanced reinforced bastions. Within the complex area, the structures supported by the precinct wall have three or four stories; divided into 60 compartments, basements, and 250 individual family store houses (figure 7.21).

The construction of the church and bell tower at Prejmer began around 1218. The plan is often referred to as a Greek cross or holy cross that was believed to be of Teutonic Knight origin. The first phase of construction raised the walls of the church to some 3 meters in stone with the general outline was for each side of the cross to be in the form of a half hexagon (Teutsch, 1900: 12, 88). The central aisle contains architectural elements of Byzantine construction and has similarities with the Teutonic Knight church of St. Elizabeth in Marburg built in 1225 (Fabritius-Dancu, 1983a: 42) (Velescu, 1967: 170). In 1240, the church was placed under the control and care of the Cîrța Abbey and its' construction continued in an architecturally modified Cistercian Gothic style. The walls



**Figure 7.24: External view of the Prejmer choir with Romanesque elements and peasant storage locker built into the eternal wall.**

above the 3 meter line are made of chalky tuff and are easily distinguished from the original building phase (figure 7.23). Accordingly, in the Cistercian style, the addition of

sexpartite Gothic ribbed vaulting supported by columns along the central west aisle, eleven arched windows and a Gothic arched arcade along the choir that separate the side chapels were built. Gothic ribbed vaulting in the choir was supported not with columns but with corbelled piers (figure 7.30). External prop columns support the walls of the church including the choir which is a 5/8ths scale to the rest of the church. Above the central cross of the church an octagonal tower (figure 7.22) was constructed in 1461 (Angelescu and Dobriceanu, 1964-70: 15143.01) and in the sixteenth century, between 1512 and 1515, the west end of the church was lengthened by some 6.5 meters and vaulted in late-Gothic style. At the same time, the construction of the west loft and the west portal was completed along with quatrefoil windows around the upper sections of the choir and side chapels (Csallner, 1930: 12). The north chapel was altered in 1520 into a vestry. The pulpit is made of stone with a wood carved cover and was designed to visually balance the opening to the choir. Facing the altar, the carved stone pulpit is on the left, and the wood cover is painted with biblical passages and scenes from the mid-1500s. The pulpit juts out into the nave and is separated by three steps which lead to the choir.

Repairs were carried out in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries on a regular basis. Major repairs were in 1621, 1780, 1801 and 1860 and again in 1890 (Csallner, 1930: 14; Teutsch, 1857). The last restoration work carried out by the Socialist Romanian Government was between 1964 and 1970. Here the bricked up west portal was uncovered and restored along with repairing windows and the 1461 foundation additions (Angelescu and Dobriceanu, 1964-70: 15143.01). In 1992, the Transylvania Saxons again took over the care and maintenance of the church and fortified complex. Between 1992 and 1996 Saxon repairs were carried out on the roof, an extensive fire suppression system for the church and its' archives was installed. At this time, ownership of the church resides with only one remaining Saxon family which runs the

**Figure 7.25: Prejmer wooden pulpit cover dating from 1500.**



fortress as a museum and historic monument. Prejmer along with Harmon is probably the most visited Saxon fortified church in Transylvania.

Prejmer contains the oldest Gothic double sided altar triptych in Romania, created between 1450 and 1460, portraying the traditional Saxon clothing and headwear of period. The triptych is considered one of the most important in central Europe consisting of the crucifixion (Morres, 1929: 199-200; Oprescu, 1961: 14; Roth and Alexander Rosemann, *et al.*, 1934: 125; Vatasianu, 1959a: 581).

The original church organ dates from 1676 and was purchased for 65 forints by the town. In 1803 a new organ was purchased for 2,900 guilders and set up behind the altar. It was moved back to its original location in 1837 and again replaced in 1929 with a new one in the Baroque style (Dressler, 1975: 25-6).



Figure 7.26: Prejmer altar triptych dating from 1450.

The church has three bells in the central tower dating from 1923. Within the archives on display are the original bells; the large bell made in Braşov in 1768, the middle bell dates from the fifteenth century and origins are unknown and the small bell is dated 1562 and inscribed 'For Jerge Paul' (Philippi, 1880: 55).

The Prejmer church complex contains one of the most substantial Saxon defensive complexes and precinct walls in all of Transylvania. The entire complex in the center of the town was surrounded by an eight meter moat that was filled in between 1850 and 1880. The precinct wall was constructed in two phases with the first being an oval shape approximately three meters in height built sometime prior to the use of firearms, the oval shape as well as the exposed position of the complex and town suggests prior to 1300. The second wall construction phase built over the first wall to the height of 12 to 14 meters at a thickness of 4.5 meters and added four mural flanking towers along the southeast, southwest, northeast and northeast of the church. This construction phase began at the end of the fifteenth and ended in the early sixteenth centuries in response to the Turkish threat (Harrison, 2004: 131).



Figure 7.27: Prejmer main entrance and covered bridge from the southwest.

The precinct wall diameter is approximately some 72 meters with the wall walk some two meters wide along the battlements. The upper sections of the wall along the battlements contain firearms loopholes and various types of casting and plunging oriels to include ones for casting hot-pitch on attackers. Three of the four mural flanking towers are semicircular with the fourth southwest tower in the shape of a polygon. A lower

second wall is some three meters inside the outer precinct wall and connected with communication passages and a covered roof. At a width of two to three meters, the defensive passage surrounds the precinct and is 10 meters high where the firing loopholes and casting oriels are located. The guard and communications passage is covered with a saddle roof made of tiles. On the southeast passage a small death organ was mounted. This device is unique to Saxon fortifications in Transylvania and is on a board and spindle with five rifle barrels placed in slots. The guns could be reloaded and turned and thereby fired continuously.



**Figure 7.28:** Detail of precinct wall defense elements at Prejmer.

The southern section of the fortified complex contains the entrance to the complex. Significant military defensive systems were employed to protect the entrance. The length of the entrance is some 30 meters of well defined and carefully sculpted defensive systems that provided the greatest amount of protection for the defenders and allowed for the greatest amount of danger for the attacker. Multiple portcullises with oak gates sheathed in iron blocked the entry path into the complex. A barbican with forecourt was constructed in the sixteenth century to add to the defense. The walls surrounding the forecourt also contained

shooting loopholes, casting and plunging oriels. To the left of the forecourt was a shield wall that was also heavily defended and named the bakers court (shop) where communal

food was prepared to prevent fire in the complex. This was the only area in the complex where fire was allowed in order to prevent a general fire that all medieval people feared. Here also along the outer precinct wall were the stables where horses, livestock and valuable complex farm implements could be protected. The external walls of the forecourt -looking into the court- today is a Renaissance era renovated section where many of the upper defensive elements along the wall are non-functional but may have a decorative purpose instead (Harrison, 2004: 131).



**Figure 7.29: Interior view of a storage chamber as seen from above with typical heavy door to the exterior.**

Inside the fortified complex precinct walls are numerous chambers built into the wall. This is where the town individual families had their possessions and emergency foodstuffs and planting seeds were kept. There are some 260

chambers along the entire wall surrounding the

church at levels up to four floors high. The entrances to the chambers were via ladders to an open walkway with each heavy wooden door secured by the owner. Prejmer had one of the largest grain and other storage facilities in all of the Saxon lands and had enough food and supplies to protect the entire town of up to 1,000 persons for four months. The walls of the interior chambers are devoid of decoration but are simply painted white and provide contrast with the dark carved wood (Harrison, 2004: 132-3).

#### 7.6.4 Archaeological Data Archival Sources

Prejmer archaeological materials and research records have been organized and catalogued since 1952 under the Romanian Institute for Cultural Memory (CMIC). The Institute has consolidated the reports that are known to exist and continues to integrate

Romanian Archaeology journals, bibliographic databases and research records. Prejmer records include the excavation reports from 1996 and 2004. Archival Sources include museum collections, scholarly research and data not present in Romania.



**Figure 7.30: Prejmer church north transept with Cistercian Gothic ribbed vaulting on corbelled piers.**

In describing and evaluating the archaeological evidence of Prejmer, the site itself is centrally located in the village as a circular complex with a filled-in moat; the precinct wall encloses the church and group of attached storage rooms with open space enclosed by a double precinct wall.

The only formal archaeological excavation of Prejmer was by Dr. Costea (1996a: 41675.1) and subsequently analyzed by Zoia Maxim (1999: 34-72) who determined that the church site was occupied by a Neolithic culture known as the Coțofeni people. Prior informal excavations and discoveries of the nineteenth century determined that the church elements belong early Gothic style, which and dated the church to the mid-thirteenth century. The 2004 archaeological field work at Prejmer was primarily a survey whereas the site was included in the Romanian list of historical monuments (Monuments number 646) as a medieval rural site under the category of civil housing (Anonymous,

2004e: 417). Major archival sources include (Anonymous, 1999; Fabini, 1998; Fabritius-Dancu, 1983a; Harrison, 2004; Kröner, 2003)

## 7.7 Conclusions

Prejmer and Cristian's identities are based on land and building space usage unique to their sites. Their patterns are distinctive based on their settlement history, initial construction and purpose as altered overtime.

This study has determined that of the 236 Saxon villages and church sites, in Braşov and Sibiu Counties, all are individual. At the beginning of the fifteenth century a great fortification effort began again due to the Turkish threat. These updated defenses began with the Saxon Nation organizing the support and construction or rehabilitation of village fortified sites. These fortified church complexes began to be equipped with defensive precincts proper. Based on Turkish military capabilities, the advent of gunpowder and modern weaponry, defensive requirements dictated that single, double, or triple precinct walls were built, integrating towers, bastions, ditches and strongholds into a coherent, unified defense. The fortified complexes, together with the church either fortified or unfortified, produced a consistent complex defensive system that included buildings with other function than religious and defensive, particularly for storing food and critical supplies and materials in case of siege.

Cristian and Prejmer as well as most of the Saxon churches in the study area continued to evolve until the mid-sixteenth century when the structures were generally completed. Their existence enabled the survival (in good conditions) of the Transylvanian Saxons in a land often fought over. After the annexing of the region by Austria in 1699 and the end of the autonomous Principality of Transylvania, the Saxons continued to maintain their structures and defenses (Miko, 2006: 34-5). The Saxons successfully used fortified church complexes during the Habsburg wars and peasant revolts to the early eighteenth century. From the early eighteenth century, the fortified churches were no longer used to support defense of the village but were however, continually maintained.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### CONCLUSIONS AND STATUS

#### 8.1 Conclusions

This thesis has examined a distinctive medieval phenomenon, namely the history and archaeology of the Saxon Rural Church in Romania including its roles and identities. Transylvania witnesses, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, a deliberate investment in human and material defense. Whilst many aspects of Saxon settlement in Transylvania reflect their homeland, in Romania and Hungary new features appear. As this study of two distinct regions – Braşov and Sibiu Counties – has observed, the Saxons created a network of fortified centers – from village to town to city – with fortified churches as the core to these communities. Tracing the form and evolution of these churches and their communities has been the core of this research. I have sought to consider how far such structures and units were integral to the identity of the Saxons, and how far the investments in these structures were an investment in the Saxon Nation itself.

Key questions examined centered on origins, form, content, materials and society; key sources utilized comprised documentary data, the architectural and archaeological evidence, village morphology and other sources relating to the time period. In addition, we noted similarities and differences in other regional settlements and considered the heritage of complexes – how viewed, how maintained, issues of access, of decay, and of recognition by UNESCO and European Union departments.



**Figure 8.01: Rasnov – fourteenth century peasant fortified village and fortress.**

What has been shown is that the Saxon settlers introduced into Transylvania a type of colony adapted to the position of the villages, most of which stood on hills that were easy to reach and protect. The compact villages, planned with a church in the center, were composed of houses with gardens closely aligned in rows along the streets. Defending this type of village, which had certain advantages, was a constant preoccupation of the communities, and they were supported by the Hungarian sovereigns and the Church from the second half of the 13th century. It was also the basis for the development of church fortifications.

The austerity of these churches is, probably, their most striking trait, morphologically and decoratively speaking. This research makes a definite contribution, yet it only contributes a small portion of the body of knowledge for understanding the phenomenon. Thus future research and contemporary studies will add to the fuller understanding of the sternness of the churches as an image of the Saxon medieval community; socially compact, without luminaries prone to grandiose architectural gestures. To the Saxons, the vital investment was in durability and security.

## 8.2 Differing Regional Settlement Patterns

The settlement nature, history and patterns of other Germanic peoples in areas such as Slovakia and neighboring Romanian monastic sites differ from those of the Transylvanian Saxons. For example, Germans were also invited to settle in the twelfth century in the Zips but not Ruthenia area of present day Slovakia (Hokky, 1966: 10). Similar to the Saxons of Transylvania, the Zipster Germans were assigned to guard the mountain passes to the Baltic and to develop and exploit the minerals of the region. Similarly, Hungarian Kings gave the settlers large tracts of land and extensive autonomy. This included the right to use the German language and restrict freeholds to Germans in their communities (Knefelkamp and Stolpe, 2001: 49-52).

The German settlements in Zips County, Slovakia (Szepes Megye) were enlarged during the reign of Geza II and Andreas II and also began rebuilding after the Mongol invasion of 1240-41. So by the fourteenth century, the self-governing administrative Saxon provinces of the Zipser Städtebund and the Sieben Oberungarische Bergstädte were created (Kessler, 1883: 440). These regions remained autonomous from the regular Megye administration till 1876. Similar to the Saxons in Transylvania, the count of the Zips was not appointed by the king but elected for life by an assembly of county notables, city mayors and priests. Unlike the Transylvanian Saxons (Giurescu, 1998: 522-4), the Zipster Germans were weakened by the lack of new settlers, dismemberment of their lands to Poland, religious wars with Czech Hussites in the 15th century and the Turks in the 16th-17th centuries, followed by the Habsburg civil wars and then the suppression of the largely German Protestants (Gindely, 1884: 442, 450).

Throughout this region, the Saxon settlements did not build, develop or formulate fortified church complexes in their settlement patterns. By the fifteenth century, the Protestant Saxons were allowed only 2 churches per county in the so-called *Articularkirchen*, from article 26 of the Landtag of Oedenburg Treaty (Henke and Vater, 1820: 228; Pangerl, 1883: 537). The churches were constructed of wood and built outside the city walls, making them vulnerable to destruction. After the Turkish army retreated

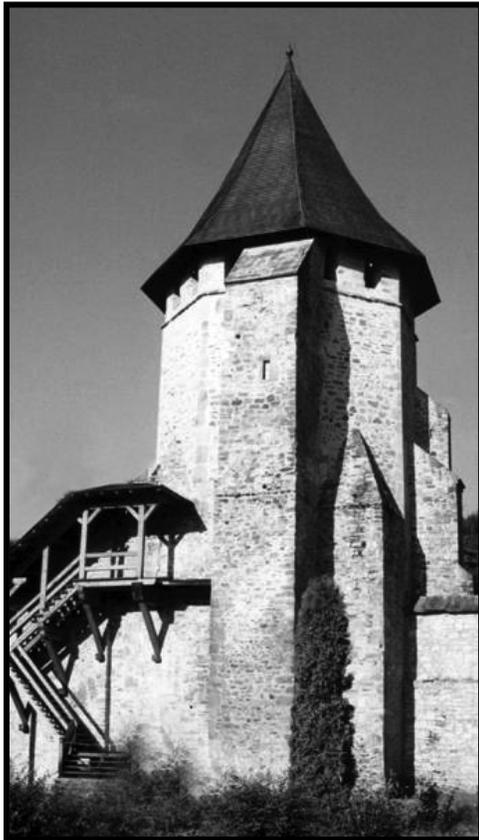
from Hungary, Leopold I began again to persecute Protestants further destabilizing the Saxon population.

The Romanian fortified monastic settlements in the Neamț region of Romania also differed from the Transylvanian Saxons. These ecclesiastical complexes, fortified in the late fifteenth century, were not built as a part of a larger



**Figure 8.02: Neamț – fourteenth century fortified monastery.**

Romanian settlement but were in fact monastic sites that were purposely built in remote areas with no population centers nearby. Romanian Voivods incorporated these monastic sites into a strategic defensive zone protecting their lands from Hungarian and Turkish encroachment. The late thirteenth century Neamț Monastery typifying the



**Figure 8.03: Putna – northwest defensive tower of the fortified monastery.**

Moldavian style is an example of the typology of Romanian fortified complexes. Successively enlarged and fortified by Princes Petru I, Alexander the Kind and Romanian King Stephen the Great. Neamț, by the 1500s, became the most important monastery in the region. Fortified with substantial fortified precinct walls, projection towers, fortified gates in the sixteenth centuries, the churches in the center of the complexes were built and remained unfortified. In another example, the Probota Monastery fortifications included precinct walls some five meters high containing loopholes and two square corner defensive towers (Matei, 1994: 148060.01). A single fortified gate-tower is located along the center of the east wall provides the only access to

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the complex. Monastery churches are also distinguished by their unfortified floor plans where the structure was divided into five parts: exonarthex, pronaos, burial chamber, naos and chancel with its altar behind the iconostasis. Archaeological excavations confirmed this during the 1994-5 seasons (Puscasu and Gherman, *et al.*, 1995: 148060.02).

### 8.3 Archaeological Deficiencies

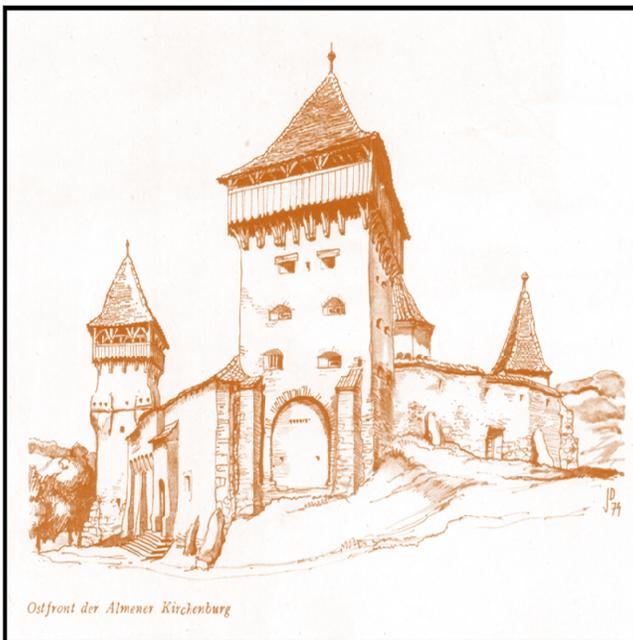
Formal archaeological research into Romanian sites and monuments has been ongoing but sparse since the nineteenth century. Recognized excavations were initially conducted at Cislăchioara and Alba-Iulia by Friedrich Müller (1858: 32-41), providing the earliest formal archaeological work on Saxon sites. Even though many descriptive and valuable historical documents by foreigners such as ambassadors and travelers, dating from the fourteenth century, survive, they are of themselves are not formal archaeological investigations of the sites mentioned and thus lack the scientific verification of archaeology.

According to Juliana Fabritius-Dancu (1979: 132-4), prior to WW II, documentation led most historical researchers such as Hermann Phleps (1924: 3), to date the earliest Saxon sites generally to the end of the twelfth century without any specific archaeological confirmation. Against the consensus, Virgil Vătășianu (1959b) and later Grigore Ionescu (1982: 131-3), cautioned that an accurate assessment could not be confirmed due to the lack of systematic archaeological excavations and opined that the sites in question could be dated from as late as the late thirteenth century. Maria Țiplic (2001b: 171-3) summarizes and documents these differences in an incisive article written in the Romanian journal *ACTA TERRAE SEPTEMCASTRENSIS* published by the Lucian Blaga University, Sibiu Research Centre (IPCTE). As she states in her article,

“The study of these monuments is an old Roman tradition, and books about this area are relatively rich. As noted, however, sites are not fully investigated, some conclusions fall within the sphere of dubious dating... subjected buildings timelines (which can not be dated solely on the basis of the study of architectural evolution), and research reports rely on very few archaeological investigations. For this reason today, it is necessary to call on archaeology to confirm the history of medieval monuments” (Țiplic, 2001b: 174).

The few working archaeologists today not only conduct research and excavate but also have the responsibility for the protection of sites and artifacts. Saxon site preservation and excavation is one of the greatest deficiencies facing scholars today. The 2007 report on Romanian Archaeology listed the museums, universities and governments sponsored organizations participating in archaeological excavations. Most were funded by outside institutions, foundations and governments or agencies (General, 2007: 5-7). A coherent program for the safeguarding Saxon Fortified Church archaeological heritage and the conservation of Saxon monuments is lacking.

The basic tenets of research are not the sole responsibility of any one professional group. They apply instead to all those involved in the conservation of cultural property and represent general standards of approach and methodology. From the broadest perspective, archaeology and historical research should be seen as a conjoined enterprise. For both, physical evidence has to be studied and interpreted. Such interpretations are founded on a profound and exact knowledge of the various histories of the thing or place



**Figure 8.04:** Artist rendition of the Saxon church at Alma Vii as presented by historical research and documentation but not confirmed by archaeology.

deficiencies, one seems most important. When existing, archaeological site excavations continue to provide the preeminent evidence for and confirmation of data such as in this

and its context, on the materiality of its physical fabric, on its cultural meanings and values over time, and its role and effect on current affiliates and the public in general. This implies the application of a variety of specialized technical knowledge, but ideally the process must be brought back into a cultural context so that the archaeology and historical research become synonymous.

Of the many conclusions that may be drawn from the archaeological

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study of settlement patterns, roles and identities whereas other forms of data can be used to fill in when archeology material is lacking. The latter are especially important in areas when human habitation practices have destroyed archaeological remains. However, in the past Saxon sites have been characterized through historical research and visual observation (figure 8.02) rather than archaeological excavations. The number and types of excavations on Saxon sites needs to be increased. Without more archaeological data, confirming settlement patterns may be impossible, and data may continue to be under-reported.

### 8.3 Research and Survey

This research into Saxon settlements has not been concentrated on a single site or set of sites, but future research may, since a key need is to explore the territories and lands and resources attached to farmsteads, villages and towns. We have seen how Saxon inhabitants depended on a particular territory and its resources for their living, and their use and experience of the land should be a dimension of any future study, as might their relationship with authorities. But research should also embrace a wider region, where traditional historical evidence (written sources) is supplemented and expanded by the archaeological investigations of specific sites. Landscape archaeology would enable a better dialogue between sites and land. At the same time, however, more effort will be needed working on the results of the fieldwork in the laboratory, library analyzing the finds, their context and material preparation for publication.

Research should continue to embrace the great variety of settlement forms, from town to farm and village. Local architecture needs to be studied: buildings should be recorded and analyzed in their landscape context, as their form and layout is an important part of the Saxon landscape and heritage; these structures can provide valuable insights into



Figure 8.05: Computer generated 3D interior of the Saxon church at Cisnădioara.

the building traditions and economic purposes of the Saxons. Churches, church complexes and ancillary buildings provide invaluable evidence of wealth, social structure and the mentality of the Saxon people.

Future surveying (including aerial photography, geophysical investigations, soil and plant sampling) is also essential for the preparation of site management and excavation programs. Using advanced technologies from other disciplines allows for cooperation among the sciences and better scholarly work in the field of archaeology and architecture. Future work on Saxon fortified churches would benefit from the use of geodetic measuring techniques and digital photogrammetry. These applications, combined with total station surveying as well as imagery acquisition using digital



Figure 8.06: Computer generated 3D exterior of the Saxon church at Cisnădioara with the complex plan shown.

non-metric cameras would allow for 3D modeling and visualization of Saxon sites. The complete 3D acquisition of the architecture of a Saxon Fortified Church using these methods would incorporate reliability, speed and precision into a complete survey. These

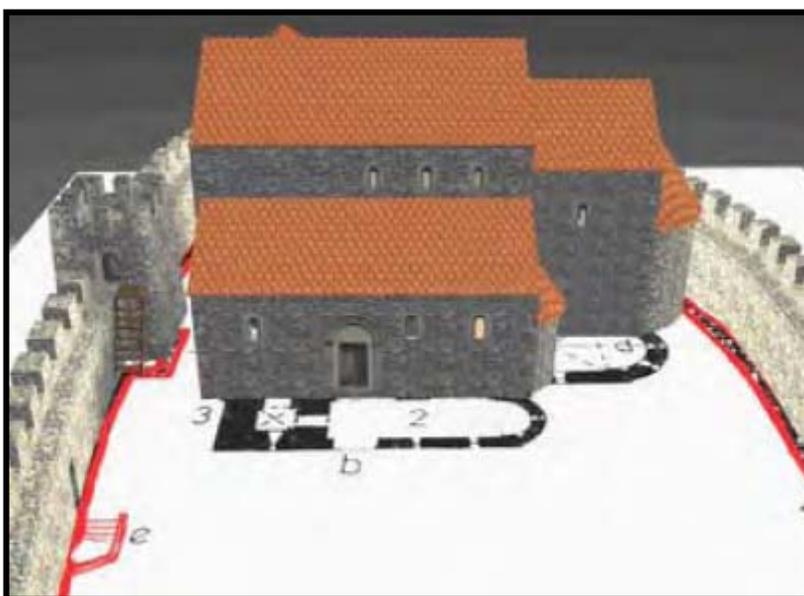


Figure 8.07: Computer generated 3D exterior of the Saxon church at Cisnădioara and complex precinct wall.

results then themselves become a primary source and point of reference for new studies (Manea and Calin, 1993: 1-3).

Maria-Emilia Tiplic and Martin White (2007) recently produced a paper within the study area using

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virtual reality and 3D computer graphics to present the importance and the necessity medieval archaeology and architecture. Their work focused on the virtual reconstruction of the Romanesque church typology changes over time at Cisnădioara and Șura Mică (see figures 8.03-5). Their use of virtual archaeology as the synthesis, conservation, reproduction, representation, digital reprocessing, and display with the use of advanced imaging technology (Roussou, 2002: 93) clearly provides a prime example of future research and survey techniques.

#### **8.4 Future Research**

Since the nineteenth century when fortified churches were no longer supposed to fulfill defensive purposes, they were still being maintained and supported. The individual communities whose physical identity had been preserved along with the fortified churches gratefully maintained and imbued them with the value of the unique Saxon cultural identity.

These unique complexes within the zone of European heritage have worsened since 1989 when many of the surviving Saxon communities immigrated en masse to Germany causing the demise of their settlements and culture, as well as of their exceptional architectural legacy. The Romanian government and UNESCO continue to support the safeguard and preservation of these monuments but resources remain limited. Protection of these sites remains problematic and thus far is only partial. Abandoned sites continue to be scavenged for materials by the local non-Saxon populace and the remnants left open to the elements and so the threats to these monuments remain.

Presently, UNESCO is focusing on six specific Saxon fortified churches. UNESCO intends to strengthen the rural communities of Biertan and Viscri whereas the community of Călnic has been turned into a research center by the Romanian Academy and conservation efforts are continuing at Prejmer, Săschiz and Valea Viilor.

Future site work by archaeological excavations, mapping, inventory and land surveying continues to be of vital interest in higher or post-university education in Brașov and Sibiu Counties. These projects may attempt to identify the functional potential of the

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ensembles for contemporary usage or try to devise the best modalities to preserve, restore and capitalize them.

The trait highlighted by almost all the researchers of Transylvanian Saxon churches focus on the changes in the architecture of the different styles of churches built. The fortified churches of Transylvania remain an excellent example of the principles of good architecture and settlement identities. The abandonment / dereliction by Transylvanian Saxons of their villages needs to be halted and reversed to prevent further the decay of the respective villages and churches.

Much more research is needed to understand the form, function and evolution of these sites. Specific areas of needed additional research include the internal configuration of the sites and the social organization of the population within the site. Key steps in the future would include studying the landscape context to see the interaction of sites and environments over time. Clarifying the modes and styles of medieval Saxon markets and industry followed by a complete study of Saxon households would greatly expand the knowledge of the phenomena of Saxon settlements in Transylvania.

Currently, the archaeology is limited, Saxon economies and material have yet to be fully explored and challenges remain for varied scholars – of defense, churches, households, etc... It is evident that the all of these differing aspects remained integrated into the whole of the Saxon culture and is best studied as an ensemble to completely understand the individual components. Future research must include the development, typology and chronology of the Saxon Fortified Church as well as the study of social, economic and religious structures of the Saxon population.

Finally, these fortified churches are old now, but what were they like when they were young? Who created them and why? Did they do so in hope, gratitude, or in simple faith? Were they plodding peasant builders, or wise beyond their imaginations? Did they think of the future as they built, or only of the present? Did they love their toil, or shrug their shoulders at it with tolerant resignation? Did they curse the labor, or glory in it? Saxon Fortified Churches stand silent and reserved; they seem to have no answer to these questions. Only continued protection and study can reveal the complete story of the past. It is a long story that goes back some 800 years, where its beginning is all but lost; and it winds its way through to the present and possibly into the complete focus of history.

With regard to archaeology reports contained in the bibliography it should be noted that in Romania all archaeology reports are uniform in format as outlined by the Romanian Ministry of Culture (CIMIC) documentation guidance. Therefore, in the bibliography, each archaeology report is titled followed by the city that names the excavation and the number assigned by CIMIC. Exceptions have been noted with Vasile Pârvan Institute which continues to hold certain collections and some reports.

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