

## **CASTRUM KARAZNA.**

### ***Hidden castle in clear social ambient.***

### ***Archaeological contributions to the formation and development of the County of Crasna, during the 11<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> centuries.***

**-ABSTRACT-**

*Keywords: Crasna, Barcău, medieval counties, Slavs, fortifications, settlements*

The birth of the medieval county is the result of temporal and spatial changes that are influenced by a number of economic phenomena, social and military. As a secular administrative institution, the issue has set series of questions, not only in the Kingdom of Hungary, but also in Transylvania, mainly due to the atypical situations in our area. These situations, at the current level of knowledge, were caused mainly by the presence of the Hungarians in the area and the administrative organization of Transylvania. Unfortunately, both Hungarian and Romanian historiography, still deals with this issue, without creating a relatively clear picture of the historical evolution of early Transylvania.

*The main goal of this research is to clarify the context of formation and development of the county, its development during the first two centuries of its existence, namely compiling an exhaustive overview of the county's early period. We will also call on auxiliary sciences of history, to identify the centre fort of the county, which until now has not been found. We approach therefore multidisciplinary analysis methods, the issues that we identified during the research. We also notice that these polemics, we will generate new questions whose answers, we hope to find in the coming decades of research on the studied area. We strongly hope to lay the foundations of research methodologies, work platforms, which will hopefully provide a clear picture of the future of the area's medieval phenomena<sup>1</sup>.*

Undoubtedly, the basic motivation of our research is well marked by *Ioan Marian Țiplic*, which criticizes the method by which history / histories of Transylvania were written, without taking into account what archaeology has to offer, as a typical situation of communist period historiography, that emitted theories based on preconceived or ordered ideas. We believe strongly in maximum fairness of recording and processing the information obtained in

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the course of our research, thus contributing to the emergence of constructive theories, worthy of being disseminated at European level, without wearing ourselves the unconstructive stigma of the "millennial conflict".

This research is based on two main platforms, with which aims the probation and argumentation of the theoretical framework county formation. Forming the image is the theoretical result of the preliminary analysis, overall, the information gathered during the research period, thus we are dealing with an extremely broad and complex topic. Therefore, we must clarify from the outset that the methodology used expansive elements, and which, motivated by caution, they do not restrict or detail.

*On one hand, the main theory line is based on the assumption that, in the run-up to the county formation in this area there is a population which by argument delivered by multidisciplinary analyses belongs to Slavic origins. Conventionally, we call "local population" without alluding to the various theories of various continuities or eternal phrase of "first mover" it especially in order to eliminate any preconceived annexation by theory. By granting privileges initially offered elements of county, without interfering in its internal structure, include this population in early pseudo-organization of county administration. For the twelfth century, we already have information - that's right extrapolated from the realities of the next century - confirming a structure of county already solidified, based on these local populations, and the evidence brought later, colonization zones rarely inhabited. This large number of population in the area, lead to the development of the small county throughout the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The decisive element of the presence of these populations, we believe, is geography, a relatively isolated but still provides excellent infrastructural possibilities. On the other hand, in the secondary lines of research, we aim to elucidate a mystery whose explanation concerned local historiography since the twentieth - century. We refer to the identification of the county castrum, mentioned in written sources from the end of 11<sup>th</sup> century.*

To maximize the accuracy of the information provided by the present study, we used interdisciplinary methods, convening a series of methods that we considered most relevant for the construction of theoretical thesis and argument assumptions. Linguistics, archaeology, palaeography, topography and geographic information systems were used.

On the basis of our research are the preliminary studies on documentary sources, and archaeological research is also the basis of investigations, trying, in fact, collating data from land to those provided by written sources and references. We are aware that the current state of research is far from being mature, so we believe this thesis is only a debut for a large-scale

investigation in the territory of the county in question. During fieldwork, we tried to gather as many topographic data using Global Positioning Satellite devices with the aim of building a database on medieval sites. Programs used, such as the Quantum GIS 2.6, allow databases construction that serve as a tool for data extraction and we consider it extremely important. Cartography helped us in the recreation of medieval realities, illustrating those maps, we used during research a series of applications and tools that have been made available on online platforms. Language analyses, offered examination of pre-county landscape, referring here, first, to the gathered place-names from written sources, antique maps, Habsburg maps, respectively (the most important source) gathering place-names during field research. One of the sources of basic research in our approach is the reference work of etymologies of Knieszsa István, one of the first works that analyses in detail the etymology of place names and water names in Transylvania.

In archaeological point of view, our chronological upper limit has its roots in the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, moment, when stone castles appear. The phenomena is induced by the Tartar invasion, that determined king Béla the 4<sup>th</sup> to promote the politics of edification of stronger castles, giving up on the old wood and earth fortification construction techniques<sup>2</sup>.

One of the most important factors that determined the appearance of the county was its geographical position. Set at a distance of 15 km from the area known as *Meseş Gate*, one of the most important trade routes went across its territory. Also, the alternation of relief elements, helped the formation of the infrastructural network, because of the river's higher terraces, with maintainable roads, that have been well supervised by the hilltop forts above them.

In matters of soil fertility usable for historical plant cultures, all the sample data we have collected shows a very good ability of the land to produce heavily, mostly in the lower valley of Crasna, where we have registered the highest level of fertile soils.

The population movement in time and space, as its character and motives that provoked it, in lack of written sources can only be traced by the data served by archaeological research. Our basic theory on the formation of the county relies on the fact, that for the period of 7<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> centuries, a massive population block lived in the valleys of Crasna and Barcău, evolving and living in our areas of interest. For identifying these populations, the most eloquent example that can be given is the burial mound complex in the valley of Barcău, dated to the 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> centuries, linked to a Slavic population.

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<sup>2</sup> Țiplic 2005, 161.

The first document that mentions the county contains some very interesting issues, which can be linked to this Slavic population, the name of their chieftains: **Mesta** =*město* (Russian- *město*; Czech- *město*; Slovak – *miesto*; meaning: place, city<sup>3</sup>. **Непосор** =покорни; meaning humble + negation *nie*, meaning not humble, rebel, unconquered<sup>4</sup>.

Another mean of occupying land, practiced by the Hungarian kingdom, was the colonization of populations on the lands that had potential, but not used: this is how, according to the written sources, on the territory of Crasna, on the land under the jurisdiction of the castrum, several settlers appear: Ruthenians, Croatians, Czechs and several *de genere latini* attributed people (German, most likely).

The most efficient way of placing land under administration, was its donation by the king, to the most powerful noble families. In our county there is proof of the existence of at least 4 domains belonging to such kindreds: *Geregye, Kata, Csolt*.

Concerning the ecclesiastical organization of the county, we know that it was under the jurisdiction of the bishop of Alba Iulia, but on lower level, there is signalled an archidiaconate of Crasna, for example *Compoltus*, mentioned in 1219. 11<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> century, Romanesque buildings haven't been constructed, except the only case we see even today, the Romanesque church of Uileacu Șimleului, which has a unique character, given by the corridor built in the walls of the nave. We launched the theory that admits the possibility of military functions to this corridor, mostly given the fact, that in matters of geographical position, the church is set on the Crasna's exit from its gorge, very near to the customs outpost at Măeriște.

The military architecture is represented by a set of fortifications in key points that are showing the gradual extension of the eastern limits set by the administration process starting from the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

The research that has been made during the past 3 years, raised even more questions relating to the formation and development of the county, but we are very hopeful on the fact, that we will be able to continue our work, with the aim of shedding light on this ambiguous period of Transylvanian history

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<sup>3</sup> EDSIL 2008, 313.

<sup>4</sup> СЛОБАРЬ 1899, 691.