

The Fortress Saschiz. Historical and Archeological notes

DANIELA MARCU ISTRATE, IOAN FEDOR PASCU

The fortress from Saschiz, Mureş County, was built on a rocky slope, very close to the town of Saschiz, to its northwestern side. Typologically, the ensemble is a refuge fortress, a relatively close and easily protected safe shelter for the community, if it was in a direct peril. At the beginning of the 20th century the fortress was still used by the community on different occasions, but, when the Saxons have emigrated, it has rapidly degraded, and, in a very short term, the fortress was a collapsed ruin. In 1999 and 2000 a restoration project, along with a few archaeological surveys were initiated. This article presents the results of the archaeological research, the stratigraphic sequence of the site and the uncovered artifacts. The archaeology evidenced the fact that the site was intensely dwelled in Prehistory, with traces of several Neolithic and Bronze Age complexes. The medieval building site started in the first half of the 15th century, by leveling the sloppy terrain, thus disturbing the prehistorical complexes and moving the artifacts toward the edges of the plateau. A first fortress was therefore built here. The terrain compelled it to have an irregular, multiangular shape. The plateau is 90 m long on its long axis while the short one is 52 m wide. This plateau was surrounded by a curtain wall that initially had three towers: the gate tower, the school's tower on the south side and the voivode tower that was most likely placed on the north side of the fortress. This first stage of constructions probably lasted several decades, some of the interventions being datable at the end of the 15th or even in the beginning of the 16th centuries. The northeastern and southeastern extremities were later on consolidated by building two more towers. They are known as the priest's tower and the ammunition tower. The first one was built toward the middle of the 16th century, as demonstrated by the coin findings in several levels inside it. The second tower was built at the beginning of the 17th century. The gate area was reorganized during a stage of constructions that we cannot yet chronologically place in the current research stage. A small zwinger was created. It was limited to the south by a sixth, the watch tower. The fortress was extended eastward by adding a secondary precinct, that was also probably guarded by towers. During the 17th century the main enclosure was severely transformed. The old towers were repaired or rebuilt (the voivode tower for example) and pantries were built along the sides of the curtain wall. A two room structure was built; this is considered by specialists to have functioned as a chapel. The artifacts unearthed by the excavations consist mainly of pottery shards. Several of these can be dated in the 13th–15th centuries, but the significant majority of the pottery is placed during the 15th–17th centuries. We also discovered some metallic artifacts, such as a fragment of a jeweler's scales and a battle knife, both of them dated in the 15th century. The interpretation of the dig as well as establishing a chronological evolution of the site wouldn't have been possible without the 20 coins, that were, most of them, discovered in coherent stratigraphic situations.