

THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY NOBLE RESIDENCE FROM CETATEA DE BALTĂ. OBSERVATIONS REGARDING THE ARCHITECTURE OF ROUNDED CORNER TOWERS CASTLES IN TRANSYLVANIA

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Abstract: The article presents an architectural analysis of the seventeenth century noble residence from Cetatea de Baltă (Hu: Kükülvár), introducing it in the context of similarly shaped noble residences from Bahnea (Hu: Bonyha), Ozd (Hu: Magyarózd) and Țopa (Hu: Kisbún), residences with a compact central building, framed by four rounded (or polygonal) corner towers. A comparative view of the seventeenth century architectural features of these residences has allowed us to identify a possible use of the eastern corner towers for accommodating the court chapel, and in the same time to understand better the possible influences and connections in building noble residences in the seventeenth century Transylvania. The origin of this model has been already argued to have a French parentage, and this article brings forward illustrated engravings showing this type of residence in sixteenth century architectural treatises published by Jacques Androuet du Cerceau, but the closer Central European influences are also discussed as a result of craftsmen and architects coming to work in Transylvania under princely patronage from the neighbouring provinces.

Rezumat: Articolul propune o analiză arhitecturală a reședinței nobiliare din localitatea Cetatea de Baltă (Hu: Kükülvár), cu o prezentare a grupului de reședințe construite după același model arhitectural – clădire compactă, fără curte interioară, cu turnuri circulare (sau poligonale) la colțuri – din localitățile: Bahnea (Hu: Bonyha), Ozd (Hu: Magyarózd) și Țopa (Hu: Kisbún). Analiza comparativă a caracteristicilor arhitecturale a evidențiat o posibilă folosire a turnului de est pentru adăpostirea capelei de curte, oferind în același timp o perspectivă mai nuanțată asupra influențelor și legăturilor dintre reședințele transilvănene ale secolului al XVII-lea. Este discutată, de asemenea, influența modelelor venite pe filieră franceză sau mai apropiată, central europeană, atât prin intermediul tratatelor de teorie arhitecturală (cu exemplul unei gravuri de secol XVI, publicată de arhitectul francez Jacques Androuet du Cerceau) sau prin intermediul meșterilor și arhitecților veniți în Transilvania la comandă princiară.

The Bethlen-Haller Residence in Cetatea de Baltă

The Bethlen residence from Cetatea de Baltă occupies the top platform of the northern, hilly side of the village, separated by it not only through the altitude but also by the river Velt. From the village central street, running south-north, the residence appears as an impressive building complex, dominating the view. It is one of the most beautiful examples of an early-modern noble residence in Transylvania, and its pre-eminence is still recognized due to its unique shape, often compared with French Renaissance castles (Fig. 1).

The castle was built over two main sequences, and suffered different alterations during the following centuries, as the noble domain has often been donated, confiscated, or purchased. The first mention of a noble residence in the village dates from the second half of the sixteenth century when the domain is part of the Csáky family possession.¹ In the beginning of the seventeenth century the owner of the domain is already different: István Bethlen, brother of Gábor Bethen, Prince of Transylvania between 1613 and 1629. He is the most important patron related to the architecture of the still preserved residence. The starting point of building the castle is yet unknown. The letter addressed by István Bethlen to the magistrate of Bistrița in the year 1622, expressing his wish to build a new “small manor”,² has been regarded as a *terminus post quem*, its building lasting probably until towards the end of Gábor Bethlen’s reign (1629),³ one of the most intense periods of princely and noble architectural patronage.⁴

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¹ Bicsok, Orbán 2011, p. 180; Takács 1970, p. 44; Kővári 1866, pp. 83-85. The authors mention 1565-1580 as the interval of building, but nothing about its architecture, or the location of that residence. Shortly before the building of the castle, in 1542, the Transylvanian Diet decided to demolish the medieval fortress from Cetatea de Baltă, therefore it is not unlikely that the building material resulted from the demolition might have been used in building the new castle.

² Kovács 2006, p.130.

³ *Ibidem*, loc. cit.; Feuer Tóth 1981, p. 33; Vătășianu 1970, p.162 etc.

⁴ Kovács 1984, pp. 129-131. The author considers the noble residence from Cetatea de Baltă as an example of architectural patronage closely connected with the artistic circle of Alba Iulia patronized by the Prince.



Fig. 1. South-western view of the residence. Cetatea de Baltă (Hielscher 1938).



Fig. 2. Engraving of noble residence in Cetatea de Baltă. Luigi Ferdinando Marsigli, 1687 (Kovács 2006, p. 131).

levels (basement, ground floor, two upper floors and the attic), justifying somehow the implied similarity with a medieval donjon.¹² The actual shape of the roof, with a steep pitch, is however the result of an eighteenth century intervention. The solution adopted in the seventeenth century was

Towards the end of the seventeenth century (1686) the domain was already in another possession, this time that of the Transylvanian Prince, Mihály II Apafi.⁵ A series of alterations and extensions of the residential complex have been realized in the second half of the eighteenth century (ca. 1773-1775), patronized by Miklós Bethlen,⁶ and consisted in: remodelling the entrance by adding a new volume with a double symmetrical stair; replacing the former bridge (probably a timber drawbridge);⁷ rebuilding the roofs with the actual slope; building a chapel in the south-western proximity of the castle, and an extensive interior redecoration directed by the famous painter Mátyás Veress, among other interventions.⁸

Architectural description

The residence finds itself on the top of the plateau surrounded by a rectangular, deep and broad ditch, meant to protect it from an easy intrusion.⁹ Nowadays the moat is dry and whether it was originally filled with water is yet unknown.¹⁰ The castle had a second line of fortification too, consisting of an irregularly shaped system of curtain walls fortified by circular bastions of medieval type (Fig. 2).¹¹

The building displays an approximately square layout (ca. 20 x 23 m), flanked by four round corner towers, and with a symmetrical interior spatial distribution. Its height comprises five

⁵ Bicsok, Orbán 2011, p. 180; Takács 1970, p. 44.

⁶ Miklós Bethlen belonged to another branch of Bethlen family than István Bethlen, the previous patron of the castle.

⁷ Recent works of renovation initiated by the actual owner (unfortunately without any specialist guidance), revealed a wooden pulley in the masonry, right side of the entrance door, covered by a layer of plaster.

⁸ Bicsok, Orbán 2011, p. 180.

⁹ In a letter from 1622 István Bethlen expressed his wish to build a manor house in Cetatea de Baltă for his children, where not everybody could enter easily: "... gyermekimre névze akarnék itt lézengő és nyargaló mingyárt ne üthetné be orrát...". See Bicsok, Orbán 2011, p. 180; Kovács 2006, p.130.

¹⁰ Unfortunately, recent works of renovation involved earthworks carried out in the proximity of the castle, without any specialist surveillance. Nevertheless, the basement openings close to the ground level might suggest the mere presence of an empty ditch.

¹¹ See the seventeenth century cartographic representation attributed to Luigi Ferdinando Marsigli, in Kovács 2006, p. 132.

¹² Vătășianu 1970, p. 161.

a flat roof framed by a decorative crenellated cornice, which failed to protect the castle of water infiltration.¹³ The crenellated cornice was an architectural decoration frequently employed in Transylvanian architecture during the princely patronage of Gábor Bethlen (1613-1629),¹⁴ introduced mainly by Italian architects and craftsmen active at that time in Transylvania.¹⁵ The relatively high number of castles decorated with this type of crenellated parapet during this decade might even indicate an architectural fashion in the noble milieu.¹⁶

The main entrance of the residence is placed in the middle of the south-western façade, accessing the central largest bay (ca. 8.70 m), which is framed by two side bays of equal span (ca. 4.70 m). Directed to the four cardinal points, the round corner towers accommodate circular rooms (radius ca. 3.50 m), accessible from the four side-bay rooms, and each having three windows arranged symmetrically. In close proximity to the rooms' entrances, one can find small alcoves built in the masonry (ca. 0.80 m wide and 2.50 m long), opening towards the interior space. Only the western tower displays a particularity, as an octagonal tower containing the staircase is placed on its northern side, and the alcove opens towards the stairs and not towards the interior of the tower. The same tower distinguishes itself also through its height, as it accommodates four levels, the last one being accessible from the roof, unlike the rest of the towers comprising only three levels.

An inventory from the late seventeenth century mentions munitions necessary for military defence at the western tower top level,¹⁷ indicating thus the possible use of this space as a deposit of munitions. The disposition of the western tower in the best defended corner of the residence (oriented towards the river Târnava Mică, on the edge of a steep slope) may explain the choice to build this tower with a supplementary level, functioning as a deposit for munitions. At the roof level, loopholes and machicolations encircle the building, strengthening thus the hypothesis that the last level of the western corner tower was functioning as a space to deposit munitions, necessary for defending the castle from the attic level, where a possible sentry walk was functioning, similar to those of the residences in Țopa, Buia, Miercurea Ciuc, etc.¹⁸



Fig. 3. Ground floor passage way. Cetatea de Baltă (Letiția Cosnean Nistor, 2012).

¹³ Feuer Tóth 1981, p. 33; Kovács 2006, p. 131.

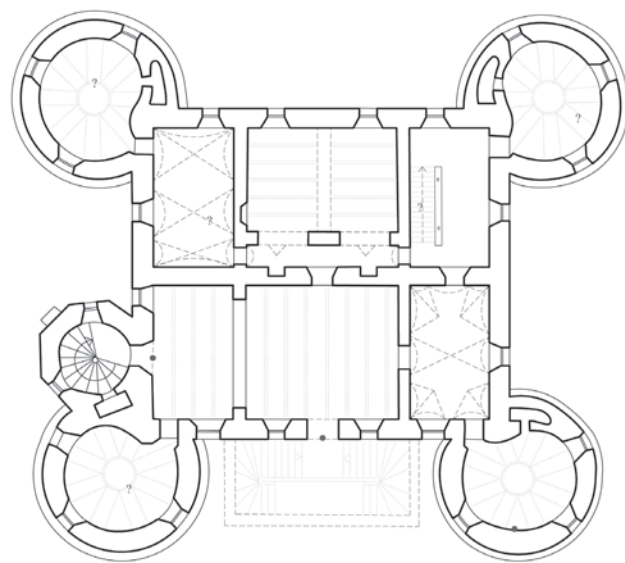
¹⁴ Benkő 1970, pp. 16-24; Mândrescu 1999, p. 75; Kovács 2006, pp. 81-125. Kovács identifies this decorative element with the artistic activity promoted by the princely court, as the "taste of the prince" and his court architects.

¹⁵ For more information regarding the work of Italian architects and craftsmen coming from neighbouring provinces (Slovakia, Upper Hungary, Poland, etc) see: Benkő 1970, pp. 16-24; Feuer-Tóth 1981, pp. 32-33; Kovács 2006, pp. 106-107; Balogh 1982 II, pp. 147-149, 151-155; P. Kovács 2009, p. 232. *Giacomo Resti*, Italian architect, works on the princely sites of Alba Iulia, Vințu de Jos and Oradea, around 1615-1630; *Giovanni Landi* from Mantova, Italian architect, works at Gherla fortress; *István Diószegi* – mason, *Péter Kassai* (probably from Kassa, Hungary) – carpenter, *Márton Lindtner* from Eperjes and other painters, carpenters and stucco workers.

¹⁶ See Rákoczi Palace in Gherla, Lăzar Castle in Lăzarea, Apafi Castle in Dumbrăveni, Lonyai Castle in Medieșul Aurit, Hunyad Castle in Hunedoara, Bethlen Castle in Vințul de Jos, princely palaces in Alba Iulia and Oradea, and others.

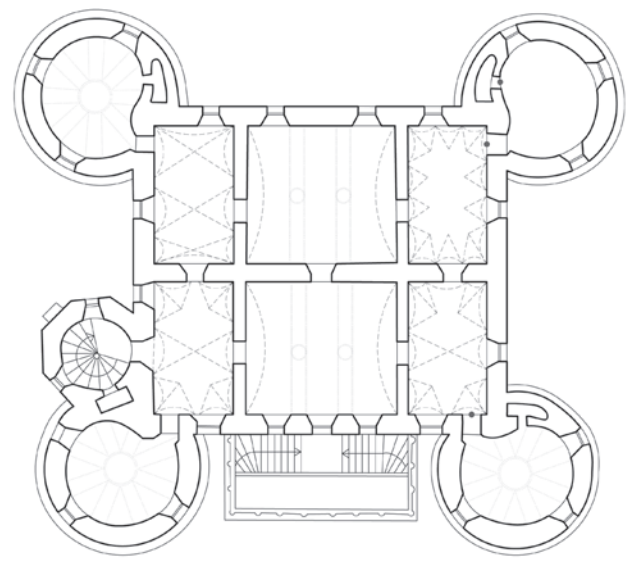
¹⁷ Prodan 1987, pp. 472-475 offering a synthesis of several inventories from 1691, 1693, 1694, 1700.

¹⁸ Kovács 2006, p. 129; Cosnean 2011, p. 153.



● Stone profiles blocks - door frames and a chimney
 ? Inaccessible information (proposal)

Fig. 4. Proposal of ground plan. Cetatea de Baltă (after INP - DMI 1962 survey).



● Profiled stone door frames

Fig. 5. Second floor plan. Cetatea de Baltă (after INP - DMI 1962 survey).

The basement spaces from the central body of the castle are covered by brick banded barrel vaults, supported by stone pilasters, while the corner towers present semi-spherical brick domes. The basement masonry, nowadays uncovered by any plaster layers, expose different situations of additions, adjoining or repairs, which would require a specific architectural study.¹⁹ On the upper floors, groin vaulted rooms occupy the central body of the castle, except the barrel vaulted central passageways (Fig. 3), while the corner towers have octopartite ribbed vaulting. More recent interventions introduced a new type of vault at the ground-floor level – iron beams supporting small brick vaults.²⁰ Another exception of vaulting, but which is more difficult to date, is the horizontal timber frame floor from the central body eastern room of the ground-floor level. A painted wooden beam, with two rectangular mounting grooves, is still visible embedded in the flat ceiling. It may be a relic from a timber frame staircase, probably introduced during the eighteenth century together with the interior painted decoration.²¹

¹⁹ This investigation might explain the constructive relation between the late sixteenth castle and the early seventeenth century building phase, a subject which didn't receive any attention, but which can reveal the seventeenth century architectural conception of the castle as an extension of a previous sixteenth century keep, or other type of shape. A similar case was unveiled at the Bethlen residence from Țopa (see Cosnean 2014).

²⁰ These vaults are most probably a nineteenth century intervention. Unfortunately, no restoration has been yet documented in the archives dating later than eighteenth century, yet the on-site observations and the local people testimonies confess about even more recent works during the twentieth century: replacing the timber frame stairs on the front façade after an important fire during the sixties; introducing a concrete beam on top of the walls, visible in the attic; “remodelling” the north-eastern balcony with a concrete structure. The lack of iconographical representation of this castle side makes the assessing of the originality for this balcony very difficult.

²¹ Recent renovation works carried out by the private owner without any authorized documentation of intervention, and without skilled restorers, introduces an antique style of interior decoration, which makes the originality of decorative elements questionable. Thus, also this painted wooden beam must be carefully analysed before any further action. Another misleading element can be the carved timber door at the entrance of the castle, which uses a Renaissance type of decorative vocabulary, with a heraldic shield on top, displaying a monogram composed by two letters: C-N, the initials of the current owner: Claudiu Necșulescu...

The carved stone frames decorating two doors from the ground-floor level and three from the second floor, and a stone fireplace have been related to the work of the very active mason's workshop in Cluj.²²

Functionality aspects

An inventory of historical monuments from Romania, initiated by the Historical Monuments Direction (DMI) in 1962, included the residence from Cetatea de Baltă, and as a result a set of schematic architectural surveys still survives in the archive of the National Institute of Heritage.²³ The graphical representations of the castle consist of the second floor plan and a characteristic section, both at scale 1:200. The second floor plan becomes the classic illustration for this castle's architecture, being published repeatedly afterwards,²⁴ without any explicit mention that it represented the second floor layout. The 1994 inventory,²⁵ for example, completes this drawing with elements from the site plan (the edge of the surrounding ditch), treating it as the ground-floor plan. There is though an important difference between the spatial organisation of the ground- and first-floor and the second floor (Figs. 4, 5). A passageway ca. 2 m wide, interposed between the two rooms of the central bay, connects the adjacent spaces at the first two levels,²⁶ while at the second floor it simply disappears, leaving a six room spatial composition in a perfect symmetry. Here, the four side-spaces are each functioning together with the adjacent rounded corner room, like four distinctive units (Fig. 6), separated and in the same time connected by the larger central bay spaces. The rounded corner rooms are the most secluded spaces in relation to the access and circulation diagram, most suited thus for the living quarter (especially on the second floor, offering at the same time a resplendent view over the landscape).

The seventeenth century inventory offers an enumeration of all the interior spaces with a short description and sometimes even the name, though without specifying their precise location.²⁷ The basement comprised storage spaces with food and drinks (e.g.: “a large interior cellar”, “the northern corner cellar”, “the eastern corner cellar”), while on the ground floor and the first floor the inventories mention spaces functioning as servants' living spaces (e.g.: “governor's house”, “cupbearers' house”) and the kitchen.²⁸ The so-called “palaces” were oriented towards the eastern part of the castle, consisting of a “house of the lady”, the audience hall – “the palace” –, and a dining hall. They were most probably situated at the third level of the castle, as the south and east corner rooms were especially marked by carved stone door frames at the entrances only at this level, suggesting thus a special character. The exterior decoration of the castle marks as well the special



Fig. 6. Entrance to the second floor of the western corner tower. Cetatea de Baltă (Letiția Cosnean Nistor, 2012).

²² Kovács 2006, p. 130.

²³ INP-DMI 1962.

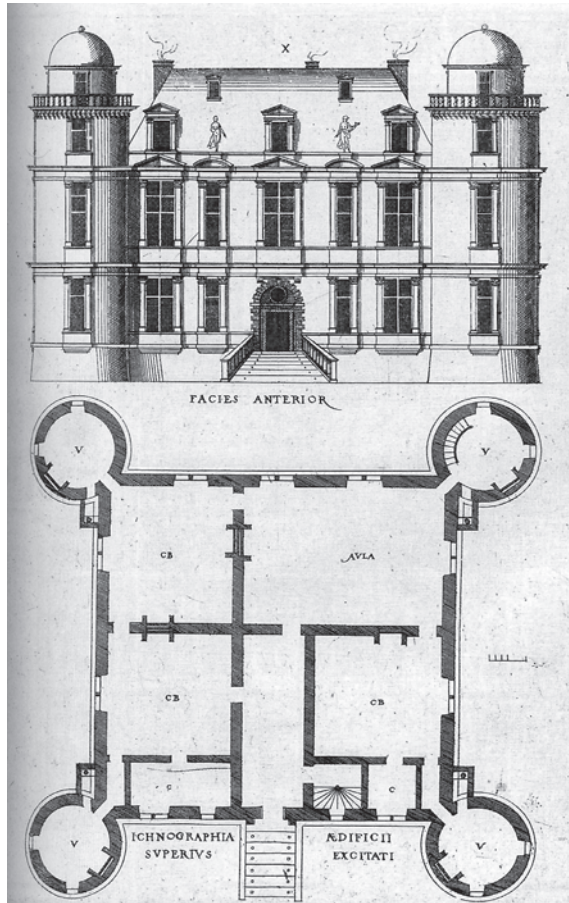
²⁴ Vătășianu 1970, p. 160; KÖH 1994; Kovács 2006, fig. 228. This drawing was first published by V. Vătășianu in *Istoria artelor plastice*, without indicating the author of the survey or its source. An inventory of Transylvanian castles realized in 1994 (*Erdélyi kastélyok, felmérési dokumentáció*, Budapest) presents the same representation. A. Kovács uses the same drawing, indicating as the source the work of Vătășianu. The identic representations of these three drawings make us believe that the 1962 survey is the source for all subsequent illustrations.

²⁵ KÖH 1994.

²⁶ According to the cross section from the survey of INP-DMI 1962.

²⁷ Prodan 1987, pp. 472–475, inventories from 1691, 1693, 1694, 1700.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 472.



character of this particular, by treating the first two levels (the ground-floor and the first floor) as a socle, and the third level, separated by a roll moulded string course, as the *piano nobile* of the castle.

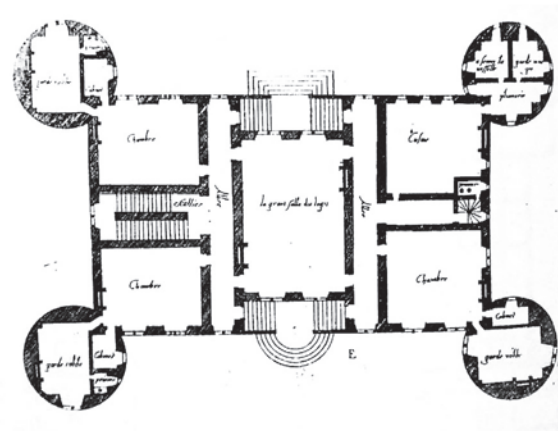
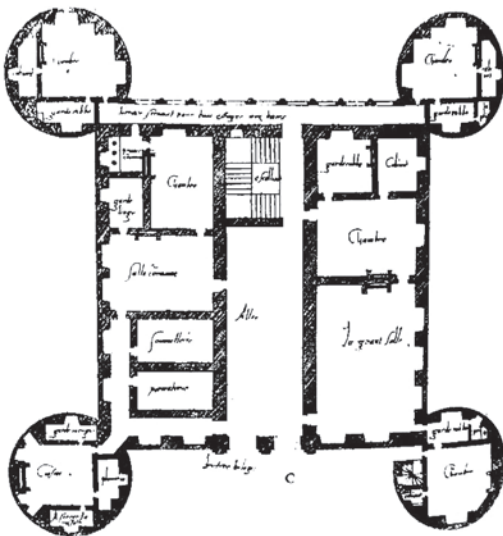
Analogies

J. Biró has argued for a French influence on the architecture of this type of noble residences, on the basis of the direct diplomatic relations between Transylvania and France during the seventeenth century; the author indicates a series of possible analogies, residences built at the beginning of the sixteenth century: Chambord, Le Lude, Azay-le-Rideau, and Gençay respectively.²⁹ A. Kovács emphasizes the influence of Italian architects active in the service of the Transylvanian Prince at the Alba Iulia princely court during the seventeenth century, who were familiar with architectural theoretical treatises of the period.³⁰

It is worth mentioning three engravings from sixteenth century French books on architecture, proposing architectural solutions for domestic architecture very similar to that of the noble residence from Cetatea de Baltă – a central body framed by rounded corner towers (Figs. 7, 8).

Fig. 7. Engraving presenting the elevation and ground plan of a building with corner towers. J. A. Du Cerceau, X. Project (Freigang, Kreimer, p. 223).

Fig. 8. Engravings presenting two ground plans of buildings with corner towers. J. A. Du Cerceau, type C and F (Thomson 1992, fig. 12).



²⁹ Biró 1943, p. 26. For a short history and architectural description of these castles, see Gebelin 1927, pp. 51-53, 68-74, 149-150.

³⁰ Kovács 2006, p. 132. The author considers the Italian architects active in the first half of the seventeenth century in Transylvania as followers of Bramante and Peruzzi.

These engravings are published by Jacques Androuet du Cerceau (ca. 1550),³¹ and are considered to be adoptions of Serlio's proposals adjusted to the French tradition.³² Nevertheless, they experienced a large spreading in Europe, most probably due to a rich illustration.³³ Rounded towers recall the medieval donjons, a symbol for families with historical tradition. The spatial organization proposes a clear separation between the servants' and the noble family's spaces, with the spaces allotted for accommodating the services and servants occupying a larger area than the spaces reserved for the noble family (living and ceremony).³⁴ The similarity between the noble residence from Cetatea de Baltă and this theoretical solution reflects both in the volume conception and in the interior spatial organization (the living quarter and the ceremonial spaces are restricted only to the second floor, leaving three other levels for servants and services (deposits, kitchen, defence, etc.).

Noble residences shaped in a compact prismatic volume, without an interior courtyard, and with rounded corner towers started to spread with great popularity in Upper Hungary beginning with the seventeenth century, e.g.: Beniczky castle from Dolná Mičiná (Hu: Alsómicinsye) (the façade with a loggia is a later addition), ca. 1585, 1667 (Fig. 9),³⁵ Máriássy castle in Markušovce (Hu: Márkusfalva), 1623-1634 (Fig. 10), and castles in Červený Kameň (Hu: Vöröskő), Zayugróc, Štítník (Hu: Csetnek), Zborov (Hu: Zboró), Nagysáros.³⁶ They were compared with the Austrian Renaissance residences, which had instead more slender towers.³⁷ Besides these examples, it is worth mentioning a series of residences with a simple, prismatic volume, without interior courtyard (e.g.: Thurzó-Faigel residence in Bethlenfalva, 1564-1568), or

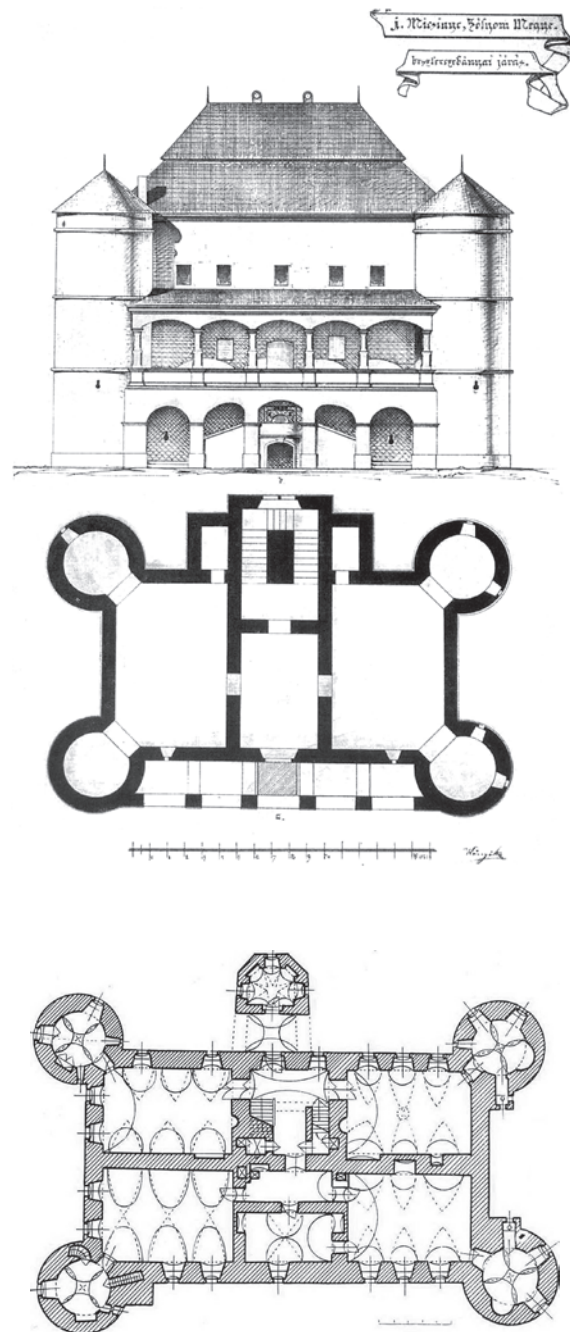


Fig. 9. Ground plan of Beniczky residence in Dolná Miciná (Hu: Alsómicinsye) (Takács 1979, fig. 1).

Fig. 10. Ground plan of Máriássy residence in Markušovce (Hu: Márkusfalva) (Takács 1979, fig. 128).

³¹ Freigang, Kreimer 2003, p. 220. Apparently, J. A. Du Cerceau was not an architectural theorist, but a publisher, relying much on the unpublished work of Serlio. His prints are providing an important collection of models, very well illustrated. He published a group of three books on house-building (1559, 1561 and 1582).

³² Thomson 1994, p. 221.

³³ *Ibidem*, p. 226.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 224.

³⁵ Takács 1970, p. 45.

³⁶ Feuer Tóth 1981, pp. 30-33.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 30.



Fig. 11. Western view of the residence. Ozd (Letiția Cosnean Nistor, 2010).



Fig. 12. Frontal view of the residence. Bahnea (KÖH photo archive no. 55866).



Fig. 13. Western view of the residence, 1960. Țopa (www.arthistoria.blogspot.com).

with only two corner towers (e.g.: Bertóthy residence in Frics, 1623-1630; Alaghy-Mágócsy residence in Pácín, 1560's).

We find this type of residence appearing quite rapidly in Transylvania too, one of the first examples being the castle from Cetatea de Baltă (ca. 1625), and other two seventeenth century noble residence: the Rádak-Pekri residence in Ozd (Fig. 11) and the Bethlen residence in Bahnea (Fig. 12). Of smaller dimensions and having polygonal corner towers, the Bethlen residence in Țopa fits in the same formal category (Fig. 13). The residence in Sânmiclăuș follows a similar pattern – compact, prismatic volume without interior courtyard, marked by rectangular corner towers, but its original conception appears to be the result of a more complex set of influences.³⁸ We consider interesting to notice that Bahnea, Ozd and Sânmiclăuș are situated in the rather close vicinity of Cetatea de Baltă (ca. 35, 15, and respectively 10 km).

The choice for polygonal and rounded corner towers may be related both to their defence attributes (enfilading the adjoining wall faces, and avoiding “dead angles”),³⁹ but in the same time their architecture recalls a traditional medieval type of construction, being thus an element of identity and a testimony of the noble family historical continuity. There are frequent examples of polygonal towers in the noble residences' architecture of Transylvania: the princely castle in Făgăraș, Bethlen residence in Criș (octagonal), Apafi residence in Dumbrăveni (dodecagonal), Kemény residence in Brâncovenești, Bethlen residence in Țopa and Sânpaul (heptagonal), Kornis residence in Mănăstirea, Lázár residence din Lăzarea (hexagonal), Haller residence in Hoghiz (hexagonal), Bethlen residence in Racoș, etc.

Castles with rounded corner towers in seventeenth century Transylvania

The similarity in shape of this group of seventeenth century Transylvanian castles – the noble residence in Cetatea de Baltă, Bahnea, and Ozd – was widely acknowledged. Nevertheless, a more detailed analysis of their architecture (spatial organization, decoration, patrons or building stages) reveals a more complex relation between these buildings, even though information regarding the architects,

³⁸ Ottenheim 2013, pp. 222-223, Cosnean 2014, pp. 140-143.

³⁹ Anghel 1972, p. 96.

craftsmen or a specific model is still unknown. The seventeenth century Bethlen residence from Țopa is added to the group, as a variant of this type of building, with polygonal towers (Fig. 14).

The Bethlen residence in Bahnea. Bahnea village lies at 35 km from Cetatea de Baltă, on the left side of the river Târnava Mică. The noble residence built gradually during the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries by the Bethlen family (Farkas Bethlen and his descendants: Elek Bethlen, ca. 1617, and Elek Jr. Bethlen, ca. 1675)⁴⁰ has completely disappeared at the beginning of twentieth century (ca. 1930),⁴¹ the only sources to testify about its architecture being an eighteenth century inventory (1711),⁴² early twentieth century photographs,⁴³ and several engravings.⁴⁴ The architecture of the seventeenth century residence closely resembled the residence in Cetatea de Baltă – a compact rectangular building with a double-loaded space arrangement, framed by four rounded corner towers. The Baroque shaped roof and the entrance portico are eighteenth century additions.⁴⁵ The early eighteenth century inventories and a 1927 J. K. Sevestyén engraving⁴⁶ reveal the existence of a private chapel situated in the eastern rounded corner tower, with a richly decorated stone door frame at the entrance and with an octopartite ribbed vaulting.

The Bethlen residence in Țopa. The noble residence in Țopa lies in the adjoining region of Sighișoara (ca. 8 km), on the left side of river Târnava Mare (though originally the river was running on the opposite side of the building, forming a small peninsula).⁴⁷ Built over the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the residence follows the pattern of a compact rectangular building without interior courtyard, and framed by heptagonal corner towers. The two-story loggia of the south-western façade appears to be a late seventeenth century addition (ca. 1675), while the configuration of four polygonal corner towers framing the central three bays body is the result of the early seventeenth century patronage (Farkas Bethlen, ca. 1617 and János Bethlen, ca. 1641).⁴⁸ The eastern rounded corner room from the first floor has a large niche

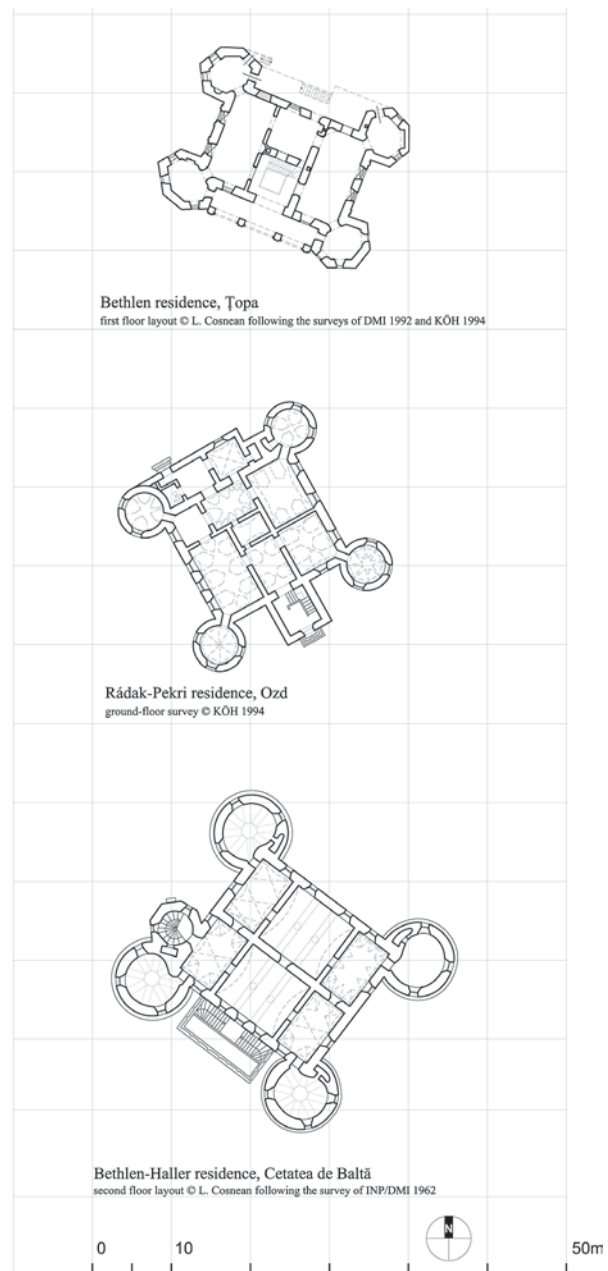


Fig. 14. Comparative view of plans. Cetatea de Baltă, Ozd and Țopa.

⁴⁰ Fülöp 2012.

⁴¹ Bicsok, Orbán 2011, p. 162.

⁴² Prodan 1968, pp.168-171.

⁴³ KÖH photo archive, no. 55866.

⁴⁴ Rohbock, Hunfalvy 1864; Lukinich 1927, figs. 136, 169, 205.

⁴⁵ Takács 1970, p. 75.

⁴⁶ Lukinich 1927, fig. 205.

⁴⁷ See *Josephinische Landesaufnahme*, 1769-1773, KA, Section 159.

⁴⁸ Cosnean 2014, pp. 143-147.

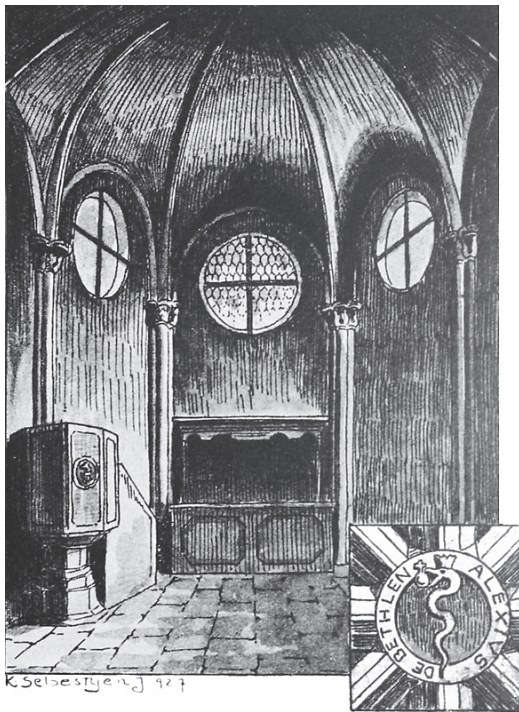


Fig. 15. Interior view of the court chapel, engraving 1927. Bahnea (Lukinich 1927, fig. 205).

on its eastern side, recalling somehow the ambry-like niche present in the eastern corner room from Cetatea de Baltă. The ruinous state of preservation of this monument⁴⁹ stopped us from identifying a special type of vaulting of this corner tower.

The Pekry-Rádák residence in Ozd. Ozd village lies ca. 30 km south-west of Iernut on an affluent valley of river Mureș. Yet, its position is more closely related to Târnava Mică valley than of Mureș, and its distance to Cetatea de Baltă, following the path of country roads, barely reaches ca. 15 km. The moment of building the noble residence on the commanding position in the south-western part of the village remained a controversial issue: sixteenth century, early seventeenth century (István Rádák I.), late seventeenth century (István Rádák II. – ca. 1682), or end of seventeenth century (Lőrinc Pekry).⁵⁰ Nevertheless, as later centuries' additions didn't change significantly the seventeenth century architecture, we can still identify the original core: an almost square layout with rounded corner towers. Similarities with the residence in Cetatea de Baltă are noticeable: a commanding position on a high platform, raised from the level of the neighbouring village; rounded corner towers oriented towards the cardinal points, marked by three windows each disposed symmetrically; entrance on the south-eastern façade. The proportions, however, are different, as the residence in Ozd is only two stories high, resembling more to the residence in Țopa.

The Renaissance moulded window frames are still preserved *in situ*, and the moulded string course encircling the building is dividing the building façades in two parts. The ground floor eastern corner room has an octopartite ribbed vaulting, reminding us of the already known solution from Cetatea de Baltă and Bahnea.

An important resemblance between these Transylvanian residences (namely Cetatea de Baltă, Ozd, Bahnea and Țopa) is the *corner towers orientation towards the cardinal points*. The ceremonial spaces of the residence in Cetatea de Baltă were located in the eastern and southern part of the castle, most probably aiming to gain the abundant sunlight during all day. Residences with double-loaded spaces have the advantage of using the sunlight in connection with the spatial and functional organization, offering a better comfort for the living spaces.⁵¹ The entrance is also located on the same side, the southern part of the building (south-west: Cetatea de Baltă and Țopa; south-east: Ozd), treated in all situations as the main façade. Not least, the explicit mention of a chapel in the eastern corner room of the residence in Bahnea (Fig. 15) impelled us to closely analyse the eastern corner rooms of the rest of residences: (1) The rounded eastern corner room from the third level of the residence in Cetatea de Baltă distinguishes itself through a bigger height than the rest of the corner rooms. The entrance is marked by a carved stone door frame; the room is covered by a flat ceiling and not a vaulted one as the other corner rooms, and a small niche (ca. 25 cm high) is spared into the wall of the eastern corner of the alcove, similar to a church ambry. The access to the lateral alcove is crowned by a stone moulded cornice (Fig. 16), distinguishing itself as well from the rest of the towers. The tower orientation towards the east, the higher ceiling (probably a former higher vault) and the special carved stone decoration of the door frames may indicate the use of this space as a private chapel.

⁴⁹ Cosnean 2011, pp. 155-156, 159.

⁵⁰ See Bicsok, Orbán 2011, p. 444; Fekete 2007, p. 105; Keresztes 1997, p. 51; Horváth 1971, pp. 24-26.

⁵¹ Waddy 1990, p. 16.

(2) Likewise, the rounded eastern corner from the ground floor level of the residence in Ozd shows a distinctive architectural feature from the rest of the rooms: the vaulting. An octopartite ribbed vaulting covers the space, in a star-like shape, different from the vaulting in the rest of the corner rooms. (3) In the case of Țopa, as the first level vaulting is missing (the ceremonial level), one can only note the presence in the eastern corner room of an ample niche oriented eastwards.

The connection between the central building and the corner towers is not a unitary feature: the residence in Cetatea de Baltă solved the access to corner towers through openings in the perimeter wall of the central block, the rounded towers appearing as adjoined to the central body; however, the residences in Ozd and Țopa present a more evolved solution of connecting the two structures, in diagonal, similar to the solution displayed in the sixteenth century French engravings.

Their building construction, even though still controversial, extends between 1617 and the last decade of the seventeenth century. The residences in Bahnea and Țopa have patrons from the same Bethlen family (Farkas Bethlen, Elek Bethlen, János Bethlen), and probably it is not merely coincidence that the first mention of a residence construction in both cases was patronized by the same Farkas Bethlen, and dates to 1617 (as finished), while another building phase dates to 1675.⁵²

The exterior decoration is characterized by an austere, simple treatment: moulded stone window frames, a three level horizontal structuring of the façades corresponding to the basement level (a socle), the median level (*piano nobile*) and the attic level, with the roof supported by a parapet with loopholes (Cetatea de Baltă, Țopa). The moulded string course encircles the buildings, as a common feature for all them, and the towers have three windows equably disposed (Cetatea de Baltă, Ozd and Bahnea).

The common architectural features in the composition of the noble residences from Cetatea de Baltă, Bahnea, Ozd and Țopa indicate a possible common conception. The relatively close interval of construction, most probably in the first half of the seventeenth century, makes them contemporary with a number of edifices in the neighbouring parts of Upper Hungary. As the sixteenth century engravings show, this type of residence saw a wide spread in Western Europe too. The architects and craftsmen commissioned by Prince Gábor Bethlen to work in Transylvania during the second and third decade of the seventeenth century might have mediated the transfer of this model. Not least, the identification of private chapels in the eastern corner towers could be a starting point in researching the way in which the sixteenth century Reformation changed the architecture of the court chapel and how it continued to exist as an element of noble confessional identity.



Fig. 16. Second floor eastern corner tower. Entrance to the adjacent alcove. Cetatea de Baltă (Cosnean Nistor, 2012).

⁵² Buzogány 2002, pp. 26-28; Fülöp 2012.

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