

# MEDIEVAL HERITAGE FROM TÂRGȘORU VECHI. AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL OVERVIEW OF 50 YEARS OF RESEARCH

*“Only ruins of churches, which rise solitarily, illustrate today where the flourishing Târgșor of the 15<sup>th</sup> century was...” (Giurescu 1943, p. 443).*

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**Abstract:** One of the important Wallachian medieval towns, Târgșoru was, at a certain moment, the most involved in the commercial relations with Brașov. Due to this Târgșoru was first mentioned in medieval documents 600 years ago. Its medieval ruins, and the vestiges of three churches in particular, were those to first draw the attention of historians and architects. The archaeologists started their work here more than half a century ago. Those investigations succeeded to give us a better understanding over many aspects of the old town of Târgșor. In the present paper we try to briefly present the development of the archaeological research at the site, to identify the investigated medieval monuments and to draw a possible scenario for the chronological evolution of the medieval town.

**Rezumat:** Târgșorul a fost unul dintre importante orașe muntene medievale și, la un moment dat, cel mai implicat în relația comercială cu Brașovul. Datorită acestui fapt Târgșorul apare menționat în documente încă de acum 600 de ani. Ruinele medievale existente aici, dintre care se remarcă vestigiile a trei biserici, au atras mai întâi atenția istoricilor și arhitecților. Acum mai bine de o jumătate de veac au început cercetările arheologice la Târgșoru Vechi. Acestea au reușit să contureze mai bine diferite aspecte ale vechiului Târgșor. În lucrarea de față se încearcă prezentarea, succintă, a felului cum a evoluat cercetarea, care au fost monumentele investigate precum și o posibilă evoluție cronologică a orașului medieval.

Half a century ago archaeological research was starting at Târgșoru Vechi.<sup>1</sup> It was only one of many archaeological sites that were part of a scientific programme undertaken by the “Vasile Pârvan” Institute of Archaeology. Since then, the medieval town of Târgșor came to light and revealed some of its secrets.

One of the oldest towns of Wallachia, Târgșoru is mentioned in documents since 1413, when Mircea the Elder issued an obligation to pay the fish custom tax to merchants from Brașov, in *Novum Forum*.<sup>2</sup> In another document, given in 1424 by Dan II, to confirm the document of Mircea the Elder, the equivalence in *Traxsor videlicet in Novo Foro* is mentioned, which certifies that *Novo Foro* is in fact Târgșor, a name conserved till today.<sup>3</sup>

At the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Târgșoru appears in the list of voivodal towns. This mention dating from 1517, in a document of Neagoe Basarab, is related again to the commercial relations between Wallachia and Brașov.<sup>4</sup> The same document attests the fact that Târgșoru was at that time one of three towns that had the right of deposit (*ius stapuli*, *Stappelrecht*).<sup>5</sup>

The commercial importance of Târgșor comes out also from the fact that from here depart, in 1502, a number of 83 saleable transports to Brașov, more than those from Câmpulung or Târgoviște.<sup>6</sup>

Despite of all those commercial rights and privileges, Târgșor, that once was part of a strategic line of settlements,<sup>7</sup> stops evolving in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and slowly disappears.<sup>8</sup>

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century ruins of three churches were still visible in the former area of the medieval town. In 1908 N. Iorga published a description of the portraits of the churches founders and their

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<sup>1</sup> For an overview see Damian *et alii* 2007, pp. 177-182.

<sup>2</sup> Bogdan 1902, p. 5 (only Romanian translation); Bogdan 1905, p. 5 (Slavonic text and Romanian translation).

<sup>3</sup> Giurescu 1943, p. 441.

<sup>4</sup> Bogdan 1902, p. 152, no. CLIII.

<sup>5</sup> Cantacuzino 2011, p. 32.

<sup>6</sup> Giurescu 1973, p. 171.

<sup>7</sup> Harhoiu 1997, p. 23.

<sup>8</sup> Petrescu-Sava 1937, Potra, Simache 1969.