

THE ARCHITECTURAL PATRONAGE OF MIKLÓS BETHLEN IN LATE SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY TRANSYLVANIA

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Keywords: patronage, architectural treatises, noble residences architecture, nobility, Early Modern Transylvania, architectural surveys, Miklós Bethlen, Nicolaus Goldmann, Adam Freitrag.

Abstract: Analysing the architectural patronage of the noble Miklós Bethlen in Late Renaissance Transylvania, this article sheds light upon the scope of a noble building patronage in Early Modern Transylvania, reflecting at the same time the exceptional case of a patron playing the role of the architect. Miklós Bethlen is an exceptional figure of late seventeenth-century Transylvanian nobility, active both on the political scene and on the cultural one. He is better known due to the memoirs he has written during his last years spent in prison in Vienna, and published for the first time in the middle of the nineteenth century. His architectural patronage became a landmark for the Transylvanian architectural history. The Bethlen castle in Sânmiclăuș (Alba county) represents an iconic building for his architectural patronage, built from the ground up following his plans and supervision. Nevertheless, his patronage extended to other less known buildings as well.

This paper aims at identifying the building patronage of Miklós Bethlen on the basis of his memories, but also analysing the architectural context of late seventeenth-century noble residences from Transylvania. His architectural conceptions are re-evaluated as well following the novel observations of Professor Konrad Ottenheim who call attention to the direct relation between the residence from Sânmiclăuș and the architectural theory promoted by Nicolaus Goldmann in Leiden. Moreover, following the analysis of original drawings by Goldmann and the spatial disposition of the residence in Țopa, the article suggests the hypothesis that Miklós Bethlen has contributed as well to the third building phase of the noble residence from Țopa (ca. 1675).

Rezumat: Patronajul arhitectural al nobilului Miklós Bethlen reflectă aspecte importante despre anvergura patronajului nobiliar în Transilvania la sfârșit de secol XVII, dar mărturisește și despre cazul excepțional al unui comanditar care joacă în același timp și rolul arhitectului. Miklós Bethlen este o personalitate de excepție a nobilimii transilvănene, care s-a evidențiat pe plan politic și cultural, recunoscut în literatura de specialitate atât datorită memoriilor sale, scrise în captivitate în Viena (cca. 1708-1710), dar și datorită clădirilor patronate. Reședința Bethlen din Sânmiclăuș (județul Alba) a devenit emblema patronajului său arhitectural, construită în întregime pe baza planurilor sale și sub atenta sa supraveghere. Cu toate acestea, Miklós Bethlen patronează și alte clădiri mai puțin cunoscute, dar care se pot identifica pe baza memoriilor sale.

Studiul urmărește să identifice patronajul arhitectural al nobilului Miklós Bethlen pe baza memoriilor sale, dar și prin analiza arhitecturală a contextului oferit de reședințele nobiliare construite la sfârșitul secolului al XVII-lea. În același timp, articolul își propune să evidențieze concepția arhitecturală care a stat la baza proiectelor sale, pornind de la studiul cunoscutului cercetător olandez Konrad Ottenheim (aflat în curs de apariție), care semnaleză legătura directă dintre planul reședinței din Sânmiclăuș și teoria arhitecturală promovată de profesorul Nicolaus Goldmann din Leiden, al cărui curs de arhitectură civilă și perspectivă îl urmează și Miklós Bethlen în timpul studiilor sale din Leiden. Astfel, deschiderea spre gândirea europeană de arhitectură a Renașterii târzie a nobililor maghiari și-a găsit o expresie particulară în activitatea arhitectului și nobilului Miklós Bethlen, care a diseminat prin patronajul său de arhitectură ideile teoretice ale profesorului Nicolaus Goldmann. De asemenea, pe baza analogiilor cu scheme de planuri și fațade predate de Goldmann, prezentul studiu formulează o nouă ipoteză privind concepția arhitecturală care a generat ansamblul de la Țopa, sugerând implicarea directă a nobilului Miklós Bethlen în ultima etapă constructivă din secolul al XVII-lea a reședinței sale natale (cca. 1675).

“(...) I had a special leaning for building, the more so as I had learnt both civil and military architecture at academies; moreover I had seen many beautiful houses in Christian countries, and, as the eldest son, I also inherited deserted lands, therefore even if I didn't like them, I would have been forced to build.” (fragment from the autobiographical work of Miklós Bethlen).¹

Historical background

The Hungarian nobleman Miklós Bethlen (1642, Țopa - †1716, Vienna) was an exceptional Transylvanian personality - an astute politician, a man of letters, and last but not least an architect. He was born in the Late-Renaissance residence of the Bethlen family in Țopa village (Hu: Kisbún),² the son of

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¹ Bethlen 2004, p. 58.

² Currently the village of Țopa (name variants: Ro: Boiu-Mic, Hu: Alsóbún, Kisbún) is no longer in the vicinity of the castle, but is situated at a distance of ca. 4 km to the north-west. The cartographic representation of this geographic area in the eighteenth century - the first Austrian military survey (see *Josephinische Landaufnahme*, 1769-1773, KA, Section 159) - illustrates a small village on the eastern side of the castle, all surrounded by the sinuous course of the Târnava Mare river. The village consisted of around 13 plots, most probably the servants' households.

János Bethlen, a prestigious historian and humanist, and of Borbára Varádi, daughter of a wealthy and respected patrician from Cluj.³ János Bethlen had an active role in the political scene of seventeenth-century Transylvania: deputy since 1648, princely councillor (1658-1678), and chancellor (1659). He wrote an important historical chronicle of the political events from the Transylvanian Principality between 1629 and 1673: *Rerum Transylvanicarum libri quatuor continens res gestas principum eiusdem ab anno 1629 usque ad annum 1663* and *Historia rerum Transylvanicarum ab anno 1662-73*.⁴ Moreover, János Bethlen distinguished himself as an important patron of Protestant schools (Odorhei, Târgu Mureș, and Aiud),⁵ equally investing in a truly humanist education for his eldest son, Miklós Bethlen. Miklós Bethlen continued his father's political career, holding the offices of general captain of Odorhei Seat (1660-1667), *comes* of Turda (1651-1656), Târnave (1656-1662; 1658-1658), and Alba counties (1662-1678).⁶ He also continued the intense architectural patronage of his predecessors by building several new residences and supporting the reformed colleges from Cluj, Aiud, and Târgu Mureș. Moreover, the Bethlen noble courts gradually became important places for the promotion of Protestant ecclesiastical figures.⁷

Miklós Bethlen became an important figure in the political and cultural life of Transylvania in the second half of the seventeenth-century, after ending his tumultuous period of travelling and study, characterized by frequent interruptions due to internal conflicts, but gathering an exceptional experience in diplomacy. He studied in Heidelberg, Utrecht, Leiden (1661-1663), and travelled throughout all of Western Europe (Vienna, Heidelberg, Hague, Rotterdam, Utrecht, Leiden, London, Paris, Lyon, Venice, etc.).⁸

The years spent abroad in peregrination (May 1661 – June 1664) brought him in contact with different personalities (ecclesiastics, dignitaries, and noblemen), most probably due to the fact that the noble status was acknowledged throughout Europe.⁹ Thus, in Vienna he stayed at the Golden Stag and was invited to dine with Dénes Bánffi, came in contact with György Szelepcény (chancellor, bishop of Kalocsa and Esztergom), and frequented the imperial palace.¹⁰ In Heidelberg, elector Carolus Ludovicus became his patron,¹¹ and Joachimus Camerarius, former dignitary at the Swedish and Czech courts became his tutor.¹² In London he was received in the homes of several noblemen and even met the King Charles II, Rupert the Duke of York and the Rhine Palatine. His stay in London was very expensive as he wanted to integrate at the noble courts, therefore he and his companions were forced to buy special clothes and cover their accommodation and expenses in grand style.¹³ In Paris, he first came in contact with the marshal of France, the prince and Reformed preacher Turenne, upon Vilhelmus Curtius' written recommendation. The latter was the advisor of Frederik V of the Czechs. But as an armed campaign against the Ottomans was under way in the eastern part of Europe with the support of France, the King himself was interested in meeting Miklós Bethlen and gave him the mission to deliver an official letter for the Transylvanian prince.¹⁴

³ Bethlen 2004, p. 51.

⁴ Bicsok, Orbán 2011, p. 172; Keresztes 1995, p. 53.

⁵ Bethlen 2004, p. 51.

⁶ Trocsány 1980, p. 25.

⁷ Toth 2009, pp. 24-25.

⁸ Bethlen 2004, pp. 99-105. "I saw very large, beautiful cities, but I swear I do not know the point of just seeing many stone walls and people. *Qui multorum momres videt et urbes [He who saw the manners of many men and cities], that is something useful.*"

⁹ Dewald 1996, pp. 2-3. The European nobility shared a common lifestyle, mentality, and privileges in different and varied cultural milieus, favored by a close and continuous contact (including the eastern regions). The common values expressed through behavior, dress codes, and beliefs were also reflected through the acknowledgement of the noble status all over Europe.

¹⁰ Bethlen 2004, p. 94. "(...) he had left word for all the doormen to let me enter [i.e. in the palace] (...) and then I was able to move freely in the waiting rooms".

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 95, "elector Carolus Ludovicus was a very good master to me, graceful, often invited me for dinner, especially on Sundays, took me on his horse or with him in his calash, him in the back and me in the front, and as we were almost always alone there, he talked to me a lot, full of amiability".

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 95. Joachimus Camerarius was secretary and councilor to King Frederic V and Gustav Adolf, the king of Sweden.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 102.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 105.

The European travels gave him several occasions to see important monuments of architecture, and residential architecture. He mentions visiting the imperial palace in Vienna, the residence of elector Carolus Ludovicus in Heidelberg, the manor house of dignitary Joachimus Camerarius near Utrecht,¹⁵ the royal academy, palace and library in Paris, the Tuileries Gardens, the parliament, “*the good order and luxury of other houses of administration*”.¹⁶ During his stay in London he visited the royal residences in Hampton Court and Windsor and the famous academy in Oxonium [*i.e.* Oxford].¹⁷ Shortly after his return from abroad (June - December 1664), he left to fight the Habsburgs at Miklós Zrínyi’s side, “*the most famous valiant Hungarian gentleman*”, being hosted by Miklós Zrínyi at his palace in Čakovec (Hu: Csáktornya).¹⁸ The eagerness to take part in the military conflicts at Zrínyi’s side announced already the Anti-Habsburg position of Miklós Bethlen, which was to become one of the main directions of his activity, though he often concealed his views with diplomatic ability. His travels ended in Venice where he spent two months, visiting the Arsenal, the House of Guilds, St. Mark’s Basilica, the glass manufacture in Murano, etc.¹⁹

His activity as a writer started with the publication of several anonymous political pamphlets aiming to inform the European public on the abuses of the Counter Reformation in Hungary.²⁰ During the troubled period of the end of the seventeenth-century, Miklós Bethlen represented Transylvania in the negotiations from Vienna regarding the Leopoldine Diploma (1691), granting the preservation of certain political and social privileges of the Transylvania social elites. But in 1704 Bethlen published another anonymous political pamphlet aiming to obtain the support of the ambassadors of the Low Countries and England in Vienna against the imperial politics, but the pamphlet was intercepted by the Austrians, and even though his political views were known in Vienna by King Leopold I himself, he was imprisoned for treason and spent his last years in prison. He wrote his autobiographical work there (1708-1710), which became a milestone in the history of literature,²¹ and an important source for anthropological investigations regarding the Transylvanian society from the seventeenth-century.²² The memoirs illustrates details of social, political and economical life in Transylvania, providing at the same time valuable information regarding the education, the travels and the architectural patronage of Miklós Bethlen. His memoirs have attracted more attention to literature historians regarding his contribution to the history of literature, and less from the architectural history perspective. Published for the first time in 1858 on the basis of different copies preserved in the archives, and later in 1955, 1980 and 1986 after Eva V. Windisch discovered an original fragment,²³ we owe the first Romanian integral translation to Francisc Pap.²⁴

The architectural training of Miklós Bethlen

Miklós Bethlen’s studies, both in Transylvania and abroad, covered a wide array of topics – rhetoric, logics, arithmetic and Euclidian geometry, juridical sciences, world history, astronomy, physics and theology, German and French languages, and last but not least architecture. The first architectural courses provided him with an introduction to notions of military architecture – *fortificatio, militaris architectura* – under the guidance of the mathematics professor Wasner in Utrecht, an “*old man, a drunkard, but a very famous person*”.²⁵ It was on

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 95: “[Joachimus Camerarius] owned a beautiful manor house on the shores of Neckar, beyond the city [Utrecht].”

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 106.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 102.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 107.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 111.

²⁰ Rozsondai 2004: *Justi de Palma Florentini Austriae austeritatis, ejusdemque. Continuationis confirmatio. Venetiis*, Kolozsvár, 1672, *Apologia ministrorum evangelicorum ad innocentiam suam orbi Christiano declarandam*, Kolozsvár, 1677; *Moribunda Transylvania*, 1687; *Corona muralis Josepho I. a regio gubernio et toto populo Transylvanico oblata*, Claudiopoli, 1703.

²¹ Nagy 1994; Kovács 1994.

²² Toth 2007.

²³ Bethlen 2004, p. 9.

²⁴ Nicolae Bethlen, *Descrierea vieții sale de către el însuși*, Cluj-Napoca, 2004.

²⁵ Bethlen 2004, p. 96.

that occasion that he came in contact with Adam Freitag's work *Architectura militaris nova et aucta...* (Leiden, 1631). But it was the private courses of Professor Nicolaus Goldmann he attended in Leiden which proved most influential to his future architectural patronage in Transylvania.

Gábor Haller (1614-1663), close friend and political partner of János Bethlen, followed a similar pattern in his peregrination thirty years before; therefore one cannot exclude the possibility that he was the model in young nobleman Miklós' formation and choice of school curricula. Following the usual itinerary of a young Transylvanian nobleman, Gábor Haller started his apprenticeship at the princely court, strongly dominated by the party of Protestant noblemen, political adversaries of his father, István Haller. It was under the pressure of this environment that he chose to convert to Calvinism in 1630, and therefore spent the subsequent five years at German and Netherlandish Protestant universities (Frankfurt, Franeker, and Leiden).²⁶ Restricted by modest financial resources, Gábor Haller did not follow the ample itinerary of his predecessor Péter Bethlen (nephew of Prince Gábor Bethlen), but he compensated for this drawback by attending new and varied courses (mathematics, military architecture, and theory of the state).²⁷ His contact with the work on military architecture written by Adam Freitag, *Architectura...*, published during his stay in Leiden (1631), proved essential for his future career as military architect in Transylvania, designing the defensive systems of several fortifications in Transylvania.²⁸ He reconstructed the castle in Ineu and contributed to the design of the fortifications in Gherla, Făgăraș, Gheorgheni, Oradea, Gilău, Sárospatak, and Săcuieni (Hu: Székelyhíd) (ca. 1638-1642, demolished in 1665),²⁹ in which one can identify Gábor Haller's attempt to adapt the Netherlandish fortifications.

Adam Freitag was a mathematician and military engineer of Polish origin who was active in the university milieu of Leiden at the *Duytsche Mathematique*, the Netherlandish Institute of Mathematics, founded in 1600 by prince Maurice of Nassau.³⁰ In 1631 Freitag published the first edition of his theoretical work on military fortifications, *Architectura militaris nova et aucta, oder Newe vermehrte Fortification von Regular Vestungen, von Irregular Vestungen und Hussen wercken, Von praxi Offensiva und Defensiva*, Leiden, durch Adamum Freitag. The work includes a series of mathematic calculations meant to ease the designing of fortifications and was considered "*the canon of seventeenth-century fortifications*",³¹ but it also provided a historical perspective on the development of regular and irregular polygonal fortifications. Gábor Haller owned a Latin copy of this treatise and he used it as a guide in designing the fortifications.³² Miklós Bethlen would also translate Freitag's treatise from German during his studies in Holland: "*I was very happy about this science [architecture] and for this reason I translated from German into Latin Adam Freytag's Architectura; it is still among my papers, if it was not somehow lost.*"³³

Miklós Bethlen came in contact with another personality in the field of architectural theory, Nicolaus Goldmann (1611-1665), an "*old German*",³⁴ a private tutor in Leiden who taught mathematics, military architecture, and architectural theory, less ordinary topics at the time. The courses provided an introduction to the theory of classical architectural orders, architectural drawing, and design techniques.³⁵ Considered the "*Scamozzi of the Northern Countries*", Nicolaus Goldmann shaped a genuine architectural theory adapted to the needs and specific cultural and geographic conditions of the Northern Countries, on the basis of the architectural theories formulated by Vitruvius (editions Rivius, 1548, Daniele Barbaro,

²⁶ Kenyeres 2001.

²⁷ Szábo 2008, p. 3.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 6.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 5-6; Biró 1943, p. 49.

³⁰ Goudeau 2007.

³¹ Grafton *et alii* 2010, p. 977.

³² Szabó 2008, pp. 5-6.

³³ Bethlen 2004, p. 96.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 98.

³⁵ Goudeau 2006-2007, p. 236.

1556, and de Laet's, 1649), Alberti, Serlio, Vignola, Palladio, and Scamozzi, covering in a comprehensive manner the entire field of architecture (civil and military architecture, the classical orders, and building typologies).³⁶ Recent studies have indicated that the impact of Goldmann's theories spread in Central and Eastern Europe as well, through his former Protestant students coming from these provinces.³⁷ Though it remained unpublished during his lifetime, Goldmann's architectural theory enjoyed a wide dissemination in the Northern Countries starting with the first half of the eighteenth century, once the four books of his works were published posthumously.³⁸ The final book in the series includes a comprehensive analysis of the functionality and shape of all types of buildings, being one of the earliest construction typologies in the theory of architecture in the northern regions.³⁹

The architectural patronage

Miklós Bethlen built and renovated several residences in Transylvania: he repaired the house in Turda "with spindle-shaped balcony pillars";⁴⁰ in 1668 he advised on the building works patronized by his father, János Bethlen, at the noble residence in Criş;⁴¹ between 1667 and 1698 he built from the ground up the residence in Sânmiclăuş together with the surrounding fortifications according to his own project; he renovated the manor house in Zăbala (ca. 1680); and in the end, between 1701 and 1703, he built a new house in Alba, near the Apor palace, a three-level high building, surrounded by a complex of gardens (flower, vegetables, and fruit gardens).⁴² One can find important information regarding his patronage in his autobiography, but quite unequally represented: if in the case of his own residence in Sânmiclăuş there is rather few information regarding the building site planning and the masters employed (one can only find mention of a certain Tobias, an old German mason), the description of the building site in Alba offers many more details; he enumerates, for example, teams of masons, carpenters, stucco painters, plumbers ("those with the pipes"), locksmiths, blacksmiths, potters, and roof tile makers (including a Gypsy brick maker from Vienna) taking part in the building of the new residence. The description is also relevant for the types of finishing works and decorations employed: door and window frames ("stone blocks for doors and windows"), locks and iron fittings brought from Vienna.

The noble residence in Criş

One of the first building projects that Miklós Bethlen mentions in his memoirs is the Bethlen noble residence in Criş (Hu. Keresd, Mureş county), patronized by his father, János Bethlen, who spent the last years of his life there, after leaving the Sânmiclăuş estate as inheritance to Miklós Bethlen, and the Țopa residence to his other son, Pál Bethlen. Miklós Bethlen, recently returned from his travelling and studying abroad, became directly involved in the coordination of these works started in 1668, which can be localized in the

³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 235; Evers, Zimmer 2003, p. 552. Books: I. General principles (*Von den allgemeinen Anfängen*), II. The Five Orders (*Von den fünf Ordnungen*), III. On the inside of buildings (*Von der inneren Eintheilung*), IV. Types of buildings (*Von den gantzen Wercken*).

³⁷ Ottenheim, De Jonge 2014.

³⁸ Goudeau 2006-2007, p. 238; Evers, Zimmer 2003, p. 550. The publication of his works was possible due to the fact that some of his disciples have preserved their class notes, together with the original manuscripts written by Goldmann (ca. 10 copies discovered in Germany and Denmark). The class notes included tests and sketches made by Goldmann himself. Between 1696 and 1699 the German architect Leonhard Cristoph Sturm edited Goldmann's unpublished principle work, bringing some transformations to Goldmann's original treatises. The work publishes was entitled *Nicolai Goldmanns vollständige Anweisung zu der Civil-Bau-Kunst: in welcher nicht nur die 5 Ordnungen samt den dazu gehörigen Fenster-Gesimsen ... auf eine neue und sonderbare Art aufzureissen deutlich gewiesen, sondern zugleich getreulich entdecket wird ... ; alles aus den besten Überresten des Alterthums, aus den au*, Braunschweig, 1699 [*Complete Instructions on Civilian Architecture...*].

³⁹ Goudeau 2006-2007, p. 239.

⁴⁰ Bethlen 2004, p. 264.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 58-59.

⁴² *Ibidem*, pp. 264-265.



Fig. 1. Heraldic block at Bethlen residence in Criș.

western wing, the one with the arcaded gallery.⁴³ We cannot know with certainty if these works really refer to the building of the arcaded gallery itself, as the period of building remains controversial, or rather to the now collapsed western wing. Nevertheless, the arcaded portico was most probably built during the chronological interval between 1657 and 1668, as more recent studies suggest,⁴⁴ and not earlier, in the sixteenth century, under the patronage of György Bethlen.⁴⁵

Moreover, a heraldic stone block bearing the inscription with the year 1669 and the name of János Bethlen has been attributed by scholars to the Bethlen patronage at the residence in Țopa, assuming somehow that it migrated later to the residence in Criș (Fig. 1).⁴⁶ In the light of the less known architectural patronage of János Bethlen at the residence in Criș in the year of 1668,⁴⁷ and considering as well the fact that he spent the last years of his life there, I consider this item another testimony regarding the building patronage of János Bethlen at his residence in Criș. Moreover, it is important to mention that the chronological interval between 1668 and 1675 represents a

period of intense building works patronized by both János and Miklós Bethlen, on three important building sites: the residences in Criș (ca. 1668-1669?), Țopa (ca. 1675), and Sânmiclăuș (1667-1673).

The noble residence in Sânmiclăuș

Regarding the architectural patronage of Miklós Bethlen several different studies have already mentioned the importance of the residence in Sânmiclăuș in the history of Transylvanian architecture. V. Bierbauer noted in 1935 that the years spent abroad, travelling and studying at several western Protestant universities, have shaped the premises for the later building patronage, referring mainly to the residence he built in Sânmiclăuș.⁴⁸ Likewise, L. Kővári published a novel fragment from Miklós Bethlen's memoirs indicating the model of the French residences for the design of this particular residence.⁴⁹ The French influence on

⁴³ Bethlen 2004, pp. 58-59: "following the Transylvanian way, he wanted to execute everything with serfs, with inexperienced peasants, without money, and thus big errors insinuated in the Criș house, especially that I couldn't be present at the moment of digging the foundation, but only when the first stone was laid (...). I couldn't move it, cause they have already built two bastions towards the water, the southern and eastern structural walls, and part of the eastern walls as well, therefore I had to leave them there; (...). This is how I have indicated to build new pillars and new stone masonry walls under the exterior wall of the corridor, without harming the vaulting."

⁴⁴ Kovács 2006, p. 141, Iosipescu *et alii* 1999, p. 70. The building of the arcaded portico was associated with the second half of the seventeenth century due to a tin flag bearing the A.B. monogram (Alexius Bethlen known also as Elek Bethlen) and the date 1668 (see Lukinich 1927, p. 174, drawing by K. J. Sebestyén). Moreover Professor A. Kovács considers the second half of the seventeenth century as a more plausible chronological dating due to the fact that arcaded galleries spread in Transylvania only beginning with the "golden age" of Prince Gábor Bethlen. I wish to thank Professor Kovács for the kindness of sharing with me his opinions regarding this issue.

⁴⁵ Biró 1942, p. 347; Biró 1943, p. 45; Tugearu 1980, p. 82, Vătășianu 1968, p. 416.

⁴⁶ Bicsok, Orbán 2011, p. 170; Kovács 2006, p. 130; Buzogány 2002, p. 26. The stone is still preserved in the castle lapidary in Criș.

⁴⁷ Bethlen 2004, pp. 58-59.

⁴⁸ Bierbauer 1935, p. 318.

⁴⁹ Kővári 1866, pp. 235-236: "Bátyám, Bethlen Farkas, itten meglehetősen erődű kastélyt építtetett, széles árkokkal, melybe a Küküllő vizét bele lehet bocsátani. Mihelyt e jószágot atyám nekem adta, azonnal feltettem magamban, hogy ide csinos, francia izlésti kastélyt építtessenek. Tehát egy nagy köépületet emeltem, melynek közepén folyosó, jobbról balról lakszobák vannak, s körüllette kert. Az épület körülétén is sánczot húztam, melybe a vizet azon patakából bocsátottam, mely részemet a bátyámétól elválasztja. Egy külsőudvart is csináltattam udvari tisztjeim számára". [My uncle, Bethlen Farkas, had built there a fortified building with wide moats that could be filled with the channelled waters of River Târnava. After receiving the animals from my father, I soon started to build there a beautiful castle, in French style. Thus, I built a large building in the middle of the plot, from left to write living rooms and gardens all around. Near the building I also designed moats that separate my domain from my brother's. Outside I also built a court for my officers.]

the architecture of noble residences in Transylvania is also supported by J. Biró, on the basis of the direct diplomatic relations between Transylvania and France during the seventeenth-century; the author indicates a series of possible analogies: the residences in Mănăstirea, Cetatea de Baltă, Ozd, and Bahnea are compared to several French residences built in the beginning of the sixteenth century in Chambord, Le Lude, Azay-le-Rideau, and Gençay respectively.⁵⁰ For the residence in Sânmiclăuș, J. Biró indicates analogies with the French architecture in terms of ground plans (especially the habitation on the ground floor), while for the multiple-storey loggias he indicates the architecture in the region of Veneto, especially Vicenza as a possible influence.⁵¹

Both architect and patron, the nobleman Miklós Bethlen spent almost two months (January–February 1665) in Venice,⁵² thus becoming acquainted with the Venetian palaces designed by Sansovino,⁵³ and maybe with the Palladian country residences as well. Moreover, the period spent in England, integrating in the London gentry' life,⁵⁴ was another occasion for Miklós Bethlen to become accustomed to Palladian architecture, already assimilated in the architecture of noble residences,⁵⁵ and this confirms once more this possible influence on his future architectural conceptions. Nevertheless a new direction was highlighted by Professor Konrad Ottenheim, who stated in a recent study regarding the contribution of Netherlandish architects to European architecture in the sixteenth and seventeenth-centuries (*The Low Countries at the Cross Roads*, 2014, forthcoming) that Miklós Bethlen used the theoretical ideas of Professor Nicolaus Goldmann in the architectural design of his castle in Sânmiclăuș.⁵⁶

In the absence of a recent detailed survey of the still preserved residence in Sânmiclăuș, the architectural analysis is based on several iconographic sources from the archives⁵⁷ and Miklós Bethlen's autobiographic writings. The ground floor layout was firstly published in 1970 in *Istoria artelor plastice*,⁵⁸ reproduced in the same year with minor changes in M. Benkő Nagy's *Renezánsz és barokk Erdélyben*.⁵⁹ Twelve years later, G. Ionescu used the same plan to illustrate his compendium, adding the survey of the southern façade.⁶⁰ The original surveys could not be found yet, and neither of the studies mention the original source. Nevertheless, a photo-reproduction preserved in the photo collection of the UAUM archive,⁶¹ including first-floor layout and the southern façade as well, shows a cartouche indicating the origins of the survey from the archive of the "Ion Mincu" University of Architecture and Urban Planning.⁶²

The construction of the noble residence in Sânmiclăuș started in 1667 at the initiative of Miklós Bethlen, replacing an older manor house belonging to the Bethlen family.⁶³ He was to live in this residence

⁵⁰ Biró 1943, p. 26.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 29–30.

⁵² Bethlen 2004, p. 111.

⁵³ Kelényi 1998, p. 98.

⁵⁴ Bethlen 2004, pp. 101–102.

⁵⁵ Girouard 1979, pp. 120–162.

⁵⁶ I would like to express my gratitude to Prof. Dr. Konrad Ottenheim (University of Utrecht) for sharing with me his conclusions regarding the relationship between the layout of Sânmiclăuș castle and Nicolaus Goldmann's theory, even prior to the publication of his study (forthcoming in 2014). This was made possible by the 2012 summer school *Court Residences as Places of Exchange in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe (I)* in Utrecht.

⁵⁷ Recent surveys on the residence were not available and the fact that the domain in Sânmiclăuș entered private property prevented me from checking the older surveys. The ground floor plan was identified in two archives (KÖH 1994, Budapest, D 38286_1 and DMI, Bucharest – monument file (1948–'77). The first floor plan was identified in a photographic reproduction of a survey preserved in the UAUM-DITCP archive that was only available, as a photograph, in the UAUM photo collection. A conscription of the domain in Sânmiclăuș also includes a plan of the complex from 1761–1780, reproduced by M. Benkő Nagy in B. Nagy 1970, p. 159, fig. 138 and preserved in the State Archives, Cluj County Department – AStCluj 284.

⁵⁸ Vătășianu 1970, p. 159.

⁵⁹ B. Nagy 1970, p. 161.

⁶⁰ Ionescu 1982, p. 270.

⁶¹ UAUM Photo Archive - Sânmiclăuș castle (ground-plan and the southern façade).

⁶² The UAUM-DITCP survey archive inventoried so far only includes one watercolor depicting the south-eastern view of the residence, depictions of the roof framing and decorative details, while the ground plans, façades, and sections are missing, most probably still in the un-inventoried section of the archive.

⁶³ Bethlen 2004, p. 124. "That house [the manor house] was on the spot of today's porch, the girls' house, and the nearby bastion."

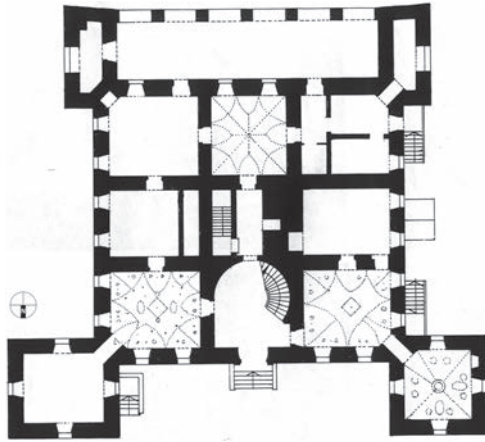


Fig. 2. The Bethlen noble residence in Sânmiclăuș. Ground floor layout (KÖH 1994, D 38286_1).

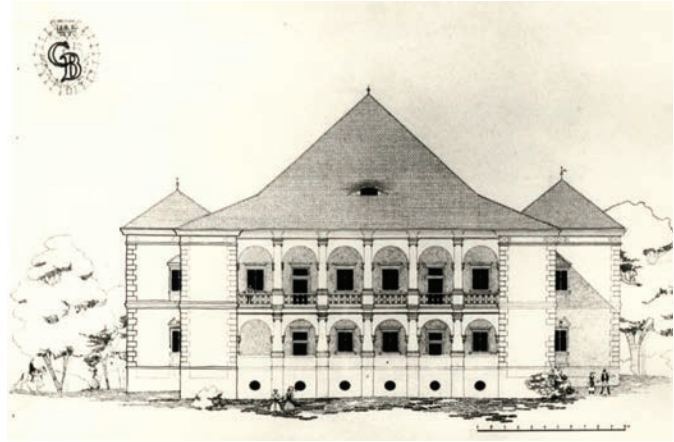


Fig. 3. The southern façade of the Bethlen castle in Sânmiclăuș (UAUIM Photo Archive).

together with his family for 26 years (1667-1703).⁶⁴ The first construction phase consisted of the foundation of the basement and the building of the first floor, followed by the second floor building, the decoration of the vaults, the enclosed balcony decorated with the Rhédei coat of arms (1686), and the fortified precinct with five “bastions” and a defensive ditch (1680-1683, 1686).⁶⁵ In 1683 the Tatars raided through Transylvania and Miklós Bethlen, with a larger group of people and ca. 40-50 riflemen took refuge in the residence of Sânmiclăuș. On that occasion the patron “added a wall to the upper part of the house”.⁶⁶

The residence in Sânmiclăuș, a three-level high building (basement, ground floor, and first floor) is characterized by a compact ground plan, framed by four corner pavilions and with an original interior space syntax (Fig. 2). The square towers on the northern side are strongly projected in front of the adjacent façades, while the southern pavilions, half the size of their northern counterparts, are aligned with two tiers of open loggia (Fig. 3). The regular and symmetrical façades were marked by the regular placing of openings along six axes, reflecting the mathematical division of the interior space resembling “a nine square checkerboard”.⁶⁷ The volumetric peculiarity, the spatial structure and the exterior decoration determined scholars to consider this monument as the moment of transition to Baroque style in Transylvanian architecture.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, the so-called Baroque ornaments were added only in the second half of the eighteenth century (1765) by Franz Schweininger (namely the cornices, the balusters of the loggia, the corbels and shell-shaped ornaments of the windows), and do not belong to the building phase coordinated by Miklós Bethlen.⁶⁹ The spatial distribution of rooms on a square grid, divided in nine spaces along a double-loaded arrangement, makes the residence in Sânmiclăuș unique in Transylvania.⁷⁰ The central room, lacking natural light, is dedicated to vertical access (an ample stairway, a lift, and a niche), while the living and representative rooms are placed around it. The entrance room accommodates the circular, ceremonial stairway, while the horizontal spatial connections surround the central space in a square circuit.

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 128: “(...) in anno 1673 I moved to that house in Sânmiclăuș, that I had built with a terrible concern, I left it in 1703, around August, and haven't been there ever since, maybe never to return again.”

⁶⁵ Kovács 2006, p. 143.

⁶⁶ Bethlen 2004, p. 175.

⁶⁷ Kelényi 1998, p. 97.

⁶⁸ B. Nagy 1970, pp. 158-170.

⁶⁹ Kovács 2006, pp. 142-143.

⁷⁰ The size of the rooms is not absolutely equal. For example the north-western tower is smaller than the north-eastern tower, and the span of the bays differs as well.

As Professor K. Otthenyem suggests, the architectural solution for the residence in Sânmiclăuș is an ingenious application of the theoretical principles taught by Nicolaus Goldmann in Leiden, during the years of 1640 and 1665. On one of Nicolaus Goldmann's drawing plates one can note two buildings with a spatial structure that reflects that of the residence in Sânmiclăuș: (1) a square divided into nine smaller squares of equal surface, with the stairway located in the centre, lit through a spire-like skylight (*Das Freystehende Hausß*) (Fig. 4),⁷¹ and (2) a two-storey cubical villa with a modular layout, divided as well into nine smaller squares (Fig. 5).⁷² Both projects reflect Goldmann's architectural principles:

cubic volumes, use of proportions (e.g. 1:1 and 1:2), gable with pilasters, and last but not least, the layout organization according to a grid composed of 9 or 16 sections.⁷³ The use of square plan divided into 9 equal sections has the origins in the Temple of Solomon, which Goldmann considered as the spiritual basis of architecture, an archetypal model inspired by God for the architectural and scientific thinking.⁷⁴ Following this spatial pattern, Goldmann has shaped different architectural programs, including a university and an ideal city (Figs. 6, 7).

Therefore, the value and originality of the residence in Sânmiclăuș needs to be reconsidered in the light of Goldmann's influence on the architectural and philosophical conceptions of Miklós Bethlen, considering as well the influence of the local building traditions and materials.⁷⁵ The geometrical structural grid of the inner space into nine square sections was combined with the traditional solution of marking the corners with towers, but also with the open relation to the surrounding landscape through loggias, the latter being a trait that Goldmann himself took over from treatises written by Palladio and Scamozzi.⁷⁶

The noble residence in Țopa

The fact that Miklós Bethlen mentions his direct involvement in the building works from the residences in Criș, Sânmiclăuș, Turda, and Alba, but nothing regarding his native residence in Țopa explains somehow the lack of studies analysing his direct contribution to the architectural conception of this residence. Nevertheless, two aspects indicate the fact that he might have been involved there as well. First of all, one notes the fact that the final building stage of the residence in Țopa (ca. 1675) took place at the same time with

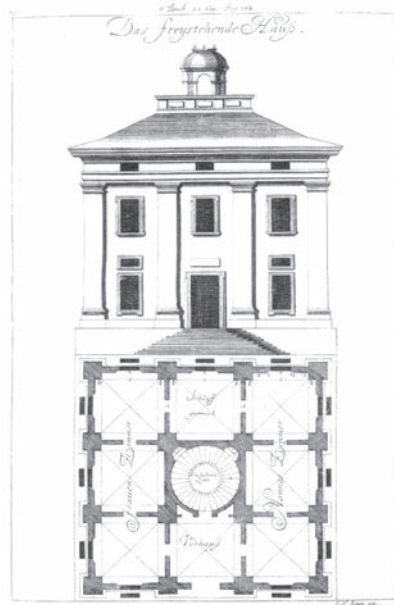


Fig. 4. Nicolaus Goldmann's detached house (Evers, Zimmer 2003, Fig. 10, Pl. 70).

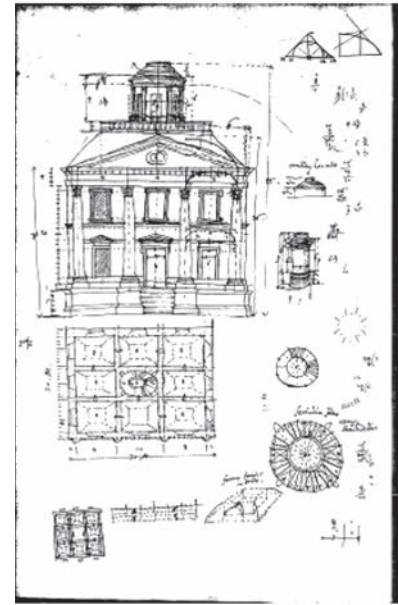


Fig. 5. Nicolaus Goldmann's cubic villa (Otthenyem 2011, Fig. 2).

⁷¹ Evers, Zimmer 2003, p. 559, fig. 10 (see also the illustrations).

⁷² Otthenyem 2011, pp. 3- 5, fig. 2. The sketch in question was exclusively made for didactic purposes and it was aimed at illustrating the first stage in architectural design, so that the *modules* under discussion make reference to an abstract measuring unit.

⁷³ Goudeau 2010, p. 20.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 22; Evers, Zimmer 2003, p. 552.

⁷⁵ Bethlen 2004, p. 59. Miklós Bethlen complained of the fact that he was unable to create a good time of craftsmen; the only master that he mentions by name is Tobiás, a German mason who has arrived in Transylvania almost half a century previously: "a German mason, Tobias, gentle, good, who ended up in Transylvania as he was caught as a musket man ever since the rule of Gabriel Bethlen".

⁷⁶ Goudeau 2010, pp. 15, 18.

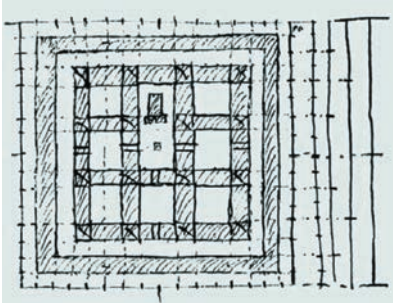


Fig. 6. Nicolaus Goldmann, Temple of Solomon (Goudeau 2006-2007, Fig. 22).

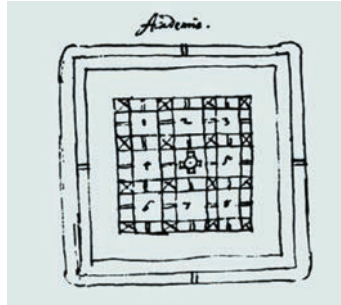


Fig. 7. Nicolaus Goldmann, A university project (Goudeau 2006-2007, Fig. 23).

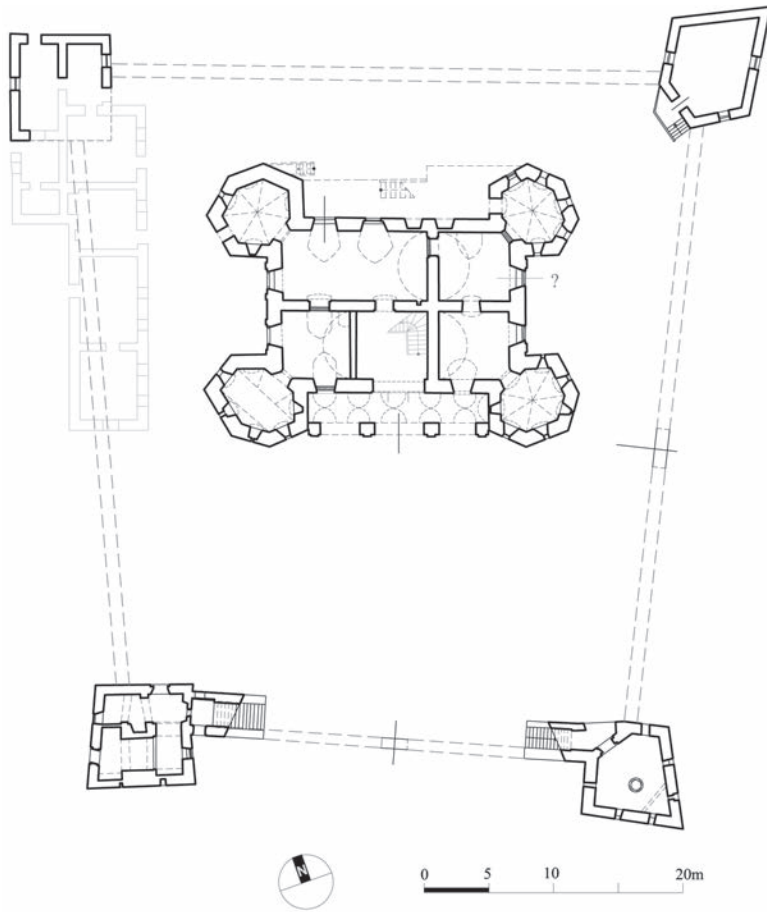


Fig. 8. The Bethlen noble residence in Țopa. Late seventeenth-century site plan proposal.

the first building phase of the residence in Sânmiclăuș (1667-1673). Second of all, there are rather few compositions with porticos or two-storey loggias, framed by columns or pilasters, and crowned by a classical gable preserved in the architectural landscape of seventeenth-century Transylvania. This characteristic is nevertheless extremely popular in the entire Europe starting with Palladio's activity in the sixteenth century. Moreover, several drawing plates preserved from Goldmann's didactic material illustrate general guiding principle recommended in the architecture of public buildings and residences. Among them, we have already illustrated the proposals of a rigorously geometric organization of the spatial structure, with access in the middle of the façade and a ceremonial stairway located in the middle of the construction. The main façade of both projects discussed displays a three-bay composition framed by two-storey high pilasters, crowned by a gable supported on an architrave and a frieze, in a classical decorative language.⁷⁷

The Bethlen noble residence is located in the flood plain of River Târnava Mare, in the relative proximity of the old medieval fortification of Sighișoara (ca. 8 km away) and in the vicinity of the villages of Boiu and Țopa (ca 2 and 4 km respectively). The noble complex consists of an approximately regular rectangular precinct, fortified at the corners with differently shaped towers (two towers of pentagonal layout and two with a square-shaped ground plan) (Fig. 8). The residence is placed inside the precinct, a compact two-storey building, without inner courtyard and framed by four heptagonal towers in the corners. The spatial structure follows a double loaded arrangement, with three bays almost equal in width

⁷⁷ Goudeau 2010, p. 16.

(5.30 m / 5.50 m / 5.52 m).⁷⁸ The decorative vocabulary of the façades is structured according to three horizontal fields, delimited by intermediate moulded cornices and crowned by the high roof. The southern façade represents the central element of the elevation, consisting of two superposed arched galleries, structured according to the three bays of unequal width – the central bay larger and two smaller lateral bays, crowned by basket arches.⁷⁹ The portico on the ground floor provided the main access to the building and the first-floor loggia was probably initially open, similar to the loggia in Sânmiclăuș. The arches are framed by four engaged pilasters in the colossal order, stretching over the height of both ground floor and first floor, and resting on half-storey bases (Fig. 9).

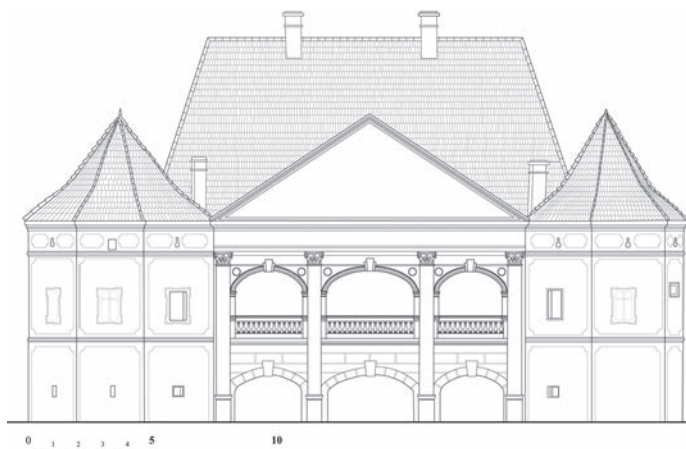


Fig. 9. The Bethlen noble residence in Țopa. Southern façade reconstruction proposal based on INP 5489/1992 and KÖH 1994 surveys.

The residence in Țopa was built on the noble domain owned by the Bethlen family, through its “Balasz-Blasius branch”, starting with the sixteenth century.⁸⁰ During the seventeenth-century, three main building phases have already been identified: (I) 1615?-1617, (II) ca 1640-1641, and (III) 1669?-1675, through the efforts of three generations – Farkas Bethlen (†1618), János Bethlen († 1678), and Pál Bethlen (†1686). Farkas Bethlen initiated the erection of a new noble residential complex in the beginning of the seventeenth-century, over the remains of a noble residence that had burnt down.⁸¹ The building was completed in 1617, according to a (now lost) inscription. János Bethlen, Farkas Bethlen’s son, patronized several extension works around the years of 1640-1641, with the contribution of the nobleman architect Gábor Haller, a close friend of the patron.⁸² These works envisaged the construction of the rectangular fortified precinct around the residence, strengthened at the corners with four artillery towers. The fact that János Bethlen borrowed 1500 golden coins for the creation of a fish pond illustrates the complexity of this building stage and the fact the defensive system also included landscape design interventions. Master Elias Nicolai was mentioned in this building phase, probably creating some of the sculptural elements,⁸³ among which a stone entrance portal of the precinct is mentioned in the documents, dismantled in 1831 together with the precinct wall.⁸⁴

The ruinous state of the monument during the period of 2008-2011 allowed for the identification of certain building peculiarities that partly clarify the building’s relative chronology. One of the fundamental observations revealed the fact that the eastern bay was adjoined to the adjacent structure, explaining thus the

⁷⁸ The inner walls had crumbled down so that the dimensions were not verified through direct measurements of the ruin but are based on the DMI survey of 1992.

⁷⁹ The 1992 survey, on a 1/50 scale, stresses a difference in size between the two side bays, so that the left (western) bay is larger than the eastern bay.

⁸⁰ Buzogány 2002, p. 26, Sârbu 2010, p. 29; Postăvaru 1996, p. 89.

⁸¹ Buzogány 2002, p. 28. The correspondence preserved in the archive in Sighișoara mentions Bethlen Farkas loss of 1615, when the manor house in Țopa was burnt.

⁸² Szabó 2008, p. 112, 190; Buzogány 2002, p. 29; Keresztes 1995, p. 53; Biró 1943, p. 49. Gábor Haller’s memoirs include references to the close friendship between Gábor Haller and János Bethlen, mainly during these years (1640-1641). A single mention makes direct reference to the construction of a bastion; it is dated June 9th 1641: “*Búnon fundáltam egy bástyát Bethlen János uramnak.*” [In Boiu I founded a bastion for my nobleman Bethlen János].

⁸³ Buzogány 2002, p. 30.

⁸⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 30. “*GENEROSUS DOMINUS JOHANNES BETHLEN (...) FRUSTRA AEDIFICANT HOMINES, NISI DEUS ADJUVAT(...)* *GENEROSA DOMINA BORBÁRA VARÁDI (...) MULIER SAPIENS AEDIFICAT DOMUM SUAM, STULTA AUTEM DESTRUIT EAM.*” The mention of János Bethlen’s first wife, Borbára Varádi (†1661) dated the decorated stone portal in an earlier building phase, meaning 1640-1641.

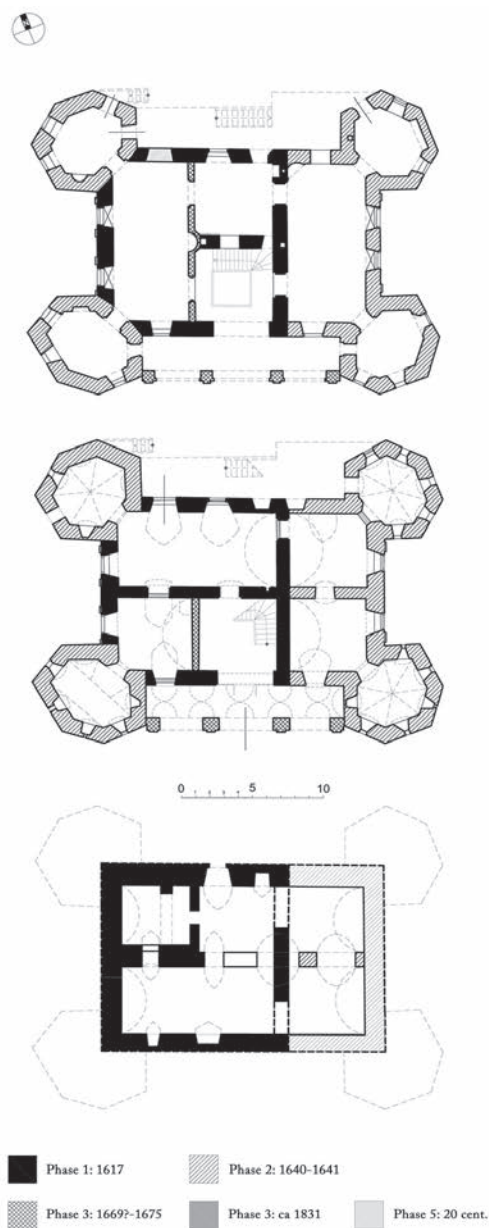


Fig. 10. The Bethlen noble residence in Țopa. Relative chronology proposal.

100 cm thickness of the inner wall between the median and eastern bays.⁸⁵ Besides the inequality of the side bays, expressed as well in the decoration of the southern façade, this detail reveals as well two distinctive building phases. The original building – a square consisting of the median and western bays – had its sides measuring ca. 130 cm. The initial shape of the central body was probably tributary to the architecture of the noble residence that had burnt down in the beginning of the seventeenth-century, built as a keep, square in section (Fig. 10). Art historian Á. Kovács suggests that the evolution of double loaded compact volumes of noble residences is the result of sixteenth-century keeps extension,⁸⁶ aspect confirmed in the case of the residence in Țopa. Therefore, the transformation of János Bethlen most probably included the addition of the eastern bay and of the polygonal towers in the corners. The preference for the polygonal shape of the towers might have been the influence of Master Elias Nicolai's as he was involved at the same time in the building site of the Bethlen family in Criș during the third decade of the seventeenth-century,⁸⁷ when the octagonal north-eastern tower was transformed into a keep, most probably inspired by the Red Tower of the fortification in Făgăraș.⁸⁸

The commemorative slab dedicated to patrons Farkas Bethlen and János Bethlen was set in 1675 on the eastern side of the south-eastern tower. The year was considered the end date of a new building stage, patronized by Chancellor János Bethlen.⁸⁹ In 1831 the Bethlen family had a new manor house built in the village of Boiu (Hu: Nagy Bún), decorated with a classicist vocabulary: pilasters crowned by a series of vertical semicircular grooves suggesting triglyphs.

The degradation of the architectural surfaces over the last two decades has revealed the existence of two main historical plaster layers, which might correspond to the building stages of the seventeenth century and of the nineteenth century. The first layer of historical plaster was applied directly onto the wall surface. It is white in colour and displays traces of hammering, a usual technique of surface treatment in the preparation of a

⁸⁵ The attaching line could be identified both on the southern and the northern sides. On the southern side I could record this detail through photography, while on the northern side that more degraded during the 2008 inspection one can note a vertical fissure left of the door leading to the first floor in the photographic documentation of 1992 (according to the photo recording 1992, INP Photo Archive).

⁸⁶ Kovács 2006, p. 129.

⁸⁷ Tugearu 1980, p. 85.

⁸⁸ Kovács 2006, p. 130. Polygonal towers can also be encountered at the Apafi residence in Dumbrăveni, the Kornis residence in Mănăstirea, the Bethlen residence in Criș, the Lázár residences in Lăzarea and Brâncovenești.

⁸⁹ Takács 1970, pp. 55-56; Kovács 2006, p. 130.

new plaster layer. One notes that this layer with traces of white plaster and hammering can be identified on all of the castle's façades, including the towers and the southern main façade. The subsequent plaster layer had ceramic roof tile fragments included, mainly on the side façades of the building where one finds those pilasters similar to those in the manor house in Boiu build in 1831. This detail, besides the obvious differences in stylistic composition, reveals the fact that the pilasters, decorated with triglyphs, from the lateral façades are not contemporary to the pilasters on the southern façade, another aspect indicating the building of the southern façade during a previous stage.

The fact that the southern façade is made of a different type of masonry than the rest of the castle (brick wall consolidated with *spolia* – reused limestone blocks) may indicate its later construction, but the existence of the first layer of historical plaster prevents us to attribute it to the nineteenth-century intervention. Thus, the building of the brick façade can only be linked to the last phase of the seventeenth-century (ca.1675), and the *spolia* were rather part of the previous structure of the residence (door and window frames) than of Roman ruins.⁹⁰ The inclusion of the southern façade in the last building stage of the seventeenth-century can also be supported with a stylistic argument, considering that by that time Miklós Bethlen had just returned from studying abroad (1664). The teaching sketches preserved among professor Goldmann's manuscripts⁹¹ illustrate a series of project for small-size lay buildings (house, small town hall) with façades of classical inspiration, defined by a pattern of organization of the main façade in three bays divided through engaged columns or pilasters, elevated from the ground through a base, with the upper part consisting of entablature and gable. Similarities can also be noted on the level of the spatial design of the noble residence in Țopa and the ground plan of the residence in Sânmiclăuș, especially the central location of the access stairway to the upper level – a ceremonial stairway located along the main entrance as an element of spatial organization, a detail present in professor Nicolaus Goldmann's plates.

Zăbala manor house

A small manor house located in Zăbala (Hu. Zabola, Covasna county) is another residence patronized by Miklós Bethlen in the late seventeenth-century. He owned the Zăbala estate starting with 1673 as his first wife's inheritance, Ilona Kún, the grand-daughter of Tamás Basa, a wealthy and influential nobleman.⁹² A nineteenth-century engraving,⁹³ alongside a stone portal decorated with an inscription and the Bethlen and Kun noble coats of arms⁹⁴ testify to these buildings works finished in 1680. The nineteenth-century engraving of János Greguss illustrates an arcaded portico, protruding in the middle of the main façade, a Late Renaissance noble residences' influence in the architecture of manor houses (Fig. 11).⁹⁵



Fig. 11. The manor house in Zăbala. Greguss János drawings (Orbán 1869).

⁹⁰ Cosnean 2011, pp. 155-159.

⁹¹ Ottenheim 2011, p. 4, fig. 2; Goudeau 2010, p. 16, fig. 1; Evers, Zimmer 2003, p. 559, fig. 10, Pl.70.

⁹² Bethlen 2004, p. 127, Tüdös 1998, pp. 371-374.

⁹³ Orbán 1868, p. 139.

⁹⁴ Tüdös 1998, p. 374. The inscription is the following: "*Domum hanc augendo et reformando nova fecit / Sp. ac. Gen. D. Nicolavs Bethlen et D. Helena / Kun Anno D. 1680*". Nowadays the stone frame is exhibited in the Szekely National Museum in Sfântu Gheorghe.

⁹⁵ Tüdös 1998, pp. 371-376. Comparing the stone portal from Sânmiclăuș residence with the portal of Zăbala manor house, K. Tüdös concluded that they were executed by two different stone masons' teams. At the same time she noted that the artistic quality of the stone frame from Zăbala manor house, together with the arcaded portico reflect the influence of the rural noble castles in the architecture of smaller manor houses, and even more they reflect the artistic and cultural personality of Miklós Bethlen.

Alba urban house

The noble house in Alba was built between 1701 and 1703, and represents the last architectural patronage of Miklós Bethlen. Built in the vicinity of Apor house, close to the princely residence, it was meant to host the family of Miklós Bethlen and his daughter, Julia with her husband.⁹⁶ The project consisted of a three-level high building, of which only two levels were actually finished, and functioning in a complex functional unit: sleeping rooms, living and dining rooms, kitchen, bakery, laundry etc. The exterior was also organized in different types of gardens – fruits and vegetables, flowers.⁹⁷ The third storey could not be finished due to the imminence of war, but Miklós Bethlen confessed that his original plan included also “*a whole corridor, or a covered balcony, with planks, the same as my grain house in Turda, with spindle-shpaed balcony pillars*”.⁹⁸

The architectural patronage of Miklós Bethlen, starting with the larger countryside residences – Sânmiclăuș, Țopa and Criș – continuing with the Zăbala manor house, and ending with the urban residence in Alba, reflects a complex cultural personality, who was able to adapt innovative architectural solutions to different building contexts. At the same time, an important consequence of Miklós Bethlen’s architectural patronage during the second half of the seventeenth-century in Transylvania is the penetration of novel architectural ideas promoted by important theoreticians of the time (*i.e.* Adam Freitag for the military architecture and Nicolaus Goldmann for civil architecture), whose ideas Miklós Bethlen has adapted and disseminated within his architectural achievements. One can note, for example, the constant and innovative presence of arcaded porticos in the architectural composition of the residences (Criș?, Sânmiclăuș, Țopa?, Zăbala, Alba?), and the regular and geometric spatial structure of the interior (Sânmiclăuș and Țopa?). Therefore, we consider the architectural patronage of Miklós Bethlen a reflection of the receptiveness of Transylvanian nobility towards the European architectural thinking in the late seventeenth-century, which needs to be further investigated and analyzed in the context of European architectural thinking.

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