Incintele estice ale Palatului Principilor din Alba Iulia. Cercetări de parament din anii 2014-2017 / The Eastern Precincts of the Princely Palace in Alba Iulia. Wall-research from 2014-2017

Abstract:

The so-called "Princely Palace" building complex consists of two-level buildings forming two approximately rectangle-shaped, unequally sized courtyards. However, these buildings make up around two-thirds of what was once the residence of the Princes of Transylvania, built mainly on previous constructions of the Bishopric of Transylvania, the Provostry, and some houses of the Catholic clergy. At its peak in the 17th century, during the rule of Princes Gabriel Bethlen (1613-1629) and George Rákóczi I (1630-1648), the palace had three interconnected courtyards. This extensive shape was partly reflected in Giovanni Morando Visconti's plans from 1711 and 1714. At the beginning of the 18th century, the Habsburgs changed the function of the palace. The western courtyard and the cathedral were returned to the Catholics, thus becoming the Roman Catholic Episcopal Palace, and the eastern courtyards were passed over to the Arsenal and the Artillery Barracks. The two eastern courtyards had maintained their usage as military headquarters for around 300 years, although the armies occupying it had repeatedly changed during that time (from the Habsburg army to the Austro-Hungarian and Romanian ones (1867-1919). Finally, the most part of this ensemble passed on to the administration of the Alba Iulia Mayor's Office. Some years later, the new administrator provided the financial support for a number of preliminary studies to yield a primary set of data for a research project and later for a preservation and restoration project to rethink the future of the monument.

The first wall investigations in the eastern courtyards of the former princely residence were undertaken at the beginning of 2014 and continued intermittently through 2015 and 2017, depending on the availability of financial resources and the requirements of the preservation and restoration project. As a preamble to detailed reports and surveys on some parts of the wings of the ensemble included in this volume, the paper presents the architecture of the ensemble and the main wall discoveries from 2014-2017, with some working hypotheses and final conclusions on the construction stages (marked on the plans). One of the major findings was that all the interventions made by the armies during the 18th-20th centuries have dramatically altered the coherence of the buildings and decorations in the eastern parts of the former princely palace and has seriously affected the previous heritage of the site rich in valuable Roman, medieval, and Renaissance remains. These changes have raised major problems of identification in the field, even for the main parts of the residence described in 17th-century chronicles and inventories. Primarily, this is the case of the "F" wing (closed to the cathedral), but also the case hall of the Diet and the hall of the Supreme Court

(1643), which have completely lost their shape and they can only very vaguely be located in the middle of the first floor of wing E.

Keywords: *Princely residence, Transylvania, Habsburgs, Arsenal, Artillery Barracks.*