

Analize dendrocronologice la culele din Groșerea (Gorj) și Zătreani (Vâlcea)

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Abstract:

Dendrochronological analyses of two tower houses (Cule): Groșerea (Gorj County), and Zătreani (Vâlcea County)

This study examines two monuments representative of the Romanian cula – a vertically organised fortified tower house characteristic of Oltenia and parts of Wallachia: the Crăsnaru Tower House at Groșerea, Gorj County, and the tower house incorporated into the residential ensemble at Zătreani, Vâlcea County. The analysis combines dendrochronological data (by Anno Domini Dendrolab from Miercurea Ciuc, Romania) with historical and visual sources, as well as observations on constructional features. These are the first published dendrochronological investigations in Romania devoted to this architectural type, providing absolute chronological benchmarks in a field long shaped by local traditions, insufficiently verified genealogical attributions, and dating by analogy.

At Groșerea, the analysis of thirty oak samples substantially revises the established chronology of the monument. The results indicate that the initial phase was erected in the winter of 1814/1815, or shortly thereafter, rather than around 1750, in 1808, or in the second half of the eighteenth century, as previously proposed. From the outset, the building functioned as a tower house, with a defensive base, two upper levels intended for habitation and surveillance, a south-facing masonry loggia, and a timber gallery on two sides. Later interventions were also identified, including repairs and functional changes from the second half of the nineteenth century and around 1900. The study further clarifies issues of attribution: it nuances the proposed connection with the local captain Barbu Cocoș, attested at the village church in 1808 and 1822; confirms the later association of the tower house with the Crăsnaru family; and, at the present stage of research, excludes its foundation by the Săvoiu family. The case also offered an opportunity to reassess other, now vanished, cule from the same village, with which the Crăsnaru Tower House shared certain constructional similarities.

At Zătreani, the sixteen samples analysed do not confirm the phase traditionally dated to 1754 and associated with Radu Zătreanu. Instead, they document a previously unknown intermediate construction phase. The timber from the roof structure and from part of the attic floor derives mainly from oaks felled in the winter of 1858/1859, indicating a major remodelling campaign after the mid-nineteenth century, when the original core of the tower house was enlarged.

These results demonstrate the value of dendrochronology not only as a means of confirmation, but also as a method for critically revising the historiography of

monuments.

Keywords: *Oltenia, fortified dwellings, building archaeology, absolute dating*