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The border- and self-defence of Szeklers from the Medieval Age till the Age of Principality.

Castles and other defence objects in the settlement history of Udvarhelyszék

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Abstract of PhD thesis submitted in 2013 to the Archaeology Doctoral Programme, Doctoral School of History, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest under the supervision of József Laszlovszky.

Subject and aims of the dissertation

My dissertation deals with the survey and analysis of the defence system of Udvarhelyszék (Odorhei district), a central administration area of the Medieval Szeklerland (Secuime, a historical region in eastern Transylvania, today part of Romania), and it discusses the Szeklers' role in the border defence during the Medieval Age and the Age of Principality. Beside the well-known castles having been under study for a long period, systematic surveys of the last years and decades have brought some other types of objects (earthworks, caves, pitfalls, churches) to the front, whose imaginary or real military defence role had to be analysed in order to give answers to the circumstances and function of their arising. It was obvious at the beginning of my research that the subject is in a strong connection with the settlement system and has to be studied jointly with that. The large analysis of the researched topics and the question of border defence extended far beyond the borders of the Udvarhelyszék area in many respects and it needed a wider enquiry. The question of border defence and of "border-castles" had to be analysed at large because of its research history antecedents too. Some commonplaces – like the Szeklers' negation of castle-building or their exclusive use of natural refuges in the Middle Age – had to be reviewed.

Research sources and methods

The researched area is neither geographically nor in point of its source facilities homogeneous, as it can be seen in the spreading of Medieval settlements and their written mentioning. The historical data – except for Keresztúrszék (part of Udvarhelyszék) – was very poor at the beginning of the research. The data of the few documents were significantly increased by field ramblings, surveys and excavations.

At the moment in the area of the Late Medieval Udvarhelyszék (2.716 km^2, one third of it is in the mountain zone), there are 83–84 settlements and/or parishes known from the Arpadian Age, but in my estimation the number of settlements might have reached even one hundred. In the second half of the 16th century written sources mention 138 settlements.

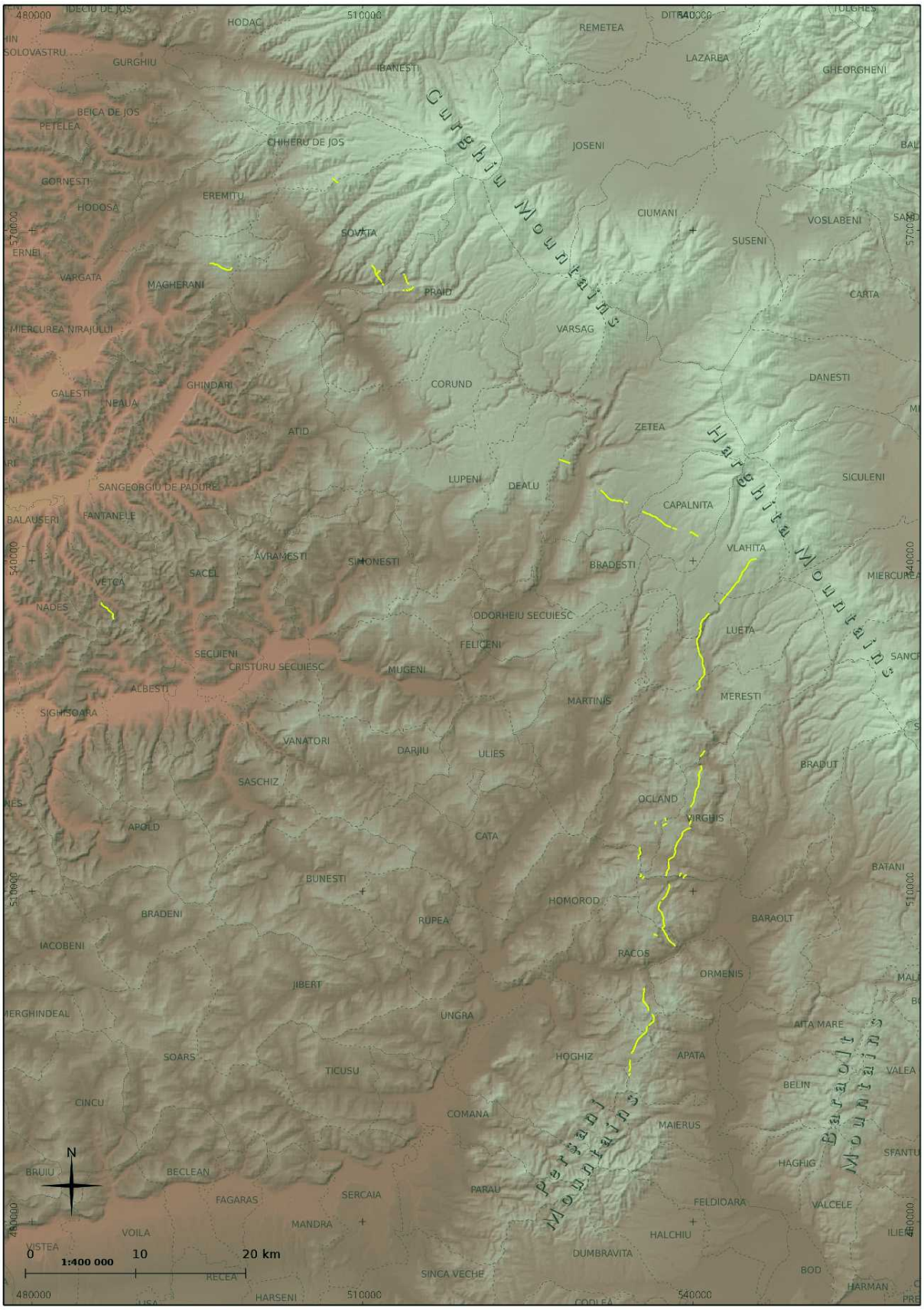

Fig. 1. Ramparts in the region of Gurghiu, Harghita and Perşani Mountains (A. Kosza – A. Sófalvi)

Within the framework of my dissertation I have researched and analysed more than 70 objects from Udvarhelyszék and its neighbourhoods which, according to the historical data had, or at least during the earlier researches were supposed to have a military defence role.

In the research of Medieval and Principality castles and other defence objects I have followed comprehensive methods. In all cases the most important aspect of my research was the separate, detailed study and knowledge of each object, which, beside data collection, extended to the controlling of earlier, doubtful information. This meant field ramblings and – in many cases, where there was no topographical survey – the survey of objects (castles). In the case of assessing caves we used both conventional techniques and modern instruments, refining the line of earthworks with GPS. We used traditional measuring instruments in the survey of church-towers (plans and sections). Beside the few written documents (diplomas, litigations and ecclesiastical sources) in my field researches I have used more recent historical maps, geographical and forestrical data and folkloristic documents as well. The knowledge of folkloristic data and its critical review has proved to be useful and efficient. In the survey and analysis of church-towers I have followed the results of art historical researches. In the analysis of castles or other types of defence objects I have studied the background of their settlement history on the basis of written documents and thriving archaeological data.

I carried out new excavations covering the whole spectrum of researched objects (castles, earthworks, caves, pitfalls, churches), among which we can find some very important places as the castles of Kustaly, Rapsóné and Csonkavár/Székelytámadt, the cave system of Teleac (Telekfalva), the earthwork of Kakasbarázda, the churches of Mărtiniş (Homoródszentmárton) and Dârjiu (Székelyderzs). The processing or in some cases the reanalysis of archaeological finds coming from older excavations (pottery in most cases) received a very important role due to the method of earlier researches, which had dated the finds with preconceptions and without stratigraphical observations, typological describings or analogies. As far as it was possible, I used natural scientific methods (radiocarbon analysis, dendrochronology, geophysics). In some cases radiocarbon analyses (the dating of earthworks) proved to be clinching; the dendrochronological researches brought new results in the dating of defence elements of churches. Aerial photography also proved to be useful.

Assessment and results of the dissertation

The Szeklers and border defence

Most of the castles of Udvarhelyszék were defined in earlier researches as border castles, and nowadays there are opinions which still consider this theory reasonable. Due to this theory I needed to analyse the defence system of Medieval and Principality Transylvania to confute these controversial questions, and in reference to the Arpadian Age I also had to analyse the defence system of the entire Hungarian Kingdom at large. In the Early Arpadian Age most important elements of the Transylvanian defence system were the border *castle-marchias* (h. '*határvár-ispánságok*'), which controlled the strategic points in the southern and eastern borderlands. In the Early Middle Ages we can scarcely track a few border castles, such as the castle of Bâtca Doamnei (Piatra Neamţ). The major cramps and passages were closed by border castles from the end of the 13th century and during the Anjou period (Haţeg, Tălmaciu, Piatra Craiului, Bran and Tabla Buţii castles); the borders of the expanding Hungarian Kingdom were

protected by buffer states established outside the Carpathian Mountains. There was no line of border castles against the Turkish invasion on the borders of Transylvania, the defence of the province was secured by companies of the voivode (the political and military head of the province) and nobility, respectively by Saxon and Szekler troops. Turkish attacks were blocked by the refortification of earlier castles or by building new ones along passages and cramps. We have no information from the Middle Ages concerning the closing of the passages by castles in the Eastern Carpathians. In the light of written documents it seems that the military protection was fulfilled by closing the cramps with different natural and artificial elements. The Rákóczi castles in the Oituz (Ojtoz) and Ghimes (Gyimes) passages were built only in the 16–17th centuries.

Due to the military function and the border defence of the Szekler people, a special historical situation developed and survived in Szeklerland.

In the Middle Ages the basis of Szeklers' laws was constituted upon the ground of personal military service, meaning not only taking part in different military companies but defending eastern borders too. The letters patent given by Ulászló II dating from 1499 underlines that Szeklers are "obliged to guard permanently in the defence of the country, for which they are exempt from any taxes or other kind of services, just like the nobility privileged by the kings of the Hungarian Kingdom". This is a clear statement concerning the border defence service in return to personal freedom and tax exemption. Sporadic Medieval written sources already contain some data referring to the fortification and "cutting" of cramps by Szeklers. The light-armed, mobile warfare practice of Szeklers was suitable for this function for a long time, meaning the control and supervision of the borderland during peacetime, and the blocking of passages and cramps in the time of the enemy's offensive. This kind of border defence obviously did not build an impenetrable wall on the line of the Carpathians, but it was very viable to hold up the enemy till the mobilization of the hinterland. Later the defence of the country was set up by corps of the province, with Szeklers among them. From the Middle Ages we hardly have any data concerning the organization of border defence in Szeklerland. On the basis of sporadic written documents it seems that just as the participation in campaigns, the border defence was organized within the confines of *sedes* (districts) too. The external districts (Csík, Gyergyó and Kászon districts, respectively Háromszék district) held an accentuated role in the control of the borders both in military and economic aspects. The military troops of Aranyos, Udvarhely and Maros districts also contributed efficiently to the greatly structured defence of the country and the interception of the enemy. The border defence tasks were probably set up similarly to the general military services of the Szekler states. Eastern campaigns carried out by Szekler *comes* (military, administrative and juridical heads of Szeklers) had an indirect border defence, with a preventive and averting function as well. We can find some data referring to the controlling activity near the borders of Szeklers in 15th century written documents.

This kind of Szekler border defence did not need border castles, as we do not know any Szekler border castles from the Middle Ages. The theory settled by István and Géza Ferenczi in the 1970s – which considered that the eastern borders of the Hungarian Kingdom at the turn of the 11–12th centuries had been protected by a defence system of castles and earthworks – is not tenable any more, because along the complex archaeological researches it turned out that the castles this theory referred to had been built in the 13–14th centuries.

Fig. 2. Ördög útja ('Road of Devil') rampart on Zetea upland (Photo: A. Sófalvi)

Fig. 3. Kakasbarázda ('Furrow of the Cock') rampart on the Godra upland (Photo: A. Sófalvi)

Studying the topographical location of these castles we can state that they could not fulfil any border defence or military control. The castles which stood far away from the main roads, surrounded by the protecting mountains, had much more properties of refuges. The castles of Szeklerland – although the collective memory has hardly preserved any remains of them – are the establishments of Szeklers.

Another commonplace of modern Szekler historiography – which considers that the Szeklers did not build any castles – hardly has any real basis. The Szeklers who were protesting against castle-building at the initiative of István Báthori, voivode of Transylvania in Odorhei (Udvarhely) at the beginning of 1490's, only claimed that on the territory of Szeklerland no external authority had any right to build castles among them. On the other hand, we know several medieval written documents, which show relations between Szeklers and castles.

Coming back to the Szekler border defence, we can clearly see that the changes which took place in the Szekler society and military organization during the 15-16th centuries produced serious consequences in the aspect of border defence too. After the insurrection in 1562, there are hardly any written sources about the Szeklers' border defence activities. At the beginning of the 17th century the restitution of the Szeklers' laws and military role had an influence on border defence as well, which meant the providing of some communities living near the borders with special roles. Their letters patents given by princes of Transylvania entrusted them with the controlling of roads, passages and valleys leading to Moldova and Muntenia, their blocking in case of danger, and obliged them to spy outside the borders. The tasks of Háromszék and Csíkszék districts were the building and guarding of castles near the borders. In 17th century censuses from Csík-, Gyergyó- and Kászon districts we can find some custodians as well, who set up the guarding and controlling of castles and customs. The law-book *Approbatae Constitutiones* also underlines the support of castles and the guarding of roads among the obligations of Szeklers. The document *Diploma Leopoldinum* also emphasizes the Szeklers' military obligations which did not have more than an economical character in aspects of border defence at the end of the 17th century.

The issue of the so-called 'ramparts' in Szeklerland

In the framework of my dissertation – which analysed the institutional and asset remains of the border defence and self-defence – I have researched all kinds of objects which had a hypothetical or a real military role in the history of Udvarhelyszék (and its territorial antecedent). One group of monuments (the major part of castles) which was earlier considered to have had a border defence role, has proved to be the basis of self-defence in Udvarhelyszék, while the ramparts associated with castles and early Arpadian border defence turned out to be the products of an earlier historical period.

Since Balázs Orbán we have known the earthworks (composed of banks and wood-structured ditches: 'Road of Devil' /Ördög útja/, 'Furrow of Devil' /Ördögbarázda/, 'Furrow of the Cock' /Kakasbarázda/) which run on the volcanic plateau of the Ghurghiu and Harghita Mountains and on the watershed of the Perşani Mountains, in the northwest-southeast, respectively in north-south direction, from the Szencsed Plateau to the Bogata Pass south of the Racoş Gorges of the Olt River *(Fig. 1–3)*. During the last one and a half century several theories have appeared referring to their chronology and function, among which the best known is the one of the early Arpadian defence system, in the frame of which these earthworks had the role of *gyepű* (lat. i*ndagino*).

Fig. 4. Tatársánc ('Tartar's wall') rampart next to Vargyas-fold (Photo: A. Sófalvi).

Fig. 5. Burnt structure of a smaller rampart near the Kakasbaráza (Photo: A. Sófalvi).

I began their research with István Dénes – the person who knew and mapped most of these earthworks – using a new method in their dating: radiocarbon analysis. The dating of carbon samples collected from several points of these wood-structured, later burnt earthworks has produced surprising results. Analyses made by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences Institute for Nuclear Research in Debrecen dated all the samples without exception to the 7–9th centuries, with little spreading within the period. Thus the 'Road of Devil'–'Furrow of Devil'–'Furrow of the Cock' ramparts system is the built heritage of a historical period (called the Avar-Slavic period), about which we have little well-documented knowledge referring to this region. To specify who and why built these ramparts (in my opinion the border defence role is not established concerning this period either) the settlement history researches of this region in this period are required and the study of the ramparts in Eastern–South-Eastern Europe is indispensable (for example, we know hundreds of kilometres long earthworks on the territory of Ukraine).

I have to mention that in Udvarhelyszék and its surroundings we managed to divide another group of ramparts, which are much shorter than the previously mentioned ones, composed of few hundred-metre-long banks and ditches, occurring near the Bekecs Mountain, in the Ţinutul Ocnelor (Sóvidék) region, along the Târnava valley and in the Rika forest. Some of them are next to certain Medieval castles (Rapsóné, Firtos castles) or other Medieval buildings (the Tatársánc rampart near the Tatárkápolna chapel, *Fig. 4*). The topographical location of these earthworks suggests that they are Medieval establishments in an integral unity with the castles; in the case of Tatársánc the archaeological finds (13–14th century pottery) from the structure of the earthwork date the establishment *post quem*. Shorter ramparts with wood structure near the Kakasbarázda *(Fig. 5)* have also been proved by radiocarbon analyses to be from the 8–9th centuries, while the researches on the banks and ditches of Országhatár (earthwork built near the lowest passage on the northern part of the Perşani Mountains) suggest that it was built in the Roman Age, and it was renewed and used in the Late Middle Ages, after the 15th century (the renewed object locked the Rika Customs, called as 'Fejedelmi méta' as well).

Self-defence objects of the Szeklers in Udvarhelyszék

Castles and other defence objects of Udvarhelyszék described in the dissertation have been classified in several respects in the course of the analysis. Each type of object is characterised by special formal attributes and architectural parameters.

Castles in the territory of Udvarhelyszék

The main aspects of classifying Medieval and Principality castles were their territorial jurisdiction and their law and order. There are some objects which could be set apart from Szekler castles on the basis of the above criteria.

The Kustaly castle in the Rika Forest with two similar ones (the so-called 'rikai' tower-castles) was built in the 12th century along the roads running on the watershed of the Perşani Mountains. These castles characterized by small size plans *(Fig. 6–7)*, rectangle-shaped multilevel floors circled by ramparts and ditches, were inhabited for at least one century according to the evidence of archaeological finds (pottery, animal bones coming from hunting and metal tools, *Fig. 22*). In the interpretation of earlier researches these castles appeared as border

castles or manorial refuges, but in the light of new researches they belong to the forest-granger (h. '*erdőispánság*') organised on the territory of the early Arpadian royal domain of later Udvarhelyszék – allusions to people with service engagement are preserved in the settlement names like Drăuşeni (Homoróddaróc), Şoimoşu (Solymos), Lueta (Lövéte) – with economic and controlling function in the region between Ţara Bârsei (Burzenland) and internal parts of Transylvania. During the 13–14th centuries the area of this forest-granger was merged into the neighbouring counties in the process of donating the royal domain, and gradually disappeared from collective memory (its one-time existence is preserved by historical geography and administrative names like the subdeaconate of Erdővidék or Erdőhát). Later the surroundings of Kustaly castle entered in the possession of Szeklers in Udvarhelyszék (the border of this administrative area ran next to the Kustaly castle, which is preserved by the Gyepűbükke and Határ-patak names).

Fig. 6. Aerial photo of Kustaly castle.
(Photo: A. Sófalvi)

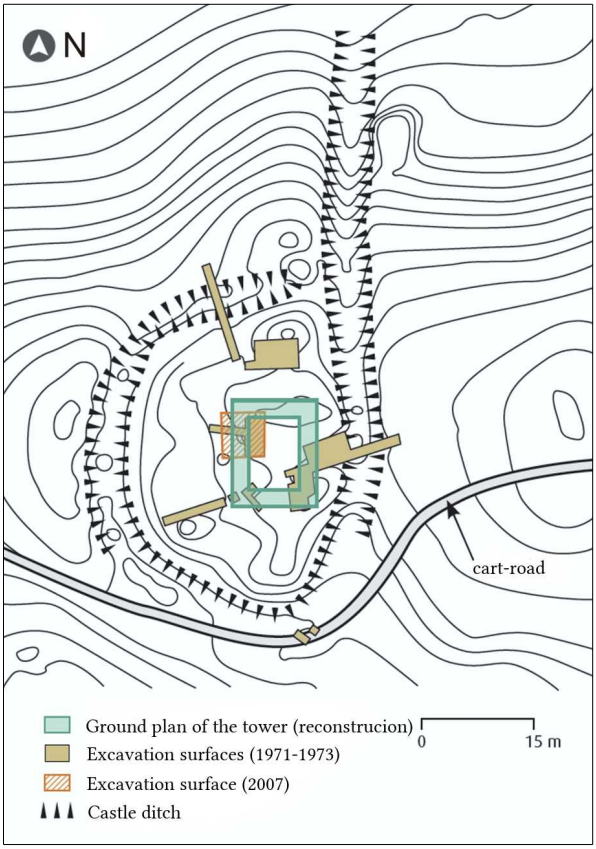

Fig. 7. Ground-plan survey of Kustaly castle.
(A. Sófalvi – A. Serfőző – I. Kuti)

During the expansion of Szeklers from Udvarhelyszék in the Middle Ages, with the occupation of the so-called Szekler *Partium* (south-western part of the Udvarhelyszék administrative area), in the fields surrounding Jacodu (Magyarzsákod) the castle of another county became part of our researching area, which was already called *castrum antiquum* in 1325. Unfortunately we do not have any authentic data referring to the supposed castle.

The voivode's castle in Udvarhely – which later became the prince's –, needed a detailed analysis, because this is the point of Szekler history to which the commonplace that the Szeklers having not built any castles is strongly connected. I tried to confute this theory beforehand by the interpretation of documents and I lined up counterexamples.

Beyond the Szekler aspects of these castles I have tried to analyse their military, defence role and their components. The defence system of Székelytámadt (Szekler attacked) castle can be outlined very well on the basis of written documents and archaeological researches, some special elements of it (gun-towers) are the unique creations of Szeklerland principality military building *(Fig. 8)*.

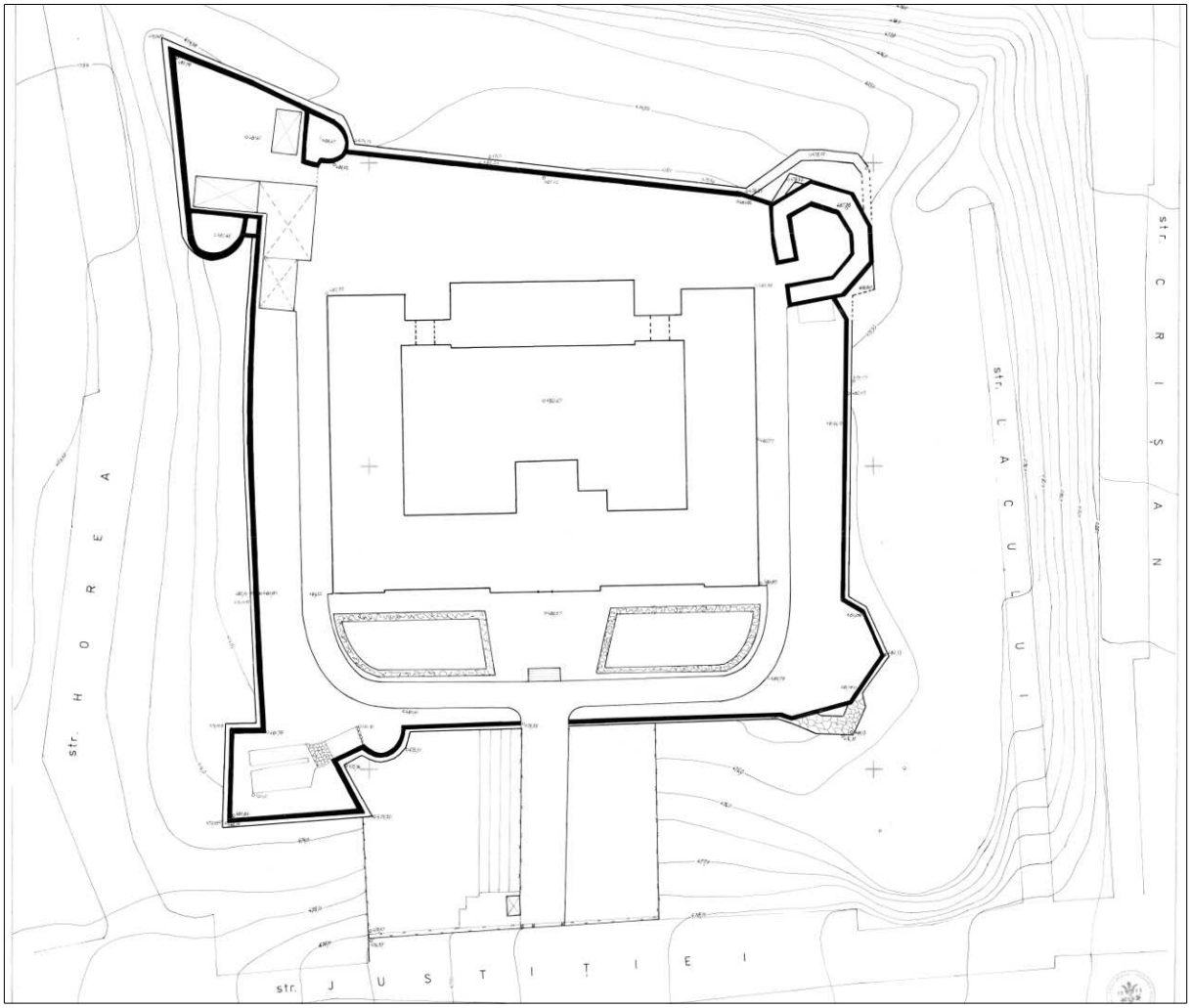

Fig. 8. Ground-plan survey of Székelytámadt castle ('Szekler attacked') (D. Szalai).

The claim of completeness required the inclusion of the analysis of the mansion-castles at (Sânpaul) Homoródszentpál and Dumitreni (Szentdemeter) in my research, which were residences of nobility in the first place, although their military role is not negligible either.

In the cross-section of the analysed and researched objects the self-defence of Szeklers in Udvarhelyszék indicates a very complex and varied image. During the Middle Ages and the Principality almost all kinds of military defences were used in the framework of geographical facilities for the saving of human and material goods. Regarding their settlement-geographic location the Szekler fortifications built with self-defence aims can be generally divided into two chronological parts: defence-forms characterising the Early (13–14th centuries) and the Late Middle Age – Principality Age (15–17th centuries).

The basis of the Late Arpadian Age self-defence in Udvarhelyszék was composed of community castles. Some of them (Rapsóné, Tartód castles, *Fig. 9*) were established at the edge of the settlements' area on the common property of districts or groups of villages, being built and operated with the contribution of more villages (it is likely that the grands of Szeklers, the jurisdiction and military leaders had an important role in the building of early castles). According to archaeological finds these castles and the stonewall phase of the Budvár castle *(Fig. 10)*, which was built on a strategic point, came into existence as a result of the shock effect of the Tartar invasion, and after being on the alert for a few decades, in the 14th century, by the leave of Tartar offensives, they were gradually given up too. The hilltops and bens were fortified by walls built with the so-called *emplekton* technique from rocks exploited on the spot, having a defence floor on the flange. On the surface of simple-structured castles surrounded by stone walls some building remains were discovered (houses sunken in the earth, buildings standing on the surface) during excavations. Similarly to other Szeklerland examples these castles, having a few thousand square meters, served as refuges for more village communities in the time of eastern offence. It is important to underline that they were not inhabited continuously (all animal bones came from domestic animals, and there is no castle where any fountains were found), as it is proven by the small quantity of finds. Being generally built on high grounds with good natural facilities, the number of castles in Udvarhelyszék is hardly smaller than, for example, the number of similar castles built in the Csík district (in the Udvarhely district: 5; in the Gergyó- and Csík district: 6; in the Háromszék district: 11; in the Maros district there were only 2 castles of this type). In the framework of my dissertation, in the analysis of the parameters of Szeklerland castles I have tried to work out a typology of Szekler castles which divides the earlier homogeneous image of research in many aspects. Beside the Szekler communities, the role of Szekler nobility (lat. *primipilii* and *primores*) has gradually become more and more underlined, separating one special type of castle (small- size-castles with towers) from the others on the basis of plans and formal properties.

The castle of Porumbenii Mari (Nagygalambfalva) standing on the surface of a prehistoric earthwork was used in the 13–14th centuries and it belongs to the type of castles built far away from settlements, which could be interpreted as a transition between natural defence forms and stone castles. This fortification without stone walls stands out of the other castles in the aspect of archaeological finds (metal tools: arrowheads, knives, heel). The existence of remains different from ordinary ones implies the attendance of Szekler nobility, in this case we have to reckon with the existence of a wood-tower. Inside the large prehistoric earthworks – where graves coming from a military incident were discovered – the people of surrounding settlements found a refuge in case of emergency.

On the basis of archaeological finds known from Firtos castle we have to consider that it was built after the Arpadian Age, with a semicircular sanctuary on its area, which probably also belongs to the Szeklers' community castles. In the building of the castle we can make a distinction between two main periods: the constructions reaching back to the 14th century, and a renovation in the 16–17th centuries. During this latter period an internal stone building was built next to the eastern wall of the castle (pieces of tile stoves coming from its ruins), which suggests that in the time of Principality a prominent family (probably the Firtos genus) and/or the monk activity had an important role in the life of the castle. The unclarified chronological and functional connections between castle–chapel–inner stone building make Firtos castle unique in the series of Szeklerland castles.

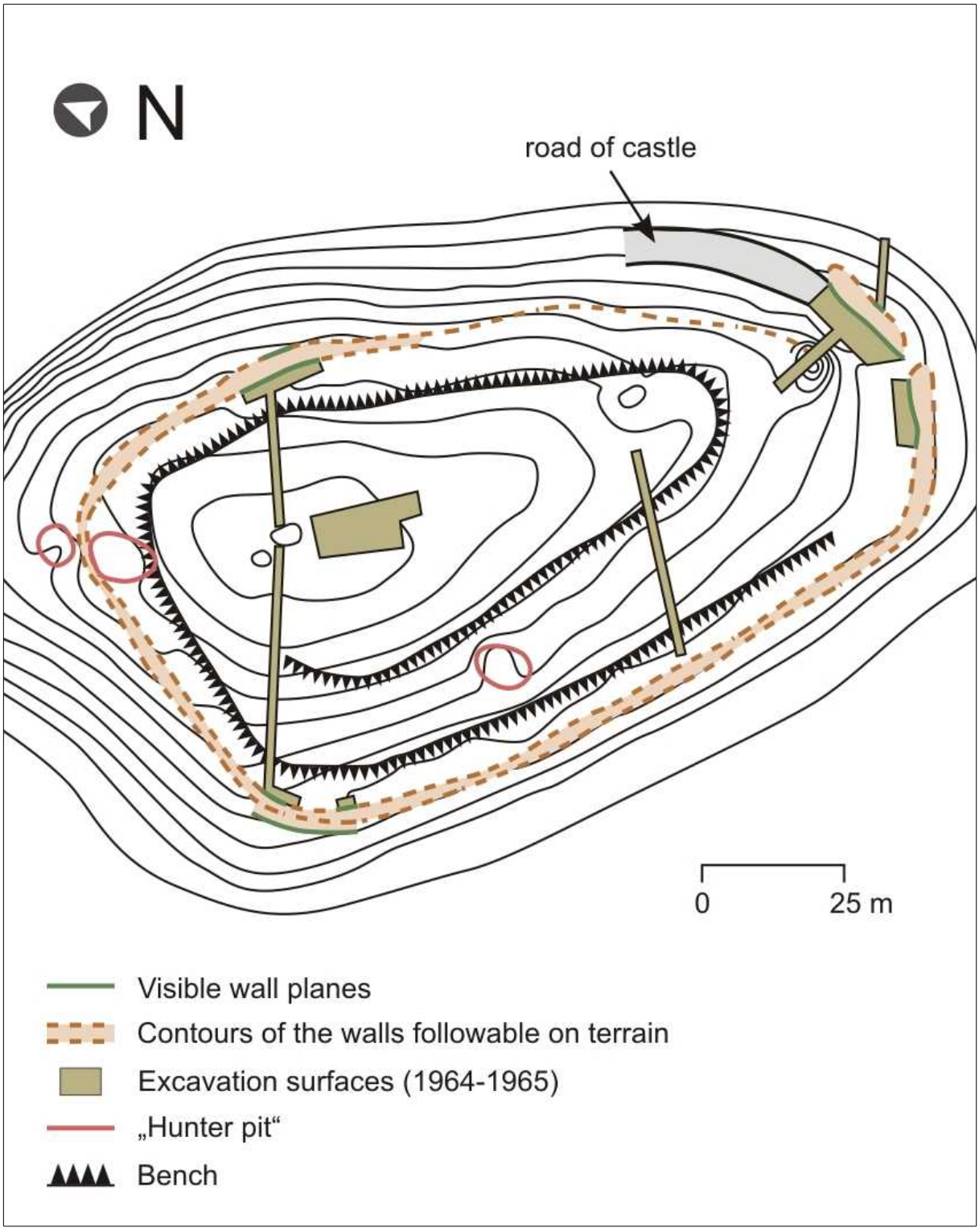

Fig. 9. Ground-plan survey of Tartód castle (A. Sófalvi – A. Serfőző – I. Kuti).

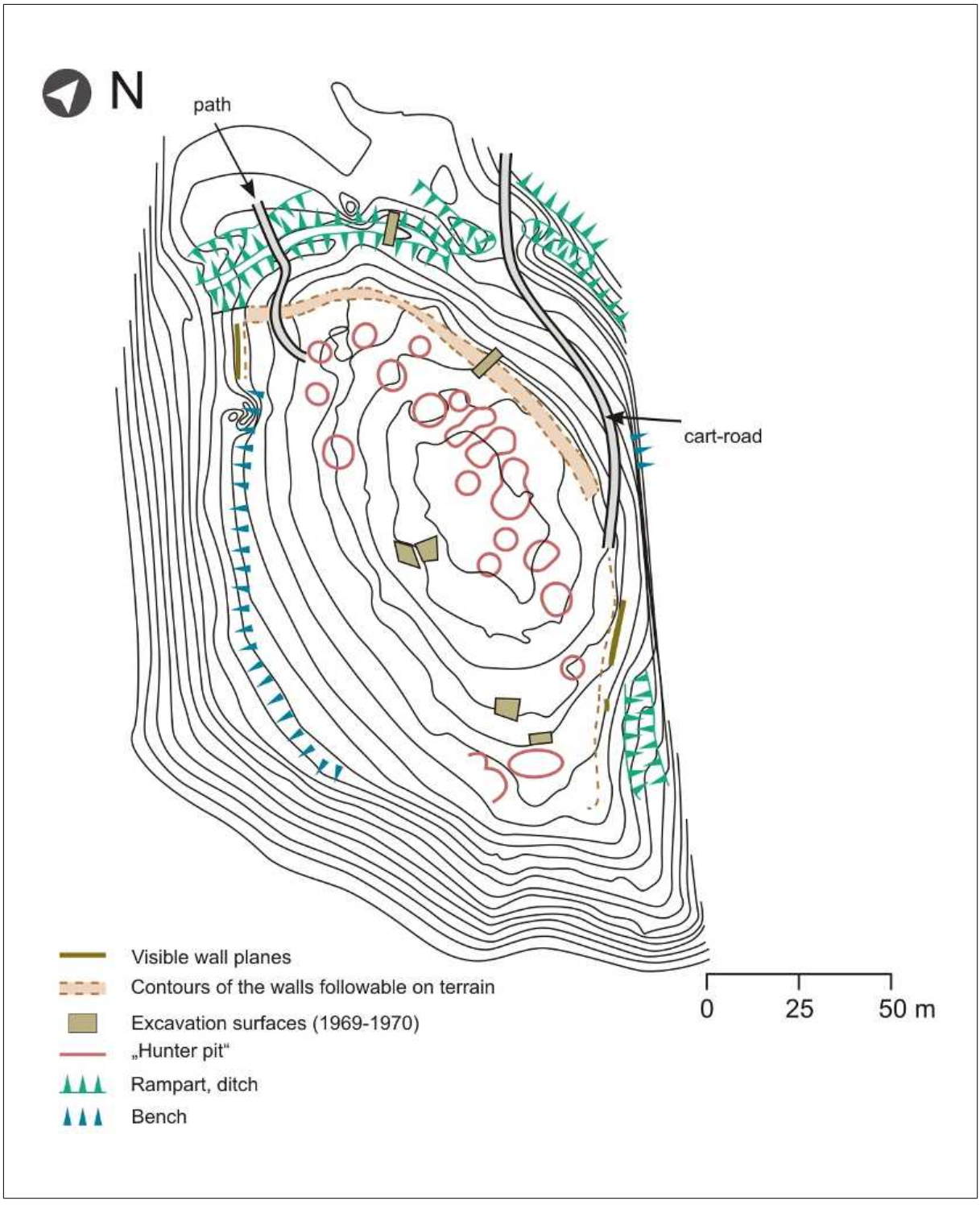

Fig. 10. Ground-plan survey of Budvár castle (A. Sófalvi – A. Serfőző – I. Kuti).

Fig. 11. Aerial photo of Bădeni castle (Photo: A. Sófalvi).

The castle of Bădeni (Bágy, *Fig. 11*) built in the 17th century is the latest example of Szeklers' castles. Built with the contribution of more villages (Bădeni/Bágyon, Ighiu/Ége, Daia Secuiască/Székelydálya, Locodeni/Lókod, Văleni/Patakfalva, Rareş/Recsenyéd) the effects of residence castles and fortified churches together with modern field engineering had an important role in its formation. The defence of the irregular rectangular inner castle with four towers in the corner was made more efficient by the external castle: a gate-tower on the western side, a zwinger on the northern side, the outpost bastion on the eastern side, which meant one tower for cannons (a big, polygonal, multilevel defence tower with flanker properties). In the light of a document issued by prince Mihály Apafi in 1663, earlier historical researches interpreted the building of Bădeni castle as the direct consequence of Turkish attacks in 1658 and 1661. On the basis of analysing the ground-plan system and formal details it could be supposed that the building of the fortification is the result of a longer activity which began half a century ago.

Defence-caves and pitfalls

In the Vârghiş-fold and its surroundings with unique natural aptitudes a special defence system came into existence, where the permanent use of cave-sites can be traced from the 12th century *(Fig. 23)*. We have no data regarding the wall built of stones without adhesive at the southern entrance of the fold, three caves were closed by stone walls probably only in the Age of Principality (Orbán Balázs, Tatárlik and Lócsűr caves, *Fig. 12*). On the northern side of the fold stands the church Tatárkápolna (chapel of Tartars) on the Kőmező ('Stone land'); the determination of its straight function needs further researches (a special role: the intermittent ecclesiastical function for runaway people looking for shelter in the Vârghiş-fold, or the parish church existing near the fold). The Pipások dombja ('Pipers' hill') with defence function and the Tatársánc ('the earthwork of Tartars') were in use till the Late Middle Ages *(Fig. 24)*.

By the Late Middle Ages changes took place in the defence approach and thinking in Udvarhelyszék, which was also manifested in the type of self-defence objects, namely, in contrast with earlier times, the defence places were established near settlements (artificial caves), or the fortification of the most important buildings of the villages (churches) came to the front *(Fig. 21)*. According to the actual knowledge it seems that the horizon of artificial

Fig. 12. Remains of stone wall at the entrance of "Orbán Balázs" cave (Photo: A. Sófalvi).

caves made and used in the surroundings of Odorhei town in the 16–17th centuries are specific for Udvarhelyszék: Satu Mare (Máréfalva – Kőlik), Tibod (Tibód – Szirt-oldal), Odorheiu Secuiesc (Székelyudvarhely – Rez-oldal, Székelyudvarhely – Budvár), Chinuşu (Kénos – Veresmart), Teleac (Telekfalva – Őrhegy), Mujna (Székelymuzsna – Likoldala). They may have remained on the periphery of researches just because of their special characteristics, and since the age of Balázs Orbán these objects called 'holes' in the common language have only caught geologist János Bányai's attention. These caves burrowed in relatively mellow, easily exploitable conglomerates have a short lifetime from a geological point of view and are liable to natural destruction (a group of Chinuşu' caves was destroyed by ballast-digging in the last decades), so their survey was very important. Apart from their unique characteristics, the group of caves with special formal properties, are connected with several factors. These establishments located near settlements (within a maximum of one kilometre distance) and burrowed on the southern or south-eastern parts of cliffs with sometimes 10 m^2 large caves (the largest one is the big cave of Teleac with special features in several respects, *Fig. 13*) can be found in groups in each case (the work of families, tens or villages), and, with static aims dividing their inside by natural pillars, providing them with narrow, defensible entrance and windows *(Fig. 14)*. They are not mentioned in historical written documents and not each of them has preserved archaeological stratas, namely the remains of historical human activity. The archaeological researches of caves in Teleac and Satu Mare confirmed the legendary tradition, which indicated the use of caves in the 16-17th centuries *(Fig. 25)* in the time of Turkish invasions with defence aims. The areas with small capacity probably served for the defence of the population unable to fight, while the military groups were fighting at the open field. In the legends the figure of a woman can be outlined, the type of woman who defeated the enemy with the help of tricks. These caves were only able to offer a limited protection (the animals were probably set on the lower, wide natural terraces in front of the caves); during the long assaults water-supply was a problem, because they could get water from this type of rock only when it rained. The origin of this cave type, as well as the circumstances of its establishing and functioning needs further researches. The defence character of these caves is confirmed by place-names like 'ambush', 'custodian', 'watcher', 'vigilant', befalling close to the caves, which allude to natural kinds of refuges and observer places.

Natural refuges (forests, valleys, mountains, caves, prehistoric castles etc.) could not be neglected in the Medieval and Principality history of Udvarhelyszék, but – and this is one of the main conclusions of the dissertation – it was a methodological mistake made by earlier researchers to determine this type of refuge as the most important defence frame of the Szeklers.

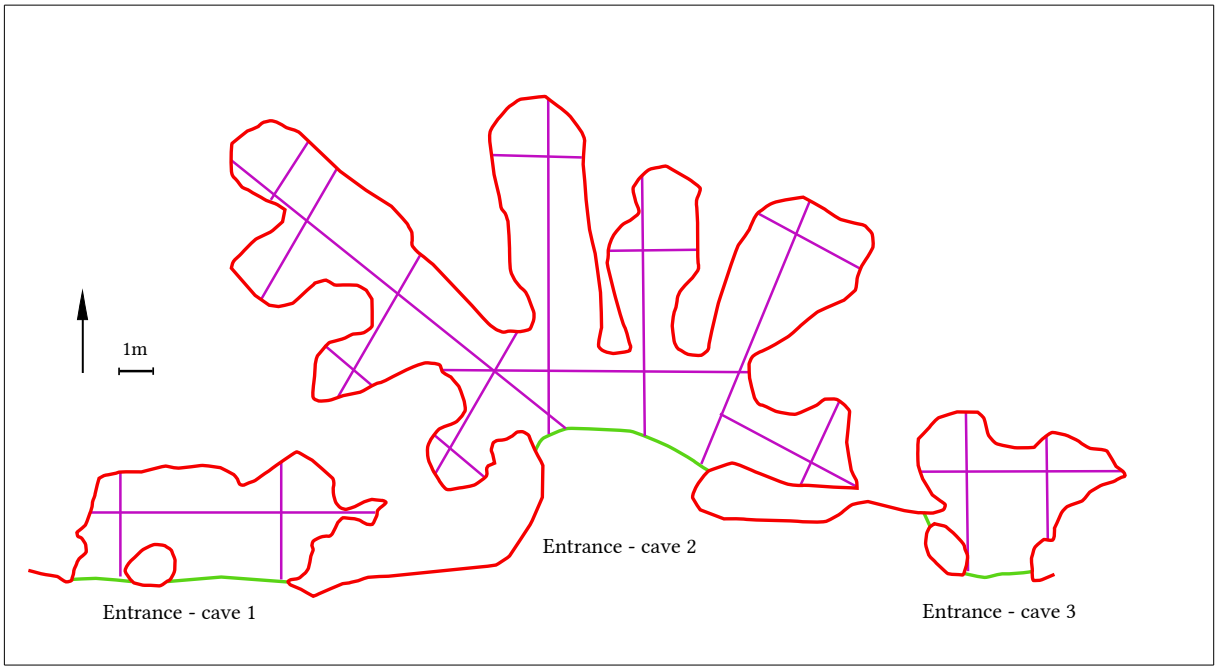

Fig. 13. Ground-plan survey of Teleac caves (A. Sófalvi – A. Serfőző – I. Bagi)

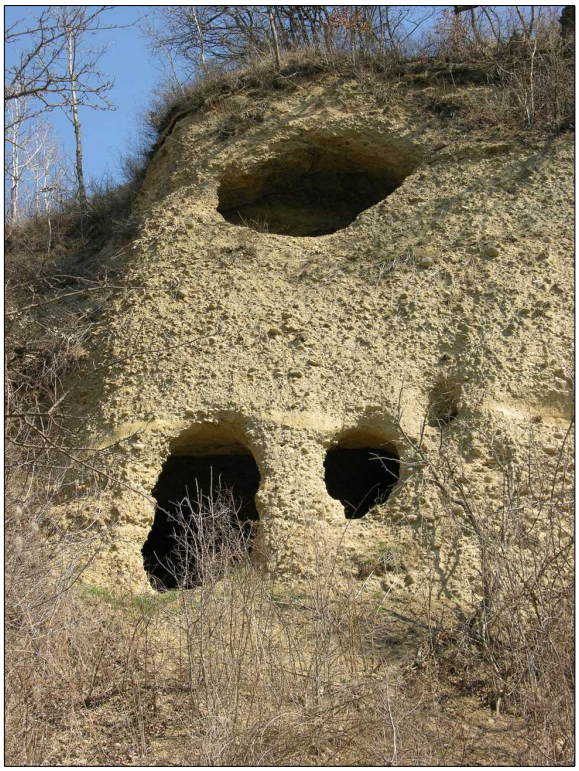

Fig. 14. Entrance of Satu Mare caves (Photo: A. Sófalvi)

The use of prehistoric earthworks (Máré and Zete castles) for casual refuge – if we can believe popular traditions – is probable, but there are no Medieval or Principality archaeological findings to confirm this theory (the only exception is the heel-find coming from the Galath castle in Porumbenii Mici /Kisgalambfalva/). By developing the natural rock-cavity of Hollókő in Comăneşti (Homoródkeményfalva) a refuge was created in the bosom of the forest in the 16–17th centuries. In a letter dated to the 17th October 1661 we found that the arriving of Turkish-Tartar troops was being observed from the Hill of Şiclod (Siklód). As far as future archive and archaeological researches are concerned, we may identify and map new locations and objects which had a permanent or occasional defence role in the Middle Ages or in the time of Principality.

Parallel with the documentation of gradually destructed artificial caves the analysis of another type of object came to the front. During the Principality the creating of pitfalls dug in the earth was an efficient form of storing goods against Turkish-Tartar robberies. Only three of these pitfalls were identified in Udvarhelyszék: Mereşti (Homoródalmás), Ioneşti (Homoródjánosfalva), Tărceşti (Tarcsafalva), however, this is only a fragment of their original number. The pitfalls with hive-form bur-

rowed vertically in the soil or soft rock can also be found in groups, as they were created in accordance with static and defence (hiding) factors. In reference to the storage of goods and defence the function of fortified churches is also concerned; in the recent past, during archaeological excavations in Mărtiniş we discovered some dwelling and storage buildings behind the precinct walls of the fortified church, which had an important role in the defence of human and material goods in case of emergency.

The fortification elements of churches

Systematic field researches have proven that fortified churches formed one of the most characteristic types of self-defence objects in Udvarhelyszék too. Beside classical fortified churches (Mărtiniş, Dârjiu) more churches have come into view, which show partial fortification and defence function. Beyond data known from bibliography, the study of ecclesiastical sources and systematic field researches (at church towers, precinct walls and surroundings) made the survey of the fortification elements of every church possible. We have made the documentation of ecclesiastical buildings that I name churches with a defence character, with many auxiliary elements (loop-holed walls, defence floors, ditches next to walls, storage places, special spaces and elements etc.), which were obviously made with a defence function. In my opinion the simple precinct walls alone could not demonstrate defence role. We can find only one example for the fortification of the church frame itself, the defence floor built at the and of the 15th century in Dârjiu *(Fig. 15)*, which was circled by a wall in oval form with a gate-tower; this wall was demolished at the beginning of the 17th century and another precinct wall was built in a parallelogram form with a defence floor, loopholes and slots for spilling hot water, and with rectangular ground-plan towers on the corners. In Mărtiniş the oval-form wall of the medieval cemetery was rebuilt into a defence wall with loopholes and six external defence-towers in the same period *(Fig. 16)*.

In the case of other churches the defence role manifests itself in the fortification of towers built together with churches or separately from them, and in the drilling of defence walls surrounding the ecclesiastical building. Among the latter ones we have to underline the example of Rugăneşti (Rugonfalva), where the gallery of wall, namely the defence floor was mentioned by 18–19th century historical sources, the existence of which can be proven in Ocland (Okländ) too. The precinct walls of churches in Bisericani (Szentlélek, *Fig. 17*) and Rugăneşti were encircled by ditches with a defence role. Some parts of these auxiliary elements were destroyed, demolished or walled-off; there are some cases where only the written sources (Mujna) or historical illustrations (Odorheiu Secuiesc) refer to the Medieval or Principality Age fortification.

Towers had a main role in the fortification of the churches of Udvarhelyszék. Just like in Háromszék, there are also many gate-towers built together with precinct walls in Udvarhelyszék, located on the eastern parts of sanctuaries (Dârjiu, Mărtiniş, Ocland), to make it difficult to get to the entrance of churches. The gate-tower having three levels most often and towers built on the western facade of churches reflect their defence character. The ground floor of these towers was usually vaulted, and in some cases the upper floor was also vaulted with fire protection aims. Nowadays we could not find any steeples on the upper parts of churches made of wood and with open structures, which are mentioned in 18–19th century ecclesiastical sources: Mugeni (Bögöz), Forţeni (Farcád), Ocland or by Balázs Orbán: Feliceni (Felsőboldogfalva), Porumbenii Mari, Dârjiu.

Fig. 15. Defence-floor of Dârjiu church (Photo: A. Sófalvi).

Fig. 16. South-eastern defence-tower at Mărtiniş (Photo: A. Sófalvi).

Fig. 17. Ditch next to Bisericani church (Photo: A. Sófalvi).

Fig. 18. Loopholes at Crăciuneşti church-tower, second floor, north side (Photo: A. Sófalvi).

Fig. 19. Loopholes at Şoimoşu Mare church-tower, first floor, north side (Photo: A. Sófalvi).

In other cases the study of internal wood elements or wall structures of the towers shows the existence of steeples: Sânpaul, Roua (Rava). With regard to their defence role, in the row of towers in Udvarhelyszék we have to present the examples with four floors in Crăciuneşti (Karácsonfalva, *Fig. 18*) and Şoimoşu Mare (Nagysolymos, *Fig. 19*). In the aspect of architectural features we also have to mention the proportional gothic towers broad-stoned on their corners from Feliceni *(Fig. 20)* and Mărtiniş. The stairway built in the internal structure of the Medieval tower in Sânpaul was obviously made with a defence aim, and this construction was also used in Mărtiniş in the 17th century. The northern and southern enclosures of the tower in Forţeni – which were built with a defence role – are very special.

Fig. 20. Church-tower of Feliceni (Photo: A. Sófalvi).

Within the framework of the dissertation the western towers or gate towers were surveyed, the defence function of which proved to be obvious, though some of them were transformed significantly in the Modern Age. In many cases these towers were dated by dendrochronological analyses of samples received from wood structures, so it was possible to work out their typo-chronology and their development between the Late Middle Ages and Principality. The prototype of defence towers in Udvarhelyszék was the Gothic one, spread from the 15th century with vaulted ground floor, generally having 3 floors (in some cases two or four floors occurred too), and loopholes used for archery and steeples on its top. The end of constructing Medieval defence towers is represented by the building of Sânpaul tower between 1530 and 1542. The spreading of manual firearms in the 16th century notably changed the character and drilling of towers (dimensions, number of floors with loopholes, the shape and form of loopholes). As the research of the defence function of churches in Udvarhelyszék proved to be very complex, the accent was rather on their documentation. A wider comparison could only be realised after systematic researches done through all Szeklerland.

The extent of fortification and number of fortified churches in Szeklerland could be analysed and appreciated in terms of the geographical situation of a certain region. The relative distance of Udvarhelyszék from the eastern and south-eastern borders differentiates it from the permanent and increased danger in Háromszék and Csíkszék districts settled along the borders, which determined the number and stage of fortifications. According to our knowledge about the building of fortifications the village communities had a main role, but from the example of Dârjiu and Mărtiniş we can see that the contribution and patronage of *primores* and *primipilii* was significant too. We could ask the question: what degree of assault could these partly fortified churches stave off? In the answer we have to underline the historical and geographical factors too, on one hand the fact that Udvarhelyszék – apart from a road

of a country-wide importance coming from the direction of the Rika forest – was crossed mainly by regional roads. Udvarhelyszék was avoided by Turkish expeditions, and, apart from certain grave attacks like the revenge campaign in 1661, the area was mainly affected by raids. Against few tens or maximum one hundred assaulters, who had no assaultive siege-guns (we have to underline that the Dârjiu and Mărtiniş fortified churches could not have resisted either a longer assault), the fortified churches, defence towers and simple precinct walls in Udvarhelyszék usually proved to be resistant enough, and during short assaults they provided right protection. Beside the fortified walls in this fact the number of defenders, their arming, provision and persistence also had an important role. The number of several communities is only a referential data in the determination of the power of defenders (there were 84 inhabitants mentioned in Dârjiu and 214 in Mărtiniş and its curacies in the military list made in 1614). There is no direct reference to the arming of churches; these are mostly made up from the armament of Szeklers who had a compulsory military service (bows, crossbows, lances, spontoons, axes, scythes, muskets etc.), which were completed with auxiliary materials (stone, hot water, pitch) used usually at the defence of castles. According to our knowledge it seems that cannons were rarely used in the fortified castles of Udvarhelyszék, but the tower excavated on the southern part of the Mărtiniş defence-wall built at the most important point against attacks, was probably made for cannons on the basis of its dimensions and features. The loopholes of closed church-towers which served the deterrence of the enemy – were able to keep only small areas under fire, while the Dârjiu and Mărtiniş external defence-towers and defence floors could offer efficient protection. Church-towers with only a passive role could not execute the liquidation of the enemy, their weak point was the danger of being burnt, and the vault of the ground floor had the task to eliminate this danger. This is why the external closing of loopholes was made of stone in each case. Only the vaulting of the top floor could prevent the enemy from setting fire to the upper part of the towers – the tower helmet and the defence floor made of wood – and block the spreading of the fire (nowadays only one example is known from Dârjiu).

The simple precinct walls were not able to resist larger attacks. In 1613 the gate-tower and cemetery wall of Mărtiniş was not able to protect the Medieval church against Turkish troops who entered Transylvania for removing Gábor Báthori from the throne of the Principality. After this sad experience the community of Mărtiniş rebuilt the cemetery wall into defence walls with loopholes and external towers *(Fig. 16, 26)*. Against thousands of the enemy not only the fortified castles of Udvarhelyszék, but the other church-castles of Szeklerland were unprotected too. In 1658 Turkish troops reached only the southern part of the area, burning Sânpaul. During the raid in 1661 the largest part of Udvarhelyszék was plundered, and there are written documents about the significant damages in the fortified churches or churches with defence elements of Lutiţa (Agyagfalva), Mugeni, Mărtiniş, Dârjiu (the churches of Inlăceni /Énlaka/, Văleni, Sâncrai /Szentkirály/, Tămaşu /Székelyszenttamás/ and Zetea /Zetelaka/ were rifled and burnt). Some indirect data refer to the devastation of Feliceni, Ocna de Sus (Felsősófalva) and Porumbenii Mari churches, and the chapel of Jesus in Odorheiu Secuiesc. The Medieval vaults of many churches (Inlăceni, Feliceni) had to be changed to wood ceilings. The western gate of the Înlăceni church was strengthened with a pusher beam built into the wall. The roof and the wood structures of the tower of Mugeni church were replaced by woods cut between 1664 and 1670, in the background of which a

large revenge can be assumed. According to the time of the cutting (1661–1676) of its wood elements we may have a similar assumption about the church of Porumbenii Mari too.

In 1690, during the principality of Imre Thököly the Turkish-Tartar armies marched across Udvarhelyszék two times, rifling many settlements and churches, for example the church of Văleni. The church of Mărtiniş was attacked again and, taking advantage of its weak points, the assaulters broke through the south-eastern gate of the wall, set fire to the church, however, they could not conquer the gate-tower protected by arms, stones and hot water. This fact is a good example of how a well-equipped and convenient defence gate-tower could resist a shorter assault.

In 1704 the „castle" of Mujna could not resist the Habsburg troops, and as a result of its devastation it completely lost its fortified character (there probably was a high precinct wall with a gate-tower).

The distribution of churches with defence character provides a good outline of the most endangered parts and points of Udvarhelyszék in the 15–17th centuries. According to the written documents the region of the Homorod River (Homoród) was mostly affected by attacks of different sizes, raids or robberies of the Turkish troops marching through it. Next to churches with fortification elements we can find here some caves with defence character, and the Bădeni castle was also built here in the 17th century. Due to the nearness of Altland (region of Saxons) hostile troops often appeared on the southern edge of Udvarhelyszék. The fortified church of Dârjiu, the artificial defence caves in Mujna, and 'custodian'-type place names on the southern border of the district reflect this very clearly *(Fig. 21)*. The military relevance of the most important roads passing through Udvarhelyszék is indirectly shown by some defence-type churches, like the road coming from the valley of Târnava Mare (Nagy-Küküllő), leading through Şoimoşu Mare and Roua to the valley of the Târnava Mici (Kis-Küküllő) River, the relevance of which is confirmed by written data too. There are written documents about a military road (Hadút) near Odorhei, through Tămaşu (Székelyszenttamás), which crossed over the Târnava River at Cădişeni (Kadicsfalva – Hadrév) and ran across Satu Mare (Máréfalva) to the direction of Ciuc.

Watching the occurrence and use of defence-type objects through the entire cross section of the researched period, there are more villages where the communities experimented several defence techniques and used them along the centuries: Mereşti, Ioneşti, Satu Mare, Porumbenii Mari, Mujna, Odorheiu Secuiesc, Vârghiş (Vargyas).

The organisation of Medieval and Principality defence system of Udvarhelyszék, its methods and mechanisms constitute a proper segment of the self-defence system of Szeklerland, with special characters in some respects. On the basis of the partly presented and analysed historical monuments we have seen that next to the natural forms of refuges the area was characterized by varied transitory and built defence forms. The border-defence role of the Szeklers from Udvarhelyszék in the Middle Ages and Principality Age was outlined by written documents. The image sketched on the basis of known defence forms and techniques is fragmentary, but we have to underline that these objects provided a successful self-defence system against offences, robberies and destructive invasions along the centuries.

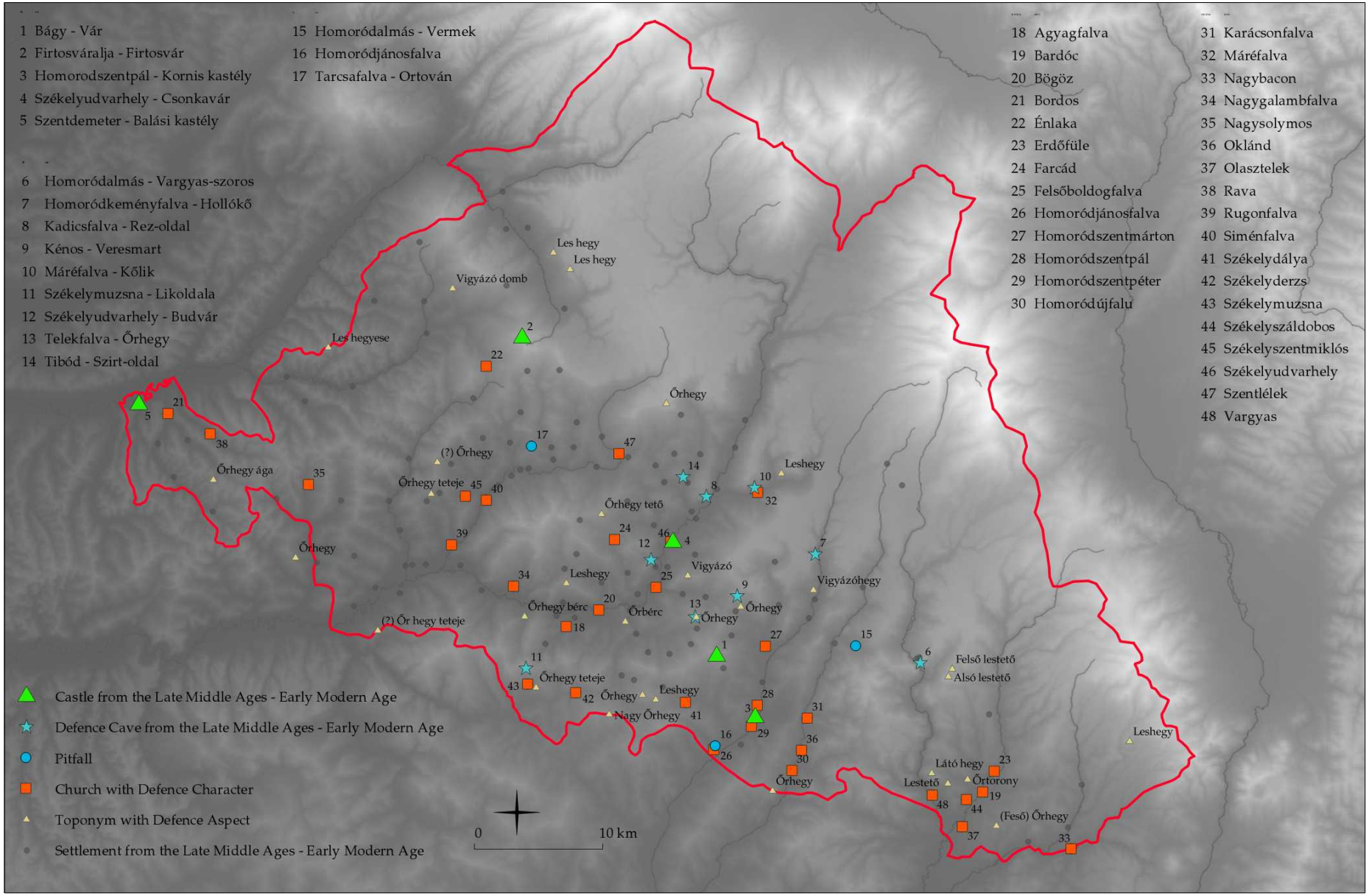

Fig. 21. Defence objects in Udvarhelyszék from the late Middle Age – Early Modern Age (A. Kosza – A. Sófalvi).

Fig. 22. Finds from Kustaly castle: pottery – 12–13th century (A. Sófalvi).

Fig. 23. Finds from caves of Vârghiş-fold: pottery – 12–14th century; denarius of King Béla III (A. Sófalvi).

Fig. 24. Finds from Pipások dombja ('Pipers' hill') and Kőmező ('Stone land'): pottery – 12–14h century (A. Sófalvi).

Fig. 25. Finds from Teleac – Őrhegy cave: metal and stone clothing clips, nail, hairpin, denier (1534), knife handle from the 16–17th century (A. Sófalvi).

Fig. 26. Finds from Mărtiniş – Unitarian Church: pottery and tile stoves – 15–17th century (A. Sófalvi)