

RELICS OF THE DIASPORA

Tibor Kollár (ed.)

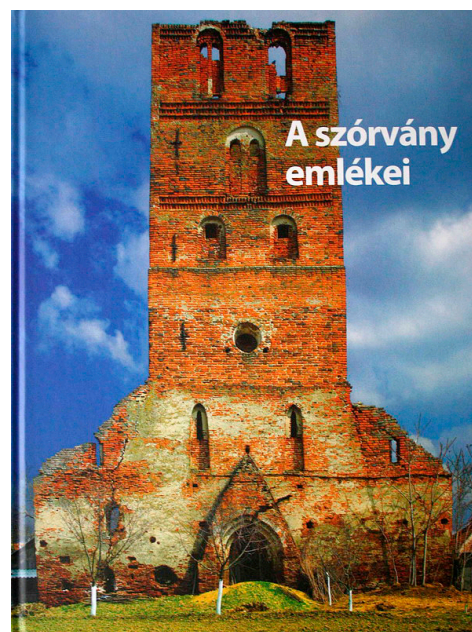
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The volume published by the Teleki László Foundation is the newest book in the representative series on the built heritage of the Carpathian Basin. The series was started in 2008, and one of its basic objectives has been the scholarly documentation and illustrated publication of the preservation of cultural assets going on in the recent years. The project has been substantially supported by the Foundation, and it focuses on the results of the saving of tangible heritage from the aspects of the history of art and architecture, thus proving the complex significance of the work.

The book is arranged around the keywords “diaspora” and “the Middle Ages”, which means that such buildings, mostly significant medieval edifices from southern Transylvanian settlements are closely examined where the Hungarian or Saxon communities live in a very small proportion now, and their past importance, their culture, may only be indicated by the studied buildings.

The first study of the book by Ernő Marosi gives dignity to the volume. He writes about a group of Saxon Romanesque portals decorated with carved figures in the archivolt (in Felek/Avrig and Oltszakadát/Săcădate they are datable to the first half, while those of Holcmány/Hosman and Kisprázsmár/Toarcla were built in the second half of the 13th century). These relics are rarities even outside Hungary. The next study fits in time to the previous one. It is concerned with Boroskrakkó/Cricău, one of the significant locations of the early settlement of the Saxon people in Transylvania and its church. The building is dated to the very beginning of the 1200s, and its interrelationships of art history together with its history of research and architecture are reconsidered and provided with a new basis by Krisztina Havasi. The next two articles further detail the picture of the church: the analysis of the medieval tombstones surviving here (including those mentioned in the list of carvings in the documentation of the excavations) is provided by Pál Lövei. The short study offers an outlook upon the Hungarian examples of the medieval remodeling of the Roman-Age tombstones as well.

Tekla Szabó was given the privilege to publish two articles in the book. In her writing about Boroskrakkó she analyses the wall paintings found during the 2011 investigation, which, in her opinion, cast new light upon the frescoes we have known from earlier. Her other work is concerned with a special aspect of the processing of the Óraljaboldogfalva/Sântămăria-Orlea wall paintings known to be connected with her name: the representations of women's attires. She endeavors to find evidence of western and Byzantine clothing habits in them. It is an important result of the study that it publishes the collection of tracing paper and watercolor copies of the wall paintings with first-rate images, along with their data and description in the appendix. During the past decade, a previously almost unimaginable quantity and quality of wall paintings (often covering significant expanses) have been found throughout Transylvania. The presentation of a part of the above paintings is treated in three further studies. Lóránd Kiss restorer, whose name is connected with a major part of these explorations, presents



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the analysis of the frescoes found between 2003 and 2013 in the Calvinist church of Szamosújvárnémeti/*Mintiu Gherlii* (of which only the one-time sanctuary has survived). The analysis he offers is based on technical and restorer's observations, and draws attention to details that, without the publication of the restorer's examination, would remain hidden from the public and most of the art historians as well.

The Somogyom/Şmig, Homoróddaróc/*Drăuşeni* and Darlac/*Dârlos* wall paintings, the latter in an outstanding condition, are largely freshly uncovered; Gábor Gaylhoffer Kovács gives a comparative analysis of their St. Catherine cycles. The examination offers an elaborate representation of the three different renderings of the legend, detailing their stylistic and iconographic characteristics as well as their types of narration.

Zsombor Jékely introduces the destroyed wall paintings of the church of Máramarossziget/*Sighetu Marmătiei* with his usual effortlessness; more precisely, he gives a survey on the watercolors made after them, which are considered to be the earliest copies of wall paintings of Hungary made with scientific precision, and which were signed by Miklós Barabás in 1845. The copies of the wall paintings of the church that burnt down in 1859 were made on commission, and their investigation provides fascinating results for the history of science.

Béla Zsolt Szakács's work fits in with the line of studies on the history of medieval architecture. It presents the research results connected to a significant example of the brick buildings of medieval Hungary: the Tamáshida/*Tămaşda* church ruins. With the help of the detailed description of the building, the chronological history of its construction, and its art historical assessment he finds the place of the building not only in the Transylvanian Saxon environment, but also in the broader, European context.

Attila Weisz's writing provides us with a comprehensive analysis on the medieval church of Szászfenes/*Floreşti*. An important role is given to the examination of the freshly uncovered wall paintings in its assessment, while the thorough and pictorial description of the building is likewise important, together with the medieval details of the church, the carvings of its stone repository and the construing of their art-historical connections. Balázs Szőke's writing on the reconstruction of the late Gothic vault covering the one-time northern chapel of the Szászfenes church is closely connected to the previous study. Starting out with the stone fragments he publishes several reconstruction models, and gives an account of the analogies to the system as well, but the descriptions written from the aspects of the work are often rather technical, and the reader might find them somewhat difficult to digest.

The only study with an explicitly archaeological viewpoint is Zsuzsanna Kopeczny's writing, which offers a summary on the history of Temesvár/*Timişoara* as reflected by the archaeological research done in recent years. Besides the architectural information collected during the excavations related to the reconstruction of the tramway track of Temesvár (primarily referring to the remains of the medieval St. George church), the major part of the study is comprised by the results of the extensive archaeological research, conducted since 2007, around the so-called Hunyadi Castle, the headquarters of the Banat Museum. The analysis of the history of architecture of the castle, beginning at its first stage in end of the 13th – beginning of the 14th century, serves with a lot of new results contradicting to our previous knowledge.

One of the main attributes of the book, as it is usual with the publications hallmarked by the name of Tibor Kollár, is the rich and demanding illustration material. It is also characteristic of the editor that he carefully selected the authors from the point of view of topics as well, thus the book represents a scholarly achievement amalgamating the processing of long neglected, but outstandingly significant relics with the publication of the newest explorations. If we wanted to observe the volume with criticism, we could only hold against it what nowadays a publication of scholarly character can scarcely flaunt with: the reader sometimes struggles with the problem of facing too many illustrations. The large number and size of the pictures caused problems at the layout editing, and at times makes the readability of the text fitful. Perhaps it would have been more favorable from the aspect of some of the recent architectural assessments too (whose quality is somewhat lesser than that of the rest of the illustrations), if they had been presented in a smaller size.

In conclusion we can say that a scholarly, at the same time demanding popular anthology has been given to the interested public, which verifies the significance of the preservation of cultural heritage of the past years with concrete results; having seen these, we cannot wish the people undertaking roles in the work and in the book anything but a similar continuation.