Sabina-Lacramioara Stanila

LATE MEDIEVAL MOLDAVIAN CASTLES
FUNCTIONS, IMAGES, PERCEPTIONS

M.A. Thesis in Medieval Studies

Central European University

Budapest

June 2003

LATE MEDIEVAL MOLDAVIAN CASTLES
FUNCTIONS, IMAGES, PERCEPTIONS

by

Sabina-Lacramioara Stanila

(Romania)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,

Central European University, Budapest, in partial fulfillment of the requirements

of the Master of Arts degree in Medieval Studies

Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU

_____

Chair, Examination Committee

_____

Thesis Supervisor

_____

Examiner

Budapest

June 2003

LATE MEDIEVAL MOLDAVIAN CASTLES
FUNCTIONS, IMAGES, PERCEPTIONS

by

Sabina-Lacramioara Stanila

(Romania)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,

Central European University, Budapest, in partial fulfillment of the requirements

of the Master of Arts degree in Medieval Studies

Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU

_____

External Examiner

Budapest
June 2003

I, the undersigned, Sabina-Lacramioara Stanila**,** candidate for the M.A. degree in Medieval Studies declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

Budapest, 17 June 2003

_____
Signature

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements

My thanks go to many people who have helped and advised me in writing this thesis. I am very pleased to acknowledge, in the first place, the permanent care and attention that József Laszlovszky bestowed upon me. His warm encouragement and constant support made me always look up to him as my mentor. I would also like to say how much I appreciated his wide range of knowledge and the willingness with which he shared it with me. I owe a very particular debt to Judith Rasson for her almost motherly attitude and to Gerhard Jaritz for his unfailing willingness to help me in any situation. I would also like to thank Adrian Rusu who guided me in the regional literature of the Moldavian castles.

I would like to acknowledge the welcome of Mugur Andronic, director of the Ethnographic Museum of Bucovina, Ion Scripcariuc, director of the local archives in Suceava, Dorel Guliciuc and Floricel Babei, managers of the hostel of "Ştefan cel Mare" University of Suceava

List of illustrations

The map of historical Moldavia - fragment of Map 12 – The Romanian Countries from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century. Taken from Pascu Vasile, *Atlas istoric* (Historical atlas) (Bucharest: Clio Nova, 1998).

1. Suceava – Cetatea de Scaun – main gate. Taken by the author on April 8, 2003.

2. Suceava – Cetatea de Scaun – the chapel. Taken by the author on April 8, 2003.

3. Suceava – Cetatea de Scaun – ground plan. Taken from *Secular Medieval Architecture in the Balkans*, ed. Slobodan Ćurčić and Evanghelia Hadjitryphonos (Thessaloniki: AIMOS, 1997), 186.

4. Suceava – aerial view. Taken from *Secular Medieval Architecture in the Balkans*, ed. Slobodan Ćurčić and Evanghelia Hadjitryphonos (Thessaloniki: AIMOS, 1997), 186.

5. Suceava – model reconstruction. Taken from *Secular Medieval Architecture in the Balkans*, ed. Slobodan Ćurčić and Evanghelia Hadjitryphonos (Thessaloniki: AIMOS, 1997), 186.

6. Şcheia, Suceava, Cetatea Neamţului – ground plans. Taken from Mircea D. Matei and Emil I Emandi, *Cetatea de Scaun şi Curtea Domnească din Suceava* (The Voievodal Castle and Palace of Suceava) (Bucharest: Editura Sport-Turism, 1988), 33.

7. Neamţului Castle - the bridge. Taken by Zoltan Soos on April 2000.

8. Neamţului Castle – arial photograph. Taken from *Secular Medieval Architecture in the Balkans*, ed. Slobodan Ćurčić and Evanghelia Hadjitryphonos (Thessaloniki: AIMOS, 1997), 188.

9. Neamţului Castle – ground plan. Taken from *Secular Medieval Architecture in the Balkans*, ed. Slobodan Ćurčić and Evanghelia Hadjitryphonos (Thessaloniki: AIMOS, 1997), 188.

10. Cetatea Albă - ground plan. Taken from Mariana Şlapac, *Cetatea Albă. Studiu de arhitectură medievală militară* (The White Castle. A Study on Medieval Military Architecture) (Chişinău: Editura ARC, 1998), 113.

11. Plan of the settlement of Cetatea Albă. Taken from Mariana Şlapac, *Cetatea Albă. Studiu de arhitectură medievală militară* (The White Castle. A Study on Medieval Military Architecture) (Chişinău: Editura ARC, 1998), 113.

12. Soroca – ground plan. Taken from Tudor Stavilă, Constantin Ion Ciobanu, and Tamara Draconescu, *Patrimoniul cultural al Republicii Moldova* (The Cultural Patrimony of the Republic of Moldavia) (Chişinău: Editura ARC, Editura Museum, 2000), 110.

13. Hotin. Taken from Haralambie Holic, *Cetatea Hotinului - destin în istorie* (Hotin Castle – Its destiny in history) (Botoşani: Axa, 2002).

14. Hotin – ground plan. Taken from Haralambie Holic, *Cetatea Hotinului - destin în istorie* (Hotin Castle – Its destiny in history) (Botoşani: Axa, 2002).

15. Soroca. Taken from http://www.molddata.md/Cultura/cetati.cttighina.html.

16. Tighina. Taken from http://www.molddata.md/Cultura/cetati.cttighina.html.

17. Crusader castles. Taken from Hugh Kennedy, *Crusader Castles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1994), 58, 66, 79.

19. Medieval castles in southern Italy. Taken from Tomáš Durdík, *Kastellburgen des 13.Jahrhunderts in Mitteleuropa* (Prague: Academia, 1994), 11, 12, 15.

20. Coucy. Taken from Tomáš Durdík, *Kastellburgen des 13.Jahrhunderts in Mitteleuropa* (Prague: Academia, 1994), 11, 12, 15.

21. Diósgyör – ground plan. Taken from Tomáš Durdík, *Kastellburgen des*

13.Jahrhunderts in Mitteleuropa (Prague: Academia, 1994), 11, 12, 15.
22. Bohemian and Austrian medieval castle types. Taken from Tomáš Durdík,
Kastellburgen des 13.Jahrhunderts in Mitteleuropa (Prague: Academia, 1994), 11, 12,
15.

INTRODUCTION

The present study was intended to follow one of the lines traced by Jacques Le Goff in his chapter "Warriors and Conquering Bourgeois: the Image of the City in Twelfth-Century French Literature" of *The Medieval Imagination,*[1] that is to be concerned with "image." But I wanted it to be a translation into the Romanian space of medieval castles. Several problems emerged. Firstly, when dealing with Romanian castles, one is confronted with three different identities due to the fact that present-day Romania was formed as a result of the union of three principalities: Transylvania, Moldavia, and Wallachia. Their specific historical contexts gave rise to different features of Romanian medieval castles. Secondly, the literature of Romanian castles consists mainly of folklore (legends and tales) that cannot be dated. One is not able to deal with problems of image, representation and perception of castles by relying on such sources. For all these reasons a shift from the originally intended topic was necessary, which led to a historical study of Moldavian castles. The idea remained the same, that of image and perception. But the destination had to be reached in a different way by choosing a different approach

Image implies perception: our perception in an attempt to reflect or reconstruct the medieval perception of Moldavian castles. The following questions will be addressed: How can we view the Moldavian castles? How were they perceived? What were their images?

---

[1] Jacques Le Goff, *The Medieval Imagination*. Tr. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988). – The intention grew out of my previous study written as a diploma paper "The Multicultural Identity of the English Medieval Castle," defended at the University of Bucharest, Faculty of Foreign Languages, English-French specialization, 1998.

What still raised problems was the selection of the castles and the scarcity of sources. Castles that still have ruins were selected for my sample. They are better documented than those that were completely destroyed.

The problem of primary sources for castles is a painful one in Romanian historiography. The traditional written sources are confined to: one homage; a few economic privileges; some charters in which castellans, castles or their counties are mentioned; a grant whereby three castles are entrusted to a Polish dignitary; and other charters (donations) in which the castellans are mentioned as witnesses. The seventeenth century *Chronicle* of Grigore Ureche[2] barely mentions seven castles, assigning to them a Genoese origin. A single page is devoted to castles in Miron Costin's seventeenth century *Chronicle*, where he acknowledges that few things were known about the castles of Moldavia.[3] Foreign travellers' accounts give evidence of the perception of castles, but they are scanty. Other sources are archaeological reports, photographs and ground plans available in the secondary literature.

Secondary literature falls into two categories: a varied international literature and a regional one consisting of monographs or other writings on Moldavian castles. The international literature provided the necessary documentation with respect to general archaeological information on castles, functions, perceptions, environmental history, and castle politics. I will enumerate some international works that shaped the main ideas of my research. John Steane wrote important studies[4] dealing with the

---

[2] Grigore Ureche, *Letopisețul Țării Moldovei* (The Chronicle of Moldavia) (Bucharest: Editura Academiei R. P.R., 1958), 71.

[3] Miron Costin, *Cronica polonă* (The Polish Chronicle) in *Opere* (Major Works), ed. P. P. Panaitescu (Bucharest: Editura Academiei R. P.R., 1958), 205.

[4] John Steane, *The Archaeology of Medieval England and Wales* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1984) (henceforth Steane, *Medieval England and Wales*); *The Archaeology of Medieval English Monarchy* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1993) (henceforth Steane, *English Monarchy*); *The Archaeology of Power* (Charleston: Tempus Publishing Ltd, 2001) (henceforth Steane, *Power*).

issue of perception and castle building programmes. David Austin's article[5] on Barnard castle laid an emphasis on functionality within a medieval castle. Michael Aston dealt with environmental history.[6] Steane, Austin, and Aston relied on archaeology as the foundation of their studies. The Austrians Otto Brunner[7] and Herwig Ebner[8] were concerned with issues related to castle politics and the relationship between castle building and territorial control and consolidation of a ruling family. Erik Fügedi[9] focused on the relationship between castle and society, therefore indirectly with perception, while Imre Holl dealt with castle types. The collected work *Secular Medieval Architecture in the Balkans*[10] made an attempt to synthesise the common features of fortifications in the Balkans, also projecting them against a thoroughly defined political background. The book also aims at moving secular architecture out of the shadow of religious architecture, which has been dealt with predominantly in the region.

The regional literature can also be divided in two because historical Moldavia is now two distinct territories: Romanian Moldavia and the Republic of Moldavia. The castles situated on the River Dniester are now in the territory of the latter, consequently one has to deal with the problem of accessibility to the primary sources and secondary literature (part of which is written in Russian).

---

[5]. David Austin, "Private and Public: An Archaeological Consideration of Things," in *Die Vielfalt der Dinge. Neue Wege zur Analyse mittelalterlicher Sachkultur,* ed. Helmut Hundsbichler et al. (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1998), 163-206

[6] Michael Aston, *Interpreting the Landscape. Landscape Archaeology and Local History* (London: Routledge, 1997), 91 (henceforth: Aston, *Landscape Archaeology*).

[7] Otto Brunner, *Land and Lordship: Structures of Governance in Medieval Austria*, tr. Howard Kaminsky and James Van Horn Melton (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992).

[8] Herwig Ebner, "Die Burgenpolitik und ihre Bedeutung für die Geschichte des Mittelalters," *Carinthia I* 164 (1974) (henceforth: Ebner, "Burgenpolitik"): 33-51.

[9] Erik Fügedi,. *Castle and Society in Medieval Hungary (1000-1437)* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1986).

[10] *Secular Medieval Architecture in the Balkans,* ed. Slobodan Čurčić and Evanghelia Hadjitryphonos (Thessaloniki: AIMOS, 1997).

Two general studies have been made on Moldavian castles: 1) Lucian Chițescu's doctoral thesis[11] first provided the historical context against which the Moldavian fortifications were listed and gave a chronological account; 2) Gh. Anghel's article[12] gives a thorough analysis of the Moldavian defence system during the reign of Stephen the Great (1457-1504). A work on the Moldavian castles from the perspective of images and perceptions would integrate them into the larger international context where such an approach has already been used. In order to answer the research question, I wrote two parts, each with subordinate research questions. The first part is a description and a deconstruction of Moldavian castles. It will consist of individual descriptions of castles done by framing them into a rigid standard, that is, by using a framework consisting of the following parameters: location, builders and building stages, plan, type, and functions. The purpose of these descriptions and deconstructions (the information may seem at times broken down and disparate) is to uncover patterns. These patterns will lead, in the second chapter, to identifying the images and perceptions of late medieval Moldavian castles, that is, to see their common features and to establish possible differences in terms of the parameters that constitute the headings of each description. This will be done by focusing mainly on chronology and the castles' functions. The methodology chosen consists of two contrasting movements: decomposition and composition, analysis and synthesis, description and comparison.

I borrowed the term "decomposition' from the field of semantics because, just as in semantic theory a word can be decomposed into smaller units of meaning that

---

[11] L. Chițescu, *Fortificațiile Moldovei în secolele XIV-XVI – cetăți* voievod*ale şi fortificații orăşeneşti – Rezumatul tezei de doctorat* (The Fortifications of Moldavia from the Fourteenth to the Sixteenth Century – Royal Castles and Urban Fortifications – A Summary of the Doctoral Thesis) (Bucharest: Academia de Ştiinţe Sociale şi Politice a R.S.R., 1970) (henceforth Chițescu, *Fortificații*).

4

are called semantic features, so the castle can be viewed as a decomposable unit and the features that I chose to take into consideration (I am fully aware that they are not all) are the parameters mentioned above. On a parallel level, the implicit assumption of this study is that a castle can be regarded as a text having a grammar (that is, a structure) and a vocabulary (that is, meaningful elements to fill the structure). Therefore, like a text, a castle can be deconstructed and reconstructed.

In order to tackle the issue of multifunctionality, I will start from D. J. Cathcart King's tentative definition of the castle: "Typically, a castle is a fortified habitation."[13] His definition is apparently restrictive. Nevertheless, it encompasses all facets of castles, because habitation means a place of living. Living, in its turn, is a complex term: the place of living can be a residence but also the place where one makes a living by commercial, administrative or even judicial activity. The residence, with added degrees of comfort, can turn into a representation of the owner's power or prestige. I hope I will be able to show that Moldavian castles had all these aspects which can be grouped within the general concept of "multifunctionality."

Keeping this as a starting point, the main research questions that will be addressed in the first chapter are: what is the location of Moldavian castles? Who built them and when? Are there building stages? What plan(s) and type(s) do they have and share? What functions did they have and when did they acquire them? I am of course aware that each of these questions has been answered with respect to each castle. What I am interested in now is putting them together in a framework so as to answer to the following questions in the second chapter: was a certain location preferred for castles? What particular features in the location made the "perfect" castle site from

---

[12] Gh. Anghel, "Cetăţile medievale ale Moldovei din timpul lui Ştefan cel Mare" (The medieval castles of Moldavia during the reign of Stephen the Great) *Apulum* 16 (1978) (henceforth Anghel, "Cetăţile medievale"): 239-259.

the fourteenth to the sixteenth century in Moldavia? Is there a connection between builders-building and stages-functions? How does this affect the image of castles? What was added, when and to what purpose? Were new functions added together with new "walls?

---

[13] See D. J. Cathcart King, *The Castle in England and Wales: An Interpretative History* (London: Routledge, 1988) (henceforth King, *Castle*), 1.

CHAPTER 1

A Survey of Late Medieval Castles in Moldavia from the Second Half of the

Fourteenth Century to the First Half of the Sixteenth Century

One cannot attempt to define and compare the late medieval castles in Moldavia without a general description of them. Written sources and archaeological research have revealed the existence of the following castles on the territory of historical Moldavia:[14] Hotin, Soroca, Orheiul Vechi, Tighina, Cetatea Albă, Chilia, Crăciuna, Roman, Cetatea Neamțului, Suceava, Șcheia, Țețina and Hmielov (See map).

The objects of concern here are only those castles that can demonstrate to the visitor or to the researcher visible proof of their existence, that is, ruins. My choice is based on the fact that castles that still stand have benefited from research, therefore they are well-documented. Contrary to a lot of western European examples of castles that do not have ruins but can still be researched on the basis of charters or other written sources, the Moldavian castles are hardly mentioned in the documents of the time. One can find monographs on Hotin and Cetatea Albă; Suceava and Cetatea Neamțului are well documented. Țețina, however, or Roman are not known to have benefited from any study.[15] Therefore, I took the risk of an incomplete list of the Moldavian castles that existed in the time span surveyed and excluded from my detailed analysis Orheiul Vechi, Chilia, Crăciuna, Roman, Țețina, and Hmielov. I will deal with Șcheia only to the extent to which it is instrumental to making a case out of Suceava. Archaeological excavations only uncovered traces of a rectangular castle

---

[14] Following the map, they have been listed clockwise, from the north to the east, south and west.
[15] Exceptions are, to some extent, Șcheia and Orheiul Vechi where archaeological research was done and the results were published.

with four round towers at the corners at Orheiul Vechi.[16] The castle was situated on a promontory on the River Răut, fifteen kilometres east of the present day town bearing the same name, between Trebujeni and Butuceni villages. The remains of the stone buildings were dated to the reign of Stephen the Great (1457+1504). Only some scattered remains of the former castle of Chilia can be seen at present.[17] There is no mention whatsoever of the plan of the castle. It was situated on an island in Chilia channel and linked with the old Greek *castrum* of Licostomo (the Mouth of the Wolf); according to the chronicle, eight hundred masons helped by seventeen thousand workers built it in less than a month: from June 22 to July 16, 1479. Crăciuna was built in wood and earth and its traces were identified by L. Chițescu.[18] Roman disappeared without a trace (although perhaps archaeological investigation would reveal remains).[19] Only remains of the foundation can be seen at Șcheia.[20] The fragment of a wall, the foundations of a tower and a stone stairway are the testimony of the existence of Țețina.[21] A certain amount of data is available for these castles, but this is not enough for a standardised analysis.

This chapter will present in a standardised form as much information as possible regarding the castles' location, size, builders and periods of building, plan, type, and functions. This will become a basis for further analysis of their image, perceptions and representations. The idea behind this catalogue is to provide a framework for the following chapter in which I also plan to establish a correlation between the multiple functions of late medieval Moldavian castles and the political changes that influenced and engendered the image of these castles.

---

[16] See Grigore Ionescu, *Istoria arhitecturii în România* (The History of architecture in Romania), vol. 1, (Bucharest: 1963) (*henceforth* Ionescu, *Istoria arhitecturii*), 208.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Chițescu, *Fortificații*, 16.
[19] *Ibid.*

Not all the questions addressed here can be answered with respect to each and every castle for various reasons. For most of the castles written sources are scarce or have limited accessibility. In some cases[22] the archaeological research carried out has been insufficient, and there are still blanks to be filled. A detailed and thorough analysis of each castle is not possible, as some are well-researched[23] whereas others have not yet been done justice.

The primary sources for this chapter will be the castles themselves, photographic materials, the plans of the castles, reports of archaeological finds, and the few written sources. The description also relies extensively on information drawn from secondary literature which can constitute indirect evidence. The method that will be used throughout the survey is a descriptive-analytical approach to delineate the characteristic features of each castle.

The Castles

1. Suceava (Figure 1 and 5)

The peculiarity of Suceava is that there were two castles: Suceava proper, known as Cetatea de Scaun (see Figure 1), in the eastern part of the settlement, and one in the western part of the settlement, known in the literature as Şcheia,[24] which was built first that is before the castle of Suceava.

1.1 Location

Both Şcheia and Suceava castles were built near the settlement that existed here from prehistory. The hypothesis of "mobile continuity" is put forth by M. D. Matei: the communities that settled on the territory of Suceava never abandoned it but

---

[20] See Sergiu Adam, *Ctitorii Muşatine* (Muşatin Foundations) (Bucharest: Editura Sport-Turism, 1976), 20-49 (*henceforth* Adam, *Ctitorii*).
[21] Adam, *Ctitori*, 20-49. See also Anghel, "Cetăţile medievale."
[22] For instance Hotin or Soroca.
[23] Suceava is a good example in point.

only moved function of circumstantial conditions at small distances within the area;
they were driven by the permanent need to look for means of living and also by
political insecurity.[25] M. D. Matei postulates that the town has been continuously
inhabited.[26]

Both castles were built on hills. Their location is distinguished by conditions
favourable to habitation: the varied relief and the water.[27] Indeed, Şcheia dominates
from on top of Şeptilici hill (384 m) the village and the river bearing the same name,
while Suceava looks upon Suceava Valley. Şcheia is situated about 2,5 km northwest
of Suceava on the old road to Siret.[28] On the basis of archaeological finds, it is known
that the plateau on which Suceava castle was built was previously covered with a
forest that was cleared before the building process started.[29]

1.2 Builders and building stages

On the basis of archaeological finds[30] and the double comparison with
Cetataea de Scaun and Cetatea Neamțului, N. Constantinescu reached the conclusion
that it was Petru I Muşat (c.1374-c.1391), the first Moldavian voievode of the Muşat
dynasty,[31] who built Şcheia, Suceava (Cetatea de Scaun), and Cetatea Neamțului. It

---

[24] Although an "extinct" castle, Şcheia is important because of its typological connotations. The fact that it was built before Suceava by the same voievode determined its inclusion in the same typological category together with Suceava and Cetatea Neamțului.

[25] Mircea D. Matei, *Civilizaţie urbană medievală românească – contribuţii – Suceava până la mijlocul secolului al XVI-lea* (Medieval Urban Romanian Civilization – Contributions – Suceava Until Mid-Sixteenth Century) (Bucharest: Editura Academiei R.S.R., 1989) (*henceforth* Matei, *Cotribuţii*), 52.

[26] Mircea D. Matei and Emil I Emandi, *Cetatea de Scaun şi Curtea Domnească din Suceava* (The Voievodal Castle and Palace of Suceava) (Bucharest: Editura Sport-Turism, 1988) (henceforth Matei and Emandi, *Suceava*), 16.

[27] Matei and Emandi, *Suceava*, 11.

[28] Gh. Diaconu, N. Constantinescu, *Cetatea Şcheia* (Şcheia Castle) (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Populare Romane, 1960) (henceforth Diaconu and Constantinescu, *Şcheia)* , 13.

[29] Matei and Emandi, *Suceava*, 98.

[30] N. Constantinescu, "Date noi in legatură cu Cetatea Neamțului," (New data concerning Cetatea Neamțului), *Studii si cercetări de istorie veche* 1 (1960) (*henceforth* Constantinescu, "Date"), 81-107.

[31] The Muşat dynasty took its name from Muşata or Margaret, the mother of Petru I Muşat, and wife of Stephen, the voievode of Ţara Şipeniţului. Stephen had come from the north, from Ţara Maramureşului (the country of Maramureş) at the same time with Bogdan (?-1367) and set up Ţara Şipeniţului (the Country of Şipeniţ) in the area limited by the rivers Prut, Dniester, and Ceremuş, also defined by the castles of Hotin, Ţeţin, Hmielov. Muşata was a close relative of Bogdan who had been unfaithful to Louis the Great of Anjou, king of Hungary (1342-1382) and of Poland (1370-1382). Around the year

seems that Şcheia was used until about 1410 – the final stage of the building process

of Suceava (Cetatea de Scaun).[32] The archaeological evidence produces the following

arguments in favour of this hypothesis put forth by Constantinescu: 1) the

archaeological material discovered at the three castles is similar; 2) the old access

road to Cetatea Neamțului seems to have come from Suceava; Cetatea Neamțului was

only 55 km away from Suceava in a straight line; 3) on September 26, 1387, Petru I

Muşat took an oath of vassalage to the Polish king Vladislav Iagello in which the

"Moldavian castles" are mentioned;[33] in 1388 Cetatea de Scaun is first mentioned in

documents, and in 1395, seven years later, Cetatea Neamțului was mentioned as

well;[34] 4) Petru I Muşat had the necessary means to build castles and also workers.[35]

L. Chițescu also supports the idea that Şcheia, Suceava and Cetatea Neamțului were

---

1363, together with other rebels Bogdan defeated Dragos, Louis's vassal and the leader of the first royal military feud east of the Carpathians. See Victor Spinei, *Moldavia in the 11th-14th Centuries*, tr. Liliana Teodoreanu and Ioana Sturza (Bucharest: Editura Academiei R. S. R., 1986) (*henceforth* Spinei, *Moldavia*). H. Holic, *Cetatea Hotinului – destin în istorie* (Hotin Castle – Its Destiny in History) (Botoşani: Axa, 2000) (henceforth Holic, *Cetatea Hotinului*), 14-17. Hotin, Țeţina and Hmielov were the castles of the country which was bordered by the Dniester, Prut, Colacin and Ceremuş. Petru I Muşat married Nastasia, daughter of Lațcu-voievod, successor of Bogdan, the founder of Moldavia. Thus, in 1375, Țara Şipenițului became part of Moldavia. See Al. Husar, Gh. Gonța, S. Dimitriu-Chicu, *Cetăți de pe Nistru* (Castles on the Dniester) (Chişinău: Revista "Limba Română," Asociația Culturală "Grai şi Suflet," 1998) (henceforth Husar-Gonța-Chicu, *Cetăți de pe Nistru*), 9.
[32] Matei and Emandi, *Suceava*, 80.
[33] The original text of the document can be found in Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki, *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor* (Documents concerning the history of Romania) vol. I2 (1346-1450) (Bucharest: 1890), 295: "Ad perpetue rei memoriam. Petrus Woyeuida Muldauiensis harum noticiam habituris significamus quibus expedit uniuersis, Quod dum in Lemburgo tempore date praesencium cum serenissimo principe domino Wladislao Rege Poloniae Litwanieque Principe supremo et herede Russie etc. fuimus constituti, non coacti nec conpulsi, sed ex certa sciencia et utronea voluntate Boyaronum nostrorum fidelium communicato consilio immo specialiter accedente, memorato domino regi necnon preclare principi domine Hedwigi Regine consorti sue carissime ipsorumque legittimis succesorihus ac corone Regni Polonie fideliter omagium prestitimus tenore presencium et prestamus subiacentes nos, gentem atque terram nostram **Valachie castra ceteraque** …." (bolding mine)
[34] Constantinescu, "Date," 81-107.
[35] *Ibid.* This is proved by later documents, the first of this kind appeared in the region Rădăuți-Suceava-Neamț. Constantinescu quotes the document of August 1, 1444, when Stephen voievod, the son of Alexander the Good, exempts the village of Balasinouți belonging to the monastery of Horodnic from the "castle work." On March 11, 1446, the voievode exempts two villages belonging to the monastery of Neamț from castle work: Timişeştii and Cristieneştii; a document from January 7, 1407 shows that they were donated to the monastery by "the late voievode Petru," which proves the existence of the monastery during the reign of Petru I Muşat. Therefore Constantinescu believes "castle work" – a typical feudal chore – emerged in Moldavia when Petru was building "the castles of Moldavia."

built before 1387, when Petru I Muşat paid homage to the king of Poland.[36] The numismatic material found at the three sites shows that Şcheia, Suceava, and Cetatea Neamţului were built during the reign of Petru I Muşat, starting with Şcheia.[37]

Toward the end of his reign, Petru I Muşat decided to relocate the capital of the country, which was at Siret.[38] His decision to make Suceava the new capital of his kingdom, when Siret was one of the most well-developed centres at that time, is viewed as a political and religious option and is attributed to two main reasons connected with the clash of Moldavian orthodoxy and Catholicism.[39] The first is the strategic position of Suceava: it was farther than Siret from the frontier of Catholic Hungary and Poland, and consequently "it could not be attacked by surprise."[40] The second reason has to do with the fact that Siret had become "a bastion of papal propaganda for the spreading of Catholicism."[41] Apart from these reasons archaeological excavations seem to add another one: a fortification existed at Suceava as early as the end of the thirteenth century and the beginning of the fourteenth, which was not common for Romanian towns at the time. This led historians to suggest the

---

[36] Chiţescu, *Fortificaţii*, 7.

[37] Matei and Emandi*, Suceava*, 78.

[38] Matei and Emandi*, Suceava*, 34-35.

[39] Matei and Emandi*, Suceava*, 22-23.

[40] Matei and Emandi*, Suceava*, 25.

[41] Cristian Moisescu, *Arta românească veche*, vol. 1 (Old Romanian Art) (Bucharest: Meridiane, 2001) (*henceforth* Moisescu, *Arta veche*), 86. Claudia Dobre, "The Mendicants' Mission in an Orthodox Land: a Case Study of Moldavia In the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries," to be published in Annual of Medieval Studies at CEU 9 (2003). Claudia Dobre states that both the Franciscan and the Dominican Orders were present in Moldavia at the beginning of the fourteenth century. She quotes Paulinus of Venice who "mentioned five Franciscan houses situated on the territory of Moldavia belonging to the vicariate of Russia: *Cereth*, *Modalvie*, *Cotham*, *Licostomo*, and *Albi Castri*. The first three, identified with Siret, Baia, and Hotin, were situated in the northern part of the country; the other two, identified with Chilia and Cetatea Albă were in the south … Siret, which was the residence of the Moldavian voivodes until the end of the fourteenth century, had both Franciscan and Dominican monasteries. Furthermore, when the court moved to Suceava around 1388, they might have followed the court, as archaeological research has revealed a Catholic church near the court of the voivode. Attempts to convert the prince and his mother or wife was one of the strategies that the Mendicants' applied in Central and Eastern Europe. They applied the same strategy in Moldavia, which was an Orthodox country and therefore the support of the ruler and its court was very important for the Mendicants' activities. They succeeded with voivode Petru I's mother, Margaret, who had a Dominican confessor. She supported the friars, for whom she built a church in Siret, which she chose as her burial place. "

existence of a centre of political authority of the voievodal type well before the independent Moldavian state was founded in 1364.[42] The fortification discovered at Suceava included a palisade, an earthwork, and a ditch. Written sources merely attest the existence of two political units of feudal structure, namely those of Ioan and Farcas. The archaelogical finds compensate for the scarcity of the written sources and thus shed light on a third such political unit (Suceava) on Moldavian territory.[43]

Petru I Muşat first built Şcheia, which was probably abandoned,[44] and later dismantled,[45] its stone being used for Suceava.[46] Two hypotheses were advanced with respect to the causes of its destruction:[47] 1) it was deliberately destroyed after it had functioned for a short period of time during which it either must have degraded because of the instability of the soil or no longer corresponded to the defence standards of the capital city, being relatively far from the centre of the settlement; 2) it could have been destroyed due to the new political context created by the vassalage of Alexander the Good (1400-1432) to the Polish crown, that is to say, the Moldavian voievode could have been compelled to destroy it. Archaeological material seems to prove that either it was not finished or it functioned for a very short while.[48]

The second period of building of Suceava, or more precisely of strengthening of the castle, took place during the reign of Stephen the Great (1457-1504) and it can be divided into two stages:

[42] This hypothesis was first put forth in Matei and Emandi, *Suceava,* 19-20.
[43] Matei, *Cotribuţii,* 49; Gheorghiu, *Fortified Towns*, 92-93; Moisescu, *Arta veche*, 83.
[44] Matei and Emandi, *Suceava* , 36-37.
[45] Matei and Emandi believe it was systematically dismantled during the last years of Petru I Muşat's reign. The stone thus resulted was used for the construction of Suceava castle. (Matei and Emandi, *Suceava*, 78).
[46] Matei and Emandi, *Suceava*, 78-79.
[47] Diaconu and Constantinescu, *Şcheia*, 97.
[48] Matei and Emandi, *Suceava*, 78-79.

a) 1475-1477, that is between January 1475, when Stephen defeated Mehmed II at Podu Înalt near Vaslui, and the summer of 1476, when the latter made a new incursion into Moldavia.

What Stephen did was adapt the old fortress so that it could resist the new military techniques, especially artillery.[49] Thus he surrounded the old fortress with a new wall (1.5 m thick) with square towers and buttresses, so that the defenders of the castles could make use of artillery against the besiegers.

b) Before 1497. This time Stephen prepared Suceava to resist the attack of the Poles led by Jan Albrecht by "gluing" a thicker wall to the exterior of the older one, the resulting thickness of the curtain being of 3.50 m. The square towers were transformed into semi-circular ones, which caused cannonballs to ricochet. A ditch was dug. Making an analogy with Cetatea Neamțului, Matei and Emandi postulate that, in this first period, the walls of the old fortress were also heightened.[50]

1.3 Plan

The area of the central fort of Suceava (sides 36/40 m) is 1440 sq. m. The total estimated area of Suceava fortification is about 2,500 sq.m. Șcheia is slightly smaller – 1,296 sq.m. Șcheia has a rhombus plan, which was totally unsuitable for the configuration of the land. There are exterior rectangular towers at each corner and no buildings inside the precinct.

As can be seen from the ground plan (Figure 3) and the arial photograph (Figure 4) in the appendix, Suceava was built according to a rectangular plan with exterior rectangular towers placed at each corner as well as on each of the sides. A ditch surrounds the fortress. After the second period of strengthening, during the reign

---

[49] George Oprescu, ed., *Istoria artelor plastice în Romania, vol. 1* (The History of Figurative Arts in Romania, vol.1) (Bucharest: Meridiane, 1968) (henceforth Oprescu, *Istoria artelor*), 294.

14

of Stephen the Great (1457-1504), its shape came to resemble that of a star, because a new curtain wall was added with semi-circular towers.

Unlike Şcheia and Cetatea Neamţului, Suceava had interior buildings inside the fortress built by Petru I Muşat. From archaeological research, it is known that these buildings were located on the west and east sides of the fortress and date from the Muşatin period.[51] On the east side the space of the ground floor was occupied by three rooms: one for the use of the guards, a crypt, and a larger room whose destination is uncertain. The crypt was used for more pretentious funerals, for instance the skeleton of a man who is assumed to have been a dignitary was found.[52] A spiral staircase led to the voievode's apartment and the chapel on the first floor (Figure 2). On the west side there was a cellar. The rooms on the ground floor were household rooms. On the basis of K. A. Romstorfer's finds, Matei identifies the larger room on the first floor with that where the council was held. He also suggests the existence of an armoury hall and chancellery on this floor.[53]

1.4 Type

In the most recent studies, the historians' and art historians' opinions tend to converge towards the idea that a northern Polish-Baltic influence is apparent at Suceava castle.[54] But they do not exclude the possibility of a southern influence coming from the Balkan and the Danube region. Byzantine and western European castles may have such rectangular plans.[55]

---

[50] Matei and Emandi, *Suceava*, 92.
[51] Matei and Emandi, *Suceava*, 116.
[52] Matei and Emandi, *Suceava*, 117.
[53] Matei and Emandi, *Suceava*, 119.
[54] Cristian Moisescu is an advocate of the idea of Polish-Baltic influence, whereas G. Ionescu believes that Suceava is the result of masons belonging to some western school. See Ionescu, *Istoria arhitecturii*, 112-118. In the collective study Oprescu, *Istoria artelor plastice*, only the "international" aspect of Moldavian castles is mentioned.
[55] See Mariana Şlapac, *Cetatea Albă. Studiu de arhitectură medievală militară* (The White Castle. A Study on Medieval Military Architecture) (Chişinău: Editura ARC, 1998) (*henceforth* Şlapac, *Cetatea Albă*), 116. Without drawing any specific conclusion as to the provenance of this type, the author

Archaeological finds have uncovered a relatively large number of Gothic elements, such as railings, that are reminiscent of those in Transylvanian castles. Renaissance elements such as door frames have also been identified, and their origin must be looked for in castles of central Europe (Transylvania, Poland).[56]

1.5 Functions

From the very beginning, there were buildings in the interior precinct of the central fort of Suceava.[57] The military and political functions (the fact that Suceava had been the capital since the end of the fourteenth century) triggered the increasing administrative and economic role of Suceava; throughout the fifteenth century the capital reflects the ascending line of development of the whole country.[58] We should here note another reason why Suceava had been chosen to be the capital: it was situated at the crossroads of two commercial routes: the so-called "Moldavian route" and the commercial way that linked Bistriţa-Baia-Suceava-Botoşani-Soroca. The "Moldavian route," formerly called the "Tatar route" followed the River Dniester passing through Tighina, Orheiul Vechi, and Hotin, thus linking the Black Sea and the Baltic coast through Lviv.[59] The economic function is also underlined by written sources, namely privileges granted by Moldavian voievode*s* of the fifteenth century to the merchants of Lviv, according to which Suceava was considered the main customs centre.[60]

---

merely points out that the original type of the regular rectangular plan can be found in the Roman-Byzantine world, in such instances as Dişipudac (castrum), Gornea and Hinova (castella),and in the Orient, where plenty of field castles were built, such as Gastal, Lemsa, Kalaat Iahmur, Lehon, Timgad etc. She also states that, at the same time, the plan was spread all over Europe from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries and can be seen at the following castles: Guseatyn in Halici, Rudnic, Şabaţ, and Zemun in Serbia, Krasiczyn in Poland, Zalavár in Hungary, Kaunas in Lithuania, Cataneo in Italy, Friedewald in germany, Petange in Luxemburg, Villandraut, Bussy Rabutin and Roquetaillade in France, Beaumaris in England, Villanueva del Canedo and Coca in Spain etc.

[56] Matei and Emandi, *Suceava*, 106.
[57] Matei and Emandi, *Suceava*, 81.
[58] Matei and Emandi, *Suceava*, 21.
[59] Moisescu, *Arta veche*, 83.
[60] Matei, *Cotribuţii*, 87. An instance of such a document is the one of March 13, 1458, whereby Stephen the Great grants a privilege to the merchants of Braşov. The document stipulates that the

All these functions combined with the residential one, both for the voievode and his retinue, plus the soldiers defending the castle. We do not know for sure whether the castle was the voievode's permanent residence, since there was another building, *curtea domnească* or "princely palace"[61] in the middle of the settlement. Matei and Emandi state that the princely palace at Suceava was conceived by Petru I Muşat, Alexander the Good, and Stephen the Great as an ensemble of buildings with administrative and residential function (it sheltered the voievode and his family, the courtiers and servants). It started being built before or simultaneously with Scheia.[62] Together with the castle it could serve for a defensive purpose. The Council was held here, like the most important trials, and charters were issued. Guest, travellers and ambassadors were put up here as well. It was built at the end of the fourteenth century by Petru I Muşat as a wooden *casă domnească* (voievodal house). At the beginning of

merchants are not to pay the Suceava duty anywhere but at Suceava. See *Documentele lui Ştefan cel Mare* (The Documents of Stephen the Great), vol. 2 (Hrisoave şi cărţi domneşti 1493-1503), ed. Ioan Bogdan (Bucharest: Atelierele grafice SOCEC: 1913), 265: "Iar vama Sucevii să n-o plătească nicăiri, afară de Suceava, măcar de ar merge dincolo de mare. De asemenea, întorcîndu-se cu marfa lor la ţara ungurească, vor plăti vama Sucevei la Suceava, iar în alt loc nicăiri în ţara noastră." ("And they shall pay the Suecava duty nowhere else but at Suceava, even if they went over the sea. And returning with their goods to the Hungarian kingdom, they shall pay the Suceava duty at Suceava, and nowhere else in our country.")

[61] The term *Curtea domnească*, designating the voievode's palace (Matei and Emandi, *Suceava*, 130,) has been translated as "princely palace" in T. O. Gheorghiu's *Fortified Towns. Urban defences in Medieval Central and Eastern Europe* (Bucharest: Simetria, 2000) (*henceforth* Gheorghiu, *Fortified Towns*). See also Corina Nicolescu, *Case, conace şi palate vechi româneşti* (Old Romanian houses, manor houses and palaces) (Bucharest: Meridiane, 1979) (*henceforth* Nicolescu, *Case*), 15-16: "In the specialist literature, the notion of *curte*, as it was used at the beginning of the Romanian feudal states, was generally linked to the voievode, but this type of fortified residence also disposing of defenders – the courtiers – was equally used by noblemen, especially before the formation of the state. An interesting study relying on document analysis and archaeological data shed light, convincingly, the existence and the political and military role of these princely courts that were renowned in Moldavia form the fourteenth to the sixteenth century. Those that belonged to the nobility were actually the equivalent of the western European castles. [...] They dominated the passes by their position; they were usually raised on promontories so as to serve the military goal of defence and control over a certain area. [...] The importance of noblemen's *curti* decreases during the reign of Stephen the Great when the number and size of princely palaces increases instead." 67 "From written sources it is known that at the end of the fourteenth century the Moldavian voievodes resided at Suceava, Siret, Bacău, and Hârlău; Alexander the Good used to travel across the country quite often from spring to autumn, returning to Suceava for the winter. By analysing in a previous study the sources and the archaeological data linked to princely palaces during the reign of Stephen the Great, we saw that they play an important part after castles."

[62] Matei and Emandi, *Suceava*, 35.

the fifteenth century Alexander the Good rebuilt it as a small palace in stone and a cellar was also dug. Stephen the Great extended the courtyard in two phases.[63]

Behind the sobriety of the façades of the buildings, archaeological research has revealed the interior glamour and richness of Suceava castle, testified by the glazed stove tiles,[64] the rich oriental fabrics, embroideries, vividly coloured carpets and so on,[65] which makes us think of the natural tendency to improve and make the residence more comfortable; it also raises the question of the function of prestige representation.

2. Cetatea Neamțului (see its bridge in Figure 7)

2.1 Location

It was built on the extremity of a chain of higher hills, in the vicinity of the Ozana and Neamț rivers. Digging a ditch, over which a long bridge was built so as to reach the gate of the northeastern tower, cut the link with the whole chain. The building of the castle gave a new boost to the development of the settlement at the bottom of the hill, Târgu Neamț, which is 1.5 km from the castle.[66] The old access road to the castle passed through a nearby village (Oglinzi nowadays, Oglindești in the sixteenth century), across the mountain and around a steep precipice down to the castle.[67]

2.2 Builders and building stages

Cetatea Neamțului was built in stone extracted from the very hill on which it is situated. Four hypotheses have been enumerated[68] about when and by whom Cetatea

---

[63] Matei and Emandi, *Suceava*, 130-131.
[64] Paraschiva Vicroria Batariuc, *Cahle din Moldova medievală. Secolele XIV-XVII* (Stove tiles in Moldavia. Fourteenth to seventeenth century) (Suceava: Muzeul Brăilei, Editura Istros, 1999) (*henceforth* Batariuc, *Cahle*), 98-133.
[65] Matei and Emandi, *Suceava*, 167.
[66] Constantinescu, "Date."
[67] *Ibid*.
[68] See Constantinescu, "Date."

Neamțului was built:[69] 1) the castle was built by the Teutonic Order in the thirteenth century;[70] it is included in the list of Far and Near Russian Towns.[71] 2) the castle could have been built by the Germans from Bistrița;[72] 3) Cetatea Neamțului was built by a nobleman before the Moldavian state was formed,[73] but this is easily ruled out by Constantinescu, as no nobleman of Moldavia ever had sufficient power and finances to build such a castle; 4) Cetatea Neamțului is linked in time with the reign of Petru I Mușat − this opinion was supported, first intuitively as early as the end of the nineteenth century.[74] By analogy with Șcheia and Suceava, on the one hand, and with the Transylvanian castles, on the other, it was assumed that the central rectangular fortress was built by Petru I Mușat in the last quarter of the fourteenth century, very likely between 1382, when Louis the Great (1342-1382), king of Poland, died, and before 1387, when the "castles of Moldavia" were mentioned in the homage the Romanian voievode paid to Wladislaw Iagello, the Polish king.[75] Due to the political changes in Hungary that concentrated all efforts on establishing the internal stability that had vanished once Louis died, the period must have been propitious for the Moldavian ruler to build defences on his territory. The fourth hypothesis is now accepted by historians as the most probable.

---

[69] Constantinescu, "Date."

[70] It is perhaps the oldest hypothesis and was supported by Bogdan P. Hașdeu on the basis of the etymology of the name and the information in the papal bull of 1232. Other supporters of this opinion are: K.A. Romstorfer, A.D. Xenopol, C. Matasa, Grigore Ionescu, and so on (Constantinescu, "Date").

[71] This fact was pointed out by D. Onciul (Constantinescu, "Date"). Although this hypothesis was discarded, the question of toponymy is an interesting one and needs further research.

[72] This opinion is supported without arguments by C.C. Giurescu (Constantinescu, "Date").

[73] N. Grigoraș put forth this idea (Constantinescu, "Date").

[74] This last hypothesis was held by N. Iorga, Al. Lepădatu, I. Minea, C. Cojoc, and others (Constantinescu, "Date").

[75] See Radu Popa, *Cetatea Neamțului* (Neamțului Castle) (Bucharest: Meridiane, 1963) (*henceforth* Popa, *Neamț*), 7; Constantinescu, "Date."

The second period of building can be traced back to the reign of Stephen the Great, most probably between 1475 and 1476,[76] and it was justified by the fact that the old defence system taken over by the voievode no longer corresponded to the increasing development in siege techniques. Thus a second curtain wall was built in the middle of the former ditch. This wall runs along the north side of the central fort and is linked to it through the buttresses of the towers on this side. The wall has four round bastions. A new ditch was dug and the walls of the old fortress were heightened.

2.3 Plan

The total area of the central fort is 1,767 sq. m. The area of one of the towers on the ground floor is 90 sq.m.

From the ground plan (Figure 9) we see that initially, it was rectangular, with inward square towers at the four corners. It was restructured and strengthened during the reign of Stephen the Great with the addition of a new wall, which yet does not make it a concentric castle because it was built only on one side of the previous construction. Fourteen buttresses, the strongest of which are placed on the northern side, support the wall.

Archaeological research[77] has shed light upon the buildings behind the wall of the fortress. On the east side, the cellar also functioned as a prison, and traces of the mint where counterfeit coins were minted have been found on the ground floor. On the first floor, one can still see the apse of the church of the monastery the voievode Vasile Lupu (1634-1653) founded here later on. R. Popa states that the church was previously a chapel. The south side, which was considered the safest of all, was the

---

[76] Popa, *Neamţ*, 18-20. See also Constantinescu, "Date" where the author states that the building period of the curtain wall can be accurately determined due to archaeological finds; these large strengthening works date back to the second half of the fifteenth century, namely the reign of Stephen the Great.
[77] See Matei and Emandi, *Suceava*, 114-123.

location for the voievode's apartment, while the west side sheltered a large hall.[78] But from Constantinescu we learn that the old Mușatin buildings might have been at the south side, which is today almost completely ruined.[79] The traces of a large hall with arched roof are noticeable on the west side.

2.4 Type

Cetatea Neamțului has an "international" aspect dictated by its military function, one generally agreed upon as northern Baltic influence.[80] N. Constantinescu raises an interesting question: whether the type of castle represented by Cetatea Neamțului, together with Suceava, is characteristic of Moldavia. He does not consider it a simple coincidence that a regular rectangular type of castle (see Figure 8) specific to the plains emerged all of a sudden in fourteenth-century Moldavia adapted to heights. He merely points out that such castles can be found in the south, some supposedly Byzantine in origin, and also draws our attention to the Polish-Baltic space, without opting for either as an explanation.[81]

2.5 Functions

Apart from the military function, inherent in any fortification, one could easily add the administrative one, as the *pârcalab*[82] of the castle administered the whole estate belonging to it. The estate comprised several villages that supplied the voievode's court at the castle and the garrison with food, and also took care of

---

[78] Popa, *Neamț*, 43-45.

[79] Constantinescu, "Date."

[80] See Virgil Vătășianu, *Istoria artei feudale în Țările romne*, vol. 1 (The History of feudal art in the Romanian Countries, vol.1) (Bucharest, Editura Academiei R.S.R., 1959), 293 (henceforth Vătășianu, *Istoria artei*).

[81] Constantinescu, "Date." In 1492, when the castles of Suceava and Neamț were surrounded with a new curtain wall, according to the new standards imposed by the progress of artillery, a regular rectangular castle with four towers at the corners was built at Ivangorod, in front of Narva. After 1506, this castle was also surrounded by a curtain wall with bastions for artillery.

[82] *Pârcalab* designates the castellan or governor of the castle. "The *pârcalab* was a frontier official carrying out military duties as defender of the castle and its domain. [...] They also had administrative and legal attributions in the estates belonging to the castle.[...] At the same time they clarified frontier disputes..." See Holic, *Cetatea Hotinului*, 27-28.

building and maintenance of the castle.[83] The *pârcalab* also had important legal functions in the county that was in fact the domain of the castle.

Cetatea Neamțului could not have been the permanent residence of the voievode, but the presence of princely apartments hints at temporary stays at least. Moreover, the fact that such apartments show a certain concern for comfort and even ostentation and the presence of the ceramic decorations with Moldavia's coat of arms evince a certain need for prestige representation. In other words, the castle represented the power and the authority of the voievode through such elements.

3. Cetatea Albă

Cetatea Albă makes a special case among the castles belonging to the Moldavian group for nothing seems to be certain about it despite the research that has been carried out for almost a century, mostly with respect to its commercial function.[84]

3.1 Location

It was built on a promontory at the point where the River Dniester flows into the Black Sea. N. Cazacu (1986)[85] assumes that there were two castles, one on each of the banks of the river; this is partly due to the enigmatic name: the castle we are dealing with was called both the White Castle and the Black Castle. M. Şlapac too hypothesises the existence of two distinct castles.[86]

---

[83] Popa, *Neamț*, 15.
[84] Victor Spinei, "La Génèse des villes du sud-est de la Moldavie et les rapports commerciaux des XIIIe-XIVe siècles," *Balkan Studies*, 35, 2 (1994) (*henceforth* Spinei, "La Génèse"), 197-269. Extended areas have been subject to archaeological excavations at Cetatea Albă and yet there are disagreements among the archaeologists with respect to the chronological framing of certain finds.
[85] Quoted by Slapac, *Cetatea Albă*, 15.
[86] See Şlapac, *Cetatea Albă*, 156. With respect to the baffling toponymy of Cetatea Albă, Mariana Şlapac advances the hypothesis that there must have been two distinct settlements with antonymic names. "The first one, Cetatea Albă –White Castle (Asprokastron, Asprocastrum, Belgorod, Mocastro, Monte Castro etc.) was situated on the right bank of the river, and the second, Cetatea Neagră – Black Castle (Maurokastron, Maurocastro, Nigrumcastrum, Cern, Czarnigrad etc.) was on the other bank. Black Castle may be identified with Czarne Horodok (czarne ruinée, Czarna, Cazarne) which can be found on several Polish maps of the seventeenth and eighteenth century and which disappeared after the Russian-Turkish war of 1769-1774."

3.2 Builders and building stages

Cetatea Albă was executed in stone on the spot of an ancient Greek colony – Tyras.[87] Since this is not a simple castle, but rather a complex system, we need to anticipate its plan in order to understand the building stages. The complex consists of: the inner fort or the central fort and the fortified ensemble which includes three precincts.

Şlapac argues that the most likely date of the construction of the central fort is in the last decades of the fourteenth century, being probably contemporary with Şcheia, Suceava, and Cetatea Neamţului.[88] Then, it was probably built by Petru I Muşat. But other historians held that the nucleus of Cetatea Albă was built during the reign Alexander the Good.[89] Three hypotheses have been put forth with respect to the dating of the central fort:[90] 1) the Genoese hypothesis[91] according to which Cetatea Albă was founded by the Genoese, who obtained some economic privileges in the economic and political sphere of Byzantium, after the treaty of Nymphaion; Şlapac denies this on the basis of archaeological material that does not show any traces of Italian architecture (heraldic or thematic bas-reliefs or inscriptions in Latin, for instance) that were found in other Genoese colonies.[92] 2) the Turkish hypothesis,[93] should be understood as a complete rebuilding of the central fort by the Ottomans after 1484. 3) the Moldavian hypothesis, the most plausible, according to which the

---

[87] Tyras was destroyed in the second half of the third century by migrators. The settlement of Cetatea Albă were afterwards under the rule of the Byzantines, Mongols, Genoese, Moldavians and Ottomans. See Traian Valentin Poncea, *Geneza oraşului medieval românesc în spaţiul extracarpatic. Secolul X-XIV* (The Genesis of the Romanian Medieval Town in the Extracarpathian Region: from the Tenth to the Fourteenth Century) (Bucharest: Editura Biblioteca Bucureştilor, 1999) (*henceforth* Poncea, *Geneza*), 106.

[88] See Şlapac, *Cetatea Albă*, 160 and Husar-Gonţa-Chicu, *Cetăţi de pe Nistru*, 151.

[89] See Moisescu, *Arta veche*, 87. Adam, *Ctitorii*, 47-48. Vătăşianu, 298. Ionescu, *Istoria arhitecturii*, 116. Chiţescu, *Fortificaţii*, 8.

[90] They are listed in Şlapac, *Cetatea Albă*, 37-39.

[91] Supported by N. N. Murzukevici, A. A. Kociubinski, Grigore Ionescu and others (Şlapac, *Cetatea Albă*, 37-39).

[92] Şlapac, *Cetatea Albă*, 37.

[93] Supported by A. L. Bertier-Delagarde, N. I. Veselovski (Şlapac, *Cetatea Albă*, 37-39).

central fort was built either in the last decades of the fourteenth century[94] or during the reign of Alexander the Good.[95] Some historians believe it could have been built in the fifteenth century,[96] others are even more specific and date it back to the reign of Stephen the Great.[97] The fourteenth-century suggestion is now generally accepted.

In 1440 the curtain wall of the garrison ward was entirely built or rebuilt. Four years later, the towers of the same precinct were raised. Two stages of (re)building were again recorded during the reign of Stephen the Great: one in 1476, when the main entrance gate was completed, and 1479, when the walls of the civil ward were raised. Finally, the last period of building that can be framed into our time limits took place in between 1484 and 1512, when Cetatea Albă already belonged to the Ottoman Empire. In this final stage the mosque in the civil court was erected.[98]

3.3 Plan

The total area of the complex is approximately 9 hectares. The area of the central fort alone is 0.1 hectares. The garrison ward measures 2.5 hectares; the civil ward is 5 hectares; the harbour ward measures 1.5 hectares.[99]

As the ground plan shows (Figure 10), Cetatea Albă is a defensive complex which includes[100]:

1) The central fort of a rectangular plan with four round towers;

2) The fortified ensemble, in its turn made up of:

▪ The first precinct surrounded by a curtain wall in the shape of a trapezoid with watch tower and flanking towers (the garrison ward);

---

[94] Hypothesis supported by M. Slapac, V. Spinei and A. H. Toramanian (Şlapac, *Cetatea Albă*, 37-39).
[95] This is what Gr. Avakian and V. Vatasianu believe.
[96] L. L. Polevoi and V. A. Voiţehovski (Şlapac, *Cetatea Albă*, 37-39).
[97] P. P. Barnea (Şlapac, *Cetatea Albă*, 37-39).
[98] See Şlapac, *Cetatea Albă*, 36.
[99] All these measurements are provided in. Şlapac, *Cetatea Albă*, Annex 1, 160.
[100] Şlapac, *Cetatea Albă*, 35-36.

- The second precinct surrounded by a curtain wall of irregular plan, adjoined to the south side of the first one (the civil ward);

- A third precinct adjoined to the west of the first and second precincts (the harbour yard with commercial and storing functions).

The first precinct includes the central fort; the second one merely continues the first. It is for the refuge of the community in case of danger. Such a plan is characteristic of field castles (as different from mountain castles). Their main feature is the almost regular plan, more often than not, rectangular.

3.4 Type

One should make a distinction between the central fort and the fortified ensemble when discussing their typological origin.

The opinions of art historians differ in this respect and have been summarised by Şlapac.[101] V. Vătăşianu sees the influence of the Poles and the Lithuanians,[102] whereas Grigore Ionescu thinks that Cetatea Albă is the masterpiece of Podolian masons.[103] Gh. Anghel claims the castle has a Byzantine but also European origin.[104] By gathering all these contradictory opinions and adding her own metrological analysis, M. Şlapac believes that at least the central fortress at Cetatea Albă falls into the category of Roman-Byzantine castles. As to the fortified ensemble, it follows the Constantinopolitan (Byzantine) model.

3.5 Functions

Şlapac identifies the following functions of Cetatea Albă:[105]

- Defensive function

---

[101] Şlapac, *Cetatea Albă*, 20, 158.
[102] Vătăşianu, *Istoria artei*, 298.
[103] Ionescu, *Istoria arhitecturii*, 116.
[104] All these opinions are taken into consideration in Şlapac, *Cetatea Albă*, 116.
[105] See Şlapac, *Cetatea Albă*, 123.

- Residential function (for the permanent garrison and, in case of attack, also for the inhabitants of the settlement)

- Administrative function (inside there is a palace-residence of military officials)

- Economic function (warehouses, workshops, stables and so on). Although this function is the last listed by Şlapac, it was not the least important, as Cetatea Albă was the end of a transcontinental trade route linking north-west Europe to the Black Sea coast.[106]

4. Hotin

4.1 Location

Hotin (Figure 13) is the northernmost of the Moldavian castles situated on the border,[107] a strategic point on the Dniester River: it guards an important ford, thus preventing the passing of potential enemies from Poland. It is no exception to the Moldavian castle, as it is built on low rock. The castle was built near the homonymous settlement.[108]

4.2 Builders and building stages

Most historians and art historians believe that the castle was built in stone in one continuous phase during the reign of Alexander the Good (1400-1432).[109] But there seems to have been a palisade preceding the stone construction, since it was

---

[106] See Poncea, *Geneza*, 106.

[107] Soroca, Tighina, and Cetatea Albă are considered to fall into the category of border castles, as they were situated on the natural frontier made by the River Dniester, whereby historical Moldavia neighboured Poland and the Tatars.

[108] It was the castle and the customs house that gave birth to the settlement. Similarly, the castle and the customs house would have not existed but for the important ford on the River Dniester (Holic, *Cetatea Hotinului*, 18).

[109] Moisescu, *Arta veche*, 86. The Polish chronicler Długosz held that the castle, which was first mentioned in 1310, was raised by Cazimir the Great, king of Poland (1333-1370). His opinion is cited by Husar-Gonţa-Chicu, *Cetăţi de pe Nistru*, 9. They nevertheless believe that the castle, together with Ţeţina or Cernăuţi, could have been built at the end of the fourteenth century by Stephen, voievode of Ţara Şipeniţului, with the help of the Polish king. It should be mentioned as well that they do not specify the source in which Dlugosz gives this piece of information.

mentioned as early as 1354, when the Moldavians come to possess Hotin, Ţeţina and Hmielov.[110] Stephen the Great doubled its curtain walls, adapting the ramparts for the use of cannons; he also enlarged the surrounding ditch and built the chapel that bears the name Ştefania. What is interesting is the fact that this is a two-storey chapel, the higher level having probably been destined for the officials and the ground level to the guards.[111]

Yet another period of (re)building was started during the reign of Petru Rareş (1527-1538, 1541-1546), son of Stephen the Great, who was particularly interested in the maintenance of this castle as he was perpetually in open conflict with the Poles. This is when the walls were heightened and decorated with red brick on the exterior side; ramparts were also built above these decorations; the inner precinct was extended towards the east, a tower was built between the gate and the southern corner; the cellars and a well were also dug.[112]

4.3 Plan

The area of the inner precinct of Hotin is 3,175.53 sq. m. (37.90×110.70 m). The outer precinct is about 171,500 sq. m (350×550 m).

By looking at the ground plan (Figure 14), one can see that Hotin is an exception among the Moldavian castles in the sense that it is slightly irregular and follows the forms of the ground. The inner precinct has five towers; three of them are square (situated towards the east, west and north), while the other two are round on the south side. In the inner ward near the chapel, there were two rows of building, each with three rooms. None of these rooms seems to have been a hall. The large tower at the north-western part of the inner precinct (the dungeon) seems to have been

[110] Moisescu, *Arta veche*, 86. It is therefore certain that the Moldavians had Hotin before the establishment of Moldavia as a national state.
[111] Holic, *Cetatea Hotinului*, 20.
[112] Holic, *Cetatea Hotinului*, 22.

used by the garrison. The outer precinct has the form of an irregular rectangle with eight filled towers, one at each of the corners, one on the east side, two on the south side, one on the west side. In the outer precinct one can still see the foundations of buildings that had been probably destined for the garrison.[113]

4.4 Type

The use of bricks and stone, as well as the round towers, the heightening of the walls are elements that can be found at the Hunedoara castle in 1441, when the old royal castrum was transformed into residential castle.[114] The ornamentation with glazed bricks is specific to the Polish-Baltic area and also to the Byzantine provincial architecture from the southern Slavic area.[115]

4.5 Functions

Besides its primary military function, Hotin distinguishes itself by the commercial one. It was situated on an important trade route, linking the Black Sea with the coast of the Baltic (the Moldavian route).[116] Linked to the commercial function, a customs house operated here.[117] It was not initially part of the castle, but was incorporated into the outer curtain wall.[118] At the merchant's request, an exchange office was set up here.[119] The administrative and judicial attributions of the *pârcalabs* of Hotin show that the castle was the centre of local administration. The

---

[113] The garrison of the castle was made up of seven or eight thousand soldiers, but could even number fifteen thousand during war. Not all these people resided in the castle (Holic, *Cetatea Hotinului*, 24-25).

[114] Moisescu, *Arta veche*, 87.

[115] "The aforementioned characteristics are to be found in the year 1441 as well, at the Corvins' Castle of Hunedoara, when the former royal castrum was transformed into a residential castle, form the initiative of the then newly appointed voievode of Transylvania, Iancu of Hunedoara." (Moisescu, *Arta veche*, 87)

[116] See Holic, *Cetatea Hotinului*, 6-7.

[117] See Holic, *Cetatea Hotinulu*, 28. Hotin castle mentioned as customs point on October 6, 1408, in a document whereby Alexander the Good granted important economic privileges to the merchants of Lviv.

[118] Holic, *Cetatea Hotinului*, 18. The customs house is separated from the castle by a brook .

pârcalabs also could intervene to solve frontier conflicts, which confer upon the castle an important political and diplomatic role.[120] The residential function applies only to the garrison and the *pârcalabs*. It occasionally served as a refuge for the voievode's family.[121] The decorations added during the reign of Petru Rareş could be an indication of the function of prestige representation.

5. Soroca

5.1 Location

Soroca (Figure 15) is located on the bank of the River Dniester, on no elevation at all. Together with Orheiul Vechi, and Tighina it was meant to protect the eastern border of Moldavia. It is known that, although the castle is first mentioned only on July 12, 1499, a nearby settlement existed here before.[122]

5.2 Builders and building stages

Stephen the Great was the first to build it in wood and earth.[123] In this form, it was supposedly constructed after Stephen defeated the Tatars at Lipnic on August 20, 1470; the Tartars allegedly crossed the Dniester at the ford of Soroca at that time.[124]

---

[119] Holic, *Cetatea Hotinului*, 35. Holic does not mention when the exchange office was set up, but he says it was run by an official dealer, appointed from among the burgers.

[120] Holic, *Cetatea Hotinului*, 28. An instance of such a conflict was the one on October 9, 1467, when the representatives of the king of Poland met those of the Moldavian voievode. Such meetings could be held annually.

[121] Holic, *Cetatea Hotinului*, 32. One such occasion was in 1476, when the Turks invaded Moldavia and Stephen the Great was thus forced to shelter his family at Hotin. And it is here, at Hotin, not at Cetatea Neamţului, as the legend tells, that the voievode reorganized his army.

[122] Poncea, *Geneza*, 141. Poncea quotes Alexandru I. Gonţa, *Legăturile economice dintre Moldova şi Transilvania în secolele XIII-XVII* (Commercial Relationships Between Moldavia and Transylvania from the Thirteenth to the Seventeenth Century) (Bucharest: Editura Ştiinţifică şi Enciclopedică, 1989), 26-27. Silvia Dimitriu-Chicu in Husar-Gonţa-Chicu, *Cetăţi de pe Nistru*, 74, states the settlement was first mentioned on September 25, 1470.

[123] In Husar-Gonţa-Chicu, *Cetăţi de pe Nistru,* 78, it is mentioned: "The first fortification of Soroca was provisory. Archaeological research effected after World War II uncovered the existence of a modest square fortification of wood and earth, surrounded by a deep ditch."

[124] See Husar-Gonţa-Chicu, *Cetăţi de pe Nistru*, 76-78. Although the victory at Lipnic had allowed Stephen to extend his influence over territories on the left bank of the Dniester, the danger of foreign

The stone castle that can still be seen today seems to be the work of masons commissioned by Petru Rareş between 1543 and 1546.[125]

5.3 Plan

Soroca has an area of about 730 sq.m. (given it is a circle with the diameter of 30,5 m). It represents a deviation from the Moldavian rectangularity by being perfectly round, which is evident from the ground plan (Figure 12). Five towers are placed on the perimeter of the curtain wall, four of which are round and one – square.[126] Three-storey wooden buildings were inside the precinct. The stables were located on the ground floor, and rooms for the guards occupied the second floor, while the third level was reserved for cannons and weaponry. A well was dug in the middle of the fortified system.[127]

5.4 Type

The plan of Soroca – the castle built by Petru Rareş - is reminiscent of Italian Renaissance castles.[128]

5.5 Functions

It had a prevailing defensive function (Soroca is after all one of the surviving border castles), also serving as a place of refuge for travellers and the inhabitants of the nearby settlement.

---

invasions was not entirely eliminated. The Crimean Tartars became the sultan's vassals in the 1480s and an instrument of Ottoman influence in the north of the Black Sea. Moreover, John Albert, king of Poland, made recurrent attempts to replace Stephen with a Jagellonian prince at the end of the fifteenth century, apparently after the castle had been built.

[125] This opinion was first held by Miron Costin: "… Soroca a fost clădită de Petru vodă, după descălecatul al doilea." (Soroca was built by Petru voievod, after the second decălecat). See Miron Costin *Opere Cronica Tărilor Moldovei şi Munteniei* (Works. The Chronicle of Moldavia and Wallachia) (Bucharest: Editura de Stat pentru Literatură şi Artă, 1958), 205. Tudor Stavilă, Constantin Ion Ciobanu, Tamara Draconescu, *Patrimoniul cultural al Republicii Moldova* (The Cultural Patrimony of the Republic of Moldavia) (Chişinau: Editura ARC, Editura Museum, 2000), 113-115 (henceforth *Patrimoniul*). Husar-Gonţa-Chicu, *Cetăţi de pe Nistru,* 78-80.

[126] *Patrimoniul*,113-115l

[127] Husar-Gonţa-Chicu, *Cetăţi de pe Nistru,* 81.

It also served commercial purposes, being situated on the trade route that ran along the River Dniester from Hotin (important link to Podolia), going down through Otaci or Vama Stancii (another customs point), then through Soroca, Orhei, Tighina (all of them castles situated in the vicinity of market towns/settlements). The route branched at Tighina, going either to Cetatea Albă or to Oceakov and Caffa.[129] The novelty brought about through the round plan of Soroca is indicative of the function of prestige representation.

6. Tighina

6.1 Location

Tighina is situated on the bank of the middle course of the River Dniester at a ford.

6.2 Builders and building stages

There is the hypothesis according to which the castle was built during the reign of Alexander the Good, at the beginning of the fifteenth century. As a result of its annexation to the Ottoman Empire in September 1538, Tighina was strengthened with a resistant fortification external to the Mușatin fort.[130] It was rebuilt in stone by the Turkish architect Sinan after 1538, when it was conquered by Suleyman the Magnificent.[131] Figure 16 shows the Turkish reconstruction.

6.3 Plan

The castle built by Alexander the Good has a rectangular, slightly trapezoidal, plan with round towers placed in each corner and square ones in the middle of each

---

[128] *Patrimoniul*, 113-115
[129] Poncea, *Geneza*, 143-144.
[130] Moisescu, *Arta veche*, 88.
[131] *Patrimoniul*, 115.

side.[132] Therefore, it can be concluded that it is a synthesis of previous experience, the square towers having been used at Suceava, and the round ones at Cetatea Albă.[133]

6.4 Type

A close resemblance with the Italian fortifications was noticed and therefore the conclusion was drawn that it had been built by the Genoese.[134]

6.5 Functions

Tighina was an important ford to Tartaria and customs point, the last stopover[135] on the routes to either Cetatea Albă or Caffa.[136] The role of Tighina as customs point is first mentioned in the privilege granted to merchants from Lviv by Alexander the Good on October 8, 1408.[137]

The following chapter builds on the information enclosed here. A comparative approach so as to shed light upon the similarities and differences of the individual castles will be used. The focus of the comparison is in the relationship of chronology and functions.

---

[132] *Patrimoniul*, 113-115.

[133] Moisescu, *Arta veche,* 86-89.

[134] Husar-Gonța-Chicu, *Cetăți de pe Nistru,* 106-107.

[135] Poncea, *Geneza*, 135. The author speaks about the existence of what is called "stopover towns," situated on the commercial routes crossing medieval Europe. They are thus called because they emerged as a result of the increasing network of trade routes and due to the fact that they were located within such distances from one another that could be covered by the means of transport of the time in one day.

[136] Poncea, *Geneza,* 143. Even toponymy is indicative of Tighina's commercial function. "Even the name of the settlement, given by the Tartar conquerors, and afterwards by the Turks, as mentioned in the oldest Slavic-Romanian acts, was Tighineachici or Tighineacheci; the name was a compound of Tighinea (Tighina), that is the name of the place itself, and "chici" or "checi" which means ford or passage way in the language of peoples of the steppes.

[137] Husar-Gonța-Chicu, *Cetăți de pe Nistru,* 107.

CHAPTER 2

The Moldavian Castles

Patterns of Building Functions, Meanings, and Images

This chapter is designed to answer the main question related to the possibility of identifying a "character" or "images" of Moldavian castles for the period from the second half of the fourteenth century, through the fifteenth and the first half of the sixteenth century. A mosaic of images would result from comparing the castles from the point of view of those criteria used to describe them in the previous chapter, that is, location, plan, origin of type, builders and periods of building, and functions. The movement is this time centripetal, putting together and reconstructing the perceptions of Moldavian castles. The following questions arise: Is a certain location preferred? What does this imply? What are the similarities and differences with respect to plan and type? What is the type of Moldavian castle and to what purpose is it used? How do functions relate to ground plans and building stages?

Location

Turning to the first criterion, one problem emerges, namely, to what extent is location relevant. Michael Aston seems to point out that such an effort is of little avail when he says: "We do not know and we will probably never know why any particular settlement is placed exactly where it is. We are not told directly in documents why one site was chosen rather than the other."[138] He is right to the degree to which we solely rely on written sources. The period that is referred to here makes it even more difficult as the sources are scanty and there is hardly any mention of the siting of castles. Nevertheless, one cannot totally exclude such an influence and Aston himself

---

[138] See Aston, *Landscape Archaeology*, 91.

acknowledges that the choice of a site needs to be considered from two points of view: "firstly, its context in the local region, particularly in relation to contemporary sites, and secondly, the actual physical site."[139] These perspectives are worthy of a thorough analysis because "popular topographical books still tend to suggest that any particular place is sited where it is for defence reasons, or because it is near a source of water."[140]

Based on Aston's suggestions, what one should keep in mind when comparing Moldavian castles from the point of view of their location, are a number of elements that are features of siting. Natural features that influenced location included whether castles were built on a height or elevation, whether there was a water source nearby, and whether the site was forested. A social question is whether the castle was built near a pre-existing settlement or if the castle itself engendered the establishment of a settlement nearby. Finally, how castles were connected to communication and trade routes should be considered.

Elevation

With respect to location, not all the castles (see Soroca and Tighina) in the study sample are situated on an elevation, most often a hilltop. Suceava was built on a hill 351 m high, while a lower hill, only 84 m high, had been chosen for Şcheia. This could be one of the reasons why Şcheia was abandoned, to take advantage of a form of relief that could enhance the defensive power of the castle. Cetatea Neamțului looks down upon the River Neamț from a height of 80 m above the level of the river and lies 480 m above sea level. Further, the central fort of Cetatea Albă was erected on a rocky promontory that was also the site of ancient Byzantine, and later Genoese,

---

[139] Aston, *Landscape Archaeology*, 91.
[140] Aston, *Landscape Archaeology*, 91.

fortifications.[141] All that is known about Hotin is that it is situated on a low cliff; the choice of the site surprised Haralambie Holic,[142] because there were higher cliffs both up and downstream along the Dniester. One can infer that his surprise was not genuine as he was well aware that the choice of the site in this case was influenced by the fact that the castle had to be built where the ford was. As to Soroca and Tighina, there is no relevant textual information, but Tighina is situated on a very low elevation, while Soroca stands close to the river, seemingly on no elevation at all. It can therefore be inferred that the inland castles needed additional natural defences in the form of location on an elevation, whereas for the Dniester castles this was not a *sine qua non* condition. Where the configuration of the landscape allowed, elevations were selected, as it is the case of Hotin. Cetatea Albă seems to be an exception in that it benefited from the close proximity of both the Dniester and the Black Sea.

Water

All the castles seem to be located in the vicinity of a water source. Thus, the River Suceava runs by Suceava castle, Cetatea Neamţului has two sources – the Ozana and Neamţ -- Hotin, Soroca and Tighina are on the River Dniester. Cetatea Albă was mentioned above. Water can be considered a vital element in the choice of a site. At least this is the position held by Michael Chisholm[143] who considers water the most important element for subsistence as it is used for drinking by people and animals, for various crafts and simple industrial processes, and as a source of power. Because it is heavy and a constant supply of it is indispensable every day, one cannot carry it over long distances. Water can also be a convenient and cheap means by which to carry bulky goods. In addition to the water provided by whatever river or

---

[141] Moisescu, *Arta veche*, 87.

[142] Haralambie Holic. *Cetatea Hotinului – destin în istorie* (Hotin Castle – Its Destiny in History). Botoşani: Axa, 2000.

[143] Quoted in Aston, *Landscape Archaeology*, 91.

brook, there were wells inside the precincts of some of the castles. This was the case at Hotin,[144] Soroca,[145] and Tighina.[146] Water can also fulfill the function of an additional defensive element: this is valid for the castles that are situated on the River Dniester, which was by its width, a natural obstacle that the defenders of the castles could take advantage of.

It would be desirable to know something about the natural vegetation existing before castles were constructed: whether the sites of the castles were forested or not before their building started. Since we only have relevant information about Suceava, where it was cleared before the building process started, this feature cannot be discussed further.

Settlement

The issue of a nearby settlement, pre-existing or engendered by the building of the castle, is more challenging, but difficult to address since none of the written sources for the period between 1387 and 1408 mentions the foundation of market towns or castles on Moldavian territory.[147] Archaeological evidence has demonstrated that there was such a settlement at Suceava when Petru I Muşat decided to move his capital there.[148] Again, archaeological excavations have discovered that around the middle of the fourteenth century the Suceava settlement was in a period of development and one of the most important urban centres in the north of Moldavia.[149] It is therefore no surprise that, following the establishment of the capital here, with

---

[144] The well at Hotin was dug in the middle of inner precinct during the reign of Petru Rareş. Its dimensions are impressive: 3 m diameter and 40 m deep. See Holic, *Cetatea Hotinului,* 22-23.

[145] Husar-Gonţa-Chicu, *Cetăţi de pe Nistru*, 81.

[146] Husar-Gonţa-Chicu, *Cetăţi de pe Nistru*, 110.

[147] Constantin C. Giurescu, *Târguri sau oraşe şi cetăţi moldovene din secolul al X-lea pâna la mijlocul secolului al XIV-lea* (Moldavian Market Towns or Towns and Castles from the Tenth to the Fourteenth Century) (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste Romania, 1967), 139 (henceforth: Giurescu, *Târguri*).

[148] See Matei and Emandi, *Suceava,* 24. Previous hypotheses held that the territory where the town of Suceava appeared had been uninhabited before the middle of the fourteenth century, but they have been ruled out by archaeological finds.

everything that entailed (including building the castle), the settlement developed rapidly from a number of perspectives.[150] Interestingly, the princely palace,[151] not the castle, was the centre of the urban area.[152] One could say the castle may have been perceived as more important since it was built in stone, unlike the princely palace, which was built of timber,[153] and timber offered more comfort to a winter residence. Nevertheless, the castle had to be of stone to be any good for defence. A settlement existed in the vicinity of Cetatea Neamțului before its construction. Radu Popa dates it back to the first half of the fourteenth century and suggests that it could have been one of the reasons for the choice of the site of the castle.[154] Spinei dates it to the same century, but at the end, together with a larger group of towns such as Iaşi, Cernăuți, Roman, Bârlad, Piatra lui Crăciun, Bacău, Țețina, Târgu Trotuş, Hârlau, Orheiul

---

[149] Matei and Emandi, *Suceava,* 24.

[150] Matei and Emandi, *Suceava,* 26.

[151] See note 61.

[152] Matei and Emandi, *Suceava,* 28. The street grid and the important buildings of the town such as churches were organised around and depended on the position of the princely palace. The craftsmen's districts emerged at roughly the same time. Visegrád (Hungary) is a similar case where a princely palace was built near a pre-existing castle. The purpose of this building was "to reinforce the castle and to make it more comfortable." The similarity relies on the fact that Visegrád served as a royal residence in the fourteenth century, and as one of the most important residences in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Gergely Buzás and József Laszlowszky, "Középkori királyi központok," in *Magyar régészet az ezredfordulón*. Gen. ed. Visy Zsolt. (Budapest: Teleki László Alapítvány, 2003): 359-364; Gergely Buzás,"Visegrád." In *Medium Regni. Medieval Hungarian Royal Seats*. Tr. Erika Zoltán. (Budapest: NAP KIADÓ, 1999): 115-161: "Charles Robert, however, only decided to move his seat from the distant Temesvár to the middle of the country after the Máté Csák's death, in 1323. He chose Visegrád, where the strongest castle of the middle of the country was to be found and not Buda, which was big and rich but not safe.Charles Robert built his mansion in the Hungarian part of the town, which was close to the German town." After his death (1342), his son, Louis I (the Great) (1342-1382) chose buda as royal court. The rebuilding and enlarging of Visegrád palace was only started when the court moved back. See also Gergely Buzás, "The Remains of the Royal Palace of Visegrád from the Angevin Period," and Gergely Buzás and József Laszlovszky, "Life at Visegrád Palace under the Reign of King Matthias." In *Dissertationes Pannonicae* III 4 (1995): 9-18 and 19-25.

[153] Matei, *Cotribuții,* 56. This opinion is also held by Nicolescu, *Case*, 67: "It is known from written sources that, at the end of the fourteenth century, the voievodes resided at Suceava, Siret, Bacău and Hârlau, and that Alexander the Good often travelled through the country from spring till autumn, returning to his residence at Suceava for the winter. Following the written sources and the archeological traces referring to princely palaces during the reign of Stephen the Great, I noted, in an older study, that princely palaces have the main role after the castles; like military buildings, most of them had their origin in the previous century."

[154] Popa, *Neamț*, 15.

Vechi, Botoşani, and so on.[155] What is perhaps relevant to a further discussion is that this settlement was designated as *târg* (market town).[156] This designation, probably testifying to the major function of the settlement, is also to be found in the toponym – Târgu Neamţ. Further, the building of the castle triggered the development of the settlement.[157]

At Cetatea Albă the fortified complex situated on top of the promontory dominates the town (Figure 11). It is still a thorny matter how the settlement came into being, where it was situated and how it evolved. This is due to the lack of precision in written sources and toponymic confusion caused by the fact that settlements with similar names are situated relatively far from Cetatea Albă.[158] It is also difficult to establish an accurate chronology of the town-settlement relationship. In this respect, M. Şlapac advanced two hypotheses: either the town came into being as a typical "castral burg," but paradoxically of Byzantine origin, or the fortification was integrated into the already existing settlement.[159] Besides being a castle, Cetatea Albă was a port town bearing the imprint of Byzantine civilization, as the archaeological excavations conducted by Grigore Avakian showed.[160] M. Şlapac concluded that the mode of the fortified town illustrated by Cetatea Albă remained unchanged from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century, namely a site furnished with modest defences, an open settlement protected by a fortification that was tangent to the urban area, an irregular street grid with discontinuous forts, and architectural

---

[155] Victor Spinei "Generalităţi privind geneza oraşelor medievale din Moldova," (General Issues regarding the genesis of medieval towns of Moldavia) *Arheologia medievală*, I (1996) (henceforth Spinei, "Generalităţ*i*"), 35-53.
[156] Giurescu, *Târguri*, 139.
[157] Popa, *Neamţ*, 15.
[158] Poncea, *Geneza*, 107.
[159] See Şlapac, 46. Şlapac discusses in detail the urban context of Cetatea Albă, pointing out that both situations were generated by a primeval impulse to create a well-protected habitat which later developed into an urban agglomerate.
[160] See Poncea, *Geneza*, 110. Byzantine influence has also been pointed out at by Şlapac, but with respect to the origin of the plan of the fortification.

components with insignificant defensive elements. Cetatea Albă is perhaps the exception to the rule of the *târg* near Moldavian castles in the sense that written and archaeological information highlight the cosmopolitan character of this port, which resembled the other towns on the coast of the Black Sea.[161]

The settlement of Hotin, which appeared in medieval documents as Choczim, Chotin, Ciocin, and Hocin, is first mentioned in a document of February 15, 1310.[162] The situation of the settlement is unclear, and those who carried out archaeological excavations did not publish the results.[163] The nucleus of the settlement was the castle and the customs house. [164] Hotin became an important frontier town during the reign of Petru Rareş as a commercial, craft, military, political, and religious centre.[165]

We know as well that there were earlier settlements at Soroca[166] and Tighina before the castle construction.[167] Historians say that the settlement of Soroca, which is also categorised as a *târg*, must have been older than the first documentary mentions since it gave the name to the entire county.[168] As to Tighina, archaeological excavations revealed the existence of a settlement that can be traced back to the third and fourth centuries BC and the second and the fourth centuries AD.[169] Tighina was an important customs point on the Moldavian trade route that linked Western Europe

---

[161] Spinei, "Generalități." Its population consisted of Italians, Greeks, Mongols, Bulgarians, Romanians, Jews, and Armenians. The architecture of Cetatea Albă resembles that of other towns of the Golden Horde and the Byzantine Empire.

[162] The document mentions the existence of a catholic bishopric here: "avemo comtanti per lo vescovo da Chocina suo chapelano." Quoted in Holic, *Cetatea Hotinulu,* 17. See also Claudia Dobre, "The Mendicants' Mission in an Orthodox Land: A Case Study of Moldavia in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries." To be published in *Annual of Medieval Studies* at CEU 9 (2003).

[163] Spinei, "Generalități."

[164] Holic*, Cetatea Hotinului*, 17.

[165] Holic*, Cetatea Hotinului*, 35-37.

[166] Husar-Gonța-Chicu, *Cetăți de pe Nistru*, 74. Two elements of the settlement were first mentioned in 1470: the village of Drăgănești in the county of Soroca is mentioned on September 25 and Albul, *pârcalab* of Sroca appears in another document of November 23.

[167] Moisescu, *Arta veche*, 88.

[168] Husar-Gonța-Chicu, *Cetăți de pe Nistru* , 75.

[169] Husar-Gonța-Chicu, *Cetăți de pe Nistru,* 106.

to the Orient.[170] The birth of the medieval town of Tighina dates back to the end of the fourteenth century, according to Spinei.[171] He also noticed there is a clear-cut distinction between towns in the west of Moldavia, such as Suceava, Târgu Neamț, and those in the southeast of the country. The former, situated between the Oriental Carpathians and the River Prut, had a more uniform distribution, whereas between the Prut and the Dniester rivers the network was more irregular and sparse.

What conferred the quality of urban centres upon them was to a lesser extent their dimensions or exterior aspect and to a greater extent their attributes with respect to craft production and commerce.[172] This fact was noticed by foreign travellers in Moldavia. Giovanni Maria Angiolello (1450-1525), who witnessed the battle of Valea Albă (1476) writes that:

> The settlement of Suceava was surrounded by ditches and palisades. The houses and churches were made of wood and the roofs were covered with shingle. Only the castle of Suceava was built in stone on a hill outside the town.[173]

The non-western character of the settlement (it might have seem rural) is noteworthy, despite the mention of the stone castle. Other travellers underline the small number of castles. In the *Anonymous Description of Moldavia* (The Chorography of Moldavia) dated to 1528, the following important places, that is castles and towns, are mentioned: Suceava, Hotin, Neamț, Cetatea Nouă a Romanului, Cetatea Iaşi, Vaslui, Soroca and Orhei.[174] And later:

> "And that country of Moldavia is beautiful enough, with plains and valleys all over, with towns and various villages, but without castles or fortresses apart from the castle of Neamț, which is situated on a very high mountain and is

---

[170] Husar-Gonța-Chicu, *Cetăți de pe Nistru,* 106.
[171] Spinei, "Generalități."
[172] Ibid.
[173] *Călători străini despre Ţările Române* (Foreign travellers on the Romanian countries), vol. I (Bucharest: Editura Ştiinţifică, 1968) (henceforth *Călători străini*), 137.
[174] *Călători străini*, 193.

surrounded by walls. …There are two other well fortified castles with strong walls, like Cetatea Nouă a Romanului and the other one, Târgu Roman."[175]

Ercole Dalmatian (?-after 1534) says that

"In Moldavia there are only three castles made of stone: Suceava – the voievode's residence, Hotin and Neamț. The former situated on the border with Poland, the latter on the border with the Germans."[176]

These accounts pose several problems: how well can you know a place from passing by. Some travellers may never have been to the places they describe, but they could have heard about them. If they did not travel throughout the whole territory the information they present may be incomplete. Nevertheless, these testimonies represent a point of view: the castles of Moldavia seen from the outside by people who had seen other castles in other countries, and consequently had a basis for comparison.

A partial conclusion can be drawn with respect to castle site selection vis-à-vis a nearby settlement. The sites of all the castles in question incorporated a settlement that had existed before the building started. The reasons for this choice have to be looked for in the advantages a nearby settlement provided: workers for the building process and, after the construction was finished, for the maintenance of the castle, people who could be soldiers of the garrison of the castles, people who could defend them, and people who needed defence. Moreover, Suceava, Cetatea Albă, Tighina, seem to prove a continuity of habitation which leads to the conclusion that castle site selection was oriented toward areas with good population density. The medieval fortifications of Suceava and Cetatea Albă were built as a continuation of previous ones. The same place was reoccupied and became a new site. Since these neighbouring settlements were mostly market towns, they brought a commercial connotation to castles (this commercial connotation is even more salient at Cetatea

---

[175] *Călători străini*, 202.

41

Albă, which was an important port); the castles did not defend only their territories and their inhabitants, but also important trade routes on which those territories and inhabitants depended. Castles protected trade routes that facilitated urban development.[177] In other words, the site selection for castles involved the castle-town interdependence, a relationship that can be compared to a two-way street. Castles protected towns, which in turn maintained castles. It is a commonplace that the development of urban settlements was closely related to the presence of a castle in the vicinity and this is stated in written sources such as the twelfth century chronicle by William of Tyre:[178]

> The people of the surrounding region began to place great reliance on this castle as well as on the other strongholds and many suburban places grew up around it with numerous households and tillers of the fields. The whole district became much safer because it was inhabited and a more plentiful supply of food for the surrounding areas was made possible.

We lack written sources of this kind for Moldavia about castles bringing wealth, but secondary literature seems to credit the idea of interdependence between castle building, economic growth and demographic growth. To illustrate this it is worth mentioning that the county of Suceava was perhaps the most densely populated of the whole territory.[179]

The existence of a nearby settlement has to be corroborated with that of a water source in the vicinity of the castles. All the settlements in question were founded along the valleys of larger rivers which the principal trade routes also

---

[176] *Călători străini*, 404.
[177] Poncea, *Geneza*, 137.
[178] Guillelmi Tyrensis, *Historia belli sacri* Patrologiae Latinae Tomus 201, édition originale, Paris, 1855, Reprinted at Brepols, 1995, 636-637: "Porro, qui circumcirca possidebant regioneni, praedicto confisi munimine et vicinitate castrorum, suburbana loca aedificaverunt quamplurima, habentes in eis familias multas et agrorum cultores; de quorum inhabitatione facta est regio tota securior, et alimentorum multa locis finitimis accessit copia." See Hugh Kennedy, *Crusader Castles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1994) (henceforth Kennedy, *Crusader Castles*), 32.
[179] Emil Ioan Emandi, *Habitatul urban şi cultura spaţiului* (The Urban habitat and the culture of space) (Iaşi: Editura "Glasul Bucovinei," 1996), 30-33.

followed.[180] As mentioned above, the presence of the castle usually gave a boost to the development not only of the town but also of the entire region, because it offered security. Similarly, the constitution of urban settlements is linked to the formation of political authorities.[181] The case of Suceava is perhaps the most illustrative: Petru I Muşat chose it as the new capital of Moldavia at a time when it was nothing more than a settlement with more or less rural character, yet fortified.[182]

Builders and building stages

The activity of castle building is of several types: it can mean modernising, it can imply total reconstruction, or it can completely change the initial function of a building. From the second half of the fourteenth century to the first half of the sixteenth century one can distinguish two main periods of building and rebuilding and other two when these activities were carried out on a lower scale.

Four major figures arise as major builders of the fortified system of Moldavia from the second half of the fourteenth century to the first half of the sixteenth century: Petru I Muşat, Alexander the Good, Stephen the Great, and Petru Rareş. They were all members of the Muşat dynasty. As Steane[183] put it, "the European Middle Ages are dominated by the concept of kingship. The Norman, Plantagenet, Capetian and Hohenstaufen dynasties lend their names to periods in English, French and German history." This was also the case of medieval Moldavia, where the Muşat dynasty played a role similar to the enumerated ones. The Moldavaian analogue of a regular European monarch was the voievode. Steane argues that in England "the irradiation of

---

[180] Spinei, *Moldavia*, 156.
[181] Spinei, *Moldavia*, 157.
[182] See Spinei, *Moldavia*, 157-158: "In the first half of the fourteenth century, the living quarters at Suceava were confined to only 3-4 hectares, surrounded by a defence trench and a wooden palisade." Matei and Emandi, *Suceava*, 22-23.
[183] Steane, *English Monarchy*, 13.

monarchy"[184] was facilitated by such accidents as "strong" kings in succession: William I, William II, and Henry I., "who created or improved institutions too powerful to be destroyed by the 20 years' anarchy of Stephen's reign."[185] In Moldavia there were two such kings (Petru I Muşat and Stephen the Great) in the period studied, but it should be noticed that they were not in a succession. "Kingship was surrounded and bolstered by ceremonies and symbols, many of which have left structural and artifactual vestiges."[186] Castles could be regarded as symbols of kingship and the Moldavian square type fortifications are representative of the voivodes' power.[187] The function of such a building could have been to impress the contemporary.[188]

Petru I Muşat chose a regular rectangular four-tower type of castle through Suceava (Şcheia and Cetatea de Scaun) and Cetatea Neamţului (see Figure 7). Besides these, he also built Ţeţina. An unprecedented political context was created under the rule of Petru I Muşat. According to V. Spinei the confines of Moldavia included the entire space between the Carpathians and the Dniester.[189] The southeast of Moldavia was included in the voievodate at an earlier date, probably under Laţcu (c. 1365-c. 1374). The territorial unity of the state, which overlapped with achievement of its feudal administrative, institutional and military bodies, had to be defended. Therefore,

---

[184] Ibid.
[185] Ibid.
[186] Ibid.
[187] Steane, *Power*, 35. When referring to the palace of Goslar, the author states that it "became an embodiment of imperial status." Goslar was one of the Salian kings' most favoured stopping places and an impressive site. Henry III built an *Aula Regis* in c. 1050.
[188] Steane, *English Monarchy*, 72. One can make an analogy with the great hall Rufus built at Westminster in 1097, whose dimensions made it the largest hall in England, and, "for its time, perhaps the largest hall in Europe." It is the author's assumption that "its scale certainly impressed its contemporaries."
[189] Spinei, *Moldavia*, 218-220. This statement is based on several conjectures: 1) that Cetatea Albă together with the entire country north of the Danube Delta belonged to Moldavia, since Petru I Muşat had a representative there, namely Costea-Constantin; this was proved due to the careful examination of the seals attached to the act of homage of January 6, 1395, which revealed a Greek inscription on the seal of Costea Viteazul attesting to the influence of a chancellery within the area of Byzantine civilization – Cetatea Albă, and 2) that a passage in the Russian chronicles concerning the events of 1386, when Basil, son of the Moscow Knez Dimitrie Donskoj, fled from the Horde "in the country of Podolia to the greater Vlachs of voievode Petru" suggests that Petru controlled Podolia.

Petru initiated the Moldavian castle policy.[190] He may be considered the last voievode in the line of the founders of the Moldavian state that began with Dragoş (c. 1352-1353). If the founders of the first half of the fourteenth century were to free their territories from the influence of the Hungarian kingdom, which made repeated attempts to restore its dominance east of the Carpathians, Petru I Muşat began a political orientation toward Poland. The annexation of the Knezate of Halici in 1349 by Poland caused a long rivalry between the two neighbour kingdoms.[191] Poland became an even more powerful ally in Central and Eastern Europe after its union with Lithuania. The allegiance sworn by Petru I Muşat to Wladislaw Iagello at Lviv in 1387 paved the way for the main external political orientation of Moldavia for the following century. It was during his reign that Moldavia became a Pontic state, which had important consequences like the Moldo-Genoese contact that resulted in the opening of a transcontinental trade route on the Moldavian territory. The spiritual legitimation of the voivode's power came as a result of the homage paid at Lviv, when the *mitropoly* of Moldavia was founded.

Alexander the Good continued on a smaller scale the politics of his predecessor. Only two fortified constructions are linked with his name: the central fort at Cetatea Albă and Tighina. The buildings on the east side of Suceava castle are attributed to him.[192]

The reign of Stephen the Great is well-remembered for having achieved the territorial unity that Petru I Muşat had initiated. When Stephen became voievode of Moldavia in 1457, Moldavia was still the apple of discord between Poland and

---

[190] See Ebner, "Burgenpolitik." He develops a theory of castle policy as essential part of medieval politics.
[191] Şerban Papacostea, "Desăvârşirea emancipării politice a Ţării Româneşti şi a Moldovei (1330-1392)" (The accomplishment of political emancipation of Wallachia and Moldavia) *Revista istorică* II (1991): 471-494.
[192] Matei and Emandi, *Suceava*, 90.

Hungary which both tried to gain access to the Lower Danube and the Black Sea.[193]

His external policy first concentrated on retrieving the lost territories and

independence of the country, focusing on the conquest of Chilia – an important point

controlling the commerce between Asia and Europe through the Black Sea and an

important source of income.[194] He also improved and adapted the defensive system

inherited from its forerunners to the advances in military technique. Thus he

strengthened Suceava, Cetatea Neamțului, Cetatea Albă,[195] Hotin.[196] He built Orhei

and Soroca.[197] He rebuilt Chilia and Roman.[198] Nicolae Iorga metaphorically

characterised him as "builder of the country"[199]

Petru Rareș was involved quite a lot in strengthening and rebuilding. Soroca is

the only castle that was entirely built in stone during his reign.

These voivodes "built" their names and fame not only through the battles they

won or lost, but also by castle building. According to Herwig Ebner,[200] castle building

was what medieval politics was about: "The main point in castle politics was to

represent power by the number of castles. The number of castles in one region

demonstrates political and military activities, and the penetration of power of this

region." Therefore castles are equal to power. If it were so, then Moldavia had eleven

castles (eight built in stone and three of wood and earth)[201] during the reign of

---

[193] Şerban Papacostea, "Relaţiile internaţionale ale Moldovei în vremea lui Ştefan cel Mare" in *Evul Mediu românesc* (The Romanian Middle Ages) (Bucharest: Corint, 2001) (hencefoth Papacostea, "Relaţiile internaţionale "), 139-178.

[194] Papacostea, "Relaţiile internaţionale, " 139. This politics lasted for thirty years, since 1459, the year of the reconciliation with Poland, until the end of the war against the Ottoman empire, in 1489.

[195] For Suceava, Cetatea Neamțului, and Cetatea Albă, see Adam, *Ctitorii*, 43-48.

[196] Holic, *Cetatea Hotinului*, 20-21.

[197] See Adam, Ctitorii, 49-50.

[198] Adam, *Ctitorii*, 48-49.

[199] Nicolae Iorga, *Istoria românilor* (The History of the Romanians), vol. IV (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 1996), 179.

[200] See Ebner, "Burgenpolitik."

[201] Gh. Anghel, "Cetăţile medievale ale Moldovei din timpul lui Ştefan cel Mare" (The medieval castles of Moldavia during the reign of Stephen the Great) *Apulum* 16 (1978) (henceforth Anghel, "Cetăţile Moldovei"): 239-259.

Stephen the Great, that is, when this politics reached its climax. Further on, Ebner notes that "building castles was also connected with demarcating borders and enlarging one's sphere of influence and consolidating power in one region."[202] This is true for the Moldavian border castles: Hotin, and Soroca, Tighina, Cetatea Albă. They marked the constantly threatened borders with Poland and the Tatars, respectively. Drawing a parallel with Western Europe, with thirteenth century England in particular, a similarity between English and Moldavian castle politics is noticeable. As Edward I launched a spectacular castle building programme in two stages in order to conquer Wales and consolidate his power,[203] so the Moldavian castles were built to reinforce rulership within the territory. Steane remarks the "masterly" siting of the Edwardian castles: "Each is planned to control either a route way (Caermarfon in this way controls the southern entry to the Manai Straits), the exit of a valley (Conwy is on the estuary of the River Conwy) or an area of rich cornland (Beaumaris controls Anglesey, the granary of north Wales). Further they were more than strong points because they protected towns of English colonists whose control of the newly conquered north Wales was meant to be economic as well as military."[204]

Medieval Moldavia is a special case with respect to castle ownership in the sense that they all belonged to the voivode. This situation may seem unusual, but due to political instability and the insecurity of the time, it can be explained by the need to impose order and stability through centralised rulership, which did not allow the aristocracy to have sufficient power or sources to build castles. This kind of rulership was emphasised by the building of castles. If "building a castle meant rooting a

---

[202] See Ebner, "Burgenpolitik."
[203] John Steane, *Medieval England and Wales*, 45.
[204] Steane, *Medieval England and Wales*, 46.

dynasty"[205] this was certainly the case of Moldavia, where the first voievode of the Muşat dynasty initiated the castle building policy which was continued by three other voievodes of the same ruling family to culminate with Stephen the Great whose building programme does not include only castles but also churches and monasteries which gave rise to an architectural style.[206]

Type

Viewed from the outside,[207] the origin of the medieval Moldavian type of castle seems to be a controversial issue in Romanian historiography. As with other disputable issues, chronological layers of opinions have to be examined before reaching a conclusion. The first trend emerged in the 1960s, with Virgil Vătăşianu as the leader. He launched the long-cited idea of Baltic influence, evinced in his opinion by the regular rectangular (square) four-tower plans of Suceava, Cetataea Neamţului and Şcheia.[208] This idea, resulting merely from a formal architectural analysis, came to be supported by archaeologists as well.

Diaconu and Constantinescu[209] stated that in fourteenth century Moldavia there must have been a school of builders whose ideas have come down to us through the plans and the techniques of building. The plan was old but the technique was new. The plan was originally designed for the plains and its starting point has to be sought in the Danubian and north Pontic space; it may have been typologically associated with Roman-Byzantine fortifications. Constantinescu[210] does not have a clear-cut conclusion; he vacillates in attributing the influence either to the southern regions of

---

[205] See Ebner, "Burgenpolitik." According to him, "the house of Louxembourg possessed thirty castles by the mid twelfth century and by the late thirteenth one hundred castles."
[206] G. Oprescu *Istoria artelor*, 294.
[207] I come from the domain of philology.
[208] Vătăşianu, *Istoria artei*, 293-307.
[209] Diaconu and Constantinescu, *Şcheia*, 106-117.
[210] Constantinescu, "Date."

the Balkan-Danubian area or to the northern regions of Europe. These pioneering studies referred to three of the Moldavian castles.

Gh. Anghel's article from 1978[211] made a thorough and wide-ranging analysis. For the first time in the literature, he emphasised the originality of medieval Moldavian castles which consists in: 1) creating a unitary defence system of fortifications in southeast Europe; 2) thickening the walls of precincts and towers (their thickness was doubled or tripled); 3) developing a tendency to hide stone constructions with earthworks; 4) establishing technical innovations, for instance Cetatea Albă has a parapet in the escarpment of the ditch; between the parapet and the curtain there is a platform on which cannons could be placed. All these point to a gap between the castles built before the reign of Stephen the Great and those built during his reign or afterwards and to a difference from the fortified system of Transylvania, Hungary and Poland of that time with respect to conception, tactics, planimetry and components. According to Gh. Anghel, inferring Byzantine influence can only be justified by the fact that some of the Moldavian castles have circular and semi-circular towers. Byzantine castles were built everywhere in the empire from the sixth to the tenth century, using mostly rectangular plans with circular, semi-circular and horse-shoe-shaped towers. These elements were taken over by Crusaders in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries who combined them with the European experience when building such castles as Coucy (see Figure 20), Chateau Gaillard (see Figure 18), Boulogne, Morisson, Pierrefonds in France, and Rhunddlan Castle, Harlech Castle, Caermavon Castle, Conway, Beaumaris and so on in England. However, Anghel points out, circular and semi-circular towers can also be seen in Europe in the military architecture from the twelfth to the fifteenth century. Practically, there were no longer

[211] Anghel, "Cetățile Moldovei."

Byzantine fortifications starting with the twelfth century and especially after the crusade of 1204, when Byzantium ceased to be a military force and therefore to exert any influence in the domain of fortifications. As Anghel shows, the Byzantine world was confronted with a new phenomenon: the thirteenth century saw the formation of small Frankish kingdoms on the Byzantine possessions, continental Greece, Morea, the Aegean Sea and Cyprus; in the fourteenth century Genoa and Venice replaced these kingdoms. The result was that the old Byzantine castles were rebuilt and reshaped in a European manner (see Figure 17). A new style of fortification was created, that with circular, semi-circular and horse-shoe-shaped towers, which became dominant in the second half of the fourteenth century and spread all over Europe in the second half of the fifteenth century. Anghel believes the fortifications of Stephen the Great are part of the same tendency, although the architects that were employed did not come directly from the south or north. Despite all these new elements revealed by Anghel, there is no clear-cut conclusion as to the influence affecting the Moldavian type of castle. The only conclusion that can be drawn is the fact that the Byzantine or the Polish-Northern influences taken individually cannot stand due to insufficient evidence. What Anghel brings new to illuminate the whole issue is the presence of Italian elements in the context: architectural elements of late Gothic and Renaissance origin at Suceava and Cetatea Albă; an Italian architect, Provana, being mentioned as the alleged architect of Chilia; the tombstone of an Italian architect at Suceava; Stephen's connections with the Genoese castles on the Black Sea coast; Italian financiers, physicians, and scholars in the voievode's company.

In 1984, Imre Holl[212] remarked that three of the castles in the Moldavian group, namely Şcheia, Suceava-Cetatea de Scaun, and Cetatea Neamţului (see ground

---

[212] Imre Holl, "Négysaroktornyos szabályos várak a középkorban" (Regular four corner towered fortresses in the Middle Ages) *Archaeologiai Értesitö*, III (1984), 192-217.

pans in Figure 7), belonged to the ancient *castellum* type group of Byzantine origin. Only Cetatea Neamțului evinces some traces of Central European influence (the Anjou model) such as the interior towers. The most recent general work in art history, by Cristian Moisescu[213] asserts a northern influence indeed, but filtered through one coming from the south: the regular rectangular four-tower type of fortification can be found in Byzantine-Arabian fortifications, but its origin seems to be fourth to sixth century Byzantine architecture. It was taken over by the Crusaders and transposed to France, England and Germany during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, especially by the Teutonic Order. They also spread it into some of the countries in the north of Europe, from where it exerted a heavy influence on the Moldavian fortifications from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century.

The solution that Imre Holl (indirectly) and Cristian Moisescu propose with respect to influences that Crusaders brought back from the East, that the Moldavians must have borrowed such elements via Poland or the Baltic countries, is counter-argued by Kennedy, citing Fossier: "As Fossier recognised, the Crusaders brought back from the east new methods of attacking castles, not new theories of military architecture."[214] It is known that new methods of attack trigger innovations in the military techniques. Therefore the castles the Crusaders built after having returned home must have used some of the architectural solutions acquired in the East. Nevertheless, Kennedy does not believe in pure imitation:

> The Crusaders could draw on a number of different styles of military architecture but how important these borrowings were is more problematic. There is a model suggesting that, in cultural matters, people only borrow from others what they are on the verge of inventing themselves. If there were borrowings of military technology it was because the Franks could appreciate that such devices were useful and served their immediate purposes. There is no question of slavish imitation but of adaptation of particular designs whose

---

[213] Moisescu, *Arta veche*, 86.
[214] Kennedy, *Crusader Castles,* 189.

utility was apparent. At the same time, we should never underestimate the pragmatism and inventiveness of castle builders.[215]

The last hypothesis, put forth by Holl and Moisescu, seems to be more comprehensive, integrative, or "globalising." Gh. Anghel uses the word "eclectic." An approach that tries to account for the regular rectangular four-tower plans of the Moldavian castles by one single influence or by applying a disjunctive sentence (it may be one influence or it may be another) seems simplistic. Nevertheless, the eclectic approach has its drawback as well; it ignores the originality of the Moldavian castles, which are indeed no parrot-fashion imitation. Rather this type of plan must have been fashionable throughout Europe (see also the Italian medieval castles in Figure 19) starting with the twelfth century, and the Moldavian voievodes were no exception when initiating their building plans.

To synthetise, the building programme of regular rectangular castles initiated by Petru I Mușat in the second half of the fourteenth century with Suceava (Șcheia and Cetatea de Scaun), and Cetatea Neamțului, was continued by Alexander the Good in the first half of the fifteenth century. He is attributed with the building of Tighina and, more recently of Cetatea Albă. Cetatea Albă has to be dealt with carefully since this study relies solely on the book published by M. Șlapac. Hotin, with its irregular plan, also attributed to Alexander the Good, and Soroca, which has a round ground plan, do not fit into this analysis. If one were to fully accept Șlapac's dating of the central fort at Cetatea Albă, the result is that four regular rectangular castles were built in half a century or so by two voievodes belonging to the same dynastic line. Șcheia reinforces this programmatic castle politics. Another element suggests the idea of programmatic ideology: location. The fact that efforts were made to reconcile a type of castle characteristic to plains to steep promontories or hilltops by means of a

---

[215] Kennedy, *Crusader Castles,* 20.

52

building technique that proved to be successful shows how much the Moldavian voievodes wanted to promote a certain image of their rulership and power through the physical image of the castles they built, which have comparable areas: 1,000 to 1,500 sq. m.

To answer the question why the Moldavian voievodes chose to stick to this plan is already the domain of speculation, since there are no explicit or implicit written or other kind of sources that could shed a ray of light on this matter. If one assumes that this type of castle was, at that time, taken to be the image or the representation of the castle par excellence, then the reason for choosing it must have been prestige. If one accepts the solution proposed by Imre Holl and Cristian Moisescu with respect to castle type, namely a Polish, and possibly a Northern-Baltic influence, plus the Central-European elements (see Figures 21 and 22) posited by Gh. Anghel (possibly coming from Hungary through Transylvania), the following hypothesis can be postulated: Moldavian castles were seen as prestige representations, as they seem to have been built as a replica of the Polish and Hungarian castles. This could make sense in the political context of the age[216] if one remembers that both Poland and Hungary tried to gain Moldavia in their sphere of influence - the dispute over the access to the Black Sea commerce which yielded substantial income. Moldavia's resistance to both powers manifested, among other things, in building castles. Not any kind of castles, because the best fighting strategy is to fight against your opponent using its own type of arms. It can therefore be suggested that Moldavian voievodes might have taken as model, to a certain extent, the Polish and Hungarian castles. The Moldavian castles would then assert the centralised power the

---

[216] This was the situation in the fourteenth century and at the beginning of the reign of Stephen the Great as well. See Şerban Papacostea, "Moldova începuturilor între regii Ungariei şi Poloniei" (The Beginnings of Moldavia between the kings of Hungary and Poland) and "Relaţiile internaţionale ale

Muşat dynasty strove to impose and perpetuate. Nevertheless, other influences (Byzantine, Italian) were filtered and infused into the model.

Referring to the type and style of castle building, Kennedy produced a commonsensical statement: "A different landscape also produced different styles of castle building."[217] In the fourteenth century and later, in fifteenth-century Moldavia, a certain kind of landscape (namely hilltops) appears to have been intently sought and one style of building was used, ingeniously adapted both to the ground plan and to the nature of the terrain. It is the so-called "building in steps" style which allows the builder to use a regular rectangular ground plan on heights without levelling or regularising the irregularity of the hilltop. This solution is known to have been applied at Scheia, Suceava and Cetatea Neamţului.[218]

It should be noted that most of the assertions with regard to the typology of Moldavian castles rely heavily on only three of them: Şcheia, Suceava-Cetatea de Scaun, and Cetatea Neamţului. Other rectangular four-tower castles were the central fort of Cetatea Albă and Tighina, both built by Alexander the Good.

Functions

Starting from King's definition mentioned in the Introduction, two functions seem to be essential for a castle, namely the military and the residential: "Typically, a castle is a fortified habitation,"[219] Like any other functional object, the castle develops through time by accumulating new functions.

The strengthening of fortifications over time suggests a strengthening of the military function. This is also paralleled by accommodating other functions within the

---

Moldovei în vremea lui Ştefan cel Mare" (The international relations of Moldavia during the reign of Stephen the Great). In *Evul Mediu Românesc* (Bucharest: Corint, 2002): 41-45, 139-178.
[217] Kennedy, *Crusader Castle*, 62.
[218] Constantinescu, "Date."

castles, which can be perceived in the dynamic of building and rebuilding. As the addition of a curtain wall and bastions, or the thickening of a wall is meant to respond to the advances of military techniques, especially of artillery, the interior space in the central fort was divided and given new contours so as to keep up with new views on comfort and fashion. Here is the description of the typical Muşatin castle by Matei and Emandi:[220]

> Along the curtains, on their inner part, above large cellars, there were two-storey storerooms, workshops for arms, the soldiers' rooms, all of them situated mostly on the groundfloor; above, there were terraces for guards patrol. Along the other sides of the inner precinct, there were the voievode's apartment and guest rooms. Such a castle also included a long armoury hall, a banquit hall and a council hall, as well as the chapel that was linked with the voievode's apartment, the rooms of the garrison, the servants' rooms, the children's rooms and so on. In order to look like this, the old castles were transformed by Stephen the Great.

One can infer from this passage that, beginning with the reign of Stephen the Great a major shift in the functionality of Moldavian castles occurred. They were transformed to better fit the need for comfort. Adding up to comfort and decoration also speaks about a need for representation and prestige: the voievode needed to make public his power by displaying it under this form. Not only comfort and decorations signal the prestige function, but also the shape of the castle: this started in Moldavia with Petru I Muşat's implementing the regular rectangular four-tower type and ended with Petru Rareş' building the perfectly round and, therefore unique in the country, castle of Soroca. And castles did not only represent the power and prestige of each individual voievode, but also of the continuity of the dynastic line. Their way of being built signals not only "the presentation of the self"[221] but also membership to a certain group (or family in our case).[222]

---

[219] King, *The Castle*, 1.
[220] Matei and Emandi, *Suceava*, 116-117.
[221] See Amos Rapoport, *The Meaning of the Built Environment: A Nonverbal Communication Approach* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1982) (henceforth Rapoport: *The Meaning of the Built*

Just like the other factors that have been taken into consideration so far, the functions of the Moldavian castles varied through time. Change over time brought about change and development in the (multi)functionality of the Moldavian castles. From almost purely military objects – Şcheia - whose guards resided in the towers because there were no buildings inside the rectangular fort,[223] Cetatea de Scaun (Suceava) evolved to a palace. These examples illustrate the development in one castle, because Şcheia and Cetatea de Scaun can be regarded as interfaces of the same identity – the castle protecting the capital city of Suceava. Şcheia is perhaps a good example in point for the "pre-history" of castle building in Moldavia. Hotin, Tighina, Soroca came to incorporate a customs house due to their location on the border. At Hotin, as it can be seen from the ground plan, the customs, otherwise separated from the central fort by a brook, was incorporated in the castles when the curtain wall was built. It added and emphasised the commercial function to the castle. For this incorporation to take place, the location of the castle was essential.

Trade routes and communications

All the castles in the current study were situated on important communication and trade routes. One important aspect has to be highlighted when speaking about the medieval commerce of Moldavia, namely that it was strongly oriented in two directions: Poland and Transylvania-Hungary. As might be expected, there was also a close relationship between the prevailing commercial orientation towards Poland and politics. The political and economic situation together triggered changes and development of the Moldavian castles and their neighbouring settlements, as well as their decline.

Environment), 15: "In fact, the meaning aspects of the environment – clothes, furnishings, buildings, gardens, streets, neighborhoods, and so on – is used in the presentation of self, in establishing group identity."
[222] Ibid.

The issue of trade routes and communication (which is also related to castle site selection) touched upon in a previous paragraph is one of great importance for the history of Moldavia and the other two Romanian principalities, and also for Poland.[224] There were two important trade routes crossing Moldavia from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries, corresponding to the aforementioned orientations. By far the most important out of the two was the commercial road from Poland to the Black Sea – an outlet of the commerce developed between the Flemish and Hanseatic towns and the Orient.[225] The road was opened in the first half of the fourteenth century for the benefit of merchants coming from Poland. The economic privileges granted by the princes of Lviv and Halici, independent provinces at that time, to the Teutonic Knights and German merchants testify to the existence of the road before this region was annexed by Poland in 1343. The southern extension of this road was the Tartar Road that extended to the Genoese colony of Caffa in Crimea. This road was abandoned after 1387, when Wladislaw Iagello definitively conquered the province of Lviv, and was replaced by the Moldavian road, which is first mentioned in 1382 in the documents of Lviv.[226] Cetatea Albă was the Moldavian analogue of Lviv, benefiting

---

[223] Matei and Emandi, *Suceava*, 78.

[224] P. P. Panaitescu, *Interpretări româneşti. Studii de istorie economică şi socială* (Romanian interpretations. Studies on economic and social history) (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 1994) (henceforth Panaitescu, *Interpretări*), 83.

[225] Ibid.

[226] Panaitescu, *Interpretări*, 84-85. See also Mihnea Berindei, "L'Empire ottoman et la 'route moldave' avant la conquête de Chilia et de Cetatea Albă (1484)," *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire*, 3-4 (1991), 161-188. "La route moldave doit son essor aux modifications survennues en Europe orientale dans les dernières décennies du XIVe siècle. La crise prolongée de la Horde d'Or après la mort du Khan Berdibeg en 1361 profite tout d'abord aux Lituaniens qui poussent leur avance vers la mer Noire mais également aux Moldaves qui enlèvent aux Tatars le contrôle des embouchures du Danube et du Dniestr. En 1368 cette région, et notamment la ville de Cetatea Albă, se trouvait sous la domination d'un prince tatar, Démètre; en 1386 au plus tard, elle fait déjà partie de la Basse Moldavie. 1386 est aussi la date de l'union polono-lituanienne, union qui ferra la preuve de sa force dès l'année suivante par la reprise de la Galicie et donc de la ville de Lwów aux Hongrois. Résultat direct de ces événements: la Moldavie accepte la suzeraineté polonaise (serment de vassalité de Petru voïévode au roi Ladislas Jagellon en 1387). Les conditions nécessaires au fonctionnement de la 'route moldave' étaient ainsi réunies à la fin du XIVe siècle: la Moldavie et la Pologne assurent la sécurité des marchands."

from the staple right.[227] Other towns protected by castles on the Moldavian road were Hotin, Soroca, Orheiul Vechi, Tighina, and Cetatea Albă.[228] The other important trade route connected Moldavia with Transylvania, that is the Hungarian kingdom; it passed trough Soroca, Botoşani, Suceava, Baia, and reached Bistriţa.[229]

P. P. Panaitescu discusses the commerce and the trade routes of medieval Moldavia[230] by referring first to the commerce of Lviv and Cracow through Moldavia. There was a long dispute between 1400 and 1504 between these two important medieval trade centres over the right of commerce with Moldavia and for the access to the Tatar road. The capital was successful and the king of Poland allowed the merchants of Cracow to trade "ad partes Valachiae."[231] Panaitescu makes an important point when he abstracts the organization of medieval commerce in Moldavia from the texts of economic privileges. It was of a Western type and was founded on two basic principles:

1) the staple right whereby the merchants had to stop in the town that possessed this right and could not go further with their goods; they could either deposit them in warehouses or sell them on the spot. Only the merchants of the town were allowed to resell the goods.

2) merchants were compelled to follow certain routes, prescribed by the privileges, among certain towns.

The second principle shows that a close interconnection was established between certain urban settlements and trade routes so that the latter facilitated the development of the former. In Moldavia, these settlements, especially those on the

---

[227] Panaitescu, *Interpretări*, 84-85. Towns that benefited from the staple right were those where the merchants had to stop to sell their merchandise as they could not ship it further.
[228] Poncea, *Geneza*, 139-145.
[229] Moisescu, *Arta veche*, 83.
[230] Panaitescu, *Interpretări*, 83-98.

Moldavian road, were protected by castles. They were also situated in border areas, which required the protection of a fortification even more. The Moldavian voievodes granted few economic privileges and their texts do not differ much from the beginning of the fifteenth century to the first half of the sixteenth century.[232] The most important fact of these privileges is that Suceava benefited from the staple right for cloth – the main trade item that came from Poland.

Since Moldavia at that time was a centralised state and the castles were owned by the voievode, it is worth mentioning that economic privileges, and therefore commerce, were a state affair, not a simple private commercial relationship between Moldavia's voievodes and Polish merchants. The privileges were controlled behind the scenes by the kings of Poland, whose ambassadors were mentioned as witnesses in the privileges granted in 1456 and 1460. The conclusion that P. P. Panaitescu draws is that commercial privileges were closely connected with the political rights that Poland claimed over Moldavia.[233]

Apart from the suggested stopover towns, one can postulate a hierarchy of commercial centres that were also castles. Of course, such a hierarchy was not immuable, but would have changed through time. From the top of the pyramid Cetatea Albă dominated the commerce of medieval Moldavia and historical studies as well,[234] for several reasons:

---

[231] Panaitescu, *Interpretări*, 86. It should be mentioned that in the documents of the time Moldavia was referred to as Vallachia.

[232] See Panaitescu, *Interpretări*, 87. The oldest privilege that has survived dates back to 1408 and was granted by Alexander the Good. His son, Stephen, granted a similar one in 1434, followed by those of Petru Aron (1456) and Stephen the Great (1460).

[233] Panaitescu, *Interpretări*, 89.

[234] Cetatea Albă and its salient commercial function have been the subject of countless articles and books, among them: N. Iorga, *Studii istorice asupra Chiliei şi Cetăţii Albe* (Historical Studies on Chilia and Cetatea Albă) (Bucharest, 1899); Şerban Papacostea "Desăvârşirea emancipării politice a Ţării Româneşti şi a Moldovei (1330-1392)" (The accomplishment of the emancipation of Wallachia and Moldavia: 1330-1392); "Tratatele Ţării Româneşti şi Moldovei cu Imperiul Otoman în secolele XIV-XVI: ficţiune politică şi realitate istorică" (The treaties Wallachia and Moldavia with the Ottoman Empire from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century: political fiction and historical reality); "Moldova, stat tributar al Imperiului Otoman în secolul al XV-lea: cadrul internaţional al raporturilor stabilite în

a) it was the end point of and controlled the Moldavian road; b) it was the centre of economic movement and it had a status similar to that of Lviv in Poland; its conquest by the Ottomans in 1484 provoked the collapse of Moldavian trade and therefore economic ruin and political decline. The country was deprived of the money brought in by international trade.

If the castle secured power externally, by protecting frontiers, it also played an important role internally, in the sense that "the rule from the castle was the dominant factor for the regional administration and the castle was more important in the administrative sense than in its military function."[235] In medieval Moldavia castles and market towns owned agricultural fields (fields proper, orchards, fishponds fords of mills, forests and so on).[236] The Moldavian equivalent of the western Europe domain or fief was "ocol" and it included several surrounding villages that had to provide the inhabitants of the castles and the market towns with all that was necessary to living. The villagers were also responsible for constructing and maintaining the buildings of the castle and the premises.[237]

The power exerted internally by the castle was not only administrative but also judicial. Unlike in Western Europe, there are no written sources for Moldavia that could prove this. The *pârcalab,* that is the castellan or governor of the castle, had administrative and legal attributions in the estates belonging to the castle. Where the case, they could clarify frontier disputes. Hotin was an example in point, as there were frequently conflicts with Poland that had to be mediated.

1455-1456" (Moldavia: tributary state of the Ottoman Empire in the fifteenth century: the international context of the relations established in 1455-1456); "Relaţiile internaţionale ale Moldovei în vremea lui Ştefan cel Mare" (Moldavia's international relations during the reign of Stephen the Great); "Ţelurile campaniei lui Ioan Albert în Moldova (1497): un nou izvor" (Ioan Albert's goals in Moldavia in 1497: a new source), in *Evul Mediu românesc* (Bucharest: Corint, 2001) Victor Spinei, "Generalităţi privind geneza oraşelor medievale din Moldova;" "V. Spinei, "La Génèse." There is hardly any study on Romanian economic history of medieval Moldavia in which Cetatea Albă should not be mentioned.
[235] Ebner, "Burgenpolitik."
[236] Giurescu, *Oraşe şi cetăţi*, 139.

***

Functions ascribe meaning to the built environment and meaning is the image projected by the onlooker. According to Rapoport

> "meaning also gains in importance when it is realised that the concept of 'function,' goes far beyond purely instrumental or manifest functions. When latent aspects of functions are considered, it is quickly realised that meaning is central to an understanding of how environments work."[238]

This statement goes hand in hand with postulating core/inherent/denotative and latent/additional/connotative functions of a castle. The core functions of a castle are the military and the residential. The commercial function raises some problems since all Moldavian castles surveyed seem to have been intently built along trade routes and near market towns (or settlements of an urban type that had a definite commercial orientation). Consequently the Moldavian castles might have been perceived as essential to the security and maintenance of trade routes, and perhaps the commercial function could be regarded as inherent in this case. The connotative functions which all the surveyed castles seem to have had are probably the administrative and prestige representation. King pleads for an image of the castle as a purely functional object[239] and he argues strongly against the prestige function as the only function a castle had.[240] And this is where he is wrong, because nobody seems to support this idea. Rather the prestige representation function comes to complete the corollary of functions that one usually expects a castle to have. On the basis of all these functions that Moldavian castles may be assumed to have had, one can re-construct (again a rebuilding stage) their image as perceived by contemporaries: far

---

[237] Giurescu: O*raşe şi cetăţi*, 141. Giurescu mentions Cetatea Neamţului as having an "ocol."
[238] Rapoport, *The Meaning of the Built Environment*, 13.
[239] King, *The Castle*, 4.

from being merely functional objects with a clear-cut military and residential destination, they were placed in an socio-economic context and employed for prestige representation purposes.

---

[240] King, *The Castle*, 4.

CONCLUSIONS

What I have tried to do in this thesis[241] was a search for functions, images, and perceptions of late medieval Moldavian castles by contemporary people. I attempted to offer as detailed as possible a description of each of the selected castles in terms of location, builders and building stages, type, and function. After deconstructing the traditional image of late Moldavian castles, a re-construction was necessary, which I did by analyzing and comparing them again depending on the standard.[242] In other words, I meant to distance this work from the traditional chronological story-like descriptions used so far in Romanian literature by introducing a standard. I am fully aware that such a standard can sometimes be rigid and not quite a workable formula for some of the castles that are less well researched.

What I found is firstly an aspect that has only been slightly touched upon in Romanian historiography, namely castles from the point of view of landscape history. The relationship between Moldavian castles and their location has been noted and was correlated with the building technique. Not all Moldavian castles were built on a promontory, hill or height; Soroca and Tighina do not follow this rule. In any case, their regular rectangular (square) plans are not in accordance with this aspect and historians agree that an irregular plan to follow the roughness of the topography would have been far more suitable. Soroca is not an example in point, being circular, and neither is Hotin, of irregular plan. What we have here is a constant effort to reconcile a type of castle characteristic to plain with steep promontories or hilltops by means of the building technique. In addition, the sizes of the castles are comparable.

---

[241] That is very much indebted to my professional orientation – that of a teacher. Especially the approach in the Survey was meant as a systematized way of presenting such a complex topic as medieval castles to students.

These facts speak about how much the Moldavian voievodes wanted to promote a certain image of their rulership through the physical presence of castles.

There are other natural factors in the location, such as water and an adjoining settlement that the castle depended upon. Moreover, in some cases (see the castles situated on the River Dniester), water seems to have had a defensive potential. Most studies point out the importance of a pre-existing settlement near the castles in question, but none has made it clear that these settlements were all market towns. This comes to reinforce the connotative commercial function that castles had. The fact that all the Moldavian castles surveyed in this research were situated on trade routes was already a commonplace in Romanian historiography.

Yet another commonplace was constituted by the discussions of their type. Three mainstream orientations were noticed: 1) a Polish-Baltic influence 2) a Byzantine influence, and 3) a Byzantine influence filtered through the Central European experience. What the issue is here is rather the fact that the regular rectangular four-tower type was in fashion in Europe during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and that the Moldavian rulers were consistent in using it. Their consistency, correlated with the fact that the voievode was the sole proprietor of all the castles, plus the fact that the building programme was initiated and perpetuated by one ruling family – the Mușat dynasty – inevitably leads toward one conclusion: this castle type performed the function of prestige representation, in the sense that it represented the voivode's power. They were viewed (and acted as) as insignia of power. Moreover, the building programme of castles was reinforced by building churches and monasteries (some monasteries are fortified) which gave rise to an architectural style.

---

[242] Deconstructing and reconstructing an image is a post-modernist approach for which I am again indebted to my philology background.

An understanding of the Moldavian pattern of castle building emerged from this study. It consists in the fact that a programme seems to have been initiated, promoted, and carried out by voievodes of one ruling house. This is part of the larger European framework wherein a dynasty concentrated on castle building as a means of consolidating both its internal and external power. What was peculiar to medieval Moldavia, and in this sense the Moldavian castles do not resemble their European counterparts, is the fact that all of them (although it is true that they are not many) belonged to the voievode. The idea of a systematic programme or policy was supported by the following arguments: a certain location, incorporating an elevation and water as natural components, and a commercial settlement as part of a trade route, seems to have been preferred by voievodes belonging to one dynasty. A certain castle type (regular rectangular square four-tower) was selected and employed rather consistently. There were stages in the programme (two salient ones and another two which were less important); during these stages new functions were added to castles: they started mainly as fortified habitations, then the habitation turned into a residence, then the residence was provided with comfort, richness, and decorations and became an image of the voievodes' power and prestige.

A comparably relevant point for the image and perception of late medieval Moldavian castles is the travellers' accounts. Although quite few, they are indicative of the fact that foreigners from the west identified Moldavian castles as such, that is the western and eastern images of the castle overlapped in their "imaginaire." What did not match the western standards was the number of Moldavian castles, as they were few, and the character of the nearby settlements, whose building were wooden ones.

The elevation, the nearby market town, water source, and trade route, the regular rectangular (square) four-tower type, the fact that castles were built to consolidate and represent a dynasty from the end of the fourteenth century until the beginning of the fifteenth, all these are particulars of the late medieval Moldavian castles and reconstruct, in our understanding, their image and perception by people who were their contemporaries. They make one postulate the existence of a "castle civilisation" if not in quantitative terms (their reduced number) at least with respect to quality.

Finally, what I consider a novelty of the study is the approach, which was instrumental to deconstructing the traditional discourse about Moldavian castles (already having a ready-made image) thus enabling me to point out the patterns. I trust that these patterns of building functions offer a new meaning and a clearer image of Moldavian castles. This would be a good starting point and a matrix for a further study of additional sites for further historical research or archaeological excavation. Such projects have the potential to lead to a complete monograph on late medieval Moldavian castles. This research would be beneficial to castle specialists in Western Europe by providing comparative material and because of the systematic approach to both architecture and social function. It also opens the Romanian-language literature to an international audience.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary sources

Costin, Miron. *Cronica polonă* (The Polish Chronicle). In *Opere* (Major Works), ed. P. P. Panaitescu. Bucharest: Editura Academiei R. P.R., 1958.

Documentele lui Ştefan cel Mare (The Documents of Stephen the Great), vol. 2 (Hrisoave şi cărţi domneşti 1493-1503). Ed. Ioan Bogdan. Bucharest: Atelierele grafice SOCEC: 1913.

Hurmuzaki, Eudoxiu. *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor* (Documents concerning the history of Romania), vol. I2 (1346-1450). Bucharest: 1890.

Guillelmi Tyrensis, *Historia belli sacri.* In Patrologiae Latinae Tomus 201, édition originale, Paris, 1855, Reprinted at Brepols, 1995.

Ureche, Grigore. *Letopiseţul Ţării Moldovei* (The Chronicle of Moldavia). Bucharest: Editura Academiei R. P.R., 1958.

Secondary literature

Adam, Sergiu. *Ctitorii Muşatine* (Muşatin Foundations). Bucharest: Editura Sport-Turism, 1976.

Anghel, Gheorghe. "Cetăţile medievale ale Moldovei din timpul lui Ştefan cel Mare" (The medieval castles of Moldavia during the reign of Stephen the Great) *Apulum* XVI (1978): 239-259.

Michael Aston. *Interpreting the Landscape. Landscape Archaeology and Local History.* London: Routledge, 1997.

Austin, David. "Private and Public: An Archaeological Consideration of Things." In *Die Vielfalt der Dinge. Neue Wege zur Analyse mittelalterlicher Sachkultur.* Ed. Helmut Hundsbichler et al., (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1998), 163-206.

Batariuc, Paraschiva Vicroria. *Cahle din Moldova medievală. Secolele XIV-XVII* (Stove tiles in Moldavia. Fourteenth to seventeenth century). Suceava: Muzeul Brăilei, Editura Istros, 1999.

Berindei, Mihnea. "L'Empire ottoman et la 'route moldave' avant la conquête de Chilia et de Cetatea Albă (1484)," *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire* 3-4 (1991): 161-188.

Cathcart King, D. J. *The Castle in England and Wales: An Interpretative History.* London: Routledge, 1988.

Călători străini despre Ţările Române (Foreign travellers on the Romanian countries), vol. I . Bucharest: Editura Ştiinţifică, 1968.

Chițescu, L. *Fortificațiile Moldovei în secolele XIV-XVI – cetăți voievodeale și fortificații orășenești – Rezumatul tezei de doctorat* (The Foritfications of Moldavia from the Fourteenth to the Sixteenth Century – Royal Castles and Urban Fortifications – A Summary of the Doctoral Thesis). Bucharest: Academia de Științe Sociale și Politice a R.S.R., 1970.

Constantinescu, N. "Date noi in legatură cu Cetatea Neamțului," (New data concerning Cetatea Neamțului). *Studii si cercetări de istorie veche* 1 (1960): 81-107.

Diaconu, Gheorghe and Nicolae Constantinescu, *Cetatea Șcheia* (Șcheia Castle). Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Populare Romane, 1960.

Dobre, Claudia. "The Mendicants' Mission in an Orthodox Land: a Case Study of Moldavia In the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries," to be published in Annual of Medieval Studies at CEU 9 (2003).

Ebner, Herwig. "Die Burgenpolitik und ihre Bedeutung für die Geschichte des Mittelalters." *Carinthia I* 164 (1974): 33-51.

Emandi, Emil Ioan. *Habitatul urban și cultura spațiului* (The Urban habitat and the culture of space). Iași: Editura "Glasul Bucovinei," 1996.

Fügedi, Erik. *Castle and Society in Medieval Hungary (1000-1437)*. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1986.

Gheorghiu, T. O. *Fortified Towns. Urban defences in Medieval Central and Eastern Europe.* Bucharest: Simetria, 2000.

Giurescu, Constantin C. *Târguri sau orașe și cetăți moldovene din secolul al X-lea pâna la mijlocul secolului al XIV-lea* (Moldavian Market Towns or Towns and Castles from the Tenth to the Fourteenth Century). Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste Romania, 1967.

Holic, Haralambie. *Cetatea Hotinului – destin în istorie* (Hotin Castle – Its Destiny in History). Botoșani: Axa, 2000.

Holl, Imre. "Négysaroktornyos szabályos várak a középkorban" (Regular four corner towered fortresses in the Middle Ages) *Archaeologiai Értesitö*, III (1984): 192-217.

Husar, Al., Gh. Gonța, and S. Dimitriu-Chicu. *Cetăți de pe Nistru* (Castles on the Dniester). Chișinău: Revista "Limba Română," Asociația Culturală "Grai și Suflet," 1998.

Ionescu, Grigore. *Istoria arhitecturii în România* (The History of architecture in Romania), vol. 1. Bucharest: 1963.

Iorga, Nicolae. *Istoria românilor* (The History of the Romanians), vol. IV The Knights. Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 1996.

Kennedy, Hugh. *Crusader Castles.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1994.

Matei, Mircea D. *Civilizaţie urbană medievală românească – contribuţii – Suceava până la mijlocul secolului al XVI-lea* (Medieval Urban Romanian Civilization – Contributions – Suceava Until Mid-Sixteenth Century). Bucharest: Editura Academiei R.S.R., 1989.

Matei, Mircea D. and Emil I Emandi. *Cetatea de Scaun şi Curtea Domnească din Suceava* (The Voievodal Castle and Palace of Suceava). Bucharest: Editura Sport-Turism, 1988.

Moisescu, Cristian. *Arta românească veche* (Old Romanian Art) vol. 1. Bucharest: Meridiane, 2001.

Nicolescu, Corina. *Case, conace şi palate vechi româneşti* (Old Romanian houses, manor houses and palaces). Bucharest: Meridiane, 1979.

Oprescu, George, ed. *Istoria artelor plastice în Romania* (The History of Arts in Romania), vol. 1. Bucharest: Meridiane, 1968.

Papacostea, Şerban. "Desăvârşirea emancipării politice a Ţării Româneşti şi a Moldovei (1330-1392)" (The accomplishment of political emancipation of Wallachia and Moldavia) *Revista istorică* II (1991): 471-494.

_____. "Relaţiile internaţionale ale Moldovei în vremea lui Ştefan cel Mare"(The Interantional relations of Moldavia during the reign of Stephen the Great). In *Evul Mediu românesc* (The Romanian Middle Ages). Bucharest: Corint, 2001: 139-178.

Poncea, Traian Valentin. *Geneza oraşului medieval românesc în spaţiul extracarpatic. Secolul X-XIV* (The Genesis of the Romanian Medieval Town in the Extracarpathian Region: from the Tenth to the Fourteenth Century). Bucharest: Editura Biblioteca Bucureştilor, 1999.

Popa, Radu. *Cetatea Neamţului* (Neamţului Castle). Bucharest: Meridiane, 1963.

Rapoport, Amos. *The Meaning of the Built Environment: A Nonverbal Communication Approach.* Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1982.

Secular Medieval Architecture in the Balkans. ed. Slobodan Ćurčić and Evanghelia Hadjitryphonos. Thessaloniki: AIMOS, 1997.

Spinei, Victor. "Generalităţi privind geneza oraşelor medievale din Moldova" (General Issues regarding the genesis of medieval towns of Moldavia) *Arheologia medievală* I (1996): 35-53.

_____. "La Génèse des villes du sud-est de la Moldavie et les rapports commerciaux des XIIIe-XIVe siècles." *Balkan Studies* 35 2 (1994): 197-269.

_____. *Moldavia in the 11th-14th Centuries*. Tr. Liliana Teodoreanu and Ioana Sturza. Bucharest: Editura Academiei R. S. R., 1986.

Stavilă, Tudor, Constantin Ion Ciobanu, and Tamara Draconescu. *Patrimoniul cultural al Republicii Moldova* (The Cultural Patrimony of the Republic of Moldavia. Chişinau: Editura ARC, Editura Museum, 2000.

Steane, John. *The Archaeology of Medieval England and Wales.* Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1984.

_____. *The Archaeology of Medieval English Monarchy.* London: B. T. Batsford, 1993.

_____. *The Archaeology of Power*. Charleston: Tempus Publishing Ltd, 2001.

Şlapac, Mariana. *Cetatea Albă. Studiu de arhitectură medievală militară* (The White Castle. A Study on Medieval Military Architecture). Chişinău: Editura ARC, 1998.

Vătăşianu, Virgil. *Istoria artei feudale în Ţările române* (The History of feudal art in the Romanian Countries), vol. 1. Bucharest: Editura Academiei R.S.R., 1959.

Appendix

POLAND

Tetina
Hotin
Soroca

HUNGARIAN KINGDOM

TRANSYLVANIA

Suceava

Cetatea
Neamtului

Orhei

DNIESTER

MOLDAVIA

Tighina

PRUT

SIRET

Cetatea Alba

Craciuna

TATAR
REGION   Chilia

BLACK SEA

WALLACHIA

0   30   60 km

Late fourteenth century Moldavia

POLAND

Tetina
Hotin
Soroca

HUNGARIAN KINGDOM

TRANSYLVANIA

DNIESTER

Suceava

Orhei

MOLDAVIA

Cetatea
Neamtului

Tighina

PRUT

SIRET

Cetatea Alba

Craciuna

TATAR
REGION
Chilia

BLACK SEA

WALLACHIA
OTTOMAN EMPIRE

0   30   60 km

Late fifteenth century Moldavia

Figure 1 - Suceava – the entrance and the bridge. Taken by the author on April 8, 2003.

Figure 3 - Suceava – ground plan. Taken from *Secular Medieval Architecture in the Balkans*, ed. Slobodan Ćurčić and Evanghelia Hadjitryphonos (Thessaloniki: AIMOS, 1997), 186.
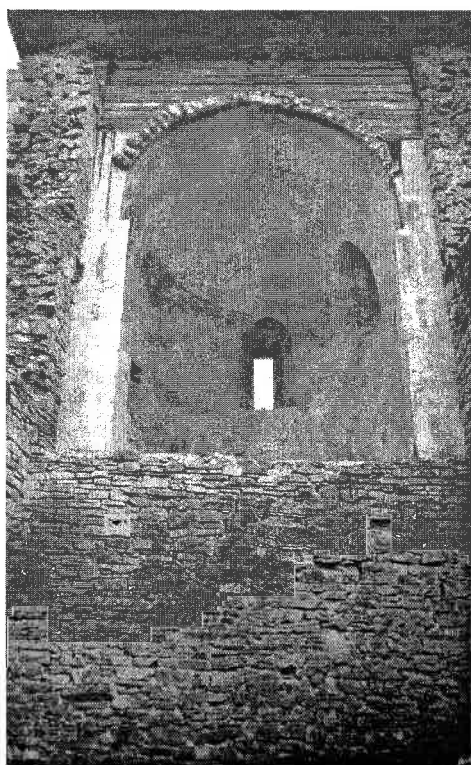
Figure 2 - Suceava – the chapel.
Taken by the author
On April 8, 2003.
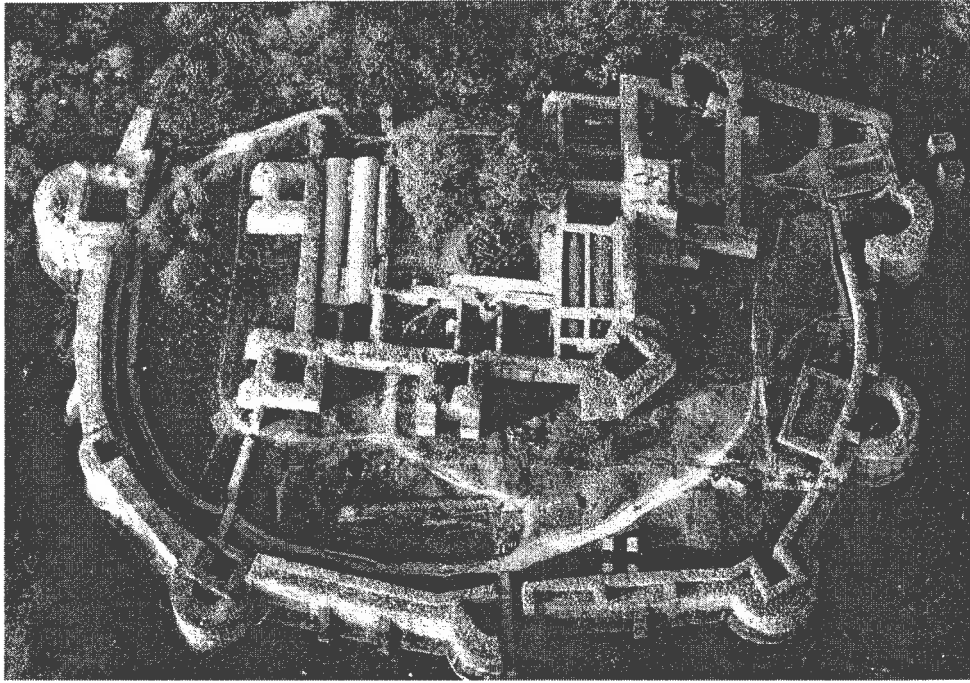
Figure 4 – Suceava – Arial view. Taken from *Secular Medieval Architecture in the Balkans*, ed. Slobodan Ćurčić and Evanghelia Hadjitryphonos (Thessaloniki: AIMOS, 1997), 186.
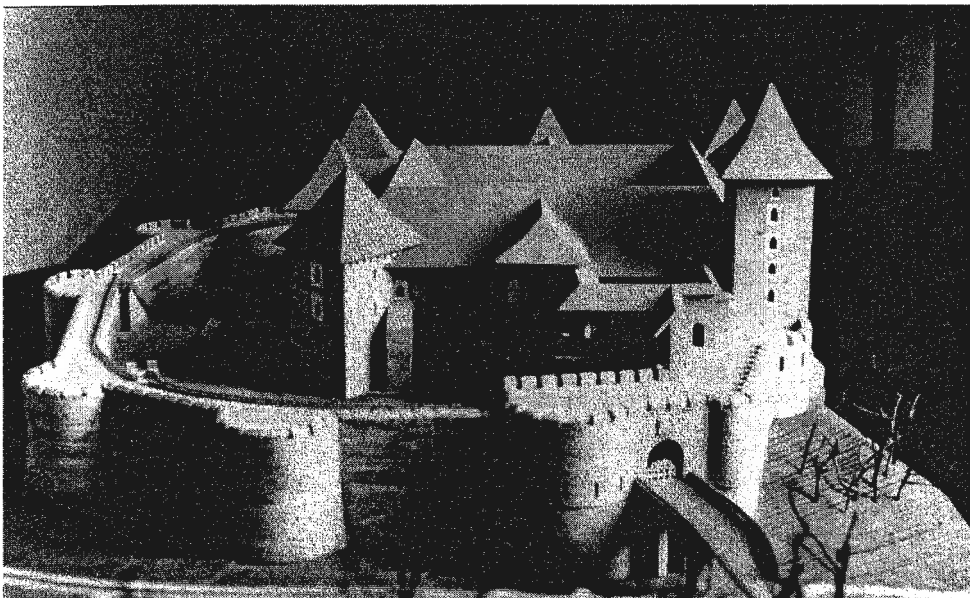
Figure 5 – Suceava – model reconstruction. Taken from *Secular Medieval Architecture in the Balkans*, ed. Slobodan Ćurčić and Evanghelia Hadjitryphonos (Thessaloniki: AIMOS, 1997), 187.
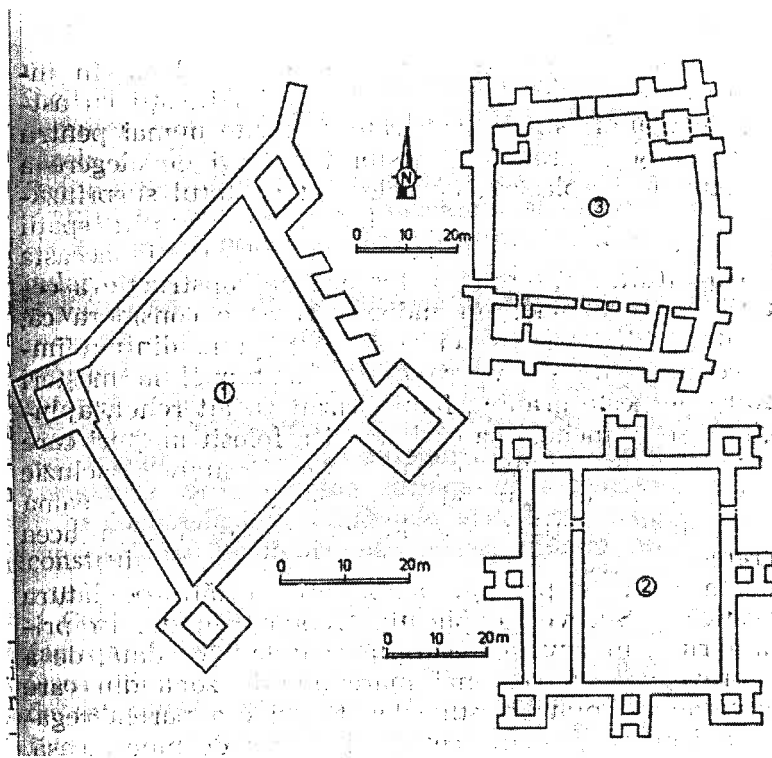
Figure 6 – Şcheia, Suceava, and Cetatea Neamțului. Ground plans. Taken from Mircea D. Matei and Emil I Emandi, *Cetatea de Scaun şi Curtea Domnească din Suceava* (The Voievodal Castle and Palace of Suceava) (Bucharest: Editura Sport-Turism, 1988), 33.

Figure 7 – Cetatea Neamțului – the bridge. Taken by Zoltan Soos on April 2000.
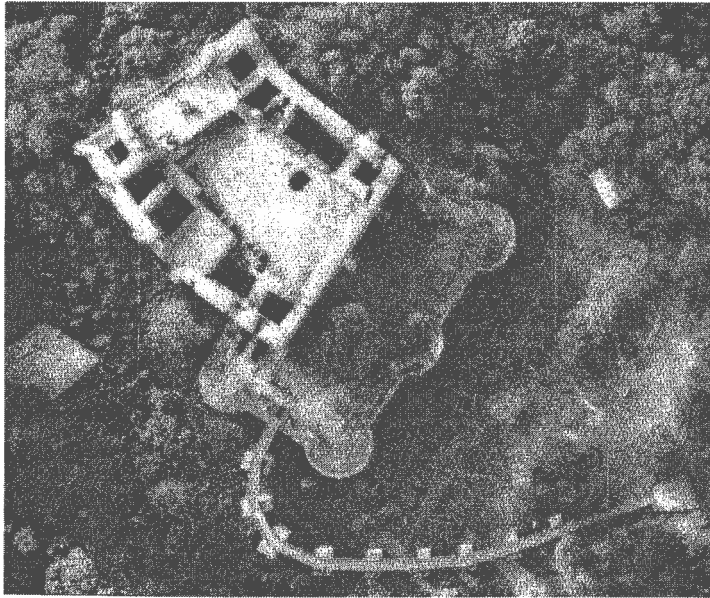
Figure 8 - Cetatea Neamțului. Arial view. Taken from *Secular Medieval Architecture in the Balkans*, ed. Slobodan Ćurčić and Evanghelia Hadjitryphonos (Thessaloniki: AIMOS, 1997), 188.
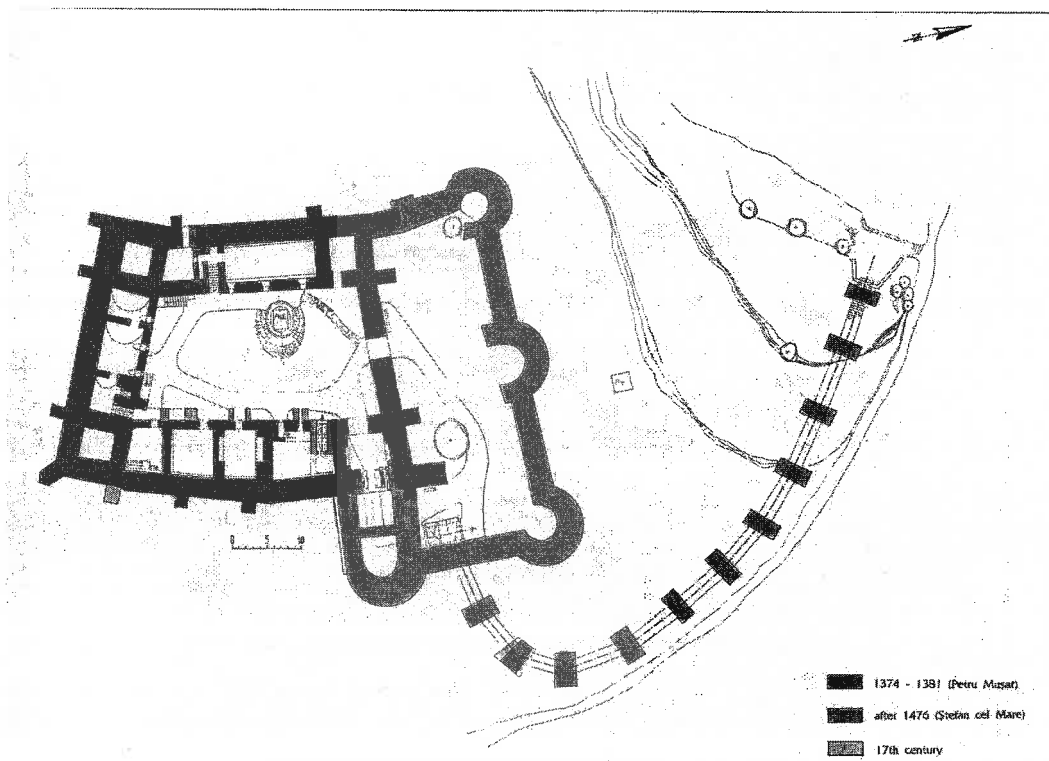
Figure 9 – Cetatea Neamțului. Ground plan. Taken from *Secular Medieval Architecture in the Balkans*, ed. Slobodan Ćurčić and Evanghelia Hadjitryphonos (Thessaloniki: AIMOS, 1997), 189.
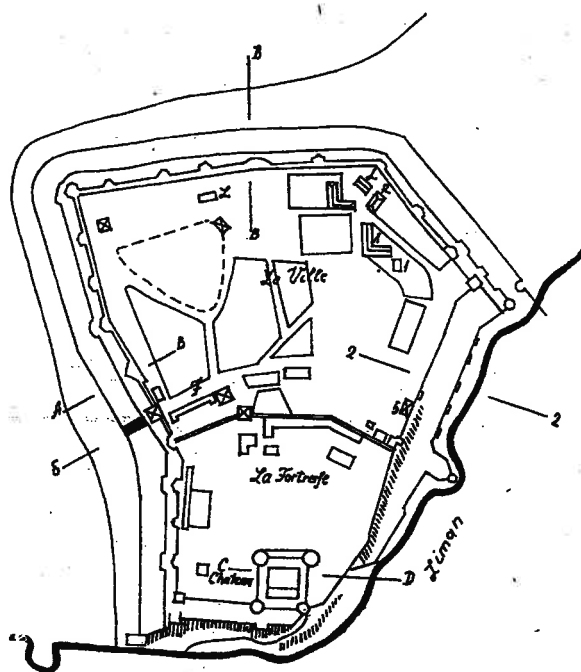
Figure 10 - Plan of Akkermann castle (Cetatea Albă). Taken from Mariana Şlapac, *Cetatea Albă. Studiu de arhitectură medievală militară* (The White Castle. A Study on Medieval Military Architecture) (Chişinău: Editura ARC, 1998), 113.
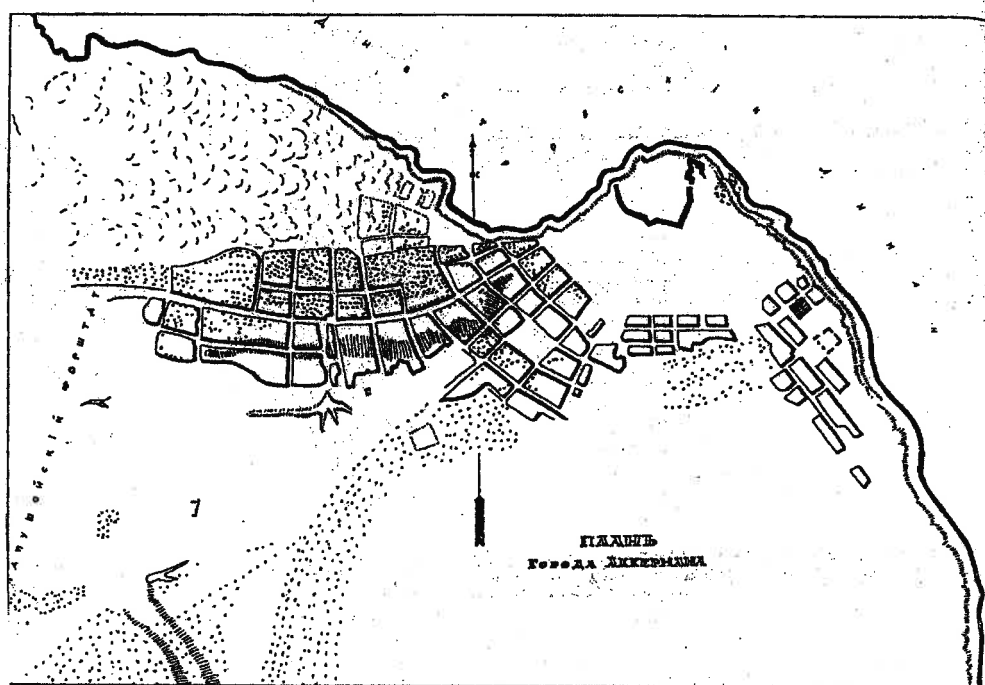
Figure 11 – Cetatea Albă and the nearby settlement. The plan of Akkermann drawn by B. I. Eitner (1842). Taken from, Mariana Şlapac, *Cetatea Albă. Studiu de arhitectură medievală militară* (The White Castle. A Study on Medieval Military Architecture) (Chişinău: Editura ARC, 1998), 48.
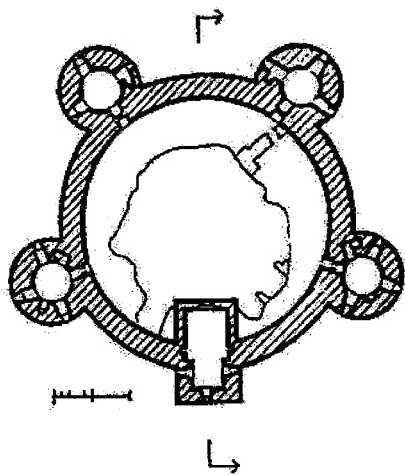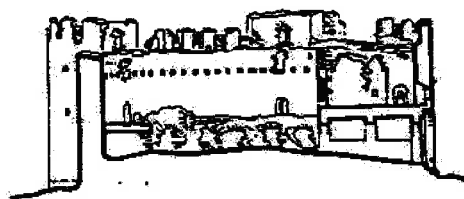
Figure 12 – Soroca – ground plan. Taken from Tudor Stavilă, Constantin Ion Ciobanu, and Tamara Draconescu, *Patrimoniul cultural al Republicii Moldova* (The Cultural Patrimony of the Republic of Moldavia) (Chișinău: Editura ARC, Editura Museum, 2000), 110.
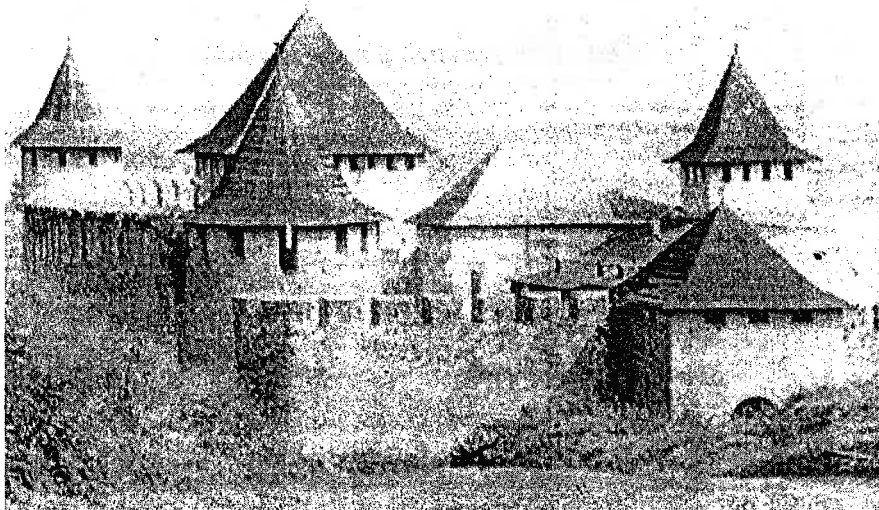
Figure 13 – Hotin. Taken from Haralambie Holic, *Cetatea Hotinului - destin în istorie* (Hotin Castle – Its destiny in history) (Botoșani: Axa, 2002).
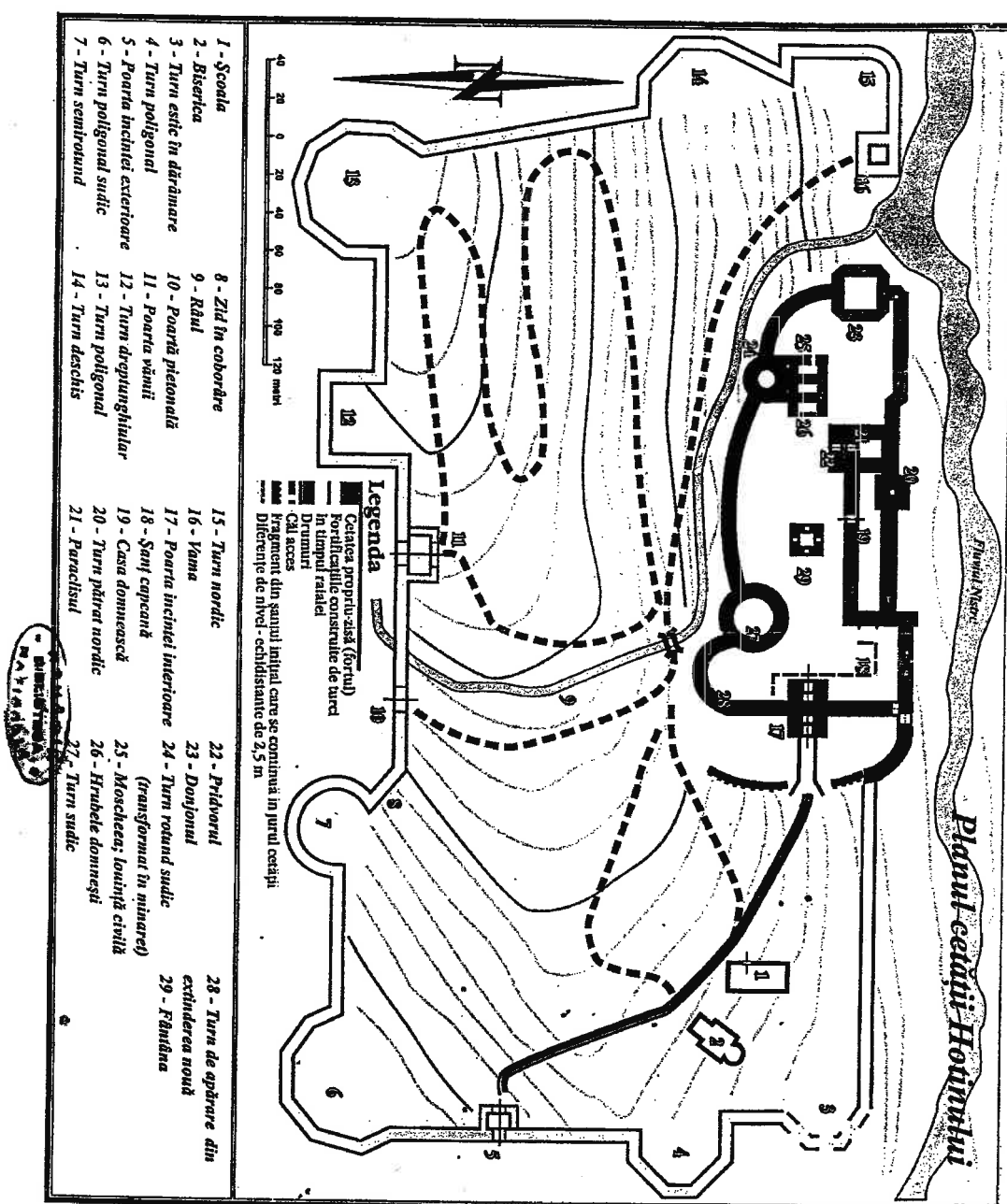
Figure 14. Hotin – ground plan. Taken from Haralambie Holic, *Cetatea Hotinului - destin în istorie* (Hotin Castle – Its destiny in history) (Botoşani: Axa, 2002).

Figure 15 - Soroca. Taken from
http://www.molddata.md/Cultura/cetati.cttighina.html.

Figure 16 – Tighina. Taken from
http://www.molddata.md/Cultura/cetat/cttighina.html.
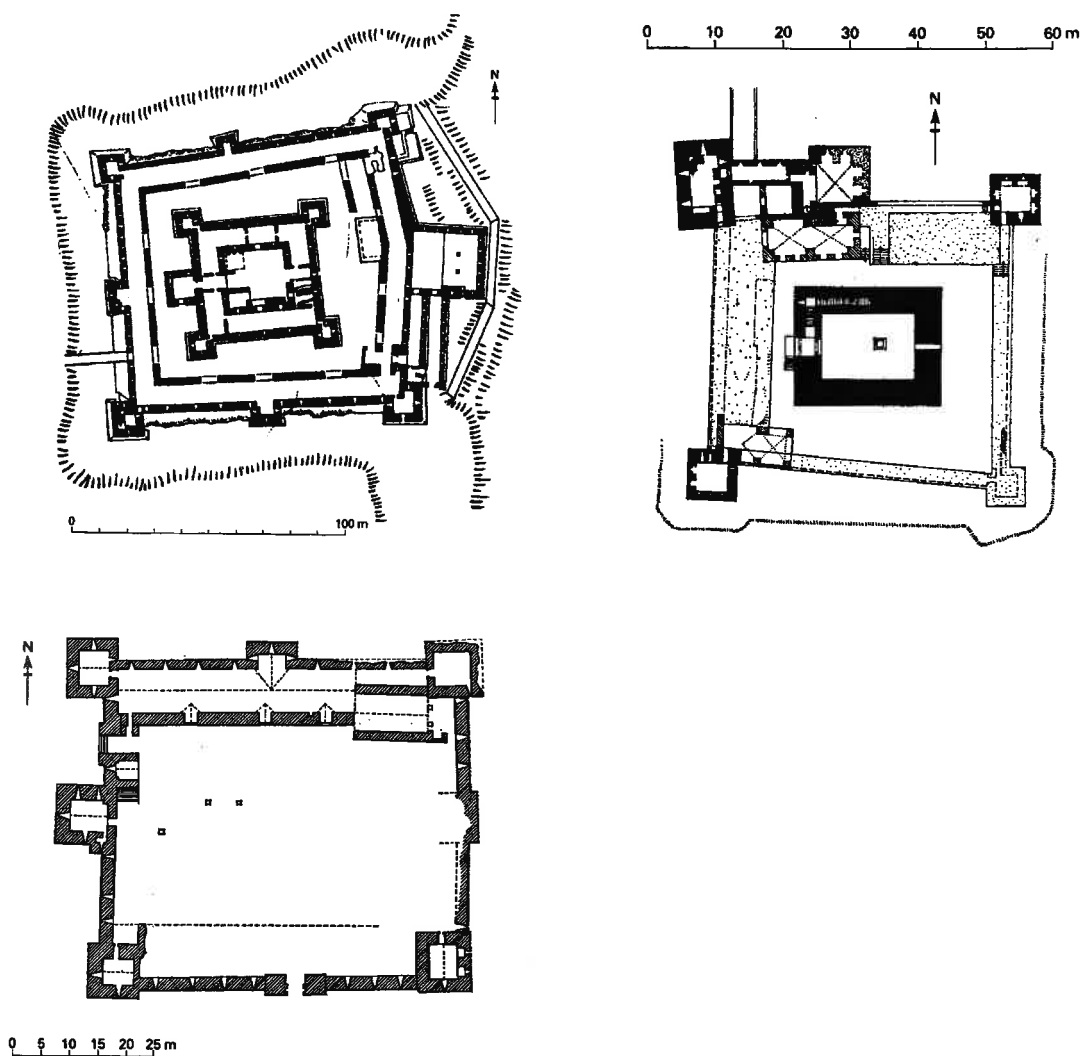
Figure 17 – Castles built by crusaders: Belvoir - plan. Giblet – plan of ground floor. Goliath: plan. Taken from Hugh Kennedy, *Crusader Castles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1994), 58, 66, 79.
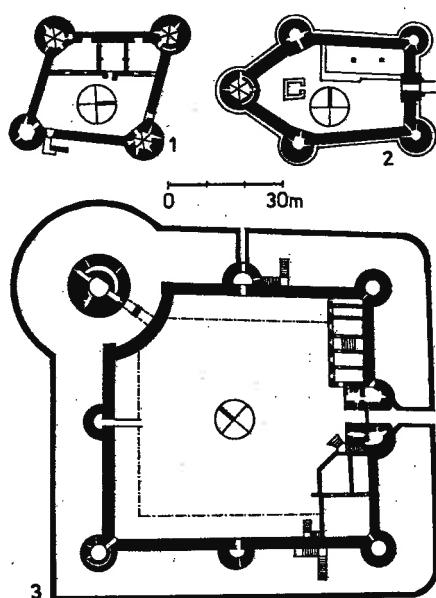
Figure 18 - Castles of Philip
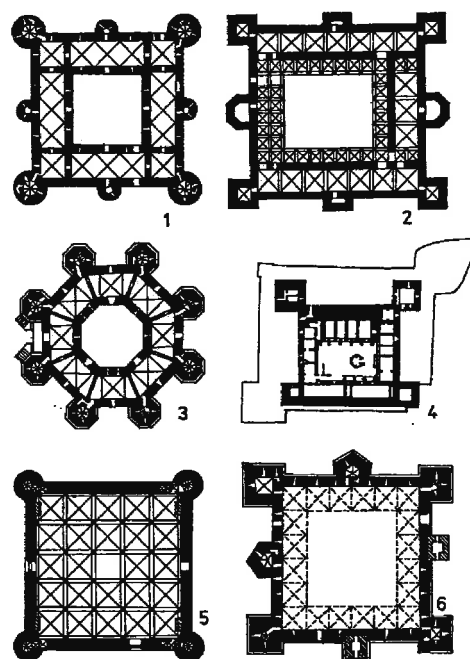August in Ile-de-France. 1. Yèvre
le Châtel 2. Montlhéry. 3. Dourdan.
Ground plans.

Figure 19 – Castles Friedrich II in
Southern Italy. 1. Castel Ursino in Catania
2. Augusta 3. Castel del Monte 4. Trani 5.
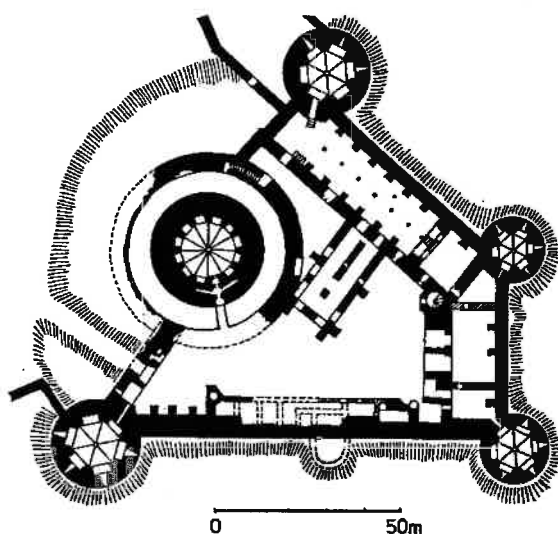Castel Maniace in Syrakusa 6. Prato.
Ground plans.

Figure 20 - Coucy, France. Ground plan.

Taken from Tomáš Durdík, *Kastellburgen des 13.Jahrhunderts in Mitteleuropa* (
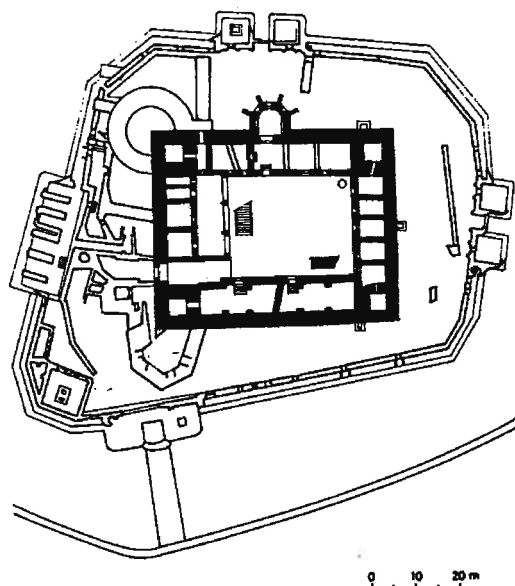Prague: Academia, 1994), 11, 12, 15.

Figure 21 – Diósgyör. Groundplan. Taken from Tomáš Durdík, *Kastellburgen des 13.Jahrhunderts in Mitteleuropa* (Prague: Academia, 1994), 11, 12, 15.
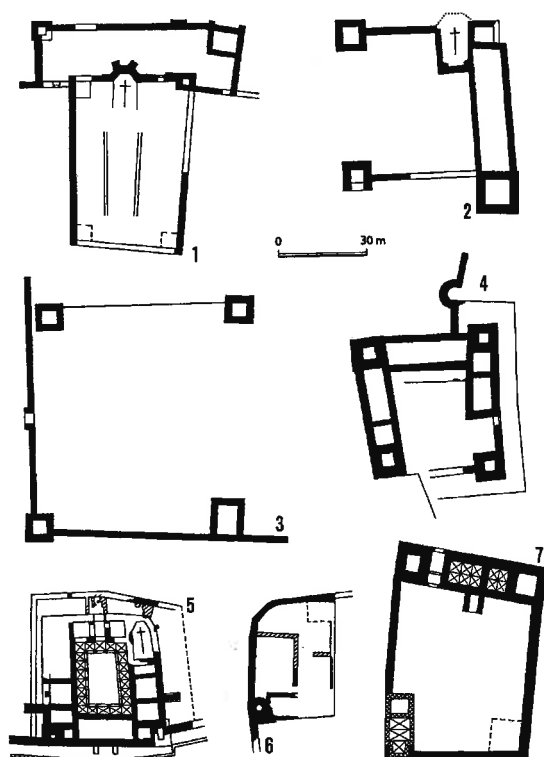

Figure 22 – Bohemian and Austrian medieval castle types 1. Chrudim 2. Wien 3. Wiener Neustadt 4. Kadan 5. Pisek 6. Domažlice 7. Horšovsky Tyn. Taken from Tomáš Durdík, *Kastellburgen des 13.Jahrhunderts in Mitteleuropa* (Prague: Academia, 1994), 231.