



ARMENIAN TOWNSCAPES IN TRANSYLVANIA

MÁTÉ TAMÁSKA

böhlau



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Table of Contents

I.	Introduction	7
2.	Research Issues in Armenian Architecture in Transylvania	15
2.1	Previous Research	15
2.2	Research Data Collection	25
3.	Armenian Identity in Transylvania	32
3.1	The Concept of Armenian Identity	32
3.2	Foreign Locals	37
3.3	The Armenian Population and Socio-Economic Stratification	43
3.4	Armenian Hungarians: the Integration Model	49
4.	Gherla: The Integration of Armenians and their Urban Architectural Model ..	51
4.1	The Age of Diaspora	51
4.2	The Early Era: the Town's Foundation	53
4.3	The Town's Golden Age: the Baroque Gherla	55
4.4	The Eclectic Town	57
5.	The Changing Relationships between the Town and its Region	65
5.1	The Role of Landscape and Cultural Landscape in the Town's Formation ..	65
5.2	The Colonies' Location in the Town's Network	69
6.	The Settlement Structure	82
6.1	Conquering the Center	82
6.2	The Armenian Town Turns Transylvanian	87
7.	Buildings	94
7.1	Sacral Architecture	94
7.2	Public Buildings	101
7.3	From the Armenian House to the Apartment House	110
8.	Armenian Townscapes	122
8.1	The Skyline	122
8.2	Streets and Squares	126

9. Summary	144
References	147
Sources	156

1. Introduction

The history and specific identity of Transylvanian Armenians often appear in Hungarian historiography. This attention is by no means ensured when one considers how small the Transylvanian Armenian population was. The Armenians mostly came from Moldova into Transylvania in the 16th and 17th centuries. They played a very important role in the trade system of the time. However, even after the 17th and 18th centuries' immigration wave, we can only talk about a population of a couple thousand people.¹ Other similarly small, migrant populations usually lost their identity after a few generations, and their memories have survived only as curiosities in local history or folklore. Hungarian history, on the other hand, clearly depicts the Armenian minority as merchants and town builders. Gherla is the most frequently cited example in connection with municipal construction. This 'Armenian metropolis' was built in the 18th century "on the site of a goose grazing field, based on engineering plans."²

This well-known Armenian image derives from the turn of the century, romantic, myth-creating historiography, which is full of fabrications, exaggerations, and farfetched statements. For a long time, modern historiography has uncritically accepted the narratives and data that Kristóf Szongott and his colleagues published about Gherla over a century ago, at the end of the 19th century.³ These narratives, including the legend of the "3,000 Armenian families" and the idea that Gherla was a town with walls, were accepted as fact until recently.⁴ Re-evaluating the history of the Transylvanian Armenians and refuting the origin myths has only started in the past few decades. This book attempts open a new avenue of inquiry in this re-evaluation process. It is the first to compare the urban development of four Armenian colonies, Gherla, Dumbrăveni, Gheorgheni and Frumoasa starting in the 18th century until the first decades of the 20th century.

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- 1 PÁL, Judit: Armeni în Transilvania. Contributii la procesul de urbanizare și dezvoltare economică a provinciei / Armenians in Transylvania. Their Contribution to the Urbanization and the Economic Development of the Province. Romanian Cultural Institute, Center for Transylvanian Studies, Cluj-Napoca 2005, 27.
 - 2 MÁTÉ, Zsolt: Történeti településeink értékvédelme [Protection of our Historical Settlements]. Egyetemi jegyzet BME, Budapest 2006.
 - 3 SZONGOTT, Kristóf: Szamosújvár, a magyar-örmény metropolisz írásban és képekben [Gherla, the Hungarian-Armenian Metropolis in Word and Images]. Szamosújvár (Gherla) 1893. / SZONGOTT, Kristóf: A magyar örmény metropolisz. I–III [The Hungarian-Armenian metropolis I–III]. Szamosújvár (Gherla) 1901–1903.
 - 4 ÁCS, Zoltán: Nemzetiségek a történeti Magyarországon [Nationalities in Historical Hungary]. Budapest 1984. / GAZDOVITS, Miklós: Az erdélyi örmények történetéből [History of the Armenians in Transylvania]. Budapest 2000.

Table 1: Names of Armenian Colonies in different languages used during the history⁵

Romanian	Armenian	Latin	Hungarian	German
Gherla	Hajakalak / Kēřla	Armenopolis	Szamosújvár	Armenierstadt
Dumbrăveni	Ibasfalau / Yelisabet'owpolis	Elisabethpolis	Ebesfalva / Erzsébetváros	Elisabethstadt
Gheorgheni	Sënd Migloř / Čurčov		Gyergyószentmiklós	Niklasmarkt
Frumoasa	Sibviz		Csíkszépvíz	

Such comparative work is not possible without prior scholarship. Above all, Gherla and Gherla's Baroque style are remarkably well researched. A range of publications has addressed this issue since the 1980s (see chapter 2). Most scholars believe that Gherla's unique Baroque architectural features stem from the colony's connection with the western Habsburg Monarchy and the direct adoption of forms more commonly found there. Fewer researchers, on the other hand, have focused on local determinism, the influence of local folk architecture, or the role of Transylvania's late Gothic and Renaissance traditions.⁶ These publications only rarely mention that Gherla's Baroque features could have influenced the architecture of the other three colonies. Only a few local histories are available on Gherla's 19th and 20th century urban development. Yet, this era is as much a part of the town's Armenian architecture as its Golden Age in the 18th century. Thus, earlier scholarship has been limited by previously available data, both in terms of geographical area (examining all four colonies at the same time) and in periodization (examining more than two hundred years of development).

The Armenian townscapes in these four colonies can be interpreted as a regional architecture design in Transylvania or as a part of the international Armenian Architecture. However, only analyzing influences from the Armenian perspective would not provide many clues to the colonies' developments. The reason for this is that by the end of the 17th century, Transylvanian Armenians had entered into the Roman Catholic Church, and by the beginning of the 19th century, they had given up the Armenian language and had become entirely assimilated into the Roman Catholic cultural sphere of Central Europe, thus almost completely losing their cultural relations with their homeland.⁷

On the surface, it does not require any particular architectural background to determine that 18th and 19th century Transylvanian Armenian architecture is not related to well-known

5 BERNÁD, Rita—KOVÁCS, Bálint: A Szamosújvári Örmény Katolikus Gyűjtőlevéltár. Repertórium. Arhiva de Colecție Armeano-Catolică din Gherla. Repertoriu. The Armenian Catholic Collective Archive in Armenopolis. Repertory. Leipzig—Budapest 2011.

6 KÓS, Károly: Erdély kövei [The Stones of Transylvania]. Kolozsvár 1922.

7 NAGY, Kornél: Az erdélyi örmények katolizációja (1685–1715) [Transylvanian Armenians' Catholicization (1685–1715)]. Budapest 2012.

traditions of medieval Armenian sacred architecture.⁸ Oriental patterns developed from the Byzantine architecture, which even accompanied Armenians to the neighboring Moldavia before vanishing abruptly across the Carpathians.⁹ Although we have little direct evidence of the secular monuments found in Armenian urban architecture, we assume that there would have been few similarities between settlements in the Caucasus, Crimea, Moldavia, and Transylvania, given that the surviving sacred architecture from these regions is quite varied. Accepting this paradigm, we must base our assumptions about urban development on the conditions in Transylvania itself.

Another fundamental thesis we have to formulate is whether we consider townscapes as cultural productions.¹⁰ Contrary to classical architectural investigations, it is not the form itself that we intend to evaluate. Instead, we seek to understand the cultural expressions and content tied to the form. When examining the settlement structures, churches, and houses, therefore, our goal is not to make a detailed survey of them (in certain cases, the heritage impact studies have already done so, see: research history), but rather to understand what cultural content a particular architectural design demonstrates/expresses. In other words, we explore Armenian architecture as a cultural and social process, rather than architectural work.

Generally speaking, the cultural process in this case is the history of the integration and later assimilation of the Armenian colony into Transylvanian culture, and the spatial dimension of this process. We endeavor to uncover, whom the Armenian colony modeled itself after, how its tastes changed, how they related to local architectural traditions. As a result, keywords throughout the book will be “cultural integration,” “interaction,” “assimilation,” and “pattern adoption.” First and foremost, however, we will try to find an answer to what caused urban architectural differences, which emerged between the individual colonies, studying the nature of cultural interaction with other (non-Armenian) peoples and social structures. Even early on in the colonies’ foundation and development, differences in

8 GUZSIK, Tamás: *Középkori örmény szakrális építészet* [Medieval Armenian Sacred Architecture]. Budapest 1991. The edifices in the new world demonstrate what Armenians considered the prototypical Armenian church and its architectural form. Oriental designs and ornamentation, for example, are employed ubiquitously. On Armenian architecture, see the following databases Armenian Historical Monuments: <http://www.armenianarchitecture.am/v2/index.php?Language=2> (11. 05. 2018)

9 While not directly connected to the topic, it is worth mentioning that the largely Armenian architecture in the Caucasus had a great impact on the sacred architecture of the Balkans in the 7th and 8th centuries, as Armenians were much more innovative and proactive at this time than Byzantine, the core area of the eastern sacral architecture. SZENTKIRÁLYI, Zoltán: *Az építészet világtörténete. I–II* [The World History of Architecture. I–II.]. Budapest 1980, 32. Due to the union with Rome, similar forms that characterized Transylvanian Armenian architecture also appeared in Galicia, where the Armenian Catholic Church operated from the 17th century onward with Lemberg as its center.

10 SOJA, Edward W.: *Postmodern Geographies. The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*. London—New York 1998. / LEFEBVRE, Henri: *La production de l’espace*. Paris 1994. / ROSSI, Aldo: *Die Architektur der Stadt. Skizze zu einer grundlegenden Theorie des Urbanen*. Düsseldorf 1973. / KOSTOF, Spiro: *The City Shaped: Urban Patterns and Meanings Through History*. London 1991.

architecture emerged depending on whether a settlement received the status of an autonomous town or not. Without this, settlements faced constant conflict and reconciliation, though they eventually became closely integrated into their local environment. In the 19th century, when Armenians supported Hungarian national efforts, a more profound integration occurred among Armenians in Szeklerland (Sfântu Gheorghe, Frumoasa) in Transylvania, while Armenian towns in the Romanian-majority regions increasingly became ethnic islands.

The book's structure follows the logic below. First, the work's methodology will be clarified. The Armenians' patterns of cultural identity, subjected to change over time, will be the next topic. In the light of the abundant literature on the Armenian identity, the four-step process of assimilation will be outlined based primarily on the example of Gherla. In the first period under study, lasting until the end of the 17th century, the Armenians existed as a diasporic people coming from the neighboring countries such as Moldova. The next era was the period of settlement and town foundation lasting until the early 18th century. During this era, Armenians were considered foreigners in Transylvania's feudal society, and their status there was rather uncertain. Beginning with the reign of Maria Theresa and lasting until the first half of the 19th century, Armenians acquired full rights, and many attained a privileged position in Transylvania and the Habsburg Empire. Numerous families were even ennobled. Armenians even gained the right to leave the colonies and settle elsewhere within the country. The fourth period began with the 1848/49 Hungarian War of National Liberation. The Armenians supported the Hungarian cause against the Habsburg dynasty. In the following decades, they became part of the Hungarian nation. It was not a forced assimilation process, but progressed naturally after adopting the Hungarian language and their cultural practices and behaviors. Thus, within this study, we see an initial period when Armenians were considered foreigners in Transylvanian society, though they later became part of the feudal system, and eventually an integral part of the Hungarian nation during the era of nationalism.

The book's second topic will explore the Armenian colonies' external relations highlighting the positions of them within the network of urban centers in Transylvania. In the early 18th century, as Armenian merchants established 'new towns' and trading centers, they fought to overcome at times disadvantageous geographical relations with other towns, in order to distinguish themselves and gain access to otherwise well established trade networks. Szeklerland already had a peripheral position, or was at least a separate entity within Transylvania in both geography and social consciousness. Gherla and Dumbrăveni, on the other hand, had to compete with the existing urban centers (Cluj, Bistrița, Sibiu, Medias, etc.). Over the course of two hundred years, what is clear is that with Armenians' eventual assimilation, the vitality of their „new towns” dropped dramatically. It is also apparent that Gheorgheni, which was in the most favorable position in terms of relations between town and countryside, performed the greatest urban transformation in the early 20th century.

This work's unit of the analysis is the towns' internal structure, their street and land layout and the cultural-symbolic contents behind of this structure. From view perspective, it becomes clear that the Armenians' status had a decisive role in the evolution of their

townscapes. A true new town could only be built where the land of the town was in the hands of the colonies in a legally arranged form, that is, in the royal treasury demesne. This was the case above all in Gherla and to a lesser extent in Dumbrăveni. Even in these settlements, however, we should not forget that the actual Armenian town was not built entirely in a free area, but more closely connected to an existing castle or to a settlement's core below the castle. Because of certain constraints, adaptations can always be detected in the structure of new Armenian towns. Depending on what principles or constraints dictated the adaptation and what structural elements and customs were observed, various layout systems were established.

After studying colonies' ground plans, the buildings will be examined next. Plot sizes were markedly different, and a uniform development was therefore impossible for Armenian architecture. For example, houses with wide Baroque façades in Gherla could not have been built in the strip plots of the Szeklerland. However, regardless how small the Armenian community in Transylvania was, local building traditions and the availability of building materials and of craftsmanship all led to architectural dialects, that is differences in the individual settlements' appearance and structure. Besides differences, the architecture of the four Armenian colonies also shares common features. Some of these are Armenian characteristics and arise from the fact that the colonies tried to maintain their connections with each other despite geographical distance. The other, more important common denominator was the urban lifestyle of the people in the colonies. Despite settling in smaller villages, Transylvanian Armenians developed architectural patterns in the early 1700s that appeared more urban. The urban nature of Armenian architecture seems the most striking in Frumoasa, which until now has retained its village character beyond its Armenian core.

Along with analyzing these urban patterns, this work will also describe and compare the Armenian townscapes of the early 20th century. Compared with the two centuries preceding it and their dearth of surviving depictions and buildings, this period is abundant in available source material: postcards, cadastral maps, the statistical data series of the buildings from the modern census of 1910, the enthusiastic homeland literature. Finally, this era's temporal proximity allows us to generate more tenable hypotheses on the characters of individual streets and town districts based on today's buildings and styles. The detailed examination of the turn of the century, besides offering methodological insight, is necessary to consider, as the changes in 1920 with new borders and political realities opened a new era in the history of the Armenians. Before the First World War, the majority of Armenians had assimilated into the Hungarian nation, Transylvania's new place in Romania after 1920 placed Armenians in a minority position. Mass emigrations resulted. Everything that happened to Transylvanian Armenians in the 20th century led to a complete rupture in their sense of place and identity. A significant portion of Transylvanian Armenians left the colonies, many moved from Romania to Hungary. From a live tradition and culture, Transylvanian Armenian architecture became a historical and cultural heritage in the 20th century.

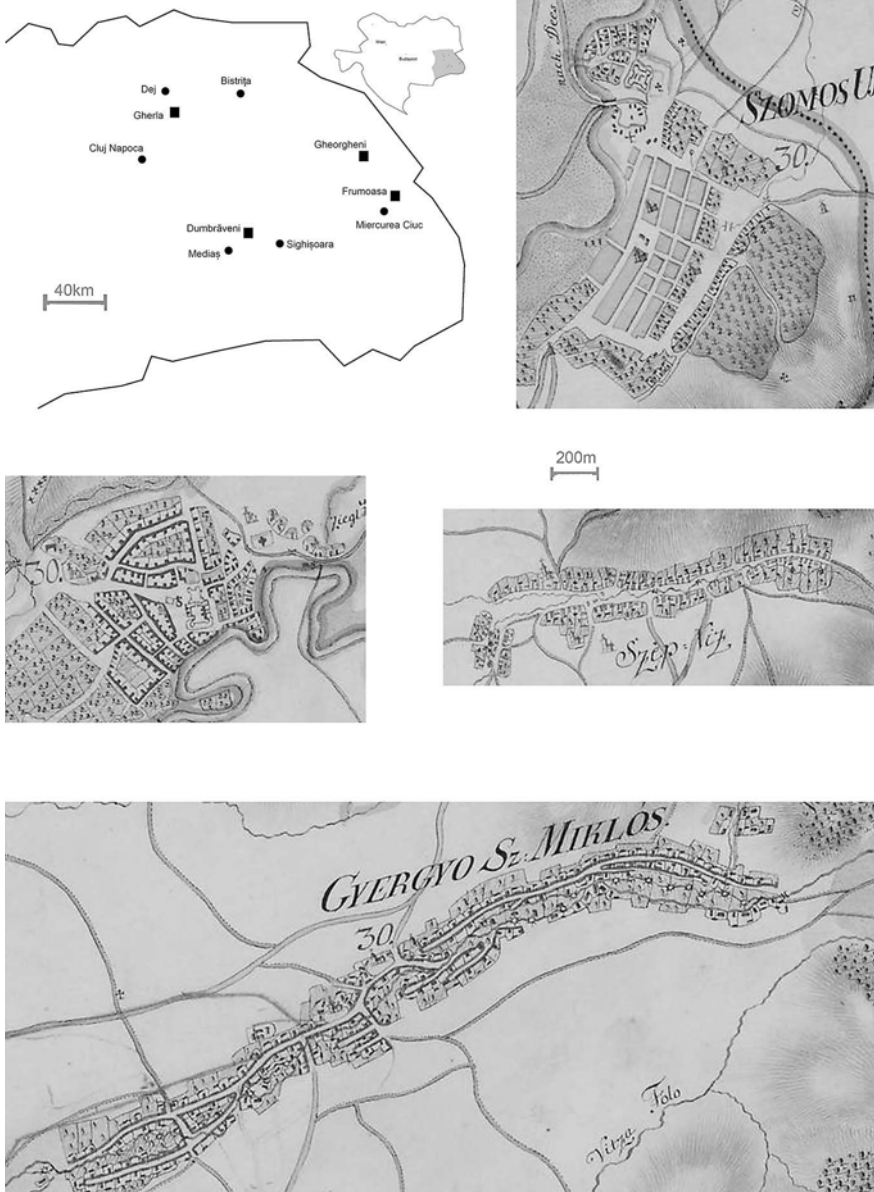


Fig. 1 The map of Transylvania in the 18th Century and its territory in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy around 1910 (Transylvania was smaller in the 18th century than it is today) and the settlements on the Military Survey (*Josephinische Landesaufnahme 1763–1787*). Gherla (above) and Dumbrăveni (middle left) were settled along important rivers (Someș and Târnava Mare), and Gheorgheni (bottom) and Frumoasa (middle right) on local water course.
 Source: Borders made according to maps published in Sonkoly Gábor: *Erdély városai a XVIII–XIX. században* / Source: mapire.eu (26.03.2018).



Fig. 2 Gherla and Dumbrăveni as depicted in the second Military Survey (*Franzsische Landesaufnahme* 1806–1869). Both Armenian towns developed around a castle. Gherla was a new structure a bit farther from the castle. Dumbrăveni developed on the former parcel structure, therefore its layout is more organic.
Source: mapire.eu (26.03.2018).

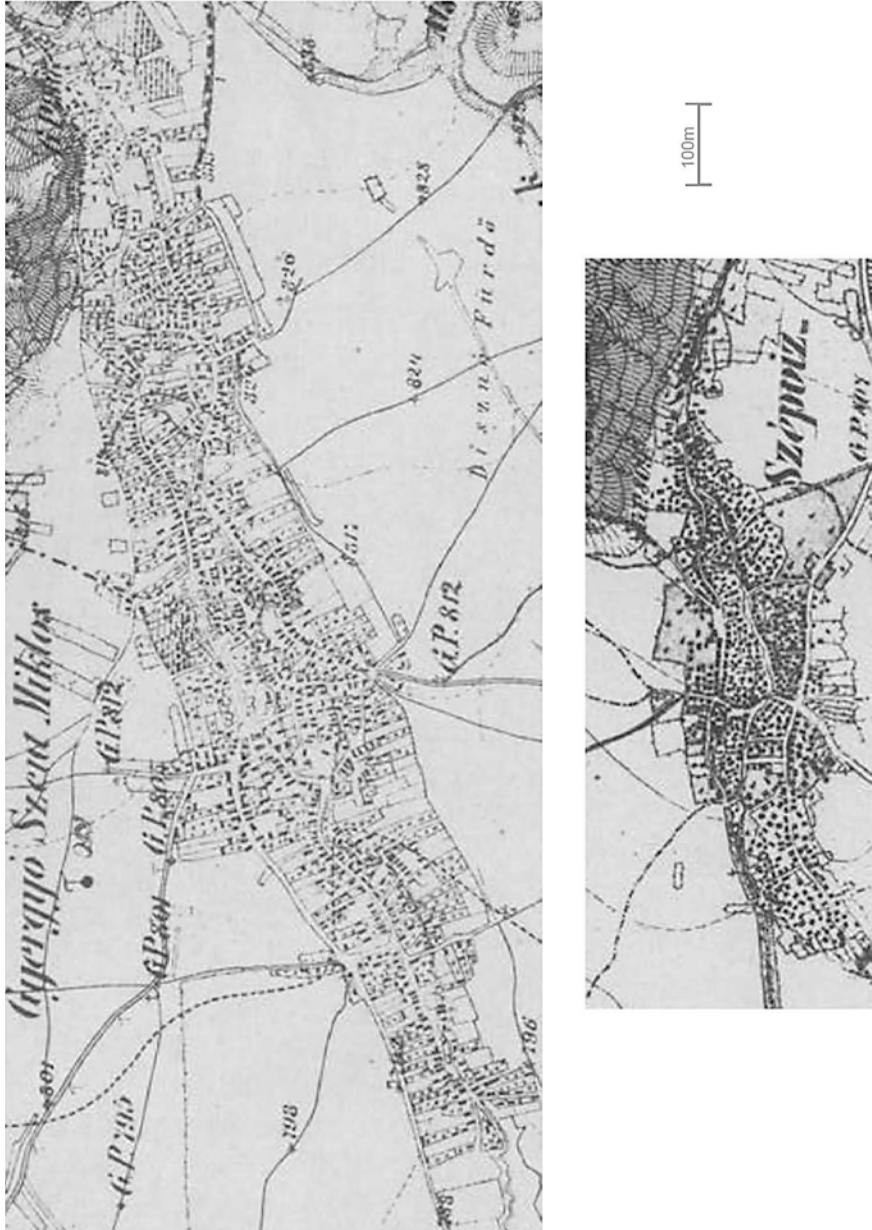


Fig. 3 Gheorgheni and Frumoasa on the second Military Survey (1806–1869).
Source: mapire.eu (26.03.2018).

2. Research Issues in Armenian Architecture in Transylvania

2.1 Previous Research

The literature of Transylvanian Armenian architecture shows enormous inequalities, which my study of four Armenian towns will rectify. On one hand, there is Gherla, subject to several high-quality studies, on the other hand Dumbrăveni remains almost unknown. Compared to these two cities, Gheorgheni is in a special situation, mainly due to the fact that researchers do not separate the histories of the Szekler and Armenian small towns. Finally, the village milieu of Frumoasa has thus far only interested those who are interested in homeland knowledge. Armenian research has rich literature and there are some attempts to compare these four locations, however, these tend to offer sketches and some interesting observations, but are not sufficient analysis to fill a monograph.

The following literature review begins with Gherla, which has the most detailed architectural description thanks to Virgil Pop. Pop defended his dissertation in Romanian, but has published his results in international journals as well. The importance of English and German publications has helped overcome the very language barriers, which have already caused Transylvanian Armenian architecture to be barely visible in international Armenology.¹¹

In international literature about Transylvanian Armenian architecture, only the settlements' most important churches are present. Summaries consider even the churches insignificant, as Transylvanian colonies that united with Rome are designed in a manner that shows the Western and Roman Catholic tastes.¹² Pop emphasizes the 'westernness' of Gherla, which is outstanding not only in comparison with the Armenian homeland or surrounding Moldavian territories, but also with the neighboring Transylvanian towns. The uniquely rich and "pure style" presence of 18th-century Baroque urban planning principles and decorative arts demonstrate this western appearance. Although others had been aware of Gherla's Baroque elements, Pop coined the term "Baroque new town" (*barocke Gründungsstadt*) to describe this. In his interpretation, the town's layout from

11 POP, Virgil: Armenopolis—oraș baroc. Teza de doctorat [Armenopolis—Baroque City. Doctoral Thesis]. Institutul de Arhitectură "Ion Mincu" București 1997. / POP, Virgil: Armenopolis, eine barocke Gründungsstadt. In: Zeitschrift für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde, 21 (92.) 1998, 168–191. / POP, Virgil: Armenopolis—oras baroc, Accent, Cluj-Napoca 2002.

12 BOCK, Ulrich: Die armenische Baukunst. Köln 1983. GUZSIK, Tamás: Az örmény építészet emlékei [The Armenian Architectural Monuments]. Budapest 1996. / HASRATIAN, Mourad: Histoire de l'architecture arménienne des origines à nos jours. Lyon 2010. / KHAZINEDJIAN, Albert—KHAZINEDJIAN, Maryse: Architecture et art sacré arméniens: Aperçu et divers aspects. Paris 2012.

the early 1700s, the Armenian house's evolving structure, a variety of arch shapes and decorative window and door frames, all of that can be interpreted as the local adaptation of Baroque style. However, such a strong emphasis on the Baroque features has the potential to push other influences to the background. These include the late Renaissance decorative motifs, the effects of regional and vernacular architecture, the provincialism of the second half of the 19th century, or Armenians' lifestyles, which directly affected the shape of the house (storage needs). Pop acknowledges these factors outside the Baroque era, but he considers them secondary compared to the Baroque's influences. He regards European architectural history as offering the theoretical framework for his research. Specifically, town conceptions of absolutist rulers offer themselves as a basis for comparison, like the examples of Karlsruhe, Erlangen, Mannheim, Versailles.¹³ It is apparent from Pop's comparison that compared to internationally acclaimed models, Gherla shows not only the many characteristics of peripheral existence, like delays in time, its modesty in scale, but it also differs from the ideal Baroque town in its concept. Classic Baroque residentiary seats have the palace in the center of town, whereas in Gherla, the main organizing motif is the church.

Pop emphasizes Gherla's Baroque nature and draws parallels with its European contemporaries, which serves both an academic and a pragmatic purpose. Pop is a heritage conservation expert, and his work formulates a clear message to help raise public awareness. The "Baroque town" serves as a slogan that circumscribes academic audiences and reaches the general public as well. This is particularly crucial in Transylvania, where evidence of Baroque urban planning is uncommon, especially in the highly decorative form that Gherla offers.¹⁴ Despite the reference to European examples, the term "Baroque town" therefore serves to position the individual townscape in Transylvania. The methodology of heritage value assessment pervades Pop's work as a whole. His doctoral dissertation and the published translations thereof contain very detailed descriptions and surveys. He reviews the plot sizes block by block, and provides a cadastral overview of the houses requiring heritage protection.

His conclusions mirror those of a conditions survey undertaken in 1977.¹⁵ The heritage condition survey was commissioned after a complete rehabilitation of the downtown was planned.¹⁶ Leaders János Sóvágó and Csaba Miklósi-Sikes marked the working group that prepared the survey, which is still the most valuable source of Armenian

13 POP 1997, 16. He refers to: HAROUEL, Jean-Louis: *Histoire de l'urbanisme*. Paris 1990. / NORBERG-SCHULTZ, Cristian: *La signification dans l'architecture occidentale*. Paris 1997.

14 POP 2001, 25.

15 SÓVÁGÓ, János—MIKLÓSI-SIKES, Csaba: *Studiu de Sistematizare pentru punerea in valoare a zonelor rezervatiilor de architectura si a monumentelor de architectura Gherla* [Systematization Study for Valuing Architectural Reservation Areas and Architectural Monuments of Gherla]. Cluj-Napoca 1977.

16 MIKLÓSI-SIKES, Csaba: *Örmény kutatások Erdélyben az 1980-as években* [Armenian Studies in Transylvania in the 1980s]. In: *A 300 éves örmény szertartású római katolikus egyház és közösségei Magyarhonban régen és ma című konferencia*. Szerk: Sarolta ISSEKUTZ. Budapest 2001, 127–134.

architectural research in Transylvania. A total of about 80 buildings dating from the 18th and early 19th centuries were surveyed. Michael Sabău and Michaela Bodea published the results of the research, first in Romanian and later in German and English.¹⁷ The analyses clarified the ground-plan typology of the historical houses of Gherla, and as Pop's thesis later indicates, they pointed out the town's architectural importance for establishing Baroque styles in Transylvania. Looking at the structure of the town, they also discussed possible Transylvanian models, for example, Cluj-Napoca. While recognizing the formal similarity, they did not deal deeper with the logic of pattern adoption nor did they attempt to explain the social history of the Baroque townscape. Especially characteristic of Sabău, although he was thoroughly familiar with the turn-of-the-century Armenology research, he used it as auxiliary data to flesh out the history of architecture. This meant that the architectural discourse on Gherla was separated from its socio-historical context. For decades, only architectural form was studied and the sociological content was barely considered.

Their colleague, Csaba Miklósi-Sikes, was also active in the heritage surveys. He first claimed in a conference presentation held at the beginning of the 2000s that, besides style, it was time that to interpret the townscape from the customer's—that is to say the Armenians'—point of view.¹⁸ He argues that the Armenian Baroque is just the Armenians casting their loyalty to Vienna in physical form. The idea of Viennese orientation was born as a result of a comparison with the Baroque small-town architecture in Hungary, in particular with Sümeg's townscape.

Sümeg is barely 150 kilometers from Vienna, but Vienna's effect has a much stronger presence in Gherla's Baroque architecture about 800 kilometers off.¹⁹

Thus Miklós-Sikes enriched the Baroque meaning of Gherla with another thread. In his interpretation, the Baroque townscape is a result of a cultural transfer that cultivated direct contact with the architectural center, Vienna, in spite of the distance. Miklós-Sikes's ideas were derived from the similarity of architectural forms. At the same time,

17 BODEA, Michaela: Valoare in peisajul urban al Gherlei [Value in the Urban Landscape of Gherla]. In: *Revista muzeelor si monumentelor—Monumente istorice și de artă*. 1984/1, 27–29. / SABĂU, Nicolae: Gherla. Aspecte istorico artistice ale dezvoltării orașului [Gherla. Historical Artistic Aspects of Town Development]. In: *Revista muzeelor si monumentelor—Monumente istorice și de artă*. 1984/1. 17–29. / SABĂU, Nicolae: „Armenopolis“ oder das Barock in Gherla (18.–19. Jahrhundert). In: *Zeitschrift für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde* 14. 1991. 47–67. / SABĂU, Nicolae: “Armenopolis” the Baroque Gherla. In: *Armenian Culture and Art in Gherla*, ed. by N. SABĂU, București 2002, 85–98.

18 MIKLÓSI-SIKES 2001, 128.

19 MIKLÓSI-SIKES, Csaba: Szamosújvár és Sümeg barokk belvárosának építéstörténeti sajátosságai [The Historical Architectural Features of the Baroque Downtowns of Szamosújvár and Sümeg]. In: *Tusnad 1998: Történeti városok védelme*, szerk. Sándor BENCZÉDI—Izabella HLAVATHY. Sfântu Gheorghe 1999, 69–78, 69.

the research on other Armenian diasporas' trade relations also reveals a similar role of connecting remote regions.²⁰

Interestingly, the works discussed so far hardly mention Margit B. Nagy's, name, even less her research results, although her art history analyses rely on archival data and give additional insight into the issue of style.²¹ Nagy's work indicates that prior to the 1750s, before construction of the great church, mostly craftsmen from the region worked in the town, whence the Armenian customers acquired Renaissance stone carvings that corresponded to contemporary Transylvanian fashions. However, the second generation of master builders, who arrived at the same time as the church's construction, is foreign: the accounts include mainly names from Austria, Moravia and Western Hungary. Because these master builders came directly from the Baroque centers of the Habsburg Empire, the Armenian Baroque styles in Gherla are richer than others in Transylvania.²²

Nagy was a follower of the first discoverer of the Armenian Baroque, Géza Entz. This renowned art historian was able to demonstrate the aesthetic values of the town along the Someş River with sophisticated skill. He first formulated the basic features of the Armenian baroque, or as he called it "late Baroque or Rococo" including elaborate decoration, searching pictorial effect, and the striking closeness to European forms.

The crowding architectural elements, the playful, often cumulative decorating mode, the scenic management of sculptural elements are all traits that bring the Gherla Rococo close to the contemporary European art, but at the same time away from the Hungarian taste.²³

Entz drew attention to two more important phenomena that future research would emphasize. One is the rural, almost village-like effect of the streetscapes. This rural character is partly visible in Transylvania (Cluj-Napoca, Sibiu), but even more palpable in comparison with the late Baroque streetscapes of the Hungarian Kingdom.²⁴ While there are closed street lines and mainly multi-leveled townhouses there, in Gherla, one-story houses with

20 TROEBST, Stefan: Isfahan—Moskau—Amsterdam: Zur Entstehungsgeschichte des moskauischen Transitprivilegs für die Armenische Handelskompanie in Persien (1666–1676). In: *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 41 (2) 1993. 180–209. / KOVÁCS, Bálint: Abschnitte aus der neuzeitlichen Geschichte der armenischen Missionen. *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai Theologia Catholica Latina* 2006 (2), 39–50.

21 NAGY, Margit B.: A szamosújvári örmény nagytemplom [The Armenian Cathedral of Gherla]. In: *Reneszánsz és barokk Erdélyben [Renaissance and Baroque in Transylvania]*, szerk. Margit B. NAGY. Bukarest 1970, 211–226. / NAGY, Margit B.: A barokk Szamosújvár születése [The Birth of the Baroque Gherla]. In: *Építés- építészettudomány* 15, 1983, 27–39.

22 NAGY 1983, 36.

23 ENTZ, Géza: Szolnok-Doboka műemlékei [Monuments of Doboka-Szolnok County]. In: *Szolnok-Doboka magyarsága*. Szerk: Attila T. SZABÓ. Dés–Kolozsvar. 1944. 191–230, 228.

24 GERŐ, László (szerk.): *Ungarische Architektur: bis zum Ende des XIX. Jahrhunderts*. Budapest 1954. / GERŐ, László: *Történeti városrészek [Historic Neighborhoods]*. Budapest 1971.

large gardens are dominant. Another characteristic is the social status and the rank of the owners. While the religious and the secular aristocracy led the way in urban architecture in Hungary as it was generally the case in Europe, in the 17th and 18th-century constructions in Gherla, the bourgeoisie played a leading role.

Géza Entz's art history approach and the 1970s research based on heritage protection have a common feature: their interest was focused on the Baroque. All previous and future urban architectural works were compared to those of the Baroque. The Renaissance was defined as preparation for the Baroque, and Classicism and Romanticism were unable to emerge from the shadows of the Baroque heritage. The remarkable transformation of the 19th century's second half only deals with them to the extent that they modified or spared the Baroque underpinnings.

Compared to the abundant scholarship concerning Gherla's history, Dumbrăveni ("Elizabeth Town") is virtually unknown in the public life of the history of art and architecture. Yet in a socio-historical sense, a lot of parallels exist between the two towns. Dumbrăveni's architectural monuments are rather modest, but this alone does not justify the enormous discrepancy between the mass of second-generation heritage protection architects who are working to rescue Gherla, while Dumbrăveni's values are still yet to be recognized. As such, the town's only inventory of architectural value was carried out under the "Denkmaltopographie Siebenbürgen" project, which Ioan George Andron and Iosefina Postavaru led and which listed Saxon monuments.²⁵ Postavaru highlights the disparity in her review on the results of the survey: while in Gherla there are nearly fifty buildings designated as heritage protected sites, in Dumbrăveni there is only one-tenth. Postavaru divides the town's construction process into ten architectural periods, from the manorial center developed in the 1300s to the present day. The role of the Armenians lasted from the end of the 1600s until the early/mid-20th century. In the 20th century, Dumbrăveni gradually lost its urban functions and melted it into neighboring Sighișoara's village-like catchment area. Its population was almost completely replaced. It is a serious problem that in 1952, many more villagers were settled into the downtown area than the town could provide adequate housing for.²⁶ All this has led to the overcrowding and deterioration of the buildings. On the other hand, one positive aspect of the past century is that there have been few significant changes to the structure and skyline of the settlement since the end of the 19th century. According to Postavaru, this feature alone justifies the establishment of a historic zone as soon as possible. Postavaru's methodology preferences aspects of the heritage value cadaster. The historical data of her periodization rely on the monograph published in 1896 by the town's renowned monographer Lukács Ávedik. Roland Hönig's

25 POSTAVARU, Iosefina: Orasul Dumbrăveni, jud. Sibiu. Un sit urban istoric neprotejat [Dumbrăveni, Sibiu County. An Unprotected Historic Urban Site]. In: Monumentul, Ediția XI, 2011. 237–260, 238.

26 POSTAVARU 2011, 245.

summary in 2001 recently supplemented Ávedik's work.²⁷ On the basis of these sources, Hönig believes that Dumbrăveni had been built up by the mid-1700s, the same period when the Baroque Old Town of Gherla was designed/established. He notes that the Armenians' town building activity organized the civil town around the main square of clustered settlement below the castle. Its basic structure was completed by the end of the 18th century. The oldest buildings of Dumbrăveni were also constructed at that time. Like Pop, Postavaru also attempts to describe the basic form of the Armenian house, though she had much less data available. She only reviews the characteristics of the courtyard constructions and leaves out the standardization of the internal proportions of the rooms. This analysis indicates that the oldest layers of Dumbrăveni's Armenian architecture were largely modeled on Saxon examples.²⁸ Because property sizes in Dumbrăveni were different from Gherla, the houses had to be built differently as well. Although, the settlement heritage of Dumbrăveni has a significant proportion of Baroque elements terminating at the beginning of the 19th century, we have still not seen the term, "Baroque town". Furthermore, the second half of the 19th century has as much significance as the previous periods.

A grounded social-historical interpretation of the changing architectural character in the late 19th century is missing from all previous analysis. For example, it should not be overlooked that the intensive office building boom at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, enforced the administrative, governmental tasks rather than merchant, urban functions in the changing role of the town network. All of this was of utmost importance to the townscape, as it created discrepancies in the townscape that are still palpable today. The changing Armenian identity is reflected in changing townscape designs. The foreign merchant populations adopted different architecture patterns ("International Baroque") from the contemporary Transylvanian culture the same way as later assimilated bourgeois families did at the turn-of-the-century ("Hungarian State-Buildings Style").

The relationship between the changing Armenian identity and the townscape is interesting for Gheorgheni, although here the architectural form rested on a very different footing. Two basic papers are available on Gheorgheni architecture. Miklós Köllő, who has written one, actively works in the renovation of town houses, as well as in urban planning and heritage conservation plan.²⁹ György Vofkori, the cultural historian, has written the other.³⁰ Köllő summed up his knowledge acquired as practicing chief architect in his

27 ÁVEDIK, Lukács: Szabad királyi Erzsébetváros monográfiája [Monograph of the Free Royal City Dumbrăveni]. Szamosújvár 1896 (reprint 2004). / HÖNIG, Roland: Elisabethstadt in Siebenbürgen. Aalen 2001.

28 POSTAVARU 2011, 248.

29 KÖLLŐ, Miklós: A gyergyószentmiklósi főtér homlokzatának állagvizsgálata [Survey of the Condition of Façades on Gheorgheni's Main Square]. Graduate Thesis. Kolozsvár 2006.

30 VOFKORI, György: Gyergyószentmiklós: Várostörténet képekben (Gyilkos-tó—Békás-szoros) [Gheorgheni: Town History in Pictures (Red Lake—Bicaz Gorge)]. Cluj-Napoca 2004.

diploma thesis for conservation engineering. Due to the genre of monument examination protocol, the division of the urban architectural eras is a central element. Compared to Gherla's and Dumbrăveni's architectural documentation, Köllő's works place more powerful emphasis on the issue of cultural interaction, especially, the relationship between the Szekler-Hungarian environment and the Armenian populace. In contrast with the two aforementioned towns, clearly considered Armenian, in Gheorgheni, Armenian architectural style only characterizes one era. This era, at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries when the town was mostly built of wood, witnessed the emergence of a new construction method employing solid material.³¹ However, Köllő believes that the Armenian Baroque in Gheorgheni is not comparable to Gherla's, partly because the advanced stone carving workshops were missing, and because the Armenians had no feudal privileges. After the assimilation of the Armenian merchant class, the author presents the development of Gheorgheni at the end of the 19th century as a self-contained urbanization era, in which the Armenians' building activities could not be separated from the whole town. Köllő's professional prestige of working as an architect and being the town's planning director greatly increases the credibility of his works. The concept of the paper, the diagrams and figure annexes show the contours of a protection regulation to help practical heritage management. We can see the fundamental work before us that was carried out at the end of the 1980s for Gherla, and for Dumbrăveni in the early 2000s.

But while in Gherla and especially Dumbrăveni, the architectural surveys rely on historical from a hundred years ago, Gheorgheni has a very lively discussion on local history. The best-known authors are Márton Tarisznyás and Dezső Garda. Their publications are interesting not only because of the historical data, but also because they have largely explicated the town's structural changes from the early Middle Ages to the 20th century.³² An important step in this activity was György Vofkori's special work on architectural history.³³ Vofkori presents Gheorgheni in an enjoyable manner, using archival photographs and postcards, completed with a large amount of local data. His methodology leaves less room for periodization compared to the historic value studies in Dumbrăveni. Vofkori's main organizing principle is topography, location and time are secondary. The book may be used as a guide, and the lexicon, with its rich image material, can be used as a source.

Regarding the amount of special works, there is no doubt that Gherla and Gheorgheni provide the richest material. However, in Gherla, the practical conservation work has priority, whereas in Gheorgheni, townscape research typically appears as part of local histories. However, a detailed architectural survey of Gheorgheni like the one in Gherla,

31 KÖLLŐ 2006, 12.

32 GARDA, Dezső: Gyergyó a történelmi idő vonzásában [Gheorgheni in the Draw of Historical Time]. Gyergyószentmiklós 1992. / GARDA, Dezső: Gyergyói örmények könyve I–II [The Book of the Armenians in Gheorgheni I–II.]. Budapest 2007. / TARISZNYÁS, Márton: Gyergyó történeti néprajza [Gheorgheni's Historical Ethnography]. Bukarest 1982.

33 VOFKORI 2004.

is still to come. In the early 1990s, only the center's façade image was recorded, there were no systematic investigations on house floorplans.³⁴ On the other hand, the historians have researched the social-economic backgrounds better here than in Gherla. Therefore, we have a better understanding of effect of architecture and society, regarding issues like the Szekler-Hungarian and Armenian cohabitation and its effect on the townscape, changes of the economic system, and the connection between the town and its surroundings.³⁵ Consequently, while researchers have explored Gherla better than Gheorgheni in the technical-monumental field, from a social-historical point of view, the situation is reversed.

Finally, there are few basic works worth mentioning with regards to the smallest Armenian colony, Frumoasa. While the Armenian core of the settlement looks like a little town, its functions are far from urban. By these standards, Frumoasa is definitely a village. The limited development potential not only affected the architectural image of the settlement, but the research on it as well. While the other three colonies regularly appear in the summaries on the history of Transylvania due to their town/borough status and their regional position, these same volumes contain nothing about Frumoasa. The research is also fruitless even if Frumoasa is considered a village, as the ethnographic literature has not yet compiled a comprehensive monograph on it.

Only the past few years have brought a change to this situation. Thanks to heritage protectionist architect, Ernő Bogos, the evaluation, renovation, and promotion of the settlements' values have begun. Bogos has not yet published his results, but he placed some details of his plans at the disposal of this research.³⁶ Due to the nature of heritage

34 TÖRÖK Á.—KERESZTES SZ.: *Renovare urbana zona centrala* [Renovation of Urban Central Area]. Façade Survey Drawing, commissioned by Gheorgheni Local Government Office. Undated.

35 PÁL, Judit (A): *Örmények a Székelyföldön a 19. század közepéig* [The Armenians in the Szeklerland until the mid-19th Century]. In: *Acta 1995. Sepsiszentgyörgy 1996.* 161–172. / PÁL, Judit (B): *Az örmények a Székelyföld gazdasági életében a 19. század közepéig* [The Armenians in the Economic Life of the Szeklerland until the mid-19th Century]. In: *Tradíciók és modernitás. Közép- és kelet-európai perspektívák*, szerk.: Dorottya LIPTÁK—Éva RING. Budapest 1996. 35–50. / PÁL, Judit: *Az erdélyi örmény népesség számának alakulása és szerkezete a 18. században* [Evolution and Structure in the Armenian Population's Numbers in 18th-Century Transylvania]. In: *Erdélyi Múzeum LIX, 1997/1–2.* 104–120. / PÁL, Judit: *Das Bild der Armenier in Siebenbürgen*. In: *Siebenbürgische Semesterblätter Jg. 12. (1–2)*, München 1998, 68–76. / PÁL, Judit: *Az erdélyi örmények és beilleszkedésük a magyar társadalomba* [The Transylvanian Armenians and their Integration into Hungarian Society]. In: *Kötődések Erdélyhez*, szerk: Béni L. BALOGH. Tatabánya 1999. 64–73. / PÁL, Judit: *Armenier im Donau-Karpaten-Raum, im Besonderen in Siebenbürgen*. In: *Minderheiten, Regionalbewusstsein und Zentralismus in Ostmitteleuropa*, Hg. Heinz-Dietrich LÖWE—Günther H. TONTSCH—Stefan TROEBST (Hrsg.): Köln—Weimar—Wien 2000, 121–138. / PÁL, Judit: *Városfejlődés a Székelyföldön 1750–1914* [Municipal Development in the Szeklerland in 1750–1914]. Csíkszereda (Miercurea Ciuc) 2003.

36 BOGOS, Ernő: *Measuring Sheets of the Site Frumoasa*. It is a privat self made material of the Architect Bogos about Church, Different Dwellings and Layouts. Some parts of the material have been published in the local exhibition in Frumoasa about History of Armenians. The exhibition is to see since 2010.

protection work, the plans mainly include cartographic surveys, which focus on visual relationships. Independent from this documentation, the settlement history was published in a booklet by Katalin Bogos.³⁷ The author largely relied on data from the *Historia Domus* (Chronicle) recorded since 1860. Exploration of the relationship between the architectural character and village history is missing for Frumoasa, not surprisingly, since research has only just begun.

To sum up the history of research, we can say that a considerable amount of data is available, however, there are great disparities that have hindered a comprehensive, comparative analysis. Gherla's highly detailed scholarship inevitably serves as a yardstick when examining other locations. As a logical solution, making virtue out of necessity, this work presents Gherla separately as an ideal type and interprets the characteristics of the other three sites in comparison.

Besides the difficulty in comparing sites that have been scrutinized to varying degrees, the methodology of architectural history research poses the greatest challenge. This is not a problem in and of itself, but it is worth bearing in mind that this paper doesn't present the townscape itself, but its role as part of a socio-historic narrative.

All cited authors agree that these townscapes would not have been created without the Armenians' involvement. In other words, ethnic determinism creates a connection between the towns of Gherla, Dumbrăveni, Gheorgheni, and Frumoasa despite the distance between them. Since heritage studies focus on the four settlements' forms, they tend to point out major differences between them without attempting to understand the ethnic character of the minority group, whose character affected the townscape. Nevertheless, one can understand architectural similarity beyond the category of form and instead as the similarity of the underlying principles.³⁸ The character and atmosphere of towns obviously feel similar when the street structure or the building stock have the same appearance, but this may also be the case when parallels exist in inhabitants' occupational structure, way of life, and status. Architectural form research may not necessarily address this issue, but exploring social history reveals the actions and behaviors behind a town's form. In this way, we may discover similarities among the four Armenian settlements.

The social-historical explanation also broadens the concept of urban architecture and includes the results of special contemporary cultural history works. It is typical of heritage investigations that their descriptions are based on the results of classical historiographical arguments in Transylvanian Armenology. Nonetheless, the strengthening Armenology discussion in recent decades has pointed out that the historical monographs from the end of the 1800s served both as the authentic exploration of reality, as well as the Armenians'

37 BOGOS, Mária: A szépvízi örmény közösség [The Armenian Community of Frumoasa]. Budapest 1997. http://www.sulinet.hu/oroksegtar/data/magyarorszag_i_nemzetisegek/ormenyek/a_szepvizi_ormeny_kozosseg/pages/ooo_konyveszeti_adatok.htm (03. 03. 2018).

38 KOSTOF 1991, 7–14.

demand for self-definition at the end of the 19th century.³⁹ A theme emerges along the ethnic issue of minority existence—and the closely related issue of identity—and these are the socio-historical strands along which the Armenian town architecture can be interpreted not only in form, but also in content.

Consequently, this comparative analysis proves to be a novelty, because systematic comparisons have not yet taken place. In addition, it is also unique that the townscape is analyzed beyond form to include an appropriate cultural product matching the periodization of Armenian cultural integration. Armenology research in recent years has provided a theoretical framework for this model. The key point in Armenians' identity was their union with the Catholic Church in the 17th century. The Pázmány Péter Catholic University and the Leibniz-Institut für Kultur und Geschichte des östlichen Europa (GWZO Leipzig) have produced a generation of historians who have established fundamental theses by analyzing unknown religious protocols, religious texts, and missionary correspondences regarding 18th and 19th-century Armenian identity and social development. Their results have proven to be instructive in urban architectural research.⁴⁰ Cluj historian Judit Pál provides the initial theoretical framework for this analysis, as she processed the progression of the Transylvanian Armenians' integration in a series of studies.⁴¹

Reading Judit Pál's works inevitably raises questions about the broader context too, the specific socio-historical, urban hierarchy, and ethnic relations in Transylvania. These peculiarities directly affected the Armenians' position in Transylvania, which naturally influenced their development, including their townscapes as well. Some direct examples include Armenians' political status in Transylvania, occupational distinction among certain national groups, the religious diversity, the development of the urban network systems, and place of the region in wider trade networks.⁴² The broader context of the 17th and 18th-century Armenian architectural Golden Age includes the general boom in Transylvanian beef and leather exports.⁴³ External factors also led to the decline of Armenian

39 KOVÁCS, Bálint: Ursprungsimaginationen. Die Armenische Hauptstadt Ani als lieu du mémoire. In: Adamantios Skordos, Hg.: Dietmar MÜLLER, Leipzig 2015, 253–262.

40 BERNÁD—KOVÁCS 2011. / ŐZE, Sándor—KOVÁCS, Bálint (szerk.): Örmény diaszpóra a Kárpát-medencében [The Armenian Diaspora in the Carpathian Basin]. Piliscsaba 2006. / ŐZE, Sándor—KOVÁCS, Bálint (szerk.): Örmény diaszpóra a Kárpát-medencében II [The Armenian Diaspora in the Carpathian Basin. II.]. Piliscsaba 2008. / KOVÁCS, Bálint: Az irodalom és vallás kulturális közvetítő szerepe az erdélyi örmények integrációja során a 18. században [The Cultural Intermediary Role of Religion and Literature in the Integration of Transylvanian Armenians in the 18th Century]. PhD Dissertation, Piliscsaba 2010. / KOVÁCS, Bálint and PÁL, Emese: Far Away from Mount Ararat. Armenian Culture in the Carpathian Basin. Budapest 2013. / NAGY 2012.

41 PÁL 1996, 1996B, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2005.

42 KÖPECZI, Béla (szerk.): Erdély története I–III [History of Transylvania I–III]. Budapest 1986.

43 BÍRÓ, Vencel: Erdély XVI–XVII. századi kereskedelmének történetéhez [The History of 16th and 17th-Century Trade in Transylvania]. In: Ódon Erdély. Művelődéstörténeti tanulmányok I–II, szerk.: Péter SAS, Budapest, 1986, 221–248, 237.

towns' development in the 19th century. Leather's importance declined, and the emerging grain trade strengthened the importance of new regions like the Banat and the Great Hungarian Plain (Alföld).⁴⁴

The interpretation of Armenian town architecture is even less conceivable without the theoretical parameters of urban geography. The 18th and 19th centuries witnessed a very different town type than what emerged at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries with industrialization and the emergence of nation-states. Two fundamental works have been published in recent years on this background with regards to architectural image. One monograph analyzed Transylvanian town networks from the 1700s until 1867 with the legal union of Transylvania and Hungary.⁴⁵ The other work analyzes the hierarchal rearrangement of these town networks in subsequent decades, relying on rich statistical data from the era. The perspective of town networks helps us understand each Armenian center's initial establishment and how town functions changed in different historical periods.⁴⁶

2.2 Research Data Collection

The townscape's most important historical source is the physical environment itself. This is especially the case in locations, where 20th-century developments did not extensively restructure towns' layouts from the early 1900s. Fortunately, for various reasons, all four locations meet these criteria. This is even true in Gheorgheni and Gherla, which have undergone relatively dynamic periods of development, given that new housing estates have been mostly constructed beyond the towns' historic cores. The old and the new structures are so divided that even the landscape and historic environs are preserved in some places. Frumoasa and Dumbrăveni have even more telling townscapes, as the past hundred years have passed without any major intervention.

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- 44 NÉMETH, Ferenc: Magyar-örmények Bánát közéletében a 19. században [Hungarian Armenians in the Public Life of the Banat in the 19th Century]. In: Délkelet Európa—South-East Europe: International Relations Quarterly, vol. 4. no.1. Spring 2013, 1–11.
- 45 SONKOLY, Gábor: Les villes en Transylvanie moderne entre 1750–1857. Diplome work, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales Territoires urbains 1994. / SONKOLY, Gábor: Comment définir une hiérarchie urbaine? La Transylvanie entre 1750 et 1857. In: Cahiers du Centre de Recherches Historiques 17, 1996, 163–172. / SONKOLY, Gábor: Erdély városai a XVIII–XIX. században [Towns of Transylvania in the 18th and 19th Centuries]. Budapest 2001. / SONKOLY, Gábor: Vásárok, vásárczözetek és városok Erdélyben 1820-ban [Marketplaces, Catchment Areas, and Towns in Transylvania in 1820]. In: Korall 2003/11–12, 163–182.
- 46 BELUSZKY, Pál—GYŐRI, Róbert: Magyar városhálózat a 20. század elején. Budapest 2005. [The Hungarian Town Network in the Early 20th Century] Budapest—Pécs 2005. / BELSZUKY, Pál—GYŐRI, Róbert: The Hungarian Urban Network in the Beginning of the 20th Century. Centre for Regional Studies, Discussion Papers 46, Pécs 2005.