



# The Evolution of Towns in Transylvania. Geographical and Historical Review Based on the Correlation: Age – Genetic Type

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## ABSTRACT

The evolution of towns in Transylvania is studied along time relying on the historical documents of the region, the geographical space framing of the towns and the proofs of humanity influence over years. These geographical - historical characteristics of the Transylvanian region have generated through the historical periods the existence of a land with comprehensive meaning of the geographical space. In this context, the topic of our study discovers the birth of each town and his evolution over the years, its importance and functions in each historical period. In order to achieve a better knowledge about the geographical-historical evolution of towns in Transylvania we have identified and analyzed the differences between the ages of different towns referring to their first documentary attestation. Then, we deduced the three genetic types of towns in Transylvania region that can be divided into three categories: fortress and citadel, fair and primary resource town. The correlation between the ages of towns and their genetic type is performed, resulting in a novel approach for the geographical - historical research in the evolution of a town from the Transylvania region.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of “settlement” is a very comprehensive one and it had different definitions based on historical, economic and cultural functions [1]. In our study we take into consideration the following statement: “The settlements are human creations conceived over time in various socio-economic conditions in the uninterrupted process of geographical space exploitation” [1]. Based on this statement we could point out that an urban area was like a living being who had its particularities, its appropriate individuality, its symbols, historical and cultural experience translated into a large diversity within the planetary physical-geographical framework. The term “urban settlement” represents a habitation structure

with its people. When we are referring to a certain territory we have in mind a wide variety of natural and social conditions that have emerged, have developed and are established today as urban settlements [3], [4], [5].

Over time it was revealed that a town had a decisive role for the demographical level and the level of civilization attained in different time periods by the adjacent area, representing a true “barometer” of economic and cultural status [3]. Humanity and towns had a multistage evolution through history, marked by multiple structural changes.

The structural changes represent transitions from a lower organizational form to a higher one in terms of administrative and functional characteristics of settlements [5]. Examples of structural changes in the

evolution of towns are all the subsequent transitions from a geographical space or territory, to a commune (or *localité* in France vs. *settlement* in the Anglo-Saxon space), then to an agglomeration (or town) and then to a town [5].

The three key dimensions of time: past, present and future are found invariably in the urban physiognomy as presented by G. Erdeli and V. Cucu [6]. These dimensions of time were studied by several geographers together with historians across different ages, underlining the historical and geographical evolution of towns through the years. Chronologically, the first step was the accumulation of material wealth. This subsequently requested protection in form of a fortress or citadel that could protect inhabitants from wars and diseases. Towns have an evolution both in their own time, one that marks their own becoming, but

there is also a general time frame for the region, country or continent to which they belong.

In our study, we point out the meaning of an urban settlement and its evolution through historical periods. Then we continue by identifying and analyzing the evolution of urban settlements in Transylvania region. The evolution of urban settlements, especially in Transylvania was studied by I.-A. Pop and by Grigor P. Pop presenting the region as an important historical area of permanent habitat and a territory of the first state formations with a distinctive identity in the central part of Romania [7], [8]. Compared to these previous studies, in this paper we present a novel approach based on the correlation between the age of the towns and their genetic type. The indication regarding the age of a town is considered the first documentary written attestation.



Fig. 1. Counties and towns in Transylvania [5].

The aim of our study is to reveal the historical and geographical significance of towns from Transylvania over the years. The evolution of towns is connected to the history of the region, giving rise to genetic types of towns classified in our study by the first written attestation. These genetic types of towns such as fortress or citadel, bourg and primary industry resources centres have an identity, personality and tendency of growth in historical periods. The existence of each town is related to historical events affecting its

evolution and explains its survival through the Roman-Dacian period, through the Feudal period and through the modern and contemporary ones.

As long as the history of the region is involved in the development of towns, it is possible to make a historical-geographical review resulting in the correlation between the age of a town and its genetic type.

In the background of our study we analyse the Transylvania region integrated into the Transylvanian

Plateau, but we focus our research on the towns in this region. In figure 1 we present the area of our study - the region of Transylvania - which is surrounded by the Carpathian mountain chain: the Oriental Carpathians in the East, the Southern Carpathians in the South and the Apuseni Mountains in the West. From North to South, the composing counties of Transylvania are: Sălaj, Cluj, Alba, Hunedoara, Bistrița-Năsăud, Mureș, Sibiu, Harghita, Covasna, and Brașov. These counties include a total of 88 towns, concentrated in the lowland region.

## 2. THEORY AND METHODS

### 2.1. Methods and classification criteria

The history of Transylvania cannot be understood today without referring to the urban history, the historical events and the migrant populations that crossed this land. Over the years, we have discovered that the region of Transylvania, affected by wars, diseases, population's migrations, has kept its cultural and ethnic identity, as attested in historical sources [7]. Today, historical resources help us discover Transylvania through its urban history as a sum of urban settlements [8]. Urban settlements describe an area that is more densely populated comprising mostly man-made structures that contain all administrative, cultural, residential and religious functions [5].

In the first part, we focus on the term "urban settlement" related to human activities and on the complexity of the natural factors that contribute to the current geographical landscape. Transylvania presents a geographical landscape regarded as a complex system created by human population over the years, being a part of the Transylvania Depression.

The history of Transylvania is analyzed in a large literature expressed through historical sources, documents, maps that attest the existence of this land. We used basic information about Transylvania and its history as revealed by I.-A. Pop [7] and Gr. P. Pop [8] that debated and emphasized the historical and geographical evolution of the region.

They analyzed Transylvania from historical, geographical and demographical perspectives, underlining the existence of a perfectly integrated landscape in the surrounding Carpathian space, in which the towns developed in successive historical periods. In time, the intervention of the human factor to the complex elements of the natural environment gave birth to different towns.

A big contribution to our research had the historical and geographical information accumulated from studies written by G. Erdeli and V. Cucu [6], D. Ghinea [9], Gh. Vlăsceanu and I. Ianoș [10] and the maps that detail the variety of characteristic physical-geographical and historical factors in Transylvania. Also

to these factors, in time, it was added the human factor that underlined the fact that a town was a human agglomeration defined by its human functionality [11].

The research methodology was based on the approach documented by G. Erdeli and V. Cucu [7], about the existence of three genetic types of towns that were divided in fortresses or citadels as ancient towns, bourgs as Medieval towns and primary industry resources centres from the contemporary and modern periods. This classification was supported by statistical information represented by the first written attestation of the towns according to D. Ghinea [9], Gh. Vlăsceanu and I. Ianoș [10], Șt. Gh. Theodoru [13], and D. Prodan [14].

In our study we referred to a value representing the age of the town by studying the first written documentary attestation of towns in Transylvania. Although the first documentary attestation did not indicate the real age of some towns (e.g. in the case of the ancient towns: Napoca, Potaissa, Apulum, etc. the real age was different), this measure represented the most trustworthy indication for towns where few archaeological or historical indications existed. The same applied for towns founded in the modern or contemporary periods. This historical-geographical review of towns highlighted the historical importance of Transylvania as a province that hosted the appearance, evolution and development of all genetic types of towns.

In our study we supported the historical meaning of towns and that allowed us to establish a historical and geographical retrospective on this region. Therefore, we offered examples of genetic types of towns that through historical periods took different physical-geographical forms: fortresses or citadels, bourgs and centres that provided industrial and commercial supplies.

The findings of our study developed a comprehensive elementary correlation of each town with its genetic type, which provided an overview to understand the evolution of towns in historical periods.

### 2.2. Genetic types of towns in Transylvania

The towns in Transylvania are analyzed and classified in the so-called genetic types of towns related to the dimension of time such as the past, the present and the future. The typology established by G. Erdeli, Cucu, V. [6] was relevant and suggestive for our study because the genetic types of towns were consistent with the current diversity of settlements in this region and could be adapted to the image of an ancient town, of a town from the Medieval period, of a town from the contemporary and modern periods.

There were also other typologies for the classification of towns (e.g. by historical period [11]), but the first written documentary attestation leading to the three genetic types of town described above was the

most adequate criterion for our study. It classified the towns from a hierarchal historical perspective where historical events were considered in correlation with the demographical and functional aspects of these towns.

Towns in Transylvania were consolidated on the basis of economic motivation and social-historical characteristics, which played successively or simultaneously a decisive role for their development (the function of defence, trade, crafts development, industrialization, etc). The existence of the roads was a real proof in the presence of a network of urban centres with its differentiated functions [12]. In general, roads remained clear testimony of territorial formations. These influences today at some point extent territorial evolution of localities and have a pregnant role the in physiognomy and in the urban personality of the towns. So at the crossroads of major communication routes, there were old towns which today are true urban areas. Railroads installed along ancient trade routes also produced significant changes in the evolution of towns.

The formation of towns in Transylvania was closely related to a number of historical facts. The first was related to the urban architectural structure. In Medieval towns, we recognized the palace, the royal court and the cathedral as the centre. On the town boundary there was the defence wall, as a symbol of the prestige acquired over time. The appearance of towns remained dominated by their social-economic function such as: trade, agriculture, exploitation of the underground resources and processing of products, etc. For towns in Transylvania we distinguished the important role of the three forms of trading: internal, external and transit [12].

Towns in Transylvania, under the direct influence of Western life, preserved and developed particularly the features acquired in the feudal period. Towns formed on old cores resembling the Western Europe ones as plans and structure, where ancient elements were better preserved and enhanced, thus creating the so-called feudal towns. It could be shown

that the appearance of towns was not only because of economical forces, but also because of cultural factors, education factors, social and political factors imposing themselves through an especially important role.

The sinuous history of this space suggested us to introduce and to emphasize the existence of prosper periods of the urban network, followed by periods of stagnation and decline. Antiquity was characterized by the development of extensive urban centres. They were positioned along major thoroughfares. In the Middle Ages, as long as different types of the crafts and commerce were growing, this gave birth to the bourg-towns. Then, after the 1241 Mongol invasion which destroyed a number of towns, they reappeared in close proximity on the ruins of ancient settlements, but also along the trade routes already known. Afterwards, the modern and contemporary ages were in general prospering periods, culminating with the Romanian Kingdom inter-war period, when towns continued to develop [6].

In towns evolution was expressed through architecture and also through facilities for daily life. Therefore, they were transformed from simple forms of human settlement into valuable conglomerates. These valuable conglomerates were seen as an aggregate of urban settlements where the evolutionary character of the towns looked like a part of a whole.

Over time the name of the town in the region as well as its spatial extension did not have a constant evolution. Even the name of Transylvania, in different variants had its own history. The word is derived from the Latin terms: "trans" (over, above) and "silva" (forest) and means "land beyond the forest". It is not dating from the Antiquity, but from the Middle Ages, in a precise moment of history, around the years 900-1000 [7].

Based on the classification criterion mentioned above, we distinguished several kinds of urban settlements considered as three genetic types of towns (fig. 2).

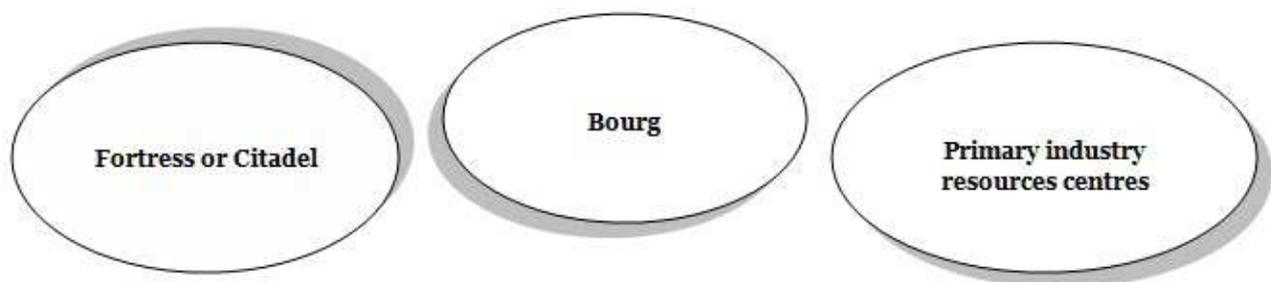


Fig. 2. Genetic types of towns in Transylvania [7].

a). The fortress or citadel was considered a simple formation in the embryonic stage of an urban environment. This was known as the most ancient urban centre, and was born for defence, political, religious, and for economic necessities. As

archaeological evidence showed, the need for defence of the humanity since distant times was felt in the way of organising settlements on high places, or in hidden ones, fortified by walls. Around the year 100 BC there was a number of fortresses that multiplied throughout

the Transylvanian area such as the fortresses: Ulpia Traiana Sarmisegetusa, Napoca, Appulum, Potaissa, Porolissum, Ampelum etc. [7].

b). The bourg town was an urban centre which conserved the old centre with its functions or took over the functions of a fortress town. The bourgs, according to their historical phases of evolution were towns with permanent central functions. The natural evolution process of the bourgs showed a material result, a spiritual and cultural development of the urban population. Bourgs were centres of commerce which developed on the basis of rural settlements that became administrative and religious centres. Nearby there was actually located the Romanian countryside that became a noble or royal residence starting from their economical-geographical or strategic position. The fortified bourgs developed on a rural basis where formations that through their economic position towards commercial roads, and their political and geographical favourable conditions, became centres for commerce and trade, and later they became towns. The bourgs, by their position in the territory exposed to dangers from outside, were transformed into strategic points by gaining also a defence function [12].

c). The primary industry town encompassed the old centre of exploitation of underground resources from the Dacian-Roman period, because mining was one of the main occupations in Dacia. The primary industry of these towns naturally evolved starting from the exploitation of rare earth metals or of other underground resources. There were others towns fitting with this kind of urban settlement which were related to the excavation of salt (salt mines). This genetic type of town generated an urban environment, which extended and completed its industrial or service functions [6].

These genetic types of towns materialized the image and evolution of all kinds of settlements that through the years were influenced by social, political, economic and demographical factors.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1. The first documentary attestation of towns in Transylvania

The name of Transylvania had interesting geographical oscillations: in the beginning it indicated only a vaguely defined area situated in the East of the Apuseni Mountains, on the Someş Rivers and in the North of the Mureş River, where Duke Gelou reigned [13]. Then, from 1200 onwards, it meant the whole intra-Carpathian region or what was called the Transylvanian Voivodeship, with the seven counties of the nobility, with the lands reserved to the people. This was the meaning of the name for the geographical region of Transylvania until the middle of 16<sup>th</sup> century, when Medieval Hungary broke-up. In the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Principality of Transylvania

appeared, by adding to the Transylvania region also the “Hungarian parts” (Partium), also known as the Western parts of Transylvania (Banat, Crişana, Maramureş [13]). Basically, the surface of Transylvania had doubled, although a large part of Banat was soon occupied by the Ottomans (1552). For a few decades, in the latter 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Habsburgs also ruled temporarily on certain regions in the North, to occupy the whole country from 1688-1699. Afterwards, in the modern and contemporary times, Transylvania was the generic name of the whole region including the ancient Transylvania, Banat, Crişana and Maramureş [14].

The territory of Transylvania is located in the Carpathian area surrounded by a “crown of mountains” as a natural fortress, and benefiting from particularly favourable natural conditions. It was an ancient territory, continuing an intense urbanization, from the earliest historical times until today. The historical and geographical province of Transylvania, one of the most important of Romania, represented 23.9% of the total country area, and 20.1% of its total population [8]. To highlight the importance of this region it was enough to recall the numerous archaeological findings from the Paleolithic and Neolithic Ages, then the strong humanization of the Dacian-Roman period; Transylvania was the geographical centre of the State and then of the provinces to the North of the Danube. The Transylvanian Depression, together with the mountainous area represented the birth matrix for the Romanian people. In feudalism and in the Modern age, the Transylvanian Depression and its adjacent space have benefited from important economic development, mainly related to the use and exploitation of land and underground resources. Our geographical and historical incursion presented the towns of Transylvania as the most dynamic components of the spatial structure and true “command centres” for the organization of the territory. We could follow in figure 3 the extension of the counties in Transylvania in the overall territory of Romania. These 10 counties were correlated in our geographical-historical retrospective with the evolution of towns, their history and connection to the region. More than the history of the region we mentioned the steps that were followed to understand the impact of transformations in the physiognomy of these towns. Their physiognomy reflected societal transformation and migrant people that only passed or remained into this region. In a first stage of our study we documented the first written attestation for the most important towns in Transylvania. This approach helped us establish the correlation between the first documentary written attestation and the town type as an ancient town, a Medieval town, a bourg or a town from the modern and contemporary period. Figure 4 presents the historical attestation of each town in Transylvania. The figure below shows also the different ages of the towns depending on their first documentary attestation.

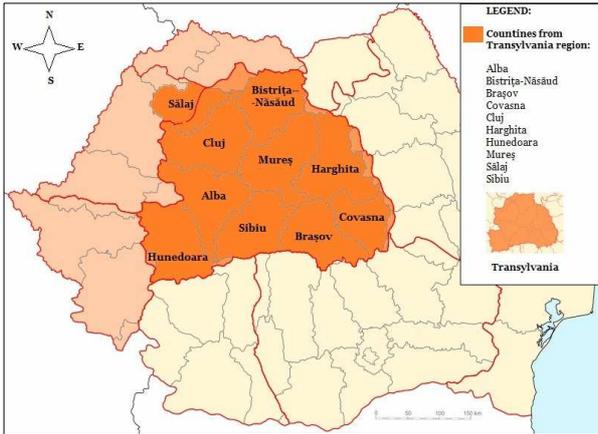


Fig. 3. Counties of Transylvania in Romania [7].

The first attestation of each town was a documentary act that revealed the relative age of the town because in some cases the foundation of a town was far older than the written attestation. The age of the town could be correlated with a specific increase or decrease of population and gave the possibility to explore and discover this variation through the years. We use statistical data collected from censuses in order to focus our attention on population growth and to

understand the natural tendency of the birth rate for each town. Population variation was related also to the genetic type and the eventual change of type so that helped us make the correlation between the first attestation and their genetic type. The increase and decrease of towns, both in area and population, were established by the historical periods and the functionality of the town, by the development and by societal transformations through the years. Each town was founded differently depending on the age and its intended functionality. The oldest towns are the ancient ones, founded before year 1000 (although the written attestation is after), as towns from the Dacian-Roman period: Napoca, Apulum, Potaissa etc. [15].

These towns were the true actors in the history of this entire region, being affected by all events and mainly by the effects of migrant population. The younger towns were based on industry and commerce demands of the modern and contemporary periods, starting with 1800: e.g. Uricani, Vulcan, Lupeni, etc. [16]. Starting from the attestation issue, we discussed the historical and geographical perspective for each of the counties and towns of Transylvania in order to point out their first documentary written attestation and the subsequent evolution up to the present time.

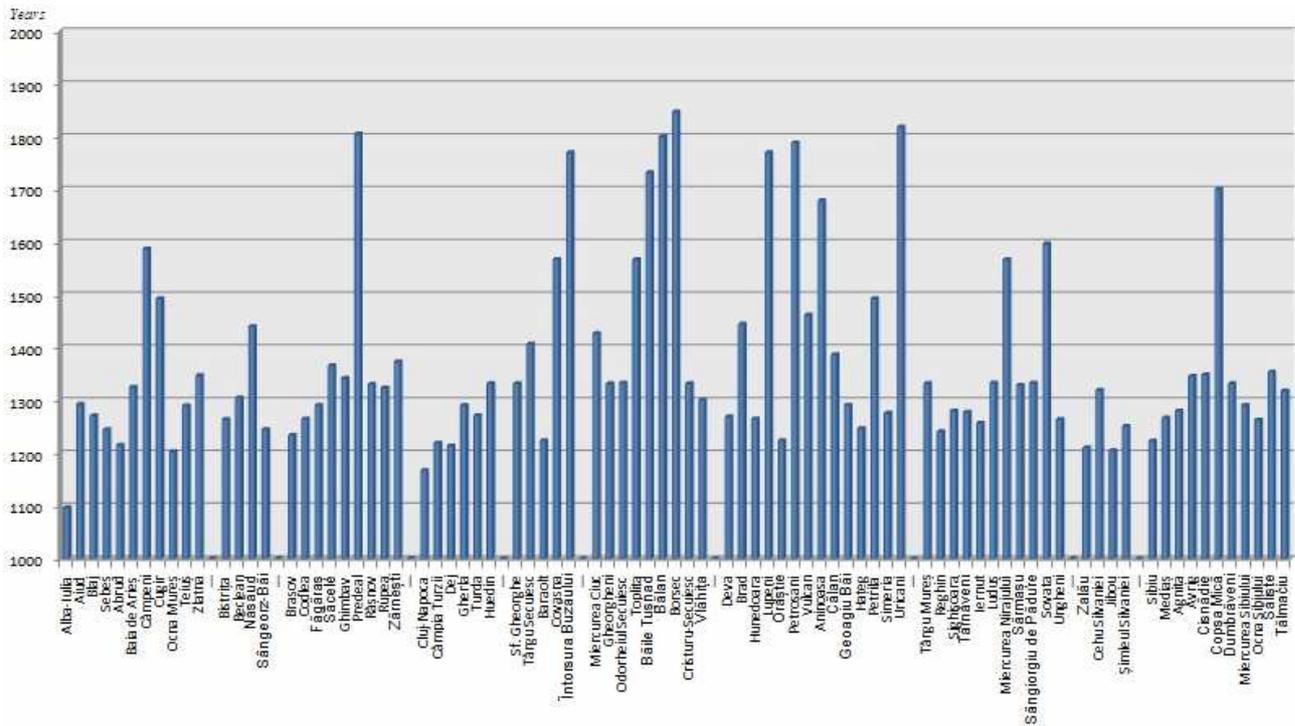


Fig. 4. The first written attestation of the towns in Transylvania region [9].

### 3.2. The historical evolution of towns in Transylvania

In our analysis we included first the central-western part of Romania represented by the county of Alba, with its residence in Alba Iulia town, located on the middle and the lower Mureș River. This town was

inhabited continuously since Neolithic (vestiges found at Călnic, Pianu, Tărtar, Petrești), with traces of Bronze Age life (Călnic, Spâlnaca) and of the Iron Age (Ciumbud). The territory witnessed an increasing growth since the Dacian Age, with numerous settlements: Apulum (now Alba Iulia), Brucla (Aiud), Ampelum (Zlatna), Alburnus Minor (Abrud), Salinae

(Ocna Mureș), etc. These settlements were first documented between 1203 and 1347 [19]. During this period different migratory invasions took place, the main one being the Tartar invasion in 1240. We also mentioned Medieval towns such as: Sebeș, documented in 1245, Cugir, documented since 1493, and the modern and contemporary towns [9]: Blaj, which was first mentioned in 1252, then in 1290 Teiuș town considered a bourg, later in 1325 Baia de Arieș, known for gold mining since Dacian times. Only in 1587 was Câmpeni town mentioned, located right in the “*heart of the Stone Country*” in Alba County. In the area of Alba County, the earliest attestation to the status of town was made in 1341 for Sebeș, in 1357 for Abrud, Blaj, in 1387 for Zlatna [19]. The newest attestation to the rank of town was made in 1994 (Aiud and Teiuș), then in 1997 (Baia de Arieș) [5].

In the northern extremity of Romania lies Bistrița-Năsăud County in the northern half of Transylvania, in the upper basin of the Someșul Mare. The residence of county is Bistrița, first attested in 1264 [20]. The largest part of Bistrița was included in the Roman province of Dacia. The genesis and evolution of this town was under the direct influence of the physical characteristics of the Medieval German colonised population, receiving the rank of a town in 1349 [15]. The urban development and evolution of Bistrița had many planimetric similarities with the towns of central and north German colonization. These planimetric similarities were indicating a quite accurate geometrical feature, a rigorous system of streets that converged to the central market. It also had an almost square rectangle with two longitudinal streets. In 1264, in an act of donation was mentioned the town of Năsăud, although historical sources certified it in a document in 1440 that Queen Elizabeth of Hungary gave to Michael, the son of a former Saxon commit, a particular village Năsăud [9]. Beclean was attested as a bourg in 1305, but later it was classified to the category of town in 1968. In 1245, the town Sângeorz-Băi was known by the name of Saint Gurgu, then, after 1770, the town was recorded as a resort of mineral waters and later, in 1960, it was recognized as a town [20].

In the centre of Romania there lies Brașov County, located in the Carpathians, where the Southern Carpathians meet the Transylvanian Plateau, on the middle and upper Olt River. In 1203 the historical sources appreciated this year the Medieval foundation of the town Brașov, in the calendars chronicles the year was mentioned as “*the beginning of the building of Brașov*”, although the first document appeared only in 1234 with the name “*Corona*” [5]. The town Codlea was considered a Medieval town reported as fortress erected in the year 1265, called “*The Black Fortress*”, but its evolution as a municipality was reported as late as 1950 [21]. In the category of Medieval towns, we included the town Făgăraș which was first mentioned in 1291.

During his trip to Transylvania, while seeing Făgăraș in the morning, Nicolae Iorga wrote in 1906: “*with poor water or clear River (Berivoiul) which wiggles slowly walking underneath the wooden bridges, with the streets shaking terribly dusty atmosphere, with roof humble houses ...*” [7]. The town Ghimbav was first mentioned in 1342. Its origin was linked to the presence of the Teutonic Knights in the Land of Bârsa between 1211 and 1225 and, in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, to the presence in the area of the Saxons’ colonization. An ancient settlement is the town Râșnov, the first documents mentioned this town Cumidava. From the Dacian period, the town was first mentioned in 1331. The name of the town Rupea was derived from the Latin word “*Rupes*” meaning “*Rock*” and was first mentioned in 1324 [21]. Zărnești dated back to the year 1373, during the Saxon colonies in Transylvania, Banat or the Land of Bârsa. The town Săcele belonged to the modern and contemporary periods, being first mentioned in the year 1366. The town Predeal, compared to other towns in the county, was mentioned in documents for the first time as late as 1805. The latest attestation was made in 1949 for the town Victoria who was founded near the industry factory Ucea, when the first settlements were built under the name “*Colonia Ucea*” [10].

In the central-western part of Romania unfolds Cluj County, on the middle course of the Someșul Mic River, surrounded by the Hills of Cluj and the Feleacul. The first documentary record of Cluj-Napoca was made by the Greek geographer Claudius Ptolemeu, who noted that it was one of the most significant settlements in the Dacian period, with the name Napoca and which received urban privileges in the year 1316. The town Cluj-Napoca had the oldest attestation for the rank of town in this county [8]. Turda is considered a Dacian settlement known as Potaissa, an important Roman town and military centre of Dacia Superior, attested in 1271 because of the extraction of salt from the Salina Turda. In 1705, Turda was attested with the name *Castrum Turda*, then it was declared a town in 1968 [22]. The oldest settlements in Transylvania in the ancient period was Câmpia Turzii (first attested in 1219) and it was considered a Medieval town elevated to the rank of town in 1952. The first documentary evidence of the Medieval town Dej was mentioned in the years 1061 and in 1214, under the name *Dees*, but evidence of the existence of an important settlement was found in distant ages (Neolithic) [9]. The town Gherla was marked with traces of habitation on the transition from the Neolithic to the Bronze Age being first mentioned in 1291 as Gherla and then elevated to the rank of the town in 1510. The town Huedin was documentary recorded in 1332 in the papal register [14].

Covasna County is located in the centre of Romania at the internal curvature of the Carpathian Mountains. The town Sfântu Gheorghe was placed in

the category of towns from the modern and contemporary periods being the most important town of Covasna County, the historical region of “*Trei Scaune*”. The urban settlement was first mentioned in 1332, being raised to the rank of town in 1461, in comparison with other towns from the county that were certified as late as 1968 [23]. The town Târgu Secuiesc was a town from the modern and contemporary periods, being certificated late in the year 1407. The first documentary record of the town Covasna dated from 1567. In the year 1773, the mineral waters in the town Covasna were analyzed chemically and in a textbook of geography appeared in Vienna in 1818 it was already known as a water resort [12]. Instead, the town Baraolt was an old mining town with Medieval characteristics where Saxons were settled and it was mentioned in the year 1224. The town Întorsura Buzăului, compared to other towns in the county, was first mentioned in 1770 [23].

In the north-central part of Romania we find Harghita County, in the central-western part of the Eastern Carpathians, in the upper rivers basins of the Olt, Mureș, Târnava Mare, and of the Târnava Mică. The first towns that were included in the category of towns from the modern and contemporary periods were Odorheiul Secuiesc, attested in 1333 under the name Uduor (certified as bourg in 1485 and as a town in 1558); Gheorgheni, attested in 1333 (declared town in 1905); Cristuru-Secuiesc, attested in 1332 (certified as bourg in 1503 and as town in 1559) [24].

The town Miercurea Ciuc was certified as bourg in 1427 called “*town of the plains*” and was attested as a town in the year 1558. The town Toplița was attested in 1567 (declared town in 1956) and the town Băile Tușnad was attested in 1732 (declared town in 1968) [9]. A great importance had the town Borsec, which in 1767 was considered the most important spa from the Harghita County. The town Vlăhița got its name from a shepherd named Olah Janos “*whose sons and descendants founded the village and named him after the first native*”, the first record being made in the year 1301, with the name *Villa Nostra “Regis” Olachalis* [7].

Hunedoara County is located in the central-western part of Romania, on the lower course of the Mureș River, at the contact zone of the Southern Carpathians with the Western Carpathians. Deva is from the Dacian period. The first mentioning of the town dated back to 1269, many vestiges were related to the Neolithic Age and remained largely preserved in the Hunedoara County Museum. The name *Castrum Deva* was a native one, coming from the Dacian word “*Dava*”, meaning fortress or citadel [25].

Instead the town Brad was mentioned for the first time in the year 1445, then in the year 1585 was considered a bourg belonging to the modern and contemporary periods. Hunedoara was attested in 1265

as Hunnod according to statistic information in the papal register. In the year 1276 was attested the town Simeria, but compared to other towns in the county, the town Hunedoara received urban privileges only in the year 1415 [25]. Lupeni was attested documentarily in 1770, when population settled in the village of Valea Lupului, in the Land of Hațeg. Then, the so-called “*Lupeni*” was declared a town in 1941. The town Orăștie was first mentioned in the year 1224 as a Medieval town, while the towns Vulcan, Aninoasa and Călan were attested between 1387 and 1462, being considered towns belonging to the modern and contemporary periods [11]. The town Petrița called “*Rocky unpaved road*” was attested later, more precisely in the year 1493. Also, the town Petroșani was attested in the year 1788, considered a mining town, and the mining town Uricani was attested in 1818. Geoagiu-Băi was attested in 1291 [10]. The first evidence about the existence of this town belonged to the Dacian period (1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC) and then numerous archaeological discoveries were made in the area. According to the theories of many historians, the name of Germisara is coming from the Roman *castrum* that had Dacian origins. *Germisara* meant “*hot water*” (*germi* = heat; *sara* = waterfall) and referred to the thermal waters in the area. Instead, the town Hațeg, in 1247, was considered a Medieval town which belonged to the Knights of John, this being the oldest attestation among the towns in Hunedoara County [10].

In the north-central part of Romania, lies Mureș County, included in the Transylvanian Plateau, in the basin of the Mureș River and partly in that of the Târnava Mare River and of the Târnava Mică River. The town Târgu Mureș was first mentioned in the year 1332, as a Medieval town, but they also discovered the Neolithic settlements type called “*the Grove*” belonging to the culture of the Criș. The Medieval town Sighișoara was first mentioned in 1280 under the name of *Castrum Sex* [26].

The old name of the town Reghin was “*Reghinul Săsesc*”, a Romanian translation of the German name “*Sächsisch Regen*”, but in a diploma issued in 1241 by King Andrew II of Hungary, the area was referred to under the name of “*Regun*”. The town Iernut belonged to the Roman period and was first mentioned in the year 1257 with the name *Ranoltu* [10]. On the site of the town were found vestiges of a Roman colony. We also took in account the towns of the modern and contemporary periods, such as: Luduș, first mentioned in 1333, declared town in 1960; Miercurea Nirajului first mentioned in the year 1567 under the name *Zereda* (bourg of Miercurea); Sărmașu mentioned for the first time in the year 1329, later declared a town in 2003; Sângiorgiu de Pădure was attested for the first time in the year 1333 in a statistic document from the papal register. The town Ungheni was attested for the first time in 1264 under the name *Ingheni* (Naradtew),

on the occasion of an estate donation made by Stephen, Duke of Transylvania, Megyes and Fysch [9]. The name Ingheni derived from the angle formed by the confluence of the Niraj River with the Mureş River, where the town lied. Its first mentioning dated back to the 13<sup>th</sup> of September 1597 in privilege Act of Prince Christopher Bathory, granted for the guards of the mining salt in Sovata. In 1952 was declared the first town due to its reputation as a balneal-climatic resort [26].

In the north-western part of Romania lies Sălaj County at the contact zone between the Transylvanian Plateau and the Western Hills. The earliest traces of habitation dated back to the Paleolithic Age and the most common to the Neolithic Age (Zăuan, Borla), to the Bronze Age (Moigrad, Wallachia), and to the Iron Age. According to figure 4, Zalău belongs to the Dacian period and was attested as a town in 1968 [27]. The town Jibou was part of the Someş land, ancient, historical documents kept multiple evidence of the existence of the settlement along the ages, so the first documentary accreditation of the town dated back to the year 1205, under the name of “Chybur”. While the town suburbs were related to the existence and development of the Bathory family, its evolution was first attested in the year 1251, and then raised to the rank of a town in 1429 [27].

In the southern part of Transylvania lies Sibiu County, in the plateau with the same name, located in the north of the Southern Carpathians. The residence of the county is represented by the Medieval town Sibiu attested in 1223, followed by the Medieval town Mediaş who was attested in the year 1267 under the name Villa Medias, then declared a town in 1968. Town Coşşa Mică that was attested in 1700, rather late compared to other towns in this county [28].

Within the county we have the towns that were part of the modern and contemporary periods: Avrig attested in the year 1346, Agnita in 1280, Dumbrăveni attested in 1332 and the town Miercurea Sibiului certified in 1291, belonging to a rural area known for its Roman and post-Roman ruins. The town Ocna Sibiului identified in the year 1263, being as a balneal-climatic resort known for its salted waters. The town Sălişte was attested in the year 1354 under the Latin name of Magna Villa and the town Tâlmaciu was attested in 1318. The town Cisnădie was attested in 1204, in the heart of the settlement being discovered traces of Dacian and Roman civilization. The towns of the county were offered urban privileges between 1961 and 1989 [10].

On a synthetic perspective, Transylvanian towns belonged to three basic generations. First, the ancient towns: Napoca (Cluj-Napoca), Apulum (Alba Iulia) and Potaissa (Turda). Then, the Medieval towns (Sibiu, Bistriţa, Mediaş, Sighişoara, Târgu Mureş, Făgăraş, Braşov, Dej, Sebeş) and, last, the towns from the

modern and contemporary periods (Ocna Mureş, Victoria, Târnăveni, Lupeni, etc). The Romans occupied the area of the central and south-western Transylvania and across the Carpathians between 106 and 270 [7]. They founded towns on Dacian sites and imported colonists from far, but the Roman empire was short lived, being abandoned in 271. Today, these towns are a real testimony of the Dacian-Roman period [29] being well preserved, see the figure 5.

The evolution of the towns in Transylvania took place in a hierarchical order in counties and each town through time develop its origin, identity and geographical characteristics. This hierarchical order pointed out the existence in the region of a system of ranks that classified each town with urban privileges.



Fig. 5. Towns from the Dacian-Roman period [28].

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Correlation between the age of towns and their genetic type

The collection of statistical data for the first attestation of each town from Transylvania allowed us to identify a correlation between the age of the town and different types of towns, the so called genetic types. The genetic types of towns were the first type of towns that were born throughout the process of historical evolution which then mixed and inherited other characteristics, resulting in the present urban settlements. We applied the classification of the towns in Transylvania into the three genetic types presented in Section 2.2. Most of these towns fell in one specific category, but we found a few examples of towns that were difficult to classify based on this single criterion. This was the case of some of the towns which could be classified as ancient towns and also as towns based on the primary industry resource. In this case, the most prominent characteristic determined their classification. For example, Hunedoara was attested in 1265 as ancient town, but also in the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries it was declared a steel centre. Turda was an ancient

town from the Dacian period but it was also known as a town based on salt exploration in Turda salt mine [15].

In our study, to materialize the historical-geographical evolution of the towns in Transylvania, we considered the age of towns using three reference periods, starting from the year 1100 and ending with the year 1950. The first stage was up to 1350, when the dominating towns were the old Dacian-Roman ones. A second phase was between 1350 and 1550, when, in the north-western parts, towns developed rapidly, increasing both in size and importance and the relationship between the various towns was consolidated. In the third stage, from 1550 to 1950, we noticed a stagnation of development and then a revitalization of the evolution starting from the 18<sup>th</sup> c. and mostly in the 19<sup>th</sup> c. [16], [17].

In Table 1 one could notice that between 1100 and 1350 ancient towns and Medieval towns looking as a fortress or citadel were attested. The first attestation of this genetic type (fortress or citadel) had a higher ranking (27) because there were also Antic towns, most of which appeared before the year 1300.

Table 1. Correlation between the age of towns and their genetic type [5].

Genetic type of town	1100-1300	1300-1550	1550-1950
Fortress or citadel	27	-	-
Bourg	12	2	2
Primary industry	19	15	12

The bourgs were also ancient towns in Transylvania that are reflecting through their evolution the need for commerce and exchange of products. In our table, the genetic type of bourg had a gradual growth starting from the year 1100 until the year 1550 when stagnation began. Starting from 1550, we noticed this stagnation, interrupted only in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but without spectacular changes.

The problem was extremely complex, but in essence, it was about the relationship between prices of handicrafts, grain and other food. Around 1300-1350, food prices were high and because of this the development of towns was slower. In the second period, the population decreased and also did food prices. The main cause of this phenomenon was the epidemic plagues like the Black Death. A slight decrease in birth rates could also be associated with this decline. As a result, an overproduction of food followed, mostly cereals and there was a substantial drop in prices for cereals; in parallel, there was an increase in the prices of the craft [15]. These changes were also reflected in

the impressive town building: at the end of the Middle Ages, for instance, Sibiu had 8 km<sup>2</sup> inside the walls and 70 fortified towers; this is the higher number of all the fortresses in Transylvania. Other large monuments were built like the Black Church in Brașov, or the one in Bistrița. All these led to a rise in the importance and power of towns.

The Transylvanian towns attested during the period 1350-1550 were Sibiu, Brașov, Cluj, during the period 1450-1500, with the most numerous inhabitants was Brașov, with 9,000-10,000 inhabitants, Sibiu and Cluj, with 8,000, Sighișoara and Bistrița, with 3,000-4,000 inhabitants [16]. During this period, the towns in Transylvania passed through many administrative and urban changes. In the beginning, towns had central and defence functions as fortified or citadels. Then, starting with the 12<sup>th</sup> century, towns became regal land capitals. Then, towns were transformed in capitals of lands ("țări") led by rulers ("domnitori") that had their own autonomy and independence as isolate settlements. Later in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century, these so-called "țări" were transformed in districts that represented dense populated areas.

Starting around 1550, the evolution of towns was influenced by the transformation of the region in the Principality of Transylvania. It was recognized as an independent state with urban settlements that were developing their own functions and specificity. After 1550, statistical reports for the population showed an imbalance, the price of grain was also increasing, thus the evolution of the bourgs stalled [16]. The most important towns founded during the period 1550-1950 were Victoria, Târnăveni, Toplița, Borsec, etc.

When compared to the fortress or bourg genetic type, we noticed longevity through the three periods of the genetic type of towns based on primary industry. This was coherent because we could identify different types of primary industry, developed in different ages (exploitation of salt, exploitation of ferrous and non-ferrous ores, woodwork, etc.) and also the establishment of new locations as part of the resources exploitation. This longevity could also be supported by the existence in these towns of the necessary resources that needed to be discovered and capitalized. These towns usually continued to develop and integrate other industrial activities, while the fortress or citadel towns lost their importance, remaining only architectonic monuments or ancient ruins.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The evolution of towns in Transylvania followed the path of a tumultuous history. The meaning of the word "Transylvania" refers to a Latin expression meaning Trans-Silva, "*Land beyond the Forests*" due to dense forests that covered the mountains surrounding

it. The Romanian archaeologists' researches showed that this area was inhabited since the Paleolithic period (approximately 2 million years B.C.). However, a relatively stable population was not discovered until the Neolithic period (6000-5000 B.C.) [30].

Being located inside the arch of the Carpathians, during the 1<sup>st</sup> century, on the present territory of Transylvania, at Sarmisegetusa Regia, the main fortress in the Orăștie Mountains was located the political centre of the Kingdom of Dacia, [30]. Then the region was part of the Roman Empire, of the Kingdom of Hungary, of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, but it was also a period in which it was independent under the name of the Principality of Transylvania, until it was integrated into the Kingdom of Romania.

Our geographical-historical retrospective of the towns in Transylvania outlined the image of a successive evolution of towns over these history ages. The oldest towns were represented by the ancient towns considered fortress towns, attested since 1100 until 1350, followed by Medieval towns attested between 1350 and 1550, and then we mentioned the towns of the modern and contemporary periods from 1550 to 1950.

The results of our study pointed out a significant relationship between the relative age of towns and their genetic type. The historical events changed the physiognomy of towns, their evolution and geographical limits. In our study a big role had the first documentary attestation that was so different for each county. The first documentary attestation represented the first step to declare the existence of a settlement and its development through the years. The first documentary attestation of towns could not reveal for a few towns their right genetic type because, for example, these towns were born as a fortress or citadel and grew as bourgs or towns based on primary industry resources. The geographical-historical incursion helped us anticipate in time and space the chronological evolution of towns belonging to Transylvania. In this perspective, these towns were regarded not as isolated settlements, but as ones that maintained economic, demographical, cultural and social relationships with other urban settlements or with the surrounding rural ones. The geographical-historical retrospective on the towns in Transylvania created the image of the region, of the counties and towns that were part of the Transylvanian Depression. This retrospective was a review of each county and town in this region, of its affiliation to the geographical space and of the historical identity related to the land. We discussed not only the geographical point of view that reflected aspects as location of the town, development as an urban settlement or whether it was a dense populated area, but also the historical point of view reflecting the different kind of transformations that towns were confronted with along the passing years. Also this historical point of view reflected the evolution of a town

starting with its attestation and then the contribution to the natural process of the history explained the life course for each town. These two points of view were put together to improve our research on the evolution of the towns in Transylvania and to understand the historical process that was suitable with the three dimension of time: past, present and future.

The first documentary written attestation of each town represented a piece of a "puzzle" that gave the opportunity to counter the age of a town and its continuous route through historical periods. This "puzzle" initiated the geographical-historical retrospective that engaged a material support and database information collected to accomplish a formal knowledge about the history of the region. The first documentary attestation gave birth to a formal approach to the age of a town and how this could be correlated with different type of towns. These different types of towns were called in an analytical way as genetic types of towns and were born from the historical events being affected and connected with the urban settlements.

This correlation was possible because we established a connection between the age of towns and their genetic type. In our investigation we explored into detail this direct relation between the age of towns and their genetic type that was integrated, assimilated by the urban history. The present work underlined a conceptual framework that could be explored, investigated and demonstrated using the database information collected from the first documentary attestation of towns. We explored the issues on the existing number of genetic type of towns in Transylvania. In this case, we built a hierarchical and methodological order to emphasize the number of genetic types of towns in the region and to distinguish three genetic types of towns that had an empirical impact on our study. These three genetic types such as the fortress or citadel town, the bourg and the town born created through primary resources represented the result of historical periods and of population movement in Transylvania.

The results of the present research strengthened the fact that history events were living through the geographical space so a geographical-historical retrospective provided a valuable interconnection between urban settlements and urban history not only to a local level, but also to the regional and national ones.

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