

“BABEȘ-BOLYAI” UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY
“CULTURE, CIVILIZATION, HISTORY” DOCTORAL SCHOOL

RENAISSANCE, BAROQUE, AND NEO-CLASSICAL
MONUMENTS IN THE PATRIMONY OF THE
NATIONAL HISTORY MUSEUM OF TRANSYLVANIA

ABSTRACT OF THE DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

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architecture, sculpture, architectural monument, sculptural monument, funerary monument, inscribed slab, commemorative slab, sarcophagus, Renaissance, Baroque, Neo-classicism, portal, window frame, fireplace, vault keystone, corbel

Abstract:

The medieval and early modern lapidarium of the National History Museum of Transylvania (henceforth NHMT) is the most valuable collection of this type from the entire region; it is also considered the most valuable lapidarium from the inter-Carpathian area, including sculptural monuments dated to the thirteenth-nineteenth centuries, acquired, donated, or found during demolition works and systematic and rescue archaeological excavations.

The history of the National History Museum of Transylvania and its collections is closely connected to that of the Transylvanian Museum Society, since the latter's collections constituted the basis of the present-day museum's collections. The *Transylvanian Museum Society* was founded in 1859, together with the National Museum of Transylvania. The museum was structured according to the model provided by the Hungarian National Museum in Budapest that included different types of permanent collections, a Library, an Archive, a Collection of Numismatics and Antiquities, a Pinacotheca, and Ethnographic, Minerals, and Botanic Collections. Starting with 1972 when the "Ferenc József" University was founded, all museum collections were subordinated to the university in exchange for annual founding that was meant to ensure their functioning. The permanent collections of the National History Museum of Transylvania are thus related to the *Collection of Numismatics and Antiquities* of the Transylvanian Museum Society that in 1919 passed under the administration of the newly founded *Institute of Archaeology and Numismatics*, that was also included in the structure of the university, called in this period the Ferdinand University. In 1929 the research and museum institutions of the university were reorganized; the *Institute of Classical Studies* was established and the museum collections were taken over by the *Museum of Antiquities*. During the Second World War the museum's exhibitions were closed, partially sheltered, and only reopened during the Socialist period, in 1963, with exhibitions adapted to the era's official view, as part of the *History Museum in Cluj*; in 1994 the latter was recognized national importance, thus the new denomination became the *National History Museum of Transylvania*.

The above mentioned institutions have published several selective or complete catalogues of their collections, but the value and size of the present-day lot, consisting of ca. 600,000 items, is not proportional to its degree of research and publication. The present dissertation aims at correcting this imbalance, as a first step in the fundamental research of one

of the museum's most significant collections; the lapidarium contains today 560 medieval, early modern, and modern monuments.

Due to the extensive size of the lot and the restricted time available, I chose to restrict the topic of research to sixteenth-nineteenth century monuments, thus focusing on 301 items.

The present dissertation is structured according to five chapters: history of research of monuments in the lapidarium, its formation and development, description of the collection, catalogue of items, and annexes consisting mostly of museum-related correspondence preserved in the MNIT archive.

Though I have restricted the researched material to early modern and modern monuments, *The history of the lapidarium* refers to the entire lot in order to provide an image as complete as possible on the collection's formation, display, and research.

The *description* and *catalogue of the collection* parts of the dissertation are structured according to two large thematic groups: architectural and funerary monuments. In the group of architectural monuments the items are grouped according to style, including objects attributed to the Renaissance and Baroque styles. The Renaissance architectural monuments are grouped according to thematically structured units (The first monuments of the Early Renaissance in Transylvania, The architecture of homes in Cluj, Renaissance public buildings in Cluj, Religious buildings in Cluj, Renaissance castles and manor houses in Transylvania), while inside these units I employed the topographic criterion, thus the place names are listed alphabetically. The Baroque monuments are thematically structured in two chapters (*Architectural monuments* and *Sculptures*) in which the monuments are presented topographically, with the place names ordered alphabetically. As for the funerary monuments I decided best to employ a stylistically-based structure (Renaissance, Baroque, and Neo-classical items) and, inside each group, a typological structure, in order to provide an overall presentation of the development of the different types of funerary monuments.

By going through the history of the lapidarium I focused on the presentation of its development, as well as the most important stages of its collections increase, publication, and display. This process strengthened my belief that one of the most significant periods in the development of this collection is related to director Béla Pósta. He played a significant role in setting an actual program for the increase, valorization, and publication of the patrimony, aimed at integrating the museum in the network of the large museums in Europe.

The group of Renaissance architectural monuments is the most numerous and important part of the lapidarium, including different types of Early Renaissance monuments from lay and religious buildings in Transylvania, such as the coat of arms of Bishop Geréb from the castle in Gilău and the pastophorium of the Reformed church in Coveș; most of the items, a series of portals, window frames, fireplaces, corbels, vault keystones and balusters were once used in the homes of Cluj.

Most of the Renaissance monuments included in the lapidarium have been produced in the masonry workshops of the city of Cluj. The first written mention of the activity of the stonemasons' guild in Cluj is the very privilege document of the guild, written and confirmed by the town council on December 20th 1525. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries these workshops had a very rich activity in the city of Cluj, the masons becoming in this period the most sought-for masters for the construction of various buildings in Transylvania, mainly requested to work on princely building projects.

The Baroque monuments and sculptures in the lapidarium form one of its most heterogeneous groups of items, as they include objects ranging from the most representative Baroque sculptures in Transylvania, created in the Baroque stonemasonry workshops of Cluj, among which one must note Johannes Nachtigall's sculptures from the Bánffy castle in Bonțida, until the simple commemorative slabs in Cluj and the most modest monuments of Transylvanian Baroque. The collection also preserves some remarkable statues, whose carvers remain unknown, but which through their quality are considered among the most representative productions of the workshops from Cluj (the statue and head of Saint John Nepomuc and the Vir Dolorum statue in Cluj-Mănăștur, etc.).

The lapidarium preserves a diverse range of various Renaissance tombstones used in the Protestant and Romano-Catholic environment, starting from the simple inscribed funerary slabs of Cluj citizens, engraved on the cut stones of the fortification wall, to the various types of funerary slabs, coffin-shaped funerary monuments, until the figurative sarcophagi that commemorate some of the members of the Transylvanian noble elite.

The present research is but a first step in the research of these collections. In the future I aim at revealing those monuments that might help in the creation of a typology of their formation.