

PARALLEL IDENTITIES WITHIN THE COMMUNITY OF RUPEA

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Abstract: The territory that nowadays is known by the name of Rupea used to be a colonization area of the German population in the Middle Ages. The Saxons, as the colonists from South Germany, East of Rhine and Flander were generically called, reached this area in the middle of the 12th century. The documents mention them by the name of hospites and list the privileges they were granted by the Hungarian Royal Court as a result of the latter's entity need to control the newly conquered area of Transylvania. Among the German urbs Rupea was ranked lower, as a town where the German colonists settled in the central area founding a cultural, administrative and religious space, while Romanians lived in separate areas with their own administration. As with all towns established by the Saxons in Transylvania, Rupea consisted of two communities with different identities. On one hand, there were the Saxons benefitting from extended economic and administrative privileges and, on the other hand, there were the Romanians struggling to preserve their Orthodox religion, language and to make a living. One can argue that the two nations had separate identities but for a long period of time there are no solid arguments supporting the existence of a dialogue between the two. It is not until 1876 that, as a result of the ruling of Austria's emperor, Joseph the 2nd, the free urban area administered by the Saxons and known by the name of Fundus regius that is royal land is opened to settlers of Romanian and other ethnic origin. Thus, the Romanians will settle on a street that ran parallel to the main one, as well as in the areas where vegetables were grown and known as Verzerii. What is worth noting in Rupea are the means by which the Saxons and Romanians preserved and displayed their identity: defense units for the citadel, neighborhoods, schools, boys' and girls' associations, dance groups, bands, lecture groups. All these render the specificity of the geographic area enclosed by the Homoroadelor Valley and Hârțibaciului plateau.

Key words: colonists, Saxons, Romanians, administration, cultural identity

History of Rupea Town

The history of the settlement between the hills and Cohalmului Valley dates back to time immemorial and hence, in the absence of written track records, archaeological discoveries and the archaeologists' ability are the only ones to rely upon when outlining it. Archaeological evidence is scarce but offers some information: the traces of a large neolithic settlement (ovens for ceramic enameling, as well as tools characteristic of the Petresti period) are to be found at approximately 1.5 km from where Rupea is nowadays on a hillock parallel to a man terraced hill [1]. The digging within the premises of the citadel were done before it was rebuilt and objects dated at a late age were found (a silver coin of prince Georg Wilhelm of Branderburg struck 1640, a terracota slate fragment featuring a knight, a carpenter's workshop and numerous fragments of ceramic pots, building bricks, terracotta slates, items made of glass, bronze, stone or bone) [2].

The assumptions are that this was a Proto Romanian dwelling and this area in the South East of Transylvania was inhabited by Slavs, Cumans, groups of Ghepids and other migrating peoples until the 6th century when the Proto Romanians are dated. With the beginning of the 10th century the land of Transylvania draws the attention of the young neighboring Hungarian Kingdom. On the spot where the citadel was to be later established the Romanian dwellers built a clay and wooden fortification that ensured the security of the dwellers and of those living on the nearby hills. The exact date when the citadel was built is

not known. The first documents that mention it date back to the 14th century and therefore placing it in a specific category of citadels is difficult. In this respect, Ștefan Pascu deems it to be part of the "...feudal citadels that later became royal citadels where their owner inhabited"[3]. Beginning with the 14th century there are more details about the citadel. Thus, during the reign of Louis the Great the Rupea citadel used to be a royal one: "in 1357 the king announces the citadel owners from Deva, Târnava and Rupea that they should no longer ask the church for taxes, and in 1380 the Rupea citadel owner is required to send the taxes to Alba presbytery"[4]. The citadel was built on a basalt outcrop that actually guarded the settlement against the invasion of the Tatars. Later the Saxon colonists who settled in the area will fortify it. The names of the citadel and of the dwelling are different and yet they mean the same thing given their location: - RUPES- that is "rock" in Latin and KOSD which means the same thing in Hungarian - even though there are no records of Hungarian people inhabiting the area in the Middle Ages, and most likely the name was given by the Hungarian royalty when it was a royal citadel. In 1324 it is recorded under the name of KUHOLM, in 1375 KOBOZ, in 1437 RUCKPASS, in 1572 RUPPES, in 1615 RAPES and in 1670 REPS.

The territory is colonized by the German people at the end of the twelfth century. According to Diploma Andreanum this land is recorded as a boundary area with Drăușeni, "terra Daraus", located East of Rupea and which was the king's land. Thus, the area was "between Drăușeni and Rupea presbyteries"[5]. The colonization and its progression can be traced by investigating "the oldest Roman buildings from Sibiu and Cincu, for the first stage, and the spread of the Roman style to the East up to Rupea and Homorodului Valley, for the second stage of the process"[6]. Thus, the colonization of the area belonging to the Saxon capital of Sighisoara started.

These colonists' first form of organization was a spiritual one under the name of presbytery. One such example is the presbytery of Kosd to which only some of the towns that later would be grouped under the similarly named capital city belonged. The colonists enjoyed the privileges granted by King Andrew the 2nd and turned the small settlement into a prosperous and thriving town from an economic point of view.

With the 13th century and until 1876 the territory granted through the Andreanum act is administered by the Saxons and is called Konigsboden (King's Land). An imperial decree issued by the court of Vienna establishes a new administrative organization of the Transylvania province. The territory belonging to the old capital city of Rupea and to the capital city of Sighisoara, as well as other areas around these are joined under the Târnava Mare district with Sighisoara as its capital. After 1918 when Transylvania, Banat and Bucovina join Romania the district becomes a county under the same name as before, while Rupea is a settlement subordinated to the county. As a result of administrative changes, after 1945 the Stalin region is established (Brasov was at the time the capital of the region and was called for a while Stalin) and Rupea is subordinated to this. The counties as they are known today are set up in 1965 and Rupea becomes part of the Brasov county.

Elements of identity

2.1. Saxons and their history

The first written information about the Saxons records their status of hospites. The Saxons colonists founded the town at the foot of the citadel and fortified it. The first colonists

were merchants and agriculturists and they will consolidate the central area of the town through their buildings. Rupea is in an area with salt deposits and the salty water spreads much further from the settlement. In the center of Rupea there was an uninhabited swampy area and the Saxon colonists drained it, consolidated the land and built a large street two kilometers long that they called the Main Street (*strada Principală*) and also the Town Hall, the school, the market and the fortified church. Along this street there were shops, warehouses, drugstores, cafes and houses of the most important people in the Saxon community. Apart from this street there was another one, the Fortress Street (*strada Cetății*) that went up to the fortified citadel.

The Saxons' freedom to administer the territory led to the establishment of a hierarchy: the highest authority for the Rupea settlement was a clerk who was a royal administrator (appointed from within the Saxon nobility from Sibiu-where the Saxons had their administrative headquarters), the county administrator (a local administrator of the county), the mayor (also appointed by the community), the clerk in charge of administrative issues, the notary (in charge of drawing up the papers for both the county and town administration), town hall secretary (keeping track of records) and school director (always a well trained person holding baccalaureate certification).

The outlook on the way the citadel was managed by the Saxons and the clashes that took place in Rupea and in the settlements around it is rendered by historic documents. Beginning with the 10th century Rupea was administered by a small military Hungarian garrison (deployed in the upper part of the citadel which was the only one in place at the time) as royal citadel. The kings of Hungary gave ownership rights over this territory to various nobles in the neighborhood who were granted the title of castellan (citadel owner) of Kosd (Rupea) upon taking an allegiance oath to the ruler of Transylvania in accordance with Medieval customs in place. This was also the time when the Székely people came to this area and attempts to catholicize the territory were made by building a Franciscan monastery at the foot of the citadel at a time when there was no other settlement in place. Once the German colonists came to the area, the Székely people left the territory and for 100 years there were clashes among the Saxons who had been granted the right to settle in the region by the king of Hungary and the nobles in the area who were unwilling to give up the territory they had owned until then. For a better understanding of the history of Rupea, a number of events must be reminded. The citadel was administered and enlarged by the Saxons from one building to three until the 17th century. In 1285 the citadel "sheltered the dwellers during the incursion of the Tatars and it was well fortified" [7] and in 1289 "documents record its existence on Kohalmului Valley as Rupea and the Rupea presbiter" [8] even though apparently it was built earlier than this year.

The information on the town that dates back to the 14th century is richer compared to previous centuries and highlights events like the Saxons' uprising under the leadership of Henning of Petresti and the royal court's ownership of the settlement. In 1309 "the Kosd presbiter and the dean Nikolaus are mentioned in relation with a trial between the bishopric of Alba and some Saxon deans"[9]. The fights over the throne of Hungary and the troubled times in the area have an impact on Transylvania as well and, despite the coronation of Charles Robert of Anjou in 1310 as king of Hungary, peace is far from being achieved. Characters like Paul of Lodmosz, Nikolaus of Tălmăciu and Solomon of Braşov refuse to

acknowledge the king's power and gain temporary control over some towns, Rupea being one of them. The king appoints ruler Toma as administrative leader of the Saxons in order to keep the latter under control. However, this was "...an unscrupled, greedy person hated by the people and therefore the Saxons went on mutiny"[10].

Ruler Toma issues an act, which is the first written record of the citadel, that grants "Ladislau of Sîn' Martin ownership rights over the citadel, as well as the position of captain acting on behalf of the ruler in the latter's absence and subject of the king of Hungary"[11]. Consequently, the citadel is sieged by the Saxon troupes led by Henning of Petresti and conquered. While Charles Robert hurried to Transylvania asking for the nobles' support, ruler Toma gathered a big army and sieged the citadel between the second half of August and "...September 1324. The citadel was fortified but the lack of water caused difficulties. The water to be brought in the citadel at night or by cart from a well in the field or in the valley...the Saxons attacked the administrative leader in the open and Henning was killed in a fight where the siegers outnumbered the mutineers"[12]. Thus, at the beginning of the 14th century the citadel was used as a commodity between the royal court and the nobles who were temporary owners of the citadel.

The documents dated back to the 14th century present also information on the life and activity of Rupea owners. In this respect, in 1332 Johann, son of Petru, the citadel owner of Kohalom and in 1340 "the priests from the Rupea presbitery sent the bishop of Alba Iulia a letter asking him to allow them not to pay taxes because of the great damages they had suffered. They received 3 dinar from the bishop who forbade tax collection"[13]. The rights to collect taxes from the settlement at the foot of the citadel and from the settlements of the presbitery were under dispute all along the 14th century between the citadel owners of Rupea and the Catholic bishopery from Alba Iulia.

In 1341 "the bishop of Alba Iulia complains to the Pope about the abuses of ruler Toma while underlining the activity of the citadel owner, Petrus, who was in charge of the citadel and brought damage to the Saxons" [14]. In 1358 "the magistrate Nikolaus is mentioned as citadel owner of Rupea"[15]. The first written record of the Kosd capital, a form of administrative organization that ran in parallel for a while with the administrative power of citadel owners of Rupea, dates back to 1337. However, as of the beginning of the 14th century, the citadel is resubordinated under the authority of the Kosd capital. "In 1413 Nikolaus Gross is the representative of the capital in the Sibiu province, acting as royal administrator, and the capital is recorded under the name of Kosd Stuhl [16]".

The 15th century is a troubled period for the capital and its settlements due to the repeated looting incursions. In 1431 the representative of the Székely while on a campaign towards Țara Bârsei causes great damage in the area. In 1432 different areas of the capital are attacked by the Turks and in 1453 the inhabitants of the Făgăraș district start fire and cause damages, as well. As a result of all of the above, the capital authorities write a letter to Sibiu to ask for perpetrators' punishment or to be excused with a percentage of the tax they owed.

The 16th century is a time when the capital authorities sue or complain about the neighboring nobles' illegal appropriation of some of the territory. In "1508 the noble Caspar Sükösd of Theremy took by force a part of the property belonging to Jimbor village and buys a house in Rupea"[17]. The Saxons availing themselves of the rights they had been granted by Andreanum and that guaranteed their free administration of the royal land ask both the Saxon

University and the ruler to solve the conflict. To this effect, representatives of the Saxon University and of the ruler come to Rupea to investigate. The situation gets worse in 1547 when a member of the same family, Benedikt of Sükosd of Theremy “is appointed royal administrator in Rupea and caused a lot of dissatisfaction by his interference with the free people’s right to cultivate their land. Moreover, caused losses to the capital since he used the taxes collected for his luxurious expenditures and personal luxury guests [18]. The problem is solved a few years later when the position is assumed by another Saxon.

The town and the capital settlements had a lot to lose in the first decades of the aforementioned century since the entire territory of Transylvania became a theater of operations and was divided among the supporters of Ferdinand of Habsburg and Ioan Zapolya. The citadel served as refuge and defense for the inhabitants since, along with other smaller capital cities (Nocrich, Cincu), it had declared its support for Ioan Zapolya while Sighisoara had pledged allegiance to the Habsburg dynasty.

While consolidating their political and administrative rights, the Saxons developed a set of means to express their identity. In this respect, under the protection of the Lutheran church and of school, a number of socio-cultural associations were established such as:

- Six neighborhoods that were actually means by which neighbors collaborated. “In 1640 the magistrate and the seniors advisory council draw up provisions on the establishment of neighborhoods in Rupea”[19] that list the obligation of providing mutual support in building houses and not only, in organizing weddings and funerals;
- Boys’ and girls’ groups (called Bruderschaft and Schwesterschaft) organized by age categories before and after confirmation and that allowed young people to spend their free time;
- Reading groups that gathered under the guidance of the priest and other intellectuals in the town;
- Traditional theatre groups;
- Music and brass bands.

Apart from these there were also the guilds, which were older, and that were professional associations of the Saxon craftsmen. The prince Sigismund Bathory granted Rupea the right to organize fairs annually (every summer on St. Jacob’s day) in 1509. There were 15 guilds of the Saxons in Rupea. The earliest attested was the guild of coopers (1320) followed by others like those of cobblers (1490), millers (1540), blacksmiths (1569), furrers (1581), gunsmiths (1589), skimmers (1612), tailors (1624), weavers (1711), carpenters(1714), butchers (1757), tanners (1772), mercers (1784), potters, all of which were joined in the guild from Agnita and the beer manufacturers (1700). These guilds could only be joined by the Saxons and this was a basic principle never trespassed. A professional from among the guild members would lead the guild and each of these had a case in which the founding documents of the guild, the symbols, the roll, the coat of arms, the flag and the annual contribution were kept.

The first drugstores in town belonged to the Saxons. Thus, “in 1775 Fernolend obtains the right to set up a drugstore and this will be later owned sequentially by Samuel Negelschmied of Braşov, dr. Heinrich Müller and the Melas family of Braşov (that settles in down in Rupea)”[20] A hundred years later, in 1887, the second drugstore was opened and its

owner was s lșui Ernst Wolf who came from Sighișoara and who sold it to the Mederus family. These drugstores will be open until 1948 when they are nationalized.

At the beginning of the 20th century the community of Saxons from Rupea and from the neighboring areas supported the developemnt of the media in the German language that played a role in providing the necessary information on the political, socio-economic, cultural and religious events. There were thre publications: Repser Burgvogt issued on Saturday , Repser Wochenblatt and Repser Heimatdank.

All of the above are defining features of a community and of its identity. Until 1800 the Saxons were the majority in Rupea. Only startin g with the aforementioned year other nationalities like Romanians, Hungarians, Jews, etc. are mentioned by the polls. With the increased industrialization and the growing number of new comers into town the Saxons were only 25-28% of the population after 1965 . after 1990 they massively emigrated to Germany and nowadays there are only two families of German origin in the town.

2.2. The Romanians from Rupea and their history

The first polls of the Saxons dating back to 1488 show no record of any Romanian inhabitant. The only observations in these document refer to a small number of ingvili and shepherds, and the latter may have referred to Romanians. It was not in the interest of the Saxons to record the number of Romanians and hence, the latter's status in Transylvania was that of a tolerated population. What is known for sure is that at the time when Transylvania was under Hungarian rule, the Romanians living in the area were employed as workers in the fields. Once the Saxon colonists settled, the Romanians remained in the area and more of them came from neighboring villages. The Romanians lived on the side streets that ran in parallel with strada Principală that was inhabited by the Saxons. There were several spots in Rupea where there were groups of Romanian dwellers: the first streets inhabited by the Romanians were Hudită (a narrow street ending in a closed angle), Pe Deal (which went up to Strada Cetății that was inhabited by the Saxons and strada Cimitirului). After 1800 the Romanians are given a piece of land where a long street by the name of Gusgas (meaning the street at the back in te Saxon dialect) running in parallel with the main one is built. Moreover, the Romanians were allowed to build houses in the areas where the Saxons' vegetable gardens were (its name, because of their initial destination was therefore Verzerii) (former 30 Decembrie, currently 1 Decembrie 1918), and the streets Între Grădini and Târgului. Romanians' occupations were agriculture and animal breeding. They had little land to none and hence they had to work on the Saxons' land (in lease or under other types of agreements). Their religion was Orthodox and this became one of their identity features. The Orthodox Chirch, the oldest in Rupea, dates back to 1790 and it was built by the Greek merchants who came to the area for trade and had to spend a longer time in the region. This was on strada Principală and all Orthodox attended the service there. After 1799, some of the Romanians from Rupea adopt he Greek-Catholic religion and the church is transferred to this religious denomination until 1948.

After 1781, when the Emperor Joseph the 2nd, issues the Edict of Tolerance, the Saxons are forced to allow Romanians and Hungarians in their towns. The same thing happened in Rupea where some of the houses on the Main Street were bought by Romanian entrepreneurs and merchants. The Romanian Orthodox community along with the Greek

Catholic one bought a piece of land on this street and built a new large Orthodox church and a parish house.

The Romanian elementary school did not have a place of its own until 1871 and the classes were conducted in rented houses in the areas where Romanians lived. As of 1871 the large church hosted two classes of Romanian Orthodox and Greek Catholics, each with its own teacher. It is only after 1918 that Romanians developed economically and culturally. In this respect, the oldest means to preserve their identity were the school and the church. Later on, Romanian secondary classes were established (in the same place high school classes were to be later set up), as well as associations like the one of the ploughmen, which was the most important one started in 1921 for economic reasons, and they made a great contribution to the evolution of the identity forms of Romanians. The Association of the Ploughmen bought a piece of land where a room was to be built in order to host the events of Romanians (shows, meetings, weddings). As of 1909, the Romanians from Rupea had two associations: the Reading Club and the Junimea Singing Gathering that later on gave birth to what was known as Ateneul Popular Junimea (the Junimea Popular Atheneum) divided in four: the academic section (joined by students), the Romanian Casina (joined by teachers, clerks and priests), the people's section (dedicated to the peasants) and the section dedicated to physical education and national culture (contributing to event organization). In addition, there were also the Reading association of Craftsmen and Tradesmen of Rupea. Similar to the Saxons, the Romanians had their own neighborhoods displaying features no different from their German counterparts. Besides these, a brass and singers' band was established and it played both at parties and at funerals.

When the country was united in 1918, the number of Romanians in Rupea increases since the people from the neighboring areas come to this town looking for trades or for commerce. However, the most significant change in the distribution of ethnics takes place after 1960 when the Romanians become the majority. Rupea becomes the capital of the region and it is the place where industry and craftsmanship developed in the effort to give those who were had been taken their land away in communist times a workplace. In 1975 the cement factory of Hoghiz is built and hence the vacant position offering increases. The town also underwent a lot of changes in terms of the decisions concerning the buildings: on the spot where there were the Saxons' gardens block of flats are built, while the walking area downtown is turned into a park.

2.3 The Hungarians from Rupea

The number of Hungarians in Rupea was not a significant one and they only came to town after 1800. Because of the restrictions imposed on their presence by the Saxon authority they are not allowed to enter the town. After 1800, Szekely people came from the outskirts of the capital cities of Drăușeni and Trei Scaune. Their concerns were mostly of a commercial nature and a small percentage were highly educated (doctors or engineers). The number of Szekely increased after 1867 when, due to the establishment of the Austro Hungarian regime they received a number of privileges along with the Catholic church at the foot of the citadel. Moreover, they also had a school in Hungarian language (the courses were delivered for free as mentioned in the Act of Apponyi of 1909) and bought living places downtown among the

Saxons. After 1960 more people of Hungarian origin came to Rupea and, as a result of industrialization, their number increased up to 10% of the people of this town.

2.4. The Roma people (gypsies)

The establishment of the Roma community takes place after 1900 and the number of its members increases dramatically after 1960. One dominant feature of their history is that they were not allowed to live alongside the Saxons, nor the Romanians. They settled on the outskirts of the town: on the Grand bridge on the exit to Brasov, on Cimitirului street (from where the Romanians had moved to Guzgas and Verzerii), or beyond the bridge near the cattle fair. Some of them spoke Hungarian, while others Romanian and most likely they originated from the villages nearby the town. Their business was mostly related to traditional gipsy crafts (they were tanners and blacksmiths) or itinerant vendors. Their number increased after 1990 and nowadays they raise a number of social challenges for the authorities given their unemployment and large families they needed to support.

Conclusions

As with all establishments of the Saxons from Transylvania, those from Rupea lived in the central area of the town where they also built administrative buildings and a fortified church with direct control over the citadel. They only lived in the citadel in emergency situations when there were looting incursions or plagues because the way it was built did not allow for that as it was the case with the citadels of Sighisoara or Brasov. The community of the Saxons maintained its identity: when they first came to the area they were Catholics but after the Reform they all became Lutherans; their dialect was that of the first colonists who had settled in the area; they controlled the town politically and economically given their administrative positions and the role played by the guilds; they only married within their community (in the town or in the neighboring areas). Romanians also formed well defined communities, they were Orthodox and Greek Catholic, they spoke Romanian and worked to make a living. The Szekely were fewer in number and most likely this is why they merged with the important communities of Rupea. The gypsies lived separately from the two communities and they were not allowed to fill administrative or economic positions. In conclusion, in Rupea there were two communities who lived completely separately and tried to preserve their identity. However, their mutual influence is of a more subtle nature and can be identified at the level of vocabulary and traditional outfit.

Romanians took over from the Saxons the model for building their houses and for managing their households. It was only with the communist state that the two communities were forced to merge. Nonetheless, the consciousness of belonging to a given community and the sense of belongingness to a community by preserving the latter's language could not be levelled.

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