

## THE ROLE OF ARCHITECTURE IN THE CULTURAL TOURISM OF SIGHIȘOARA

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**Abstract:** The architecture of Sighișoara is represented by a mixture of styles in which Gothic, Renaissance and baroque elements are found. The urbanistic structure has been preserved through all the defining elements of the Medieval period. The great density of architectural monuments: public buildings, the dwellings that make up the assembly, but also the defence works that have been preserved up to 90%, make the area unique by its historical value. In the town, there is a great difference between the architecture of the Citadel and that of the Downward Town, the latter having been much more affected by the transformations which came along with the passing of years.

After 1950, new utilities have been introduced and they generated changes in the arrangement of interiors and annexes, according to the newest functional requirements. But, these changes are reversible. The transformations, imposed to the houses because of permanent inhabitance, have been realised from the same materials, using the same techniques, the plastered gravels, the brick walls and the roofs with high tiles. The walls with ornaments of many houses represent a characteristic of Sighișoara city and it reflects authenticity to the architectonic outlook.

**Key words:** architecture, culture, outlook, cultural symbol, civilisation, ethnic group

### MEDIEVAL ARCHITECTURE AND ITS MAIN ROLE IN THE CULTURAL TOURISM OF SIGHIȘOARA

Conditioned by both geography and history, Sighișoara stands out not only due to its monumental buildings, since the architecture was much simpler here than that of the West, but also by the old buildings assembly which have mostly preserved their initial character (patterns), no matter the subsequent transformations.

From the architectural point of view, in Sighișoara Citadel there may be observed a mixture of styles: the Gothic is continued by the Renaissance and the Baroque and other influences are added in the Citadel, but even more in the Downward Town. The medieval atmosphere of the Citadel is given by the aspect of the narrow streets, the architecture of the walls and the relatively well preserved tours and its old churches.

The 1676 fire destroyed many houses, generating a break between the old Gothic and Renaissance town and the new town rebuilt according to the architectonic trends of the time.

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The Clock Tower is the most beautiful monument and symbol of the Citadel. It represents the expression of four architectonic styles: its bases are represented by two vaulted alleyways pertaining to the old short gate tower from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, built in the late Romanic style (or early Gothic), over which the four floors of massive bricklaying with small openings, specific to the Gothic style. At the fifth floor, the Gothic structure is interrupted by „loggia”, which suggests the Renaissance style and makes the upward connection with the Baroque roof, which practically doubles the height of the tower.

The houses of the Museum's Square and the one of the Citadel were inhabited by rich patrician families and the aristocratic families of the city. The Citadel Square was the civic and commercial centre beginning with the medieval period.

In their actual form, most of the houses in the Citadel Square and the Museum Square are the result of the transformations carried out after the 1676 fire. Most of them spread, changing their fronts by gaining baroque features, as the Wagner House, for instance, or Renaissance elements as in The Stag House or the Venetian House (the Mann House).

The Gothic traditional architecture was maintained only in the case of some civil constructions. In the Citadel and in the Downward City, some old Gothic door borders have been found at 7 School Street building and at 26 Herman Oberth Square building. Generally, the Gothic architecture elements that allowed the descent of the dating in the 14<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> centuries have been the semicylindrical vaultings made of boulders from the level of cellars in some buildings (Vlad Dracul House). In the Citadel there are also three civil buildings with late Gothic or Renaissance architecture: The Gothic House (the Furriers' Street, no.3-5), The Stag House, the house in the 24 Carpenters' Street. The Stag House has the best preserved old facade from all these.

The former archaic and simple architecture is found on the little street of the Monastery. On the Bulwark Street there is the Shingle House, a building transformed in the traditional Saxon style, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. With this occasion, the facades have been modified, the eave has been amplified and decorative elements from jigsaw wood have been introduced.

On the School Street, the last five houses nearby the Covered Ladder mostly maintain the traditional Saxon aspect, having a rural influence. The Covered Ladder represents a distinctive sign of the city, having been built during the mayor's J. Both mandate in 1654.

Another particularity of the town is offered by the emphasized polichromy of the houses' facades in Sighişoara. The architect Karl Scheiner had the idea to paint the town using vivid colours.

In the Downward City, almost all the houses from the 12<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> centuries were wood-made, one floor only. The civil stone houses were extremely rare. Regarding the structure of the wooden houses, it is supposed that they were thatched of shingle covered. At the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, 75% of the dwellings were still made of wood, with one or two rooms.

The devastating fires from the medieval period eliminated the wooden architecture and in the 18<sup>th</sup> century the Austrians banned it completely. Beginning with the 17<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the brick houses with shingle roof were generalised in all Saxon towns and at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the shingle will be gradually replaced by tiles. The new houses were simple, with an elongated form and one level. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, their structure was modified by adding one more level, which afterwards extended above the vaulted entrance, forming those deep alleyways, specific to the medieval Saxon architecture. In some cases, the houses that resembled in form and dimensions were stuck together. They maintain the traditional type of the French house, with an elongated form. Later on, an over flooring is put in practice, the most suggestive area being formed by the buildings on the western side of Herman Oberth Square.

The old houses in the central area of the Downwards City have generally suffered important transformations or have been demolished and replaced with new buildings that possess architectural styles corresponding to the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The unique trait of the medieval architectural assembly, in which both the Citadel and the Downwards City have been included, has become visible beginning with the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the natives protested against the demolishment of the old dominican monastery and the Dogars Tour, the only monument from the 13<sup>th</sup> century that was kept intact.

Nowadays, these sights attract a great number of tourists by their style. Sighișoara is able to attract tourists during all seasons due to these monumental buildings, in which life continues its course. Sighișoara represents an inhabited museum.

### **THE TRANSFORMATIONS THAT OCCURED IN THE TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE AFTER 1950**

After 1950, there were numerous systematization or restoration projects of the town, suggesting different solutions for capitalizing the town. One of the old projects (1950) suggested a new avenue along the hills in the south-eastern part of the town. The decades that followed brought no change in this direction.

The only change was the transformation of the Hermann Oberth Square into a park so that a definitory element for a medieval city vanished from Sighișoara townscape.

The systematization and road modernization workings, which imposed after the major flood of 1975 generated the demolishment of some street endings at the joint of December, 1st, Street with H.Teculescu Street.

The serious destructions of the old structure of the town took place in the 1980s. After 1987, half of The Mill Street and part of the December, 1st, Street in the centre of the town were demolished for a so-called systematization and building of modern commercial areas, a new centre respectively. Even if on that particular area there were built only some block of flats and an universal store and in the

1990s a CEC headquarters, the free space could be reintegrated only by the building having the same height as the ones that were not demolished yet.

## THE INFLUENCE OF ARCHITECTURE ON PEOPLE'S MENTALITY AND BEHAVIOUR

Sighișoara is considered to be the most beautiful peopled citadel in Europe. The architectural monuments are of rare beauty, reminding of the medieval period, testify for the continuous inhabiting process of the citadel for centuries. Keeping it in the best conditions Its best conditons preserve represent a living proof of the settlers' appartenance to this privileged place. Also, this fact highlights the people of Sighișoara's desire to maintain and continue the cultural and spiritual values of the area.

There is a tight connection between arhitecture and the population's mentality, the architecture being the most visible part of a people's mentality The buidings' construction and the urbanistic structure made by Germans points out the qualities of this people: rigurozitate, corectness, their appreciation for beauty.

Sighișoara has a specific image also because of the fact that, for centuries, in this medieval citadelle have successfully lived together Romanians, Hungarians, sași, Gipsies, Jews and other nationalities which helped each other, giving birth to a multicultural community.

The people of Sighișoara are proud to be living in this medieval city, being spiritually connected with this area.

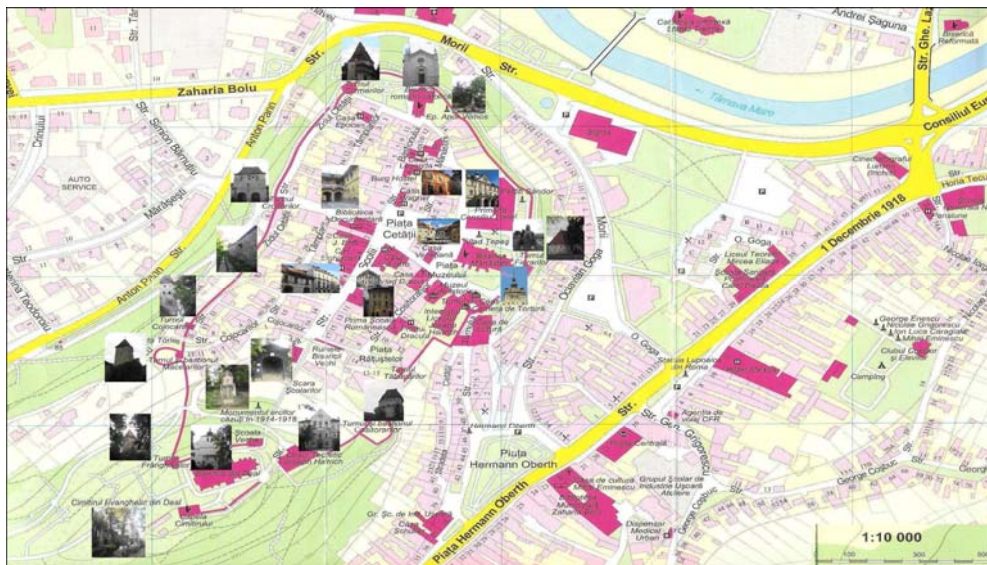


Fig. 1 Main touristic sights in Sighișoara

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