

On the other hand, the archaeological data is usually found only in technical reports, or even only in manuscript form. Until now, no systematization attempt has been made for larger areas, let alone for the entire eastern part of the medieval Kingdom of Hungary, roughly corresponding to Transylvania, in its present-day definition.

There is a great disjunction between the amount of excavation and the number of published papers, which has resulted in a huge amount of almost inaccessible, or now unidentifiable, grey literature. On the other hand, there are natural communication problems between the archaeologist, whose gaze is on the underground, and the art historian, who mostly looks skywards. However, for the sake of properly researching and maintaining the heritage of the religious landscape, archaeological data need to be taken seriously and accepted as part of the general discussion – only then a real image on the phenomena of Christian society-building and pre-Reformation religious architecture is likely to be obtained.

The contribution archaeology brings to this discussion is fundamental, considering that for the first several centuries of church building there are almost no relevant written sources. The latter become more consistent only after 1400, but even then, they rarely mention factual data about the buildings themselves.

The present-day shapes of the churches almost invariably conceal at least one earlier development stage. It falls onto archaeology to not only unearth the ruined structures, but also to investigate their context, identify chronological indicia provided by artefacts and burials goods, recognize successive phases in the overall development of the religious site, and many other related issues. The subject matter is a complex one, requiring interdisciplinary approaches, while the following pages are barely more than an introduction into an undertaking whose fulfilment belongs to the future.

Transylvania has developed a rich religious architecture, individualized in many ways from that of the neighbouring territories, and even at European scale. However, in many respects, including the archaeology of churches, it has remained a *terra incognita* for many European archaeologists, particularly in the Anglo-American world. The second motivation for this book is therefore to introduce Transylvania to an international audience from the point of view of its medieval churches, as seen through the lens of archaeology.

This approach targets a broad audience, but primarily historians and archaeologists interested in Eastern and East-Central Europe and its religious architecture. However, the book is likely to appeal to scholars interested in monastic

FIGURE 0.3 Archaeological excavations on the site of the Church on the Hill, in Sighișoara (1998–2001): over 700 graves and dozens of ruins were unearthed, the oldest from before 1200 (on the north side of the sanctuary), the youngest from before 1450.

DRAWING BY THE AUTHOR