The introduction of the Hall-choir in the Transylvanian church architecture took place in the second half of the fourteenth century in the context of economic growth experienced by the royal towns located in German settled areas. The structures reflect the contemporary Central-European trends in terms of church design as well as a close bond with the workshops active in the region. In terms of typology, the examples vary from the simple solution with three-sided polygon termination and lesser ambulatory at Sebeș / Mühlbach, to the Hall-choir with ambulatory and uneven outer and inner polygons at Brașov / Kronstadt or with constant polygon shapes at Sibiu / Hermannstadt. The patterns point to Upper Austrian and South German contemporary hall structures as source of inspiration, like the Wallsee family chapel at Enns (Upper Austria), the Holy Cross church in Schwäbisch-Gmünd and the Nuremberg St. Sebaldus’ eastern choir. At European level, the choir of Sebes (consecrated prior to 1382) counts amongst the earliest achievements employing the scheme with the central vessel ending up in a straight wall and the inner piers in line, which remained one of its kind in Transylvania, yet it knew a certain spread in the fifteenth century in Austria as well as in South- and East Germany. It not only remained the sole authentic Transylvanian Hall-choir delivered to us, but also marks the introduction of the Hall-structure in the Gothic church architecture of the region. The present shape of the choir of St. Mary’s parish church at Brașov (1385 under construction) and the conjectural reconstruction of its original ground plan, as proposed by Walther Horwath, render, at smaller scale, the model of Nuremberg St. Sebaldus’ Hall-choir, both in terms of chevet design (featuring 9/16 outer and 5/8 inner polygons), and exterior decoration. The assimilation of the Hall-choir in the Transylvanian Gothic architecture came to an end at Sibiu, where the city has made an attempt to increase the choir of the parish church, in the first half of the fifteenth century. The wall foundations recently uncovered around the choir reveal the ground-plan of an incipient Hall-structure with 5/8 choir design employed the same centre point for the apse, resulting in a naturally amplified 5/8 polygon. The findings at Sibiu point to a new design pattern, namely that of a Hall-choir with ambulatory having the same number of sides for both the inner and the outer polygons. The system was known in Hungary from the beginning
of the fifteenth century, where it had been employed at the St. Mary’s inner city parish church at Pest and the St. Demeter church of Szeged. It is hard to ascertain a linear development of the Hall choir at local level, and the diverse types of structures employed for the three above discussed examples point to an assimilation process in which either certain foreign building models (St. Sebaldus for Brașov) or just pragmatic reasons like specific needs and financial possibilities (at Sibiu) have been determinant in the selection of the architectural solution. The instability brought by the fifteenth century Ottoman invasions slowed down the soaring building enterprises and hindered the further development of the Hall-choir in Transylvania, yet the system will not be abandoned, in the contrary, it will be successfully mastered in the nave of the St. Michael’s church at Cluj as well as in a series of parish churches located in cities and market towns (Sighișoara/Schäßburg, Bierțan/Birthäl, Moșna/Meschen etc.).

Cuvinte-cheie: gotic, cor hală, plan, contrafort, deambulator

Keywords: Gothic, Hall-choir, ground plan, buttress, ambulatory