

SCRĂDEANU KULA FROM POJOGENI, GORJ COUNTY

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Abstract: From the medieval period, in the area of Oltenia, there have been preserved some tower-dwellings, which are reminiscent of the Byzantine ones or those of the Balkan world, through their structure and construction system. They are called, with a term of Turkish origin, kula (cule = tower). They are a type of construction representative only for the Oltenia area, with specific architectural elements such as the turret with pillars, and double functionality: residential house and place of defence.

In Gorj County there were several kulas, a large part of them being located along the Gilort Valley. Such a requirement was also met by the kula in the village of Pojogeni, Gorj County, built by the captain Ion Scrădeanu. This extremely important architectural monument, unfortunately, is no longer preserved today.

The kula had a rectangular shape, a height of 10.80 m up to the roof and levels (cellar and three floors).

Keywords: Scrădeanu Kula, Pojogeni, architectural monument, Oltenia area, Gorj county.

From the medieval period, in the area of Oltenia, there have been preserved some tower-dwellings, which are reminiscent of the Byzantine ones or those of the Balkan world, through their structure and construction system. They are called, with a term of Turkish origin, kula (cule = tower). They are a type of construction representative only for the Oltenia area, with specific architectural elements such as the turret with pillars, and double functionality: residential house and place of defence.

In Gorj County there were several kulas, a large part of them being located along the Gilort Valley. Their settlement and constructive arrangements specify their identity and functionality: watch and signaling kulas, refuge and defence kulas or temporary dwelling kulas.

Such a requirement was also met by the kula in the village of Pojogeni, Gorj County, built by the captain Ion Scrădeanu. This extremely important architectural monument, unfortunately, is no longer preserved today.

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Kula from Pojogeni

(apud Virgiliu N. Drăghiceanu, *Monumentele istorice din Oltenia*, in “Buletinul Comisiei Monumentelor Istorice”, XXIV, fasc. 69, 1931, p. 106).

It was built between 1718 and 1720¹, during the Austrian rule in Oltenia, in the southern part of the village of Pojogeni, at the intersection of three valleys: Gilortului, Blahniței and Galbenei². In 1801 the kula was attacked and burned by the bands of Turkish thieves³. After the death of Ion Scărădeanu, the kula came into the possession of his daughter Bala Dobrotescu⁴.

In 1838, the building was seriously affected by the earthquake, the top floor being collapsed. It was rebuilt between 1839 and 1840, but not from masonry, but in the form of a turret built entirely of carved wood, without any ornament. In 1906⁵ The kula burnt, partially, as a result of a fire caused by lightning. The owners did not

¹ SJAN Dolj, Commission of Historical Monuments, file 21, f. 1.

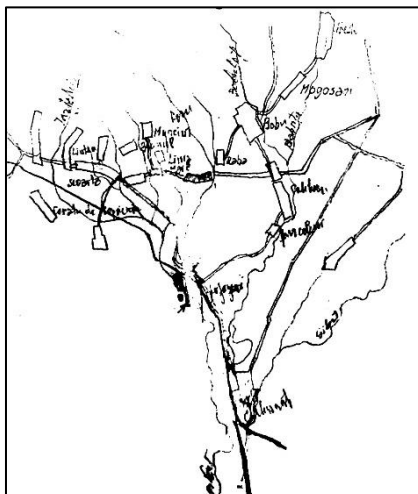
² *Ibidem*.

³ *Ibidem*.

⁴ *Ibidem*, f. 2.

⁵ The architect Iancu Atanasescu claims that this kula caught fire due to lightning twice: on a date that has remained unknown until now and in 1906 (SJAN Dolj, Commission of Historical Monuments, file 21, f. 3.).

repair it, choosing to desert it⁶. When the roof was destroyed, the rainwater penetrated into the vault, gradually eroding and destroying. In 1927, the foundation of the cellar was the only remnant of this kula.



The visibility area of the kula from Pojogeni (SJAN Dolj, Collection of Historical Monuments, file 21, f. 8).

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The former monument “Kula of Scrădeanu” falls into a category of edifices that are found only in the area that extends over the Oltenia area and east of the Olt in the counties of Argeş, Teleorman and Olt. It was a particular means of confronting/defending the family of the seneschal Ion Scrădeanu against the bands of Turks who often attacked and plundered Oltenia.

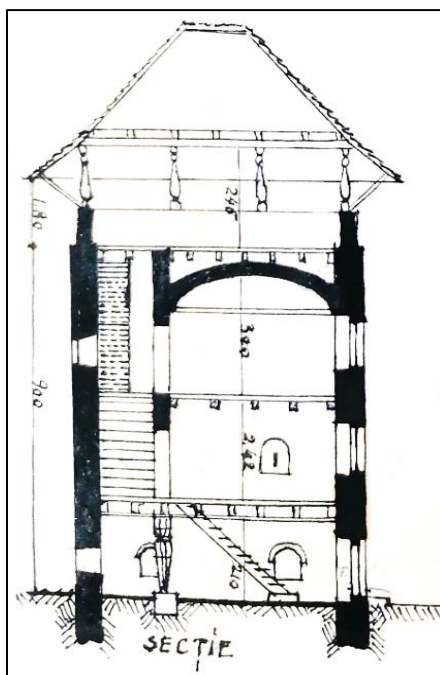
Similar to the other kulas on the territory of Oltenia, the construction from Pojogeni had an adequate shape for the defence of the walls, having two battlements through which one could fire a rifle and pistol at the besiegers, located at the level of the cellar and the first floor.

The kula had a rectangular shape (7.40x6.10 m), a height of 10.80 m up to the roof and levels (cellar and three floors)⁷. It was built of stone alternating with brick, with external walls almost one meter thick (0.65 m) and was covered with slats⁸.

⁶ Referring to the moment when this building was abandoned by the owners, the same architect states that it is much earlier than 1906 (*Ibidem*).

⁷ Alexandru Tzigara-Samurcaş, Al. Tzigara-Samurcaş, *Scieri despre arta românească*, Supervised edition, introductory study, chronology, bibliography and footnotes by C. D. Zeletin, Bucharest, Meridiane Press, 1987, p. 59.

⁸ SJAN Dolj, Historical Monuments Commission, file 21, f. 1.



Plan of the Pojogeni kula (reconstruction) SJAN Dolj,
Historical Monuments Commission, file 21, f. 12

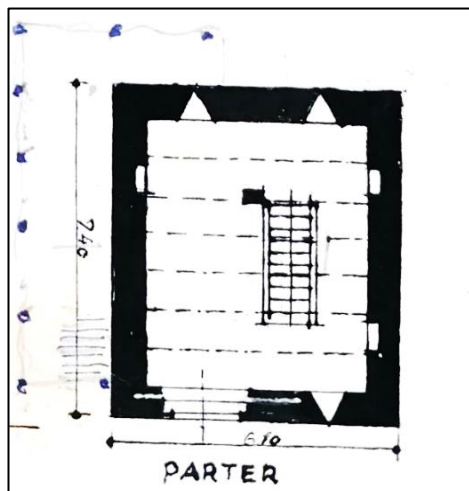
The entrance to the kula was made through a door located on the first floor, on the left side wall. This was reached by climbing a straight staircase, with massive wooden steps, stuck in the masonry. Subsequently, it was replaced by another one built on stringers, which had steps without buttresses and which, at the top led, to a balcony⁹.

On the ground floor there was a cellar, built with massive masonry work, made of stone and brick. At first, the entrance to it was made only from the inside, from a hatch on the first floor. In the middle of the nineteenth century, the descendants of Ion Scrădeanu, in order to make the best use of the cellar, built a second entrance to the cellar, this time from the outside. It was placed on the eastern side of the kula. The door was built in two folds and closed from the inside.

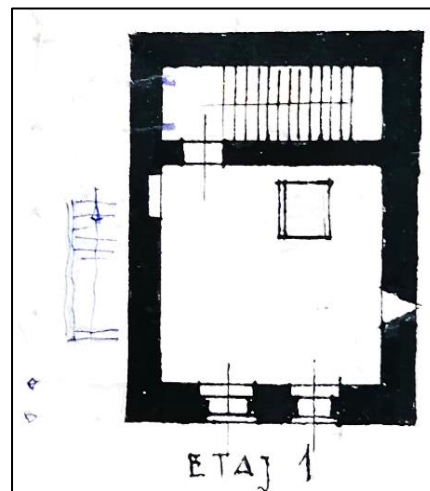
Inside the cellar, there was a pillar of shaped oak wood with a thickness of 0.70 m that supported two beams mounted right from the building of the kula, over which the walls, separating the staircase from the living rooms, were built through overlaying. The cellar was illuminated by three windows: one of them, rampart-like, arranged on the east wall and the other two on the west wall¹⁰.

⁹ Iancu Atanasescu, Valeriu Grama, *Culele din Oltenia*, Craiova, Scrisul Românesc Press, 1974, p. 125.

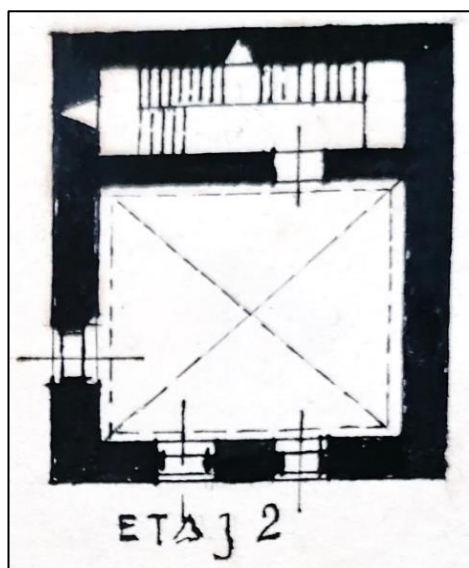
¹⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 125–126; SJAN Dolj, Historical Monuments Commission, file 21, f. 4.



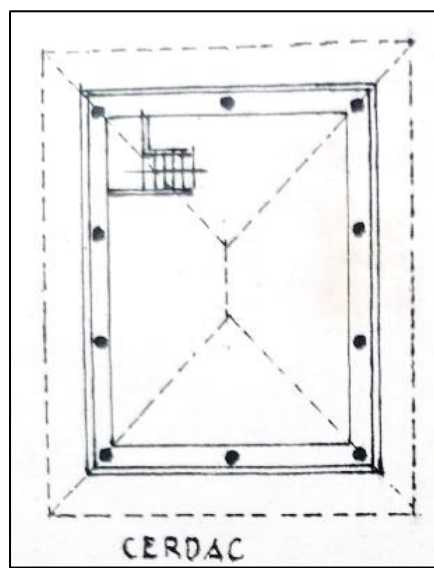
Plan of the ground floor of the kula from (reconstruction) SJAN Dolj, Historical Monuments Commission, file 21, f. 8



Plan of the first floor of the Pojogeni kula (reconstruction) SJAN Dolj, Historical Monuments Commission, file 21, f. 8



Plan of the second floor of the Pojogeni kula (reconstruction) SJAN Dolj, Commission of Historical Monuments, file 21, f. 8



Plan of the turret of the kula from Pojogeni (reconstruction) SJAN Dolj, Commission of Historical Monuments, file 21, f. 8

Access to the first and second floors was made through a straight staircase with solid wood steps carved with an axe and stuck in the walls.

The first floor included the hall that had the size of 1.35x4.70 m and a single room that was illuminated by a few small windows that were later enlarged, reaching 1.45x0.90m. The room, which measured 4.20 m x 4.70 m, had massive wooden beams on the ceiling¹¹.

On the second floor, there was a single room with a brick vault. It had a vaulted ceiling decorated with tassels and a double-headed eagle¹². The room was illuminated by several small windows that were later enlarged by elevation.

The heating of the two living rooms, on the first and second floors, was done by stoves, similar to those in the kula from Măldărești, Vâlcea county¹³.

On the last level, there was a turret, supported by 10 wooden pillars over which the very high roof was raised, with very wide eaves (130 cm) which, in order to support the weight of the snow, was supported with buttresses on each pillar. This turret had the role of surveillance, for the entire area.

Since the kula no longer exists today, and the reconstruction of its history was made based on the information provided by the locals from the village of Pojogeni, the historians and architects who were in charge of the analysis of this type of construction, could not support whether it had particular elements that would individualize it in relation to the other kulas.

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¹¹ Virgiliu N. Drăghiceanu, *Monumentele istorice din Oltenia*, in "Buletinul Comisiei Monumentelor Istorice", XXIV, fasc. 69, 1931, p. 106.

¹² *Ibidem*; Al. Tzigara-Samurcaș, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

¹³ Virgiliu N. Drăghiceanu, *Monumentele istorice din Oltenia. Raport din anul 1921*, in "Buletinul Comisiei Monumentelor Istorice", year XXIV, 1931, no. 115, p. 106.