

The Discourse of Power in Early Middle Ages Transylvania: Centers and Peripheries*

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Abstract: *Resulting from a post-doctoral research project, this study investigates the discourse of power in Early Middle Ages Transylvania (11th-14th centuries), viewed from the perspective of the relation between centers and peripheries. Our approach is based on three premises: unless acting as brute force, power is exercised mainly through discourse; public discourse is itself an act of power; discourse is not only a sign of power, but also a space of negotiating it. The most important conclusions of our research are: (a) during the 11th-14th centuries, the discourse of power in Transylvania undergoes a series of transformations caused by a number of factors such as the geopolitical situation in the region, the centralizing agenda of the Hungarian monarchy, the changes in socio-economic structure and the reform of the legal system; (b) although it is in the beginning (11th-to-13th centuries) an exclusive attribute of “those who fight” (bellatores) and “those who pray” (oratores) and it emerges from the balance between these forces, the discourse of power becomes also accessible in the 14th century Transylvania to “those who work” (laboratores), even if this process is only an alibi for increasing the centralizing power of the Hungarian monarchy; (c) despite the unifying trends of the center, the peripheral Transylvania retains, during the 11th-14th centuries, a substantial autonomy in relation to the Hungarian monarchy, both because of the military difficulties and the administrative problems entailed by the government of such a distant territory.*

Keywords: *discourse, power, Early Middle Ages, Transylvania, centers vs. peripheries*

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