

### Die Entwicklung der Dorfanlage (the development of the village layout)

At the beginning of the contemplations about the history it was noted that the name of the village has Hungarian roots and, derived from the word “kapu” = gate, means guardian of the gate. This implies that the Szeklers who settled here had to guard the south-eastern access to the Mediasch Stuhl. When they moved on to the East, Saxon farmers took their place in their search for new lands when the King’s grounds in the South of Siebenbürgen had become too crowded. With this assessment of the facts a row of new questions came up.

Where was the Szekler settlement “Nagy Kapus”?

How did the transition take place between the old and the new population?

How large was the Saxon settlement? How many farms did it have, and how many souls were counted in the village when it was first established?

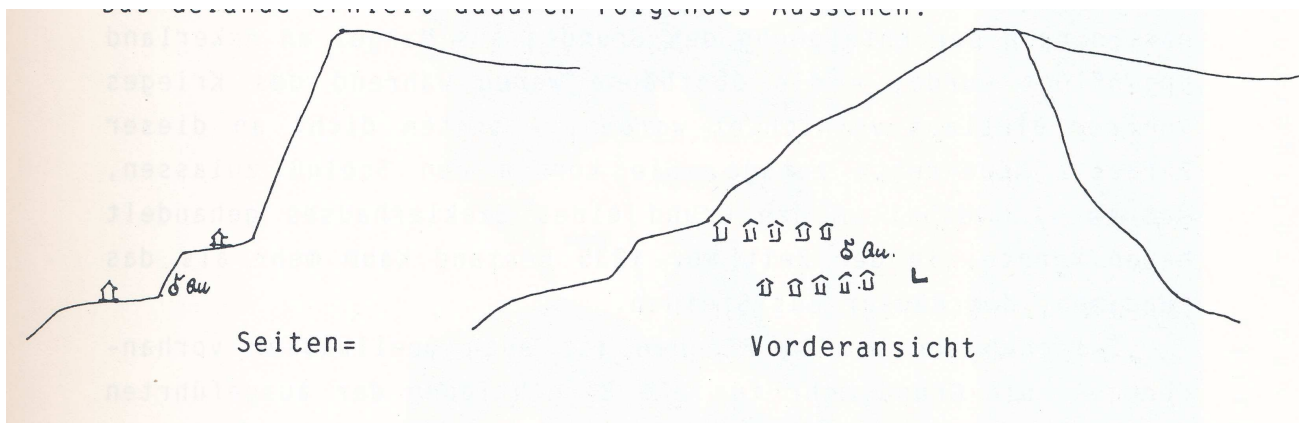
In addition, the question had to be answered as well, how the village evolved over the centuries.

With certainty it can be said, that the assumption, maintained by the people and which is also detailed in Adolf Buchholzer’s Reminiscences about Grosskopisch, published in Canada, that there actually had been a castle on the ‘Burg Kuppe’ (Castle mountain), has not been proven. Such a fact would have been expressed in a specific name given to the location. More certain would be to assume that this site is about a weakly secured guard post providing shelter to the guards in bad weather, but not a ‘Fliehbürg’ (secured guard castle) which could have been used in defense. It is probably true that its brickwork was used in building the church located hundred meters below, because, at the time of its construction at the end of the thirteenth century, such a structure was no longer necessary. Also, Grosskopisch no longer was a border town as the frontier of Siebenbürgen had been pushed to the Carpathians in the East, now watched by the Szeklers and the German settlers of the ‘Burgenland’ (land of castles).

Where was the Szekler settlement ‘Nagy Kapus’?

There are hints that it was not in the marshy valley at the place of today’s village, but below the northern rocky promontory of the ‘Burgkuppe’ (name of mountain). Above this point one can climb this mountain most easily.

The western slope of the mountain has the appearance of a steep side of a pyramid. This can be explained in such a way that once, during a heavy rain, the upper loose surface layer slipped on the smooth, impermeable clay of the bottom layer fifty feet into the valley below. There it buckled and created two narrow flat plateaus located at different heights. The terrain thus got the following appearance: see sketch of the lateral and frontal views.



The upper western slope of the 'Burgberg' was planted with pines at the beginning of this century. But, when in the year of floods 1970, a lot of rain fell new landslides occurred, always on the western slopes, on the 'Schrewelberg', in the 'Klingeln' and at the 'Gockelberg'. Also, below the top of the 'Bergkuppe' the surface layer of the grounds began to move again and compressed the barns and stables of the farms Numbers 230 – 233. The church remained intact because the four meter foundation of the Choir reached about one meter deep into the clay layer and thus withstood the pressure of the sliding earth, thanks to the wisdom of its builder.

It could be that the settlement of the Szeklers had been located on the flat plains created by the landslide. For this assumption speaks not only the location of the plateaus but also the fact that there are to this day small gardens of which one can assume that these had been the farms of the Szeklers. But these gardens likely had not been herb gardens because their soil was so poor that they were unfit for such a purpose. Vegetable gardens were allocated in the river plain among the herb gardens below the village. But here fruit trees were planted, as each farm had a sufficiently large fruit garden already.

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For the assumption that here the Szekler village had been speaks another fact. Today the gardens of the farms number 239 to 242 end at the edge of the plateau of the lower level. At this site noticeable relationships regarding property were present:

- a) A separate, crosswise parcel of land at the upper end, belonging to farm number 241, cut off the neighboring gardens.
- b) Another parcel of land intruded into the garden of the parish and had no free access from either side. When the garden of the parish was plowed over after the expropriation out of lack of arable land – the fruit trees had been destroyed during the war by the woolly aphid - remnants of brickwork were discovered close to this particular field. This allows the conclusion that these bricks could have been part of the foundation of a Szekler house. From the time before 1235 hardly anything still remains besides the stones of the foundations of the houses.

Between the two plateaus there is spring water, which is another justified reason to assume that here was the settlement of the border guards directly beneath the steep slope of the 'Burgberg'. This would even also be possible if one considers the location of the church. If the present church were at the location of an earlier church, built by the Szeklers, then the pathway would pass both of the last mentioned plots and lead directly to the choir of the church. See the plan of the location below.

Sketch

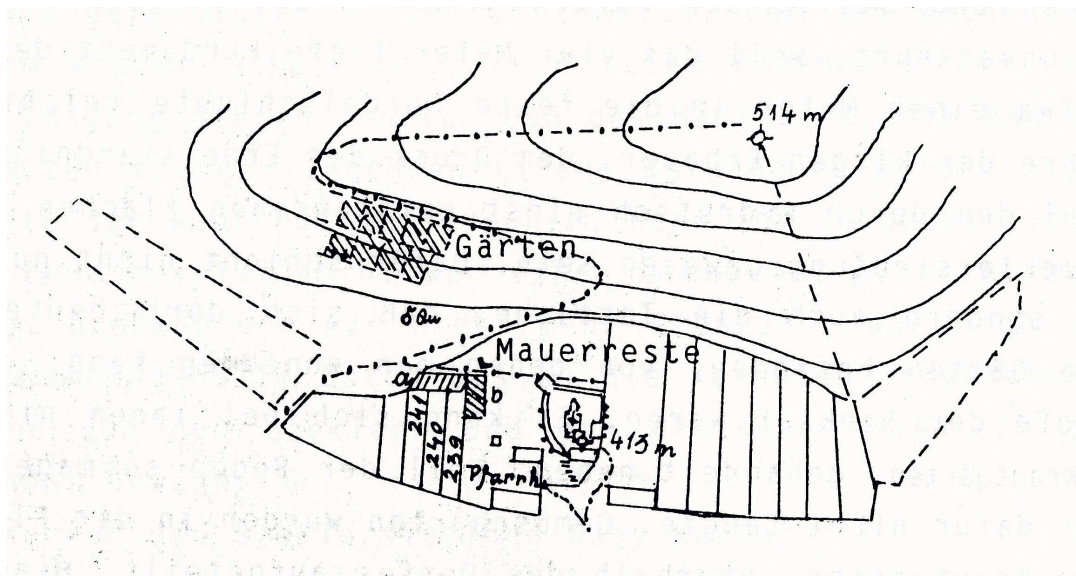


Image with the legend:

Market with 'Luther House' and Preacher Court



Der Markt  
mit "Lutherhaus" und Predigerhof



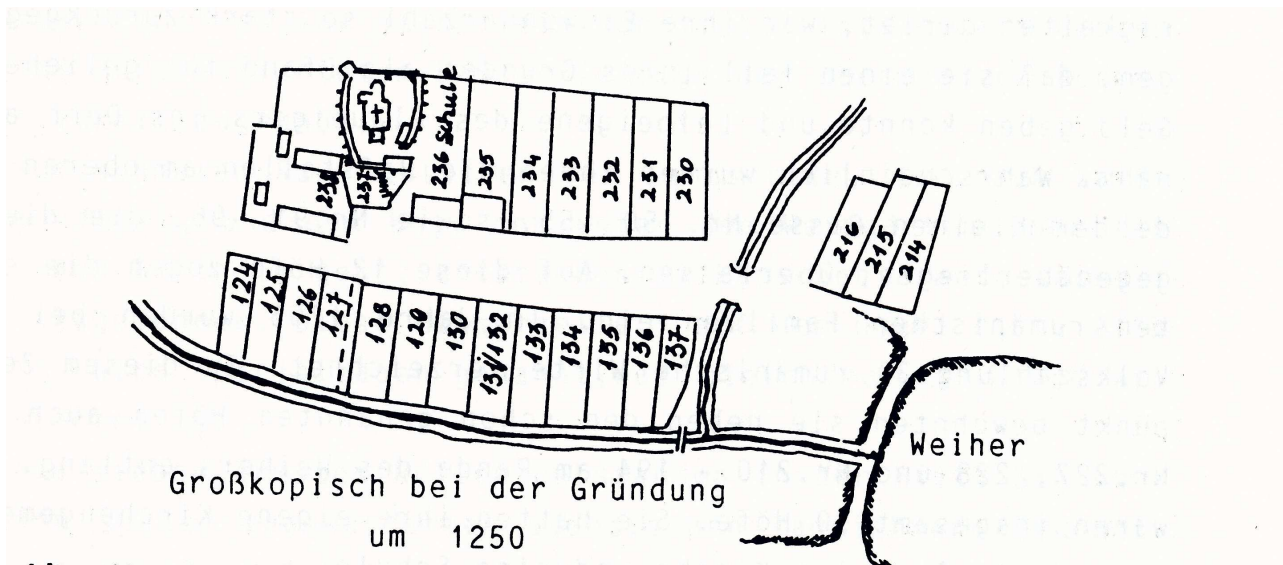
It would be possible that the Saxon settlers used the houses of the withdrawing Szeklers temporarily and that the locations of the individual farm sites remained in their possession. These plot sites then remained until the present time exclusively Saxon property which stayed untouched by the 'Kommassation' (confiscation) as the courts and gardens of the community.

But then, the ancestors started to survey plots for farms in the valley and distribute them by lottery. Directly below the 'Burgkuppe' where its slope reaches most deeply into the valley with a steep and abrupt drop off a farm could only be started with effort. But here an appropriately large piece of land, slightly off the village main alley, was provided for the church. Below of the church, located on the street, the school was to be built. Downhill, on a high margin the width of five farm places, the location for the parish was established. Adjacent to this three additional farms were distributed later. The first one remained vacant, the second only showed one house, and only the third was provided with outbuildings. The next farm, today number 243, cannot be ascribed to the first settlement period because under the house, - exactly below the spring which was located in the assumed Szekler settlement -, a strong, never running dry spring bubbles. The allocation of such a site for a farm seems unlikely, because in those days no lack of land to build existed. The adjacent farms to the north, numbers 244 – 248 belong to the so-called Pfaffeln, not only by local parlance but also because of the dimension of their surface areas. They are of a later construction period.

South of the school six farm sites were allocated, which reached to the 'Grävelbächlein' (Grävel small creek). Beyond that there were three, among them the 'Grävenhof' (Gräven farm) number 216, at the border of the property of the 'Gräven' (Earl) directly adjacent to 'Gräveln' (village of Gräveln). The region of today's farms Numbers 138 – 145 and Numbers 217 – 228 gave the owner the necessary space for his agricultural needs. It was partly developed only after his disfranchisement in 1477. On the opposite side of the village grounds the farms Numbers 124 – 137 were allocated specifically as farm sites, here it is to be noted, that today's farms Numbers 131 and 132, as their dimensions suggest, were the result of a later division of the original farm.

If we now visualize the expansion of the community at the time of its establishment we find that it consisted of no more than 24 farms and the church. If one counts an average of five members per family so we come up with a population of approximately 120 souls in the beginning.

Sketch of Grosskopisch at its formation about 1250.



As the number of landowners increased and the necessity came up to allocate farm sites to the young families, those in the Great Alley, numbers 118 – 123, and those opposite, Numbers 239 – 248, were divided. After four generations the ancestors were already forced to partition the slope in the Small Gate into farm lots. Thus the farms Numbers 21 – 55 emerged. The area between the creek and the row of houses was left unexploited at first. It served as a pasture for poultry, and, what was even more important, it served as a flood plain for the creek which rose above its banks with strong thunder storms. But it too became developed at a later time. About at the same time the 'Neugasse' (New Alley) emerged as were established the farms Numbers 15 – 18 in front of the Hill. At the close of the fifteenth century, at the upper end of the Great Alley the farms Numbers 138 – 145, 229 and 228, also the Numbers 211 – 213 were established, so that the community had 125 farmsteads at the beginning of the sixteenth century. At the census in the year 1532 the "Kepeysz" was listed as having 126 landowners.

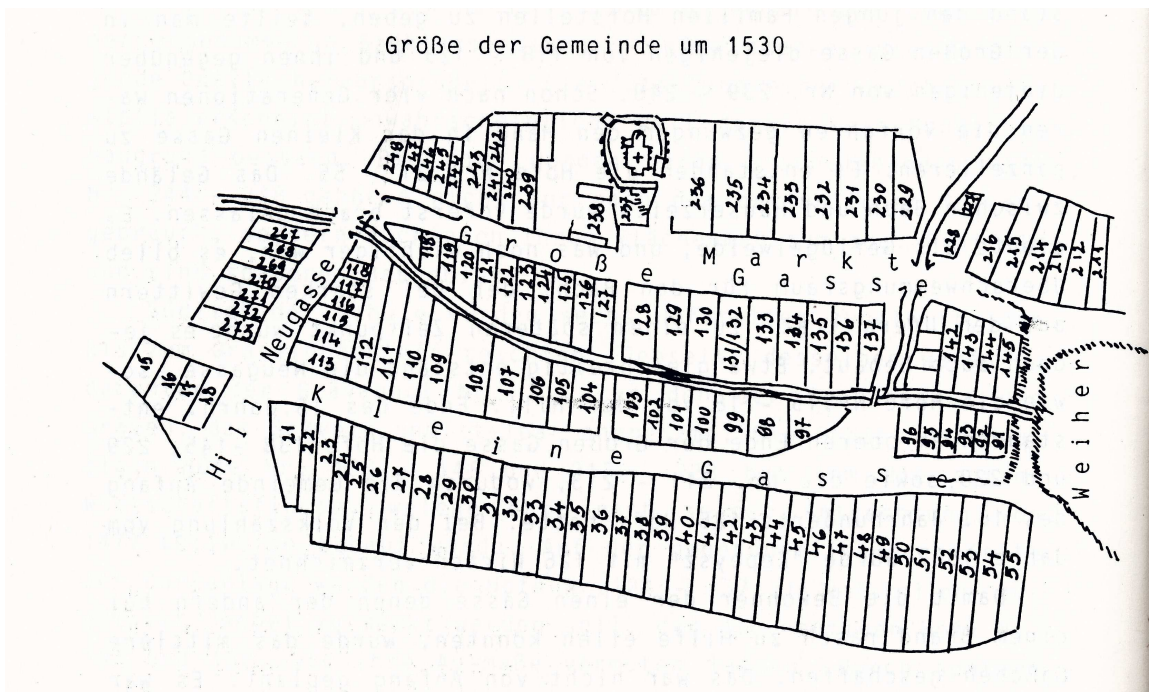
In order to be able for the people living in one alley to be able to reach quickly to help the inhabitants of the other alley in case of a fire the Middle Alley was formed. This had not been the plan at the beginning.

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It had not been necessary because the 'Kleine Gasse' (Small Alley) did not yet exist. Now the area necessary for the path in the middle was cut off from farm Number 127, by which this farm became slimmer than its neighbors.

When the community in the 17<sup>th</sup> century through the hardship of war, pestilence, and unbearable expenditures became impoverished, its population fell so much that the community could pledge a portion of its land as security for a loan of money and take serfs of the creditors into the village. Most likely the community let them have the farms Numbers 50-55 at the upper end of the 'Kleine Gasse' and Numbers 91-96 as well, which were opposite of them. The first Romanian families moved into these twelve units. In the census of the year 1765 thirty Romanian landowners were listed. At this point in time, besides occupying the farmsteads already listed, they also lived in the farmsteads Numbers 227, 228, and Numbers 210 – 194 at the edge of the lake. That was 30 farms in total. They had their own church community and a school.

Sketch of the size of the community around 1530.



After the year 1740 the number of the population jumped to double its size within fifty years. This put the community to the task to create new slots for farms. To this purpose they exchanged a meadow in the Pfaffeln from the pastor into one similar in Marhelt. The pastor, as it were as his excuse of having arranged the exchange, inscribed in his inventory: "It was only reeds." As a matter of fact, the eighteen houses built there, perished because of the overwhelming dampness of the ground.

On the narrow space between the country road to 'Waldhütten' and the way below the vineyards across the 'Hill' to 'Birthälm' fifteen small houses emerged for Saxon day-workers. This row of houses "auf dem Hügel" (on the hill), s. af'm häfal, is called "sparjalzäpan, which is synonymous with 'Armenviertel' (slum).

The seven poorest cottages turned up in the 'Hill'. They were occupied by wandering Saxon day-workers. During the Second World War they deteriorated and all were razed.

For the Romanian increase in population drainage of the lake provided space for housing which extended from the upper bridge to the merger with the 'Munzelbach' (Munzel creek) along both sides of the river. That once there had been a dam can be seen at the ascending slope of the terrain to the houses Numbers 146, 212, and 54, 91 in both alleys. About the lake it says in the first intake of the land in 1769: "The pond below the village has a marshy ground and is of no importance". Whether it was destroyed a little while later by a high tide or by people can no longer be determined. Because of its low significance the last option is conceivable. The fact is that the water drained away and the ground dried out. One still talks about the lake, but today there stand houses which are occupied by Romanians. These are the houses Numbers 146 – 188, 58 – 62, and 83 – 90. To the existence of the lake attests not only the name but also the memory of some villagers who found remnants of reeds at low depth when they dug for a well at the house Number 153.

When in the year 1901 the Orthodox Church was built the Protestant pastor noted that the ground was so soft in the foundation that one first had ram oak posts down so that the brickwork could be laid on top of it.

Some parcels for farms were also allocated in front of the 'Munzeln' (mountain? creek?).

According to lore, once only one 'Zigeuner' (Romany) lived in the village, who had moved there as a blacksmith. The Romanies grew fast and occupied nine cottages in 'Greveln' and twenty poor dwellings at the 'Zigeunerberg' (Romany Mountain) and in the creek bed below. Today, however, as the houses in the village became cheaper because of Saxons were moving away, several young Romanies have bought Saxon farmsteads.

As of now, Grosskopisch counts 274 farmsteads. Many houses fell into disrepair and collapsed and all houses in Pfaffeln and in der Hill did so. Others were demolished because excessive moisture of the grounds made them uninhabitable. This was not only due to the natural conditions of the land but also due to carelessness and ignorance of the residents who narrowed the creek bed, and, by depositing trash, caused silting of the creek. Therefore rainfalls not only caused floods but also the groundwater level at the bottom of the valley rose so much that both rows of houses along the creek were damaged. Another cause for floods must not be disregarded, that is draining the lake above the village contributed to flooding. With large downpours water first accumulated in the lake and afterwards it only slowly dripped downhill so that floods occurred less often.

When in the year 1847 the Protestant school was built, 170 Saxon and 80 Romanian homeowners were listed in the document of laying the foundation stone. Since then the circumstances of home ownership have changed remarkably. The following picture of the village shows the most recent changes as compared to the plan in the year 1938.



Picture of the village with both churches



After the Second World War everything began to waver. The farms and all property of the Saxons were expropriated. When their farmsteads were returned to the Saxons after ten years, they had deteriorated because the new owners had done nothing to maintain them. The previous owners were impoverished and uprooted because their livelihood was no longer secured in their home village. They began to migrate to the cities. In a few years they wanted to emigrate and leave their homeland forever. Thereby many farmsteads have changed ownership. A part of the farms were sold. The farms of the emigrants are taken over by the state at a cheap price. The emigrants had to transfer the farms to the state before they could leave and they had to pay the administrative expenses of it. Just as the state once set up state-owned farms with expropriated Saxon lands, so now it creates state-owned living quarters out of Saxon houses, which are administered by regional council which then leases these houses. Who is to carry the costs of their maintenance? Are they not to deteriorate to a larger extent?

After the last counting and numbering the farmsteads the total count is less by 36 as compared to before. That is because many vacant farms no longer were taken into account since they were located at the edge of the village or their small size did not seem suitable as a building site. This is what happened to those in the 'Hill'. Others were allocated to neighboring farm sites. In this manner the number of 306 houses, which is the number of farm sites before the Second World War, sank to 274. Among those are many whose houses were demolished so that they could be used as gardens by their Romanian owners, or, if they had formerly been Saxon property, they could be leased by the regional council. The loss of houses in no way asserted itself, because at the same time the number of people, both of Saxons and Romanians, declined to an even greater extent. Therefore there is no shortage of housing in the community today.

How large the losses were of the Saxon population's home ownership will be noted on the next page.

Sketch of:

Plan of the community  
Grosskopisch.

The legend explains which houses were owned by Saxons, Romanians, and Romanies (Gypsies) which were expropriated and subsequently sold to Romanians, Romanies, or the state.

Key:

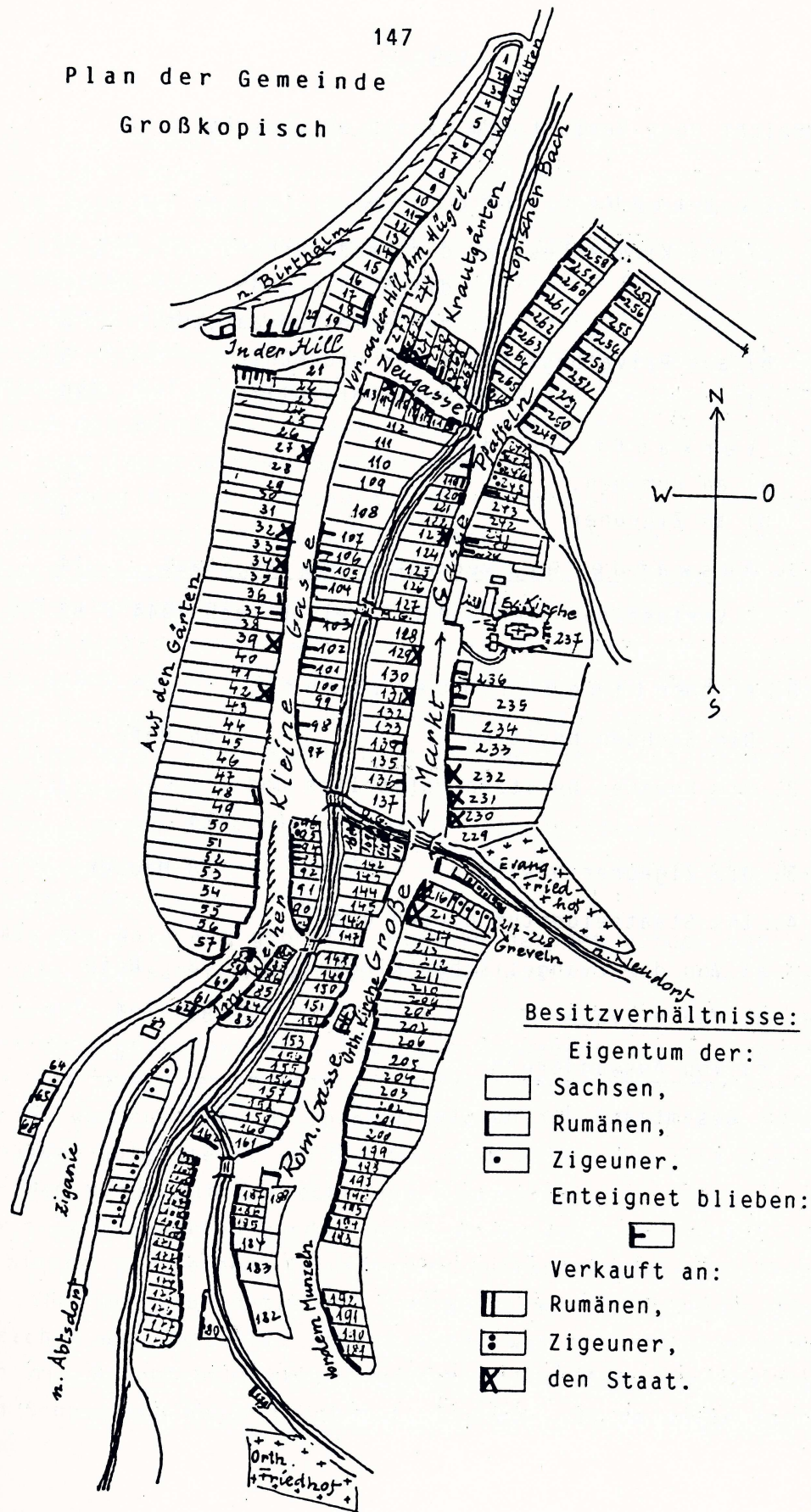
Property Ownership

- 1. Saxon
- 2. Romanian
- 3. Gypsy

Expropriated

Remained sold:

- 1. Romanian
- 2. Gypsy
- 3. The state





Survey of loss and homeownership

A) 1. Remaining expropriated:

a) From of property of the church:

- a. The Preacher's Court
- b. The school
- c. The community hall          total    3

b) From private property:

- a. Houses and mill                                         3
- b. Empty farm plots                                         39

2. Sold were:

- a. to Romanians     14
- b. to Romanies     9

3. Emigrants sold to the State:     14

Loss of farms and farm sites after 1944     82

B) Today's owners of farmsteads:

- 1. Saxons own:     56 farmsteads
- 2. Romanians own: (farm sites and farms)     124
- 3. Romanies own:     38 houses
- 4. Appropriated by the state: