

ULPIA TRAIANA SARMIZEGETUSA: *EXTRA MUROS* 23 EXCAVATIONS 1982—1984.  
AN INTERIM OPINION

Extra Muros 23 was discovered in 1981 when agricultural drainage operations cut into the walling of supposed Roman adjacent to the Roman colonia Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa. But the site was first brought to the notice of archaeologists in 1982 when two complete pottery oil lamps were discovered by children playing in the ditch near the exposed areas of walling.

A trial excavation by Ion Piso of the University of Cluj-Napoca revealed the remains of substantial mortared stone building into one corner of which had been set a pottery kiln.

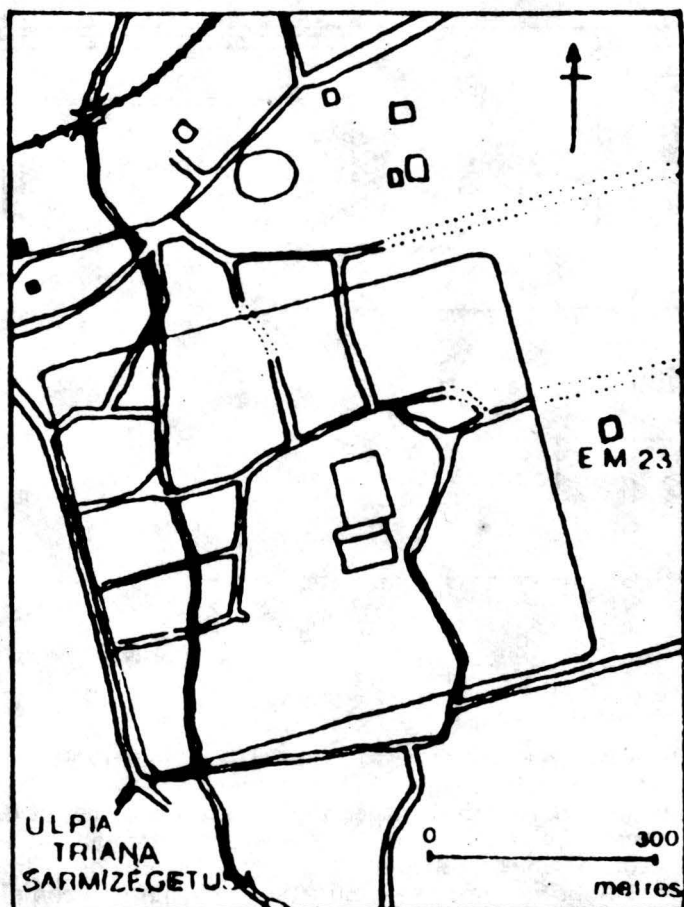


Fig. 1. Location Plan.

In June 1982, as part of an exchange scheme between Romanian and British archaeologists the author was asked by Dorin Alicu of the *Museul de Istorie a Transilvaniei* to extend the excavations of Ion Piso and investigate the relationship between kiln and building. Using a labour force of local Romanian people a trench of 10 m x 5 m was cut around the kiln. By cleaning away topsoil and preliminary investigation of the revealed features it quickly became clear that this area was inadequate and the trench was extended to 10 m x 10 m in June 1983. The following is an account of the results of those excavations.

*The excavations:*

Extra Muros 23 lies 50 metres east of Colonia Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa — a colonia established by Trajan after his second Dacian War in 107 AD. The site sits on slightly rising ground just beyond the probable remnants of the defensive ditches of the city. Some 40 metres to the north of the site a road, probably Roman in origin, runs from the east gate of the city to join the military way which runs north of the city to give access to, and cross, the Iron Gates Pass.

Visual inspection of the site in the absence of surveying equipment suggests that E.M.23 cuts a substantial rectangular building perhaps 35 m x 35 m. Excavations have revealed that the remains of this building still stand in some places to

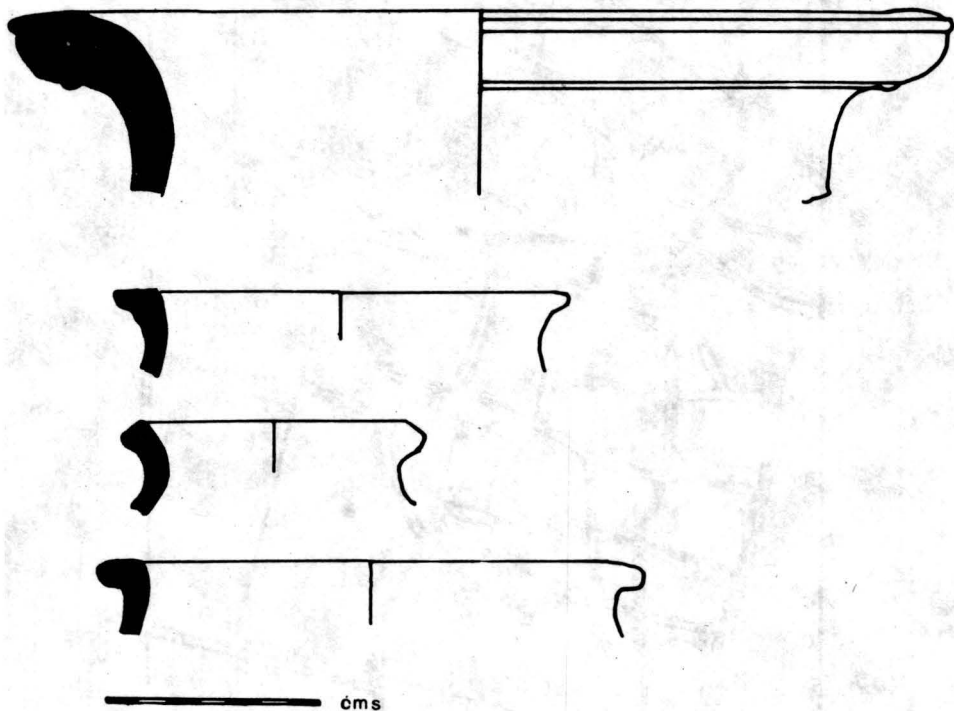


Fig. 2. Profiles of pottery types found in the pits below Extra Muros 23 and tentatively identified as early 6.

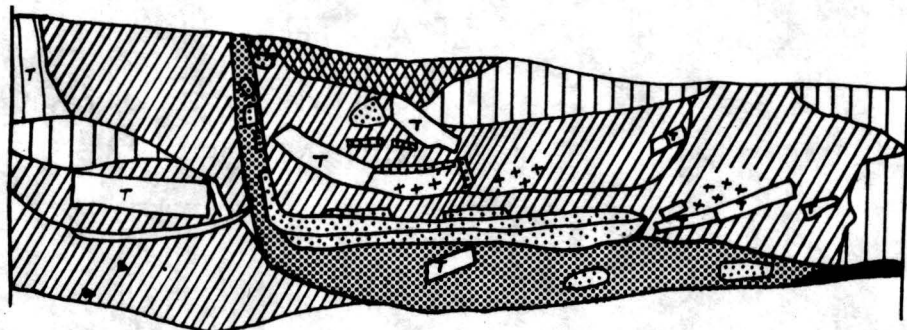
a height of 2 metres from the base of the foundations.

The drainage ditch, which damaged the site, cut the corner of E.M.23 nearest to the city walls. Limited work on the site was concentrated on the area damaged by the ditch which, although at its base had cut deep into natural, revealed in its margins the remains of refuse pits and exposed a complete profile

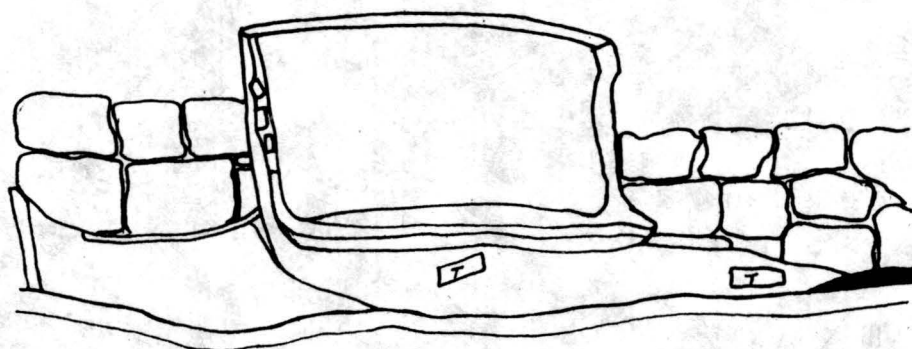
of the building. It was the extent of damage and the availability of time which persuaded me to excavate a 10 m section along the edge of the ditch.

### PHASE I

The initial phase of the site was revealed in the base of, and in the section revealed by, the drainage ditch. The areas damaged by the ditch were cursorily examined in poor conditions and the presence of pits noted. It was the sections A — A' und Z — Z' which showed that the site E.M.23 was first used as a refuse area;



0 50  
cms











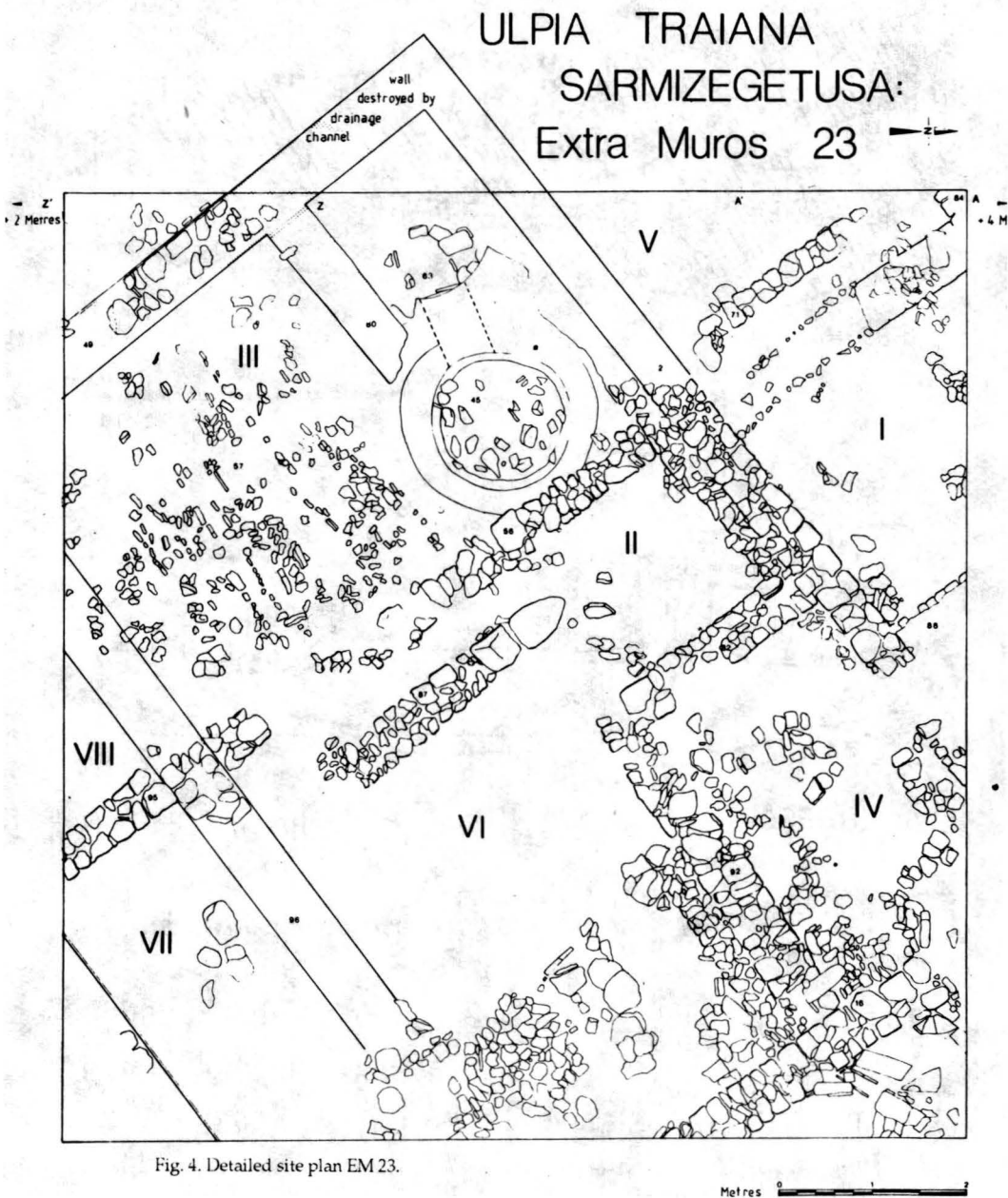
- |  |  |
|--|--|
|  charcoal     |  solid mortar     |
|  burnt clay   |  orange-grey clay |
|  tile         |  loam             |
|  mortar lumps |  red brown clay   |

Fig. 3. Section (above) and stylised cutaway section of the small oven 103, as excavated.

pits 10 and 42 illustrating the dumping of a variety of organic debris including ox bone boars' teeth as well as pottery sherds and glass fragments. There were no complete pots discovered in the refuse layers but we await complete excavation.

Towards the end of the phase, probably associated with an earlier building on an adjacent site, came the construction of the small mortared wall 36 which appears, from the section, to respect and surround the hearth 44. That the hearth was built before the wall is proved by its cutting layer 40, the charcoal which overlies pit



42. Whether simple pit or hearth, 44 was ringed by flat sherds of amphora and contained many fragments of perhaps five vessels. None of the sherds discovered was either of rim or base and no profile could be devised to date the deposit.

This period of refuse disposal was probably prolonged, a fact suggested by the build up and spread of debris layers 7, 41, 43 and 46.

### PHASE II

Phase II of E.M.23 is the period of construction of the first building on the site. When this phase began, with the cutting of foundations, for walls 49 and 2, into pit 7 and through the spread of debris from 7, the small wall 36 and amphora lined pit were still in use. Associated with the building phase II was a sealing layer of clay which was deliberately laid over the refuse layers 7 and 41 between walls 2 and 49.

Walls 2 and 49 were the external walls of EM 23, but as first conceived they appear never to have been completed, for above the clay layer 6 and below the concrete floors of a later building is a layer of destruction debris-identified as layers 5, 11, 51, 14 (see fig. 5).

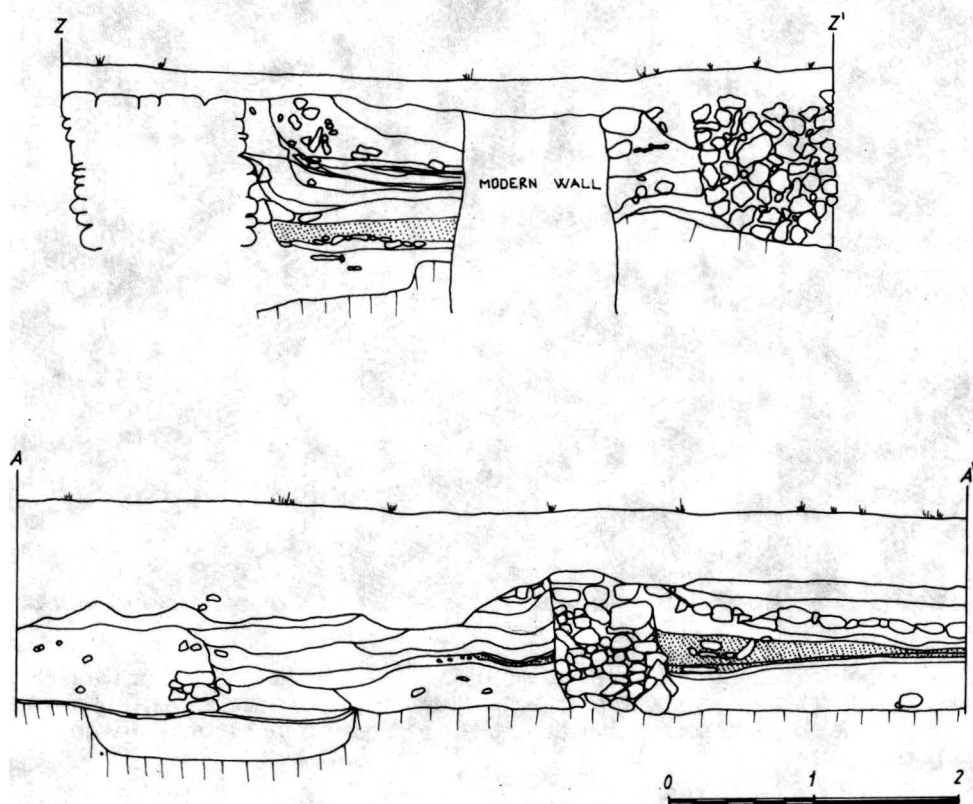


Fig. 5. Extra Muros 23 sections taken from east side of drainage channel.

Containing burnt tile, large quantities of charcoal and very little burnt pottery the nature of the destruction layer implies the burning down of an incomplete building, although complete excavation of the building may reveal that the sealing clay layer 6 was in fact a floor surface and that building was indeed complete.

### PHASE III

The destruction of the partially complete building at the end of phase II resulted in a period of abandonment for the site; layers 17, 13, 9, 35, 30 of soil with no occupation debris began to build up and presumably the result of weed growth and windblown dust accumulation. How long the building stood empty is unclear but will doubtless be revealed by further excavation.

After a period of dereliction the site was given a new lease of life and the second part of phase III marks a period of rebuilding. The foundations of walls 2 and 49 are topped by new mortared stone walls and a series of concrete floors laid on pitched stones throughout the building. The construction of the concrete floors and the plastering of the internal faces of the new stone walls appears to indicate a period of considerable affluence for the site of EM 23 — that this period lasted for a long time is suggested by the fact that the internal walls of the building were replastered at least twice and in the case of wall 49 three times (fig. 6,7).



Fig. 6. Before the removed of the concrete floors.

Probably contemporary with this building phase is the capping of walls 88 and 72 with a layer of concrete, in the upper surface of this concrete were observed two steight ridges implying that the walls had been capped to take a wooden superstructure.

### PHASE IV

The mortared house of Phase III, as yet, has yielded no clear dating evidence either from inclusions within the walls or concrete floors. What is clear however is that the building was abandoned and decayed sufficiently for a less substantial building of dry stone walling and earthen floors to be built above the ruins. In rooms I, IV, V, an earthen floor overlay the concrete of earlier floors and the capped remains of walls 72 and 88. In the central area, rooms II, III, IV, and VI, the remains of later walls 56 and 87 overlay the grubbed out foundations of earlier walls. Some of the rebuilding in this Phase involved the buttressing of





Fig. 7. After the removed of the concrete floors.

walls 2, 92, 91, and this may imply the need to support some sort of superstructure perhaps more involved than simply a roof.

The major intrusive feature of this period of building, though, was the insertion of the pottery kiln 45, let through the floors of rooms II and III and truncating wall 80. Probably contemporary with the construction of the kiln was the building of wall 87, perhaps as a retaining wall, against which was placed, lying on top of a layer of charcoal debris, a small oven, 103. Subsequent development of the site saw the probable replacement of wall 87 by wall 56 flanking and slightly overlaying the pottery kiln. The building of this wall marked the end of the useful life of oven 103.

#### *Final Phase*

So far EM 23 has yielded no unambiguous dating evidence, even the coin of Septimius Severus found set into the latest floor of room IV looks like a residual unless we are to see the entire development of the site take place over just 90 years.

In the Final Phase of the site the kiln was left stacked full with waste pottery; in the upper fill of the kiln which comprised mostly soil and roof tile fragments, were two pilae — circular from an hypocaust — which would imply perhaps later stone robbing whilst the site was at least partially open. Certainly minor stone robbing on the site accounted for the state of the dry stone walls, but the site appears to have suffered no serious robbing a factor that would argue against continued occupation of the surrounding area after the abandonment of EM 23. There is certainly no evidence as yet of mediaeval activity on the site.

#### *DISCUSSION*

Although EM 23 has yielded no unambiguous dating evidence the author feels it is possible to offer the following scenario for the development and final demise of the site — but it cannot be stressed too strongly that such a scenario will almost inevitably change as research and excavation at the site continue.

In the years immediately following the establishment of the colonia Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa the site was used as a refuse area — probably because it was well away from the city, but equally likely because it was adjacent to another building as yet undiscovered but whose occupants needed somewhere to throw their refuse. This area of shallow pits was soon developed though, presumably at the point at which pressure on the land within the colonia became too great for continued intra mural development. This could have taken place within 10 years of the foundation of the colonia, but as yet there is no evidence to support this.

The first stage in the building of the structure at EM 23 was the sealing of the refuse pits by a layer of yellow clay. Where this clay came from, specifically, is unclear but as the underlying natural is clay it need not have come far. Once sealed the foundations for a substantial building were dug down into the refuse pits an attempt to prevent later subsidence. The first building was never completed for it was destroyed by fire, a fire which may be as a result of the well documented raid by the Iazyges in 168 AD. Later, once the site had stood derelict long enough for weeds; rain and windblow deposition to form a fine dark soil layer across the abandoned site, the building was recommissioned. The structure was finished comprising substantial mortared stone walls, concrete floors and tiled roof.

How long this building survived is not yet clear, a coin of the Emperor Septimius Severus was found in an earthen floor of phase III which covered the concrete floor in room IV, but this is probably a residual deposit. It is clear, however, that the mortared stone building stood for some considerable time before the insertion of the kiln into rooms II and III for at least one wall, 49, had been replastered twice—which could imply a life of over 100 years.

As for the kiln, the date of its use cannot be clearly estimated without some analysis of the pottery it contained and the author looks forward to the academic year 1984/1985 for the commencement of such a study.

Why the kiln went out of use is not clear, but when it was abandoned it was filled with broken and discarded pottery, including two circular pilae from hypocaust, but including no kiln wasters — implying that the potters dump has yet to be found.

Once the kiln had gone out of use the site continued to be occupied for a period, the rough wall 57 was probably built at this time. Soon after this the place was abandoned.

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