URBAN ARCHAEOLOGY IN CLUJ-NAPOCA.
THE FINDINGS FROM THE ART MUSEUM' COURTYARD

LUCA-PAUL PUPEZĂ

Résumé: L'archéologie urbaine suit le développement d'une ville au cours de toute son histoire, en insistant sur des notions telles que dedans-dehors, planifiée-spontanées, denses et dispersées, notions qui sont des concepts communs pour les archéologues et les architectes ou urbanistes, faisant partie d'archéologie du processus d'urbanisation. Outre la récupération, la protection et la conservation, à l'archéologie urbaine un nouvel objectif a été ajouté: celui de l'intégration du patrimoine dans l'environnement urbain. L'archéologie urbaine a plus à voir avec les problèmes spécifiques de la ville contemporaine, avec l'urbanisation croissante et la mondialisation, et moins à faire avec la chronologie ou la spatialité. Les découvertes de la cour du Musée d'Art couvrent l'ensemble du segment chronologique urbain de Cluj-Napoca, faisant de ces découvertes un point d'intérêt de l'archéologie urbaine.

Mots-clés: archéologie urbaine; patrimoine; urbanisme; Napoca.

I. Urban archaeology

By urban archaeology[1] we refer to that archaeological research of a broad purpose taking place in a city, which follows the whole chronological development, from its founding until today[2]. This is not a research confined to only one historical age or to just one monument but one that has a global perspective, focused on wider phenomena such as the man-place, climate-economy or change-environment relationship. From this perspective, the concept of urban archaeology differs from the simple archaeology in a city, offering as an alternative the integration and not the transposition of an interpretative pattern. Its standards and techniques are very different from those of classical, systematic archaeology, reflecting in certain measure archaeology's adaptability to the new realities. Preventive research in the cities is first of all limited by time, by space, or by financial or human resources. The digging techniques have also been modified, stratigraphy, the method of the singular complex or digging in disproportionate layers being emphasized upon. Unlike systematic archaeological research, the preventive one focuses on details and not on the whole, on particular and not on the general.

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[1] General aspects of urban archaeology in Romania have been taken into account in a larger paper, partially used in the present paper: P. Pupeză, *Arheologia urbană în România. De la orașul antic la orașul contemporan*, in H. Pop et alii (eds.), Identități culturale locale și regionale în context european. In memoriam Alexandru V. Matei, Zalău 2010 (in print).

[2] R. Francovich, D. Manacorda, Dizionario di archaeologia, Roma-Bari 2002, p. 350, s.v. *urbana, archaeologia*; Ch. E. Orser, Encyclopedia of Historical Archaeology, London-New York, p. 612, s.v. *urban archaeology*.

Urban archaeology follows the development of a city during the course of its whole history and emphasizes notions such as empty-full, inside-outside, rich-poor, native-foreign, planned-spontaneous, and dense-dispersed. These notions are common concepts to archaeologists and public authorities, architects or urban planners, making archaeology part of the urbanization process[3]. In truth urban archaeology has more to do with the specific problems of the contemporary city, with increased urbanization, and less with chronology or spatiality. Modern town planning launched the concept of a city that is connected, tied, amalgamated by several connections: social, economic, environmental and historic[4]. Besides saving, protecting and conserving the patrimony, a new goal was added in what the archaeological research regards that of integrating patrimony in the urban environment. In fact the term "patrimony" gained new meaning, it being different from any other patrimony by simply belonging to the city, as a unique, individualized entity. Unlike cultural patrimony, (which is) a vague, relative, general notion, urban patrimony is more precisely defined. Thus a more precise goal can be given[5].

Strangely, economic, political or cultural globalization led to a deep segmentation of human society, by disrupting the balance between tradition and recent values. Cities are the main vector of this phenomenon, each transforming in a small, globalised world, breaking the limits of traditional boundaries, imposing a new vocabulary, symbolic for group identity. The traditional life style lost the battle with modern times and the old cultural and political identities become daily little more than simple clichés[6]. Urban archaeology wants to provide an answer to the new global requirements of the city, by marking the identity of the city instead of the identity of its old inhabitants. Herein lays the subtle difference between classical archaeology, seeking to identify and mark spaces in the past, and urban archaeology, seeking to identify and mark spaces in the present.

II. Cluj-Napoca – urban site

Every contemporary city is an urban site, no matter the economic development, how much space is used for living and for how long people have lived there. But the importance of every site for urban archaeology differs on the basis of a series of decisive factors. Among these is the chronological factor (people lived there since Antiquity, Middle Ages, Modern Age), the continuity/discontinuity of some elements of urbanism (fortified space, organized streets, public spaces), the relevance of archaeological finds (stone constructions, deposits rich in materials, different artifacts) and the quality of auxiliary sources (aerial photographs, cadastral surveys, topographical surveys, written documents).

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[3] ****Archaeology and urban development. New Council of Europe code of practice*, The European Archaeologist 13, Praha 2000, p. 1-3.

[4] ***The New Charter of Athens. The European Council of Town Planners' Vision for Cities in the 21st century, Athens 2003, passim.

[5] *Archaeology and urban development*, p. 2-3.

[6] J. Friedman, *The World City hypothesis*, in P. Knox, P. Taylor (eds.), World cities in a world system, Cambridge 1995, p. 317-331.

Taking these factors into consideration, among the most important urban archaeological sites in Romania are: Alba-Iulia (*Apulum*, Weissenburg, Gyulafe-hérvár), Bistrița (Bistritz, Beszterce), Brașov (Kronstadt, Brassó), Cluj-Napoca (*Napoca*, Klausburg, Kolozsvár), Constanța (*Tomis*), Drobeta-Turnu Severin (*Drobeta*), Mangalia (*Callatis*), Sibiu (Hermannstadt, Nagyszeben), Sighișoara (Schaessburg, Segesvár) or Turda (*Potaissa*, Thorenburg, Torda). At a first glance, cities that are created in Antiquity (*Apulum*, *Napoca*, *Tomis*, *Drobeta*, *Callatis*, *Potaissa*) are the ones that provide most information, due to long functioning, a continuity of the urban elements and the plentitude of archaeological finds. Cities dated in the Middle Ages (Bistritz, Kronstad, Hermannstadt, Schaessburg) have more material when it comes to auxiliary sources or continuity of habitation while not lacking archaeological discoveries.

III. Archaeological findings from the Art Museum' courtyard

The findings from the Art Museum' courtyard (the Bánffy Palace), the result of archaeological preventive research[7], cover the whole urban chronological segment of the city of Cluj-Napoca, making these discoveries a point of interest from the perspective of urban archaeology.

Bánffy Palace, the highest achievement of Transylvanian baroque, is situated in the central area of Cluj-Napoca, in Piața Unirii, next to St. Michael cathedral and the statue of Mathias Rex (Pl. I). Geographically, the palace is on the first terrace of Someș River, just like the whole old center of the city, about 500 m south of the river. A single section was made, S1, 23 × 3 m, with N-S orientation, (Pl. II-III, V-VI), the layers containing archaeological materials being one on the top of the other on a depth of over 6 m (Pl. IV).

Contemporary Age

The latest complex identified during the excavations in the Art Museum' courtyard belongs to the contemporary age. It is part of a concrete structure from a cinema (named Apolló, Capitol and then Progresul) that functioned from the inter-war period up until 1971 (Pl VII). The material in the complex was poor, more important being two coins dated in the inter-war period (Pl. VIII-IX).

Modern age

Findings dated in the modern age are closely related to the construction of the palace, in the period 1774-1785, by the governor of Transylvania G. Bánffy. In the south-east of the courtyard were found two stone walls, parts of a cellar, one of them with an arch. The building which these walls belonged to was partially destroyed, in

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[7] D. Alicu, A. Isac, P. Pupeză, B. Gergely, *Cluj-Napoca, punct: Muzeul de Artă*, CCA 2009, nr. 140, p. 285-287; A. Antal, P. Pupeza, *Ceramica ștampilată de la Napoca. Descoperirile din curtea Muzeului de Artă*, in V. Rusu-Bolindeț, T. Sălăgean, R. Varga (eds.), Studia Archaeologica et Historica in honorem magistri Dorin Alicu, Cluj-Napoca 2010, p. 67-85.

order to gain enough space to build the palace. The cellar was filled with black, clay-like earth, with a persistent smell.

Two phases of the pavement of the courtyard remained, one paving with river stone, afterwards covered with massive stone slabs, of an irregular shape, with a relatively smoothed top surface (Pl. XII). Most of the complexes of this age are pits for obtaining slaked lime (Pl. X-XI). The pits had different shapes and were filled with lime, sand or pebbles and scarcely any archaeological material. In the cultural layers of the modern age we found pottery fragments, one with an inscription on the bottom (Pl. XXI/2, 4), clay pipes (Pl. XIV, XVI), coins (Pl. XIII), tiles (Pl. XV, XVII), processed stones, one from a window frame as well as different bronze and iron objects.

Medieval age

We could not observe stratigraphically successive layers between the 12th-17th centuries of the medieval age, the most consistent layer being a leveling one, with mixed materials. Few pits and a "V"-shaped ditch were found. The most consistent layer of material has a black color, with many stones, some of them of great size. The material found consisted of ceramic fragments (Pl. XXI/1, 3), animal bones, tiles (Pl. XVIII, XX), coins (Pl. XIX, XXII) and different bronze and iron objects.

Roman age

From the Roman city of *Napoca*, at least two phases have been identified. To the Severan phase, after the second half of the 2nd century AD, belonged a road made of stone slabs, with the approximate orientation NV-SE, similar to a *cardo*, with a massive foundation of river rocks and sand (Pl. XXV). In the debris where the slabs were found some processed stones have been discovered as well (Pl. XXIII/1), including a funerary cone (Pl. XXIII/2), coins (Pl. XXIV), many pottery fragments (Pl. XXVI), tiles, ceramic pavement pieces, bronze and iron objects as well as animal bones, including horns.

To the Hadrianic phase, dated in the first half of the 2nd century AD, belonged a thick layer of reddish burning, with a lot of archaeological material: pottery fragments, animal bones, a large quantity of bronze slag, iron objects as well as a massive bronze coin. No doubt we are dealing with a construction that burnt, the fire being strong enough to almost vitrify the layer of sand and pebbles from underneath.

Neolithic age

The oldest culture layer we could identify belongs to the Neolithic age, where we found a lot of bones, processed flint as well as pottery fragments belonging to the cultural group Cluj-Cheile Turzii, without finding an archaeological complex however.

IV. Urban archaeology in Cluj-Napoca

All the findings from the Art Museum' courtyard remained at the level of a rescue excavation, just like all the other discoveries in Cluj-Napoca or any other of the above-mentioned urban sites. The material was separated by ages in order for it to be

published by the experts, increasing the amount of knowledge we posses about the province Dacia, the medieval age or the modern age. For saving, conservation and capitalizing on the patrimony it is, probably, more than enough. But, from the perspective of urban archaeology, integrating the patrimony in the local environment, transforming it into an identity symbol or from vague, cultural patrimony into real, urban patrimony, this was not succeeded.

Thus, the Roman or early medieval findings have too few connections with the modern cities, which, from the perspective of urban archaeology, is the main failure. In the way it is now conceived urban archaeology is missing from the Romanian archaeology. In Romania urban archaeology is more of a wish, being rather archaeology inside a city, an archaeology separated on ages, in which the general aspect is missed by following particular points.

Such a fragmented archaeology follows just the history of the Roman city, of the medieval city or of the modern one. Even if all these stages are united in the covers of a single book, we still lack that unifying, global perspective and we miss the general notions that break the boundaries of time. History is thus not the history of Cluj-Napoca[8], but the history of the cities of Cluj-Napoca, the history of Cluj, of Klausenburg, of Kolozsvár, or of the Roman *Napoca*.

V. Urban archaeology – perspectives

One of the problems solved in the West due to urban archaeology was that of passing from Late Antiquity to Middle Ages, from the Roman to the medieval city but the solution did not cone by following the disparate history of a site. The city is a product of a political context and the changing of the political context brings the changing or disappearance of the city[9]. The Roman city is no exception: with the disappearance of the Roman Empire it will be subject to numerous changes or even disappear. The medieval city replacing the Roman one is also a by-product of the political context, thus it is a city entirely different from the previous one, with completely different aspects[10]. Beyond the differences between the Roman and medieval city, some aspects of continuity were discovered, especially as a result of the rescue excavations in urban sites. The presence of common elements between the Roman city and the medieval one is due chiefly to a continuity of urban life in some cities, even after the fall of the Roman Empire.

An important clue relating to the continuation of urban life is the overlapping of the medieval and Roman streets[11]. If Roman cities had disappeared, it would have been impossible for the streets to have the same course, the old one being most likely

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[8] Şt. Pascu (coord.), Istoria Clujului, Cluj-Napoca 1974, passim.
[9] M. I. Finley, *The ancient city: from Fustel de Coulanges to Max Weber and beyond*, in B. D. Shaw, R. P. Saller (eds.), Economy and society in Ancient Greece, London 1981, p. 21.
[10] D. Hill, *Unity and diversity - a framework for the study of European towns,* in R. Hodges, B. Hobbley (eds.), The rebirth of towns in the west AD 700–1050, London 1988, p. 8-15.
[11] B. Ward-Perkins, From Classical Antiquity to the Middle Ages: urban public building in northern and central Italy, Oxford 1984, p. 179.

covered by vegetation. When a society changes the topography of living changes, so accidental continuity is almost excluded[12].

The most examples obviously come from Italy, where over 20 present day cities follow the Roman street course, some almost completely[13]. Fewer such examples come from Great Britain, France, Spain or Germany. In Verona (Italy), archaeological excavations proved what the street topography assumed: an overlapping of Roman and medieval streets. But, after the fall of the Empire, the intensity of urban living decreased. In an *insula* it was discovered a continuity of living in the outside area, towards the street, while in the inside area, black earth separating the two living stages was found[14]. In other Italian cities (Brescia, Verona, Pavia), was found black earth deposited between the Roman and medieval periods and this lead to an initial assumption about an abandonment of living at the end of the Roman Empire. Afterwards it was noticed that this earth does not appear inside the habitation structures, rather proving a reduction in habitation, but not its disappearance[15].

A special case of urban continuity is represented by the *praetorium* of a city. Home of the *praeses provinciae* or of a local military leader, the *praetorium* was often placed near the walls. In this building, especially in Gallo-Roman cities, the Frankish king, the duke or count will choose to reside, the Roman *praetorium* becoming the medieval *palatium*[16]. The discovery of the *praetorium* of the city of *Genava* (Geneva, Switzerland) proved archaeologically what was mentioned only in the written papers of the time[17]. It seems we have the same situation for the *praetorium* from *Colonia Claudia Ara Agrippinensium* (Köln, Germany), which was used for a while as a palace by the Merovingian kings[18]. In fact, even maintaining the functionality of the streets implies that some authority was present in the city after the Roman administration was gone. Such an authority probably took charge of keeping the bridges and the sewage systems functioning. Here we can include the conservation of the Roman *forum* used as a market place in the medieval time (Florence, Brescia, Verona)[19].

Along with the streets, the other topographic example of continuity is represented by fortifications. Due to a decrease in what regards urban living, at the beginning of the Middle Ages and up to the 12th century, no Roman fortification was enlarged, in certain cases fortifications being kept as they were in the Antiquity. Afterwards, as the number of urban dwellers swelled, most of the Roman city walls were destroyed. They

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[12] P. Banks, *The Roman inheritance and topographical transitions in early medieval Barcelona*, in T. F. C. Blagg, R. F. J. Jones, S. J. Keay (eds.), Papers in Iberian archaeology, Oxford 1984, p. 629.

[13] B. Ward-Perkins, *The towns of northern Italy: rebirth or renewal?*, in R. Hodges, B. Hobbley (eds.), op.cit., p. 18.

[14] P. J. Hudson, *La dinamica dell'insediamento urbano nell' area del cortile del Tribunale di Verona. L'età medievale*, Archeologia Medievale 12, Firenze 1985, p. 282-291.

[15] B. Ward-Perkins, op. cit., p. 18, with bibliography.

[16] C. Brühl, *Problems of the continuity of Roman civitates in Gaul, as illustrated by the interrelation of cathedral and palatium*, in R. Hodges, B. Hobbley (eds.), op.cit., p. 44.

[17] L. Blondel, *Praetorium, palais burgonde et château comtal*, Genava 18, Genève 1940, p. 69-87.

[18] W. Janssen, *The rebirth of towns in the Rhineland*, in R. Hodges, B. Hobbley (eds.), op.cit., p. 50, with bibliography.

[19] B. Ward-Perkins, From Classical Antiquity to the Middle Ages: urban public building in northern and central Italy, Oxford 1984, p. 182-186.

were kept only as streets that follow the patrol road[20]. Unlike the maintaining of the streets or of some buildings, usage of Roman fortifications does not necessarily imply continuity of habitation. It is the case of most Roman fortifications reused by early medieval towns in Great Britain. Here, like in other places in Germany[21], the Roman city did not transform itself into a center for urban life during the Middle Ages, but it functioned as a place of refuge[22]. For this reason the direction of the streets was lost, except the main streets connecting the gates.

The situation of urban centers in Dacia after the withdrawal of the Roman administration is an integral part of this transformation phenomenon of Roman urban life into medieval urban life. Based on information obtained from archaeological excavations, results that *Napoca* had a right-angled enclosure and the plan of the streets was orthogonal[23]. The fortified enclosure of the Roman city was archaeologically observed on three sides, those from the west and north being overlapped by the medieval fortification (Pl. I). The first medieval fortified enclosure, *Castrum Clusium*, seems to have occupied the north-west corner of the Roman city[24], the enclosure being afterwards enlarged, exceeding the limits of the antique settlement.

By following the street layout on a map, we can easily assume the existence of a *cardo maximus* along Ferdinand street, the medieval *Hid utcza*, and then in Piața Unirii, in front of Bánffy Palace. The route of the *decumanus maximus* was probably along 21 Decembrie and Memorandumului streets, the *Belső Monostor utcza* from the Middle Ages. The importance of the direction of these two streets is obvious in the Middle Ages, the two main access roads following their course as shown in maps dating from that period. If correctly identified, the fortified enclosure *Castrum Clusium* followed on two sides the Roman walls, on one side the *cardo maximus* and on the other side the *decumanus maximus*, intersecting each other near its south-east corner. Other streets that follow Roman ones could be I. Bob, Iuliu Maniu, Napoca or Cotiță streets. For those, we lack archaeological proof, the only clues coming from medieval or modern maps.

Just like other European cities, in certain areas of Cluj-Napoca was found a black earth layer separating the late Roman layer from that of the early medieval one, the situation being proven stratigraphicaly in the Art Museum' courtyard. But, in the present stage of research, we cannot say whether this is a general phenomenon in the whole city or it is specific only to certain areas.

It cannot be made any direct connection, similar to the *praetorium-palatium*, between some Roman buildings and early medieval fortifications inside the antique walls. In the case of *Napoca – Castrum Clusium*, one can speculate that the medieval habitation evolved in the north-west corner of the Roman fortification because there

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[20] C. Brühl, op. cit., p. 44.

[21] W. Janssen, op. cit., p. 47-51.

[22] D. G. Russo, Town Origins and Development in Early England, c. 400–950 A.D., London 1998, with the whole bibliography of the phenomenon.

[23] H. Daicoviciu, Napoca romană, in Șt. Pascu (coord.), Istoria Clujului, Cluj-Napoca 1974, p. 25-49; RepCluj, p. 118-154, fig. 69, s.v. *Cluj*.

[24] J. Lukács, Povestea orașului-comoară. Scurtă istorie a Clujului și a monumentelor sale, Cluj-Napoca 2005, p. 28-32, with bibliography.

were the ruins of a more massif construction, such as the *praetorium*, almost always placed near the enclosure wall. It would be identical to situations in sites such as Geneva or Köln. Early medieval engravings and maps show a higher density of habitation in this area, but it is not enough to prove this.

Besides these rather topographical than archaeological observations, details of continuity/discontinuity of the urban phenomenon are missing. Due to the lack of consistent archaeological excavations, we do not know how many of the medieval streets follow the Roman course. Thus, we cannot surely prove that the main roads connecting the gates survived, that the fortress was used in the Medieval Age or that some *insulae* were kept in use, as a sign of true urban life. Generally this is the course of things with regards to most of the information we have about this phenomenon on the actual territory of Romania. We can only make assumptions without having certain information. It is an important aspect of history that urban archaeology could clarify.

VI. Conclusions

The transformation of cities in small, globalised worlds represents a general tendency of global urbanism. Sooner or later this will deeply affect all cities, including Cluj-Napoca, forcing them to discover new identities and to build new individualities. Urban archaeology is an integral part of this process.

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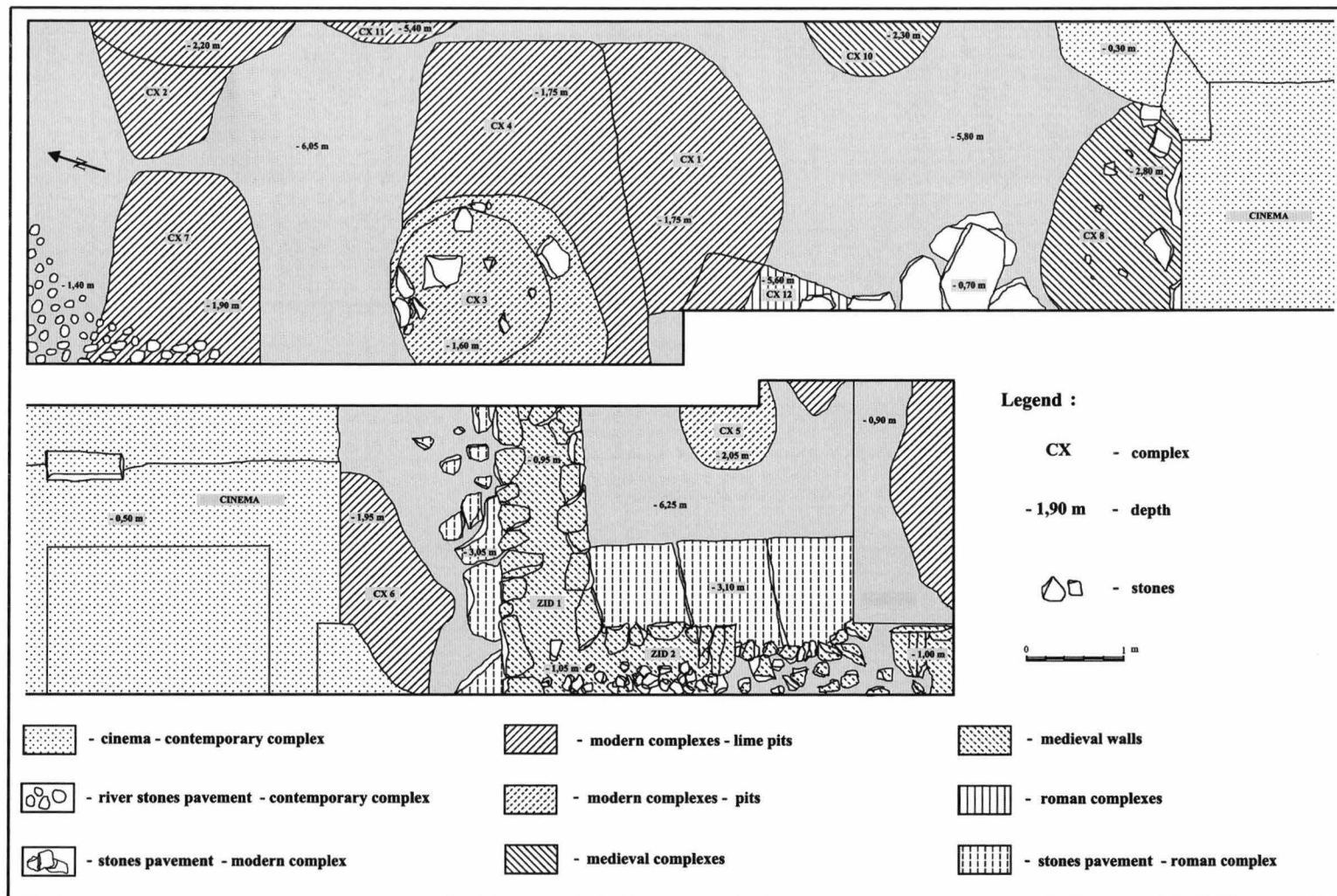National History Museum of Transylvania, Cluj-Napoca
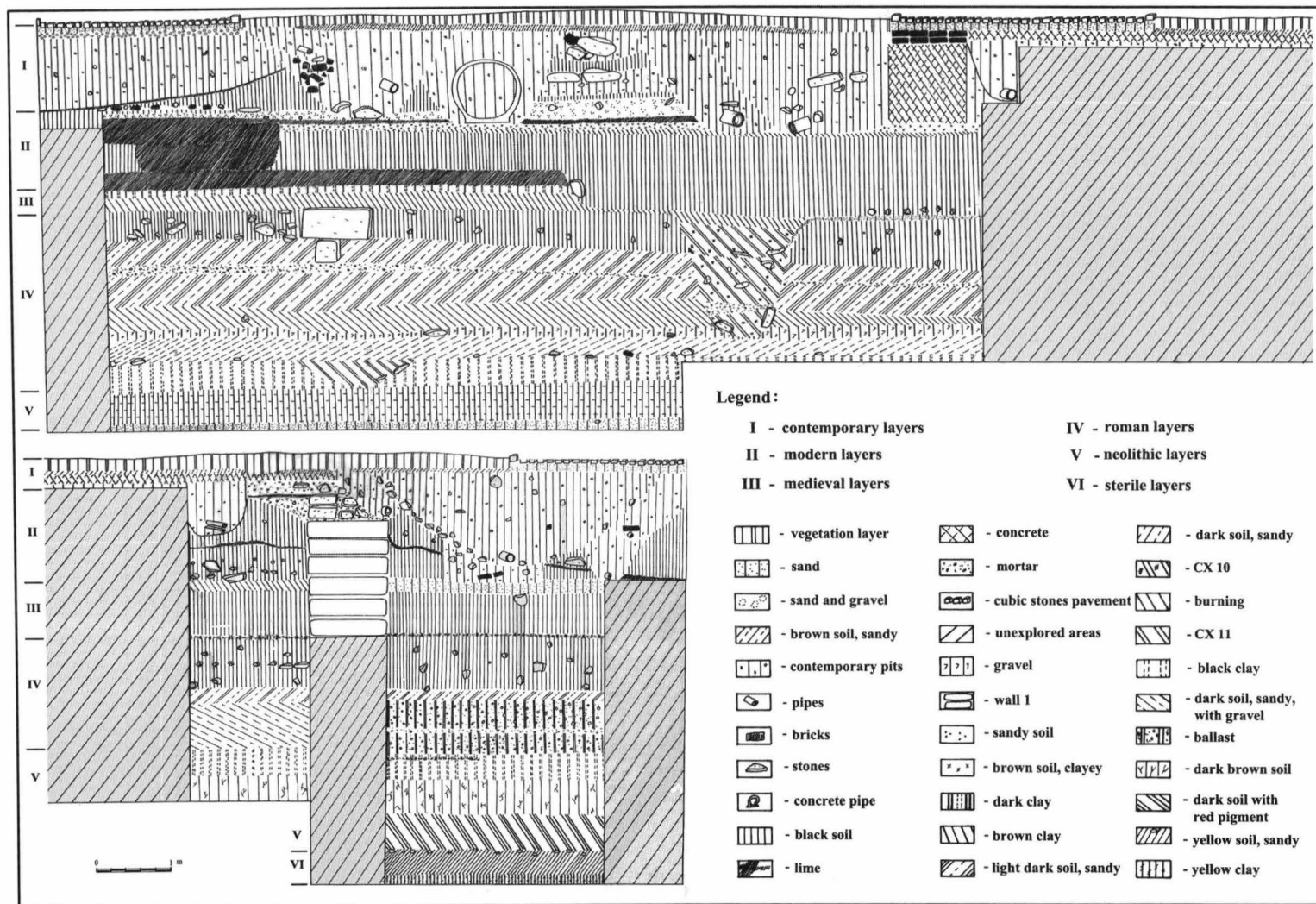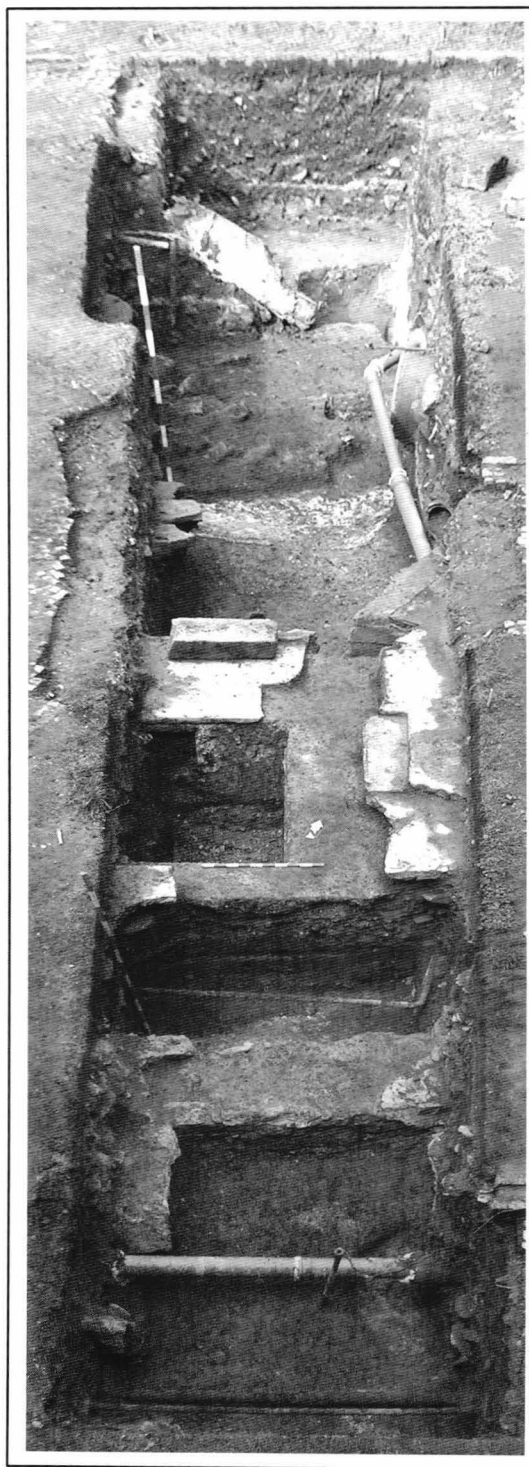arheopi@yahoo.com
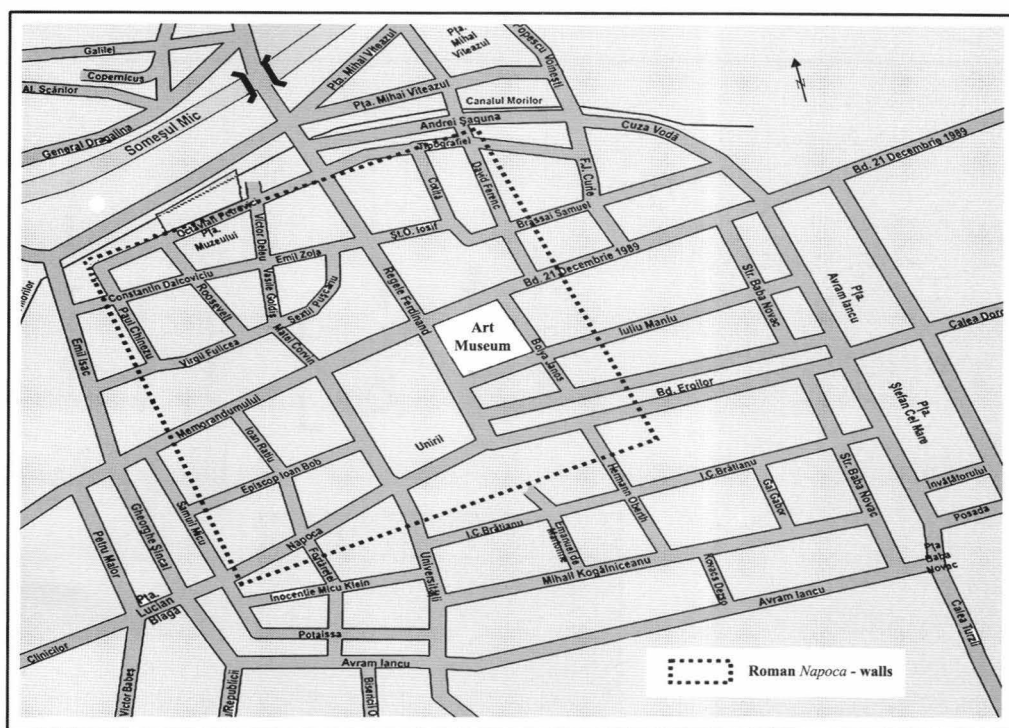
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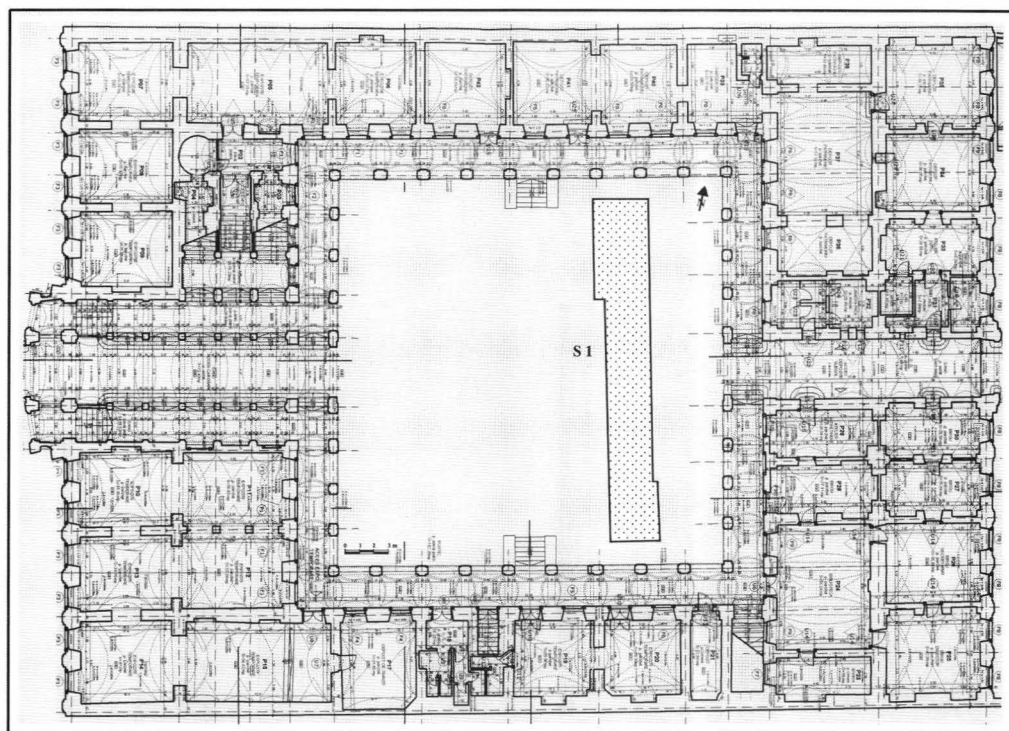
Pl. II

Pl. I. Cluj-Napoca – central area the fortifications of the Roman city *Napoca* (after RepCluj, p. 125, fig. 69); **Pl. II.** Art Museum (Bánfy Palace) – plan (after *Releveu Arhitectural – plan parter*, made by *Utilitas SRL*, Cluj-Napoca).
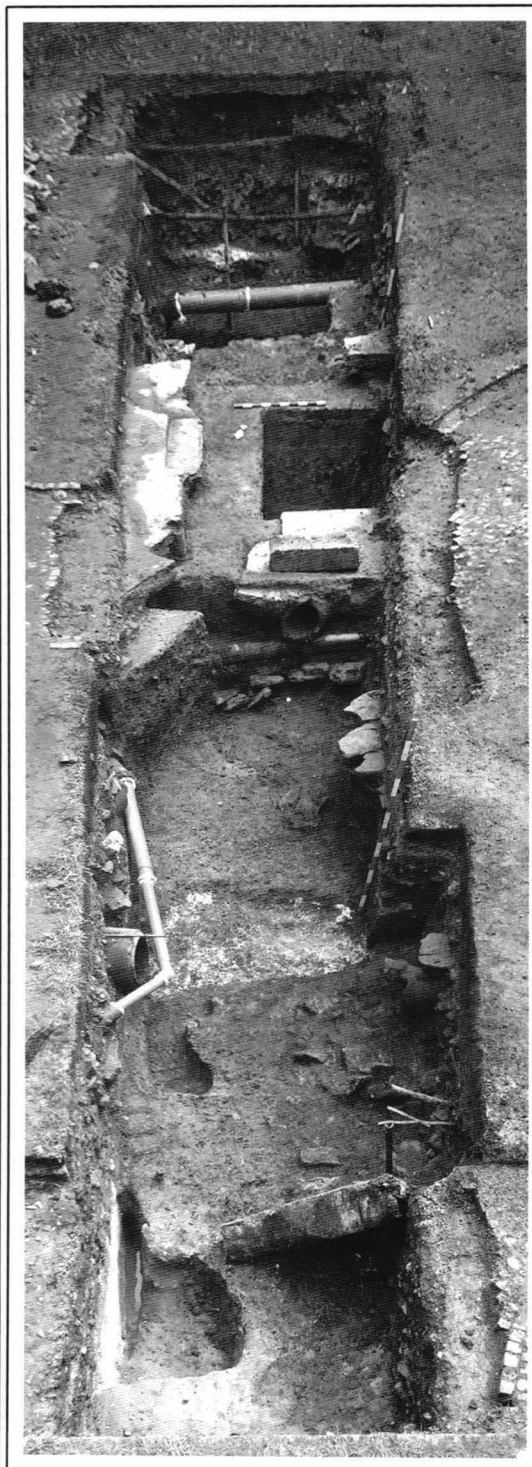
Legend :

CX   - complex

- 1,90 m   - depth

⬡◻   - stones

0   1 m

- cinema - contemporary complex

- river stones pavement - contemporary complex

- stones pavement - modern complex

- modern complexes - lime pits

- modern complexes - pits

- medieval complexes

- medieval walls

- roman complexes

- stones pavement - roman complex

Pl. III. Surface S1 – plan (drawing of the author).

Legend:

I - contemporary layers   IV - roman layers

II - modern layers   V - neolithic layers

III - medieval layers   VI - sterile layers

- vegetation layer   - concrete   - dark soil, sandy

- sand   - mortar   - CX 10

- sand and gravel   - cubic stones pavement   - burning

- brown soil, sandy   - unexplored areas   - CX 11

- contemporary pits   - gravel   - black clay

- pipes   - wall 1   - dark soil, sandy, with gravel

- bricks   - sandy soil   - ballast

- stones   - brown soil, clayey   - dark brown soil

- concrete pipe   - dark clay   - dark soil with red pigment

- black soil   - brown clay   - yellow soil, sandy

- lime   - light dark soil, sandy   - yellow clay

Pl. IV. Surface S1 - eastern profile (drawing of the author).

Pl. V

Pl. VI

Pl. V. Surface S1 – south view; **Pl. VI.** Surface S1 – north view (photos of the author).
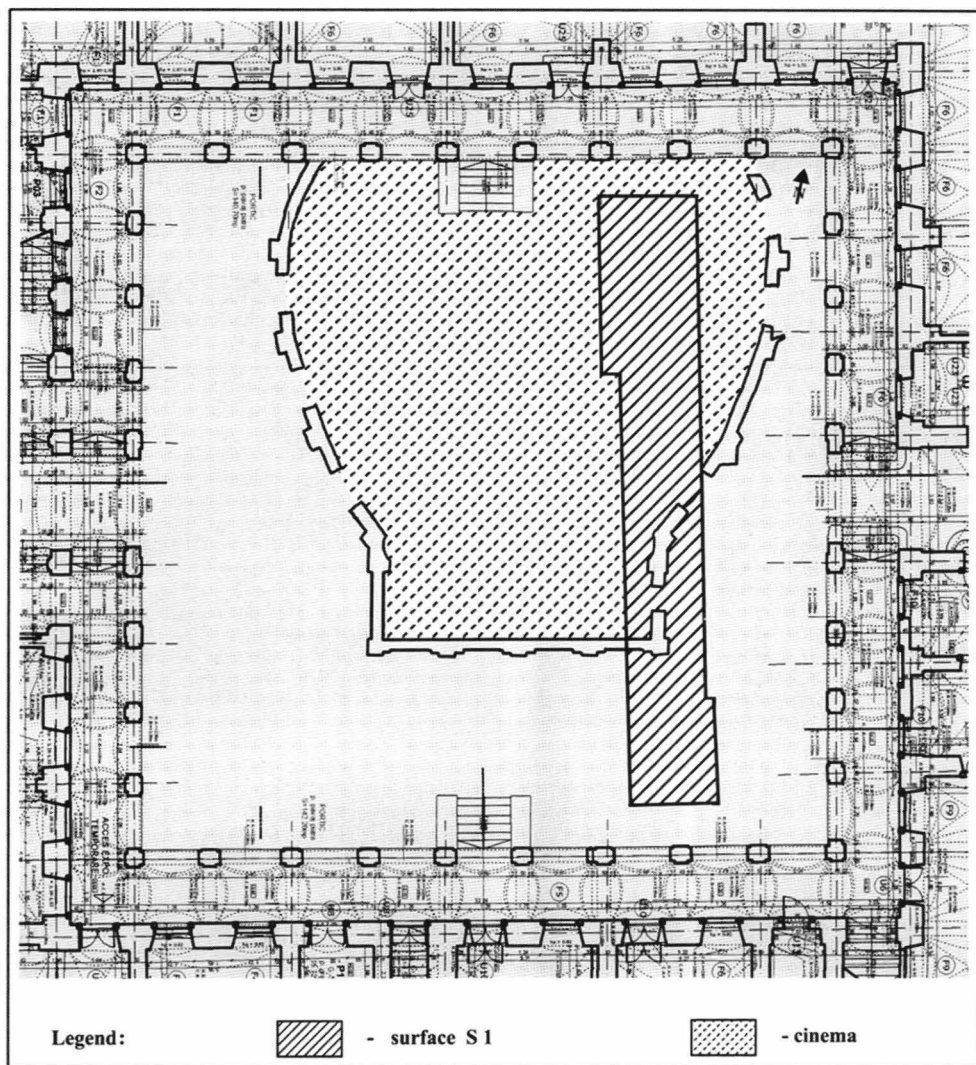
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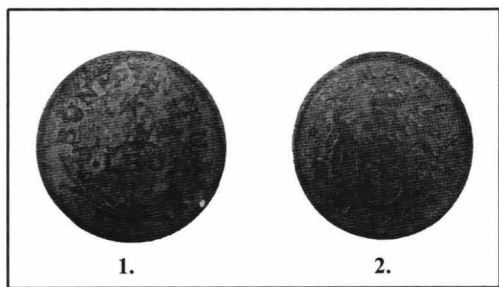
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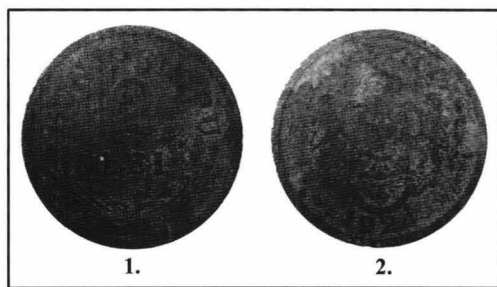
Pl. IX

Pl. VII. Progresul Cinema – plan (after (after *Releveu Arhitectural – plan parter* made by *Utilitas SRL*, Cluj-Napoca); **Pl. VIII.** 1 LEU coin from the 1920's, reverse (1) and obverse (2); Pl. IX. 2 LEI coin (photos of the author).
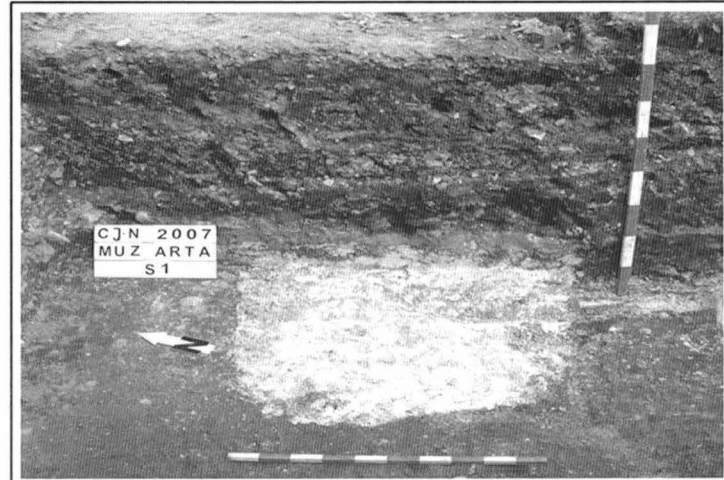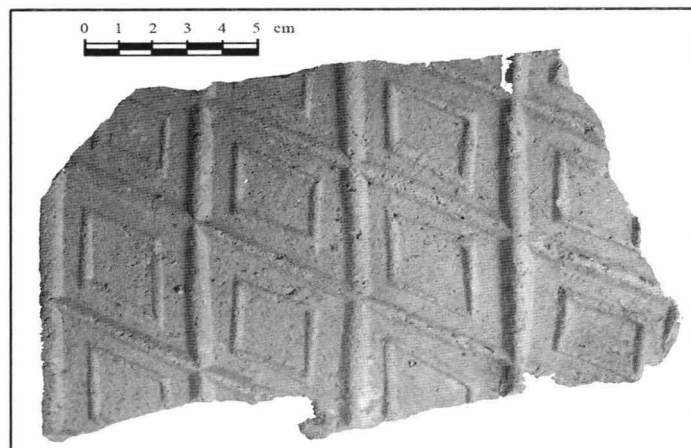
Pl. XII

Pl. X

Pl. XI

Pl. X. Surface S1-CX2; **Pl. XI.** Surface S1-CX1; **Pl. XII.** Stone pavement – modern complex (photos of the author).
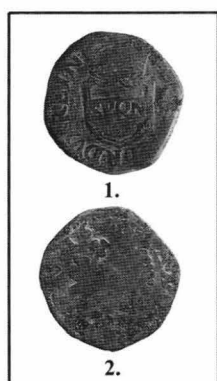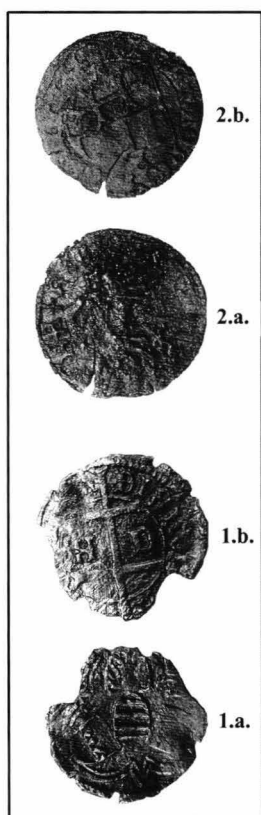
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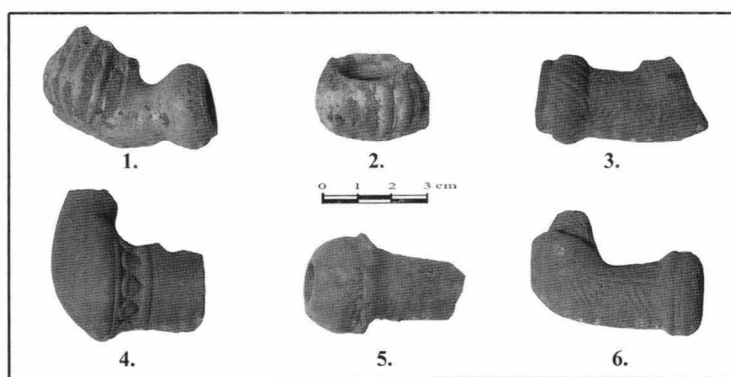
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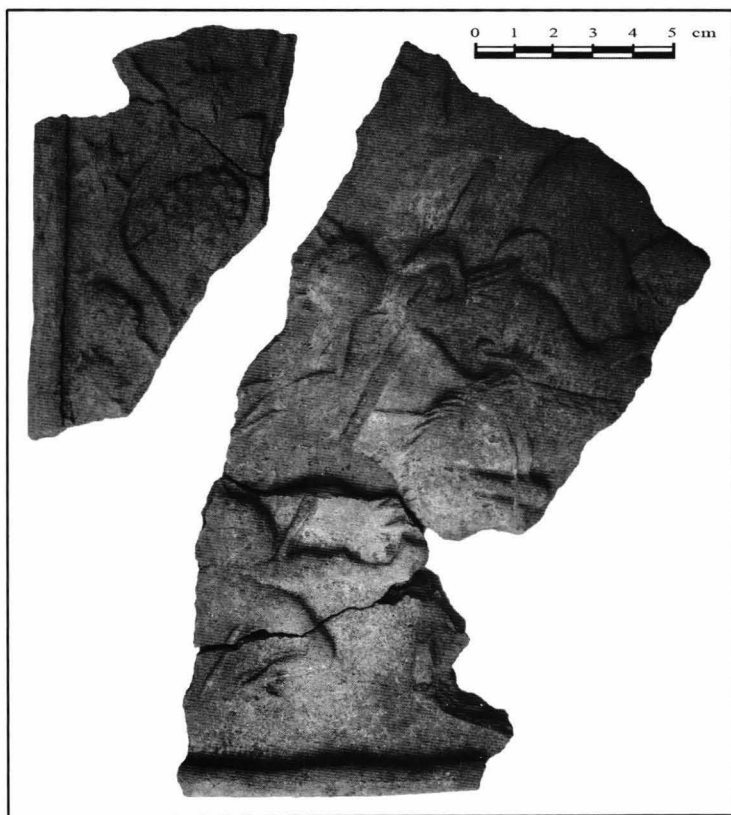

Pl. XV
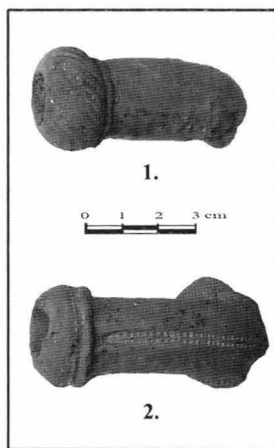
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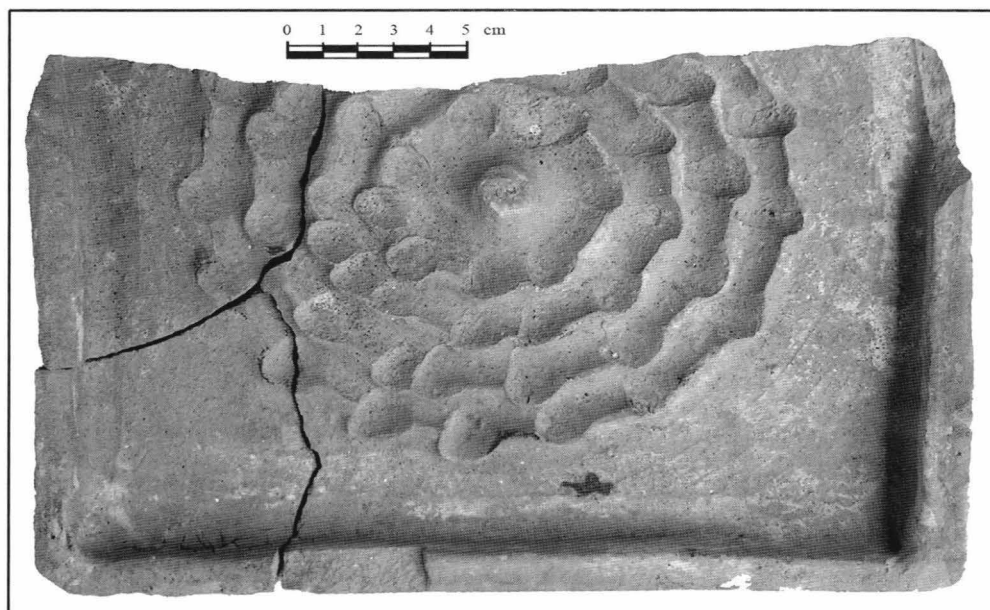
Pl. XVII

Pl. XIII. Bronze coin, obverse (1) and reverse (2); **Pl. XIV, XVI.** Clay pipes; **Pl. XV.** Tile decorated with geometrical motifs; **Pl. XVII.** Decorated tile (photos of the author).
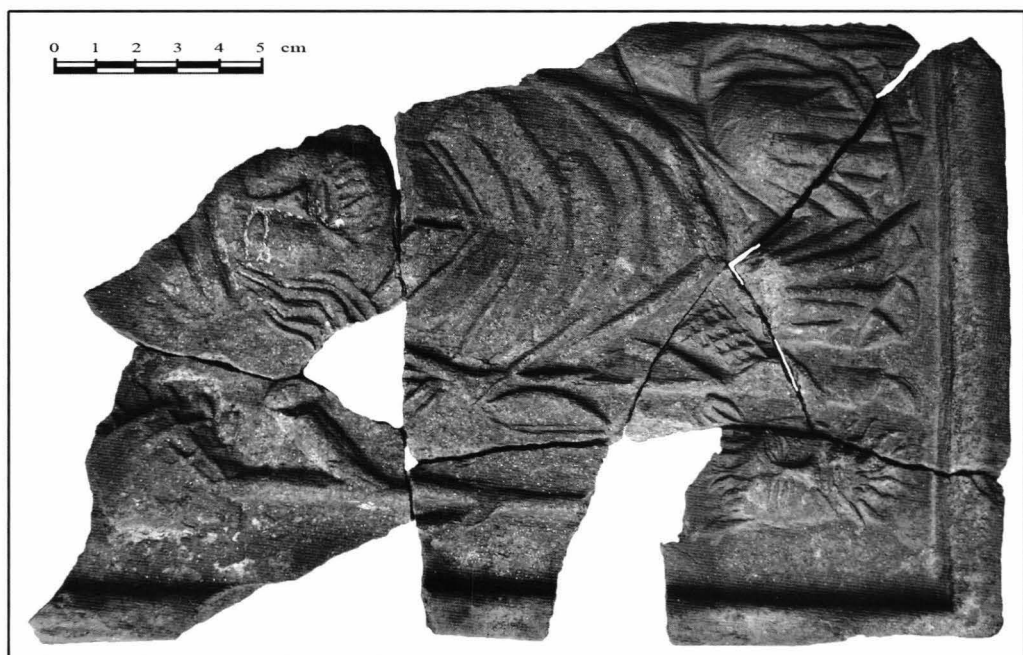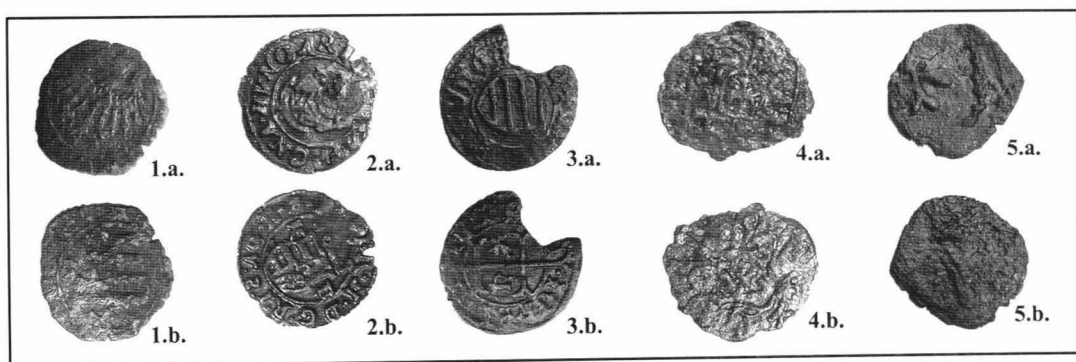
Pl. XVIII

Pl. XIX

Pl. XX

Pl. XVIII. Tile decorated with a male character; **Pl. XIX.** Silver coins, obverse (a) and reverse (b); **Pl. XX.** Tile with Saint George slaying the beast (photos of the author).
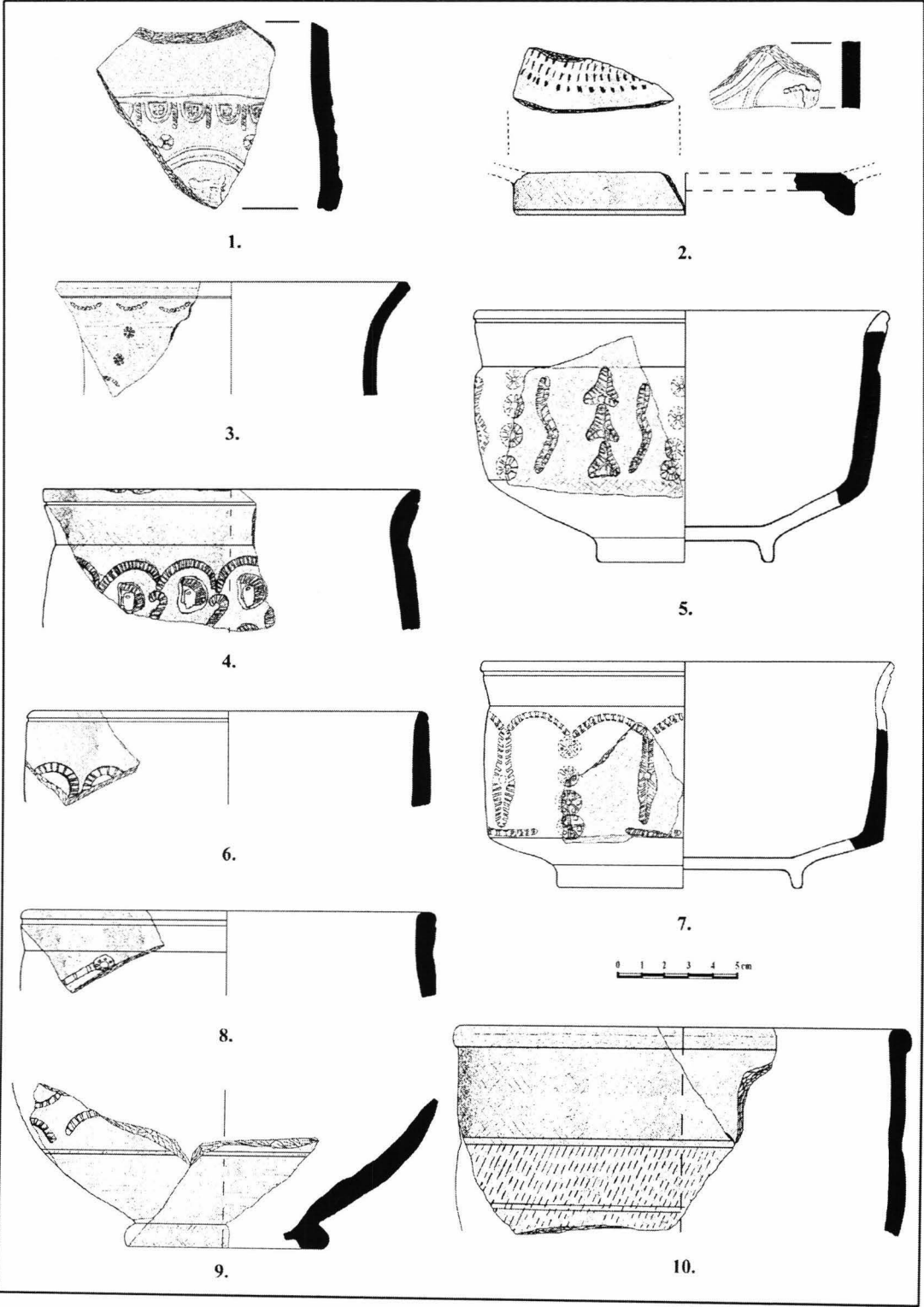
Pl. XXI

Pl. XXII

Pl. XXI. Medieval pottery; **Pl. XXII.** Silver coins, obverse (a) and reverse (b) (photos of the author).

Pl. XXVI. Roman pottery (drawings of the author).