

ANTHROPOMORPHIC TOMBS BUILT OF BRICK IN THE MIEVIAL CEMETERY OF SIBIU

*Daniela Marcu Istrate**

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Introduction

In 2005 the restoration of the historic center of Sibiu has created the opportunity to carry out archaeological work on the medieval cemetery of the city. The cemetery was used between the mid-twelfth century to mid-sixteenth century¹ around the parish church Sfânta Maria/Saint Mary (an evangelic church nowadays). The research had a partially character, focusing on releasing the areas on which there were presumed some architectural actions. However within the bounds established by the builders, there were excavated important parts of the cemetery, especially on the southern side of the church. Approximately one fifth of the site was excavated, 1833 funerary complexes containing the remains of 1874 individuals were recovered.

The elaboration of the archaeological excavation results evidenced three main stages of the cemetery use: the early stage from twelfth-thirteenth centuries, the middle stage from fourteenth to fifteenth centuries and the final stage belonging to the first part of the sixteenth century. Each of these stages is defined by certain objects, mainly by coins, ceramic and by the built up structures preserved as ruin or still in use².

The cemetery seems to have been established by the Saxon colonists soon after their settlement on the high terrace of the Cibin river, probably in the same time with the construction of the parish church. It is generally

* Cercetător independent, Asociația *Hieronimus*, Brașov, e-mail: damasus@yahoo.com.

¹ The monography of archaeological research and the cemetery catalogue: Daniela Marcu Istrate, *Piața Huet. Monografie arheologică*, I-II, Alba Iulia, 2007.

² *Ibidem*, p. 24-31.

accepted that the systematic occupation of the south of Transylvania happened around the year 1150³. In the cemetery from Sibiu this chronology is asserted by four twelfth century coins discovered in connection with the oldest graves.

The churchyard was closed in 1554: the community decided to transfer the cemetery outside the city walls.⁴ In nineteenth century the churchyard became public area, known as Huet Square. The coins recovered during the archaeological excavation also assert this chronology, the late issuance belonging to the king Ferdinand I (1526-1564).

Within these chronological limits, the community of the town was buried almost exclusively in this cemetery. The study of a pattern on the southern side of the parish church, in an area in which we were certain that the cemetery was intact, indicated a density of more than 8 graves of a square metre. (Fig. 2) This evaluation was based on the preserved skeletons in an anatomical connection, in variable proportions. In order to better understand the agglomeration of the parish cemetery we must consider also the huge quantity of disarticulated bone that we could observe during the diggings. Because of this density it was very difficult to realize the individual chronology of the graves and to establish more precisely chronological groups.

The earliest stage of burials was defined by an analysis based upon the correlation between the burials. The separation was made starting from the greatest depth and observing how the graves crossed. For each group we built a Harris matrix. (Fig. 4) There were very few reference points: the ritual was almost uniform, the inventory was modest (round about 7% from the graves contained inventory objects, from which only 32 graves had legible coins), the stratigraphic parameters proved to be not that relevant. Initially we presumed that the clean filling is the symbol for the earliest burials, but along we realized that this relation is relative: several graves with such a filing contained fourteenth to fifteenth century coins. One of the most important chronological indicators concerning the cemetery study proved to be the particular shape of

³ For a general image upon the German colonization phenomenon in east Europe: Harald Roth, *Kleine Geschichte Siebenbürgens*, 3. Auflage, Köln, 2007, p. 370-379, 456-467. For the Transylvanian guests the main paperwork is Thomas Nögler, *The Saxon settlement in Transylvania*, Bucharest, 1979.

⁴ Inside the church burials were done up in 1796, and exceptionally in 1803. Sigerus, *Chronik der Stadt Hermannstadt, 1100-1929*, Hermannstadt, 1930 (ed. in Romanian language *The annals of Sibiu (1100-1929)*, Sibiu, 1997), p. 51.

the graves with a head niche: 105 were registered as such and other 62 were assimilated by analogy.

By means of these we delimited the group of the oldest graves, in which we included only the graves with a head niche and those being in any relation with these ones. The graves overlapped by the anthropomorphic pits, those being on the same level or immediately over and having a common indicator (such as the filling formed by the natural subsoil or the position with the arms stretched along the body) were included here. We considered that this group can be dated from mid-twelfth century towards the middle of the following century for the graves with obvious head niche, respectively towards the end of thirteenth century for the whole group.

Over this group there have been discovered seven graves built of bricks. Their detailing represents the object of this study. (Fig. 3)

Archaeological evidence

In the medieval cemetery of Sibiu there have been uncovered seven graves built of bricks, on the southern side of the parish church, on its close proximity. (Fig. 1) Two cists were entirely preserved, although they were overlapped by several other graves (M 230, M 241). The other ones were destroyed by the current church (respectively by the foundations of the funerary chapel – M 1240, of the transept – M 447, and of the southern aisle – M 212), or purely they disappeared almost completely due to other burials (M 1167 and M 1243). The niche for that matter is documented only in two cases, from the other cists remaining only fragments. (Fig. 2)

The cists have a general trapezoidal shape, made of six rows of bricks (the common sizes: 31x15-16x3/cm; 27x17x5,5 cm) bounded with thick layers of yellowish mortar (lime and sand). The inner side walls were levelled by a thick layer of polished coating. For the head it has been built a niche of bricks (overlapped (M 230) or sidelong laid-down (M 241)), and mortar; as well under the skull was placed a brick. (Fig. 5-8) At cist M 212 we could see that the bottom of the pit was covered too with a poor yellowish mortar layer, in order to avoid to lay down the body directly on the ground. We did not identify the case in which the bottom of the grave pit has been also paved with brick. (Fig. 6)

The graves are built up carefully, in order to protect the deceased and to provide him a privileged position in time of resurrection. The cautious furnishing of the grave excludes the possibility that over such a construction

should be purely thrown clay. We presume that the graves were initially covered, although the great density of the cemetery did not allow the preservation of the upper part. The similar examples that we know reveal different possibilities for this roof: stone blocks, a brick construction, but in the long run we can accept also a wood roof⁵. The depth at which the graves are located points out that they were completely buried: whichever the covering system might had been, it was not conceived to be in sight.

The cists are west-east headed, except M 230 and M 1240 which seem to have been slightly deviated towards north. According to their general shape, they were set apart for adults. The skeletons were preserved only in two mentioned cases: the inhumations were extended and supine, the legs parallel and the arms stretched along the body. The grave M 241 was a double one, an adult and a child. (Fig. 8) Though, during the digging we considered that probably we deal with a mother and a child, the anthropological analysis indicated a male (aged between 50 and 60 years) and an infans (8 months)⁶.

The graves did not have an inventory.

Chronological framing

The anthropomorphic pits shaped through diggings are frequent in the medieval discoveries from the Saxon colonization area in the south of Transylvania. Similar complexes are certified in Alba Iulia, Drăușeni, Feldioara, Mediaș, Moșna, Orăștie, Sebeș (?) and in various locations from Sighișoara⁷. (Fig. 11) They appeared as well in Sibiu, still before our researches from 2005:

⁵ Beside the general protection of the body, a special protection for the skull was documented, by covering the niche with a stone block or a bigger brick. See Marc Durand, *Archéologie du cimetière médiéval*, in *Revue archéologique de Picardie*, Numéro spécial 6, 1988, p. 161-163.

⁶ Daniela Marcu Istrate, Mihai Constantinescu, Andrei Soficaru, *Cimitirul medieval din Sibiu. Arheologie, antropologie, istorie (Medieval cemetery from Sibiu. Archaeology, anthropology, history)* in prep. 2013.

⁷ A synthesis concerning this problem, with the afferent bibliography and the mapping of the discoveries: Daniela Marcu-Istrate, Angel Istrate, *Morminte cu nișă cefalică descoperite la Alba Iulia (sec. XII-XIII). Contribuții privind istoria oaspeților occidentali în Transilvania (Graves with head niche in Alba Iulia. Contribution to the history of the hospites in Transilvania)*, in *Relații interetnice în Transilvania (sec. VI-XIII)*, București, 2005, p. 236-237. The first appearances in Transylvania was in the medieval cemetery from Alba Iulia: R.R. Heitel, *Principalele rezultate ale cercetărilor arheologice din zona sud-vestică a cetății de la Alba Iulia (1968-1977)*, I (*The main archaeological research results from the south-west area of Alba Iulia citadel (1968-1977)*, in *SCIVA*, 36, 1985, 3, p. 228.

some of them were mentioned at Biserica Azilului⁸ (Asylum Church), but also in the parish cemetery (Huet Square)⁹. Anyhow, if we limit ourselves to the 2005 findings, we will affirm that in Sibiu was documented the most wide group of graves with a head niche.

These tombs are usually located on the first layers of the cemeteries. Their chronology was based on documentary evidence and also on recent archaeological findings. In particular we should mention here the numismatic material, which contains coins from the second half of twelfth century and from the beginning of thirteenth century¹⁰. The later chronology, towards the end of thirteenth century, was proposed for the graves from Biserica Azilului (Asylum Church) of Sibiu¹¹.

In the parish cemetery of Sibiu we identified frequent overlaps between headniche graves, the utmost recording being of six graves on the southern side of the church. This is a very high density, usually the intersections being limited to two, at most three overlaps¹². Even if we admit that in that period of Middle Ages the disturbance of the bones was not so important as long as they were and they remained in consecrated ground, a succession of six burials reveal the use of anthropomorphic pits for a period longer than previously thought.

It is difficult to estimate which could be the distance in time between two overlapping graves. If we consider this distance to be at two decades, the

⁸ The graves depiction suggests their affiliation to this group: "laid-down directly in narrow grave pits, rounded at the west side". "In the oldest layer of burial a skeleton appeared with the hands stretched along the body, with the skull on an upper level than the body, laid-down in a narrow grave pit": Petre Munteanu-Beșliu, *Sibiu, jud. Sibiu. Biserica Azilului, Biserica Evanghelică, str. Avram Iancu și Blănarilor*, in *CCA, Campania 1996*, București, 1997.

⁹ P. Munteanu-Beșliu, *Sibiu, jud. Sibiu*, in *CCA, Campania 1994*, Cluj-Napoca, 1995, p. 81; Idem, *Cercetări de arheologie medievală în perimetrul orașului Sibiu efectuate în ultimul deceniu*, in *ArhMed*, II, 1998, p. 87-102; idem, *Practici funerare în evul mediu. Cercetări arheologice și evaluări culturale*, in *Istorie și tradiție în spațiul românesc*, IV, București, 1998, p. 81-82; idem, *Considerații asupra evoluției structurilor arhitectonice în zona centrală a orașului Sibiu*, in *Historia Urbana*, 9, 2001, 1-2, p. 71-78.

¹⁰ Adrian Ioniță, Dan Căpățână, Nikolaus Boroffka, Rodica Boroffka, Adrian Popescu, *Feldioara-Marienburg. Contribuții arheologice la istoria Țării Bârsei/Archäologische Beiträge zur Geschichte des Burzenlandes*, București, 2004, p. 43-44 (Ioniță et alii, *Feldioara 2004*).

¹¹ P. Munteanu Beșliu, *Practici funerare*, p. 85. In central Europe these graves survive until fourteenth century, the utmost spread period being twelfth century. M. Durand, *Archéologie du cimetière médiéval*, p. 164; Ioniță et alii, *Feldioara 2004*, p. 46-56.

¹² In this context to be seen the Feldioara situation. Ioniță et alii, *Feldioara 2004*, p. 46-56.

head niche dug into the ground exceed the middle of thirteenth century: the version of those made of brick appeared around this chronological reference point. (Fig. 4)

For the brickgrave being in a certain relation with the church, the accepted chronology for this important building provides us several *antequem* dates¹³. M 447 is disturbed by the transept foundation, so the burial was prior to mid-fourteenth century. (Fig. 9) M 212 was disturbed by one of the southern nave buttresses (Fig. 6) and M 1240 by the foundation of the funerary chapel on the southern side of the choir: both compartments were already used in the first decades of fourteenth century. Based on these relations is pointed out the fact that the brick graves belonged to the first parish church, a basilica of which ruins exist in the inside of the current church. This assignment leads as well towards a dating along thirteenth century, which could be extended upmost to the beginning of fourteenth century.

Conclusions

The graves with head niches are invariably bound by the first *hospites* settled in Transylvania, in an organized way after mid-twelfth century. However, as it resulted also from the Sibiu parish cemetery study, these graves do not characterize exclusively the first colonists. The recent archaeological researches pointed out that they were using in the same time and on the same cemetery area, both anthropomorphic and simple, rectangular grave pit. We still cannot find an answer, why and for which reason some people preferred a special grave pit, with a head niche¹⁴. There have been approached different hypothesis concerning the family or the social factor of the deceased. Most experts agreed the simplest explanation: the head niche fix the skull, so the deceased will see among the first the time of resurrection¹⁵.

To whom might the graves built of bricks belong to?

In the thirteenth century, in Sibiu, using bricks for constructions was not common. All buildings in the area were made of stone: the boundary wall, the chapels that we can assign to the period (the Saint Jacob funerary chapel at the Liars Bridge, respectively the east side rotunda), most likely the parish church too. Even for the parish church extension by building new eastern sides

¹³ D. Marcu Istrate, *Piața Huet*, I, p. 52-55.

¹⁴ D. Marcu-Istrate, A. Istrate, *Morminte cu nișă cefalică*, 2005; P. Munteanu Beșliu, *Practici funerare*, 1998.

¹⁵ M. Durand, *Archéologie du cimetière médiéval*, p. 192.

(choir and transept), in the first part of the fourteenth century it has been used masonry stone. Hardly at the beginning of the following century we record that the craftsmen shop produced brick: really rare fragments have been recorded on the southern nave foundations. Instead, towards the middle of the century for the church extended choir it has been mainly used brick.

From this point of view too, the graves built of bricks seem to be an extraordinary fact: those who have wanted such a grave had a clear defined project, which did not have in sight the simple protection of a body, but expressly a some kind of construction.

If we search for analogies, we will find out that the brick tombs are a rare form of anthropomorphic graves. Prior to Sibiu researches, these were known in Transylvania only from the cemetery of the Roman-Catholic cathedral from Alba Iulia, where they have been dated in 12th-13th centuries, based on inventory (circular buckles and coins, the late ones from the king Andrew II (1205-1235)) and on stratigraphic context¹⁶. Developed inside the Roman castrum, the medieval habitation from Alba Iulia was plentiful provided with ancient construction materials and implicitly with bricks. However, the anthropomorphic cists seem as well as an extraordinary achievement, not only a burial by using a ready at hand material. This latter version materializes in improvisations such as grave pit bordering by several stones or brick fragments, the laid-down bricks on the bottom of the grave pit, demarcation of the shape by several bricks laid on the cant. In contrast to these improvisations, the brick cists are conceived as sarcophagi, entirely closed. The construction method shows a special care for the aspect: uniform masonry with equal mortar layers, plastered walls, stone blocks roof and sometimes a second roof for the niche.

The authors of the diggings observed the fact that in Alba Iulia the head niche cists actually close the cemetery of the first cathedral, from the twelfth-thirteenth centuries. After the cists, there followed here and there burials until the seventeenth century, without getting to a comparable density with the medieval period. The medieval cemetery belonged to an Hungarian

¹⁶ D. Marcu-Istrate, A. Istrate, *Morminte cu nișă cefalică*, 2005. D. Marcu Istrate, *Catedrala romano-catolică Sfântul Mihail și palatul episcopal din Alba Iulia. Cercetări arheologice 2000-2002 (The roman catholic St. Michel cathedral and the bishop's palace of Alba Iulia. The 2000-2002 archaeological research)*, Alba Iulia, 2008-2009; R.R. Heitel, *Principalele rezultate*, I, p. 228; Idem, *Principalele rezultate ale cercetărilor arheologice din zona sud-vestică a cetății de la Alba Iulia (1968-1977) (The main archaeological research results from the south-west area of Alba Iulia citadel (1968-1977)*, II, in *SCIIVA*, 36, 3, 1986, p. 244.

community that used only accidentally the head niche pits. This kind of grave was assigned to a group that has been earthed only temporary around the cathedral, probably concerning the edification of the current church, fact that began somewhere before 1200 and evolved not so fast along the thirteenth century¹⁷.

We need as well to point out the fact that this kind of grave is not known in other Saxon cemeteries of the period. Some brick cists were signalled at Cricău¹⁸ and Sebeș¹⁹, with an (indirectly) dating in thirteenth century, though without resulting that they were provided with head niches. Other two cists are mentioned at Sibiu, on the parish church inside, but it is not clear if they belong to the earliest stage of burials or to the Modern Ages²⁰. Extended researches in the funerary sites from Drăușeni, Sighișoara, Moșna or Brașov, that revealed hundreds of graves, had recorded grave pits with the niche dug in clay, but not brick built versions too.

On the territory of Transylvania, the only grave group comparable with that of Sibiu and Alba Iulia was signalled in the monastically environment at Bizere near Arad. (Fig. 11) The archaeological researches revealed several graves built of bricks, having a rectangular shape, some (?) of them being provided with head niches²¹. M 111, the only published so far, has been laid on a brick cist, with a special head support, which could be assimilated with a niche: a large brick in which a little place was set apart for the skull fixation. Related to other graves with niches built of bricks, we do not know other construction details. The inventory was absent, but concerning the general

¹⁷ D. Marcu Istrate, A. Istrate, *Morminte cu nișă cefalică*, 2005.

¹⁸ Radu R. Heitel, Alexandru Bogdan, *Contribuții la arheologia monumentelor transilvane. I. Principalele rezultate ale cercetărilor arheologice efectuate în complexul medieval din Cricău (jud. Alba) (Contributions to the archaeology of the Transylvanian monuments. I. The main archaeological researches performed during the medieval complex of Cricău (Alba county)*, in *Apulum*, VII, 1968, p. 487-488.

¹⁹ R.R. Heitel, *Monumentele medievale de la Sebeș Alba (The medieval monuments from Sebeș Alba)*, ed. II, București, 1969, p. 6-7.

²⁰ P. Munteanu Beșliu, *Practici funerare*, 1998, p. 95. The depiction of the stratigraphical context encourages an early chronology, the cists being placed between the graves with „pits dug in human body shape” and the graves with modern coffins. D. Marcu Istrate, *Piața Huet*, 2007, p. 89.

²¹ Adrian Andrei Rusu, Ileana Burnichioiu (ed.), *Mănăstirea Bizere (Bizere Monastery)*, 1, Cluj Napoca, 2011, p. 66-70. The graves appear in a partial publication, only one being in detail published so far, related with a funerary chapel. The number of the cists is not specified, in any case it is about at least two cists (p. 68, note 15).

context of the discovery, which includes a rich enough numismatic material, the authors proposed a dating towards the mid-thirteenth century or towards the next decades²². Thanks to the fact that it seems to have had a privileged position in the cemetery, the authors consider that the grave was arranged for a special character, which had to be distinguished among the inhabitants.

On the Hungarian Kingdom territory the brick cists appeared towards the end of eleventh century and survived until the end of fourteenth century: from a quantitative point of view most of the samples were dated in the second part of this period²³. The built grave was discovered mainly in monastically environment, being considerate to have been a byzantine tradition. Usually it has been recorded a simple rectangular construction: the head niche appears only isolated, in about 2% of the cases. One of the best analogies derives from the monastery cemetery of Dombó (Rakovac): the anthropomorphic graves built of bricks and protected by a rigged roof made also of bricks, were dated in twelfth century.²⁴

At the current research stage, the cists from Sibiu represent a single apparition in a parish cemetery of the German hospites. (Fig. 11) The arrangement of the head niche convinced us to assimilate them with the anthropomorphic grave of the first colonist generations. But, if we expand the analysis, it seems that the things will not be necessary in this way. The brick cists are obviously an exceptional funerary patent around the year 1200, which we find in Transylvania in very important religious centres: in Alba Iulia, around the cathedral of the Catholic Episcopacy and in Sibiu, where functioned the free Provostship of the Saxons. The Benedictine monastery of

²² *Ibidem*, p. 67.

²³ Pap Ildikó Katalin, *Téglás és téglakeretes temetkezések (Gräber mit Ziegeln und Ziegelrahmen in der südöstlichen Tiefebene)*, in *Communicationes Archaeologicae Hungariae*, 2002, p. 177-190; Türk Attila, *Árpád-kori templom körüli temető feltárása Szentes-Kaján, Temetőhalmon*, in „...a halál árnyékának völgyében járok”. *A középkori templom körüli temetők kutatása*, szerk. Ritoók Ágnes, Simonyi Erika, Budapest, 2005, p. 213-219; Ritoók Ágnes, *A templom körüli temetők kutatása (Research into cemeteries from the early Árpadian age)*, in *A középkori és a kora újkor régészete Magyarországon (Research of the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period in Hungary)*, Budapest, 2010, p. 473-494.

²⁴ Neboisa Stanojev, *A dombói (Rakovac) Szent György-monostor szentélyrekesztői*, in *A középkori Dél-Alföld és Szer*, szerk. Kollár Tibor, Szeged, 2000, p. 394; N. Stanojev, *Les sépultures dans les nécropoles autour des églises (en Voïvodine)*, in „...a halál árnyékának völgyében járok”. *A középkori templom körüli temetők kutatása*, szerk. Ritoók Á., Simonyi E., OH, VI, Budapest, 2005, p. 60-69. .

Bizere is presumed to be as well a valuable endowment, maybe even a royal foundation²⁵. Therefore, seems more plausible that those buried in this way were generally of religious status, perhaps some clerics that in a particular historical period have been linked to an important religious institution. The cists from Alba Iulia are dated with the help of the inventory and the context, those from Sibiu on a context basis and those from Bizere are dated thanks to the analogies from other territories belonging to the Hungarian kingdom: the discovery context or the logic of the authors led to a period which starts with the second half of twelfth century and ends up with mid-thirteenth century, with a maximal extension towards 1300. After this, the anthropomorphic tombs disappear from Transylvania.

The graves catalogue

M 212/ S 2

Grave pit shape: trapezoidal shape cist, built of bricks bounded by mortar (two brick rows with the dimensions 26x16x4 cm). The interior has been grouted, the bottom of the grave being covered with a coarse yellowish mortar.

Grave pit filling: blended filling, mellowed with mortar and ceramic pigments, stone and brick fragments.

Age: adult

Preservation condition: good.

Disturbances: the grave has been damaged by the buttress foundation of the southern side of the nave.

Orientation: W-E.

Depth: - 1.40 m the upper layer of the conserved bricks, - 1.58 m the bottom of the grave pit.

Position: supine with the legs parallel.

Stratigraphic correlations: prior the current church.

M 230/ S 1

Grave pit shape: trapezoidal shape cist, built of bricks (31x16x3 cm), grouted on inside; 6 brick layers. For the head support it has been built a niche made of overlapped bricks and mortar.

²⁵ A.A. Rusu, I. Burnichioiu (ed.), *op.cit.*, p. 16-17.

Grave pit filling: black soil with mortar and ceramic pigment.

Age: adult

Preservation condition: good.

Disturbances: varied. From the southern side of the cist there had been dislocated five bricks layers and from the eastern side four layers. Around the skull it has been preserved only one brick row, the other ones being disturbed since antiquity; several bricks were on the inside of the filling. The south-east construction corner disappeared entirely. Although, there had been practiced a lot of burials over the cist, the skeleton preserved itself almost intact, only the skull being dislocated (only the jaw was preserved).

Orientation: W-E.

Depth: -1.00 m on the bottom of the cist; - 0.78-0.96 m on the upper layer of bricks.

Position: supine, the hands along the body with the fingers outside the femur; the legs are parallel. The skull was supported by a brick which remained in situ.

Stratigraphic correlations: posterior of M 355 that intersect around the pelvis, posterior of M 242. Overlapped by other several burials.

M 241/ S 2

Grave pit shape: trapezoidal shape cist built up of six brick layers (31x15x5 cm and 27x17x5.5 cm). The lime and sand friable mortar has been used in thick layers (round about 2 cm). For the head support it has been used bricks, sidelong positioned with a lot of mortar. The cist walls seem to have been preserved entirely (with a slight disturbance on the south-east corner), the superior part being equalized with a thick mortar layer: we presumed that this mortar was used for fixing the roof. On the bottom of the cist, on the eastern side there have been preserved the traces of a thin layer of mortar, probably accidentally deposited during the construction. The skeletons were laid-down directly on the ground.

Grave pit filling: black soil, relatively tamped, pigmented.

Age: adult (50-60) and infans (8 months)

Preservation condition: good.

Disturbances: it has been overlapped by several graves that probably have dislocated the roof. Both construction and the two skeletons remained intact.

Orientation: W-E.

Depth: -1.90 m on the grave pit bottom; -1.50 m the superior limit of the preserved bricks.

Position: The adult skeleton has been laid-down on the back with the arms stretched alongside the body, the left one slightly away, with the fingers outside the pelvis. The skull remained by the niche border, in almost vertical position. The legs are parallel; the right foot presents a deformation, the femur being bent. Between the adult legs it has been found a child, as well supine with the arms alongside the body and the legs slightly bent starting with the knees.

11. Stratigraphic correlations: the cist was overlaid directly by M 233, M 234, M 235, which partially disturbed it. Afterwards, these graves were as well overlapped by several others. M 216 with a stone head niche was older.

M 447/ S 3

Grave pit shape: brick cist (bricks with the dimensions of 34x14.2x4 cm).

Age: probably adult.

Preservation condition: there were not preserved bones.

Disturbances: the cist was overlaid by the buttress foundation of south-east transept and probably affected by other area burials. In the excavation remained only a small fragment.

Orientation: W-E.

Depth: -1.35-1.55 m on the superior side of the preserved bricks.

Stratigraphic correlations: was buried after M 345 which as well seems to be earthed after M 344.

M 1167 / C 48

Grave pit shape: partially preserved cist. Half of the eastern side, western side and the big part of northern side were damaged by other burials. The inside grouted walls of the cist were made of at least three brick rows. The mortar used is yellowish with a lot of small stones. (The used bricks: 24x5,5x4,5 cm).

Orientation: W-E.

Depth: on the south side of the preserved bricks at – 1.48-1.60 m. The bottom of the initial grave probably around – 1.60 m.

Observations: the skeleton from the cist did not preserved. A grave with a wooden coffin occupied thereafter the cist, being buried at a higher depth from the cist bottom (M 1162).

M 1240 / S 5

Grave pit shape: cist fragment, probably the short west side. The cist wall is formed of five rows of brick bounded by yellowish mortar with a lot of lime grains.

Observations: destroyed partially by the buttress of the funerary chapel, which overlays it and partially by a recent digging.

M 1243 / C 36

The grave shape: cist fragment, probably the northern side, preserved on a length of about 60 cm. It can be observed four rows of bricks bounded by yellowish mortar. (The brick: 36x16x4,5 cm).

Disturbances: the eastern side of the cist is disturbed by the afterwards burials and the western side is destroyed by a pluvial water pipe.

Orientation: W-E.

Depth: - 1.32 m / bricks.

Observations: on the front interior side of the preserved section it can be observed traces of grout.

MORMINTE ANTROPOMORFE CONSTRUITE DIN CĂRĂMIDĂ ÎN CIMITIRUL MEDIEVAL DIN SIBIU

Rezumat

Restaurarea centrului istoric al orașului Sibiu în anul 2005 a prilejuit efectuarea unor ample cercetări arheologice în cimitirul medieval, dezvoltat în jurul bisericii parohiale Sfânta Maria (astăzi biserică evanghelică) între mijlocul secolului al XII-lea și mijlocul secolului al XVI-lea. Cercetarea a avut un caracter parțial, concentrându-se pe degajarea unor suprafețe pe care erau prevăzute intervenții constructive profunde. În limitele stabilite de constructori, au fost totuși cercetate câteva segmente importante ale cimitirului, mai ales pe partea sudică a bisericii: am apreciat că cercetarea a surprins aproximativ o cincime din totalul cimitirului medieval. Au fost înregistrate 1833 de complexe funerare, care au corespuns unui total de 1874 de indivizi.

În cimitir au fost descoperite șapte morminte construite din cărămidă, prevăzute cu nișă pentru cap, localizate pe partea de sud a bisericii parohiale, în imediata apropiere a acestora. Mormintele au o formă generală trapezoidală, construită din cărămidă și mortar. Pentru susținerea capului a fost prevăzută o nișă, construită de asemenea din zidărie de cărămidă, iar sub craniu a fost așezată o altă cărămidă. Uneori, sub schelet au fost observate urme de la un strat subțire de mortar. Deși mormintele au fost descoperite deschise, am presupus că inițial acestea

erau prevăzute cu acoperiș. Indiferent cum va fi fost sistemul de acoperire, mormintele trebuie să fi fost însă complet îngropate în pământ.

Scheletele s-au păstrat doar în două cazuri: decedații au fost întinși pe spate, cu brațele pe lângă corp. M 241 a fost dublu, un adult și un copil. Mormintele lipsite de inventar au fost datate, pe baza contextului descoperirii, în cea de-a doua jumătate a sec. XIII cu posibile extensii la începutul secolului următor.

Mormintele de la Sibiu reprezintă, în stadiul actual al cercetărilor, o apariție singulară într-un cimitir parohial al oaspeților germani. Deși amenajarea nișei pentru cap ne convinge să asimilăm aceste ciste cu gropile antropomorfe și să le atribuim primelor generații de coloniști, dacă extindem analiza se pare că lucrurile nu stau în mod obligatoriu astfel. Cistele din cărămidă constituie evident o manifestare funerară de excepție din jurul anului 1200, pe care în Transilvania o întâlnim în centre religioase foarte importante, precum Alba Iulia și Sibiu, sau în mediul monastic de la Bizere, lângă Arad. În consecință, pare mai plauzibil ca mormintele discutate să aparțină unor clerici care, într-o anumită perioadă istorică, au fost atașați unei instituții religioase de un anumit rang. Cistele de la Alba Iulia sunt datate cu ajutorul inventarului și al contextului, cele de la Sibiu pe baza contextului, iar cele de la Bizere mai mult pe baza analogiilor din alte teritorii ale regatului maghiar: contextul descoperirii sau logica autorilor a condus la un interval ce începe în a doua jumătate a secolului al XII-lea și se încheie la mijlocul secolului următor, cu maxime extensii până în jurul anului 1300. După această dată, cistele antropomorfe dispar din Transilvania.

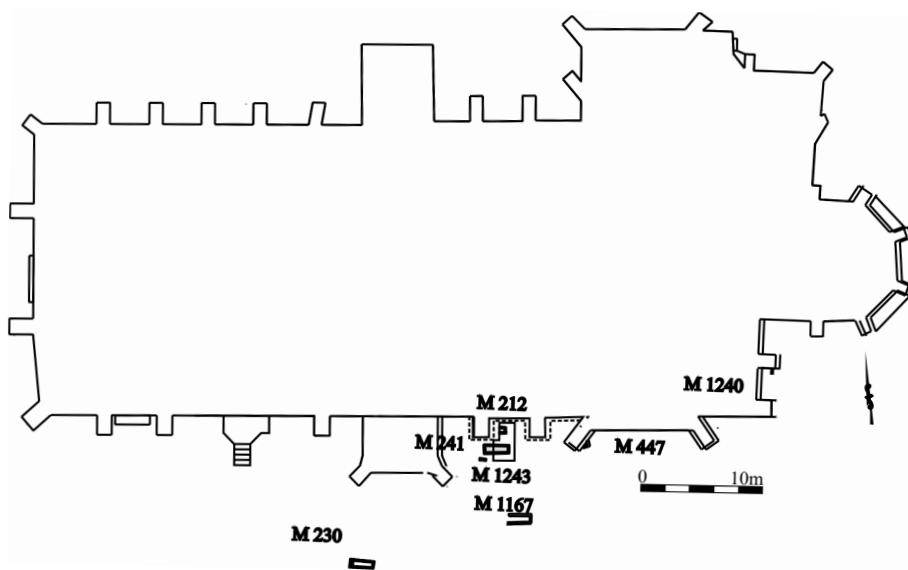


Fig. 1. General plan: the parish church (XIV-XVI centuries) and the graves built of bricks discovered in 2005



Fig. 2. General plan of the cemetery in the area in which there were discovered the brick graves

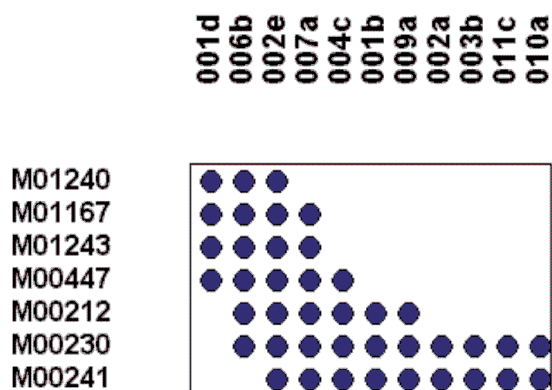


Fig. 3. Main characteristics of the anthropomorphic brick cist. 1b. Trapezoid pit. 1d. Pit with an undetermined shape. 2a. Head niche. 2e. Brick cist. 3b. Filling with rare pigments. 4c. adult. 6b. Disturbed by later interventions. 7a. W-E orientation. 9a. Supine position. 10a. Arms stretched along to the body. 11c. Parallel spread legs.

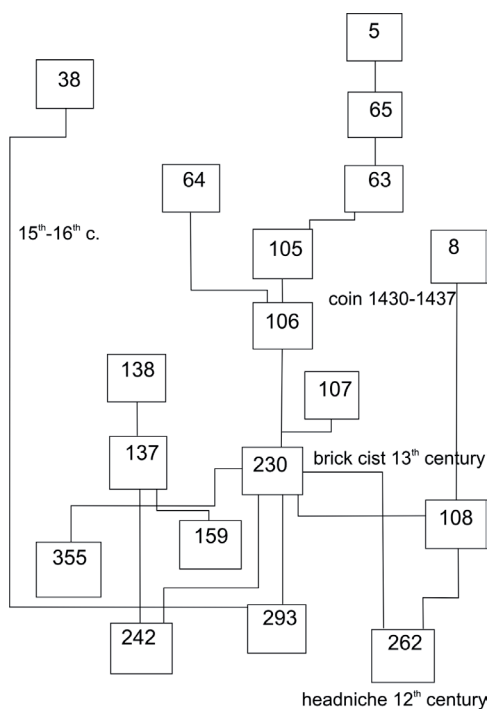


Fig. 4. Evolution of the graves in M 230 area

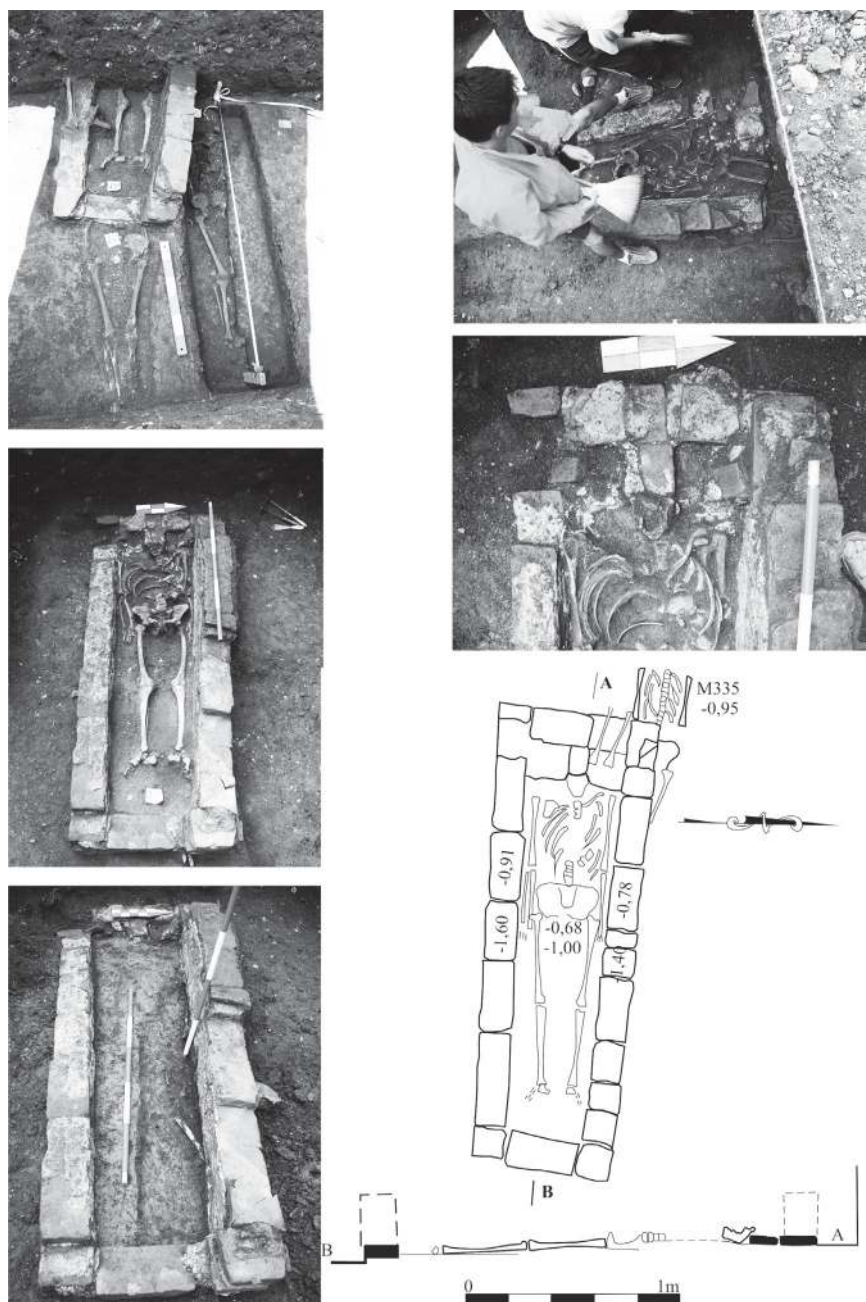


Fig. 5. Grave 230: research stages, final plan and section through the grave



Fig. 6. Graves 212 and 241: the discovery context



Fig. 7. Grave 241: the discovery context

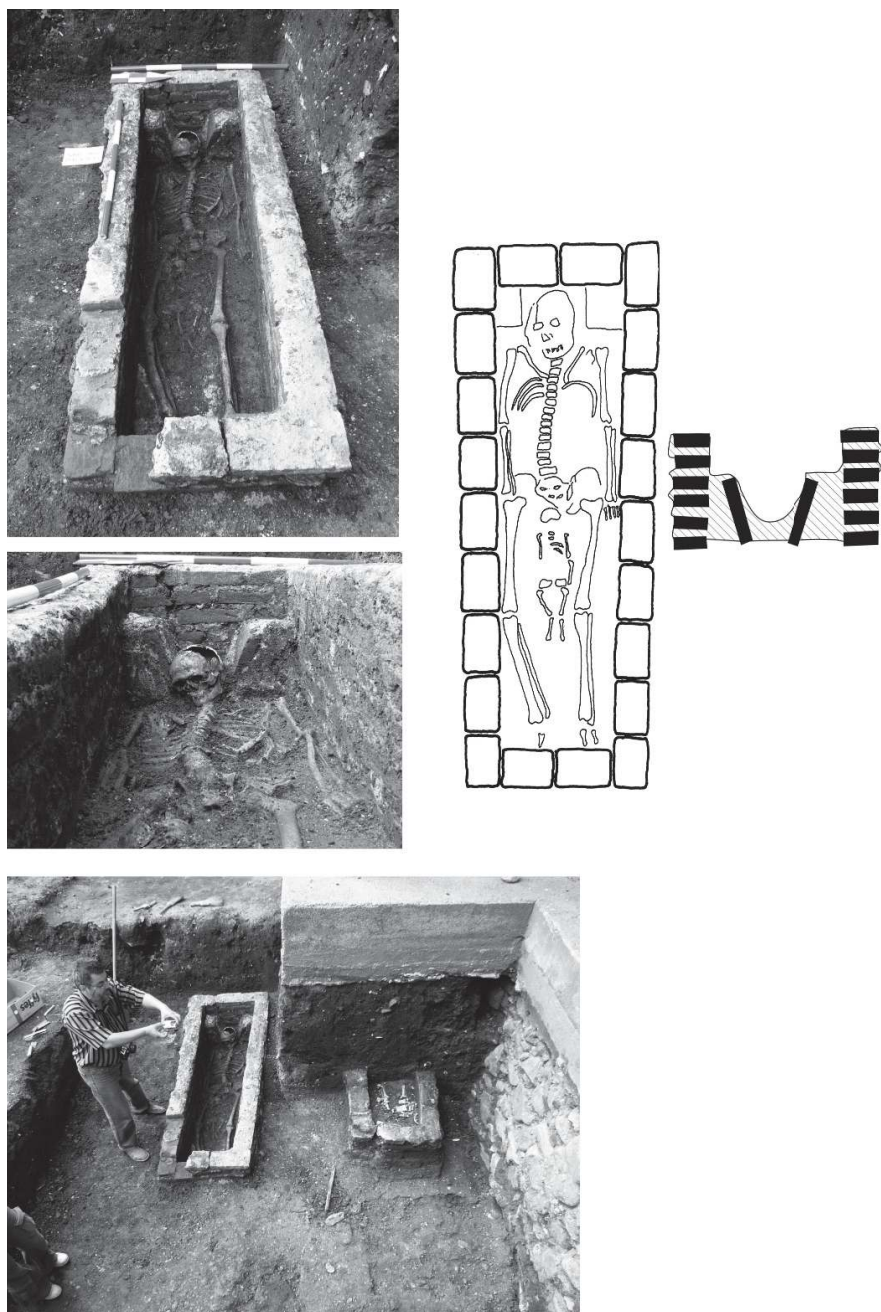


Fig. 8. Grave 241: research stages, general plan of the grave and the brick niche detail



Fig. 9. Grave 447, destroyed by the transept foundation



Fig. 10. Grave cist 1167, reused for the 1162 skeleton interment.

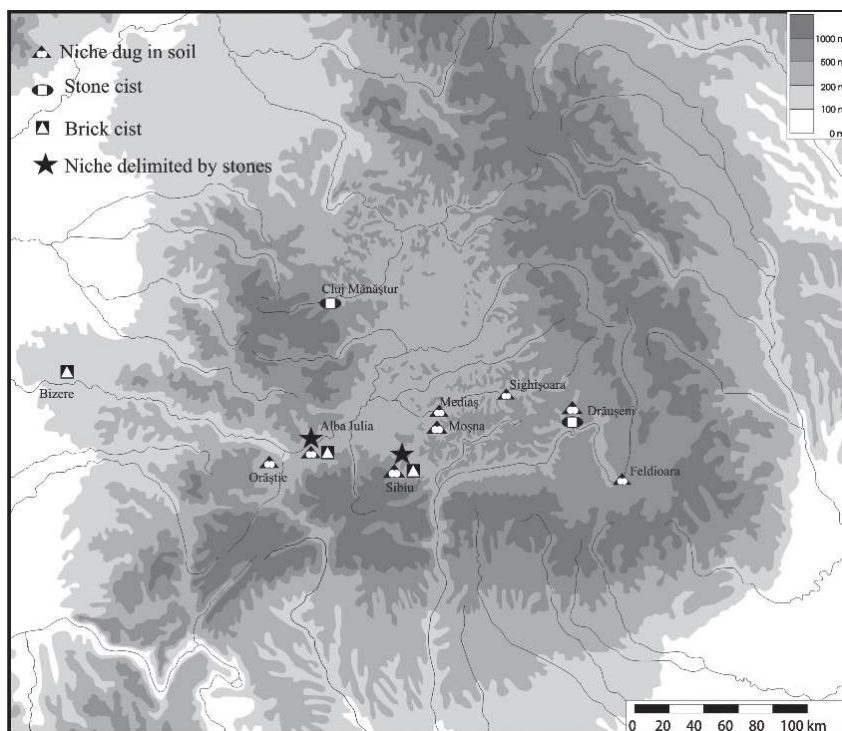


Fig. 11. Anthropomorphic graves from Transylvania