

THE *HISTRIA SUD* SECTOR. RECENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH ON AN ‘IMPOSING’ EARLY ROMAN PUBLIC BUILDING

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Abstract: In 1961, Nubar Hamparțumian resumed the archaeological research in the *Basilica extra muros* Sector at Histria. Among the discoveries made between 1961–1964 were the ruins of an ‘imposing’ Early Roman public building dated to the 3rd c. AD. The ruins were three 1.95m-wide wall segments, discovered in three different parts of the sector.

In 2010 the author of the present paper extended northwards the research in the *Histria Sud* Sector where, in collaboration with the neighbouring sector (the *Basilica extra muros* Sector, coordinated by dr. Viorica Rusu-Bolindeț), three new main trenches were excavated on a N–S orientation, spanning from the southern limit of the archaeological site up to the early Christian basilica. In 2012–2013 we discovered seven segments of the same Early Roman building in sections S3b, S5, S6 and S7. When measured on a plan, all these segments belong to the same building discovered in the 1960s. By corroborating all the construction elements discovered up to the present moment, we obtain a public building of 90 × 20m. Future archaeological research will clarify the plan and function of this impressive building.

Cuvinte-cheie: Histria, Sector Sud, edificiu public, perioada romană timpurie, necropole.

Rezumat: În anul 1961, Nubar Hamparțumian relua săpăturile arheologice din sectorul *Basilica extra muros* de la Histria. Printre descoperirile făcute de acesta între anii 1961–1964 se numără și vestigiile unui „impunător edificiu” roman timpuriu, cu un caracter public, databil în secolul al III-lea p. Chr. Aceste vestigii erau reprezentate de trei segmente de ziduri cu lățimea de 1,95 m, descoperite în trei puncte diferite ale sectorului.

În anul 2010, cercetarea arheologică din Sectorul Sud de la Histria s-a extins spre nord, unde în colaborare cu sectorul vecin (*Basilica extra muros*, condus de Viorica Rusu-Bolindeț) au fost efectuate trei secțiuni magistrale pe direcția nord-sud, de la limita sudică a sitului arheologic și până la monumentul creștin timpuriu. În campaniile arheologice din anii 2012–2013 au fost descoperite șapte segmente ale aceluiași edificiu roman timpuriu, în secțiunile S3b, S5, S6 și S7. Planimetric, toate aceste tronsoane de ziduri aparțin aceleași clădiri descoperite

în anii '60. Prin coroborarea tuturor elementelor constructive dezvelite până în acest moment, s-ar contura un edificiu public cu dimensiunile de 90×20m, cercetările arheologice viitoare urmând să contribuie la clarificarea planului și a funcționalității acestei clădiri impresionante.

I. PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH

In 1961 Nubar Hamparțumian resumed the research in the *Basilica extra muros* Sector at Histria (Pl. 1. 1). The first excavations in this sector were undertaken by Vasile Pârvan, who started to uncover in 1914 the only Christian monument located outside the Late Roman defence wall.¹ Between 1950 and 1953 the ditch of the Late Roman Rampart no. III was excavated and as a result the western front of the Hellenistic defence wall was uncovered, superposed by Early and Late Roman layers. Between 1955 and 1956 the archaeological research extended westwards in the perimeter bordered by the Hellenistic defence wall to the east and by the *Basilica extra muros* to the west. Several Late Roman buildings were discovered, as well as Late Roman graves while the *Basilica extra muros* was completely uncovered.²

Another research team active in the *extra muros* area was led by Nubar Hamparțumian between 1961 and 1964. The objectives set by the above-mentioned archaeologist when resuming the research in this sector were: establishing the stratigraphy in the area outside the Late Roman defence wall, in order to understand Histria's

¹ Pârvan 1915, p. 118–119.

² Nubar 1970, p. 193, n. 23.

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topographic evolution during the different periods of its history; establishing the development phases for the Late Roman necropolis, its chronology and its relation to the nearby Christian basilica.³ The research method⁴ used (Pl. 1. 2) was to excavate trenches first to establish the stratigraphy and then to continue the research in an open surface excavation. Thus a main 75 × 3–3.5m E–W trench located north of the basilica and parallel to its longitudinal axis was dug between 1961 and 1963. In 1963 the excavation extended southwards and in 1964 a transversal E–W trench was dug on the transversal axis of the Christian basilica and of the excavation unit dug in 1955–1956.

This archaeological research established the following stratigraphic succession:⁵

1. Late Hellenistic layer; 2. Early Roman level (1st – 3rd c. AD); 3. Late Roman layer (4th c. AD) that corresponded to the first phase of the flat necropolis; 4. Late Roman level (5th – 7th c. AD) connected to several buildings and the second phase of the flat necropolis. As far as the information on the Early Roman layer is concerned, it indicated⁶ an intense and continuous dwelling and divided into two main construction phases. The first, containing four levels, corresponds to the ruins of the dwellings dated to the 1st – 2nd c. AD, while the second corresponds to the ruins of an **'imposing building'** dated to the 3rd c. AD.

According to Nubar Hamparțumian, the ruins of this **'imposing monumental building'** were identified as early as 1953⁷, when it was discovered that the foundations of this Early Roman structure were erected directly over the southern side of the Hellenistic defence wall. More precisely (Pl. 2. 1) there are two wall segments, 7m, respectively 9 m long, 1–1.25m wide, perpendicular on one another and thus forming a corner. In the current state of the research, we cannot be sure that these two walls are part of the Early Roman building proper (maybe an annex?) mentioned by Nubar Hamparțumian, or if they are the walls of another Early Roman building, given the varying width of the walls. Nubar Hamparțumian's excavations in 1961–1964, undertaken in the area west of the Hellenistic defence wall, led to the discovery of other wall segments belonging to the same *imposing monumental building*. Parts of this buildings were identified in three locations of the researched area

(Pl. 2. 2):⁸ to the east, in the trench north of the basilica, on the same trajectory as the wall discovered in 1953; in the southern part of the area researched in 1963; in the western end of the trench dug in 1964 inside the basilica, under its treading level.

Several conclusions can be drawn from the analysis of Nubar Hamparțumian (Pl. 3.1–3).⁹ All the wall fragments had the same width (1.95 m), orientation and construction technique, and were all preserved at the same height. They represent the strong foundations of walls built using cobbles alternated with brick courses, all bound with lime mortar. Once this monumental structure was destroyed, it was dismantled down to its foundation and all the resulting debris was used for levelling the area. By extending the excavation southwards, in the surface between the building's southern and northern sides, Nubar Hamparțumian established the existence of two constructive phases separated by a consistent burn layer covering the debris of the first phase. In this layer of debris he discovered many fragments of painted plaster, fragments of marble wall tiles and a large quantity of roof tiles and bricks. The second phase was represented by the reconstruction of the structure, when new, modest-looking walls made of unfashioned stones bound with earth were erected between the building's massive walls.

According to Nubar Hamparțumian, this monument raises two major issues:¹⁰ its chronology and its function. The regretted archaeologist believed the building was set directly on the ruins of 2nd c. AD structures shortly after their destruction, but not before the ground was levelled in the area (a situation that still has to be confirmed by our own research); it was then totally destructed and abandoned at the beginning of the 4th c. AD, when the city's Late Roman flat necropolis was established there, among wall fragments and debris of the former building. Based on this theory, the building was dated by the author of the research to the 3rd c. AD. As far as its function is concerned, the situation is less clear. Even so, the almost 2m-wide walls with massive external buttresses and the shear dimensions of the building indicated its **public character**.

To summarize,¹¹ Nubar Hamparțumian considered that the building was erected in the 3rd c., probably during the reign of Septimius Severus, and

³ Nubar 1970, p. 193.

⁴ Nubar 1970, p. 193.

⁵ Nubar 1970, p. 196.

⁶ Nubar 1970, p. 196.

⁷ Nubar 1970, p. 199.

⁸ Nubar 1970, p. 199.

⁹ Nubar 1970, p. 199.

¹⁰ Nubar 1970, p. 199–200.

¹¹ Nubar 1970, p. 200–201.

functioned in its monumental shape up to the middle of the century, when it suffered extensive damage. It was rebuilt and continued to function up to the beginning of the 4th c. AD, when it was abandoned and the entire area it occupied was taken over by the city's flat Late Roman necropolis.

II. RECENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH

This was the state of the research of the supposed Early Roman building up to 2010, when the excavations in the *Histria Sud* Sector extended northwards and reached the *Basilica extra muros* Sector. The main objective of the new excavations was to better understand and expose the Early Roman levels at Histria, a period less known or researched on the site. One priority was establishing the general stratigraphy of the area in question, extending from the site's southern limit northwards, up to the *Basilica extra muros*. Another priority was to identify in the field the southern and western limits of the necropolises located around the *Basilica extra muros*, known from previous research in this sector.¹² A third priority was to identify the limit of ancient Histria's southern shoreline, now marked by a marine silt line. Today we know –thanks to earlier geophysical surveys,¹³ as well as to recent archaeological research –¹⁴ that in the southern part of the archaeological site there is a thick layer of silt where, because of the absence of ancient structures, we consider¹⁵ that at a certain moment functioned at least one of Histria's harbours.

In order to reach all proposed objectives three main trenches were dug (Pl. 3. 4), oriented N–S, extending from the neighbouring *Basilica extra muros* Sector down to the southern limit of the archaeological site, on an average length of 100m.¹⁶ The first of these was trench **S1**,¹⁷ dug between 2008 and 2010¹⁸ in collaboration with the

Basilica extra muros team. In 2011¹⁹ we started the other two main trenches, **S2**²⁰ and **S3**,²¹ and in 2012 and 2013 we started four others to verify the stratigraphy, namely **S4**,²² **S5**,²³ **S6**²⁴ and **S7**,²⁵ the last being located west of **S3b**. In the present paper we will present only the most important discoveries in **S3a–S3c**, **S2b**, **S4**, **S5**, **S6** and **S7**, as these represent only a stage in the research of this sector at Histria.

In the perimeter bordered by the main trenches, the following monuments were identified:²⁶ a Christian basilica – also called *Basilica extra muros* –, two inhumation necropolises – one contemporary to the basilica (6th–7th c. AD) and another dated to the 4th – 5th c. AD – and the ruins of a 3rd c. AD Roman building immediately under the level of the earlier necropolis.

The *Basilica extra muros* is one of Vasile Pârvan's earliest discoveries at Histria where, as we mentioned before, he started excavations in 1914. Since then, this monument was researched by several archaeologists, among which Nubar Hamparțumian and, in recent years, the team lead by dr. Viorica Rusu-Bolindeț.²⁷ Three functioning phases could be established for this Christian monument, spanning from the end of the 5th to the beginning of the 7th c. AD. Due to its location outside the Late Roman defence wall, this basilica seems to have functioned as the *basilica coemeterialis* for the second necropolis (6th – 7th c. AD) that surrounded it.

Under the basilica and the second inhumation necropolis lies the first necropolis (4th – 5th c. AD), which developed in this area after the erection of the Late Roman defence wall (second half of the 3rd c. AD) to the east. Following the archaeological research undertaken in 1961 and 1964, Nubar Hamparțumian was the first to be able to establish, based on 71 on the 74 graves discovered there,²⁸ the existence of two necropolises,²⁹ one previous to the construction of the basilica and the second

¹² Nubar 1971, p. 199–215; Nubar 1971a, p. 335–347; Rusu-Bolindeț *et alii* 2009, p. 127–129; Rusu-Bolindeț *et alii* 2010, p. 87–90.

¹³ Merkle 1973, p. 108–122; Höckmann *et alii* 1997, p. 209–217; Höckmann *et alii* 1996–1998, p. 55–102.

¹⁴ Dabîca 2009, p. 132–133; Dabîca 2010, p. 82–84; Dabîca 2013a, p. 157–187.

¹⁵ Dabîca 2010a, p. 381–393.

¹⁶ The main trenches were planned as a series of successive sections of 20 × 2m, separated by 1m-wide baulks.

¹⁷ Dimensions: 75 × 2m, made up of S1/2008 and S2/2009 (each 10 × 2m), S1a (15 × 2m), S1b (15 × 2m), S1c (18.5 × 2m) and S1d (11 × 2m).

¹⁸ Rusu-Bolindeț *et alii* 2009, p. 127–129; Rusu-Bolindeț *et alii* 2010, p. 87–90; Dabîca 2011, p. 56–57; Rusu-Bolindeț *et alii* 2011, p. 63–65; Dabîca 2011, p. 56–57.

¹⁹ Dabîca 2012, p. 74–75.

²⁰ The main trench S2 (85 × 2m) is oriented N–S and is made up of S2a (20.50 × 2m); S2b (27.10 × 2m); S2c (7.10 × 2m) and S2d (20.20 × 2m), divided by 1m-wide baulks.

²¹ Trench S3 (116 × 2m) is made up of S3a (20 × 2m), S3b (20 × 2m), S3c (31 × 2m), S3d (20 × 2m) and S3e (25.60 × 2m).

²² Dimensions: 10 × 2m, 8 m west of S3b.

²³ Dimensions: 6 × 2m, la 3.50m west of S3b.

²⁴ Dimensions : 6 × 2m, la 1.5 m west of S3b.

²⁵ 7 × 4m, located 1.5m west of the baulk between S3a and S3b and 6m north of S6.

²⁶ See n. 12.

²⁷ Rusu-Bolindeț, Bădescu 2003–2005, p. 104–112.

²⁸ Nubar 1971, p. 208–209.

²⁹ Nubar 1971, p. 199–215.

contemporary to it. Following his analysis, based mainly on the funerary inventory, as well as on the position of the skeletons, type of grave and stratigraphic context (overlappings and intersections of graves), the author attributed 30 graves to the 4th – 5th c. AD necropolis, and only seven to the second one; the rest of the graves could not be dated with certainty.³⁰

II. a. The *extra muros* necropolises

In the three main trenches mentioned above (excavated between 2011 and 2013) in the areas researched by the author of the present paper,³¹ 26 inhumation graves were identified, out of which only 13 were researched. Six of these were simple-pit graves, six others were covered by *tegulae* forming a roof over the skeleton, and one was a stone cista grave. The simple pit graves are attributed, based on their type and stratigraphy, to the 6th – 7th c. AD necropolis³², contemporary to the *Basilica extra muros*; the rest of the graves researched (those with *tegulae* and the stone cista grave) are attributed, based on the same criteria, to the 4th – 5th c. AD necropolis that preceded the basilica. Most of the graves exposed had no inventory, except for M. 10/2013, and traces of the coffin were discovered in two of them. As far as grave orientation is concerned, most were dug on a W–E orientation, but some have a certain deviation.

In what the extent of the necropolis is concerned, graves were identified only in the areas dug north of the modern visiting alley, allowing us to consider the latter as the southern limit of the necropolises. Between 2011 and 2012³³, in the southern part of S3a, we discovered and excavated two simple-pit graves, M. 1/2012 (Pl. 4. 1–2) and M. 2/2012 (Pl. 4. 3–5). We must mention that when a small section³⁴ was dug east of M. 2/2012, we observed that another skeleton was reburied (M. 2'/2012) (Pl. 4. 4–5) at the feet of the skeleton in M. 2/2012. In 2012,³⁵ in S3b, we identified seven other graves, two of which had a simple pit, the other five being covered with *tegulae* set in the shape of a roof. Only the two simple-pit graves were excavated³⁶ (M. 4/2012 and M. 5/2012) (Pl. 4. 6–7). Three other graves were identified later on,

one in a simple pit and two with *tegulae*. Here we came across an explicit stratigraphic situation for the area north of the modern visiting alley: under the two simple-pit graves from the 6th – 7th c. necropolis, we excavated a grave with *tegulae* – M. 6/2012 (Pl. 4. 8–11), from the 4th – 5th c. necropolis. An interesting detail was the fact that, even if it was a closed archaeological feature and the skeleton was in a good state of preservation, the skull was discovered at the level of the thorax and was the only part of the body that had been disturbed. It was also the first time when we identified remains from the wooden coffin, namely eight nails located near the pit's sides. Finally, we discovered that this grave superposed and partially destroyed an Early Roman wall made of unfashioned green shale cobbles bound with mortar. We must also mention that the southernmost grave was identified in the southern extremity of S3c, and it was a simple-pit grave that is yet to be researched.

In 2012 we excavated four graves in S2b, south of the *Basilica extra muros*, two with a simple pit and two with *tegulae* set as a roof above the skeleton. We must stress the fact that the two simple-pit graves (M. 3/2012 and M. 7/2012) represent two special cases. M. 3/2012 (Pl. 5. 1–2), even if well preserved *in situ*, was missing the lower leg bones (the tibiae, peronei and feet bones). M. 7/2012 (Pl. 5. 3–4) was discovered in a special position: in dorsal decubitus, slightly bent and with the arms and legs extended outwards; this leads us to believe that it is possible that the deceased was simply thrown in the pit. The two graves with *tegulae* (M. 8/2012 (Pl. 5. 5–10) and M. 9/2012 (Pl. 5. 11–14) are infant graves. An interesting detail is the fact that in M. 8/2012, even if it was a closed archaeological feature, two very long bones were discovered over the child's skeleton, set along the pit's longitudinal axis.³⁷

We identified one grave in S4 and another one in S5 (both have yet to be excavated), that pertain to the 4th – 5th c. necropolis, and three in S6, all with *tegulae* set as a roof over the skeleton (only two were explored – M. 10/2013 and M. 11/2013; Pl. 6. 1–4). Even if the *tegulae* of M. 11/2013 partially superposed those of M. 10/2013, the level their pits were dug at indicated that they were contemporary, accounting for the slightly different position of M. 10/2013. This is also the only case where we had an inventory, namely a fragmentary fibula

³⁰ Rusu Bolindeț *et alii* 2014, p. 199–219.

³¹ S3a, S3b, S3c, S3d, S3e, S2b, S2c and S2d.

³² See n. 28.

³³ Dabica 2013, p. 78–80.

³⁴ 0.70 × 1.50 m.

³⁵ Dabica 2013, p. 78–80.

³⁶ For which a 1.70 × 3.00m section was excavated.

³⁷ The human bones have not been analysed yet by an anthropologist.

dated to the 4th c. AD and several partially or entirely preserved coloured glass beads (4th c. AD) (Pl. 6. 5–10). The grave goods were found near the skull. It confirms the fact that the grave was part of the 4th – 5th c. necropolis. M. 11/2013 is also the second grave to have contained a coffin, as proven by the two nails discovered on the pit's northern side.

In S7 (Pl. 9. 4) four graves belonging to the earlier necropolis were discovered. Three of these had *tegulae* set as a roof over the skeleton, and one was a stone cista. Two were excavated, namely M. 13/2013 (Pl. 7. 1–4) and M. 15/2013 (Pl. 7. 5–7). M. 15/2013 is interesting from a typological point of view, as it is an inhumation grave where the deceased was laid in a stone cista made of unfashioned green shale cobbles and covered by similar stones.

CATALOGUE OF THE RESEARCHED GRAVES³⁸

M1/2012: inhumation grave, oriented SW–NE, simple pit, unidentifiable in the field; probably an adult, laid in dorsal decubitus, with badly preserved bones; no inventory; typologically and stratigraphically it belongs to the 6th – 7th c. necropolis.

M2/2012: inhumation grave, oriented SW–NE, simple rectangular pit with rounded corners; probably an adult, laid in dorsal decubitus, with the bones in a bad state of preservation (only the lower part of the body was better preserved); no inventory; typologically and stratigraphically it belongs to the 6th – 7th c. necropolis. Near the legs was reburied another body (M. 2'/2012).

M3/2012: inhumation grave, oriented SW–NE, simple pit, unidentifiable in the field; adult, laid in dorsal decubitus, with the right arm along the body and the left one on the pelvis; the skeleton is very well preserved; the legs are only partially preserved; no inventory; typologically and stratigraphically it belongs to the 6th – 7th c. necropolis.

M4/2012: inhumation grave, oriented W–E, simple rectangular pit with rounded corners; probably an adult laid in dorsal decubitus, with the arms along the body and the skeleton in a good state of preservation; no inventory; typologically and stratigraphically it belongs to the 6th – 7th c. necropolis.

M5/2012: inhumation grave, oriented W–E, simple rectangular pit with rounded corners; probably an adult laid in dorsal decubitus, with the arms along the body and a well-preserved skeleton; no inventory; typologically and stratigraphically it belongs to the 6th – 7th c. necropolis.

M6/2012: inhumation grave, oriented W–E, rectangular pit with rounded corners, with *tegulae* set in the shape of the roof above the skeleton; coffin; probably a teenager, laid in dorsal decubitus, with arms along the body; no inventory; typologically and stratigraphically it belongs to the 4th – 5th c. necropolis.

M7/ 2012: inhumation grave, oriented W–E, simple pit, unidentifiable in the field; adult laid in dorsal decubitus, slightly bent and with the arms and legs extended outwards; no

inventory; typologically and stratigraphically it belongs to the 6th – 7th c. necropolis.

M8/2012: inhumation grave, oriented W–E, rectangular pit with rounded corners, with *tegulae* set in the shape of a roof above the skeleton; infant (newly born?) laid in dorsal decubitus, with the arms along the body and well preserved skeleton; no inventory; tipologically and stratigraphically it belongs to the 4th – 5th c. necropolis.

M9/2012: inhumation grave, oriented NW–SE, rectangular two-levels pit with rounded corners and *tegulae* set in the shape of a roof over the skeleton; infant (newly born?) laid in dorsal decubitus, with arms and legs extended and a relatively well preserved skeleton; no inventory; typologically and stratigraphically it belongs to the 4th – 5th c. necropolis.

M10/2013: inhumation grave, oriented SE–NW, rectangular pit with rounded corners, with *tegulae* set in the shape of a roof above the skeleton; probably an adult, laid in dorsal decubitus, with partially-preserved bones; inventory: a fragmentary 4th c. AD fibula and several partially and entirely-preserved coloured-glass beads (4th c. AD); typologically and stratigraphically it belongs to the 4th – 5th c. necropolis.

M11/2013: inhumation grave, oriented NE–SW, rectangular pit with rounded corners, with *tegulae* set in the shape of a roof above the skeleton and with coffin; probably an adult laid in dorsal decubitus, with partially-preserved bones; no inventory; typologically and stratigraphically it belongs to the 4th – 5th c. necropolis.

M. 12/2013 identified but not researched.

M13/2013, inhumation grave, oriented W–E, rectangular two-levels pit with rounded corners and *tegulae* set in the shape of a roof over the skeleton; adult laid in dorsal decubitus, with arms along the body and a well-preserved skeleton; no inventory; typologically and stratigraphically it belongs to the 4th – 5th c. necropolis.

M. 14/2013 identified, but not researched.

M15/2013: inhumation grave, oriented W–E, simple pit with cista made of green shale cobbles (the deceased was laid in a stone cista and then covered with green shale cobbles); probably an adult laid in dorsal decubitus; only the legs were preserved *in situ*; no inventory; typologically and stratigraphically it belongs to the 4th – 5th c. necropolis.

II.b. The large Early Roman public building

As we mentioned above, during a previous stage of the research, under the 4th – 5th c. necropolis a wall (Z8) was discovered in S3b, at a depth of – 1.20m (Pl. 8. 1–7), approx. 1.80m wide and oriented E–W, with a buttress 0.50m wide, made of unfashioned green shale cobbles bound with mortar. It continues to a depth of –2.45 m and is in fact the foundation of large wall whose upper part was built probably using green shale cobbles and unfashioned limestone blocks alternated with brick courses, as proven by the debris of the wall, which was dismantled in Antiquity down to its foundation. Above it, in the layer of debris, we discovered a coin dated to the first half of the 3rd c. AD. It is a 2 *assaria* coin minted in Tomis³⁹ during

³⁸ For an easier access to the graves' presentation, we decided to briefly describe them in a catalogue.

³⁹ We hereby thank Theodor Isvoranu from 'Vasile Pârvan' Archaeological Institute in Bucharest for identifying the coins.

the reign of Gordianus III (238–244), setting a *terminus post quem* for the wall's destruction. Z8 was found to the west (Pl. 9. 4) only in S5, where its SW corner was also identified, a segment leading northwards, conventionally called Z10 (Pl. 9. 1–3). This first corner has a buttress on its southern side (Z8), as indicated by the larger width of Z8 in this section.⁴⁰ Another similar wall segment, conventionally called Z9, was discovered in the northern part of S3b, but at a depth of –2m, clearly showing that the dismantling process was not uniform. Z9 wall was uncovered on a length of 1.60m (Pl. 9. 2), but it surely continued in the baulk between S3a and S3b.

Following these discoveries we connected these wall segments (Z8, 9 and 10) – Early Roman, made of green shale cobbles bound with mortar, very wide and located in the centre of the Early Roman city – to the similar ones (Pl. 3. 4) discovered by Nubar Hampartumian between 1961 and 1964, more precisely to those of the Early Roman 'large public building'. Other arguments for this identification were the construction materials – roof tiles, bricks, painted plaster fragments, marble wall tiles, limestone fragments – discovered in S3b over a distance of almost 20m. The section's limits represent, in our opinion, the public/official building's total width.

The research of the Early Roman building continued in 2013, when we tried to identify its western side and NW corner. The northern part of the building's western side, conventionally called Z11, was discovered directly underneath the 4th – 5th c. necropolis. First we uncovered its western side (Pl. 10. 1), where we also discovered two mortar traces left by the wall's upper part (Pl. 10. 2–3). After excavating the two graves (as mentioned above, M. 10/2013's pit partially destroyed Z11's masonry), we uncovered its eastern side (Pl. 10. 4–6). This wall segment (with an average width of 1.80m) was also built using green shale cobbles bound with mortar, confirming the fact that it was the western side of the large Early Roman building. The foundation of this wall segment could be followed on its western side down to a depth of –2.42 m, where we stopped on a layer of fine sand and pebbles, and on the eastern side down to a depth of –1.70 m, where we identified the building's dismantling level, a level of burning and its construction level.

Archaeological research continued in 2013 in S7, under the 4th – 5th c. necropolis, where, at a

depth of –1.33 m, we identified the Early Roman building's NW corner foundation, dismantled in Antiquity in a slope descending eastwards. We identified the building's internal and external corners (Pl. 11. 1). At the present moment we consider that the NW corner has the shape of a buttress, with a width of 0.80m (Pl. 11. 2). The building's western side (Pl. 11. 3), Z12, is 1.80m wide, as is the northern side, Z13 (Pl. 11. 4). North of the building we identified a similar wall, Z14, made of green shale cobbles bound with mortar. But, apart from the fact that it is not part of the same building, we can say nothing more concerning this structure. We must also mention the fact that west of the building we identified another wall segment, conventionally called Z15 (Pl. 11. 5), oriented E–W, perpendicular to the building's western side, Z12, and built during the same period (it was not set against the building's side). The latter, even if built in the same manner, is only 1.40m wide, suggesting an internal division of the space (Pl. 11. 6) in the western part of this 3rd c. building (Pl. 11. 7–8), a date confirmed by the pottery shards found in the area. This is made up of fine, as well as common ware, dated to the 2nd – 3rd c.: bowls, cups, plates, saucers, pots, amphorae and lamps.⁴¹

The building's debris layer was first identified in S3a (Pl. 12. 1–3). In the present state of the research we believe this debris, made up of green shale cobbles and unfashioned limestones, roof tiles and bricks, is the result of the destruction of the building's northern side. This dismantling level is dated to the end of the 3rd c. AD based on a coin from Diocletianus' reign (284–305), minted in 293–295. This debris area is bounded to the north by a street (Pl. 12. 4–5), north of which we identified another debris area, containing bricks and traces of burning (Pl. 12. 6). The street is also dated to the Early Roman period, and was therefore contemporary to and functioned in relation with the large public building to the south, its NE–SW trajectory being already known from the research undertaken by Nubar Hampartumian.⁴² On this street we discovered a Histrian coin dated to the end of the 2nd – beginning of the 3rd c., an *assarion* from the reign of Caracalla (198–217). The second debris layer, north of the Early Roman street, is dated by a coin from the first half of the 3rd c., and *assarion* (military type with standards) from Nicaea, minted

⁴⁰ The possible existence of buttresses for Z8 is yet to be confirmed.

⁴¹ The pottery, as the other categories of discovered material, will be analysed in detail in the site's archaeological monograph.

⁴² Nubar 1970, fig. 13.

during the reign of Gordianus III (238–244). The fact that this is a destruction level is also proven by the coin's state of preservation, as the latter was partially melted following a powerful fire. Based on this numismatic information, it is probable that the second debris layer represents the levelling of the building's first destruction level, and the first debris layer represents the monument's final destruction.

A similar situation was identified south of the building, in the northern part of S3c,⁴³ where we discovered the southern side's destruction level (Pl. 12. 7–12). An interesting detail is the fact that this debris, which has the same composition (green shale cobbles and unfashioned limestones, marble fragments, roof tiles and bricks), is mixed with a consistent layer of mortar that first appeared at a depth of –1.20m and continued in a slope southwards, down to a depth of –1.81m. The debris is dated to the end of the 3rd c. AD based on a coin minted in Cyzicus in 293–295, during Diocletianus' reign, which could represent the moment of this building's final destruction. The destruction layer was also identified in S4, at a depth of 1.78m, where it represented the debris of the building's western side, whose segment (Z11) was discovered, as mentioned before, in S5.

III. CONCLUDING REMARKS

After the topographic survey⁴⁴ of all the Early Roman wall segments in S3b, S5–S7, we established that these can be connected to the three wall segments discovered in the 1960s by Nubar Hamparțumian (Pl. 3. 4). Corroborating this information with the fact that these wall segments have approximately the same width as the latter, namely 1.80m, we obtain the image of an 'imposing' Early Roman building, as its discoverer, Nubar Hamparțumian, described it. We are therefore dealing with a public building of approximately 90 × 20m, with its exact dimensions to be established by future archaeological research.

In the present state of the research it is evident that this edifice was built sometime at the beginning of the 3rd c. AD (probably during the reign of Septimius Severus). The structure suffered an important destruction at the middle of the 3rd c., probably during the massive destruction of the city (*excidium Histriae*)⁴⁵ due to the devastating Gothic

raid in 251 AD. This first destruction is well documented archaeologically both in the monument's northern, southern and western sides, and was followed by a partial repair, a period in which the building continued to be used, but at a different scale. According to the numismatic evidence, its final destruction took place sometime at the end of the 3rd – first decade of the 4th c., when the area it used to occupy was covered by the first Late Roman necropolis (4th – 5th c.). This massive destruction is also confirmed by the fact that 80% of the coins in S3a, S3b and S3c bear the marks of a powerful fire, many of them being partially or completely melted. From a quantitative perspective, the coins also demonstrate that the first destruction, at the middle of the 3rd c. AD, is less attested by the coins in comparison to the second one, at the end of the 3rd and first decade of the 4th c.

As we mentioned before, this article represents only a stage in the research of the area in question, and future campaigns will have to identify this 'large' early Roman building's northern and southern sides, as well as answer questions concerning the possible internal divisions in the western part, discovered in 2013. The present state of our research largely confirms Nubar Hamparțumian's discoveries in the 1960s concerning this public/official Early Roman building. We thus obtained an ever clearer image of the Early Roman period at Histria, which represents one of the objectives of the archaeological research undertaken in the perimeter bounded by the Early and by the Late Roman defence walls.

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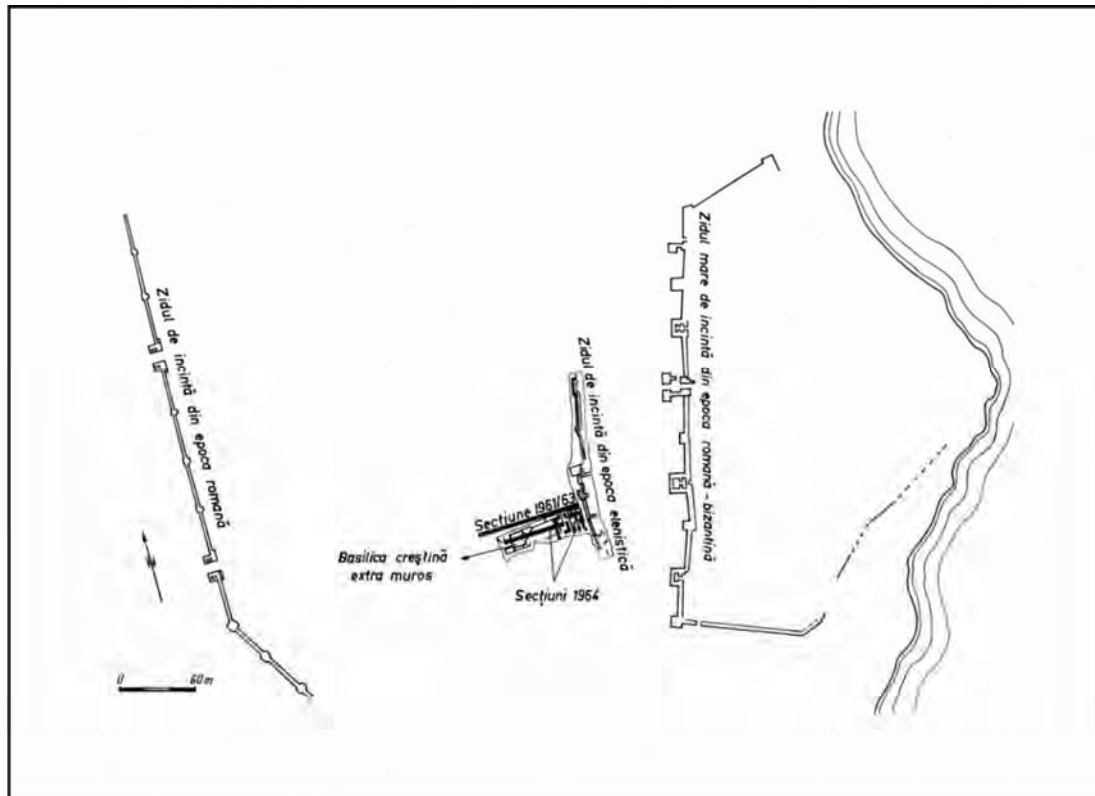
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⁴³ Dabîca 2013, p. 78–80.

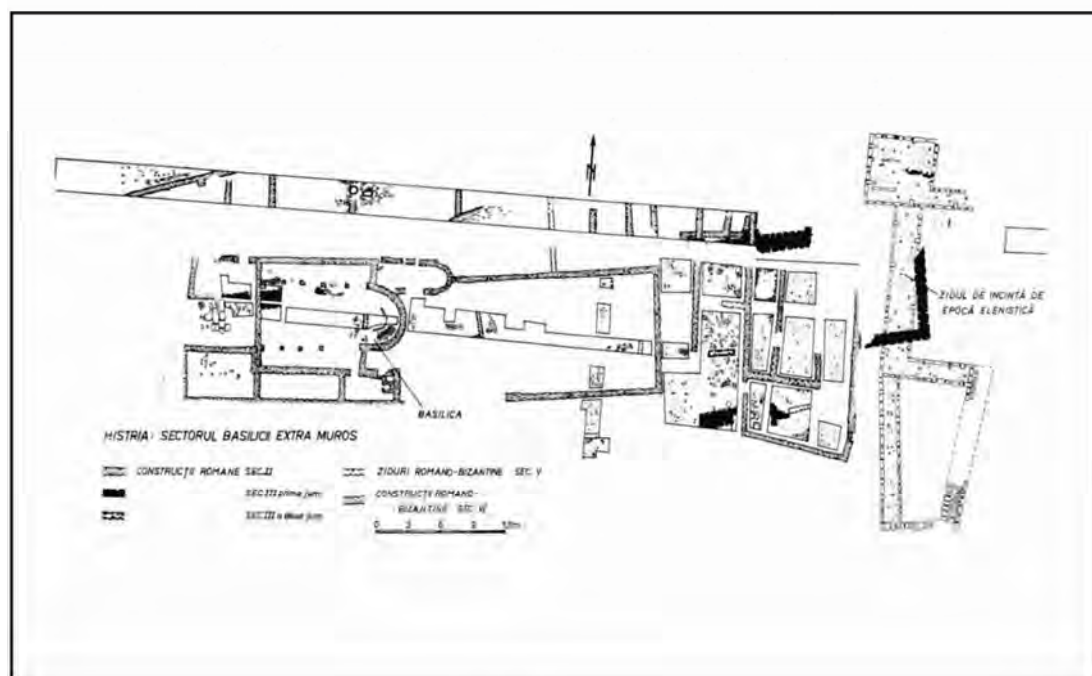
⁴⁴ I would like to thank eng. Constantin Mehedințeanu for the annual topographic survey of this area.

⁴⁵ SHA, *Vita Maximi et Balbini*, XVI. 3.

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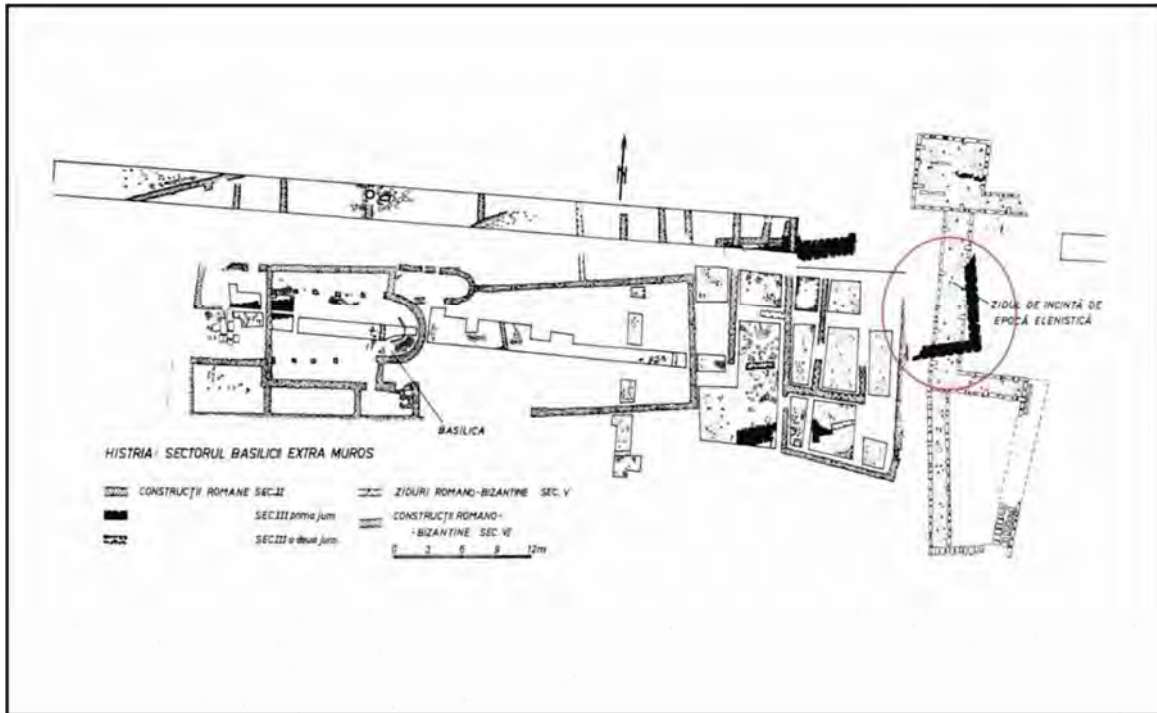


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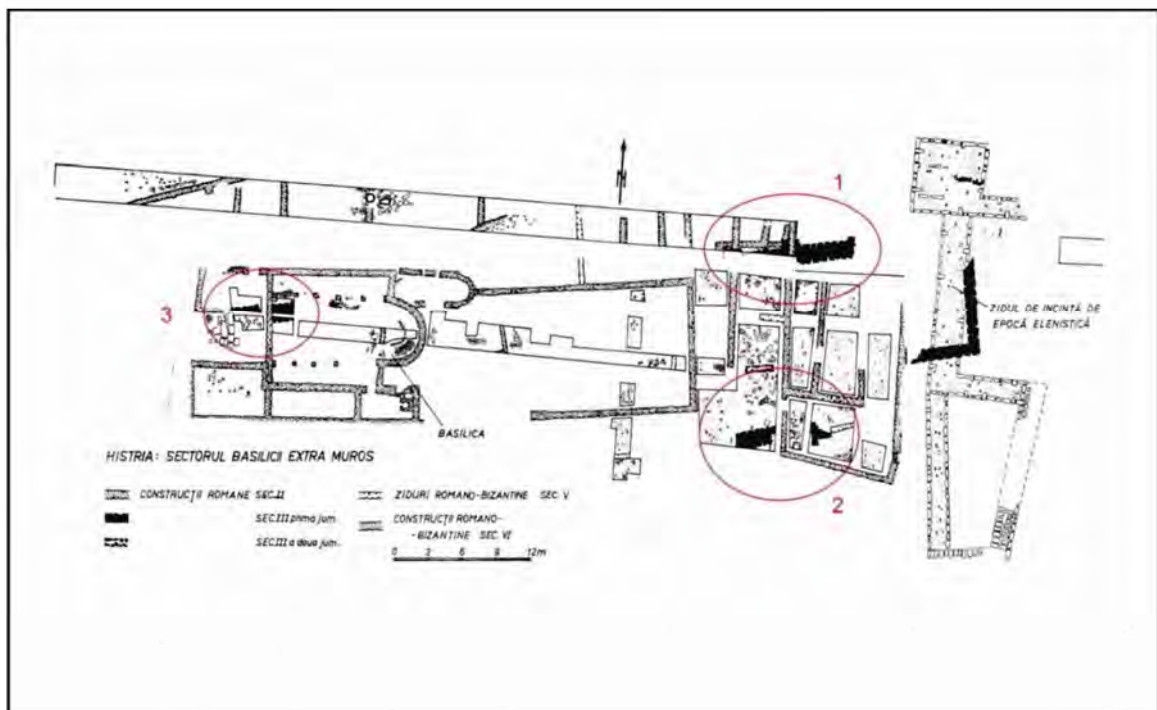


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Pl. 1. 1. Histria. Excavation plan for the Basilica *Extra-Muros* Sector, 1961-1964, Nubar 1970;
2. Histria. The Basilica *Extra-Muros* Sector, Nubar 1970.

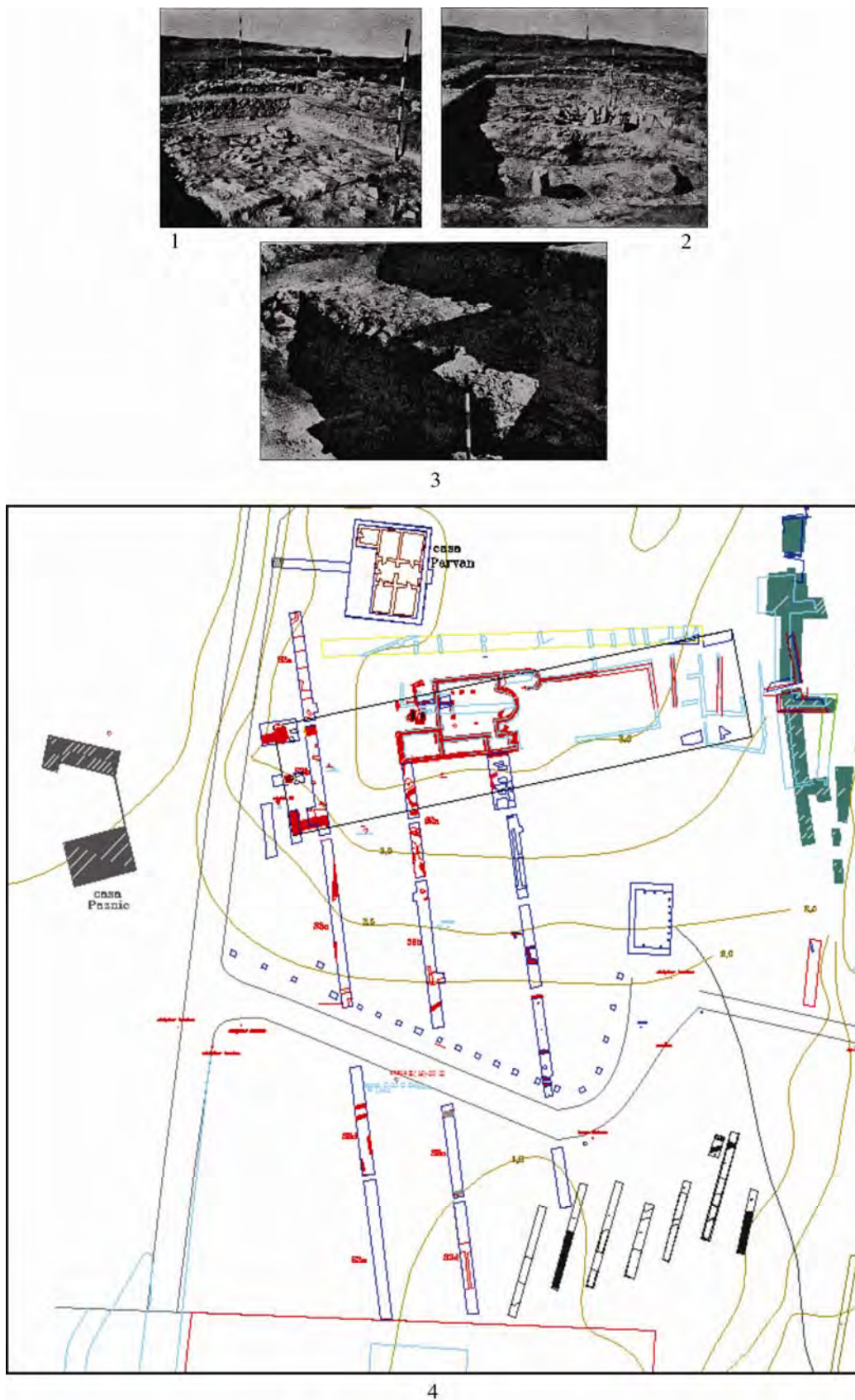


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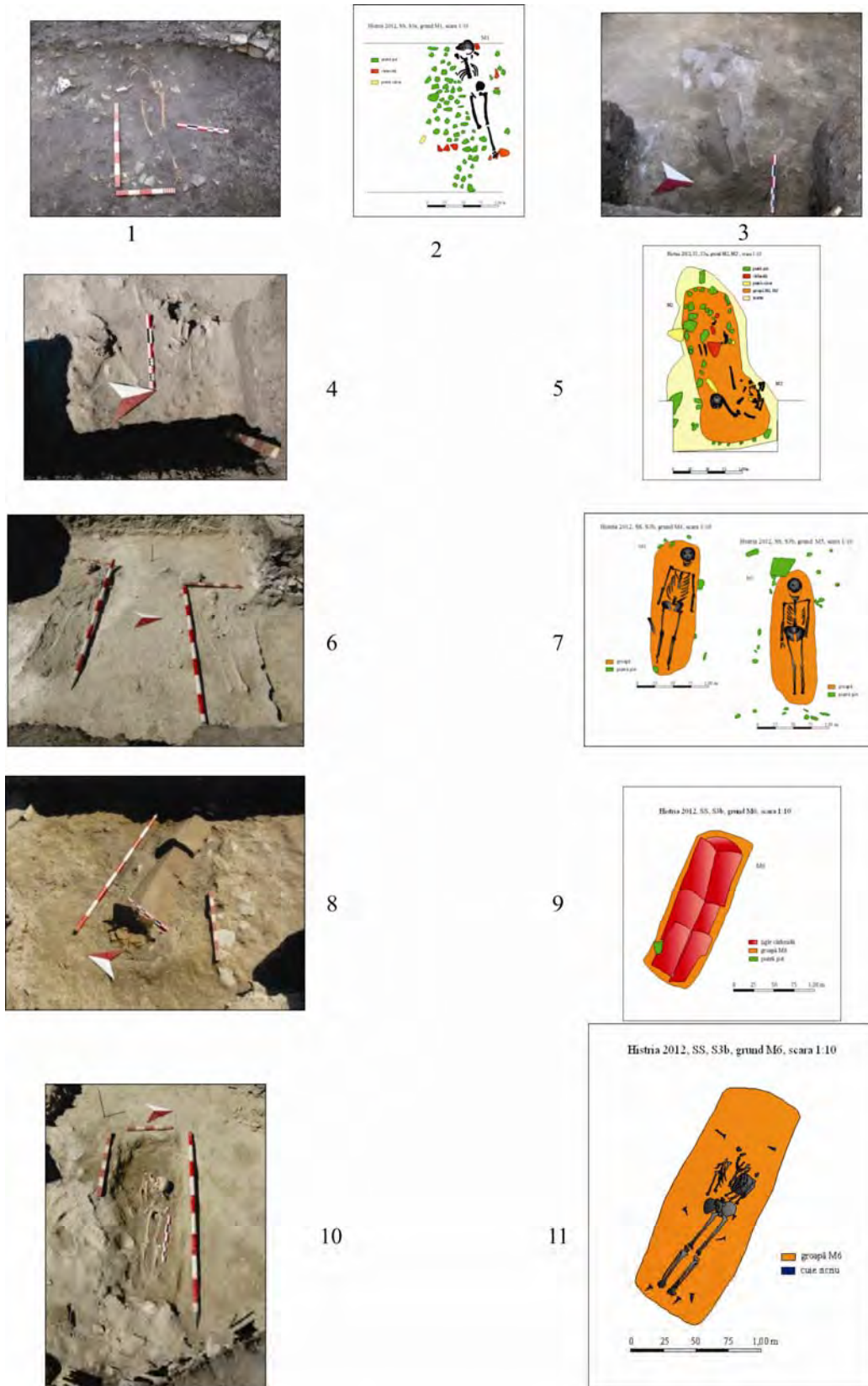


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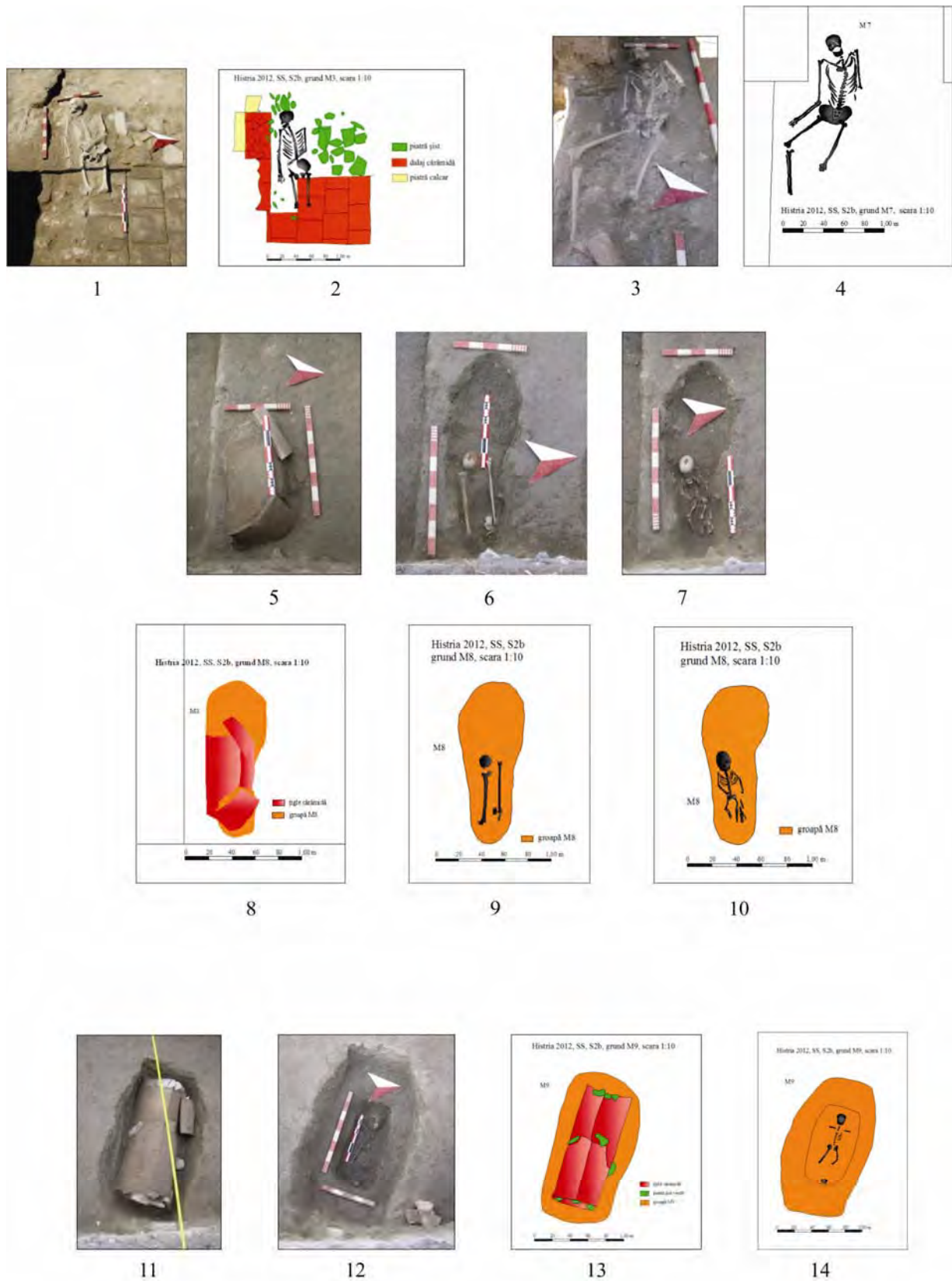
Pl. 2. 1-2. Histria. The Basilica *Extra-Muros* Sector, with the wall segments mentioned in the text, according to Nubar 1970.



Pl. 3. 1-3. Histria. The Basilica *Extra-Muros* Sector, ruins of the 3rd c. AD.
Roman building, Nubar 1970;
4. General plan of the main sections S1, S2, S3.



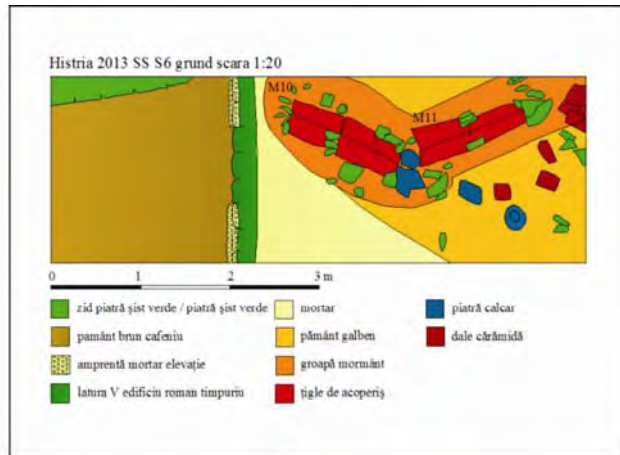
Pl. 4. 1. M1, seen from the E; 2. M1, plan; 3. M2, seen from the E; 4. M2', seen from the E; 5. M2, M2', plans; 6. M4, M5, seen from the E; 7. M4, M5, plans; 8. M6, seen from the W; 9. M6, plan; 10. M6, seen from the SE; 11. M6, plan no. 2.



Pl. 5. 1. M3, seen from the E; 2. M3, plan; 3. M7, seen from the E; 4. M7, plan;
 5-7. M8, seen from the E; 8-10. M8, plan no. 1, plan no. 2, plan no. 3;
 11, 12. M9, seen from the E; 13, 14. M9, plan no. 1, plan no. 2.



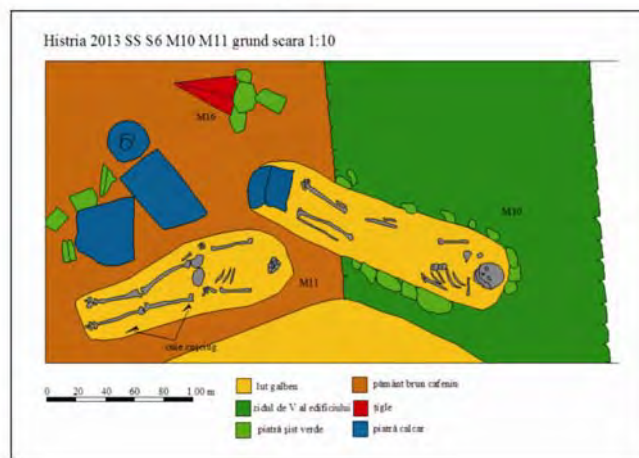
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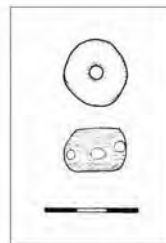
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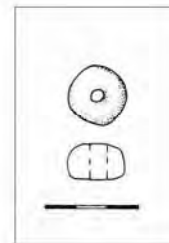
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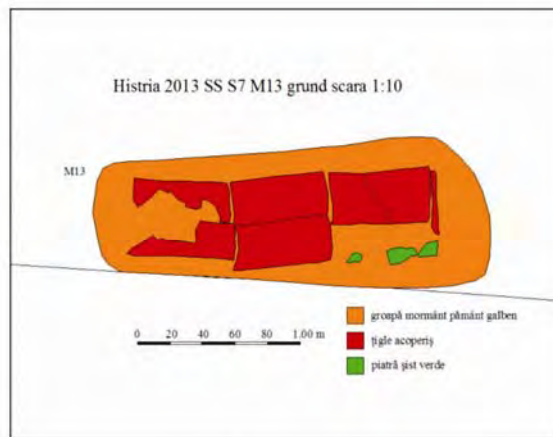


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Pl. 6. 1. M10, M11, seen from the E; 2. M10, M11, plan; 3. M10, M11, seen from the E; 4. M10, M11, plan no. 2; 5-10. Inventory from M10.



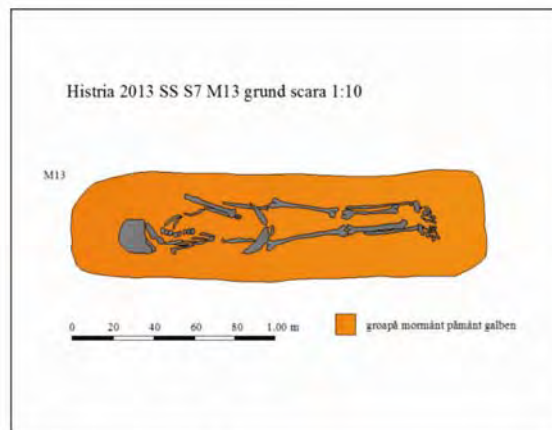
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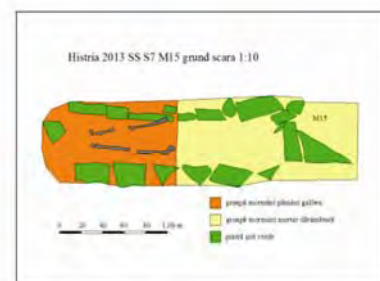
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Pl. 7. 1. M13, seen from the E; 2. M13, plan; 3. M13, seen from the E; 4. M13, plan 2;
5. M15, seen from the E; 6. M15, seen from the E; 7. M15, plan.



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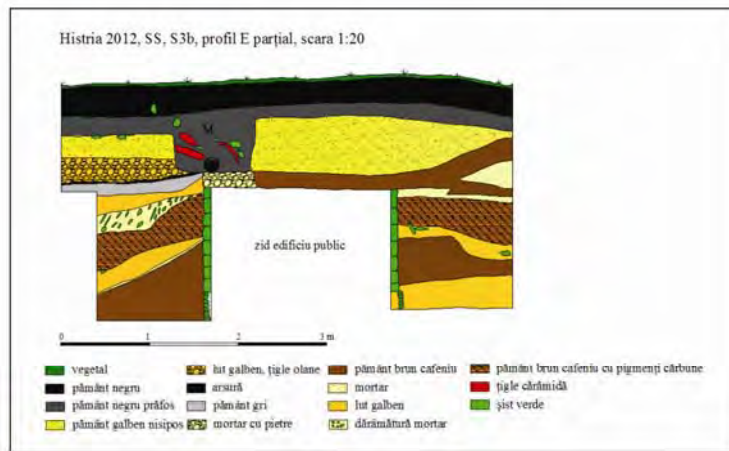
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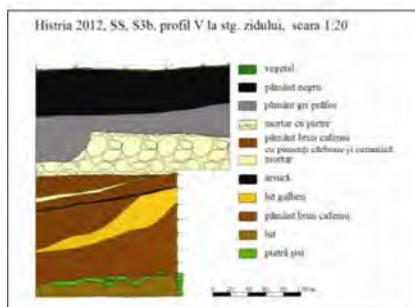
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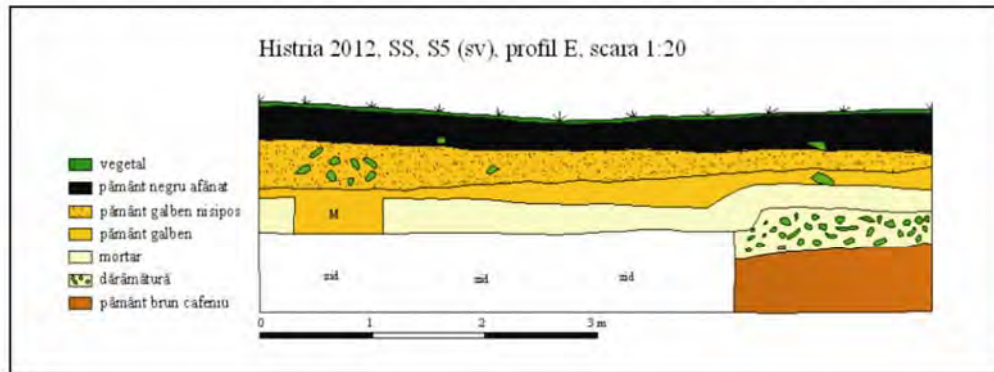
Pl. 8. 1-3. S3b, Z8, seen from the S; 4. S3b, Z8, seen from the E; 5. S3b, partial E profile; 6. S3b, W profile (left of Z8); 7. S3b, W profile (right of Z8).



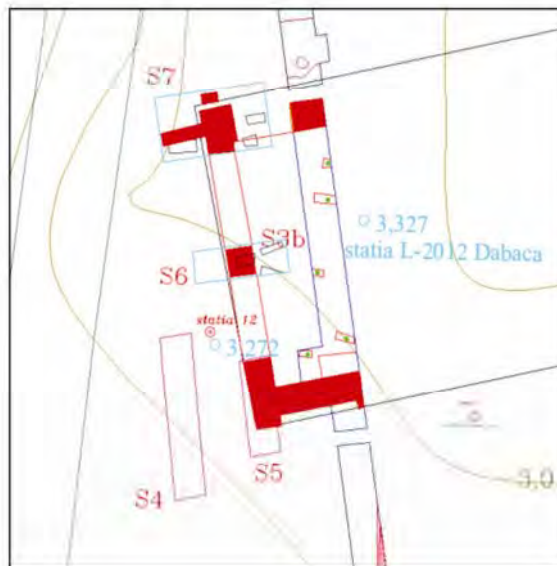
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Pl. 9. 1. S5 (sv), Z10, seen from the S; 2. S3b, Z9, seen from the E; 3. S5 (sv), E profile;
4. Topographic survey with the archaeological sections excavated between 2012-2013.



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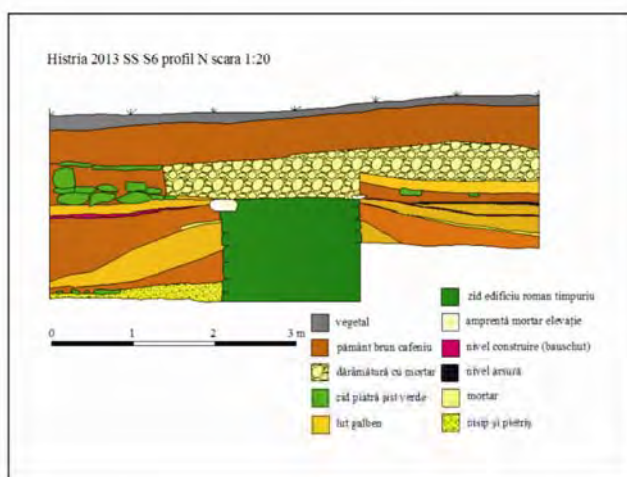
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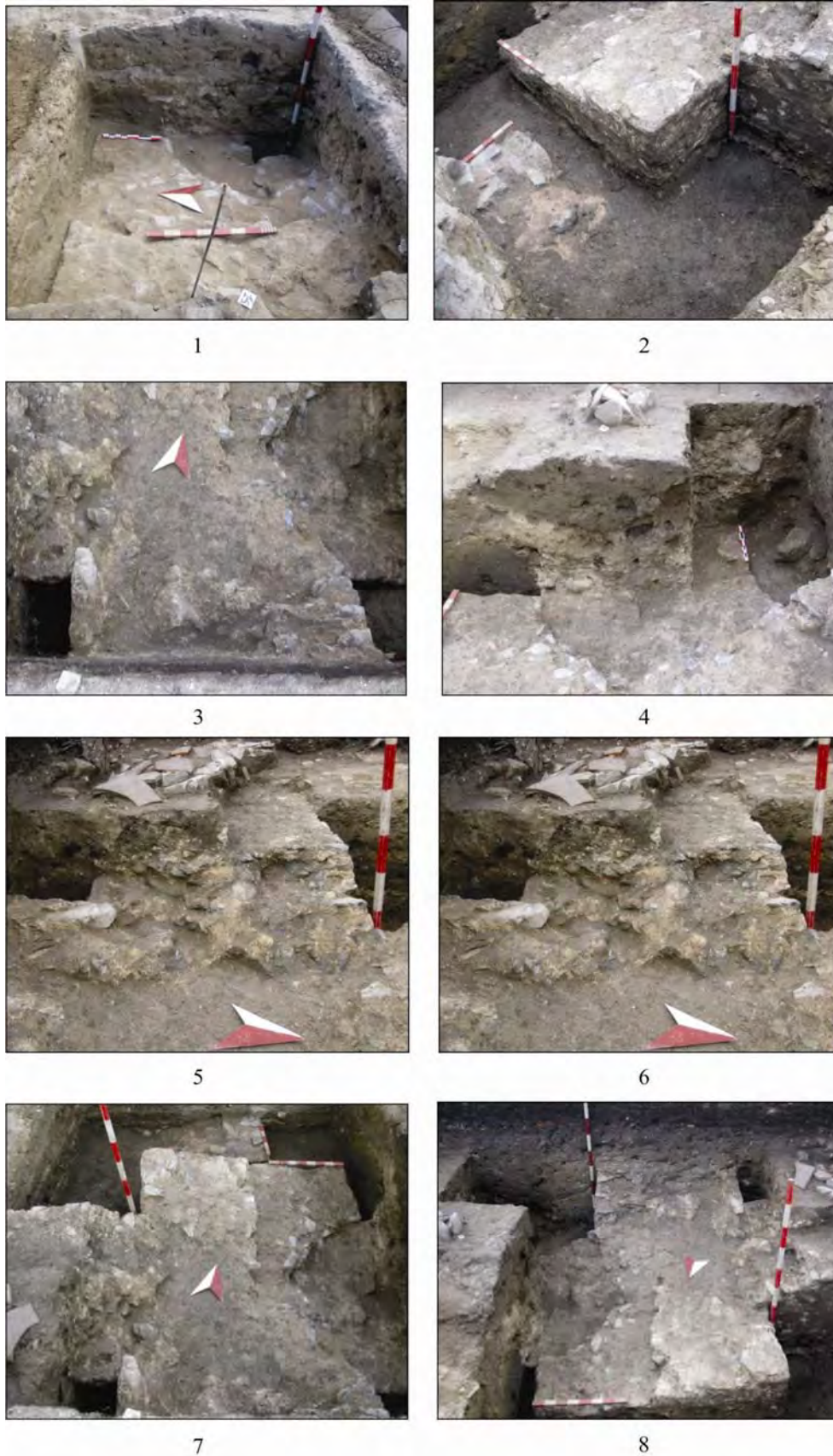


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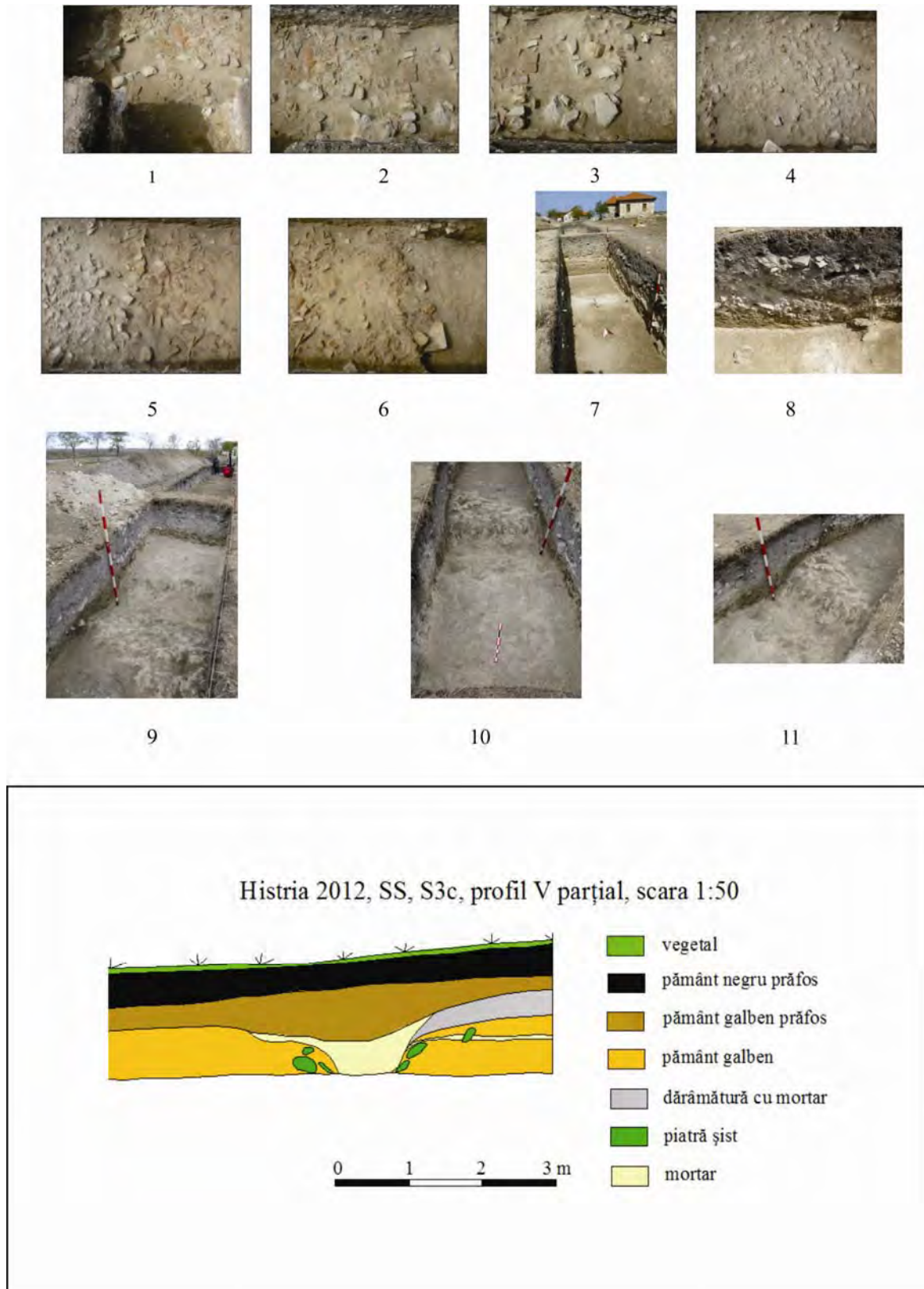


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Pl. 10. 1. S6, Z11, W side, seen from the N; 2. S6, Z11, W side, seen from the W; 3. S6, Z11, seen from the W; 4. S6, Z11, seen from the E; 5. S6, Z11, seen from the S; 6. S6, N profile.

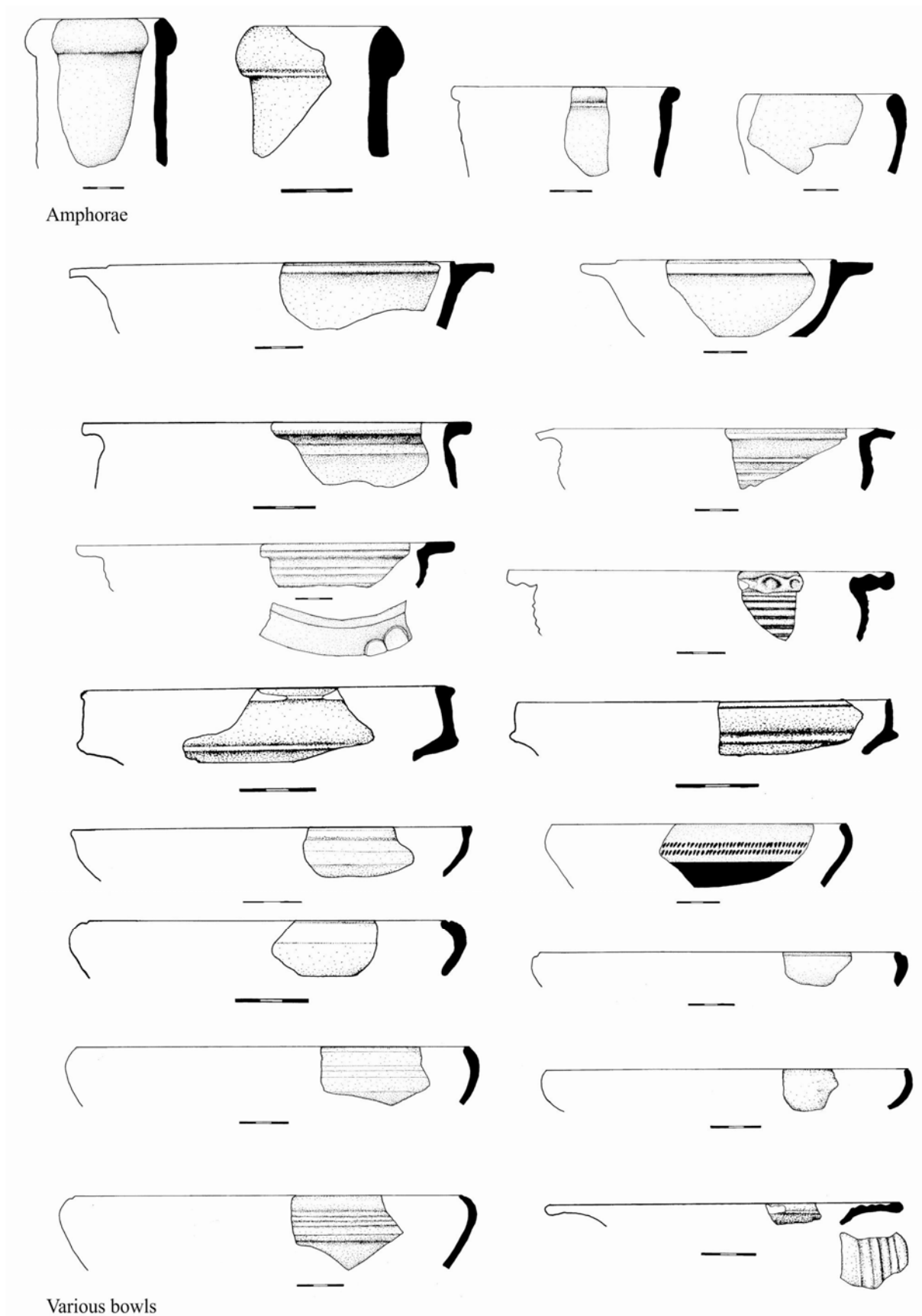


Pl. 11. 1. S7, NW corner of the building; 2. S7 buttress; 3. S7 Z12; 4. S7 Z13; 5. S7 Z15; 6. S7 seen from the NE; 7. S7 seen from the S; 8. S7 seen from the N.

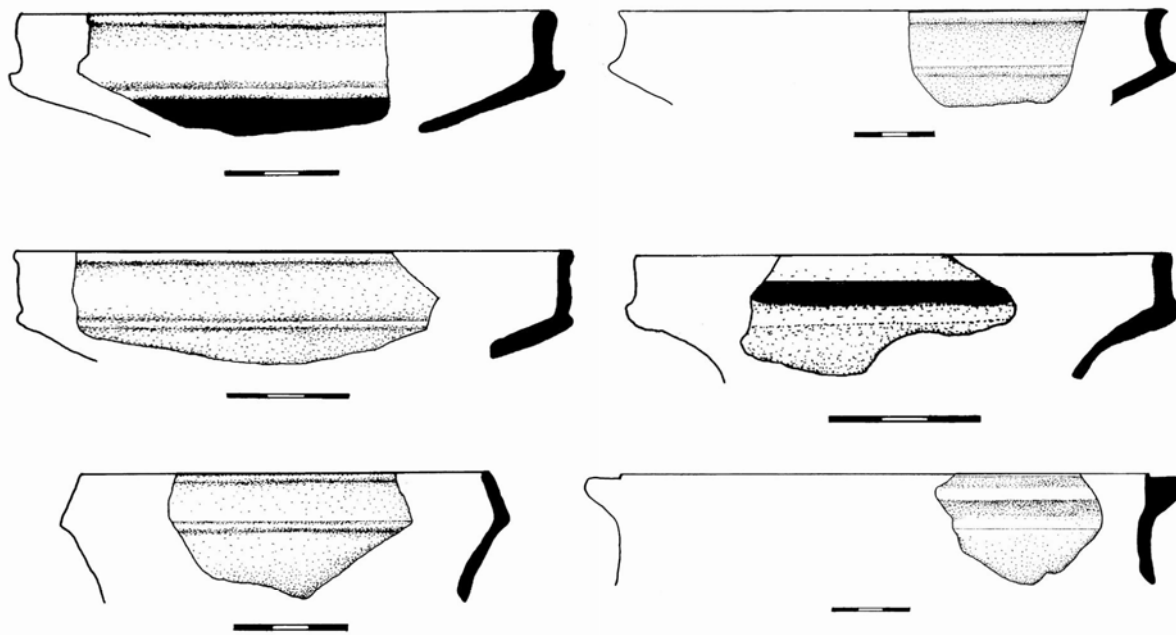


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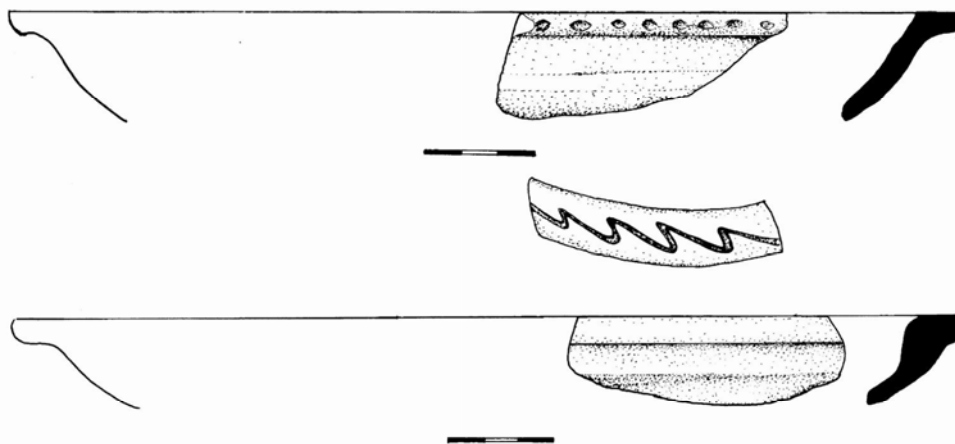
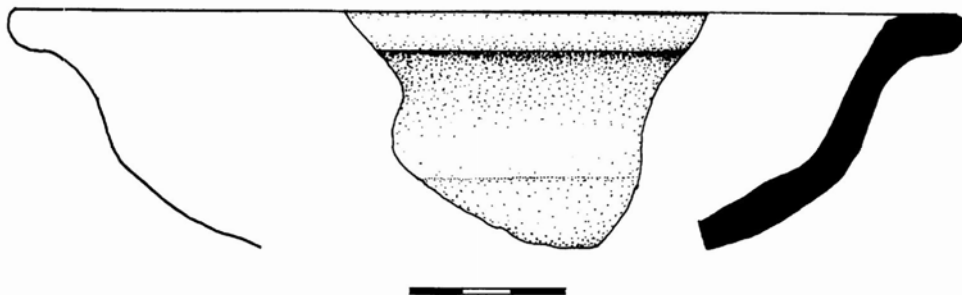
Pl. 12. 1-3. S3a, northern debris of the Early Roman building (squares 8-10);
 4-6. S3a, Early Roman street (squares 4-6) and debris no. 2 (squares 3-4);
 7-11. S3c, southern debris of the Early Roman building; 12. S3c, partial W profile.



Pl. 13. Early Roman pottery, 2nd – 3rd c. AD.

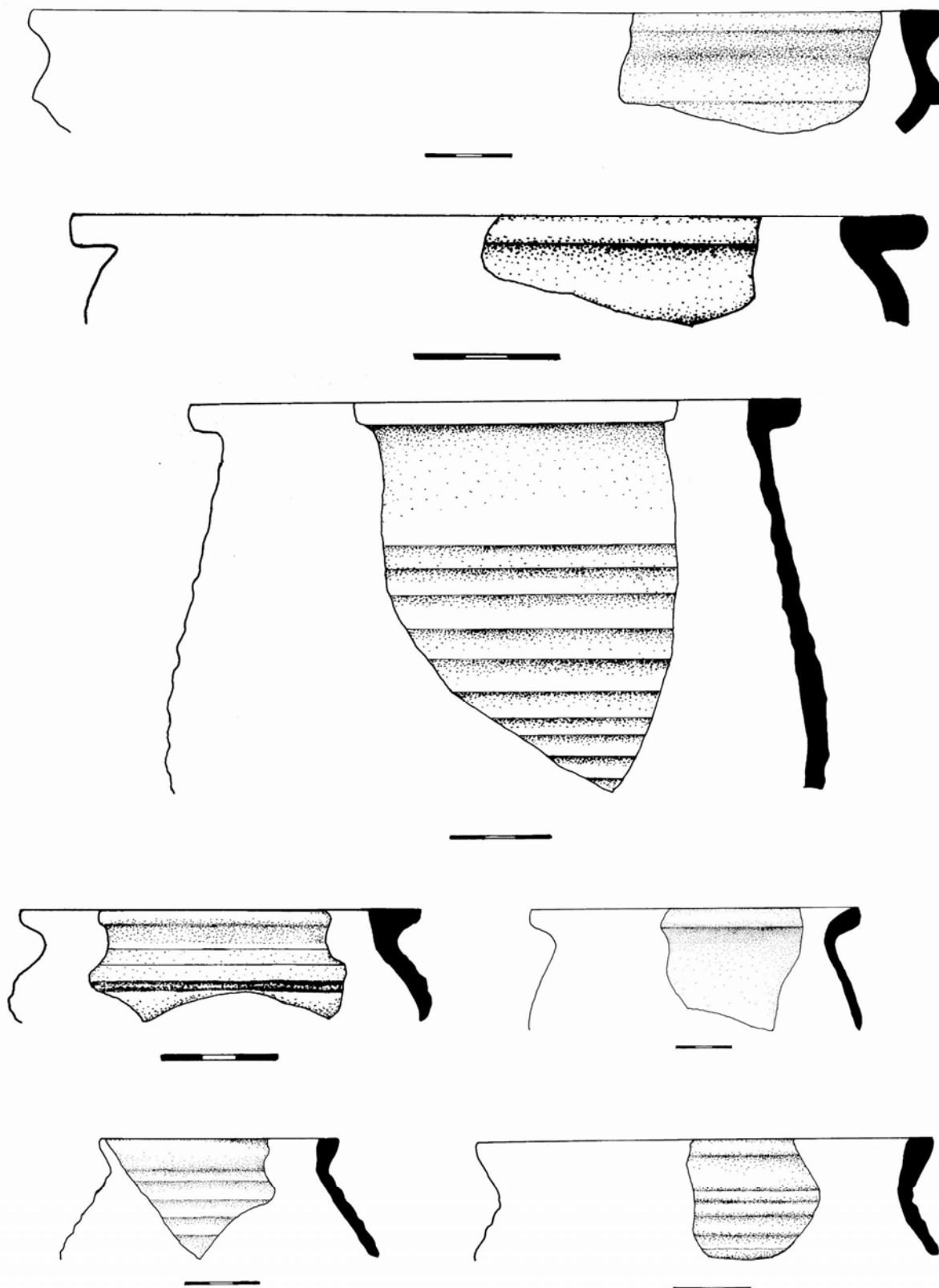


Cups



Dishes, plates

Pl. 14. Early Roman pottery, 2nd – 3rd c.AD.



Pots

Pl. 15. Early Roman pottery, 2nd – 3rd c. AD.