

RECENT RESEARCH AT THE *BASILICA EXTRA MUROS* IN HISTRIA AT 100 YEARS SINCE THE INITIATION OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH ON THE SITE

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Abstract: The *Basilica extra muros* is among the first monuments in Histria that started to be excavated right after Vasile Pârvan discovered the site in 1914. The uncovering of the only Early Christian basilica outside the precinct walls of Histria continued during several campaigns (1917 – under the leadership of the the German architect J. Jacobs; 1955–1956 – Em. Popescu; 1961–1964 – N. Hamparțumian), leading to the almost entire uncovering of the monument and the identification of two necropolises in the area – one earlier than the basilica (4th–5th century AD) and the other contemporary to it (end of the 5th century – first half of the 7th century AD).

At the initiative of Alexandru Suceveanu, the research of the *Basilica extra muros* was resumed again in 2001 by a team initially consisting of Viorica Rusu-Bolindeț (MNIT), Karl von de Lohe (“Ludwig Maximilian” University in München – the 2001 campaign), Alexandru Bădescu (MNIR), and since 2008 Vlad-Andrei Lăzărescu (IAIAC). The following goals have been reached during the five campaigns (2001, 2006, 2008–2010, 2013): the creation of an up-to-date survey of the basilica (2001) and archaeological research of both the annex on the north-eastern side (2006) and the area south of the three annex buildings of the Christian monument (2008–2010, 2013).

The present article aims at providing a synthesis overview of the results of the archaeological research performed during the previously mentioned campaigns. On the basis of the stratigraphy and the archaeological material we shall present both the new data obtained, aimed at contributing to a more detailed chronology, building and functioning stages of the *Basilica extra muros*, and at providing new information on the development of the *extra muros* area in Histria. Thus, it has been noted that the Late Roman habitation (end of the 5th century – first half of the 7th century AD) was present both north and south of the *Basilica extra muros*, as building elements discovered in the area south of the three annex

buildings of the Christian monument, to the south, confirmed the observations we were able to make during previous research north of the basilica (2001–2012). We have also obtained new data on the necropolises in that area – 23 more inhumation tombs were discovered on the southern side of the basilica (out of which 10 have been excavated so far), mainly belonging to a necropolis in use before the construction of the basilica (4th–5th century AD), but also some were part of the necropolis that was contemporary to the building (end of the 5th century – first half of the 7th century AD). The presentation of these tombs, together with their inventory, typology and chronological setting, as well as the anthropologic analysis¹ of the skeletons are a significant part of the results obtained by the team excavating the *Basilica extra muros* sector during the last years. We hope that the continuation of the archaeological research in that area, combined with those performed in the Histria South sector by colleague Mircea Dabîca (IAB), will bring more information on the possible boundaries between the habitation area and the necropolises and on the location of the harbor of the Greek-Roman city of Histria.

Cuvinte-cheie: Histria, *Basilica extra muros*, anexele de pe latura de sud, necropole de înhumatie, sfârșitul secolului al V-lea – prima jumătate a secolului al VII-lea p. Chr.

Rezumat: *Basilica extra muros* este unul dintre primele monumente de la Histria a cărei cercetare a început odată cu descoperirea sitului de către Vasile Pârvan în anul 1914.

¹ The anthropological analyses were performed through the project “Genetic Evolution: New Evidence in the Study of Certain Interconnected Structures. A Bio-molecular Incursion around the Carpathians from Antiquity until the Middle Ages”, National Authority for Scientific Research, CNCS-UEFISCDI, project no. PCCA-1153/2011-P2 (Dr. Octavian Popescu-PI & Dr. Simona Beatrice Kelemen-co-PI).

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Dezvelirea singurei basilici creștine timpurii din zona extramurană a Histriei a continuat de-a lungul timpului în câteva campanii (1917 – arhitectul german J. Jacobs; 1955–1956 – Em. Popescu; 1961–1964 – N. Hamparțumian), ducând la descoperirea aproape exhaustivă a monumentului, precum și la atestarea a două necropole în zonă – una anterioară basilicii (secolele IV–V p. Chr.) și alta contemporană cu aceasta (sfârșitul secolului al V-lea – prima jumătate a secolului al VII-lea p. Chr.).

Din inițiativa lui Alexandru Suceveanu, cercetarea Basilicii *extra muros* a fost reluată în anul 2001 de către un colectiv constituit inițial din Viorica Rusu-Bolindeț (MNIT), Karl von de Lohe (Universitatea „Ludwig Maximilian” din München – campania 2001) și Alexandru Bădescu (MNIR), căruia i s-a adăugat din anul 2008 Vlad-Andrei Lăzărescu (IAIAC). În cele cinci campanii derulate până în prezent (2001, 2006, 2008–2010, 2013) s-au realizat: un relevu actualizat al basilicii (2001), respectiv cercetări arheologice la anexa de pe latura de nord-est (2006) și în zona aflată la sud de cele trei construcții anexă ale monumentului creștin (2008–2010, 2013).

Articolul de față va încerca să ofere o sinteză a rezultatelor cercetărilor arheologice din campaniile menționate. Pe baza stratigrafiei și a materialelor arheologice vor fi prezentate atât noile informații obținute, menite să contribuie la rafinarea cronologiei, a etapelor de construcție și de funcționare ale Basilicii *extra muros*, cât și datele noi privind evoluția zonei extramurane a Histriei. Astfel, s-a constatat că locuirea romană târzie (sfârșitul secolului al V-lea – prima jumătate a secolului al VII-lea p. Chr.) este prezentă atât la nord, cât și la sud de *Basilica extra muros*, elementele constructive descoperite în zona aflată la sud de cele trei clădiri anexă ale monumentului creștin, spre sud, confirmând cele constatate în cercetările făcute până acum de noi la nord de basilică (2001–2012). Totodată, s-au obținut noi date referitoare la necropolele existente în zonă – au fost descoperite alte 23 de morminte de înhumare pe latura sudică a basilicii (din care au fost cercetate deocamdată 10), aparținând în principal unei necropole anterioare basilicii (secolele IV–V p. Chr.), dar și celei contemporane cu aceasta (sfârșitul secolului al V-lea – prima jumătate a secolului al VII-lea). Prezentarea acestor morminte, împreună cu inventarul aferent, tipologia și încadrarea lor cronologică, precum și analiza antropologică³ făcută scheletelor, reprezintă o parte însemnată a rezultatelor obținute în cercetările arheologice întreprinse de echipa sectorului *Basilica extra muros* în ultimii ani. Continuarea săpăturilor arheologice în această zonă, combinate cu cele efectuate în sectorul Histria Sud de către colegul Mircea Dabîca (IAB), sperăm să aducă un plus de informație legată de posibilele limite dintre aria de locuire și necropolele din zonă și amplasamentul portului orașului greco-roman Histria.

1. SITE LOCATION³

Out of the four Early Christian buildings attested in Histria, the monument under discussion is the only basilica located outside the walls of the Late Roman fortification. It is located ca. 200 m south-west of the Main Gate of the Late Roman

fortification, in the close proximity of the southern side of the Pârvan House (Pl. I).

2. HISTORY OF RESEARCH

Vasile Pârvan discovered the *Basilica extra muros* in 1914 and also gave it its name. Unfortunately, due to the onset of the First World War, he only managed to publish preliminary data on the monument⁴. R. Netzhhammer, the Roman-Catholic archbishop of Bucharest, published the first ground plan of the edifice in his work focusing on the Christian antiquities from Dobrudja⁵, on the basis of data (ground plan and drawings of sculptures) provided by the German architect J. Jacobs who performed archaeological excavations on the site in 1917⁶.

Archaeological excavations were resumed in the area between the Hellenistic precinct and the *Basilica extra muros* between 1955 and 1956. On that occasion, specialists have uncovered the courtyard of the basilica and the eastern end of the apse of its north-eastern annex⁷. Later on, between 1955 and 1956, Em. Popescu uncovered the rest of the basilica – of which only the ground plan of the central nave had been known – i.e. the three annexes on the southern side and the annex on the north-eastern side⁸. The north-south transversal section opened by the same archaeologist along the width of the edifice yielded twelve inhumation tombs, among which most were dated earlier than the monument⁹. A thirteenth tomb was uncovered

⁴ Pârvan 1915, p. 118–119; Pârvan 1915a, col. 256–257, p. 268–269; Pârvan 1924, p. 125.

⁵ Netzhhammer 1918, p. 159–161, fig. 59; Netzhhammer 2005, 143–145, fig. 59. On the relations between V. Pârvan and R. Netzhhammer, and especially on Pârvan's dissatisfaction with Netzhhammer's publication of some results of his excavations in Dobrudja, among which the *Basilica extra muros* in Histria, see Pârvan 1924, p. 125 and footnote 47. On R. Netzhhammer's activity related to the antiquities in Dobrudja, see more recently Alexandrescu 2007, *passim*. The same author discusses the relations between V. Pârvan and R. Netzhhammer on p. 219–222, with special reference to the *Basilica extra muros* in Histria on p. 219–220 and footnote 45.

⁶ Published in Dobrudscha Bote, nos. 64–65, 1918.

⁷ Condurachi et alii 1957, 21–24, pl. IV, fig. 9.

⁸ Em. Popescu published the preliminary results of the archaeological excavations in the site's excavation reports – see Condurachi et alii 1957, p. 16–24; Pippidi et alii 1959, p. 291–296. The same author provided a synthesis presentation of the results of archaeological research on the edifice in question in a study dedicated to Early Christian antiquities in Histria – see Popescu 1994, p. 308–313.

⁹ Out of the 13 identified tombs, only 8 have been excavated, the majority belonging to the necropolis used during the 4th and 5th centuries AD – see Pippidi et alii 1959, p. 293–295, fig. 4 (Em. Popescu).

³ The present article is a synthesis of the results of the excavations in the *Basilica extra muros* sector in the last years. Due to the limited editorial space in the present volume, an extended article, with all detailed analyses (anthropological, numismatic, small finds etc.) will be published in another publication/journal.

in the south-eastern corner of the central apse, on the exterior, cutting through the southern apsidiole dated to the first phase of the edifice¹⁰.

In 1964, N. Hamparțumian continued the excavations through an east-west transversal section that intersected the inner part and courtyard of the basilica. Several tombs belonging to the two necropolises attested in the area outside the walls were discovered on that occasion, both inside the edifice and east of the central apse, in the courtyard¹¹.

Al. Suceveanu provided a synthesis of the data regarding the inclusion of the monument and of the necropolises in the historical development of Histria in a series of studies: a paper on the Roman baths¹², a study focusing on the Early Christian basilicas in Histria¹³ and a monograph work on the bishopric basilica¹⁴. Our colleague I. Achim published the most recent approach to the Christian monument in the area outside the walls; her synthesis study aims at integrating the Early Christian monuments of Histria in the urban landscape of the Late Roman fortification¹⁵.

3. RECENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH – GENERAL DATA

Archaeological investigations of the Early Christian monument and of the area located 50 m north of it – labeled as the *Basilica extra muros* sector – were resumed in 2001 on the initiative of Professor Alexandru Suceveanu; the main goal of the investigations was to finalize the research of the monument and to include it in the historical-tourist circuit (Pl. II/2, III/1).

Five archeological seasons of excavation focused on the monument between 2001 and 2013. An up-to-date plan of the monument was made during the 2001 campaign, but no archaeological excavations were performed. On the basis of the observations made for the drawing of a detailed survey and of the data obtained through the close

analysis of the existing building elements, the team was able to refine the monument's chronology¹⁶ (Pl. II/1).

A test trench was performed in 2006 inside the annex on the north-eastern side in order to define its function¹⁷ (Pl. III/1–2). Research of the area located south of the *Basilica extra muros* was initiated during the 2008–2010 excavations (Pl. I, IV). The specialists first opened a section perpendicular to the south-eastern corner of the first room of the annexes on the southern side of the monument (S1/08, extended westwards through S2/09), followed by two other sections (S1A/2010, S1B/2010) that continued it to the south, down to the Alley with Inscriptions¹⁸ (Pl. IV).

Two further trenches were opened in 2013, perpendicular to the south-western corner of room 3 part of the annexes on the southern side of the basilica (S2A/2013 and S2A'/2013)¹⁹ (Pl. I). The new trenches opened on the southern side of the Early Christian monument had a threefold purpose:

1. Uncovering the outer side of the southern wall of the basilica (not researched before) and establishing a more refined chronology of the building development of the three annex rooms on the southern side of the monument;

2. Identifying the extent of the necropolises in the area south of the basilica (one dated before the basilica, the other contemporary to it), where no archeological research has been performed before²⁰;

3. Establishing a possible boundary between the area of the basilica, the necropolises, even a habitation area outside the walls during the 6th–7th centuries AD and the harbor of Histria and tracing Early Roman habitation in the same area (data that will be correlated to those obtained by colleague Mircea Dabâca (IAB), leader of the Histria South sector).

4. RESULTS OF RECENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH

The preliminary results of the five archaeological campaigns performed so far can be abstracted as follows:

¹⁰ Pippidi *et alii* 1959, p. 294–295, fig. 4.

¹¹ Nubar 1970, p. 193; Nubar 1971a, p. 200, fig. 1. For data on the trench excavated by the same author between 1961 and 1963, parallel to the northern side of the basilica, see below, subchapter 4 of the present study. For the comparative plans of the *Basilica extra muros* published by R. Netzhammer, N. Hamparțumian, Em. Popescu, K. von der Lohe and Al. Bădescu, see Rusu-Bolindeț, Bădescu 2003–2005, fig. 2.

¹² Suceveanu 1982, p. 89–92.

¹³ Suceveanu 2002, p. 288–289.

¹⁴ Suceveanu 2007, p. 130–144.

¹⁵ Achim 2012a, p. 145–154, fig. 19–22; see also p. 155–161 for the final discussions of the architectural context and ritual equipment of Early Christian basilicas in Histria, with the corresponding bibliography.

¹⁶ Rusu-Bolindeț, Bădescu 2003–2005, p. 105–112, fig. 2–3.

¹⁷ Rusu-Bolindeț *et alii* 2006, p. 200.

¹⁸ Rusu-Bolindeț *et alii* 2009, p. 127–128; Rusu-Bolindeț *et alii* 2010, p. 87–90; Rusu-Bolindeț *et alii* 2011.

¹⁹ Rusu-Bolindeț *et alii* 2014 (in press).

²⁰ Except for certain geophysical surveys performed by Fl. Scurtu in 2001 south of the basilica. The test trench that verified the geophysical data (labeled S1G) led to the identification of two inhumation tombs, partially researched – see Scurtu 2002, p. 171–172; Scurtu 2009, p. 13–15, fig. 12–16.

A. The basilica

1. Sectioning the inside of the annex on the north-eastern side in 2006 has revealed the north-eastern corner of one of its rectangular phases (Pl. III/1–2; IV). The wall, oriented N–S (with $L_{uncovered} = 1.00$ m, $l = 0.60$ m, identified at -0.35 m in depth) was discovered 0.50 m away from the eastern end of the annex's apse. It was built out of large limestone, basalt, and schist stones connected with yellow clay; two rows of its foundation have been preserved. The other wall, oriented E–W, was uncovered over 1.60 m in length, as its foundation had been destroyed by previous archaeological excavations inside the annex²¹. It was partially overlapped by the wall of the apsidal phase of the annex. It was impossible to follow the relation between the newly discovered rectangular stage of the annex and the northern apsidiole of the basilica due to the destruction of the stratigraphy in the western half of the north-eastern annex during previous excavations²². It is nevertheless clear that this annex had two phases of use – the earlier one, rectangular, that might have been contemporary to 2nd phase of the *Basilica extra muros* (dated to the middle and second half of the 6th century AD) and the later one, with an apse, that could correspond to the last phase of the monument (end of the 6th century – beginning of the 7th century AD²³).

2. The trench perpendicular to the south-eastern corner of room 1 part of the annexes on the southern side (S1/08)²⁴ led to the identification of two building phases of that room. Thus, on the south-eastern corner of the room (Pl. V/1) we have identified an outer entrance built-in during the final stage (the room was also provided with an inner entrance, on the northern side, that opened to the

main nave), that has not been known so far. The fact changes the data on the time when this room was built (probably also room 2, to which it is related) on the southern side of the basilica – it is possible that it was built in the same period as 2nd phase of the basilica, when access to and from this annex was made both from the inside, from the main nave, and from outside the basilica. Later on, during the final phase, the access from the outside was blocked by building-in the entrance. At the same time, the depth of the foundations of the southern wall of room 1 (one m), compared to those of its pendant on the south-western corner of room 3 part of the same annexes (of only 0.50 m) and the two ground levels identified on the outside²⁵ support the possible existence of two functioning stages of this annex. A trench opened inside room 1 might bring further data on its building stages.

3. In the trench perpendicular to the south-western corner of room 3 (part of the annexes on the southern side) was identified the outer side of the southern wall of the basilica (Pl. V/2). Its foundation measured only 0.50 m in depth and was built in a less exact technique when compared to that of the foundation of room 1 on the south-eastern corner, thus indicating that the room had a single phase of use. In this case, we suggest it was built during the final phase of the basilica (end of the 6th century – beginning of the 7th century AD). Moreover, both its size (larger than that of the other two annexes on the southern side – 4.55×6.60 m, compared to 2.40×4.80 m and 2.80×8 m respectively – the size of rooms 1 and 2), and the manner in which its north-eastern corner almost overlapped the south-western corner of the main nave of the basilica, might provide indications on its possible construction during the final stage of the monument.

B. The necropolises

Previous archaeological research taking place in the area outside the walls, starting with those aiming at the discovery of the western side of the Hellenistic precinct²⁶, those focusing on the

²¹ Namely the longitudinal E–W section, measuring 3 x 0.80 m, performed by Em. Popescu in 1956, through which he attempted to find the relation between the northern shoulder of the basilica and the walls of the north-eastern annex. The section failed to reach its goal due to the destruction of the stratigraphy by several modern pits – see Pippidi et alii 1959, p. 292, fig. 4.

²² Rusu-Bolindeț et alii 2006, p. 200.

²³ Recent data on the development of the monument and its chronology in Rusu-Bolindeț, Bădescu 2003–2005, p. 107–112, fig. 2–3; Suceveanu 2002, p. 288–289; Achim 2012, p. 146–154, fig. 19.

²⁴ The technical data of the archaeological researches performed on the southern side of the basilica's annexes have been published – see Rusu-Bolindeț et alii 2009; Rusu-Bolindeț et alii 2010; Rusu-Bolindeț et alii 2011 – therefore we shall not insist on them here, except for the cases when they provide useful data on the function, development, and chronology of the Christian monument.

²⁵ For the detailed description of the final habitation phases identified in the area south of the *Basilica extra muros* see Rusu-Bolindeț et alii 2009, p. 127; Rusu-Bolindeț et alii 2014.

²⁶ Canarache 1953, p. 112–113; Canarache 1954, p. 77; data on habitation phases subsequent to the Hellenistic precinct have been abstracted by Preda, Doicescu 1966, p. 329–334, who mention the discovery of 30 inhumation tombs, mostly disturbed, that could be dated, on the basis of their inventory, to the 4th century (p. 331–332).

uncovering of the area between the Hellenistic precinct and the *Basilica extra muros*²⁷, and those taking place at *Thermae II*²⁸ led to the discovery of certain inhumation tombs, mostly part of the early necropolis (4th–5th century AD).

Nevertheless, N. Hampartumian excavated most of the tombs during his 1961–1964 excavations. On the basis of the large number of tombs discovered – he identified 74 and researched 71 – the author of the excavations has the merit of having clearly defined the existence of the two necropolises in the area outside the walls – one earlier than the church, mainly dated, on the basis of the funerary inventory, to the 4th century and the first half of the 5th century AD, the second contemporary to the church, dated between the end of the 5th century and the beginning of the 7th century AD²⁹. In 1956, Em. Popescu also identified 13 tombs, out of which he excavated eight³⁰.

1. Recent results

23 inhumation tombs have been identified in the five trenches performed south of the *Basilica extra muros*, out of which nine were excavated so far (Pl. VI). In the case of the un-excavated ones, the team identified and traced the contours of their pits, but the complete research would have required the opening of new trenches and this has not been possible yet.

Since the technical data of the tombs under discussion were presented in the annual reports of archaeological research³¹, we shall analyze them here according to the type of funerary structures.

²⁷ Condurachi *et alii* 1957, p. 23, pl. IV – two inhumation tombs (M2 and M3), discovered in the area south of the basilica's courtyard and believed to belong to different periods due to their different orientation and inventory (M2 – N–S; M3 – E–W). There was also a third tomb (M1 – according to all indications, a case of re-inhumation), uncovered inside building B, located in the close proximity of the western side of the Hellenistic precinct – Condurachi *et alii* 1957, p. 19, pl. IV. Scattered human bones were also found inside the courtyard of the basilica and in the close proximity of its northern wall – see Condurachi *et alii* 1957, p. 24, pl. IV.

²⁸ Suceveanu 1982, p. 36–37, fig.15 – 18 inhumation tombs, out of which 10 have been excavated, most of them (7) belonging to the early necropolis.

²⁹ Nubar 1970, p. 193; Nubar 1971a; Nubar 1971b. The same author mentions the discovery of some tombs during the construction of the Pârvan House – see Nubar 1971a, p. 203.

³⁰ See also footnotes 9 and 10. For the plan of the necropolises uncovered at north, east and inside the Basilica extra muros see Rusu-Bolindeț. Bădescu 2003–2005, fig. 4.

³¹ See Rusu-Bolindeț *et alii* 2009, p. 127; Rusu-Bolindeț *et alii* 2010; Rusu-Bolindeț *et alii* 2011. The order of presenting the tombs is the following: type of burial; orientation; position of the skeleton; grave goods; anthropologic analysis; analogies.

The presentation of the tombs in the two necropolises will be made chronologically.

1.1. Necropolis I

Tombs belonging to the necropolis dated to the 4th century and the first half of the 5th century AD have different funerary patterns, among which the following were noted in the area that we analyzed:

a. Burials in a simple pit, with the body placed directly on the ground or in a wooden coffin (M 3/08);

b. Burials in a sarcophagus with a gable roof made of tiles (M 6/10, M 10/09, M 11/09);

c. Burials with a side niche made of tiles or slab stones placed sideways (M 4/2008, M 14/20009);

Depositions of newborn babies in ceramic vessels – body of amphorae (M 20/10).

a. Inhumation tombs in simple pits³²

A single tomb of this type was found (M 3/2008) which had the pit bordered by stones and brick fragments. Four iron clamps were identified inside, on the left side of the body, thus indicating the presence of a wooden coffin. The body was placed in the dorsal decubitus position, with arms and legs extended and the skull oriented westwards. There were no grave goods (Pl. VI, VII/1–2). The deceased was a man aged 33–45³³, measuring 1.66 m in height, who did not suffer from any serious health problems (except for arthrosis in a few joints, the thoracic vertebrae, and one of the lumbar ones).

This type of burial (in a wooden coffin) was attested before in the same necropolis, both during the earlier excavations³⁴, and during the most recent ones (M10/2009³⁵), but in all those cases the coffins were fixed with nails and not iron clamps.

b. Burials in sarcophagi with gable roof made of tiles³⁶

Tomb M 6/2010 consisted of four *tegulae* placed to form a gable roof (Pl. VI). To the western end, the structure was closed with a fifth tile placed

³² Petre 1987, p. 8; pl. 6, fig. 9d, Type IV – subtype e; Barbu 1971, p. 52 Type VI – subtype 1; Ionescu *et alii* 2002–2003, p. 243 Type 10 or Soficar 2011, p. 154–155 Type 2 – subtype B. See also Type II of late Roman Burial from Moesia Secunda at Rusev 2012, p. 387–388, Table II, 2.

³³ A preliminary anthropological analysis of the skeletons discovered in 2008–2009 was made by Dr. Gál Szilárd and we hereby renew our thanks. The final anthropological analyses, included in this article, were made by Claudia Radu, Szeredai Norbert and Beatrice Kelemen.

³⁴ Nubar 1971a, p. 203, fig. 1 – tombs M39 and M49.

³⁵ Rusu-Bolindeț *et alii* 2010, p. 87–88.

³⁶ Barbu 1971, p. 52, Type VII; Preda 1980, p. 19, Type d; Ionescu *et alii* 2002–2003, p. 243, Type 8; Soficar 2011, p. 154, Type 1 – subtype d.

sideways. The body was placed in the dorsal decubitus positions, with the left arm slightly bent from the elbow over the pelvis. The legs were extended, in anatomical position. The skeleton was in a poor state of preservation, with very frail bones. The deceased, a man aged 43–55, measuring 1.66 m in height, displayed traces of articular arthrosis, mainly in the joints of the right hand. There were no grave goods; the only item discovered in the infill of the grave, under the *tegulae*, was a nail, but it did not belong to a coffin.

Tomb **M 10/09** was partially overlapped by **M 1/08**, and the pit was marked by several stones. After removing the tiles, we identified a cist-type structure, made of stones. Inside the box we discovered six nails from a wooden coffin (Pl. VII/3–5). Glass fragments and a tubular glass-paste bead were found in the filling soil. The tomb can be interpreted as a **cenotaph**, so far a novelty at Histria³⁷.

The same structure was also encountered in the case of tomb **M 11/09**, oriented west-east (Pl. VI). To the eastern side, the structure in question was closed with fragmentary tiles and then rocks. The deceased, a newborn, less than 6 months old, was deposited in dorsal decubitus position, with the head westwards. The arms were bent from the elbow and placed on the chest and the legs were extended. Animal bones, deposited as food offerings, were discovered on the right side of the skeleton, outside the inner elements of the tomb.

This type of structure was also encountered in the early necropolis in the area of the *Basilica extra muros*, both during N. Hampartumian's research³⁸ and during recent excavations³⁹. It is possible that such tombs, just like those with a side-niche made of stones (M13/09) or tiles (M4/09) formed a special group in the necropolis under discussion. This is, nevertheless, just a preliminary observation, that could only be confirmed after the uncovering of a wider area around the *Basilica extra muros*.

c. Burials with a side-niche made of tiles or slab stones placed sideways (M 4/2008, M 14/2009)⁴⁰

M4/2008 – oriented W–E. The grave's pit was rectangular with rounded corners, measuring 2.00 x 1.10 m. The side niche had been sealed with

several large tiles placed sideways (Pl. VIII/1–4). The bottom of the niche, just like that of the pit, was identified at a depth of –1.56 m. The body was in dorsal decubitus position, with the arms bent over the pelvis and the head slightly turned southwards. A bone hair pin was discovered in the western part of the tomb, in the filling. Traces of bronze were observed on the fingers of the right hand, probably from a ring, and traces of bronze oxides were found on the right forearm, probably from a bracelet. None of these objects could be recovered. Glass paste beads were discovered in the area of the neck and a pendant, made from a re-used bronze coin, was found in the right clavicular area. The tomb belonged to a woman aged 24–35, measuring ca. 1.63 m in height, who suffered from joint arthrosis that mainly affected her right femur and tibia that display large osteophytes and a severe morphological deformation. She also suffered from ankylosis of the thoracic vertebrae T11 and T12, a lithic lesion, and periostitic lesions on the right tibia that was thicker in its proximal half. A fully healed ante-mortem blow, made with a contusive object, showing no traces of infection, was noted on the right parietal bone. A small-size benign tumor, a button osteoma, was identified on the frontal bone.

Tomb **M 14/2009** was rectangular in shape, with rounded corners. The bottom of the pit for the niche was identified at –1.90 m under the current ground level. The tomb was oriented west-east. It contained a skeleton in dorsal decubitus position, with arms bent on the chest and stretched legs (Pl. IX/1–2). The skeleton is that of an adult, aged over 45, with medium ossature and a height of ca. 1.65 m. The deceased suffered from a frontal-parietal deformation of the skull, but there were no traces of the wrappings that caused it. Two iron objects, possibly *fibulae*, were discovered in the area of the shoulders. Bovine bones were deposited as food offerings on the bottom of the pit excavated for the niche, near the legs. Large iron object, hard to define as yet, was also found.

d. Depositions of new born babies in ceramic vessels – amphorae (M 20/10)⁴¹

M20/2010 – The pit of this grave was rectangular, with rounded corners; the body was placed on the bottom, on top of a large tile (Pl. X/1). The body was covered by three amphora body-sherds while tile fragments, placed sideways, were placed on the margins of the amphora. The body, of a newborn

³⁷ For cenotaph-type tombs in Dacia and Moesia Inferior see Sonoc 2005.

³⁸ Nubar 1971a, p. 203, fig. 2 e–f (tombs M10, M12, M20, M53).

³⁹ Dabîca 2014 – six tombs: M 7–9/2012, M 10–11, 13/2013.

⁴⁰ Petre 1987, p. 8, Type II – subtype c; Barbu 1971, p. 53–55, Type VIII – subtype 1; Preda 1980, p. 21, Type g.1; Soficaru 2011, p. 155, Type 3 – subtype A; Rusev 2012, p. 390, Type VI, Table II, 6.

⁴¹ Preda 1980, p. 21; pl. XLIV, Type f; Soficaru 2011, p. 154, Type 1 – subtype C. For an overview of this very interesting type of burials see Sonoc 2006; Soficaru 2011, p. 175–179; Achim 2012; Rubel, Soficaru 2012.

child, was placed in dorsal decubitus and oriented W–E. The tomb contained no funerary inventory. This type of children burials in amphorae was attested in Histria previously, as N. Hampartumian discovered one such tomb during his excavations inside the *Basilica extra muros*⁴² and Al. Suceveanu uncovered three more in the *Thermae II* sector⁴³. In the Danubian area, such tombs were also found in the necropolis in Callatis⁴⁴ and that of (L)ibida⁴⁵. The tombs were dated to the 4th–5th centuries AD, thus the grave under discussion fits the funerary horizon of the first necropolis in the area of the *Basilica extra muros*, just like the other tombs of this type discovered in Histria.

1.2. Necropolis II – two tombs were identified, part of the following categories:

a. Inhumation tomb in a simple pit⁴⁶

Tomb **M1/2008** has the margins clearly defined through the presence of a layer of mortar measuring 0.25–0.40 m (Pl. X/2–3). No special structures were noted and no trace of a coffin could be identified. Tomb M1/08 belonged to a woman, placed in dorsal decubitus position, with the head westwards. The hands had been placed along the body and the right leg was bent at the knee. She died at the age of 33–46 and measured 1.59 m in height. She suffered from articular arthrosis that affected the most the joints of the right hand, the right distal femur, the right proximal tibia, the right foot, and the left distal femur. The tomb lacked inventory objects. From a stratigraphic perspective, the tomb can be connected to one of the functioning stages of the *Basilica extra muros*, probably to the last phase, that included the blocking of the access into room 1 of the basilica's southern annex.

b. Tomb with roof tiles placed at the head and feet⁴⁷

Tomb **M 2/2008** – male buried in a simple pit, oriented W–E, an arrangement novel for Histria: three roof tiles by the head and two by the feet, lacking grave goods (Pl. XI/1–2)⁴⁸. On the surface,

the pit of the tomb was rectangular in shape, with rounded corners, slightly wider at the head, and slightly boat-shaped in section. The maximum depth of the tombs was of –1.22 m. The body was placed in dorsal decubitus, with the right arm extended beside the body and the left arm slightly bent at the elbow. The legs were stretched, flanked by the two roof tiles placed sideways in the eastern end of the tomb. Tomb M 2/08 belonged to a man aged ca. 33–45, measuring ca. 1.71 m. in height. Articular arthrosis could be noted on 31 of all 34 observed joints, thus reaching a very high percentage, i.e. 91% of all joints. The funerary inventory was extremely poor, consisting of only two iron objects – a cramp-iron and an arrowhead (?).

No other grave pits were found on the surface of trench S1/2010. Below the layer of the tombs we found a large-size building, with walls made of schist and limestone stones bound with yellow clay (Pl. XI/3). The construction covered almost the entire surface of the trench, with observed dimensions of 10.80 m × 1.50–1.80 m. It was oriented N–S. Two rooms were uncovered from this building (numbered from N to S): room 1a, measuring 4.80 × 1.50 m; room 1b, of 6 × 1.60–1.80 m. The building had a tiled roof that had collapsed over its ground level. According to the building technique, the stratigraphic position and the archaeological material discovered, the large building under discussion can be dated to the second half of the 3rd century AD – possibly the beginning of the 4th century AD (phases II A–II B in the chronology of Histria). Similar constructions, made of schist stones bound with clay, were uncovered in the trenches made on the southwestern corner of the basilica in 2013⁴⁹, on the *Thermae II* sector⁵⁰ and in trench SI in *Basilica extra muros* sector, the latter, like the one described above, of impressive size⁵¹.

5. THE CHRONOLOGY

From the point of view of the numismatic evidence⁵², 52 bronze coins were found in the five excavation seasons focused in *Basilica extra muros* area. They were discovered both inside and outside

⁴² Nubar 1971, p. 203, fig. 1 – tomb M68.

⁴³ Suceveanu 1982, p. 36–37, fig. 15 – tombs M8, M11 and M17.

⁴⁴ Preda 1980, p. 21 – tomb M208.

⁴⁵ Soficaru *et alii* 2004, p. 354 – tomb M23/2002.

⁴⁶ Petre 1987, p. 8; pl. 5, fig. 8a–1, 8b, Type I; Barbu 1971, p. 52, Type V; Ionescu *et alii* 2002–2003, p. 243, Type 10 or Soficaru 2011, p. 154, Type 1 – subtype A; Rusev 2012, p. 386–387, Table II, 1.

⁴⁷ Soficaru 2011, p. 155, Type 3 – subtype A.

⁴⁸ Though we have been unable to identify exact analogies for this type of funerary design, a similar situation was documented during recent research in the necropolis of *Callatis*, namely tomb M3(49); see Ionescu *et alii* 2002–2003, p. 231; p. 250, pl. VIII/3.

⁴⁹ See the technical details of those buildings at Rusu-Bolindeț *et alii* 2014.

⁵⁰ Suceveanu 1982, p. 35, fig. 14.

⁵¹ Suceveanu *et alii* 2003, p. 164–65.

⁵² The coins were determined by Mihai Dima. Because of the limited editorial space, other categories of archaeological finds will be analyzed in an extended article and in the archaeological monograph of the sector.

church (on its southern part), in the necropolises (especially in the infill of grave pits), and in the levels of the Late Roman buildings dated prior to the Early Christian church and the necropolises.

The earliest coins belong to Hellenistic period and were locally issued, minted at Histria in 2nd–1st centuries BC. They were discovered in positions irrelevant for the dating of archaeological contexts.

The majority of the coins from the time of the Principate date to the 3rd century AD, with few exceptions – a small number of pseudo-autonomous Histrian coins, which could be dated earlier. They could be divided in two distinct categories. The first category includes coins from Severan times and the first years of the Military Anarchy (Geta/Caracalla – Gordian III, years 209/211–238/244 AD). Most of them were minted at Histria, in the local workshop, with the exception of one bronze coin issued at Dionysopolis for Gordian III and Serapis. Unfortunately, they were discovered in secondary positions, in later archaeological contexts.

The second category of the Early Roman coins is represented by the so-called “radiates” – *antoniniani* and *aureliani* – from the second half of the 3rd century AD, issued during the reigns of Gallienus (260–268), Claudius II (268–270), Aurelian (270–275) and Probus (276–282). They were discovered on the layers of the Late Roman buildings in the trenches located perpendicular to the south-eastern and south-western corners of the south side of the Early Christian church, below the funerary horizon represented by the two necropolises known in the area.

The Late Roman coins, issued after Diocletian’s reform in 294 AD, were only few, but chronologically they were distributed relatively uniform, starting with the end of the 3rd century until the first half of the 5th century AD. The pieces discovered were minted during the reigns of Maximian Herculus (286–305), Maximinus Daia (308–313), Constantine the Great (306–337), Constantius II (337–361), Valens (364–378) and Theodosius II (408–450). There were a few coins without a precise issuer, but they could be dated in the same time span based on the reverse type. The Late Roman coins were discovered mainly in the infill of pit graves belonging to necropolis I from the *extra muros* area.

The most recent coins found in *Basilica extra muros* area are the Byzantine ones, all of them minted in the 6th century AD: five *folles* from Justinian I (527–565) – four issued in the first decade of his reign, before 538 AD, the fifth dated in 549–550 AD; four coins (three *hemifolles* and

one *folles*) minted during the reign of Justin II (565–578). They were found mainly on the first ground level outside the basilica, on the southern part, but also inside, in the rooms 2 and 3 of the annex from the same side⁵³. They confirm the chronology of the 2nd phase of the *Basilica extra muros*, dated to the middle and the second half of the 6th century AD.

The most recent coins discovered in the analysed area were issued during the reigns of Tiberius II Constantine (578–582) (one *folles*) and Mauricius Tiberius (582–602) (10 *nummia*). They were found on the second ground level outside the basilica, on the southern part, and on the debris layer of the monument. The coins date to the last phase of the Early Christian church, at the end of the 6th century and the beginning of the 7th century AD⁵⁴.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Recent archaeological research in the *Basilica extra muros* brought several new elements to the chronology of the monument. Thus, the discovery of two new phases of the annex on the north-eastern side and of room 1 on the southern side of the annex changes the hypotheses on the building development of the monument. It is possible that both the north-eastern annex (in its rectangular form) and the first two rooms on the southern side were built during the second phase in the existence of the Christian monument (middle and second half the 6th century AD). Changes were brought to the north-eastern annex (through the construction of the apse) during the final stage of the basilica (end of the 6th century – beginning of the 7th century AD) and it is possible that room 3 of the annexes on the southern side was only added at that time. Naturally, the continuation of the archaeological research both on the southern side of the basilica (uncovering the outer side of the precinct wall) and on the western side, where the closing wall of the *atrium* is missing, will complete the absent data on the development and chronology of the monument.

At the same time, through the extension of the archaeological research south of the *Basilica extra*

⁵³ The coins found inside the room 2 (two *folles* from Justinian I, minted in 527–538 and 549–550 AD) and the room 3 (one *folles* from Justin II (567–568) of the annex from the southern part of the basilica were chance finds – vezi Rusu-Bolindeț, Bădescu 2003–2005, p. 111 and note 30.

⁵⁴ For the building phases of *Basilica extra muros* and their chronology see Popescu 1994, p. 312; Rusu-Bolindeț, Bădescu 2003–2005, p. 111–112 and note 30, Achim 2012, p. 153–154.

muros we were able to observe that the necropolises in the sector under discussion are concentrated in its close proximity and the tombs became progressively rarer to the south. As in the case of the situation noted on the northern, eastern, and western sides of the same basilica, one can observe that most of the discovered tombs belong to the first necropolis (earlier than the basilica) and fewer to the second necropolis (contemporary to the basilica). Naturally, the performing of test sections and not surface excavations, that would reveal new data on the way in which these necropolises were structured (groups of graves according to family ties, the existence of separation areas among them, the organization of funerary horizons etc.), the relation between them and their relation to the Early Christian basilica prevent us so far from reaching a coherent picture of the actual situation in the area of the Christian monument. One can nevertheless note, by corroborating older and newer research performed in the area under analysis, that the necropolis that was used at the same time as the basilica includes a small number of tombs concentrated around the church. On the other hand, a civilian quarter was discovered in the area between the western side of the Hellenistic wall and the *Basilica extra muros*. The neighbourhood consisted of well-structured buildings and had at least two habitation phases, with a rich archaeological inventory⁵⁵. At the same time, archaeological research performed in the courtyard of the basilica did not lead to the discovery of a high concentration of tombs – except for those found by N. Hampartumian east of the monument's central apse⁵⁶ and of the human bones from scattered graves discovered previously⁵⁷. This fact makes us reconsider the theories on the building's funerary character – it is possible that it was a parish church that served the neighbourhood outside the walls and its corresponding cemetery.

100 years after Vasile Pârvan initiated the archaeological excavations in Histria, also envisaging the Early Christian monument in the area outside the walls, the research of the latter remains unfinished. We intend to finalize this research over the following four years, both for academic purposes (refining the chronology, knowing the

stages of use and the functionality of its annexes, defining its role in the area – parochial or cemetery) and for its inclusion in the tourist-historical circuit.

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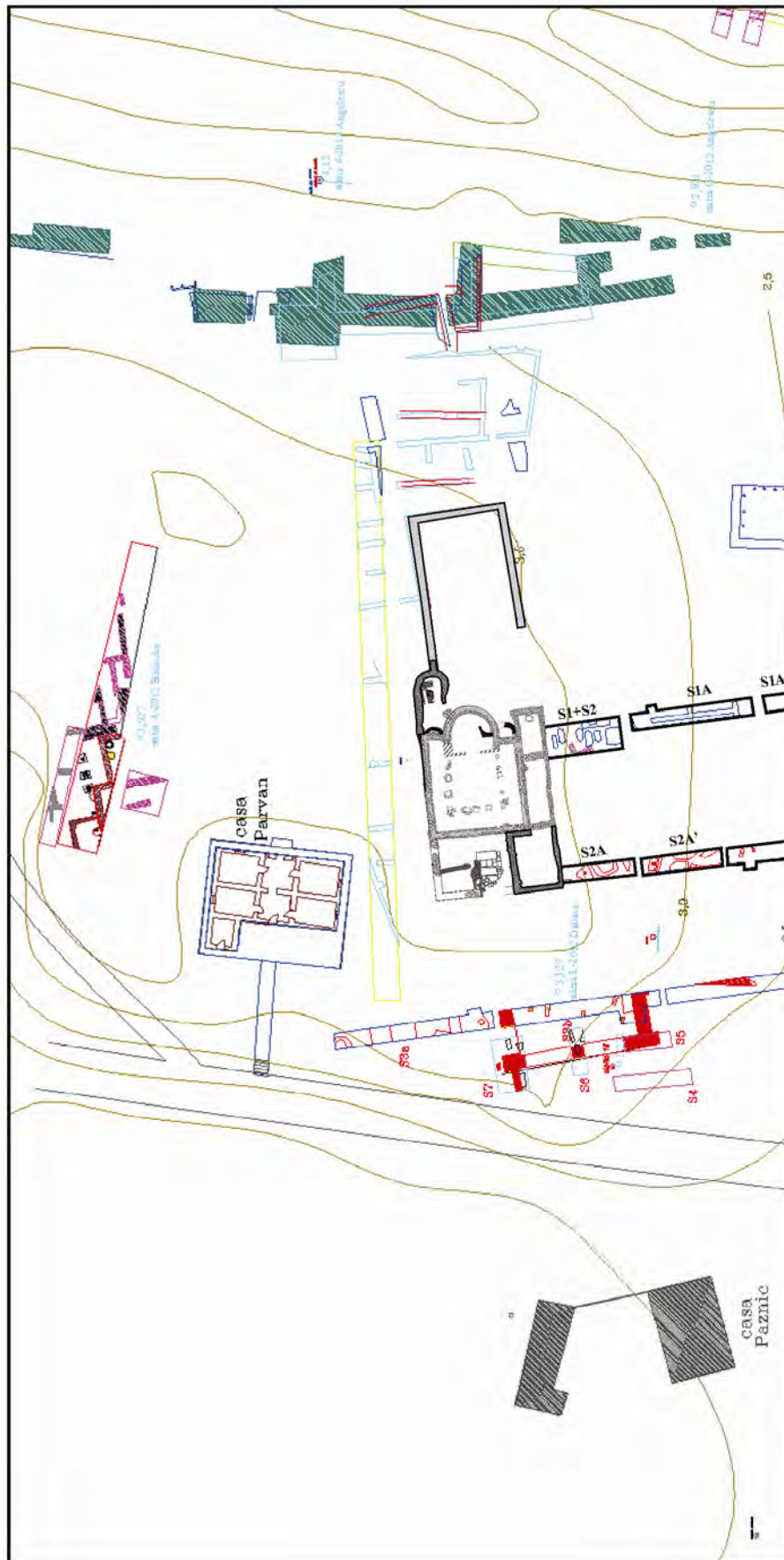
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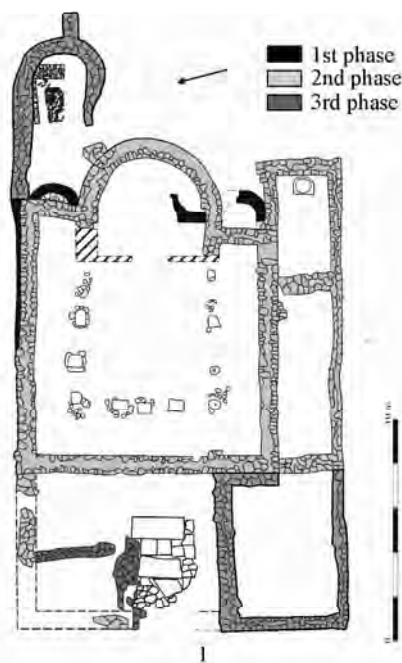
⁵⁵ See both the results of previous researches – Preda, Doicescu 1966, p. 329–334; Condurachi et alii 1957, p. 9–16, pl. IV and those of the recent researches – Suceveanu et alii 2002, p. 168–170; Rusu-Bolindeț et alii 2014.

⁵⁶ Nubar 1971b, Oanță-Marghitu 2013. For the delimitation of the two necropolises in the area of the basilica according to data known from specialized bibliography see Rusu-Bolindeț, Bădescu 2003–2005, fig. 4.

⁵⁷ Condurachi et alii 1957, p. 24, pl. IV.

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Pl. I. General plan of the *Basilica extra muros* sector.



Pl. II. 1. General plan of the Early Chirstian church; 2. General view of the *Basilica extra muros* (from the west).

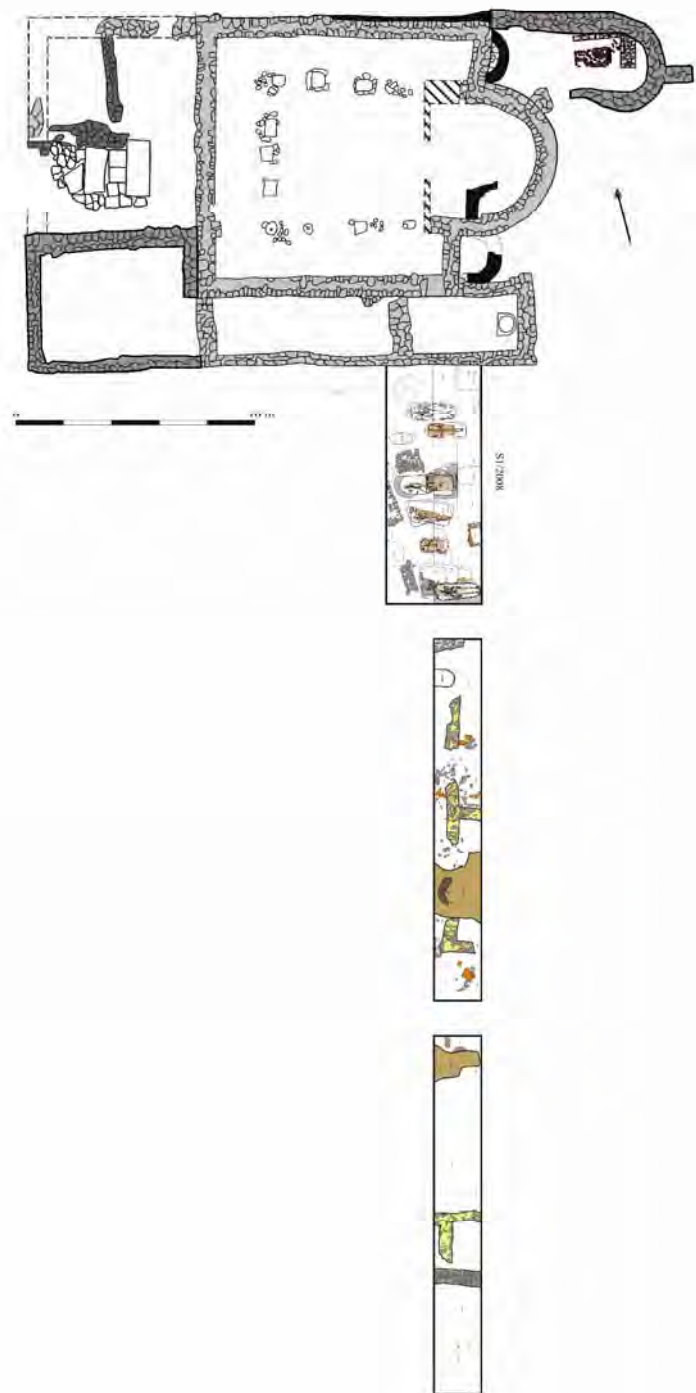


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Pl. III. 1. General view of the *Basilica extra muros* (from the north-east);
2. Detail of the rectangular phase of the north-east access.



Pl. IV. General plan of the excavations from 2008-2010.



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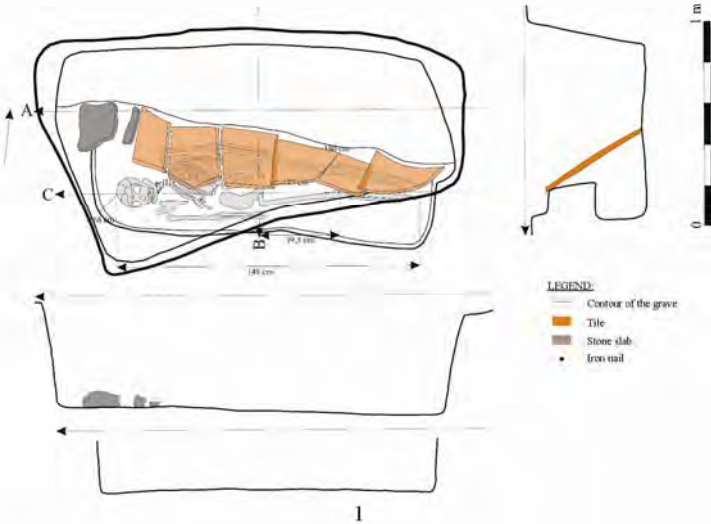


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Pl. V. Detail of the southern wall and of the blocked entrance of the room no. 1;
2. Detail of the wall foundation of the south-western corner of room no. 3.



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Pl. VIII. 1-4. Tomb M4/2008, photos and grave goods.



Pl. IX. Tomb M14/2009, drawing and photo.



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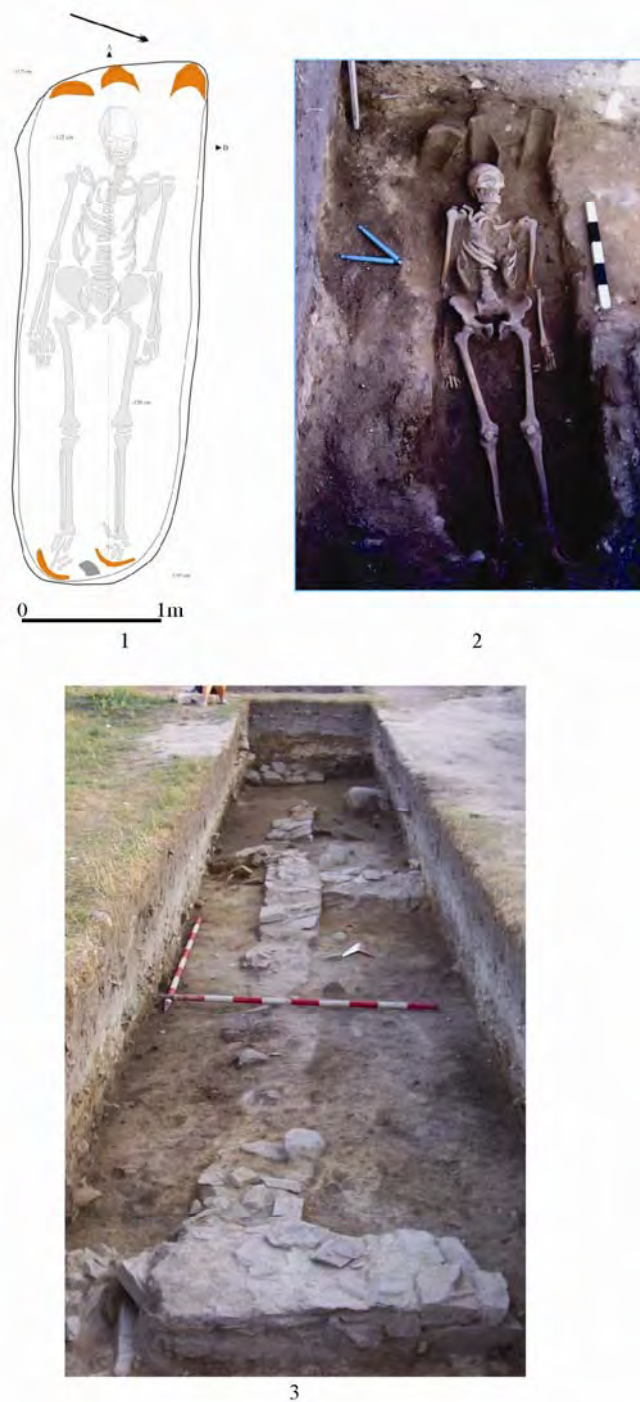


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Pl. X. 1. Tomb M20/2010, photo; 2-3. M1/2008, photo and drawing.



Pl. XI. 1-2. Tomb M2/2008, drawing and photo; 3. General view of trench S1A/2010.