

## THE 'INTRA URBEM' DEAD AND BURIALS IN THE LOWER DANUBE AREA DURING THE LATE ANTIQUITY. TRADITIONAL URBANISM VS. NEW CHRISTIAN ANTHROPOLOGY

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**Abstract:** *The available archaeological documentation and the data extracted from the historical sources allow both for a close observation of city development in the Lower Danube area during the Late Antiquity, and the urban area transformations triggered by the growing influence of Christianity. The presence of the dead and their burials within the urban area is one of the symptomatic phenomena of the Late Antiquity when a new type of sensibility – this time Christian – would abolish the former opposition between polis and necropolis.*

*The present paper discusses the 'intra muros' presence of isolated burials and relics in some of the cities in the Lower Danube region (e.g. Tomis, Halmyris, Tropaeum Traiani, Istros, Ibida, Novae). Following the line of analysis initiated by Gilbert Dagron in 1977 in his study of the Byzantine city, the existing archaeological material is analysed in order to determine the identity and status of the dead, the topography of the intra urbem burials, their typology, the age groups of the buried individuals and the integrity degree of the human remains from the funerary contexts located within the urban space. The analysis of the archaeological information leads to a series of observations regarding the funerary practices during the proto-Byzantine period across a geographic region and within certain social groups that held Christianity as a common factor.*

**Rezumat:** *Documentația arheologică disponibilă și datele ce pot fi extrase din alte surse istorice ne permit să urmărim mai îndeaproape evoluția orașelor din regiunea Dunării Inferioare în perioada antichității târzii, precum și transformările pe care cadrul urban le suferă sub influența crescândă a creștinismului. Prezența morților și a înmormântărilor în interiorul cadrului urban reprezintă un fenomen simptomatic al perioadei Antichității târzii, când un nou tip de sensibilitate, de astă dată creștină, va aboli vechea opoziție între polis și necropolis.*

*Prezentarea își propune să discute prezența mormintelor izolate sau a relicvelor intra muros în unele dintre orașele din regiunea Dunării de Jos (e.g., Tomis, Halmyris, Tropaeum Traiani, Istros, Ibida, Novae). Urmând linia de analiză deschisă în 1977 de Gilbert Dagron în studiul său asupra orașului bizantin, vom recurge la analiza materialului arheologic disponibil cu scopul de a evidenția identitatea și statutul defuncților, situația topografică a mormintelor în ambitus murorum, tipologia mormintelor, clasele de vârstă și gradul de integritate a osemintelor depuse în amenajări funerare situate în interiorul cadrului urban. Din analiza dosarului arheologic decurg o serie de observații asupra practicilor funerare în perioada protobizantină, într-o regiune geografică și în sânul unor grupuri sociale ce au ca punct comun creștinismul.*

**Keywords:** *'intra urbem' burials, martyrial tombs, infant burials, Late Antiquity, Lower Danube area.*

**Cuvinte cheie:** *înmormântări în așezări, morminte de martiri, antichitatea târzie, Dunărea de Jos.*

## INTRODUCTION

Already four decades ago, G. Dagron<sup>1</sup> drew attention to the burials *in ambitus murorum* as markers of the irreversible transformations undergone by the urban structures during the Late Antiquity. Undoubtedly, Christianity imprints the city with new dynamics, and the increasing influence of this new kind of religious sensibility contributes to redefining the post-classical urban identity. Under the expanding influence of Christianity, the corollary transformation of the urban environment remains undoubtedly a theme that has generated an intense scientific debate over the last decades and, subsequently, a huge scientific literature<sup>2</sup>, be it theoretical, problem-centered or regional, including the body of works concerning the Lower Danube.

In his splendid work published in 1977, G. Dagron reserves an entire chapter to the issue of *intra muros* graves and reopens thus, through an erudite academic demonstration, the point of tombs inside the walls. His remarks of great interest on the topic, complemented by a comprehensive investigation of juridical sources<sup>3</sup> are still valid, and allow to the author a number of needed clarifications on the distinction between the urban soil/subsoil, the polis/necropolis opposition, and the creation of other civic cohesion mechanisms by which churches and relics/holy corpse play a central role and are distinctive indicators of post-classic urbanism.

In the last decades, following the increase of archaeological fieldwork, and derived publications, we are able to closely follow the evolution of cities and urban life in the Lower Danube region during late Antiquity. In the following discussion, attention will be paid to *the intra urbem* installation of certain categories of graves from the 4th to the 6th c. AD in the urban landscape of the area under scrutiny<sup>4</sup>, namely the provinces of *Scythia* and *Moesia Secunda* (Fig. 1).

The occurrences discussed here are better known due to the available archaeological documentation, and allow the reconstruction of the presence and manner in which the deceased find their place in an urban context. This phenomenon occurs in a historical period marked by multiple social and ideological transformations, and in a context in which the urban and Christian revolutions are pivotal factors for the change of perception of the city as

<sup>1</sup> Dagron 1977, 1-25, specifically 2, 12-19.

<sup>2</sup> Of the vast literature dealing with the subject, we retain the contribution of Lavan 2001, 9-26, which supplies a complex and thematic bibliographic analysis of the publications on the topic of late antique urbanism; see also Liebeschuetz 1992, 1-49, in particular 6-15 (concerning the factors that change the city during Late Antiquity); Poulter 1992, 99-135; Saradi 2006; Dintchev 1999, 39-73; Dintchev 2008, 405-416; Ando 2008, 31-60; Born 2012 (on the Christianisation of Tomis, Istros and Tropaeum Traiani, with bibliography).

<sup>3</sup> Dagron 1977, 12-14, notes 42-58. The author demonstrates that by the suffusion of burials inside the city walls, an entire system of thinking is gradually but irreversibly changed. From the mid of the 5th c. BC to late Antiquity, the interdiction of burying inside the city is enforced by the *Lex Duodecim Tabularum*. But, starting with the end of the 3rd c. AD until 6th c. AD, as indicated in *Codex Theodosianus* (IX.17.6, July 30, 381) or in *Codex Iustinianus* (I.2.2), the funerary practice often contradicts the juridical norms codified by the law. On urban burials in general, see, for example, Cantino Wataghin 1999, 147-163. For a synthetic view and literature on the phenomenon of urban burials in Rome, see Brandt 2012, 151-156.

<sup>4</sup> A recent paper – Achim 2015a, 287-342 (also reviewing prior bibliography) discusses the issue of burials in an ecclesiastical context. Infant burials were examined by Rubel, Soficaru 2012, 163-168.

space reserved exclusively to the living. In order to blunt the disparities of the archaeological dossier, and for a better hierarchization of the selected archaeological finds, the urban burials were organized into three main categories – martyrial tombs, small groups of tombs organized around urban churches and infant burials. They will be presented case by case, although will be unequally discussed in this paper. Six urban sites are considered, even if each of them holds a different degree of importance: Murighiol–Halmyris, Istros, Constanța–Tomis, Adamclisi–Tropaeum Traiani, Slava Rusă–Ibida and Švištov–Novae.

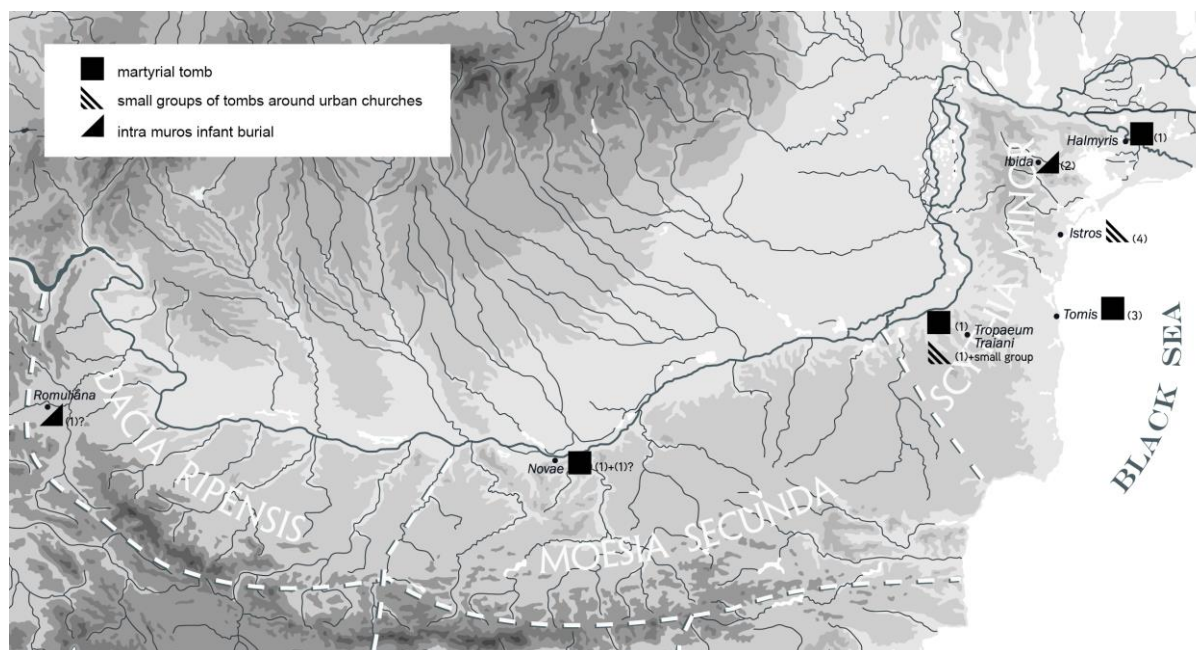


Fig. 1. Map of the geographic distribution of Christian urban burials by site and category in *Scythia Minor* and *Moesia Secunda* (Cîrjan, Achim 2016).

## THE MARTYRIAL TOMBS

By their particular destiny and heroic death, *pro Christi nomine*, the Christian martyrs benefit of a particular status in the Late Antiquity society<sup>5</sup>. A new religious sensibility and a funerary behaviour profoundly modified allow that these athletes of the Christian faith to benefit, in most of the cases in Scythia and Moesia, by a resting place *intra ecclesiam*, be they *intra* or *extra urbem*. Succeeding the Peace of the Church, both in the East and the West, these followers of Christ benefited of special attention, translated into the crystallisation of a cult dedicated to them, a trend towards monumentality in the graves holding their holy remains, and the commemorative manifestations generated by their bodies' presence within the sacred topography of the city.

The archaeological dossier of this category comprises six cases of crypts or martyrium type structures, all included, sheltered by Christian basilica *intra muros*: three crypts at Constanța–Tomis, the capital of Scythia (the Great Basilica, the Small Basilica and the basilica

<sup>5</sup> Dagron 1977, 23-25; Duval 1982, 2, 455-523 (on martyrial tombs and different saints and relics veneration forms in North Africa); Brandenburg 1995, 71-98; Snively 1998, 493-494; Crook 2000, 14-22; Pergola 2000, 99-105; Maraval 2002, 63-74, specifically 68-71; Brandenburg 2005-2006, 237-275; Carlà 2010, 197-272 (concerning the social importance of saints' and martyrs' worshipping in the West). See also Rapp 2007, 557-560 for her discussion of the cult of relics.

in the yard of M. Eminescu Highschool); one in the Episcopal Basilica at Murighiol–*Halmyris*, another one in the Basilica A at Adamclisi–*Tropaeum Traiani* and a martyrium in the Episcopal Basilica at Švištov–*Novae*, nowadays Bulgaria. One has to mention that only two of these hypogea contained the bones of the martyrs *in situ* when they were discovered.

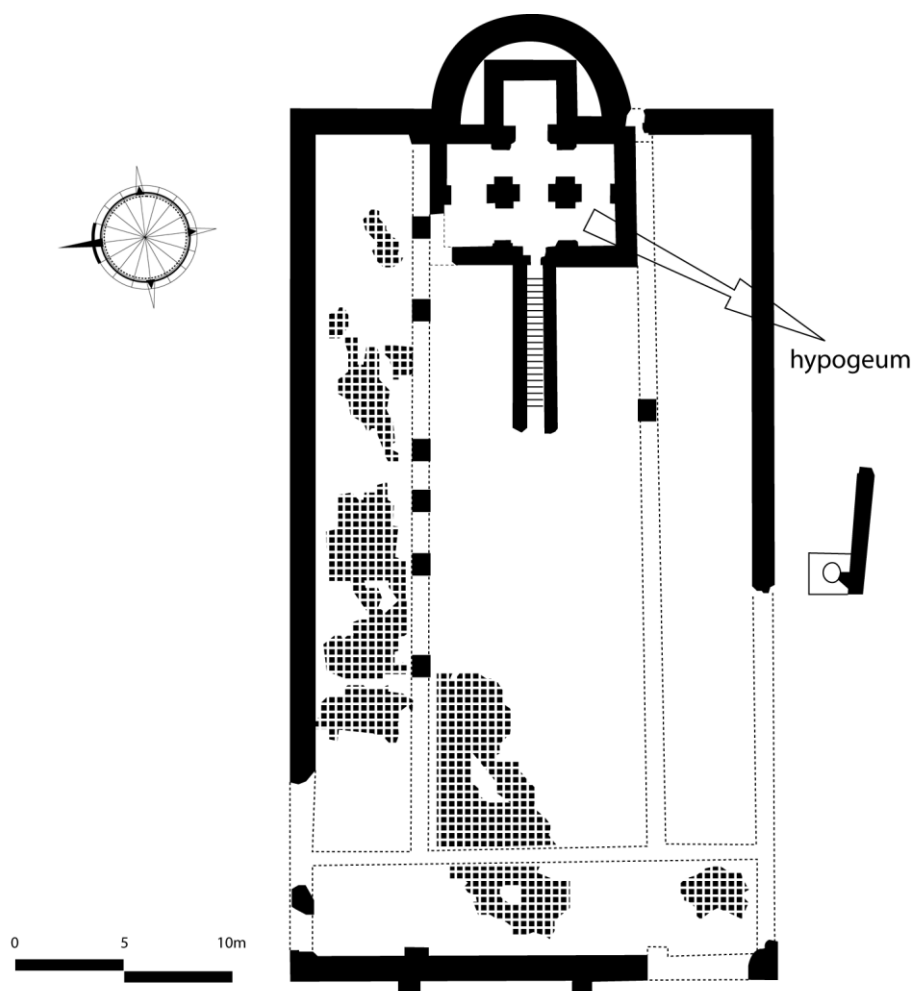


Fig. 2. Constanța–*Tomis*. The Great Basilica, plan (according to Barnea 1981, 494, fig. 5).

At Constanța–*Tomis*, the crypts associated to the above-mentioned edifices are impressive buildings by their sizes. These crypts are located invariably in the sanctuary's basements, thus fit to shelter the entire bodies of many martyrs.

Thus, the crypt of the Great Basilica in the West district of the ancient city (*Tomis*) is undoubtedly the most impressive of the hypogeum type structures discovered up to now in Scythia<sup>6</sup> (Fig. 2–3). Similarly, to the other cases known from *Tomis*, it occupied the eastern extremity of an imposing basilica, the apse's basement and partially the one of the central nave. It covers a surface of 50 sq. m. and comprises seven inter-communicating compartments, six of square layout and a rectangular one, to the East. The brick vault was sustained by two pillars of square plan, while the walls were erected in mixed masonry, with limestone blocks and bricks

<sup>6</sup> Rădulescu 1966, 32-45, 77-80, fig 11-15, 20-21; Barnea 1981, 492, 494-495, fig. 5-6; Sodini 1981, 444-445, fig. 5; Achim 2015a, 321, 323, 325, fig. 10.16.

(Fig. 4). The hypogeum could be accessed by a flight of stairs of 12 steps located on the western side (Fig. 5). When it was discovered in 1960, it didn't contain *in situ* human remains. And finally, it is worth mentioning that the elements of architectural sculpture and furniture fit well within the range of types dated to the 5<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> c. AD<sup>7</sup>.

Here it should be made a brief mention of the Small Basilica, located just 50 m NE to the Great Basilica, an ancient monument which is only partially excavated<sup>8</sup> (Fig. 6). This, too, has a crypt, 2.2 m wide, not entirely researched, located beneath the apse and the nave. Ion Barnea<sup>9</sup> suggested the hypothesis of a western staircase, yet unidentified on site, and considered, based on the size of the hypogeum that it could have comprised two entire bodies. The monument was dated to the 5<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> c. AD<sup>10</sup>.

The crypt of the basilica discovered in the yard of Mihai Eminescu Highschool<sup>11</sup>, the only part preserved of this cult ensemble introduces to the devotional scenario of the relics a unique variable at the provincial scale: the vault crypt of large size comprises in fact two spaces, a square layout room to the West and three vaulted *loculi* to the East, placed in parallel, each of it being fit to accommodate a revered body<sup>12</sup> (Fig. 7–9). As in the other cases from Constanța–Tomis, the access to the crypt was made by a staircase with eight steps (Fig. 10). The differences of construction techniques observed for the entire burial vault might validate the observation that the eastern part of the crypt was set up on the occasion of a rebuilding of the cult edifice, most probably during the 6<sup>th</sup> c. AD. Moreover, the West chamber is decorated with an exceptional fresco, comprising a series of successive panels imitating marble plywood and a cornice and architrave decorated with acanthus leaves, all together creating a perspective effect. Stylistically, the painted decoration of the crypt was dated by A. Barbet to the 4<sup>th</sup> c. AD as the earliest date, except for the scheme used for the vault that may indicate a later date, sometime during the 5<sup>th</sup> c. AD<sup>13</sup>, which sustains the hypothesis of a later makeover<sup>14</sup>.

At Murighiol–Halmyris, the Episcopal Basilica<sup>15</sup> situated westwards of *cardo maximus* has three successive phases of architectural evolution (Fig. 11). Starting with the first one it includes a martyrial tomb situated in a similar manner to those of Constanța (partially beneath the apse and the central nave). Contrary to the crypts from Constanța–Tomis, the hypogeum at Murighiol–

<sup>7</sup> Duval 1980, 338, notes 69-71, fig. 14 a-b, c (regarding marble fragments from two circular tables with different profiles); Barnea 1981, 495, note 6.

<sup>8</sup> Rădulescu 1966, 23-27, fig. 9-10.

<sup>9</sup> Barnea 1981, 497, fig. 9.

<sup>10</sup> Barnea 1977a, 124.

<sup>11</sup> Barnea 1981, 491-492, fig. 3-4; Sodini 1981, 445, note 26; Achim 2015a, 321, 324-325, fig. 10.17.

<sup>12</sup> Duval 1980, 321-322, notes 24-25: the author suggests that the three small eastern niches might have functioned as preservation spaces for relics (similar to those documented in the central basilica at Apollonia, in Cyrenaica). In an later publication, he discussed this particular monument, where the chapel situated on the northern flank of the basilica and the southern apsed chamber might have hold a potential specialized function (a *martyrium*) - see Duval 1989, 2748, 2767, 2780 (on the burial placed in the Northern Annex), fig. 3 with commentary.

<sup>13</sup> Barbet, Monier 2001, 227, fig. 2-3.

<sup>14</sup> N. Duval justly observes that the ambo fragments discovered inside the crypt are typical for the production of the 5<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> centuries AD – see Duval 1980, 322.

<sup>15</sup> Zahariade 2009, 131-150; Achim 2015a, 325-325, Table 10.3, fig. 10.18; Achim 2015b, 133-136, fig. 2-6 (with bibliography).

*Halmyris* is composed of a room with rectangular layout, having masonry benches for the display of the revered bodies to the North and South and an access corridor to the West, with eight steps of limestone (Fig. 12). The interior fresco decoration resembles the one of the crypt in the yard of the Mihai Eminescu Highschool at Constanța<sup>16</sup>, having the same panels imitating marble located in a lower register.



Fig. 3. Constanța–Tomis. The Great Basilica, 3D reconstruction of the crypt with extended field of view (Cliante 2016).

The skeletal remains taken from the hypogeum and the further paleoanthropological analyses<sup>17</sup> have shown that it was a double interment (adult males), the anatomic joints being displaced in ancient times, a strong clue for a *post mortem* manipulation of the bodies, most probably on the occasion of the relics translation inside the church. In the case of the two skeletons identified as the martyrs *Epictet* and *Astion*, it was possible to determine the age, the cause of death, and the associated pathologies. According to the tradition, the two martyrs suffered the torment on July 8<sup>th</sup> 290<sup>18</sup> at *Almiridensium ciuitatis*, under the accusation of sorcery. The paleoanthropological analysis also indicates the presence in the funerary chamber of other distinct skeletal remains<sup>19</sup>, both human (six adults and three children) and animal, possible later burials following the abandonment of the church. Also, a secondary inhumation (an adult female)<sup>20</sup> was made on the crypt's dromos, most probably after the abandonment of this cult monument, at the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> c. AD.

<sup>16</sup> Achim 2015b, 135, note 12.

<sup>17</sup> Mirițoiu, Soficaru 2009, 151-181 (with bibliography).

<sup>18</sup> For a recent, different chronology, see Madgearu 2014, 128-132. The author suggest a later date for the martyrdom of the two holy men, e.g. 8<sup>th</sup> of July 304, during Galerius' great persecution.

<sup>19</sup> Mirițoiu, Soficaru 2009, 174-178, 180, fig. 21/1-6, 22/1-5, 23-23.

<sup>20</sup> Zahariade 2009, 141, fig. 13.





Fig. 4. Constanța–Tomis. The Great Basilica, view over the crypt (MINAC, photo archive, inventory no. 2237a).



Fig. 5. Constanța–Tomis. The Great Basilica, view over the stairs on the western side of the crypt (MINAC, photo archive, inventory no. 2981b).

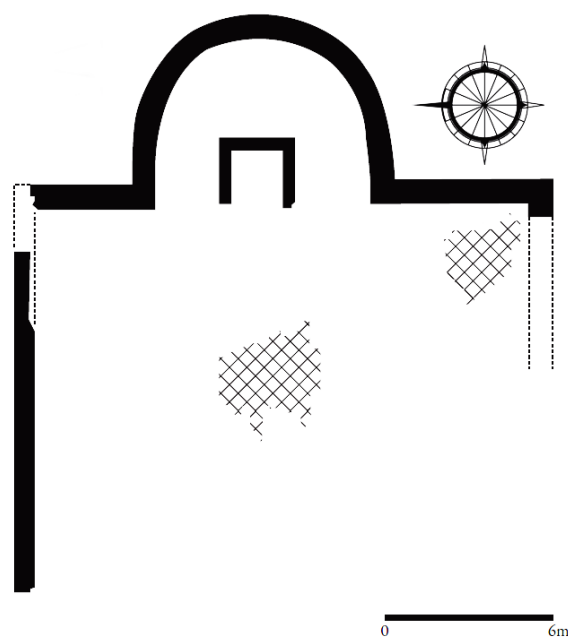


Fig. 6. Constanța–Tomis. The Small Basilica, plan (according to Barnea 1981, 496, fig. 9).

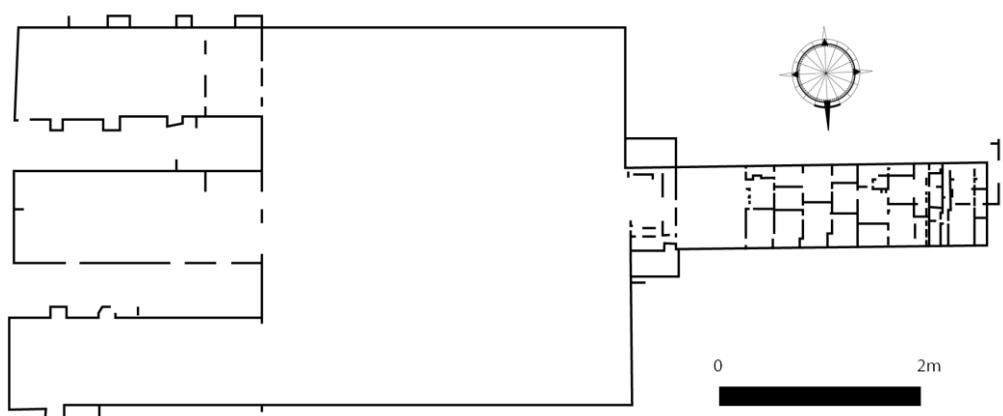


Fig. 7. Constanța–Tomis. Basilica in the courtyard of M. Eminescu Highschool, plan (according to Barbet, Monier 2001, 221, fig. 1).

At Adamclisi, the Basilica A<sup>21</sup>, situated North to the *via principalis*, is a monument which can be dated in the 6<sup>th</sup> c. AD. It comprises a multiple martyrial tomb<sup>22</sup>, uncovered from 1971 to 1973 (Fig.

<sup>21</sup> During the 2010 archaeological excavations, north of basilica A, in the S34 trench (within the perimeter of an annex occupying the northern flank of the Christian monument?) human skeletal remains were discovered at shallow depths relative to the current walking level (at only 0,47 m); according to the excavator, no elements related to the funerary rite and ritual were present, but the archaeological contexts revealed the fact that the remains of the partially preserved skeleton were still in anatomical connection, and was oriented N–S, see Panaite 2011, 4. This may represent a burial in a simple grave, without a coffin, dating to the period following the abandonment of the adjacent Christian basilica. It should also be mentioned that from 1891 on, Basilica A and its surrounding area were intensely investigated in successive stages (for a more ample discussion, see Achim 2007, 199-200, notes 16-20, fig. 2/1-2).



13). In this particular case, the hypogeum is located on the eastern side of the central nave, having an access corridor to the West, the wooden stairs being no longer preserved.

The analysis of the human osteological material<sup>23</sup> found inside the crypt led to the identification of five individuals (males), with comparable ages, and who suffered a violent death. It was confirmed the absence of any evidence for the bodies' placement in a coffin, and also the absence of one of the anatomic joints for the entire osteological lot, incontestable arguments for the *post mortem* transfer of the bodies deposited in the crypt. It is worth to notice the extraordinary extent of the basilica's sanctuary which includes the martyr tomb.

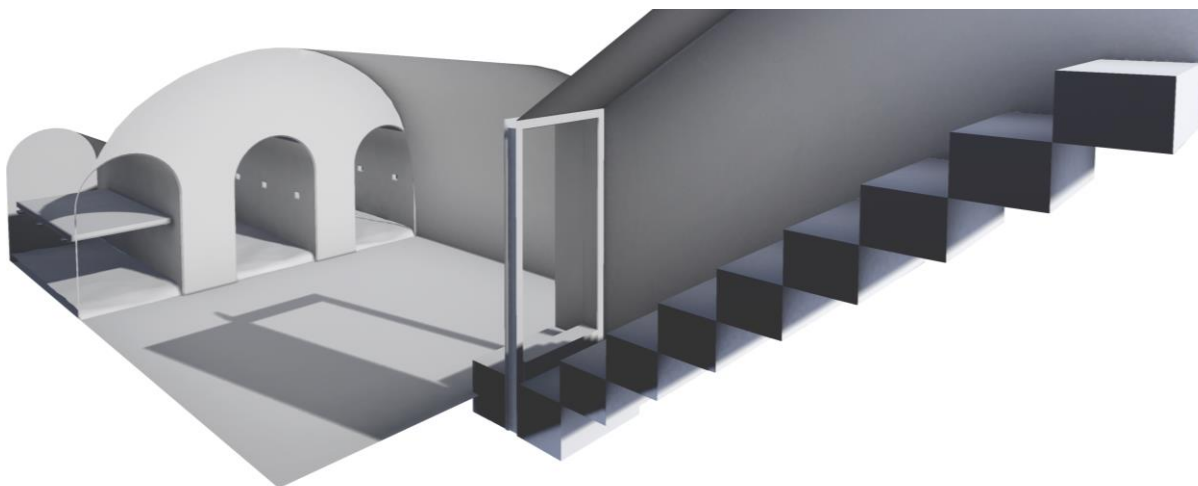


Fig. 8. Constanța–Tomis. Basilica in the courtyard of M. Eminescu Highschool, 3D model of the crypt (according to Cliante 2016).

Finally, at the Great Basilica in the Episcopal complex at Švištov–*Novae*, a chapel with apse was built eastwards of the southern aisle, during the third phase of the basilica, at the end of 5<sup>th</sup> – beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> c. AD (Fig. 14). The chapel communicates directly with the southern aisle and also with the exterior. A. Biernacki has identified the chapel as a *martyrium*<sup>24</sup>, but no interment has been found on here. It is worth mentioning that sometime during the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD (during the first two phases of cathedral's use) a stone masonry grave with a brick vault was added to the external southwestern corner of the southern aisle. During the following century, a reliquary was added inside the internal baptistery no. 2<sup>25</sup> while other relics were set under the eucharistic altar of the Minor Basilica<sup>26</sup>, northwest of the cathedral.

<sup>22</sup> Barnea 1978, 181-183, fig. 1-3; Barnea 1981, 495-497, notes 7-8, fig. 7-8; Sodini 1981, 445, note 27.

<sup>23</sup> Mirițoiu, Nicolaescu-Plopșor 1978, 189–207. In 2008, anthropological analysis of this osteological collection was repeated by N. Mirițoiu, as mentioned by A. Soficaru (see Soficaru 2011, 210, note 35, fig. 35), without the publication of the new results.

<sup>24</sup> Biernacki 2005, 58-59, fig. 5A-D; Achim 2015a, 300, 305, Table 10.2, no 3, fig. 10.6.

<sup>25</sup> Limestone lid of a great dimensions sarcophagus type reliquary, see Biernacki 2005, 67, fig. 10D-E; Minchev 2003, 30-31, fig. 20a-g.

<sup>26</sup> Rectangular shaped box/body of limestone reliquary - Biernacki 2005, 68, fig. 10B-C; Minchev 2003, 41-42, fig. 33a-c.

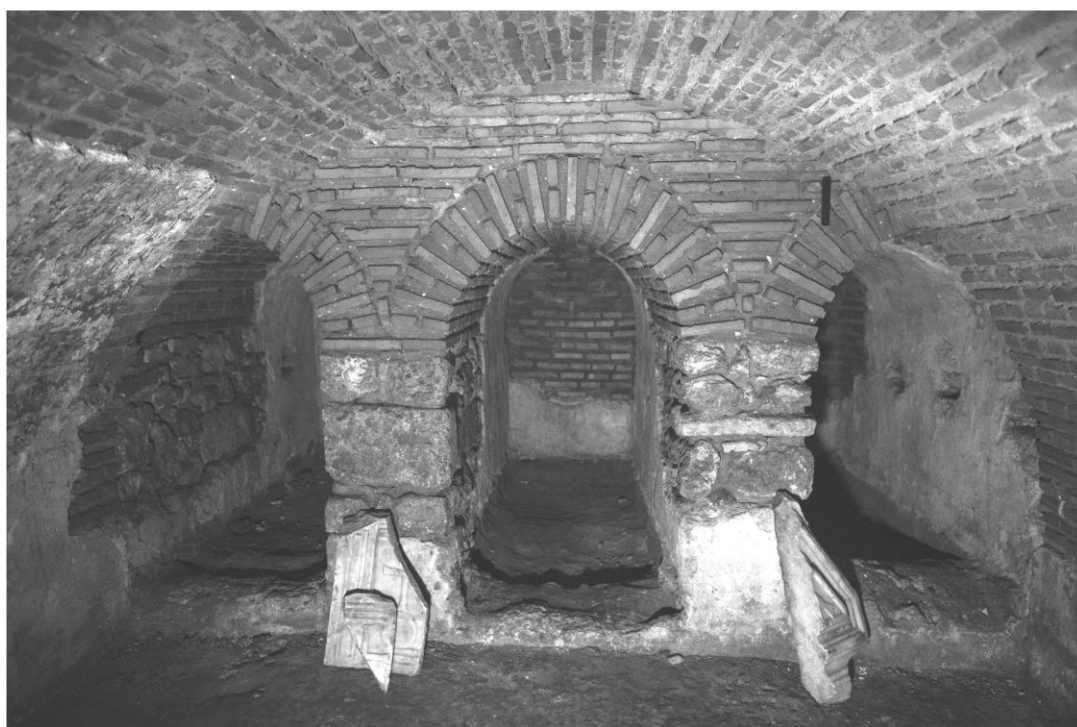


Fig. 9. Constanța–Tomis. Basilica in the courtyard of M. Eminescu Highschool, view over the three vaulted *loculi* on the Eastern part of the crypt (photo Cianta 2016).

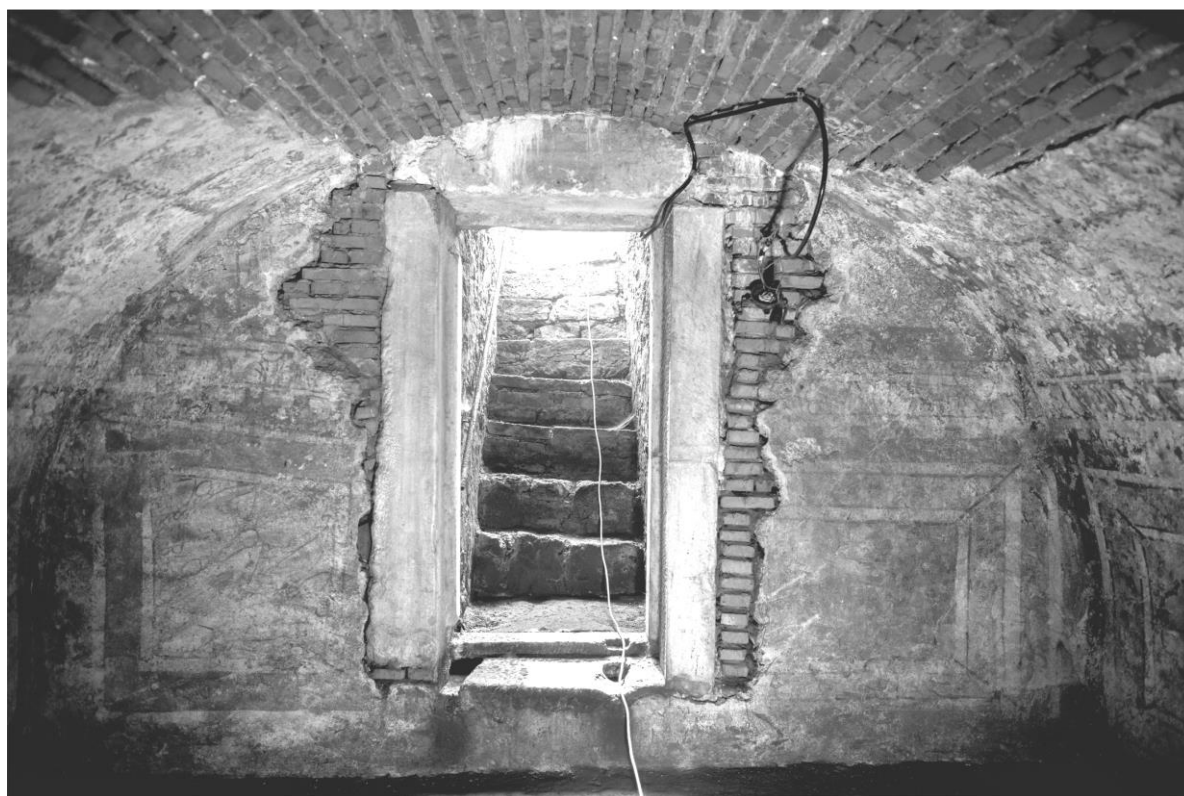


Fig. 10. Constanța–Tomis. Basilica in the courtyard of M. Eminescu Highschool, view over the entrance into the crypt (photo Cianta 2016).

### SMALL GROUPS OF GRAVES AROUND CHURCHES

A second sub-group of *extra ecclesiam* graves contains examples of churches that determined the positioning in their immediate vicinity of isolated or small groups of graves. This is the case of the basilica C at Adamclisi–*Tropaeum Traiani* and of the cathedral at *Istros* (both of them in Constanța County, Romania).

The situation of Basilica C at Adamclisi–*Tropaeum Traiani* is particular (Fig. 15). This urban basilica – which had a small crypt for relics – was cut off from the rest of cityscape through a precinct wall. Within this protected area a series of burials were observed<sup>27</sup>. The burials were grouped on the southern side and only sporadically on the eastern side of the basilica, as indicated by the discoveries in 1908<sup>28</sup> and 1976<sup>29</sup>. Future investigations within the perimeter of basilica C will aim to clarify the exact size of this funerary area, its main characteristics and the chronology of the burials located within.

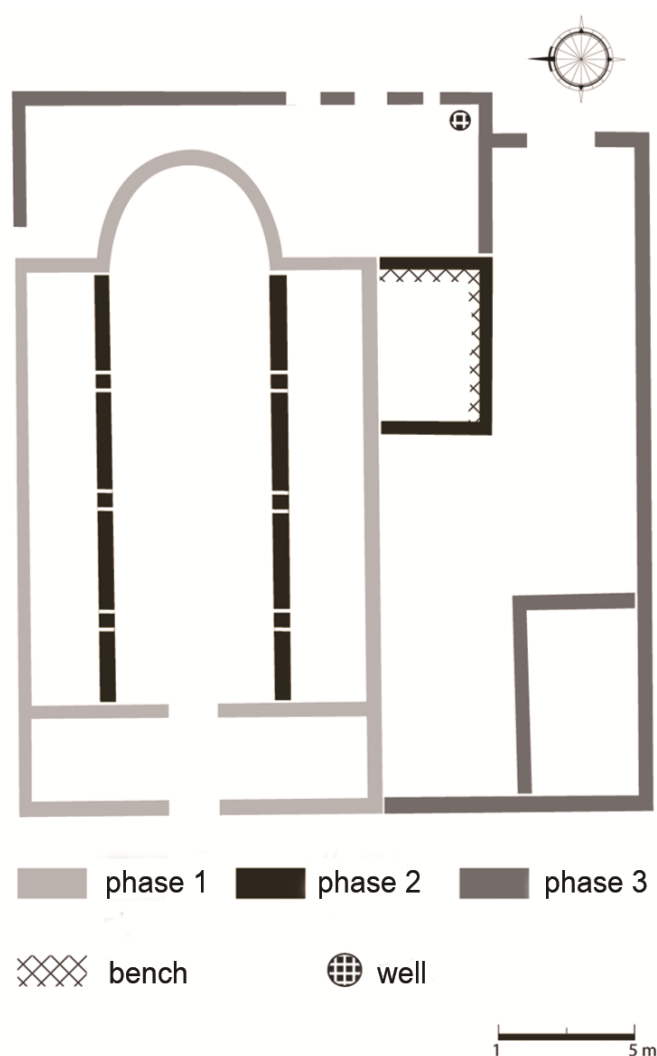


Fig. 11. Murighiol–*Halmyris*. The Episcopal basilica, plan (according to Zahariade 2009, fig. 6-7, 10).

<sup>27</sup> Born 2012, 119-120, fig. 132-133.

<sup>28</sup> Barnea 1979, 21-22, fig. 2-3.

<sup>29</sup> Barnea 1977b, 225-227, 233, fig. 4-5.

At *Istros*, however, four graves<sup>30</sup> (three burials East of the apse are simple inhumations pits and the fourth, on the northern side of the Episcopal Basilica (Fig. 16), a cist type with walls made of tiles placed edge) were dated based on stratigraphic observations to the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD, a chronology that corresponds to the second phase of the Episcopal basilica. The only grave<sup>31</sup> dated to the first half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD (an inhumation in stone cist set in the North transept) discovered there suggests a sporadic funerary use of the site in the period after the cathedral had been abandoned.

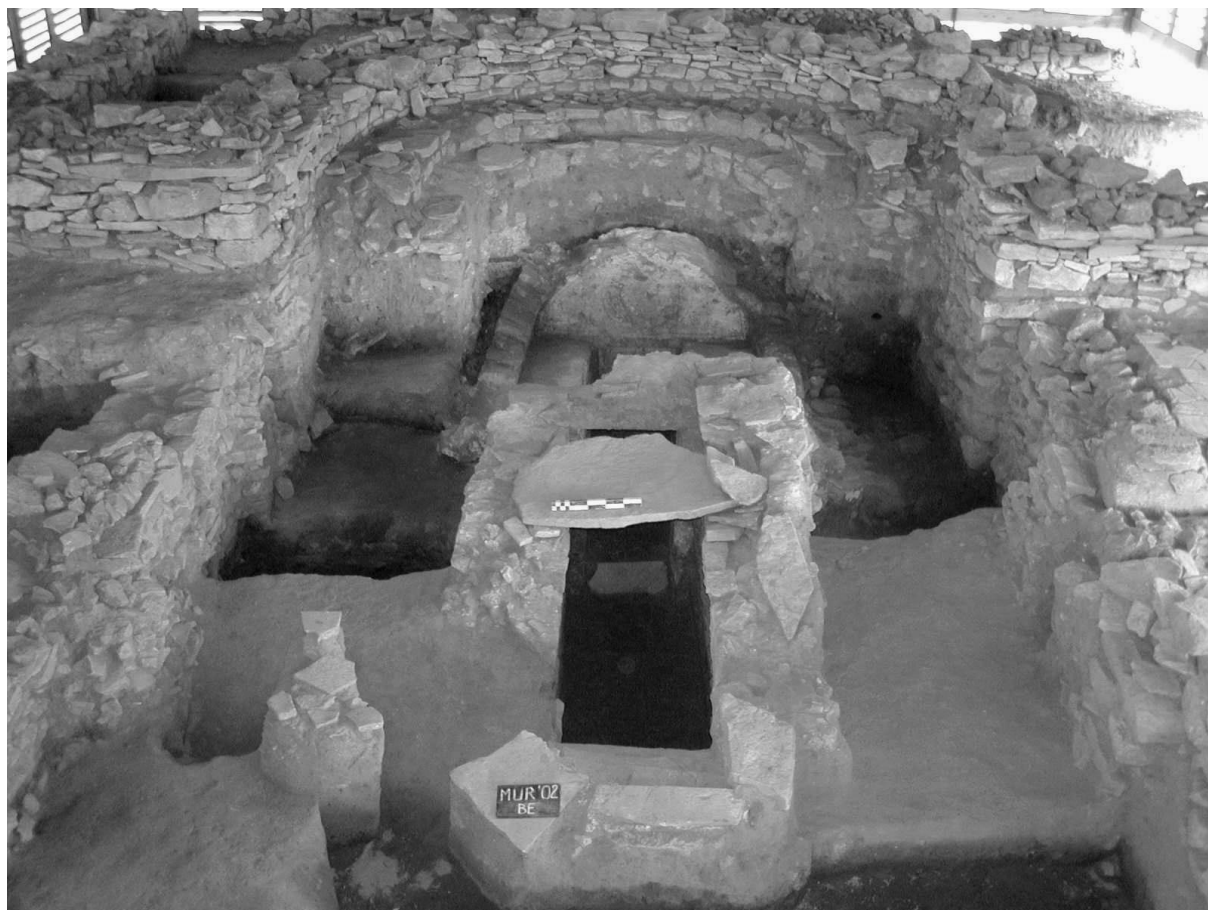


Fig. 12. Murighiol–Halmyris. The Episcopal basilica, view over the eastern side of the nave and crypt (according to Zahariade 2009, fig. 12).

Previously unpublished documents from the Louis Robert collection of the Académie des Belles Lettres et Inscriptions<sup>32</sup>, found during the first decade of our millennium in Paris allowed Alexandru Avram<sup>33</sup> to identify the existence of an *intra muros* burial, dating most probably to the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD, located in the proximity of the rectangular basilica on the street leading to the *thermae*. The construction manner of the

<sup>30</sup> Suceveanu 2007, 37-38, note 26.

<sup>31</sup> Suceveanu 2007, 43.

<sup>32</sup> A contribution of A. Avram explains the circumstances resulting in the discovery of the Lambrino archive in Paris – see Avram 2002-2003, 185-188. From this important archive originate those documents facilitating the identification of the tomb discussed here.

<sup>33</sup> See Avram 2007, no 59, 93, notes 78-79, 119 (Addenda, XXXII).

grave and the proposed chronology<sup>34</sup>, indicate the fact that the burial was contemporaneous to the tombs around the episcopal basilica.

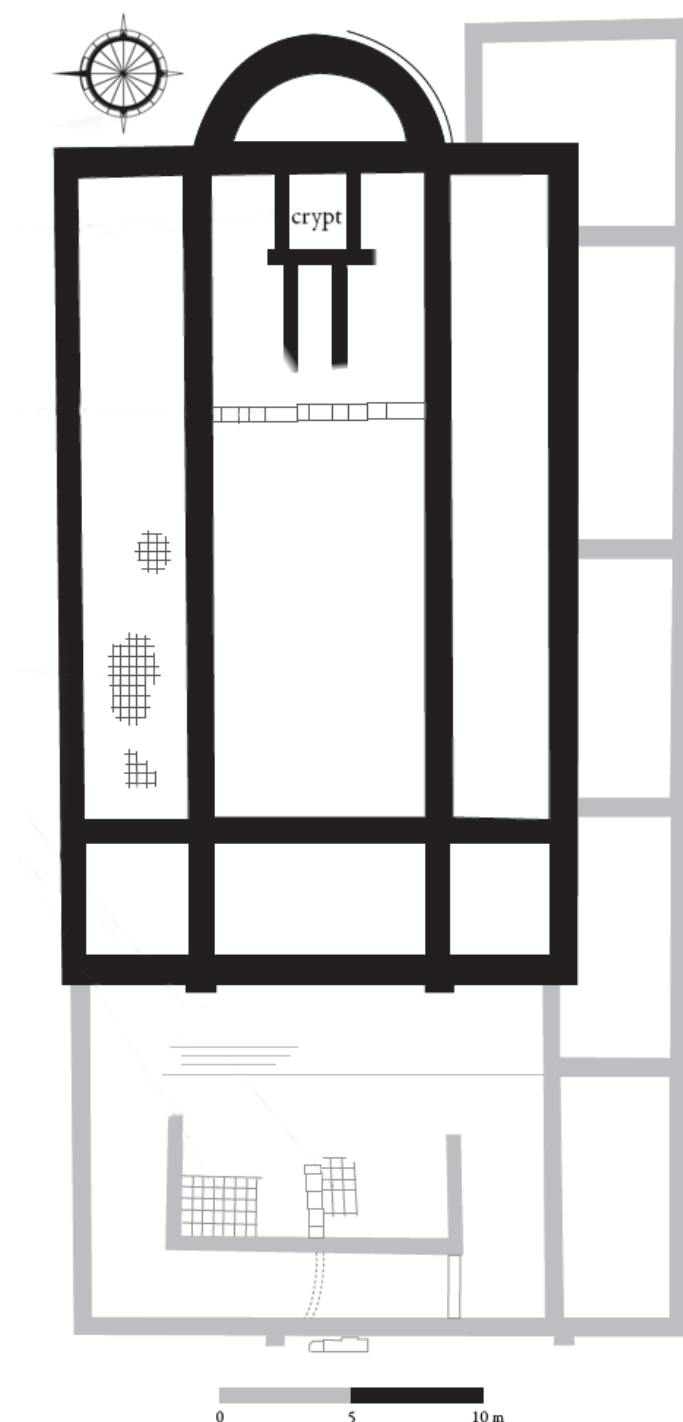


Fig. 13. Adamclisi–*Tropaeum Traiani*. The Basilica A, plan (according to Barnea 1981, 496, fig. 7)

<sup>34</sup> The burial was discovered on 11<sup>th</sup> of October 1929 by S. Lambrino which supplies a detailed description of the item, accompanied by a sketch, see Lambrino 1928-1929, writing book 2, 107-108, 124 (no 312 – sketch of a fragmentary greek inscription identified in the tombs' foundation). In the construction of this particular grave a marble stela fragment was used; the Greek inscription was published in 1983 by D. M. Pippidi – see ISM I, 59, 160-165, in particular 160 (fragment A).

### INFANT BURIALS IN *AMBITUS MURORUM*

A small group, of only two tombs, both discovered at Slava Rusă–*Ibida* (Tulcea County, Romania), pertains to this category. In both cases there were newborns, one deposited in an amphora<sup>35</sup> and the other one in a simple pit, in non-funerary contexts, inside the city walls of *Ibida*.

Thus, in the case of grave 23<sup>36</sup>, uncovered in 2002 in a domestic context from sector 1, G curtain, is an evolved *foetus* or newborn with a well-preserved skeleton, placed in a bladder type amphora (Robinson M273<sup>37</sup>), a variant of transport vessel produced in the Aegean area, in use in Scythia during the 4<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> c. AD.

A second grave of a child (M 145)<sup>38</sup> was identified in 2008, inside tower 10, at the base of the tower's southern wall<sup>39</sup>. The skeletal remains are partially preserved, but the conservation stage indicated an evolved *foetus*, buried in the former tower which during the 6<sup>th</sup> c. AD was transformed in a dwelling.

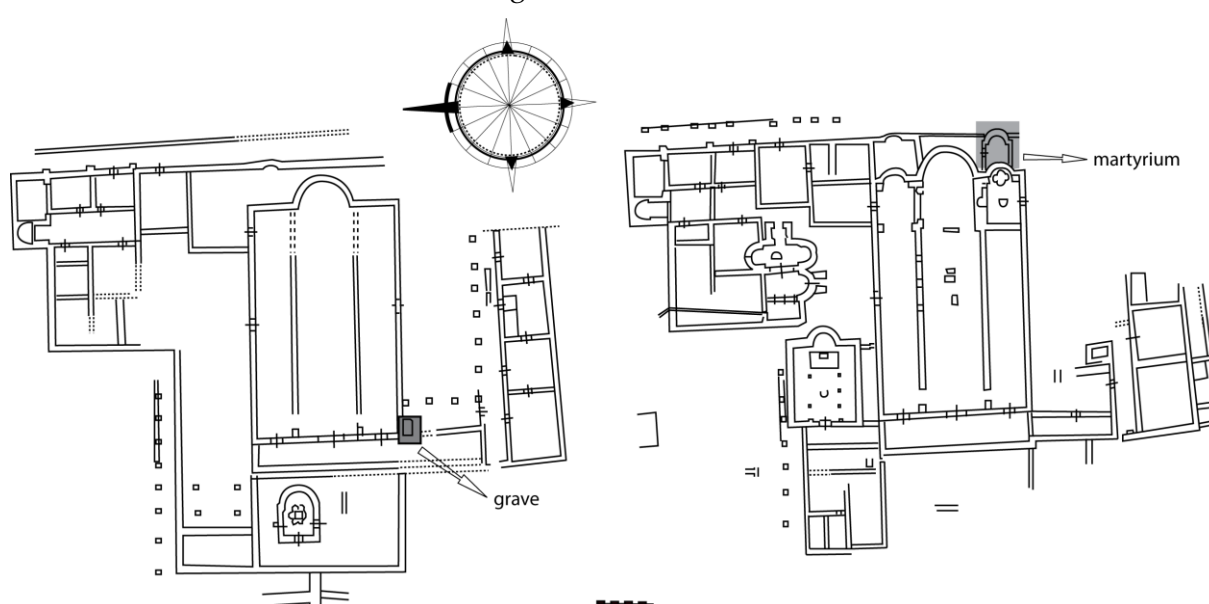


Fig. 14. Švištov–*Novae*. The Great Basilica, plan of the complex on various phases of evolution (according to Biernacki 2005, 57, fig. 3A–B).

<sup>35</sup> For the infant burials in amphorae, see Achim 2012, 191, who give more examples.

<sup>36</sup> Rubel, Soficaru 2012, 164, 166, fig. 2.

<sup>37</sup> A amphora type defined also Opaî CIII–1, see Opaî 2004, 18.

<sup>38</sup> Rubel, Soficaru 2012, 164, 167, fig. 4.

<sup>39</sup> At Gamzigrad–*Romuliana*, nowadays in Serbia, an adult (discovery dating back to 2002) and a child (discovered in 1996) were buried inside tower no 19, in the B1 layer, dating from the third quarter of the 5<sup>th</sup> c. AD. The two inhumations were made in rectangular brick cysts with sidewalls made of bricks placed on edge, the child grave without grave goods, both placed in the central part of the southern tower at the fortress' Western Gate – see Petković 2006, 39, fig. 2, pl. II, 3–4; Petković 2007, 268, note 39.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Despite their fragmentary character, the archaeological data gathered within the present paper offer a series of information on the burial customs in the Christian cities in Lower Danube area. For a better understanding of the way they penetrate into cityscape, three chronological stages are suggested, corresponding to the transformation rhythm of the urban development.

- A. During the entire period of the 4<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> centuries AD funerary areas continued to exist beyond the city ramparts;
- B. From the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD on, and during the entire next century, the first graves sporadically appear *in ambitus murorum*, and this relatively isolated phenomenon seems to characterize the highly urbanized centres. In *Scythia* and *Moesia Secunda* – as for the rest of the Empire – the first burials starting to move from the outside into the city walls are the martyrial tombs, invariably associated to urban churches, some of them holding a cathedral status (e.g. Basilica at Murighiol–*Halmyris*, the Great Basilica in Constanța–*Tomis*, and the Great Basilica in the Episcopal complex at Švištov–*Novae*). *Tomis* seems to play a defining role for the provincial and regional diffusion of the martyrs' cult, as well as for the transfer of the holy remains to smaller urban centres which did not own local martyrs (e.g. Adamclisi–*Tropaeum Traiani*). Where holy remains were identified *in situ*, paleo-anthropology was able to indicate that in *Scythia* martyrs are generally adult males, suffering *perimortem* tortures and in some cases (Murighiol–*Halmyris* or Adamclisi–*Tropaeum Traiani*) decapitation. The graves holding their remains following death are monumental constructions, highly visible and imposing through their size and interior decoration. As a general rule, martyrs are buried in groups in these hypogea associated to churches, but without any coffins or funerary furniture while the integrity degree of the skeletons is high. In the case of the Basilica at Murighiol–*Halmyris*, epigraphy offers substantial clues as to the recognition of the martyr title and their names.
- C. During the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD, small groups of graves are attracted by the cathedrals<sup>40</sup> or the urban churches (e.g. *Istros*, *Novae*, and *Tropaeum Traiani*), probably in order to mark the special status of the deceased, but without turning into a mass phenomenon. In these cases, the graves appear at the periphery of these new holy places, without entering the *intra ecclesiam*<sup>41</sup>. In the same time, the gradual degradation of the monumental heritage of the cities and the modification of their perceived physical boundaries allow the installation of other isolated graves into the cityscape (e.g. *Istros*, the street leading to the *thermae*, area of the former official district of the Late Roman city).

Finally, the presence of infant burials at Slava Rusă–*Ibida*, within the city walls, is a particular case with no other analogies at the present stage of the research and in this

<sup>40</sup> On the use of cathedrals as burial places in Italy, see Chavarria Arnau, Giacomello 2014, 209–220; Chavarria Arnau, Giacomello 2015, 129–166.

<sup>41</sup> There is only one exception: Basilica no 1 at Švištov–*Novae*, an urban church (one grave located inside the nave) – see Čičíkova 2016, 421–422, fig. 6, 10.



particular geographical area. There are two possible explanations for this situation: on one hand, the familial attachment to these deceased without social identity or, on the other hand, a particular (military?) context which blocked their disposal on the city's necropolises.

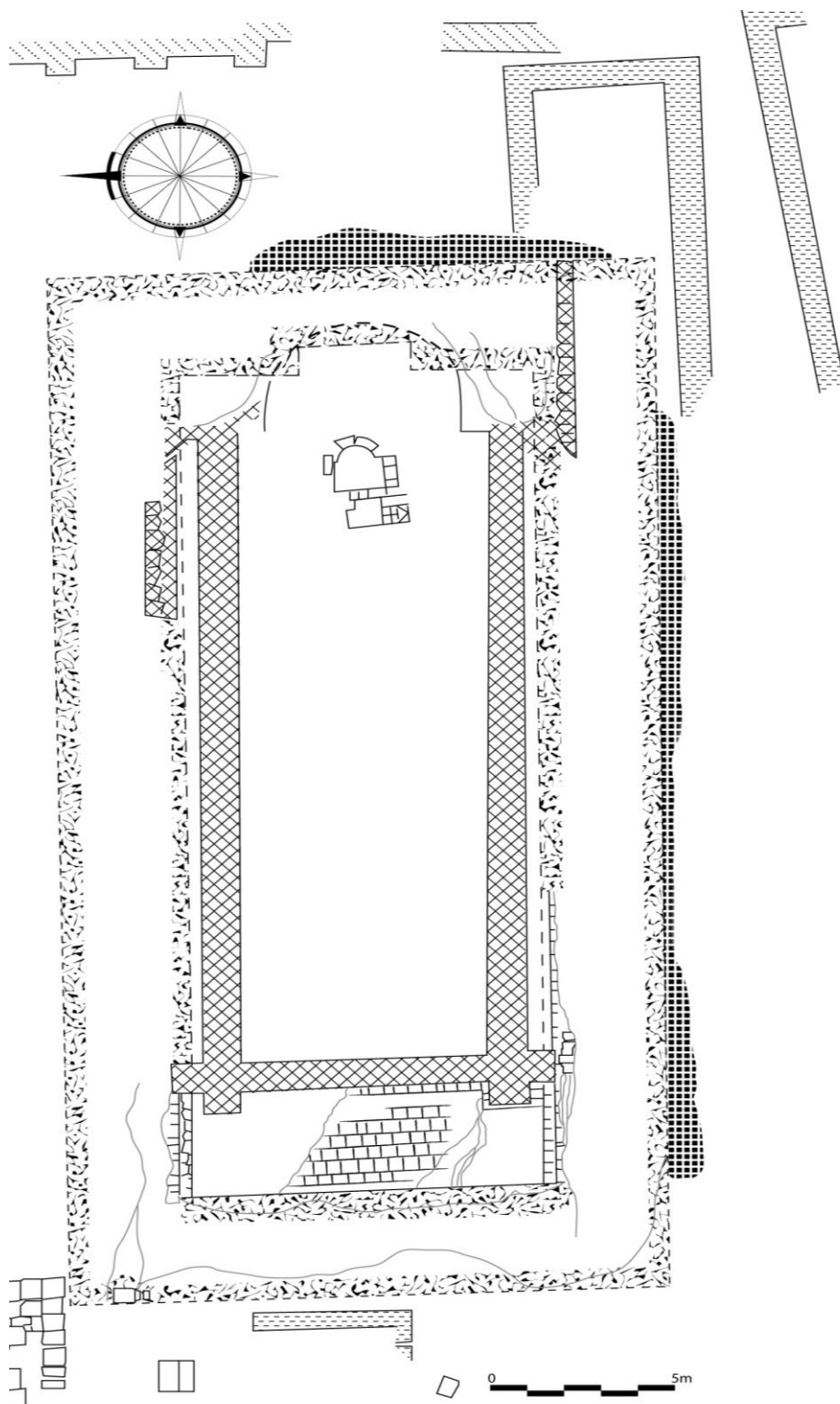


Fig. 15. Adamclisi–*Tropaeum Traiani*. The Basilica C, plan of the church and its courtyard (according to Mărgineanu-Cârstoiu 1977, 236, fig. 1)

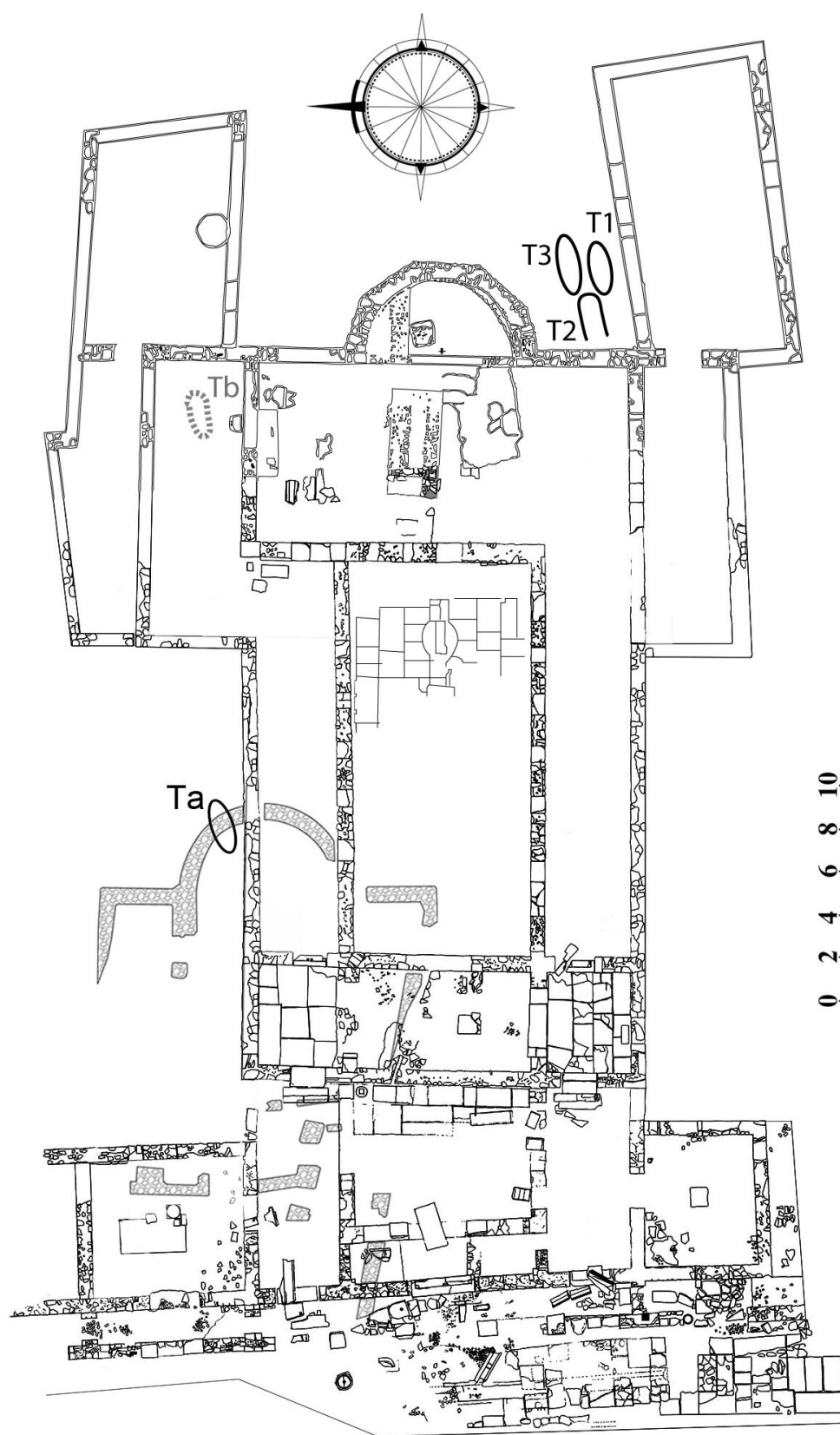


Fig. 16. *Istros*. The Episcopal Basilica, plan and distribution of graves around the monument (redrawn after Suceveanu 2007, pl. XXV).

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