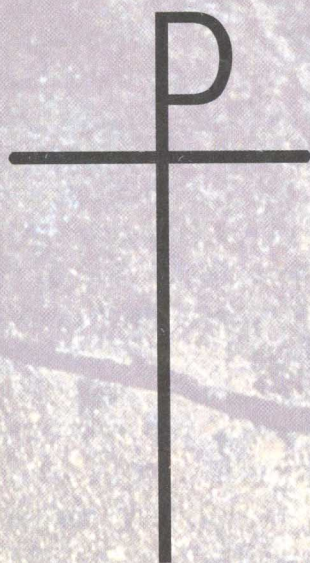


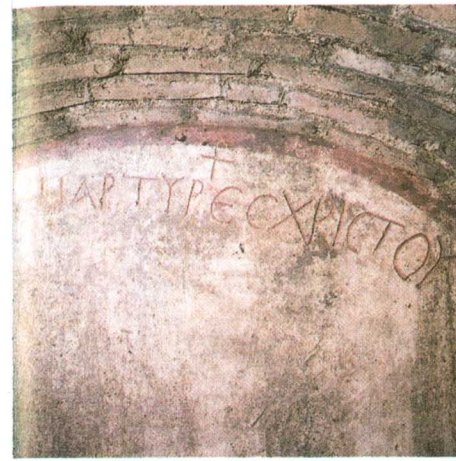
NICULITEL



MARTYRION



◀ The supporting structure of the paleochristian tomb.



◀ The inscription from the crypt-wall: "MARTIRES"



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The paleo-Christian monument in Niculițel is placed in the north-eastern part of the locality, at the foot of the hill Piatra Roșie, which borders the village at the eastern side. Within this area vestiges of several *villae rusticae* were discovered and a tomb of incineration of Roman epoch of 2nd century AD was investigated.

The monument was discovered due to the torrential rains during the spring of 1971 which brought about the partial unveiling of the crypt vault. Placed in a slanting area, in a dwelt and cross-roads zone, the monument needed a thorough research which developed in successive phases (1971, 1975, 1985, 1994).

We are faced at Niculițel with an architectonic ensemble built within an older dwelling area. It consists of a paleo-Christian basilica placed above some martyritombs.

The basilica belongs to a type of monuments found in the Balkan-Danubian region during the 4th-5th centuries AD. It was built at the end of the 4th century during the rules of the emperors Valens - Valentinian the 2nd, according to a Christian Roman

layout, with a protruding semicircular apses, wide in comparison with its side, with rectangular nave divided in three by independent pillars which supported within the vertical space of the building a wooden two-sided roof, covered with burnt-earthen shingle. The building had no narthex, but it

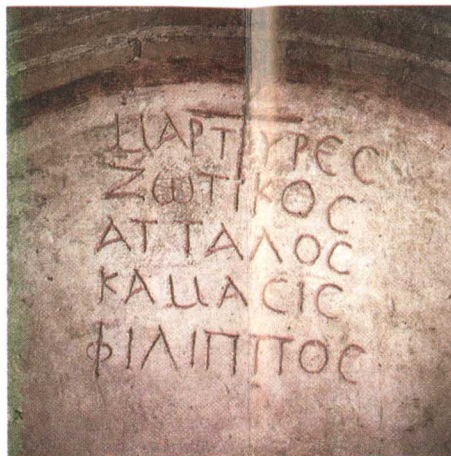
had pilasters at the southern edges of the side naves which supported transversal archways and divided the interior space of these naves, at both sides of the entrance of the central nave. This entrance was wide placed on the axis of the apses.

At the beginning of the 5th century, during the rule of the emperor Theodosius the 2nd, the basilica is strongly modified, both in its horizontal layout and the vertical one. In the zone of the apses an open narthex was endorsed. Probably there also was a strium (a small interior courtyard from where one could pass through the narthex to the interior of the basilica). It is divided by continuous stylobates (basements which could support high columns). The presbyterium (sanctuary which





▶ The crypt-wall having the names of the martyrs (Zoticos, Camasis, Attalos, Philippos)



▲ General view of the crypt.



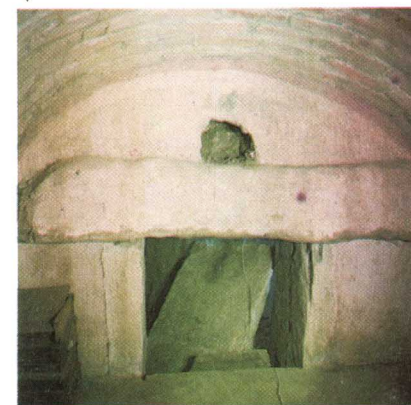
◀ Independent inscription on the ceiling.

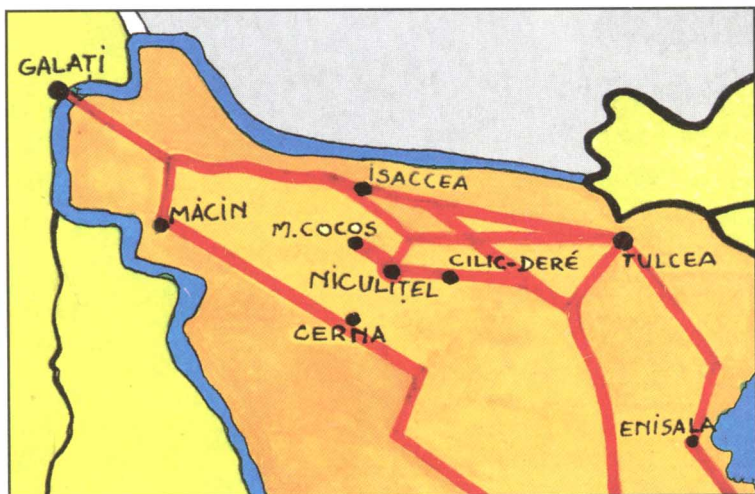
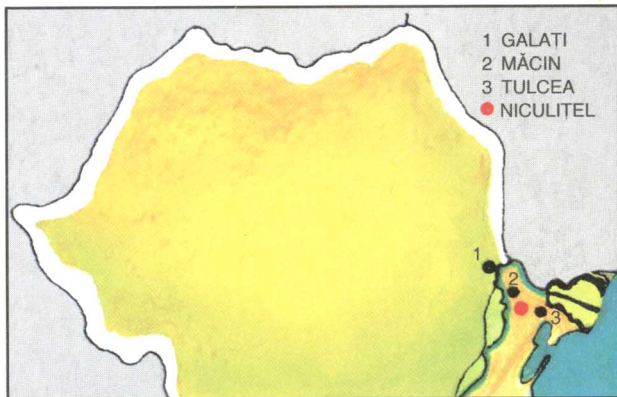
hid the martyr remains and in the same time the place where the mass was officiated) was surrounded by a transversal wall. As for the vertical plan, there was the central nave with a two-sided roof. Above the side naves there was a "cathedral" roof.

In the central zone of the apses, under the pavement of the altar, there was an entirely buried monumental martyr crypt. The tiered structure of the crypt allowed to have here two groups of martyrs. A first group of four martyrs was placed at the upper part of the martyrion. Other two were found at the lower part. The four martyrs were put in a collective coffin and in anatomical connection, emphasizing a primary burial. Their quality of Christian martyrs and their names (Zotikos, Attalos, Camasis and Philippos) are writ-

ten on the wet plaster of the crypt walls. They are known in the Martyrs'Chronicles as being martyred at Noviodunum (Isaccea). The martyrdom was during the second half of the 4th century AD. The osteological remains discovered in the "basement" of the martyrion proceed from an older martyr tomb, dismantled when the monumental crypt was

▼ The inside of the crypt (The entrance)





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