

THE MARBLE BASILICA (B) IN *TROPAEUM TRAIANI*

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The importance of the city, which developed at the foot of the triumphal monument in Adamclisi, grew in the Constantinian period. It is rather difficult to conclude whether the development of the city is the result of radical destruction caused by a Carpien or Gothic attack or by several successive attacks, or it is merely an imperial decision meant to bring new life to a *municipium* created by Trajan, the emperor taken as a model.

Dobrudja, integrated into the Empire after Dapyx' defeat in M. Licinius Crassus' campaign¹, was not transformed into a province, but, alongside the entire Moesia, was the "Kommandobereich"² of a *legatus Augusti exercitus*. The form of pre-provincial organization³ lasted relatively long, as in the two military themes, which made up the border territories on the Rhine. The two Germanies were military themes under the command of *legati Augusti exercitus* and only Domitian and Trajan would provide these territories with the administrative territorial organization characteristic to a province. It can be noted that within this development phase Trajan is the first to apply a strategy of municipalization of the territories in the northeast of the Empire. Trajan took into consideration the form of civilization developed by the local population in the previous period. We can thus understand why not only Greek cities maintain their own urban form and the traditional administrative structures as well as the strongly hellenized Thracians in the southern Balkans will also develop their traditional structures along Hellenistic lines. Unlike here, in the Getae regions south of the Danube and western Dobruja – what was identified as *ripa Histri* – where the Greek influence was not overwhelming, and Trajan will determine Roman-type municipalization. Only lately has more been discovered about Dobruja's administrative organization⁴, although it is reluctantly accepted that there were *civitates peregrinae* here, subsequently transformed into *municipia* with *ius Latii*.

Tropaeum Traiani was the first *municipium* on Getic territory and it probably covered a relatively large *territorium*. We can see the first wall of the *municipium*⁵ (of probably 7 × 4 *actus*) only as the administrative and religious center of a Getic population that continued to live in the rural territory of the city. The epigraphic material⁶ discovered as building stone in the edifices of the Roman-Byzantine city highlighted the role of the

¹ I. Bogdan Cătănicu, „A propos de Ripa Histri”, *Novaensia* 15, *Actes du colloque International - Novae and the Roman Limes, Swistow - Novae, 11-15 sept 2002*, Warszawa, 2004, 73-87.

² About the meaning of *provincia* in *Res Gestae Augusti* and politics in border territories, there is a remarkable study by Braunert Horst, „*Omnium provinciarum populi Romani... fines auxi*” (Ein Entwurf), *Chiron* 7, 1977, 207-209.

³ The absence of clear signs of administrative-territorial organization before the reign of Domitianus, who created Moesia Inferior, and the rare identification of military presence before Vespasianus, supported the hypothesis of the lower Danube territories having been „given over” to the Thracian client kingdom.

⁴ Al Suceveanu and Al. Barnea, *La Dobroudja romaine*, 1991, 47-55.

⁵ I. Bogdan Cătănicu, in *Tropaeum Traiani, Cetatea I*, 1979, 53-54, 60-62; eadem, *Tropaeum Traiani, Cetatea*, Electronic-Version, 2003. It seems that these Tropaeum Traiani monographs were of no interest to R. Cîrjan, not even when, after the presentation of the paper „Tropaeum Traiani un municipie de droit latin en Mésie Inférieure?” at the Convegno Romanità danubiano-balcanica I-VI secolo d. C, in April 2004, Al Barnea informed him that I had shown evidence of this status of the *municipium*.

⁶ See *Tropaeum Traiani, Cetatea*, Electronic Version-Cimec 2003, chpt. „Introducere Istorică și Izvoare Antice”.

Getic population in the creation of municipal elite as a result of assuming magistrate ship. Tropaeum Traiani confirms the policy of integration of the local population in provincial life and it excludes the hypothesis, formulated without arguments, of an inferior social status of the Getae⁷. The reasons for the granting of the *municipium* status must have had to do with the fact that the settlement of the local community was on the access route from west to east and on the road south. This is the route the Getae from the north bank of the Danube took in Domitian's time, and Decebalus' Dacians, allied with the Roxolans, during Trajan's first Dacian war. This geographical position, advantageous in times of peace, facilitated the battles commemorated by the altar and the funerary tumulus and the triumphal monument dedicated to Mars Ultor, but also the Costoboci⁸ attack and then those of the "barbarians" in the 3rd century AD.

As a result of Diocletian's reforms and the political-economic improvement of the eastern Empire under the reign of Constantine the Great, Tropaeum Traiani would benefit again from imperial support in order to develop as the urban and religious center of southern Dobruja. We have sufficient reasons to believe that after the Milan edict, a bishopric will be established here⁹, as part of the policy of developing Christian religious communities on existing municipal structures¹⁰.

The axis of the marble *basilica* constitutes the central axis of the north-west sector of the Constantinian city and an area with direct access from the Pomeria Street was probably initially assigned to it. The Constantinian wall built *a fundamentis* included a part of the hill which was left outside the city wall in the Principate period, at least in the western sector (Fig. 1). The street network of the *municipium* area probably developed in the areas included in the large Constantinian city, but the researches carried on the network of the 4th century and of the previous ones have been insufficient. Remarcable, the *basilica* was built in respect of the frame of the early Roman city, over the previous edifice, but the baptistery had the long axe parallel with the city wall of Constantin and Licinius, determined by the shape of the plateau. In this way the baptistery was planned to harmonize the space. There must have been a pomeria street, but there are no elements to indicate how wide it was (the baptistery is at half an actus from the wall), because buildings were erected on it, at the rear of the wall, as in the case of the eastern gate. In the 5th-6th centuries, the towers – here, the large supply tower T12 – were reached from a narrow street (3.5 m wide). It is certain that *decumanus* was the southern limit of the *basilica* in the 4th century, but we have no objective elements as to its position and size. The street was reduced to only 2.1 m in the 6th century, and it was paved with bricks. Another street (4.3 m) was revealed on the northern side of the *basilica*, by clearing the surfaces investigated at the beginning of the 20th century.

The excavations in the Roman city of Tropaeum Traiani went into decline after 1977, even though the researches carried out between 1968-1975, with significant resources, succeeded in bringing to light numerous aspects of Roman-Byzantine life whose study was worth continuing. In the newly established conditions, priority was given to the initiation of works meant to clarify essential issues regarding the buildings partially investigated before 1909, in view of their immediate restoration. The excavations of the marble *basilica* in Adamclisi, led by Gr. Tocilescu and, after his death, published by V. Pârvan, were restarted in 1979, with the purpose of consolidating the *basilica*. Unfortunately, they can be not even today considered concluded. Between the interruption of the research, at Gr. Tocilescu's premature death, and its re-initiation, two World Wars passed over the ruins left at the mercy of the times. WWI left numerous traces of battle on the territory of the city¹¹. Part of Gustav von Cube's site documentation disappeared, and only

⁷ Al. Suceveanu, Al. Barnea, *op. cit.*, 38-39.

⁸ B. Gerov, *Acta AntHung* 6, 1968, 326-337.

⁹ The bishoprics were from beginning of urban nature. See J. Zeiller, *L'empire romain et l'église*, Paris, 1928, 46; Letizia Ermini Pani, *Spazio Urbano e organizzazione ecclesiastica nel Mediterraneo occidentale*, in *Acta XIII Congressus Internationalis Archaeologiae Christiana* I, Split, 1994.

¹⁰ I. Bogdan Cătănciu, *Les dernières modifications de l'urbanisme à Tropaeum Traiani* in *Acta XIII Congressus Internationalis Archaeologiae Christiana* III (*Studi di Antichità Cristiana pubblicati a cura del Pontificio Istituto di Archaeologia Cristiana*, LIV, Città del Vaticano, 1998, 141-148).

¹¹ In the central nave, there is an inscription chiseled into the marble spindle, with the name of several soldiers, Radovici/ Gheorghe /1916 Galati/ Bu----/Pavel /1916 Braila /Niculae /M---, who had turned the ruins into resistance nests; at tower T 4, in order to investigate the hypothesis of the existence of a northern gate, the former „dig” turned out to be such a machine gun nest – bullets made in 1904 had been used.

some elements are included in Tocilescu's manuscript volumes at the Romanian Academy. The museum created by Gr. Tocilescu in Adamclisi was looted when Dobruja was occupied in 1918, and the entire patrimony disappeared.

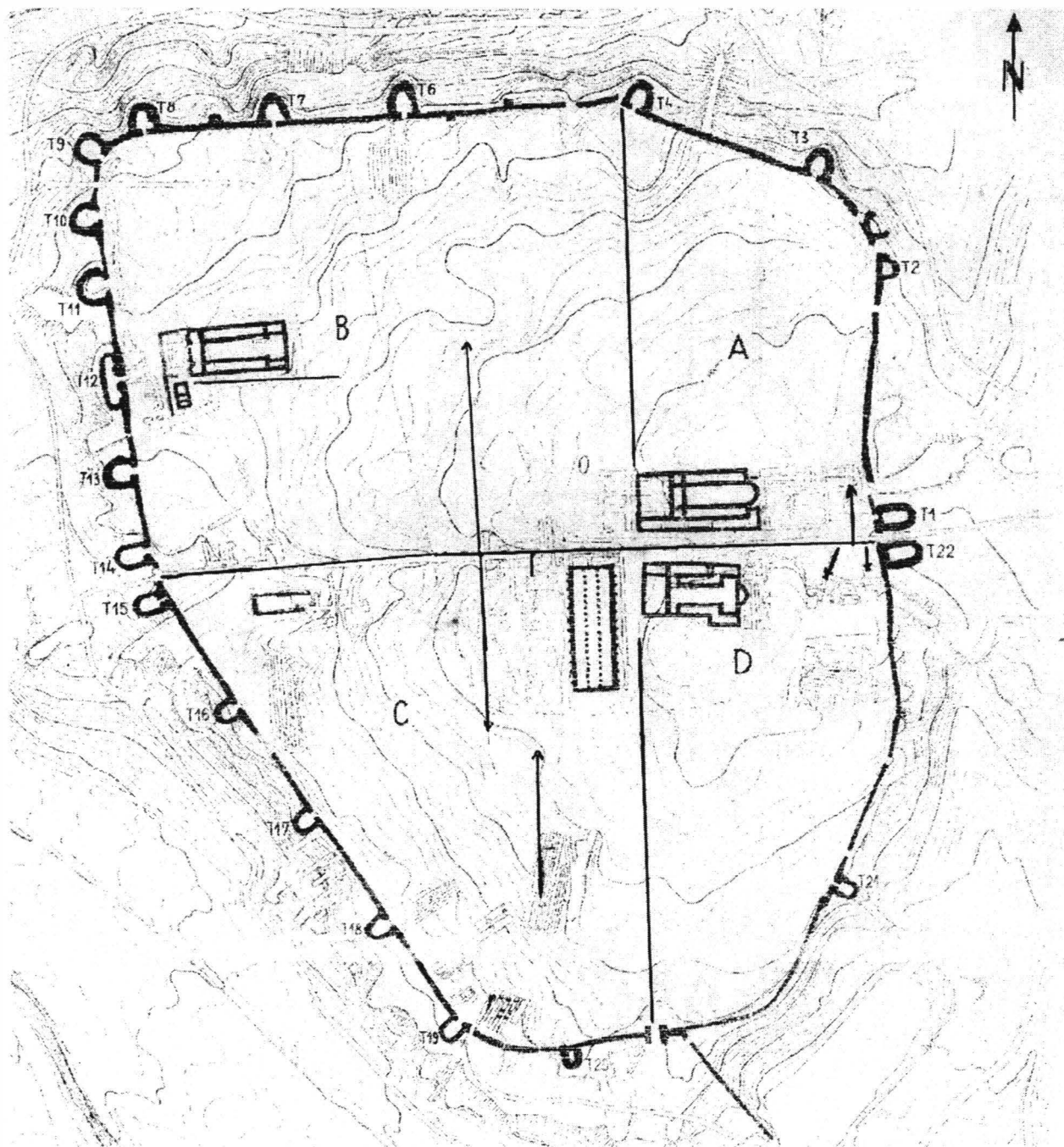


Fig. 1. *Tropaeum Traiani*, the city, restitution (IGFCOT) after the aerial photograph taken in 1973, the street grid in the IVth c. A.D. as it is now known.

We started our own research with the purpose to reveal the stratigraphic and chronological elements preserved after the excavations led by Grigore Tocilescu and performed by Gustav von Cube. We intended to establish the phases and the planimetric evolution of the area of the western city wall, the streets and the buildings. As we had limited financial resources, we only did probes. As compared to our financial resources, the results were very significant (Fig. 2). We established the phases in the existence of the basilica and its

planimetric evolution throughout all these phases, we concluded the study of the baptistery; we cleared the previously investigated ruins and we sketched these buildings to scale.

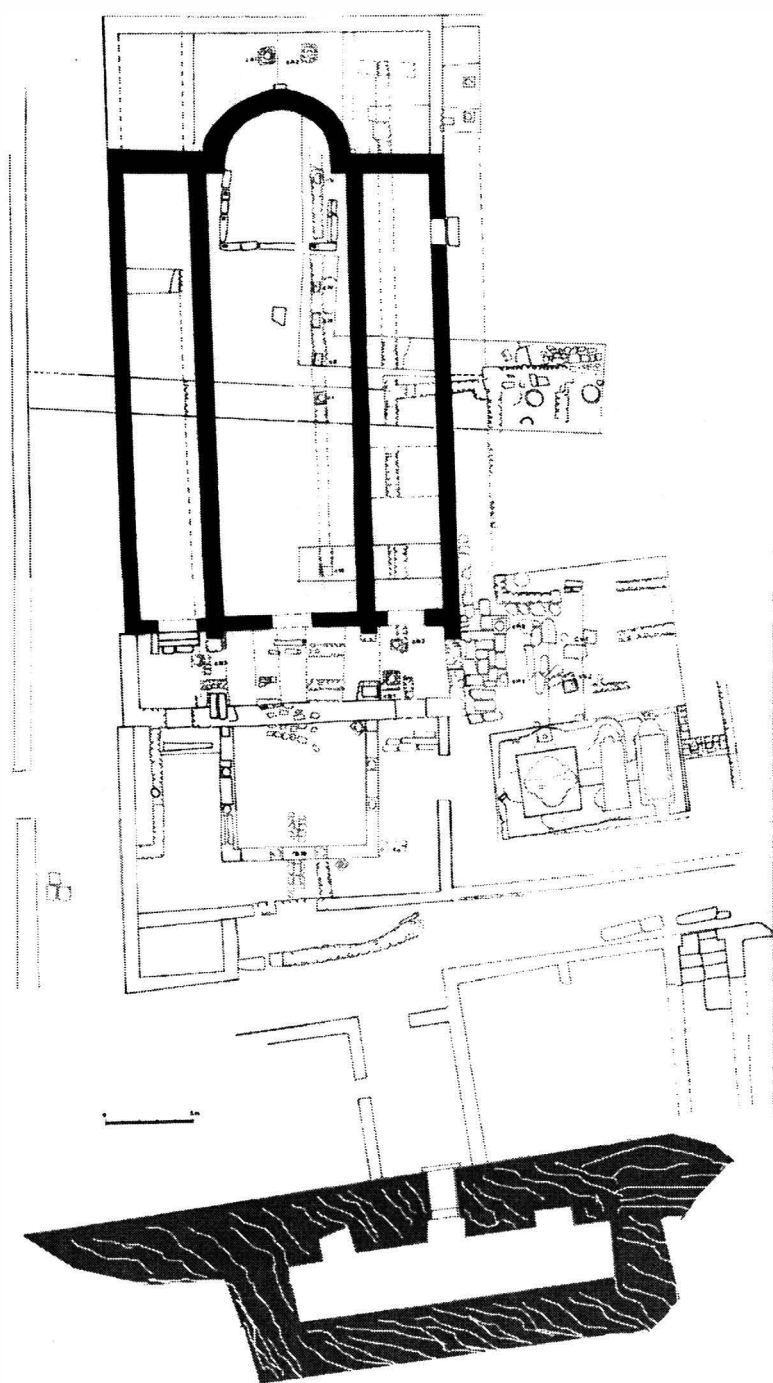


Fig. 2. Plan of the 'Marble' Basilica and the ruins in the B sector of the city.

Fortunately, the excavations at the beginning of the 20th century were only carried out in order to reveal the surface of the buildings and the stratigraphy was affected only where the existence of a *confessio* was supposed (in the apse and perhaps in the northern nave of the baptisterium)¹².

¹² Even though we believe that the pit which destroyed the basin is one of those dug by soldiers during the First World War, as G. von Cube would not have partially destroyed it, but he would have discovered the foundation of the basin.

Unfortunately, the research carried out at the beginning of the 20th century did not pay attention to the superficial constructions in the city's last phase of existence. Therefore, we can not know whether there was any form of civilian inhabitation after the definitive destruction of the basilica. The last layer in the basilica, where G. von Cube's research stopped, was a layer of soil mixed with stone and a little mortar, on which there was a brick pavement preserved in several places in the central nave. At this level, there are no traces of violent destruction by fire, so that we can state that this was not the reason why the basilica was abandoned.

The result of the stratigraphic researches carried out between 1979 and 1992 (interrupted between 1985-1991) in the marble basilica is the knowledge of the phases in the planimetric development of this monument. There are three phases in the existence of the marble basilica (I-III); in all three phases, the plan and size of the naos (25.50×18 m) and the apse (6.40 m large, 3.3 m in radius) are the same. The east-west interior axis is of 29.4 m and the exterior dimensions are 31.4×19.8 m. The basilica has three naves and one apse at the east of the central nave (25.50×7.85).

We were able to establish that in antiquity, the natural slope of the plateau descended significantly westward. The buildings erected in the Roman-Byzantine period used the ground level difference and reduced them, so that now the terrain is almost plane.

It must be emphasized that the stratigraphy in the north-western sector is not the same everywhere. We could see (Fig. 3) that in section S I (oriented towards the north-south, on the naves of the naos) there is the same succession of levels as we were able to establish in the eastern part of the city. A first Getic inhabitation, a culture layer of brown soil, without the delineation of treading levels, but which includes a pit (Fig. 4) (part of a dwelling?). The foundation of a colonnade was built over this pit (Fig. 5) There are traces of a fire previous to this construction phase – undoubtedly the Costoboci attack of 170 AD, about whose consequences we have sufficient epigraphic data¹³.

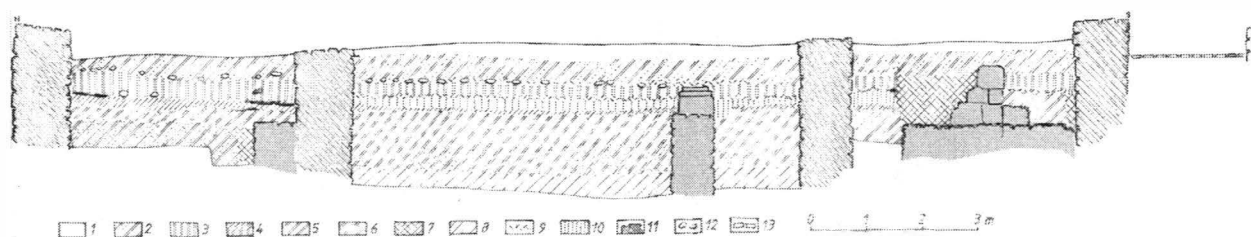


Fig. 3. Eastern profile of the section S I, 1980 over the naves of the basilica.

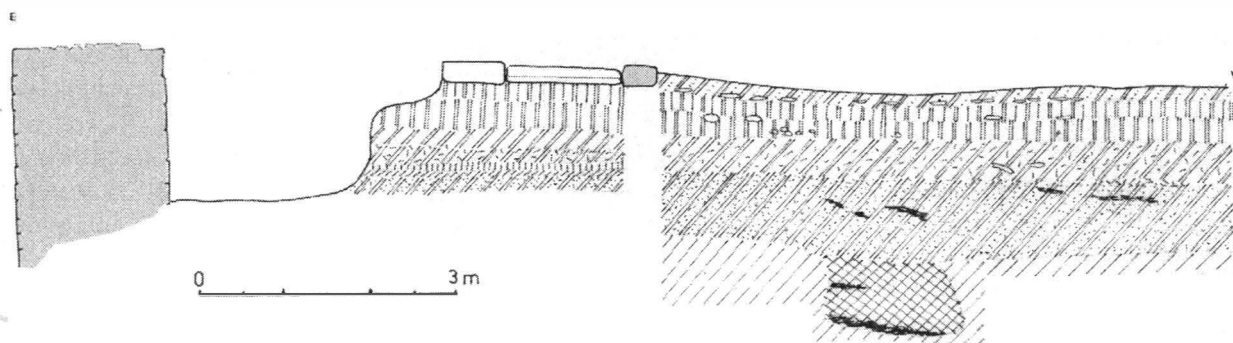


Fig. 4. The east-western section S V (south profile) in the central nave.

We believe there may be a building, E 1, from which we only have the foundation discovered in the northern nave. We postulated this phase based on the fact that level N II crosses the entire width of the

¹³ R. Vulpe, DID II, 1968, 159, 162-163.

* See the stratygraphy in the *Tropaeum Traiani, Cetatea I*, București, 1979, 35-40 fig. 8.

foundation parallel with the north wall of the central nave. We can assume that this building existed at a level included in the brown soil layer with traces of burning. All our observations on the existence of this building are hypothetical¹⁴, as they are only based on two 2 m wide probes.



Fig. 5. The stylobate and the bases for the columns in S V, 1980.

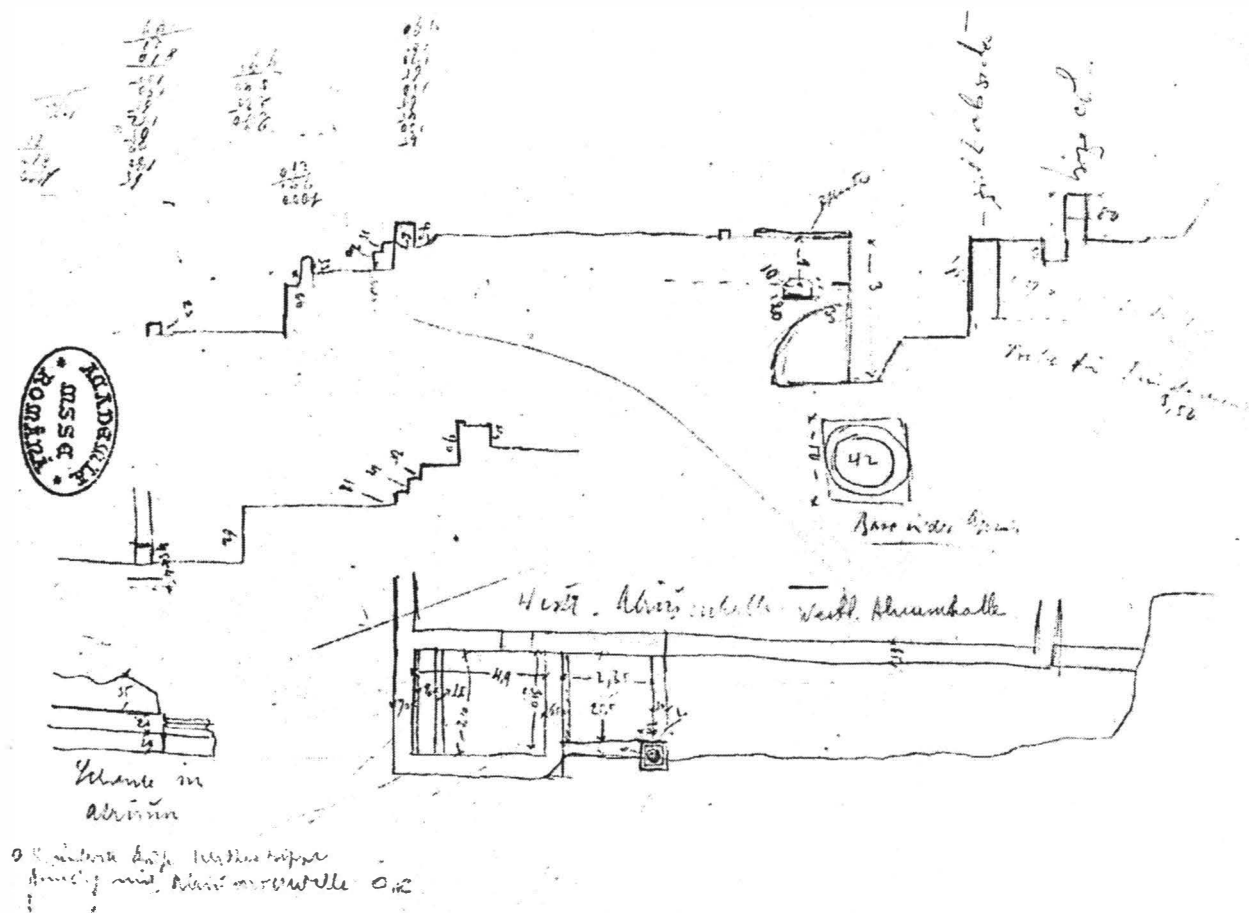
The stratigraphic research carried out in basilica B revealed a large building, E 2, previous to the construction of the basilica. When a “Probe für Fundamente” was carried out in the apse¹⁵, in fact an attempt to reveal a crypt underneath the altar, the level of this construction was reached and one of the column bases was discovered (Fig. 6) on the stylobate found in the east-west section through the central nave (Fig. 7). The walls made of rough stone bound with mortar, 75-80 cm wide, were dismantled when the foundations of the naos were erected. These remains of large buildings were dated to the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD¹⁶. The construction of building E 2 began at level N II, superposed onto a level with traces of burning. The treading level corresponding to building E 2 was preserved as a thin layer of well pressed yellow soil, corresponding to the column base discovered in the central nave E 2 C 5 (Fig. 4). The edifice was rebuilt, and this is proven by the discovery, next to the plinth of the same column base, of a pit of approximately 25 cm full of mortar and carved stone. The second level N III of building E 2 is approximately 15-20 cm higher. The treading level was

¹⁴ We cannot exclude the possibility that it is indeed a stylobate, parallel to the one discovered in the central nave. A section may have been discovered between column bases in the northern nave, and thus covered by the treading level, from which only the column bases would have been visible.

¹⁵ Ms Tocilescu 5129, drawing p. 163.

¹⁶ „Epoca principatului la Tropaeum Traiani, cu privire specială pentru zona basilicii de marmoră”, paper on this inhabitation level in the sector of the basilica B, presented at *The XXXVIth Colloquium Pontica*, Constanța, 2004.

The north-south stratigraphic probe S I, (Fig. 2) which intersected all three naves, was particularly revealing in the investigation of the initial phase in the existence of the building in the 4th century AD. It was noted that it replaced the previous pagan edifice, still incompletely investigated/known. Building E 2 was systematically dismantled in a period dated by a coin issued in the time of Maximianus Herculus (Fig. 8)¹⁷, discovered in the leveling soil which covered the foundation of the wall. A large quantity of pink plaster was discovered in the demolition layer of the pagan building. Taking into consideration the nature of the building erected in the 2nd century, we dare to formulate the working hypothesis that we are looking at a temple and that we are in the extra mural sacred area of the Tropaeum *municipium*. We suppose, based on the elements at our disposal, that building E2 was entered from the east, from within the city.



The construction layer of the basilica (phase I – **Fig. 10**) is practically at the level where the demolition of the pagan building took place (**Fig. 9**). We were able to see in all sections that the level at which construction work took place was not the same as the treading layer in the finished basilica. Part of building E 2 was not demolished, above the construction level of the southern nave – so it was planned to raise the level inside the basilica by 0.3 m, in order to emphasize its monumentality. The church must have been at least 7 m tall, because the foundations went 2.3 m below the construction level. At the pavement level of the first basilica, placed over the filling layer of 30 cm over the leftovers from the construction work, the mortar with which the southern wall of the southern nave was plastered trickled horizontally over few centimeters, thus marking the level, which must have been of stone or brick slabs.

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A later level (Phase II – Fig. 11) is 25 cm higher, on a filling layer of clay with extremely few archaeological traces, but mixed with average sized quarry stones. This layer must have been covered by pavement, which was completely removed on the surface we intersected. It must be noted, however, that the stylobate was so high that it did not allow the crosspassing between the lateral and the central naves, except in places where there were steps. The last treading level in the basilica (Phase III – Fig. 12) is the one where research stopped in the central and southern naves. In the northern nave, previous excavations also went below the last level. On clearing the surface of the central nave, we discovered some places in which remains of the brick pavement were preserved. They also appear in the plan V. Pârvan published (BCMI IV, 1911, Fig. 15).



Fig. 7. Image of the section S V in the apse.



Fig. 8. Coin issued by Maximianus Herculius.



Fig. 9. Part of the building E 2 nondemolished S I, 1981.

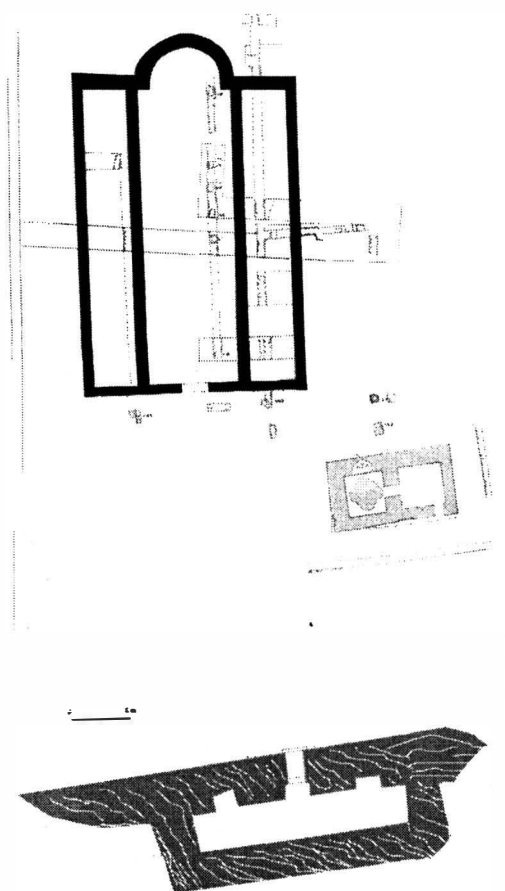


Fig. 10. Basilica in the Constantinean times – Phase I.

The *cancelli* (4.40×7 m) were built then – their bases made of parallellipedic marble blocks were preserved *in situ*. The orifices for the marble slabs of the railing can be also seen in the bases.

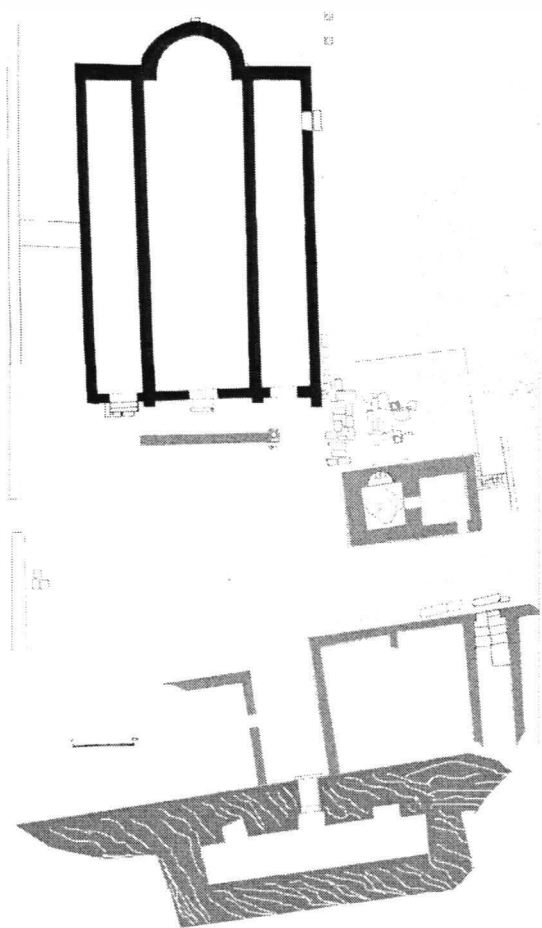


Fig. 11. Basilica in the middle of the Vth c. A.D. – Phase II.

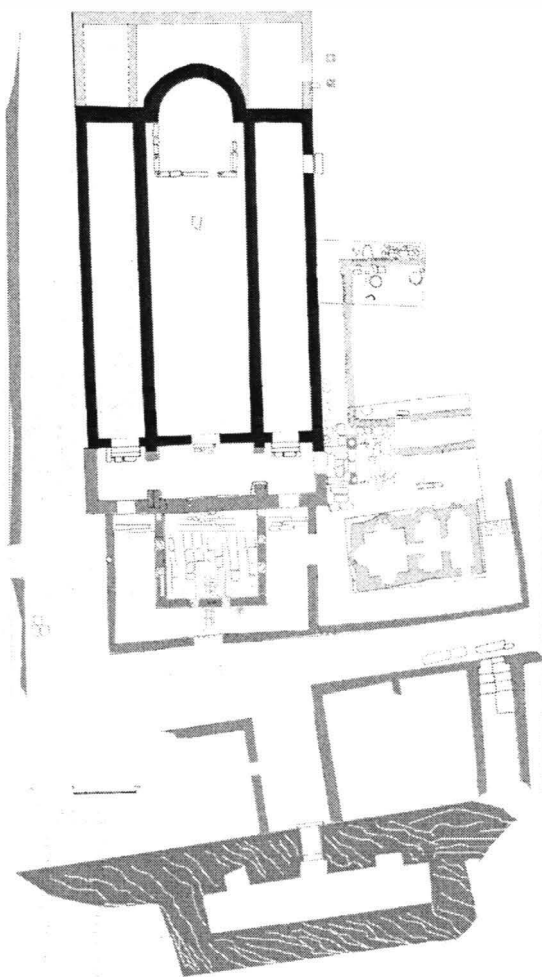


Fig. 12. Basilica reconstructed in the Anastasius-Justinian period – Phase III.

We believe that the remains of a shell limestone slab discovered 3.3 m in front of the *cancelli*, on the central axis, can only be identified as the remains of an Ambon. V. Pârvan, publishing G. von Cube's research results¹⁸, believes that the basilica went through another rebuilding process, left unfinished, as the processing of the column capitals was interrupted. If we discard this argument because those capitals are finished and the ornaments are typical for the period¹⁹, we can only wonder whether a superior treading level was removed. On the basis of the discoveries made at the eastern gate of the city compared with others discoveries in the other sectors, we consider that there are data regarding a rebuilding in the middle of the 5th century (N IV B). The evidence is a coin issued by Theodosius II²⁰, and we believe it is possible that the rebuilding of basilica B to have been initiated in the same period. The Justinian period (N V) is very likely marked by the last rebuilding of the basilica in its sumptuous form with specific marble elements that gave it its name in the literature. Even without the argument regarding an interruption of the late rebuilding – the fourth phase (Fig. 13) supposed by V. Pârvan – it is plausible that this phase existed. The evidence may be a late consolidation of the northwestern pillar of the narthex and the building of the columns in the space created east of the apse. Changes to the shape of the northern

¹⁸ V. Pârvan, BCMI IV, 1911, 180-181.

¹⁹ I. Barnea, DID, 1968, 484; R. Kautzsch, *Kapitellstudien*, Leipzig, 1936, no. 566 f; 583; R. Hodinott, *Early Byzantine Churches in Macedonia and Southern Serbia*, 1963, pl. 39 K.

²⁰ *Tropaeum Traiani, Cetatea I*, 225 n. 9.

wall of the northern portico of the atrium took place in the same sub-phase. Unfortunately, we do not have sufficient elements to be able to date every rebuilding and addition that can be set in the last inhabited phase of *Tropaeum*.

The stratigraphy in the narthex is difficult to decipher due to the numerous ancient interventions in a limited space. We believe that G. von Cube's excavations also stopped *grosso modo* in the narthex at the last level of existence. The penultimate level near the wall of the *naos* consists of a layer of limestone over which there is clay with a little mortar, 0.25 m below the current level. The access stairs to the central nave were probably built on this clay layer. The narthex existed in this phase with the aspect that we know today.

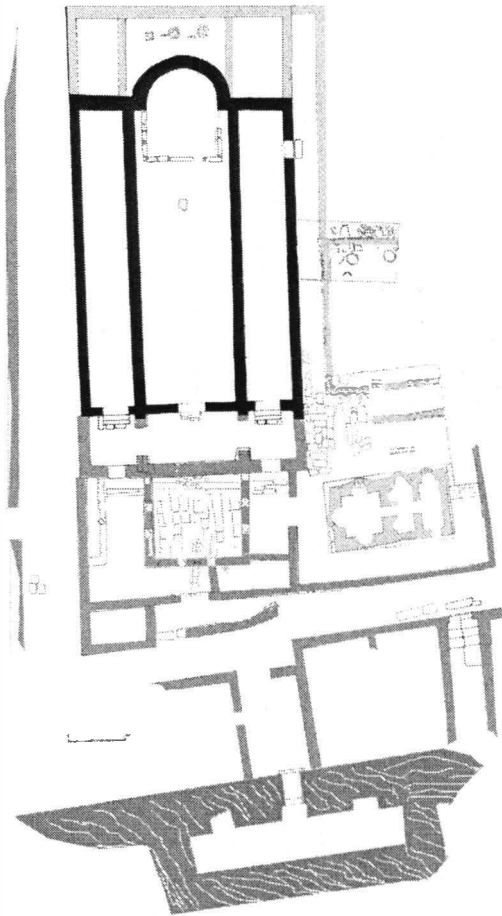


Fig. 13. Latest (phase III 1) changes in the shape of the basilica after the Avars' destruction (586 A.D.).

At -0.60m near the *naos* there is average stone similar to the one used for pavement. At -1.07 m there is a sort of pavement made from mortar and stone slabs. It is a layer of yellow soil, stone, brick and lime mortar with crushed brick in it, which goes down to -1.35 m. At -1.55 m, there is a layer of pebbles and mortar – layer which probably marks the time the basilica was built. The construction level was arranged by bringing a layer of yellow soil in order to cover the rests of a fire and the walls of the 2nd-3rd centuries, probably part of edifice E 2. Over the layer of virgin soil there is the layer of brown soil with early Roman material.

In the first construction phase I, the basilica with three naves and an apse (Fig. 10) to the east could be entered from the west, by way of a staircase which emphasized its grandeur²¹, reducing the ground level difference in relation to the westward slope (Fig. 14).

²¹ A coin issued by Constantius II at Nicomedia on revers *GLORIA EXERCITVS* was found in narthex.

There is no evidence of the number and interval between the columns, which separated the central nave from the lateral ones. Nor do we have any way of knowing whether entrances to all three naves or only to the central one existed from the very beginning.

It is important to mention the fact that the basilica covered the same surface as the previous pagan buildings, fact revealed by the probes in the narthex. For this initial phase I, the foundations for a propylon structure were laid over the partially demolished 2nd-3rd century wall. In 1992 we discovered a column base c N 3 (Figs. 15, 16), set on a stone and clay foundation, built on the dismantled 2nd-3rd century wall. Another column base c N 2 uncovered in section S XVIII may be part of the same colonnade if we take into account the fact that its foundation was built over the remains of the same early Roman wall. This column base (Fig. 17) was taken out of use and covered by the soil layer which constituted the functioning level for the later propylon, built 3 m west from the basilica.



Fig. 14. Coin issued by Constantius II at Nicomedia found in the narthex.

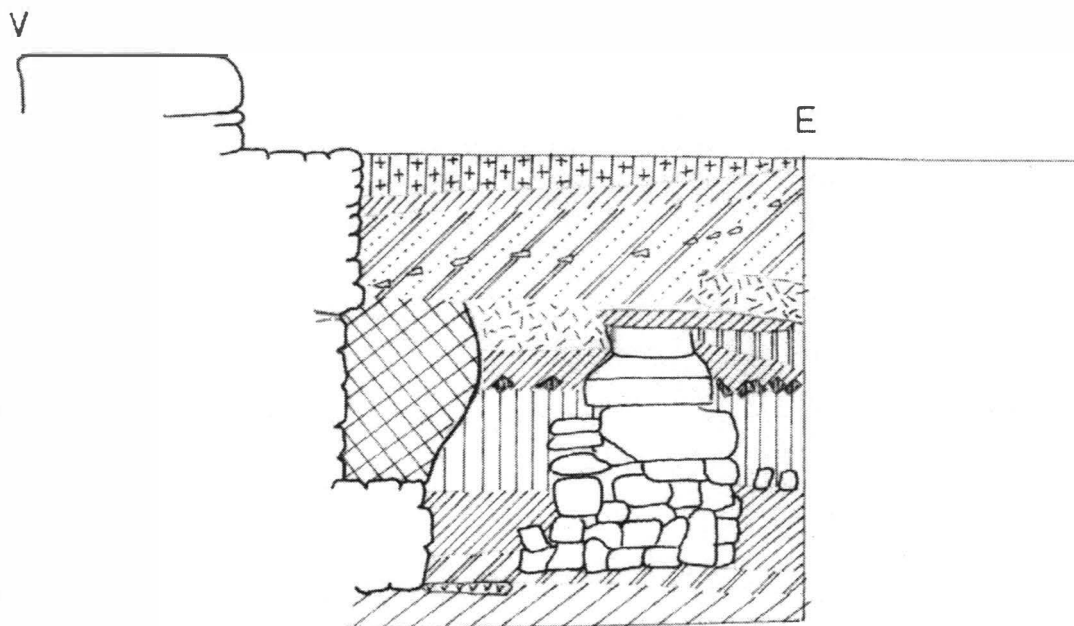


Fig. 15. Profile of the section in the narthex (S XXV); the base of column c N3.

The surface of the basilica is likely to have been delineated by a *temenos*, which was very common in the Constantinian period. A baptistery was built in this area, to the southwest of the basilica (Fig. 18). At the level dated on the basis of 4th century material, the baptistery only had two rooms, approximately equal in size, and it must have been entered from the southern room (Fig. 10). In the northern room there was an apse embedded within the eastern wall. The eastern wall of the nave has a foundation of 2 m deep. The foundation was

excavated down to the virgin soil, going past the layer of brown soil, which contained several early Roman ceramic fragments.

The substructure of the apse included a channel which supplied water to the *piscina* and a niche, which was in an advanced state of decay almost a century after it was first revealed. Only the foundation of the basin was preserved, and only its western half, but its quadrilobate plan can be reconstituted perhaps on the square area (Fig. 19).



Fig. 16. Image of the section east-west in the pronaos base column c N 3.

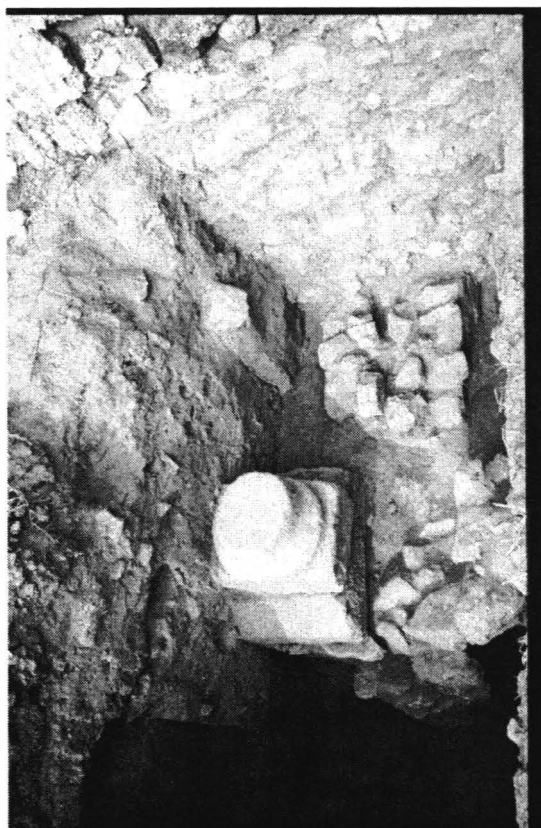


Fig. 17. Image of the section S XVIII in the south nave of the pronaos, base of column c N 2.

The probes²² in the narthex revealed the existence of a wall, 3 m west of the basilica, parallel to the western side of the *naos*. The wall, 63 cm wide, is made of stone and soil and it breaks off in front of the entrance to the central nave of the *naos*. The precarious state of the foundation indicates the existence of only one colonnade in front of the entrance to the *naos*. It can be assumed that this is a stylobate for a larger propylon. The column base (c N 1) discovered in S XVIII would be part of this propylon. It is only for stratigraphic reasons that we can consider this moment as part of phase N IV B, dated Theodosius II²³.



Fig. 18. The baptistery, photograph taken at the beginning of the XXth century, after BCMI, IV, 1911.



Fig. 19. The piscina view from the east.

²² We made four probes perpendicular to the long side of the narthex: two in 1984 and another two in 1992, meant to complete the data we did not consider relevant. In fact, it would have been preferable to perform surface digs in this area in order to have certainties, not hypotheses.

²³ K. Dimitrov, „*Novae* on the Low Danube as Early Christian Centre (5-6 century A.D.)”, paper presented at The XII Internationaler Kongress für Christliche Archäologie, Bonn, 1991 – a restauration phase of the city after Huns attacks, an the built of the cathedral.

The narthex was built in the form we know today at a later phase, at the end of the 5th century – the beginning of the 6th century (N V). It is divided into three areas with massive pilasters on both the eastern and the western walls. The size of these pilasters makes us believe that they supported vaults. On the southern side, the narthex had an entrance and it had also a propylon.

An *atrium* (Fig. 20) with porticoes on three sides was built in the same time with the narthex. Between the narthex and the atrium there still was a ground level difference, so that they communicated through a wide central staircase and two staircases corresponding to the lateral porticoes. This phase of the *atrium* functioned 60 cm below the current level and the porticoes were also open to the exterior. Above the foundations, the porticoes had a quarry stone elevation. We only have data from a probe carried out in the northern portico and we cannot know what was there before the atrium was built. There might have been a timber building from which we recovered a pillar pit. The southern portico was entered from the courtyard of the baptistery, and the western one from a street parallel to the city wall. The probe on the northern side of the northern portico revealed a subsequent rebuilding of the latter. The northern portico opened into a 4.30 m wide street, bordered by a building which has not been yet investigated and opened into the street through a 1.4 m wide gate. The threshold of the entrance is at the same level as the foundation plate of the northern wall of the portico. The street might have been paved with stone slabs, two of which were discovered on a 70 × 70 cm area near the northern wall. It must be mentioned that this entire area was excavated at the beginning of the 20th century and we only cleared the recent deposits. Only a small area in the northwestern corner was untouched by the previous excavations and we discovered a fragment of a pot decorated with a band of horizontal and wavy lines, and the fragmented bottom of an inscribed glass vessel.



Fig. 20. Image of the atrium, view from the east, channel which served the phiala.

When the radical reconstruction took place (Phase III) at the end of the 5th century and the beginning of the 6th, three rooms were built east of the basilica. They were the size of the three naves of the basilica and were used as *pastophoria*. Later, the apse was redone “à épaulement”. The foundations deepened a little in relation to the level at which they were built, at the same time; the room behind the apse is divided by two columns (or three as in the plan published by V. Pârvan²⁴), probably for consolidation purposes. Unfortunately, G. von Cube excavated down to the construction level of the walls of these rooms and removed the stratigraphic deposits. The existence of the column base (Fig. 21) at a much higher level than the one trodden today, gives us reason to attribute it to the last construction phase of the basilica, (phase III 1), the one Pârvan stated and which we can date after the destruction described by Theophilactus Simocatta. From what we discovered, from an archaeologist’s perspective, without the necessary knowledge to assess

²⁴ BCMI IV, 1911, fig.20.

the likelihood of this hypothesis from an architectural point of view, we note that the apse wall was destroyed down to a very low level. It is possible that this massive destruction took place during the Avar attack and the apse was never rebuilt. The wall is below the level of the column bases that G. von Cube discovered which are only 1.5 m away from the apse wall and 1 m from the eastern wall of the central room to the east of the basilica. If the apse ceased to exist, it could simply mark (it could serve as a *synthronon*) the section reserved to the altar in a rectangular area where there was a deambulatory marked by the columns, which suggest a circular arc.

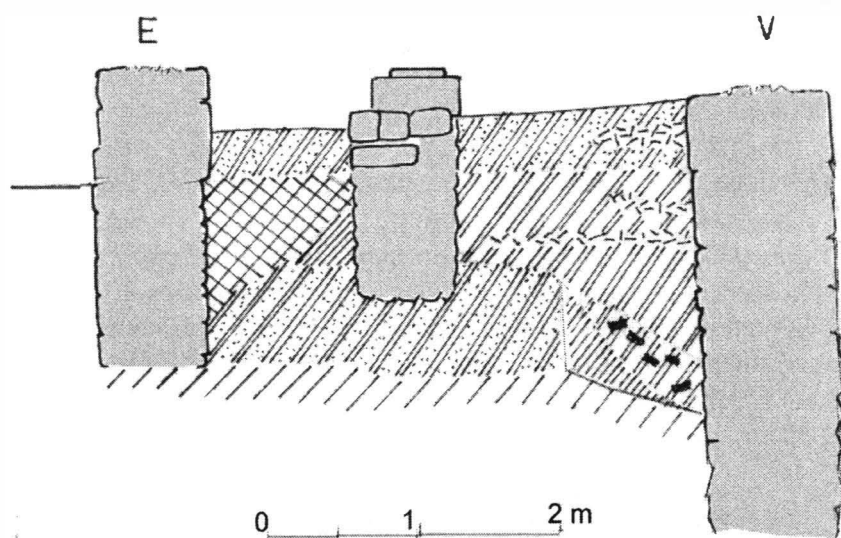


Fig. 21. Profile of the section S XVI in the central room built east from the absis.

The stratigraphy in the baptistery area is different from the one in the area of the marble basilica. We investigated the stratigraphy in the eastern, southern and western areas of the baptistery and inside the three rooms.

In the perpendicular probe (Fig. 22) on the eastern side of the northern nave of the baptistery - S IV - we only discovered three levels datable to the Roman-Byzantine period, over the early Roman brown soil. This is also confirmed by the survey in tower T 13. Here it was a non-built space.

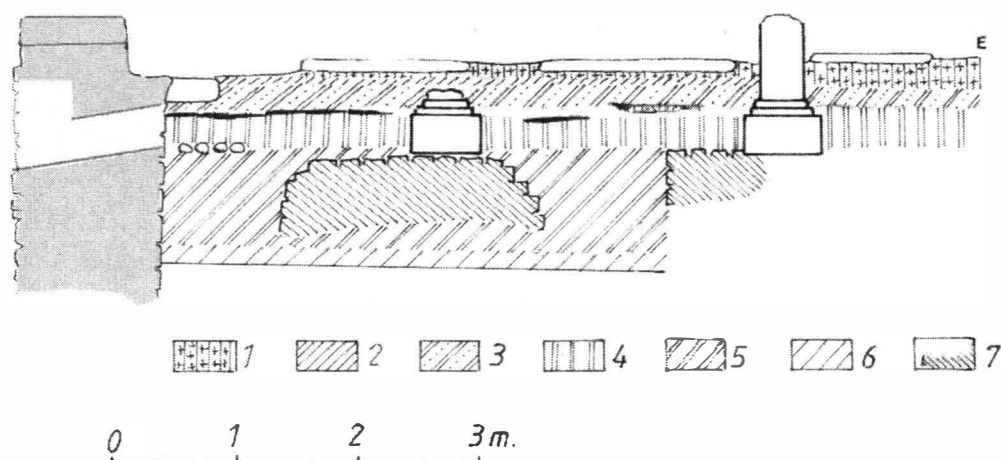


Fig. 22. Profile north of the section S IV, 1984.

The foundations of the baptistery are set in a 0.7 m thick dark brown layer over the virgin soil, with few Roman ceramic materials from the 1st-3rd century AD.

Above this layer there is a construction level defined by ceramic material from the 4th century²⁵. The first phase of the baptistery (11.1 × 6.4 m), its long side oriented north south, was built at the level represented by a layer of mortar and carved stone. Only the foundations are preserved (1.4 m wide in the northern room and only 1.1 m wide in the southern one and 1.9 m deep), which were used in the rebuilding of the baptistery in its current form, from quarry stone bound with mortar. A first nave to the north covered an area of 3.5 × 3.5 m, while the surface of the second room, a vestibule, was of 3.8 × 3.8 m. The massive walls (1.35 m wide) of the square northern room suggest the existence of a vault²⁶.

There were two column bases at this level outside the baptistery – one of their spindles remained *in situ* CV 1, published (BV5C1) in the monography²⁷, with observations concerning its role in the structure of the street porticoes in this area. The second column base C V2 is 2.7 m away from the eastern wall of the baptistery, and the interaxis of the columns is of 2.7 m as well. In the 4th century, the street must have been approximately 8 m wide. Column CV2 seems to be in the corner of the porticoes of the two perpendicular streets. The baptistery was built at the top of the street which ascended from *via principalis*. It was reduced in the 5th or 6th century, at the latest, to only 2.1 m when a series of stone and clay buildings were erected. The row of columns is 6 m south of the marble basilica and it is parallel to it. As a conclusion to the observations already made, we can confirm the existence of a portico, which functioned in the N IV level, represented by a thick stone slab pavement. Only one of the slabs was preserved in the immediate vicinity of the eastern wall of the baptistery. It is important that in the first phase, I, the building also functioned as a *baptisterium*, as under the treading level there was a channel (Fig. 23) which supplied water to a cruciform baptismal font (Fig. 19).

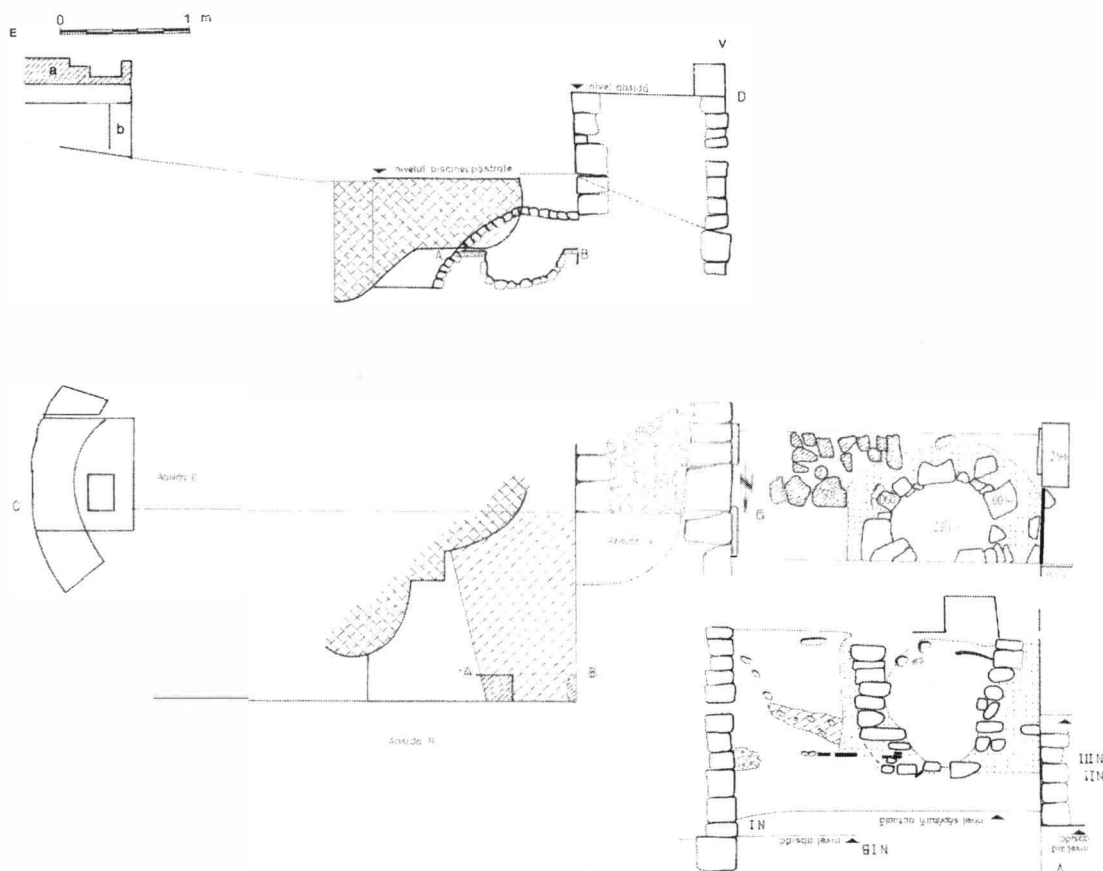


Fig. 23. Plan and profile of the east-west section over the north nave of baptistery and the space in the west of it.

²⁵ It must be emphasized that this probe also revealed an extremely small amount of ceramic material – proof of the fact that we are not within a living space.

²⁶ The same opinion: Sp.Cegăneanu, BCMI IV, 1911, 193.

²⁷ M. Monica Mărgineanu Cârstoiu, Al. Barnea in *Tropaeum Traiani, Cetatea I*, 1979, 121, fig. 105.

Level phase I was at a maximum of 5 cm below the current treading level, given the thickness of the slabs replaced with the current ones. At level II there was a street portico (?) comprising columns, C VI and C V 2, which had already been used in the previous level.

In the initial phase, an apse was built in the eastern wall of the northern room of the baptistery, recognizable by the opening of the arch carved in block (a on **Fig. 23**) still preserved *in situ*.

A smaller niche was built at an inferior level, embedded within the eastern wall. Its opening was circumscribed to the arch of the apse. At the time we restarted the investigation of the baptistery, the smaller apse was already difficult to recognize, as the mortar had deteriorated and the fallen stones had been removed. We supposed its existence based on the recovery of a stone block (b on **Fig. 23**) with a suitable arch for such a niche. This block was 30 cm tall. The water channel (**Fig. 24**) was inscribed in the semicircular recess. Its section was of 30 × 30 cm and 75 cm of its length to the east have been preserved. The falling slope towards the basin is visible within the wall to the west. In the reconstruction of the baptistery, S. Cegăneanu supposed²⁸ the existence of a baptismal font for whose drainage the channel had been built. The completion of the investigation invalidated this hypothesis. The channel comes from the east and the water came through an aqueduct, which probably disappeared in the 6th century. At the level preserved today, there is a slab (a) in the eastern apse with a 10 cm deep 25 × 25 m hole in which a stone pillar was placed, against the wall of the apse. It was probably the leg of a *mensa*.

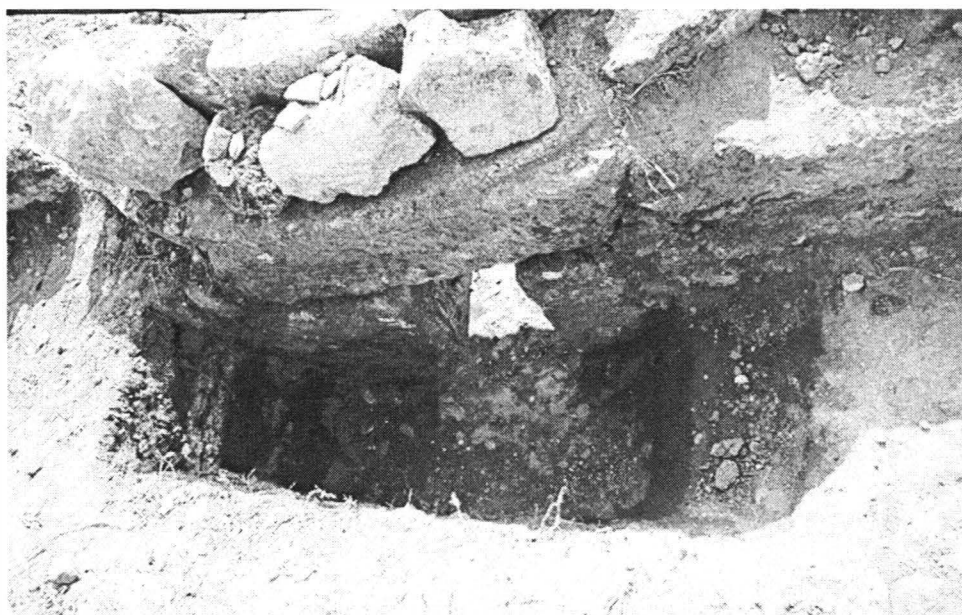


Fig. 24. The aqueduct channel in the eastern wall of the baptistery, view from the east.

The baptismal font was used during two phases, after which it was destroyed and probably replaced with a baptismal font that we have not discovered. A “hiatus” can be seen in the structure of the western wall of the baptistery, with a 40 cm level difference between the eastern and the western sides of the wall. This anomaly in the structure of the wall can only be explained by reconstruction, after the basin was abandoned and a drainage pipe for the baptismal water was no longer necessary. In the north-western corner of the room, in the free area near the basin we discovered a sort of “channel” built in small stone. The space was closed with an arched lid, from the same type of stone. Everything is bound with clay. (**Fig. 24**) We cannot say which one of the two drainage systems functioned in the first sub-phase of basin use and which in the second. The basin was demolished in antiquity. The font was used during two phases. It was taken out of use by a pit which was observed immediately under the level of the northern and western apse, which transformed the northern nave into a trilobate area, probably in Anastasius’ or Justinian’s period.

²⁸ BCMI IV 1911, 180 fig 25.

The foundations of the basin were destroyed by a deep pit which we cleared, discovering fragments of marble spindles, stones from the smaller apses which existed in the last phase embedded within the wall between the northern and the central naves. All these deposits are of recent date, as in the photograph published by V. Pârvan the apses in the southern wall of the northern nave were very well preserved at the time of G. von Cube's investigation.

The preserved remains suggest that the basin had the shape of a Greek cross, more precisely four semicircles on a square. The axis of the basin measures 3 × 3 m. Only the foundations were preserved. These are not of the same depth, which suggests the existence of a deeper basin, perhaps with steps in the central square area. The foundation measures 0.8 m in the central area, and 0.6 m in the semicircular one. The first 15 cm of the foundation were made of stone without mortar. In the upper area, with lime mortar, there were also architectural elements from previous buildings and brick fragments.

It was probably at the time when the building spirit typical of Anastasius' and Justinian's period made itself strongly felt, that the aspect of the baptistery changed. It adapted to more sophisticated religious requirements. The baptistery building is divided into three rooms and the eastern apses are built for the first two rooms resulting from the division of the southern room. The northern nave is triconch, as apses were also embedded within the northern and western walls. The basin was abandoned, as the baptism of children²⁹ was not done by *immersio* anymore, but by *effusio*.

The probe in the southern nave revealed the stratigraphic element which sets the moment of change in the plan of the baptistery: the building of the dividing wall of the phase I southern room 30 cm above the construction level for the entire building. The wall was implanted by digging a foundation pit 20-30 cm wider at this level, for which there are no absolute dating elements. We noted that in the northern nave, the northern and western apse of the triconch³⁰ were built at the level at which the basin was dismantled.

The baptistery was rebuilt for the last time after massive destruction and fire, datable to the 6th century. It appears to have been demolished then, at least in the southeastern area, where burning traces are still visible under the stones in the apse's wall, at the treading level.

Therefore, our observations concur with G. von Cube's. The dating of the three phases in basilica B is slightly different from that proposed by V. Pârvan³¹. We believe that the beginning of the basilica must be set before the middle of the 4th century AD. As it was well observed³², the marble basilica is the first basilica in *Tropaeum*, built in the Constantinian period. The main outcome of our research is the certainty that the baptistery was built at the same time as the Constantinian basilica and it reinforces our belief that, in this oriental province too, bishoprics developed on the existing administrative, municipal structures. The existence of the municipal center, which developed into a strong Constantinian city, allows³³ us to state the existence of several bishops in *Scythia Minor*³⁴. The one in Tomis was probably recognized as metropolitan from the very beginning.

The destruction of the city by the Goths in Valens' period was not revealed in *Tropaeum Traiani*, therefore we cannot assume that the first rebuilding of the basilica might have been caused by possible destruction. The only massive destruction identified in the area of the marble basilica is of a later date, post Justinian II, probably the Avar destruction Theophilactus says ended life in *Tropaeum*. All our researches so far show beyond any doubt that the Avar attack did not cause the city to be abandoned. The city continued to be rebuilt and the marble basilica existed at least until *civitas Tropaeum* would gradually be abandoned by its inhabitants as a consequence of the fall of the "limes" and because of the disappearance of the imperial power³⁵, which had ensured a poorer but nevertheless still urban way of life.

²⁹ Augustinus.

³⁰ Anna Gattiglia, „L'Architecture symbolique de l'époque de Justinien dans les Balkans et la Région Danubienne“, paper presented at the *XIII Congressus Internationalis Archaeologiae Christiana* I, Split, 1994.

³¹ *Ibidem*, 181.

³² V. Pârvan, *loc cit*.

³³ I. Bogdan Cătănciu, „Notes sur l'évolution architecturale de la basilique de marbre de *Tropaeum Traiani*“, in *Akten des XII Internationalen Kongresses für Christliche Archäologie, Bonn, 1991, Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* Ergänzungsband 20/1, 1995, 578-586, pl. 71.

³⁴ Only for a later period - Emilian Popescu, „Contributions à la géographie historique de la péninsule Balkanique aux V-VIII siècles de n. e.“, *Dacia* NS 13, 1969, 412; I. Barnea, *DID* II, 1968, 458-459, 471; my opinion in *loc. cit.* 584-585.

³⁵ I. Barnea, *DID*, 1968, 416-438.

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