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Any correspondence will be sent to the editor:

Museum Arad

Piata George Enescu 1, 310131 Arad, RO

e-mail: ziridava2012@gmail.com

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Preliminary Data Regarding the Archaeological Research Performed between 2016 and 2019 at the Cistercian Abbey in Igrış/Egres, Timiș County*

Daniela Tănase, Balázs Major

Abstract: In 2016 started the archaeological research at one of the most important monastic foundations in the Medieval Kingdom of Hungary, the Cistercian abbey in Igrış/*Egres*, Timiș County. The main goals of the research were identifying the abbey church, establishing the general stratigraphy of the site, and discovering the location of the royal tombs.

King Andrew II, who reigned between 1205 and 1235, was the abbey's greatest benefactor. According to the written sources, queen Yolanda of Courtenay was buried in *Egres* abbey in 1233 and king Andrew II in 1235.

In the western foreground of the church abbey crossing the robust foundation of two pillars of the nave were excavated. Both the northern and the southern pillar base had a rectangular brick structure attached to it from the direction of the centre of the nave. These structures are the foundation of a *tumbas* construction. The southern one (discovered in 2016) must have been the burial site of queen Yolanda and Andrew II was buried in the superstructure of the northern *tumba* (discovered in 2019).

In 2016 and 2017 was excavated a "mass grave" that contained numerous human skeletons, fragmentarily preserved, mixed with various objects including coins that can be dated to the twelfth-thirteenth centuries. All of these artifacts, deposited on top of each other, indicate an attempt to remove the remains of a disaster that had struck the abbey. The violent event that triggered this deposition was most likely the 1241 Mongol invasion that also affected the abbey of *Egres*, as attested by the written sources.

A remarkable result of the excavations performed in 2019 was the discovery of the traces of a church that was older than the church of the monastery founded in 1179. The excavation revealed a church with a rectangular nave provided with a small niche on the northern side and the nave ending in a semicircular apse to the east. Burials were performed inside and outside the older church during its period of use, as indicated by the discovery of brick cist-graves. This older church can be likely dated to the eleventh century and was probably a parish church that served several villages.

Keywords: archaeological research; Middle Age; Cistercian church; 11th century church; royal tombs; Mongol invasion.

Preserved written sources attest that the abbey in Igrış/*Egres*, dedicated to the Virgin, was founded in 1179 as *filia* of the Cistercian Abbey in Pontigny (France) by King Béla III of Hungary (1172–1196)¹. During the 13th century it became one of the most important monastic foundations in the Medieval Kingdom of Hungary². King Andrew II, who reigned between 1205 and 1235, was the abbey's greatest benefactor. During his reign the abbey reached a peak of development³. Both King Andrew II and his second wife, Yolanda of Courtenay, chose to be buried there, an understandable choice considering their attachment to the Cistercian abbey in *Egres*. According to the written sources, Queen Yolanda of Courtenay was buried in *Egres* abbey in 1233 and King Andrew II in 1235⁴.

Considering the significance of this monastic institution to medieval archaeology and history systematic archaeological research was initiated there with the goal of discovering the ruins of the Cistercian abbey and the location of the royal tombs. These researches were the result of an international collaboration between the National Museum of Banat in Timișoara and the Institute of Archaeology of the Pázmány Péter Catholic University in Budapest.

One should mention the fact that the two institutions had already cooperated in 2013 in

* Translated by: Ana Maria Gruia.

¹ Bácsatyai 2015, 263–267.

² Juhász 1927, 73; Romhányi 1994, 201.

³ Juhász 1927, 75.

⁴ Bácsatyai 2015, 285.

performing geophysical research that have led to the identification of the abbey ruins in the north-eastern part of the village of Igriş, on a plot that the villagers called *La Ofer*, after the name of one of its former owners⁵.

The archaeological research. The research performed in the summer of 2016⁶ aimed at confirming the results of the geophysical research, identifying the abbey church, and establishing the general stratigraphy of the site. The team has set three trenches measuring 5x5 m each, corresponding to the topographic ground plan grid, and labeled C1, D1 and D2. They were located in that part of the garden where archaeologists presumed that the area west of the abbey church transept was to be found based on the geophysical research. The archaeological excavations validated the results of the geophysical prospections and led to the identification of the church of the Cistercian abbey (Fig. 1). They also led to the discovery of the foundation of a *tumba* construction attached to the northern side of one of the pillars dividing the southern aisle and the nave.

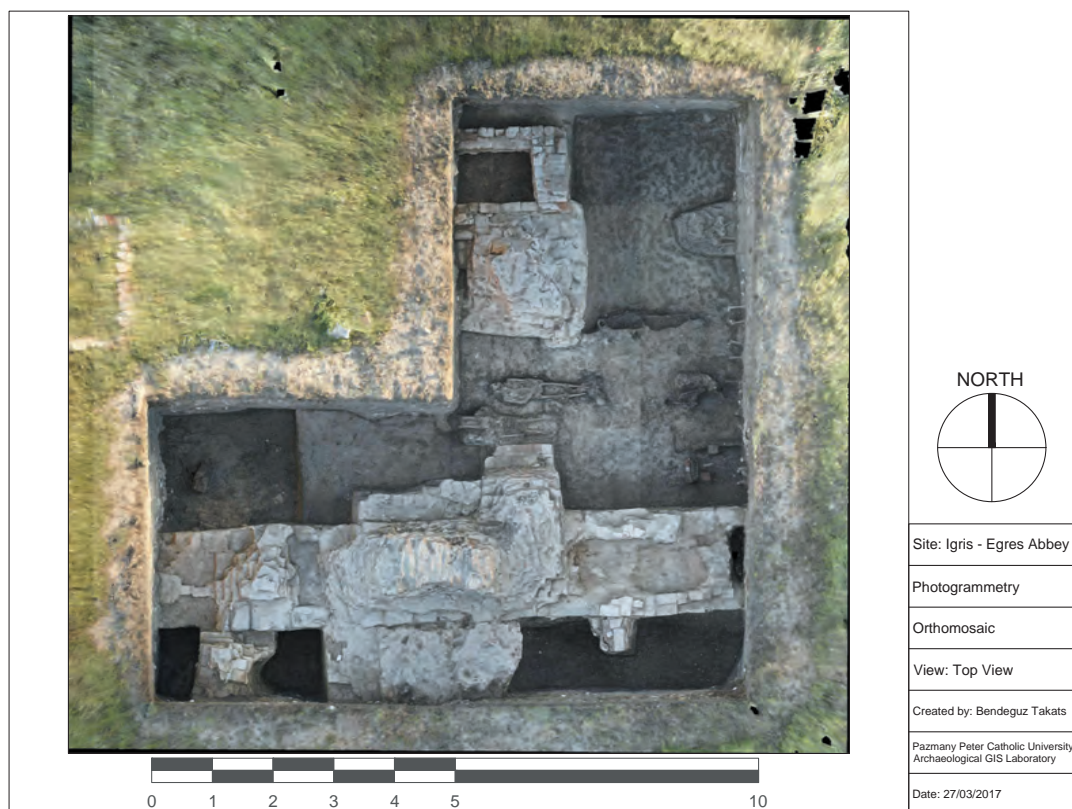


Fig. 1. Orthomosaic of the 2016 excavations.

In 2017⁷ the research aimed at continuing the investigation of the abbey church, but also at completing the research of a “mass grave” attesting to the destruction of the Mongol invasion from 1241. We had discovered the pit containing the bones of the victims in 2016. A trench measuring 5x5 m was marked out, corresponding to the topographic plan grid and labeled D3. Trench D3 was adjacent to the west to trench D2 excavated in 2016. The latter was re-excavated over a segment measuring 5x2 m down to the depth where the “mass grave” had been dug during the previous year, namely to 2.60 m under the current ground level (Fig. 2).

⁵ For the geophysical researches performed in 2013 and the history of research of the abbey in Igriş, see: Tănase *et al.* 2017, 229–240.

⁶ A brief report on the excavations performed in 2016 was published in the *Cronica Cercetărilor Arheologice din România* series: Tănase *et al.* 2017a, 66–68, Pl. 1–5.

⁷ A brief report on the excavations performed in 2017 was published in the *Cronica Cercetărilor Arheologice din România* series: Tănase, Rétfalvi 2018, 48, 313–316.



Fig. 2. General view, drone photograph, trenches D2/2016 and D3/2017.

After a one-year break, the field research was resumed in 2019⁸ with the goal of extending the excavations towards the transept of the church in order to identify the location of King Andrew II's tomb and of extending the research area outside the church, south of it, into the cloister area. The team opened three trenches, adjacent to the south to trenches D1/2016, D2/2016, D3/2017, labeled E1, E2, and E3. Trenches E1 and E2 measured 5x5 m, while trench E3 measured 6x5 m. We have also uncovered trench D3 that was not entirely researched in 2017. Two more trenches were opened, labeled A1 and B1, continuing trenches C1/2016 and D1/2016. The southern side of trench B1 was tangent to trench C1/2016. Trenches A1 and B1 measured 5x5 m (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3. Orthomosaic of the 2016–2019 excavations.

⁸ A brief report of the excavations performed in 2019 has been published in the *Cronica Cercetărilor Arheologice din România* series: Tănase *et al.* 2020, 167–173.

The general stratigraphy of the site. The following observations could be made regarding the stratigraphy: the archaeologically sterile layer consists of yellowish-gray clay, identified in all researched areas at the depth of –2.45 m below the current ground level. Above the sterile layer, team members have noted the first layer of habitation in the perimeter of the abbey, dated to the Bronze Age – the Mureş Culture, consisting of blackish-gray color clayish soil, containing pottery fragments, animal bones, and pigment or small adobe clusters. This layer had been disturbed by the habitation layer dated to the 11th–12th centuries that consisted of dark gray soil with adobe pigment, clayish in structure. The corresponding layer of the 11th–12th centuries was overlapped / cut by the church construction layer and consists of clayish soil, blackish-gray in color, with pigments of adobe, mortar, and brick.

Skeletons of children and adults were found inside the church in all of the researched trenches, at the depth of 1.30–1.40 m below the current ground level, in a layer of gray soil mixed with brick and mortar pigments. The skeletons were oriented W-E and some were dated by coins issued during the 14th–15th centuries. The layer in which they were found reached down to –2.25 m. The burial level of the skeletons was overlapped by floor construction levels. A compact layer of yellowish sand featured at the depth of 1.2 m below the current ground level, on top of which bricks had been set. Yellowish sandstone slabs were also preserved in some areas. Burnt layers were found above the floor, measuring ca. 3–4 cm in thickness, reddish and black in color, overlapped by modern layers and pits with debris from the demolition of the walls and the extraction of the walls down to the foundation that took place during the Modern Era. The vegetal layer measured ca. 0.2 – 0.3 m and at the border between trenches D1 and D2 it rested directly on the wall.

Archaeological features and levels that can be connected to the destruction caused by the 1241 Mongol invasion were discovered both inside and outside the church. The soil mixed with burnt pigments contained considerable quantity of human bone fragments and artifacts. These archaeological features were located below the fourteenth–fifteenth century burial level, usually below skeletons with inventories that allow for archaeologists to date them, but there are also cases in which the layers in questions had been pierced by the grave pits.

The stratigraphy outside the church was similar to the stratigraphy inside it in the researched areas. Still, outside the church the team has also identified a habitation layer dated to a period subsequent to the abandonment of the abbey in the first half of the 16th century (when the site was converted into a fortification).

One should note the fact that both the foundations of the edifice and the graves inside the church or in the church yard cut older habitation layers: the 11th–12th centuries one, before the construction of the Cistercian abbey, and the Bronze Age one typical to the Mureş Culture.

The Bronze Age habitation level was documented at the depth of 2.10 m below the current ground level. In trench D1/2016, in the southern part of the wall oriented E-W, it consisted of two open hearths and an agglomeration of adobe⁹. This habitation level was also identified in trenches E2/2019 and E3/2019 as a culture layer featuring pottery fragments, fragmentary bronze objects, and animal bones, at the depths of 1.6 m (E3/2019) and 1.8 m (E2/2019) below the current ground level and even an agglomeration of adobe in trench E3/2019 at the depth of 1.5 m below the current ground level.

Excavating the abbey church. A brick structure that proved to be the southern wall of the abbey church nave (Fig. 4) became apparent in trench D2/2016, tangent to the south-western corner of trench C1/2016, already at the depth of 0.25 m below the current ground level. The wall, oriented east-west, had been built of brick rows connected with mortar on a foundation made of stone blocks on the margins and bricks rows in the middle connected with thick layers of solid mortar. The wall of the church measured 1.65 m in thickness and the sole of the foundation was located at the depth of 2.15 m below the current ground level.

The foundation of another wall had been attached to the foundation of the nave wall in its southern part. We presumed that this other wall belonged to the south-western wall of the church transept¹⁰, but in 2019 it turned out to be a buttress¹¹ with a brick structure attached to its eastern side, possibly the base of a flight of stairs.

⁹ These archaeological features were initially published as belonging to the habitation layer before the construction of the church, though the era was not mentioned: Tănase *et al.* 2017a, 67.

¹⁰ Tănase *et al.* 2017, 67.

¹¹ Tănase *et al.* 2020, 168.



Fig. 4. The wall of the Cistercian abbey church nave, view from the north – trench D2/2016.

Another structure made of bricks connected with mortar, semicircular in shape, was partially uncovered south of the nave wall, attached to it, at the depth of 0.95 m below the current ground level. Its function was initially difficult to identify¹², but the 2019 researches have clarified the fact that it was part of the apse of an earlier church, in use before the church of the Cistercian abbey¹³.

Part of the brick elevation and of the stone and brick foundation of a rectangular pillar as well as a rectangular brick structure that presumably functioned as the foundation of a *tumba* structure were discovered in trench C1/2016, in the western foreground of the transept, at the depth of 0.85 m below the current ground level, under a thick layer of debris (Fig. 5). This structure was leaning to the pillar on its northern side. In this trench we have identified parts of a brick floor set upon a compact layer of



Fig. 5. Pillar and rectangular brick structure – possibly the tomb of Yolanda of Courtenay (?), view from the east – trench C1/2016.

¹² Tănase *et al.* 2017, 67.

¹³ Tănase *et al.* 2020, 165–166.

sand. Glazed floor tiles were also found, but not *in situ*. Immediately to the east of the pillar the team found a dwelling with a small clay oven. The dwelling, dated to the 11th–12th centuries and containing fragments of clay cauldrons, was destroyed by the foundation of the pillar.

As a result of the discovery of the church nave wall in trench D2/2016 we have opened to the east trench D1/2016, adjacent to the southern part of trench C1/2016. The aim was to identify the direction of the wall, but the team only found the foundation of the wall throughout the entire length of the trench. Part of a brick structure, possibly from a side altar, was discovered in the northern part of this wall.

In trench D3/2017 we have noted the fact that the southern wall of the church was demolished down to 1.65 m below the current ground level. A brick pavement was found in the outer part of the wall, south of it, at the depth of 0.90 m below the current ground level. This pavement measured 2.65 m in length and 1.2 m in width and suggests a southern entrance to the church. A kreutzer coin issued in 1800 was discovered in the debris above the pavement, 0.70 m below the current ground level, indicating the period when the walls on that side were dismantled.

A buttress perpendicular to the southern wall of the church was also found in trench D3/2017, in its south-eastern part, at the depth of 0.85 m below the current ground level. The buttress was built of bricks connected with mortar and its foundation was attached to the wall, but its elevation was only partially connected to the wall of the church (Fig. 6).



Fig. 6. The southern wall of the church, buttress and pavement from the entrance of a side door, view from the south-east – trench D3/2016.

In trenches E1/2019 and E2/2019, under the layers of debris down to the depth of 0.9 – 1 m, the team found built structures, wall imprints, floor fragments, and the imprint of a stove. In E3/2019 we found the brick base of another stove, indicating a layer of habitation subsequent to the ecclesiastic use of the abbey, most likely to be dated to the first half of the 16th century when the site became a fortress¹⁴. It is not very likely that the place was inhabited during the time Banat was under Ottoman rule, as in the autumn of 1551 beylerbey Mehmet besieged and destroyed the fortification of Egres and the village was depopulated. In 1581 only some shepherds lived among the ruins of the abbey together with their sheep¹⁵.

Foundations of two brick pillars were discovered in trench E1/2019, one of which was located in the eastern profile of the trench (Fig. 7). The trench was extended eastwards by 2.5 m in order to allow archaeologists to uncover the second pillar and a corner of the foundation of a wall was found in the

¹⁴ Bárányi 1845, 101; Borovszky 1912, 393.

¹⁵ Borovszky 1912, 397.

north-eastern corner of the trench. This might have been the south-west corner of the southern transept of the church (Fig. 8). While the foundations of the two pillars were dug into the blackish-gray clayish soil located above the sterile soil, this wall corner foundation was partially lying on soil layers mixed with brick fragments and small mortar agglomerations, the reminders of intensive human activity in this area of the structures.



Fig. 7. Pillars and wall imprint, general view from the south-west – trench E1/2019.



Fig. 8. Pillars, general view from the north-west – trench E1/2019 and its extent.

In trench A1/2019 we found the northern wall of the church and the pillar base that is suspected to be the second pillar to the west of the crossing formed by the nave and the transept. Beside the line of the wall, the foundation of the pilaster supporting a transverse arch over the northern aisle were also apparent (Fig. 9).



Fig. 9. Corner pillar and continuous foundation, general view from the south-east – trench A1/2019.

As for the excavation of the 14th–15th century burial level, in trench C1/2016 skeletons oriented W-E rather featured towards the eastern profile and in the southern part, namely south of the pillar. In trench D2/2016 skeletons oriented W-E were found north of the church nave wall, at the depth of 1.4 m. Also, skeletons oriented W-E were found in the northern part of trench D3/2017, at the depth of 1.32 m below the current ground level, inside the church. In 2017 the 14th–15th century burial level was excavated down to the depth of 1.75 m below the current ground level. The research of this trench was completed in 2019.

The layer of burials was also documented in trenches A1/2019 and B1/2019, where skeletons oriented W-E became apparent at the depth of 1.65 m below the current ground level. One should mention the fact that half of a gold coin was found in trench B1, issued by Byzantine emperor John III Vatatzes who ruled between 1222 and 1253. The discovery of this coin indicates that burials were also performed inside the church of the Cistercian abbey during the first half of the 13th century.

Evidence of the destruction caused by the 1241 Mongol invasion. A layer of disorderly placed bricks was found in trench D2, inside the southern aisle, at the depth of 1.85 m below the current ground level, under the layer of burials dated to the 14th–15th century. It proved to be the upper part of a “mass grave” that contained numerous human skeletons, fragmentarily preserved, mixed with pieces of bricks and roof tiles, stained glass, stone architectural fragments, pieces of glazed floor tiles, animal bones, pottery fragment, fragments from a crystal cup, metal items (iron, bronze), and even coins that can be dated to the twelfth-thirteenth centuries (Fig. 10). All of these artifacts, deposited on top of each other, indicate an attempt to remove the remains of a disaster that had struck the abbey. The violent event that triggered this deposition was most likely the 1241 Mongol invasion that also affected the abbey of Egres, as attested by the written sources¹⁶.

Due to the high phreatic water, in 2016 we were only able to research this mass grave pit down to the depth of 2.60 m below the current ground level – except for the western part of the feature that fell outside trench D2/2016. In trench D2/2016, the “mass grave” measured 1.9 m in length and a maximum of 1.84 m in width, but we should also mention that fact that it displayed an alveolus of ca. 0.4 m under the wall of the Cistercian abbey.

¹⁶ Izvoarele istoriei românilor 1935, 91–92.



Fig. 10. The “mass grave” dated to the 1241 Mongol invasion, view from the east – trench D2/2016.

The excavation of this archaeological feature continued during the subsequent year, so that disturbed human bones mixed with debris started to appear in the eastern part of trench D3/2017, inside the church, at the depth of 1.35 m. This was the fill of a pit for the demolition of the walls that also affected the upper part of the “mass grave”. From the depth of 1.65 m below the current ground level we excavated the western part of the “mass grave” that had not been disturbed by those who extracted the building materials there during the 19th century. In trench D3/2017 the “mass grave” measured 0.50 m in length, so that the total length of the feature was 2.4 m.

The research of the “mass grave” was continued in trench D2/2016 that was excavated again in 2017 over an area of 2x5 m down to the depth of 2.60 m below the current ground level, reaching thus the same level in section D3/2017. As we went deeper in trench D3/2017 we noticed that the pit became narrower, so that the bottom, reaching down to 3.65 m below the current ground level, was only located in trench D2/2016. We were able to reach this depth because the autumn of that year was dry and the level of the phreatic water decreased considerably. Still, the soil on the bottom of the pit was very humid.

Just like in 2016, in the “mass grave” we found fragmentary human skeletons, mixed with fragments of bricks, roof tiles, stone architectural elements, glazed floor tiles, pottery fragments from cooking pots and cauldrons, and metal items (iron, bronze, silver, gold). One should also mention the fact that the base and shaft of a small stone altar column were found, as well as the frame of a door made of massive wood, partially destroyed, with traces of burning (Fig. 11).

Archaeological layers and features that indicate the 1241 destructions have also been documented in 2019. In the extension of trench E1/2019 and in trench E2/2019 under the layer of graves dated to the 14th–15th century we discovered a pit and a soil layer that indicated a destructive event. It lay at the depth of 1.65 m below the current ground level in trench E2/2019 and at the depth of 1.9 m in trench E1/2019. The W-E oriented graves from trench E2/2019, located at the depth of ca. 1.7 m, seem to have disturbed this layer as their fill contains soil mixed with black burnt matter with fragments of bricks, roof tiles, and stone architectural fragments. Thus, the upper border of the destruction layer was located higher, possibly at the depth of 1.6–1.65 m below the current ground level. The archaeological material discovered in the gray soil mixed with a lot of coal pigment supports the hypothesis that these are traces of the disaster caused by the Mongol invasion: fragments of bricks, roof tiles, entirely and fragmentarily preserved bronze items, architectural fragments made of sandstone and red marble, pottery sherds, and fragments of burnt stained glass.



Fig. 11. The “mass grave” dated to the 1241 Mongol invasion, detail from the bottom of the pit – trench D2-D3/2017.

The 11th century church. A remarkable result of the excavations performed in 2019 was the discovery of the traces of a church that was older than the church of the monastery founded in 1179. None of the preserved written sources mention this earlier church. Parts of this building had also been noted in 2016 and 2017, but the function of the wall fragments and of the masonry imprints could only be explained in 2019 through the research of trenches E2 and E3 and the completion of the research in trench D3/2017. The excavation revealed a church with a rectangular nave provided with a small niche on the northern side and the nave ending in a semicircular apse to the east (Fig. 12).



Fig. 12. The older church, general view, drone photograph – trenches E2-E3/2019 and D3/2017.

Its construction method is especially interesting: the contours of the church's foundations had been dug into the soil and yellow clay, well rammed, was deposited in the ditches. The ground plan of the construction was therefore well visible against the gray-black soil that featured pottery fragments to be dated to the Middle Bronze Age – the Mureş Culture. The yellow clay foundation measured 0.85 m in depth and supported walls made of bricks connected with mortar. The northern half of the early church was destroyed by the wall of the Cistercian abbey church.

The fact that the wall of the church of the Egres abbey cuts the nave and the northern half of the apse indicates that the older church was already in ruins when the construction of the abbey started. At the same time, the walls of the older church were destroyed by the burials performed during the 14th and 15th centuries both inside and outside the abbey church.

Burials were performed inside the older church during its period of use, as indicated by the discovery of two brick cist-graves; one inside, the other cist-grave outside, parallel to the apse, and of several graves also located outside the building. The inner cist-graves were partially destroyed by the subsequent burials, but one of them contained part of the initially entombed body. Fragmentarily preserved human skeletons were documented in the outer cist, though it is possible that none belonged to the body originally entombed during the older church's period of use.

The cists have been constructed of bricks, those at the base thinner and rectangular in shape, while those in the walls were thicker but still rectangular in shape. The features seem to have been covered with thin square bricks placed obliquely on the margins of the walls.

One should also note the fact that the southern part of the foundation of the apse had been cut by a pit that can be connected to the destructions caused by the Mongol invasion. The pit was filled with gray soil mixed with burnt materials containing fragments of bricks and roof tiles, fragments of stained glass, and fragments from a small red marble column (Fig.13). The “mass grave” researched in 2016 and 2017 also cut the northern part of the early church apse.



Fig. 13. View from the east of a pit dated to the 1241 Mongol invasion that cuts the apse of the older church – trench E2/2019.

This older church can be likely dated to the 11th century and was probably a parish church that served several villages. It was most likely built sometime after 1030 when King Stephen I passed an edict regulating the ecclesiastic organization in the Kingdom of Hungary and decreed that every ten villages have to collaborate in building one church¹⁷. On the other hand, the construction of the church

¹⁷ Tari 2000, 235.

under discussion in Igrış might also have been influenced by St. Gerard's missionary activity. Gerard, the first bishop of Cenad, preached in the region of the Lower Mureș between 1030 and 1046¹⁸.

Churches with rectangular naves and semicircular apses were usually built of wood, but also wattle and daub or bricks, have also been discovered in the county of Pest in Hungary, dated to the 11th–12th centuries¹⁹.

The royal burials. In the western foreground of the church crossing the robust foundation of two pillars of the nave were excavated. One was brought to light in 2016 in trench C1/2016 (see Fig. 5) and the other was found to the north of it in trench B1/2019 (Fig. 14). According to the analyses of the Ground Penetrating Radar pictures and the calculations on the estimated size of the abbey church they are the pair of pillars in the nave immediately in front of the transept. Both pillar foundations had some scanty remains of the superstructure of the pillars above them and from the northern, better preserved one the area of the ground covered could be calculated as being 2.27×2.27 m with rectangular pilaster bases on each side.



Fig. 14. Pillar and rectangular brick structure – possibly the tomb of Andrew II, view from the south – trench B1/2019.

Both the northern and the southern pillar base had a rectangular brick structure attached to it from the direction of the centre of the nave. This means that the brick structure of the northern pillar was attached to it from the south and that belonging to the southern pillar from the north. Both structures were clearly of a second construction period and none were inserted at the foundation of the abbey church which is very clear from the stratigraphy and also from the fact that the upper brick courses of both were partially positioned over the pillar base. Also from the stratigraphy of the structures it is evident that none were cist-graves, having no floor inside and no burials inside. The three courses of brick set in heavy mortar were actually the foundations of medieval *tumba* constructions about 1.4 m wide with an estimated length of about 3 m. Given their position and the structure itself there is a very strong possibility that they were the foundations of the memorials erected for the royal couple. As the crossing was very likely occupied by the choir of the monks, the two pillars immediately to the west of it by the two *tumba* structures would have made it an ideal place for the royal couple. If this was the case the southern one must have been the burial site of queen Yolanda and Andrew II was buried in the superstructure of the northern *tumba*. The secondary position of the structures is

¹⁸ Roos 2017, 41–44, 61–63; 111–141.

¹⁹ Tari 2000, 250–251.

not surprising as in the time of the foundation in 1179 nobody is known to have been intending to be buried here, but from the 1220's, the numerous royal donations made it very likely that the actual monarch or at least his wife had this intention.

The *tumbas* were thus brick structures but their outside was covered by highly decorated stonework very likely of the so called 'red marble' of Süttő close to the royal capital Esztergom. Many such fragments were retrieved by the excavation in almost every trench and most of them must have belonged to the architectural decoration of the church itself. However some fragments might have belonged to the monumental graves. A red marble fragment from a three-lobed arch discovered years ago in a garden located ca. 20 m east of the later area of trench B1/2019 probably belonged to a parapet pierced by an arch. Through analogy with the fragments of the funerary monument in Pilis (attributed to Gertrude, Andrew II's first wife) one can attempt to reconstruct a parapet with a row of seven arches that could represent one of the sides of the sarcophagus, identical in length to the one in Hungary.²⁰ Some delicate fragments discovered in the "mass grave" together with the cleared destruction debris might also point their origin to such structures. Whatever was the case the stratigraphy of the northern *tumba* that lay approximately 0.8 m below the present ground level showed clearly that the stone flags of the late medieval raised floor level were slightly going over the foundations of the *tumba*'s, thus the levelled constructions were long out of use by the 15th century.

The discovered artifacts. The archaeological material discovered during the three archaeological campaigns organized so far is highly varied and significant in quantity. Thus, the team discovered architectural stone fragments (made of sandstone and red marble) that can be dated to the 12th–13th centuries, glazed ceramic floor tiles, entire or fragmentarily preserved, and an impressive quantity of bricks and roof tiles, usually in pieces.

Besides artifacts from the abbey buildings, archaeologists also found daily life items such as fragments of cooking pots, jugs, and cauldrons dated to the eleventh-thirteenth centuries, pots dated to the 14th–15th centuries, and stove tiles from the 15th century. There were also metal items of daily use: keys, blacksmith and woodwork tools, while the burial layer revealed a large quantity of iron nails and cramp-irons. Among the metal items one can also mention weapons and pieces of military equipment.

We also discovered jewelry items and dress accessories made of gold, silver, bronze and bone: lock rings, buckles, pendants, belt elements, and rings. Another significant group of items includes coins made of gold, silver, and bronze that can be dated to the 12th–16th centuries.

One should also note the fact that finds dated to the Bronze Age were also found (fragments of a bronze bracelet, pottery fragments) as well as objects dated to the Modern Era (pottery fragments, pieces of glass items, fragments from everyday objects made of iron, and coins).

Some conclusions. We believe that the excavations performed in Igrış have led to exceptional results with the discovery of the abbey church, but also the identification of new elements related to the site's history: the discovery of the church in use before 1179 and the archaeological proof of the destruction caused by the 1241 Mongol invasion previously only known from written sources.

Another praiseworthy result is the discovery of the rectangular brick structures that can be very likely connected to the royal tombs. The hypothesis is also supported by some of the architectural fragments made of red marble that have been discovered in all of the researched sections.

Significant contributions were also made to the ground plan of the Cistercian abbey (Fig. 15). The general observations based on the results of the GPR survey were proven by the excavation. The line of the northern and southern side walls were found precisely on the spot where they were indicated by the radar pictures. The same is true for the bases of the pillars that separated between the nave and the side aisles. Five pairs of them are clearly visible on the radar pictures. The rest of the "geophysical plan" is however not that clear. This is largely the result of the huge amount of debris in which it is virtually impossible to detect build structures between the huge quantity of fallen walls and vaults. This is especially true for the blurred radar picture the GPR provided for the apses and their immediate foreground. The unevenness of the ground combined with the dense vegetation might hinder the GPR detection on other areas, like the western end of the church.

²⁰ Regarding the three-lobed red marble arch fragment, see Móri Heitel 2010, 59–60.

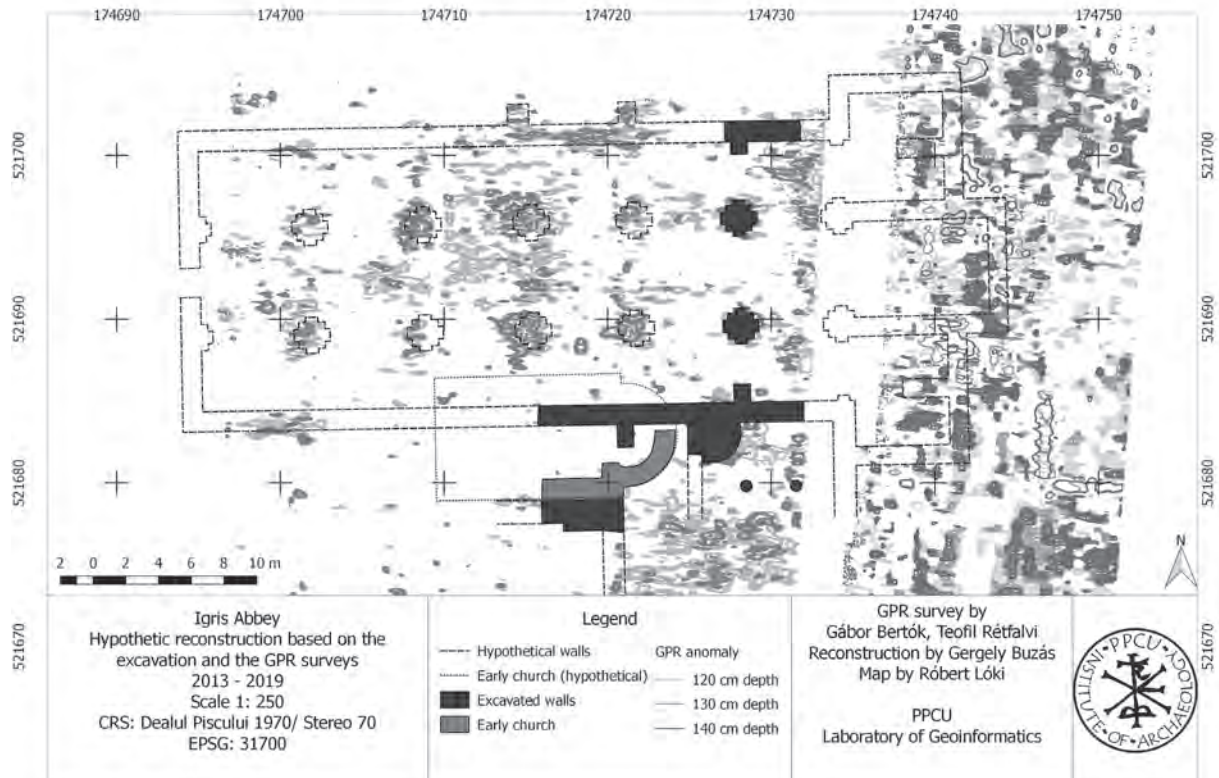


Fig. 15. Hypothetical reconstruction of the Cistercian abbey based on the excavations and the GPR surveys 2013–2019.

If one starts from the logical assumption that by the second half of the 12th century, a royal funded Cistercian monastery that was founded by monks directly coming from Pontigny might follow the mostly conventional Cistercian plan, then the apses of the monastery are ought to be preceded by a transept and their eastern ends closed by straight walls. This has to be decided by the excavations planned in the area of the apses that are covered by a modern public road. The excavated remains proved that the church had an interior width of 15.8 m, with the nave being 7.2 m and the side aisles 4.3 m wide as measured from the centre of the pillars. As both the eastern and the western ends of the church are rather uncertain, we can only guess that the total length was more than 45 m.

Even less is known about the monastery buildings from which just a few fainted wall lines can be deciphered on the GPR survey pictures and only fragments were touched by the excavations. Further excavation works are needed to demarcate the southern end of the hall partially excavated to the south of the church by trenches D1/2019 and E1/2019. The massive foundations and the lower parts of two circular pillars found in this area indicate a building which immediately adjacent to the nave and transept could have been the sacristy of the abbey church. However its precise extension towards the south and the east is still a question.

A fragment of a wide foundation made of bricks connected with mortar, parallel to the southern wall of the older church, became apparent in trench E3. Although it might have been the outer façade of the cloister the final proofs are still to be waited for.

Thus, the archaeological research fit both the written sources regarding the Cistercian abbey in Igris and the results of the geophysical survey performed in the autumn of 2013. The built structures and the discovered artifacts point to the monumental character of the abbey complex and to the daily life inside its walls and they suggest a mix of monastic austerity and royal pomp.

Daniela Tănase

National Museum of Banat, Timișoara
Timișoara, ROU
danielaetanase@yahoo.com

Balázs Major

Institute of Archaeology of the
Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Budapest
Budapest, HU
balazs.major.hu@gmail.com

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Abbreviations

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| ActaArchHung | Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae. |
| AAC | Acta Archaeologica Carpathica, Cracow. |
| ActaMN | Acta Musei Napocensis, Cluj-Napoca. |
| ActaMP | Acta Musei Porolissensis, Zalău |
| AnArchRessoviensia | Analecta Archaeologica Ressoviensia, Rzeszów. |
| AAS at CEU | Annual of Medieval Studies at CEU, Budapest. |
| Apulum | Acta Musei Apulensis – Apulum, Alba-Iulia. |
| Alba Regia | Alba Regia, Székesfehérvár. |
| Antaeus | Antaeus, Budapest. |
| Arrabona | Arrabona, Győr. |
| ArhMed | Arheologia Medievală, Cluj-Napoca, Brăila, Reșița. |
| ArchBaltica | Archaeologia Baltica, Vilnius. |
| Arch.Inf | Archäologische Informationen. |
| ATS | Acta Terrae Septemcastrensis, Sibiu. |
| ArchÉrt | Archaeologiai Értesítő, Budapest. |
| Banatica | Banatica, Reșița. |
| BBMÉ | A Béni Balogh Ádám Múzeum Évkönyve, Szekszárd. |
| BUFM | Beiträge zur Ur- und Frühgeschichte Mitteleuropas. |
| BCMI | Buletinul Comisiei Naționale a Monumentelor, ansambluri situri istorice. București. |
| CommArchHung | Communicationes Archaeologicae Hungaricae, Budapest. |
| CCA | Cronica Cercetărilor Arheologice, Comisia Națională de Arheologie, București. |
| CIL | Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum, Berlin. |
| CMA | Complexul Muzeal Arad. |
| Dolgozatok | Dolgozatok az Erdélyi Múzeum érem- és régiségtárából, Cluj. |
| Dolg. | Dolgozatok a Magyar Királyi Ferencz József Tudományegyetem Archaeologiai Intézetéből, Szeged. |
| Dolg. ÚS | Dolgozatok az Erdélyi Múzeum Érem- és Régiségtárából, Új Sorozat. Cluj-Napoca / Kolozsvár. |
| EphNap | Ephemeris Napocensis, Cluj-Napoca. |
| HOMÉ | A Hermann Ottó Múzeum Évkönyve. Miskolc. |
| JAHA | Journal of Ancient History and Archaeology, Cluj-Napoca. |
| JAM | Jósa András Museum, Nyíregyháza. |
| JPMÉ | Janus Pannonius Múzeum Évkönyve. |
| JRGZM | Jahrbuch des Romisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums, Mainz. |
| KRRMK | Kaposvári Rippl Rónai Múzeum Közleményei, Kaposvár. |
| LMI | Lista monumentelor istorice, updated in 2015. |
| MittArchInst | Mitteilungen des Archäologischen Instituts der Ungarischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. |
| MOL | Magyar Olaj- és Gázipari Részvénytársaság / Hungarian Oil and Gas Public Limited Company |
| Marisia | Marisia, Târgu Mureș. |
| NyJAMÉ | A nyíregyházi Jósa András Múzeum Évkönyve, Nyíregyháza. |
| PBF | Praehistorische Bronzefunde. Berlin. |
| Przegląd Archeologiczny | Przegląd Archeologiczny, Wrocław. |
| Rad | Jósa András Museum, Archaeological Archive |
| RégFüz | Régészeti Füzetek, Budapest. |

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| RKM | Régészeti Kutatások Magyarországon/Archaeological Investigations in Hungary, Budapest. |
| RAJ Arad | Repertoriul Arheologic al Mureşului Inferior. Judeţul Arad. Timişoara 1999. |
| RAN | Repertoriul Arheologic Naţional. |
| Sargetia | Sargetia. Acta Musei Devensis, Deva. |
| SCIV(A) | Studii şi Cercetări de Istorie Veche şi Arheologie, Bucureşti. |
| SGB | Studii de Geografie a Banatului, Timişoara. |
| SIB | Studii de Istorie a Banatului, Timişoara. |
| Slavia Antiqua | Slavia Antiqua, Poznań. |
| SlovArch | Slovenská Archeológia, Nitra. |
| SMK | Somogyi Múzeumok Közleményei, Kaposvár. |
| SovArh | Sovetskaja Arheologija, Moskva. |
| SRTM | Shuttle Radar Topography Mission. |
| StudiaUBB Historia | Studia UBB Historia, Cluj-Napoca. |
| SzKMÉ | A Szántó Kovács Múzeum Évkönyve, Pécs. |
| Századok | Századok, Budapest. |
| Terra Sebus | Terra Sebus. Acta Musei Sabesiensis, Sebeş. |
| Tibiscum S. N. | Tibiscum S. N., Caransebeş. |
| TransRev | Transylvanian Review, Cluj-Napoca. |
| ZalaiMúz | Zalai Múzeum, Zalaegerszeg. |
| ZSA | Ziridava. Studia Archaeologica. Arad. |
| Živa Antika | Živa Antika, Skopje. |