

ZIRIDAVA
STUDIA ARCHAEOLOGICA

34

2020

MUSEUM ARAD



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34
2020

Editura MEGA
Cluj-Napoca
2020

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In Romania, the periodical can be obtained through subscription or exchange, sent as post shipment, from Museum Arad, Arad, Piata G. Enescu 1, 310131, Romania.

Tel. 0040-257-281847.

ZIRIDAVA STUDIA ARCHAEOLOGICA

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Layout: Francisc Baja, Florin Mărginean, Victor Sava

ISSN 2392-8786



EDITURA MEGA | www.edituramega.ro
e-mail: mega@edituramega.ro

Contents

Emil Grigorescu Middle Neolithic at Oradea-Salca “Pepinieră”.....	7
Ana Fetcu, Alina Bințișan, Mihai Gligor An Early Eneolithic isolated non-adult burial from Alba Iulia – <i>Lumea Nouă</i> (Romania).....	25
Alin Frînculeasa Earthen burial mounds and the Coțofeni Culture south of the Carpathians. The archaeological research in Ariceștii-Rahtivani – <i>Movila pe Răzoare</i>	35
Mária Bondár, Anna Szécsényi-Nagy Skull cult in the Late Copper Age.....	91
Tünde Horváth, Attila Botond Szilasi Salgótarján–Baglyas-kő: A multi-period prehistoric site and medieval castle.....	105
Călin Ghemiș The Bronze Age Shaft-hole Axe Discovered in Loranta, the Municipality of Brusturi, Bihor County.....	119
Sofia Bertea Preliminary analysis of the bronze age pottery from Dudeștii Vechi- <i>Cociohatul Mic</i>	125
Alexandra Găvan, Marian Adrian Lie A casting mould uncovered in the Bronze Age tell settlement from Toboliu. Notes on the origin and distribution of socketed chisels.....	157
Andrei Stăvilă, Alexandru Hegyi, Bogdan Alin Craiovan Non-invasive archaeological researches performed in the Middle Bronze Age settlement from Alioș-Valea Alioșu (Timiș County, Romania). Structures, chronology, and perspectives.....	169
Florin Gogâltan, Andrei Stăvilă The Late Bronze Age Settlement from Giroc (Timiș County). The 1992–1993 archaeological excavations	189
Ioan Cristian Cireap A spearhead discovered at Săvârșin – <i>Cetățuia</i>	243
Remus Mihai Feraru Feasts in Honor of Demeter in the Megarian Colonies on the Shores of Pontus Euxinus.....	249
Andrei-Cătălin Dișcă Roman Sites and Discoveries Around Potaissa (III). New Data and Clarifications Regarding the Topography of the Sites in Aiton.....	259
Sorin Nemeti, Ștefana Cristea New Reliefs Plaques from Pojejena (Caraș-Severin county) depicting the Danubian Riders.....	277
Igor’ Khrapunov, Anastasiya Stoyanova A Grave with Roman Imports in the Cemetery of Opushki in the Crimea.....	287
Norbert Kapcsos An attempt to reconstruct the chronology of the Roman and Early Migrations Period in the Lower Mureș Valley.....	305

Vitalie Bârcă	
Funerary Ditched Enclosures in the Sarmatian Funerary Ritual. Observations Regarding Their Introduction, Distribution, Use, and Dating.....	325
Călin Cosma	
Dwellings with Weapons from the Early Medieval Settlement in Sfântu Gheorghe (Mureş County).....	377
Melinda Takács	
Late Avar Age Sites in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County.....	411
Margareta Simina Stanc, Daniel Ioan Malaxa, Dan Băcuet-Crişan	
The Exploitation of Animal Resources During the Early Medieval Period. Case Study: The Settlements in Popeni <i>Pe Pogor</i> and Cuceu <i>Valea Bochii</i> (Sălaj County).....	431
Daniela Tănase, Balázs Major	
Preliminary Data Regarding the Archaeological Research Performed between 2016 and 2019 at the Cistercian Abbey in Igriş/Egres, Timiş County.....	439
Florin Mărginean, Tamás Emődi	
The Medieval Church in Iermata Neagră – <i>Feketegyarmat</i> (Arad County).....	455
Dan Băcuet-Crişan	
A Medieval Knight Passionate about Dice games. The Spur Decorated with “Dice” Discovered in Aghireş <i>Sub păşune</i> (Sălaj county).....	479
Andrea Demjén	
Glass Artefacts Uncovered at the Pricske Quarantine Facility (Harghita County).....	489
Calin Ghemis, Constantin Iosif Zgardan	
Oradea 1703–1710 – the Blockade Coins.....	501
Abbreviations.....	511

The Medieval Church in Iermata Neagră – *Feketegyarmat* (Arad County)*

Florin Mărginean, Tamás Emődi

Abstract: The restoration works performed over several years at the Reformed church in Iermata Neagră have allowed specialists to embark upon wall-face and preventive archaeological researches. The two archaeological campaigns performed in 2008 and 2016, as well as the analysis of the masonry structure, have led to the reconstruction of the monument's relative chronology. We have focused on the identification of the planimetry and of the medieval phases of the church, as well as on the impact of the modern reconstructions.

Since 2000 specialists have known that fragments of wall painting from the beginning of the 15th century or the beginning of the subsequent century have been preserved in the nave of the church. Before 2000 they thought that the wall paintings had been destroyed at the latest around 1889. The preserved fragments provided clear indications of the existence of remains from the medieval structure of the church, less known due to the transformations over time. We have also identified segments of the medieval foundations in the opened trial archaeological trenches. The rehabilitation works have revealed the planimetry and the volumetry of a village parish church that can now be added to an otherwise short list of medieval stone edifices researched on the territory of the present-day county of Arad.

Keywords: medieval church; Romanesque; Gothic; graves; wall painting; Iermata Neagră; Arad County.

Due to historical conditions, namely the depopulation and disappearance of hundreds of settlements, especially during the period of Ottoman occupation south of the Black Criș, only a handful of ecclesiastic buildings from the Middle Ages have been preserved on the territory of the former administrative units of Arad and Zărand. Most of these buildings are in a ruinous state, except for very few, including the Reformed church in Iermata Neagră (*Gaumad* <= *Garmad*, *Fekete Gyarmath*).

The location and the preservation of a medieval core in the structure of the parish church in Iermata Neagră were especially confirmed by the wall paintings (re)discovered in 1862 on the southern wall of the nave. Once this drawback was surpassed, the subsequent issues envisaged the planimetry of the monument and the impact of the modern interventions on the medieval phases of the church and the dimensions of the cemetery around it.

The first archaeological investigations were performed in 2008 at the Reformed church in Iermata Neagră, triggered by the necessity of consolidating and restoring the monument¹. During the first campaign, during a geotechnical study we were able to open two archaeological trial trenches on the northern and southern sides of the church, in areas where the caesuras in the monument's elevation suggested structural weakness issues. Interventions inside the church were delayed for a while due to the lack of funding. The research was only taken up again in 2016, located in the nave of the church as well, where we were allowed to excavate key-sectors that could allow for the identification of the construction phases of the medieval church².

Location. Iermata Neagră can be reached along municipal road 119 that branches off the European road E 671 (Fig. 1/4). The church is located 150 m SE of the dam on River Crișul Negru and ca. 15 m north of an old dried branch of the same river (Fig. 1). The site belongs to the geographic unit of Câmpia Crișurilor.

* Translated by: Ana Maria Gruia.

¹ The research team consisted of archaeologists George P. Hurezan (*scientific coordinator*), Florin Mărginean, Victor Sava (CM Arad), and architect Tamás Emődi. See Mărginean *et al.* 2014, 137–150.

² The research team consisted of: Florin Mărginean (*scientific coordinator*), architect Tamás Emődi, Eszter Bedő, and Britta Burkhardt (students at the UBB Cluj-Napoca).



Fig. 1. Fig. 1. 1-2. Location of the church in Iermata Neagră according to the Austrian topographic surveys (18th–19th centuries) – taken from <https://mapire.eu/en/>; 3. Location of the church according to the directory plans; 4. Location of the church according to a satellite image (taken from Google Earth).

Historical data. The village is mentioned in the work of Rogerius, a monk from Oradea, entitled *Carmen Miserabile*. Describing his journey to Cenad out of the way of the Tartar invaders, Rogerius mentions a certain *Wayda de Geroth* who found refuge, together with the population of the surrounding settlements, on a strengthened island, but he does not mention the existence of a church³ that can thus only be inferred. The parish first features in the papal tithe ledgers in 1332–1333 and 1336–1337. The written source in question mentions priests Nicholas⁴ and *Elias* (Elijah)⁵ who paid the modest sum of six groschen a year. The church was part of the arch deanery of Coleșer, in the diocese of Oradea. In 1555 the church was already considered the daughter of the Reformed parish of Zerindul Mare.

Most of the data regarding the edifice and the interventions related to its reconstruction and extension are later than the 18th century and originate in the descriptions of priest Kuthy Lajos in the Official record of the parish archive⁶. This source speaks how the parishioners took refuge in Sarkad and Salonta and the church was severely damaged after the events connected to the wars of reconquest from under the Ottoman rule, the wars led by Francisc Rákóczy II, and the desolation of the village at the hands of the Serbs who had risen in revolt. Despite the fact that the Reformed parish continued its institutional activity for a while – as the priests of the 1660–1702 period are known –, the ruinous state of the church was already mentioned in 1696⁷. The former inhabitants of the village returned around 1711, when the settlement was confiscated by the Imperial Chamber. In 1710 the vault (of the choir) was damaged and in 1724 fell. In 1743, during the time of priest Zilahi János, the walls and the ceiling were repaired and the shingles roof was replaced, while a wooden bell tower was

³ Rogerius 2006, 80, 85.

⁴ DIR C, XIV, III, 57, 60, 97.

⁵ DIR C, XIV, III, 57, 60, 97, 107, 118.

⁶ Rác 1880, 182–183.

⁷ Veress 1938, 463.

built near the church in 1766. As for the furniture of the church, the crown of the pulpit was created in 1785 and a new ceiling was set in place in 1792.

During the works performed in 1801–1804 the Gothic choir was demolished in order to make room for an extension that turned the nave into a single space and a polygonal ending. The works that also included new galleries and new furniture were performed by master Sajringer Ferenc, carpenter Mitru, and woodworker Andrásik András. The painted coffered ceiling of 1804 has not been preserved, but some fragments had been reused for the extrados of the ceiling, below the roof, and were identified during the 2015 restoration.

A new, westward extension included the demolition of the western wall of the nave and the construction, in 1818–1821, of a tower that strides the middle bay of the new vaulted gallery.

Between 1702 and 1822 the parish belonged to the Makó Deanery, and subsequently to the deanery of Salonta⁸.

The church and its frescoes in specialized literature. Renovation works performed around 1862 to the nave walls – both of them, it seems – have revealed wall paintings that have remained for a while yet covered, allowing drawing teacher Kallós Kálmán – working in Zerind and then for the gymnasium in Debrecen and Arad – two copy two of the scenes⁹. Art historian Ipolyi Arnold was thus able to indicate the existence of the vestiges to cannon priest and archaeologist Rómer Flóris. Thus, the first detailed description of the frescoes on the southern wall is included in the first positivistic repertory of medieval wall paintings in Hungary¹⁰ and they were subsequently mentioned in most of the works on the topic¹¹ starting from Kallós' copy published in the *Vasárnapi Újság* periodical and then adopted by Márki¹². The two scenes captured by Kallós in his watercolors covered an area of 6.6 × 2.3 m and depicted, according to the above-mentioned studies, Anna Selbdritt (Mettercia) and St. George slaying the dragon. Gerecze interpreted the existence of a depiction of Sf. Gheorghe as indication of the patron saint of this church, but A. A. Rusu claims that the monument was dedicated to the Virgin as indicated by one of the inscriptions preserved inside the church¹³.

As for the building of the church, it was only briefly discussed in the monographic work of A. A. Rusu and G. P. Hurezan that focuses on the architecture of the medieval churches in Arad County¹⁴. Data on the extensions of the church, corroborated with data regarding the wall paintings on the southern wall of the nave have provided sufficient argument in support of the idea – already expressed by Bunyitay Vince¹⁵ – that the middle sections of the nave's masonry preserve the vestiges of a medieval nave and thus the edifice in Iermata Neagră can be included among the few monuments of Arad that preserve medieval elements in their structure.

The wall-face research. The researches performed in 2008 and between 2015 and 2016 have led to the identification of the segments of medieval masonry included in the structure of the present-day church nave. A segment measuring 11.9 m was preserved on the northern side of the nave's wall and one that was 11.3 m long was identified on the southern wall (Fig. 2). The caesuras in the structure of both walls were not vertical, due to the fact that when the western and eastern walls of the old nave and the buttresses were demolished, none of the corners had remained intact and the new masonry work and completions were highly irregular¹⁶. The western buttresses were placed obliquely (the south-western one was not researched archaeologically, but the meeting line suggests that it was

⁸ Rácz 1880, 275–276.

⁹ Kallós' watercolor on canvas recorded in 1871 and a copy on glossy paper recorded in 1891 are preserved in the archive of the former National Monuments' Commission (MOB) in Budapest. It remains unclear if the other scenes were also visible at the time or not.

¹⁰ Rómer 1874, 108.

¹¹ Gerecze 1906, 115; Radocsay 1954, 137; Vătăşianu 1959, 412; Drăguţ 1979, 209, 262; M. Műv. I. 1987, 212; Lángi, Mihály 2002, 36–37.

¹² Márki 1892, 455. The copies were republished in *Archaeológiai Értesítő* 1892, (Száráz Antal's review) 257; Rusu, Hurezan 2000, photo 15; Emódi 2018, 71.

¹³ Rusu, Hurezan 2000, 108.

¹⁴ Rusu, Hurezan 2000, 109–111.

¹⁵ Bunyitay 1884, III, 456.

¹⁶ During the restoration works, the lines meant to suggest the caesura in the structure of the wall marking the medieval stage were rendered vertically in order to paint a clear, didactic picture.

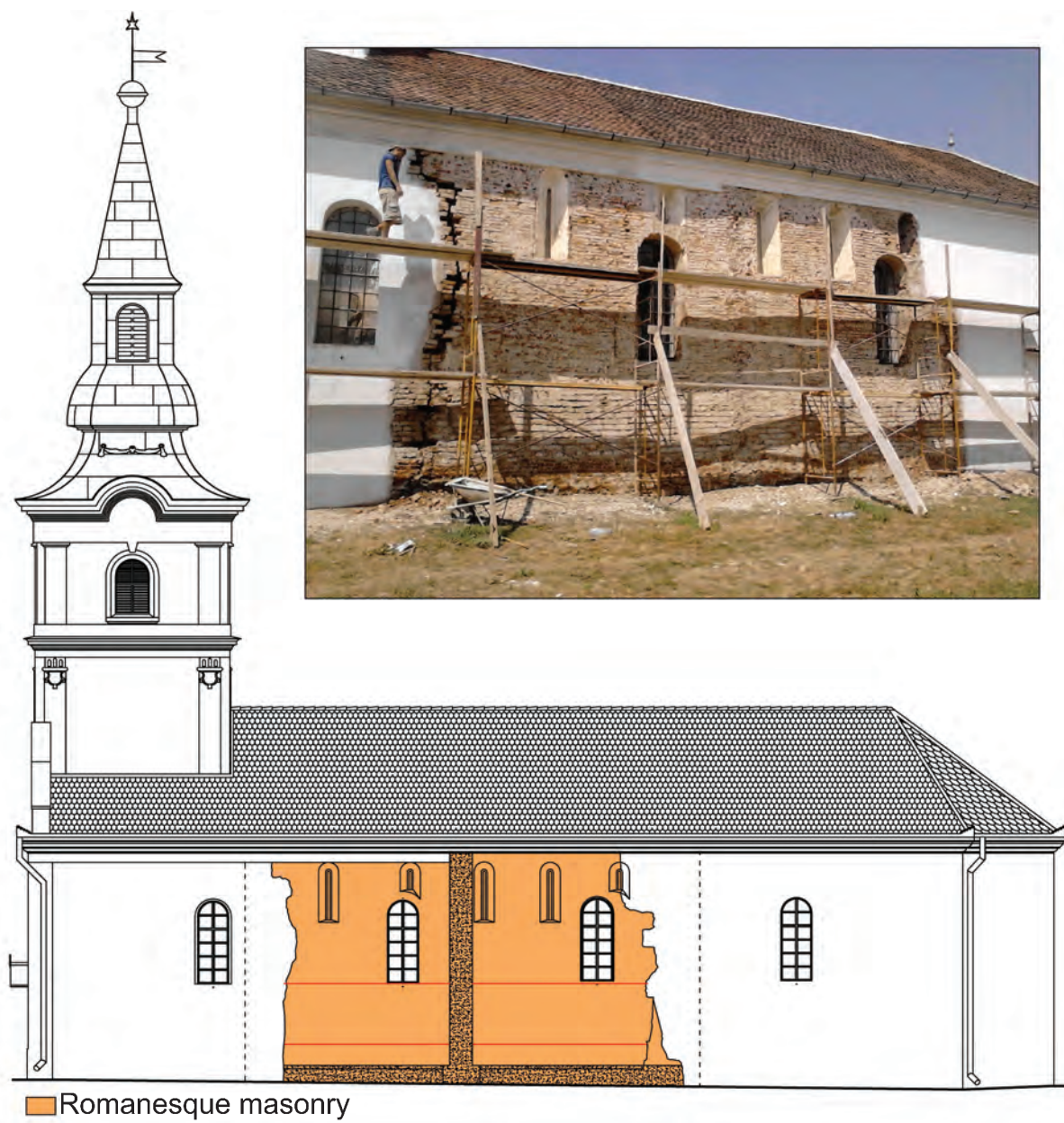


Fig. 2. Scale plan and images of the southern facade of the church, with the Romanesque wall.

also oblique). The south-eastern corner did not originally have a buttress, but on the north-eastern corner, near the jutting part of the portico there, we have identified a wall junction imprint in the lower part, that might have been that of a buttress or a sacristy. Two imprints of buttresses measuring 64 cm in width on the southern facade and 72 cm in width on the northern facade became apparent about the middle of the medieval segments and rose up to the level of the cornice. In the lower part of the wall we have identified the hammered remains of a base that ran all around the building, including the buttresses, initially jutting 20 cm from the line of the facade. It recessed through a row of bricks set vertically that probably formed a convex (semicircular) or polygonal profile.

The tall windows with semicircular ending were cut into the masonry subsequently. The western windows, that bring light into the gallery, are also devoid of discharging arches, and thus one can exclude the hypothesis that they were made in 1818–1821; these windows were probably only opened during the 1889 works.

The wall-face analysis has led to the discovery of a row of five Romanesque windows with semicircular ends on the upper third part of the walls, on the southern facade. These windows measure 1.7 m in height, have oblique embrasures, and only allow for the light to come in through narrow opening, measuring just 7–10 cm in width. The interaxis of the windows measures 2.3 m in the case of the two elements located west of the middle buttress and 1.9 m in the case of the three openings on the right side of the buttress. These windows were walled-in when the new, above-mentioned windows were made. Two of the new windows destroyed the lower half of two of the medieval windows. The original cornice has not been preserved and it seems that an unknown number of brick rows were demolished from the Romanesque masonry.

Two horizontal caesuras were noted both on the facades and on the inside, marking out a 1.7 m wide strip in the masonry structure where especially large bricks were used (31–33 × 14–15 × 7–8 cm) as compared to the rest of the masonry that consisted of bricks measuring 29 × 13–16 × 5 cm. The strip is located 95 cm above ground level.

On the inside, the imprint of the western Romanesque wall, demolished in 1818, was identified on both of the long sides, but the imprints of the eastern wall were entirely destroyed by the eastward extension of the nave.

Sets of three walled-in beam-holes indicate the existence and position of the floor and rail of a medieval wooden western gallery, approximately of the same height as the current tribune, with the rail 2.3 m from the western wall.

Two large niches were also identified on the eastern ends of the walls of the Romanesque nave. The built-in niches measured 150 cm (on the south) and 189 cm (on the north) in width and 27 cm in depth, but their ends could not be identified due to the presence of the wall-painting. Pairs of small niches, measuring 18 × 28 cm, with triangular ends, became apparent near the above-mentioned niches, to the east (Fig. 3).

The wall paintings uncovered in 2000 and 2015. The 2000 research has uncovered the two scenes discovered in 1862 that were nevertheless in a poorer state of preservation due to the degradation in time, the traces of hammering, and the cutting of the two new windows that have destroyed the upper part of the painting (Fig. 4). The smaller scene, marked by a square cartouche on the upper part, decorated with a rolled scroll, depicts the iconographic scene of Anna Selbdritt, St. Anne with the three Marys and their families, in a strongly central symmetric composition. St. Anne is rendered sitting on a throne made of architectural elements, holding in her arms the Holy Virgin and Christ Child, flanked by the other daughters she had with Cleopas and Solomon, with their children: Jacob, Judas Thaddeus, Simon the Zealot, and Joseph, on the one hand, and the apostles Jacob and John, on the other hand, each pair holding a book. Fragmentary depictions feature under the lower cartouche, in yellow contours: a raised head, gazing upwards, and a cubic architectural element.

Wall paintings depicting Anna Selbdritt and the Holy Kingship have also been preserved in Sântana de Mureș, Mălincraș, Feketeadó (Чорнотуців, UA), and Szőlősvégardó (Підвиноградів, UA), all from the period between the end of the 14th century and the beginning of the 15th century¹⁷. The same

¹⁷ Drăguț 1979, 213, fig. 240–242; Jékely – Kiss 2008, 214–215, 219–224; M. Műv. II. 1987, fig. 1382; Lángi 2013a, 294–295, fig. 11, 13, 19 and appendix (watercolor copy).



1



2

Fig. 3. The altar and tabernacle niches discovered in the southern and northern walls.

dating can be accepted for the painting in Iermata. A good analogy for the architectural throne is to be found in the wall painting of the Reformed church in Bădești¹⁸.

The neighboring scene, that measures 4.3 × 2.3 m, set between a cartouche decorated with geometric elements, depicts the most popular scene in the legend of St. George (Fig. 5) who was killed in 303 after having publicly confessed his Christian faith. The city of Cyrene in Libya is depicted on the

¹⁸ Jékely – Kiss 2008, 13.

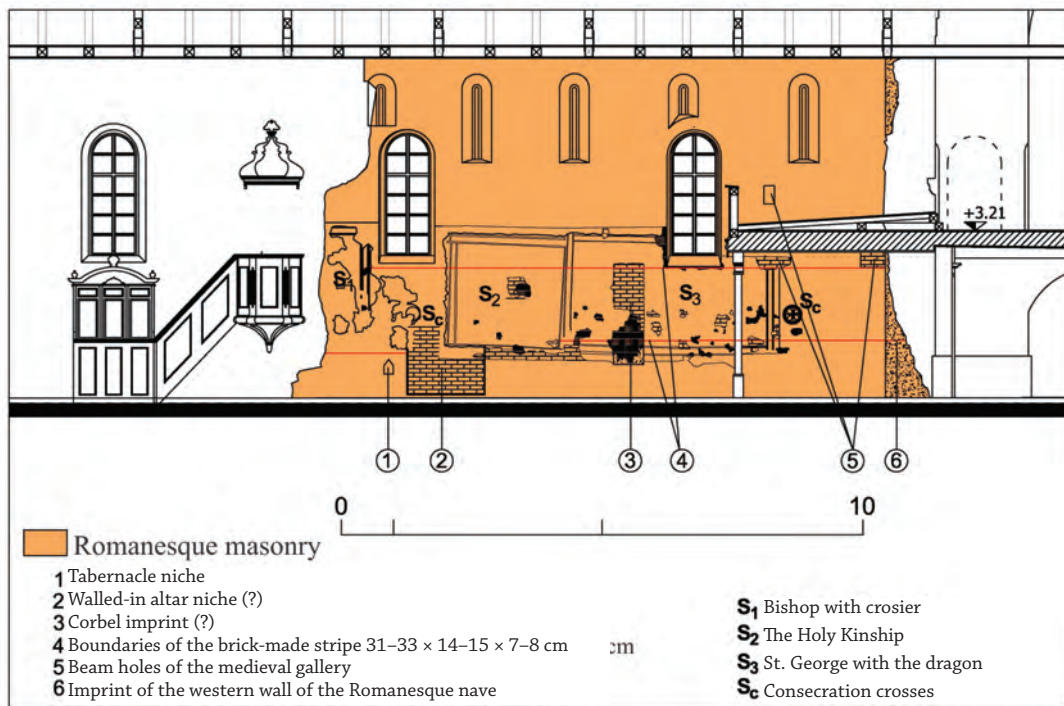


Fig. 4. Scale plan and image of the southern wall of the nave during the wall-face researches.

left, suggested by walls and towers crowned by merlons, with the king and queen watching discouraged St. George who wears a halo, on horseback, in the center of the image, holding a shield and a spear, facing the dragon that had built a den near the spring that provided water to the city. Due to the window opened there, the upper part of the military saint's body has been destroyed; only his armored leg had been preserved. On the right side of the image the artist has depicted Cleoldine, the king's daughter, kneeling. According to the *Legenda Aurea (Sanctorum)*, the girl dragged the defeated dragon to the city with her own girdle, as the saint had encouraged her to. The body of the dragon, lying on its back, is clearly visible though fragmentarily preserved and not rendered on Kallós' copy. The analogies



Fig. 5. Wall paintings on the southern wall (The Holy Kinship and St. George with the dragon).

of the composition probably derived from Simone Martini's painting in Avignon (Notre Dame des Doms), can be encountered in the Carpathian Basin as well: in Mălâncrav (approx. 1400), Szentsimon (1423), Tarpa (begining of 15th century XV.), Ófehértó (1420–30), possible and Daia (1419)¹⁹.

A relatively regular shaped area is missing from the wall painting, between the walls of the city and the horse's croup, measuring 60 cm in width (Kallós has simply omitted and cut this part out). Researching the lower part of this lacuna we have noted that broken bricks feature over a height of at least 40 cm and thus it probably represents the imprint of a part (corbel?) of a Romanesque wall that was cut out before the painting layer was applied. The painted faces were destroyed in both scenes. Only the faces of the king and his daughter attest to the quality of the painting.

A series of inscriptions have been incised into the painted surface, some during the Middle Ages. One even preserves the year 1467. In his drawing Kallós has rendered between the horse's legs and below the frame of the scene several rows of inscriptions in Gothic minuscules, probably copied from the fresco. Sándor Márki, the author of the county's monograph, has described them thus: the inscription "*Do (mine crav) di (orati) onem m(eam)*" was right on the fresco, while below the scene, in the middle of the image, one can read "*(In homo)rem B(ea)te m(atri)s b(ea)te m(arie) V(ir)ginis f(eri fe)cit Dnoni S(i)us Veer*", namely "(this work) was made by Dionysius Veér, in honor of the Mother of God" while on the right of *Non omnes sunt sanus (...)*, to the left, one finds the inscription *Egidius de Des...* According to Márki's interpretation, the text refers to painter Dionysius Veér who painted the frescoes for Egidius of Dej. The interpretation is based solely on Kallós' copies and not on the autopsy. Unfortunately, the analysis of the fragmentary inscriptions no longer allows one to check the calligraphy and the interpretation, as only some syllables in red paint can be distinguished below the horse's legs, but this inscription that continues beyond the western edge of the scene was painted subsequently on the painting layer, on top of an ochre layer set above the fresco.

As for the Weér family – if Márki's reading is correct –, its relation to Iermata is limited to the possession of the neighboring Socodor and the fact that in 1476 Muronyi Weér András put in pawn Nadabi family's property²⁰ in Iermata. We believe that if the inscription truly mentions the Weérs as donors, this might refer to the construction of the Gothic choir.

¹⁹ Lángi 2013b, fig. 3; M. Műv. II. 1987, 606, 613, fig. 1293, 1400.

²⁰ ANM. DI. 19362 (1488); Iványi 1931, 155.

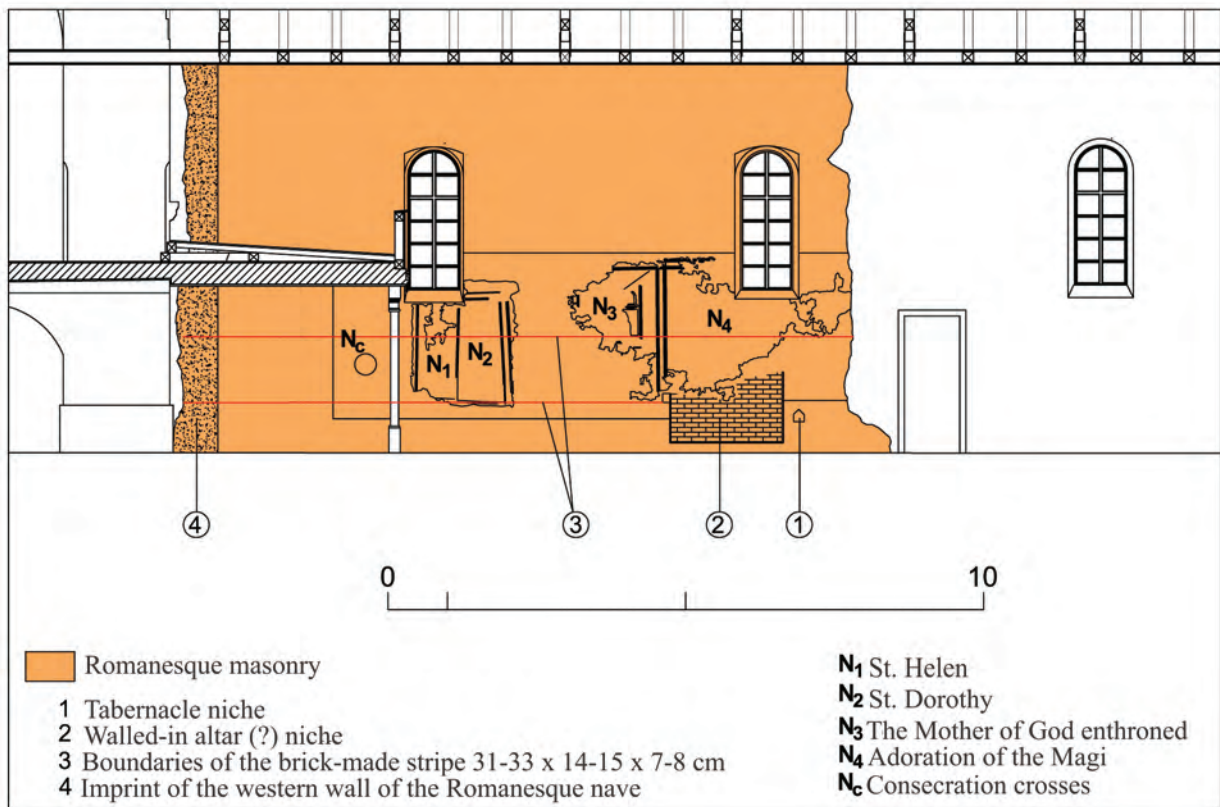


Fig. 6. Scale plan and image of the northern wall of the nave during the wall-face researches.

Three other traces of painting were identified in the southern wall: two consecration crosses before the fresco and the fragments of a third iconographic scene, as yet unidentified, and its frame decorated with geometric motifs.

The wall-face researches performed in 2015 have led to the discovery of wall painting fragments on the northern wall of the nave (Fig. 6). The 4.9 m segment from the middle of the medieval masonry depicts four narrower scenes with frames and a wider scene. The first from the west, slightly cut by the modern window there, depicts St. Hellen holding a cross (Fig. 7). The main character of the second scene has been poorly preserved, but according to the gesture of the child on the right side, raising a basket, one can identify St. Dorothea based on the details of her legend in the Golden Legend. Dorothea had chosen to sacrifice herself for Christ, receiving a sentence of decapitation from the governor of Caesarea, Saprichie, but a beautiful youth appeared on the spot of the execution and handed the maiden three apples and three red flowers from the Garden of Eden. Dorothea is usually depicted in medieval wall painting and sculpture only with the basket in her arms, but one also knows scenes similar to the one described above in St. Jacob's church in Levoča (ca. 1420) or the church in Mecseknádasd (dated to the beginning of the 15th century), Mălâncrav (cca. 1400), Mugeni or Chilieni²¹.

The third scene has been destroyed beyond recovery, while the two others to the east share the same frame, decorated with stripes painted red, white, and burgundy. Only the upper half of the fourth scene has been preserved, depicting the Virgin on a throne, wearing a white mantle decorated with red lozenge-shaped motifs, holding Christ Child in her arms, who raises his left hand that probably holds an orb surmounted by a cross. The final scene depicts the Adoration of the Magi, with two crowned kings, with halos, on the left side of the image, standing, and one kneeling in front of Mary with Christ Child. The fine features of their faces, though rendered in faded colors due to the degradation of the painting layer, reveal the special quality of the work. One also notes another figure above Mary's head, probably an angel with a halo holding a book, and yet another, unidentified character behind her (Fig. 8).

The archaeological research. The Reformed church in Iermata Neagră had not been researched archaeologically before and the 2008 and 2016 campaigns are the first such interventions. Through the start of the restoration works we have been able to recover archaeologically as well the phases and the planimetric development of the successive medieval churches, together with the archaeological contexts that resulted from this initiative (Pl. 1).

General stratigraphy of the researched sectors. The stratigraphy that is of archaeological interest was strongly disturbed in the trial trenches opened during the 2008 campaign, all located inside the church. Late medieval and Neolithic (Starcevo-Criș Culture²²) pottery fragments were discovered at various depths in the brown soil mixed with pieces of bricks and mortar, below the vegetal layer that was ca. 0.10 cm thick. A cemetery stood around the medieval church, as indicated by the three discovered graves and the numerous scattered human bones, subsequently disturbed by the renovation works performed upon the church during the Modern Era. At the depth of – 2.90 m we have reached the archaeologically sterile soil that was clayish and yellow.

In the trial trenches opened in 2016 inside the church we were able to note that the stratigraphy of archaeological interest had also been disturbed by the repeated interventions ever since the medieval period. Thus, the lines of the old foundations, but also the remains of a floor became apparent under the level of the present-day floor, from the depth of ca. 0.2 – 0.3 m. In the northern part, the stratigraphy was less disturbed by the modern interventions. Thus, below the clay layer identified 0.22 m and 0.28 m below the floor, we have recorded several layers of fill, generally dark brown – black in color, aired, with intrusions of bricks, mortar and scattered pottery fragments dated to the late medieval period (black and gray in color), down to –1.22 m and –1.26 m (see drawing, layers 4–11); the subsequent layer consists of aired black soil that has revealed disturbed graves, between the depths of –0.80 and –0.98 m (3 skulls), and several fragments of limb bones and ribs discovered in secondary

²¹ M. Műv. II. 1987, 606, fig. 698, 1272, 1416; Jékely – Kiss 2008, 279, 325–326.

²² Sava 2015, 86, Pl. 22/2–6.



Fig. 7. Paintings depicting St. Helen and St. Dorothy on the northern wall of the nave.



Fig. 8. The Mother of God enthroned with Christ child and the Adoration of the Magi.

positions. This layer is followed by another, made of compact black soil with undisturbed graves (two such features could be identified). Then there was a layer of compact black clay, connected to the period of use of the first church identified on the site. On the southern side the stratigraphy seems less complicated, characterized by two stripes of clay, possibly flooring layers (-0.18 and 0.35 m/ -0.58 and 0.68 m) and a thick layer of brown soil, very likely disturbed, aired in structure, with intrusions of broken bricks, mortar, and pebbles, between -0.58 and -138/140 m in depth.

Description of the excavations

The 2008 campaign

Two trial trenches were opened outside the church during the first archeological campaign. Thus, the first trench was set on the northern side – S01 (3×2 m) – and the second on the southern side – S02 (1.5×2 m) – in order to allow for a geotechnical study required for the technical expert report that was to form the basis of the restoration of the monument and also in order to identify the caesuras between the old parts of the church and the subsequent additions.

The two archaeological trial trenches were aimed at identifying the medieval parts of the present-day church and the caesuras between them. Thus, on the northern side we have identified the caesura between the medieval core of the church and its western extension that overlapped the north-western corner of the Romanesque church, where we found the foundation of an oblique brick buttress (Pl. 2). The trial trench opened on the southern side has revealed the brick foundation of the medieval church with a brick buttress placed perpendicularly, as well as the caesura with the eastern extension of the old church (Pl. 3). After having extended the section eastwards we have identified the south-eastern corner of the medieval church, behind the subsequently added buttress.

A cemetery certainly existed around the church, as the excavation has led to the discovery of three graves, two in the trench opened on the northern side and one in the southern trench.

The stratigraphy had been disturbed both by the grave pits from the upper layers and by the subsequent interventions connected to the reconstruction and extension of the edifice²³.

The 2016 campaign

The second archaeological campaign has only focused on the inner area of the church, that was about to be redesigned. The opportunity allowed us to open three archaeological trial trenches and based on the finding we were able to reconstruct the chronological and planimetric development of the medieval ecclesiastic edifice.

The first section S 03 (4.2 × 3.5 m) was set on the northern side of the present-day church nave, under the eastern gallery. The spot selection proved inspired, as we have identified three stages in the development of the medieval church, namely the foundations of the Romanesque-phase apse, the foundations of the Gothic-period polygonal choir, and the eastern wall of an attached sacristy (Pl. 4).

Thus, right beneath the present-day floor we have been able to identify the foundations of the medieval choir with the north-eastern side of its closure. The foundation had been dug into a compact brown layer and made of rows of bricks connected with gray mortar containing numerous quick lime granules (brick size: 27–29×12–12.5×6–6.5 cm). A small shoulder might indicate the preservation of three rows from the elevation of the choir, that display a more homogenous mortar without quick-lime granules. The two oblique buttresses were also identified, inter-woven with the foundation of the polygonal choir, also made of brick rows. In width, the rows vary between 0.9 and 1 m, and the foundation was built at the depth of – 1.45/1.50 m. The 0.85m-wide brick foundation attached to the choir from the north has offered proof of the existence of a sacristy erected after the construction of the polygonal choir. The technique was similar, with brick rows, the difference consisting only in the foundation layer set much higher than the foundation of the polygonal choir. It seems that the Modern-Era interventions have affected beyond repair the floor of the Gothic choir. Only the imprint of compact yellow clay from a layer that supported the floor of the choir has been preserved (Pl. 5).

Excavating deeper into the subsequent, strongly disturbed layers, we were also able to identify a few graves, as well as human bones in secondary position (Pl. 6).

Deeper inside the polygonal choir we were able to identify some of the upper layer of another masonry

²³ Mărginean *et al.* 2014, 137–150.

imprint that offered indications on the existence of yet earlier phases. The hypothesis was confirmed at the depth of – 0.85 m where we found the first bricks set lengthwise (brick size: 29–30x16–16.5x5 cm) in the 0.80 m-wide foundation. They were connected with homogenous, yellowish-brown mortar, well cemented, with minuscule quick-lime granules. After completing the excavation we were able to note the semicircular shape of the apse, the foundation of which had been set into compact yellow clay. The erection of the Gothic choir had led to the deconstruction of most of the elevation but also of the foundation of the Romanesque apse, that was only identified in negative towards the shoulder of the nave. As for the inner part of this apse, no clue has been preserved regarding its inner design.

Another section, S 04 (2.9 × 2.3 m), was set on the southern side of the nave, in the area where we suspected the existence of the shoulder between the choir and the nave of the medieval church (Pl. 7). Right after the removal of the floor we have identified the shoulder of the Gothic church at the depth of – 0.22 m. The foundation of the Gothic choir partially overlapped there the foundation of the Romanesque apse. In the case of the latter, one should note a small inward foundation spur, that might suggest the existence of a pillar that supported the triumphal arch between the nave and choir of the Romanesque church. North of the foundation of the southern shoulder we have identified a foundation attached to the first, belonging to a triumphal arch subsequently built or to a pulpit attached to the southern side of the Gothic choir, requested by the belonging of the church to the Reformed cult. Several bricks have been preserved to the west, in a structured pattern, interpreted as elements of the medieval church floor, at least of its Gothic phase.

In section S 05 (2.1 × 2.1 m) we have identified the south-eastern corner of the polygonal closing and the corresponding buttress, namely the foundation of the modern eastern tribune made of wood (Pl. 1).

The final section, labeled S 06 (3 × 1.5 m), targeted the western closure of the church nave (Pl. 1). Thus, all along the trial trench we have identified the brick foundation that enclosed the area of the nave from the west. We have not identified there traces that could suggest the existence of a western tower.

The cemetery

The 2008 campaign

As expected, the two trial trenches have also revealed several graves: two were found in S01 (M02 – partially disturbed and M03) and one (M01) was found, partially disturbed, in S02.

M01. The grave was discovered in the north-eastern corner of S02, – 2.65 m, near the brick foundation of the church (Pl. 3/1). It seems that this was the grave of a child, but the feature was largely destroyed. The body had been placed in dorsal decubitus, oriented west-east. The shape of the grave pit could not be determined, but we can note that the fill consisted of soil mixed with brick pigments and mortar. Only some of the bones have been preserved: parts of the skull cap, the bones of the upper limbs, ribs, vertebrae, and parts of the pelvis. The upper part of a skull cap was discovered instead of the lower limbs, near the eastern profile of the section, in secondary position. No pieces of funerary inventory have been discovered.

M02. Was discovered in S01, – 2.65 m, between the oblique brick buttress of the first church and the eastern profile of the section (Pl. 2/1, 3–4). The body had been largely disturbed; only the skull, the left side of the torso, and the pelvis have been left intact. The body had been placed in dorsal decubitus, with the left arm extended along the body, the head oriented west-east, facing left (northwards). In the fill of the grave pit the soil was mixed with brick pigments and mortar, and scattered human bones that might have belonged to the deceased were found towards the foundation of the church. In the case of this grave, only the northern side of the sepulchral pit could be identified, as the rest was probably disturbed by the interventions envisaging the repairs and consolidation of the edifice during the Modern Era. No items of funerary inventory were discovered.

M03. The only undisturbed grave was discovered in the north-eastern corner of S01, – 2.82 m, only identified from the pelvis up (Pl. 2/5). The deceased had been placed into the sepulchral pit in dorsal decubitus, with the arms extended along the body, with the face to the left (northwards), oriented west-east. The shape of the pit could not be clearly determined, also due to the fact that the northern side was near the edge of the trial trench. It is nevertheless clear that the body had been placed in a wooden coffin, of which several iron nails have been preserved, one in the area of the right arm, another on the right side of the skull, and another near the left shoulder. Brick fragments and

mortar pigments were also preserved in the soil that filled the grave pit. No items of funerary inventory were found.

The 2016 campaign

M04. The first grave of this campaign was excavated in the north-eastern part of S03, entering below the northern buttress. The deceased had been deposited in dorsal decubitus, oriented slightly north/west-south/east, overlapped by the brick structure of the buttress from the pelvis upwards, only with the lower limbs preserved. The grave pit could not be clearly identified and there were no traces of a coffin or of items part of a funerary inventory. The grave very likely disturbed older tombs, as human bone fragments were preserved in the soil around it.

M05 – M06. Two overlapping graves were cut by the western side of section S03, on the inner part, near the foundation of the polygonal choir, at the depth of –1.20 m. The skeletons in these graves had been deposited in dorsal decubitus, oriented west-east. The individual in M05 had the left arm extended along the body (Pl. 6). Ribs, vertebrae, the coxal-femoral bones, and the bones of the lower limbs extremities have been preserved. The soil in the fill of this pit was mixed with brick fragments and mortar. Towards the foundation of the church, starting from ca. – 0.96 m, we have discovered several skull caps and an entire skull, as well as scattered human bones that most likely belonged to disturbed graves. The shape of the sepulchral pits of the two graves could not be identified and no items of funerary inventory have been discovered in these features.

The shape of a pit oriented east-west was also identified on the western side of S03, close to the Gothic foundation. The bottom of the it was located below the foundation level of the polygonal choir and it cut the foundation of the semi-circular choir down to the base of this latter feature. Despite the fact that the shape and the orientation of this pit suggested the existence of the grave, no elements were found to clearly support this hypothesis. The fill soil was aired, mostly average gray in color, with fragments of bricks and especially with mortar. We believe that this pit is rather connected to a construction stage performed after the Romanesque choir was abandoned and the Gothic choir was erected.

Even if only six graves were discovered, we can state with certainty that a cemetery functioned around the church, used by the local community. The number of graves seems small also due to the limited extent of the excavations and the repeated interventions. In the absence of pieces of inventory, the chronology was established based on the features identified during the excavations. We have thus established that the cemetery can be dated after the first stage of existence of the medieval church.

Conclusions. The first archaeological and wall-face investigations have allowed for the identification of the foundations and walls of the medieval churches that have succeeded each other on this spot. Based on these researches we were also able to establish the planimetric development of one of the most important medieval edifices in the county of Arad. The two major phases thus identified are marked by the development of a first Romanesque edifice with semicircular apse into a Gothic church with a wider polygonal choir and the nave decorated with wall paintings.

The first Romanesque church (?). Taking into consideration the toponym of the settlement that refers to one of the seven Magyar tribes (Gyarmat) – the fourth according to the description of Konstantinos VII (Kourtougermatou)²⁴ – one can presume that the settlement was founded at the latest during the 11th century. It is hard to believe that the name of the village was preserved between the first century of the second millennium and the end of the 13th century without the continuity of the population who used a cult building. Though we cannot be certain that this building stood on the same spot as the Reformed church, there are clues supporting this hypothesis. In the description of the masonry of the Romanesque nave walls, both sides preserve a stripe measuring ca. 1.7 m consisting of bricks clearly different in size than those in the rest of the walls. This might easily be explained through the demolition of a brick building in the vicinity and the reuse of the construction material. The archaeological researches have envisaged too restricted an area to exclude the possibility that even older foundations exist below the nave, that have not yet been identified.

The Romanesque church dated to the end of the 13th century. The results obtained through the archaeological trial excavations and the wall-face research inside the present-day church have

²⁴ KMTL 1994, 241.

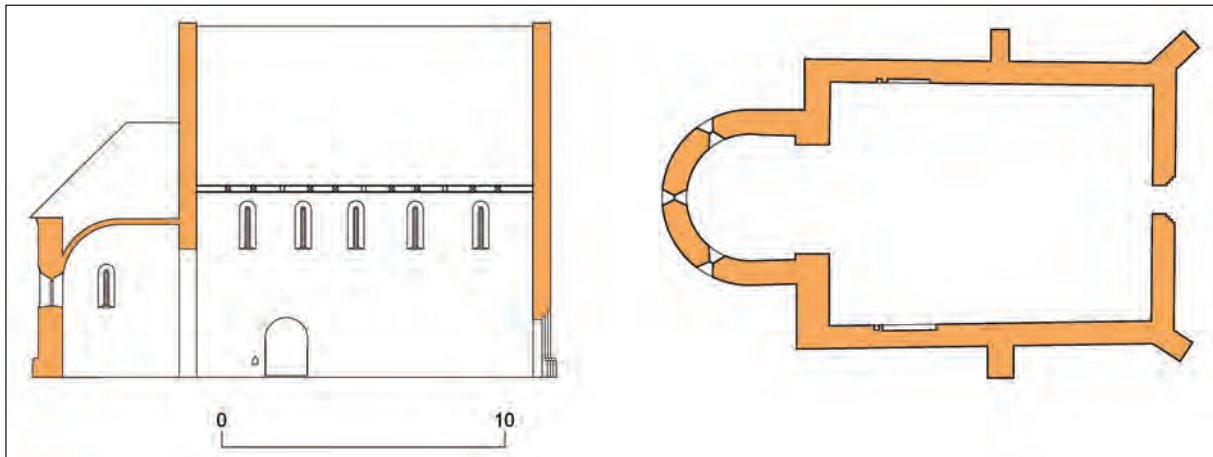


Fig. 9. Graphic reconstruction of the Romanesque phase (ground plan and facades).

allowed us to conclude that the edifice of the first identified phase was a church with the nave that was slightly trapezoidal in ground plan, measuring 9.9–10.2 × 13.1 m on the outside, with walls measuring 80 cm in thickness. On the western ends and in the middle of the long sides the nave was flanked by oblique and perpendicular buttresses, a design that can be dated before the final third of the 13th century. Two ample recessed areas, measuring 1.8 m (south) and 2.3 m (north), mark the transition between the nave and the semicircular apse with the radius of 3.1 m. The church was founded in a compact, clayish soil and the walls were made of bricks measuring 29–30x16–16.5x5 cm. Taking into consideration the fact that we have not identified the northern face of the southern pillar of the triumphal arch, we establish how wide this arcade was.

Based on the wall-face research in corroboration with the results of the archaeological excavations we can state that the two longitudinal walls were preserved from the structure of the Romanesque church nave, included in the structure of the church until the Modern Period. Wall-face analyses have uncovered five window openings with semicircular ending located on the southern side, right under the cornice of the roof. The first and the fourth window openings had been cut in the lower part by modern-era interventions, probably between 1862 and 1889, when two wider windows were designed and thus the older windows were built-in. The analysis of the masonry structure inside the nave has also revealed preserved traces of a western wooden gallery both on the southern and on the northern side, as well as the existence of two wider and two smaller niches towards the choir of the church. We suspect that the Romanesque apse was covered with a semispherical dome (Fig. 9).

As for the planimetry and the similar dimensions of the nave as well as the configuration of the southern facade with the five tall windows with semicircular endings, the closest analogy is the Reformed church in Vânători. For the altar niches located in the ends of the longitudinal walls of the nave one can mention the examples in Magyarszecsőd²⁵, Csempeszkopács and Șișterea²⁶ a, while for the small tabernacle niches with triangular endings located near the altar niches, one can invoke the features in Nyírkáta, Nyíribrony²⁷ and Hodoș²⁸. One should note that the solution of lateral altar niches seems to have been subsequently abandoned through a change of project, considering the fact that they were later walled-in with large bricks, similar to those in the above-mentioned stripe.

Another significant observation refers to the possibility that the discovered semicircular apse belonged to a nave from an intermediary phase, narrower than the preserved nave. The proportion and relation between the apse and the nave are unusual at best. Due to the narrow area, in section S 04 we did not open the floor located west of the southern shoulder of the nave in order to dig in depth and check the possible connection of a narrower Romanesque nave. Only a future geophysical investigation performed with the geo-radar might confirm or contradict this hypothesis.

²⁵ Valter 2004, 157, fig. 63.

²⁶ Emődi – Lángi 2004, 221.fig. 1, 3, 18.

²⁷ Szakács 2011, 21.

²⁸ Biserica reformată cercetată de T. Emődi în 2005.

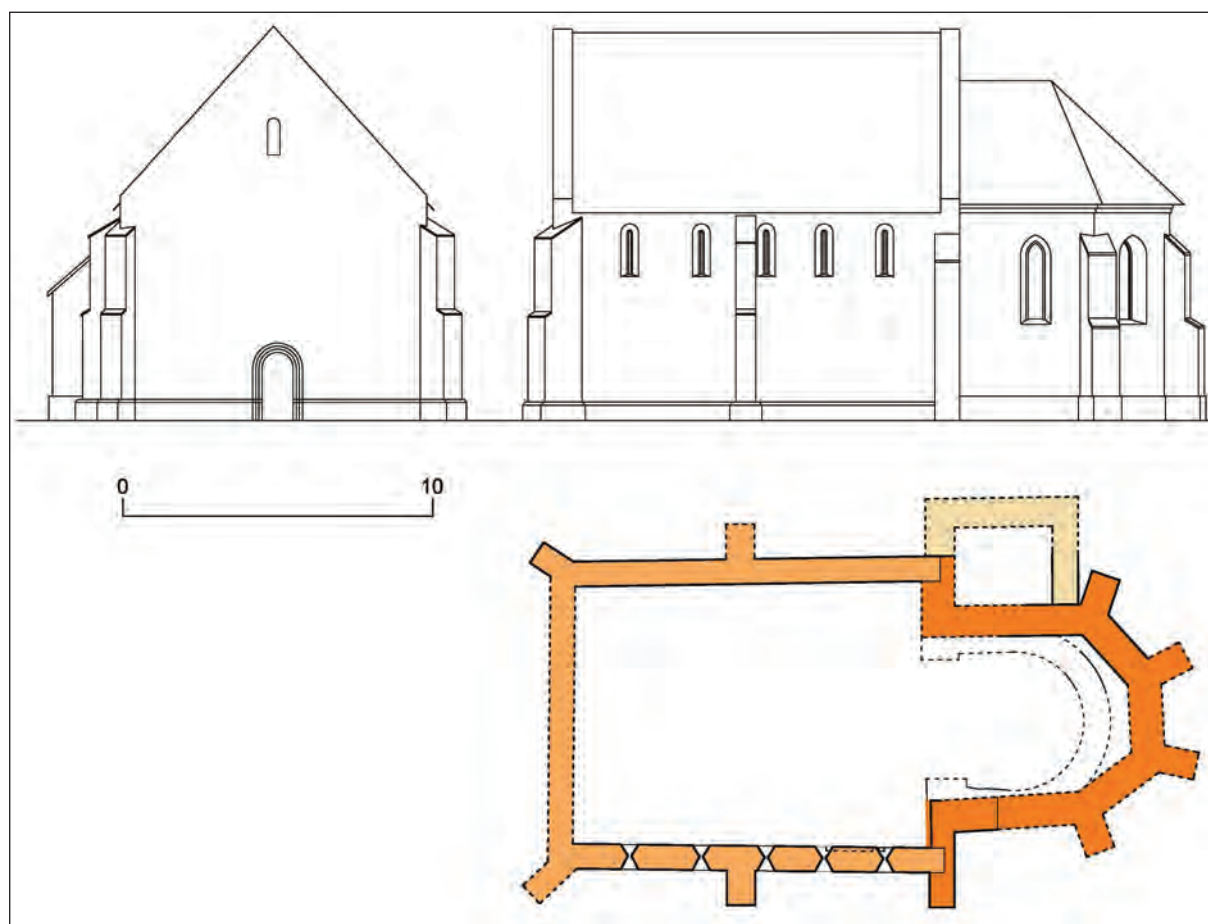


Fig. 10. Graphic reconstruction of the Gothic phase church (ground plan and section).

The Gothic church. In the absence of written data, one can only speculate regarding the reasons behind the interventions to the structure of the medieval church. Part of the church was modified due to a possible relative increase in the wealth of the community or in the number of parishioners. Archaeologically, this was identified through the uncovering right below the floor of the present-day church of a polygonal choir that has replaced the dismantled semicircular choir. The same phenomenon took place during the Modern Period, when the church was redesigned and extended, after it was used by the Reformed cult during the 16th century. Though the new Gothic choir was not much larger, its foundation was set directly on a compact layer and consisted of brick rows, like the previous choir. The difference resides in the use of good-quality mortar. The Gothic choir started from and was connected to the shoulders of the old Romanesque church and closed in a polygonal ending, with corner oblique buttresses woven onto the foundation of the choir (Fig. 10). Both the wall-face analyses and the excavations have shown that the old nave was entirely preserved and the only additions consisted of a south-eastern buttress and a sacristy on the northern side. The starting point of the eastern side foundation of the sacristy was identified in section S03. Very likely, the western side of the sacristy closed onto the northern shoulder of the church. In the absence of typical architectural components and relying solely on the 18th century sources, one can presume that the area of the choir was vaulted and the nave had a ceiling.

The most remarkable interventions were connected to the painting of the inside of the nave – maybe also of the choir – with the frescoes preserved until today, probably created in the end of the 14th century or in the beginning of the 15th century.

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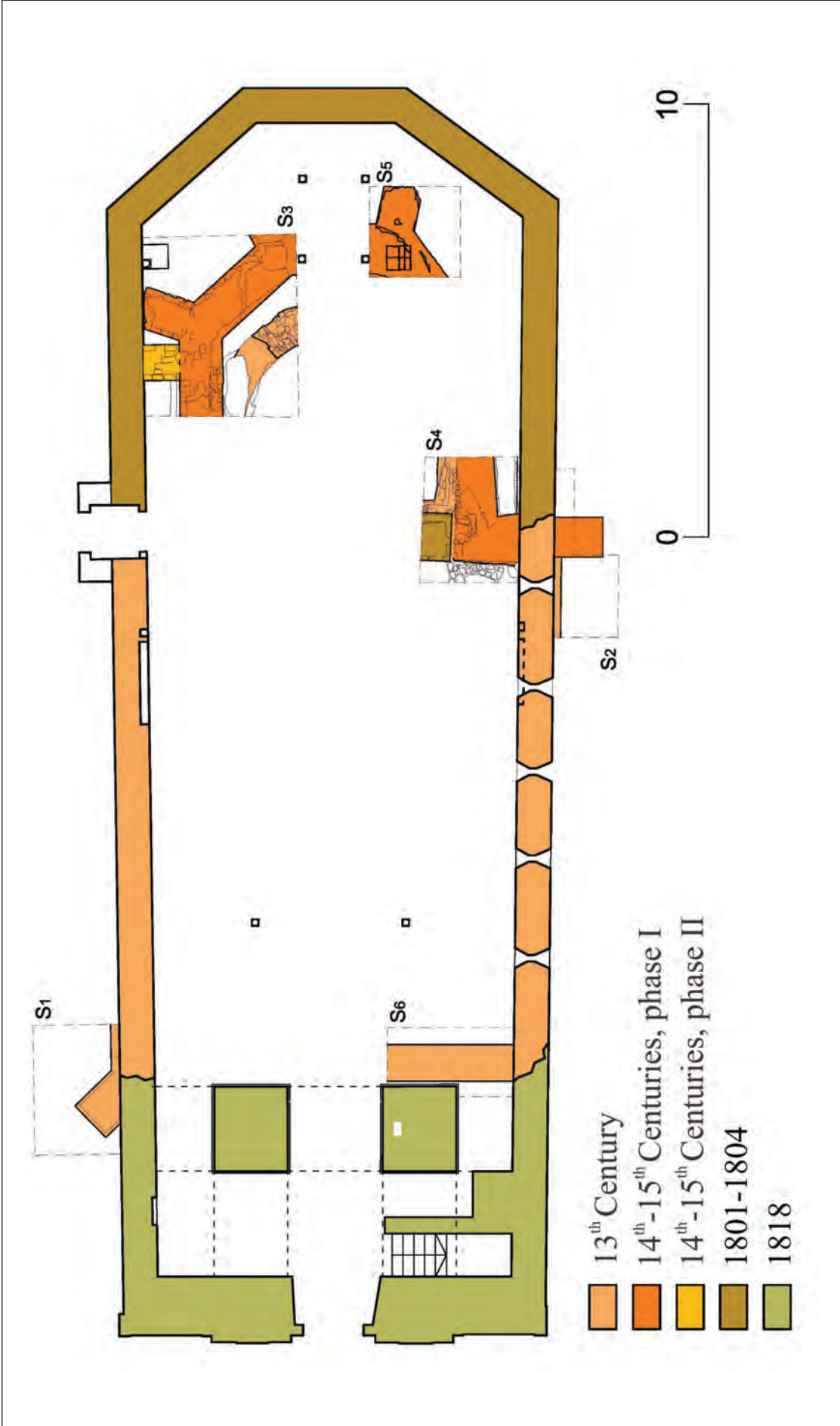


Plate 1. Ground plan with the phases of the church and the archaeological sections.

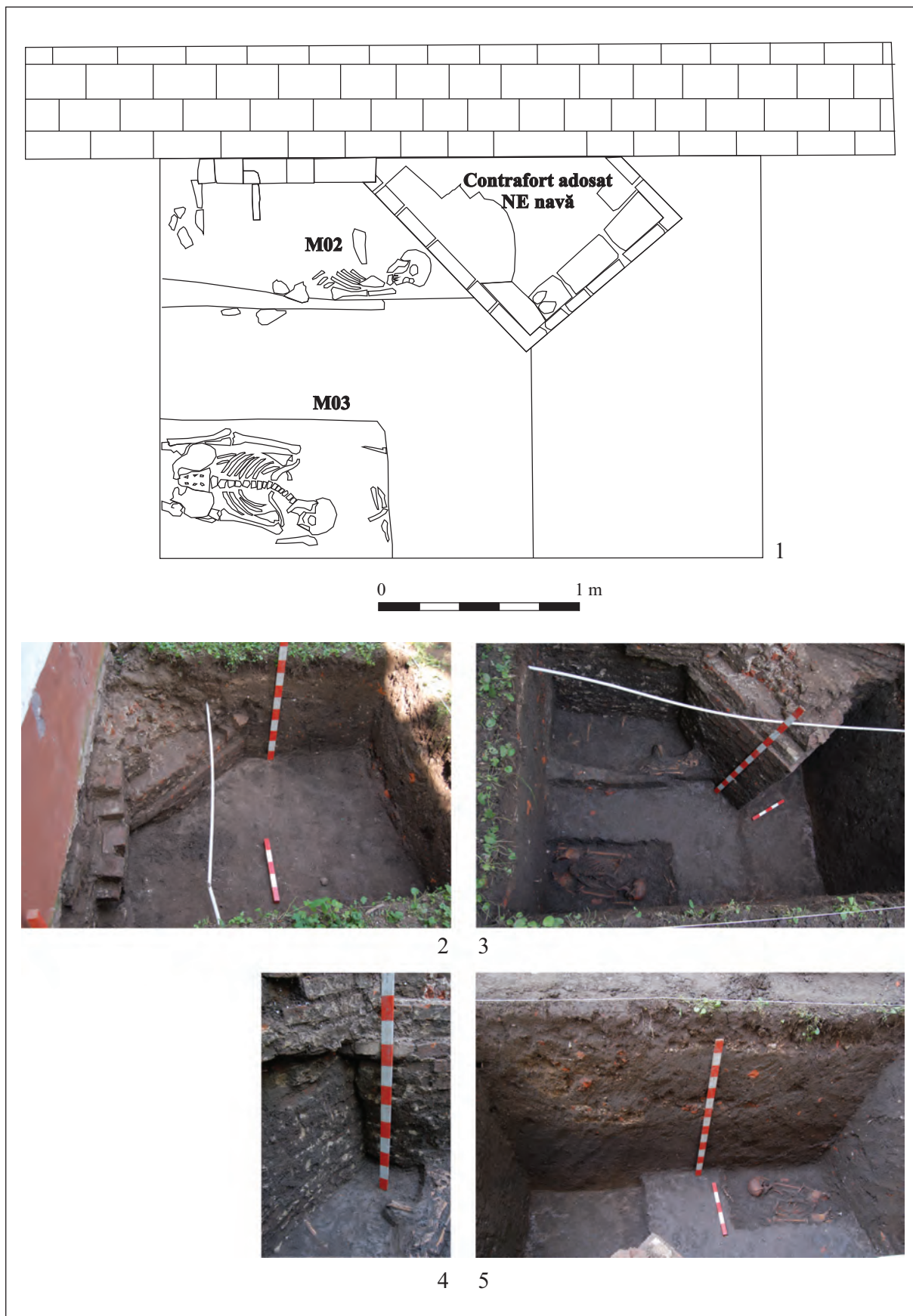


Plate 2. Trial trench S 01, ground plan and images.

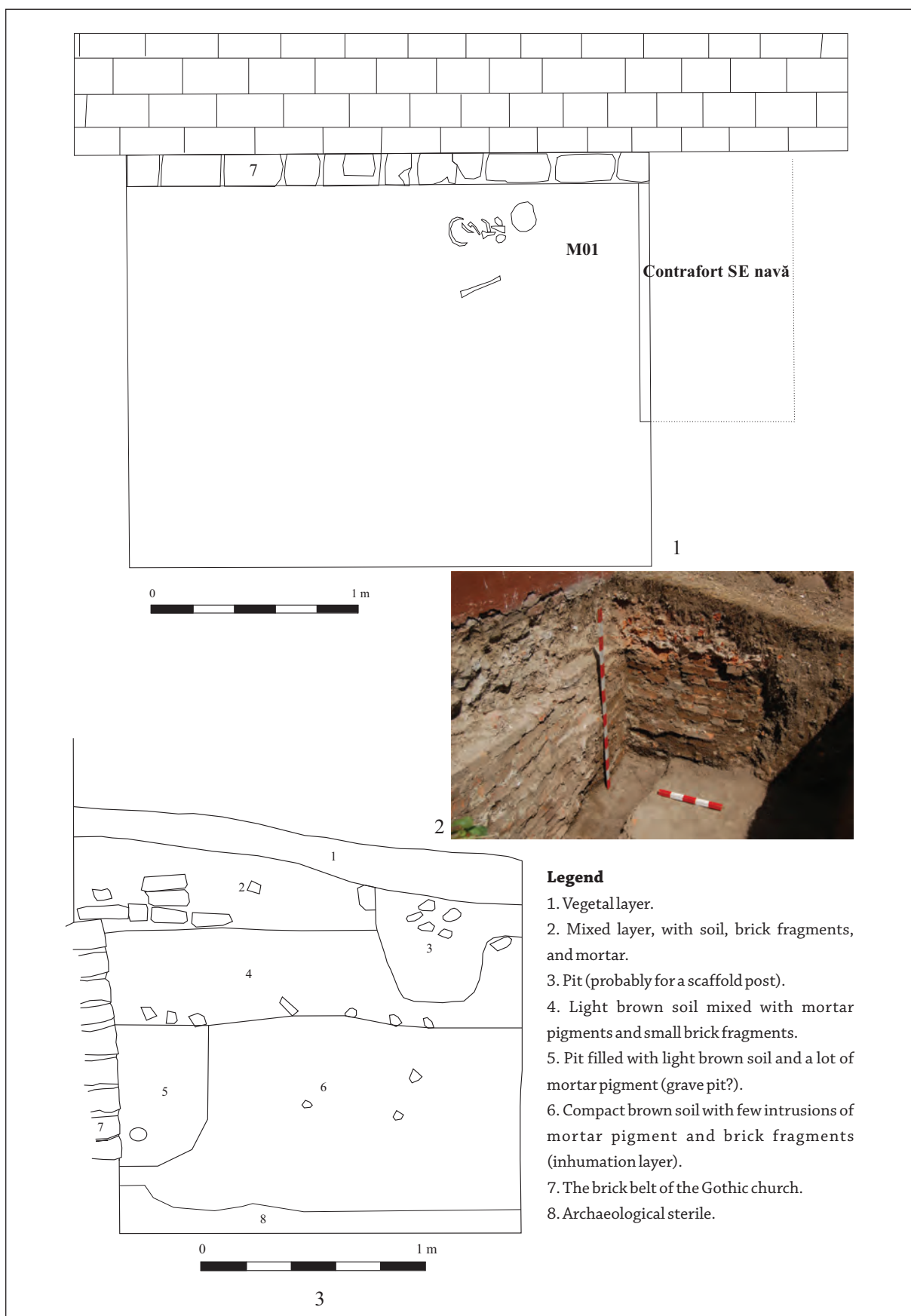


Plate 3. Trial trench S 02, eastern profile and image.

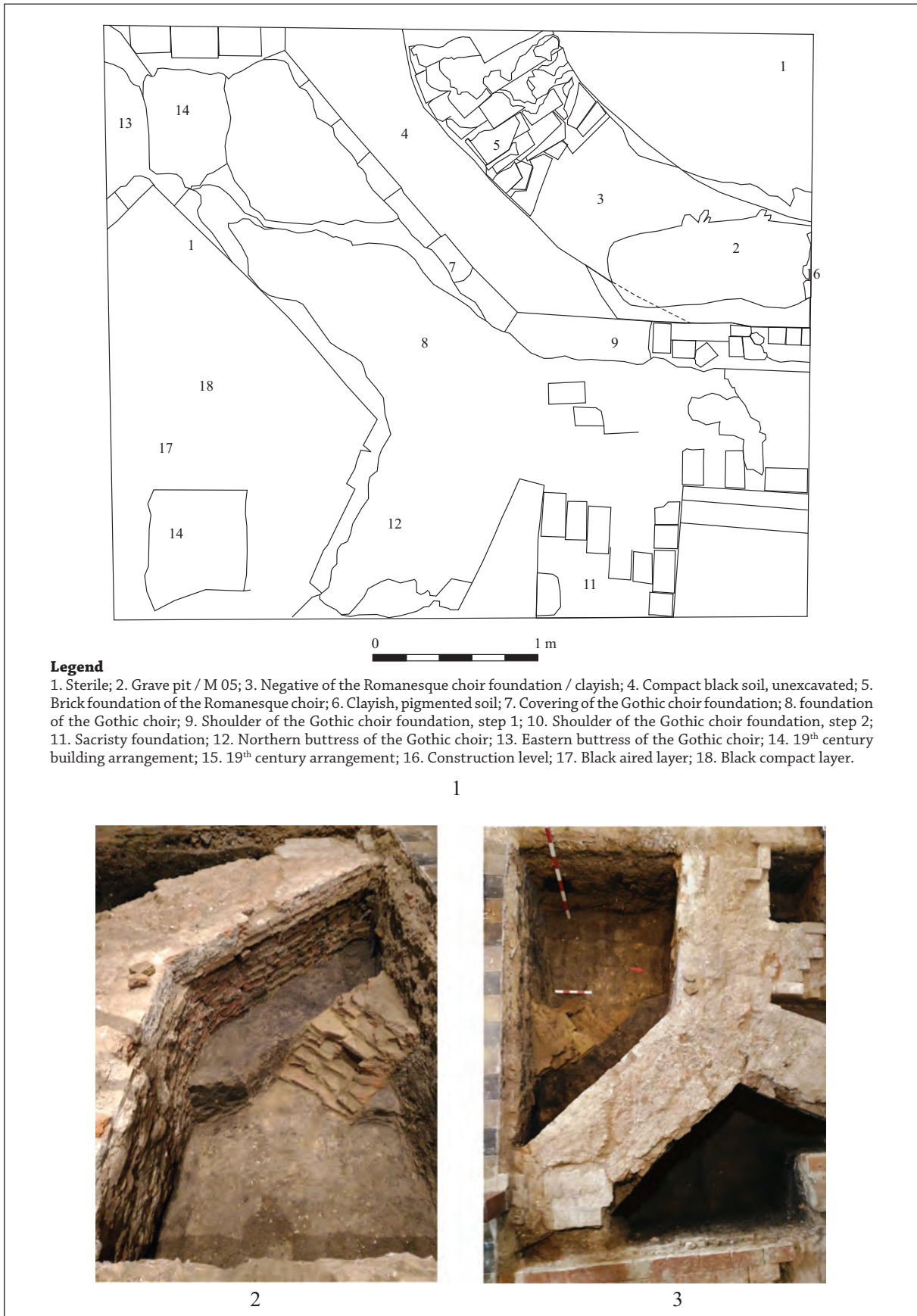


Plate 4. Trial trench S 03, ground plan and images.

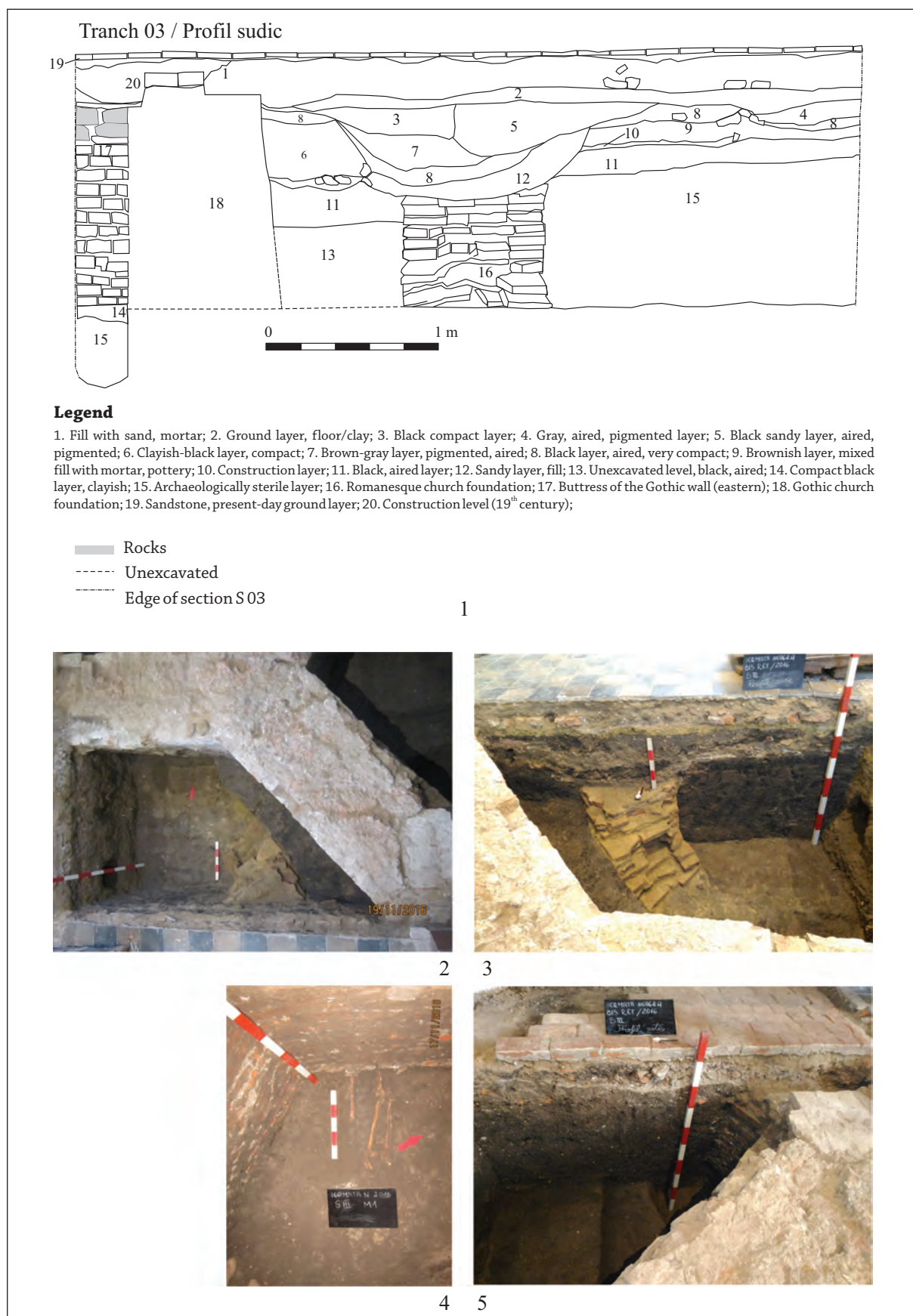
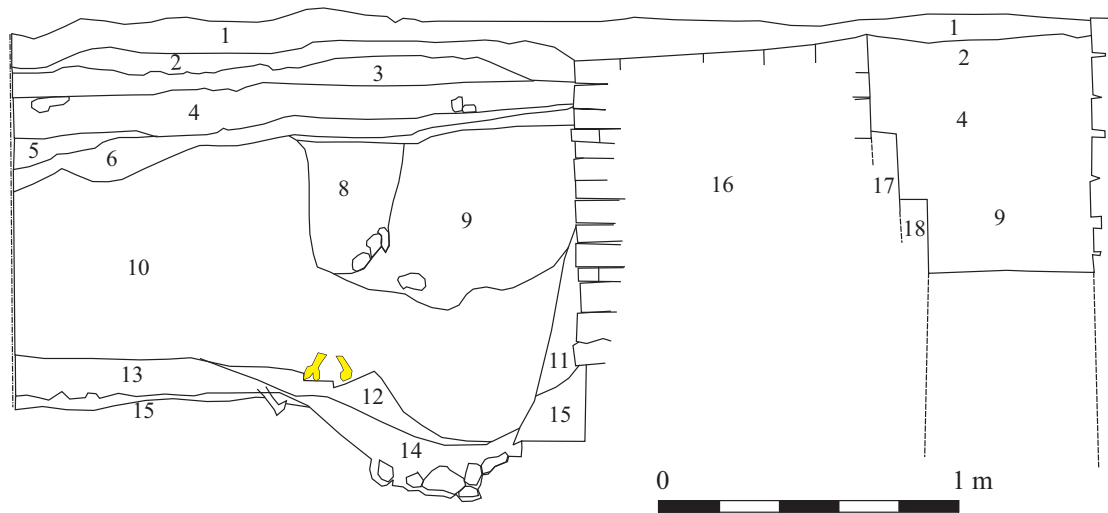


Plate 5. Trial trench S 03, southern profile and images.

Tranch 03/ profilul vestic



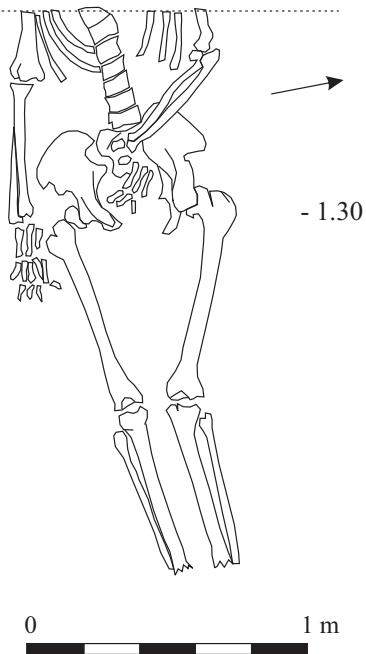
Legend

1. Fill with sand, mortar; 2. Fill with mortar, rocks; 3. Ground level, clay; 4. Level pigmented with mortar, roof tiles, bricks; 5. Clay; 6. Fill, black layer, sired, pigmented with mortar; 7. Construction level; 8. Filling layer, compact, black; 9. Sandy, black, aired layer, pigment with mortar, roof tiles, bones; 10. Sandy layer, very aired, black, with bones, pigmented; 11. Black, compact layer, similar to the layer near the sanctuary of the Romanesque church, northern side; 12. Black aired layer, spot of M 05, M 02; 13. Sandy layer with bone fragments; 14. Construction level, pit 1; 15. Archaeological sterile; 16. Gothic church foundation; 17. Foundation shoulder 18. Foundation shoulder.

- Edge of profile S 03
- Unexcavated
- ▬ Wall (19th century)

1

S 03 / M 05



2



3

Plate 6. Trial trench S 03, western profile, grave M 05 and image.

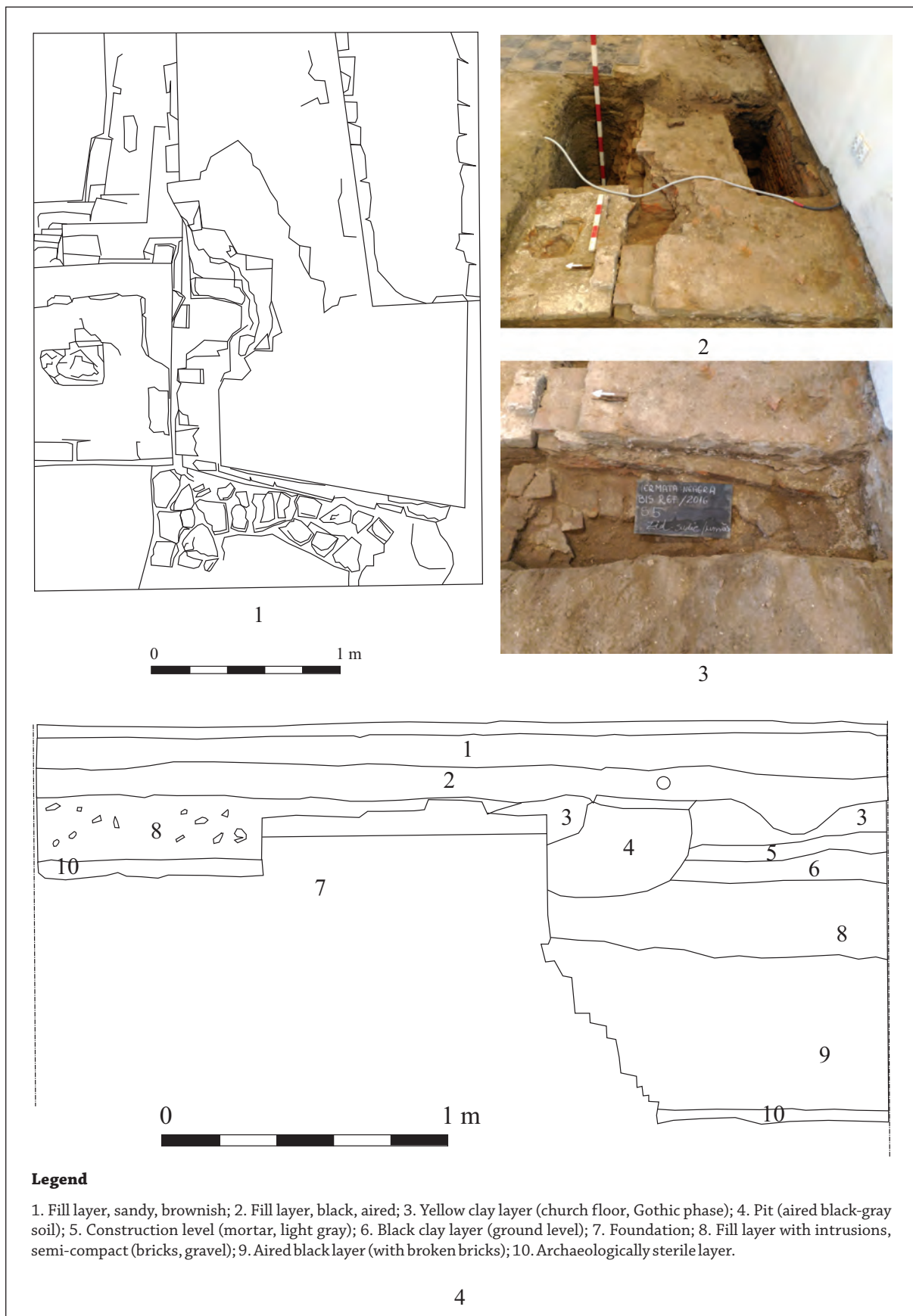


Plate 7. Trial trench S 04, ground plan, northern profile, and images.

Abbreviations

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 Béri 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.

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.