

A BRIEF RETROSPECTIVE ON THE HISTORY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH FROM VLADIMIRESCU "LA CETATE" – GLOGOVĂȚ / OROD (ARAD COUNTY)

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Cuvinte-cheie: *cercetări arheologice, fortificație de pământ, epoca arpadiană, castrul Orod, județul Arad.*

Abstract: *Discussed in specialized works for more than three decades now, the earth fortification in Vladimirescu still raises historiographic polemics. Its situation is due, on the one hand, to the "hardships of present times", but mainly to the partial publication of archaeological results. For these reasons I felt it was useful to turn to it again and to collect the entire material discovered during archaeological excavations in Vladimirescu "La Cetate" or "Cetate" between 1975 and 1980. Preserved in the archive of Arad Museum, the entire material and most of the documentation related to it lay at the core of the entire present initiative that I hope to present in the form of a monograph in the near future.*

Rezumat: *Discutată în lucrări de specialitate de mai bine de trei decenii încoace, fortificația de pământ de la Vladimirescu ridică încă polemici istoriografice. Situația sa se datorează atât „greutăților vremurilor prezente”, cât mai ales publicării parțiale a rezultatelor arheologice. Din aceste motive, am simțit că este util să mă întorc din nou la subiect și să adun întregul material descoperit în timpul săpăturilor arheologice de la Vladimirescu „La Cetate” sau „Cetate”, între anii 1975 și 1980. Păstrate în arhiva muzeului din Arad, întregul material și cea mai mare parte a documentației aferente stau la baza inițiativei prezente, pe care sper să o prezint sub forma unei monografii în viitorul apropiat.*

Through this article, we would like to share the results of the archaeological excavations undertaken in probably one of the most important sites linked to the medieval period and the evolution of present-day Arad. The articles published by the authors of the archaeological excavations at Vladimirescu have not been able to cover the extent of the six campaigns carried out between 1975 and 1980. Although the subject has already been touched upon on other occasions¹, the present approach

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¹ MĂRGINEAN 2016, p. 90–97.

attempts to make the results as useful and succinct as possible to scientific circulation. This could be a priority starting point if investigations on this important monument of the medieval period in the Arad area were to be resumed. In view of the new discoveries in immediately neighbouring areas, due to infrastructure works such as those on the southeastern ring road of the city of Arad² or the Arad – Timișoara railway, we can hope for a somewhat better understanding of the early medieval period in the Lower Mureș Basin (**Fig. 2** and **6/2**).

Built in the middle of the plain, the fortification in Vladimirescu is placed westwards from the eponym settlement (previously called Glogovăț), now almost a suburb of the city of Arad, 1000 m south of the Arad – Deva road, on an alluvium deposit between two former, yet still visible branches of river Mureș, flowing more to the south (**Fig. 1**). Micro-toponymically, the place is called *Șanțuri* (*Öthalom, Die Schanzen – Ditches*), while the toponym "Cetate" or "La Cetate" is preserved in the specialized literature. The fortification became the focus of specialists relatively late; the first non-intrusive investigation was only started in the beginning of the 70s of the previous century. On that occasion, pottery fragments were collected from the soil surface and they were dated to the 11th–13th centuries (**Fig. 2**).

The fortification follows a slightly trapezoid shape (well discernible in recent satellite images, with its small side westwards and with rounded corners). It measures 150 m in length, 130 m along the eastern side and 85 m along the western side (**Fig. 3** and **4/1**). If regarding its planimetry the ground plans published so far are those existing on site³, no accurate plan of the excavations performed during the six archaeological campaigns has been published⁴. The present paper includes an up-to-date ground plan, only missing the exact location of trench 8, excavated during the last 1980 campaign in the south-western corner of the fortification (**Fig. 3**).

The written source does not mention the fortification in Vladimirescu in connection to Ahtum, even less to Glad. Unfortunately, the corroboration of the few preserved written sources and archaeological discoveries did not yet bring sufficient clarifications on the chronology of such monuments. The biased and partial publication of archaeological discoveries, the often subjective interpretations, lacking supporting arguments, only led to speculative scenarios according to each author's "interest".

In general, the presence of earth fortifications from the Early Middle Ages was seen as indication of existing administrative, political and economic power centers. The fact was not entirely by chance, since the significant commercial route along the Mureș Basin made necessary the creation of control points (mainly aimed at controlling salt transports). In the present case, this seems not to have been the only reason. Starting from the few written records (in fact the two chronicles: the 11th century chronicle of St. Gerard and the 12th century chronicle of Anonymous), corroborated (in a more or less far-fetched manner) to archaeological discoveries, one finds today

² MĂRGINEAN *et alii* 2023.

³ MĂRGHITAN 1985, p. 143; PĂDUREANU 1985, p. 41–42; BÓNA 1998, p. 98–99, fig. 51; RUSU, HUREZAN 1999, p. 32, fig. 4; IAMBOR 2005, p. 346, pl. XVIII/1.

⁴ This was due to the authors of the excavations not publishing the general ground plan; besides the annual reports, they were unable to valorize their archaeological research later on in a monograph. This led to the perpetuation of a falsely rendered or more likely an incomplete ground plan.

an entire literature dedicated to the topic⁵. In most cases, the analysis of earth fortifications was made according to out-dated scientific general lines. For the area under discussion, there are two antagonistic historiographical trends: one Romanian, and the other Hungarian. A closer analysis reveals that there is as yet no solid database focused on the architecture and inner organization of early medieval fortifications. No major change in the approach of these issues was noted during the post-revolution period. Radu Popa's appeal to the pressing need of reconsidering the topic, printed in 1991, seems not to have triggered significant changes in the analysis of such monuments⁶. One still waits for pertinent reaction to questions formulated by members of the Hungarian historiography, such as Bóna István, regarding the dating of "pre-Hungarian" fortifications and the entire group of related issues⁷. Through their recently published volumes, Adrian A. Rusu⁸ and Ioan M. Țiplic⁹ took a stand on the matter and nobody can deny their merits in re-opening discussions on the topic. In addition to the above, it is worth mentioning the new approach of Maxim Mordovin, who analyzes these fortifications from the point of view of the emergence and roughly synchronous evolution of three medieval kingdoms (Bohemia, Poland and Hungary)¹⁰.

The first investigation of such earth fortifications in the area under analysis can be placed during the 17th and 18th centuries, when they were located on the first Austrian military maps and included in topographical surveys, such as the case of Vladimirescu. Nevertheless, the research of that period was not systematic. No significant progress was recorded during the Romantic and Positivist periods of the 19th century. The issue of their chronology remains to this day connected to the interpretation of the Anonymous Notary's chronicle. Contested by the Hungarian historiography, this source became the argumentative basis for one part of the Romanian historiography, connected to the existence of such fortified centres before the arrival of the Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin¹¹.

As I will subsequently show, the attempt to confirm written sources through archaeology did not lead to expected results due to causes mainly related to the way in which each excavation was published. Despite the fact that the fortification in Vladimirescu was archaeologically researched, the exhaustive results have still not been published.

On the basis of the documentation preserved in the archive of the museum in Arad, I will attempt to present here, in a highly synthetic manner, the main discoveries connected to life inside the earth fortification in Vladimirescu, made during the six archaeological campaigns performed there (1975–1980).

⁵ RUSU 1971; PASCU 1972, p. 40–60; RUSU 1980; BÓNA 1998; RUSU, HUREZAN 1999; IAM-BOR 2005; RUSU 2005; ȚIPLIC 2006.

⁶ POPA 1991, p. 167–171.

⁷ BÓNA 1998, p. 198.

⁸ RUSU 2005, p. 80–89.

⁹ ȚIPLIC 2006, p. 203–232.

¹⁰ MORDOVIN 2016.

¹¹ Despite the fact that the bibliography referring to Anonymous' chronicle has enlarged considerably, it would have stood a higher chance of credibility if it were corroborated by other written sources.

On the basis of the documentation preserved in the archive of the museum in Arad, I will attempt to present here, in a highly synthetic manner, the main discoveries connected to life inside the earth fortification in Vladimirescu, made during the six archaeological campaigns performed there (1975–1980). The partial publication of results supported the perpetuation of two historiographical trends related to the monument's dating. Representatives of the first trend date the fortification to the 9th–11th centuries¹² and link it to the pre-state formations existing there before the arrival of the Hungarians, while members of the second trend place here the centre of the medieval county of Arad (during the 11th–13th centuries)¹³. Supporting or rejecting any of the two suggested datings without solid arguments would only perpetuate the uncertainty. For this reason, in the present study I only wish to present data connected to living inside and outside the fortification that might subsequently aid in the clearer chronological framing of the monument and of its building stages. To the same aim, the correlation of such data with funerary discoveries inside the fortification will be very useful, though I shall not discuss them here.

The first systematic excavation on the site "Cetate" in Vladimirescu started in the autumn of 1975. It seems that two young archaeologists employees of the Museum in Arad, M. Zdroba and M. Barbu initiated the excavations there under the direct coordination of K. Horedt, M. Rusu, and R. Heitel. The initiation of more extensive or smaller-scale investigations at other sites with medieval remains in the Mureş Valley (Vladimirescu – *Bazilică*, Frumuşeni – *Fântâna Turcului*, Felnac – *Complexul Zootehnic*, etc.) is also owed to them. The research undertaken was probably part of an ambitious program of understanding the early medieval period. Unfortunately, the subsequent processing and capitalization of the results left much to be desired, one of the reasons being the preconceptions with which the research started, both in terms of the chronology of the finds and their attribution. The causes are largely known and we will not dwell on them here¹⁴. However, it is worth emphasizing the discoveries directly related to the earth fortification.

Even since the first archaeological campaign, the expressed goal was to establish the site's chronology and to identify its membership. Even if, apparently, a rigorous plan was followed, the results of the first two campaigns allowed their authors to establish the chronology of the entire site, but unfortunately it can be correlated with neither the archaeological contexts and materials discovered, nor later written sources. The sections performed on the eastern, northern, and southern sides allowed for the identification of the fortification system, with two building stages, while the remains of a necropolis were identified in the eastern half of the fortified precinct, out of which about 253 graves were excavated. The few coins discovered in graves, dated to the time of kings Peter, Andrew I, and Bela I, were good dating elements for the beginning of the necropolis in the first half of the 11th century.

¹² GLÜCK 1976, p. 78; BARBU, ZDROBA 1979; BARBU 1980; RUSU 1980, p. 166–167; MĂRGHITAN 1985, p. 143; BEJAN 1995, p. 119–120; COSMA 2002, p. 47–48, 52; IAMBOR 2005, p. 79; CRIŞAN 2006, p. 44.

¹³ BÓNA 1998, p. 98–99; BENKŐ *et alii* 1998, p. 14–23; RUSU, HUREZAN 1999, p. 31; RUSU 2005, p. 95.

¹⁴ See the critical notes on these aspects made by POPA 1991, and more recently by RUSU 2005, p. 84, 95.

The first contexts of living and the activities of people inhabiting the fortification were provided by discoveries made on the northern side of the fortification, more precisely outside it in sections Trench 2 and square B, where two ovens were found: one for cooking, placed inside a dwelling (square B) and two pottery kilns, westwards of another dwelling (in Trench 2). The entire recovered material can be dated on the basis of analogies, no sooner than the 11th century. The closest analogies for such ovens feature among older, but also more recent discoveries around the present-day city of Pecica, from where 25 such pottery kilns are known up to the present day¹⁵.

In the first campaign, it seems that a single large section marked as Trench 1 (64 × 2 m) was traced from the eastern edge of the fortification to the west, to which a square marked as A was added. Although the original aim was to cut the entire area of the fortification through this section¹⁶, and thus of the western side as well, this did not end up happening. The maximum depth reached was 1.80 m, and a substantial medieval layer was uncovered. Between meters 4 and 12 (see **Fig. 7/1**), a lens of yellow clay was discovered, which pertained to the earth wall of the fortification. No other elements of the wall (traces of wooden posts, stones, etc.) were discovered. We are only told that in the upper part of the wall, a burned layer was discovered, stronger in the northern profile, resulting from the burning of the fortress¹⁷. Apparently, the section did not cut the defence ditch, which is superimposed by a concrete road still in use. According to its researchers, the ditch was between 8–12 m wide, and it was more visible on the north and northwestern side of the fortification. Towards the western end of the section, roughly in the middle of the fortification, a square noted A was also traced. No other construction elements from the period of its active use were discovered here either. Immediately from the edge of the wall inwards at –0.80 m, grave pits were outlined. The total number of graves discovered in the two investigated areas amounted to 89, which, according to the authors, were subsequent to the fortification¹⁸. Stratigraphically, it is rather difficult to say whether these graves actually cut the wall or only part of it. Without having clear contexts for the finds, it is only said that an impressive number of fragments of small cauldrons were discovered over the whole investigated area. Without further clear stratigraphic details regarding the cauldron sherds, for which we can at least estimate a relative date, we learn that ceramic fragments dated to the 9th–10th centuries were discovered between meters 9–14 and 33–37¹⁹. Curious or not, even if they were of small scale, the excavations of the first campaign at Vladimirescu allowed the direct authors, probably under the guidance of those who indirectly supervised them, to draw clear-cut conclusions regarding the chronology of the fortification. It is dated based on the finds and stratigraphy (!) to the 9th–10th centuries, and was destroyed sometime in the early 11th century, when the first burials of an unknown

¹⁵ MĂRGINEAN 2021, p. 242–247, fig. 1, Tab. 1.

¹⁶ ZDROBA, BARBU 1976, p. 48.

¹⁷ ZDROBA, BARBU 1976, p. 48.

¹⁸ ZDROBA, BARBU 1976, p. 49.

¹⁹ ZDROBA, BARBU 1976, p. 54.

– but presumably autochthonous and at the same time “peaceful” – population began to take place inside the enclosure²⁰.

The second archaeological campaign started in the spring of 1976 and from the outset aimed at sectioning the long sides of the fortification, namely the north and south sides. The new section was named Trench 2 (186 × 2 m). This time, the section went beyond the limits of the enclosure, both north and south. Immediately outside the fortification, on the north side, between meters 13 and 20 of section Trench 2, with a preserved 1 m baulk, a square noted B (7 × 3 m) was also traced. The results of this campaign were summarized in a short report published in the museum’s journal²¹. Construction system elements of the earth wall with palisade were discovered on both the north and south sides. In a first phase, it seems that the sturdiness of the wall was ensured by beams (15–20 cm), arranged in a lattice, between which earth of various consistencies was rammed, probably taken from the defence ditch. The same situation was uncovered on the south side. The existence of a layer of burned and vitrified earth has been blamed on the burning and destruction of the fortification. The only dating elements were a few pottery sherds discovered under the beam lattice, all typologically and by analogy dated to the 9th–10th centuries. They all appear to have belonged to the same pot, decorated with lines and waves²².

The reconstruction of the wall, apparently destroyed by fire, was rapid, because, as archaeologists have found, the overflows into the first defence ditch were very thin (3–5 cm). The second wall was taller and wider than the first, which it enveloped. At the point where it was cut, it was 12.75 m wide and the preserved height was 1.40 m. In the second phase, the system of latticed beams was abandoned and a palisade was built of only vertically placed beams, 0.30–0.40 m thick, arranged at unequal distances, but set at appreciable depths (at meters 40 of the Trench 1 section, one beam was almost 2 m high).

As for the defence ditches of the two phases, we only have the testimony of the two archaeologists, as the preserved documentation does not include those portions of the Trench 2 section profiles in which the defence ditch was dug²³. Thus, the ditch of the first phase had a U-shaped bottom. It was found between meters 18 and 29 of section S 2, on the north side only. At meters 26.50, a post was found, set obliquely into the edge of the ditch, presumably from a line of posts, which probably constituted an additional obstacle to attackers. In the second phase, the ditch was apparently narrower and deeper (discovered between meters 21.50 and 25), and ended in a V-shape. The depth reached in the ditch exceeded 2.5 m. The same ditch was also found on the south side, between meters 139 and 146. The authors of the excavation did not notice several phases in the evolution of the trench, a fact which they put down to the overflow and disturbance caused by the waters of the Mureş. In this

²⁰ ZDROBA, BARBU 1976, p. 54.

²¹ BARBU, ZDROBA 1977.

²² BARBU, ZDROBA 1977, p. 20 (see illustration).

²³ It is quite possible that they did not even exist, because, as we have been able to ascertain in the analysis of this documentation, the profiles of the surveyed areas were only selectively made on certain portions.

campaign, too, graves were discovered along the entire length of the section of the fortification enclosure, bringing the total number to 155²⁴.

A black and white satellite image shows the location of the first three sections traced at Vladimirescu (**Fig. 3/1**). In the 1977 campaign²⁵, the investigation of the central-western space of the fortification was continued with a section called Trench 3 (118 × 2 m). Towards the western end of section Trench 3, a square, noted C (5 × 5 m), was also outlined, where the traces of a dwelling were revealed, excavated in its entirety and dated by the authors of the excavation as prior to the fortification (**Fig. 7/2**). By sectioning the wall and the ditch on the western side, it was possible to reveal the two phases of construction. In the defence ditch, the archaeologically sterile layer was not reached due to the high level of the water table. Archaeological material dating from the 11th–12th centuries was recovered from outside the defence ditch. Also, during this campaign, a section marked Trench 4 (36 × 2 m) was traced in the northwest corner of the fortification. It only concerned the fortification system; the ditch was not touched. Between meters 20.60 and 29.80 traces of beams arranged transversely were discovered, considered to belong to the first phase of the fortress. A last section, Trench 5 (36 × 2 m), was traced perpendicular to S 1, to the south, in order to delimit possible constructions that may have furnished the fortification. Only 30 tombs were discovered, to which the 25 in section Trench 3 can be added²⁶, bringing the total number of graves to over 200²⁷. The conclusions of this campaign did not differ from those previously stated, related to the anteriority of the fortification in comparison with the necropolis and the surrounding settlement.

Having already outlined the evolutionary stages of the whole ensemble discovered at Vladimirescu, the 1978 campaign was aimed at furthering them. As a first step, a new section, marked Trench 6 (56 × 2 m), was traced, 15 m from and parallel to Trench 3. The stated aim was to reveal the fortification system on the west side, which was less relevant in section S 3. Towards the western end of the section, two more squares were traced on either side of section Trench 6. To the south, square D (5 × ? m) was traced between meters 9 and 14, with a 0.75 m preserved baulk. This square was traced in order to delimit a dwelling seen in the southern profile of the section. For the same reasons, square E (10.5 × 3 m) was traced to the north, between meters 9 and 19.5 of section Trench 6. Apparently, elements of the fortification system were only revealed within section Trench 6 and especially square E. These seem to overlap the dwelling discovered in square E, which led the authors of the excavation to argue their theory of the anteriority of the settlement from the 8th–9th centuries (!). Logically it would seem correct, but another scenario could just as logically be imagined, in which the dwelling is destroyed at the same time as the burned palisade. Without rushing to conclusions, we continue the presentation of this campaign. The second section of this campaign, marked Trench 7 (53 × 2 m), was traced in the NE square of the fortification, 15 m east of S 2, with the same stated aim of verifying the fortification system on the north side. Thus, the wall and the defence

²⁴ BARBU, ZDROBA 1977, p. 24, 27.

²⁵ M. Rusu and R. Heitel took part in this campaign.

²⁶ BARBU, ZDROBA 1978, p. 109–112.

²⁷ According to the planviews kept in the Arad museum's archive, the number is lower by approximately 10 graves than that estimated by the authors of the excavation.

ditch were sectioned once more. The results confirmed the stratigraphic situations discovered in Trench 2. Another 43 graves were also discovered in this section, for which unfortunately no documentation was preserved, thus the total number, as published by the excavation authors, reached 253 graves (Fig. 5)²⁸.

Only M. Rusu participated alongside the two archaeologists from Arad in the 1979 campaign. A single square, labelled F (13 × 10 m) was opened during the 1979 campaign, in the south-western corner of the fortification, located 10 m away from section Trench 6. The report prepared and published by M. Barbu suggests that the fortification system, consisting of transversal beams, overlaps another earlier dwelling (dated to the 8th–9th centuries on the basis of pottery fragments). A dwelling was identified inside the same surface, on its western side, this time dated to the 11th–12th centuries on the basis of small cauldrons' fragments, and the authors relate that it cut through the earthen rampart. Photographs or drawings supporting such hypotheses were unfortunately not preserved for these contexts²⁹. One very likely faces the same situation as in the case of section Trench 6 and square E. In the absence of documentation, one cannot comment on the interpretations expressed by the author of the last published report³⁰.

Although another archaeological campaign took place in 1980, 1979 was in fact the peak of the excavations at Vladimirescu. In the last campaign, another section was certainly traced, noted Trench 8, about which we do not have much data, neither in terms of its location nor about what was discovered in it. Only a profile sketch has been preserved in the archive, which is irrelevant to be reproduced here. It is quite possible that this last section was made somewhere in the western area of the fortification, as no funerary finds are marked. Whatever the situation was, it seems that the site was no longer of interest, and its purpose had been served.

Beyond the preliminary interpretations and conclusions of the research's authors, the results of the six archaeological campaigns took out of anonymity an earth fortification scarcely mentioned in the available written sources. Unfortunately, the subsequent valorisation of these discoveries did not rise to the expectations, though this does not diminish the merits of the two archaeologists from Arad, M. Zdroba and M. Barbu.

One knows from a historical perspective that none of the sources mention the fortification in Vladimirescu in connection to the events during the time of Ahtum and even less during the time of Glad; we at least know that the first controlled and ruled over these territories. In order to ensure such control, it is very likely that Ahtum had fortified points erected in this area and that this angered king Stephen I. For the time being, in the absence of clearer evidence, all scenarios remain nevertheless irrelevant.

According to Bóna I., most earth fortifications were only built during the 11th century³¹. This is in fact the time when one can justify the need of the central power of the kingdom to establish power centres in its territory³².

²⁸ BARBU, ZDROBA 1979, p. 190.

²⁹ BARBU 1980, p. 152–153.

³⁰ BARBU 1980, p. 156–158.

³¹ BÓNA 1998.

³² NOVÁKI, SÁNDORFI 1981, p. 154–155.

Returning to the fortification in Vladimirescu, its dating before the middle of the 10th century on the basis of some pottery fragments discovered in the filling of the first rampart alone seems hard to believe. The existence of a settlement prior to the fortification cannot yet be proven on the basis of just some pottery fragments and certain contexts lacking clear documentation through conclusive ground plans and photographs. Even if one admits the anteriority of the necropolis inside the fortification and of the dwellings identified both inside and outside the stronghold, the dating cannot be lowered before the middle of the 10th century³³. This statement stands even if one were only to take into consideration the fact that the rapid reconstruction of the fortification system in the first phase, placed sometime at the turn between the 9th and the 10th centuries would have been incapable of ensuring the fortifications' endurance for another almost 100 years without periodical repairs that would have left archaeological traces.

Despite all this, the historiography still perpetuates two trends, one dating the fortification to the 9th–11th centuries (especially the older Romanian historiography, but also some of the more recent) and the other placing here the castrum of the medieval county of Arad. Indifferent to how we might date it, the fortification's role as power centre in the area cannot be denied. Starting from this idea, it could have only been built and used in the framework of a well-established state entity or of one in the course of becoming established. As it is known, the creation of the royal county of Arad cannot be dated accurately, since it became a separate part of the larger and previously founded county of Cenad³⁴. The mention of 15 households inside the fortification (*in castrum Orodienensi sunt 15 mans-es*)³⁵ in 1131 might be connected to the archaeological discoveries made on the northern and western sides of the fortification, where specialists identified dwellings that according to shape and material can be dated to the wider interval of the 11th–13th centuries. It is very likely that a closer analysis of the material might reveal slightly different chronologies for some of the dwellings, i.e. we might reach earlier datings for some of them (maybe the end of the 10th century, certainly the 11th century – those discovered in squares C, E, D, and F) and less late for others (11th–12th centuries, maybe even the first half of the 13th century – see the dwelling discovered in square F and Trench 2).

One of the most important early events during which the fortification is mentioned relate to the kingdom's diet organized somewhere near the fortification of Orod by queen Helen, king Bela II's wife (1131–1141)³⁶. It was then that queen Helen ordered the trial and execution of nobles guilty of having blinded her husband during the time of king Koloman. One knows that in 1177 the fortification's possessions were confirmed³⁷. Thus, the *iobagiones* of the castrum in Arad were mentioned in 1213 (*iobagiones castrum Orod*): Basu hotnog, Nuhu, Bayr, Belche, Kelemin, centurions, and other servants³⁸. Other mentions of villages belonging to the fortification date

³³ RUSU 1980, p. 165–171.

³⁴ RUSU, HUREZAN 1999, p. 34.

³⁵ GYÖRFFY 1966, p. 170.

³⁶ SRH I, 1937, p. 447.

³⁷ GYÖRFFY 1966, p. 170–172.

³⁸ DIR I, 1951, p. 57.

to 1214, 1222, while the last mentions are from 1232³⁹. The number of villages and possessions attached to the fortification was certainly larger than written documents allow us to grasp⁴⁰.

It seems that the presence of the prepositure and its rising importance were inversely proportional to that of the fortification located in its close proximity⁴¹. This might be just one of the causes, probably not the most important, leading to the latter's decline and eventual abandonment. In such conditions, it is very likely that by the time of the Tatar invasion (in 1241) the fortification had lost its initial functions and had been abandoned, reason for which the most important contemporary narrative source (Rogerius's *Carmen Miserabile*) does not mention it. Archaeologically as well, habitation inside and around the fortification did not continue beyond the 13th century.

The resumption of archaeological research involving a strategy based on complementary methods and analyses, in conjunction with the results already known, could shed light on the chronology and layout of this site. We have tried to take a first step by conducting non-invasive measurements. In 2022, a magnetometric survey was carried out on the entire surface of the fortification, allowing us to observe anomalies linked mainly to the fortification system of the wooden enclosure (Fig. 6/1)⁴². Unfortunately, the results concerning the built structures, both residential and ecclesiastical, are not clear, and thus, neither are the internal organisation and settled area of the castle.

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³⁹ DIR I, 1951, p. 63, 131, 262.

⁴⁰ RUSU 1980, p. 170–171.

⁴¹ RUSU, HUREZAN 1999, p. 35; MĂRGINEAN 2016, p. 97–100.

⁴² The measurements were made by Adrian-Cristian Ardelean and Adriana Sărășan (National Museum of the Banat, Timișoara), to whom I would like to thank in this way.

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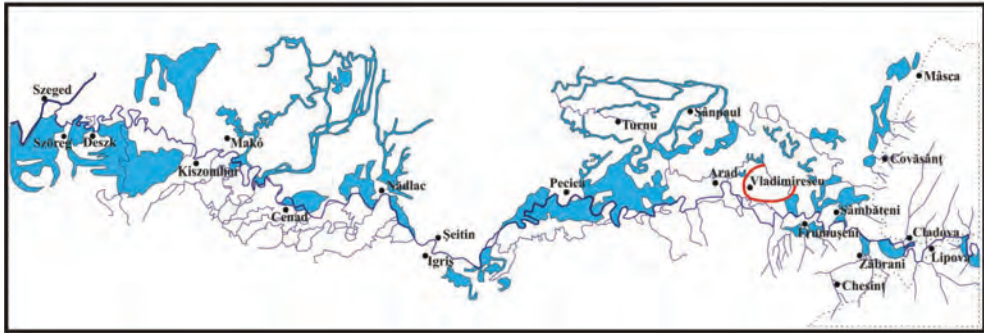
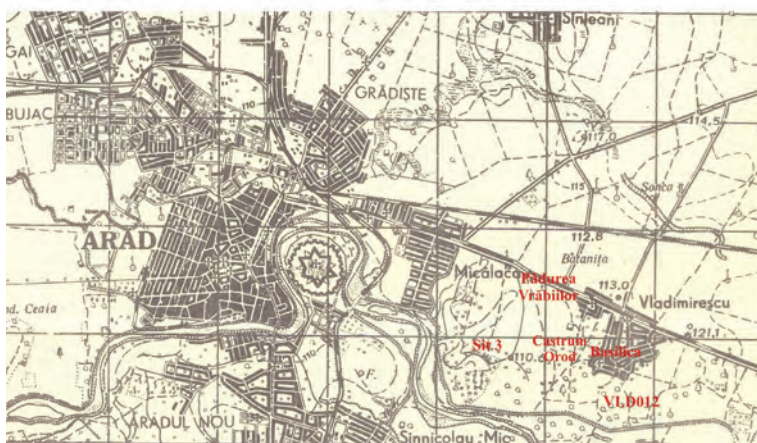


Fig. 1. Vladimirescu on a map with the marshy areas in the lower basin of Mureș.



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Fig. 2. 1 – Location of archaeological sites around Vladimirescu (old Orod) on a map from 18th century; 2 – And on a map from 20th century.

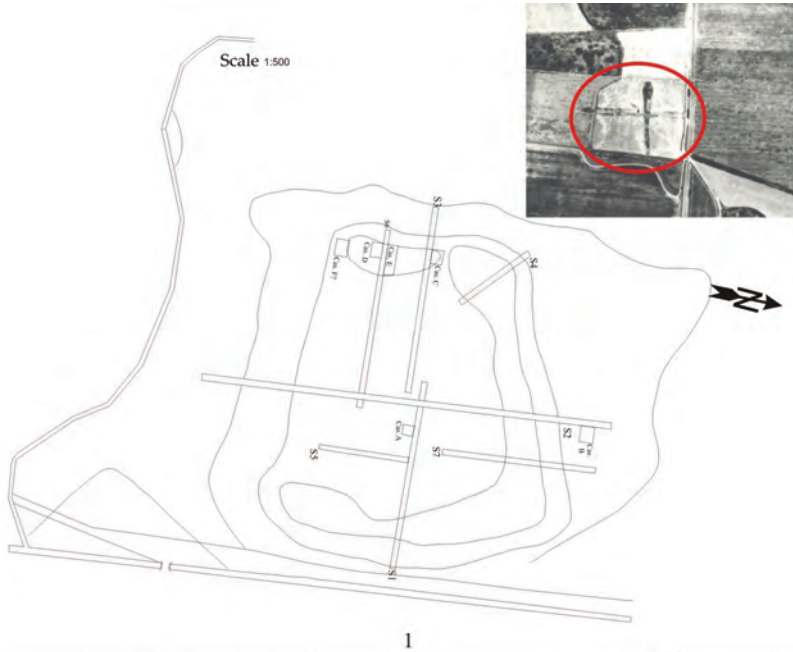


Fig. 3. 1 – Satellite image from the excavation period (1975–1976) and the general plan of the excavations; 2 – Google Earth image with the approximate layout of the general excavation plan.

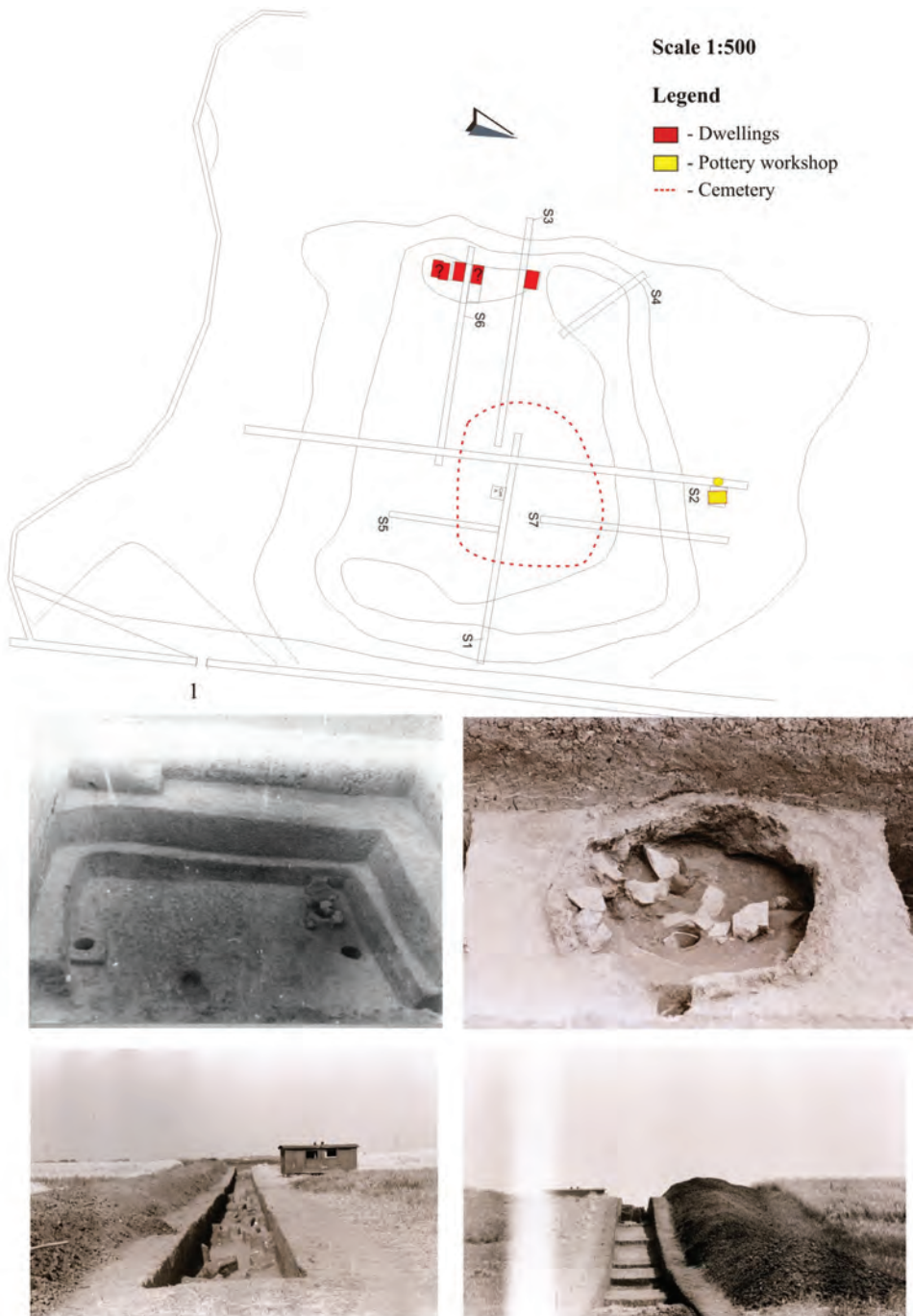
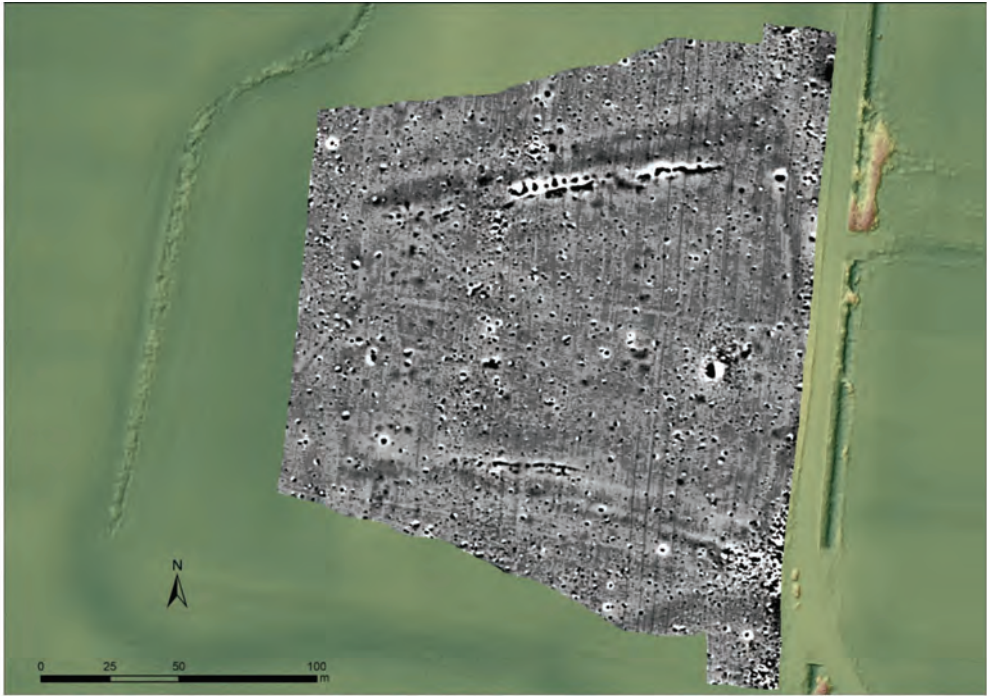


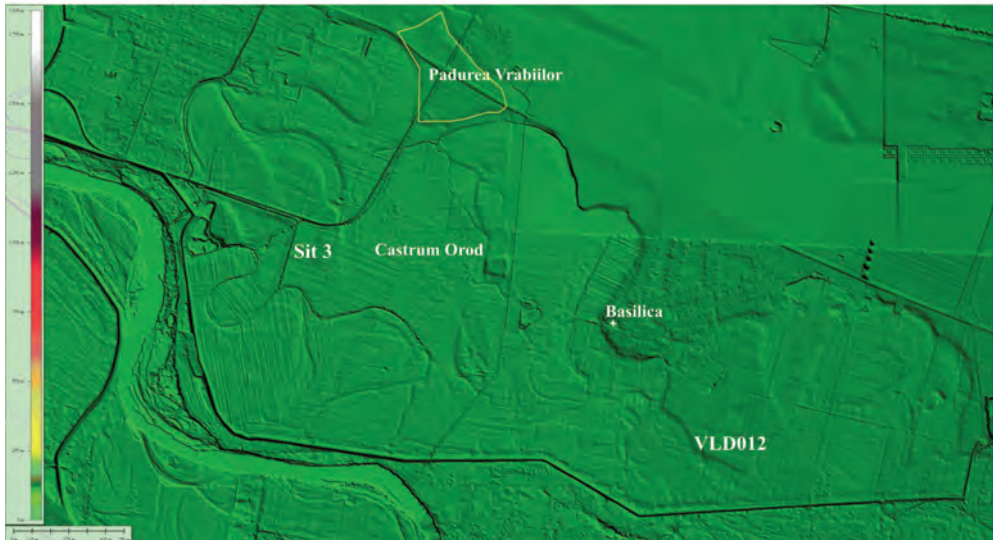
Fig. 4. General plan of the archaeological excavation and some photographs from the research (after ZDROBA, BARBU 1975–1980).



Fig. 5. Images of graves dug in the 1977 campaign (after ZDROBA, BARBU 1976).



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Fig. 6. 1 – The plan of the fortification after the magnetometric measurements; 2 – Location of archaeological sites around Vladimirescu (old Orod) after a Lidar scan.

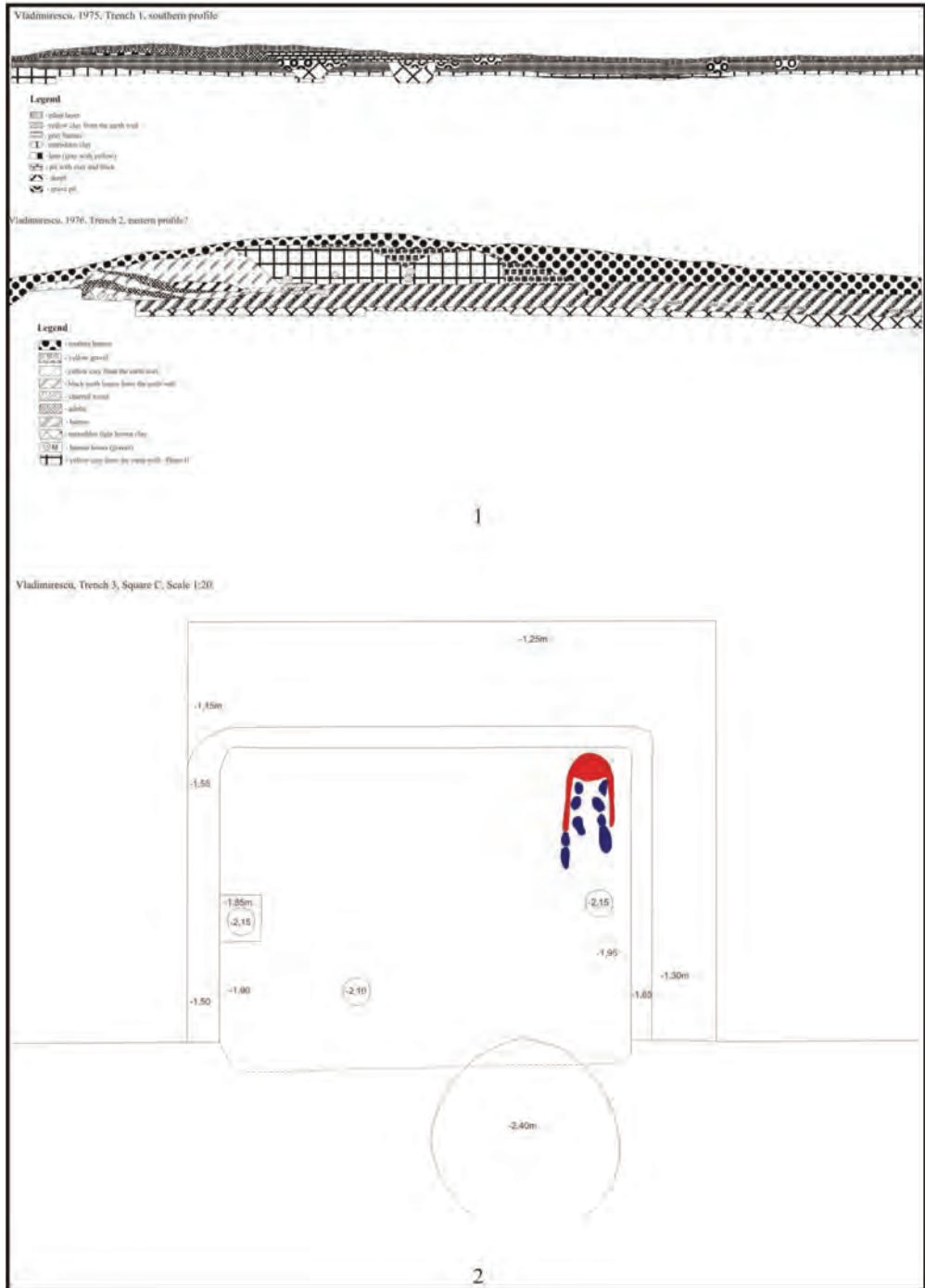


Fig. 7. 1 – Profiles of sections S1 and S2; 2 – Plan of the dwelling in cassette C (after ZDROBA, BARBU 1975–1976).