

## HISTRIA. THE BASILICA „PÂRVAN” SECTOR. (I). THE SECTOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL TOPOGRAPHY (2001-2007)<sup>1</sup>

Mircea ANGELESCU,  
Valentin BOTTEZ

**Cuvinte cheie:** Histria, sector basilica „Pârvan”, *bothros*, complex eclesiastic roman; zid de incintă roman târziu; clădiri arhaice, clasice și elenistice.

**Keywords:** Histria; the Basilica „Pârvan” sector; *bothros*; roman ecclesiastical complex; late roman defense wall; archaic, classical and hellenistic buildings.

*Reluarea săpăturii în sectorul basilicii „Pârvan” a făcut posibilă completarea informațiilor provenite din săpăturile anterioare, sistematizarea datelor obținute precum și conturarea unor concluzii științifice referitoare la complexele și materialele descoperite. Prezentul articol este primul dintr-o serie prin care ne propunem să aducem la zi publicarea noilor descoperiri și să eliminăm câteva semne de întrebare care încă mai planează asupra funcționalității, succesiunii și datării unor complexe din această zonă. Sectorul basilicii „Pârvan”, cum este denumit convențional, se situează în partea de SE a orașului roman târziu. Primele săpături conduse de V. Pârvan și continuate de M. Lambrino, au fost efectuate în spiritul perioadei de pionierat a arheologiei românești. Prin urmare, o bună parte din stratigrafia zonei a fost bulversată, iar informațiile istorice aferente straturilor distruse imposibil de recuperat. Au rămas însă și zone neafectate de vechile secțiuni.*

*Săpăturile „noi” au fost începute în anul 2001 și au avut ca principale obiective: lămurirea problematicii legate de zidul de apărare roman târziu; o analiză mai amănunțită asupra complexului ecleziastic; probitatea teoriei avansate de M. Lambrino, conform căreia acest edificiu creștin ar suprapune un sanctuar păgân; clarificarea situației monumentelor grecești din zonă.*

*Obiectivele asupra cărora s-au axat cercetările sunt: un bothros, de care ar putea fi legată prezența unui templu în zonă; un fragment de zid (Z29) construit din blocuri de șist verde legate cu pământ, descoperit pe o lungime de 10 m, datat între sfârșitul*

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<sup>1</sup> During this period the team working on this sector comprised: Mr. Mircea V. Angelescu (MCC, IAB; 2001-present), Miss Adriana Panaite (IAB; 2001-2002), Mr. Valentin-Victor Bottez (FIB; MNIR; 2002-present), Miss Anca Timofan (MNUAI; 2004-present).

secolului VI – începutul secolului V a. Chr.; cinci construcții grecești (CG1-5); complexul ecleziastic roman târziu format din basilica creștină (sec. V-VI p. Chr.), strada descoperită de-a lungul laturii ei nordice și clădirea civilă de la nord de stradă; sectorul de sud al incintei romane târzii. Cercetările arheologice recente au demonstrat că basilica „Pârvan” (notată de noi basilica 2), suprapune o altă construcție creștină (basilica 1), funcțională în sec. V p. Chr.

The present paper is the first in a series of articles to be published on the results of the current excavations in the Basilica “Pârvan” Sector at Histria<sup>2</sup>. We will present further on:

- A) the **previous excavations** in this area;
- B) the **objectives of the recent excavations**;
- C) the **archaeological complexes** identified and investigated, as well as
- D) the **research and data-processing method** used.

As this article presents the general situation of the sector, future articles will focus on specific issues or archaeological complexes and the problems they raise.

The Basilica „Pârvan” Sector covers the south-eastern part of the late Roman city. Its limits are: to the South the late Roman defenses wall, to the West the „economic district” (Rom. „cartierul economic”), to the North the Cetate sector and to the East an area that has not been researched which links the sector to the Domus Sector. The area it covers is the southern part of the acropolis, which constituted a centre for the main religious and political institutions starting as early as the archaic Greek period (the sacred area to the North<sup>3</sup>). The area continued to play an important role throughout the Roman period, and even though no temples that could be dated to this period were discovered<sup>4</sup>, the western part of the acropolis housed impressive buildings during the 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> centuries A.D. (levels IA, IB, IC<sup>5</sup>) and the administrative district (3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> centuries = levels IIA-IIB), which comprised no fewer than three civil basilicas. During the late Roman period, the ancient acropolis housed three of the city’s four Christian basilicas. It is therefore to be expected that the area covered by the Basilica „Pârvan” Sector still has important archaeological remains waiting to be discovered.

**A) Previous excavations** in the area have been conducted by V. Pârvan (1914-1916 and 1921) and Marcelle Lambrino (1932-1935). V. Pârvan, during his excavations at the late-Roman defense wall, uncovered a building with a brick pavement, which later proved to be a Christian basilica built „on the city’s SE wall”.<sup>6</sup> South of the basilica’s pavement he discovered a four-cornered pit dug

<sup>2</sup> For the yearly archaeological reports see CCA 2001-2007.

<sup>3</sup> See Histria VII; important Greek structures were also uncovered in the Basilica Florescu Sector (see CCA 2003-2007).

<sup>4</sup> A *bothros* or votive pit containing material dated to the Roman period was discovered in the Basilica Florescu Sector – see CCA 2003, the Basilica Florescu Sector.

<sup>5</sup> For the Histrian chronology see SUCEVEANU 1982, *passim*.

<sup>6</sup> Our own translation from PÂRVAN 1923, 9, no. 5.

directly in the rock, containing material from the 6<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C. After delimiting the basilica, Pârvan moved forwards, uncovering to its North a street and beyond it a large building.<sup>7</sup>

We have no information concerning Marcelle Lambrino's excavations. Her archaeological diary, lost for a long time and only partially recovered, offers no new information on the work in the sector under scrutiny. In *Histria I*, her name is not mentioned (due to her *persona non grata*-status in the newly-installed communist state), but further excavations are said to have extended some 120 m<sup>2</sup> to the W of the basilica. These were done without concern for the stratigraphy, and most of the buildings identified (dated in *Histria I* to the late Roman-Byzantine period, and being described as built of stone bound with earth) were nearly destroyed by 1954.

In her own book, *Les Vases archaïques d'Histria* (1938), Lambrino's chief concern is the pottery, as well as its archaeological and historical implications. Information on the excavations proper (to be found at p. 14) is scarce, except for the fact that she respected the late-Roman buildings at the surface and excavated inside small rooms, which compelled her to make only limited investigations. This would imply that she excavated beyond the walls of the basilica, which is not mentioned in connection to any of the discoveries.

As far as stratigraphy is concerned, there are only two pieces of information: **1)** pp. 14-15 - the fact that the rock is covered everywhere by a 1 m-thick lime-yellow clay layer („limon argileux”), considered by her to be untouched, on which the first signs of civilization identified went no further back than the half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C. (oriental Greek pottery); **2)** p. 359 – the fact that at a depth of about 3 m she found a hard yellow-clay layer, under which she discovered the first of the three archaic ceramic deposits, then followed another yellow-clay layer, then the other two deposits. It is unclear if the two deposits' pits were dug in the yellow clay layer mentioned at pp. 14-15, or if they were discovered in an archaeological layer.

The archaeological discoveries treated in *Les Vases archaïques d'Histria* are, as the title says, the ceramic finds. Lambrino concentrates on the contents of the three archaic deposits ( $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$  and  $\gamma$ ) she discovered, which are located according to a photograph. Unfortunately, besides a vague assumption we can make that the deposits were discovered at a depth of approximately 3 m and that remains of certain buildings were also discovered nearby, no further information is to be drawn from this disappointing source. Nevertheless, an important information at p. 359 is the mention of a structure which „could have been a votive chapel” in the area where the three ceramic deposits were discovered. No further explanations are given for this shocking statement. The pottery itself<sup>8</sup> is compared and found similar to that discovered in sanctuaries at Naucratis and Delos (pp. 25-26), and along with the large Ionian amphorae (p. 96), the crown-vessels (pp. 205-206), and a votive offering in the shape of a leg<sup>9</sup>, is presented as an argument for the presence of the temple of *Apollo Ietros* under the brick pavement of the

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<sup>7</sup> CONDURACHI 1954, 155.

<sup>8</sup> An inventory of deposit  $\alpha$  is presented at p. 359.

<sup>9</sup> This is not described and is nowhere to be found for further examination.

Christian basilica.

Even if Lambrino's discoveries appear as very important, the extreme lack of information regarding the conditions the archaeological discoveries were made in do not allow for any specific conclusions to be drawn. The detailed description of the area<sup>10</sup> in *Histria I* was made according to the information provided by the structures visible in the field at that time, and no connections with Lambrino's data can be made.

### **B) The objectives of the recent excavations.**

According to the site's strategy imposed by Prof. Al. Suceveanu starting with 2001, all old sectors, unfinished or unpublished, were to be re-opened in order for research to be completed, the information published and the respective monuments to be either restored and introduced in the tourist circuit, or conserved and covered with earth, according to their importance. And the area around the so-called „Pârvan” basilica presents several important elements for Histria's historical and archaeological past.

First, the area is delimited to the South by the late-Roman defense wall; that is by the late-Roman defense walls<sup>11</sup> (phase A – Probus; phase B – Diocletianus/Constantine; phase C – Theodosius I and phase D – Anastasius), of whose trajectories and trajectories in this area little is known – especially on how phase A (a wall with a different trajectory) was replaced by phase B.

Second, there are the problems raised by the late-Roman ecclesiastical complex: the position of the basilica and its relation with the late-Roman defense wall, the existence of an ecclesiastical complex and its function in the late-Roman city (a problem of special interest due to the existence of a similar complex to the North and North-East, formed by the Episcopal basilica<sup>12</sup> and the late-Roman residential district conventionally known as the „Domus” sector).

Third, there is Marcelle Lambrino's theory, concerning the existence of a sanctuary under the Christian basilica. Although Lambrino did not produce clear evidence of such a structure, the existence of a pagan sanctuary under a Christian basilica is a hypothesis never to be taken lightly, as an extensive bibliography<sup>13</sup> proves.

And last, but not least, an important element to be cleared is the situation of Greek monuments in the area. As it is known, apart from the sacred area, the structures uncovered in the Basilica „Florescu” Sector and an archaic structure under one of the Roman civil basilicas<sup>14</sup> are the only Greek buildings to be discovered on Histria's acropolis.

Following the general research strategy imposed on the site, taking into account the importance of the monuments discovered in the area and its

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<sup>10</sup> CONDURACHI 1954, 155-164; the description concerns the basilica with its “porch”, as well as the street to its north.

<sup>11</sup> For a full treatment of the issue, see DOMĂNEANȚU 1990.

<sup>12</sup> SUCEVEANU 2007.

<sup>13</sup> DAGRON 1977 and FRANTZ 1965 with references.

<sup>14</sup> See CCA 2003-2007 for the Basilica Florescu Sector and CCA 2001-2003 for the BTG Sector.

archaeological potential, the sector around the basilica located in the south-eastern part of the late-Roman city (as described at the beginning of the present paper) was re-opened in 2001 under the name of the Basilica „Pârvan” Sector.

A set of general objectives was established for the new excavations:

- Delimitation of the area affected by previous archaeological excavations, and an assessment of the damage they produced;
- Research of the southern side of the late-Roman defense wall and that of any other defense walls in the area;
- Research of the late-Roman ecclesiastical complex (the basilica, as well as the street and the large building to its North);
- Verify the Marcelle Lambrino’s hypothesis concerning the existence of a temple underneath the Christian basilica;
- Research of the Greek monuments in the area.

Before passing to the structures uncovered in the sector, we would like to present the extent to which the area has been affected by modern excavations.

First of all, the entire area’s stratigraphy has practically disappeared down to the present-day treading level (the last phase? of the Christian basilica and of the street to its North). From the beginning this situation transforms the effort to precisely date the last phase of the Christian basilica, as well as that of the street and large building to its North, into a hopeless endeavor.

To make matters worse, we have –thus far, as we have not covered yet all of the sector– identified several areas where the layers have been disturbed down to greater depths (fig. 1). The largest area disturbed by modern excavations covers the entire centre of the Christian basilica, down to the rock. The excavations were probably conducted by V. Pârvan, because it is there that we have identified a pit dug into the rock, which has clearly been excavated before (and approximately 1 m above it the spot was marked by a column fragment). This excavation also affected the entire stratigraphy of a Greek building (CG 4<sup>15</sup> – see further on), of a large Greek? wall (Z29<sup>16</sup> – see further on and fig. 2) and physically destroyed parts of other two Greek buildings (CG 1 and CG 2).

The area West of the basilica was also affected by modern excavations, which disturbed the stratigraphy of the entrance to the basilica (the so-called „porch”) and the structures immediately underneath (of which only scarce remains were discovered).

The basilica’s north-eastern annex also underwent pre-war excavations, which destroyed only the area near the so-called secondary entrance (to be considered cautiously, as it is not mentioned in *Histria I*) down to a level of +4.68 m.

Another area of critical importance which was previously excavated is the area between phases A and B of the late-Roman wall (fig. 2), situation that prevented us from analyzing the stratigraphical relation between the two phases; also, South of the precinct, „outside” the late-Roman city, a 4 m-wide excavation

<sup>15</sup> CG stands for the Romanian conventional term „clădire grecească” = Greek building. Accordingly, for Roman buildings we will use the abbreviation CR = „clădire romană”.

<sup>16</sup> Z stands for the Romanian „zid” = wall, and S for archaeological section.

along the wall was identified, starting from the south-western corner and ending at the point where the defense wall makes a corner, changing its trajectory from WNW-ESE to SW-NE.

Finally, the Christian basilica's walls have been reconstructed in 1959 from the current treading level, which renders them useless to a scientific output.

To sum up, the sector were heavily affected by previous excavations. No general stratigraphy can be established for the Christian basilica; no absolute stratigraphy can be established for **CG1** and **CG4**, and the stratigraphical relation between phases A and B of the late-Roman defense wall is lost (further on westwards the stratigraphy is disturbed by late-Roman dwellings from the „economic district“). There are, however, several seemingly undisturbed areas which will be used in order to establish the area's stratigraphy. One of them is the basilica's western part (the western profile of section **S1**, which covers the center of the basilica, and the eastern profile of **S1E**, which covers the area East of the basilica's entrance); another is its northern part (which contains the brick pavement of the last phase of functioning); other revealing profiles were obtained in the area of the apse and that of the north-eastern annex, and the street to the North also seems to be in a good state of preservation. A final area where further stratigraphical information (concerning the late-Roman defense wall, the basilica and its north-eastern annex) could be available is the area immediately East of the „Pârvan“ basilica, covered with earth after Pârvan's excavations.

### C) The archaeological complexes identified and investigated.

#### 1) Structures dated to the Greek period.

Following the recent excavations we have identified several archaeological complexes dated to the Greek period – a **votive pit/bothros**, a **large wall (Z29)** and **five buildings (CG 1-5)**.

The **pit/bothros** is located in the centre of the space occupied by the Christian basilica (fig. 2), and was dug in the rock, though we do not know on which level it was started (the pit and all the levels above it were destroyed by Pârvan's excavation). We know that the material found inside by Pârvan was dated to the archaic and classical periods<sup>17</sup>, which corresponds to our dating of the thick yellow clay layer that seems to cover the entire area starting at a level of approximately +2.50 m above the sea level; this layer is probably to be identified with that mentioned by Lambrino at pp. 14-15 of her book. We can therefore hypothetically assume that the pit was contemporary to the yellow clay level, and therefore to be dated to the 6<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C. The pit is oval (2×1.60 m), has a N-S orientation and is approximately 2.50 m deep. Its function was probably religious, as its location on the acropolis and other analogies suggest.<sup>18</sup> What will never be known is whether the pit was a votive one or a *bothros*; the presence of a *bothros* would imply the presence of a sanctuary in the area, while a votive

<sup>17</sup> *Histria I*, 155.

<sup>18</sup> See CCA 2003, the Basilica Florescu Sector, CCA 2002, the BTG Sector and ALEXANDRESCU 2005, 199-200, 202, 205, 208, 211, for the *bothroi* of the temples of Aphrodite and Zeus.

complex could be linked to the city's southern limit.<sup>19</sup> Due to the level it was constructed at, and the dating of its material, it is –until now– the oldest archaeological complex uncovered by the latest excavations.

South of the pit, along the late Roman defense wall, we have identified a **large wall (Z29** – figs. 2 and 3). It was uncovered on a length of over 10 m (its maximum preserved height is 1.50 m near the so-called „gate” in the late Roman defense wall, and its thickness is of at least 1.10 m at the point where it has a „déchirement”), and seemed to have served as base for the late Roman defense wall; also, when the Christian basilica was constructed, its southern wall was built on **Z29**, after covering it with a layer of mortar. The building technique (green shale stones bound with yellow clay) and the depth at which it was built suggest a very early construction date. Its relative chronology (the fact that to the East the wall seems to have destroyed **CG4**'s southern limit) seems to suggest the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century – beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. As to its function, it is difficult to assume anything, as its stratigraphy was destroyed and most of it is superposed by the late Roman defense wall and the mortar layer on which the basilica's southern wall was built. Its impressive dimensions suggest an important structure. Taking into account its location, on the acropolis' southern limit, one would immediately think of a defense wall. Even though this is not impossible, the building technique is totally different from that of the Greek defense walls discovered thus far.<sup>20</sup> Another possible use for this structure is terracing the terrain on the edge of the acropolis (our own excavations South of the late Roman defense wall, as well as a sonar sounding in the area, performed in 1996 by a German team<sup>21</sup>, show that the late Roman defense wall was built on the margin of a rocky cliff that dropped abruptly and which most probably constituted the city's southern limit, as already supposed by the results of the excavation made in 1996 in the Domus area – S.IV). But unless we gain further information (which is highly improbable), **Z29**'s exact function will remain unknown.

**CG1**<sup>22</sup> was a rectangular structure (figs. 2 and 4) located under the Christian's basilica western half; only its northern (uncovered l 1.50, w 0.60 m, max. h 1.70) and eastern walls were discovered (the northern wall's western limit is still buried in the baulk separating S001 from S001E; its southern wall was completely destroyed by recent excavations and its western wall –if preserved– lies in the baulk previously mentioned). The building's foundation is 0.60 deep, and the maximum preserved height of the elevation is 1.10 m (the eastern wall); the walls are built of mostly green shale stones bound with yellow clay. Fortunately we identified the structure's treading level (context 1006, a yellow clay level uncovered at +3.10 m), on which we discovered a Hellenistic amphora and three stamped amphora handles, which dated the building at the beginning

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<sup>19</sup> 12 Hellenistic amphorae set in a circle (unpublished) were discovered near the acropolis's southern limit (in the Domus Sector, section S. IV) in 1996.

<sup>20</sup> For details see ANGELESCU 2003-2005 with further references.

<sup>21</sup> For further details see HÖCKMANN, MÜLLER, PESCHEL, WOEHLE 1997 and HÖCKMANN, PESCHEL, WOEHLE 1996-1998.

<sup>22</sup> See n. 16.

of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. We have no indication as far as its function is concerned. One of the problems this structure raises is the fact that its eastern wall's upper course starts at a very small depth under the Christian basilica's treading level. This leaves us only two possibilities: either the area was abandoned starting with the Hellenistic period and down to the late Roman period, or –more likely than an abandonment of an area of the acropolis– when the Christian basilica was built all the layers and structures from the preceding periods (from the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. up to the Hellenistic period) were destroyed. What is certain is that, up to the present moment, we did not identify anywhere in the sector an archaeological complex dated clearly to the early Roman period (1<sup>st</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> centuries A.D.).

**CG2** (fig. 2) is a structure located East of **CG1**, in the northern part of **S001**; only two walls (WSW-ENE: l 1.80, w 0.40 m; NNW-SSE: l 1.50 m, w 0.50m) were partially and poorly preserved (on up to three courses), built also of mostly green shale stones bound with yellow clay (which suggests that it was built in the Greek period). The structure's stratigraphy was completely destroyed. If future excavations are to investigate the area along the basilica's northern wall, maybe we will obtain further information on this building.

**CG3** (fig. 2) was supposedly a rectangular building made of adobe, located North of **CG1** –in **S002**–, near the basilica's northern wall. Only its western wall is partially preserved (l 1.20 m, w 0.30 m), while a small part of its southern wall (l 0.30 m, w 0.30 m) is now lost. A treading level was identified in connection to this building, on which we discovered a Fikellura amphora dated around the mid-6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.; this date is also confirmed by the construction technique: Greek archaic structures made of adobe have been discovered on the city's western plateau.<sup>23</sup> The treading level is covered with strong burn traces, which suggest a violent end of the building's use.

**CG4** (figs. 2 and 5) is the best preserved Greek building we have discovered this far in the sector. It is made up of an almost square room (3.30 × 2.80 m) with the foundation and base of a (wooden?) central pillar in its centre. The structure's walls are made of mostly green shale stones bound with yellow clay; it was built directly in the archaic yellow clay layer mentioned above, by extracting the yellow clay in the area to be occupied by the future structure, and „covering“ the pit's limits with stone walls. This technique accounts for the fact that on the inside the walls are very well built, while on the „outside“ –really where the wall met the yellow clay– they follow the shape of the pit's margin, which results in a very irregular trajectory. The stone walls are preserved on only two courses above the archaic yellow clay layer. This can be the result of a violent process, ancient or modern, or maybe the building had an elevation made of adobe, now lost. Such types of semi-buried structures are well attested throughout the western and especially northern Black Sea areas.<sup>24</sup> The building's western wall continued southwards and seems to have been destroyed by the above-mentioned large wall (**Z29**). In this context, **CG4**'s southern wall seems to be a more likely a new limit of the structure (the wall's southern face has a highly irregular aspect, while its northern face is nicely built) after the construction of **Z29**, than a previous wall

<sup>23</sup> DIMITRIU 1966, especially 22 and 32.

<sup>24</sup> TSETSKHLADZE 2004, *passim*.

that divided the building into two separate rooms. The second hypothesis is supported by the fact that to the East, there is a gap in the southern wall, marked by four stones built at the same level with the central pillar –which could therefore have constituted a threshold that made the connection to the southern room. The level of destruction caused by the building of **Z29** and later of the late Roman defense wall makes it difficult to make any further assumptions on this situation. The building was first discovered during previous excavations and, as **S001**'s eastern profile shows (fig. 6), all the layers inside it were destroyed. We have discovered, only a few centimeters above the rock, fragments of late Roman pottery, which clearly indicates a modern intervention. Therefore our only stratigraphical data comes from the area around **CG4** - more precisely, it is the massive yellow clay layer. This layer was dated to the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. by the material found in a pit discovered 1.50 m NW from **CG4**. The direct connection between the yellow clay layer and **CG4** is given by a projection of the latter's northern wall northwards (fig. 2), which rests firmly on the yellow clay level. Thus, a relative chronology indicates that **CG4** was in use somewhere between the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. The function of **CG4** remains unknown; its location on the acropolis, as well as the material it was built of, suggest that it was an important building<sup>25</sup> for the Greek city.

**CG5** (figs. 2 and 7) is a rectangular building located directly under the Christian basilica's apse. It is made mostly of green shale stones bound with yellow clay. Up to the present moment we have partially uncovered the building's western, southern and eastern walls (the northern wall was not discovered). The structure's south-eastern corner was destroyed by the construction of the late Roman defense wall (fig. 7) and, later on, the Christian basilica's apse was built directly over its eastern and southern walls, as well as over the late Roman defense wall (which led Pârvan to speak about the basilica built *on* the late defense wall). **CG5** was built in the massive yellow clay layer and its foundations were laid directly on the rock (leveled with a compact layer of yellow clay). In this case it is clear that, even if the structure's internal treading level was located beyond the external treading level (the yellow clay level), its elevation was made of stone (**CG5**'s western wall is preserved on a height of 1.80 m). The structure's internal stratigraphy was relatively undisturbed; the lowest layer (context 4007) was dated by small atypical shards from the archaic and early classical periods (therefore contemporary to **CG4**). A more refined chronology will be offered by the final processing of the ceramic material.

## 2) The late Roman ecclesiastical complex.

The ecclesiastical complex is composed of the Christian basilica (5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D.), the street along its northern side and the large civil building North of the street. The elements that connect the three are the two thresholds that seal both ends of the street at the limits of the basilica, thus revealing a direct relation between the three. Our excavations have not touched yet the civil

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<sup>25</sup> Another archaic building made of green shale stones was discovered by Catrinel Domăneanțu beneath one of the civil basilicas in the official district – see CCA 2002, the BTG Sector.

building, and research on the street has just started and has not yet produced any revealing results.

The Christian basilica, conventionally known as **Basilica 2**, was already exposed at the beginning of our excavations.<sup>26</sup> The only new information concerns the fact that the southern half of its apse was built directly on **CG5**'s eastern and southern walls and on the late Roman defense wall. Also, the masonry of its apse and northern wall indicate a succession of two phases of functioning (fig. 8). Also, another new element is the fact that the basilica's foundations are only about 1 m deep, which is very unusual for a building of this size (approximately 19.30 × 12.50 m). To its NE, following the trajectory of its northern wall, we have identified what seems to be an annex (figs. 2 and 9), directly adjacent to the basilica's apse and eastern wall (this far we have not identified the annex's eastern wall).

In 2004 we discovered – starting W of **Basilica 2**'s *synthronos*, going under its apse and westwards projection of the altar– the apse of another Christian basilica (conventionally named **Basilica 1**). The apse (contexts 4002 and 5002) is 1.10 m wide, was uncovered on a length of 6 m and is preserved on a height varying around 0.5 m, which formed part of its foundation. Unfortunately, this means the church's entire elevation and its treading level(s) are now lost. It is made of mostly green shale stones bound with mortar; at its southern end, the apse seems to have been violently destroyed, while at its northern extremity it strangely ends in a neat line (figs. 2 and 10), as if the construction was abandoned there or the eastern wall was carefully dismantled from the apse northwards. Southwards the stratigraphy was destroyed by modern excavations, but to the North the situation is different, and still there are no traces of the eastern wall. Near **Basilica 2**'s western entrance we have uncovered the foundation of a wall (11 × 0.70 m) doubled by a colonnade (figs. 2 and 11), which could represent **Basilica 1**'s western limit. But until we find a direct link between the apse and the western wall and portico, this remains only a hypothesis. Hopefully, excavations of the street to the North will reveal other remains of this early basilica. We have to stress the fact that this basilica (for which we can –for now– only suppose the 5<sup>th</sup> century as a construction date) was the first Christian sanctuary on the spot. The date and conditions of its destruction remain in the dark, but it is clear that the second church –**Basilica 2**– was built only after the terrain had been thoroughly leveled and the remains of the first basilica almost completely removed.

The discovery of two superposed Christian basilicas is a situation similar to that found at the Episcopal basilica in Histria, which also superposes an earlier church.<sup>27</sup> Thus, the choice for rebuilding an entirely new church on the same spot could have a reason determined by the presence of a pagan sanctuary in the area. Another church in Histria –the Basilica Florescu – was built over structures with seemingly religious purposes.<sup>28</sup>

### 3) The southern part of the late Roman defense wall.

<sup>26</sup> It is scrupulously described in *Histria I*, 155-159.

<sup>27</sup> SUCEVEANU 2007, 17-18; BĂJENARU 2003-2005.

<sup>28</sup> See CCA 2001-2007, the Basilica Florescu Sector.

Although thoroughly investigated, the late Roman defense wall yielded several new elements following our excavations. The monument's stratigraphy in the area investigated until now was almost completely destroyed by previous excavations. Therefore, the future architectural study, doubled by a section through the wall, will probably bring more precise data on the monument's complicated archaeological situation.

First of all, during the regularization of Pârvan's excavation in the central area of **Basilica 2**, which resulted in the large section S001 (fig. 1), we have partially uncovered what seems to be a small gate in the wall, later on blocked by a wall made of stones bound with mortar. As half of the monument lies beneath the magistral baulk which will give an N-S profile of the basilica –and therefore will be the last to be dismantled–, we cannot speculate more on the exact use of this architectural element, or on its exact chronology.

Second, in S010 and S009 (the area where the two trajectories – **phases A** and **B** of the precinct wall– run almost parallel for about 15 m before they meet), phase B has two plinths (figs. 2 and 12). These plinths do not have the same trajectory, and the lower one disappears under the second one where the two phases meet. This, along with the fact that the two walls run almost parallel (**phase A** not only was preserved at the same height as **phase B**, but a sort of platform –see fig. 2– built between the two indicates that they even functioned together), suggests that **phase B** could have been built on an older defense wall, whose trajectory not only enlarged the late city's surface but also provided a solid base for the new wall. Otherwise it is difficult to understand the need for such a costly building program at such a short distance from **phase A**.

All the monuments mentioned in this section are still being investigated and will be published separately after research on them has come to an end.

#### D) The research and data-processing method used.

The method we have applied, starting with 2005, contains three levels of data gathering and processing:

1) For the **primary processing/field research** we have implemented a **system of paper-records** for each stratigraphical unit/context (layer, pit, and building structure), starting from the M.O.L.A.S. archaeological recording system, which allows us to gather and manage more precise standardized data on the monuments and complexes we excavate and study. Thus, each context has a standard number and description – dimensions, color, components, conditions of excavation, use, additional comments, dating, function and depth levels.<sup>29</sup> The actual record also contains a space reserved for a hand-sketch for better understanding the archaeological situation in question.

2) For the **secondary processing** stage these paper records, along with data for the sector, for each section, ceramic/artifact and sample package, are introduced each year in a **general database**. In this database we are also

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<sup>29</sup> These are also standardized, as they are taken in reference to the same fixed point, whose absolute height we know and thus we obtain the absolute height of each monument in reference to the sea level.

connecting the gathered data with the photographic and drawings archive. The database does not serve only purely scientific purposes, but it also provides an accurate and detailed situation of the archaeological heritage discovered and researched in the sector.

3) For the **final processing** stage, all the data (AutoCAD drawings and databases) is integrated in a **GIS application**, thus obtaining a precise and reliable plan for the entire sector, based on new and precise topographical plans that are upgraded with field information each year. The importance of this plan resides in the fact that it also allows us to undertake precise, yet differentiated statistical, planimetric and urban analyses for each monument apart or sets of monuments/complexes grouped in desired categories. We are therefore able to have a separate image for all the monuments from one period, see the evolution of the urban planning in the area etc.

The GIS application also contains data about old excavations, the trajectories of the railroads used for the wagons, the areas where the earth from old excavations was deposited, the main structures and information that was found in old publications – all the available information that is needed for a history of the excavations in the site.

On the other hand, using the AutoCAD drawings and the databases a complete and up to date record of the excavation is maintained, as part of the GIS application that is developing for the whole site.

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After identifying the areas affected by previous excavations and creating an updated topographical plan for the entire system, the situation of the monuments identified is the following:

- research on the pottery and coins discovered in the **votive pit/bothros** will probably take another 4 years;
- information on **Z29** remains extremely scarce, and further investigations will be connected to the research of the late Roman defense wall;
- in 2008 we are going to finish the research on **CG4** and **CG5**;
- research on **CG3** is to be finished in 2 years, after the study of what seems to be a nearby large pit dug in the Archaic yellow clay layer;
- research on **CG1** is to be finished only when the N-S magistral baulk is dismantled;
- research on the two **Christian basilicas** is to be finished in a 2-3 years period, as further research on the street to their North and the area to their W and E is needed (especially the structures W of the main entrance and the north-eastern annex);
- research on the large **civil building** North of the street is scheduled to start in 2009;
- research on the **late Roman defense wall** is to continue, but will become a priority once research on the Christian basilicas has ended.

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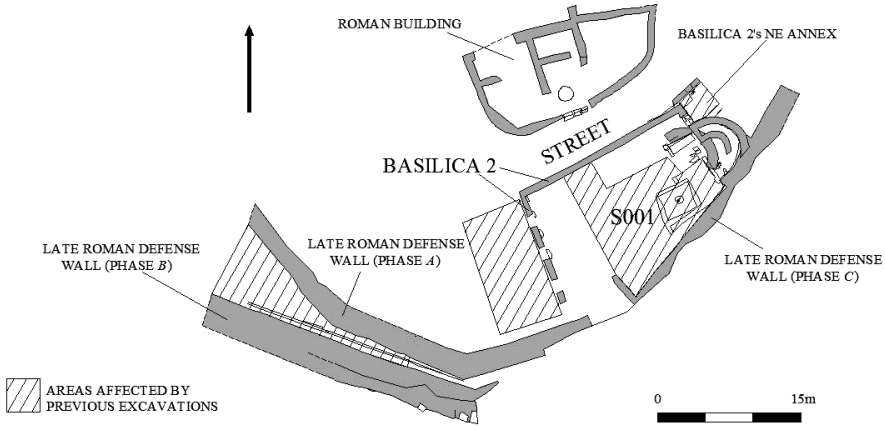


Fig. 1

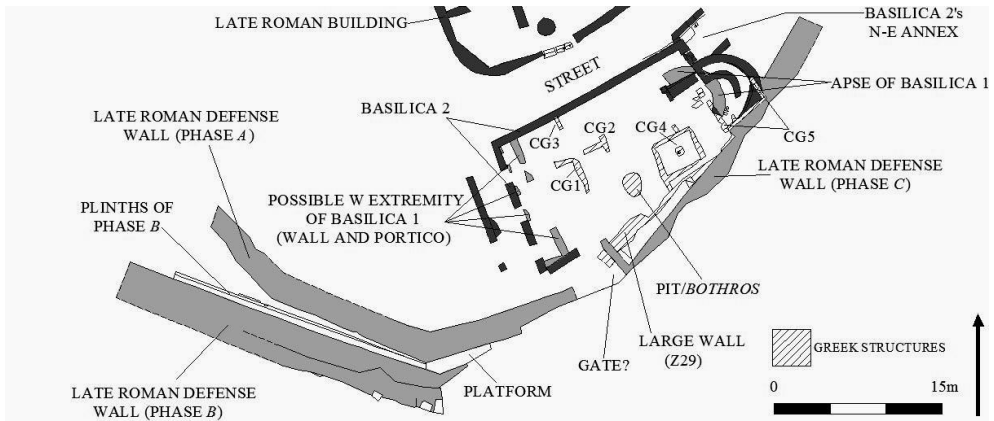


Fig. 2

Fig. 1-2. Areas affected by previous excavations.

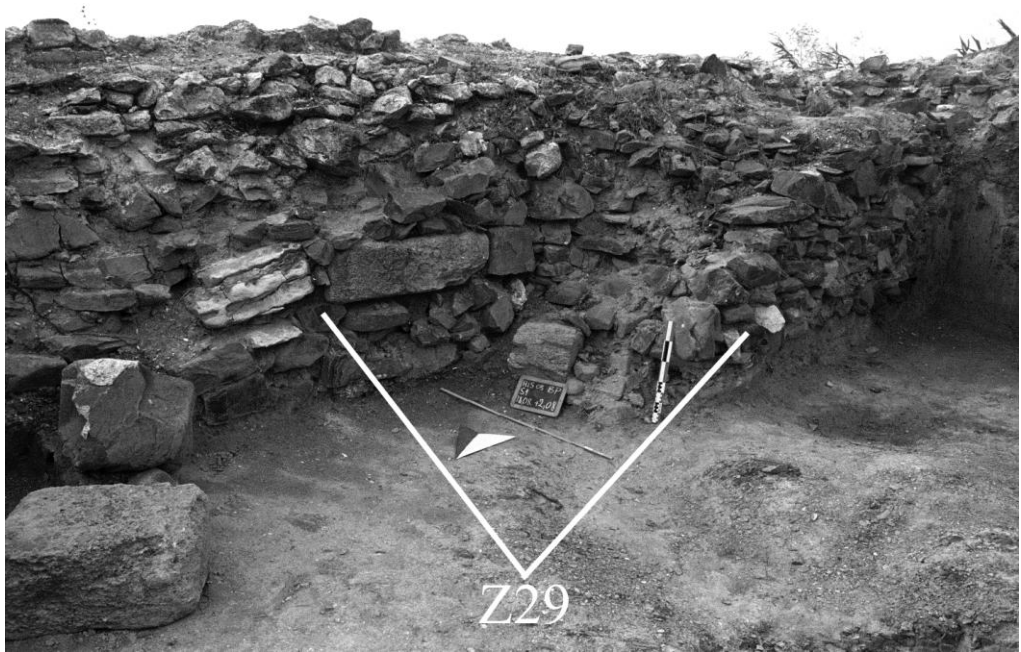


Fig. 3 - A large Greek wall (Z 29).

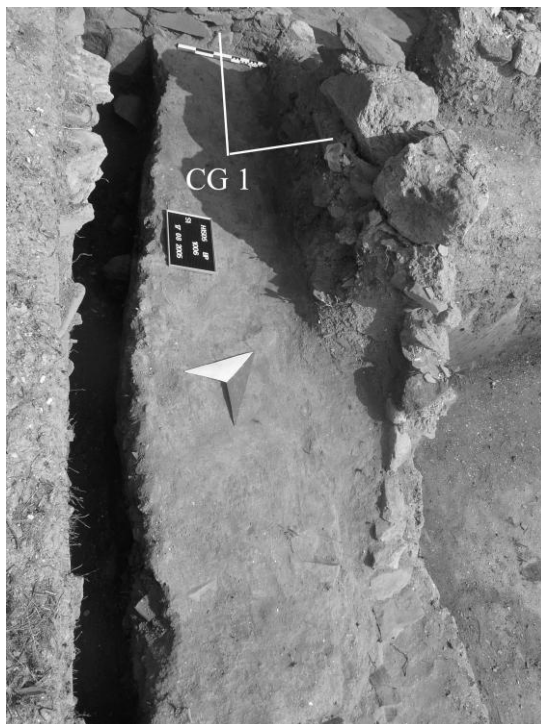


Fig. 4 - CG1, a Hellenistic structure.



Fig. 5 - CG4, an Archaic or early Classical structure.

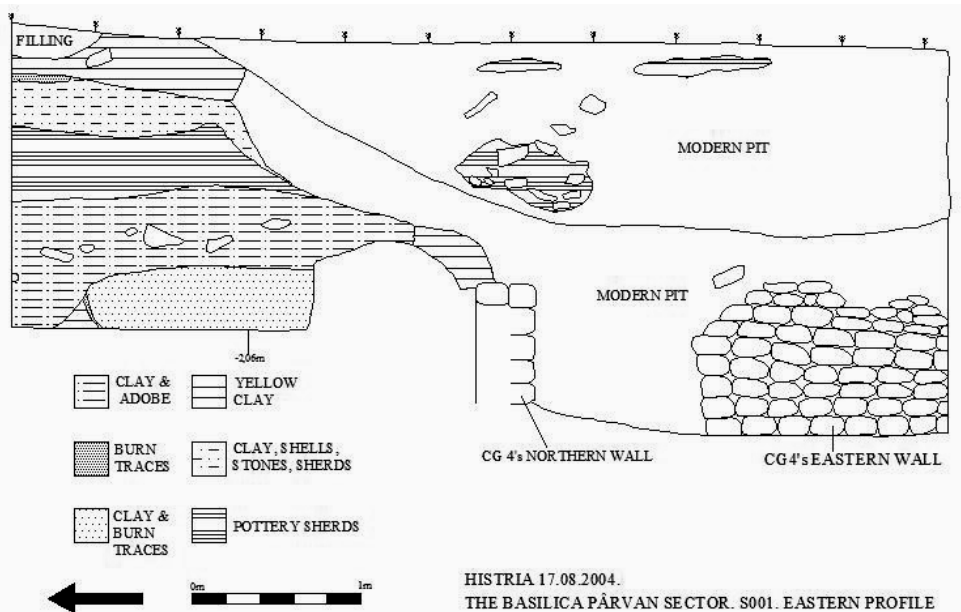


Fig. 6 - S001, eastern profile with the traces of previous excavations.

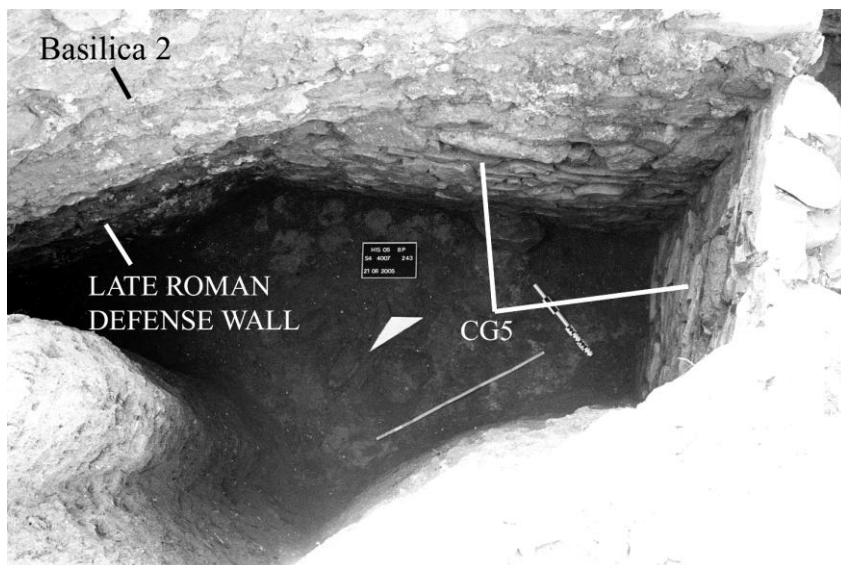


Fig. 7 - CG5, an Archaic or early classical structure.

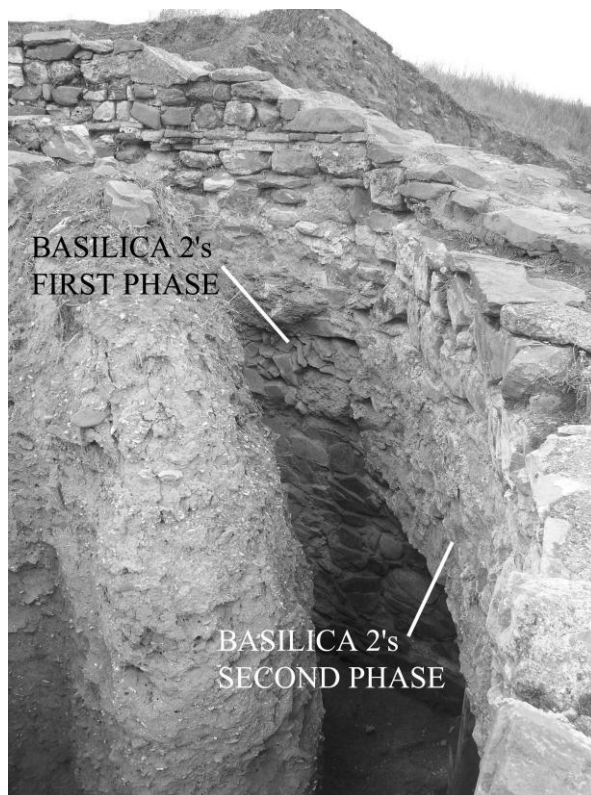


Fig. 8 - a. Basilica 2.

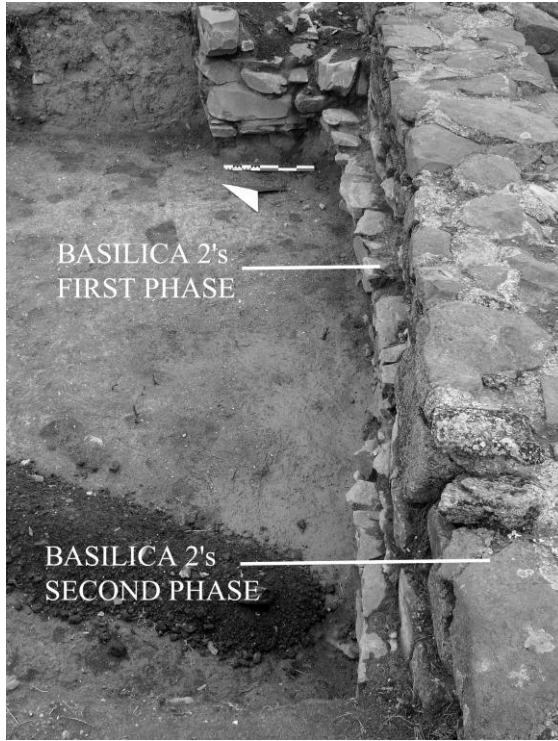


Fig. 8 b - Basilica 2.

The two construction phases visible in the apse's and northern wall' masonry.

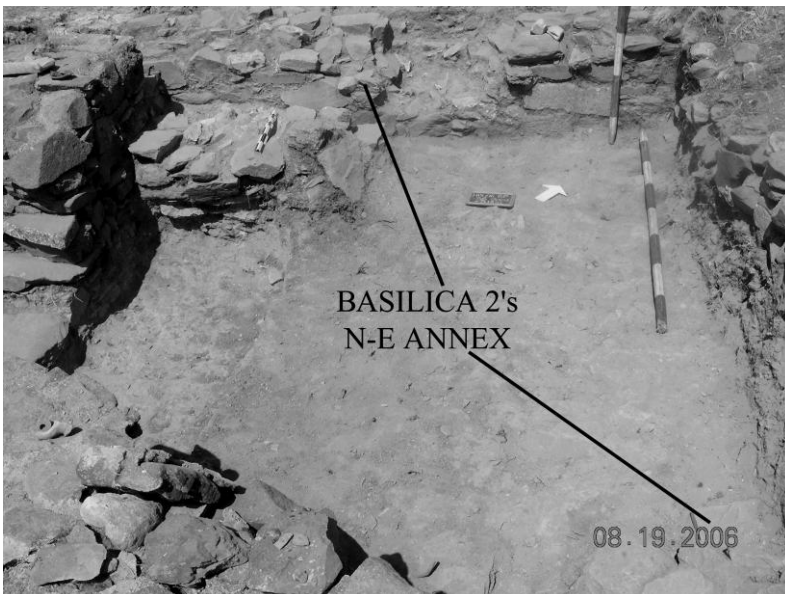
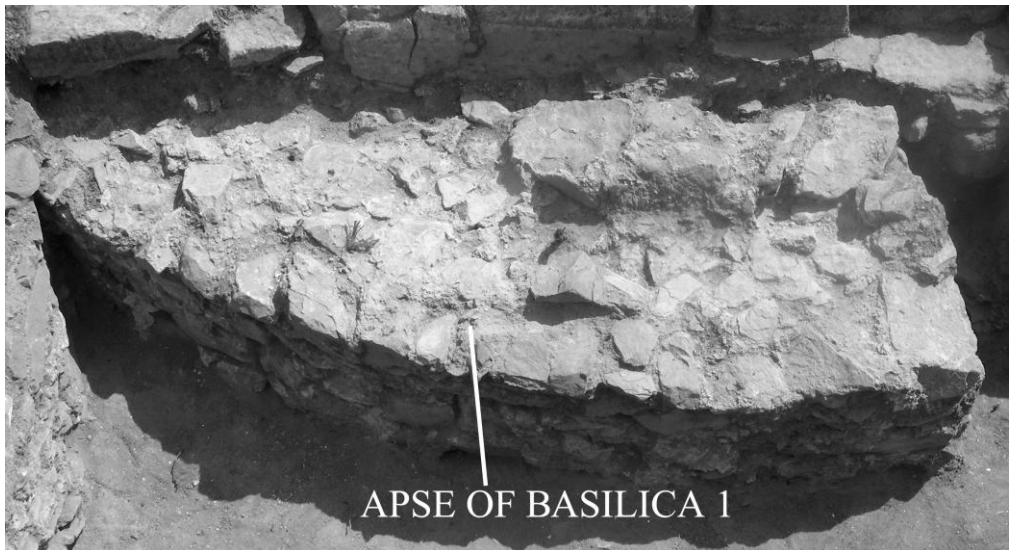


Fig. 9 - Basilica 2. The NE annex.

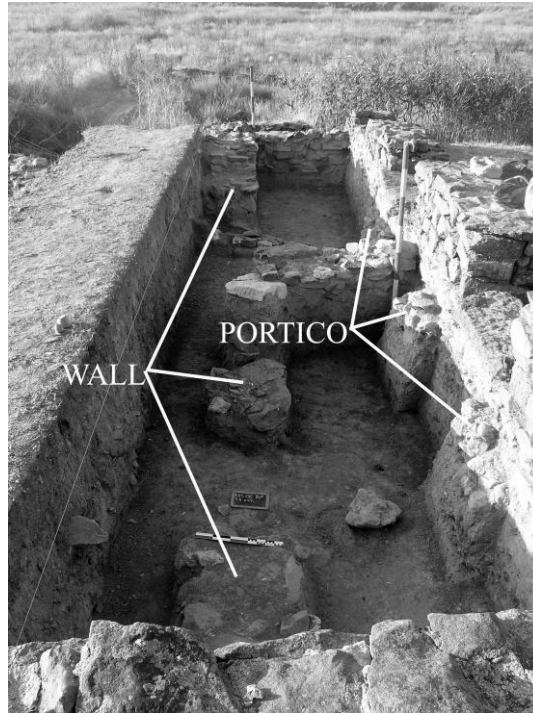


a

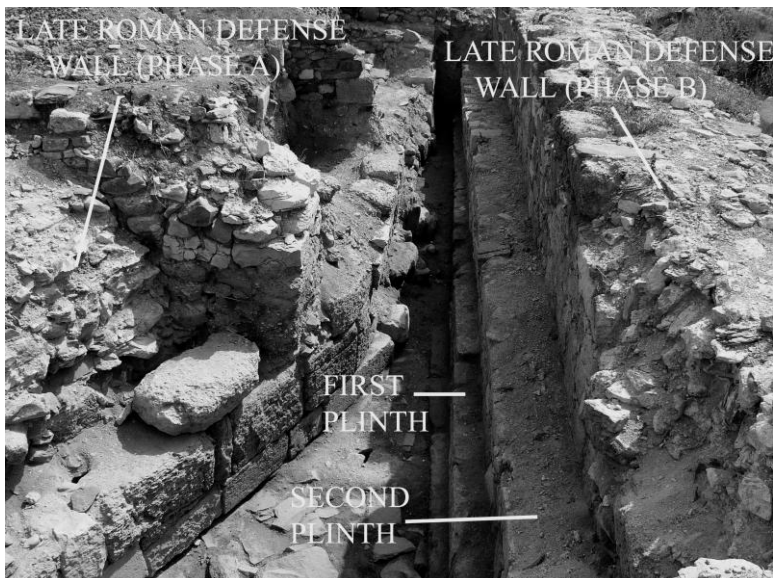


b

Fig. 10 - a, b. Basilica 1. The apse.



**Fig. 11 - Wall with portico (under Basilica 2's western entrance) that may represent Basilica 1's western limit.**



**Fig. 12 - Phases A and B (with the two plinths) of the late Roman defense wall.**