

# NEW DATA ON THE LATE ROMAN CEMETERY (4<sup>TH</sup>–5<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES AD) FROM THE *EXTRA MUROS* BASILICA AT HISTRIA: BURIAL AND REBURIAL OF TWO YOUNG PEOPLE

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**Abstract:** This study presents an atypical burial from the Late Roman cemetery at Histria. During previous archaeological excavations at the same site and the Scythia Province, no such discoveries were identified. This case consists of a burial in a simple pit with coffin and ordinary inventory, and an atypical re-inhumation which disturbed the first skeleton. The anthropological analysis identified two individuals under 20 years old, who displayed musculo-skeletal markers of physical activity. This feature is less common for this age category.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** Histria, arheologie funerară, înmormântare atipică, analiză antropologică

**Rezumat:** Studiul de față prezintă o înmormântare atipică din necropola romană târzie de la Histria. Atât în descoperirile arheologice precedente din acest sit, cât și din provincia Scythia, nu au fost documentate astfel de complexe funerare. În cazul de față s-a identificat o înmormântare în groapă simplă cu sicriu și inventar funerar modest și o reînhumare atipică care a deranjat scheletul precedent. Analiza antropologică a identificat doi indivizi sub 20 de ani, care au efectuat activități fizice intense în timpul vieții, aspect mai puțin normal pentru asemenea categorie de vârstă.

## INTRODUCTION

Over the past 15 years, archaeological excavations at Histria shed light on a variety of ancient funerary practices. Among these, an inhumation grave identified in 2012 and excavated in 2018 appears to occupy a special place. During ordinary re-inhumations, the disturbed skeleton is usually placed commingled in a corner of the pit. In the case discussed below, unparalleled so far in Late Roman Dobrudja, the skeleton of a young male was reburied, mimicking an articulated skeleton, alongside that of an adolescent girl (the primary burial). The anthropological analysis identified bones from four individuals: skeleton 2 was buried first, later to be disturbed by skeleton 1, alongside bones from skeletons 3 and 4. Our aim is to explain the succession of the skeletons in the same pit and to correlate and interpret the archaeological and anthropological data.

## THE CEMETERIES OF THE *EXTRA MUROS* BASILICA. THE HISTORY OF THE EXCAVATIONS

First archaeological excavations in the *Basilica extra muros*<sup>1</sup> area started in 1914, under the supervision of Vasile Pârvan and some graves were found<sup>2</sup>. More excavations around this spot took place between 1950 and 1953<sup>3</sup> and 30 skeletons from disturbed graves were uncovered<sup>4</sup>; based on their inventories they were assigned to the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD<sup>5</sup>. In 1955–1956<sup>6</sup>, those excavations were extended by Emilian Popescu to the west of the area between the Hellenistic wall and the *Basilica extra muros*. Then the Early Christian basilica was unearthed along with three inhumation graves found to the east, in the cemetery yard<sup>7</sup>. In 1956, the same archaeologist supervised a north-south trench across the church: 13 graves were found, but only eight were excavated<sup>8</sup>. According to the excavator, some of them were dated to the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD and some to the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Pârvan 1914, p. 118–119; Pârvan 1915a.

<sup>2</sup> Nubar 1971a, p. 203.

<sup>3</sup> Nubar 1970, p. 193; Nubar 1971a, p. 199.

<sup>4</sup> Nubar 1971a, p. 199

<sup>5</sup> Preda, Doicescu 1966, p. 331–332.

<sup>6</sup> Popescu 1957; 1959.

<sup>7</sup> Popescu 1959, p. 295.

<sup>8</sup> Popescu 1959, p. 293–294.

<sup>9</sup> Popescu 1959, p. 295.