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AN OVERVIEW OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH IN THE ROMAN FORT AND VICUS AT SUTOR (SĂLAJ COUNTY)

Sorin Cociș,¹ Vlad-Andrei Lăzărescu,² Sergiu-Traian Socaciu³

Abstract: *The article informs upon the current state of research concerning the Roman site at Sutor (Sălaj County). The first reliable information concerning the site was accounted by K. Torma during the second half of the 19th century. The site remained 'silent' until the late '60s when several votive monuments were recovered from the area of the site. The systematic archaeological research began in 2001 and continued since then with few interruptions. Even though the fort was trenched between 2006–2008 to establish its position and dimensions, it was in 2012 that most of its inner structure as well as an initial smaller timber fort were revealed, after a large-scale geophysical survey was performed. In 2021 the archaeological works were resumed in connection with the infrastructure works for the 'Transylvania Highway' highlighting multiple elements of the civilian settlement developed around the Roman fort.*

Keywords: *Roman Dacia, Dacia Porolissensis, Sutor, Roman fort, civilian settlement*

In memoriam Constantin Ilieș

The beginnings...

The first information concerning the presence of a Roman fort and its adjacent civilian settlement at Sutor (Sălaj County) was accounted during the second half of the 19th century. The first attempt to establish the exact location of the Roman fort was made by K. Torma in 1864. With this occasion, he mentioned that although the course of the Almaș river shifted multiple times modifying the topography of the land, the Roman fort is rectangular in shape and must be placed on the left bank of the river in the place called 'Gura Căpușului', where numerous tiles and stones are to be found (Pl. 1).⁴ Torma believes that the lack of epigraphic monuments in the area is to be explained by the reuse of such monuments for the construction of the Zimbor – Cuzăplac – Huedin road. The only inscribed artefacts that he knows relate to the tile stamps bearing the mark *NMO*⁵ which he identifies with the military unit garrisoned here, namely the 'numerus Maurorum miliaris'.⁶ The Roman imperial road connecting *Napoca* to *Porolissum* is also mentioned in this context, when K. Torma describes some of its preserved sectors in the vicinity of the site at Sutor, as well as its trajectory towards *Porolissum*.⁷ From Șardu, following

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⁴ TORMA 1864, 10.

⁵ CIL III 1633, 6 = 8074, 27.

⁶ TORMA 1864, 10.

⁷ TORMA 1864, 21–22.

the road through Cubleşu, Stoboru, Bozolnic, then on the right bank of the Almaş river, the road goes near the southern gate of the fort at Sutor towards *Porolissum*. A branch of this road goes westwards passing through Cuzăplac, Fildu de Mijloc, Hodişu and leading up to the fort at Bologa. Based on the information that he obtained from the locals, Torma mentions another possible branch of the Roman road leading straight from Sutor to Buciumi, this time going through Mierţa and Răstolţ villages.⁸

K. Torma reopens the discussion concerning the Roman fort at Sutor in his book dedicated to the northern frontier of Dacia mentioning that after the flooding in 1879, the site was heavily damaged by alluviums and that the ruins of the fort were hardly visible.⁹ Several Roman archaeological materials discovered in the area are mentioned with this occasion: a funerary monument found in the Greek-Catholic church at Sutor, traces of wall foundations, stamped tiles and fragments of stamped pottery recovered from the property of Banyai Mozes in Cuzăplac village.¹⁰ The discovery in 1878, in the proximity of the fort,¹¹ of a funerary monument dedicated to *Aurel(ius) Massinni(us?) dupli(carius) al(a)e miliarae*¹² allowed K. Torma to reopen the dossier concerning the military unit stationed at Sutor. He concluded that the unit was a *n(umerus) m(ilitum) miliarus*.¹³ At the same time, based on the information illustrated on *Tabula Peutingeriana*, Torma believes that the civilian settlement and the fort at Sutor should be identified with the ancient *Optatiana*.¹⁴

The discovery of other funerary monuments allowed E. Panaitescu to discuss the problem of the troop hidden behind the *NMO* denomination. Based on one of the funerary inscriptions mentioning a certain *Aurel(ius) Bassus signifer N M O*¹⁵ he believes that the name of the unit should be read *N(umerus) M(ilitum) O(srhoenorum)*,¹⁶ while C. Daicoviciu interprets the name of the unit as *N(umerus) M(aurorum) O(ptatianensium)*,¹⁷ the latter reading being the accepted version since then by most of the archaeologists.¹⁸ Recently, an iron *signaculum* bearing probably the inscription *NM[O]* was discovered in the area of the *vicus* at Sutor, between one of the road segments and a large wooden structure that might have functioned as a storage house, supporting the idea of this troop being stationed on site (**Pl. 2**).¹⁹

Rediscovering the site...

The site remained 'silent' up until the late '60s when another votive monument was unearthed during some agricultural fieldworks around Sutor.²⁰ It is in this context that the archaeologists became once more interested in the site and attempted to rediscover its exact position.²¹ However, things did not go that smoothly since the flat land where the site was

⁸ TORMA 1880, 114–115.

⁹ TORMA 1880, 28.

¹⁰ TORMA 1880, 28; COCIŞ/ZĂGREANU/TAMBA 2009, 58.

¹¹ TORMA 1880, 28, note 4 indicates as the findspot of the monument a ditch that was destined to drain the creek connecting 'Gura Căpuşului' to the Almaş river on the property of a certain Mariaffy Albert.

¹² TORMA 1879, 92, nr.12; CIL III 7644; COCIŞ/ZĂGREANU/TAMBA 2009, 55 with the literature.

¹³ TORMA 1880, 29.

¹⁴ TORMA 1880, 29; 119–121.

¹⁵ FINÁLY 1905, 102.

¹⁶ PANAITESCU 1932, 88 also adding C. Daicoviciu's opinion concerning the reading as *N(umerus) M(aurorum) O(ptatianensium)* in note 5.

¹⁷ DAICOVICIU 1928–1932, 53–55.

¹⁸ PISO/DEAC 2016, 281–282.

¹⁹ COCIŞ 2021.

²⁰ RUSSU 1968, 459–461; COCIŞ/ZĂGREANU/TAMBA 2009, 54.

²¹ GUDEA 1997, 101–102, no. 96.

located underwent systematic ploughing and was constantly flooded in springtime, adding constantly alluvial deposits. The heavy flooding in 1980 added to this already inconvenient situation, but the drainage works performed in connection with the reconstruction of the main road led to the discovery of various archaeological artifacts in the area known as ‘Gura Căpușului’ along the DN G1 road.

Despite the ambiguity surrounding the exact location of the fort and civilian settlement at Sutor, it was only in 2001 that the first steps were made to pursue this topic (PI. 3). As part of a partnership between the Faculty of Greek-Catholic Theology – Oradea Department of the Babeș-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca, Zalău County Museum of History and Archaeology and the Institute of Archaeology and History of Art Cluj-Napoca, the first systematic fieldwalks were performed in April 2001. As a result, lots of archaeological material especially in the area situated to the right of DN G1 Zimbor – Cuzăplac road, between the km 24+5 – km 24+6 hectometric signs were recovered. The aim of the 2001 archaeological campaign was to find the fort and *vicus* at Sutor. Although small scale excavations, the trenches opened with this occasion showed that the civilian settlement had two distinct chronological stages: a first earth and timber phase (1) and a later stone phase (2) (PI. 4). Apart from the Roman period, traces of human habitation belong also to the Bronze Age and Early Middle Ages.²² It was only in 2002 that the defense system of the Roman fort was found and documented on its eastern side (trenches S5 and S6), while towards the north (trench S4) the adjacent military baths were identified (PI. 5). Trench S7 pointed to the lack of any habitation in this area, referring to a limit for the extent of the *vicus* in this direction. For the next three years, the archaeological research was halted due to a project that envisaged massive research in the Roman fort caused by the construction of the ‘Transylvania Highway’ in this area. In 2004, Iptana SA Bucharest, the general planner for the Braşov – Oradea highway, asked for a cost estimate and timetable for the rescue excavation that were to take place in the km 38+300 – 39+ – 300 (including a road junction – site 6 at Sutor) area (documents no. 652/383/04.12.2003 and 652/399 05.01.2004).²³ Unfortunately, the project was temporarily abandoned, the only financial support for the research of the site referring either to the funds obtained from the Ministry of Culture and/or the Institute of Archaeology and History of Art Cluj-Napoca.

Getting to know the site...

The archaeological research was resumed in 2006, going further with the earlier endeavor of delimiting the extent and position of the Roman fort. Thus, the defense system of the fort was documented on the eastern, northern, and southern sides (trenches S8 = 11 × 1.1 m; S9 = 19 × 1.1 m; S10 = 16.5 × 1.1 m; S11 = 25 × 1.1 m; S12 = 27 × 1.1 m; S13 = 17 × 1.1 m and S14 = 15.8 × 1.1 m) (PI. 6).²⁴

The stratigraphy of the defense system is quite complex as can be seen studying the archaeological profiles along the eastern and northern sides of the Roman fort (trenches S9 and S11) (PI. 7–8). We can count multiple alluvial sandy deposits leveling the entire surface of the fort as well as the ‘robbing ditch’ (approx. 1.3 m wide and 1 m deep) that dismantled the stone precinct probably during the Middle Ages when the Almaş castle was built.²⁵ The *agger* of the

²² ILIEŞ ET ALII 2002, 131–151; ILIEŞ ET ALII 2002a, 302–304.

²³ The invoice compiled by the Zalău County Museum of History and Archaeology and signed by the Iptana SA Bucharest in 2004 had a value of 1.979.284 Euro, the archaeological works being planned over a period of four years (June 2004 – November 2008).

²⁴ ILIEŞ ET ALII 2007, 355–356.

²⁵ Not much information is known about the Almaş citadel that was first mentioned in 1370 when it was the object of a donation, meaning that at that time it was already erected. Since no systematic archaeological excavations

fort was also identified being composed of a compact layer of dark soil containing several clayish deposits. In close connection with the turf rampart, a thick layer of stone, approx. 1.5 m wide, served as *via sagularis*. From a chronological standpoint, this *via sagularis* belongs to the last phase of the fort since it partially superimposes a debris layer composed of stone, mortar, wall plaster and tile fragments. Towards the inner part of the fort no other archaeological feature was found, an argument for the fact that at 4 m from the *via sagularis*, we are still in the area of the *intervallum*. An earlier phase was documented; at this stage the turf rampart being wider and stretching more towards the inner part of the stone fort. Eastwards from the ‘robbing ditch’, at approx. 2 m, a first defense ditch corresponding to the first phase with a ‘V’ shape (*fossa fastigata*) can be observed, having a maximum width of around 4 m (PI. 7). The fill of this ditch is composed of a compact dark brownish soil with no archaeological material suggesting that we are dealing with a rapid backfilling of the ditch at a certain moment in time, due to the reconfiguration of the defense system of the fort during its second stone phase. Unfortunately, since the ‘robbing ditch’ disturbed the original stratigraphy of the site, we cannot make any comments concerning the construction technique of the stone phase during its two phases. A second defense ditch, corresponding to the second stone phase of the fort cuts the first ditch discussed above accounting for a clear chronological relation between the two stone phases. In terms of morphology, it obviously has a wider opening, a reality which is rather typical to the defense systems of the 3rd century AD. On the northern side, the stone wall of the fort was intact (trench S11), the alluvial deposits being not as thick as on its eastern side. The wall has a width of 1.1 m and was built from carefully ranged big quarry stones (PI. 8), brought probably from the area of Zimbor where similar stone can be found. An earlier sunken feature (destroyed by fire) that might belong to the Bronze Age habitation, was found beneath the turf rampart. Concerning the defense ditch on this northern side, the only difference was that the berm was 4.5 m wide. Unfortunately, the southern side of the fort was almost destroyed by the course of the Almaș river (trench S14), the initial stratigraphy being almost impossible to reconstruct.

Beginning with 2006, it was clear that we were dealing with at least two stages of the stone phase of the fort. Three sides of the fort were documented, allowing for the distance between the northern and southern walls of the precinct to be calculated (= 165 m). Apart from the usual archaeological material, two fragments of a funerary aedicula were recovered from the defense ditch belonging to the second stone phase of the fort.²⁶ In 2008, the western side of the fort was still unknown, a reason for which trench S19 was excavated in order to fill the gap in the archaeological and topographical data (PI. 9). The actual size of the Roman fort at Sutor was not an unknown anymore, having a 165 × 220 m total width.²⁷ Once more, the lack of funding had prevented future research of the site, a reason for which a shift in research philosophy was obviously needed. In 2010, as part of a research project studying the Roman sites in Dacia from a geophysical non-invasive perspective, F. Marcu and G. Cupcea surveyed the *principia* of the fort.²⁸ At the same time, the research team changed their focus from excavation to the publication of the monuments recovered from the site.²⁹

were performed here, it is difficult to clarify its chronology. At the moment, we can only speculate concerning the use of *spolia* coming from the Roman site at Sutor for the construction of this citadel, but what is certain is that the citadel itself was spoliated in 1808, stones being taken from here to erect a manor house in the neighboring village, see RUSU 1978, 102; RUSU 2005, 28; 501–502.

²⁶ COCIȘ/ZĂGREANU/TAMBA 2009, 58.

²⁷ ILIEȘ ET ALII 2009, 208–209.

²⁸ CUPCEA/MARCU 2010, 89–97.

²⁹ COCIȘ/ZĂGREANU/TAMBA 2009.

Understanding the site...

Due to the geological and pedological characteristics of the site, but also because of the lack of financing, the priority concerning the investigation of the Roman site at Sutor shifted towards large scale non-invasive geophysical surveys. As part of a research project initiated by the Institute of Archaeology and History of Art Cluj-Napoca, the first large scale magnetic surveys at Sutor took place in 2012 covering a total surface of 7 ha and encompassing the entire area of the fort. As a result, we were able to establish, for the first time, the structural pattern of the inner planning of the fort. But to our surprise, in the north-western corner of the big stone fort, the contour of a smaller burnt earth and timber fortification was observed, making this the most interesting result of the survey (Pl. 10).³⁰ The next step was to validate the non-invasive survey and try to obtain as much information as possible concerning the stratigraphic relation between the two overlapping forts. To this respect, trench S20 was excavated confirming the earlier dating of the earth and timber small fort (Pl. 11–12).³¹

The next step of the research concerned the position, potential extent and stratigraphy of the military baths already discovered in 2001 (trench S1). Following the already known details, in 2014 the research strategy was to build upon the earlier data and expand the excavation northwards (Pl. 13–14). Two new walls and a possible *praefurnium* were recorded allowing for elaboration of a coherent ground plan of the structure.³² The artifacts inside the baths were quite diverse ranging from ceramic building material (*tegulae mamatae*, *tubuli* or hypocaust *pilae*), pottery and small finds. But the most interesting item refers to a tile fragment bearing the inscription *[C]ob(ortis) I Br(ittonum)*, originally garrisoned at Porolissum,³³ accounting for the presence of this troop on site for construction works, namely the erection of the military baths although at the moment we cannot exclude also the involvement of this troop in the construction of the stone phase of the fort.³⁴

In 2018, the site at Sutor was proposed for the UNESCO World Heritage Tentative List as part of the Roman Frontier of Dacia dossier, while 2019 brought another take upon the older Transylvania Highway project, including also the Topa – Zimbor area where the site is located. Considering these new developments, the geophysical surveys were expanded towards the north-eastern area of the Roman fort.³⁵ Due to the fact that the construction works for the Transylvania Highway were set to start in 2021, massive geophysical surveys were planned for 2020–2021 to cover as much of the area that would have been affected by the road works. These new surveys covered approx. 11 ha and were performed as part of a cooperation between the Satu Mare County Museum (in their capacity of winning institution of the public auction for the archaeological rescue excavations in the area) and the Institute of Archaeology and History of Art Cluj-Napoca. The magnetic survey revealed that the civilian habitation spreads especially on the north-western and western sides of the Roman fort (Pl. 10).³⁶

In February 2021 the archaeological rescue excavations for the construction of the Transylvania Highway in the site at Sutor began.³⁷ In the context of these massive construction

³⁰ Unpublished research performed by Sorin Cociș, Vlad-Andrei Lăzărescu, Coriolan Horațiu Opreanu and Dan Ștefan. For a brief mention of the results, see COCIȘ/ONOFREI 2019, 88–89; 89, Fig. 2.

³¹ COCIȘ ET ALII 2014, 144.

³² COCIȘ ET ALII 2015, 134–137.

³³ OPREANU 2018, 367–370 with the literature.

³⁴ COCIȘ/ONOFREI 2019, 90–91.

³⁵ Unpublished research performed by Sorin Cociș, Alexandru Popa and Dan Matei.

³⁶ Unpublished research performed by Sorin Cociș, Alexandru Popa and Vlad-Andrei Lăzărescu.

³⁷ The research team had the following members: Sorin Cociș, Vlad-Andrei Lăzărescu, Coriolan Horațiu Opreanu, Adrian Ursuțiu, Lavinia Brândușan, Szabolcs Ferencz, Sergiu-Traian Socaciu, Teodor Taloș, Andrei Mărincean and Norbert Nagy.

works, the preliminary goal of the rescue excavations was to document the structure of the site and assess the impact upon the archaeological heritage given that the ‘Frontiers of the Roman Empire – Dacia’ dossier was already submitted to the UNESCO committee.³⁸ Such an action was essential for the research strategy of the site as long as the authenticity and integrity of the monument represents a mandatory requirement for a site to be included on the WHO list.³⁹ The first stage of the archaeological rescue excavation campaign taking place in 2021 led to the identification and documentation of 850 archaeological features ranging from the Bronze Age to the Early Middle Ages, most of the contexts belonging to the Roman time given the intensity of the habitation in the region during this period (Pl. 15). A first chronological horizon refers to the Bronze Age, characterized by a limited habitation attested by few documented pits and limited archaeological material recovered from their fill. The Early Middle Ages were represented by a high quantity of artifacts compared to other contemporaneous sites in the region, especially wheel thrown pottery decorated with wavy lines made with probably with a wooden comb. The few documented features are clustered in the northern part of the excavated area where a limited number of dwellings were recorded, mostly based upon the pottery dispersion. By far, the most consistent habitation is related to the Roman time military *vicus* developed in connection with the auxiliary fort, around 95% of the archaeological features belonging to this timeframe.

The defensive elements of the fort on its south-eastern part were in danger of being affected by the road works, a reason for which a 66.4 × 4 m long trench was planned perpendicular to the stone precinct. Due to the elevated level of the groundwater in this region of the site, the trench was enlarged to 10 m in width, to better reveal the defense elements. With this occasion, we were able to document the following stratigraphic situation concerning the two phases of the larger stone fort: (1) during its first stone phase, the fort had only one ditch placed quite close to the precinct wall; (2) during the second stone phase, the fort had two defense ditches. At that moment, the entire area in front of the precinct wall was remodeled by enlarging the space between the precinct and the first defense ditch that would now cut through the earlier ditch accounting thus for a clear stratigraphic and chronological relation between the two defensive systems. The earlier observation that the eastern side of the stone precinct was dismantled sometime after the fort was abandoned was confirmed also with this occasion. Apart from the above-mentioned defense elements, there were no other archaeological features belonging to the Roman period, implying that a ‘buffer zone’ delimiting the military from the civilian elements composing the site was in place (Pl. 16).⁴⁰

As a rule, the excavation units were planned to harmonize the technical aspects of the construction plans with the rigors of archaeological research. To this respect, 16 trenches and 3 areas were excavated covering the entire area affected by the construction works. The study of the general stratigraphy, spread of the military *vicus* as well as the nature of the identified features and impact of the road works would have upon the archaeological heritage represented problems that we followed while planning the research. The total excavated area comprised a surface of 11687 m² spread unevenly across the site. It is worth noting the fact that regardless of the location of the excavation units, all trenches revealed archaeological features. From a chronological point of view, the civilian settlement had two main phases: (1) a wooden phase and (2) a stone phase. Now, we cannot synchronize the phases documented in the fort with the ones recorded in the military *vicus*, nor can we establish the absolute dating of each phase. We were however able to document the constant metamorphosis of the site from the timber phase

³⁸ <https://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/6447>.

³⁹ For this reason, after the defensive system of the fort was documented, a decision has been taken to decrease the radius of an adjacent access road connecting the highway with the national road.

⁴⁰ The only context recorded in front on the defense elements of the Roman fort refers to a prehistoric pit: context 1086.

to the stone phase as well as its general inner spatial patterning. In at least three cases we were able to record the development of different buildings ranged at the main roads from wooden structures to a more complex buildings that have stone bases for porticos oriented towards the main road, as well as stone buildings overlapping former wooden structures. As a characteristic of the military *vicus*, at least during its earlier phase, we can note large scale wooden structures that can be interpreted as large storage houses that might be linked both with the Moorish mounted troop garrisoned here as well as with the position of the site in connection with the main road network of *Dacia Porolissensis*.⁴¹

Among the most important discoveries we can count two converging road segments (summing a total of 140 m of Roman road) among which we can count the imperial road leading from *Napoca* to *Porolissum*, previously known and mentioned in the archaeological literature,⁴² and a second segment linking the Roman forts at Bologna and Sutor.⁴³ The combined study of the trajectory of the excavated segments with the satellite imagery allowed us to estimate the place where the two roads would intersect, but unfortunately this exact spot is inaccessible to the archaeological research due to the fact that it is overlapped by the concrete station and regional headquarters of the construction site (Pl. 17). However, this will remain a topic that needs to be addressed during the following years since such intersections are rarely being excavated and documented archaeologically across the Roman Empire. From a technical point of view, there is an obvious difference between the two road segments in terms of construction technique and stone provenance, the same difference being noted in the masonry technique of different buildings uncovered in the vicinity of the two road segments. The fact that the technique of using mixed stones coming from at least two quarries was documented for the buildings that can be tied to the second stone phase of the *vicus*, together with the stratigraphic evidence, points towards a difference in terms of relative chronology between the two road segments. The earlier segment would be the one bypassing the southern side of fort that we have identified with the imperial road leading from *Napoca* to *Porolissum*, build probably during the early years of the province as the milestones at Aiton⁴⁴ and Mera⁴⁵ seem to prove.⁴⁶ The segment heading towards the fort at Bologna seems to be slightly later based on the stratigraphic data recorded on site, the artifacts recorded from the contemporaneous archaeological contexts providing a dating around the middle or the second third of the 2nd century when need to connect all the elements of defensive system of the province became more acute. As a *terminus ante quem* we can mention two coins issued during the reign of Antoninus Pius⁴⁷ and an Almgren 84 (= Cociş 8b2b2) brooch⁴⁸ dated in Dacia where they are widely spread starting with the beginning of the province up until third quarter of the 2nd century AD,⁴⁹ all being found in connection with the Roman road leading to Bologna. The importance of this discovery consists in the archaeological excavation for the first time of the two segments mentioned above merging into a single road leading to *Porolissum*. This unique situation clearly requires these monuments to be preserved and protected *in situ*.

⁴¹ FODOREAN 2006, 134–148; FODOREAN/FODOREAN 2010.

⁴² TORMA 1864, 21–22; CHRISTESCU 1937, 83–85; 108; FODOREAN 2006, 71.

⁴³ FODOREAN 2006, 115; URSUȚ 2008, 47–48; 97.

⁴⁴ FODOREAN 2001, 66; FODOREAN 2002, 60–64; FODOREAN 2006, 64–68.

⁴⁵ DAICOVICIU 1928–1932; FODOREAN 2002, 65; FODOREAN 2006, 70; PISO 2011, 313.

⁴⁶ FERENCZI/URSUȚ 1985–1986, 215; 217; FODOREAN 2006, 66; 333.

⁴⁷ We are referring to a *dupondius* minted at Rome during 138–161 and a *sestertius* minted also at Rome in 141. We would like to take this opportunity to thank our colleague Dr. Cristian Găzdac for his kind help in identifying the numismatic finds discovered at Sutor.

⁴⁸ ALMGREN 1923, 43–44; COCIȘ 2004, 65–67.

⁴⁹ COCIȘ 2004, 65–66, pl. XXXIII/489–495; XXXIV/496–504; 506–511; 513; 515–523; XXXV/524; 526–528; 530–532; 534–540; 542; XXXVI/543–546; cat. nos. 489–546; COCIȘ 2019, 24, pl.73/2.

Adjacent to these roads, several structures with multiple construction phases were documented, leaving the impression of a ‘quasi-urban’ spatial patterning of this military *vicus*.

On the northern side of the *vicus*, one of the limits of the civilian settlement was found. In this region, a ‘pottery production quarter’ was discovered in connection with the northern segment of the road leading to Bologa. One pottery workshop was excavated, and several other delimited, arguing for the necessity to expand the research in this part of the settlement. The pottery kiln was circular in shape and had a radial grate supported by a median pillar. The kiln did not have the initial pottery batch. It was transformed into a ‘rubbish pit’ after being decommissioned. The approx. 1.2 m³ pottery kiln contained 1438 pottery fragments (representing a MinNI = 580 individuals and a MaxNI = 851 individuals) with a heterogenous typological series and other votive ceramic *terracotta* figurines representing the goddess Venus⁵⁰ and *Genius cucullatus*.⁵¹

The civilian baths complex (entirely excavated) represents the most spectacular discovery of this year. The baths were ranged to the south of the imperial road *Napoca – Porolissum* at approx. 8 m, accounting for the connectivity and access to this structure. They are positioned in a densely built area situated at 165 m from the Roman fort, outside its military ‘buffer zone’. The baths cover a total surface of 384 m² (27.2 × 14.6 m) having an architectural ratio of 1:2 between their width and length. From a relative chronological point of view, we have identified 4 phases, the structure and functionality of the 12 rooms being constantly in change as is generally the case with such bath complexes.⁵² The shape of the baths that we were able to document belongs to the stone phase of the site, corresponding to phases II/III and IV of the structure itself. Despite the fact that the baths are exceptionally well preserved, no tile-stamp was recovered, arguing together with their topographical position inside the *vicus*, for the civilian use of this building. If this is to be true, we are faced with the first entirely documented civilian bath complex in Dacia, enhancing their archaeological potential significantly.⁵³ Several partitioning, adjoined rooms, and/or blocked entrances contributed along with the inner stratigraphy of the complex (Pl. 18) to the phasing of this bathing complex, accounting for successive structural and functional changes of the rooms. Another important structural element that unfortunately in most of the cases remained undocumented refers to the *prae-furnium* placed outside area of the baths, to the in south-east. This functional element was however disabled during the 3rd phase of the baths complex when the southern wall of room G that made the connection between the baths complex and the *prae-furnium* was blocked, corresponding with the erection of a partition wall dividing the room in two (G1 and G2) change thus the functionality of the room. Through time several important structural and functional changes marked the main phases of the baths complex, the most important being the successive changes of room H during the 1st to the 3rd phase (Pl. 19/a) and the adjoining of room I during the 4th phase (Pl. 19/b). The area covered by the civilian baths was also inhabited during the first phase of the *vicus*, where a series of wooden structures were burnt to clear the terrain for the construction of this stone structure (Pl. 19/c). From a relative chronological standpoint, we must say that the stratigraphic evidence allowed for the identification of phases I and II only in terms of structural and functional changes of the building (see for example room H and H1) due to systematic cleaning and levelling processes followed by building activities associated to phase III of this complex that ultimately set the final plan of the civilian baths. The analysis of the coin finds recovered from the civilian baths revealed that phases II/III and IV, show two different numismatic spectra. While phase(s) II/III show a higher frequency of Septimius Severus coins, the coins of later emperors, Elagabalus

⁵⁰ ANTAL 2016.

⁵¹ ANTAL 2014; ANTAL 2016a.

⁵² BURKHARDT 2016; BURKHARDT 2020, 141–163.

⁵³ BURKHARDT 2020; ŢENŢEA/BURKHARDT 2020.

and Severus Alexander dominate phase IV.⁵⁴ The two brooches recovered from the baths of type Cociş 37a8b1a1⁵⁵ and type Cociş – Bârcă A VII/I/B2a1a1⁵⁶ are also confirming the dating suggested by the numismatic analysis.⁵⁷

On the 2nd of June 2021, the initial blueprint of the Transylvania Highway in the area of the site was redesigned, a fact that determined the necessity of a new impact assessment of these new works upon the archaeological heritage, based on geo-statistical GIS spatial analysis (Pl. 20). With this occasion we were able to confirm the magnetic data that suggested the existence of stone structures in the area situated towards the west of the 'pottery production quarter' as well as the fact that the 40 m strategic 'buffer zone' documented for the eastern side of the military camp was also present in this region (Pl. 21). Unfortunately, the rescue excavation in the site is halted at the moment but will be resumed allowing for the entire area affected by the construction works to be archaeologically investigated and documented as was recommended by the Ministry of Culture's National Archaeological Commission.⁵⁸

Conclusions

Although researched for the last twenty years, as is usually the case with archaeology in Romania, the results are rather anarchic in terms of time schedule and planning. In this case the strategy was focused upon the two main objectives composing the site: the fort (in the early stages of the research) and the civilian settlement developed around the military garrison (during the last period in close connection with the road works for the Transylvania Highway). In terms of chronology, it is quite hard at the moment to synchronize and correlate the information obtained from the few trenches performed inside the fort with the excavations in the military *vicus*, but some general conclusions can be drawn:

- The fort has two main stages:
 - F-a) an earth and timber phase, the fort being limited in terms of space.
 - F-b1) an initial stone phase characterized by the enlargement of the military encampment that at the moment had only one defense ditch.
 - F-b2) a second stone phase, the precinct maintaining the same dimensions and planning, but the initial defense ditch was decommissioned and replaced by a two ditches system.
- The military *vicus* had at least two stages:
 - V-a) a timber phase characterized by large-sized structures that seem to be ranged in connection with the road leading from Napoca to Porolissum.
 - V-b1) an initial stone phase documented in terms of construction technique and type of stone.
 - V-b2) a second stone phase documented also in terms of construction technique and type of stone coming from at least two sources.

We must state right from the beginning, that although the two parts of the site have similar development patterns, we cannot synchronize the two realities since clear dating elements necessary for such an action are lacking from all the contexts associated with the phases mentioned above. Moreover, unfortunately we have no information concerning the inner structure and/or possible changes in planning occurring during these phases both inside the fort or

⁵⁴ GĂZDAC ET ALII 2021, 77.

⁵⁵ COCIŞ 2004, 145; 394, Pl. CXL/1935–1936; 395, Pl. CXLI/1937–1939.

⁵⁶ COCIŞ/BÂRCĂ 2014, 197; COCIŞ/BÂRCĂ 2020, 140–141.

⁵⁷ OPREANU/COCIŞ/LĂZĂRESCU 2020, 81, Fig. 15.

⁵⁸ <http://www.cultura.ro/sites/default/files/inline-files/rezolutii%20CNA%2014-15%20octombrie2021%20final%20%281%29.pdf>.

in the civilian settlement. A certainty that was revealed quite recently refers to the fact that we should probably understand all these metamorphoses of the site in relation with the two Roman roads that had a junction right here, making the site an important strategic and logistic hub destined to support the advanced line of the Dacian *limes* (Pl. 22). The two roads were bypassing the fort on two of its sides (the norther and southern side) allowing for quick access. Under these circumstances there is no wonder that the troop stationed here was a mounted troop, able to ensure quick connectivity and the flow of information from the command center of the northwestern *limes* around *Porolissum* with the political and financial headquarters of the province at *Napoca*. The same pattern, of mounted troops being stationed on an imaginary second defense line is documented also in the case of the forts at Gilău⁵⁹ and Gherla,⁶⁰ a fact that cannot be ignored if one wants to understand the nature and function of the defense system of *Dacia Porolissensis*. At the same time, apart from the military and strategic role, the site, or better said the civilian settlement developed around the fort, had most probably an economic role functioning as a 'logistics hub' a hypothesis sustained also by the large-size buildings documented on site that we interpreted as large storage-houses.

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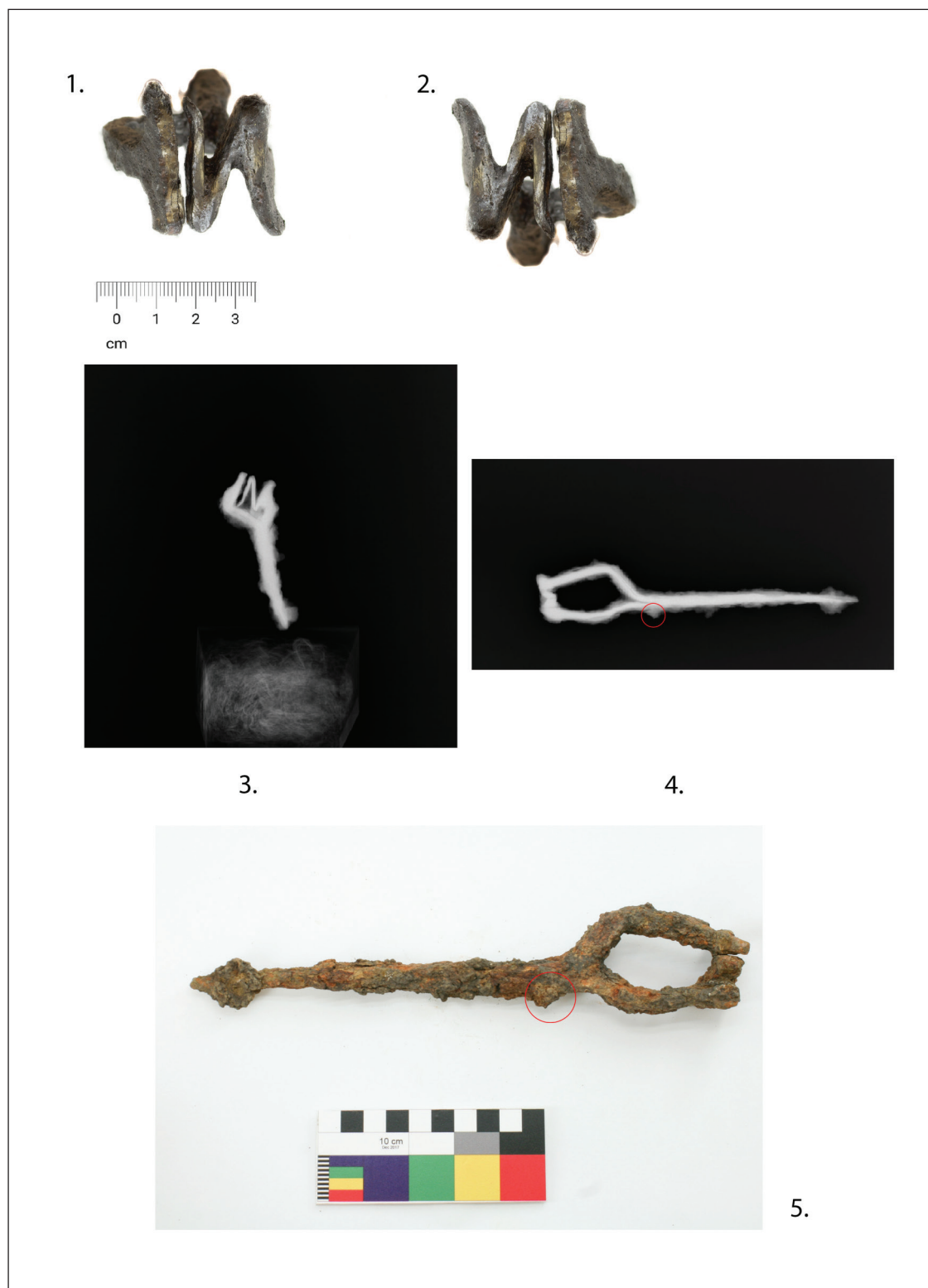
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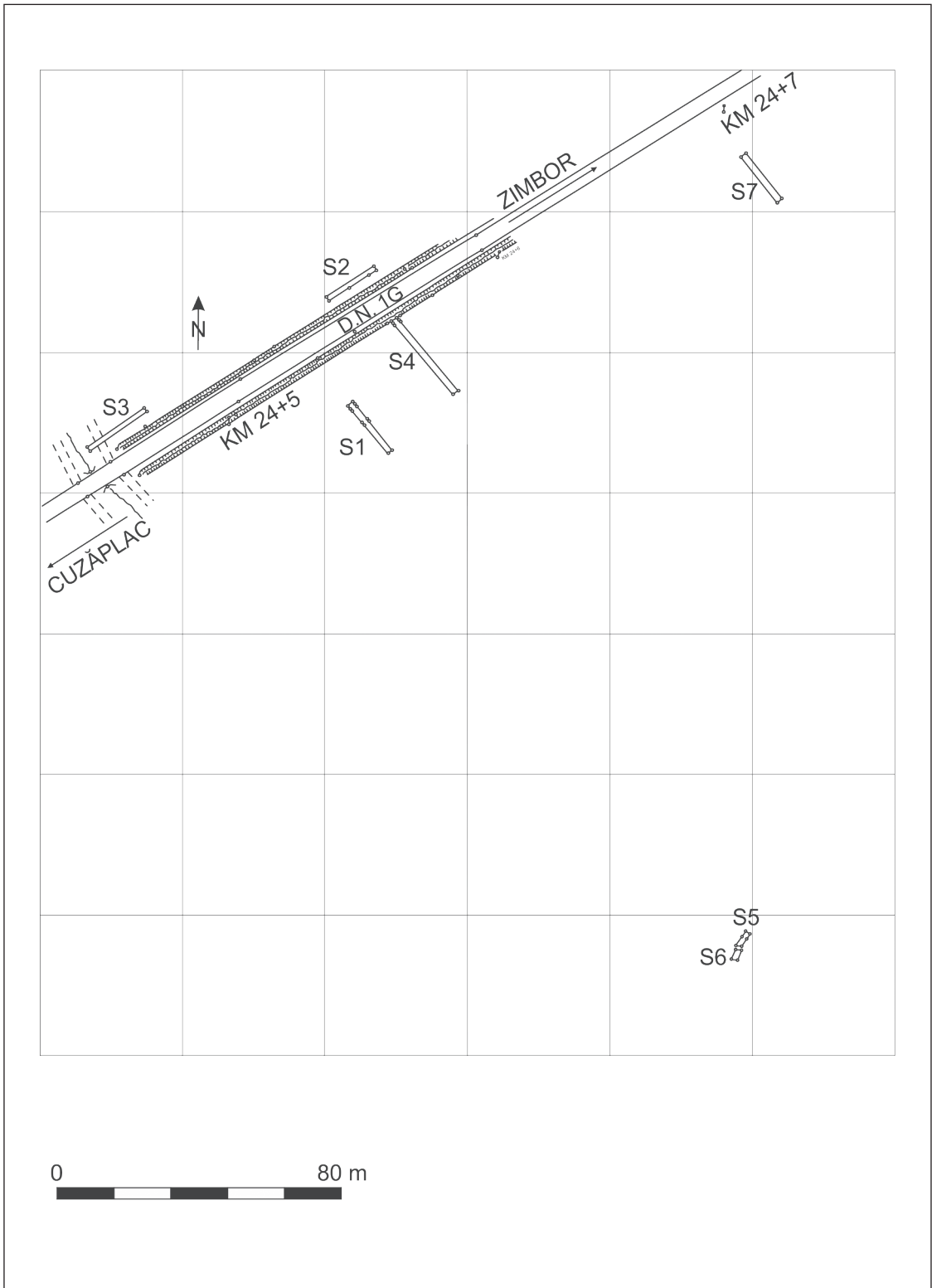
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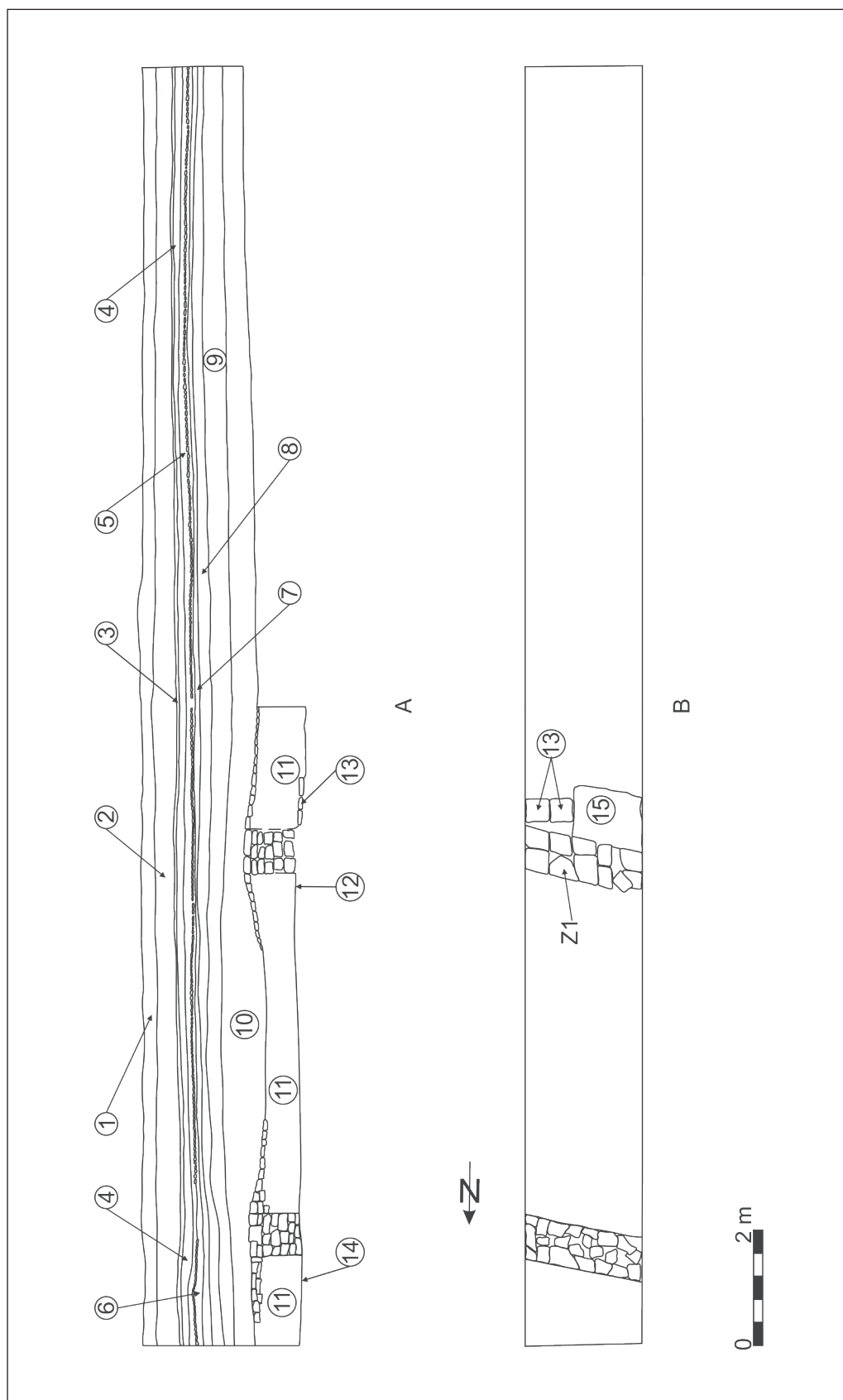
Pl. 1. The potential position of the Roman fort at Sutor based on the information presented by K. Torma.



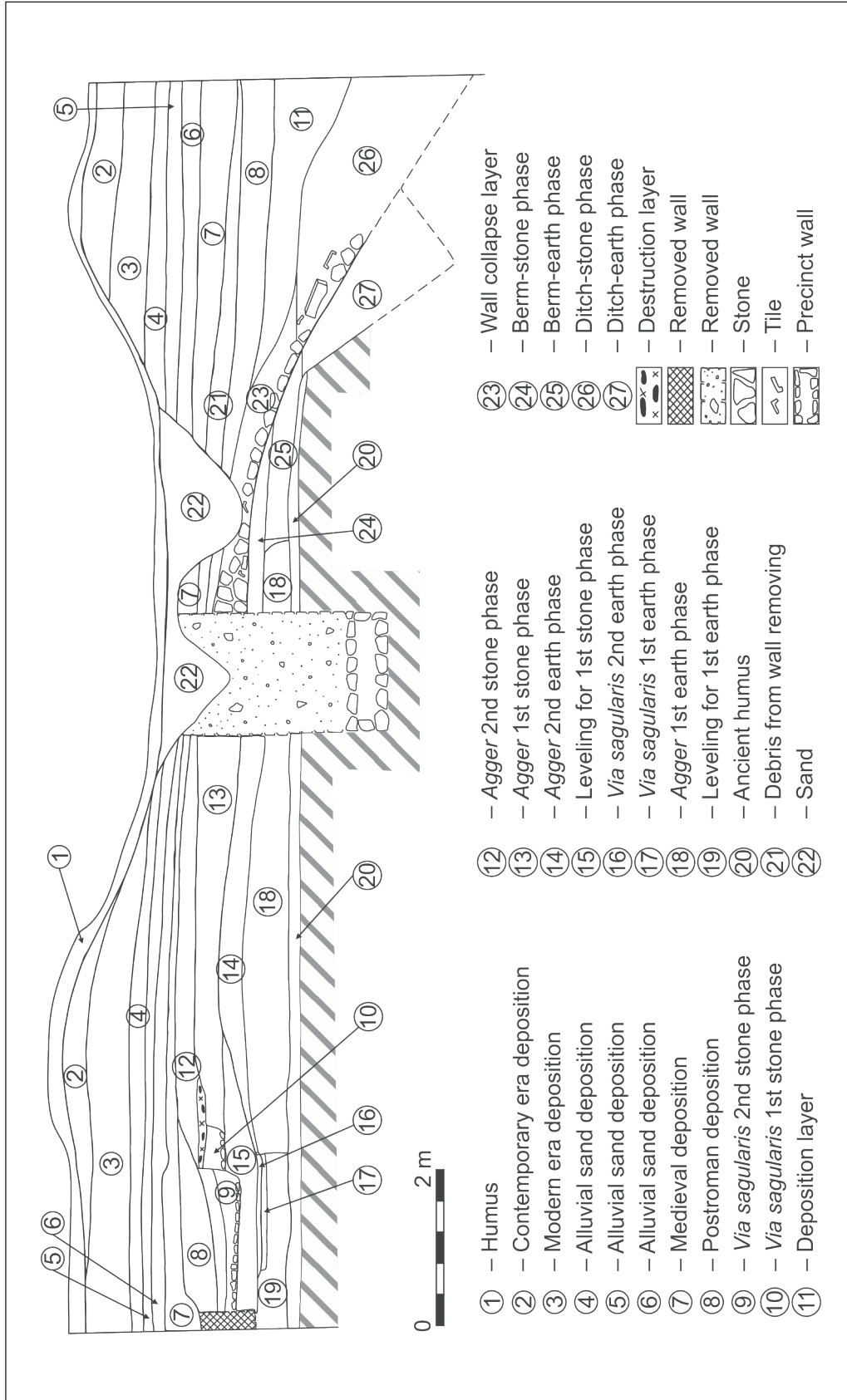
Pl. 2. The *signaculum* found at Sutor: 1–2. Photograph of the inscription; 3–4. X-ray images; 5) Photograph before the restoration process.



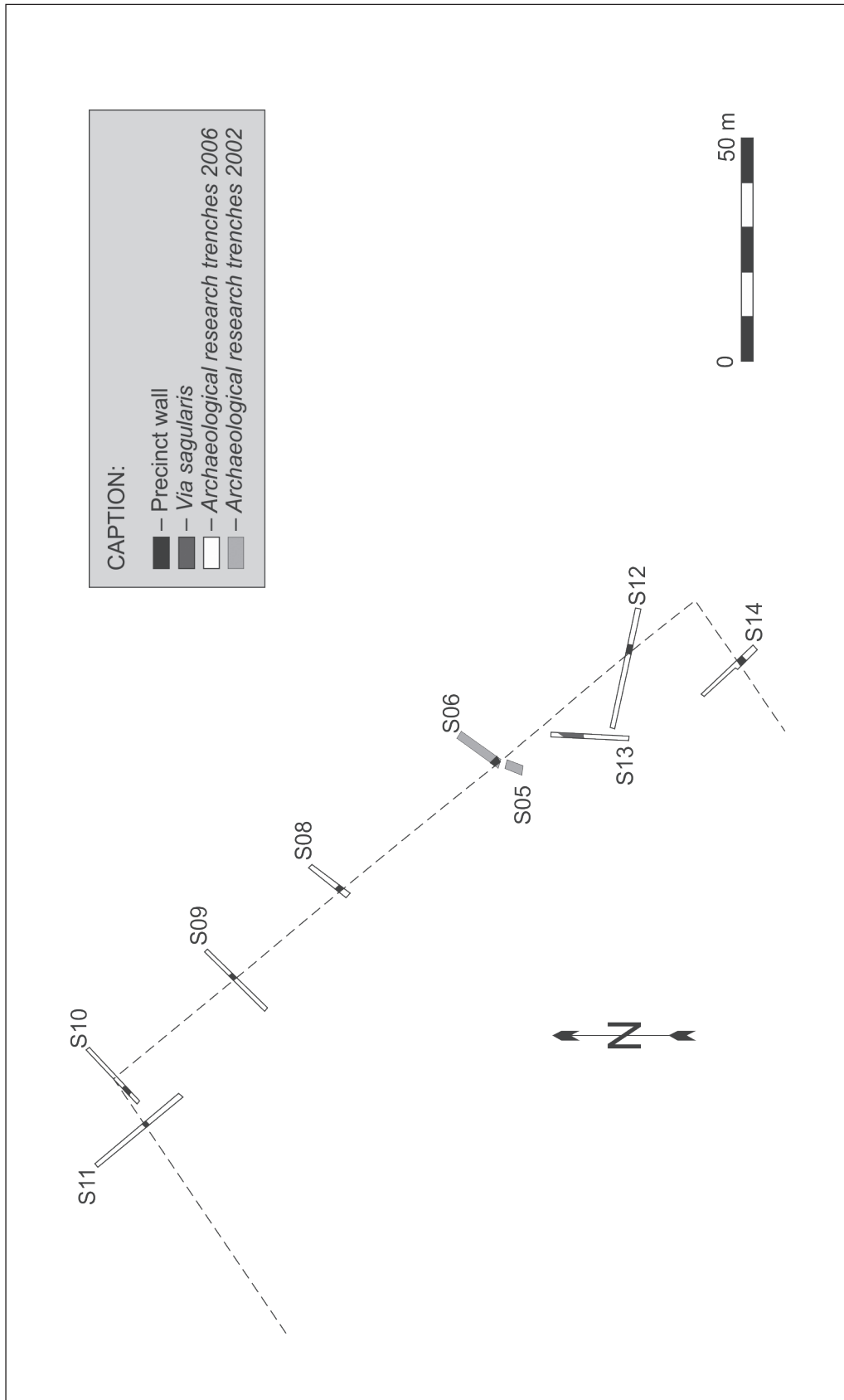
Pl. 3. Topographic plan of the first archaeological trenches at Sutor between 2001–2002.



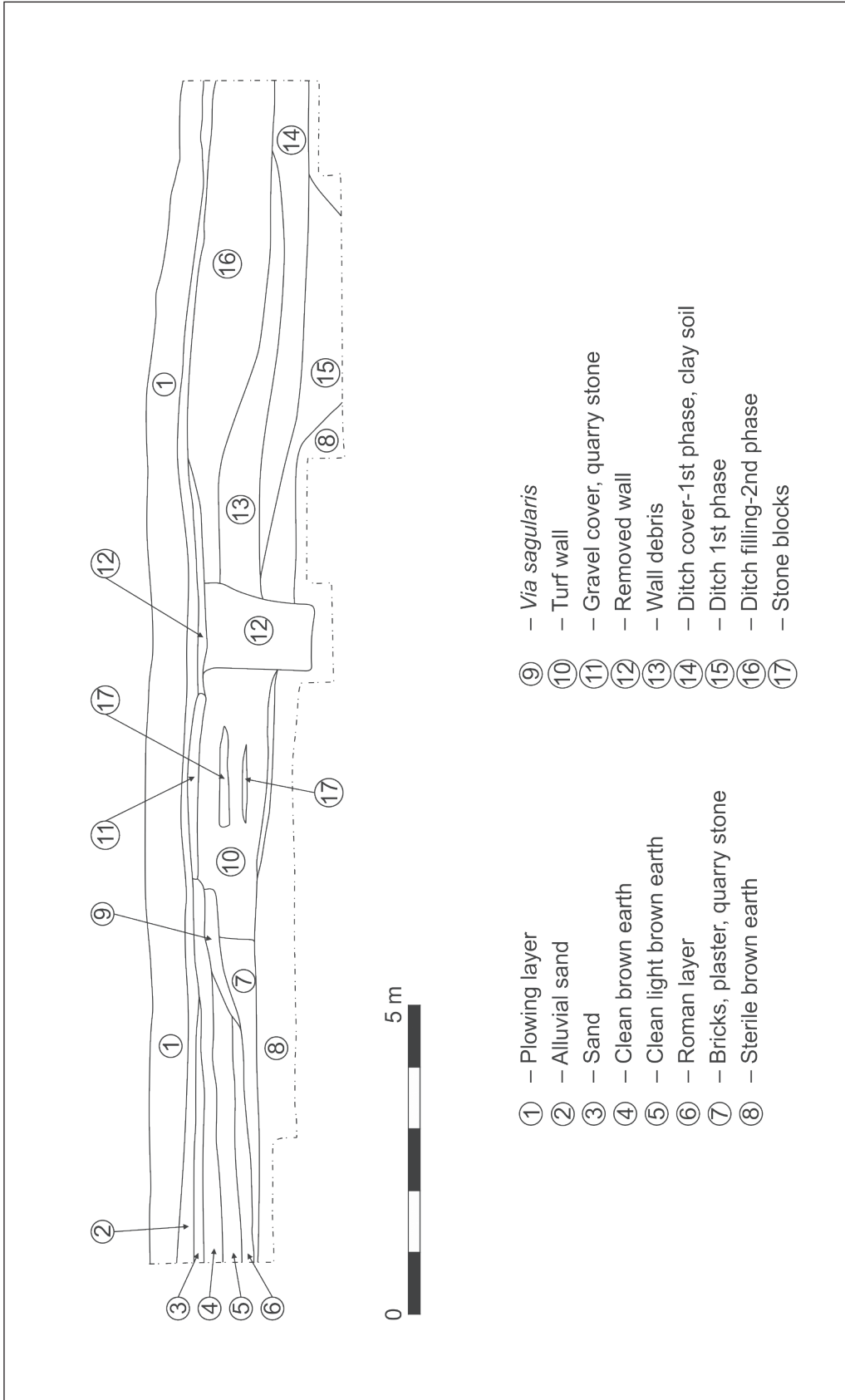
Pl. 4. Trench S1/2021.



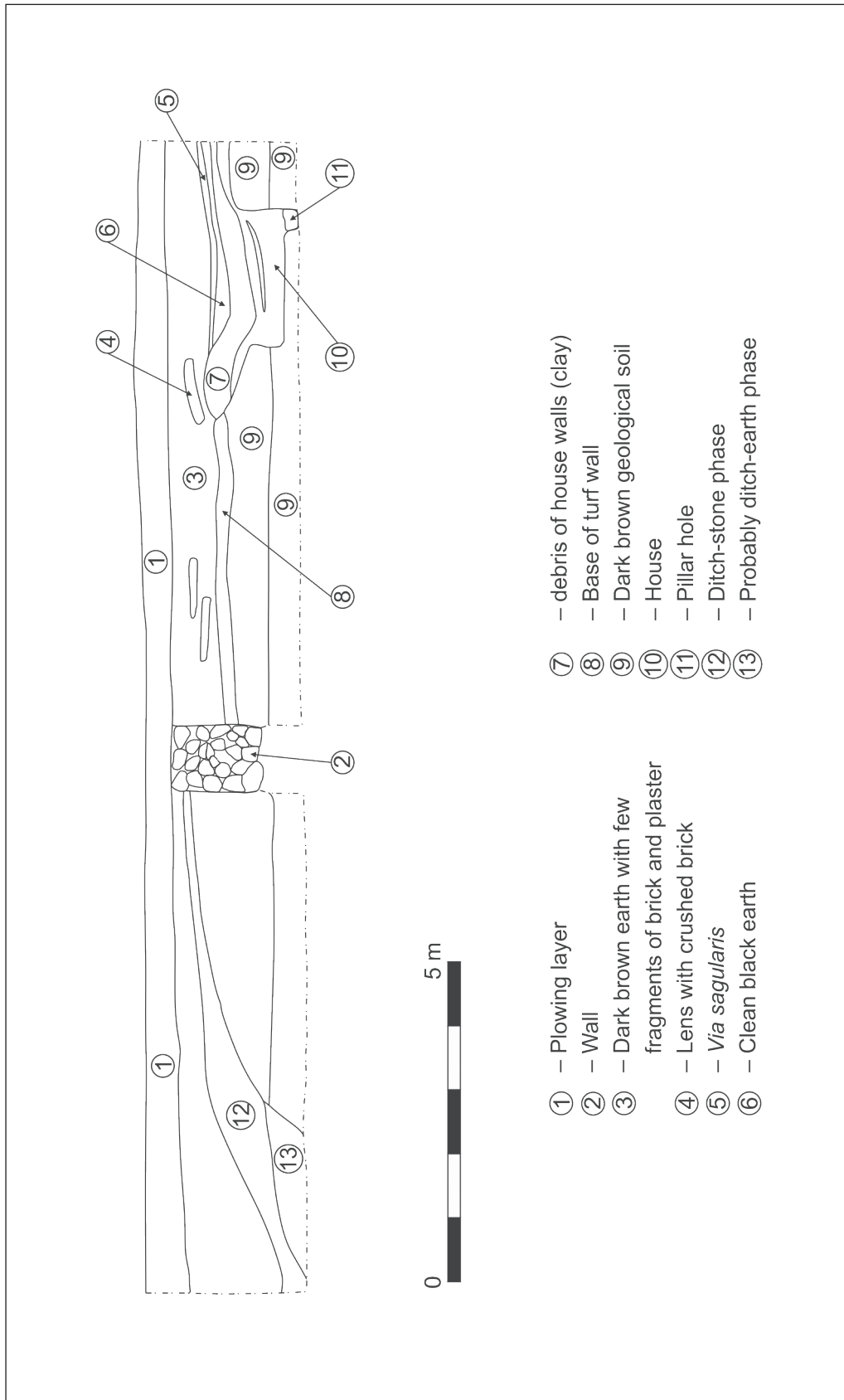
Pl. 5. The western profile of trench S4/2002 documenting the defensive system of the Roman fort.



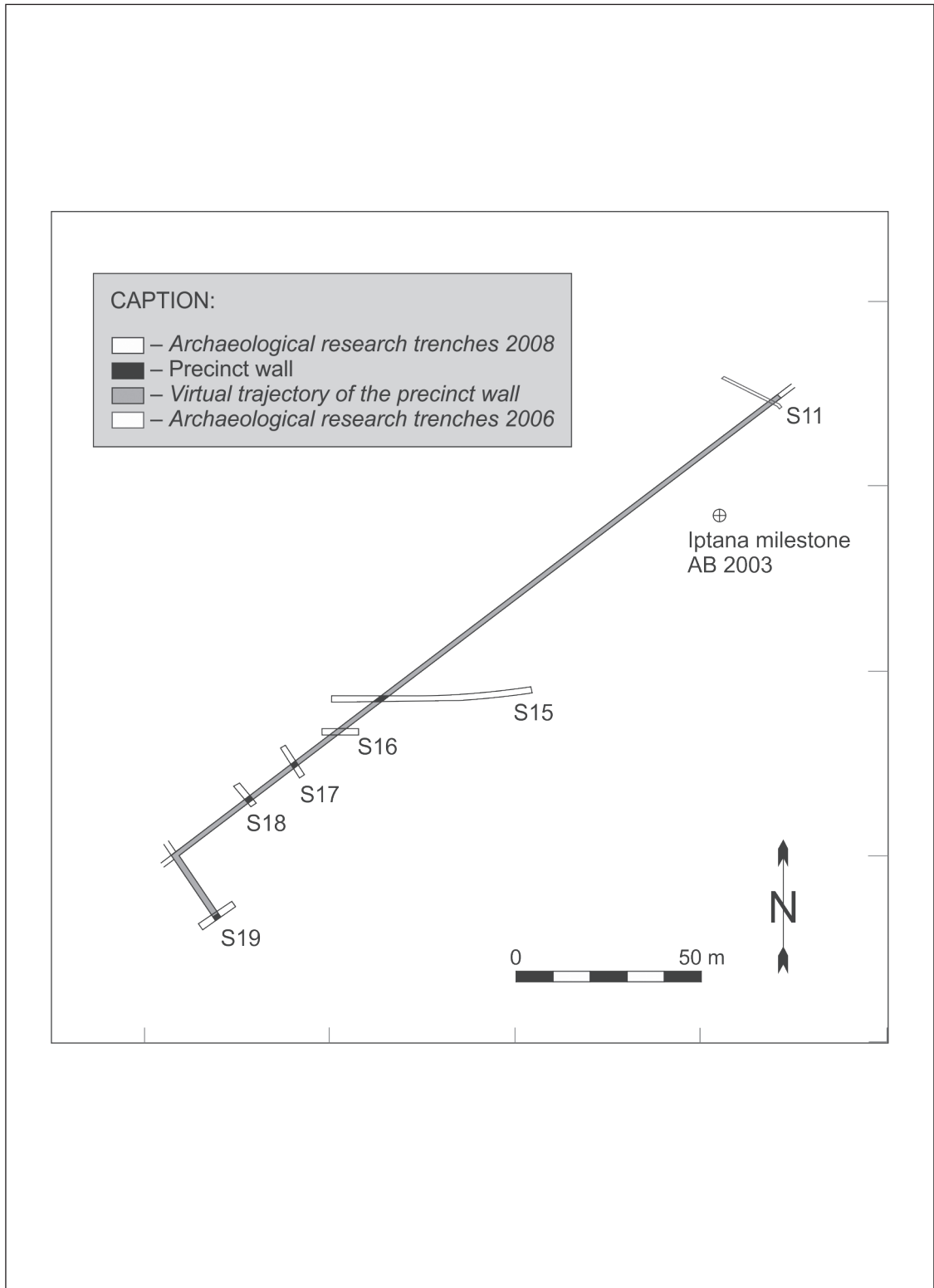
Pl. 6. General topographic plan of the excavations between 2001–2006 destined to identify the contour of the Roman fort at Sutor.



Pl. 7. The northern profile of trench S9/2006.



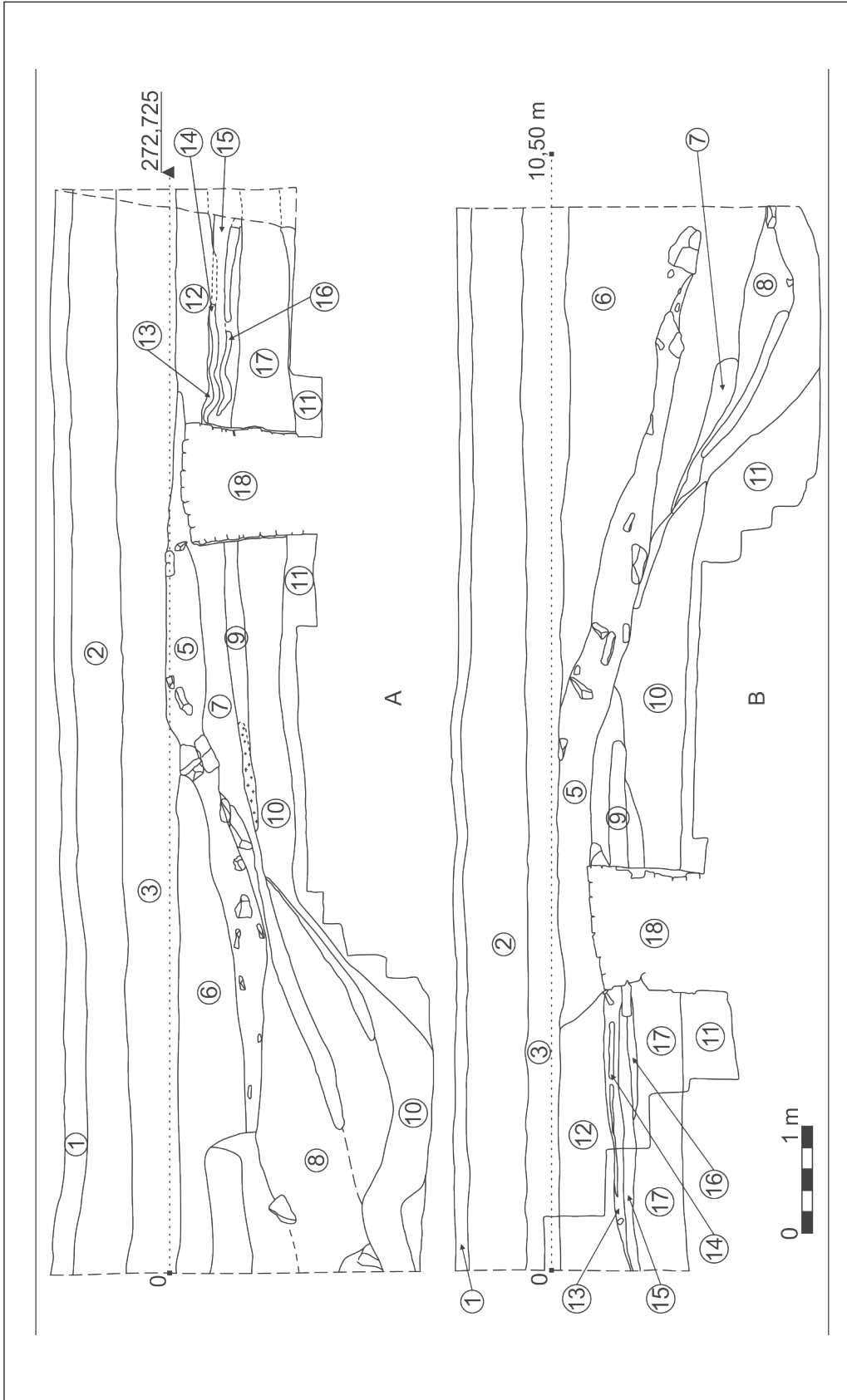
Pl. 8. The eastern profile of trench S11/2006.



Pl. 9. Topographic plan of the first archaeological trenches at Sutor in 2008.



Pl. 10. The results of the large-scale geophysical surveys at Sutor (2012; 2019–2021).



Pl. 11. The profiles of trench S20/2013. A) the northern profile and B) the southern profile.

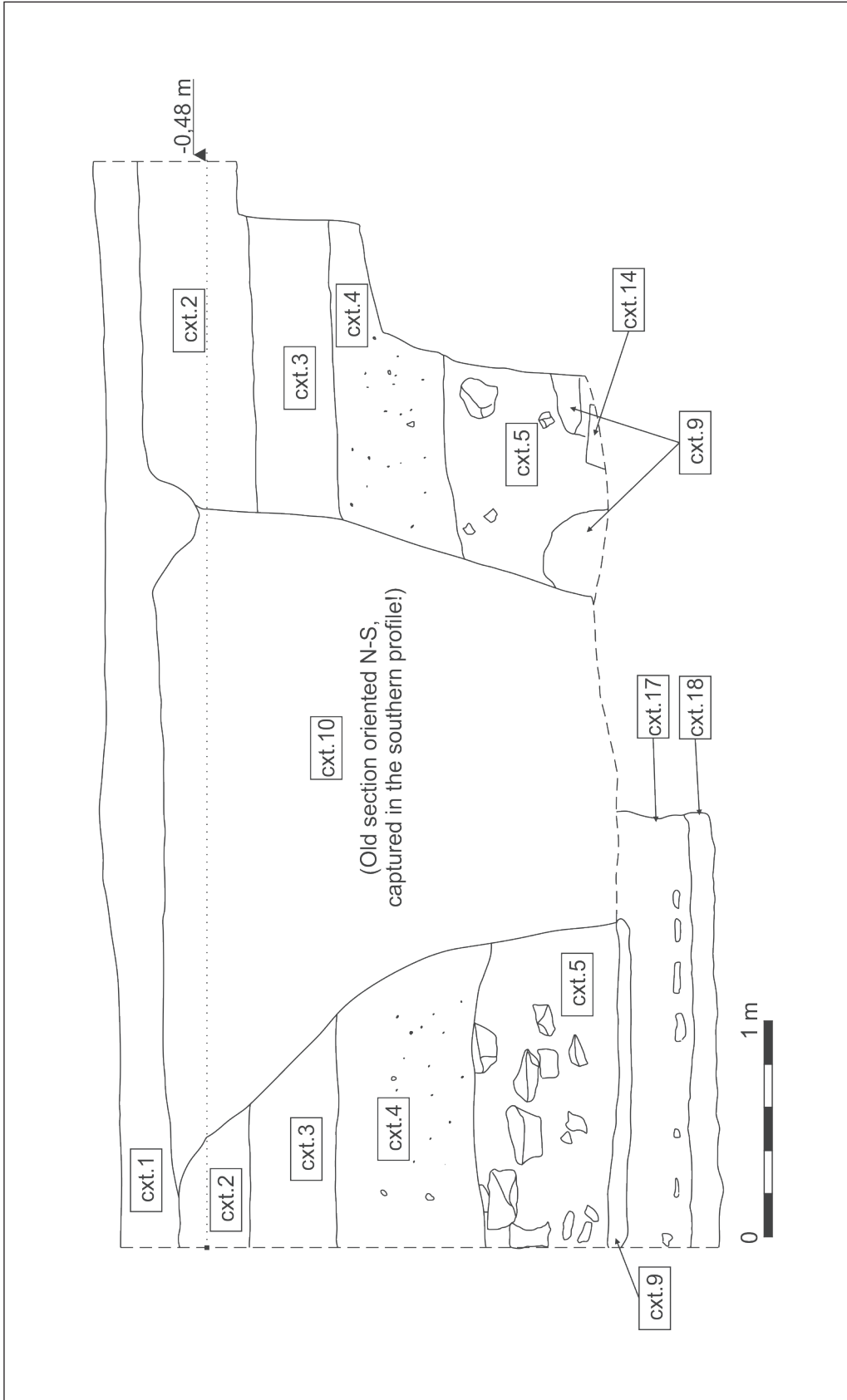


A

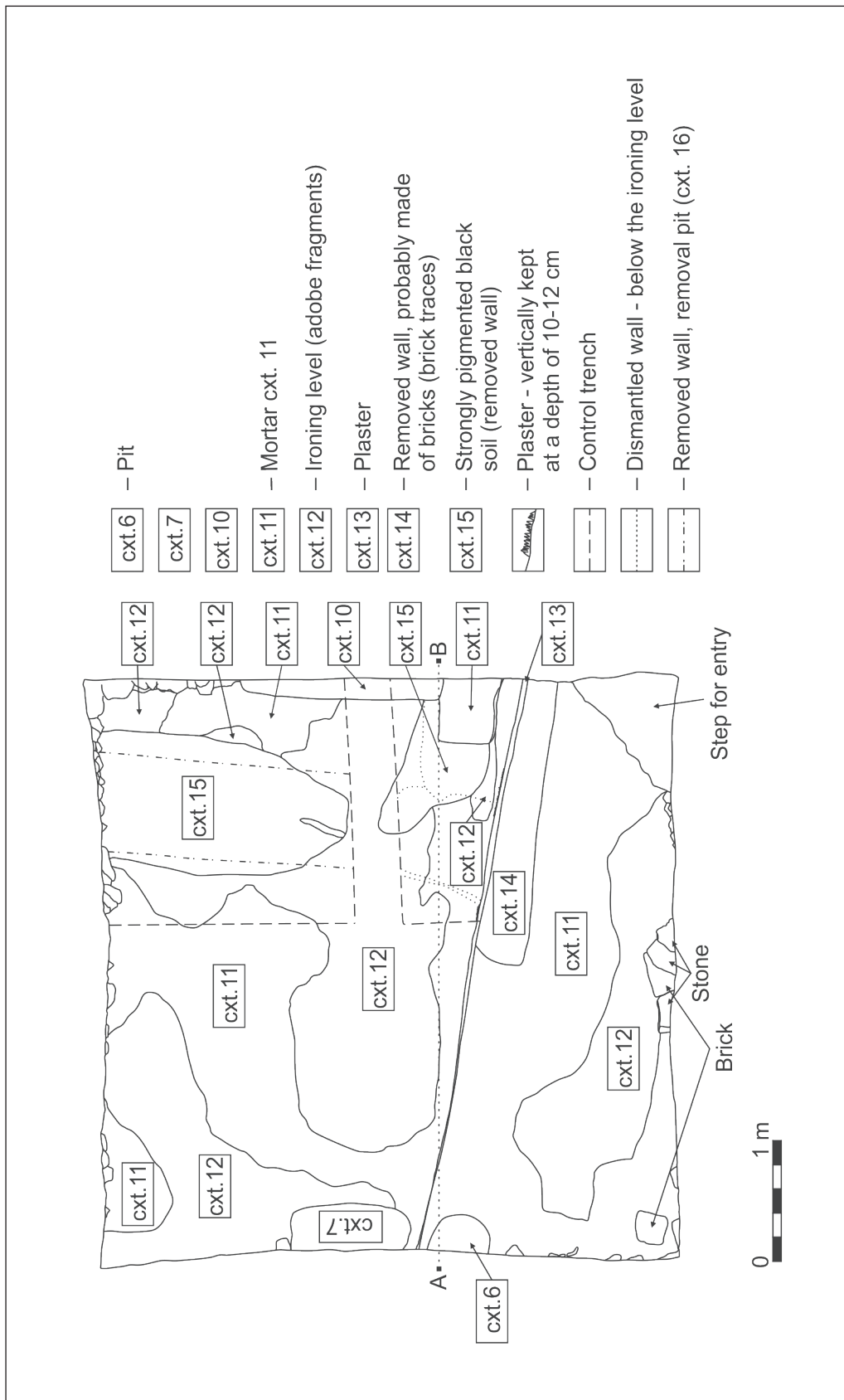


B

Pl. 12. Photographs of trench S20/2013. A) the northern profile and B) the southern profile.



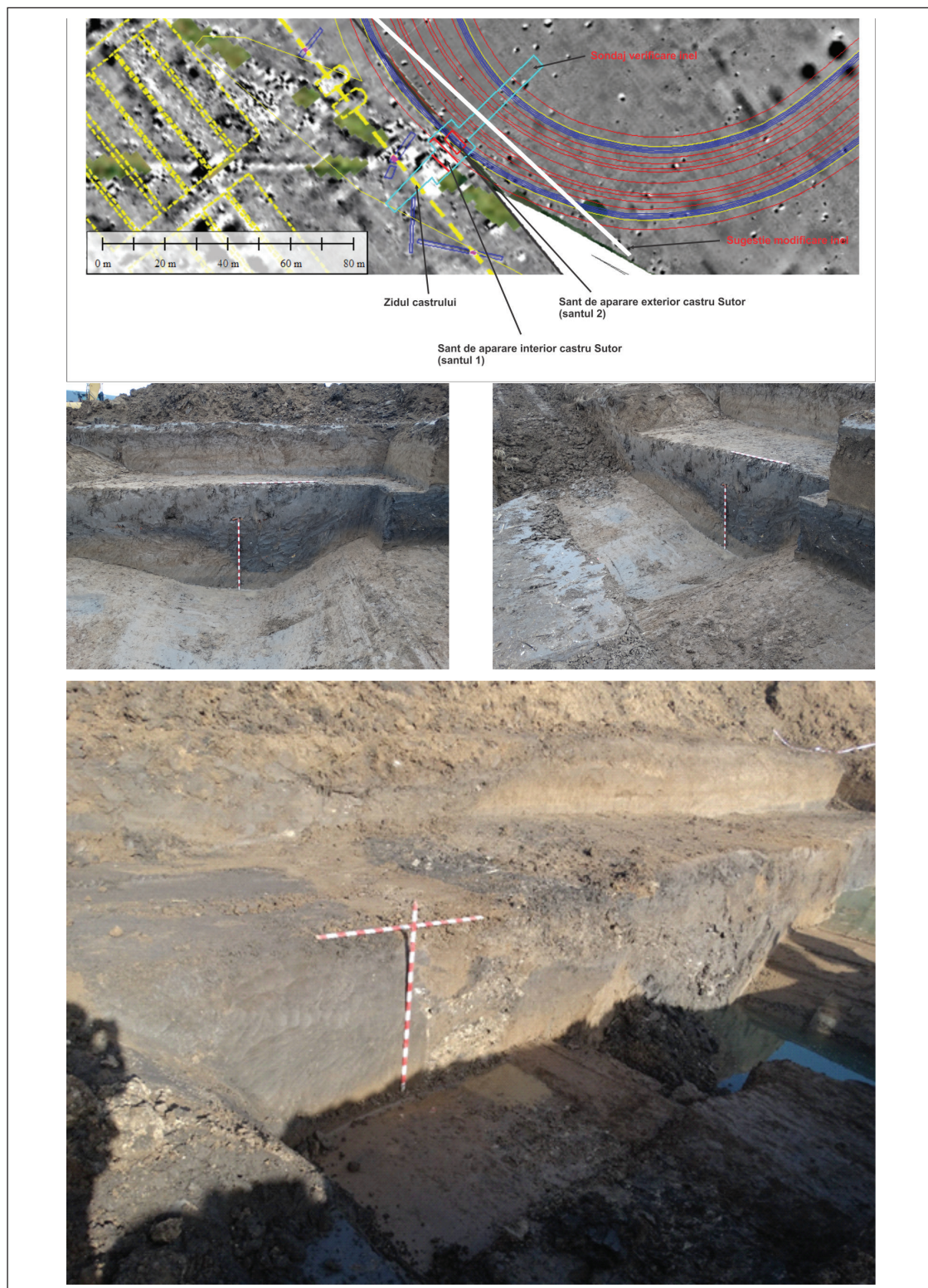
Pl. 13. The southern profile of trench S21/2014.



Pl. 14. The ground plan of trench S21/2014.



Pl. 15. Topographic plan of the excavations in 2021 at Sutor.



Pl. 16. Plan and photographs from the excavation of the defense system of the Roman fort at Sutor on its eastern side (2021).



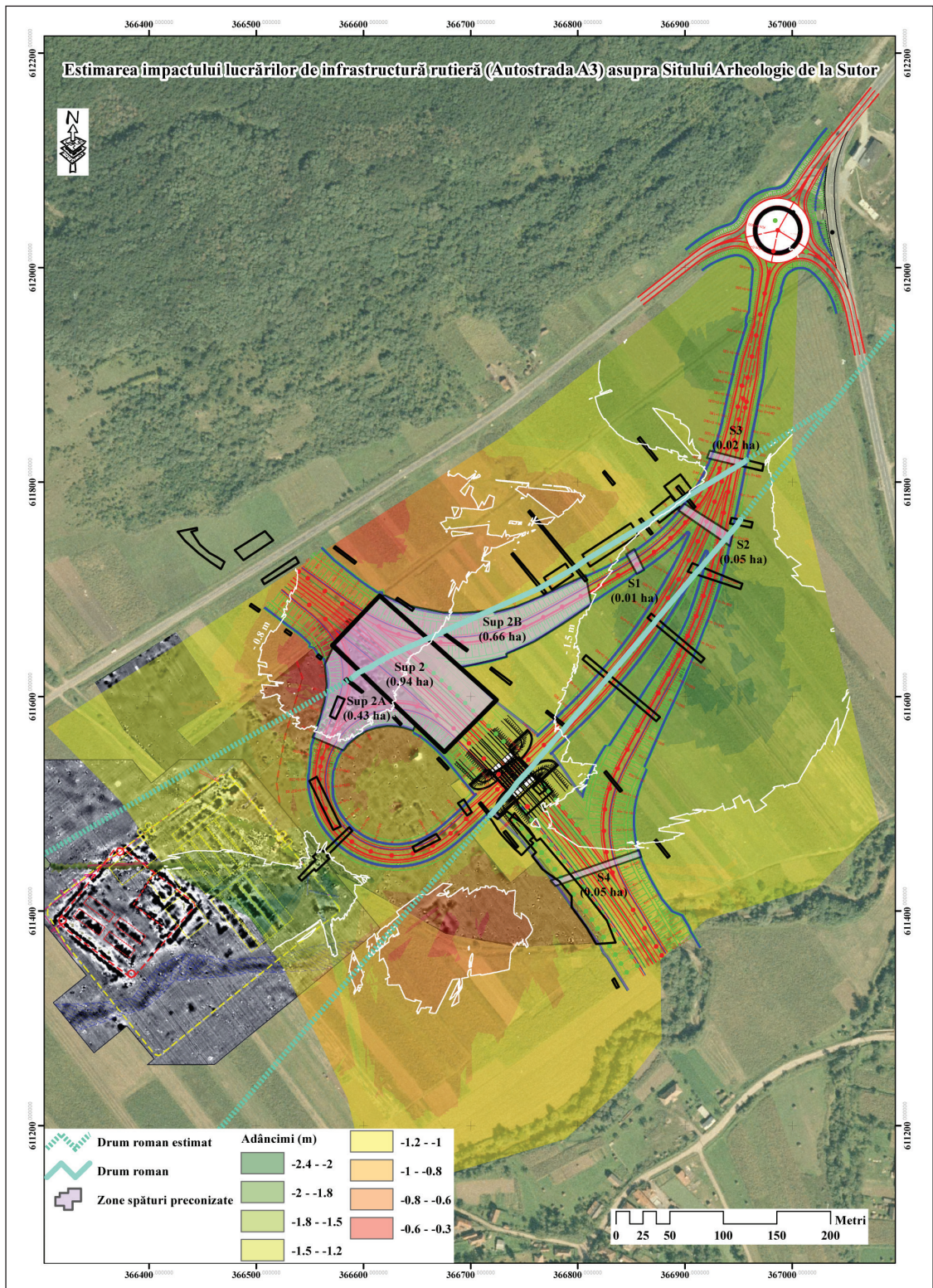
Pl. 17. Topographic plan and aerial photograph of the segments of Roman roads found at Sutor in 2021.



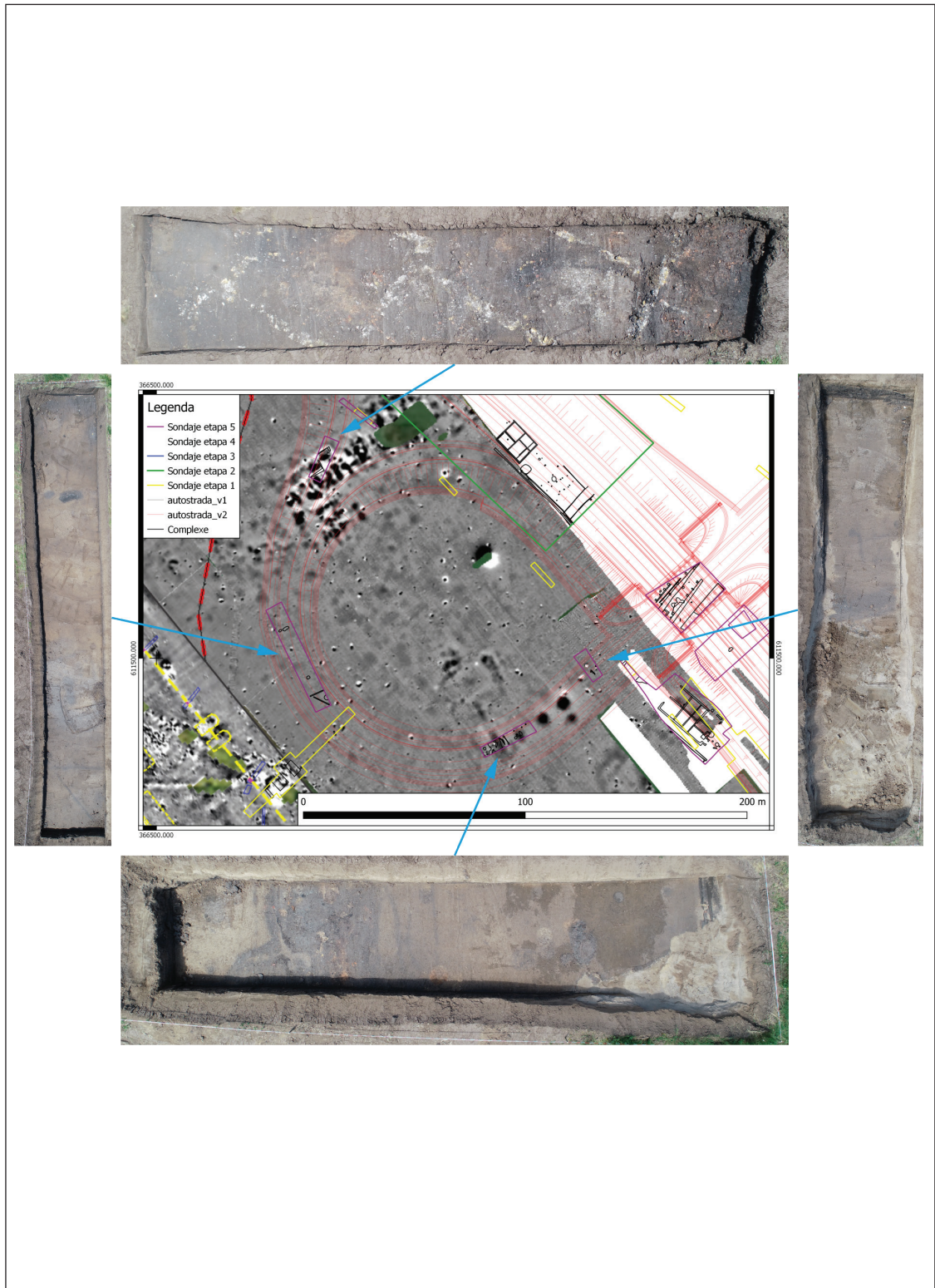
Pl. 18. Aerial photograph of the civilian baths at Sutor and photogrammetric wall survey of showing different changes in the internal structure of the rooms.



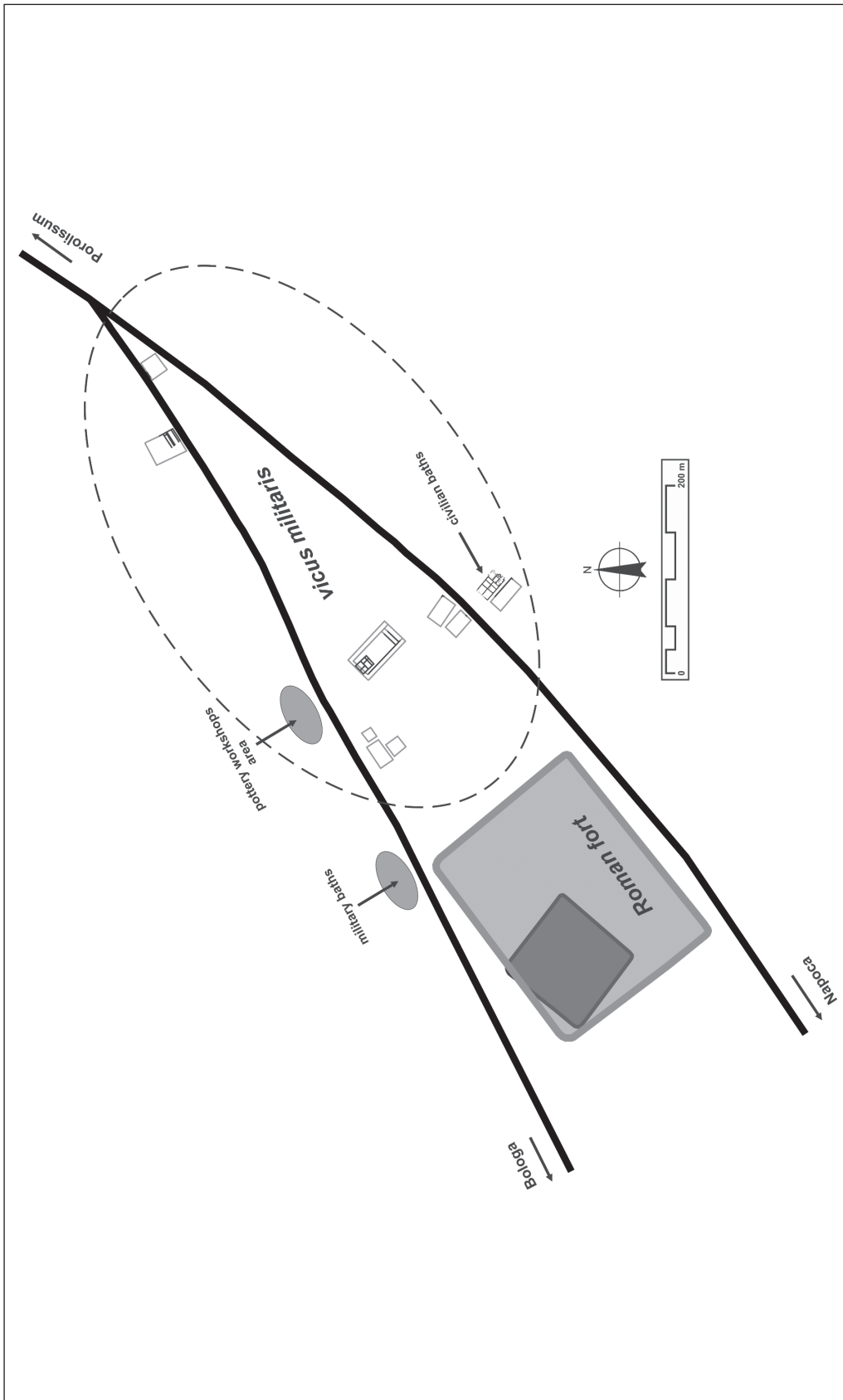
Pl. 19. Different stratigraphic phases of the main rooms in the civilian baths at Sutor.



Pl. 20. Impact assessment of the road works upon the archaeological heritage around the site at Sutor based on geo-statistical GIS spatial analysis.



Pl. 21. Magnetic survey and plan of the test trenches destined to assess the impact of the road works upon the archaeological heritage in the area west of the 'pottery production quarter'.



Pl. 22. Sketch-plan of the main archaeological features documented at Sutor.

ABBREVIATIONS THAT CAN NOT BE FOUND IN BERICHT DER RÖMISCH-GERMANISCHE KOMMISSION

Abhandlungen der Königlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin	= AKAWB
Acta Classica Universitatis Scientiarum Debrecensis, Debrecen	= ACD
Acta Ethnographica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae (Budapesta)	= Acta Ethnogr Acad Scien Hungaricae
Analele Academiei Române. Memoriile secțiunii istorice	= An. Acad. Române. Mem. Sec. Istor.
Analele Banatului (Timișoara)	= An. Banatului
Analele Dobrogei (Constanța)	= An. Dobrogei
Muzeulul Județean Vaslui (Vaslui)	= Acta Moldaviae Meridionalis
Muzeul "Vasile Pârvan" (Bârlad)	= Acta Musei Tutovens
Analele Universității București	= An. Univ. București
Analele Universității Iași	= An. Univ. Iași
Analele Universității „Dimitrie Cantemir” (Constanța)	= An. Univ. Constanța
Annales: économies, sociétés, civilisations (Paris)	= Ann. Écon. Soc. Civil.
Arheologia Moldovei, Institutul de Arheologie (Iași)	= ArhMold
Arkheologiya, Natsional'na akademiya nauk Ukraini. Institut Arkheologii (Kyiv)	= Arkheologiya
Annales Universitatis Apulensis (Alba Iulia)	= AUA
Annali di scienze religiose, Milano	= Annali di scienze religiose
Anuarul Institutului pentru Studii Politice, de Apărare și Istorie Militară	= Anu. Instit. Stud. Pol. Apăr. și Istor. Milit.
Archaeologisch-epigraphische Mitteilungen aus Österreich (-Ungarn), Wien	= AEM
Archiv des Vereines für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde, Hermannstadt – Kronstadt (Sibiu – Brașov)	= AVSL
Archaeologia Baltica Polonia = Peregrinatio Gotica (Łódź)	= Arh Baltica
Arheologia Medievală (Iași)	= Arh. Medievală
Antigüedad, religiones y sociedades, Huelva	= ARYS
Az alsóféhérmegyei történelmi régészeti és természettudomány évkönyve (Alba Iulia)	= AlsóTermÉvkönyve
Balcanica Posnanensia. Acta et Studia. Czasopismo wydawane przez UAM w Poznaniu	= Balcanica Posnaniensia
Buletinul cercurilor științifice studențești (Alba Iulia)	= BCȘS Alba Iulia
Buletinul Monumentelor Istorice (București)	= BMI
Instrumentum Bulletin du Groupe de travail européen	= Bull Instrumentum

sur l'artisanat et les productions manufacturées dans l'Antiquité (Montagnac)	
Bulletin antieke beschaving Annual Papers on Classical Archaeology	= BABesch
Bulletin de l'Institut historique belge de Rome (Rome)	= BullInst Hist Belge (Rome)
Cahiers du Centre Gustave Glotz, Sorbonne (Paris)	= Cahiers Centre Gustave Glotz
Complexul Muzeal „Julian Antonescu” (Bacău)	= Carpica
Cercetări arheologice, Muzeul Național de Istorie a României (București)	= Cercetări Arheologice
Muzeul Municipiului București (București)	= Cercetări arheologice în București
Classical Philology (Chicago)	= Class. Philol.
Cronica Cercetărilor Arheologice din România (București)	= CCA
Cronica Numismatică și Arheologică (București)	= Cron. Numis. Arh.
Dacia. Recherches et découvertes archéologiques en Roumanie, București, I-XII (1924–1928); Nouvelle Série: Revue d'archéologie et d'histoire ancienne (București)	
Muzeului de Istorie Galati	= Danubius
Dialogues d'Histoire Ancienne, Paris-Besançon	= DHA
Dicționarul limbii române moderne (București 1958)	= DRLM
Documenta Romaniae Historica (București)	= DRH
Les Dossiers d'archéologie, Paris	= DossPar
Ethnic and Racial Studies (London)	= Ethnic and Racial Studies
Ephemeris Napocensis, Institutul de Arheologie și Istoria Artei, Cluj-Napoca	= EphemNap
File de Istorie = Revista Bistriței (Bistrița)	= FI (Rev. Bistriței)
Muzeul județean Ilfov (București)	= File de Istorie
Greek-English Lexicon (Oxford 1966)	= Greek-English 1966
Harvard Studies in Classical Philology	= Harvard Stud. Class. Studia Philol.
A Herman Ottó Múzeum Évkönyve (Miskolc)	= HOMÉ
Hrvatski arheološki godišnjak (Zagreb)	= Hrv. Arh. God.
Historica. Historia Antigua (Salamanca)	= Stud. Hist. Hist. Antigua
Il Mar Nero Annali di archeologia e storia (Roma)	= Il Mar Nero
Izvestija Russkogo Arheologičeskogo Instituta v Konstantinopole	= Izv. Ross. Arch. Inst. Konstantinopole
Jahreshefte des Österreichischen Archäologischen Instituts in Wien	= ÖJh
Journal of Ancient History and Archaeology,	
Institute of Archaeology and History of Art Cluj-Napoca	= JAHA
Jósa András Múzeum Évkönyve (Nyíregyháza)	= JAMÉ
Journal of Indo-European Studies (Washington DC)	= JIES
Journal of the Society for Ancient Numismatists	= Journal Soc. Ancient Numism.
Könyv és könyvtár, Budapest	= Könyv és könyvtár
Labeo Rassegna di Diritto Romano (Napoli)	= Labeo
Lateinisch-Deutsch Schulwörterbuch (Leipzig 1891)	= Lateinisch-Deutsch 1891
Lateinisch-Deutsch Handwörterbuch (Hannover-Leipzig 1918)	= Lateinisch-Deutsch 1918

Litua. Studii și comunicări. Muzeul Județean Gorj, Târgu Jiu	= Litua
M. M. Roxan, P. Holder, Roman Military Diplomas, London	= RMD
Materialy po arkheologii, istorii i etnografii Tavrii.	= MAIET
Krymskoe otdelenie Instituta vostokovedeniya NAN Ukrainy (Simferopol')	
Muzeul Municipiului București	= Materiale de Istorie și Muzeografie
Materiale și Cercetări Arheologice (serie nouă) (București)	= MCA (S.N.)
Mélanges de l'École roumaine en France (Paris)	= Mél École roumaine en France
Mélanges de l'Univ St Ioseph (Beiruth)	= Mél Univ St Ioseph (Beiruth)
Mémoires de la Société Historique et Archéologique de Langres (Langres)	= Mém Soc Hist et Arch Langres
Memoria antiquitatis Acta Musei Petrodavensis	= Memoria Antiquitatis
Revista Muzeului arheologic (Piatra Neamț)	
Monumenta Germaniae Historica (München)	= MGH
Mousaios Anuarul muzeului județean Buzău	= Mousaios
A Nyíregyházi Jósa András Múzeum Évkönyve (Nyíregyháza)	= Josa Andras Múz Évk
Muzeul Național de Istorie a României (București)	= Muzeul Național
Norba Revista de arte, geografía e historia (Cáceres)	= Norba
Numismatische Zeitschrift	= NZ
O Arqueólogo Português, Lisboa	= Arque. Português
Opțiuni istoriografice, Iași	= Opțiuni istoriografice
Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica, Lovaina (Leuven)	= OLP
Ostraka Rivista di antichità (Napoli)	= Ostraka
Institute of Archaeology of the Czech Academy of Sciences (Prague)	= Památky Archeologické
Patrimonium Apulense, Alba Iulia	= Patrim. Apulense
Rossijskaya Arkheologiya. Institut arkheologii Rossijskoj akademii nauk (Moskva).	= RA
Rad Muzeja Vojvodine (Novi Sad)	= Rad Muz. Voj.
RepArAb Repertoriul arheologic al județului Alba, Alba Iulia, 1995 [= Bibliotheca Musei Apulensis, II]	= RepArAb
Res Antiquae (Bruxelles)	= Res Antiquae
Revista de etnografie și folclor (București)	= Rev Etnogr și Folclor
Revista Bistriței	= Rev. Bistriței
Muzeul Municipiului București	= Revista de Cercetări Arheologice și Numismatice
Muzeul Național de Etnografie și Istorie Naturală a Moldovei (Chișinău)	= Revistă de Etnografie, Științele Naturii și Muzeologie
Revista de Istorie (București)	= Rev. de Istor.
Revista Facultăților de teologie din Patriarhia Română (București)	= Stud Teologice
Revista Muzeelor, București	= Rev. Muzeelor
Revue archéologique de l'Est et du Centre-Est (Paris)	= RAEst
Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes (Bucharest)	= Rev. Études SE Européennes

Revue Historique (Paris)	= Rev. Historique
Revue Historique du Sud-Est Européen (Bucharest)	= RHSEE
Revista Storica dell'Antichita (Roma)	= Riv. Stor. Antichita
Strabon (Iași)	= Strabon
Studia Archaeologica, Roma	= StArch
Studia Antiqua et Archaeologica (Iași)	= SAA
Studii și Cercetări de Istorie veche și Arheologie, Institutul de Arheologie "Vasile Pârvan" (București)	= SCIV(A)
Slovenská Archeologia. Archeologický ústav SAV (Nitra)	= SlovArch
Stratum plus, Vysshaya Antropologicheskaya Shkola (Chișinău)	= Stratum plus
Studia Universitatis „Babeș-Bolyai”, seria Historia, Cluj-Napoca	= Stud. Historia UBB
Studia historica. Historia Antigua (Salamanca)	= Stud.Hist. Histor. Antig.
Studia Thracologica (București)	= Stud. Thracologica
Studii și Comunicări Câmpulung	= Stud. Com. Câmpulung
Studium, Debrecen	= Studium
Symposia Thracologica (București)	= Symp. Thracologica
Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association, Atlanta	= TAPA
Transsilvania. Ein Beiblatt zum Siebenbürger Boten, Hermannstadt (Sibiu)	= TranssilvBB
Uniwersytet Im Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu, Seria Historia (Poznań)	= Uniw Adama Mickiewicza Poznan
Vestigia. Beiträge zur Alten Geschichte (München)	= Vestigia
Arkheologicheskij muzej-zapovednik "Tanais" (Rostov na Donu)	= Vestnik Tanaisa
Państwowe Muzeum Archeologiczne w Warszawie (Warszawa)	= Wiadomości Archeologiczne
Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins	= ZDPV
Zeitschrift für Geschichte	= Zeitschr. Gesch.

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