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Short report on the excavations in Brigetio in 2015

Civil town, *canabae* and legionary fortress

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Abstract

In 2015, first time in the history of excavations in Brigetio, the Department of Classical and Roman Archaeology of Eötvös Loránd University and the Klapka György Museum of Komárom carried out excavations in all three major parts of Brigetio: the civil town, the canabae and the legionary fortress. At the site Szőny-Vásártér, the excavation was concentrated on a Roman cellar with collapsed wooden ceiling and a large pit nearby. Most important results are the complete excavation of the cellar, where a large amount of pottery vessels, a Dressel 20 amphora and a bronze cavalry parade helmet came to light. In the territory of the canabae (Szőny-Dunapart) two horrea and another stone building with uncertain function have been found. At the legionary fortress (Szőny-MOL-Kiskertek), the fieldwork was concentrated on the principia and its surroundings.

Civil town (Szőny-Vásártér)

Systematic excavations in the civil town of Brigetio (Fig. 1) have started in 1992, carried out by the Department of Classical and Roman Archaeology of Eötvös Loránd University and the Klapka György Museum of Komárom. Main aims of the excavation campaign of 2015¹ were to

- 1 The excavation was conducted by the Department of Classical and Roman Archaeology, Eötvös Loránd University and Klapka György Museum, Komárom under the direction of László Borhy (Eötvös Loránd University), Emese Számadó (Klapka György Museum, Komárom) and Dávid Bartus (Eötvös Loránd University). Participants were Gabriella Delbó (Klapka György Museum), Nikoletta Sey, Lajos Juhász, Bence Simon, Barbara Hajdu, Zita Kis, Anna Nagy, Csilla Sáró, Eszter Süvegh archaeologists (Eötvös Loránd University); András Morgós, Eszter Harsányi, Zsófia Kurovszky and Emese Nausch restorers; Julianna Burucs, Ferenc Barna, Anita Benes, Adrienn Borsos, István Czeti, Sára Gábor, Tamás Gál, Rebeka Gergác, Dóra Hományi, Bianka Horváth, Szilvia Johácz, Borbála Mohácsi, Rita Olasz, Zsolt Papp, Dániel Polyák, Alexandra Szabó, Melinda Szabó, Katalin Szarvas (students, Eötvös Loránd University); Wang Xing and Fang Ruosu (students, University of Peking); Mátyás Hülvely and Zita Szabó. The excavation was funded by the Municipality of Komárom and the Directorate of the National Cultural Fund of Hungary. Work on the present paper was supported by the Hungarian Scientific Research Fund (OTKA K 108667) and the MTA-ELTE Research Group for Interdisciplinary Archaeology.

finish the excavation of the cellar and a large pit nearby which have been found in 2012–2013.² The total excavated area in 2015 was approximately 150 m².

The collapsed wooden ceiling of the cellar was covered with a temporary wooden roof after the excavation campaign of 2014.³ The first task of the excavation in 2015 was removing this roof, then cleaning and conserving the Roman wooden ceiling (*Fig. 2*). After the conservation of the wooden planks they were taken out by restorers, then we started the excavation of the lowest layers of the cellar. In a depth of approximately 170 cm from the original ceiling level, a very large amount of pottery have been found on the floor of the cellar (*Fig. 3–4*). It was concentrated to the southern end of the cellar, where the collapsed wooden ceiling was missing, which indicates that originally there was an opening on that side of the ceiling used as an entrance to the cellar (*Fig. 5–6*). After the cellar had been abandoned, but before the collapse of the ceiling, a large amount of pottery – including a lot of terra sigillata vessels – and other rubbish was thrown down the floor of the cellar through the entrance opening. The “other rubbish” was surprisingly includes a Roman bronze cavalry parade helmet (*Fig. 7*), which is one of the most extraordinary finds of the last years in Brigetio. In the northern half of the cellar, under the collapsed ceiling, an amphora of type Dressel 20 has been found (*Fig. 8*), which was originally served as a container for olive oil from Baetica. Some of the *tituli picti* were also preserved on the surface of the amphora. All of the material from the cellar are now under restoration and will be evaluated later in a separate article.

Some metres southeast to the cellar a large pit measuring 5 × 4 m has been found earlier, which contained a huge amount of iron slags weighing hundreds of kilograms, as well as bronze brooches, bone hairpins and a lot of pottery. It could be served as a waste pit related to nearby ironworking activities.⁴ In a depth of more than three metres, we have surprisingly found remains of stone walls next to and parallel with the northern and southern clay walls of the pit, which means that the pit was originally a cellar with stone walls (*Fig. 9–10*). The walls of the cellar were systematically taken out as building material after the abandonment of the cellar, only the lower rows of the wall remained. After that, the pit was filled up with the waste material of the nearby metal workshop.

Besides the above-mentioned find material, a bronze figurine of Amor should be mentioned.⁵ It has been found in a 3rd century AD demolition layer consisted of bricks and tiles, obviously in secondary position. The figurine belonged most probably to a household shrine in a neighbouring building.

Canabae (Szöny-Dunapart)

In autumn 2015, a planned excavation was carried out by the Institute of Archaeological Sciences of Eötvös Loránd University and the Klapka György Museum of Komárom at the site

2 BORHY ET AL. 2013, 129–130, Fig. 5–10; BARTUS ET AL. 2014c, Fig. 3.

3 Reports of the last seasons: BARTUS ET AL. 2012; BORHY ET AL. 2013; BARTUS ET AL. 2014a; 2014b; 2014c; 2015. See the complete bibliography of the research in Brigetio between 1992 and 2014: BORHY 2014.

4 BARTUS ET AL. 2014.

5 BARTUS 2015, 67, no. 44.

Szőny-Dunapart,⁶ in the territory of the canabae of Brigetio (*Fig. 1*). The aim of the excavation project, which is funded directly by the Government of Hungary, is to continue the fieldwork which has been started in 2014 as a preventive excavation preceding the construction of the flood control dam between Komárom and Almásfüzitő. The most important result of the 2014 excavation season was the discovery of the first Roman bath in Brigetio.⁷ The excavation area of 2015 was located east to the Roman bath in a territory of 600 m² (*Fig. 11–12*), where earlier aerial photography has shown traces of a very intensive settlement part.

At the eastern end of the excavation area a building with large, massive walls has been found. The southern wall of the building is at least 30 metres long, of which a section of 13 meters has been unearthed, together with the southwest corner and traces of the western wall. Five buttresses are connecting to the outside of the southern wall, which indicates that the building was a horreum (*Fig. 13–14*). Similar buttresses were commonly used in horrea to carry the heavy roof of the building. The floor of the building, which was obviously raised with a *suspensura*, is not preserved. The building had been abandoned and probably demolished before its area was used for funerary practices attested by Late Roman child burials.

The neighbouring rectangular building, measuring approximately 11×11 metres, can also be reconstructed as a horreum. We have found 21 postholes spaced regularly in a grid of 7×5, these posts supported the wooden floor of the first period of the building. The horreum was built in stone later, its stone walls and six of the rectangular pillars which supported the floor have also be found (*Fig. 15–16*). The impress of a wooden beam is visible on the top of a pillar, which indicates that the floor was made of wood in the second period as well.

Between the two horrea a street leading north-south has been found, its pebbly surface was renewed several times. At western part of the excavation area a large stone building with hypocaustum has been found (*Fig. 17*). It is unclear, yet, whether it was a public building or a house, however, it has several building periods. As it could be observed, the building had stone foundations supporting adobe walls and it was decorated with wall-paintings. Terrazzo walls and sewers have also been found in the building. In the 3rd century AD, the building was burnt down but it was rebuilt later.

The abundant find material of the excavation mostly consists of pottery and animal bones, of which a complete skeleton of tortoise should be mentioned. Similarly to the previous excavation season, more than 200 brick stamps have been found, mostly of the legio I adiutrix. Several crucibles have been found in the eastern part of the excavation area but we could not

6 The excavation was conducted by the Department of Classical and Roman Archaeology, Eötvös Loránd University and Klapka György Museum, Komárom under the direction of László Borhy (Eötvös Loránd University), Emese Számadó (Klapka György Museum, Komárom) and Dávid Bartus (Eötvös Loránd University). Participants were Gabriella Delbó (archaeologist, Klapka György Museum), Zita Kis, Csilla Sáró, Nikoletta Sey, Barbara Hajdu, Bence Simon, László Rupnik, Lajos Juhász, Katalin Groma, András Jáky (archaeologists, Eötvös Loránd University), Boglárka Fábrián, Fanni Fodor, András Hudecz, Anikó Bózsza (archaeologists), Anita Benes, Tamás Gál, Ferenc Barna, Gergely Kostyál, Szilvia Johácz, Melinda Szabó, Márton Szabó, Julianna Burucs, Dóra Hományi, Dániel Polyák, Zsófia Kelemen, Rita Olasz, Zsanett Kartali, József Vigh, Rita Rakonczay, Orsolya Gálvölgyi, Adél Ternovác, Ágnes Font, Borbála Schliszka, Bianka Horváth, Fruzsina Németh, Zoltán Kiss, Réka Tóth, Zsolt Papp, Máté Mészáros, Zoltán Pallag (students, Eötvös Loránd University), Katarina Černaňová, Denisa Kormañáková (students, University of Trnava), Gergely Nagy. The excavation was funded by the Government of Hungary and the Hungarian Scientific Research Fund (OTKA K 108667).

7 BARTUS ET AL. 2014d.

localize the presumed bronze workshop. One of the most remarkable finds of the excavation is a golden aureus of Vespasian, datable to 77/78 AD (*Fig. 18*).

Legionary fortress (Szöny-MOL-Kiskertek)

The excavation in the legionary fortress of Brigetio in summer 2015 was concentrated in the center of the castra legionis⁸, at the site Szöny-MOL-Kiskertek (*Fig. 1*). Three surfaces of 100 m² were opened, two of them in the north-south axis, the third one 40 metres to the east (*Fig. 19*).

The eastern surface was opened at the exact place where one year before the inscribed bronze tablet with the law of Philippus Arabs⁹ said to have been found by metal detector, with the aim of finding additional fragments of the tablet. Surprisingly, in the second day of the excavation a small bronze fragment with six engraved letters came to light, which fits perfectly to the bottom of the bronze tablet. This fragment also confirms the findspot of the tablet. The new fragment – as well as the others – was in secondary position in a Late Roman layer. Another important result from the eastern surface was locating a street leading north-south, parallel with the via decumana (*Fig. 20*). The street has five periods, of which the first three was covered with a very hard, pebbly surface. In the fourth period, which can be dated most probably to the Severan age based on terra sigillata finds from Westerndorf in its foundation, the street was covered by stone slabs. There was a sewer at the eastern side of the street, in which a bronze wagon attachment with grotesque head has been found (*Fig. 21*). In Late Roman times the street was not in use anymore, the stone pavement of the street was taken out and new buildings were erected, traces of which have been found in the topmost layers.

The two western surfaces were opened in the presumed location of the principia. In the northern section we have found part of a large courtyard which extended beyond our surface of 100 m² in all directions and can be identified as the courtyard of the principia with five periods (*Fig. 22*). In the other section 15 metres south, we have found the southern end of the courtyard with the same layers and periods, as well as remains of walls and terrazzo-floors south of the courtyard, which could belong to the principia building (*Fig. 23*). The precise dating of the layers will be possible only after the evaluation of the finds, however, some preliminary observations can be made (*Fig. 24*). The first period can be dated to the first years of the reign of Trajan, when the legionary fortress was built. The courtyard was covered with a terrazzo floor on clay foundation. Sometimes later the level of the courtyard was raised by 30 cm and the new courtyard had a very hard, pebbly covering (Period 2). The upper 2–3 centimetres of that pebbly floor is burnt all over the courtyard, which means that the principia suffered heavy damages,

8 The excavation was conducted by the Department of Classical and Roman Archaeology, Eötvös Loránd University and Klapka György Museum, Komárom under the direction of László Borhy (Eötvös Loránd University), Emese Számadó (Klapka György Museum, Komárom) and Dávid Bartus (Eötvös Loránd University). Participants were Gabriella Delbó (archaeologist, Klapka György Museum), Zita Kis, Csilla Sáró, Nikolett Sey, Bence Simon, Barbara Hajdu, Lajos Juhász, László Rupnik, Eszter Süvegh (archaeologists, Eötvös Loránd University), Anikó Bózsza, András Hudecz (archaeologists), Anita Benes, Tamás Gál, Ferenc Barna, Gergely Kostyál, Szilvia Johácz, Melinda Szabó, Márton Szabó, Dóra Hományi, Dániel Polyák, Zsófia Kelemen, Rita Olasz, Zsanett Kartali, Rita Rakonczay, Adél Ternovác, Ágnes Font, Bianka Horváth, András Fazekas, Borbála Mohácsi, Fruzsina Németh, Zoltán Kiss, Réka Tóth, Zsolt Papp, István Czeti, Sára Gábrriel, Hella Mag, Enikó Mikusi, Zoltán Pallag, Rebeka Gergác, Alexandra Szabó (students, Eötvös Loránd University), Dóra Balogh (student, University of Pécs), Daniel Svihalek, Peter Breza, Michaela Siekelová (students, University of Trnava).

9 BORHY ET AL. 2015a; 2015b.

most probably during the Marcomannic wars. The courtyard was renewed soon with another pebbly floor (Period 3) and finally the whole surface was covered with stone slabs in the Severan age (Period 4), together with the above-mentioned eastern street, and remained in use until the Late Roman period. The stone slabs were probably taken out already in Late Roman times (Period 5), together with the pavement of the street. The most important finds from the courtyard are more than 50 fragments of a large imperial inscription carved in stone, which is under evaluation at the moment, but it will most likely shed new light on the legionary fortress of Brigetio.

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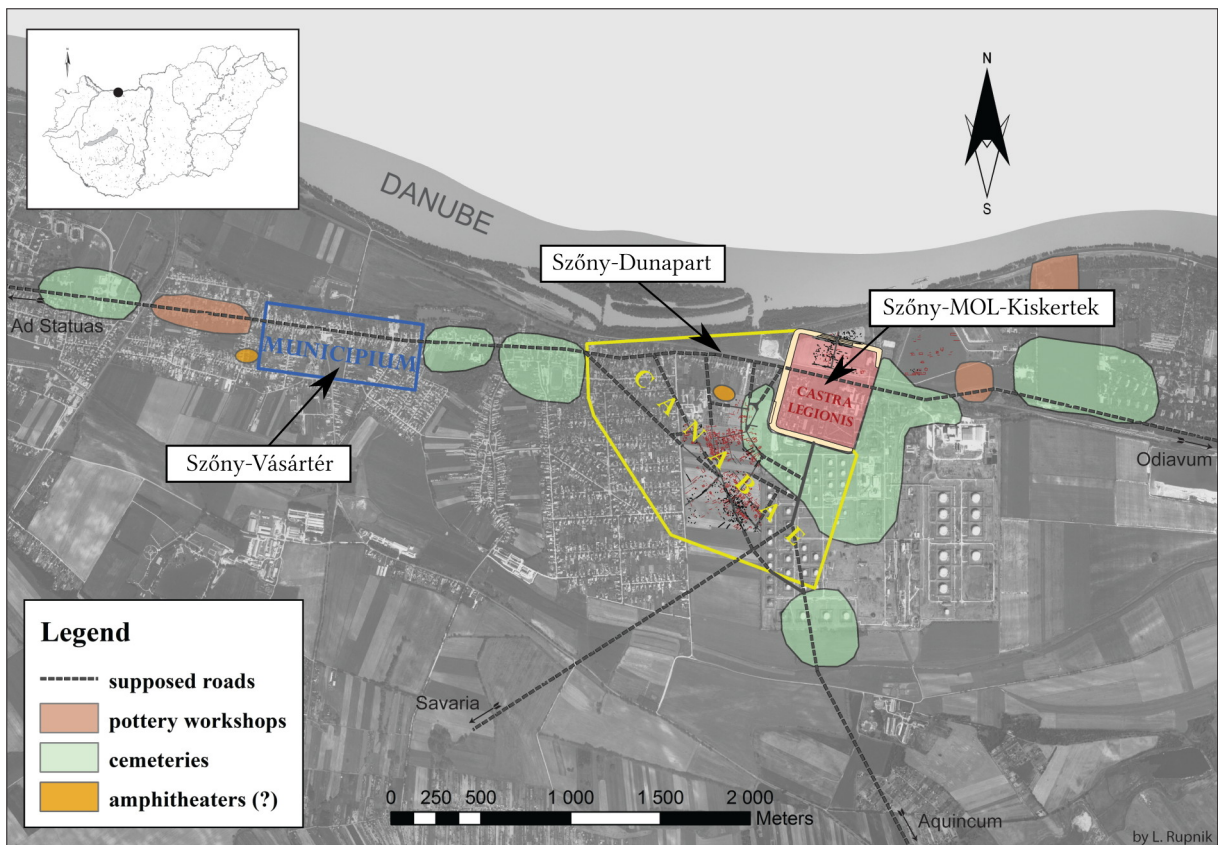


Fig. 1. Map of Brigetio (L. Rupnik).



Fig. 2. The collapsed wooden ceiling of the cellar (Photo: D. Bartus).



Fig. 3. Pottery in the cellar (Photo: D. Bartus).



Fig. 4. Pottery in the cellar (Photo: D. Bartus).



Fig. 5. The cellar before the removal of the wooden ceiling (Photo: D. Bartus).



Fig. 6. The cellar after the removal of the wooden ceiling (Photo: D. Bartus).



Fig. 7. Bronze cavalry parade helmet (Photo: D. Bartus).



Fig. 8. Fragments of a Dressel 20 amphora in the cellar (Photo: D. Bartus).



Fig. 9. The southern cellar (Photo: D. Bartus).



Fig. 10. The southern cellar (Photo: D. Bartus).



Fig. 11. Aerial photo of the excavation at the site Szöny-Dunapart (Photo: Zs. Varga).



Fig. 12. Aerial photo of the excavation at the site Szöny-Dunapart (Photo: Zs. Varga).



Fig. 13. Walls of the horreum (Photo: Zs. Varga).



Fig. 14. Walls of the horreum (Photo: D. Bartus).



Fig. 15. The second horreum (Photo: Zs. Varga).



Fig. 16. Periods of the second horreum (D. Bartus).



Fig. 17. The western building (Photo: Zs. Varga).



Fig. 18. Aureus of Vespasian (Photo: D. Bartus).

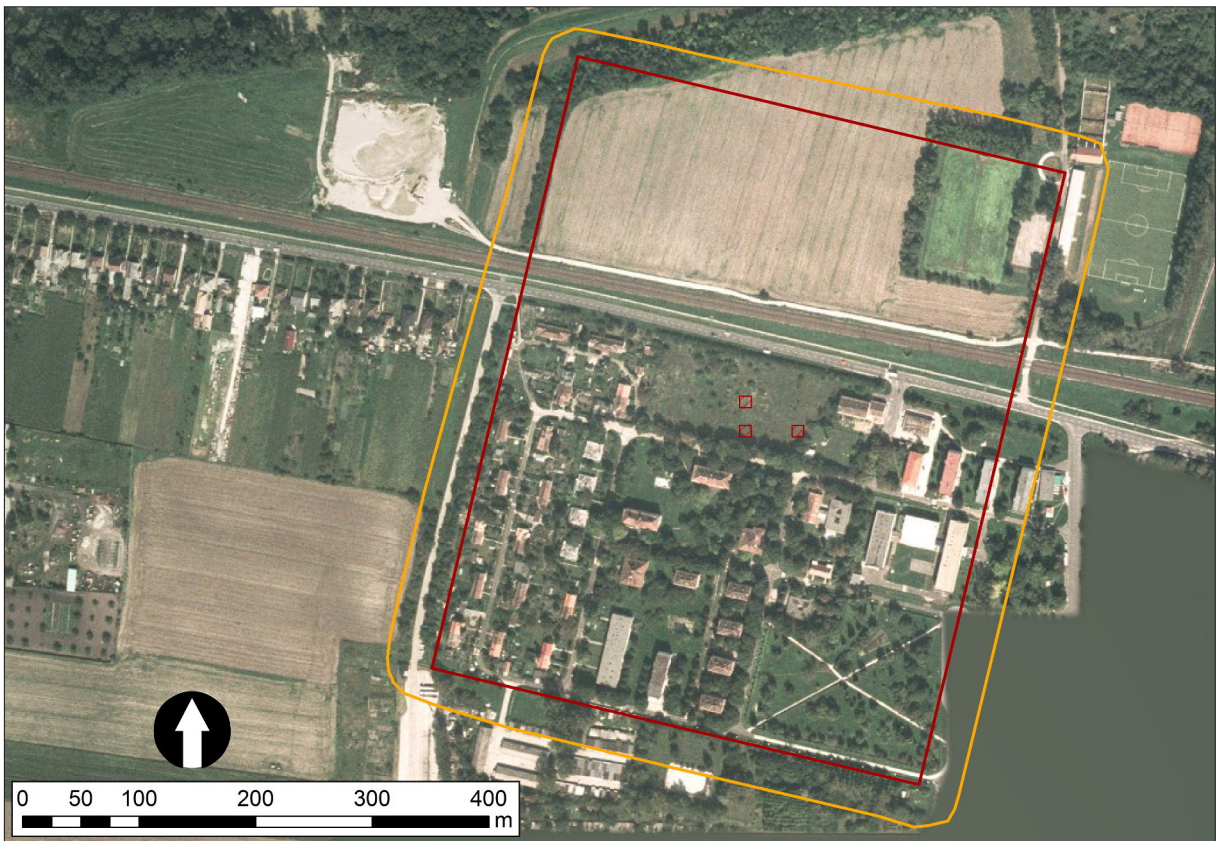


Fig. 19. The three opened surfaces at the site Szőny-MOL-Kiskertek (L. Rupnik).



Fig. 20. The three opened surfaces at the site Szőny-MOL-Kiskertek (L. Rupnik).



Fig. 21. The street and the sewer (Photo: D. Bartus).



Fig. 22. Grotesque bronze head in the sewer (Photo: D. Bartus).



Fig. 23. The courtyard of the principia (Photo: Zs. Varga).



Fig. 24. Southern end of the courtyard (Photo: Zs. Varga).

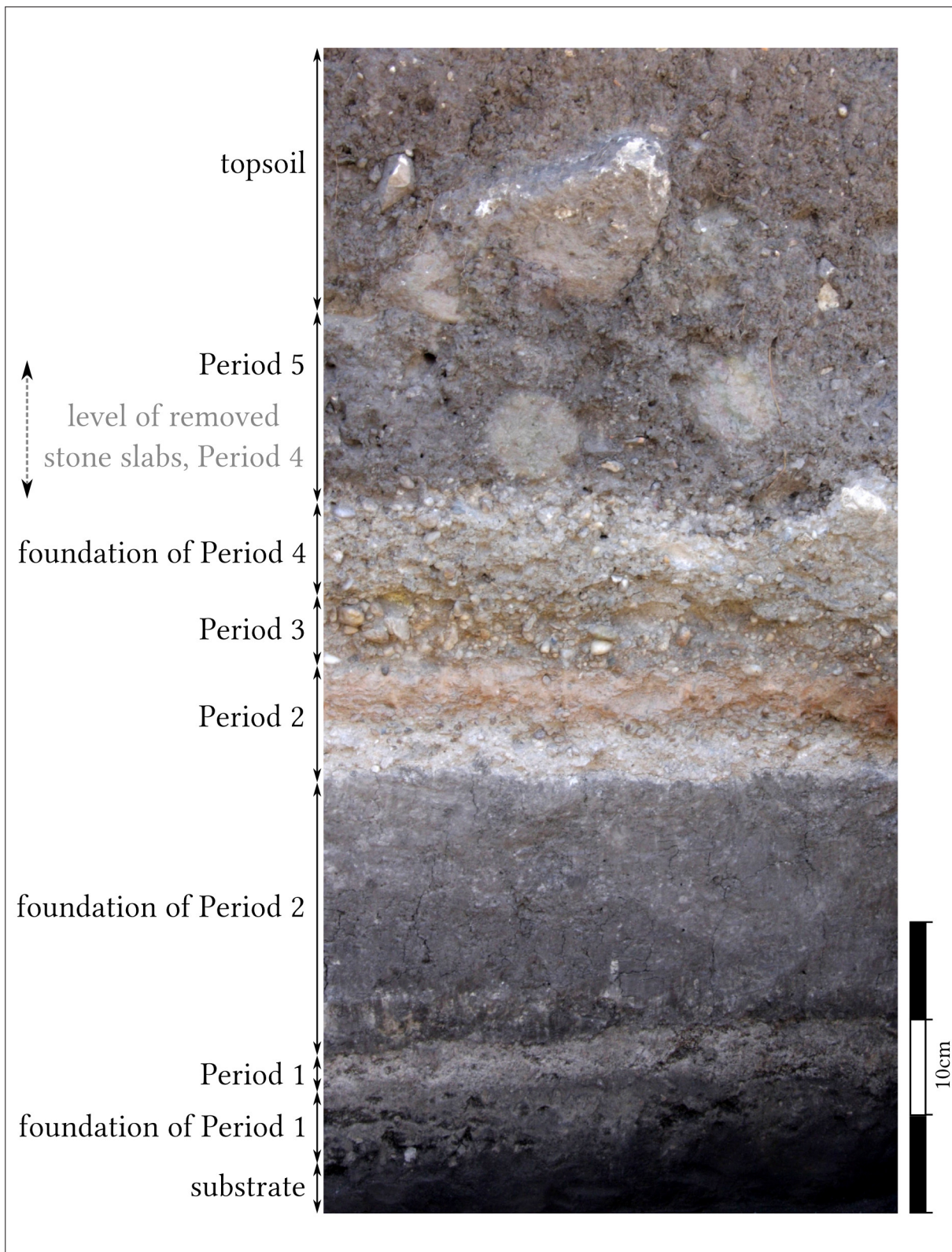


Fig. 25. Periods of the courtyard (D. Bartus).