

# ONE BRICK - MULTIPLE DISCUSSIONS

Andrei Măgureanu, Alin Anton, Bogdan Ciupercă\*

**Keywords:** church, Târgșoru Vechi, Middle Ages, image of a church, animal representation, symbolism.

**Abstract:** In 2013, archaeological excavations continue at the building adjacent to the gate tower of the first precinct of the Princely Court from Târgșoru Vechi (Prahova County). Here, a surprising discovery was made: a brick with one side completely covered with a “drawing” of a church. Dated, probably, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, this brick raises a number of questions, both from archaeological and architectural point of view.

**Rezumat:** În anul 2013, cercetările arheologice au continuat la clădirea adosată turnului de intrare în prima incintă a Curții Domnești de la Târgșoru Vechi (jud. Prahova). Aici a fost făcută o descoperire surprinzătoare: o cărămidă acoperită pe una dintre părți cu un desen reprezentând o biserică. Dataabilă cel mai probabil în secolul al XVI-lea, această cărămidă ridică o serie de discuții atât din punct de vedere arheologic, cât și arhitectural.

## The discovery

The archaeological ensemble of the Princely Court from Târgșoru Vechi continues to offer important information despite the fact that almost sixty years have gone by since the beginning of the research.

When resuming the excavations at the building adjacent to the gate tower of the first precinct<sup>1</sup> we were surprised by a unique discovery: a brick with one side completely covered with a “drawing”. It is this particular discovery – considered extraordinary by the authors of this contribution – that we would like to present as a starting point for further scientific discussions.

This particular artefact was found during the excavation of the interior of Room II of the above mentioned building (with the inner dimensions of 3.50 m on the North-South axis and 4.20 m on the East-West one). A fragment of the original floor of the room (dating to the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century) was still preserved and was subsequently dismantled. Afterwards, excavation was resumed, initially only on the eastern part, in order to obtain a complete stratigraphic section of the deposits, and was later extended over the entire surface.

Thus, several anthropic interventions were observed, their succession allowing insight both on the identification of some chronological landmarks and on the development of the spatial occupation. We shall not insist on these, but will mention that the brick appeared in a layer of debris (mortar and brick fragments), dated to a time prior to the construction of the precinct wall. Considering the fact that the wall was erected after the area ceased to be used as a burial place (sometime at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century or the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century)<sup>2</sup> the mortar layer cannot be dated earlier than the 16<sup>th</sup> century. For our find though, this is only a *terminus ante quem*, since it could have belonged to an earlier construction (perhaps from the 15<sup>th</sup> century) that had been demolished during the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup>

## Description of the artefact

The artefact is not entirely preserved, presenting a break on its lower part (lower and upper refer to the orientation of the “drawing”) and some more breaks on the sides, so that the original size of the brick is unknown (Figs. 1-2). At present it measures 18.5 cm in length, 14.5 cm in width and 5.55 cm in height. It was made of a hard, compact paste, well fired, brick-coloured. The clay, containing a small quantity of mica, was mixed with calcareous concretions.

The missing lower part makes for about a third of the maximum length (assumed at about 29 cm, given the fact the norm was that the length had to be double the width). Still, as the piece might have been a special one,

\* *Andrei Măgureanu*, “Vasile Pârvan” Institute of Archaeology, Bucharest, e-mail: arheologiemedievala@yahoo.com  
*Alin Anton*, *Bogdan Ciupercă*, Prahova County Museum of History and Archaeology, Ploiești.

<sup>1</sup> First excavations were undertaken by N. Constantinescu, with some of the information published in Constantinescu 1969.

<sup>2</sup> For a general overview see Măgureanu, Ciupercă, Anton 2013.

<sup>3</sup> The brick has a long “life”: 1. original purpose; 2. building material, the “drawing” being covered with mortar; 3. debris.