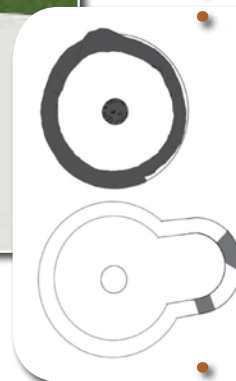
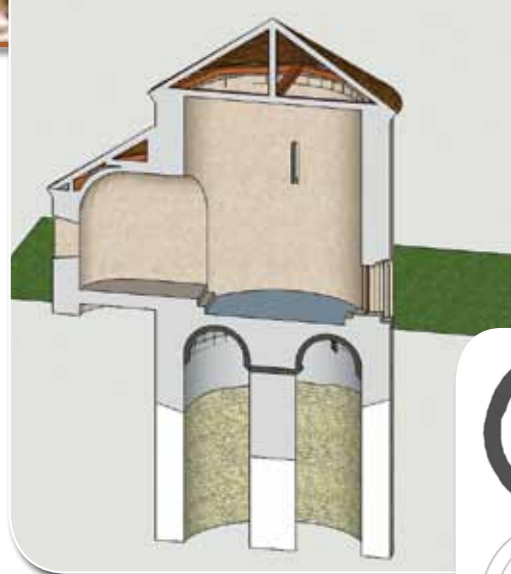




reconstruction is still to be seen on the paving of the sidewalk.

Owing to missing archaeological findings and historical sources, the dating of the construction of Trnava's charnel house is somewhat complicated. It ceased to exist around 1360 at the latest. On its site, the presbytery of the St Nicolas' Church was built. One of the pillars partially overlaps the preserved foundations of the charnel house. Building materials from the dismantled aboveground section of the charnel were used secondarily in building the foundations of the St Nicolas' Church. In the vicinity of the church burials were intense for several centuries. Graves dating from the Middle Ages and the modern times provide good evidence thereof.

Structures of this kind were not built in isolation. They would be part of parish churches



with which they formed a typical couple. We learn about the Trnava's parish church from the first written record of Trnava, as early as 1211. Its foundations and the precise ground plan could not be found to date although it is likely that it was located on the site of the nave of the present St Nicolas' Basilica. During archaeological excavation of 2008, a part of older stone foundation masonry was unearthed on the south-eastern corner of the nave, built mostly of quarry stones. It cannot be ruled out that these involve remains of the foundations of the original parish church. Only further excavation in the interior of the basilica could confirm this hypothesis.

The charnel house is thus far the oldest preserved sacral structure in the territory of Trnava that was built in the Romanesque period.

Published for Trnava City
Hlavná 1, 917 71 Trnava • Tel: +421 33/323 61 01
 • E-mail: info@trnava.sk • web: www.trnava.sk
 • Authors: © E. Hrnčiarik, K. Kuzmová
 (Trnava University, Department of Classical Archaeology)
 • Photographs: © E. Hrnčiarik, I. Kuzma
 • Issued in: 2011



Romanesque
 charnel
 house
 in Trnava



Construction of the oldest sacral structures in the territory of the borough Trnava is associated with the coming of the mendicant monastic orders of Poor Clare nuns, Franciscans or Dominicans. Their original churches and monasteries have not been fully explored to date since most of them were subsequently either removed or rebuilt into shapes we know today.

The Trnava University Department of Classical Archaeology realized archaeological excavation in the exterior of St Nicolas' Basilica in 2008 – 2010. During the fieldworks on the south-eastern side of the presbytery, remains were unearthed of monumental stonebuilding of a circular ground plan, of as much as 8.2 m in outer diameter. The building's foundations made of quarry stone and bricks with mortar are 0.7 to 1.2 m in width and reach 5.6 m in depth. In the middle of the building, remains were found of a circular pillar that was supporting



its vault. On the eastern side, foundations of an apse were explored in the aboveground section. The content of the basement was a 3.2 metre thick layer



of human skeletal remains, mostly skulls and long bones. It could originally be even thicker, by 2 m, since remains were gradually being decomposed and deposited in the course of several centuries.

Building stones were brought from the adjacent Small Carpathian Mountains. Used bricks (*plevovky* - baked bricks with chaff

added) come from an older dismantled structure found in the vicinity. Most of them are incomplete and show marks of secondary treatment. The internal side of masonry is joint, with unique original surfacing, so-called pointing, being preserved at several places. In addition, on the internal side, regularly spaced holes can be found in three rows serving to fix the scaffolding.

The discovered building is a Romanesque ossuary with an apse, in specialised literature usually referred to as charnel house or ossuary. Charnels served to store human skeletal remains from older graves that were disturbed by subsequent burials. Bones were deposited inside the underground part of the charnel house. Above it, a chapel with an altar located in the apse would be found for serving requiem masses during funerals or on major holy days, such as All Saints' Day. In the territory of Slovakia building of charnel



houses is associated with the coming of German settlers in the late 12th or early 13th century. Two-storey charnel houses with an apse above the ground are



rare in the territory of Slovakia. They are more commonly found in the territory of present Austria or southern

part of Germany. The closest parallel is the charnel house of St Jacob in Bratislava, dating from about 1200 and the charnel house of St Michael in Banská Štiavnica from the first third of the 13th century.

Charnel chapels are usually consecrated to archangel Michael, a saint helping souls on their journey to the Judgement Day. No information is available on *patrocinium* (consecration) of Trnava's charnel house. It was most likely consecrated to archangel Michael whose cult was brought to our region by ethnic Germans. After discontinuation of the charnel house, to the east of it was built the St Michael Archangel Church, initially serving as ossuary. Its traced

