

# ARCHAEOLOGICAL REPORT ON THE EXHUMATION OF THE GREEK CATHOLIC BISHOP VASILE AFTENIE (1899-1950), BELLU CATHOLIC CEMETERY, BUCHAREST<sup>1</sup>

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**Keywords:** the archaeology of communist repression, memory, Romanian Greek Catholic Church, Bellu Cemetery.

**Abstract:** This article presents the results of an archaeological intervention carried out in 2010 involving the exhumation of the remains of Bishop Vasile Aftenie (1899-1950). The intervention took place as part of the efforts of the Greek Catholic Church of Romania to beatify said bishop, who, from a Christian perspective, died a martyr's death: he was arrested in 1948 by the *Securitate* (the Romanian secret police under communism), tortured and pressured into renouncing his faith. The inventory items discovered (fragments of clothing, a collar), the stature of the deceased as computed using anthropological analysis (and in keeping with witness statements), as well as circumstantial evidence confirms the oral testimony relating to the site of the bishop's burial. Among the material used to fill the grave we found many coins as well as a glass phial with a metal lid containing some strands of hair and a slip of paper containing a prayer for the lifting of curses. The coins and phial, together with the candles from the grave, represent the material expression of the homage and prayers offered up by the faithful to the bishop. The results of our archaeological research rendered material expression to the relationship existing between the bishop's remains and the faithful, confirming the fact that, long before the Romanian Greek Catholic Church began considering the bishop for beatification, some people had already begun honouring him as a saint of their own accord.

**Rezumat:** Articolul prezintă rezultatele intervenției arheologice din anul 2010 prilejuită de exhumarea osemintelor Episcopului Vasile Aftenie (1899-1950). Intervenția s-a desfășurat ca parte a demersurilor efectuate de Biserica Greco-Catolică din România în vederea beatificării episcopului care, din perspectivă creștină, a avut o moarte martirică: acesta a fost arestat în anul 1948 de Securitate, torturat și supus presiunilor pentru a se dezice de credința sa. Elementele de inventar descoperite (fragmente din veșminte, un colar), statura decedatului stabilită de expertiza antropologică (conforme cu informațiile martorilor), cât și datele generale confirmă mărturiile orale legate de locul de înmormântare al episcopului. În umplutura gropii funerare am descoperit mai multe monede, dar și un flacon de sticlă cu capac metalic având în interior fire de păr și un bilet ce conținea o rugăciune pentru dezlegarea blestemelor. Monedele și flaconul, împreună cu lumânările de pe mormânt, constituie împreună materialitatea cinstirii și rugilor pe care credincioșii le-au adus episcopului Vasile Aftenie. Rezultatele cercetării arheologice oferă materialitate relației stabilite între corpul episcopului și credincioși, confirmând faptul că mult înainte ca Biserica Greco-Catolică din România să-și fi propus a-l beatifica, unii oameni l-au cinstit în mod spontan ca pe un sfânt.

## Introduction, the context of the grave and the excavation approach adopted

At the start of May 2010, the Greek Catholic Vicariate in Bucharest asked the Vasile Pârvan Institute of Archaeology and the Francisc Rainer Institute of Anthropology (both in Bucharest) to take part in the exhumation of the Greek Catholic bishop Vasile Aftenie (1899-1950). To this end a team was formed made up of the authors of this article. The resulting archaeological intervention formed part of the efforts of the Greek Catholic Church of Romania to beatify the bishop, who, from a Christian perspective, died a martyr's death: he was arrested in 1948 by the *Securitate* (the Romanian secret police under communism), tortured and pressured into renouncing his faith, but did not give in. Following his torture, he died in the Văcărești prison hospital and was buried by the *Securitate* in Bellu Catholic Cemetery in Bucharest. On 11 May, R.-Al. D., S.O.M. and T.V. visited Bellu Cemetery in order to identify the grave, evaluate the available working space and decide on the most appropriate excavation method to use.

Judging by its exterior features – a white marble cross supported by two pedestals, one on top of the other, and resting on a marble-clad concrete base demarcating the funerary site – the grave of Bishop Vasile Aftenie was similar to those around it. In time, it had apparently become just another grave among the many

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<sup>1</sup> This is the English version of the research reports on the exhumation in 2010 of the remains of Bishop Vasile Aftenie: Dragoman *et al.* 2012; Soficaru, Ion 2012. The archaeological component of this article was written by R.-Al. D., S.O.-M., N. P. and T.V.; the anthropological analysis was provided by A.D.S. and A.I. For further reference to this archaeological context, see: Dragoman, Oanță-Marghitu 2014; Dragoman 2015, pp.84-85, 177-178; Ion 2016.



Fig. 1. The grave of Bishop Vasile Aftenie (surrounded by red votive candles), one day before the exhumation.

other orderly, parallel rows of graves grouped into different plots in Bellu Catholic Cemetery (Fig. 1). The following names are written on the cross of the grave immediately to the east: Maria Mihail (1849-1941), Eugenia Badac (1902-1987), Dumitru Mihail (1907-1992), Wilhelmina Mihail (1912-1936). The grave to the south is that of Augustin Iacob (1920-2003) and Maria Iacob (1918-2005). However, unlike those graves – and, in fact, unlike the majority of the graves in the cemetery – the grave where Vasile Aftenie was buried lacked any kind of genealogical information in respect of his family's funerary history.

The bishop's initials (V.A.) and the year of burial (1950) were inscribed into the upper pedestal of the funerary monument, which according to witnesses in fact represents the coded epitaph from the original cross erected in 1950. On the second

pedestal, which contained two sculpted receptacles for the planting of flowers, and beneath the photograph of the bishop, was written: "Vasile Aftenie. Bishop. 1899-1950". A concrete, white marble-clad edging ran around the border of the funerary site. The area separating the gravestone from the surrounding graves had similarly been covered in concrete.

Our initial intention was to dismantle the exterior structure (the cross, pedestal and concrete edging) in order to determine the shape of the grave in plan view and cross-section. However, at the request of the representatives of the Vicariate, we abandoned this initial plan and the archaeological intervention was thus limited only to the actual exhumation and its documentation.

### **The exhumation works**

#### *Overview*

The exhumation works began at 7:45 am on 12 May, being completed that same day, at 8:30 pm, with legal assistance provided throughout.<sup>2</sup> Importantly, Mr. Mihai Creangă, who also participated in the burial of the bishop in 1950,<sup>3</sup> was also present during the exhumation and thus able to provide us with information pertaining to the moment of burial, the type of coffin used, the original cross and the various subsequent additions to the grave site.

The edging of the grave – 0.10 m in height and with a foundation going down 0.25 m – enclosed a patch of soft earth in which flowers had been planted. The exterior layout of the grave, built on the current ground level, does not respect the original form or – more importantly – dimensions of the grave in which the body of the bishop was buried. Having decided, at the request of the Vicariate, not to dismantle the marble structure during the exhumation, we proceeded to excavate a smaller surface area – that between the cross and edging, i.e. strictly the filling of the grave and the deposit on which the gravestone was erected. In order to study the area around the skull we had to dig 0.40 m into the west wall of our section and beneath the gravestone. During the excavation, the north wall of our section collapsed due to the instability of the filling material.

<sup>2</sup> The objects and bones found were recorded and bagged appropriately. The anthropological analysis was performed on 15 May. The objects were also analysed and photographed at the offices of the Vicariate during the second half of May.

<sup>3</sup> Cosmovici 2012, p. 14.

*The bishop's remains and related objects*

The human remains from three bodies were found in the grave and these were numbered according to the depths at which they were found (Appendix 2). Skeleton 3 was well represented and was discovered in anatomical connection at a depth (measured from the top of the grave edging) of 1.85 m (skull)/1.93 m (postcranial skeleton) (upper part) and 2.06 m (lower part). The colour of the bones varies, from light brown with reddish brown stains to dark brown or even black.<sup>4</sup> The brown colour with reddish brown stains is a result of the action of the soil. The dark brown colour with black stains or black colour present on the tibias (proximal), kneecaps, femurs and the fragments of the upper limbs is most likely a result of the effect of the textile in the clothes worn by the deceased. This hypothesis is supported by the discovery on site of the aforementioned bones either covered or surrounded by the remains of black-coloured textile (see below). The state of conservation of the bones is average, mainly due to the action of the soil (reddish brown in colour). Of the post-cranial bones found, only diaphyseal and, in rare cases, incomplete and eroded epiphyseal parts have been preserved. In addition, the cortical surface of the femurs, the clavicle, the kneecaps and part of the cranium present patches of erosion and exfoliation (due to the action of the soil). Deformations caused by the pressure of the earth were observed on the bones of the cranial calotte. We should also note the presence of a large fungus deposit on the endocranial and exocranial surface (yellowish-white in colour). No fractures, cuts or blows were recorded for the remaining bones.

Ligneous fragments were found beneath and between the bones that probably originated from the coffin. Given that the femurs and tibias were discovered in anatomical connection and at the same level, and that both kneecaps were still attached to the tibias, it can be concluded that the deceased was placed in the coffin in a decubitus dorsal position with head towards west (Fig. 2), thus indicating that the body was buried according to the Christian tradition. The surface of the bones and adjacent areas were covered by a large number of dead insects, black in colour and a few millimetres in length.

The anthropological analysis of Skeleton 3 showed a male (glabella score 4 and nuchal crest score 5) with age at death of minimum 45 years (estimated based on the degree of closure of cranial sutures). The average stature of 1.80 m was calculated based on a reconstruction of the maximum length of the femur and the tibia. In order to calculate these the following segments were measured: F 2 = from the mid-point of the lesser trochanter to the point where medial and supracondylar lines diverge or become parallel; F 3 = from the previous point to the nearest point on the intercondylar fossa; T 1 = from the most prominent point on the lateral half of the lateral condyle to the nearest point on the tibial tuberosity; T 2 = from the previous point to the point of intersection of the lines that extend distally along the lateral and medial edges of the tibial tuberosity; T 3 from the previous point to the point at which the anterior tibial crest begins to descend medio-distally towards the medial malleolus.<sup>5</sup> The dimensions of these segments for the right femur are F 2 = 30 cm and F 3 = 9.1 cm; and, for the right tibia, T 1 = 2.8 cm, T 2 = 7.8 cm and T 3 = 15.3 cm.



Fig. 2. The remains of Bishop Vasile Aftenie in situ.

<sup>4</sup> The human bones were cleaned before being analysed. Identification of the bones was performed using osteological handbooks (White, Folkens 2005; Matshes *et alii* 2005). Sex was determined based on morphological features (Walker 2008, pp. 39-50) and age estimated from the degree of closure of the cranial sutures (Buikstra, Ubelaker 1994, pp. 32-38). Unfortunately, given the state of conservation and preservation of the bones, it was not possible in every case to use reliable indicators when estimating sex and age. In light of this situation, multiple methods were used to estimate age (closure of cranial sutures) and sex (cranial morphology). In the case of Skeleton 3, we were able to correlate these data with the sizes of the long bones. Stature was calculated using the Pearson and Trotter & Glesser methods (Rösing 1988, pp. 586-599) based on the maximum length of the femur and tibia, the latter being estimated using discriminating functions (Jacobs 1992). The dimensions were measured using the Martin system (Bräuer 1988, pp. 160-232).

<sup>5</sup> Jacobs 1992, pp. 335-336, fig. 1.

Function	Calculated length (cm)	Stature (cm) / method	
		Pearson	Trotter & Glesser
F 2	52.49 ± 17.5	178.68	187.92
F 3	45.69 ± 26.7	165.89	170.38
F 2 + F 3	52.41 ± 8.6	178.53	187.71
T 1	38.12 ± 23.8	167.22	174.65
T 2	37.98 ± 24.4	166.89	174.26
T 3	37.67 ± 19.5	167.15	173.39
T 1 + T 3	37.79 ± 19.1	166.44	173.73
T 1 + T 2 + T 3	37.25 ± 16.4	165.25	172.22
T 2 + T 3	37.25 ± 16.4	165.25	172.22

Table 1. The functions used to calculate the lengths of segments of the femur and tibia, as well as the corresponding statures.

Martin no. (Bräuer 1988)	Value (mm)
<b>RIGHT FEMUR</b>	
6. Sagittal diameter at mid-point	30
7. Transversal diameter at mid-point	33
19. Transversal diameter of head	48 (!)
Index of diaphysis section at mid-point (6:7)	90.90
<b>RIGHT TIBIA</b>	
8. Sagittal diameter at mid-point	32
8a. Sagittal diameter at f. n.	34
9. Transversal diameter at mid-point	26
9a. Transversal diameter at f. n.	27
Index of diaphysis section (9:8)	81.25
Cnemic index (9a:8a)	79.41

Table 2. Measurements collected from the femur and tibia.

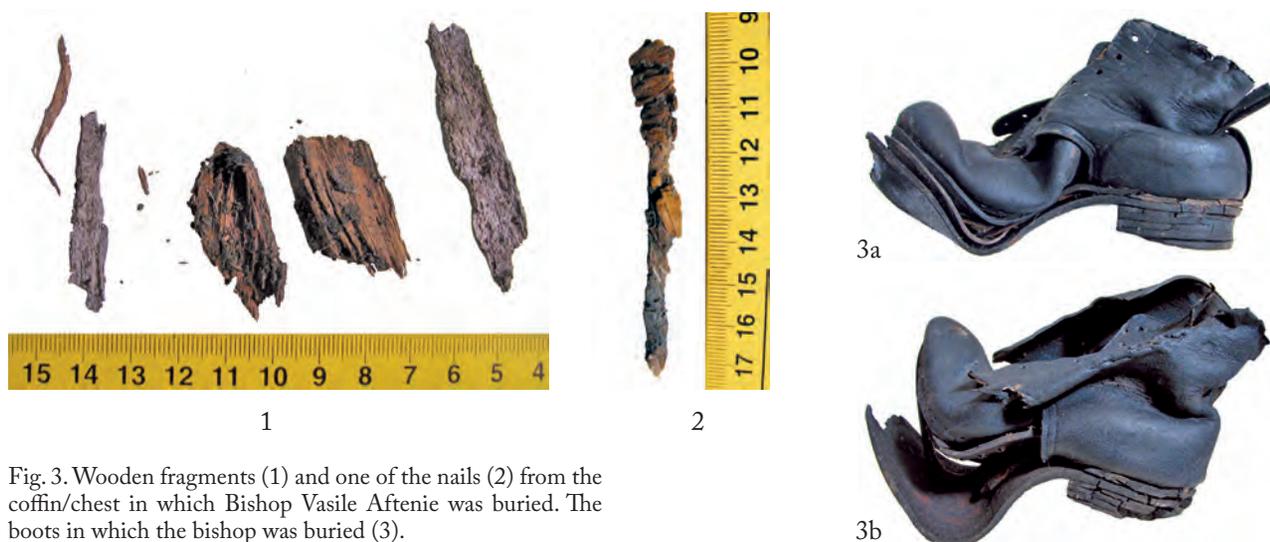


Fig. 3. Wooden fragments (1) and one of the nails (2) from the coffin/chest in which Bishop Vasile Aftenie was buried. The boots in which the bishop was buried (3).



Fig. 4. Fragments of clothing that belonged to Bishop Vasile Aftenie: trousers (1); shirt (2); buttons (3-4); collar (5).

The deceased had a mesial caries on the left maxillary canine and mild osteoarthritis in the fovea capitis of the right femur.<sup>6</sup> Metal dental elements were identified in the right mandible (from the canine to first molar), the left maxilla (from the fourth premolar to the first molar), and in a premolar with a metal crown.

The body was either placed in a coffin or, according to some testimonies, a kind of chest, many fragments of wood and a few nails being found scattered both above and below the skeleton (Fig. 3/1-2). During burial the deceased wore a pair of leather military boots made at the Crișana factory; these were found without laces, while the right boot had been repaired with two metal plates (Fig. 3/3a). Inside the boots we found the distal part of the tibias. Many fragments of textile were also recovered (in particular from the area of the tibias and the upper limbs): black and dark blue cloth (e.g. from trousers), as well as shirt material (Fig. 4/1-2). We found only two buttons: one of the “press stud” variety, which had a greenish patina (Fig. 4/3); the other made of plastic and bearing the inscription “Extra Modern” (Fig. 4/4). The object that directly indicates the status of priest, servant of Christ, of the person buried here is a yellow Celluloid collar (found in the area of the neck) (Fig. 4/5).

<sup>6</sup> Mann, Hunt 2005, p. 182.



Fig. 5. Fragment of the skull belonging to Skeleton 2.



Fig. 6. The western profile of the grave of Bishop Vasile Aftenie.

### *The grave*

As the anthropological analysis shows, the grave also contained the human remains of two other people. The bones of Skeleton 1, found among the grave filling at a depth of 1.21 m (a pubic symphysis), belong to a male of 50-60 years of age (Appendix 2). The bones of Skeleton 2, found at a depth of 1.78 m (in the south-western corner of the grave), belong to a female<sup>7</sup> of at least 40 years of age<sup>8</sup> (Appendix 2). These bones appear to tally with information from the archive of Bellu Catholic Cemetery, according to which two other people were buried, in 1917 and 1927 respectively, in the plot where Vasile Aftenie was buried (Plot X, b, 12).<sup>9</sup>

So, the bishop's grave had also been the site of previous burials and it is therefore possible that some of the objects found in the grave filling originate from those burials (Fig. 5). Given the circumstances of his death and the context of his burial, the relationship between the previous burials and that of the bishop, buried almost in secret on the night of 9/10 May 1950, cannot be accidental; the body was hastily inserted into this row of graves. In time, the funerary identities of those buried there previously were "erased".

The coffin of Vasile Aftenie was predominantly covered with filling from the previous burials (hereafter "Layer III"), comprising yellow-brown earth with lumps of ashen grey soil containing a large proportion of yellow clay. The edging and cross were erected on an ashen grey clayey deposit with a thickness of 0.55-0.60 m ("Layer II"). The foundation of the cross reaches a depth in the grey deposit of 0.63 m and leans slightly inwards due to its own weight and the instability of the earth used as filling. When the gravestone was erected, a layer of earth meant for flowers, light brown in colour and 5-10 cm thick, was deposited ("Layer I") (Fig. 6).

### *The objects found in the grave*

The objects found in the grave (Appendix 1), in different deposits, cannot be used for the absolute dating of the archaeologically defined stratigraphic units. The latter, representing the material expression

<sup>7</sup> Based on the values of the functions  $Y2 = 2,948$  and  $Y6 = 1,511$  (Walker 2008).

<sup>8</sup> Based on the degree of closure of the sutures (Buikstra, Ubelaker 1994); endocranially the sutures are completely closed, only the lambdoid sutures showing sections parts still in the process of closure.

<sup>9</sup> Cosmovici 2012, p. 15.



Fig. 7. Objects found in Layer III (1-3) and Layer II (4-7): ceramic fragment (1); fragment of votive lamp (2); coins (3-7).

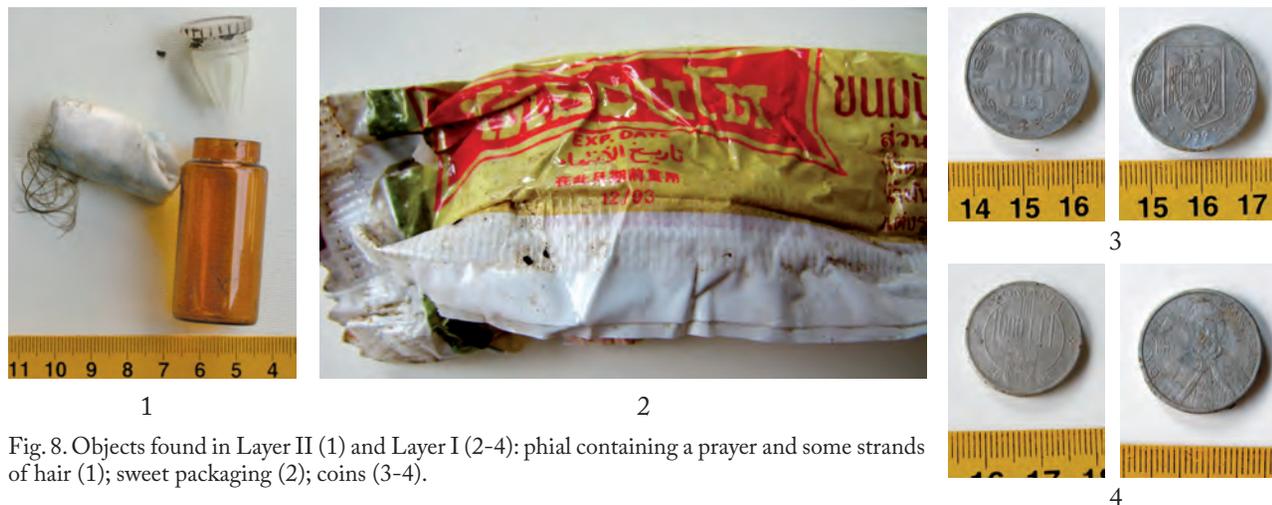


Fig. 8. Objects found in Layer II (1) and Layer I (2-4): phial containing a prayer and some strands of hair (1); sweet packaging (2); coins (3-4).

of particular moments in the history of the plot (the burial of the bishop, the later addition of a cross and edging), can only be dated in relative terms – which one is older, which comes later, etc. Consequently, in this type of filling material (Layer III), beside small amounts of excess building materials (pieces of brick and concrete, two pieces of limestone), we also found fragments of materials that make up a large part of the biography of the site where the bishop was buried: the bones of Skeletons 1 and 2 (belonging to people buried there previously), objects relating to these earlier burials which became part of the new grave (a piece of a candle and votive lamp, a piece of leather, some sherds, some of which enamelled), bits of the coffins of the two deceased buried later or that of the bishop, and a 1 leu coin issued in 1966 (deposited, therefore, after the burial of the bishop) (Fig. 7/1-3). Similarly, in Layer II (the grey deposit), far from dating the erection of the funerary monument, the coins found were issued both during the communist period and the post-communist period (Fig. 7/4-7). In Layer I (flowers) we found, among other things, coins issued during the post-communist period and the packaging of some sweets made in Toronto (Fig. 8/2-4).

Excerpt from ARA Reports 8, 2017.

### *Samples*

During the excavation, apart from the aforementioned objects, the following types of sample were also extracted from the grave:

- wood we believe came from the coffin – in case it becomes necessary to analyse the anatomy of the wood to determine its species (should it be suspected that these fragments of wood come from objects other than the coffin)
- soil from above the skeleton – with the purpose of conducting pollen analysis (in order to verify the date of burial recorded in official documents)
- soil from beneath the skeleton – in an attempt to recover coprolite
- the exoskeletons of insects – to aid determination of the chemical and biological processes that occurred in the earth after burial.

### **Concluding remarks**

The inventory items found (clothing and, in particular, the collar), the stature of the deceased established by anthropological analysis (and in keeping with witness testimony), as well as the other data (remains of the coffin/chest) confirm the oral testimonies relating to the place of burial of Bishop Vasile Aftenie. We should note the relationship between the context in which the bishop's death and burial occurred, in which the *Securitate* played an important role, and the act of interring the bishop's body in the grave: while lacking in procession, ceremony and a religious service (according to witnesses), at least in terms of the position and orientation of the body, the actual burial respected the Christian tradition.

The objects found, as well as the later interventions on this site through successive burials, the erection of the gravestone and the depositing of a layer of soil for the planting of flowers, together serve to create a biography of the place. The excavation performed to exhume the remains of the bishops is yet another important intervention, which, we hope, will reinstate the funerary identities of the people subsequently buried there that were visually “erased” when the bishop was interred.

As mentioned above, the objects from the inventory of the grave do not date with precision the stratigraphic units we identified. Nonetheless, we should note the different distribution, among the three layers identified, of ceramic fragments, which can be found mainly in Layer III, and of the coins, which, with



Fig. 9. The votive lamps and candles lit by the faithful at the grave of Bishop Vasile Aftenie.

the aforementioned exception, are deposited in Layer II and Layer I. The ceramic fragments afford the biography of the place a material dimension, establishing a relationship between the bishop's grave and the previous burials.

Moreover, beside this biographical dimension, the coins, together with other objects, reveal the importance of the bishop's grave as a place of pilgrimage. Before commencing the exhumation works, many votive lamps and candles, placed by people who come to pray to the bishop, were found on the grave (Fig. 9). While praying, the people would touch the

gravestone – something which tells us that, for these believers, the Gift of God radiated out of the bishop's body into the physical world around him, including the earth and the gravestone, etc. Material proof of the people's faith in the power of Bishop Vasile Aftenie is given by the discovery, in Layer II at depth of 0.60 m, of a glass phial with a metal lid containing some strands of hair and a note with the following text: "Lord, I pray that you might break the curses and spells placed on me by Peza. Amen" (Fig. 8/1). It is therefore clear that the bishop is considered to be a powerful mediator between God and the people. Moreover, in this specific case, Christian practices (prayer) were mixed with what are rather pagan elements (strands of hair, curses). The coins found probably also stem from this combination of practices. In chronological order, the earliest coin found was issued in 1966. We can therefore say, albeit with some reservations (a large part of the grave filling not having been studied), that the start of pilgrimages to the bishop's grave and the act of leaving coins can be traced to the policy of liberalisation begun in 1964. Even if the coins themselves – two 1 leu coins issued in 1966, one 25 bani coin (1982), one 100 lei coin (1992), one 500 lei coin (1999) and one 1,000 lei coin (2001) – do not correspond to particular moments in the biography of the grave (for example, the coin issued in 1966 remained in circulation until 1992), they do suggest that the practice of leaving coins went on for a long time, both during communism and afterwards.

Consequently, the coins, the phial and the candles on the grave together provide material evidence of the worship and prayer the faithful offered to Bishop Vasile Aftenie, who for them possessed the divine power to help them. Some of the faithful were present on the day we performed the exhumation and, kneeling, prayed outside the perimeter of the site, while one of them asked us for a small quantity of the earth to take home with him. Beside this group of believers, a number of priests also prayed constantly throughout the entire exhumation works.

In conclusion, the results of the excavation provide material evidence of the relationship existing between the bishop's corpse and the faithful, confirming the fact that long before the Romanian Greek Catholic Church decided to beatify Bishop Vasile Aftenie, some people were already worshipping him as a saint of their own accord.

#### **List of contexts from which the illustrated materials originate**

- Fig. 3: (1) coffin/chest, pelvis region, depth 2.05 m (bag no. 6); (2) coffin/chest, tibia region, depth 2.05 m (bag no. 69); (3) the remains of the bishop (bags nos. 2-3).
- Fig. 4: (1) the remains of the bishop (bag no. 1); (2) the remains of the bishop (bag no. 12); (3) the remains of the bishop (bag no. 10); (4) the remains of the bishop (bag no. 9); (5) the remains of the bishop (bag no. 4).
- Fig. 7: (1) Layer III, western half of grave, depth 1.71 m (bag no. 37), north-east part of grave, depth 1.57 m (bag no. 17); (2) Layer III, western half of grave, depth 0.95 m (bag no. 38); (3) Layer III, depth 0.73 m (bag no. 33); (4) Layer II, beneath foundation of cross, depth 0.55 m (bag no. 44); (5) border between Layer III and Layer II, depth 0.74 m (bag no. 39); (6) border between Layer III and Layer II, depth 0.74 m (bag no. 39); (7) Layer II, southern part of grave, depth 0.16 m (bag no. 25).
- Fig. 8: (1) Layer II, depth 0.60 m (bag no. 32); (2) Layer I, depth 0.12 m (bag no. 51); (3) Layer I, southern profile, depth 0.12 m (bag no. 35); (4) Layer I, southwestern part of grave, beside edging (bag no. 49).

**Appendix 1****List of objects found during the exhumation of Bishop Vasile Aftenie**

(The numbers in brackets represent the bag number)

*Objects belonging to Bishop Vasile Aftenie and the remains of the coffin*

(1) Fragments of dark blue textile; (2) Right boot; repaired heel; two metal plates. Brand: “Crișana” (3) Left boot; (4) Collar (four fragments), one fragment of wood and one of textile; (6) 8 wooden fragments found in the pelvis region, depth 2.05 m; (7) Fragment of wood and one of leather found in the skull area (2.06 m); (8) fragment of wood found in the femur region (1.95 m); (9) Plastic button, brown in colour, inscribed with “Extra Modern” and with four perforations for thread; (10) “Press stud” button; green patina; (11) Fragment of textile; (12) Fragment of a shirt; (27) Fragment of wood found above the kneecaps (1.98 m); (56) Fragments of wood found in the area of the legs (1.90 m); (57) Earth containing insects found in the skull region; (58) Fragments of wood found in the femur region (1.97 m); (59) Fragments of wood found in skull area (1.89 m); (60) Two fragments of wood found in the area of the legs (1.92 m); (61) Fragments of wood and a nail found beneath the skeleton in the chest region (2.15 m); (62) Fragments of wood and a piece of concrete found immediately above the boots (1.92 m); (64) Fragments of wood found beneath the skeleton (2.06 m); (65) Fragments of wood found in the abdomen region (2.02 m); (66) Fragments of wood found in skull region (2.07 m); (67) Fragments of wood found beneath the pelvis (2.00 m); (68) Fragments of wood found beneath the thorax (2.10 m); (69) Nail found in tibia region (2.05 m); (70) Nail found in abdomen region (2.02 m); (71) Nail found beneath thorax (2.15 m); (72) Fragments of wood found beneath skeleton; (73) Fragments of wood found at the level of the right tibia; (74) Nail found in the region of the legs (1.90 m).

*Objects from Layer III*

(5) Fragment of leather found at a depth of 0.76 m; (14) ceramic fragment, reddish paste, similar to Fragment 13 from Layer II; (15) Fragment of brick, found in western half of grave filling, found at a depth of 1.21 m; (16) Ceramic fragment, found immediately above the legs of the deceased at a depth of 2 m; (17) Fragment of the lip of a vessel with yellow enamel on the interior and exterior found in the northeast part of the grave at a depth of 1.57 m; (18) Fragment of wood found in the southwestern part of the grave at a depth of 0.89 m; (22) Fragments of wood found in western part of the grave when the grave filling collapsed during excavation; (23) Fragment of wood and stone found in eastern part of the grave at a depth of 1.17 m; (24) Fragment of candle found in eastern half of the grave at a depth of 1.17 m; (26) Fragment of vessel made of reddish paste (28) Ceramic fragment with brown enamel on exterior and green on interior (29) Fragment of wood and three pieces of concrete; (33) 1 leu coin issued in 1966 found at a depth of 0.73 m; (34) Ceramic fragment similar to the previous item found in the eastern half of the grave at a depth of 1.17 m; (36) Concrete fragment found in western part of grave towards the cross (0.90 m); (37) Two ceramic fragments, one with white enamel (fits with no. 17), the other with green enamel on the interior and exterior; found in the western half of the grave at a depth of 1.71 m; (38) Fragment of votive lamp with traces of wax and a piece of concrete found in the western half of the grave at a depth of 0.95 m; (40) Ceramic fragment with dark green enamel on exterior and interior, similar to fragment no. 37, found in the southwestern part of the grave at a depth of 1.63 m; (41) Ceramic fragment found at a depth of 0.78 m; (43) Fragment of wood and ceramic fragment with green enamel, similar to Fragments nos. 37 and 40, found in the western half of the grave at a depth of 1.46 m; (45) Piece of concrete found in the central region of the grave at a depth of 1.09 m; (46) Fragment of wood, a piece of concrete and a nail found at a depth of 1.14 m; (47) Fragment of wood and a fragment of the perforated base of a flower pot found at a depth of 1.98 m immediately above the pelvis of the deceased; (52) two small pieces of limestone (0.72 m); (53) Ceramic fragment made of reddish paste; (0.73); (54) Ceramic fragment with yellowish enamel on the exterior, found in the western half of the grave at a depth of 1 m; (55) Shard of glass (0.77 m).

*Objects from Layer II*

(13) Ceramic fragment, probably from the neck of a pitcher, made from reddish paste (0.58 m); (25) 100 lei coin issued in 1991 (with a depiction of Michael the Brave on the obverse side), found in southern part of grave at a depth of 0.16 m; (31) Ceramic fragment made of reddish paste; (32) Glass phial with metal lid containing some strands of hair and a note containing the text “Lord, I pray that you might break the curses and spells placed on me by Peza. Amen”, found at a depth of 0.60 m; (39) Two coins, one a 25 bani coin issued in 1982, the other a 10 Pfennig coin, found at the border between Layer II and Layer III (0.74 m); (42) A stone and two ceramic fragments (one being the lip of a vessel) made from reddish paste (0.23 m); (44) 1 leu coin issued in 1966 found beneath the foundations of the cross (0.55 m); (48) fragment of wood.

*Objects from Layer I*

(30) Ceramic fragment made from reddish paste and fragment of wood; (35) 500 lei coin issued in 1999 (0.12 m); (49) 1,000 lei coin issued in 2001 (with a depiction of Constantin Brâncoveanu on the obverse side) found in the southwestern part of the grave next to the grave edging; (50) Pieces of molten wax found at the border between Layer I and Layer II (0.22 m); (51) Packaging for sweets made in Toronto for an Eastern country (based on the language used on the packaging, from which it was possible to make out the product’s expiry date of December 1993), found at a depth of 0.12 m.

*Objects with no certain context (from the grave filling that collapsed during the excavation)*

(19) Fragment of brick; (20) Fragment of wood; (21) Fragment of wood.

**Appendix 2**

## Inventory of the bones

*Skeleton 1*

We were able to attribute to this person a metatarsal bone, a pubic symphysis and a fragment of rib. The first metatarsal (right) has a maximum length of 6.4 cm.<sup>10</sup> Based on its dimensions, the maximum length of the femur was calculated to be 46.53 cm, which corresponds to a stature of 167.47 cm. The fragment of the right pubic symphysis with a section of the pubic tubercle appear, based on shape, to be typically male and indicative of an age of over 50 years (based on Todd) or 60 years (Suchey & Brooks). The fragment of rib is 4.1 x 1.7 cm in size.

*Skeleton 2*

This skeleton was found at a depth of 1.78 m in the southwestern corner of the grave and is represented by a cranial calotte that still retains a frontal bone, the parietal bones, the occipital bone and the right mastoid bone. The frontal bone still contains the right supraorbital margin, but is broken in the region of the left temporal line as well as after the coronal suture, albeit it still retains small portions of the parietal bones. It features a metopic suture, right supraorbital foramen and some green coloured stains between the glabella and the frontal eminence as well as in the region of the bregma, with a flat frontal crest.

The left parietal bone is connected with a fragment of a left temporal bone, a right parietal bone and an occipital bone. It shows exocranial damage, with a lack of bone mass 4.3 cm to the left of the lambda covering an area of 2.8 x 1.7 cm. The right parietal bone is connected with the left parietal bone and the occipital bone and shows signs of damage around the parietal striae, with green staining on the parietal boss that runs up towards the sagittal suture, while arachnoid fovea can be observed endocranially.

<sup>10</sup> Wilbur 1998, p. 184, tab. 1.

The occipital bone is attached to both parietal bones and the left temporal bone, but is broken in the region of the lower nuchal line.

The left temporal bone is attached to the left parietal bone and the occipital bone, is lacking squama, is broken above the suprameatal crest and features a supramastoid crest. The right temporal bone shows a mastoid process with a portion of the lambdoid suture.

Nine other small bone fragments were also found: a Wormian bone at the mid-point of the right lambdoid suture and another beside the left asterion, as well as three fragments of the temporal bones (found at a depth of 1.87 m and approx. 30 cm to one side of the skull).

### *Skeleton 3*

The frontal bone shows damage beneath the glabella, under the orbital margin and in the direction of the temporal lines, and is attached to a small fragment of the left parietal bone. It has a closed endocranial metopic suture and the frontal crest and small portions of the frontal sinuses are visible, while beside the frontal boss there is a 1.4-cm long fracture and another discontinuous fracture line of 4.5 cm in length that intersect the metopic suture; these were caused by the burial environment.

The left parietal is attached to the right parietal, but is broken into two fragments around the area of the parietal tuberosity, and shows damage to the sphenoid bone; the region of the parietal striae is missing. The right parietal lacks the sphenoidal and mastoid angle, the parietal striae being damaged.

The occipital bone, eroded along the right lambdoid suture, is attached around the asterion (on both sides) to sections of the temporal bones and is damaged beneath the upper nuchal line, which is very prominent.

Both temporal bones retain parts of the mastoid processes.

Twenty-two other bone fragments were also identified, including the left pars petrosal, the suprameatal crest with the upper part of the right auditory meatus, with the remainder being fragments of the parietal and occipital bones.

In terms of dentition, the following were recovered: 18 permanent teeth, including two maxillary central incisors, the crown of an incisor, two maxillary canines, a right mandibular canine, five premolars and seven molars. Metal-coated teeth were also identified, with dental work present from the canine to the first molar (with metal premolars in between), of the right mandible; from the second premolar to the first molar of the left maxilla; and in a premolar with a metal crown.

From the scapular belt a fragment of the left clavicle was found showing signs of older fractures at both ends and erosion of the bone surface, with the posterior third of the medial part missing.

From the spinal cord there exists a fragment from the thoracic vertebra (body and articular surface).

From the bones of the upper limbs there exists a fragment of the diaphysis of the left humerus with a length of 15.6 cm and on which is visible the lesser tuberosity and the lower part of the intertubercular sulcus; a fragment of the diaphysis of radius; and two further fragments that cannot be identified.

Both kneecaps were found.

From the lower limbs, a fragment of the left femoral head was found, unattached, with the surface of the diaphysis eroded and the medial part of the femoral neck still present. The femur is represented by a femoral head showing small signs of erosion on the lower section, a diaphysis with the medial part of the femoral neck and the anterior half of the distal epiphysis with erosion of the cortical surface. The right tibia is missing its distal epiphysis, while its proximal epiphysis shows erosion and damage; in addition, laterally a fragment is missing from the cortical surface and the soleal line is marked. The left tibia is missing its distal epiphysis and the lateral proximal quarter of the tibial tuberosity is destroyed, while the cortical surface is eroded. The diaphysis of the right fibula was also found.

In terms of foot bones we identified the following: for the left leg – a fragment of the calcaneus, a cuboid bone, a navicular bone and 18 fragments with dimensions ranging between 0.9 cm and 2.8 cm, as well as four nails, one of which from the big toe; from the right leg – a talus bone, a navicular bone, a calcaneus, a cuneiform bone and 14 fragments with dimensions ranging between 1 and 3 cm, as well as three nails.

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Excerpt from *ARA Reports 8, 2017*.