



ACADEMIA ROMÂNĂ
ȘCOALA DE STUDII AVANSATE A ACADEMIEI ROMÂNE
INSTITUTUL DE ARHEOLOGIE „VASILE PÂRVAN”, BUCUREȘTI

Doctoral Thesis

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***Alba Iulia around the Year 1000: Dynamics of
Medieval Settlement***

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Alba Iulia around the Year 1000: Dynamics of Medieval Settlement

Abstract

Keywords: Alba Iulia; year 1000; early medieval settlement; funerary horizon; early medieval habitation; cemeteries; dwellings; early medieval settlements.

The doctoral thesis *Alba Iulia around the Year 1000: Dynamics of the Medieval Settlement* examines the early medieval settlement in the Alba Iulia area around the year 1000, with an emphasis on the relationship between habitation structures, funerary spaces, and the region's historical–political transformations. Taking as its point of departure the Roman legacy, represented by the castrum of Legio XIII Gemina and the nearby urban centers, the research traces settlement continuity and the reconfiguration of urban space in a context marked by political and religious transitions.

The period spanning the 8th – 11th centuries is underrepresented in the scholarly literature, and existing data are often fragmentary. In this context, the thesis offers a synthesis of archaeological research conducted both within and outside the Roman fort, complemented by the analysis of four unpublished archaeological contexts. The resulting information provides new perspectives on household organization, construction techniques, raw-material use, and on the relationship between habitation and funerary rite.

Archaeological results indicate a sedentary community with dense, stratified occupation, undergoing Christianization and integration into emergent Hungarian political structures. Funerary discoveries, including extensive cemeteries and an early church, confirm the social and confessional complexity of the local population.

The study contributes to the interdisciplinary reconstruction of Alba Iulia's urban, social, and cultural evolution in the early Middle Ages, while providing a coherent, systematized dataset for future research.

Chapter I, *History of Research*, reviews archaeological investigations at Alba Iulia, grouped into two major directions: those inside the Citadel and those outside it. The main areas of intervention are discussed, the interior of the current Citadel (overlapping the former Roman castrum), as well as Dealul Furcilor, Horea Street, and the “Stația de Salvare”, and a catalogue is compiled of finds relevant to the 9th – 11th centuries. The absence of prior coherent syntheses and the fragmentary character of sources underscore the need for rigorous systematization.

Based on the archaeological information available to date, it emerges that not only the Citadel precinct was intensively occupied in the early medieval period (9th – 11th centuries). Although the monumental structures of the former Roman fort conferred a strategic advantage, providing enhanced protection amid demographic mobility and instability, the extra-muros area also saw substantial habitation, which remains, unfortunately, insufficiently researched.

The primarily rescue-driven context of archaeological work at Alba Iulia, especially in recent decades, has not favored large-scale, systematic investigations capable of clarifying the structure and dynamics of the early medieval settlement. Significant gaps persist in the interpretation and publication of recovered material, substantially limiting access to relevant data for this period.

A notable deficiency in the current archaeological picture is the lack of a methodical focus on early medieval settlements outside the Citadel's enceinte. Although some scholars associate the intra-mural settlement with the cemetery at the "Stația de Salvare," at least for its early phase (8th–9th, possibly 10th century), and later with the community that utilized the "Izvorul Împăratului" cemetery, hypothetically linked to the builders of the pillar-supported church, many questions remain open and insufficiently discussed in the literature.

The archaeology of early medieval settlements outside the Citadel should be approached integratively, in correlation with Roman remains on the fort's periphery, as numerous discoveries point to the reuse of Roman structures in later periods. Published sources, however, treat this subject only summarily. Most Roman-period studies focus on the castrum proper, and references to adjacent sites are often incidental, without adequate contextualization of early medieval remains.

In the last decade, the publication of rescue-excavation results within the municipality has been extremely limited, posing a major difficulty for reconstructing a coherent picture of early medieval habitation.

An eloquent example of the importance of the *extra-muros* zone is the site of Dealul Furcilor, where preventive excavations (1995–2022) revealed a complex stratigraphy with multiple occupation levels from the Bronze Age to the early Middle Ages. Early medieval remains (9th–11th centuries) are particularly dense: sunken-featured buildings (SFBs)/semi-subterranean houses, hearths, refuse pits, workshops, and, notably, cemeteries with rich grave inventories. Recovered objects, bronze and silver ornaments, ceramics, tools, weapons, cult items such as pectoral crosses and reliquaries, and food offerings, reflect a well-structured community with an active religious life and diverse cultural connections.

The archaeological significance of Dealul Furcilor lies not only in its multistratified character but also in the frequency and quality of early medieval discoveries, which are essential for reconstructing the post-Roman transition. The clear association between settlements and cemeteries strengthens the hypothesis of an organized habitation nucleus, likely among the most relevant in Transylvania for this period. Dealul Furcilor thus emerges as a key reference point for understanding the relationship between the Roman legacy and the new communities formed in the early Middle Ages.

Chapter II, *Historical Context*, provides general and local historical frameworks for dynamics around the year 1000. It analyzes migration processes, Byzantine, Bulgarian, and Hungarian influences, and the formation of incipient political and ecclesiastical structures. Alba Iulia is presented as a regional power center, with possible links to a local voivodate and to the Roman Catholic bishopric established in this period.

Around the year 1000, Transylvania was a space of ethnic, cultural, and political convergence, undergoing a profound transition from tribal/autonomous structures to gradual integration into a Western-type Christian state. The period remains complex and sensitive, approached interdisciplinarily through written sources, linguistics, and especially archaeology, the principal instrument for reconstructing the era's social and political realities.

From Late Antiquity through the 9th – 10th centuries, the region was traversed and settled by successive populations, Goths, Huns, Gepids, Avars, Slavs, Bulgars, and, ultimately, Magyars, each leaving significant material traces. The local Romanized population coexisted especially with Slavs in mixed ethnic structures under conditions of relative continuity.

After the dissolution of the Avar khaganate (c. 800), Transylvania underwent significant political reorganization. Regional entities formed, attested in Hungarian sources, such as Menumorut's polity at Biharea, that of Glad and then Ahtum in the southwest (Cenad), and Gelu's voivodate in the central area (Cluj-Dăbâca). In southern Transylvania, a political formation associated with the former Roman castrum at Alba Iulia took shape, identified in historiography as the "Voivodate of Bălgrad."

The Magyar penetration into the Carpathian Basin beginning in 895 culminated, after the defeat at Lechfeld (955), in the consolidation of a state and ecclesiastical structure. Around 1000, the Hungarian kingdom was officially Christianized, and Transylvania began its integration into the centralized Christian state, undergoing administrative and ecclesiastical reorganization in the following decades.

Early medieval fortifications play a crucial role in understanding the period: beyond defensive functions, they served community and political roles as regional centers of power and control. Archaeology has identified over 18 such sites in northwestern Romania, datable to the 9th – 11th centuries (e.g., Biharea, Dăbâca, Cluj-Mănăştur, Moreşti, Moldoveneşti, Cenad). These fortifications display significant morphological diversity and topographic adaptation, grouped into three main types: on levees and marshy plateaus, on hilly terraces, and in strategic mountain zones.

Archaeology also attests stable communities both within and near these forts, along with an extensive network of cemeteries, many only partially excavated, supporting the hypothesis of “incipient towns.” At Alba Iulia, for instance, five cemeteries totaling over 2,000 graves have been identified; at Dăbâca, three partially investigated cemeteries comprise c. 1,000 graves. These data indicate high demographic density and complex community life.

The fortification phenomenon aligns with trends in Central and Eastern Europe and was influenced by Byzantine, Slavic, and Carolingian models. The stone wall at Moldoveneşti, with parallels south of the Danube, supports the hypothesis of Byzantine craftsmen or direct Byzantine influence.

Chapter III, *Settlement*, addresses early medieval habitation in and around the Roman fort. Case studies of dwellings at key points (the Palace of the Princes, the “1 December 1918” University, Dealul Furcilor, Horea Street) provide insights into household structure, building techniques, reuse of Roman materials, and the organization of domestic space. The evidence indicates dense, stratified occupation; however, documentation is often incomplete due to recent destruction and the absence of a unified research strategy.

Across Transylvania (7th – 11th centuries), settlement was predominantly stable and organized into small sites located near water sources, on high terraces or promontories safe from flooding and easier to defend. Archaeologically attested house-types fall into three categories: pit-houses (SFBs) excavated fully into the ground, semi-subterranean dwellings, and surface-built structures. Ground plans are mainly rectangular or trapezoidal; dimensions are modest (2–4 m); walls are built of timber or wattle-and-daub supported by vertical posts; roofs are vegetal, usually gable, more rarely conical with circular base. Interiors feature hearths and stone-built ovens adapted for cooking and heating.

Domestic space often included outdoor ovens, storage pits later reused as refuse pits, and ancillary structures (granaries, workshops). House layout suggests organization into family

groups or small clusters, without true urban planning—exceptions include Borsod, where regular alignment along streets has been identified.

Settlement density and distribution vary regionally, but overall there is a significant increase from the 7th – 8th to the 9th – 10th centuries, with notable concentrations in major river basins and low hill zones. The absence of systematic research means much of the information derives from spatially limited interventions, hindering a full reconstruction of settlement organization. Nevertheless, the data reveal a coherent evolution of vernacular architecture adapted to the natural environment and marked by continuity in construction and ceramic traditions, defining the rural Transylvanian profile prior to integration into the Hungarian kingdom.

Early medieval habitation within the Roman castrum at Alba Iulia (9th – 13th centuries), documented by excavations initiated in 1966 and continuing to the present, shows a complex, stratified evolution. The earliest phases (9th – 10th centuries) comprise sunken or semi-subterranean houses with circular, oval, or square plans, hearths or ovens, and assemblages including slow-wheel pottery, quern stones, bone and metal artifacts, together with reused Roman materials (tiles, bricks, dressed stone). Occupation density was greater in the southwest sector, where Roman walls offered additional protection.

Stratigraphy investigated at the Ravelin of St Francis of Paola, the Roman Catholic Cathedral precinct, and the Monetărie (Mint) plateau indicates continuity of occupation in the 9th–11th centuries through domestic features (ovens, refuse pits, hearths). A C14-dated oven around AD 900 confirms the intensity and durability of these installations.

The transition to the 11th – 12th centuries is marked by spatial reorganization and the emergence of the first ecclesiastical buildings, notably a pillar-supported church overlying earlier domestic structures, signaling not only functional change but also community reconfiguration through integration into Christian religious structures. By the 12th – 13th centuries, surface-built houses or repeatedly rebuilt pit-houses are accompanied by more standardized ceramics, and occupation extends to the northern side of the fort (Palatul Apor area).

A constant feature across phases is the absence of systematic demolition layers for Roman buildings, suggesting that many were already in ruin when medieval occupation resumed. Early medieval houses frequently overlie Roman ruins, reflecting pragmatic reuse of available space.

Excavations in the courtyard of the Palace of the Princes and in the courtyard of the “1 December 1918” University brought to light early medieval dwellings (10th – 11th centuries) illustrating both the reuse of Roman materials and the stratified nature of occupation. The Palace dwelling shows clearer spatial organization (two phases, beaten-clay floor, post-holes), whereas the University dwelling, in a denser stratigraphic context, is also associated with craft activities (e.g., comb-making from horn).

Other city areas, Dealul Furcilor and the west/northwest of the castrum (“Stația de Salvare”), document intensive occupation in the 9th – 11th centuries, often over abandoned Roman structures and consistently reusing ancient materials. Sunken or semi-subterranean houses with rectangular or irregular plans, clay floors, and pietrar-type hearths reflect the continuity of construction traditions. Modest but informative inventories include hand-made and wheel-made ceramics, iron tools, ornaments, and quern stones, frequently accompanied by reused Roman sherds.

Overall, the archaeological record indicates a continuous, adaptive settlement model combining local traditions with pragmatic reuse of Roman resources. Yet fragmentary publication and the absence of unified research projects have hindered integration into a coherent synthesis of early medieval Alba Iulia.

Chapter IV, *Funerary Horizons*, analyzes early medieval cemeteries at Alba Iulia, focusing on rite and ritual, social and ethnic composition, and the transition to Christianity. The principal necropolises, “Stația de Salvare,” “Izvorul Împăratului,” „Brândușei Street”, and the Roman Catholic Cathedral, are discussed individually. Grave goods indicate South-Danubian, Byzantine, and Hungarian influences, reflecting profound cultural and religious transformation.

In the 9th – 10th centuries, the Alba Iulia area functioned as a convergence node for diverse ethnic and cultural communities in Transylvania. Following Charlemagne’s campaign against the Avars and the collapse of the Avar–Slavic order at the end of the 8th century, the Carolingian Empire pushed its eastern frontier to the Tisza; its influence on Transylvania, however, remained largely indirect, “remote oversight”, without effective integration. In this transitional context, it is very likely that Avar–Slavic funerary practices persisted into the early 9th century, as indicated by analogies from the Tisza Plain and Banat, where late Avar cemeteries were not immediately abandoned. The Mediaș group, which maintained bi-ritual cemeteries throughout the 9th century, exemplifies cultural and religious continuities despite major political change.

The concurrent functioning at Alba Iulia of three cemeteries, “Stația de Salvare,” „Brândușei Street”, and “Izvorul Împăratului”, indicates a sizeable population and the emergence of a regional power center in the eastern Carpathian Basin. Control over the region’s mineral resources (salt and gold), previously under Bulgarian authority, supported the prosperity of local military leaders associated with the Gyula clan, but also generated tensions with the new Hungarian king, Stephen I. Around 1003, his campaign against Iulus, ending with the latter’s capture, marked the cessation of burials at “Izvorul Împăratului” and the diminished role of the “Stația de Salvare” cemetery.

Graves discovered at “Museikon” and at the Ravelin of St Francis of Paola are isolated, outside any coherent cemetery layout. Their placement near habitation levels and later intrusions suggests domestic-context burials at the margins of, or within, the settlement—consistent with early medieval practice before strict separation of funerary space. Inventories (e.g., a jar with egg offerings, a ring, a twisted torque), typologically datable to the 10th–11th centuries, indicate diverse cultural influences without allowing strict ethnic attribution. The lack of a well-defined funerary grid supports interpretation as punctual inhumations tied to local communities in direct connection with the inhabited space.

The early medieval cemetery at “Stația de Salvare” is the largest and most complex funerary assemblage known in Transylvania for the 9th–11th centuries: over two hectares, c. 2,000 graves, and rich stratigraphy documenting two distinct chronological and cultural horizons. This rare, clearly documented succession captures the transition from post-Roman syncretisms to a material culture influenced by the Hungarian conquest and Christianization.

- Horizon I (9th – first half of the 10th c.): great diversity of funerary rite—cist graves in tile or stone, food offerings (including animal remains and eggs), varied ceramic deposits (amphorae, grey burnished vessels, coarse ware), and charcoal with a purificatory role. Organization is uneven, with randomly dispersed graves, varied orientations (predominantly W–E), and inventories of moderate prestige (modest ornaments, knives, ritual ceramics, pendants with early Christian symbols), not yet indicating full Christianization. Culturally associated with the Blandiana A group (South-Danubian—especially Bulgarian—influences) and possible elements of a local Romanized population in early contact with Christianity.
- Horizon II (second half of the 10th – early 11th c.): a clear shift—cists and fine ceramics disappear; burials are better aligned and spatially organized; inventories reflect sharper social stratification. Warrior graves attributable to Magyars stand out, with weapons

(arrowheads, axes), horse-tack fittings, military gear, and prestige ornaments (rings, twisted bracelets, lyre-shaped buckles, Christian pendants). Inventories suggest gradual integration into the Christian horizon, with archaic or syncretic survivals (e.g., horse remains, varied ritual gestures). The context reflects the formation of Árpáadian structures and the rise of warrior elites alongside early Christianization.

The Vânătorilor Street cemetery remains underexploited despite 186 graves excavated (1979–1980) over c. 0.5 ha. Fragmentary publications indicate relatively standardized Christian practice: supine inhumations, predominantly without coffins, W–E orientation. Inventories (ornaments, utilitarian objects, ceramics) include 24 coins from the late 11th century—a decisive chronological marker. Initially treated separately from “Stația de Salvare,” the site was later integrated into a unified funerary landscape, revealing a more complex archaeological picture.

The Brândușei Street cemetery (systematically investigated 1997–2008; 229 graves) is among Transylvania’s best-documented sites for the 10th–11th-century transition from paganism to Christianity. Practices are diverse (varied forearm positions, stone use in grave construction, multiple orientations), grave goods are rich (vessels, eggs, jewelry, coins), and coin issues of Stephen I and Andrew I provide both solid chronology and insight into Christianization and Árpáadian integration. Elaborate arrangements (slab coverings, stone delimitations) indicate post-mortem prestige and recognition, confirming Alba Iulia’s role as an administrative and identity pole in the intra-Carpathian early Middle Ages.

The “Izvorul Împăratului” cemetery—likely second in importance after “Stația de Salvare”—documents over 140 graves (campaigns 2001–2014) and offers a nuanced picture of a community in transition in the later 10th century. Inventories (Byzantine reliquaries and pectoral crosses, beads, spindle whorls, decorated ceramics, egg and animal offerings) simultaneously evidence pre-Christian survivals and Christianization strongly marked by Byzantine models. The elaborately iconographed reliquaries suggest Byzantine liturgical symbolism and possible links to an active Orthodox mission traditionally associated with Bishop Hierotheus and supported by Gylas. While direct association remains difficult without further evidence, the complex points to strong Byzantine influences preceding Stephen I’s intervention—a turning point in the region’s religious and political history.

The Pâclișă – “La Izvoare” cemetery near Alba Iulia documents funerary and religious transformations from the late 10th to the mid-11th century, paralleling Vânătorilor Street, later phases at Brândușei, Horizon II at “Stația de Salvare,” and the earliest burials around the

Roman Catholic Cathedral. Systematic research (2000–2012) recorded 33 graves notable for ritual coherence and diverse inventories. Coins of Stephen I and Andrew I—sometimes unusually numerous—allow precise dating (c. 970–1070) and close correlations with other Alba Iulia sites. The assemblage reflects the shift from pagan to Christian rites amid Magyar penetration and Byzantine influences attributed to Hierotheus’s mission, significantly informing Christianization and the political integration of Transylvania into the Hungarian kingdom.

Around the Roman Catholic Cathedral, approximately 400 graves have been documented and published (9th–17th centuries into the modern era), with recent investigations indicating at least 600 additional burials—for a total of c. 1,000—making it one of Transylvania’s largest medieval funerary complexes. An exceptional find is the pillar-supported church identified in 2011, probably datable to the late 10th–early 11th century. Although no published graves can yet be securely associated, its plan—with semicircular apse and a central system of four posts—suggests an architectural model with liturgical and symbolic valences compatible with the beginnings of organized Christianity in the region, under Byzantine influence. A case study of 35 graves discovered in 2011 during restoration of the Vauban bastionary fortress (near Gate IV) indicates the cemetery’s northern margin, with lower density but standardized practices (W–E orientation, supine burials) and specific inventories (S-ended wire earrings, twisted rings), datable to the 11th–12th centuries with possible late 10th-century antecedents. Superpositions among some graves denote long-term use and persistent memory of place.

Taken together, Alba Iulia’s funerary landscape in the 9th–11th centuries illustrates continuity of burial grounds and profound cultural–religious transformation: from post-Roman syncretisms and South-Danubian influences to the assertion of Magyar warrior elites and integration into Árpáadian state and ecclesiastical structures. The complexity and coherence of these assemblages provide a solid foundation for reconstructing the region’s cultural, spiritual, and political developments at the turn of the millennium.

Chapter V, *Pottery from Early Medieval Settlements at Alba Iulia*, focuses on early medieval ceramics recovered from settlements. It analyzes technical traits and typological–chronological distribution, particularly through four case studies that include unpublished fragments. Comparing settlement ceramics with funerary ceramics reveals significant differences in quality and function, with funerary wares generally more refined. A detailed catalogue and statistical analyses support dating and contextualization.

For the 9th – 11th centuries, the literature highlights a major research gap concerning the identification of settlements and dwellings, with “white areas” or sectors of sparse discoveries. As shown by the Catalogue of Discoveries (ch. 1.3), numerous dwellings have nevertheless been identified or mentioned both inside the Roman castrum and in adjacent areas. Publication remains deficient: only a small portion of ceramics from these contexts has entered the scholarly record.

Most of the early medieval ceramics known from Alba Iulia derive from funerary contexts (over 90%): “Stația de Salvare,” “Izvorul Împăratului,” Brândușei Street, Pâclișa – “La Izvoare,” and the Roman Catholic Cathedral, joined by cemeteries in the vicinity (Blandiana, Sebeș, Orăștie—“Dealul Pemilor X2”). For settlements, the most relevant typological analogies come from Blandiana – “La Brod” and Lancrăm – “Glod.”

In the late 9th and early 10th centuries, cemeteries along the middle Mureș valley—Alba Iulia (“Stația de Salvare,” Horizon I), Blandiana – “Brod,” and Sebeș—define the so-called Blandiana A Group, characterized by consistent and varied use of ceramics as integral to funerary ritual.

- At Alba Iulia – “Stația de Salvare” (Horizon I), of 82 excavated graves (1981–1985), 68 contained vessels, usually placed near the head. Most graves had one–two vessels (rarely three), associated with offerings and, at times, metal objects (e.g., knives).
- At Blandiana – “Brod”, fragmentary data indicate diversified use of vessels, predominantly small and medium forms, wheel-thrown at medium speed, fired in oxidizing or semi-oxidizing atmospheres, often associated with meat offerings.
- Sebeș confirms the model through ceramic deposits alongside animal remains, suggesting a relatively homogeneous funerary practice on the Mureș.

Horizon II at “Stația de Salvare” (late 10th – early 11th c.): funerary ceramics appear in a considerable number of graves, including warrior burials. Wheel-thrown vessels are placed variably (at the head, hip, feet), frequently with offerings, coins, horse gear, or even animal remains (e.g., horse). In some cases, the vessel is the sole grave good, underscoring an autonomous ritual function. The practice of depositing two vessels in the same grave is more frequent than in other necropolises, indicating both diversity and internal coherence.

Brândușei Street (10th–11th c.): data illustrate in detail the role of ceramics in funerary discourse. Small jars (10–15 cm, sometimes under 10 cm) predominate, deposited whole, mouth-up, in variable positions (hip, between the legs). In 15 analyzed graves, decoration ranges from absent to complex (incised lines, fluting, comb-made lattices) and includes potter’s

marks on the base (e.g., a cross within a circle). Associations with eggs, ornaments, coins, or amulets reveal an elaborate ritual; typological diversity suggests local adaptations within broader influences.

Comparative analyses show that in 10th-century Transylvania the handleless jar dominates, followed by liquid containers (jugs, cups) and two-handled jars. Very small vessels (<10 cm) become more frequent after c. 930, likely carrying symbolic functions. From the later 9th century, hemispherical or globular forms with high shoulders and stable profiles appear, signaling maturation of the ceramic tradition.

Vessels with potter's marks, attested especially at Alba Iulia – “Stația de Salvare” and Blandiana – “La Brod,” seem to carry dual meanings: religious–apotropaic (protective symbols) and economic (workshop identification). In later centuries these marks evolve into social or commercial emblems; in the period under study they retain a sacral character linked to a craft invested with symbolic prestige. Comb-stamped decoration, a technological innovation of the later 10th century, suggests external influences, with proposed connections to the Răducăneni culture (Moldavia).

Ceramics from settlements and research limits. The study of settlement ceramics at Alba Iulia lags behind that of funerary wares. Publication is fragmentary; assemblages are incomplete; unified typologies are lacking. Very small or, conversely, very large and heterogeneous sherd groups complicate reconstruction of forms and precise dating.

General characteristics:

- Forms: small/medium jars with short necks and everted or oblique rims, sometimes thickened; bowls, jugs, and beakers occur less frequently.
- Decoration: predominantly incised (horizontal, wavy, oblique, combined), with bosses, comb-decoration, and occasional potter's marks on the base.
- Technology: hand-made or slow-wheel; oxidizing or reducing firings; sandy or coarse fabrics; some pieces with fine slip or burnish.

Funerary ceramics from “Stația de Salvare,” Brândușei Street, Blandiana – “Brod,” and Sebeș constitute a fundamental reference for understanding 9th–11th-century funerary practices and cultural identities in Transylvania. The variety of forms, decoration, and depositional contexts indicates not only standardized practices but also a complex symbolic system in which the ceramic vessel functions as a medium of collective memory and as a marker of social and religious identity.

By contrast, settlement ceramics remain under-studied. Integrating them into a coherent historical framework requires rigorous typological and chronological systematization, supported by complete publications and interdisciplinary analyses capable of elucidating not only economic function but also the social and symbolic dimensions of ceramics in early medieval Transylvanian habitation.

The study of early medieval habitation at Alba Iulia (9th–11th centuries) thus begins from the absence of an integrated research program: archaeological interventions have been predominantly ad hoc and driven by construction, yielding a fragmentary, dispersed, and unevenly valorized documentary corpus. Reconstructing settlement dynamics therefore demands substantial efforts of data identification, sorting, and correlation.

The thesis concludes with a set of findings that synthesize early medieval habitation at Alba Iulia, its historical framework and institutional transformations, the funerary landscape, and the settlement around the year 1000.

Citadel interior and extra-muros zones. The Citadel, protected by the Roman castrum walls, functioned as the settlement nucleus; extra-muros areas were likewise intensively occupied, especially Dealul Furcilor. Research concentrated disproportionately within the castrum and lacked a systematic strategy for the periphery, producing interpretive gaps regarding the early medieval settlement network and its relationship to Roman remains.

Dealul Furcilor: extra-muros nucleus. Dense, continuous stratigraphy with SFBs, hearths, refuse pits, workshops, and a rich cemetery (Brândușei Street) indicates a stable, socially stratified community. Medieval levels frequently overlie Roman structures and reuse ancient materials, reflecting pragmatic spatial adaptation. The frequency and diversity of finds outline a closely linked extra-muros habitation nucleus; the lack of a recent synthesis leaves much interpretive potential unrealized.

“Stația de Salvare” area and the west–northwest of the castrum. Around the “Stația de Salvare” necropolis, documentation for the 9th–11th centuries is thin, but there are indications of a 6th–8th-century habitation nucleus likely continuing nearby, given the cemetery’s extent. West and northwest of the castrum (Horea, Moșilor, Goldiș), occupation is nearly continuous from the 6th to the 11th century, with bordei-type SFBs repeatedly reusing Roman materials. Despite functional diversification and complex construction solutions (e.g., Horea 22), 20th-century urban pressure and limited excavations constrain understanding.

Historical framework and institutional change. Around 1000, Transylvania lies at the confluence of Slavic, Avar, Bulgarian, and Magyar influences. After Avar decline and

Bulgarian expansion (8th–9th c.), regional polities (Gelu, Glad, Menumorut, Ahtum) coalesce, and centers like Alba Iulia assume local primacy. The Magyar conquest (895–902) and Árpáadian consolidation, together with official Christianization, anchor Alba Iulia—on the ruins of Legio XIII Gemina’s castrum—as the chief political and religious center of southern Transylvania and later episcopal seat (Gyulafehérvár).

Funerary landscape. The “Stația de Salvare” necropolis (>2,000 graves) remains the principal reference for the 9th–11th centuries, with two horizons:

- Horizon I: syncretic practices, cists, food offerings, objects with incipient Christian symbolism; a heterogeneous milieu not yet uniformly Christianized.
- Horizon II: clearer funerary organization; Magyar warrior graves with weapons and horse-gear; assertion of an elite and integration into Árpáadian structures.

Brândușei Street (229 graves, probably ~20% of the cemetery) documents the transition from paganism to Christianity and provides numismatic anchors (Stephen I, Andrew I). “Izvorul Împăratului” (>140 graves) highlights Byzantine influence (reliquaries, pectoral crosses), possibly correlating with Orthodox missions attributed to Bishop Hierotheus—suggestive yet not conclusive.

Habitation and ceramics. Dwellings in the Citadel (e.g., Palace of the Princes; “1 December 1918” University) show convergent building patterns (beaten-clay floors, hearths, post-holes, timber superstructures) with variation in spatial organization and stratigraphic density. Many contexts present vaulted ovens on pit edges (at least from the 9th c.), workshop annexes, and storage pits later reused as refuse pits.

While funerary ceramic studies have advanced, settlement ceramics remain poorly published and fragmentarily analyzed: lots are either too small or too large and heterogeneous, complicating typological reconstruction and dating. The present work catalogued over 500 sherds from dwellings (drawing, photography, description, digitization, analysis)—a volume comparable to all previously published material for the area. Results underscore the near absence of luxury wares in settlements (amphorae, burnished globular vessels), in contrast to cemeteries, suggesting functional and status differences between domestic and funerary spheres.

The emerging picture is one of continuous, adaptive habitation on Roman urban infrastructure, articulated with a rich funerary landscape that records religious and institutional transition into the Árpáadian kingdom. Alba Iulia emerges as a political and ecclesiastical pole of Transylvania at the turn of the millennium.

Research is constrained by difficult access to field documentation and often-unprocessed materials, fragmentary publication, and the lack of a unified methodology for settlement ceramics. Refocusing the thesis, from a topochronology of cemeteries to an analysis of settlement in correlation with funerary spaces, provides a useful synthesis and an expanded ceramic corpus for the scholarly community. Future directions include osteological analyses and radiocarbon (C14) dating to refine chronology and interpretation.

In conclusion, the thesis helps clarify the dynamics of early medieval habitation around Alba Iulia c. 1000. By correlating archaeological research with historical data and valorizing unpublished material, it provides a solid foundation for understanding the urban, social, and cultural evolution of one of medieval Transylvania's most important localities.

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