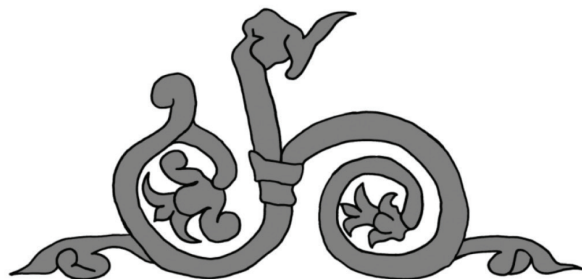


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This volume is dedicated to the memory of George Pascu Hurezan (1949–2016)

Bird Offerings in the 10th–11th Centuries Necropolises From Alba Iulia*

Aurel Dragotă, Mihai Blăjan

Abstract: The article focuses on bird offerings (skeletons and eggs of *Gallus gallus dom.*, rooster skeleton, duck eggs) identified in the necropolises from Alba Iulia – “Izvorul Împăratului”, “Str. Brîndușei”, “Stația de Salvare”, “Str. Vinătorilor”, and “Pîclișa”. Among the interesting combinations one must mention G. 500 from Alba Iulia – “Stația de Salvare” that contained bone remains from two hens and a rooster and G. 78 from “Izvorul Împăratului” where hen remains were associated with horse remains. Egg offerings feature both in simple graves and graves set with stone, limestone and reused Roman tiles, or, in one case, with a brick case (“Stația de Salvare” – G. 10/S. XIII). The only duck eggs have been identified in G. 113 and G. 126 part of group I in “Izvorul Împăratului”, and this cannot be by chance. Between one and three eggs had been deposited in each grave, and in one case they were placed inside a ceramic pot (“Str. Brîndușei” – G. 15). The funerary inventory of the graves with bird offerings is rather diverse, consisting of pottery, jewelry items and dress accessories (necklaces, beads, finger rings, and buckles), everyday items (knives) and weapons (quiver, bow plate, battle axe, arrowheads). In some cases, traces of coal have been identified inside the grave pits, a habit typical to the 10th century necropolises from Alba Iulia. The egg offering was sometimes placed in the proximity of a ceramic pot, a habit observed in the necropolises from “Izvorul Împăratului”, “Stația de Salvare”, and Pîclișa.

With two or three possible exceptions (G. 624, G. 10/S. XIII in “Stația de Salvare” and G. 198 on “Str. Vinătorilor”), the rest of the graves can be dated with certainty to the second half of the 10th century.

Keywords: Alba Iulia, Transylvania, offering, eggs, bird, duck, hen, Paganism, Christianity.

The habit of depositing egg offerings is often encountered among the human communities from Alba Iulia around the year 1000. This tradition can also be noted during other historical periods or in different ethnic-cultural environments, namely the Germanic, Romance, Slavic, Avar, or Magyar ones¹. Egg offerings (*Gallus gallus dom.*) are attested in the Slavic world of the 7th–9th centuries both in inhumation and incineration graves (Radvaň nad Dunajom, Kyulevcha, Balchik, and Bdintsi)². Eggs had a varied symbolism (as symbol of life, resurrection, the afterlife/a new existence), and the deposition of eggs in graves must be analyzed from the perspective of two interpretations: rebirth/the beginning of a new life or food appendix. In some cases, the presence of two or three eggs could probably be interpreted as a food offering, while the deposition of eggs in certain anatomical area (on the left or on the right side of the body) could be correlated to the gender of the deceased.

In Alba Iulia egg offerings have been identified on several sites part of the 10th–11th century horizon: “Str. Brîndușei”, “Izvorul Împăratului”³, “Stația de Salvare”, “Str. Vinătorilor”, and “Museikon”. To these one can add the discovery of bird offerings in Pîclișa “La Izvoare” (Fig. 1).

The situations observed in the necropolis from “Izvorul Împăratului”, where egg offerings have been identified in the graves of adults (women, men) and children, have allowed for a series of interesting observations. In fact, in the 9th–11th centuries cemeteries from Alba Iulia the egg offerings consisted of bone remains from domestic hens and hen or duck eggs. I shall describe below the cases of bird offerings signaled during the archaeological researches performed in the necropolis from “Izvorul Împăratului” (Fig. 2–3):

* The article was published in Romanian in Transilvania – serie nouă, anul XLVII (CLI), nr. 7, 2019, 83–94.
Translated by: Ana Maria Gruia.

¹ Dragotă 2014, 183–192.

² Chobanov, 2009, 301–305.

³ Dragotă 2016, 7–15.

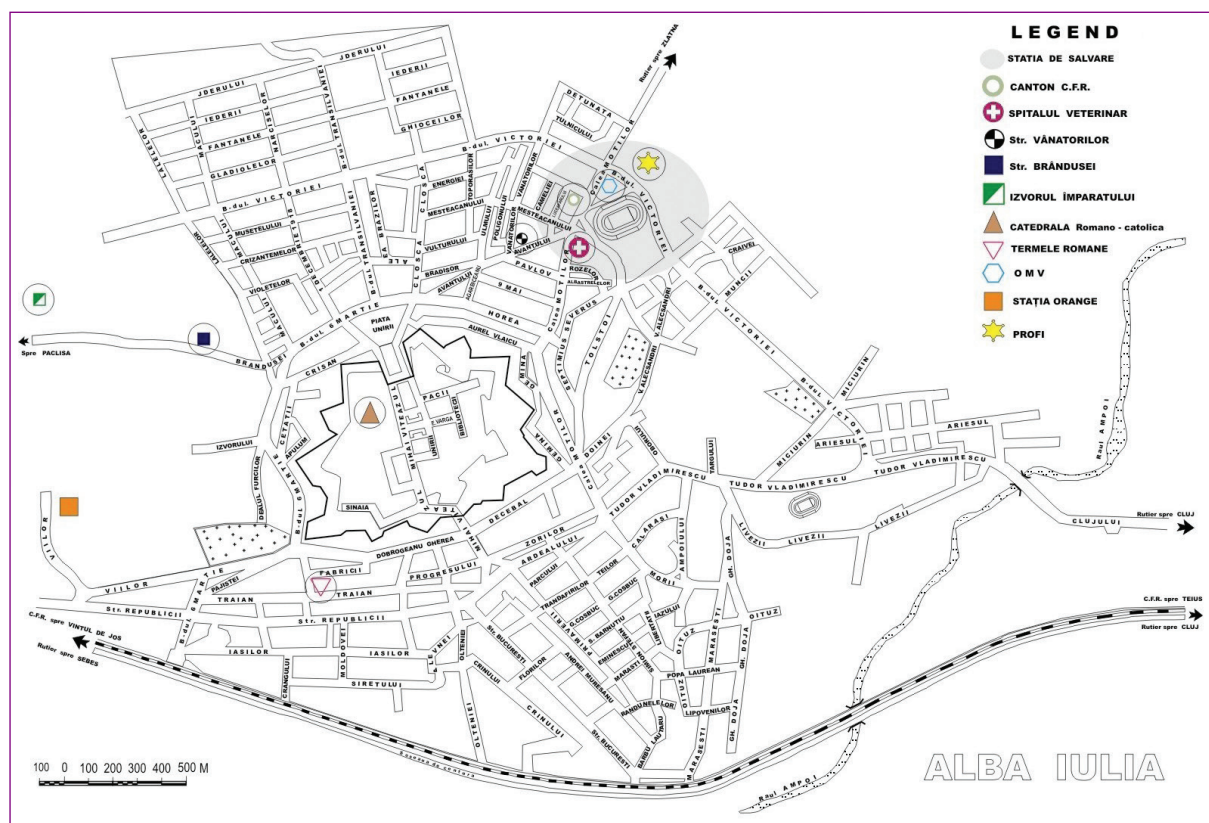


Fig. 1. Map with location of findings in Alba Iulia.

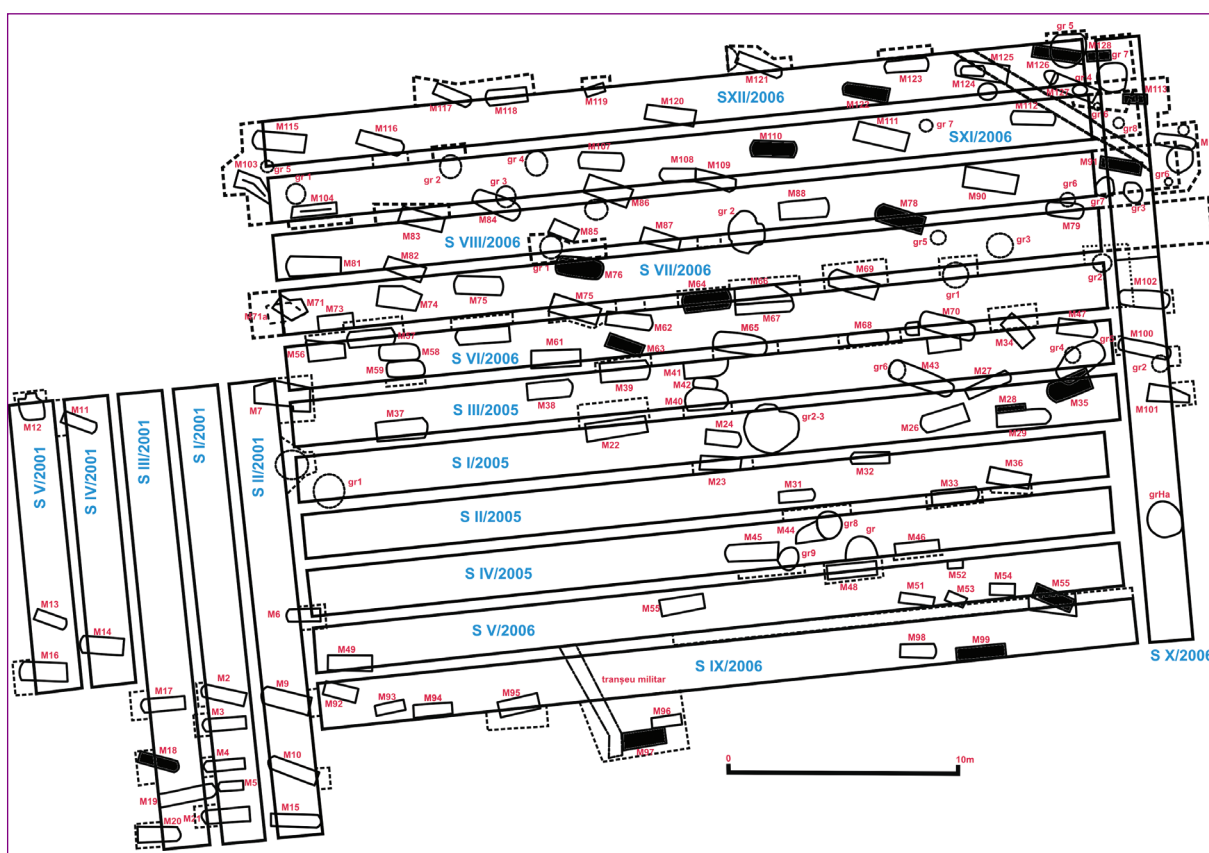


Fig. 2. Ground plan of graves with bird offerings (marked in black) from the necropolis in Alba Iulia "Izvorul Împăratului" (drawing: Mihai Blăjan, Anca Mătiș, A. Dragotă).

• G. 18. A woman's skeleton, with the left forearm raised towards the shoulder and placed with the palm on the chest, under the clavicle. The right hand was bent from the elbow at an obtuse angle, with the palm placed on the right hip. Orientation = West (the skull)-East. The funerary inventory consisted of a small temple ring made of silver, discovered in the area of the frontal bone. The shells of two eggs from a domestic hen had been deposited on the left side of the upper third and by the middle of the left femur (Fig. 4).

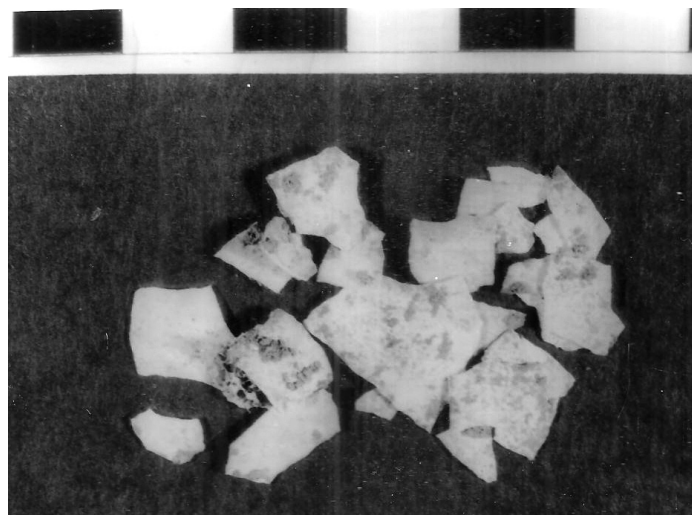


Fig. 4. Egg remains recovered from "Izvorul Împăratului"/G. 18 (photo: Lacrima Rădulescu, Mihai Blăjan).

• G. 28. Set with stone. A child's skeleton (109 cm) from group *Infans* I (6–7 years old), with the arms extended along the body and the palms placed on the pelvis. Orientation = West – East (the skull). Shells from a bird egg have been signaled in the north-eastern corner of the grave pit, near the skull.

• G. 35. The skeleton of an adult-mature individual, with the right arm extended along the body and the diaphyses of the left forearm elevated to the middle of the left humerus. Orientation = West-South-West (the skull)-East-North-East. The shells of a bird egg have been identified near the lower third of the right tibia.

• G. 55. The skeleton of an adult-mature man, with the arms extended along the body. Orientation = West (the skull)- East. From the fill 30 cm above the head archaeologists have recovered an oxidized iron bar, while the shells of a bird eggs were found near the lower third of the tibia.

• G. 63. Contains the skeleton of an adolescent female from the juvenus group, with the upper limbs extended along the body and the right palm placed on the pelvis. Orientation = East (the skull)-West. A necklace consisting of three twisted bronze wires was found around the right arm, above the elbow. The shells of a hen egg were discovered near the left wrist, in the margin of the pit.

• G. 64 contains the skeleton of an adult-mature man (173 cm) with the upper limbs extended along the body. Orientation = West (the head)- East. The funerary inventory includes the blade of a knife with an iron tang, deposited on the left pelvic wing. Near the ankle one should mention the shells of an egg, while the shells of another egg, a hen egg, had been deposited 17 cm apart from the tibia, as food offering.

• G. 76 belongs to an adult-mature man (135 cm), with the right arm extended along the body and the left arm bent at the elbow and placed with the forearm and the palm of the pelvis. Orientation = West (the skull)- East. The food offering consists of two broken eggs: one had been deposited below the left sole and the other near the tips of the toes of the right foot.

• G. 78. Skeleton of an adult-mature woman, with the arms bent at the elbow and placed with the palms on the abdomen. Orientation = West-North-West (the skull)- East-South-East. The skeleton and legs of a horse were found on the eastern end of the grave pit, on a postament made of unexcavated soil, measuring 20–30 cm in height. The skeleton of a hen (a leg, femur bones, the spine, the sternum, the shoulder bones) was uncovered in the middle of the southern margin of the pit. The bird had been placed along the grave's edge with the head towards the west and the legs towards the east and its crop

preserves granules of yellowish quartz. The funerary inventory consists of two temple rings / one by each ear, a bronze item, and a ceramic pot deposited mouth up on the lower third part of the right tibia (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5. Horse and hen offerings discovered in “Izvorul Împăratului”/G. 78 (photo: Lacrima Rădulescu, Mihai Blăjan).

- G. 91. The skeleton of a mature man (164 cm), with the arms bent at the elbows and the forearms placed on the wings of the pelvis. Orientation = West-North-West (the skull)-East-South-East. A fragmentary bone had been placed in the south-western corner of the grave pit, above the right shoulder (on the right side of the skull). The deceased's inventory consisted of a firesteel placed in the upper third part of the left femur and a knife blade deposited on the outer side of the diaphysis of the left femur.

- G. 97 houses the disturbed skeleton of an adult-mature individual, with the right arm bent at the elbow and the forearm brought in the place of the humerus, with the bones scattered around the right hip. Orientation = West-South-West (the skull)- East-North-East. The shells of a hen egg were discovered near the left foot.

- G. 99 preserves the skeleton of an adult-mature woman (148 cm), with the upper limbs bent at the elbow and the palms placed on the abdomen. Orientation = West (the skull)- East. A simple bronze ring was found by each ear and the shells of an egg were identified on the right side of the skull. Another egg, deposited as offering, must be noted 14 cm west of the skull cap.

- G. 110 preserves the skeleton of an adult-mature woman (160 cm), with the arms bent at the elbow and the palms placed on the pelvis. Orientation = West (the skull)- East. She wore two temple rings by the right ear, while a third was recovered from the fill, discarded on the southern edge of the pit. The shells of an egg and part of a bronze plate from the Post-Roman Period (the 5th century) were found near the lower third part of the left tibia, in the left corner of the pit.

- G. 113. Skeleton of a child from the infants I age group (7–8 years old), with the arms extended along the body and the palms near the hips. Orientation = West (the skull)- East. The white, thick shells of a duck egg were found on the middle of the epiphysis of the left femur. A second egg had been deposited between the femurs and a third was found on the hip, near the right coxal bone (Fig. 6).

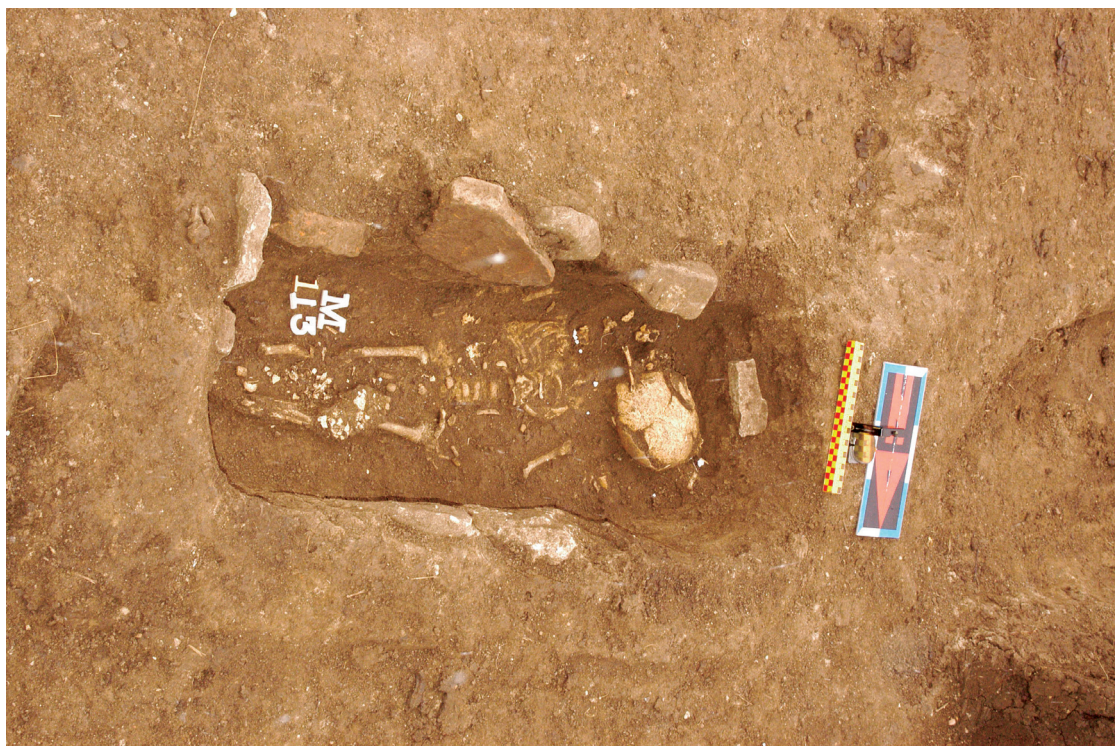


Fig. 6. Egg offering identified in “Izvorul Împăratului”/G. 113 (photo: Lacrima Rădulescu, Mihai Blăjan).



Fig. 7. Egg remains identified in “Izvorul Împăratului”/G. 126 (photo: Lacrima Rădulescu, Mihai Blăjan).

- G. 122. The skeleton of a robust adult-male man (165 cm), with the bones of the arms extended along the body. Orientation = West (the skull)- East. A bone fragment was found inside a pot tilted eastwards, placed near the left heel. The shells of a hen egg were found outside of the left knee and a second egg was located towards the middle of the left tibia, together with an iron needle.

- G. 126. Pit covered with a layer of river rocks, limestone, and brick fragments. Orientation = West (the skull)- East. The skeleton of an adult-mature man placed in dorsal decubitus (164 cm), with the arms bent at the elbow at a 90° angle and placed on the abdomen (the left palm overlapped by the right). Few pieces of coal were scattered on top of the bones. Two broken duck eggs (?) were found near the left foot, in the north-eastern corner. The funerary inventory consists of temple rings, one bead, and one pendant fragment (Fig. 7).

- G. 128. Child from the infans II age group (10–12 years), the skeleton of which measured 109 cm in length. The upper limbs were bent at the elbow at an obtuse angle and placed the left on top of the right, with the palms on the pelvis. Orientation = West (the skull)- East. The funerary inventory

includes a bronze ring found near the right ear and the shells of a hen egg placed outside the lower third of the tibia.

- G. 136. Set with rocks and reused ancient bricks. Skeleton (126 cm) with extended arms, slightly bent, and the palms deposited on the pelvis. The remains of two eggs were found after the removal of the boulder placed towards the eastern end of the sepulchral pit, in the black soil from the bottom of the pit. The eggs were set 10 cm apart. Orientation = West – East. The funerary inventory consisted of a band hoop finger ring, a temple ring, and a necklace fragment.

- G. 142 includes the skeleton of a child from the *infans I* age group (3–4 years), with the left arm extended along the body and the right arm bent at the elbow, with the palm deposited on the pelvis. Orientation = West (the skull)- East. The shells of a hen egg, of which 45 small and average-size fragments have been recovered, were identified under the right ear.

- G. 149. The skeleton of an adult-mature woman (154 cm), with the upper limbs extended along the body and the palms overlapped on the edge of the coxal bones. Orientation = West (the skull)- East. The inventory consists of a ring with bronze chaton, worn on one of the phalanges of the left hand, one temple ring by each ear, one iron awl with a rotten wooden handle, found near the left heel, one iron knife fragment, and a strongly corroded iron object (arrowhead?). The shells of a bird egg were found in the north-western corner, near the skull, while remains of another egg were located near the left heel.

- G. 154. The skeleton of an adult-mature woman, with the bones of the upper limbs destroyed. Orientation = West-South-West (the skull)- East-North-East. Two temple rings were found by the left ear and a broken pot was discovered mouth up near the left ankle. The shells of a large egg were uncovered near the pot, on the outer side knee (Fig. 8–9).



Fig. 8–9. Egg remains identified near a clay pot in “Izvorul Împăratului”/G. 154
(photo: Lacrima Rădulescu, Mihai Blăjan).

- G. 156. The skeleton of a robust mature man (173 cm), with the left arm extended along the body and the bones of the palm overlapped on the coxal. The right arm was bent at the elbow and the forearm placed with the palm on the coxal. Orientation = East-North-East (the skull)- West-South-West. A pot had been placed lying between the femurs, with the mouth towards the knees. Shells from two eggs were deposited near the pot, outside the lower third of the left femur.

- G. 161. Skeleton of a man (162 cm), with the left arm extended, bent at the elbow, with the palm placed on the coxal bone. The right arm was extended along the body but the bones of the forearm and palm had been destroyed. Orientation = West-South-West (the skull)- East-North-East. The inventory consisted of a pot placed mouth up in the area of the right foot, the blade of an iron knife deposited obliquely between the left coxal bone and the lower third part of the left forearm, and an iron firesteel found under the left coxal. Shells from one or two hen eggs had been deposited near the ceramic pot, place din the proximity of the right foot. The grave also contained pieces of coal, as one often encounters in the graves of this period until the spread of Christianity (Fig. 10).

- G. 163. Adult-mature woman (131 cm), with extended arms, bent at the elbow and placed with the palms on the pelvis. Orientation = West-North-West (the skull)- East-South-East. The inventory consisted of a pot placed mouth up between the femurs, near the pubic bones, one fragment from



Fig. 10. Egg remains identified near a clay pot in “Izvorul Împăratului”/G. 161 (photo: Lacrima Rădulescu, Mihai Blăjan).



Fig. 11. Egg remains identified near a clay pot in *Izvorul Împăratului*/M. 163 (photo: Lacrima Rădulescu, Mihai Blăjan).

a twisted bronze wire, and five simple rings/ loops, small and average in size, recovered from the area of the skull. Eggshells were identified inside the grave (Fig. 11).

- G. 165. The skeleton of a warrior (178 cm), with the left arm placed along the body and the right with the forearm destroyed (the position cannot be reconstructed). The funerary inventory consisted of a quiver, hair rings, one ceramic pot in the area of the occipital bone with shells from two bird eggs in close proximity, a horse offering (remains from the skull and limbs), an iron axe, and a “lyre”-shaped buckle. The fill above the pelvis contained coal remains⁴.

- G. 178. Skeleton (148 cm) deposited in dorsal decubitus, with the left arm along the body and the right with the forearm and the palm on the pelvis. Between the feet archaeologists found an iron knife overlapped by the shells of an egg. Orientation = West-North-West (the skull) – East-South-East.

- G. 215 (G. 2/2014). Skeleton (149 cm) with the right forearm deposited on the abdomen and the left along the body. Orientation = West (the skull)- East. An offering consisting of an egg had been deposited on the left side of the pelvis. The funerary inventory consisted of a finger ring made of bronze lamella/by the right humerus.

⁴ Dragotă 2018, 71; Dragotă, Blăjan 2018, 271, 286.

• G. 217 (G. 4/2014). Skeleton (170 cm) with the right forearm deposited on the pelvis and the left along the body. Orientation = West (the skull) – East. An offering (one egg) had been deposited between the shanks.

• G. 222 (M. 9/2014). A girl's skeleton (102 cm) deposited in dorsal decubitus, with both arms along the body. The left arm was slightly bent at the elbow. Orientation = West (the skull)– East. The funerary inventory consisted of an undecorated ceramic pot/behind the skull on the left. An egg offering was located on the left side of the humerus, near the ceramic pot.

The orientation of the 28 graves with egg/bird offerings from “Izvorul Împăratului” differs:

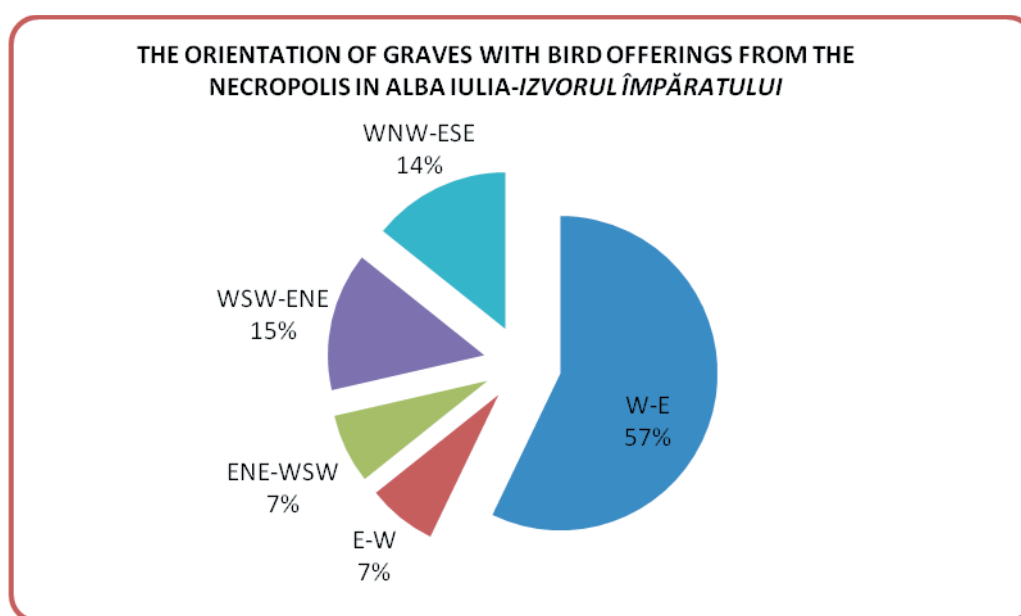
a.) W (the skull)-E: G. 18, G. 55, G. 64, G. 76, G. 99, G. 110, G. 122, G. 126, G. 113, G. 128, G. 136, G. 142, G. 149, G. 215, G. 217, G. 222 (57%);

b.) E (the skull)- W: G. 28, G. 63 (7%);

c.) ENE (the skull)- WSW: G. 156, G. 165;

d.) WSW (the skull) – ENE: G. 35, G. 97, G. 154, G. 161;

e.) WNW (the skull)-ESE: G. 78, G. 91, G. 163, G. 178;



Regarding the position of the upper limbs of the deceased, one can identify the following variants:

a.) the left upper limb on the chest, under the clavicle, and the right hand on the hip: G. 18;
b.) the left arm along the body and the right arm on the pelvis: G. 63, G. 142, G. 156, G. 161, G. 178, G. 217;

c.) the left arm along the body and the right hand on the abdomen: G. 215;

d.) the left arm on the pelvis and the right arm along the body: G. 76;

e.) both arms along the body: G. 55, G. 64, G. 113, G. 122, G. 149, G. 222;

f.) the right arm along the body and the left hand raised towards the humerus: G. 35;

g.) both forearms placed on the abdomen: G. 78, G. 99, G. 126;

h.) both forearms placed on the pelvis: G. 28, G. 91, G. 110, G. 128, G. 136, G. 163;

i.) uncertain position of the forearms: G. 97, G. 154, G. 155, G. 165;

One can note that most of the graves with egg/bird offerings (15) were oriented West (the skull)- East, a situation that together with the position of the arms leaves no room for interpretation. The combination of horse offering and egg/hen offering was only observed in two of the graves, one belonging to a woman (G. 78) and the other to a warrior (G. 165). The deposition of the egg offering in the proximity of the ceramic pot was noted both in women's and in men's graves (G. 154, G. 156, G. 161 and G. 222), while traces of coal were identified in men's graves (G. 126, G. 161 and G. 165). According to tradition, coal is interpreted as symbol of the resurrection of the body and of the Holy Baptism⁵.

⁵ Aga 2005, 75.

In the case of the researches performed in 2001–2014 in Alba Iulia – “Izvorul Împăratului”, egg offerings were observed in 28 graves (of children, men/warriors and women): G. 18 (woman), G. 28 (child), G. 35 (man), G. 55 (man), G. 63 (woman), G. 64 (man), G. 76 (woman), G. 78 (woman), G. 91 (man), G. 97 (adult), G. 99 (woman), G. 110 (woman), G. 113 (child), M. 122 (man), G. 126 (man), G. 128 (child infans II/10–12 years old), G. 136 (woman), G. 142 (child /Infans I, 3–4 years old), G. 149 (woman), G. 154 (woman), G. 156 (man), G. 161 (man), G. 163 (woman), G. 165 (man), G. 178 (man), G. 215 (G. 2/2014), G. 217 (G. 4/2014), and G. 222 (G. 9/2014). As compared to other cemeteries where egg offerings were more frequent in children’s graves, in “Izvorul Împăratului” the situation is reversed. Thus, the analysis of the 28 graves with bird offerings has revealed the following percentages: 82% were adults and 18% children, while the graves with egg offerings represented 96% of all graves with aviary offerings as compared to the burials with bird/hen remains that only amount to 4%. Out of this percentage, 89% consist of graves with hen egg offerings, 7% are graves with duck egg offerings while 4% are graves with bird osteological remains. This reversal of the proportion between adults and children as compared to the other cases from the European environment (where such depositions were more frequent in children’s graves), can only be explained through the spread of Christianity.

In children’s graves, remains of one egg have been discovered in the following anatomical areas: a.) near the skull, on the left side, above the left humerus (G. 28, G. 9/2014) in the proximity of a ceramic pot; b.) in the area of the left rotula and femur (G. 113); c.) near the right coxal (G. 113) and d.) on the right side of the skull (G. 142). In women’s graves, the egg offering was deposited in the following positions: a.) the area of the left femur, on the outside (G. 18); b.) left tibia (G. 110); c.) left palm (G. 63); d.) the area of the left and right feet (G. 76, G. 78?); e.) on the right side of the skull (G. 99); f.) on the left side of the skull and by the left heel (G. 149); g.) near the left knee, on the outside (G. 154); and h.) between the femurs, in the proximity of a ceramic pot, and by the right heel (G. 163). There are fewer cases when two eggs were deposited in women’s graves in Izvorul Împăratului: G. 76, G. 99 (?), G. 136, and G. 163.

Remains of offerings consisting of a single egg have also been noted in the case of men, where one can observe a certain predilection for the following anatomical areas: a.) near the right tibia on the outside (G. 35); b.) near the right ankle and tibia (G. 64); c.) between the tibias (G. 55); d.) near the right heel, in the proximity of a ceramic pot (G. 161); e.) the right shoulder (G. 91); f.) near the left foot (G. 126), and g.) near the skull (G. 165). Cases of remains from two eggs, though fewer, have also been recorded in the case of men’s graves: G. 35, G. 64, G. 126, G. 161 (?), and G. 165.

Graves with the skeletons of individuals of uncertain gender also contained egg offerings, in the following anatomical areas: a.) the left foot (G. 97); b.) the left side of the pelvis (G. 215) and c.) between the shanks (G. 217).

In the case of the necropolis in Alba Iulia “Izvorul Împăratului”, egg offerings are more frequent in graves with funerary inventory (71%) than in graves without artifacts (29%), while the proportion between such depositions in simple pits (43%) and those with some special design (57% covered or marked/bordered) is relatively even.

From the perspective of the correlation/connection with the types of artifacts in the composition of the funerary inventory, egg offerings are associated with jewelry items and dress accessories (Kecel buckles, necklace, rings 13 Giesler, pendant, boar tusk, beads, finger rings), objects of daily use (knives, flint, firesteels), weapons (quiver, bow plate, battle axe, arrowheads), and pottery. Most of the deceased were accompanied by a single deposited egg (59%), while those with two or three eggs represent smaller percentages (37% and 4%, respectively). Out of all 28 graves, hen eggs represent 89%, while duck eggs represent 7% and the hen skeleton 4%. From the perspective of the number of eggs deposited in these offerings (1–3) and of the anatomical position they were found in, one can note analogies in other 10th – 11th centuries necropolises from Alba Iulia (“Stația de Salvare”, “Str. Brîndușei”, Pîcliș) but also from the Danubian Basin. Except for a few graves with egg offerings located further apart on the ground plan of the necropolis (G. 18, G. 97, G. 136, G. 142), one can note groups of 2–4 graves located at a maximum of 5 meters apart (Fig. 9–10): group I- G. 91, G. 113, G. 126, G. 128; group II- G. 78, G. 110, G. 122; group III- G. 28, G. 35; group IV- G. 63, G. 64, G. 76; group V- G. 55, G. 99; group VI- G. 149, G. 178; group VII- G. 154, G. 156, G. 161, G. 163, G. 165. Duck eggs feature, for example, in G. 113 and G. 126 from group I and this cannot be by chance, though the meaning remains unclear!

Numerous graves with egg offerings also contain more or less consistent traces of coal, an indication of this habit in this necropolis during the tenth century. Coal traces disappeared from graves starting with the eleventh century, after the reactivation of Christianity, and became much rarer.

The habit of making egg offerings is also encountered in Alba Iulia “Stația de Salvare”⁶ in anatomical positions, also noted in the other necropolises from the territory of the ancient Apulum. I shall present, as examples, the graves identified during 1979–1981 in which archaeologists have observed this tradition (Fig. 12).

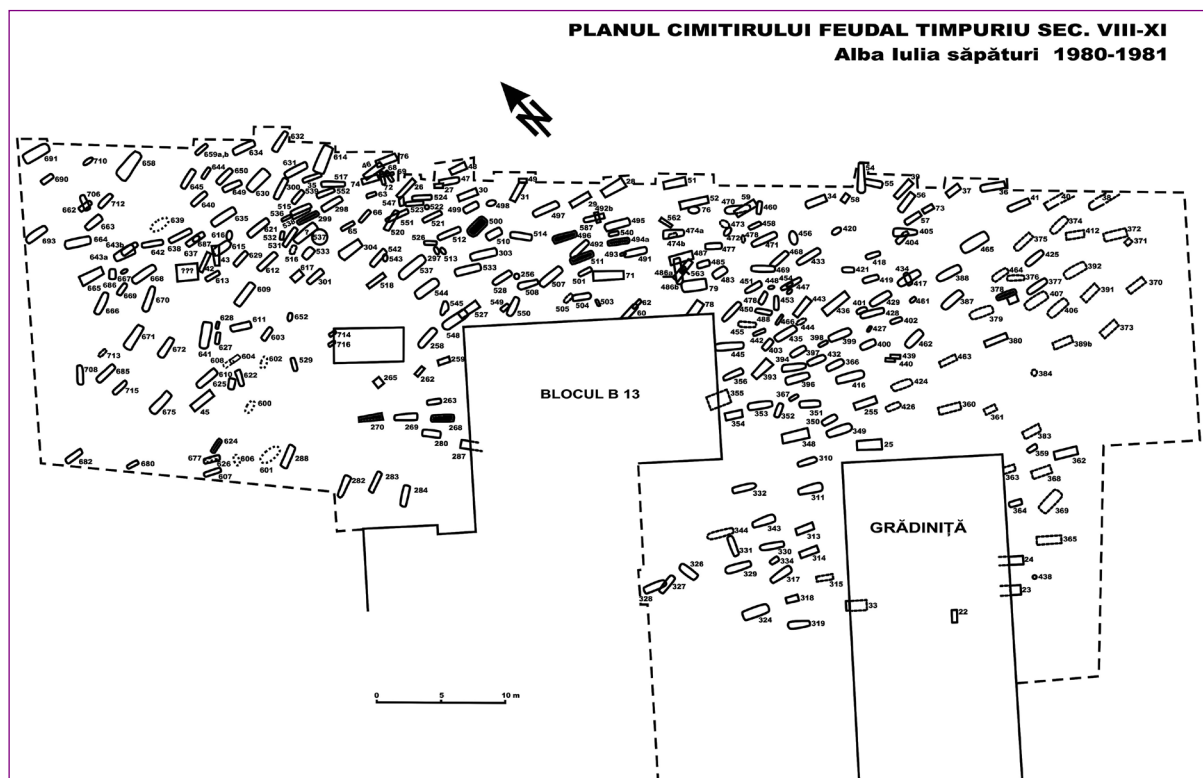


Fig. 12. Ground plan of graves with bird offerings (marked in black) from the necropolis in Alba Iulia “Stația de Salvare”, 1979–1981 (drawing: Mihai Blăjan, Anca Mătiș, Aurel Dragotă).

- G. 268. The skeleton of an adult woman (152 cm), with both arms extended along the body. Orientation = North-West (the skull)- South-East. The inventory consisted of a ceramic pot deposited mouth up in the south-eastern corner of the pit, two temple rings by the right ear, one temple ring by the left ear, and a simple ring by the right elbow. A bird egg with fragmented shell had been deposited near the right tibia.

- G. 270. The skeleton of a mature woman (147 cm), with both arms extended along the body. Orientation = North-West (the head)- South-East. A temple ring was found by each ear and a bronze finger ring was identified on the third finger of the right hand. The egg offering had been placed on the left side of the lower extremity of the left forearm.

- G. 299. The skeleton of a mature man (167 cm), with the left arm extended along the body and the right arm bent at the elbow, with the palm placed on the pelvis. Orientation = East (the head)- West. A cooking pot was found between the femurs. It had fallen on one side, with the mouth towards the pelvis. The blade of a bone-handle dagger was found under the left femur. A bird egg had been deposited near the middle of the right tibia.

- G. 328. The skeleton of an adult woman (157 cm), with the right arm extended along the body and the left arm bent at the elbow, placed with the palm on the abdomen/pelvis. Orientation = West-North-West (the skull)- East-South-East. The funerary inventory consisted of two silver temple rings (one by each ear), a bronze finger ring found on the phalanx of the left hand, and half of a ceramic pot. Fragments from the shell of a bird egg were found above the right shoulder of the deceased woman.

⁶ Blăjan, Popa 1983, 377.

• G. 378. Set with sandstone slabs and fragments of Roman bricks. The skeleton of an 8–9-years-old child with the arms extended along the body (?). Orientation = East-South-East (the skull)– West-North-West. A ceramic pot and the shells of a bird egg had been deposited near the left heel, while an iron object, atypical (knife?) and in a fragmentary state of preservation, was located near the right hip.

• G. 494. Set with lithic material. The skeleton of a child (10–15 years old), with the left arm extended along the body. Only the humerus and one fragment from the bones of the forearm have been preserved from the right arm. Orientation = West-North-West (the skull)– East-South-East. Between the heels the archaeologists discovered fragments from the shell of a bird egg, and on the outer side of the left heel there were the remains of another bird egg shell and a ceramic pot, initially placed mouth up, but over time tilted towards the north-west.

• G. 496. Skeleton of an adult individual (160 cm)/ woman? (45–50 years old), with the left arm extended along the body, with the forearm and palm on the pelvis (left coxal) and with the right arm bent at the elbow and placed under the pelvis, with the palm extending underneath the pelvis until towards the upper third part of the left femur. O = ESE (the head)– WNW. A broken cooking pot had been deposited between the feet, with fragments from the shell of a bird egg found near this pot. In the area of the skull the skeleton was protected with two stone slabs, placed sideways, and other stones and fragments of Roman bricks were found near the hip and the lower limbs.

• G. 500. Set with lithic material. The skeleton of a child aged around 7–8 years at the time of death, oriented East (the skull)– West, with the right arm extended along the body and the left arm bent at the elbow and placed on the sternum. Small bones from the skeletons of three domestic hens, ritually sacrificed, were found ca. 30 cm above the left knee. Other bones were scattered near and above the shanks, while an entirely preserved cooking pot had been placed between the knees, fallen with the mouth towards the south-east. The mortuary offering is attested by 40 bone fragments (upper and lower limbs, one sacrum fragment) from two domestic hens and probably a rooster.

• G. 511 a. The skeleton of a mature woman (142 cm), with the left arm extended along the body and the right hand bent at the elbow, with the palm placed on the pelvis. Orientation = West-North-West (the skull)– East-South-East. Remains from the skeleton of a suckling-age baby, buried at the same time or subsequently, were found in the area of the feet, 15–25 cm above them. The existence of three broken bird eggs has already been noted in this grave. They were placed apart, near the right foot. The funerary inventory consisted of four temple rings by the right ear, three temple rings by the left ear, a torques around the neck, a bracelet around the right forearm, and a finger ring on the right hand.

• G. 624. The skeleton of a child, with the right arm bent at the elbow and the palm elevated towards the chest and the left arm extended along the body. A lamb's skull had been deposited near the feet, with the cap upwards, besides bone remains from the animal's limbs. The funerary inventory consisted of two pots (a small amphora with Greek inscription and a cooking pot) and a knife blade. Remains of one or two eggs were identified in the area between the two ceramic pots, while others were found under the bottom of the small amphora. To the current stage of research this is the only grave in this necropolis that contains two pots and egg remains.

On the ground plan of the necropolis in Alba Iulia-*Stația de Salvare*, the graves with bird offerings identified during the 1979–1981 researches (Fig. 11) appear scattered (G. 299, G. 328, G. 378, G. 500, G. 624) but also grouped, in an area of maximum 5 square meters (group I- G. 268 and G. 270; group II- G. 494 a, G. 496, and G. 511).

The presence of the two pots might tempt one to date the grave to the ninth century or, with more certainty, to the chronological interval of interference between the two horizons, during the first half of the tenth century. In this context, one must make several observations regarding the dating of this habit. The probability that only the graves in question from “Stația de Salvare” (G. 624 and G. 10/S. XIII, that H. Ciugudean has included in horizon I) demonstrate the existence of the habit during horizon Blandiana A is very small.

If I were to accept this working hypothesis, I could not avoid asking myself why there were no egg depositions in the horizon dated to the first half of the 10th century and why it (re)surfaced during the second half of that century, at the same time when Christianity experienced a new impetus! Further more, H. Ciugudean accepts the inclusion of some graves with two ceramic pots also in horizon/phase II and I completely agree with this. My researches focusing so far on the graves from horizon I have not revealed egg offerings on the level of the 9th century. The funerary inventory of G. 624 that also

included a crotal bell confirms this and indicates a dating towards the middle or the second half of the 10th century.

Based on the above mentioned data, one notes that egg offerings feature in “Stația de Salvare” in the graves of women (G. 268, G. 270, G. 328, G. 496 (?), and G. 511a), children (G. 378, G. 494, G. 500, and G. 624), and men (G. 299). Also, four graves with egg offerings had been set with lithic material (G. 378, G. 494, G. 496, and G. 500). G. 624 and G. 500 are the most special cases, as they contained remains from the skeletons of two hens and one rooster. The position of the arms includes the following variants:

- a.) the left arm along the body and the right hand on the chest: G. 624;
- b.) the left arm along the body and the right hand on the pelvis: G. 299, G. 511a;
- c.) the left arm along the body and the right hand under the pelvis: G. 496;
- d.) the left hand along the body and the right arm placed on the sternum: G. 500;
- e.) unclear position: G. 494;
- f.) both arms along the body: G. 268, G. 270, G. 378;

In most of the graves (G. 268, G. 299, G. 328, G. 378, G. 494, G. 496, and G. 500) the egg offering is correlated with a ceramic pot and in a single case (G. 624) with two pots. The orientation of the graves with egg offering is different:

- a.) E (the skull)- W: G. 299, G. 500;
- b.) NW (the skull)-SE: G. 268, G. 270;
- c.) WNW (the skull)-ESE: G. 328, G. 511a;
- d.) ESE (the skull)- WNV: G. 378, G. 496;

According to H. Ciugudean, during the 1981–1985 researches archaeologists have also identified 13 other graves with bird offerings: G. 22/S. I, G. 13/S. IV, G. 15/S. V, G. 21/S. VII, G. 32/S. XII, G. 10/S. XIII (?), G. 12, G. 17, G. 38/S. XIV, G. 14/S. XVIII (warrior), G. 35/S. XXI, G. 1/S. XXII, and G. 10/S. XXVII. I shall provide below H. Ciugudean's description of the graves with egg offerings, thanking him for the generously provided data!

- G. 22/S. I. The intact skeleton of an adult individual, well preserved, buried lying on its back in a box with stone. Depth = 0.85 m. Rectangular pit, with the following dimensions: L = 2.28 m, l = 0.80 m. Orientation: East-West. Skeleton length = 1.85 m. Funerary inventory: eggs (near the left foot), ceramic pot (near the left tibia).

- G. 13/S. IV. The skeleton of an adult individual, with the left arm along the body and the right on the pelvis. Intact and well preserved. Set with stone. Depth = 1.42 m. Rectangular pit. Orientation: West-East. Skeleton length = 1.67 m. Funerary inventory: egg offering.

- G. 15/S. V. Well-preserved skeleton of an adult individual, placed in dorsal decubitus. Set with stone. Depth = 1.05 m. Rectangular pit, with the following dimensions: L = 1.80 m, l = 0.75 m. Orientation: East-South-East – West-North-West. Skeleton length = 1.62 m. Funerary inventory: finger ring, one arrowhead, two earrings, two links, and eggs (on the right side of the skull, above the right humerus).

- G. 21/S. VII. The skeleton of an adult, placed on the back, disturbed and poorly preserved. Grave set with stone. Orientation: East- West. The length of the skeleton is not mentioned. Depth = 0.92 m. Rectangular pit, with the following dimensions: L = 2.20 m, l = 0.85 m. Funerary inventory: three earrings, three beads, egg offering.

- G. 32/S. XII. The skeleton of an adult individual, intact and well preserved, placed in dorsal decubitus, with the arms along the body. Depth = 1.10 m. Orientation: West-East. An egg offering had been deposited near the left femur. Funerary inventory: one ceramic pot, four silver temple rings, and two agate beads.

- G. 10/S. XIII. The skeleton of an adult individual, placed lying on the back, intact and well preserved, deposited in a brick box. Depth = 1.60 m. Trapezoidal pit, with the following dimensions: L = 1.52 m, l = 0.22 m. Orientation: North-West –South-East. Skeleton length = 1.20 m. Funerary inventory: two pots, one small knife, animal offering, and eggs.

- G. 12/S. XIV. The skeleton of an adult individual, lying on the back, intact and well preserved. Set with stone. Depth = 1.30 m. Rectangular pit with the following dimensions: L = 2.10 m, l = 1.00 m. Orientation: West-East. Skeleton length = 1.92 m. Funerary inventory: pottery fragments, bronze leaf, one firesteel, one sharpening stone, one arrowhead, iron nails and links. Egg offering.

• G. 17/S. XIV. The skeleton of an adult individual, lying on the back, intact and well preserved. Depth = 1.02 m. Orientation: South-West – North-East. Skeleton length = 1.80 m. Egg offering.

• G. 38/S. XIV. The skeleton of an adult individual, lying on the back, intact and well preserved. Depth = 1.25 m. Rectangular pit with the following dimensions: L = 1.90 m, l = 0.55 m. Orientation: East-South – East-West – North-West. Skeleton length = 1.73 m. Funerary inventory: one arrowhead, one pot, one bone object, one sharpening stone, egg offering (near a ceramic pot located in the proximity of the left femur and left shank).

• G. 14/S. XVIII. The skeleton of an adult individual, deposited on the back, intact and well preserved. Depth = 1.20 m. Rectangular pit with the following dimensions: L = 2.30 m, l = 0.70 m. Orientation: West-South – West – East-North-East. Skeleton length = 1.86 m. Funerary inventory: two temple rings, one iron buckle, one firesteel with flint, one fire steel(?), one bone plate from a bow, one quiver with two arrowheads, one pot, lamb offering, and one egg.

• G35/S. XXI. The skeleton of an adult individual, lying on the back, with the right arm on the pelvis, the legs brought slightly together at the knees, intact but poorly preserved. Depth = 1.26 m. Rectangular pit with the following dimensions: L = 1.80 m, l = 0.60 m. Orientation: West-NorthW – ESE. Skeleton length = 1.55 m. Funerary inventory: five silver temple rings, one pot, and egg offering by the legs.

• G. 1/S. XXII. A child's skeleton, deposited on the back, in a mediocre state of preservation. Depth = 0.60 m. Pit shape not observed. Orientation: West-South-West – East-North-East. Funerary inventory: five temple rings, 14 beads, and egg offering.

• G. 10/S. XXVII. The skeleton of an adult individual deposited in dorsal decubitus, intact and well-preserved. Depth = 0.94 m. Set with stone. Oval pit with the following dimensions: L = 2.00 m, l = 0.62 m. Orientation: West-East. Skeleton length = 1.80 m. Funerary inventory: one iron knife, egg offering.

One notes the fact that the egg offering features in graves oriented West – East (G. 13/S. IV, G. 32/S. XII, G. 12/S. XIV, G. 10/S. XXVII), East- West (G. 22/S. I, G. 21/S. VII), South-West-North-East (G. 17/S. XIV), North-West – South-East (G. 10/S. XIII), West-South-West – East-North-East (G. 14/S. XVIII, G. 1/S. XXII), West-North-West – East-South-East (G35/S. XXI), and East-South-East-West-North-West (G. 15/S. V, G. 38/S. XIV). In the absence of other elements (such as the position of the arms, the number of eggs, and the anatomical area in which the eggs were deposited) one can observe a number of characteristics that are also encountered among the other necropolises in Alba Iulia, namely: the deposition of the egg close to a ceramic pot (G. 38/S. XIV), the brick design (G. 10/S. XIII), and stone design of the graves/ sepulchral pits (G. 22/S. I, G. 13/S. IV, G. 15/S. V, G. 21/S. VII, G. 12/S. XIV, G. 14/S. XVIII, G35/S. XXI, G. 10/S. XXVII).

The habit of making egg offerings has also been archaeologically identified in the necropolis of the Romance population in Alba Iulia “Str. Brîndușei”, dated to the 10th – 11th centuries. Egg offerings identified there, representing a much smaller percentage than in “Îzvorul Împăratului”, have been deposited during the second half of the 10th century.

• G. 15. Set with limestone. Skeleton with both forearms deposited on the pelvis, the inventory consisting of a ceramic pot recovered from the area of the left femur. Egg remains were recovered from inside this pot⁷.

• G. 17. Set with limestone. Skeleton with both forearms deposited on the pelvis, the inventory consisting of an iron knife. The offering, consisting of three eggs, had been deposited near the left foot⁸.

• G. 155. Set with limestone. Skeleton with both forearms deposited on the pelvis, the inventory consisting of a Kecel buckle, an iron knife, three temple rings, and a ceramic pot. Egg remains had been deposited near the lower right limb⁹.

• G. 175. Skeleton with both forearms along the body and an inventory consisting of a finger ring. The egg offering had been deposited near the lower right limb¹⁰.

One can note that the egg offerings discovered in the necropolis from “Str. Brîndușei” are less

⁷ Drâmbărean *et al.* 1998 a, 4; Dragotă *et al.* 2009, 30.

⁸ Drâmbărean *et al.* 1998 a, 4; Drâmbărean *et al.* 1998 b, 188sq; Dragotă *et al.* 2009, 30.

⁹ Dragotă *et al.* 2009, 62sq, 83.

¹⁰ Dragotă *et al.* 2009, 67, 83.

numerous because the Romance population that used it adopted Christianity a little later. In most of the cases the graves had been set with lithic material and the skeletons, with a single exception, had the forearms deposited on the pelvis. Between one and three eggs had been deposited, in one case inside a ceramic pot.

The existence of this tradition during the second half of the 10th century was also observed in the necropolis from Pîclișa „La Izvoare”:

- G. 25. A girl's skeleton (54 cm), in a rather precarious state of preservation – only the skull cap, several upper vertebrae and fragments of the lower limbs have been found. Orientation = South-West (the skull) – North-East (the legs). The funerary inventory consisted of a necklace made of three twisted wires, two temple rings, and eight circular beads. The shells of an egg deposited as an offering were identified in the area of the lower limbs, on the right side.

- G. 30. A girl's skeleton (76 cm) preserving, in a precarious state, only the skull and remains of the lower limbs. Orientation = North-East (the skull) – South-West. The funerary inventory consisted of a necklace made out of two twisted wires, with a hook and eye closing system, two temple rings, an iron knife, a ceramic pot deposited between the knee caps, and an egg offering nearby.

- G. 33. A woman's skeleton (144 cm) with both arms extended along the body. Orientation = South-West (the skull) – North-East. Among the items of the funerary inventory one can mention two temple rings, a bitronconic whorl, an iron needle, and a globular silver pendant. The egg offering had been deposited near a ceramic pot and in the area of the left arm pit¹¹.

With a single exception (G. 30), all graves were oriented South-West (the skull)- North-East, and the egg offering was also documented near a ceramic pot (G. 30, G. 33). At the current stage of research, in this necropolis egg offerings only feature in two girls' graves (G. 30, G. 25) and one grave belonging to a woman (G. 33).

The analysis of the investigations in “Stația de Salvare” attests, up to this point, the fact that the egg offering was not among the habits specific to the funerary horizon of the 9th century. The only grave with two pots that contains three eggs deposited as offering can rather be dated to the 10th century. This type of offering was also documented during researches performed in the area of the “Museikon” where archaeologists have identified a 10th century ceramic pot that contained egg remains¹². A similar situation was noted in G. 15 from “Str. Brîndușei”¹³ and in Tekovský Hrádok/G. 3¹⁴.

The only case with bird offering from Alba Iulia that can be dated to the middle/second half of the 11th century is attested in the necropolis on “Str. Vinătorilor”/G. 198. The skeleton belongs to a girl who died before reaching seven years of age (L = 85 cm) and had been buried with the arms extended along the body and together with a funerary inventory consisting of two silver rings, one by each ear. The body had been oriented West (the skull)- East and a bird egg had been deposited as an offering by the middle of the right forearm.

The only exceptions are G. 624, G. 10/S. XIII in “Stația de Salvare” and G. 198 on “Str. Vinătorilor”. Bird offerings are best represented in “Izvorul Împăratului”, even if the number of graves is much smaller than the number of graves in “Stația de Salvare”.

Both bird species (hen, rooster) deposited as offerings in the necropolises from Alba Iulia “Stația de Salvare” and “Izvorul Împăratului” are present in funerary rituals. Hens were traditionally seen as psychopompanimals, guiding the souls in the afterworld¹⁵. Roosters have also received a similar interpretation, as they announced the souls of the dead and were mainly associated with the male

¹¹ Dragotă *et al.* 2013, 147.

¹² Florescu, Ota 2016, 245–253. Regarding the authors' attempt to date again the disturbed grave from the Roman-Catholic Cathedral in Alba Iulia to the second part of the 10th century or even later is debatable (p. 248). Supporting this opinion they mention, in footnote 22, a 2014 publication that on page 194 does not contain any mention of the discovery from the area of the Roman-Catholic Cathedral, even less its chronological identification. The heart-shaped artifact and the archaeological context seem to confirm that R. R. Heitel's is a more pertinent dating. I also support this dating, even if horse offerings feature in the graves from Alba Iulia-“Izvorul Împăratului” and “Stația de Salvare” throughout the entire 10th century. Furthermore, considering the location of the cemeteries researched in Alba Iulia, the existence of a sepulchral area in that area on that chronological level is debatable and improbable. The habit in question was rather random, similar to the one by the St. Francis of Paola Ravelin. A similar variant of the stamp from the bottom of the pot (p. 246, footnote 4) can be encountered on a ceramic pot from “Stația de Salvare”.

¹³ Drâmbărean *et al.* 1998 a, 4; Drâmbărean *et al.* 1998 b, 188.

¹⁴ Nevizánsky, Kujovský 1991, 553, 556.

¹⁵ Evseev 1998, 159sq.

principle, connected to manhood and bravery in battle. Roosters have also been invested with the gift of knowing the secrets of life and death and in Christian symbolism the rooster is an emblem of Jesus Christ, signifying the light and supreme intelligence that emanated from God. Roosters were also apotropaic animals, protecting against evil spirits¹⁶. They were envisaged as accompanying the dead on their travel to the afterworld and protected them against the Evil Spirit¹⁷. Eggs have received a diverse symbolism, connected to magical gestures¹⁸, immortality, resurrection, regeneration, the origins, and permanent life. They were also envisaged as an archetypal symbol of the beginning of all things¹⁹. Eggs were generally associated with the human soul and body²⁰. Ducks can also be connected to the souls of the dead²¹ or, in the case under discussion, the duck eggs in “Izvorul Împăratului”/G. 113 and G. 126.

In conclusion, one should mention the interesting association (hen and rooster) encountered in Alba Iulia “Stația de Salvare”/ G. 500, in which one of the animals (the rooster) announced the soul of the deceased, and the other (the hen), a chthonian animal, guided the soul to the afterworld. One notes that egg offerings were especially frequent in these necropolises from Alba Iulia during the second half of the 10th century and coincide with the reactivation of Christianity.

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¹⁶ Evseev 1998, p. 89sq.

¹⁷ Talos 2001, 36.

¹⁸ Talos 2001, 109.

¹⁹ Evseev 1998, 338sq.

²⁰ Aga 2005, 270.

²¹ Talos 2001, 127.

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Abbreviations

AAASH	Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae, Budapesta.
AAC	Acta Archaeologica Carpathica, Cracovia.
Alba Regia	Alba Regia. Annales Musei Stephani regis, Székesferhérvár.
Angvstia	Angvstia. Sfântu Gheorghe.
Arabona	Győri Xántus János Múzeum, Győr.
ArchÉrt	Archaeologiai Értesítő, Budapesta.
ArchHung	Archaeologia Hungarica, Series Nova, Budapest.
ArhMold	ArheologiaMoldovei. Iași.
Arheologija/Archeologiya	Arheologija/ Archeologiya. Sofia.
Apulum	Acta MuseiApulensis – Apulum. Alba-Iulia.
AMN	Acta Musei Napocensis, Cluj-Napoca.
AMP	Acta Musei Porolissensis, Zalău.
BAM	Brvkenthal Acta Mvsei. Sibiu.
BHAB	(Museum Banaticum Temesiense) Bibliotheca Historica et Archaeologica Banatica.
BMMK	A Békés Megyei Múzeumok Közleményei. Békéscsaba.
BMA	Bibliotheca Memoriae Antiquitatis, Piatra Neamț.
BMN	Bibliotheca Musei Napocensis.
BudRég	Budapest Régiségei. Budapest.
CCA	Cronica Cercetărilor Arheologice din România, București.
CRSCRCR	Coins from Roman sites and collections of Roman coins from Romania.
Dacia N.S.	Dacia. Revue d'archéologie et d'histoire ancienne. Nouvelle serie. București.
EphNap	Ephemeris Napocensis. Cluj-Napoca.
Ethnographia	Ethnographia. A Magyar Néprajzi Társaság Folyóirata. Budapest.
FADDP/GMADP	Führer zu archäologischen Denkmälern in Dacia Porolissensis/Ghid al monumentelor arheologice din Dacia Porolissensis
FolArch	Folia Archaeologica. Budapest.
Hesperia	Hesperia: The Journal of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens. Athens.
MCA	Materiale și Cercetări Arheologice. Bucharest.
MFME	A Móra Ferenc Múz. Évkönyve. Szeged.
MFME SE	Móra Ferenc Múzeum Évkönyve: Studia Ethnographica. Szeged.
MFME-StudArch	A Móra Ferenc Múzeum Évkönyve, Studia Archaeologica. Szeged.
MGTSZ	Magyar Gazdaságtörténeti Szemle. Budapest.
MMA	Monumenta Avarorum Archaeologica, Budapest.
Mousaios	Mousaios. Buletin Științific al Muzeului Județean Buzău, Buzău.
NyJAMÉ	Jósa András Múzeum Évkönyve. Nyiregyháza.
OM	Orbis Mediaevalis, Arad.
PAT	Patrimonium Archaeologicum Transylvanicum. Cluj Napoca.
PBF	Praehistorische Bronzefunde. Berlin.
PeuceS.N	PEUCE. Studii și cercetări de istorie și arheologie. Serie nouă. Tulcea.
RI, SN	Revista Istorică, Serie Nouă. București.
RMM-MIA	Revista Muzeelor și Monumentelor. seria Monumente istorice și de artă. București.
SA	Sovietskaia Arheologija. Moscova.
SCIV(A)	Studii și Cercetări de Istorie Veche. București.
SlovArch	Slovenská Archeológia. Nitra.
SPMA	Studies in Post-Medieval Archaeology. Prague.

StudArchMed	Studia Archaeologica et Medievalia, Bratislava
TRÉT	TRÉT – Történelmi és Régészeti Értesítő, Temesvár (Timișoara).
WMMM	Wosinsky Mór Megyei Múzeum, Szekszárd
ZSA	Ziridava. Studia Archaeologica. Arad.