

**MINISTRY OF NATIONAL EDUCATION
"1 DECEMBRIE 1918" UNIVERSITY OF ALBA IULIA
DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF HISTORY**



UNIVERSITATEA
1 DECEMBRIE 1918
ALBA IULIA

ABSTRACT OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS

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**ALBA IULIA
2023**

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**LITHIC FUNERARY MONUMENTS IN ALBA
COUNTY CEMETERIES. FROM RESEARCH TO
CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION**

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Key words: *funerary monument, stone, lithic, conservation, restoration*

ABSTRACT

Funerary art remains a field full of novelty and mystery, especially because of the extremely complex social, cultural, linguistic and historical aspects it offers. It is the interdisciplinary nature of the field that also gives the subject its uniqueness. The pages of the thesis *Lithic Funerary Monuments in Cemeteries of Alba County. From Research to Conservation and Restoration* attempts to reflect the importance of funerary monuments and to present a way of researching and preserving them. Although it has been a subject studied at various levels lately, funerary art remains a generous theme, the variety discovered, as well as the uniqueness in many cases, concluding particular religious and social aspects.

The presentation and analysis of the monuments used to mark burials in the geographic area on which I have focused in this research, more precisely Alba county, will be based on a typological and stylistic approach, even if the final aim of the work is to carry out detailed research on dating and enhancement through restoration or to draw up conservation and restoration proposals based on field research, which will be the basis for cultural promotion of the funerary heritage.

According to the title, the only category of funerary monuments that I will focus on is that of petrographic material due to the position occupied, although the supports from which commemorative pieces are made are not limited only to lithic material.

Even if the lithic material from which the goods in question are made is of particular importance, as there is the possibility of using a certain type of rock depending on the social status of the deceased, the classification according to the material used in the manufacture of the stone pieces will be made in the last part of the work. The analysis of the state of conservation of the monuments studied will be carried out in the part of the case studies chosen for research.

The monuments will be both described and dated, and the inscription of the epitaphs will be transliterated as far as possible, depending on its legibility. Based on the

results of the field research, the funerary monuments have been analysed and their typology, structure and description have been recorded in detail as far as possible.

Interferences, particularly artistic, have led to the selection of case studies of Jewish, Reformed and Evangelical communities. The orientation towards the case studies chosen from rural and urban areas was mainly generated by the difference in the manner of execution of these monuments from petrographic support and the realisation of the connections between religious communities in terms of the typologies used.

Another aspect to be pointed out is the fact that the research has focused mainly on the communities' own cemeteries, but also on municipal cemeteries, taking into account those details of the field that have so far been too little researched, especially in the case of the common people of the society concerned.

The present research proposed to continue the preliminary efforts begun in the field over time through various special projects, as well as to approach and to promote the multi- and inter-disciplinary methodologies necessary for similar research. At the heart of the work was the conservation and restoration of funerary monuments considered as documentary sources. This preservation of lithic pieces is imperative for further epigraphic research. The digitisation of the funerary monuments was also an important aspect in order to facilitate the thorough and easy research of the monuments.

The sources used were multiple, ranging from archival sources, registers of religious communities, related bibliography, but last but not least the epigraphic inscriptions transliterated, translated and analysed following the restoration of the monuments, inscriptions that provide special information for the religious community as well as the manner of writing a commemorative inscription.

Starting from these general lines, my attention has been directed in particular to the stone funerary monuments existing in the historical areas of the cemeteries, although they are still active. Thus, commemorative pieces from the old and early areas of the cemeteries were selected, which can also lead to the temporary placement of cemeteries, which is particularly important for certifying the settlement of a community in a particular region. In the case of urban cemeteries of Evangelical and Reformed character, on the other hand, one can notice the certification of moving burials to a cemetery of its own, if up to a point in history they were carried out around churches.

Following the history of the research undertaken in this direction of the study of funerary monuments, although recently the field has begun to gain more extensive scope, the problem is insufficiently researched, proving to be extremely complex. Both the epigraphic research itself, the identification of the pieces, the inventory and centralisation of funerary monuments, as well as the extensive process of conservation and restoration, were the premises that led to the conclusions of the research and the identification of the uniqueness of some funerary pieces. Also, the field placement of the cemeteries, the marking (in some cases) of the monuments, as well as the correlation with old historical maps or with old existing plans, have contributed to the research.

The main criterion for the selection of the monuments with funerary status analysed was, in particular, their age, which could provide the dating, even relative, of the cemeteries, especially in the absence of other documents that make it more precise, which is one of the objectives of the present work.

The monuments selected covered the time span from the 17th to the 19th centuries, with occasional references to the 20th century. The reality in the field differed from the descriptive one identified in some documents, and the selection was aimed at the earliest monuments and marking the temporary period of the cemetery's appearance as well as the information reflected through epitaphs.

The analysis of each funerary piece studied, from the point of view of its state of conservation, the identification of the degrading factors as well as the establishment of the ideal methodology for the technical process of restoration was an extremely important stage, preliminary to the actual beginning of the restoration of the pieces, their digitization and the epigraphic research in order to date and identify the deceased. The primary objective of the present research was to secure as many as possible of the funerary monuments in the historical parts of the cemeteries and this aspect brought with it the need for adjacent analyses and studies, involving geological studies of the rocks from which the funerary monuments are made of, microscopic identification by analogy of the rock types, identification of the type of biodeteriogen attack on the basis of analysis bulletins accredited by specialists and experts in the field, measurements of rock humidity, as well as careful analysis of the state of conservation of the identified goods.

The situation of the case studies in urban areas differs from those in rural areas primarily due to the ease of working in urban cemeteries¹ as opposed to rural cemeteries where access has been hampered mainly by the lack of necessary utilities. Thus the decision was taken to carry out complex works in urban cemeteries while in rural cemeteries simple tests were carried out, sufficient to identify the appropriate technical process for carrying out more extensive conservation and restoration work on commemorative assets.

The PhD thesis does not aim to provide definitive answers to all the uncertainties related to the existence of the cemeteries studied, as this is impossible without extensive archaeological research, but in the absence of this possibility, an attempt is made to save and valorise the pieces still existing in these burial complexes, as well as their epigraphic research.

The present thesis is structured into five distinct chapters, according to the course of the research, its organisation being dictated by the way the subject is approached. The first part of the thesis, chapters I-III, provides an overview of the defining elements in the research of the subject, focusing on an extensive bibliography in fields auxiliary to history, while chapters IV-V make the deep transition into the subject of conservation and restoration of lithic monuments, both by offering technical aspects, analysis of the reality in the field as well as punctually, by offering specific images of case studies selected following the research carried out over time.

Chapter I, *Basic Concepts. Definitions. The Research Methodology*, brings clarifications related to the research method undertaken both in terms of the defining concepts of the field and the accepted specialist language, as well as the field research methodology, the method of selecting cemeteries, their classification in rural and urban areas, as well as the method of selecting monuments, the identification of pieces, the analysis of the state of conservation of commemorative goods, the method of digitization and epigraphic research undertaken with the support of specialists in the field. The conclusion at the time of undertaking the subject was that the subject, by its complexity, requires the presence of a team in the field, the impossibility of collaboration in all cases,

¹ There is easy access for entry, raw sources of electricity and water as well as the ability to easily transport necessary materials.

leading to the reduction of the related results, but the orientation in the field was prioritized, the number of pieces selected was reduced but the selection was made according to their importance for the final result of the research.

After defining these aspects, a review of the evolution of funerary monuments has been made in the second chapter *Sepulchral Monuments. From Tombstones to Complex Funerary Monuments. Grave Complexes*. The first sub-chapter of the second chapter, entitled *Funerary Art in Historiography*, clarifies the study of this field over time and signals the interest of specialists in this speciality.

This comprehensive chapter summarises, through sub-chapter II.2. *The Appearance of Slabs and Other Funerary Monuments. The Evolution from Antiquity to the Modern Era*, the course of funerary art from Antiquity to the period covered in the pages of this work, a foray in this direction being imperative in order to be able to analyse the selected monuments, especially from an artistic point of view as well as the preservation of certain component elements over time and modified according to the fashion of the time.

The typology of funerary monuments is dealt with in the third sub-chapter, the orientation being based on the location of the monuments as well as on the way in which the tombstones are made. The morphology of memorials is then dealt with in the fourth sub-chapter, a comprehensive sub-chapter which covers all the defining elements of a funerary monument, both from a compositional point of view, in terms of the general way in which monuments are divided, in most cases, into inscription and decoration, and in terms of the decoration of monuments through the use of various symbols: vegetal, zoomorphic, geometric, compositional and heraldic elements, religious symbols or anthropomorphic decorative elements.

The original component of the thesis resides in its main objective, namely the conservation and restoration of some sepulchral pieces from cemeteries selected as case studies during the research. Chapter IV. *The State of Conservation of Funerary Monuments*, divided in turn into four sub-chapters, deals both with the theoretical component of stone conservation and with the applied, on-site analysis of the *de facto* situation. The first of the sub-chapters, *Types of Rocks Used in the Construction of Funerary Monuments*, aims to analyse and describe, in relation to field research, the types

of petrographic support most commonly used in the construction of the sepulchral tombs. This examination is based on the certified geological analyses carried out during the research.

The state of conservation of the burial pieces analysed is dictated by the existing degradations on the surface and in the depth of the lapidary support, thus the detailing of the possible degradations as well as the analysis in the field of their existence punctually, was a mandatory aspect. Thus the following sub-chapters of Chapter IV deal with degradations produced by environmental factors, biological degradations as well as degradations produced by anthropogenic factors.

The last chapter of the paper aims to describe the case studies selected for research. Divided into two sub-chapters: *Funerary Monuments of Urban Cemeteries* and *Funerary Monuments of Rural Cemeteries*, the sub-chapters gradually deal with selections from the cemeteries analysed. Thus, for the urban environment, the Jewish cemetery in Alba Iulia, the Reformed cemetery in Aiud and the Evangelical cemetery in Sebeş were selected, all three cemeteries being located in localities of particular importance for religious communities, having the highest number of members of the communities during the period analysed, thus enjoying a special status among the surrounding localities.

The funerary monuments in the rural cemeteries were selected from the Jewish cemetery in Vințu de Jos, the Reformed cemetery in Ighiu and the Evangelical cemetery in Petrești, important localities that certify the presence of religious communities both through places of worship and the existence of their burial places.

In the analysis of the precise state of conservation of the funerary monuments, in the proposals for conservation and restoration as well as in the technical process carried out, a particular role was played by the petrographic and biological analyses carried out. Microscopic and physico-chemical investigations were also carried out on samples taken from the field, with a view to proposing a precise methodology for the restoration of the pieces on petrographic support.

The technical process of conservation and restoration will be preceded by a survey of the degradation that will generate a series of solutions that will be found in the field of

conservation and restoration works precisely carried out in order to stabilise the petrographic support from which the funerary pieces are distinctly made.

The aspect of the restoration of lithic monuments was one of the personal contributions of the research approach. An example worth mentioning is the case of the Jewish Cemetery in Alba Iulia, a situation in which the conservation, restoration and valorisation work of the cemetery is a large-scale and team action, the project was started in 2013 by researching the cemetery, and then began the annual Conservation and Restoration Camp held in this historical cemetery. The year 2022 brought with it the winning of a grant from the Embassy of the United States of America, a contribution that allowed the development of the project into an international one, bringing with it a series of opportunities for epigraphic research, support for conservation and restoration work, and the closure of a large chapter in the work carried out here. At the same time, it opened the door to a plan to enhance the cemetery by making it a much more visible setting.

In the other cases of urban cemeteries, the situation did not involve research teams and the work was carried out punctually on selected pieces from within the cemetery sites, primarily on the basis of accessibility. Thus, in the Reformed cemetery of Aiud four funerary pieces in a secondary position were restored. The funerary monuments testify to the beginnings of the Reformed cemetery here, as they were reused in the construction of the access steps and excavated in the 20th century. The decision to secure the stone supports of the monuments thus came from an initiative to save the oldest Reformed burial pieces in this urban centre.

In the Evangelical cemetery of Sebeş, an intervention was carried out on a funerary monument, following the necessary steps for the conservation of the stone support², and on other monuments, especially cleaning tests were carried out in order to propose suitable conservation and restoration proposals.

² The funerary monument is still in the process of conservation and restoration, as the steps required to strengthen and stabilize the support are delicate and the precarious state of conservation of the monument requires special attention. The upper acroterium of the obelisk-type monument (an urn decorated with the folds of a veil) showed a series of physico-mechanical deteriorations at the time of dismantling, which were extremely harmful to the rock from which it was made (sedimentary rock), and it is now in the restoration laboratory undergoing consolidation and will subsequently be reassembled. The

As far as the funerary monuments in rural cemeteries are concerned, in addition to scanning the oldest monuments and epigraphic transliteration, which adds a unique touch to the research³, the investigations have included tests on the deterioration of the monuments, identification of the rocks from which they are made⁴, as well as analysis of the best way to clean the pieces. The funerary monuments were selected from the historical areas of the cemeteries, opting for the oldest grave *markers*, focusing on different typologies and different rock supports, thus adapting the technical operations according to the degradation and the nature of the rocks, elements that can be the basis of complex technical documentation on conservation and restoration proposals within a large restoration or classification project of historical cemeteries⁵.

The use of 3D models of the pieces, made by structured light scanning and photogrammetry, has been extremely useful in the case of epigraphic research and transliteration of epitaphs, the results of this research being in themselves an original component of the work, carried out with the help of specialists in the fields⁶ as well as speakers of the languages in which the inscriptions were written, for the best possible transliteration and translation of the inscriptions. Aerial photographs also played an important role in marking the cemeteries and cemetery boundaries in the territory. Also marked (either on the aerial photographs or on the plan carried out) was the location of the pieces considered important for this doctoral thesis.

Although the research has only focused on the historical parts of cemeteries, the general evolution of such a space, which has also been observed throughout the analysis of the subject, may reflect a number of social elements of the community to which such an ancient place belongs. In addition to the temporal placement of the beginning of the burial site, which certifies the beginning of the establishment of a religious community in

advantage of the restoration work was that the support was pre-consolidated and cleaned (which facilitated the transliteration of the inscription).

³ Especially in the case of the Jewish Cemetery in Vințu de Jos, epigraphic research on Hebrew inscriptions is the most delicate.

⁴ Analysis carried out based on comparisons made based on microscopic photographs by comparison with such rocks certified by analysis bulletins.

⁵ The desire to classify historical cemeteries exists, first of all, in the case of the Jewish cemetery in Alba Iulia.

⁶ On this occasion I must especially thank Lucian Herscovici, Claudiu Stoian, Zsolt Kovacs, Istvan Barabas, David Sipos, Mordechai Fridman and Alb Katalin and Ingrid Lehel.

a given space, the evolution of the cemetery can also reflect the impact of society on the community in question and its integration into the social framework.

The use of certain typologies of funerary monuments at the beginning of a cemetery's existence shows specific characteristics of the use of tombstones, while the use of common typologies and the diversification of these categories of pieces can provide us with an overall picture of the cultural and artistic interferences and the social evolution of a religious community. The integration of the religious community into the social order of the time can be distinguished by the adoption of elements taken from other communities and this can be visible in the newer areas of a cemetery, particularly from the late 19th century onwards.

The unique character of cemeteries is perhaps most striking in the case of the Jews, where maintaining the integrity of a cemetery, with the prohibition of disturbing burial sites makes these spaces provide a range of valuable information for the community. Also, the evolution over time of the typologies of the burial pieces, much more gradual and slower than in the case of other religious communities, makes it possible to get a clear picture of the traditional Jewish way of life. However, once the Jews adopted the fashion of the time, the typologies of funerary objects became diversified and reflected, for example, the architectural influences of the time extremely well.

The types of monuments are much more diversified in the case of the other denominations mentioned, but they overlap with what we find also in the newer (19th century) areas of Jewish cemeteries.

The stones used are another feature that defines the social nuance of a religious community. The diverse nature of the rocks and their quality reflect the social status of the deceased. In comparison, in the Evangelical cemeteries mainly the high economic level of the buried persons can be observed, the rocks being extremely diverse and of higher quality. Although rocks of various kinds are also found in Jewish and Reformed cemeteries, their presence in Evangelical cemeteries is much earlier, while in the other cemeteries mentioned they are much later. Also, the frequency of the use of good-quality rock memorials is much higher in Evangelical cemeteries than in the other examples.

However, it was concluded that the rock most used for the creation of funerary monuments⁷ is a sedimentary rock of local origin, the raw material most readily available being that in the vicinity of the localities. Thus, according to the petrographic analyses carried out, the most frequently used stone in the construction of funerary monuments was white-yellowish limestone, which is extremely easy to obtain and process, as well as the most accessible in terms of cost manufacture in the case of stone workshops. At the beginning of the 20th century and in the following period, special monuments began to be commissioned very often from workshops in other neighbouring localities⁸ or even from workshops abroad, mainly in Hungary. There are, however, cases in which we have funerary monuments that were made by reusing rubble stone from other constructions. One such case was found in the Jewish cemetery in Alba Iulia, where one of the monuments was made using rubble stone that had been ornamented in some parts (Jewish Cemetery Alba Iulia M 42). Unfortunately, the epitaph is no longer legible to date the commemorative piece.

Recalling the Evangelical cemeteries, another feature of the funerary monuments here is the neat manner of the epitaph. Although the epitaph is sparser in description and gives basic details about the deceased, the more carefully carved and artistically more nuanced manner of lettering than in the other cases highlights a touch of specificity to the monuments in the cemeteries mentioned. However, the mentioned manner in which the text was written was also frequently used in the 19th century for Jewish and Reformed funerary monuments.

Another peculiarity of the inscriptions is the language used: while the Evangelicals and Reformed retain their original language, i.e. German and Hungarian, things gradually change for the Jews. Thus, as time goes by, bilingual inscriptions appear, depending on the community they belonged to. Hungarian inscriptions appear as well as inscriptions dubbed in German. While initially the inscription appeared only in Hebrew, the Latin characters used in dubbed inscriptions from the 19th century onwards made it easier to identify the name of the deceased buried and to date the monument, i.e. to recognise the date of death.

⁷ Although to a lesser percentage in the case of Evangelical cemeteries.

⁸ As is the case of Sibiu.

With regard to the epitaph, while in the case of the Evangelicals and Reformed, simpler texts appear, in the case of the Jews the social position of the deceased is often given by the inscription, as well as the paternal affiliation, which makes it easier to identify the kinship ties of the deceased, whereas in the case of the other denominations, only the family name (non-existent in the case of the Jews in the vast majority of cases) reflects the kinship of those buried there.

The documentation has dealt with funerary monuments in terms of their connection to the epitaph, but has also looked at the symbolism of the monument, and this relationship is of particular significance. Turning to the symbolism used in funerary art, there are concrete examples where this symbolism can provide details about the deceased buried there, with reference to the place in society. This can be seen both in Jewish cemeteries, where the position in the religious community is often signalled, and in Reformed or Evangelical cemeteries where the graves of people useful to society (priests, scholars, teachers, physicians, craftsmen, and so on) are marked.

A special feature of the Jewish cemetery in Alba Iulia is the existence of anepigraphic funerary pieces, oriented both vertically and horizontally. These were a mystery at the beginning of the research, the latest investigations certifying the fact that they practically mark graves, existing and found in the burial register as well as marked on the cemetery map, but which do not provide us with any stylistic detail nor the possibility of the existence of an epigraphic text providing details about those buried in those places. However, it can be assumed that the burials may belong to people who were considered unworthy of society and placed in that area of the cemetery. However, this statement remains only a presumption, as the vertical anepigraphic burial pieces were placed among those with inscriptions. Also, one of the anepigraphic tombstones is located in the immediate vicinity of the Rabbis's area, in the vicinity of the burial place of Rabbi Ezekiel Paneth.

Also with regard to the burial place of the deceased, a defining aspect of Jewish cemeteries is the positioning of the dead randomly, with no connection to relatives, with small exceptions where fathers are buried next to their children if the date of death is close. There are also cases where the marking of these burials is done by double graves.

In contrast, often in other denominations, the husband and wife are buried in the same place, with either a single grave *marker* or a doubled one.

The thesis's primary conclusion points to, through examples of good practice in the restoration of stone funerary monuments, the imminent need for preservation and the obligation of intervention towards the conservation and stabilisation of the support from which funerary monuments are made, regardless of religion or the nature of the monument, for the durability over time of such valuable information identified more easily following interventions through technical restoration processes or through ways of digitising tomb pieces. The conservation and restoration of commemorative monuments is the basis of their longevity and perfectly complements the research approach, which is often hampered by the passage of time and the poor state of conservation of the objects in question.