Roman adornments discovered in funeral context from the Provinces Moesia Inferior and Dacia

Roman jewellery represents a category of artifacts that combines material with spiritual value. These pieces are characterized by a diversity of forms, in which the decoration transforming the adornments of the ancient craftsmen into the works of art. They appear in the funeral contexts as evidence about burial rites and as clues relating to the defunct: gender, religion, status symbol.

Roman armies penetrate in the Balkan area towards the end of the 3rd century B.C. by the Illyrian and Macedonian wars and continued in the 2nd and the 1st centuries B.C. through expeditions organized against the barbarian of the Lower Danube area until their conquest. As a result of the Roman advance in the Balcans and towards the Danube mouths at the beginning of the 1st century A.D. was founded the province of Moesia[1]. After the formation of the new province the northern limes remained a sensitive area due to the incursions of the dacians and their allies. In this context and as a result of the wars occurring in the 85/86 A.D. against the Dacians the emperor Domitian divided the province in tow: Moesia Superior and Moesia Inferior.

The new province of Moesia Inferior was bounded to the North by the Danube, in the East by the Black Sea Coast, from the of Danube Mouths to Mesambria, and in the western part the limit of this province have reached the valley of the river Ciabrus (Tibrița, Bulgaria). In the south the border was drawn roughly midway between the river Danube and the mountains Haemus (Balcani), with some changes to the end of the 2nd century A.D. when the boundary is shifted to the south and the towns Nicolopis-ad-Istrum and Marcianopolis, incorporated at that time in the province of Thrace, are integrated into the territory of Moesia Inferior[2].

As a result of more frequent attacks of the dacians together their allies over the province of Moesia Inferior, Emperor Trajan decided at the beginning of the century to conquer the territory ruled by Decebal. After two military campaigns carried the first one in 101-102 and the second one 106-107 A.D. a new roman province of was founded. Province of Dacia was situated to the north from the traditional Roman Danube frontier established in the 1st century A.D. The new province included in its boundaries most of the Banat, Transylvania (without south-east area), Oltenia and west Muntenia[3].

The roman conquest stimulated first of all the urban development by revitalizing the former Greek fortresses (in the territory of Moesia Inferior) as well as through the establishment of new towns made after Roman model. The jewels found in the necropolis of cities and in the rural cemeteries appear as a evidence of the degree of the civilization of the tow provinces as well as testimonies of Roman provincial art and of spiritual and material interference between different populations of the Roman Empire.

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[1]Petolescu 2010, 71-72

[2] Petolescu 2000, 45; Boteva 1996, 173-176

[3] Petolescu 2010, 165-166

I. From the antiquarians to the scientific research

Thanks to their value (material and stylistic) jewels of roman era came early to the attention of antiquities amateur, of the members of royal or ecclesiastical courts, where they are usually reused. Thus precious and semi-precious stones became ornaments for crowns or chalices[4]. In the year 1577 in Wallachia Dobromir, Ban al Craiovei, used a seal comprising an ancient stone carved with a female portrait[5].

The interest for ancient adornments was stimulated by the new archaeological excavations from the 19th century. In this period was discovered many ancient objects and among them the jewellery were occupying a very important place. Join the antiquaries from the high society of the Europe from the 15th century to the 19th century a important role was played by the Jewellers from the 19th century such as members of Castelani family. In the same century in the Balkan region the interest for antic artifacts has developed as a consequence of contacts with Western Europe. An important role, in this development, was played by foreign officers detached in the area during the russo-turkish-austrian wars.

In this context take place in many sites (even if in a rudimentary form) the first archaeological excavations. Now are discovered many antic objects described in different journals. For example the Russian officer V. Blaremberg, settled in Wallachia, is considered today one of the first authors of archaeological items because he wrote the description of archaeological research made by his brother-in-law M. Ghica[6]. These artifacts found with these occasions, devoid of context, sometimes appear in private collections or are deposited in the National Museum of Antiquities officially founded in 1864 by the Al. I. Cuza. The nucleus of this museum was represented by the Mavros collection, with about 4.0000 objects, followed by those of: prince D. Ghica, C. Bolliac and D. Papazoglu[7]. The last one, as a result of several travels and archaeological research at *Romula* (Reşca, jud. Olt) and *Sucidava* (jud. Olt), was able to set up a personal collections published in 1864 in: *Muzeul Papazoglu*[8].

At the beginning of the 20th century the scientific research of the ancient ornaments is developing alongside the antiquities market. The study goes beyond aesthetic, the new trend focusing, where is possible, on the contextualisation of objects, on the reconstitution of the sets of jewellery and the detection of the spot held by them in the ancient costume, with changes over time. Because of this consideration, the jewellery can be studied: typological, from the point of view of art historians, processing technique, without leaving aside their functions: magico-religious, social, or fashion.

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[4] Fortini-Brown 2007, 309
[5] Vîrtosu 1950, 147
[6] Tudor 1978, 14
[7] Opriş 2003, 81
[8] Papazoglu 1864

II. The manufacture of Roman jewellery

In the manufacture of antique ornaments were used various materials from the common or precious metals to the glass, bone, amber and sometimes even gagat. Between these gold was the preferred material for Roman jewellery and due its properties: brilliance, durability, malleability was a state monopoly. Noble metal found in the river sands or veins was commonly used in the adornments making in the form of sheets and/or wire.

Without any rule in creating ornaments according to the cosmopolitan character of the Roman Empire the models include a vast repertory in which the refinement of execution was given by ancient craftsmen. Their outcome was often composed by small pieces. The monotony of metal was broken by decoration obtained by hammering (repoussée or hammering over a high relief form), engraving, open-work (a common technique in the third century A.D. which has become very popular in the Byzantine gold-working), filigree technique or more rarely granulation.

A constant in the decoration of roman jewels was beaded wire, widely used in the ornamentation of earrings, medallions and rings. This element had the appearance of a striated wire, first attested in the $14^{th} - 15^{th}$ centuries B.C. in Egypt[9]. Beaded wire was obtained, as shown in the description of the Theophilus Presbyter, with two "tools". The first one called *organarium*, is a system composed by two iron elements a lower and a upper one both with inner surface provided with small grooves with holes in the middle[10]. It appears that the tool work's like a press in which is introduced a wire with a circular cross section to obtain a relief like a beaded wire. The second one described by Theophilius is called *lima inferius fossa*, how look's like a file (hemispherical in the top while the lower part is provided along its entire length with a longitudinal strip)[11].

III. Adornments in Roman Empire

The adornments revealing important elements related to the social status or religiosity of the owners. The vast majority are pieces with a fragile look, accepted as part of the costume worn by women and less by men. In funerary context usually are discovered jewellery sets consisted by pieces of precious or common metals. An example in this direction is a set of jewellery found in a tomb from *Romula* (Reşca, jud. Olt). This includes: a pair of gold wire earrings, a necklace of various beads (metal, glass, gilded glass, amber), a silver *lunulla*, three bronze bracelets and two rings[12]. In this inventory is distinguishing the emergence of pendant which besides other decorative purpose it appears with apotropaic functions, associated with fertility was given at birth and generally worn by women or children[13].

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[9] Tamla, Varkki 2009, 37
[10] Theophilus III. IX
[11] Theophilus III. X
[12] Mircea Negru în *Aurul şi Argintul*, 480
[13] Pinckernelle 2007, 47-49

Sometimes the using of adornments pass away from the decorative function being used in healing or magic purposes. In this category of artifacts can be included the jewels in the form of Hercules Knot. With an elaborate design these pieces surprising by the refinement of the decoration that gives to the objects distinction. The Hercule's Knot is linked to the legend in which the Hero after the killing the lion of Nemea bears his scalp with the paws caught in a knot under the chin[14]. Works of art of the antiquity these items are distinguished by multiple symbols for example: apotropaic concepts against the force of evil, the symbol of fertility and protective functions during birth[15].

IV. Adornments found in funerary context in the provinces of Lower Moesia and Dacia. Types of jewels discovered in the tombs.

The crowns, remarkable by their softness, were taken into the Roman world from the Hellenistic period. Crafted of thin foil of gold or bronze gilded or silvered was decorated with ribbons after Etruscan model. They were originally used for rewarding athletes at sacred games[16], while in the army were used like military insignia[17]. However the crowns are used frequently in the burial rituals, they being found often in tombs. Their presence in the funerary contexts has been interpreted as offerings and as a crowning of the deceased which ended his life in a glorious way[18].

Three types of crowns were indentified

Type I: represented by pieces made from leaves, defined through fragility. This category has been divided into two variants depending on how the leaves were assembled.

Type II: comprising the items with more solid aspect made by metal strips decorated with precious stones, leaves or flowers. Such crown was discovered in a female tomb from the tumular necropolis of *Callatis* (Mangalia, Constanța).

Type III: represented by a separate category consisting of hair ornaments crafted of metal plates, usually decorated with precious or semi-precious stones and pendants.

Earrings (*inuares*) with oriental origins are the most widespread forms of roman jewels worn by women in a variety of shapes: with or without pendants, monochrome or polychrome, in the most cases with an obvious decorative role. After the manner of fasten in the ear were indentified two types subdivided into several variants and sub-variants, depending on their composition.

Type I: consists of earrings made from o hoop with open-end or closed-end with a hook and a loop. In the light of changes of the system of fastening and decorative elements were established seven variants.

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[14] Popović 1998, 77; Puttock 2012, 112; Pfrommer, Towne Markus 2001, 22
[15] Popović 1998, 77; Pfrommer, Towne Markus 2001, 21
[16] Plinius XXI(1) 4-XXI (1) 6
[17] Maxfield 1981, 67-84
[18] Plinius XXI. (8) 11; Hadriani Augusti et Epicteti Philosophi, 24-25

Type II is given by the pieces that fasten in the ear through a hook simple or in the shape of "S". After their appearance were indentified nine variants.

Necklaces (*monilae*) were a very popular ornament in antiquity, like a symbol of feminine elegance, were adopted in roman world from the oriental fashion[19]. Chains, like in the funerary portraits, were usually worn in a variable number, so we can meet more voluminous pieces with more fragile items and/or variants of smaller sizes combined with longer necklaces wrapped several times around the neck[20]. According to the links shapes the assemblage pattern or after ring aspect of the *torques,* were established two types.

Type I is given by the chains manufactured from the wire links with five variants.

Type II consist of the *torques* with a heavier structure made from one round wire or more twisted wires with three variants.

In connection with the appearance and functionality of the pendants have settled several types divided into two groups: the first one is compos by the talismans in the form of: *lunulla*, *bulla* or Hercules's Club, and the second one given by the medallions adorned with figures in relief or with different stones, glass or even coins. Many medallions incorporated in their mount engraved stones, on which the images suggest mythological stories in such cases the items acquire a religious function.

Bracelets (*armilae*) were commonly used by women, by effeminate men and sometimes in the army like military insignia, *dona miliaria[21]*. In the first centuries of the Roman era are known several types of bracelets made of wire or metal strips, and depending on the technique of processing the items can be classified in three major categories: those made of wire (type I with three variants established after fastening system), those made of metal strips (type II) and beginning with 3rd century cant be observed more massive bracelets manufactured from metal bars (type III). Last of these are crafted of several elements: the main segment is composed from a bar over witch are soldered with thin foils decorated in the open-work technique, which confer to the metal the look of broken embroidery. Their use became popular during the 3rd century A.D, perhaps the second half of it, and continued to be used in the 4th century A.D. In our work this model is represented by a single bracelets found at *Durostorum* with analogies at *Viminacium* (Kostolac, Serbia)[22].

Rings worn by men and women, is probably the most common type of roman adornments, with symbolic or functional purpose and not at least with a decorative one. Depending on their feature have been established for the pieces discovered in burial contexts from the provinces of Moesia Inferior and Dacia five types subdivided into several variants.

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[19] Higgins 1980, 179
[20] Ruseva-Slokoska 1991, 44-50; Ignatiadou, Tsigarida 2008, 39-41; Deppert Lippitz 1993, 108
[21] Maxfield 1981, 89-91
[22] Popović 2005, 97, 99 Fig. 2

Type I: the items without stone with three variants

Type II: pieces with plate fitted with an ornamental stone, without box

Type III: the rings with chaton

Type IV: the rings made of an ellipsoid hoop with a massive aspect and the outer surface decorated with grooves, which became popular since the 3rd century A.D. and were used including in the 4th century A.D.

Type V: pieces with a hoop made from a strip of gold with three variants.

V. Iconographic representations on the jewellery of Lower Moesia and Dacia

Often adornments (especially rings) are decorated with precious stones engraved with the religious motifs. Among them a first place was held by the *dii consentes*, with Capitoline triad: Jupiter, Iuno and Minerva, followed by oriental deities. By indentifying the pieces from the tombs can be observed that are predominant representation depicting figures of deities which were in connection underworld and with the journey of the deceased soul toward the spirit world.

Between them appears Hercules which according to the legend he was going in to the underworld and after he fought with Cerberus and defeat it, Hercules became also a god. This episode appears on the sarcophagi, but is represented and in the jewellery iconography, like it is and a medallion discovered in a burial from the necropolis of *Drobeta*[23]. Another personage is *Hermes psychopompos*[24]. About it is believed that he had the quality to guide the moribund in the after-life world, so the good is characterized by the journeys on the dark roads. Between this deities, in roman glyptic, appears and Thanatos[25] the God of death showed and on a brooch discovered in 1966 in Orşova (*Dierna*).

One of the most diverse and numerous types of jewellery found in roman burials is represented by earrings (reality observed and in our catalogue). Therefore from a total of 406 pieces included in the catalogue (individually numbered, including pairs) 171 from 294 pieces, from Lower Moesia, are earrings and 50 from 112 pieces from Dacia is given by earrings. Higher number of adornments found in Lower Moesia can be put in the connection with funeral customs existing in the Greek colonies and with the reminiscence of "Thraco-Hellenised culture". The latter aspect can be detected after burial type, *bustum* with the pit carved in steps usually covered by tumulus constructions[26]. A feature of the burials in this area Roman era is also the construction of the graves with bricks as receiver of cinerary remains. Therefore the adornments found in funerary context helps, through their materiality in connection with other objects, to knowledge the religious beliefs as well funerary customs perpetuated in Roman Empire.

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[23] Antonescu 1923, 14-15
[24] Bărbulescu 2003, 282
[25] Tudor 1967, 219 nr 44, fig. 5/4
[26] Mihaela Simion în Alburnus Maior II 2004, 77-81

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