



ULBS

Universitatea "Lucian Blaga" din Sibiu

**UNIVERSITY „LUCIAN BLAGA” OF SIBIU FACULTY OF SOCIAL AND HUMAN
SCIENCES, DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
DOCTORAL SCHOOL ULBS**

**Typology of the ornaments and clothing at the Lower
Danube (VII-XI centuries AD.)
- SUMMARY -**

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PROF. UNIV. DR. HABIL. IOAN-MARIAN ȚIPLIC

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SUMMARY

Keywords: *Dobruja, 7th-11th centuries AD, funeral rite and ritual, necropolis, Christianity, metal objects.*

The study of metal objects from the 7th-11th centuries AD discovered in the provinces along the Danube is found in the literature, but the level of knowledge on this topic is much lower, if we compare it with other studies related to the period of the early Middle Ages at the mouth of the Danube. Many of the existing studies perpetuate a schematic view of the typological evolution of metal pieces, especially those of wear and adornment.

This paper systematizes and synthesizes available data on the history and importance of the early Middle Ages from the Lower Danube in the context of the province of Scythia Minor, the great migrations and the Byzantine return in the 9th-11th centuries, in terms of metal objects used for garments and as adornments and discovered in the medieval graves of Dobruja. The approach of the paper is a critique one, based on historical sources as well as on the results of archaeological research. The information obtained through the various means, put together, manages to paint a picture in which it can be seen the important role that cities and settlements in this area have played throughout history. Formidable fortresses, like the other famous settlements of the Byzantine Empire, they strongly defended its interests, being also important centres of spread of Byzantine civilization, in a geographical area that has always been a place of pilgrimage for many peoples of the early medieval world. The consequences of the economic development achieved in the Danube' south regions whose material culture is Byzantine in the 10th-11th centuries, will manifest on much larger geographical areas. They will be fully highlighted in many fields of material culture in Wallachia (Țara Românească) in the following centuries¹.

Last but not least, the archaeological research of the last two decades has brought many new contributions to the knowledge of the historical processes carried out here. The synthesis of the information available so far will be an important working tool for researchers of the period and will be able to provide a starting point for understanding the complex historical process of the area proposed for study.

We specify the fact that in the elaboration of the paper it was used unpublished material from the archaeological research carried out in Dobruja' sites, but also the material published in various papers, referring to the analysed period.

¹ VÎLCEANU 1972, p. 415.

So far, there has been no paper that includes a detailed study, a catalogue of metal pieces used for garments and as adornments, a correct analysis that gives explanations about the symbolic and practical role that these objects had.

The paper comprises four chapters.

Chapter I is dedicated to the objectives of the study, but also to the methodological tools chosen to substantiate the approach.

The history of the research but also the critique perspective of the data analysis, represents the subject of the second chapter. Also, here it is presented a statistic of the specialized bibliography dedicated to the theme of the study, as well as to the Dobruja's territory. This chapter is structured in the form of a historiographical analysis between 1949 and 2021.

A very important chapter is the third chapter, in which are presented the political-military and administrative situation in Dobruja, during the 7th-11th centuries. This chapter, in turn, includes three other subchapters that refer to: the administrative organization of the Dobruja's territory in 7th-11th centuries, the military organization of Dobruja in 7th-11th centuries and the spread of Christianity on the Lower Danube. The latter, in turn, includes three subchapters: Christianisation of the funeral ritual in the 7th-8th centuries, basilicas and cemeteries in Dobruja (9th-11th centuries) and the funeral inventory in a Christian context: Between custom and regulated ritual.

The synthesis of the discoveries is developed in chapter IV, dedicated to the metal objects used for garments and as adornments discovered in funerary contexts. It has been divided into two subchapters: garments and adornments, then followed by the final considerations as well as the catalogue of metal objects.

For any beginning of research, a compact structure must be outlined in one form or another, this being reflected in the working methodology which is closely related to the proposed objectives.

The methodology includes all the approaches, tools and methods related to the preparation of the study on adornments and garments.

This paper fits into a positivist scientific current, approaching a rather complex and niche topic, being a working tool for the future from the perspective of the rich material it collects, structures, typifies and frames chronologically. This approach has the role of outlining a qualitative work and not necessarily a quantitative one.

Prior to the elaboration methods, the territorial and chronological area of the research are established. The techniques used are diverse, focused on the catalogue. Based on this fact,

the scientific work has a deductive approach, and the combination with the comparative method using both national and international specialized bibliography outlines a broad and rich vision on the subject.

The paper is based on activities specific to the archaeological field, locating pieces and contexts, creating a database compatible with geo-computer programs, analyzing the multiculturalism and diversity of populations in the studied territory and the symbolic basis of objects in the funeral ritual, unwritten law between paganism and Christianity.

The typology of the material is the result of research activities specific to the study of the archaeological heritage, the description of the pieces and the elaboration of standard sheets for each object, as well as the reading of the specialized bibliography.

The constitution of the catalog with metal pieces will include:

- data about the place of discovery of the piece, referring strictly to the objects identified in funerary contexts;
- description of the piece: shape, decoration, dimensions, cultural framing;
- bibliography: unpublished or published with the author's name, year of publication, study in which it was published, etc.
- the place where the piece was (if possible);
- illustration: photograph or drawing (if possible).

This work is dedicated to metal adornments and clothing ornaments, discovered in the context of the necropolises of medieval Dobruja in the 7th-11th centuries. The study systematizes and synthesizes the published materials, by developing a detailed typology of the most popular types of earrings, rings, bracelets, metal adornments and clothing ornaments. The paper then continues with the analysis of the development of different types of jewellery by specifying the chronological and geographical distribution frameworks of each of these types and their value as an ethno-cultural indicator.

The research is based on materials from different sources. Most of them are from specialized publications as well as from an unpublished lot discovered in 2011 in the necropolis from Valu lui Traian, Constanța County. The geographical area of the research includes the regions of medieval Romania and Bulgaria located in the territory of Dobruja. From this area were selected the objects discovered in the necropolis, as well as those found in isolated graves.

The systematization of metallic objects offers a good starting point for tracing the dynamic cultural processes in medieval Dobruja. Ornamental pieces made of bronze alloys have become very popular among the ordinary population. Some of them very carefully imitated the shape and decoration of the models from precious materials. Such cultural phenomena,

characteristic of high social groups, began to penetrate the ordinary population and gave society a homogeneous cultural expression. Jewellery from the medieval era was not only a luxury item, but also a feature of social status. This determined their wider semantics as well as their importance in different rites marking the transition between life cycles (the example of weddings)². At the highest level, the ornament was given new features that turned it into a royalty of the leader. The treasure from Preslav holds an essential place among the discoveries of the Christian period. These are the most luxurious ornaments of this period ever found, not only in the old Bulgarian culture, but also throughout Europe, and demonstrate the high level of jewellers' art³. The jewellery from Preslav finds its closest analogy with objects usually associated with the ones made in the emperor's workshops in Constantinople, where the sophisticated technique of enamelling was preserved and applied. Although they are not the subject of our study, it is important to remember them as an analogy. The discovery of objects with a similar decoration around the first Bulgarian capital shows that glazed luxury jewellery came to be used by the family of the Bulgarian ruler and the aristocracy of the Bulgarian capital in the 8th-10th centuries⁴.

The study of medieval ornaments and clothing provides an important date for following the cultural and economic processes of the old Bulgarian society and the peoples who lived on Dobruja's territory. At the same time, the study of places of worship and ecclesiastical monuments provides us with a cultural context of influences and interactions, at a time when religious and political changes have left their mark on the population of this area.

The brooches are quite rare in funerary contexts and, with the end of the sixth century, they lost their importance they had during the previous centuries, being replaced by other fasteners.

Buckles, the second category of material studied, play an important role in the fashion of the 6th-7th centuries, being divided into several types, having as a distinctive mark, the fixed or movable plate decorated in various ways⁵. Having one of the largest weights among the studied objects, after the earrings, the buckles were discovered both in settlements and in graves. In the funerary setting, they are generally positioned in the basin area. For the most part, buckles appear to be attributed to men's graves.

² GRIGOROV 2007, p. 107.

³ GRIGOROV 2007, p. 107.

⁴ GRIGOROV 2007, p. 107.

⁵ DAMIAN 2015, p. 141.

The appliques were used for both the aesthetic and the practical role, offering a fairly wide range of typology. Having the role of decorating and strengthening the straps and belt pieces, the appliques were made by casting the material used, usually bronze or iron⁶. They fall into several categories: circular, oval, heart-shaped, cordiform and varia. Having often small dimensions, they can be simple or with various ornaments, made by incisions of different geometric shapes or small embossed patterns.

The ends of the belt had the role, like the previous pieces, both to beautify the belt band and to provide a correct posture of the belts. Because they were placed at the free end of the belt, the ends, due to their weight, held the belt straight. Such pieces are common in military environments, being used for a long time⁷. The two belt ends presented in this paper were discovered in a burial grave in Runcu. The grave was attributed to an Avar warrior from the 7th century⁸.

Hair or temple rings are often found in graves, located to the right or left of the skull. These small rings could be used to beautify the wearer's ear, to adorn the hair or for the ribbons/headbands which the hair was attached/braided with⁹.

The largest share of discoveries is represented by earrings of different types. The most common type is earrings made of a simple link. They were used both to adorn the ears and to adorn the articles of clothing. As a chronological extent, we can say that they were the "survivors" of the transition from paganism to Christianity, being objects too insignificant to disturb the rite of passage or to change very much over time. Discoveries in the necropolis show that the earrings were worn mainly by girls and young women but also by men. In the pagan necropolises are found in a percentage of 2-6% of the graves. An important thing to note is that only one earring is found in most pagan graves.

The earrings were made in different ways. These include the technique of pressing, granulating, filigree or chiselling. Execution required some special attention, and the craftsmen who processed the materials showed skill and experience. Most of the pieces were made in Byzantine workshops in the Balkans¹⁰.

Depending on the shape, decoration and technique, the rings are divided into nine types. They were worn by women and children, less often by men. "Men's rings" were more solid and relatively large in diameter. The rings are more often found in graves than in

⁶ TOMEGEA 2011-2012, p. 211.

⁷ PETCU 2015, p. 76-77.

⁸ TALMATCHI et. al. 2020, p. 109-110.

⁹ FIEDLER 1992, p. 171.

¹⁰ TEODOR 1981, p. 68.

settlements and were most often designed to be worn by women on the fourth finger. During the pagan period, open rings spread widely. Most of the discoveries are made in fortifications where we have evidence of the presence of Byzantine garrisons at the end of the 10th-11th centuries. In addition to other jewellery, the rings were considered objects with a strong apotropaic character. Rings have played an important role in wedding ceremonies as a wedding sign. There are data that show that much of the Bulgarian elite borrowed from the Byzantine emperors the tradition of giving rings as a sign of vassality. This was the function of the gold ring found in Pliska, whose engraving says, "*These rings are given by the archon (ruler)*"¹¹.

Bronze bracelets were perpetuated from antiquity to the Middle Ages and even in the modern period¹². Among the various models is a bracelet with zoomorphic heads, illustrating a snake or bird's head¹³, a similar analogy being found in Dinogetia¹⁴, where there are three other types of bracelets: single rod, twisted wire and bracelets of sheet metal¹⁵.

The silver bracelets in the studied area can be found in Dinogetia¹⁶ and Issacea¹⁷, these specimens being dated to the 11th century¹⁸.

The cross, an object with a strong Christian symbolism, is one of the fundamental signs of this religion, along with the circle and the square. In the symbolic frame of geometric figures, the circle occupies an important place, next to the cross, the square and the triangle. It is the symbol of perfection, homogeneity, of eternal motion that has neither beginning nor end.

In Dobruja there are, in different ways, many representations of the symbol of the cross. Whether we are talking about the chalk incised crosses at the cave churches from Murfatlar or from the caves from Dumbrăveni¹⁹, or about the medallion type crosses found all over Dobruja, they have a deep religious connotation, being also very important from the stylistic and artistic point of view. Representations with Jesus, Mary or sketches of biblical scenes are defining for Byzantine art²⁰.

¹¹ GRIGOROV 2007, p. 104.

¹² CORBU 2004, p. 179.

¹³ DIACONU 1972, p. 148, fig. 60, 2.

¹⁴ BARNEA 1967, p. 291, fig. 172, 10.

¹⁵ BARNEA 1967, p. 290.

¹⁶ BARNEA 1967, p. 290, p. 291, fig. 172, 17-18.

¹⁷ VASILIU 1984, p. 133, IV, 39, pl. V, 5.

¹⁸ BARNEA 1967, p. 290, VASILIU 1984, p. 133.

¹⁹ DAMIAN 2015, p. 146.

²⁰ DAMIAN 2015, p. 146.

Reliquary crosses, among the most widespread types in Dobruja, can have various representations. Those with Jesus Christ in the scene of the crucifixion are found at Valu lui Traian²¹, Hârşova²², Nufăru²³, Oltina²⁴. They are attributed to the 10th-12th centuries and are found in the territories under the influence of the Byzantine Empire²⁵.

Bells are found in fairly small numbers in the studied necropolises. They were identified in the graves of children from Istria-Capul Viilor²⁶ and Balchik²⁷. Although the bell itself appears to be part of a complex of harness objects, its inclusion in the funerary frame, next to the arms, leads us to believe that they were used or reused as toys.

Only two hooks are presented in this paper, and both were discovered in Valu lui Traian's necropolis. The first, composed of a bent bronze wire that passes through another piece (probably torn from the object it hung), and the second, cast. Hooks are common objects that could be used on most metal objects.

Of all the jewellery, diadems have a pronounced representative character. This type of jewellery was widespread in antiquity. The number of diadems in the Middle Ages is relatively small. Probably people used their equivalents made of perishable material, such as fabrics or leather, being later decorated with embroidery²⁸. In Dobruja, diadems are very rare in funerary contexts, the only specimen being known in the necropolis from Satu Nou²⁹. Considering the specific semantic load of jewellery, we can assume that diadems were used both during ceremonies and in exposing the social status.

The applique discovered at Valu lui Traian in 2011 in the M86 grave is one of the most interesting pieces of this study. Discovered in a man's tomb, about 30 cm from the pelvis, the applique is a reused piece of harness, which was attached to the horse's forehead³⁰. Quite large, cast in bronze and then processed, the applique is in the shape of a leaf with semi-rounded edges. On the top plaque it has incisions that seem to be used to be sewn on the skin, having imprinted the traces of the material which it was sewn with. In its center, there

²¹ CUSTUREA 1999, p. 303.

²² MĂNUCU-ADAMEŞTEANU 1992, p. 349.

²³ MĂNUCU-ADAMEŞTEANU 1984, p. 379, p. 728/ pl. III/4.

²⁴ CUSTUREA, PARASCHIV-TALMAŢCHI, 2009, p. 486

²⁵ ŞTEFAN, *et. al.* 1967, p. 362, CUSTUREA, PARASCHIV-TALMAŢCHI 2009, p. 486

²⁶ FIEDLER 1992, p. 433, Taf 17, 6.

²⁷ DONCEVA-PETKOVA, APOSTOLOV, RUSSEVA 2016 p. 201, Taf. CXXI/2.

²⁸ GRIGOROV 2007, p. 105.

²⁹ MITREA 1961, p. 557, Fig. 6/3.

³⁰ KRUMOVA 2001, p. 67, fig.3.

is a decorative incision, surrounded by a vegetal decoration. At the bottom are two rivets that help hold the object by the belt.

This type of harness seems to be attributed to the Pechenegs, who settled between the Danube and the Balkan Mountains, preferring the Black Sea coast³¹.

The study of medieval ornaments is an important step in understanding and describing the dynamic mode of economic and religious processes, which developed in the old society of the 7th-11th centuries.

As it can be seen, the number of ornaments and clothing ornaments made of metal and discovered in the funerary contexts of Dobruja is relatively small (335 presented in this paper). This is the result of political and religious instability in the area, but also economic. People reused all the materials they had access to and only a small part of the population allowed themselves to be deprived of certain objects in order to deposit them as offerings in graves. Certainly, these objects reflect the social status, even if the materials from which they were made are not necessarily precious, the value being given to them by the power of imitation. Also, with the generalization of Christianity, they are found less often, new rules regarding the funeral ritual being imposed. Certain pagan traditions have been carried from generation to generation, receiving a new meaning, this time Christian.

In conclusion, the funerary inventory has a major importance both symbolically, religiously and socially, these characteristics being, in most cases, related to each other. The ritual began to be regulated with the burial of the dead in the space near the church walls, being considered a sacred place for the chosen, humble, who had a "clean" life, but also for the pagans who repented and chose the right side, this being generalized in the 9th century. The creation of the Christian cemetery occurs as a result of the prohibition of the mixture of pagan and Christian graves. Obviously, with the solid implementation of Christianity, the inventory decreases considerably, often being closely related to pagan manifestations. Christianity has implemented the idea that facts are important, not material goods. Taken as a whole, it is possible to make a man renounce his own beliefs in order to be integrated into society and the sacred space, but you cannot make him forget his ethnic origin and the customs carried by generations, some pagan customs being metamorphosed into Christian rituals.

³¹ KRUMOVA 2001, p. 65.

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