

A SILVER DACIAN BRACELET IN THE KEMÉNY COLLECTION

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Abstract: The antiquities collection of count Kemény József (1795–1855) at Luncani (Cluj county) also included, at a certain point, a silver spiralled Dacian bracelet with terminal plates and zoomorphic protomae, originating from Turda, of which though, nothing is known at present. The manuscripts of the Hunedoara physician Fodor András Lugosi (?–1859) preserve yet two sets of drawings and information related to this artifact, signed by Kemény József, respectively J. F. Neugebauer. Based on such data, one may recompose the image of this precious Dacian item, insofar unknown to the scientific world.

Keywords: Silver spiralled Dacian bracelet; the Dacian Kingdom period; Dacian metal-working; antiquities collections; Kemény József; Fodor András Lugosi.

Rezumat: În colecția de antichități a contelui Kemény József (1795–1855) din Luncani (jud. Cluj) s-a aflat, la un moment dat, și o brățară dacică spiralică de argint cu plăci terminale și protome zoomorfe, ce provenea de la Turda și despre a cărei soartă astăzi nu se mai știe nimic. În manuscrisele medicului hunedorean Fodor András Lugosi (?–1859) se păstrează însă două seturi de desene și informații legate de acest artefact, semnate de Kemény József, respectiv de J. F. Neugebauer. În baza acestor date se poate reconstitui imaginea acestei prețioase piese dacice, rămasă necunoscută până acum lumii științifice.

Cuvinte-cheie: brățară dacică spiralică de argint; orfevrărie dacică; epoca regatului dac; colecții de antichități; Kemény József; Fodor András Lugosi.

Famous at the time for his passion for history, count Kemény József (1795–1855) gathered at his mansion at Luncani (Cluj county) a large number of ancient objects discovered on the territory of Transylvania and copied hundreds of ancient documents from both the archives of the Transylvanian government and private archives. By early fourth decade of the 19th century, the count donated his impressive collection of documents, manuscripts and minerals in order to establish a Transylvanian museum, preserving though the collection of artifacts, which included inscriptions, coins, statues, pottery and ancient objects of every sort, from metal items to tools and weapons. During the dramatic events of 1848, the mansion at Luncani was looted and burnt¹, large part of his collection of artifacts being destroyed. The collection of manuscripts, housed today at the Academy Library, Cluj-Napoca branch (the *Kemény Fund*) includes a catalogue of inscriptions and one of coins, which the count collected over time, however none comprising the other artifacts.

Fortunately, the sheets in which some of these items were drawn and described, either by the count himself or by other individuals who have seen the collection, were

¹ Veres 1942, note 8; Bajusz 2005, I/1, 29, note 30.

gathered in a manuscript together with materials from various other sources by the physician Fodor András Lugosi (?-1859) based in Hunedoara, also an antiquities passionate and friend of the count². Most likely, Fodor also intended to publish them, however he did not succeed either. All the material he collected, originally preserved within the Erdélyi Nemzeti Múzeum under the title *Utmutató a három Dáciakban*, was later transferred to “Lucian Blaga” Central University Library of Cluj-Napoca in the “Special collections” department, where today it is grouped in eight tomes under no. 754 with the generic title *András Fodor Lugosi Kézirata [Archaeological data from Transylvania]*. Tomes I-III, drafted in Hungarian, are titled *Panoráma az archeológiai nevezetességeikkel*, tomes IV and V are in German and titled *Führer durch Siebenbürgen für Freunde vaterländischer Alterthümer in verschiedenen Teilen und Ortschaften*, resuming part of the information of the first tomes, while tomes VI-VIII include illustrations (*Abbildungen zum “Führer durch Siebenbürgen” I-III*). Among the latter, tome VIII unifies sheets and original drawings belonging to J. F. Neigebaur, M. Ackner, Fodor A., Kemény J. and others, and tomes VI-VII comprise plates drawn by certain professional drawers, who redrew the original materials in tome VIII. Dacian period information in this manuscript is much less known and used³.

Among the items drawn and described within the sheets gathered by Fodor counts a silver Dacian bracelet, multi-spiralled, with terminal plates and zoomorphic protomae, belonging to the well-known series of spiralled Dacian bracelets that today counts 31 silver specimens and possibly 24 of gold (of which only 13 retrieved)⁴. The item was inventoried in the Kemény collection, however it remained novel until present, lacking from the specialty catalogues drafted over time⁵. Nonetheless, today nothing is known of its fate.

Fodor saved two drawings of this bracelet. The first is included in tome VIII, page 26, beside other objects discovered at Turda. The drawing is at a small scale, made in crayon in a realistic manner. The helix shape of the object is accurately represented in perspective and the piece length is mentioned. The count's writing is recognizable on the plate (Pl. I; hereinafter, *drawing no. 1*). The second drawing, included in tome VIII, page 54, is at large scale and was drawn in crayon, later in ink. The spiral is represented poorly and asymmetrically by a sine curve. Based on the writing style, the sheet belonged to Consul J.F. Neigebaur (Pl. II; hereinafter, *drawing no. 2*)⁶. Both drawings record the origin of the object at Turda (“*Thorda*”) and mention their storage in count Kemény József's collection, under the inventory number 77. The two sketches were re-

² See the correspondence between the two in Ferenczi 1914.

³ Among the Dacian period researchers, only Al. Ferenczi quoted this manuscript, (Ferenczi 1937; Daicoviciu, Ferenczi 1951), which he examined in the Museum of Transylvania; two plates with drawings were firstly published by V. Wollmann in the monograph dedicated to M. Ackner (Wollmann 1982) and later taken over by Daicoviciu et alii 1989.

⁴ Spănu 2012, 62-63. Three and a half decades before, Fl. Medeleț counted only 23 sure silver specimens (Medeleț 1977, 291).

⁵ Horedt 1973; Medeleț 1974; Mărghită 1976; Medeleț 1977; Medeleț 1994; Mărghită 2008; Spănu 2012.

⁶ Both the count's elegant writing and that irregular of the consul are unmistakable. Kemény and Neigebaur had close relations; the latter copied several inscriptions from the count's collection and even wrote together with him, see IDR I, 49.

drawn and included in tome VII, the first at page 41, Tab. XLI, e (Pl. III), the other at page 47, Tab. XLVII, a (Pl. IV). Though less artistic, the original drawings are much more accurate, which is natural since they were made by individuals who have seen the object. The copies included in tome VII deform certain significant details like the shape of the flattened, decorated segment at the end of the bracelet, the shape and details of the zoomorphic protoma, the decoration of the top panel, the number of buttons on the palmettes' mid rib etc. and overlook the size noted by the count on the original drawing. Therefore, we shall make references only to the original drawings.

The two drawings clearly show that the object in the count's collection was a multi-spiralled Dacian bracelet with flattened ends decorated with zoomorphic motifs, complete by all appearances. The object had, at least in Kemény's representation (drawing no. 1), five and a half coils. The protoma, less visible in the small scale drawing, is depicted from the front in drawing no. 2, where the elongated nose of the animal and the cap with the two eyes and arcades marked by two curved lines are distinguishable. The "crest" is rendered by five rows of curved lines one on top of the other, oriented alternately, so to suggest the wavy fur of an animal. The edges of this register are decorated with the "fish back" motif.

The number of palmettes is unclear. In drawing no. 1, the representation in perspective hinders the identification of the palmettes' number; nevertheless, in the lower part one may count five. In drawing no. 2, where the ends of bracelets are represented from the front, there are five palmettes at one end and three at the other. The end with three palmettes is obviously rendered inaccurately, because the drawing space was not carefully considered from the very beginning. The drawing is disproportionate, as the drawer, who seems to have started the sketch from the page bottom⁷, drawing equally the first sine curves, made the last much wider than the others so to be able to figure on the next segment five palmettes instead of three.

The outline of the palmettes is heart-shaped and one may distinguish a mid rib decorated with five knobs. Knobs are also depicted between the palmettes. Other details are not distinguishable in the fields of palmettes, however the spiral's state of preservation was unknown at the time when the drawing was made.

The explanations for the two drawings are found in tome I, f. 99 recto and 99 verso (in Hungarian)⁸ and in tome IV, f. 31 verso and 32 verso (in German) and reference to the plates redrawn in tome VII⁹. The information is confined to only 2-3 text lines, which however brings together several significant data. The two text sets, in the

⁷ It is possible that the drawing sheet was reversed when the identification data were written on it, so the drawer might have still started the drawing from top down; in the re-drawn version, the image is reversed, like the original must have been as well.

⁸ I wish to thank this way too lecturer Dr. Bajusz István for the transcription and translation of the Hungarian texts.

⁹ The first text: „e) Ezüstből csinált fél font nehézségű, mindkét végén kígyófejú oly karperetz milyenekel önmagukat kitüntették, lovas vitézeket szokták a rómaiak megjutalmaztatni.” = „Aus Silber gemachte halb pfund Schwer, auf beiden ende mit Schlangen Koepfe dergestalt gefertigte Arm Ring, mit welche die Roemer ihre ausgezeichnete Ritters zu belohnen pflegten”. “Bracelet made of silver, weighing half a pound, with both ends ending in snake heads, with which the Romans used to reward the knights who distinguished themselves”. The second text: „a) Egy ezüstből csinált egy sing hosszúságu kígyó.” = „In Seiner große abgezeichnete ein ellen Lange, aus Silber gemachte Schlange”. “A snake made of silver, with a length of one ell”.

two languages, reproduce the same information. The first text transcribed by Fodor, very likely belonging to Kemény, as it references his drawing, informs us it is a silver bracelet with both ends in the shape of snakes, weighing half of pound (= ca. 280 gr)¹⁰, and that such bracelets were offered to Roman knights as award for their valour¹¹. The second text, shorter, written by Neigebaur to accompany his drawing, mentions it is a “silver snake” of one ell in length (= 77.70 cm – the equivalent for the Viennese ell “*Elle*”). Kemény’s drawing contained the indication of the piece length, namely 7 feet (= ca. 210 cm).

The spiral seems to belong to type A – Orăștie¹². The number of palmettes is smaller than commonly, yet not singular, another specimen with 5 palmettes existing at Velika Vrbica¹³, while the other known specimens have 6 or 7 palmettes. It is not excluded that their number is rendered correctly, however we cannot necessarily count on the accuracy of the two drawings. Closest analogies for the overall decoration are the silver spirals at Dârlos and Orăștie, as well as three of the golden bracelets at Grădiștea de Munte¹⁴. Regarding the execution of details, the item similarities with those at Oradea and Vălișoara include the mid rib decorated with knobs (detail also found on most golden spirals at Grădiștea de Munte), and with those at Orăștie and Gliganul de Jos, the circular motif (most likely punched) separating the palmettes, also found on some of the gold spirals¹⁵.

The 280 gr weight is plausible and ranks it by the lower limit of this class¹⁶. The size provided by Kemény, of ca. 210 cm, which must refer to the uncoiled length of the spiral, is within the known limits¹⁷. Instead, the ell number given by Neigebaur doesn’t seem to mirror a real size of the item, neither uncoiled, nor twisted¹⁸. The number of five and a half coils is frequently found with the series of multi-spiralled silver bracelets.

The item seems to come from Turda, as recorded within the sheets, however one cannot be certain that this is the real find place. The text provides no details concerning the find place and context and there is no information on how the object ended up in Kemény’s possession. Still, it is not excluded that it might have been discovered precisely in Turda area, where finds of Dacian items and even similar bracelets¹⁹ are also recorded.

¹⁰ The Austrian pound was equivalent to 560.012 gr.

¹¹ Kemény was not familiar with the material culture of the Dacians; M. Ackner also assigned to the Romans two same type bracelets discovered by mid 19th century at Hetiur and Orăștie (Vaidei), see Wollmann 1982, 91–93.

¹² According to Fl. Medeleț’s classification. It is likely that incised decoration also existed beside the stamped one, however it must have been no longer visible in order to be rendered by the drawer.

¹³ Garašanin 1954, 67, no. 4880, Pls. XLIV/10, LIX/6; Spănu 2012, 254, no. 209 and Pl. 195, no. 1.

¹⁴ Spănu 2012, 225–226, no. 55 and Fig. 48, 52 and 54.

¹⁵ I am indebted to Dr. Daniel Spănu (“Vasile Pârvan” Archaeology Institute of the Romanian Academy, Bucharest), for the valuable suggestions provided in relation to determining the item and its analogies.

¹⁶ The bracelet at Bălănești has 278 gr and has an uncoiled length of 196 cm, see Spănu 2012, 215.

¹⁷ All completely preserved spirals measure around 2 meters long, see Spănu 2012, 63.

¹⁸ The maximum height of such a bracelet is 25 cm, see Spănu 2012, 63. Neigebaur was more negligent in noting details, which is also mirrored in the transcription of the numismatic and epigraphic materials, see IDR I, 49.

¹⁹ RepCluj, 404, no. 62g, where are recorded at Turda a silver *torques*, scyphate Dacian coins and

Nothing is known on the fate of this item; however it likely disappeared during 1848–1849 among large part of the collection, when the Luncani castle was ransacked. We may wonder whether the item at Turda had entered other collection, whilst information on its place of origin was lost. Still, none of the 7 silver Dacian spirals with unknown find spot exhibit the decoration like that in the Kemény collection²⁰. Therefore, one may argue this item is novel.

In conclusion, it is safe to say that the number of known specimens in the category of multi-spiralled silver Dacian bracelets with terminal plates and zoomorphic protomae has risen, insofar, to 32. In the event that the location of this item at Turda is accurate, then it sheds new light on the issue of the Dacian finds in the area. Concurrently, it proves that the use of information concerning the Dacians from 19th century documents is far from complete, able still of much surprise.

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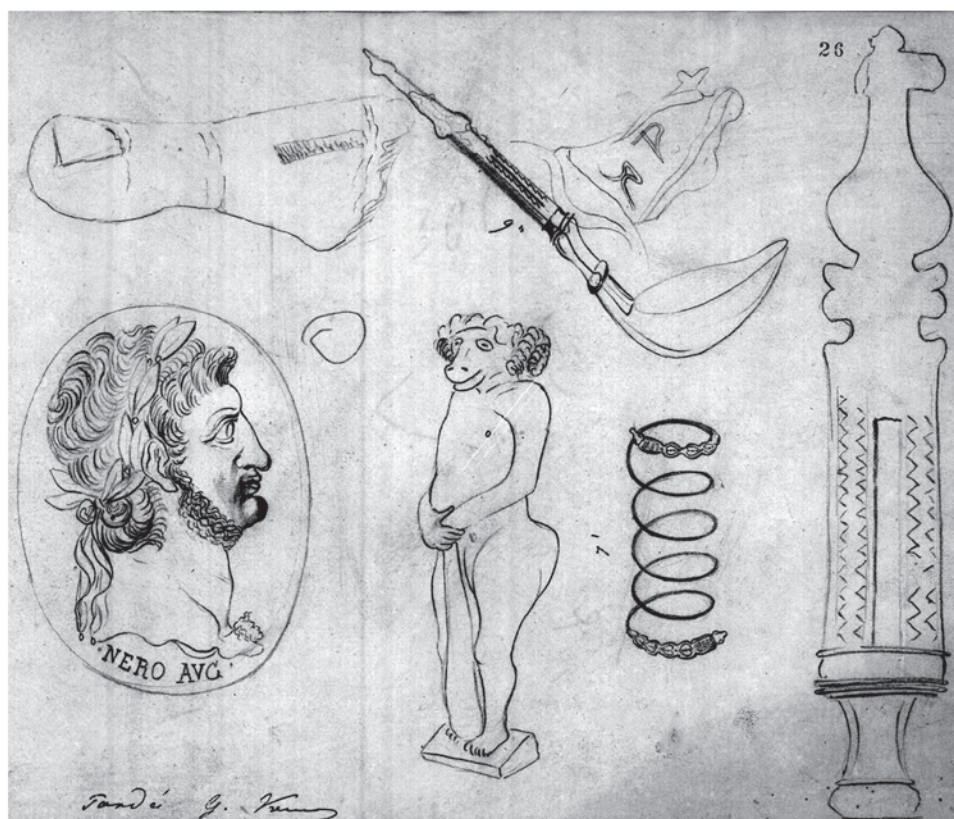
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Dacian tetradrachms; to these adds a possible bronze Dacian bracelet deemed Roman by Téglás I. (Bajusz 2005, I/2, 708, Fig. 46/9). Not far from Turda, on the territory of Vălișoara village, was discovered a silver Dacian spiral in the same category like the one in the Kemény collection (Spănu 2012, 248–249 and Pl. 157). A hoard discovered at Cojocna, also at small distance from Turda, includes a silver Dacian spiral, yet without terminal plates, deemed either in the same type, yet with broken ends (Popescu 1941, 219) or included in the category of simple spiral bracelets, undecorated (Spănu 2012, 22 and Pl. 33).

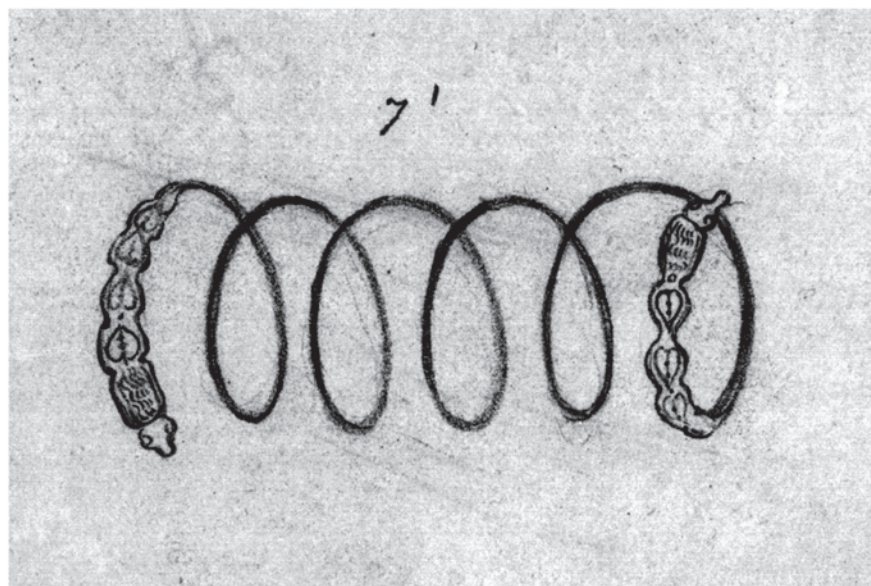
²⁰ According to Spănu 2012, two are now at the Museum in Belgrade (Romania no. 4 and 5), three are at the Museum in Budapest (Transylvania no. 9, 10 and 51), one at MNIT (Transylvania no. 13), and another in the Severeanu collection (Romania no. 1).

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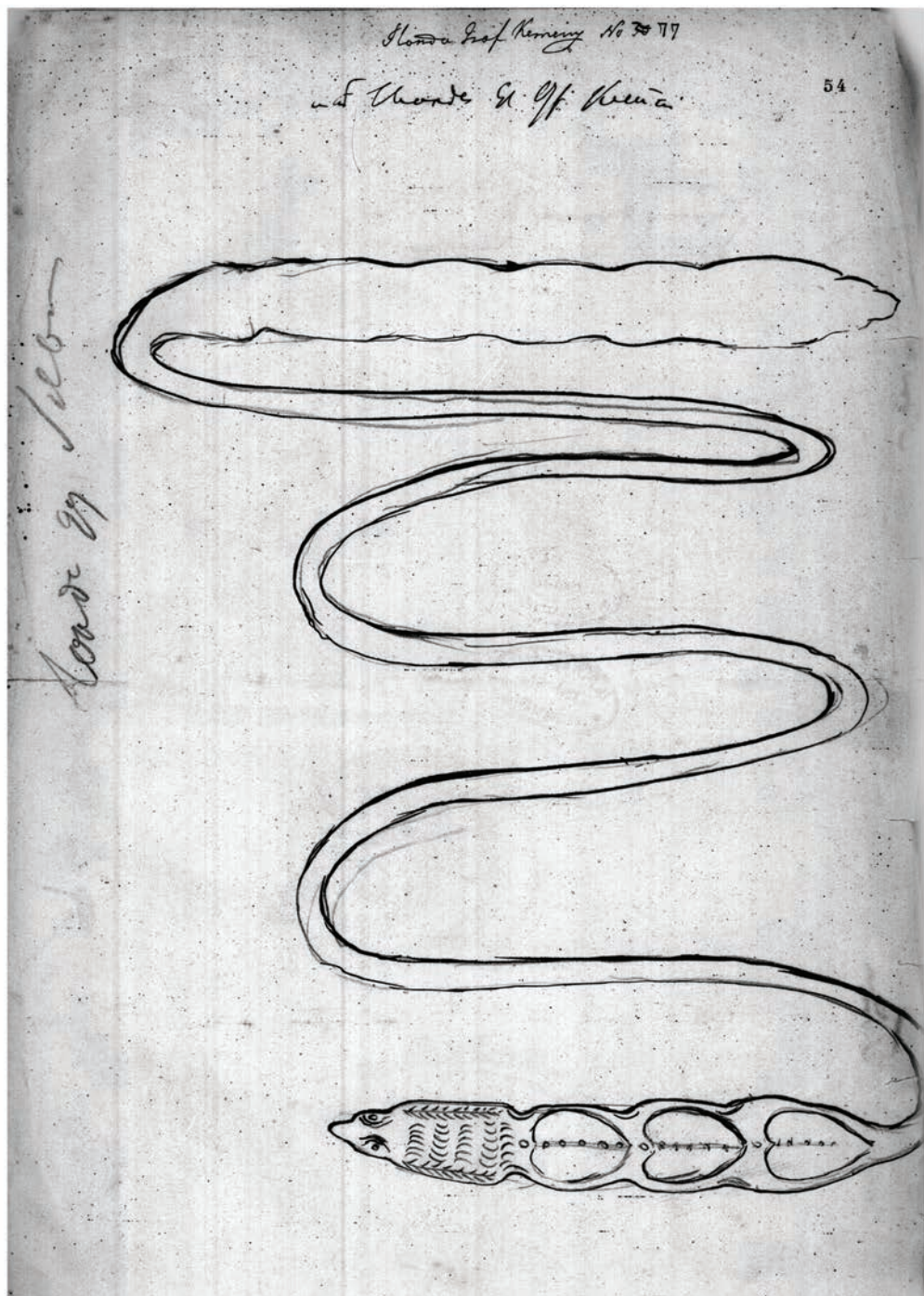


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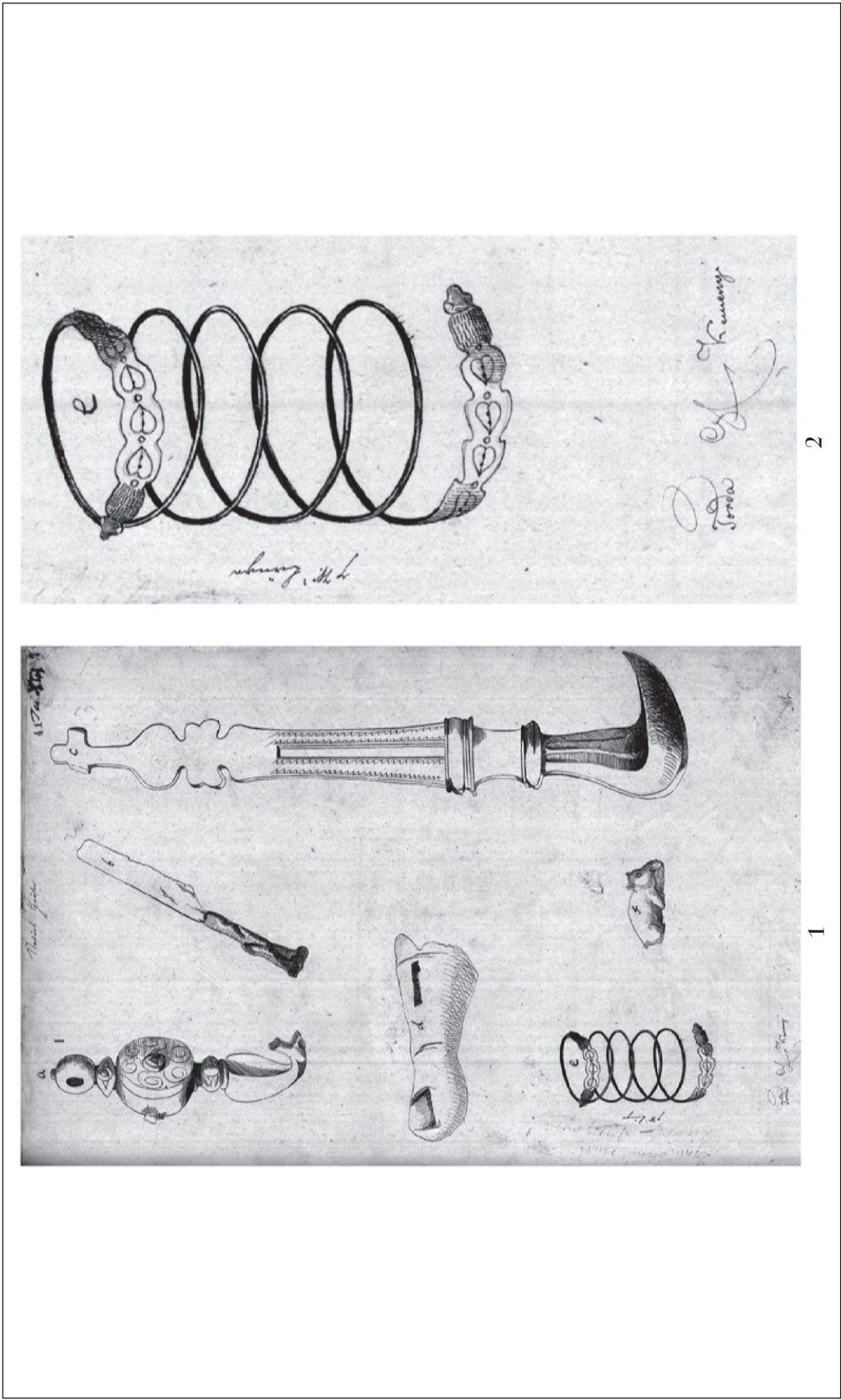


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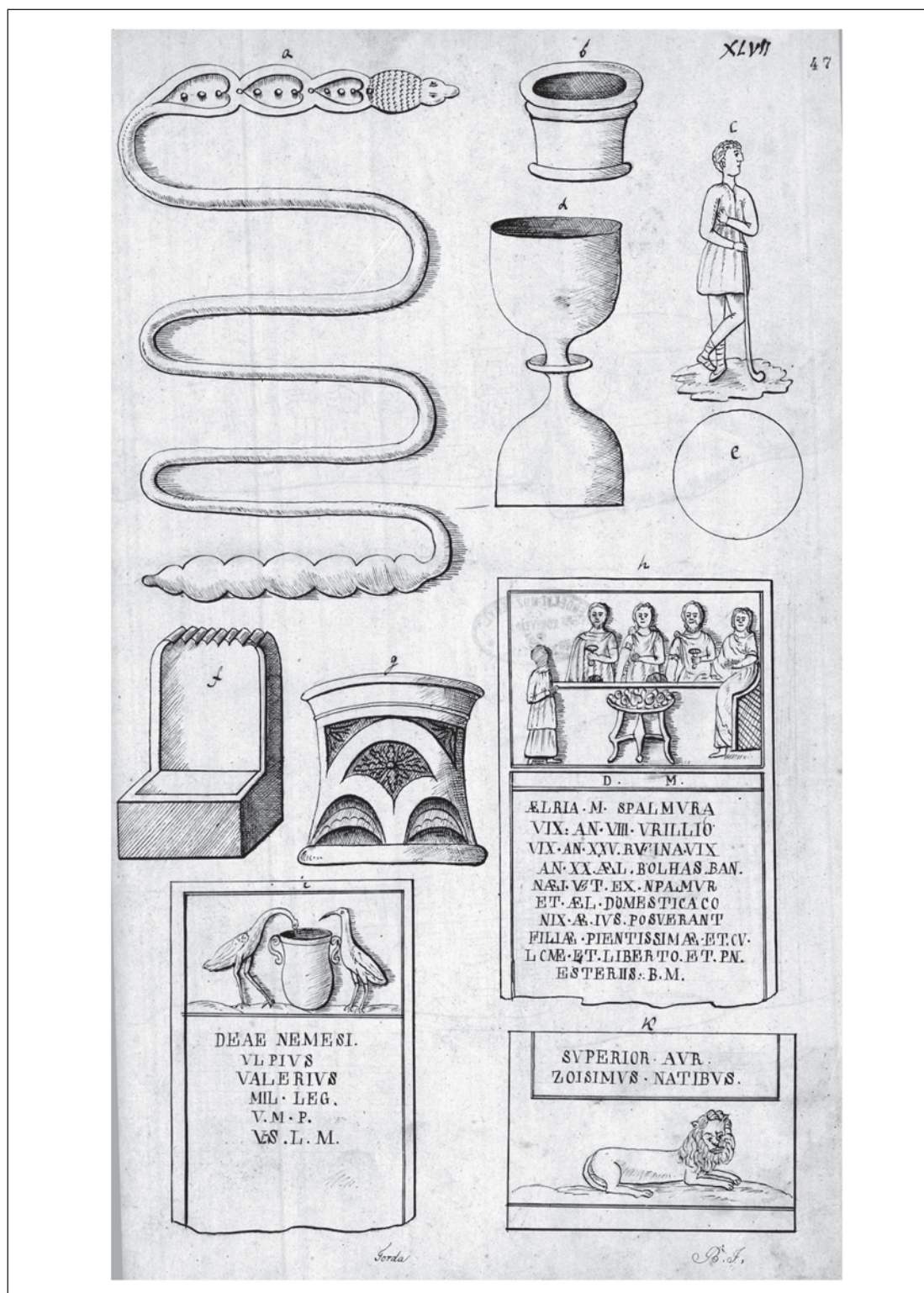
Pl. I. 1. Items discovered at Turda, drawing by Kemény József; **2.** Detail of the multi-spiralled bracelet (Source: Fodor mss, tome VIII, 26).



Pl. II. Bracelet drawn by J. F. Neigebaur (Source: Fodor mss, tom VIII, 54).



Pl. III. 1. Items from Turda, redrawn; 2. Detail of the multi-spiral bracelet (Source: Fodor mss, tome VII, 41).



PL. IV. Neigebaur's sketch, redrawn, on the same plate with other objects coming from Turda (Source: Fodor mss, tome VII, 47).