

SOME NOTES ABOUT A LA TÈNE PERIOD GLASS BRACELETS FROM DROBETA

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On the occasion of a work visit at the Museum of the Iron Gates Region of Drobeta – Turnu Severin, we noticed on display in a temporary exhibition several glass bracelet fragments, most dated to the Roman age. Among these, the glass fragment with the inventory number II. 7545 constitutes the subject of the present note. The artefact caught our eye because, even though we identified it at a first glance as having a Celtic origin, it had not been published before. The examination of the inventory register revealed that this piece of jewellery was part of the old collection of the Museum. It was catalogued in the year 1962 and was erroneously attributed to the Roman period. The mistake is understandable considering that at the moment when it entered the registry the study of glass bracelets discovered on the territory of Romania was only in its infancy. The first La Tène glass bracelets were published with a context only in 1967¹. On the other hand, in the column with the find spot, the register mentions Drobeta, so it was automatically ascribed to the Roman age without further inquiry. This makes us think that it was probably discovered in a context which appeared undoubtedly Roman to the authors of the archaeological research at that time. Therefore, with our short note we wish to bring into discussion this unpublished jewellery fragment, along with a new typological and chronological classification based on analogies traced throughout Europe.

1. State of research.

The La Tène glass bracelets attributed to the Celts and discovered on the territory of Romania constituted the subject of individualised research only in recent years, in articles like the one published by J. Némethi in 2000², or that by L. Vaida in 2006³. Previously, such items were merely described together with the rest of the inventory

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¹ Zirra 1967, 69.

² Némethi 2000.

³ Vaida 2006, 29–41.

from funerary contexts related to the Celts from Transylvania⁴. In the case of Banat and Oltenia, although funerary or habitation contexts attributed to these populations were published⁵, there were no glass bracelets among the discoveries. Thus, the present fragment is the only Celtic jewellery of this kind recovered from the territory of Oltenia.

2. Discovery context

Unfortunately, as mentioned above, the only record of its discovery context is 'Drobeta' and we know it entered the inventory register on February 15th, 1962. However, there are some clues that can provide further information on the place of discovery. First of all, regarding the exact location, we can suspect that it was found on the territory of the modern city, probably on the occasion of the research carried out in the fort or in its immediate vicinity. A first indication of this is the fact that until 1972 the name of the modern city was just 'Turnu Severin', and so the name 'Drobeta' must have referred to the area of the fort and its civilian settlement, whose location on the field was already largely known since the 18th century⁶. This discovery marks another point with Celtic finds from Oltenia; the area around Drobeta was actually known in the specialised literature for the discoveries attributed to this population. Thus, the bibliography mentions that archaeological excavations had been carried out between 1961 and 1970 at the Roman fort, also at the Şimian Holm and at Schela Cladovei⁷ and that all of this places yielded Celtic material, both in habitation and in funerary contexts. These mainly consisted of pottery, weapons, an iron snaffle bit, various metal objects, as well as a monetary hoard⁸. The finds were assigned by M. Davidescu primarily to the Scordiscan Celts⁹, a population which settled in the Balkan area at the confluence of the Sava river with the Danube around the time of the invasion and defeat suffered by the Celtic tribes at Delphi¹⁰. The area under their control stretched along the Danube and temporarily also included parts of present-day Romanian territory¹¹. From a historical point of view, the Minor Scordiscans are attested by Strabon in the area adjacent to the Danube, east of the Morava¹², so the territory between this river and the Iron Gates was briefly controlled by them¹³, a fact also archaeologically confirmed by the presence of Scordiscan material both on the territory of Oltenia, and that of Banat¹⁴. To the spots with Celtic finds mentioned above one should also add the tomb from Corbului

⁴ Zirra 1967, 69; Crişan 1973, 75; Lazăr 1975, 72; Crişan 1975, 47; Zirra 1980, 65–69; Némethi 1988; Némethi 1989; Némethi 1992; Némethi 2000, 168–169.

⁵ Sîrbu, Rustoiu, Crăciunescu 1999; Rustoiu, Ursuţiu 2013.

⁶ Benea 1977, 133.

⁷ Boroneanţ, Davidescu 1968, 253–260; Davidescu 1980, 50–51; Stingă 1998, 13.

⁸ Davidescu 1980, 50–51; Stingă 1998, 13.

⁹ Davidescu 1980, 50–51.

¹⁰ Rustoiu 2015, 20.

¹¹ Rustoiu, Ursuţiu 2013, 323; Rustoiu 2004–2005, 59–60.

¹² Strabon, *Geografia*, VII, 5, 12.

¹³ Rustoiu 2004–2005, 59.

¹⁴ Sîrbu, Rustoiu, Crăciunescu 1999, 221.

Holm, dated to Lt. B2b, located on an island of the Danube which was also part of their territory¹⁵. South of the Danube and in the area nearing Drobeta, isolated discoveries attributed to the Minor Scordiscans and dated to Lt. C1 were made at Boljetin, Pecka Bara and Negotin¹⁶.

For an overview of the chronological and territorial situation of the Celtic finds from the immediate vicinity of the city one must also mention the funerary contexts at Corcova, discovered in 1975, and at Gruia, in 1969¹⁷, as well as the most recent at Florești, dated towards the end of the Celtic horizon, between the end of the 2nd and the middle of the 1st centuries BC. The last was attributed to the Padea- Panagjiurski Kolonii group, a warrior elite from the south which concluded the Celtic domination in the area¹⁸.

Consequently, Celtic discoveries from around Drobeta fall into the general picture of the consequences of the Celtic expansion towards the east and the invasion from 280–277, as well into the circumstance created by the arrival of the Padea Panagjurski Kolonii group¹⁹. Against this general background, the presence of La Tène population somewhere in the territory of the modern city of Drobeta–Turnu Severin is once more pointed out by the existence of the bracelet fragment discovered here. Regarding the exact find spot, we believe that the fragment was almost certainly discovered during the research of the Roman fort, thus explaining why its origin was registered as ‘Drobeta’. It was probably one of the materials displaced by the building of the fort in antiquity. It might have originally come from a funerary context, considering that such bracelets predominantly appear as items of the funerary inventory of female graves²⁰. We cannot rule out its provenance from a habitation context either, bearing in mind the fact that in the rest of Europe glass bracelets were mainly discovered in habitation contexts. However, since all of the finds from our area come from graves, we believe that the piece from Drobeta also originates from a funerary context.

3. Description

The bracelet fragment has a total length of 7.9 cm and is manufactured from blue translucent glass with appliques of white opaque glass paste²¹. It has a D-shaped section with two central ribs flanked by another two smaller ones. At the base it is 1.2 cm wide and the maximum height of the moulding reaches 0.4 cm. The bracelet was manufactured in the hot glass technique, modelled on a rotating core with the help of an iron rod²². In what concerns the type, such bracelets are rather widespread in the

¹⁵ Zirra 1971, 223; Rustoiu 2004–2005, 56, 60.

¹⁶ Rustoiu 2004–2005, 60.

¹⁷ Sîrbu, Rustoiu, Crăciunescu 1999, 217–229.

¹⁸ Rustoiu 2015, 27–28.

¹⁹ Rustoiu 2004–2005, 53.

²⁰ Rustoiu 2004–2005, 56.

²¹ Generally, opaque glass is used for the decoration, not for the body of the bracelet, and usually comes in two colours, white and yellow (Karwowski 2004, 59).

²² Karwowski 2012, 250, Fig. 7.

Celtic world, with analogies known from Austria, at Seebarn, where they are dated to Lt. C2²³, from Poland, at Pleszow, with the same date²⁴, as well as from France, at La Lande du Rameau and Le Petit Mont Arzon, where they are dated to Lt. C2 – Lt. D1²⁵. Furthermore, a close analogy for our piece was also found in Slovakia, at Žehra, dated to Lt. C1 – Lt. C2²⁶.

Our fragment is deformed due to a secondary burning, and part of the zig-zag appliques are no longer preserved. The blue colour, often called cobalt blue, is typical for La Tène period bracelets, while the glass is predominantly translucent, without visible impurities, and comes in different shades²⁷. The presence of zig-zag decorations made from yellow or white opaque glass paste on cobalt blue-coloured bracelets is typical for the Lt. C1b period²⁸.

4. Typological and chronological classification

To date, works of reference for the typological classification of Celtic glass bracelets remain the typology published in 1960 by Th. E. Haevernick²⁹, the one by R. Gebhard in 1989 concerning Manching³⁰, followed by the more recent typologies published by M. Karwowski for Poland in 1997³¹ and that for the territory of Austria published in 2004³², as well K. Tankó's typology for eastern Hungary³³, and the one published by a collective of authors in 2011 with respect to Bretagne³⁴. For the Romanian territory, a typology of Celtic bracelets was devised by I. Némethi in the articles referring to the necropolis at Pişcolt³⁵. In the year 2000, the same author published a typology of the glass bracelets discovered in north-western Romania³⁶ and in 2006 L. Vaida devised another typology according to which the glass bracelets are assigned to type 20³⁷.

Based on the analogies, our fragment can be classified as Th. E. Haevernick's type 7c³⁸. Also, at Manching they were dated to Lt. C1b, during the last quarter of the 3rd and the beginning of the 2nd centuries BC according to R. Gebhard³⁹, a date also supported

²³ Karwowski 2004, 176, cat. nr. 284.

²⁴ Karwowski 1997, 37.

²⁵ Dinard, Gratuze, Chérel 2011, 158.

²⁶ Březinová 2017, 49, 51.

²⁷ Karwowski 2004, 56; Haevernick 1960, 12.

²⁸ Gebhard 1989, 128.

²⁹ Haevernick 1960, 41–66.

³⁰ Gebhard 1989, 128–134.

³¹ Karwowski 1997.

³² Karwowski 2004.

³³ Tankó 2006, 253–263.

³⁴ Dinard, Gratuze, Chérel 2011, 158.

³⁵ Némethi 1988, 65–67; Némethi 1989, 107–108; Némethi 1992, 106–105.

³⁶ Némethi 2000, 166–171.

³⁷ Vaida 2006, 40.

³⁸ Haevernick 1960, 53.

³⁹ Gebhard 1989, 128, 130–131.

by the cobalt blue colour which is used starting with this period⁴⁰. In the chronology devised by M. Karwowski for Central Europe, based on the number and shape of the mouldings, our piece corresponds to type 7c and is ascribed to period Lt. C2⁴¹; the colour, shape, as well as the type of zig-zag decoration are likewise typical for this period⁴². Referring to Bretagne, it corresponds to type XII which has the same date⁴³. If we consider Poland, it can be classified as type 7c and dated to Lt. C2⁴⁴. In Romania, in the area of Transylvania, glass bracelets were generally dated starting with the third Celtic horizon Lt. B2b, being more frequent during the fourth horizon corresponding to Lt. C1⁴⁵.

5. Conclusions

Glass bracelets are among the representative jewellery discovered in the area pertaining to the Celtic culture, alongside beads and rings⁴⁶. They were found both in La Tène age graves and settlements, especially from the Lt. C and Lt. D periods. The largest collections of such finds originate from Manching and Berching–Pollanten in Bavaria⁴⁷. Together with the beads manufactured from the same material, they are typical for the female dress and are consequently found in women's graves⁴⁸. On the territory of Romania, this type of accessories attributed to the Celtic culture were found at Delureni-Şopteriu⁴⁹, Fântânele-Livadă⁵⁰, as well as in the area of Carei, at Ciumeşti, Pişcolt, Hotoan, Cămin-Malul Crasnei, Berea, Căpleni, la Medieşu-Aurit, Aţel-Bratei⁵¹, and at Orosfaia⁵². The most well-known discoveries remain those at Delureni, Fântânele- Livadă and Pişcolt. The fragment kept in the collection of the Museum of the Iron Gates Region is thus part of a series of finds of this type of dress accessories discovered on the territory of modern Romania. Also, the fact that the bracelet fragment comes from somewhere on the territory of the Roman fort or city is reasonable keeping in mind that several discoveries attributed to the Minor Scordiscans were made in the environs of the town, both in habitation and in funerary contexts, namely at Şimian, Schela Cladovei or Corbului Holm. The dating of this fragment is assigned to the Lt C1b – Lt. C2 periods, on the basis of its typology, colour, decoration mode, and especially on the number of mouldings; this means the first half of the 2nd century

⁴⁰ Tankó 2006, 254.

⁴¹ Karwowski 2004, 79.

⁴² Tankó 2006, 254.

⁴³ Dinard, Gratuze, Cherel 2011, 158.

⁴⁴ Karwowski 1997, 37, 52.

⁴⁵ Berecki 2008, 62, 60.

⁴⁶ Karwowski 2006, 133.

⁴⁷ Karwowski 2004, 63; Karwowski 2006, 135.

⁴⁸ Rustoiu 2004–2005, 56.

⁴⁹ Lazăr 1975, 72.

⁵⁰ Crişan 1975, 47.

⁵¹ Zirra 1967, 69; Némethi 2000, 168–169; Zirra 1980, 65–69; Crişan 1973, 75.

⁵² Berecki 2008, 57.

BC, a time frame corresponding to the rise to power of the three Celtic tribes of Boii, Taurisci and Scordisci⁵³.

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⁵³ Berecki 2008, 49–50.

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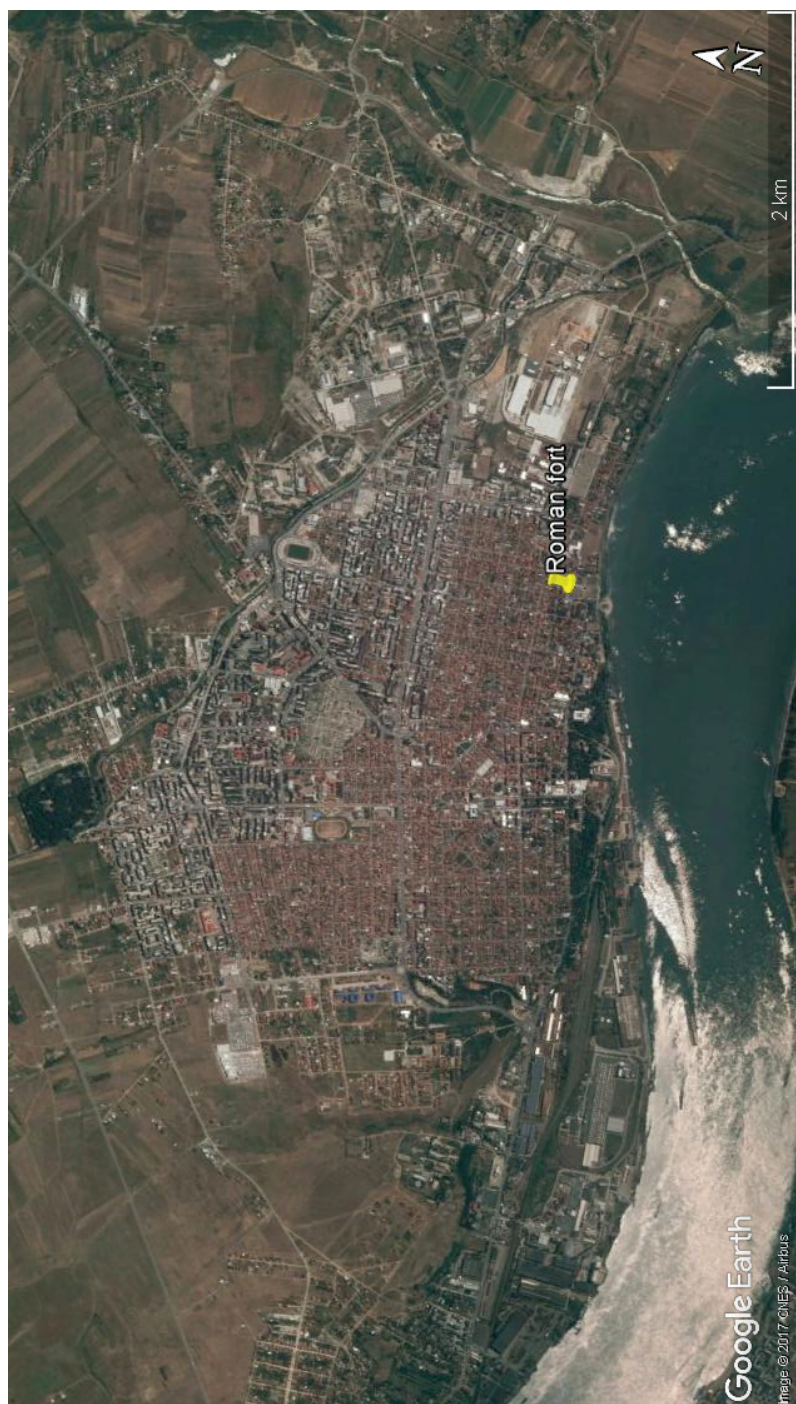
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CÂTEVA OBSERVAȚII ASUPRA UNEI BRĂȚĂRI DE EPOCĂ LA TÈNE DE LA DROBETA

Rezumat

În depozitele Muzeului Regiuni Porților de Fier din Drobeta-Turnu-Severin se află un fragment de brățară de sticlă care a fost greșit atribuită epocii romane, fiind descoperită la Drobeta în deceniul al șaselea al secolului trecut. Ea face parte din colecția veche a muzeului și nu a fost publicată până în prezent. Noi am identificat acest fragment ca aparținând unei brățări celtice, cu analogii în descoperiri de pe teritoriul Europei Centrale și de vest și credem că se poate data pe baza acestor analogii în LT C2. Fragmentul este deformat de foc și, prin urmare, presupunem că poate proveni dintr-un mormânt celtic distrus în antichitate de construcția castrului roman de la Drobeta. Încadrarea cronologică a brățării completează descoperirile mai vechi de tradiție La Tène făcute în zona Drobetei romane și în imediata ei apropiere.



Pl. 1. Drobeta-Turnu Severin, the modern city and the Roman fort / Drobeta-Turnu Severin, oraşul modern şi castrul roman



Pl. 2. The Celtic discoveries in the area of Drobeta-Turnu Severin / Descoperirile celtice din zona Drobeta-Turnu-Severin



Pl. 3. Celtic glass bracelet, Museum of the Iron Gates Region, inv. no. 7545
(photos by the author, drawing by G. Văcuță) / Brățară celtică de sticlă,
MRPF nr. inv. II. 7545 (fotografii personale, desen G. Văcuță)