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FIGURATIVE REPRESENTATIONS ON SARMATIAN AND GETO-DACIAN PHALERAE OF 2ND - 1ST CENTURIES B.C.

Abstract: Scopul acestui articol este acela de a prezenta o serie de reprezentări figurative – phalere, provenite din descoperiri sarmatice și geto-dace. Phalerele erau realizate în majoritatea cazurilor din argint, dar există și piese realizate din bronz sau aur. Tipul acesta de piesă are o formă rotundă și un profil concav sau conic. De obicei sunt decorate cu motive geometrice, zoomorfe și antropomorfe. Unele piese prezintă scene mitologice. În zona cuprinsă între Siberia de vest, Munții Caucaz și Balcani, au fost făcute 37 de descoperiri, însumând 184 de piese. Din punct de vedere al contextului arheologic, 14 descoperiri (71 piese) provin din contexte funerare, 20 (11 piese) au găsite în tezaure, 8 piese provin din două descoperiri izolate. În 10 cazuri, phalerele cu reprezentări figurative provin din morminte, în 16 cazuri din tezaure și în alte două din descoperiri izolate, al căror context nu este clar. Așadar, asemenea piese nu se găsesc în așezări, cetăți și sanctuare. Din punct de vedere cronologic, acest tip de piesă apare din a doua jumătate a sec. al IV-lea – începutul sec. al III-lea î.Chr până a doua jumătate a sec. I î.Chr. În acest articol au fost analizate doar descoperirile din sec. II-I î.Chr.

Keywords: sarmatian, geto-dacian, 2nd - 1st centuries BC, phalere, archaeological contexts, chronology

The purpose of phalerae – made mostly of silver, but sometimes also of gold or bronze, and of round shape and concave or conic profile – was embellishing their bearer. Finished with scrapers and punctuators, they were molded into shape by stamping or hammering, and then attached by means of silver, bronze or iron rivets or ears which were themselves riveted into place. Geometric, phytomorphic, zoomorphic or anthropomorphic motifs made up the decorations on the phalerae, some of which show gods or mythological scenes. Because of that, although their primary use was functional, the phalerae also have a strong artistic side.

The phalerae meant somewhat different things to the people in the Eurasian steppes as compared to those in the Hellenistic and Roman worlds. The former used them mainly as harness appliqués, whereas the latter regarded them mostly as accessories for clothes (Šćukin 2001: 137-138). In any case, the renderings on them, although in the spirit of the themes and production methods of the ancient art, are also windows into barbarian naivety and primitivism as well (Šćukin 2001: 138).

Any analysis of the figurative representations needs to start by listing the problems surrounding this category of items. Our discussion will include the “fibulae with anthropomorphic marks” for they were present only in the Geto-Dacian area, where the fibulae were attached to round phalerae (Bucharest-

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Herăstrău) and there are anthropomorphic representations on certain kinds of fibulae that are not unlike those on phalerae (Bălănești, Coada Malului, "Transylvania").

It is our opinion that ideological identity, and the consequential iconographic uniqueness, account for the similitudes between two families of items that look different but are used the same way. Given the type of items, the manner of attaching them, and the iconography, it seems to us improbable that the items in the Geto-Dacian environment north of the Danube were used as harness items. Ceramic medallions (e.g. Cârlomanești) (Drâmbocianu 1979: 95-100) also display such iconographic representations, pointing to similar beliefs and the accompanying similar representation methods, despite the support or type of items.

Spread area. One counts 37 discoveries, totaling 184 items, in the region between West Siberia, the Caucasus Mountains and the Balkans. Thirty-four of them (174 items) originate in the area between the Ural Mountains, Caucasus and the Balkans, of which 28 (168 items) include phalerae with figurative anthropomorphic and zoomorphic representations (Fig.1). These discoveries count 81 items, 76 of which are from complexes in the area currently under research.

Archaeological contexts: 14 discoveries (71 items) are from tombs, another 20 (111 items) were in treasures, 8 items are from 2 isolated findings and we do not know the origin of 4 phalerae. In 10 cases, the phalerae with figurative representations were from tombs, in 16 from hoards, and in 2 from isolated findings (*Tab. 1*).

As you may have noticed, there are none from settlements, fortresses and sanctuaries. All the items in the Geto-Dacian class are from isolated hoards.

Materials: 34 findings total 169 silver phalerae (115 gilded and only 11 made of gold). There are very few bronze items as well (14 in 3 sites). The pattern that emerges, then, is that most items are made of silver (usually gilded), and that few are bronze or golden. The widespread practice of gilding silver and bronze items (when lacking enough gold) could mean an emphasis on the sacred connotations of the precious metal, applying both to the Greek-Roman world and the "barbarians". They must have been impressed with gold's color and shine, evoking the sun, and thus thought it had miraculous properties. Furthermore, it also denoted the wealth and high status of its owners (Marazov 1994).

Cultural environment: a) 30 discoveries (154 items) are from Sarmatian tombs and treasures, b) the origin of a discovery with 4 items is unclear, but we do know for sure that they are Sarmatian (the Siberian Collection of Peter the First), c) 27 items are resulted from 5 discoveries of Geto-Dacian treasures (Galiče, Jakimovo, Bucharest-Herăstrău, Lupu and Surcea), d) one finding (3 items) is from the southern-Thracian region (Stara Zagora). The discoveries from Galiče and Jakimovo in the Geto-Dacian region were included since the findings in this area from the 2nd-1st centuries BC resemble those north of Danube and their iconography is part of what we could term the "Geto-Dacian group" (see Rustoiu 2002: 123-141), different from phalerae in other cultural environments. It could be that some phalerae from the Sarmatian area, particularly those manufactured in the Pontic area or Asia Minor, arrived here as "diplomatic gifts" for the Sarmatian rulers from a Mithridates in search of allies.

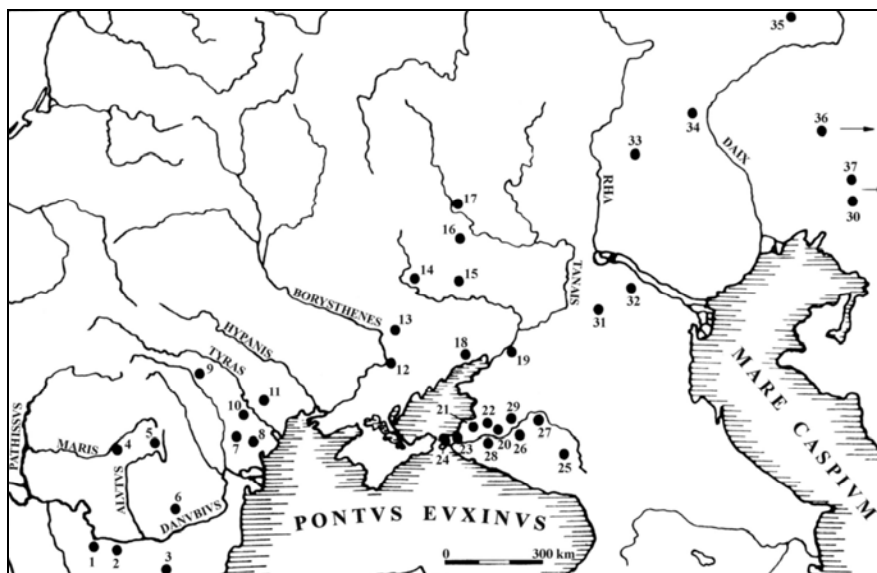


Fig. 1. Discoveries of phalerae with figurative representations in the region between the Caucasus, the Ural and the Balkan Mountains (2nd – 1st centuries BC). *List of localities* 1. Ahtanizovskaja, 2. Balakleja, 3. Bubueci, 4. București-Herestrău, 5. Fedulov, 6. Galiče, 7. Jakimovo, 8. Jančokrak, 9. Klimenkovka, 10. Korenovsk, 11. Krivaja Luka, 12. Lupu, 13. Novodžerelievskaja, 14. Novouzensk, 5. Rogovskaja, 16. Seversk, 17. Stara Zagora, 18. Starobel'sk, 19. Surcea, 20. Taganrog, 21. Tvardica, 22. Uspenskaja, 23. Vasjurina Gora, 24. Velikoploskoe, 25. Verhnij, 26. Volodarka, 7. Voronežskaja, 28. Žutovo.

Chronology. All the items under analysis are from the 2nd-1st centuries BC, but this does not mean there are no significant differences between certain time periods. Some are from the 2nd century BC and most, those from the Geto-Dacian period and from between the end of the 2nd century and the first half of 1st century BC inclusive (*Tab. 1*). The Christian era does not claim any discovery so far.

A number of discoveries from the second half of 4th century – beginning of 3rd century BC, either from the Scythian (e.g. Alexandropol, Babina Mogila) or the Thracian environment (Panagjurište, Letnica, Chirnogi), were not included in the analysis because they need to be tackled in another manner, within the figurative art of those particular people at that moment in time. The phalerae from the 1st-2nd centuries AD were not taken into account either because they raise different issues, be they from the Sarmatian world or, as a result of being used as some kind of decorations in the Roman army and their proliferation, from the Empire. We will only analyze the phalerae from the 2nd-1st centuries because those from the Geto-Dacian group date back to that period and they are to be found in only two cultural environments – the Sarmatians and the Geto-Dacian, who had strong connections.

Techniques. Generally, the items are made from thin silver sheets, meaning the production method was stamping and then finishing with the scraper and punctuator. Two silver phalerae from Žutovo and two bronze ones from Bubueci and Velikoploskoe were produced through casting. The phalerae were affixed with

rivets or silver, bronze, iron – and, in one instance, gold (Seversk) – ears. The items in Bucharest-Herăstrău (Fig.5/2) make up the exception, as fibulae were attached to them.

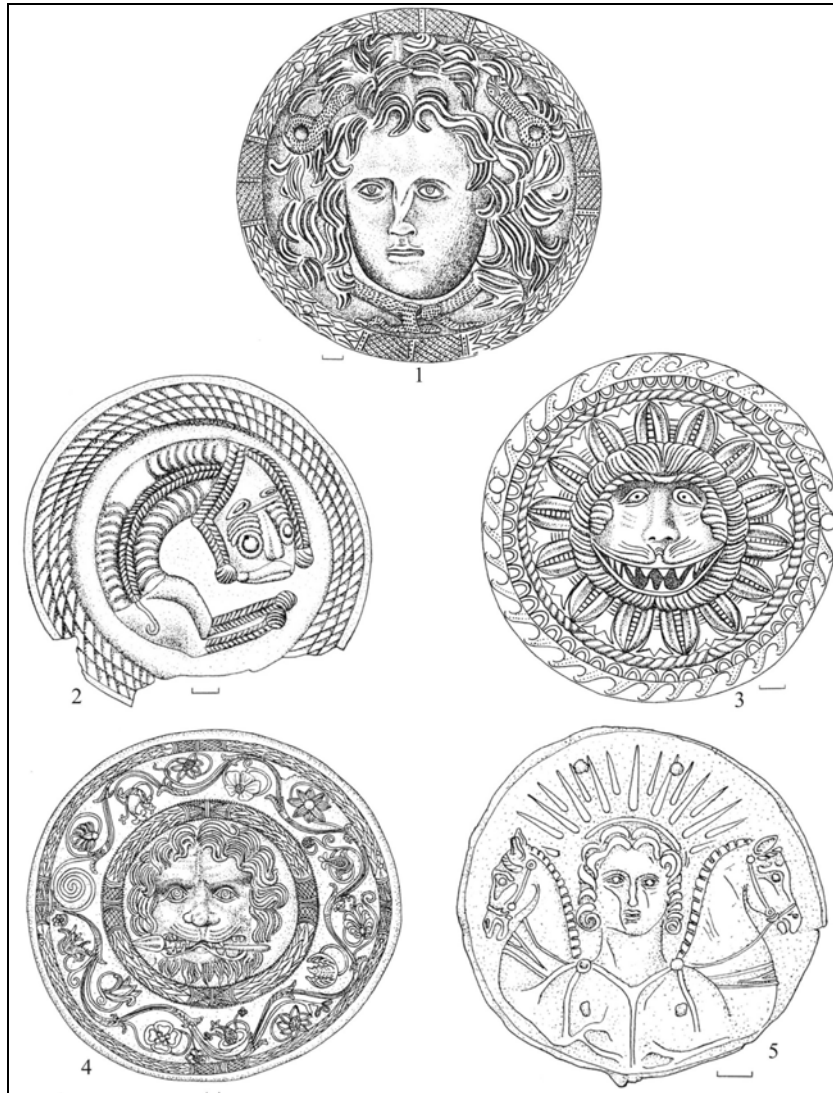


Fig.2 1 Ahtanizovskaja, 2 Voronežskaja, 3 Balakleja, 4-5 Fedulov
(after Spicyn 1909; Mordvinceva 2001).

Shapes and sizes. Despite the major differences in diameter between the smallest and the largest items - for instance, between the three pieces from Seversk, around 3.7cm, and the phalerae in Fedulov (Fig.2/4) (31.2cm) - the bulk of them ranges from 7 to 17 cm. Still, a small group of phalerae, such as those from Ahtanizovskaja, Išim, Prohorovka, Volodarka and the Siberian collection of Peter the First, exceed 20 cm.

But for a few oval ones - Ahtanizovskaja, Surcea (Fig.5/1), Verhnij and Vasjurina Gora - all of them are round. In terms of profile, though, they are very diverse, falling into three main categories: a) almost flat (e.g. Bubueci, Fedulov, Išim, Verhni), b) concave/skyphate, with a curved profile (e.g. Antipovka, Galiče, Fedulov, Klimenkovka, Krivaja Luka, Lupu, Novouzensk, Sidorovka, Surcea, Jančokrak, Uspenskaja, Volodarka, Žutovo) and c) conic/semi-sphere, of the *umbo* type (e.g. Balakleja, Bulahovka, Jančokrak, Korenovsk, Novodžerelievskaja, Starobel'sk, Taganrog, Tvardica).

Inventory associations. The phalerae must have been associated with a very varied funerary inventory, for 14 findings (71 items) are from tombs, and tumuli tombs with a rich inventory for that matter. These included defensive or offensive military equipment items and, when adding the use of phalerae, it could mean they belonged to rider-aristocrats.

The associations in the 20 treasures are telling as well, for they include the following: 1) silver conic and semi-spherical items (Ahtanizovskaja, București-Herăstrău, Jakimovo, Lupu, Surcea, Lupu, Velikoploskoe), 2) situlae (Bădragii Noi, Jakimovo, Korenovsk, Veseloja Dolina), 3) bronze vessels, whole or fragmentary (Bucharest-Herăstrău, Jakimovo, Jančokrak, Lupu), 4) bronze cauldrons (Bubueci, Velikoploskoe), 5) helmets (Ahtanizovskaja, Antipovka, Bubueci, Sergievskaja, Veseloja Dolina), 6) spear heads (Velikoploskoe, Veseloja Dolina), 7) frontal appliqués (Ahtanizovskaja, Antipovka, Bădragii Noi, Bubueci, Klimenkovka, Velikoploskoe), 8) horse bits (Antipovka, Bădragii Noi, Klimenkovka, Seversk, Velikoploskoe, Verhnij, Veseloja Dolina), 9) harness appliqués (Bădragii Noi, Fedulov, Jančokrak, Klimenkovka, Novouzensk, Starobel'sk, Velikoploskoe, Veseloja Dolina), 10) clothing appliqués (Ahtanizovskaja, Starobel'sk), 11) fibulae (Ahtanizovskaja, Lupu, Tvardica), 12) bracelets (Bucharest-Herăstrău, Jakimovo).

Obviously, these types of items are not associated in all the complexes in the area under scrutiny. The discovery context (unvarying across many cases), the chronological synchronization and the partial item associations mean we can say, at the very least, that the Sarmatian treasures and tombs that include phalerae are a separate group within the early Sarmatian vestiges in the above-mentioned area. Furthermore, the inclusion of cauldrons, chain fragments and cruciform bridles (characteristic of the Kuban and Lower Don area) in hoards and graves in the north and north-Pontic space points to the geographical origin of some of the Sarmatians that owned these treasures.

The origin of the phalerae can be analyzed in two ways: a) what is the temporal origin of the use of these items, be it in general or in the Thracian environment, and b) what were, *stricto sensu*, the models for those used during the period of interest.

The earliest specimens in the north-Thracian area are the 33 golden items from Ostrovul Mare (late bronze) (Davidescu 1981: 21). Next come the phalerae of the well-known treasures of Vălcitrău (the Plevna region), with a contentious dating (ranging from the 14th to the 8th centuries B.C.) (Mikov 1958; Bonev 2004: 135-140). The renderings of Assyrian and Achaemenid sovereigns from the 9th-4th centuries BC confirm the early use of phalerae (Anderson 1961: pl.3-4; Barnett 1975: 32, 37, 65, 147, after Ščukin 2001: 151). The earliest discovery (8th century BC) is from Hasanlu (Iran) (Ghirschman 1963: 291, pl.350, after Ščukin 2001: 151).

The Greek-Roman world started using phalerae later. There are no phalerae representations available from the classic Greek period or the Roman world of that time. The earliest items known in use in Europe are from the Monerbio complex in Italy - 3rd-2nd centuries BC, but plagued by uncertain dating (Megaw 1970: 130, fig.204-206) and the cauldron in Gundenstrup (Hachmann 1990: fig.49, anexa 9/1) showing phalerae of riders (somewhere between 2nd and 1st centuries BC). They proliferated after that, probably as a result of a strong push from the east (Ščukin 2001: 151).

Several golden medallions with figurative representations, anthropomorphic female ones in particular, termed „Thessalian“ (based on the probable origin of the production workshops), circulated in the Greek world from 4th to 2nd centuries BC (Gramatopol 1982: 72-79).

The phalerae were practically alien around the northern Black Sea early in the Scythian age. Their emergence around the dawn of 3rd century BC is confirmed by the tumulus in Alexandrovsk (Alexeev 1992), and M.I. Rostovcev included them in this class of items (Rostovcev 1993: 40, pl.1). Still, there are also the three phalerae in the Babina Mogila tumulus (Dnepropetrovsk region, Ukraine), from 4th century BC (Ščukin 2001: 151). Items from the treasures of Panagjurište (Venedikov, Gherasimov 1979: 377, cat. nr. 244) and Letnica (Venedikov 1996: fig.21) or the one in the tomb of Chirnogi (Șerbănescu 1999: 231-244) are also representative of the golden age of the Thracian-Getic art.

If we were to analyze the entire area as a whole, we would have to deal with serious problems raised by the significant differences in cultural environments and the typological, stylistic and figurative representations of the various items. Therefore, the approach needs to be regional. This does not mean that similarities between the items and other connections between the regions will be discarded.

Types of ornamentations. The phalerae from the Sarmatian, Geto-Dacian and Thracian environments of the 2nd-1st centuries BC all include geometric decorations, but only 23 discoveries include items displaying vegetal ones. But these motifs and arrangements are not within the scope of our analysis and will therefore be left aside.

Zoomorphic and anthropomorphic figurative representations appear on 19 and 20 discoveries, respectively, from the Ural Mountains, Caucasus and the Balkans (*Tab. 1*). There are other zoomorphic and anthropomorphic representations on the phalerae in the Sarmatian complexes of Sidorovska and Ișim in Western Siberia, as well as those from the Siberian Collection of Peter the First, but they are outside the area of interest to us and will be analyzed on another occasion. Anthropomorphic representations appear on all the 5 discoveries from the Geto-Dacian region, whereas zoomorphic ones appear in only 3 instances. Obviously, geometric or phytomorphic representations accompany the anthropomorphic ones most of the times.

Interpretations. Grasping the meanings of the phalerae iconography requires looking at the discovery data (context, association with other kinds of items, the other representations in a finding - for they used to form a whole, motifs and decorative combinations, and so on and so forth) and the big picture consisting of the figurative representations in a certain cultural area. Overlooking some things and emphasizing others generates unrealistic answers. Since quite a few of them are chance discoveries, and therefore deprive us of some items and the order of the images, our task is even more daunting.



Fig.3 1 Tvardica, 2 Jančokrak, 3 Vasjurina Gora, 4 Krivaja Luka, 5 Uspenskaja, 6 Novouzensk (after Ščukin 1994; Mordvinceva 2001a).

On the whole, the figurative bestiary lacks high diversity, despite the fact it lists both wild (lion, panther, tiger, deer, wild boar, elephant, vulture/hawk, other birds, porcupine, snake) and domesticated (bull, horse, he-goat, dog) real animals. Gryphons (9 findings) and a sphinx make up the group of fictional animals. Nevertheless, a mere symbol, such as feathers, sometimes endows anthropomorphic character with animal attributes.

The artists have rendered the animals either as a whole, or employed the *pars pro toto* approach (they outlined a single part of them) – bull head and neck – Uspenskaja (Fig.3/5), bull head in Stara Zagora, horse heads and necks in Fedulov

(Fig.2/5) and Taganrog (Fig.4/3). Sometimes real species are fused into composite animals (chimera = lion + he-goat + snake in Volodarka).

The Geto-Dacian group does not have many real species to show for (horse, dog, feline, snake, hawk), and in just about any case human characters accompany them. There is one gryphon from Surcea, but there is no instance of a horse alone. The analysis of the zoomorphic and anthropomorphic figurative representations needs to rely on the cultural environment of the discoveries, for the ideological background is more revealing than the formal aspect of the items.

Here is a brief list of common features displayed by the discoveries from the Sarmatian area. The region between the Sea of Azov, the Caucasus and the Ural mountains has yielded discoveries quite similar to the Oriental art and Greek-Oriental style, but the animal representations are closer to the style of the nomad peoples, influenced by the civilizations of Asia Minor, Persia and Greece. Items found in Novouzensk (Fig.3/6), Sidorovka and Zutovo suggest that the artists in the steppes would not constrain the image but rather emphasize flow, trying to let the shape be influenced by the vastness of the natural environment and not protect it the way the sedentary peoples tried to.

The bestiary bears the mark of the Asian areas, in terms of both real (elephant, lion, panther) and fictitious (various gryphons and sphinxes) animals, as a result of the influences by the civilizations of Asia Minor and Persia. Such are the phalerae in Novouzensk and Sidorovka, showing intertwined gryphons, which is more Chinese than Hellenistic (Trever 1940: 48-50; Ščukin 1994: 146; 2001: 147). The Greek-Indian origin of the phalerae (Trever 1940: 46-48; Mordvinceva 2001: 13-14) with battle elephants - the Siberian Collection of Peter the First (Spicyn 1909: 29, fig.74-76; Trever 1940: 40-48, 50-51, pl.1-2; Mordvinceva 2001: 36-37, 64, 74, pl.13) - is as clear as it gets, given the many analogies for these motifs in the Hellenistic world (Trever 1940: 40-48; Ščukin 2001: 143). Another instance of a battle elephant is on a phalera from the Sark treasure (Allen 1971: pl. XIIb; Ščukin 1994: fig.54; 2001: fig. 5/6), which included Celtic coins, dating back no further than 58-52 BC, as well as a Roman republican coin, from 82 BC (Ščukin 1994: fig.55). Other items with representations of elephants include the cauldron from Gundenstrup (Ščukin 1994: fig.55) and one phalera in Punjab (Rostovcev 1993: 45, pl. 7), property of the British Museum. A phalera in the Medal Cabinet of the National Library in Paris, purchased from Istanbul (Allen 1971: 12-13, pl. XV), also shows an elephant, among other animals. The second phalera from exhibits an inscription with the name of king Mithridates, the one that offered these items to the altar of goddess Artemis (Megaw 1970: 135).

One also takes an interest in the confrontations between various strong animals (dog, feline, wild boar, deer and gryphon) as they appear on the Starobel'sk (Fig.4/1a-d) and Tvardica (Fig.3/1) phalerae. Certain Oriental elements include the representation on the gryphon phalera from Surcea, the Pegasus wings on the Volodarka phalera, or the image of the Jančokrak goddess (Fig.3/2), produced by means identical to those of the Achaemenid items (Mordvinceva 1996b: 154; 1997: 107; 2001: 17; Ščukin 2001: 146). We also regard as Oriental (Mordvinceva 1997: 107; Ščukin 1994: 146; 2001: 146 -147) the multi-spiral necklaces worn by the characters on the Jančokrak (Fig.3/2), Galiče (Fig.6/1) and Surcea phalerae (Fig.5/1). One can witness the mark left by the Hellenistic world not only in the concrete technique of rendering this or that animal (Pegasus, horse head with Helios etc) but also in the themes leaked from Greek mythology. This

stands proof of its major influence on the sacred mentalities of the Sarmatian elites.

The Sarmatian phalerae from hoards (84 items) aside, there are some from tombs as well (68 items). As far as our data goes, they were generally attached to horse harnesses, conic in shape, and the results of artistic styles resembling Oriental art or Greek-Oriental or North-Pontic style. The animals are rendered in ways characteristic of the nomad peoples and with noticeable influences on the part of civilizations from Asia Minor and Persia. The bestiary consists of real regional species (lions, panthers) or fictional creatures meant to inspire fear or suggest domination (several types of gryphons, sphinxes).

The hero Bellerophon, riding Pegasus while killing Chimera (a composite animal made up of lion, he-goat and snake parts) appears on two "mirror" phalerae from Volodorka, while victory goddess Athens (riding a lion) and the Dionysus's victory over the giants are rendered on a phalera in Seversk. Two such items from Ahtanizovskaja present the viewer with the Gorgons' heads (Fig.2/1). Yet another, from Taganrog, shows Dionysus next to a panther.

There are a few remarkable phalerae from Fedulov, such as the one showing Helios between two horse heads, the one depicting goddess Athens fighting giant Alcyoneus, or the two showing a human-lion head with a spear in mouth, or, finally, the four with a rider on them. Just as interesting is winged female character, with a phiala in the right hand and what looks like a hawk in the left one, as it appears on the phalera from Jančokrak (Fig.3/2).

It is relatively safe to trace a representation back to the Sarmatian world because most of them follow the Hellenistic iconography, meaning the bulk of them were made in that region. As for the Geto-Dacians, that data allow us to say this much: a) there is no name of a local deity under any representation there, b) there is no sure proof of animal worshipping, c) there is no depiction in the written sources if, and in what way, they rendered their deities, d) there are no discoveries of statues, bas-reliefs or figurative offerings in sanctuaries (Sîrbu 2004: 112).

There are no phalerae from sanctuaries and tombs, only from hoards. Some had fibulae attached to them (Bucharest-Herăstrău) and several fibulae displayed representations similar to the phalerae (Bălănești, Coada Malului, „Transylvania”). Their style and technique suggests that, for the most part, the items were made in the Geto-Dacian space. The Jakimovo phalera alone – which shows a man – look Hellenistic. What matters, though, is not so much the ethnic origin of the maker but the cultural background, namely the message conveyed and the actual way it is a mirror of the owner's frame of mind.

The cultural background and style of depiction, as they come out based on the iconography of the phalerae in the Geto-Dacian group, are markedly different from the Sarmatian, Hellenistic or West-European ones. That this iconographic motif was widespread and had a major impact is shown by the fact that such representations also show up on ceramic medallions (e.g. Cârlo-mănești) (Drâmbocianu 1979: 95-100) and that they are attached to fibulae. It was an internal need that created these representations, and they served a particular purpose, meaning they reveal specific mentalities.

It is now clear why most of these hoards are from the first half and the middle of the 1st century BC, for king Burebista was ruling the Geto-Dacian society through times of expansion and development (Crișan 1978), and such an outbreak of political-military force was bound to have a counterpart in the sacred domain.

The fact that such items were not found either in sanctuaries or around them, not even buried as offerings or in tombs, is an archaeological fact (Sirbu 1993: 139).

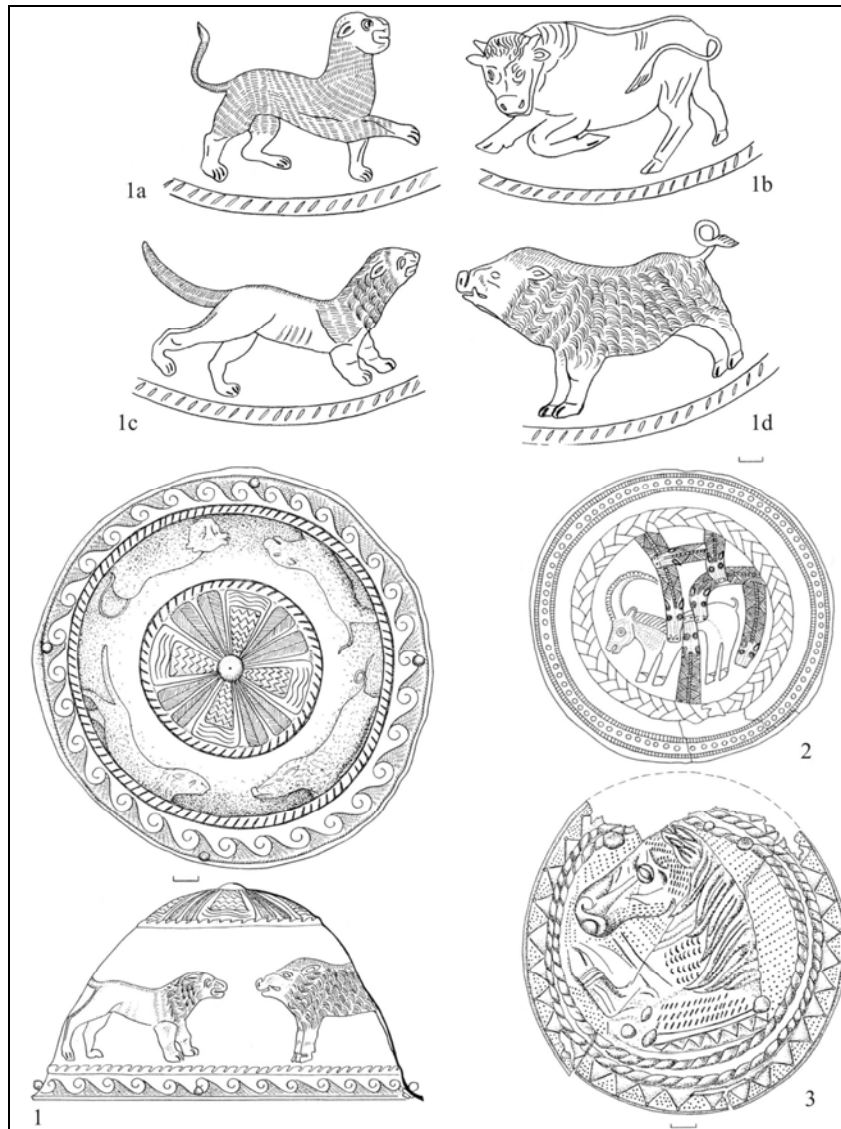


Fig.4 1 Starobel'sk, 2 Vozdviženskaja, 3 Taganrog (after Mordvinceva 2001).

There is no safe way to interpret them, since no image of a deity includes names and there are no relevant similarities with the Hellenistic-Roman iconography. However, there is little doubt, if any, that they were sacred, given that the items were buried and sometimes destroyed (e.g. Lupu). Only deep cultural motivations can make one waste such valuable things, and the opinion that they were hidden as protection measures, due to tough times, no longer stands.



Fig.5 1 Surcea, 2 București-Herăstrău, 3-5 Lupu, 6 Coadă Malului (after Fettich 1953; Glodariu, Moga 1994; Marghitan 1976).

The rider motif is widespread in the Geto-Dacian world, as proven by its appearance between 4th century BC and 1st century AD on phalerae in Surcea, Lupu and Galiče (Șirbu, Florea 2000b: 23-43). There are no images of human confrontation, nor do the riders seem warlike, meaning we need to take into account that they may not stand for war deities (Șirbu, Florea 2000b: 27-34.). The Surcea rider, accompanied by dog and hawk (Fig.5/1) seems to be hunting, such as part of an initiating trial or as in one of the aristocracy's favorite pastimes. The riders in Lupu (Fig.5/5) and Galiče (Fig.6/2) riders look solemn and high-ranking, meaning they could be deities, but we must not discard other possibilities.

The type and iconography of the phalerae in the Geto-Dacian world and the inventory of some findings (of which those in Lupu and Galiče are the most relevant) lead us to support those that claim the inventory of such treasures is made up of suites worn by high-ranking religious figures or basilei on solemn occasions (Medeleț 1993: 18-20).

Clearly, the fibulae with anthropomorphic shield or the phalerae with attached fibulae were used in connection to clothing items.

Given the number, shapes and decorations of the items in the Galiče hoard, it could have been ornamentation on horse harnesses. Since this was a chance discovery, and in 1918 for that matter, only 14 phalerae made it. Two of them have figurative decoration (Fettich 1953: fig.5-12; Rostovcev 1993: 41, pl.2-3). In the case of the Jakimovo hoard, the two phalerae might have been attached to the base of conic cups, as portrayed by a cup displaying a rider, part of the same treasure (Milčev 1973: 2, fig.3).

The style and representations of the phalerae in Stara Zagora (Fig.6/5-6) cannot be considered a product of Thracian mentality, but is rather associated with Oriental iconography and the items discovered in Western Europe (Schnurbein 1986).

A Stara Zagora phalera portrays Hercules killing a lion, surrounded by gryphons and felines, meant to inspire fear (Fig.6/5). The same scene also appears on a phalera in Panagjursite, from the second half of the 4th century BC. The central medallion of a phalera in Stara Zagora shows a feline attaching a he-goat and the scene is surrounded by gryphons, felines and a bull head (Fig.6/6). The Medal Cabinet of the National Library in Paris (Schnurbein 1986: 416, fig.6; Hachmann 1990: 682 sqq., fig.30-31) includes two phalerae, similar in style with those found in Stara Zagora, that could also be from the Greek-Oriental region.

Fifteen items found in Western Europe (13 in Sark, an island in north-western France), and one in Oberaden and Helden (Germany), outline a new group of phalerae. They have numerous stylistic and iconographic similarities with the Greek-Oriental ones and those from Asia Minor and Persia (Allen 1971: 1 sqq., pl. I-XIII; Schnurbein 1986: 409 sqq., fig.2, 4-5; Hachmann 1990: 682 sqq., fig.27, 32, 34-40). That is because we are dealing with a bestiary of real (elephants, lions, panthers) and fiction animals (gryphons or composite animals) from Asia Minor and Persia. Furthermore, the rendering method is itself oriental. Only one phalera from Helden shows a human character - Hercules killing the lion (Hachmann 1990: fig. 27).

In Western Europe, the phalerae or the artisan that made them were probably in contact with the Sarmatians and the Germanic groups (proto-German, to be more precise), or as a result of the politics of Mithridates Eupator (Šćukin 2001: 157).

A number of ancient representations, some of them on the phalerae themselves, show how these items were attached/fastened to the horse harnesses or clothes. Such are the representations in Dura Europos or Halčajan - which clue us as to how the phalerae were attached to harnesses in Asia Minor and Persia - or, when it comes to the Geto-Dacian environment, the barrel-shaped vessel rendering a rider (Căpitanu 1994: 337, fig. 4; Sîrbu, Florea 2000b:34, fig.14.) and the ceramic pattern from Răcățău. A Jakimovo phalera shows how that worked with clothes, on a man's right shoulder (Fig.6/4).



Fig.6 1-2 Galiče, 3-4 Jakimovo, 5-6 Stara Zagora (after Nikolov 1988; Milčev 1973; Schnurbein 1986).

Following V.I. Mordvinceva's taxonomy, the phalerae in Balakleja, Bulahovka, Jančokrak, Starobel'sk and Taganrog belong to the fourth stylistic group (the "graphic" style from the Black Sea region). It is characterized by rich decoration, made up of geometric, phytomorphic and, rarely, anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figures from the barbarian repertoire (Mordvinceva 1996: 12-14; 2001a: 37, 64-65; 2001b: 164); by the fact that all phalerae are made of the same material, a thin sheet of gilded silver. The workshops in the Greek cities north of the Black Sea created most of these items during 2nd-1st centuries BC. Others go only as far as 1st century AD (Mordvinceva 1996: 14; 2001a: 37, 64; 2001b: 164).

Although they share some common features, there are significant differences between the phalerae with figurative representations from the Sarmatian and Geto-Dacian environments, respectively. The features relevant in terms of iconography are much more expressive, but those concerning the discovery context and the items are pertinent as well. Namely, Geto-Dacian items are from hoards exclusively, date back to the first half and middle of 1st century BC, and were used primarily as clothing accessories. On the other hand, tombs and hoards equally account for the Sarmatian phalerae, which mark the entire span of 2nd-1st centuries BC (or even go as far as end of 3rd century BC) and were used for horse harnesses.

Furthermore, the representations are a rife with fundamental differences. The Sarmatian phalerae (Fig.2-4) show Greek-Oriental inspiration not just in terms of themes, but also of the manner of rendering the characters. As for the nomad influences, they are the most visible when one looks at the animal representations and notices the fluidity and dynamism. The far-reaching impact of the Hellenistic world is noticeable in the aspect of the Gorgons' heads (probably meant to turn the enemies into stone), in the presence of goddesses Athens and Nike, of gods Helios and Dionysus, of hero Bellerophon killing the Chimera etc. The real animals encountered in the Oriental world (lions, panthers, elephants) are a strong presence, as are those imagined by these peoples (gryphons, sphinxes).

The Geto-Dacians (Fig.5-6), though, are much more focused on the local ideology and iconography themes, a heritage of Thracian toreutics. The themes of the rider in solemn positions (Lupu, Galiče), of the hunt as a trial for achieving high status (Surcea), of the confrontation between the hawk and the snake (Lupu), of the winged characters as "masters of animals" (Lupu, Jakimovo), of bust rendering (Herăstrău, Galiče, Jakimovo) are often seen in the Thracian toreutics of the 5th-3rd centuries BC (Sîrbu, Florea 2000a: 105-152). All these are solid evidence for assuming that most of the phalerae were made in the Geto-Dacian region. Thus, the differences between Sarmatian and Geto-Dacian mentalities, rooted in the history, traditions and occupations of each people, are highly visible in this category of items as well.

Notes

1. The phalerae are likely to be from the famous Artemis temple in Ephesos (Ščukin 2001, p. 143).
2. According to M. B. Ščukin, who relies on the oriental iconographic elements, the Stara Zagora phalerae appeared in Thracia as a result of the Sarmatians spread out to the west or Mithridates Eupator's diplomatic dealings (Ščukin 2001: 157).
3. According to V. I. Mordvinceva, the phalerae of Starobel'sk and Tvardica date back to the first half of 1st century BC.

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Nr.	Locality	Number of items		Material				Discoveries origin			Cultural environment			Representation type			Chronology	
		Total number of phalerae	Phalerae with figurative representation	Gold	Silver	Gilded silver	Bronze	Golden bronze	Tomb	Hoard	Isolated finding	Geto-Dacian	Thracian	Sarmatian	Geometric	Phytomorphic		Anthropomorphic
1.	Ahtanizovskaja	23	3		10	13				*			*	*	*	*	*	End of the 2 nd c. BC-first half of the 1 st c. BC
2.	Balakleja	9	8			9			*				*	*	*	*	*	End of the 2 nd c. BC-1 st c. BC
3.	Bubueci	6	4				6			*			*	*	*	*	*	First half of the 1 st c. BC
4.	București-Herestrău	2	2			2			*		*			*	*	*	*	First half of the 1 st c. BC
5.	Fedulov	8	8		4	4				*			*	*	*	*	*	2 nd c. BC
6.	Galiče	14	2			14			*		*			*	*	*	*	End of the 2 nd c. BC-middle of the 1 st c. BC
7.	Jakimovo	2	2			2			*		*			*	*	*	*	First half/middle of the 1 st c. BC
8.	Jančokrak	9	2			9			*				*	*	*	*	*	1 st c. BC
9.	Klimenkovka	8	4		6	2			*		*		*	*	*	*	*	2 nd c. BC
10.	Korenovsk	2	2			2			*		*		*	*	*	*	*	1 st c. BC
11.	Krivaja Luka	2	2			2			*				*	*	*	*	*	End of the 2 nd c. BC-first half of 1 st c. BC
12.	Lupu	7	7		7					*		*		*	*	*	*	First half of the 1 st c. BC
13.	Novodžerelievskaja	11	3		8	3			*				*	*	*	*	*	First half of the 1 st c. BC
14.	Novouzensk	2	2			2			*				*	*	*	*	*	End of the 2 nd c. BC-first half of the 1 st c. BC

Nr.	Locality	Number of items		Material				Discoveries origin			Cultural environment			Representation type			Chronology	
		Total number of phalerae	Phalerae with figurative representation	Gold	Silver	Gilded silver	Bronze	Golden bronze	Tomb	Hoard	Isolated finding	Geto-Dacian	Thracian	Sarmatian	Geometric	Phytomorphic		Anthropomorphic
15.	Rogovskaja	5	1		5					*			*	*	*	*	*	End of the 2 nd c. BC-first half of the 1 st c. BC
16.	Seversk	4	4	4				*					*	*	*	*	*	Second half of the 2 nd c. BC-Beginning of the 1 st c. BC
17.	Stara Zagora	3	3		3			*				*		*	*	*	*	1 st c. BC
18.	Starobel'sk	5	1		5				*				*	*	*	*	*	Second half of the 2 nd c. BC-Beginning of the 1 st c. BC
19.	Surcea	2	2		2				*				*	*	*	*	*	First half of the 1 st c. BC
20.	Taganrog	6	2		6				*				*	*	*	*	*	End of the 2 nd c. BC- 1 st c. BC
21.	Tvardica	2	1		2				*				*	*	*	*	*	First half of the 1 st c. BC
22.	Uspenskaja	3	1		3					*			*	*	*	*	*	End of the 3 rd c. BC-2 nd c. BC
23.	Vasjurina Gora	17	1	5	5			7	*				*	*	*	*	*	2 nd c. BC-Beginning of the 1 st c. BC
24.	Velikoploskoe	1	1			1				*			*	*	*	*	*	First half of the 1 st c. BC
25.	Verhnij	6	2		6				*				*	*	*	*	*	2 nd c. BC
26.	Volodarka	2	2		2				*				*	*	*	*	*	2 nd c. BC
27.	Voronežskaja	2	2		2				*				*	*	*	*	*	Second half of the 1 st BC
28.	Žutovo	5	2		1	4			*				*	*	*	*	*	End of the 2 nd c. BC-1 st c. BC
TOTAL		168	76	9	43	102	7	7	10	2	5	1	22	27	19	20	19	

Table 1. Discoveries of phalerae with figurative representations between the Caucasus, the Ural and Balkan Mountains (2nd – 1st centuries B.C.)