

# WILD BOARS REPRESENTATIONS ON SOME GEMSTONES FROM ROMULA AND THEIR SIGNIFICATIONS<sup>1</sup>

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From Romula derives a large number of gemstones<sup>2</sup>, in fact the largest amount of this kind of objects from all over Dacia<sup>3</sup>. The discoveries of whole pieces, but also fragmental or scrap ones, proves the existence at Romula of at least one workshop of processing gemstones<sup>4</sup>.

The topics were extremely rich and treat various and complex scenes with divine characters, mythological and allegorical figures, fantastic beings, grotesque creatures<sup>5</sup>, zoomorphic and vegetal symbols, or with a gnostic character<sup>6</sup>.

I present below the two objects in question.

1. Gemstone worked in carnelian of good quality (dark brick colored jasper, in opinion of D. Tudor<sup>7</sup>), by carving and polishing. It has an oval shape, and in section (cut) is in the shape of a truncated cone with the small base down. Its upper surface area is convex. Well preserved condition. Sizes: 1 × 1,2 × 0,4 cm. Weight: 0,55 g. Currently is part (it makes part) of the Museum of Caracal Collection of gemstones. Inv. no. 1998. **Fig. 1.**

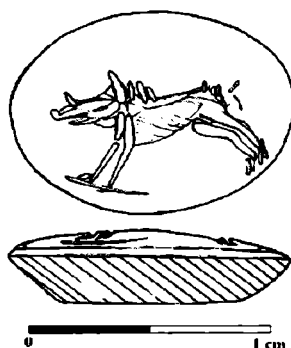


Fig. 1– Gemstone with the representation of a wild boar (drawing Gabriela Filip).

On the surface area of the gemstone it was represented a wild boar, seen in running to the left side. Stylistically (in terms of style, on stylistic point of view), the piece is carefully made. But

<sup>1</sup> I want to thank this way to Mr. Dr. Dorel Bondoc (Oltenia Museum, Craiova) for kindly information, bibliography and suggested working directions.

<sup>2</sup> Tudor 1938, p. 14.

<sup>3</sup> Gramatopol 2000, p. 109.

<sup>4</sup> Tudor 1938, p. 14–19; Bărbulescu 1984, p. 112.

<sup>5</sup> Mărgărit Tătulea 1994, p. 109.

<sup>6</sup> Mărgărit Tătulea 1994, p. 109–110; Gramatopol 2000, p. 111.

<sup>7</sup> Tudor 1967, p. 214, no. 22, fig. 3/5; Tudor 1968, fig. 35/5; Tudor 1978, fig. 33/5.

compared to other pieces that portray similar scenes<sup>8</sup>, its artistic composition betrays a simpler fashion style, much poorer in anatomical details. It is however noted the attention paid to elements which define the nature of the animal, namely the muzzle (snout), the fangs and the fur (hairy skin).

2. Gemstone worked in brick colored carnelian (jasper, in opinion of D. Tudor<sup>9</sup>) by carving and polishing. It has an oval shape, and in section (cut) is in the shape of a truncated cone with the small base down. Its surface area is flat. Well preserved condition. Sizes: 1,2 × 1,5 cm. Weight : 0,77g. This gemstone is part of the Museum of Caracal Collection of gemstones. Inv. no. 3386 (former inv. no. 2213<sup>10</sup>). **Fig. 2.**



Fig. 2 – Gemstone with the representation of a hunting scene (drawing Gabriela Filip).

On the surface of the gemstone was rendered a wild boar, carved in running to the left side. The animal is closely followed by a dog. Above the wild boar appears engraved a crown. This is a hunting scene, therefore we can associate this representation to the cult of the goddess Diana<sup>11</sup>.

In terms of style, the piece is neatly made. The whole composition reveals a obvious care for suggesting the anatomical details, proving the patience, working knowledge and skills the artisan engraver.

Highlighted comes out the hunted animal rendered clearly bigger, compared to its tracker. It can be noticed the attention which has been used to engrave the wild boar fur, that was suggested by using parallel streaks, horizontally carved.

Among the known pieces of this kind, depicting hunting scenes<sup>12</sup>, this is one of the most successful from the artistic point of view.

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The presence of wild boars on gemstones from Romula, can be random or not. For the second alternative, one can invoke (put forward) certain arguments. I am referring specifically

<sup>8</sup> Similar scenes treated on gemstones see at Furtwangler 1896.

<sup>9</sup> Tudor 1967, p. 214, no. 21, fig. 3/4; Tudor 1968, fig. 35/4 and 36/12; Tudor 1978, fig. 33/4.

<sup>10</sup> The piece appears published with old inventory number (see Tudor 1967, p. 214, no. 21).

<sup>11</sup> For more information about the cult of the goddess Diana see Bărbulescu 1984, p. 130–186.

<sup>12</sup> Hunting scenes rendered on gemstones, see at Furtwangler 1896.; A similar representation can be found at Archeological Museum of Sofia (see Dimitrova-Milceva 1980, p. 77, fig. 197).

to a military “badge” with a representation of a wild boar, discovered some time ago, also at Romula<sup>13</sup>. Here is what it is about.

3. Bronze figurine, rendering a wild boar. The body of the animal is of compact bronze, while the pedestal is empty inside. It has a rectangular perforation in its lower part. Well enough preserved. Unspecified sizes. At the moment of publication, the figurine was part of the Maria Istrati-Capșa private collection that was located at the Museum from Drobeta-Turnu Severin. Inv. no. II 211. **Fig. 3.**



Fig. 3 – Bronze figurine rendering a wild boar (after Doinea Benea).

The piece was placed on a horizontal pedestal shaped like a parallelepiped, and renders a wild boar leaning on his legs. The body of the animal is well proportioned; It is slender, while the back legs are slightly curved inwards (to the inside). The head is slightly turned towards the right, with the muzzle half-open and his fangs displayed prominently. The small eyes are suggested rather summary. The same cannot be said about the animal mane, which was rendered very large and tousled, covering the entire neck of the wild boar and extending forward the its back, almost to the waist. The fur was depicted by some engraved in depth horizontal lines, which offers a graceful appearance to the animal.

In the same direction enroll a discovery with a similar representation, with unknown place of finding<sup>14</sup>, but that may be presumed to be somewhere along the Olt Valley, maybe even at Romula<sup>15</sup>. The object is presented, as follows.

<sup>13</sup> Benea 1974, p. 69–74.

<sup>14</sup> Bondoc 2000, p. 50–51, no. 40.

<sup>15</sup> This bronze figurine was part of the Bălăcescu collection. Gramatopol suggest that the place of origin for most of the Bălăcescu collection, was most likely Romula (see Gramatopol 2000, p. 109).

4. Small bronze figurine, with the representation of the head of a wild boar. It is of compact bronze and it has a greenish-black patina. Well preserved. Sizes : height of the socle: 7 cm; height of the representation of the animal: 4 cm. The piece is now part of the Oltenia Museum collection. Inv. no 38009. **Fig. 4.**

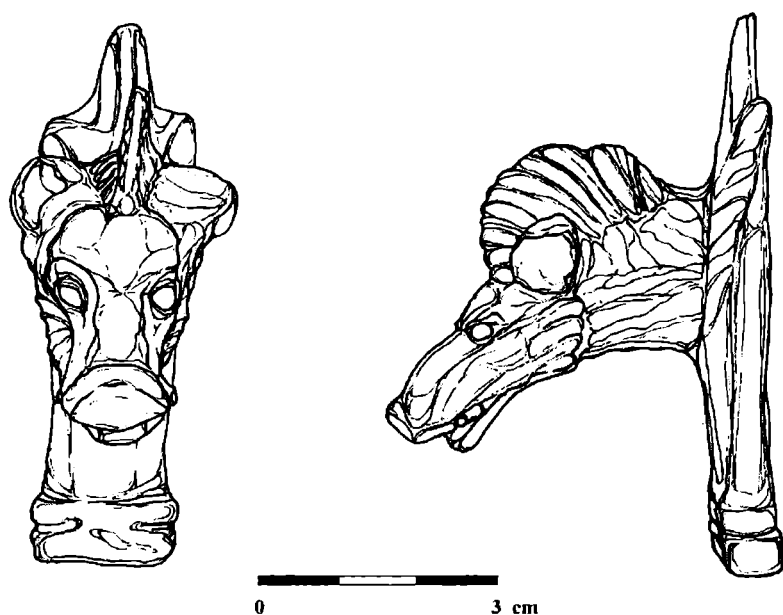


Fig. 4 – Small bronze figurine, with the representation of the head of a wild boar (drawing Gabriela Filip).

The head of the wild boar, bent gently forward, is disposed on a vertical socle. The anatomical details are well defined. The animal half-open muzzle is elongated. The fangs, not very large, are well rendered. The same attention was given to the execution of the eyes, which are shown dilated. Between the animal ears, the mane is like a protuberance and is extended up to the base of the neck. Both fur and mane of the wild boar are made in the form of incised lines. In general terms, the piece is worked in a clean and clear manner, focusing on all the details that define the nature of the represented animal.

The appearance of the wild boars representations on the gemstones from Romula, as well as on figurate bronzes alike, can not be the result of one simple circumstance. If we accept the fact that the wild boar from no. 3 (fig. 3) represent a *signum* of the legion I Italica (and there is no reason to doubt about this fact<sup>16</sup>), then the presence of such images on the gemstones from Romula makes sense. The only problem is that until now, there were not discovered at Romula inscriptions or stamped bricks or tiles of this legion. Overcoming this shortcoming, which can be generated by the research stage or their publication, it may be noted the presence of decorative motifs that render wild boars on the vessels of *terra sigillata* type found at Romula, brought here from other parts of the Roman Empire<sup>17</sup> or manufactured in the local workshops.

5. Vessel of *terra sigillata* type. Fragment from the vessel wall decorated with motifs rendered in relief. Drag. 37 Types. Piece made in the workshops of Lezoux, PATERNVS, CINNAMVS style (see Popilian 1976). The second half of the second century AD. The vessel was decorated in the so-called “free style” characteristic to the third period of the Lezoux workshops<sup>18</sup>. Unspecified

<sup>16</sup> Amon disagrees with the identification of Doina Benea (see Amon 2004, p. 164).

<sup>17</sup> Popilian 1976, p. 163, no. 83, pl. V/83.

<sup>18</sup> Popilian 1976, p. 28.

sizes. At the time of its publication, the piece was part of the Museum of Caracal collection. Inv. no 1712. Fig. 5.

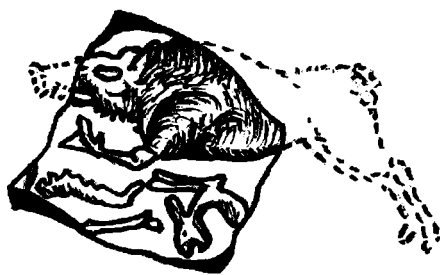


Fig. 5 – Fragment of a *terra sigillata* type vessel, rendering a hunting scene with a wild boar (drawing Gabriela Filip).

On the surface area of this ceramic fragment several animal elements have been preserved which were made in relief, and from which, in the upper part of the fragment, It can be easily recognize the front half of a wild boar seen in running to the left side. In the bottom left there have been preserved a hooved animal foot (maybe also a wild boar or rather a deer) and a vegetal fragment (most likely a leaf). In the bottom right, it can be seen a representation of a dog, rendered in running to the right side, with his head turned toward the wild boar. The composition seems to represent a hunting scene.

Also important in the direction of the problem discussed here are the representations of the wild boars on the *terra sigillata* type vessels, locally produced, at Romula.

6. Local produced *terra sigillata* type vessel<sup>19</sup>. Fragment, probably a plateau (tray or platter); it has been preserved a handle and a part of the body of the vessel; skipping the increase of the decorative motifs which covers the surface area of this piece of fragment, I point out the presence in the lower register (bottom left) of a motif that renders a wild boar. At the time of its publication, the fragment was part of the Museum of Caracal collection. Without a number of inventory. Fig. 6, 6a.

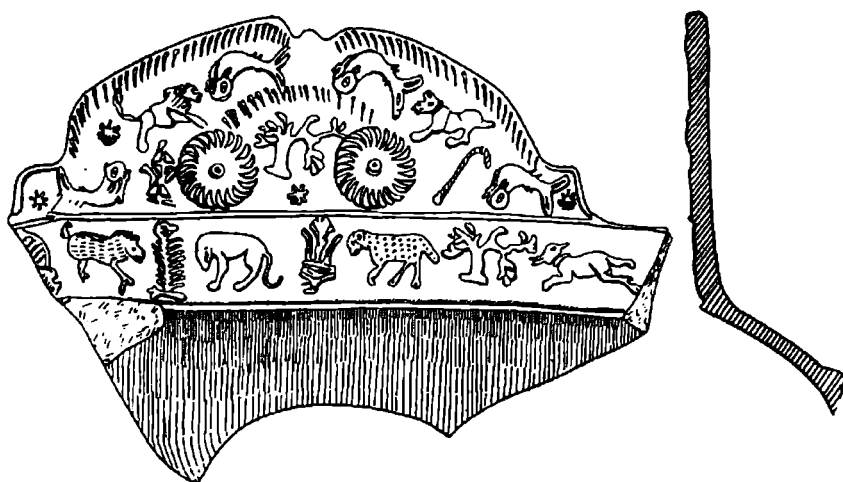


Fig. 6 – Fragment of a local produced *terra sigillata* type vessel, on which can be seen a representation of a wild boar (after Gh. Popilian).

<sup>19</sup> Popilian 1972, p. 150, fig. 2/2; Popilian 1976, p. 175, no. 265, pl. XXIV/265.

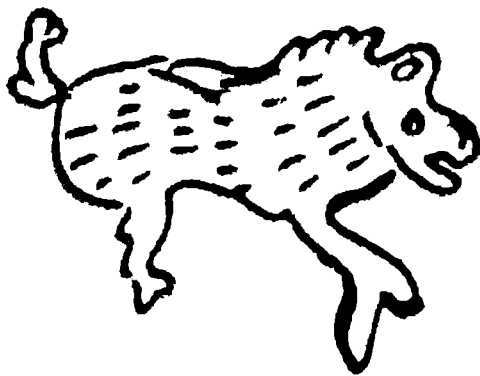


Fig. 6a – Fragment of a local produced *terra sigillata* type vessel, on which can be seen a representation of a wild boar (after Gh. Popilian)

At the end of this presentation, after reviewing the representations of wild boars on gemstones from Romula, and comparing them with those found on the figurate bronzes and *terra sigillata* type vessels, some considerations are required.

It can be noted first the fact that the wild boar has been a favorite motif on the representations made by the craftsmen engravers on the gemstones from Romula (above, no. 1 and no. 2), as has been a favorite motive of the subjects rendered on the *terra sigillata* type vessels, imported (no. 5) or locally produced (no.6). The handy explanation could be a relationship between these representations and the cult of the goddess Diana, the patroness of hunting and wild animals.

On the other hand, the figurate bronzes rendering the wild boars can be related with the mark of the legion I Italica (above, no. 3) or may represent simple objects of decoration (no. 4). Perhaps the choice for such representation was given to the fact that the wild boar is a strong and fearsome animal.

In any case, the wild boars representations have enjoyed the craftsmen engravers full attention, artisans who worked in bronze or ceramists, which competed in terms of rendering with high fidelity the anatomical and artistic details.

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REPREZENTĂRI DE PORCI MISTREȚI PE GEME DESCOPERITE  
LA ROMULA ȘI SEMNIFICAȚIA ACESTORA  
(Abstract)

Tematica glipticii romulense era extrem de bogată și trata diverse și complexe scene cu personaje divine, mitologice, alegorice, făpturi fantastice, creaturi grotești, simboluri zoomorfe, vegetale sau cu un caracter gnostic. Pentru subiectul lucrării de față, atenția mi-a fost atrasă de reprezentările de mistreți, două la număr. Prezența mistreților pe gemele de la Romula, poate fi întâmplătoare sau nu. Mistrețul a reprezentat un motiv predilect în compozițiile meșterilor gravori care au realizat gemele de la Romula după cum a reprezentat un motiv preferat în tematica redată pe vasele de tip terra sigillata, de import sau locale, dar și pe bronzurile figurate deopotrivă. Reprezentările de mistreți pot fi puse în legătură cu însemnul legiunii I Italica sau pot constitui simple obiecte de decor. Nu trebuie exclusă nici o relație între aceste reprezentări și cultul zeiței Diana, patroana vânătorii și a animalelor sălbatice.