

**THE GOLD CROSS TIARA  
OF QUEEN MARIA OF YUGOSLAVIA  
TIARA DE AUR CU CRUCE A REGINEI MARIA  
A IUGOSLAVIEI**

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‘Gold? Yellow, glittering, precious gold?’\*\*

**Rezumat**

Acest articol prezintă istoria unei bijuterii regale, tiara de aur cu cruce care a aparținut reginei Maria a Iugoslaviei, născută principesa Maria a României, fiica regelui Ferdinand I și a reginei Maria a României. Tiara a fost realizată din lingoul de aur pe care „Societatea Anonimă Română Minieră Mica” i l-a dăruit reginei Maria a Iugoslaviei cu ocazia căsătoriei sale cu regele Alexandru I al Iugoslaviei la 8 iunie 1922. Inventivitatea și particularitatea design-ului, precum și povestea sa interesantă au asigurat tiarei un loc de onoare în istoria bijuteriilor regale din regiunea balcanică.

**Cuvinte cheie:** căsătorie, cadou de nuntă, lingou de aur, „Societatea Anonimă Română Minieră Mica”.

In Belgrade on 8 June 1922, at St. Michael’s Cathedral, was officiated with great pomp the wedding of Princess Maria, daughter of King Ferdinand I and Queen Marie of Romania, with the then King Alexander I of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, later King of Yugoslavia (Maria 2005 188-192 (8 June 1922); ‘Le Figaro’ 9.06.1922 1; ILN, 17.06.1922 892-893; Mandache 2018 149-151) **Pls. 1-2**

On this happy occasion, the young Queen received a large number of wedding presents, comprising pieces of jewellery (Maria 2005 175 (31 May 1922), 183 (8 June 1922), 184 (6 June 1922); NAR ‘Princess Mărioara of Romania Archive’ 1922 12, letter from 6 May 1922 wrote by the jeweller Ignatz Roller; Mandache 2018 149), a car (Maria 2005 176 (2 June 1922), three horses (Maria 2005 177 (3 June 1922), and a gold ingot (‘Adevărul’

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\*\* W. Shakespeare, *Timon of Athens*, Act 4, Scene 3, 28.

24.07.1922 2) etc. (Maria, regina României 2006 112 (2.04.1923); Mandache 2018 149, 242)

Among the gifts mentioned above, I chose this gold ingot as the subject for the present study.

On 27 June 1922 Oscar Kiriacescu, director of the Department of Gold of the National Bank of Romania, replied to the official letter no. 19057 of the Minister of Industry and Commerce (Vasile P. Sassu, during the mandate of PM Ion I. C. Brătianu), that the NBR had no objection to the 'Mica' company's intervention to allow it to export one kilogram of raw gold. (NBR Archive 1922 frame no. 69 (=p. 263))

On 24 July 1922 the 'Adevărul' newspaper published a short notice announcing the approval of the export of one kilogram of raw gold, with the payment of legal export taxes necessary to make a tiara that the 'Societatea Anonimă Română Minieră Mica' (About the activity of the 'Mica' Company, see Radu 1973 349-354) offered as a present for Queen Maria of Yugoslavia's wedding ('Adevărul' 24 July 1922 2).

On 28 July 1922 the approval of the Council of Ministers for the export of a gold bar weighing 1 kilogram for the 'Mica' Company was published in the 'Monitorul Oficial', receiving the authorization no. 948. (MO 28.07.1922 4543)

The first record of the existence of the tiara is in January 1923, in Bucharest, when Queen Maria of Romania wrote in her diary of the moment when her daughter received the tiara from Alexandru Averescu and from another person, most likely Ion Gigurtu, General Director of the 'Mica' Company. (Maria, regina României 2006 41 (29.01.1923); Rișcuța 2001-2002 645)

The second record of its existence was in February 1928, when Queen Maria sent a letter to her mother describing a ball in Belgrade at which she wore a red velvet dress and the Gold Cross tiara. Queen Maria added that 'they arranged very well for me here' the piece. (NAR 'Queen Marie Archive' 1928 1 (19.02.1928); Mandache 2018 169)

It is very likely that, for reasons unknown, the export of the ingot had not taken place and a jeweller from Romania was chosen instead to create the piece. The artist could be from Bucharest, yet his name was not mentioned by Queen Maria of Yugoslavia or Queen Marie of Romania in their writings. Afterwards the tiara was 'arranged' in Belgrade, sometime prior to 1928.

The Gold Cross tiara (Diameter: 15 cm) has an original square case made of fine leather (Length: 25 cm, Width: 25 cm). On the lid of the case are engraved in gold the royal coat of arms of the Karadjordjevic dynasty. (Андрејић 2008 218)

The tiara was produced from an openwork and chiseled gold sheet. The piece is made of solid gold, featuring acanthus leaves, flower motifs and

a large Greek cross in the *kokoshnik* style. A rich spiral ornament of vines with leaves is placed symmetrically around the circle. This tiara has no gemstone. A strand of long blonde hair is attached to the back of the tiara hoop. The ringlet is of Queen Maria's beautiful hair, the tiara's most frequently wearer. (Андрејић 2008 218) **Pls. 3-4**

The tiara was made in 1922 or 1923 since the 'Julietta' photographic studio of the Romanian royal court accomplished a series of postcards depicting Queen Maria of Yugoslavia wearing the Gold Cross tiara. On the lower part of these postcards is stamped the year 1923. For the photo session, Queen Maria of Yugoslavia wore the Gold Cross tiara, the emerald and diamond Cartier *sautoir*, after its alteration in 1923, and a pair of brilliant round earrings. The dress is clasped on the hip region with diamond dress clips. Except the stoneless tiara, all the others jewellery have inset gemstones and belong to the Art Deco style. **Pl. 4**

The 'Mica' Gold Cross tiara, also known as 'Devojačka dijadema' (= the 'Girl's tiara') on Serbian websites, (<https://mediasfera.rs/> 20.09.2023; <https://www.kurir.rs/> 21.09.2023; <https://www.politika.rs/> 20.09.2023), was made of gold mined in Transylvania, very likely from the '12 Apostoli' mine.

The 'Societatea Anonimă Română Minieră Mica' was the proprietor of the '12 Apostoli' gold mine (the village of Ruda, municipality of Brad, Hunedoara County) (NBR Archive 1921 frame no. 194 (5.08.1921), which was one of the most productive gold mines of the interwar period in Romania. (Rișcuța, Rișcuța 2018 224)

The possibility that the raw gold ingot was from the '12 Apostoli' gold mine is very high, since for the period 1920-1921 it was the only gold mine belonging to the 'Societatea Anonimă Română Minieră Mica'.

In 1922 the '12 Apostoli' gold mine was still the only gold mine owned by the 'Societatea Anonimă Română Minieră Mica'. But for this year, the 'Mica' Company also had other subsidiary enterprises from which it received gold. (Rișcuța, Rișcuța 2018 241, appendix I) Either way, the raw gold ingot was of Transylvanian origin, from the Brad area.

Other similar examples of gold bars given to members of the Romanian royal family should be cited for the same time period as follows.

During the 1919 tour of Transylvania, King Ferdinand and Queen Marie of Romania received a piece of gold when visiting a 'șteamp' structure in the Abrud area (Alba County). (Maria, regina României 1996 195 (29.05.1919); Stoian, Mălușelu 2019 147)

The ardent patriot and publicist Radu Cosmin, a member of the royal retinue on the tour mentioned above, captured the moment when the King and Queen looked at three large and heavy pieces of pure gold when they visited the 'șteamp' structure in Gura Barza (In the Brad area, Hunedoara County). On

this occasion, Queen Marie received a large native gold ‘flower’. (Cosmin 1919 386; Stoian, Mălușelu 2019 147)

Queen Marie of Romania wrote in her diary about the piece of gold she received at Abrud on 29 May 1919, but did not mention anything about the visit to Gura Barza and Brad and the large gold ‘flower’ received there, as Radu Cosmin wrote in the report of the royal tour. (Cosmin 1919 386)

Like Radu Cosmin, Ion G. Duca, a retinue’s member during the 1919 tour of Transylvania, mentions in his memoirs the royal cortege’s visit to the town of Brad, but nothing else about the gifts. (Duca 1982 178)

On 26 May 1919 the royal cortege visited the city of Baia Mare, and Ion G. Duca wrote about meeting with ‘indescriptibilul Pokol de Lozna Mare, care a oferit aur din minele sale pentru Coroana Regală’ (=‘the ineffable Pokol of Lozna Mare, which offered gold from its mines for the Royal Crown’). (Duca 1982 178)

Indeed, Senator Alexiu Pokol (sometimes spelled Alexe Pocol), a prosperous gold mines owner, offered after three years gold to Queen Marie of Romania.

Alexiu Pokol gave, ‘cu inimă curată’ (‘with pristine heart’), ‘tot aurul necesar pentru făurarea Coroanei’ (‘all the gold needed to forge the Crown’). (NAR ‘the Vasile Stoica Fund Archive’ 1921 5, letter from 2 July 1921 wrote by Pokol to General Constantin Coandă)

General Constantin Coandă, President of the ‘Commission for organizing the coronation celebrations of the sovereigns’, informed the Royal House of the gold offering on 5 July 1921. Later, the Royal House replied that Queen Marie was grateful for Pokol’s attachment to the Crown and the Country. (NAR ‘the Vasile Stoica Fund Archive’ 1921 4)

On 1 August 1921 General Constantin Coandă wrote a letter to Senator Pokol in which he stressed the gratitude of Queen Marie and the Commission’s greetings. (NAR ‘the Vasile Stoica Fund Archive’ 3; Opreș 2022 309, 311)

In the diary of Queen Marie of Romania, the first mention of Transylvanian gold linked to the crown is made during her visit to Paris in 1921. She had two meetings with members of the Falize family to take measurements for the crown on 4 August and 11 September 1921. (Maria, regina României 2004 232, 282)

Recently, Viorel Rusu and Lucia Pop stated that Alexiu Pokol donated 3,600 kg of gold from his mines located in the Maramureș region. (Rusu, Pop 2019 40)

Although X-ray fluorescence analyzes have been undertaken in recent years on the crown of Queen Marie of Romania (Exhibited in the ‘Treasury Hall’ of the National History Museum of Romania, Inv. No. 37421), their

results neither confirm nor disprove the use of native Transylvanian gold. (Oberländer-Târnoveanu 2022 305)

The use of native Transylvanian gold was aimed at increasing the symbolic value of the crown with which the Queen of Romania was to be crowned on 15 October 1922 in Alba Iulia. (Oberländer-Târnoveanu 2022 305)

Two similar examples have to be correlated with the crown of Queen Marie. The first is the Royal Crown of King Carol I of Romania made from a segment of a steel cannon used by the Ottomans in the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-1878 and captured by the Romanian army. (Exhibited in the 'Treasury Hall' of the National History Museum of Romania, Inv. No. 37391; Georgescu 2012 68)

The second is the crown of the Kingdom of Serbia (1903-1918) (Later Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (1918-1929), afterward Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1929-1945), made for the Coronation of King Peter I. The item, exhibited in the Historical Museum of Serbia, has inset gemstones discovered in Serbian mines. (<https://royalfamily.org/the-regalia/> 22.09.2023)

Returning to the discussions regarding the Gold Cross tiara, it was worn by Queen Maria of Yugoslavia a few times during the reign of King Alexander, her favorite by far being the Emerald and diamond tiara she received from her husband as a wedding gift. (Papi 2016 324, 326)

D. Acović, a reputed specialist in heraldry, considered the gold tiara to be a substitute for a woman's crown on ceremonial occasions, given that it has a coronal appearance. (Ацовић 2008 511, quoted by Андрејић 2008 218 note no. 47)

Nowadays the tiara is exhibited in 'King Peter's House', in Topola (the Republic of Serbia), along with other personal items belonging to King Alexander I and Queen Maria of Yugoslavia. (<https://www.blic.rs/> 26 June 2023)

The last use of the Gold Cross tiara was in 2016, when it was loaned and worn by Princess Brigitta Karadjordjevic at an event in Serbia. (<https://royalwatcherblog.com/> 22.09.2023)

### Conclusions

From the beginning, from the moment the gold ingot was donated by the 'Societatea Anonimă Română Minieră Mica', it was meant to be used to make a tiara. The Gold Cross tiara was worked in 1922 or 1923 probably in Romania, by an unknown jeweller. The jewel was worn by Queen Maria of Yugoslavia a few times during her reign, another tiara being preferred by far.

The gold used to make the piece was extracted in Transylvania, most likely from the '12 Apostoli' mine (village of Ruda, municipality of Brad, Hunedoara County).

Of all the diadems belonging to Queen Maria of Yugoslavia, the 'Mica' Gold Cross tiara is the only one exhibited in a museum, in 'King Peter's House', in Topola, about 70 km from Belgrade.

The design's inventiveness and peculiarity, as well as its interesting story have secured the tiara a place of honor in the history of royal jewellery from the Balkan region.

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### Abbreviations

- Adevărul – *Adevărul*, newspaper, Bucharest.
- ILN – *Illustrated London News*, magazine, London.
- Le Figaro – *Le Figaro*, newspaper, Paris.
- Митолошки зборник – *Митолошки зборник*, Центар за митолошке студије Србије, Раџа-Belgrade.
- MO – *Monitorul Oficial al României (The Official Gazette of Romania)*, Bucharest.
- NAR – The National Archives of Romania, Bucharest/ANR – Arhivele Naționale ale României, Bucharest.
- NHMR – The National History Museum of Romania, Bucharest.
- Sargetia – *Sargetia. Acta Musei Devensis*, the Dacian and Roman Civilisation Museum, Deva.



**Pl. 1** – Princess Maria of Romania and King Alexander on their wedding day, postcard, 'Julietta', NHMR, inv. no. 165852





**Pl. 2** – Princess Maria of Romania as bride; postcard, 'Julietta', NHMR, inv. no. 87505



**Pl. 3** – The Gold Cross tiara. Photo credit:  
Courtesy of HRH Crown Prince Alexander of Serbia



**Pl. 4** – Queen Maria of Yugoslavia wearing the Gold Cross tiara, the emerald and diamond Cartier *sautoir*, after its alteration in 1923, and brilliant round earrings; postcard, 'Julietta', NHMR, inv. no. 164939