

A LEAD MOLD FROM ULPIA TRAIANA SARMIZEGETUSA

CRISTIAN GĂZDAC

During the archeological campaigns with "Global research and Discovery Network" in 1995-1997 at Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa have been found a lot of very interesting objects belonging to the Roman period¹. In the area of the Great Temple has been found a round-shaped object in lead (found by Frank Adams). After the restoration, on the one side had appeared the image of a coin reverse in a bad preservation state (D= 0,32 mm; W = 51,20 g, inv. 33310). On the other side, can be seen the traces from a handle (pl. I, 1,2).

The legend of the reverse can be completed as [concord(ia) a]V[gus]TOR(um) TR(ibunicia potestate) II, in the field S(enato) C(onsulto), in the exergue: CO(n)S(ul) II. Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Vergus standing with clasped hands (fig.1).



Fig. 1.

By the Roman Imperial Coinage this reverse belongs to a sesterce of Lucius Verus (RIC III, p. 318, no. 1308-1311) issued at Rome between December 161 and December 162.

We have only one analogy in Dacia found at Apulum and represents a lead seal with an obverse of Diva Faustina I (I, 3,4,5,)².

1. The catalogue of all finds from these campaigns will be published in the next volume of *Acta Musei Napocensis*, 36, 1998.

2. I. Pioariu, *Un sigiliu roman din plumb cu efigia și legenda Faustinei I descoperit la Apulum*, in *Apulum*, XXXII, p. 247-250.



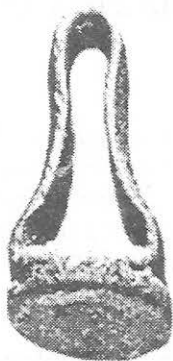
1



2



4



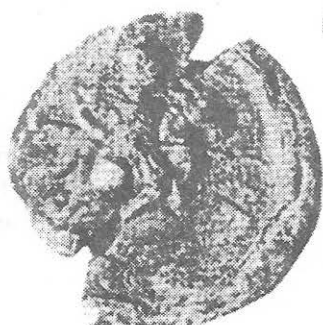
3



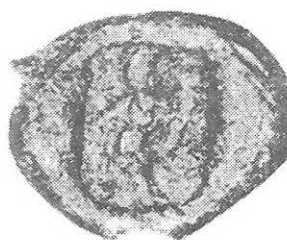
5



6



7



8

This mold would have been used for made seal – weather of clay, wax or lead, which helped prevent merchandise being tampered with either during transportation or while being stored. The arguments for this are the finds from Britain where are more than 300 Roman lead seals (a few examples see at the pl. I. 6,7,8,)³. A great part of this seal leads have been found in London at the side of Thames where boats would have been unloaded. Other seals come from the neighbourhood of Roman forts where stores of merchants would have been kept⁴. At the same time, it is known that in the Roman Empire and then later in the Byzantine Empire the correspondence is secured and guaranteed by such seals of clay or lead⁵. Roman lead seals seem to be usually quite thick, of circular or rectangular shape with one or both sides stamped. Through the middle of the seal is an opening, where a cord would have been passed to enable the device to be secured to a parcel or package⁶ (pl.I, 6,7,8).

The find places of both lead molds, Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa and Apulum, are the biggest towns of the province of Dacia, in fact, we speak about the religious capital and the administrative capital of the province. So, the finding of such pieces, even if these seals were destined for cargoes or correspondence (suggestions of L. Petculescu), it is very normally in places where the trades and the mail were at the high level of interest.

List of illustrations

Fig. 1– Lead mold from Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa (drawn by Anca Suciú).

Pl. I, 1-2 – Lead mold from Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa (photos by S. Onedie after copies made by H. Henrikssen); 1 - reverse side; 2– handle side.

Pl. I, 3,4,5, – Lead mold from Apulum (after I. Pioariu, p. 247) : 3 – handle side; 4 – positive picture of seal; 5 – obverse side.

Pl. I, 6,7,8 – Lead seals from Britain (after N. Mills, p. 74): 6 – leads seal showing mounted emperor; 7 – lead seal depicting Genius; 8 – lead seal showing standing figure.

3. N. Mills, *Roman Artifacts found in Britain*, Essay 1995, p. 72-75.

4. Idem, p. 74.

5. DA, IV, 2, s.v. *signum*, p. 1325-1326.

6. N. Mills, p. 74.