

Buckles from *Apoulon* - Piatra Craivii

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The late Latène buckles from the south-east of Europe, have been presented in a large study, well informed and commented¹. Among these, there have also been included, of course, the ones that have been discovered on the territory of Romania. In Transylvania they were found in stonewalled fortresses², in settlement³ and in necropoles⁴. The buckles from *Apoulon* - Piatra Craivii⁵ have not been exhaustively published yet⁶, till now. They have been discovered during the last digging cycle, accomplished by Cloșca L. Băluță in the rotunda situated in the south - western part of the sanctuary on terrace V, arranged among the numerous ceramic fragments, ordinary and painted; silver jewelry fragments and a few bracelets, bronze pendants and necklaces, complete and fragmental⁷.

1. Buckle type I, reconstituted from two fragments (18,5 x 6,5 - 4 cm). The edges are folded; the belt fixing hook, entire; the hasp zone is missing and also, partly only, the bronze plate. The ornamental field is divided into three registers. The upper one (5 x 3 cm), with three parallel nervures in the upper side, is decorated with a pair of concentric circles, with central *umbo*. The central register (9 x 6,4 cm) separated from the upper one by a nervure, is decorated by four parallel, longitudinal nervures; in the right side inferior corner, a sign in the shape of C. The lower register, limited from the middle one by two parallel nervures, has an ornament in the shape of Branch tirtrec. At the fixing zone of the hasp, two parallel nervures (fig. 1).

2. Buckle type II (16,5 x 4,5 - 6,5 cm), with folded edges, partly destroyed; the hasp zone is broken; the fixing hook from the belt is entire. The ornamental field is divided into three registers, limited by parallel oblique gared strips, partially destroyed. The upper one, limited by two parallel nervures next to the hook has its bronze plate destroyed. The central register (3,3 x 3,5 cm), limited from the upper one by two parallel nervures, is decorated with concentric circles and central *umbo*, symmetrically disposed, by threes in the first row and by fours in the next two rows. The lower register (3,5 x 3,7 cm), separated from the central one by a broad strip with oblique grooves, limited by three parallel nervures, has the same ornament, but arranged conversely. At the fixing zone of the hasp, five parallel nervures (fig. 2).

3. Buckle type I (16,5 x 5 - 7,5 cm), with folded edges. The hasp is broken; the hook is partially preserved. The ornamental field is limited in the upper part and, probably in the lower one, by two broad strips with vertical grooves and laterally by a broad strip with horizontal grooves on each side. It is divided into four registers, separated by a simple nervure (3,5 x 4,2 - 4,7 cm). They are decorated

symmetrically, with semicircles framed by rows of pearls placed on the lateral strips. In the upper register, pearls are arranged on the diameter of the semicircles, as well (fig. 3).

Types of geometric decorative elements, relatively few, are the following:

1. Broad strips framed by nervures with horizontal grooves disposed on the lateral parts of the buckle (fig. 3); with vertical grooves at the extremities of the buckle (fig. 3) and with oblique grooves in its lateral parts, inferior and probably superior (fig. 2). Relative frequency of the ornament: 9 (cf. Babeş, group 1).

2. Simple nervures, disposed horizontally for delimitation of the registers (fig. 3) and multiples, parallel, disposed vertically, asymmetrically, as ornament (fig. 1), or horizontally in order to frame the ornaments (fig. 1), the stripes with oblique grooves (fig. 2) and the ones with horizontal grooves (fig. 3). The general relative frequency of the ornament: 7 (cf. Babeş, group 2).

3. Concentric circles, with central *umbo*, horizontally disposed and symmetrical in rows by threes and by fours, in registers (fig. 2). The general relative frequency of the ornament: 4, respectively 6 (cf. Babeş, groups 4 and 5).

4. Simple semicircles, flanked by a row of pearls, placed on the lateral strips, symmetrically disposed, in registers (fig. 3).

5. Fir-tree needles, horizontally disposed, in register (fig. 1).

6. Small decorative semicircle, placed in corner of the field (fig. 1).

In the typology register of the ornaments engraved on the *Apoulon* - Piatra Craivii buckles, fir-tree needles – if it is correctly interpreted – the singular ornament, in the shape of a C and semicircles, flanked by rows of pearls, arranged in the superior register and on the circles diameter, are stylistically different from the buckles discovered elsewhere (cf. Babeş, group 3).

The disposal of the decorative elements, generally placed in the typological register of those which are specific for that epoch, is slightly differentiated at *Apoulon* - Piatra Craivii from the ones that have been found in other centres.

The *officina* in which the Apoulonian buckles were worked out, could be local, due to the fineness of the manufacturing, the disposal of the decorative elements, the originality of some of them and also the assumed existence of a local *officina* here, meant to manufacture silver jewelry.

From a typological point of view, these handicraft pieces from *Apoulon* - Piatra Craivii, are placed in the Geto-Dacian group, unitary stylistically and chronologically, type I, determined by the construction system of the hasp⁸. The dimensions of the hasps are placed between the limits of the group: 19 x 6,7-7,8 cm.

Chronologically, they are placed, according to the archaeological context in which they were found – rotunda and associated materials – within the second half of the first century B.C. The dating back is confirmed also by the buckles discovered in the other settlements or Geto-Dacian fortresses of the "classical" epoch.

The processing method: the bronze plate decorated by hammering, fixed on an iron prop by folding the edges, place the buckles from *Apoulon* - Piatra Craivii among the most numerous in the northern part of the Lower Danube.

They bring a modest, but substantial contribution to the enlargement of our knowledge and horizon, concerning these rare handicrafts.

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NOTES

1. M. Babeș, *Paftale Latène târzii din sud-estul Europei*, SCIVA, 34, 3, 1983, p. 196-221 (further on, Babeș).

2. Piatra Roșie (C. Daicoviciu, *Cetatea dacică de la Piatra Roșie*, București, 1954, p. 55-56, 89 and pl. 16/10; Babeș, cat. 8) and Piatra Craivii, unpublished (Babeș, cat. 7).

3. Sighișoara (Babeș, cat. 12a) and Șura Mică, unpublished (Babeș, cat. 13).

4. Bratei, unpublished (Babeș, cat. 1) and Sighișoara (Babeș, cat. 12b).

5. The results of the archaeological research were to be integrate in the monography of oppidane fortress, to its elaboration it is not working yet. The drawing of the buckles are performed by C.L. Băluță.

6. General bibliography: I. Berciu, *Piatra Craivii - Apoulon*, FastiArch XI, 1963, p. 41, nr. 6424; I. Berciu, H. Daicoviciu, Al. Popa, *La forteresse dace de Piatra Craivii (Transilvania - Roumanie)*, Celticum XII, Rennes, 1965, p. 115-162; M. Macrea, O. Floca, N. Lupu, I. Berciu, *Cetăți dacice din sudul Transilvaniei*, București, 1965, p. 45-57; Al. Popa, *Nivelul dezvoltării economiei dacice în lumina descoperirilor de la Piatra Craivii și Căpîlna*, Apulum IX, 1971, p. 271-282; I. Berciu, V. Moga, *Contribuția Muzeului de Istorie din Alba Iulia la cunoașterea culturii dacice*, Crisia I, 1972, p. 65-78; V. Moga, *Așezarea și cetatea dacică de la Piatra Craivii*, Studii dacice, Cluj Napoca, 1980, p. 103-116; idem, *Remarques sur le mur de la citadelle dace de Piatra Craivii*, ActaMN, 32, I, 1995, p. 146-147.

7. I. H. Crișan, *Ceramica daco-getă, cu privire specială la Transilvania*, București, 1969, p. 197-201; I. Berciu, V. Moga, *Ceramica pictată din cetatea dacică de la Piatra Craivii*, Apulum XII, 1974, p. 70-74; C. L. Băluță, *Des bronzes daciques d'Apoulon*, Actes du IV^e Colloque International sur les bronzes antiques. Annales de l'Université Jean Moulin, Lyon, 1976, p. 9-12.

8. M. Babeș, *op. cit.*, p. 199-202.

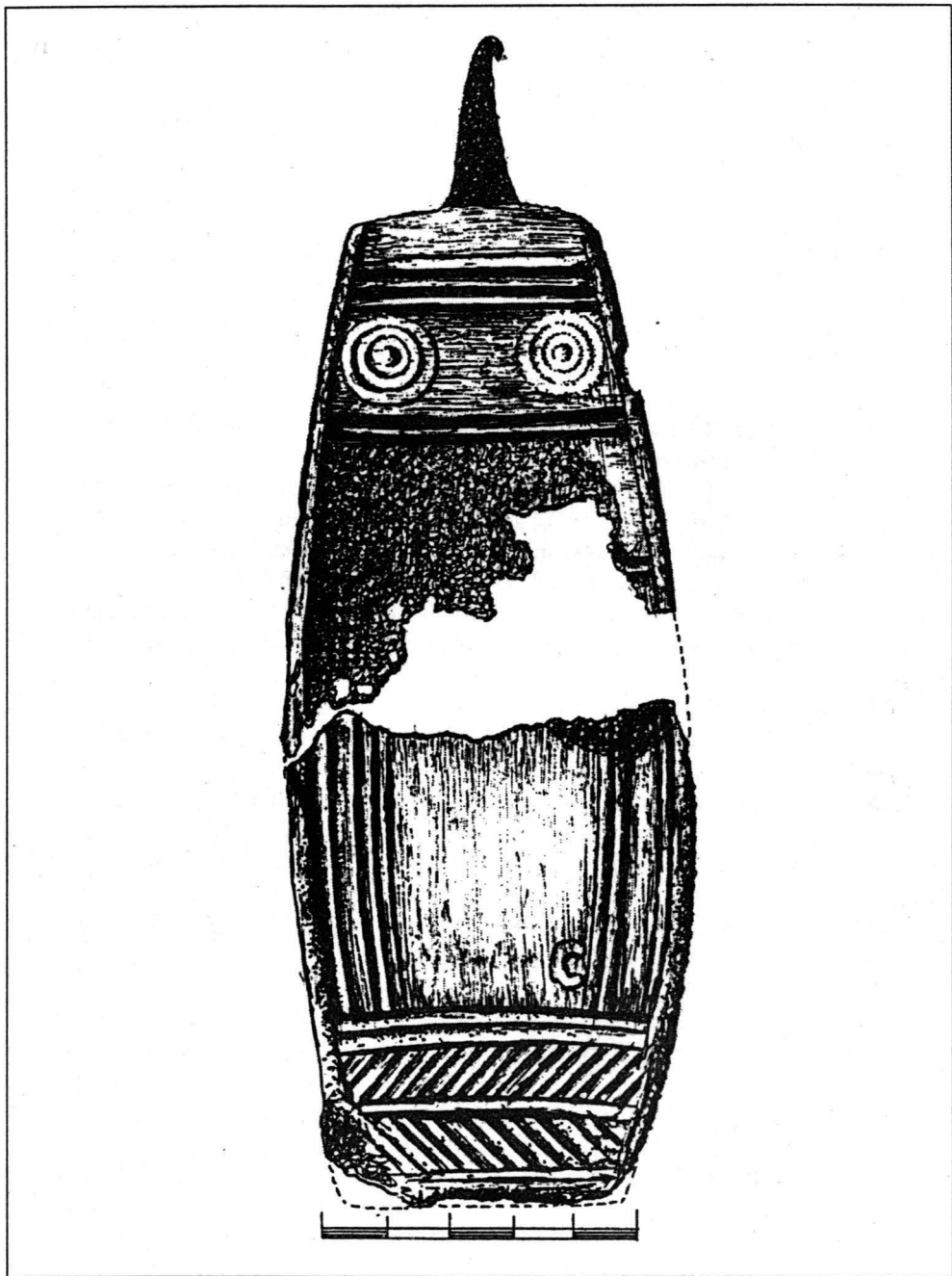


Fig. 1. Buckle from *Apoulon* - Piatra Craivii

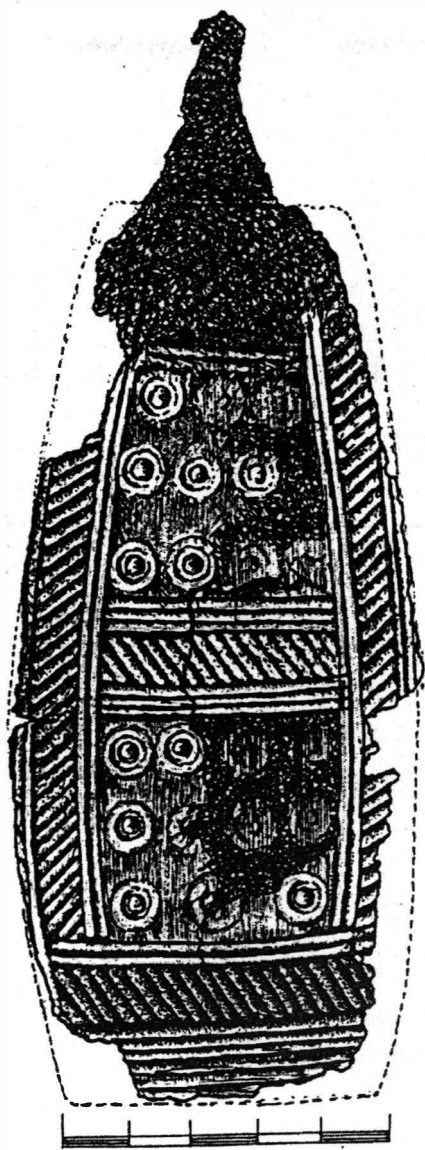


Fig. 2. Buckle from *Apoulon* - Piatra Craivii

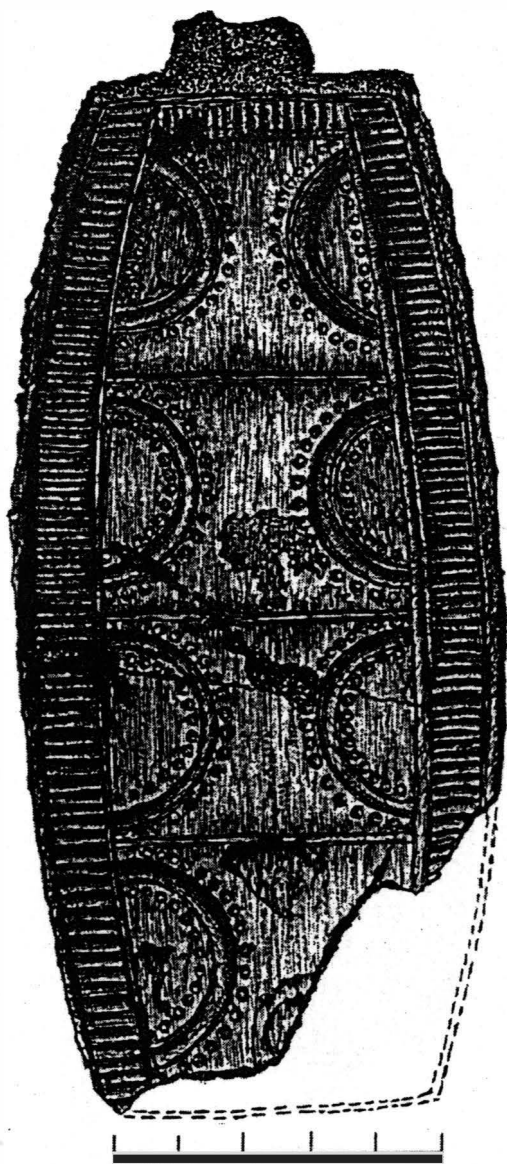


Fig. 3. Buckle from *Apoulon* - Piatra Craivii