

Reviews

Falko Daim/Kurt Gschwantler/Georg Plattner/Peter Stadler (Hrsg/eds), *Der Goldschatz von Sânnicolau Mare (Ungarisch: Nagyszentmiklós) / The treasure of Sânnicolau Mare (Hungarian: Nagyszentmiklós)*, Verlag des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums, RGZM Tagungen Band 25, Mainz 2015, 164 p.

The volume edited by the foremost specialist from Mainz and Vienna with contributions from various institutions from Germany, Austria and Hungary represents a new and important chapter in the study of one of the largest gold treasures ever found on the contemporary territory of Romania. After the great exhibition catalogue on Avarian gold treasures published in 2002¹ and the monographs of Csanád Bálint from 2004 and 2010², the present volume continues the investigation of this remarkable find from 1799. The present volume is the result of the workshop held between 7 and 9th October 2010 in the Kunsthistorischen Museum from Vienna, published in the well known quality of the Publishing House of RGZM from Mainz in their conference series.

The work contains six articles and the foreword of Falko Daim. In the first article, Csanád Bálint presents the latest results of the research history (*Forschungsgeschichte*) of the treasure. Summarizing the main results of his book from 2010, Bálint emphasize again with the Ornamental language, runic epigraphy and specific vessel types of the treasure that the initial claim from the 1930's and 40's on the so called "proto-bulgarian" ethnicity of the treasure is false. He also presented the long parallel discussions between the archaeologists of the migration period and scholars of Byzantine history, where the treasure was not or rarely cited and analyzed. Bálint presented also the long history of iconographic analysis, especially the interpretation of the Sasanian elements. Worth to mention also the geological analysis and the investigations of Pál Sümegei, who dated the treasure between 660 and 783. Despite of these new results, Bálint points numerous questions – for example the problem of Carolingian influences in the case of the Pyxis nr. 19 – which need to be investigated by future researchers.

The next study is the important contribution of Viktor Freiberger and Birgit Bühler presenting for the very first time the techniques used by the gold smiths and the analyses of the material. Illustrated with never published photographs and remarkable details of the manufacturing processes, the study presents typical features of workshop circles, individual workshops and craftsmen too. Due to this new analysis, a different classification and grouping of these pieces is possible now. They also identified workshops, where two different craftsmen worked. This was possible in the case of the vessels nr. 13 and 14, the two so called Horned Lion Bowls.

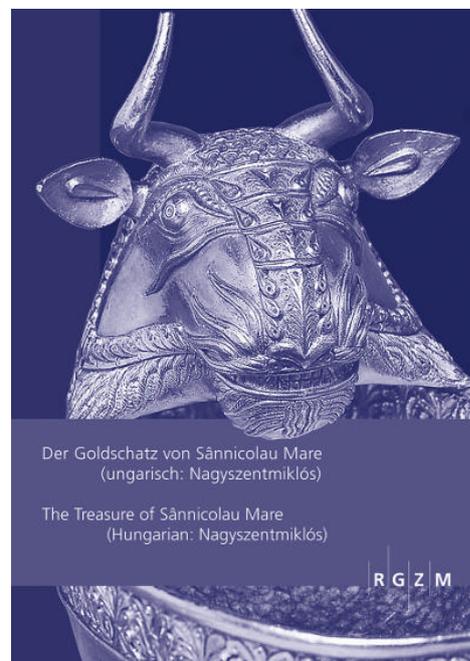
Ádám Bollók, a foremost specialists of early Byzantine art and archaeology, present his view as he claims, as "non specialist" on the visual language and iconographic program (*Bilderwelt*) of the treasure. He presumes,

1 KOVÁCS-GARAM 2002. See also: HAMPEL 1885, MAVRODINOV 1943, GSCHWANTLER 2002.

2 BÁLINT 2004, BÁLINT 2010.

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that the owner's Bilderwelt is clearly trans-Mediterranean, especially, Sasanian, even if in its appearance it is Byzantine. This duality could reflect, after his opinion, that the goldsmith(s) were working with a group of "stereotyped images". Identifying several Sasanian motifs on the vessels, Bollók – beside analogies from depictions of the royal hunt from Arsinoe, Apamea and the Pur-I Vahman plate – he cites also the famous Budakalász Byzantine bronze jug recently published by Tivadar Vida. Although, he is too careful perhaps to use the recent bibliography on visual language and cognitive science, Bollók rightly observes, that a key to understand the iconographic program of the treasure would be the interpretation with the inscriptions together.

In the next article, Egon Wamers gives the first detailed analysis (morphological, stylistic and art historical) of a single object from the treasure, the so called Bowl 19. Through this particular object, Wamers identify not only the pre-Carolingian analogies of the liturgical lid *pyxides*, but also the Upper Italian and Alpine works from the late 8th century, where similar objects were made with glass inlays technique. For its decoration, he identify the area of St. Germain-de-Prés, where around 820 and 850 similar visual program was established.

Similarly to Bollók, Bruno Overlaet presents in his article the Sasanian, Central Asian and Byzantine patterns and cultural exchanges, which marked the decorative principles and iconographic language of the treasure. He identifies the bottle shaped vessels, as having clear Sasanian analogies, represented not only on reliefs but on gold vessels. This type however, as Harald von Petrikovits already proved, has Late Roman prototypes – found also in the Seuso treasure, for example. He identify the so called Senmurw (the horse bodied, winged griffons) representations as a popular motif in European art, even in the 11/12th century (in the monastery of Santa Maria de l'Estany, Catalonia for example).

Finally, Stefan Albrecht's article analyses the inscriptions of the vessels, where he tries to identify the West-Byzantine prototypes which could influence the language and the classical formulas of the vessels – both Byzantine and the rune inscriptions.

The volume is an important addition to the great bibliography available now on the treasure and it answered numerous questioned unasked till now, but reflected also on the complexity and problems of the discipline, when it deals with an undocumented archaeological context and the highly problematic question of visual, iconographic language and cultural transformations in macro-scale spaces.

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