

R. Oanță-Marghitu (editor), *Antique gold and silver of Romania. Exhibition catalogue, National Museum of Romanian History, Conphys Publishing House, Bucharest 2013, pp. 703, ISBN 973015811-8*

The frame of the exhibition contains pieces that represent six millennia of history, starting from the Eneolithic period and reaching Late Antiquity and Early Middle Age (5th millennium B.C. – 7th century A.D.). The project took place at the end of 2013, organized by the National History Museum from Bucharest, and was later on materialized in a catalogue. Over two years, 33 museums and institutions and over 70 people had worked to create this exhibition, with only one purpose in mind: to show to the public 1003 unique pieces. The public exhibition gathers together in one place the most significant creations from the era of noble metal, discovered on Romanian land.

The authors of introductory chapters are: Alis Dumitrașcu, Dragoș Măndescu (Argeș County Museum), Rodica Oanță-Marghitu (National Museum of Romanian History), Sorin Oanță-Marghitu (National Museum of Romanian History), Ernest Oberländer-Târnoveanu (CEO of National Museum of Romanian History), Anca Diana Popescu (Vasile Pârvan Institute of Archaeology), George Trohani (National Museum of Romanian History), Alexandra Țârlea (Department of Archaeology and Ancient History, University of Bucharest).

The volume contains a list of contributing partners, a summary and an introduction (pp. 10–15) signed by the director of the National Museum of Romanian History, Ernest Oberländer-Târnoveanu, 8 articles (pp. 16–168) on the history of precious metals discovered on Romanian land, the exhibition catalogue (pp. 169–661) and a list of bibliography, arranged in alphabetical order (pp. 663–703).

The catalogue is printed by Conphys Publishing House, Râmnicu Vâlcea in excellent printing conditions: colour illustrations, high quality paper and professional layout for each page.

The volume is structured into two parts:

The first part of the volume reunites 8 articles, which analyze different epochs and periods, arranged in chronological order.

The second part of the volume includes the exhibition catalogue, structured as well in chronological order, fragmented according to the major historical periods. It starts with the Eneolithic period, continues with Bronze Age and Hallstatt, Neoclassic Getae Culture, Classical Geto-Dacian culture, reaches the Roman period and ends with Late Antiquity and Early Middle Age.

This impressive number of pieces, both gold and silver pieces, were collected and published in the catalogue for preserving their significance and emphasizing past's distinctions.

The declared purpose of this exhibition is to underline the importance of protecting cultural heritage, constantly under the risk of being destroyed and damaged due to poor management from the authorities. It is just the beginning of further actions that aim to bring into attention the most significance remains inherited from the past.

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The first study, *Dacian gold and silver – origin, mining, analysis*, is signed by Ernest Oberländer-Târnoveanu. It begins with a brief explanation regarding the amount of gold from Dacia, particularly, explaining the facts during Trajan's conquest of Dacia. The second part brings into discussion the origin (geological and external sources) of Dacian gold and silver, mining and the manufacturing techniques in pre- and proto historic as well as during antique periods. The most common origin for metals was the alluvial or raw material, extracted from deposits. Regarding the analysis of gold pieces, the specialists haven't shown such great interest. Serious researches on the composition of gold items begin have begun only in 2007. The analysis obtained showed that items from the Dacian period were the result of processing the native, unrefined gold. As for external sources, analyses show that the main sources of raw material used to create Dacian ornaments were Greek and early Roman coins.

The second article named, *About the gold items from South-East European Eneolithic*, was written by Sorin Oaniță-Maghitu, article in which he explains how the patterns of gold are symbols of wealth, luxury and ostentation. Taken out of context, gold pieces legitimize the existence of a uniform image on social differences. The article lists the series of necropolis studied and all the gold items founded (the *necropola* from Varna, then those from Pietrele, Bucșani, Vitănești, Sultana). For obtaining an interpretation, gold items must be reinstated into their original historical context. The article also includes a gold biography, referring in particular to the gold used in social practices: the staple source, definition of technological processes, storage and hoarding practices, interpretation of the intentional acts-deposition. Regarding manufacturing process and the form of items, important observations can be made by analyzing pieces belonging to the most important deposits.

Gold and silver in Bronze Age and Hallstatt, signed by Alexandra Țârlea and Anca-Diana Popescu, is the third article. This third article discusses how gold and silver were a symbol of wealth, prestige, power for rulers or communities. For this period, two major manufacturing techniques can be mentioned: modelling by knocking and pouring molten metal into forms. Some of the pieces were decorated by *au repousse* technique or by incision and torsion. There is one important observation to make: the authors offer definitions for gold, manufacturing techniques and techniques used in decoration. The Early Bronze Age is characterized by a predominance of silver items, most of them used in funeral practices, namely for head decoration – tumulus. Those pieces cannot be found in a large number and present a low typological variety. The Middle Bronze Age is defined by a number of cultures (based on the type of pottery) and shows the changing relationship between the uses of gold pieces, considered more sophisticated, in detriment of silver. The items from this period were worn around the neck and on the head. As for the Late Bronze Age and the Hallstatt A, most of the gold items have been found in isolated places or as parts of a hoard. There is an upward interest for precious metal pieces, with a particular focus on those worn on the hand.

The fourth study, *Art of gold and silver in Carpatho-Danubian territory (VI-III centuries B.C.)*, belongs to George Trohani.

The article begins with a detailed description of the tribes (Scythians, Thracians), which inhabited the Carpathian-Danubian territory, based on written and archaeological sources. Necropolises are the main sources for understanding the Getae society in IV-III centuries B.C. Toreutic items, from "princely" graves, were manufactured using the following techniques: *au repoussé*, knocking, punching and printing. Starting with La Tène period, the metal was used extensively, regardless it's nature. Manufacturing techniques for metal included: rapping technique, hot tapping, using dies or by fretwork. Tracien-Getic art has a zoomorphic and geometrics character, with strong Greek, Scythian and Achaemenian influences.

The next one, *Gold and silver items for port and ornament from classical Gaeto-Dacian culture (II century B.C. – I century A.D.)*, is signed by Dragoș Măndescu. This study talks about the absence of gold in the Dacian world (exception are the gold bracelet recovered) and the predominance of silver (over 60 treasures discovered). The silver hoards contain, usually, neck (necklaces, chains), chest (brooches, *phalerae*), arm (bracelets, rings) ornaments, coins or drink containers, as well as small pieces of raw material. Finding rare, isolated pieces such as bracelets show that ornaments were not consumer items that can be worn in everyday life. This is also suggested by their weight, feature which makes them unsuitable for daily use. Burial treasures have two meanings: one profane (items which are in a good state of preservation and contain coins) – were hidden because of the danger represented by military and political conflicts or by natural disasters; the second one is cultic (damaged since ancient time) because of wilful destruction.

An interesting article, *Royal gold bracelets from Sarmizegetusa Regia – acme of Dacians precious metal art*, is signed by Ernest Oberländer-Târnoveanu. At the beginning the author brings into attention the problem of theft and illegal export of valuable Dacian items. The entire study discusses about the 13 bracelets, made from gold, which have a spiral shape and are decorated with dragon protomes and stamped palmettes. He brings into discussion the manufacturing process, observing its particularities. For instance, an important detail in understanding better the manufacturing techniques, was the lack of polishing: none of the bracelets were actually refined (pg 108–109). Based on the metal analysis it was possible to establish the source of the gold. Discoveries such as the one from Sarmizegetusa, were no bronze replica could have been found, show that they belonged to local Dacian elites. By analyzing the coins, it has been found that the bracelets have been used for a period around 50–60 years, in the first half of the first century B.C.

Another article entitled, *Ornaments from roman period on Romanian territory*, belongs to Alis Dumitrașcu. It shows that ornaments throughout Roman times, were perceived differently during the Roman Republic and the Roman Empire. During the Roman Republic it had noticed a conservative attitude: only the elite had the legal right to have ornaments. By the time other territories and tribes, with different traditions and a different cultural background, where annexed to the Roman Empire (starting with the first century A.D.) the attitude regard ornaments changed. Available in a great variety of forms, ornaments were an expression, especially,

of women luxury, as they were worn on arms, on the fingers, around the neck, in ears and hair. Among the most common ornaments can be mentioned: crowns, hair pins, earrings (*inuares*) – all with oriental origins, chains (*monilae*) – Greek-Oriental filiations, pendants (*torques*) – worn by both women and men, *fibulae* – manufactured from gold and worn by men as a sign of integration into the political and administrative hierarchy of the Roman Empire, bracelets (*armillae*), rings (*anuli*) – taken from the Greeks; were worn by men as symbols of social rank or as seals, and by women as an expression of luxury or social status. Roman jewelleries were processed using granulation or filigree technique.

The last one, *Precious metals from Late Antiquity and Early Middle Age (IV-VII centuries A.D.)*, written by Rodica Oanță-Marghitu, presents a history evolution based on how perception about precious metals changed. For the IV century A.D. the article talks about the material culture known as Sântana de Mureș-Cerneahov, from which have been preserved only small silver pieces. For the V century A.D., the study suggests that lavish ensembles were representative, impressive because of the amount of precious metal, especially gold and the diversity of objects, because of their significance, their refinement of execution and finishing details. By the VI century A.D. precious metals are only isolated occurrences, while gold pieces disappear almost completely. Significant for the VII century A.D. are a series of items, made from gold, different in terms of smoothness compared with those belonging to the fifth century A.D. The prevalent material is silver, most pieces being used in funerary practices.

The catalogue: after the title, there are information regarding the period and the culture they belong to. Also, there are pointed out contextual data, analogies and related

bibliography. Every single piece comes with an individual description, description which contains details such as: type of material, processing technique, weight, diameter, length, width, thickness, inventory number and possible uses. Besides the images of the pieces, individual and as an ensemble, for some of them there is also a picture showing the location where it was found.

No one contest all the work, all the time invested into the exhibition and also into this catalogue. Theirs interest it is to be appreciated and this initiative will always be recognized by the entire public, but there are a few thinks to be mentioned: the title for the exhibition, also, the title for the catalogue, *Antique gold and silver of Romania*, it porpoise is to emphasize the value of items, the value of the past and the importance of history in everyday life, but chronological, it is a little improper, because based on the presented items, a large number are from o period which cannot be integrate into Antiquity. This thing does not decrease all the merits for the exhibition. It is intended for the public, regardless is knowledge or not for the subject. Those 8 studies present the historical part, the contextual data for the items. From all, just two of them (the third and fourth one) offer definitions for different terminological dates so than everyone can understand what it is actually about. For specialists it is easy to understand what the articles tries to present, but to not forget, the main porpoise of any exhibition is to show to the public the work of a few. It is to be noted that some of them are easy to follow, but this fact is due to the way to express clearly. All the hard work it is to be appreciated, because such an exhibition requires so many things just to be with one step closer to the public.