

Contribution to the chronology of the late Roman period in Romania

(Abstract)

The author presents two silver brooches, both coming from the North-Western Barbaricum. The first one was found in the barbarian settlement at Zalău-Mihai Viteazul Avenue 104-106 (Sălaj County) (Fig. 1/1), the second one belonged to the inventory of a cremation grave from the barbarian cemetery at Medieșul Aurit (Satu Mare County) (Fig. 1/2). Both brooches seem to be related to type Almgren VII.211. They both had, initially, double spring, high catch-plate and were ornamented with filigree wire. The catch-plate was crossed by an ornamented peg.

This variant is not very frequently, among the best analogies being some items from Poland (Fig. 1/3, 5-6), having the same long catch-plate with a peg and the filigree ornaments and mainly a silver brooch from Mătășaru, in South-East Romania (Wallachia) (Fig. 1/4).

Almgren VII.211 type belongs to the late Roman period in Northern Europe and on the territory of the Przeworsk culture. It was dated in stages C1a-C1b. The „Sarmatian” variant, spread mainly in Central and Eastern Europe, was also dated between AD 180-260/270. The silver items having the bow end in a knob, high chorde, long, high catch-plate ornamented with filigree and granulation are later variants, around the middle of the III-rd century AD, that means at the end of stage C1b-beginnings of the stage C2. Some bronze brooches from the cemetery at Opatow (Poland), having double spring, belonged to the 4-th phase of the site, dated in the late stage of the late Roman imperial period. Based on the long double spring and on the long, high catch-plate, Gh. Bichir, dated the silver brooch from Mătășaru at the end of the III-rd century AD, around AD 300, considering it one of the latest piece of the serie. Another similar brooch (unpublished) from Căbești-Milești (Southern Moldavia) was dated using a burnt bronze coin of Aurelianus. Other three bronze brooches having high, long catch-plate and double spring have been found in the settlement at Bârlad-Valea Seacă (Moldavia) (Fig. 2/9). One was found in hut no. 8, an antler bone combs workshop, specific to the 4-th century AD, others are coming from a pit together with a bronze coin of Philippus Arabs. The bronze brooch from the cremation cemetery at Șopteriu (Eastern Transylvania) (Fig. 2/7), having close analogies in Moldavia at Piatra Neamț-Dărmănești (Fig.2/6), Sohodor (Fig. 2/1), was dated at the end of the 3-rd century-beginning of the 4-th century AD, using also a bone comb of type Thomas I.1 (Fig. 4/1), dating in central Europe in the second half of the 3-rd century and the first half of the 4-th century AD. Other brooches from the same category are those from a cremation grave at Lipia Maidan (Wallachia) (Fig. 2/5) and Udeni (Wallachia) (Fig. 2/3), a settlement where a coin of Galerius Maximianus, from AD 302-303 was also found. Both were dated around AD 300.

One of the three silver, so-called „Schmetterlingfibeln” from the second „princely” grave at Štraze (Slovakia) (Fig. 3/1) has some connections with the groupe VII of Almgren, as well as with the silver brooches at Zalău, Medieșul Aurit and Mătășaru. The second grave at Štraze belonged to the stage C2, as well as the brooch from Zakrzow (Sakrau) in Poland (Fig. 3/2). A silver brooch belonging to the same category has been found in the settlement at Culciul Mare-Boghilaz (Satu Mare County) (Fig. 3/3; 6/3). It has a good analogy at Litten (Germany) (Fig. 3/4), and is characteristic to stage C2.

The author concludes that the silver brooches from Zalău-Mihai Viteazul Avenue 104-106 and from Medieșul Aurit can be dated in C2, between AD 270-300, being contemporaneous, with the silver brooches from Štraze-Zakrzow-Culciul Mare-Litten. They show also the continuity of living in the two sites during the stage C2.

The second part of the study deals with the social meaning of this silver brooches. They are obviously linked with the tribal aristocracy and with the pan-european horizon of the „princely” graves Leuna-Hassleben-Zakrzow-Litten-Štraze (Fig. 6). As a new result is stressed the chronological relation among this horizon of „chiefs” graves (Fig. 6/1), cemeteries (Medieșul Aurit) and settlements (Zalău). The barbarian sites at Medieșul Aurit, Zalău and Mătășaru (Fig. 6/2) are situated in the interaction zones appeared in front of the Roman frontiers of Dacia. All three settlements and cemeteries have begun only in the second half of the 2-nd century AD and the excavations carried on identified two layers: the first one between the second half of

the 2-nd century to the first half of the 3-rd century (B2/C1-C1a) and the second one between the second half of the 3-rd century to the first half of the 4-th century (C1b continuing in C2, or even later). The first layer fits with the period of the big development of the Roman civilization in Dacia, after the Marcomannic wars and in Severan time. The new military and diplomatic relations of Roman Dacia and the barbarian world can be seen in these settlements. The study of the Roman military equipment found in Barbaricum shows two main concentration zones: Wallachia and North-West Romania. East of the Carpathians, in Moldavia, they are almost totally missing. No Roman item can be dated during the first half of the 2-nd century AD. The main period when Roman military objects arrived over the frontier in Barbaricum was the first half of the 3-rd century AD. It is possible that some Roman detachments were disposed in Barbaricum to control the communities, in settlements like Mătășaru, or even Medieșul Aurit. Very significant are the two bronze baldrick fittings in the shape of a spearhead, so called „beneficiarius badge”, found in these two sites (Fig. 5). Both were dated between AD 200-250/260, more probably around the middle of the 3-rd century. The beginnings of the second layer and stage of these settlements fit with stage C1b of the late Roman period. This moment can be related with a *crise* between the Empire and the barbarian world, when Maximinus Thrax fought with the barbarians and got the official title of Dacicus Maximus, as Trajan did. The silver brooches with social meaning appeared in these territories only after the withdraw of the Roman administration and army from Dacia in AD 271. It is interesting that many silver barbarian brooches are known in Roman Dacia in stages B2/C1-C1a, but they are missing in the province in C1b and C2. The conclusion is that till around AD 300 the barbarian settlement from the former outside interaction zones survived and continued their life, the only barbarian community attested as recently moved in the former province being represented by the 27 graves at Șopteriu.

The last problem mentioned in this study is concerning some ancient written sources which record that in AD 270, while marching to the East, Aurelianus defeated the Vandals from the Hungarian Plain and put them under contract (*foedus*). Few decades later, between AD 280-303, other barbarians from the North of the Danube, as Bastarni and the Carpi, were defeated and forced by the Romans to move inside the Empire. In AD 291 are for the first time recorded in the written sources the Tervingi, who, allied with Taifali, fought against the Gepids and the Vandals. The last two peoples were defeated at citadel Galtis, near river Auha. The historians tried to identify the place on the upper and middle Pruth river, or on the Tisa, Mureș and Someș rivers. A recent hypothesis considers the Early Gepids were living at the end of the 3-rd century AD in North-East Hungary and North-West Romania. The conclusion of the present study showed that in the stage C2 in North-West Romania still survived the native settlements of the Dacians and Vandals (arrived from North of the Carpathians in stage C1a). It is not impossible that, at the same time, the changings in the social structure identified to represent the first penetration from the same North of the Carpathians region of the Early Gepid population, after the Roman authorities abandoned the province of Dacia.