

A „TUTULUSFIBEL” FROM CAPIDAVA*

Zahariae Covacef *piae memoriae*

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Cuvinte cheie: *Moesia Inferior, Capidava, fibula cu email, “Tutulusfibel”, secolul II p. Chr.*

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Rezumat: *Autorii prezintă o fibulă descoperită în anul 2007 la Capidava, com. Topalu, jud. Constanța. Fibula este una dintre rarele piese decorate cu email descoperite în Dobrogea. Tipologic, aparține grupului “Tutulusfibeln” datat între a doua jumătate a secolului I p. Chr. și secolul II p. Chr. Pe baza informațiilor epigrafice referitoare la unitățile militare staționate la Capidava, autorii consideră că fibula a fost adusă din zona de origine (zona central-estică a Galliei) de către un auxiliar în prima jumătate a secolului II p. Chr.*

Abstract: *The authors present a brooch discovered in 2007 at Capidava, Topalu commune, Constanța district. This brooch is one of the rare enamelled finds discovered in Dobruja. Typologically, it belongs to “Tutulusfibeln” group, dated back between the second half of the 1st century AD and the 2nd century AD. Based on local epigraphic dossier referring to military units quartered at Capidava, the authors assumed that a soldier, in the first half of the 2nd century AD brought this find from the origin area (Centre and East of Gallia).*

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Introduction

The aim of this paper is to analyse a circular-shaped brooch with raised boss discovered at *Capidava* in 2007, on the Danube's beach¹. This ancient city, a Roman and early Byzantine fortress on the Danube, lies between *Axiopolis* and *Carsium*, on the outskirts of the nowadays village having the same name (Topalu commune, Constanța district)².

Unfortunately, one of the best-preserved and beautiful fibulae discovered in Dobruja is a stray find, as many other archaeological materials. For this case particularly, it is a pity that there are relatively few examples of enamelled brooches in this region³.

The dossier of brooches at Capidava

The number of brooches found at *Capidava* is difficult to estimate in the absence of any study concerning these artefacts. Only limited information is available and consists in brief mentions of findings in funerary contexts⁴. Other attempts consist in short catalogue entries⁵. The early Roman local fibulae assemblage is little, but of a certain variety. One can notice the presence of flat openwork discoid and pelta-shaped brooches, a rare "Architektur-Fibel" discovered in the harbour area, and other common types spread across the Roman provinces (strongly profiled, knee, and T-shaped brooches).

In later periods, only one article written almost two decades ago, gives an idea about the varieties of these dress accessories in the city⁶. Fieldwork in the eastern sector uncovered an impressive residential quarter spread on a large surface. The oldest habitation layer dates from the second half of the 4th century AD and, except a series of restorations, will be inhabited until the late 6th – early 7th century AD. A first attempt to present the dress accessories and jewellery showed that the fibulae assemblage is typical for early Byzantine settlements in the Balkans. The fibulae with bent stem are spread over large territories south of Danube, especially in hilltop fortresses, but also in the settlements from Dobruja. Although there are a considerable number of brooches presented over the years, there is still a lack of an overview of this category of archaeological materials.

Description of the object

The brooch has a circular-shaped base with cut marks around the rim (**Pl. 1**). Two symmetrically disposed holes are set on the rim. The centre is raised having a truncated-shape and is decorated with triangle-shaped cells disposed on two rows. Each cell was originally filled with dark-blue enamel. In six of them, the enamel is still preserved. The top of the truncated cone is set with a discoid-

¹ This brooch was acquisitioned from a local by Radu Petcu and donated to the Museum of National History and Archaeology (MINA) from Constanța.

² The bibliography of *Capidava* has been resumed in OPRIȘ 2003, p. 17-33 and GÂNDILĂ 2006-2007, p. 105.

³ The number is generally small in *Moesia Inferior*: CURTA 1992, p. 41, no. 40; GENČEVA 2004, p. 115-116 and 120-121; HARALAMBIEVA 2003, p. 136-140.

⁴ See for example CHELUȚĂ-GEORGESCU 1979, p. 190-181.

⁵ MATEI 1987, p. 125-126, fig. 5/6-8; MATEI 1988-1989, p. 98, fig. 4/5, 11, 17-19, 23, 26.

⁶ COVACEF 1995-1996, p. 95-100, pls. 1-2.

shaped knob set on a circular cross-section shaft; probably the tip was also filled with enamel. The obverse is hollow. The fastening system was a hinge of the "Backenscharnier" type. The catch-plate is rectangular-shaped, fragmentary preserved. The diameter is 3.5 cm and it has a height of 1.4 cm.

The type and spreading area

"Tutulusfibeln" is a heterogeneous brooch group characterised by a circular base⁷ with raised boss and sometimes small lugs around the rim. Enamel is a current decorative technique, but other finds are silvered or decorated with concentric incisions placed around the rim. Enamel technique was largely employed for decoration of the Roman dress accessories. In regard of fibulae, one can notice a mass-production⁸. Generally, the earlier types were developed in the middle of 1st century AD and remained in use until 3rd century AD. However, the 2nd century AD is the period when most of the enamelled brooches were dated⁹.

There is a certain variety inside the group of "Tutulusfibeln" with a large spreading area across the Roman provinces. The continental sites had prevalence of these finds, but in *Britannia*, a local variety developed. The local brooches are circular or oval-shaped, gilded or set with coloured glass and they occur in relatively great number in 3rd – early 4th century AD contexts, in comparison to the small number in western provinces of the Roman Empire¹⁰. A glimpse of various examples found across the Roman provinces show that this group is not homogeneous¹¹. There are significant differences in diameter, existence or absence of small lugs around the rim, and decorative patterns. Enamel is not always used for decoration, and when it is, only the top of the apex is filled. The cross-section varies also, as most of the finds are conical, while other examples have the cone truncated. A later type of 4th – 5th centuries AD (*Jobst 30*) has a raised conical-shaped body set with a baluster-shaped segment ended with a flat discoid. The base is circular and the brooch is secured by spring¹².

Feugère hypothetically considered the origin of this type in Centre and East of *Gallia*, but noticed the large diffusion area, from *Hispania* to *Pannonia*. He also sets two varieties, the first with simple conical-shape (*Feugère type 25a*) and more elaborated, with a truncated cone-shaped set with a flat knob filled with enamel (*Feugère type 25b*)¹³.

⁷ The shape of the base is variable, for example at Saalburg and Zugmantel where the "tutulus" group includes hexagonal-shaped base brooches, see BÖHME 1972, p. 37, nos. 969-970, pl. 25; for the examples with rhomboid-shaped base from *Pannonia*, see MERCZI 2009, p. 262, fig. 1/6-8. Buora, on the other side, made a clear distinction between the rhomboid-shaped base brooches and "Tutulusfibeln", based on morphological characteristics and different distribution areas, see BUORA 2008, p. 47.

⁸ For an overview of enamel technique see NIEMEYER 2003, p. 189-192.

⁹ NIEMEYER 2003, p. 192.

¹⁰ HATTATT 1989, p. 128; BAYLEY & BUTCHER 2004, p. 177-178, fig. 152/T269-271.

¹¹ This observation could be applied for example in the case of "Tutulusähnliche Fibeln" from *Augusta Raurica* – Augst/Kaiseraugst, see RIHA 1979, p. 186-188, pl. 60, 61/1603; RIHA 1994, p. 159-160, pl. 41/2817-2824.

¹² JOBST 1975, p. 115-116; HEYNOWSKI 2012, p. 108, no. 3.26.5.

¹³ FEUGÈRE 1985, p. 351.

Moreover, the raised boss decorated with triangular-shaped cells filled with enamel of the brooch from *Capidava* seems to represent a particular type of "Tutulusfibeln", which makes the transition to enamelled circular brooches. This equally heterogeneous group (*Feugère type 25*) has known a remarkable longevity and diffusion areas. However, in essence, the chronological development of this type encloses the frame time of the "Tutulusfibeln"¹⁴. The surface decorated with enamel set in concentric bands and sometimes combined with various geometric motifs is not uncommon between the 2nd AD century brooches. A fairly close example was discovered at *Camulodunum* – Colchester and was included among the umbonate brooches of this period¹⁵. Yet, circular-shaped brooches ("Scheibenfibeln")¹⁶ decorated with enamel, developed during 1st century AD under the influences of the Gallic-Celtic traditions and spread over large areas of western Roman provinces. Well-dated finds from *vicus* located at Sulz am Neckar (Kreis Rottweil) are recorded during the late phases of habitation (Phases 3-4), from late Flavian period until the middle of the 2nd century AD¹⁷. At Corbridge one similar brooch is recorded, with raised (conical) boss and three bands of red, green, and yellow enamel¹⁸.

Genčeva made a clear distinction between the conical-shaped brooches (without enamel?) and the truncated-cone brooches decorated with enamel. She included both varieties in the same type (*Genčeva type 26*), but only the examples in the first group are considered typical "Tutulusfibeln"¹⁹. However, in *Moesia Inferior* the number of these finds is too small to allow further considerations. The series of enamelled geometric brooches discovered in *Dacia* is significantly larger and various as artistry. Most of these finds were discovered in military milieus, as pointed out by Cociș²⁰. The several "Tutulusfibeln" fall into *Cociș type 24a1*, with or without lugs around the rim, and have been discovered in Trajanic habitation levels, but their use in the 2nd century AD is not out of question²¹. In extra-Carpathian regions, at Bărboși, a fairly close parallel has been discovered. This piece also has a raised conical boss ended in a small knob, small lugs on the rim, but there is no specification of enamel²².

Another interesting feature of the brooch found at *Capidava* is the two holes of the rim, symmetrically disposed. One hypothesis is that the holes were used for hanging a pendant through two small chains. During the interwar period, Sellye has published a fibula with an attached chain discovered in *Pannonia*, at *Brigetio* – Szőny²³. This is also an enamelled brooch having six protrusions around the rim and "tutulus"- like centre, but with traces of silvering on the surface. A further

¹⁴ FEUGÈRE 1985, p. 371-372.

¹⁵ CRUMMY 1983, p. 17, type 257, fig. 14/83.

¹⁶ For this group we may notice Exner's state-of-the-art analysis, see EXNER 1939, p. 102-116, pl. 17.

¹⁷ RIECKHOFF-PAULI 1977, p. 21.

¹⁸ SNAPE 1993, p. 61-62, fig. 12/110.

¹⁹ GENČEVA 2004, p. 117.

²⁰ COCIȘ 2004, p. 122-123.

²¹ COCIȘ 2004, p. 121-122, pl. 104/1473-1482.

²² CROITORU 2007, p. 326, fig. 1/13.

²³ SELLYE 1939, p. 59, pl. 8/13.

prove of the existence of a pendant are the "Ankerfibeln"- type brooches which display chains for suspending various types of pendants.

Closest parallel for the fibula discovered at *Capidava* come from *Burnum* (*Dalmatia*), a Roman legionary camp and later *municipium*, located at Ivoševci, on the Krka River valley (in nowadays Croatia). This fibula has a similar truncated shape with the disc decorated with triangular-shaped cells filled with polychrome enamel. The cells are set on two concentric rows; the upper row is decorated with whitish enamel, while beneath was used red and marine blue enamel. It is also a "Backenscharnier" type of brooch and on the circumference of the base, one can notice two drilled holes like in the case of *Capidava* find. Unfortunately, the hanging chain is missing also in this case. Dimensions of this fibula are similar, of 2 cm height and 3.8 cm in diameter and the proposed dating is 2nd century AD²⁴. The ancient *Burnum* was an important strategic outpost located at the border between *Liburnia* and *Dalmatia* and was headquarter of a large number of military units from the 1st century onward²⁵.

Chronology

Dating these artefacts was not always an easy task. Ettlinger dated the finds from Switzerland from early to middle 2nd century AD, and cited other several earlier examples from *Britannia* and later examples from *Dura Europos*, in *Syria*²⁶. Hattatt on the other hand, dates this group from the late 1st century AD to the 2nd century, but he also mentions a late example discovered in a 4th century AD context²⁷. Both varieties of *Feugère type 25* were dated in the same chronological interval, from the end of the 1st century AD to mid-2nd century AD²⁸. Earlier examples were recorded in the necropolis from Keckwiese dated from early Claudian to early Flavian period²⁹. On the other side, no brooch of this type was found in early Flavian habitation levels from Sulz am Neckar, where earliest examples were recorded in late Flavian period³⁰.

The context of the finds

Excavations in the sanctuary from Halatte forest (Oise, F) delivered a relatively large number of brooches, possibly used as offerings inside the *fanum*. Amongst the assemblage, a "Tutulusfibel" without enamel, but decorated with concentric incisions on the rim was recorded³¹. Although ordinary artefacts, brooches discovered in religious contexts can gain a sacral value through rituals. Analysing the finds in *Britannia*, Hattatt concluded that their area of distribution "is too wide to suggest any particular centre of manufacture". They are spread both in civilian and military milieus, predominantly and in a larger variety in last

²⁴ ŠEPAROVIĆ & URODA 2009, p. 62, no. 125, figs. 125-125a.

²⁵ BOSCHI 2011, p. 117.

²⁶ ETTLINGER 1973, p. 130, pl. 15/6-10, type 50.

²⁷ HATTATT 1989, p. 128.

²⁸ FEUGÈRE 1985, p. 351, 354.

²⁹ SCHLEIERMACHER 1993, p. 36, 39, nos. 300-301, pl. 22.

³⁰ RIECKHOFF-PAULI 1977, p. 20.

³¹ DEVILLERS 2000, p. 270, no. 25, pl. 3.

type of settlements³². As Cociș pointed out³³, “Tutulusfibeln” were discovered mainly in military settlements of *Dacia*, and consequently, one can notice that soldiers prevalently wore this type.

Concluding remarks

The military life of *Capidava* is well known in the light of epigraphic documents, *tegulae* stamps and ancient sources. The early Roman camp was built by detachments of *legio XI Claudia* and/or *legio V Macedonica* during Trajan, based on tile stamps³⁴. During the 2nd century AD, two cohorts are garrisoned at *Capidava*. *Cohors I Germanorum civium Romanorum* is recorded in this period³⁵ and, as Matei-Popescu pointed out, probably remained in this headquarter during the 3rd century AD³⁶. Previously, another Germanic troop, *cohors I Ubiorum equitata* had its headquarter in this camp until the Dacian war, based on tile stamps³⁷. Both military troops came from western areas of the Roman Empire, and we suppose that one of the soldiers brought this brooch from a foreign (Gallic) workshop in the first half of the 2nd century AD.

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³² HATTATT 1989, p. 128.

³³ COCIȘ 2004, p. 122.

³⁴ For an overview, see OPRIȘ 2003, p. 18.

³⁵ A brick with the cohorts stamp is published by COVACEF 2000, p. 285-291.

³⁶ MATEI-POPESCU 2010, p. 214.

³⁷ MATEI-POPESCU 2010, p. 236.

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Pl. 1 – "Tutulusfibel" from *Capidava*.