

A UNIQUE LEAD TESSERA FROM DOBROGEA

Steluța MARIN*
Virgil IONIȚĂ**

Cuvinte-cheie: tessera, Dioscuri, Callatis, Iulius Celer, ἀρχή.

Keywords: tessera, Dioscuri, Callatis, Iulius Celer, ἀρχή.

Rezumat: Autorii descriu o piesă de plumb dintr-o colecție privată, având la dispoziție doar o fotografie și câteva date tehnice. Una din informațiile care o însoțesc este aceea că piesa ar proveni din regiunea sud-dobrogeană. Ea poartă inscripția Ἰουλίου Κέλερος ἀρχή. Este vorba de un personaj cu nume latin, Iulius Celer, care ar fi îndeplinit o funcție într-o cetate greacă.

În literatura de specialitate din țara noastră, nu am găsit un obiect asemănător, care să ne poată oferi un indiciu referitor la atelierul emitent sau proveniența sa.

Un element care ne-a determinat să-l considerăm de proveniență dobrogeană este imaginea de pe avers, cu Dioscurii călări galopând spre stânga. Reprezentarea zeilor prezintă analogii cu modul lor de redare de pe reversul unei emisiuni pseudo-autonome de tip Demeter de la Callatis. De aceea, asemănarea stilistică cu emiterea callatiană pledează cu destulă convingere pentru atribuirea acestui plumb orașului Callatis. Monedele pseudo-autonome înrudite cu tessera descrisă de noi pot fi datate spre mijlocul sec. II p.Chr., în vremea Antoninilor.

Plumbul descris aici pare să fie o tessera emisă la Callatis cu ocazia unor sărbători dedicate împăratului, ce au fost organizate de Iulius Celer pe cheltuiala sa. Acesta a îndeplinit probabil funcția de arhiereu, cândva spre mijlocul sec. II p.Chr.

Abstract: The authors describe a lead item from a private collection, having at their disposal only a photograph and some technical data. One of the information it comes with is that the item seems to have come from the South-Dobroujan region. It bears the inscription Ἰουλίου Κέλερος ἀρχή. It refers to a man with a Latin name, Iulius Celer, who seems to have occupied a public position in a Greek city.

We have not found a similar object in Romanian specialised literature, which could have provided a clue regarding its provenance or the workshop that produced it.

* Steluța MARIN: Municipal Museum of Bucharest; e-mail: stelutamarinn@yahoo.com.

** Virgil IONIȚĂ: Romanian Numismatic Society; e-mail: secretariatsnr@gmail.com.

An element that determined us to consider the piece as originating from Dobrogea is the image on its obverse, with the riding Dioscuri, galloping to the left. The representation of Gods presents analogies in what concerns their manner of representation with the reverse side of a pseudo-autonomous Demeter-type issue from Callatis. This is why the stylistic resemblance with the Callatian issue pleads a strong case for attributing this lead piece to the city of Callatis. Pseudo-autonomous issues related to the tessera we've described, can be dated back to the mid-2nd century AD, during the time of the Antoninus dynasty.

Our lead appears to be a tessera issued in Callatis on the occasion of celebrations dedicated to the Emperor, organized by Iulius Celer at his own expense. The latter held the position of Archiereus, and in this capacity he organized the preparation of these games, which sometimes lasted six days in a row.

In the attempt to write about certain Pontic Greek coins, we have found, among the preserved notes, the photos and incomplete data on a lead piece from a private collection. Part of the information that accompanies it says that the piece comes from the south-Dobrogea area, which we consider to be an important detail. For this reason, we considered that its description and identification in the context of monetary circulation in the western-Pontic littoral area was necessary.

Obv. The Dioscuri on horseback, with stars above their heads and cloaks aflutter, riding one after the other to left. Linear circle.

Rev. ☉: IOYAIIOY : KEAEPOC : APXH. Inscription displayed around a circle, which has a point in the middle. Linear circle.

Pb 23 mm diameter; 2 mm thick; circular form, yellowish-white colour, with irregular edges and a visible crack on its reverse side. **Pl. I, 1.**

The inscription on the lead piece: 'Ιουλίου Κέλερος ἀρχή¹ can be translated to the following: „The Magistracy of Iulius Celer”, or, in a more general sense, „in the time of magistrate Iulius Celer”. The latter is a personage with a Latin name, Iulius Celer, transcribed in its Greek version, who could have occupied the position of magistrate in a Greek city.

From the photo, one can notice the piece is a well-preserved tessera, with riding Dioscuri on the obverse side and the name of the magister on the reverse. *Tesserae* are metallic objects, made of lead, bronze or pewter, in the shape of coins or rectangular, those were produced in the Roman world as well as in Greek cities, on the occasion of important events: victories, anniversaries, events with a propagandistic purpose². There are known cases of *tesserae* produced for the distribution of grain within the Roman Empire, offered to Roman citizens or soldiers by the Emperor. The lead tokens allowed access to theatre spectacles in Greek cities. The others were issued by certain collegiums or private associations for a different purpose, at their own expense.

¹ BAILLY 1897, p. 281, *sub voce*: ἡ ἀρχή, -ῆς, with the meaning from B, 1: ἀρχή, ἄρχειν – magistracy, task.

² DAREMBERG & SAGLIO 1892, pp. 125-136, analyses the entire problematic of this category of objects, issued for different purposes.

We have not found a similar object in Romanian specialised literature, which could have provided a clue regarding its provenance or the workshop that produced it. Additionally, we have not identified analogies with other lead pieces of the Greek world bearing this kind of representation in numismatic catalogues³. A simple internet search on a numismatic website revealed a personage called Demetrianos Keleros⁴, whose name was engraved on the coins of a city in Phrygia, Kotiaion, dating to the time the personage acted as archon, during the time of Emperor Macrinus (217-218 AD)⁵. However the *cognomen* is quite common and can be encountered in Dobrogea as well, in combination with other *gentilicium*. As a result, it is not excluded that the piece was produced in the western-Pontic region, in one of the Greek cities.

An element that determined us to consider the piece as originating from Dobrogea is the image on its obverse, with the riding Dioscuri, galloping to the left. The representation of Gods presents analogies in what concerns their manner of representation with the reverse side of a pseudo-autonomous Demeter-type issue from Callatis. To compare, we described and illustrated a few pieces found on auction house offers.

Obv. Draped bust of Demeter, with a wheat ear wreath and veil, on the right, with two grain ears in front. Border of dots.

Rev.  KAA – AATIA – , with the last letters in the exergue. In center, above, Γ. Dioscuri on horseback, with stars above their heads and cloaks aflutter, riding to the right. Border of dots.

Pick 284.

2. Auktionshaus H. D. Rauch GmbH, Auction Numismata Wien 2011, 15.04.2011, lot 116: AE 6.92 g. **Pl. I, 2.**

3. Numismatik Naumann (formerly Gitbud & Naumann), Auction 55, 02.07.2017, lot 423: AE 6.61 g; 22 mm. **Pl. I, 3.**

Obv. Demeter's bust, as above.

Rev.  KAAATI – A; in the exergue . In center, above, Γ. Dioscuri, as above.

Pick 284 var.

4. Numismatik Lanz München, Auction 109, 27.05.2002, lot 110: AE 7.56 g. **Pl. I, 4.**

One can notice many affinities with our piece in what concerns the Dioscuri's on horseback image, the artistic manner in which the deities as well as the horses were represented. Such issues were worth 3 *assaria*. They are part of a series of

³ FICORONI 1740; GARRUCCI 1847; MOWAT 1898; ROSTOVTSEW 1897; ROSTOVTSEW & PROU 1900; ROSTOWZEW 1905; DISSARD 1905; ENGEL 1884; SCIALLANO 1987; VIRLOUVET 1988; STILL 1995; GÜLBAY & KIREÇ 2008.

⁴ www.acsearch.com: *Publios Ailios Demetrianos Keleros*.

⁵ Fritz Rudolf Künker GmbH & Co. KG, Auction 115 / 25.09.2006, lot 642: AE 9.52 g. The same personage is present on a pseudo-autonomous issue of the city: Numismatik Naumann (formerly Gitbud & Naumann), Auction 30 / 5.04.2015, lot 361 (AE 6.18 g; 22 mm).

pseudo-autonomous issues, produced for a long period of time in the Megarian city, together with Herakles-type coins/grain ears and a club, worth 2 *assaria*⁶. This is why the stylistic resemblance with the Callatian issue pleads a strong case for attributing this lead piece to the city of Callatis. Pseudo-autonomous issues related to the *tessera* we've described, can be dated back to the mid-2nd century AD, during the time of the Antoninus dynasty⁷. Despite all this, many questions remain regarding the circumstances surrounding the issue of the lead piece and the personage whose name is inscribed on it.

Although the *tessera* bears inscription in Greek, it features the name of a Roman citizen, who held an official position in Callatis. This situation is not surprising, as in the Megarian city there had been communities of Romanian citizens since the time of Trajan, merchants and craftsmen⁸. In an inscription found next to the city, Titus Turpilius Hermes dedicates the monument to Caius Iulius Proculus, president of an enclave of Romanian residents in Callatis (*conventus civium Romanorum*)⁹. On the other hand, epigraphic sources record the presence of a Roman personage, son of Secundinus, who is said to have offered Callatians help in a certain situation, for which they granted him some privileges¹⁰. The Callatian people also dedicated a monument to the Roman Monianios, commander of the military unit tasked with defending the city, for merits which remain unknown¹¹. This inscription proves that the city was guarded by local troops until the third quarter of the 2nd century AD, when the western-Pontic littoral became a part of the Empire¹².

One can observe that, in the Megarian city, Roman citizens had amassed significant fortunes, which allowed them to make important donations for certain occasions, even if they are not often featured in inscriptions¹³. Titus Flavius L[...], son or relative of the Pontarch of Hexapolis, donated 10 000 denarii for Panegyris or other legal celebrations linked to the imperial cult, to the end of the 2nd century AD, during the time of Commodus¹⁴.

Priest Titus Aelius Minicius [...], as well as Titus Aelius Minicius Pudens from the same family, alongside other members of an association, used their own funds to organize an activity during the time of Marcus Aurelius, which has

⁶ MARIN & IONIȚĂ 2016, p. 162.

⁷ Such pseudo-autonomous monetary series of a Demeter/Dioscuri type (but also featuring other representations) and Herakles type, were issued at the same time, in parallel, with the coins featuring the imperial portrait, until late, in the time of Gordian III, perhaps even until Philip the Arab's reign.

⁸ *IstRom.* II, p. 304.

⁹ ISM III, p. 83.

¹⁰ ISM III 29. A. Avram considers that Secundinus' son could have been a military commander who was active in the Callatis area during the mission of propraetor Publius Vinicius in Thrace and Macedonia, according to ISM III 57 (3-2 BC).

¹¹ ISM III 30, where the author also places it in the historical circumstances described above.

¹² *IstRom.* II, p. 316.

¹³ *IstRom.* II, p. 353.

¹⁴ ISM III 104.

remained unknown because of the stone slab's degradation¹⁵. Members of this family actively intervened in the city's life by holding different positions: Titus Aelius Minicius Athanaion was *πρώτος ποντάρχης* and Archiereus before 172 AD, and his son, Titus Aelius Minicius Moschion, was only a Pontarch¹⁶. Two other figures with incomplete names, Minicius Athaneon and Minucius Tryphon, were part of the collegium of those who had the passion for hunting (*phylokynegoi*), in a stele dedicated by a donor in the time of Gordian III¹⁷.

The inscriptions that list the members of an association or *collegium* are particularly relevant for the implication of Roman citizens in the administrative and cultural-religious life of the epoch. A list of the worshipers of Herakles Farangeites (*Ripensis*) from the second half of the 2nd century AD also features some individuals with Latin names, written in their Greek versions, such as: Antonios, son of Macedon; Markos of Antonios, Markos of Leukios, Niger of Titos, Iulianos of Titos¹⁸. In the inscription of those with the passion for hunting, one can notice other names of Roman citizens: Publius Valerius Chares, Aemilius, son of Aemilianus, Iulius Flavius, some Aelii, names that demonstrate their active participation¹⁹. Through the prism of these examples, we can observe a sustained involvement of Romans in social life, in fulfilling certain tasks during the more unfavourable periods of the city, for which they received the appreciation of Callatians. In these conditions, a Roman citizen issuing a *tessera* in a Greek city does not appear as surprising.

Unfortunately, in the corpus of Callatian inscriptions there is no record of a personage by the name of Iulius Celer²⁰. There is no such name on record in Dobrogea either. A Caius Iulius Celer, veteran of the V Macedonian Legion, is known to us thanks to an inscription from Oescus (today, Gigen), on the Danube's shores, in Bulgaria²¹. Two personages from Tomis appear with the *cognomen* Celer, but their *gentilicia* are different: there is a Papirius Celer on a list of Roman citizens from various cities in the south, who practiced the worship of the Thracian Horseman²²; there is also a Quintus Allidius Celer, veteran of the I Cohort of Lusitania, who is mentioned on a tombstone²³.

At this time, we cannot tell if there is a connection between the figure on our lead piece and the settlement *vicus Celeris*. The latter was found to have existed on the territory of Histria, at Vadu, Constanța County, thanks to an inscription uncovered there²⁴. The document features a grieving father's wish, who, pained by the premature passing of his daughter, Diana, asked for the grave to be taken

¹⁵ ISM III 70.

¹⁶ ISM III 99.

¹⁷ ISM III 74.

¹⁸ ISM III 72. We must mention that the author claims, unlike other sources, that the association could have belonged to a group of inhabitants from Heraclea Pontica, who lived in Callatis.

¹⁹ ISM III 74.

²⁰ ISM III.

²¹ ILB 56.

²² ISM II 129.

²³ ISM II 196.

²⁴ ISM I 352.

care of and for certain funeral rituals to be performed at a date during Rosalia (the festival of roses), dedicated to the death cult. To this end, he leaves authorities, the mayor (*per magistratos*) 75 denarii to fulfil this request, sometime during the 2nd century AD. According to another opinion, the inscription comes from Sibioara, Constanța County, so placing the settlement becomes a slightly uncertain, being attributed to the city of Tomis²⁵.

In another inscription found in Histria, the mayor Ulpius Ulpianus from *vicus Celeris* dedicated an altar at his expense to Emperor Marcus Aurelius, in honour of his health and for the prosperity of the settlement he led²⁶. The mention of Consuls Verus Caesar (in fact, Commodus) and Quintillus allowed the monument to be precisely dated to 177 AD²⁷. The discovery of the inscription at Histria offers a solid case for situating *vicus Celeris* at Vadu or in a locality in the Histrian territory. In this stage of the research, we assume it is only a coincidence in what concerns the name on the tessera and the Histrian settlement's name, but we do not deny the possibility of the Callatian magistrate's origins being linked to this settlement.

The term *ἀρχή*, as it appears on the lead piece, designates a magistracy in a general sense. Should we consult inscriptions from other Greek cities on the western-Pontic coast, we may notice that the term *ἀρχή* does not appear at all in the Histria inscriptions²⁸ and only in an isolated case in Callatis, on a partially-preserved marble slab²⁹. The few words inscribed on the stone suggest that it is an honorific inscription from the 3rd century BC, dedicated to a benefactor who, during his time as magister, had gifted a certain amount of denarii. The initiative of the anonymous donor is similar to that of Titus Flavius L [...], who had provided 10 000 denarii for celebrations dedicated to the Imperial cult towards the late 2nd century AD³⁰. This general meaning of the word *ἀρχή* is also apparent in an inscription from Tomis, found on a stone altar dedicated to Apollo Agyeus, built in the time of Governor Catonius Vindex and under the magistracy (*ὑπὲρ ἀρχῆς*) of P. Flavius Theodorus³¹. The dedication was dated to a period *post* 170 AD, at the latest the beginning of Commodus' rule. It is also here, during the 2nd century AD, that a personage originally from Neapolis, Syria, is mentioned as having held the position of magister three times, aside from fulfilling other obligations, without prejudicing the city: *τρίς τελέσας ἀρχήν*³².

Magistrates, *ἄρχοντες*, are closely connected to the term used on the *tessera*. They are mentioned in Callatian inscriptions during the autonomous period³³, as well as the Imperial one, during the second half of the 3rd century AD³⁴. The term

²⁵ ISM II 371.

²⁶ ISM I 351.

²⁷ *DID* II, p. 172-173.

²⁸ ISM I.

²⁹ ISM III 220.

³⁰ ISM III 104.

³¹ ISM II 116.

³² ISM II 188.

³³ ISM III 3.

³⁴ ISM III 75.

refers to dignitaries, functionaries and officials in general, also being used as such in other Greek cities³⁵.

As the meaning of the term ἀρχή is so uncertain, we can only make assumptions in what concerns the conditions and purpose of the lead piece's production. It is known that, ever since the 1st century AD, most administrative functions were taken on by benefactors (*evergetai*), who utilised their own funds to perform their duties³⁶. Such is the case of Ariston, son of Ariston³⁷, of Apollonios³⁸ or of Iatrocles of Isagoras³⁹ in the 1st century AD. In the circumstances of Publius Vinicius' expedition in Thrace and Macedonia (3-2 AD), the inscriptions that record the names of some people, son of Secundinus⁴⁰ or Monianios⁴¹, involved in the city's defence, can be dated. In the 2nd century AD, Titus Flavius L [...] donated an important sum for the feasts tied to the Imperial cult⁴², and Titus Aelius Minicius funded an activity which remains unknown⁴³. This tradition ends in the Megarian city after the rule of Marcus Aurelius, when taking on such a position was no longer considered an honour, but rather a burden⁴⁴.

The artistic style of the lead piece, as well as resemblances with certain pseudo-autonomous issues of the Demeter-type, places it sometime during the 2nd century AD, in the time of the Antoninus dynasty. In Callatis, during this time a series of important urbanistic works were recorded. The existence of an architrave that features the name of Antoninus Pius, as well as Caesar Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, alongside other fragments, suggests the construction of some large edifices⁴⁵. The urbanistic activity seems to carry on during the time of Emperor Marcus Aurelius as well, when the road that followed the coastline and crossed the city was repaired, as recorded by several milestones from 163 AD. After the Costoboci attack on Lower Moesia settlements in 170 AD, rebuilding the cities' fortifications was one of the first measures imposed by the Emperor⁴⁶. Consequently, the Governor of the province, Marcus Valerius Bradua, enforced an exceptional tax for the city's population, which helped collect money to fund the repairs needed by the Callatian fortifications⁴⁷. The general reconstruction works from the entire region also determined an increased number of manifestations of the Imperial cult: altars featuring dedications to Emperors and the imperial family were built in Histria and Tomis⁴⁸, but also in the rural area, as was the initiative of

³⁵ ISM III, p. 90 and p. 399.

³⁶ *IstRom*. II, p. 316.

³⁷ ISM III 40-42, 44-45; GRĂMĂȚICU & IONIȚĂ 2007, p. 33-35, for coins with the name of Ariston.

³⁸ ISM III 31.

³⁹ ISM III 32.

⁴⁰ ISM III 29.

⁴¹ ISM III 30.

⁴² ISM III 104.

⁴³ ISM III 70.

⁴⁴ *IstRom*. II, p. 317.

⁴⁵ ISM III 61 and p. 72-73.

⁴⁶ *DID* II, p. 165-166.

⁴⁷ ISM III 97-100.

⁴⁸ *DID* II, p. 149-150 (for Antoninus Pius); p. 172-173 (for Marcus Aurelius); *IstRom*. II, p. 369.

Mayor Ulpius Ulpianus from *vicus Celeris*⁴⁹; dedications on edifices or even sculptural monuments.

An important part of the official cult was organising the Caesarea and Panegyris celebrations, feasts during which citizens would pray for the health of the Emperor and his family. Games with gladiators and beasts were organised, prizes were given, and various public works were inaugurated. The organisation of these celebrations was handed to a wealthy citizen of the community, a benefactor (*evergetes*), who could afford such an endeavour⁵⁰. One such person was Apollonios, founder of the Gerousia. He offered Callatians sumptuous sacrifices, distributed meat and oil, held shows and banquets, and provided the necessary funds for new projects in the city⁵¹. Even when the people decided he should be honoured by producing bronze sculptures and honorific inscriptions that would be displayed in the most visible places, Apollonios covered the expenses, unwilling to affect public resources. Later on, in the 2nd century AD inscriptions, the merits of benefactors are not described so detailed, sometimes because of the stone's partial state of preservation. However, there are analogies of such personages at Tomis, from a later period, the first half of the 3rd century AD.

The honorific inscription dedicated to Aurelius Priscus Isidorus, who held the position of Pontarch as well as the first magistracy (ἡ πρώτη ἀρχή) irreproachably is also very relevant⁵². The latter also held the position of Archiereus, generously organizing games with gladiators and beasts for six days in a row. He was a Romanised Oriental, appreciated in other communities as well, in Flavia Neapolis and Antipatris, where he was a councillor for the heads of the two cities. Another inscription mentions yet another personage with a similar name, Aurelius Priscus Annianus, whom Kurt Regling identified with his son in the monetary corpus' introduction⁵³. He was also a Pontarch, but exercised his first magistracy (ἡ πρώτη ἀρχή), as well as the role of Archiereus, in the capacity of which he held "brilliant gladiatorial and Bestiarii fights"⁵⁴. It is known that the Archiereus was charged with overseeing the fulfilment of all tasks set by the practice of the Imperial cult within the city⁵⁵. These inscriptions record that, in Tomis, during the Severan dynasty, one of the Archiereus' obligations was to organize these shows and fights during festivities. In Callatis, neither Apollonios nor Isagoras of Iatrokles were named Archierei. Later on, during the time of Governor M. Valerius Bradua, while the city was being reconstructed, Titus Aelius Minicius Athanaion was named Protos Pontarches and Archiereus⁵⁶; along with his son, Titus Aelius Minicius Moschion (who was just a Pontarch), they took

⁴⁹ ISM I 351 (Marcus Aurelius).

⁵⁰ ȘTEFAN 1975, p. 171-172.

⁵¹ ISM III 31.

⁵² ISM II 96.

⁵³ Regling 1910, p. 73.

⁵⁴ ISM II 97.

⁵⁵ EIAVR I, p. 100, *sub voce*: *arhiereu*; *IstRom.* II, p. 373.

⁵⁶ ISM III 99.

on the duty of fully reconstructing seven defence towers and the walls around them, as well as repairing the front gates.

An inscription from Troesmis reveals that the Archiereus was aided by a *flamen Augusti municipalis*, *seviri Augustales* and *Sodales* to fulfil his duties⁵⁷. The latter, the *Sodales*, were tasked with preserving the memory of deceased Emperors, officiating various rituals⁵⁸. In one of his studies, M. Rostowzew illustrated a *tessera* which presents certain similarities to our lead piece in the way the inscription on the reverse side is represented. The obverse portrays a winged Victory raising a wreath to the right, while on the reverse, as in the case of our piece, the legend is inscribed around of a circle, with a dot in the middle: SODALES DE SUO⁵⁹ (Pl. I, 5). As the inscription shows, it belongs to members of the association and was produced at their own expense. The author remarks that it could have been used for games or banquets organised by the association using its own funds, on special feasts dedicated to the Imperial cult. The similar style of the reverse side of the two lead pieces testifies to their common execution and utilisation.

The *tesserae*, described by us, was probably issued as part of these manifestations tied to celebrating the Caesarea and Panegyris feasts, which were more magnificent due to the effervescence of construction work initiated in the entire region. In this stage of research, as it is the only such piece known in Dobrogea, we are inclined to consider it an exceptional issue, prompted by certain circumstances: a remarkable donation, which would have allowed the organization of grandiose and plentiful festivities. It is possible that, during these festivities organized at the expense of Iulius Celer, those who would receive a *tessera* such as this would gain access to food distribution: meat or oil⁶⁰. Additionally, we do not exclude the possibility that the piece was only a souvenir, a token gifted to participants in order to remind them of this event and of the figure who made the extravagance possible. We do not believe it is a common piece, issued in several repeating series, discontinued, as the equivalent of an entry ticket at the city's theatre⁶¹, as in this case more such pieces should have been found, with the name of different magistrates.

The choice to portray the Dioscuri on the obverse of the lead piece is not an accident. It is not necessarily linked to the cult of the Dioscuri, since not many traces of these deities' worship have been preserved in the Megarian city, with the exception of coins. The only testimony is the discovery of an incomplete stone relief from the 2nd century AD, which features the bust of one of the Dioscuri wearing a bonnet on his head, to the right, followed by his horse⁶². The image on the *tessera* represents the reverse side of a pseudo-autonomous three-*assaria* coin from Callatis, on which these deities appear repetitively and monotonously, walking to the right. Unlike the coin, the Dioscuri are portrayed in the same

⁵⁷ ISM V 151, 194.

⁵⁸ DAREMBERG & SAGLIO 1873, p. 1371-1372, *sub voce*: *sodales augustales*.

⁵⁹ ROSTOWZEW 1905, p. 67, no. 880-882, pl. II, 11.

⁶⁰ ISM III 31, 32.

⁶¹ ISM III 3, mentions the existence of a theatre in the city; PIPPIDI 1966, p. 232.

⁶² SAUCIUC-SĂVEANU 1941-1944, p. 278, fig. 15, 8; BORDENACHE 1969, no. 71.

stylistic manner, but heading in the other direction, to the left, as in the mirror. This aspect is important as it is a distinctive mark of the lead piece, ensuring it could not be mistaken for a coin.

The *tessera*'s similar artistic style to that of such pieces urged us to consider whether the lead did not have monetary value. In a study from 1884, a *tessera* bearing the inscription ΤΡΙΩΒΟ[λον] was described⁶³. The author states it could have been a conventional coin, but with limited circulation, valid only within temples. Consequently, it had a fictive value, imposed in a limited setting, like one of our modern tokens.

Another case is that of a *tessera* uncovered at Durostorum⁶⁴. The lead piece, weighing 25 g and 44 mm in diameter, had a representation only on one side, portraying an image from the sestertii of Emperor Trajan. It bears no inscription, but the image used allowed it to be dated to 105 AD, before the second Dacian war. It was likely produced as an element of Imperial propaganda for the *Legio XI Claudia* that had been brought in Durostorum.

Our lead appears to be a *tessera* issued in Callatis on the occasion of celebrations dedicated to the Emperor, organized by Iulius Celer at his own expense. The latter held the position of Archiereus, and in this capacity he organized the preparation of these games, which sometimes lasted six days in a row⁶⁵. Through analogies with Callatian pseudo-autonomous issues as well as other inscriptions found in Tomis, Iulius Celer would have fulfilled this magistracy (ἀρχή) sometime towards the mid-2nd century AD.

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⁶⁴ CULICĂ 1972, p. 651-652.

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Pl. I - A lead *tessera* from Callatis (1, magnified 2:1); pseudo-autonomous coins from Callatis of the Demeter type (2-4); a *tessera* discovered at Durostorum from 105 AD. (5); a *tessera* of the *Sodales* college (6, magnified 2:1).