



Institutul
de Cercetări
Bioarheologice
și Etnoculturale

Revista

de Arheologie, Antropologie
și Studii interdisciplinare

Journal of Archaeology, Anthropology
and Interdisciplinary Studies

5

2023

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Revista de Arheologie, Antropologie și Studii Interdisciplinare (RAASI) este publicația anuală a Institutului de Cercetări Bioarheologice și Etnoculturale (ICBE) din Chișinău.

Revista de Arheologie, Antropologie și Studii Interdisciplinare (RAASI) este indexată în bazele de date internaționale [CEEOL](#) și [ERIHPLUS](#).



Editare și tipar: Bons Offices

ISSN: 2587-3768

E-ISSN: 2587-3776

Chișinău 2023

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Consolation in death. Three cameos from the Roman necropolis of Barboși

Adrian Adamescu¹, Gabriel Jugănaru²,
Tudor Mandache³, George Nuțu^{4*}

Abstract. The Barboși archaeological site represents an interesting Roman settlement in the Lower Danube area. As such, the preventive archaeological excavations undertaken in 2020 at the point called *Metalhard* offered the possibility to research and better understand the ancient necropolis of the site. A single dig unit S1 (Surface #1) was excavated, and research led to the unearthing of 22 graves, two funerary enclosures, and a large Roman defensive ditch. Two of the inhumation graves, which were probably robbed in ancient times, contained three unique pieces of jewellery. First, grave Cx. 1223 revealed a pair of gold earrings with cameos that have engraved the head of a feminine figure identified as a Gorgon. Also, grave Cx. 1211 contained, besides two fragmentary leather shoe soles, a gold finger ring with a cameo of a male persona, the image of the god Hermes. Apart from being a series of precious offerings for the dead, they represent the care of the safe and protected passage towards the afterlife.

Keywords: Lower Danube limes, Barboși, necropolis, early Roman period, Medusa, Hermes.

Consolare în moarte. Trei camee din necropola romană de la Barboși. Complexul arheologic de la Barboși reprezintă o interesantă așezare romană din zona Dunării de Jos. Astfel, în urma cercetărilor arheologice preventive realizate pe parcursul anului 2020 în punctul *Metalhard* a fost posibilă cercetarea necropolei antice și o mult mai bună înțelegere a poziționării și planimetriei sale. A fost trasată o singură unitate de săpătură, S1 (Suprafața 1), care a dus la evidențierea unui număr de 22 de morminte, două incinte funerare și un șanț defensiv roman de mari dimensiuni. Două dintre morminte, cel mai probabil jefuite încă din antichitate, conțineau trei podoabe unice pentru spațiul menționat. Mai întâi, în mormântul Cx. 1223 au fost identificați doi cercei din aur cu camee care aveau reprezentarea unei gorgone. De asemenea, mormântul Cx. 1211 conținea, pe lângă două tălpi fragmentare din piele, un inel din aur cu o camee cu

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reprezentarea unei divinități masculine – Hermes. În afară de a fi ofrande funerare extrem de prețioase, cele trei artefacte denotă o mare grijă pentru defunct și pentru trecerea în siguranță către viața de după moarte.

Cuvinte cheie: limesul de la Dunărea inferioară, Barboși, necropolă, perioadă romană timpurie, Medusa, Hermes.

.....

Introduction

The archaeological site of Barboși (Bărboși) lies on the shores of a former meander of the Siret River, west of its confluence with the Danube, and south-west of the city of Galați, Galați County, Romania (**Fig. 1**). It contains evidence of a Dacian fortress, a Roman Castellum and Castrum, as well as a Roman civilian settlement and its necropolis, which existed in the 2nd-3rd centuries AD, and is the most important site from that period in the area of Southern Moldavia. The dominant position of Tirighina Hill at the confluence of the Danube with the Siret River and the general openness of the area towards Dobrudja are strategic advantages that make the site extremely favourable for inhabitation (Gostar 1962, 507-509; 1965, 144-147; Gostar *et alii* 1964, 418-426; Sanie, Dragomir 1970 136-141; Sanie 1981, 160-164; Dragomir 1982, 160-162; Sanie 1987, 109-110; 1988, 53; Sanie, Sanie 1991, 49-52; 1992, 81-85). Also, from Antiquity, until late in the Middle Ages, Barboși and, later, Galați, was an important crossroad for trade routes (by land, river and sea) coming from Tyras/Cetatea Albă and went to the Angustia/Brețcu, in Dacia, along the river valleys of Siret and Trotuș. As such, the ancient fortification was visible and accessible to scholars and foreign travellers beginning with the 18th century, one of the first to be studied on the territory of nowadays Romania.

Regional Setting

A large Roman tumular necropolis was evidenced on the plateau of the Galați Steelworks that is located north of the site on the Tirighina heights, which served the Roman military camp and, above all, the civilian settlement. Nowadays, the tumular necropolis consists of a group of seven funeral mounds, to which we can add a large number of flat graves, with both inhumation and cremation rites being present.

Unfortunately, the Barboși archaeological site has suffered a lot from anthropic interventions. This situation is first signalled in 1836, when Gh. Săulescu notes that the Tirighina height was used as a stone quarry (Săulescu 1991, p. 61-62). Next in the series of interventions at the archaeological site, around 1870, is the construction of the railway over the Roman civilian settlement with stone and earth dislocated from all over the ancient site (Pârvan 1913, p. 109). This corroborated

with the extension of Barboși village in the modern and contemporary period, and the construction of a large number of production halls in the area of the Roman tumular necropolis has forever changed the archaeological landscape.

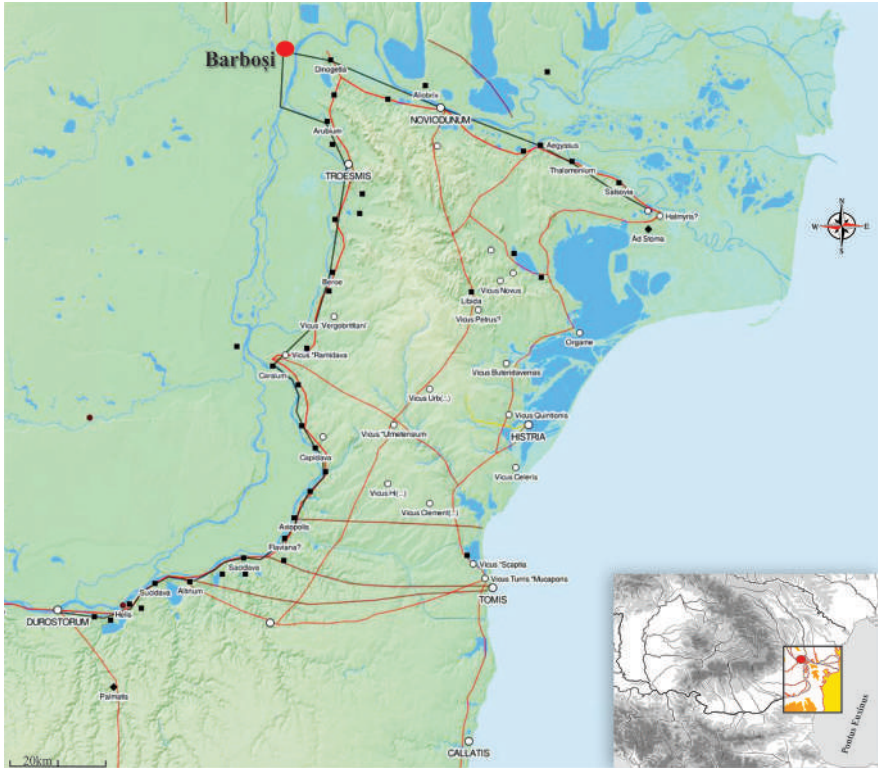


Fig. 1. Barboși and the Lower Danube *limes* (background map from the Digital Atlas of the Roman Empire, <http://imperium.ahlfeldt.se/>, with additions by the authors).

Fig. 1. Barboși și *limes-ul* Dunării de Jos (hartă de fundal din Atlasul Digital al Imperiului Roman, <http://imperium.ahlfeldt.se/>, cu completări ale autorilor).

A series of fortuitous discoveries and rescue archaeology carried out by I. T. Dragomir and M. Brudiu, when the steelworks were being built, brought about the first clear information about this site (Sanie 1981, p. 83-84; Dragomir 1981, 73-114; 1982, 160-180). As such, they improved research on the Roman tumular necropolis from Tirighina through a series of funeral discoveries, tumular or flat graves, which would have been lost because of the increasing modernisation of the area (Dragomir 1991, p. 237-245; Brudiu 2003, p. 78-80). Moreover, of the 11 mounds mentioned by V. Pârvan in 1913 (Pârvan 1913, p. 111, fig. 9; p. 112), only seven funerary mounds could be identified by M. Brudiu in the early 80s (Brudiu

2003, p. 117, no. 237-256) (**Fig. 2**). Currently, six tumuli remain untouched, with heights between 0.50 and 2 m.

One of the seven mounds mentioned above was excavated in 2009 by researchers from the “Paul Păltănea” History Museum of Galați. During this field campaign, 12 graves were discovered, four incineration tombs, and eight inhumation ones (Ilie *et alii* 2010, p. 265-266). Moreover, this tumulus was only 200 m west of the excavation that was conducted in 2020.

In the same area, researchers from the “Paul Păltănea” History Museum of Galați carried out a series of preventive archaeological excavation explorations in the area northwest of the archaeological research mentioned in the current study. These excavations have unearthed a total of 12 graves, of which eight are flat inhumation graves and another four are cremation ones; also, the research identified two funerary enclosures separated by ditches (Ilie, Adamescu, Mandache 2020, p. 45-47).

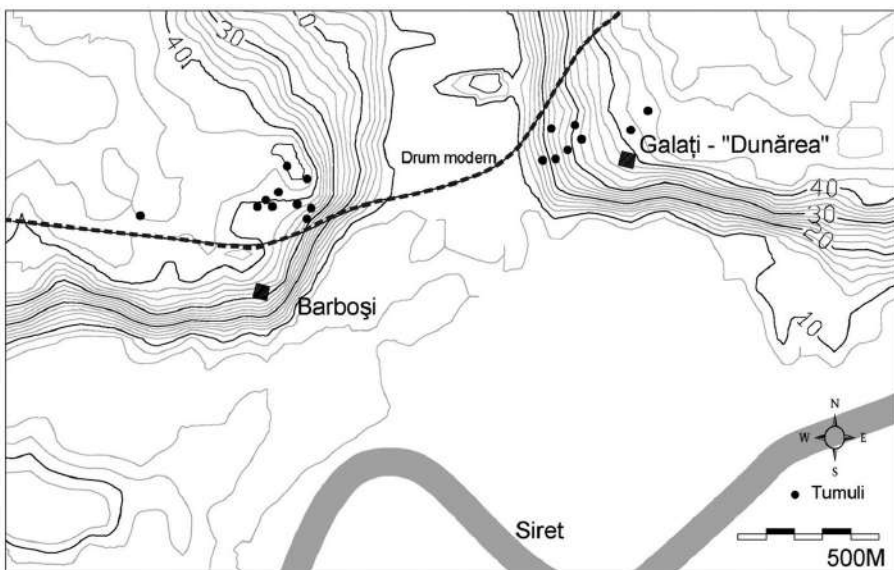


Fig. 2. Barboși archaeological area (after Țentea, Oltean 2009, fig. 1).

Fig. 2. Zona arheologică Barboși (după Țentea, Oltean 2009, fig. 1).

The 2020 Field Season

Barboși archaeological area has seen rapid degradation in recent years, and the opportunities for archaeological research in this site have been dramatically reduced given that most of the site is now occupied by private properties. However,

new possibilities for archaeological investigation have arisen periodically owing to the investments made in this area. One of these possibilities appeared in 2020 when a production hall was built by Metalhard Activ S.R.L. Company.

Archaeological units⁵

Area I (S1/Metalhard) was oriented northeast/southwest. It had sides of 95.16×20.60 m, with a total area of 1960 m². The excavation unit was divided into 2×2 m squares. The squares were numbered with letters from N-S and numbers from W-E (**Fig. 3**).

Stratigraphically, from top to bottom, the section begins with the topsoil (US 1001) resulting from earthworks conducted in the early 21st century. Its thickness was larger in the northern part of the dig unit (approximately 10 cm) (**Fig. 3**).

US 1002, black-brownish sediment mixed with household waste, is a large contemporary intervention, probably a loan pit, practiced in the mid-80s. In addition, in the northern area of S1, we were able to identify US 1003 (-0.10-0.35 m), greyish-black silty sediment that was compact and homogeneous, mixed with organic materials and limestone pigments (**Fig. 3**). They represent, most likely, a series of terrain levelling events from the contemporary period.

Following, is a brown-blackish crumbly textured soil pigmented with limestone - U.S. 1004, (-0.35-0.75/0.80 m). This layer represents the topsoil from the First World War, from which all machine gun pits were dug (**Fig. 3**). At its base, we noticed the appearance of the upper part of a Roman funeral enclosure, whose western (Cx. 1221), and eastern side (Cx. 1225) appeared in the southern and northern stratigraphic sections.

US 1005 (-0.80-1.00/1.30 m) is a greyish silty sediment that is compact and homogenous, mixed with ceramic fragments, bone, and organic matter (**Fig. 3**). The layer contains material traces datable in the Roman period and serves as the beginning of the other funerary enclosure, Cx. 1220.

US 1006 (-1.30-1.60 m) is a compact and homogenous sediment that has a yellow-greenish colour and contains very few artefacts (**Fig. 3**).

Finally, we have to mention US 1007 (-1.60/-1.65), a yellow soil, which represents the archaeologically sterile layer (**Fig. 3**).

The two funerary enclosures mentioned above (Cx.1220 and Cx. 1221, 1225) were identified at a depth of 1.00m. Their general shape is that of a rectangle, with an entrance from the south side (**Fig. 3**).

⁵ For an overview of the 2020 field season see Adamescu, Mandache, Parnic 2020, p. 69-114.

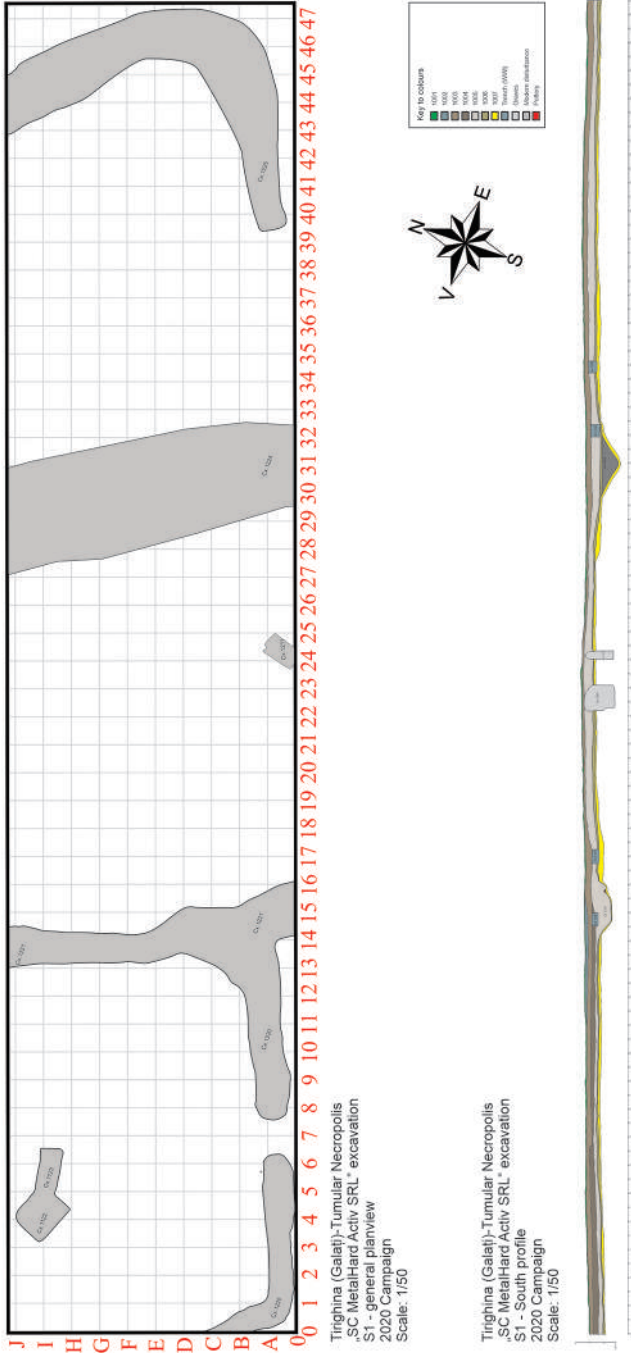


Fig. 3. Mound necropolis of Barboși. Area 1 – ground plan and south profile.

Fig. 3. Necropola tumulară de la Barboși. Zona 1 – planul și profil de sud.

The first funerary enclosure (Cx. 1220) has the appearance of a ditch, which starts from the western stratigraphic profile towards the SE; it makes a small bend and then continues eastward. In squares 6-8A an interruption is visible, which is a possible entrance. Then, it continues eastwards until it makes a bend to the north until, in squares 14-15 B-C. The ditch of the funerary enclosure is approximately 2.00 m wide, and its base was reached at -1.35 m; it has pointed sides and a slightly bleached base. Roman pottery fragments were discovered in the soil filling it, which was compact and grey in colour.

The second funerary enclosure first appeared in the southern stratigraphic section of S1 and in squares 14-16. Similar to the one above, it looks like a ditch, which starts from the southern side of S1, makes a slight bend to the west, and then continues to the northern stratigraphic section. Initially, this western side of enclosure 1 was named Cx. 1221. The other part of the burial enclosure 2 (Cx. 1225) was identified in the eastern part of S1, squares 38-45 A-I. In this area, the archaeological complex starts at m. 78 and goes straight to m. 90, where it makes a bend and then continues in a north westerly direction to the northern section. The ditch of the second enclosure is approximately 2.00 m wide. It has pointed sides and a slightly bleached base, which reaches -1.90 m (Cx. 1221) and -1.30 m (Cx.1225). Only a few Roman pottery fragments were discovered in the compact grey soil that filled the ditch.

Regarding the relationship between the two enclosures, it is visible that Cx. 1220 predates funerary enclosure 2 (Cx. 1221 = Cx. 1225) because its western side damaged the eastern part of the funerary enclosure 1.

Such burial grounds have been identified in Pannonia, at Nagytétény/Budapest (Beszédes, Szilas 2006, 156-158; 2007, 239-240; Mrav 2010, 91, 94, fig. 6), Halimba – Veszprem (Bónis 1960, 93, abb. 23; Török 1961, 65, 20 abra), Nemesböd (Ilon, Kvassay 2015, 20-21, 94, fig. 3) or Mannersdorf am Leithagebirge (Ubl 1974, 421), but also in the Don area (Larenok 2016, p. 1-26). To those mentioned above, we must also add the archaeological complexes researched by M. Brudiu in the area of Galați, the Roman necropolis in the Dunărea District (Brudiu 2004, 40, fig. 1). The aforementioned author describes several burial enclosures, which he presents as a Roman earthen fortification (*castellum*) and three oil amphorae deposits (Brudiu 2004, p. 32; Țentea, Rațiu 2015, 42-45). As noted recently, ‘most of the ditched enclosures from the north-Pontic area mainly cluster in the Prut-Dniester interfluvie’ and are typical to the Sarmatian environment (Bărcă 2020, p. 325-376). Such funerary structures were discovered in large numbers in Pannonia, in civilian and military milieus (Ubl 1974, p. 421; Beszédes, Szilas 2006, p. 158; Mrav 2010, p. 94, fig. 6). The Barboși archaeological site has a strong military character (ISM V, p. 304-305, nr. 295-296; Croitoru 2004, p. 160; Matei-Popescu 2010, p. 45; Țentea

et alii 2019, 50), therefore, an association between these funerary and military complexes cannot be excluded *ab initio*.

The features and the finds⁶

Among the archaeological contexts unearthed in 2020, we present the following: Cx. 1223 from funerary enclosure 1, where the pair of cameo earrings was discovered, and Cx. 1211, in which a gold cameo ring was discovered.

In the first funerary enclosure (s. 5-6 I, S1), at a depth of -0.90 m from the current ground level, we identified a flat inhumation grave dubbed Cx. 1223 (Adamescu, Mandache, Parnic 2020, p. 83). Sub-rectangular with squared corners, the grave pit was 2.80 by 1.50 m and had a roughly W-E orientation (**Fig. 4**). The filling soil of the pit was black mixed with yellow.

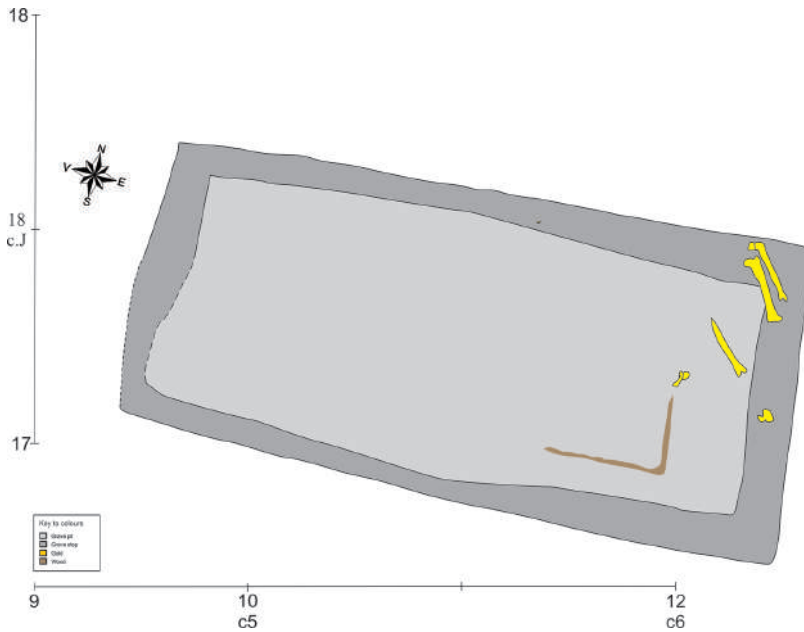


Fig. 4. Ground plan of Cx. 1223.

Fig. 4. Planul Cx. 1223.

The grave (Cx. 1223) was excavated to a depth of -2.35 m, where a step was identified along each of the long sides. Subsequently, two gold earrings with cameos depicting the Gorgo Medusa were discovered on the NE wall of the pit,

⁶ The two earrings and the gold finger ring were synthetically presented in Adamescu, Mandache, Parnic 2020, 86, fig. 26/1-2.

more precisely on the step. The base was reached at a depth of -2.80 m. Here, we were able to retrieve a series of disturbed human bones, present on the entire surface of the grave pit base. We also recovered Roman ceramic fragments, iron pieces, and a bronze plaque.

Cx. 1211 (Adamescu, Mandache, Parnic 2020, p. 80) is a flat inhumation grave oriented NNE-SSW, which was identified funerary enclosure 2. The grave pit was identified in s. 24-25A at in US 1005. The pit shape is sub-rectangular with squared corners, with dimensions of 1.86×0.86 m (**Fig. 5**). It was dug straight along its contour to a maximum depth of -2.30 m. On the NW side of the tomb, a chamber with dimensions of 1.26 by 0.60 m was observed. The chamber was also rectangular with straight sides.

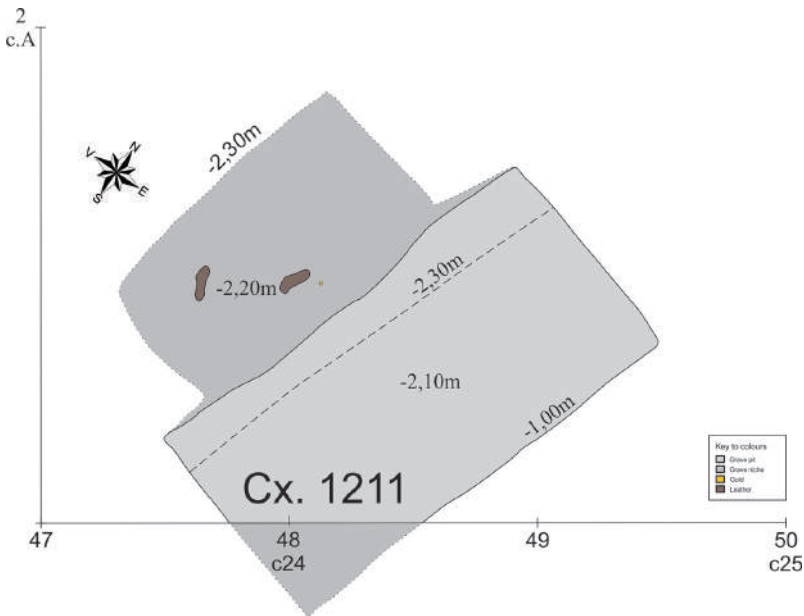


Fig. 5. Ground plan of Cx. 1211.

Fig. 5. Planul Cx. 1211.

Ceramic fragments, iron pieces, and two fragmentary leather shoe soles (**Fig. 6**) were recovered from the pit's fill soil. The first sole was found in the central part of the tomb, near the western side of the chamber. The second sole was also discovered in the central part of the burial space of the deceased but close to the south side of the chamber. A gold ring with cameos representing a personage, embossed in white on a blue background, was discovered at the base of the chamber, close to its western side. Both the leather soles and ring were discovered at a depth of -2.00 m (**Fig. 5**).



Fig. 6. Fragmentary leather shoe soles.
Fig. 6. Tălpi fragmentare din piele.

Style, Parallels and Chronology of the Cameos

The Earrings with Cameos Depicting Gorgo Medusa

The gold earrings with cameos were discovered in Cx. 1223 and have similar features and consist of a hook-shaped bar onto which is welded an oval-shaped gold plate with a cameo (sardonyx) in the centre depicting the Gorgo Medusa. In the lower part, there are two rings from which two pendants are suspended, which are made of twisted gold wire finished with a loop. The cameo was made from sardonyx by cutting, incising, grinding, and abrasion. The features are rudimentary and barely sketched. The oval face, broad nose, firm mouth, and hair rendered by vertical and oblique incisions are characteristic representations of Medusa, one of the three Gorgons of Greco-Roman mythologies (Fig. 7).

Medusa, the Gorgon, is a universal subject on cameos from the Roman period, extremely loved and used, both for rings and pendants used in earrings or necklaces (LIMC IV.1, p. 352, no. 85). The reason for its popularity is explained to us by a cameo in the Content Collection that reproduces the inscription εὐτυχί γοργονί ('with the luck of the Gorgon') (Molesworth, Henig 2011, p. 182, pl. 19). The motif's popularity is also due to the belief that the representation of Gorgo Medusa can ward off evil spirits and the evil eye (Henig 1974, p. 20; Hamat, Kovacs 2020, p. 401-402; Georgescu-Hamat, Potârniche 2022, p. 285-286). The fascination

for this subject will persist over the centuries until the modern period, when imitations will be made after ancient prototypes⁷. The depictions are diverse, as is the craftsmanship of artisans.⁸ The materials used are also diverse, using different semi-precious stones (onyx, sardonyx, multi-layered, or single-layer) for greater visual impact. Examples made of a jet are also known, particularly in Roman Britain (Parker 2016: p. 98-113), but they also spread to other provinces. Moreover, a cameo depicting Medusa's head made of jet was discovered at Aquincum and was a western (Britannia or Rhineland) import from the late 3rd century AD – a period of flourishing production and trade with jewellery made of this material (Facsády 2009, p. 70, 117, no. 243).



Fig 7. The golden earrings with cameos depicting Gorgo Medusa.
Fig. 7. Cerceii din aur cu camee înfățișând Gorgo Medusa.

Earring #1.
 Material: Gold with sardonyx.
 Dimensions: H. 2.8 cm.
 Weight: 2.54 g.
 Condition: Well preserved,
 Minimal usage.

Earring #2.
 Material: Gold with sardonyx.
 Dimensions: H. 2.8 cm.
 Weight: 2.58 g.
 Condition: Well preserved,
 Minimal usage.

⁷ For example, a Medusa cameo attributed to Jean Vangrol, Paris, around 1640 – see Aschengreen Piacenti, Boardman 2008, p. 62, no. 49.

⁸ See as for example the diversity of styles of the 13 cameos depicting Medusa recorded by I. Popović in Belgrade Museum' collections – Popović 1989, p. 65-69, nos. 17-29, of the cameos from National Archaeological Museum in Sofia – Dimitrova-Milčeva 1980, p. 108-110, nos. 310-319 or of the gems and cameos from Numismatic Cabinet of the Library of the Romanian Academy – Gramatopol 1977, p. 176-177, nos. 687-700, pls. 32-33.

Earrings, medallions with pendants (Popović 2010, p. 60), and rings (Popović 1992, p. 84-85, nos. 56, 60; 1997, p. 25, fig. 3.) with cameos depicting Medusa are frequent discoveries across Roman provinces (Spier 1992, p. 161, no. 446 with the bibliography; Johns 1996, p. 83-84) in various artistic manners. A somehow 'Orientalised-style' Medusa cameo is housed in the Kibuttz Giv'at Oz collection, in Roman Palestine, and was discovered in the area of the military camp of Legio VI Ferrata at Kefar 'Othnay (Peleg-Barkat, Tepper 2011, p. 101, pl. 5.). This item reflects the variety of artistic trends employed by the gem cutters during the Imperial period.

Among parallels from the Lower Danube provinces, a series of cameos from Moesia Inferior and Moesia Superior stand out. Some representations are more schematic, like the Medusa cameo on two medallions discovered at Ratiaria (Ruseva-Slokoska 1991, p. 149, nos. 127-128; Dumanov 2008, p. 109, fig. 25). Gorgo Medusa is depicted on intaglios from Moesian sites, some of high quality. One such example is a 'pathetic' Medusa discovered in the late Hellenistic/early Roman habitation stratum at Slava Rusă – Late Antique (L?)Ibida (Aparaschivei, Chiriac 2018, p. 93-99, fig. 4a-b). This popular motif in Roman art was used to decorate personal jewellery. Among the earrings with cameos decorated with Medusa's image we can recall a pair made of gold from Kod Koraba at Viminacium, in Grave 76, together with a coin of Severus Alexander (Milovanovic, Andelkovic Grasar 2017, p. 175, fig. 16). Obviously, different in shape from the earrings discovered at Barboși, they are proof of the popularity of the Medusa motif in the Roman period. On the other hand, another pair of gold earrings decorated with cameos rendering Medusa in onyx from the Aquae/Prahovo necropolis (3rd century AD) are closer in shape, although in the lower part, there are three pendants instead of two, as in the case of our specimen (Popovic 2001, p. 42, fig. 9; Milovanovic, Andelkovic Grasar 2017, p. 175, fig. 17).

Representations of Medusa are, as a rule, frontal, in profile, or show the face turned slightly to one side (Aparaschivei, Chiriac 2018, p. 96; Hamat, Kovacs 2020, p. 403-404). It should be emphasised that jewellery decorated with cameos were offerings in women's graves, such funerary contexts being known in Moesia Inferior, at Capidava (Covacef 2009, p. 470, pl. 4/1, 3, an empress and a satirical personage), at Suhindol in the proximity of Nicopolis ad Istrum, possibly in a child's grave (Ruseva-Slokoska 1991, p. 124, nos. 51a-b.) and perhaps in Marcianopolis (2nd-3rd century AD) (Minchev 2021, p. 260, fig. 6). In addition, in a cremation grave from Tomis was discovered another inset earring with a cameo (agate) with the image of Medusa (Lungu, Covacef, Chera 2012, p. 40-41, cat. no. 35, pl. 14; Georgescu-Hamat, Potârniche 2022, p. 290, cat. no. 1, fig. 1-2.). In the North of Pontus, earrings with cameos depicting Medusa were discovered at Chersonesos in a 3rd century AD context (Zhuravlev 2002, p. 59-60, nos. 197-200).

Most funerary contexts indicate that grave goods consisting of jewellery decorated with gorgoneia were discovered in inhumation graves. This characteristic is similar to other provinces such as Britannia, where analysis of Medusa pendants made of jet indicates that most evidence points to adult female graves (Parker 2016, p. 110). Most of the well-dated findings came from the early 3rd century AD context (Hamat, Kovacs 2020, p. 404).

The Gold and Cameo Finger ring

The gold finger ring discovered in Cx. 1211 is widened at the top, oval-shaped, with a chaton with a cameo depicting a male figure standing leaning on an altar looking right. The chaton seems welded (?) to the hoop with a semi-circular cross-section. The central piece is a cameo (sardonyx in two layers) with the representation of Hermes/Mercurius wearing chlamys, to the left, leaning on a column. On his head, he has two stylised wings, the caduceus is behind him and in his right hand, and he has the purse. The torso is covered with a cloak, rendered by fine incisions (**Fig. 8**).

Hermes/Mercurius is one of the most popular deities in Moesia Inferior, this situation is also noticeable in other Roman provinces. The god exerts a strong influence as a protector of trade, associated with prosperity in all Roman provinces.



Fig. 8. The Golden finger ring with cameo depicting Hermes/Mercurius.
Fig. 8. Inelul din aur cu camee care îl înfățișează pe Hermes/Mercurius.

Material: Gold with sardonyx in two layers (combination with hematite)
 Dimensions: Dinner 1.5 cm; L 1.6 cm; W 1.5 cm.
 Weight: 1.17 g.
 Condition: Well preserved, minimal usage.

The depiction of Hermes/Mercurius resting on a column is a well-known pattern in Roman glyptic. *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* records several intaglios depicting Hermes/Mercurius naked or with chlamys, with one leg slightly flexed and leaning on a column (LIMC VI, 1, p. 511-512, nos. 107, 109, 115; LIMC VI, 2, p. 280). The specific attributes (the kerykeion, the bag, and the fins on the head) are rendered more or less successfully. On the column is sometimes the ram head or the rooster, the specific companions of the deity. This subject has its roots in the Hellenistic period (LIMC VI, 1, p. 511, no. 107), but will become widespread in the early Roman period, especially in the 1st century AD, when it became extremely popular. The same pose of the deity, leaning on a column to the left with the left leg slightly flexed, a chlamys fastened around his neck was reproduced on a 1st century AD intaglio (rock crystal) from the Getty Villa collection from Los Angeles (Spier 1992, p. 105, no. 257). There are, of course, some variations from this pose in terms of both the body position and the god's attributes (see for example, Furtwängler 1896, p. 125, no. 2713, pl. 24; Henig, Whiting 1987, p. 14, no. 88; Guiraud 1988, p. 108, no. 194, pl. 13; Spier 1992, p. 105, no. 258). Two intaglios from the National Museum in Sofia render Hermes/Mercurius in a similar position, but the column is interpreted as an altar (Dimitrova-Milčeva 1980, p. 46-47, no. 62, 66).

Most of these intaglios are dated to the 1st-2nd centuries AD. Although we do not know a close analogy for the cameo from Barboși, we believe that it can be chronologically framed in this period, when this manner of representation was extremely popular.

Concluding Remarks

The presence of the three cameos in the two graves from Barboși in the first three centuries of Roman rule is not surprising. These represent precious funeral offerings for the deceased, who was passing into the afterlife. At the same time, they also represent a status symbol that emphasises the value shown by the family, but also the important role played by the deceased in provincial society in this area of contact between the Romans and barbarians. The arrival of the three precious stones in the region is not accidental if we consider the role played by the fortification complex from Barboși between the Roman Empire and the areas of the free Dacians. Frontier societies have always had the opportunity to develop economically during times of peace. River Danube acts as a frontier, but also as a trade route through which products from the provinces of the middle and lower Danube, as well as the Pontic basin, reach this outpost of the Roman world.

Hermes/Mercurius is a versatile deity, but above all, a protector of trade and business success, which perhaps explains his presence in the funerary inventory

of tomb Cx. 1211. On the other hand, the apotropaic role of the Gorgo Medusa image is well known and its presence among the funeral offerings in Cx. 1223 has precisely the role of protecting (a lady?) in the afterlife.

Acknowledgements: This work was supported by a grant of the Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digitization, CNCS - UEFISCDI, project number PN-III-P1-1.1-TE-2021-0544, within PNCDI III.

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