

ANCIENT CULT IN BALKANS THROUGH ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDINGS AND ICONOGRAPHY

Edited by Sofija Petković and Nadežda Gavrilović-Vitas

Beograd 2020.

АНТИЧКИ КУЛТ НА БАЛКАНУ КРОЗ НАЛАЗЕ И ИКОНОГРАФИЈУ

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Београд 2020

Publisher / Издавач:

Serbian Archaeological Society / Срско археолошко друштво

For publisher / За издавача:

Adam Crnobrnja/Adam Crnobrnja

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Print / Штампа: **Colorgrafx**

Print in 230 copies / Штампано у 230 примерака

ISBN-978-86-80094-12-0

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The publication of this volume is financially supported by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia.

Издавање ове публикације финансијски је подржало Министарство просвете, науке и технолошког развоја Републике Србије.

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SOFIJA PETKOVIĆ

ROMAN BROOCHES
FROM SERBIA
AS CULT OBJECTS

ROMAN BROOCHES FROM SERBIA AS CULT OBJECTS¹

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UDK: 904:739.2(497.11)"00/04"

Abstract: Among Roman Brooches originating from the territory of today's Serbia, in nearly every typological group there are types or specimens with a cult function or symbolism.

In the group of early Roman fibulae there is a type in the form of pincers related to metallurgy and Vulcanus. In the group of strongly-profiled arch brooches there are several types connected to cult issues: anchor-fibulae and some variants of a hybrid-type, like zoomorphic and anthropomorphic strongly-profiled arch fibulae. In the group of elbow-brooches there is a luxurious specimen made of silver, ornamented with gold foil and with a votive inscription. Nearly all types of plate brooches could have had a cultic meaning or function, especially the type in the form of a swastika. The types of the group of figural modelled fibulae are obviously associated with certain deities, as they appear in the form of different animals as well as in form of cult scenes. There is a type of brooches in the form of cult objects, like a jug, *thyrsus*, *caduceus* and horn of plenty (*cornu copia*) (Petković Types 27 A-D). In the group of arch fibulae some types could be referred to as cult objects, like crossbow brooches decorated with imperial portraits or Christian symbols, but also with a representation of an obscure deity.

Keywords: Roman brooches, cult objects, Roman period, Serbia, Roman deities, zoomorphic brooches, anthropomorphic brooches, cult scenes

Brooches/fibulae were used as insignia and cult objects from their origin. Certainly, they also had a utilitarian function for fastening clothes, but primarily they were decorations and jewellery with a symbolic meaning. Fibula emerged as a significant ornament in the Late Bronze Age and the Early Iron Age (Hallstatt).²

No doubt, some types of Roman fibulae were connected with cults and magic or devoted to some deities providing their protection to the owner of the brooch. Among the Roman brooches from the territory of today's Serbia, there are types or specimens with a cultic function or symbolism in nearly every typological group.

In the group of early Roman fibulae (Petković Group II), there is a type in the form of pincers (Petković Type 5).³ They were made of copper alloy or iron, representing metallurgical tools used for casting and forging, according to the form of the pincers.⁴ The pincers are the attribute of the god of fire and metallurgy, *Vulcanus*. Based on the iconography of the Greek god Hephaestus, this deity is represented with a hammer and tongs in his hands.⁵

Brooches of Petković Type 5 originate from the Roman province of *Dalmatia*, from where they spread to the North, to *Gallia*, and to the East, to *Pannonia* and *Moesia*. The chronology of the findings of this type of fibula is very wide, from the 1st to the 4th cen-

1 This article is the result of the project: Romanisation, urbanisation and transformation of urban centres of civil, military and residential character in Roman provinces in the territory of Serbia (no. 177007), funded by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia.

2 RGA, Fibel und Fibeltracht, II, §2–5, 11; Vasić 1999, 119–123.

3 Petković 2010, 45–47

4 Popović 1988, 143, T. XXVIII, 6, T. XXIX, 1–2.

5 Srejić, Cermanović-Kuzmanović 1979, 480; Popović 1988, 143.

tury, with a slightly larger number of specimens dating from the second half of the 2nd to the first half of the 3rd century.⁶

In Serbia, six brooches in the form of pincers have been found: one in a *villa urbana* in *Sirmium*, one on the Danube Limes, in Tekija - *Transdierna*, two in a *villa* preceding the imperial palace of *Felix Romuliana* at Gamzigrad and one from the mining region of Bor, Eastern Serbia.⁷

The last mentioned brooch, now in the Museum of Mining and Metallurgy in Bor, resembles, with its form and ornament, Etruscan bronze pincers, which belonged to the fireplace.⁸ (Fig. 1)



Figure 1 – Fibula of Petković Type 5, from unknown site, Museum of Mining and Metallurgy, Bor. (Petković 2010)

Слика 1 – Фибула Петковић тип 5, непознато налазиште, Музеј рударства и металургије, Бор. (Петковић 2010)

It is obvious that fibulae in the form of pincers were discovered at Roman archaeometallurgical sites in Serbia – in *Sirmium*, in the Roman settlement at Gamzigrad from the 2nd - 3rd centuries, in the Bor mining region and in *Timacum Minus*.⁹ Bearing this in mind, it is possible that brooches of Petković Type 5 were connected to the autochthonous deity *Sedatus*, a parallel with the Roman *Vulcanus*.¹⁰

In the group of strongly profiled arch brooches (Petković Group IV), there are several types connected to cultic issues: “anchor-fibulae” (Petković Type 15) and some variants of the hybrid type, like zoomorphic (Petković Type 17 A) and anthropomorphic (Petković Type 17 Â) fibulae.

Figural elements of ornament on these fibulae, in addition to their aesthetics, have both symbolic and cultural significance, whilst the repertoire of the representations points to already known autochthonous elements of the Roman cult in the Balkans.

The most striking examples of the composite structure of zoomorphic decoration on Roman brooches from Serbia belong to variants of the so-called “anchor-fibulae” type, which are named according to the shape of their head (Lengerfibeln). For a study of the symbolic/cult function of these brooches, variant Petković 15 C is the most important. It has a plastic, ornithomorphic decoration at the beginning of the stem, between symmetric semicircular or square plaque enlargements. The head of a bird, probably a dove, faces the head of the fibula, and the fan-like tail to the stem. The whole fibula has the shape of the head of a horned animal (ram, goat or bull?), on which the bird (dove) has set down. Although, within the



Figure 2 – Fibula of Petković Type 15 C, Taurunum, Private Collection of Branko Najhold, Zemun. (Petković 2011)

Слика 2 – Фибула Петковић тип 15 C, Татуринум, Приватна збирка Бранка Најхолда. (Петковић 2011)

⁶ Petković 2010, 46.

⁷ Petković 2010, 47.

⁸ Jockenhövel 2001, 94, Abb. 4.

⁹ Petković 2009, 190-194.

¹⁰ Jovanović 1995, 112; Jovanović 2007, 66 – 68.



Figure 3 – Fibula of Petković Type 17 A, from unknown site, National Museum, Belgrade. (Petković 2010)

Слика 3 – Фибула Петковић тип 17 А, непознато налазиште, Народни музеј, Београд. (Петковић 2010)

Petković Type 15, luxurious silver examples, ornate in filigree and granulation techniques, are not rare, the most sophisticatedly decorated fibula of this type, with a complex zoomorphic ornament, was made of copper alloy. On this fibula, two seated dogs and a dove, which were cast separately, have been applied to the support bar (dogs) and at the beginning of the stem (dove). The bird sits between, also applied, two pine cones. At the end of the stem is a poppy fruit and the ends of the “anchor shaped” head are in the form of snake heads. (Fig. 2)¹¹

This brooch, which belongs to the private collection of Branko Najhold, originated from Zemun – *Taurinum*.¹² It is very important for the interpretation of the cultic significance of the Petković 15 Type.

Anchor-brooches were often found in pairs, linked with silver, braided chains, as a part of a set of silver jewellery containing earrings and necklaces with pendants in the form of ivy leaves, as well as arm and fingerings in the shape of a snake. Often, they were parts of deposits of silver objects, probably of sacral treasuries, dated to the 2nd - 3rd centuries. This silver jewellery was a sign of dignity and the special status of women from the provinces of *Pannonia Inferior*, *Dalmatia* (the eastern part), *Moesia Superior* (in the Save valley), *Dacia* and the northeast part of *Moesia Inferior* (in the Danube Basin). Nevertheless, the re-



Figure 4 – Fibula of Petković Type 17 A, Buđanovci – Gaj, deposit of golden and silver objects, Peoples© Museum, Sremska Mitrovica. (Petković 2012)

Слика 4 – Фибула Петковић тип 17 А, Буђановци – Гај, остава златних и сребрних предмета, Народни музеј, Сремска Митровица. (Петковић 2012)

gion of Roman silver mines *Argentariae Panonnice* should be considered as the motherland of the “ anchor“ brooches, from where they spread further with the migration of the miner population across this part of the Roman Empire.¹³

¹¹ Petković 2012, 64-65.

¹² Petković 2011 B, 25-28.

¹³ Petković 2012, 69-70, Map 1.

Considering the miner population of the Balkans in the Roman period, probably of Pannonian and/or Illyrian origin, the cult connected to the sets of silver jewellery and anchor-fibulae belongs to the *Magna Mater* type, close to lunar and fertility divinities like Artemis/Diana, Selene/Luna, Hecate, Aphrodite/Venus or the autochthonous goddess *Dea Dardania*.¹⁴

The animals represented on the Petković Type 15 brooches, goat or ram, dogs, dove and snakes, are well-known attributes and symbols of the above mentioned goddesses, showing the fusion of the autochthon cult and Greek/Roman Pantheon that had already happened before the Roman conquest.¹⁵



Figure 5 – Fibula of Petković Type 17 B, Ritopek – Vodice (Castrum Triornia), City Museum of Belgrade. (Petković 2010)

Слика 5 – Фибула Петковић тип 17, Ритопек – Водице (Castrum Triornia), Музеј града Београда. (Петковић 2010)

The hybrid types of strongly profiled brooches (Petković Type 17) have similar cultic significance. These are anthropomorphic or zoomorphic strongly profiled fibulae in the shape of a human figure (Fig. 3), goat/ram (Fig. 4) and/or with a male portrait at the end of the stem (Fig. 5). Portraits of young or bearded men probably represent some deities linked to the mining and metallurgy of silver, maybe to the Pannonian god *Sedatus*.¹⁶

The luxurious type of elbow hinge brooches, with a wide strip like bow, spirally folded towards a trapezoid stem, manufactured from silver and inlaid with ornamented gold sheet, with motives of ivy leaves and vines executed in filigree and granulation, could be

connected to the Dionysian cult.¹⁷ One of two specimens from Serbia, now in the National Museum in Belgrade, is made of silver and has gold inlays on the bow and stem (Fig. 6). On the bow, framed in vegetal motives, there is an inscription, impossible to decipher: C A P / S V B. One fibula of Petković Type 20 C, very similar to the specimen from the National Museum in Belgrade, was found in Hungary and kept in the Nemzety Muzeum in Budapest. It is made of silver, decorated on the bow and stem with a gold sheet with filigree vegetable motives.¹⁸ According to the typological and stylistic characteristics, these types of brooches can be dated to the 3rd or the beginning of the 4th century.



Figure 6 – Fibula of Petković Type 20 C, from unknown site, National Museum, Belgrade. (Petković 2010)

Слика 6 – Фибула Петковић тип 20 C, непознато налазиште, Народни музеј Београд. (Петковић 2010)

Considering plate, discoid brooches (Petković Type 21), there are types with explicit cult content that is a figural representation of various deities, like Hercules, Dionysus and *Sol Invictus*.

In Serbia, a variant of plate discoid brooches, decorated radially with filigree and/or granulation and with inserted gems in the centre with a representation of an *en face* male portrait framed by a ring of radial notches, a crown with rays, has been found in the Sarmatian necropolis in Vršac – in the Courtyard of the Eparchy of Banat, in women's graves dated to the second half of 3rd and the 4th century.¹⁹ In grave no. 3, a small brooch made of copper alloy has a black glass in-taglio in the centre, depicting a human mask with wide

¹⁴ Jovanović 1978, 75–83, sl. 158–170; Jovanović 1999, 63–71; Popović 1999, 74–85, Petković 2012, 75–77.

¹⁵ Petković 2012, 75.

¹⁶ Jovanović 1995, 111–114; Jovanović 1999, 63–65; Petković 2012, 67–71.

¹⁷ Petković 2010, 158–159, Cat.nos. 912–913.

¹⁸ Kovrig 1937, 121–122, T. XI, 115–115a, T. XXXIX, 3 a–b.

¹⁹ Petković 2010, 171–172, Pl. XXX, 8–10.

open eyes, a projecting nose and a round bearded face was found. (Fig. 7). In grave no. 10 a similar fibula was discovered, with an intaglio of blue glass representing the portrait of a male, smiling. (Fig. 8) These two portraits undoubtedly represent the image of the Sun god, *Sol Invictus*.



Figure 7 – Fibula of Petković Type 21 D₁, Vršac – Dvorište Eparhije banatske, grave G. 3, City Museum of Vršac. (Petković 2010)

Слика 7 – Фибула Петковић тип 21 D₁, Двориште Епархије банатске, гроб G. 3, Градски музеј, Вршац.



Figure 8 – Fibula of Petković Type 21 D₁, Vršac – Dvorište Eparhije banatske, grave G. 10, City Museum of Vršac. (Petković 2010)

Слика 8 – Фибула Петковић тип 21 D₁, Двориште Епархије банатске, гроб G. 10, Градски музеј, Вршац.

In grave no. 9 in the Vršac necropolis a large silver disc brooch in the form of a capsule or small box, richly decorated with granulation and a dark brown glass gem, depicting a male portrait *en face* in the centre was discovered. The gem on this luxurious specimen is more carefully executed, with realistic details of the face and a laurel crown. (Fig. 9) Considering the imperial propaganda of Constantine's dynasty, this portrait could represent Constantine the Great himself, depicted as a deity, *Sol*, or his son *Constantius II*.²⁰ These rare types of brooches were also discovered in graves of Sarmatian necropolises in the Carpathian Basin: Foeni - Orthodox Cemetery, Madaras - Halmok, Tiszaföldvár - Brick factory, Öcsöd, Aszód, Kecskemét - Szentkút, Csongrád - Határút and Endröd - Kocsorhegy.²¹ Generally, they are characteristic grave finds in burials of high ranking Sarmatian

women in *Barbaricum*. We cannot say with any certainty to which deity these brooches were dedicated, but it was *Sol* in *interpretatio romana*, obviously favoured among influential Sarmatian women for some reason. On the other hand, the glass intaglios with a depiction of *Sol* or some emperor of Constantine's dynasty were a means of Roman imperial propaganda and the fact that they were in the possession of women point to their high social position.

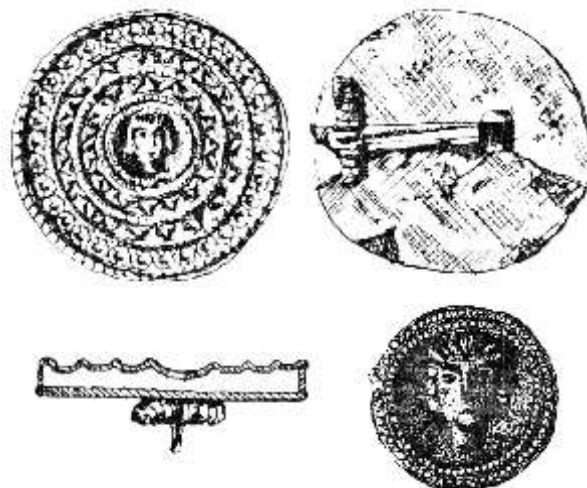


Figure 9 – Fibula of Petković Type 21 D₁, Vršac – Dvorište Eparhije Banatske, grave G. 9, City Museum of Vršac. (Petković 2010)

Слика 9 – Фибула Петковић тип 21 D₁, Двориште Епархије банатске, гроб G. 9, Градски музеј, Вршац.

Workshops producing brooches of the Petković Type 21 D₁ were located in the Roman territory or in the cities of Pontus. However, they could also have been manufactured by travelling masters in the barbarian, in our case the Sarmatian, territory.

Petković Type 21 D₂ fibulae in the form of an oval shallow recipient with an ornate rim and a figural relief depiction in the centre, a kind of a medallion-brooch, are a typically Roman product, based on the Antique Hellenistic tradition.²²

A silver, gilded fibula from Viminacium, now in the National Museum in Belgrade, is in the form of a shallow recipient with a double edge, ornamented with engraved motifs of a *klimation* and a pseudo-filigree ring, which frames the decoration field, an inserted silver plate with an engraved scene of Hercules' fight

²⁰ Petković 2010, 172, Type 21 D 1; Popović 2010, 149-151, Fig. 3.

²¹ Grumeza 2014, 77-79.

²² Petković 2010, 171-173, Type 21 D 2, Cat.nos. 949-950, Pl. XXX, 11-12.

with the Nemean lion. The hero, portrayed as a young man, is turned to the left side towards the lion, while on the right, behind his back, is an olive tree. The engraved details are inlaid with gold. (Fig. 10) Although this brooch was dated by the archaeological context to the second half of the 1st century,²³ it should be dated later, in the period of the second half of 2nd – the first half of 3rd century, connected to reign of the Severian dynasty and the time of economic progress in Viminacium. *Imitatio Herculi* is characteristic of the emperors Caracalla, Alexander Severus and Gallien, in the 3rd century, and especially for Maximianus Herculus and Galerius, founders of the Herculean dynasty, during the First Tetrarchy.²⁴



Figure 10 – Fibula of Petković Type 21 D₂, Viminacium – "Više grobalja", Peoples' Museum Požarevac. (Petković 2010)

Слика 10 – Фибула Петковић Тип 21 D₂, Viminacium – "Више гробалја", Народни музеј Пожаревац. (Петковић 2010)

Another fibula of this type, also now in the National Museum in Belgrade, is in the form of a shallow recipient with a double annular edge and an ellipsoid silver plate inserted with a relief male portrait, a profile facing to the left, framed in an astragaloid ring. The person shown wears a laurel wreath, attached to the back of the strap, with the ends down the neck, and a diadem decorated with ivy leaves and vines with grapes, and is wearing draped clothes. (Fig. 11) Although, this portrait could be identified as Dionysus, it is more probable a depiction of a Roman emperor, represented as this deity. It is probably an emperor from the Severian dynasty, Caracalla, or most likely Alexander Severus, who appeared as *imitator*



Figure 11 – Fibula of Petković Type 21 D₂, from unknown site, National Museum, Belgrade. (Petković 2010)

Слика 11 – Фибула Петковић тип 21 D₂, непознато налазиште, Народни музеј Београд. (Петковић 2010)



Figure 12 – Fibula of Petković Type 22 A, from unknown site (Kosmaj), City Museum of Belgrade. (Petković 2010)

Слика 12 – Фибула Петковић 22 A, непознато налазиште (Космај), Музеј града Београда. (Петковић 2010)

Alexandri in his ideological programme of imperial propaganda, which connected him to Dionysus, who was the ideal model of Alexander the Great.²⁵

Some of the plate brooches with perforated decoration from Serbia could also have had a cultic meaning. Among them, the wheel-shaped fibulae (Petković Type 22 A) had a long tradition from the Late Iron Age.²⁶ (Fig. 12) They symbolize the Sun disc and, indirectly, solar deities. This type of brooch is distributed along the Danube Limes of *Moesia Superior*, but

²³ Popović 1994, 278, Cat.no. 181.

²⁴ Popović 2002, 384-385 ; 2011 Živić 2011, 124-125, Figs. 72, 84 a-b.

²⁵ Popović 2002, 385; Petković 2010, 173.

²⁶ Böhme 1972, 44; Jobst 1975, 116-117.

also inland (Kosmaj, *Timacum Minus*, Rgotina – *Argentares*) and in *Barbaricum* (Pančevo – Najeva ciglana). They are dated from the mid-2nd to the 4th century.²⁷

Fibulae in the shape of a swastika (Petković Type 23) also have the meaning of a revolving Sun disc. They can be considered cult objects providing power and military strength, but also as signs of particular units of the Roman army. (Fig. 13)



Figure 13 – Fibula of Petković Type 23 B₁, *Timacum Minus* – Fortification, Homeland Museum Knjaževac. (Petković 2010)

Слика 13 – Фибула Петковић тип 23 B₁, *Тимасум Минус* – Утврђење, Завичајни музеј Књажевац. (Петковић 2010)



Figure 14 – Fibula of Petković Type 23 B₂, *Taurunum* – Zemun, City Museum of Belgrade. (Petković 2010)

Слика 14 – Фибула Петковић тип 23 B₂, *Татуринум* – Земун, Музеј града Београда. (Петковић 2010)



Figure 15 – Fibula of Petković Type 23 D, *Timacum Minus* – Fortification, Homeland Museum Knjaževac.

Слика 15 – Фибула Петковић тип 23 D, *Тимасум Минус* – Утврђење, Завичајни музеј Књажевац. (Петковић 2010)

One of these fibulae (Petković Type 23 B₂) from *Taurunum* (Zemun) is particularly interesting, as the swastika wheel form consists of four double-edged axes (labrys) joined by the ends of handles in the centre, creating a cross pattern. (Fig. 14) This brooch, undoubtedly of a military character, could be connected to the cult of Jupiter Dolichenus, whose attribute is *labrys*.²⁸ The double-edged axe is also an attribute of the Thraco-Dacian supreme deity *Zalmoxis* (*Gebeleizis*).²⁹ Also, the *labrys* appears on tombstones from *Romuliana*, carried by the deceased, represented as a hero – horseman.³⁰

A special variant of the brooches in the shape of a swastika has horse proteomes at the end of its arms (Petković Type 23 D). (Fig. 15) These brooches have a prototype among Sarmatian fibulae in the shape of a cross with animal proteomes at the end of the arms and they represent the latest variant of Roman swastika-shaped plate fibulae.³¹ The centres of their production were on the northern border of Dacia, in the 3rd century and, later, in the 4th and the beginning of the 5th century, in *Pannonia Secunda*, *Moesia Prima* and *Dacia Ripensis*, but they also appeared in *Pannonia Prima*, Northern Italy and Bulgaria.³² Together with

²⁷ Petković 2010, 178.

²⁸ Jobst 1975, 111, Typ 28, Axtfibeln Var. c; Cociş 2004, 119, Typ 23 a 2 –brooches in the form of a labrys.

²⁹ Kitov 2005, 15, Fig. 1.

³⁰ Srejšević 1983, 93-94, кат. бр. 40, 42.

³¹ Vinski 1968, 133; Petković 1999, 225 – 226; Petković 2010, 188.

³² Vuora 1992, 105 – 107, Fig. 1; Petković 1999, 217, Map 2; Gudea 2002, 101 – 104; Cociş 2004, 135 – 136, Type 33 b, Pl. XCV, 1631 – 1638; Geneva 2004, 75, tip 32 b, T. XXVIII, 3; Petković 2010, 189, Map 16.

unilateral antler combs, decorated with horse proteomes, they were insignia of auxiliary cavalry units of the Roman army. Sometimes they were made of silver or silver-plated copper alloy.³³

The function of brooches of Petković Type 23 D and the above mentioned antler combs was protective. Also, they had a strong solar symbolism, representing the Sun chariot, connected to some military, solar deity in *interpretatio romana* (*Sol Invictus*). Nevertheless, a fibula of this type was found in a child grave G – 2059 in the necropolis of “Više grobalja” in *Viminacium*, where it possibly had an apotropaic function.

Figural brooches create a special group (Petković Group VII), consisting of zoomorphic fibulae (Petković Type 25), fibulae presenting deities or mythological scenes (Petković Type 26) and fibulae in the form of different cult items (Petković Type 27). They originated from the Early La Tène brooches (La Tène A-B) and they also appear among the Hellenistic types on the Black Sea shores.³⁴

By construction, these brooches can be plate, elbow or T-fibulae with a spring or hinge mechanism for attaching a pin. Different forms of pin-holders also appear on Petković Group VII fibulae.

The function of this group of brooches was decorative, i.e. they were worn as jewellery, but their cult-apotropaic character is very pronounced.³⁵

Fibulae in a zoomorphic shape can undoubtedly be connected to certain deities or beliefs and, therefore, considered cult objects. In Serbia, Roman brooches in the form of various animals have been found: a horse, a deer, a dove, an eagle, a lion, a leopard, a dog, a rabbit, a dolphin, a turtle, a fish and a bee.³⁶ Although many of these zoomorphic fibulae had a simply decorative purpose, as with other Roman items of everyday use, or had the purpose of an *insignia* in the army (like a horse, eagle or lion), some of them certainly had a cultic significance. Animal symbolism in Roman art and religion has a wide field of research, so we would like to highlight only particularly interesting variants and specimens of zoomorphic fibulae from Serbia, characteristic of the provinces in its territory.

The deer-fibulae can be divided into three-dimensionally shaped, T-fibulae with a spiral



Figure 16 – Fibula of Petković Type 25 A₁, Lubnica, Peoples' Museum Zaječar. (Petković 2010)

Слика 16 – Фибула Петковић тип 25 А₁, Лубница, Народни музеј Зајечар. (Петковић 2010)

head or a cylindrical head with a hinge mechanism (Petković Type 25 B₁) and plate brooches (Petković Type 25 B₂). Variant B₁ is shaped so that the spiral head with a supporting beam or cylindrical head represents the hind legs of the animal, the "bulb" on the head of the fibula – the tail, the bow of the fibula – the body, the stem – the head, and an elongated, transverse pin-holder forms a foreleg. Plate fibulae Variant B₂ has a bow in the shape of a deer or roe deer in a race, a freely articulated mechanism and an elongated needle holder. Details are made with notches and embossed circles and “eyelets”. (Fig. 16)

³³ Petković 1999, 226-228.

³⁴ RGA, § 17, 458 – 469, Abb. 89; Ambroz 1966, 34, T. 15, 9 – 13.

³⁵ For the cult-magical meaning and symbolism of certain animals in Antiquity, in the territory of Serbia see in: Marić 1933, Grevs 1974, Srejšević, Cermanović-Kuzmanović 1979, Chevalier, Gheerbrant 1983, Rode 1991, Eliade 1991, Gacović 2002 and Jovanović 2007.

³⁶ Petković 2010, 199-211.

The deer has a dualistic nature. It is a symbol of the Sun and heavenly light, but also of the world of the dead and the underworld. The cult of the deer was expressed among Celts: their god Cernunnos, who is the master of wild beasts and nature, but also the deity of warriors and war, is represented with deer antlers. The shamans of the steppe peoples also wore a crown of deer antlers. Many Celtic and Germanic tribes considered the deer to be their mythical ancestor. In the Indo-European tradition, this animal symbolised fertility, but at the same time it was connected to funeral rituals. Also, the deer was a favourite game in the ritual hunting of the military aristocracy. Deer hunting symbolised the tragic death of the hero. In the funeral custom of *Petrecuratura* among the Vlachs in eastern Serbia, the deer played an important role as a *psychopompos*, leading the deceased to the underworld.³⁷

Dove-shaped fibulae (Petković Type 25 C) can be divided into those with a spring mechanism, variant 1, and those with a freely articulated mechanism on the ventral surface of the brooch, variant 2. Also, these brooches can represent a bird with gathered or spread wings. These fibulae have a flat body, but their stem is modelled in the shape of a bird's head, and the head of the fibula, i.e. the supporting beam, is in the shape of a fan-shaped dove's tail. The details are engraved and can be filled with enamel. Petković type 25 C brooches were made of copper alloy, silver and bone and are small in size (2-4 cm). Silver and bone specimens undoubtedly had a cultic meaning. Dove-brooches made of silver appear as part of a jewellery set with a pair of fibulae and braided silver chains with pendants in the form of leaves or lunules.³⁸

The dove is dedicated to *Aphrodite - Venus*. In ancient and early Christian symbolism, it represented the soul. In Roman provinces of *Pannonia Inferior*, *Moesia Superior*, *Dacia* and the continental part of *Dalmatia*, this bird often appeared on jewellery, such as decorative pins, earrings and fibulae. These ornaments, usually made of silver, were worn by the women of the local elite and are related to some autochthonous goddess of the *Magna Mater* type, *Di-ana*, *Venus*, *Luna* or Hecate in *interpretatio romana*. This complex deity had a chthonic and orgiastic char-

acter, but also a celestial lunar aspect. It is related to the miners' population in *Argentariae Pannonicae* and the mining district of *Alburnus Maior* in Dacia.³⁹

In the above mentioned Roman provinces, the dove had the symbolism of femininity, virtue, spirituality and purity. On tombstones, women were represented holding a dove in their left hand, which indicates a belief in renewal and immortality of the soul.⁴⁰

A dove-brooch made of bone, discovered in a cremation grave G1 – 27 in the "Pećine" necropolis in Viminacium has the same symbolic and ritual meaning.⁴¹

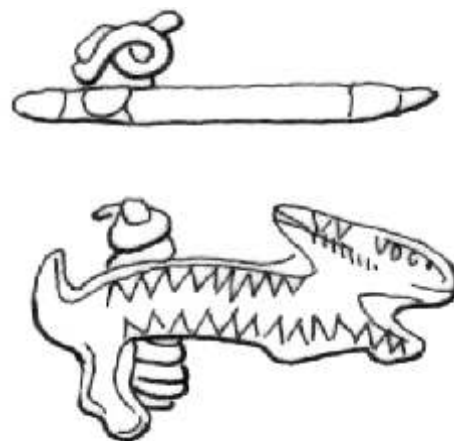


Figure 17 – Fibula of Petković Type 25 E₁, Singidunum – Castrum, City Museum of Belgrade. (Petković 2010)

Слика 17 – Фибула Петковић тип 25 E₁, Singidunum – Castrum, Музеј града Београда. (Петковић 2010)

Three plate rabbit-shaped fibulae have been found in Serbia, two of which are in the form of a schematic representation of the racing animal, with a spring mechanism on the ventral side (Petković Type 25 E₁), from the Singidunum and Viminacium necropolis, and one with a semi-plastic representation of a rabbit in a sitting position, with a freely articulated hinge mechanism, decorated with inserted red enamel in the form of two rabbits, symmetrically placed with a cabbage in the middle of the representation (Petković Type 25 E₂), from an unknown site in the area of Belgrade. (Figs. 17-18) The fibula from the castrum of Singidunum was found in the 3rd century layer, while the other two fibulae were accidental finds.⁴²

³⁷ Petković 2010, 210.

³⁸ Petković 2010, 204; Petković 2012, 69-7. – These kinds of sets of silver jewellery may also contain a pair of elbow or anchor fibulae

³⁹ Petković 2012, 72-77.

⁴⁰ Petković 2012, 74.

⁴¹ Petković 2016, 250-260.

⁴² Petković 2010, 206.

In Dacia, in *Napoca*, in a craft workshop, a mould for making plate fibulae in the form of a rabbit in a race was found. The brooches of this type from *Singidunum* and *Porolisum* were decorated with an incised zigzag line. A lead mould die for making such fibulae was also found in *Novae* in Lower Moesia. The fibula in the form of a sitting rabbit, on which two facing rabbits with a cabbage between them shown in red enamel, has an analogue specimen from Britain, from Richborough. A similar fibula in the shape of a rabbit in a sitting position, eating grapes, was found in *Carnuntum*.⁴³

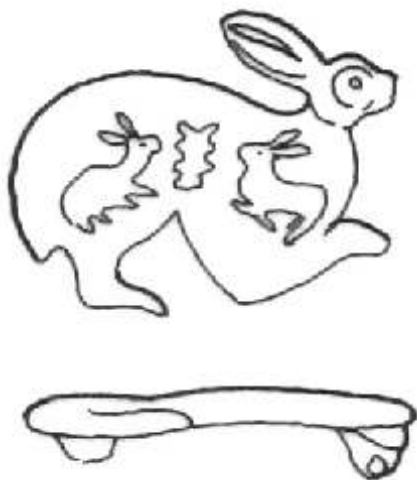


Figure 18 – Fibula of Petković Type 25 E₂ from unknown site, City Museum of Belgrade. (Petković 2010)

Слика 18 – Фибула Петковић тип 25 E₂, непознато налазиште, Музеј града Београда. (Петковић 2010)

The rabbit is an animal of lunar and chthonic symbolism. It is dedicated to *Diana*, but above all to Hecate. It is also associated with *Dionysus*, and, through the Celtic tradition, it is related to the cyclical

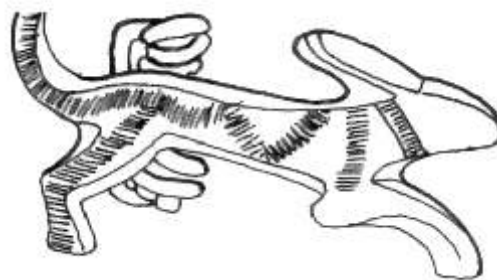


Figure 19 – Fibula of Petković Type 25 H, Ušće – “Plantaže”, City Museum of Belgrade. (Petković 2010)

Слика 19 – Фибула Петковић тип 25 H, Ушће – „Плантаже“, Музеј града Београда. (Петковић 2010)

renewal of the world. The rabbit is often associated with silver, so it was an attribute of the Roman provinces on the Iberian Peninsula, and sometimes of Upper Moesia.

Only one plate fibula in the shape of a dog in a race comes from Serbia, from the site of Ušće – “Plantaža” in the vicinity of Obrenovac, dated to the 3rd - 4th century (Petković Type 25 H). However, on the body of the dog with longer hair, depicted with incised zigzag lines and chevrons, there is a “rabbit’s head” with long, raised ears with a rounded tip and with a rounded muzzle. The dog’s collar is represented with incisions (Fig. 19). The only interpretation of this seemingly strange symbiosis can be the fact that both animals, the rabbit and the dog, were dedicated to *Diana* and Hecate. In that respect, the fibula from Ušće depicts a ghostly rabbit-dog, a fantastic animal from Hecate’s night escorts. Compared to Roman fibulae in the shape of a dog, our specimen remains without analogy.⁴⁴

Here, we should mention the plate fibulae in the form of a dog chasing a rabbit from *Dalmatia*,

⁴³ Cociş 2004, Pl. CI, 1429; Geneva 2004, 72, T. XXVII, 2; Jovanović 2007, 131, note. 31; Buora, Werner 2002, 218 – 219, III n. 16.

⁴⁴ von Patek 1942, T. XXI, 16; Cermanović-Kuzmanović 1968, 284, T. II, 6; Ljubenova 1981, Sl. 118, 1; Feugere 1985, type 29 a; Cociş 2004, 116, Type 22 e, Pl. CI, 1427 – 1428; Geneva 2004, 72, T. XXVII, 1; Petković 2010, 208.

Pannonia and Lower Moesia. This motif of the Celtic tradition appears on small bronze sculptures and tombstones in *Pannonia Inferior*, as the so called “Pannonian hunt”, symbolically representing life as a struggle and infinitely cyclical, close to Dionysian beliefs.⁴⁵

The dog was considered a *psychopompos* in Greek mythology, and the three-headed Kerberos is a terrible guardian of Hades. Healing abilities were also given to him. That is why this animal is dedicated to Hecate and Asclepius. In Celtic mythology, the dog, which chases the rabbit, represents destiny and participates in the cyclical renewal of life.



Figure 20 – Fibula of Petković Type 25 K, Singidunum – Studentski trg 9 (Municipium), City Museum of Belgrade. (Petković 2010)

Слика 20 – Фибула Петковић тип 25 К, Singidunum – Студентски трг 9 (Муніципјум), Музеј града Београда. (Петковић 2010)

Two semi-plastic turtle-shaped brooches were found in *Singidunum* and *Viminacium* (Petković Type 25 K). The fibula found at the site of *Singidunum* - Studentski trg 9, originates from the layer of the second half of the 3rd century. However, the characteristic decoration with enamel in circular pit-deposits on zoomorphic fibulae dates back to the 2nd century. On the other hand, this fibula has similarities with discoid plate brooches, decorated with enamel in the *millefiori* technique in a chessboard motif, which are dated to the second half of the 2nd and the first half of the 3rd century. The turtle-brooch from Singidunum most probably originates from this time. (Fig. 20)

⁴⁵ Jovanović 2007, 32–33, 128.

⁴⁶ Petković 2010, 209.

⁴⁷ Petković 2010, 217–218.

⁴⁸ von Patek 1942, T. XIX, 17; Riha 1979, 201, T. 67, 1730.



Figure 21 – Fibula of Petković Type 26, from unknown site (Kosmaj), City Museum of Belgrade. (Petković 2010)

Слика 21 – Фибула Петковић тип 26, непознато налазиште (Космај), Музеј града Београда. (Петковић 2010)

The Viminacium fibula was found at the “Pećine” necropolis, in a grave with cremation G 1 - 394, with a Hadrian's coin, which dates it to the first half of the 2nd century. Analogies for our fibulae of Petković Type 25 K are not known, but a large number of plate, hinged enamelled fibulae in the form of a schematic representation of a turtle (Petković Type 12 B) should be kept in mind.⁴⁶

The turtle is an animal dedicated to Hermes and Apollo. A lyre resonator was made of its armour. For the Pythagoreans, it symbolised time. This animal symbolised healing and home, and it was connected with the god Pan, embodying the Universe.

There are three plate brooches with the representation of deities or religious-mythological scenes (Petković Type 26) that have been found in Serbia; on the Kosmaj Mountain, in Ušće near Kraljevo and in *Ulpiana* near Gračanica.⁴⁷

The first one is a copper alloy plate fibula representing a rider on a galloping horse, with a hinge mechanism and trapezoid pin holder (Petković Type 26 A). (Fig. 21) The closest analogies to our brooch, in the form of a galloping horseman, originate from Pannonia and Augst (*Colonia Augusta Raurica*). Also, they are known from Gaul and Britain.⁴⁸

A galloping horseman is a representation of a heroised ancestor, expressed in the Balkans in the cult of the Thracian Rider and the Danube Riders, and in



Figure 22 – Fibula of Petković Type 26, Ušće na Ibru, National Museum, Belgrade. (Petković 2010)

Слика 22 – Фибула Петковић тип 26, Ушће на Ибру, Народни музеј, Београд. (Петковић 2010)

Roman iconography it depicts a heroised or deified emperor. The meaning of our fibula from Kosmaj should be sought in this framework.⁴⁹

The plate copper alloy brooch found in Ušće on the Ibar, near Kraljevo shows a schematic human figure standing in a static position *en face*, in a long pleated dress, with facial features shown with small incisions and the hair split in the middle and gathered in a bun at the nape of the neck (Petković type 26 B). (Fig. 22)

Representations of female and male deities in a standing position on plate fibulae are known from Gaul. An analogous example of our goddess is the representation of Luna from Augst. E. Riha sees the brooch from Augst as a male deity.⁵⁰ However, the hair gathered in a bun at the nape of the neck, as well as a large crescent crown on the head, rather indicates a representation of the goddess *Luna*. Fibulae in the

shape of a crescent, *lunula* (Petković Type 24 D) and in the shape of *Luna* had an apotropaic character and were worn by women to increase beauty, health and fertility. Based on a reliably dated analogy, the fibula from Ušće can be dated from the second half of the 2nd to the first half of the 3rd century.

The silver brooch from *Ulpiana* depicting the goddess *Leda* with a swan is a mythological scene in the true sense of the word (Petković Type 26 C). (Fig. 23) Although the quality of manufacture is not the best, it shows a strong tradition in Hellenistic jewellery. Also, the precious metal, silver, indicates a high social position of the owner of this item. Considering the style of manufacture, this brooch can be dated to the 3rd century.⁵¹

Several fibulae in the shape of objects which are attributes of certain deities or reflect a cultic purpose have been found in Serbia (Petković Type 27).⁵² They represent a jug, a doubled *thyrsus*, a *caduceus* and a *cornucopia*.

Jug-shaped plate fibulae, found in Gaul, Switzerland, the Rhine Limes and in Dacia, date to the end of the 1st and the 2nd century.⁵³ In Serbia, they were found in *Singidunum*, in the layer from the middle of the 2nd



Figure 23 – Fibula of Petković Type 26, Ulpiana, National Museum, Belgrade. (Petković 2010)

Слика 23 – Фибула Петковић тип 26, Улпиана, Народни музеј, Београд. (Петковић 2010)

⁴⁹ Boteva 2011, 97-101.

⁵⁰ Riha 1979, 199, Typ 7. 22, T. 66, 1708.

⁵¹ Petković 2010, 217-218.

⁵² Petković 2010, 219-220.

⁵³ Ettliger 1973, 126 - 127, Typ 48, T. 28, 11; Riha 1979, 203, Typ 7. 25, T. 68, 1759 – 1769; Cociş 2004, 120 – 121, Type 23 f, Pl. CIV, 1471 – 1472.

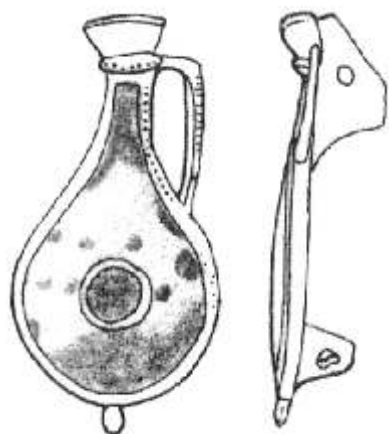


Figure 24 – Fibula of Petković Type 27 A, Singidunum - Castrum – City Museum of Belgrade. (Petković 2010)

Слика 24 – Фибула Петковић тип 27 А, Singidunum - Castrum – Музеј града Београда. (Петковић 2010)

century, and in Zemun (*Taurunum*) (Petković Type 27 A). While the brooch from *Singidunum* was polychrome decorated with enamel of red, green and yellow, which is characteristic of the 2nd century, the fibula from *Taurunum* has no traces of enamel, but a circular perforation in the centre, and a tray for inserting glass paste or a semi-precious stone, which is a method of decorating plate fibulae in the 1st or the beginning of the 2nd century (Fig. 24).

Fibulae in the shape of two *thyrsus* connected by handles in the form of the Latin letter S, which have no direct analogies, were found in Ritopek (*Castra Tricornia*), Viminacium and the Mlava Valley. These brooches have a free hinge mechanism and a transverse pin-holder (Fig. 25). The fibula from Viminacium was found in a layer with coins of the 1st - 2nd

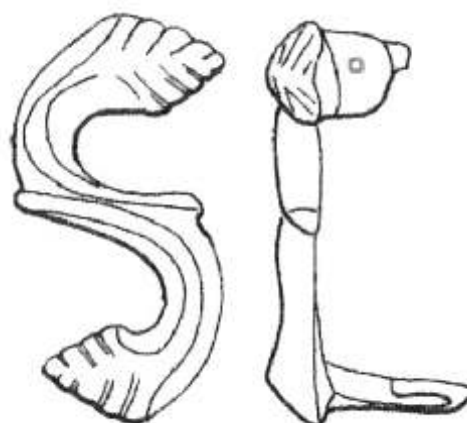


Figure 25 – Fibula of Petković Type 27 B, *Castra Tricornia* – Ritopek, City Museum of Belgrade. (Petković 2010)

Слика 25 – Фибула Петковић тип 27 В, *Castra Tricornia* – Ритопек, Музеј града Београда. (Петковић 2010)

century in the necropolis of “Više grobalja”. Similar brooches, but of much coarser workmanship, in the form of the Latin letter S with palmettes at the ends, with a spring mechanism and a transverse needle holder, were found on the Rhine Limes, in Dacia and in Lower Moesia, dating to the 2nd and early 3rd century.⁵⁴ Experts believe that these are simplified zoomorphic fibulae, representing a dragon or a two-headed monster (*Amphibia*).⁵⁵ However, it is more likely that the fibulae from Upper Moesia in the form of a double *thyrsus* are earlier, dating to the 1st and the first half of 2nd century, representing a prototype of brooches from Dacia, Lower Moesia and Germania. In that sense, the latter are a reduced representation of a double *thyrsus*, and the “palmettes” are in fact rudimentary pinecones.

⁵⁴ Böhme 1972, 46, Typ 48 c, T. 30, 1175 – 1177; Cociş 2004, 116, Type 22 b, Pl. CI, 1415 – 1421; Geneva 2004, 74, tip 31 a, T. XXVII, 11.

⁵⁵ Böhme 1972, 46; Cociş 2004, 116.

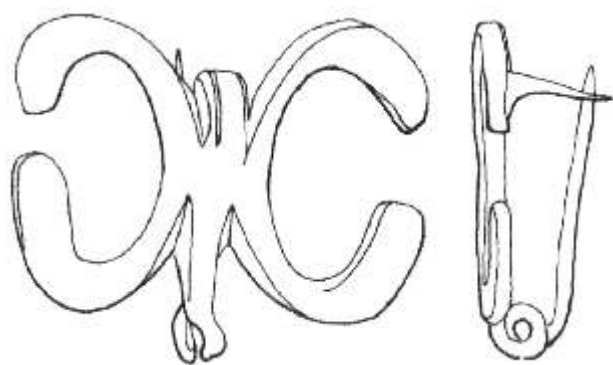


Figure 26 – Fibula of Petković Type 27 C, from unknown site, City Museum of Belgrade. (Petković 2010)

Слика 26 – Фибула Петковић тип 27 С, непознато налазиште, Музеј града Београда. (Петковић 2010)

The fibulae of Petković Type 27, variants A and B, represent objects related to the Dionysian cult, which was very widespread in Upper Moesia as a result of the veneration of *Liber Pater*. The jug contains wine, and the double *thyrsus* with curved handles is also reminiscent of a vine, which connects our brooches with the symbols of the mysteries of Dionysus. In this sense, perhaps the “palmettes” on the S-fibulae represent vine leaves. These fibulae could also have a protective purpose as they provided good health, fertility, long life and abundance.

The Petković Type 27 C fibula from an unknown site, which is kept in the Museum of the City of Belgrade, is *unica*. Made of one piece of copper alloy in the form of a mystical *caduceus*, it could have had a special meaning for the owner. (Fig. 26) Although I accept D. Bojović's opinion that this fibula represents a *caduceus*,⁵⁶ there is a possibility that it could be considered a fibula with an inscription, composed of two letter Cs between which is the letter I. Maybe it could

⁵⁶ Bojović 1983, 70.

be read as C(ohors) I C(retum). Evidently, the cult of Mercury was a favourite in Upper Moesia in the 2nd and 3rd centuries, but, given its one-part construction, it is probably older.

A copper alloy fibula in the shape of a *cornucopia* (Petković Type 27 D) (Fig. 27), was found in the Viminacium necropolis of “Više grobalja” in grave G 1 – 507 of a cremated male, an officer of the Roman army, with rich grave goods, which consist of an iron ring, an opal gem with a representation of a Roman soldier, which was most likely an insert of a ring. Also, parts of a military belt (*cingulum militae*), made of copper alloy, were found in this grave. The clasp of the belt consists of a cast rectangular plate with a D-shaped buckle, which is longitudinally decorated with three strips filled with yellow and black enamel in rectangular cassettes in the technique of *millefiori*, in a chessboard motif system. Besides these grave finds, fragmented iron items, two iron daggers and a fragmented ceramic bowl decorated with barbotine were found. The tomb is of the Mala Kopašnica - Sase II Type, a rectangular two-story grave-pit, with baked walls. The remains of the deceased were badly burned - bones and the contents of ash and soot from the pyre were mixed with the grave goods and placed at the bottom of the grave-pit. Based on the grave finds and the stratigraphy of the necropolis, grave G 1 - 507 dates to the 2nd century. This person evidently had a high military rank in the legion VII Claudia, judging by his ornate belt.

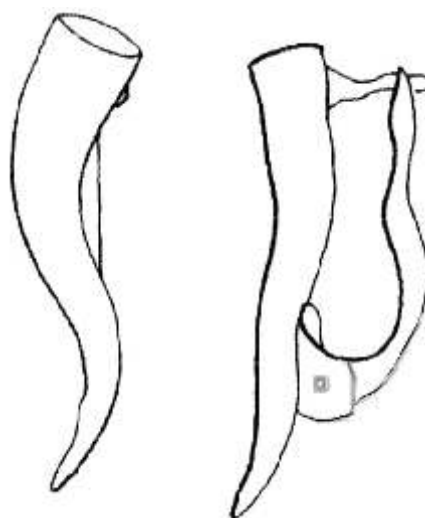


Figure 27 – Fibula of Petković Type 27 D, Viminacium – “Više gobaľa”, grave G 1 – 507, Peoples' Museum Pořarevac. (Petković 2010)

Слика 27 – Фибула Петковић тип 27 D, Viminacium – „Више гробаља“, Народни музеј, Пожаревац. (Петковић 2010)



Figure 28 – Fibula of Petković Type 34 C₃, Naissus – Fortification, deposit of bronze objects, Peoples' Museum Niš. (Petković 2010)

Слика 28 – Фибула Петковић тип 34 C₃, Naissus – Тврђава, остава бронзаних предмета, Народни музеј, Ниш. (Петковић 2010)

Analogies of our fibula in the form of a horn of plenty come from Pannonia (*Carnuntum*), from the north-western border of Dacia (Bologa) and from Lower Moesia (*Martianopolis*).⁵⁷

Fortuna, for whom the horn of plenty is an attribute, was a favourite deity among members of the Roman army, for understandable reasons.

The relative uniformity of form and the materials that bulbous crossbow fibulae (Petković Type 34) were made of, as well as their respective frequency and wide distribution across the Roman Empire in the period of Late Antiquity (the end of 3rd – the mid-5th century), indicate their official use in the Late Roman army and administration. This is also confirmed by the portraits of Roman emperors, military commanders and dignitaries, with a cape fastened by a crossbow fibula, with the foot facing up, on the right shoulder: the representation of Emperor Galerius on the trium-

phal arch in Thessaloniki,⁵⁸ the marble statue of the Tetrarch in the National Museum in Belgrade,⁵⁹ the representation of a dignitary (*togatus*) on the pedestal of the Obelisk of Theodosius in Istanbul,⁶⁰ the representation of Stilicho in the consular diptych from Monza⁶¹ and of Constantius III in the consular diptych from Halberstadt, the representations of the escorts of Emperor Justinian I and Empress Theodora in the mosaic in the apse of the Basilica of San Vitale in Ravenna,⁶² the representations of commanders in the Roman army or state administration officers in tomb frescoes and tombstones of the 4th century.⁶³

It has been ascertained that emperors gave this type of fibulae personally to military commanders and administration dignitaries on the occasion of public holidays (*dies imperia*) and the anniversary of their reign (*vota*).⁶⁴ It is assumed that they were produced in imperial workshops, which travelled across the empire together with the emperor.⁶⁵ So, this type of brooch

⁵⁷ von Patek 1942, T. XVIII, 22; Cocis 2004, 120, Type 23 b, Pl. CIII, 1465; Geneva 2004, 69, tip 27 b, T. XXV, 16 – fibula from Devnaja in Bulgaria (*Martianopolis*) was found in a tomb with a Hadrian coin minted in 119 AD.

⁵⁸ Theune-Grosskopf 1995, 86, Fig. 58; Janes 1998, 388, Note. 9.

⁵⁹ Tomović 1997, 420 – 421, Figs. 1 – 2, Figs. 5 – 6.

⁶⁰ Pröttel 1988, 371, Fig. 9, 1.

⁶¹ Volbach 1958, 57.

⁶² Volbach 1958, 166.

⁶³ Zabeňlicky 1980, 1101 – 1103; Theune-Grosskopf 1995, 83–87; Figs. 55 and 59; Ivčević 2001, 165, Fig. 1; Jovanović 2007, 112 – 113, Fig. 15, 6; Pop – Lazić 2009, 166 – 168, Fig. 7.

⁶⁴ Theune-Grosskopf 1995, 84 – 89; Janes 1998, 388 – 390; Diaconescu 1999, 205 – 217, Pl. 1, 1 – 2, Pl. 2, 1, Pl. 4, 3.

⁶⁵ Vasić 2001, 195 – 197.



Figure 29 – Fibula of Petković Type 34 C₃, Romuliana – the Late Roman necropolis, grave 6, Peoples' Museum Zaječar. (Petković 2009)

Слика 29 – Фибула Петковић тип 34 C₃, Romuliana – Касноантичка некропола, гроб 6, Народни музеј, Зајечар. (Петковић 2010)

was connected to the imperial cult. One of the variants of crossbow fibulae, decorated with emperor portraits (Petković Type 34 C₃), shows directly their cultic function. Nevertheless, some of the portraits represented on brooches have a *nimbus*, indicating that emperors were deified, probably after their death.

The “imperial fibulae” represent an outstandingly luxurious variant of bulbous crossbow fibulae, and they appear only in a small number (Keller Type 5, Pröttel Type 5, and Petković Type 34C). They were produced using the combined technique of casting the corpus (part of the head, bow and part of the foot) and the application of the other parts made of hammered metal sheets. The head features three massive bulbs (knobs) and a profiled, short bar. The wide, short bow with a trapezoidal cross-section is decorated by a longitudinal ribbon with the engraved “fir twig” motif – sub-variant 1, geometric and vegetal motifs – sub-variant 2, or the previously listed motifs combined with portrait medallions in the *niello* technique and a rectangular foot decorated in the same way as the bow, with stamped pelts or rims profiled with a series of pelts – sub-variant 3. Brooches of Petković Type 34 C are dated from the second third of 4th to the end of this century, i.e. from the death of Constantine I to the split of the empire into eastern and western parts, after the death of Theodosius I, 337-395 AD. The most interest-

ing variant of this type of crossbow fibulae is adorned with portraits (Petković Type 34 C₃).⁶⁶

Two copper alloy, gilded, “imperial fibulae”, adorned with portraits in the *niello* technique, originate from the territory of Serbia: one from *Naissus* (Niš) and another from *Romuliana* (Gamzigrad).

In the Fortress of Niš a copper alloy brooch with three portraits was found in a deposit of bronze objects, among which were also brooches of Petković Type 34, Var. C, D and E, interred around 378 AD. The fibula has a wide and short arch of trapezoidal cross-section, longitudinally decorated with a stripe of incised rhombus motifs, between which are three circular medallions with male portraits *en face* in the *niello* technique. The men shown have large, hypertrophied eyes with accentuated lashes and short hair represented by vertical incisions. The rectangular foot is longitudinally decorated with a ribbon consisting of rhombus, square and meander motifs in the *niello* technique and with three pairs of pelts. The portraits in the medallions most probably represent the sons of Constantine I: Constantine II, Constantius II and Constantine, and the fibula was made as part of their proclamation for *Augusti* in September 337 AD.⁶⁷ (Fig. 28)

The brooch of Petković Type 34 C₃ from *Romuliana* was found in grave 6/06. A rectangular grave-pit had been dug along the outer side of the

⁶⁶ Laur – Belaart 1959, 64 et sequ; Ivanov 1972, 9 et sequ; Jovanović 1976, 2 et sequ.

⁶⁷ Jovanović 1976, 43, Fig. 1.



Figure 30 – Fibula of Petković Type 34 C₂ Aquae – Prahovo, National Museum, Belgrade. (Petković 2010)

Слика 30 – Фибула Петковић тип 34C₂ Aquae – Прахово, Народни музеј, Београд. (Петковић 2010)

foundation of the southern rampart of Galerius' fortified palace, in the area between polygonal towers 13 and 15. The grave is oriented in a west-east direction, and its left (northern) longitudinal line is a part of the foundation of the southern rampart. Even though the stratigraphy of this area is not altogether clear, it is certain that the layer from which the grave had been dug was above the foundation zone of the southern rampart, i.e. that the later fortification of *Romuliana* already existed at the time of the burial. An adult man was buried in an extended position, lying on his back, with arms bent at the elbows and crossed over the stomach. There was a military belt (*cingulum militae*) with a bronze buckle laid by the side of his lower left leg, together with a bag made of organic material, either leather or cloth (decomposed), containing his personal belongings, which survived: a piece of iron, flint and seven bronze coins. One coin belonged to the mintage of Emperor Constans, between 340 and 350 AD, whereas the other six were minted during the reign of Emperor Valens, from 357 to 378 AD.⁶⁸

Analysis of the grave finds laid next to the lower left leg of the deceased indicates that the grave should be dated to the last quarter of the 4th century.⁶⁹

A crossbow fibula was found on the right shoulder of the deceased, foot pointing upwards, in a position used for fastening a military cloak (*paludamentum*) made of white woollen cloth, judging by the threads

preserved on the inner side of the bow and on the corroded iron pin of this brooch. A long rectangular foot was decorated along its edges by an incised string of three pairs of peltae and volutes, on the beginning and the end, and along the middle by an inlaid strip of tin silver with a decoration in the *niello* technique. The entire fibula was gilded, except for the silver strip on the foot. In the centre of the decoration on this stripe there was a square metope with a male portrait, profile $\frac{3}{4}$ to the left, surrounded by a multiple "fir twig" motif. The man has a discoid fibula on the right shoulder and a hairstyle of long hair, covering his ears. On the beginning and the end of the bow there were incised rectangular metopes with male portraits *en face*, which might also have been filled with *niello*. The men represented on the bow have large round caps or nimbuses. One of them has a discoid brooch on the right shoulder, but the portraits are schematically incised with scant details. On the bow of this brooch, three medallions with incised two crossed oblique lines, maybe a motif of a Christogram, could also be noticed. The iron pin, which was damaged and corroded, had been additionally applied. (Fig. 29)

Considering all of the above, the symbolism of the representations on the brooch from *Romuliana* is not completely clear. It could be connected to the imperial cult, but also to Christianity.⁷⁰ If we assume that these are emperors' portraits, they could represent Gratianus, Valens and Valentinianus II. In that case,

⁶⁸ Petković 2009, 266-267.

⁶⁹ Petković 2011 A, 117-118.

⁷⁰ Migotti 2008, 38-39. – The author observes Christian symbolism on the later specimens of this type of fibulae.



Figure 31 – Fibula of Petković Type 34 E₂, *Viminacium* – “Pećine”, grave G-3123, Peoples' Museum Požarevac. (Petković 2010)

Слика 31 – Фибула Петковић тип 34 E₂, *Viminacium* – „Пећине“ гроб Г-3123, Народни музеј, Пожаревац. (Петковић 2010)

this brooch was donated on the occasion of the proclamation of Valentinianus II as August in 375 AD.

The crossbow fibula of Petković Type 34 C₁, now in the National Museum in Belgrade, probably originating from the Late Roman necropolis of *Aquae* (Prahovo),⁷¹ has decoration of a double “fir twig” motif on the bow and foot and a medallion with a Christogram on its end. The copper alloy brooch was gilded and the decoration on the foot was daubed with silver. (Fig. 30) This exceptionally luxurious fibula was probably produced during the time of the Constantine dynasty, emphasising the Christian aspect of the reign of Constantine's sons.

One find from *Viminacium* stands out among the fibulae of variant Petković 34 E₂. This bronze, gilded fibula has a wide bow, trapezoidal in cross-section and decorated in the *niello* technique by a longitudinal ribbon with a “fir twig” motif, while in the middle there are two rhombuses with a dot in their centres and volutes between them, representing a pair of eyes with apotropaic symbolism (Egyptian Wadjet eye, i.e. the Eye of Horus). The long rectangular foot is decorated lengthwise in the *niello* technique, with a ribbon containing an engraved representation of a chimerical creature, a demon with a snake-like body and the head

with lop ears or loop earrings and a pair of horns (or two long rays on the scalp and two shorter ones on each side). This creature is wearing a torque with a solar, ray-shaped symbol around its neck, and is surrounded by lush vegetation. The foot is faceted and decorated with three pairs of pelts and volutes at its end. (Fig. 31) The fibula was discovered in the necropolis of “Pećine”, in grave G – 3123, together with a ceramic jug and a glass goblet from the second half of the 4th- first half of the 5th century.

The imaginary creature represented on the fibula could be Silvanus, schematically rendered after the model of the iconography of this deity in the province of *Dalmatia*.⁷² A fragment of a ceramic icon with a similarly represented forest deity is kept in the Museum of Mining and Metallurgy in Bor.⁷³

Nevertheless, taking into account the representation of the Eye of Horus, i.e. the Wadjet eye, it can be assumed that the figural motif represents the Gnostic demon Chnoubis (Χνουβις), represented as a chimerical animal with the lion's or human head with a nimbus/diadem of light rays and a serpent body.⁷⁴ Created within the elaborate Gnostic ideology, this solar demon, associated with Abraxas, had a strong apotropaic power against poison and heart and stomach diseases.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Jovanović 1996.

⁷² Zotović 1994, 178 – 179, Fig. 1.

⁷³ I express my gratitude to the custodian of the Museum of Mining and Metallurgy in Bor, Marija Jovičić, for this information.

⁷⁴ Bonner 1951, 325 –326, 340, Pl. 96, 20, Pl. 97, 21-23, 28, Pl. 99, 65-67, Pl. 100, 68; Desen, Nagy 2012, 293 –294, Figs. 1 –3.

⁷⁵ Bakowska-Czerner 2015, 30 –31, Fig. 4; 303 –307.



Figure 32 – Fibula of Petković Type 34 F, *Viminacium* – “Pećine”, grave G- 1033, Peoples' Museum Požarevac. (Petković 2010)

Слика 32 – Фибула Петковић тип Типе 34 F, *Viminacium* – „Пећине“, гроб G- 1033, Народни музеј, Пожаревац. (Петковић 2010)

In synergy with the Wadjet eye, Chnoubis provided good health, protection from black magic and poison, and power. This could be a desirable magical protective combination for a local dignitary of the army or administration in *Viminacium*.

The third possibility is that this fibula is a falsification of the “imperial fibulae” type with portraits of rulers or saints, in which the craftsman copied the representations seen on Petković type 34 C 3 fibulae, which he did not understand. On the other hand, the exceptional workmanship of the fibula, its gilt and the elaborate *niello* drawing make this presumption barely tenable.

There remains the likelihood that the specimen from *Viminacium* was a parody of the official imperial cult, or the response of the Gnostic “opposition” to imperial propaganda. In that case, the fibula would have been commissioned and worn by a very influential and daring individual, ready to oppose the official imperial ideology of the 4th century, inclined to Christianity. In that sense, this fibula might perhaps be associated with the reign of Julian the Apostate, i.e. the brief period of pagan restoration.

Based on the aforesaid, it could be claimed that the hermetical or Gnostic concept of the ornament of the *Viminacium* fibula is, in a way, a synthesis of all the mystical “learnings” of the Roman Empire of that day- Egyptian, Judaic, Oriental, Dionysian and Neo-Pythagorean.⁷⁶ In any case, in the time of reli-

gious-ideological turbulence of the 4th century, Gnostic symbols are to be expected in iconography, alongside Dionysian and Christian ones.

Christian symbolism is ascertained on the late crossbow type of fibula from *Viminacium* (Petković Type 34 F). This brooch was found in grave G-1033, in the “Pećine” necropolis. In this grave a male deceased was buried with a crossbow fibula on the right shoulder, and silver parts of a military belt, a rectangular plate and a belt-buckle in the shape of the letter B, were found in the pelvic region, together with remains of a glass goblet near his head. The gilded fibula made of a copper alloy from *Viminacium* has an arch and a foot decorated with the motif of a “fir twig” and a circular medallion with an inscribed Christogram in the *niello* technique. At the trapezoidal end of the foot, i.e. the needle holder, there is a circular medallion with a male portrait in $\frac{3}{4}$ profiles on the left.⁷⁷ (Fig. 32)

* * *

Considering the analysis of different types of Roman fibulae that originated from the territory of today’s Serbia, it is possible to conclude that from the 1st to the middle of the 5th century there were cult contents in various forms and decorations. Some of the cult symbolism on Roman brooches has the pre-Roman autochthonous tradition, which can be traced back to the Iron Age. That is the case with the fibulae of Petković Type 5, in the form of a pincer, the so called

⁷⁶ Eliade 1991, II, 233 – 236, 291 – 294.

⁷⁷ Petković 2018, 103-104.

“anchor-fibulae” (Petković Type 15) and some variants of hybrid types, like zoomorphic (Petković Type 17 A) and anthropomorphic (Petković Type 17 Â) brooches.

On the other side, there are provincial Roman types, characteristic of the whole empire, also based on pre-Roman tradition, but formed through the fusion of different cult symbolisms. Most of them probably lost the original cult meaning, which often happened by accepting symbols from other cultures and redesigning them according to their own taste and perceptions. The Roman provincial types with cult symbolism and meaning, mostly connected to Roman deities or similar local gods in *interpretation romana*, are different variants of discoid brooches (Petković Type 21), figural brooches (Petković Group VII), consisting of zoomorphic fibulae (Petković Type 25), fibulae presenting deities or mythological scenes (Petković Type 26) and fibulae in the form of different cult items (Petković Type 27).

In addition, there are the types of Roman fibulae formed on the basis of “barbarian” cult symbolism, like a special variant of the brooches in the shape of a swastika with horse proteomes at the end of their arms (Petković Type 23 D) and discoid or capsule brooches with inserted glass intaglio in the centre, in the form of the head of the Sun god, Sol in *interpretation romana* (Petković 21 D_{1,2}). Both types were made under the Sarmatian influence.

The Late Roman bulbous crossbow fibulae (Petković Type 34) are rather uniform in their cult

symbolism. There are generally two groups of symbols: imperial and Christian, which reflects the policy of the emperors from the Constantine to the Theodosian dynasty.

Finally, we can conclude that Roman cult and religious eclecticism can also be observed on items of everyday life, like fibulae discovered in the territory of today’s Serbia.

Generally, brooches had a private function, like a part of clothing, but also an institutional usage, the most obvious being in the Roman army.⁷⁸ In both cases, fibulae were distinctly personal items. Because of this, brooches could reflect the beliefs, aspirations, wishes, needs and fears of their owners. This is why numerous types of brooches had a distinctly apotropaic function. Often a fibula was shaped as an attribute of the owner’s favourite deity, mostly animal or object. Brooches could have a direct cult meaning if they were used as votive gifts, grave goods or adornments and signs of the particular religious *collegia*, worn by priestesses and priests. Furthermore, some Christian dignitaries wore fibulae with Christian symbols, usually the Christogram.

As brooches were also considered jewellery, they were manufactured using various sophisticated jewellery techniques: openwork, filigree, granulation, enamel, daubing, etc.⁷⁹ However, it is sometimes difficult to separate the cult-symbolic meaning from the decorative function of some types of fibulae.

Translated by author

⁷⁸ Petković 2018, 65 et sequ.

⁷⁹ Petković 2010, 19-20.

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Abbreviations

Acta MN	Acta Musei Napocensis, Cluj – Napoca.
Arch. Korr.	Archologische Korrespondenzblatt, Berlin.
AV	Arheološki vestnik, Ljubljana.
Diss. Pann.	Dissertationes Pannonicae, Budapest.
JRGZM	Jahrbuch des Römisch-Germanische Museum Mainz, Mainz.
RGA	Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde, Begründet von Johannes Hoops, Zweite vřllig neu bearbeitete und stark erweiterte Auflage unter Mitwirkung zahlreicher Fachgelerter, Hrsg. Beck, H. Bonn, Jankuhn, H. Göttingen – Steruer, H. Freiburg, Wenskus, R. Göttingen, Band 8, 5/6, Berlin – New York, 411–608.
SJ	Saalburg Jahrbuch, Bericht des Saalburg Museums, Berlin – New York.
VAHD	Vjesnik za arheologiju i historiju Dalmatinsku, Split.
VAMZ	Vjesnik Arheološkog muzeja u Zagrebu, Zagreb.
ГСАД	Гласник Српског археолошког друштва, Београд
ЗНМ	Зборник Народног музеја, Београд
ЗРФФ	Зборник радова Филозофског факултета у Београду, Београд

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Међу римским фибулама са територије данашње Србије готово у свакој типолошкој групи ових предмета има типова или примерака са култном функцијом или симболом.

У групи раних римских фибула (Петковић група II) то је тип у виду клешта (Петковић тип 5), који се односи на металургију и бога Вулкана.

У групи изразито профилисаних лучних фибула (Петковић група IV) има више типова повезаних са култним темама: „сидрасте фибуле“ (Петковић тип 15) и неке варијанте хибридног типа, као што су зооморфне (Петковић тип 17 А) и антропоморфне (Петковић тип 17 В) изразито профилисане лучне фибуле.

У групи коленастих фибула (Петковић група V) је луксузни примерак од сребра, украшен златним лимом, са вотивним натписом (Петковић тип 20 С).

Готово сви типови плочастих фибула (Петковић група VI) могу имати култно значење или функцију, посебно тип у облику свастике (Петковић тип 23).

Типови групе фигурално обликованих фибула (Петковић група VII) су очигледно повезани са одређеним божанствима, јер се јављају у облику животиња, које су им посвећене (Петковић тип 25): коња јелена, голубице, орла, зеца, пса, корњаче, и у виду култних сцена (Петковић тип 26).

Постоји и тип фибула у облику култних предмета, као што су крчаг, тирс, кадуцеј и рог изобиља (*cornu copia*) (Петковић), који су атрибути, односно симболи појединих божанстава.

У групи лучних фибула (Петковић VIII), неки типови се могу одредити као култни предмети, као што су крстообразне фибуле украшене портретима царева или хришћанским симболима, крстом и хрисограмом, али и представом опскурног божанства (Петковић типови 34 С и 34 D).

Култна симболика римских фибула на тлу Србије показује, с једне стране утицај преримских аутохтоних култова и веровања, а са друге, римски еклектицизам, који промовише одређену култну симболику у свим провинцијама Царства. Такође, на култно значење римских фибула у Србији утичу и „варварски“ елементи, пре свега сарматски, који се огледају у соларној симболици (Петковић тип 21 D₁₋₂, и тип 24 D).

Можемо закључити да је култна функција римских фибула била важна колико и њихова употребна вредност, као копчи за причвршћивање одеће, и украсна, као накита. Треба додати, да су касноантичке крстообразне фибуле имале двоструку институцијализовану култну функцију: у царском култу, приликом државних празника (*dies imperii*) и јубилеја владавине императора (*vota*), када их је владар поклањао и у славу Хришћанства, које су цареви константинијанске и теодосијанске династије промовисали као ослонац своје власти.

Коначно, фибуле су могле имати вотивну функцију, а пре свега апотропејску намену, кроз симболику повезану са одређеним божанством. Култна функција фибула је зависила од њихових власника, од њихових религијских веровања, убеђења, очекивања, жеља и страхова.