

## A TOMB FROM THE 4<sup>th</sup> CENTURY A.D. DISCOVERED IN TULCEA (AEGYSSUS)\*

Georgică Costea, Iuliana Costea

**Abstract:** *This article presents the results of a salvation archaeological investigation in Tulcea, on 14 Noiembrie Street, in front of the gate of the Azizie mosque. The inhumation tomb has a rich inventory made of four black glass bracelets, six bronze bracelets, five of which have rolled up ends, and another bracelet made of two twisted bronze wire, a silver ring, glass paste marbles, one rushlight and a bronze coin – a follis from the time of Constantine the Great. Based on the funerary inventory, the tomb was dated to the 4th century A. D. The found objects permit analogies with other items from the Roman-Byzantine necropoleis at Callatis and Beroe*

**Rezumat:** *Acest articol prezintă rezultatele unei săpături arheologice de salvare, realizată în Tulcea, pe Str. 14 Noiembrie, în fața porții Geamiei Azizie. Mormântul de înhumare prezintă un inventar bogat, constând din patru brățări din sticlă, de culoare neagră, șase brățări din bronz, din care cinci de tipul celor cu capete înfășurate și una realizată din două sârme de bronz răsucite, un inel din argint, mărgelile din pastă de sticlă, un opaiș și o monedă de bronz, un follis de la Constantin cel Mare. În baza inventarului funerar, mormântul a fost datat în sec. IV p.Chr. Obiectele descoperite permit analogii cu pieșe din necropolele romano-bizantine Callatis și Beroe.*

**Cuvinte cheie:** *perioada romano-bizantină, sec. IV p.Chr., mormânt de înhumare, inventar funerar, Aegyssus*

**Key words:** *Roman-Byzantine period, 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D., tomb of inhumation, funeral inventory, Aegyssus*

In the summer of the 2007, on 14 November Street, right in front of the gate's Azizie Mosque, in Tulcea, it was signalled to us by the workers the presence of a skull and a bracelet in a pit which was delved for gas fittings (Fig. 1/1). In the initial stage the pit had size of 1.70 × 0.60 m and 1.50 m depth; it was spread till a size of 1.70 × 1.50 m. The grave was delved in the yellow ground; it was not possible to distinguish any signs of the grave, only here and there appear remainders of filling, yellow and friable soil and lenses of dark-brown soil. Some metal remains appear in the head and feet zone, and on one side and another of the pelvis, as well as the yellow-brown colour of the soil around the skeleton indicates that the defunct was buried into a wooden coffin.

Skeleton was in anatomical connection, laid in dorsal decubitus, with the right hand along the body and the left hand slightly bent and put on the pelvis. The defunct, most likely a female, was oriented west-east, with glance to the east. The funerary inventory consists of glass and bronze bracelets, a silver ring, beads of glass, a clay lamp and one bronze coin (Fig. 1/2).

On the right arm were three bronze bracelets in the elbow zone, another two black glass bracelets on the forearm and a silver ring on the ring finger. Close by the elbow was discovered a few fragments of bronze wire which were parts of another bracelet. Some of these fragments represent probably the closing system of the bracelet.

---

\* This paper was presented on the Session of Reports Pontica 2007. We would like to thank to Mr. Fl. Topoleanu.

Almost the same situation was recorded for the left arm; three bracelets were close by the elbow: two of bronze and one of glass. Between the femora and pelvis was discovered the second glass bracelet and a number of one hundred and two beads of light-blue colour. On the pelvis, close by the left hand was discovered another eleven beads by the same size and colour, probable connected with those which were mentioned. Another one hundred and one beads was discovered in the neck zone.

Near the thigh-bone of the right leg were the bronze coin and forty-five blue beads with a spherical form.

A last piece which was part of the funeral inventory is a clay lamp, situated on the tiptoe left leg with the foot over the clay lamp. The piece had the disk partially broken and its rim exfoliated close to the handle.

### **Funeral inventory:**

- a) Glass bracelets have black colour and protuberances diametral opposed, semicircular in section.
  1. right hand, D = 7.2 cm, inv. 47935 (Fig. 2/1);
  2. right hand, D = 7.4 cm, inv. 47936 (Fig. 2/2);
  3. left hand, D = 6.5 cm, inv. 47934 (Fig. 2/3);
  4. between femora and pelvis, D = 6.5 cm, inv. 47937 (Fig. 2/4).
- b) Bronze bracelets are well-preserved, excepting one which is fragmentary. Among these, only one exemplary is made from two twisted bronze wires, the other being made with wrapped ends.
  1. left hand, D = 6.5 cm, inv. 48283 (Fig. 3/1);
  2. left hand, D = 6.2 cm, inv. 48284 (Fig. 3/2);
  3. right hand, D = 5.3 cm, inv. 48285 (Fig. 3/3);
  4. right hand, D = 5.8 cm, inv. 48286 (Fig. 3/4);
  5. right hand, D = 5.5 cm, made from two twisted wires, inv. 48287 (Fig. 3/5);
  6. right hand, the fragmentary one, inv. 48288 (Fig. 3/6).
- c) The silver ring is fragmentary, semicircular in section, without any decoration, inv. 48289, D = 1.8 cm (Fig. 2/5);
- d) Beads are made from paste of glass.
  1. neck zone, dark-blue colour, small size and spherical form, inv. 47720-47820;
  2. nearly coin, light-blue colour, with major size and spherical form, inv. 47675-47719, (Fig. 2/7);
  3. pelvis zone, light-blue colour, small size and spherical form, inv. 47821-47922;
  4. on pelvis, left hand zone, dark-blue colour, small size and spherical form, inv. 47923-47933;
- e) The coin represents a follies from Constantinus I Augustus and it was emissive on Heraclea<sup>1</sup> (Fig. 2/6);

<sup>1</sup> LRBC I, nr. 894, per. I, a. 324-330; RIC VII, 553, nr. 90, a. 327-329.

- f) The clay lamp have a big and roundly body, with the disk partially broken. It still preserves a part of the decoration which represents a scene with vegetable and anthropomorphous motifs. The disk is limited by two concentric circles. The rim, exfoliated close to the handle, it is decorated with dot rosette and stalk motive, panels with incised branch and a S-letter. Lamp has a narrow-nozzle, handle grooved and pierced; base: two concentric circles surround other five circles situated in cross form.

Clay with mica, light brown colour (HUE 7.5 YR, 6/4)<sup>2</sup>, D = 8,2 cm; H = 3.2 cm; L = 10.4 cm; inv. 47938, (Fig. 3/7; 4/6).

The coin which is in a good state of preservation and the other funerary objects allow us to date this tomb of inhumation in the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

Black glass bracelets are not so numerous for this period, as it is known from archeological researches in necropolises of Callatis<sup>3</sup> and Beroe<sup>4</sup>. They are set in the chronological frame in the first part of 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. For this tomb it is particular the presence of four glass bracelets comparative with only six bracelets from necropolis of Callatis.

The bronze bracelets, among which majority have so-called „wrapped ends”, were framed from the chronological point of view in the second and third quarter of the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. The same chronological frame it is used for the bracelet which was made from two twisted bronze wires. In necropolis of Callatis was discovered one bracelet of the same type with a coin from Constantine II emissive in 351-360 A.D.<sup>5</sup>. Both types of bracelets were discovered in necropolis of Beroe<sup>6</sup>.

The beads are characteristic to the wider period and represent the most frequently and numerous objects as funeral inventory. They have spherical form and are made from glass. It is important the symbolical arrangement of these two types of beads: the smaller beads maybe are from a necklace, anyway they were being jewelry but the biggest beads were deposited near the coin and have probably other significance. Analogies can be done with the beads from Callatis<sup>7</sup> and Beroe<sup>8</sup>.

Following the typology established by O. Th. Broneer, we could include the lamp in XXVIII A-C type<sup>9</sup> and is set in the chronological frame in the second part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century and the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>10</sup>. This type of clay lamp, with round body and plain rim, narrow-nozzle and rich ornamentation has a large aria of spreading. As concerns the scene that its still preserve on the broken disk, namely a man and a vegetable motif, we don't find any analogies but we suppose that the scene represent an agrarian one. Concerning on funerary practices, it is important to mention the presence, near the thigh-bone of the right leg, of the

<sup>2</sup> Munsell 2000.

<sup>3</sup> Preda 1980, 53.

<sup>4</sup> Petre 1987, pl. 40, fig. 56/c.

<sup>5</sup> Preda 1980, 50.

<sup>6</sup> Petre 1987, pl. 35, fig. 47/b, 47/c, pl. 36, fig. 48/c, 48/e, pl. 38, fig. 51/b, 51/c.

<sup>7</sup> Preda 1980, 56, pl. 27.

<sup>8</sup> Petre 1987, pl. 149 I-1d.

<sup>9</sup> Broneer 1977, pl. 33.

<sup>10</sup> Perlzweig 1961, pl. 17/742, 750, 751, 777; pl. 18; Pl. 19; Szentlélek 1969, nr. 169, 170, 171; Broneer 1977, pl. 33, tip XXVIII, A-C; Preda 1980, pl. 55, M34.1; Kuzmanov 1992, 31, nr. 196; Topoleanu 2000, pl. 56/453, 454.

coin and a few beads as fare to pay the ferryman Charon<sup>11</sup> and alike the lamp which was discovered with left foot over it. The lamp has trace of burning which indicate his usage as a funerary practice.

We could conclude that this tomb of inhumation is another discovery from Aegyssus which complete the archaeological information about funeral practices in this period; future archaeological survey excavations in the city will produce new material and will contribute to the study of Roman-Byzantine necropolis from Aegyssus.

### Bibliography

*Munsell Soil Color Charts*, 2000.

Bărbulescu, M. (coord.) 2003, *Funeraria dacoromană*, Cluj Napoca.

Bența, C. 1999, „*Obolul lui Charon*” în *Dobrogea*, ArhMold 22, 85-116.

Broneer, O. 1977, *Isthmia III. Terracotta Lamps*, New Jersey.

Iconomu, C. 1967, *Opaițe greco-romane*, Constanța.

Kuzmanov, G. 1992, *Anticinii lampii*, Sofia.

Mănucu-Adameșteanu, Gh. 1984, *Aspecte ale ritului și ritualului în lumina descoperirilor din necropola medievală de la Enisala*, Peuce 9, 355-363.

Mitrea B., Preda C. 1966, *Necropole din secolul al IV-lea e.n. în Muntenia*, București.

Perlzweig, J. 1961, *Athenian Agora VII. Lamps Of The Roman Period*, New Jersey.

Petre, A. 1987, *La romanité en Scythie Mineure (II-e – VII-e siècles de n. è.). Recherches archéologiques*, AISÉE 17-18, 5-171.

Preda, C. 1980, *Callatis. Necropola romano-bizantină*, București.

Protase, D. 1971, *A existat la geto-daci concepția greco-romană despre „obolul lui Charon”?*, SCIVA 22, 3, 495-500.

Szentlélek, T. 1969, *Ancient Lamps*, Budapesta.

Topoleanu, F. 2000, *Ceramica romană și romano-bizantină de la Halmyris (sec. I-VII d. Ch.)*, Tulcea.

**Georgică Costea**

Institutul de Cercetări Eco-Muzeale  
str. 14 Noiembrie nr. 5  
820009, Tulcea  
Tel. 0240-512626  
geocostea@yahoo.com

**Iuliana Costea**

Institutul de Cercetări Eco-Muzeale  
str. 14 Noiembrie nr. 5  
820009, Tulcea  
Tel. 0240-512626  
iulianazvinca@yahoo.com

<sup>11</sup> Protase 1971, 495-500; Mănucu-Adameșteanu 1984, 358; Bența 1999, 105-107; Bărbulescu (coord.) 2003, 44-83.

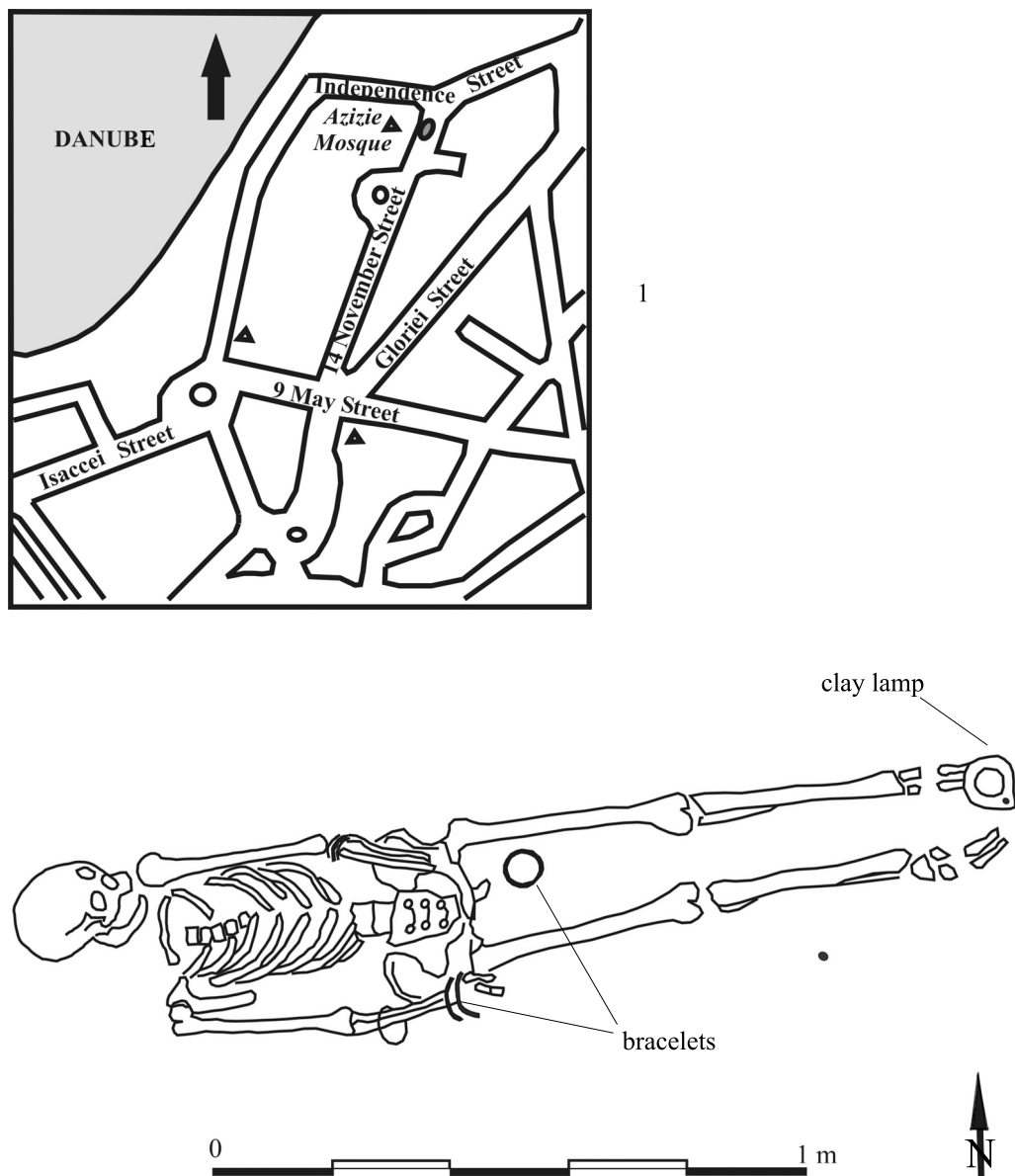


Fig. 1. 1. The topographical position of the tomb; 2. The tomb.  
Fig. 1. 1. Poziția topografică a mormântului; 2. Mormântul.

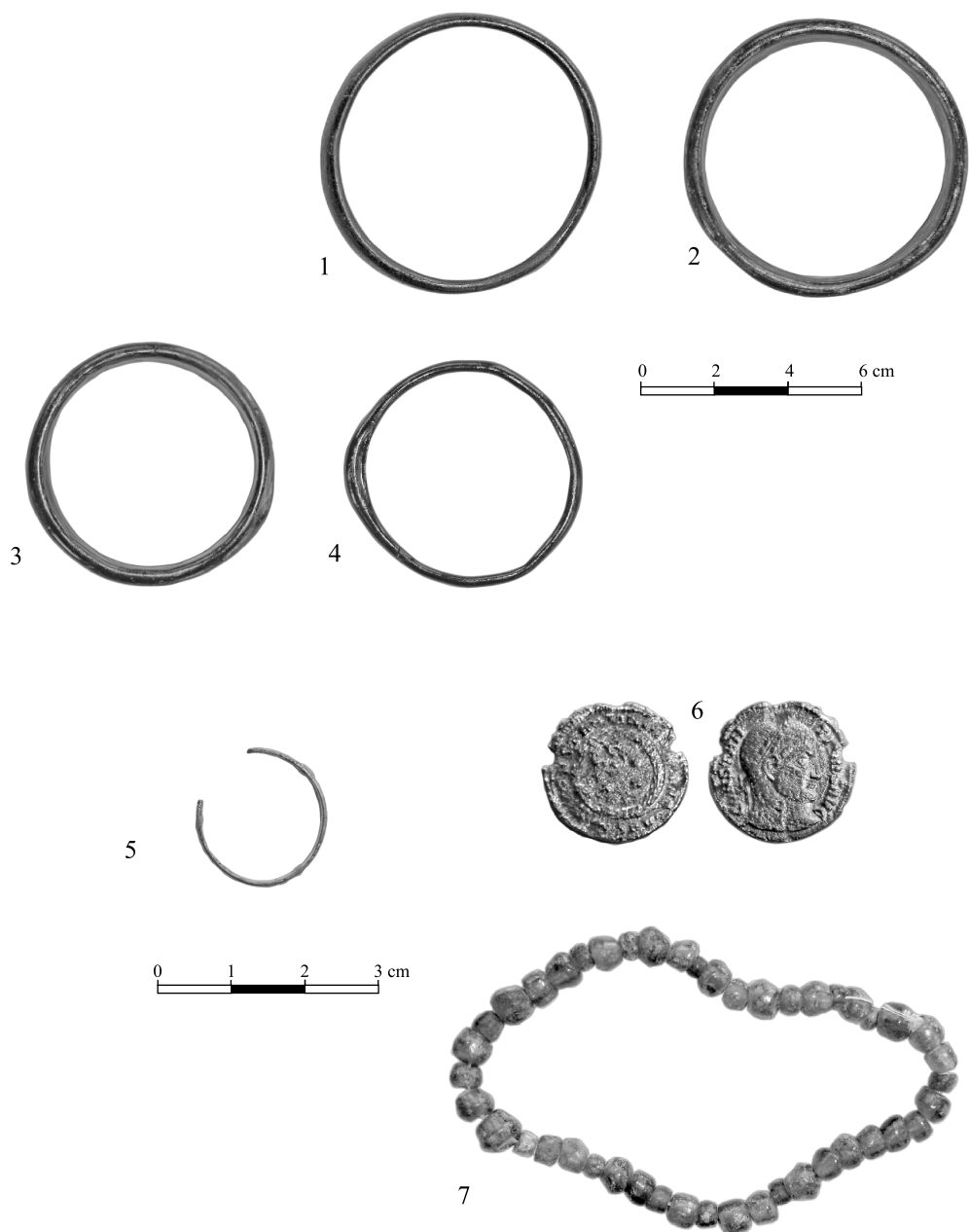


Fig. 2. 1- 4. Glass bracelets. 5. Silver ring. 6. Coin. 7. Beads discovered nearly the coin.

*Fig. 2. 1- 4. Brățări din sticlă. 5. Inel din argint. 6. Monedă. 7. Mărgelile descoperite în apropierea monedei*

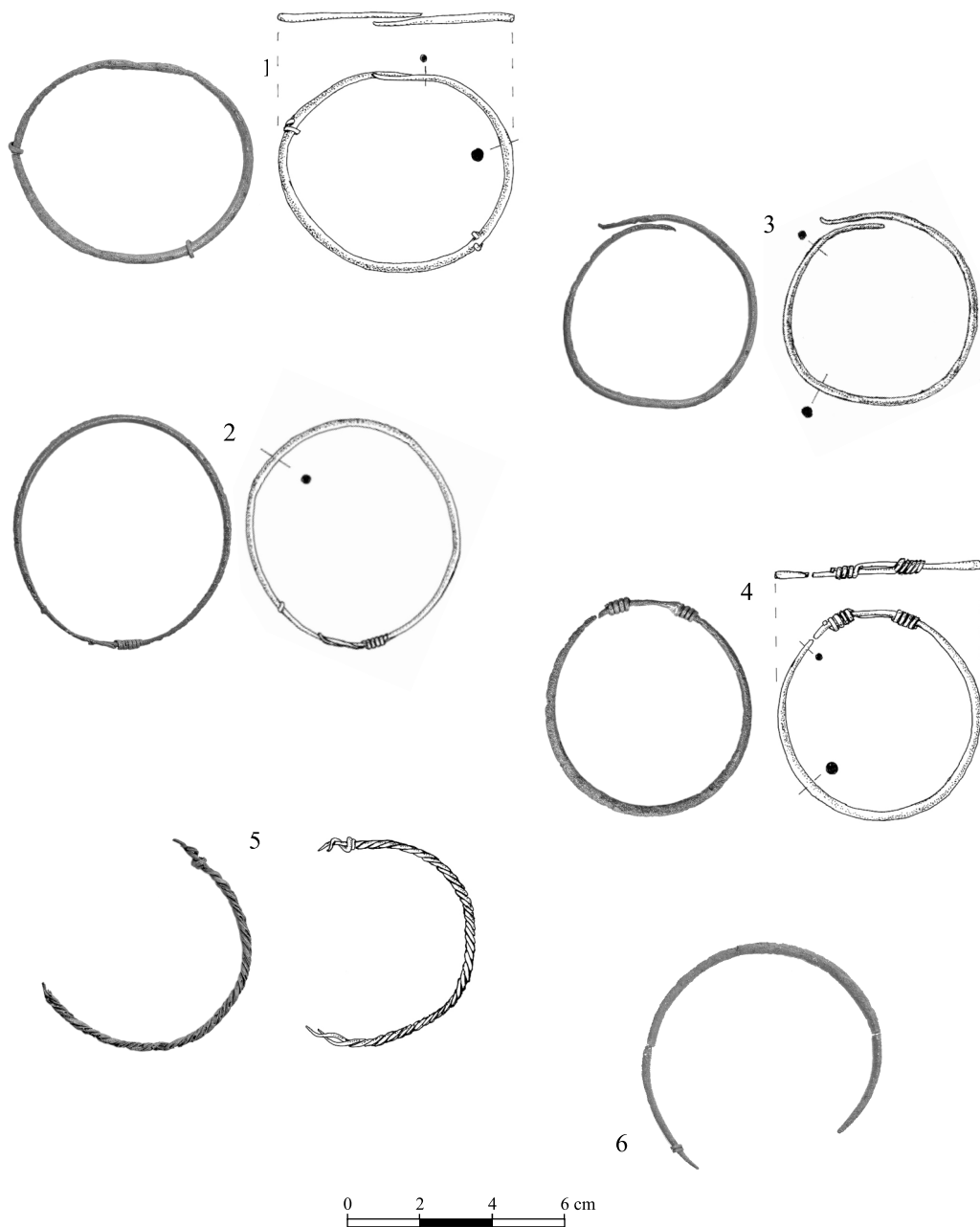


Fig. 3. 1-6. Bronze bracelets.

Fig. 3. 1-6. Brățări din bronz.



Fig. 4. Clay lamp.  
*Fig. 4. Opaît.*