

Sorin Cociş, *The Brooch Workshops from Dacia and the other Danubian Provinces of the Roman Empire (1<sup>st</sup> c. BC – 3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD)*, Series *Patrimonium Archaeologicum Transylvanicum* (Eds. S. Cociş, A. Ursuţiu), vol. 16, Mega Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 2019, 266 p., ISBN 978–606–543–743–2.

Brooches were used in Antiquity for a practical reason, that is, to hold garments together. Besides this functional purpose, because brooches were inseparable from the physical and social body, they also had an ornamental role, making them relevant for understanding aspects regarding personal taste, attitudes and fashion trends or ideology. In addition, because these artefacts are very regional in their distribution, they allow us to notice the stylistic and technological variations specific to certain geographical and cultural areas, but also the mechanisms through which the material culture of a community has changed after the contact with other groups (as a result of human mobility and trade). This information can be used for dating archaeological contexts, but also for observing the dress etiquette, the social (individual or collective) identities, the cultural interferences and the mobility of ancient communities, thus helping us see the creation, adoption, and especially adaptation and hybridisation of different traditions and technologies.

The study of brooch making technology is extremely helpful in revealing these aspects. Understanding how and why an object was made can give us insight on the people employed in the manufacturing process, those artisans' skills and knowledge, the available resources, the nature of the production, the consumers' needs and preferences, and trade relations. The book analysed below represents an important contribution to this field, which is why I think it is worth reviewing.

As revealed in the title, the book is focused on the research of brooch production in Roman Dacia and the other Danubian provinces between the 1<sup>st</sup> c. BC – 3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD. The author, Sorin Cociş, analyses certain or probable workshops specialised in brooch production from the Roman provinces of Dacia, Moesia, Pannonia, Noricum and Raetia, focusing on their characteristics and inventories, on the types of brooches they produced, on the manufacture technology and on the potential consumers for whom these artefacts were made. This study is unique for its interest in technology and for the vastness of the territory in question. With over three decades of research experience in the field of Roman archaeology, small finds (with special attention to Roman and barbarian brooches) and paleometallurgy, Sorin Cociş is one of the most qualified researchers for a work of such amplitude.

The book is written in English and its publishing was supported by a grant of the Ministry of National Education of Romania. It is coherently structured into four chapters, which are preceded by a *Preface* (p. 9–10), written by Maurizio Buora, and the *Foreword* (p. 11) of the author himself. The *Preface* summarizes the aim of the study, describes the research methodology and pinpoints the main conclusions reached by Sorin Cociş regarding brooch manufacture in Dacia, through its comparison to brooch production in the rest of the Danubian provinces. Maurizio Buora considers this work to be special for its interest in technology, it being useful not only for the scholars specialised in brooches or other dress accessories, but also for those interested in the creation and evolution of material culture in general (p. 9).

In the *Foreword*, Sorin Cociş mentions succinctly the aim of his study and the process

that the research has undergone before its final publication, and he expresses his gratitude towards the scholars who contributed in the making of the book. Initially, the author wanted to analyse brooches from the perspective of their production in specialised workshops and of their fabrication technology in Roman Dacia, but has decided to extend his investigation to the Danubian provinces. The author does not provide a clearer thesis statement or the motives behind this research, as they are being implied by the research itself.

The first chapter of the book comprises *The History of Research* (p. 13–15) in the field of the brooch production and workshops. Although this chapter is brief, the author provides reasons why the research in this field is still in its incipient stage, including the difficulty of archaeologically identifying these workshops, but also the lack of interest in investigating the inventories of *officinae* or even the areas where these buildings might have existed. Sorin Cociş goes on by indicating the main directions in the study of brooches, from artefact or site monographies, conferences and colloquia dedicated to brooches and small finds, to studies dedicated to specific types of brooches and their distribution, and finally to inquiries regarding manufacture technology and metallography.

*The Brooch Workshops of Roman Dacia* (p. 17–46) is the core chapter of the book. The author starts by presenting the history of research of brooches from the territory of Roman Dacia, dividing it into three stages (p. 17–18). This introduction is followed by seven sub-chapters dedicated to each identified or potential workshop from this province, namely the ones from Napoca (p. 18–28), Porolissum (p. 28–34), Arcobadara (p. 34–35), an unidentified location in Dacia Porolissensis (p. 35–38), Apulum (p. 39–43), Micia (p. 43–44) and Dierna (p. 44–46). In each case, the author begins by describing the history of the settlement and the state of research of the site on the territory of which *officinae* or specific workshop inventory were identified. This part is followed by the description of the discoveries of the *officinae* themselves (Napoca, Micia, Dierna), or the specific workshop inventories, such as moulds, crucibles, half-finished pieces, scrap, waste material, ingots, objects meant for recycling or specific metalworking instruments. Afterwards comes the description of the brooch types produced in the aforementioned workshops, consisting of information regarding morphology, typology, technology, distribution, consumer market and chronology, each sub-chapter ending with the general dating of the brooch production in these *officinae*.

The sub-chapter dedicated to Napoca is central in this book, because it is the most complete and impressive workshop of Roman Dacia. These characteristics have allowed the author to reconstruct almost the entire technological chain of brooch manufacture (p. 20–22). By doing this, the author has also included some information about manufacture technology in general (e.g. from the raw materials and the nature of alloys used in brooch production, to recycling, to theories regarding metal melting in crucibles, to the stages of the production itself). The description of the manufacturing process helps understand the nature of Napoca's brooch *officina*, but also of the entire brooch production in Dacia. Remarks regarding manufacturing technology, omnipresent in this book, compensate for the lack of a distinct sub-chapter dedicated to this subject.

The main flaw of this chapter is the fact that the author has included all of his previously published studies regarding these workshops in his book, without always adding new information on the matter<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Besides the monograph dedicated to brooches of Roman Dacia (COCIŞ 2004), some of the other publications regarding the workshops of Roman Dacia are: for Napoca – COCIŞ 2001; COCIŞ, CIONGRADI, VOIŞIAN, BOTA 2001; RIEDERER, COCIŞ 2000; for Porolissum and the discussion on the Barbarian brooch type produced in that workshop – COCIŞ 2009; COCIŞ, BÂRCĂ 2013; COCIŞ, BÂRCĂ 2014; for the workshop of Dacia Porolissensis – COCIŞ 2007; for Apulum – COCIŞ, BOUNEGRU 2017; for Micia – RĂDEANU, COCIŞ 2001; for Dierna – COCIŞ 2006.

The third chapter, *The Brooch Workshops of the Danubian Provinces* (p. 47–74), is composed of four sub-chapters for each discussed province (Moesia – p. 47–50, Pannonia – p. 50–56, Noricum – p. 56–63, Raetia – p. 63–67), which are divided themselves into smaller parts for each (certain or potential) workshop. Each sub-chapter begins with a short paragraph about the state of research in the field of brooches and metalworking *officinae* from the province in question. This introduction is followed by the description of each location where workshops or indirect evidence for brooch production were found, containing, similarly to the previous chapter, the history of the site, the state of research, the presentation of *officinae* (where it is the case), and of the artefacts indicating metalworking. Sorin Cociş does not forget to discuss the brooch types that were produced, their morphology, distribution and chronology. These descriptions vary in the quantity or quality of the given information, that depending mostly on the archaeological contexts themselves, the state of research, or on accidental omissions on the side of the author. This chapter is structured as a catalogue, rather than a narrative, as the author leaves the interpretations for the last chapter.

The *Conclusions* (p. 69–74) are unexpectedly succinct, but relevant. The author has identified, by comparison, the similarities and differences between the workshops of the analysed provinces. Most of the *officinae* appear to be located in civil settlements, especially in large towns alongside the important trading routes, which implies that the products were meant for supplying the local market, but also for massive export (such being the case of Noricum and Raetia). Sorin Cociş has divided workshops into three types (with mixed production, with exclusive brooch production and also the ones specialised in brooches grouped into artisanal districts), and he has noticed that they have almost identical inventories, in all of them there were used mostly recycled materials and the artisans preferred the „casting upon archetype” technique. By using the statistical approach, the author has also identified the specific brooch types manufactured in each province and the most prolific centres of production of the Danubian region. As for chronology, it appears that brooch production has flourished between the 1<sup>st</sup> c. AD – 3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD, the only workshops that are mentioned to have manufactured these artefacts from the 1<sup>st</sup> c. BC (as implied by the title) are the ones from Magdalensberg (p. 61). More importantly, Sorin Cociş mentions the fact that the homogeneity of fabrication in these workshops, typical for the first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. AD, is replaced by a much more diversified production, until the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD, when people seem to require and use brooches less and less. Unfortunately, the author does not elaborate on the political, economic, social and intimate implications of these changes, aspects which might have been relevant for this study and for the history of dress and technology in this part of the Roman world.

The last chapter is followed by a vast and impressive *Bibliography* (p. 75–108), by an equally impressive *List of Illustrations* (p. 109–114), and one hundred and fifty *Plates* (p. 115–266) presenting distribution maps, plans, complete or half-finished brooches, casting moulds, metalworking utensils.

In my opinion, the book presented here is of great usefulness for the study of brooches, their manufacturing technology, paleometallurgy and history of dress and economy of the Roman Danubian provinces. It represents a complete synthesis of all the discoveries regarding brooch workshops in this part of the Roman world, making it a friendly instrument for scholars interested in the aforementioned fields. The results of lifelong research of the author have materialised themselves into a unique study, for this approach in the research of brooches has not been undertaken until now. Although the presented workshops and their inventories lack a more elaborate interpretation from the perspective of social mobility and cultural interferences, this study creates many avenues for further research in the field of small finds and their creation.

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