BABEŞ – BOLYAI UNIVERSITY, Cluj-Napoca FACULTY OF HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY "HISTORY. CIVILIZATION. CULTURE" DOCTORAL SCHOOL

DOCTORAL THESIS SUMMARY

Glass artefacts from the Eastern Carpathian Basin in the Second Iron Age

Doctoral advisor: Candidate

Prof. univ. dr. Aurel-Gelu Florea Adrian Cătălin Căsălean

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KEYWORDS

Glass artefacts, La Tène, Second Iron Age, Eastern Carpathian Basin, Celtic horizon, Dacian horizon, beads, bracelets, glass vessels, LA-ICP-MS analyses.

INTRODUCTION

In the absence of glass, the present would become difficult to imagine. By studying this category of material, the techniques used by the artisans who created it, and the role it played in the daily and spiritual life of people in the past, we can gain a deeper understanding of contemporary reality. In this context, objects that today seem self-evident and integral to the world we live in acquire a more complex meaning, and their evolution becomes a lesson in human progress.

Within archaeological literature, glass and objects made from this material have been the subject of numerous specialized studies. These have analyzed artefacts according to the historical periods to which they belong, investigating their roles in the lives of individuals, groups, and historical, protohistoric, or prehistoric communities. At the same time, research has also focused on the evolution of glassmaking and glassworking techniques—from the earliest procedures to those common in more recent periods.

This work has focused on the area of the eastern Carpathian Basin, bounded to the east, north, and south by the Carpathian mountain range, to the southwest by the course of the Danube River, and to the west by the Tisza River. This region includes Transylvania, Banat, Crişana, Maramureş, and the eastern part of the Great Hungarian Plain. In this area, glass artefacts constitute a frequently encountered material category among the discoveries at sites dating to the Second Iron Age. Probably due to their small size and poor state of preservation, these objects have remained neglected by researchers and placed on the margins of academic discourse. It is worth noting that starting in the 20th century and continuing into the current one, the number of glass artifact discoveries has increased considerably. These are often mentioned in specialized studies through brief presentations and rarely become the subject of detailed analyses or studies that cover wide geographical areas or entire historical, protohistoric, or prehistoric periods.

Within the defined region, the Second Iron Age is generally marked by the presence of both the Celtic and Dacian cultural horizons. In accordance with these and the period under study, this work opted for the use of the Central European La Tène chronology and terminology, taking into account the adjustments discussed in the scholarly literature. In brief, the chronological system associated with the La Tène period spans from the 5th century BC to the end of the 1st century BC. According to this chronological framework, the Dacian

horizon—which developed between the second half of the 2nd century BC and the beginning of the 2nd century AD—is partially included within this periodization. Thus, in order to maintain the use of a combination of relative and absolute chronology, the period following the end of the 1st century BC is covered by Eggers phases B1 (30/25 BC – AD 50) and B2 (AD 50 – 150), which are used in the relative chronology of the Roman Empire.

Given the current state of research, the development of this doctoral thesis became necessary in the context of studying glass artefacts both at the "macro" level, referring to their distribution, circulation, typology, and chronology across temperate Europe, and at the "micro" level, through the quantification and analysis—under the same lens—of the categories and types of glass objects discovered within the studied spatial and temporal framework. These were further enriched by "nano" level analyses, which include the study of the discovery contexts and their implications, and by "pico" level investigations, which, based on the chemical composition of the pieces, aim to identify the raw glass recipes used to produce the finished objects and the geographical origin of the raw materials employed in their synthesis.

SYNTHETIC PRESENTATION OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS CHAPTERS

The doctoral thesis consists of 13 chapters, of which the introductory chapter—previously summarized—established the spatial and temporal framework of the analysis, the current state of research on glass artefacts, along with the arguments and objectives that formed the foundation of this study.

Chapter II details the methodology underlying the study of glass artefacts. This includes a theoretical component based on the principles developed by N. Crummy regarding the analysis of special finds or "small finds". To streamline the analytical process, an electronic database was developed to quantify all contextual, morphological, typological, and chronological data provided by the studied artefacts.

The first practical stage of the analysis includes the morphological study of glass artefacts and the definition of component parts across different functional categories—primarily items of adornment and those used for storing and consuming food, liquids,

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¹ Crummy 2007.

cosmetics, and pharmaceutical substances. Additional, rarer categories are also included, such as game pieces, globules, *phalerae*, and fragments of window glass.

Following the definition of the studied material, its classification relied on the use of several typological systems from the specialized literature. For the category of beads, the typology developed by N. Venclová was used and further refined throughout the work². Glass bracelets were classified according to the typology proposed by Th. E. Haevernick³, while glass vessels were identified using the typology established by C. Isings⁴.

The morphological and typological studies, grounded in the theoretical and chronological framework, are complemented by archaeometric analyses using laser ablation inductively coupled plasma mass spectrometry (LA-ICP-MS) to examine the chemical composition of the artefacts. The concentrations of the various identified elements were subjected to comparative analyses in order to distinguish between raw materials, fluxes, and colorants used in the production of the objects, as well as to suggest possible areas of origin for the raw materials. Finally, the methodology includes a terminological subchapter dedicated to defining the specialized terms used throughout the thesis.

Chapter III presents and analyzes the category of glass beads. It begins with an overview of the main manufacturing techniques used in bead production and the decorative methods applied to them. A technical discussion highlights the importance of observations regarding the matrix of the artefacts and the orientation of encapsulated particles, which are essential for accurately identifying the processing techniques used on the material.

To facilitate the presentation, the beads have been grouped according to shapes, colors, and types of decoration into several categories, each forming the basis of dedicated subchapters: monochrome beads with simple shapes, monochrome beads with complex shapes, polychrome beads with circular decoration, polychrome beads with linear decoration, polychrome beads with combined linear and circular decoration, beads with complex decoration, amphora-shaped beads, typologically unclassified beads. Within these groups, several distinct types have been identified. Monochrome variants are differentiated based on the shape and color of the pieces, while polychrome ones are classified according to the

² Venclová 1990.

³ Haevernick 1960.

⁴ Isings 1957.

matrix's shape and color in relation to that of the decoration. Throughout the analysis, the presentation of each bead type follows a consistent format: A description of the item, Identification of the manufacturing techniques used, Discussion based on analogies found in the specialized literature, presentation and analysis of the discovery contexts for each bead type within the eastern Carpathian Basin, absolute and relative chronology, geographic distribution, including comparisons with finds outside the studied area. All of this provides the informational basis for the data evaluation phase and the resulting final interpretations. In addition to the categories mentioned, Chapter III also includes **Subchapter III.3**, which is dedicated to faience beads. These are treated separately to clearly differentiate them from glass ornaments. Their analysis concludes with a more detailed discussion of their chronology and distribution.

Chapter IV focuses on the only large-sized ring bead ("ringperlen") that was studied. Both in specialized literature and based on the manufacturing techniques, size, glass quality, and overall shape, these pieces stand apart from the beads discussed in the previous chapter⁵. Technologically, they occupy an intermediate position between simple ring beads and glass bracelets. Moreover, "ringperlen" have a fairly clear chronology at the European level and are considered common items within oppida environments associated with the Celtic horizon.

Chapter V discusses glass bracelets. Similarly to the chapter on beads, the presentation and discussion of glass bracelets begin with a brief overview of the quantity of identified pieces in the studied area, the main typologies for this category, and the primary techniques manufacturing encountered in the specimens examined. Briefly, glass bracelets typically feature one or more profiled ribs on their outer surface. Depending on the number, size, and decoration of these ribs, several groups have been identified, each with chronological significance. Th. E. Haevernick's 1960 typology divides glass bracelets into 15 groups. Since then, this typology has undergone modifications and additions, making these pieces useful chronological markers as well as indicators of the evolution of glassmaking techniques in the Celtic milieu. It also reflects how these techniques, wearing styles, and consumption practices spread into the eastern Carpathian Basin.

Unlike beads, glass bracelets from the studied region have not prompted substantial additions or changes to known European typologies. However, some discovery contexts have allowed the refinement of the chronology for certain types, such as bracelets 6a, 6b, and 8b.

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⁵ Venclová et al. 2020, p. 204; Čižmářova 2022, p. 121; Haevernick 1960, p. 40; p. 67-71.

The last two types are found in both the Celtic and Dacian horizons, suggesting a prolonged use of these items even amid cultures with different social organizations and consumption practices.

Chapter VI presents fragments of glass vessels, generally corresponding to the Dacian horizon. The identified forms indicate the use, during the 1st century BC to the 1st century AD, of several vessel types designed for storing, serving, and consuming liquids, food, cosmetics, and pharmaceuticals.

Besides differentiating types based on shape, color, and surface decoration, this chapter also classifies the vessels according to the manufacturing techniques used. Several studies have highlighted the importance of this classification due to the evolution of glassmaking techniques, from pieces modelled on a sand core to those formed by free blowing. These manufacturing techniques carry chronological significance and offer insights into changes in production centers, workshop exchanges, artisans, and raw material sources. Based on the period these vessels correspond to, the circulation and distribution routes of these Mediterranean-style objects can also be detailed.

In the Dacian context, such items were most likely luxury goods, primarily found in the context of fortresses and prestigious buildings. The relatively small number and functionalmorphological diversity of these finds support this hypothesis, also revealing possible assimilation of consumption habits and customs through analysis.

Throughout the chapter, several vessel types are analyzed and presented, including those for serving liquids such as *Syro-Palestinian* bowls and cups, some decorated with lotus buds. Others include various polychrome mosaic bowls or ribbed bowls intended for food consumption, liquid storage vessels like bottles, and sanitary vessels such as *unguentaria* and aryballoi. Finally, the chapter addresses fragmentary finds that, due to poor preservation, could not be typologically identified.

Chapter VII includes the less common discoveries. The malleability of glass under high temperatures encouraged the creation of various types of objects serving a diverse range of functions. Although encountered sporadically and in small quantities, among the glass artefacts found in the studied area are fragments belonging to *phalerae* and windows, as well as small objects such as tokens and glass beads. Throughout the chapter, attempts were made to identify valid analogies within the specialized literature, which in some cases allowed the

establishment of chronological frameworks. Additionally, through the analysis of discovery contexts, some aspects related to the functionality of these pieces within the context of the second Iron Age in the eastern Carpathian Basin were formulated.

Chapter VIII, entitled "Evaluation of the data according to the main analyzed categories", follows the methodology used throughout this work and aims to quantify the data resulting from the analysis, treating them comparatively. The analysis covers the categories of beads, bracelets, and glass vessels, along with their respective subcategories and types. Thus, the source of written information, as well as graphic and tabular data found in the illustrations, is based on the content of the previous chapters of typological, chronological, and contextual analysis of the pieces in relation to specialized literature and studies that brought them into the academic circuit. The centralized data concerning morphological, typological, chronological, and distribution aspects can also be found in the catalogue and illustrative segments (Chapters XII and XIII).

The content of this chapter discusses comparatively the data obtained from the material analysis, using the same analytical structure for each of the three mentioned categories. Hence, all morphological, typological, chronological, and distribution data of beads, bracelets, and glass vessels are gathered.

By comparing the morphology of these categories and the differences within them, some aspects related to the evolution of forms and decorations, craftsmanship, and primarily the preferences of individuals and communities using such objects were observed. Similarly, the gathering of typological and chronological data allowed visualization over time of all variants of jewelry and vessels, from simpler forms and decorations to more complex ones, indicating on the one hand the transition from simpler to more complex variants, and on the other hand their coexistence in some cases, as well as the reuse of certain types of jewelry. Also, the analysis of the distribution of pieces and their placement on a map covering both the studied area and neighboring ones shows possible access routes, supply and distribution channels of glass goods, as well as the main settlements or, ultimately, necropolises where these objects were used or deposited. Last but not least, according to the known discovery contexts, the specimens from each category underwent an analysis emphasizing how these pieces were used in everyday life and in funerary and ritual deposits within the Celtic and Dacian horizons.

Finally, this chapter dissects the primary information from the material analysis, compares various types and subtypes through the lenses mentioned above, preparing the argumentative foundations for the interpretations stated in the conclusions chapter.

Chapter IX is dedicated to archaeometric analyses. By using laser ablation, a minimally invasive method that identifies a wide range of chemical elements, some aspects regarding the types of raw materials, fluxes, and colorants used in the production of the raw glass from which the finished objects were made could be stated. In summary, by comparing the various chemical elements and the percentage distribution of the primary elements, it was observed that the majority of the analyzed pieces were made using sands typical of beach zones. In few cases, the presence of silicates produced by crushing quartzites can be inferred. Fluxes that help lower the melting temperature to about 1000-1100 °C were mostly provided by natron, with few specimens showing the use of potassium oxide. Regarding coloration, most of the analyzed pieces were blue, exhibiting certain shades. Chemical analysis revealed the use of cobalt, copper, and iron oxides. By comparing the values of primary elements and colorants, the presence of more standardized "recipes" respecting certain proportions of raw materials can also be observed.

CONCLUSIONS

The study of glass artefacts leads us to observe the chronological, social, economic, spiritual, and symbolic implications they fulfilled within the context of the eastern Carpathian Basin during the second Iron Age. All these aspects were interpreted within **Chapter X**, dedicated to the conclusions.

From the analysis of chronological data, an overall presence of glass beads throughout the entire analyzed period is observed, glass bracelets during the LT C1–D1 period, and finally glass vessels from the LT D phase until the first half of the Eggers B2 period. To these are added sporadically found objects mainly from the 1st century AD and the beginning of the 2nd century AD, such as *phalerae*, beads, tokens, and window fragments. By comparing the main categories of glass artefacts and organizing them according to the chronological system used in this work, a series of types of jewelry and later vessels spread over similar periods were distinguished.

Among the beads, complex monochrome forms, polychrome beads with circular decorations, and mosaic beads (types 301–310, 512–517, 555, 902, 906) have been considered in multiple specialized studies as being of Mediterranean origin⁶. With a similar area of provenance, including the Pontic region, the variants of beads with anthropomorphic figures (type 901⁷) and amphora-shaped beads were also considered⁸. Based on the distribution analysis of types 111, 562–567, 569, 809, and faience specimens, a possible origin or at least circulation through the northern and western coasts of the Black Sea can be inferred⁹.

In the absence of a documented glass workshop for the LT C1–LT D period within the analyzed area, the circulation of glass bracelets from Central European zones—where they were more intensively present and probably produced—is assumed ¹⁰. Moreover, connections with this last mentioned area are confirmed by type 736 beads and "*ringperlen*". On one hand, the presence of bracelets in the eastern Carpathian Basin can be explained by the penetration of populations bearing objects specific to the La Tène culture. At the same time, one cannot exclude the maintenance of links or the formation of new forms of interaction with the Central European area, given the influx of bracelets also during the LT C2–D period.

Glass vessels can be viewed in a similar way. Although discoveries of raw glass, crucibles, and blowing tubes at Sarmizegetusa Regia indicate the possible presence of glassmakers, according to research published to date, no workshop dedicated to the production of glass objects has been identified¹¹. Also, the types of vessels present in Transylvania show analogies in the area east of the Carpathians, suggesting through this distribution a circulation of glass vessels from the Mediterranean zone through the Pontic area, reaching the Lower Danube and then the intra-Carpathian regions¹².

The aforementioned categories and types of objects serve as markers of interaction between communities in the eastern Carpathian Basin and nearby regions, as well as more distant areas. The ways in which glass artefacts entered the analyzed area were most likely diverse. Considering the cultural and event contexts, these may include exchange, individual

⁶ Kysela 2020, p. 150, Fig. 68; p. 151-153, with refferences.

⁷ Karwowski 2005, p. 167; Venclová 1990, p. 96; Rustoiu 2008, p. 57.

⁸ Rustoiu 2015, p. 365, with refferences.

⁹ See chapter III, t 111, 562-567, 809.

¹⁰ For a distribution of possible workshops in the European area corresponding to the La Tène period, see Venclová 1990, p. 415, Map 9.

¹¹ Iaroslavschi 1981; Florea et al. 2015, p. 21-22; p. 52, Fig. 23; p. 53, Fig. 24; Mateescu-Suciu et al. 2016, p. 100-101; p. 113-114, Fig. 4-5.

¹² Botan 2015, p. 97-139; p. 150.

mobility, conflicts, looting, stipends, gifts, and diplomatic agreements¹³. Beyond the objects themselves and the routes they traveled, it is important to emphasize the existence of an informational baggage associated with them that most likely influenced and was incorporated into the consumption practices and models of the communities in the eastern Carpathian Basin.

Regarding consumption models, for now, we can observe the integration of the two categories of jewelry, most probably used both for their visual and artistic qualities and for considerations related to their perceived spiritual protective effects. According to the identified functionalities, glass vessels likely led to the integration of sanitary or personal care practices into indigenous consumption models through the use of substances contained in small containers. These vessels offered new ways of serving and consuming food and liquids, as well as storing them. It is not excluded that all these functionalities underwent changes during their use. This was probably the case for containers once their contents were depleted ¹⁴.

In conclusion, this work likely represents a step forward in the study of glass artefacts from the second Iron Age in the eastern Carpathian Basin. By bringing most of the objects under one cover, the aim was to analyze each category and align them with typologies present in the specialized literature to create an overview of this material category. The analysis led to the development of chronologies related to jewelry and glass vessels in the studied area, along with an analysis of discovery contexts intended to reveal certain social, economic, and spiritual particularities of individuals and communities from the second Iron Age.

Looking ahead, the study of glass artefacts would benefit from a more substantial number of discoveries with clearly documented contexts, accessible to interdisciplinary analyses aimed at diversifying the range of knowledge related to the objects themselves and the people who used them.

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¹³ Căsălean 2018, p. 23-24.

¹⁴ Căsălean 2021, p. 124.

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