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# TWO BRONZE BRACELETS WITH LOOPED AND TWISTED ENDS FROM THE NOTES OF TÉGLÁS ISTVÁN

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**Abstract.** The present article brings forward information concerning two bronze bracelets with looped and twisted ends recorded by Téglás István in his note books. The pieces were discovered in Turda, respectively Sarmizegetusa (Várhely). The first one belonged to Téglás's collection, and the second one ended up at the museum in Deva, its actual finding place and context being probably forgotten in the meantime.

**Keywords:** Téglás István, antiques collections, bronze bracelets with looped and twisted ends, *Potaissa*, *Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa*

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, besides the famous collections of the Transylvanian aristocracy, other collections were also constituted, maybe less spectacular, but valuable in many ways, belonging to some erudite persons. One of the most well-known was that of Téglás István from Turda<sup>1</sup>.

Téglás István (1953-1915) was born in Sfântu Gheorghe, received his elementary school teacher diploma in Deva in 1874 and had a long teaching career<sup>2</sup>. He started collecting artefacts since 1873

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<sup>1</sup> For Téglás István and his collection, see Orosz 1915, Bajusz 1980, Bajusz 2005.

<sup>2</sup> He was a teacher in Făgăraş (1875-1876), Braşov (1876-1878), Petroşani (1878-1880); school principal in Sibiu (1880-1885), Rupea (1885-1891); assistant school inspector of the county Târnava Mică & Mare, Sighişoara (1891-1894); school inspector of the county Turda-Arieş, Turda (1894-1907); school inspector of the county Bistriţa-Năsăud, Bistriţa (1907-1908).

and after definitively settling in Turda, his collection had become a museum with thousands of artefacts, coins, historical documents, and other objects belonging to archaeology, ethnography and natural sciences, available to those interested.

He has published nearly 100 articles in various scientific fields. However his greatest merit is the scrupulosity with which he has noted and drawn everything he had seen where he went. His collection, following his death, was slowly scattered, but 56 note books remained for posterity, with very diverse information, from which until now mostly only the archaeological ones have been exploited<sup>3</sup>.

In the following we will present two bronze bracelets recorded by Téglás István in his note books<sup>4</sup>. Both artefacts belong to a category widespread in pre-Roman Dacia, but also to be found in Roman time, namely that of shackles with looped and twisted ends<sup>5</sup>. The two pieces were discovered in Potaissa (Turda), respectively Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa (Várhely). Téglás István attributed the first one to the Romans, and for the second one he gave no chronological data, probably considering it Roman as well, due to its finding place.

## 1. The bronze bracelet from Potaissa (Turda)

*Potaissa romjaiból római tárgyak. Bronzkarperec. Találtatott a Szindi-patak jobb partján 1911. Június 7-én. A kerülete 24 cm és pár mm. Belsejében az átmérő felülről lefelé 65 mm – egyik sodronybogtól a másikig 7 cm. A sodrony belül lapos, de a külső oldala háromszögű, vagyis három élűre van domborítva (Rr. 735). 46/9.<sup>6</sup>*

“Roman pieces from the ruins of Potaissa. Bronze bracelet. It was discovered on the right side of the Sânduleşti stream on the 7<sup>th</sup> of July 1911. Circumference: 24 cm and a few mm. The diameter of the interior, top to bottom, 65 mm, the distance between the two knots is 7 cm. The wire is flat at the interior, and the exterior part is triangular, meaning it consists of three edges.”

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<sup>3</sup> Bajusz 2005.

<sup>4</sup> We are very indebted to Conf.dr. Bajusz István („Babes-Bolyai” University of Cluj-Napoca) for providing us unpublished data and original drawings from the manuscript of Téglás István. We also thank Dr. Aurel Rustoiu (Institute of Archaeology and Art History of Cluj-Napoca) for his valuable suggestions regarding the identification of the artefacts.

<sup>5</sup> Rustoiu 1996, p. 94.

<sup>6</sup> Bajusz 2005, I/2, p. 708 and fig. 46/9.

### **1.1. The context of the discovery**

The bracelet was discovered in June 1911 in the lower part of the valley of the Săndulești stream (its right side). Several other roman artefacts also were discovered in the area at that time: a ceramic wheel for a toy carriage, a bronze key-ring and a bronze fibula<sup>7</sup>.

In this area, on different occasions, but mostly in the spring of 1911, when the railroad leading to the Săndulești stone quarry was constructed, many traces of buildings belonging to the roman settlement were discovered<sup>8</sup>.

The piece from Turda belongs to the numerous Roman discoveries from Potaissa, that starting from 1894, Tégylás had registered and drawn in his notebooks, most of them being also acquired for his collection, as it is this bracelet.

### **1.2. The identification**

The item from Turda (Fig. 1) is a bronze bracelet with looped and twisted ends. This type of piece has appeared in the Mediterranean area at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC and in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, spreading in the “barbarian” Europe and being used over the entire 1<sup>st</sup> millennium AD<sup>9</sup>. It was widespread in pre-Roman Dacia, but a few pieces were also recorded in Roman environment. The shackles were made of gold, silver or bronze and had diameters between 1.5 and 8 cm. Only those above 5 cm in diameter were used as bracelets, but these too could have had other functionalities as well<sup>10</sup>.

The bracelet from Turda falls in the most common subtype, namely *2a* according to the classification made by Aurel Rustoiu<sup>11</sup>, respectively *D3a* according to that of Kurt Horedt<sup>12</sup>, having the ends looped and twisted on a circle segment of 7 cm in length out of a total of 24 cm. One of the ends forms 5 coils, and the other only one. The diameter of 6.5

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<sup>7</sup> Bajusz 2005, I/2, p. 708, fig. 46/11 and 46/25/1, I/2, p. 709, fig. 46/25/2.

<sup>8</sup> See Bajusz 2005, I/2, p. 707-726.

<sup>9</sup> Rustoiu 1989-1993, p. 255; Rustoiu 1996, p. 94.

<sup>10</sup> Rustoiu 1989-1993, p. 258.

<sup>11</sup> Rustoiu 1996, p. 94.

<sup>12</sup> Horedt 1973, p. 139.

cm is within the known limits that vary between 5 and 8 cm<sup>13</sup>. The bar seems to be triangular in section according to the description, a feature yet unknown in other bracelets from the same category.

Bronze bracelets of this type have been discovered in several Dacian settlements<sup>14</sup>. However, some similar pieces were also reported in the Roman period, for example in the Locusteni necropolis<sup>15</sup>, in that from Sucidava<sup>16</sup>, in the tumular necropolis at Callatis<sup>17</sup> or in the amphitheatre of Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa<sup>18</sup>.

Having no other information about the context of the discovery, no assumption can be made considering a Dacian presence in the spot from the bank of Săndulești stream<sup>19</sup>. The piece could have ended up there accidentally, but we cannot exclude its provenience from a Roman context, as the other objects found in the same place would suggest.

## 2. The bronze bracelet from Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa (Várhely)

1884 július 17. [Bronze] Rézkarperec az Alexa Arion kertjében kiásott épületből. Átmérő 9 cm. 4/26.<sup>20</sup>

“[Bronze] Copper bracelet from the building excavated in the garden of Arion Alexa. Diameter 9 cm.”

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<sup>13</sup> Rustoiu 1996, p. 94.

<sup>14</sup> Brad, Răcățău, Poiana-Galați, Popești, Șimleu Silvaniei etc. Rustoiu 1996, p. 95 and 192-193, with associated bibliography.

<sup>15</sup> Popilian 1980, p. 96, pl. XXX.

<sup>16</sup> Petolescu, Onea 1973, p. 126, 129, fig. 2/b, 4/1-3.

<sup>17</sup> Preda 1965, p. 247, fig. 10/2.

<sup>18</sup> See below note no. 38.

<sup>19</sup> Other Dacian artefacts come from Turda as well: a silver *torques*, Dacian scyphate coins and Dacian tetradrachms (Crișan et al. 1992, 404, nr. 62g), and possibly a silver plurispiral bracelet with the ends ornamented with zoomorphic motifs (Pețan 2013).

<sup>20</sup> Bajusz 2005, I/1, p 437 and fig. 4/26. In the original text Téglás mentioned that the bracelet was made of bronze, but afterward he corrected and wrote above that it is copper. Such confusions are common in his notes. The piece was, of course, made of bronze.

## **2.1. The context of the discovery**

The piece was found in the garden of a local man Alexa Arion, in a large mound from the south-west corner of the Roman settlement, opposite to the old church, that hid the ruins of a building. In the notebooks of Tégylás István there is more information about this building – some published in the 2005 edition, others unpublished –, that we will summarize further on for a better understanding of the bracelet's discovery context, but also because of the importance of the information itself.

The building is located very close to the enclosure wall, had a length of 16 m, and the width, together with the wall, was of 4.2 m. The building's back wall is 0.75 m thick, the one from the front is 0.60 m. The western wall is preserved to a considerable height<sup>21</sup>. The building's walls were made of quarry stone bound with lime, and the lintels and the building's corners were made of carved stone<sup>22</sup>.

It had 4 rooms that on Tégylás István's drawing were noted as follow, from left to right: room, sanctuary, room, kitchen, and latrine<sup>23</sup> (Fig. 2). In the second room (from the left) there was an altar<sup>24</sup>. The rooms' walls were painted in red and decorated with a mural painting that had greenish and yellowish ornaments. The sanctuary's walls were also painted in red, and those of the next room had also greenish and yellowish ornaments<sup>25</sup>.

A page torn from Tégylás István's notebooks that was afterwards retrieved gives us a drawing of the building's ruins and some additional data beside those previously mentioned (Fig. 3):

*Sheet torn from notebook no. 4 (1884), unpublished<sup>26</sup>*

*Ásatás 1884. júli[us] 17.*

*A kiásott római lak[ó]ház meglévő falai Alexi kertjében 1884.*

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<sup>21</sup> Bajusz 2005, I/1, p. 436.

<sup>22</sup> Bajusz 2005, I/1, p. 436, fig. 4/33 and 4/33/1.

<sup>23</sup> Bajusz 2005, I/1, p. 435, fig. 4/30.

<sup>24</sup> Bajusz 2005, I/1, p. 442, fig. 2/61/1.

<sup>25</sup> Bajusz 2005, I/1, p. 435, fig. 4/20.

<sup>26</sup> In the 1950s many pages were torn from his notebooks (recording mostly inscriptions), and partly published in IDR. Lately we have managed to recover some of them. Among them it is the adjacent page that could not be included in the published volume.

1-ső szoba falának magassága 1,60 m, oldalfalazat legkisebb magassága 0,80 m.  
 xx Kápolna  
 x Konyha

The excavation from the 17<sup>th</sup> of July 1884.

The existing walls of the Roman house uncovered in the garden of Alexi. The wall's height from the first chamber (room): 1.60 m, the lowest height of the lateral wall: 0.80 m.

xx Sanctuary

x Kitchen

It is not known from which of the 4 rooms of the building the bracelet came. Some other pieces drawn by Téglás István also come from that building, which include a ceramic statuette representing "the divine couple" and fragments of another statuette, found in the same room with the altar, and a *terra sigillata* fragment<sup>27</sup>.

Téglás István was present at the excavations undertaken in Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa in July 1884, together with his brother, the well-known archaeologist Téglás Gábor, being employed as a drawer by the History and Archaeology Association of the Hunedoara County. The found artefacts were taken to the Association's museum in Deva. Among them there is also the bronze bracelet recorded as having been found in the Roman building described above.

## 2.2. The identification

The piece has some interesting features. First of all, it has the greatest diameter known so far for this type of bracelets, 9 cm. Secondly, as the drawing shows, it is flattened in the median segment of the arch, forming an ellipsoid widened section provided with a socket in which an element could have been inserted – an organic or inorganic material with an apotropaic role (plants, animal organs or bones etc.)<sup>28</sup>, as in the case of the Roman *bullae* (Fig. 5a)

It is interesting to notice that the next piece Téglás presents (Fig. 4), also discovered in Sarmizegetusa (Várhely), has a similar morphology, although the only thing mentioned about it is that

<sup>27</sup> Bajusz 2005, I/1, p. 437, fig. 2/62, 4/19 and 4/20.

<sup>28</sup> According to Pliny the Elder, *Nat.Hist.* XXVIII, 9, 1; 47, 5, where the Roman custom to introduce such materials inside the bracelets is noted (*inclusus in armillam*). We thank Dr. Aurel Rustoiu for this information.

it is a bronze ring (“Bronzgyűrű”)<sup>29</sup>. Its diameter is not noted, but considering the fact that Téglás’s drawing is at scale, the diameter appears to be of 3 cm, - too much for a ring. This type of shackles with diameters that are between those of rings and of bracelets - namely between 1.5 and 4 cm - had different practical and decorative uses: to close up chains, to make necklaces and belts, as belt rings etc.<sup>30</sup>. The two pieces seem to be a pair, as both of them have a socket.

Returning to the bracelet, it has analogies in two<sup>31</sup> pieces considered as coming from Costești-Cetățuie, found today at the Dacian and Roman Civilization Museum in Deva, and that also have a socket on the median part of the arch<sup>32</sup>. Aurel Rustoiu has delimited this subtype, giving it the indicative 2c. A comparison between the two pieces drawn- the one published by Rustoiu as coming from Costești and the one drawn by Téglás, discovered at Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa - shows that they are identical in the smallest details: they have the same diameter, the largest so far attested; they have the same number of loops, twisted in the same manner and at the same distance; they have the same type of socket, that has, in both cases, a slight distortion in the right side (according to the orientation of the two drawings) (Fig. 5/a, b). This raises the question whether it is one and the same piece, that came to Deva after 1884, and whose provenance was forgotten in the meantime. As we do not know the inventory numbers of the pieces from Costești, we can make no further observations<sup>33</sup>. Their identification in the inventories of the museum could provide additional data about how they got into the

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<sup>29</sup> Bajusz 2005, I/1, p. 438, fig. 4/21.

<sup>30</sup> Rustoiu 1996, p. 107-108; Rustoiu 1989-1993, p. 255-258. In pre-Roman Dacia such pieces are known at Bâzdâna, Răcățău, Tinosu and Poiana, see Rustoiu 1996, p. 108 with the associated bibliography. They were included by Horedt 1973, p. 139 in the category *E2a* and by Rustoiu 1996, p. 107 in *3a*.

<sup>31</sup> Today the number of known pieces in this subtype could actually be higher.

<sup>32</sup> Rustoiu 1996, p. 95, who mentions items morphologically similar in the Scordisci’s cultural area; p. 278, fig. 42/5. See Popović 1999, p. 50, Pl. 3/10-12.

<sup>33</sup> A. Rustoiu knows two bracelets of this type, but only published the drawing of one of them, without an inventory number. The discovery context of the pieces is not mentioned.

museum's collections and would clarify the confusion about their finding place.

The two shackles with the ends looped and twisted mentioned by Téglás in Sarmizegetusa join other similar pieces found later on in the same site: a bronze ring with looped and twisted ends, with a diameter of 1.7 cm, which is said to come from older excavations<sup>34</sup>; a bronze shackle from the same category, but with a diameter of 2.4 cm, and decorated with a spiral eye, discovered in building B<sup>35</sup>, that belongs to a subtype widespread in the Roman world; a bronze bracelet with a diameter of 7 cm, coming out from the excavations at the amphitheatre<sup>36</sup>. In all likelihood, both the shackle and the bracelet recorded by Téglás in Ulpia, being discovered in a Roman context and with analogies in the same site, are of Roman origin.

Téglás István records in his notes more Dacian jewellery, which he correctly identifies<sup>37</sup>. As for the two bracelets, even they belong to a widespread type in pre-Roman Dacia, their assignment to the Roman culture is probably correct due to the contexts of discovery.

The two pieces recorded by Téglás István are important because of their features and by their finding place. At the same time, we hope that by making reference to them, we will draw the specialists' attention to the two volumes of the monumental work recently published, that comprise Téglás István's manuscripts including many archaeological information yet unused.

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<sup>34</sup> Alicu, Cociș 1988, p. 231, pl. I/11 and p. 231; Alicu et al. 1994, p. 107, no. 706 and pl. 37/714 (the numbering from the text does not correspond to that from the plate).

<sup>35</sup> Alicu, Cociș 1988, p. 231, pl. I/10 and p. 242.

<sup>36</sup> Alicu, Cociș 1988, p. 238, pl. VIII/70 and p. 245; Alicu et al. 1994, p. 107, no. 708 and pl. 37/708.

<sup>37</sup> The Dacian bracelet from Dârlos (I/1, p. 114), the silver torques from Mezóség (I/1, p. 241-242), the silver torques from Colțești (I/1, p. 406), the silver shackles from Moldovenești (I/1, p. 410) etc.

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## Figures



Fig. 1. The bracelet from Turda. Bajusz 2005, I/2, p. 708, fig. 46/9.

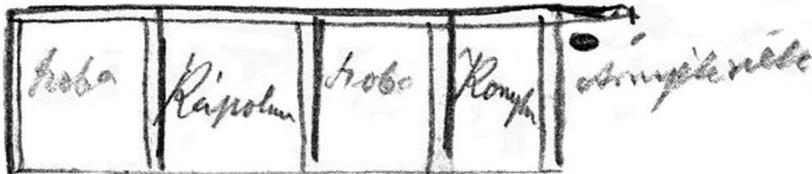


Fig. 2. The plan of the bulding from Arion Alexa's garden. Bajusz 2005, I/1, p. 435, fig. 4/30.

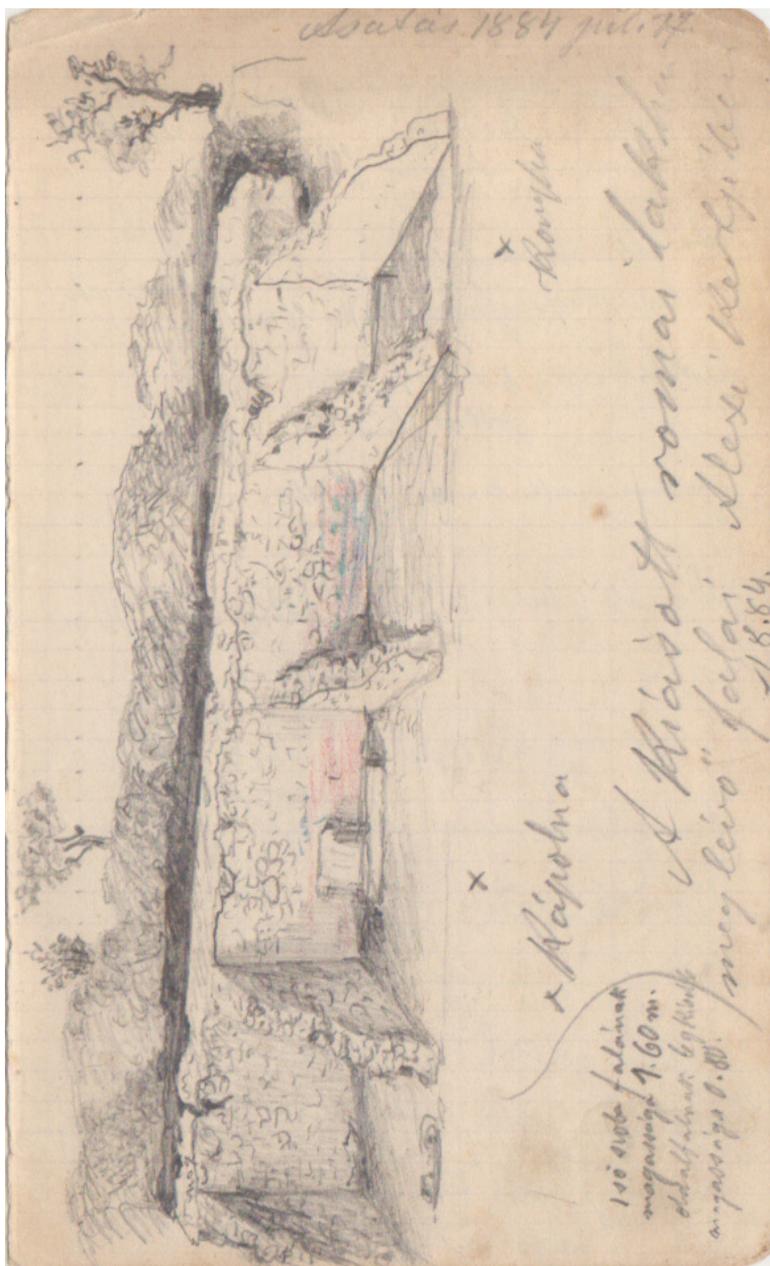
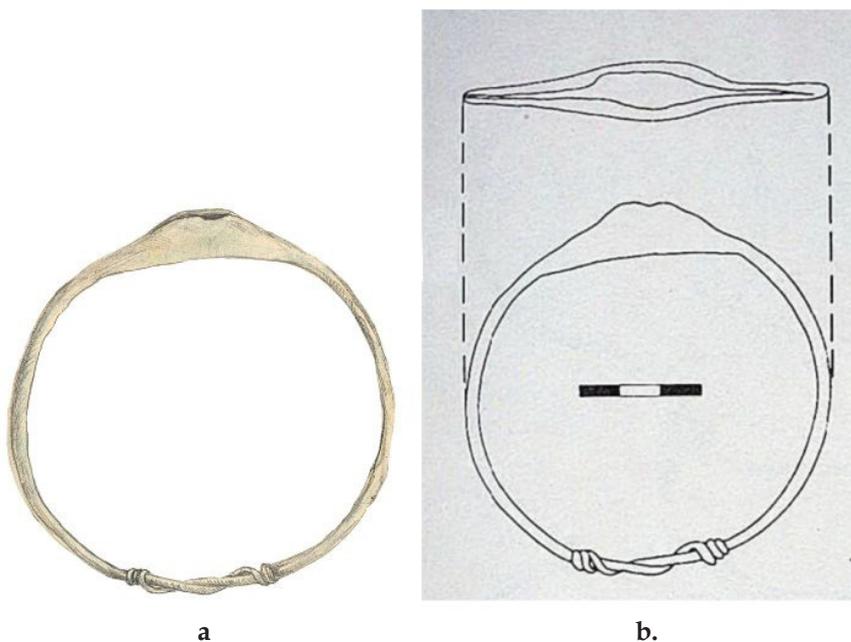


Fig. 3. Ruins of the Roman building from Arion Alexa's garden.  
Sheet torn from notebook no. 4 (1884), unpublished.



**Fig. 4.** The shackle from Sarmizegetusa (Várhely).  
Bajusz 2005, I/1, p. 438, fig. 4/21.



**Fig. 5. a.** The bracelet from Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa.  
Bajusz 2005, I/1, p. 437, fig. 4/26.  
**b.** The bracelet from Costești.  
Rustoiu 1996, p. 278, 42/5.