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*International Conference on Amulets*

*15<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> November 2024*

**Abstracts**

**Compiled and edited by**

**Christopher J. Duffin and Alexandra Vieira**

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## Timetable

Please note that this is a provisional timetable; it is possible that changes to the order of the presentations may need to be made, even potentially at short notice. Having said that, we will do everything we can to ensure that it remains as stable as possible. Any changes that might have to be made to the running order will be posted on the ICA website. Please follow this link to check if any changes have had to be made :

<https://icamulets.wixsite.com/amulets/about-4>

<b>DAY 1</b>		
<b>Session 1</b>	<b>Timing</b>	<b>Time</b>
<b>Welcome and Introduction</b>	<b>15</b>	9:15-9:30
RESPECT: Reshaping Perceptions about Apotropaic and Prophylactic Cultural items: Community, Historical and Curatorial Interaction Research Themes. Diane Heath	<b>20</b>	9:30-9:50
Recognising Amulets. Chris Wood	<b>20</b>	9:50-10:10
Noah, magic and solid earth: an amulet for treasure hunting in the Sepher Raziel Ha-Malakh. Eugene Kuzmin	<b>20</b>	10:10-10:30
Engraved Gems as Amulets in Modern Age: Some Literary Sources. Alessandra Magni & Gabriella Tassinari	<b>20</b>	10:30-10:50
<b>BREAK</b>	<b>20</b>	10:50-11:10
<b>Session 2</b>	<b>Timing</b>	
Animal teeth as amulets in the Bronze Age Period. Selena Vitezović	<b>20</b>	11:10-11:30
The 'Power of Animals': Astragali as Amulets in Classical Antiquity. Barbara Carè	<b>20</b>	11:30-11:50
Snakestone amulets and talismans. Rachael Pymm		11:50-12:10
The Amulets of The Koban Culture in The Caucasus Region. Makhortykh Serhii & Kotova Nadiia	<b>20</b>	12:10-12:30
Egyptian amulets as objects of "exotic"(?) offerings with ingenious magical value and efficacy in receptive cultures: the case of the Minoan and Rhodian Egyptian and egyptianised amuletic donations. Panagiotis Kousoulis & Christina Papadaki	<b>20</b>	12:30-12:50
<b>LUNCH</b>	<b>40</b>	12:50-13:30
<b>Session 3</b>	<b>Timing</b>	
Beliefs and Domestic Activities in Ancient North Sinai: Objects with Amuletic Value From an Urban Settlement of the 10th and 7th Centuries BC. Eva Amanda Calomino	<b>20</b>	13:30-13:50
The Use of Amulets in Mycenaean Culture. Christina Aamodt	<b>20</b>	13:50-14:10
Funeral Wreaths and the Representations of Medusa in The Archaeological Research at Callatis. Laurențiu Radu	<b>20</b>	14:10-14:30
"So Far So Good". The 30 Amulet Scarabs found in Archaeological Context in Portugal. New Perspectives. Susana Bailarim	<b>20</b>	14:30-14:50

<b>BREAK</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>14:50-15:00</b>
<b>Session 4</b>	<b>Timing</b>	
Knotted to Death. Heraklean Knots in the Punic Necropolis of Gadir. M. <sup>a</sup> Reyes López Jurado	<b>20</b>	15:00-15:20
An overview on the discoveries of Roman Amulets from Dacia Superior. Ana Hamat	<b>20</b>	15:20-15:40
Tubular Capsules (Phylacteria) from Viminacium. Ilija Danković & Bebina Milovanović	<b>20</b>	15:40-16:00
Amphora-Shaped Glass Beads from La Algaida sanctuary (Sanlúcar de Barrameda, Cádiz): Symbolism behind Ancient Amulets. Carmen Ramírez Cañas	<b>20</b>	16:00-16:20
<b>BREAK</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>16:20-16:40</b>
<b>Session 5</b>	<b>Timing</b>	
Remnants From the Realms of Magic - Greek and Roman Amulets From the Maria And Dr. George Severeanu Collection. Alina Streinu & Dan Pîrvulescu	<b>20</b>	16:40-17:00
Magic and Apotropaic Devices from Bracara Augusta (The Capital of Roman Callaecia). Maria do Sameiro Barroso	<b>20</b>	17:00-17:20
Objects of Superstition and Religion. Amulets in the Archaeological Record of Tavira. Jaquelina Covaneiro & Sandra Cavaco	<b>20</b>	17:20-17:40
The Apotropaic Power of Sound: The Bell Amulets. Alexandra Vieira	<b>20</b>	17:40-18:00
<b>DEBATE</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>18:00-18:20</b>

<b>DAY 2</b>		
<b>Session 6</b>	<b>Timing</b>	<b>Time</b>
<b>Welcome and Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>	9:15- 9:20
Some new and old finds from the western necropolis of Tomis. Amulets for the dead. Ștefan Georgescu & Ana Hamat	<b>20</b>	9:20-9:50
Amulets and personal adornment in the colony Augusta Emerita. Model and diffusion throughout the province of Lusitania. Nova Barrero Martín & Abel Morcillo León	<b>20</b>	9:50-10:10
A Mother - of - Pearl Amulet Discovered in a Child's Grave at Callatis. Nicolaie Alexandru, Monica Mărgărit, Ana Hamat	<b>20</b>	10:10-10:30
Azabache (Jet), Amber and other organic materials. Their use as Amulet in Hispania. Andrea Menéndez Menéndez & Macarena Bustamante Álvarez	<b>20</b>	10:30-10:50
<b>BREAK</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>10:50-11:10</b>
<b>Session 7</b>	<b>Timing</b>	
The afterlife of the Buridava's children. Amulets for the dead. Constantin Augustus Bărbulescu, Ovidiu Udrescu, Ana Hamat	<b>20</b>	11:10-11:30
Golden amulets depicting the attack on the Evil Eye. Andrej Preložnik	<b>20</b>	11:30-11:50

Amulets in Ancient Bengal: Intersections of Art, Religion, and Daily Life. Sufi Mostafizur Rahman & Sabikun Naher	20	11:50-12:10
Slavic amulets - examples from early medieval Poland. Joanna Wawrzeniuk	20	12:10-12:30
<b>LUNCH</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>12:30-13:10</b>
<b>Session 8</b>	<b>Timing</b>	
Early Modern Plague Amulets. Christopher J. Duffin	20	13:10-13:30
A collection of amulet pendants from Oman. Sigrid M. van Roode	20	13:30-13:50
The Holy Tooth. Protection and healing against rabies. Álvaro Campelo	20	13:50-14:10
Amulets of Uzbekistan: Evolution of Forms and Meanings. Elmira Gyul	20	14:10-14:30
<b>BREAK</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>14:30-14:40</b>
<b>Session 9</b>	<b>Timing</b>	
Artefacts of luck and misfortune. Bożena Józefów-Czerwińska	20	14:40-15:00
Apotropaic mechanism of the “suzdal’skii zmeevik”. Alexander Lapshin	20	15:00-15:20
Forehead talismans. Rachael Pymm	20	15:20-15:40
The Pentagram and Its Apotropaic / Protective Roles since Late Prehistory until The Contemporary Period. Fernando Augusto Coimbra	20	15:40-16:00
<b>BREAK</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>16:00-16:20</b>
<b>Session 10</b>	<b>Timing</b>	
Amulets in Contemporary Portuguese Culture: An Anthropological Exploration Of Symbolism And Significance. Ana Piedade	20	16:20-16:40
Rootworking amulets in the American South. Tony Kail	20	16:40-17:00
Charms in The Life Cycle. From Greek Amulets to Contemporary Jewellery. Véronique Dasen	20	17:00-17:20
<b>CLOSURE / FINAL DEBATE</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>17:20-17:40</b>

**Please note that the following abstracts are arranged in alphabetical order by surname of the presenter (the first author in cases of multi-authored documents).**

## THE USE OF AMULETS IN MYCENAEAN CULTURE

**Christina Aamodt** (Independent Researcher)

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Amulets are objects worn or carried on the person or placed at the location of the desired magical effect. Their appeal lies in the belief that certain objects have the power to protect, heal, or assist those who carry them, due to the material they are made from, their shape, decoration, inscription and their symbolic or religious associations, or the rituals involved in their creation.

In Mycenaean Greece, protective properties have been attributed to several objects of personal adornment, most of which have been uncovered in funerary contexts. The identification of an object as an amulet is usually based on the iconography, symbolism, material, shape and exotic quality of the object. Thus, protective properties have been applied to beads of particular colours, materials and shapes (such as the figure-of-eight shape, a symbol of a female warrior deity that would presumably literally shield the wearer from harm). Red carnelian seems to have been particularly associated with children, as iconographic representations and evidence from funerary contexts suggest. Other shapes, such as the crescent in the form of a pendant, might also have had protective qualities for the Mycenaeans, particularly women, based on its association with the lunar phases and with notions of fertility and child rearing. Inscribed objects and objects with intelligible text, reminiscent of the practice during Antiquity to inscribe amulets with repetitive and non-sensical invocations as some type of exorcism, though rare, also occur in Mycenaean Greece.

Moreover, sealstones with religious symbols and images, worn as finger rings, necklaces, bracelets or anklets, could have also served as protective or apotropaic ornaments. The occurrence in funerary contexts of objects of foreign origin with magico-religious properties, such as Egyptian scarabs symbolizing resurrection and rebirth, indicates the resort of the Mycenaeans to the use of amulets from foreign cultures as well.

The purpose of this paper is to present the evidence for the existence and use of amulets in Greece during the Mycenaean period and to attempt a reconstruction of the occasions that would have necessitated the use of amulets and the possible beliefs that their use reflects.



Fig. 1. 1. Inscribed lentoid, tomb 24, Perati cemetery, Attica, after Iakovidis 1970B, p. 317, fig. 134.



Fig. 2. LH IIB-III A1 lentoid, West Gate Area, Room XIV, Midea, Argolid (source: <https://chronique.efa.gr/?kroute=report&id=296>)



**Dr. Christina Aamodt** studied archaeology in the UK. She received her PhD from the University of Nottingham in 2006 on the subject of the Mycenaean priesthood. She worked as a field archaeologist for the Greek Ministry of Culture from 2008 until 2021 in projects that included rescue excavations and conservation and reconstruction programmes. Since 2021 she has been working as a teacher in upper secondary education. She has published a number of articles on Mycenaean cult practice. Her research interests include Mycenaean religion and cult performance, aspects of ritual pollution and purity, the use of amulets and apotropaic rituals.

## A MOTHER - OF - PEARL AMULET DISCOVERED IN A CHILD'S GRAVE AT CALLATIS

**Nicolaie Alexandru** (Callatis Archaeology Museum, Romania), **Monica Mărgărit** (Valahia "University" of Târgoviște, Romania) and **Ana Hamat** (Museum of National History and Archaeology, Constanța, Romania)

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In 1980, Ct. Preda published in his book *Callatis. Romano-Byzantine Necropolis*, grave 171, a child's grave, with a spectacular inventory, thanks to the two specimens of mother-of-pearl amulets found among other archaeological objects. One of the amulets is a spectacular representation of a human figure with distinctive features related with the apotropaic nature of the mother-of-pearl material.

Unfortunately, due to the scant bibliography, at that time there was little discussion concerning this amulet which is so far unique, due to a narrow list of analogies and especially due to the material from which it is made. Today, we know more about this type of amulet which appears in discoveries throughout the Roman Empire, with specimens found in Europe and in Asia Minor, in Palmyra. Discussion relating to this particular object, together with more recent discoveries in Viminacium and Tomis, has been reopened. The amulets discovered in Callatis and Tomis are the first items of this type, known on the territory of Moesia Inferior.

Recent advances in microphotography and analyses of mother of pearls material, have provided us with new insights concerning their typology, chronology, functionality and the journey of such an object through the Roman world.



**Nicolaie Alexandru** graduated from the Faculty of History-Archaeology at Ovidius Constanța University in 1996 and obtained a PhD from the University of Bucharest in 2011. Since 1996, he has been employed as an archaeologist at the Callatis Archeology Museum in Mangalia, specializing in Hellenistic and Roman archeology. He has participated in archaeological research at Callatis, Albești (fortified settlement on Callatian territory), Capidava and Tropaeum Traiani.



**Monica Mărgărit** is a professor, researcher in the field of prehistoric archaeology and a specialist in experimental archaeology, personal adornments and osseous industries. She is PhD supervisor at the Valahia "University" of Târgoviște (Romania). Monica has contributed to the development of new research directions in Romanian archaeology: the study of cultural heritage through experimental archaeology and microscopy to reconstruct as accurately as possible the means of processing and using various prehistoric artifacts.



**Ana Hamat** has a PhD in Roman Jewellery from Dacia and is an archaeologist at the Museum of National History and Archaeology in Constanța, Romania. She specialises in the fields of Roman small finds and Roman jewellery and works in the rescues excavations at Constanța

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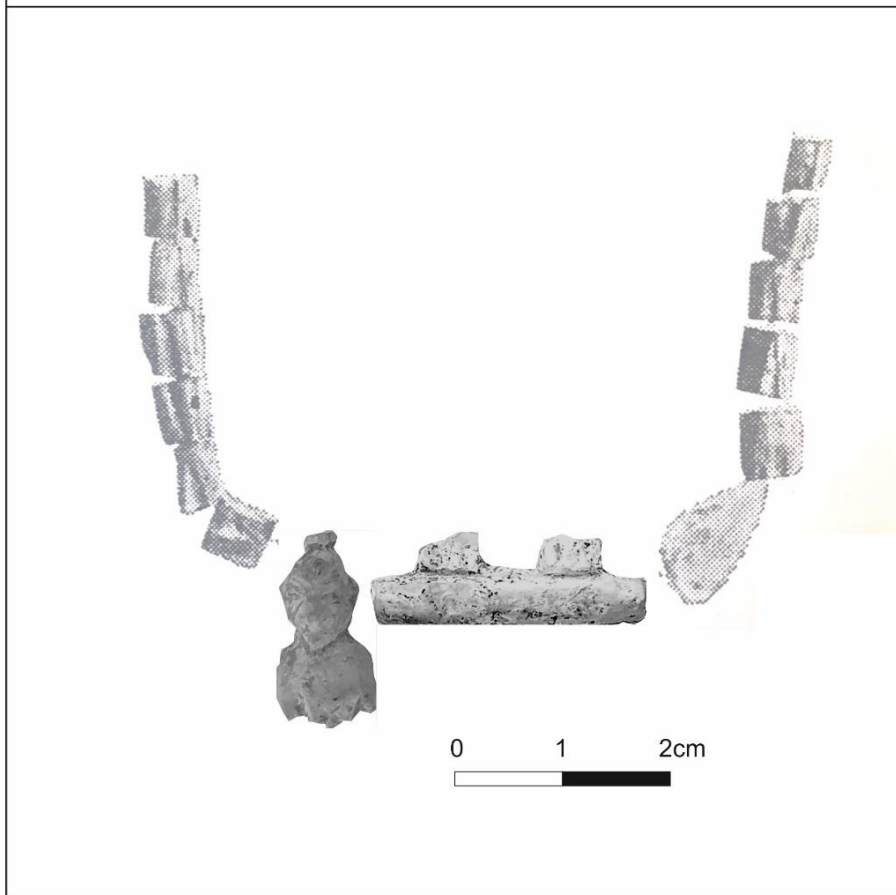


Figure 1. Mother of Pearl amulet discovered in Callatis

**“SO FAR SO GOOD”. THE 30 AMULET SCARABS FOUND IN  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT IN PORTUGAL. NEW PERSPECTIVES.**

**Susana Bailerim** (College of Archaeology and Cultural Heritage (AASTM University),  
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The persistence of the Egyptians' relationship between everyday acts, ceremonial acts and the scarab beetle shows us the importance of this small insect's role. In life and in death, it was always present. It was undoubtedly the most popular and widespread amulet. But this taste and belief transcended continents, reaching almost every part of the known world at the time in various ways.

Plutarch (46-c. 120) tells us that Egyptian soldiers wore a scarab as an adornment or amulet in order to increase their bravery. If women wore it as an amulet, it would increase their fertility. Apiano gave a rather curious reason to justify the rituals related to the use of the scarab beetle, saying that the insect, in its actions, portrayed the revolution of the sun.

Undoubtedly, whatever it was used for, it was an object loaded with superstition, because those who carried it placed all their anguish, despair and hopes in it.

The small scarab amulets usually had hieroglyphics incised on the underside (obverse), were pierced lengthways and placed on the chests of mummies or suspended around their necks by a gold or other metal wire. As a ring stone it was worn on the fourth finger of the left hand and sometimes inside the palm of the closed left hand.

Made from semi-precious stones, noble metals or simple ceramics, scarabs spread from Egypt to the western Mediterranean as far as Asia Minor. The Iberian Peninsula was no exception. In Portugal, we know of 30 amulet scarabs that have been found. We are going to talk about these Egyptian and "Egyptianizing" finds: the contexts in which they appear and where possible their dates, and how and why they appear in such small numbers.



Figure 1. Detailed photo of the amulet scarab obverse found in the necropolis of Fonte Santa (Ourique), in 1970, by Caetano Beirão. possibly to identify the name Petubastis (SB).



**Susana Balarim** has a Master's degree in Archaeology from the University of Minho (Portugal); her thesis concerned the archaeological site of Qubbet el-Hawa (Aswan). She has worked on the archaeological excavations carried out at the Bet-She'an Archaeological Site (Israel), under the supervision of Professor Amiai Mazar (University of Jerusalem) (1992) and was an effective member of the first Portuguese Archaeological Mission that carried out archaeological work at the Palace of Apriés -Kom Tuman/Mit Rahina (ancient Memphite capital) Egypt, between 2004 and 2009. Between 2016 and 2017 she worked with the Swedish Archaeological Mission in Gebel el Silsila (Aswan-Egypt) under the guidance of Professor Maria Nilson (Lund University) and since then has been Field Archaeologist, Researcher and Assistant Professor at the College of Archaeology and Cultural Heritage (AASTM University) in Aswan, Egypt.

## THE AFTERLIFE OF THE BURIDAVA'S CHILDREN. AMULETS FOR THE DEAD

**Constantin Augustus Bărbulescu** (University Politehnica București, Romania), **Ovidiu Udrescu** (University Politehnica București, Romania), and **Ana Hamat** (Museum of National History and Archaeology, Constanța, Romania)

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The Dacian site at Ocnîța, ancient Buridava, can be considered unique in the landscape of the classical Dacian civilization (1st century BC - 1st century AD). The discoveries made by Dumitru Berciu in the period 1960-1993 led to the conclusion that we are dealing with a local dynastic centre, separate from the well-known one from Sarmizegetusa Regia.

The resuming of systematic research at Ocnîța, in 2016, had as central objectives the clarification of the site's chronology issues, as well as the role and relationship of this power centre with the Roman world, the necropolis issue being considered a secondary one.

The recent research allowed us to identify here some types of archaeological structures, which can also be found in other sites belonging to the classic Geto-Dacian era and which largely correspond to the discoveries of Dumitru Berciu from the period 1961-1992.

In 2023, we excavated feature M10 feature, which is a small child grave. Along with the human skeleton, the funeral inventory consists of ceramic sherds, charcoal, stones, a bronze object, a fragment from a sapropelite bracelet, and a glass bead. This burial feature and its inventory is one of the most important recent discoveries relating to the Dacian Civilization in consideration of funerary rites and ritual and also because of the items which accompanied the deceased into the grave, especially small amulets for the afterlife.

The presence of the human graves has been documented through analyses conducted by the Romanian Institute for Forensic Medicine. All the items related to this kind of burial are very important in order to recreate the burial ritual and because we need to understand the beliefs of the population who conducted the ritual, especially since the Dacian had no writing culture, meaning that we know very little about their religions and beliefs. The existence of these amulets, buried with the dead is therefore very important and we intend to present the preliminary findings of this research which will probably be extended with further analyses conducted on the objects themselves.

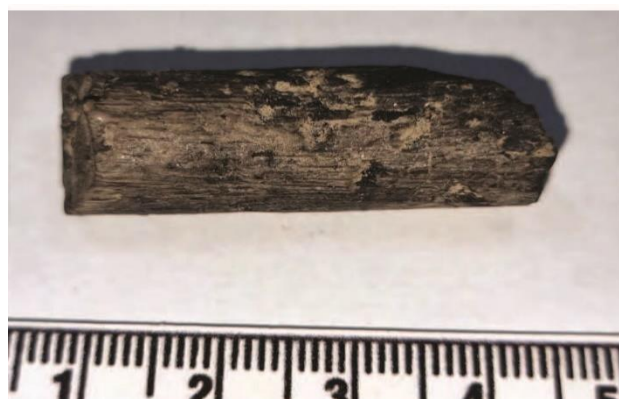


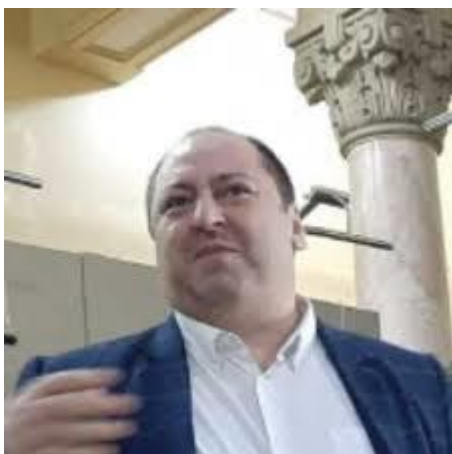
Figure 1. Fragment of a bracelet discovered in M10



Figure 2. M9 and M10 Ocnita Buridava 25



**Constantin Augustus Bărbulescu** is an associate professor at the University Politehnica București, whose field of interests includes the La Tene period and Dacian Civilization. Since 2016 he has been scientific director for the Dacian Fortress at Ocnita Buridava and has many publications in regard with this archaeological site.



**Ovidiu Udrescu** is an assistant professor at the University Politehnica București, with of interests in the La Tene period, Dacian Civilization and the technology of materials. He participated in the excavations of the Dacian Fortress at Ocnita Buridava and other Dacian fortresses from Romania, and has publications regarding the metal objects related, primarily, with this site.

**Ana Hamat:** see Alexandru et al.

**AMULETS AND PERSONAL ADORNMENT IN THE COLONY *AUGUSTA EMERITA*. MODEL AND DIFFUSION THROUGHOUT THE PROVINCE OF LUSITANIA**

**Nova Barrero Martín** (National Museum of Roman Art, Mérida, España) and **Abel Morcillo León**

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Since its foundation around 25 BC, the colony Augusta Emerita, capital of the Roman province of Lusitania, became a political, economic and cultural centre that quickly promoted the political but also religious messages of the new Hispano-Roman society. From the point of view of the uses and customs regarding clothing and personal adornment, the city stands out because of the abundance and variety of amulets found there. These objects could have been ornaments. If this were the case, they would have combined the magical power of their material with symbolic forms that had protective, apotropaic and beneficent functions.

Among the most notable finds are the *bullae*, made of very diverse materials, as well as *fascina*, the latter occurring not only as pendants, but also as earrings (Fig. 1). Likewise, the presence of coins reused as amulets stands out. Finally, we must highlight the set of female figures, made of bone (Fig. 2), a characteristic production from Emerita, whose exact functionality is still questioned and whose diffusion throughout the province of Lusitania shows once again that *Augusta Emerita* was a cultural dissemination centre.



Figure 1. *Fascina* found in *Augusta Emerita* in different materials, used as pendants and as an ornament for earrings. Photo: MNAR archive.



Figure 2. Female figure in bone from *Augusta Emerita* workshop. Photo: MNAR archive.



**Dr Nova Barrero Martín** holds a doctorate in Art History from the University of Extremadura (2021) and a Master's Degree in Advanced Methods and Techniques of Historical, Artistic and Geographic Research, specialty Ancient History, from the National University of Distance Education (2011). Since 2009 she has worked at the Faculty of Museum Curators of the Ministry of Culture, occupying a position in the National Museum of Roman Art. Her Master's Degree Final Project concerned the collection of toréutics in Late Antiquity of the National Museum of Roman Art in Mérida, published in *Cuadernos Emeritenses* (2014), opening a line of research towards a Doctoral Thesis, *Ornamenta Muliebria*.

*Female personal adornment in Mérida during Antiquity* and published under the same title in 2022. In this regard, she has participated in conferences and seminars and published various works. Currently this theme is a priority in her scientific activity. As Conservator responsible for the MNAR Research Department, she currently participates in the R&D Project "Augusta Emerita: Urban Model and co-directs the 'Lusitania' Project. She is also involved in the research and archaeological project in the Roman city of Ammaia' in its five consecutive

editions (2018-2022). She is responsible for Communication at the MNAR. Since January 2022, she has held the position of Museum Administrator.



**Abel Morcillo León** (Guareña, Badajoz, 1981) has a degree in Classical Philology (2004) and a Doctorate (2016) from the University of Extremadura in the Department of Antiquity Sciences (Philological Studies program), with mention of European Doctor and Prize Extraordinary Doctorate. During his predoctoral training, he won several research grants and has made several short stays at the Università degli Studi di Firenze (Italy). Since the 2008/2009 academic year he has worked as a secondary and high school teacher of Latin and Greek in different institutes in Extremadura. He has developed his doctoral thesis in the field of Latin Philology where he has researched the figure of the humanist Lorenzo Valla and the lexicon and neologisms in the Latin language from Antiquity to the Renaissance. He has dedicated himself to the teaching and

dissemination of Ancient History and the Classical Roman World from the teaching field through various innovation projects and scientific contributions and, since 2015, through historical recreation, being a founding member and current president of the association “ARA CONCORDIAE: recreation of Roman Mérida”. He has also participated in numerous archaeological excavations and has carried out activities on experimental archaeology.

## MAGIC AND APOTROPAIC DEVICES FROM BRACARA AUGUSTA (THE CAPITAL OF ROMAN CALLAECIA)

**Maria do Sameiro Barroso** (Department of History of Medicine of the Portuguese Medical Association Lisbon; Anthropology and Health Centre, University of Coimbra and Centre for History, Faculty of Letters, University of Lisbon, Portugal

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Amulets and talismans, magical-apotropaic objects, are not just decorative, but practical tools used to manage any hostile forces that may be encountered. They are designed to ward off all kinds of dangers and illnesses and attract good luck, health, and fortune, particularly in situations of fragility and precariousness. The belief that particular objects can promote positive energies through magic is one of the first affirmations of human skills to manage hostile forces. Therefore, they often appear as an integral part of healing practices. Magical-apotropaic objects appear and are shared in primitive civilisations.

The collection of amulets from Bracara Augusta, the capital of the Roman Province of Callaecia, founded by Emperor Augustus in 15 BC in a region occupied by an indigenous Celtiberian population, were classified according to their purpose. This classification is significant as it provides insight into the specific dangers and needs of the people of that time, and how they sought protection and prosperity. These amulets, unique in their purpose, were designed to protect from natural phenomena, such as lightning and storms, to ward off spirits, to be propitious against bad luck, and to propitiate fertility and abundance.

Some of these items are typically Graeco-Roman. However, others reveal fascinating connections between the city and ancient Neolithic artefacts, the Celtic traditions of the *Bracaros*, and relations with other Roman cities in the Portuguese territory. They also point to intriguing religious and cultural exchange with Phoenician and Middle Eastern traditions, sparking curiosity about the interconnectedness of ancient cultures.

Through these amulets, with their rich tapestry of religious and cultural exchange, we can trace ancient magical-apotropaic beliefs from the Palaeolithic down to the Graeco-Roman and neighbouring cultures.

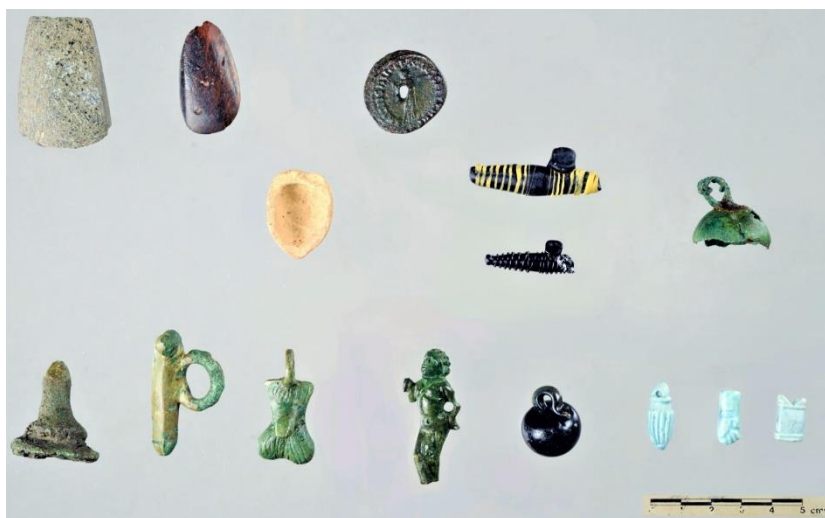


Fig. 1- Amulets. Upper row. From left to right: 1a - Amulet, Amphibolite Adze. H: 430 mm W: 30 mm. Inv. Nr. 1992.0995. 1b - Amulet, Silimanite Adze. Inv. Nr. 2000.0236. 1c - Perforated coin. Copper alloy. Middle row: 1d - Nutshell. Ceramic. Inv. Nr. 1992. 0254. 1e - Amulet, Case Type. Black and yellow Glass. Inv. Nr. 1996. 1065. 1f - Amulet in the shape of a long tubular case. Black glass. Inv. Nr. 1997.0930. 1g - Bell pendant. Copper alloy. Inv. Nr. 1991. 27. Lower row: 1h - Phalus amulet. Copper alloy.. Inv. Nr. 1991.2637. 1i - Phallic Pendant. Copper alloy. Inv. Nr. 2001.0452. 1j - Phallic Pendant. Copper alloy. Inv. Nr. 1991.2631. 1k - Phallic figurine. Copper alloy.. Inv. Nr. 1991.2685. 1m - Amulet pendant in form of a pomegranate. Black glass. Inv. Nr. 2006. 0309. 1n - Pomegranate-shaped amulet. Vitreous paste. 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. Inv. Nr. 2009. 0741. 1o - Amulet in the shape of a fist with crossed thumb and forefinger. Vitreous paste. 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 1st century AD. Inv. Nr. 2012.0307. 7p - Amulet in the shape of a shrine. Vitreous paste. 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. Inv. Nr. 2012.0306. Photo credit: MADDS/Manuel Santos.



Fig. 2 - 7 e - Amulet, Case Type. Black and yellow Glass. Inv. Nr. 1996. 1065. Photo credit: MADDS/Manuel Santos.



**Maria do Sameiro Barroso** is a Medical Doctor and Family Medicine Specialist who originally graduated in Germanic Filology. She has been awarded Poet of the World and is Researcher in History of Medicine, President of the Department of History of Medicine of the Portuguese Medical Association; Invited lecturer in History of Medicine at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Lisbon; *Ad Interim* Treasurer of the International Society for the History of Medicine (ISHM); Researcher at the Centre for History, Faculty of Arts, University of Lisbon and Research Centre for Anthropology and Health (Centro de Investigação em Antropologia e Saúde - CIAS), University of Coimbra; Secretary of the Group of Friends of the National Museum of Archaeology (Grupo de Amigos do Museu Nacional de Arqueologia- GAMNA), Lisbon; Secretary of the Federation of Groups of Friends of Portuguese Museums (Federação de Amigos dos Museus de Portugal- FAMP). She is also an Advisory Board member of the *Acta Medico-Historica Adriatica* and *Revista Portuguesa de Antropologia* (CIAS) and *Vesalius*, Journal of the International Society for the History of Medicine (ISHM); and has authored numerous articles, books and book chapters in History of Medicine, Ancient History, Archaeology and Translation and Gender Studies.

**BELIEFS AND DOMESTIC ACTIVITIES IN ANCIENT NORTH SINAI: OBJECTS WITH AMULETIC VALUE FROM AN URBAN SETTLEMENT OF THE 10TH AND 7TH CENTURIES BC.**

**Eva Amanda Calomino** (University of Granada, Spain)

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Tell el-Ghaba archaeological site is located on the east of the Nile Delta (North Sinai, Egypt), close to the extinct Pelusiac branch. It is an urban settlement that was occupied between the beginning of the Third Intermediate Period and the Early Saite Period (mid-10th - end 7th centuries BC). Given the socio-political context of the period and its location, this site has become important for the analysis of the social, economic and military policies that the Egyptian state developed on its eastern border, as well as the characteristics of the different structures.

Previously developed studies on Tell el-Ghaba materials (Fig. 1) suggest that the dominant activities in the structures were domestic. In the spaces where these activities took place, a great variety of small finds have been recovered, the study and review of which seeks to contribute to the understanding of the functions and interpretation of the themes, meanings and symbolism that these objects may have had.

This work is presented as a continuation of previous writings in which the concept of 'small finds' has been problematized and a review of the materials catalogued as 'small finds' for Tell El-Ghaba has been systematised and conducted.

Defining the use and meaning of 'small finds' is a difficult and complex task and the functional issue requires considering a set of variables which integrates thematic and symbolic compositions, since the meaning is part of the function of each object. The research questions pursued are not only oriented to recognize if we are dealing with amulets, ornaments, seals or domestic pieces, but rather seek to understand whether the objects could have functioned in all or some of those options and others.

In summary, in this work we will focus on those 'small finds' with amuletic value, and how their study allows us to characterize the inhabitants of this settlement and their beliefs.

In summary, it is proposed that:

- The small finds form a group of popular and local objects typical of the period in which the occupations in this border site and some of the meanings that denote them can be understood within a religious, mythical, ritual and even identity use.
- Many of the small finds are related to the domestic sphere, associated with the powers of protection and even curative for diseases, the power of life and rebirth, or with those who can be considered pseudo-seals that allow us to think of both religious and identity meanings.
- As a whole, most of these small finds gave magical protection to the individual who owned them; their decorations were intended to bring into play the forces of these divine representations, through sympathetic and/or apotropaic magic. They could be carried by each person from taking advantage of the sectors in which the objects could be lined up, suspended, linked and fastened with strings or other elements - integrating different items -

as part of body adornments, of outfits, placed in items of furniture, and in domestic offerings accompanying the activities people's daily lives.



Figure 1. Menkheperrea Wdjat made in faience (N° F1000) Provenance: Area I, Level IV, Building B, L0271 (floor), Tell el-Ghaba



**Eva Amanda Calomino** has a PhD in Archaeology (University of Buenos Aires, Argentina), and has participated in several research projects in the southern Andean area (Northwest Argentina and Bolivia) as well as in Sinai and Luxor (Egypt) and in Spain, and has collaborated with multiple national and international research projects. She has taught classes and seminars at the University of Buenos Aires and the University of Granada. Calomino has focused postdoctoral research on the set of small finds of the archaeological site of Tell el-Ghaba (North Sinai, Egypt). She is Senior researcher at Center of Studies of Ancient Near Eastern History, CEHAO-UCA. She is a member of the Research Group of the Recent Prehistory of Andalusia (GEPRAN, HUM274) and the Amenmose Project (Conservation and study of the tomb of

Amenmose, TT318 in Seikh Abd el-Qurna, Luxor, Egypt); and she is director of the Archaeological Mission at Tell el-Ghaba (North Sinai, Egypt).

## THE HOLY TOOTH. PROTECTION AND HEALING AGAINST RABIES

**Álvaro Campelo** (UFP-CRIA, Portugal)

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Of ancient origin, the relic known as the "Holy Tooth" was entrusted to a family from Aboim da Nóbrega, Ponte da Barca, Portugal, with a special mission. According to tradition, it is a tooth of Saint Frutuoso, a Catholic saint, embedded in the tip of a silver reliquary, held by a ribbon. A man from the family responsible for its safekeeping, who was assigned the mission of using it, would wear this amulet on his chest, with the ribbon secured around his neck. This miraculous object was used to protect and heal those afflicted with rabies.

At present, the amulet is housed in the Museum of Medicine at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Porto. Extracted from the community and family that held it through a judicial process, the amulet remains as a memory of a health practice, in a space that views it within the realm of superstition. Thus, the same 'object' acquires different meanings, but it compels reflection and engagement with these two cultural fields: popular belief and practice, and its re-signification within a museological and hospital context.

The purpose of this communication is to contextualize this relic within the history and life of the community, its use and transmission, as well as the meanings attributed to it by the community. Using an ethnographic methodology within the community, the aim is to provide an anthropological interpretation of the relic's function of protection and healing, within the broader context of the anthropology of the body and health.



Figure 1. The Holy Tooth (Photograph: Álvaro Campelo)



Figure 2. The chapel of S. Frutuoso de Montélios (Braga)



**Álvaro Campelo** is an Associate Professor at the Fernando Pessoa University, with a PhD in the field of Anthropology / History of Religions from the Sorbonne University. He was director of the Center for Applied Anthropology at the same university, editor of the journal “Antropológicas” and coordinator of CTEC. He was a member of the UFP Scientific Council and coordinator of several projects in the area of Cultural Heritage Development and Museology. He has dozens of articles published in specialized journals and is the author of six books.

## THE ‘POWER OF ANIMALS’: ASTRAGALI AS AMULETS IN CLASSICAL ANTIQUITY

**Barbara Carè** (University of Fribourg, Switzerland)

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This paper focuses on the protective value of astragali, small bones from the tarsal joints of mammals, in Greek and Roman antiquity.

The distinctive shape and characteristics of these bones have traditionally led to theories and speculation about their original function as dice-like objects, used in both games and divination, and thus as objects associated with luck (Fig. 1). The direction taken by modern scholarship has not moved significantly away from this conventional reading; research now in press challenges these biased scholarly assumptions, and demonstrates how astragali were used as dice only during the Roman period. With a context-based approach, this paper refocuses attention on human-animal relationships and highlights the primary meaning of astragali as physical remains of an once-living being, leading to their function as amulets and protective devices. By revisiting documentary evidence and looking at depositional features from different types of archaeological contexts (tombs, votive areas, etc.), I will address the consistent occurrence of astragali in what we might define as liminal spaces, and the magical power imbued upon actual bones (Fig. 2) as well as the image of the bone.



Fig. 1. Cameo with depiction of the Venus' throw (Perugia, Museo Archeologico Nazionale dell'Umbria) - I c. CE (after Carè, B., *Astragali. A "Toy" story*, in press).

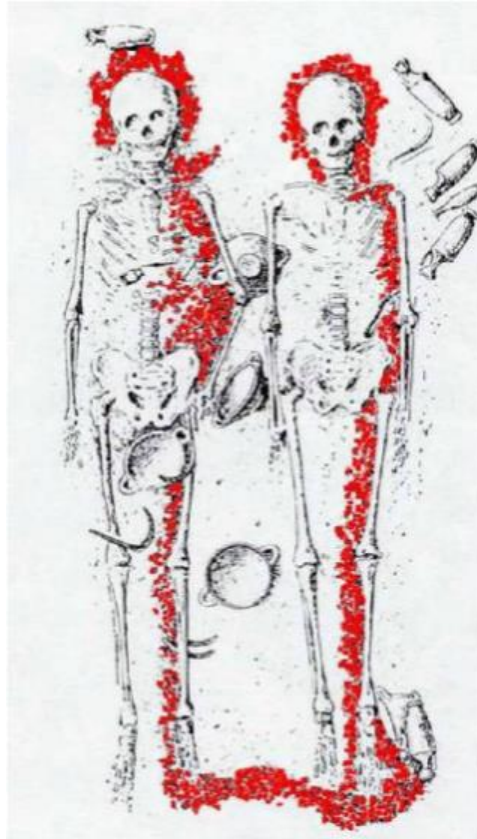


Fig. 2. Double burial from Locri Epizefiri (gr. 348) furnished with about 1400 astragali (marked in red) placed around the skeletons (after Carè, B., *Astragaloï. A “Toy” story*, in press).



**Barbara Carè** is an archaeologist and currently a senior researcher at the University of Fribourg (CH), where she was a member (2022-2023) of the ERC AdG project *Locus Ludi. The Cultural Fabric of Ancient Play and Games* (#741520) and the FNS-funded project *Greek and Roman articulated dolls (10th century BC/7th century AD): Archaeological and anthropological approaches*, both led by Prof. Véronique Dasen. She specialises in the study of Greek material culture and is also interested in ludic culture, gendered representations of games, the reception of ancient game practices in modern times and the preservation of the cultural heritage of games (Care, B. – Dasen, V. – Schädler, U. (eds). 2021. *Back to the Game: Reframing Play and Games in Context*, Lisbon, 2021; Care, B. – Dasen, V. 2024. *Athènes, une cité ludique ? L'importance des jeux dans la vie quotidienne*, in N. Siron (ed.), *Nouvelle histoire d'Athènes. La cité vue de l'Agora : Ve-IVe siècles av. J-C.*, Paris, 353-371). She is also co-editor, with V. Dasen, of the forthcoming *Interactive Encyclopaedia of Play and Games in Antiquity*. Her main area of research concerns the practical and symbolic meanings of astragali in the ancient world (Carè, B., *Astragaloï. A “Toy” story*, in press; Carè, B. (ed.), *Astragalomania. New perspectives in the Study of Knucklebones in the Ancient World*, Berlin forthcoming).

*Games in Context*, Lisbon, 2021; Care, B. – Dasen, V. 2024. *Athènes, une cité ludique ? L'importance des jeux dans la vie quotidienne*, in N. Siron (ed.), *Nouvelle histoire d'Athènes. La cité vue de l'Agora : Ve-IVe siècles av. J-C.*, Paris, 353-371). She is also co-editor, with V. Dasen, of the forthcoming *Interactive Encyclopaedia of Play and Games in Antiquity*. Her main area of research concerns the practical and symbolic meanings of astragali in the ancient world (Carè, B., *Astragaloï. A “Toy” story*, in press; Carè, B. (ed.), *Astragalomania. New perspectives in the Study of Knucklebones in the Ancient World*, Berlin forthcoming).

## **THE PENTAGRAM AND ITS APOTROPAIC / PROTECTIVE ROLES FROM LATE PREHISTORY UNTIL THE CONTEMPORARY PERIOD**

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The pentagram, also known as the pentacle or five-pointed star, is a symbol used in many cultures since at least the IV millennium BC, “surviving” until the Contemporary Period, and appearing in a large variety of archaeological and historical remains, such as prehistoric pottery, rock art, funerary tombstones, belt buckles, shields, rings, coins, manuscripts, medieval churches, coats of arms and 19<sup>th</sup> century houses, among other examples. Pythagoras and his followers called the pentagram *ὑγεία* (*hugieia*), which means “perfect health” (physical, mental and spiritual), as a mark of perfection. It was a symbol also used by early Christians, being present in funerary inscriptions in the Catacombs in Rome. In Christianity, it was used until at least the 18<sup>th</sup> century in gold amulets for children, associated with five dots that symbolized the five wounds of Christ. Its association with warriors and warfare of different places and chronologies allows to understand it as having a protective role in war. Furthermore, the pentagram appears also in contexts that can be considered to be hieratic in character, becoming therefore an apotropaic symbol, with examples from several countries. When the pentagram is depicted in isolation, its meaning is not easy to understand, but its association with other figures or its presence in scenes of mythological character allows an easier approach to its symbolism.

Medieval superstition considered prehistoric rock art as the work of witches or of the devil, surviving today at several rupestrian sites called “rock of the witches” or “rock of the devil”. Interestingly, there are some cases of pentagrams carved during the Middle Ages near prehistoric engravings, this symbol being used to avoid and exorcise evil. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, pentagrams were carved in corrals for cattle in order to act as an amulet against the “evil eye”. In that period, the use of the pentagram as a good-luck charm was still very common in the European countryside, being depicted near doors and windows of several villages. But it was also considered as an amulet in the intellectual field, appearing with that value in Goethe’s “Faust” (1808).

In the present text, the author focuses exclusively on the archaeological, historical and ethnographic aspects of the pentagram, not approaching its use by neo pagan religions or esoteric beliefs. The paper is accompanied by several images that illustrate comprehensively the apotropaic and protective roles of this symbol and its extraordinary survival since Late Prehistory until the Contemporary Period.



Fig.1. Pentagrams in rock art. Iron Age. Rock 1 of Figueiredo (Sertã, Portugal).



**Fernando Augusto Coimbra** (PhD in Prehistory and Archaeology by Salamanca University) is a Guest Professor at the Polytechnic Institute of Tomar (Portugal), where he teaches two courses: *Methods of Excavation, Record and Analysis; Archaeoacoustics and Rock Art*, in the frame of the Master – Prehistoric Archaeology and Rock Art. Fernando is a Senior Researcher of the Geosciences Centre of Coimbra University, where in 2010 he completed post-doctoral research in Rock Art. Having delivered invited lectures in Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, Finland and Greece, he has published about 125 scientific articles and 12 books about Archaeology, Rock Art, Archaeoacoustics and Cultural Heritage, among other themes.

Fernando is the Director/Editor of the peer reviewed journal *O Ideário Patrimonial* (Polytechnic Institute of Tomar). Currently he is the Principal Investigator of two projects: Archaeological research in the Roman site of Vale do Junco (Ortiga, Mação); Acoustics of caves and prehistoric hypogea in Central Portugal: a contribute to understand early musical behaviour. Fernando was keynote speaker in the II International Symposium “Music, Sound and Wellbeing” (2021), organized by the University of Eastern Finland at Joensuu. He is currently involved with an audio-visual documentary about Archaeoacoustics in Late Prehistoric funerary places of Central Portugal.

## OBJECTS OF SUPERSTITION AND RELIGION. AMULETS IN THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORD OF TAVIRA

**Jaquelina Covaneiro and Sandra Cavaco** (Município de Tavira/Museu Municipal de Tavira)

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The archaeological work carried out in the municipality of Tavira has revealed some amulets produced in metal, ceramic and bone. In a world of uncertainty, dominated by suffering and pain, these objects had magical and apotropaic properties.

The amulet was to be worn on the body, to better serve its purpose. These objects were used with various intentions, either to ward off the evil eye or bad luck, or to ask for help in curing diseases.

The first known amulets in Tavira date back to Roman times and come from Quinta de Torre de Ares. Among them we highlight the phallic-shaped and jar-shape pendant amulet (3rd-4th centuries AD).

From the Islamic era (twelfth/thirteenth centuries) we highlight two objects. A fragment of tile containing the inscription *al-basmaLlah* (introductory invocation of any purpose or action), surrounded by six-pointed stars (Fig. 1). The second object concerns a ceramic fragment with the "hand of Fatima", also called "khamsa" (five), one of the most frequent talismans in this period.

From the Medieval and Modern Periods, we record the identification of several medals that express Marian devotion, bearing the Image of the Immaculate Conception and the Virgin on the reverse side (Fig. 2). One object fashioned from copper alloy represents a hand, in which the fingers are suggested by incised lines, verifies that one of the medals is unique.

Finally, we highlight two Brown Bear teeth whose ends were covered with iron oxide. Although we can consider the hypothesis that these two dental elements are hunting trophies, we do not exclude the possibility that they functioned as amulets.

These, and many other objects, gave comfort and support to the men and women who wore them, in a world full of uncertainty and fear.



Figure 1. Fragmento de telha. Convento de Nossa Senhora da Graça (Tavira). Séculos XII/XIII © Susana Gonçalves | CMT



Figure 2. Medalha em liga de cobre. Convento de Nossa Senhora da Graça (Tavira). Século XVIII © Ana Sofia Vieira | CMT



**Jaquelina Covaneiro** was born in Coimbra and grew up in Ourém (Santarém). She graduated from the University of Coimbra (1995), and received her MA from the University of Lisbon (2005) with the dissertation *Castro Marim: A arqueofauna enquanto expressão da 2ª Idade do Ferro (séculos V a IV a.C.)*. Working in the Municipality of Tavira since 2002, she has carried out research in the area of local history/archaeology, medieval/modern ceramics and especially fauna studies. She has also served as scientific curator of temporary exhibitions at the Islamic Museum. Jaquelina is a founding member of the CIGA Group (Islamic Ceramics from Gharb al-Andalus) and is part of the group of Archaeology of the Rede de Museus do Algarve.



**Sandra Cavaco** was born in Mértola and grew up in the Algarve. She has a degree in História, Variante Arqueologia (Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa, 1999) and in 2012 defended her dissertation "O Arrabalde da Bela Fria. Contributos para o estudo da Tavira islâmica" (Master's degree in Portugal Islâmico e o Mediterrâneo pela Universidade do Algarve/Campo Arqueológico de Mértola). She has been an archaeologist at the Município de Tavira/Museu Municipal de Tavira, since 2001, where she has carried out research in the area of history/archaeology of Tavira, especially the study of medieval and modern ceramics. Sandra Cavaco is a founding member of the CIGA group (Cerâmica Islâmica do Gharb al-Andalus) and is part of the MAVA working group (Museu Arqueológico Virtual do Algarve/Grupo de Arqueologia da Rede de Museus do Algarve).

## TUBULAR CAPSULES (*PHYLACTERIA*) FROM *VIMINACIUM*

**Ilija Danković and Bebina Milovanović** (Institute of Archaeology, Belgrade, Serbia)

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Metal capsules in the shape of tubes with loops on their longer sides have been discovered as pendants in the graves of women and children at the Viminacium necropolises. Larger capsules made of silver and bronze were used as containers to hold rolled-up miniature plates made of silver or gold with inscribed magical messages or symbols (*lamellae*). Gold and silver specimens from the Eastern Mediterranean date back to the 7th and 6th centuries BC, while bronze and lead specimens appeared somewhat later in the West. The name for this type of amulet is associated by some authors with the Greek word for reed (*syrinx kalamos*), which matches the shape of the cylindrical metal box. *Lamellae* with Greek magical texts only appeared at the end of the 1st century BC and the beginning of the 1st century AD (specimens from Pontus, Macedonia, Syria, and Lebanon). Empty specimens likely had the same purpose; perhaps the messages intended for gods and demons were written on perishable materials that, unfortunately, have not survived. Unlike other tubular capsules in which *lamellae* have been preserved, or at least could have fit, the content of three smaller silver specimens from Viminacium was probably different. All three formed parts of necklaces along with several pendants. Due to damage, their contents are unknown, but given their miniature size, we cannot expect *lamellae* to have been present in them; instead, they might have contained items such as seeds of herb or other organic (resin, beeswax) and mineral (sulfur, hematite) substances believed by the Romans to have special protective powers for both the living and the dead. Sulfur was found inside a cylindrical capsule from the Thetford Treasure. The practice of wearing tubular capsules with special contents as amulets was known since the time of the Egyptians and Phoenicians and was adopted by the Greeks and Romans. Finds from the Middle and New Kingdoms contained garnet beads and seeds, while branches of fragrant wood, pieces of iron, mica, and crushed insect wings were found inside Phoenician capsules. If these specimens contained such materials, they are most comparable to *bullae*-shaped containers used for similar substances. Unlike *bullae*, which had a generally accepted shape and survived beyond antiquity, miniature tubular capsules are not only rarer but also chronologically limited. The specimens from Viminacium date to the late 2nd and 3rd centuries AD when the city experienced its greatest economic prosperity and was a kind of "metropolis" in the central Balkans. The city's significance during this period attracted people from various parts of the Empire, bringing with them their customs, beliefs, rituals, and ceremonies, thus contributing to the expansion of a multicultural community.



Figure 1. Silver phylacterion.



Figure 2. Bronze phylacterion with lamellae



**Bebina Milovanović** enrolled in studies at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade (Serbia) at the Department of Archaeology. She finished her BA studies in 1999, MA studies in 2005 and PhD studies in 2008 at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade. From 2002 until 2019, she has been employed on the project *IRS – Viminacium, Roman City and Legionary Fort – Research of Material and Non-material Culture, Inhabitants*. In 2020 she acquired the title of Senior Research Associate at the Institute of Archaeology Belgrade. Starting this year she is the Project manager of the project *Limes in Serbia – UNESCO's World Heritage – Research of the fort Mioč – Gerulata*. Her main subjects of interest are material and spiritual culture, religion, cult and women's lives in Ancient Rome. In recent years, her interest has also focused on lead finds, especially sarcophagi. She focused her research on determining the socio-economic aspect of life, primarily of women of the Roman period in the Balkan area. Her primary interests relate to the material and spiritual culture of the Romans in the area of the province of Upper Moesia, with special reference to *Viminacium*, which has been largely archaeologically researched.



**Ilija Danković** obtained his PhD degree in archaeology in 2021 at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, Serbia with a thesis entitled: *Grave goods in female burials as indicators of age: A case study of Viminacium's cemeteries from the 1st to the 4th century*. Danković is employed at the Institute of Archaeology Belgrade as part of the Viminacium project. As of 2021 he is a Research Associate in this institution. Since 2006 he has participated in numerous archaeological excavations, mainly in the Roman city of Viminacium. His professional interests are concerned with Roman provincial archaeology, primarily researching all aspects of the identity and status of women in Classical antiquity, reflected through material culture, which was the topic he pursued through his PhD thesis. Also, Danković deals with questions regarding the materiality of magic and textile production.

## CHARMS IN THE LIFE CYCLE. FROM GREEK AMULETS TO CONTEMPORARY JEWELLERY

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This paper will focus on the concept of cluster or assemblage composed by amulets defined as small objects in various material, cheap, like a shell or bone, or costly, like gold, worn as charms in various ways on different parts of the body (earrings, pendants, necklaces, rings). Is the meaning and function of the single object transformed by being associated with other items? We will examine examples of Greek and Roman sets or clusters of amulets worn by young individuals, girls and boys. They comprise regular elements composing a discourse on the symbolic relations between young individuals and the life cycle. They allow also to reflect on how life passages were ritually managed and of lived religious experience. Metaphoric correspondances with similar connections can be found in contemporary jewelry relating to the life cycle of young individuals. A striking example is a string of twelve gold charms from the necropolis of Akanthus in northern Greece (4<sup>th</sup> cent. BCE) (Fig. 1) and the depiction of string of charms on vessels that may have contained real jewelry, such as a pyxis in the Benaki Museum (330-320 BCE).



Figure 1. String of twelve gold charms from the necropolis of Akanthus in northern Greece (4<sup>th</sup> cent. BCE)

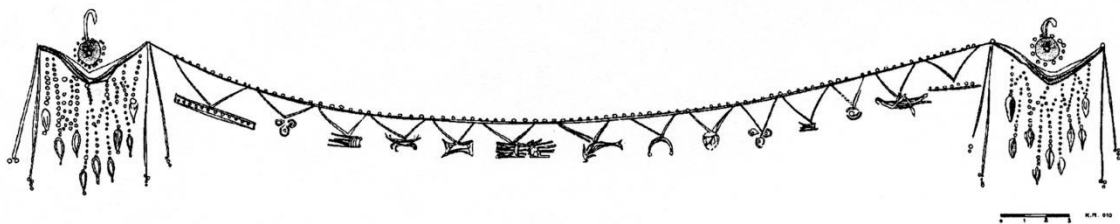


Figure 2. Pyxis in the Benaki Museum (330-320 BCE)



**Véronique Dasen** is Professor of Classical archaeology at the University of Fribourg (CH), whose research specialises in the history of the body, ancient medicine and magical practices, motherhood, childhood, coming of age, and ludic culture in Classical antiquity (ERC AdG Locus Ludi 2017-2022). Her publications on amulets, magic, and divination include: *Le Jeu comme métaphore. Images ludiques de Grèce ancienne*, Liège, 2024 ; *Le Sourire d'Omphale. Maternité et petite enfance dans l'Antiquité*, Rennes, 2015 ; *Bijoux antiques : de l'ornement au talisman*, with F. Spadini (eds), *Gemmae. International Journal on Glyptic Studies*, 2, 2020 and 3, 2021 ; *Les savoirs magiques et leur transmission de l'Antiquité à la Renaissance*, with J.-M. Spieser (dir.), Firenze, 2014 ; *Des Fata aux fées: regards croisés de l'Antiquité à nos jours*, with M. Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère (eds), Lausanne, 2011. Amongst her papers relevant to this topic are: 'Gems', with Á.M. Nagy, in D. Frankfurter (ed.), *Guide to the Study of Ancient Magic*, Leiden, 2019, 416-455 ; 'Amulets, the Body and Personal Agency', in S. McKie, A. Parker (eds), *Material Approaches to Roman Magic: Occult Objects and Supernatural Substances*, Oxford, 2018, 127-135 ; 'Probaskania: Amulets and Magic in Antiquity', in J. Bremmer, D. Boschung (eds), *The Materiality of Magic*, Paderborn, 2015, 177-203.

## EARLY MODERN PLAGUE AMULETS

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One definition of the early Modern Period is the time interval between the invention of the printing press (c. 1450) and the onset of the chemical revolution with Lavoisier's seminal publication in 1789. Waves of bubonic, septicaemic and pneumonic plague periodically passed through western Europe during these times; in the United Kingdom, the Great Plague of 1665 was the most devastating. There were numerous different theories for the origin and transmission of plague in early modern times including it being a punishment from God for the sins of mankind, being brought about by foul air or miasmas, being the consequence of disturbances in the heavens, and the transmission of 'seminaria' or seeds of disease. No apothecarial treatments were successful in curing or preventing the spread of the disease. In the resulting climate of hopelessness and desparation, amulets purportedly offering protection against the plague became popular items for personal use. The English medical literature, especially that dating from the seventeenth century, contains much debate amongst physicians on the supposed efficacy of amulets. Those that whole-heartedly supported the use of amulets were pitted against opponents who were openly and vociferously critical. Both camps appealed to the authority of European writers and anecdotal evidence in support of their contrary points of view.

Most of the amulets commended against the plague were worn around the neck in such a way as to hang directly over the heart, which many were believed to both protect and strengthen in some way. The dense, toxic metalloid arsenic, in either its elemental or mineralogical forms (orpiment and realgar), was one such component, as was quicksilver (liquid mercury) enclosed in a drilled, wax-sealed, empty hazelnut. Dried toads were also used in this way. The thread common to each of these is that the materials were known to be toxic. The power of sympathy was at work here; the amuletic material was believed either to block the entry of miasmatic poisons into the body or, if infection had already occurred, to 'wrestle against' the internal toxins, overcoming them by their superior toxic power and concentrating the offending poison within them. Opponents of the use of these materials noted that increased body heat caused fumes to be released from them which were likely to cause severe adverse symptoms and even death. Paracelsus (1493-1541) advocated the use of *zenexton* – amulets which harnessed astrological power. These steel or gem-encrusted gold containers (Fig. 1) contained mixtures of the first menstrual blood of young girls, white and red arsenic, Dittany root, Tormentil, pearls, coral, hyacinth, emerald and crocus together with 18 carefully sun-dried toads. The figures of a serpent and a scorpion were carved onto the holders at astrologically auspicious times and the whole unit was believed to attract and consume any plague 'venom' present in the body.

Appeals to divine intervention were embodied in printed amulets ('*Plagueblätter*') depicting various plague saints (especially Saints Sebastian, Roch and John of Nepomuk; Fig. 2) and often containing Latin charms, dating from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards.

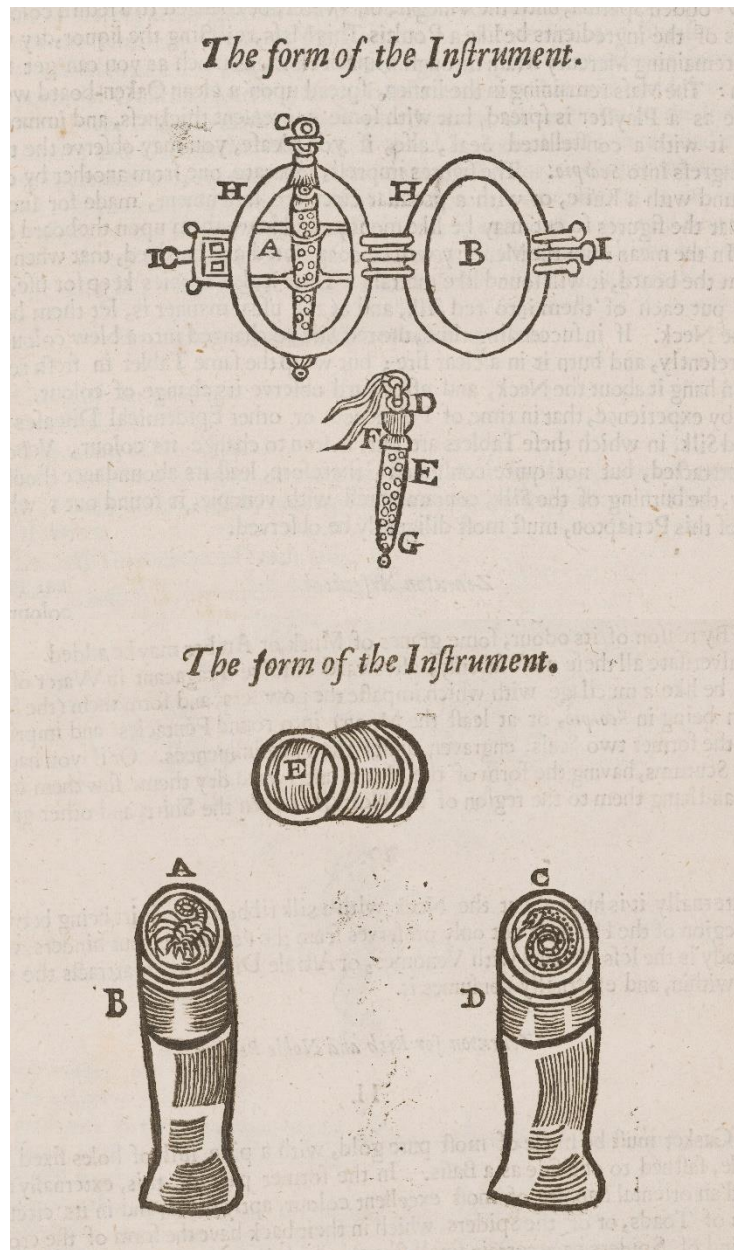


Fig. 1. Zenexon from Croll (1664). Reproduced by kind permission of the Wellcome Library, London.



Fig. 2. Printed 17th century plague amulet depicting a plague cross with Saint Sebastian, Saint Roch and Saint John of Nepomuk. Reproduced by kind permission of the Wellcome Library, London.



**Chris Duffin** trained originally as a geologist and then switched to zoology with a PhD in vertebrate palaeontology and comparative anatomy from University College, London (1980). A high school teacher for his working life, he was Director of Sixth Form, Head of Biology, Head of Critical Thinking and Senior Master at Streatham and Clapham High School in south London. On retirement, he became Scientific Associate at the Natural History Museum in London and Research Associate at both Bristol University and the Lauer Foundation for Paleontology, Science and Education in Chicago. The author of over 320 publications and an editor of 8 books, Chris is the recipient of several awards for his palaeontological work which mostly concerns fossil sharks and their allies. A second PhD, this time in the history of medicine from

Kingston University led to his interest in amulets.

## SOME NEW AND OLD FINDS FROM THE WESTERN NECROPOLIS OF TOMIS. AMULETS FOR THE DEAD

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The city of Tomis (modern Constanța) was, in Antiquity, one of the most important cities on the Black Sea shore and an outpost of the Greek and Roman civilizations in this area. Founded in the VI<sup>th</sup> century BC. by Milesian colonists, Tomis was integrated into the Roman Empire by the time of the end of Augustus's reign. Being a Greek colony, a city port and, since the end of the first century BC, a centre of the Roman power, Tomis had a thriving economy with a numerically high and mixed population and beliefs. The prosperity of the city led to the expansion of the city's perimeter several times over until the late Roman era, and also to the establishment of a huge necropolis, which encases the walls and follows the main roads which enter the city's gates. Today, Constanța is one of the main sites in Romania in which we have extended rescue excavations throughout the entire year; the primary institution of research is the local museum (MINA Constanța).

This paper will focus on the western necropolis of the city by presenting some of the older and more recent discoveries of amulets in graves from the Roman period (I<sup>st</sup> to IV<sup>th</sup> centuries AD). These small items were discovered, in most cases, in women's and children's burials, as a part of the funerary inventory. Among the most well-known types of amulets used at Tomis are the Hercules Club, an amulet in form of a hand and amulets used in medical magic, such as some gems and cameos.

The study of these amulets offers us an insight into the private and public lives of the inhabitants of Tomis.



Figure 1. Funerary inventory from Labyrinth Street 2023



Figure 2. Funerary inventory from Spital Point 2023



Figure 3. Ring discovered at Gara Veche in 1991



**Ștefan Georgescu:** Ph.D. in Roman Lamps and Pottery, archaeologist at the Museum of National History and Archaeology in Constanța, Romania. He is specialized in the field Roman lamps and pottery, being one of the experts in rescue excavations in Tomis

## AMULETS OF UZBEKISTAN: EVOLUTION OF FORMS AND MEANINGS

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One of the most interesting and widely spread groups of jewelry in Uzbekistan is the *tumars* (amulet holders; Figs. 1, 2). They were believed to possess healing, protective, and magical-guarding functions. Many aspects of the existence of this type of jewelry have been thoroughly researched (such as the distribution area, manufacturing technology, decorative features, ways of wearing, semantics, etc.). However, questions about the genesis and evolution of these items have remained outside the attention of researchers.

A *tumar* was a special silver, less commonly gold, case (there were also leather *tumars*) into which a talisman (amulet) was placed. This amulet protected against the evil eye, diseases, infertility, and evil spirits. The *tumar* became an essential part of the general, including wedding, set of jewelry, and wearing it provided protection and well-being to its owner. Both the case itself and the amulet placed inside it were endowed with sacred properties.

Various items were used as the talisman placed inside, each believed to have strong protective properties to varying degrees. Most of these items were associated with ancient pagan magic, which in itself speaks of the archaic nature of this type of jewelry. The most common amulet in ancient times was a needle. Other items included a piece of sharp coral or glass, soot from a cauldron, bitter spices, medicinal herbs, tufts of sheep or camel wool, and more. The case with the needle, endowed with the magical property of protecting the life of its owner, is perhaps the key to understanding the genesis of this type of jewelry. This mysterious item appears in Russian folklore and is associated with the figure of Koschei the Deathless, whose life was contained in a needle, which was kept inside an egg. Break the needle, and Koschei dies. Since the image of Koschei in Russian fairy tales literally represents a nomad (Koschei – *koshchi* – nomad), it can be concluded that the amulets with needles were characteristic primarily of nomadic culture. Over time, they spread across a significant region of their migrations.

With the adoption of Islam, all pagan talismans were replaced by a piece of paper with a prayer text from the Quran. Such a *tumar* protected its owner with the sacred word, combining the protection of both ancient pagan deities and Allah.

In the late 19th to early 20th century, the *tumar* transformed into an ordinary piece of jewelry, without the amulet inside. Nowadays, it is used as a popular piece of jewelry without any contents inside, yet the belief in its protective power remains.



Figure 1. Kukrak Tumar – doubles amulets, Tashkent, 1910. The State Museum of Arts of Uzbekistan (Tashkent)



Figure 2. Buyin Tumar – amulet, Tashkent, 1900s. The State Museum of Arts of Uzbekistan (Tashkent)



**Professor Elmira Gyul** is a Doctor of Art Criticism and Chief Researcher at the Institute of Art Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Elmira graduated from Tashkent State University (now National University named after Mirzo Ulugbek) with a degree in the History of Art. In 2003, she defended her doctoral thesis on *The problem of Ethno-Cultural Interaction in Antique and Medieval Art of Uzbekistan*. Since then, she has authored a number of monographs dedicated to the decorative and applied arts of Uzbekistan, to name just a few: *Gardens of Heaven and Gardens of Earth. Embroidery of Uzbekistan: a Hidden Meanings of the Sacred Texts* (Moscow 2013), *Architectural Décor of the Temorids' Epoch: Symbols and Meanings* (Tashkent 2014), *Carpets of Uzbekistan: History, Aesthetics and Semantics* (Tashkent 2019), etc. Elmira is a prolific writer: she has published numerous articles exploring various aspects of the Uzbek decorative and applied arts. She has been invited to many international conferences as a speaker to share her expertise on the carpet weaving. Elmira is a scientific coordinator and member of the Academic Council of the International Multimedia Project “Cultural Legacy of Uzbekistan in the World Collection”.

## AN OVERVIEW ON THE DISCOVERIES OF ROMAN AMULETS FROM DACIA SUPERIOR

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At the beginning of the II<sup>nd</sup> century AD., the kingdom of Dacia was transformed in a Roman province, after two bloody wars (101-102 and 105-106).

The Roman peace (*pax Romana*) meant that many colonists came from all over the Roman world to the newly created province. All these people brought with them their personal beliefs and adapted them to the Roman system. Among personal items belonging to the individual, amulets are one of the most important. They have been discovered in different locations in Dacia Superior such as Tibiscum, Apulum, Ampelum, Dierna, Drobeta, Obreja, Ulpia Traiana and Micia and were made in various materials, from common and precious metals, to glass or bone. Among the well-known types of amulet we have bulla, lunula, phallic amulets, different gems and cameos, geometric bone amulets and amulets in the form of a hand (Figs. 1, 2). They were discovered in funerary contexts as well as in habitation layers, although some of them have no information regarding the context of their discovery. Unfortunately, Romanian scientific bibliography mentions them as simple objects, with some apotropaic features.

In this paper we intend to discuss all these types of amulets and establish a chronology based on the context of discovery and analogies well dated from other province of the Roman Empire.

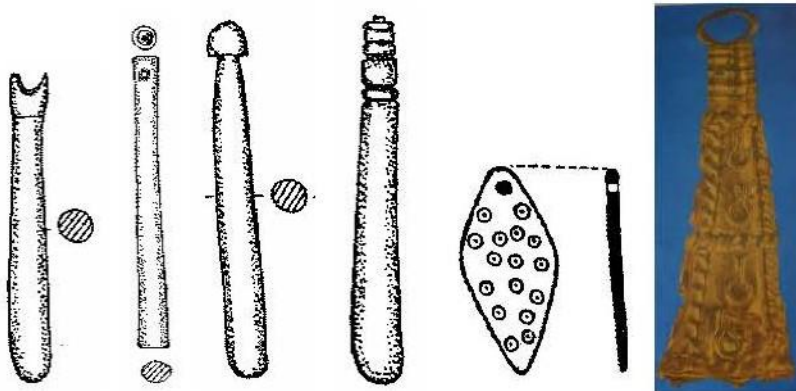


Figure 1. Amulets in the form of Hercules club from Dacia Superior

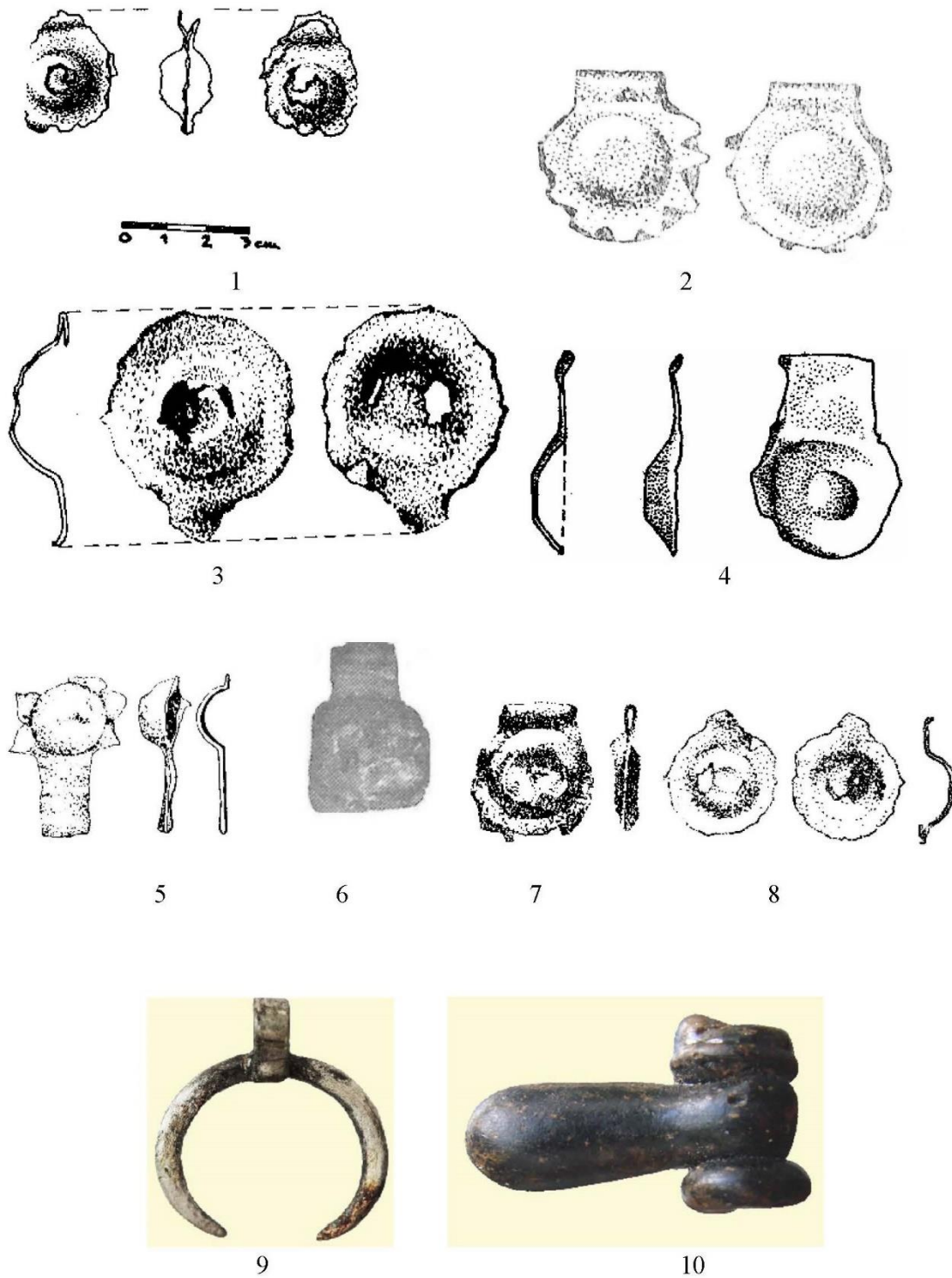


Figure 2. Bulla, lunula and fascinum discovered on the territory of Dacia Superior

**Ana Hamat:** see Alexandru et al for biographical details.

**RESPECT: RESHAPING PERCEPTIONS ABOUT APOTROPAIC AND PROPHYLACTIC CULTURAL ITEMS: COMMUNITY, HISTORICAL AND CURATORIAL INTERACTION RESEARCH THEMES**

**Diane Heath** (Research and Public History Department, Dana Centre, Science Museum, London)

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Material culture from prehistory to the present and across the globe includes apotropaic and prophylactic objects. Amulets are thought of as powerful, sensory cultural objects - but how are these items perceived to cure, to comfort, and even heal? And how can research on communities' use of amulets through the ages and around the world help inform and aid prophylaxis now? How do people conceptualise, understand, discuss and experience mental health in their communities and furthermore, what role does material culture play in conceptualisations and understandings of mental health?

This paper introduces these research topics via several interwoven and imbricated strands summarising the findings of two preliminary interdisciplinary workshops on amulets held at the Science Museum Group's Dana Centre, with the aim of developing a research project with other museums and institutions. We have been working on defining amulets and how they are related to talismans, charms, binding words, belief, and magic, and refining ideas about

- Amulet lifecycle: from hagstones and birthing girdles, to rites of passage/gift-giving, to burial amulets
- Amulets and Emotions – e.g., fear, hope, control, love, fetishes, and taboos
- Amulets and the Senses – e.g., decoration, speaking, writing, making, touching, holding, and wearing next to the skin, or close to the heart
- Amulets and Belief – e.g., Becket ampullae, St Christopher medallions, folklore
- Amulets and Protection – e.g., apotropaic toadstone rings, four-leaf clovers, and magic symbols
- Amulets and Preventative Healthcare – e.g., Healing, Placebos, Bedside manners, Anxiety, Self-care, Wellbeing, and Rituals – e.g., how medicines are prescribed, given, and taken

The paper will examine how the proposed project seeks to use textual/iconographic sources on how people in the past used amuletic objects, combined with examining amulets in British collections (focusing on the Science Museum's collections). It will be closely aligned with contemporary research on the current use of amulets in communities to strengthen the contemporary relevance of the historical and collection research findings. The paper will briefly survey some amulets in British collections for both the materiality of these objects (animal, mineral, plant origin; decoration; the reuse of objects, such as coins for amulets, the use of holy words in amulets, etc.) and how these objects have been classified, analysed, interpreted, and displayed since entering these collections.

Like many researchers, we are keen to break down the barriers that have often dismissed these objects as 'superstitious' rather than recognising how much power was invested in these objects by the communities that created them and what they can tell us about different cultural beliefs that all had the same aim of preserving mental health. The paper will finish with a case study on the well-known Canterbury Amulet (Canterbury, CCAL Add. MS 23), a thirteenth-century 'Sheet of incantations', which will focus on the community that used such amuletic devices and demonstrate how that research was used in a recent academic workshop.



Figure 1. Modern amulet of interwoven beadwork.

Figure 2. Canterbury Cathedral Archives and Library CCL HH/L-3-3, mid 15<sup>th</sup> century, Hours of BVM, Use of Paris, ff. 161,160 x 118mm. Folio 107 shows evidence of stitched-in pilgrim tokens



**Dr Diane Heath** is a researcher and also guest editor of the Science Museum Group Journal (Spring 2025), based at the Science Museum, Dana Centre, London. Previously, Diane was a Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for Kent History and Heritage, Canterbury Christ Church University, where she was project lead for the National Lottery funded Medieval Animals Heritage Project. She is general editor, with Dr Victoria Blud, of the academic Medieval Animals strand at University of Wales Press and on the Steering Committee for Gender and Medieval Studies Forum. Her interests, besides amulets, include medieval cultural history and ‘green’ heritage.

## ARTEFACTS OF LUCK AND MISFORTUNE

**Bożena Józefów-Czerwińska** (Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, Poland)  
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Up to the present day, many Polish people, seeing a coin on their way, pick it up, blow on it and take it with them. However, they do not keep it for long, but quickly return it to monetary circulation. In the modern, secular world, found coins no longer have the significance they once did. Interestingly, picking up a found coin often still involves blowing on it, which corresponds to old cultural convictions and magical practices that have retained their relict meanings in modern times.

In order to understand the reasons for such contemporary behaviours, it is useful to go back to the folklore sources; for this purpose, I will use data collected during ethnographic fieldwork conducted in the Podlasie region between 2010 and 2017. In the light of this research, according to the opinions of senior citizens, artifacts can possess a specific causal charge, which may be beneficial or, on the other hand, dangerous for people. Thus, depending on the connotation of a given artefact, it can have different effects on human life. According to these convictions, elders indicated objects that could be considered as amulets, but also drew attention to artifacts that might be marked with dangerous potencies for the living. For example, objects inherited from ancestors, especially items such as sacred paintings (Fig. 1), were considered benevolent. They were present in many respondents' homes and their role was described in apotropaic terms, protecting the household and the householders from misfortune, among other things. Some families possessed artefacts associated with rites of passage, such as great-grandmothers' wedding garlands (Fig. 2) or towels (Fig. 3) - which were not regarded solely as mementos of deceased ancestors. In this context, the phenomenon of metonymic associations of artefacts with a particular ancestor and their protection for the living family was noticeable. For those for whom the old beliefs (usually internalized in the process of socialization) is still important; these are objects that can have apotropaic and prophylactic significance. For others who do not share such beliefs, they have mainly identity and commemorative significance. The opposite of such artefacts were those marked with potential misfortune. A magical practice known to this day in Podlasie is that of whispering warding off used by so-called 'babki', i.e. transferring misfortune or illness to other objects, including coins.

'Warding off illness could involve [for example] transferring the ailment to another object, which was a fairly common healing strategy in folk medicine. In Slavic folk culture, there are known cases of transferring an illness to an animal, a tree, some object or water, so that the sick person was cured" (J. Rybarczyk-Dyjewska, *Język magii jako na przykładzie zaklęć rosyjskich*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków 2013, p.65).

Such artefacts are usually left at crossroads. For this reason, there is a strong taboo, present especially among the elderly, against taking away anything which might be found at a crossroads.

In my lecture, I will pay particular attention to the importance of the metonymic ties linking objects to the subject against the background of the complex cultural context in which artefacts exist.



Figure 1. An Icon of the Virgin Mary passed down through the generations in one of the families in Okczyn (southern Podlasie (photo by the author)

Figure 2. Wedding garland, preserved in a chest frame icon (photo by the author)



Figure 3. A decorative wedding towel, with which the swat was girdled. Still kept in one of the Okczyn family (photo by the author)



**Bożena Józefów-Czerwińska** - People and their stories are my passion. I have been doing fieldwork in Mazovia and Podlasie (which borders Belarus) for a long time. Among other things, I concentrate on spirituality, customs, and old beliefs. In addition, I carry out ethnohistorical projects and study memory and "loss of memory" in landscapes. My areas of specialization are cultural anthropology, ethnography, and archaeology.

## ROOTWORKING AMULETS IN THE AMERICAN SOUTH

**Tony Kail** (Beale Street Hoodoo History and Folklife Museum, Memphis, Tennessee, USA)

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Archaeological and ethnographic research has revealed a number of amulets used in the historic practices of devotees of African American Hoodoo in the southern United States. Hoodoo is a collection of beliefs and practices that focuses on healing and spirituality emerging from Africans living on slave plantations in the South. Also referred to as rootworking and conjure, these practices include the use of herbal materials as mediums of physical and spiritual healing.

Amulets play an important role in the culture of Hoodoo. Amulets are utilized as a means of gaining protection, luck and in matters of love. Amulets are composed of herbal, zoological, synthetic and geological materials. Amulets reflect the availability of specific plants, animals and geological materials to devotees of the culture. Commonly used amulets are worn, concealed or kept in small cloth bags. One of the most prolific amulets is known as the mojo bag (Fig. 1). The mojo bag is such an important amulet in the culture that many blues songs from the region speak of the power of the amulet. Some amulets used in the culture are geographically specific such as the use of the amulet known as the Nation Sack. Utilized primarily by females, this African inspired amulet has been documented primarily in the city of Memphis Tennessee.

This presentation will utilize cultural and historical data collected from practitioners, folklorists and historians.



Figure 1. This is an example of the Mojo Bag, an important amulet used in African-American folk practices in the American South. This bag was created by a spiritual worker in Memphis Tennessee. The amulet was created to bring about love to the owner of the bag. The bag contains materials including stones that represent the client and their potential love. The bag also contains a stone used to combat the evil eye in hopes of protecting the couple from

negativity. Lastly herbs that are used in love workings are placed in the bag including lavender and patchouli. The vial of liquid is a love oil that is 'fed' to the amulet. These concepts speak to the practices of African traditional religions such as that among the Kongo traditions that utilize amulets related to the healer known as the Nganga and the medicines known as Minkisi.'



**Tony Kail** is a cultural anthropologist and curator of the Beale Street Hoodoo History and Folklife Museum in Memphis, Tennessee. He is the founder and director of AnthroFolk Research Associates. Kail also serves as an instructor for Southern New Hampshire University and is the author of several books including *A Secret History of Memphis Hoodoo: Rootworkers, Conjurers and Spirituals* and *Stories of Rootworkers and Hoodoo in the Mid-South* by The History Press.

**EGYPTIAN AMULETS AS OBJECTS OF “EXOTIC” (?) OFFERINGS WITH  
INGENIOUS MAGICAL VALUE AND EFFICACY IN RECEPTIVE CULTURES:  
THE CASE OF THE MINOAN AND RHODIAN EGYPTIAN AND EGYPTIANISED  
AMULETIC DONATIONS**

**Panagiotis Kousoulis and Christina Papadaki** (University of the Aegean, Greece)

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This presentation attempts to investigate elements and aspects of magical interactivity and *praxis* in the ancient Mediterranean through the examination of certain Egyptian and egyptianising material of amuletic value from Crete and Rhodes, with a special focus on criteria for designation and issues of definition and perception: transformation of the Egyptian religious values, icons and identities within the local ideology, as well as phenomenological modes of familiarity and creative misreadings. Possible differentiations between the Egyptian prototypes and the egyptianising amulets will be accentuated based on the user’s religious values and background.

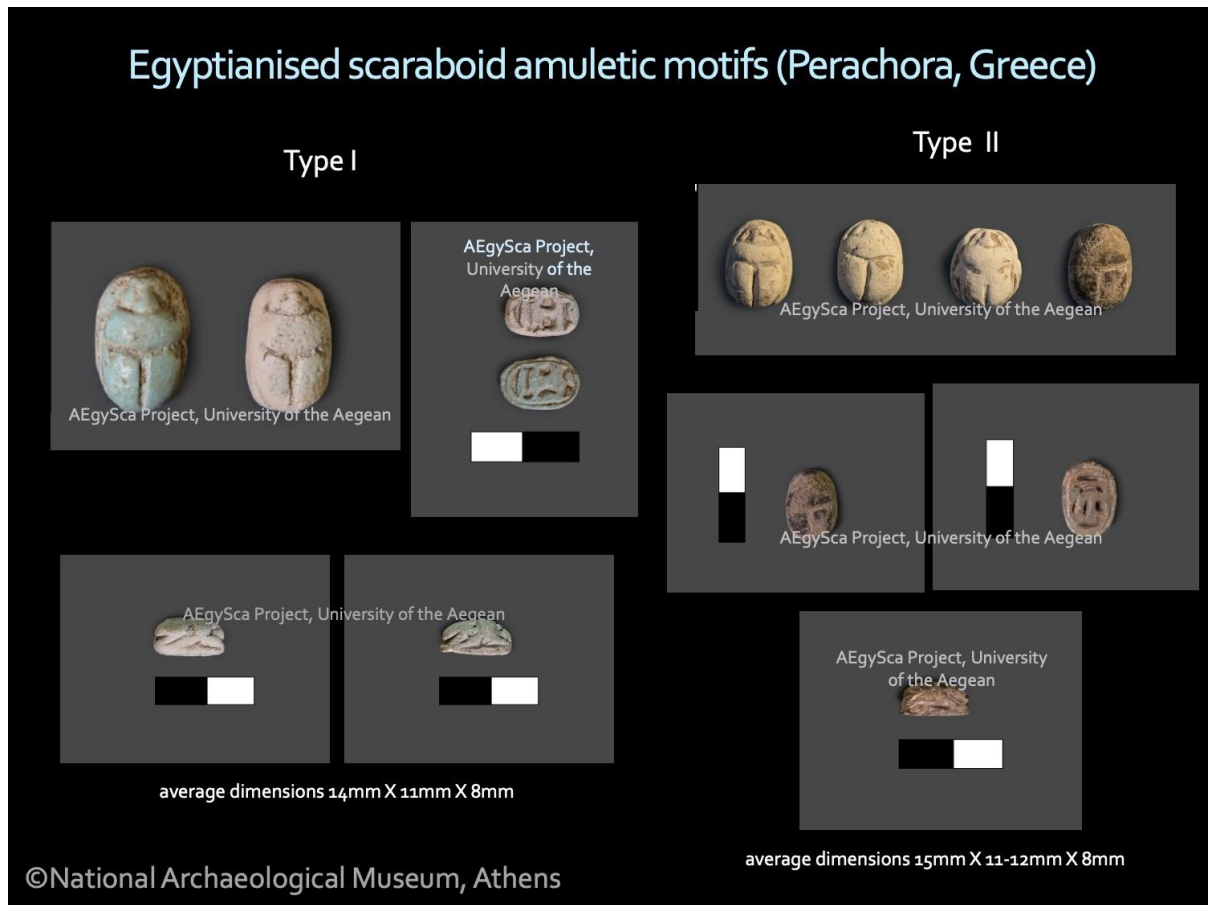
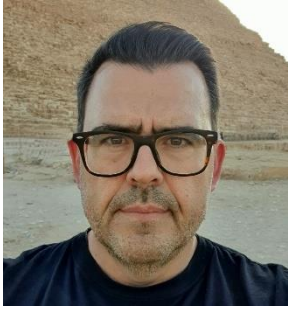


Figure 1. Perachora scaraboids



**Dr. Panagiotis Kousoulis** is Professor of Egyptology, Director of the Aegean Egyptology Research Group and the Laboratory for the Ancient World of the Eastern Mediterranean at the Department of Mediterranean Studies of the University of the Aegean (Rhodes, Greece). His current projects include the “*Aegyptiaca Project: Ecumene and economy in the horizon of religion*” and *MAG.I.A.M - MAGical Interactivity in the Ancient Mediterranean: phenomenology, semantics, performativity* (<http://aegeanegyptology.gr>). His latest monograph *Apep and the Anti-god Perception in the Egyptian Belief System* will soon appear in *Hans-Bonnet Studien zur Ägyptischen Religion*, Eb-Verlag, Berlin.



**Dr. Christina Papadaki** is a prehistoric archaeologist, focusing especially on the Minoan civilization and the Aegean Bronze Age. She has researched extensively on Minoan religion and ritual, as well as on a wide range of artefacts related to magic and death. She has been working since 2000 as a contract archaeologist in many excavations of the Greek Ministry of Culture, notably in the Archaeological Museum of Heraklion, in the development of the new information system of the National Archive of Monuments and in the excavation of Galatas Minoan Palace in Central Crete. Her latest book is entitled *Body and Magic: The Protection of the Human Body in the Aegean Bronze Age*, Alloste Publishers, 2023 (in Greek).

## NOAH, MAGIC AND SOLID EARTH: AN AMULET FOR TREASURE HUNTING IN THE SEFHER RAZIEL HA-MALAKH

**Eugene Kuzmin** (Independent Researcher)

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*The Sefer Raziel ha-Malakh* is both one of the best known and most neglected magic books in history. The text is widely known and mentioned. Yet, it has not been sufficiently studied. The entire text of the book remains enigmatic for wide circles of readers. There are only two translations of the text. Steve Savedow translated the book into English, but his version of the text was widely criticized and can hardly be called reliable. Eugene Kuzmin translated the *Sefer Raziel ha-Malakh* into Russian. The problem lies within the specific features of the book. It is too voluminous for an old grimoire, its language (or even languages, Hebrew and Aramaic) and style vary significantly; it consists of quite different topics, such as magical, scientific and theological. There are many codes in the text. Any translation without deciphering is meaningless.

*The Sefer Raziel ha-Malakh* is a motley anthology with an intricate history. It was first printed in Amsterdam in 1701. In the introduction, the editor relates the long and difficult story about his search for a reliable version and conflict with the local Jewish community on this book. The history of manuscripts of the anthology goes back to the 14th century. Thus, all the texts in the collection were written before that. The language, style and content show the decisive differences between various parts, which originated from diverse epochs and cultures. The commentaries and associations from the Bible appear near the Greek and Roman pagan gods. The anthology may be regarded as a bridge between different cultures and epochs before the Renaissance. Simultaneously, the research on the anthology may show the formation of Renaissance magic.

There is a rite for treasure hunting on p. 6v of the *Sefer Raziel ha-Malakh*. It has never been studied. Its context, source and dating have never been discussed. Let us briefly describe it. A magician should prepare the gold plate with sacred names. Afterwards, he ties this plate with a specific kind of cord to the neck of the white dove. The dove shows the precise location of the treasure. The next page presents an amulet which does not entirely fit the description in the recipe. However, there is also no other explanation for this amulet. The text on the amulet is not clear and difficult to decipher. Yet, it is possible to show some parallels and associations, which may show certain rationality, logic behind the rite and the amulet.





**Dr. Eugene Kuzmin** is an independent researcher in the history of science. He was born in Odessa in 1972, Ukraine, and since 1997 he has been permanently residing in Jerusalem, Israel. He earned his MA from the State University of Odessa in 1997. In 2010 he received his PhD from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem under the supervision of Prof. Guy G. Stroumsa and Prof. Michael Heyd. The revised text of his dissertation was published as *Alchemical Imagery in the Works of Quirinus Kuhlmann (1651-1689)* (Wilsonville, Oregon: Sirius Academic, 2013). Eugene is the author of a number of articles on the history of science and the esoteric. Dr. Kuzmin combines his research activities with his work at Yad Vashem, the Israeli Holocaust Memorial, as a specialist in Eastern European geography, and a musical composer.

## KNOTTED TO DEATH. HERAKLEAN KNOTS IN THE PUNIC NECROPOLIS OF GADIR.

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Under the modern city of Cádiz, ancient Gadir or Gades, there is a large necropolis corresponding to the Phoenician, Punic and Roman periods. Since the end of the 19th century this necropolis has been and continues to be partially excavated, and a large number of finds have been made. Nowadays, with the commercial salvage excavations, tombs of different types and chronology continue to be discovered, although there have been many years of excavations, only a very small number of scientific papers have been published clarifying the funerary panorama of the ancient city. Focusing on the Punic period of the necropolis (from the end of the 6th century BC to the 3rd century BC), among the jewellery found as part of the grave goods, several examples of the ‘Heraklean knot’ have been identified. This motif, very common in eastern Mediterranean iconography, is rare in western necropoli and deserves a specific approach to examine the eastern comparanda and the connections that led to its use in the Far West. The protective value of this symbol can be traced back centuries to its use in the necropolis of Gadir, in Egyptian iconography, but it was also adapted in Greek iconography from the Archaic period as well. The use of different types of amulets used for protection in the tombs is a frequent feature in the necropoli, although they are found in different forms and made of diverse materials, indicating wide accessibility to these pieces by the people. We have studied the heraklean knots found in the necropolis of Gadir so far; most of them and their archaeological contexts are unpublished. They have several factors in common; they were all found in inhumations, and they are all made in a similar way, in gold and forming parts of elaborate necklaces. With this study, which is part of the general research on the Phoenician-Punic necropolis, we aim to generate a better understanding of the funerary practices of this community and its relations with other places in the Mediterranean.



Figure 1: Heraklean Knot from the necropolis of *Gadir*.



**M.ª Reyes López Jurado** has both a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Archaeology. She is currently working on her PhD thesis on the Phoenician-Punic necropolis of Cádiz with a scholarship at the University of Seville and continuing her research in funerary themes in the southwest of the Iberian Peninsula. She is collaborating on several projects covering areas in the western Mediterranean, as well as with other teams working in areas such as Greece, focusing on the protohistoric and ancient periods and the material culture of these areas.

## APOTROPAIC MECHANISM OF THE “SUZDAL’SII ZMEEVIK”

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“Suzdal'skii zmeevik” is a round medallion (5.9 x 0.7 cm), carved from heliotrope (blood jasper) (Fig. 1). It was kept for a long time in the Sacristy of the Cathedral of the Nativity of the Theotokos at Suzdal. In 1890 the medallion was transferred to the collection of the State Historical Museum in Moscow.

On both sides of the medallion, there are images and two-line church slavonic prayer inscriptions. On one side, there are images of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus with their names and an inscription (an appeal to Christ with a mention of the Seven Sleepers about the granting of life-giving sleep to a certain George and Christina and the extinguishing of the “fiery power”). The other side bears an image of an anthropomorphic head with six serpentine bodies emanating from it with the heads of dragons, turned to the left; six eight-pointed stars located between the serpentine bodies; and an inscription (an appeal to Christ for mercy on certain Mary and Christina).

The medallion became the subject of attention of many researchers: Yu.D. Filimonov, M.N. Speranskii, A.N. Ryndina, V.N. Zalesskaya, M.V. Shchepkina, T.V. Nikolayeva and A.V. Chernetsov, J. Spier., A.A. Gippius and A.A. Zaliznyak, A.A. Medyntseva, Yu.Yu. Shevchenko, N.I. Milyutenko.

The “Suzdal'skii zmeevik” belongs to a group of artifacts defined as Byzantine Hystera-amulets and Medieval Russian zmeevik-amulets. These medallions appeared in Byzantium, were exported to Rus' at the end of the Early Middle Ages along with Christian Greek-language scholarship, were adapted into medieval Russian culture and were used until the middle of the 19th century. A Byzantine master for a Russian customer created the “Suzdal'skii zmeevik”.

The amulet from Suzdal is a structurally specified product. It is a combination of several elements: mineral, shape, images and inscriptions on both sides. Analysis of these elements and their interrelation brings us to suggest an apotropaic mechanism for the amulet as a closed sequence of articulated links for warding off disease.

The “Suzdal'skii zmeevik” is an artifact of the elite culture of Medieval Rus'. It embodies the theological (canonical, apocryphal) and natural scientific (medical, gemological) knowledge accumulated in the Mediterranean and Europe by the beginning of the 13th century. The creator and customer of this amulet had this knowledge (to varying degrees, perhaps).

“Suzdal'skii zmeevik” represents the healing practices of the Middle Ages. This is not an object of personal piety, but a medical instrument (or remedy) used in the case of illness of one of the three persons named in the prayer inscriptions. Each of the elements of the apotropaic mechanism had corresponding properties - it affected the illness and ensured the reproduction of a healing prayer. The list of diseases, for which this amulet could be used, is wide - from infections and viral diseases to mental disorders. The user of the amulet may not have had the full knowledge and experience encoded in it but was aware of the effect produced by the apotropaic mechanism of the amulet.



Figure 1. “Suzdal'skii zmeevik”. Source: Zalesskaya V.N. Christianity and magic: Mysterious Suzdal serpentine amulet of the XII century. Grand Duke Mstislav] // Internet resource “Kul'turologiya.RF” – URL: <https://kulturologia.ru/blogs/050918/40369/>



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members of the Rurik dynasty at Vladimir” (2011); “Potter’s stamps of medieval Vladimir: three-petal rosette” (2016-2017). He also participated in the implementation of the following research programmes “Hellenistic culture of the Middle East” (1986-1991, 1994-1996, 1999-2002), “Greeks on the Black Sea” (1997), “Man of the past: models of consciousness and behavior” (2010). He has produced 136 scientific publications

## ENGRAVED GEMS AS AMULETS IN MODERN AGE: SOME LITERARY SOURCES

**Alessandra Magni** (Independent Researcher) and **Gabriella Tassinari** (Independent Researcher)

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In the 18th and 19th centuries, the study of ancient gems and their interpretation changed: in fact, we moved from an interest in iconography and its meaning, and from a moral judgment on them, to attention paid to artistic aspects and the value of gems as witnesses to the history of art. This change of perspective and a certain diversity of views can be seen in the reading of literary sources.

Some scholars, such as Joseph Hilarius Eckhel (1737-1798), express negative judgments on amulets, as objects of superstition. Famous authors such as Pierre-Jean Mariette (1694-1774), imbued with the spirit of the Enlightenment and rationalism, underestimate the value of engraved gems as amulets; others, such as Luigi Bossi, on the contrary, appreciate the magical value of the gems.

Through the reading and analysis of some significant pages, we intend to exemplify this diversity of opinions.



Figures. Cameo. Harpocrates. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum. From: G. Tassinari, *Joseph Eckhel e le gemme, antiche e 'moderne'*, in Bernhard Woytek - Daniela Williams (eds.), *Ars Critica Numaria. Joseph Eckhel (1737–1798) and the Transformation of Ancient Numismatics*, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Klasse, Denkschriften, 541, Veröffentlichungen zur Numismatik, 66, Wien 2022, pl. 16.1-2 (<https://austriaca.at/8774-5inhalt?frames=yes>)



**Alessandra Magni** is a teacher and independent researcher (Alma Mater: Università degli Studi di Milano). Since 1992 she has been working on the classification, inventory, and edition of the gem collection of the Museo Archeologico al Teatro Romano in Verona; she is member of AIHV - Italian Committee. Her publications pertain to different aspects of glyptics.



**Gabriella Tassinari** collaborates with the Department of Cultural and Environmental Heritage of the Università degli Studi di Milano and various museums and institutions in Milan, Lombardy, Italy and abroad. She has written numerous contributions on ancient and post-ancient glyptics, Roman ceramics, and Roman necropoli in Lombardy. She has edited various entries on ancient and modern gem engravers for K.G. Saur (now De Gruyter), *Allgemeines Künstler Lexikon*; she is a member of the scientific committee of the journal *Gemmae. An International Journal on Glyptic Studies*.

## THE AMULETS OF THE KOBAN CULTURE IN THE CAUCASUS REGION

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The sites of the Koban culture of the Late Bronze-Early Iron Age (1000-500 BC) are located in the Central and Northern Caucasus. Their material culture includes a representative collection of various amulets. These objects accompanied burials from the cemeteries of Tli, Styrfaz in the South Ossetia, Koban, Elkhotovo in the North Ossetia, Belorechensky 2, Klin-Yar 3 in the Kislovodsk hollow, and the Zayukovo 3 and Tereze burial grounds in Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachay-Cherkessia respectively. A significant part of these burials has sex and age identification, which allows us to consider the gender - age characteristics of the amulet assemblages.

There are two main groups of amulets: bone amulets and bronze amulets.

Amulets of the first group include animal astragals with a hole, boar tusks, as well as pendants made of dog or fox, red deer, bear and human teeth.

Bronze amulets are made by casting with subsequent destruction of the mould. They are represented by pendants in the form of figures of birds, bull, goat, ram, horse, dog, deer, bear, turtle, snail, and a man. For hanging, loops were made on the backs of the figures or holes perforated in their bodies. Bronze amulets also include pendants shaped like animal heads (bull, ram, goat, dog) and rarely a human.

The combination of a circle and a cross is fixed in cross-shaped pendants of two types - in the form of a mace or equilateral cross as well as wheel-shaped pendants. Pendants with swastika images are rare.

The magical objects also include pellet bells and bell-shaped pendants.

The majority of burials with amulets belong to a rather narrow chronological interval in the range of 800-650 BC. Single burials with amulets can be dated to between 1000-800 BC or 650-600 BC.

A gender and age analysis of the graves with amulets shows that the burials of children were accompanied by pendants made of bone as well as animal or human teeth, and less often by single amulets made of bronze. Individual bronze amulets were typical of male burials (pendants in the form of a bird, a deer, rams' heads, a bull, and an equilateral cross).

Necklaces were numerous in female burials, which included several bronze amulets as well as a variety of beads. Silver, gold or electrum jewelry was present in such female burials, indicating the high status of the deceased women, which can be correlated with priestesses.

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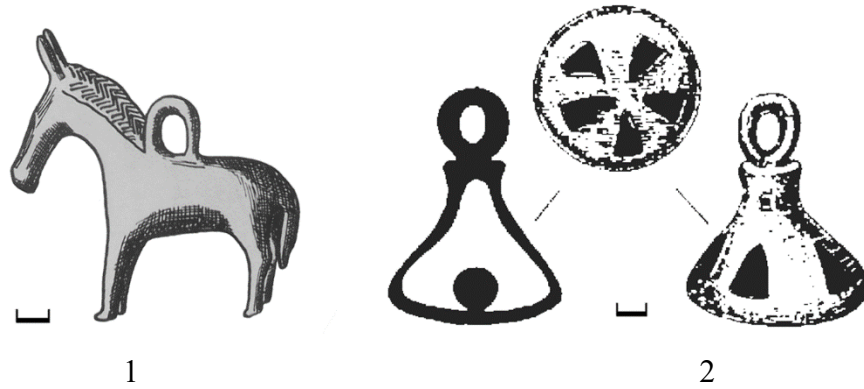


Figure 1. Koban culture amulets. (1) Tli cemetery, burial 214 (bronze figurine of a horse); (2) Industriya 1 cemetery, burial 7 (bronze pellet bell)



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**AZABACHE (JET), AMBER AND OTHER ORGANIC MATERIALS. THEIR USE AS  
AMULET IN *HISPANIA*.**

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Azabache (jet) is a raw material of organic origin used in jewellery since prehistoric times, and which, until now, has received little serious study in the Iberian Peninsula. It is closely related to other organic materials, such as amber, both in its geological origin and in the way it is used. It is common, for these materials, to be combined as part of the same ornamental element, generating rich chromatic contrasts. This is why some researchers have, symbolically, linked this contrast of black and yellow with light and darkness or life and death.

The use of these raw materials always has an ornamental, magical-medicinal, religious and superstitious connotation. This protective benefit is amplified with shapes that acquire a defensive power.

Typologically, examples of jet amulets found so far from Hispanic Roman contexts are scarce in number. This is the case, for instance, for some anthropomorphic and *bullae* specimens (Fig. 1). However, certain types of beads clearly functioned as amulets. This applies, for example, to some beads with circle and dot decoration, which can be included in the category of ‘eye beads’ (Fig. 2). It is also the case in other items of jewellery, such as rings with zoomorphic engravings or inscriptions, which may have had a magical-protective character. A certain magical ritual can also be detected in the way in which these jewels of organic origin are worn, both, in life and in death.

It is common to find these raw materials in funerary contexts, mainly for women and children, transformed into jewellery and amulets, but also in other everyday objects, whose function may also be dual, as a tool and as a protective element, due to the material in which they are made.

Archaeologically, there is persistent confusion between jet and other black materials, such as black glass or shale. However, it is other organic materials such as bone, ivory or horn that actually recreate the macroscopic and sensory characteristics of jet. This is especially the case when these materials have been dyed, perhaps for imitation purposes. For amber, honeyed glass is often used as a substitute for this raw material and is also often confused with it.

In summary, we will take a specific look at the use of jet as an amulet in *Hispania*. Also we will give an overview of its close relationship with other organic materials with which it is commonly combined (such as amber) or confused, in terms of its identification (bone, horn or ivory). We will analyse the choice of raw materials and what classical greek and roman sources tell us about its amuletic use. We will also briefly introduce the artisans, possible workshops or commercial networks of these materials in *Hispania* and the fundamental role played by the bearers. We will also consider typological parallels and the use of other everyday objects made from these raw materials for magical-protective purposes. Finally, we will refer to the typological antecedents and influences on earlier and later chronologies.



Figure 1. Jet amulets. 1.- Anthropomorphic amulet found Astorga (Museo de León). 2.- Head of an anthropomorphic amulet located at Huelva (Museo de Huelva). 3.- Bulla found in Veranes (Gijón). (Museo Arqueológico de Asturias-Museos Arqueológicos de Gijón-Centro Interpretación Villa Romana de Veranes). Imágenes: A. Menéndez



Figure 2. Jet eye beads (detail) and necklaces where this type of beads are combined with amber and black, yellow and blue glass beads. La Olmeda, Pedrosa de la Vega (Palencia). Imagen: A. Menéndez.



**Andrea Menéndez Menéndez** has a degree from the University of Oviedo and holds a PhD in History and Arts from the University of Granada. She is currently working as archaeologist in the field of historical-archaeological heritage management and as a scientific illustrator. She is also a teacher at specialised workshops in this field and she has participated in/directed many national and international archaeological projects. The author of several scientific papers, Andrea has coordinated various activities of both a scientific and informative nature. As a researcher, she is a specialist in the historical-archaeological use of azabache (jet).



**Macarena Bustamante Álvarez** holds a degree and a PhD in History from the University of Cádiz and a degree in Art History from the UNED. She is professor in the Department of Prehistory and Archaeology at the University of Granada. She has been awarded several prizes and mentions. She has taken part in more than 40 international competitive projects and has published more than 50 scientific papers in some of the most high profile journals. She is the author of several monographs, has coordinated several books and has organised various seminars, conferences and

exhibitions.

## **AMULETS IN CONTEMPORARY PORTUGUESE CULTURE: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL EXPLORATION OF SYMBOLISM AND SIGNIFICANCE**

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This research aims to analyze amulets from a symbolic and anthropological point of view. In addition, we would like to determine, if at all possible, whether amulets are still significant to Portuguese people.

A group of 48 people from various parts of continental Portugal were observed for five years with relation to their customs surrounding the wearing of amulets and carrying out routine household rituals.

The study employed a qualitative methodology, utilizing exploratory interviews and direct observation as primary data collection techniques. Additional methodologies, including life narrative gathering, documental analysis, bibliographical research, and participatory observation were also included. Life stories, diaries, and letters were all subjected to the content analysis procedure, which made it possible for analysis aspects to emerge.

Regarding amulets, there is a substantial corpus of scientific anthropological literature. These symbolic artifacts have been investigated by anthropologists as part of larger investigations into material culture, religious doctrines, and symbolic systems. Depending on the theoretical approach, these are some important points of view from anthropological research on amulets: functionalism, symbolism, cross-cultural approach, structuralism, and cognitivism, among others. Additionally, studies on historical and economic anthropology provide an intriguing viewpoint on amulets.

We thought it necessary to examine several anthropological viewpoints on the subject. To achieve that, we will investigate the following methods: historical approaches, which trace the development of talisman use over time within specific societies or regions; functionalist approaches, which provide an idea regarding the functions of talismans within societies, often focusing on their role in providing psychological comfort and social cohesion; symbolic analysis, which examines the symbolic meanings of talismans within specific cultural contexts; and a medical anthropology approach, which examines the use of talismans in healing practices and their role in traditional medicine systems. Finally, a cognitive anthropology approach investigating the connections between talisman beliefs and larger cognitive patterns and cultural frameworks.

Anthropologists from the past and present, both Portuguese and international, will be cited to convey these viewpoints from various locations and eras.

A comprehension of the complex human cultural fabric requires a grasp of the relationship between amulets and the anthropology of the symbolic. Amulets are more than just ordinary things; they are symbols with a multitude of deeper meanings and purposes that are found in almost every society.

Based on the four primary functions that emerged from the 48 informants' life stories, letters, diaries, exploratory interviews, and observation of their daily practices, we aim to share in

this communication how the informants standing relates to amulets and the significance they assume in their daily lives. Therefore, their protective role—which includes warding off evil and guarding against illnesses and dangers—identity—which they mark as belonging to a social, religious, or family group—power—which they associate with supernatural powers or authority figures—and memory—which they can serve as family heirlooms or mementos of significant occasions carrying memories and affections—will all be examined.

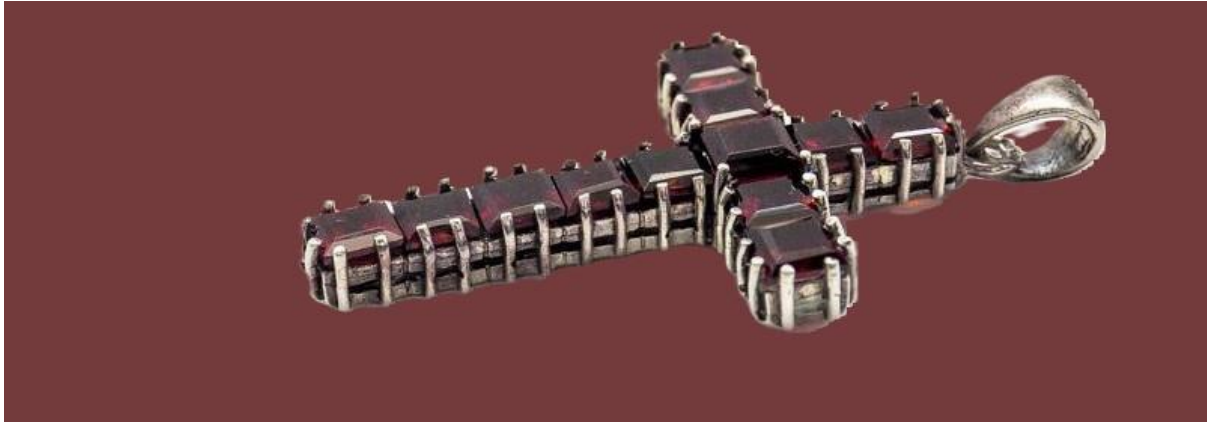


Figure 1. Cross (author's photograph)



**Ana Piedade** has a PhD in Anthropology, specializing in Social and Cultural Anthropology, from the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences of the Universidade Nova de Lisboa. She is a Coordinating Professor at the Polytechnic Institute of Beja (IPBeja) and a researcher at CRIA/In2Past - Research Network Centers in Anthropology, UNL-FCSH. She coordinates the Territorial Animation Laboratory (Lab-AT)/IPBeja and has collaborated on projects cofounded by the European Union, the Camões Institute as well as the Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT). She represents IPBeja in RESMI (Higher Education Network for Intercultural Mediation); at Kastalia Network (Higher Education Network) and is a Focal Point at the

School of Education for the National Strategy for Development Education. Current topics of scientific interest, with articles already published, embrace: anthropology of play, anthropology of body's anthropology, anthropology of food, education, development, citizenship, community intervention, intercultural mediation, cultural diversity as well as minorities.

## GOLDEN AMULETS DEPICTING THE ATTACK ON THE EVIL EYE

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The evil eye was - and often still is - considered the source of many problems. Defending against it is a difficult task, in which amulets play an important role. Perhaps the most typical and Roman amulets are those depicting an attack on the Evil Eye.

*Praebia* of this kind are the most illustrative illustration of the idea of taming the malevolent gaze, combining three key ways of defending against it. Firstly, the apotropaic power was attributed to the very gold from which they are made. The second way of diverting the harmful gaze from a potential victim is by redirecting it to a shiny and unusual target, which such pendants certainly are. The third element is the motif itself: aggressive, powerful animals, sharp weapons, divine elements and the phallus as a source of life force threaten and attack the eye.

This motif is familiar from reliefs, mosaics, frescoes, small objects and amulets. The latter attracted the attention of collectors and researchers as early as the 18th century. These earliest examples later found their way through private collections into the world's greatest museums, often, unfortunately, without any locality data. More recent finds give us at least the locations, but most of them are still without context.

Today, we know of around 20 such objects. For various reasons only Western European specimens have been better known and considered in studies, but they are just as commonly found in the Balkans. Since the motif is also known from the Middle East and North Africa, we can expect to find amulets of this type there as well.

The vast majority of them are similar: they are round, made of gold sheet and with an embossed motif. Yet the differences in design are such that we can speak of different makers. They also differ in the way they are fastened: most have a loop at the top, some at the back, and a few have other attachments. The characters shown are not always identical either. Alongside the various dangerous animals (lion, elephant, snake, lizard, scorpion, bird, etc.) and weapons (dagger, trident, lightning, bow, etc.), there is usually also a phallus, which takes on an animalistic nature with its wings.

Some specimens are known or at least suspected to have been found in necropolises, probably in children's or girls' graves. The tentative dating of the contexts places them in the first or second century, but such amulets seem to have been valued and reworked, with at least one specimen being worn for several centuries after its creation. The attacked eye remains a popular amulet motif in Late Antiquity, but from that time only bronze examples are known with narrowed range of involved characters.



Figure 1: A gold pendant found at Zgornji Hajdina near Ptuj (Poetovio), Slovenia in 1893. Diameter of the plate 17 mm. Kept at the Universalmuseum Joanneum Graz.

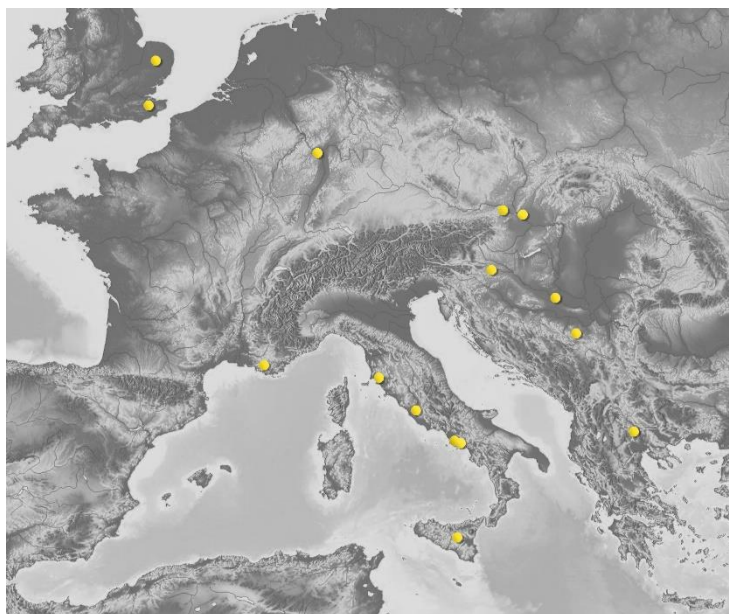


Figure 2: Distribution of gold pendants and plaques depicting the attack on the Evil Eye.



**Andrej Preložnik** is an archaeologist, interested in selected chapters of material culture from the Iron Age to the Middle Ages (especially jewellery, fibulae, amulets, writing implements, and armaments), both the practical use of these objects as well as their broader and symbolic meaning - in short, anything that gives us an insight into life and beliefs at a certain time.

## Snakestone Amulets and Talismans

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By the end of the thirteenth century, western European medicine had inherited medical texts from Greco-Roman and Arabic traditions, which themselves had been influenced by neighbouring cultures. The received texts included references to remedies using ‘snakestones’. ‘Snakestone’ is a term which can apply to five different types of material, unified by their supposed connection to snakes – either visually resembling snakeskin, or believed to be formed by snakes. This work considers four types of snakestone: serpentinite, glass beads (or similarly shaped substitutes), ammonites and stones reportedly extracted from the head of a serpent. When used medicinally, these snakestones were usually applied topically, however, there is also a significant body of evidence as to their use as amulets. This paper assesses the amuletic function of four types of snakestone, considering the similarities and differences between their amuletic and topical functions.

Serpentinite, and other minerals whose patterns are reminiscent of snakeskin, were worn as amulets for good health, believed to ward away various illnesses, such as the plague, and to repel poisonous creatures. Serpentinite, often called *ophites*, can trace its amuletic pedigree to Pliny the Elder’s *Historia Naturalis*, which held that serpentinite amulets could cure headache and snakebite. Its use against ailments associated with the head or brain, and with snakes, persisted into the seventeenth century and occasionally beyond.

Snakestones in the form of glass beads or spindle whorls are particularly strongly represented in English folklore. They are frequently held to have been purposefully generated by the action of serpents. The shape of these beads suggested a rudimentary eye, and they were frequently credited with the ability to cure eye diseases. This association was, however, extended to the supernatural sphere, and these beads began to be associated with magical ‘sight’, prophesying, and the ability to ward off the evil eye. These stones began to be associated with hagstones, naturally holed stones, which themselves had a strong amuletic tradition and were hung in houses and stables to protect the occupants from witchcraft.

The amuletic tradition of ammonites shares some similarities with glass beads and from the time of Pliny the Elder were associated with prophesying and accruing luck. The English tales of Saints Keyna and Hilda credit the saints with expelling snakes from the locality, and the fossil ammonites found there are said to be the petrified remains of the offending reptiles. They are thus associated with protection against serpents when worn as amulets but have also come to be associated with protection for mariners.

Snakestones said to be extracted from inside the head of certain serpents had various amuletic applications: the accrual of wisdom, wealth, happiness and fame, humoral rebalance of excessive phlegm, as well as protection against and cure of snakebite. This type of snakestone has also clearly evolved from amulet to fashion, a process which started as early as the second century AD. Today, a prominent jewel on the head of a serpent is a popular motif and features particularly in the jewellery of Kenneth Jay Lane and Bulgari.



**Rachael Pymm** is an Honorary Research Associate at Royal Holloway, University of London, and holds a PhD in medical history from the University of Exeter. Her primary research focus is the medical and magical applications of geological and animal-sourced *materia medica*. Her work has been published in edited volumes *Geology and Medicine: Historical Connections* by the Geological Society, London and *Medical Heritage of the National Palace of Mafra* by Cambridge Scholars, and in the journals *Folklore*, *Pharmaceutical Historian* and *History in Pharmacy*. She has presented at conferences including the Leeds International Medieval Congress (IMC) and “Geology and Medicine” hosted by the Geological Society, London.

## FOREHEAD TALISMANS

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Operating on the premise that an amulet is believed to repel bad or negative forces from the bearer and that talismans are intended to accrue positive forces, this paper explores the symbolism and functions of forehead-worn talismans, most frequently jewels. Focus on the location in which the talisman is worn informs its function. The wearing of talismans on the forehead other than in the short term is particularly difficult, and reflects how bearers were considered divine, magical or otherworldly.

This paper surveys formal religious and informal folk beliefs from a range of cultures and geographies. For example, forehead-worn items feature in Buddhism, Hinduism, and Judaism, serving a religious purpose. While they are absent from Christianity, indications as to why this is can be gleaned from Biblical references. Tantalising hints can be found in Phoenician, Syrian and Nubian material culture. Animals with jewels within and atop their heads appear in medieval European bestiaries, and indigenous North American legends. With respect to the latter, and animals believed to hold a gem in their heads, consideration is given to the differing powers ascribed to forehead stones in situ, compared to those of a forehead gem captured from its host.

In modern times, the forehead talisman has become firmly associated with psychic or enhanced mental powers. The final section of this paper surveys some of the ways in which forehead talismans feature in modern culture, particularly literature, jewellery and entertainment.

**Rachael Pymm:** see previous page for biography.

## FUNERAL WREATHS AND THE REPRESENTATIONS OF MEDUSA IN THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH AT CALLATIS

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The ancient city of Callatis (Mangalia, Romania) was founded in the 6th century BC by the Greeks from Heracleea Pontike and became one of the most important cities on the western coast of the Black Sea. The city's development is also proven by funeral finds. Among these discoveries are ceramic disks bearing representations of Medusa fixed on lead, bone or ceramic wreaths, which are undoubtedly amulets. Amulets with the image of Medusa are used to enhance qualities such as power, victory, wealth or love. They are also used to heal medical problems, wounds or diseases and to remove causative demonic influences.

The representations of Medusa known so far at Callatis are ceramic discs or medallions (52 pieces), bronze appliqués (4 pieces), ceramic protomes (5 pieces) used for apotropaic purposes, two ceramic antefixes and a fragment of marble pediment. In total, there are 65 pieces. The oldest depictions of Medusa have been dated to the 4th-3rd centuries BC, while the most recent ones are from the second third of the 4th century AD. The majority of the pieces date from the Hellenistic era (4th-2nd centuries BC) – 59 artefacts – and from the Roman era – 6. In the Hellenistic era, ceramic discs or medallions are the most common form. However, in the Roman era, larger ceramic protoms and bronze appliqués became the dominant style, used as decoration for various objects. This reflects a change in perception: from an object with a well-defined apotropaic function to a simple element of decoration with an aesthetic character.

Catalogue:

1. Funeral wreath that accompanied a *kalpis*-type vessel, consisting of 7 similar, gilded ceramic discs bearing the head of Medusa. On the reverse, a small channel was made for the passage of the thread that fixed the disc onto the wreath (Fig. 1). Date: 3rd century BC.
2. Funeral wreath with a lead frame, on which 34 gilded ceramic discs were fixed, with the Medusa head of the "*gorgoneion*" type. Date: third quarter of the 4th century and the beginning of the 3rd century BC.
3. Seven ceramic medallions discovered together with a circular clay frame. Of these, on two medallions, the figure of Medusa can be clearly distinguished, surrounded by a circle of pearls. The other five have a smaller diameter, are very faintly printed, probably with Medusa. Date: IV-III centuries BC.
4. Ceramic pendant with the representation of Medusa, decorated with black paint, with the representation of Medusa's face (Fig. 2). Date: II-III centuries BC.



Figure 1. Funeral wreath that accompanied a *kalpis*-type vessel



Figure 2. Ceramic (black slip terracotta) pendant with the representation of Medusa



**Laurențiu Radu** graduated from the Faculty of History at Ovidius University in Constanța, Romania, after which he worked at the „Callatis” Museum of Archaeology. He completed his doctorate at the University of Bucharest in 2011 with a thesis on the end of antiquity in Dobrogea. He worked as an archaeologist at Callatis-Mangalia and Noviodunum-Isaccea and has published numerous articles on these sites in the journals *Pontica* and *Peuce*. As a scientific researcher for over 20 years at the "Callatis" Museum of Archaeology, he has dealt with a range of topics related to the Dobrogea region, with a particular focus on the city of Callatis. His research focused on funerary discoveries in Hellenistic and Roman necropolises, as well as cults and beliefs in Callatis during these periods. He has also studied glass artefacts found in Callatian tombs, including vases, pendants and rings.

## AMULETS IN ANCIENT BENGAL: INTERSECTIONS OF ART, RELIGION, AND DAILY LIFE

**Sufi Mostafizur Rahman & Sabikun Naher** (Department of Archaeology, Jahangirnagar University, Savar, Bangladesh)

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In human history, amulets have played a vital role as symbols of spirituality, protection, and cultural values. From the early historic period to the early medieval period (4th century BC to 12th century CE), these artifacts from ancient Bengal paint a vivid picture of religious and cultural life. Through the use of an interdisciplinary approach combining historical texts, iconographic research, and archaeological evidence, this study investigates the artistry, symbolism, and beliefs linked with amulets in ancient Bengal.

Since the Harappan period, people on the subcontinent have worn amulets. In ancient Bengal, archaeological sites like Bangarh, Chandraketugarh, Mahasthangarh, and Wari-Bateshwar have yielded a plethora of amulets made of diverse materials, although semi-precious stone beads are dominant. A lot of amulets have ambiguous, specific intentions that can be hard to determine. However, amulets are mentioned numerous times in various items of Vedic literature, such as the Atharva Veda, the Kaushika Sutra, etc. A ship-shaped charm is said to ensure safe travel in the Kaushika Sutra. An axe-shaped amulet, which has been around since the Vedic era, is said to help restore a man's honour. Amulets in the shape of tortoises were worn as symbols of longevity.

Amulets made in Bengal are expertly crafted from terracotta, metal, semi-precious and soft stone beads. These amulets have a rich and varied symbolism that is derived from the various religious traditions in the area. The imagery is dominated by religious symbolism, fertility symbols, and protective motifs, which represent the amulets' functions in attracting divine protection, fending off evil, and guaranteeing wealth. The integration of Buddhist and Hindu imagery underscores the syncretistic nature of Bengal's spiritual landscape.

In addition to serving as jewelry, amulets were utilized in a variety of cultural customs and rituals, often being dedicated by religious figures. This study offers a thorough explanation of how these diminutive but powerful artifacts functioned as channels for heavenly blessings and protection, providing important new insights into the religious and cultural practices of ancient Bengal. Further interdisciplinary research will continue to uncover the deeper meanings and enduring legacy of these enigmatic artifacts.



Figure 1. Stone Amulet from Wari-Bateshwer, Narsingdi (Photo courtesy: Pathan Collection)

This grey soft stone amulet, presently housed in the Pathan Collection, Narasingdhi, was discovered at Wari-Bateshwar, one of the early historic sites in Bengal. Measuring 52x22 mm, this amulet is marked with an elaborate core design depicting two devotees worshipping a deity, characterized by iconographic attributes: a sword in the right hand and a shield in the left. An earthen pot, popularly known as *ghata*, was also engraved on the bottom of the deity. The presence of the two holes at the upper corners indicates this amulet might be worn as a pendant. The aesthetic appeal of the thin plaque is further enhanced by the palm-like tree behind the devotee on the right, which reflects the artistic skill and symbolic depth of Bengal's religious iconography.



**Sufi Mostafizur Rahman**, born in Kurigram in 1964, is a distinguished Archaeology professor at Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh. He completed his BA in History and MA in Archaeology at Jahangirnagar University and earned his PhD from Deccan College, Pune, India, with research on "Archaeological Investigation in Bogra District." A Charles Wales Visiting Fellow at the University of London, Rahman has published over fifty research articles and several influential books, including *Wari-Bateshwar: Shekorer Shondhane* which won multiple awards. He has led major excavations at Wari-Bateshwar, Vikrampur, and Dhaka Old Central Jail. An ardent heritage conservationist,

he founded the Archaeological Research Centre 'Oitihya Onneswan' and established the Bhai Girish Chandra Sen Museum, Buddhist Lotus Temple Site Museum, and Wari-Bateshwar Citadel Open Air Museum. His work has earned him numerous accolades, such as the Shahid Munir Chowdhury Award 2017. Currently, he chairs the International Council of Museums (Bangladesh National Committee), having previously served as its secretary from 2017 to 2020.



**Sabikun Naher** is an archaeologist and currently serving as an associate professor in the Department of Archaeology at Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh. Her academic journey began at Jahangirnagar University, where she completed both her BSS and MSS in archaeology. Seeking to expand her expertise, she embarked on an Erasmus Mundus Joint Master's degree in 'Archaeological Materials Science' at Sapienza University of Rome, in collaboration with the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece, and the University of Evora, Portugal. Her research interests mainly include archaeometallurgy, medieval warfare and military tactics, the politics of museum display, and conservation. At her institution, she teaches

'Introduction to Archaeology', 'Ancient World Civilization', 'Theory and Practice in Archaeology' at the undergraduate level, 'Archaeometallurgy of South Asia' and 'Museum Education and Archaeo-Chemistry' at the graduate level. She is an active individual member of International Council of Museums (ICOM) Bangladesh and a life member of the Indian Society for Prehistoric and Quaternary Studies (ISPQS).

## AMPHORA-SHAPED GLASS BEADS FROM LA ALGAIDA SANCTUARY (SANLÚCAR DE BARRAMEDA, CÁDIZ): SYMBOLISM BEHIND ANCIENT AMULETS

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The pre-roman sanctuary of La Algaida, also known as Monte Algaida or Cerro del Tesorillo, is located in the eponymous pine forest, north of Sanlúcar de Barrameda (Cádiz, Spain). Situated at the mouth of the Guadalquivir River, at the entrance to the Betic inlet, this strategic position endowed it with a cosmopolitan character by connecting the Atlantic and Mediterranean regions. This is reflected in the diversity and quantity of documented ex votos, among which we highlight some glass and carnelian beads with distinctive typology. Traditionally, these amulets have been interpreted as "mammellas", anatomical ex votos representing the shape of a female breast, thus linking them to the invocation of a nurturing female deity worshiped at the sanctuary. However, after a comparative analysis with other examples from the Aegean and the Mediterranean, we propose a new interpretation for these objects, now seen as representations of miniature amphorae.

This type of ex voto is widely dispersed throughout the Mediterranean, with documented examples in Israel, Cyprus, Greece, the Aeolian Islands, and other places. This new perspective on the amulets suggests a more complex functionality and symbolism, which could offer new insights into the religious and cultural practices of the time. With this proposal, we aim to contribute to the understanding of Mediterranean interconnectedness and to the re-evaluation of the meanings attributed to the ex-votos of the La Algaida sanctuary within a broader and more diverse context.



Figure 1. Different Amphora-Shaped Glass Beads from La Algaida sanctuary (Sanlúcar de Barrameda, Cádiz).



A PhD student of Archaeology at the University of Seville and a member of the HUM-152 Research Unit, **Carmen Ramírez Cañas** completed her bachelor's degree (2021) and master's Degree in Archaeology (2022) at the University of Seville, receiving the Award for Best Academic Grades in both cases. She is currently part of the Project "Tarteso olvidado (en los Museos) 2: redes urbanas vs paisajes rurales. PID2022-139879NB-I00 (2023-2027)" at the University of Seville. Her main line of research focuses on the study of pre-roman Maritime Coastal Sanctuaries in the southwest of the Iberian Peninsula and their exchange networks. Additionally, she has participated in archaeological projects, both within the Iberian Peninsula (Spain and Portugal) and in Mediterranean contexts (Italy, Turkey, and Greece). Furthermore, she is advancing her training activity with research stays abroad, such as her current stay at the Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche (CNR) - Istituto di Scienze del Patrimonio Culturale (ISPC), in Rome (Italy).

## **THE MEANINGS OF AMULETS AND MODELS OF THEIR USE (BASED ON MATERIALS FROM MODERN STORIES OF BREST RESIDENTS)**

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From ancient times (the earliest amulets, found on the territory of Belarus, date back to the Neolithic period, in particular, in the settlement near the village of Kamen, Pinsk district, Brest region) to the present day, amulets have existed in Belarus – objects endowed with a high semiotic status, worn or kept by the owner as a magical means of giving him special powers and capabilities, ensuring good luck in various endeavors and protection from harmful witchcraft, the evil eye, diseases, infertility, evil spirits, etc. In some groups of modern society, amulets and similar “magical objects” still remain incorporated into various interactions (interactional settings), acquired (bought) or received as a gift (usually from a mother, spouse, friend). The stories about amulets that I have recorded in the Brest region over the last 10 years make it possible to distinguish, on the one hand, the meanings assigned to this or that “magical object” (which need interpretation), and, on the other hand, the scripts (inscriptions) inscribed on the object (i.e. patterns of its use).

According to the stories, the amulet could be made both by “knowledgeable” people (blacksmiths, healers) - for example, a cross made of aspen - and by the “users” themselves (when going to war, men made crosses for themselves from aluminum spoons, which allowed them, although severely wounded, but alive, to return home; women copied prayers from each other for illnesses and troubles, etc., as amulets). Typical answers to the question that I asked 19–22 year old Brest residents in 2024 (“Do you or your friends use amulets?”) include messages that they wear a pin, a cross, a red thread (usually on the wrist), various pendants, keychains and bracelets made of semi-precious stones (like a cat's eye), selected according to the zodiac sign.

Often there are images which refer to the semiotic systems of Slavic (graphic symbols, images of piercing and cutting tools, horseshoes, bells, keys, characters of demonological prose, fairy tales, etc.) and non-Slavic mythology (dragon, ouroboros, eye [of divine wisdom], pentacle [Solomon], knot [Taliesin], swastika [Saturn], axe [Zeus], Yin-yang, etc.).

When choosing amulets, the main attention is paid to information gleaned from the media about their magical properties, to the manufacturer’s (seller’s) description of their symbolism and miraculous abilities – to ensure happiness (including family), health, eternal youth, career growth, perfection and, interestingly, knowledge about the future (through prophetic dreams).

Practices and attitudes towards the amulets vary from taking them seriously, placing great hopes on a “correctly” chosen, “charged” and “tied” amulet to the owner (and then the “attributed” and “read” meanings of the amulet can become the subject of relatively detailed reflexive interpretations of the respondent) before purchasing such items simply to create an image, a general mood. Many of the modern practices described are quite comparable with ancient ideas, on the one hand, that the amulet itself has magical power emanating from its material, and on the other hand, that the magical properties of such objects should be “activated” under certain conditions (for example, place and time – full moon, “place of power”).

Such an object-agent can serve as the subject of “long and persistent” (several months) appeals to it by the owner with a specific request. When asked “Has an amulet ever helped?”, characteristically, not only “frivolous” but also “serious” owners most often answer: “Rather no than yes.” Associations, worldviews and “stories” verbalized in the context of the question asked about amulets deserve special attention.



**Professor Ina Shved**, Full Professor at Anhui University, is also Director of the Center for the Study of Belarus, and a Member of the Steering Committee of IOV Science and Research Commission for Europe. Her main scientific interests are related to ethnosemiotics, gender studies and cultural anthropology (cultural codes, meanings recorded in the “language of culture” of the relevant local communities; long term traditions; traditional and modern folklore; rituals in communities that arose on the basis of oral culture, etc.). She has written about 550 articles published in national and international press, and her monographs include *Plant Symbols of Belarusian Folklore* (2000), *Dendrological Code of Traditional Belarusian Folklore* (2004), *Space and Man in Belarusian Folklore Dendrological Code* (2006), *Slovak folklore: forms, genres, poetics* (2010), *Mythology of color in the traditional spiritual culture of the Belarusian* (2011), *Arnithological code of the Belarusian traditional spiritual culture* (2019) and tutorials entitled *Student Folklore Practice* (2007), *Introduction to folkloristics* (P. 1–2; 2009, 2010) and *Belarusian mythology. Cosmology* (2018), *Belarusian mythology. Anthropology. Demonology* (2019). She has also co-authored *Man in relation to animals, plants and machinery in the culture* (Poland, 2014), and *Words and things in language and literature* (Poland, 2014).

Unfortunately, Professor Ina Shved will not be able to attend the conference.

**REMNANTS FROM THE REALMS OF MAGIC - GREEK AND ROMAN AMULETS  
FROM THE *MARIA AND DR. GEORGE SEVEREANU* COLLECTION**

**Alina Streinu and Dan Pîrvulescu** (Bucharest Municipality Museum, Romania)

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The Maria and Dr. George Severeanu collection comprises over 3000 archaeological artefacts and more than 9000 coins. Most of the artefacts span the period from Classical to Late Antiquity, covering numerous categories – ceramic, bronze and terracotta figurines, adornments, etc., originating mostly from the Black Sea area.

From this impressive collection, our presentation will focus on three types of Greek and Roman amulets: *Gorgoneia* (both bronze and gemstones; Fig. 2), seven phallic pendants (Fig. 3) and two magic gemstones with depictions of the goddess Hecate (Fig. 1) and *gryllos*. The phallic amulets were usually worn around the neck, the gemstones on adornments, rings, necklaces and earrings, whereas the morphological features of the *Gorgoneia* make them more likely to have been used attached to other objects, e.g. vessels, small boxes, furniture, etc., perhaps both for apotropaic protection and as adornments. Although information concerning the provenance of many of the artefacts from the collection is scarce, we know that some pieces originate from Tomis, Romula and Cladova, and assume that the rest could also have been purchased from sites in the larger Black Sea area, by means of analogies and similar discoveries. Among the magical gemstones, one is unique in the collection: the triple goddess Hecate *triceps* is shown frontally on green jasper, holding her attributes: the hammer, sceptre, knife and whip, as well as two torches placed over two opposing altars (Fig. 1). She wears the crescent moon (*lunula*) on her head. The three categories of artefacts relate to different personal and social behaviours, but all took part in the daily lives of the people, revealing an intricate set of practices and common displays of personal beliefs.



Figure 1: Gemstone depicting the goddess Hecate



Figure 2: Gorgoneion from Tomis



Figure 3: Phallic pendant



**Dr Aleina Streinu** holds BA, MA and Ph.D degrees from the Faculty of History, University of Bucharest. Since 2016 she has been an archaeologist at the Bucharest Municipality Museum. From 2008, Alina has participated in archaeological excavations in Romania (Tropaeum Traiani, Argamum, Acic Suat, rescue excavation ancient and medieval settlements) and abroad (Ephessos, Labraunda, Mytilene), as part of diverse research teams coordinated by the University of Bucharest, Romanian Academy, National Museum of History, Agence Nationale de la Recherche (France), Louvre Museum, Österreichisches Archäologisches Institut, Institut Français d'Études Anatoliennes, and Laboratoire HISOMA (Lyon, France). Her main field of research is the study of Roman period settlements and Roman material culture, with a particular focus on the production, distribution and use of goods, as part of local and regional economies.



**Dan Pîrvulescu** obtained the title of doctor in history in 2015 at the Romanian Academy. He is a numismatist and archaeologist, specializing in the study of the medieval period and in monetary discoveries from Romania. As an archaeologist, his expertise is in archaeological goods and historical sources, and an organizer of prestigious exhibitions in Romania and abroad. Dan has participated in several conferences on numismatics and archaeology and is the author of a volume dedicated to the emergence of the first Romanian medieval coins as well as some chapters in encyclopedic volumes and over 25 specialized studies. Since 2005, he has been working at the Bucharest Municipality Museum, and from 2017, he has been deputy director within the institution. He is the founder and chief editor of *the Journal of Archaeological and Numismatic Research* (2015-present), a publication accredited by the National Council of Scientific Research in Romania and indexed in international databases. In partnership with other institutions, he is also the organizer of the "Archaeological and Numismatic Researches" Symposiums held at the Bucharest City Museum (2015-present).

## A COLLECTION OF AMULET PENDANTS FROM OMAN

**Sigrid M. van Roode** (Leiden University/NIMAR)

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This contribution will present and examine a collection of 50 amulet pendants from Oman, dating from the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The collection is remarkable in its variety of materials: among the materials are coral branches, glass bottle stoppers, pieces of bone, teeth, horns, thorns, nuts, stones, flint, and even tiny pieces of plastic. Each of these has carefully been set in silver or even gold, and often the setting is as finely decorated as regular Omani jewellery. This equal treatment of both valuable materials such as coral, and ‘worthless’ materials such as bone or flint, encasing them in silver and gold, raises the question how we are to understand these items. In this talk, I will examine three aspects of the collection: its material diversity, modes of wearing, and cultural context.

First, I will introduce the range of materials used, as well as their geographical provenance: the collection includes materials that have been imported as well as materials that have been sourced locally.

How and by whom these pendants were worn is also relevant, especially in the context of jewellery. These pendants were worn strung in between the solid silver beads of heavy necklaces as worn by married women in certain regions of Oman, but also attached to headdresses, or threaded on rope to be worn by children. Incorporating them into regular necklaces places these amulets both in the domain of visible personal adornment and in regional traditions.

Using three case studies (Bohemian glass amulets, bottle stoppers and flint), I will then integrate the previous two aspects in an exploration of how studying these amulets in the specific cultural context of Oman, taking into consideration the fluidity of lived informal practices and the perceived capacities of specific materials, is vital for understanding their agency.

When studied as objects in their cultural context, this relatively small collection shows how amulets carried meaning on multiple levels, in varying circles of social interaction, and for individuals from various age groups and social background.



Figure 1. Part of the Omani amulet collection. Photo and collection Sigrid van Roode.



**Dr. Sigrid van Roode** is a jewellery historian, archaeologist, and ethnographer. Her main research interest is jewellery in the context of amulets and informal ritual. She obtained her PhD at Leiden University with *Silver of the Possessed: Jewellery in the Egyptian zār* (2024). On her website [bedouinsilver.com](http://bedouinsilver.com), she offers blogs and teaches online courses. Her Instagram account [@bedouinsilver](https://www.instagram.com/bedouinsilver) shares the world of jewellery with a wide audience.

## THE APOTROPAIC POWER OF SOUND: THE BELL AMULETS

**Alexandra Vieira** (Polytechnic Institute of Bragança (IPB) Portugal)

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Based on the analysis of the collection of small Roman bells in the D. Diogo de Sousa Museum of Archaeology (Braga, Portugal), the aim of this paper is to analyse the use of bells as amulets and the importance of the sound they produce to ward off evil spirits, bring good luck and protection.

Throughout history, bell amulets have been used as symbolic artefacts by different societies. These amulets are usually made of metal, are small and are designed to make a soft tinkling sound when the wind blows through them. Roman bell amulets are known by a variety of names depending on their characteristics and functions. Terms such as 'tintinnabula' and 'campanula' are directly applicable to these objects. The metal 'tintinnabula' sculptures contain anatomical features of human or divine figures or phallic parts at their centre, with several bells hanging on chains below the main figure. They probably served as wind chimes and were intended to be hung in a building or garden, for example.

In Europe, bell amulets were often used in folk magic and protective practices. Small bells were hung on doors or worn as components of necklaces and bracelets. During the Roman period, bell amulets had specific characteristics that reflected the beliefs, religious practices and everyday life of the Roman civilisation. They used advanced metal casting and moulding techniques, and the Bells were often small and delicate (Fig. 1), designed to produce a clear, ringing sound.

Bells were used in domestic contexts to protect the home and family, but they could also be found in public spaces such as temples, sanctuaries and cemeteries (adult and child graves). They varied in size, but many were small enough to be worn as personal adornments, hanging from necklaces, bracelets or clothing.

The Romans believed that the sound of the bell had the power to purify the environment and create a barrier against evil forces. Indeed, in many cultures, sound is considered an effective means of warding off evil and protecting individuals and communities from negative influences. This phenomenon is known as the apotropaic magic of sound, and its importance is evident in various traditions and practices around the world. Sound, with its ability to create vibrations and resonate at different frequencies, is often used as an apotropaic tool, believed to have the power to repel evil entities and negative energies. The sound of the bell is often associated with purification and the removal of negative influences.

Small bells have been found in the Iberian Peninsula in different archaeological contexts. This paper focuses on the bells of the pre-Roman and Roman periods published or reported in the archaeological literature of the Iberian Peninsula, as well as those deposited in museums and collections. We intend to systematise the information and analyse the archaeological objects and their contexts (when possible), in order to contribute to the understanding of the apotropaic power of the sound of bell amulets.



Fig. 1. Bell-amulets in bronze . Roman period; Cividade, Braga. Dimensions 2,2 x 2,5 x 0,1 cm. MADDs (Braga, Portugal)



**Alexandra Vieira** is an archaeologist and researcher. She holds a bachelor's degree in History and Archaeology (2001); and a PhD in Archaeology (2015) (Faculty of Arts, University of Porto - FLUP). She is currently Professor at the Department of Arts and Humanities, School of Communication, Administration and Tourism - Polytechnic Institute of Bragança, an institution at which she started working in 2003. Her work explores the relationship between archaeological remains and social memory through the study of legends, oral traditions and place names. She coordinates the ArchaeoLore Group project.

## ANIMAL TEETH AS AMULETS IN THE BRONZE AGE PERIOD

Selena Vitezović (Institute of Archaeology, Belgrade, Serbia)

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Animal skeletal elements have been used for the production of personal ornaments since Palaeolithic times. In particular animal teeth were widely used from the Upper Palaeolithic into the historical periods. Animal teeth required minimal modifications, usually just the addition of a perforation in the upper part, and they were then aligned onto a string to create a necklace or bracelet, or sewn onto an item of clothing. Teeth were presumably selected for their morpho-technic characteristics, as well as their symbolic meaning and value, both of which were derived from the connection with the animal from which they were taken. The teeth of some animals were used more than those of others – in particular, residual canines of red deer and canines of Canids were widespread in different geographical and chronological settings.

This paper will analyse animal teeth used as decorations in the Bronze Age, within the Maros cultural group, widespread in the river Maros (Moriš, Mureş) basin in present-day northeastern Serbia, southeastern Hungary and western Romania. Two necropolises were excavated in the Banat region in Serbia during the second half of the 20th century : Ostojićevo and Mokrin. Grave goods consisted of ceramic pots, bronze jewellery and weapons, gold jewellery, as well ornaments fashioned from shell, bone and teeth. In particular, animal teeth were quite frequent. Most commonly, dog teeth (*Canis familiaris*) were used, although teeth from other animals also occur – residual canines of red deer (*Cervus elaphus*), teeth from equids (*Equus sp.*), etc.

The number of teeth varies considerably from grave to grave; at some just one or a few teeth were found, while in some others over twenty teeth were discovered. Wear traces on these objects produced during use are very interesting. All the teeth were used (their perforations are polished and worn), suggesting they were used during the lifetime of an individual person and not just produced for funerary purposes. Furthermore, the degree of in-use wear differs amongst teeth found together in the same grave, suggesting that the ornamental piece that contained them (necklace, bracelet) was enriched and/or repaired during the period of use. Their positions in the grave suggest that they were used as necklaces, but were also incorporated onto items of clothing – most likely, sewn onto belts. Moreover, some of the amulets produced from lithic raw materials or from shell imitate to a certain extent the morphology of animal teeth, particularly that of red deer residual canines. Within Maros culture cemeteries, they are mainly associated with female graves, but they have also been found as lost or discarded items in settlements.

The symbolic meaning of these amulets cannot be identified with certainty; however, certain hypotheses can be made, which are complementary (i.e., not mutually exclusive) – their long use and traces of repair suggests they were valued items, their association with female graves suggest they were perhaps used to display status and/or identity. Furthermore, their traits – frequent presence in graves, strict choice of animal species, as well as long use and traces of repair suggest they also had apotropaic and/or prophylactic meaning, most likely connected with the meaning ascribed to the animals from which the teeth were taken.



Fig. 1. Amulets from animal teeth from the site of Ostojićevo.



Fig. 2. Amulets from animal teeth from the site of Mokrin.



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## SLAVIC AMULETS - EXAMPLES FROM EARLY MEDIEVAL POLAND

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Amulets are common findings at medieval excavation sites, which may indicate their widespread use among the Slavs. They were used to protect against the evil eye, witchcraft, etc. This “multiple use” amulet was usually passed down from one generation to the next. Objects with apotropaic features included, for example, animal bones, red woolen threads, beads made of cherry pits or bladdernut, belemnites, mica flakes strung on a cord and discs or pendants made of various materials. They were worn primarily in a visible place, around the neck or hanging down to the chest, individually, or as a component on a necklace; sometimes they were placed in pouches or so-called *kaptorgs* (Fig. 1). I would like to present amulets that were used particularly frequently in the early Middle Ages in Poland, based on archaeological material from settlements sites and strongholds. I will explain their role on the basis of written sources and ethnographic analogies.



Figure 1. The silver replica of a kaptorga, from the 10th-11th century, hoard, Chełm Drezdenecki (now Drezdenko, Lubuskie Voivodeship. Dimensions: 5.8 cm x 5.5 cm, silver. (<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kaptorga.jpg>)



**Dr Joanna Wawrzeniuk** specializes in research on early medieval burial mounds and modern cemeteries, especially in eastern Poland. Her research interests also include Slavic beliefs and magic, early medieval Slavic archeology, Slavic folklore, protection and promotion of intangible cultural heritage. She has carried out projects related to funeral rituals in Podlasie, fire cult, and cult of the dead on the Polish-Belarusian border and was the coordinator of the interdisciplinary project: "Cultural and natural heritage of the Białowieża Forest". She is the

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## RECOGNISING AMULETS

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How do we recognise an amulet, talisman, charm or apotropaic device? Whether on an archaeological dig, recording a building, observing a person, browsing at a flea market or triaging a collection bequeathed to a museum, how do we spot such a magically empowered item?

The terminology is contested, but what these categories of objects have in common is a charge – magical, spiritual, religious or emotional. They may be charged by their maker and are also empowered by the belief of the user – not necessarily belief in a divinity, but the belief that the amulet will work.

We may recognise them from our professional or practical experience. We may find clues in symbolism, crafting details or observation of how the item is worn or handled. Some amulets have entire books devoted to them, written by curators, archaeologists, collectors, researchers or, indeed, practitioners, but some are entirely the creation of the owner's imagination. We may simply recognise the aura of power or have a gut feeling that this is something special. Sometimes we are lucky enough to have a note from the owner or maker, but this is rare. Often provenance is uncertain.

Naturally, there are overlaps with decoration and symbols of identity, not to mention the quasi-magical connection found with heirlooms or souvenirs. Medieval Christian pilgrim tokens, for instance, were status symbols, healing amulets, good luck charms, devotional objects, tertiary relics, souvenirs and even guarantors of safe passage. Many also became votive offerings too. Then there is the question of authenticity. Many copies or replicas of familiar charms and amulets are available. These can still be used as the real thing, or just as a decoration. A mass-produced *khamisa* may be a copy of a handcrafted original, but is meant for use; or it could be bought as a tourist trinket. Carefully chosen materials carry greater charge, but if you have belief in its efficacy, then a cheap plastic amulet can still work.

Drawing on magical practice and illustrated with items from the Ickeny Collection, this paper explores these issues of identification and their implications for our understanding of amulets and related objects.



Fig. 1. An Italian-made St Christopher pendant attached to a pierced, 1965 UK half penny coin. This item is unprovenanced, but was clearly important to its original owner. Was it an amulet for protection on a sea voyage? Or meant to protect someone born in 1965? EAMMM : 2019.22



Fig. 2. A pair of hand-carved wooden livestock amulets from the Swat Valley of Pakistan. The left-hand example shows the filled hole where a sacred item (e.g. a verse from the *Qur'an*) was inserted to empower it. EAMMM : 2021.1.1 and 2021.1.2.



**Chris Wood** curates the Ickeny Collection (a developing East Anglian Museum of Magic and Mythology: [www.ickeny.co.uk](http://www.ickeny.co.uk)) and is currently Interim Chair of the Religion, Collections & Heritage Group (a UK-based, international museums and heritage subject specialist network: <https://religioncollections.wordpress.com>). He has helped run Norwich Pagan Moot ([www.norwichmoot.co.uk](http://www.norwichmoot.co.uk)) since the mid-1990s and serves on the committee of Norwich InterFaith Link ([www.norwichinterfaith.co.uk](http://www.norwichinterfaith.co.uk)). Chris is an independent researcher on mythology, magic and the land, writing regularly for *Quest* magazine. Current, on-going research

and writing projects include animist Paganism and re-indigenisation, Pagan perspectives on ‘Seahenge’ (the Bronze Age timber circle controversially excavated in NW Norfolk in 1999), the use of the X as an apotropaic sign, past responses to climate and environmental change through the lens of mythology, and the common basis of consecration and ensoulment rituals in responses to human birth and death.