

21TH INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON ANCIENT BRONZES Budapest, 20–24 September 2022.

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The "International Congress on Ancient Bronzes" conference series has been around for more than five decades. It is the most significant gathering for researchers into these find groups (Fig. 1). The first conference, held in 1970 in Nijmegen, was followed by others every 2–3 years. The seventh iteration of the series in 1982 was the first one with close ties to Hungary, as it was hosted by the Szent István Király Museum in Székesfehérvár (for the proceedings of that conference, see J. Fitz, ed. 1984. *Bronzes romains figurés et appliqués et leurs problèmes techniques: Actes du VII^e colloque international sur les bronzes antiques*, Székesfehérvár, 1982 *Alba Regia* 21: 5–136). The prestige of the conference series is reflected by renowned institutions housing the events in Cambridge, Madrid, and Lyon. Before returning to Budapest, Hungary in 2022, the event was held in Zürich (2013), the Getty Museum in Los Angeles (2015), and Tübingen (2018). The presentations of all twenty previous congresses are available in proceedings volumes.



Fig. 1. Logo of the conference series
International Congress on Ancient Bronzes

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Although the series have "ancient" in its name, it does not focus only on bronze objects from the Antiquity but every archaeological period from prehistory up to early modern times (though most presentations discuss finds from the Greek and Roman cultural sphere). The topics include large statues and statuettes, bronze vessels, pieces of attire, and instruments, completed lately – due to recent advances in archaeometry – by statistics in archaeology and the analysis of material and technological characteristics.

The idea to hold the conference in Budapest first arose in 2017. Originally, the event was scheduled to 2020, but it became postponed first to 2021 and then to 2022 due to the pandemic. Finally, it became realized in September 2022 as an event co-hosted by the Faculty of Humanities of the Eötvös Loránd University and the Hungarian National Museum. Approximately 120 participants registered from 22 countries, including archaeologists, art historians, conservators and natural science experts from renowned museums, research institutes, and universities. The conference was a hybrid event, which about half of the participants attended personally, the rest, online (Fig. 2).

The conference comprised 50 presentations in 11 sessions in English, German, and Spanish. Following the traditions, the conference started with the *Large Bronze statues* session: in the opening lecture, Gunvor Lindström from DAI presented a new research project into Hellenistic and Parthian statues from Iran. Next, Colleen Snyder and Seth Pevnick, conservators from the Cleveland Museum of Art, presented a new 3D

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Fig. 2. Participants of the 21st International Congress on Ancient Bronzes

model and various technological observations made on a near-lifesize statue of the “Cleveland Apollo” that acquired by the museum in 2004. Andreas Vordos (Greek Ministry of Culture and Sports) and Georgianna Moraitou (National Archaeological Museum of Athens) reported about the results of iconographical and material analyses conducted on a fragment of a colossal statue from Aigio.

Topics related to Italy, including votive bronze statues from the Diana sanctuary in Nemi (by Federica Grossi), bronze objects from the Mantua region (by Margherita Bolla, Verona) and Late Roman bronze workshops in the Marche region were collected in the *Rome and Italy* session. Despite being in Italy, Pompeii and Herculaneum were granted their own session, where Kenneth Lapatin, an organizer of the 2015 congress, and Erik Risser (both from the Getty Museum in Los Angeles) presented new hypotheses about the satyr statue from the *Villa dei Papiri*. Valeria Meirano (University of Turin) presented the effects of the 1943 bombing on the bronze statues of the Museo Pompeiano. A series of presentations focused on a DFG project, titled “New Light from Pompeii,” by Ruth Bielfeldt (Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich); the lectures by Ute Klatt, Alessandra Giumlia-Mair (AGM Archeoanalisi), Ruth Bielfeldt, Susanne Bosche and Johannes Eber (Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich) all discussed bronze candelabra and other lighting equipments from the 1st century AD.

Ancient Greece also had a session of its own. Sophie Descamps (Louvre), Benoît Mille (CRRM) and Pascale Richardin (CRRM) gave presentations about the Apollo sanctuary in Didyma, Stephanie Stoss (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Wien) presented a Late Hellenistic candelabrum depicting a centaur, and András Patay-Horváth, head of the Department of Ancient History at ELTE, proposed an entirely new reconstruction of the Serpentine Column in Delphi.

Two scholars from the Katolische Universität Eichstätt-Ingolstadt, Nadin Burkhardt and Aura Piccioni, organized a session with six presentations on the large bronze statue record of the Roman provinces. The reports following the two introductory lectures (by Nadin Burkhardt and Norbert Franken), presented bronze statue fragments from *Germania* (Claudia Sarge, INRA Luxembourg and Ulrike Wolf, University of Frankfurt), *Lusitania* (Trinidad Nogales, Museo Nacional de Arte Romano, Mérida), *Hispania* (David Ojeda, UNED) and *Raetia* (Aura Piccioni and Roland Schwab, Tübingen).

Three lectures focused on *Pannonia*: László Borhy (ELTE) presented a new piece of ornamental horse armour discovered at *Brigetio*, now in the collection of the Hungarian National Museum, while Csilla Sáró (ELTE) surveyed enamelled brooches from the territory of Komárom-Esztergom County in Hungary. Finally, Zsolt Mráv (Hungarian National Museum), gave a summary of figural bronze ornaments recovered from wagon burials in Pannonia.

The session about bronze vessels has always been one of the important ones on conferences into the research of the archaeological bronze record. Accordingly, the topics showed a great variety including *Campanian* vessels from the 1st century AD (Klara De Decker, Münster), Sarmatian burials (Mikhail Treister), and vessels from the Hun (Orsolya Heinrich-Tamáská, Leipzig and Stephen W. Merkel, Bochum) and Migration Periods (Tivadar Vida, ELTE and Stefan Lehmann, Halle-Wittenberg), completed by presentations by Silvia Mustată and Sorin Cociş on an assemblage from Cluj-Napoca (Romania), and by Miroslav Vujović (Beograd) on bronze vessels from Serbia.

The session on small bronze statues included presentations on artefacts related to oriental cults in the territory of Albania (Sabina Veseli), finds from Wareswald (Philip Kiernan, Kennesaw State University), and a bust of Alexander from Oarda-Bulza (Mariana Egri, Cluj-Napoca, Matthew McCarty, University of British Columbia and Aurel Rustoiu, Cluj-Napoca). Péter Kovács from the Damjanich János Museum in Szolnok outlined a connection network based on bronze objects between the Middle Tisza Region and the Northern Balkans in the Late Iron Age. Fabienne Karl (Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich) demonstrated how a new software may be used in analysing the production of bronze casting moulds.

The final day of the conference started with the session *Do ut des*, organized by Arianna Zapelloni Pavia (Charles University in Prague), discussing questions related to votive bronze artefacts. Five presentations addressed different aspects of votive bronze objects from Olympia to Pre-Roman Italy (Cristina Biella, Roma, Arianna Zapelloni Pavia, Prague, Raimon Graells i Fabregat, Alacant, Vana Orfanou, Dublin and Azzurra Scarci, Mainz).

The last two decades saw a significant upscale in the number of lectures addressing statistics in archaeology and technological and material analysis. Accordingly, the last session of the Budapest conference, on archaeometry, was the largest. Francesco Cantini (University of Florence) and Francesco Grazzi (CNR) held two presentations in the name of their quite large team on the application of non-invasive neutron-based techniques, focusing on imaging and the neutron diffraction method. Anna Patera (Florence) and her colleagues demonstrated the results of a recent conservation project of a statue, the Winged Victory of Brescia. As a result of their work, since October 2020, the statue has been on display again at its site of discovery in Brescia. Rosemary Jeffreys (Oxford) held a technical presentation on the manufacturing method of Hellenistic wires. Uwe Peltz (Berlin) discussed how the teeth of ancient large-sized statues were produced. The chronological endpoint of the conference was marked by a lecture by Omid Oudbashi (University of Isfahan and Metropolitan Museum) and his colleagues on the material analysis of Early Modern Armenian church bells. The conference concluded with two presentations on iconography: Thomas M. Weber-Karyotakis (German-Jordanian University) surveyed the iconography of Apollo, while Ádám Szabó (Hungarian National Museum) presented a Mithric plate discovered in *Brigetio*.

Alongside presentations, four posters were displayed during the congress: one on bronzeworking in the Roman Period *Gerasa* (Stefanie Becht, Eichstätt-Ingolstadt), another on the results of the material analysis of the patina of the Winged Victory statue from Brescia (Francesco Cantini, Francesco



Fig. 3. Bronze Lar statues in the Hungarian National Museum

Grazzi et al.), a third on new Bronze Age artefacts in the collection of the Musée National de Préhistoire (Pauline Rolland), and a fourth about 1st-century AD military equipment from the Crimea (Mikhail Treister and Nikolay Vinokurovm, Moscow).

The Hungarian National Museum welcomed the congress by organising two thematic chamber exhibitions. A Roman bronze statuette, donated to the museum in 2020, from the area of a Roman *villa* near Pomáz was selected "Artefact of the Month". The almost complete statuette depicts a domestic *Lar*, a deity protecting the family inhabiting the *villa* at Pomáz (Fig. 3). The other temporary exhibition, titled "Images cast in bronze. Roman figural bronze artefacts in the collection of the Hungarian National Museum" displayed 27 bronze items and statues of high artistic value from the museum's archaeological collection. The exhibition included a thematic cabinet on the aesthetics of utilitarian bronze items, showcasing bronze vessels used for storage and serving, toilet requisites, bronze lamps that lighted banquets and sleeping quarters, as well as lavishly embellished bronze accessories of wagons. One must highlight the embossed bronze plates that adorned wooden boxes, featuring figural motifs depicting characters of the Greek mythology or biblical scenes, including apostles. Free-standing sculptures constitute the highest-ranked genre of Roman bronzeworking; the figurines comprise both miniaturised reproductions of popular and well-known Hellenistic and Roman stone sculptures and larger-than-life-size reproductions of gods and emperors. The two main exhibits were also free-standing sculptures: a the torso fragment of a gilded bronze statue depicting a centaur from *Sarmizegetusa* in Dacia (Fig. 4) and a Bacchus bust from *Brigetio* (Komárom–Szöny).

The concluding event of the conference was an excursion to Komárom, where participants visited the excavation by the Department of Classical and Roman Provincial Archaeology of ELTE in the military camp of *Brigetio*, a collection of gypsum copies in the Star Fort (Csillag Erőd in Hungarian), and the permanent exhibit of the Klapka György Museum in Komárom. An abundance of positive feedbacks has reflected the success of the 21st International Congress on Ancient Bronzes in Budapest, an event of key importance in improving the recognition and connections of Hungarian archaeology and ancient and art history.



Fig. 4. Bronze centaur statuette from *Sarmizegetusa*