

Military Gear Found in the Dacian Fortress of Racoșul de Jos–Piatra Detunată, Brașov County*

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Rezumat: Prezentul studiu are ca scop introducerea în literatura de specialitate a unor obiecte rar întâlnite în siturile din Dacia pre-romană și anume a unor piese de echipament militar descoperite în cursul cercetărilor din fortificația de la Racoșul de Jos–Piatra Detunată, jud. Brașov.

Cuvinte cheie: Dacia, perioada pre-romană, echipament militar, Racoșul de Jos–Piatra Detunată

Key words: Dacia, pre-Roman period, military gear, Racoșul de Jos–Piatra Detunată

The current study introduces a number of artifacts that are encountered rather rarely in the pre-Roman Dacian sites from Romania (settlements, fortresses, necropolises), namely military gear and weapons.

1. Helmet – nape guard

1a. Context of the discovery. The item was found in *Section I/2002-2003*, m. 9, at a depth of 40 cm, behind the fortress's enclosure wall, in a closed complex, most likely the living quarters of soldiers from the guard of the fortress (Fig. 1/a). We are dealing with a space inhabited at all times, given the existence of a fireplace and a fitting out made of crushed local limestone, which extends the fireplace towards the center of the room. Further evidence consists of the very rich inventory, characteristic of a prosperous daily life, which was found together with the helmet fragment: wheel-modeled cups, mugs, *kanharoi* of "the Celtic type", fruit-bowls, as well as hand-modeled cups, mugs, jars, supply vessels etc. Most of the vessels are whole or broken *in situ*, but they can be reconstituted. Some of them were on top of the helmet fragment which, in turn, was above some of the skeleton of a sheep or goat, fallen over and next to the fireplace (Fig. 1/b).

The position of the entire inventory (over 100 items, mostly pottery) makes it clear that we are dealing with a wall that collapsed when the whole complex was on fire, at which time the items placed on shelves fell around and on top of the larger vessels on the floor, which were found in one piece and with the mouth upwards (two of them even with rush-light cups in them). Based on the position that the other materials had, the nape guard was definitely among the items on the shelves.

On top of the inventory there is a layer of burnt clay with traces of logs, thick planks and wattle, a layer that consists both of the room's wall and of the cover of the fortress's wall (large pieces of clay with the imprints of planks); the thickness of these layer ranged from 10 to 30 cm and was smaller as it went higher. On top of this layer is the wood's soil, mixed with local limestone rocks, which varies in thickness depending on the slope and formed in time out of the earth slides from higher up and from rotting vegetation.

It must be said that the deposits covering the inventory, as well as the substructure of the complex (at a depth of 1–1.20 m) are "weaved" with the trees' roots, some of them several hundred years old, and that this posed a great deal of difficulties for the research. As for the layer of burnt material covering the items, it is almost as certain that it is the result of a (first?) destruction of the Dacian fortification around the time of the Roman conquest, an event that we will not go into at this moment.

1b). Materials, technique. The nape guard is made of brass in the following composition: Cu = 88.81%, Zn = 10.75%, Fe = 0.24%, Sn = 0.19%, plus slight traces of arsenide, lead and silver (we would like to take this

* We have a debt of gratitude to the colleagues R. Ardevan, for the help with the correct reading of the inscription and for offering most of the bibliography on it, Al. Suceveanu, the first one to be shown the inscription and who offered us some of the bibliography on the topic, and L. Petculescu, for the fruitful discussion regarding the item and the description as well as for the willingness to provide us with some of the bibliography on the Roman weaponry; warm thanks to our colleague T. Bader (Germany). for sending some books and studies which otherwise would not have been accessible to us.

opportunity to rectify the statement made on the occasion of the publishing of this item in *Tyragetia* where, in the absence of the metallographic analyses, we said we were dealing with lead). It was made by both casting and hammering. After being cast, the plate was modeled and finished while being warm, in several stages, by banging. Particular attention was paid to reinforcing the edge, an operation which created a flange with an “inner” groove, marked with a chisel at an angle, which left a mark ranging between 5 and 13 mm in length and 1-2 mm in width. Hammering was also used for bending the “collar”, which went up towards the calotte, as the marks of the tool are perfectly visible on both sides.

There are also details which raise some questions in regard to the craftsman’s skill. The most striking thing seems to be the line of the flange, which is far from linear, a defect that cannot be attributed to the hammering and the chiseling but rather to the lack of accuracy on the part of the matrix.

It seems that the varying thickness of the tin is also a result of the banging while being warm, as the nape guard is wider where the tin is thinner. In any case, the marks of a hammer with a very small convexity are visible all over the “inner” side (towards the wearer’s body), while the visible side shows only three marks, all of them in the lower part (left one) of the item.

There are no other visible fabrication marks, as the two sharp, isosceles dents that are close to the perforation are from a later period and can have various explanations: in any case, they were made when the item was cold.

We also need to state that the “anvil”-support used during the banging had a fine surface, as the upper part of the item bears the imprint of a very fine “porosity”, similar to sand. It is clear that the banging did not take place on a hard and flat surface.

1c). Size, weight. Based on our data, compared to other helmets, contemporary or not, the nape guard in question is among the large ones. The distance between the extremities, namely the “rounded corners”, is 320 mm, while the edge of the “neckline” is 215 mm long. The width of the ends was unequal from the beginning: 60 mm on the left side and 83 mm on the opposite side. Also unequal is the width of the “neckline”, which is 16 mm on the left side, compared to 26 mm on the other. This “defect”, plus the absence of bolts and perforations, suggests that the nape guard and the calotte were one and the same item and that, originally, they were not detachable. At some point, the nape guard was separated from the calotte and the edge was carefully polished. It is from this “neckline”, on the left side, that one took a 60 mm long strip, by striking with a chisel from both sides, most likely to use it as raw material. The operation is a sign not only of craftsmanship, but also of the care taken not to compromise the item, as the marks left by the chisel were removed by polishing. The operation might have been made by a jeweler, as the strip that was detached was large enough for a fibula or some piece of jewelry. The thickness of the strip is also a little unusual, larger than with the other helmets that we know of, hence the 296 grams of weight. The width varies, both on the nape guard itself (where it ranges between 0.70 and 2.50 mm) and along the neckline (between 0.5 and 3 mm).

We believe that the nape guard was separated from the helmet’s calotte on site, in the fortification from *Piatra Detunată*, which means that the rest of the helmet might be in the settlement, whole or dismembered.

1d). The state in which it was preserved is acceptable, but the wider segment is broken and pierced by corrosion. The cause of the breaking could be an ancient blow. Because of the very strong secondary burning, the metal sheet warped and gained a very rich interplay of yellow-red nuances.

1e). The inscription on the item. On the upper, visible part of the item, 0.7–3.2 cm from the neckline, on a single row, one finds the name of the helmet’s owner. We are dealing with a simple inscription, with “standard” letters, paleographically speaking. The text was imprinted after the metal sheet cooled and hardened, with dotted letters made with a stamp whose tip was smaller than 1 mm. Although the letters are “standard”, they are disproportionate in size, having between 9 and 28 mm in height. The smallest one is the “O” from CORELVS, while the largest is the S from ACVSTVS. The writing might have been “dictated” and not with a matrix, meaning the author was literate.

As with other inscriptions on helmets, the text specifies from the beginning the unit to which the owner belongs, a unit designated by its commander (the Centurion – CL), after which comes the name of the owner (CORELIVS ACVSTVS). So, a mirrored “C” is short for *centurion* or *centuria*, followed by the usual abbreviation for the *gentilicium* Claudius (CL). This leads us to believe that the helmet’s owner was on active duty in a *centuria* (infantry), led by an officer named Claudius, hence: *centuria CL(AUDII)*.

Next come, very clearly, the letters CORELIVS. Usually, they are the *gentilicium* of the military that owned the helmet. However, the Roman onomastics does not record a *nomen gentile* as such, but only a

Corellius¹. We know of one *eques* and three consuls with the *nomen gentile* Corellia. Therefore, the *gentilicium* Corellius is encountered², but our item does not show two “L” letters. On the other hand, this could be the widespread *gentilicium* Cornelius, rarely attested as a *cognomen* as well³.

Therefore, the most reasonable reading, in our opinion, could be *COR(N)ELIVS*, an idea also supported by the inscription *CIL* XII 4694, discovered in Gallia Narbonensis, on which the name Cornelia appears as *Cor<n>elia*⁴.

Just as clear are the letters of the following word, *ACVSTVS*, and not *AGVSTVS*, the letter “C” being identical to the one from *CORELIVS*.

At first glance, the cognomen *ACVSTVS* could seem standard and, as such, accepted, as it is not necessarily depreciative (“The sharp one”). However, besides the fact that such a *cognomen* is not known to us (we do have to mention, nevertheless, that we did not have access to the work of I. Kajanto (1965), a careful observation of the way the letters are arranged clearly shows that between the current “A” and “C” letters, there is not only enough, but in fact an ideal space for the letter that we think is missing, namely “V”. As a result, it is our opinion that we are dealing with neither the name *Acustus*, which is not encountered in any of the authors mentioned, nor *Agustus*. What is very frequent, however, is the cognomen *Augustus*⁵, a reading that we do not find surprising at all, despite the fact that the letter “C” is correct, but it could be the result of the scribe’s lack of attention (“C” instead of “G”). We believe, therefore, that the author missed or forgot to write the letter “V” between “A” and “G”. This statement is supported by an inscription from Belgica⁶, where the name appears spelled as *A(u)gustus*.

In light of the above, we believe that the clearest reading is: (*centuria*) *Cl(audii) Cor(n)elius A(u)gustus* = Cornelius Augustus, from the centuria of Claudius. The owner of the helmet was, therefore, a military by the name of Cornelius Augustus, a Roman citizen from the infantry centuria led by the officer Claudius.

In the Roman world, in the time of the Republic or the Principate or later on, the dotted inscriptions on armory items or offensive or defensive gear are quite many and enjoy a rich bibliography, which we mention in part at the end of this study. In our country, we have two dotted inscriptions on military items: on the bronze mask for a parade helmet found in Comani, in Olt’s waters, close to *Romula*, kept for some time in the collection of A. Papazoglu, but currently found in the *Kunsthistorisches Museum* in Vienna⁷ and on an armor fitting whose discovery site and context are unclear⁸. Both of them are written on bronze, also when the material was cold. There are also the inscriptions from another category of military items, even smaller in size⁹.

2. Bronze ornament from the helmet (Fig. 2/c) (L = 32 mm, D_{max} = 15 mm, D_{min(body)} = 9 mm; MIBv – Inv. no. II 6793). It was made by casting and has the shape of a “spool” with bi-truncated ends and a cylindrical, hollow body; it is decorated at each end with two circular nervures, thin at the end of the bi-truncated areas, with one of them thicker at the maximum diameter, and two other thin, circular nervures on the cylindrical part of the body.

Alone or together with another two, the item wraps around the support for the crest of an officer’s helmet which, most of the times, was made of iron¹⁰.

The ornament was discovered in the same place as the helmet’s nape guard, in the same layer of burnt material.

3. Dagger (Fig. 3-5).

3a). Context of the discovery. The offensive weapon found during the excavation campaign of the summer of 2007, in the divider between cassettes 2 and 3 (C_{2-3/2007}), between m. 3-4, at a depth of 0.68 m. Same as with the helmet fragment, we are dealing with a closed complex – a dwelling, placed in the enclosure, 14 m away from the place the helmet was discovered (Fig. 3/a).

The dagger was covered with a layer of wall rough cast turned red by the fire and with stones from the wall of the fortress, a layer under which there was a large number of Dacian vessels broken on site, but which can be reconstituted. Nearby, there also was a large nail shaped like the letter “L”, 16.2 cm long. Here too, we

¹ Mócsy *et alii* 1983, 88; Solin, Salomies 1994, 64; Lörincz 1999, 75; Klebs, Rohden, Dessau 1897-1898; Groag, Stein 1936.

² Mócsy *et alii* 1983, 69; Solin, Salomies 1994, 61 sqq.; Lörincz 1999, 76-78.

³ Mócsy *et alii* 1983, 88; Solin, Salomies 1994, 64; Lörincz 1999, 76-78.

⁴ Lörincz 1999, 76.

⁵ Mócsy *et alii* 1983, 38; Solin, Salomies 1994, 298; Lörincz, Redö 1994, 228.

⁶ *CIL* XIII 7584.

⁷ IDR II, 378, with bibliography.

⁸ IDR II 660, cf. Petculescu 1974-1975, 83-84.

⁹ Gudea 1982, 59-68; Gudea 1991, 69-80.

¹⁰ Bishop, Coulston 1993, fig. 58/4 etc.

are dealing with a dwelling's rich inventory, specifically, with items that were on shelves but fell on the floor, together with the wall the moment the fortress was set fire to, also around the Roman conquest.

Same as with the pottery, the impact with the floor and the fire slightly upset the complex, as its parts are spread a little. We would like to draw attention to the absence of the organic part of the handle and the back of the scabbard, due to the nature of the material that they were made of, probably wood or leather, which were destroyed by the fire.

The parts that were preserved are as follows: the dagger itself, the visible part of the scabbard, the handle and the system to affix it to the belt. The dagger, handle and affixing hinge are made of iron.

3b1). The dagger (Fig. 4/a; 5/a), triangular in plane, elongated, with two sharp edges, has a total length of 255 mm, 200 mm of which is the blade; the maximum width, towards the handle, is 41 mm, and the thickness, at half-length, is 5 mm. At the handle, the blade has two small, sharp and triangular winglet-stoppers (one of them broken from ancient times), which secured it to the handle.

In section, the blade is a compressed oval. In length, on the middle, it has two grooves that surround a nervure. The latter is also the maximum thickness.

The peduncle, which enters the handle, is rectangular in section, 55 mm long and slightly sharp. It still has the two grooves and the nervure, up to the middle rivet of the handle.

3b2). The handle ($L=85$ mm, $W_{\max}=23$ mm). Shaped like an upside-down "T", it only has one of the two handle parts anymore; the length of the rivets left in it (16-17 mm) can be a decisive argument in favor of the statement that the pair of the iron handle part was made of some sort of hard wood, of such a size that it could be grabbed and handled normally (Fig. 4/c; 5/b).

Grooved along its entire length, the handle is trapezoidal at the upper end and it ends with a horizontal bar; towards the middle, it has a disc-like area, with an orifice in the middle. It came together with the wooden part with the help of five iron rivets; the one in the middle penetrated the knife's peduncle and made it stable inside the handle. The ends of the rivets were in the shape of discs and, for practical or aesthetic reasons; they must have been covered in enamel, bronze or some noble material. As we said before, the handle's pair might have been made of some sort of hard wood or leather, but it burnt completely. Based on the length of the rivets, one can estimate it was 17 mm thick. The handle was assembled with the help of five rivets, two at the ends and one in the middle.

The scabbard was assembled with 15 rivets, positioned as follows: four in each of the two lateral "winglets" towards the handle, three in each of the two "winglets" in the middle and one in the center of the disc at the extremity of the sharp end.

Grooved in order to allow the peduncle to go in, the handle is ornamented with geometrical motifs, shaped like continuous or zigzagging lines, plus vertical or oblique incisions, which could suggest wheat husks.

3b3). The scabbard ($L = 218$ mm, L_{\max} , towards the handle = 48 mm, and "at the middle" = 39 mm; thickness = 2 mm) (Fig. 3/c, 4/b, 5/c). The only preserved part is the one permanently visible. The shape of the scabbard is imposed by the blade and it is triangular, elongated, with a round end pierced by a rivet.

Despite the fact that it went through a very strong fire, the metallic core was preserved relatively well. On the other hand, the burning generated a very thin and brittle oxide casing, partially exfoliated from ancient times. The metallographic analysis performed on the inside, towards the middle of the length, had the following results: Fe=80.74%, Sn=15.20%, Cu=1.70%; there is no As or Ag. On the outside, the analysis came up with: Fe=91.71%, Sn=7.98%, Pb=0.31%; traces of Cu, but no Ag.

Therefore, the tin was used as a film that imitates silver (*argentarium*), which covered the entire surface of the item, as revealed by a more constant layer in the decoration's negative. The larger amount present on the inside is the result of the film's "leaking" from the upper to the lower part, something also confirmed by its "movement" toward the handle which was lower, where the composition is as follows: Fe=96.64%, Sn=3.91%, Pb=0.16%.¹¹

The scabbard, made by forging, pressing and hammering, is ornamented with geometric and vegetal motifs that, even though somewhat elegant, do not endow the piece with particular artistic qualities. The geometric motifs are placed towards the edge and are meant to highlight the central symbol, particularly the military one. From edge to the middle, the succession of motifs is as follows: a) groove on the scabbards contour, with perpendicular, uneven incisions; b) profiled strip with a zigzagging motif, made by hammering; and c) thing groove that also follows the shape of the item.

The central decoration consists of a stylized vegetal motif, with the leading part played by the acanthus leaves seen in profile, placed along a path like a meandering river, with volute on the way and at the upper ends,

¹¹ The metallographic analyses were performed by Dr. B. Constantinescu from the Metallographic Laboratory of the Romanian National Museum of History, in Bucharest.

which points out the fluidity towards infinity of the drawing that takes up all the space. Obviously, the incrustation and the *argintarium* film contributed to this impression.

The decoration on the scabbard of the dagger from Racoș–Piatra Detunată has a good analogue, namely the scabbard from Usk, from the time of Nero: they have the same snaking vegetal motif, but going down, included in a continuous and fluent central panel. We would like to recall the fact that the buckles of the two items are also identical¹². The decoration has its origins in the Mediterranean Orient. From there, it came up in the Etruscan symbolic and in the early La Tène and it carried on until the modern era¹³.

3b4). The hinging system (Fig. 4/d, 5/d). The hinge is made of an iron tin plate, bent along the pivoting axis, plus a whole for the belt, made of a flat strip, 4.5×2.5 mm in section, shaped like a loop, but with the ends arched outwards. The pivoting axis is riveted in the support as well. The hinge is not decorated.

Depending on the hand that used them, this sort of dagger was kept attached next to the belt or the chest, one the side of the body. However, the rivets of our item's hinge only fit the perforations at the end of the handle, meaning it was carried around in the vertical position, which was unnatural and uncomfortable while moving around. For the same reason, we also believe that weapon had lateral fasteners, which were not preserved, and that the one at the end of the handle was just for providing more stability. Same as in other cases, they must have been identical to the one from the handle, the only difference being the number of rivets.

4. Lance ($L_{\text{total}} = 360$ mm, of which the blade is 260 mm); $W = 40$ mm, $\text{weight}_{\text{max, close to the handle}} = 10$ mm; the width must have lost 1-3 mm to corrosion). The item is made of forged iron, with a hollow handle, conical, probably with a gasket (the handle is broken at the end); it has a median nervure, which is present almost all the way to the tip, the section is rhombic and has two sharp edges (Fig. 6/a). At the time of the discovery, it had a thick crust of iron oxide, so it was put through fire; although it is strongly corroded along the sharp edges, it still has enough of the metal core after being restored and it looks like a saw.

It was discovered in S_{1/1995}, at meter 56, at the depth of 0.30m, in the upper of the burnt collapsed wall layer which marks the edge of a room (L_{1/1995}). We are dealing with the same stratigraphic layer as that of the fragmentary helmet and the distance between them (a little over 5m) rules out the possibility that they were from the same room and belonged to the same soldier. The item is a Roman make.

5. Pilum ($L = 190$ mm, $W = 10$ mm). It was found in S_{1/2004}, at the depth of 0.40 m, on the dwelling's floor, under a collapsed burnt wall. It was close to the helmet fragment and in the same stratigraphic layer, and was made of forged iron. The handle peduncle and the most of the rod are rectangular in section and the tip is rounded. Because there is a small rupture, from ancient times, at the end, we cannot say if it had a rivet as well. Based on size, the item is a small-to-medium one. About a third of the length penetrated the handle, which, most likely, was made of wood (Fig. 6/6).

The context of the discovery spares us the attempt to date based on analogies, as it was contemporary with the other weapons. This was a weapon for legionnaires, for as long as they used armor and chain-mail shirts. Because of its efficiency, it stayed around until the Middle Age¹⁴.

6. Slingshot, small and made of iron ($L = 70$ mm, $W_{\text{body max}} = 20$ mm, $L_{\text{peduncle}} = 43$ mm). It was found in C_{3/2007}, section A2, in the same layer of burnt material as the dagger, at a depth of 0.45 m (Fig. 7/a). It was forged out of a flat strip rectangular in section, a single piece in the area of the handle, then split, with the "body" shaped like the letter "W" and with two teeth arched forward, the one on the left broken from ancient times, and the ends having the ends shaped like spheres. It used to have a handle, probably made of wood.

7. Slingshot, large, made of iron ($L_{\text{total}} = 112$ mm, $W_{\text{peduncle handle}} = 12$ mm, teeth opening = 67 mm, $L_{\text{peduncle}} = 65$ mm, $L_{\text{teeth}} = 52$ mm), found in the same place as the previous one, namely C_{3/2007}, section A2. This is a large iron item, made by forging from a flat strip rectangular in section, a single piece in the area of the handle, then split at the end in order to obtain the two teeth arched forward. The peduncle was slightly warped during the making and it is sharp towards the end (Fig. 7/b). The handle might have been made of wood, which is why it was not preserved.

Both slingshots were close to the aforementioned dagger, in the same room, clearly the room of a fighter.

Without further dwelling on the subject, we would just like to draw attention to the fact that our archaeological literature has published similar items, but they were considered to be "forks". For example, we have the items in Cozia, Răcățau and Costești¹⁵.

¹² Scott 1985, 206, no. 65, fig. 2/65.

¹³ Dumitrașcu 1973, 30-46; Mitran 2003, 19-26.

¹⁴ Bishop, Coulston 1993, 48-51.

¹⁵ Glodariu, Iaroslavschi 1979, fig. 64 / 9, 20-21.

8. Slingshot projectile (D = 18 mm), also found in C_{3/2007}, in the profile towards the wall of the fortress, in the same room as the slingshots and the dagger (Fig. 7/c). It is round, made of burnt clay, semifine paste, with sand and mica grains. It is red, because of the secondary burning.

We would like to mention that similar items, some of them made of stone, were discovered in the same fortress as during the previous years and that they will be published in the site's monography soon. The slingshot projectiles are rather frequent in the specialized literature¹⁶. The ones we mentioned are, practically, the same size as the one found in Racoș.

9. Date of the items

One suggestion for dating all the items is provided by the context of the discovery, namely before the first burning down of the fortification: all of them were on the floors of the rooms, under the burnt walls. The event happened a little earlier or even at the same time as as the Romans occupied south-western Transylvania.

A narrower dating, with due caution, is made possible by two of the objects, namely the helmet fragment and the dagger, in fact, by their typology. In other words, the helmet is of the Weisenau type, although all we can do is compare the nape guard. Worn after the middle of the 1st c. A.D., some of the items were pinpointed to the year 69, during the civil war in Rome. The most striking analogy of the item in Racoș is the item found in the river Po, close to Cremona, which is from the year 69 and is currently in the collection of the Museum in Köln¹⁷. Similar items are also in the famous Axel Guttman collection, as well as in Holland, Germany, England, Italy, France, Austria and Spain or Bulgaria, in Ruse¹⁸. In terms of shape, the only difference between these guards' items and those from the time of Traian's Dacian wars is the larger width of the latter.

The perfect analogy with several items of the Weisenau type allows us to place the helmet in Racoș in the decades 6-8 (perhaps 9) of the 1st c. A.D.

As for the dagger, the only differences are in the archetype details, the differences between the items that allow one to distinguish types, groups etc., having as a starting point, first of all, the architecture and motives of the decoration, but also the affixing mechanism¹⁹. We would like to draw attention, in this regard, to the resemblance between the buckle that we found and the scabbard from Mainz, which lacks the support frame for the mobile part²⁰. Based on this detail alone, and not on the theme of the decoration, the thing to remember is that it falls exactly in the Mainz type, in production starting the time of Augustus and used until mid-1st c. A.D.²¹.

Based on the partitioning of the decoration, and not on the motifs, the scabbard of our dagger falls in the same category as the scabbards of the daggers from Usk (Great Britain), from 65-75 A.D.²² and Ristinsen (Germania), from around 50-70 A.D.²³. The resemblance consists of the fact that all three of them have a continuous, unpartitioned decoration.

Fortunately, we are able to come up with a narrower period during which the item was made. The best analogy, in fact a twin of our buckle, is in southern Holland, in Velsen, an item that is from the time of the rule of Claudius²⁴. The mobile part of the "Dutch" buckle has both a support and a loop through which the belt goes that are identical to those from Racoș.

This constitutes further evidence in favor of believing that the dagger in Racoș was made around mid-1st c. A.D. or in the decades immediately after that, after which it was part of the equipment of the Roman troops for a period as long as, we believe, that of keeping the helmet (decades 6-8/9 A.D.).

We believe that the issue of the exact period of helmet ornament, lance, *pilum* and slingshots is superfluous, as long as the first one belongs to said item and the other four were found in the same stratigraphic layer as the helmet and the dagger.

In conclusion, all of the items are, with a degree of certainty, from the third and, partially, the fourth quarter of the 1st c. A.D..

One of the items is part of the defensive gear (helmet), while the dagger, *pilum* and slingshots fall in the category of offensive weapons. The helmet and the dagger belonged to the officers, while the other items could have also been part of the soldier's gear.

¹⁶ Bishop, Coulston 1993, fig. 43 /13-18, from Pförring, Germany etc.

¹⁷ *Roman Military Equipment. Protective Equipment-Roman Helmets*-Agen/Port and Weisenau, fig. 16. Sursa www.romanlegions.info, 15.12.2007 și www.romanarmy.com, 15.12.2007.

¹⁸ Peeva, Sharankov 2006, 25-33.

¹⁹ For instance, Obmann 2000, 8 sqq.

²⁰ Scott 1986, 206, Kat. no. 68.

²¹ „Ab augusteischer Zeit denkbar, die Verwendung bis Mitte des 1. Jahrhunderts wahrscheinlich” - Obmann 2000, 8-9.

²² Obmann 2000, Taf. 4.

²³ Obmann 2000, 9, note 53 and ill. 15 / 26.

²⁴ Bishop, Coulston 1993, fig. 42, 79 and *passim*.

10. How the items get in Dacia?

It is beyond any doubt that the dagger, fragmentary helmet and *pilum* are Roman products, while the two slingshots could have been on site. As a result, the question of how they got into Dacia only applies to the helmet, dagger and *pilum* and, only to some extent, to the other items.

The fact that the gear and the weapons are from the 6-9 decades, together with the trophy features of the former, point to events that happened at the same time. The chronological placing of the helmet and dagger in those decades leads us to think, firstly, of the Dacian incursions south of the Danube, immediately after Nero's suicide (the year 69). From Tacitus²⁵, we have the piece of information that "the Dacians were also on the move, and they were people with no faith and, hence, no fear, for the army in Moesia had left. They were calmly learning of our first events and learned that Italy was in the midst of war and that the whole Empire was torn apart by enmity and conquered the winter camps of the cohorts and *alae*. The Dacians had become masters of both banks of the Danube (our emphasis). As early as then, they were getting ready to destroy the legion's *castrum*, had not Muncianus sent the sixth legion" (the Sixth Legion *Ferrata*, established in 52 B.C. – our note).

The repelling of the Dacians did not bring about the end of their incursions. The same author²⁶, but also Josephus²⁷ confirm that the attacks of the Dacians were anything but few, even though not always successful and, implicitly, resulting in loot.

A slowdown in the Dacian attacks (usually, in alliances) on the south-Danubian Roman provinces takes place after Vespasian (69 A.D.) takes the throne. The Dacians disturb the peace of the great river once again after the disappearance of Vespasian (79 A.D.) and the rule of Titus (79-81 A.D.), at the beginning of Domitian (81-96 A.D.). During this time, the Dacians were ruled by king Diurpaneus, the successor of Scorillo. Iordanes (*Getica*, 76), on the resumption of hostilities, tells: "During the time of Domitian, the Goths [= Getae, our note], for fear of his greed, broke the alliance that they had made in the past with other emperors and began to devastate the Danube's bank, long under the rule of the Roman Empire, obliterating the armies and their chiefs. Back then, the head of this province (Moesia, our note) was, after Agrippa, Oppius Sabinus, while the Goths [= Getae, our note] were ruled by Dorpaneus. There was a battle and the Romans were defeated and Oppius Sabianus was beheaded, while the Goths [= Getae, our note] raided many *castra* and towns and pillaged the lands that belonged to the Empire".

Hadrian Daicoviciu does not rule out the possibility that this attack in the winter for 85/86 was led by Decebal²⁸. Tacitus²⁹ tells that in Moesia "the strengthened camps of the legions and our very rule were hanging by a thin thread".

We do not want to dwell on the measures taken by Domitian for the purpose of driving back the Dacians to the other side of the Danube. The important thing is that he entrusted Cornelius Fuscus with the command of the troops. We would like to recall that in the spring of the year 87, the Dacians, "defeat the Romans in the very first clash, kill their general Fuscus and *pillage the riches from the soldiers' camp*" (our emphasis)³⁰. It was then, most likely, in the Olt Pass from Turnu Roșu, in the opinion of H. Daicoviciu³¹, that the Dacians capture the Roman flags, including that of the 5th legion *Alaudae*.

In the following year, the Romans, led by Tettius Iulianus, secure their victory at *Tapae*, but retreat afterwards and Domitian refuses Decebal's peace offerings. The failure in the Marcomanic war forces him, though, to urgently send dispatches to the Dacian king, in view of signing the treaty that had been repeatedly refused until then. What is of interest to use from this is a particular detail, namely Decebal's attitude and offer: "He accepted the offer, for he faced great difficulties, but did not agree to come himself to talk to him, but sent Diegis with a few men, *to return him the weapons* (our emphasis) and a few captives, as if he only had these³².

Rightfully so, says H. Daicoviciu³³, "the Dacian king had not returned to the Empire, as it would have been normal, *all of the weapons, flags* (our emphasis) and prisoners taken during the war".

The further developments in the relations between the Dacians and the Roman Empire do not constitute the subject of our paper, for they are analyzed, in detail, in many specialized studies and treaties³⁴. We will not dwell on them because the previous lines, which we have from the historians of the antiquity, some of them contemporary with the events, tell us not only that the Dacians and the Romans had armed conflicts prior to the year

²⁵ Tacitus, *Hist.*, III, 46.

²⁶ Tacitus, *Hist.*, I, 2, 1.

²⁷ Josephus, *Bellum iudaicum*, II, 16, 4.

²⁸ Daicoviciu 1972, 279.

²⁹ Tacitus, *Agricola*, 41.

³⁰ Iordanes, *Getica*, 78.

³¹ Daicoviciu 1972, 80.

³² Cassius Dio, *Istoria romană*, LXVII, 7.

³³ Daicoviciu 1972, 284.

³⁴ Daicoviciu 1960, 289-299; Daicoviciu 1972, 112-125, 278-284; Tudor 1964, 11-16; Petolescu 2001, 668-688.

101, but also confirm that, besides destroying some of the Roman fortifications in the provinces south of Danube, they also came back with large loots and with trophies, particularly weapons that were part of the Empire troops' gear. The amount of weapons captured must have been quite great, given that some of the provisions of the treaty concerned the return of the weapons and captives. Therefore, we have from both sides a confirmation of the arrival in Dacia of a significant amount of Roman weaponry, before Decebal brought Roman craftsmen.

We do not know for sure during which of the aforementioned events the items entered the possession of the Dacians. It stands to reason that it was only during those events in which the Dacians were the winners, during the Moesian raids after the death of Nero or after the disaster of Fuscus on Dacian lands. Together with the previous bit of information, regarding the chronological placing of the helmet in Racoș starting with the sixth decade of the first century of the Christian era, the capturing of the offensive and defensive Roman gear and its transport to the Dacian fortress on *Piatra Detunată* could have taken place either in the '60s of that century or, more likely, in the first stage of the Dacian war (Dorpaneus) with Domitian.

Although we cannot come up with clear arguments, we would like to put forward a proposal as to the unit that the weapons were taken from, the unit that foot soldier Cornelius Augustus was a part of. We can rule out the sixth legion *Ferrata* because Mucianus had sent it to repel the Dacians, which is what happens. The weaponry, together with the flags and other objects of military prestige, was captured, most likely, from the 5th legion *Alaudae* (also created in 52 B.C., our note). This one was practically decimated and its commander was killed. Therefore, it makes sense that the centuria led by Claudius might have been a part of this legion, and so did Cornelius Augustus. Once again, this is just the opinion that, at the current stage, seems the most plausible.

We would like to add that in the same Dacian fortress from Racoșul de Jos and at the same layer of burnt material, during the excavations of 1995, one found a strongly burned and warped bronze coin that, according to expert Radu Ardevan, was from the time of Claudius or Domitian. However, there is no evidence connecting it to the aforementioned events.

Not all of the weaponry items obtained by the soldiers on *Piatra Detunată* enjoyed the same treatment: while the offensive weapons were used according to their purpose, the nape guard in question was, first of all, a trophy that gave its owner bragging rights and was kept with great care although, as we saw, a small strip was taken from it, most likely for making jewelry out of it. The attention with which the cut was immediately polished, as well as the helmet fragment's being kept in a visible place in the room several years after being obtained, makes it clear that it was, primarily, proof of the new owner's bravery.

We believe that the status of trophy applied to the dagger as well, which was discovered in the same stratigraphic layer. There is also the issue that it was not used as a weapon during the event that led to the fortress's being set on fire, as its breaking was the result of the impact with the floor, together with the rest of the objects that fell down.

11. Final observations.

The review of the aforementioned items confirms that Roman offensive weapons and defensive gear entered pre-Roman Dacia. From Racoș–*Piatra Detunată*, the fragmentary helmet (the nape guard and the ornament from the support of its crest) falls into the first category, while the second category encloses the dagger, *pilum* and, likely, the two slingshots and their projectiles (of which only one was introduced). The context of the discovery, the time that they are from and the way in which the dagger and the helmet arrived in Dacia support the hypothesis that they are trophies taken by the Dacians from the military clashes that preceded Traian's Dacian wars. The other weapons could have been part of the Dacian soldier's gear on a permanent basis. The quality of the gear and the ornamentation confirm that both common soldiers and officers were present in the fortress permanently, and the helmet and dagger belonged to the latter. In other words, we can conclude that in *Piatra Detunată* we are dealing with a military fort, presumably manned by troops at all times, and that the soldiers' non-military occupations were secondary to the requirements of the military life. The spread of the artifacts in question over a large area, all of it very close to the defense wall, in rooms that were practically adjacent to it, highlight the military character of the community. The abundance, variety and quality of the other vestiges that were found together with the military items support us in saying that these discoveries confirm, first of all, the presence of the military elite, namely the commanders.

Together with the other Dacian monuments from the Olt Valley, from the Perșani Mountains (*The Sacred Mountain* from *Tipia Ormenișului*, the fortress on *Tipia Racoșului*, the towers on the river's left bank and the civilian settlements), the fortress on *Piatra Detunată* can rightfully be called the military center of the area, where soldiers were garrisoned permanently.

One could say that the fortress in question had more soldiers than were needed for guarding the pass from Augustin to Mateiaș and that these men probably participated to the well-known incursions in the Roman provinces south of the Danube and to Dacia's pre-Traian wars, the proof of this being the weapon trophies that we reviewed.

In conclusion, the recent discoveries of military gear from Racoș–Piatra Detunată are doubly important: they enrich the repertoire of Roman artifact that got into Dacia before it was turned into a province of the Empire and they confirm historical facts that preceded the same event, but that we know of solely from written sources.

Translated by Mihai Sîrbu

Drawings: Mihaela Cioc

Photo: Foto Advertising Brașov (the Dacian fortress of *Piatra Detunată*), Fl. Costea (the dagger and the objects found *in situ*), Terezia Simon (the helmet nape guard)

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Fig. 1: a – The Dacian fortress of Racoș–Piatra Detunată (aerial view – foto Advertising Brașov); b – the helmet nape guard *in situ*.

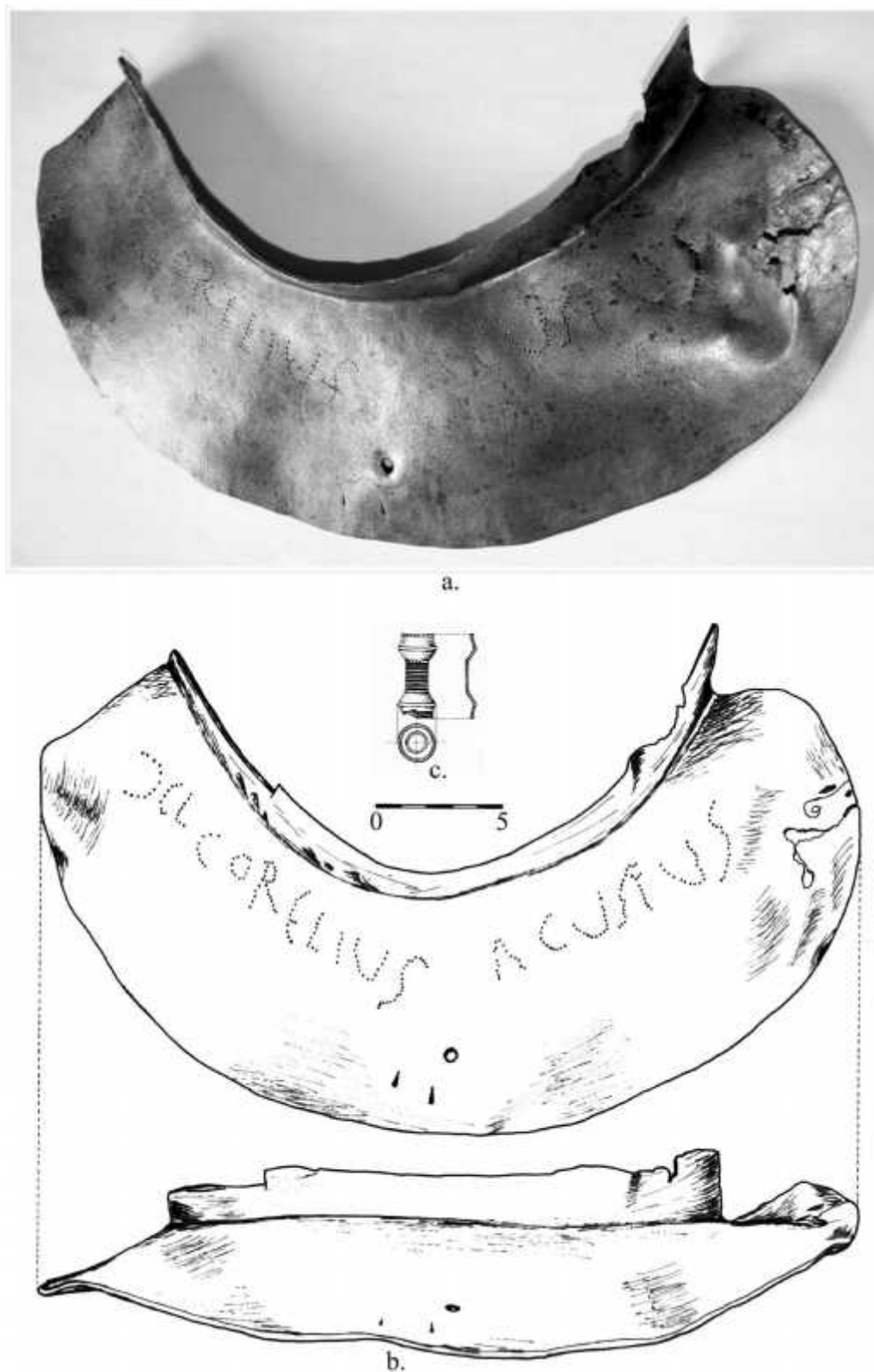


Fig. 2: a-b – Helmet nape guard (photo and drawing); c- helmet decoration (drawing).



a.



b.



c.

Fig. 3: a – The dagger *in situ*; b – the dagger before the restoration;
c – the dagger scabbard (photo).

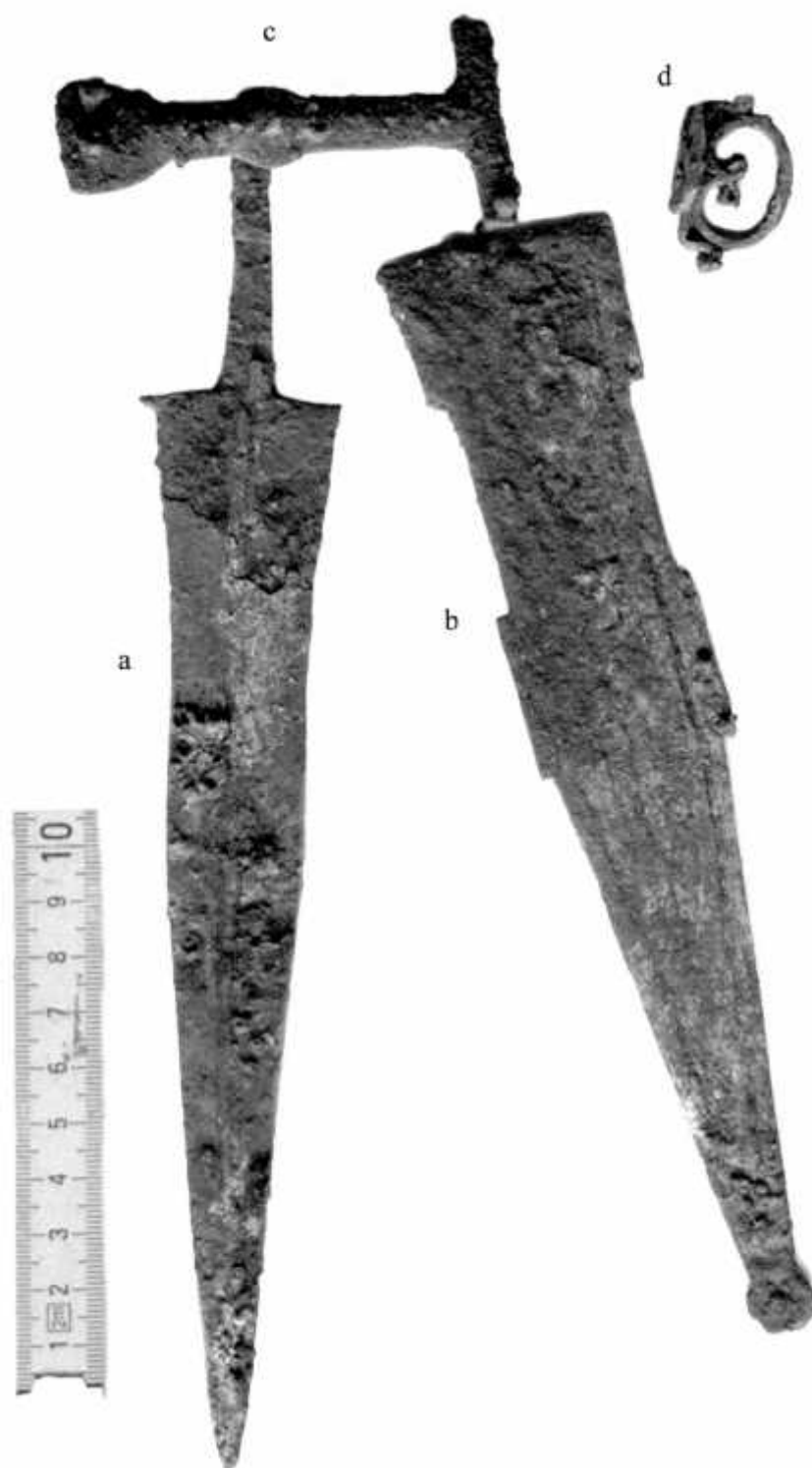


Fig. 4: a-d – The dagger before the restoration (photo).

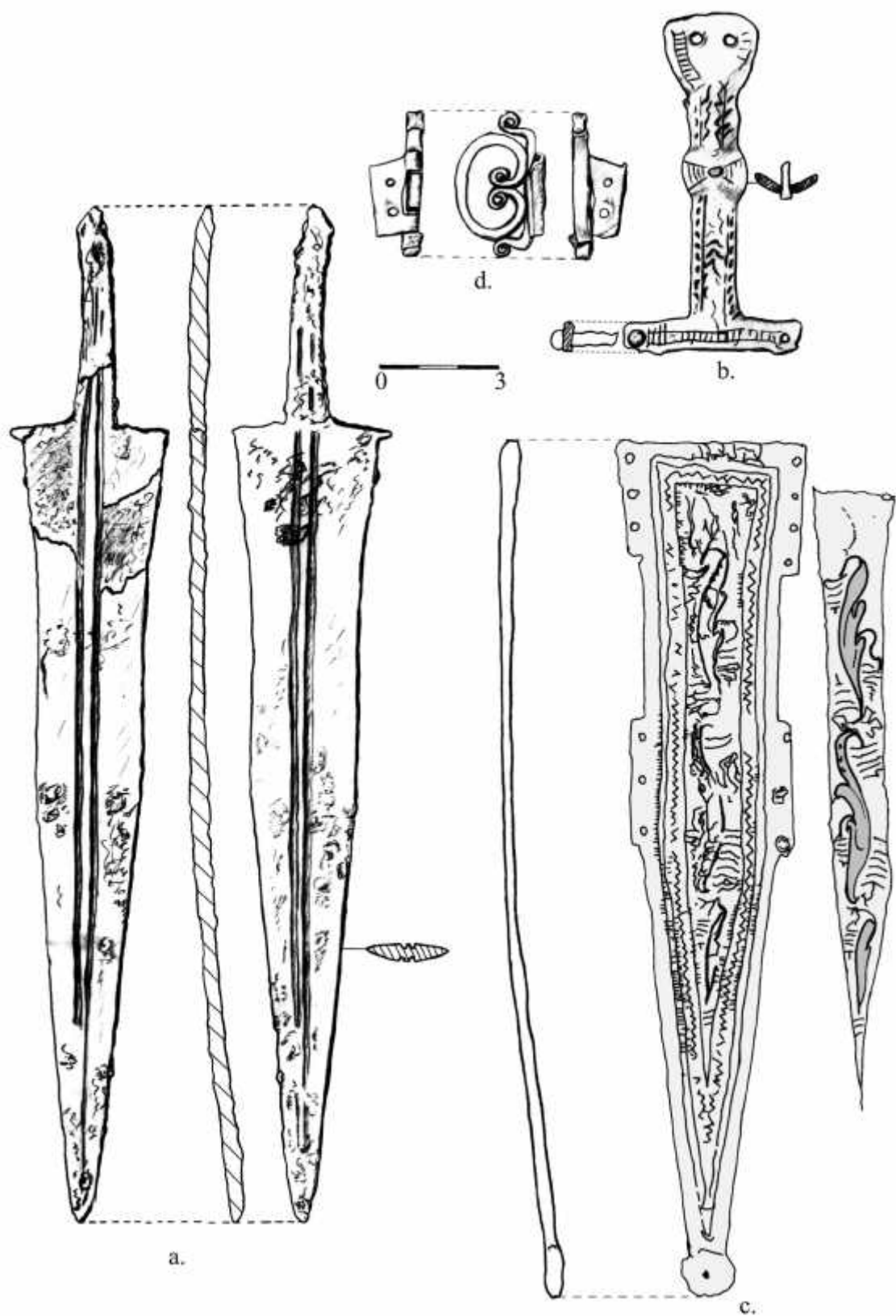


Fig. 5: a-d – The dagger (drawing).

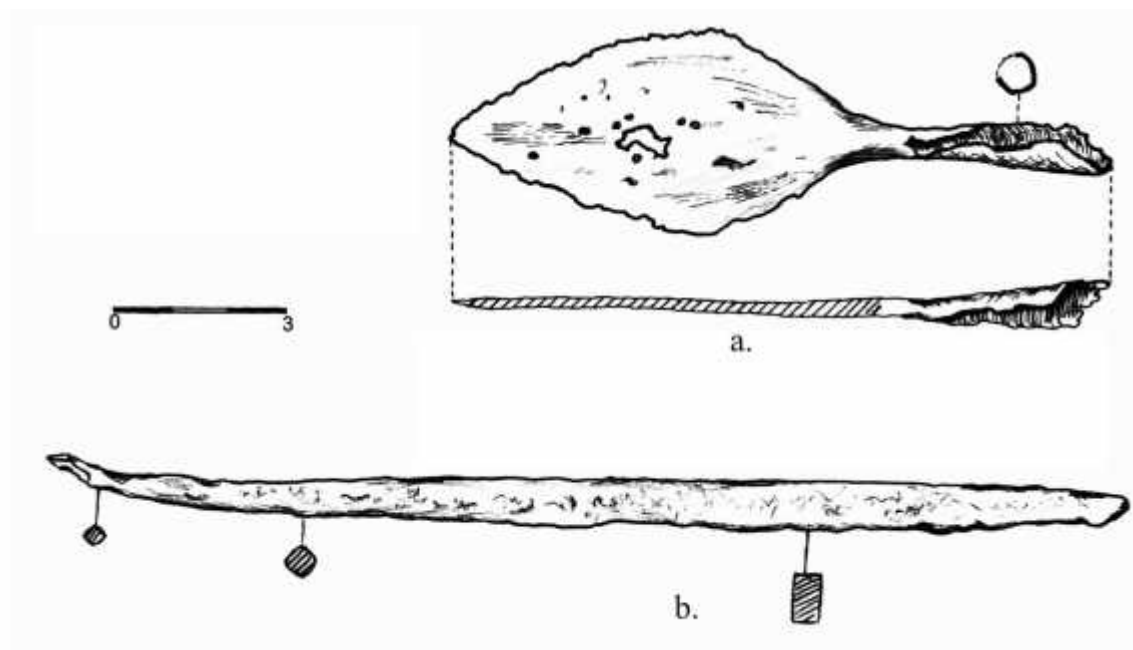


Fig. 6: a – Spear iron head; b – *pilum*.

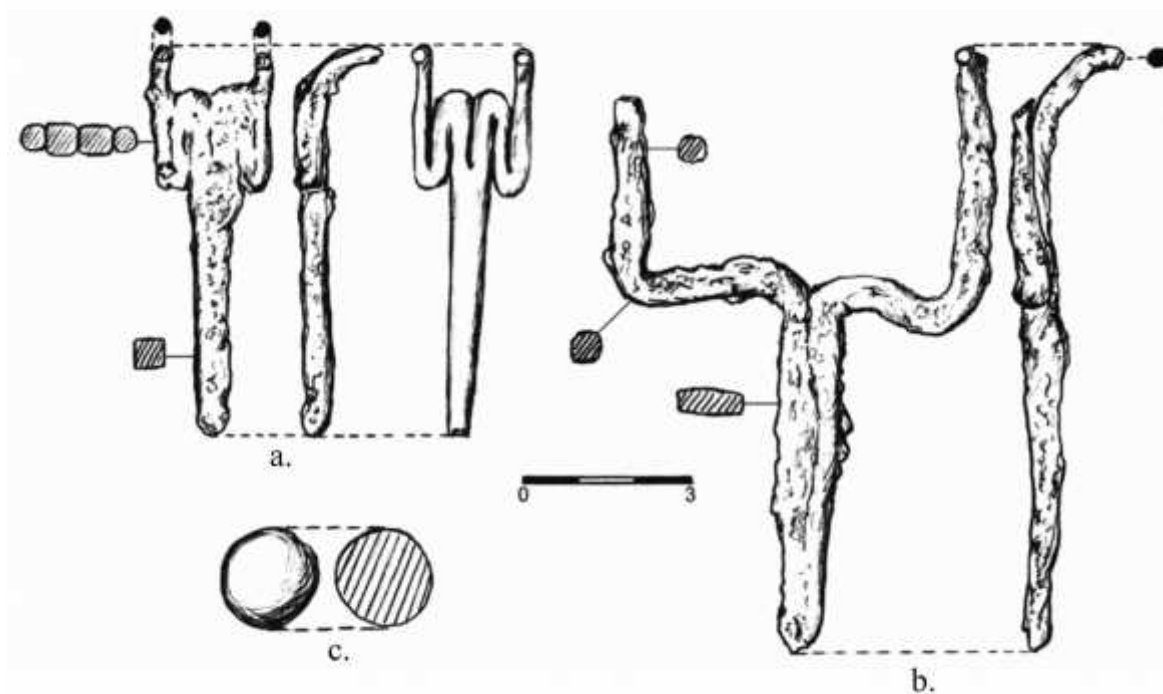


Fig. 7: a – Small slingshot; b – large slingshot.