



INSTITUTE OF ARCHEOLOGY
AND ART HISTORY OF ROMANIAN
ACADEMY CLUJ-NAPOCA



UNIVERSITATEA TEHNICĂ
DIN CLUJ-NAPOCA

JAHA
JOURNAL OF ANCIENT HISTORY
AND ARCHAEOLOGY

editura
MEGA

Journal of Ancient History and Archaeology

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.14795/j.v12i4>

ISSN 2360 266x

ISSN-L 2360 266x



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No. 12.4/2025

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University Press, 2024. XVIII + 713 pages, 71 illustrations, 1 table,
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Design & layout: Petru Ureche



EDITURA MEGA | www.edituramega.ro
e-mail: mega@edituramega.ro

CULTURAL HERITAGE PROTECTION

LOST ARTEFACTS: THE CASE OF THE DACIAN *SICA* WEAPONS FROM THE ORĂȘTIE MOUNTAINS

Abstract: The present study draws attention to the case of three Dacian daggers about which judicial authorities obtained information during the criminal investigation indicating that they had been stolen from the archaeological site of Luncani–Piatra Roșie, Romania—items that are currently listed as wanted objects on the Romanian Police website, yet have nonetheless been resold multiple times through international auction houses. This situation highlights the limitations of the instruments employed by Romanian state institutions to monitor the global antiquities market, a particularly serious issue for a society striving to protect its cultural heritage for future generations.

Our analysis includes all available judicial and archaeological evidence, comparing the stolen daggers with similar artefacts originating from sites in the vicinity of Luncani–Piatra Roșie, in order to provide the academic community with a well-documented perspective on the extent of damage caused by archaeological looting. The findings strengthen the conviction that the absence of such weapons in the Orăștie Mountains—the core of the Dacian elite’s power—contrasted with their presence in nearby fortifications, can only be explained by the systematic looting of archaeological sites and the subsequent illicit circulation of these artefacts on the black market.

Keywords: *Dacian weapons, auction, archaeological looting, forensic archaeology.*

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INTRODUCTION

This study was carried out in acknowledgement of our professional obligation to the preservation and interpretation of archaeological heritage. Recognising that certain hypotheses remain tentative rather than conclusive, we operated to reconstruct a coherent assemblage of data related to three Dacian *sica* weapons registered as stolen in the Romanian Police database. Accordingly, we drew upon every available source, both archaeological and judicial, in order to formulate scientific arguments regarding the archaeological site from which they were removed. Since both judicial documentation and the scientific literature (see *infra*) consistently attribute these weapons to the site of Luncani–Piatra Roșie, we have proceeded on the premise that this information is correct¹.

¹ From the outset, it must be noted that the information documented by judicial institutions is the product of evidence being collected, examined, and cross-checked, with the pursuit of factual truth at the core of their mandate. This process typically involves witness hearings, specialist expertise, wiretaps, and other investigative instruments, and is often protracted, with results that may remain fragmentary. In the case of the three *sica* blades discussed here, we observe that, despite their inclusion in the national register of stolen cultural goods, they no longer appear to have been treated as a priority, likely because they later entered commercial circulation. As long

The study is centred on four core objectives: to document each of the three *sica* daggers², to define their typological and cultural affiliations within the Padea-Panagjurski Kolonii-Mala Kopanya horizon, to infer the most plausible archaeological context of origin, and to reconstruct the route they followed through the illicit antiquities market. Considered as a whole, these objectives seek to recover at least a minimal portion of archaeological truth in a situation where context has been lost and the circulation of the artefacts obscured. The study does not claim to repair what is irretrievable, but endeavours, insofar as possible, to restore the connection between the artefacts, their original context, and the cultural-historical matrix to which they belonged, a scholarly undertaking in which bringing them to public awareness currently represents the only attainable form of justice. The recovery and repatriation of these artefacts remain, quite appropriately, the ethical and institutional endpoint toward which this research ultimately directs itself.

Archaeological poaching has undoubtedly constituted a large-scale criminal phenomenon, characterized by a continuous hunt for artefacts, especially in areas rich in treasure finds. The archaeological reserve in the Orăștie Mountains was targeted by treasure hunters, since oral tradition preserved echoes of famous discoveries of gold coins made by peasants in the early nineteenth century. At the same time, the institutional and administrative shortcomings in ensuring proper guarding and protection created favourable conditions for such illegal activities.

As has been emphasized on other occasions³, following the discovery in 1996 of a hoard of gold “Koson” coins, consisting of approximately 4,000 pieces, the attention of the underworld turned toward a new opportunity for enrichment. Consequently, they relied on local inhabitants who were well acquainted with the toponymy mentioned in the specialized literature⁴.

The criminal environment was hierarchically organized, a fact visible in the control exercised over areas considered significant for their archaeological potential. At the archaeological site of Sarmizegetusa Regia, three criminal groups were active, with connections between them maintained to some extent by local guides. Members of one of these groups also carried out surveys at the Luncani–Piatra Roșie site (Fig. 6), where they identified several objects, including the artefacts that are the subject of the present study.

as stolen antiquities from the Orăștie Mountains, most notably Koson and Koson-Droyeis issues, continue to be traded internationally and monitored by law-enforcement agencies, it is important to highlight that evidence has also been gathered regarding other categories of artefacts during criminal investigations. This study arises from that necessity.

² Although the morphology of this weapon type would more accurately place it within the category of curved knives (*poignard recourbé* in French, *Krummmesser* in German), Romanian scholarship has consistently employed the term *curved dagger*. As the typological implications of this terminology require a separate discussion, which lies beyond the scope of this paper, we will adopt the terminology already established in Romanian research. See RUSTOIU/SÎRBU 1999, 12; RUSTOIU 2007, 68; RUSTOIU 2016, 199–207.

³ LAZĂR 2008, 147; CIUȚĂ 2016, 138–139; CONSTANTINESCU *et alii* 2018, 670.

⁴ According to the testimony of witness F. R., the poachers from Deva specifically sought him out after being informed by other locals that he had been involved in treasure-hunting activities. PURDEA 2024, 58, 309–314.

Well known in the specialized literature for the discoveries resulting from the archaeological investigations of 1949⁵, as well as for the Roman coin hoard⁶, the Dacian fortress at Luncani–Piatra Roșie⁷ became the target of repeated acts of archaeological poaching. The site’s archaeological potential began to be tested by metal detector users as early as the 1990s, if we accept the hypothesis that a deposit of Dacian tools—published in the specialized literature and donated in 1995–1996 to the Museum of Corvin Castle—originated from the fortress at Piatra Roșie⁸.

A new action probably took place in 1998, when two bronze appliqués were sold in Belgrade to a Serbian citizen⁹. In the year 2000, members of the Association of Treasure and Hoard Hunters¹⁰, motivated by the existence of the large hoard from *Râpa cu Galbeni* discovered in 1883, carried out several operations in the area, contacting locals in order to obtain guidance. On this occasion, a fragmentary bronze vessel was discovered¹¹. In 2001, judicial authorities prosecuted a case in which three Austrian citizens were indicted, having been caught in the act while conducting metal detection within the Dacian fortress¹².

In 2002, poachers from Deva stole a deposit consisting of seven or eight discs and three *sica*-type daggers. Another act of archaeological poaching deprived the site of a series of artefacts that were recovered by the judicial authorities in 2005¹³. In 2006, an offer was submitted to the National Museum of the History of Transylvania for the acquisition of a disc (decorated with a feline), similar to those looted in 2002; and in 2010, a lot of 141 archaeological objects was donated to the same museum¹⁴. In 2015, four Czech citizens dug no fewer than 169 pits within the Piatra Roșie fortress,

⁵ DAICOVICIU 1954, 119–120.

⁶ PAVEL/ANDRIȚOIU 1994, 79–121.

⁷ Although still referred to in the literature as “Luncani–Piatra Roșie,” the site is in fact located on the territory of Alun village, Boșorod Commune, following the 1952 administrative reform (PEȚAN 2019, 315, n. 1).

⁸ SÎRBU/CERIȘER/IOAN 2005, 7–26.

⁹ According to the indictment in criminal case no. 440/P/2008, p. 12 (unpublished).

¹⁰ According to public statements, the Association of Treasure and Hoard Seekers in Romania, then headquartered in Reșița, presents itself as a legal organization, claiming to support activities related to the identification and reporting of heritage discoveries. However, critical opinions have been expressed, and documents have been highlighted that call into question the legality of certain activities carried out by members of this association, particularly prospecting with metal detectors in archaeological sites.

¹¹ According to the Indictment in criminal case no. 151/P/2005 (also available online on the SCRIBD platform), fol. 51.

¹² According to Criminal Sentence no. 282 in case no. 2007/2001 of the Hunedoara Court, the three Austrian nationals identified and stole 23 archaeological objects (including weapons). The items were published in FERENCZ/BODÓ 1999–2000, 169–181. For judicial references, see also PURDEA 2024, 27, 104, 140.

¹³ This concerns the S. N. lot, which had not particularly attracted the attention of specialists until two appliqués from this lot could be linked to discoveries made during archaeological research and to other similar pieces confiscated by authorities from the Czech looters. In this way, it was possible to determine from which part of the archaeological site the artefacts had been stolen, since, although seemingly ordinary, they are unique within the Orăștie Mountains area, having been found only at Piatra Roșie. Currently unpublished, these items were the subject of a presentation at the Patrimonium Conference, an event dedicated to forensic archaeology, held in Alba Iulia in 2024, authored by Claudiu Purdea, Cătălin Cristescu, Claudiu Tănăselia, and Răzvan Mateescu. For judicial references, see also Purdea 2024, 161.

¹⁴ PURDEA 2024, 141, 440–446.

during which they stole several archaeological items, including coins, fragments of bronze sheet, ornamental studs, and weapons.

Also originating from the fortress area are a pair of pliers (unpublished), a broken spearhead, and a Thracian-type bit, which—together with several other metal artefacts—entered the collections of the Museum of Ethnography and Folk Art in Orăștie, with the vague source “Orăștie Mountains,” although the accession records should have specified more precise provenance data¹⁵. Another disparate lot of objects complements the repertoire of discoveries, indicating that the site has been repeatedly looted, with the outcome of these criminal activities amounting to 385 artefacts (to which approximately 80% of the objects recovered from the Czech poachers must be added), some of which are spectacular¹⁶.

As for the pieces that are the subject of this study, information indicates that they were discovered during the looting campaigns of 2002–2003. According to judicial documents, it was during this period that the iron discs with zoomorphic and vegetal decoration—already published in the specialized literature¹⁷—were stolen from the archaeological site. Although investigations carried out in the archives of the judicial authorities made it possible to correlate seven lots of archaeological objects with the Piatra Roșie site¹⁸, it could not be documented which of the looter groups stole the wrought-iron discs, since witness statements and wiretaps do not provide such data, unlike the cases of the spirals or the pseudo-Lysimachus staters. Consequently, the date of the theft was established based on the pit discovered in the archaeological site by the research team in the autumn of 2003¹⁹, and on the testimony of a witness who stated that he had seen the pieces in the spring of the same year in the United States (Florida)²⁰.

DESCRIPTION

1. The type “C”²¹ *sica* dagger, measuring 35.5 cm in length, features a lamellar-type hilt, preserving two rivets (out of three) securing the grip scales and a single ferrule (Fig. 3). The rivet heads are decorated with incised concentric circles. A longitudinal groove runs along the blade’s surface (often inaccurately termed a “blood channel”, *Blutrinne*)²², flanked by two confronted birds of prey surrounding a solar motif, while the reverse displays an equine figure²³. The

chape is ornamented with three recessed channels that were originally inlaid with bronze strips, and its tip is slightly curved.

2. The type “C” *sica* dagger, 48 cm long, also has a lamellar-type hilt, preserving all three rivets that secure the grip scales (Fig. 4). The rivet heads are incised with a floral motif²⁴, and fine vertical grooves are present on both the ferrule at the blade–hilt junction and the terminal ferrule. The blade shows the longitudinal groove along with faint traces of confronted birds of prey decoration. The chape is partially corroded in its upper section and terminates in a small button, around which a geometric motif has been executed.

3. The type “C” *sica* dagger, 29.3 cm long, with a lamellar-type hilt, preserves ferrules for fastening and protecting the grip scales (Fig. 5). The blade’s shape slightly differs from the previous examples, with the longitudinal groove extending only halfway along its length. The decoration consists of three concentric circles with central dots, in an area where surface exfoliation makes the piece distinctive. The chape, made of sheet metal, ends in a mushroom-shaped terminal button and bears geometric ornamentation arranged in three registers: upper, middle, and near the terminal button²⁵.

CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION

In the autumn of 2003, during a site-cleaning operation at the Piatra Roșie archaeological site, the research team led by Prof. Aurel-Gelu Florea from Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, discovered a pit located near the apsidal building (where, during the 1949 archaeological investigations, two metal discs with zoomorphic and vegetal decoration had been found). Within the excavated soil, along the edge of the pit, seven fragments of sheet metal originating from a metal disc were observed, five of which were decorated with vegetal motifs²⁶.

During the investigation carried out by the judicial authorities, three *sica*-type daggers were identified at an auction house in Munich, Germany, offered for sale on 11 April 2008²⁷, prompting the initiation of provenance verification procedures. It was established that during the 2002 archaeological poaching campaign, when the disc deposit was stolen, three Dacian daggers had also been

¹⁵ CĂSĂLEAN 2019, 359–361.

¹⁶ PURDEA 2024, 140–143.

¹⁷ LAZĂR/LAZĂR 2009, 473; LAZĂR 2015, 109; LAZĂR 2020, 137; BORANGIC/BĂDESCU 2017, 114–116; COMES *et alii* 2021, 134–143; COMES *et alii* 2022, 1–30; PURDEA 2024, 607.

¹⁸ PURDEA 2024, 438–450, 451–453.

¹⁹ FLOREA/FERENCZ 2007, 47.

²⁰ According to the testimony of witness R.H. in criminal case no. 457/P/2016, vol. II, p. 30.

²¹ Considered together, *sica* daggers represent a morphologically cohesive class, structured around a common archetype of the curved blade. The standard typological framework identifies three principal variants - Types A, B, and C - defined by differences in blade outline, tang morphology, and the presence, arrangement, or stylistic execution of grooves and decorative motifs (SÎRBU/BORANGIC 2016, 28–35).

²² BORANGIC 2025, 124–126.

²³ Catalogue description: *Los 200, Dakisches Krümmmesser, 2/1 Jhdt. V. Chr. Eisen mit Brandpatina und größtenteils erhaltener Oberflächen. Kräftige*

Rückenklänge mit einseitiger Kehlung und graviertem Wellenband bzw. Pferd auf den Gegenseite. Rechteckige Angel mit erhaltenen Griffnieten, Knauf und zwei bronzeverzierten Zwingen. Dazu der originale, rückseitig offene Scheidenschuh mit dreifacher Bronzebänderung. Länge 35,5 cm. 66983. II-III. 700 €.

²⁴ Catalogue description: *Los 201, Dakisches Krümmmesser, 1 Jhdt. v. Chr. – 1 Jhdt. n. Chr. Typisch gekrümmte Rückenklänge mit beidseitig mehrfacher Kehlung. Griffzwingen und Knaufkappe mit feinem Kerbdekor. Angel mit drei vollständig erhaltenen Griffnieten mit blütenförmig geschnittenen Köpfen. Dabei zugehöriges eisernes Ortblech mit scheibenförmigem Knauf. Gereinigter Bodenfund. Länge 48 cm. 63583. III. 400 €.*

²⁵ Catalogue description: *Los 202, Dakisches Krümmmesser, 2./1. Jhdt. v. Chr. Eisen mit Brandpatina. Gekrümmte (verbogene) Rückenklänge mit einseitiger Kehlung und dreifacher Augenmarke. Gelochte Angel mit eiserner Knaufkappe und Griffzwingen. Zugehöriger eiserner Ortsbeschlag. Gereinigter und konservierter Bodenfund in guter Erhaltung. Länge 29,3 cm. 58245. II-III. 300 €.*

²⁶ FLOREA/FERENCZ 2007, 47–54.

²⁷ The items were auctioned at the Hermann Historica house on April 11, 2008, under the heading *Dakisches Krümmmesser*, lots 200 (€700), 201 (€400), and 202 (€300). See PURDEA 2024, 76, note 357.

uncovered at the same site²⁸. This information comes from the testimony of a witness whose identity has been changed²⁹, and in order to avoid possible criticism, it is necessary to clarify the management of evidence during the criminal trial.

Information obtained through judicial means is often the first to be questioned, particularly within the archaeological community. However, the available evidence—including witness statements, expert reports, and wiretap records—corroborates to establish the existence or absence of an offense, to identify the perpetrator, and to clarify the circumstances necessary for a just resolution of the case, in accordance with Article 63 of the previous Code of Criminal Procedure.

Consequently, when encountering information in an indictment or judgment, one must consider the entire procedure conducted during the criminal investigation before contesting the veracity of the data. For instance, a witness statement is recorded under oath and signed after the deponent has been informed of the consequences of providing false testimony.

In the case of objects belonging to the national cultural heritage, the legislator provided a clause of exemption in Article 280¹ of the former Penal Code, according to which, if before the finalization of the decision the offender restores the result of the offense, returning the object to the heritage or collection, the act is not punishable. Accordingly, the criminal investigation was halted in line with this provision, and for this reason, the following discussion will focus on the scientific presentation of the three artefacts.

Although, following the examination of judicial documents, no explicit mention of the three weapons was identified—apart from the already cited witness statement indicating that they were discovered simultaneously with the zoomorphic and vegetal-decorated discs—neither in intercepted communications between the accused nor in other documents is there any reference to these daggers. This absence is understandable, as the items did not constitute exceptional objects on the antiquities market and were likely sold as part of a larger lot. Similarly, the discs themselves are not mentioned in the inventory lists filed with the case. However, they do appear in sale documents addressed to the company Robert Haber & Assoc³⁰.

In the catalogue of the auction house Hermann Historica, in addition to the three *sica*-type daggers, two *spathae* (lots 195–196) and four Celtic tetradrachms (lots 242–244) are listed, similar to those found in the Dacian mint³¹. No source

of origin (e.g., collection) is indicated for any of these items, suggesting that they may have come from sales conducted by antiquarian shops or companies specializing in the trade of antiquities. Illicit provenance cannot be ruled out, as omitting the source is one of the most common methods of concealing the theft of objects from archaeological sites³².

After 2003, the aforementioned auction house began selling artefacts from the collection of Axel Guttmann, a prominent German collector of ancient weaponry³³. This explains, to some extent, the focus of Romanian authorities on this auction house during the investigation of the already famous “Dacian Gold” case. However, the daggers that are the subject of this study were not part of the Guttmann collection. Nevertheless, their presence as objects offered for sale online without provenance information was already reported in 2008³⁴.

Illicit provenance cannot be ruled out, as the omission of origin is one of the most common methods of concealing the theft of objects from archaeological sites. The following discussion will examine the sources through which Dacian artefacts reached the international antiquities market.

NETWORKS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL LOOTING AND TRAFFICKING

According to data obtained by the judicial authorities, the looting activity at the Lunca-Piatra Roşie archaeological site was carried out by one of the three criminal associations based in Deva³⁵ (HD), with the artefacts subsequently sold to the collector R.H.C., known locally under the pseudonym “the Professor”³⁶. He was highly active in the antiquities trade both within Romania, where he acquired any objects discovered with metal detectors, and abroad, where he turned to profit exceptional items³⁷. By tracing the

In Romanian numismatic tradition, the various types of these imitations were designated according to the localities where they were discovered; however, within the international auction and trade environment they continue, somewhat reductively, to be categorised under the broad label of the so-called “Celtic coins” (PREDA 1973, 364).

²⁸ The detailed scheme of both legal and illegal trade in antiquities was explained by Barbara Deppert-Lippitz in 2009. According to her observations, intermediaries play a key role in this sphere, as they are the ones who establish the connection between looters and either auction houses or commissioners. Once removed from its country of origin, any archaeological artefact could be commercialized as “legal” (at least until the adoption of Directive 2014/60/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 May 2014 on the return of cultural objects unlawfully removed from the territory of a Member State). See DEPPERT-LIPPITZ 2009, 133–134.

²⁹ The collector passed away in 2001, and part of his holdings was put up for sale by Christie’s in London in 2002 and 2004.

³⁰ CIUTĂ/LAZĂR 2008, 10–13.

³¹ Recently, Prof. A. Lazăr, the former Prosecutor General of Romania and coordinator of the judicial investigation “Aurul dacic”, has published a study detailing the archaeological contexts from which cultural goods were illicitly removed, together with the identified perpetrators. According to this evidence, Pit no. 17, the context from which the discs from Piatra Roşie were extracted, was excavated in 2002 by the criminal organisation led by N.M.N. It is noteworthy, however, that whereas earlier studies also referenced “the deposit of seven or eight iron shields and swords removed in 2002,” the more recent publication refers exclusively to the pit associated with the recovery of the discs. See LAZĂR 2015, 109; LAZĂR 2020, 137; cf. LAZĂR 2025, 72.

³² LAZĂR/CIUTĂ 2009, 32.

³³ According to the indictments in criminal case no. 151/P/2005 of the

²⁸ See the request for judicial assistance in criminal case file no. 440/P/2008, vol. I, fols. 131–138. For judicial references, see also LAZĂR 2015, 109 and LAZĂR 2020, 137.

²⁹ The statement was given before the judicial authorities on 25 May 2005, in criminal case file no. 45/P/2005 of the Prosecutor’s Office attached to the Alba Iulia Court of Appeal.

³⁰ According to invoice no. 1424/30 March 2004, in criminal case file no. 457/P/2016, vol. II, f. 14. For judicial references, see also LAZĂR 2015, 109.

³¹ Imitations of the Greek tetradrachms of Philip II, depicting Zeus on the obverse and a mounted horseman on the reverse, recovered within the territory of Romania were identified by Constantin Preda as products of a Celto-Dacian mint. Retrospectively, his early observation may be regarded as a remarkably prescient recognition of the cultural synthesis later formally conceptualised by Z. Woźniak as the Padea-Panagjurski Kolonii phenomenon.

movement of these objects, it is possible to reconstruct the criminal networks through which the illicit origins of the archaeological artefacts were concealed.

The first point requiring clarification concerns the criminal association responsible for conducting metal detection and stealing the aforementioned items. The broader criminal landscape comprised sixteen associations³⁸, either controlled by or connected with the underworld in Deva, which were significant for field operations; however, collectors were the ones who ensured connections to the black market. Two such individuals can be highlighted here: R.H.C. and D.E., both in contact with the coordinators of the looting groups and with Serbian intermediaries.

The most active looting network was that coordinated by C.C., which operated intensively in the Vârtoape–Dealul Muncelului–Fețele Albe area and in other sites within the Orăștie Mountains archaeological reserve. Nevertheless, the boundaries between these groups were relative, depending on the interests of their members. These networks-maintained connections ranging from field operatives to the channels through which the stolen artefacts were marketed. In this system, C.C. acted as an active collaborator of D.E., who, in turn, was in constant communication with R.H.C. and the Serbian collectors, conducting telephone conversations regarding artefacts stolen from archaeological sites and sold through their intermediaries.

Moreover, C.C. also collaborated with the Serbian dealers F.D. and A.G., who contacted him between 2005 and 2006 for various transactions involving archaeological objects, as well as with R.H.C., whom he called periodically to provide updates on the availability of the “merchandise” and on the status of the criminal case in which they were co-defendants³⁹. In addition, in December 2010, both offered for sale ancient coins (1,000 Koson gold coins and 18,000 Roman denarii) on the car market in Arad⁴⁰.

Once the artefacts reached R.H.C., they were either passed on to other intermediaries, such as P.Z., or sent to auction houses and from there to collectors. As an example, the number of archaeological items marketed by P.Z., a German dealer of Romanian origin who operated a company based in a small Austrian town (though unregistered in the national trade registry), can be highlighted⁴¹. He sourced items from multiple channels, including the Serbian

dealer A.G. mentioned above, and between 2009 and 2013 conducted 28 transactions involving archaeological objects.

Furthermore, during a domiciliary search conducted by the authorities, 18 Dacian silver ornaments, 23 Geto-Dacian coins originating from at least four dispersed coin hoards, a batch of 473 Roman Republican silver coins and their Dacian imitations, as well as 10 archaeological artefacts made of ceramic or stone from excavations within Romania, were identified⁴².

ART MARKET EXPLOITATION

According to previously published data in the specialized literature, the weapons that are the subject of this study were first presented on the website of the auction house Hermann Historica in 2008 (Fig. 8), at the same time with one of the wrought-iron discs currently under international tracking. This likely led to the assumption that the objects originated from the same source, namely the same archaeological site. Judicial documents indicate that the items were included in the same year on the Romanian Police website under the “stolen objects” section, with identification numbers 505, 506, and 507, alongside three other bronze weapons and a statuette.

However, in 2009, the item with number 507 (Fig. 9) was once again offered at auction by the same house and was acquired by C. Davis, a private collector, and later by Artemis Fine Galleries, which auctioned it again in 2022⁴³. The item with number 505 (Fig. 10) was sold in 2008 and reached Royal Athena Galleries in 2011, an institution that indicated its provenance from a German collection⁴⁴. It should be noted that this auction house has been repeatedly reported in the press for selling artefacts of illicit provenance, stolen from archaeological sites in Greece, Italy, and Egypt⁴⁵. Romania can be added to this list through the sale of the *sica* dagger currently under investigation. In 2020, the auction house closed, and the remaining unsold items were transferred to Hixenbaugh Ancient Art, as reported on the gallery’s website.

The item with number 506 (Fig. 11) was sold on 18 December 2018 by the French auction house Aguttes, which noted that the weapon originated from the G. Grimm collection and had been acquired from Hermann Historica München in April 2009⁴⁶.

REPATRIATION OF ARTEFACTS TO THE NATIONAL HERITAGE

During the criminal investigation, a good-faith individual, motivated by the efforts of the judicial authorities to recover

Prosecutor’s Office attached to the Alba Iulia Court of Appeal and no. 457/P/2016 of the Prosecutor’s Office attached to the High Court of Cassation and Justice of Romania, R.H.C. was documented as having received and subsequently sold, through his companies in the United States and the United Kingdom, a corpus comprising 225 Roman coins (Republican and Imperial issues), two gold spirals, two decorated iron discs, 145 coins of the Koson type, six bronze coins (issued under Procopius, A.D. 363–366), and 156 medieval denarii.

³⁸ PURDEA 2024, 363

³⁹ Excerpts from the intercepted telephone conversations were included in the indictments of criminal cases no. 151/P/2005 and 440/P/2008 of the Prosecutor’s Office attached to the Alba Iulia Court of Appeal, as well as nos. 457/P/2016 and 9/P/2017 of the Prosecutor’s Office attached to the High Court of Cassation and Justice of Romania.

⁴⁰ According to the indictment in criminal case no. 457/P/2016 of the Prosecutor’s Office attached to the High Court of Cassation and Justice, f. 17.

⁴¹ According to the indictment in criminal case no. 9/P/2017 of the Prosecutor’s Office attached to the High Court of Cassation and Justice, f. 38.

⁴² Ibidem.

⁴³ According to the data published on the auction house’s website, the item exhibited on 10 February 2022 in the USA (Louisville, Colorado) remained unsold, <https://www.bidsquare.com/online-auctions/artemis-gallery/rare-balkan-celtic-iron-machaira-sica-w-chape-2733132> (accessed 10 August 2025).

⁴⁴ Royal Athena Galleries, *Art of the Ancient World Greek, Etruscan, Roman, Byzantine, Egyptian, & Near Eastern Antiquities*, volume XXII, New York, London, 2011, lot 69.

⁴⁵ TSIROGIANNIS 2021, 148.

⁴⁶ <https://www.aguttes.com/en/lot/96055/10238568-serpe-art-celte-gau-lie-ier-s-av-j-c-rare-outil-de-druide> (10.08. 2025).

stolen artefacts, purchased three *sica*-type daggers from the London auction market (!) between 2009 and 2010 and donated them to the National Museum of Romanian History. These items thus entered the national heritage as part of the “Boeriu Collection”⁴⁷. However, these were not the same daggers under official tracking. The repatriated daggers were immediately put under the scrutiny of the scientific circuit, providing an opportunity for the author to highlight that such weapons are characteristic of the “Geto-Dacian” habitation area, understood as southwestern Romania, northern Bulgaria, and the territories inhabited by northern Thracians⁴⁸.

The auction house that sold the daggers could not be identified at the time of writing this study. However, another example was discovered for sale by Gorny & Mosch, with no provenance indicated⁴⁹. Although the catalogue image of the latter does not have optimal resolution for detailed analysis, it is clearly a curved *sica*-type dagger.

HISTORICAL RECORD

The presence of curved *sica*-type daggers in the Șureanu Mountains area is not consistently documented archaeologically, and in the core of the Dacian kingdom—the Orăștie Mountains, the stronghold of the warrior aristocracy—such weapons are almost entirely absent, except for fragmentary or disputed cases⁵⁰. In this context, the reporting of pieces at Lunca-Piatra Roșie, although unusual, is not impossible, given analogies with finds from other fortresses or proximity to significant Dacian centres (Fig. 2) such as Cugir⁵¹, Piatra Craivii⁵², Hunedoara⁵³, Tilișca⁵⁴, Căpâlna⁵⁵, Pietroasa Mică-Gruieu Dării⁵⁶, or deposits from Bulbuc-Ceru Băcăinți⁵⁷, as well as with South-Danubian specimens associated with the Padea-Panagjurski Kolonii phenomenon⁵⁸ (Torbov 2018, *passim*).

⁴⁷ SÎRBU 2011, 251–257; BORANGIC/BĂDESCU 2014, 53–54; SÎRBU/BORANGIC, 72–73.

⁴⁸ SÎRBU 2011, 251.

⁴⁹ Description from the Gorny & Mosch Catalogue, Auction 198, Lot 514: Dakisches Eisenmesser. Eisen, L 38cm. ca. 1. Jh. v. Chr., mit gebogener Schneide mit eingravierter Sonne zwischen zwei Vogelköpfen. Mit Scheide. Dazu zwei eiserne Lanzen spitzen (L 47 bzw. 43cm). 3 Stück! Leichte Korrosionsspuren, insgesamt ausgezeichnet erhalten. 500 €, - Dacian iron knife with scabbard, about 1st century B.C., and two iron spear heads. 3 pieces!

⁵⁰ BORANGIC 2024, 21–23

⁵¹ POPA 2011, 302; BORANGIC 2024, 7–28.

⁵² PLANTOS/CIUTĂ 2015, 251–259.

⁵³ SÎRBU/BORANGIC 2016, 77–78.

⁵⁴ NATEA/PONTA/SIMION 2011, 97–101.

⁵⁵ The two *sica*-type daggers unearthed on Netot Hill should be understood in connection with the formidable noble fortress located in the Frumoasa Valley, which represents the sole high-status residence in the surrounding area. CIUTĂ/TOTOIANU 2023, 70–75.

⁵⁶ SÎRBU/BORANGIC 2016, 83–84.

⁵⁷ BORANGIC 2014, 277–310.

⁵⁸ TORBOV 2018, *passim*, for the entire PPK-MK area. The phenomenon, initially labeled as the Padea-Panagjurski Kolonii group, was identified based on associations between certain artefacts and specific funerary practices, dating from the late 4th century BC. These were first noted in the central and northwestern parts of present-day Bulgaria (WOŹNIAK 1974, 382–402), later observed in northeastern Serbia, Oltenia, Muntenia, and southern Transylvania (RUSTOIU 2002, 33–40; RUSTOIU 2012, 171–178), and in recent years extended to current southern Ukraine and throughout Romania. Initially lacking additional benchmarks that could

The issue, however, lies in identification: how can we know if the daggers under investigation originated from Piatra Roșie? Unlike the case of treasures stolen from Sarmizegetusa Regia, where witnesses could recognize the pieces, no such procedure was applied to the *sica* daggers or to the wrought-iron decorated discs. The uniqueness of the discs allowed their rapid identification on the auction market, but the daggers did not benefit from the same advantage. In such situations, correlating judicial documents with archaeological arguments becomes essential for establishing provenance.

The pieces auctioned by Hermann Historica in 2008 distinguished by their execution quality: decorated metal scabbards and fittings, engraved blades—features compatible with elite armament⁵⁹. The site declared as provenance had already yielded, in 1949, a Celtic-type sword and a Thracian-style bridle bit among other artefacts⁶⁰. This seemingly minor information becomes relevant when compared with other funerary contexts from the PPK phenomenon, where swords appear alongside *sica* daggers, spearheads, shield umbos, and bridle bits⁶¹.

Although the discoveries at Piatra Roșie are dispersed and uneven, they include all standard components of a warrior’s panoply: a sword, a spear butt, and two bridle bits near the apsidal building in Enclosure II⁶², interpreted as part of a funerary complex⁶³, a hypothesis supported by other similar finds attributed to looting⁶⁴. A fragmented spearhead was identified in Tower T2, two shield umbos and two other bridle bits in Tower B⁶⁵, another spearhead was recovered from looters in 2016⁶⁶, in addition to a Thracian-

have designated it as a fully defined archaeological culture, the phenomenon has successively been considered a horizon, a *facies*, or a cultural group, revealing either the inconsistent recognition of its defining constants or even a partial misunderstanding of it as a whole. Nevertheless, the term Padea-Panagjurski Kolonii has been retained, despite not fully reflecting the complexity of issues concerning its ethno-cultural, historical, and civilizational implications, and remains, for now, the only neutral label that sufficiently delineates the landscape of its material record. For instance, if we consider the current distribution area of such vestiges, the most precise designation of this cultural-archaeological phenomenon would be “Padea-Panagjurski Kolonii – Mala Kopanya.” The emergence of this horizon cannot be separated from the political-military effervescence of the region: the chain of events triggered by the Celtic invasion of the Balkans, the establishment of Roman power on the peninsula, the fall of the Hellenistic kingdoms, and the dynamics of the turbulent local Thracian tribes. More broadly, the PPK-MK model is explained by the rise of a new cultural-archaeological identity, whose main expression consisted of depositing the deceased in cremation graves along with their weapons, often intentionally destroyed. The funerary inventories, sometimes spectacular, indicate that the deceased belonged to the political and military aristocracy, socially detached from their communities through the rites and rituals practiced, the weapons they possessed, and the economic power they displayed, with numerous and evident correspondences to the contemporary daily reality (SÎRBU/BORANGIC 2016, 41–47; BORANGIC 2020, 189–209; BORANGIC 2025, 123).

⁵⁹ RUSTOIU 2016, 199–201; BORANGIC 2025, 121.

⁶⁰ DAICOVICIU 1954, 82, 90–91.

⁶¹ RUSTOIU 2012, 171–178; BORANGIC 2017, 405–413; BORANGIC 2024, 7–48.

⁶² DAICOVICIU 1954, 66.

⁶³ POPA 2008, 362.

⁶⁴ DIMA 2019, 33.

⁶⁵ DAICOVICIU 1954, 92.

⁶⁶ The previously unpublished piece was stolen from the archaeological site by four Czech citizens, who conducted unauthorized metal-detecting activities. During what they considered “spectacular” discoveries, they photographed the artefacts. Consequently, following the initiation of the

type spearhead and bridle bit that mysteriously reached the Orăștie museum. Furthermore, on 9 May 2001, three Austrian looters identified a spearhead and the mouthpiece of a bridle bit, with provenance from Pietra Roșie confirmed by their apprehension on site by authorities⁶⁷.

The paradox of *sica* daggers in the heart of the Dacian Kingdom lies in their near-total absence from the Orăștie Mountains, the fief of the aristocracy and the political core of Dacian power, where their appearance would have been most expected. Discoveries here are rare, decontextualized, and controversial⁶⁸. The contrast with other Dacian centres is striking: major fortresses yielded *sica* daggers, generally in funerary contexts, where these weapons appear naturally alongside other elements of elite warrior panoplies. Yet, they are absent from the kingdom's centre of power. The situation is at least peculiar: after a century of archaeological research throughout the capital-dependent area, there are no well-documented and published contexts that clearly attest to their presence.

Moving beyond the limited and at times uncertain explanatory scope of archaeological inquiry, answers must also be sought in domains less visible through the lens of formal research, specifically the black and grey areas, like the archaeological poaching and the illicit trade in antiquities. The demand of private collectors for unique and non-replicable artefacts effectively creates, through mechanisms of supply and monetised scarcity, a stable commercial outlet for objects illegally extracted from archaeological sites in the Șureanu Mountains. Despite the existing legislative framework, and counterintuitive though it may seem, Koson and Koson Droyeis emissions continue to circulate on the international antiquities market without verifiable provenance, or with provenance that remains vague or deliberately obscured. Comparable conditions have also been observed in relation to the *sica* daggers.

While not stated as definitive fact, it is reasonable to infer that the area of Orăștie Mountains that was subjected to extensive looting since 1993, may have supplied at least some of the artefacts currently traded internationally. The scale of these activities becomes particularly evident when examining the 2015 poaching operation in which, over the course of eight days (12 to 19 September 2015), four Czech nationals looted three Dacian fortresses in the Orăștie Mountains and removed a total of 201 archaeological artefacts⁶⁹. As a result, between 1993 and 2015, artefact hunting, destruction of archaeological contexts and the transfer of illegally obtained cultural objects into black

market circulation constituted a sustained and self-standing activity for certain Romanian nationals⁷⁰.

In contrast to their near absence within systematic archaeological findings, private collections and the antiquities trade display a remarkable abundance of *sica* daggers. Numerous specimens appear frequently in auction catalogues, often labelled as “Celtic”, “Thracian” or “Machaira”, an approach which conveniently avoids explicit association with the Dacians⁷¹. Among these, the three exceptional specimens analysed in this study are particularly noteworthy, as they align morphologically and typologically with the aristocratic martial panoply associated with the aristocracy of the Dacian Kingdom.

This situation exposes a pronounced disjunction between archaeological data and the realities of the antiquities market. While systematic excavations have not yet demonstrated conclusively the presence of *sica* daggers in the core area of the Dacian Kingdom, the black market presents an abundance of specimens of evidently high status, often characterised as items of “royal or aristocratic grade”. One possible explanation lies in the intensive activity of heritage poachers operating in archaeological sites, whose interventions have stripped stratigraphic contexts and thereby erased significant portions of historical information. The inclusion of the artefacts previously listed in the Hermann Historica auction catalogues, into the Romanian Police database should, in our perspective, be regarded as a strong indicator of their relevance to ongoing or previous judicial investigations undertaken in Romania.

A further interpretative framework emerges indirectly from the three daggers themselves. It has been consistently observed that they do not originate from funerary contexts and, in addition, bear no indications of exposure to cremation, which constituted the dominant mortuary practice. Nor do they display intentional bending or ritual breakage, acts frequently associated with the same funerary rite. The cumulative dataset therefore supports the working hypothesis that these weapons were intentionally concealed in a manner consistent with other high value artefacts, such as the iron discs, most likely to prevent their seizure by the Romans following the conquest of the fortress. This interpretive line connects directly with certain dimensions of Dacian warrior spirituality and ideological behaviour.

For example, the absence of *sica* daggers from the pedestal register of Trajan's Column remains difficult to account for, particularly given that this zone displays the most valuable war spoils taken from the Dacians and their allies. The pedestal scenes present, in a carefully structured allegory, of the type *congeries armorum*, all major categories of Dacian weaponry, including chainmail, scale and lamellar armour, helmets, shields, bows, spears, axes, battering rams, swords and straight blades. The curved dagger is, however, conspicuously missing. Its omission generates several potential avenues of interpretation. Imperial propaganda sought to exhibit the most emblematic arms of the defeated populations, and the historical and archaeological dossier of the *sica* dagger

criminal investigation and the subsequent digital search, four images were identified, dated 14 September 2015, in which the aforementioned piece is visible. According to the information in criminal case no. 477/P/2016 of the Prosecutor's Office attached to the Alba Iulia Court of Appeal, vol. II, p. 124. PURDEA 2024, 147.

⁶⁷ FERENCZ/BODÓ 1999–2000, 170–171; PURDEA 2024, 27.

⁶⁸ A superficial blade fragment is preserved at Costești Blidaru, and a tumular assemblage from Costești Cetățuie records the presence of a dagger, and a possible scabbard fragment from Fețele Albe. The daggers published from the area of the Dacian capital and identified as *sica* (GLODARIU/IAROSLAVSCHI 1979, 139, fig. 72 6 to 7), however, does not meet the defining typological criteria, whose diagnostic traits were neither consistently described nor structurally recognised within Romanian historiography prior to 1989.

⁶⁹ PURDEA 2024, 105.

⁷⁰ PURDEA 2024, 56; LAZĂR 2025, 56.

⁷¹ BORANGIC 2024a, 22–29.

demonstrates that it was a central element of the martial mentality, ideological framework and aristocratic identity of Dacian elite (Fig. 1) warriors from the consolidation of the PPK-MK (Fig. 1), through to the end of the Dacian Kingdom, as illustrated on scene CXLV of Trajan's Column.

It therefore appears more probable that such weapons could not be captured and displayed, a fact all the more difficult to explain in the context of the exceptionally violent confrontations between the two sides. Therefore, certain questions follow naturally. Could it be that Dacian warriors did not carry them in military campaigns? Might they have deposited or dedicated them as offerings to the gods before departing for war? Might they have been buried as substitutes for the warriors themselves, as if they were already dead, which could help explain the existence of "graves without bodies" that nevertheless contain daggers? Or, on the contrary, could these artefacts be considered spiritually charged weapons that were used in discreet rituals that are archaeologically undetectable? Answers to these questions were provided by A. Rustoiu, who argued that such weapons were worn only by the warrior and priestly elite. This exclusivity allowed imperial propaganda to turn the *sica* into a distinct ethnic marker associated with the defeated Dacians, which explains its appearance on monuments: for example, in the scene of King Decebal's suicide on Trajan's Column, on the funerary stele of Tiberius Claudius Maximus, and on commemorative plaques such as the one from Gârla Mare (MH). In this sense, the *sica* not only conferred status on the bearer but also held a ritual significance and could be used in sacrificial acts⁷². Following this line of hypothesis, we must ask whether it is possible that the emperor and imperial propaganda deliberately chose to conceal them, precisely because their powerful religious significance. In any case, the enigmatic and discreet nature of the warrior ritual seems to have played a decisive role in the "invisibility" of these weapons in both iconography and archaeology. The three *sica* daggers presented here may offer, even if indirectly, an answer to this dilemma. Considering the highly compelling hypothesis advanced by A. Rustoiu regarding the ritual function of these weapons, we must therefore ask whether the information initially presented in the scientific literature⁷³, concerning the possible association between the three daggers and the pit of iron discs from Piatra Roşie should be dismissed without doubt or examined even more closely.

CONCLUSIONS

Our analysis aimed to reconstruct as fully as possible the informational context concerning three curved Dacian daggers, currently listed by the Romanian Police as sought cultural objects and which, according to the data available to us, were stolen from the archaeological site of Lunca-Piatra Roşie. According to information obtained during the criminal

investigation and cited within the scientific literature (see above), the three *sica*-type curved daggers were identified at the site during the same period in which the iron discs with zoomorphic and vegetal decoration were stolen.

Their recent documented history begins when images of such weapons, offered for sale by the Hermann Historica auction house, were correlated with the information held by judicial authorities and subsequently entered into the Romanian Police database under the category of ransacked stolen objects."

The evidence confirming the theft is based primarily on the testimony of a protected witness, yet we do not possess absolute certainty that the weapons depicted in the images are the same as the stolen items, since no initial photographs of the artefacts recovered by the looters are available. Even so, the hypothesis regarding the presence of *sica* daggers in the fortress at Piatra Roşie becomes plausible when compared with artefacts identified during archaeological investigations and other looting operations. The possibility that these daggers were stolen during the same period as the decorated discs, as documented by judicial authorities, cannot be excluded, particularly given the scale of criminal activity in those years, when archaeological sites were literally ransacked by organised groups in search of "treasures." The appearance of this information in two papers published by the coordinator of the "Dacian Gold" judicial investigation may also serve as significant. Surprisingly, although the daggers were registered in the Romanian Police database as stolen goods, they were never entered into the INTERPOL database and were therefore sold repeatedly, a situation which reflects the administrative incapacity of the institutions responsible for the recovery and repatriation of heritage.

Since these artefacts have not yet been recovered and therefore could not be examined directly, we have been obliged to work with hypotheses, which we do not intend to present as certainties. At the same time, it must be emphasised that the information obtained during the criminal investigation is not of a doubtful nature; at most, it may be approached with due reservation. Considering the procedure through which evidence was gathered and corroborated, we regard these data as starting points for a potential reopening of abandoned judicial investigations. As researchers directly invested in every fragment of information concerning the history of the Dacian elites inhabiting the Şureanu Mountains, we naturally remain inquisitive about the evidence on which the listing of these items as wanted goods was based. Do they belong to the Şureanu area, and specifically to the site of Lunca-Piatra Roşie? These are questions to which we cannot yet offer full answers. In his regard, we reiterate to the academic community that the "Dacian Gold" judicial operation was initiated following press disclosures and witness statements. The fact that the authorities invested considerable effort in the search for truth, disputed as it was in the first decade of the twenty-first century, and that monetary and gold-silver-monetary hoards with Dacian spirals, Greek coins, and Koson and Koson-Droyeis emissions were recovered, stands as proof in this regard. Had the hypothesis advanced by the prominent Romanian numismatist C. Preda been

⁷² RUSTOIU 2016, 205.

⁷³ We refer here to the fact that two studies employed the phrase "the deposit of seven to eight iron shields and swords, stolen in 2002" - for the goods taken from Lunca-Piatra Roşie. Vide LAZĂR 2015, 109; LAZĂR 2020, 137.

accepted, namely, that the Koson emissions are Renaissance forgeries and the Dacian spirals modern fabrications (!), and thus that their discovery could not be attributed to the site of Sarmizegetusa Regia, it would have meant that the entire effort of judicial authorities prior to the repatriation of the first artefacts and the possibility of compositional analysis had been unnecessary.

Within these limitations, the analysis of the *sica* daggers examined in this study must also be understood, since judicial authorities obtained information indicating that they were stolen from the area of the Piatra Roşie fortress. On this basis, our intention has been not only to address the issue of antiquities trafficking and criminal networks, but also to present the historical arguments that may support the hypothesis of provenance. Judicial documents indicate that the investigated artefacts circulated on the international antiquities market through the auction houses Hermann Historica, Royal Athena and Aguttes, without any clear provenance being stated, a situation explicable through the mechanisms of concealment commonly practiced by traffickers. The criminal network active around Deva, operating through Serbian and German intermediaries, supplied this market continuously, and the case of the daggers presented here follows the same pattern.

Although similar pieces have been repatriated through private efforts and added to the National Museum of Romanian History, the issue of the artefacts still wanted by authorities remains unresolved. At the same time, auction catalogues continue to feature large numbers of *sica* daggers, vaguely labelled as “Celtic” or “Thracian,” a trend that stands in stark contrast to their near-total absence in controlled archaeological research within the central area of the Dacian Kingdom.

The historical and archaeological record of these weapons reveals a striking paradox: in the Orăştie Mountains, the stronghold of the Dacian aristocracy, they are almost entirely absent, while other fortresses have yielded such items in various archaeological contexts. The most likely explanation is the large-scale looting carried out mainly between 1993 and 2016, which targeted and depleted the Orăştie Mountain area and transferred artefacts into the black-market system. The daggers presented in this study may also have been among these artefacts. Although frustrating, this hypothesis parallels that of the gold and silver-monetary hoards, which could not be identified archaeologically prior to the criminal activity carried out within the archaeological sites. This distinction is evidently linked to the nature of each activity: archaeology focuses on systematic investigation of surfaces and stratigraphic data recording, while treasure-hunting sought exclusively the recovery of hoards, and it is well known that in the early stages, looters would discard iron artefacts.

The value of the pieces presumed to originate from Piatra Roşie is evident from their exceptional quality, and they correspond perfectly to the panoply of Dacian elites as defined by A. Rustoiu. The fact that they do not come from funerary contexts and do not exhibit traces of the specific funerary rite (burning, breaking, bending) may indicate deliberate deposition, possibly with the purpose of concealment and

protection from seizure, provided we accept the interpretation of their role within ritual practices.⁷⁴

Therefore, the three daggers presented in this paper are prestige items and, as already noted in the scientific literature, emblematic weapons of Dacian warriors⁷⁵. They simultaneously document the fragility of heritage in the face of looting, the complexity of trafficking networks, and, above all, in agreement with the observations of A. Rustoiu, the identity-bearing and spiritual role of curved daggers in the life of the Dacian elite. Far from being mere weapons, these artefacts stand as evidence of a concealed dimension of Dacian aristocracy, which preferred to hide them rather than leave them to the victor.

Although the available data on the artefacts is currently limited, it may still serve as a foundation for initiating a dynamic process of recovery, a process which would inevitably generate new historical and material information. Anything affected by looting loses, through the absence of context, data that cannot be retrieved. The present undertaking, far removed from the classical archaeological model in which information accumulates organically and enables coherent reconstruction, operates instead with fragments, with fragile clues and with a structurally vulnerable foundation for conclusions.

Even under these restrictive conditions, the analysis opens an essential line of inquiry: if the association of the three daggers with the Piatra Roşie site is confirmed, then the use of *sica* daggers in the Dacian environment must be understood as extending concretely up to the moment of the Roman conquest. This would provide, for the first time, a solid internal point of reference that complements and nuances the only argument so far considered certain, namely the image of Decebal's suicide on the Column. In doing so, it would confirm the continuity and importance of these weapons in the arsenal of the elite until the political collapse of the Dacian Kingdom.

Therefore, although this study cannot provide definitive certainties, it outlines coherent hypotheses and opens avenues of research which, through the recovery and expert analysis of these types of artefacts, could significantly reshape our understanding of the longevity and function of *sica* daggers throughout the entire historical span of the Dacian elite.

Although the *sica* daggers lack the spectacular visual impact of the gold bracelets or the artistic scale of the decorated iron discs, the analysis shows that their value for understanding the period is fundamental, since these weapons constitute one of the most powerful symbols of Dacian warrior ideology. They are not merely components of the panoply, but status markers, instruments of military identity, and material supports for an aristocratic imaginary that expresses itself in discrete forms - funerary, ritual, or through deliberate acts of concealment.

Given this, their recovery and repatriation would not simply restore ownership of the artefacts, but would allow a more nuanced reconstruction of the ideological dimension of the Dacian elite, of how it understood war, death, loyalty, and the transmission of memory. These daggers represent potential interpretive junctions within this conceptual

⁷⁴ RUSTOIU 2016, 206.

⁷⁵ RUSTOIU 2016, 207.

network: through their advanced typology, their association with unique artefacts (the iron discs), and the historical context of their loss, they can illuminate the mechanisms through which the military aristocracy managed its symbols of power in the final moments of political independence.

Indirectly, the entire discussion leads to the same conclusion: even if less visually spectacular, the *sica* daggers are essential for understanding Dacian warrior ideology, and their recovery would restore a missing component of the mental architecture of the elites who created and employed them.

This undertaking, far removed from the classical archaeological model in which information accumulates organically and allows coherent reconstruction, operates with fragments, with fragile clues, and with a structurally vulnerable foundation for conclusions. Under these conditions, the present study, although it seeks to reinsert the artefacts into their historical matrix, both by reconstructing their post-depositional trajectory and by relating them to the broader landscape of weapons of this type, cannot, for now, provide further certainties, but only new and necessary directions for investigation.

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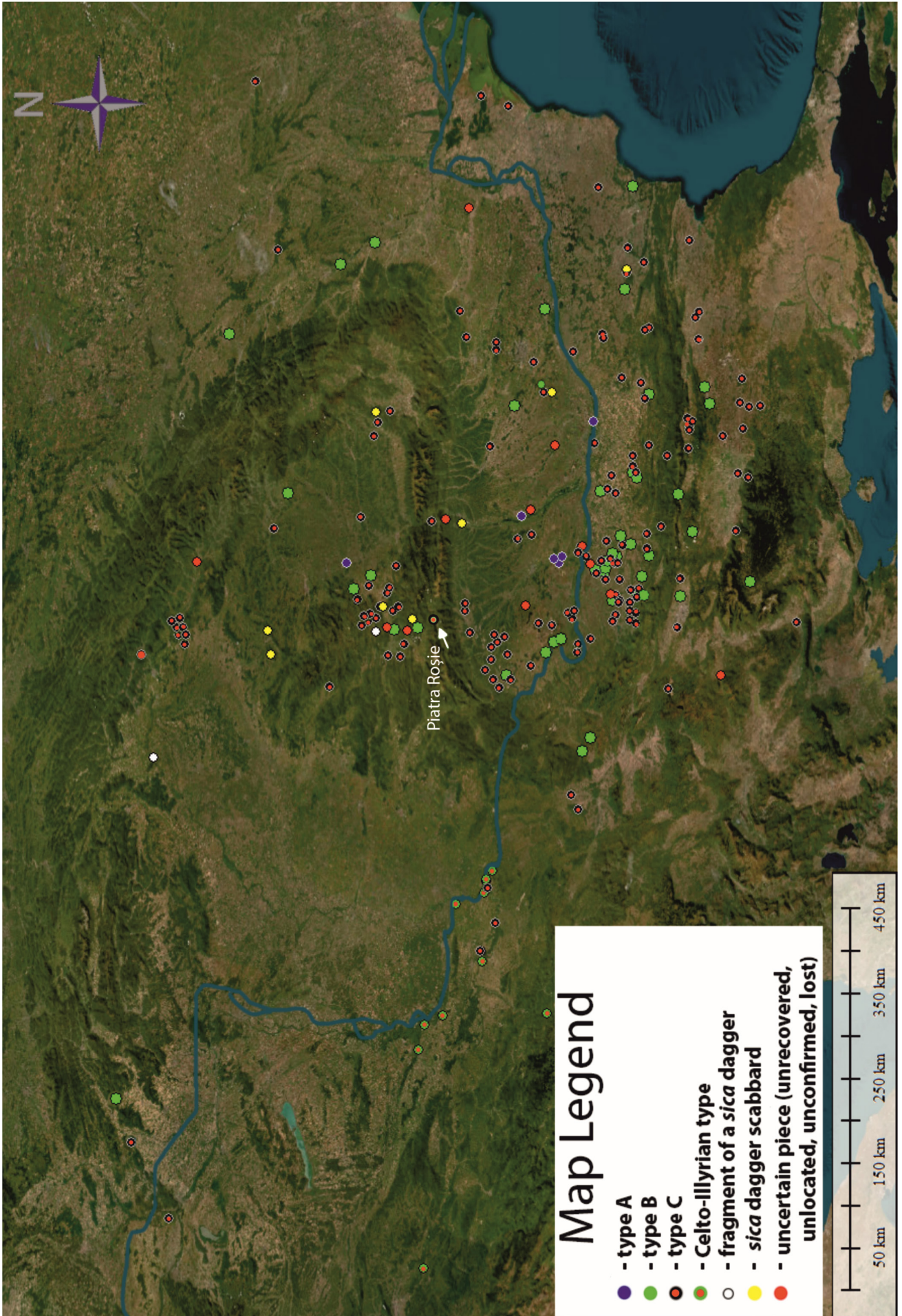


Fig. 1. Geographic and typological distribution of sica-type daggers.

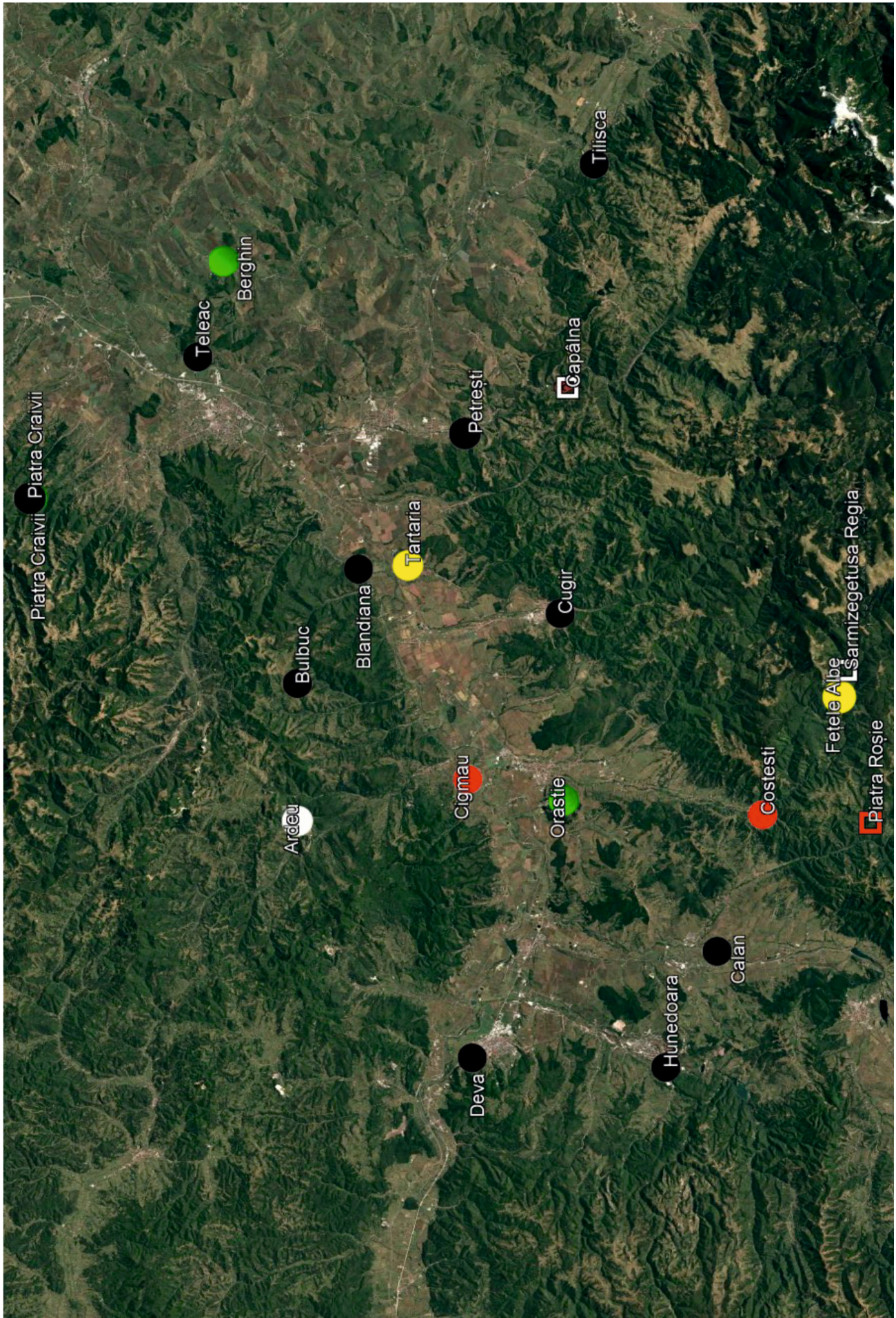


Fig. 2. Discoveries of the *sica*-type daggers in the central area of the Dacian Kingdom and along the Middle Mureș Valley.

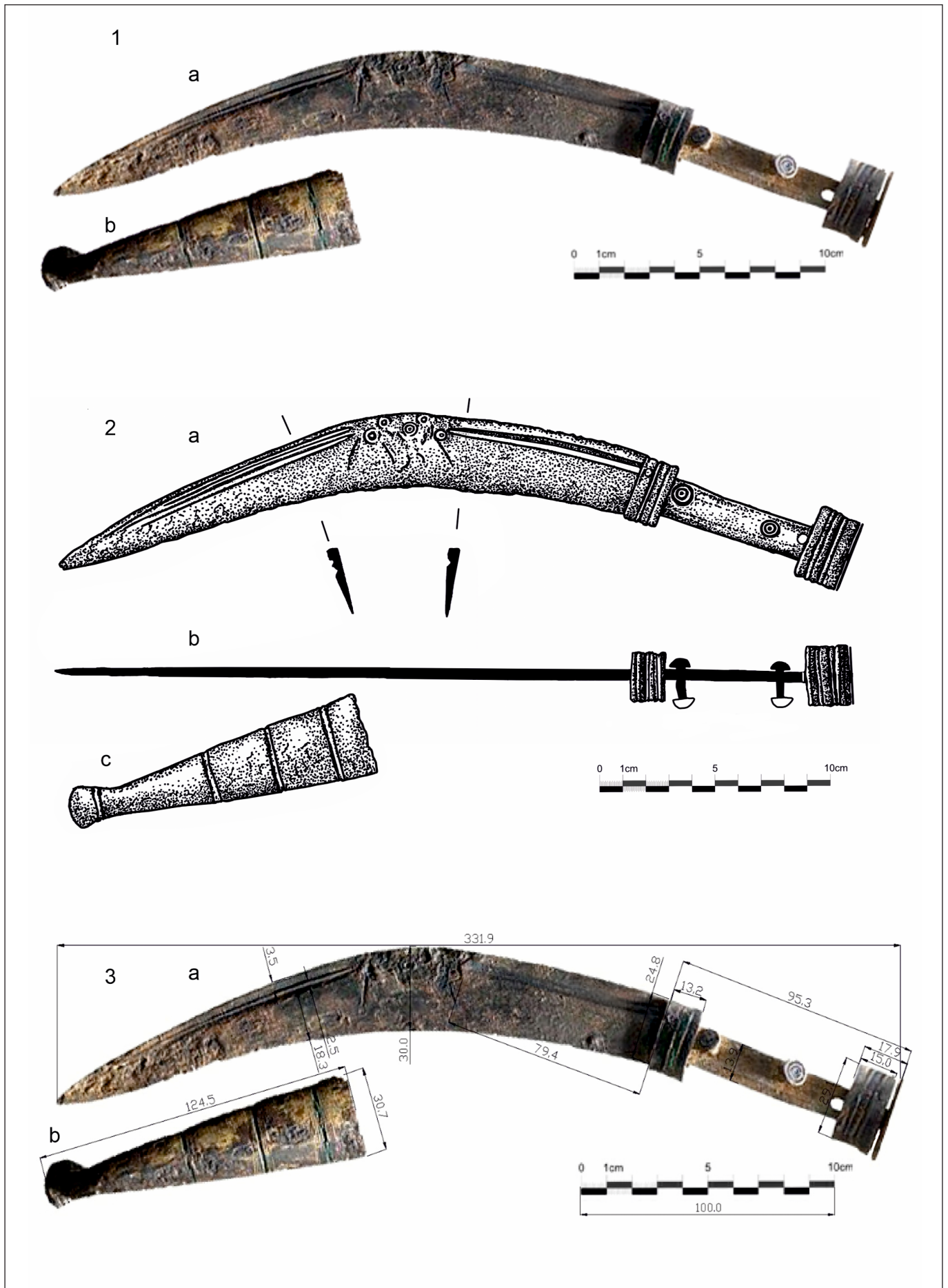


Fig. 3. Hermann Historica, 200, 2008; 2 a-c. drawing by Fl. Mărcuți.

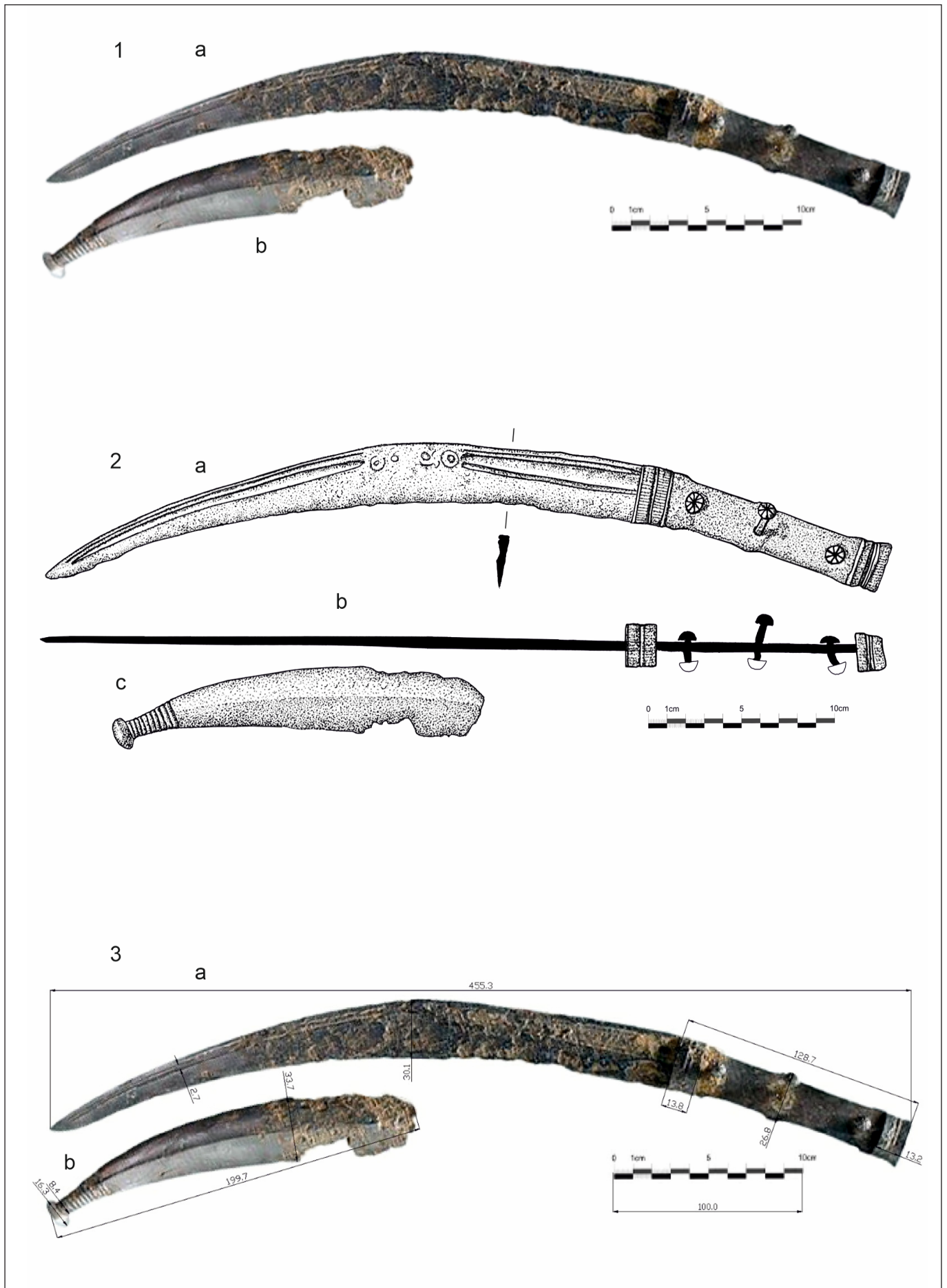


Fig. 4. Hermann Historica, 201, 2008; 2 a-c. drawing by Fl. Mărcuți.

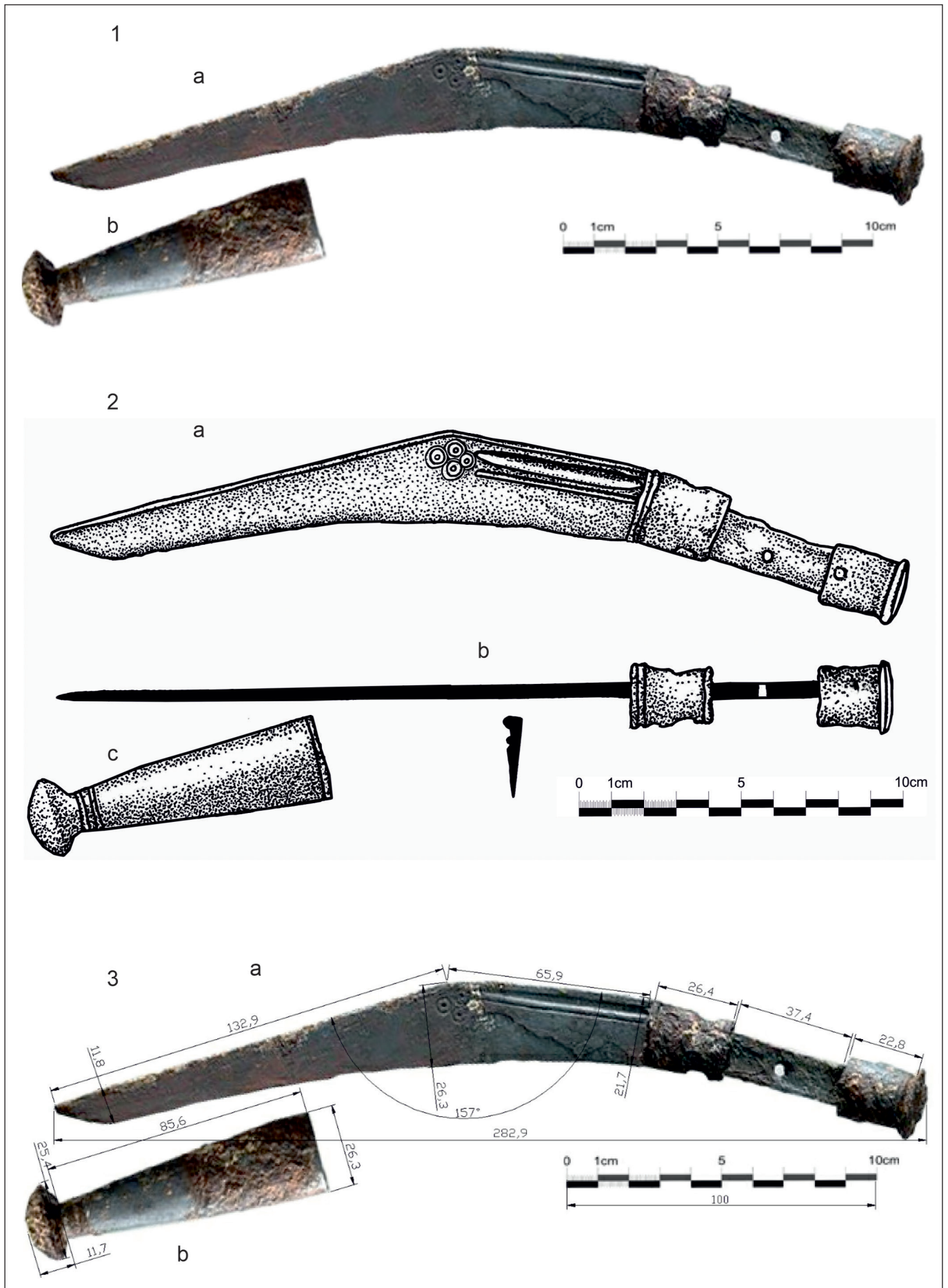


Fig. 5. Hermann Historica, 202, 2008; 2 a-c. drawing by Fl. Mărcuți.

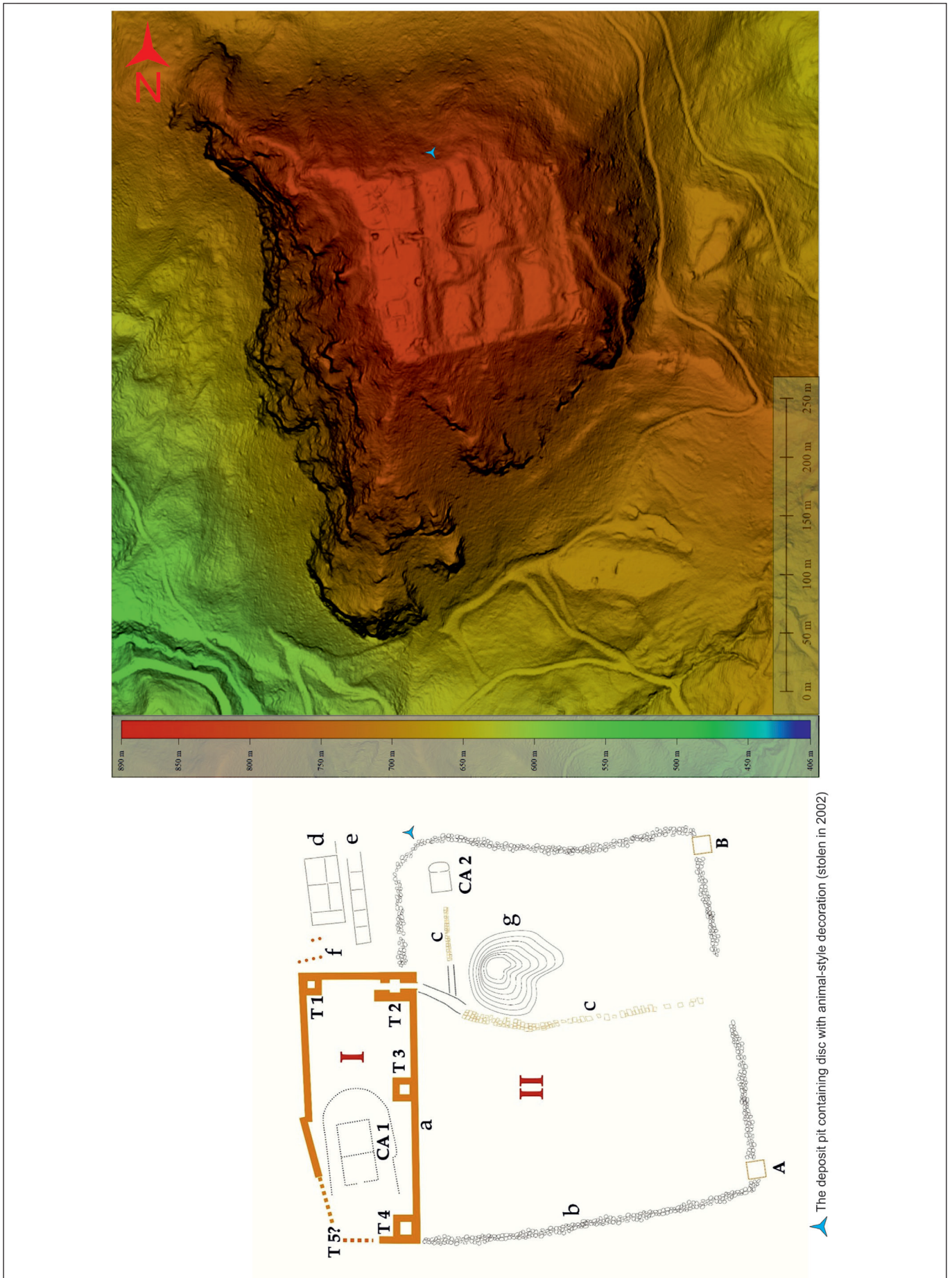



Fig. 6. Plan of the Dacian fortress at Luncani-Piatra Roşie showing the pit from which the metal discs with zoomorphic and vegetal decorations were stolen in 2002 (author: R. Mateescu).




POLIȚIA ROMÂNĂ

112

112 Pentru situații de urgență, apelați

Cauta in site

NIVEL PRECAUT



Sistemul național de alertă teroristă

Politia Română

Știri și media

Informații generale

Prevenire

Utile

Informații publice

Carieră


Proiecte

Contact


Obiecte Furate

Filtrează după:


Acasă → Obiecte furate



Arme
Sabie
Cod: 505
Data furtului: 01-01-2001
Detalii
Sabie Incovoiată din fier (sica dacică), cu maner cu miezul din fier, praselele (probabil din lemn sau alt material organic) lipsesc, fiind prinse cu 2-3 nituri de maner), cu disc masiv cilindric, lungime 35,5 cm, latime variabila de cca. 2-5 cm; stare de conservare buna, are depuneri specifice (oxizi de fier), iar lama, cu nervura, prezinta unele elemente de decor; varful tecii, din fier, intreg, prezinta ca decor trei incizii paralele si o sfera la extremitatea inferioara; datare: La Tene (sec. I.B.C. – I.A.C.).



Arme
Sabie
Cod: 506
Data furtului: 01-01-2001
Detalii
Sabie incovoata din fier (sica dacica), cu maner cu miezul din fier, praselele (probabil din lemn sau alt material organic) lipsesc, fiind prinse cu 3 nituri, cu decor incizat radiar, de maner), cu disc cilindric, lungime 48 cm, latime variabila de cca. 2-5 cm; stare de conservare buna, are depuneri specifice (oxizi de fier), iar lama, cu nervura; varful tecii, incomplet, din fier, prezinta o sfera la extremitatea inferioara datare: La Tene (sec. I.B.C. – I.A.C.).



Arme
Sabie
Cod: 507
Data furtului: 01-01-2001
Detalii
Sabie incovoata din fier (sica dacica), cu maner cu miezul din fier, praselele (probabil din lemn sau alt material organic) lipsesc, fiind prinse, prin immanusare, cu 1 nit masiv de maner), cu disc cilindric, lungime 29,3 cm, latime variabila de cca. 2-5 cm; stare de conservare buna, are depuneri specifice (oxizi de fier), iar lama, cu nervura groasa la baza, prezinta un decor imprimat constand din trei cercuri dispuse in triunghi; varful tecii, complet, din fier, prezinta la extremitatea inferioara o proeminenta bitronconica; datare: La Tene (sec. I.B.C. – I.A.C.).

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Fig. 7. Items listed on the Romanian Police website, stolen objects section (codes 505, 506 and 507).

HERMANN HISTORICA MÜNCHEN



54. AUKTION 11. APRIL 2008



LOS 200

DAKISCHES KRUMMESSER
2./1.Jhdt. v.Chr.

Eisen mit Brandpatina und größtenteils erhaltener Oberfläche. Kräftige Rückenklänge mit einseitiger Kehlung und graviertem Wellenband bzw. Pferd auf der Gegenseite. Rechteckige Angel mit erhaltenen Griffnieten, Knauf und zwei bronzeverzierten Zwingen. Dazu der originale, rückseitig offene Scheidenschuh mit dreifacher Bronzeabänderung. Länge 35,5 cm. 66983

II-III € 700

LOS 201

DAKISCHES KRUMMESSER
1.Jhdt. v. - 1.Jhdt. n.Chr.

Typisch gekrümmte Rückenklänge mit beidseitig mehrfacher Kehlung, Griffzwinge und Knaufkappe mit feinem Kerbdekor. Angel mit drei vollständig erhaltenen Griffnieten mit blütenförmig geschnittenen Köpfen. Dabei zugehöriges eisernes Ortblech mit scheibenförmigem Knauf. Gereinigter Bodenfund. Länge 48 cm. 63583

III € 400



LOS 202

DAKISCHES KRUMMESSER
2./1.Jhdt. v.Chr.

Eisen mit Brandpatina. Gekrümmte (verbogene) Rückenklänge mit einseitiger Kehlung und dreifacher Augenmarke. Gelochte Angel mit eiserner Knaufkappe und Griffzwinge. Zugehöriger eiserner Ortbeschlag. Gereinigter und konservierter Bodenfund in guter Erhaltung. Länge 29,3 cm. 58245

II-III € 300

Fig. 8. Hermann Historica Auction Catalogue, Auction 54, 11 April 2008, showcasing the three *sica*-type daggers (lots 200, 201 and 202).



Fig. 9. Comparative images of the sica dagger from Hermann Historica 2008, lot 200, and the sica dagger from Royal Athena Galleries 2011, lot 67, illustrating the points of similarity.



Fig. 10. Comparative images illustrating the *sica* weapon from Hermann Historica 2008, lot 201, alongside the example from Aguttes 2018, lot 211, with corresponding similarities indicated.

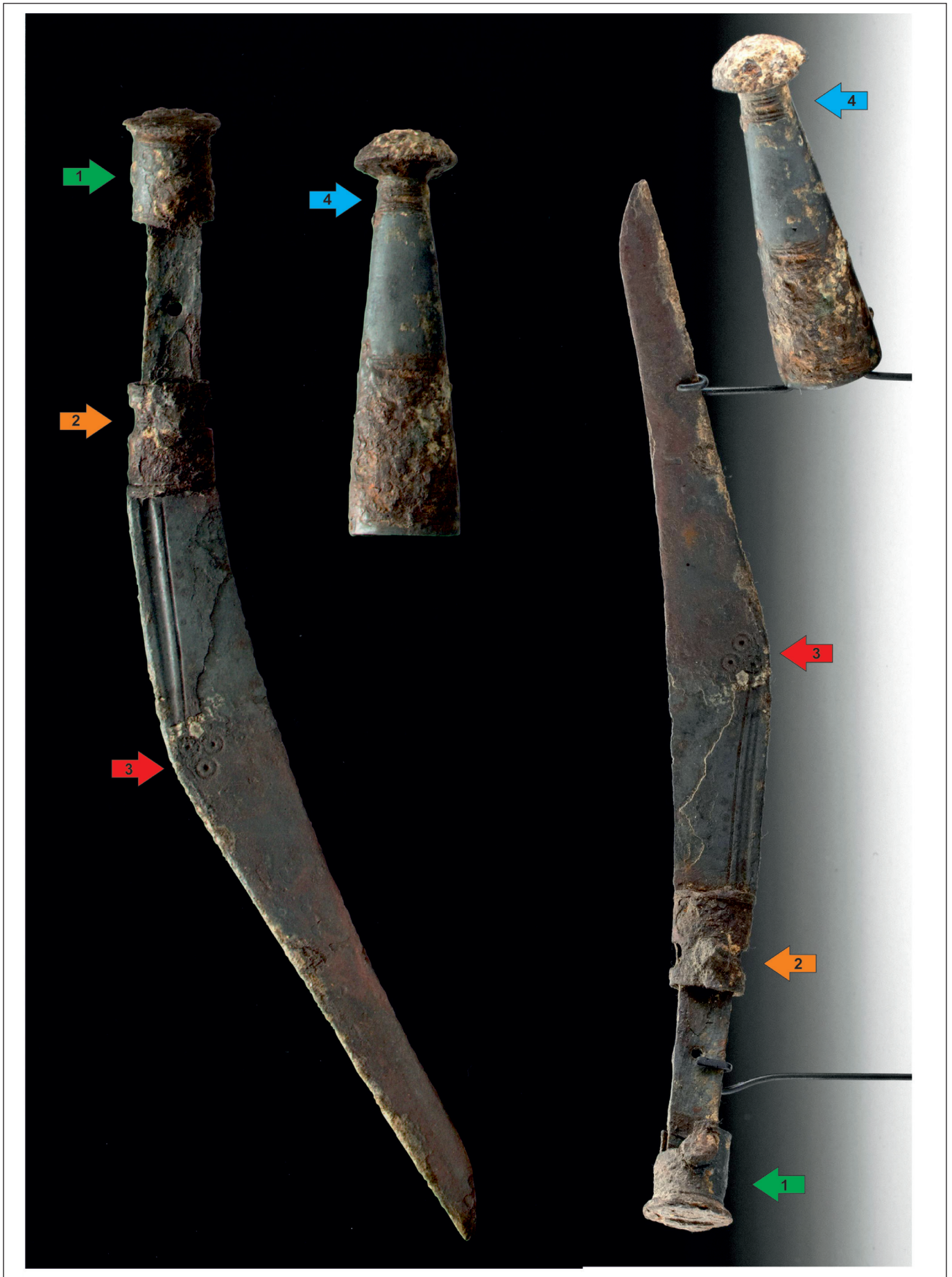


Fig. 11. Comparative images illustrating the sica weapon from Hermann Historica 2008, lot 201, alongside the example from Artemis Fine Arts 2018, lot 18, with corresponding similarities indicated.