

ACTA TERRAE SEPTEMCASTRENSIS XIV, 2015

**LUCIAN BLAGA UNIVERSITY OF SIBIU
FACULTY OF SOCIAL AND HUMAN SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF
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TRANSYLVANIAN PATRIMONY IN THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT**

ACTA TERRAE SEPTEMCASTRENSIS

XIV

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NEW RECOVERED ARCHAEOLOGICAL ARTIFACTS FROM CRAIVA “PIATRA CRAIVII” DACIAN FORTRESS (CRICĂU COMMUNE, ALBA COUNTY) I.

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Abstract: *The authors analyze a curved dagger, sica type, found near Piatra Craivii Dacian fortress, recovered from a treasure hunter. Following its analysis, it was found that it comes from a cremation grave dating from Dacian period. One can find analogies of the dagger both in the so-called cultural horizon "Padea-Panagjurski Kolonii" from south of the Carpathians and also in the Getic and Dacian sites from Transylvania, Transcarpathian Ukraine, Wallachia and Moldavia.*

Key words: *curved dagger – sica, cremation grave, Dacian fortress, Padea-Panaghjurskii Kolonii horizon.*

The discovery context

The beginning of the 21st Century in Romanian archaeology is marked by an unseen previously phenomenon with multiple connotations, a phenomenon that places those involved in researching the underground remains of civilizations and cultures in front of a new and complex challenge. We are here referring to the emergence of dilettantes and *pseudo-archaeologists* amongst owners of metal detectors, commonly referred to as *detectorists*. We will not accomplish here a detailed analysis of this phenomenon (additional literature on the subject: Teodor 2014; Ciută 2012; 2014; Ciută, Ciută 2015, Ciută, Ciută 2015a), as we will limit ourselves to the conclusion that the Romanian society is, once again (!) unprepared to adequately and efficiently react to the consequences of this type of investigations, resulting in most cases in the irreversible destruction of archaeological contexts

and/or the plundering and loss of often important and spectacular artefacts of national heritage status.

Like we have specified with another occasions (Ciută, Ciută 2015, note 4), the year 2014 represented an interval in which the phenomenon of making geo-physical detections by no specialists in archaeological areas, is developed with an extreme manner, impossible to anticipate at the moment of commencement and implementation of the laws who rules the regime of this activities on the territory of Romania.

The artifact presented in this study was recovered from the above mentioned type of *detectorist* during the judiciary investigations inside a penal file, and all the information is being related to the originate context where recovered, on the same judiciary way, from a witness¹, who indicated exactly the place from where was extracted, specifying more other details associated with the area of the context and also about the object.

Thus it was stolen, along with other objects in the area of the Dacian settlement and fortress from Craiva - "Apoulon", a monument of national importance², specifically in the north-east of the site, not far from recent units of archaeological research excavated in the points: "Terrace V" and "Șura", according to those who have researched this site (Berciu *et al.* 1965, 155-166; Berciu, Popa 1970, 261-274; Moga 1981, 103-116.; Moga *et al.* 2006, 142-143; Moga *et al.* 2007, 140-142; Moga *et al.* 2008, 140-142; Moga *et al.* 2008, 106-109).

The perimeter of the context of origin was located at a distance of approx. E-SE 420 m in a straight line towards the mountain plateau and approx. 140 m NE from the archaeological research units from the "Șura" point, in a small clearing. The glade has a relatively round shape with a slope with southerly direction, and is in close proximity to the forest road flowing through the forest edge, on the watershed or edge evolving east, between Craiva Basin south and Cricăului Basin north. The highest point of the glade at less than 10 m from the indicated road, covered with young peanut threes, during the detections was found several artifacts, including the dagger presented below³.

¹ Due to the fact that the penal file is in progress, we do not specify dates about the identity of the involved persons, for understatedly reasons. At the end of the penal process all data will be public.

² LMI code: AB-I-s-A00028; RAN code: 4160.01.

³ Because, in this moment, the investigations of precise identification of recovered and/or unrecovered artifacts associated with the dagger are not completed, we will venture into their presentation, but as a working hypothesis, we can mention funeral of deposits, given the characteristics of type *sica* daggers and their associated parts.

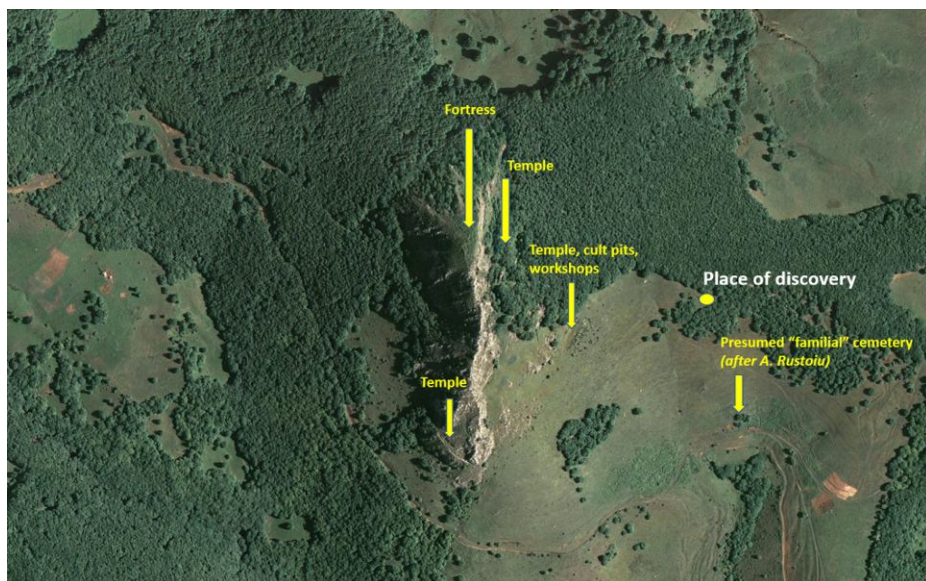


Fig. 1. The place of discovery of the curved dagger and of the main discoveries from Dacian site of Craiva - "Piatra Craivii".

Dimensions and explanation:

The iron curved dagger had the following dimensions:

- Blade length – 22.5 cm;
- Maximum and minimum width of the blade: max. = 3.4 cm; min. = 3 cm (right of the press handle);
- Maximum and minimum thickness of the blade: max. = 6 mm (right at the handle); min. = 2 mm (at the top);
- Handle length – 12 cm;
- Maximum blade width – 3.5 cm;
- Maximum width handle – 3 cm;
- Width of the collar next of the blade – 1,6 cm;
- The width and diameter of Collar at the end of the handle – 1,5 cm; Ø = 2,5x1,7 cm;
- Length and diameter of fastening rivets– 2 cm; Ø decorated (incised) ends = 1 cm.



Fig. 2. Curved dagger from Craiva – "Piatra Craivii" (photo by Călin Șuteu).

The artifact present at the moment of discovery, a layer of iron oxide was present on the entire surface, consistent to its top, being noted a mechanical cleaning intervention made by the "discoverer" of the blade, on the handle area⁴.

The blade of the dagger, triangular in section, is curved, with greater emphasis near the top, being bent in antiquity. The decoration is constituted by a register ornamental formed on the side handle, a ribbon suggests two longitudinal channels (so-called "egress of blood" - *Blutrinnen*), coupled with another composition consisting of an incised line waves and two arranged *in garland*.

⁴ For the expertise, the artifact was subsequently cleaned and treated properly by Mr. Ștefan Lipot, in the Conservation and Restoration Laboratory of the Department of History, Archaeology and Museology of the University "1 December 1918", whom we thank here.

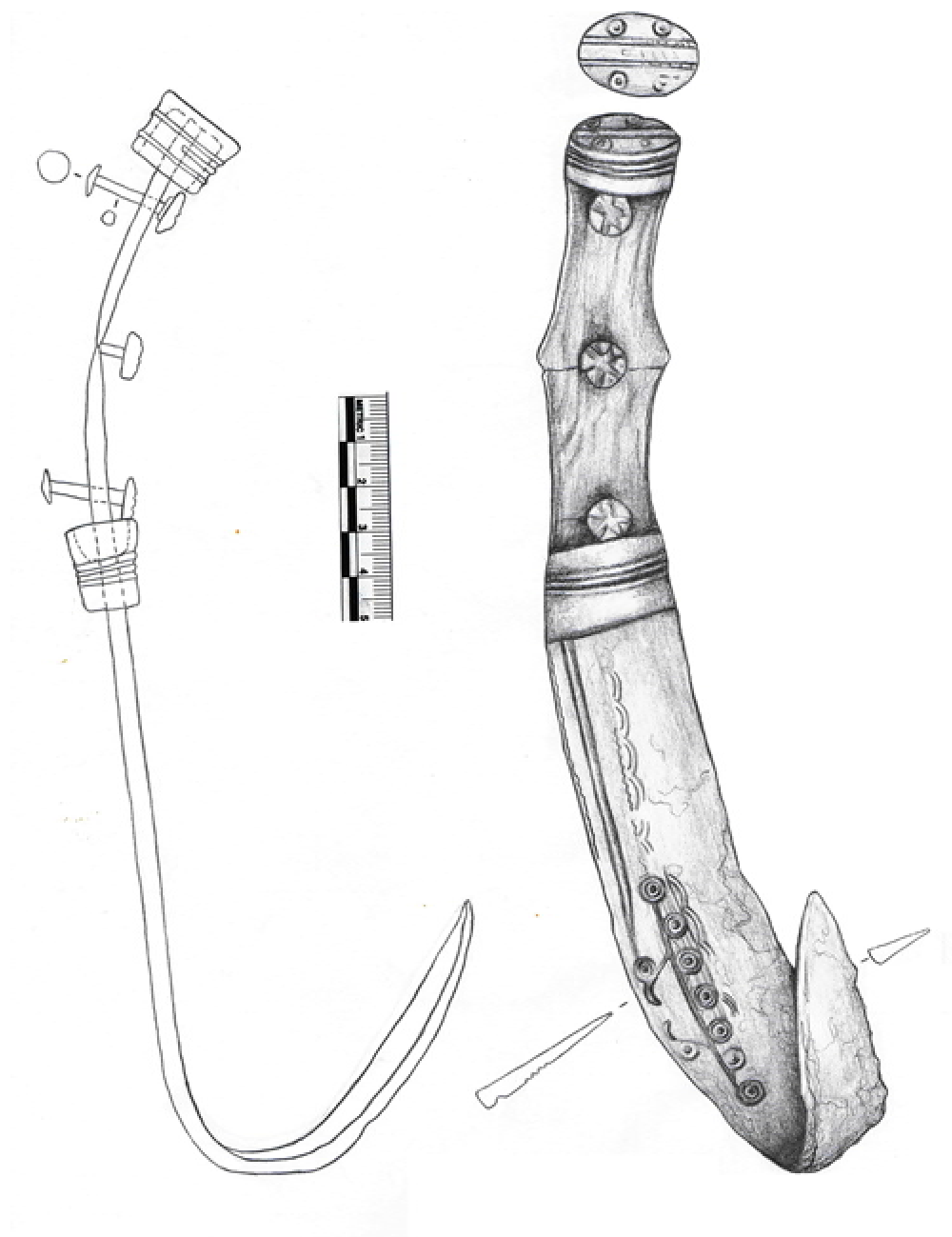


Fig. 3. Curved dagger from Craiva – "Piatra Craivii" (Drawing made by Ștefan Lipot).

The central element of decorative structure is shown in the middle and to the top part where there are two *avimorphic* representations in affront position (eagles, as suggested their beaks and eyes well singled out), below which are played by seven circles, incised by punching, arranged in a line. They are "linked" together by parallel incised lines, being also noticeable underneath, but only on a certain area, further elements displayed "in garland" (Fig. 2-3).

The handle of the dagger has a rectangular shape so its profile is wider in the middle area. The hilts, which were not preserved, were joined by three rivets with heads, from the decorated blade, semi globular shaped and decorated by five to six radial incisions. The other ends of the rivets, which only two were kept in full, are cone-shaped. Finally, fixing hilts was completed, in the contact area, with the blade of a collar guard, whose decor is achieved by two parallel incised lines form of grooves. The second collar disposed in the terminal, with additional shows a similar decor on end, four die-cut circles and parallel, displayed in pairs of two and separated in the middle by two parallel lines, protruding (Fig. 2-3).

Comments

Through the features frames the piece from "Piatra Craivii" in the group of *sica* type daggers (discussions regarding the origin, spread, functionality and typology at Rustoiu 2007, 67-82; Borangic 2009, 22-73), weapons whose genesis and evolution occurs within the Thracian aristocratic milieu from south of the Danube, in the Balkan Peninsula, spreading further and north of the river, from the second century BC (LT C2), being used until the disappearance of Dacian kingdom (Rustoiu 2007a, 69). As we noted, they meet overwhelming during centuries II-I. BC (LT C2 - LT D1), especially in funerary contexts, belonging to a warriors elite, generally found associated with defensive/offensive weapons, harness and sometimes with costumes and adornments (Rustoiu 2002, 16-19; Spânu 2001-2002; Łuczkiewicz, Schönfelder 2008, 159-210). Initially they occurred mainly in the area between northwest and northern Bulgaria, northeastern Serbia and southwestern Romania, the center area of the so-called cultural horizon *Padea-Panagjurskii-Kolonii* type, supra-ethnic and supra-regional structure (Woźniak 1974, 2225-226; Rustoiu 2002, 13-19; Łuczkiewicz, Schönfelder 2008, 159-210).

The dagger from Craiva find morphological analogies, both of cultural environments from south of the Danube, for example at Osen (Borangic 2009, pl. XIII/4), Varna (Borangic 2009, pl. X/5) and Vinograd (Woźniak 1974, 90, fig. 8/24) in Bulgaria and especially from north of the river. We mention here the findings of flat graves cremation as those in Călărași (Dolj County)(Rustoiu 2002, fig. 41/5), Cetate (Dolj County)(Rustoiu 2002, fig. 39/5), Rast (Dolj County)(Rustoiu 2002, fig. 42/3-5) and in Transylvania we notice similarities with some pieces from Blandiana (Alba County)(Rustoiu 2002, fig. 20/1), Bulbuc (Alba County)(Borangic 2014, fig. 12), Hunedoara-Castle Garden (Hunedoara County)(Sîrbu *et al.* 2007, fig. 8; Roman, Luca 2012, fig. 1/8), Teleac (Alba County)(Rustoiu 2002, fig. 20/1).

Finally, analogies with the discussed piece we find in Transcarpathian Ukraine in the necropolis of the settlement from Malaja Kopanja (*Komuzopouko* 2009, fig. 24/1-2), but also in the case of some objects whose place of provenance is unknown (See, for example, Sîrbu 2011, 252, fig. 2).

In terms of ornamentation, the analyzed *sica* present elements that are found on other daggers, but without knowledge of a piece with an identical setting. Additionally, as a novelty, we note the presence of decorative elements made of incised lines arranged "in garland". The problematic of the ornamental registers was initially approached by Z. A. Wozniak (Wozniak 1974, 99-101, where distinguished four stylistic groups), reopened by A. Rustoiu (Rustoiu 2001, 181-194; Rustoiu 2002, 57-62. For the area of Bulgaria, see Torbov 2005) who considered that the presence of zoomorphic ornaments on the blade daggers is typical for northwestern Bulgaria and South-West Oltenia Transylvania (Rustoiu 2002, 58), while geometric representations (die circles and lines) know a much wider territorial extension (Rustoiu 2002, 58).

Regarding the affront eagles on the dagger from Craiva, note similarities with the rendering and execution represented a dagger from Altmir (Bulgaria)(Rustoiu 2001, fig. 3/3), Orodel (Dolj County)(Rustoiu 2001, fig. 3/6) and Bulbuc (Alba County)(Borangic 2014, fig.12). Regarding the presence of simple concentric circles made by punching, they find their similarities in many more discoveries. We note, however, a very good analogy for setting the spout of our part in Bulbuc (Alba County)(Borangic 2013, fig. 10c).

Regarding the significance of the presence of these decorations on the daggers they have a definite symbolic connotation, especially because overwhelmingly came from funerary contexts (Rustoiu 2002, 60; Spănu 2001-2002, 99).

Another noteworthy aspect is the voluntary bending of the dagger. And in this case we can speak of a "pattern" widely encountered such discoveries within (and beyond), on which we will not dwell on the moment (Măndescu 2012).

Fine chronology coordinates for the dagger discussed are rather difficult to attribute, given its removal from the archaeological context by unauthorized persons⁵. The presence of other funerary finds in Piatra Craivii can be a foothold in overall necropolis dating here (Rustoiu 2007, 83-98; Popa 2008, 357-365; Rustoiu, Gheorghiu 2010, 447-457). A first funeral inventory comes from accidental discoveries of the late nineteenth century (Herepely 1901, 76-77, pl. XXI/228-233; Rep. Alba 1995, 83), which were performed and interpreted correctly after more than a century (Popa 2008, 357-365) and whose dating was proposed, broadly throughout I century BC (Popa 2008, 362). Possibly related to this inventory is a dagger with a complex decoration (Rustoiu 2007, 83-97 *sqv*, fig. 1/1), which has its good analogies with similar piece from tomb no. 1 of Mala Vrbica – Ajmana (Rustoiu 2007, 87, fig.

⁵ We hope that during the processing of other artifacts associated with the dagger is possible to obtain more data.

1/2), in Serbia, in the Iron Gates, in a context LT D1 (approx. 150-75 BC), another from Popitsa (Bulgaria)(Rustoiu 2012, 174, fig. 9/3; Torbov 2005, Pl. II/3) and in a hoard(?) of objects find on the southern slopes of Rtanj mountain near the town Vrmđža in Serbia, recently published (Милојевић, Милановић 2015, p.40-41, pl. I/11)⁶. Another dagger, whose features make all plausible the origin of a grave, is being kept in the National Museum of History⁷, in course to be published soon (Sirbu, Borangic 2016). Finally, a third discovery of the funerary "Piatra Craivii" probably as a result of illegal activity detection was partially published (Rustoiu, Gheorghiu 2010, 447-457)⁸. On the basis of the brooch from the grave inventory, it was dated to the period between the last third of I century BC - beginning I century AD, and is, according to the authors, the late expression of the Padea Panaghjurskii Kolonii-group in Transylvania (Rustoiu, Gheorghiu 2010, 451)(Rustoiu, Gheorghiu 2010, 451).

Therefore, based on the funerary discoveries done so far in Craiva "Piatra Craivii" we tend to believe that they rather fit in the sub-phase of D2's of later Latène.

Corroborating the certain late dating of one of the mentioned graves with other similar complexes from other locations, we ask whether the use of "Padea - Panaghjurskii Kolonii group" may be applicable for the period rise of Burebista (approx. 60-40 a. Chr.)(Dobesch 2001, 781-811) and later?⁹

⁶ Slovenian researcher D. Božič is cautious considering the existence of a deposit in this case, pointing out they come from some illegal detections, Critically analysing the parts chronology same author concludes the majority of the pieces are dated LT D1, two of them LT D2 and one piece probably dating to old antiquity. (Božič recommendation on <https://www.academia.edu/16580021>).

⁷ On its existence was made aware of us, years ago Dr. Horia Ciugudean. Our subsequent attempts to study the track have failed. Recently, more successful, proved endeavors researcher Valeriu Sirbu.

⁸ The Inventory, preserved today in the Museum of Gherla (Cluj County), consisted exclusively of iron pieces, consisting of a hybrid fibula, a curved dagger, a spearhead and probably a long sword late Latène type, last piece lost.

⁹ In this direction, see also the separation what E. Teleagă, makes between the tomb of the warrior with waggon from Cugir, assigned to the graves with weapons Padea-Panaghjurskii Kolonii (in the range of LT C2- approx. 250-150 B.C. and LT D1 - approx. 150-75 B.C.) and the warriors of Burebista (Teleagă 2014, 309; 311). Several questions regarding the chronological connections, and not only, see at Măndescu 2013, 127-128. See also Łuczkiwicz, Schönfelder 2008, 161-162. Recently, V. Sirbu proposes to eliminate the term "Padea-Panaghjurskii Kolonii" defined awarded funerary discoveries by Wozniak (with subsequent contributions). He believes they are Dacian monuments, being rejected and the possibility that at the genesis of the Dacian kingdom have participated groups of warriors came from south of the Danube. Arguments in Sirbu, 2011, 253 (where is proposed abandonment of this term discoveries in southwestern Transylvania and Ukraine) and Sirbu 2015, 13-14 (for the whole complex of the group recalled the centuries II-I. B.C.).

The dagger published here, though discovered under less favorable conditions, completes the overall image of the funerary finds in the area of the south and north of the Lower Danube between late Latène's and particularly the one in the Dacian settlement from Craiva-"Piatra Craivii". Based on oldest and recent discoveries is confirmed the existence of an aristocratic necropolis¹⁰, whose behavior and inventory reveals supra-regional and supra-ethnic patterns and connections.

¹⁰ Its location, proposed on the basis of incomplete information (cf. Rustoiu 2015, fig. 29) is considered to be corrected by the presented plan and others to be published later (see Fig. 1).

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