

# DACORVM FALCES

The illusive curved weapons of  
the Geto-Dacians  
(Excerpt)

Cătălin Borangic

Dan Pălimaru

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# Argument

Rhetorician Cornelius Marcus Fronto (ca. 100 - ca. 175 B.C.) is the one who fixed in the imaginary of antiquity curved weapons and their association with the Dacian warriors. Nearly half a century after the Dacian-Roman wars, the memories of the terrible battlefields still haunted the legions. The vain Roman soldiers of Lucius Verus were preparing to face the terrible cavalry of the steppe archers again, remembering the dreadful wounds caused by the bent weapons of the Dacians. For half a century had not been long enough for the impact of these weapons to be forgotten, a sign that the wounds had been inflicted not only in flesh, but also in spirit.

*(...) in bellum profectus est cum cognitis militibus hostem Parthum contemnentibus, saggitarum ictus post ingentia Dacorum **falcibus** inlata volnera despiciatui habentibus.*

*[...] he went to war with tried-and-tested soldiers, who despised our enemies, and did not care for their arrows after the terrible wounds inflicted on them by the bent Dacians **sickles**.*

The pretext of this book started from the ambiguity of this quote, which wording, although clearly shows that the Dacians were fighting with bent weapons, does not provide any explanation whatsoever regarding what they were or how they looked. The

equivocation, corroborated with the images of Trajan's Column, engraved in the ancient and then contemporary collective memory the image of the Dacian accompanied by his bent sword. On a closer look, both on the phrase and on the historical timeframe to which it refers, things no longer appear simple. The bent arms of the Dacians were of many kinds - swords, daggers, hooks, knives - and the use or possession of each category belonged to a certain social or military strata.

It became obvious that the historiographic space needed a broad, historical, social, morphological, ideological and functional research for each type of weapon in an attempt to establish its historical route, owners, efficiency and real place in its own cultural matrix, but especially in the collective imaginary.

# *Sica*-type curved dagger<sup>1</sup>

The most specific type of curved weapon in the panoply of Thracian warriors is a sharp dagger, with a curved blade and a triangular section, with one or more grooves for blood draining along the blade and zoomorphic or geometric motifs encrusted on the same. The size of this dagger, generically called *sica*, varies between 25 and 35 cm in length<sup>2</sup>. The relative morphological uniformity is affected by the random inclusion in this category of larger pieces, improperly called *daggers*, and even of smaller swords<sup>3</sup>, most likely because the curved daggers are invariably attributed to the Thracian ethnos and, consequently, associated with it. This observation underlines the fact that, from a semantic and terminological point of view, the term *sica*<sup>4</sup>, which designates a bent dagger, though strongly anchored in Latin through its derivatives<sup>5</sup>, was adopted by Romans from the Greek culture, where it once entered with the mercenary Thracians employed in the various Hellenic conflicts<sup>6</sup>. It is therefore possible that the *sica*

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter is based on the *article Sica. Typology and functionality*, published in the NEMVS magazine (Borangic 2009b, p. 22-74) Also, the theme was resumed and updated consistently, in the form of a specialized monograph, written in collaboration with Dr. Valeriu Sîrbu, where the topic is detailed with unique pieces, illustration, maps, archives, annexes and discussions (Sîrbu, Borangic 2016). For these reasons, the present chapter is not extended, presenting only the principal ideas, though, unlike the monograph, here daggers from the south of the Danube are also represented.

<sup>2</sup> Rustoiu 2007b, p. 68.

<sup>3</sup> Pădurean, 2006, p. 219-233, Pl. VIII.

<sup>4</sup> Scorpan 1995, p. 87, s. v. *sica*.

<sup>5</sup> Ocheșanu et alii 1962, p. 677, s. v. *sica*.

<sup>6</sup> See Rustoiu 2007b, p. 67, referring to A. Emout, A. Meillet, *Dictionnaire etymologique de la langue latin*, Paris, 1932, p. 896, v. *Sica, sicae*

or a similar term, may have been the original, Thracian name of the dagger, itself a creation of the Thracians from the south of the Danube. At the origin of the word is the Indo-European root *\*sec*, *\*sac*, with the meaning *to cut, to section*<sup>7</sup>, which allows the hypothesis that the curved daggers of the second half of the 1st millennium BC were favorite weapons for cutting and stabbing.

As far as it can be documented, the origin of this weapon seems to be on the slopes of the Rhodopes Mountains. Here, as early as the IV-III centuries BC, the *sica* daggers reached a final form, defined functionally and aesthetically, as evidenced by the funeral discoveries of Kabyle (Pl. XXXIX/2)<sup>8</sup> or Seutopolis<sup>9</sup>. It should be noted that some of the daggers in this category have a slightly broken blade, reminiscent of the older *mahairae*, from which they were probably inspired.

The easy classification of different medium-sized curved weapons of the Thracian world, such as *mahaira* or *falx*, as daggers, has made it increasingly difficult to inventory and study the daggers themselves, despite the fact that the latter are present in relatively large numbers in archaeological contexts, as well as in figurative representations. The hypothesis of identity between the *sica* and any other curved weapon in the Thracian arsenal cannot be supported if one takes into account that in Latin *sica* (bent dagger) is part of the same family of words as *sicilis* = sickle, *sicilio* = to cut with the sickle, *sicilicula* = harvester, small basket, *sicarius* = knife, figured assassin<sup>10</sup>. The whole word family suggests small dimensions and not always warriors.

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<sup>7</sup> Daremberg, Saglio 1926, tom 4, vol. 2 (R-S), Paris, 1926, p. 1300, s. v. *sica*.

<sup>8</sup> Domaradzki 1991, p. 76, fig. 26/9.

<sup>9</sup> Ogenova-Marinova 1984, p. 184, fig. 17.

<sup>10</sup> Guțu 1983, vocile respective.



At least on a theoretical level, Romanian historiography places the equal sign between the *sica* and every other type of curved dagger; however, in practice, the exemplification with material items weapons covers a wide range of shapes and dimensions<sup>11</sup>, which requires careful analysis and clarification for the validity of the equivalence.

Ambiguity has its roots in often unclear historical sources that assess the Thracian weapons. According to Herodotus, the equipment of the Bithian Thracians that had passed through Asia in the middle of the first millennium BC consisted of *spears, light shields and small swords*<sup>12</sup>, a formula that Nicolae Iorga translates through *spear, and hatchets, and scimitars*<sup>13</sup>, trying to recapture both Herodotus's expression and historical truth<sup>14</sup>. Clemens Flavius heightens the confusion, recalling the Thracians' invention of a *large bent knife*<sup>15</sup>, called *mahaira* in text, but without other morphological or functional details.

The representations of the curved weapons on the monuments of Antiquity are insufficiently clear so as to definitely identify as daggers or *falces* the weapons carried by the Dacians immortalized on the Trajan's Column or by the personifications of the Dacia from the Roman numismatics<sup>16</sup>. By sheer number of the pieces and their relative standardization, the items discovered in archaeological sites, devoid of literary ambiguities or artistic

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<sup>11</sup>

Petrescu-Dîmbovița et alii 1995, p. 190; Daicoviciu 1965, p. 236; *The military history of the Romanian people*, p. 101; Fox 1988, p. 83, p. 228

<sup>12</sup> Herodot, The Histories, VII, 75.

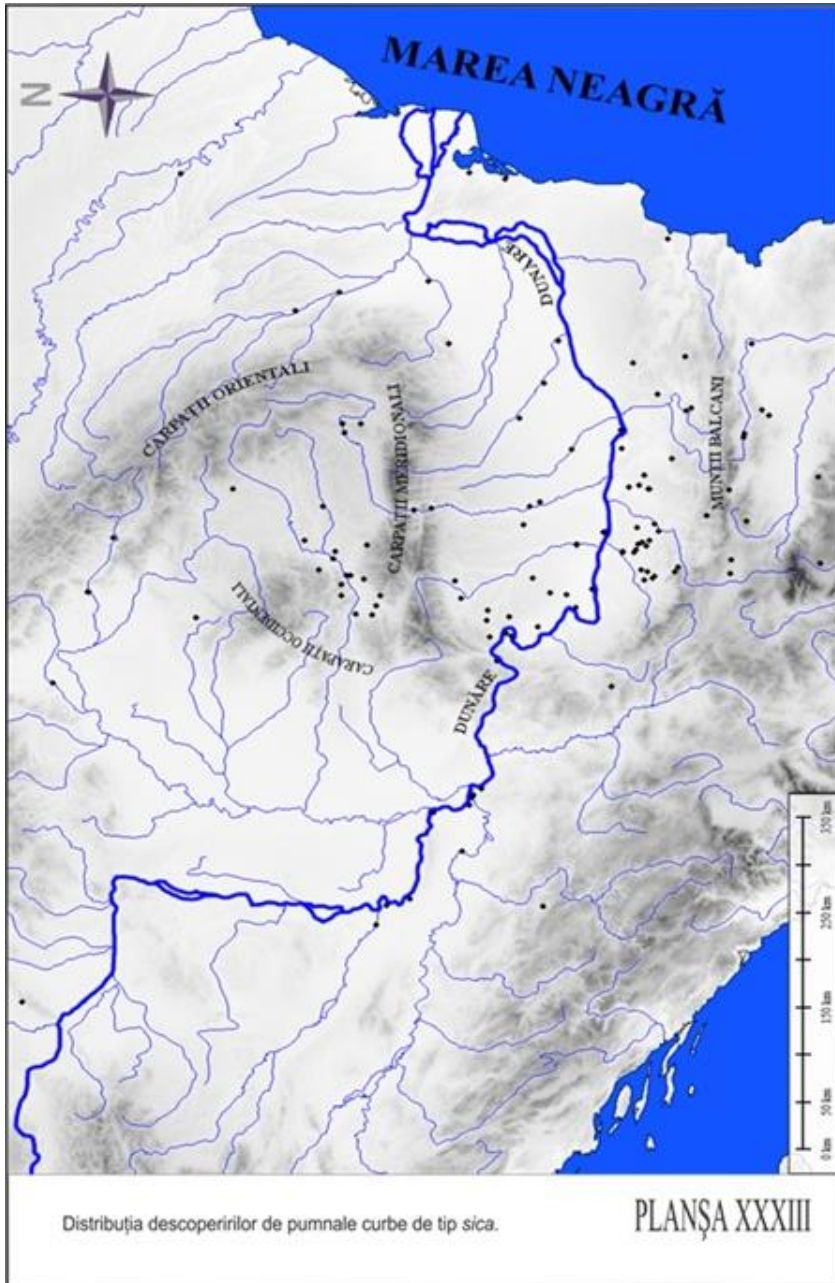
<sup>13</sup> Herodot, The Histories, VII, 75, (2003, p. 385).

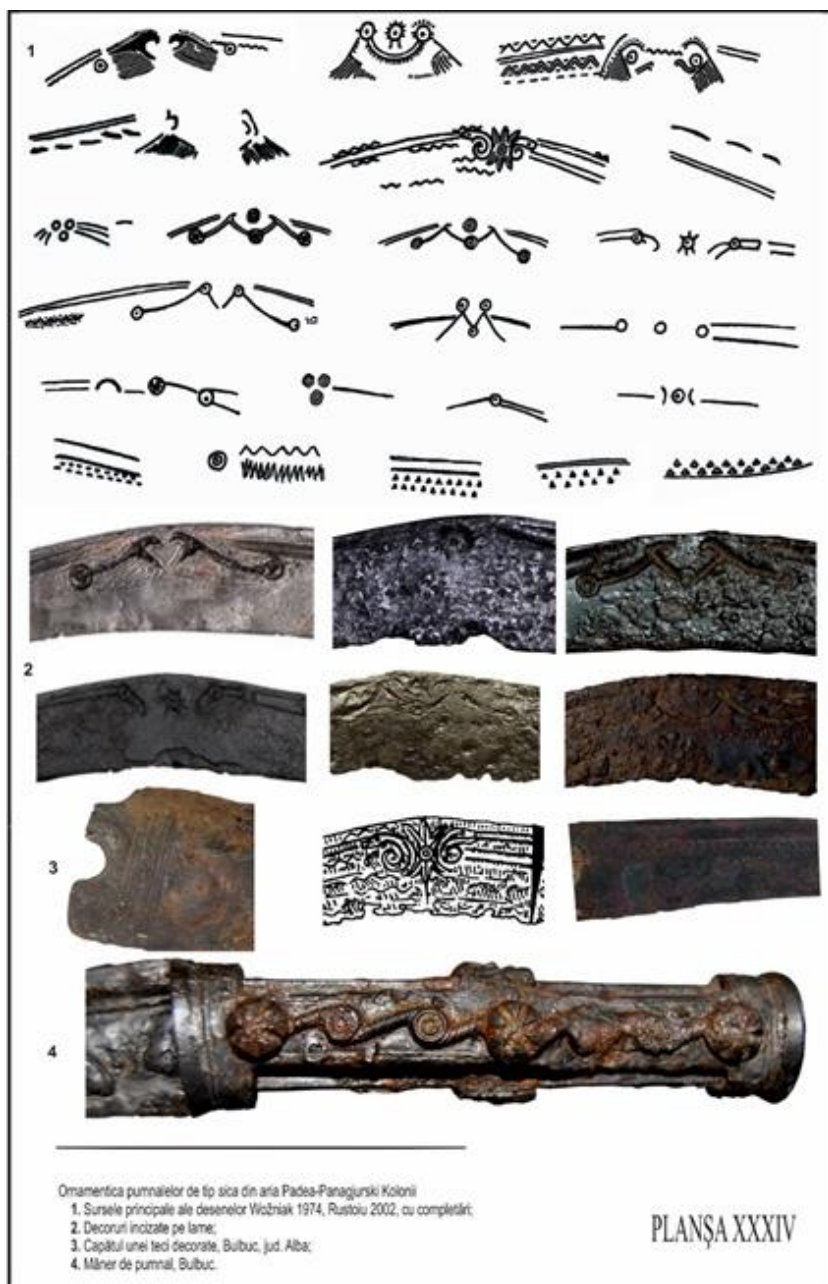
<sup>14</sup> DEX, ediția a II-a, București, 1996, s. v. Hanger (romanian in original text), defined as large, curved dagger.

<sup>15</sup> Clemens din Alexandria, Covoarele, I, 16.

<sup>16</sup> Winkler 1965, p. 229-230

additions, are more likely to shape a more accurate image of these weapons.





The large number of discovered items (Pl. XXXIII), with varied characteristics, but centered on the notion of dagger, cumulated with the scarcity of ancient sources, possible only taking into account the physical and functional characteristics of the weapons considered.

According to the specialists, a *dagger* is considered a generic portable edged weapon with short blade, usually with two cutting edges and pointed tip<sup>17</sup> - an insufficient description, because the dimensions are not mentioned, being factors of precise distinction between the different cutting weapons in the Thracian space. Another distinguishing element needed to exactly define Thracian daggers would be functionality, especially as it is particularly complex in the spatial and chronological area in question.

By definition, the dagger, similar to the knife, is a secondary offensive weapon, used in combat only as backup, when the main weapon, the spear, lance, sword or cutlass are broken, unavailable or when the tactical situation specifically requires its use<sup>18</sup>. Due to the implicit short range, the effectiveness of the dagger is maximum when used for stabbing and sectioning, but much lower for hitting strikes. These features make the dagger a rather useful combat item in itself. Additionally, in the Thracian space it has also accumulated a series of distinctive elements, of an aesthetic, identity and religious nature.

In this general framework regarding the concept of dagger,

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<sup>17</sup> Lexicon 1980, p. 540, s. v. *dagger*.

<sup>18</sup> This combat scenario is only applicable prior to the advent of firearms. The dagger and implicitly its functionality survived the disappearance of melee weapons (which were kept for parade purposes only), and its utility, given by the secondary function, determined the presence of this weapon in every modern army.

the Thracians items have specific attributes, especially related to the form and the spiritual imprint. In the first and perhaps the most obvious case, the shape of these sharp-pointed daggers and the section of the triangular blade is curved, most often presenting an elegant curvature and has only one edge instead of two, on the concave side of the blade. This conformation enhances the basic features of the daggers because, while retaining the high penetration power resulting from the sharp tip and the extended blade, it amplifies the effects of the cutting/stabbing action. The second peculiarity of the Thracian daggers is the presence of a notable spiritual significance, deduced from the representations that adorn the blades<sup>19</sup>, from their presence in the tombs of the aristocracy, as well as from the relation of curved weapons in general to the idea of sacrifice.

Starting from these considerations, in the North-Balkan area, an evolutionary line is visible, starting from simple shapes and, through successive modifications, leading, towards the end of the 3rd century BC and the beginning of the next century, to the dagger as the weapon of a cosmopolitan warrior elite, whose arsenal also includes a powerful Thracian component. The area covered by the specific manifestations of this elite, largely marked by the presence of these daggers, is represented by the northern Balkans, present-day Oltenia, western Muntenia, southern and southeastern Transylvania, and continues to the periphery of the Dacian kingdom until sub-Carpathian Ukraine. Sporadically, such daggers are found in different contexts in Dobrogea and central Moldova. The bearers of these daggers, in their expansion to the north, eliminated the Celtic authority from the intra-Carpathian zone and spread the *sica* dagger throughout the Carpathian Basin,

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<sup>19</sup> Rustoiu 2001, p. 181-194.

being used by the military elites of the Dacian Kingdom until its fall, as can be deduced from the presence of the weapon in the scene of the suicide of King Decebalus.

The arsenal of these warriors covers all types of weapons necessary for successful fight as professional soldiers: spear for attack, long sword for close combat and shield for defense, helmet and armored clothes, dagger for melee combat. The arming of the warrior elite with weapons of different types demonstrates not only the diverse origin of its members (or the cultural models they carry), but also the contribution that each group has made to the entire complex. The arsenal reflects the adaptability of these communities to the new realities on the battlefields of the last half-millennium BC. In this context, the dagger has a precise destination, taking into account its short range of action and the morphological particularities, respectively the curvature of the blade, the grooves on the blade and the cut on the convex side. These characteristics need to be discussed for a better understanding of the practical ways of use in combative actions, both for delimiting the curved daggers in relation to the different variants of small and medium sized swords, and for the very necessary replacement of the *sica-type sword* verbiage, often used in specialized literature and which, by its ambiguity, transfers to a variety of curved swords the place and role that the daggers should have occupied.

This misconception, born at the beginning of the twentieth century<sup>20</sup> and continued, with small exceptions, throughout the historiography of the twentieth century<sup>21</sup>, is the result of combining

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<sup>20</sup> Xenopol 1913, p. 107-110.

<sup>21</sup> Manea 1999, p. 229, s.v. *sica*. The author defines this term with two apparently complementary explanations: *lat. sica = dagger with bent blade*, but also *small, bent sword with a single edge*.

the images of the Trajan Column with the few historical sources, all curved weapons other than the big swords being considered as *sica*, regardless of their functionality. The analysis of this functionality shows that the curved daggers and swords, having different functions and characteristics, cannot be used in the same way and were therefore rendered differently in the reliefs of the Column. The curved swords were used to penetrate the arms and helmets of the soldiers grouped into compact formations, which requires a heavier, larger weapon and with a curved tip more accentuated than the daggers found in archaeological contexts, a feature that results from the more robust appearance they are represented with. According to these considerations, a curved sword had to be held up to the enemy, given that the sword was used especially for top-to-bottom shots, as it results from LIX, LXXII or XCV scenes<sup>22</sup>, an improper use for daggers, smaller and much more elegant items. The only scene which unequivocally represents a *sica*-type dagger is the one in which the King Decebalus commits suicide, CXLV<sup>23</sup>, which unequivocally presents the proper use of daggers. They were intended for stabbing and slicing, actions that could only be effected from the bottom up, as well as cutting, in the case of suicide, which forced the weapon to be positioned with the sharp edge angled towards the handler's body.

The third feature, namely the longitudinal ducts, rarely more than one or two, allows blood to be drained from the wound even as the dagger is still stuck in, favoring continuous bleeding. The presence of blood drainage channels on the daggers of the Thracian military elite since the 4th century BC shows not only the

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<sup>22</sup> Vulpe 1988, p. 141; p. 182

<sup>23</sup> Vulpe 1988, p. 228.

efficiency of these weapons<sup>24</sup>, but also the place they occupy in the warrior arsenal. Based on these details, both in figurative art and in the specialized literature, a distinction is possible between daggers and other weapons with close morphological characteristics.

To complete this distinction, the fourth characteristic is equally eloquent, namely the ornaments of the blade with different geometric or zoomorphic elements (**Pl. XXXIV/1**). The classification of these decorative elements was initiated by the Polish researcher Zenon Woźniak in 1974. He divided these ornaments into four distinct groups:

- First group **(A)** cumulates the zoomorphic representations;
- Second **(B)** comprises a series of complex associations of circles, points and lines arranged in zigzag;
- Third **(C)** is composed circles and longitudinal lines;
- Fourth and last **(D)** includes rows of triangles punched on the blades of daggers<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> In this case, the efficiency of the daggers due to blood drain is only slightly increased, unlike for swords and blades, where these grooves significantly reduced the weight of the weapon and substantially modified the geometry of the section. The dagger canals often have a purely decorative role, being incised only symbolically, with no effect on blade strength (there are very few specimens with prominent grooves).

<sup>25</sup> Woźniak 1974, p. 99-101.





The interpretation of these decorations is different, ranging from Uranian symbols<sup>26</sup> to the figuring of some heavenly phenomena on the blade<sup>27</sup>, all variants being probable, but all the possibilities listed have to do with the personality of the owner or his cultural matrix. In addition to personalizing the weapon, the dagger's ornament was intended to give it a powerful spiritual charge, most likely amplified by its use as a sacrificial tool.

From a typological point of view, although there is a definite standardization tendency, *sica* type daggers can be classified into three main types (**A**, **B**, **C**), distinguished only by some morphological, not functional<sup>28</sup>, aspects, to which a common type can be added - a generic type of curved daggers (**D**).

The first type (**A**) is based on the three items discovered at Padea<sup>29</sup> (**Pl. XXXV/1-2**). Also in this category we can include a dagger from Zimnicea<sup>30</sup> (**Pl. XXXV/4**), one from Slatina<sup>31</sup> (**Pl. XXXV/5**), and one known in the specialized literature as coming from "Silivaş" (**Pl. XXXV/6**). These daggers have a long blade, sometimes provided with a groove for blood drain, a smooth curve, and the handle is fixed in a short, triangular tip or blade extension (no full handle has been retained). This type of *sica* dagger seems to be among the earliest, at least north of the Danube<sup>32</sup>. The lack of

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<sup>26</sup> Rustoiu 2002, p. 59-60

<sup>27</sup> Stalio 1986, p. 34.

<sup>28</sup> The morphological differences were initially noticed by Dr. Aurel Rustoiu (2007a, pages 83-97), who proposes two variants of *sica* daggers

<sup>29</sup> Three daggers were discovered at this site, which partially gave the name of the category, though only two were recovered (Bondoc 2008-2009, p. 143, Fig. 7 / 19-20), the third being identified only in a drawing (Zirra 1976, p. 180, Fig. 4/8), Pl.VI/4.

<sup>30</sup> Alexandrescu 1980, p. 40, fig. 59/17; 76/5.

<sup>31</sup> Butoi 1974, p. 29-32, fig. 2.

<sup>32</sup> A similar type also seems to exist south of the Danube, at Nadezna (near Teteven, Lovech); Mikov 1931-1932, pp. 160-161, fig. 141 / b (**Pl.XXXV/3**). The

decorations on the blades is also a feature that seems to place them before the appearance of artistic and religious manifestation mode. Another indication could be the lack of the terminal buttons characteristic of the metal sheaths of the curved daggers. This category also seems to include the longest known copy, a piece most likely illegally acquired, but offered for sale on a site specialized in antique trade<sup>33</sup> (Pl. XXXV/7). Without knowing the origin of this dagger, having only the lacunar information presented on the site, according to the morphological characteristics and the analogies with similar pieces discovered in certain archaeological contexts, it can only be affirmed that it is possible to be a weapon that belonged to the arsenal of the Thracian world<sup>34</sup>.

The second type (**B**) is individualized by a massive allure, compared to other types of daggers. The blade strongly curves in the middle of its length, the tip is short, but pointed, and the attachment in the handle is made by a triangular extension, reinforced by a rivet and provided with one or two holes for fixing the pads. The blade is decorated with incised symbols and has, almost invariably, a ridge for blood draining. The daggers of this type are short, characterized by massiveness, sometimes with a broken aspect immediately after the middle of the blade, short and

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dagger found here, apparently in a cenotaph, also seems to be dateable between the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC.

<sup>33</sup> [www.hermann-historica.de](http://www.hermann-historica.de) (22.03.2009).

<sup>34</sup> In general, the pieces found on antique trading sites must be viewed with great reserves due to the large number of forgeries, which themselves have become an industry and are especially common on-line. However, some firms or auction houses are above these suspicions due to the reputation and the specialists involved. Hermann Historica is one of the most well-known such establishments, which is why the degree of authenticity of the exhibited pieces is high and, as a consequence, the weapons displayed here can be taken into account, even if for statistical reasons only.

sharp tip, with a slight curvature, a short handle rod, usually of triangular shape, provided with one or two holes for the rivet required for fixing the handle, located near the blade. These characteristics are not general, the only arguments for the delimitation of this type being the approximately similar size and shape. Not very numerous, *sica* daggers of this type were discovered along a general north-south axis, starting with the western part of Bulgaria and moving north, to the center of Transylvania, the discoveries being more compact in the Iron Gate area.

The southernmost specimen was found at Ravno-Pole (Pl. XXXVI/2), near Sofia, then, advancing to the Danube, at Hristo Danov, Galatin (Pl. XXXVI/3), Prisovo (Pl. XXXVI/4), Komarevo, Sokolare, Altimir, Barbačevo, Sofronievo, Vraca, Comakovtzi, Panagyurishte Colonies, Bogomilovo (Pl. XXXVI/1), Pleven, all in Bulgaria. From the Iron Gates area there are also three such pieces, one discovered in Ajmana, in Serbia (Pl. XXXVI/5), and two daggers were discovered north of the Danube, in Ogradena<sup>35</sup> (Pl. XXXVI/7), and one from at Piatra Craivii (Pl. XXXVI/6), Hunedoara, Răcățau (Bacău county), Izvoru, Vânătorii Mici commune, Giurgiu county (Pl. XXXVI/8), Radovanu, Călărași county and Poiana, Galați county, Poiana, Galați County and Vălenii de Mureș, Mureș County. Another dagger can be included

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<sup>35</sup> Regarding the place of origin of the pieces from Ogradena (previously published as being found in Dubova, Mehedinți county), there are planning a series of uncertainties, starting with the delays in reporting the discoveries. Although the inventory was initially published in part by D. Spânu (2001-2002; 2003), it independently appeared in the specialized literature. Based on manuscripts of F. Medelet, the researcher A. Rustoiu restates the problem and although he notes the discovery point "Dubova", he makes the indication that the place of origin of the pieces actually belongs to the commune of Ogradena, Mehedinți county (Rustoiu 2007a, p 86, note 19).

here, which appears in the collection of the National Museum of History of Romania, from a particular donation<sup>36</sup>. The inclusion of these daggers, from various private collections or museums, whose places of discovery are unknown, among the North-Danube daggers was made in order to attempt to include all the weapons of this type that are now in this space, their statistical significance being necessary in the analysis of the whole Balkan area and, eventually, for the whole study. Only with the title of curiosity, it can be noted that the pieces presented are accompanied by a number of pieces exhibited on sites more or less specialized in online transactions, as well as on various forums, most likely illegally sourced and often quite much better preserved than those located in archaeological finds<sup>37</sup>.

Even with a conservative assessment of this information, the situation itself nearly doubles the number of daggers in the category. The historical value extracted from the identification and analysis of the whole batch is obviously reduced by the lack of contextual details. The only useful certainty, besides the morphological aspects, is their significant number, which allows a broader view on the demographics and economic power of the warrior elites that possessed them.

Unlike the other types, type **B** daggers denote a manufacturing technique that implies lower craftsmanship skills. It should be noted, however, that although they are morphologically

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<sup>36</sup> Sîrbu 2011, p. 251-252, Fig. 1.

<sup>37</sup> On the same considerations expressed above (note 380) at least from a statistical point of view, for this type of dagger, a few more pieces must be considered, originating from "Eastern Europe", which are present in various collections and deposits of auction houses as object of activity the historical artifacts or on specialized sites in this kind of trade (see Catalog 2011, no. cat. 1754-1760)

similar, the south-Danube daggers similar to type **B** are much more carefully crafted compared to the specimens found north of the river. Both the appearance and the technological details reveal a piece relatively easy to forge in a superficial manner. The handle, one of the most demanding aspects when it comes to manufacturing, was made exclusively of perishable materials, minimally fixed to the blade, often without gaskets and sleeves. Also, daggers of this type are missing the metal sheaths - which would have been difficult to put in relation to the coarse blade anyway - so the possible sheath must have been only wood and/or leather. Though rarely, sheaths associated with daggers of this type were discovered in Thracian space<sup>38</sup>. The actual fixing the handle remains uncertain, especially for those with only one fixing nut. The attempts of reconstruction of this type<sup>39</sup> were hindered by this problem due to the lack of discoveries of the metal seals that would reinforce the attachment of the blade to the handle. In a relatively low period of casual use, the simple fixing with one nit is prone to failure, aggravated also by the improper assembly of the metal in the wood and, in the case of inadequate wood essences, the handle frequently cracks and needs repair or replacement. It is possible that either the clamping was done in an as yet undiscovered way, or, more surely, there were seals, but they were not kept, the only one found, at least for the north-Danube area<sup>40</sup>, is that of the piece from Hunedoara. The shape and dimensions of these daggers are not the most suitable for puncturing, but they are excellent for cutting/sectioning.

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<sup>38</sup> Teodosiev, Torbov 1995, p. 31, fig. 32.

<sup>39</sup> Borangic 2013, p. 835, fig. 15.

<sup>40</sup> Such seals are kept at some daggers of this type in the south of the Danube (Torbov 2005, p. 23, fig. IV / 2).



However, when used for stabbing, and the sharp tip strongly suggests this function, the wounds made by the wide blade were large and caused heavy bleeding, with immediate serious effects.

The last type of daggers (C) is the most statistically and geographically representative. The long, elegant blade, decorated with circular incisions and/or reins along the blade, as well as the existence of the blood drains are specific. The handle is constructed from the extension of the blade material and protected by guard sleeves and terminals. All these distinctive elements can be found or in some specimens only one or few such features are found. The dimensions show a relative standardization, at circa 30-40 cm long and circa 3-3, 5 cm wide, though some pieces exceed these dimensions. Some copies have extremely elaborate handles, and the execution of the whole piece is very careful (Corcova, Bulbuc (Pl. XXXIV/4)). Most daggers have guard sleeves and terminals. The sheaths were made of iron sheet, slightly curved in the shape of the blade, with the edges bent inward in length, until they welded together at one end in a specific discoidal knob.

In the upper side the sheaths were decorated with fine incisions, observable today in some better preserved pieces (Pl. XXXIV/3). A peculiarity of most of these sheaths is that the metal part was used only for the protection of the upper third of the blade, the most active, the rest being made of leather and wood. It can be deduced that the sheath was made of a combination of the metal part - necessary for the protection of the pointed tip, but also for the protection of the warrior from possible accidents - and an upper part of wood and / or leather. In this metal case that covered only half the blade (there are few cases of completely metallic sheath), remaining in sight as we deduce from the fact that they were



decorated, entered the part made of organic materials, to which the metal component was fastened by rivets. The entire sheath was fastened to the belt, potentially on the right side, the most likely option due to easy access to the weapon, relative to its curved shape.

In the context of the entire area in which they were used, from the morphological point of view, this type of daggers from the north of the Danube, are highly sophisticated from a technical and artistic point of view. In some items, the tip changes its axis over a short distance, a transformation that makes the weapon more efficient. If the enemy was stabbed, the different angle made by the tip relative to the blade axis caused deep wounds, much larger than the blade width, and the groove on the blade favored blood flow. The allure of the blade and the tip, combined with sufficient force and technique, had the effect of penetrating blows with an immediate lethal effect.

Another obvious change is the artistic register. The decorations become very schematic, on a chronological and geographical south-north axis. Although the antithesis of zoomorphic elements and solar symbolism is preserved, at the level of ideas and intentions, they are increasingly less detailed, sometimes barely suggested - which sometimes makes their interpretation difficult. Instead, the handles are very well crafted, at least on some daggers, the weapon itself receiving significant artistic valence. Making such a dagger required many more resources, which makes his possession a reflection of the attributes of the individual, who wanted to be significant and ostentatious.

From a chronological point of view, this type of dagger is dated mainly in the century 2<sup>nd</sup> to 1<sup>st</sup> BC. The North-Danube

discoveries of this type come from Berghin, Blandiana, Balănești<sup>41</sup>, Bulbuc (Pl. XXXIVIII/1-7)<sup>42</sup>, Florești<sup>43</sup>, Călan, Călărași, Cetate (Pl. XXXVII/3)<sup>44</sup>, Cornești, Corcova, Cugir (Pl. XXXVII/1), Deva<sup>45</sup>, Dâlbocița<sup>46</sup>, Enisala<sup>47</sup>, Trebujeni-Potârca<sup>48</sup> (Republic of Moldova), Golents, Histria, Hunedoara<sup>49</sup>, Hoghiz<sup>50</sup>, Mala Kopanya<sup>51</sup>, Mediaș<sup>52</sup>, Orodel (Pl. XXXVII/6), Piatra Craivii<sup>53</sup>, Pietroasa Mică-Gruuiu Darii, Popești<sup>54</sup>, Racovița<sup>55</sup>, Rast (Pl. XXXVII/4)<sup>56</sup>, Rotbav<sup>57</sup>, Șisești, Teleac, Tilișca (Pl. XXXVII/5), Viiășu, Vișoara, to which we can add a dagger discovered at the beginning of the 20th century, somewhere in Mehedinți county<sup>58</sup>. Without being able to specify the place of

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<sup>41</sup> Three items (Marinescu et alii, p. 211-225).

<sup>42</sup> Five items (Borangic 2014, p. 259-310).

<sup>43</sup> Two specimens with sheaths were discovered in the perimeter of this site, probably a necropolis. The pieces were discovered by metal detector amateurs and are part of the funeral inventory of some tombs that still contained swords, *umbo*, Thracian rattles and spearheads. The lot is in the process of restoration and will be published soon (Șirbu et alii, 2016).

<sup>44</sup> Șirbu, Borangic 2016, p. 33, nota 82.

<sup>45</sup> Bajusz 2004, p. 126, fig. 69; Rustoiu 2013, p. 173-174.

<sup>46</sup> Two items (Șirbu, Borangic 2016, p. 33).

<sup>47</sup> Șirbu, Borangic 2016, p. 76.

<sup>48</sup> Topal, Bubulici 2016 (sub tipar).

<sup>49</sup> Three items (Șirbu, Borangic 2016, p. 34).

<sup>50</sup> Șirbu, Savu 2015, p. 107.

<sup>51</sup> Six items (Kotigoroșco 2015, p. 114-116).

<sup>52</sup> Șirbu, Borangic 2016, p. 31.

<sup>53</sup> At least three curved daggers were discovered in the proximity of the fortress, namely from its necropolis, of which one type C, and at least four others, discovered in the same perimeter, scattered between different museum institutions. The illegally acquired items were subsequently recovered by the Alba Heritage Police (Plantos, Ciuta 2015, p. 251-263).

<sup>54</sup> The dagger classification in this type is supported by the existence and the shape of the specific sheath.

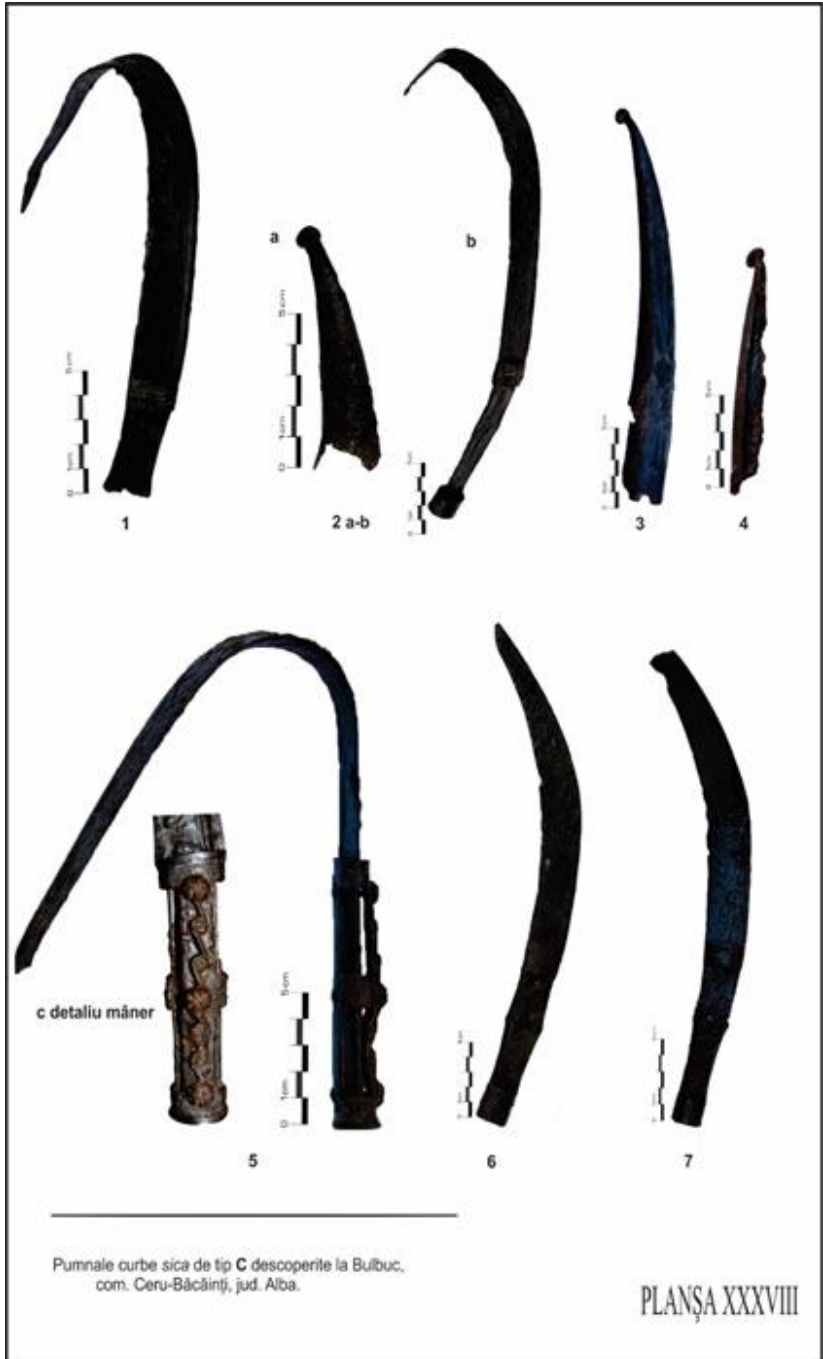
<sup>55</sup> Șirbu, Borangic 2015, p. 369-390.

<sup>56</sup> Three items (Șirbu, Borangic 2016, p. 34)

<sup>57</sup> Șirbu, Savu 2015, p. 100.

<sup>58</sup> Istrati 1913, p. LXXIX, Fig. 17.

origin, in this category we can also include some daggers in private



collections (Iasi) or museums (Bucharest)<sup>59</sup>.

The similar items south of the Danube are numerous and we can mention the discoveries at Comacovtzi (Pl. XXXIX/1), Hassan-Faka (today Kamburovo Pl. XXXIX/4), Galiče, Koínare, Osen (Pl. XXXIX/6), Pavolče, Sofronievo, Tárnavá (Pl. XXXIX/3), Vinograd (Pl. XXXIX/5), localities in Bulgaria. From the ex-Yugoslav space come the pieces from Hrtkovci, Gomolava, and Krajcinovici in Serbia.

The daggers in this area have some morphological difference from the classical appearance of the *sica* type, appearing rather a synthesis between types **A** and **B**.

For the North-Danube area, the specialized literature also includes in this category a number of pieces of questionable typology, given either by the incomplete or ambiguous way of publication, or by the lack of morphological and contextual elements that would undoubtedly qualify them as *sica* daggers. The least questionable are the components that can be associated with the daggers, respectively the discoveries of specific sheaths, which have not retained the dagger itself, their presence being only presumed. It is a fragment of a sheath discovered in Tártária, a strongly fragmented sheath in Tipia Ormenișului and another probably ritually deposited in Măgura Moigradului.

Situations of this kind can be explained by the separate deposition of the weapon and the sheaths. Equally possible is the scenario in which the deposition was subsequently disturbed, and the weapons were only partially recovered, in the best case

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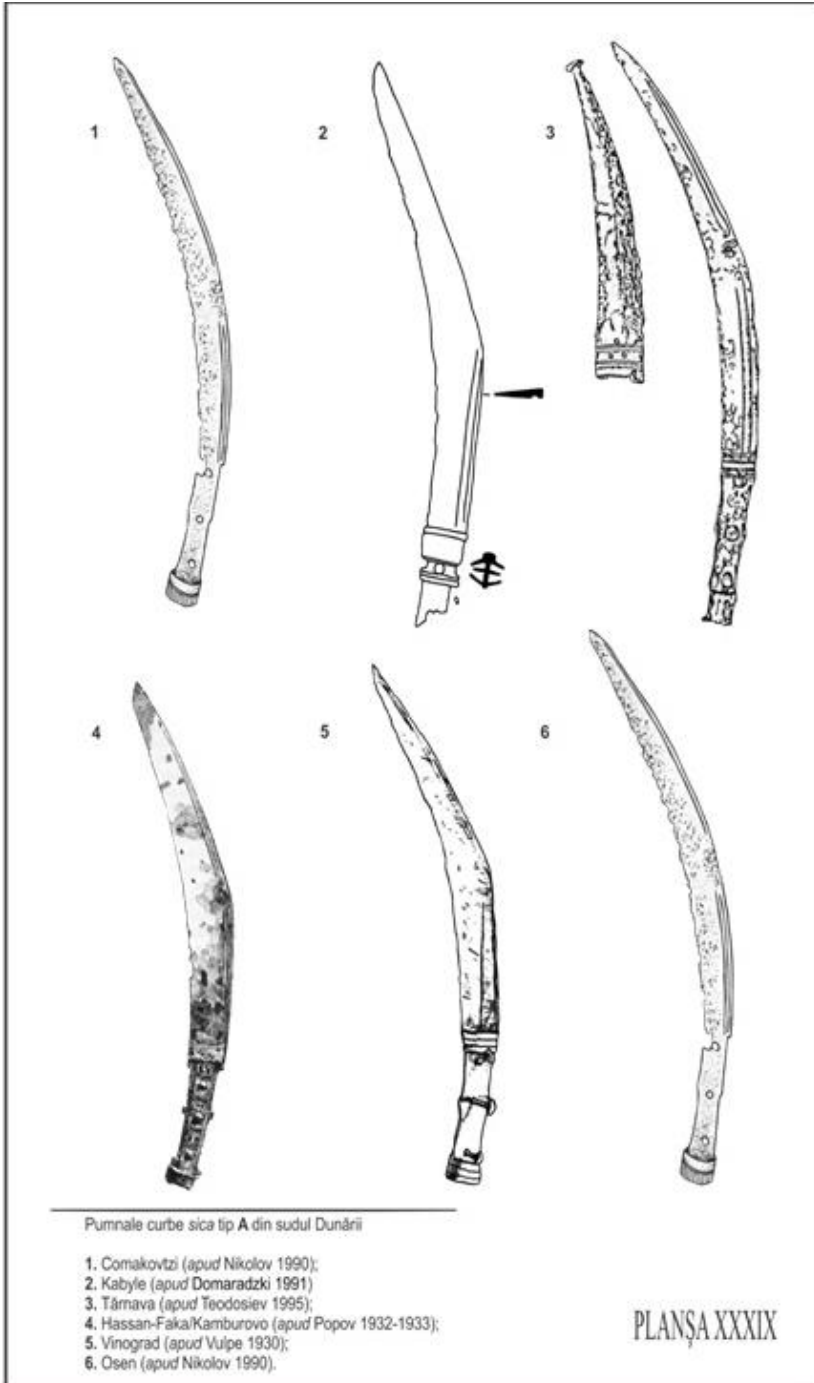
<sup>59</sup> Sîrbu 2011, p. 252, Fig. 2; Berzovan, Borangic 2014, p. 410-411, fig. 1; Borangic, Bădescu 2014, p. 53

scenario, at different stages (eg: Piatra Craivii). Another possible scenario would be that the sheaths were intentionally deposited as single items as part of an offering. In all three situations presented, the sheaths have undoubtedly belonged to C-type curved daggers, but no further details can be provided. To the relatively uncertain cases listed, we can also mention some locations for the curved daggers, probably of *sica* type, but which have not been published with details, and the value of the information, assuming that it was correctly recorded, remains only statistical.

Of these, the least prone to misinterpretations seems to be a curved dagger found in a mound on the plateau of the Dacian fortress in Costesti. The inventory of this tomb consisted of a dagger, a spearhead, and a few iron pieces from a chariot, ceramics, and histrionic coins, a fragment of iron ornament plated with golden silver and osteological remains. Based on the pottery, the discoverers dated the mound in century I BC. Unfortunately, the study of the dig site is still not fully published<sup>60</sup>.

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<sup>60</sup> Gheorghiu 2005, p. 208, with references to the CCA 1998 reports; no.78; CCA 1999, no. 123; CCA 2000, no. 41.





Much less data accompany the reports of daggers coming from Căciulata<sup>61</sup> (Vâlcea county), Albesti<sup>62</sup> (commune Vedea, Teleorman county), Sărata<sup>63</sup> (Călărași, Dolj county), Urdinița<sup>64</sup> (Brabova, Dolj county) or Teiușului Valley<sup>65</sup> (today Teiușu, Brebeni, Olt county). The fragility of the historical value of these reports requires their treatment as uncertain pieces, but throughout the discussion they are important, if only for extracting as much information as possible. This series also includes archeological pieces auctioned on thematic sites<sup>66</sup> (Pl. XL/1-3): well preserved pieces, with obvious typological characteristics, but which must be reviewed with a dose of skepticism in the absence of the information provided by the archaeological context.

Looking back at the classification of daggers, despite the typology, which is not highly standardized, sometimes with relatively mixed features, one can create the image and context that define the profile of a *standard sica*-type dagger.

Such a dagger is sharpened, with more or less elegantly curved blade and triangular section, with one or more grooves for blood drain along the blade and zoomorphic or geometric motifs incised on the blade, on the same side as the groove. Dimensions vary between 25 and 35 cm in length (with some specimens coming out of these boundaries). The edge is invariably on the concave side

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<sup>61</sup> Vlădescu, Marinescu 1984, p. 23.

<sup>62</sup> Berciu, Moscalu 1972, p. 639. The dagger seems to come from a tomb, being accompanied by a spearhead. The proximity of the fortress, dated between the end of the century IV BC. and up to the century BC, justifies the presence of the tomb.

<sup>63</sup> Berciu 1966, p. 85, nota 9.

<sup>64</sup> Woźniak 1974, p. 185, nr. 33a; Rustoiu 2002, p. 62.

<sup>65</sup> Butoi 1974, p. 30

<sup>66</sup> [www.hermann-historica.de](http://www.hermann-historica.de); [www.liveauctioneers.com](http://www.liveauctioneers.com) (07.02.2009).



of the blade.

The daggers mainly come from the war inventory of warriors, as it is obvious from most discoveries. The most common associations are with spear tips (one or two), Celtic type sword, and *umbo* for shield. In exceptional cases the warrior was also buried with scaled armor, helmets and ornaments, to which are added various pieces of harness (spines, Thracian snaffle bits, and buckles) and ceramic vessels. In these inventories, the most often found are the dagger and the spear, followed by swords and snaffle bits. The remains of the deceased are frequently missing, which shows that the weapons, especially some of them, were sufficient by themselves, maybe even more important than the body.

Beyond all the morphological differences, not always sufficiently determinant, what places the *sica* daggers in a single cultural horizon is the archaeological context in which items were discovered. With inherent exceptions, this context is funerary, with an inventory specific to the Iron Age warriors of the Balkan Peninsula and often containing, in addition to weapons and harness, jewelry and ceramics. These discoveries, which by their nature complete a specific elaborate funeral ritual, date in the north of the Danube from the second century BC and can be traced onward to the 1st century AD. The most common weapon associations attributed to this ethno-cultural model are the spearheads - in some cases two or more in the same grave - with the straight sword, the *umbo* of the shield, buckles and the curved dagger, to which different pieces of harness are added: spurs, junk, buckles. This type of funeral inventory, almost constant in the tombs from which the daggers originate, allows today the identification and reconstruction of specific arsenals, which have

disappeared over time for various reasons<sup>67</sup>, as well as of different social positions held by the inhumed individual.

The ornamentation of these daggers, particularly complex, gives them a combination of spiritual, artistic and symbolic valences<sup>68</sup>. The geometrical motifs were engraved on the blades, as well as eagles and snakes, whose schematization implies the existence of a certain "code" understood only by the approved members of the group. The function of ornamentation in warrior ideology is given by the frequency with which it is encountered and by the wide spaces it has spread into<sup>69</sup>. It may have had a strong apotropaic significance and at the same time it was an emblem that emphasized the membership to a brotherhood or to a warrior group or to demonstrate a certain social status<sup>70</sup>. The symbols engraved on the blades of the daggers offered the warrior a spiritual bond in relation to his social environment, transposing into the material world the set of spiritual connections existing between the members of the group, placing the individual in a well-defined network of relationships. The strong schematization of the themes present in the dagger blade iconography transformed the symbols into "ideograms" of myths that came into the consciousness of the collectivities of which their owners belonged to<sup>71</sup> and, at the same time, through the use of zoomorphic iconography, they made a reference to the virtues of some animals whose aggressive behavior was a model to be followed at the time.

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<sup>67</sup> As it is the case of some tombs in which the pieces of the funeral inventory were either buried separately (Hunedoara), either it was not possible to recover the entire inventory (Tărtăria), or the tomb was destroyed later, the pieces being recovered partially or in stages (Piatra Craivii), etc.

<sup>68</sup> Rustoiu 2002, p. 60

<sup>69</sup> Florea 2008.

<sup>70</sup> Florea 2008.

<sup>71</sup> Florea 2008

A good example in this regard can be drawn from the stratagem of King Scorilo<sup>72</sup> who, in order to convince his compatriots of the inopportunity of an attack on the Romans, associates a wolf with his own warriors. In some cases, the combination of the dagger, and the sword with the "totemic" image was an easy and visible way of personalizing the weapon and, implicitly, of the possessor and at the same time emphasized the warlike characteristics of the human-weapon pair.

On these considerations we can admit the existence of a different type, more common, of curved daggers (type **D**), equally effective copies of the most famous *sica*, but whose owners were not part of the hierarchical circle of warrior aristocrats, even if they probably lived close to them. These weapons are classified in the specialized literature either as so-called *hit knives*, a name that seems to be inspired by the Celtic knives (*Hiebmesser*), either, due from inertia or confusion, as *sica* daggers. We can consider that the daggers found at Solotvino<sup>73</sup>, Căpâlna<sup>74</sup>, Sarmizegetusa Regia<sup>75</sup>, Grădiștea<sup>76</sup>, Tilișca (PI. XL/5)<sup>77</sup> and probably those from Rotbav (PI. XL/4; 6)<sup>78</sup>, are part of this category, lacking both the specific funerary context and the characteristic morphological elements (blood drain grooves, sheaths or decorations).

Conceptually the weapon was permanently the depository of a set of values and meanings, it was *personified*, *invested with*

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<sup>72</sup> Frontinus, *Stratagemae*, I, 10, 4.

<sup>73</sup> Vasiliev et alii 2002, p. 74, fig. 4.

<sup>74</sup> Glodariu, Moga, p. 105, Fig. 89/1-2; 6.

<sup>75</sup> Glodariu, Iaroslavschi 1979, p. 139, Fig. 72/6-9.

<sup>76</sup> Serbia 1996, p. 99, fig. 12/16. It is very possible that for some daggers in a precarious state of conservation, the decorations on the blades can no longer be distinguished.

<sup>77</sup> Natea et alii 2011, p. 97-101.

<sup>78</sup> Borangic, Bădescu 2014, p. 55.

*magical powers, thus likely to fit perfectly in a mythological environment*<sup>79</sup>. The *sica* dagger, already the depository of ritual significance, receives a double dose of meanings as a prestigious and sacrificial weapon and, in this context, its presence in the episode of King Decebal's suicide is not at all coincidental<sup>80</sup>. Prestige, exceptional combative qualities, an elaborate mystical component are the elements that, combined with the warrior character of its carriers, allow the identification of a military elite sufficiently coagulated to be able to build a barbaric state, which was sufficiently powerful to become a serious opponent of the Roman Empire in military terms. As a feared sign of prestige, with a special spiritual significance, the *sica*-type dagger is a landmark in the attempt to establish the dimension of the Thracians military phenomenon as a whole, but especially of the role played by the military elite in the society.

Starting from the data set out above, it can be said that the *sica* dagger is an important historical artifact that, due to its importance and role in the world of the Danube warriors, contributes to the understanding of the social and military mechanisms of the social structures that employed it, and by the special spiritual dimension, to the discovering of a new facet from the religious mosaic of the Thracians, in general, and the Geto-Dacians in particular. Of all the curved weapons used in the Thracian space, the *sica* daggers make the connection between the southern and north-Danube Thracians, being a weapon equally spread weapon on both sides of the river.

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<sup>79</sup> Florea 2008.

<sup>80</sup> Rustoiu 2002, p. 61.

# Excursion I. Reconstruction of a *sica* dagger<sup>81</sup>.

In order to penetrate as deeply as possible into the historical matrix of this weapon, the use of multidisciplinary research methods - in this case experimental archeology<sup>82</sup> - may prove to be an additional investigative method that reveals the technological path and the specific tactical possibilities.

This project, for which I have benefited from the experience accumulated in other works of the kind<sup>83</sup>, comes to complete the knowledge and historical data about this weapon and the role and qualities that made it the symbol of a warrior aristocracy.

In order to emphasize the qualities of the *sica* daggers, we reconstructed a series of specimens (**Pl. XLIV / 3; 6**) by applying simple techniques, supposed to have been at the reach of the antique blacksmiths, which we subsequently tested in various situations such as bending, blows on metal pieces, wood, armor suits, fabrics and tactics (assault on an equipped opponent).

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<sup>81</sup> The experiment was presented and published in an extended form, in the magazine *ArheoVest*, entitled *Experimental Archeology. Sica type dagger* (Borangic 2013).

<sup>82</sup> Without necessarily being related to this method, but in close relation with it, we included in this concept the historical reconstructions, as well as their graphic reconstructions. These reconstructions have led to a series of authenticity conventions, which I will not insist on now, but which depend on the different levels of competence and professionalism of the reenactors or the historical reconstruction groups of which they are part.

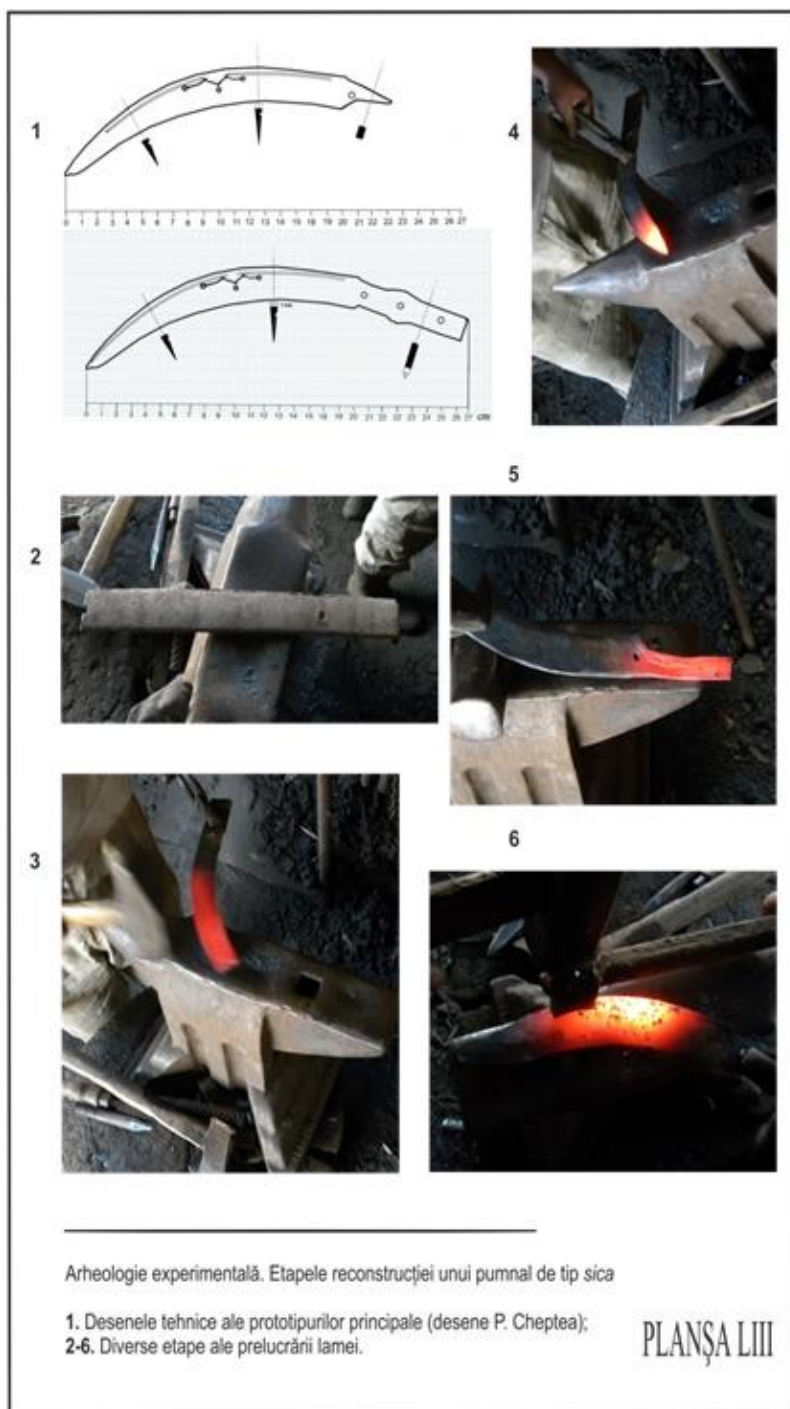
<sup>83</sup> Borangic 2008, p. 44-60.

The detailed reconstruction of the weapon<sup>84</sup> was done in a traditional blacksmith shop, the place of numerous experimental archeology projects. The workshop has a set of simple tools, sufficient for such a reconstruction (pliers, hammers, chisels, piles, niches, thorns, punches, forge). The tools identical to those identified in the archaeological complexes of the Dacian workshops also assume similarities with the old iron processing techniques, so obtaining the dagger replica allowed to extract the data regarding the time allocated and the approximate costs for such a weapon. I used as fuel wood of strong essence (30-35%) with which we maintained the burning of charcoal (65-70% of the total supply of the furnace).

The working temperature obtained was about 1000 ° C, sufficient for malleability of the metal strip chosen for processing.

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<sup>84</sup> For further testing of the different characteristics, as well as of the different production procedures, we have made two replicas in this case, each with different dimensions and with different handle fixing systems (**PI.LIV/3**). Also, the reconstructed pieces were made on the basis of simple models - there are also extremely elaborate daggers, made with complicated techniques, at the limit of the art - and using unpretentious raw materials, in order to obtain weapons with basic characteristics, thus establishing the standard minimal complexity, endurance and appearance that the curved daggers had in reality.



To obtain a replica as close as possible to the original parts, we used a metal band from an old cart over half a century old. The age estimated by provenance, the processing technique<sup>85</sup> and the degree of wear allowed the conclusion that it was manufactured manually, by traditional procedures, simple, comparable to those used in Antiquity.

The piece went through a series of technological stages that included chopping, hot forging, hammering, sanding, reheating, blade decoration, tempering, handle mounting, seals and fixing nuts (**Pl. LIII/3-6**).

The first step was to cut a suitable length from the iron item (**Pl. LIII/2**), then heating and straightening the respective piece on all planes. The metal strip was then cooled and reheated successively and, starting from the top, the piece was beaten on the edge to obtain the curvature of the blade (**Pl. LIII/4**).

The next step was to obtain the tip, which was repeatedly beaten for precise orientation of the edges and sharpening (**Pl. LIII/5**), after which the handle was machined. The whole piece was then reheated to incandescent and allowed to cool naturally, to avoid premature steeling. After this cooling the cut was drawn by moderate beating, so that the final shape of the section became triangular, striking from the blade axis to the outside. Also now, with the help of two hammers (one actually modified as a chisel) the drain on the blade (**Pl. LIII/6**) was executed.

At this time, the dagger had the desired shape (**Pl. LIV/3**), and the only necessary operations were those of primary grinding

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<sup>85</sup> An important indication was that the items had no holes for fixing the nail strips on the wheel wood made with the drills, but the metal strip was heated to red and perforated with a spindle, resulting in holes of different sizes



of the margins and the cutting edge for removing asperities. The differentiation hardening of the cutting edge followed, with the aid of a thin and continuous jet of water. To respect the model we decorated the blade with various motifs (**Pl. LIV/2**), using a set of punches and a small chisel.

The next operation was installing the wooden handle. For this stage I chose a medium hardwood (elm), which has a density with good buckling properties and shock resistance. The seals were made of metal sheet. For the entire weapon, including the sheath here, the execution time was about 150 hours, most often with two individuals working intermittently.



Concentrating the production, the time required for completion was about 15 days, considering the actual time worked at ten hours per day. These calculations also include the purchase of raw materials (iron) and auxiliary materials (wood, brass, copper, leather) that were sourced externally. However, the replicated dagger (Pl. LIV/5) is an average one in terms of complexity. Also, the construction of the handle had to be approximated - there being no whole preserved copies - so after several attempts I found the most suitable type of handle, supposed to have been applied to the old ones as well. The production of such a weapon requires a range of technological skills and technical knowledge specialty, because the production is more difficult than in the case of straight blade weapons. The previous experiences made a significant difference. For example, in the case of the reproduced curved swords<sup>86</sup>, the blacksmith had real problems of adapting his skills, otherwise excellent (he was specialized in the execution of the different components and tools for wheeling and horseshoeing etc.), in order to be able to follow the technical procedures explained. As we made more and more items, the quality of the replicas increased and the lead times decreased. It is obvious that repeated production of the same types of weapons substantially raises the degree of specialization, with visible effects on the quality and number of parts produced.

The equipment of a warrior from the upper layers of society was diverse and of good quality. Archaeological records show that their arsenal also contained, in addition to the dagger, a bow with arrows, a spear, a sword, a shield, a helmet, armor and sometimes a knife. These weapons are also associated with components of the harness. Even if not all warriors afforded a complete arsenal, the

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<sup>86</sup> Borangic 2008, *passim*.

production of each weapon required time, various costly materials and special practical skills, which implied consistent production costs, manufacturing all of the pieces involving different categories of craftsmen, especially metallurgists. Also, the purchase and maintenance of the equipment involves a large volume of resources (people, time, infrastructure, materials, etc.). Numerous, well made, and supplying an avid, expanding market, the weapons were a major product of the blacksmith shops. The great variety of the arsenal, the care for the details and, last but not least, the special quality of the finished pieces indicate the degree of professionalism achieved by the antique blacksmiths. The possibility that some of these weapons to have come into the possession of warriors due to the mobility of some manufacturers or traders should not be overlooked. In support of this hypothesis come the presence of a warehouse of objects - weapons, accessories, ornaments, tools - discovered in the Juhor massif, at Veliki Vetren (Serbia), in which 14 sets of equipment for a group of warriors were identified. It is possible that the whole lot was ordered to a specialized workshop (parts are unused) and the transport was in progress when unexpected events occurred which led to its concealment<sup>87</sup>. This discovery shows, to some extent, the mobility of a warrior's panoply, which could have an independent dynamic of the owner, as well as the fact that the warrior and/or his suite was armed with orders given to economic entities far from the domain or his residence or the community of which he was a part. Of course, the hypothesis is based on a relatively isolated case, especially from the point of view of access to real information, from the field, other warriors or other communities being able to order or manufacture locally the set of necessary equipment according to the economic,

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<sup>87</sup> Stojić 2003, p. 82-84.

technological and human resources they possessed.

The quantity of armament existing, of local origin, reveals an effervescent manufacturing industry, and the attested intensity of the military activities (campaigns, confrontations, preparations, garrisons, etc.) implies the existence of a controlled war economy, with the necessary specializations. Perhaps it is useful to ask ourselves whether the Geto-Dacians had a certain degree of specialization in the production of military equipment.

The hierarchy of the craftsmen was a reality<sup>88</sup>, and the stratification of those who worked the iron on specialized fields or other considerations, within the society as a whole<sup>89</sup> or within their own guild<sup>90</sup>, even if it does not derive directly from the historical or archaeological document, must have been a reality if we take into account the whole historical context. The concentration of blacksmith shops near the capital of the Dacian kingdom and the existence of some other close to other urban centers, under the conditions of a military effervescence of the political situation created both by the edification of the Dacian kingdom and by the subsequent emergence of the Roman danger, allow the hypothesis that the production was primarily intended for the military use.

The workshops established prior to the time of the kingdom, scattered throughout the Geto-Dacian area, appear to have belonged to craftsmen who carried out different categories of products and repairs, including, without doubt, weapons, but lacking the evidence to support the hypothesis of over-specialization. The demonstration is all the more difficult as there

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<sup>88</sup> Popescu 2004, p. 289.

<sup>89</sup> Iaroslavschi 2006, p. 257-264.

<sup>90</sup> Rustoiu 2008, p. 116-117.

is also possible the existence of mobile workshops or traveling craftsmen, whose archaeological traces are almost impossible to detect, especially as a series of artifacts have a dual weapon-tool character, as is the case with knives, billhooks or hatchets, which could be made in the same register of ambivalence, which makes it difficult to identify not only the product, but also the craftsman who created it.

The yield and physical characteristics of the iron quickly propelled it among the preferred materials for making weapons, the first uses being in this sector, despite the more complicated technology of obtaining, different from that of the previously used metals. In this context, the blacksmiths are the holders of professional secrets and manufacturing "recipes" with a powerful magical-religious imprint, preserved and transmitted within the same group, orally, a position that particularizes them once more in the whole Getae-Dacians society.

The existence of specialized blacksmiths in the making of weapons can be accepted as a working hypothesis also from the perspective of the social position of the guild as a whole, but especially by analyzing the archaeological material that reveals a good professionalization of the producer and the positioning of the workshops in the immediate vicinity of the aristocracy residences.

Hard to detect in the field, the hypothesis of the existence of a special category of blacksmiths, the weapon smiths, can be at least suspected during the last half of the 1st millennium BC, when the economic, political and especially military realities were urgently demanding numerous good quality weapons. This requirement becomes a political directive with the building of the Dacian kingdom, whose military needs are incomparably greater than in

previous times. The number of people under arms, occasionally or permanently, is, much larger in this era, and the extremely varied armament, including all types of weapons used by the populations with whom they came in contact, owning an arsenal of their own, with a pronounced ethno-cultural character. These requirements also have as a consequence the large number of workshops concentrated in the Orășiei Mountains, whose military production orientation is certain.

Therefore, it seems natural that in a well-structured society, animated by a strong warrior spirit, who was aiming for professionalization in all its social and economic fields, the guild of "weapons makers" would have broken off from the great mass of metalworkers. This professional category must have played an important role in the community, decisively contributing to the design in the territory of the power and authority of the Geto-Dacian military elites.