

Ministère de l'Education, de la Recherche, de la Jeunesse et du Sport
L'Université Valahia Târgoviște
Faculté de Sciences Humaines

ANNALES



D'UNIVERSITÉ VALAHIA TARGOVISTE

SECTION
d'Archéologie et d'Histoire

TOME XIV
Numéro 1
2012

Valahia University Press
Târgoviște

Annales d'Université Valahia Targoviste Section d'Archéologie et d'Histoire publie des mémoires originaux, des nouvelles et des comptes-rendus dans le domaine de l'archéologie préhistorique, de l'histoire du moyen âge, de l'environnement de l'homme fossile, de l'archéologie interdisciplinaire et de patrimoine culturel.

Rédacteur en chef:

Prof. dr. Marin Cârciumaru

Secrétaire général de rédaction:

Conf. dr. Corneliu Beldiman

Secrétariat de rédaction:

Prof. dr. Ioan Opriș, dr. Denis Căprăroiu, dr. Radu Cârciumaru, dr. Monica Mărgărit, dr. Marian Cosac, dr. Roxana Dobrescu, dr. Ovidiu Cîrstina, dr. Elena-Cristina Nițu, dr. Daniela Iamandi, dr. Adina Elena Boroneanț.

Comité de rédaction:

Prof. dr. Eric Boëda, prof. Marcel Otte, prof. dr. Răzvan Theodorescu, prof. dr. Alexandru Vulpe, prof. dr. Victor Spinei, prof. dr. Sabin Adrian Luca, prof. dr. Gheorghe Lazarovici, dr. Marylène Patou-Mathis, dr. Marie-Hélène Moncel, dr. Alexandru Suceveanu, dr. Cristian Schuster, dr. Dragomir Nicolae Popovici, dr. Adrian Bălășescu, dr. Radu Ștefănescu

Correspondants:

Prof. Jacques Jaubert, prof. Jean-Philippe Rigaud, prof. Árpád Ringer, prof. Alain Tuffreau, dr. Aline Averbouh, dr. Alain Turq, prof. Ivor Iancovič, prof. Ivor Karavanič, prof. dr. Ștefan Trâmbaciu, dr. Eugen Nicolae, dr. Emilian Alexandrescu, dr. Sergiu Iosipescu

Technorédacteurs:

Dr. Elena-Cristina Nițu, Marius Alexandru Florică

Revue indexée B+ par CNCSIS/B par CNCS - Roumanie

Indexée dans:



**AWOL, FRANTIQ,
LAMPEA, SCRIBD,
DAPHNE**

Tout ce qui concerne la Rédaction des *Annales d'Université Valahia Targoviste Section d'Archéologie et d'Histoire* doit être envoyé à: mcarciumaru@yahoo.com, www.annalesfsu.ro

ISSN: 1584-1855

The Dacian red deer antler sleeve discovered at Unip, Timiș County

*Corneliu Beldiman**

*Christian University “Dimitrie Cantemir”, Faculty of History, Splaiul Unirii No. 176, 040042 Bucharest 53, Romania; e-mail: belcor@gmail.com.

Abstract: The Dacian red deer antler sleeve discovered at Unip, Timiș County. Complex no. 7 was discovered during the 2011 archaeological campaign in the multi-layered fortified settlement from Unip – „Dealul Cetățuica” / “Little Fortress Hill” – dated from the Second Iron Age (Geto-Dacian culture, probably 1st century AD). It is a ritual pit containing ceramic pots, other small pieces in clay, stone and metal, a bone handle and a red deer antler sleeve. The antler sleeve is a piece quite rare, less studied in the area of Dacian civilisation. It is entirely and in exceptional state of conservation. It is cone-shaped and he has 40.30 mm length and 50.42 mm maximum diameter. The surfaces were carefully finished. Three of the exterior surfaces were engraved with 14 double circles with a central dot. The circles are arranged in two rows, each of them having seven circles. This type of ornamentation is usual for bone and antler artefacts corresponding to the same chrono-cultural level both from Romania and Europe (handles, combs etc.). In order to analyse the piece, the optical and digital microscopic techniques were used (x10 – x200 magnifications). The artefact was probably used as sheath for a sword or a dagger. The use-wear traces revealed the fact that the sleeve was used before it had been put in the pit, quite habitual situation in the Geto-Dacian area. As analogies we may mention the pieces discovered in the sites from Sighișoara-“Wietenberg”, Mureș County and Poiana, Galați County. The close analysis of the artefact discovered at Unip offers an example regarding the way in which the methodology of study of osseous materials industry can be applied for Geto-Dacian materials.

Keywords: ancient technology, osseous materials artefacts, Preroman Dacia, red deer antler, ritual pit, Romania, sleeve.

Context

The multi-layered fortified settlement (*dava* type) from Unip-“Dealul Cetățuica” (“Little Fortress Hill”) dated from the First and Second Iron Age, and is the only one known until nowadays in the Banat Field (fig. 1). During the excavation carried out in 2011 by a team led by Professor PhD Adrian Bejan, Lecturer PhD Liviu Măruia and Lecturer PhD Dorel Micle (West University of Timișoara) the archaeological complex no. 7 was identified in S2. This appeared at the depth of 0.80 m as a quasi-circular pit, with an opening of 1.50 m / 1.40 m having a depth of 0.6 m of the contouring level. Inside the pit, various clay artefacts (especially entire and fragmented clay pots, spindle whorls and an anthropomorphic protoma), metal pieces

(iron piece, perforated bronze plate), lithic objects (whetstone and grinder) and osseous materials artefacts (a bone tube and a red deer antler sleeve) were disposed in groups (fig. 3/3). Inside a fragmentary jar, a bone object having the shape of a tube was found. It has the length of 5 cm and it is well-preserved.

In the South-Eastern corner, close to the central area of the pit, few fragmentary clay lamps were found, above which a red deer antler was deposited on a red deer antler sleeve above were found (fig. 3-4).

All these artefacts had been covered with earth mixed with Hallstadian and Dacian ceramic fragments. In the filling of the first level of the pit, traces of burning were observed *in situ* and many of the pots preserved traces of a secondary

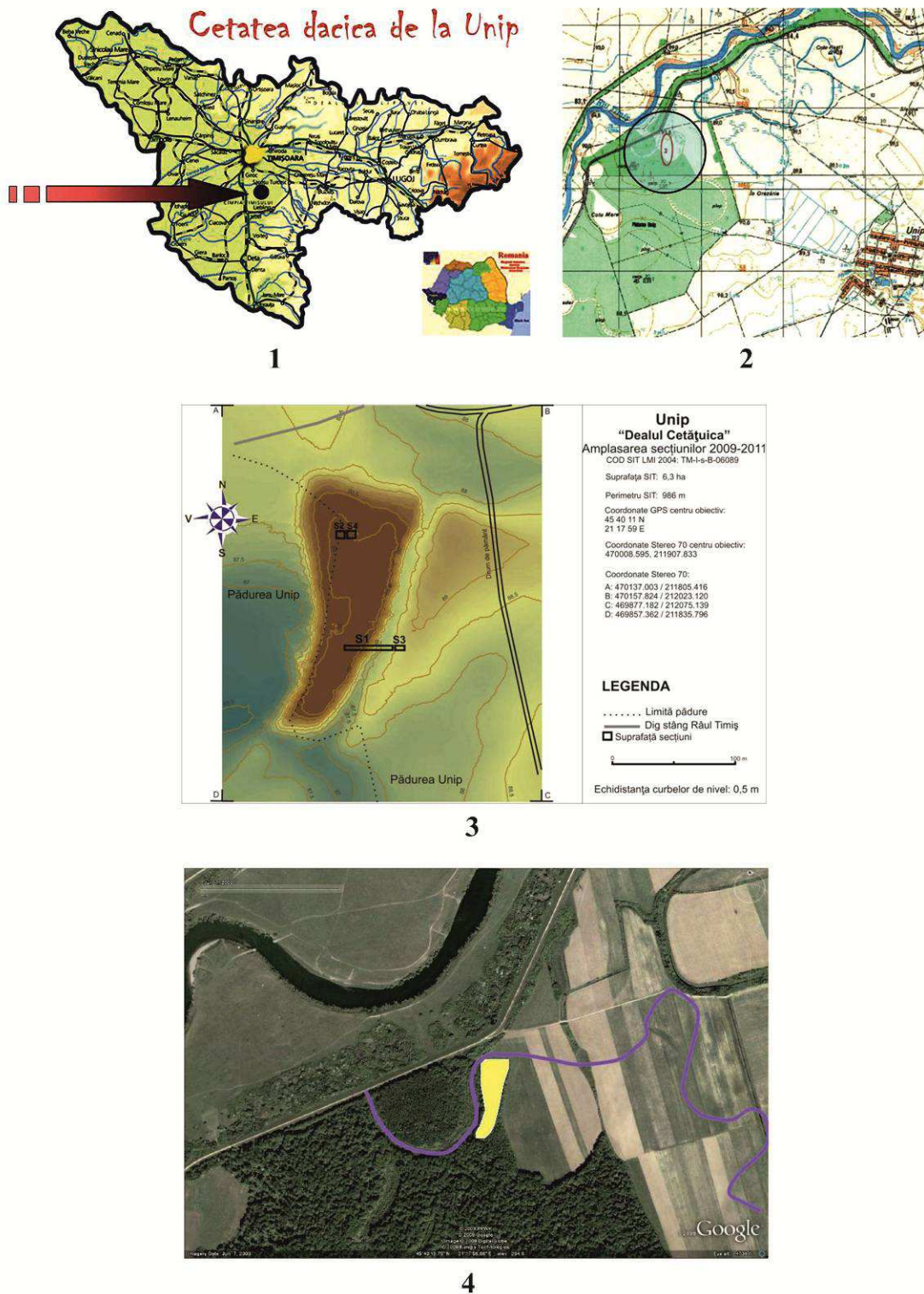
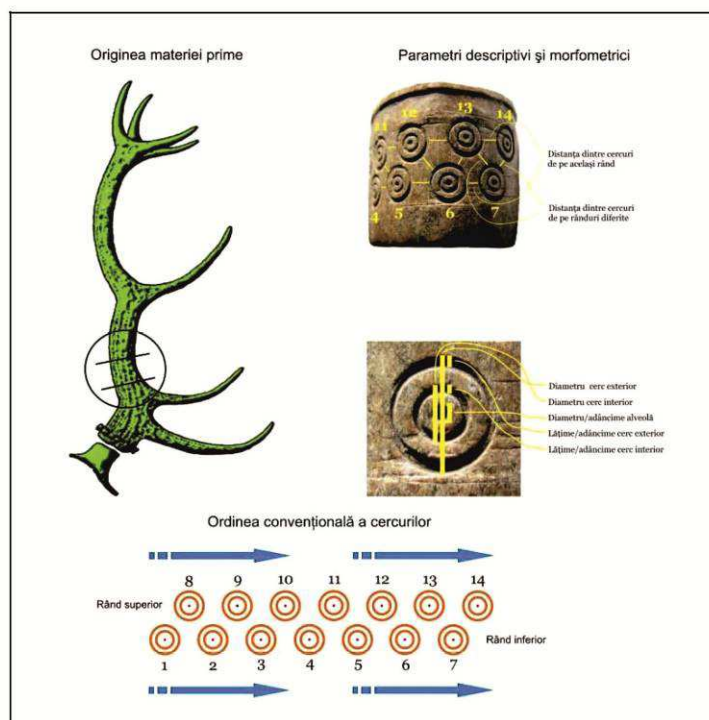


Fig. 1 – Unip-“Little Fortress Hill”: 1 location of Unip Commune, Timiș County; 2 location of the site (map); 3 plan of the site and excavated areas; 4 location of the site (yellow surface) and the ancient course of the Timiș river (adapted by Liviu Măruia after <http://www.earth.google.com>). Images provided by Liviu Măruia.

The Dacian red deer antler sleeve discovered at Unip, Timiș County



1



2

Fig. 2 – Unip-“Little Fortress Hill”: 1 red deer antler sleeve: origin of raw material, elements of description and dimensions; 2 general views (drawing and photos by Corneliu Beldiman).



1



2



3

Fig. 3 – Unip-“Little Fortress Hill”: 1-2 Complex 7/2011 (ritual pit) - red deer antler sleeve, detailed views, *in situ* context; 3 Complex 7/2011 (ritual pit), general view (photos by Liviu Măruia).

The Dacian red deer antler sleeve discovered at Unip, Timiș County



1



2

Fig. 4 – Unip-“Little Fortress Hill”: 1-2 Complex 7/2011 (ritual pit) – red deer antler sleeve, detailed views, *in situ* context (photos by Liviu Măruia).

burning. Nevertheless no traces of burning were observed on the walls of the pit. The special pieces had not traces of burning. Maybe the pots were burnt somewhere else and then deposited in the pit with the rest of the cremation.

From a functional point of view, the authors of the research considered that the complex played the role of a cultic pit.

This could be provisionally dated from the 1st century AD (A. Bejan, D. Micle *et al.*, 2011; A. Bejan, L. Măruia *et al.*, 2012; L. Măruia, D. Micle *et al.*, 2011; C. Beldiman, M. Cărciumaru *et al.*, 2012).

Description

The red deer antler sleeve is a rare piece among the Dacian osseous materials artefacts. The artefact was offered for study by Lecturer PhD. Liviu Măruia (West University of Timișoara, Faculty of Letters, History and Theology) and Professor PhD. Marin Cărciumaru. It is preserved entirely in good conditions, without deposits and taphonomic damages (due to the two millennia deposit in the soil - flaking, corrosion, cracks, etc.) (fig. 2).

The piece has a length of 40.30 mm, the maximal diameter of 50.42 mm. Its general shape is conical, slightly asymmetric due to the raw material morphology. The transversal sections are oval, asymmetric, due to the same reason. The piece is made of a segment of an adult red deer antler beam, right side. The segment was most probably taken from the base of the beam, above the tine no. 2.

The object is shaped by removing almost entirely the natural aspect of the antler – the upper superficial part of the compact tissue (*compacta*, the channelled and gutter anatomic aspect). On the inside, the spongy tissue was almost entirely removed using the carving technique. The edges are linear, quasi-parallel.

At the distal extremity a border wide of 2.3 – 3.3 mm and high of 1 mm is observed (fig. 6). In the central part, on a strip wide of 89 mm ornamentation was engraved. This comprises 14 double circles with a central dot, with a conic and hemispheric profile that looks conic and hemispheric profile (fig. 3/3; fig. 5; fig. 7-9). The circles are quasi-identical and they were obtained by engraving with two special metallic tools like compasses, with sharp extremities that allowed the drawing of circles with different diameters.

Previously, the dot had been designed by rotation using the metallic sharp point of a compass or the tip of a knife. The circles are arranged on two rows (2 x 7). The decoration does not cover the inferior part of the sleeve probably because this part of the object was not seen when the piece was used. The circle and dot ornamentation are frequent on the artefacts from Preroman Dacia, especially on bone and antler handles and combs (A. Ganciu 2003).

Manufacture

The manufacture of the artefact was done in several stages whose type and succession were identified through macroscopic and microscopic analysis of the preserved traces. The classic optical microscope, zoom x10 – x40 and the digital one, zoom x40 – x 200 were used. The technical transformation of the raw material was probably done using a prior water immersion in order to soften the tissue. This procedure makes the manufacture easier, especially in the first stages (*débitage* and shape of the surfaces). We also have to underline the fact that the techniques of sleeve manufacture (cutting, chopping, and carving using a knife or a chisel, the decoration engraving) are identical to the ones applied in case of woodworking. As a consequence, we may have an appropriate view regarding the way in which the wood was worked in order to obtain small-sized objects in Geto-Dacian times. The used tools and the specifics of the technical traces could also be analysed.

The *débitage* (in order to obtain a blank) consisted in removing a segment long of cca 40.5 mm from the base of the right red deer beam, above the tine no. 2. The techniques used in order to achieve this blank were: the transversal cutting on the circumference using a knife and the fracture by direct percussion.

The shaping includes few stages, defined according to the specific traces preserved on the surface of the object: 1. the finishing of the edges by transversal cutting and chopping with a knife; 2. the removal of the exterior aspect of the antler in order to obtain a flat aspect. This procedure was done through the chopping procedure using a knife; 3. the removal of almost all the spongy tissue was done by bipolar carving in an axial direction using a knife blade or a chisel with a long and narrow active part; 4. the shaping of the interior part of the piece in order to remove the

The Dacian red deer antler sleeve discovered at Unip, Timiș County



1

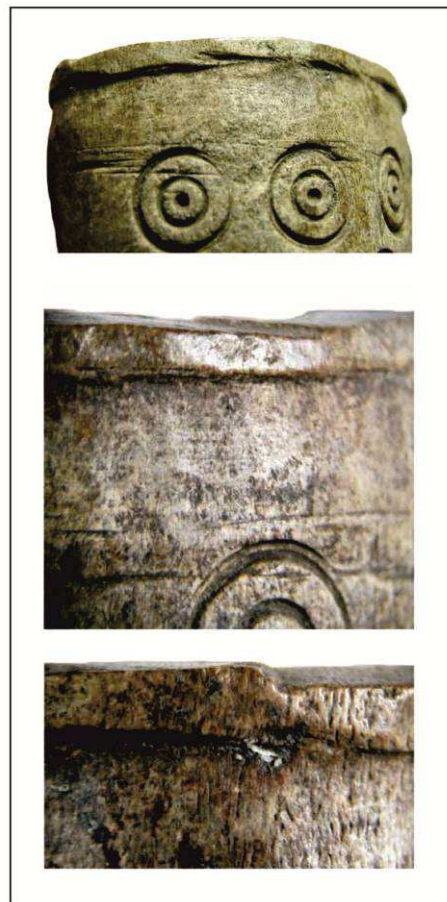


2

Fig. 5 – Unip-“Little Fortress Hill”: red deer antler sleeve – 1 general views; 2 the decorated surface (photos by Corneliu Beldiman).



1



2

Fig. 6 – Unip-“Little Fortress Hill”: red deer antler sleeve – 1-2 details of proximal and distal ends (photos by Corneliu Beldiman).

The Dacian red deer antler sleeve discovered at Unip, Timiș County

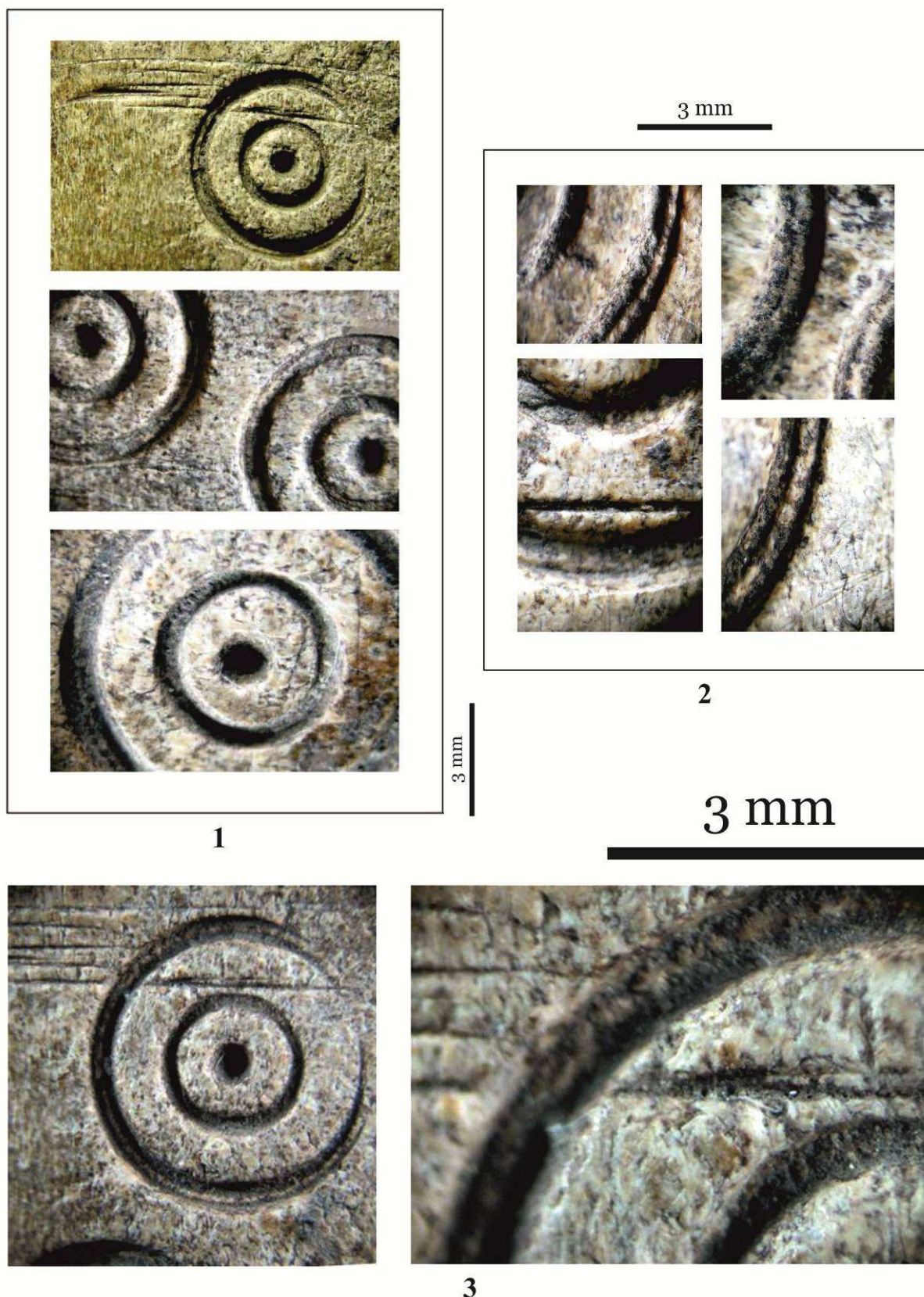


Fig. 7 – Unip-“Little Fortress Hill”: red deer antler sleeve – 1-3 details of the engraved ornamentation (photos by Corneliu Beldiman).



1



2

Fig. 8 – Unip-“Little Fortress Hill”: red deer antler sleeve – 1-2 details of the engraved ornamentation (photos by Corneliu Beldiman).

The Dacian red deer antler sleeve discovered at Unip, Timiș County

superimposed traces of carving. This procedure was done using a knife blade, abrasion with a lithic piece or with leather/textile and wet sand. In this way an almost flat surface was obtained; 5. the shaping of the exterior surface by chopping in the border area; 6. the engraving of the ornamentation made of 14 double circles with dots, arranged on two parallel rows (2 x 7 circles); the engraving may have started with the lower row and then it continued with the upper one (fig. 2/1). The exterior circles have the diameter of 9 – 9.20 mm and the interior ones of 4.80 – 4.84 mm. The diameter of the dot is 1.4 mm.

The exterior surfaces and the extremities, as well as the edges of the circles present traces of bluntness and polish that probably appeared either by repeated contact with a leather or textile support or due to the intense use. On the exterior surface, in the central area – in the register reserved for the ornamentation – fine, superficial striations may be observed. They are randomly disposed and were resulted during the use of the artefact (fig. 6; fig. 8-9). The sleeve was probably a decorative or functional object that exposed three sides. These three sides are decorated while the side that was not seen remained without ornamentation.

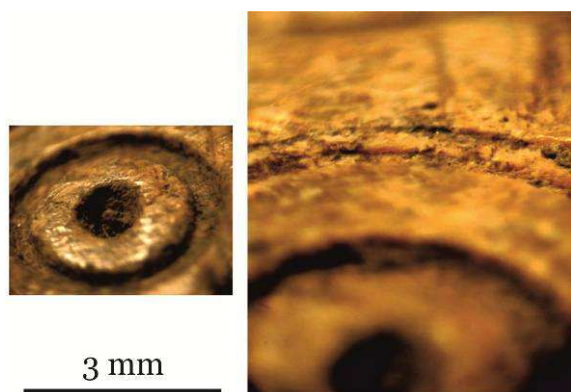


Fig. 9 – Unip-“Little Fortress Hill”: red deer antler sleeve – details of the engraved ornamentation (photos by Corneliu Beldiman).

Utilisation

We can advance the hypothesis that the artefact was used as a sleeve fixed on the terminal part of a wooden sheath, of a knife or of a sword. The sheath was made of two symmetrical pieces of wood that were plated with tin and that were assembled at the proximal end

by applying the sleeve (fig. 10). This conclusion, as well as the observation of the use of a special tool in order to decorate the piece, determined us to advance the hypothesis that the piece was manufactured in a specialised workshop (C. Beldiman, M. Cârciumaru *et al.*, 2012).



Fig. 10 – Replica of Dacian iron curved fight knife (*sica*) made by Marius Barbu (photos by Marius Barbu).

It was common in those times that some warriors' equipment (this artefact, together with other osseous material pieces – bone knife handle?) to be deposited as an offering in a pit. Another example can be the deposition of a *lorica squamata* armour piece in a pit discovered at Sânsimion, Harghita County site (research led by PhD. Corneliu Beldiman in 1987) (C. Beldiman, 1990; C. Beldiman, 1991).

Analogies

As analogies, we may mention here: the Geto-Dacian sites from Sighișoara-“Wietenberg”,

Mureș County and Poiana, Galați County (K. Horedt, 1943; K. Horedt, C. Seraphin, 1971; I. Andrițoiu, A. Rustoiu, 1997, p. 294, fig. 124/6-7; R. Vulpe, S. Teodor, 2003, p. 562-563, fig. 83/5, 7, 9; fig. 84/1).

Short conclusion

We underline once more the importance of the object, importance offered by the exceptional state of conservation, rarity and by the artistic values of its geometrical ornamentation. It was manufactured by a Dacian craftsman in a specialised workshop and it illustrates very well the value of the osseous materials artefacts in Geto-Dacian times.

Acknowledgements

The artefact was offered for study by Lecturer PhD. Liviu Măruia (West University of Timișoara, Faculty of Letters, History and Theology) and Professor PhD. Marin Cărciumaru. I express here my warmest thanks for their interest and kindness.

English version by Diana-Maria Sztancs; translation revised by Andreea-Daniela Hompoth.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Andrițoiu I., Rustoiu A., 1997, *Sighișoara – Wietenberg. Descoperirile arheologice și așezarea dacică*, Bibliotheca Thracologica XXXIII, București.

Bejan A., Măruia L., Micle D., Berzovan A., Stavilă A., Floca Cr., Bolcu L., Borlea O., 2012, *Unip, com. Sacoșu Turcesc, jud. Timiș-„Dealul Cetățuica”*, in M.-V. Angelescu (coord.), *Cronica cercetărilor arheologice din România. Campania 2011. A XLVI-a Sesiune națională de rapoarte arheologice, Târgu-Mureș, 23-26 mai 2012*, Ministerul Culturii și Patrimoniului Național, Comisia Națională de Arheologie, Institutul Național al Patrimoniului, București, p. 156-161.

Bejan A., Micle D., Măruia L., Cîntar A., 2011, *Unip, com. Sacoșu Turcesc, jud. Timiș-„Dealul Cetățuica”*, in M.-V. Angelescu, C. Bem, I. Oberländer-Târnoveanu, Fl. Vasilescu (coord.), *Cronica cercetărilor arheologice din România.*

Campania 2010. A XLV-a Sesiune națională de rapoarte arheologice, Sibiu, 26-29 mai 2011, Ministerul Culturii și Patrimoniului Național, Comisia Națională de Arheologie, Muzeul Național Brukenthal Sibiu, p. 199-203.

Beldiman C., 1990, *Piepteni din a doua epocă a fierului descoperiți în estul Transilvaniei*, Studii și cercetări de istorie veche și arheologie, 41, 1, p. 111-113.

Beldiman C., 1991, *Plăcuțe de cuirasă (lorica squamata) din Dacia preromană*, Carpica, 20, 1989 (1991), p. 125-136.

Beldiman C., Cărciumaru M., Bejan A., Măruia L., Berzovan A., Stavilă A., Sztancs D.-M., Iamandi D., 2012, *Unip, com. Sacoșu Turcesc, jud. Timiș-„Dealul Cetățuica”. Industria materiilor dure animale descoperită în campania 2011*, in M.-V. Angelescu (coord.), *Cronica cercetărilor arheologice din România. Campania 2011. A XLVI-a Sesiune națională de rapoarte arheologice, Târgu-Mureș, 23-26 mai 2012*, Ministerul Culturii și Patrimoniului Național, Comisia Națională de Arheologie, Institutul Național al Patrimoniului, București, p. 161-164.

Ganciu A., 2003, *Piepteni din corn și os din sec. IV a.Chr. – I p.Chr. de la Dunărea de Jos*, Studii și cercetări de istorie veche și arheologie, 52-53, 2001-2002 (2003), p. 53-82.

Horedt K., 1943, *Zwei Knochenzierplättchen aus Siebenbürgen*, in Omagiu lui Ioan Lupaș la împlinirea vârstei de 60 de ani, August 1940, București, p. 1-9.

Horedt K., Seraphin C., 1971, *Die Prähistorische ansiedlung auf dem Wietenberg bei Sighișoara-Schäissburg*, Bonn.

Măruia L., Micle D., Cîntar A., Ardelean M., Stavilă A., Bolcu L., Borlea O., Horak P., Timoc C., Floca C., Vidra L., 2011, *ArheoGIS. Baza de date a siturilor arheologice cuprinse în Lista Monumentelor Istorice a județului Timiș. Rezultatele cercetărilor de teren*, Cluj-Napoca.

Ursachi V., 1995, *Zargidava. Cetatea dacică de la Brad*, Bibliotheca Thracologica X, București.

Vulpe R., Teodor S., 2003, *Piroboridava. Așezarea geto-dacică de la Poiana*, Bibliotheca Thracologica XXXIX, București.