
ROMAN MILITARY EQUIPMENT IN THE NORTHEASTERN PART OF MOESIA INFERIOR. I. THE CAPIDAVA CEMETERY

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ABSTRACT:

In the cemetery of the auxiliary fort and *vicus* at Capidava on the Danubian frontier of Moesia Inferior were discovered two weapon graves, one inhumation and one cremation of *bustum* type, placed in the same tumulus, each of them containing a short sword. Among the three cremations of *bustum* type of another tumulus there is one including in his funeral assemblage a belt set of silver fittings together with an attached knife sheath dated approximately from the last third of the 2nd century AD until the first quarter of the 3rd century AD. The silver openwork plates of curvilinear design of this set are freely assembled to make a unique belt according to the taste and/or wealth of his owner. So, it seems that the Capidava fittings were manufactured in a workshop from the northeastern part of Moesia Inferior, located perhaps at Durostorum, the base of *legio XI Claudia*.

After the Dacian Wars of Trajan and until at least the end of the 2nd century AD, but most probable also in the 3rd century AD, Capidava was garrisoned by *cohors I Germanorum civium Romanorum*. Consequently, the weapon graves and the one with the belt set belonged to soldiers or veterans of this military unit. The best analogy of the Capidava military burials is at Noviodunum, c. 160 km downstream on the Danube, where in a grave of a Moesian fleet *arkarius* were deposited a sword and the silver fittings of a baldric and two belts. Therefore, two of the Capidava military burials belonged probably to non-commissioned officers and the poorest one almost certainly to a private soldier.

REZUMAT: ECHIPAMENTUL MILITAR ROMAN ÎN PARTEA NORDESTICĂ A MOESIEI INFERIOR.

I. CIMITIRUL CAPIDAVA.

În cimitirul castrului auxiliar și *vicus*-ului de la Capidava pe frontiera dunăreană a Moesiei Inferior au fost descoperite două morminte cu arme, unul de înhumatie iar celălalt de incineratie, amplasate în același tumul, fiecare dintre ele conținând o sabie scurtă. Printre cele trei morminte de incineratie de tip *bustum* din alt tumul unul are în inventar un set de aplice de argint de la un centiron având atașată și o teacă de cuțit care datează aproximativ din ultima treime a secolului II p. Chr. și până în primul sfert al secolului III p. Chr. Plăcile de argint ajurate cu decor curbiliniar ce compun acest set au fost asamblate în așa fel încât să compună un centiron unic conform gustului și/sau posibilităților financiare ale proprietarului său. Se pare că centironul de la Capidava a fost produs într-un atelier din partea de nord-est a Moesiei Inferior, poate la Durostorum, sediul legiunii XI Claudia.

După războaiele dacice ale lui Traian și până cel puțin la sfârșitul sec II p. Chr., dar cel mai probabil și în secolul III p. Chr., la Capidava a staționat *cohors I Germanorum civium Romanorum*. Prin urmare mormintele cu arme și cel cu centiron au aparținut unor soldați sau veterani ai acestei unități militare. Cea mai bună analogie pentru înmormântările de militari de la Capidava este la Noviodunum, c. 160 km în aval pe Dunăre, unde într-un mormânt al unui casier al flotei militare a Moesiei au fost depuse o sabie, o diagonală și două centiroane cu aplice de argint ajurate. Prin urmare, două dintre mormintele militare de la Capidava au aparținut probabil unor subofițeri iar cel mai sărac, aproape sigur, unui simplu soldat.

KEYWORDS: Moesia Inferior, Capidava, military equipment graves, swords, silver belt fittings.

CUVINTE CHEIE: Moesia Inferior, Capidava, morminte cu echipament militar, săbii, aplice de centiron din argint.

The territory of Moesia Inferior situated between the Danube and the Black Sea, known today as the region of Dobrudja, with its main part lying within the modern state of Romania, had a heavy military presence during the first three centuries AD. However, until recently, the Roman military equipment from Romanian Dobrudja has received

scant attention. Thus, there are only few articles on this topic¹ and a few other military items cursorily published in excavation reports or collections of stray finds from some sites. Under these circumstances, the systematic research of the military equipment from this region is needed as much as part of it was found in funerary contexts allowing a thorough analysis. So this paper on the highly profiled military items from the Capidava cemetery is only the first one in a series dealing with the military pieces of the 1st-3rd centuries discovered in Dobrudja.

The Capidava auxiliary fort was built on the right bank of the Danube river between Axiopolis and Carsium. Some barrows located around the fort were excavated in 1976-1978 by N. Cheluță-Georgescu. Unfortunately, a long illness eventually resulting in his untimely death prevented him from publishing his research. Under these circumstances, in order to state the contexts of the military equipment items dealt with in this paper, I had to use only the compendious preliminary report of the 1978 season of work and sparse unpublished data on the military burials made available to me by the author of the excavations.

At Capidava three military graves were found, two of them in tumulus 1 and one in tumulus 8 (Fig. 1).

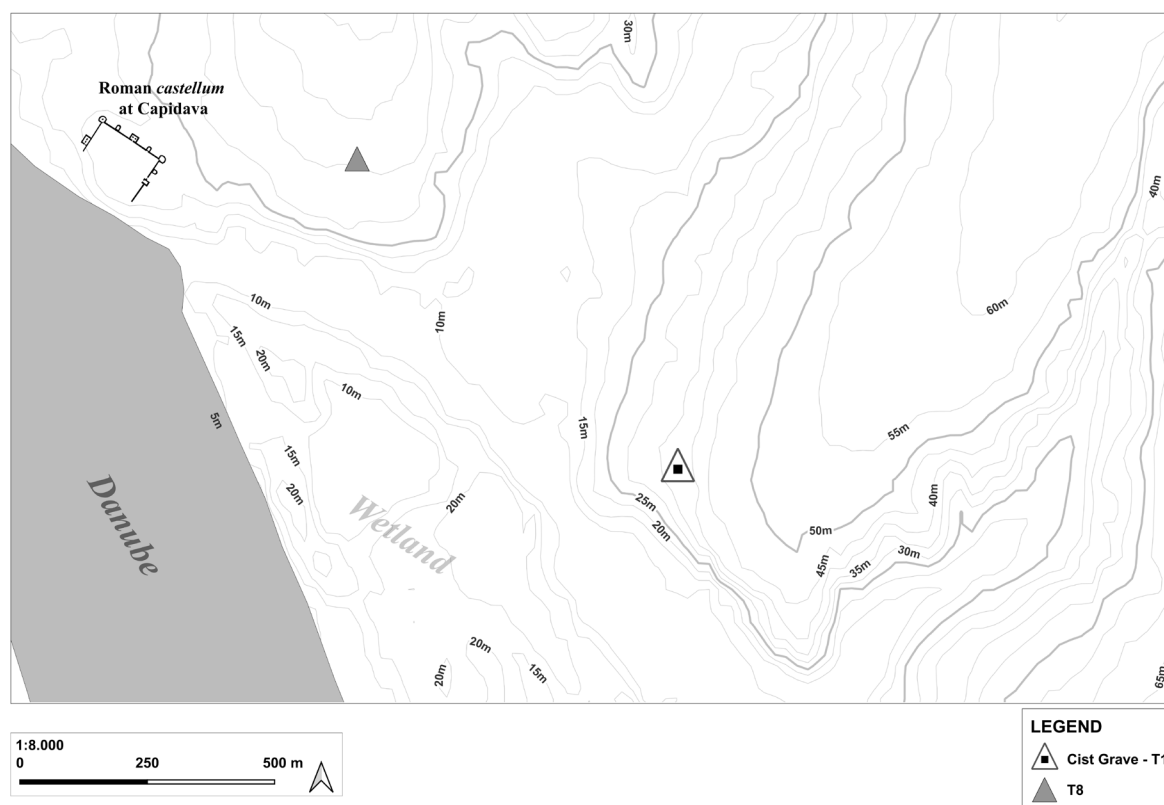


Fig. 1. Location of tumuli 1 and 8. (plan by V. N. Călina)

TUMULUS 1.

Tumulus 1 c. 50 m in diameter and 5 m in height is situated 1180 m eastward of the fort, near the present-day village Bălăgești, seemingly along the Roman road coming from Capidava and bifurcating towards Histria and Tomis.² The burial mound erected in the 9th century BC for a deceased belonging to the Babadag II-Culture also included three Roman graves, one inhumation and two cremations, among which two weapon graves.

GRAVE 1.

Inhumation in a rectangular limestone cista of 2.80 by 1.40 m, orientated South-North (Fig. 2). The sides of the cista are made of 8 slabs and the lid of two flat slabs linked together by two massive iron hooks. The funerary assemblage consists of a clay jug put at the feet of the dead, near the head a bronze coin issued by Antoninus Pius in AD 155-156 (BMC, group IV) identified by the late Radu Ocheșanu and a sword without recorded information on its position inside the *cista*.

¹ Rădulescu 1963; Vlădescu 1981-1982; Petculescu 1988; Glad and Nuțu 2010; Rațiu and Opreș 2021.

² Opreș *et alii* 2008, 88 the dimensions of the barrow and the distance from the fort.

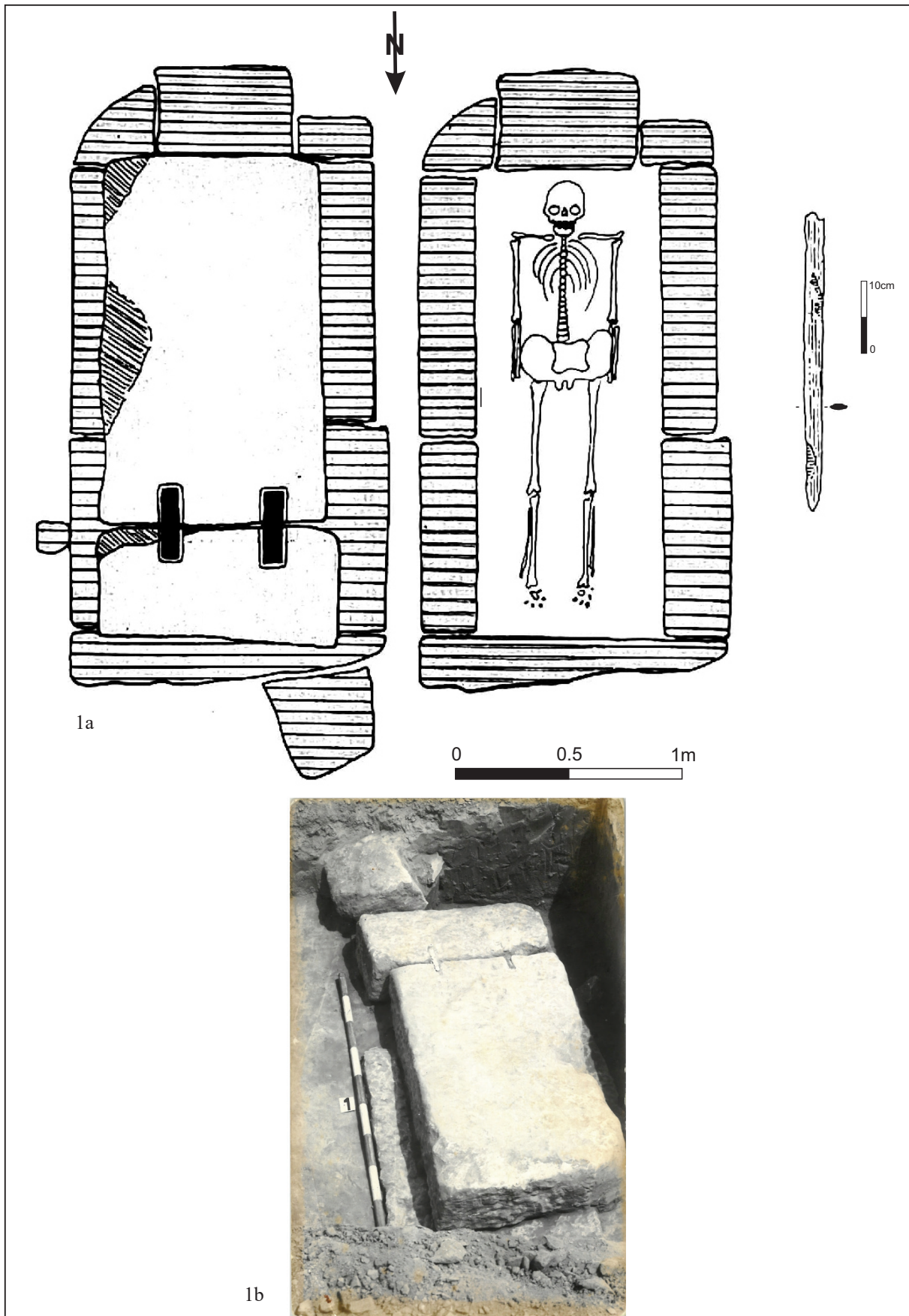


Fig. 2. Capidava. Tumulus 1, Grave 1: 1a. cista (unpublished drawing by N. Cheluță-Georgescu); 1b. cista lid (unpublished photograph by N. Cheluță-Georgescu).

It seems that the sword (no. 1), missing the handle assemblage and a small part of the upper end of the blade, was deposited long after the minting of the associated coin, perhaps toward the end of the 2nd or even at the beginning of the 3rd century AD, when inhumation became fashionable. And such a somewhat later dating of the grave 1 is also suggested by its location in the tumulus 1, at a considerable distance to the fort than the other barrows which were already used for placing the Roman graves.

This sword with a short and exceptional narrow blade can't be included in Ulbert's typology of the long swords or among Miks's classification where under the clumsy heading "Gladii vom Spatha typ, Tendenz/Variante ähnlich Straubing" very different examples are gathered, dating from the 1st to the middle of the 3rd century AD, discovered all over the Roman Empire and in *Barbaricum*³. A close parallel to it is represented by a little broader sword discovered in a destruction layer from the *praetentura sinistra* of the large fort at Tibiscum in Dacia, dated c. AD 260⁴. And a similar blade was dragged out the river Saône at Montbellet in Gallia⁵.

GRAVE 2.

Cremation in a *bustum* type grave. Rectangular stepped pit of 3.20 by 2 m with the lower pit of 2.20 by 0.90 m. On the southern end of the lower pit there were the calcined bones of the head of the deceased. The funerary assemblage consists of a burnt sword placed near the left hand of the cremated body and a coin of Hadrian issued in AD 128-133 (BMC group F) identified by the late Radu Ocheșanu, which was put at its feet. So, the sword no.2 was deposited after AD 128-132, but anyway before the sword no. 1. And considering that the *busta* were frequent until around the middle of the 2nd century AD, one can suppose that it was probably deposited during the second third of the 2nd century AD⁶.

The short sword (no. 2) was heavily burnt during the cremation of the body. Consequently, the edges of the blade are damaged, part of the tang is missing, the ivory (?) semicircular hand guard and the broken pommel are burnt⁷ and the hand grip which must have been made of wood or leather is missing. Its closest parallels are the sword no. 1 from Capidava and the one from Tibiscum⁸. Besides, undecorated semicircular pommels and hand guards are known at Colonia Ulpia Traiana (Xanten), Brigetio (2 examples) and Vimose⁹.

TUMULUS 8.

The tumulus 8 of c. 38 m in diameter and 1.80 m in height is situated c. 500 m east of the fort. The barrow was raised above the burial of a deceased provided with a pot belonging to the Babadag II-Culture dated in the 9th century BC¹⁰. In the tumulus there are also three Roman cremation graves of *bustum* type, one of them with military equipment inventory (grave 19) and 15 inhumations, the majority dated in the 4th century AD but at least one in 9th century AD (grave 18).

GRAVE 19.

Bustum in a rectangular stepped pit of 2.20 by 1.80 m orientated North-South, cut in its southern part by the grave 18. The funerary assemblage consists of: three burnt clay lamps, one of them of Firmalampen type stamped by Fortis producer; figs, dates, vine stalks and fir cones on the pit step and military equipment silver mounts in the lower pit. It seems that the lack of the usual coin among the funerary goods is due to the destruction of the southern part of the *bustum* by the pit of the grave 18.

The offerings found on the step and the lower pit, were put after the cremation of the body and accordingly they were recovered in a very good state of preservation. However, the digging of the *bustum* was made in 'difficult conditions' meaning probably during the heavy rain, resulting perhaps in the loss of one mount¹¹. Among the silver mounts deposited in the grave there is a set of belt fittings (nos. 3a-i), a set of knife sheath mounts (nos. 4a-d) and a collar of uncertain function but likely associated with the knife sheath (no. 5).

³ Ulbert 1974; Miks 2007, 72-74, tab. 12A; See also Petculescu 2023, 493 for Miks's typology of the short spathae.

⁴ Petculescu 2023, 492-493, 499 no. 8.

⁵ Miks 2007, A 509.

⁶ Bechert 1989, 189; Babeș *et alii* 2020, 27 *busta* used in Dacia at Romula until Severus Alexander but mostly during the 2nd century AD.

⁷ Identified after a couple of photographs by V. Radu as probably ivory made.

⁸ For Tibiscum see above note 4.

⁹ Miks 2007, B 335.2 Xanten; B 148.3-4 Brigetio; B 308.5 Vimose.

¹⁰ Cheluță-Georgescu 1979, 181.

¹¹ Cheluță-Georgescu pers. inf.

As among the few published sets of belt fittings there aren't close parallels to the one from Capidava I will deal with its components separately. The belt set is made of one buckle with plate (no. 3a), a counter-plate (no. 3b), five other plates (nos. 3c-g) and two strap terminals (nos. 3h-i). All the belt plates bear an openwork decoration of curvilinear design including trumpet motifs.

The hinged trapezoidal buckle with triangular tongue (no. 3a) has close parallels among the copper alloy buckles from Dacia. So, a similar item with triangular tongue but linked to a differently shaped broader openwork plate was discovered in the auxiliary fort at Porolissum¹². Another hinged trapezoidal buckle without tongue and plate from Alba Iulia Museum was probably found in Apulum legionary fortress or in one of the two towns at Apulum¹³. Two more such buckles were discovered in the auxiliary forts at Buciumi and Gresia respectively¹⁴. Besides, a belt set made of a trapezoidal buckle hinged to a 39 mm wide rectangular plate and two other identical belt plates was excavated at Viminacium in Moesia Superior. This buckle has a triangular tongue with a triangular hole and is decorated with a spherical knob on each corner and a short oblique bar protruding from each angular recess at its base¹⁵. However, as the associated pierced decorated plates belonged to a type of broader belts dated c. AD 200-250, very common in Dacia and scarcely present also in Moesia Inferior, Moesia Superior and Dura Europos, it means that this belt set is definitely later than the one from Capidava¹⁶.

The triangular tongues with a triangular hole are met in Dacia at Apulum, Porolissum and Potaissa fortress (2 pieces)¹⁷. Yet, since at Chersonesos in Moesia Inferior such a tongue is part of an oval buckle and at Viminacium a decorated trapezoidal buckle with a similar tongue belonged to a broader later belt set, it means that these tongues are not sound evidence for Capidava buckle parallels.¹⁸ There are also few splayed pseudotrapezoidal buckles with an internal triangular projection representing a unique feature amongst these Roman fittings.¹⁹ But, since these strange buckles have only superficial similarities with the Capidava example they will not be considered in this context.

The elongated buckle plate (no. 3a) is identical to the counter-plate (no. 3b) except for the lack of the hinge sockets on the latter. Their openwork decoration of curvilinear design includes trumpets- and a central ogival motif rendering perhaps a stylized pine cone. And the shaping of the upper ends of the miniature spearheads baldric fasteners from Raetia and Vimose as pine cones proves that this motif was not exceptional in the decoration of the military equipment fittings.²⁰

A buckle plate identical to the piece no. 3a but attached to an oval buckle was recovered from the Antonine layer of Newstead fort in Britannia.²¹ Four other belt plates are very similarly decorated to the Capidava pieces 3a-b, but with slightly differently shaped back ends and lacking the ogival motif, were found in Moesia Inferior. Thus, an incomplete set including a buckle plate, a counter-plate and two specific strap terminals were discovered in a cremation grave from Canlia (Constanța county) on the eastern bank of the Danube River, 99 km southward from Capidava.²² One buckle plate connected with an oval buckle was found in the tumulus 528 of the Chersonesos cemetery and a belt plate with unknown exact findspot also originates in Chersonesos.²³ Finally, a plate representing a highly stylized reproduction of the prototypes from Moesia Inferior is part of a belt set including an oval buckle deposited in a grave at Faimingen in Raetia.²⁴

Each of the five openwork belt plates not directly associated with the buckle (nos. 3c-g) is different from the others. However, they are grouped in pairs with the same size and similar shape to balance the decoration of the belt on either side of the buckle: nos. 3c and 3d are elongated and nos. 3e and 3f rounded. So, I think that this group of fittings originally included another plate, now lost, to pair with the irregular squarish piece no. 3g.

¹² Unpublished. Excavations 1989. MIA-Zalău, inv. no. 27/89.

¹³ Ciugudean 2017, pl. 7/10 the photograph of the items without any text.

¹⁴ Buciumi: Chirilă *et alii* 1972, pl. 71/43. Gresia : Amon 2004, 234-235, no. 2, pl. 32/4.

¹⁵ Redžić 2013, 68, nos. 99a-c.

¹⁶ Petculescu 1995, 117-118, 137-138, pl. 8 grave no. 7, Dacia; Genčeva 2009, 14, fig. 2/13 Oescus, fig. 4/10 Rogozen; Redžić 2013, 68-70, nos. 99a-c, 101-102 Viminacium, Pećine; James 2004, 80, nos. 91-92, fig. 38 Dura Europos.

¹⁷ Apulum: Ciugudean 2021, 224, no. 83, pl. 8/7 harness pendant! from the old collections. Porolissum: Gudea 1989, 673, pl. 221/13 pendant! from the Wesellényi-Teleki Collection. Potaissa: Fodorean 2018, 273, nos. 5-6, pl. 72/10-11.

¹⁸ Chersonesos: Kostromichyov 2011, 134, no. 33, fig. 26/2; Viminacium: Redžić 2013, 68, no. 99a-c.

¹⁹ Allason-Jones and Micket 1984, 195, no. 3.639 South Shields fort; Ciugudean 2021, 210, no.31, pl. 7/7 Olea Collection made of objects from Ampelum (Zlatna town, Alba county) and its surroundings.

²⁰ Petculescu 1993, 187, notes 43-44.

²¹ Curle 1911, 304, pl. 76/2.

²² Boroffka and Trohani 2003, 163, grave 23, fig. 11/7-10.

²³ Kostromichyov 2011, 134, no. 33, fig. 26/2; 135, no. 45, fig. 27/1.

²⁴ Müller 1999, 132, grave 292, pl. 51.

The openwork plates of curvilinear design including trumpet motifs are common, especially in the Danubian provinces, for example only at Eining in Raetia originating 8 such fittings²⁵. Yet, the decoration of these items differs so much in detail that I don't know any close parallels to the plates nos. 3c-g but only distant similar items for no. 3c at Gomolava in Moesia Superior, for no. 3d in an unknown findspot in Moesia Superior, at Eining in Raetia and for 3e at Komořany in Barbaricum in the proximity of the Pannonia Superior *limes*.²⁶

The two small strap terminals nos. 3h-i, remarkably similar in size and shape, are distinct from one to another only in the details of their poor incised decoration. They belong to a very rare variant of strap terminals represented mostly by silver examples so far. I know three parallels to the nos. 3h-i: a silver piece with an almost identical decoration to no. 3h at Noviodunum in Moesia Inferior, c. 160 km downstream on the Danube from Capidava, and two other copper alloy examples, one at Mătășaru (Dâmbovița County) in *Barbaricum* beyond the *limes* of Dacia Inferior but also not far from the Danube River and another one in Buciumi fort, on the northwestern frontier of Dacia²⁷. The silver items from Capidava and Noviodunum and the copper alloy one from Mătășaru are made of thin metal sheets soldered together, a highly unusual technical procedure to manufacture these fittings, but the Buciumi one is simply cast as virtually all other copper alloy terminals²⁸.

The set of knife sheath mounts consists of two suspension bands (nos. 4a-b) and two studs (nos. 4c-d). The suspension bands are linked at their right ends by 4 mm long rivets making room for binding the cord attaching the sheath to the belt. Their front sides are decorated along the borders with irregular squares cutoffs and their ends are configured as a rough peltate motif on no. 4a and as the same motif rendered almost unrecognizably on no. 4b.

Pairs of copper alloy knife suspension bands were found together with their related belts in Moesia Inferior at Chersonesos, in Dacia at Romula, in Moesia Superior at Viminacium, in Pannonia Superior at Emona and Radvan nad Dunajom-Žitva and other ones without the associated belts were discovered in Pannonia Superior at Poetovio and Vindobona, in Raetia at Rainau-Buch and in Germania Inferior at Nijmegen.²⁹ At Viminacium there is another knife with sheath and a suspension band but only its drawing was published and no other information.³⁰ None of these parallels have square cutoffs along the borders of the front side yet on the ends of the items from Vindobona, Rainau-Buch and Nijmegen there are peltate motifs and on the ones from Chersonesos a trefoil ornament. Besides, the cremation grave of a woman from Kolovrat in Slovenia includes among its rich inventory two silver similar bands. However, as these items were mounts of a *theca* for three spectacular silver hair pins, they are not dealt with in this context.³¹

The studs (nos. 4c-d) with flat peltate heads are very similar to one another. As their unusually long shanks give enough room for binding a cord, I suppose that they probably paired up the bands nos. 4a-b, in order to attach the knife sheath to the belt. This assertion is supported by the presence of somewhat similar suspension studs of the knife from Chersonesos³².

The collar (no. 5) wasn't found attached to the item it was part of and thus its function is unknown. Yet, as it was deposited together with the other silver fittings in the lower pit of the grave, it means that it was associated with them. Therefore, I think that it was perhaps attached, like some kind of a chape, to the end of the knife sheath. Even less probable is its setting in the middle of the hand grip of the knife not only due to its small size but also as there isn't any proof that a knife was also among the prestige grave goods represented by the silver belt and its attached sheath.

At the end of the analysis of the fittings included in the belt set one can make some statements.

²⁵ Gschwind 2004, C 389-391, 395, 399-401, 403, pls. 46-47.

²⁶ Gomolava: Redžić 2013, no. 508, pl. 52. Moesia Superior, unknown findspot: Redžić 2013, no. 507, pl. 52. Eining: Gschwind 2004, C 389, pl. 46; Komořany: Tejral 1994, fig. 10/8.

²⁷ Noviodunum: Unpublished. L. Petculescu, Roman military equipment in the north-eastern part of Moesia Inferior. II. The Noviodunum cemetery, in preparation. Mătășaru: Petculescu 1999, 897, no. 19, pl. 2. Buciumi: Gudea and Bajusz 1992, 265, pl. 13/8.

²⁸ Petculescu 1999, 897, no. 20, pl. 2 a strap terminal with middle ring loop which is the second such fitting made of copper alloy sheets soldered together known to me.

²⁹ Chersonesos: Kostromichyov 2011, 56, 131, no. 12, pl. 24/ 1-11. Romula: Babeș *et alii* 2020, 156, no. 10.4 the bands, 153-154, nos. 9.8, 9.9 the belt set. Viminacium: Zotović and Jordović 1990, 84, grave 58, pl. 86 Mrdić and Raičković 2013, 119, grave 58, fig. 9; Emona: Greiner 2008, 105, note 276, fig. 146. Radvan nad Dunajom-Žitva: Hüssen and Rajtár 1994, 220, fig. 6, grave 4/g. Poetovio: Istenič 2000, 19, grave 11, pl. 3, grave 11/7. Vindobona: Maspoli 2014, 36, 102, nos. 40-41, pl. 8. Rainau-Buch: Greiner 2008, 103-105, figs. 141-144; Greiner 2010, 47, no. 148/2, pl. 24. Nijmegen: Gerhartl-Witteveen and Hubrecht 1990, 105, no. 11, fig. 13.

³⁰ Korać and Golubović 2013, 147, pl. 5/10.

³¹ Cermanović-Kuzmanović 1990, 232, grave 93, pl. 2/1.

³² Kostromichyov 2011, pl. 24/2-3.

Each Capidava item, but the strap terminals, has parallels or at least similarities to its curvilinear decoration among the copper alloy counterpart. So, the differences between the silver and copper alloy belt fittings consists only in the striking appearance and better finishing of the first ones which were certainly considered prestige items. And, while the standard belts were usually made of some identical poorer decorated copper alloy mounts the openwork fittings of different curvilinear design were freely assembled to make unique belts according to the taste and/or wealth of their owners (Fig. 3).

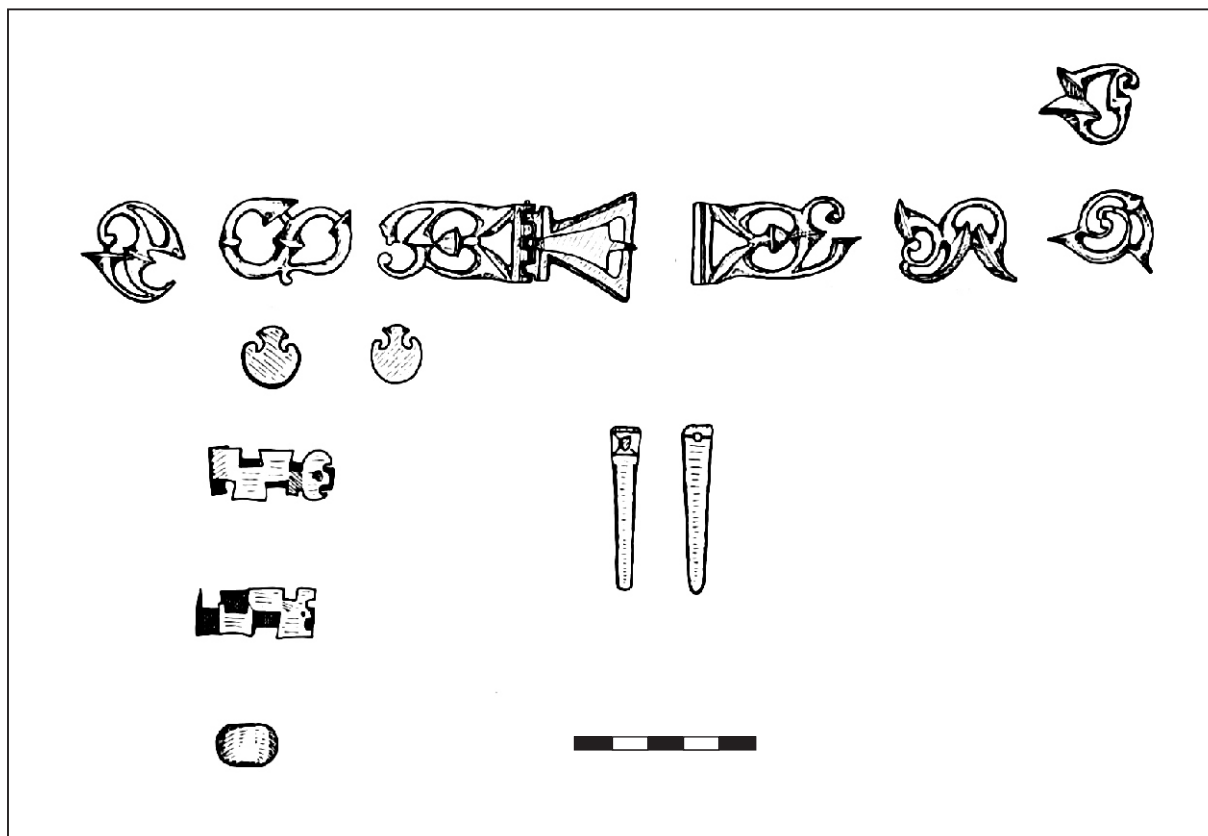


Fig. 3. Capidava. Set of belt fittings including the mounts of the attached knife sheath. Silver. Scale 1 : 2.

Outside Moesia Inferior, the hinged trapezoidal buckles are attested in Dacia (4 pieces) and Moesia Superior. However, as at Porolissum in Dacia and Viminacium in Moesia Superior they are part of broader belts distributed in these provinces during the first half of the 3rd century, it means that the isolated similar buckles are not straightforward evidence for Capidava set parallels. And the association at Chersonesos of a triangular tongue with an oval buckle also proves that these items quite largely spread in Dacia were part of differently shaped buckles and not only of trapezoidal ones. The elongated buckle plate and similar counter-plate (nos. 3a-b) have close parallels in Moesia inferior at Canlia (2 pieces) and Chersonesos (2 pieces) and in Britannia at Newstead. Besides, a highly stylized example, obviously manufactured in a distinct workshop from the one producing all the other pieces, originates at Faimingen in Raetia. If the other five plates (nos. 3c-g) belong to a type of openwork fittings common in the Danubian provinces, for the strap terminals (nos. 3h-i) I know only few parallels in the Lower Danubian region. The knife sheath bands (nos. 4a-b) have a characteristic crude decoration unmatched of any similar items found on the northern frontier, from Chersonesos in Crimea to Nijmegen in Germania Inferior. And the attaching studs (nos. 4c-d) are, as far as I know, unparalleled.

It results that the Capidava fittings included rare fittings – the trapezoidal buckles, the specific identical buckle plate and counter-plate, the soldered strap terminal and the strangely decorated knife sheath – with few close analogies concentrated in or around the northeastern part of Moesia Inferior. So, I think that the belt was manufactured in a regional workshop located perhaps at Durostorum, the base of *legio XI Claudia*, where another silver belt set was discovered, although of a slightly different type and of a somewhat later dating. If this supposition is correct, it means that both belt plates from Crimea, similar to Canlia pieces and Capidava nos. 3a-3b, were probably brought

to Chersonesos by the detachments of the *legio XI Claudia* attested in the town from the late 2nd century AD to the middle of the 3rd century AD³³.

The parallels to the Capidava belt set give some hints for its chronology. Thus, the Newstead buckle plate was perhaps deposited around AD 180 when the fort was abandoned³⁴ and one Capidava strap terminal (no. 3h) has the same incised decoration as the strap terminals with middle ring loop coming into use after the Marcomannic Wars. The suspension bands of a knife sheath from Vindobona, Poetovio as well as the Nijmegen and Viminacium sheaths provided with similar bands were deposited toward the end of the 2nd century AD, the belt set and the knife sheath from Radvan near Dunajom-Žitva belonged to the furnishing of a military cremation grave dated c. AD 168-180 while another similar sheath was found at Rainau-Buch in a refuse pit used between AD 161 and 193. Consequently, I think that the Capidava set dates approximately from the last third of the 2nd century AD until the first quarter of the 3rd century AD when the cremations of *bustum* type are most rare and the broad belts became very fashionable in the Lower Danubian provinces.

Discussion

All the graves excavated by N. Cheluță-Georgescu were placed in preexisting barrows, probably trying not so much to comply with a strict funerary ritual commandment but rather to offer the deceased a conspicuous resting place without wasting too much in making the burials. The military equipment items were found in three graves, one inhumation and two cremations of *bustum* type. In one of the *busta*, a sword accompanied the corpse on the funeral pyre and in the other the belt was placed in the pit of the grave after the burning of the body. This means that the deposition of the military items in the graves was intended to emphasize the links of the dead with the army irrespective of the funeral rite or rituals.

After the Dacian Wars of Trajan and until at least the end of the 2nd century AD, but most probably also in the 3rd century AD, Capidava was garrisoned by *cohors I Germanorum civium Romanorum*.³⁵ Consequently, the weapons graves and the one with the belt belonged to soldiers or veterans of this military unit. As a sword similar to the Capidava ones was found in Tibiscum fort, the base of *cohors I Vindellicorum milliaria equitata, numerus Palmyrenorum Tibiscensium* and *numerus Maurorum Tibiscensium*, it seems that some specialized auxiliaries among which those from *cohors I Germanorum* and the Palmyrene archers were provided with short swords.³⁶

As for the military ranks and/or social positions of the soldiers buried with military items, one has to evaluate the worth of their burials. So, the grave 1 of tumulus 1 cost mainly the price of the *cista* and the sword. One undecorated 4th century AD limestone *sarcophagus* from Salona, the only one with a known value, was bought for 15 *solidi*, thought to represent approximately 150 *denarii* by the late 1st century AD.³⁷ But, since the *cista* was made of reused slabs, its price was much lower, perhaps only about 75 *denarii*. And as an “Italian” sword was purchased in Egypt in AD 116/117 for 80 *drachmae* that is 20 *denarii*,³⁸ it means that the swords nos. 1 and 2, dating towards the middle and the second half of the 2nd century AD, should have a similar price. The set of silver belt fittings together with the knife sheath mounts from the grave 19 of the tumulus 8 weight 107 gm but adding the lost fitting pairing no. 3g and the very small fragments missing from buckle plate no. 3a, plate no. 3f and suspension band no. 4b, one arrives at c. 114 gm that is c. 33.5 *denarii* of 3.40 gm each. However, as the price of this luxury belt also included its manufacture, its cost was much higher, perhaps even doubling the value of the silver component. Consequently, letting aside the very cheap offerings among which ceramic pottery and lamps present in all graves, the amount of money spent for the burial 1 of tumulus 1 was of c. 100 *denarii* plus perhaps a lost *epitaph* impossible to evaluate. The military equipment offerings from the grave 2 of the tumulus 1 and grave 19 of the tumulus 8 were worth c. 20 and 68 *denarii* respectively.

Therefore, the Capidava military graves were quite poor not only compared to those of the municipal aristocracy but also to some other military burials. Thus, at Puteoli, was found a funerary inscription of a private soldier (*miles*) from the *classis praetoria Missenensis* specifying that 2000 *sestertii* were prescribed to cover the expenses of his funeral, obviously including the payment of the *epitaph* and perhaps also of a funerary monument, the burial plot

³³ Antonova and Kostromichyov 2000, 213, fig. 40/2. Sarnowski 2000, 219-221, 224, brick stamps of the types 4, 11, 15. Zubar 2000, 250, notes 11-15.

³⁴ Breeze 2015, 118-119 the date of the abandonment of the fort.

³⁵ Matei-Popescu 2010, 213-215.

³⁶ See above note 4.

³⁷ Russell 2011, 122.

³⁸ P. Giss. 47, l. 11-12 = Kortus, Briefe des Apollonios-Archives, 6, l. 11-12 ; Ben Zeev 2005, 18-20, 168. See also Bishop 2016, 45.

and the funerary banquet.³⁹ Accordingly, no matter how this sum was spent, it was much larger than the amount of money used for the Capidava burials.

Yet, the best analogy of the Capidava military burials is at Noviodunum, c. 160 km downstream on the Danube, where the grave of an *arkarius* of *classis Flavia Moesica* had a funeral inventory including a sword with an opal pendant, the silver fittings of a baldric, two belts and a lot of other items.⁴⁰ Therefore, the grave 1 of the tumulus 1 and 19 of the tumulus 8 probably belonged to non-commissioned officers and the grave 2 of the tumulus 1 almost certainly to a private soldier.

Acknowledgements

I am deeply indebted to the late Nicolae Cheluță-Georgescu who allowed me to use the unpublished records of his excavations and to study the recovered military items for preparing their publication. Also, I have a debt of gratitude to the late Alexandru V. Matei who allowed me full access to the small finds from Zalău Museum. Many thanks are due to Cristina Alexandrescu and Florian Matei-Popescu for bibliographical information, to Alexandru Rațiu for computerizing the illustration and to Iuliana Barnea who draw the items after my own sketches.

³⁹ CIL X 3360. Starr 1993, 45 note 71, 83 note 55.

⁴⁰ Simion 1994-1995, 123-125, figs. 3, 6d, 7, 13b.

CATALOGUE

All the items are kept in Mzeul de Istorie Națională și Arheologie Constanța (The Museum of National History and Archaeology Constanța). The numbering of the items corresponds to that of their illustrations. All the measurements are in mm and gm respectively. Abbreviations: L: Length; W: Width; H: Height; Th: Thickness; D: Diameter; Wt: Weight.

TUMULUS 1.

Grave 1.

1. Sword. Inv. no. 13788.

Iron. Incomplete; the upper end of the blade, the tang and the handle assemblage are missing. The blade is covered with the remains of the wooden laths of the scabbard. L: 428; W: 28; Th: 7.

Short narrow blade of lenticular section narrowing imperceptibly toward the lower end where it curved to form an ogival point.

Grave 2.

2. Sword. Inv. no. 13789.

Iron and ivory (?). Incomplete; the upper part of the tang is missing and the edge of the blade are breached. The ivory (?) pommel and hand guard are heavily burnt and broken. L (entire): 508; L (blade): 376; W (actual): 30; Th (actual): 4.5. Pommel W: 56; H: 27; Th : 31. Hand guard W: 58; H: 26; Th: 30.

Sword with short narrow blade of lenticular section slightly narrowing toward the lower end to form a seemingly elongated triangular point. The semicircular pommel and hand guard of rectangular sections have virtually the same dimensions.

TUMULUS 8.

Grave 19.

3a-i. Set of belt fittings. Silver.

3a. Belt buckle with plate. Inv. no. 14001

Complete (without a very small part of the external end of the plate). L: 71; Wt: 25.05; Buckle: L: 31; W: 28.5; Th: 2. Plate L: 45; W: 21.5; Th: 4.5. Rivets L: 3.5.

Trapezoidal buckle with triangular tongue. It ends toward the plate in a vertical bar provided with two cylindrical hinge sockets. The silver spindle of the hinge is still in place.

The openwork elongated plate of curvilinear design includes a trumpet- and a central ogival motif. The plate ends toward the buckle in a vertical bar provided with four hinge sockets. On its rear face it has four fixing rivets, the thinner one placed in the lower recess representing the replacement of the regular rivet at the lower end of the vertical bar broken during the manufacturing process or afterwards.

3b. Belt counter-plate. Inv. no. 14002.

Complete. L: 48; W: 22; Th: 4; L of the rivets: 3-4. Wt: 15.78

As the buckle plate but, of course, without the hinge loops. It has all four rivets placed in the standard positions.

3c. Belt plate. Inv. no. 14004.

Complete. L: 37.5; W: 23.5; Th: 4; L of the rivets 3.5-4; Wt: 10.49.

Elongated openwork plate of curvilinear design including trumpet motifs. On the rear face there are four fixing rivets.

3d. Belt plate. Inv. no. 14005.

Complete. L: 33.5; W: 23; Th: 3.5; L of the rivets: 3.5; Wt: 8.65.

Elongated openwork plate of curvilinear design including three large trumpet motifs. The fixing rivets are disposed on the rear face of the trumpet motifs.

3e. Belt plate. Inv. no. 14007.

Complete. L: 30; W: 20; Th: 3.5; L of the rivets: 3.5; Wt: 5.46.

Rounded openwork plate of curvilinear design including three trumpet motifs running one after another. The fixing rivets are disposed on the rear face of the trumpet motifs.

3f. Belt plate. Inv. no. 14006.

Incomplete; one small fragment of the edge is missing. L: 28; W: 24; Th: 4; L of the rivet: 3.5; Wt: 6.45.

Rounded openwork plate of curvilinear design with a central double-faced trumpet between one larger and another small residual trumpet motif, disposed on the edge of the fitting. From its original three fixing rivets only one survived.

3g. Belt plate. Inv. no. 14003.

Complete. L: 25; W: 23; Th: 3.5; L of the rivets: 3; Wt: 6.84.

Plate of irregular squarish shape. Its curvilinear design includes two large opposed trumpets emerging from another smaller double-faced one. On the rear face there are three fixing rivets.

3h. Strap terminal. Inv. no. 14011

Complete. L: 44; W: 8.5; Th: 1; Wt: 4.

Small terminal made of two thin silver sheets soldered together, tapering slightly toward the lower end. The upper end of the item is divided to receive a 1mm thick strap of leather which was secured by a rivet still in place. The upper part is decorated by four incisions, two crossing at the rivet head between the other two horizontal. On the upper edge there are file cuts.

3i. Strap terminal. Inv. no. 14012.

Complete. L: 45; W: 9; Th: 1; Wt: 3.5.

Small strap terminal made of two thin silver sheets soldered together, tapering slightly toward the curved lower end. Its upper end is divided to receive the strap of leather which was secured by a, now lost, rivet. The upper part of the item is decorated with a horizontal incision intersecting the rivet hole. On the upper edge there are file cuts.

4a-d. Set of knife sheath mounts. Silver.

4a. Suspension band. inv. no. 14009.

Complete. L: 35; W: 13; Th: 0.5; Wt: 3.65.

Folded back strip to hold the wooden sheath. The broader front side has irregular square cutoffs on both edges and its back side is made of a narrower elongated strip with parallel upper and lower edges. The end of the front side is cut off to form a rough peltate motif. The ends of the band are linked by a 4 mm long rivet making room to bind an attaching cord.

4b. Suspension band. Inv. no. 14010.

One small part of its front side is missing. L: 33; W: 13; Th: 0.5; Wt: 2.75.

Strip folded back to hold the wooden sheath. As no. 4a but with the end of its front side decorated only by two small semicircular holes rendering an almost unidentifiable peltate motif.

4c. Stud. Inv. no. 14013.

Complete. L: 16.3; W: 16; Th: 1.5; L of the shank: 9.5; Th of the shank: 2; Wt 2.66.

Stud with a flat peltate head and long thin shank making room for the attaching cord linking the sheath band to the belt. The washer is missing.

4d. Stud. Inv. no. 14014.

Complete. L: 15; W: 14.7; Th: 1; L of the shank: 9.5; Th of the shank: 2; Wt: 1.71.

As no. 4c. The bulging centre of the shank is evidence for its breaking and subsequent welding of the detached lower part.

5. Collar. Silver. Inv. no. 14008.

Complete. L: 17.5; W: 16; H: 11; Th: 4; Wt: 10.2.

Collar with solid convex wall on the oval front side and flat rear side.

Abbreviations

CIL - Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum, Berlin.

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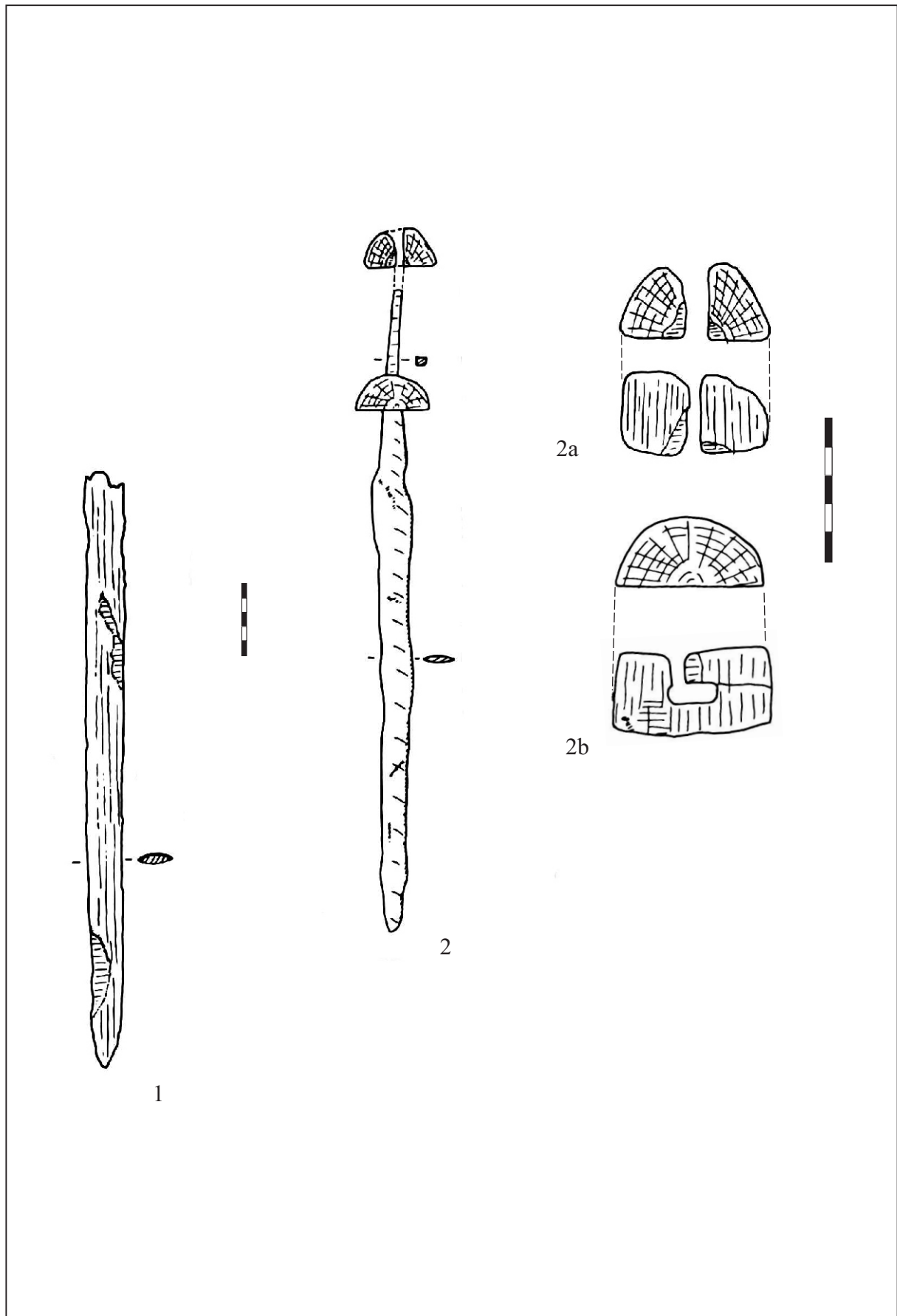
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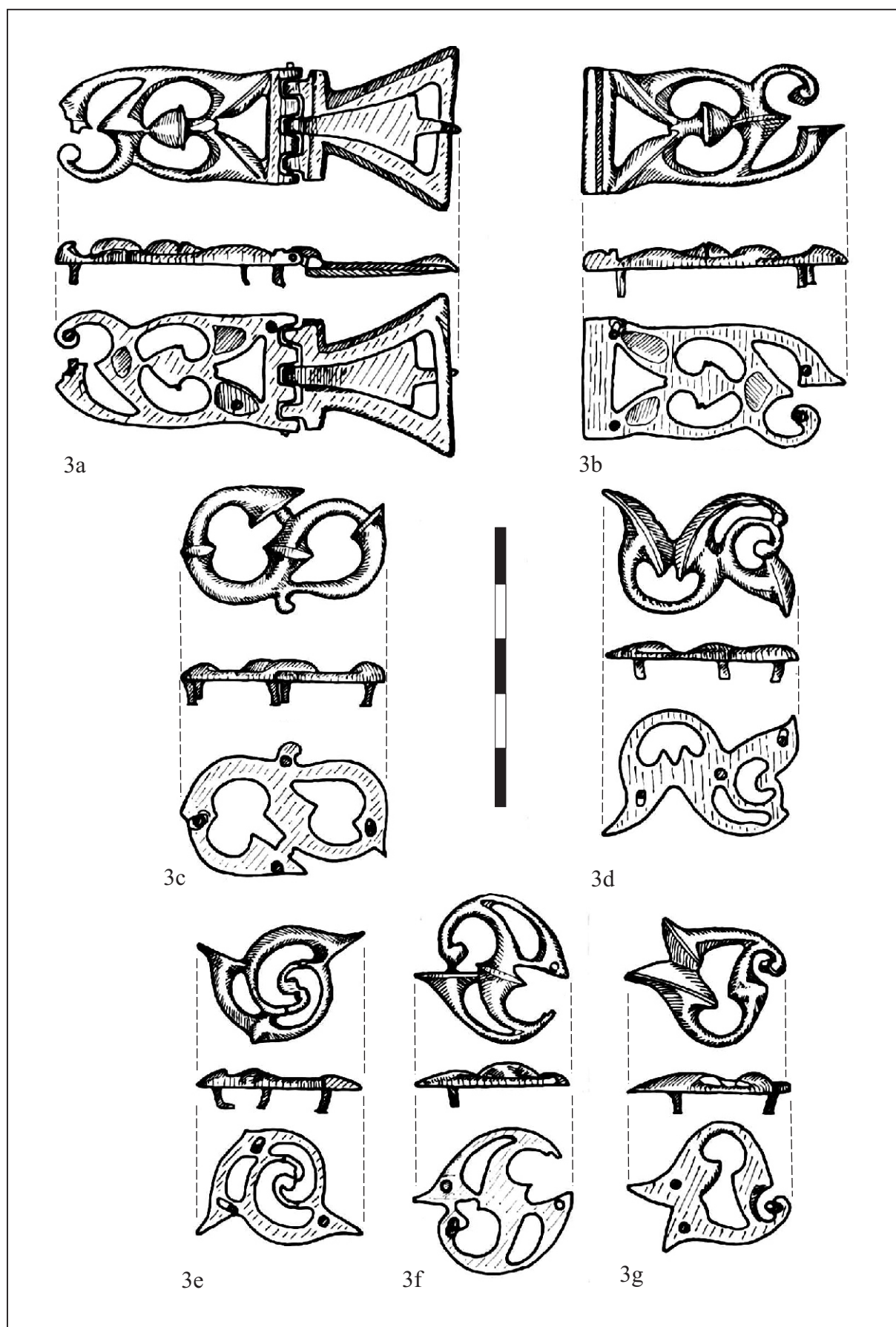
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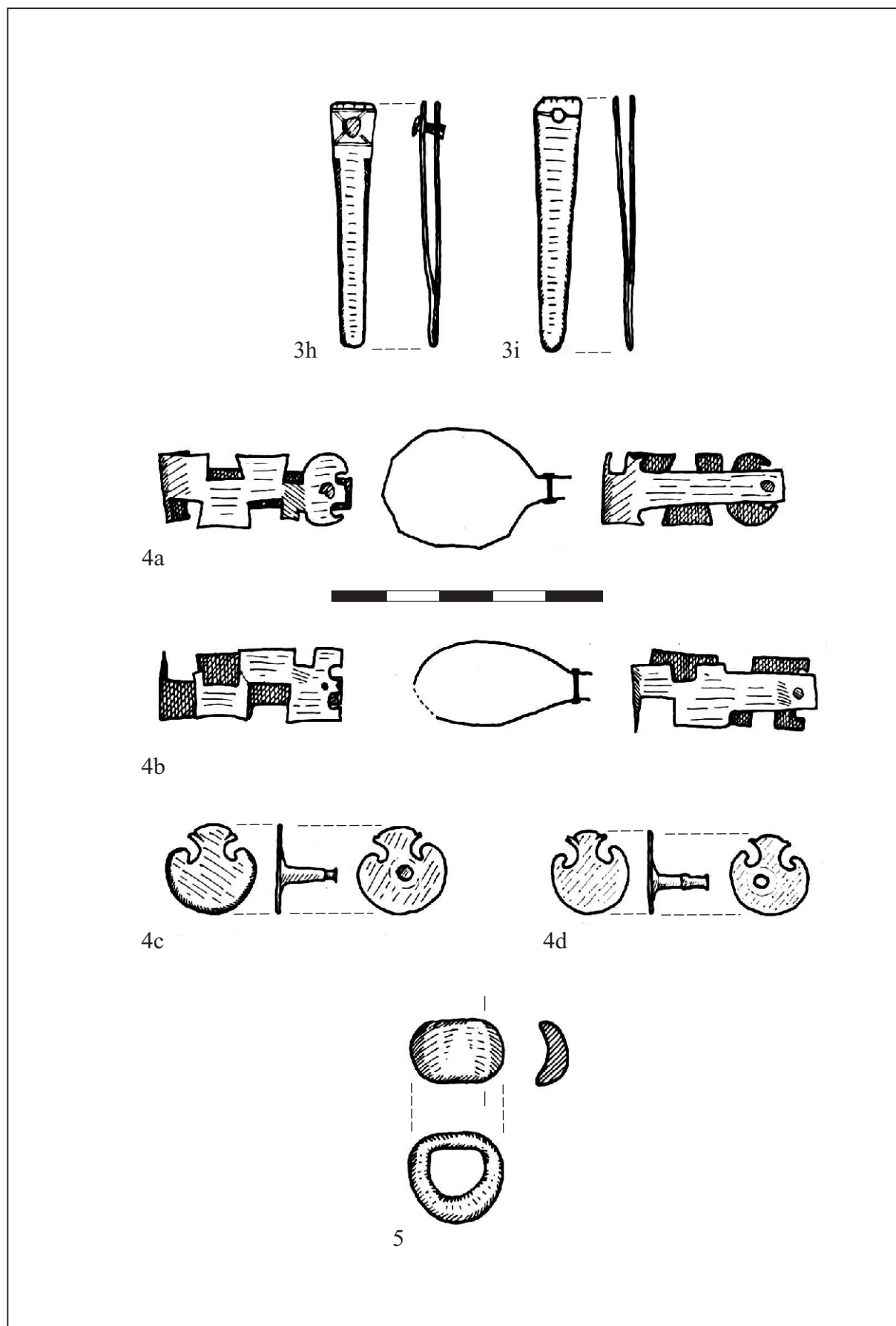
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