

The Dacian Fortress of Căpâlna (Săsciori Commune, Alba County) – In Search of Lost Time (1999–2019)

Marius-Mihai CIUȚĂ

Abstract

The present paper deals with a recovered hoard of gold Hellenistic style jewellery, stolen in 2001 from the Dacian fortress of Căpâlna, archaeological site and UNESCO monument from Romania. After 7 years of illegal trafficking of the artefacts on the black market of antiquities, the Romanian law enforcements recovered the hoard from Germany, with the generous support of an expert from Frankfurt am Main. The items come from a Western Balkan workshop around the inhabited by the Danubian Celts, located on the northern territory of Serbia and the western part of nowadays region of Banat (Romania). Nevertheless, one should not completely exclude the possibility that the items were made in a roving workshop on the territory of South-western Dacia. The technique used and the style of decoration prove the assimilation of late Hellenistic and Italic influences. The composition of the gold alloy is similar to the one used by jewellers in the late Hellenistic and Roman imperial periods. An important detail is the reconstruction of the "discovery circumstances" inside of the protected area of Căpâlna fortress, by the archaeological poachers from Deva (Hunedoara County). During the judicial and forensic investigations, from 2006 to 2018, the members of the law enforcement observed the "evolution" of the actual state of the monument. The conclusion is that during the twelve years since the fortress was a UNESCO monument, its protection and scientific promotion was minimal.

Keywords: Dacian fortress, Căpâlna, Alba County, penal investigations, poachers pits, destruction, ignorance, recovered artefacts.

When, in 1999, the first historical monuments from Romania were accepted on the UNESCO List, all scholars involved in the cultural heritage field imagined that the monuments would enjoy, finally, a special regime of protection and valorisation. The evolution of the last twenty years has revealed that, unfortunately, not all these monuments enjoyed the *special regime*, which is provided even in the normative acts issued by the Romanian legislators.

This study wishes to be a radiograph of how protection and enhanced use standards of a UNESCO site lying within the boundary of Alba district, namely, the Dacian fortress of Căpâlna–*Dealul Cetății* (Săsciori commune)¹ have been

¹ The site was included on the UNESCO list according to the decision of 2 December 1999: whc.unesco.org/en/list/906.

applied. The author's connection with this site is the result of specific activities related to several criminal cases investigating certain offences perpetrated in this archaeological site starting with 2000. These criminal case files targeted unauthorized detection activities performed within the archaeological site and the resulting damages to the fortress walls and the misappropriation of archaeological artefacts - susceptible to belong to the national cultural heritage - from *in situ* contexts, that have survived for almost 2000 years, from the conquest and abandonment of the fortification by the Romans.

On January the 28th of 2009, the National Museum of the Union in Alba Iulia received a lot of ancient artefacts in its collections, composed of 3 pieces, recovered two days prior from Frankfurt am Main (Germany). *The travelling jewellery*, as termed during the criminal investigations, finally returned home, more than 7 years after having been removed from their original context, the Dacian fortress of Căpâlna. Due to my involvement in this action, as a member of the investigation team working very hard to document the criminal deeds perpetrated in the Dacian fortress and my capacity of an archaeologist organically linked with the issue of the protection of the cultural heritage, the connection with the UNESCO archaeological site became personal. The pieces were later inventoried and classified in the class of *hoard* of the National Cultural Heritage². The academic world oscillated, from the very start, between genuine delight for having recovered and placed in the museum collection such remarkable pieces (rather rare even for the archaeologists!) and scepticism concerning the context of origin, respectively their cultural-chronological framing, as suggested by those designated to carry out the expertise during the criminal prosecution. Currently, the criminal charges for the theft and traffic of these pieces³ have been settled by definitive sentencing⁴. Furthermore, so that the experts in the second Iron Age have the opportunity to examine finally

² *Necklace* - inv. no. D. 4709; *Earring no. 1* (4 pearls) inv. no. D. 4710; *Earring no. 2* (3 pearls) inv. no. D.4711. The pieces were classified, by order of the Ministry of Culture OMCCPN no. 2222 of 02.06. 2009 in the class of Hoard.

³ The criminal prosecution was carried out for criminal file no. 300/P/2010, under the supervision of the Prosecutor's Office with the Court of Appeal of Alba Iulia, being differentiated from that no. 440/P/2008, respectively 151/P/2005, generically termed: *Dosarele Aurului Dacic (The Files of the Dacian Gold)*. Information from the indictment accompanying the case file in trial court (filed on 24. 09. 2012 with the Court of Law of Hunedoara), as well as data from the proper case file are found herein.

⁴ By the sentence of December 2017, the two leaders of the group who have stolen the pieces from the archaeological site were sentenced to imprisonment, and one of those who illegally exported the pieces from the country was sentenced with suspension, given that the debt was recovered.



in more detail this archaeological find, the author can provide the particulars of the circumstances of the find (Ciută 2018) for an as accurate as possible interpretation of their significance and the role they played in the period when they were produced, used, deposited and/or abandoned.

The destiny of the national cultural heritage, as defined and approached in the Romanian society by the early 3rd millennium, is undoubtedly that of ill fortune, incapacity and occasionally even ludicrousness. The lines below include an account, which, it must be specified, is an exception. An isolate exception within a too large rule: that of irremediable loss of certain parts of the cultural heritage by *poaching* the archaeological sites and illegal export of the products of the crimes. Below, we shall not examine the “tale” of the stolen necklace and earrings, removed from the country and then recovered, as this has already been discussed elsewhere. We shall though present how this highly important objective, a historical site on the UNESCO list, included among the Historical Monuments, on the “short” list of the archaeological sites of national interest and priority and in the National Archaeological Repertoire appeared.

The Dacian fortress of Căpâlna lies in the Sebeș Mountains⁵, part of the Șureanu Mountains, somewhat peripheral within the Dacian fortification system of the Orăștie Mountains. Included in 1999 on the World Heritage List of Sites (UNESCO), together with the other 5 similar fortifications from the Hunedoara district⁶, the fortress of Căpâlna is easy to approach, being located very close (ca. 2 km) from DN67C (Transalpina Road), on a road difficult to access to off-road vehicles (on Gărgălău valley, to the north) or on a pathway, to the south (Râpa stream) (Figure 1).

Infrequently excavated, starting with the first half of the last century and then systematically during the 1950-60s (Glodariu and Moga 1989; Glodariu and Moga 2006; Borangic 2017: 132-134), the fortress had revealed a small

⁵ The site was partly systematically excavated in the second half of the 20th century: Glodariu and Moga 1989; Glodariu and Moga 2006: 14-18; Borangic 2017: 132-134.

⁶ *Lista monumentelor patrimoniului mondial UNESCO (List of World Heritage Sites)*, with identification no. code 609-006 [1999]: village of Căpâlna, Săsciori commune, Alba district code LMI - AB-I-s-A-00020, coord. 23° 36' E, 45° 48' N.906. The fortresses are also protected by Government Ordinance no. 47/30 of January 2000 on the establishment of protection measures of the historical monuments on the World Heritage List, approved with further amendments and completions by Law 564 of 19 October 2001. There adds the GR. 1268/2010 on the Approval of the Protection and Management programme of the historical monuments listed among UNESCO world heritage sites, published in MO no. 11 of 5 January 2011, which stipulated the establishment of Management Committees, with clear attribution in terms of the necessary management plans of the sites. For the Dacian fortresses, these Committees were set up by the Local Councils (Alba and Hunedoara). The fortress of Căpâlna is under the *protection and administration of the* District Council of Alba, via the National Museum of the Union.

portion of its secrets, however sufficient enough for the interested to know that it belonged to above system of the Dacian Kingdom in its classical period (1st century BC – early 2nd century AD), that it had been built sometime by the end of Burebista's reign (or just after), that its walls had been erected according to the same technique as identified in the contemporary fortress of Costești-*Cetățuie*, that it lay in a dominant, strategic, barely accessible position, monitoring the Sebeș valley and communication southwards, to Polovragi (Glodariu and Moga 1989: 126-130; Glodariu and Moga 2006: 142-146; Pescaru and Pescaru 2009: 47-51), making easy connection with the fortress of Tilișca, eastwards and that of Cugir, westwards, that the access to the fortress had been flanked by two rectangular towers (a tower house and a gate tower) (Figure 2), that it was provided with a central acropolis, on a relatively rectangular rock platform and a temple on the south-eastern terrace. It was first hypothesised that the fortress had been conquered in the first Dacian War by the cavalry of Lucius Quietus⁷ - who would have also conquered the fortresses of Tilișca and Cugir - to be later partially dismantled, and hastily rebuilt during the second War, only to be put to fire by the conclusion of the wars (Glodariu and Moga 1989: 126-130; Glodariu and Moga 2006: 142-146; Borangic 2017: 132-134). Ultimately, the fortification (or what remained of it), was reused in the Middle Ages, likely as an observation post (Figure 2)

Starting with 2001-2002, there was an obvious increase in the number of reported *poachers* of archaeological sites, equipped with metal detectors, arriving especially from Hunedoara District, where their “finds” were already so important and valuable that there was certain competition in their detecting work! In the spring of 2001, two archaeologists from Alba Iulia who periodically visited the fortress reported the first holes left by the detectorists on the terraces inside the fortress. One pit, with the appearance of a trench/archaeological sondage in an L shape (6×2.5×1m), stood out, on a terrace near the acropolis. The hole was not refilled. Based on its appearance and excavated earth one could suspect it had been recently dug (Figures 3 and 5). In October, the returning archaeologists noted the same circumstances: “large poaching hole, while inside and around the fortress (especially on the slopes and terraces on the northern and eastern extremities) other holes (12–15), smaller in size, had emerged”⁸.

The last archaeological excavation of the site was conducted in 1996, when one of the terraces by the base of the hill onto which lay the fortress was

⁷ Hypothesis disregarded by I. Glodariu, as the scholar believed this cavalry unit followed a different route (Glodariu and Moga 1989: 130; Glodariu and Moga 2006: 146).

⁸ Excerpt from the criminal case file 130/P/2006.



Figure 1. Aerial view of the Dacian fortress of Căpâlna, indicating the site, the protection area and the protected area. (Sursa: I.N.P. Raport de monitorizare cetăți dacice <http://patrimoniul.gov.ro/images/monitorizare/Cetatea-dacica-de-la-Capalna-zona-de-protectie.jpg>).



Figure 2. Details during the archaeological excavations (Glodariu and Moga 1989).



Figure 3. Aerial view of Căpâlna fortress, northwest. The arrow indicates the large poacher's pit (2001), still visible (Photo Zoltan Czajlik, MNIT).

investigated in relation with the suspected archaeological poaching, which resulted in the discovery of an iron tools deposit. Practically, since the past century or otherwise put, before it became a UNESCO site, in the fortress no further archaeological investigations had been performed (Figure 3).

The circumstances of poaching are not very accurate, as, at the time, the fortress had no security, it was not exposed to the public and had not even a responsibility to *effectively* make periodic checks – although this was a UNESCO site⁹. That is why the detectorists could care less for covering their tracks. Thus, after 3-4 years, in 2006, when the first *investigation on-site* was carried out during the legal investigations, the fortress was still covered all over by holes of various sizes, not refilled, associated with waste remains (plastic bags inscribed with the name of certain companies from Deva and Hunedoara, newspapers etc.), indicating the origin of those who carried out there illegal prospection and excavations.

In August of 2003, after additional information received, the police went to the site, namely the police officer with the Criminal Investigation Department

⁹ Only from 2006, subsequent to the first criminal case file opened, under the supervision of the Prosecutor's Office with the Court of Law of Alba (130/P/2006), respectively the repeated appeals of the judiciary structures, the fortress was supplied with a guard, a local inhabitant, owner of the household closest to the fortress, employed by the County Council of Alba.



Figure 4. Photos taken in August 2003: the wall of the dwelling-tower collapsed (a-b); pits dug by poachers (c-d) (photo by R. Totoianu).

of the Police Inspectorate of Alba District – in the national cultural heritage line of work¹⁰ – together with the manager of that time of D.J.C.C.P.C.N. Alba and an archaeologist from the same institution¹¹, as well as an archaeologist from the Museum of Sebeș. Then additional holes there were identified in the fortress, and in one, in the area of the south-eastern terrace within the fortress, several fragments of a copper or bronze object, which was photographed *in situ*¹² were identified (Figure 4/a–d). The lack of any other evidence closed this case, while the hole remained uncovered, silent witness of the *crimes* perpetrated on fortress terraces.

On the 6th of April 2005, the judicial bodies involved in the investigation of the theft and sale of the gold multi-spiral bracelets from Sarmizegetusa Regia were informed about a *hoard composed of a necklace with pendants and two golden earrings stolen during 2002-2003 (?) most likely from the archaeological site*

¹⁰ Principal Inspector (at that time) Radu Tomuța.

¹¹ Dan Dorin Ovidiu and Gabriel Tiberiu Rustoiu.

¹² “Still on the occasion, it was noted that important parts of the fortress walls had been vandalised, stone blocks being dislodged from their original position and thrown to the ground” – excerpt from case file 130/P/2006 (see Figure 7).



Figure 5. The poaching pit reported in 2001 (photo by R. Totoianu, 2005).



Figure 6. Signboard of the access road to the fortress (photos by M-M Ciută, April 2006).

of the Dacian fortress at Căpâlna, Alba county. Thus, it was found that between 2004-2005, in the city of Deva, “the turntable of organized crime and traffic with archaeological artefacts”, in the world of rank and fashion, circulated a 3.5” floppy disk, with 14 image type files that contained photos of a necklace with biconical pendants and an associated pair of earrings, modelled in the form of the *Knot of Hercules*.

On the 5th of June 2005, during a symposium of the National Museum of the Union, held together with D.J.C.C.P.C.N. and a historical association of Alba Iulia, a visit of the fortress of Căpâlna was organized, with employers of the Museum of the Union, the Directorate, University professors and students in attendance. On-site, pictures of the *large hole* (identified as early as 2001) (Figure 5) were taken. Other, more recent holes were also noted, which resulted in discussions regarding the fortress’s security.

Practically, the month of April 2006 was the time when the investigation team made the first visit on-site, noticing the real protection and preservation state of the site, and respectively of the fortress. On the entire length of the road from the municipality of Sebeș to Căpâlna, there was no sign informing the public of a UNESCO site in the area. Just after the bridge that crossed over the Sebeș river (or Apa Frumoasei) by the exit from the village of Căpâlna, upstream, nearby a boarding house located to the right of the road, by the base



of the hill on which the fortress is placed, in the vicinity of the junction with the road climbing to the fortress, there was a panel, rather worn and torn, which mentioned, in a poorly legible text, partially erased, that at ca. 2 km ahead there lay a Dacian fortress is located (Figure 6).

The road that climbed to the fortress was difficult, steep, yet relatively accessible to an off-road vehicle. By the entry into the fortress, there was no panel, no warning sign, only a wooden, broken bench and a wooden wayside cross. Just nearby the entrance, on the relatively steep slope of the fortress glacis above the created saddle created coming from the Stăuini Hill, in parallel with the path that climbing to the fortress, two not refilled longitudinal trenches, perpendicular on the hill's contour lines, were refilled¹³. Close to the entrance tower, tens of square blocks, exhibiting features and profiles specific to the constituent parts of the ancient *murus dacicus*, lay scattered along the access road. A series of worked stone blocks from the preserved elevation structure of the fortress walls (*murus dacicus*) and especially of the *Tower House* and the *Entrance Tower* were identified dislodged and collapsed, abandoned in an inadequate position, which evidences that their structure likely comprised metal elements that drew the attention of the detectorists (Figure 7).

The archaeological site, strongly "vandalised", appeared in a deplorable state. The second row of the tower house wall was collapsed here and there, more than 10 sucked in blocks being dislodged and collapsed by its base. The earth they sometimes contained had slid inside and outside of the wall, the same case is noted also in the enclosure wall of the fortress, below which lay a road circumscribing the fortress top has extended. In several places, the worked blocks were collapsed on the road and some were rolled past it, stopped in various positions on the steep slopes with eastern, southern and northern exposure. In the eastern sector, a few blocks were removed from their original position and rebuilt in a curious manner, perpendicular to the fortress's wall route, being supported by a noble tree. Such layout evidenced that the individuals involved in their destruction had plenty of time and resources available.

There were noted frequent, variously sized holes (more than 100), older or more recent, based on how they were covered by leaves or vegetation, spread on the entire surface of the fortification as well as just nearby it, on the manmade terraces towards north-east and south-east (Figure 8). Some, older ones, were clogged, others, more recent, covered only by leaves. The poaching hole excavated in 2001 (Figure 8/b) could also be recognized. There were also identified holes covered by topsoil, to hide illegal excavations, indicative

¹³ Upon the examination of the general plan of the research, it resulted these were test trenches and for stratigraphic information excavated in the archaeological campaigns of the 1950s.



a



b



c



d



e



f

Figure 7. Destruction of curtain walls and tower walls inside the fortress (photos by M-M Ciută, April 2006)



Figure 8. Pits of archaeological poaching identified inside the fortress (photos by M-M Ciută, April 2006)



Figure 9. Signage marks on the objectives on the Sebeş Valley (left) and indicator of the road to the fortress of Căpălăna (right) (photos by M-M Ciută 2007)



Figure 10. The indicator panel at the entrance to the fortress, with the topographic plan of the fortification, the archaeological research units and the related explanations (photo by M-M Ciută, 2007).

of different *method of procedure* and, possibly, different individuals. Lastly, on the fortress acropolis, there were found fire hearths, used repeatedly, waste etc. Everything was photographed and every responsible institution informed.

Later, over 2006, the criminal prosecution bodies sent several letters to the National Museum of the Union in Alba Iulia and the District Council of Alba, in which, besides informing them about the circumstances noted during the investigation on-site, they requested that legal measures be taken to avoid further exposure of the site to obvious andimminent anthropic and natural risks. As a result of the investigations in the fall of 2006, the fortress was finally provided with a guard, employed by the National Museum of the Union and paid by the District Council of Alba.

The legal investigations required repeated visits on-site, in the fortress of Căpâlna, to identify additional evidence for the criminal case as well as to reconstruct the circumstances in which the detectorists carried out their illegal detecting activities there. Thus, during the visit in March 2007, accompanied by employees of D.J.C. Alba¹⁴, we noted new elements in how the site and historical monument were made known. Thus, after the actions of the County Council of Alba and specialized departments, some information and signalling panels were set up. The first was placed in the centre of Săsciori commune, to the left of Transalpina Road, with information on the *main historical and touristic sites on the Sebeş valley*. Coloured according to historical site markings, the panel is both generous in information and efficient, being set in a highly visible place (Figure 9).

Further on, we noticed that the panel with illegible text had disappeared, being replaced by a sign for the road to Căpâlna-Cetățuie, the conventional symbol finally referring to a UNESCO site (Figure 9). The access road was no different from the previous year, yet, by the entrance to the fortress from the Șaua Stăiunilor, we were pleasantly surprised to find a direction panel, with excellent details regarding the site as well as the most representative results of the archaeological excavations conducted there, inspiringly completed by the topographical layout of the fortress with the mention of the main elements of military architecture, respectively indicating the stages of the archaeological research. Furthermore, the panel informs that the site is listed among both the *Historical Sites* (LMI) and the World Heritage UNESCO sites (Figure 10). Thus, no one could ever say, to their defence that they were unaware of being in an archaeological reserve, protected by national and worldwide regulations when carrying activities forbidden by the criminal law concerning the protection of the national cultural heritage.

¹⁴ On site were present Drîmbărean Matei, executive manager of DJC Alba and Mazălu Dan, counsellor on matters of historical sites with the Culture Directorate of Alba County.



Unfortunately though, inside, the fortress looked unchanged inside. The same holes of archaeological poaching, collapsed limestone blocks, the same vandalised walls and towers (Figure 11). Besides, recently, some large trees have been cut within the fortress perimeter, which, for the lack of supervision by specialists of the authorised institutions, affected the integrity state of the walls (Figure 11/b).

The judiciary investigations resulted in the recovery of the necklace and gold earrings, stolen from the archaeological site at Căpâlna (Ciută 2018). The artefacts (Figure 12) were examined by several specialists, even during the criminal prosecution stage, for the first time present on this site, and, like all first, it was and is perceived with many reservations¹⁵.

It is currently impossible to locate/identify with accuracy the hole from where the three pieces object herein, were removed. This would require the identification and inventory of all holes still visible within the fortress area and, soil samples for comparison with the depositions still found on the artefacts. From the hole with the appearance of a sondage near the acropolis, still not refilled, the earth could be sieved, which would possibly lead to the discovery of other artefacts as well. Lastly, the resumption of the systematic excavations in the fortress of Căpâlna could clarify many issues, including for the 2001–2006 period, when the site was frequently “visited” by the detectorists.

A large number of holes inside the fortress and just nearby the outer area, as well as those identified on various terraces lying to the south, north and east of the fortress—some even past the Gărgălău stream, which delimits to the north, the Dealul Cetății (place at *La Ferigă*, etc.) – yet also on the top westwards, let us believe that the necklace and earrings could be deposited in its vicinity, in the area of the civil inhabitancy, more precisely by their boundary, with the same possible votive/apotropaic significance with similar depositions nearby the fortification and sacred area of *Sarmizegetusa Regia* (Ciută and Condruz 2013). The Dacian world of the 1st century BC–2nd century AD was rather a cosmopolite, permeable and dynamic¹⁶, so that luxury products, especially jewellery (for reasons more than obvious), had a special circulation, occasionally atypical.

In 2014, the local mass-media announced the start of a comprehensive operation for the preservation and restoration of the fortress of Căpâlna, *extremely generously funded* (Țimonea 2014). Daring propositions for the 3D reconstruction of the fortification were compiled. Specialists of the “1

¹⁵ Regarding the topic raised by the location of the find context and the logical deductions based on judiciary and historical debates, see Ciută 2018.

¹⁶ There is a rich bibliography regarding the imports discovered in the Dacian settlements and fortresses.

Decembrie 1918” University of Alba Iulia were involved for geo-physical prospection, as part of the project’s geological study. Nonetheless, to the dismay of those interested in the historical and cultural heritage, to date, nothing changed in the fortress to this effect. There is only much vegetation that has grown, unhindered, on the fortress’s terraces and slopes. So, it is only natural to ask, who would be able to manage and coordinate such a project, since the specialized institutions of the district of Alba, do not employ any specialist or expert in the classical archaeology of Dacian date, at least, for now. On the 25th of August 2015, two detectorists, from Cluj-Napoca¹⁷ were caught red-handed in the fortress of Căpâlna, seeking for treasures and thrills (Figure 13).

This time, goddess Clio had a big break, and the fortress guard—who fully deserves his title¹⁸—notified the authorities. The poachers of the archaeological site were captured, red-handed (Figure 13) and faced the rigours of the law, being sent to trial and sentenced. Yet what could a single man (guard) do to protect an area with a surface of 42 hectares, on a steep, forested and hostile land, yet also when facing youngsters haunted by the *Indiana Jones syndrome*, well equipped logistically, on the search for the priceless treasures of the Dacians and the *sine qua non*-resulting celebrity?

One would have expected that after 15 years of legal inquiries, criminal trials and heavy imprisonment convictions, the Romanian citizens had learnt something from the experiences of the first poachers of the archaeological sites¹⁹. It seems this is not the case, though. The mirage of the hidden treasures left its print on a generation that lacks a scale of values and the *sin* tends to be passed on. Those poachers, some imprisoned, others fugitive in foreign countries, remained as poor, materially and spiritually, as before, yet much more tired and prematurely aged. Others took, early, the *road of the Styx*, indisputable proof of Divine justice, all-powerful and all-sufficient. Possibly, those still living, would sometime write themselves “*forgetting to have forgotten*”, about these events and ask themselves the question if that cursed effort of erasing—by de-contextualizing the artefacts—the even so scarce archaeological evidence remaining *from* and *about* the Dacians... was worthwhile.

¹⁷ In the criminal case file no. 1245/P/2015, under the supervision of the Prosecutor’s Office with the Court of Law of Alba Iulia, the defendants CDO and SDȘ, of Cluj-Napoca, were criminally indicted for unauthorized detections carried out in the archaeological site.

¹⁸ Gheorghe Aloman of Căpâlna.

¹⁹ The case files generically designated under the name the *Dacian Gold*, following which in the last 10 years were recovered—by specific procedures of international legal assistance—thousands of artefacts significant for the ancient history, were coordinated by the Prosecutor’s Office with the Court of Appeal of Alba Iulia and, from 2016, the Prosecutor’s Office with the High Court of Cassation and Justice, Bucharest.



Post scriptum

In June of 2018, the author, accompanied by Professor Sergiu Musteață, carried out a guiding tour of the Căpâlna fortress. An excellent occasion to observe the latest developments in terms of the measures taken for the preservation, restoration and touristic use of a UNESCO site, near the celebration of two decades from its introduction on the select world list of historical sites. We noticed that upon exiting Sebeș city from Highway A10 (Sibiu Orăștie), there was no sign to suggest that a UNESCO site extends at ca. 15 km ahead, although, by comparison, several signs directing to the Dacian fortresses from the Orăștiei Mountains, also UNESCO sites, existed by the exits from Romos.

We also noted that the sign that marks the junction with the road climbing to the fortress was weather damaged and damaged through the passage of time (2006-2018!) (Figure 14). The unpleasant surprise came later, when we found that the access road on the northern side, from the Gărgălău valley, was no longer practicable for two reasons, mutually connected: it was covered by vegetation, as the owners of the earth plots overlapping the road decided to forbid access to their land, placing metal crossing gates provided with fastening systems (locks). Due to the fact that the local authorities took action, a compromise was reached, and these gates remained on the spot, being left open on weekends, when, supposedly, tourists would be visiting the fortress. This makes access to the fortress impossible to off-road vehicles, even partially and thus considerably extending the climbing time, to more than 40-50 minutes. The panel by the entrance to the fortress, though moved from its original place, is preserved much better, as it was positioned in the shadow. Inside, the fortress is the same, if not worse. Practically, since 2001, the archaeological poaching hole nearby the acropolis has remained unchanged, possibly slightly clogged, the fortress walls being even more collapsed, the square stone blocks being almost entirely covered by vegetation. Slowly, yet surely, only the entrance panel would mark with certainty the place where a fortress is in ruins, covered by ever winning vegetation and thus returning to circumstances before the 20th century.

For 20 years' time since it became a UNESCO site, there has not been any archaeological excavation campaign conducted inside the fortress or its protection area, as there is no further action taken for the protection, restoration and preservation of wall, terrace and specific structures within. In 2007, they only added, an explanatory panel regarding the site and a sign for the access road, which, in the meanwhile, tends to become inaccessible owing to the property statuses. Predictably, the rhetorical question arising is: *to be or not to be UNESCO*.

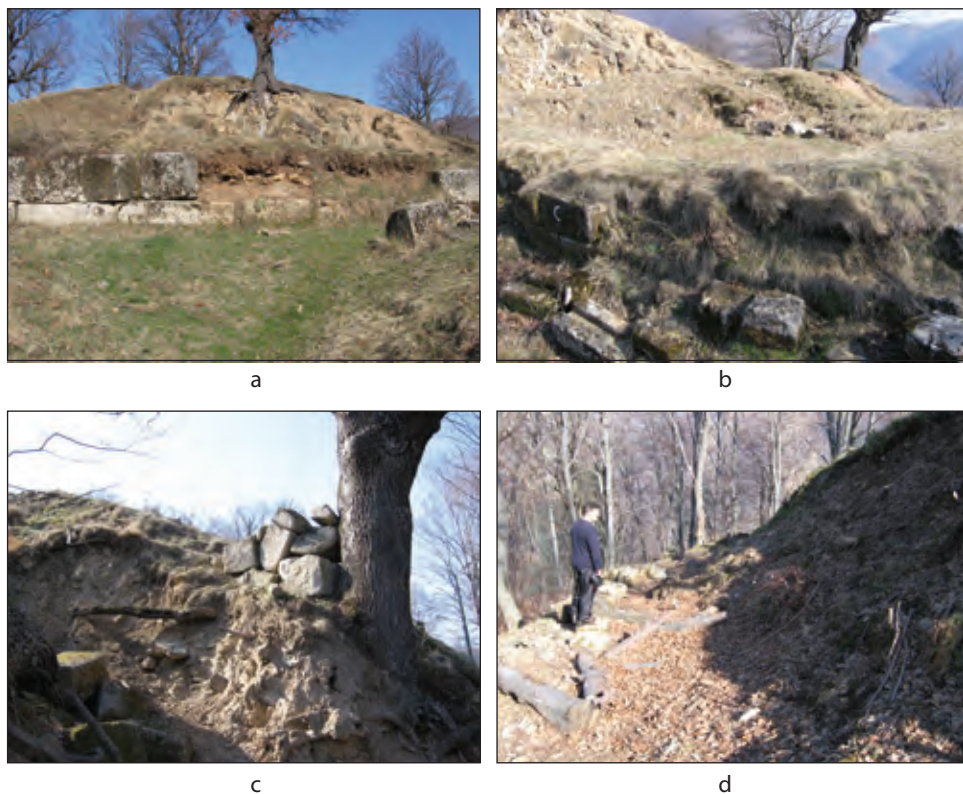


Figure 11. The walls of the dwelling --tower, with the second ashes on the west side (a) and north (b) collapsed. A block of stone that keeps the craftsman's mark (c) is observed (photo by M-M. Ciută 2007).



Figure 12. The gold necklace with pendants and the pair of gold earrings (photo by M-M Ciută, 2009).



a



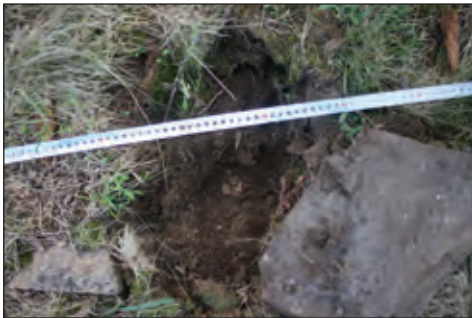
b



c



d



e



f

Figure 13. Detection equipment abandoned by poachers (a), seized metal detectors (b), poaching pits made in the fortress identified during on-site research (c-f). (photo by M-M Ciută, 2015).



a



b



c



d



e



f

Figure 14. Current outposts. Access road indicator (a), metallic gates forbidding car access to the UNESCO monument (b), pedestrian indicator towards the fortress (c), an explanatory panel with one of the old research unit (d), the current state of the fortress walls (e-f) (photo by S. Musteață 2018)



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Cetatea Dacică de la Căpâlna (comuna Săsciori, județul Alba) - în căutarea timpului pierdut (1999–2019)

Rezumat

Lucrarea de față tratează recuperarea unui tezaur de bijuterii în stil elenistic din aur, furate în 2001 din cetatea dacică din Căpâlna, sit UNESCO din România. După șapte ani de trafic ilegal de artefacte pe piața neagră a antichităților, încercările autorităților românești au recuperat acest tezaur din Germania. Obiectele, după toate probabilitățile provin dintr-un atelier din Balcanii de Vest. Cu toate acestea, nu ar trebui să excludem complet posibilitatea ca piesele să fie fabricate într-un atelier de pe teritoriul Daciei. Tehnica folosită și stilul de decorare dovedesc asimilarea influențelor elenistice și italice târzii. Compoziția aliajului de aur este similară cu cea folosită de bijutieri în perioadele imperiale elenistice și romane târzii. Un detaliu important este reconstrucția „circumstanțelor de descoperire” din interiorul zonei protejate a cetății Căpâlna, de către braconierii arheologi din Deva (județul Hunedoara). În cadrul investigațiilor judiciare și criminalistice, din 2006 până în 2018, membrii organelor de ordine au observat „evoluția” stării reale a monumentului. Concluzia este că în cei douăzeci de ani de când cetatea are statut de monument UNESCO, protecția și promovarea sa științifică a fost minimă.

Cuvinte cheie: Cetatea dacică, Căpâlna, județul Alba, cercetări penale, gropi de braconieri, distrugere, ignoranță, artefacte recuperate

Marius-Mihai Ciută, Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu,
e-mail: mariusciuta@yahoo.com