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MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN MILITARY ITEMS DISCOVERED IN THE VILLAGE OF TAUȚ (ARAD COUNTY, WEST ROMANIA)

Starting with 2002 after a 1999 investigation, several archaeological excavation campaigns were conducted at the medieval and early Modern Period site of Tauț, western Romania (Mărginean 2007, pp. 95–105). The publication of the volume *Medieval churches from Arad county* (Rusu, Hurezean 2000) was the preamble of the research conducted at Tauț (Rusu, Hurezean 2000, p. 142, fig. 22). The excavations lasted from 2002 until 2009.

The village is situated in the eastern part of the Zarand County, the western part of Romania at the feet of the Zarand Mountains, in the plain of Cigher. The archaeological excavations were conducted on the peak of a hill, 500 m west of the River Cigher.

The earliest reference to this place can be traced in a Papal charter, dated 1187, where a house belonging to the Order of the Hospitallers is mentioned in Tauț. They are mentioned helping to build a vessel for salt transportation on the River Mureș (Kovács 1980, p. 198). In 1272 the church of Tauț, in Hungarian named Feltót (Kovács 2005, p. 24) is mentioned as belonging to the bishopric of Várad (today Oradea, Romania). In 1334, the settlement is mentioned in the Register of Papal tithes (DIR C, XIV, Vol. III, p. 249). Still, their presence in this area is not yet sustained by any archaeological data.

The archaeological site where the excavations were conducted is called the Turkish fortress or more simply the Fortress by the local population. The name is correct starting with the 16th c. The research revealed that the first inhumations along with both phases of the medieval church had been placed inside the earth fortification which had an approximately circular shape. The fortification ramparts and the ditches are doubled on the south, west and north and even tripled on the eastern part.

Based on the research conducted until today one can state that the earth fortification was erected prior to all the other features, namely the churches or the Turkish garrison.

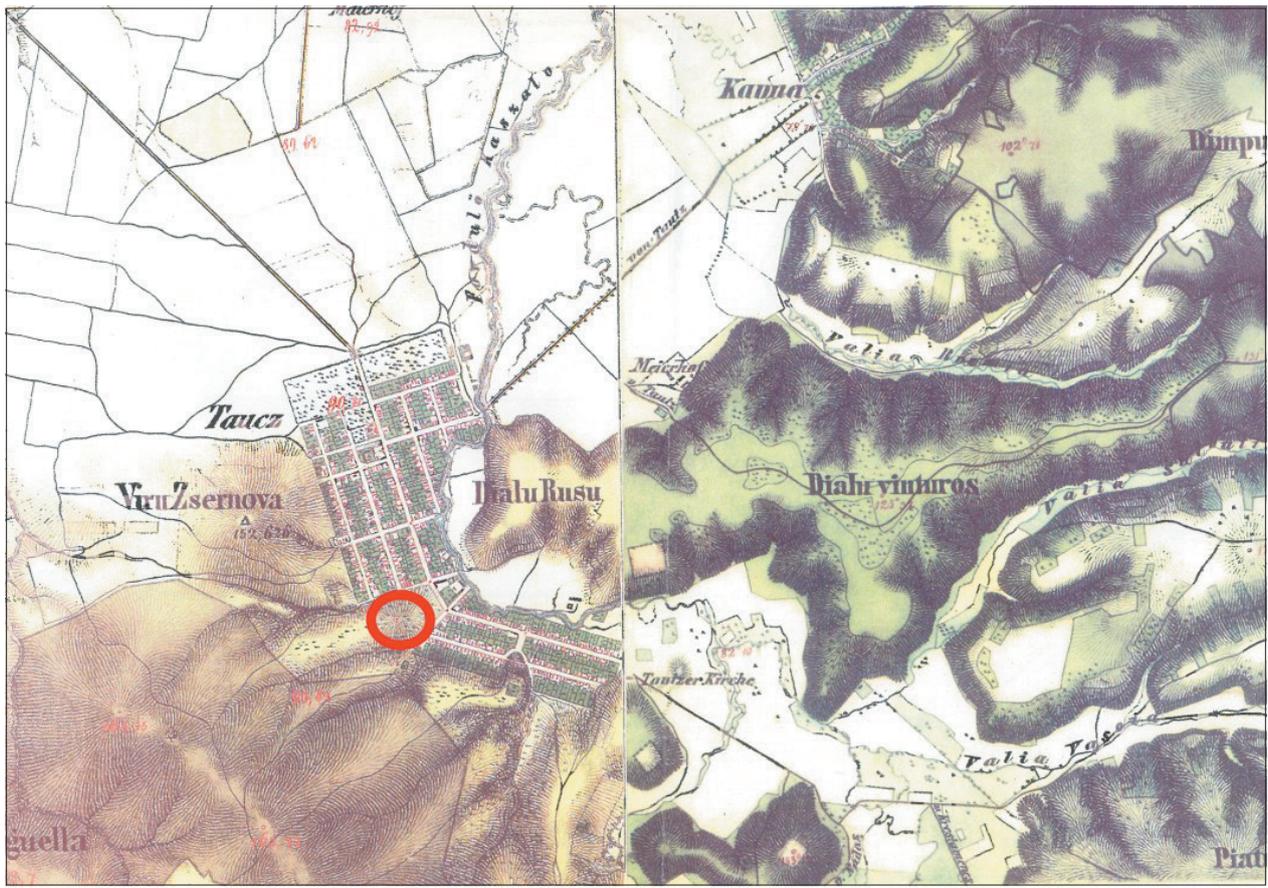
Based on the archaeological context and the discovered material, excavated until 2009, a relative chronology of the site was established, being between the 12th and the 17th c. Prior to the church, erected most probably in the 12th c. or earlier, the existence of an earlier cemetery was identified here. This cemetery continued to function after the first phase of the church and was extended inside and around the church.

Initially, the building was constructed in the Romanesque style and was probably enlarged, since the first Gothic church was placed on the ruins of the former one. Parts of the Romanesque church, namely the nave, were included in the structure of the new Gothic church.

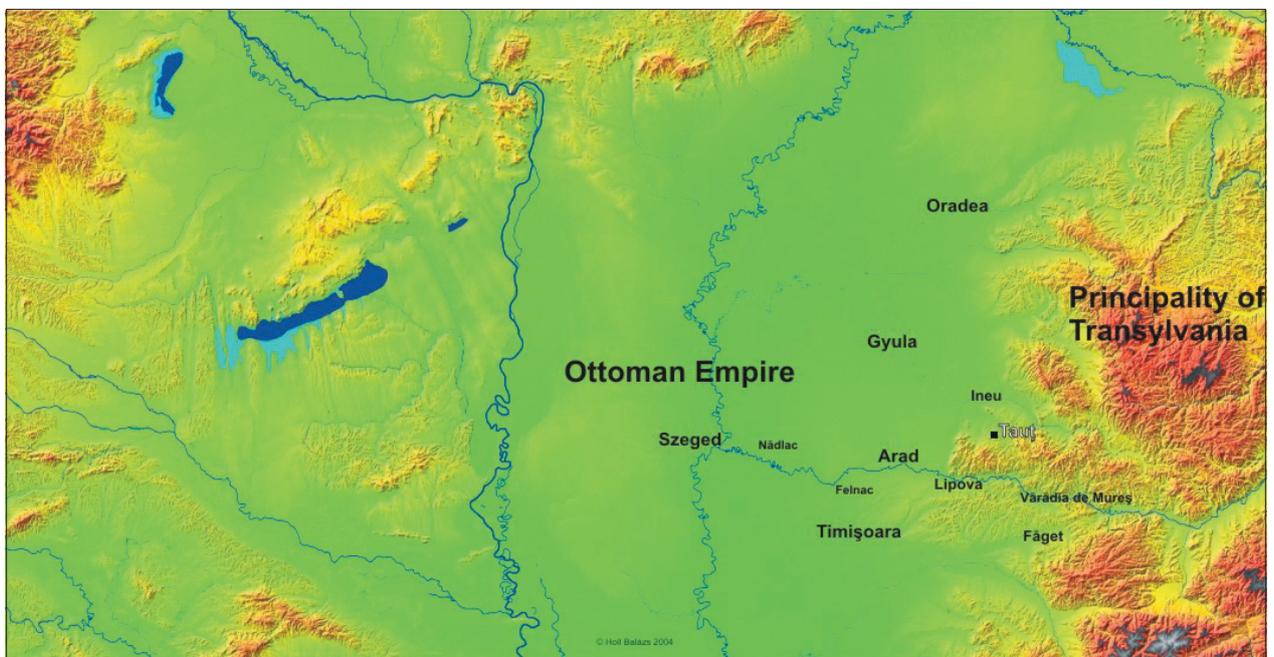
The local community which survived here for more than four centuries was more likely devastated or moved away after 1552. The remains of medieval Tauț along the church were also destroyed and abandoned.

A Turkish garrison was attested here between 1552 and 1595. Its existence is also confirmed now by archaeological data. In the 17th century the settlement is mentioned without military troops in the documents. The archaeological research conducted until now revealed the fact that in the perimeter of the church and the earth fortification (the southern area) a new settlement had been built up.

The Hungarian historian Klára Hegyi pointed out in her book *The Ottoman empire in Europe* that a number of 39 persons without the officers were mentioned in 1544 (Hegyi, Zimanyi 1989). The



1



2

Fig. 1. 1. Location of Tauț, *The fortress*, on a Habsburg military map from the 19th century.
2. Tauț in the political context of the 16th c.



Fig. 2. 1. Aerial view of *The Fortress* from the north; 2. Aerial view of *The Fortress* from the west.

actual number of persons could be even higher, i.e., 42 adding the superior officers. Eight of the names were of Balkan origin. The same number remained until 1567.

In 1579 the fortification seems to be part of the Sangeac of Ineu estates.

Based on the analysis of a 12 years period (1579–1591), the Hungarian author estimates a number

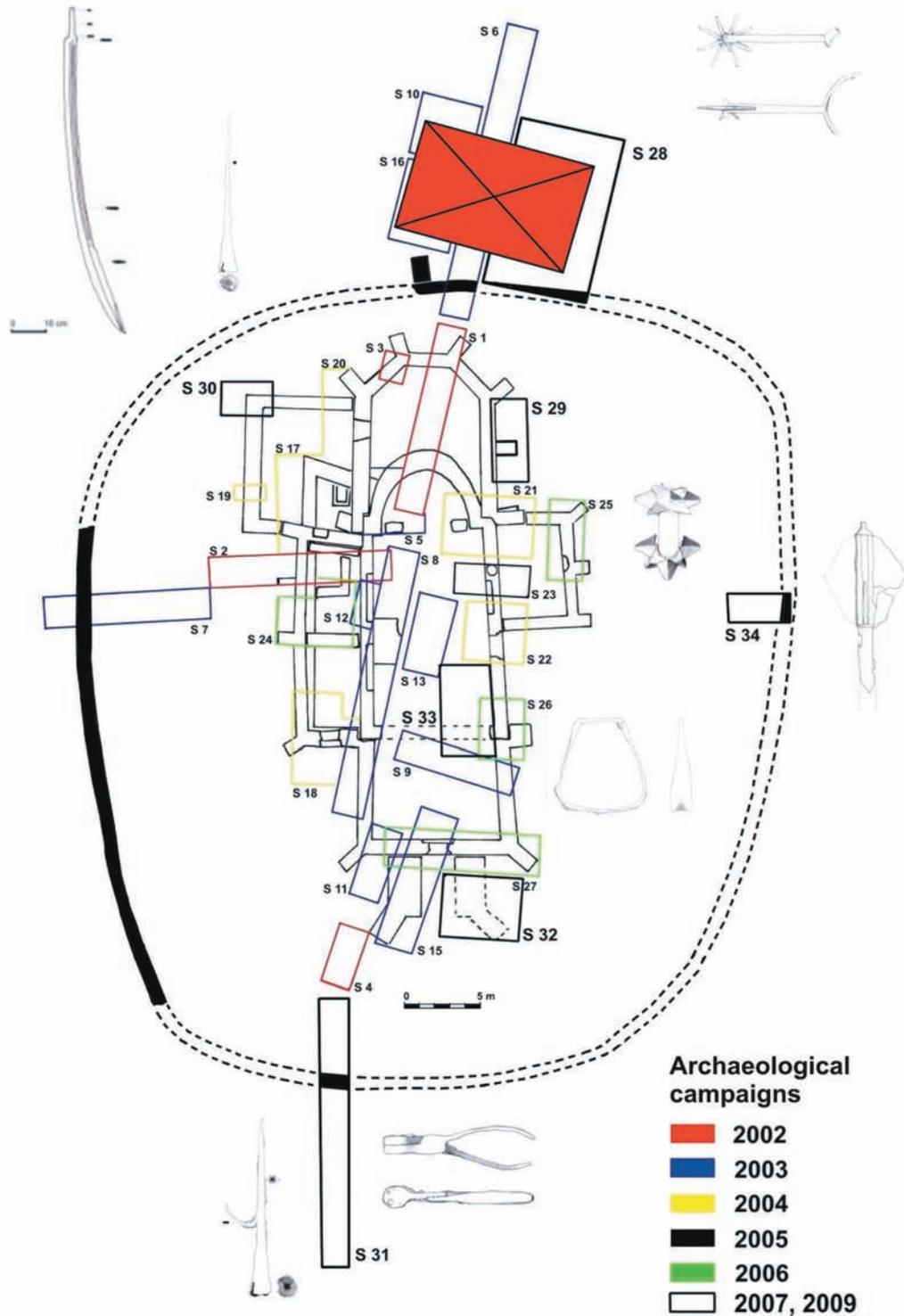


Fig. 3. Presentation of the archaeological campaigns conducted in Taut along with the distribution of finds of weaponry items

of 70 soldiers stationed here. They were divided into three different categories: the *mustafizi* as the guardians of the garrison, the artillery men (mostly gunners) as separate part of the Kapikulu Corps (Nicolle, McBride 1983, p. 15) of the Turkish army

and the *martalocs* (mainly mercenaries, spies, Balkan volunteers). The spies are mentioned between April and October 1591 and out of 29 persons, 24 were Christians.

In the mid–16th c. political context the Taut garrison was aligned on the line of Turkish defence fortresses along with the ones in Gyula (Hegyí 2000, p. 169), Ineu, Pâncota, Şoimoş, Vărădia de Mureş, Făget, and Bocşa. These were more likely control fortresses rather than defence such as those placed by the Ottomans on the border with the Habsburg Empire. This situation was mainly caused by the political situation of the Transylvanian principality. Practically one cannot speak about a proper defence system, but rather of a control of the main water courses such as the Rivers Mures or Cris. Later on, the above mentioned situation was to change.

It seems that the new political context made Taut part of the defence system of the Ottoman Empire towards the vassal Transylvanian principality. A violent destruction of this Turkish “fortification” at the end of the 16th c. or the beginning of the next one was mentioned in written sources, and is also traceable in the archaeological context. The excavations conducted here within the last years supported the written sources, and a substantial level with burnings was discovered all over the researched area.

Although the first research was mainly focused on the perimeter of the medieval church with its two phases, i.e., the Romanesque and the Gothic ones, the evidence provided by the whole archaeological material allowed for a more complex view after the abandonment of the sacred space.

The Turkish settlement made several changes dividing the former church space into living spaces. Several heating systems were uncovered and researched, such as stove tiles or hearths, floors or any other elements of material culture: pottery, iron tools, and even toys. A similar situation was encountered outside the sacred space; houses made of wood covered with mud were traced by archaeological excavations. It is highly possible for the whole place to be organised systematically if we confirm the fact that several levelling works were conducted in the southern part. Although in the inner part such works were not necessary, these works were mandatory outside. This is when the land surrounding the church was levelled; additionally, terraces were built in the southeastern, southern and southwestern parts. The northern part of the former fortification system remains intact. In the course of several archaeological campaigns a residential house placed east of the church was fully researched. It had a square form placed on a rock foundation with twinge walls glued with earth and probably covered with grains or reed. The entrance was also discovered, with a brick floor

being uncovered outside the house. In the interior of the residential house a stove tile was placed. Two surrounding storage pits and several grinding mills were traced. Other objects, such as plates, iron, and bronze or bone finds, animal bones and two spurs were also discovered.

Along with the archaeological data, the presence of weapons, horse harness and riding gear, distributed all over the site could become a further evidence of the rush in which the Turkish garrison was abandoned.

The military items as part of the archaeological material are mainly dated to the 15th and 16th c., ranging from maces to spears and even firearms.

The most interesting item was a sabre. It is partially preserved, having a curved blade that broadens in its lower part. The sabre is unfortunately preserved in a poor state. The edge is missing along with the grip and the cross-guard. The cross-guard is straight and formed a cross with two cusps on the blade and on the grip. Due to its precarious state it was not possible for it to be restored. Similar items which were found in other garrisons situated in the neighbourhood allow us to say that this is most probably a European sabre, namely a Hungarian Hussar sabre of the 16th c.

Beside this, two types of maces were discovered in different parts of the perimeter of the Turkish garrison in Taut.

One of these finds is a classical example of a 16th century four flanged mace. It was discovered outside the sacred space in the southern part of the Turkish settlement. This type of flanged mace could have from four to six and even up to twelve flanges positioned vertically (Kálmar 1971, p.174). Earlier types had an iron head mounted on a wooden haft. Hafts of later examples were also made of metal. Ceremonial maces developed from this type of weapon and they were used from the second half of the 16th c. to the 17th and also the 18th c. Similar items were uncovered in other Turkish garrisons such as Timișoara (Drașovean *et al.* 2007, pp. 149 – 150) or Ineu.

The other mace head was discovered inside the sacred space, more precisely in the sacristy of the church. It is a club mace with 4 main knobs (Kovács 1971, p. 168) in the middle register and other smaller ones placed on the lower and upper registers. It was made by casting in a mould; such as those discovered not very far away at Frumușeni, in the Mureș valley. This last mace dates back to the 15th c., being widely spread all over Eastern Europe. Bronze types are dated earlier to the 13th or the 14th c.

Another two weaponry finds are the two spear-heads excavated in different parts of the 16th c. settlements, namely the one in the sacred space and the other outside it, near one of the residential houses. One of them has a circular socket that was usually mounted on a circular haft. The form appears to be of a leaf shape, but due to its deterioration one cannot state this certainly.

The other spear, discovered outside the sacred space is a typical “spear or lance with a hook” type which first appeared in central Europe sometimes at the end of the 14th or the beginning of the 15th c. It has a similar form to the other one and the hook is placed in the lower part, closer to the socket than to the edge. The measurements come to confirm the idea according to which such types of weapons were used by foot soldiers or light cavalry. It was used even later in the 16th c.

The other major category of military finds is represented by horse harness and riding gear. These

comprise two rowel spurs, a stirrup and several strap distributors.

Both rowel spurs survived in a fragmentary condition. The first one has a preserved rowel and a stick but no heel bands for fixing the spur on the foot. The size of the surviving part allows us to date it to the 16th c.

The other one is more complete, with the rowel being the missing part. Similar items were discovered by the Hungarian scholar during the excavations conducted in the fortress of Bajcsa (Kovacs 2002, p. 147). Based on the archaeological context, such items can also be dated within the 16th c. Comparative material consisting of images of Balkan soldiers from the Ottoman army stationed in Hungary came to confirm the dating of these items.

The stirrup of a pear shape having the footplate slightly curved inwards indicates that such items were used by light cavalry, by soldiers who had softer footwear.

CATALOGUE OF WEAPONS, HORSE HARNESS AND RIDING GEAR

1. Name
2. Place of discovery, year, and archaeological context
3. Size: L – Length, l – width, h – height, gr.- thickness, g – weight, Ø – diameter
4. Material and manufacturing techniques
5. Description
6. Chronology
7. Storing place / inventory no
8. Illustration

WEAPONRY:

1.

1. Sabre
2. Tauț *The fortress*, 2007, discovered in the NE corner of the sacristy of the Gothic phase of the church
3. L= 94.5 cm, L_{grip} = 8.5 cm, l_{blade} = 3.4 cm, l_{edge} = 4 cm, gr.= 0.5 cm.
4. iron, forging
5. Curved single-edged blade of a Hussar sabre. The blade broadens towards the point. The edge is missing along with the grip and the cross-guard. The cross-guard is straight and formed a cross with two cusps on the blade and on the grip. Due to its precarious state it was not possible for it to be restored. From the grip three grooves can be seen on the blade. Part of an iron rivet was also preserved.
6. Second half of the 16th c.

7. Arad County Museum, Inv. No. 17449.

8. fig. 4

2.

1. Mace
2. Tauț *The fortress*, 2009, S34, –1.50 m.
3. L_{preserved} = 27.5cm, Ø_{sleeve} = 1.9 cm, L_{blade} = 15 cm, l_{blade} = 5.5 cm.
4. Iron, forging, welding
5. Partially preserved mace with four flanges. The iron socket was destroyed to some degree and out of the four original flanges just one survived. The bronze flanges were initially vertically welded. The top of the mace ends with a spherical bulge.
6. Second half of the 16th c.
7. Arad County Museum, Inv. No. 17450.
8. fig. 5.1.

3.

1. Fragment of mace head
2. Tauț *The fortress*, 2006, S26, m 1–2, –1.60 m.
3. L = 8.5 cm, Ø_{socket} = 2.3 cm.
4. Alloy?
5. Partially preserved mace head with three of the four big knobs and other eight ones of smaller dimensions positioned in two registers above and subjacent the main register. Only four of them survived, with two having traces of prolonged use.
6. Second half of the 16th c.
7. Arad County Museum, Inv. No. 17451.
8. fig. 5.2.

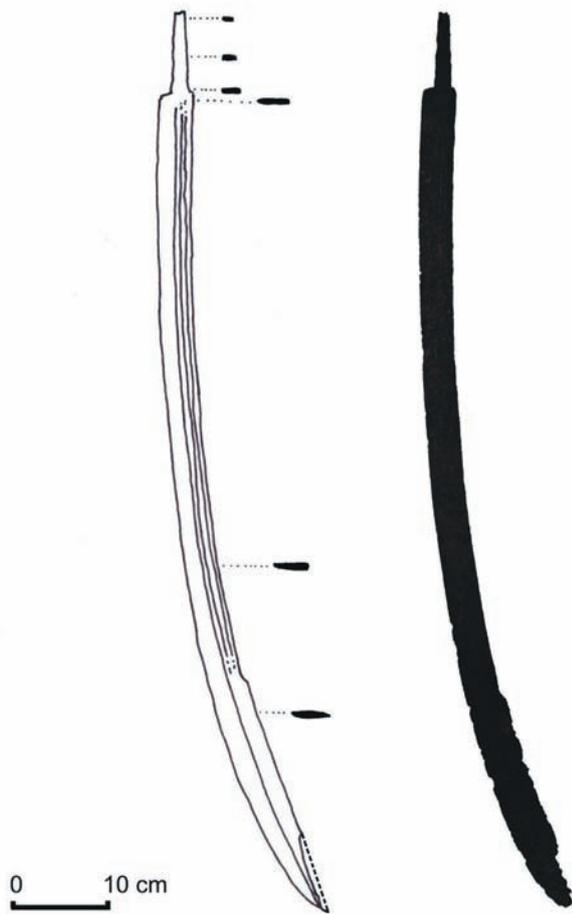


Fig. 4. Weaponry find: sabre

4.

1. Lance head.
2. Tauț *The fortress*, 2007, S30, – 0.70 m.
3. $L = 29.3$ cm, $\varnothing_{\text{socket}} = 3.1$ cm.
4. Iron, forging
5. Spearhead probably of a leaf shape with a hook and a circular socket.
6. Second half of the 16th c.
7. Arad County Museum, Inv. No. 17452.
8. fig. 6.1.

5.

1. Spearhead
2. Tauț *The fortress*, 2009, S31, m 2, –1.13 m.
3. $L_{\text{total}} = 18.5$ cm, $L_{\text{socket}} = 7$ cm, $\varnothing_{\text{socket}} = 2.1$ cm.
4. Iron, forging
5. Fragment of a spearhead. It has a long spike of a square profile and another smaller one. It has a conical shaped socket.
6. Second half of the 16th c.
7. Arad County Museum, Inv. No. 17453.
8. fig. 6.2.

6.

1. Arrowhead
2. Tauț *The fortress*, 2003.
3. $L_t = 4.2$ cm, $L_{\text{socket}} = 1.2$ cm, $l_{\text{kept}} = 1.2$ cm, $l_{\text{estimated}} = 1.7$ cm, $\varnothing_{\text{socket}} = 0.6$ cm.
4. Iron, forging
5. Arrowhead that has a rhomboidal shape ending in a conical shaped socket.
6. Second half of the 16th c.
7. Arad County Museum, Inv. No. 17454.
8. fig. 6.3.

7.

1. Arrowhead
2. Tauț *The fortress*, 2002, S2, m 2, –1 m.
3. $L = 4.3$ cm, $L_{\text{socket}} = 2.2$ cm, $l = 2.3$ cm, $gr = 0.1$ cm, $\varnothing_{\text{socket}} = 0.7$ cm.
4. Iron, forging
5. Arrowhead with two extensions which has a flattened blade. It has a conical shaped socket
6. Second half of the 16th c.
7. Arad County Museum, Inv. No. 16.933.
8. fig. 6.4.

RIDING GEAR:

8.

1. Stirrup
2. Tauț *The fortress*, 2006, S26, m 4, – 1.60 m.
3. $h = 15.2$ cm, $l_{\text{maximum}} = 14.6$ cm, $l = 3.5$ cm.
4. Iron, forging.
5. The stirrup of a pear shape having the footplate slightly curved inwards
6. Second half of the 16th c.
7. Arad County Museum, Inv. No. 17456.
8. fig. 7.2.

9.

1. Spur
2. Tauț *The fortress*, 2007, S28, m 3, – 0.60 m.
3. $L_{\text{total}} = 24$ cm, $L_{\text{bar}} = 15.3$ cm, $\varnothing_{\text{estimated}} = 10.5$ cm, $\varnothing_{\text{rowel}} = 8.8$ cm.
4. Iron, forging
5. Rowel spur with straight heel bands continued with a prolongation ending with a rowel.
6. Second half of the 16th c.
7. Arad County Museum, Inv. No. 17457.
8. fig. 7.3.

10.

1. Rowel spur
2. Tauț *The fortress*, 2007, S28, m 3, –0.40 –0.50 m.

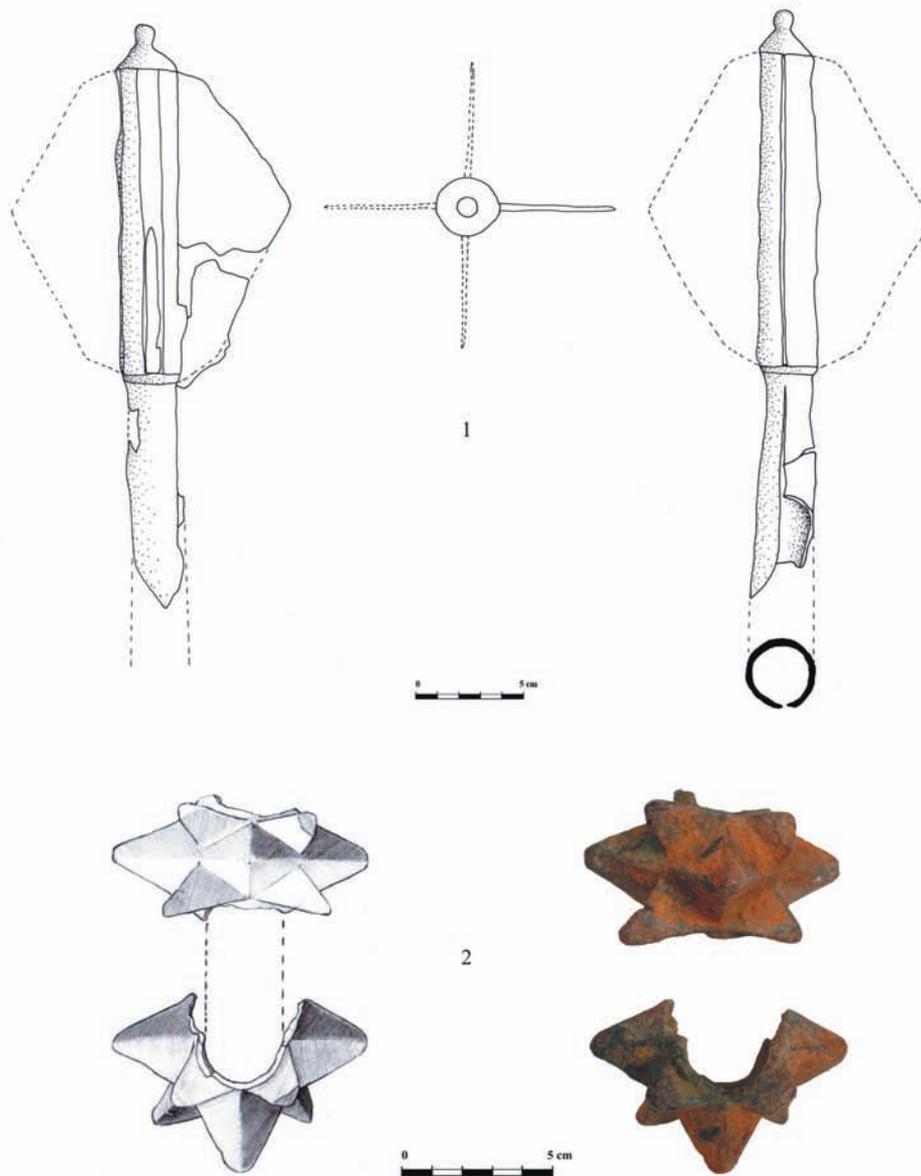


Fig. 5. Weaponry find: 1 – Mace – fragment; 2 – Mace head – fragment

3. $L_{totală} = 16.4$ cm, $L_{bar} = 10.4$ cm, $\varnothing = 8.5$ cm, $l_{arms} = 1.9$ cm, $gr_{arms} = 0.15$ cm.
4. Iron, forging
5. Rowel spur, partially preserved without the rowel. It has straight heel bands and a prolongation ending with a rowel which is missing.
6. Second half of the 16th c.
7. Arad County Museum, Inv. No. 17458.
8. fig. 7.4.

3. $L = 8.8$ cm.
4. Iron, forging
5. The preserved fragment is the bar intended to fix the horse bridle. It has a conical shape and is empty inside.
6. Second half of the 16th c.
7. Arad County Museum, Inv. No. 17459.
8. fig. 7.1.

12.

HORSE HARNESS:

11.

1. Bit – partially preserved
2. Taut *The fortress*, 2003, S11, –1.15 m.

1. Strap distributor
2. Taut *The fortress*, 2007, S28, m 2, – 1 m.
3. $L = 8.9$ cm, $gr_{bar} = 0.8 \times 0.6$ cm.
4. Iron forging

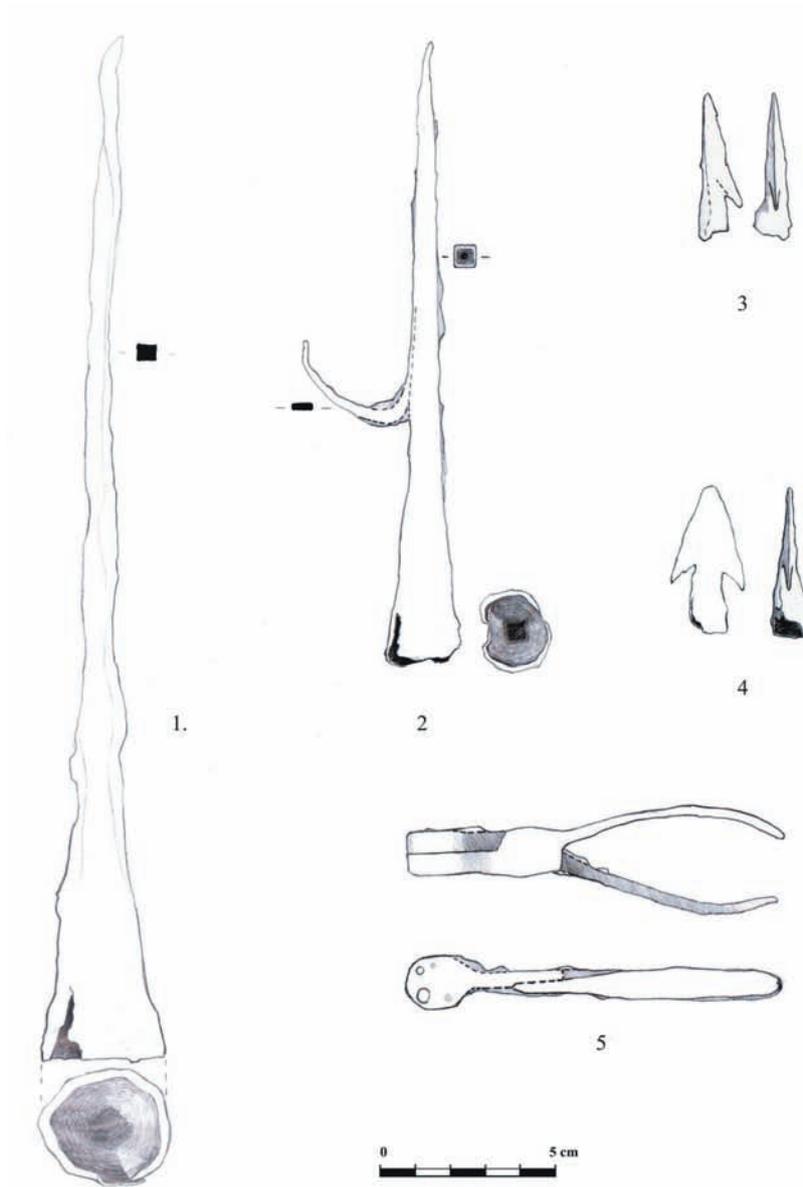


Fig. 6. Weaponry and tools: 1 – Lance; 2 – Spearhead; 3 – Arrowhead; 4 – Arrowhead; 5 – Bullet die

- 5. Strap distributor made of a square profile bar, partially preserved. It has a semicircular loop.
- 6. Second half of the 16th c.
- 7. Arad County Museum, Inv. No. 17460.
- 8. fig. 8.1.

13.

- 1. Strap distributor
- 2. Tauț *The fortress*, 2009, S31, m 5, – 0.43 m.
- 3. L = 8.6 cm, gr._{bar} = 0.7 × 0.5 cm.
- 4. Iron, forging
- 5. Strap distributor made of a square profile bar, partially preserved. It has a semicircular loop for fitting.
- 6. Second half of the 16th c.

- 7. Arad County Museum, Inv. No. 17461.
- 8. fig. 8.2.

14.

- 1. Strap distributor
- 2. Tauț *The fortress*, 2003, S15, m 1, – 1.90 m.
- 3. L = 9 cm, gr._{bar} = 0.8 × 0.6 cm.
- 4. Iron, forging
- 5. Strap distributor made of a square profile bar, partially preserved. It has a semicircular loop for fitting.
- 6. Second half of the 16th c.
- 7. Arad County Museum, Inv. No. 17462.
- 8. fig. 8.3.

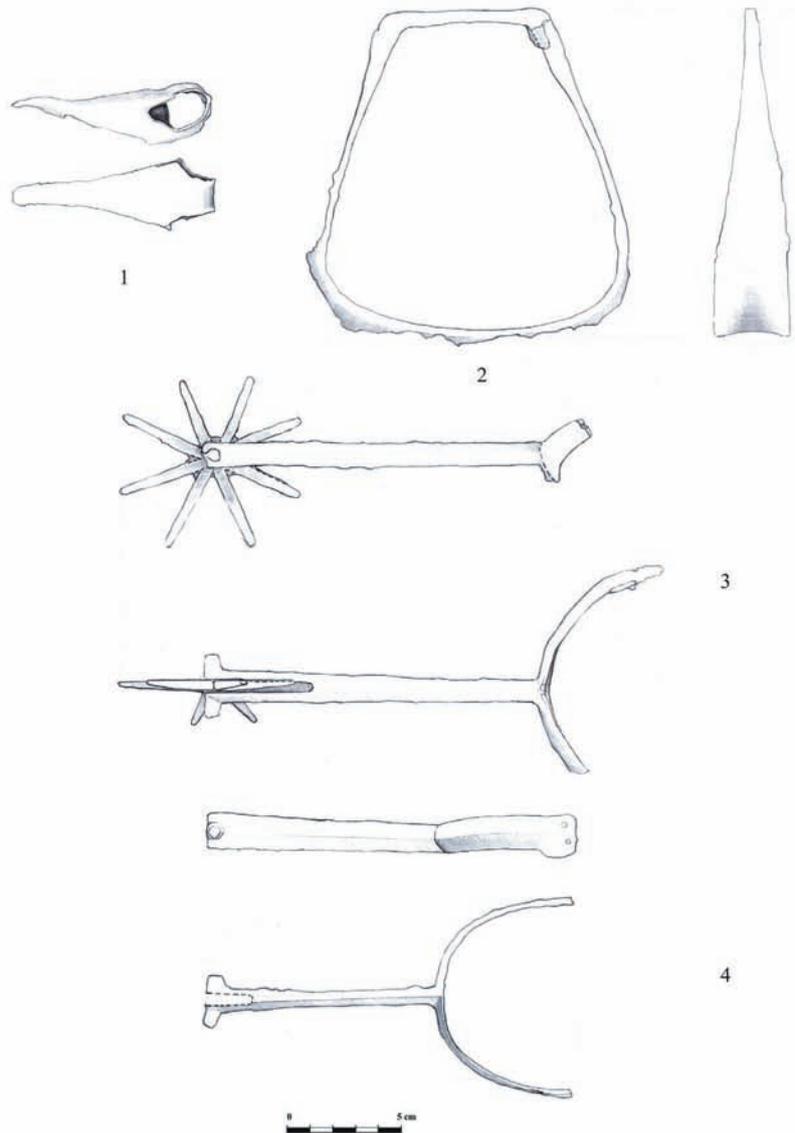


Fig. 7. Riding gear: 1 – Bit – fragment; 2 – Stirrup; 3 – Rowel spur; 4 – Rowel spur

15.

1. Strap distributor
2. Tauț *The fortress*, 2003, S4, – 0.95 – 1 m.
3. L= 6.8 cm, gr._{bar} = 0.6 × 0.35 cm.
4. Iron, forging
5. Strap distributor made of a square profile bar, partially preserved. It has a semicircular loop for fitting.
6. Second half of the 16th c.
7. Arad County Museum, Inv. No. 17463.
8. fig. 8.4.

16.

1. Strap distributor
2. Tauț *The fortress*, 2007, – 0.70 m.
3. L= 10.1 cm, gr._{bar} = 0.6 × 0.6 cm.

4. Iron, forging

5. Strap distributor made of a square profile bar, partially preserved. It has a loop closed at a 90⁰ angle.
6. Second half of the 16th c.
7. Arad County Museum, Inv. No. 17464.
8. fig. 8.5.

17.

1. Strap distributor
2. Tauț *The fortress*, 2003, m 5–6, – 0.65 m.
3. L= 9.6 cm, gr._{bar} = 0.7 × 0.4 cm.
4. Iron, forging
5. Strap distributor made of a square profile bar, partially preserved. It has a loop closed at a 90⁰ angle. It was made in this shape for the purpose of fitting.
6. Second half of the 16th c.

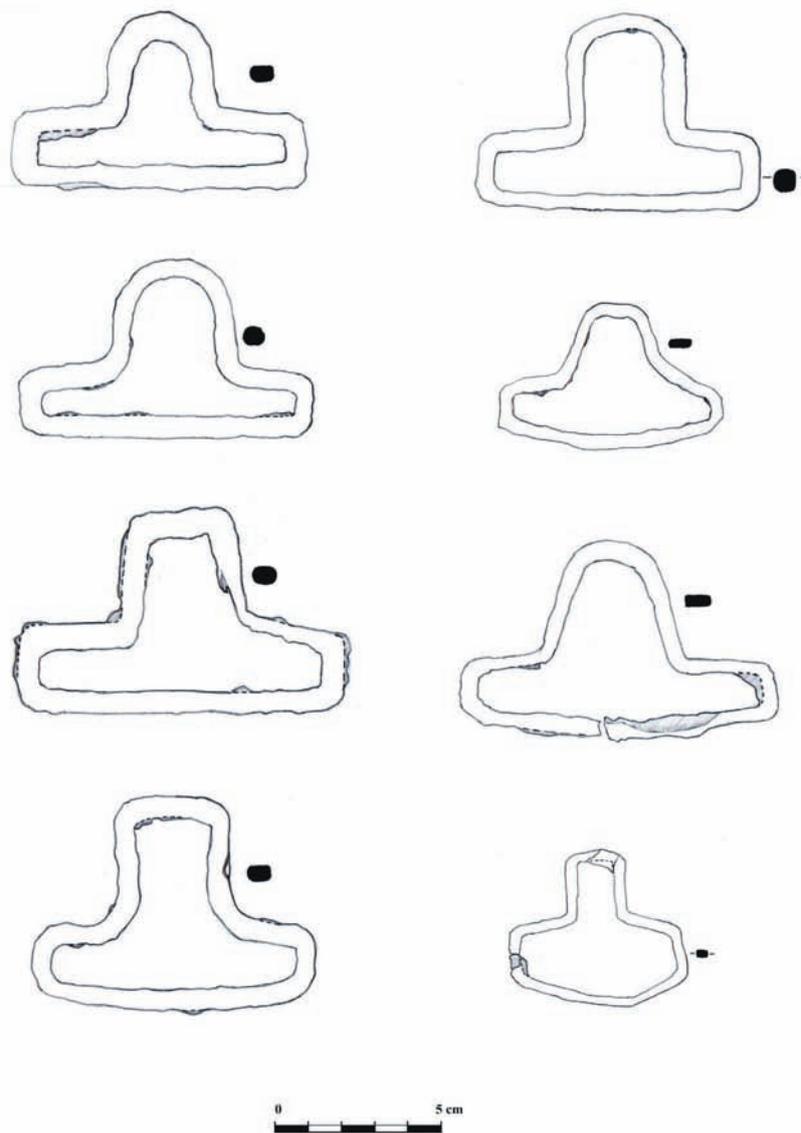


Fig. 8. Horse harness: 1- 8 – Strap distributors

7. Arad County Museum, Inv. No. 17465.

8. fig. 8.6.

18.

1. Strap distributor
2. Tauț *The fortress*, 2009, m 3, – 1 m.
3. L= 8.5 cm, gr._{bar} = 0.5 × 0.5 cm.
4. Iron, forging
5. Strap distributor made of a square profile bar, partially preserved. It has a loop closed at a 90⁰ angle. It was made in this shape for the purpose of fitting.
6. Second half of the 16th c.
7. Arad County Museum, Inv. No. 17466
8. fig. 8.7.

19.

1. Strap distributor
2. Tauț „*The fortress*, 2009, m 3, – 1 m.
3. L= 7.5 cm, gr._{bar} = 0.3 × 0.3 cm.
4. Iron, forging
5. Strap distributor made of a square profile bar, partially preserved. It has a loop closed at a 90⁰ angle. It was made in this shape for the purpose of fitting. The tube to which a tag was fixed was preserved, too.
6. Second half of the 16th c.
7. Arad County Museum, Inv. No. 17467.
8. fig. 8.8.



1.



2.

Fig. 9. General views of the excavations: 1 – Dwelling on the eastern part of the medieval fortification; 2 – Aspects of excavations in the western part of the medieval fortification

TOOLS

20.

1. Bullet die
2. Tauț *The fortress*, 2009, S31, m 1, – 0.60 m.
3. $L_{total} = 11$ cm, $L_{arms} = 7$ cm, $\varnothing_c = 1.6$ cm, $l = 1.2$ cm.
4. Iron
5. Bullet die that has two curved arms. These are crossing in a mid-point and end up with a cavity (an empty space) shaped like the bullet without the back end.
6. Second half of the 16th c.
7. Arad County Museum, Inv. No. 17455.
8. fig. 6.5.

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