

TWO STONE AXES FROM IOAN RAICA MUSEUM COLLECTION

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In the autumn of 2008, at the symposium about archaeological small finds from Deva where I presented one stone shaft-hole axe with cylindrical butt found in Călacea (Bihor county)¹, it was brought to my attention that two other unpublished pieces of the same type can be found in the collection of the Ioan Raica Municipal Museum from Sebeș².

The first axe (inventory number: 2158), which was discovered at *Podul Cetățelii*, Căpâlna, is made of granite, an igneous rock, has 9,2 cm in length, 4,1 cm in width, the diameter of the shaft-hole is 2,2 cm, the butt diameter is 2,8 cm, and it weighs 250 gr. The butt is quite short, just 2 cm (pl. I/1).

The second axe (inventory number: M 289/ist 120) comes from the collection of the Evangelical Gymnasium from Sebeș, but its place of discovery is unknown. It is also made of an igneous rock, namely, rhyolite. It has 12 cm in length, 4,7 cm in width, the shaft-hole diameter measures 2,5 cm, the butt diameter is 3,9 cm, it weighs 470 gr and it has flat horizontal profile. The butt is 4,5 cm, the relatively smooth blade measures 3,5 cm and the surface of the axe is well polished (pl. I/2).

Regarding the stone axes presented in this paper, we underline the fact that their exact discovery conditions are unknown. Consequently, we do not know if the axes were part of some funerary offerings, came from a deposit submitted as offering, were isolated finds, or if they were accompanied by other archaeological pieces.

The stone shaft-hole axes with cylindrical butt were used from the Caucasus to the Carpathian Basin during the Eneolithic and the Bronze Age. In an article dedicated to copper metallurgy in the Carpathian-Danube region, Al. Vulpe argues that copper axes are replicas of some stone artifacts³.

Axes with cylindrical butt and blunt, curved blade were considered luxury items and fit into the axe-scepter category⁴. In England, the stone axes that appear in post-Neolithic contexts are regarded as intentional offerings, perhaps substituting bronze axes (but in this case we have no knowledge of bronze axes of this type, i.e. with cylindrical butt)⁵.

¹ In print, *Crisia*, 39, 2009.

² I thank my colleague Radu Totoianu for the information provided and for granting me access to the artifacts.

³ Vulpe 1973, p. 229.

⁴ Popa 2001, p. 54.

⁵ Roe 2006.

Both axes from the collection of the museum from Sebeş have a rather wide approach angle. If in the case of the axe from *Podul Cetățelii*, Căpâlna the blade is slightly curved, the axe which comes from the collection of the Evangelical Gymnasium from Sebeş has a flat blade. However, both show evidence of their use in the past (at the blade and the butt area), which makes us believe that they were actually used as tools and can neither be classified under the axe-sceptre type nor considered power symbols.

Stone shaft-hole axes with cylindrical butt were found throughout Romania, but many axes are insufficiently documented in archaeological contexts. This type of artifact was uncovered at Cernatu de Sus⁶, Călacea (unpublished) and Prodănești⁷. In the Žuto Brdo-Gârla Mare Culture area two axes with cylindrical butt are noticed, both of which found at the surface, during of area survey in *Rampă* site, Cârna⁸.

In the absence of any other chronological element, the dating of these stone shaft-hole axes with cylindrical butt is difficult to accomplish. Most axes of this were dated in Early and Middle Bronze Age, but this type of axe was found in the area of Noua culture, as well⁹. By their shape and appearance, less carefully completed pieces, the axes from Sebeş Museum collection appear to be of an earlier date than those from Prodănești and Șugag (Wietenberg culture). Maybe, the axe coming from the collection of the Evangelical Gymnasium from Sebeş belongs to the late Early Bronze Age-Early Middle Bronze Age. It has a more elaborate shape, especially in the area of the shaft hole where it is thickened with an socket, in order to strengthen that fairly stressed area.

Our intention was not to elaborate major theoretical statements in relation to such type of artifacts (chronology, distribution area, typology or trade). The main aim of this paper was to introduce unpublished artifacts which, on the one hand, enriches the knowledge about the prehistory of the Sebeş area and, on the other hand, increases the known number of such axes.

Două topoare de piatră din colecția Muzeului Municipal Ioan Raica din Sebeş

(rezumat)

Primul topor (nr. inv. 2158), descoperit la Căpâlna-*Podul Cetățelii* este realizat din granit, cu următoarele dimensiuni: lungime = 9,2 cm, lățime = 4,1 cm, diametrul găurii de înmănușare = 2,2 cm, diametrul cefei = 2,8 cm iar greutatea de 250 gr. Taișul toporului este ușor curbat (**pl. I/1**).

Cel de-al doilea topor (nr. inv. M 289/ist 120) provine din colecția Gimnaziului Evanghelic din Sebeş fără a se cunoaște locul de descoperire al piesei. Este realizat din riolit, de asemenea o rocă magmatică. Are 12 cm. lungime, 4,7 cm lățime, diametrul găurii de înmănușare

⁶ Roska 1942, p. 40 și 108 k ep.

⁷ Bejinariu 2006, p. 34, pl. I.

⁸ Șandor-Chicideanu 2003, p. 156 sq. and pl. 133/15-16.

⁹ Florescu 1991, fig. 158/2, 5; 159/6.

măsoară 2,5 cm iar cel al cefei 3,9 cm și cântărește 470 gr. În plan orizontal este drept. Lama are 3,5 cm și este dreaptă (pl. I/2).

La ambele piese nu se cunosc condițiile de descoperire. Topoarele cu gaură de înmănușare și ceafă cilindrică sunt relativ răspândite pe teritoriul României din eneolitic și până în perioada bronzului târziu. Ținând cont de formă și aspectul topoarelor credem că ele aparțin unei perioade anterioare celei în care au fost încadrate topoarele de la Prodănești și Șugag (cultura Wietenberg). Probabil toporul care provine din colecția Gimnaziului Evanghelic să aparțină sfârșitului bronzului timpuriu – începutul bronzului mijlociu.

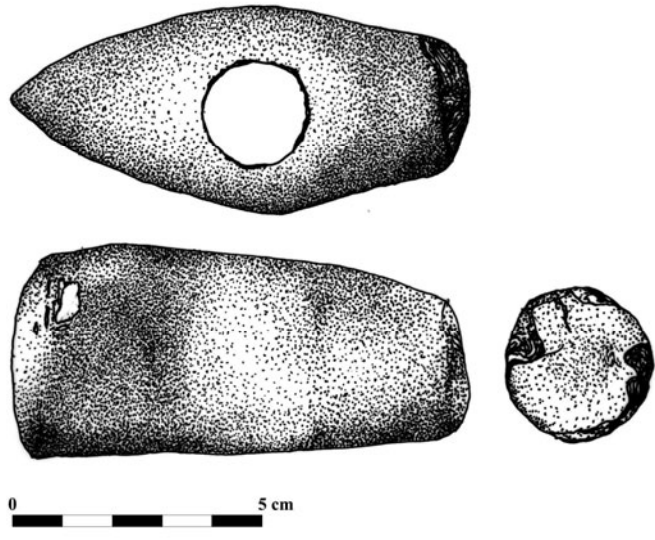
Intenția articolului de față nu a fost de a construi concluzii teoretice legate de astfel de artefacte (cronologie, arie de răspândire, tipologie sau comerț). Scopul principal a fost de a introduce în literatura de specialitate piese inedite care, pe de-o parte îmbogățesc cunoștințele noastre legate de zona Sebeșului iar, pe de altă parte îmbogățeste numărul de astfel de topoare cu ceafă cilindrică cunoscute.

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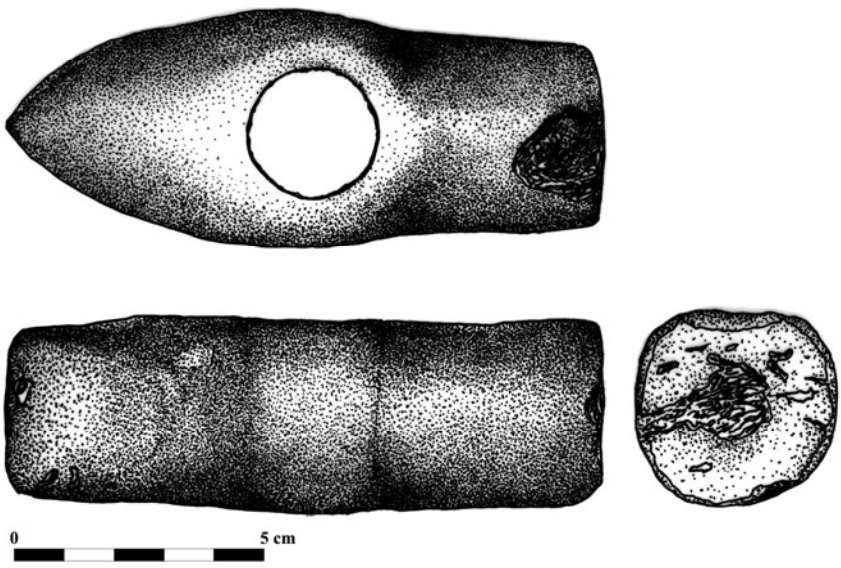
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Cuvinte-cheie: topor de piatră cu gaură de înmănușare și ceafa cilindrică, Sebeș, piese inedite.

Keywords: Stone shaft-hole axes with cylindrical butt, Sebeș, new artefacts.



1



2

Pl. I Stone Axes with cylindrical butt: Căpâlna-Podul Cetățelei (1); unknown place (2)