Interpretări funcţionale ale „greutăţilor” din lut ars

Abstract:

Among the most common findings of prehistoric archaeological sites as well as ancient and medieval ones are those artefacts made up mostly of fired clay and usually called by the Romanian archaeologists with the generic name of “weights”. So far, the Romanian archaeological literature lacks studies devoted exclusively to the function of these artefacts. This is the reasons why we considered appropriate to study this topic. Moreover, the current paper is grounded by our previous work. We investigated over 500 such objects found in various Neolithic and Copper Age sites in Transylvania and interpreted them as potential loom weights in our doctoral thesis (“The craft of textile production at the Neolithic and Copper Age communities in Transylvania (Romania)”, 2012). Ethnographic data and experimental studies have shown that almost any “weight” could be used for tensioning threads in the warp-weighted loom and in this case the artefacts represent an indirect proof of weaving. Besides this interpretation, specialists consider that artefacts could also have had other functions. Therefore, we believe that the name of “weight” should be defined in accordance to a set of criteria representative for the functional role of the artefacts, such as the context of discovery, the frequency or clusters of similar artefacts, the wear traces, etc. Starting from these premises, the paper is structured in two parts. First part presents the main functional interpretations found in the archaeological literature in relation to these artefacts: “firedogs” (“andiron”) or other functions related to fire, “link-stones” (“loop-stones”) used for fixing the thatched roofs, counter-weights, door-stoppers, net sinkers, weapons or prestige items; tools for twisting fibres/yarns and loom weights. Second part is devoted to verifying the presumed role of loom-weights for several artefacts found in the Neolithic and Copper Age sites in Transylvania (Starčevo-Criş culture, Linear Pottery Culture and Vinča, Turdaş, Petreşti and Ariuşd cultures). For this purpose, we employed the model of calculations and the functional assessment proposed by Linda Mårtensson and her collaborators from Centre for Textile Research (CTR), University of Copenhagen. As well, we brought some innovative additions to this model. One of the most important innovation was to define the warp density coefficient (WDC = the ratio of the thickness to the width of the loom-weight). Moreover, we expanded our innovation by applying the calculations on sets of objects found together which probably functioned as loom-weights in the same loom.

Keywords: *loom-weights, net sinkers, thatched roofs “link-stones”, “firedogs”, twisting tools, weapons, prestige artefacts.*