An Copper Axe Discovered in Hărău (Hunedoara County)

Abstract:

The research this article describes was triggered when a treasure hunter found a shafthole axe on a hill locally known as Piatra Țâcăoara, in the territory of Hărău village. Following this find, we proceeded with a field survey and found two prehistoric habitation clusters specific to the Late Copper Age and Early Bronze Age on the same hill. The axe is of the Fajsz type, characteristic of the Late Copper Age and the beginning of the Early Bronze Age and widespread in the Central-European zone but represented in Romania by only a few pieces. XRF analysis revealed that the axe was made by copper, the proportion of other elements being insignificant. One particular integral feature of the Hărău axe makes it stand out from other examples of its type, namely wide vertical facets made on the socket. The creation of such facets on the exterior of the shaft-hole is characteristic of another typological series, the Dumbrăvioara type, associated with Early Bronze Age axes, and especially widespread in eastern Transylvania and in Oltenia. The coexistence of these elements leads to the hypothesis that it is a hybrid specimen or a "series head" for Dumbrăvioara type axes. We believe that, ultimately, artefact is a variant of the Fajsz type, for which reason we propose the "Hărău variant" as a new term in the topic. The axe was probably ritually deposited, as a crack in the socket made the item nonfunctional. Furthermore, the lack of any traces of use on the cutting edge suggests that it was used only as a weapon or a prestige good. The axe, along with ceramic spouted vessels found at Hărău, reveals the status of the southwest and western Transylvanian space as a contact and interference zone for elements specific to the Early Bronze Age from the east and west of the Carpathian Basin, as well as the strong connection of the local communities with the areas south of the Danube.

Keywords: *shaft-hole axe, Fajsz type, Dumbrăvioara type, spouted vessel, Early Bronze Age.*