

The Late Eneolithic in South-East Transylvania

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Cuvinte-cheie: *carte, cultura Bodrogkeresztúr, Eneoliticul târziu, cultura Tiszapolgár, orizontul ceramicii cu mânere aplicate.*

Rezumat: *Situat în centrul României, sud-estul Transilvaniei este mărginit de colțul de sud-est al Carpaților Răsăriteni și este traversat de cursul superior al râului Olt. Datorită poziției sale geografice, această zonă este caracterizată, în vremuri preistorice, prin procese intense de interferențe culturale și demografice.*

Volumul pe care îl prezentăm sintetic aici - Bártok Botond, Eneoliticul târziu în sud-estul Transilvaniei, Editura Charta, Sf. Gheorghe, 2005 - are menirea de a grupa și sintetiza rezultatele cercetărilor arheologice privind Eneoliticul Târziu (post-Ariușd) din sud-estul Transilvaniei, care se întinde pe teritoriul județelor Covasna, Harghita și Brașov. Autorul arată importanța acestei tematici, ca și structura cărții. El își exprimă recunoștința față de cei care l-au ajutat cu informații utile.

Keywords: *book, late Eneolithic, Bodrogkeresztúr, Tiszapolgár, horizon of pottery with applied handles.*

Abstract: *Situated in the center of Romania, south-eastern Transylvania is bordered by the south-eastern corner of Eastern Carpathians and is crossed by the superior course of the Olt River. Due to its geographical position this area was characterised in prehistoric times by intense processes of cultural and demographical interferences.*

The here presented book - Bártok Botond, Eneoliticul târziu în sud-estul Transilvaniei, Editura Charta, Sf. Gheorghe, 2005 - is an attempt to group and to synthesise the results of archaeological investigations concerning Late Eneolithic (post-Ariușd) in south-eastern Transylvania which covers the territory of Covasna, Harghita and Brașov counties. The author shows the importance of this theme as well as the structure of the book. He expresses his gratitude to people who allowed him to use the unpublished archaeological evidence and helped him with useful information.

The first chapter

The first part of this chapter deals with the geo-morphological frame and environmental conditions of south-eastern Transylvania. In order to reconstruct the Late Eneolithic geographical conditions the author presents the main forms of relief, and the natural resources of the soil and subsoil which contributed to the settling and development of human communities in this area along the time.

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The mountain area Bodoc, Baraolt and Perșani, as well as the Brașov, Sfîntu Gheorghe and Ciuc valleys are approached in close relation with other natural conditions of the area.

The *second part* of this chapter is assigned to the history of the research. There are three main stages of the development of the archaeological research concerning the Late Eneolithic in south-eastern Transylvania. The first stage covers the 19th century and the very beginning of the 20th century. This period includes the romantic 19th century and the first researches that began after the organisation in 1879 of the *National Sekler Museum*. The second stage corresponds to the years between 1905 and 1940. It is related especially to the contributions Francisc László and Marton Rosks contributions. In this period, Francisc László started the excavations at the famous Eneolithic settlement Ariușd. The results of these investigations were so important that soon they were included in the international scientific network. Outstanding Romanian scholars like V. Pârvan, I. Andrieșcu, Al. Tzigara-Samurçaș, as well as some from abroad, H. Schroller, H. Schmidt, V. Gordon Childe and others, considered the research of the Ariușd settlement as being of great importance comparable to that from Cucuteni. Márton Roska in 1929 set up the first archaeological repertoire of the area, where he tried to approach, among many other subjects, some aspects of the Eneolithic period. The third stage includes the period since the end of the 50th up to the present. In this stage I. Nestor, E. Zaharia, Z. Szekély, M. Marcu, I. Pop, Ad. Alexandrescu, F. Costea, G. Ferenczi, I. Ferenczi, Zs. Szekély, E. Benkö and B. Bartók carried out their investigations concerning the Late Eneolithic period. Their attention was mostly directed towards the Bodrogkeresztúr culture and to a smaller extent to the elements of the Tiszapolgár tradition as well as to the horizon characterized by the pottery with applied handles. That is why it is difficult to establish the exact frames of the manifestations of the latest Eneolithic in south-eastern Transylvania. The archaeological excavations concerning Late Eneolithic were carried out at Reci, Mugeni, Cristuru Secuiesc, Hărman, Merești – Peștera Almaș, Ariușd, and Brăduț – Biborțeni.

The second chapter

The second chapter includes the *Catalogue* of the discoveries which are presented in alphabetic order.

The third chapter

The third chapter covers the Late Eneolithic archaeological cultures and groups. Its *first part* presents the general frame of the Late Eneolithic period in south-eastern Transylvania. In the author's opinion, the Late Eneolithic period included cultural manifestations of the *Tiszapolgár* tradition discovered within the settlements of the Bodrogkeresztúr culture, the *Bodrogkeresztúr* culture itself, and the horizon characterised by the *pottery with applied handles*.

The *second part* of the chapter deals with the Tiszapologár type of evidence. In fact, these are just the elements of Tiszapologár type (tradition) or rather the pottery similar to the late Tiszapologár Transylvanian variant. Such pottery was discovered in the settlements of Bodrogkeresztúr type at Reci, Cristuru Secuiesc, and Mugeni. The pottery includes small cups, sack-shaped vessels, and vessels with a tube-shaped high leg, as well as the vessel stands. The ornamentation of the pottery is made by incision, or relieved. On the basis of the discoveries till now it can be stated that in south-eastern Transylvania we do not deal with a classical penetration of the Tiszapologár people, but just with several manifestations (elements of tradition) specific to this culture.

The *third part* of the chapter deals with the description of the discoveries belonging to the Bodrogkeresztúr culture. The author presents the results of the systematic excavations carried out at Reci (1957-59), Mugeni (1960-61), Cristuru Secuiesc, Brăduț – Biborțeni (1997), Bicsadul Oltului (1949), Hărman (1965-1970), Feldioara, Măgheruș, Merești, etc., as well as isolated evidence, especially as copper pieces are concerned.

The settlements are open, they are usually situated on high level, naturally defended: the hill foot (Cristuru Secuiesc), the promontory (Mugeni), the terrace (Reci and the ritual pit at Brăduț – Biborțeni).

Only the rectangular-shaped surface dwellings are generally known. The fire installations include circular-shaped hearths, with or without horseshoe-shaped edges. Several ovens used for pottery burning and the ovens used probably for copper working are also known.

The funeral rites are hardly known. Two graves at Reci were investigated, that show the general features specific to the Bodrogkeresztúr culture, in what the skeletons' orientation, the crouched position of the skeletons are concerned and to a smaller extent the inventory which is rather poor.

The pottery is hand-made. It could be divided into three categories: fine, intermediary and coarse. By the fabric composition and by the burning, the pottery shows two aspects: the coarse pottery with eroded surface, and the fine polished pottery, sometimes with rests of slip. The main types of pottery are: the tureens, cups, „milk pots”, rectangular vessels, lids, lamps, funnel-shaped vessels, and colanders.

The decoration of the pottery is made by incision, relief, perforation and painting techniques.

The stone tools include the obsidian, andesite, flint and opal blades, two axes with and without hole, as well as querns. Also several obsidian and andesite cores are known. As to the weapons, the only flint spearhead is known. The adornments are presented by bead.

The clay objects include the weights discovered within the houses. They were used either for the fishing net, or for the weaving heddle.

The *forth part* of the chapter tells about the horizon of the pottery with applied handles. Here the author presents the history of the research, and then he refers to the evidence from Merești – Peștera Almaș, Feldioara and Ariușd.

The area of this group underwent several modifications in time, but in essence it was the same as the former area of the Ariuşd culture. In this area the evidence of the Bodrogkeresztúr type were also spread. On the basis of the data that we possess in what concerns the manifestations of this horizon in south-eastern Transylvania, several considerations could be made:

- It is framed within the chronological succession of the cultural evolution within the Carpathian arch (as well as the Bodrogkeresztúr culture), proposed by P. Roman: a. Petreşti – Ariuşd – Tiszapolgár, b. late Tiszapolgár – Decea Mureşului; c. Bodrogkeresztúr; d. the horizon characterised by the pottery with applied handles; e. The horizon related with Cernavoda III – Celei; f. Coţofeni.

- Chronologically it follows the end of the of Ariuşd culture.

- The horizon of the pottery with applied handles precedes the early stage of the Coţofeni culture.

The fourth chapter

This chapter deals with the metalworks. The copper metallurgy in south-eastern Transylvania is proved by several categories of objects: raw material, tools, weapons, utensils, accessories for clothing and adornments. The analyses showed that the pieces of copper are of better or worse quality. None of them has over 10% of other metals.

The copper tools are represented by: a. Axes with „cross” arms of Jászladány type (9 pieces); the Jászladány type – Tg. Ocna variant (1 piece); the Jászladány type – Bradul variant (2 pieces); the Ariuşd type (7 pieces); b. Axes – pick (the Jászladány type – Orşova variant, 1 piece).

The only copper dagger discovered at Mereşti – Peştera Almaş is known so far. As to the utensils there is known an awl fragment. The accessories for clothing are represented by round perforated button. A hair needle with double spiral, three arm spirals (bracelets) and 12 cylindrical pearls are also mentioned.

The fifth chapter

This chapter is dedicated to the cultural and chronological grouping of the Late Eneolithic discoveries in south-eastern Transylvania.

The *first part* of this chapter presents the general frame as well as the local aspects of the Tiszapolgár culture manifestations, which, like the Româneşti type, represents the evolution in the Eneolithic of the local Neolithic fund. In south-eastern Transylvania, the evidence of the Tiszapolgár tradition include only the latest manifestations of this culture. In fact, they show the transition towards the Bodrogkeresztúr culture, or belong already to this culture. The evolution of this culture manifestation led towards the formation of new culture –that of Bodrogkeresztúr. Thus, the Bodrogkeresztúr culture resulted from the close contacts between the Tiszapolgár type manifestations and the Ariuşd culture.

For the discoveries of the Tiszapolgár tradition in south-eastern Transylvania, the analogies for the main forms of pottery are known in Hungary but especially in Romania.

The *second part* of this chapter presents the general frame of manifestation of the Bodrogkeresztúr culture, focused mainly on its manifestations in south-eastern Transylvania. On the basis of the notes and of the realities in the area, the fact that we deal neither with a forced penetration of the Bodrogkeresztúr culture in this area, nor with a combination with the horizon Petrești-Ariuşd can be stated. The Bodrogkeresztúr culture appeared in south-eastern Transylvania due to the synthesis between former cultures: the Ariuşd, the Tiszapolgár, the Petrești and the Sălcuța.

Chronologically, the Bodrogkeresztúr culture discoveries in south-eastern Transylvania correspond to its early and „*classic*” stages.

The *third part* of this chapter refers to the chronology of the Late Eneolithic in south-eastern Transylvania. As the absolute chronology is concerned, the author shows that there are different points of view: some authors believe that the Late Eneolithic in Transylvania must be dated into the first half of the 3rd millennium B.C., while the others date it in the 4th millenium B.C. As for the relative chronology, there are no doubts that it is situated between the Tiszapolgár and the first stage of the Coțofeni culture.

The sixth chapter

This chapter is assigned to the general conclusions in what the Late Eneolithic in south-eastern Transylvania is concerned.

The first part of this chapter presents the division into periods of the Late Eneolithic in the area. This period could be divided in the following successive cultural manifestations: a. The final stages of the *Ariuşd* culture, b. elements of the *Tiszapolgár* tradition, c. the *Bodrogkeresztúr* culture, the horizon characterised by the *pottery with applied handles*.

The second part of this chapter is dedicated to the economic and social life of human communities from late Eneolithic period in south-eastern Transylvania. The evolution of these communities was influenced by the geographical and environment conditions as well as by natural resources. Salt would play a major part for the communities with main shepherd features in the period. Copper would lead to the appearance of new tools, weapons, and jewels, more efficient than the prior ones.