

A ZOOMORPHIC «SCEPTRE» DISCOVERED IN THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA AND ITS CULTURAL AND CHRONOLOGICAL POSITION

It is well-known that the question of the so-called zoomorphic stone «sceptres» dated to the transition period which links the Neolithic to the Bronze Age, was repeatedly discussed in the R.P.R.¹ Naturally, the rather recent publication of a new «sceptre» from Suvodol, near Bitolia (Yugoslavia)², brought about the resumption of the discussions³. As a matter of fact, the presence so far away into the Balkans of a new figurine resembling so much the other four figurines already known, would have been in itself a stimulus to the reconsidering of certain opinions. But on the Lower Danube, as well as in the Balkans, a large cultural complex was identified, which we called the Cernavoda-Ezero (Karanovo VI)-Donja Slatina culture. Gradually, as its contents and the part it played in the regions of Europe were studied, we saw it was necessary to revise the old hypotheses concerning the stone «sceptres», and that, even before the new find in Macedonia was known⁴. What could until lately be presented only in a hypothetical form, becomes now, owing to the find at Suvodol and to that of the Maritza basin — which will be presently examined — a quasi-certainty.

In the spring of 1960, on the territory of the Rezhevo village (district of Plovdiv), the peasants discovered between the said village and that of Rezhevo Konara, near the Striama river, a stone «sceptre». The archaeologist P. Detev, of the National Museum of Plovdiv,

¹ D. Berciu, *Asupra problemei așa-numitelor sceptre de piatră din R.P.R.* — Cu prilejul publicării unei descoperiri similare din Caucazul de nord (U.R.S.S.), in SCIV, V, 3–4, 1954, p. 539–548; Vladimir Dumitrescu, *Citeva precizări cu privire la sceptrele în formă de capete de cal din R.P.R. și U.R.S.S.*, in SCIV, VI, 3–4, 1955, p. 925–936.

² M. Garašanin, *Elemente der Steppen- und der Pontischen Einflüsse der Unteren Donau und auf dem Balkan, am Übergang vom Neolithikum zur frühen Bronzezeit*, in «Glasnik-Sarajevo», N.S., XV-XVI, 1960–1961, Arheologija, 1961, p. 5–22, in Serbian, with a German abstract, p. 22–26, p. 15, fig. 1.

³ Vladimir Dumitrescu, *Un sceptru de piatră în formă de cap de cal descoperit în Iugoslavia*, in SCIV, XIII, 1, 1962, p. 95–99.

⁴ D. Berciu, *Chronologie relative du néolithique du Bas-Danube à la lumière des nouvelles fouilles faites en Roumanie*, in the Acts of the International Eneolithic Symposium held in Prague, 1959; Idem, *Contribuții la problemele neoliticului în România în lumina noilor cercetări*, Bucharest, 1961, p. 119 sqq.; p. 129; p. 135 sqq.; p. 148; p. 536 and note 2, in which we referred to the Suvodol sceptre, the study of M. Garašanin having reached us only during the last revision of our paper.

kindly informed us about it during our common researches of the summer of 1961; he also gave us, in order to publish them, his notes, the drawing and the photograph of that object⁵. A note about that discovery was first published by P. Detev in a local Plovdiv newspaper⁶.

The Rezhevo sceptre is a fortuitous discovery. It was found at the surface of the soil, in a tillage zone where there are no hillocks. The figurine was carved in a hard, black stone with greyish tints and white, rather small grains to it, resembling so far — before its petro-



Fig. 1. — The stone sceptre of Rezhevo (Plovdiv district of P. R. of Bulgaria). Reproduced with Mr. P. Detev's permission and that of the Archaeologic Museum in Plovdiv.

graphic analysis is known — to the rock out of which the sceptres of Sălcuța, Fedeleşeni, Suvodol and Terekli Mekteb⁷ were cut, the Casimcea sceptre⁸ being on the contrary made out of a local rock, friable and easily cut.

The whole part representing the animal's head was smoothed and polished, while the rest, which was designed to be mounted on wooden handle or at the end of a staff, has a rough surface. On the upper part of the head two prominences are seen. The internal one represents the animal's ears. The muzzle is straight, the lips are simply rendered by

a single very slightly incised line, which detail reminds us of the technique and the conventional manner of the Sălcuța sceptre⁹. The nostrils are rather full, taking the form of rounded buttons. The eyes were not indicated by any special trait. The whole eye's socket zone is prominently bulging. The ears are highly conventionalized.

In the ears, as well as on one of the broader sides of the «sceptre», conspicuous traces of red ochre have been found. This proves that the «sceptre» like the Casimcea one had been among the grave-goods of a grave. As there are no tumuli at Rezhevo it is likely that the grave had no tumulus, like that of Cernavoda.

The piece is 0.15 m long, 0.075 m high (at the ears' level; that is the maximum) and 0.03 m thick. The portion representing the animal's head is 0.10 m long. As the greatest height of the muzzle is 0.05 m, it follows that between it and the head's length there is a 1/2 ratio. At the eyes' level the height is 0.065 m.

As for the meaning, the function of the Rezhevo figurine, cannot be separated of that of other sceptres, the whole set of zoomorphic representations having most likely a double role, that of «social distinction tokens» and of ritual objects, both elements being associated in the primitive communities' mentality¹⁰.

⁵ We want to express on this occasion also, our best thanks to our friend and colleague P. Detev.

⁶ « Otchestven Glas » (Plovdiv), no. 5020, of 18, XII, 1961.

⁷ A. A. Jessen, in KS, XLVI, 1952, p. 48–53, fig. 1.

⁸ Dorin Popescu, *La tombe à ocre de Casimcea*

(Dobrogea), in « Dacia », VI–VIII, 1937–1940, p. 81–91. As for the animal that sceptre rendered, the author hesitated to declare himself, being inclined to think it either a rhinoceros or a hippopotamus or a dog but by no means a horse (p. 86).

⁹ D. Berciu, *Sceptre de piatră...* p. 543, fig. 3.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 546.

In the previously published papers a question constantly arose: what kind of animal it was that the whole series of sceptres represented? It was generally supposed they were horse heads¹¹, although, long before, they were thought to represent a hippopotamus and be the result of «commercial» relations with Egypt¹², while other archaeologists believed they figured wild boars' or even pig heads¹³. To be sure, by their very form, their technique, stylistic details, general structure, anatomic elements and by the materials they are made of, the zoomorphic figurines could generate various hypotheses more or less justified, which the archaeologists could formulate quite independently one of another, as it actually happened¹⁴. Anyhow, the six sceptres known until now do not represent a whole animal, be it a hippopotamus or some other animal; they only render the head of an animal. That circumstance certainly makes easier the question of the sceptres' meaning — of their function¹⁵ —; but on the other hand it renders the determining of the species more toilsome. As a matter of fact we believe the latter is a minor problem, as compared to other questions, as yet unsolved, in connection with that set of zoomorphic figurines. All we can say in this respect is that, on examining more attentively the six sceptres, we no longer think them conventional horse-heads; on the contrary, they seem bulldog heads or heads of a kindred breed, watch-dog or mastiff, for instance. The structure of the whole skull rendered by all the sceptres in this series is not that of a horse head. The jaw is in no way characteristic of the horse, no more than the bulging forehead; the latter, which is not met with in horses, is typical of the dog. The horse's muzzle grows gradually and elegantly thinner; while with our figurines we see a thickened muzzle. Nor can the «swollen» nostrils — which are actually seen on our figurines — be a criterion for judging it a horse head: they are equally met with certain dog breeds. On the Rezhevo sceptre, the ratio between the muzzle's breadth and that of the head is $1/2$ ¹⁶, while in the real horse

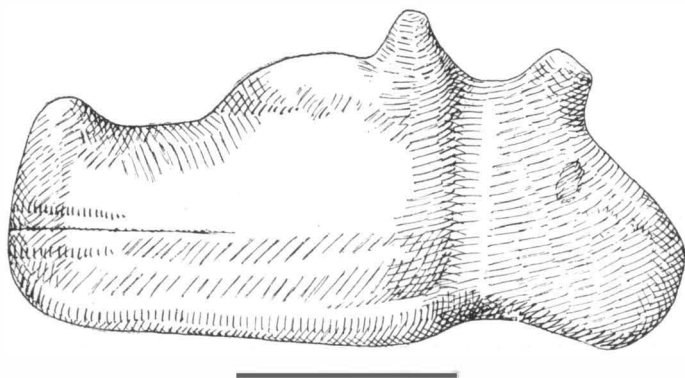


Fig. 2. — The Rezhevo sceptre, drawing by P. Detev.

¹¹ Not without some hesitation we ourselves thought until lately it could be question of no other head but a horse head (ibidem, p. 539 sqq.). The opinion recently expressed by J. Werner (PA, 2, 1961, p. 389), namely that there is no typological connection between that set of sceptres and that other, posterior, the «Thraco-Cymmerian» and Avaric one, which may have represented different animals, ought perhaps to be taken into consideration.

¹² Vladimir Dumitrescu, *Les figurines en pierre trouvées à Sâlciuța et à Fedeleșeni (Roumanie) et le commerce entre l'Égypte et le Bas-Danube, pendant la période énéolithique*, in «Istros», I, 1934, p. 187–200. Later on Vladimir Dumitrescu reconsi-

dered his opinion, maintaining already since 1951 and 1954 that the stone figurines in discussion here represented a horse's head (see the precedent notes).

¹³ A. A. Jessen, *op. cit.*

¹⁴ In this report, the case of the Soviet archaeologist B. A. Bonči Osmolovski — who, without being aware of the Rumanian archaeologists' opinions, saw in the sceptre of Terekli Mekteb (at the Caspian Sea) a horse's head — is conclusive; cf. J. Neustupný, in «Slovenská Archeológia» VI, 2, 1958, p. 288.

¹⁵ The presence, invariably on all the six pieces, of the shaft-hole, strengthens the conclusion that these figurines were used as sceptres.

¹⁶ The same ratio is generally maintained for the other items too.

it is much greater. It could of course be objected that in some pieces, that of Casimcea, for instance, the horse's halter seems to be indicated. But, in respect to the same piece, one could say that, on the one hand, the same kind of banded relief decoration was used around the full nostrils too, where there can be no question of a «halter». On the other hand, the stripes of the so-called «halter» could render as well some natural peculiarities (stripes of variegated colours), which are met with certain dog breeds and which the primitive shaper of the Dobrudja zoomorphic sceptre wanted — and succeeded — in rendering by such details, which were perhaps enhanced by paint of different colours.

As for the presence of the domestic horse in the cultural milieu to which we ascribed the series of sceptres found on Rumanian territory — that is the transition period to the Bronze Age and this latter's first times — it certainly cannot be contested, the horse being in that period one of the most wide-spread domestic animals, as proved by the latest discoveries in the Cernavoda culture settlement on Dealul Sofia. If the assumption that the Fedeleşeni sceptre must be dated to the end of the Cucuteni A phase (that is, following our own periodization, to Cucuteni I b), and that of Sălcuța in the «Gumelnița B phase» (as a matter of fact, the phase Sălcuța III, in our periodization), is accepted¹⁷, as well as the assertion that the Casimcea item «was actually modelled by workers of the Pontic tribes» which inhabited the Dobrudja territory too, during the period corresponding to the end of the Cucuteni A phase and of the Gumelnița B phase, then the horse could in no way be a «favourite animal», which was «to be taken for a model»¹⁸, for the mere reason that in the said cultural and chronological level the presence of the horse among the domestic animals is not attested. On the Rumanian territory and in the Balkans it became common, as it is well-known, only during the Cernavoda culture, in the transition period and in the first stage of the Bronze Age. The remains of *Equus caballus* L. found at Traian, Bogata, Techirghiol and in other settlements of the Late or of the Middle Neolithic are most likely to be connected with the presence of the savage horse, as was recently affirmed by the specialists¹⁹. Thus being the case, it goes without saying that there can be no more question of a horse-head representation, not even if we were to think of intertribal barter: which, as a matter of fact, is supposed to have taken place on an immense area, extending from the Caspian Sea to westwards of the Prut (Fedeleşeni) and to Sălcuța (nearly 2000 km!), in which up to now no zoomorphic sceptre like the set of six in discussion was found. The presence of a new item in Western Macedonia and of a sixth one in the Maritza basin, consequently south of the Balkans, makes it equally improbable that a North-Pontic shepherds' tribe could penetrate so far into the Balkans, especially before the period we are now going to determine.

On the other hand, during the excavations we conducted at Cernavoda, uncommonly numerous dog bones and skulls were uncovered. In a pit, for instance, some such skulls were found: the fact they were buried there on purpose does not seem devoid of a certain signification, which is not without connection with the dog head conventionalized representation and with the social and religious meaning of the sceptres. Besides, even before the Bronze Age had fully crystallized in its social and economic structure, it seems dog breeds related to the bulldog or the mastiff already existed in these regions of Europe.

¹⁷ Vladimir Dumitrescu, in SCIV, VI, 3–4, 1955, p. 930 sqq.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 927 and 933. So much more it cannot be question of «horsemen-tribes» (*ibidem*), it being known that only much later on was the

horse used for riding.

¹⁹ Olga Necrasov and Sergiu Haimovici, *Studiul resturilor de faună neolitică (cultura Hamangia) descoperite în cursul săpăturilor de la Techirghiol (1959)*, in «Materiale» VIII, p. 175 sqq.

Consequently, we believe there are sufficient reasons to see in these zoomorphic figurines conventional dog heads, considering that this animal was not less important for the tribes with prevalent pastoral economy, than for the cultivator's tribes or for those with mixed economy either. Besides, it is certainly common knowledge that in primitive art (plastic art, painting, engraving), dog representations are not absent, while some field reports prove too that certain ritual ceremonies may be connected to the animal which stands nearer to man and is the oldest in the series of domestic animals.

Taking into account the Cernavoda-Ezero-Donja Slatina complex' extension, as well as its contents and its chronology, we listed in 1961 the Casimcea tomb – among whose goods the zoomorphic sceptre repeatedly mentioned in this paper was found – to that complex²⁰. On the other hand we equally considered the first stratigraphic remarks made on Dealul Sofia, at Cernavoda. At the same time we thought the series of sceptres of Casimcea, Sălcuța, Fedeleșeni and Terekli Mekteb were the result of Aegean-Anatolian influences²¹. The find of a new item at Suvodol, in Western Macedonia, appeared to strengthen our conclusion²². The presence of a third sceptre south of the Danube and especially just in the Maritza basin, points even more out that it is necessary to revise the older opinions and to seek for new trends concerning the origin, the diffusion and the cultural and chronological listing of the stone sceptres' series.

Nowadays it is established that, from the chorological point of view, the Terekli Mekteb sceptre, at the Caspian Sea, is completely isolated from the group formed by the three items found on Rumanian territory – at a distance of some 2000 km of Sălcuța – and, the more so, from the group Suvodol-Rezhevo (fig. 3). It is not only question of the very great distance which separates these various places, but at the same time of the fact that certain geographical and cultural units, which were differently directed during the primitive communal system, must be taken into account. If until 1961 the find of the Fedeleșeni sceptres and even of the Casimcea one (Northern Dobrudja) could be explained by the penetration, so far into these regions of the shepherds' tribes from the North-Pontic steppes, or could be ascribed to the intertribal barter, which went on either from the west eastwards – as thought A. A. Jessen – or conversely, as pointed out by the Rumanian archaeologists. This time however, confronted with the two new finds, that of Rezhevo and that of Suvodol, we are obliged to seek somewhere else for the origin and the diffusion ways of these sceptres. The penetration of tribes from the North-Pontic steppes into the upper basin of the Vardar²³ and at the same time south of the Balkans, as far as the Thracian plain (Plovdiv region) cannot as yet be proved, even if we were to take into account some elements or cultural influences reported of late²⁴, which reached Porțile de Fier and got even further. Nor are the general historical circumstances of the epoch to which such sceptres could really be listed, a support for such a hypothesis, the more so if we were to accept the dating of the sceptres to the Middle or the Final Neolithic, some scientists proposed. To be sure, the question is too, whether the items found in Bitolia's and Plovdiv's neighbourhood could not have come there, by means of intertribal barter, from the North-Pontic steppes. To this not only the considerable distance opposes – as already shown above – but also the fact that from the lower basin of the Terek, near the Caspian Sea,

²⁰ D. Berciu, *Contribuții...*, p. 137.

²¹ *Ibidem*.

²² *Ibidem*, p. 536.

²³ As our colleague Milutin Garašanin believes (*op. cit.*).

²⁴ M. Garašanin, in «*Arheološki Vestnik*»,

Ljubljana, V, 1954, p. 225 sqq., (the Kladovo hoard on the Danube); Idem, *Neolithikum und Bronzezeit in Serbien und Makedonien*, p. 36–37; p. 51–53 (the vase decorated with the whipped cord, at Srpski Kristur on the Tisa, near the Yugoslav-Hungarian frontier line).

to Fedeleşeni, between the Prut and the Siret rivers, and to Casimcea, in the Northern Dobrudja, no zoomorphic sceptre like those we are interested in, was found as yet. That fact alone could give cause to a justified doubt concerning the eastern, North-Pontic origin of the sceptres. As for the sceptre found in the Casimcea tomb, it is well-known it was carved in a local stone of Dobrudja, white-yellowish and friable, but easier to cut than the hard rock out of which all the other five items are carved. There cannot be the slightest doubt that the Casimcea figu-



Fig. 3. — Map of the six zoomorphic sceptres' diffusion.

rine was made *on the spot*, after a model which served to the whole lot. The question, naturally is, *what tribes were those*, which could carve a sculpture with such evident traits of a primitive realism and had attained a level of social and economic development in which the tribal community had already passed through transformations that asked for such «social» — and perhaps even ritual — «distinction» marks, as the said sceptres. Previously, it was believed the Casimcea sceptre had actually been made by the North-Pontic tribes, which penetrated the Northern Dobrudja before the end of the period corresponding to the Cucuteni A phase²⁵ (Cucuteni I b, in our periodization)²⁶, that is long before the horizon Gorodsk-Usatovo or Horodiște-Foltești I. That would mean to admit the presence of the shepherds' tribes from the North-Pontic steppes south of the Danube — and implicitly, along that river — in the thick of the Late Neolithic or, more exactly, after its first period had scarcely ended. But the archaeological evidence opposes to such supposition. Even if there are certain cultural elements which could be thought either Eastern or influences from the East, they cannot prove the actual presence, as early as that, in the said area, of the North-Pontic tribes. It is equally well-known that among the grave-goods of the Casimcea tomb certain flint objects have an evident Balkano-Danubian character, of the Gumelnița type²⁷. Taking into consideration their elegant form,

²⁵ Vladimir Dumitrescu, SCIV, VI, 3–4, 1955, p. 932–934.

²⁶ D. Berciu, *Contribuții...*, p. 12.

²⁷ It was Vladimir Dumitrescu who stressed that point, yet with the mention that triangular flint arrow heads are equally found in the North-Pontic tumular tombs (*loc. cit.*, p. 930). As a matter of fact, after the publishing of the Casimcea tomb,

O. Menghin at once remarked that there was a connection between the flint goods of that grave and the flint tools of the Gumelnița culture. The technique of polishing the heavy flint axes was long before known in the Gumelnița culture. It was, as a matter of fact, already reported in 1925, and just at Gumelnița (Vl. Dumitrescu, «Dacia», II, 1925, p. 44); it is worth mentioning too, that the spear

their skillful technique and their size, we are inclined to ask ourselves whether the two flint axes from the Casimcea tomb could not be classed, owing to their function, among the so-called «festive» objects and not to the tools proper²⁸.

On the other hand, the use of red ochre is not an exclusive custom of the North-Pontic tribes. The same for the contracted burial of the dead. It is common knowledge that both customs are met with in the Balkans and in Anatolia, namely with tribes which are not native from the zone of North-Pontic steppes. We shall only mention the graves with red ochre, and without tumuli, of Cernavoda²⁹, certain graves in Eastern Bulgaria and the many ochre graves in Anatolia. For the chronological and cultural position of the Casimcea tomb, we dispose nowadays of some more conclusive data than in the past. No doubt, the presence of that tomb in the area of the Cernavoda culture appears from the first to be one of the principal arguments which prompt us to attribute it to the bearers of that culture³⁰ and generally to the complex Cernavoda-Ezero of the Lower Danube and of the Balkans; but it cannot be the only one. The Casimcea tomb has no tumulus, just like the Cernavoda graves. As regards the point which counts here, we think it particularly important to examine the funeral goods of the red ochre grave with contracted skeleton, uncovered in 1958 at Devnia (Varna district) and concerning which our colleague Milko Mirčev, director of the Museum of Varna³¹, will publish a detailed study. This is a fortuitous find. We shall only mention that among the grave goods there are 29 flint blades, some of them quite similar to those at Casimcea, and five flint spear heads (some of them, arrow points!), with a straight basis, alike in form to those in the Casimcea tomb. Yet, the flint objects mentioned are associated with other grave goods, which from the very first prevent us to place the Casimcea-Devnia level — and implicitly, that of the Fedeleşeni sceptre — «in the final phase of the Cucuteni A culture» and that of Sălçuța sceptre «in the Gumelnița B phase» as certain scientists would have it³². The 32 gold rings (left unprocessed!) the flat copper axe, the copper chisel (0.275 m long!), the dagger blade of the same material, left unprocessed, as well as other objects, make us look, from the cultural point of view, towards Asia Minor and the Caucasus³³. From the chronological point of view, they oblige us to date the ochre grave at Devnia and, indirectly, the Casimcea tomb, approximately to the same chronological level as the «royal» tombs of Alaca, in Anatolia,

heads were uncovered only in the B layer (*ibidem*). That type is peculiar to the phase III of the Gumelnița and Sălçuța cultures, but it outlasts it (D. Berciu, *Contribuții...*, p. 199, fig. 51/8–9). The discovery of the five items in the «lower layer» at Căscioarele, as against the set of twelve found in the upper layer (Gh. Ștefan, «Dacia», II, 1925, p. 147 and fig. 5/1–18) may be a mere hazard. Such spear heads occur in the Gumelnița settlements of Bulgaria and in the ochre graves as well.

²⁸ Let alone, of course, the polished stone axe with pointed butt from the Early and Middle Neolithic.

²⁹ Up to now 11 graves were uncovered in the diggings we conducted on Dealul Sofia.

³⁰ As we already supposed some years ago (D. Berciu in *Istoria României*, I, 1960, p. 77; see also note 4 at the beginning of the present paper). Most likely the contracted skeleton grave of the transition period settlement, in the tumular zone at

Histria (Em. Condurache and co-workers, *Șantierul arheologic Histria*, in «Materiale», IV, 1957, p. 69–70) belongs to the Cernavoda culture.

³¹ Whom we thank for having kindly allowed us to study the grave goods, in october 1958, soon after its uncovering.

³² Vladimir Dumitrescu, *Cîteva precizări...*, p. 930. For a typological and chronological relation of the Casimcea flint blades with those of the Decia Mureșului — Bodrogkeresztúr complex, cf. M. Garašanin, *Neolithikum und Bronzezeit*, p. 36–37.

³³ Cl. Schaeffer, *Stratigraphie comparée et chronologie de l'Asie occidentale*, London, 1948, p. 267–277; p. 281; p. 292–293; p. 516–619, and fig. 180/a; fig. 174; fig. 293. We are thinking of some among the «royal» pieces of Alaca Huyuk, from the depots at Soli-Pompeïopolis, and Sachkere and Zékari, in the Caucasus, let alone, for the time being, other analogies, for instance, with the Maicop finds, etc.

the Maicop complex and others, in Caucasus and Asia Minor, which Cl. Schaeffer placed between 2300–2000 B. C. ³⁴; that is, in relative chronology, to the final period of the early Bronze Age and to the beginnings of the middle Bronze Age of Asia Minor, of the Caucasus, of the Terek region ³⁵, etc. In other words — on a more general plane, but linked to the corresponding period of the Balkano-Danubian area — this would be *after* Troy II ruin, during the development of Troy III–V and the passage to Troy VI, that is towards the middle Bronze Age of Anatolia ³⁶.

These remarks are in their turn a confirmation of the place we assigned, from the cultural and chronological point of view, to the Casimcea tomb, in the Cernavoda culture, namely during its evolution and most likely in a period which seems related to phase III; as a matter of fact, the same thing is indicated by the stratigraphical determinations of the nine ochre graves at Cernavoda. However, this does not mean that the Fedeleşeni sceptre can be implicitly ascribed to the same early Cernavoda III level, because it can as well belong, chronologically, to the Cernavoda I level, or to the Cernavoda II, respectively Horodiştea-Folteşti I or Horodiştea-Folteşti II levels. As for the Sălcuţa sceptre, we have already stated there are no reasons to doubt neither I. Andrieşescu's conscientiousness in noting the depth where that sceptre was found, nor the exact stratigraphical determinations we made in 1951. There are also other arguments, to support them. On Piscul Cornişorului there is a well determined Sălcuţa III horizon, to which the Sălcuţa IV level is superimposed, where gradually, beside the final Sălcuţa culture elements, new elements are found, some of them of the Sălcuţa IV proper character, others of the Coţofeni type and others again of the Cernavoda type. The sceptre of Sălcuţa was found in that *post-Sălcuţa III* level. As concerns the presence at Fedeleşeni of a pottery of the Usatovo type, it is well-known that before World War II the Museum of the Town of Bucharest History possessed a wholly painted vase ³⁷. For the time being the succession of the stylistic, typological and chronological stages represented by the three sceptres found on the Rumanian territory cannot be ascertained. The high conventionalizing of the two figurines of Fedeleşeni and Sălcuţa, as well as of the items of Terekli Mekteb, Suvodol and Rezhevo, seems rather to require for them a typological and chronological place posterior to that of the Casimcea sceptre, if the primitive realistic traits of the latter must be thought older; but nothing opposes to the inverse succession either. What seems acquired for the time being, is the fact that the tomb at Casimcea ranges with the Cernavoda culture, that is with the earlier stage of its third phase, the other finds documenting eventually some anterior moments.

On the other hand, the Devnia tomb, with such rich grave-goods — which recall to a certain extent the «royal» or «princely» tombs in Asia Minor or in the Caucasus, generally dated to about the same time, — must be ascribed to the Ezero-Cernavoda complex. The ethnical-

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 293 and p. 516–519.

³⁵ *Ibidem*. With that we are recalling here A. A. Jessen's chronology of the great kurgans of Caban, published in SA, XII, 1950, p. 175, on which we relied to date the cultural milieu of the sceptre of Merekli-Mekteb (D. Berciu, *Sceptre de piatră* . . . , p. 542). See also, for the chronological and cultural setting of the large level we are interested in M. Gimbutas, *The Prehistory of Eastern Europe*, I, 1956, p. 48 sqq. and pl. III, on p. 91. Very good parallels for the flat axe at Devnia are equally found in Anatolia (H. Koshay, M. Akok, *Ausgrabungen von*

Büyük Güllücek, Ankara, 1957, pl. 35/1 (18–19)), although similar objects are met with in the graves of the Bodrog-keresztur culture too, in Hungary (P. Patay, in *ActaArch*, IX, 1–4, 1958, p. 147, pl. I/18; with silex blades like those of Casimcea; pl. I/19).

³⁶ J. Mellaart, *Anatolia and the Balkans*, in «Antiquity», XXXIV, 136, 1960, p. 275–276; especially p. 277.

³⁷ Information held from I. Nestor and Dinu V. Rosetti.

and cultural milieu to which the Rezhevo sceptre must necessarily be listed cannot be but that corresponding to the Karanovo VI level (Karanovo V, according to the older periodization and VII, according to Georgiev's latest periodization), which, as a matter of fact, represents a cultural complex of the same structure as what we termed Cernavoda-Ezero. In the transition period going from the Late Neolithic to the Bronze Age, an extensive ethnical and cultural Cernavoda-Ezero-Karanovo VI complex is found, ranging from the Rhodope mountains to north of the Danube (a slip of territory along its bank), to which the Rezhevo and Casimcea sceptres belong and which is very closely related to the final phase of the Early Bronze Age of Anatolia³⁸ and, westwards, is continued by the Yugoslav Donja Slatina culture and the similar zones of Macedonia.

To be sure, the Suvodol find represents a landmark — the farthest south-westwards (Fig. 3) — which delimits the close cultural unity of the Balkano-Danubian region of that time. Yet the question is to what cultural and chronological level the sceptre from the Bitolia region really belonged. M. Garašanin is inclined to connect it to the Late Neolithic of Macedonia, namely to the Crnobuki complex³⁹. The Crnobuki culture of Macedonia is as yet not well-known, especially as regards its chronological position, its part during the transition to the Bronze Age, its internal periodization, its relations to other cultures, etc. Generally, the Yugoslav scientists describe it as a culture of the Late Macedonian Neolithic, with certain expanses in the first epoch of the Bronze Age and related — as it seems — to the Porodin complex in the same Prilep-Bitolia region, of which it is the continuation. On the other hand, it was pointed out that the Crnobuki level is generally contemporary to the chalkolithic Rakhmani (Thessalian III) period of Thessaly, which closes there the Neolithic period and constitutes the transition stage to the Bronze Age⁴⁰. It was of late rightly remarked that the Rakhmani period corresponds, in our opinion at least partially to the phase Vinča D⁴¹ with the middle, late and final phases of the Gumelnița, Sălcuța and Cucuteni cultures, and with certain stages of the Cernavoda culture⁴². What is here of interest to us, in the fixing of the cultural and historical milieu in which the Suvodol (Macedonia) sceptre was found, is the fact that in the Crnobuki complex a zoomorphic clay plastic occurs, characterized by a more or less flat idol type, with a hollow in which a movable head was mounted⁴³. From the typological and chronological

³⁸ J. Mellaart (*loc. cit.*) synchronized Karanovo V (VI) — Ezero with Troy II. However, we believe that that level may be paralleled with Troy III—V, lasting perhaps — if we are to take into account the contents of that complex — into Troy VI. It is true that for the time being no zoomorphic representations of our sceptres' type are known in the Anatolian area of the Early Bronze Age. We hold that information from Mr. J. Mellaart and D. French of the British Institute of Archaeology of Ankara (letter dated 8, II, 1962 of the archaeologist D. French, whom we are glad to thank again on this occasion).

³⁹ M. Garašanin, « Glasnik-Sarajevo », XV—XVI, 1960—1961, p. 6 sqq. For the group Crnobuki, *Idem*, *Vorgeschichtliches aus Crnobuki*, in « Arheološki Vestnik » Ljubljana, IV, 1953, p. 75—93; *Idem*, *Neolithikum und Bronzezeit*, p. 118—120.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*; *Idem*, *Zur Chronologie des make-*

donischen Neolithikums, in « Archoeologia Yougoslavica », III, 1959, p. 3 and pl. I.

⁴¹ VI. Milojević, *Zur Chronologie der jüngeren Stein- und Bronzezeit Südost- und Mitteleuropas*, in « Germania », 37, 1959, p. 68. Cf. F. Schachermeyr, *Die ägäische Frühzeit. III. Bericht*, in « Anzeiger für die Altertums-Wissenschaft », Innsbruck, X, 1957, p. 83—86.

⁴² D. Berciu, *Contribuții...*, p. 89—70.

⁴³ M. Garašanin, *Neolithikum und Bronzezeit*, p. 119, fig. 25/2; *Idem*, « Arheološki Vestnik », IV, 1953, p. 86, fig. 12. We cannot discuss here the typology, periodization, diffusion and zonal peculiarities of that type of idol, as well as its adoption by the bearers of certain cultures and its transmission to others. This will be done in the course of the studying of the Cernavoda culture's plastic. Yet it seems useful to record here that this type of figurine was also found at Gumelnița (two items). (Vladimir Dumitrescu, in SCIV, XI, 2, 1960,

point of view, the item published 1953 (not 1955) and 1958 by M. Garašanin is similar to other objects too from the third level of the Cernavoda culture — to which, as shown before, we equally assigned the Casimcea tomb containing the zoomorphic sceptre — it being most likely the mask of a coinciding stage in the two cultures' evolution, *posterior* to other typological and chronological older stages. It is, as a matter of fact, well-known — and proved by the stratigraphy too — that in Thessaly such idols occur in period IV also, that is in the local Early Bronze Age ⁴⁴, as attested by the item uncovered in the fourth layer of Rakhmani ⁴⁵, in which certain ceramic categories of the third layer (Rakhmani phase) ⁴⁶ are still met with. The clay idol at U1, mentioned above, constitutes a document of approximately the same historical and cultural moment.

From the Crnobuki materials published up to now, and from the hypotheses published formerly ⁴⁷ or of late ⁴⁸, it appears clearly that in the Crnobuki settlement (of the Cerna valley, in Yugoslavia), and in what was generally termed as «the Crnobuki group» as well, some levels occur which as a whole correspond to the Final Neolithic and the Early Bronze Age. These levels are naturally closely related to the Late and Final Neolithic and to the Early Bronze Age of Macedonia.

No doubt, the series of seated idols — of the A type, according to M. Garašanin ⁴⁹ — as well as the various ceramic categories, prove a very close connection to the similar clay plastic of the Porodin layer; so that we can say a Porodin-Crnobuki culture complex occurs in the Bitolia region, whose evolution embraces a certain number of phases. But what is here of interest to us, in our attempt to locate from the cultural and chronological point of view the zoomorphic sceptres with conventionalized dog heads, is another element belonging to the Porodin-Crnobuki complex, to which the Cernavoda culture is connected (the related ethnical and cultural milieu, in which the above-mentioned sceptres spread being thus once more pointed out). That element is represented by a rich enough — but as yet unpublished — series of clay seated idols, which are typologically near those at Porodin and Crnobuki, and are dated to the early phase or the Cernavoda culture. That means there is a synchronism of that phase with a certain period — of course early — of the Porodin-Crnobuki complex, and not only of the Cernavoda II phase with the Cernavoda III one (partly, at least).

The above exposed remarks prove that there are as yet sufficient data to allow the cultural and chronological locating of the sceptres' series found in the Balkans and along the Danube: namely, that such figurines were circulated in the Balkans in the area of certain contemporary and related complexes, as for instance the Cernavoda-Ezero-Karanovo VI complex, and the Porodin-Crnobuki-Donja Slatina one. Still, we cannot as yet say in what exact period of the respective complexes' evolution such plastic began to spread. It is possible it had already appeared during the earlier period, but we are not as yet possessed of conclusive proofs thereof.

p. 245–260; Idem, in «Dacia», N. S., IV, 1960, p. 443–453), beside the items discovered at Vinča proper, in the kurgan near Maicop, in Northern Caucasus (M. Gimbutas, *op. cit.*, p. 52–54, fig. 25/e), in the Ljubljana region and in Slovakia (in the Boleraz group).

⁴⁴ V. Milošević, *Zur Chronologie der jüngeren Steinzeit Griechenlands*, in JDI, 65/66, 1950–1951, p. 11–12 and fig. 17.

⁴⁵ A. J. B. Wace and M. S. Thompson, *Prehistoric Thessaly*, Cambridge, fig. 25/d; see also fig. 25/b–c; and fig. 27/2, triangular flint arrow point,

of the Casimcea ones' kind.

⁴⁶ V. Milošević, *Steinzeit Griechenlands*.

⁴⁷ Idem, *Chronologie der jüngeren Steinzeit Mittel- und Südosteuropas*, Berlin, 1949, p. 65 sqq.; see also the table of generic synchronisms at the end of that book.

⁴⁸ Especially by M. Garašanin, *loc. cit.*

⁴⁹ Idem, *Vorgeschichtliches aus Crnobuki*, p. 92, fig. 9 and 11; Idem, *Neolithikum und Bronzezeit*, p. 119 and pl. 25/I; the study about the Crnobuki discoveries is wrongly cited there, in note 619.

All we can say is that, as shown above, the Casimcea tomb could be assigned to the beginnings of the Cernavoda III phase. As a matter of fact, the synchronism of the Cernavoda II phase with the Foltești II one, on the one hand, and that of these cultures with Sălcuța IV and, partly, with the Coțofeni culture, as well as the observation that the Fedeleșeni and Sălcuța sceptres circulated about that same time, prove that the process of the latter's diffusion could have lasted even longer. The style and type study of the six items seems to conduct to the same supposition. From this point of view the likeness between five of them is striking, the sixth, the Casimcea sceptre being isolated, that is only in respect to the primitive realism of its features.

The origin of such primitive art products could raise still other objections, owing to the absence hitherto, in the Aegean and the Mediterranean area of similar discoveries⁵⁰. Yet, because of the prolonged tradition of the stone plastic and of the marble vases in the said area, and of the permanent and many-sided influence of the Mediterranean factor in the Balkans and Danube regions, as well as of the circumstance that the whole Neolithic plastic of these regions originates in the Aegeo-Mediterranean area, we are somehow obliged to admit for the series of sceptres too one and the same primary source of irradiation. Besides, the very structure of the Balkan cultural complexes in which these sceptres were circulated has a strikingly Mediterranean character, or, more accurately, an Eastern-Mediterranean and Anatolian one.

Evidently, considering all the conclusions which could possibly be drawn from the extant documentation, another question arises: whether these sceptres could not even have a Balkano-Danubian and Pontic origin? The answer to it is still dependent on the future finds and studies.

The spreading of the sceptres takes place at a moment in which on vast areas an intricate process was going on: that of the mixing up and assimilation of tribal communities at different degrees of social and economic development, as well as that of the diffusion of new cultural elements and of new technological knowledge. It is the epoch of the newly tamed horse⁵¹, which actually played an important part in, or at last made easier, the shifting of human groups during the transition period to the Bronze Age. In the cultural complexes above discussed, the tame horse was already known. The spreading of the sceptres cannot be separated of the events which took place at the end of the Neolithic in South East Europe and during the transition period. Their diffusion in the Terek basin, in the North Caucasus and towards the Caspian Sea and Lower Volga could possibly have begun from the South, through the Derbent mountain-pass, likewise in the chronological framework of that general structural stage of the Indo-European languages. No doubt converse movements must have then taken place, carrying with them similar culture elements too. Again, the presence of the idol with movable head, in the Ul kurgan, near Maikop, must be connected to the events of the zoomorphic sceptres' epoch. Maybe in the future the relations between the Vučedol culture and the

⁵⁰ See notwithstanding the panther-shaped axe of Mallia, Crete: Chr. Zervos, *L'art de la Crète néolithique et minoïenne*, Paris, 1956, fig. 424 (third Middle Minoan period). In a recent letter (dated 21. III. 1962), Chr. Zervos (one of the best experts in the Cretan and Cycladic art), kindly drew our attention to the fact that the zoomorphic axe of Mallia was used as a sceptre in ritual ceremonies, but that he himself knew of no zoomorphic representations similar to our sceptres, in the Cretan and Cycladic area. We are glad to thank again here

Mr. Chr. Zervos.

⁵¹ Against F. Hančar's opinion, that in the area of the Tripolje culture the horse could have been tamed rather early, serious objections were raised of late by the linguists too (W. Brandenstein, *Das Indogermanenproblem*, in «Forschungen und Fortschritte», 36, 2 (Februar), 1962, p. 47–48). The tamed horse begins to play an important part only during the Usatovo period: cf. S. Bököny, in *ActaArch*, 11, 1959, p. 94.

Caucasus will be also better explained and still owing to the Balkans and the transitional cultures. At any rate, the Fedeleşeni and Sălçuța sceptres were brought North of the Danube by the bearers of the Cernavoda-Ezero-Karanovo VI culture. The Suvodol find equally makes us think of a possible way of diffusion along the Vardar and Maritza valleys, and along those of their tributaries, towards Oltenia, the Banat and Central Europe; similarly, the sceptre discovered

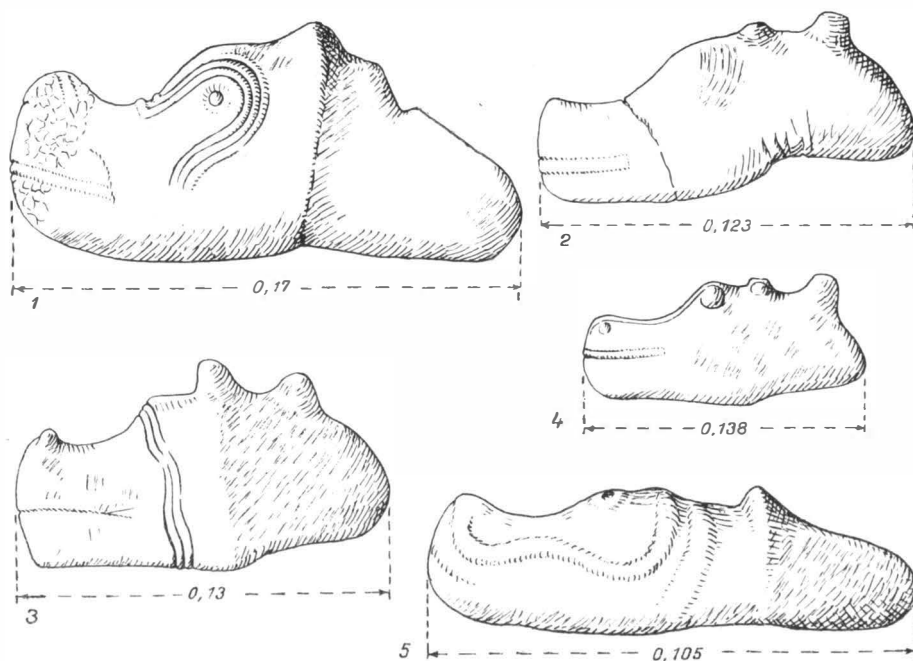


Fig. 4. — Zoomorphic stone "sceptres": 1) Casimcea; 2) Fedeleşeni; 3) Sălçuța; 4) Terekli Mekteb (after A. A. Jessen); 5) Suvodol (after M. Garašanin).

near Plovdiv may as well be a landmark on a diffusion way northwards through the Eastern Balkan, or one on another way along the Maritza course and the Striama valley, then through the Trojan gorge and the Ossam valley to the Danube, at the Olt confluence.

In appreciating the facts of the period we are here dealing with, we cannot of course neglect even the ever increasing penetration of cultural and ethnical elements from the South-East regions of the Soviet Union, let alone for the time being those which spread into the Rumanian territory from the North-East. It was severally pointed out that eastern elements appeared in the Cucuteni area as early as the beginnings of phase II (AB). Among these elements are mentioned also the ceramics decorated with the whipped cord (the «caterpillar» motive)⁵²; but the Cernavoda and Ezero diggings proved that such decoration was already largely used during the lower levels of the Cernavoda-Ezero complex, and that later on the whipped cord proper was generalized. On the other hand, the recent diggings in Thessaly demonstrated that in Greece too the corded decoration is older than the Early Helladic III period (EH III), as was generally thought before.

We are now in possession of a Radio-Carbon (C 14) determination, establishing — more or less approximately — the moment of the cultural and ethnical penetration South of the

⁵² As at Traian, in Moldavia: H. Dumitrescu, in «Materiale», VII, 1961, p. 101.

Danube of the eastern element. We are thinking of the grave no 1/1952 at Ceamurlia de Jos. The same core-sample, taken from the beams of the ochre grave was dated at the Groningen laboratory to about 2330 ± 65 B.C. and at the Berlin laboratory to about 2240 ± 100 and 2139 ± 160 B.C.⁵³ Taking into consideration the resulting approximation and comparing both determinations, it seems possible that towards the years 2200—2100 B.C. the interferences from south-northwards and north-southwards⁵⁴ got more frequent. To that phenomenon could also be connected the diffusion of the copper metallurgy, based on the copper ore exploiting and the passage to the last phase of the Late Neolithic and afterwards to the transition period proper, at a moment and a pace differing from one zone to another. On a more general and historical plane, the above exposed chronology could be understood only as part of the Aegean and Balkano-Danubian system, in which the important moments were Troy II g ruin, the greatest development of Early Helladic III, the formation of the Medio-Helladic culture, the closing of Troy III—V periods and the passage to Troy VI, that is to the Middle Bronze Age in Anatolia.

Without looking profoundly into that uncommonly vast horizon the history of the primitive system displayed on the eve of the paleometallic epoch, in South East Europe, we could hardly understand the real — cultural, social and chronological — sense of the six sceptres, to which we once more wanted to direct the scientists' attention.

D. BERCIU

⁵³ H. Quitta, in PZ, 38, 1960, p. 184 and in a personal letter dated February 23, 1962 and June 4, 1963.

⁵⁴ The recent discoveries and studies of the Soviet scientists about the North-Pontic tribes obliged us to revise our until now generally accepted opinion concerning the nomadic and mostly pastoral character of these tribes. As a matter of fact, it is now proved they actually had an economy based on steppe-cattle rising, but that at the same time they developed a primitive agriculture and led an established life. During the International Symposium

at Prague, N. J. Merpert pointed out in 1958 to that new side of the North-Pontic steppes' archaeology; see also his recently published report, in the volume *L'Europe à la fin de l'âge de la pierre*, Prague, 1961, p. 176 sqq. For the new succession of the Karanovo levels, see in the same volume, p. 45 sqq., G. I. Georgiev. The Karanovo VI level corresponds, in Georgiev's study, to Karanovo VII. The volume reached us only when the present paper was written, so that we no more could make the necessary references to it.