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XV

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POLISHED STONE ARTEFACTS FROM EARLY NEOLITHIC SETTLEMENTS OF STARČEVO-CRIȘ AND VINČA CULTURES

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Abstract: *The lithic polished artefacts discovered during the recent preventive researches, open a new perspective over the relations between the habitations from Anatolia and Transylvania. Through ethnographic analogy, from Maramureș popular tradition, we can recognize some habits and objects discovered in prehistoric settlements from Transylvania, used as polishers, having remains of red or black pigment. The composition and structure of the archaeological materials from the sanctuaries of Early Neolithic shows an amazing similarity of the surviving Mesolithic technologies.*

Key words: *Starčevo-Criș Neolithic sites, social stratification, prestige elements, perforated polished artefacts, strikers, currency-axes, red and black pigment. Cultic places in Starčevo-Criș culture.*

Between the 11th and 8th millennium the man started gradually to give up the nomad way of life, in favor to permanent dwellings and in this way the first farmers villages appeared (Esin 1999, p. 14). The origins of the Neolithic farmer should be somewhere in Iran, Levant and Anatolia, where the hunter, gatherer and fisherman assume the domestication, the domestic ways being more practical, so that around 5.000 B.C. to be inhabited also the fertile valleys from norther Europe, respectively of Scotland (Barklay 1998, p. 12).

In time, the pallet of the lithic industry is being diversified, recognizing among the usual artefacts, the cultic ones and prestige objects or, according to other interpretations, "fashion objects" (Esin 1999, p. 14), pendant of a social stratified society, of which elite has the privilege of a special clothing and obvious of a mobile inventory of the sort below presented.

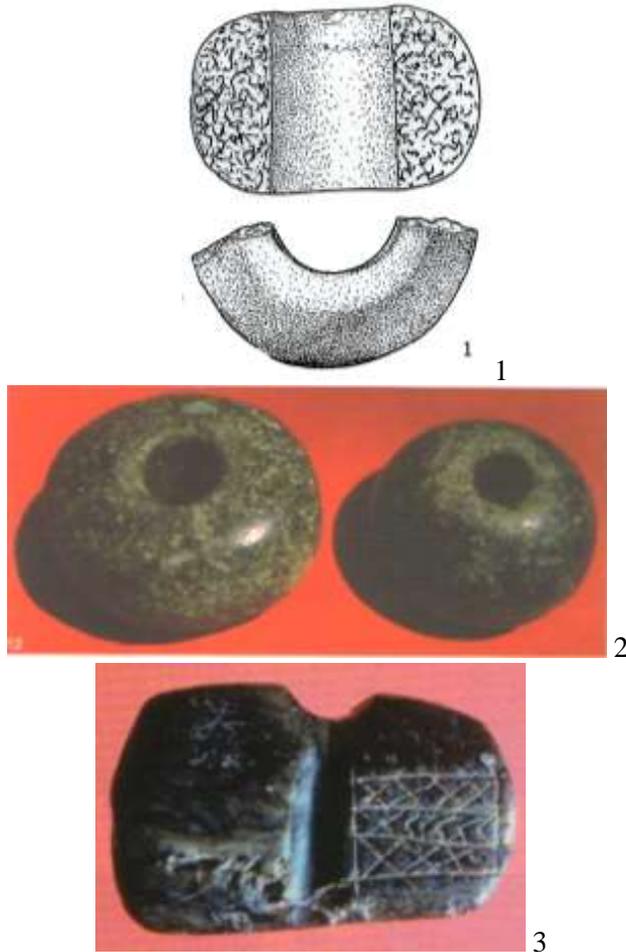


Fig. 1. 1. Mace of *microdiorite* discovered at Cristian I, Sibiu County, Starčevo-Criș level, C₁₀; **2.** *Diorite* maces discovered at Hallan Çemi, Turkey (Rosenberg 1999, p. 16, fig. 12); **3.** Stone club (possible *gabro*) polished, perforated and decorated with incisions (Cauvin *et al* 1999, p. 76, fig. 32).

A distinct category of stone artefacts are the polished and perforated pieces, controversial because of the unclear conditions of sampling and research of the archaeological features, that sometimes appear. But, in Anatolia, appear in clear stratigraphic conditions and – more recently – in sites researched and published from south-western Transylvania (Miercurea Sibiului-Petriș, Tărtăria-Gura Luncii, Limba-Bordane, Miercurea Sibiului II, Cristian I and Cristian III), objects that are

connected more likely with the prestige, either that they are called scepters, or maces (fig.1/2) or cudgel (fig.1/3). From the same category, but from Pottery Neolithic, Starčevo-Criș culture, phase I, in the archaeological station from Cristian I (Sibiu County) feature C₁₀, along with the block axe (fig. 2) it is also being discovered a half of mace from polished and perforated diorite (fig. 1/1), as the ones from Hallan Çemi, Turkey (Rosenberg 1999, p. 16, fig. 12).

The pieces that are to be presented following were used in preparing and sustain the doctoral thesis of Mrs. Florentina Martiș, all of them came from the preventive researches made by Brukenthal National Museum, above mentioned as sites.²

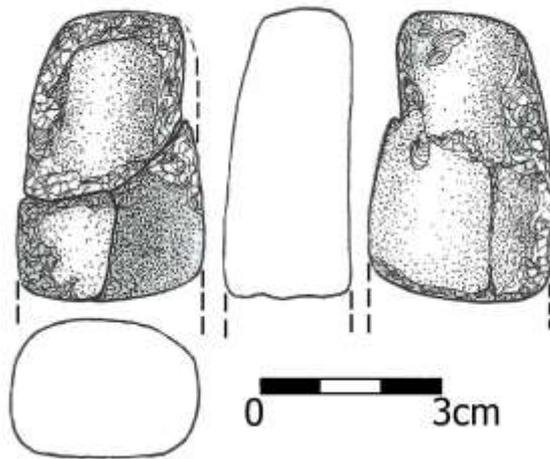


Fig. 2. Cristian I, C₁₀, axe of *chaille* (*corneean?*), remounted, thermic treated. Cristian I, C₁₀.

The polished artefacts have their origin in the Pre-Pottery level, evolving then, in Starčevo-Criș I, towards the block axes from Cristian I (Sibiu County) (plan/convex) (fig. 2) or trapezoid (fig. 3) from Miercurea Sibiului II station (Sibiu County). In many cases the passive part of the artefact presents polishing/usage imprinted on the nape of the axes, by the functionality of striker.

² Ph.D. thesis sustained at *Lucian Blaga* University from Sibiu in 2015.

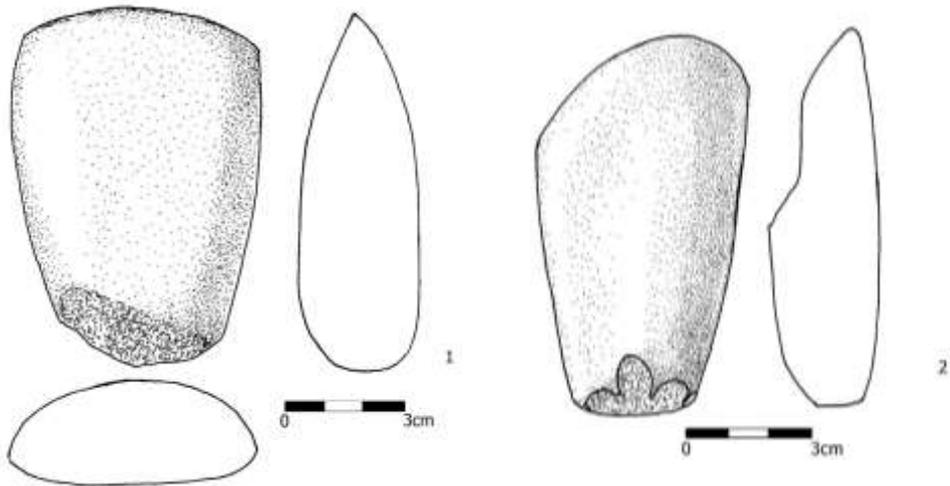


Fig. 3. Miercurea Sibiului II (Sibiu County), C₁₂, Starčevo-Criș dwelling, *block axes* made of: 1. Greenish *diorite* with white quartzite lodes; 2. *Microdiorite* grey-greenish - *amfibolit* (?) (with usage marks in the nape area. These have functioned as strikers/polishers.

At this moment, we should discuss a few things about feature C₁₀ from the settlement of Cristian (Sibiu County). Over it sever scientific articles were published (Luca 2015a; Luca *et al* 2013; Luca *et al* 2013a; Luca *et al* 2013b; Luca *et al* 2013c; Luca *et al* 2013d; Luca *et al* 2014a; Luca *et al* 2014b; Luca *et al* 2015a; El Susi 2014; Nițu *et al* 2015; Nițu *et al* 2015a), but also a synthesis book (Luca 2015). In the case of pit C₁₀ we are facing a special situation because it represents an apart case. It is being displayed at north form the sanctuary formed of ritual pits and it has some particularities that distinguish it from the rest of the features.

We can notice that for pit C₁₀ there is a special situation because it represents a totally apart case. It is being displayed at North from the sanctuary formed of ritual pits and it has some particularities that are distinguishing it from the rest of the features. These are: the pit that stands out from the general context of display of the pits from the sanctuary, not being part of its general architecture; it is being isolated, but it pieces the debits od ritual-dwelling L₁, so it is being after the ritual of its abandonment – or at least – of that part of the feature (the pit of the ritual-dwelling may be abandoned in successive stages). The composition of the pottery for pit C₁₀ it is being formed two pots having a different facture in the context of the sanctuary formed of ritual pits, being contemporary – in our opinion – with phase IC of Starčevo-Criș culture (Luca 2015, p. 207-208; photo 109).

More – and more interesting – in the composition of the pit there are several stone pieces, weights or pieces that are components for the roof (Luca 2015, fig. 102; 139-141 – these seem to be transformed in *cult pieces* in this case or in the case of C₇₉), used as offering, this time losing their practical character (as there are other isolated cases, as pit C₇₉)(Luca 2015, p. 89-92, fig. 67-77; photo 66-67), and the ¹⁴C for this feature (C₁₀) confirms our assumption regarding the relative chronology of the feature Beta 405701: 6.910±30 calBP (Luca 2015, p. 208).

This feature is being different by two aspects. From 48 stone pieces discovered here, there was no blade. Only two fragments of small blades fine retouched, marginal, chopped of Balkan flint, the rest of the products being associated with debitage of splinters: 13 splinters, one nucleus, 22 remnant and crackers, two percutors from which one it is also used as rubbers, 6 fragmented boulders. The second distinct element it is that the only polished piece from the settlement, a fragment of an axe that was fired, was discovered in this feature (Luca 2015, p. 155).

Next are the pieces from C₁₀ (9%), the rest being under 4%. It can be said that the chopping area for the lithic material, but also for usage of the tools, as it will show in the analysis, was located in C₄₀, while in C₁₀ it is being surprised a small sequence of processing some categories of rocks, maybe ritual deposits (Luca 2015, table synthetic 9; graphic 29).

The obvious conclusion for these observations is the one that also considering the rituals of abandonment of the sacred area (or one its parts) the surrounding communities have not forgotten the magical signification, ritual of the area described and came – from time to time – to bring offerings for the ones that used to be priests, the shamans of a group of communities that used to live in Southern and South-Western Transylvania (Luca 2015, p. 208).

All these observations, along with the piece from fig. 1/1 from this article, indicate the fact that the signification of C₁₀ feature can be connected to a ritual made in honor of a great priest or a shamanic leader of the community. A process of sacred remembering (important signs of the character but also other communities, were putted in a pit; the mace-scepter was broken in two pieces – fig. 1/1, an axe was broken and fired – fig. 2, some of the stone pieces, component of the roof were buried next (Luca 2015, fig. 102; 139-141) some type of tools, but also two pots (Luca 2015, p. 207), and the pit was made eccentric as positioning, but near the ritualist dwelling L₁. One of its parts (Luca 2015, p. 123-174). The phases of evolution of the communities from Cristian I were synthetically explained, at the end of the book (Luca 2015, p. 220-221).

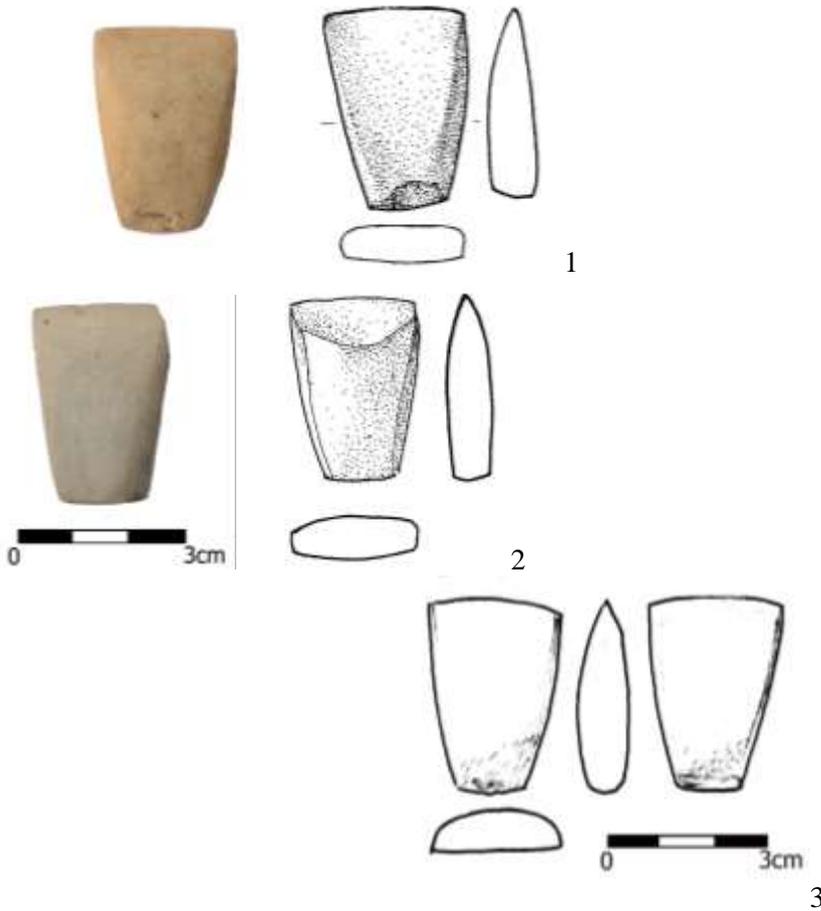


Fig. 4. Cristian III (sanctuary – dwelling-hut number 7 (B₇)). Herminete small axes made of conrean rock 1-3, C₃₉₂.

The polishes small axes, herminets (fig. 4), appear, among other stations, also at Cafer Höyük, Turkey, pre-pottery archaeological site (with structures of the dwellings organized on rectangular foundations, extremely elaborated)(Cauvin *et al* 1999, p. 64-65), revealing the existence of this type of artefact, before pottery, also of perforated and polished axes and (fig.1/2)(Rosenberg 1999, p. 16; fig. 12/3).

In the archaeological site of Cristian III (Sibiu County) was discovered the same type of *herminet* as the ones from Turkey (fig. 4).

The herminets, or the small axes, many times they are discovered as funerary inventory all around Europe (Vlassa 1976, 83-84; Tillman 1995, p. 44; Hansen

2011, p. 28; Marțiș *et al* 2015, p. 2-3), without knowing exactly in what conditions or purposes they were deposited. The dimensions of this small axes and their morphology are matching for fixing a handle, and the fixing was explained through the discovery, unique, of one small axe of this type, having a wood handle, in Scotland (fig. 8 – possible hatchet, scepter)(Barklay 1998, p. 8).

At Cristian III these pieces (fig. 4) were discovered in a sanctuary (formed of pits C₃₉₂, C₃₉₃, C₅₁₈ and C₅₈₃)(Luca *et al* 2014; Luca *et al* 2015). Towards this supposition leads us to the positioning – somehow isolated – of the construction, near the external north-east palisade, but also the doubling, its excessive reinforcement, of the wood wall, even though we are not facing a fortification reinforcement. Other arguments by the special character of the construction are:

- the existence of a circular hearth in the central-eastern zone of the feature, another in the central-western zone and the third one, quadrilateral, towards the south of C₅₈₃;

- the existence of three statuettes/menhir (custom also present at Cristian I – Luca 2015, p. 150-152, photo 92) in three distinct areas (the northern one, the eastern one – in correlation with the rounded hearth and the western one in correlation with another round hearth); the un-natural position in situ of some ceramic fragments of hearth, which indicates the fact that these were troubled/broken and placed facing down, intentional;

- the existence of a pot made of fossil wood in the center of the construction (fig. 5);

- the presence of a fragment of axe/scepter of polished stone, transversal perforated and with nape, conic, rounded by polishing. The piece (part of the inventory of one of the three hearths discovered inside this feature, respectively of the one placed in its western extremity) was, probably, interionately broken on the line of maximal diameter of the fixing hole, after it was thrown on the hearth – possibly material rest of a ritual (photo 5-6). Dimensions: L=69 mm; LA=48/23 mm; H_{Hole}=48 mm (possible scepter, symbol of power?);

- were discovered other fragments of zoomorphic statuettes (photo 1-4) and amulets.

One of the zoomorphic statuettes from this archaeological features can be a dog, considering the attitude and position. The way this piece was preserved does not allow us to make more observation in this matter. The statuette is missing the inferior part of the left leg. Dimensions: I=39 mm; L=43 mm; LA=19 mm (photo 1-2).



Photo 1. Cristian III. Zoomorphic statuette. Feature 583 (sanctuary – dwelling-hut number 7 (B₇)).



Photo 2. Zoomorphic statuette. Feature 583 (sanctuary – dwelling-hut number 7 (B₇)).

A second zoomorphic statuette (bovine?) is fragmentary. Its décor is being composed of short incisions, on the back and lateral sides of the animal. Dimensions: I=32 mm; L=33 mm; LA=23 mm (photo 3-4).

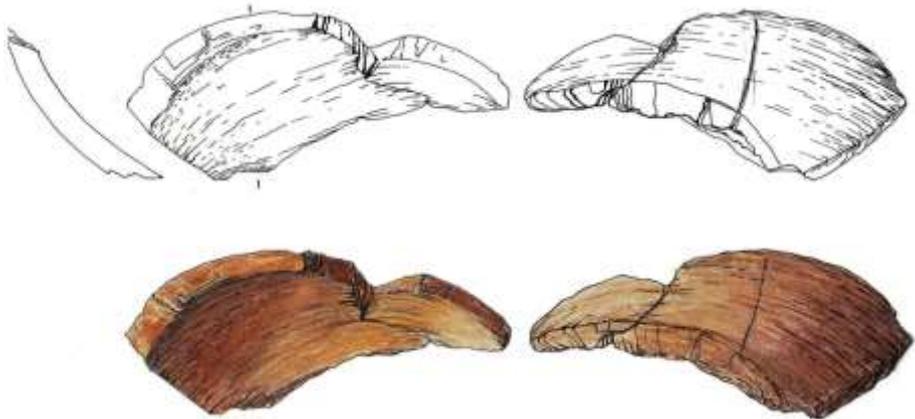


Fig. 5. Cristian III. Pot made of wood (sanctuary–hut-dwelling number 7 (B₇)).

Analogies for the described piece – for its ornament made with nail – we have nearby, at Cristian I (Luca 2015, p. 146, fig. 115/1). We notice the fact that the statuette from Cristian I is from an older level of Starčevo-Criș culture (Luca 2015, p. 219-224). There is a continuity that reflects, by reporting to the economic models that are around, an incapacity of adaptation to the new realities from here (where hunting, fishing and gathering have a determinant role), so we have to notice that fact that these adopt some strange divinities for Neolithic, specific for the Mesolithic the three massive sculptures, made in stone, specific to Lepenski Vir –

Schela Cladovei, in order to reach an equilibrium with the structure of exploiting the existing habitat. More, the sceptre it is being broken, wood pots apearar – extremely rare and a dog of clay it is being modeled, a very rare fact for Neolithic communities. All these observations show that the herminiets too have here a well established role.



Photo 5. Cristian III. Axe/scepter made of polished stone (sanctuary– hut-dwelling number 7 (B₇)).



Photo 6. Cristian III. Axe/scepter made of polished stone (sanctuary– hut-dwelling number 7 (B₇)).



Fig. 6. Trapezium Neolithic axe, in wood handle, fragmented, “Shuloshader Axe” discovered in a swamp from Lewis. It is being preserved at Scotland National Museum (Barklay 1998, p. 8).

The proof of finxing the axe in a handele exists – we are reefing to axes or scepters – on each artefact, either there were fine incisions oriented oblique on the ax

of the small axe, either glue of bines or bitumium, but the discovery if the axe already fixed in the handle (fig. 6) is the most serious proof of the existence of it, in this maner, but it also precedes the hatchet with two edges made from one piece.

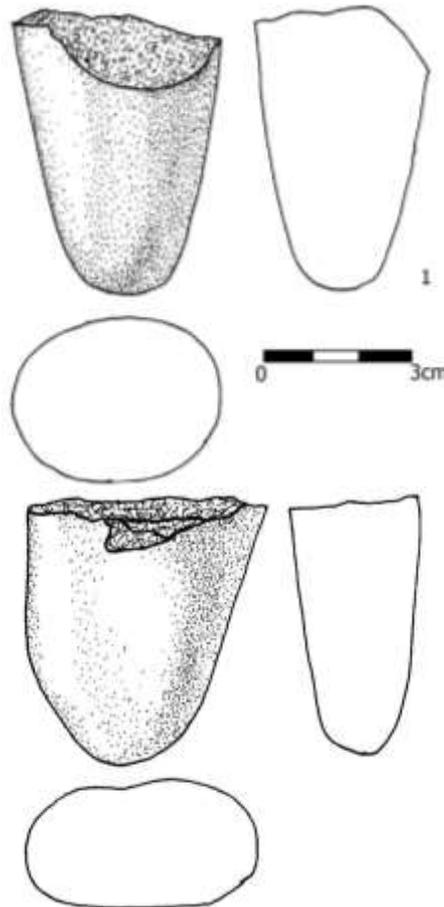


Fig. 7. Miercurea Sibiului II (Sibiu County), C₁₂, Starčevo-Criș dwelling: 1. Proximal fragment of *cob* axe made of *amfibolit*; 2. Proximal fragment of *cob* axe made of black gabbro (?).

As in the case from Miercurea Sibiului II, C₁₂ (fig. 7), the small axes are isolated, as values itselfs, either by two pieces component of the above mentioned hatchet. Unfortunately, the working of landscaping during prehistory, but also the agricole ones from the last 50 years distoyed the Vinča habitation level from here, so we

don't have any framing on features for the artefacts from Miercurea Sibiului II (Sibiu County)(fig. 8-9).

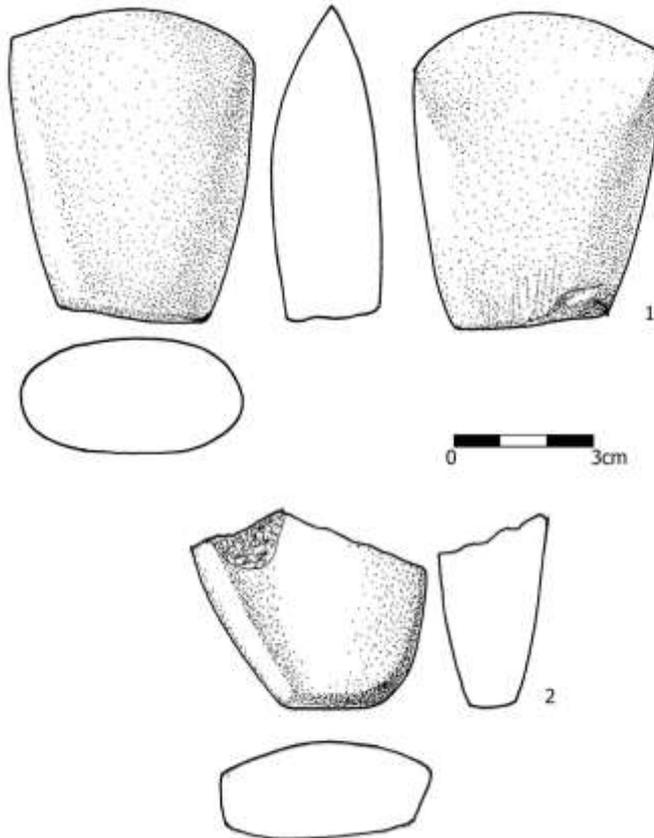


Fig. 8. Miercurea Sibiului II (Sibiu county), C₁₇, Vinča dwelling, *cob* axes: 1. Axe from *corneean*, faced; 2. Proximal axe fragment of *chaille baige*.

A category of polished artefacts, discovered in the recent excavations, are the stones made of kind of anatomic shape, easy to grabe, generally *argillits*, easy to polish, present in Early Nelithic sites, Starčevo-Criş in our case.

Today, in the old tradition pottery centres, as are the ones from Maramureş, for polishing the clay pots, dried 2-3 weeks in shade, it is being used the object strictly destined for this purpose, called "*bdicaş*" - grit stone (Florescu 1970, p. 52, 57), and the *pigment*, red-dark-red used for painting the pots, *is the earth-stone brought*

from Glodului Valley, smashed, dissolved in a watery solution called "șar" (Florescu 1970, p. 57-58). "Fătiușa"/spatula it is another object used for flattening the pot, name also valid today.

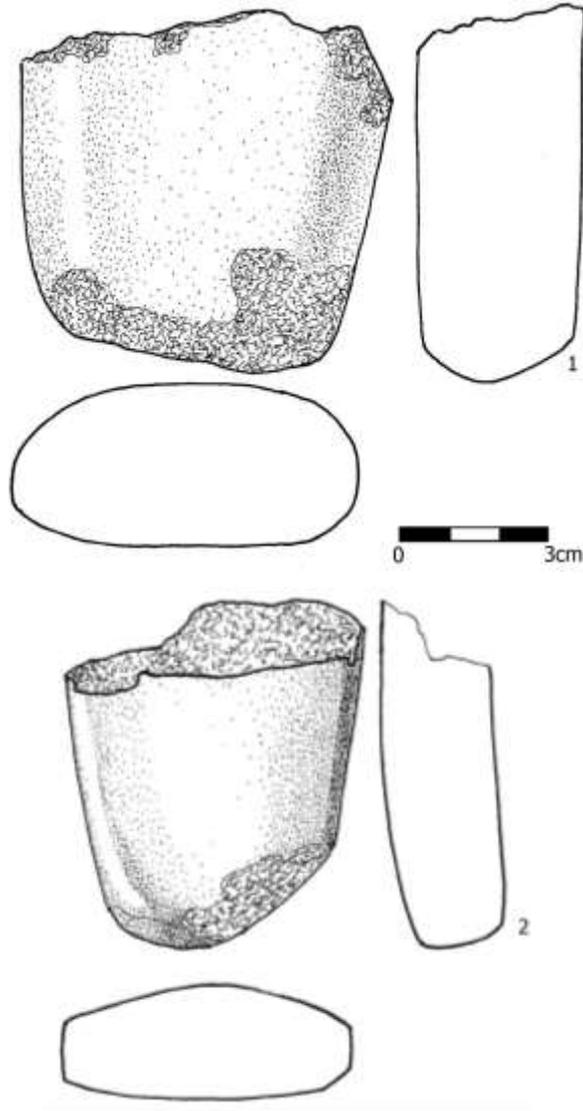


Fig. 9. Miercurea Sibiului II, (Sibiu County), C₁₇, Vinča dwelling (?). Poximal fragments of *cob* axes: 1. Light grey-greenish with white spots; 2. Proximal fragment

of axe made of *chaille*.

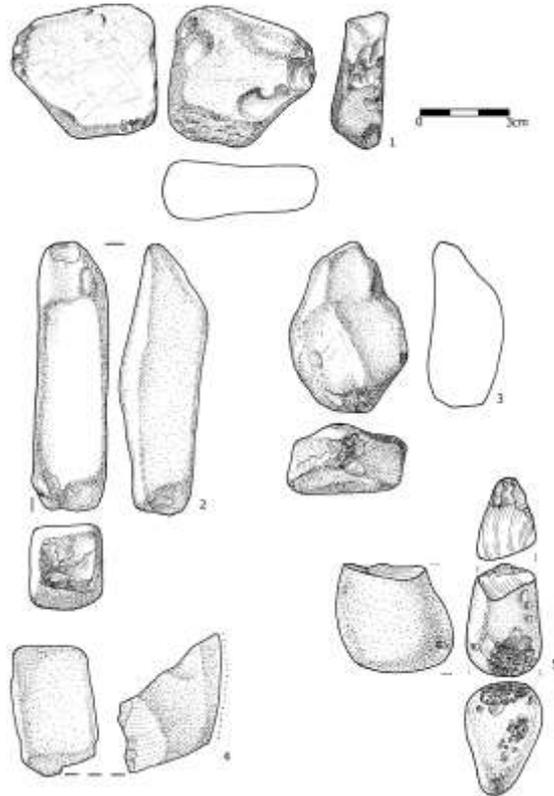


Fig. 10. Cristian I (Sibiu County), L₁ (C₄₀) Starčevo-Criș ritual dwelling, polishes with red painting in dents: 1-4. *Argilite* red ocher; 5. *Jasp* with ochre.

Through the etnographic analogy, we notice a series of objects from Starčevo-Criș dwellings, that present the same characteristics, with a well defined anatomical shapes, good flattening and oxides of some mineral substances of dark-red colour as Florescu also describes it.

An important lot of polished materials are the polishes (fig. 10-13). These have been described at Cristian I, C₄₀ (fig. 10; 11/1 (Luca 2015, p. 133, photo 78), Cristian III (fig. 11/2) or Miercurea Sibiului II (fig. 11/3; 12). The piece from fig. 12/b can be – with the normal equidistance – also the handle of a stone pot.

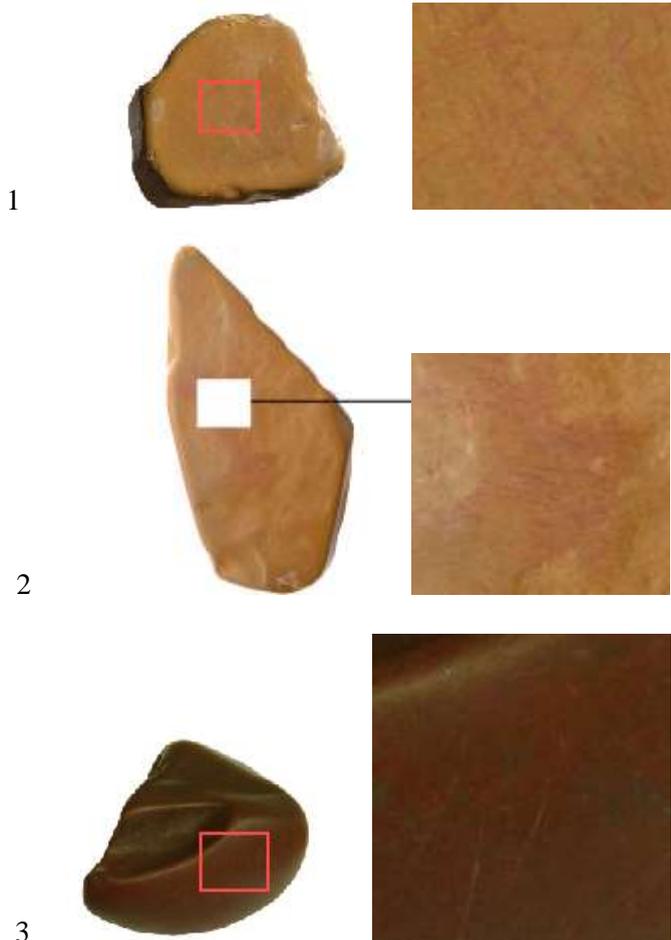


Fig. 11. Polishers. „*Bdicaș*” in a Romanian popular term . 1. Cristian I (Sibiu County). Starčevo-Criș I. Frecător/lustruitor cu pigment roșu în striățiile de uzură; 2. Cristian III (Sibiu County). Starčevo-Criș III. Polisher, remains of red pigment with usage striations; 3. Miercurea Sibiului II (Sibiu County), C₂₅, Starčevo-Criș dwelling, polisher of brown-reddish *argilit*.

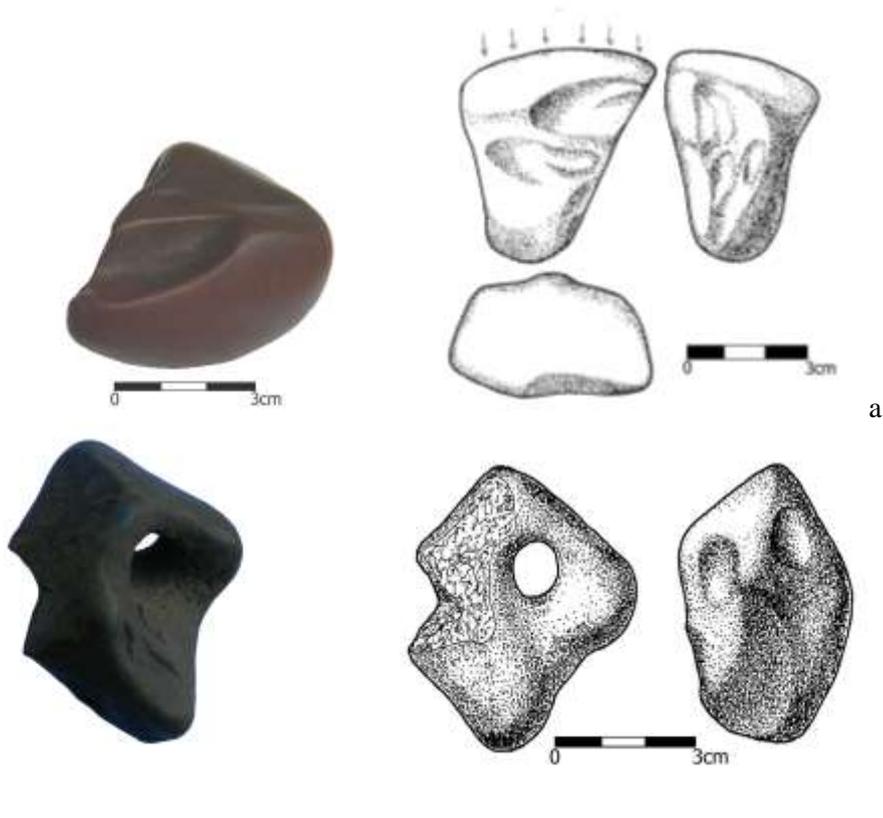


Fig. 12. Miercurea Sibiului II (Sibiu County), Starčevo-Criș dwellings: a. C₂₅, polishers of brown-reddish *argilit*; b. C₁₇, polisher of brown-reddish *argilit-cuarțit*.

The general observation is – in all three studied sites – that the way of polishing, but also of usace of some special pigments in this action, is quasi-identical the in the first three pahses of Starčevo-Criș (I-III) culture. All the polishers from fig. 11 keep this obvious marks.

At Cristian I the variety of polishers – as shape – it is very large. This affirmation can be exemplified through many archaeological materials already published (Luca 2015, p. 131, fig. 97, p. 132, fig. 106 or p. 133, fig. 109).

The percutors/polishers from Cristian I (Luca 2015, p. 133, fig. 108 – the piece is not being used for this article)(fig. 14)(Luca 2015, p. 131, fig. 96 – a part of these can be also cult objects, of exchange) and Miercurea Sibiului II (fig. 15-17) are very numerous. They have a distinct characteristic. Ther repetitive and long usage has profiled them, in a special way, crating some prismatic or biconical shapes, very frewuent in the recent researched areas in the zone of Miercurea Sibiului-Cristian.

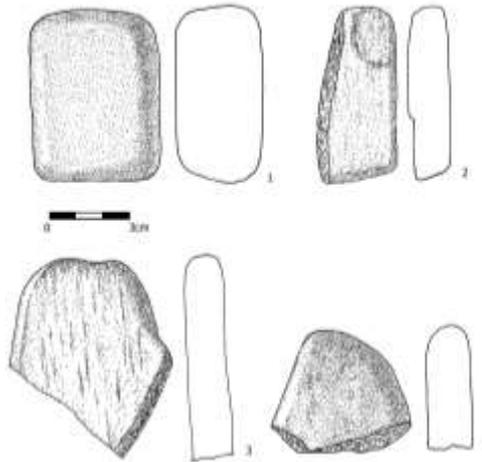


Fig. 13. Cristian I (Sibiu County). Polishers: 1. *Quartzite* (feature C₄); 2. *Grindstone* (feature C₄); 3. *Quartzite micaceu* in layers with blaj filons of piroclastite (feature C₄₀); 4. *Quartzite grindstone* (feature C₄).

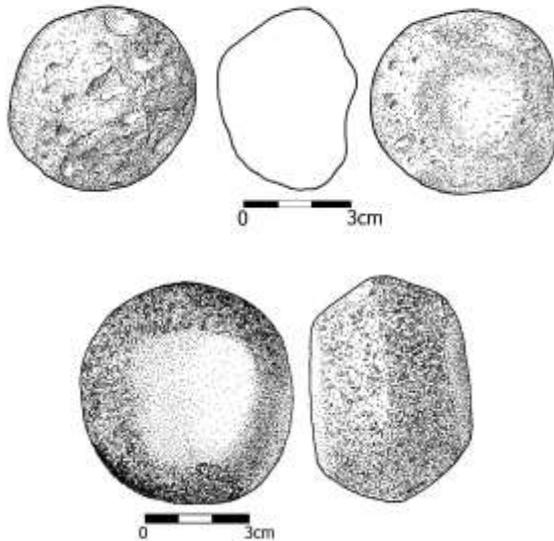


Fig. 14. Cristian I (Sibiu County). 1. Percutor made of olive colour *flint* (C₄₀); 2. Biconical percutor-polisher (C₇₉ sanctuary made of ritual pits).

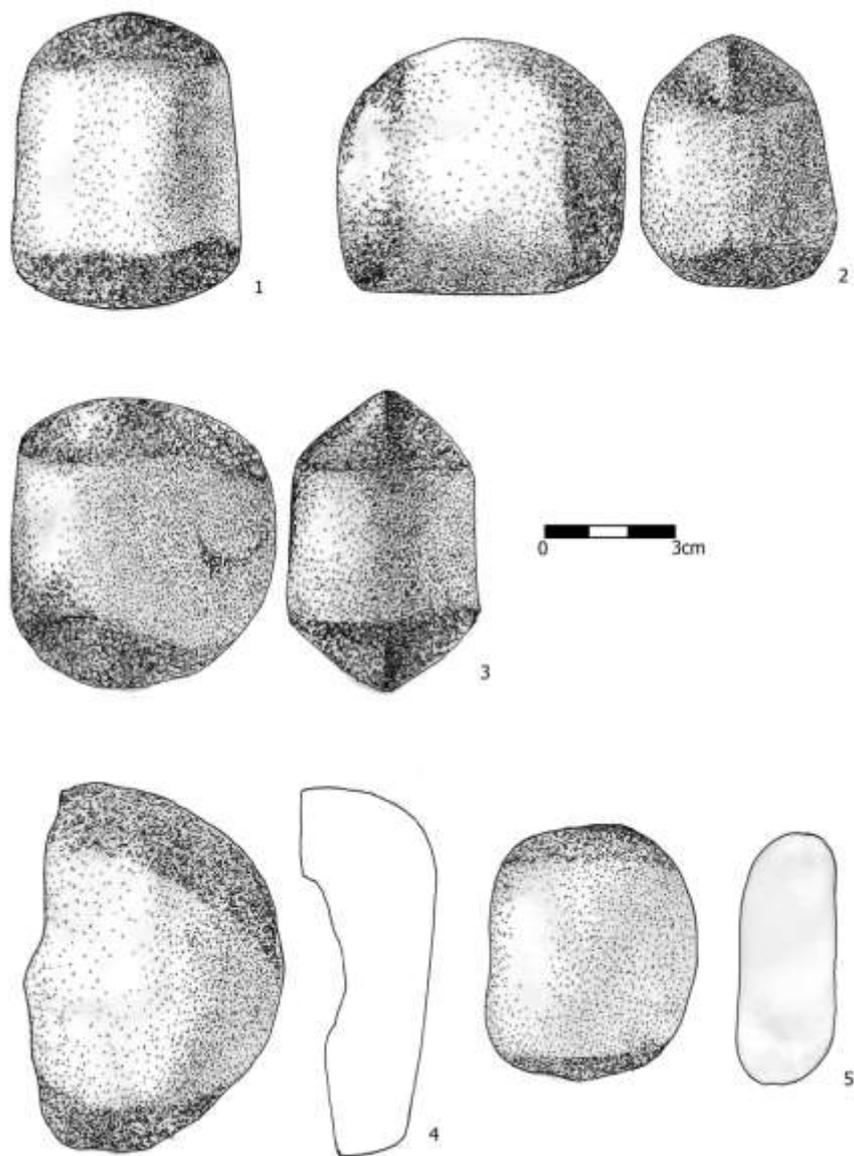


Fig. 15. Miercurea Sibiului II (Sibiu County). C₂₅. Percutor-polishers with net profilation in the polished zone; 1-2, 4-5 – *quartzite*; 3 – *quartz*.

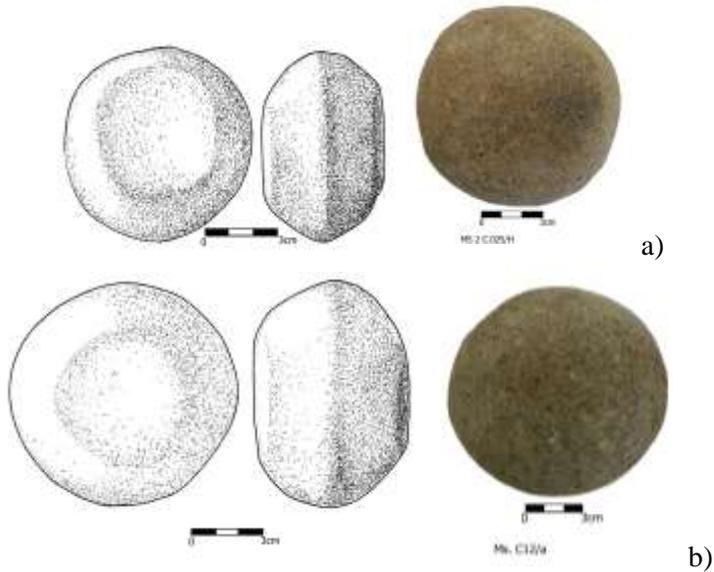


Fig. 17. Miercurea Sibiului II (Sibiu County). Starčevo-Criș dwellings. a. C₂₅; b. C₁₂: artefacts made of *silicified gridstone*.

The percutors themselves are at Miercurea Sibiului II (fig. 16/3; 18; 20). They have an obvious role in smashing raw vegetal material or in other activities that are hard to explain today.

Some percutors are being used also as polishers – without being able to name the succession of the etaphs – giving birth to some smooth surfaces, no matter of the durity of the rocks, the usace of the rock proving their long usage (fig. 14-20).

Either that they are used as percutor-axes (fig. 18-20) they present the same type of usage and profilaton, the same ad the other artefacts. A type of such rubber-polisher, presenting black pigment in the used part (we don't have any analysis for the black material), there is at fig. 20ș. Maybe this kind of objects were used for smashing the orgaing substance in order to obtain paint, as it was discovered at Cristian I (Luca 2015, p. 66-69; fig. 33-38; photo 36-37; analysis 1 (paint); feature C₅₈).

In what concerns the polishers, these have also a cultic role or they were used as exhchange values, and they are present at Miercurea Sibiului II (fig. 19) or at Cristian I (Luca 2015, p. 131, fig. 96).

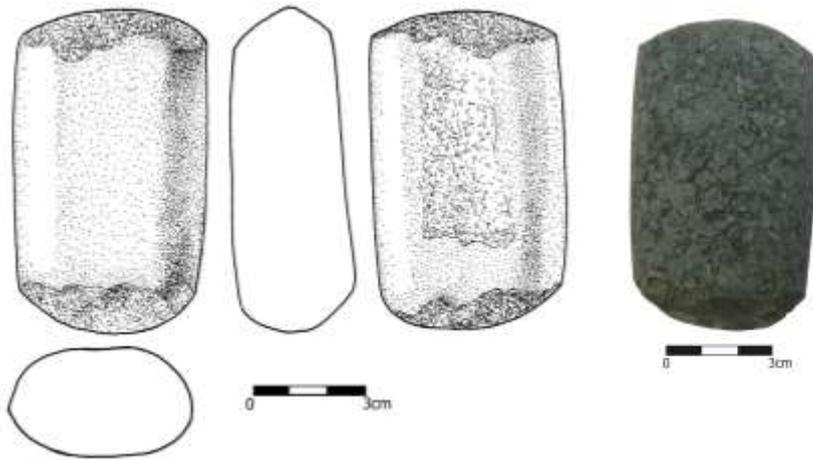


Fig. 18. Miercurea Sibiului II (Sibiu County), C₂₅, Starčevo-Criș dwelling. Hammer made of greenish *microdiorit*.

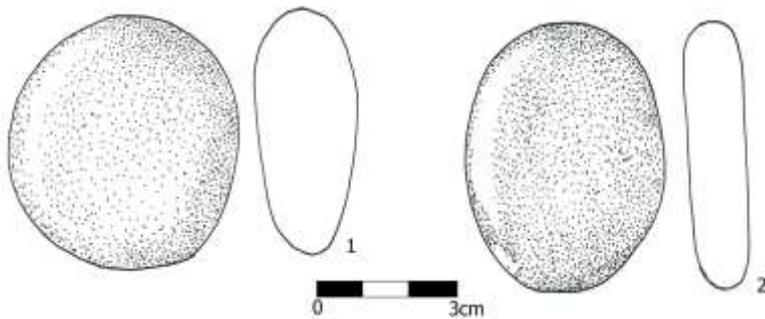


Fig. 19. Miercurea Sibiului II (Sibiu County), C₂₅, Starčevo-Criș. 1. *Quartite*; 2. *Argilit* – polishers or objects with cultic role, exchange values.

In this text we have tried to show the unicity of the material and spiritual synthesis produced at the impact of two civilisations: the Mesolithic one and the Neolithic one. It is obvious that the "salvation" of each ment – in some zones, and one of them is Transylvania, maybe the same in the Danube Gorge – also in creating some surviving models integrated in two components. Once with phase A of Vinča culture we can discuss about the definitive neolithisation of these zones.

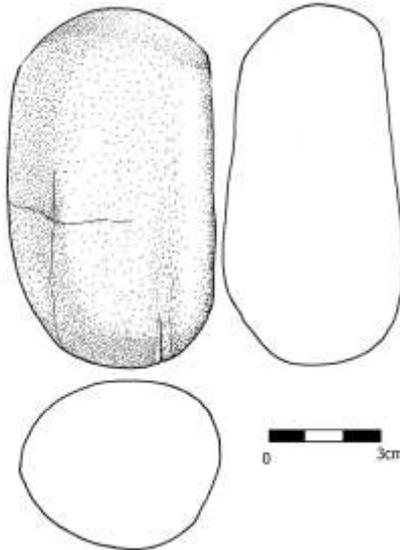


Fig. 20. Miercurea Sibiului II (Sibiu County), C₁₇, Starčevo-Criș, ochre-brik-like smasher made of *quartzite*, with remains of black pigments, with the extremities profilated conical from usage (probably omogenisator of black painting/pigment).

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Fig. 19. Miercurea Sibiului II (Sibiu County), C₂₅, Starčevo-Criș. 1. *Quartzite*; 2. *Argilite* – polishers or objects with cultic role, ore exchange value.

Fig. 20. Miercurea Sibiului II (Sibiu County), C₁₇, Starčevo-Criș, crasher made of ochre-brick like coloured quartz, with traces of black pigment, with the extremities conical profligate from usage (probably homogenizer for paint/black pigment).

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Photo 1. Cristian III. Zoomorphic statuette. Feature 583 (sanctuary – hut number 7 (B₇)).

Photo 2. Cristian III. Zoomorphic statuette. Feature 583 (sanctuary – hut number 7 (B₇)).

Photo 3. Cristian III. Zoomorphic statuette. Bovidae. Feature 583 (sanctuary – hut number 7 (B₇)).

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Photo 6. Cristian III. Axe/sceptre made of polished stone (sanctuary – hut number 7 (B₇)).

List of bibliographical abbreviations

ActaTS	<i>Acta Terrae Septemcastrensis</i> , Universitatea „Lucian Blaga” din Sibiu
AMET	<i>Anuarul Muzeului Etnografic al Transilvaniei</i> , Muzeul Etnografic al Transilvaniei, Cluj-Napoca
Apulum	<i>Apulum. Acta Musei Apulensis</i> , Muzeul Național al Unirii, Alba Iulia
BB	<i>Bibliotheca Brukenthal</i> , Muzeul Național Brukenthal, Sibiu
BEphNap	<i>Bibliotheca Ephemeris Napocensis</i> , Academia Română, Institutul de arheologie și istoria artei, Cluj-Napoca
BMN	<i>Bibliotheca Musei Napocensis</i> , Muzeul Național de Istorie a Transilvaniei, Cluj-Napoca
BrukAM	<i>Brukenthal. Acta Musei</i> , Muzeul Național Brukenthal, Sibiu
SSEP	<i>Studies into</i>
Transilvania	<i>Transilvania</i> , Sibiu

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