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# A FLANGED-AXE DISCOVERED AT PETREȘTI-DEALUL NETOTU (ALBA COUNTY) AND SOME REMARQUES ABOUT THE *DETECTORISTS*

**Abstract:** Starting from a recent discovery realized in the area of Petrești (Petersdorf, Sebeș, Alba County), the present study try to add new data to the bibliography of the end of Copper Age and Early Bronze Age on the Sebeș River Valley, as well as regarding the phenomenon of metal detection on the Romanian territory. The subject is not a new one, but it captures a paradigm shift in the case of the authors, in what we can define as: the management of the relations between public institutions of the Romanian State and owners of metal detectors interested of using these devices to discover archaeological artifacts. The most correct - deontological and moral - would be that the central idea to which we must refer permanently when we talk about this phenomenon, be that of the primordial attention paid to the context and the artifact i.e. the Cultural Heritage. As long as the legislation still in function, does not unequivocally define the concept of "fortuitous (accidental) discovery", and archaeological sites (at least those that are known officially!) are not signalized, marked and delimited, according to law (!), public representatives and archaeologists will be put frequently in the situation to find "emergency solutions" which must have in the central plan the idea of protecting the archaeological heritage.

**Keywords:** *Cultural Heritage, Flanged Axe, Copper Age/Early Bronze age, ritual deposit, metal detection.*

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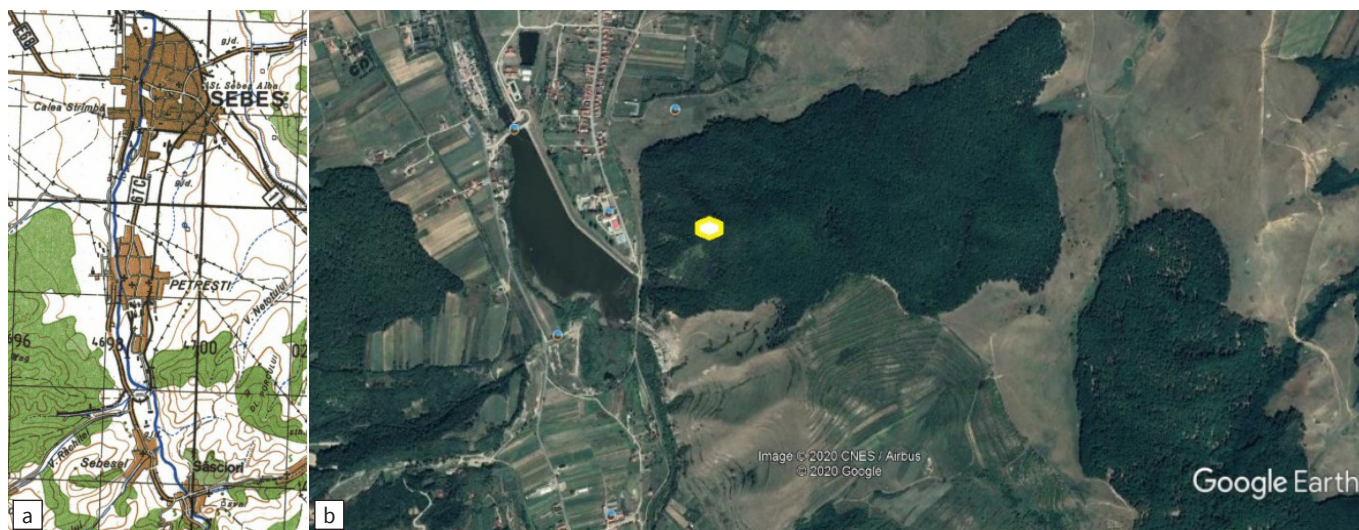
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**T**he bibliography dedicated to the protection of the Cultural Heritage of Romania, especially of the one related to archaeology, registered within the past 10 years, the more and more obvious relation in the matter incurred by the unprecedented raise of the phenomenon generated by those identified under the generic denomination of: *detectorists*<sup>1</sup>. Below, a case wherein, the *detectorist* proved to be an excellent partner, a character of (and with) good will, preoccupied by the recovery of not only the items, but also information related to it. It is not the first case of "good practice" in relation to the reaction of the *detectorist*, and, furthermore, of the public

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<sup>1</sup> BĂRBULESCU 2016; CIUȚĂ 2016; CIUȚĂ 2016b, CIUȚĂ 2019; BORANGIC/CIUȚĂ 2014; TEODOR 2014; TEODOR 2018; BUNOIU 2016; PAVEL 2017; PEDA-BĂLĂNICĂ *et alii* 2019. The first who *showed interest* on the topic, were the prosecutors and police officers, who, as of 2005, administered criminal files related to crimes committed against the archaeological heritage. About the semantics of the term we used: *detectorists*, see CIUȚĂ 2019. In most cases, *detectorists* were presented in a bad light, being responsible for the destruction of archaeological contexts as well as for the performance of synonym activities with crimes (qualified theft, antiques trafficking).



**Fig. 1.** Lower Basin of Sebeș River, with the indication of Netotu hill (a). Detail of the Netotu hill/forest, by highlighting the location the axe was discovered (b).

clerk and archaeologists<sup>2</sup>. As of September 31, 2019, the Alba County Police Department (I.P.J), under the provisions of the *Common Order of Trading and Possession of Metal Detectors* (2004), was issuing the *Authorization of Possession of Metal Detectors* to the citizen Adrian Herlea abiding in the municipality of Sebeș<sup>3</sup>. On October 23, 2019, the officer specialized on criminality within the field of cultural heritage, was notified, by phone, by the holder, of the discovery of some metallic items<sup>4</sup>, in the woods of Netotu, located on the Netotu Hill, pertaining to the administrative territory of Petrești (Petersdorf - now a neighbourhood of the municipality of Sebeș - Fig. 1). The following day, the pieces were submitted to the Museum "Ioan Raica" from Sebeș, where they are undergoing a restoration and inventory process. A first investigation was made, *ad-hoc*, by consulting the archaeological repertory<sup>5</sup>. The finding is that the indicated area was not part of an archaeological site. One of the pieces submitted, most certainly the oldest of them all, is the scope of the study herein.

### LOCATION OF THE DISCOVERY

As we are talking about artefacts of very special interest, belonging with a certainty to National Cultural Heritage -under the legislation in vigour - respectively the possibility that they might originate from another archaeological site, previously unknown, was decided upon the immediate performance of additional field investigations, in relation to the area and context of the origin of the metallic pieces. The reason for the delegation was a *crime scene investigation*, even though there was no suspicion for the

registration of a criminal activity. Netotu hill is located on the South-East from Petrești, on the right side of the valley of Sebeș river, north from Sebeșel, Săsciori and Dumbrava (and the micro-depression it marks off), practically being the last land form, pertaining to the geological structure of the Șureanului mountains, on the northern side, dominating by its height, the entire depression area of Sebeș-Petrești and providing excellent visibility towards the connection with Secașelor plateau (Râpa Roșie), respectively the Valley of Secașul Mare and further north, towards the Valley of Mureș (Fig. 1).

The hill dominates, from the south, the high terrace which represents the east frame of the Sebeș-Petrești depression, known under the name of „Hula”. Netotu hill practically represents the eastern pillar of the “entry gate” towards the mountain area of the Valley of Sebeș, being accessible with difficulty from the morpho-geologic stand point, with a strategic, dominant position. (Fig. 1). It divides the hydrographical basin of Sebeș from that of Secaș (Râhău, Câlnic). Its south-eastern side is marked on some maps, under the denomination of Dealul Porcilor (Pigs Hill).

The visit revealed the fact that the hill actually has two peaks, a main one (“*Guisora*” in the first Austrian survey = *Grușoara* or *Grușoru*?- Fig. 5), located into the south-central part, and a secondary one, located towards the western extremity, in close proximity to the area denominated *Coada Lacului*<sup>6</sup>, closely flanking the course of the river (Fig. 2). The access towards the second peak is very restrictive coming from Sebeșului valley, under the circumstance where the south, south-west and western flanks are impracticable. All that remains is the access on the Northern side, quite difficult as it is, as well as that of the back road, located on the watershed between the two peaks of the Netotu hill. This road up on the crest is continuing towards the South-East, by a series of secondary peaks (ex. *Măglii Peak*) towards Dumbrava, being a true access route as well as a border between territorial and administrative units, along various periods<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> PINTER/SANA 2018.

<sup>3</sup> At the County Police Department. Alba, upon the delivery of the *Authorization*, the owners of detectors undergo a rigorous training (“good practice”), regarding the legal, archaeological and bibliographic implications (documentation sources), so that no *detectorist* could claim to have not acknowledged the provisions of the regulatory documents in criminal matters.

<sup>4</sup> It is a lot of multiple objects, different in terms of functionality, belonging to various periods, which were presented, first, during the session of communications of the Socio-Humanistic Sciences Institute in Sibiu (dec. 2019). The entire lot, being in processing, will be published in the journal of the “Ioan Raica” Museum from Sebeș.

<sup>5</sup> REPALBA 199, p. 81.

<sup>6</sup> Is the southern limit of the lake on the Sebeș River, who belongs to the administrative territory of Petrești.

<sup>7</sup> POPA 2012, 112.



**Fig. 2.** Netotu hill, seen from the South-West (Sebeșel village). The red arrow indicates the location of the discovery of the axe. One could observe the inaccessible slopes south, south-west

The visit also revealed that on the secondary peak, the western one, having the semblance of a promontory which restricts the access to and towards Sebeșului valley, there is a mound, of a general circular shape, with a diameter of approximately 20 meters (Fig. 3a). Within the central area, there are regular dislevelments of the soil (ridges), which could be attributed to anthropic interventions (observation tower?), and into that area were discovered, on the surface, ceramic fragments, indicative of an habitation relating to the Coțofeni culture, more specific to the final phase of it (IIIc?).

At a distance of 60-70 meters towards east of this secondary peak (Fig. 3/a), on a true coastal road, with a width of 2-3 m. (Fig. 3/b), which basically connects it with the main peak (*Guisora*), on the lowest Northern side of the road segment resembling a saddle, on the Northern side of the road, following a straight line, is visible the pit wherefrom the artefact was extracted, which is the scope of the article herewith (Fig. 3/c-d). The author of the discovery mentioned that the signal of the detector was *extremely strong*, due to the massive core of the axe, although it was located at a depth of over 30-35 cm! The visual inspection of the soil in the pit, of a darker shade, and upon comparing it with the one of the surrounding area proves the complete lack of an anthropic habitation layer, the yellow-reddish forest soil, with intrusions specific to the mica-schist, being omnipresent on the surface (Fig. 3/c-d). On this access road, towards the promontory, more artefacts were discovered (antic, medieval and modern), thus confirming the access road capacity (an antic rustic road) towards the *observation point* on the

secondary peak, from various periods. The reconstitution of the pit led to the recovery of its characteristics: the shape of the entrance being approximately rounded, with a diameter of about 30 de cm. (Fig. 3/c-d). The maximum depth of the excavation is 40 cm, the pit having the general shape of a sack. No other artefact was associated to the axe, found in horizontal position, on the bottom of the pit.

In fact, the study of the antic maps (Fig. 4-5), reveals that the Netotul hill, also covered by woods at the time, was crossed by various rustic roads, of plane or coast, located on the level curves or on watershed, which connected, since the prehistoric times, the area of the Secașului Mare valley, respectively the Sebeșului depression with the middle and upper basin of Sebeș, with access through the an alpine gap area, south, towards the southern flanks of Șureanului mountains, towards the South-Carpathian area. The main road, North-South oriented, was starting on the meadow from the confluence of Secașul Mare with Sebeș and was evolving towards Săsciori, having a series of ramifications towards East (Răhău and Călnic) and towards West (the depression of Sebeș, including towards the secondary peak where the axe was discovered (Fig. 5). The map suggestively indicates the extended summit of the Netotu hill, on the south-east, as well as *Vârful Măglii* ("*Moglie*" on the Austrian map).

Upon analysing the second topographic Austrian rise (Fig. 5), we will have found that there is a change in the network of communication roads, in the sense that from the area located on the saddle connecting the two



**Fig. 3.** Details of the context of the discovery: the secondary peak seen from the north (a); the road leading to the main peak, with the pit, seen from the east (secondary peak in the background) (b); the pit where the axe was discovered at the time of the re-identification (c) and after excavation (d)



**Fig. 4.** Detail of the First Austrian Topographic Survey (*The Josephin*<sup>8</sup>, 1769-1773) with the Netotu Hill and communication roads. The red dot indicates the place of discovery

peaks, there is an access road (as an intersection) directly towards the Valley of Sebeş. The hill bears the denomination of "Dialul Kakovi", according to the denomination of the village crossed by the road between Săsciori and Răhău/Câlnic, east, nowadays known as Dumbrava. This map is very successful in highlighting the excellent strategic position of the secondary hill peak which dominates the Sebeş Valley, by controlling the Northern side (Petreşti, Sebeş) and the South (Sebeşel, Săsciori, Dumbrava), with a direct link towards the East (Răhău, Dumbrava, Câlnic), by the summit road, along the extended knoll of the hill.

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE ARTEFACT

The flanged axe (*Randleistenbeil*) (Fig. 6), is the shape of a trapeze, with the long sides slightly curved inwards, having a total length of 13,3 cm and the blade slightly curved outwards. The latter has a width of 6,5 cm, and opposite end, 2,6 cm. The maximum thickness of the sides is 1,9 cm, that of the body of the axe itself is 1,2 cm. The weight is 410 g. The exterior displays the original patina, noble, dark-green, revealing the majority composition of copper<sup>9</sup>. Overall, the axe is slightly twisted around the longitudinal axle, almost unnoticeable at a first glance, being unclear whether this is because of a casting error, or a stigma of its use against a rough surface. The blade is not worn, except a small chip, pleading for its non-excessive use. The lateral lifted sides, vary in size, towards the middle, where they are the widest, towards the ends, where they almost disappear, before reaching the limits. They thus confer a lance-like shape to the piece, looking at it sideways. It is a piece with a general remarkable, balanced and symmetrical aspect.

A similar axe was discovered relatively recent (2015),

<sup>8</sup> Source: [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/15/Josephinische\\_Lanaufnahme\\_pg202.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/15/Josephinische_Lanaufnahme_pg202.jpg). Accessed 24 August 2020. Osterreiches Staatsarchiv, Kriegsrarchiv, B IX 715, f. 202. *Theil des Muhlembacher und Rheismarker Stuhls*.

<sup>9</sup> Up until now, the artefact did not benefit of a metallographic analyse, but this endeavour is in the attention of the authors, following in the near future to perform the aforementioned test.



Fig. 5. The second topographic Austrian survey (*The Franciscan*<sup>10</sup>, 1807). The red dot indicates the place of discovery

in the *Făgetul Sălicii* forest (Sălicea village, township of Ciurila, Cluj county) "most likely in secondary position"<sup>11</sup>, close to a woody hill peak, whereupon a tumulus was seen, having a diameter of approx. 6 m. The discovery was also the work of a *detectorist*<sup>12</sup>. Older than the discovery of a similar axe at Bretea Mureșană-*Măgura Sârbilor*<sup>13</sup>. Ultimately, in Prahova county, also in 2015, at Tohani (township of Gura Vadului) a similar artefact<sup>14</sup>, was discovered, also by a detectorist (!), and therefore, such repeated findings, will make us, insist on this phenomenon which continues to grow.

### THE CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL ORIGIN OF THE AXE

The flanged axes (*Randleistenbeil*) are spread throughout the entire prehistoric Europe<sup>15</sup>. Considering they are very similar in shape to the *flat axe* - seen as the simplest typology - whereof the longitudinal sides were thickened, in order to provide a better grasp of the tale, one could assume that they could have been invented, independently,

throughout various geographic-cultural areas<sup>16</sup>, but also that they could define the early stages of occurrence and development of this type of artefact, associated to large socio-historical phenomenon. Functionally, the evidence points to a double role: tools and weapons. Alexandru Vulpe classified the flanged axes in several variants, the piece accidentally discovered in Petrești - like those from Sălicea and Bretea Mureșană - to the Șincai type<sup>17</sup>.

From the chronologic and cultural viewpoint, the flanged axes discovered in Transylvania, including those of Șincai type, is a matter whereupon the specialists agreed that there is still a degree of uncertainty<sup>18</sup>. Usually, they are attributed to the Early Bronze age<sup>19</sup>, but some pieces, more evolved, were previously recorded into the Middle Bronze<sup>20</sup>. Lately nonetheless, more and more researchers, accepted the fact that this type of axe, was familiar to the communities during the Coțofeni culture<sup>21</sup>, whilst there are still reservations<sup>22</sup>.

It is not excluded that some ceramic Coțofeni pieces, III final phase (b-c), discovered on the superior slope of the

<sup>10</sup> Source: <https://mapire.eu/hu/synchron/europe-19century-secondsurvey/europe-18century-firstsurvey/?layers=158%2C164&right-layers=163%2C165&bbox=2620910,5818943223%2C5761939,00736166%2C2628152,9903243426%2C5766716,321629483>, accessed at 25 August 2020.

<sup>11</sup> WITTENBERGER/ROTEA 2015, 20.

<sup>12</sup> WITTENBERGER/ROTEA 2015, 20.

<sup>13</sup> WITTENBERGER/ROTEA 2015, p. 21, cf. I. Ferenczi *Régészeti Kutatások Kolozsvarott 1*, Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai, series Historia, 2, 1962, 41.

<sup>14</sup> PREDĂ-BĂLĂNICĂ *et alii* 2019, 323-324. 325-326.

<sup>15</sup> VULPE 1975, 65-67, tafel 37; WITTENBERGER/ROTEA 2015, 20, note 6 with corresponding bibliography. PREDĂ-BĂLĂNICĂ *et alii* 2019. I am taking the opportunity to thank to our colleague Florin Gogâltan, for his kind support in accessing the speciality related literature.

<sup>16</sup> WITTENBERGER/ROTEA, 2015, 20-21.

<sup>17</sup> VULPE 1975, 66-67, WITTENBERGER/ROTEA 2015, 21.

<sup>18</sup> WITTENBERGER/ROTEA, 2015, 20-21; PREDĂ-BĂLĂNICĂ *et alii* 2019, 325.

<sup>19</sup> Coțofeni culture is also part of this period: Discussions on the terminology which is extremely lacking unity see POPA 2009, POPA 2015 - see also discussions on the terminological and cultural designation of the Coțofeni culture.

<sup>20</sup> WITTENBERGER/ROTEA 2015, p. 21.

<sup>21</sup> ROTEA 1993, 66; POPA 2009, p. 11; WITTENBERGER/ROTEA, 2015, 21; PREDĂ-BĂLĂNICĂ *et alii* 2019, 325.

<sup>22</sup> CIUGUDEAN 2000, 35-36; CIUGUDEAN 2002, 98; cf. PREDĂ-BĂLĂNICĂ *et alii* 2019, 325.

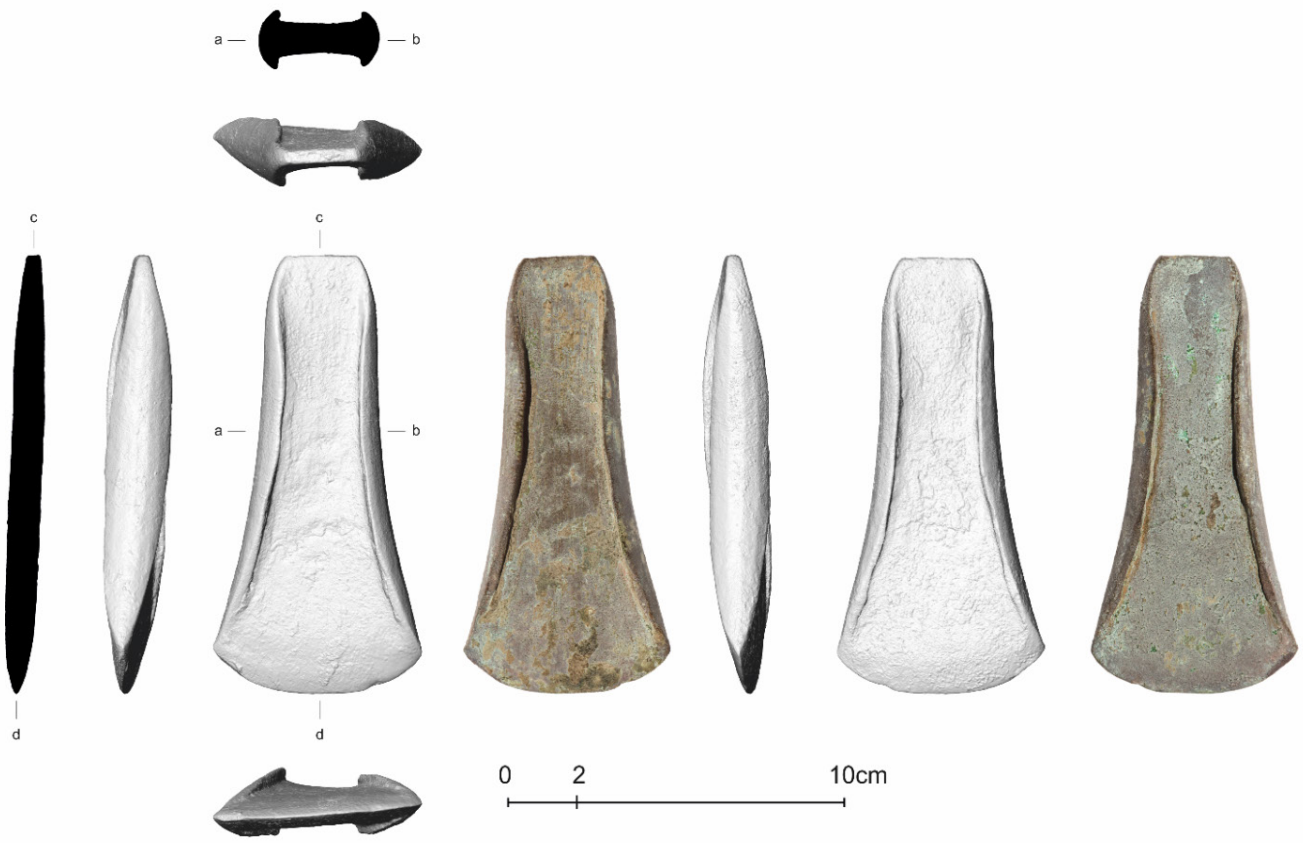


Fig. 6. Flanged axe (*Randleistenbeil*) discovered at Petrești-Netotu Hill (photo C. Șuteu)

secondary peak, having a tumulus aspect, and could plead for a possible association of the deposition of the axe, with the carriers of this culture. Especially that not far, towards east, at approx. 6 km, lies the contemporary settlement of Călnic<sup>23</sup>, wherefrom, a different flange-axe might have originated<sup>24</sup>. Petre Roman used to associate similar pieces discovered at Șincai, and Călnic with major sites, such as Coțofeni IIIb-c<sup>25</sup>, investigated within the perimeter of these localities. Other similar pieces were discovered in the immediate vicinity of the settlement of late Coțofeni (IIIC) at Sălicea-Făgetul Sălicii and Bretea Mureșană-Măgura Sârbilor<sup>26</sup>.

Recently, on the occasion of surveying the settlements of Coțofeni in the hilly area of Sebeș valley<sup>27</sup>, C.I. Popa was presenting a series of sites of Coțofeni type discoveries, located into the depression area of Sebeșel-Răchita, Săsciori, Laz, Căpâlna, the area located south in relation to the site of discovery of the axe. The intense habitation of this segment of Sebeșului Valley, during the Coțofeni culture, indicates an interest related to the local resources and the occupation of a strategic position. The closest discovery site is that from Săsciori-Vârful Măglii<sup>28</sup>, found, south-East, in the extension of the summit which is making the connection with the main peak of Netotu hill, Dumbrava-Pojeră - also located South-East, on the same coast - Sebeșel-Gorgan and Sebeșel-

*Pârloage*<sup>29</sup>.

Observing the map proposed by C.I. Popa, one finds that the site from Netotu Hill closes up north, naturally, the entire flank (*extended summit*) which limits on the East the micro depression Sebeșel-Săsciori-Dumbrava, located at the end of the summit road. Such location of settlements or observation sites, incur the necessity of observation and control possibility of potential commercial roads by the inhabitants of such communities.

The site of discovery from Coțofeni on the Netotu Hill seems to be the pendant on the right side of Sebeșului valley (east) of that from Răchita-Vârful Zăpozii, with the observation that it is much closer to the river course, making it even harder to access. Should we accept the affiliation of the axe to the late Coțofeni settlement on the secondary peak of the Netotu Hill, then we could complete, happily so one might say, the overview of the settlements belonging to that period within the hilly area of Sebeș Valley<sup>30</sup>. The side on the Netotu Hill closes and controls up North, the cram of settlements within the hilly area of Sebeșului Valley, and in addition, provides control of the access towards East, to Dumbrava (Cacova)-Răhău-Călnic, area with a consistent presence, pertaining to the Coțofeni culture.

According to the authors M. Wittenberger and M. Rotea, pieces of this type might be also attributed to the cultural realities from the Early Bronze (BT) II (Copăceni,

<sup>23</sup> ROTH 1942, 189-214; ROTH 1943, 440-459.

<sup>24</sup> VULPE 1975, 66-67.

<sup>25</sup> ROMAN 1976, 43-47, CIUGUDEAN 2000, 35-36.

<sup>26</sup> POPA 2009, 11; WITTENBERGER/ROTEA 2015, 21.

<sup>27</sup> POPA 2012.

<sup>28</sup> POPA 2012, 98-111.

<sup>29</sup> POPA 2012, 333, Fig. 16.

<sup>30</sup> POPA 2012, 133-181. In the most actually accepted version, we speak about *Enolithic* or *Copper Age* (POPA 2015).

Șoimuș, Schneckenberg, Jigodin)<sup>31</sup> or from the Middle Bronze age (Wietenberg), but nevertheless remarking that we need to consider the much more sophisticated type of metal axes, specific to them (axes with transversal glove hole)<sup>32</sup>. The closest site BT II from the discovery site of the axe herein, is that from Petrești-La Țiglărie<sup>33</sup>, located approx. 2 km north, on the meadow of Sebeș river. It is thus not excluded, the use of the secondary peak of the hill, as observation point for the community which inhabited the settlement from Petrești-Țiglărie. Some materials are attributed to the Livezile group (BT I), on the site Săsciori-*Virful Măglii*, the next prominent hill peak towards the south, in the extension of the area where our axe was discovered, that yet, some authors assign to the late Cotofeni. The contemporary materials of this horizon were found at Răhău-Dealul Șipotelor<sup>34</sup> and even Petrești-Groapa Galbenă<sup>35</sup>.

Although this type of artefact is quite spread throughout Central Europe, it appears within the Carpathian-Danube area, in small numbers<sup>36</sup>. Most of the discoveries belong to the intra-Carpathian area<sup>37</sup>, although, within the last years, into the extra-Carpathian area, such pieces were often discovered, especially in relation to funerals<sup>38</sup>. Into the South-Western part of Transylvania, there were known, up until now, four pieces which could be considered to fit this typology. Two of them are the result of random discoveries nearby, respectively at Călnic and Sebeș<sup>39</sup>. The piece from Călnic is narrower, with an almost rectangular shape, sides slightly lifted and arched blade, and the one from Sebeș is trapezoidal in shape, with sectional sides. From the typology stand point, the pieces from Călnic represent a simpler form and were initially considered to belong to the Early Bronze Age<sup>40</sup>, whereas the one from Sebeș, although processed in copper, was attributed earliest to the end of Early Bronze Age<sup>41</sup> or even to the Middle Bronze Age, being included by Al. Vulpe as of *Partoș variety*<sup>42</sup> and linked to the Wietenberg culture, by I. Andrițoiu<sup>43</sup>. Also in connection to the Wietenberg culture, is considered by N. Boroffka who is assigning it to the MN2 period, of variety MN2-a<sup>44</sup>. Together with the piece from Alba Iulia-*Partoș*<sup>45</sup>, there is another piece discovered in Râmeț-La *Cruci*<sup>46</sup>. In that respect is visible a frequency in the discovery of such pieces, in the high areas, on hill tops which control areas of passage depressions (Sălicea,

Bretea Mureșană, Petrești, Tohani), that without failure could give special significance to such type of deposits, associated to the phenomena of migration or periodicity of communities.

Recent findings within the extra-Carpathian area, in Prahova, represented by flanged axes that were discovered, plead towards an earlier chronological designation<sup>47</sup>, which indicates a cultural position that seems to belong to the final Eneolithic period (Cernavoda II)<sup>48</sup>, respectively related to Yamnaya horizon. This sets up the premises of a future reconsideration and rearrangement of the chronology of such artefacts "on more solid grounds"<sup>49</sup>

The depth whereto the artefact was discovered, "over 35 cm, maybe even 40"<sup>50</sup>, proves that it was not lost or abandoned<sup>51</sup>, its location on the Northern side, close to an abrupt slope of the access road towards the top which housed the settlement/observation point (crest road), within the area resembling a saddle (roads intersection?), being rather the result of an intentional deposition, most likely with possible spiritual connotation, probable a votive deposit in the vicinity of a settlement.

The flanged axe indubitably represents a piece of great value, a symbol of power and prestige enjoyed by its owner, at a certain point. Some specialists associate it to the funeral rituals<sup>52</sup>, without the exclusion of the functionality previously worded. This prestigious object, suggests an elaborated socio-economic system, based on a complex production technology, but also trade, and not lastly, on the existence of an elite, military and spiritual, capable to sustain production by local, regional, possibly even extra-regional trade with such items<sup>53</sup>. All these make the discovery from Petrești-*Netotu Hill* highlight the novel aspects of the behaviour of the communities of the final Eneolithic and/or the Early Bronze Age, within the area of Sebeșului Valley, at the contact of the mountain passage with the depression area of Sebeș-Petrești, area of multiple cultural and prehistoric connotations.

## CONCLUSIONS

For a long time ignored or even hidden, the topic of the *detectorists* from Romania cannot be avoided anymore, considering the disastrous consequences incurred by the use of metal detectors within areas of archaeological potential, previously not found, or worse, on sites researched and surveyed by individuals who did not possess the professional training/qualification within the field. Upon the installation in Romania of the democratic regime (1989), the phenomenon of "treasures hunt" occurred relatively quick, perceived as a safe source of becoming rich and less as a *hobby*, reaching considerable proportions, by the quality and quantity of

<sup>31</sup> In the archaeological repertory of Alba county, 60 funeral *tumulus* are mentioned at 1 km west from the village, (În Vii), having 1-2 meters high and a circumference of 8-23 m., without being mentioned their designation (RepAlba 1995, 141).

<sup>32</sup> WITTENBERGER/ROTEA 2015, 21.

<sup>33</sup> POPA 2001, 83.

<sup>34</sup> POPA 2001, 83 sqq.

<sup>35</sup> POPA 2001, 83 sqq.

<sup>36</sup> ANDRIȚOIU 1993, 99. We believe that this assertion was related to the state of the research. The last ten led to the discovery of a large number of flanged axes, their number doubling.

<sup>37</sup> PREDA-BĂLĂNICĂ *et alii* 2019, 325.

<sup>38</sup> PREDA-BĂLĂNICĂ *et alii* 2019, 325.

<sup>39</sup> VULPE 1975, 66, nr. 337-338, pl. 37/337-338..

<sup>40</sup> ANDRIȚOIU 1993, 95; CIUGUDEAN 1996, 122.

<sup>41</sup> CIUGUDEAN 1996, 123.

<sup>42</sup> VULPE 1975, 66, nr. 337-338, pl. 37/337-338.

<sup>43</sup> ANDRIȚOIU 1993, 95.

<sup>44</sup> BOROFFKA 1994, 235.

<sup>45</sup> ANDRIȚOIU 1993, pl. VII/13.

<sup>46</sup> BOROFFKA 1994, pl. 114/1.

<sup>47</sup> PREDA-BĂLĂNICĂ ET ALII 2019, 325 note 9. Radiocarbon date obtained, 4318 ± 43 BP (3090 -2870 cal. BC 2σ 95.4% probability, greatly lower the absolute chronological position of this type of artefact

<sup>48</sup> PREDA-BĂLĂNICĂ *et alii* 2019, 325.

<sup>49</sup> PREDA-BĂLĂNICĂ *et alii* 2019, 325.

<sup>50</sup> Information provided by Adrian Herlea, on site.

<sup>51</sup> As it seems that most pieces discovered by means of metal detectors into the Netotu forest, are.

<sup>52</sup> PREDA-BĂLĂNICĂ *et alii* 2019, 325. At Ploiești-Triaș I, Păulești IV, Aricești VII, these axes were found in several tombs in tumuls, with inhumed in a crouched position, associated with ceramics and copper and shell ornaments.

<sup>53</sup> WITTENBERGER/ROTEA 2015, 21.

discovered artefacts, extracted from the original context, illegally exported and capitalized on the *Black Antiques Market*. In the late 90's of the past century and the beginning of 2000, a series of famous sites (from Transylvania, Banat and Dobrogea) fell victims to the detectorists, possessed by a mercantile spirit by excellence, the irony being that within a short period of time they would have discovered unique pieces or even exceptional rare items<sup>54</sup>, putting the archaeological scientific community into a circumstance which is difficult to define. Judicial investigations performed on various occasions revealed a much wider phenomenon than initially suspected, which tended to spread national wide, but also to "specialize", treasure hunters becoming more efficient. Following 2010, it became obvious that the use of metal detectors was no longer a local, area related or occasional phenomenon, registering notable evolution, from the quantity and quality stand point<sup>55</sup>.

I was drawing the attention, in a study recently published<sup>56</sup>, on the changes of the socio-professional spectrum of the authorized owners of metal detectors, registering more and more Romanian citizens applicants who currently have, or had residence in countries within the European Union, individuals graduates of higher education institutions, who personally experienced the rules of the societies with traditions in the matter of democracy, rights of the citizens and civilization. It was for the first time when favourable circumstance existed for this category, let us call it pseudo-professional, that was previously anathemized (rightfully so!), but that was hinting that a paradigm change is in order, trying to show a new facet of the *detectorist*, who was not mandatory to play the role of "nomina odiosa". The last years led to the reconfiguration of the image of detectorists, who organized themselves rigorously as associations, started field related forums on the social medial, laid the basis for conventions national wide, holding colloquiums and trying to portray themselves as *benevolent* within the use of metal detectors, by means of the most efficient and powerful tool at hand: communication<sup>57</sup>.

The position of archaeologists in Romania, quite uninvolved in acknowledging the changes incurred in the composition and structure of the groups of *detectorists*, remained, in its guidelines, unchanged, dominated by a

<sup>54</sup> As a reminder, in short, the multispiral gold bracelets, the silver necklaces, the gold and silver monetary treasures from Sarmizegetusa Regia, the two bronze *tabulas* of laws from Troesmis, the iron "shields" (icons, roundels), with animal representations from Pietra Roşie Fortress, the necklace with pendants and gold earrings from Căpâlna Fortress, the gold vessel from the Middle Bronze Age from Bistriţa etc.

<sup>55</sup> The first author of this study, is that who, under art. 5, p 10, of OG 43/2000 regarding the protection of archaeological sites, issues permits for the possession of metal detectors to those abiding in Alba County.

<sup>56</sup> About the stages of development of the psicho-social profile of the detectorists, see CIUTĂ 2016, CIUTĂ 2016b, CIUTĂ 2019; TEODOR 2014; TEODOR 2018.

<sup>57</sup> At present, there are over 7000 authorized *detectorists* in Romania. Their number "exploded" in 2020, especially after leaving the *state of emergency*, when many compatriots returned from various Western European states. They are assigned, theoretically (!), 41 police officers, whose task is, among many others, to ensure compliance with the law on the regime of use of detectors. The number of those who have detectors, but have not been authorized, is supposedly exceeding the first. In Romania, possession of a metal detector without authorization is considered a contravention, being punished with a fine between 25.000 and 75.000 lei (5.200-15.625 Euro).

main component or at least excessively moral one (*Jacobin type*), which can be associated to an *academic affected pudibondery*. The *detectorist* is perceived as the *uninitiated individual*, who, full of curiosity, hungry for publicity and money, having unlimited resources, by using methods and techniques lacking in *fair play* and evolving within the limit of the law (sometimes a foot beyond it!), almost always succeeds to destroy the most important element of the archaeological equation: context. In principle, this is true. The archaeological context the artefacts were preserved in is essential for its interpretation as well as for the significance of the gesture whereupon its presence in that location is based (by deposition, burial, loss). Direct digging for the item upon following the signal of the detector, without mapping the observable evidence in a professional manner, leads to the inevitable destruction of the layering and particularities related to the context. Therefore the loss of the context represents the loss of any possibility to come 'closer' historically, to the interpretation/understanding of its symbolism. For an archaeologist, this is similar to a tragedy, to an irreversible destruction. For the archaeological item, it is similar to the loss of its identity data. For the Cultural Heritage, it represents another missed chance to reunite the very unclear picture of the faraway eras and the guarantee of a *theoretical grope* for the interpretation of the artefact.

As such, it is more and more obvious that there are two *sides*, located from the beginning on opposite positions, and, although there have been previous timid trials to bring them to the same round of discussions, there was no notable progress made<sup>58</sup>. Moreover, the high number of uploads on the social media, accessible to *detectorists* and archaeologists equally, regarding discovered/decontextualized artefacts, led to a radicalization of the latter, who, as a consequence, proceeded to try repeatedly to change the legislation in force, which considers the discoveries made by the use of the metal detectors, being casual<sup>59</sup>. The tries did not give any actual result, but reflected quite strongly on the pages of the *detectorists*, who are very interested in maintaining the legislative *status-quo*. Disputes became even more intense, evidence of inflexible positions rigid, the only entity certainly losing in this circumstance being the one of the cultural heritage, which suffers tremendous losses. During this entire dispute, the entity who should have undertaken the role of arbitration and decider, according to the law, has been deemed uninterested.

We believe it is the case now, within the far too evolved stage of the dispute, to prove wisdom and use that wonderful tool which should not be missing when two parties wish to show good intentions: communication. The reaction of the owner of the metal detector, efficiently trained upon the picking-up of the certification, but also after, led to the possibility to retrieve almost completely the information related to the archaeological context of the artefact. Such information, connected to the previous historical and cultural data – regarding the characteristics

<sup>58</sup> TEODOR 2018, 16-19.

<sup>59</sup> We presented our point of view with respect to the legal unfoundedness of some acts issued by the ministers of culture (*Instruction 2* of 2016), which sought to remedy the mistake in the normative act that is the Law 182/2000 (CIUTĂ 2016, 145-150; cf. Teodor 2018, 17-18).





**Fig. 7.** Photos of the archaeological context poached in Eibenthal (Dubova Township, Mehedinți County)

of the contemporary settlements within the area – provided the possibility to interpret the functionality and scientific capitalization of this artefact. Therefore, the Sebeș Museum did not only collect a piece to be registered into the inventory and, at most to be displayed as part of the basic collection, but also was provided with the possibility to complete the particular image of the human communities during the end of Eneolithic and Early Bronze from the Valley of Sebeș. We can state that this is a happy case, wherein the new image of the *detectorist* from Romania is, under the circumstance one holds the possibility to change, radically so, showing that there are communication ways, very effective, that can lead to the collaboration between the *detectorists* and archaeologist specialists. The resolution is related to the availability of the archaeologists to actually get involved.

Ultimately, as a curiosity, but one that is related to the topic herewith, we are presenting the recent, well-known case of the four detectorists from the Czech Republic, who poached on September 2015, multiple archaeological sites in Romania<sup>60</sup>. During the course of the criminal investigations

<sup>60</sup> This is a case that was the subject of a criminal file (nr. 742/P/2015) investigated by the police officers within the Police Department of Hunedoara County, in 2015, following the information regarding several archaeological

upon performing the search of the storage media of electronic information, into the computer of one of them, a *folder* was found containing multiple photographs taken on the occasion of a performed detection, as the name of the folder suggests, within the area of Eibenthal (Dubova Township, Mehedinți County). The images show, that into a forest nearby a settlement, into a pit, two ceramic fragmentary vases were discovered (urn with a lid?), wherein three flanged axes were deposited, of various types and sizes together with four multi-spiralled gold rings and two bronze bracelets. Unfortunately, in this case, only the images were recovered, the pieces being *wanted* on national and international apps<sup>61</sup>.

We cannot conclude this study without finding that in the last 5 years, the absolute majority of the discoveries of artifacts of this type, of flanged axes, were discovered by using metal detectors, by people without specialized knowledge in archeology!

poaching activities into the Dacian fortresses in the Șureanu Mountains, Orăștiei area. Their criminal activity has been proven by several ways and means, including that of conducting investigations of the electronic information storage media.

<sup>61</sup> An *Expertise Report* about the artifacts from the photos was realized by dr. Corina Borș from the National Museum of Romanian History Bucharest.

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