



The stone tools of Sopot culture in Croatia

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The Sopot Culture is a representative of the typical Neolithic agriculture based on land cultivation. It developed on the basis of the late Starčevo Culture with strong influence of the Vinča Cultural Circle. During the Middle and Late Neolithic it was present throughout the northern Croatia. The population of the Sopot Culture lived in settlements located in lowlands, frequently in marsh areas, but always in the immediate vicinity of a river or creek. These settlements were surrounded by ditches or palisades (Dimitrijević 1968;1979).

This paper is based on an analysis of the lithic material from three sites of the Sopot Culture. These are Samatovci near Osijek, Bapska near Ilok, and Novoselci in the vicinity of Požega. The three sites are located in different areas that were covered by the Sopot Culture.

There is an exceptionally high number of lithic finds on the sites of the Sopot Culture; nonetheless no systematic analysis - typological, technological or functional - has ever been carried out. Chipped stone products are mostly blades, scrapers, flakes and cores. Arrowheads with thorns have also been found on the sites of that culture. The material for these products mostly belonged to the local types of primary and secondary chert. Although the presence of radiolarit of the Metzke type has also been noticed on some sites.¹⁾ In the range of chipped stone products, a special place is kept by those made of obsidian. The leading center of the obsidian production was undoubtedly in Samatovci near Osijek, where large amount of cores, flakes and small plates were discovered. The Samatovci obsidian is of Carpathian I type.

The polished stone tools were rather similar throughout the three phases of the Sopot Culture. There were various types of small flat trapezoid axes and chisels with noticeable wearmarks on the heads rather than on their blades, which indicates that they were used for wood processing. Both kinds of tools are also present in very small sizes ranging from 4 to 10 cm. These small items sometimes have no visible wearmarks, so that they could have

been used for polishing. However, no certain claims can be made given that a wearmark analysis has never been carried out on the Croatian finds. These types of tools were mostly made of chert, tuff and sandstone.

Shafted axes are also present in the Sopot Culture, although not in high numbers. They were mostly made of amphibolite and basalt.

Among the polished tools there is also a group of items with parallel sides, with no blade and with two blunt ends, that is, with two slightly rounded sides. On both sides there are visible wearmarks that indicate that they were used as pestles/hammers. This type of tools were mostly made of sandstone. Some axes, chisels and wedges that were damaged or broken while serving their original purpose were later also used as pestles.

Tools with rough, unpolished surface were mostly made of sandstone. There were several types of these tools: grinding stones, whetstones and grindstones. The most frequent type is grinding stone: a round, or almost rectangular tool, 3.5 to 5.5 cm long.

All the above mentioned types of stone that were used to make polished axes can be found in the Dinaride Ophiolite Zone and some of them are also available in the Slavonian Mountains where they can be found in primary layers and in creek sediments. Given the vicinity of primary and secondary sources it is highly probable that the stone used for the tools production is of local provenance. However, given that no detailed and systematic research has been carried out in the territory of Croatia and that there is no database regarding the primary rocks, the origin of the material, unfortunately still remains unconfirmed.

References

- Dimitrijević S., 1968: Sopotsko-lendelska kultura, Zagreb.
Dimitrijević S., 1979: Sjeverna zona, Praistorija jugoslavenskih zemalja II, Neolitsko doba, Sarajevo, 229-360.

¹⁾ The flaked tools from Samatovci were analysed by our colleagues from Hungary: Katalin T. Biró, György Szakmány and Zsolt Schleder