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THE WORKED BONE AND ANTLER FINDS FROM THE MIDDLE BRONZE AGE LATE
VATYA CULTURE SITE OF SOROKSÁR-VÁRHEGY

The Worked Antler

Worked red deer (*Cervus elaphus*) eye tine from a mature stag (Fig 17.5). Several chop marks at the base of the tine indicate that the tine was possibly separated from the antler beam with an axe, presumably after the raw material was pre-soaked. Similar cut marks may be seen along a 50 mm stretch of the tine on its concave side. The tip of the tool is broken but polish on the fracture surface shows that it may have been used afterwards. (greatest length along the outer curve of the tool: 250 mm, greatest diameter: 28.9 mm of truncation: 15.3 mm. Inv.No. 90.1.7.)

Worked red deer (*Cervus elaphus*) eye tine from a mature stag (Fig 17.2). The form of the cut marks at the base of the tine indicate they were made with a chipped stone tool used in a saw-like fashion. When the sawing reached the spongy interior of the antler the tine was simply snapped off from the beam. This antler specimen may represent debitage since there are no use wear traces anywhere on its surface. (greatest length: 87.8 mm, greatest diameter: 18.6 mm. Inv. No. 90.1.8.)

The Worked Bone

Upper part of a fragmented *perforator* made from the ulna of a small ruminant (Fig. 17, 3). The entire surface became highly polished while it was in use. At the distal end of the bone small parts of the interior were chipped away as the tool tip became worn. Three-quarters of the remaining length is covered with traces of chipped stone carving down to 4 mm above the tip with transverse cuts running around the entire length of the tool. These odd cuts, worn from the use polish, cause this object to stand out from other ulna perforators which are otherwise relatively common tools in the Hungarian Bronze age. (breadth of tip measured 5 mm above tip: 2.9 mm, length: 400 mm. Inv.No. 90.1.9.)

Scraping tool made from the back edge (*margo dorsalis*) of the proximal end of a red deer scapula (Fig 17.1). The raw material is not typical for this scraper type which was usually manufactured during the Vatya period from the ribs of large ungulates. It is an ad hoc tool produced from a scapula fragment which happened to break in a usable manner and was exploited as a tool. The opposite end or base of the tool is unworked. Traces of use and handling polish are barely visible on the working end which is consistent with the expedient nature of this specimen and shows it was not intensively used.

The use striations run over the edge of the tool which is also chipped: both sides of the tool were used. Such trace wear is typically found on tools used for scraping hide with little bits of grit on the hide's surface causing the striations to form. (greatest breadth: 22.5 mm, greatest thickness: 11.3 mm, breadth of working end 5

mm from edge: 22 mm, length of edge: 7.8 mm, Inv.No. 90.1.15.)

Typical Vatya culture *scraper* made from the rib of a large ungulate, possible cattle (*Bos taurus* L., Fig 17. 4). On one of the sides, the spongiosa of the bone was exposed as the compact wore away during use. Compared to the previous scraper (Inv.No. 90.1.15.) this specimen is more carefully worked with a highly polished edge which displays less damage from use. The edge of this broken tool thinned out as it was pressed against the skin. Probably, this tool was used in the softening or breaking the stiffened fibers of already prepared hide. (breadth of working end measured 5 mm from edge: 17.5 mm, length of edge: 5.9 mm, other measurements not available on this fragment Inv.No. 90.1.15.)

Conclusions

It is not possible to ascertain whether the two pieces of antler came from stags which were hunted or antler which had been gathered as raw material in the spring. Both antler specimens give more of an impression of deriving from manufacturing debitage although the larger of the two tines appears to have been slightly used in an expedient manner. In the Hungarian Bronze age, the beam and burr of antler racks were considered extremely valuable raw materials. Typically the tines were cut off the beam and not used since even smaller solid objects or ornaments could be better carved out of the thicker compact wall of the beam.

The high polish of the perforator fragment is worthy of special mention here because it indicates that the tool was long and intensively used. The particularity of this tool are the transverse cuts running around it.

In spite of the small number of worked bone from this site it is possible to say that the scrapers, (one made from a scapula fragment and the other more typically from a rib) are characteristic for the Middle Bronze age in Transdanubia and the Vatya culture in particular. The cruder specimen of this type was produced at the settlement in an expedient manner on a red deer scapula. The proportions and form of the two tools is more or less similar and difference are mainly due to variation in raw material and the degree to which the tools were actually used. The use striations on both tools point in all probability to their use in various aspects of hide preparation (scraping and softening respectively).

From the point of view of technology, the use of chipped stone tools to produce the scraping and cuts on these worked bone and antler specimens is worth mentioning here. Although one of the tines may have been chopped with the blade of an axe it still serves as a useful reminder that despite the name of the period metal was still used to produce tools and ornaments that were more

status symbols than everyday utensils for household work. The technique of grinding with an abrasive stone (ie sandstone), a technique usually employed in parallel

with chipped stone carving was not found in this assemblage. This is most likely related to the small sample size and does not have any other significance.

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