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SOME REMARKS ON THE TYPOLOGY OF BRONZE AGE DISC-BUTTED AXES IN LIGHT OF A BRONZE HOARD AND AN AXE VARIANT

Josyp Kobal'*

The study focuses on Bronze Age disc-butted axes in the Carpathian Basin, providing an evaluation of the type group based on the second hoard from Kvasovo/Kovászó in Transcarpathia/Zakarpattia Oblast (Ukraine). The related analysis revealed that, in contrast to the previous interpretation, B3c axes (in Ion Nestor's system) represent a separate strain of evolution, developing from B1-type disc-butted axes in the core distribution area of the Suciu de Sus/Felsőszőcs/Stanovo culture in the Upper Tisza Region. This result questions the relevance of all current typo-chronological classifications of disc-butted axes, calling for a re-evaluation.

A cikk a Kárpát-medencei bronzkori nyakkorongos csákányok problematikájával foglalkozik. A szerző a Kvászava/Kovászó II (Ukrajna, Kárpátalja) depó leleteiből kiindulva vizsgálja a kérdéskört. Az Ion Nestor-féle B3c formájú csákányokról kimutatta, hogy azok a korábbi nézetekkel szemben önálló fejlődési vonalat képeznek, és a B1 típusú nyakkorongos csákányokból alakultak ki a Felső-Tisza-vidékén, a felsőszőcsi/Suciu de Sus/Sztánava kultúra törzsterületén. E megállapítás kérdéseket vet fel a jelenleg létező, s a nyakkorongos csákányokra kidolgozott tipokronológiai rendszerekkel kapcsolatban, és aktuálissá teszi azok újraértékelését.

Keywords: *disc-butted axes, typological classification, re-evaluation, Bronze Age, Carpathian Basin*

Kulcsszavak: *nyakkorongos csákányok, tipológiai rendszerek, átértékelés, bronzkor, Kárpát-medence*

Disc-butted axes are among the most widespread weapon types in the Carpathian Basin, especially in the eastern parts (Soroceanu 2011, 234–239). High typological variability and rich and diverse ornamentation made axes a flagship type group behind systems modelling the entangled chronological relations of the local Bronze Age. Several papers, studies, and monographs focused on these finds (the essential ones comprising Nestor 1938; Lomborg 1960, 69–83; Popescu 1963; Mozsolics 1967, 33–49; Hänsel 1968, 62; Vulpe 1970, 66–99; Mozsolics 1973, 14–22; Kroeger-Michel 1983; Stuchlyk 1988, 291–306; David 2002, 47–281; for a detailed research history, see David 2002, 47–78). During the eight decades since Ion Nestor published his groundbreaking study on the subject, the typo-chronological models built and refined primarily on axe finds seemed to be fundamentally correct. The author of the present study, however, started having questions about the overall relevance of the existing classification systems as early as the 1980s upon encountering the second bronze hoard from Kvasovo/Kovászó (Kobal' 1985, 69–71).

Later, he tackled the problem in several papers but without really delving into the topic (Kobal' 1995, 195–198; Kobal' 1998, 36–38; Kobal' 2000, 36–37; Kobal' 2005, 254–255). The present study reveals the defects of the current typo-chronological systems of axes and proves the need for reconsideration. It will be done through the example of a particular disc-butted axe type variant (classified as B3c variant in I. Nestor's system).

The typological classification of disc-butted axes is based on the presence or absence and the shape, relative position, and size of certain morphological elements (disc, neck, shaft tube, a ridge connecting the neck and the blade). Exact types may also be distinguished by the order of importance or prevalence of these elements and the extent of elaboration. As for the existing typological systems, they seem correct regarding some main tendencies but are way too

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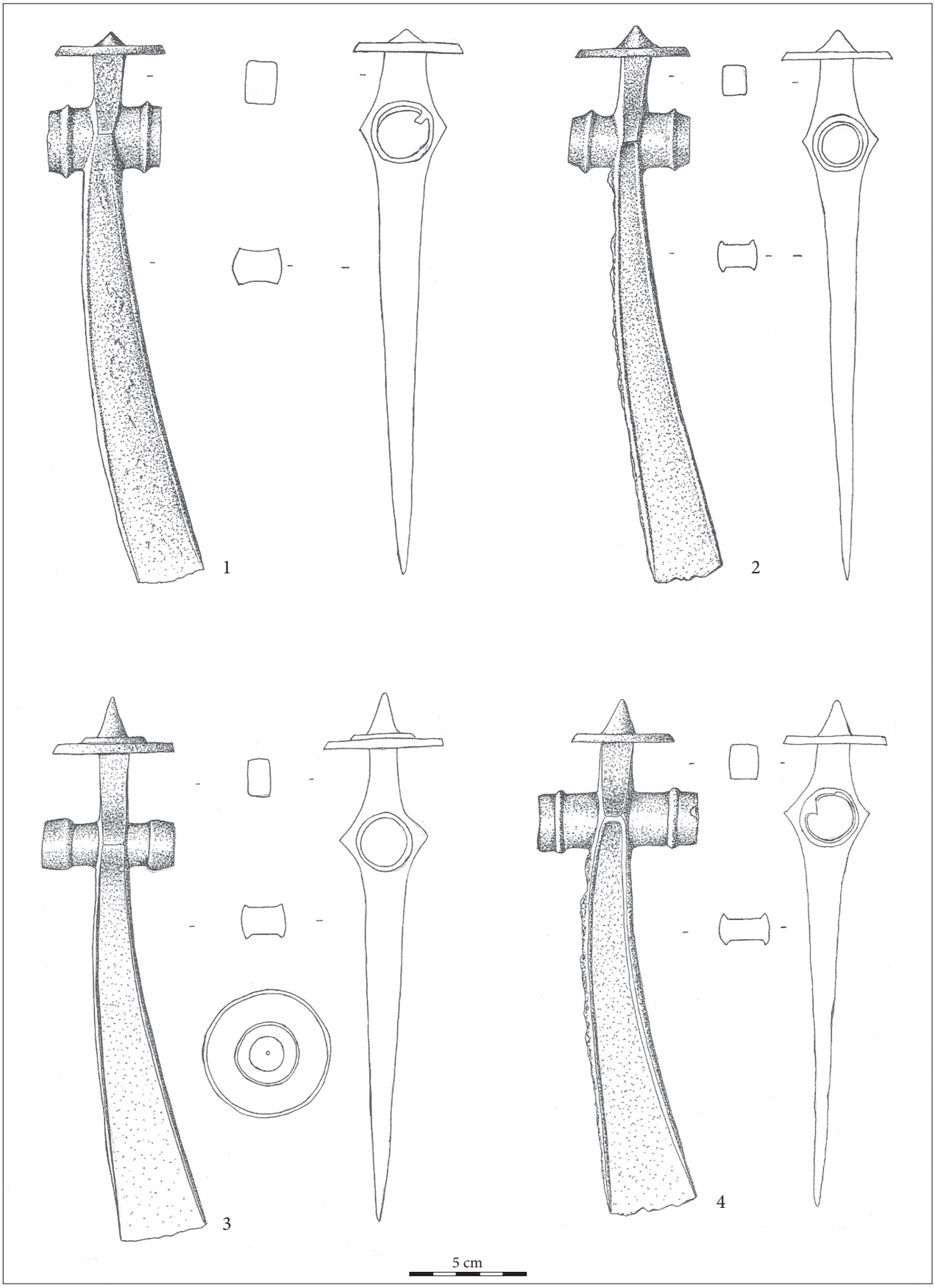

Fig. 1 Kvasovo/Kovászó, hoard no. 2
1. kép Kvászava/Kovászó II

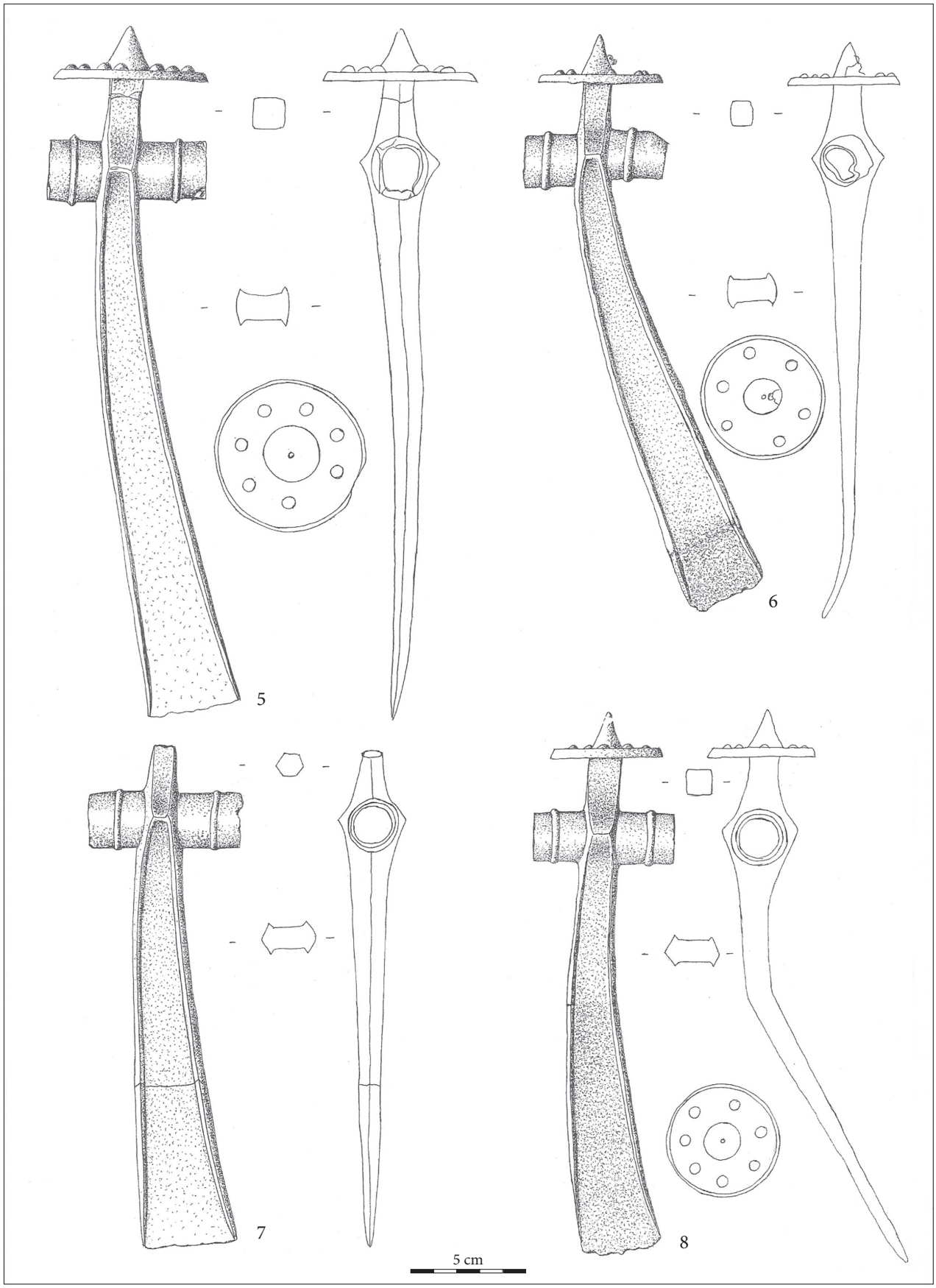

Fig. 2 Kvasovo/Kovászó, hoard no. 2
2. kép Kvászava/Kovászó II

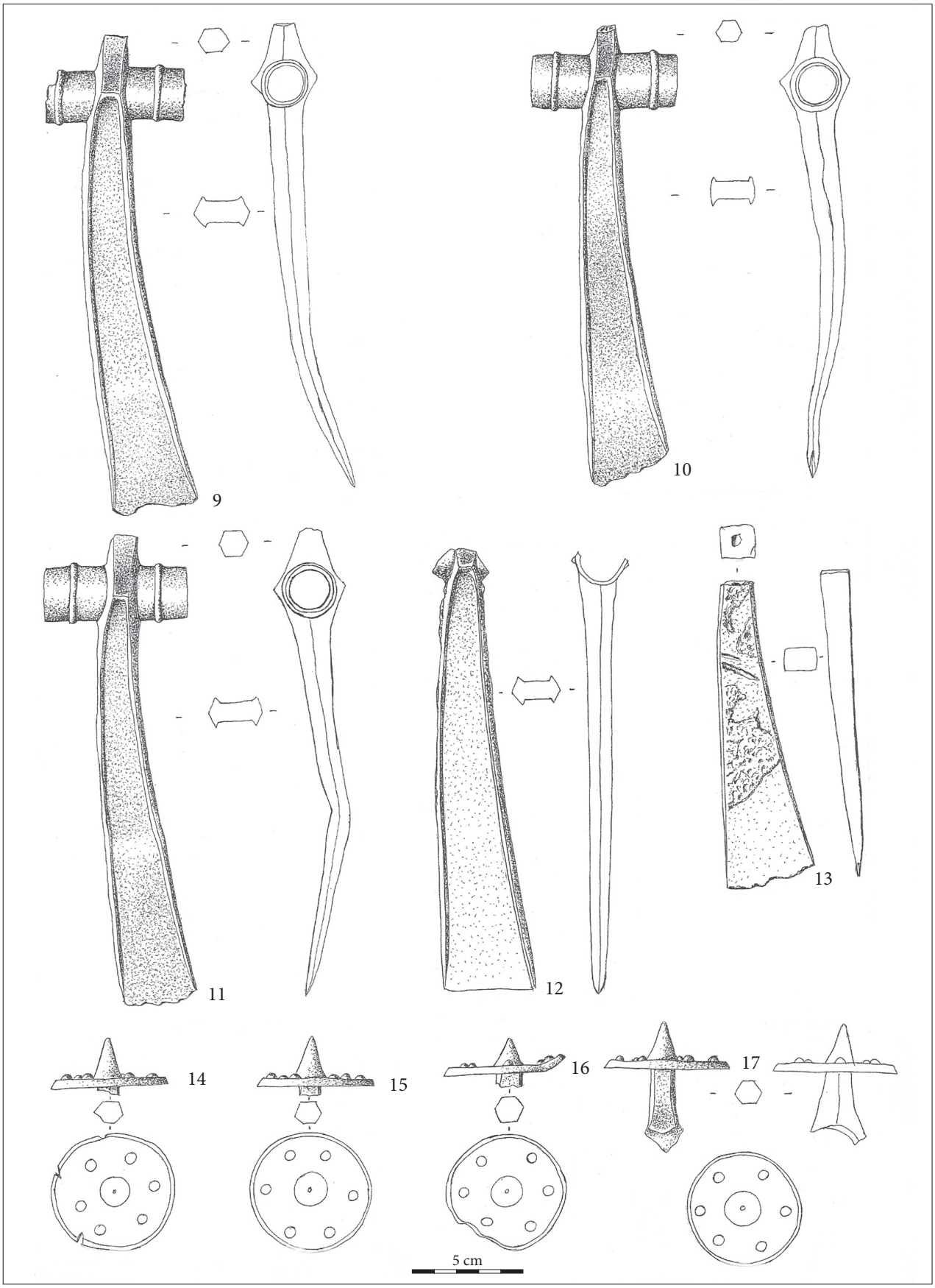

Fig. 3 Kvasovo/Kovászó, hoard no. 2
3. kép Kvászava/Kovászó II

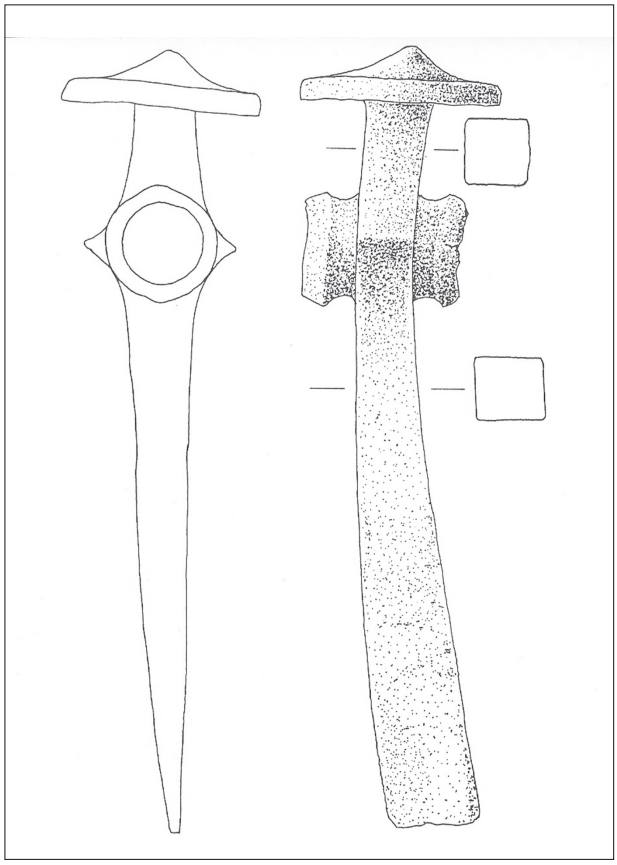

Fig. 4 Culciu Mare/Nagykolcs, Sub gradini/Kertekalja (after Bader 1996, Abb. 12, 2)
4. kép Culciu Mare/Nagykolcs, Sub gradini/Kertekalja (Bader 1996, Abb. 12, 2 nyomán)

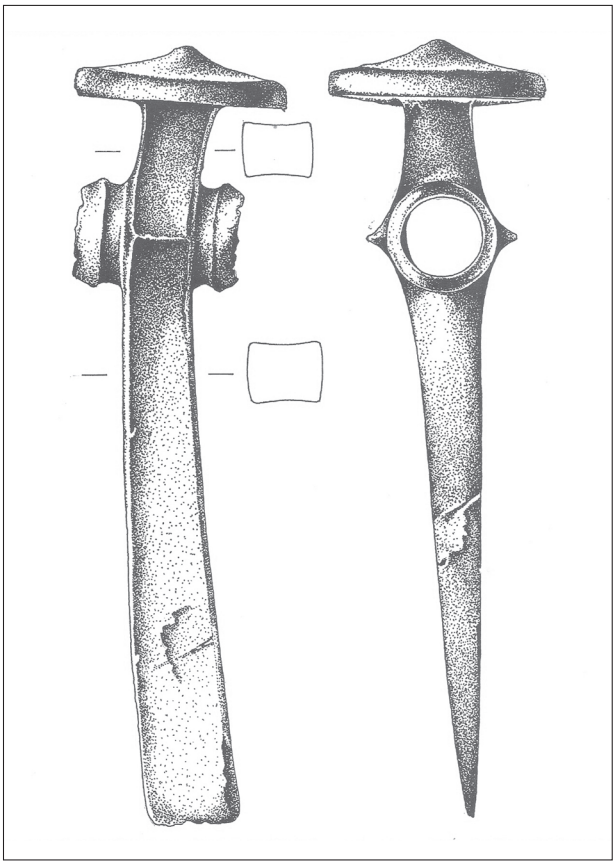

Fig. 5 Culciu Mare/Nagykolcs, Sub gradini/Kertekalja (after Bader 1996, Abb. 17)
5. kép Culciu Mare/Nagykolcs, Sub gradini/Kertekalja (Bader 1996, Abb. 17 nyomán)

rigid to provide a faithful model. They fail to incorporate some essential characteristics of axes, including that these were multifunctional tools, with each variant having particular spatial and cultural ties. Conclusively, most systems describe their development in terms of linear (e.g., Nestor 1938, Taf. 72) or a more complex phytree-like evolution (Vulpe 1970; Kroeger-Michel 1983, 45–78), following the logic of traditional typology. However, classification systems built exclusively on morphological treats tend to fail; the most apparent example, in this case, is B2- (in I. Nestor, A. Vulpe, and W. David's system), C- (in A. Mozsolics's system) or Felsőbalog-type (in E. Kroeger-Michel's system) axes, a type the distribution area of which is clearly different from that of both its predecessors and antecedents. Besides, the applied casting method and varied cultural background also differ from that of disc-butted axes in the eastern parts of the Carpathian Basin (Kobal' 2019, 181). Conclusively, B2 axes are the odd ones out, a sub-type indicating for a long time that no existing classification system can be regarded as unproblematic. In the following, we are going to illustrate the problem's extent through another example.

The present paper focuses on the B3c variant (in Nestor's system) of disc-butted axes. The variant has its name in all relevant typologies: it is the "Târguşor variant of sub-type B3" by A. Vulpe, the "Ea variant" by A. Mozsolics, the "Berencs type in phase D" by E. Koeger-Michel, and the "Ajak type" by the present author (Kobal' 1998, 38). In the following, we will refer to it as the "B3c variant". Such axes have a flat disc on the butt, decorated by a medium-high spike in the centre surrounded by six (sometimes eight, seven, or five) hemispherical knobs, a hexagonal or round-profile neck, a long shaft tube with a narrow, ring-like applied rib around the mid of both arms, and a relatively narrow, curved blade framed by ribs. The blade joins the head in a smooth concave transition between the cheeks and the side of the shaft-hole, ending in a triangular-profile thick ridge on both sides of the shaft-hole; thus, the neck looks quadrangular from above. Compared to other variants, B3c axes are more canonised with less

variance in both size and proportions (obviously, the specimens are not identical; the appearing minor differences in weight, morphological characteristics, and decoration will be discussed below). They often occur in large numbers: a single hoard may contain more than ten or even thirty (Kroeger-Michel 1969; Mozsolics 1973, 117).

I. Nestor was the first to outline the variant in question, classifying it as *type B* (shaft tube axes)/ *sub-type B3* (with long shaft tube with a facetted ending and symmetrical blade)/*B3c variant* (with a flat disc with a conical boss in the centre and small semispherical knobs surrounding it; Nestor 1938, 184). Although their structure shows fundamental differences from other B3 variants, Nestor interpreted these axes as a transitive variant between the B3 and B4 sub-types and positioned them directly before the B4 sub-type (axes without a transition from the blade to the neck) that constitutes, in his system, the final stage in the evolution of disc-butted axes. Furthermore, he dated the B3c variant to the Late Bronze Age, connecting it to the metal find horizon represented by the hoards from Domăneşti/Domahida and Uriu/Felőr (Nestor 1938, 192).

A. Vulpe followed a similar path when determining the relative position of B3c axes (Vulpe 1970, 86–88). He fitted the type into his system as the "Târgușor variant of the B3 sub-type" and refined its description some more by classifying the known specimens into three sub-variants: Târgușor (round-neck), Domăneşti (a widespread form with hexagonal neck), and Nadiş (with a boss on each side of the head by the shaft-hole instead of the triangular ridge). A. Vulpe interpreted the Târgușor variant as representing the final stage in the evolution of B3 axes, right before the emergence of the B4 sub-type, and linked it to the Uriu-Dragomireşti hoard horizon (Vulpe 1970, 86).

A. Mozsolics's typological system of disc-butted axes shows fundamental formal and structural differences from those developed by her Romanian colleagues (Mozsolics 1967, 33–49; Mozsolics 1973, 14–22). She classified the B3c axes into "group E" as "variant a" in her system. As "type E" by A. Mozsolics roughly corresponds I. Nestor and A. Vulpe's sub-type B4, she seems to have interpreted the type as representing a transition between sub-types B3 (= type D by A. Mozsolics) and B4 (E) but belonging more to the younger than the older one. She connected the Ea or B3c variant to the Ópályi horizon, thus dating it to the Central European Br D period (Mozsolics 1973, 106, 112). Unlike A. Vulpe, A. Mozsolics did not care to divide the B3c variant into even smaller units.

Fig. 6 The vessel that contained the disc-butted axes in the hoard from perhaps Kidjosh/Kígyós in the surroundings of Berehovo/Beregszász
6. kép A Berehovo/Beregszász környéki, Kiďosh/Kígyósról (?) származó kincs nyakkorongos csákányokat tartalmazó edénye

A unique disc-butted axe was published from Budeşti (Bistrița-Năsăud county, Northern Transylvania, Romania) in 1974 (Marinescu, Danila 1974, 65, Pl. I, 1, Pl. VI, 3). The find bears a close resemblance to B3c axes, except for its disc, lacking applied decoration, and quadrangular neck. Based on morphological traits, the authors classified it as a fourth sub-variant of A. Vulpe's B3 Tărguşor variant and named it "Budeşti sub-variant" (Marinescu, Danila 1974, 72–73). Later, two more similar axes were found in the same area (Marinescu 2005, 264–265, Abb. 6–8, Taf. III, 1–2).

E. Kroeger-Michel published a complete monograph on the typology of disc-butted axes in 1983 (Kroeger-Michel 1983). Based on a thorough comparison of morphological traits and differences in size, he created a complex system of groups, types, and variants, also developing his own code to describe the position of each distinguished typological unit or even object with a combination of three Latin capital letters within each phase of evolution (A–E). This way, he could also determine the exact position of a particular object in the development of the type and express whether it is regarded as an antecedent

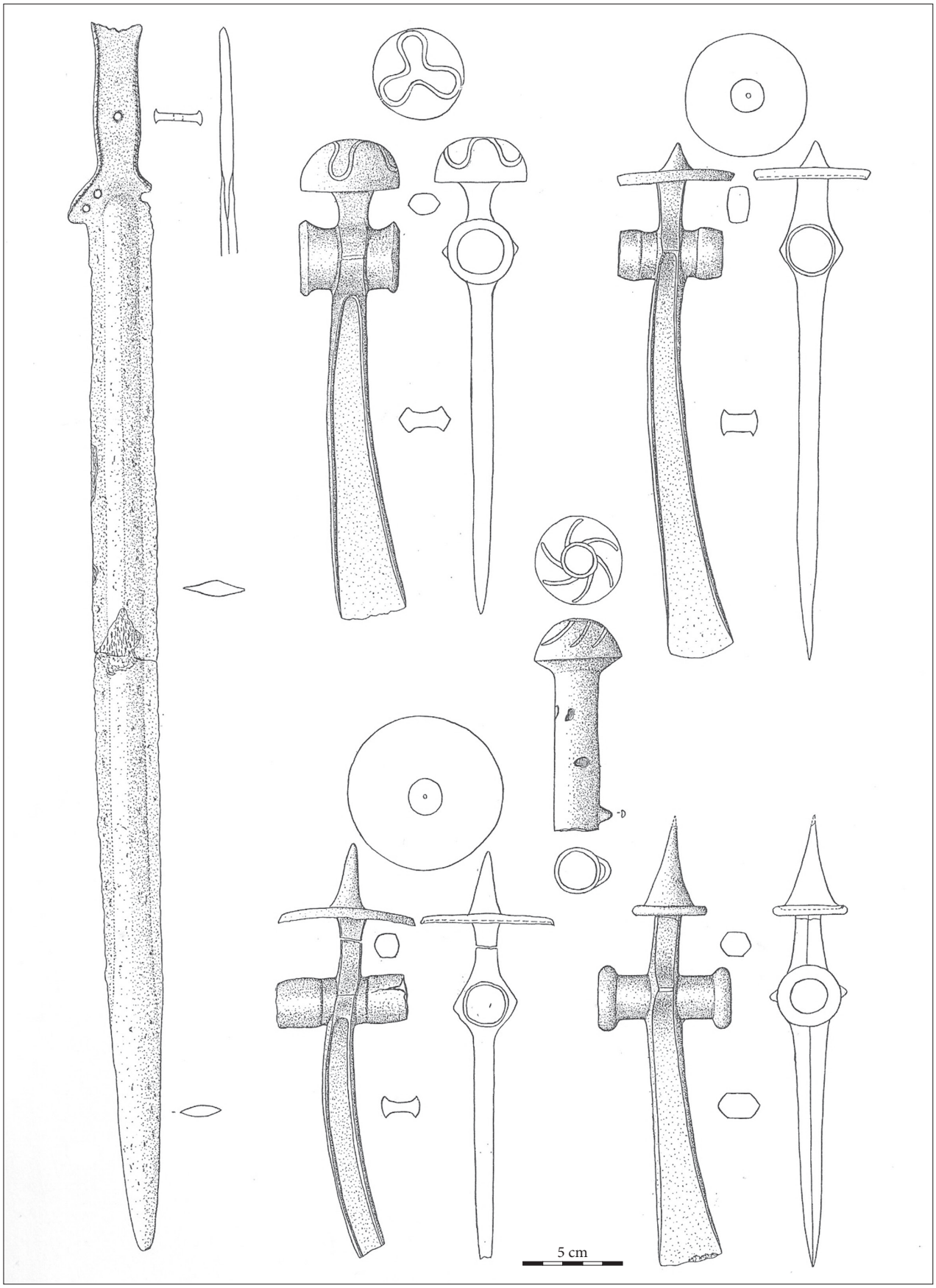

Fig. 7 Mali Heyivtsi/Kisgejőc, hoard no. 1 (after Kobaľ 2001, Fig. 1)
7. kép Mali Hejivci/Kisgejőc I (Kobaľ 2001, Fig. 1 nyomán)

or successor to another specimen within the group, type, or variant or stands alone (Kroeger-Michel 1983, 45). The French scholar classified B3c axes into phase D and named them the "Berencs variant" (Kroeger-Michel 1983, 60–63). He interpreted the sub-variant with an undecorated disc, and quadrangular neck (= Marinescu's Budeşti sub-variant, see above) as a typological antecedent to the B3c variant and also called it "Budeşti." In contrast to the archaeologists mentioned above, he believed that this type developed from the Felsőbalog (by E. Kroeger-Michel) or B2 sub-type (by I. Nestor and A. Vulpe) in the previous (C) stage of evolution (Kroeger-Michel 1983, 60–61), thus it is more an early B3 variant in stage D of the type's evolution than a transitional one between the much younger B3 and B4 sub-types (by I. Nestor and A. Vulpe) or D and E types (by A. Mozsolics). It must be noted that I. Nestor had already raised this possibility earlier (Nestor 1938, 184).

It is a common feature of all typo-chronological models presented above that the authors interpreted B3c axes as either representing a transition between the B3 and B4 sub-types (by I. Nestor and A. Vulpe) or D and E types (by A. Mozsolics), being a late variant of sub-type B3 (by I. Nestor and A. Vulpe, = type D by A. Mozsolics), an early one of type E (by Mozsolics, = sub-type B4 by Nestor and A. Vulpe), or, as E. Kroeger-Michel positioned it, a very early variant of sub-type B3 or type D, appearing at the start of phase D, right after the disappearance of B2-sub-type (by I. Nestor, A. Vulpe, and W. David) or C-type axes (by A. Mozsolics). However, the author of the present study has raised another possibility: B3c axes may have developed directly from sub-type B1 (by I. Nestor, A. Vulpe, and W. David) or type B (by A. Mozsolics), parallel with sub-types B2, B3, and, partially, B4 (equal to types C, D, and E by A. Mozsolics; see Kobal' 1985, 69–71; Kobal' 1995, 195–197; Kobal' 1998, 36–37; Kobal' 2000, 36; Kobal' 2005, 254).

Besides theoretical considerations, a particular find assemblage provided a basis for the current hypothesis, suggesting an alternative typo-chronological position for B3c axes. The hoard was discovered on a moderate eastern slope of Laposhegy near Kvasovo/Kovászó in Transcarpathia (Berehovo District, Ukraine). As the hoard has already been published several times before (Kobal' 1995, Ris. 6–7; Kobal' 1997, Ris. 6A–6B; Kobal' 2000, 84, Taf. 14B–15), the present paper will only elaborate upon some parts that are important for the problem in focus. The hoard comprised at least sixteen complete and fragmented disc-butted axes and a shaft-tube axe (*Figs 1–3*). Most disc-butted axes represent the "regular" B3c variant (with six knobs around the central boss on the disc, hexagonal-profile head and blade, and a long shaft tube with an applied ring at the middle of the arms; *Fig. 2, 7, Fig. 3, 9–12 and Figs 14–17*). Some specimens, however, do not fit into the typological models of I. Nestor, A. Vulpe, and A. Mozsolics, and even the highly elaborate classification system by E. Kroeger-Michel cannot describe them. Two axes had seven knobs instead of six on the disc, and their neck was square in profile (*Fig. 2, 5, 8*). Another specimen was very similar to regular B3c axes, but its disc was undecorated, and the neck was square in profile (*Fig. 1, 4*). Based only on recorded morphological traits, the latter should be classified into E. Kroeger-Michel's Budeşti variant but the size, proportions, and, to some extent, the blade are different. Another complete axe features traits characteristic to sub-type B2 (long spike on the disc, long shaft-tube terminating at both ends in a wide thick band, long neck with quadrangular profile), but the ornamentation of the disc resembles a B1-sub-type axe from Simontornya (Mozsolics 1967, Taf. 53, 1a–c), while its blade is similar to the B3c variant (*Fig. 1, 3*). We may interpret it as a B2–B1 hybrid shape that stands closer to sub-type B2 (by I. Nestor, A. Vulpe, and W. David) or type C (by A. Mozsolics). Finally, the hoard comprised two B1-sub-type axes that also featured characteristic B3c traits: a long shaft tube with applied ribs around the arms (although triangular in profile, while these applications on regular B3c axes usually have a semicircular cross-section) and a blade almost identical to that of B3c axes (*Fig. 1, 1–2*). These may be interpreted as representing a transitional shape between the undecorated axes of the Zajta variant of sub-type B1 (David 2002, 86, 421–423) and the B3c variant. The specimens of the Zajta variant still have a relatively short shaft tube with facetted ends but the blade is curved and sometimes framed by applied ribs like B3c axes'. Furthermore, strict standardisation is an important characteristic of the Zajta variant, indicating early mass production in the area of the former Torda County: the average axe head length is 19–20 cm, with a disc of 5–5.5 cm in diameter (Mozsolics 1967, 171). The length of the two axe heads from the Kvasovo/Kovászó hoard is 24.5 and 24.8 cm, the discs are 5 cm in diameter, and their weight is 630 and 470 g, respectively. With such extensions, they seem to be closer to the B3c axes (with an average head length

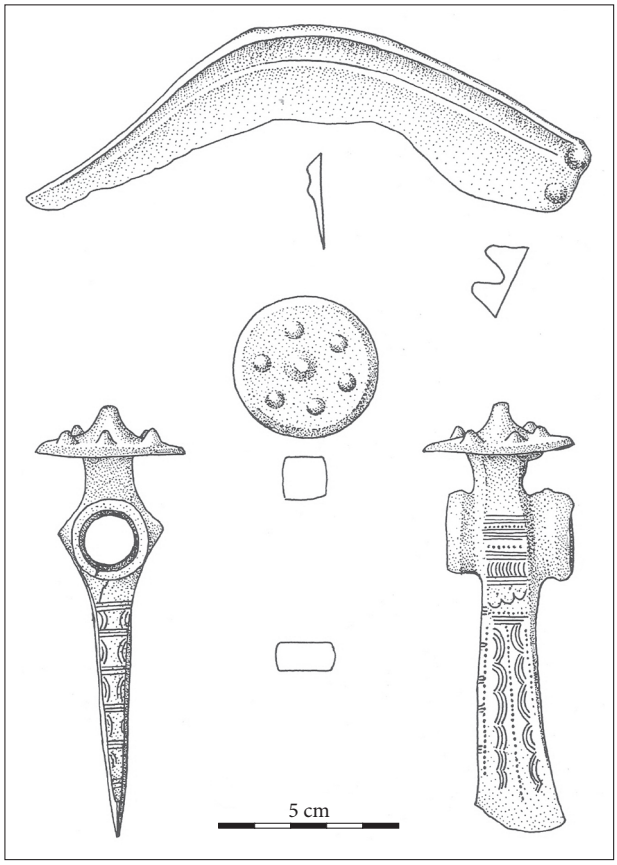

Fig. 8 Včelince/Méhi/Méhesfalva II, hoard no. 3 (after Furmánek, Markova 1996, Abb. 1)
8. kép Včelince/Méhi/Méhesfalva II (Furmánek, Markova 1996, Abb. 1 nyomán)

of around 25–26 cm and discs of 5.5 cm in diameter), a highly standardised variant that was one of the first mass-produced ones (see, for example, the hoard from Ajak; Kroeger-Michel 1969). Also, the core distribution area of the Zajta variant in the Upper Tisza Region (David 2002, Karte 5) matches the B3c variant (Kobal' 1998, Abb. 2), and they share a cultural background as both are connected to the Felsőszőcs/Suciu de Sus/Stanovo culture, also present in the region (Kalicz 1960, 5. kép; Bader 1978, Pl. XXXVII; Balaguri 2001, Ris. 60a, Kacsó 2004, Abb. 1). A series of finds support our hypothesis. Zajta-variant axes were found in a settlement of the Suciu de Sus/Felsőszőcs/Stanovo culture at Culciu Mare/Nagykolcs (Satu Mare District, Romania) and another one in the Kerektó-dűlő at the same place (*Figs 4–5*; Bader 1996, 271, Abb. 12, 1; Abb. 17, 6–7). B3c axes can also be connected to the Suciu de Sus/Felsőszőcs/Stanovo culture (e.g., the hoards at Rozsály in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County, Hungary: Mozsolics 1973, 204–205, Taf. 90, 12–13 and Kriva/Tiszakirva in Ukraine: Kobal' 2000, 83, Taf. 8, 24). The second hoard of Kvasovo/Kovászó was also discovered at the fringes of a settlement of the culture, only about a hundred metres away from an Ópályi-type hoard (Kvasovo, hoard no. 1; see Kobal' 1995, 198, Ris. 1; Kobal' 2000, 84, Taf. 34B). Illegal fieldwork yielded another hoard with B3c axes in the surroundings of Berehovo/Beregszász in Transcarpathia in 2018. The find assemblage comprised sixteen 26 cm long axe heads and a characteristic Suciu de Sus-style vessel with twelve golden rings (*Fig. 6*), analogies to which are known from the Rozsály hoard (Mozsolics 1973, Taf. 90, 11). Conclusively, the Zajta variant of the B1 sub-type and the Bc3 variant represent the same strain of evolution considering their morphological characteristics, extensions, distribution, and cultural background.

While the typological traits of the disc-butted axes in the second hoard of Kvasovo/Kovászó only raise the possibility that B3c axes are older than previously assumed, another find assemblage from Transcarpathia, namely, the hoard from Mali Heyivtsi/Kisgejőc proves that (Kobal' 2000, Taf. 4B, 1–3; Taf. 4A, 4–6). Besides regular B2 axes, the hoard contained a specimen of sub-type B3 (*Fig. 7*), leaving no doubt about at least some B3 axes being coeval with sub-type B2 and, conclusively, the Ópályi horizon being coeval with the Forró horizon rather than following it (Kobal' 1985, 69–71; Kobal' 1995, 197; Kobal' 2000, 18; Kobal' 2005, 220; for similar ideas resulting from different considerations, see also Vulpe 1970, 5, Anm. 4). An early position of B3c axes in the development of the type may shed new light on the "peculiar" disc-butted axe – fundamentally B1-type but with a disc resembling B3c axes – in hoard no. 2 from Včelince/Méhi (*Fig. 8*; Furmánek, Márkova 1996, 138, Abb. 1, 2). The finding was dated to the Br B1 horizon (Koszider period) and classified as a separate strain, the "Včelince variant" (David 2002, Taf. 51, 3). Another axe, discovered near Hódmezővásárhely-Kistanya (Kistóalja), seems to confirm this interpretation (David 2002, 425, Taf. 51, 3). In summary, these finds indicate that the typological and chronological hiatus between the B1 and B3c axes, supposed earlier, probably never existed.

The evaluation of the disc-butted axes in the second hoard from Kvasovo/Kovászó led to the following conclusions:

1. B3c axes developed directly from the Zajta variant of sub-type B1 rather than representing a transitional form between sub-types B3 and B4 (as it was supposed for decades);

2. the B3c variant emerged in the Upper Tisza Region and may be connected to the Suciu de Sus/Felsőszőcs/Stanovo culture;
3. the composition of the second hoard from Kvasovo/Kovászó and Mali Heyivtsi/Kisgejőc prove that B3c axes developed and existed parallel with other variants of sub-types B2, B3, and, partially, B4;
4. considering the above, the current typological classifications of disc-butted axes seem to require reconsideration;
5. the current typological classifications of disc-butted axes are too rigid and rely way too much on morphology while neglecting regional and cultural ties and the differences in metal processing methods both on intra- and inter-cultural levels.

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NÉHÁNY ÉSZREVÉTEL A BRONZKORI NYAKKORONGOS CSÁKÁNYOK TIPOLÓGIÁJÁRÓL EGY BRONZKINCS ÉS EGY CSÁKÁNYFORMA ALAPJÁN

Összefoglalás

A Kárpát-medence bronzkorának egyik legnagyobb számban ismert fegyverfajtája a nyakkorongos csákány. Kutatásuknak jelentős irodalma van (Nestor 1938; Lomborg 1960; Popescu 1963; Mozsolics 1967; Kroeger-Michel 1969; Vulpe 1970; Mozsolics 1973; Stuhlik 1988; David 2002). A legutóbbi időkig úgy tűnt, hogy a kidolgozott tipokronológiai rendszerek szilárd alapokon állnak. Ezt látszik részben megkérdőjelezni egy a mai Kárpátalja területén (Ukrajna) előkerült bronzkincs (Kvászava/Kovászó II) és a vele kapcsolatos egyik nyakkorongos csákányforma: a Ion Nestor szerinti B3c alvariáns.

A második kvászavai/kovászói bronzkincs legalább 16 nyakkorongos csákányt tartalmazott egész és töredékes állapotban. A lelőhely egy keleti hegylejtőn (Laposhegy), a felsőszőcsi/Suciu de Sus/Sztánava kultúra településének szélén került elő. A csákányok többsége a Ion Nestor szerinti B3c alvariánst képviseli. Vannak közöttük azonban olyanok is, amelyek nem „férnek bele" az eddig kidolgozott tipológiai rendszerekbe. Egy részük hibrid vagy átmeneti forma, amelyek a B2 és a B1 típusú csákányokhoz állnak közel. Ez utóbbiak arról tanúskodnak, hogy a korábbi elképzelésekkel szemben a B3c formájú nyakkorongos csákányok egyenesen a B1 típusból (Wolfgang David zajtai variánsa) fejlődtek ki a Felső-Tisza-vidéken, ahol a két fent említett csákányforma elterjedési területe nagyrészt fedi egymást.

A B3c formájú nyakkorongos csákányok korai képviselői több adat szerint már a közép-európai Rei. Br C periódus idején, vagy még hamarabb is megjelentek, és párhuzamosan fejlődtek a B2, B3 és részben B4 típusú nyakkorongos csákányokkal.

Kulturálisan a felső-Tisza-vidéki régióban a B1 és B3c csákányfajták egyértelműen a felsőszőcsi/Suciu de Sus/Sztánava kultúra hordozóihoz kapcsolódnak.

A kvászavai/kovászói második kincs és a Ion Nestor szerint B3c típusú nyakkorongos csákányok elemzése alapján arra a megállapításra jutott a szerző, hogy az eddig e fegyverfajtára kidolgozott tipológiai rendszerek túlságosan merevek, „mechanikusak", és túlértékelik a morfológiai jegyek jelentőségét, ezért aktuálissá vált újraértékelésük.