

**FLUTED MACES IN THE SYSTEM OF
LONG-DISTANCE EXCHANGE TRAILS
OF THE BRONZE AGE: 2350-800 BC**

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Editor's Foreword

Fluted maces (*Kannelierte Streitkolben*) have not been an object of a monographic study so far. The reasons for this deficiency was the paucity of assemblage finds (mainly grave ones) and the fact that they occurred in the borderland between the East and West of Europe. Both reasons made it difficult to identify them chronologically and keep a full record of finds. The present monograph sums up almost 25 years of studies that at the outset were limited to Poland and only gradually were expanded to include the whole continent. This was made possible owing to the goodwill of many people and institutions from the Danube area, the Balkans and the Russian Plain.

The present volume of *Baltic-Pontic Studies* consists of two parts devoted, respectively, to the current state of knowledge on the position of the mace in the Near East and North Pontic civilizations, and the forms, chronology, origins, functions and socio-organizational significance of one of its types, namely the fluted mace.

As in previous volumes in this series, our intention is to inspire team, interdisciplinary studies involving scholars from different centres and countries. Only such a wide-range co-operation will bring about new developments in the areas discussed in this volume.

Editorial comment

1. All dates in the B-PS are calibrated [see: Radiocarbon vol.28, 1986, and the next volumes]. Deviations from this rule will be point out in notes.
2. The names of the archaeological cultures and sites are standarized to the English literature on the subject (e.g. M. Gimbutas, J. P. Mallory). In the case of a new term, the author's original name has been retained.
3. The spelling of names of localities having the rank of administrative centres follows official, state, English language cartographic publications (e.g. *Ukraine, scale 1 : 2 000 000*, Kiev: Mapa LTD, edition of 1996; *Rèspublika BELARUS; REVIEW-TOPOGRAPHIC MAP*, scale 1:1 000 000, Minsk: BYELORUSSIAN CARTOGRAPHIC AN GEODETIC ENTERPISE, edition 1993).

ERRATA

BALTIC-PONTIC STUDIES, vol. 11

Page 45, fig. 11:

1 – single maces from the Baltic zone; 2 – sets of maces from the Baltic zone;
3 – single maces from the Pontic-Caspian zone; 4 – sets of maces from the
Pontic-Caspian zone

Page 53, fig. 16:

3 – southern limit of the Nordic circle; 6 – approx. borderline between
Corded Ware culture (west) and Fatyanovo culture (east)

Maciej Popko

MACE-HEADS AND SIMILAR OBJECTS IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST ACCORDING TO WRITTEN SOURCES

The mace-head is one of the oldest and most widely spread primitive weapons. Hence, it comes as no surprise that mace-heads are mentioned in the written records of the Ancient Near East from the Sumerian period until the end of its history. What is striking, however, is the diversity of the names given to the object, and their different values. As a result, it is not always possible to identify individual terms and assign them to objects that are archaeologically or iconographically documented.

The oldest mace-heads from the historical times, specifically from the Sumerian period (second half of the 3rd millennium BC) bore a name represented by a group of cuneiform signs consisting of KAK and GIŠ, with KAK 'stake' or 'stick', while GIŠ means that the object in question was made of wood. This name is found in inscriptions on mace-heads surviving to this day [Cocquerillat 1952:121-122]. Later, other logograms referring to the mace-head appeared. In time, with the domination of the Akkadian language (from the early 2nd millennium BC until the fall of the Persian Empire), some Akkadian terms for this object are attested. Of great assistance to the scholar studying this terminology are the lexical lists of the 2nd and 1st millennia BC, compiled after old Sumerian patterns. However, their analysis yields sometimes different results; for this reason it is recommended to rely on the textual evidence that allows to determine the meaning of the examined word in a specific time and place.

Old names of the mace-head included the Sumerian word TUKUL, Akkadian *kakku* (from Sumerian KAK) [The Assyrian Dictionary. . . 1971:50-58]¹. In historical times the term is most often encountered as a designation of weapons in general, also a specific weapon used by men and deities. Moreover, it refers in a metaphorical sense to power, military strength, attack and troops. In the sphere of cult it stood for a symbol of deity. The use of the term in various technical meanings is documented as well, including 'tool, staff' etc., or even the name of a part of the liver in augury.

¹ The view that the sign TUKUL originally stood for the mace-head was expressed already by F. Thureau-Dangin [1924:141].

As a general designation of the weapons the word is found in various contexts. For instance, the weapons used in victorious battle and then decorated with precious metals were placed on the altar of protecting deity. On other occasions they were washed with waters of the sea (= the Mediterranean) by Assyrian kings during their campaigns in the West. As a god's weapons they were also used for political purposes. As an example we can quote the case of Addu, the Storm God of the Syrian city of Halab. According to a myth, borrowed from the Mediterranean coast after all, the god was supposed to have subdued the personified Sea. The weapons he was said to have used were given by his priests to various rulers as a symbol of his support and a guarantee of victory. There is evidence that during the reign of Zimri-Lim in Mari (18th century BC) the weapons were moved to the temple of the god Dagan in the city of Terqa on the Euphrates. In return, the priests of Addu demanded that their god be favoured, moreover, his universal significance be recognized, which was a novelty in the polytheistic thought of that time. The policy proved effective, because it led to the spread of the cult of the Storm God of Halab far beyond Syria [Durand 1993:41-61; Popko 1998:119-125]².

As a symbol of deity, the object could have different shapes, but in general it resembled a mace-head. In this meaning it is often encountered in Hittite descriptions of cult images (13th century BC), where it is an aniconic representation of Mountain God to whom offerings were given. It could also be an attribute of a deity, mostly the War God or the Storm God, but also of some goddesses. In this case the mace-head itself was worshipped as a sacred object and got offerings. According to the texts, such mace-heads were as a rule made of wood and decorated with metal, often a precious one, silver, gold or iron (at the time more precious than gold). Apparently the whole mace-head was sometimes made of metal. Possibly belongs here a reference to TUKUL of iron found in one text from Mari [Limet 1984:193]. When the TUKUL/*kakku* appears as part of individual's armament, it certainly stand for a mace-head. Also references to the front (head) and back part (handle/shaft) of the TUKUL in Akkadian texts surely apply to mace-heads.

Another Akkadian term for the mace-head is *miṭtu* which is also a loan-word from Sumerian [The Assyrian Dictionary. . . 1977:147-148]. It is a synonym for *kakku* and, likewise, translated also as weapons in general. In a metaphorical sense it appears, for instance, in a hymn to the god Marduk, where the deluge (*abūbu*) is referred to as the god's *miṭtu*. The object is well documented as a god's weapon. This kind of mace-head could have had a head resembling a lion's head. To note is also a peculiar mention of a *miṭtu* with fifty heads. In a letter found in El Amarna, Egypt (14th century BC), a *miṭtu* made of iron and set in gold is listed among gifts sent to the pharaoh by Tušratta, king of Mitanni. There is also evidence for a mace-head of this kind made of bronze or mysterious *luddu* wood.

² For details on the weapons used in fighting the Sea compare the Ugaritic myth of Baal. The weapons can be found on some Syrian seals from Aleppo and its vicinity.

In Anatolia a mace-head was probably named *hattala-* in Hittite, written with the determinative for wood. The name is derived from the verb *hat(t)-* ‘to pierce or strike’ [Puhvel 1991:255-256]. It is found only in festival texts with participation of the king, but the object did not belong to the royal insignia. One text mentions the god’s *hattala-*; indeed, in a description of the heavenly Storm God he holds the mace-head in his right hand. According to the texts, this god’s weapon was made of lapis lazuli and gold.

To return to the Akkadian terminology, it is supposed that *pattaru* and *patarru* are other words for the mace-head. However, relying on lexical lists, these terms stand sometimes for a double axe because they occur with the determinative URUDU which designates objects made of copper or bronze [Salonen 1963:73-74; von Soden 1969:848]. In light of the texts the *pattaru/patarru* made of bronze was used as a weapon in battle. However, the name was sometimes confused with similar sounding *patru* ‘sword’.

Uncertain is also the meaning of the Akkadian word *hutpalu* (also *hutappalû*, *hurpalu*, *hurpalû*, *hulpalû*) written usually with the determinative for wood [von Soden 1962:356; The Assyrian Dictionary... 1956:263; Salonen 1963:16-17; Durand 1983:344-345; Limet 1985:17]. The inconsistent writing of the second consonant (originally it must have been *d) testifies to the foreign origin of the word. Examples for *hutpalu* with the adjective *kaptarawatum* ‘Cretan’ in the texts show that these objects may have come to Western Asia from the Aegean, but certainly the majority of them was of local production. The object consisted of a head and a ‘base’ or a handle, hence it resembled the TUKUL/*kakku* (see above). However, relying on lexical lists, one is made to believe that a double axe is meant here. This supposition is confirmed by the texts in which *hutpalu* occurs next to TUKUL. It served as a weapon, for instance, the king Ashurbanipal used it when hunting lions. In Babylonia the *hutpalu* could have belonged to the attributes of deities; it also appears in the descriptions of demons, held in either the right or left hand. In the Annals of the Hittite king Hattušili I, among priceless spoils of Syrian origin *hurpalû* of lapis lazuli and gold is mentioned; the trophy was placed in the temple of the Storm God in Hattuša, the capital of the state. There is also evidence of the objects made of iron and then gilded.

Among the terms of uncertain meaning we should also mention *katâpu*, sometimes encountered with the determinative for wood [The Assyrian Dictionary... 1971: 303]. In a document from Mari the word stands with the adjective *kaptâru* which means that the object may have originated in Crete or generally in the Aegean. It was made of bronze or gold and could have had a head and ‘base’, like the TUKUL and the *hutpalu* did, moreover ‘lips’ (or edges?) and ‘eyes’. In Durand’s opinion, its head resembled the human head, hence, it may have been a mace-head [Durand 1983:342-343].

The majority of the above discussed terms refers to mace-heads. A separate group is formed by similar weapons used both for striking and throwing. Here

belong *gamlu* ‘a hooked or curved staff’ [‘*Krummholz*’ or ‘*Bumerang*’ in German; see von Soden 1962:279; The Assyrian Dictionary... 1956:34] and probably also *gišhaššu* and *mašgašu* whose meanings are still unclear. According to lexical lists, these terms were used as synonyms; other equivalents are mentioned, too [Salonen 1963:70-75, 144-45]. Before *gamlu* and *gišhaššu* stands the determinative for wood. The object named *gamlu* was made of *kiškanû* (birch?) and *erû* wood. As a ceremonial weapon it was decorated with gold. The word *mašgašu* is derived from the verb *šagāšu* ‘to kill’. One of its Sumerian equivalents occurs with the determinative for leather; in Salonen’s opinion it may refer to a strap fastened to the handle.

As we can see, some forms of mace-heads could have served as insignia of gods and rulers. It seems worthwhile to describe briefly in this context other objects which according to the texts were used for the same purpose. One of such objects is GIDRU, Akkadian *ḥaṭṭu*. The word is translated as a sceptre, staff, stick, branch, twig or shelf [von Soden 1962:337; The Assyrian Dictionary... 1956:153-156]. It was made of reed or wood. Although at times the GIDRU is an equivalent of TUKUL and was used for beating, or even as a weapon in combat, it occurs rather as a symbol of function or office, from that of messenger to the position of king. The GIDRU is often mentioned next to other attributes of the royal power, such as a throne or tiara, and then it was decorated with silver, gold or lapis lazuli. In a metaphorical sense the word meant reign, which is evident from the benediction ‘May Shamash prolongue his GIDRU’. Together with other insignia it shows the king as shepherd of the community he ruled. It could have also been a symbol of a deity. Here, it is supposed that the shape of its crown may have reflected the nature of a given deity as opposite to other deities. If this is true indeed, the much discussed standards found in the tombs of Alacahöyük and other sites of Central Anatolia can be interpreted as such crowns [Popko 1995:45, 76]. GIDRU of gods were among the furnishing of cellae in the temples and as sacred objects received offerings.

As attribute of the king in his role of shepherd, besides GIDRU we also encounter *šibirru*, an object interpreted as a staff [The Assyrian Dictionary... 1992:377-379]. It is yet another symbol of the royal power, which is evident from the phrase ‘By virtue of your *šibirru*’. The object is also found in the descriptions of the images of deities as their attribute. As the emblem of Shamash it was supposedly made of lapis lazuli. Still another symbol of the royal power was *palû*, however, nothing is known of its appearance.

While discussing various forms of staffs as symbols of power, one cannot ignore *kalmuš*, a peculiar object characteristic of the culture of Hittite Anatolia, usually identified as a lituus. On the basis of depictions of the king holding the *kalmuš* in his hand, we can see that it resembled the modern hockey stick and was carried with the crooked part pointing back and downwards. Being one of the attributes of the king as the chief priest of the state, it is mentioned only in religious texts. The

determinative GIŠ indicates that it was made of wood, but it could also have been decorated with silver and iron [Alp 1947:164-175; Puhvel 1997:28-30]³.

A review of the terms referring to mace-heads and similar objects in the literature of the Ancient Near East shows the wealth of their meanings and uses. This data is to some degree supplemented by archaeological finds and examples of ancient art. An identification of the terms with specific objects remains a serious problem.

Translated by Piotr T. Żebrowski

³ Puhvel [1997:28-30] considers the possibility that *k*. is a loan-word a semitic language, cf Akkadian *gamlu* (on this term see above) and Ugaritic *gnl*.

ABBREVIATIONS

- AJA – American Journal of Archaeology, New York
AnOr – Analecta Orientalia, Rome
AnSt – Anatolian Studies, London
BPS – Baltic-Pontic Studies, Poznań
ČVSMO – Časopis Vlasteneckého spolku musejního v Olomouci, Olomouc
IEJ – Israel Exploration Journal, Jerusalem
JARCE – Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt, Boston
M.A.R.I. – MARI. Annales de recherches interdisciplinaires, Paris
MDP – Mémoires de la Délégation archéologique en Iran, Paris
RA – Revue d'assyrologie et d'archéologie orientale, Paris
RIA – Reallexikon für Assyriologie und Vorderasiatische Archäologie, Berlin – New York
TGIM – Trudy Gosudarstvennogo istoricheskogo muzeia, Moskva
WVDOG – Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft, Leipzig – Berlin
ZČSSA – Zprávy Československé společnosti archeologické při ČSAV, Praha – Brno – Nitra
ZfE – Zeitschrift für Ethnologie, Berlin

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