

## Funnel Beaker pottery in North-Eastern Hungary?

In my presentation, I would like to discuss an old find from a new perspective. In this sense, it is less of a presentation and more of a brief preliminary report of a research project in its initial phase.

In the last two years, I undertook the critical re-assessment of the earlier excavated Late Copper Age Baden material from north-eastern Hungary. During this research, I noticed a curious, non-local, probably intrusive pottery sherd in the material from the Salgótarján–Pécs-kő site, whose cultural affiliation eluded me. I was only certain that it could not belong either to the Baden, or to the Kostolác culture. It was suggested that it could perhaps be assigned to Coțofeni or Bošáca, the well-known post-Baden groups bordering on the Baden distribution in Hungary, but in order to determine this, I had to consult other specialists, who would be able to confirm or refute my impression. Finally, with some trial and error, involving requests to colleagues in Transylvania regarding Coțofeni, and to colleagues in Slovakia regarding Bošáca, my Polish colleague, Prof. Marzena Szmyt finally suggested an acceptable cultural attribution, according to which the sherd should be assigned to the Funnel Beaker culture – however, the distribution of this culture did not extend to the territory of Hungary, and to the best of my knowledge, Hungarian archaeologists have not yet reported any Funnel Beaker finds from the Hungarian collections.

First, let me describe the find in detail.

Inventory number 60.1.496. Rim and body fragment of a decorated, thin-walled, wide-mouthed pot or bowl tempered with grog, gravelly sand and mica. The vessel has an outturned rim, a worn, red exterior, a dark grey interior, smoothed on both sides. The vessel form can be described as follows: outturned rim, fairly tall, conical neck and a rounded, perhaps globular belly. The lower half of the vessel is missing. The outturned rim is decorated with a double row of impressed, oblique stabs on the rim interior and rows of tiny impressed round dots run on the rim exterior too. Owing to the fragment's worn condition, it is unclear whether this pattern encircled the entire rim or only decorated the area above the handle. An incised zigzag line runs between two rows of stabs under the rim exterior.

A horizontally set string-hole lug with grooved terminals is set under the rim in a field outlined by lightly incised lines; this field is plain, except for the decorated rows under the rim exterior. The handle was pierced with a plant stem, as shown by its surviving impression. A bundle of three vertical lines of stabbed dots runs along both sides of the handle toward the belly. The dots were created with horizontally positioned stabs, and perhaps form a ladder-like motif. Only a single row is visible on the left side along the fracture surface. The belly was decorated with vertical channelling.

Dimension: 77×75×4 mm, rim diam. 340 mm.

The vessel fragment came to light during the excavation conducted by Pál Patay and József Korek between May 17 and 25, 1960, in Trench X. It is now housed in the Prehistoric Collection of the Kubinyi Ferenc Museum in Szécsény.

Another possible TRB vessel fragment:

Inventory number 60.1.435–436. Fragment of a pot tempered with grog, micaceous sand and calcareous lumps, with outturned rim, decorated with a double line of stabbed dots made with plant stems under the rim. Reddish-grey, smoothed exterior, red, polished interior. Rim diam. 160 mm, from Trench V.

Let me now briefly review what we know about the find circumstances and the site.

In March 1926, the quarrymen working on Mt. Pécs-kő discovered prehistoric finds immediately underneath the basalt peak, on the eastern side of its base. The finds were

collected by Jenő Puskás, the engineer active in the quarry. Subsequently, Béla Dornyay continuously collected finds in the area and visited the location several times. In 1951, the Salgótarján Coalmine Company donated a part of these finds to the Balassagyarmat Museum. In 1953, Pál Patay collected Copper Age finds on the site. The same year, Andor Lénárt presented various finds to the Balassagyarmat Museum. During our field survey on April 3, 2017, we found that about one-half of the Pécs-kő rock had been quarried away. We identified the location of the former excavation trenches by the main quarry entrance, where we found several pottery sherds decorated in the classical Baden style, perhaps originating from the excavation's dump. The traces of human activities and basalt mining can be traced on the maps depicting the area from various periods. The basalt mine of Pécs-kő and its neighbour, the so-called Hurka-Pécskő, which has since been destroyed, was one of the top quarries in pre-war Hungary and catered to the country's demand for quarried stone in the early 1900s. The basalt from the Pécskő quarries was used for the pavement slabs in the larger Hungarian towns before 1930.

Following a trial excavation in April 1960, Pál Patay and József Korek conducted an excavation at Salgótarján–Pécs-kő between May 17 and 25 in a previously disturbed location, which had been repeatedly dug up by treasure hunters. The stratified Baden settlement, believed to be tell-like in nature, was investigated using the spade spit technique over an area of roughly 60 m<sup>2</sup>, with trenches opened adjacent to each other conforming to the terraces. The excavation results were published by József Korek together with an assessment of the animal bones found at the site written by Sándor Bökönyi in 1968. The report focused on the excavated features of the Late Copper Age Baden culture and provided illustrations of the finds found in association with various features such as occupation levels, pits and hearths, but lacked a detailed description of the archaeological finds and features. The pottery sherds appearing on the black and white photos are often erroneously oriented, some are not even Baden finds, and all lack a profile drawing, meaning that they provide little information on the ceramic types.

The original report described the site as an independent stratified site of the Baden culture, part of the culture's late Ózd–Piliny group that was distributed in north-eastern Hungary. Each find from the site's material was inventoried as an artefact of the Baden culture in the collection of the Kubinyi Ferenc Museum of Szécsény in 1960. The highly decorated ones were associated with Kostolác, Bošáca and Coțofeni cultures.

The location of Trench X was not recorded either on the original drawings made during the excavation, or in the site report published in 1968. Pál Patay's field diary briefly notes that it was located south of the rocks of Pécs-kő and that it measured 10×2 m. Because Trenches VII and X were not stratified, their investigation was soon terminated. I identified uncharacteristic classical Baden or Tumulus culture finds (inv. nos 60.1.497–498, 501, 503) and some characteristic Hatvan sherds (inv. nos 60.1.499, 500, 502) among the finds recovered from the single culture layer of Trench X, called Layer h. Following the critical review of the finds, it seems likely that the finds from Trench X represent the site's occupation in the late Hatvan–Tumulus culture period. However, on the testimony of the entry in the museum inventory book, the single pottery fragment of the Funnel Beaker culture did not come from the cultural layer denoted as Layer h, suggesting that it had come to light outside of or above Layer h, the culture layer in Trench X. The find was not included in the original site report by József Korek in 1968. The excavation trenches were not mapped according to any cartographical system due to the general conditions in the 1960s, and thus the georeferencing of the site is no longer possible.

In his doctoral thesis completed in 1986, István B. Kovács surveyed the Ózd–Piliny group together with the relevant Slovakian sites and proposed that the label Piliny should be dropped. He noted that the sites in the Salgótarján area formed a separate group whose pottery

ornamentation overlapped with the decoration of the Ózd group (e.g. scoring, Ózd-type flat knobs on vessel handles, applied ribs), and he justified the separation of the Salgótarján group from the Ózd group in view of the frequency of ladder motifs and barbotine on sites in County Nógrád. Most of the finds are either surface finds or originate from old excavations, and are in this sense stray finds.

Pál Patay too discussed the late Baden Ózd–Piliny group of north-eastern Hungary and citing the findings of the excavation conducted at Salgótarján in 1960 and the even earlier investigations at Piliny–Vár-hegy, he argued for a continuous unbroken transition from the Late Copper Age Baden culture to the Early Bronze Age Makó culture in his 1999 study.

The Ózd–Piliny group was most recently discussed by László György in his thesis on the Late Copper Age in County Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén covering 126 Boleráz/Baden sites. His final conclusion, based principally on ceramic correspondence analyses, was that there was no good reason to draw a distinction between the Ózd–Piliny and the Salgótarján groups.

In 2016, I undertook the critical review of the sites of the Ózd–Piliny group as part of a research project funded by an international grant. I began with the sites in the Ózd area, followed by the ones in the Salgótarján area. In my studies written during this work, I concluded that the Ózd–Piliny group can hardly represent a chronologically late group of the Baden culture and that it virtually spans the entire Late Copper Age within the Baden complex (from its IB Boleráz phase to the close of Phase IV). It is not a regional group of the Baden culture in the geographic sense, merely a regional variant, whose emergence and whose distinctive pottery ornamentation was undoubtedly influenced by the terminal phase of the Middle Copper Age and its cultures. Thus, drawing from the insights of my critical review, it seems to me that there is no good reason for dissociating the sites in Nógrád County under the label of Salgótarján group from the Ózd–Piliny group. In contrast to István B. Kovács, I would retain the original name of Ózd–Piliny group because Piliny refers to the group's distribution in County Nógrád in the same way as the name Ózd and the eponymous site refer to County Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén, in addition to alluding to one of the key Baden sites investigated in the county at an early date.

I assigned a total of 300 finds from the Pécs-kő site to the Baden culture: 51 from the old surface collections and 249 brought to light during the excavation, although only tentatively in the light of our current knowledge. About 269 finds, representing roughly one-half of the 569 artefacts inventoried and published as representing the Baden culture, can be securely assigned to other cultures and periods. The remaining 300 Baden finds could also include pieces that actually represent other cultures, most probably the Late Bronze Age Tumulus culture or, although with a smaller likelihood, the earlier Hatvan culture. However, their identification runs into difficulties owing to the indistinct nature of the fragments and because the sites yielding the Baden, Hatvan and Tumulus finds in the area remain unknown.

It would appear that potential finds of the Baden culture had been recovered from all parts of the site, which either indicates a destruction level covering the greater part of the site, levelling activity during, or intrusions from, later occupations, or natural erosion on the steep mountain slope, or all of these. Pits (for example in Sounding 2) and hearths with a foundation of pottery sherds (such as Hearths 3 and III/1) most likely represented the Baden occupation. Baden and Kostolác finds were recovered from all parts of Trench III (a trial trench) and the adjacent investigated areas, all from a relatively greater depth, meaning that they had been overlain by later occupations. The north to south oriented skeletal remains (of which only the foot area survived, the upper body was missing, and not even the foot part was taken to the museum) can thus probably be linked to a later culture (Hatvan or Tumulus). The scatter of finds over an extensive area could be an indication of an occupation layer. However, if the cultural attribution of the finds currently assigned to Baden and Kostolác is mistaken and they actually date from another prehistoric culture, neither Baden, nor Kostolác are

represented by more than a few features at the site. A few Makó sherds on the top of Trench II suggest that the Makó presence was insignificant (a single feature can be linked to the culture, a pit in Level 1, in the black humus or the underlying grey soil, and possibly Hearth a by the trench's western wall). The Hatvan and Tumulus cultures are represented by substantial occupation levels that often cut each other (recalling stratified tell settlements), plastered levels and hearths plastered onto pottery sherds, indicating houses and various buildings (as well as a possible organic transition between the two). Following the review of the finds and their cultural attribution, I noted that the sequence in their location where they showed a greater density became inverted at some points in the stratigraphic sequence, possibly indicating the destruction of some layers, either due to human activity or to natural causes, either in antiquity or in more recently. The Piliny and medieval occupation was scarce. The Hatvan, Tumulus and Piliny occupation can indicate a continuous local development, similarly as on the Méhi/Včelince–Lászlófala tell settlement.

Returning to the intrusive, non-local fragment or fragments, they represent imports or imitations that can be linked to the Funnel Beaker culture, and not to Kostolác, Coțofeni, Livezile or Boșáca as József Korek suggested. The hallmarks distinctive to the culture are the ornamented rim exterior and rim interior, the zigzag motif under the rim and the ladder motif on the belly. The best and closest analogies can be cited from the Baden settlement at Oldalfala/Stránska–Mogyorós, where they were erroneously identified as Coțofeni/Livezile imports.

The occurrence of Funnel Beaker pottery on several sites on the southern fringes of the Western Carpathians suggests a more complex situation; however, their stratigraphic contexts at these multiperiod and stratified sites remains unclear due to the field techniques applied during the old excavations.

The determination of the exact place of origin is rather difficult within the culture's vast distribution, although they can most likely be assigned to the eastern Wiórek group, the IIIB/IIIB–C phases in the current terminology, whose absolute dates fall between 3700/3600 and 3200 BC. Its parallels from the Kujawy–Pomorze voevodship in Poland are the following: Opatowice, Site 33, Phases Op33-A1 Op33-A2, Wilkostowo, Site 23/24, Wolica Nowa (Polówka), Site 1, and Nowy Młyn, Site 6. Comparable pieces are also attested among the south-eastern Funnel Beaker groups during the classical phase. However, an origin from the culture's Moravian group cannot be excluded either. If the import originated from Poland, it could even be contemporaneous with the Bronocice IV–V horizons of mixed late or post-Late Copper Age TRB–Baden.

The next step is to determine with the help of the applied ceramic petrographic, chemical and other analytical methods whether the vessels represented by the sherds, occurring far from the Funnel Beaker core distribution, can be regarded as original Funnel Beaker products that arrived as containers for some luxury or prestige trade items, or whether they were simply imitations. We hope to gain answers to these questions from the investigation of the raw materials, the origin and the composition of the clay, and the tempering agents, and by comparing these with locally produced wares. Finally, in knowledge of the analytical results, we can outline precisely the chronological and cultural frame of the event when these distant impacts could have reached the inner and outer regions of the Carpathian Basin.

In sum, our current results would suggest that the Baden occupation at the Pécs-kő site was not of long duration and, more importantly, it was not tell-like, but rather connected to scarce pastoralist or mining activity in the mountains, involving temporary or intermittent settlement. The permanent, long-lived, tell-like and stratified cultural layers as well as the possible fortification of the hilltop site are more characteristic of the subsequent Early, Middle and Late Bronze Age cultures (Hatvan, Tumulus and Piliny). Unfortunately, there is a

chronological and spatial gap between the Copper and the Bronze Age cultures, and thus any assertions of a continuity between them can be relegated to the realm of fairy tales lacking any evidence. The stratigraphic context of the single Funnel Beaker pottery sherd from the site remains unknown, but its typological analysis points towards the Late Copper Age or the Transition Period between the Copper and the Bronze Age, lasting until 2600 BC. The investigation of the intercultural connections between the Funnel Beaker and the Baden and the post-Baden groups remains a task of future research.