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THE CELTIC GRAVE IN CSOBAJ AND ITS ARCHEOLOGICAL TIES

(Abstract)

János Meggyesi, who was digging for sand 40 to 50 centimetres deep in the earth, found some vessels in the garden of Mr Albert Poczhody's wife at Csobaj in November 1981. The rescue excavation was done on 28th and 29th November, the real excavation was carried out in 1983.¹ The village Csobaj lies on the right bank of the river Tisza, south of Tokaj. (Fig. 1.) The site is on a sandhill surrounded by a branch of the river Takta. The grave number 1 was looked for and uncovered with the help of a trial trench. (Fig. 2. 1–4, Fig. 3.) The depth of the grave was 120 centimetres, a grave spot could be seen 94 centimetres long south of grave furniture number 12 and 13. The cremation grave had 23 pieces of grave furniture i. e. 6 urns/grave furniture No. 6–8, 10–11, 14), 7 bowls (12–13, 15, 20–23), a mug, a pot, a cantharos, 3 fibulas, a knife and a bracelet. From the 16 vessels only the number 10 and 15 pieces were brown and formed by hand, all the others were dark grey and made by potter's wheel. Those formed by hand have eastern ties. The piece number 6 is similar to those found at Muhi,² Kistokaj,³ Szomoród.⁴ The piece number 8 has its parallels at Szomoród,⁵ Kéménd.⁷ The piece number 14 in its form is very much like a Bučany pottery⁹ and a pot at Ménfőcsanak,¹⁰ though the one at Csobaj is slimmer. The urn number 10 is formed by hand and is analogous with finds at Muhi,¹¹ Lápospatak,¹³ Rozvány.¹⁴ The bowl number 12 belongs to the 8th category on Hunyady's chart.¹⁶ The piece number 15 is formed by hand, a similar one was found at Muhi though in a Scythian grave.²⁰

The piece number 3 is the decorated mug which is very similar in its form to the one at Gáva.²⁵ The circle with rays occurs on Celtic money as a counter-mark.²⁶ The triple grouping of the concentric circles is remarkable on the belly. On the handle an „X” line can be discerned. It was at the finds of the Gellért hill excavation that Éva Bónis observed „X” marks on the spindle rings.²⁷ In her opinion magic power was attributed to this mark. Similar ones can be observed on certain objects.^{28–31}

The ram-headed cantharos is very similar to the one found at Kosd in its form,³² but if we take the handle and the position of the ram-head into consideration it is also

similar to the vessel found at Aporliget-Bátorliget site.³³ The speciality of the cantharos is the decoration of the handles, although this motive, the decorated and „X” divided surface can be seen on the belly of the mug found at Berettyóújfalu,³⁵ and on the upper pot-part and on the lower shoe-form-part from the back of the shoe-form-vessel found at Gáva. (Fig. 13. 1–2.) The geometric framed decoration by the handle has its only parallel up till now in the piece number one in the number 36 grave of a man in the Celtic cemetery of Vác. (Fig. 14–15.) The form of this jug can often be seen in the Transylvanian finds.^{38–41} The „X” divided field was used on Celtic money as a counter-mark.⁴³ The decoration is in geometric frame on the neck of the urn found at Alsópél. Three of the six pieces of decoration can be seen in a four-angled frame.⁴⁶ According to L. Márton the decoration of the vessel at Alsópél makes the vessel belong to the late Hallstatt ceramics of the Alpine lands of the neighbouring Austria. Similar decoration consisting from geometrically arranged points can be seen on the Scythian vessel found at Muhi, too.⁴⁷ In my opinion even finds from the Early Iron Age in Hungary ought to be taken into consideration regarding the formation of vessels as well, because this wide and relatively deep type has its origin in local traditions as M. Szabó states, too. It was also thought by Párducz when a cantharos-handled vessel was publicated from the Scythian cemetery at Tápiószele.⁴⁹ Hunyady thought of Illyrian influence.⁵⁰ Its connection with religion is obvious because we know from the Thracian treasure besides others a helmet on which the decoration shows the sacrifice of a ram.⁵¹ Miklós Szabó connects even the cantharos form with the eastern Celtic funeral cult when analyzing the ram-head-serpent of the cantharos found at Novo Mesto.⁵² The small vessels know as „bull-headed mugs” by Hunyady are mostly ramheaded, we know a lot of similar ones.^{53–56} Hunyady thought of Scythian influence when seeing the application of ram heads. We really found ram heads on Scythian finds e. g. on the handle of the mirror at Hejőszalonta⁵⁷ which is similar to the one at Fejérd.⁵⁸ There was also a bronze mirror decorated with a ram head in the number 462 grave at Tápiószele.⁵⁹ I have to mention that a sheep in full or in parts was also put into graves e. g. at Orosháza–Gyopáros⁶⁰ and Tápiószele⁶¹ where twenty graves contained sheep tigh-bones. On classical Scythian territory e. g. in the burial vault at Kul-Oba sheep-bones were found in a copper-kettle.⁶² Sheep-bones were also found as pieces of grave furniture in Celtic finds, in sacrificial pits⁶³ at Pákozd and in graves at Radostyán.⁶⁴ Győző J. Szabó considered them the inheritance of pre-Scythian culture on the basis of his research.⁶⁵ A great number of were found.^{66–81–95} Their find-pots are enlisted in the appendix. If we look at the map it can be seen that a strong influence has to be taken into consideration on the basis of the facts told above. It was creeping forward from the South to the North in the valleys of rivers, in the eastern part of Transdanubia, from the Danube-bend to Munkács. The question arises whether there are finds in the Celtic period which are spotted on the same territory. But we did not manage to produce such groups of the archeological finds which are similar to those of the numismatic finds considered to be Celtic.⁸² Projecting Hunyady’s find-pots and the numismatic find-pots on the map it can be seen clearly that there are no Celtic finds on the circulation territory of the money called by Gohl coistoboci by Pink north-eastern corner. The same refers to the Bánát type money but beside this more and more mixed Celtic and Scythian cemeteries can be found.⁸³ By the numismatic finds we have to take notice of the spread of the imitations of the so-called Audoleon stamps,⁸⁴ which show the same the circulation as the cantharoses. (Fig. 16.) Presumably it is a way used long ago. On the basis of old⁸⁵ and recent researches⁸⁶ the Audoleon imitations appeared in the Carpathian basin in the middle of the 3d century. The grave at Csobaj must be dated LT C₁ according to its analogies by the middle of the 3d century. The mentioned cantharoses got into the earth undoubtedly in different periods from LT C₁ to LT D but heir ideal background is

homogeneous in the marked territory. It is sure that other finds confirm this fact. Here I think first of all of the spread of anklets with four blisters.⁸⁷ The astralagos belts spread from the South to the North as well. The question arises what made the people with these characteristic finds wander to the North in the middle of the 3d century. It is generally accepted that the Celts were driven back to their original homeland after the Great Balkan Campaign.⁸⁸ It cannot be a mere chance that the only Greek piece in our Celtic finds is the cantharos which was found at Szob.⁸⁹ So it is obvious that the well-known historical events caused this wandering to the North.

I carried out an excavation at the find-spot at Csobaj in 1983 (Fig. 17.) but no Celtic finds came to light. We found some pits from the period of the Roman Empire and the traces of a settlement from the age of the Arpads.⁹⁰⁻⁹¹ The Celtic grave was the grave of a child on account of the recognizable bones. The full pig-skeleton is essential, a similar one was found at Radostyán.⁹² It must be a sole grave because of the hand formed bowl and the similarly hand formed big urn. To all appearances the sandhill and the marshland in front of it provided shelter to those staying here temporarily and who had blood and family connections with the original inhabitants no matter how we may call them.

Magdolna B. Hellebrandt