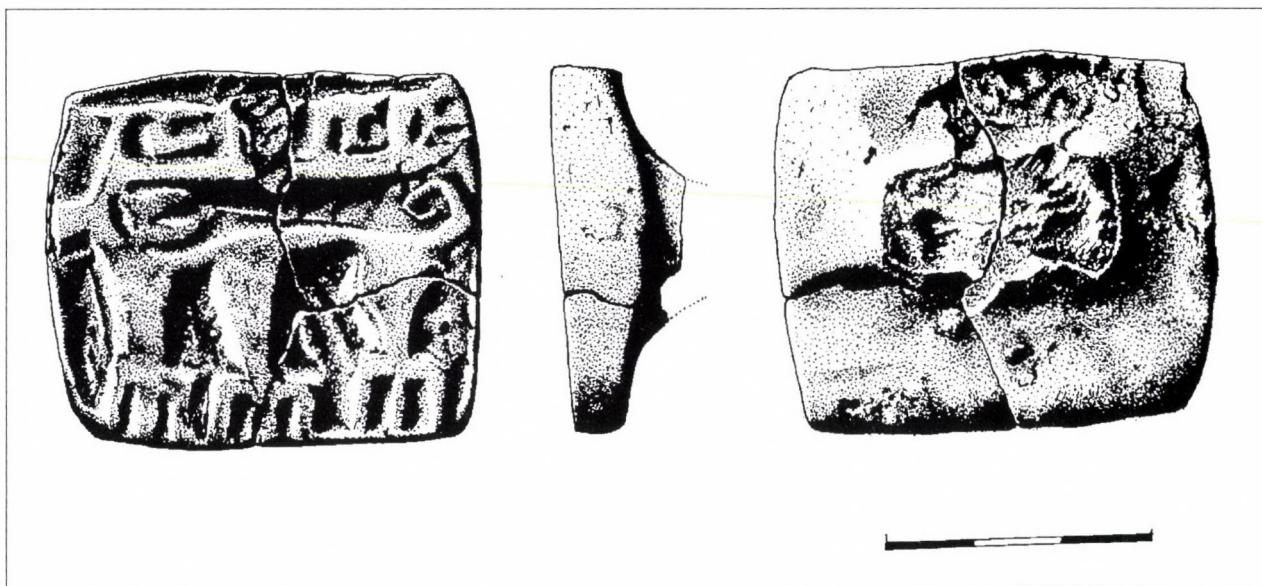


Gábor Ilon

A SCYTHIAN *PINTADERA* FROM SÉ

In 1998 we conducted an excavation in Sé, near Szombathely (Vas county), in an area called Doberdó by the locals.¹ The site lies some 10 km from Velem Szt. Vid and on a clear day one can see the Bronze Age terraces cut into the mountain. The Velem Szt. Vid site is well known to archaeologists specializing in the Bronze Age, the Early Iron Age and the Celtic period. Research in the

lay on the yellow clayey soil under this burnt daub layer. The *pintadera* described here was found beside the northern wall of the trench on November 3, 1998. It was damaged and broken in three. The layer of burnt daub yielded 'early' Iron Age pottery fragments. Owing to the onset of winter, it was impossible to enlarge the trench and continue our investigation.

Fig 1. *Pintadera* from Sé

Sé area was necessitated by the fact that construction work for a new residential area was begun here over a seven hectares large area in May, 1998. The site lies on the southern bank of the Arany creek, opposite the Malomoldal where the renowned Neolithic and Copper Age site of Sé is located (KALICZ 1998). The Arany creek flows here from near Szt. Vid. A temporary watercourse which already existed in prehistoric times, flows into the Arany creek in the area investigated during the rescue excavation and during our investigations we found the relics of various periods, ranging from the Neolithic to the late Middle Ages, on both banks of this watercourse. Trench VI was opened on its eastern bank.

We uncovered various features in trench VI. Feature 92 was an undisturbed 'closed' layer of burnt daub in the northeastern part of the trench. An oven (feature 103/A)

This brief note will concentrate on this one find, without a discussion of the manifold issues that might well be raised. My intention was to offer a preliminary publication of this unique find – now housed in the Prehistoric Collection of the Savaria Museum – since even a cursory glance at the design on this *pintadera* recalls the electrum stag from Tápiószentmárton and the stag figures on Scythian rattles (BAKAY 1971).

Description

The brownish-yellow clay *pintadera* is rectangular with curved sides and rounded corners. Its handle was broken into tiny fragments and could not be re-assembled. The *pintadera* was made from well-levigated greyish clay and carefully fired. The *pintadera* bears the depiction of a stag figure with antlers. The stag has a small

stylized head and a curved tail. It has three robust so-called 'harpoon' legs which resemble lion legs. It measures 50 cm by 42 cm by 10 mm (Fig. 1).

Since about one-third of the finds from the rescue excavation are still unwashed, this find can only be dated on a typological basis. Neither can we say anything about the other associated finds for the same reason. The stag depiction can undoubtedly be dated to the Scythian period² and most likely reflects the appearance of the Scythians in this area. The Scythians are generally associated with the finds of the Szentcsanak-Vekerzug group/culture (VÉKONY 1986).

We know that the prehistoric road which led through the Gyöngyös valley (known as the Amber Road from Roman times) was in this area controlled from Velem Szt. Vid, a settlement which acted as the major regional centre in several successive periods during prehistory. One of the main reasons for the importance of this site lay in its control over the copper and antimony mines in the eastern Alps and the activity of skilled craftsmen at the settlement. The Scythians no doubt occupied this region with the aim of gaining control over its economic

resources (VÉKONY 1986), as shown by Scythian vessels, bronze artefacts, bone bits and a bone crucible from Szt. Vid (MISKE 1907). The finds from the site also include six clay pintaderas which are part of the find assemblages from the pre-1943 investigations (conducted mainly by Kálmán Miske). Five of these are decorated with rather abstract geometric designs, while the sixth bears the highly stylized depiction of a stag. This latter pintadera, however, is considerably inferior to the Sé specimen. The presence of these pintaderas, and the proximity of the Szt. Vid and Sé sites to each other suggests that Sé was a rural village settlement – perhaps already controlled by the Scythians – which was subordinate to Szt. Vid.

Compared to the other pintaderas from the Carpathian Basin, the Sé specimen is of outstandingly good quality and it also stands out from among the other known finds owing to its depiction of a stag (PARÁDI 1972, Figs 2–3; KISFALUDI 1997).³ It is my intention to publish the associated finds from the burnt debris layer and the oven as quickly as possible, together with a discussion of their cultural context. I hope that this brief preliminary publication will nonetheless be useful.

Notes

- 1 The excavation was initially begun by my colleague, Ottó Sosztarits. I would here also like to thank Tibor Marton and Krisztián Oross, both students of archaeology at the Szeged University, and the field technicians of the BDTF.
- 2 After a personal examination of this find, Kornél Bakay, Tibor Kemenczei and Gábor Vékony shared this opinion. I would here like to thank them for their invaluable comments.
- 3 The finds are currently exhibited in the Savaria Museum.

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