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Zsófia Masek

A SARMATIAN-PERIOD CERAMIC TRIPOD FROM RÁKÓCZIFALVA

A medium-sized late Sarmatian–Hun-period settlement was excavated at the Rákóczifalva-Bagi-földek 5 site in 2006. The present study offers a detailed assessment of a unique vessel from the site, which yielded a very rich ceramic inventory. The large three-legged vessel is without exact parallels in the period’s published material. A review of the late antique parallels suggests that the vessel is an adoption of late Roman–early Byzantine metal vessels or perhaps pottery forms. In spite of its uniqueness, the vessel fits into the range of the special products of late Sarmatian pottery and reflects the far-reaching range of cultural and trade contacts on the Hungarian Plain during the late Sarmatian period.

Rákóczifalva-Bagi-földek 5. lelőhelyen egy közepes méretű késő szarmata–hun kori település került elő 2006 során. Jelen tanulmány az igen gazdag leletanyagú lelőhely kerámiaanyagából egy egyedi edény közlését és értékelését tűzte ki célul maga elé. A nagyméretű rákóczifalvi háromlábú edény pontos párhuzam nélkül áll a közölt anyagban. A késő antik párhuzamok áttekintésével valószínűsíthető, hogy az edényforma késő római–kora bizánci fém edények, esetleg kerámiaformák átvételével született. Egyedisége ellenére az edény illeszkedik a késő szarmata fazekasság speciális termékei közé, és a késő szarmata Alföld kapcsolatrendszerének tág határaitra utal.

Keywords: *late antique archaeology, late Sarmatian period, Great Hungarian Plain, Tisza region, settlement archaeology, pottery production, ritual vessels, adaptation of antique forms*

Kulcsszavak: *késő antikvitás, késő szarmata kor, Alföld, Tisza-vidék, településrégészet, kerámiakutatás, rituális edények, antik formák adaptációja*

Description

The vessel is a tripod with three large, curved legs. Its fabric is well-levigated, compact clay tempered with a mixture of golden-glittering mica and crushed stone. The diameter of the tempering agent is 1–2 mm. It was evenly fired on both the exterior and interior: the surface is reddish-light brown, the fracture is slightly oxidised, and the core is black. The vessel body is covered with a thin slip, concealing the tempering material, while the glittering-gritty temper is visible on the coarser external surface of the base.

The slightly conical vessel is basically a shallow bowl with plain, horizontally cut rim turned on a slow wheel and set on three rough legs. Similarly to some of the period’s other vessels turned on a slow wheel, the base is coarsely rounded. The long legs with outcurving bases are circular in cross-section. A thick, prominent ridge with angular edges runs down the length of the legs to the “feet”, a reinforcing

element which joins the vessel wall at an obtuse angle. The legs are carefully attached to the base of the bowl; traces of smoothing can be made out on the base.

Dimensions: The bowl has a diameter of 27 cm, base diam.: 24–25 cm, internal height: 6 cm, wall and base width: 0.7 cm. The height of the vessel is 19.5 to 20.1 cm, and the width with the legs is 33 to 37 cm. The legs have a diameter of 3–4×5–5.4 cm and a height of 14.5–15.5 cm (fig. 1).

Although the construction of the Rákóczifalva tripod is simple and somewhat clumsy, its form nevertheless followed a preconceived mental template. The vessel is not wholly symmetrical: the forms of the legs differ slightly (see their dimensions), but they follow the same formal concept. The vessel sits firmly, although slightly obliquely on the long legs with their outcurving bases. The thick ridges on the legs enabled them to be firmly attached to the vessel base owing to the larger attachment area, meaning that the weight was more evenly distributed on the legs.



Fig. 1 Rákóczifalva-Bagi-földek, Site 5. Three-legged vessel from Pit 208/301
1. kép Rákóczifalva-Bagi-földek 5. lelőhely. Háromlábú kerámiaedény, 208/301. gödör

Dark grey-blackish spots can be seen on the ends of the three legs, possibly from the vessel's use or as a result of how it was fired. The upper part of the legs and the base of the bowl are reddish-brown, while the inner and outer surfaces as well as the rim have greyish-black spots. Some of these burnt patches are roughly identical, suggesting that they were perhaps formed during use or during the destruction of the vessel. However, some joining rim fragments of differing colour indicate that these differences in colour could originate from after the vessel had fallen apart.

About one-third of the bowl is missing; the legs are almost intact, only one tip is fragmented. The base of the bowl is not secondarily burnt, only the

feet were discoloured, suggesting that the three-legged vessel had possibly been set over smouldering fires, but was not exposed to more intense heat effects or flames. The fragmentation of the vessel base suggests that it may have broken during its use. The reason for this may have been the weakness of the base (0.7 cm thick on the average), as well as its too large size. Most of the vessel's fragments were found in a beehive-shaped pit and it cannot be ruled out that additional sherds may have been missed during the rescue excavation. It seems likely that the fragments had been discarded shortly after the vessel broke and became burnt.

The tripod does not show traces of intense use, but neither does it appear to have been a vessel used

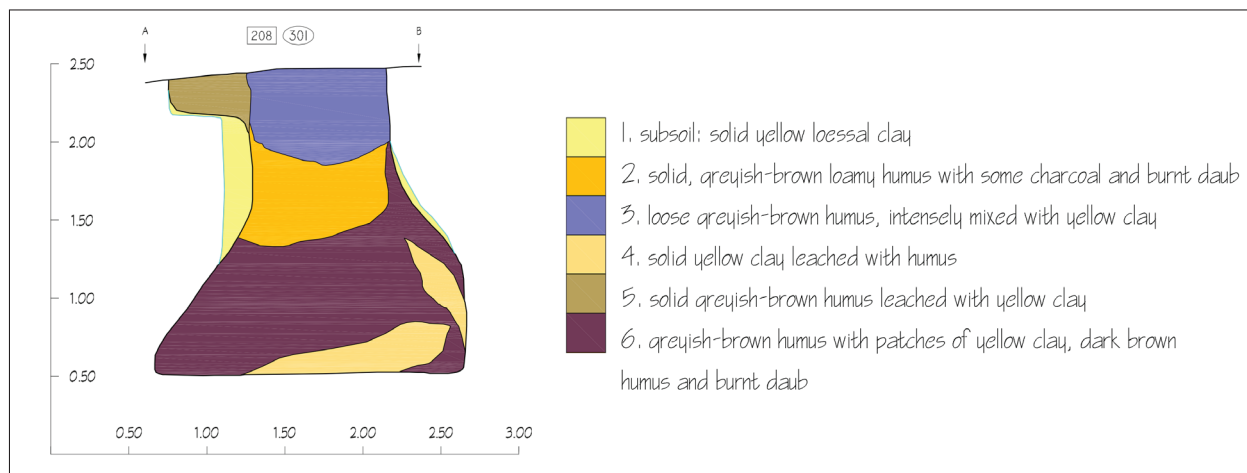


Fig. 2 Rákóczifalva-Bagi-földek, Site 5. Section of Pit 208/301
2. kép Rákóczifalva-Bagi-földek 5. lelőhely. A 208/301. tárológödör metszete

for special purposes, given that its fabric is typical for vessels used as household utensils. However, less tempering material was added than to the average mica-tempered cooking pottery. In the light of the above, it was an artefact made for occasional use, or a poorly designed piece that was discarded shortly after its manufacture, or, of course, both.

Context and date

The tripod came to light from Pit 208/301 of the Rákóczifalva-Bagi-földek 5 site (for the site, see MASEK 2012; MASEK 2016; MASEK 2018). The beehive-shaped storage pit was 2 m deep. The lower part of its fill consisted of dark humus layers mixed with yellow clay, charcoal and ash, overlain by a lighter humus mixed with clay flecks in the mouth of the pit (fig. 2). There is no information on the position of the vessel fragments. The pit lay on the south-eastern side of the densely occupied Sarmatian-period settlement section of the site, in a row with similar beehive-shaped deep pits. Several of these neighbouring pits can be linked to the late Sarmatian–Hun-period destruction horizon at the site, based on the pottery refitting method used in the evaluation of the material (the two adjacent features are Pits 207/300 and 209/332; see the pottery re-fits nos 12, 14–15, 61–64, 66 and 90: fig. 3).

It remains uncertain whether the material recovered from Pit 208/301 can be assigned to this destruction horizon, given that the material of this horizon is made up of redeposited artefacts found in a secondary position. We can nevertheless assert that the feature fits organically into the structure of the late Sarmatian–Hun-period settlement and can be

assigned to the same occupation horizon. Horizon 1 of the late antique or early Migration-period settlement of Rákóczifalva can be dated to the C3–D1/D2 period, while its life most likely ended in Phase D1/D2, a date principally based on the site's relative chronology (MASEK 2018).

Sunken-floor Sarmatian-period buildings were not observed in the proximity of this feature. However, a nearby pit contained one of the most abundant amounts of burnt daub on the site (Pit 209/332). In view of the high number of similar pits containing burnt daub and the low number of sunken-floor buildings, it can be assumed that there had probably been above-ground structures which left no traces in the archaeological record (MASEK 2015, 377–380). Based on the amount of burnt daub in Pit 209/332,

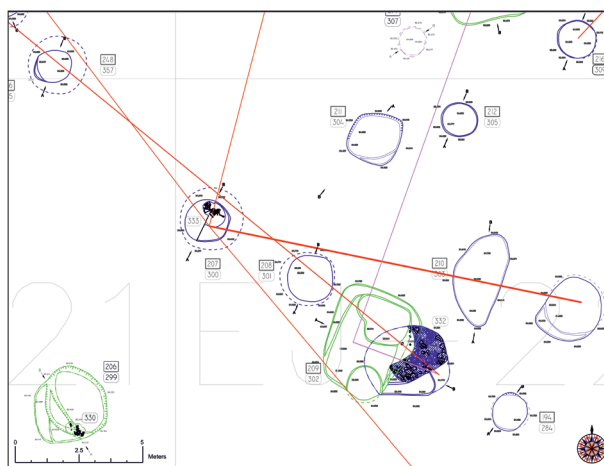


Fig. 3 Rákóczifalva-Bagi-földek, Site 5.
Location of Pit 208/301 in the settlement
3. kép Rákóczifalva-Bagi-földek 5. lelőhely.
A 208/301. gödör elhelyezkedése

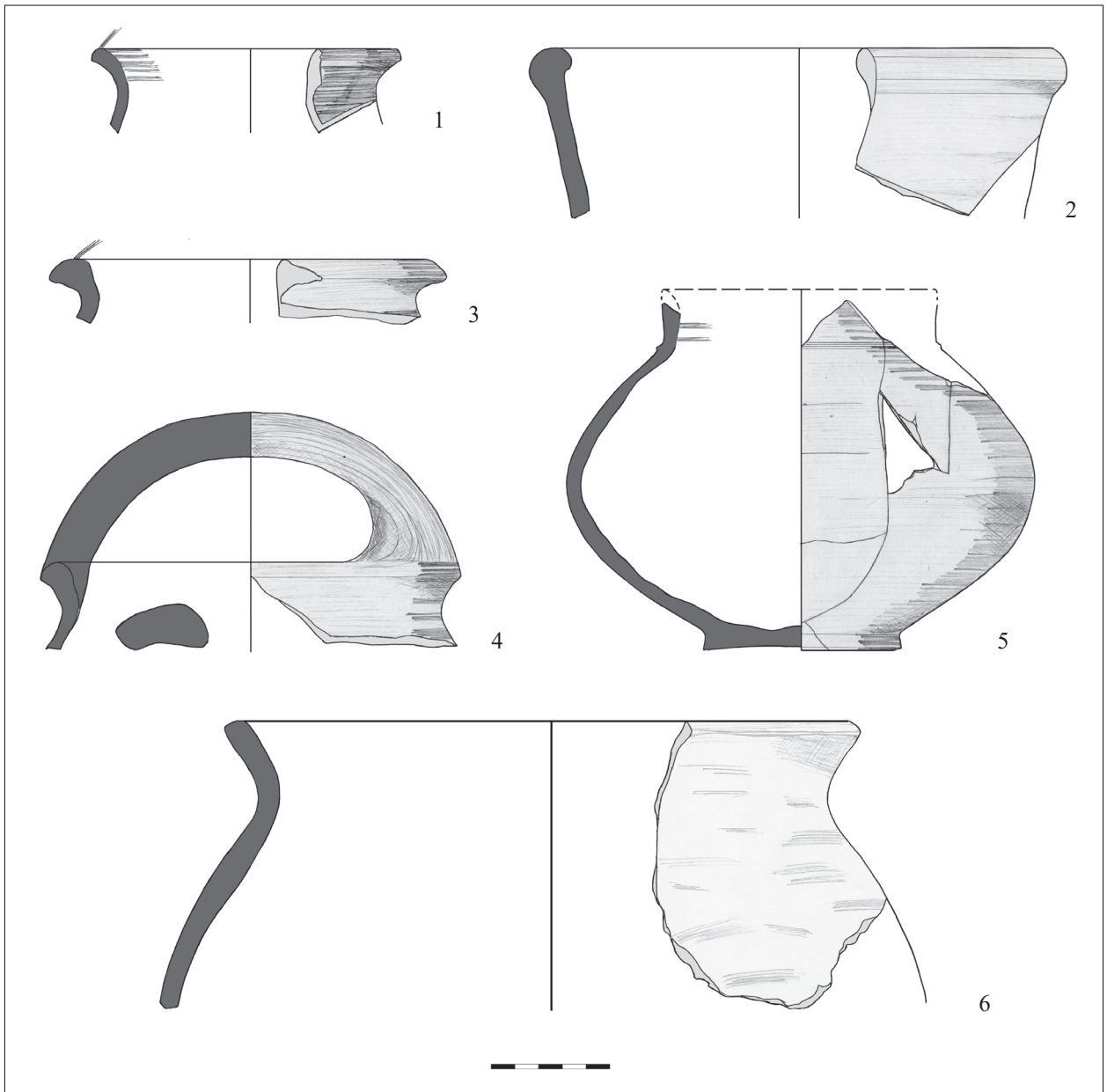


Fig. 4 Rákóczifalva-Bagi-földek, Site 5. Ceramic material from Pit 208/301
4. kép Rákóczifalva-Bagi-földek 5. lelőhely. A 208/301. gödör kerámiaanyaga

a former building can be assumed near Pits 208/301 and 209/332.

Pit 208/301 yielded an average small amount of pottery: apart from the three-legged vessel, 54 fragments of 20 vessels were found in it. Most of these are untempered fine ceramics, with frequent rim shapes that can only be broadly dated (between the late 2nd and early 5th centuries: fig. 4. 1, 3), and a common bowl type, a deep, conical vessel with a thick, slightly indrawn and rounded rim (fig. 4. 2). Typical late Sarmatian-period forms are represented by the mouth of a grey vessel with a handle rising

above and spanning the mouth (fig. 4. 4), the almost complete profile of a spherical vessel with cylindrical rim fired under oxidising conditions (fig. 4. 5); a small rim fragment covered with a so-called eggshell-coloured slip dates from the same period. Mention must also be made of the fragment of a pot tempered with pebbles, mica and grog turned on a slow wheel (fig. 4. 6), as well as the body fragment of a wheel-turned, grey, coarse vessel tempered with pebbles of the Üllő type.

In the light of the above, Pit 208/301 can be dated to the C3–D1/D2 period. The pit does not have

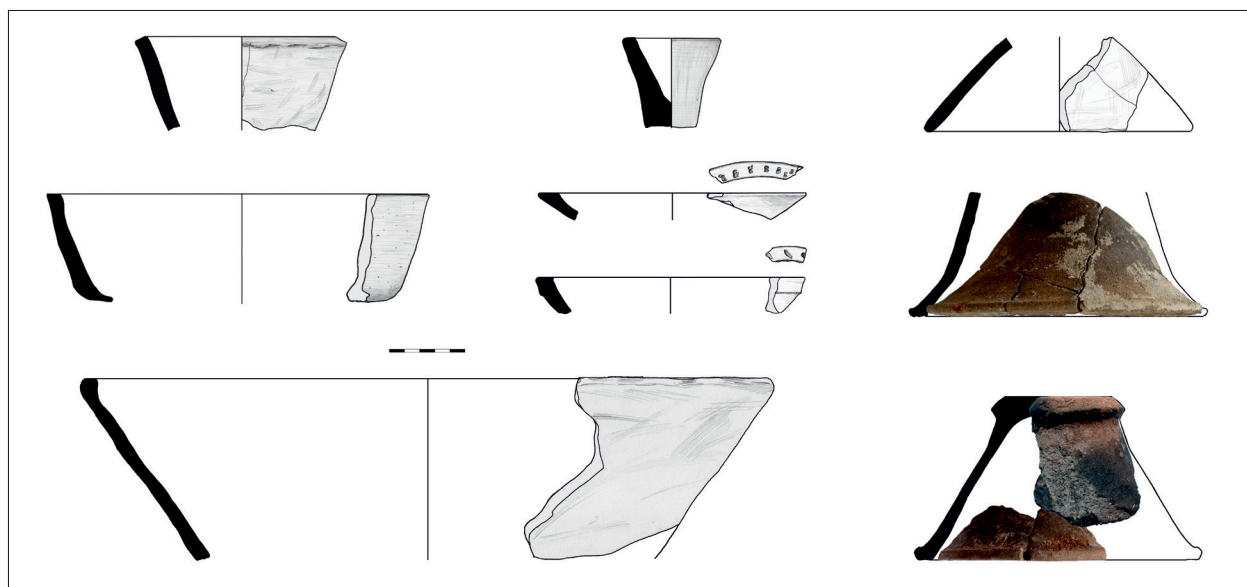


Fig. 5 Rákóczifalva-Bagi-földek, Sites 5-8-8A. Cups, bowls and lids turned on a slow wheel
5. kép Rákóczifalva-Bagi-földek 5-8-8A. lelőhely. Lassúkorongolt csészék, tálak és fedők

a special location within the settlement and neither does the find assemblage recovered from it have any extraordinary traits.

Cultural relations

The Sarmatian tripod is unparalleled in the currently known material. The vessel has the mica- and crushed stone-tempered coarse fabric of the late Sarmatian period, mainly typical for pots and the so-called late Sarmatian cauldrons turned on a slow wheel (VADAY 1984; VÖRÖS 1987; VADAY 1989, 162–163; ÁCS 1992, 102–103; RÓZSA 2000, 91–92; WALTER 2017; see WALTER–FINTOR–SKULTÉTI 2017, note 5 for the publications of additional material). The basic shape of the three-legged vessel is a simple conical bowl type that occurs among the mica-tempered coarse ware from other sites (e.g. Tiszaföldvár–Téglagyár: VADAY–RÓZSA 2006, 96; Kiskundorozsma–Nagy-szék: PINTYE–SÓSKUTI–SZ. WILHELM 2003, 218). Variants provided with handles spanning the vessel mouth also occur on the southern Hungarian Plain (PINTYE–SÓSKUTI–SZ. WILHELM 2003, Fig. 2, 4a–b; VADAY 2011, 434, Pl. 32, 14, 23). Bowls without handles of this type are rarely encountered in the material of the Rákóczifalva site (fig. 5). Formally similar, but hand-thrown small vessels also occur in the destruction horizon of Tiszaföldvár (small bowls: VADAY 1997, fig. 13.6, 8), as well as at Rákóczifalva (various hand-thrown cups and larger bowls, fig. 6).

Similar three-legged vessels are lacking not only from the material of the Sarmatian Barbaricum, since exact parallels are unknown from other areas too. In order to determine the origin of the form and to clarify the vessel's function, we need a broader perspective.

Ceramic tripods were fairly widespread in the western provinces of the Roman Empire in the 1st–2nd centuries. Their use is generally attributed to an earlier Celtic influence (BEHN 1910, 127, Kat. 884–885; HILGERS 1969, 82 (*tripes*), figs 74–75). In the case of Pannonia, an Italian origin is likely (CSAPLÁROS–HINKER–LAMM 2012, 236; OTTOMÁNYI 2012, 242). They were distributed across the entire Norico-Pannonian area (BÓNIS 1942, 24, Taf. XXIV; PLESNIČAR–GEC 1977, 54, Taf. 7, 19–21; KARNITSCH 1972, 144–148, Taf. 69–70; TOPÁL 2003, 12; CSAPLÁROS–HINKER–LAMM 2012; OTTOMÁNYI 2012, 242–244). Some types have a relatively large size range and resemble in size the specimen from Rákóczifalva, although they cannot be dated later than the 2nd century (KARNITSCH 1972, Taf. 69; KASTLER 2000, Taf. 16, 169: biconical bowl type with thick rim and slightly indrawn shoulder, decorated with ribs and incised wavy lines, mouth diam.: 20–24 cm; KARNITSCH 1972, Taf. 70, 4–7; KASTLER 2000, Taf. 16, 167: shallow vessels with angular or curved shoulder, and a diameter of up to 28 cm). Smaller and larger formal variants also have wide, straight legs, which, unlike the vessel from Rákóczifalva, start not from the edge of the bowl base, but more inward, they are set side by side and

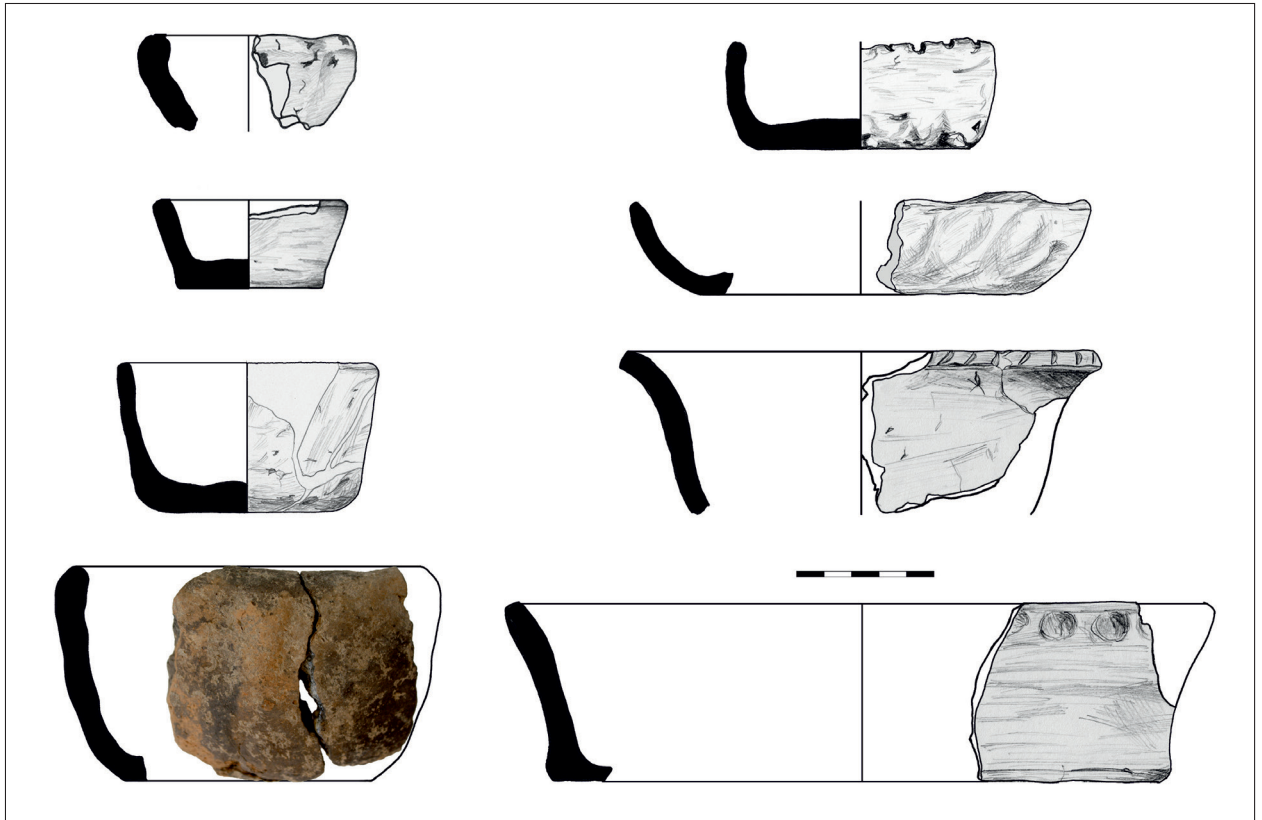


Fig. 6 Rákóczifalva-Bagi-földek, Sites 5-8-8A. Hand-thrown cups and bowls
6. kép Rákóczifalva-Bagi-földek 5-8-8A. lelőhely. Kézzel formált csészék és tálak

the diameter of the three legs is smaller than the width of the bowl.

A bowl type from Lentia (Linz), for example, represents a less common form, whose base and feet are wider than usual, but the bowl has an in-drawn rim and is decorated (KASTLER 2000, Taf. 15, 163). Similar vessels from the broader area of Flavia Solva have been dated explicitly early and have been defined as the prototype of the forms used in the early Roman period (CSAPLÁROS–HINKER–LAMM 2012, 238, Typ. I.1). However, these forms cannot be directly related to the Rákóczifalva vessel. The survival of these bowl types can be noted in the eastern Alpine region until the 3rd century (CSAPLÁROS–HINKER–LAMM 2012, 242–243). Less often, hand-thrown formal variants are also attested, which can be seen as a continuation of earlier local traditions (BOJOVIĆ 1977, 53; Taf. LII, 470; Taf. CII, 470). The three legs are generally simple knobs on the base of the deep, bowl-shaped vessel with a rim diameter of 17.6 cm, which date to the 2nd century. Hand-thrown bowls are also mentioned from Flavia Solva (CSAPLÁROS–HINKER–LAMM 2012, 236).

The closest parallel to the Rákóczifalva tripod from the provincial material is a bowl fragment from

Budaörs (north-eastern Pannonia, in the Aquincum/Budapest area: OTTOMÁNYI 2012, fig. 191. 7, 192; fig. 7. 1). The shallow, straight-sided bowl decorated with an incised wavy line is tempered with gravel. Each leg starts from the wall of the wide bowl, they are set farther from each other, they are lightly ribbed like the legs of the Rákóczifalva vessel, and are attached to the side of the bowl. The lower parts of the legs are missing. The tripod from Budaörs can be assigned to the turn of the 1st–2nd centuries AD. The fragment in question indicates the upper time limit of these vessels: the feature yielded Domitian- and Traian-period *terra sigillata*, and it was used until the Marcomannic–Sarmatian wars at the latest. Katalin Ottományi quoted parallels from Noricum that can be dated no later than the mid-2nd century (OTTOMÁNYI 2012, 194).

Early Roman-period tripods are also known from Sirmium, Bononia and Singidunum: these represent bowls with curved sides (BRUKNER 1981, 40, T. 84.69–73; the sturdy, slightly curved legs of the vessels under cat. nos 69–70 dating from the 1st–2nd centuries are good analogies to the Rákóczifalva vessel). Farther to the east, a vessel from Moesia Inferior should definitely be mentioned, despite the

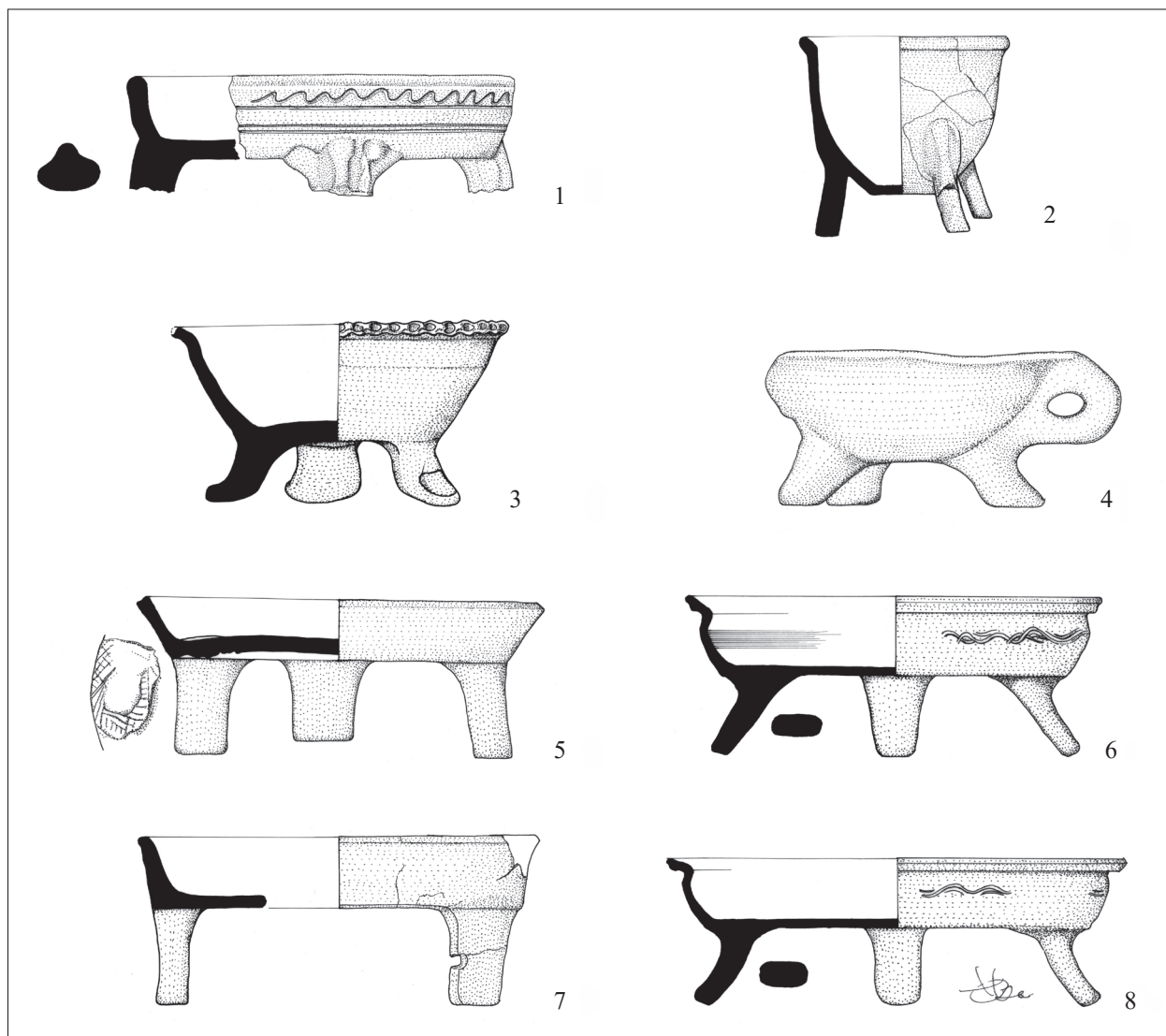


Fig. 7 Three-legged vessels. 1: Budaörs (1st–2nd c. AD); 2: Hotnița (3rd c.); 3: Branč/Berencs-Helyfölkdek (3rd–4th c.); 4: Tășnad/Tasnád-Sere (3rd–4th c.); 5: Vranje (5th–6th c.); 6, 8: Dolj (5th–7th c.); 7: Bistrica ob Sotli (5th–6th c).

See the text for the references

7. kép Háromlábú kerámiaedények. 1: Budaörs (1–2. század); 2: Hotnița (3. sz.); 3: Berencs/Branč-Helyfölkdek (3–4. sz.); 4: Tasnád/Tășnad-Sere (3–4. sz.); 5: Vranje (5–6. sz.); 6, 8: Dolj (5–7. sz.); 7: Bistrica ob Sotli (5–6. sz.).

Hivatkozásokat ld. a szövegben

lack of direct connections. The shape of the three-legged vessel found in Hotnița differs from that of the western exemplars (SULTOV 1976, 22, 109; SULTOV 1985, 87, Table XLIV, 6. Diam.: 25 cm, height: 25.5 cm; fig. 7. 2). Similarly to the Rákóczi falva vessel, the black polished deep bowl with curved sides was set on rounded legs with outcurving base, with the legs attached to the body of the deep bowl. The tripod can be dated to the 3rd century, when Hotnița was a major pottery production centre in the urban territory of Nicopolis ad Istrum and, along with several other workshops, supplied

the city with ceramics (FALKNER 1999, 108–110). In this case, it is assumed that the vessel was used for ritual purposes and had been a substitute for Roman sacrificial vessels.

The form of Roman tripods rarely appears in the neighbouring Roman-period Barbarian cultures. One three-legged small bowl from the Quadic settlement at Branč/Berencs-Helyfölkdek (Slovakia) was clearly inspired by Roman ceramic vessels. The conical vessel has short, curved legs and the rim is decorated with finger impressions (KOLNÍK-VARŠÍK-VLAĐÁR 2007, Tab. 146, 19; Tab. XXXVI, 6; fig. 7. 3).

The bowl can be assigned to the site's third, late Roman-period occupation horizon (250/270–350/370, KOLNÍK–VARSÍK–VLADÁR 2007, obr. 14. and 56, with further parallels from more distant Germanic regions).

A hand-thrown cup set on three short legs is known from north-western Romania, from Tășnad/Tasnád-Sere. It is tempered with pebbles and has a vertical loop handle (GINDELE 2010, Taf. 112, 8a–d; fig. 7. 4). The cup seems to be a blend of provincial tripods and the so-called Dacian cups. The material of the settlement can be dated from the later 3rd century to the earlier 4th century (Phase C1b/C2, possibly up to Phase C3; GINDELE 2010, 110).

Three-legged vessels are rare in the ceramic material of later centuries. Further parallels which share formal similarities with the Rákóczifalva vessel can be cited from the late antique hilltop settlements of the south-eastern Alps. Tripods from two different sites in Slovenia are similar to each other: the basic shapes are broad, shallow, slightly conical dishes set on three short legs (CIGLENEČKI 2000, 76, Abb. 88, 8: Vranje, Ajdovski gradec and Abb. 89, 13: Bistrica ob Sotli, Svete gore; fig. 7. 5, 7). These sites are dated up to the end of the 6th century.

North-west of these sites, two bowls have been published from a late antique hilltop settlement in

Carinthia. Both are wide, shallow bowls; their legs are curved and longer than those of the Slovenian dishes. However, their upper part bears no resemblance to the Sarmatian vessel because the strongly outturned rims with a circumferential groove recall the bowl types with mouths similar to pots (Feistritz an der Drau, Duel: STEINKLAUBER 1990, 118–119, 124–125, Abb. 31–32; fig. 7. 6, 8). The hilltop settlement of Duel is dated between the 5th–7th centuries, principally based on the small finds, which predominantly fall into the 6th century. Thus, in Late Antiquity, three-legged vessels, although rare finds, do occur in other areas.

Another group of simple Roman vessels, namely iron tripods, should also be considered as analogies. Iron tripods were used as auxiliary devices onto which vessels could be placed; the iron frame could be round or triangular. Several examples of the form can be cited from the earlier Roman centuries, for example from Gaul (MARCY-SOUPAULT-WILLEMS 2008, 19–20). A grave found in Fontaine-Notre-Dame, dated to the early 2nd century, yielded a rich ceramic inventory, alongside an iron rack and a riveted, three-legged iron vessel (MARCY-SOUPAULT-WILLEMS 2008, 16; fig. 10, 40). Iron tripods also occur in the Danubian provinces; their dates vary

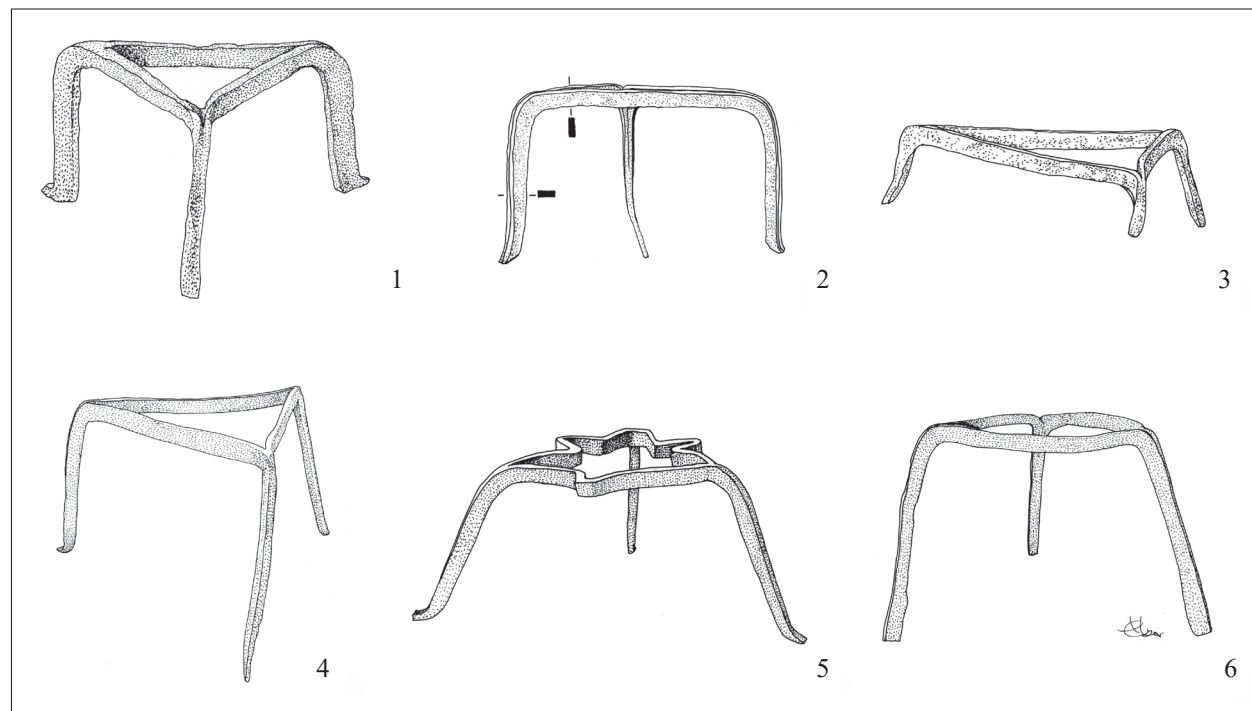


Fig. 8 Iron tripods. 1: Mauer an der Url (2nd–3rd c.); 2: Gora (4th–5th c.); 3: Keszthely-Fenekpuszta (4th–5th c.); 4: Stup (1st–6th c.); 5: Iatrus-Krivina (6th c.); 6: Krefeld-Gellep (6th c.). See the text for the references

8. kép Vas háromlábak. 1: Mauer an der Url (2–3. század); 2: Gora (4–5. sz.); 3: Keszthely-Fenekpuszta (4–5. sz.); 4: Stup (1–6. sz.); 5: Iatrus-Krivina (6. sz.); 6: Krefeld-Gellep (6. sz.). Hivatkozásokat ld. a szövegben

widely (fig. 8. 1; BOŽIČ 2005, 346–351; POLLAK 2006, 28; RUPNIK 2013, 507, with further literature). Late antique forms, like the antecedents of the 3rd century, tend to have outcurving, occasionally somewhat flaring feet.

In Pannonia, an exemplar was discovered at Keszthely-Fenékpuszta, in the fill of a heating channel, with a *terminus post quem* date of 364–378 AD (RUPNIK 2013, 102, Taf. 19. 2; fig. 8. 3). The tripod from a hoard found at Gora can likewise be dated to the later 4th–early 5th century (Polhov Gradec, Slovenia: BOŽIČ 2005, 359, Abb. 19, 4; fig. 8. 2). The tripods from Makljenovac (eastern Bosnia) and Iatrus-Krivina (Bulgaria, fig. 8. 5) more likely date from the 6th century (BOŽIČ 2005, Abb. 54, Abb. 55, 1). Two tripods of uncertain date are known from Bosnia-Herzegovina (BUSULADŽIĆ 2014, 132, Pl. 56, fig. 176: Stup, fig. 8. 4; and fig. 178: Dobož. Both stray finds date to the 1st–6th centuries AD, BUSULADŽIĆ 2014, 201). Judging from its parallels from Iatrus and Makljenovac, the exemplar from Dobož was probably also made in the 6th century. Iron tripods are rare finds in Merovingian-period graves: one specimen appears among the grave goods of the 6th-century elite grave found at Krefeld-Gellep. Unlike the examples cited above, its legs have a straight terminal (PIRLING 1964, Taf. 58, 214; fig. 8. 6). One unique analogy is a Bosnian iron vessel, a shallow bowl with a long handle set on three legs. Unfortunately, the date of this pipkin-like vessel is uncertain (BUSULADŽIĆ 2014, 131, 201, Pl. 55, fig. 173, a stray find, also from Stup).

In sum, we may conclude that a direct connection between the early Roman-period three-legged ceramic vessels and the Rákóczifalva vessel seems unlikely for formal and chronological reasons. However, the 2nd-century fragment from Budaörs leaves this issue open to some extent. While there are no parallels in the 3rd–4th-century Roman ceramic inventory, a few individual exemplars are attested in the Barbarian lands. The best late antique analogies are rare and occur in geographically relatively distant regions: the ceramic vessels of the south-eastern Alpine region and the iron tripods. The slightly differing curved legs with outcurving feet of the Roman and early Byzantine iron tripods could have been the direct precursors of the legs of the vessel found in Sarmatia. Although the form of the iron vessel type is very long-lived, it should be borne in mind that well-dated specimens, contemporaneous with the Rákóczifalva vessel, are also known (Keszthely-Fenékpuszta, Gora), which does not hold true for the ceramic analogies.

Functional questions

The early Roman-period three-legged ceramic vessels are generally considered to be kitchen utensils (ZABEHLICKY-SCHEFFENEGGER 1997; MEYER-FREULER 2005, 383; CSAPLÁROS–HINKER–LAMM 2012, 236; OTTOMÁNYI 2012, 244), principally in view of their cooking ware fabric, their relatively frequent occurrence and their use-wear traces. In some cases, a ritual function is ascribed to ceramic tripods (e.g. Hotnița). Larger, more finely made, three- or four-legged metal vessels are usually associated with the sacrificial rites of Roman religion. Other artefacts that had perhaps been used in sacrificial rites, but are not directly related to animal sacrifices or libation, are also distinguished (HILGERS 1969, 82, 290–291; SIEBERT 1999, 88–102, esp. 93–95; KRAUSKOFF 2005). It is noteworthy that the number of tripod representations in Pannonia is relatively high, due to the widespread depiction of a sacrificial scene distinctive to Pannonia, which appears in various compositions on gravestones until the 4th century (BURGER 1959; BARKÓCZI 1984; see also the previous references).

Iron tripods are viewed in a similar light. They are often considered part of a kitchen set because in many instances they are found in association with iron racks. This seems to have been the case of the 6th-century exemplar from Krefeld, where a simple bronze vessel was found set into the frame of the iron tripod. However, a cultic function has also been proposed: the Fontaine-Notre-Dame vessel, for example, is linked to domestic cults.

Obviously, the date and the context of the finds play a major role in determining function. In general, the literature on Roman religion and rituals does not consider ceramic (and iron) three-legged vessels to have had a ritual role, which is usually ascribed to bronze or silver specimens. Yet, we have to bear in mind that studies on pottery are often pursued separately from toreutics and religious studies.

Looking eastward, Sarmatian analogies dating from earlier periods, namely the three-legged stone vessels must be mentioned. These portable stone altars, along with incense burners, appear primarily in graves and are regarded as tokens of a fire cult (ISTVÁNOVITS–KULCSÁR 2017, 36, fig. 29). In the material of the Sarmatians of the Hungarian Plain, small bipartite vessels and cup- or beaker-shaped vessels with perforations on their body are considered incense burners, which appear mainly in the 2nd–3rd-century material (VADAY 2002, 217–218; ISTVÁNOVITS–PINTYE 2011, 97–99, 103). The small



Fig. 9 Rákóczifalva-Bagi-földek, Site 5. Cube-shaped vessel from Pit 387/497
9. kép Rákóczifalva-Bagi-földek 5. lelőhely. Kocka alakú edény, 387/497. gödör

rectangular vessels are fairly typical for the late Sarmatian sites. Due to their small volume, they could mainly have been used for burning incense. Their special role is in many cases indicated by unique incised decorations and *tamga* signs (VADAY-MEDGYESI 1993; ISTVÁNOVITS-PINTYE 2011, 99–103). A similar cube-shaped, but undecorated vessel came to light from the fill of a storage pit at the Rákóczifalva-Bagi-földek 5 site (fig. 9).

Two vessels from Kanjiža/Magyarkanizsa (Serbia) and Madaras should be mentioned in relation to the incense burners. The Madaras specimen is a cube-shaped hand-thrown vessel with incised decorations set on four short legs. It was placed in a girl's burial (Madaras-Halmok, Grave 105, KŐHEGYI-VÖRÖS 2011, 326, table 24, 13). The vessel from Kanjiža is regarded as a special fusion of the small

bipartite and rectangular vessels set on four legs, and is decorated with a pattern-burnished design. Its legs are straight, rectangular, with their outer edges aligned to the corners of the rectangular vessel, similarly to the Madaras specimen (ISTVÁNOVITS-PINTYE 2011, 99, fig. 38).

Finally, we have to mention the different lamp types of the Sarmatian Barbaricum on the Hungarian Plain, which were discussed in detail in a study published a few years ago, together with various other lighting and incense burning devices. The so-called boat- or shoe-shaped, simple ceramic lamps are usually hand-thrown pieces. Based on the material reviewed by Eszter Istvánovits and Gábor Pintye, they occur mainly in the late Sarmatian–Hun period, primarily on settlements (ISTVÁNOVITS-PINTYE 2011, 94). A hand-thrown, boat-shaped lamp decorated with

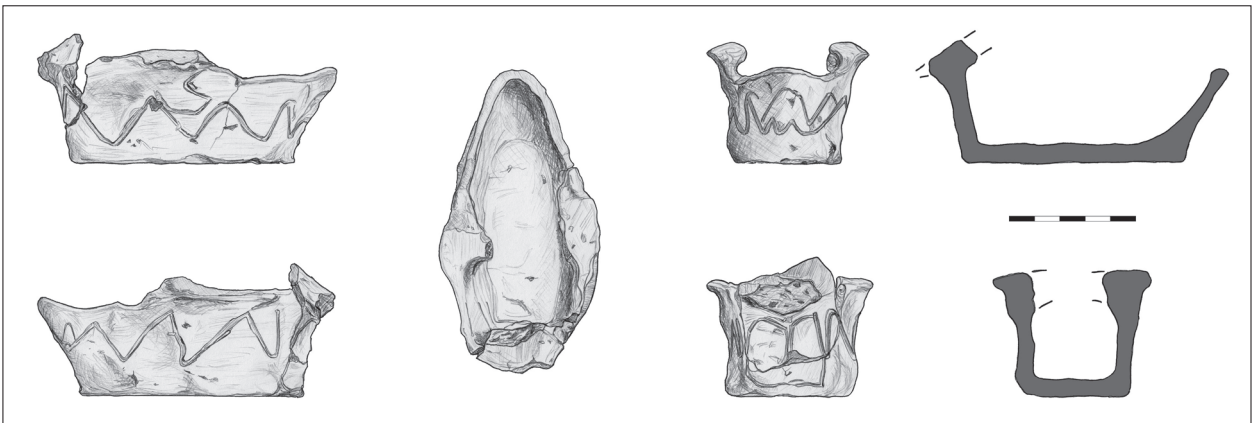


Fig. 10 Rákóczifalva-Bagi-földek, Site 5. Hand-thrown ceramic lamp from Pit 269/370
10. kép Rákóczifalva-Bagi-földek 5. lelőhely. Kézzel formált méceses, 269/370. gödör

incised wavy lines can also be found in the material of the Rákóczifalva settlement. This piece also comes from the fill of a storage pit (fig. 10). Comparable vessels were fashioned from iron too. In addition to the already known material, e.g. from Szentes-Berekhát, new specimens have been discovered over the past decades; the most recent one was published from Bükkábrány in Borsod–Abaúj–Zemplén County (KÓHEGYI 1969; ISTVÁNOVITS–PINTYE 2011, 87–88; KALLI–K. TUTKOVICS 2017, fig. 11). The relevance of the cited ceramic and iron lamps is that comparable pieces from Békéscsaba (Békés County) and Sándorfalva (Csongrád County) have a similar late Sarmatian-period mica-tempered coarse fabric as our tripod (MEDGYESI–PINTYE 2006; ISTVÁNOVITS–PINTYE 2011, 94; WALTER 2017, 39, Pl. 8. 2).

Discussion

The Rákóczifalva tripod can be better understood in the light of the above-cited finds. In the late Sarmatian material, there is a relatively wide range of specially designed vessels for incense burning, lighting, and possibly ritual purposes, with many unique pieces among them. In addition to hand-thrown lamps, iron ones are also attested, whose origins are uncertain. It is possible that the Sarmatian ceramic variant was born after the Roman ironworks were taken over by the Sarmatians, although the local production of these iron lamps of simple design may be assumed as well.

Even though mica-tempered coarse fabric was mainly used for producing cooking vessels, it was also suitable for other ceramic types that were exposed to heat such as cauldrons, lids and lamps. The combination of various shapes and the attachment of legs to local Sarmatian shapes is also attested on other ceramic types (Madaras, Kanjiža).

The three-legged Rákóczifalva vessel fits well into this circle, reflecting the spirit of experimentation among the potters of the late Sarmatian period and the fact that there was some demand among rural communities that called for the creation of new, special forms. It seems quite certain that the shape of the tripod is not an independent innovation and that the potter either saw a similar vessel on the Hungarian Plain or in the Roman territories that he or she wanted to imitate, although we have no way of telling which of these two options was the case. Curved legs are more characteristic of iron tripods than of ceramic vessels, so we may assume that the Sarmatian form ultimately imitated metal vessels. This is also suggested by the well-dated Ro-

man parallels of the late 4th–early 5th centuries. The closest analogies to the ceramic material from the south-eastern Alpine region can also be seen as a combination of late antique iron tripods and local pottery types.

Mica-tempered coarse ware has a special tempering agent, regional distribution and forms (for the different workshop traditions, see previously cited material publications, as well as SÓSKUTI 2010, 176; BENEDEK–PÓPITY–SÓSKUTI 2017, 155, 158–159; MASEK 2018), suggesting that similarly to the wheel-turned fine ceramics and the grey coarse ware of the Üllő type, these products were probably made in larger workshops. The proportion of mica-tempered coarse ware at Rákóczifalva is low (5%), and there is no indication of local ceramic production. The tripod was presumably not made on the site, and it is therefore more likely to have been a traded item rather than the result of local experimentation.

In the light of the above, it seems unlikely that the Rákóczifalva tripod would have been used for simple kitchen purposes such as cooking or re-heating food. Given its form, its use over an open fire would have been feasible and, as a matter of fact, late Sarmatian-period cauldrons are mostly made of this fabric type. However, its form is very special and the traces of burning on the vessel do not support this. We could reasonably assume another kitchen function as a serving dish, but this would not explain the vessel's heat-resistant fabric instead of the one customary in the case of wheel-turned fine ceramics or the fact that the feet had probably been exposed to heat during use.

The eastern Sarmatian parallels with special function are very distant in space and time, and therefore the vessel form suggests the direct imitation of an antique model. However, a survey of the latter did not contribute to the clarification of the vessel's exact origin or function. Thus, if we are looking for a function other than for culinary purposes, we can ultimately only draw from our general knowledge of the era, in which case the vessel's use as an incense burner seems most likely. While there is more evidence of this function in the archaeological record, the fire cult of the Sarmatian period in Hungary, which can be reasonably assumed, yet remains to be explicitly proven. However, if assuming a function as an incense burner, the question remains as to why a container with a capacity of nearly 2.5 litres was needed at Rákóczifalva instead of the usual smaller variant. (According to my calculations, the volumes of the Rákóczifalva vessels cited in the study are as follows: rectangular vessel,

Pit 387: 18 ml; lamp, Pit 269: ca. 178 ml; bowl of the tripod, Pit 208: 2351 ml).

In the late Sarmatian–Hun period, mica-tempered fabrics were typical not only for cooking pots produced in great quantities, but also for vessels whose form can be derived from eastern prototypes (cauldrons). The same workshops undoubtedly drew some of their inspiration from the antique world, but transformed the models to a remarkable extent (lamp, tripod). Simple new shapes were also created (bowls with handles spanning the mouth). This phenomenon, like many others, shows the wide range of the late Sarmatian-period network of relations on the Hungarian Plain and indicates that cultural impacts from regions lying in different directions were filtered before their integration into

local material culture. In addition to the adoption and adaptation of the antique form, it may be assumed that the use of the Rákóczifalva tripod was linked to a special tradition of local or eastern origin.

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SZARMATA TRIPOS RÁKÓCZIFALVÁRÓL

Összefoglalás

Rákóczifalva-Bagi-földek 5. lelőhelyen egy közepes méretű késő szarmata–hun kori település került elő 2006 folyamán. Jelen tanulmány az igen gazdag leletanyagú lelőhely kerámiaanyagából egy egyedi edény közlését és értékelését tűzte ki célul maga elé.

Az edény három nagyméretű, ívelten kihajló lábbal ellátott *tripos*. Alapja egy lassúkorongon formázott, tagolatlan és vízszintesen levágott peremű, enyhén kónikus falú tál, amelyet három durva lábbal láttak el. A tárgy nem teljesen szimmetrikus, a lábak kialakítása kissé különböző, egyedi, de azonos, határozott elképzelésen alapul. Az edény három lábának végén sötétszürke-feketés foltok láthatók, amelyek a használat, esetleg a kiégetés során keletkezettek. Valószínűsíthető, hogy a háromlábú parázsba állítva használhatták, de elpusztulása előtt nagyobb hőhatásnak, lángoknak nem lehetett kitéve.

A kiegészített *tripos* a 208/301. egyszerű, méhkas alakú gödörből került elő, amely az 5. lelőhely intenzív szarmata települési egységének DK-i oldalán húzódott, hozzá hasonló kialakítású, erősen méhkas alakú, mély gödrök sorában. A jelenség a késő szarmata–hun kori település képébe szervesen illeszkedik, azzal egy településhorizontba tartozik: a C3–D1/D2 periódusra keltezhető, míg a település élete a D1/D2 fázisban érhetett véget, elsősorban a lelőhely relatív kronológiai elemzése alapján. A 208/301. jelenség helyzete a településen belül nem speciális, s a kísérőleletek alapján a kontextus sem mutat semmi rendhagyót. A 208/301. gödröt a C3–D1/D2 időszakra keltezhetjük.

A szarmata háromlábú az alföldi késő szarmata kori csillámos-szemcsés kerámiának nevezett áruból készült, amelyből elsősorban kézikorongolt fazekakat, ritkábban felsőfüles bográcsokat, fedőket, tálakat és mécseseket gyártottak. Hasonló háromlábú edények nemcsak a szarmata Barbaricum anyagából hiányoznak, pontos párhuzamait más területeken sem találjuk meg.

A kora császárkori pannoniai kerámia lábastálak

közvetlen kapcsolata a rákóczifalvi edénnyel formai és kronológiai okok miatt nem valószínű. Egy budaörsi 2. századi edénytöredék azonban egyelőre ezt az értelmezési lehetőséget is nyitva hagyja. A 3–4. századi római kerámiában jó párhuzamot edényünkhöz nem találunk, de barbár területeken egy-egy egyedi megoldás máshol is előfordul. A legjobb késő antik analógiákat ritka, és földrajzilag meglehetősen távoli párhuzamok: a délkelet-alpi lábas kerámia-tálak, valamint a vas háromlábúak alkotják.

A római és kora bizánci vas *triposok* enyhén széttartó és kifelé hajló ívelt lábúak akár közvetlen előképként is szolgálhattak a szarmata területen talált edény lábainak kialakításához. A forma római területeken igen hosszú életű, azonban ki kell emelnünk, hogy jól keltezhető, a rákóczifalvi edénnyel egykorú példányai is ismertek (Keszthely-Fenekpuszta, Gora), amely a kerámia-analógiákról nem mondható el.

A római vallással és rítusokkal foglalkozó irodalom a kerámiából és vasból készült edényeket általában nem tekinti rituális eszköznek, ez inkább a bronzból vagy ezüstből készült, finomabb kidolgozású edényekre jellemző. A kora császárkori háromlábú kerámiaedényeket általában konyhai edényeknek értékelik. A vas háromlábúak értékelése hasonló. Mindkét tárgytypussal kapcsolatban előfordul azonban a kultikus funkciók feltételezése is. Keleti irányba kitekintve, a korábbi szarmata párhuzamokra, a háromlábú kőedényekre is utalunk kell, amelyeket hordozható kőoltárként értékelnek.

Az alföldi késő szarmata anyagban a speciális kialakítású, füstöléshez, világításhoz, s valószínűleg rituális használathoz is köthető edények köre viszonylag tág, s köztük számos egyedi darab tűnik fel. A rákóczifalvi háromlábú kialakulása jól illeszkedik ehhez a körhöz, amely a késő szarmata kori fazekasság kísérletező kedvére utal és arra, hogy a falusias településeken olyan igények léteztek, amelyek újabb, különleges formák kialakítását követelték. Abban csaknem biztosak lehetünk,

hogy a rákóczi falvi edény formája nem önálló újítás, s hogy a fazekas vagy az Alföldön, vagy római területen látott olyan edényt, amelyet utánozni kívánt. A két lehetőség közül – más esetekhez hasonlóan – nem tudunk választani.

A késő szarmata–hun kori csillámos-szemcsés kerámiából a legnagyobb mennyiségben gyártott főzőfazekakon kívül keleti formai eredetű edényeket is készítettek. Ugyanezek a műhelyek az antik világból is merítettek ötleteket, az előképeket

azonban jelentősen átalakították, vagy egyszerű, új formákat hoztak létre. Ez a jelenség – sok más-hoz hasonlóan – a késő szarmata Alföld kapcsolatrendszerének tág határait mutatja, és jelzi, hogy a különböző irányból érkezett hatások a helyi anyagi kultúrába sajátos szelekcióval integrálódtak. Az antik forma átvétele, adaptálása mellett egyaránt feltételezhető, hogy a rákóczi falvi edény használata speciális, helyi vagy keleti eredetű hagyományhoz kötődött.

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