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ROMAN PERIOD JET BEADED ARMLET FROM THE SITE OF BÁTASZÉK-LAJVÉR

The assemblages of a young female grave (~3rd–4th century AD), at the cemetery next to the limes mutatio at Bátaszék-Lajvér, Hungary, included an armlet made of 22 pieces of flat, elliptical and decorated jet beads. This article presents a detailed description of the armlet and a discussion of the results of a material analysis – petrological and vitrinite reflectance – performed on samples of the beads.

A Bátaszék-Lajvér (Magyarország) lelőhelyen feltárt limeshez tartozó mutatio közelében elhelyezkedő temetőrészlet egyik női sírjának (Kr. u. 3–4. század) mellékleteként egy 22 db díszített gyöngyből álló gagátkarkötő került elő. Jelen tanulmány a karkötő részletes leírását, valamint a gyöngyökön végzett vitrinit reflexiós és közöttani anyagvizsgálatát taglalja.

Keywords: *mutatio, jet, armlet, analysis of reflected light microscopy*

Kulcsszavak: *mutatio, gagát, karkötő, vitrinit reflexiós vizsgálat*

The Field Service for Cultural Heritage conducted rescue excavations at the site of Bátaszék-Lajvér, which lies at the borders of Lajvérpuszta in the eastern part of Tolna County, in 2008 and 2009. The area lies in the valley of the Lajvér-patak (stream) that runs along the region where the geographically advantageous Tolna hillside meets the Sárköz. A *mutatio* building, dated to the 2nd–3rd centuries AD, built along the probable road section of the *limes* between Pannonia Inferior, Ad Statuas and Lugio (GAÁL–LÖRINCZ 1998), and a directly neighbouring cemetery section of mixed rites were unearthed during the excavations. The 16 cremated graves of the cemetery, belonging to the Early Imperial Age, yielded coins, caskets and glass objects, which are typical of the period. The majority of the 14 skeleton graves, which were later interred between the cremated burials, were without any assemblage, except for Grave 85/657, in which a woman, who died young, wore a jet beaded armlet around her wrist.

Description of the grave

The north–south oriented, supine skeleton had a fragmented pottery cup (Fig. 1; Id. n: 46.59096.658.2) beside her right foot with two bronze fragments near the knees. Based on the analysis of Orsolya László, the remains of a 16–18 year old young woman lay

in the grave. Cremated human remains appeared at her left knee in a secondary position. The right arm of the deceased was slightly bent and positioned near the pelvis, while the left arm, also bent, lay on the right elbow crossing the chest. The beads of the armlet were found in their original sequence around the left wrist (Fig. 2).

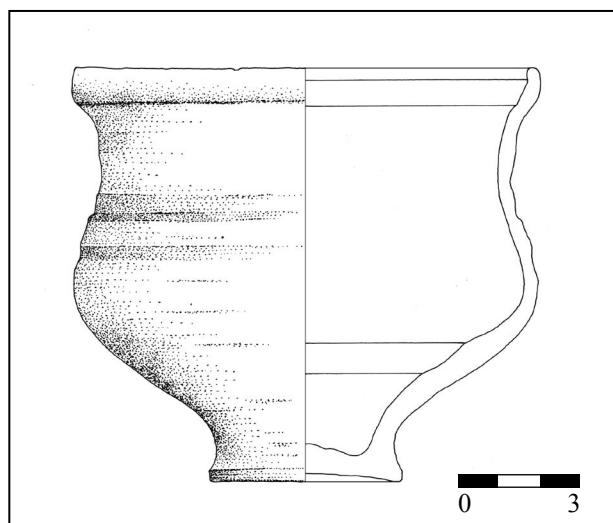


Fig. 1 Bátaszék-Lajvér: Drawing of the pottery cup
(Drawing by Katalin Szegleti)

1. kép Bátaszék-Lajvér: A 85/657. sír kerámia rajza
(Rajz: Szegleti Katalin)

The jet beaded armlet

The armlet is in good condition, although there are a few hairline cracks on its surface (Id. no.: 46.59096.658.1). Each element is matt and dark black in colour. The sides of each bead have porous

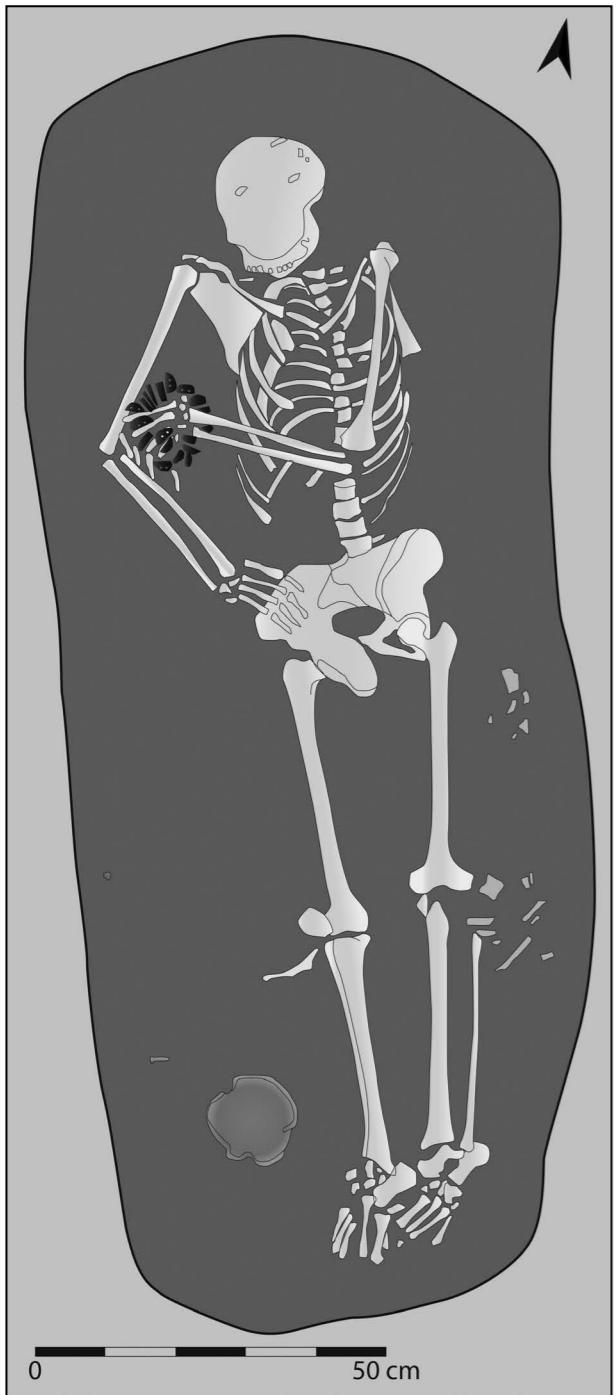


Fig. 2 Bátaszék-Lajvér: Drawing of Grave No. 85/657
2. kép Bátaszék-Lajvér: A 85/657. sír rajza

surfaces. The 22 beads were part of a flexible armlet. The beads are flat, have an elliptical form and a double hole. The beads were probably strung through these holes onto a leather strap or metal wire, or perhaps some other string of organic fibres (Fig. 3). The centre piece is the largest and the following beads on both sides of the centre piece gradually decrease in diameter and thickness. The curved, wider, glossy polished parts of the beads are decorated. The pattern consists of three units regarding both the individual beads and the overall piece itself. The most ornamental, largest S-shaped motif is found in the centre of each element, bordered on both sides by a wider band (Fig. 4). A



Fig. 3 Bátaszék-Lajvér: The assembled jet armlet (Photo by József Bicskei)
3. kép Bátaszék-Lajvér: Az összeállított gagátkarkötő(Fotó: Bicskei József)

zigzag motif closes the above-mentioned bands at the ends of the elements. An oval incision can be found instead of the S-shaped motif at the centre of the largest element in the middle of the armlet (Fig. 4, 11). The closing piece, on the side opposite the largest, central element is the smallest in size and it is incised slightly differently from the other beads. A double S-shape can be observed in its centre (Fig. 4, 21). Among the elements of the armlet one is probably a replacement, as its design and size varies from the other pieces. Two parallel incisions decorate the bead but the incisions run in the opposite direction compared to those on the other beads (Fig. 4, 2). Viewed from above, the decoration of the armlet elements fit exactly and join together to form a well-harmonizing pattern. This pattern only

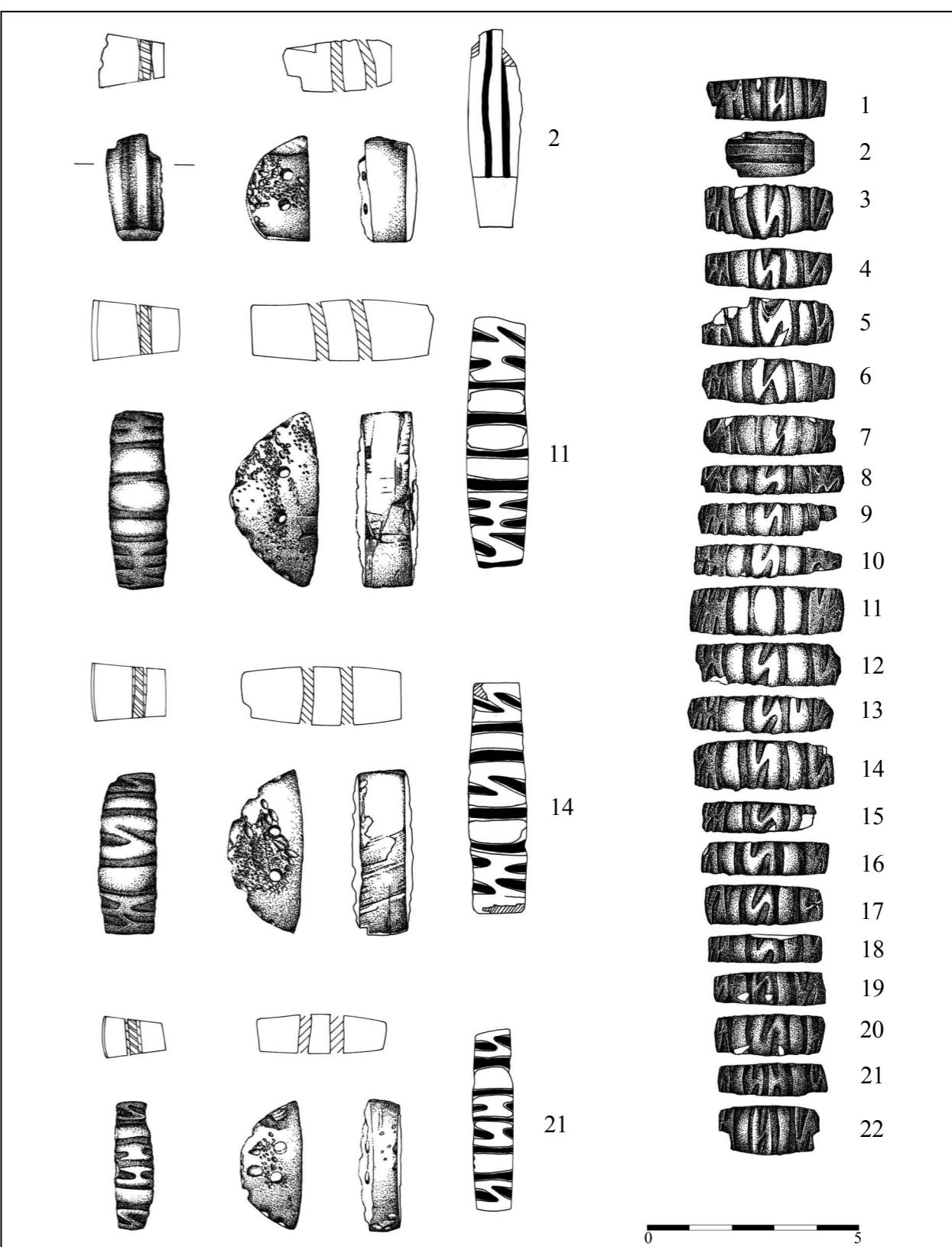


Fig. 4 Bátaszék-Lajvér: Drawing of the armlet (Drawing by Katalin Szegleti)
4. kép Bátaszék-Lajvér: A karkötő rajza (Rajz: Szegleti Katalin)

| Darabszám / No. | "Hosszúság / Length (mm)" | "Szélesség / Width (mm)" | Vastagság / Thickness (mm) | "Súly / Weight (g)" |
|-----------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|
| 1 | 31 | 13 | 10 | 2,7 |
| 2 | 34 | 15 | 7 | 2,6 |
| 3 | 33 | 17 | 8 | 2,9 |
| 4 | 35 | 18 | 8 | 3,1 |
| 5 | 36 | 18 | 12 | 5,6 |
| 6 | 34 | 18 | 11 | 4,4 |
| 7 | 35 | 17 | 10 | 3,8 |
| 8 | 33 | 15 | 12 | 4,2 |
| 9 | 27 | 14 | 8 | 2,1 |
| 10 | 30 | 14 | 9 | 2,5 |
| 11 | 28 | 13 | 10 | 2,6 |
| 12 | 27 | 12 | 8 | 1,7 |
| 13 | 27 | 14 | 8 | 2,1 |
| 14 | 27 | 12 | 10 | 2,3 |
| 15 | 26 | 14 | 8 | 1,9 |
| 16 | 25 | 14 | 12 | 2,5 |
| 17 | 28 | 16 | 11 | 3,3 |
| 18 | 21 | 15 | 12 | 2,5 |
| 19 | 30 | 17 | 14 | 4,1 |
| 20 | 30 | 16 | 10 | 3,3 |
| 21 | 31 | 15 | 12 | 3,6 |
| 22 | 30 | 14 | 10 | 2,5 |

Table 1 Bátaszék-Lajvér: The size of the armlet elements according to the numbering in the drawing

1. Táblázat Bátaszék-Lajvér: A karkötő elemeinek méretei a rajznak megfelelő számozással

breaks at the differently ornamented supplementary bead. The sizes of the beads vary, with an average size of 30×15×10 mm; their average weight is 3 g. The holes have an average diameter of 2,79 mm. The circumference of the armlet is 210 mm, its inner diameter is 50 mm, its outer diameter is 78 mm, and its total weight is 66,3 g (Table 1).

Classification of the jet armlet

Wood structures that became secondarily buried into sediments containing bitumen are prone to bitumen intake, during which process the stone-coal, we call jet, is formed (SZÁDECZKY-KARDOSS 1952, 222–224). Jet has a conchoidal fracture; its structure is porous and easily workable. Its surface can be polished, and thanks to its tenacity it is the perfect material for making jewellery, such as medallions, rings, armlets and hairpins, amongst others. Several ancient sources mention the characteristics of jet and its places of occurrence (PLINY, BOSTOCK–RILEY 1857, 36, 34; SOLINUS, MOMMSEN 1864, 22, 11). While Pliny the Elder and Solinus both give detailed descriptions of the material structure of jet, the localisation of the quarry named by Pliny is problematic (ALLASON-JONES 1996, 5–6). The rich quarry site in Britannia named by Solinus, where good quality jet was to be found, is identical to the contemporary jet quarry in East Anglia (ALLASON-JONES 1996, 9). It is worthy of notice that neither of the authors mention jet as a material for jewellery, which can probably be explained by the fact that the popularity of jewellery made from jet at the time the works were written did not arrive to its peak reached by the 3rd–4th century AD (FACSÁDY 2009, 15).

Furthermore, it is interesting that jet is regarded as a stone of healing powers in the ancient treatises that can cure and treat several illnesses and symptoms connecting to women due to its beneficial effects, amongst others (PLINY, BOSTOCK–RILEY 1857, 36, 34; DISCORIDES PEDANIUS, OSBALDESTON–WOOD 2000, 5, 146). The connection of jet to women is also emphasized by the fact that jewellery items made of jet – which were only found in areas of the northern provinces of the Roman Empire – were in several cases unearthed in assemblages of female burials. The jet armlet excavated at the site of Bátaszék-Lajvér – is similar to the almost identical armlets also found in areas of Pannonia dating to the 3rd and 4th centuries AD – belong to the assemblage of a female burial as well (KUZSINSZKY 1923; FÜLEP 1969, 20–22, 42, Fig. 5; FÉNYES 1999).

The jet armlet found at Bátaszék-Lajvér, with the exception of the supplementing bead, belongs to the Hagen C 38 form (HAGEN 1937, 91, 119–120, Fig. 2 bottom), and can be categorized in group 33 of the catalogue of Allason-Jones (ALLASON-JONES 1996, 28). Based on its ornamentation, the supplementing bead would belong in group 26 of the catalogue of Allason-Jones (ALLASON-JONES 1996, 27).

| Lelőhely / Site | Bátaszék-01 | Bátaszék-02 | Asturia, Esp-00 | Mecsek-04 | Krím-04 |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| "Ro %/Átlag / Ro %/Average" | 0,33 | 0,33 | 0,38 | 0,46 | 0,37 |
| Kor / Age | jura-kréta / Jurassic-Cretaceous | jura-kréta / Jurassic-Cretaceous | jura / Jurassic | jura / Jurassic | jura / Jurassic |
| Eredet / Origin | ? | ? | Spanyolország / Spain | Magyarország / Hungary | Ukrajna / Ukraine |

Table 2 Bátaszék-Lajvér: The results of the vitrinite reflectance analysis
2. Táblázat Bátaszék-Lajvér: A Vitrinit reflexiós vizsgálat mérései eredményei

As there were no other finds that could give a relative dating of the Lajvér grave, only the armlet, being a type of jewellery common in the 3rd and 4th centuries AD, would provide its date.

The material analysis of jet

A vitrinite reflectance analysis was performed to determine the composition and provenance of the material. We chose the supplementing bead with varying ornamentation and the bead in the worst condition for the analysis, which was conducted by Dr. Mária Vidó Hámorné from the Eötvös Loránd Geophysical Institute of Hungary. This unified method of analysis was devised by the International Committee for Coal and Organic Petrology (ICCP), which is in accordance with the method of reflected light microscopy employed by Allason-Jones and Jones (ALLASON-JONES–JONES 2001). A Leica DM-RX polarising microscope was used with oil immersion for the examination of the samples at a ×500 magnification. The instrument was calibrated with a glass prism that has a reflexive capacity of 0,683% at a wavelength of 546 nm between 22–25 °C. The study showed that both samples are of wood-structured coal that fluoresced slightly with a reddish-brown hue that is characteristic of jet. Both the similar reflectance of vitrinite results (0,33) and their analogous petrological composition indicate the same provenance of the raw material of the beads. In addition to the armlet beads, control samples of jet collected from Asturias (Spain), the Mecsek Mountains (Hungary), and Crimea (Ukraine) were examined (Table 2).

In a wider study, collecting jet artefacts in Europe, reflectance measurements of samples from other Hungarian sites are also available, which show lower values than those from Bátaszék-Lajvér. The

measurements of the majority of the finds from Aquincum range between 0,17–0,23. Only two samples showed even lower results from these. Furthermore, an armlet bead from Brigetio showed a result of 0,22. While the raw materials from Britain show results between 0,17–0,25, the samples from Holzmaden, on the banks of the Rhine, gave results of 0,19±0,2. The authors of the study referred to a possible restricted trade of jet goods in the provinces lying on the area of modern-day France and Spain during the 3rd century AD. Measurements of artefacts from Bordeaux gave results of 0,30/0,33; one object found in Wroxeter gave 0,33, and three in York yielded the results of 0,35–0,37. These measurements are identical to the levels obtained from the raw materials from the Asturian sites of the Iberian Peninsula (ALLASON-JONES–JONES 2001). The sample from Peniche, in Portugal, has a similar value of 0,35 (SUÁREZ-RUIZ–CRELLING 2008).

Reflectance measurements of raw materials from the Balkan Peninsula, in Bulgaria, ranges between 0,40–0,46; however, a sample from the same region has a value of 0,21; another measurement from Sołtyków in Poland ranges between 0,37–0,43 (SUÁREZ-RUIZ–CRELLING 2008). Systematic mining activities at the sites of Gams/Hieflau in Austria are also reinforced by written sources of the 15th–16th centuries (FREH–HABERFELNER 1950). Raw materials from this region yielded values between 0,20–0,37 (KOLLMANN–SACHSENHOFEN 1998).

Summary

The form and decoration of the armlet found at the site of Bátaszék-Lajvér differ somewhat from the jet armlets known from the area of Pannonia. We can mention Germanic and Britanic armlets as direct analogies. Similarly to other jet armlets that were

found within the borders of the Empire, the one brought to light at Lajvér was also part of the assemblage of a female burial. The ceramic found in the grave is not suitable for appropriate relative dating. For this reason the burial can be dated by the jet bracelet to the period of immense popularity of jewellery made of jet that evolved by the 3rd–4th centuries AD. With the comparison of the results of the analysis conducted on the currently available

raw materials obtained from jet quarries, it can be stated that the armlet from Bátaszék-Lajvér shows the most similarities with the values gained from the samples from the regions of the Iberian Peninsula and Austria. It can be presumed that the raw material of the armlet in question originates from one of these sites. However, further analyses are needed to determine the exact source location of the raw material.

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RÓMAI KORI GAGÁTKARKÖTŐ BÁTASZÉK-LAJVÉR LELŐHELYRŐL

2008-ban és 2009-ben a Kulturális Örökségvédelmi Szakszolgálat megelőző régészeti feltárást végzett Tolna megye keleti részén, Lajvérpuszta határában,

Bátaszék-Lajvér lelőhelyen. A feltárás során Pannónia Inferior, Ad Statuas és Lugio közötti limes útszakasz feltételezett nyomvonala mentén (GAÁL–

LÖRINCZ 1998) épített, Kr. u. 2–3. századra datálható mutatio épülete és egy annak közvetlen közelében létesített vegyes ritusú temetőrészlet került elő. A temető 16 darab kora császárkori hamvasztásos sírja a korra jellemző mellékletekkel rendelkezett, még a hamvasztásos sírok között elhelyezkedő későbbi, 14 darab csontvázas sír többsége melléklet nélküli volt, kivéve a 85/657. számú, amelyben egy fiatalon elhunyt nő csuklójára húzott, gagátból készült karkötő volt.

Az észak–déli tájolású, hátára fektetett 16–18 év körüli fiatal női váz jobb lábfejénél törékes kerámia edény, a térd magasságában kettő darab bronztörédek helyezkedett el. A bal térdnél másodlagos helyzetben hamvasztott emberi maradványok jelentkeztek. A csontváz jobb karja enyhén behajlított helyzetben a medencéhez volt helyezve, míg a bal kar behajlított állapotban a mellkasban kereszten, a jobb könyökön feküdt. A karkötő szemei eredeti sorrendben maradtak meg a bal csukló körül.

A flexibilis, 22 db lapos, elliptikus formájú gyöngyből álló karkötő szemei duplacsatornájúak. A Bátaszék-lajvéri gagátkarkötő a pótszem kivételével a Hagen C 38 forma (HAGEN 1937, 91, 119, 120, 2. ábra lent) és az Allason-Jones katalógus (ALLASON-JONES 1996, 28) szerint a 33. típusba sorolható. Minimális alapján a pótszem leginkább az Allason-Jones katalógus (ALLASON-JONES 1996, 27) 26. típusába tartozik. A gagát összetételének és származási helyének azonosítása céljából vitrinit reflexiós vizsgálatot végeztünk el az Eötvös Loránd Geofizikai Intézetben. Az International Committee for Coal and Organ-

ic Petrology (ICCP) nemzetközi szervezet dolgozta ki azt az egységes vizsgálati módszert, amely meggyezik az Allason-Jones és Jones (ALLASON-JONES–JONES 2001) által használt fényreflexiós mikroszkopikus eljárással. A mintákat Leica DM-RX polarizációs mikroszkópon olajimmerzióval 500× nagyítással vizsgálták meg. Egy átfogó európai leleteket vizsgáló tanulmánynak köszönhetően, más Magyarországról származó minták reflexiós szintjei is rendelkezésre állnak, amelyek alacsonyabbak, mint a Bátaszék-lajvéri karkötő.

A Bátaszék-Lajvér lelőhelyen előkerült ékszer formája és díszítése nemileg eltér a Pannónia területéről származó gagátkarkötőktől. Közvetlen párhuzamként germaniai és britanniai karkötők említethetők meg. Hasonlóan a Birodalom területéről előkerült más gagátkarkötőkhöz a lajvéri lelet is egy női sír mellékleteként került elő. A sírban talált törékes kerámia pontos párhuzamok hiányában jelen helyzetben szűkebb keltezésre nem alkalmas, így a temetkezés a karkötő alapján a Kr. u. 3–4. századra kialakult gagátkeszerek nagy népszerűségének időszakára tehető.

A jelenleg rendelkezésre álló gagátnyersanyag lelőhelyek vizsgálati eredményeit összevetve megállapítható, hogy a Bátaszék-lajvéri karkötő leginkább az Ibériai-félszigetről, és az Ausztria területéről származó minták értékeivel mutat hasonlóságot. Feltételezhető, hogy az említett karkötő nyersanyaga ezen lelőhelyek valamelyikéről származik. A nyersanyag pontos származási helyének lokalizálásához további mérési adatok szükségesek.

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