



## ΜΩΜΟΣ ΙΧ.

A RITUÁLÉ RÉGÉSZETE  
Őskoros Kutatók IX. Összejövetelének  
konferenciakötete

THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF RITUAL  
Proceedings of the IXth conference  
of researchers of prehistory



DISSERTATIONES ARCHAEOLOGICAE  
ex Instituto Archaeologico  
Universitatis de Rolando Eötvös nominatae  
*Supplementum 3.*

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Miskolc, 2015. október 14–16.

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edited by

Piroska CSENGERI – András KALLI – Ágnes KIRÁLY – Judit KOÓS



Budapest 2020

Dissertationes Archaeologicae ex Instituto Archaeologico  
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# Előszó

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2015. október 14–16. között a miskolci Herman Ottó Múzeum rendezte meg a IX. ΜΩΜΟΣ konferenciát, vagyis az Őskoros Kutatók IX. Összejövetelét. E konferenciasorozat 1997-ben indult útjára, és hagyományosan két évente, mindig egy meghatározott témakörben ad lehetőséget az ősrégészet kutatóinak újabb eredményeik bemutatására. Debrecen, Szombathely, Kőszeg és Százhalombatta után Miskolc városa először adott otthont a programnak.

A konferencia témája ezúttal „*A rituálé régészete*” volt, a tematika kidolgozását az ELTE BTK Régészettudományi Intézetének kutatói segítették. A felvezető és összefoglaló előadásokon túl a *Strukturált depozitumok; Rituális cselekvésmódok és rituális specialisták; Rituális tér (rituális építmények, rituális táj, rituális térhasználat)*; valamint a *Temetkezések mint rituális cselekvésformák* altémák köré rendeződött a program. A konferencia fő célja az volt, hogy közösen számba vegyünk azokat a jelenségeket, melyek ebben a körben értelmezhetőek, ütköztessük az eltérő megközelítéseket, interpretációkat, és közös fogalmi keretet alakítsunk ki – hiszen a kutatás így tud megújulni, fejlődni.

Ezeknek a céloknak csak részben tudtunk megfelelni, a konferenciát mégis eredményesen zártuk. A három nap alatt 31 előadás hangzott el, mellettük 12 poszter is bemutatásra került. A résztvevő 120 kutatót és érdeklődőt rendhagyó módon fogadó „Pannon-tenger Múzeum” hangulatos helyszínnek bizonyult, és sokat jelentett, hogy a szervezésben a Múzeum munkatársai és a közel 40 fős Régészeti Tár egy emberként vett részt.

Az esemény óta eltelt négy évben több kutató munkája is megjelent, így ebben a kötetben tizennégy tanulmány kapott helyet. A közlések a konferencia altémáit felbontva, immár időrendi sorrendben, a kőkorszaktól a vaskor végéig foglalkoznak a „rituálé régészettel”, eredményeiket egy kulturális antropológiai tanulmány egészíti ki. A kötet kiadása egy sikertelen pályázatot követően a Herman Ottó Múzeumban anyagi nehézségekbe ütközött, emiatt a Szervezők nevében szeretnénk megköszönni az ELTE BTK Régészettudományi Intézetének a lehetőséget, és különösen Váczi Gábor áldozatos munkáját, amelynek révén a *Dissertationes Archaeologicae* sorozat *Supplementum* köteteként végül mégis hozzáférhetővé válhat a kutatás és az érdeklődők számára.



# New Results from Megyaszó-Halom-oldal dűlő

## Soil-sample analysis and a hypothetical reconstruction of the funerary ritual

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### **Abstract**

*An excavation was carried out by the colleagues of the Herman Ottó Museum in 2013 in the vicinity of Megyaszó (Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County). In the course of the excavation, a total of 10 cremation burials, a vessel connected to funerary practice, four storage or waste pits and part of a ditch were documented. In addition to the ceramic, bone and stone materials, some soil samples were also collected from the vessels during the fine dismantling of the urns. 12 samples originate from the different ceramics, while one from the middle of pit S4. Based on the results of the archaeological finds and the soil-samples' analyses, it was attempted to outline some funerary practices of the Tumulus culture within a specific, narrow region.*

---

### **A brief introduction of the site and its find material**

In the summer of 2013, during an archaeological rescue excavation, some new artefacts from the period of the Tumulus culture were found near the village of Megyaszó (Fig. 1).<sup>1</sup> The cemetery section found here is rather small, its full extent is still in question, as well as the size of the assumed settlement outlined on the basis of pits and the ditch.

The location of the site is rather favourable within the surrounding landscape. The river basin of the Hernád has always had an important role to connect the Slovakian basins (Košice Basin) and the Hungarian flat areas (Hernád Valley).<sup>2</sup> It was an important 'link', a so called natural passage between these two regions during the Bronze Age,<sup>3</sup> which provided a fine exchange and interregional communication route among the surrounding areas of the site.

The excavated partial cemetery contained 10 graves and a feature that can be associated with some kind of funerary practice.<sup>4</sup> In nine cases, large storage vessels or bowls were used as urns to hold the ashes of the deceased. Only one grave could have been a scattered cremation burial. The ten graves consisted of 38 different type of vessels, two bronze spiral rings and the remains of a clay bead necklace. A separately lying handled mug could be interpreted as an independent feature due to its presumed special function as part of a secondary funeral practice.<sup>5</sup> This incomplete cemetery will certainly be extended with further graves in a later research.

1 The complete evaluation of the site was published in the Yearbook of the Herman Ottó Museum in 2015 (KÓSA 2015a).

2 PÉCSI et al. 1972, 5–12; DÖVÉNYI 2010, 214–219, 849.

3 FÜLEP – KISS 1999, 5–18; FRISNYÁK 2006, 285–286; FRISNYÁK 2007, 53–54.

4 KÓSA 2015a, 179–193, Tab. 1–5; KÓSA 2015b, 36–55.

5 FÜLÖP – VÁCZI 2014, 416.



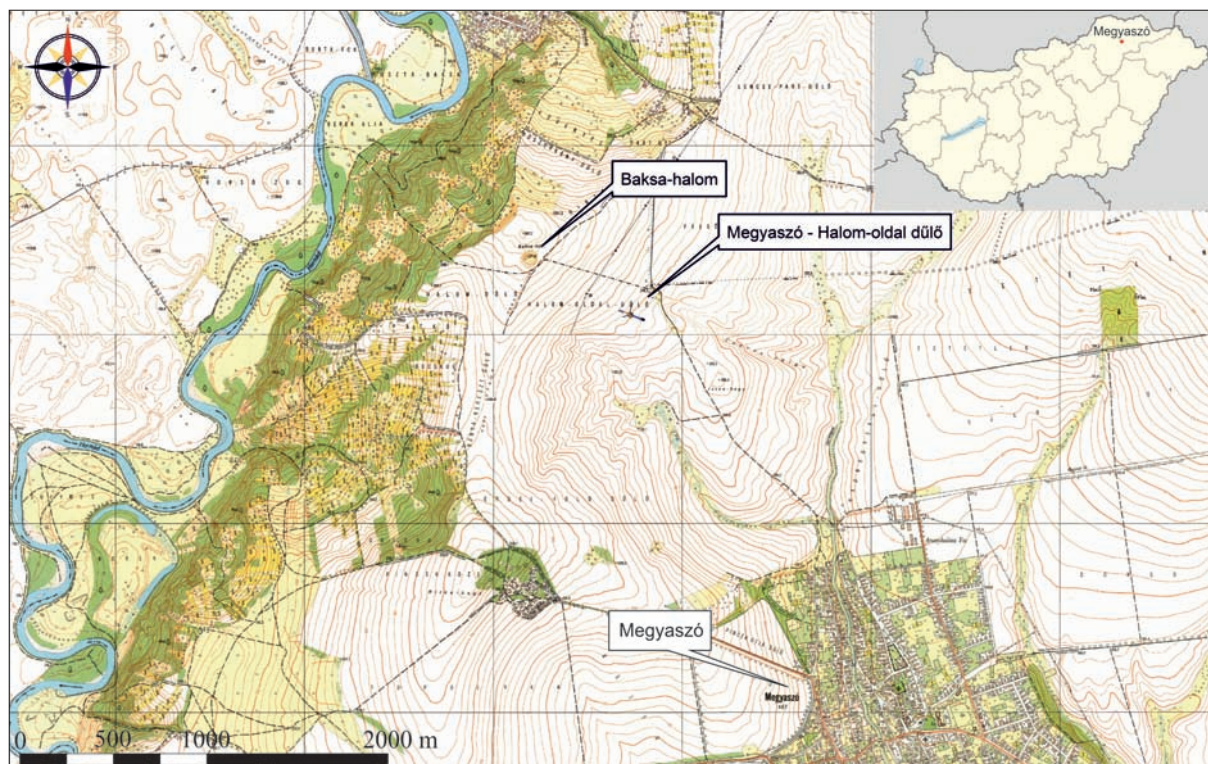


Fig. 1. Location of Megyaszó-Halom-oldal dűlő site in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County.  
1. kép. Megyaszó-Halom-oldal dűlő elhelyezkedése Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén megyében.

The pits and the ditch section treated as part of a settlement were located northwest of the graves. In addition to feature S4, the other pits were only partially excavated. Find material was only found in pit S4 and in the ditch.<sup>6</sup> The vast majority of the finds are ceramic fragments, some animal bones, grinding stone pieces, chipped stone tools and a slag. It is most probable that the settlement could have occupied a much larger area. In order to clarify the exact connection between the pits and the ditch, further research will be needed in the future.

During the evaluation of grave goods, the ceramic and bronze artefacts were divided into a typological order that were specifically delineated for this site, based on the function, form and decoration of the finds.<sup>7</sup> The traces of usage were often noticeable on the find material as well as in several cases the burn marks that provided additional information for the analysis. Through the parallels of the vessels and the similarities of the ritual, the site could be chronologically and geographically placed into the order of the surrounding archaeological sites (Reinecke BC period).<sup>8</sup>

## Methods of excavation and analysis

Enhancing a more detailed analysis, a very meticulous collection took place during excavation. Each of the urns were removed in one piece and their further dismantling was carried out in the museum. As a result, even the poorly preserved bronze jewellery and small clay beads were discovered.

6 Kósa 2015a 196–198, Tab. 6–11; Kósa 2015b, 60–65.

7 Kósa 2015a, 184–192; Kósa 2015b, 38–56.

8 E.g. Detek and Halmaj: KEMENCZEI 1968.

The ashes were separately collected by layers, in order to trace some kind of manipulation with them during a subsequent anthropological study, i.e. is it possible to observe some kind of regularity in the position of the bones, could the ashes be arranged by body parts or not.<sup>9</sup>

In several cases during the finer disassembling, different type of mugs were placed on top of the ashes inside the urns. A total of 12 soil samples were collected from these various shaped mugs and from the cups that were placed next to the urns. Of these, the opportunity was given to send five samples from the graves and one from the excavated pit for macro- and micro-archaeobotanical study. The six selected samples were analysed by Ákos Pető and his colleagues in 2015.<sup>10</sup>

## Results of the examination of archaeobotanical samples

For greater efficiency, the most diverse soil samples were selected based on the position, secondary burning, size and fragmentation of the potteries. Five samples are related to the urn burials (no. 31/2, 32/2, 74, 76, 77), which were collected from four different graves.<sup>11</sup> The first sample was in a mug that was destroyed on its upper part by an excavator (*Fig. 2.3*). This mug was placed next to the urn, on the top of another mug (*Fig. 2.4*). Soil sample from this latter one was also analysed, since it was not simply a whole vessel, but it was also in a closed state as the previous mug covered it. The third sample was found in a slightly larger mug (*Fig. 2.1*) that was lying on the top of the ashes inside the urn. There were no burnt patches observable on the mug, however the black spots and wear marks on the bottom may refer to its previous use. The fourth sample was held in the largest mug (*Fig. 2.5*) that was also located right next to the urn. Its burnt side may indicate a slight secondary burn. The fifth sample was found in a mug that was also put on the top of the ashes in the urn (*Fig. 2.2*). It was probably secondarily burned, so it could have been closer to the pyre, but it may not have been in a direct contact with that. The sample no. 61 is the only one that comes from the filling of a pit, from 70 cm deep (*Fig. 3*).

For each soil sample, both macro- and micro-archaeobotanical studies were performed.<sup>12</sup> The macro-archaeobotanical evaluation showed that the five samples from the graves were sterile.<sup>13</sup> The samples only contained a small amount of charcoal pieces and calcined bones, which have most probably come from the ashes of the urns. Sample no. 61 from the pit was the only, in which the minor fragment of a millet and another, unspecified cereal could be identified.<sup>14</sup> However, it is such a negligible quantity that it does not allow any remark on the function of the pit, or any interpretation for the past agriculture and nutritional practices.

Neither the micro-archaeobotanical nor the phytolith studies presented any plant residues from the mugs of the burials. Only the sample from the pit contained some phytolite particles,<sup>15</sup> but a very low amount in this case as well.

9 SØRENSEN – REBAY 2007, 120.

10 PETŐ 2015.

11 KÓSA 2015a, 179–182, Tab. 1–4.

12 PETŐ 2015, 3.2.1. Tab.

13 PETŐ 2015, 7.

14 PETŐ 2015, 7–9.

15 PETŐ 2015, 7–9.

Altogether, a piece of millet and the phytolite of another cereal's glume and pale was found in the filling of the pit,<sup>16</sup> which does not clarify the function of it.

### Possible reconstruction of the funerary ritual

One of the first step during cremation is to build a pyre,<sup>17</sup> which requires a large investment of labour from the community members.<sup>18</sup> From the size of the burnt bone pieces, the dimension of the pyre or the degree of burning can be hypothetically inferred. Since in many cases at this site, large, easily identifiable bone pieces were found among the ashes, thus presumably the wood that was used to build the pyre was less or its heating value was lower. The bones therefore indicate a lower degree of burning or lesser heat.<sup>19</sup>



Fig. 2. Mugs from which the soil samples have been analysed macro- and micro-archaeobotanically.

1– grave S1, 2 – grave S7, 3–4 – grave S11, 5 – grave S13.

2. kép. Bögrék, melyek betöltéséből makro- és mikro-archaeobotanikai elemzés készült. 1 – S1 sír, 2 – S7 sír, 3–4 – S11 sír, 5 – S13 sír.

16 PETŐ 2015, 11.

17 FÜLÖP 2018.

18 BECKER et al. 2006, 127–129.

19 PEARSON 2001, 7.

The bone fragments were uniformly greyish white, usually micro-, and rarely mesofragmented as well as moderately deformed. There is no sign of how the body might have laid on the pyre, because no difference could be observed between the burning degree of the right or left and the upper or lower limbs.<sup>20</sup>

The jewellery made of bronze wires and the clay beads were all burnt, which could mean that all of them were worn by the deceased while cremation.

Several burn marks are also visible on the surface of mugs, jugs and amphora-shaped vessels. Some mugs and jars were intensely burned, so they could probably have been in the immediate vicinity of the pyre. Heavily deformed dishes were not found, which would have been inside the fire. The vessels that were not deformed and less burnt could have been placed further from the pyre,<sup>21</sup> or their marks could simply have been the result of previous household use.

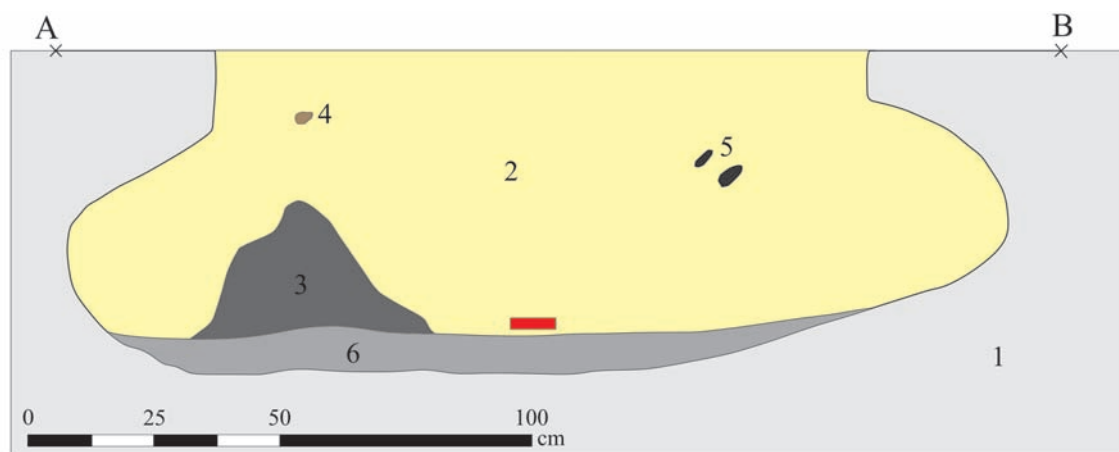


Fig. 3. Section drawing of pit S4 (1 – brown clay layer, 2 – loose grey layer, 3 – dark grey layer, 4 – large daub pieces, 5 – animal passage, 6 – over-demolition; Red square: the location of the soil sample, from 70 cm)

3. kép. Az S4 gödör metszetrajza (1 – barna agyagréteg, 2 – laza szürke réteg, 3 – sötétszürke réteg, 4 – nagyméretű patics, 5 – állatjárat, 6 – túlbontás; Piros négyzet: a földminta vételének helye, 70 cm mélyen).

At the end of the incineration, the ashes were placed into large storage vessels or sometimes in bowls. During the anthropological examination of the ash layers, no regularity could be observed in the placement of the skull or other parts of the body.<sup>22</sup> Based on these, the ashes were not arranged according to body parts,<sup>23</sup> but they were simply collected from the pyre and scattered into the urns.

One of the closing phases of the funeral is putting the ashes at rest and then providing the grave with grave goods. A clear, organised ritual can be observed based on the composition of the finds in Megyaszó-Halom-oldal dűlő. In seven of the ten burials, a small mug was placed inside or sometimes beside the urn which was covered with a bowl. These three potteries can be regarded as a set.

20 K. ZOFFMANN 2015, 1.

21 SZABÓ 2004.

22 K. ZOFFMANN 2015, 1.

23 SØRENSEN – REBAY 2007, 120.

Based on archaeobotanical studies, no food or drink was given to the deceased during the funerary ritual. The mugs placed into or next to the urn have all provided sterile results,<sup>24</sup> so it is quite probable that the ceramic goods were empty when they were put into the grave,<sup>25</sup> in these few cases. It may have a theoretical interpretation that the food and drink itself did not mean as much for this small community as the potteries.

The traces of usage on the vessels are also interesting as they may indicate a rather intensive use. The bottom of some potteries are heavily worn, so they were possibly used for a long time before they were taken to the burial. In this case, though, we do not know why these particular dishes have been removed from everyday life.

Finally, a single mug should be mentioned, which can be treated as an independent feature. In the absence of ashes and other grave goods, its exact function is uncertain. However, recent excavations and the growing number of similar examples suggest that these scattered, lone standing vessels can be associated with some kind of secondary ritual or commemorative funerary ceremony.<sup>26</sup>

## Conclusion

Comparing the results, complex funerary equipments cannot be observed in Megyaszó-Halom-oldal dűlő that are highly representative or symbolic. Graves are rather characterized by a simplified, regular ritual, which can also be detected in the adjacent burial grounds.<sup>27</sup> Neither individuals with an emphasized status, nor typical gender specific grave goods were among the graves of the site. The modest burials that include the set of a large storage vessel or urn with a bowl and a mug are the most characteristic by both sexes and all ages. The members of this smaller community mainly expressed their identity (leastwise in the cemeteries) with the decoration of their ceramics and not by putting jewellery or weapons into the graves. Based on this, a more egalitarian social structure can be outlined.<sup>28</sup>

The deceased were still treated as members of the community, they were taken to the afterlife with their everyday objects, which can be traced back to the usage marks on the ceramics. New ceramics were only occasionally produced for the dead, it was more likely that the potteries were removed from the household. Jewellery could also be part of the everyday life, which ornamented their owner even on the pyre.

The phenomenon of independent mugs associated with a probable funerary feast also seems to confirm that the community or family have thought of its late member and possibly visited the grave in the course of a secondary ceremony or commemoration.

The excavated partial cemetery provides a new perspective and hypothetical interpretation in the research of the North-East Hungarian Tumulus culture. It is particularly noteworthy, how

24 PETŐ 2015, 7–11.

25 Theoretically it is also possible that the potteries were not simply empty, but they were prepared to be funerary equipments. It could be observed by bronze artefacts that even if they were over-used, before deposition they were readied to enter the other life in a hoard as they were polished and resharpened (e.g. FONTIJN 2002, 91, 249). It is a hypothetical comparison, but it could be quite possible that potteries were also made ready to accompany the deceased to the afterlife.

26 FÜLÖP – VÁCZI 2014, 416.

27 E.g. Detek and Halmaj: KEMENCZEI 1968.

28 P. FISCHL et al. 2013, 363.

much information was provided by the analysis of samples obtained by meticulous exploration during such a small surface excavation.

Since the find material and its analysis relies on a small database, therefore extensive conclusions cannot be drawn, neither about the regional customs of the Tumulus culture, nor about the life of the local community connected to the found cemetery.

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## Újabb eredmények Megyaszó-Halom-oldal dülőről: földmintaelemzés és a temetési rítus feltételezett rekonstrukciója

E tanulmányban a földminták elemzésének eredményeivel szerettem volna kiegészíteni a korábbi, Megyaszó-Halom-oldal dülőről szóló közleményem.<sup>29</sup> Emellett kísérletet tettem a temetkezési rítus lehetséges rekonstrukciójának leírására és összefoglalására.

2013-ban a miskolci Herman Ottó Múzeum régészei tíz hamvasztásos temetkezést, egy másodlagos temetkezési rítushoz köthető tárgyat, négy gödröt és egy árokreszletet tártak fel. A lelőhely két részből tevődött össze: a településrészből és a temetőrészből. A sírok összesen 38 kerámiaedényt, két bronz spirálgyűrűt és néhány agyaggyöngyöt tartalmaztak. Az egyetlen teljes mértékben feltárt gödörből és az árokreszletből kerámiadarabok, állatcsontok, pattintott kőszerszók, őrlőkö töredékek és paticsok kerültek elő.<sup>30</sup>

A feltárás során 12 földmintát gyűjtöttek a sírokban található különböző edényekből (2. kép) és egy mintát a tárológödör középső részéről (3. kép). Az archaeobotanikai eredmények alapján<sup>31</sup> a bögrékben és csészékben semmilyen növényi vagy ételmaradékot nem találtak, így lehetséges, hogy üresen helyezték őket az elhunytak mellé. Csupán a gödörben volt némi növényi maradvány, de olyan kis mennyiségben, ami nem teszi lehetővé a gödör funkciójának rekonstrukcióját és nem ad információt a közösség táplálkozási szokásairól.

A kerámia leletanyag vizsgálata, az antropológiai eredmények és az újabb földminta elemzés segítségünkre lehet, hogy elméletben és feltételeken rekonstruáljuk a temetkezési rítust, a máglya építésétől a sírgödör lefedéséig.

29 KÓSA 2015a.

30 KÓSA 2015a.

31 PETŐ 2015.