

ZSOLT MRÁV

Hungarian National Museum

mrav.zsolt@hnm.hu

Roman Iron Folding Chairs in the Archaeological Collection of the Hungarian National Museum on Which Nothing has Been Published

New Data on the Interpretation of Iron Chairs Recovered from the Burial Sites of the Provincial Elites in the Roman Period

ABSTRACT | The study discusses the Roman-Period graves of the native elite in NE Pannonia containing iron folding chairs. In his 2013 study the author rejected the interpretation that the chairs indicated the status or office of the deceased, suggesting instead that these chairs had been part of *instrumenta balnei* and/or toiletry sets. His arguments were based on the analysis of the currently known elite burial sites with iron chairs from the European provinces of the Roman Empire, the position of the chairs in the grave and their occurrence together with bathing paraphernalia, as well as on various depictions. After ten years, the author aims to provide an update on the present state of research and address new issues concerning iron chairs recovered from the burial sites of local elites in the Roman Period. He provides information concerning three previously unknown iron folding chairs from the collection of the Hungarian National Museum. He offers a brief overview of the different types of chairs used by women for washing or grooming, known from illustrations, recovered as grave goods or discovered in hoards.

KEYWORDS | Pannonia, local elites of the Roman Period, acculturation, Eravisci, Azali, iron folding chair, chair with backrest, armchair, carriage grave, daily hygienic routine, Roman bathing equipment, *instrumenta balnei*, oil vessel, *strigilis*, perfume casket, Seuso Treasure, Esquiline Treasure, Rülzheim Treasure

MRÁV ZSOLT

Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum

mrav.zsolt@hnm.hu

Közöletlen római kori összecsukható vasszékek a Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum Régészeti Tárában

Új adatok a helyi elit császárkori temetkezéseiből előkerült vasszékek értelmezéséhez

ABSTRACT | A tanulmány azoknak az összecsukható vasszékeknek az összefoglaló értékelésére vállalkozik, amelyek a romanitas külsőségeit elsajátító tartományi őslakos elit császárkori temetkezéseiből kerültek elő. A témával foglalkozó kutatók többsége ezeknek a székeknek korábban „rangjelző” szerepet tulajdonított feltételezve, hogy az ilyen székekkel temetkezők municipális tisztségviselők vagy katonatisztek voltak. A szerző 2013-ban megjelent tanulmányában e vélemény ellen érvelve az összecsukhatósék-mellékleteket inkább a sírokba helyezett fürdő/tisztálkodó készletek részének tartotta. Értelmezése különböző fürdőzéssel, tisztálkodással kapcsolatos ábrázolásokra és a Római Birodalom európai tartományaiban előkerült, őslakos elithez köthető gazdag sírokra épült. Ez utóbbiaknak majd mindegyikében ott találhatók a fürdőben, illetve az ahhoz szorosan hozzátartozó sportoláshoz és/vagy a napi tisztálkodásra használt eszközök. A szerző célja, hogy tíz évvel a császárkori őslakos elittemetkezések vassék-mellékleteivel foglalkozó cikkének megjelenése után ismét áttekintést adjon a téma kutatásának aktuális állásáról és problémáiról. Ebbe a vizsgálatba nemcsak az elmúlt évtizedben szepulchrális kontextusban talált székeket és ezek régészeti kontextusát vonja be (4–10.), hanem a Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum (továbbiakban MNM) gyűjteményében található, még közöletlen három összecsukható vasséket is. Másik célja, hogy rövid áttekintést adjon a nők által szépítkezés és/vagy tisztálkodás során használt különböző széktípusokról (főleg támlásszékek és összecsukható székek), amelyeket részben ábrázolásokról, részben sír- vagy kincsleletekből ismerünk.

KULCSSZAVAK | Pannonia, helyi őslakos elit, akkulturáció, eraviskusok, azalusok, összecsukható vassék, háttámlás sék, karossék, kocsisír, tisztálkodási szokások, római fürdőfelszerelés, *instrumenta balnei*, olajtartó edény, *strigilis*, illatszeres doboz, Seuso-kincs, esquilinusi kincs, rulzheimi kincs

Introduction

The author undertook the conclusive evaluation of iron folding chairs recovered from the burial sites of indigenous provincial elites, which displayed outward characteristics of *romanitas*, in an article published in volume No. 138 of *Archaeologiai Értesítő* in 2013.¹ Most researchers considered these chairs “social status indicators”, suggesting that burial sites containing such chairs belonged to municipal magistrates or military officers.² However, in his 2013 study, relying on bathing kits placed in burial sites, which provided the key to solving the issue, the author interpreted folding chairs recovered from graves as bathing accessories. Folding chairs were often depicted on scenes related to bathing or everyday personal hygiene, where the *dominus* wrapped in a bath sheet appears either seated on a folding chair, or with his servants carrying the folded chair on their shoulders. Thus, those who could afford such furniture, sat on their own portable chairs in the baths. The figure of the mistress, seated on such a chair amidst her servants for her daily grooming, was a common motif in the Late Roman period, appearing also on the perfume casket of the Seuso Treasure. Other images depicted folding chairs placed near beds, alongside water pitchers and bronze basins. All over the Roman Empire, from Britannia to Thracia, these iron chairs were generally recovered from the rich burial sites of the native elite, usually together with articles used in baths for personal hygiene and those related to sports: e.g. oil vessels (*ampulla olearia*), *strigiles*, or toiletry kits of various bronze vessels for washing hands, face and feet. This pairing of grave goods was prevalent in aristocratic carriage graves in Northeastern Pannonia, enabling the

author to confirm, that *instrumenta balnei* and iron folding chairs were deliberately placed close by and formed functional kits (Fig. 1). The author concluded that folding chairs had their general everyday use, but as grave goods they belonged to bathing or personal hygiene kits. This interpretation of iron chairs recovered from burial sites has been accepted by scientists both in Hungary and abroad.³

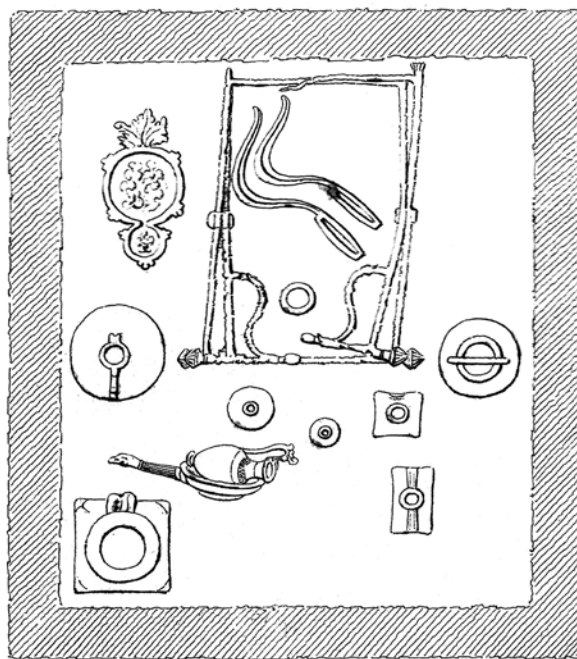


Fig. 1. Barrow 4 at Bartlow Hill (Essex, GB); the iron folding chair and bathing accessories as discovered (after GAGE 1836, Pl. XXXI.3)

1. kép. Bartlow Hill (Essex, GB) 4. halom; az összecuszkható vasszék és a fürdőeszközök megtalálásuk helyzetében (GAGE 1836, Pl. XXXI.3 után)

- 1 The article was published both in German: MRÁV 2013, 105–44, and in Hungarian: MRÁV 2014, 411–446, on the topic see also: MRÁV 2004, 7; MRÁV 2009, 82; MRÁV 2022, 24–25.
- 2 E.g. BÓNIS 1981, 131–132; BÓNIS 1982, 134–144; CZYSZ 1995, 532–534; KOSSACK 2000, 104–105; NAGY 2002, 11; PALÁGYI–NAGY 2002, 86; NAGY 2007, 151.
- 3 BUZA–KOVÁCS–TÓTH 2017, 23; HIMMELMANN–PETROVSZKY 2017, 87–88; HIMMELMANN–PETROVSZKY 2018, 178–190; LAUREY–BRUNET–DEMAREST–MAUDUIT 2019, 239; MÁRTON 2019, 6; STEIDL 2019, 103; KOCH–MÜCHENBERGER 2021, 14, Anm. 17, especially 16; RAJTÁR–HÜSSEN 2021, 355; KOCH–MÜCHENBERGER 2022, 62–63; KOCH–MÜCHENBERGER–GOTTWALD–PIEPER 2022, 190; MARTIN–KILCHER 2022, 267.

On the one hand, the present study aims to provide an update on the present state of research, and address new issues concerning iron chairs recovered from the burial sites of local elites in the Roman Period, ten years after the publication of the original article. This new overview includes both new chairs recovered from burial sites as well as their archaeological contexts (4–10), and three iron folding chairs from the collections of the Hungarian National Museum (henceforth abbreviated as HNM) on which nothing has been published in the secondary literature. Two of the three chairs have been in possession of the museum for a long time, but have been misinterpreted so far due to their highly fragmented state (1–2), and the third is a recent acquisition of the Archaeological Collection (3). The author will demonstrate how these new finds support or refine the interpretation of iron chairs as grave goods outlined in 2013.

On the other hand, the present study offers a brief overview of the different types of chairs used by wom-

en for washup or grooming (mostly chairs with backrests and folding chairs), known from contemporary illustrations, recovered as grave goods or discovered in hoards. Furthermore, a new distinct subgroup of luxurious articles, comprised of folding chairs with precious metal coating or lavish decorations, shall be discussed separately.

Iron Chairs in the Hungarian National Museum from the Roman Period on Which Nothing Has Been Published

Sofar, writings on seven iron folding chairs from the Roman Collection of the HNM have been published, all of them recovered from elite burial sites, mainly carriage graves dated to the 2nd–3rd-century AD including: Budapest-Pasarét (District II),⁴ Érd-Érdliget with one iron chair found in the carriage grave and another in the horse burial sites



Fig. 2. Érd (Pest county, H), carriage grave; oil vessel portraying an Ethiopian or Nubian servant from the related horse burial sites (HNM, photo by András Dabasi)

2. kép. Érd (Pest vármegye), kocsisír; etiópiai vagy núbiai szolgát ábrázoló olajos fedvény a kocsisírhoz tartozó lósírból (MNM, fotó: Dabasi András)



Fig. 3. Zsámbék (Pest county, H), bathing kit recovered from the carriage grave (HNM, photo by András Dabasi)

3. kép. Zsámbék (Pest vármegye), a kocsisírban talált fürdőkészlet (MNM, fotó: Dabasi András)

4 RÓMER 1964, 104; MIKS 2009, 512, Nr. 49; MRÁV 2013, 124–125.

(Fig. 2),⁵ Káloz,⁶ Grave 3 at Környe,⁷ Nagylók⁸ and Zsám-bék (Fig. 3)⁹ (see also Table 1). With the exception of the chair from Káloz, all finds are more or less complete, implying they were intact and fully operational when placed in the graves. The list can now be complemented with the following three specimens:

1. Szomor-Somodorpuszta (Komárom-Esztergom county), carriage grave (Fig. 4)

A four-wheeled carriage, complete with yoked draught horses in full harness, alongside other grave goods were unearthed by accident in 1885 or during preceding years, whilst “*expanding a tunnel*” on the Somodorpuszta estate in possession of the House of Metternich of Bajna and Bia. Some of the grave goods were brought by the Hungarian National Museum from the art dealer company “Blau und Söhne” and the estate manager Eduard Mack, other items were donated to the museum’s collections by Countess Paulina Sándor, the spouse of Prince Richard von Metternich.¹⁰

The author identified a fragment from the frame of an iron folding chair, which was mixed with the iron components of the carriage, indicating that the ensemble included an iron chair. This fragment was recorded in the 1888 inventory of the Collection of Antiquities in the Hungarian National Museum, alongside 85 iron parts from the carriage donated by Countess Paulina Sándor, registered under the same inventory number without describing the pieces separately.¹¹ Károly Gaul provided the first reconstruction of the carriage, and he likely recognized that the fragment in question could not belong to the vehicle. The first writings on the assemblage were published in 1899 and the fragment was neither mentioned, nor displayed on the drawn plates depicting the components of the carriage, nor did it appear on the reconstruction. Nothing was published concerning the fragment thus unbeknownst to researchers of the carriage grave at Szomor or those concerned with Roman period iron chairs.¹²

The fragment in question constituted the middle and lower component in one of the legs of the iron folding chair. Its dimensions are: L: 37.8 cm, W: 7.35 cm. In its present state, the leg is deformed, it is bent near its lower third and fractured approximately at two thirds of its length. These are unlikely the traces of deliberate injury made during the funeral, and it is likely, that the chair was intact when placed in the grave. With the single exception of Grave 189 in the western cemetery at Mursa/Osijek (see below), unscathed chairs were placed in the graves of the local elite. One can reasonably argue that the damage can be traced back to the circumstances of its discovery and subsequent handling (see below the manner in which the grave at Budakeszi was discovered, and the related state of the chair recovered there). A part of a horizontal linking stretcher, wider than the frame itself, can be identified near the bottom of the leg. The end of this stretcher was bent downwards at a right angle, forming the foot of the chair. The angle between the foot and the leg was originally 45 degrees, yet the surface of the foot survived only partially. The flat wrought leg of the chair has a rectangular cross-section 0.9 cm thick. The leg flared towards its middle (its maximum width there is 3.3 cm). The iron rivet used for fastening the middle and lower components together is discernible near the middle of the leg. A rather thick disc-shaped washer was placed beneath the flat head of the rivet (H: 1 cm; Diam.: 2.45 cm). The rivet pin was considerably thinner than

5 GAUL 1890, 101, Table II/10; BÓNIS 1981, 141–142; MIKS 2009, 512, Nr. 35 and 39; MRÁV 2013, 117–119.

6 BÓNIS 1981, 131–134, Abb. 20; MIKS 2009, 512, Nr. 36; MRÁV 2013, 120–124.

7 BÓNIS 1982, 134; MIKS 2009, 512–513, Nr. 50.

8 GAUL 1890, Taf. C., I.1; BÓNIS 1982, 142, Abb. 16; MIKS 2009, 512, Nr. 38; MRÁV 2013, 119–120.

9 BÓNIS 1982, 142, Abb. 16; MIKS 2009, 512, Nr. 40; MRÁV 2011a, 26–27; MRÁV 2013, 120.

10 Unpublished find. The most significant literature concerning the carriage grave from Szomor-Somodorpuszta: GAUL 1889, 193–205; GAUL 1891, 293–304; HAMPEL 1892, 51–52, 55–58; BÓNIS 1977; BÓNIS 1978, 103–124; RÖRING 1983, 60–63, Taf. 23–24; PALÁGYI–NAGY 2000, 48; MRÁV 2016a, 10–13; MRÁV 2021; MRÁV in preparation.

11 The inventory No. of the iron chair fragment is MNM NRI RT-RO 142/1888.31. See MRÁV in preparation for the results of recent research conducted on the carriage grave at Szomor-Somodorpuszta, including the description of the chair.

12 The chair fragment recovered from the carriage grave at Szomor was left undiscussed by Károly Gaul (GAUL 1889; GAUL 1891), Éva Bónis (BÓNIS 1977; BÓNIS 1978) and Sylvia Palágyi (PALÁGYI–NAGY 2000, 48), who studied the burial site. It is also absent from the exhaustive collection of Christian Miks: MIKS 2009, 510–514.

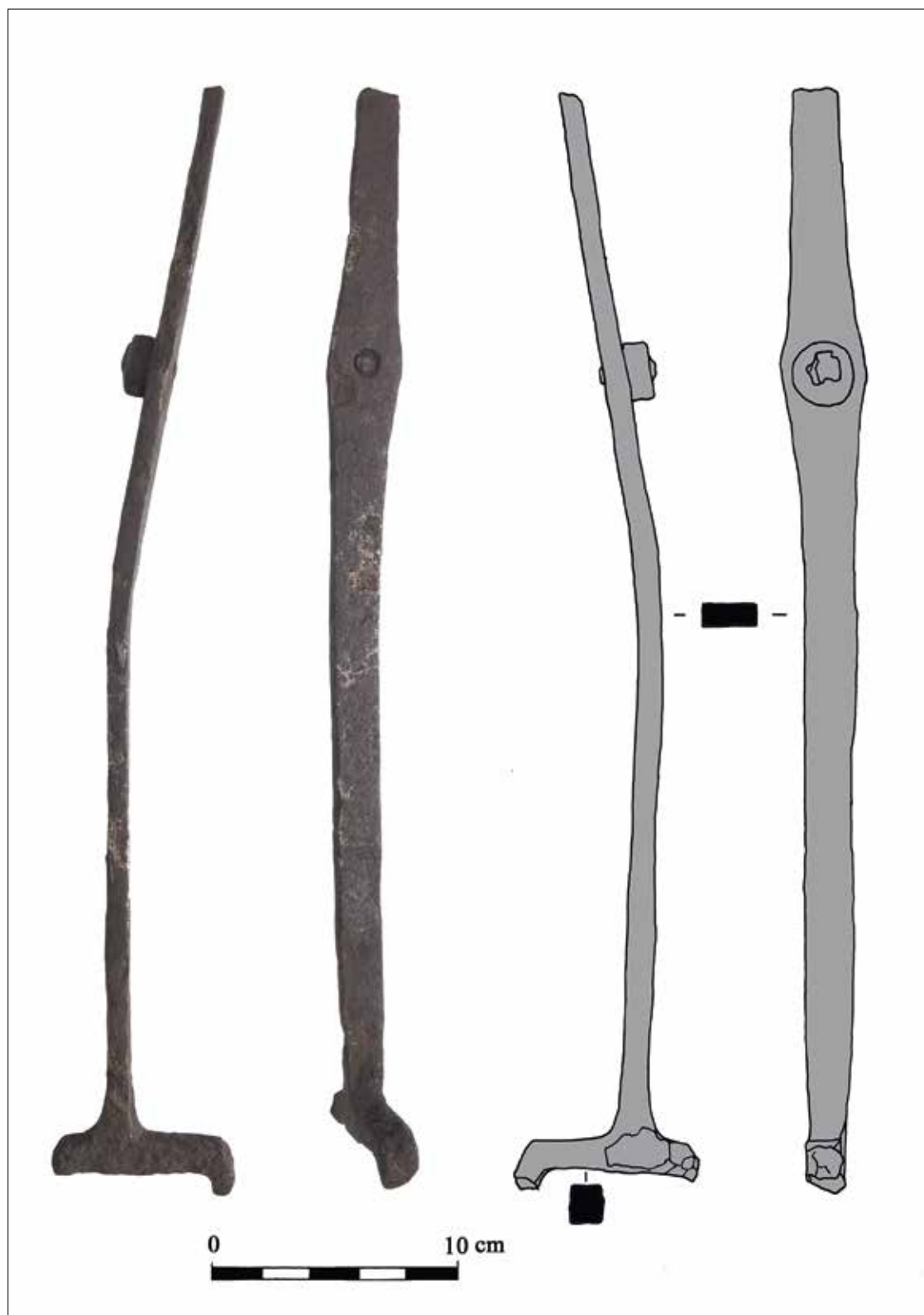


Fig. 4. Szomor-Somodorpuszta (Komárom-Esztergom county, H), carriage grave; fragment of an iron folding chair (HNM, photo by Iván Jaksity, drawing by Zsolt Mráv)

4. kép. Szomor-Somodorpuszta (Komárom-Esztergom vármegye), kocsisír; összecsukható vasszék töredéke (MNM, fotó: Jaksity Iván, rajz: Mráv Zsolt)

the rivet hole, which was 1.1 cm in diameter, hence then need for the large washer. This difference enabled the smooth folding and opening of the chair. The wider side of the leg continuously and gently tapers downwards, until the level of the stretcher, whilst its narrower side flares slightly. The horizontal linking stretcher of the frame was wrought with a near square-shaped cross-section (1.4×1.6 cm). The frame is broken inside and near the leg. The end of the frame, constituting the chair foot, was 4.1 cm wider than the chair leg. The bent end of the stretcher, which constituted the chair foot was 1.8 cm high.

Iron chairs with lower rails wider, and feet wider apart, than their iron frames constitute the closest parallels of the iron chair recovered from the carriage grave at Szomor-Somodorpuszta. Such chairs were recovered from the following graves: Devnja (BG);¹³ Dulgopol (Varna, BG);¹⁴ Kadin Most (BG);¹⁵ Káloz (H);¹⁶ Maastricht-Belfort (NL);¹⁷ Meričleri (Chaskovo, BG);¹⁸ Stara Zagora (BG);¹⁹ Tutrakanci (BG);²⁰ Grave 13 at Wehringen (D).²¹

The travelling carriage of Szomor-Somodorpuszta is the most ornate draught vehicle recovered from Pannonian carriage graves. Its rich sculptural ornaments convey complex, yet uniform Bacchic imagery.²² The artistic quality of the decorations is superb. Alongside the carriage and draught horses, numerous bronze vessels were placed in the grave (Fig. 6), including a so-called Canterbury-type handwashing kit consisting of a bronze pitcher and handled bowl of Pannonia make,²³ a *tripus* adorned with busts of Apollo,²⁴ and a bronze basin.²⁵ Base fragments attest the presence of at least two further vessels.²⁶ Although the grave goods from the carriage grave at Szomor-Somodorpuszta obtained by the Hungarian National Museum contain no articles



Fig. 5. Budakeszi centre (Pest county, H), carriage grave; fragment of an S-shaped support from the iron folding chair (HNM, photo by Iván Jaksity, drawing by Zsolt Mráv)

5. kép. Budakeszi, belterület (Pest vármegye), kocsisir; a sírba helyezett összecusukható vasszékhez tartozó S alakú támaszték töredéke (MNM, fotó: Jaksity Iván, rajz: Mráv Zsolt)

13 АНГЕЛОВ 1986, 65, таб. V, 2; MIKS 2009, 511, Nr. 11; MRÁV 2013, 133, Nr. 26.

14 LAZAROV 1998, 73–74, Fig. 8; MIKS 2009, 511, Nr. 12; MRÁV 2013, 133, Nr. 27.

15 БЕЛКОВ 1932–33, 421, Abb. 182; MIKS 2009, 511, Nr. 15; MRÁV 2013, 133, Nr. 30.

16 BÓNIS 1981, 131–134, Abb. 20; MIKS 2009, 512, Nr. 36; MRÁV 2013, 132, Nr. 17.

17 GROOTH 2005, 142, Abb. 10; MIKS 2009, 512, Nr. 34; MRÁV 2013, 131, Nr. 10; KOSTER 2021, 49, 123–124, Pl. III–IV; 138, Pl. XVII.

18 АЛАДЖОВ 1965, 96, Nr. 5; MIKS 2009, 511, Nr. 16; MRÁV 2013, 133, Nr. 33.

19 НИКОЛОВ 1961, 8–17; КАЛЧЕВ 2001, 136, 141; MIKS 2009, 511, Nr. 18; MRÁV 2013, 134, Nr. 37.

20 ЛАЗАРОВ–МИТКОВ 1993, 69–70, табл. 2/6; MIKS 2009, 511, Nr. 22; MRÁV 2013, 134, Nr. 42.

21 NUBER–RADNÓTI 1969, 36; SCHWARZ 1969, 81, Abb. 6; CZYSZ 1995, 533, 297, Abb. 76/1; MIKS 2009, 511, Nr. 27; MRÁV 2013, 132, Nr. 13.

22 ALFÖLDI 1939, 347–359; KÁDÁR 2003, 81–88; MRÁV 2009, 85–86; MRÁV 2016b, 506–516.

23 For further details on the bronze pitcher and handled bowl comprising the handwashing kit of the carriage grave at Szomor-Somodorpuszta, see HAMPEL 1892, 55, 1–6; RADNÓTI 1938, 88 (handled bowl), 143, Taf. XLVIII. 2 (bronze pitcher); NUBER 1974, 217, Nr. 121; BRUDER 1977, 109–112; BÓNIS 1978, 105–121.

24 ERDÉLYI 1931, 20–23; KLATT 1995, 478, Kat. D26.

25 GAUL 1889, 197, Fig. II/51; RADNÓTI 1938, 120–121, Taf. XXXIV.6.

26 MNM NRI RT-RO 142/1888. 12 – published in GAUL 1889, 201, Fig. IV/3–4; MNM NRI RT-RO 90/1889, 6 – unpublished.



Fig. 6. Szomor-Somodorpuszta (Komárom-Esztergom county, H); Selection of grave goods and figural ornaments from the travelling carriage deposited in the grave (HNM, photo by Ádám Vágó)

6. kép. Szomor-Somodorpuszta (Komárom-Esztergom vármegye); válogatás a kocsisír mellékleteiből és a sírba tett utazókocsi szobordíszítéseiből (MNM, fotó: Vágó Ádám)

from a bathing kit, it is possible that the find assemblage originally included *instrumenta balnei*. On the other hand, if one argues that no articles related to bathing or sports were placed in the burial site, then the iron chair can be interpreted as part of a personal hygiene kit.

2. Budakeszi, 104–106 Széchenyi Str. (Pest county), carriage grave (ID 10077) (Fig. 6)

A two-wheeled, three-horse travelling cart was recovered from a carriage grave discovered during the summer of 1976 in central Budakeszi, whilst digging a cesspit for a private home. Earthworks ravaged nearly two thirds of the burial site.²⁷ Finders kept only the most spectacular bronze objects (e.g. the figural ornaments of the carriage and vessels), and a few of the larger

iron objects.²⁸ All other finds that came to light whilst digging the cesspit, especially iron objects, were either built into the walls of the pit, or cast aside. Some of the latter were later recovered from the soil spread on top of the cesspit. Iron objects that were in the way, were bent, broken or sawed off. This is the reason why only minor and deformed pieces of otherwise large objects, such as the iron chair survived. The cesspit became operational soon after it was built, so by the end of the 1970s it was no longer possible to conduct further archaeological excavations. In 1999, the sewer network was extended to the region, enabling the excavation of the remaining third of the carriage grave, and resulting in its archaeological confirmation (head of excavation: Zsolt Mráv).²⁹

During the excavation in 1999, merely a single S-shaped support from the iron chair was recovered while examining the soil extracted from the grave and spread on top of the cesspit. Similarly to the iron chair recovered from the carriage grave at Szomor-Somodorpuszta, the chair from Budakeszi was shattered when the burial site was disturbed. The rest of its pieces were either thrown away, or they still could be laying scattered somewhere in the soil spread throughout the parcel. The dimensions of the support are: H: 12.7 cm, W: 5.6 cm, T: 1.2 cm. It is a fragment of an S-shaped bracket wrought with a rhombic cross-section. In its present state, it is a little more than half of the original object. The fragment is comprised of the top end of the support, arched in a stalk-like manner, and the stubs of two straight spacers that connected the support to the chair frame. One spacer branches off from the terminal of the arch, the other from the middle of the S-shaped support. The support was wrought to the part of the frame that consists of two components joined at a right angle (Fig. 7). It is likely, that the support was not produced of a single iron rod bent into an S-shape, but from separate parts. The top arch was made first, and its lower terminal was wrought together with the frame via a spacer. Afterwards, the bottom arch was hammered together with the top arch, resulting in a slight deflection at the mid-part of the S-shaped support. The chair from Budakeszi belongs to the so-called Weißenburg type in the chair typology of Christian Miks, yet due to its fragmented state, it is not possible to determine whether it belongs to Variant A or the twice foldable, hinged Variant B.

This small, yet distinctive fragment attests the presence of an iron folding chair in the grave at Budakeszi. Its findspot indicates that the chair was placed in the area disturbed in 1976. Alongside the iron chair, a pitcher and handled bowl from a Canterbury-type handwashing kit, a large volume globular oil vessel suspended on a bronze ring with three chains, and at least one bronze strigil were recovered from the grave, indicating,

that the folding chair from the carriage grave at Budakeszi also belonged to a bathing or personal hygiene kit. Grave goods recovered from Budakeszi included a set of bronze sieve and ladle, a bronze oil lamp, and a bronze tabletop candelabrum.

In funerary contexts, the oil lamp and candelabrum can be interpreted as objects employed during daily personal hygiene routine. Oil lamps, the most charac-

27 KISS-TÓTH 1977, 22.

28 Grave goods from the carriage grave at Budakeszi are registered in HNM under inventory Nos. MNM NRI RT-RO 86.35.1–27. Some artifacts were donated by finders, others were collected by Attila Kiss and Endre Tóth, who visited the findspot in November 1976. See further: MRT 7, Site No. 4/16 and HNM Archaeological Registry Inv. no. II/58/1983.

29 For further details on the carriage grave from Budakeszi, for the time being see: MRÁV 1999, 174, 32.

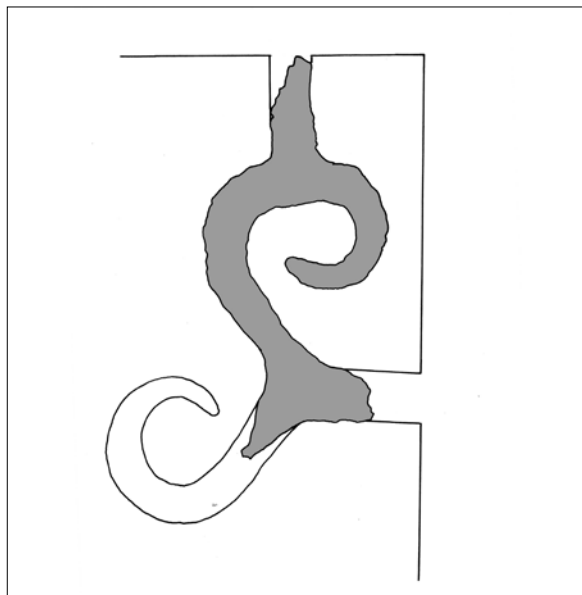


Fig. 7. Budakeszi centre (Pest county, H), carriage grave; Position of the S-shaped support in the iron folding chair (drawing and reconstruction by Zsolt Mráv)

7. kép. Budakeszi, belterület (Pest vármegye), kocsisír; az összecuszkható vasszékhez tartozó S alakú támaszték helyzete (rajz és rekonstrukció: Mráv Zsolt)

teristic finds of Italian burial sites, were recovered from merely two known Pannonian carriage graves, Káloz³⁰ and Budakeszi. Both these lamps were high-quality products made in Italy.

The handle of the oil lamp from Káloz is adorned with a panther's head (an exact analogy is kept in the National Archaeological Museum of Naples).³¹ The handle of the specimen from Budakeszi was wrought in the shape of a sandalled human foot. These oil lamps were accompanied by related candelabra, forming coherent

ensembles of lamps and supports.³² Such ensembles were common amongst the lavish burial sites of the Thracian elite. The light sources characteristic of Roman burial sites served an apotropaic purpose, providing the “eternal light” (*lux perpetua*) dispelling the darkness of the grave and warding off evil demons and wraiths.³³ In contrast, light sources in Thracian graves were accessories to daily personal hygiene.³⁴ For most of the year, these tasks were performed outside daytime, either before dawn, or after dusk, before retiring to rest. In the afterlife, as in life, the deceased performed regular morning and evening washup by the light of an oil lamp set on a candelabrum. Oil lamps are strikingly uncommon in the autochthonous burial sites of Pannonia, thus the ensembles of metal oil lamps and candelabra recovered from carriage graves likely served a similar purpose. The absence of oil lamps can be partly ascribed to the scarcity of oil, but more importantly, Roman notions of the otherworld did not take root amongst the local populace, or did so in a purely superficial manner.

3. Unknown findspot, allegedly a destroyed carriage grave (Figs. 8–10)

The iron chair was donated to the Hungarian National Museum in 2014.³⁵ Its components were thoroughly deformed and broken apart. The highly corroded and poorly preserved pieces were restored by two students specializing in the restoration of applied arts, Csilla Galambos and Nóra Nagyvárad, in April 2014, under the guidance of Eszter Bakonyi and Melinda Nagy, in the framework of a collaboration between the Hungarian National Museum and the Hungarian University of Fine Arts.

Two wrought iron frames constitute the chassis of the chair. Decorative bronze knobs were cast together with the iron framework (Fig. 11a–b). Key dimensions of the chair are: H: 63.5 cm, W: 47.5 cm. Small decorative knobs were 4 cm high and 2.2–2.3 cm in diameter. Large knobs were 5.2 cm high and 4 cm in

30 BÓNIS 1981, 121, 124, kat. 12–13, Abb. 14, 16 (oil lamp), 130–131, kat. 15, Abb. 21/7 (iron candelabrum).

31 MRÁV 2006, 61, Abb. 21b. For the oil lamp from the Naples National Archaeological Museum see DE SPAGNOLIS – DE CAROLIS 1983, 32–33 Typ. III. 11, Abb. 40.

32 MRÁV 2009, 82; MRÁV in preparation.

33 MENZEL 1953, 134–135; WÄLKE 1962, 217.

34 Rositsa Nenova-Merdjanova discussed, but did not verify, this possibility (NENOVA-MERDJANOVA 1997, 34; NENOVA-MERDJANOVA 2002, 203–204).

35 Inv. no. MNM NRI RT-RO 2014.7.1. For a preliminary publication, see: MRÁV 2022, 24–25, kat. RT 8. The chair is also mentioned: MRÁV 2014, 435, footnote 146.



Fig. 8a–b. Iron folding chair from an unidentified Transdanubian findspot, before restoration (HNM, photo by Gábor Nyíri)
8a–b kép. Az ismeretlen dunántúli lelőhelyről származó összecusukható vasszék állapota a restaurálás előtt (MNM, fotó: Nyíri Gábor)

diameter. The folding chair belongs to the type of Roman era field chairs (*sella castrensis*) prevalent during the Middle Imperial period (so-called Weißenburg type, Variant A).

The chassis of the chair is comprised of two segmented rectangular frames, joined loosely together by two round-headed rivets passing through the middle of the frames. One of the rivets was subsequently replaced with a longer nail, with its tip bent backwards. The middle third of each outside leg was worked into a distinct joint, shifted from the plane of the frame. These joints fitted together when the chair was folded. The tops of the iron frames differ: one has a continuous top rail, the other terminates in two separate top rails, with 10.5 cm between finials. Contemporary images attest that the leather seats of such chairs had semicircular cutouts,³⁶ although their purpose is yet unclear.³⁷ The two short, horizontal iron seat rails were reinforced with S-shaped brackets. All four ends of the two short top rails terminate in bronze ornamental knobs cast onto iron components. The two inner knobs are smaller than the two outer ones. One of the external knobs is missing. The knobs have pileated hemispheric heads ribbed with deep grooves. Legs are conjoined at the base by two horizontal iron stretchers. The ends of the legs were cut at 45 degrees, forming rudimentary feet (indicating that when opened, the ideal angle between the feet and the floor was 45 degrees).

36 This cutout is clearly discernible on the apsidal mosaic “4a” in the bathhouse of Villa del Casale (Piazza Armerina, Sicily), depicting a folded chair carried by a bathhouse servant on his shoulder (CARANDINI – RUCCI – DE VOS 1982, 80, Fig. 30).

37 KOSTER 2013, 254.



Fig. 9. Iron folding chair from an unidentified Northeast Pannonian findspot (HNM, photo by Gábor Nyíri)

9. kép. Ismeretlen északkelet-pannoniai lelőhelyről származó összezsukható vasszék (MNM, fotó: Nyíri Gábor)



Fig. 10. Iron folding chair from an unidentified Transdanubian findspot (HNM, photo by Gábor Nyíri)

10. kép. Ismeretlen dunántúli lelőhelyről származó összezsukható vasszék (MNM, fotó: Nyíri Gábor)



Fig. 11a–b. Detail photos of the iron folding chair recovered from an unidentified Transdanubian findspot (HNM, photo by Gábor Nyíri)

11.a–b kép. Ismeretlen dunántúli lelőhelyről származó összezsukható vasszék, részletfotók (MNM, fotó: Nyíri Gábor)



In order to find analogies for this new iron chair of unknown provenience acquired by the HNM, one needs to examine Roman Imperial-Period chairs outfitted with two S-shaped supports, bronze ornamental knobs, and other cast bronze appliques. Only four chairs reinforced with S-shaped brackets are known, including the specimens from the Weißenburg hoard,³⁸ Grave 3 at Környe,³⁹ the double burial site at Budapest-Pasarét (District II),⁴⁰ and a fourth chair of unknown provenance, identified in international antiquities trade.⁴¹ This meagre group of Imperial-Period folding chairs can now be complemented with two further items, the one from Budakeszi (2) and the latter chair recovered from an unspecified findspot somewhere in Pannonia. It is worth mentioning, that four of the six known such chairs originate from Pannonia. The fact that every whole or near intact chair outfitted with S-shaped brackets was also adorned with bronze knobs is noteworthy. During the course of the 2nd–3rd-century AD, these were the most opulent and possibly most expensive chairs available, surpassed only by rare pieces of furniture with legs decorated with metal inlays. This iron chair can be dated to the mid-2nd-century AD or at latest to the early 3rd-century AD.

Allegedly, the iron chair originated from a destroyed carriage grave, and was discovered alongside bronze vessels, including a handwashing kit comprised of a pitcher and a handled bowl. The relative positions of the corroded frames imply that the chair was folded when placed in the burial site.

Notes on new Pannonian iron chairs recovered from funerary contexts

The following two folding chairs were both recovered from rich cremated burials in Eastern Pannonia. One has already been written on (4), the other is a novel find (5).

4. Mursa (Osijek/Eszék, Croatia), cremation burial (Fig. 12/7)

Fragments of a folding chair were brought to light from one of the cremated graves in the western cemetery of Colonia Aelia Mursa, excavated in 1966 (Grave 189).⁴² The grave consisted of two levels, a large quadratic top chamber with stone walls, covered with prism-shaped stone blocks on top, and a smaller bottom chamber built of bricks.⁴³ The bottom chamber was filled with the remains of the funerary pyre, and the objects originally piled atop the pyre.

Pieces of the iron chair recovered from the grave were deformed, incomplete and broken, indicating that the chair was also placed on the pyre. The pieces were identified as the legs from one side and a horizontal seat rail. Height is the only dimension of the artifact, that can be reconstructed, which is 57.5 cm. The seat rails used for securing the leather seat in place terminated in bronze rosette knobs. The rivets fastening the two frames of the chair together also have heads resembling rosettes (Diam.: 4 cm).⁴⁴ Based on the recovered finds and their surfaces, the chair consisted of two four-sided frames without any supports or stretchers. It plausibly belongs to the so-called Ostia type in the typology of Christian Miks.⁴⁵ Fragmentary bronze vessels were documented in the grave beside the chair (Fig. 12/1–6), including a pitcher and a handled bowl of a handwashing kit, a second pitcher, and the lid of an oil vessel adorned with concentric rings (Diam.: 4 cm) (Fig. 12/6).⁴⁶ Some

38 KELLNER-ZAHLHAAS 1993, 126–127, Kat. Nr. 109.

39 BÓNIS 1982, 134; MIKS 2009, 512–513, Nr. 50.

40 RÓMER 1864, 104; MIKS 2009, 512, Nr. 49; MRÁV 2013, 124–125.

41 MIKS 2009, 512, Nr. 43, Taf. 4. 5.

42 Muzej Slavonie, Osijek, Inv. no. 7905.

43 For a detailed description of the tomb, see: BULAT 1977, 79–80. For the grave goods, see: BULAT 1977, 79–87; MIKS 2009, 514, Nr. 65; GÖRICKE-LUKIĆ 2011, 106–111, 189; MRÁV 2014, 435, footnote 146.

44 BULAT 1977, 81–82, kat. 5, T. III.1–6.

45 MIKS 2009, 512.

46 BULAT 1977, 81, kat. 4, T. II.5.



Fig. 12. Mursa (Osijek/Eszék, HR), grave goods from a cremation burial (after (BULAT 1977 and GÖRICKE-LUKIĆ 2011))
12. kép. Mursa (Osijek/Eszék, HR), hamvasztásos sír mellékletei (BULAT 1977 és GÖRICKE-LUKIĆ 2011 után)

of the fragments suggest the presence of further vessels in the grave. Thin metal objects with curved cross-sections may be interpreted as fragments of strigils.⁴⁷ One can conclude that grave goods included both bathing or personal hygiene kits alongside the iron folding chair.

5. Bóly (Baranya county), cremation burial (Fig. 13)

In March 2020, colleagues from the Janus Pannonius Museum in Pécs excavated a rich cremation burial of the local elite in the vicinity of Bóly. An iron chair was identified amongst the grave goods (head of excavation: Gergely Kovaliczky).⁴⁸

The iron chair was nearly intact, implying it was not set on the funerary pyre (the same can be said of the golden ring recovered from the burial site, discussed below). Only the lower parts of its legs were slightly deformed. The chassis of the chair consists of two rectangular iron frames, fastened loosely together by rivets near the middle of the legs (so-called Weißenburg type, Variant A), which enabled the smooth folding and opening of the chair. The chair was 50 cm high and 44 cm wide. The seat rail is continuous on one frame, and missing its middle third on the other. Both parts of the latter, divided top rail are reinforced by S-shaped supports joined directly to the frame, without the use of any spacers. Either end of the seat rails is adorned with iron knobs. In addition to serving a decorative purpose, these knobs kept the leather seat from slipping off the top rail. The publisher of the find, Gergely Kovaliczky noted traces of metal inlays on the unconserved surface of the chair legs. If his observations can be confirmed after restoration, then this would be the second iron chair from the Middle Imperial Period with such decoration, in addition to the one recovered from carriage grave No. 1–2 at Környe.⁴⁹

The grave was 1.8 × 3.8 m large, complete with a side-wall niche. The remains of the funerary pyre were drawn to the middle, deeper part of the grave. Two *asses* of Antoninus Pius, one of them struck in AD 153/154



Fig. 13. Bóly (Baranya county, H); iron folding chair from a elite cremation burial site (after KOVALICZKY 2022)

13. kép. Bóly (Baranya vármegye); összecusukható vasszék a hamvasztásos elittemetkezésből (KOVALICZKY 2022 után)

(RIC III 921), provide a *terminus post quem*, dating the burial site to the second half of the 2nd-century AD.⁵⁰ Alongside the iron folding chair discussed above, a golden ring with intaglio of an eagle,⁵¹ and a fragment from a small sculpture (see below), the bronze vessels and items of a bathing and personal hygiene kit, deformed on the funerary pyre, were recovered from the burial site, amongst other artifacts. It seems that after the pyre burnt out, not all of the partially melted fragments were collected and drawn into the grave pit. Based on its surviving fragments, the bronze water pitcher of the handwashing kit seems atypical. It is unlike any of the pitchers known from the kit types defined by Hans Ulrich Nuber (Hagenow, Millingen, Alikaria, Canterbury).⁵²

Due to their fragmentary state, the shapes and purposes of several vessels were misinterpreted, and shall be revised herein. Bronze sherds identified as a bronze

47 GÖRICKE-LUKIĆ 2011, 108, Figs. 8c and 8e.

48 KOVALICZKY 2022.

49 For the first publication on the iron chair, see: ALAPI 1913, 38, 36, Abb. 1. The author has written on the brass inlays adorning the chair legs: MRÁV 2013, 135–138, Abb. 23–24; MRÁV 2014, 437–439, Fig. 23.

50 KOVALICZKY 2022, 40, 46, Fig. 8.

51 KOVALICZKY 2022, 40, 45, Fig. 6.

52 NUBER 1974, 38–73.

bucket⁵³ belong in fact to a bronze oil vessel with a flattened globular body (Fig. 14/1–5).⁵⁴ Although none of its sidewalls survived, one may assume that they were unadorned with figural embossments.⁵⁵ The omega-shaped bronze bow handle of the vessel was cast separately. Both recurved ends of the handle terminated in baluster-shaped, segmented ornaments. The tip of one of the balusters is missing. The handle was fastened onto the body by two appliqués, brazed onto opposing sides of the vessel, each forming trilobed leafs and terminating in round loops. Numerous bronze vessels were outfitted with similar appliqués resembling trilobed or pentalobed (acanthus?) leafs.⁵⁶ The bronze object misidentified as a “chambered disc brooch” in the preliminary publication of the grave, is in fact the lid of the oil vessel (Fig. 14/2).⁵⁷ Apart from the shape of the object, this new interpretation is reinforced by the presence of decorative concentric rings on its surface, a bronze knob riveted to its centre, and the existence of a distinct round borehole, all of which have numerous analogies amongst the lids of similar bronze oil vessels. Furthermore, an iron latch belonging to the clasp securing the lid, can still be seen on its rear.⁵⁸

For all the above reasons, one can conclude that the handwashing kit set atop the pyre and partially deposited in the grave, consisted of a globular bronze oil vessel, at least one *strigilis* (Fig. 14/6), and an iron folding chair.

Finally, the fragment of a bronze statuette warrants a few remarks.⁵⁹ The practice of depositing bronze statuettes as grave goods existed in Pannonia, but such finds are exceptionally rare,⁶⁰ further emphasizing the significance of the burial site discovered at Bóly. The torso recovered from the grave portrays a figure clad in a hooded cape (*paenula cucullata*) (Fig. 15), thus it is



Fig. 14. Bóly (Baranya county, H); *instrumenta balnei* from an elite cremation burial site; 1–5: oil vessel (*ampulla olearia*) and strigil (after KOVALICZKY 2022)

14. kép. Bóly (Baranya vármegye); *instrumenta balnei* a hamvasztásos elittemetkezésből; 1–5: olajos edény (*ampulla olearia*) és strigilis (KOVALICZKY 2022 után)

definitely not a Lar.⁶¹ The head is broken off entirely, the extremities of the legs and arms are missing. No traces of a thrown back hood are discernible on the back of the figure, implying the hood was drawn over the head. Apart from a few grotesque or genre sculptures depicting travellers or countrymen, statuettes made of stone, terracotta or bronze, clad in hooded capes generally represent the *genius cucullatus*/*Telesphoros*.⁶² The *genii cucullati* were protective apotropaic entities associated

53 KOVALICZKY 2022, 41, 48, in the lower left corner and in the right column of Fig. 11. The sherd in the top right corner belongs to a separate vessel.

54 BRAUN 2001, 4–6, Type I. For the presence of the type in Pannonia, see: e.g. Intercisa (Dunaújváros) recovered from a sarcophagus: SZABÓ 1984, 108, n° 18; BRAUN 2001, 144–145, Nr. B3; Brigetio (Komárom, locality of Szőny): SZABÓ 1984, 108, no 17; BRAUN 2001, 145, Nr. B6.

55 BRAUN 2001, 40–92.

56 BRAUN 2001, 12–13.

57 KOVALICZKY 2022, 48, Fig. 12.

58 The cross-section drawing of a lid outfitted with a similar latch was published in BRAUN 2001, 9–10.

59 KOVALICZKY 2022, 41, 49, Fig. 14.

60 For an overview on bronze statuette as grave goods: FEUGÈRE 1993, 150; BOLLA 2013. Regarding Pannonian provinces: MÁRTON 2019, 225.

61 As suggested by Gergely Kovaliczky, who first wrote on the statue: KOVALICZKY 2022, 41.

62 *Telesphoros*: RÜHFEL 1994, 870–878; *Cucullus*: REINACH 1896, 1577–1579. For the bronze statues of *Genius cucullatus*/*Telesphoros*: RÜHFEL 1994, 872.



Fig. 15. Bóly (Baranya county, H); bronze statuette (*genius cucullatus*/Telesphoros) from the cremation burial site (after KOVALICZKY 2022)
15. kép. Bóly (Baranya vármegye); bronz kisplasztika (*genius cucullatus*/Téleszphorosz) a hamvasztásos sírból (KOVALICZKY 2022 után)

with health, prosperity and fertility, venerated throughout Northern Italy and provinces with an autochthonous Celtic populace,⁶³ suggesting a strong Celtic influence on the figure.⁶⁴ In the Graeco-Roman world, the character fused with Telesphorus of Pergamon, the son of Asclepius, a deity associated with healing and the wellbeing of children.⁶⁵ It is worth noting that statuettes of Telesphorus are known from funerary contexts, and have been recovered mostly from children's graves, and the figure was depicted on funerary monuments as the guide of the dead.⁶⁶ This implies that the apotropaic faculty of the *genius cucullatus*/Telesphoros was not restricted to the world of the living, but extended to those setting forth on their journey to the afterlife.⁶⁷ Hence, the statuette of the deity was presumably placed in the grave at Bóly to accompany and protect the deceased.⁶⁸

The chairs discussed in the present article increased the number of such finds recovered from burial sites of the Pannonian elite by five, raising the total from nine to fourteen (Table 1). Three iron chairs were recovered from carriage graves, two from elite cremations with rich grave goods. The folding chair was accompanied

by a golden ring at Bóly, and by travelling carriages with rich figural ornaments at Szomor-Somodorpuszta and Budakeszi. Both the golden rings and the ornate travelling carriages were unmistakable expressions of elite social status.

New folding chairs discovered in the European provinces of the Roman Empire

In the following chapter, new folding chairs discovered or written on since the overview presented by the author in 2013 shall be discussed together with their archaeological contexts.

6. Ath/Ghislenghien (Province de Hainaut, Belgium), Belgica (Fig. 16–17)⁶⁹

In 2014, a preliminary archaeological excavation brought to light two burial sites with a rich ensemble of grave goods at Ghislenghien, near the city Ath. One was a female burial site (F673), containing a large wooden

63 DOMÍNGUEZ 2015, 106. For his veneration in the Dacian provinces, see: ANTAL 2014; VARGA 2016.

64 EGGER 1932, 31.

65 KENNER 1976, 148; RÜHFEL 1994, 870.

66 RÜHFEL 1994, 877; ANTAL 2014; LA FRAGOLA 2015, 57–61; VARGA 2016.

67 EHLING 2005, 161; DOMÍNGUEZ 2015, 114.

68 The statuette from Bóly is hollow, and a hole is discernible on the body, thus one must consider its interpretation as a figural bronze oil lamp. Terracotta and bronze lamps depicting ithyphallic figures donning hooded capes constitute a prominent group amongst artifacts related to Telesphoros (most recently: RÜHFEL 1994, 877; ANTAL 2014, 200–201; VARGA 2016, 21–26). A bronze oil lamp discovered at Castellar de Santiesteban (Jaén) is the closest analogy of the statuette from Bóly: DOMÍNGUEZ 2015, 119, Fig. 18. However, the hole is located on the caped back of the statuette from Bóly, which is inconsistent with ithyphallic figures.

69 DANESÉ-HANUT-GARNIER 2017, 77–119.

	Findspot of the grave containing the folding chair	Bathing and personal hygiene kits discovered in the grave	Dating	Sex of the deceased	Literature (inexhaustive)
1.	Bóly (Baranya county/H), cremation burial site (Fig. 13)	One chair, at least one <i>strigilis</i> set previously on the pyre was found nearby, a globular bronze oil vessel and fragments of bronze vessels from a handwashing kit.	second half of the 2nd-century AD	m	KOVALICZKY 2022, 39–52; MRÁV–NEMÉNYI 2023, 18–19.
2.	Budakeszi (Pest county/H), carriage grave (Figs. 6–7)	Fragment of a chair, a globular oil vessel suspended on chains and a <i>strigilis</i> , a Canterbury-type handwashing kit, a bronze oil lamp and a candelabrum.	mid-2nd-century AD	?	Published in the present study.
3.	Budapest II, Pasarét (H)	A bronze oil vessel was found near the chair.	late 3rd-century AD	f / m	RÓMER 1964, 104; MIKS 2009, 512, Nr. 49; MRÁV 2013, 124–125.
4.	Dunaújváros (Fejér county/H), carriage grave	Rather incomplete grave goods from a looted sarcophagus.	early 3rd-century AD	m	TEICHNER 2011, 130, Kat. W17.
5.	Érd (Pest county/H), carriage grave and horse burial site (Fig. 2)	Two chairs and two handwashing and bathing kits (2 × 2 <i>strigiles</i> and at least two oil vessels).	second half of the 2nd-century AD	m	BÓNIS 1981, 141–142; MIKS 2009, 512, Nr. 35 and 39; MRÁV 2013, 117–119.
6.	Káloz (Fejér county/H), carriage grave	Two iron <i>strigiles</i> . A bronze suspension loop implying the presence of an oil vessel. Washbowl.	first half of the 2nd-century AD	m	BÓNIS 1981, 131–134 Abb. 20; MIKS 2009, 512, Nr. 36; MRÁV 2013, 120–124.
7.	Környe-Kőszénbánya No. 1–2. (Komárom-Esztergom county/H), carriage grave	Handwashing kit; bronze pail.	late 2nd – early 3rd-century AD	m	ALAPI 1913, 38, 36, Abb. 1; BÓNIS 1982, 143; MIKS 2009, 512, Nr. 37, Taf. 3.10; MRÁV 2013, 135–138.
8.	Környe No. 3. (Komárom-Esztergom county/H), carriage grave and related (?) horse burial site in separate pit	Handwashing kit. Incomplete set of grave goods.	late 2nd – early 3rd-century AD	m	BÓNIS 1982, 134; MIKS 2009, 512–513, Nr. 50.
9.	Nagylók (Fejér county/H), carriage grave	Bronze oil vessel (possibly originally accompanied by <i>strigiles</i>).	2nd-century AD	?	GAUL 1890, Taf. C., I. 1; BÓNIS 1982, 142, Abb. 16; MIKS 2009, 512, Nr. 38; MRÁV 2013, 119–120.
10.	Osijek/Eszék (HR) (Mursa), western cemetery, Grave 189 (Fig. 12)	One bronze oil vessel (lid only) and bronze vessels of a handwashing kit.	first half of the 2nd-century AD	m?	BULAT 1977, 79–87; GÖRICKE-LUKIĆ 2011, 106–111; MRÁV 2014, 435, footnote No. 146.
11.	Simontornya (Tolna county/H), burial mound?	No <i>balnearia</i> , yet grave goods are only partially known.	2nd–3rd-century AD	?	BÓNIS 1982, 136; PALÁGYI–NAGY 2002, 34–35 (including further literature); MIKS 2009, 510, Nr. 5.

Table 1. Iron folding chairs and bathing or personal hygiene kits recovered from the burial sites of the indigenous elite in the Pannonian provinces

1. táblázat. A helyi őslakos elit gazdag sírjaiba tett összecsukható vasszékek és fürdő-, illetve tisztálkodókészletek a pannóniai tartományokban

Table 1. (from previous page)**1. táblázat.** (folytatás)

	Findspot of the grave containing the folding chair	Bathing and personal hygiene kits discovered in the grave	Dating	Sex of the deceased	Literature (inexhaustive)
12.	Szomor-Somodorpuszta (Komárom-Esztergom county/H), carriage grave (Fig. 4)	Bronze vessels of a handwashing kit.	2nd-century AD	?	Published in the present study.
13.	Zsámbék (Pest county/H), carriage grave (Fig. 3)	2 <i>strigiles</i> and a bronze oil vessel, handwashing kit.	2nd-century AD	m	BÓNIS 1982, 142, Abb. 16; MIKS 2009 [2011], 512, Nr. 40; MRÁV 2011a, 26–27; MRÁV 2013, 120.
14.	Unidentified Transdanubian findspot, possibly from a destroyed carriage grave (Figs. 8–11)	Grave goods allegedly included the bronze vessels from at least one handwashing kit.	2nd–3rd-century AD	?	Published in the present study.

casket, which held grave goods and the calcinated bone remains collected from the funerary pyre. Grave goods included a vast collection of pottery, including a dining set of Italian-made terra sigillata, alongside a polychromatic glass bowl adorned with strip and lace mosaics, and a *sella curulis*-type iron folding chair, accompanied by a metal mirror and a pair of brooches. The grave can be dated between 5 BC and AD 15/20, ranking it among the earliest burial sites to have contained a folding chair. The authors of the first publication argued, that although “*même si cela doit être confronté aux résultats d’une étude anthropologique*”, the presence of the chair suggests that the grave belonged to one of the first officials of the *civitas Nerviorum*. However, the pair of brooches and the mirror are clear indications that the deceased was female, hence the grave should be regarded as one of the Early Imperial-Period burial sites of female elites, which often included *sella curulis*-type folding chairs and toiletry kits (e.g. Epagny-Metz-Tessy; Plouy Grave 94; Saintes, discussed below in detail).

7. Boinville-en-Mantois (Yvelines, France), Gallia Lugdunensis (Fig. 18)⁷⁰

In 2016, an iron folding chair was found set on the floor of a cremation burial site (Grave 34) located near a funerary monument, which was situated near the centre

of a quadratic graveyard of elegant setting, encircled by a stone fence. The chair belongs to the twice foldable, hinged Variant B of the Weißenburg type. The chair was the only object recovered from the grave, which was near intact. Sherds of pottery and glass vessels were charred beyond recognition on the funerary pyre, thus the complete range of grave goods cannot be ascertained. The burial sites of the graveyard were dated to the late 2nd- or early 3rd-century AD.

8. Epagny-Metz-Tessy (Haute-Savoie, France), Gallia Narbonensis (Fig. 19)

In 2021, professionals from the Inrap discovered a child's rich burial site near the foot of a hill at Epagny-Metz-Tessy, a commune in the urban area of Annecy, alongside a second rich burial site that likely belonged to a mature woman. The two graves are related, and possibly belonged to a single graveyard. Both burial sites were dated to the second half of the 1st-century AD. A *sella curulis*-type iron chair and silver *strigiles* were recovered from the female grave, accompanied by a pair of golden earrings, the remains of a fabric interwoven with gilded threads, 20 pottery vessels, and the same amount of glass vessels and a further 46 various metal objects. The joint presence of chair and *strigiles* hints at the possible inclusion of a bathing kit among the grave goods.⁷¹

⁷⁰ LAUREY–BRUNET–DEMAREST–MAUDUIT 2019, 237–240.

⁷¹ Nothing has been written on the grave goods. At the moment only brief reports and media coverage are available: <https://www.inrap.fr/decouverte-d-une-chaise-curule-dans-un-bucher-aristocratique-romain-epagny-metz-15525>.



Fig. 16. Ath/Ghislenghien (Hainaut, B); female burial site complete with iron folding chair (after DANESE–HANUT–GARNIER 2017)

16. kép. Ath/Ghislenghien (Hainaut, B); összecsukszóható vasszéket tartalmazó női sír (DANESE–HANUT–GARNIER 2017 után)

9. Arnsburg “Alteburg” (Hessen, Germany), Germania Superior (Figs. 20–21)⁷²

In Spring 2021, a peculiar although partially disturbed *bustum* burial site was excavated at Arnsburg (Stadt Lich, Lkr. Gießen), on the Wetterau Limes (part of the Upper German Limes), in the southern cemetery of the settlement and the accompanying fort of the *cohors I Aquitanorum veterana equitata*. Fragments from artifacts placed on the funerary pyre alongside the deceased, and the collapsed remains of the pyre were identified in a 2.09 × 3.15 m large pit delved into the round mound. Finds included food and drinking vessels, an amphora, the handle of a bronze ladle, a set of arrows possibly used for hunting, furthermore an iron chair (Weißenburg type, Variant A) and an iron *strigilis*. For the purposes of the present article, the fact that the strigil was found corroded to the iron frames of the folding chair, is exceptionally significant (Fig. 21). The same occurrence was documented at Káloz.⁷³ The Arnsburg grave is another example of functionally related artifacts of bathing kits, in this case an iron chair and a *strigilis*, being placed close by, either on the pyre or in the burial site.⁷⁴



Fig. 17. Ath/Ghislenghien (Hainaut, B); the *sella curulis*-type iron chair of the female burial site (after DANESE–HANUT–GARNIER 2017)

17. kép. Ath/Ghislenghien (Hainaut, B); a női temetkezés *sella curulis* típusú vasszéke (DANESE–HANUT–GARNIER 2017 után)

10. Nijmegen (NL), Germania Inferior (Fig. 22)

A bathing kit and a lavish dining set were discovered alongside a female laid to rest in Grave 9 in the western cemetery of Nijmegen, the details of which were published in 2013. The interpretation of the surviving metal components and related painted leather residue revealed that grave goods included a wooden folding chair, complete with a backrest and metal fittings.⁷⁵ Furthermore, bronze vessels of a Canterbury-type handwashing kit and articles of a toiletry kit (mirrors, spatulas) were also recovered from the grave. These objects can be interpreted as parts of cleansing or grooming kits deposited in the burial site. A finely crafted inkwell was also placed in the grave,⁷⁶ and its use might be associated with the chair. The burial site can be dated to the early 2nd-century AD.

All five new folding chairs were recovered from Gallic and Germanic provinces, from burial sites of local elites. In four cases, folding chairs belonged to bathing, cleaning or toiletry kits (6, 8–10). The grave goods of the fifth, cremation burial site were damaged on the funerary pyre to such a degree, as to prevent their proper interpretation (7). Thus, new finds fit the trend established by the author in his 2013 study. The

72 KOCH–MÜCHENBERGER 2021, 7–32; KOCH–MÜCHENBERGER 2022, 62–63; KOCH–MÜCHENBERGER–GOTTWALD–PIEPER 2022, 190.

73 BÓNIS 1981, 134; MRÁV 2013, 124.

74 See further: MRÁV 2013, 126–127.

75 KOSTER 2013, 58–62 (description of grave and grave goods), 163–165, 252–255 (evaluation of the chair), 423 (drawn reconstruction of the chair).

76 KOSTER 2013, 152–159, Pl. 42.30.



Fig. 18. Boinville-en-Mantois (Yvelines, F); hinged iron chair from a cremation burial site near the funerary monument of the graveyard (after LAUREY-BRUNET-DEMAREST-MAUDUIT 2019)

18. kép. Boinville-en-Mantois (Yvelines, F); zsanéros vasszék egy sírípítményt tartalmazó sírkert egyik hamvasztásos sírjában (LAUREY-BRUNET-DEMAREST-MAUDUIT 2019 után)



Fig. 19. Epagny-Metz-Tessy (Haute-Savoie, F); iron folding chair from a rich female burial site (see <https://www.inrap.fr/decouverte-d-une-chaise-curule-dans-un-bucher-aristocratique-romain-epagny-metz-15525>)

19. kép. Epagny-Metz-Tessy (Haute-Savoie, F); összecsuksukható vasszék egy gazdag női sírből (<https://www.inrap.fr/decouverte-d-une-chaise-curule-dans-un-bucher-aristocratique-romain-epagny-metz-15525> nyomán)



Fig. 20. Arnsburg "Alteburg" (Hessen, D); iron folding chair from a *bustum* burial site (after KOCH-MÜCHENBERGER 2022)

20. kép. Arnsburg „Alteburg” (Hessen, D); összecsuksukható vasszék a bustumtemetkezésből (KOCH-MÜCHENBERGER 2022 után)



Fig. 21. Arnsburg "Alteburg" (Hessen, D), grave of a military officer; iron folding iron chair with an iron strigil just beneath it (after KOCH-MÜCHENBERGER 2022)

21. kép. Arnsburg „Alteburg” (Hessen, D), katonatiszt sírja; összecsuksukható vasszék és alatta egy vas *strigilis* (KOCH-MÜCHENBERGER 2022 után)

iron chair from Arnsburg bears the most significance for the present research, as it was found conjoined with the *strigilis* of the bathing kit, indicating that both artifacts belonged to the same kit. The deceased buried at Arnsburg was likely a military officer who served in

the region. Similarly to other female graves complete with iron folding chairs, the three new female burial sites (6, 8, 10) lacked full bathing or sporting kits, but contained accessories for cleansing or grooming. The silver *strigiles* recovered from the female burial site at



Fig. 22. Nijmegen (NL), Grave 9 of the western cemetery; grave goods from the female burial site and the reconstruction of the wooden chair with metal fittings (after KOSTER 2013)
22. kép. Nijmegen (NL), nyugati temető 9. sír; a női temetkezés mellékletei a fából készült, fémveretes összecusukható szék rekonstrukciójával (KOSTER 2013 nyomán)

Epagny-Metz-Tessy are an exception, as women employed strigils for cleaning or perhaps depilation, rather than sporting purposes.⁷⁷ One can conclude that the pairing of chairs and bathing or sporting kits was related to male identity, as these functionally linked objects were common amidst, but not exclusive to, the burial sites of men of the local elite.⁷⁸

Chairs utilised by mistresses for cleansing or grooming

Contemporary illustrations, grave goods and literary evidence reveal that female members of the elite used different types of chairs for their daily personal hygiene or grooming routine accompanied by their servants.⁷⁹ Apart from a few exceptions,⁸⁰ these were mostly chairs with backrests or folding chairs.

Chairs with backrests (*cathedra*)

Various kinds of visual representations generally depict the mistress seated on a chair, whilst one of her maids holds up a mirror for her and another combs her hair. The scene is often complemented with other servants carrying mostly water pitchers, pails or chests (Fig. 23). Margot Baltzer presented the most comprehensive collection of these scene types (so-called *Frisierszene* or *Toilettenszene*), and recorded twenty instances of near identical imagery from Italy and the European provinces of the Roman Empire (most originate from Belgica, the vicinity of Augusta Treverorum). In most cases that depict chairs, the mistress is seated upon a wicker chair with a backrest, relaxing her feet on a stool. The image field of a funerary stele from Sárísáp depicts a woman in native garments seated on a chair with a backrest, while lifting a mirror and perhaps jewellery from a toiletry case or jewel box. No servants were rendered on the relief (Fig. 24).⁸²

Chairs with backrests were best suited for indoor use, usually set up in bedrooms or private baths. The relief on the sarcophagus from Simpelveld depicts a chair with a backrest next to the bed.⁸³ Such chairs were large and heavyset, hence impractical to be carried far from the house, and were likely not taken to public baths.

⁷⁷ For a comprehensive summary on *strigiles* employed by women, see: KOTERA-FEYER 1993, 6; BÓZSA 2016, 208–211; OȚA 2016, 128, 131–132.

⁷⁸ Else KOSTER 2013, 254; MRÁV 2013, 128.

⁷⁹ NENOVA-MERDJANOVA 1997, 34; NENOVA-MERDJANOVA 2002, 203–204; GRASSIGLI 2006, 305–326; MRÁV 2013, 113–116.

⁸⁰ A relief from Arlon depicts the mistress combing her hair while seated upon a cylindric stool (Musée d'Histoire et d'Archéologie, Luxembourg): BALTZER 1983, 104, Nr. 73; MARTIN-KILCHER 2018, 262, Abb. 10.1, a relief from Trier (the so-called Avituspfeiler, Rheinisches Landesmuseum, Trier) depicts a similar setting: BALTZER 1983, 104, Nr. 72a. A Late Roman silver bucket from the Naples Museum depicts the mistress seated on a plain backless bench: DRESKEN-WEILAND 1994, 39–48; MARTIN-KILCHER 2018, 264, 268, Abb. 20.

⁸¹ BALTZER 1983, 64–72, 104–107, Kat. Nr. 71–90. Since then, another scene has been brought to the attention of the scientific community, which was depicted on a bronze disc-brooch with a pressed decoration (Rheinisches Landesmuseum, Trier): MARTIN-KILCHER 2018, 262, Abb. 11.

⁸² LÁNG 1919, 246, Fig. 110; NAGY 2007, 23–24, Nr. 6. See further a fragmentary relief from TÁC, which represents a woman sitting on a chair with backrest and in front of her a female servant holding a jewellery box: FITZ 2003, 26–27, no. 11.

⁸³ Regarding the sarcophagus from Simpelveld, see: HOLWERDA 1931.



Fig. 23. Saint-Hilaire-de-Lusignan (Lot-et Garonne, F); front relief on a marble sarcophagus lid, portraying a mistress grooming while seated on a wicker chair with a backrest (after BARDIÈS-FRONTY–BIMBENET-PRIVAT 2009)

23. kép. Saint-Hilaire-de-Lusignan (Lot-et Garonne, F); márvány szarkofágtető előoldali domborműve, amely vesszőfonatos támlásszéken szépítkező úrnőt ábrázol (BARDIÈS-FRONTY–BIMBENET-PRIVAT 2009 nyomán)

Furthermore, wickerwork was less apt for ostentatious decoration representing wealth and elite social status.

The mosaic in the antechamber of the bathhouse (21) of the Late Roman Villa del Casale (Piazza Armerina, Sicily) provides additional evidence for the presence of chairs with backrests in private baths. The scene depicts the mistress and her two sons going to the baths, accompanied by servants.⁸⁴ A wicker or wooden *cathedra* can be seen, off to the side of the mosaic situated on the left of the stairs leading to the antechamber of the bathhouse (Fig. 25). A large vessel was placed in front of the chair with a backrest, its grey colour implies it was wrought of silver. A fluted silver basin or dish was placed atop the vessel. The vessel was likely used to store large volumes of water, and the basin served for washing feet (*concha*).⁸⁵ The imagery likely conveyed a practical visual cue, prompting guests to have a seat, remove their shoes and wash their legs before entering the baths.

Contrary to the aforementioned visual representations, wooden or stone *cathedrae* set in burial chambers were unrelated to the everyday grooming of the mistresses: during mortuary banquets held in tombs, these actual chairs served as the symbolic seats for deceased female family members.⁸⁶



Fig. 24. Sárísáp (Komárom-Esztergom county, H); indigenous woman grooming while seated on a chair with a backrest; Aicca's portrait in the image field of her funerary stele (HNM, photo by Ortolf Harl)

24. kép. Sárísáp (Komárom-Esztergom vármegye); támlásszéken ülő, szépítkező őslakos asszony, Aicca ábrázolása síremlékének képmezőjében (MNM, fotó: Ortolf Harl)

⁸⁴ CARANDINI – RUCCI – DE VOS 1982, 331.

⁸⁵ Most recently: MARTIN-KILCHER 2022, 187–199.

⁸⁶ KLAUSER 1927, 54–55, 82; NOELKE 2008, 455–458 (regarding the two stone carved chairs with backrests resembling wicker chairs discovered in the burial chamber at Köln-Weiden); KOSTER 2013, 254. In the brick-lined burial chamber of Kemenes-szentpéter-Dombi-dűlő, burial mound I/1, located in Pannonia, a mural delineated the outlines of a chair made from organic matter, which has since faded away: PALÁGYI 2013, 31.

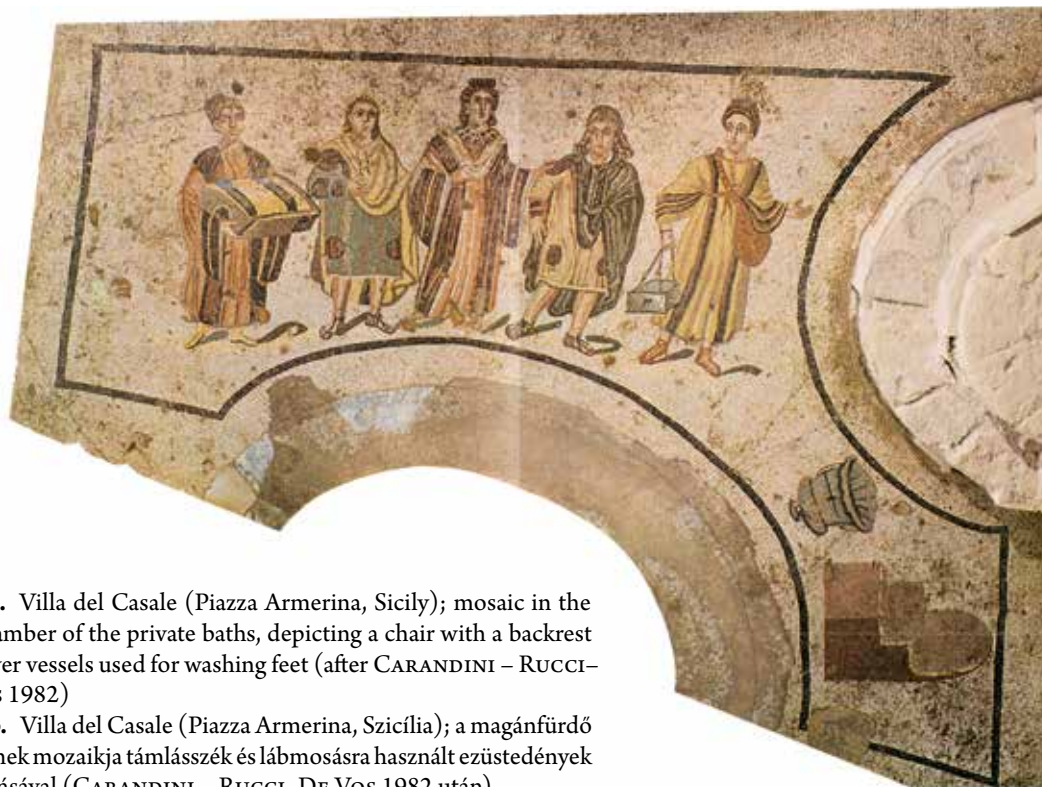


Fig. 25. Villa del Casale (Piazza Armerina, Sicily); mosaic in the antechamber of the private baths, depicting a chair with a backrest and silver vessels used for washing feet (after CARANDINI – RUCCI–DE VOS 1982)

25. kép. Villa del Casale (Piazza Armerina, Szicília); a magánfürdő előterének mozaikja támlásszék és lábmosásra használt ezüstedények ábrázolásával (CARANDINI – RUCCI–DE VOS 1982 után)

Folding chairs

Scenes portraying mistresses engaged in washing or combing from the 2nd–3rd-century AD do not depict any folding chairs. The relief on a Flavian-period bronze mirror from the collection of the Musei Capitolini, relaying a *lupanaria* scene, shows a folding chair complete with back rest, accompanied by a bronze pitcher and bronze basin for washing (Fig. 26).⁸⁷ It is clear that these objects, including the folding chair, furnished the room of the woman. Concerning the period between the 1st and 3rd centuries AD, key sources for folding chairs employed by women for personal washup and/or grooming are rich burial sites that contained such chairs, and can unequivocally be identified as female. In such sepulchres, chairs were always accompanied by bronze vessels used for washup and/or toiletry items.⁸⁸ Presently, the following such elite female burial sites are known: Ghislenghien (Hainaut, B), Grave F673 (see above),⁸⁹



Fig. 26. Relief on a bronze mirror depicting a *lupanaria* scene (Musei Capitolini, Rome) (after KOHLERT–NÉMETH 1990, 14 Abb. 7)

26. kép. Reliéfűszes bronztükör *lupanaria*-jelenettel (Musei Capitolini, Róma) (KOHLERT–NÉMETH 1990, 14 Abb. 7 után)

⁸⁷ KOHLERT–NÉMETH 1990, 14, Abb. 7; MRÁV 2013, 115–116, Abb. 10.

⁸⁸ MRÁV 2013, 88.

⁸⁹ DANESÉ–HANUT–GARNIER 2017, 81–92.



Fig. 27. Plouy (Vismes-au-Val, Somme, F), grave goods from female burial site No. 94, including a *sella curulis*-type iron folding chair (Musée Boucher de Perthes, photo by Jean-Gilles Berizzi)

27. kép. Plouy (Vismes-au-Val, Somme, F) a 94. női sír mellékletei, köztük egy *sella curulis* típusú összecuszkható vasszékel (Musée Boucher de Perthes, fotó: Jean-Gilles Berizzi)

Epagny-Metz-Tessy (Haute-Savoie, F), a cremation burial site (see above),⁹⁰ Madrec (Stara Zagora, BG),⁹¹ Maastricht-Belfort double burial site in a sarcophagus (NL),⁹² Meričleri (Chaskovo, BG), the burial site in Barrow 3,⁹³ Nijmegen (NL), Hunnerberg Grave 49,⁹⁴ Nijmegen (NL), western cemetery, Grave 9 (see above),⁹⁵ Plouy (Vismes-au-Val [Somme], F) Grave 94 (Fig. 27),⁹⁶ Saintes (F).⁹⁷

In contrast to the abundance of chiefly archaeological sources available from the 1st–3rd-century AD,

regarding the Late Roman period, for a long time, visual images were the sole evidence for the relation between folding chairs and the daily personal hygiene and grooming routine of mistresses. The mosaics of the baths at Sidi Ghrib (Fig. 28),⁹⁸ the so-called Projecta casket of the Esquiline Treasure (Fig. 29),⁹⁹ or the perfume casket of the Seuso Treasure (Fig. 30)¹⁰⁰ impart the same imagery, depicting the mistress seated upon a folding chair, conducting her daily washup or grooming, surrounded by her maids and the silverware of her bathing kit (*argentum balneare*).¹⁰¹ Church Fathers, including Clement of Alexandria (ca. AD 150–211/217), conveyed the same image.¹⁰² In his work entitled *The Paedagogus*, while rebuking women who flaunt their riches in public baths, he made a brief remark on opulent chairs: “And gold-plated chairs, and silver ones, too, and ten thousand vessels of gold and silver, some for drinking, some for eating, some for bathing, are carried about with them” (Translated by William Wilson. From *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 2. Edited by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885).¹⁰³ The folding chairs in the three above-mentioned images were ornate furniture complete with cushions, with

⁹⁰ See footnote 69.

⁹¹ БУЮКЛИЕВ 1984, 27–28, обр. 38.

⁹² GROOTH 2005, 142, Abb. 10; MIKS 2009, 512, Nr. 34; MRÁV 2013, 131, Nr. 10; KOSTER 2021, 49, 123–124, Pl. III–IV, 138, Pl. XVII.

⁹³ АЛАДЖОВ 1965, 96, Nr. 5; MIKS 2009, 511, Nr. 16; MRÁV 2013, 133, Nr. 33.

⁹⁴ VERMEULEN 1932, 173–175 pl. XV; concerning the chair, see also: ZADOKS-JOSEPHUS – PETERS – WITTEVEN 1973, 83–84, n. 143; MIKS 2009, 510, Nr. 4; MRÁV 2013, 132, Nr. 12.

⁹⁵ KOSTER 2013, 58–62, 252–255, 423.

⁹⁶ BAYARD 1993, 78–79.

⁹⁷ CHEW 1988, 51–54.

⁹⁸ ENNABLI 1986, 42–44, pl. XIV.

⁹⁹ MARTIN 2009, 389–397.

¹⁰⁰ MANGO-BENNETT 1994, 464–465.

¹⁰¹ For a collection of these visual representations concerning foldable chairs, see: MARTIN 2009, 389–397; MRÁV 2013, 113–116; HIMMELMANN-PETROVSZKY 2018, 175–179; MARTIN-KILCHER 2018, 259–271; MARTIN-KILCHER – MARTIN 2022, 266–271.

¹⁰² Clement of Alexandria, *The Paedagogus* III, 26; III, 31–32.

¹⁰³ Clement of Alexandria, *The Paedagogus* III, 31.



Fig. 28. Sidi Ghrib (Tunisia); bathhouse mosaic portraying a grooming mistress (Bardo National Museum, Tunis)
28. kép. Sidi Ghrib (Tunézia); fürdőmozaik, szépítkezést végző úrnő ábrázolásával (Bardo Múzeum, Tunisz)

backrests held fast by chains.¹⁰⁴ Until recently, one could only imagine what these Late Roman ornamental chairs employed mostly by women looked like.

In 2013, an Early Migration-Period hoard was discovered in Rülzheim, including gold jewellery and clothing ornaments, hacked Late Roman silver vessels, and pieces of a silver-plated iron chair. The recently reconstructed build and appearance of the chair corresponds to the type of folding chairs with backrests depicted on the aforementioned imagery, used by mistresses during their grooming (Fig. 31).¹⁰⁵ In his 2013 study, the author of the present article noted that scenes portraying grooming mistresses depicted “*foldable chairs [that] were outfitted with (detachable or collapsible?) backrests fastened by chains*”, although at the time of publication no other data was available concerning the existence of such chairs. However, the

chair from Rülzheim “*bestätigt Mrávs Beschreibung der Fixierung der Rückenlehne*.”¹⁰⁶ The figural reliefs of the chair depicted maids, two of them carrying lidded toilette caskets. Their presence affirms that the chair was once used by a mistress during her daily washup or grooming.¹⁰⁷

Compared to wooden or wicker chairs, folding chairs are smaller, easier to carry around and set up at will. Mistresses likely used them at home, within the walls of their own bedrooms and/or baths, and they probably took these chairs to public baths. The wrought iron frames provided ample support. Finds recovered from Concești and Rülzheim attest that iron components were outfitted with silver plates, tubules¹⁰⁸ or other precious metal ornaments, including statuettes (Table 2). The light grey colour of the chair on the Sidi Ghrib mosaic indicated that the chair was made

104 Mráv 2013, 114.

105 HIMMELMANN–PETROVSZKY 2017, 86–88; HIMMELMANN–PETROVSZKY 2018, 153–192; MARTIN-KILCHER – MARTIN 2022, 266–271.

106 HIMMELMANN–PETROVSZKY 2018, 179, Anm. 48.

107 Regarding the role of maids during the personal washup or grooming of the mistress, see: ROSE 2008, 41–49.

108 A chair made solely of high grade silver would not support the weight of an adult.



Fig. 29. Rome, Esquiline Treasure; image of a grooming mistress on the so-called Projecta casket (British Museum, London. After DALTON 1901, Pl. XV)

29. kép. Roma, Esquilinusi-kincs; szépítkezését végző úrnő ábrázolása az ún. Projecta ládikán (British Museum, London. DALTON 1901, Pl. XV. után)



Fig. 30. Toilette casket of the Seuso Treasure; mistress grooming after her bath while seated on a folding chair, accompanied by servants (HNM, photo by András Dabasi and Judit Kardos)

30. kép. Seuso-kincs, ezüst illatszeres doboz; fürdője után összecsucskható széken szépítkező úrnő és szolgálai (MNM, fotó: Dabasi András – Kardos Judit)

Designation	Figural ornament	Backrest fastened with chains	Backrest without chains	Literature
ILLUSTRATIONS				
Sidi Ghrib, bathhouse mosaics	Bird's head (duck or swan?) ornaments on the top corners of the backrest.	+		ENNABLI 1986, 42–44 pl. XIV; MRÁV 2013, 115.
Projecta casket of the Esquiline Treasure	Outward facing protomes of panthers on the top corners of the backrest.	+		DALTON 1901, 63 Nr. 304; BARBIER 1962, 10–11, Fig. 3–6; MARTIN 2009, 389–397.
Perfume casket of the Seuso Treasure	Protomes of panthers on the top corners of the backrest and the top front corners of the chair frame.		+	MANGO–BENNETT 1994, 464–465, MRÁV 2013, 115.
RECOVERED CHAIRS				
Foldable chair of the Rülzheim Treasure	Half-length (2 pc) and full-length portraits (2 pc) of maids. The latter are carrying cylindrical perfume caskets.	+		HIMMELMANN–PETROVSZKY 2017, 86–88; HIMMELMANN–PETROVSZKY 2018, 153–192; MARTIN–KILCHER–MARTIN 2022, 266–271.

Table 2. Ornaments on iron folding chairs used by women of the Late Roman Period elite for personal washup or grooming
2. táblázat. A késő római elit nőtagjai által szépítkezésre/tisztálkodásra használt összecsukható vasszékek díszítése

of silver, similarly to accompanying silver vessels. The backrest of this chair was adorned with duck's heads or swan's heads (Fig. 28). The chairs on the perfume casket of the Seuso Treasure and the Projecta casket of the Esquiline Treasure are embellished with protomes of panthers (Figs. 29–30).¹⁰⁹ The gilded silver chair of the Rülzheim treasure is bedecked with figures of maids aiding the grooming of the mistress (Fig. 31).

The gilded silver furniture fittings of the Esquiline Treasure were rightly considered components of a Late Roman-Period chair.¹¹⁰ The fitting mounted on the perpendicular joint between two round rails (dowels) forms a female hand holding a cylindrical handle in her palm (Fig. 32). The handle terminates in a large globe ribbed with many grooves, with a floral ornament on top. Similar grooved end caps (finials) were fitted to the chair of the

Rülzheim treasure.¹¹¹ Hence, the female hand-shaped fitting of the Esquiline Treasure was likely part of an ornate female chair, belonging to the same kit as bathing and grooming accessories identified in the hoard.

One may conclude that chairs used by women in Late Antiquity had a richly adorned, splendid variant, which were seemingly made of precious metals. These chairs belonged to silver bathing kits (*argentum balneare*). For illustrious women, public baths provided both stage and audience for displaying their wealth and social status. Visual and literary evidence attest that female members of the contemporary elite often made use of this opportunity in a showish and theatrical manner: they attended with a host of servants, brandished silver vessels, and dominated their surroundings seated on gilded silver chairs.

109 The chair from Concești had similar ornaments: HARHOIU 1997, 139, 172, Nr. 31. Taf. 17–18; MIKS 2009, 436–437, Abb. 27.2.

110 SHELTON 1981, 88–89, no. 34–35, Pl. 44–45: “The suggestion has been made that the ornament is ‘from a chair’. More specifically, the ornament appears to be a sleeve fitting for dowels meeting at right angles where a finial would be appropriate, such as the joints at the front of a chair arm or those at the top of a chair back.”

111 HIMMELMANN–PETROVSZKY 2018, 159, Abb. 14–18.



Fig. 31. Rülzheim (Rheinland-Pfalz, D); reconstruction of a Late Roman folding chair with a backrest recovered from a 5th-century hoard (after HIMMELMANN–PETROVSZKY 2018)

31. kép. Rülzheim (Rheinland-Pfalz, D); 5. századi kincsleletből származó késő római háttámlás összecsukható szék rekonstrukciója (HIMMELMANN–PETROVSZKY 2018 nyomán)

Over the course of the 5th century AD (or by the 6th century AD at the latest), the imagery of a mistress grooming on a folding chair aided by her maids was discontinued, likely due to a shift in social expectations towards female members of the elite, in compliance with Christian values.¹¹² However, the custom of bathing with silverware persisted in the eastern part of the Roman Empire. When crusaders sacked Constantinople in 1204 “... *nothing was shared with the common people*



Fig. 32. Rome, Esquiline Treasure; an ornamental fitting from a silver chair (after SHELTON 1981)

32. kép. Róma, Esquilinusi-kincs; ezüstszékhez tartozó díszítőveretek egyike (SHELTON 1981 után)

of the host or the poor knights or the sergeants who had helped to win the treasure, save the plain silver, like the silver pitchers which the ladies of the city used to carry to the baths” (Translated by Edgar Holmes McNeal. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1936).

112 MARTIN-KILCHER 2022, 170.

Addendum

Lisa Huber's 2017 study, *Kaiserzeitliche Bestattungen ‚in villa‘ im Salzburger Flachgau*. In: Lang, Felix – Traxler, Stefan – Kastler, Raimund (Hrsg.): *Neue Forschungen zur ländlichen Besiedlung in Nordwest-Noricum*. ArchaeoPlus 8. Salzburg, 129–153, came into my hand only after the manuscript of this paper was made up. On page 14 of this study, the author reports a carriage grave which was discovered by a Bavarian officer in Salzburg-Maxglan, near the Loig Roman villa in the 30s of the 19th century. In addition to the iron parts of the carriage, this cremation burial site also contained a folding iron chair and 169 bronze objects, including at least one strigilis. In the meantime, the finds of this grave have been lost or destroyed. This grave provides most probably a further example of folding iron chairs which were part of *instrumenta balnei* in sepulchral context.

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Közöletlen római kori összecsukható vasszékek a Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum Régészeti Tárában

Új adatok a helyi elit császárkori temetkezéseiből előkerült vasszékek értelmezéséhez

Az Archaeologiai Értesítő 2013-ban megjelent 138. számában azoknak az összecsukható vasszékeknek az összefoglaló értékelésére vállalkoztam, amelyek a romanitas külsőségeit elsajátító tartományi őslakos elit császárkori temetkezéseiből kerültek elő. A témával foglalkozó kutatók többsége ezeknek a székeknek korábban „rangjelző” szerepet tulajdonított feltételezve, hogy az ilyen székekkel temetkezők municipális tisztségviselők vagy katonatisztek voltak. Tanulmányomban az összecsukható szék-mellékleteket inkább a sírokba helyezett fürdő/tisztálkodó készletek segítségével magyaráztam, amelyek kulcsot jelentettek a probléma megoldásához. Az összecsukható székeket ugyanis gyakran ábrázolták fürdőzéssel vagy a napi tisztálkodással kapcsolatos zsánereképeken, ahol fürdőlepedőbe burkolózó, összecsukható széken ülő dominust vagy vállukon összecsukott széket cipelő szolgáit látjuk. A fürdőkhöz tehát a saját hordozható székekre ültek azok, akik megengedhették maguknak e bútordarabok birtoklását. Több, jellemzően a késő római korra keltezhető jeleneten, mint például a Seuso-kincs illatszeres dobozán, a szolgálóleányainak körében ilyen széken ül a napi tisztálkodását és szépítkezését végző úrnő is. A vasszékek Britanniától Thrakiáig általában olyan őslakos elithez köthető gazdag sírokból kerültek elő, amelyeknek majd mindegyikében ott találhatók a fürdőben, illetve az ahhoz szorosan hozzátartozó sportoláshoz és/vagy a napi tisztálkodásra használt eszközök: például az olajat tartalmazó edény (ampulla olearia) és a strigilisek vagy különböző bronzedényekből összeállított – kéz-, arc-, lábmosságra használt – mosdókészletek. Különösen jellemző ez a mellékletpárosítás az északkelet-pannoniai arisztokratikus kocsitemetkezésekre, ahol több esetben azt is sikerült kimutatnom, hogy az instrumenta balnei és az összecsukható vasszék a sírban – funkcionálisan összefüggő készletet alkotva – közvetlenül egymás mellé kerültek. Mindebből arra a végkövetkeztetésre jutottam, hogy az összecsukható székeket a mindennapi életben feltehetőleg igény szerint használták, de sírmellékletként specifikusan a fürdő és/vagy a tisztálkodó készletek részét képezték. Jelen tanulmány egyik célja, hogy tíz évvel a császárkori őslakos elittemetkezések vasszék-mellékleteivel foglalkozó cikkem megjelenése után ismét áttekintést adjak a téma kutatásának aktuális állásáról és problémáiról. Ebbe a vizsgálatba nemcsak az elmúlt évtizedben szepulchrális kontextusban talált székeket és ezek régészeti kontextusát vonom be, hanem a Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum gyűjteményében található, még közöletlen három összecsukható vasszéket is. Közülük kettő régebbi, de eddig félreértelmezett, erősen töredékes lelet, egy pedig a Régészeti Tár újabb szerzeménye.

1. Szomor-Somodorpuszta (Komárom-Esztergom vármegye), kocsisírból (4. kép): A Szomor-somodorpusztai kocsi vasalkatrészei közé keveredve egy összecsukható vasszék egyik keretelemének a töredékét sikerült beazonosítani, amely bizonyítja, hogy a leletegyüttes eredetileg egy vasszéket is tartalmazott. Az összecsukható vasszék kereteleméhez tartozó töredéket az egyik székláb középső és alsó része alkotja. A töredék méretei: h.: 37,8 cm, sz.: 7,35 cm. A vasszékének legközelebbi formai párhuzamai a szék vaskereteinél szélesebb alsó összekötőelemmel és talptávolsággal rendelkező vasszékek között kereshető.

2. Budakeszi, Széchenyi u. 104–106 (Pest vármegye), kocsisírból (6. kép): A sír 1999-ben lezajlott régészeti kutatása során a vasszéknek mindössze az egyik S alakú támasztékát találtuk meg az emésztő tetején a sír betöltéséből származó, elterített föld átvizsgálásakor. A támaszték méretei: ma.: 12,7 cm, sz.: 5,6 cm, v.: 1,2 cm. A töredék egy rombusz keresztmetszetűre kovácsolt S támasztéknak kicsit több mint a felét adja ki. Ez a töredék a támaszték indaszerűen visszakunkorodó felső végéből és a támasztékot a székkerethez rögzítő két egyenes összekötő elem indításából áll. A támasztékot valószínűleg nem egyetlen S alakban meghajlított vaspálcából készítették. Először a felső indaspirált alakították ki, amelynek az alsó végét egy hidat alkotva egybekovácsolták a kerettel. Ezt követően az alsó indaspirált hozzákovácsolták a felsőhöz, amely azt eredményezte, hogy az S alakú támaszték középső része szögben enyhén megtört. Az összecsukható vasszék a budakeszi kocsisírban is egy fürdő és/vagy tisztálkodó készlet részét képezte.

3. Ismeretlen lelőhelyről, állítólag egy elpusztított kocsisírból (8–11. kép): A vasszéket 2014-ben ajándékozták a Magyar Nemzeti Múzeumnak. A szék szerkezete két, többszörösen tagolt téglalap alakú keretelemből áll, amelyeket a hosszabb szárúk közepén egy-egy kerek fejű szegeccsel kötöttek lazán egymáshoz. Mindkét keret oldalsó lábelemeinek középső harmada egy lépcsőt alkotva kiugrik a keret síkjából, azonos helyen és mértékben, úgy, hogy összecukott állapotban a két székkeret összesimuljon. A bőr ülésfelületet tartó és a lábakat felül összekötő két kisebb vízszintes vaselemet egy-egy S alakú támaszték erősítette. A keret két felső, rövidebb vízszintes tagjának mindkét végére egy-egy bronz díszgombot helyeztek, amelyeket ráöntöttek a szék vaselemeire. A gomba formájú bronzgombok félgömb formájú teteje sugárirányban mélyen és gazdagon gerezdelt. A vasszék állítólag egy elpusztított kocsisírból származik és bronzedényekkel, köztük kézmosókészletet alkotó kancsóval és nyeles tállal együtt került elő.

Az alábbi két összecukható vasszék újabban előkerült (5.) vagy újraközlött (4.) kelet-pannoniai lelet (4–5). Mindkettő gazdag mellékletadású hamvasztásos temetkezésből származik.

4. Mursa (Osijek/Eszék, Horvátország), hamvasztásos sírból (12/7. kép): Colonia Aelia Mursa nyugati temetőjében 1966-ban egy olyan hamvasztásos temetkezést tártak fel, amely többek között egy összecukható vasszék töredékeit tartalmazta (189. sír). A vasszék elemei ugyancsak töredékesen, hiányosan és deformálódva kerültek elő a sírból, amely arra utal, hogy a széket is a máglyára teheték. A székből az egyik oldalának lábait és a keret egyik vízszintes összekötő rudját lehetett rekonstruálni. Méreteiből ezért csak a szék magassága mérhető, amely 57,5 cm volt. A bőr ülőfelület kifestésére szolgáló felső vízszintes rudak végeit rozettás bronzgombok, a két keretet összekapcsoló szegecses mindkét fejét ugyancsak rozettát ábrázoló bronz szegecsfejek díszítették (átm.: 4 cm). A sírban a szék mellett töredékes bronzedények is voltak (12/1–6. kép), amelyek közül egy kézmosó készlet korszója és nyeles tája, egy bronz lemezkancsó, és egy bronz olajos edény koncentrikus körökkel díszített fedele biztosan azonosítható (12/6. kép), de további bronzedényeket feltételező töredékek is találhatók a mellékletek között.

5. Bóly (Baranya vármegye), hamvasztásos sírból (13. kép): Bóly környékén a pécsi Janus Pannonius Múzeum munkatársai egy gazdag mellékletekkel ellátott hamvasztásos elitemetkezést tártak fel 2020 márciusában, amelybe egy összecukható vasszéket is elhelyeztek. A még restaurálatlan vasszéken fémberakás nyomai látszódnak. A temetkezés több bronzedényének funkciója és típusa töredékes állapotuk miatt tévesen került meghatározásra, ezért ezeket érdemesnek látszik ebben a tanulmányban újravizsgálni. A bronzvödörként azonosított bronzedény-töredékek valójában egy nyomott gömbtestű bronz olajos edényhez tartoztak (14/1–5. kép). Ennek az edénynek a fedeleként azonosítható az a bronztárgy, amely a cikkben tévesen „dobozszerkezetes korongfibulaként” határozták meg (14/2. kép). Mindezek alapján kijelenthető, hogy a halotti máglyára helyezett, majd hiányosan sírba tett fürdőkészlet egy gömbtestű fedeles bronz olajos edényből, legalább egy strigilisből (14/6. kép) valamint egy összecukható vasszékből állt. A sírban talált szobortorzó egy belebújós kabátot (paenula cucullata) viselő alakot ábrázol (15. kép), aki egy genius cucullatus vagy Téleszphorosz lehet. A bólyi lelet értelmezése kapcsán fontos körülmény, hogy szobraik temetkezésekből is előkerülnek, főleg gyermekek sírjaiból és síremlékeken is úgy ábrázolták őket, mint a halott kísérlőjét. Ez azzal magyarázható, hogy a genius cucullatus /Téleszphorosz óvó, bajelhárító hatalma nemcsak az ebben a világban élőkre, hanem túlvilágra indulókra is kiterjedt. Valószínűleg ez lehetett az oka annak, hogy a bólyi sír elhunytjával kísérlőként és védelmezőként az istenség szobrát is eltemették.

A tanulmányban közölt, illetve tárgyalt székek a pannoniai elitisírokhoz köthető leletek számát ötten megnövelte, amellyel számuk az eddig ismert kilencről tizennégyre emelkedett (1. táblázat). Három vasszék kocsisírból, kettő pedig gazdag mellékletadású hamvasztásos elitemetkezésből származik. Az összecukható vasszéket a bólyi sírban egy aranygyűrű, a Szomor-somodorpusztai, valamint a budakeszi sírokban pedig egy-egy gazdag szobrászati díszítéssel rendelkező utazókocsi kísérte. Az aranygyűrűk és a díszes utazókocsik az elitstátusz látványos kifejezői voltak.

A tanulmány öt újabb összecukható széklelet ismertetését is tartalmazza, amelyek mindegyike a galliai-germaniai tartományokból és ott a helyi elitekhez köthető temetkezésekből származik. Közülük négyben az összecukható szék a sírba tett fürdő és/vagy tisztálkodó, szépítkező készlet részét képezte. A legjelentősebb közülük az arnsburgi sír, ahol a vasszék és a fürdőkészlethez tartozó strigilis egymással érintkezve került elő, jelezve azonos készlethez való

tartozásukat. A három női sírból – az összecukható vasszékeket tartalmazó női sírokhoz hasonlóan – hiányoznak a fürdőzéshez/sportoláshoz használt teljes készletek, de jelen vannak a tisztálkodás és a szépítkezés kellékei.

A tanulmány másik célja, hogy rövid áttekintést adjon a nők által szépítkezés és/vagy tisztálkodás során használt különböző széktípusokról (főleg támlásszékek és összecukható székek), amelyeket részben ábrázolásokról, részben sír- vagy kincsleletekből ismerünk. A támlásszékek elsősorban a házon belüli használatra voltak alkalmasak, ahol felállításuk a hálószobában vagy a magánfürdőben történt. A simpelveldi szarkofág reliefjén a támlásszék helye is közvetlenül az ágy mellett volt. Nagyobb méretük és súlyuk miatt azonban nem volt praktikus a házon kívül, nagyobb távolságra történő mozgatásuk, ezért minden bizonnyal kerültek, hogy a támlásszékeket a közfürdőbe is magukkal vigyék. A székek vesszőfonatos kialakítása ráadásul kevésbé volt alkalmas a hivalkodó díszítésre, ezáltal a gazdagság és az elitstátusz kifejezésére.

A késő római korban az összecukható székek és az úrnő napi tisztálkodása, szépítése közötti kapcsolatot sokáig csak képi források bizonyították. A sidi-hribi fürdőmozaik (28. kép), az esquilinusi-kincs ún. Proiecta ládája (29. kép) vagy a Seuso-kincs illatszeres doboza (30. kép) azonos képi megfogalmazásban ábrázolta az úrnőt, ahogy összecukható székén ülve, szolgálólányaikkal és fürdőkészletük ezüstitárgyaival (*argentum balneare*) körülvéve napi tisztálkodását, szépítését végzi. Az elit nagyasszonyairól ezt a képet közvetítették az egyházatyák, köztük Alexandriai Kelemen is (kb. Kr. u. 150–211/217 között), aki *Paidagogosz* című művében – elítélve a fürdőkben vagyonukkal kérkedő úrnőket – külön is megemlíti a luxusszékeket: *„aranyozott, ezüstszegekkel kivert székek, ivásra, étkezésre, fürdőhöz előkészített arany és ezüstitárgyak tömkelege...”* (ford. Tóth Vencel). Az említett három jelenetben az összecukható székek párnával ellátott, díszes ülőalkalmatosságok voltak, amelyek láncokkal rögzített háttámlákkal rendelkeztek. 2013-ban Rülzheimben egy kora népvándorlaskori kincslelet találtak, amely egy ezüstborítással ellátott vasszék darabjait is tartalmazta. A szék közelmúltban rekonstruált szerkezete és megjelenése megfelel a szépítő úrnők által használt, képi ábrázolásokról ismert háttámlás összecukható széktípusának (31. kép). Az összecukható székek előnye, hogy – a fa vagy vesszőfonatos támlásszékekkel szemben – kisebb méretűek, könnyen szállíthatók és bárhol felállíthatók voltak. Bár az úrnők otthon, saját házuk vagy privát fürdőjük falai között is használhatták, ha közfürdőbe mentek, valószínűleg az összecukható széket vitték magukkal. Mindez arra utal, hogy a késő ókorban a nagyasszonyok által a használt székeknek létezett egy gazdagon díszített, luxuskategóriájú változata, amelyek úgy néztek ki, mintha nemesfémből készítették volna őket. Ezek a székek a fürdőzéshez használt ezüstkészletek (*argentum balneare*) részét képezték. Az előkelő nők számára a közfürdők kínálták azt a helyszínt, környezetet és közönséget, ahol gazdagságukat és társadalmi státuszukat megmutathatták. Képi és írott forrásaink alapján ezt a lehetőséget az elit nőtagjai – sokszor hivalkodóan és teátrálisan – ki is használták: nagy felhajrással, sok szolgálóval és ezüstedénnyel jártak a fürdőkbe, ahol aranyozott ezüstszéken ülve uralták környezetüket.