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Independent Research Project: KRAP on a Pedestal: Functional Analysis of the
Tiszapolgar Pedestal Base in the Great Hungarian Plain

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INTRODUCTION

In the eastern part of Hungary the Carpathian Basin has provided refuge for many societies in the past thousands of years. The basin is situated between the Carpathian Mountains and the Danube River, the two main regions being Transdanubia and the Great Hungarian Plain. During the Late Neolithic (5000-4500 BC) three tribes occupied this plain, the Tisza, Herpály, and Csöszhalom. The Csöszhalom occupied the northeast portion of the region, while the Tisza settled centrally, and the Herpály in the eastern half. The close proximity of these tribes helps to explain the similarities of their ceramics. The Csöszhalom and Herpály painted their vessels using red, black, and white colors. Both of the tribes used red paint, but the Herpály predominantly used the black paint instead of white, while the Csöszhalom painted with white more often (Bognár-Kutzian 1972). The Tisza, conversely, seldomly painted their ceramics, but they had a tendency to decorate their vessels with incisions, seldomly using black paint (Parkinson 1999). From the late Neolithic to the Early Copper Age (4500-4000 BC) these tribes formed into another tribal society, the Tiszapolgar. The stylistic attributes of the Tiszapolgar ceramics stems from all three tribes, frequently decorated with lugs and pedestal bases. Although the pedestal base had already been introduced to Hungary in the Early Neolithic, the Tiszapolgár began to use this method frequently (Bognár-Kutzian 1972). Both the lug and pedestal

are highly characteristic of the Tiszapolgar, which is demonstrated on most of their vessels, yet the function of these characteristics remains unknown.

The Tiszapolgar had two types of ceramic vessels; one had a flat base while the other would stand on a pedestal. The base type is not specific to certain vessels, but rather all of the vessels can have either base. The vessels were first made with a flat base, later adding the pedestal, which had been created separately. Once both pieces had been formed, usually by the coiling method, they are smoothed together before the firing process. This molding procedure is apparent through the way the pottery breaks at the base of the vessel and top of the pedestal. The vessels were also decorated some time before they were fired with punctations and incised lines.

Each pedestal had circular punctations, which protrude through the thickness of the walls, yet the function of such punctations is unknown. It may be that they were useful in the firing process, allowing for fewer possibilities of cracking or exploding. The punctations, as well as the pedestals, may not serve a function at all, but rather a stylistic attribute pertaining to prestige or family orientation. There has also been some speculation for cooking purposes, but the pedestals did not have any burned areas. Yet another possibility is that they are used for important events, such as entertaining purposes, special events, or funerals, rather than daily usage.

METHODOLOGY

In order to obtain more information as to why these vessels are being pedestaled the grave goods of the Early Copper Age Tiszapolgár-Basatanya cemetery as well as the distribution of vessels at Vésztő 20 have been studied. The first step in this process was

to count the number of pedestal and flat based vessels in each grave and then to compare that number to the number of vessels found at Vésztő 20. The purpose behind this initial step was to find out if there are more pedestal vessels showing up either in the graves or the settlement.

Using the burials at Basatanya a comparative study of men, women, and children in relation to exact quantities of base types has been applied. Each of the graves, which had the same ratio of pedestal to flat-based vessels, was then further analyzed by comparing what kind of similar grave goods and burial practices were used. Another comparison was done by age and gender to see if the number of pedestal bases has something to do with the life span or social organization of these people.

The next step in the methodology was to compare the number of pedestals to flat-based vessels and the distribution throughout Vésztő 20. Maps were composed to look at the location of these vessels to see if and where these vessels were located in the structures. Although there were originally four blocks excavated from 2000-2001, only Block 2 and 3 were used for this analysis due to the smaller areas of Block 1 and 4. Once the information from Basatanya and Vésztő had been collected the amount of vessels were compared to see if the percentages of pedestal and flat base vessels were greater in one area.

DATA

Tiszapolgár-Basatanya Cemetery, Ceramic Grave Goods

<u>Grave</u>	<u>Pedestal</u>	<u>Flat</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Age</u>
Grave 82	0	0	Child	1
Grave 14	0	2	Male	60
Grave 58	0	2	Child	5

Grave 79	0	2	Male	16-18
Grave 32	0	3	Female	55-59
Grave 61	0	4	Male	18-20
Grave 62	0	4	Child	7
Grave 77	0	5	Child	7
Grave 36	0	6	Male	25
Grave 9	1	0	Child	1
Grave 65	1	1	Male	16-18
Grave 17	1	2	Child	3
Grave 64	1	2	Child	6
Grave 78	1	2	Child	12
Grave 6	1	3	Child	10
Grave 88	1	3	Female	25-30
Grave 10	1	4	Male	18-22
Grave 13	1	4	Male	35
Grave 18	1	4	Child	6
Grave 25	1	4	Child	1
Grave 30	1	4	Male	25-30
Grave 46	1	4	Female	40-45
Grave 55	1	4	Female	60-65
Grave 56	1	4	Male	25-30
Grave 28	1	5	Male	35-40
Grave 26	1	6	Female	40-45
Grave 33	1	6	Female	25-30
Grave 54	1	6	Female	40-45
Grave 76	1	8	Female	40-45
Grave 80	2	1	Male	20-22
Grave 27	2	3	Female	55-60
Grave 50	2	3	Male	18-19
Grave 39	2	4	Male	50-55
Grave 67	2	4	Male	60
Grave 24	2	5	Child	5
Grave 38	2	5	Male	35
Grave 40	2	5	Child	9
Grave 68	2	5	Male	55-60
Grave 5	2	8	Male	65-70
Grave 42	3	1	Male	18-19
Grave 53	3	5	Male	25-30
Grave 60	3	5	Male	50-55
Grave 52	3	7	Male	25
Grave 8	3	9	Female	45-50
Grave 23	3	10	Male	24-29
Grave 4	4	5	Child	13
Grave 12	4	7	Male	55-60
Grave 21	4	8	Female	30-35

Bognár-Kutzián (1972: 36-164)

In the Basatanya cemetery 48 Early Copper Age burials were located and excavated. Of these, the only burials that were studied had only one person in the grave and specific gender identification. In total, the burials which fit these criteria contained fourteen children (gender unspecified, age: infant-14), 23 males (age: 15+), and eleven females (age: 15+). The burials contain zero-four pedestal vessels (male, female, and child), and zero-ten flat base vessels (children only have as many as five). The pedestal bases only make up 25 percent of the goods found in the burials. Most of the burials have at least one pedestal vessel, but nine of the burials did not have any and only three burials contained four pedestal vessels.

Of the three burials that contained four pedestals one was a child (age: 13), one was male (age: 55-60), and one was female (age: 30-35). All three graves had an oblong shape (not uncommon in the cemetery), and limestone beads (also not uncommon). No other similar/comparative attributes were found (Bognár-Kutzián 1963).

Grave 61 and 62 contain 0 pedestals and 4 flat based vessels. There is an age difference of about 11 years, but the positioning of each skeleton is remarkably alike. Both skeletons were slightly flexed while the “right humerus lay before the chest at an acute angle with it. The bones of the legs also lay parallel and the femora formed an obtuse angle with both the pelvis and leg bones (Bognár-Kutzián 1963).” Sheep bones were found in or near the mouth of a vessel in each grave.

Three burials had one pedestal base and two flat bases, all of which were children, age three, six, and twelve. All three graves only contain ceramics with the exception of Grave 64, which also has sheep’s limb bones (Bognár-Kutzián 1963).

There were three female burials with one pedestal and six flat bases. Small pebbles were found in or around each of the women's pedestal vessel, two of which are vases. The burials are also Proto-Mediterranean with an oblong shape to them (Bognár-Kutzián 1963).

The graves that are not further mentioned do not have any similarities in accordance with this methodology and therefore have not been added in further detail.

The ceramic analysis of KRAP 2000-2001, Vésztő 20, shows that the distribution of ceramic vessels is constricted to five areas: Block 2: N 482-484, E106-108, and N 482-484, E 110-112, and N 488-490, E 108-112, and N 489-490, E 107-108, Block 3: N 498-500, E 99-101. Both pedestal and flat bases have been showing up in Block 2: N 489-490, E 109-110 and N 482-484, E106-108 as well as in Block 3: N 498-499, E 99-101 and N 499-500, E 99-100. Only pedestal vessels are in Block 2: N 489-490, E 107-108 and N 488-490, E110-112 and N 482-484, E 110-112. Flat bases have solely shown up in Block 2: N488-490, E108-109 and Block 3:499-500, E100-101. Throughout Block 2 and 3 ten percent of the ceramics have pedestal bases, while 90 percent have flat bases. In just Block 2, 8.5% of the vessels have pedestal bases, while Block 3 has twelve percent.

Excavation Unit	North/Eastin g	Pedestal	Flat
Block 2-01	N 488-490, E108-110	0	2
Block 2-02	N488-490, E 108-110	0	1
Block 2-03	N 489-490, E109-110	0	1
Block 2-05	N 489-490, E109-110	2	3
Block 2-09	N 489-490, E109-110	1	0
Block 2-14	N488-489, E 108-110	0	3
Block 2-21	N 489-490, 108-109 E	0	2
Block 2-24	N 488-489, E 108-109	0	1
Block 2-28	N 488-489, E 108-109	0	1

Block 2-30	N 488-489, E108-110	0	1
Block 2-31	N489-490, E 109-110	0	1
Block 2-32	N488-489, E 109-110	0	2
Block 2-36	N488-489, E 109-110	1	0
Block 2-37	N 489-490, E 108-109	0	1
Block 2-39	N 489-490, E 108-109	0	2
Block 2-41	?	0	2
Block 2-44	N 482-484, E 106-108	1	0
Block 2-66	N 482-484, 110-112 E	1	0
Block 2-69	N 488-490, 110-112 E	1	0
Block 99	N 482-484, E 106-108	1	0
Block 2-103A	N 489-490, 107-108 E	1	0
Block 3-01	N 498-500, E 99-101	0	6
Block 3-02	N 499-500, 99-100 E	3	10
Block 3-03	N 499-500, E 99-100	0	1
Block 3-04	N 498-499, E 100-101	1	1
Block 3-06	N 499-500, 99-100 E	1	0
Block 3-08	N 498-499, 99-100 E	1	8
Block 3-10	N 499-500, E 100-101	0	16
Block 3-12	N 499-500, E 100-101	0	1
Appendix A (Block 2), Appendix B (Block 3)			

INTERPRETATION

The grave goods at the Basatanya site have two apparent similarities. There are always more flat based vessels than there are pedestal vessels with the exception of three; Grave 9, Grave 80, and Grave 42, the first being the age of one and the later the age of 18-22 (male). Once again, there is not enough evidence provided to say exactly why these people were buried with more pedestal base vessels. Secondly, the pedestal bases

never exceeded the amount of four and the flat bases never exceed ten (rarely exceeding six).

There are twelve similarities between the grave goods at Basatanya, all of them having the same number of ceramics in the burials, unfortunately this is usually the only parallelism. When coming across the burials with four pedestal bases it was initially thought that since it was a man, woman, and child there may be some type of family orientation, but there was no further evidence to support this considering nothing else in the burials corresponded with one another. The same is true for all of the other similar burials around the site with the exception of graves 61 and 62.

Grave 61 and 62 are very similar in the way that their skeletons were arranged, but they do not have many of the same grave goods. Grave 61 has more flint blades, but this could be because he was older and had possibly already started some sort of work.

When being compared with the percentage of vessels at Vésztő 20 it is shown that, as a whole there is a larger percentage of pedestals in the grave goods. This could lead to the conclusion that the pedestal vessels are being used for more important events, such as funerals or special occasions. Due to the low percentage of pedestals at Vésztő 20, this could be a likely presumption.

The vessels at Vésztő 20 are aligned within the structure walls in Block 2, and the presumed walls of Block 3. The 2002 excavation of this site demonstrates that the structure in Block 2 could possibly continue towards the south wall of the trench. Considering most of the ceramics seem to be found within structure limits, it is highly possible that the walls do continue to encompass the area of vessels in the south part of the trench. Since the pedestal vessels are found, for the most part, in the same area as the

flat vessels it can be assumed that they are both utilized in the same manner, only the pedestal is used with less frequency, hence less production.

CONCLUSION

Pedestal vessels are found throughout the Tiszapolgár communities in both their cemeteries and settlement areas. Since they are found in such low quantities it is believed they have more of a stylistic character than functional. More comparisons need to be made concerning the grave goods at the Basatanya site to expand on the comparative analysis that has already been completed. There is still no conclusive evidence to say exactly why these vessels are being pedestaled, but all of the recent information indicates more of a stylistic quality.

The pedestal vessels as well as the flat base vessels are distributed in the same areas throughout Vésztő 20. The boundaries of the structures in Block 2 and 3 are not yet totally defined, but these vessels are showing up within the presumed boundaries on the northern walls of the each structure. As William Parkinson and Richard Yerkes continue to excavate at Vésztő 20 the boundaries of the structures will become more evident as well as the distribution and location of the ceramics around the site. More research and excavation can help to understand whether the pedestal base really does serve a purpose or if it is entirely stylistic.

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