

# MULTIPLE IDENTITIES IN PREHISTORY, EARLY HISTORY AND PRESENCE

Alena Bistáková – Gertrúda Březinová – Peter C. Ramsel  
(editors)



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EARLY HISTORY AND PRESENCE**

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**Alena Bistáková – Gertrúda Březinová – Peter C. Ramsel  
(Editors)**

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**NITRA 2020**

Alena Bistáková – Gertrúda Březinová – Peter C. Ramsel

## Multiple identities in prehistory, early history and presence

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## CHANGING FEMININITIES AND MASCULINITIES BETWEEN THE NEOLITHIC AND EARLY ROMAN PERIOD IN HUNGARY: A REVIEW

VAJK SZEVERÉNYI – JUDIT PÁSZTÓKAI-SZEŐKE –  
ZSUZSANNA SIKLÓSI – VIKTÓRIA KISS

During the past few decades, the archaeological analysis of gender has gone through tremendous theoretical and methodological development. However, although gender relations are fundamental to the social life of any community, Hungarian archaeology only took its initial steps in the archaeology of gender relatively recently, in keeping with several other east central European research traditions. Bearing in mind the pitfalls of such a study, we will present several case studies based on the analysis of burials between the Neolithic and the end of the Iron Age and of a series of representations from the Late Iron Age and the Early Roman period. We ask what the archaeological record can tell us about the range of femininity and masculinity by analysing the life cycle of men and women, examining data concerning the social position of children, their transition into adulthood, labour division and craft specialisation, the transition into mothers or warriors, etc. Our aim is to highlight the similarities and differences in how femininity and masculinity were created using material culture and other media in these societies.

Keywords: gender, identity, prehistory, Early Roman period, Pannonia, Carpathian Basin.

### INTRODUCTION

Post-processual archaeologies of social identity focus on individual identities and use complex gender categories. Gender relations are fundamental to the social life of any given community, and the archaeological analysis of gender has undergone several important theoretical and methodological developments during the past few decades (*Gero/Conkey 1991; Gilchrist 1999; Gowland 2006; Chapman 1997; Sofaer 2011; Sørensen 2004; Voss 2006*). Despite this, Hungarian archaeology only took its initial steps in the archaeology of gender relatively recently, in keeping with several other east central European research traditions (*Anders 2016a; 2016b; Chapman/Palíncaş 2013; Koncz/Szilágyi 2017; Páztókai-Szeőke 2011; 2017; Siklósi 2007*).

The aim of the present paper is to adopt this approach in the study of prehistoric communities in Hungary using several case studies that analyse burials between the Neolithic and Early Roman periods. To this end, we carry out micro-research on several well-studied sites, with a particular focus on age and gender, femininity, masculinity, children, the body, and craft specialisation.

In each of these case studies, we review the analyses of relevant cemeteries and burials from a gender archaeological point of view, using archaeological and bioarchaeological methods. We look for gender-specific grave goods and their possible implications with regards to the social structure of the communities concerned. Moreover, stable isotope studies suggest that males and females had differential mobility patterns, providing important clues about social structure and various cultural rules, such as exogamy. Such studies also inform us about dietary practices, where differences can often have a gendered aspect as well. In many cases, the study of pathologies using human skeletal remains provides important information about gender roles, such as various forms of labour division. In some cases and in almost all periods, a small number of burials deviate from gender-specific burial rites and patterns of grave-good deposition. These are important, as they may indicate a non-bipolar gender structure, with the possible presence of third genders in these communities.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

In the present paper, we ask what the archaeological record can tell us about the range of femininity and masculinity by analysing the life cycles of men and women. For example, we examine data concerning the transitional period, as well as the process of becoming mothers, warriors, craft specialists, etc. Our case studies are based on detailed analyses of burials from the Neolithic, Bronze Age, and Iron Age periods in Hungary.

From the Middle Neolithic (Linear Pottery culture; *Linearbandkeramik*; LBK), we draw upon archaeological, physical anthropological, and stable isotope studies of the large European LBK Lifeways project from eastern and western Hungarian sites (5300–5000 cal BC; Alföld Linear Pottery: Füzesabony-Gubakút, Mezőkövesd-Mocsolyás, Polgár-Ferenci-hát; Transdanubian LBK: Balatonszárszó-Kis-erdei-dűlő), which were published in a monograph (*Whittle et al. 2013*). Data from sites on the Great Hungarian Plain were recently re-analysed by Alexandra Anders, with a special regional focus (*Anders 2016a; Anders/Nagy 2019*).

The Late Neolithic (5000–4450 cal BC) data from the eastern Hungarian Tisza and western Hungarian Transdanubian Lengyel cultures were summarized by A. Anders (2016a) and Zs. Siklósi in several papers and a book. The main focus of Siklósi's study was a correspondence analysis of the finds from the burials at Aszód-Papi földek (*Siklósi 2007; 2013a; 2013b*).

From the later period, we refer to Bell Beaker period cemeteries from the modern-day Czech Republic. Based on these, we carry out a comparative bioarchaeological analysis of Bell Beaker burials in the Budapest region that date to 2500–2200 cal BC – the first part of the Early Bronze Age in Hungary. Specifically, we focus on cemeteries excavated at Budapest-Békásmegyer, Szigetszentmiklós, and Budakalász (*Endrődi 2013; Köhler 2011; Kulcsár 2011; Patay 2013; Price et al. 2004*). More recently, the ongoing evaluation of the aDNA analyses from the same burials (*Olalde et al. 2018*) provides new data for interpreting gender roles.

We continue our analysis with burials from the Middle Bronze Age (2000–1500 BC) located in the northern part of the Great Hungarian Plain: specifically three recently excavated Füzesabony culture cemeteries around Polgár. Preliminary results from the study of these burials (*Dani/Máthé/Szabó 2004*) will be completed in ongoing multidisciplinary investigations (*Giblin et al. 2019; Kiss et al. 2018*). We refer to archaeological (*Jovanović 2016; Matić 2010; Şandor-Chicideanu/Chicideanu 1989, 9–11, 38*) and scientific analyses of Maros culture burials from the same period, located in the southern region of the Great Hungarian Plain (*Macintosh et al. 2014; Porčić/Števanović 2009*). There, a strict bipolar burial orientation connected to biological sex suggests bipolar gender roles similar to the northern region. Rare exceptions raise the question of a third gender or other kind of special social status.

Identities from the Late Iron Age and Early Roman period (1<sup>st</sup> century BC–1<sup>st</sup> century AD) require more complex answers because of the unbalanced power situation and the interactions between the indigenous people of Pannonia and Roman culture. We collect evidence that spinning implements were used as grave goods and analyse their meaning in burials (*Gleba 2011; Pásztókai-Szeőke 2011*).

At this point, it may be important to define the terms 'femininity' and 'masculinity' as we use them. We regard both as a set of roles, behaviours, and attitudes associated with females and males, respectively, in any given culture. They are socially constructed, historically emergent, and culturally contingent (e.g. *Connell 2005; Murphy 2004; Seidler 1989*), so they are likely to vary greatly throughout prehistory. Our aim is to map some of this diversity and investigate how it intersects with other aspects, such as age and social status.

## CASE STUDIES FROM THE NEOLITHIC TO THE BRONZE AGE

Research into Near Eastern pre-Neolithic and Neolithic groups and Middle Neolithic burials of Linear Pottery population (LBK) may also constitute social bioarchaeological studies. The LBK Lifeways project investigated graves from almost the whole territory of the LBK using osteoarchaeological, stomatological, stable isotope, and paleopathological analyses of 3000 individuals from the period. The stable isotope results show differential mobility patterns for men and women, suggesting patrilocality (*Bickle/Whittle 2013*). Differences in food consumption were also observed. As part of the same research project, the skeletons of 50 individuals were examined from among 113 burials at Polgár-Ferenci-hát. Dental caries was more frequent among women than among men, suggesting that women consumed higher amounts

of carbohydrates, which are found in starch-rich foods such as cereals and legumes (Anders 2016a). Tooth wear was also observed in skeletons excavated at the same site. For example, the skeleton of a 37 to 46 year-old woman demonstrated occlusal grooving of the anterior teeth, indicating that she often engaged in fibre or string working, and therefore that craft activities were gendered in her society. In addition, in the skeletons of 174 adults from the Neolithic, Bronze Age, and Iron Age of Central Europe the upper arms were examined to detect whether any changes in activities occurred over this long period, and whether there are any differences between the right and left arms or between the work activities performed by men and women. Analysis of the upper arm bones of three men and two women from burials uncovered at Polgár-Ferenci-hát indicated no apparent differences between the right and left sides, but major differences between male and female samples. The alterations were more pronounced on the female upper arm bones, which was consistent with the results at other Neolithic sites included in the analysis. The differences were linked to the division of labour between men and women (Anders 2016b, 4, 5, fig. 2).

Other Hungarian sites included in this project, like Füzesabony-Gubakút, Mezőkövesd-Mocsolyás, and Balatonszárszó-Kis-erdei-dűlő, have not yet provided any similar data. Meanwhile, in some cases, there have been difficulties in determining age and biological sex (Appleby 2011). The complex bioarchaeological methods mentioned above are sufficient to reconstruct the different social roles of prehistoric populations, and have suggested possible regional or chronological differences.

However, no similarly complex, independent studies have been conducted in Late Neolithic or Copper Age Hungary, the periods in connection with prehistoric gender studies began in Hungary. Based on Ida Bognár-Kutzián's works on Copper Age cemeteries in the 1960s, John Chapman analysed gender roles on the Great Hungarian Plain in connection with arenas of social power (Chapman 1997). He noted that houses are erected on the site of ancestors' houses, surrounded by burials on Late Neolithic tells, and that production was household-based. This is known as the *domus/agrios* dichotomy, and it suggests that women's power prevailed during this time. The male/female dichotomy was emphasised in materiality and through the use of symbols more than in earlier periods. This strong emphasis on gender dichotomy continued into the Copper Age. However, the domination of women's power changed with the appearance of formal cemeteries during the Early and Middle part of the period, and with Late Copper Age kurgan burials (Bognár-Kutzián 1963; Chapman 1997, 132).

As a case study, here we present an analysis of Late Neolithic burials from Aszód-Papi földek, where an extensive Late Neolithic settlement and 224 graves were found. The finds represent a mixture of the eastern Hungarian Tisza and the Transdanubian Lengyel cultures (Kalicz 1985; Kreiter et al. 2017). Based on absolute and relative chronological data, all these graves can be dated to a short time period. Importantly, the area of the settlement was not separated from the burials. Most people living in the settlement were buried in a contracted position, placed on their right side. Exceptions to this strict practice can only be found among women and children. The systems of orientation and grave furniture can be loosely correlated with age and gender. Mace heads, shoe-last adzes, stone chisels, wild boar mandibula, and pendants made from wild boar tusk have only been documented in men's burials, while *Spondylus* bracelets, *Glycymeris* pendants, and beads made of red deer canine have only been found in women's. At Aszód, bone tools for chipped stone tool processing have only been found in women's burials, suggesting that women also specialised in chipped stone tool making (Tóth 2013, 277). Stone chisels as characteristic male grave furniture were found in the burial of an Infans I child in only one case. However, characteristic female grave goods, such as *Spondylus* bracelets, were found in several child burials. Based on these data, some Infans II children (aged 8–12) could be identified as young females (Fig. 1). These girls had probably already passed some biological and/or social stages of growing into a woman, and thus were considered socially mature adults (Siklósi 2007; 2013a, 119, 120; 2013b).

Gender-related elements, like the *Spondylus* bracelets, were common in the whole Late Neolithic Carpathian Basin, not only at Aszód. For example, representations of broad bracelets have been found on the upper arm of female statuettes, while multiple incisions around the wrists of male and female statuettes found on the Great Hungarian Plain may represent copper spiral bracelets (Siklósi 2013a, 252, 253; 2013b, 427, 428). Multi-row belts consisting of stone and *Spondylus* beads are depicted as incisions on Sé-type anthropomorphic figures found in Transdanubia (P. Barna 2004). Conversely, two male burials were found with typical female grave furniture from Aszód and Kisköre, raising the question of whether there was a third gender or *berdache* (K. Zoffmann 2015; Siklósi 2013a, 114, 115, 178, 196).

In several Late Neolithic sites on the Great Hungarian Plain, body positioning was connected with the gender of the deceased: men were buried on their right and women on their left sides (Anders/Nagy



Fig. 1. Aszód-Papi földek Grave 164. Infant II burial with typical female grave goods, e.g. *Spondylus* bracelets.

2007, 91, 92; Bognár-Kutzián 1963, 355, 356; Raczky/Anders/Siklósi 2014, 328–331; Siklósi 2013a, 175). This became general in the Early Copper Age (Fig. 2). Burials of the latter period from Eastern Hungary were examined by Joanna Sofaer. Based on the investigation of the Tiszapolgár burials, she realized that copper bracelets were typical grave goods of individuals aged between 5 and 25; after those ages, copper artefacts were never placed in male graves (Sofaer *Derevenski* 1997, 877–880; 2000, 398, 399). Ethnographic parallels show that children became part of the economic life of the communities at the age of 5 years (Pany-Kucera/Reschreiter/Kern 2010; Wager 2009). This suggests that children in the Copper Age had an active role in society, but they had a long-lasting liminal period before they were considered adults (Sofaer *Derevenski* 2000). A simplified relationship between age and gender can be observed in Middle Copper Age burials with Bodrogkeresztúr-style material. According to Sofaer, the disappearance of copper in the Late Copper Age can be associated with this transformation in the social structure (Sofaer *Derevenski* 2000).

In the Bronze Age, we also encounter gender dichotomy in burial practice. For example, in Bell Beaker inhumation cemeteries (2500–2200 BC), deceased women were buried on their right and men on their left sides, suggesting that gender was associated with particular ideas, quarters, and sides. Anthropological analyses have shown that adherence to these rules was very high, with only a few exceptions (Endrődi 2013; Heyd 2007; Kern 2001; Turek 2000; 2013). The characteristic grave goods of male burials are weapons (copper daggers, wristguards, flint arrowheads), while the typical grave goods of female burials are jewellery and V-perforated bone buttons (Fig. 3). Decorated bell beakers, which are usually connected with beer consumption, are more frequent in the burials of men (20 %) than in those of women (11 %). Specific bipolar burial orientation is diagnostic in the graves of older children (Inf. II age category) in Bohemian cemeteries (88.8 % of graves, 54 % of which were boys and 46 % girls). Grave goods also prove that there were gender-specific rites in child burials: stone implements and weapons can be found in the burials of boys (Turek 2000; 2013). Furthermore, miniature vessels are also characteristic of children's graves.

Based on the few exceptions involving men with body orientation and grave goods typical of female burials, Jan Turek suggested that the culture may have recognised a gender of women-men, similar to *berdache* among native North American populations (Turek 2000; 2013). At this point, we

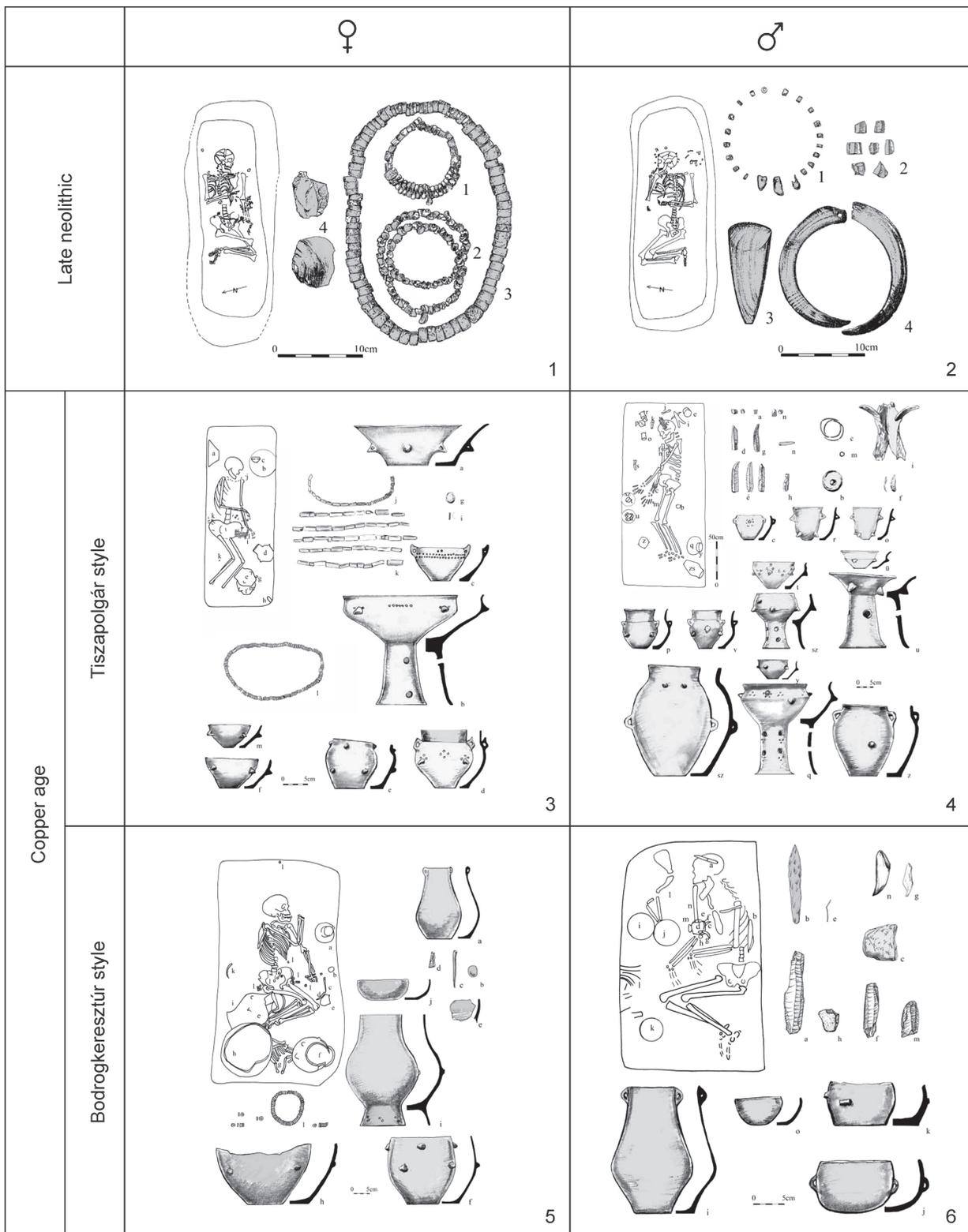


Fig. 2. Selected burials of the Late Neolithic and Copper Age with typical grave good associations. 1 – Typical female grave from Polgár-Csőszhalom horizontal settlement (Feature 362); 2 – Typical male grave from Polgár-Csőszhalom horizontal settlement (Feature 406); 3 – Typical female grave from the Tiszapolgár-Basatanya cemetery with Tiszapolgár style pottery (Grave 23); 4 – Typical male grave from the Tiszapolgár-Basatanya cemetery with Tiszapolgár style pottery (Grave 33); 5 – Typical female grave from the Tiszapolgár-Basatanya cemetery with Bodrogkeresztúr style pottery (Grave 105); 6 – Typical male grave from the Tiszapolgár-Basatanya cemetery with Bodrogkeresztúr style pottery (Grave 123; after Raczky/Anders/Siklósi 2014, fig. 5).

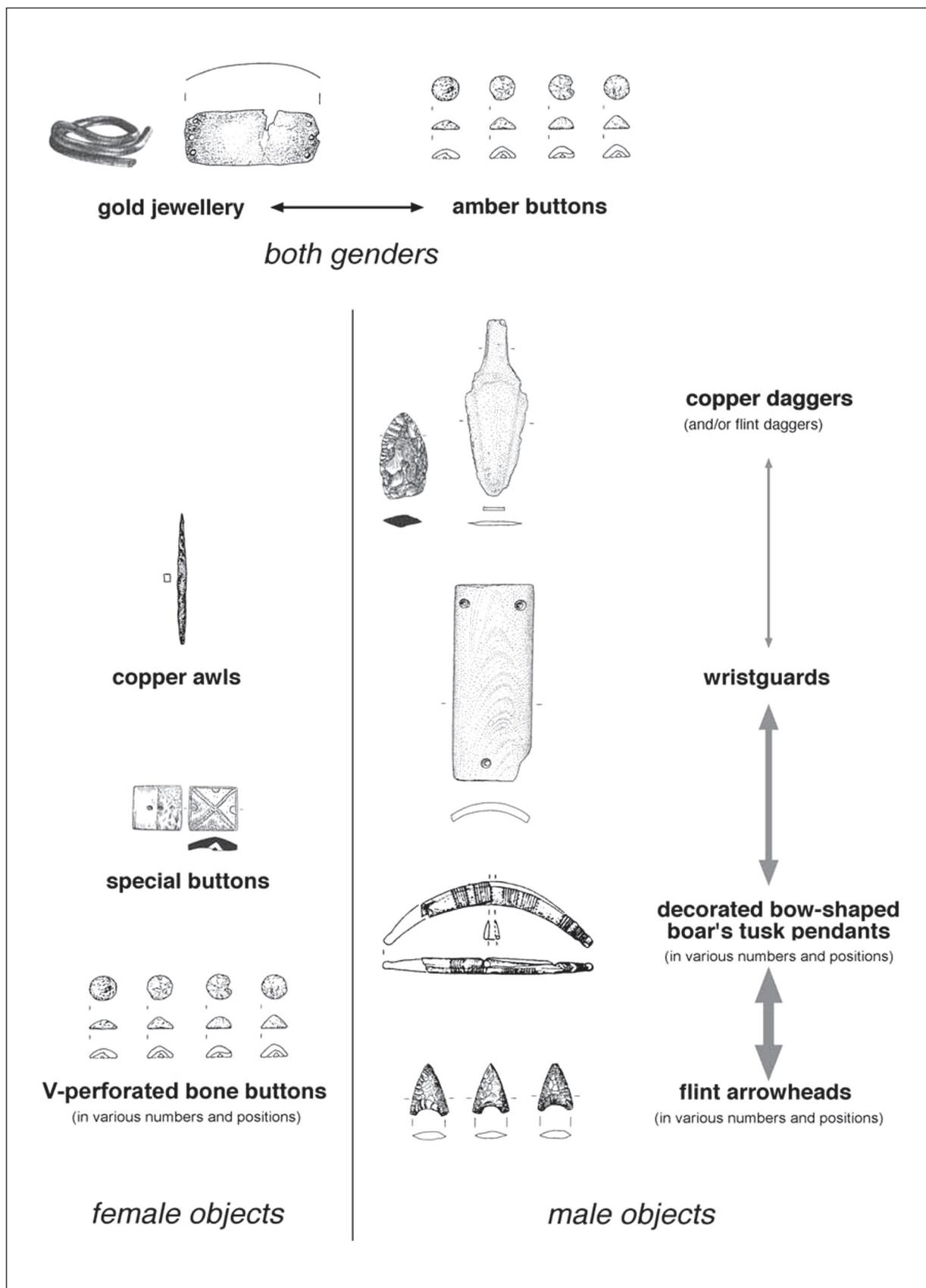


Fig. 3. Special grave goods in the Bell Beaker East Group (after Heyd 2007, fig. 9).

should mention that a recent aDNA analysis of Bell Beaker burials from Hungary highlights the uncertainties of biological sex determination by physical anthropological methods. The deceased from burial 597 of the cemetery excavated at Budakalász-Csajerszke was identified as a male, but its orientation was characteristic for female burials: on its right side, with south-to-north orientation. However, aDNA analysis determined the biological sex of this individual as female, in accordance with the usual burial orientation of the Bell Beaker complex (Olalde et al. 2018, Supplementary). This may account for the situation in the Late Neolithic grave at Aszód mentioned before, although no aDNA analysis has yet been performed on those remains.

Stable isotope data from the Neolithic LBK Lifeways project and Austrian Corded Ware burials suggest that alternative burial orientation may also occur in graves belonging to non-local individuals who had arrived from a different cultural background. In Bell Beaker communities from several regions in Central Europe, strontium isotope data have shown that some graves belonged to non-local women who spent their early lives elsewhere and had sometimes travelled 200 km. This suggests clear patterns of patrilocal and female exogamy, although strontium isotope analyses of Hungarian Bell Beaker cemeteries have already attested both male and female non-locals (Kulcsár 2011, fig. 8; 9; Price et al. 2004).

Middle Bronze Age (2000–1500 BC) burials on the Great Hungarian Plain also indicate gender dichotomy in burial practice. In the recently excavated three cemeteries of the Füzesabony culture around Polgár in northeast Hungary (Polgár-Kenderföld, Polgár-Király-érpart, and Polgár-Homok-dűlő), 242 graves were discovered. The deceased men were buried on their right and oriented south-to-north, while women were buried on their left side and oriented north-to-south. From the Kenderföldek and Homok-dűlő cemeteries, several men were buried with an orientation characteristic for women. In the Homok-dűlő cemetery, four such burials were found, from which three were placed close to each other on the northern edge of the cemetery. The excavators of the cemetery, J. Dani and G. V. Szabó, determined that these were burials of homosexual men or *berdache*. They also called attention to similar burials in the Maros culture population (Dani/Máthé/Szabó 2004).

In the Maros culture (southeast Hungary), biological sex and gender-related positioning of the deceased matched in 94 % of inhumation cases. There, another possible explanation of the 'deviant' burials came to light: ten buried males with an orientation opposite to the norm and with female grave furniture were interpreted as being some kind of ritual or medical specialists, or elderly men with a special status (Jovanović 2016; Matić 2010; Şandor-Chicideanu/Chicideanu 1989, 9–11, 38). Alternatively, based on the stable isotope data of the Neolithic LBK Lifeways project and Austrian Corded Ware burials mentioned above, the deceased may have had an unusual orientation because the graves belonged to non-local people whose burial practice differed from that of the local population.

Pottery decoration also suggests that the representation of gender was important for Bronze Age society. In the Bell Beaker period, we can see a so-called 'moustache motif' on accompanying pottery/common ware (Begleitkeramik) vessels from men's graves, while small knobs as possible depictions of breasts were identified in burials of women (Turek 2011, fig. 3). T. Kovács called attention to similar representations of breasts in Middle Bronze Age women's urns, and to depictions of weapons (daggers or axes) on the urns of men from the same period (Kovács 1992; Poroszlai 1992; Sørensen/Rebay-Salisbury 2009, fig. 6). G. Szabó analysed the ornamental motifs found on the Transdanubian Encrusted Pottery vessels at the recently excavated cemetery of Bonyhád, where an osteological analysis of the cremated remains was carried out by Tamás Hajdu. In women's burials, the pottery was frequently decorated with zig-zag lines and vertical bundles of lines, while the net-pattern motif appears on vessels associated with male burials. These results show that at least some encrusted patterns correlate with gender (Fig. 4; Hajdu et al. 2016; Szabó/Hajdu 2011, 98–104, tab. 2), perhaps because this culture practiced cremation, which results in the disintegration of the human body and the destruction of characteristic grave goods (e.g. ornamented textiles, or metal jewellery), so gendered symbols of identity may have been placed onto the urns as containers of the fragmented body (Hajdu et al. 2016; Sørensen/Rebay-Salisbury 2009; Szeverényi 2013).

In many cases, child burials are equipped with miniature vessels. At the mentioned cemetery discovered at Bonyhád-Biogas factory, excavations revealed that some burials with the cremated remains of children aged 1–3 years were associated with small vessels called drinking horns. These vessels may have been used as special purpose vessels to complement or substitute for breastfeeding (Kiss 2012, 83–85; Reich 2002; Szabó/Hajdu 2011, 90, 96, 97, fig. 1). Detailed analysis of child burials according to age categories only began recently (Melis et al., in press).

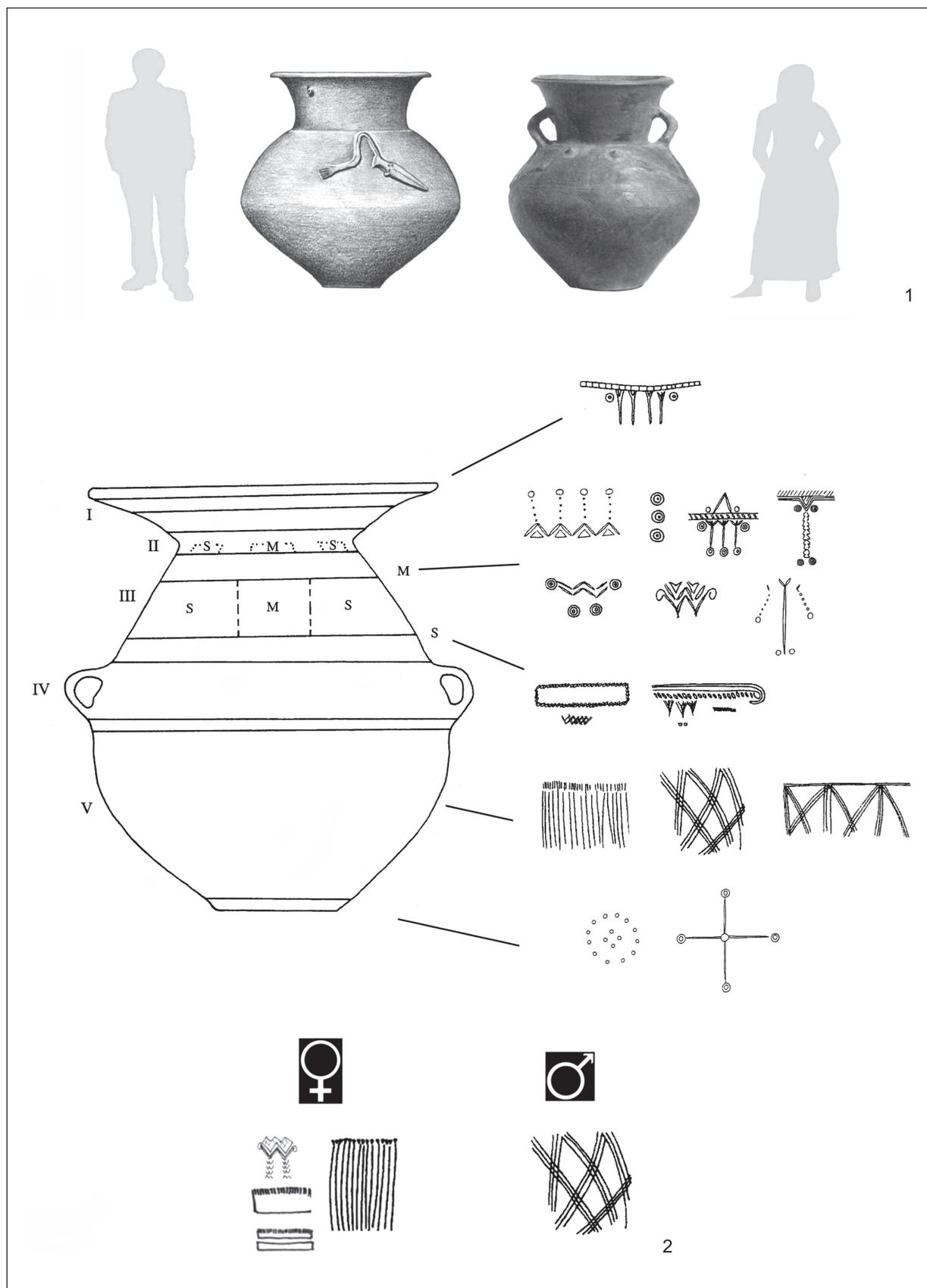


Fig. 4. Gendered symbols on Middle Bronze Age pottery. 1 – Vatyva style (after Sørensen–Rebay–Salisbury 2009, fig. 6); 2 – Transdanubian Encrusted Pottery style (Kiss 2012, fig. 16).

Small anthropomorphic figurines were also decorated with representations of jewellery and gendered symbols. Recently discovered figurines from Middle and Late Bronze Age Hungary provide evidence that both male and female statuettes were produced, with defensive armour indicating male warrior identity (Király/Koós/Tarbay 2014; Kiss 2007; 2019; Kovács 1972). According to physical anthropological analyses in the Lower Danube region south of Hungary, anthropomorphic female figurines and miniature clay axes have been found in several burials of children, as well as in double burials where one of the deceased was a child (Gârla Mare-Cârna culture, e.g. Cârna, Feudvar-Štubarlija, Korbovo-Glamija; Kiss 2007; Reich 2002). Based on these data, burials equipped with figurines have been identified as the graves of subadult children (girls) with special social status (Dietrich 2011, fig. 8; Holenweger 2011, 42, fig. 126; Chicideanu-Şandor/Chicideanu 1990; Kiss 2007; 2019).

Depending on their intensity, various activities that use the hands and arms can cause biomechanical alterations in the upper limbs that leave a mark on the surface of the bones. Results from 174 adults dated to Neolithic, Bronze Age, and Iron Age Central Europe mentioned above, revealed sex divergence in the lateralization of upper limb biomechanical properties between the Early/Middle Neolithic and Early/Middle Bronze Age, indicating major differences between male and female samples from these periods (see above). The alterations were more pronounced on female upper arm bones, which was consistent with the results from other Neolithic sites. In the Bronze Age, the properties of female remains from Ostojičevo, Serbia were more homogeneous and symmetrical than the right-biased, lateralised changes found on contemporaneous male skeletons (Macintosh et al. 2014; Porčić/Stevanović 2009). As in the Neolithic period, stable isotope and physical anthropological analyses indicate differences in food consumption between Bronze Age women and men, with less meat and more vegetables occurring in the diet of women (Münster et al. 2018; Sjögren/Price/Kristiansen 2016, fig. 7).

## CASE STUDY FROM LATE IRON AGE AND EARLY ROMAN PERIOD

In the Roman period, we find a different picture regarding the unbalanced power situation in the province of Pannonia (Alföldy 2005; Gardner 2013; Grüll 2007; Pásztókai-Szeőke 2011; Rothe 2012a; 2012b; 2012c; Schörner 2005; Woolf 2014). For the moment, available osteological analyses seem to indicate that spinning implements were placed exclusively in female burials in Roman Transdanubia (Pásztókai-Szeőke 2011; 2012; 2017). In most cases, they were found in the graves of females from the adult or mature age groups, but occasionally they occurred alongside the osteological remains of juvenile girls. It follows that, in the Roman province of Pannonia, the spindle and distaff are gender- and age-specific grave goods, being found in the burials of females aged above 10, but dominantly in those of adult females (in the Roman rather than the modern sense of adulthood; Fig. 5: 1). In the case of Roman girls, the twelfth birthday was postulated as the usual *terminus post quem* for adolescence; after this age, according to legislation enacted in the Augustan era, they were legally allowed to enter into marriage. Of course, legislation is one thing and compliance with the law is another. Among the epigraphic records from Pannonia and the neighbouring province of Dalmatia, a small group of grave monuments testifies that some girls entered into marriage at the age of 10, and that brides aged around 12 years old were not exceptional (Pásztókai-Szeőke 2011).

While the interment of spinning implements was not unusual in Roman Period Transdanubia, there is no evidence that spinning tools were deposited into burials during the indigenous, pre-Roman Iron Age. Thus, spinning implements as grave-goods appeared in the area after the Roman arrival. Indeed, most such instruments are of Italian origin, with morphological predecessors from the Italian Iron Age, and their manufacture seemingly spread along the roads in the newly established province of Pannonia (Fig. 5: 2; Bergerbrant 2014; Gleba 2008, 109–122; 2011; Pásztókai-Szeőke 2011; 2012; 2017).

In early Imperial Italy, wool spinning (*lanam fecit*) became synonymous with laboriousness and domestic virtue in women (Larsson Lovén 2002; Peskowitz 1997). Unlike the precious spinning implements of their Iron Age aristocratic ancestresses, which were deposited in burials to symbolise women's economic role as the chief coordinators of textile production in the community, the spindles and distaffs of deceased Roman wives from the more industrialized Imperial times were a powerful symbol of marital/wifely loyalty, of good moral standards, and of feminine gender, rather than of economic importance (Cottica 2007, 208–216; Gleba 2008; 2011; Pásztókai-Szeőke 2011; 2017).

In our opinion, the *Eravisci*, the indigenous Pannonian people who inhabited Northeastern Transdanubia, used these iconographic symbols of marriage on tombstones that were erected according

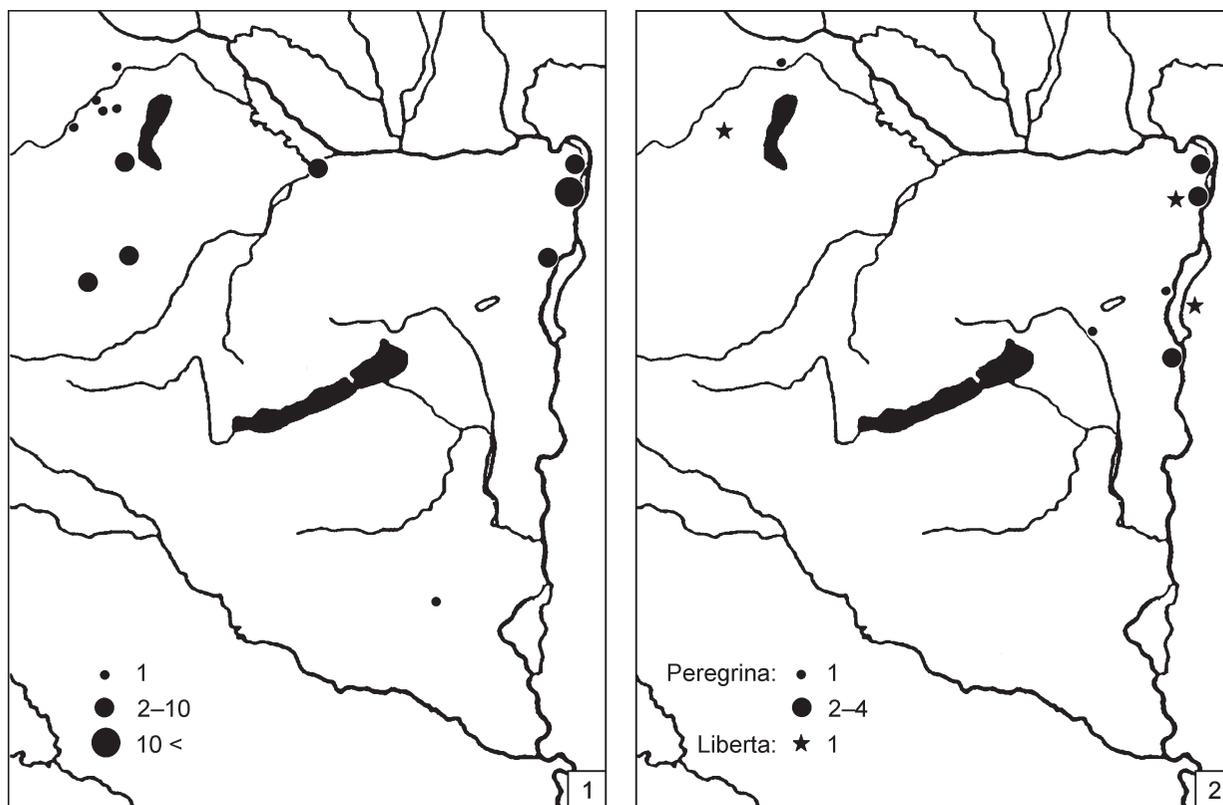


Fig. 5. 1 – Spinning tools from Pannonia in the early centuries AD; 2 – depiction of spinning tools on tombstones from Pannonia in the early centuries AD.

to Roman models during the second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> and first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD (Facsády 2007). Although these indigenous people did not always have a legal Roman marriage, the symbolism of the spindle and distaff was used to emphasise that their marital relationship (*matrimonium iuris gentium*, to use the Roman term) was morally strong and legal in their own traditional way. To make the message understandable for viewers of these monuments, they adopted and used the international pictorial “language” of Roman funeral iconography (Pásztókai-Szeőke 2011; 2012; Rothe 2009, 79; 2012a; 2012b; 2012c).

Importantly, just because spindles and distaffs are found in female burials or depicted in the hands of deceased women, it does not follow that only women spun in Roman times, that men did not, that local Pannonian textile production was a domestic affair, or that spindle whorls found in both civil and military settlements or camps are direct indicators of the presence and work of women there. As evidenced in a remark by Pliny (NH 19.17: “*spinning flax is a respectable occupation for men*”) and a unique depiction on an Ostian sarcophagus, where a male spinner is depicted working on plant fibre in a shoemaker’s workshop scene, some Roman men were certainly employed in professional spinning – although both these examples refer to linen rather than wool (Gällnő 2013; Larsson Lovén 1998; 2002; Zimmer 1985). In other words, it was spinning wool (*lanam fecit*), not simply spinning, which had a strong symbolic connection with married women, while spinning plant fibres such as linen was a respectable occupation for Roman men as well (Pásztókai-Szeőke 2011; Pásztókai-Szeőke/Radman-Livaja 2015).

Furthermore, spinning implements are probably not the only elements on these tombstones that refer to the moral standards of the depicted indigenous women. According to some researchers, even the so-called Norican-Pannonian, or Eraviscan outfit of these indigenous women can be interpreted as a hybrid or the creative re-creation of Iron Age traditions. That is, it may visually express a new Pannonian identity that amalgamated both local Iron Age and Italian elements (Pásztókai-Szeőke 2011; 2017; Rothe 2009; 2012a). Looking at these depictions of indigenous women, someone arriving in Pannonia from Italy or even Rome would immediately have noticed the differences that expressed the “otherness” of these locals. However, at the same time, they could relate to their “sameness” – to the similarity with the Roman *matronae stolatae* and its complex of values, such as fidelity and fertility (or motherhood).

## CONCLUSIONS

We believe the evidence reviewed above indicates that gender was a fundamental aspect of prehistoric social life in Hungary. Furthermore, by reviewing such evidence in a diachronic fashion, it is clear that the type, nature, and manifestations of gender differences changed through time, indicating that there were changing patterns of gender roles and relations, and that there may have been different constructions of gender in the various periods. For example, during the Middle Neolithic, bioarchaeological data indicate gender differentiation. From the Late Neolithic onwards, it seems that the male and female dichotomy was more pronounced, as represented on anthropomorphic figurines and in material remains, as well as in burial orientation and grave furniture, which can be loosely correlated with age and gender. Gender differences appear to already manifest during childhood (8–12 years), with girls probably passing some biological and/or social stages of growth into a woman. This strong emphasis on gender dichotomy continued and may even have intensified into the Early and Middle Copper Age. During the second part of the Copper Age, strong distinctions such as those expressed using copper disappeared from the burials, perhaps indicating simpler age and gender structures.

In the Bronze Age, gender dichotomies in burial practice seem to become more pronounced again, as reflected in Bell Beaker inhumation cemeteries or in the cemeteries of the Middle Bronze Age Füzesabony and Maros cultures. However, a few 'deviant' burials disrupt the strict, gender-specific burial rites. Several male individuals were buried with an orientation characteristic for women, suggesting the existence of women-men similar to the *berdache* of North American native populations.

Available bioarchaeological and stable isotope results indicate gender differences regarding labour, although the Neolithic seems to have differed from the Bronze Age in this regard. Isotope studies indicate more female mobility and differences in food consumption between women and men both in the Neolithic and the Bronze Age, with less meat and more vegetables in the diet of women. In the Early Roman period, we find a different picture regarding the unbalanced power situation in the province of Pannonia.

The case studies presented here highlight the similarities and differences in how femininity and masculinity were created using material culture and other media in prehistoric societies. However, our conclusions are only based on the available published evidence and analyses. We think that Hungarian archaeology urgently requires more dedicated gender archaeological analyses and interpretations to acknowledge the importance of this basic social identity in prehistory.

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