**“SPOOL-SHAPED CLAY ARTEFACT”: AN UNKNOWN OBJECT-TYPE OF THE BOLERÁZ/BADEN CULTURES**

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**Abstract**

In this study various or, in some cases, connectable usage-forms of the Boleráz/Baden “spool”-find group were presented, as referable to archaeological and anthropological analogues. It is likely that this object was a multifunctional tool, whose diverse functions can be separated on the basis of specific wear marks, shape. There are examples either for the profane or the religious (idol, pintadera) application of the object.

Based on chronological-functional differences, I assume that the “spools” had basically different uses in the Boleráz and the Baden periods, or cultures. It seems that the “spool” was a robust, multifunctional everyday object in the Boleráz Period, useful mostly as a pillar/pounder/pestle. Further on, the object became a delicate, personal, and maybe prestigious item by the Baden Period. The completely different function of the discussed object, appearing in both the Boleráz and the Baden periods further strengthen the opinion of those scholars, who argue that the Boleráz and the Baden societies should be interpreted as individual cultures or ceramic styles (by Martin Furholt) rather than development phases as it was suggested previously. Concerning the origin of the objects, the Boleráz Culture has strong Central European connections, whereas the material culture of the Baden Culture can rather be related to south-eastern Europe.

**Key words:** Balatonőszöd–Temetői dűlő, spool; salt-making/desiccation; pestle/pounder; stamp-seal; weaving and spinning article; braid clasp; head-support; sitting-convenience.

**INTRODUCTION**

During the excavation of a Boleráz/Baden settlement at Balatonőszöd–Temetői dűlő, along the planned route of the M7 motorway in 2001–2002, in several cases typical cylindrical objects were found, made of burnt clay, widening at the ends (Table 1). These finds were identified as “spool” (spulni or guriga in Hungarian) by reference to previous Hungarian scholarly interpretations. Mária Bondár first suggested that the spools were used as solid wheels of wagon-models; subsequently she believed theirs non-domestic, unusual meaning.

As a preliminary research paper (2008), I hypothetically categorized the finds according to their size, level of finishing and workmanship, and distinctive signs of use-wear, which may help identification of the original function of these items (Plate 1/1). Accordingly, in the framework of this paper, I would like to present and discuss some selected objects of the larger group of the found material.

The scope of the present study does not allow a presentation of the complete catalog of this object-type available from the previous scholarly literature. Besides, I think that this method would not lead to reliable results anyway, as most of these finds, and theirs archaeological context are missing from the publications. The reason for this is that, primarily, specialists did not recognize the importance of these objects, and, secondly, spool-items were not considered among the principal object-groups relating to chronological situations. Thus, their appearance, and their links to specific periods or cultures inside the Late Copper Age has not been accurately explained. Even the acknowledged data of the former publications on “spools” may direct the

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reader to misleading conclusions, as the few studies restrict themselves to the illustrative material, such as photos or drawings, without precise description. Likewise, in the absence of specific data such as traces of wear, the original function of these objects cannot be convincingly established.

This type of objects is completely absent from the famous volumes by V. Němejcová-Pavůková on the ceramic typology of the Boleráz and Baden cultures (e.g. 1981, 1984). However, there are some settlement finds in the published material from the Boleráz/Baden periods, but I am afraid that this attached list is not a perfect picture about the real occurrence of the Late Copper Age’s finds as I summarized the reasons above.

In the following discussion I will try to identify the possible functions of this special find group. The primary source of analogues will be taken from the excavation material of the Balatonőszöd–Temetői dűlő site, besides, other archaeological, ethnographical as well as cultural anthropological parallels will be presented.

Among the following cited possibilities there can be connections (1–2–3), or other variant functions (4, 5, 6). The question is: can these clay artifacts, with minimal changes of form and size be a multi-functional tool-type? The answer is: yes.

We can identify many analogies among the ancient stone artifacts. Most of the prehistoric stone implements (e.g. a chipped stones, or grinders, hand-stones, and hammers/adzes/axes) were multi-functional tools. On a grinder we can frequently see the use-wear traces from grinding of cereals, and as well as the use-wears of shell-opening, polishing of bone, shell, metal and stone implements, pounding seeds etc.).

**DISCUSSION**

Archaeological observations at the Balatonőszöd – Temetői dűlő site:

1. Salt-producing apparatus

The parts of the toolkit: salt evaporating bowl (*Briquetage*), and the pillars (*Oval-/Zylindersäule*), which held the bowl above the fire during the evaporation process.

The pottery as associated with *Briquetage* was initially described and classified in scientific literature on prehistoric ceramics as Very Coarse Ware (*VCW*), and various application circles were presented. Later, this type

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of pottery was referred to salt production, and in recent publications it is consciously connected to this function.\(^8\)

Description of the finds from Balatonőszöd:

– Balatonőszöd–Temetői dűlő, pit No. 2348, Section 53/32, Boleráz. A nearly intact, subsequently reconstructed vessel, resembling a fish-frying pan was found (Briquetage-suitable form, for salt evaporation). Light brown, the inner surface is smoothed, the outer surface is rough. It is tempered with crushed shards. The form of the vessel is oval, the bottom is flat, slightly concave, the bottom-line is hardly profiled, the sides are relatively high, wider in the middle-part, and slightly protruding at the two edges. Bottom diameter: 325, height: 120, edge-thickness: 11, largest edge-diameters: 325 and 226 mm.

Thus, it was inferred that in this area salt water was evaporated in order to produce salt (crystals or powder). Near pit No. 2348, several “spools” were unearthed together with various objects (Pit No. 2000, 2389), part of which could thus be connected to salt production. Those objects are evidently suitable for this purpose; they are sandglass-shaped, providing a flat support for the evaporating bowl. There are both smaller and larger pieces, created in either fine versions or rough ones. There is one crucial criterion, namely that there has to be a set of items, whose size is appropriate for supporting the same bowl (Plate 2/1).

I suggest that the items present as grave-goods at Budakalász–Luppacsárda cemetery served the same purpose. Unfortunately, we do not have exact information about the in situ position of the artifacts in cemeteries (Budakalász–Luppacsárda, Grave No. 403 – the spool-items lying around the neck, or in one heap in front of the face, between shoulders and hands, turned over – as if they formerly held up something?),\(^9\) but they were never found by themselves: four, five and six pieces composed a kit (pillars of some kind of vessel?).

In most settlements where “spools” were found, additional polished stone (pestle, hand-stone, grinder) and bone artifacts were usually discovered, typically chisels made of cattle’s ulnae, small ruminants’ metatarsi, or chisels made of bones of larger mammals. These tools can all be obviously connected to salt production.\(^10\)

The salt-making toolkit can be further completed with items suitable to breaking up or pulverizing salt, such as fine-grained polisher/grinder plates, hand-stones and pestles.

– Cultural layer No. 1390, Section 46/30–31, Boleráz. In the Boleráz cultural layer, beside the “spools”, a small, rectangular, fine-grained sandstone plate was discovered. Both sides of the plate were used as working surfaces (there are smooth, worn-out spots on both sides). On one side there is a small hollow, which was identified as a pestle-hollow. The diameter of the hollow and the size of the “spools” from the pit No. 2667 below of the cultural layer 1390 is the same as on the diameter of the pestle-hollow on the stone slab from the cultural layer (Plate 2/2).

– In pit No. 2667, which is situated below the Boleráz cultural layer No. 1390, a “spool” was also unearthed. This object and another stone plates identified as grinder equipment (lower and upper part), was most likely used for multiple purposes. These toolkit were probably used for pulverizing softer materials such as salt or paints, because the grain-size of the stone slab is fine and the upper part of the grinding equipment, the pounders/pestles is a of soft, burnt clay “spools”.

– In pit No. 2006, the “spool” was found together with a clod of ochre. In the neighboring pit No. 2607, a quartzite hand-stone was unearthed, with remains of red paint on it. It is likely that the two objects were involved in the same procedures (Plate 3).

2. Pounder/pulverizer or stamp?

“Spools” were discovered in pit No. 2653 from the Boleráz Period, near pit No. 2595 also from the Boleráz Period, in which, among other finds, a pintadera was discovered with red paint remains on its surface (Plate 3/5).

I think that especially those tools are suitable for that function which are rougher, larger sized, and present blowing marks on the margins or surface of the obliquely worn-out or hollow endings.

At Vučedol–Streim/Vineyard site, during the excavation of pit No. 6, in Grave 3, beside the human remains one “spool” was also discovered (very early Vučedol Culture, published as two-based stamp-seal).\(^11\)

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\(^10\) W. Matthias, op. cit. (n. 7), pp. 390–391; Abb. 7.

Other optional-application possibilities on the basis of archaeological observations:

3. Cooking; aid during the firing of pottery

This possibility can be closely linked to the above-presented option of salt-water evaporating. The Early Bronze Age Bell Beaker settlement at Nola in Italy was destroyed by the eruption of the Vesuvius. Near Nola, at the foot of the Vesuvius, volcanic ash preserved such settlement features and objects, which, due to the decomposition of organic materials, are completely missing from ordinary excavation sites (for example the roof structure of houses, food in pots, human bodies). In one of the houses food was being prepared at the moment of the eruption. One of the pots stood on a spool-like stand (Plate 4).12

Similar objects were used in the Roman Period during the firing of terra sigillata: such items were put between ceramic pots so that these should not touch each other while being fired.13 Accordingly, “spools” might have been used as an aid during pottery production.

4. Weaving and Spinning

Ezerovo II (Bulgaria, Black Sea Coast, near lake Varna, Early Bronze Age): sandglass-shaped perforated “spools” were excavated, and are listed as remains of textile craft (bobine/bobbin). On one of the items (No. 21), a carbonized woolen thread was wound (Plate 4/2).14 It is likely that the southern, Balkan spool finds were the basis for the Central European terminology and also for the definition of their function (see the Hungarian name: “spulni”). Beyond this geographical region, without doubt, this task is also most frequently associated with textile craft. Still, compared to the finds of the Baden Culture, there is a vital difference, namely that the “spools” from the Balkans are typically perforated longitudinally, which is not characteristic of the majority of the Baden finds. There is only one “spool” in the Boleráz/Baden publications, which is perforated in the central part (Nitránsky Hrádok–Vysoký breh, blok 21/54).15 In many cases “spools” were found together with spindle-whorls at the Balatonőszöd–Tetemtői dűlő site (pits No. 1594, 2298, 2606, 2684, Baden cultural layer No. 925: Figure 1.2). Thus, it is possible that some of the “spools” were used for such purposes in the Boleráz/Baden periods. Some find can identify as a bobbin on the base of the use-wear traces of the threads (e.g. Hlinsko op. cit. in N. 5).

5. Braid-clasp

The basis for this analogue is a unique anthropomorphic figurine from Răuceşti (Romania), dated to the Cucuteni Culture, Phase B.16 The complex connections between the Cucuteni–Tripolje Culture and the Boleráz/Baden cultures have been demonstrated in various cases.17 From the cited female figure only the torso is preserved, representing the upper part of the human body: the head is schematic, the eyes and the line of the nose are superficially portrayed. At the back part of the head, there are two holes, one below the other, on both sides. From the occiput down to the middle of the back there are long lines – which most probably stand for a plaited hairstyle – with a “spool” at the end (Plate 4/3).

In my opinion those “spools” are suitable for this function, which are small, and delicately crafted. In this case those pieces have to be emphasized which are richly ornamented, to mark either their magic/religious or

15 V. Nĕmejcová-Pavúková, Sídlisko bolerázskeho typu v Nitránsky Hrádku / Siedlung der Boleráz-Gruppe in Nitránsky–Hrádok, in Slov Arch, XII/1, 1964, pp. 163–268, Abb. 25.5. The typically perforated items are characteristic for the later, Bronze and Iron Age periods at the Balkan, and they were spindle-whorls, see e.g. S. Mauel, Die Spinnviertel und Webgewichte der bronze- und eisenzeitlichen Siedlung von Kastanas. Zur Textilproduktion Nordgriechenlands im 2. vorchristlichen Jahrtausend, University of Copenhagen, unpublished MA dissertation 2009, www. auth.academia.edu/SaschaMauel, Teil 1, Abb. 18.10–19; or weight of the warp-weighted loom in not perforated form: ibidem, Abb. 38.9, 41–42.
an ownership status. These Copper Age finds are usually described in publications as pintaderas or idols. Interestingly, the tattoo-like motifs on the leg of a massive clay anthropomorphic figure found at the tell of Sudievo resemble the pattern of a “stamp” excavated at the same site.

**Additional potential analogues from cultural anthropological studies:**

6. **Head support / seat support**

Marcel Mauss gave a famous lecture on the techniques of the human body in 1934 (Part VI). In his work Mauss presented the sequence of conscious and unconscious practices connected to the human body, which vary depending on geographical as well as cultural regions. The bodily behaviors have their characteristic features in every human society. Mauss argues that these habits are closely related to edification, public agreement, fashion and authority, and they are acquired by imitation and education. Since the body is the earliest and primary tool of the humankind, the techniques of the body are represented in everyday and ritual aspects to the same degree.

Among the techniques of the body I would like to reflect here on some aspects of the sleeping practices. Among those communities, who sleep on the ground (first of all in Central Africa around 15° latitude, in the tribal civilizations’ zone, but the list could be started with the ancient Egyptians) various forms of head supports exist, which are mostly used to prevent creeping insects and bugs from getting in contact with the people while sleeping.

Such very simple, spool-like supports were documented in the pastoral, cattle-breeding societies of Central Africa. The illustration comes from north-western Uganda, from the territory of the Karamodzsong tribe, as documented by Petr Jahoda in 1998, in the main street of Namalu, the centre of the community. During daytime local inhabitants habitually carry such items with them, using them as a seats, whereas they lay their heads on them during sleeping (Plate 4/4).

**CONCLUSIONS**

In this study various or, in some cases, connectable usage-forms of the Boleráz/Baden “spool”-find group were presented, as referable to archaeological and anthropological analogues. It is likely that this object was a multifunctional tool, whose diverse functions can be separated on the basis of specific wear marks. There are examples either for the profane or the religious (idol, pintadera) application of the object.

Based on chronological-functional differences, I assume that the “spools” had basically different uses in the Boleráz and the Baden periods. It seems that the “spool” was a robust, multifunctional secular object in the Boleráz Period, useful mostly as a pillar/pounder/pestle. Further on, the object became a delicate, personal, and maybe prestigious item by the Baden Period. At the same time “spools” also took over the function of the decorated pintaderas of the Boleráz Period, whose previous forms are missing from the legacy of the Baden Culture. This transformed function can be followed up to the so-called post-Baden period too.

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19 M. Mauss, Szociológia és antropológia / Sociologie et antropologie, Osiris, Budapest, 2000.
23 Vučedol Streim Vineyard, pit No. 6 – grave No. 3 – A. Durman, op. cit. (n. 11), pp. 43–46; Sarvaš, tell-settlement – J. Balen, Sarvaš – Neolička i eneolička naselje, in Musei Archaeologci Zagabriensis, Catalogi a Monographia vol. II, Zagreb, 2005, T. 57.219, 58.220, 221, 222. A complete salt-producing apparatus was published from Podolie (Bošáca
The object and its original function most probably arrived during the formation period of the Boleráz Culture from the north-eastern communities of the Funnel Beaker Culture, which is known to be one of its main cultural bases. The earliest usage of the “spool” was detected in the central German territories (around Halle) with its archaeological context, and from the earliest appearances it was connected to the evaporation of salt. The production of salt developed to an industrial scale during the Anunjetitz Culture in the Early Bronze Age, and, being a strategic export article, it became the most important economic resource of the culture under discussion.

It seems that the purpose of the object is completely different in the southern, south-eastern regions. Lorenz Rahmstorf collected the finds of the Near East and the Aegean between 2500 and 2000 BC, and he also recorded the functions attached to “spools”: Andrew Sherratt linked them to metal-refinement and to polishing (metal crafts), whereas J. Thimme associated them to the shaping of Kykladian idols. Rahmstorf argued that in that period a new pottery-type (the so-called Depas-forms) was introduced, which may be the result of new eating and drinking habits in the investigated regions. The “new” drink was marketed in such Depas-type vessels, which were sealed with such cylindrical objects. According to the same author, this type of object was also involved in the developing of the copper-zinc trade, as various weight components or sets of a unified measure-system.

Moreover, I think that objects of this type can be connected to the churning of butter; still their exact role in the process is not clear. There is a female figure find from Gilat (the so-called “Fertility Goddess”–Plate 5/1), who is holding a churn-pot on the top of her head, while there is a pestle-like spool object under her left arm. The transformation, which took place on the Sinai Peninsula in the nomadic Ghassulien Culture, can be followed in some parts of Europe too, and after Andrew Sherratt these changes are often referred to as “The Secondary Exploitation of Animals”, and the “Secondary Products Revolution” (Plate 5). There is also a pottery-type suitable for churning in the Boleráz/Baden cultures, namely the so-called Fischbuttenförmiges gefäss/Fish-barked shaped vessel, besides, the delicately ornamented variants of this pottery are even more widely used as the original churn pots themselves.

The completely different function of the discussed object, appearing in both the Boleráz and the Baden periods further strengthen the opinion of those scholars, who argue that the Boleráz and the Baden societies should be interpreted as individual cultures rather than development phases as it was suggested previously.

Concerning the origin of the objects, the Boleráz Culture has strong Central European connections, whereas the material culture of the Baden Culture can rather be related to south-eastern Europe.

Still, I think there are numerous new aspects that could be investigated in connection with the pestle finds, if a comprehensive publication of finds were available. For instance at the Balatonőszöd site, spools...
were frequently found together with stone axes and clay spoons, constituting a feature which has not yet been explained adequately.

Table 1
List of spool finds from the Balatonőszöd–Temetői dűlő site (Figure 6).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Dating (Némejcová-Pavúková system)</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Size: Height (h), diameters (d) of the ends (mm)</th>
<th>additional finds in the feature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pit No. 387</td>
<td>58/20, 21–59/16, 17</td>
<td>Early phase (II.A?) Boleráz</td>
<td>thin, small, worn-out</td>
<td>h=63 d=24/25</td>
<td>clay spoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pit No. 1072–1096</td>
<td>50/12</td>
<td>Phase III Baden</td>
<td>a broken half-piece</td>
<td>d=30/22</td>
<td>the fragment of a male face mask</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pit No. 1405</td>
<td>46/10, 11</td>
<td>characterless</td>
<td>small, delicate piece, with straight ends</td>
<td>h=48, d=28</td>
<td>in super-position with pit No. 1406</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pit No. 1444</td>
<td>44/5</td>
<td>Phase III Baden</td>
<td>small, delicate</td>
<td>h=46, d=21</td>
<td>pedestalled beaker, bipartite bowl, stone axe, daubed-painted wattle and daub</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pit No. 1594</td>
<td>48/11</td>
<td>characterless</td>
<td>small, delicate</td>
<td>h=51, d=30/29</td>
<td>wagon wheel-model, spindle whorl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pit No. 2000</td>
<td>55–56/33</td>
<td>Phase II A Boleráz</td>
<td>two smaller, delicate pieces</td>
<td>h=40, d=29; h=40, d=31</td>
<td>intact small jug and pot; in super-position with pit No. 2011: stone axe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pit No. 2298</td>
<td>50/26</td>
<td>Phase I.B–C Boleráz</td>
<td>small, delicate</td>
<td>h=51, d=29</td>
<td>beside pit No. 2313 and 2297; including: a spindle whirl and a stone axe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pit No. 2313</td>
<td>50/26</td>
<td>Phase I.B–C Boleráz</td>
<td>small, delicate, sandglass-shaped</td>
<td>h=37, d=40</td>
<td>beside pit No. 2298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pit No. 2389</td>
<td>52/34, 35</td>
<td>Phase II A Boleráz</td>
<td>delicate item, in pieces</td>
<td>h=50, d=29</td>
<td>clay spoon, bone tools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pit No. 2397</td>
<td>50/31</td>
<td>Early Boleráz</td>
<td>large, rough</td>
<td>h=72, d=41</td>
<td>beside pit No. 2412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pit No. 2412</td>
<td>50/31</td>
<td>Characterless</td>
<td>large, rough</td>
<td>h=80, d=48</td>
<td>beside pit No. 2397, stone axe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pit No. 2606</td>
<td>47/30, bellow layer Nr 1381</td>
<td>Phase I.B–C Boleráz</td>
<td>rough, broken at the ends</td>
<td>h=72, d=43</td>
<td>spindle whirl, polished ochre clod</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pit No. 2653</td>
<td>46/26, bellow layer Nr 1367</td>
<td>Characterless</td>
<td>two pieces, rough, with round ends</td>
<td>h=83, d=38 h=81, d=47</td>
<td>polished chisel, beside pit No. 2652 and 2595 (pintadera)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pit No. 2667</td>
<td>50/36, bellow layer Nr 1390</td>
<td>Phase I.B–C Boleráz</td>
<td>rough, deformed, signs of slanting wear at the ends</td>
<td>h=75, d=41</td>
<td>below the cultural layer No. 1390 from the Boleráz Period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pit No. 2684</td>
<td>45/31</td>
<td>Phase I. B–C Boleráz</td>
<td>two pieces of delicate, sandglass shaped objects, the ends are slightly hollow</td>
<td>h=43, d=39 h=45, d=36</td>
<td>spindle whorl, stone axe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pit No. 2704</td>
<td>43/29</td>
<td>Characterless</td>
<td>rough fragments of the ends</td>
<td>d=54</td>
<td>in superposition with pit No. 2743</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baden cultural layer No. 925</td>
<td>44/7-(45/8)</td>
<td>Phase II.B–III Baden</td>
<td>fine, sandglass-shaped</td>
<td>h=38, d=31</td>
<td>spindle whirl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baden cultural layer No. 925</td>
<td>48/8</td>
<td>Phase II.B–III Baden</td>
<td>fine, sandglass-shaped</td>
<td>h=43, d=31</td>
<td>spindle whirl, polished bone tool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baden cultural layer No. 925</td>
<td>48/10</td>
<td>Phase II.B–III Baden</td>
<td>small, delicate</td>
<td>h=47, d=23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boleráz cultural layer No. 1360</td>
<td>48/31–49/32</td>
<td>Phase I.B–C Boleráz</td>
<td>fine, small, sandglass-shaped, deformed</td>
<td>h=34, d=36/37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boleráz cultural layer No. 1390</td>
<td>46/30, 31</td>
<td>Phase I.B–C Boleráz</td>
<td>large, rough, widening ends</td>
<td>h= 67, d=44/48</td>
<td>sandstone-plate, together with pit No. 2667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stray find</td>
<td>2 pieces, rough, large, slanting and with hollow ends</td>
<td>h=73, d=45 h=76, d=43</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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