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## **THOUGHTS ON CONTINUITY (The Baden culture)**

Until recent years, the study of prehistory in Hungary had been characterized by a kind of monolithic approach. The different cultures were treated as blocks which developed and existed separately. Prehistoric changes can be detected only through the appearance of new elements in archaeological finds. Whenever such a phenomenon observed, researchers reckoned great masses of immigrants who brought along the new elements and swept away the old ones almost overnight. This monolithic way of thinking was characteristic not only of the geographical but also the chronological approach, as research almost exclusively reckoned with consecutive cultures which closely followed each other in time. It was only during the recent years that emphasis has been laid on the analysis of the relations between the subsequent cultures both in time and space. This new approach has regard for the continuity of the population in periods when the cultures were changed, and research now reckons with an overlap between the old and the new cultures. The above-mentioned monolithic approach eliminated the concept of motion as permanent change and the concept of autotelic inherent development from the study of history, which thus became the archaeology of objects rather than the study and reconstruction of man and his environment.

In certain areas of research, among them in archaeology, the still existing respect for authority often hinders development. The statements proclaimed by "the authority" had for years been the only manifestations of continuity in one or the other field, and it took years before these tenets could be reconsidered and reinterpreted.

The Baden culture was the first prehistoric culture during which the areas of the Great Plain and Transdanubia constituted a homogeneous cultural block. In a geographical sense, this block even extended beyond the Carpathian Basin. Within the vast area covered by the Baden complex, the role of the Carpathian Basin was still outstanding as it was the centre of the culture and also a transit point of the various connections within the culture. Let us see now how the dialectics of continuity and discontinuity was manifest in this vast cultural block.

A culture is determined by the simultaneous presence of its specific criteria: area of prevalence, origins, chronology, economic and social particulars (settlements, burials, way of life, social structure, artefacts), body of beliefs, arts, etc. In the following we'll study only some of these criteria, relying on the evidence offered by the domestic finds.

The expert faced with the task of dating the Baden culture is bound to realize that the collation of the so-called short- and long-term chronologies would lead to marked extremes (Fig. 1). The researchers hold widely different views on the dating and duration of the Baden culture.<sup>1</sup>

The internal chronology of the culture shows a slightly more homogeneous picture. There is a general consensus among researchers that the earliest phase of the culture can be characterized by the Boleraz group.<sup>2</sup> However, opinions

widely differ when it comes to the dating of the last phase of the culture. For a long while following the publication of Banner's monograph the opinion had prevailed that in the territory of today's Hungary the late phase of the Baden culture could be characterized by four groups: the Fonyód, Uny, Viss and Kostolac ones.<sup>3</sup> Remarkably, research has still not clarified the criteria of the groups established by János Banner, and no decision has yet been reached on whether these should be seen as exclusively chronological or also geographical units. Nevertheless, the four groups are still widely used by researchers. Discussing the Fonyód-type finds, I. Torma conclusively proved that they can be dated to the last phase of the Boleraz group, i.e. that they are part of this culture.<sup>4</sup> According to the authors of the Esztergom volume of the Topography of Komárom County, the Uny group should also not be dated to a late phase.<sup>5</sup> The Viss group has direct links with Cotofen, although its internal chronology and the grounds for its separate treatment require further studies. As regards the Kostolac group, which is known to have 23 sites in the territory of Hungary, research has managed to prove — first and foremost on the authority of the Yugoslav experts — that it did not form part of the Baden culture. Instead, it was an independent culture centered in Yugoslavia which found its way into Hungary (for the purpose of trade) by the rivers Danube and Tisza.<sup>6</sup>

Instead of the above-named four "late-period" groups, there is a characteristic late-Baden pottery which had for a while existed parallel with the Kostolac culture. This period can be characterized by the sites Hódmezővásárhely-Bodzáspart, Palotabozsok and Pécs-Vasas.<sup>7</sup>

Having briefly surveyed the initial and closing phases of the Baden culture, let us now concentrate on the "intervening" period. This is where the problems become really marked! Opposed to the elaborate typology of the Boleraz period,<sup>8</sup> this so-called classical period has been left out of consideration so far. This central period has been made into a kind of receptacle which took in everything that could not be fit in the early or late phases of the culture. In this, at least, research has been consequent. However, the problem is bound to resurface if we take a closer look at the finds dated to this period. What we find is a lack of published material coming from authentic excavations in the territory of origin. A reassuring typology is also missing, without which it is impossible to classify the stray finds or establish an internal chronology. And still, scholars keep referring to groups, stages, types and phases, and they often borrow the statements of their predecessors without reservations. It is not going too far to assert that the classical phase of the Baden culture has as many groups, sub-groups and phases as many experts are studying it. Consequently, the internal chronology is likewise far from settled. To illustrate this point, let us collate the chronologies of E. Neustupný<sup>9</sup> and V. Nemejcová-Pavúková<sup>10</sup> (Fig. 2). The restoration of the proportions within this diagonally protracted chronology is expected to be facilitated by the scheduled publication of the full report on the excavation of the Budakalász cemetery and also by the publication of the other relevant excavations in Hungary.

In the period at issue, the term "topology" is almost exclusively used in the context of the pottery. The analysis of the vessel forms and decorations reveals that the fairly common Baden forms (bowls, cups, jugs, pots, amphorae) are easily traceable in both space and time throughout the culture, and the marks of their internal development are also clearly discernible.

On the other hand, there are the special pottery forms in the Baden culture (e.g. bowls divided into two compartments, fishing boat-shaped vessels, sauceboats, human-shaped urns, coach models, animal sculptures, headless idols, the

Vörs diadem and rhyton, etc.) which indicate the extensive relations of this period and also raise a number of intriguing historical questions. Our present knowledge is not sufficient for defining each and every find-type according to whether it was the result of an internal development or should be seen as a proof for external ties. Therefore we should keep in mind that these external ties differed markedly in both time and space, and their mechanical comparison could only result in distorted horizons.

In typology, we have the same problem to reckon with.

As we have seen, Nemejcová-Pavúková used a meticulously worked out typology and a chain of sites to draw up the continuity development within the Baden culture.<sup>11</sup> In my opinion, this typology is acceptable in its main conclusions, but it is over-particular, extremely difficult to handle and hardly applicable in everyday analyses. On the other hand, this typology clearly shows the present state of research on the Baden culture, i.e. that while the internal chronology and typology of the Boleraz group is worked out in detail, the so-called classical period, and especially in Hungary in the central area, has remained a neglected field. According to my calculations which I based on the material I had collected throughout the country, the finds of 15 excavations (out of the more than one thousand Baden sites in Hungary) have been published in the traditional sense in the period since the publication of Banner's monograph, and a few other sites have been published in preliminary reports.<sup>12</sup> This means a mere 10,6 % of the total number of excavations in the period since Banner's publication, and these publications cover only 1,4 % the total number of Baden sites in Hungary! The situation is practically the same in the neighbouring countries, and thus it is understandable that Nemejcová could not but establish such a typology on the basis of the few publications at her disposal. The finds of her own excavations she could use primarily for making the internal chronology of the Boleraz period are more detailed,<sup>13</sup> but this she did at the expense of the internal chronology of the subsequent period. I think this explains why Pavúková considers the duration of the Boleraz period excessively long<sup>14</sup> — in her version this period extended over half of the full duration of the culture.

Without going into further details, let me touch upon a few other problems.

I made no mention so far of the intriguing and as yet undecided historical questions of the Baden culture, and I also bypassed the questions related to its origins and precedents. The burials I also left unmentioned, because the lack of publications on the cemeteries would make it almost impossible to account for the variety of burial types during the Baden culture, the coexistence of the cremation and inhumation rites, the ethnic and religious backgrounds of the 432 graves of the Budakalász cemetery and of the family burials at Balatonmagyaród where only four graves were found, the practice of interring cattles and coach models, the symbolic burials or the human-shaped urns. Also, I did not touch upon the conspicuous lack of metals in the Baden culture, which was especially marked following the Bodrogkeresztúr-Balaton-Lasinja period, but which we haven't yet been able to explain. Instead of these aspects, I decided to concentrate on the cardinal issues of chronology and typology.

I hope that these brief remarks were enough to give an idea of how obscure this phase of the Late Copper Age is for the researchers. Remarkably, the bulky volumes on the Baden culture and its seemingly well worked out internal chronology would still suggest that this period is very well known, it is hard to say something that is new. However, if we scratch the surface and launch a critical analysis,

we find that the whole theory rests on dubious foundations. The chronological framework is far from clear-cut; the difference between the durations asserted by the various studies amounts to hundreds of years; the internal chronology has not yet been worked out in detail; and the number of the authentic and well-documented publications is still extremely low. For this reason we act under the pressure of necessity when we use the few stray finds that have appeared in print as the basis for conclusions on the pre- and post-periods, influences, relations, continuity and discontinuity, integration and disintegration, Badenization or horizons, etc. to mention only the most significant ones. Are we really able to fill these concepts with archaeological and historical content? Aren't we bound by the inherited methodological mistakes? Are we really able to define satisfactorily by archaeological means the length of time needed for the transformation and spreading over a larger area of a pottery form or decoration? Can we really rest assured that the major changes which are describable archaeologically also meant the introduction of a new culture in an ethnic sense? Are the currently used maps of prevalence accurate when there are signs of identical size to mark the isolated burial, the Budakalász cemetery which has 432 graves, the trace of a settlement which has been identified by two sherds during a field survey or the settlement at Pilismarót-Szobi rév which includes more than 500 Baden pits?

I firmly believe that these questions, along with our traditional methods, must be reconsidered. We should strive to be as optimally objective as possible to be able to define the *man* of that period, the reasoning creature, innovative brain and human communities of the day as determined by the technical-economic level of the period. Let me finally raise two specific points here.

It is an ever increasing demand rooted in our daily experiences that it's not enough to rely on the preceding publication when treating a specific topic. Instead, we have to reach back to the original source, and if possible it is also a must to study the object at issue. Obviously, the information might become badly distorted when it is transmitted through a series of publications. (For this latter point, a series of examples could be cited from the recent publications on practically all the historical periods.) Suffice it now to mention only two examples.

Discussing the string of beads unearthed at Balatonmagyaród-Hídvégpuszta in 1986, Nándor Kalicz underlined that a similar object was brought to the National Museum from a site at Köveskál. Checking up on the report, we found the following: the Köveskál find reached the National Museum in 1871. It consisted of a stone axe, five vessels, a string of beads and a number of copper tubes.<sup>15</sup> The finds were first mentioned by József Hampel in 1895.<sup>16</sup> After that, the find had for more than a century been lost to memory, except for a few scattered references to the pottery. Finally, a new and authentically excavated burial at the site prompted researchers to see after the earlier finds and treat them at long last as a find coming from a burial.<sup>17</sup>

The other example is the vessel which comes from Bodrogkeresztúr and which is ranked among the nicest pieces in the Kostolac group. The vessel was published in 1961 by J. Banner and I. Kutzián.<sup>18</sup> A few years ago, István Torma was thumbing his notes when he hit upon a beautiful vessel in the 1917 volume of the periodical 'Barlangkutatás' (Speleology). At first sight it appeared to be the same with the Bodrogkeresztúr vessel.

Finally, the inventory of the National Museum revealed that the findspot of the Bodrogkeresztúr vessel, which was itemized under the number 52.24.24, was

written in the records subsequently and by a different hand. Consequently, it was by accident that the problem of this "curious" vessel<sup>19</sup> could be solved: the vessel, which was published by Lajos Bella in 1917,<sup>20</sup> came to light in the Rabló cave at Herkules-fürdő during Ottó Kadic's excavations there in 1916. On this ground it can duly be considered an outstanding product of the Cotofeni culture.

Summing up we can state that the problems mentioned above could be solved only on the strength of publications of authentically excavated Baden settlements and cemeteries. It is necessary to define groups and to list their sites but this requires the availability of a sufficient number of publications. Starting out from those publications, we could shed light on the particulars of the internal chronology of the Baden culture, set out from the territory of origin right now.

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