

THE GRAVE OF BAKTALÓRÁNTHÁZA

The identically decorated four vessels, presented among others in this study (Pl. I. 1—4) were uncovered at Baktalórántháza, Eastern Hungary. From the report of the person finding them we may infer a cremation burial. A similar vessel (Pl. II. 3) and fragments (Pl. II. 1a—c) are known also in the older material of the A. Jósa Museum at Nyíregyháza. A vessel of the same type was unearthed at Nyírgyulaj too (Pl. II. 2).

These few vessels, having an identical form make up the group of finds which may be characterized as the find of the Baktalórántháza grave.

The group of finds is rather strange in this country, only the material of the Pécel (Baden) culture contains a couple of vessels which may be connected with this group.¹⁻⁴ The decoration shows several analogous features. The chief ornamental elements of Baktalórántháza are cuneiform grooves, punched dots and periodically repeated bands of grooved vertical lines. On the vessels of the Pécel culture we may observe these decorative elements separately or together, sometimes only the structure of the ornament.⁵⁻⁹ It is striking that similar features of the decoration appear on vessels of essentially different shapes.

Conspicuous parallels of the Baktalórántháza finds are occurring north of our country. Similar amphorae and funnel-mouthed vessels are known in the various groups of the extensive Trichterbecher culture, in the Megalithic pottery of Northern Germany and Denmark. The ornaments of these show a corresponding similarity.¹²⁻¹⁹

We meet the related features also nearer, in the Central German groups of the Trichterbecher culture, to wit: in those of Baalberg,²⁰⁻²² Salzmünde²³ and Nosswitz.²⁴⁻²⁵ These contain the handled mug too, missing in the northern sites. Some connections may be discovered in Poland;²⁶ numerous parallels are occurring naturally in Bohemia.²⁷⁻³¹ As a remote analogy the find of the Illmitz grave (Austria) may be quoted.³²

The local precedents of the Baktalórántháza group of finds are unknown, nor can we discover the like south of our country.

Most probably we may establish a genetic connection between the Baktalórántháza group of finds and the extensive circle called „Northern” Megalithic or Trichterbecher culture, in a manner that the northern areas were lending in this case.

The northern component of the Pécel culture is mentioned by many, also J. Banner attributes a considerable role to the influence of northern cultures.³³ We agree with him, however, in advocating the preponderance of the southern components.³⁴

We regard the ladder-like ornament occurring in the Late Pécel material of the Ózd find as having a northern character.³⁵⁻³⁸

Northern features are more emphasized in the Baktalórántháza find than in the Pécel (Baden) culture.

We do not know the details of the connections adequately so far; they must have been reciprocal in any case. This is shown by the route leading from the north to the south, i.e. Northern Germany—Salzmünde—Nosswitz—Ózd on one hand, and the duck-shaped askos vessel of southern origin occurring among the Salzmünde finds,³⁹ together with the small animal plastics appearing in this area⁴⁰ on the other.

Also the way of intercourse is uncertain at present. The fact, however, that we meet the Baktalórántháza finds in the north-eastern part of the country, cannot be a mere chance. Connecting links are missing in Transdanubia. We may suppose that influences, objects of commercial exchange or infiltrating smaller ethnical groups arrived immediately from the North or North-east along the tributaries of the Tisza or through the Carpathian passes along the ancient Polish route.⁴²

The connection with Bohemia seems more probable in the case of the Pécel culture. So the influences radiating from the North reached two distinct areas of this country by different ways, acting more directly in one case, more indirectly in the other.

The date of the connections and the chronological situation of the finds may be allocated between very broad limits. In the North such forms occur in the Dolmen and Baalberg periods at the earliest,⁴³ they are noticeable through the periods of the younger corridor graves, the so-called northern pottery of Salzmünde, Nosswitz and Bohemia, till the appearance of the Corded Ware and the Globular Amphora cultures. This is equal to 2200—1800 B.C. according to the chronology of Mildenerger.⁴⁴ It is but natural that the influence becoming typical of a certain group of finds could not be felt through such a long time.

The extreme time limits of the Pécel culture, considering the various chronological fluctuations, may be defined in 2200 and 1900 in our country, the end of the period being parallel to Troy V.⁴⁵⁻⁴⁶ Therefore, as regards chronology, the Pécel culture could have been in touch with all the mentioned northern groups.⁴⁷ This fact makes further investigation necessary.

The finds of Ózd, or at least some of them, may be dated to a later time than mentioned above. This is the earliest phase of the Early Bronze Age in Hungary, when the folk of the Vučedol-Zók culture and of the Hatvan culture brings the independence of the Pécel culture to an end, or drives the remaining elements of it to Northern Hungary and Slovakia respectively.⁴⁸

So we may state that northern influences were at work even after 1900 B.C., nay they gained in weight in the latest Pécel material, colouring it considerably. On this ground we may identify the age of the Baktalórántháza finds with the latest phase of the Pécel culture, fixing it after the beginning of the Early Bronze Age, i.e. 1900 B.C. It is possible that the end of the Salzmünde group⁵⁰ ought to be brought a little lower to the time after 1900 B.C. The askos vessel of the Salzmünde group characterizes the Vučedol-Zók culture, following that of Pécel in this country; the small animal plastics are the features of the Late Pécel material of Ózd and the Early Bronze Age Hatvan culture. This leads to the coevity of Salzmünde, Ózd, Baktalórántháza and Hatvan. This coincidence in time may naturally refer to the late phases of the Salzmünde and Ózd groups, but to the early ones of the Hatvan culture. Influences attributable to the Trichterbecher culture are found also in the material of the Hatvan culture.⁵¹

Cremation was unusual in the northern circle. Setting a sporadical instance within the Bodrogkeresztur culture aside,⁵² it appears in our country only with the Pécel culture, having an uncertain origin. It becomes generally typical only in the late phase of this culture, i.e. at the date of the Ózd finds.

We may state with certainty, however, that the custom of cremation in the Pécel culture and the Baktalórántháza group of finds were closely

connected phenomena ; the specific new custom of the local Pécel folk developed and prevailed on a grand scale here. This custom, becoming common, linked the two groups of finds closer to each other than the related features used in the decoration of vessels. So the immediately received northern influences, proved as regards the Baktalórántháza group of finds, were possibly touching local traditions.

Nándor Kalicz

