

TWO NEW ENTHRONED IDOLS FROM SZEGVÁR-TÜZKÖVES

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1. The well known Neolithic settlement of Szegvár—Tüzköves (County Csongrád, SE Hungary) covering an area of 11 hectares is located at the shore of the former Kontra lake.¹ According to observation, the houses of the Neolithic settlement were built along the rim of this particular elevation encompassing the Kontra lake. The first settlers were in full knowledge of the favourable position offered by this site; that is, they took advantage of two adjacent environmental regions; the marshy areas, rich in flora and fauna, of the former lake shore to their west, and the previously mentioned elevation, on which cultivation and animal husbandry could be practised, to their east.

Although the site was known since 1892² the first systematic excavation of this site was only carried out in 1955, a rather late date.³ This rescue dig was followed by subsequent excavations in 1956, 1957, 1963 and 1964 respectively, conducted by J. Csalog.

In 1970 J. Korek undertook the difficult task of resuming the excavation of Szegvár—Tüzköves, a site already in the „lime light” of archaeological interest. The specific aim of the fresh excavation was to determine the extension of the settlement.⁴

The results of these digs showed that the Szegvár—Tüzköves settlement was in fact a tell, the thickness of its cultural deposits varied from 180 to 250 cm. These deposits could be divided into two main habitation levels each subdivided into several building layers. Between the two main habitation levels a 40 cm thick sterile humus layer was observed.

A characteristic feature of the site is the groupings of houses relatively distant from one another (8—20 m). In addition, the houses were renewed on the same spot, sometimes five-six times, thus creating thick cultural deposits in a short span of time.

¹ Unfortunately the site report was not published and the articles about Tüzköves deal mainly with individual site features especially with cultic artifacts. These are the following (published by J. Csalog): Újkőkori idolkaink arcformájának kérdéséről. *ArchÉrt* 1957, 207—211; Short report on the first dig; *Arch Ért* 85 (1958) 83. 201—202; Das Wohnhaus „E” von Szegvár—Tüzköves... *Acta ArchHung* IX. (1959) 95—114; Die Anthropomorphen Gefässe und Indolplastiken von Szegvár—Tüzköves. *Acta ArchHung* XI (1959) 7—38; Die Krummschwert des Idols von Szegvár—Tüzköves *Acta Arch Hung* XII (1960) 57—68; Tüzfúró és fúró az őskorban. *MFME* (1963) 3—19; A legújabb kökénydombi fonatlanymat tanulságai *MFME* (1964—1965) 17—45; Thronendes Frauenidol von Szegvár—Tüzköves. *Prähistorische Idolkunst* (1973) München. 20—23; A cernavodai idolkok és a beszélő maszk. *ArchÉrt.* (103) 1976.

² *Farkas S.*, A szegvári kőkori leletekről *Arch Ért.* (1982) 69—70.

³ *Csalog J.*, *Arch Ért* 1957/1. 84. See also Archives of MNM (Hungarian National Museum); Inv. number: 453. Sz. VII.

⁴ *Korek J.*, *Arch Ért* (1971) 268. See also; *Korek J.*, A tiszai kultúra. (1973) Manuscript. I am grateful to J. Korek for allowing me to study his unpublished dissertation on the Tisza culture which proved to be the only summarized source of the first five years of excavation.

It seems as though the settlement was composed of 25 to 30 houses at any one time. The lowest level was naturally larger in area than subsequent building strata.

Features consist of graves, open air ovens and hearths, storage and other types of pits, which were originally dug for the purpose of obtaining clay, but later filled with kitchen refuse and debris from collapsed houses. At the end of the 1970 season a total of 65 graves were registered, which were grouped in the then unoccupied areas of the settlement. These burials were assigned to the two main habitation phases of the site.

J. Csalog considered all cultural material to be that of the Tisza culture including late Szakálhát finds yielded by the lowest levels. However he mistakenly assigned the age of the tell to Chalcolithic.⁵

According to observations made by the author during the 1978 field season,⁶ the cultural strata number three as opposed to the two previously designated. The lowest level composes rubbish pits apparently sunk through the sterile subsoil into the virgin soil, containing characteristic artifacts of the late phase of the Middle Neolithic Szakálhát group. It should be mentioned here that similar levels, i. e., basal levels yielding Szakálhát material are commonly found in Tisza tells in SE Hungary. A transitional layer overlays the rubbish pits and is, in turn, overlain by the uppermost destruction level of the full-fledged Tisza culture.

While there were no complete houses uncovered in the area excavated in 1978 the three partite cultural sequence is supported by amorphous sections of housefloors covered by wattle-and-daub debris.

During the 1978 rescue operations 8 additional contracted burials came to light. These burials, based on their burial goods and depth, seem to represent the two main occupation phases; however, in the opinion of the author some of them (i. e. the deepest ones) may well be the burials of the first inhabitants; that is, the late Szakálhát people.

To date, the size of the excavated area totals 1360 m². Furthermore, 73 graves were discovered during the six seasons of excavation. They can be divided into groups that are located between such site features as houses, rubbish pits, hearths and grain-bins and so on.

2. At present the site is occupied by the dairy farm of the „Puskin” Agricultural Cooperative, which includes an office building, a number of stalls and ensile trenches. In 1970—71 earthworks were begun in preparation for the building of new stalls on the Túzköves elevation. During the digging of the foundations (the ground was disturbed to a depth of 1 m) Mr. Pál Bónus, one of the workers, continually collected in an orderly manner a number of the artifacts, which were uncovered, and later donated them to the Koszta Museum. The majority of his collection reflects the fact that only the whole, exceptional and recognizable artifacts (mainly chipped and polished stone tools) were kept. Aside from the three nearly complete pots (see below) the ceramic finds further illustrate the deliberate sorting; 10 assorted sized and shaped net-and-loom-weights and 3 fragments of one of the herein described idols.

The pots can definitely be assigned to the developed phase of the Tisza culture;

⁵ Csalog J., *Acta Arch Hung* XI (1959) 10 and 33.

⁶ Archives of the KJM (Museum of József Koszta), Inv. no: 984.

⁷ The sex of the idol is not unquestionable. Although the nudity and the similarity to the sickle-bearing number I. idol of Szegvár suggest a male deity. For further information see the summary article on male figurines by Makkay J., *The Chalcolithic Male Relief from Villánykövesd and the Earliest Male Figurines of South-East Europe*. *JPMÉ* 13 (1968) 39—62.

the first is a miniature flask with cylindrical neck. Its shoulder exhibits two horizontally perforated plug handles, one on either side. The second is a thin walled semi-globular bowl and the third is the ring stand fragment of another bowl.

There is a strong probability of a direct cultural association between these Tisza pots and the idol fragments described below. In other words, we can comfortably say that the idol fragments too belong to the fully developed phase of the Tisza culture.

ENTHRONED IDOL: 3 FRAGMENTS

A nude, possibly male,⁷ figure (Plate 1—2.)⁸. He arrived in a fragmented state. The head of the idol was apparently broken in its original Neolithic context judging from the limestone coating of the breakage. The torso is hollow and appears to be slightly reclining which gives the impression of a dignified stature. The right arm is bent at the elbow and is resting below the breast. Although the left arm is missing we may suppose that it lay in the same position. The nipples are represented by two little knobs. The back is convex in shape and is extant to the posterior region, although is no common surface between the torso and the throne fragment. With the exception of the neck breakage the idol was fragmented during its discovery.

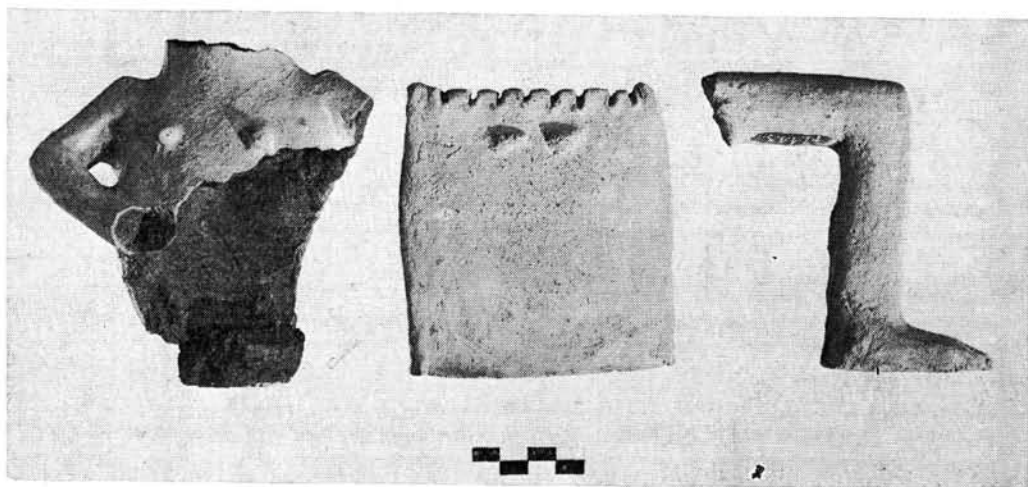


Plate 1.

Of the portable, stool-like, slightly convex throne only the right square-shaped panel is preserved. Eight vertical incisions are exhibited on the top edge of the fragment which could be interpreted as the stylized version of the joint between the woven sitting surface and the wooden side panel. Approximately 1 cm below the incisions two small applied knobs are to be seen which are most likely imitations of a handle.

⁸ The idol was photographed by *K. Kónya*. KJM Inv. no. 72. 1. 1.1—3.

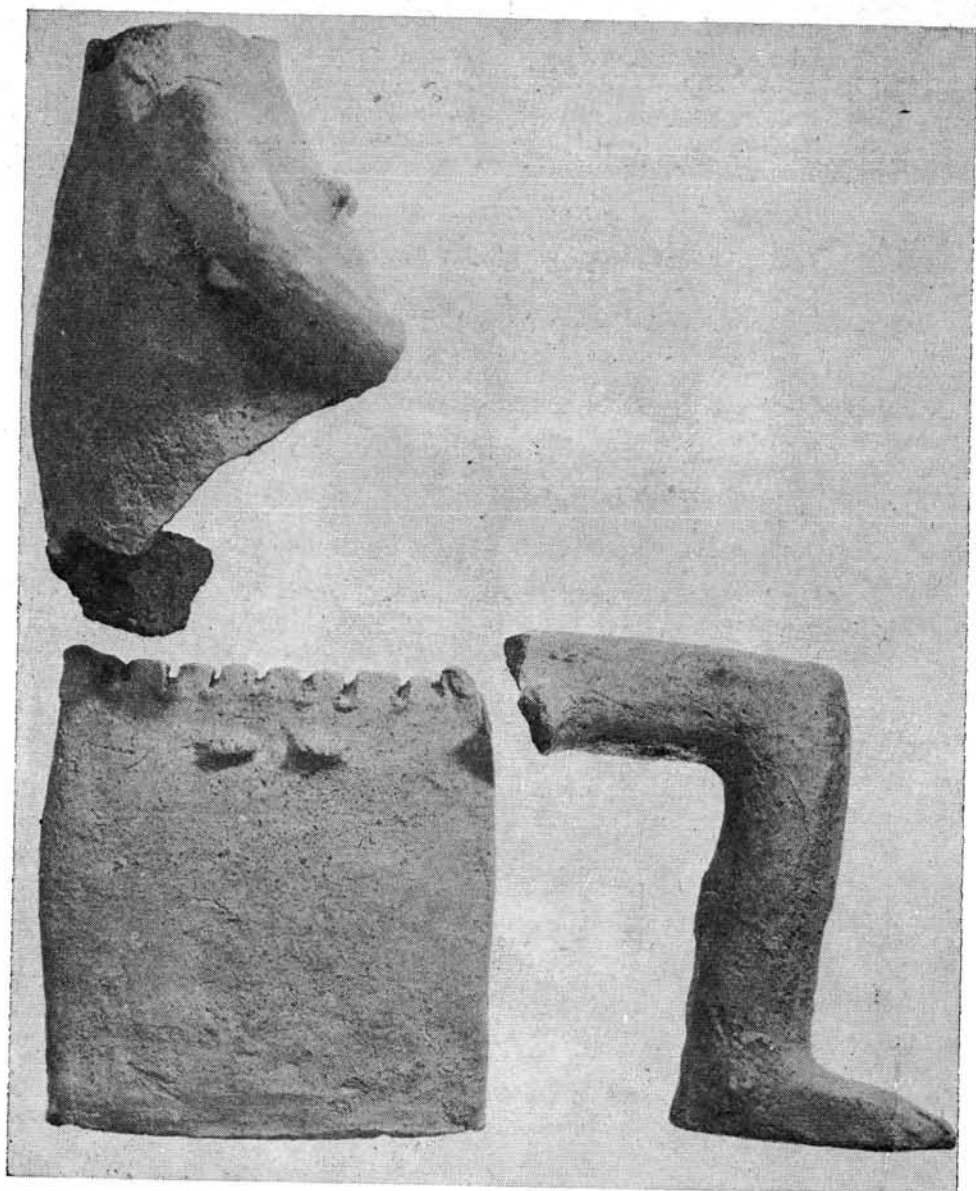


Plate 2.

Measurements

Max. height of the torso: 11,5 cm; Max. height of the leg: 10 cm; The height of the throne: 9,6 cm; The width of the throne: 9,6 cm; Thickness of the throne: 1,7 cm;

The third fragment is a solid leg and foot bent at the knee with a broken surface at the top of the thigh which connects neatly with the corner of the throne panel. The ankle is represented by an applied little lump of clay, while the calf is suggested by another slight clay appliqué. A fresh breakage is visible along nearly the entire in-step region of the foot, from which it is assumed that the feet were attached. The statue is made of finely blended, sand-tempered clay fired to a terracotta colour on the exterior surfaces of the torso and the throne, while the interior and broken surfaces are homogeneous black. After modelling, all surfaces were coated with a thick slip in order to obscure the joints. The finishing touches on the back of the torso are evidenced by parallel striations made by a smoother, probably bone.

The lower arm, the interior bend of the elbow, the foot and the back of the knee exhibit faded traces of red crusted painting. Since the extremities were coated with a hematite slip it is suggested that the remainder of the statue was originally likewise painted.⁹

Although the fragmented condition of this find is a disadvantage from the viewpoint of the public, like every cloud this too has a silver lining; in that the manner of manufacture, visible only from the interior, comes to light. In addition, the above idol stands as a caution to future Neolithic researchers against abstract and overly complex reasons (i. e. magical and religious) for the fragmentary condition of larger, hollow statues, though it cannot be excluded that in some cases religious rites may be called upon as explanations.¹⁰ It must also be considered that breakages often occur at weak points created by the manufacturing technique. Therefore it remains the task of the archaeologist to observe the minutiae of the context in order to try to determine the cause of these fractures.

Method of manufacture

The realization as well as the size (estimated on the basis of the extant fragments to be 26 cm) extraordinarily resemble the well known „sickle-god” from the same site.¹¹ It is the opinion of this author that the barrel shaped trunks of both statues were formed by pressing the clay into a leather pad which was previously prepared for easy removal. This is indicated by the finger prints evident on the interior of the torso. The trunk portion was subsequently closed by a thin clay layer, after which the throne panels were modelled. The panels were then applied to the posterior by adding another wet clay layer. Holes were perforated into the bottom anterior as well as the neck (Fig. 1.) using either a cylindrical tool or simply the finger. At these junctures were joined the solid head and the legs ending in pegs.

The arms were separately modelled and thereafter attached to the body, resulting in indentations between the neck and the shoulders.

⁹ *Csalog J.*, *Acta Arch Hung XI* (1959) 28: „Die Oberfläche der Schenkel war von deren Mitte gegen die Knie mit roter Ockerfarbe bemalt.”-wirtes Csalog about the crusted paint of the legs of the No. I. idol which is the closest analogy of the herein described new find.

¹⁰ *Höckmann, O.*, *Idolplastik der Teiss und der Bükk Kultur. JRZ 13*, 1966 (1968) 8.

¹¹ Primary source: *Csalog, J.*, *Acta Arch Hung XI*. (1959) 24—29. Fig. 7—10. See also *Makkay, J.*, *Early Near Eastern and South East European Gods Acta Arch Hung XVI*. (1964) and *Makkay, J.*, *A szegvár tűzkövesi újkőkori férfiszobor és a föld és ég elválasztásának ősi mítosza. Arch Ért* (1978) 2. 164—183. — The name „sickle-god” was given to the statue by *Kalicz, N.*, *Agyagistenek, a neolitikum és a rézkor emlékei Magyarországon. Hereditas, Corvina Press. 1970. Budapest.*

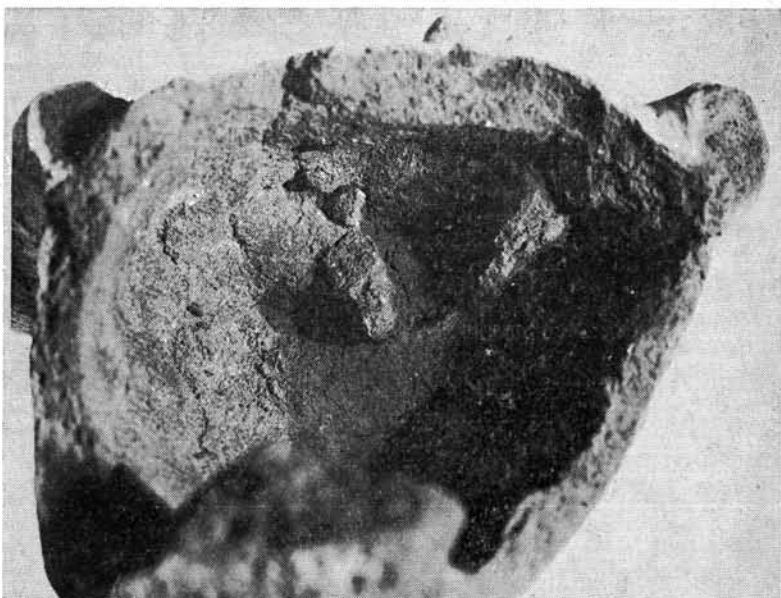


Fig. 1.

The hollow construction of the body can be explained in mundane terms; the practised potter surely was aware of the basics of his medium the clay. A statue of this size fashioned from sand-tempered clay must perforce be hollow in order to mediate against rupturing in the oven. This perhaps explains why the potter chose the safer, albeit more complicated technique.

3. Nearly the complete inventory of cultical artifacts appear as early as the beginning of the Neolithic of the Carpathian Basin.¹² Included here are such objects as figurines, altars and anthropomorphic vessels of all shapes, sizes and perhaps even functions. Still it is undeniable that the Tisza culture represents the peak of an artistic and quantitative expression for these phenomena. Most worthy of note is the monumentality, if not in size, then in presentation of the enthroned male and female gods and goddesses.¹³ The predecessors of these early deities can be seen among the finds of the Middle Neolithic Szakálhát group which is almost certainly the direct lifegiver to the Tisza culture. In support of this it should be mentioned that such enthroned figurines are either missing, or they are rarer in the other contemporaneous groups.¹⁴

¹² *Kutzián, I.*, A Körös kultúra Diss. Pann. II. 23. Budapest (1944) See also *Höckmann, O.* Die Menschengestaltige Figuralplastik der Südosteuropäischen Jungsteinzeit und Steinkupferzeit. I—II. Hildesheim (1968).

¹³ There are differing opinions as to the status of the sickle bearing figure, namely *J. Csalog*, believed (*Acta Arch Hung.* XI (1959) 29): „Da es sich um eine Art Gottheit handelt wirkte in diesem Fall zweifellos die naheliegende Vorstellung irdischer Herrscher, allenfalls Stämmes Fürsten auf die Darstellungsart des kultisch verehrten überirdischen Wesens. „Additionally Csalog did not believe that the figure bore a sickle but rather some imaginative status symbol (Krummschwert). — I think that *J. Makkay* (*Arch Ért* (1978) No. 2. 166) most satisfactorily identified both the tool as a sickle and the beater as a god. — Another interpretation was offered by *I. Ecsedy* (*Two Neolithic Idols from Eastern Hungary*, *FA* 27 (1976) 50—52) which seems to the present author overly obscure.

¹⁴ Aside from a single idollfragment of the Körös culture (see *Racky, P.*, Újabb adatok a Közép

The seated goddess of Battonya—Gödrösök¹⁵ may typologically represent a transition between the slab-like idols of the AVK (Linear Pottery Culture of the Hungarian Plain) and the full blown statue series of the Tisza cultures.

Another such figurine is known from Szentes—Ilonapart and is now through nebulous factors in exhibition in the Leiden Museum.¹⁶

Only a 10 cm high solid, slab-like idol torso remains. The nipples are exposed; however the remainder of the chest is covered by an incised pattern of geometric designs which might represent a ceremonial dress. Similar modes of indicating clothing are to be found among the idols and anthropomorphic vessels of both the Szakálhát¹⁷ and the Tisza cultures,¹⁸ further underscoring the relationship between the two.

One final example of the above is the latest enthroned god from Szegvár—Tüzköves found in 1978 at a depth of 110 cm. (Plate 3.)¹⁹

This solid statue has a reconstructed height of about 10 cm. The maleness of the figure is indicated directly by its sexual organ and indirectly by its nudity. Notwithstanding the imitation of a spondylus armband on the left arm and a coiled bracelet on the right wrist. The presence of nipples does not contradict its assignation for obvious reasons. Aside from the headless trunk the right leg and the right side panel of the throne are preserved. The entire statuette exhibits scanty remains of crusted red paint.

As a whole it represents an ingenious combination of a slab-like statue and a vessel, that is, in side view it appears as a person carrying a container on its back.

This unique form further brings to mind the long standing debate between Prof. Banner and J. Csalog on the interpretation of the Venus no. I. from Hódmezővásárhely—Kökénydomb.²⁰ Although it must be said that we disagree with the accusative tone of Csalog's attack on Banner's reconstruction, this new idol tips the scale in favour of Csalog's interpretation. The discovery of the sickle-bearing god in 1956 together with the absence of the crucial part of the Kökénydomb Venus led Csalog to believe that the anthropomorphic vessel originally had a head. Specifically he reasoned that the slightly upturned and increasingly thick rim ended in a neck.

The total number of male figurines from Szegvár—Tüzköves then is three, the latest find inclusive. If we take into account three other finds from the site which are not statues although most certainly represent males, then the total number is six. One of these is an altar which bears two varied faces, this variation leads J. Korek²¹ to believe that they reflect a male-female dichotomy. The fifth male is displayed as a

Tiszavidék korai neolitikumához. Manuscript. 1976. 77.) we do not have any seated figurines of this early date. *J. Makay* has published a seated deity from Bicske a site is the Linear Pottery Culture in Transdanubia; Excavations at Bicske. Alba Regia XVI. 26. Fig. 6.

¹⁵ *G. Szénánszky, J.*, A szakálhái csoport idoltörödéke Battonyáról. Arch Ért (1977) No. 2. 216—220.

¹⁶ *Horváth, L.*, A Szentes Ilonaparti neolitikus telep. Manuscript (1979). Chapter V. 92—98. Thanks to L. Horváth for the use of his data.

¹⁷ Aside from the Ilonapart idol a cylindrical anthropomorphic vessel is known from Battonya-Gödrösök the surface of which is covered by a similar decoration: *Goldman, Gy.*, Gesichtsgefäße und andere Menschendarstellungen aus Battonya BMMK 5 (1978) 13—60. Plate VII. 2a-b.

¹⁸ *Csalog, J.*, Prähistorische Idolkunst... (1973) 20—23. Plate 17—18—19.

¹⁹ Inv. number: KJM 80. 3. 609. 1—3.

²⁰ *J. Csalog's* reconstruction first appeared in *Folia Arch.* 7. (1955) 23.-See also in *Acta. Arch. Hung.* XI. (1959) Fig. 6/ 3, while *J. Banner's* response can be found in *Germania* 37 (1959) 14—35.-The title of his article: Anthropomorphe Gefäße der Teiss-Kultur von der Siedlung bei Hódmezővásárhely (Ungarn). *J. Korek* was also against Csalog's reconstruction: *Folia Arch.* 11. (1959) 21

²¹ *Korek, J.*, Tiszai kultúra. Manuscript. 1973. 355.

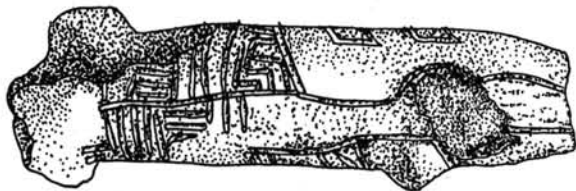
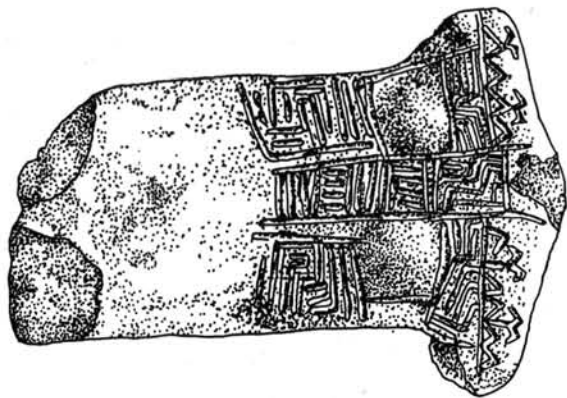
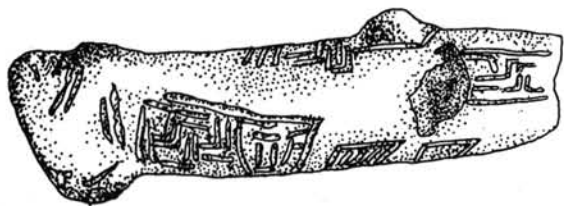
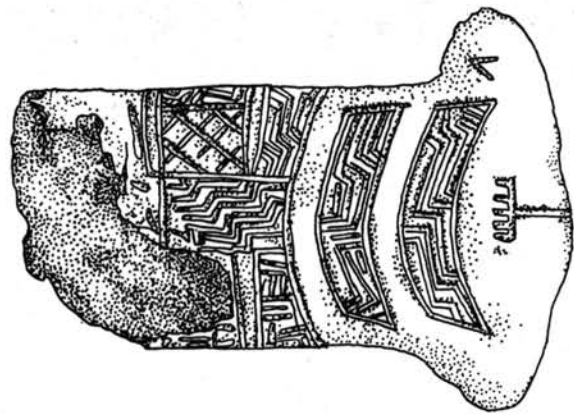


Plate 3.

bearded face of the number II. anthropomorphic vessel from Szegvár.²² The last is a phallic figure incised on the side of a vessel.²³

It must be said that these vessels, statues and incised, painted or applied anthropomorphs are problematic in that their sex is not always directly represented. Furthermore the features are often crudely or primitively executed which further complicates sex discrimination.

If we take into account the large cult storage jar from Hódmezővásárhely—Kökénydomb which bears the portrayal of either a dancing couple²⁴ or a scene of the sacred union²⁵ then there seems to be an increasing support for a god totally independent from the established goddess. Also speaking in favour of this theory is a male representation from Villánykövesd,²⁶ a site of the contemporaneous Lengyel culture. As a whole these males underwrite the extent to which the godly pair was known to the cultures contemporaneous with the Vinča C horizon.

The cultic artifacts as well as other features of the Körös-Starčevo complex are characteristically homogeneous from its southernmost extant in Thessaly to its northernmost occurrence in present day Hungary. On the other hand with the subsequent Linear Pottery Cultures there is an observable regional diversity which obscures any direct relationships with the South. The late Neolithic (more or less) in situ cultures or groups developed increasing local differences which even further complicates the task of the archaeologists.

Therefore it seems oversimplified to attribute Middle- and Late-Neolithic enthroned deities to a direct influence from Greece via the Balkans.²⁷

The above described idols dating from the Szakálhát sphere of influence points to the fact that in situ development of this art form must not be neglected, that the flowering of cultural artifacts at the end of the Neolithic cannot wholly be explained by external factors.

It is considered of utmost importance to recognize that the growing examples of male idols albeit fewer in number originating in Szakálhát strata are the predecessors to those of the Tisza culture. Of primary interest are the newly discovered slab-like idol of Tüzköves, the Ilonapart idol of the Leiden Museum and the painted representation from Szentés—Ilonapart previously known from the literature.²⁸

It is unnecessary to discuss in detail the question of the identity of the deities since this problem was dealt with excellently by J. Makkay in his Villánykövesd publication.²⁹ In short some of the males may depict either the son or the „paredros” of the Great Goddess and not necessarily the Great God himself. In fact it is probable that the earliest examples can be assigned to the previous categories. The potency of the later gods, namely those of the Tisza culture is significantly higher as shown by the unique sickle bearing Szegvár statue and the other (their number is five) male portrayals of the same site.

In conclusion it is hoped that the two herein described male examples from Szegvár shed some light upon the problem.³⁰

²² *Csalog, J.*, Acta Arch. Hung XI (1959) 14, Plate 3.

²³ *Makkay, J.*, JMPÉ 13 (1968, appeared in 1971) 56, Plate 3, number 6.

²⁴ *Korek, J.*, A tiszai kultúra. Manuscript. (1973) 355.

²⁵ *J. Makkay*, JMPÉ 13 (1968, appeared in 1971) 43, Plate 4, no 4.

²⁶ *J. Makkay*, JPMÉ 13 (1968) 39, Fig. 1.

²⁷ *Höckmann, O.*, JRGZ (1965) 5.

²⁸ First quoted by *J. Csalog* on the Third Archaeological Conference at Szeged (1965) in his paper: The informations gained by the excavations on Szentés—Ilonapart.” First published by *Gimbutas, M.*, The Gods and Goddesses of Old Europe 7000—3500 BC. (1974) London. 185. Fig. 180.

²⁹ *Makkay, J.*, JPMÉ 13 1968 47, 54.

³⁰ Thanks to Miss A. Ferenczy for translating the text.