BRONZE AGE RITES AND RITUALS IN THE CARPATHIAN BASIN

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Menace from the Afterlife?
Some Remarks about the Archaeological Evidence for Fearing and Banishing the Dead and a Contribution to Otomani and Füzesabony Sepulchral Rite

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Next to settlements and depositions, grave finds are the most important sources of information in prehistoric archaeology. Grave customs and burial rites allow us to distinguish and define patterns of funeral traditions which can be understood as culture-specific and indeed definitive aspects of human behaviour. Graves which are seen as aberrations of these rules are mainly denoted as ‘deviant burials’ (Sonderbestattungen, ‘special burials’ in the German terminology), a concept which is rather vague, since there is no precise definition about what such a ‘special’ burial actually is. This remark should not be understood as criticism since it is the conceptual ambiguity caused by the multifaceted character of these burials themselves which makes it so difficult to define this term clearly or find binding criteria to describe it.

The concept of special burials covers a rather wide range of meaning and content. In anthropology, where the term was first used in the context of paleodemographical analysis, it means the absence of certain demographic relevant sections of a population in burials, such as certain age groups or the numerical relation of sexes, etc. (Schwidetzky 1965). In cultural anthropology respectively ethnology the same term is used to describe the sepulchral rite and the ceremonies connected to it in a very active meaning while archaeology in contrast usually only is able to document the remaining material leftovers of these actions (as far as these are preserved). Generally, in archaeology special or deviant burials mean all burials different from what is considered the normative in the funeral rite of a group, community or society. This can be referring to the spatial situation of the dead and its grave, the grave construction itself, the treatment of the deceased as well as conspicuous or unusual grave goods and contents. The impossibility to cover the complete funeral behaviour of a prehistoric society is obvious. Too many traditions of diverse relevance may have asked for a special treatment of certain individuals for different reasons; there seems to be no chance trying to define consistent, universally valid features.

Totenangst and Totenbann
While the explanations and the appearances of special burials are various, their interpretation usually is surprisingly uniform (especially in Continental research tradition). Quite often these deviant burials are explained rather monocausally and connected to a certain diffuse fear of the dead. For lack of a better

1 A more detailed discussion of the German-language and Anglophone research on this topic and the concepts behind both terms can be found at Aspöck 2008.

2 For an insight into the younger discussion on the connection between special burials and fear of the dead cf. Meyer-Orlac 1982 and 1997 as well as U. Veits remarks concerning her works (Vért 1988).
English catchphrase it seems suitable to introduce the German term Totenangst (meaning exactly this: fear of the dead) and use it in the following. This assumed Totenangst is the reason why we are confronted with ‘the living dead’, ‘revenants’ and even ‘vampires’ in the archaeological specialist literature (Kyll 1964, 175; Wilke 1931). Again here lies a problematic vagueness in the meaning of this fear. Is it the fear of death and knowledge of the own mortality? Is it the fear of anything dead in general or a specific dead individual in particular? If so, does this mean people were afraid of hurtful actions by the dead out of their grave or of a real carnal return of the deceased? Adapted from later written sources and against the background of historical tradition a number of peculiarities in the context of burials (as discussed in the following) are often seen as protective measures against possibly harmful dead individuals. In contrast to the aforementioned Totenangst, we may apply and use another German term here to describe this situation: Totenbann (meaning the banishment of the dead). Most of the graves showing these characteristics are seen as measures to detain the deceased from a return in a very physical meaning. This is owed to the nature of these finds and features. Among those we find bound and tied bodies, bodies burdened with stones and such in an unusual position as well as separated and dislocated body parts.

An interpretation like this of course is a less subtle and most obvious one seen through the eyes of our very modern understanding of deference. One should not wonder that there is disagreement and criticism questioning explanation models like these (Meyer-Orlac 1997, 5f.; Schaub 2009). Maintaining the examples given before, it is probable that bodies might have been tied for better and easier transport, stones might found their way into the graves for other reasons as part of the ritual, unusual positions may be connected to post-depositional processes in at least the one or other case and dislocated body parts could hint at an earlier injury or be part of the burial rite (Schaub 2009, 6–10). Therefore the term Sonderbestattung (‘special burial’) should be preferred over ‘deviant burial’, since the first one itself is value-free and more neutrally than the rather negative connotated latter term (cf. Aspöck 2008, 29).

**Appearances can be deceiving**

The aim of this paper is not to deny that the special treatment of certain dead individuals might have been caused by beliefs involving Totenangst and Totenbann. However, it is important to disengage ourselves from postulating such interpretations based on the mere fact that a burial differs from what is considered the normative ritual. Special treatment of the dead does not necessarily involve a negative reason; it could also indicate an increased appreciation. If we could find other parameters supporting the concept of defensive measures against such deceased individuals thought to be potentially dangerous this would add to the interpretation of special burials.

To illustrate this point a number of selected examples of conspicuous burials from the Bronze Age Carpathian Basin should be addressed, focussing at the area of north-eastern Hungary and Slovakia (Fig. 1), especially the Otomani–Füzesabony cemeteries of Gelej–Beltelek and Gelej–Kanalisdülő (1), Hernádkak (2), Pusztasziszkszó (3), Streda nad Bodrogom (4), Tarnaméra–Uszoda (5), Tiszafüred–Majoroshalom, Tiszadráv–Tmetetődomb (6) and the Late Bronze Age burials from Mezőcsát (7). The attempt to approach the topic of deviant burials in the Bronze Age material confronts us with the – in this case problematic – introduction of cremation. Obviously this caused a large-scale change in burial customs and makes it even more difficult to address a differing treatment of the deceased. Especially in these times following the increased appearance of cremation we are confronted with a side by side of inhalation and cremation burials; both that numerous that it seems a bit of a stress to denote them exceptions. While in the Middle Bronze Age cemetery of Gelej nearly exclusively crouched burials were documented (Kemenczei 1979, 27), at other contemporary places, cremation burial was already adopted. The urn graves

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3. According to popular belief, a revenant – German: Nachzehrer from nach (afterwards) and zehren (feeding upon something or somebody) – would not leave his grave, but harm people (mostly own family members) from within it by exhausting their vitality (for more information cf. Schürmann 1990).

4. A number of examples and analogies are listed in Trauwitz-Hellwig 1935 and Jankuhn Et Al. 1978.

5. Chronological terms used here are always referring to the common Hungarian chronology systems (for an overview cf. e.g. Hänse 1968).

6. The close relation of these burials at Mezőcsát and their connection to the nearby cemetery of Gelej in terms of burial ritual and similarities in the treatment of the dead despite the chronological distance was pointed out by B. Hänse and N. Kalicz already (Hänse–Kalicz 1986, 71–73). Given that, including the features and finds from Mezőcsát was self-evident and only consequent, especially in the view of the secondary grave openings there as well as in Gelej and other related sites.

7. This does, by the way, raise the question from what percentage on and to what number we would and should exemplify such exceptional cases.
at Igrici–Matata (Hän sel 1968, 151ff.; Hän sel–Kalicz 1986, 67–70) from the Middle Bronze Age, and the not yet completely researched cremation cemetery at Biharszentjános (Bóna 1975, 121ff.; Bader 1998, 80 (annotation 15) may serve as examples. Among the burials at Mezőcsát, dating into the Late Bronze Age and having a noticeable shorter phase of occupation than the aforementioned sites, only five of a total of 39 graves were cremations. The new custom was clearly evident here but statistically of subordinate relevance. These cremation burials seem to belong to the earliest burial activity in Mezőcsát, chronologically interfering with the later phases of Igrici judging by the antiquated pottery in these graves (Hän sel 1968, 151ff.; Hän sel–Kalicz 1986, 67). This would mean that after the introduction of cremation there was a recurrence of the older tradition of inhumation burial again. What usually in the best case (with an accordingly large enough number of both customs) would have been considered as a bi-ritual burial rite and in particular cases (meaning an only low number of differing burials) as special burial turned out to be a dynamic, repetitive change in funeral behaviour.

This leads to the discussion of symbolic burials or cenotaphs (cf. e.g. Bá tora 1999) which were found at Gelej–Kanálisdülö and Gelej–Beltelek. Their interpretation has to be rethought in light of a parallel existence of inhumation and cremation burial customs. Often interpreted as substitutional graves for individuals who could not be buried for certain reasons or seen as cultic vessel depositions within burial grounds (Thomas 2008, 82–85), there is another aspect to be taken into consideration. In Hernádkak such burials without any skeletal material contained nothing but ceramics and had few in common with the majority of inhumation burials. But they did show a striking similarity with the number, shape and position of vessels enclosed to unurned cremation burials of contemporary sites such as Tarnaméra–Uszoda and Tiszaörvény–Tmetődomb as Schalk (1992, 37f.) pointed out. Also, Thomas (2008, 130f.) noted that the cremation graves from the cemetery of Pusztaszikszó just a few kilometres north of Gelej showed a related scheme of integration into the zones of inhumation graves like the symbolic ones do there. Together this should allow taking into consideration that we are confronted with unurned cremations in this case, too – probably not always recognizable because of unfavourable preservation circumstances.

8. Graves 21, 38, 80, 85, and 75 (Hän sel–Kalicz 1986, 20–33).
10. Graves 32, 66 and 71 (Kemenczei 1979, 7–26).
Other explanatory models, such as multiple-stage burials or differing rites carried out by minorities with their own sepulchral behaviour, seem suitable for related features, especially in view of ethno- 

graphic parallels.\(^{12}\) Two case studies may illustrate this: The Dayak of Borneo, for instance, follow a two- 

step burial rite. After the unburned body is buried for a certain amount of time, the ritual demands an 
exhumation and a new funeral of the discarnate bones. Since it is connected with extensive and expensive 

feasting, this second step often is delayed and not uncommonly completely left undone (Miles 1965). It is 

not hard to imagine how this would appear to be confusing in the archaeological record, when most of 

the deceased are present in an accumulation of loose bones among very few completely preserved skele- 

tons. Another unusual feature would be the burials of Vishnu and Shiva devotees in India, if it were not 

for the written record to explain this conspicuous situation. Although part of one ethnicity both groups 

differ in burial rites; one group practicing inhumation, the other cremation burial (Schlenther 1960). 

Depending on the structure of population, one of these funeral types may dominate the archaeological 

record making the other one appear extraordinary.

These examples demonstrate that a simple aberration from what is considered the norm in burial 

practice because of numeral predominance does indeed not define a special burial. In contrast, a minority 

of finds could lose their character as exception with progressing research and figures are about to adapt 

different points of view.

**Desecration of graves as part of the rite**

From virtually all of the cemeteries mentioned above a number of burials are reported as either 

missing certain body parts or only containing those (Kemenczei 1979, 27–30; Hänsel–Kalicz 1986, 

50–52; Schalk 1992, 81–84; Thomas 2008, 36–39, 89), which has become a *topos* in the interpretations 

of special burials as expression of *Totentanz* (e.g. Pauli 1975, 176; Olexa 2002, 89; Schaub 2009, 10f.). 

In Gelej we know of such graves, where especially the bones of the lower extremities are missing\(^{13}\) 
or such with not more than a single skull or mandible.\(^{14}\) Other examples are known from Hernádkak and 

Mezőcsát.\(^{15}\) Apart from the possibility that this could reflect one or another earlier injury during lifetime 

caused by an accident or brute force in some examples, the phenomenon of removed extremities is not 

unknown but rather frequent in the Otomani–Füzesabony culture (O'Shea 1996, 176ff.) and seems to be 

part of the burial rite. Furthermore, the majority of these partial burials (but not all) were obviously dis- 

turbed – the already existing graves were secondary opened (Pástor 1969, 82f.; Hänsel–Kalicz 1986, 

50f.; Schalk 1992, 81–84; Thomas 2008, 39). In Gelej–Kanálsdülő some graves exhibit signs of a secondary 

opening and manipulation as well: in grave 18 the skull was missing and the area of the pelvis was 

disturbed (Kemenczei 1979, 8), in grave 106 the jaw was dislocated (Kemenczei 1979, 12) and in grave 

137, again, the skull was disassembled while an additional skull was placed in the same grave (Kemenczei 

1979, 15).

From the 30 burials of the bi-ritual cemetery of Pusztaszikszó three disturbed graves are reported 

(Kőszegi 1968, 113), from Streda nad Bodrogom, also bi-ritual, 14 disturbed burials are known of a total 

of 67 (Polla 1960, 327–331). However, for both sites more recent damage must be considered (Thomas 

2008, 122 and 156f.). From Hernádkak there are a number of burials referred to as being found in a stirred 

up state,\(^ {16}\) but the vague sources make it difficult to address any details. We can only state that skull and 

chest section apparently have been disturbed in these examples and that objects were taken out (Schalk 

1992, 81f.).

Of the burials in Mezőcsát more than 50% were disturbed or partly disturbed (Hänsel–Kalicz 

1986, 50) and the damage clearly reveals why these graves were opened: they show a complete lack of 

metal objects, although small remaining rests serve witness of a more wealthy burial equipment in the first 

place. Grave 66 from Mezőcsát, for instance, shows a secondary pit in the head area of the body buried 

there. A headdress formerly located there (as a few remaining buttons and spirals attest), was removed, 

while a collar and an arm bracelet were left untouched (Hänsel–Kalicz 1986, 31). A similar picture is

\(^{12}\) Of course, such analogies are not proving anything, but demonstrate a wide range of possible models. On the use and benefit 


\(^{14}\) Graves 53, 131 and 150A (Kemenczei 1979; Thomas 2008).

\(^{15}\) Graves 4–5, 58, 61–63 and (103–) 104 from Hernádkak (Schalk 1992, 81); graves 9, 10, 15, 25, 34, 36, 47, 66 and 86 from 

\(^{16}\) Graves 43, 92, 110, 122 (Schalk 1992, 82).

revealed in grave 47 from the same site. Again, the area of the head was disturbed, the head being dislo-
cated. While a necklace was left at its place, yet again the headdress (from which only small remains were
present) was removed. Two more pits were directed at the arms, leaving nothing but a disarrangement of
bones and bronze fragments (HänSEL–KalIcz 1986, 27).

This well directed removal of grave goods while neighbouring areas of the same burial stay mostly
untouched is evidence for people acting here with a detailed knowledge of the grave and maybe even for
persons who were present at the burial itself. The question about the intentions behind this behaviour has
to come up. Was it all about the value of the material, thus indeed to be understood as grave robbery by
all means? Or are we confronted with a tolerated, even purposed mannerism here? The frequency of these
secondary grave openings as demonstrated in the examples above makes it a rather common practice. It
does not appear to be looting of graves in the meaning of grave robbery17 but more a rather regular ele-
ment of the burial rite (Primas 1977, 106f.). The minimization of destruction inflicted upon the dead
body underlines this and indicates some degree of respect for the deceased. B. Hänsel and N. Kalicz
(1986, 52) suggested a sepulchral rite including the opening of graves and removing of grave goods based
on a belief that the dead individual was only allowed (or needing) to possess the given objects as long
as their own physicality was given; after the decomposition of the dead body the more valuable objects
returned into the property of the bereaved.18

Obviously, this did not apply to all grave goods, not even to all metal ones, since some were still left
behind in the graves. Thus, it is probable that the removal of objects was not the sole motivation to open
burials again. A comprehensive rite with a more complex content has to be suspected behind this, most
likely connected to a cult of ancestor worship. Furthermore these objects removed from the graves and
therefore taken back from the dead could have been connected to another aspect of numinous nature, if
they were not to go back into the property of the living but offered to a higher force and withdrawn from
any profane use in this way. It was K.-F. Rittershofer (1987, 21) who noticed that numerous hoards
containing multiple elements of attire, so called Ausstattungsgräber (outfit / equipment hoards), are found
exactly in these cultural regions where the burials are manipulated and objects removed. The content
of these depositions seems to correspond with the missing (removed) objects in the graves,19 a thought
which also recalls H.-J. Hundt’s (1955, 107ff.) Totenschätze (treasures of the dead). Without going too
much into detail since this complex topic deserves and needs an analysis on its own going beyond the
frame of this paper, it is important to point out the depositions of the type Koszider and Tolnánemedi
(Bóna 1958; RütKAY 1983) and the objects of jewellery and attire accumulated there (especially pen-
dants); items, also playing an important role in ritual activity concerning burial and beyond, as will be
discussed in the following.

Amulet and talisman

If the aberration from burial rite does not suffice to understand special – deviant – burials as
expression of Totenangst, it is necessary to explicate what other parameters may have to be taken into
account for such an interpretation. This is also important because of the apparent conflict between the
disturbance of burials brought up above – be it a disrespectful act or intended part of the rite – and the
often claimed fear of the dead.

As a result of this, the role of grave goods must be re-examined. Especially objects destroyed and
therewith made unusable could be interpreted as being disturbed motivated through the fear of the dead.
On one hand they satisfy the duty to equip the deceased for the afterlife, on the other hand they also pre-
vent the real use of these items any longer. However, to think of this as a kind of banishment, Totenbann,
would also mean that a great many of dead individuals was put under the general suspicion of being a
potential revenant, considering the frequent appearance and distribution of this phenomenon.

grave openings are not unknown in Central and Eastern Europe starting on a widespread basis as early as the Chalcolithic (cf.
BERTEMES 1989, 131f.).
reference to the situation at the cemetery of Gemeinlebarn, Lower Austria, he speaks in favour of actual looting of the graves
for the material value of grave furnishings and points out the high degree of destruction done. Interestingly, he also mentions
a frequent disturbance of the skull area and he explains the removing of skulls from the graves with the fear of revenge by the
dead, which of course could be listed under Totenbann as discussed above.
19. For the correlation of hoard and grave finds and items of attire respectively jewellery in the Danube-Carpathian region cf.
especially SCHUMACHER-MATTHÄUS 1985, 126ff. and 140ff.
An alternative approach is more favourable. Burial furnishings usually can be divided into two groups: attire as well as personal items from the dead's property and additional equipment for the afterlife. L. Pauli (1975, 11) suggested a third group of objects with amulet character. The term 'amulet' is used here to describe objects which have been assigned spiritual powers, providing salvation and – even more emphasized in the frame of this paper – protection and defence. Objects understood in this way could have been of different nature and shape. They may have found their way into the grave as part of the personal dress in life and it is likely that a supposed protective character of these objects in a lifetime was also exceeded into the afterlife. In regard to L. Pauli's thoughts on this topic, the question at hand is whether grave goods interpreted in means of amulets have to be expanded in their meaning to another facet: what if at least some of them were used as a spiritual defence mechanism, not to protect the dead from dangers in the other world, but to guard the living descendants from possibly harmful deceased relatives and actually banish them right there in the grave (Pauli 1975, 171)?

Is it possible to apply this concept also to the Bronze Age burials introduced and discussed above? If so, where among the material could such thoughts best be based? When in many cases a large number of needles and buttons were reported found concentrated in the head area of these burials (HÄNSEL–KALICZ 1986, 56; SCHALK 1992, 68f.; THOMAS 2008, 75f.), the suggested interpretation of a garment or cloth originally covering the head or whole body is convincing, leaving these objects rather unlikely amulets.

A stronger approach suggests that such pendants were made of animal teeth, of which we know examples from grave 111 in Hernádak where three worked boar tusks were found lying close to each other (SCHALK 1992, 72f.) and grave 13 from Streda nad Bodrogom where two perforated wolf (?) teeth were found (POLLA 1960, 337). The finds of boar tusks have several analogies in their wider vicinity and especially among the grave finds of the Košťany culture in the eastern Slovakian Košice basin (SCHALK 1992, Abb. 25 and 26). Comparatively, the finds from Streda nad Bodrogom are unknown in other Füzesabony cemeteries but find parallels in the younger burials from Tiszafüred–Majoroshalom (KOVÁCS 1975, Taf. 27). In Mezőcsát animal teeth were found among the grave goods, too. While grave 7 contained the remains of a necklace made of dog teeth (HÄNSEL–KALICZ 1986, 14), in grave 15 a canine tooth of boar was found together with other remains of pig and disarranged human bones (HÄNSEL–KALICZ 1986, 18). Grave 87 is significant because it is explicitly mentioned as special burial holding the body of a senile man who was put into the pit head first. There were nearly no grave goods apart from two tusks of a boar, one at each of the temples (HÄNSEL–KALICZ 1986, 38). While this is seen as remaining braid of a cap or headband by the excavators and the deceased interpreted as shaman, one could also stress the apotropaic nature of animal tusks and their use as amulets (POLL 1975, 129; PRIMAS 1977, 101). However, it is necessary to determine that burial offerings of perforated tusks may reflect an older, widely spread tradition of such elements in common dress (SCHALK 1992, 72f.) and therefore are hard to differentiate from what might have served as protective charm. This is the general dilemma in addressing grave goods with amulet character; it needs careful and close observance to distinguish elements of attire (worn on the body) and an explicit addition to the grave.

Returning to grave 66 in Mezőcsát we have another closer look at its grave furnishings. As stated above, the headdress of the young woman buried there was removed when the grave was reopened again at a later date while a necklace (Fig. 2/15) was left untouched. The deceased also had a second necklace of four reverted heart-shaped pendants (Fig. 2/16–19) in her hand (HÄNSEL–KALICZ 1986, 31). Considering the other jewellery around her neck and the fact that pendants and necklaces apparently are not part of the common equipment in other graves – proof of corresponding jewellery is only evident from two more graves: remains of similar pendants from the secondarily opened grave 47 (Fig. 2/6–14) and one more (Fig. 2/5) from the badly preserved child burial in grave 51 (HÄNSEL–KALICZ 1986, 27–29) – underlines the outstanding character of these finds within graves. From Gelej–Beltelek three related pieces are reported (Fig. 2/1–3), all coming from just one burial, grave 68 (KEMENCZI 1979, 39). They might have been part of a necklet originally, together with four spirals and seven other beads found there as well. The larger of these pendants is crescent-shaped, the other two are smaller and of reverted heart-shape. Another

20. Pauli (1975, 185–190) also noted, that an increase of amulets in graves can be connected to periods of social change, which also go along with an increase in unusual burial practices.
22. While not present in the examples examined here, objects made of antler are known from burial contexts of the Otomani–Füzesabony complex as well. Therefore it should not be neglected to note their outstanding character among finds with an emphasized apotropaic meaning (Pauli 1975, 172).
crescent-shaped example (Fig. 2/4), but considerably larger, is known from Tiszafüred–Majoroshalom (Kovács 1984, 242).

Pendants of this type are common in the Bronze Age of the Carpathian Basin and are known in several variants and subtypes (HänSEL 1968, 115–118). Their character as part of female dress was pointed out with reference to their appearance and association in hoards and grave finds (BóNA 1975, 284ff.) and depictions on anthropomorphic clay idols (e.g. HÁJEK 1957, 323f., Abb. 5; RUTTKAY 1983, 12–14). The amulet character of these pendants was also suggested (MOZSOLICS 1988, 33, also mentioning their association with animal teeth), above all because of the connection to other types of finds interpreted in means of more refined, spiritual and cultic realms like the aforementioned clay idols and depositions (RUTTKAY 1983, 1, 9 and 14). Emerging in the Early Bronze Age and becoming more frequent in the Middle Bronze Age (HÄNSEL 1968, 145; FURMANEK 1980, 16–23; MOZSOLICS 1988, 33) they show a long lasting tradition (BóNA 1975, 285ff.).

There is a variety of classification and nomenclature in the archaeological literature concerning the different forms of these types of pendants and their various subtypes. Below are outlined only those two general forms appearing in the material discussed:

1. The open heart-shaped examples are formed by two arms bending downwards. Their backside is flat, the front often convex. There are several subtypes differing in how far both arms are mutually curved, nearly or totally touching each other and therefore closing the 'heart'. Another typological criterion would be the shaping of a central spine and its connection to the arms (e.g. HÄNSEL 1968, 115–118; FURMANEK 1980, 15f.)

2. The crescent-shaped forms appear like a sickle downwards opened, showing a perforated tong at the upper end and an extension (often larger and anchor-shaped, sometimes not more than a small tip) pointing down from the centre of the crescent. Variants are mostly differing in decoration only (e.g. HÄNSEL 1968, 121f.; FURMANEK 1980, 16f.).

The three specimens from Gelej belong to the earlier examples, especially the large crescent-shaped piece with its middle decoration having parallels in finds of the Koszider Horizon (MOZSOLICS 1967, 87f., SCHUMACHER-MATTHÄUS 1985, 36). The appropriate items from the Mezőcsát burials are
corresponding to the later forms according to Hänsel – the chronological unsusceptible variants 1 and 2 (Hänsel 1968, 115) and variant 7 (Hänsel 1968, 118) – showing the long lifetime of this group and their unbroken tradition especially in the sphere of the Otomani–Füzesabony complex. The crescent-shaped example from Tiszafüred–Majoroshalom shows a barely developed decorative tip in the middle – a basic type characteristic for the younger phase.

Despite this range of typological and chronological characteristics all those types are beyond question closely related, most likely representing the same motif. They can be regarded as anthropomorphic depictions as J. Blischke (2000, 34f.) demonstrated convincingly on the basis of a closely related pendant (made of sheet bronze) from a burial at Kisapostag (Mozsolics 1942, Taf. 1/86). J. Blischke was not only able to determine that they indeed depict a human with arms brought together above the abdomen (Fig. 3), he also pointed out a striking resemblance with postures and the top of the clay idols from Cirna in southern Romania and the arm position in inhumation burials of the Middle Bronze Age Carpathian region, where it seems to be a common cultic gesture.

The connection to the Cirna type idols has to be emphasized particularly. Figurines like these are known from a broad range of contexts. Reported finds include settlements and cemeteries alike. In the cemetery of Cirna these clay figurines are almost exclusively found in a number of children burials (Hachmann 1968, 369). It was suggested to read them as marker of individuals with a higher social rank (Reich 2002, 162) or even as guardian divinities (Schumacher-Matthäus 1985, 8). If this indicates a similar role and function as stated for the pendants, and if these also should be understood as representation of an idealized character in the meaning of a deity alluding to special status and rank, is open to question. A large number of these figurines apparently wearing the same pendants we find with the deceased in their graves and offered in depositions intensify the importance attached to them.

Bearing in mind the already discussed phenomenon of secondary grave openings and their role in the sepulchral rite, one can only presume why some of these objects with amulet character were left in otherwise emptied graves while another large number of similar items apparently were removed (and transferred into hoards?). It is unlikely that these few pieces were disesteemed or of lower value. More likely they are marking a somehow special person when staying in the grave, indicating the known and accepted apotropaic role of these symbols encouraging their interpretation as amulet.

One more example from Mezőcsát confronts us with a shackled female individual in grave 81, buried in a rather flat pit. The heavily smashed skull hints at an injury inflicted on purpose (Hänse–Kalicz 1986, 46). Was tried here to get rid of an unpopular, disliked woman as B. Hänsel and N. Kalicz suggest? Assuming that the trauma was not only inflicted pre-mortal but maybe even lethal, this could be considered a 'bad death' and therefore decisive for the special treatment (altering the violent act from a part of this treatment to its very reason). The concept of 'bad death' is known from ethnological field study. It describes the ill-timed death as well as one in an unusual way, i.e. death by violence (warriors, victims

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23. That figurine finds within settlements do not necessarily exclude a cultic interpretation is demonstrated by O. Diërich with his contribution to this volume.

24. This adds to L. Pauli’s (1975, 152) opinion, that the gifting of amulets is dependent on the age of a person and the time of its death (while he stated a dominance of amulets especially in children’s burials and those of young adults for the Iron Age examples he examined, the situation seems to be reversed here, replacing the stylized apotropaic symbol by a more concrete depiction).

25. Even J. W. Neugebauer, who argues for a very aggressive and comprehensive grave robbery in Gemeinlebarn, mentions bronze objects which were left in the looted tombs because of a certain symbolic value; although he prefers an interpretation in means of insignia or regalia (Neugebauer 1991, 126).
of murder and manslaughter as well as executed individuals), death by accident, suicides, death by disease and death in childbirth (SELL 1955, 3). 26

There is another example of at first glance unusual treatment experienced by the young women in grave 19b at Mezőcsát, who was thrown into the grave pit head first (HÄNSEL–KALICZ 1986, 48). As peculiar as this appears, the woman was treated commonly in the further process of the ritual. A later opening of graves together with the removal of a large number of grave goods was discussed in detail and shown above to be part of a complex burial rite. The individual in grave 19b was not an exception anymore – her originally wealthy burial equipment (of which only a piece of sheet gold remained) was taken out at a later time (HÄNSEL–KALICZ 1986, 48). While the original entombment was varied, the following rite was apparently fulfilled. The millstone found in this burial among the few remaining grave goods might be seen in context with working activity or even as symbolic gift. M. PRIMAS (1977, 103), for instance, pointed out the underestimated role of stones (although she was referring to unworked stones and pebbles) in the sense of amulets.

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26. That in the end such a sudden and unexpected death might be connected with malevolent and vengeful dead cannot be excluded (SELL 1955, 9) and may also lead to a special treatment of the deceased in terms of protective measures (SELL 1955, 191–199, 225).
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Fig. 3. The Bronze sheet pendant from Kisapostag, grave 2 (1) visualizes the anthropomorphic nature of heart shaped pendants (2) as well as parallels to postures of the Cirna idols (3). (No scale; after Blischke 2000, Abb. 5).
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PamArch  Památky Archeologické, Praha
PAS  Prähistorische Archäologie in Südosteuropa, Berlin, Kiel, München
PBF  Prähistorische Bronzelfunde, München, Stuttgart
Peuce  Peuce, Studii și cercetări de istorie și arheologie, Institutul de Cercetari Eco-Muzeale Tulcea, Institutul de istorie si Arheologie, Tulcea
PMAAE  Prace i Materiały Antropologiczno-Archeologiczne i Etnograficzne, Kraków
PPS  Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society, London
Pravĕk NŘ  Pravĕk NŘ, Masarykova univerzita Brno
Preistoria Alpina  Preistoria Alpina, Museo Tridentino di Scienze Naturali
Prilozi IAZ  Prilozi Instituta za arheologiju iz Zagreba
PrzArch  Przegląd Archeologiczny, Instytut Archeologii i Etnologii Polskiej Akademii Nauk
PZ  Praehistorische Zeitschrift, Berlin
RegBPA  Regensburger Beiträge zur Prähistorischen Archäologie
RégFüz  Régészeti Füzetek, Budapest
RevBis  Revista Bistriței, Complexul Județean Muzeal Bistrița-Năsăud
RevMuz  Revista Muzeelor, București
RGF  Römisches-Germanische Forschungen, Mainz, Berlin
SKM  Régészeti Kutatások Magyarországon
RocznB  Rocznik Białostocki
SAB  Saarbrücker Beiträge zur Altermumskunde, Bonn
Sargetia  Sargetia, Buletinul Muzeului Județului Hunedoara, Acta Musei Devensis, Deva
Savaria  Savaria, A Vas Megyei Múzeumok Értesítője, Szombathely
SCIV(A)  Studii și Cercetări de Istorie Veche (și Arheologie 1974–), București
SJ  Saalburg Jahrbuch, Berlin
SJA  Southwestern Journal of Anthropology
SlovArch  Slovenská Archeológia, Bratislava
SpJ  Speläologisches Jahrbuch, Wien
SSA  Śląskie Sprawozdania Archeologiczne, Instytut Archeologii Uniwersytetu Wrocławsokiego
SSUF  Schriften der Sektion für Ur- und Frühgeschichte, Berlin
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UPA  Universitätsonforschung zur prähistorischen Archäologie, Bonn
VAH  Varia Archaeologica Hungarica, Budapest
VAMZ  Vjesnik Arheološkog muzeja u Zagrebu
VHAD  Vjesnik Hrvatskog arheološkog društva, Zagreb
VMMK  A Veszprém Megyei Múzeumok Közleményei
WA  Wiadomości Archeologiczne, Państwowe Muzeum Archeologiczne, Warsaw
WArch  World Archaeology, Oxford, Oxbow
WMMÉ  Wosinsky Mór Múzeum Évkönyve, Szekszárd
WPZ  Wiener Prähistorische Zeitschrift, Wien
Zalai Múzeum  Zalai Múzeum, Közlemények Zala megye múzeumaiból, Zalaegerszeg
Zborník Bor  Zborník radova muzeja rudarstva i metalurgije u Boru
Zborník SNM  Zborník Slovenského Národného Múzea, Bratislava
ZIA  Zeitschrift für Archäologie des Mittelalters, Bonn