

SCYTHIAN AGE QUIVER MOUNT FROM THE OUTSKIRTS OF GYÖMRŐ (HUNGARY)

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PATAY, Róbert - SCHOLTZ, Róbert G. - SCARD, Alexandra. Kovanie tulca zo skýtskeho obdobia z okolia Gyömrő (Maďarsko). Príspevok sa venuje nálezu kovania tulca zo skýtskeho obdobia z Gyömrő (Maďarsko), ktoré v roku 2012 odovzdal do Košútovho múzea v Cegléde mladý darca. Zdobené bronzové obloženie tulca z Gyömrő je možné s istotou datovať do 6. stor. pr. Kr., presnejšie do jeho druhej polovice. S prihliadnutím na existujúce východné analógie nie je možné stanoviť, či ide o tovar získaný obchodom, miestnu imitáciu alebo ho vyrobili kočovní remeselníci skýtskeho alebo sauromatského (?) pôvodu. Keďže je geometrický štýl výzdoby hornej časti ramena spravidla nájdený len v Karpatskej kotlinе, je pravdepodobné, že predmet bol odliaty v Karpatskej kotlinе v prostredí Skýtmi ovplyvnenej alföldskej skupiny.

Kľúčové slová: skýtske obdobie, bronzové spevňovacie kovanie tulca, zbrane, ojedinelý nález;

Keywords: Scythian Age, bronze quiver mount, weapons, stray find;

INTRODUCTION

This paper deals with an interesting Scythian Age bronze find from Gyömrő that was donated to the Kossuth Museum, Cegléd in 2012, by a young man¹. The city of Gyömrő is located in Pest County in the vicinity of Budapest, on the border of the Pesti hordalékkúpsíkság and Gödöllői-dombság (Figures 1 and 2). The investigated site occupied several hectares on the south-western slope of an early glacial alluvium: the so-called 'Maglódi-hát', a flood-free high bank of a former meander of the Halas stream. The swampy, marshy floodplain enclosed the site on the elevated river bank from three sides (Marosi/Somogyi 1990, 33-38; Somogyi 2007, 12). On the basis of the 2nd Military Survey, the area was a waterlogged meadow and grassland (Figure 3), the elevation ranges between 132.5 m and 135 m above the Baltic Sea level. Due to excavations led during past decades, Gyömrő have become known in Hungarian Scythian research. Early Iron Age settlement and cemetery fragments were brought to light in the vicinity of the discussed site (Dinnyés 1999; Horváth 2001; 2002; Tari 1986, 34, fig. 5).

In March 2012 a young man donated an interesting bronze artefact (Figure 4) to the Kossuth Museum of Cegléd. According to his description, the bronze item was found together with human bones, ceramic sherds and a large number of beads on the outskirts of Gyömrő, in an agricultural field. The employees of the Kossuth Museum, under the direction of Róbert Patay, conducted systematic and complex field walking in the research territory, which is located westward from Gyömrő, right beside the Halasi-csatorna (Halasi-canal), on the eastern side of the medieval road between Ecser and Üllő, in the so-called 'Kő-határ-dűlő' (Site 26). On the south-eastern side of a northwest-southeast orientated sand hill, as the person described,

¹ The Alföld group, which developed close contacts with Scythian Culture, have been given different names in archaeological literature. In our article we use the determination of T. Kemenczei (2001, 14, 15), instead of the commonly used Vekerzug Culture, etc.

human bones, ceramic sherds, chopped stone tools, daub fragments and *Dentalium badense* and limestone beads were detected. On the 3rd and 4th of April “one or more disturbed human skeletons” were found during the rescue excavation.²



Figure 1. Map of the archaeological site 26: Gyömrő, Kő-határ-dűlő. Author: K. Kovács

EXCAVATED MATERIAL

In the excavated area *Dentalium badense* and limestone beads were collected together with ceramic fragments from the Middle Neolithic, Scythian and Sarmatian periods. The beads were lying amongst the human bones inordinately. According to the field excavator’s observation they might have been personal ornaments of the deceased. The exact date of the burials is questionable since no datable finds were brought to light. The *Dentalium badense* beads are characteristic elements of the preceding Late Neolithic (Lengyel Culture) (Zalai-Gaál 2006) and Late

Copper Age (Baden Culture) (Sümegi 2009) burials, though no ceramic sherds dating to these periods were unearthed from the ‘burials’ to support this date. The prehistoric finds were concentrated on the southwestern side of the archaeological site, whilst the remains of the long-lived Sarmatian settlement covered the whole researched area.

The excavation yielded numerous, but not very colourful, find assemblages. The most numerous finds are the ceramic sherds. The classification of the Scythian Age pottery from Gyömrő can be divided in two categories: coarse, handmade ware and fine, wheel-thrown ware.

Wheel-thrown bowls with inverted rims are the most frequent vessel type during the Scythian period, found in all cemeteries and settlements of the Scythian Age Alföld group (Pl. I: 2, 10) (Chochorowski 1985; Kemenczei 2009, 102-109.). The simplicity of its shape made it wide-spread in the territory of neighbouring cultures. In the present state of research it is accepted that the production of wheel-thrown pottery first appeared in the eastern part of the Carpathian Basin, due to the new immigrant population of the Alföld group in the middle/second half of the 7th century BC (Alsótelekes, Patay/Kiss 2002, 130, 131; Csanytelek-Újhalastó, Galántha 1986; Németi 2010, 181).³

Based on manufacturing marks from vessels, it can be affirmed that both fast and slow wheels were represented in the workshops (Romsauer 1991, 359). The quantity of pottery having grey, brown, light-brown or orange fabrics suggests local production, as opposed to imports from the southern Thracian or Greek world. However, Scythian Age wheel-thrown pottery is unknown in Transylvania and appears only sporadically in Trans-Carpathian Ukraine, in the Kuštanovice Culture (Németi 2010, 182, 183). Within the territory of the research area two wheel-thrown, high-handled cup fragments were found. They are greyish brown, smoothed and made of well-levigated clay (Pl. I: 5, 6). No traces of secondary burning were found on their surface. This type was also adopted by the Celts following contact with the population of the Alföld group (Németi 1988, 110). Analogues can be found in almost all cemeteries of the period.

The hand-made pottery sherds belong to bowls with inverted rims (Pl. I: 1, 3, 8), ember covers and/or ceramic strainers (Pl. I: 7, 9), as well as other storage pots (Pl. I: 4, 11). Chamotte

² The finds were deposited in the Ferenczy Museum Center Inv. No.: 2015.64.1.1.-5.122.

³ It is interesting to note that, to date, no Scythian Age pottery kiln is known from the territory of the Alföld group. /470/

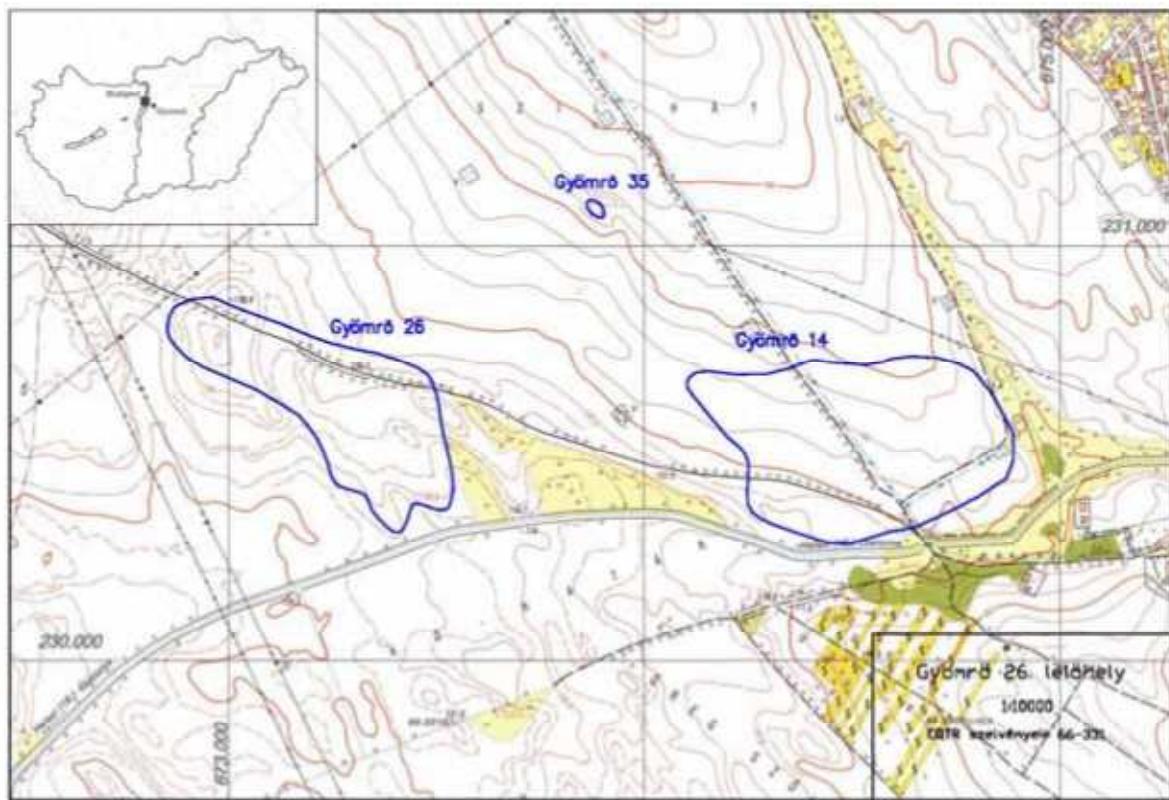


Figure 2. Gyömrő, Kő-határ-dűlő and its surroundings. Author: B. Érdi

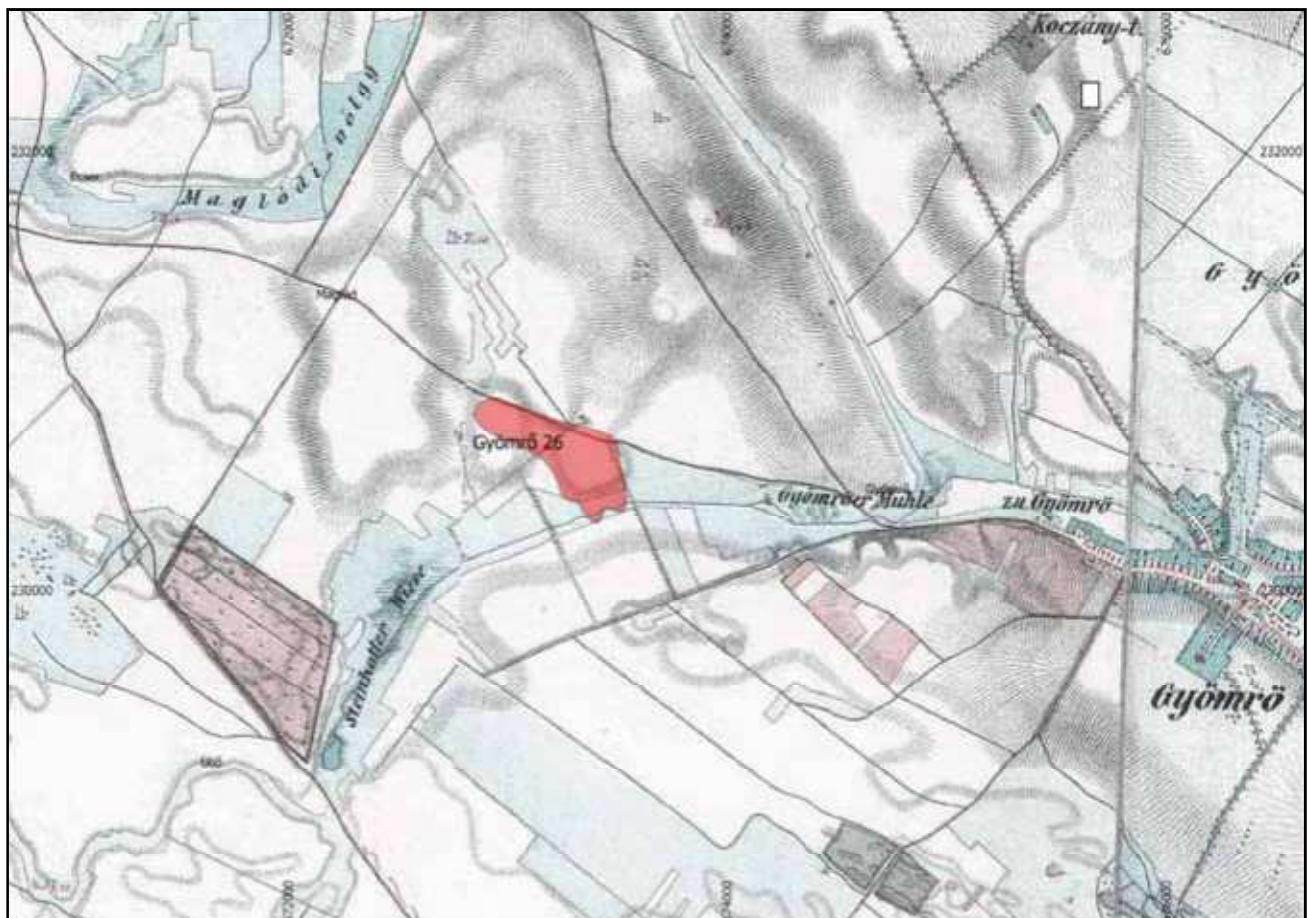


Figure 3. Gyömrő, Kő-határ-dűlő and its surroundings on the Map of the 2nd Military Survey.
Author: R. G. Scholtz

temper was characteristically used. Analogous assemblages can be counted from almost every settlement and burial of the Scythian-influenced Alföld group. All of them are long-lived forms and not characteristic enough to justify more exact dating (Kemenczei 2009, 95–101; Németi 1982).

The excavation uncovered one or more disturbed skeleton burials: the bone assemblage is fragmentary and badly preserved. No traces of burning were found on their surface. Comparative anthropological analysis of the skeletal remains is in progress.

BRONZE CRUCIFORM QUIVER MOUNT

A well-preserved casted bronze cruciform fitting with eagle/gryphon motifs (Figure 4). Its upper arm widens to the end and is decorated with incised horizontal lines. The lower arms of the cross take the form of eagle or gryphon heads. Their beaks, or the so-called ‘cere’ are decorated by incised vertical ribs. At the centre of the arms a plastic dot-and-circle pattern decorated the frontal surface, serving as the eye of the three bird heads. On the reverse side of the object two bronze ‘ears’ were attached for the gorytos hanging-up strap. Small damages caused by ploughing can be observed on both sides of the object. A lack of wear tracks indicates short usage. L.: 8.8cm; W.: 6cm; W.: 56g.

DISCUSSION

In connection with the Scythian-influenced material culture of the Alföld group, there appear to be particularly distinctive types of cruciform fittings, made of bronze and occasionally of bone (Scholtz 2007; 2010; 2012). The majority of authors have identified these objects, based on the finds of Kurgan 13 Lichačevka (Hellmuth 2010, 520, 521, Taf. 115) and Opišljanka (Kemenczei 2009, 47), as decorative or hanging elements for the archer’s quiver: a special sheath of wood and leather, called gorytos (Chochorowski 1985, 95–99, Abb. 30; Kemenczei 1986; Vasiliev 1980; Vulpé 1990, 56), commonly used by Scythian aristocracy and warriors to keep and carry bow and arrows, decorated with gold plates on rare occasions (Cernenko 1983; Fialko 2006, 64). In view of archaeological finds and a relief scene in the Apadāna of Persepolis (522 – 486 BC), Anja Hellmuth supports this interpretation. However, she presumed an even earlier dating of this group of objects. Based on the grave goods found in the vicinity of the fittings, she dated them from the middle to the second half of the 7th century BC (Hellmuth 2007, 66, 67, Abb. 1, 2). Their origin is still questionable.

According to some researchers, the questionable objects were prepared in Olbian workshops and appeared under the influence of the ancient art. On the other hand, Yu. Polidovych supposed that these objects appeared, and initially existed, in the left-bank Dnieper forest-steppe. Their appearance in Olbia, and further west in the Carpathian Basin, could be connected to the migration of populations (Polidovych 2000, 48; 2009). Contrary to this opinion, A. Hellmuth (2007, 66) wrote about the Middle European origin of the cruciform fittings. In her opinion, these artefacts appear to have been first created in the Carpathian Basin by the Scythian-influenced groups settled there, before spreading to the east during the later centuries. Further research is needed to prove or disprove this theory.

The bronze quiver mount from Gyömrő can be classified in the group II. of T. Kemenczei (1986; 2009, 47, 48), being identical with the A1 type of V. Vasiliev (1980, 77) and/or II. group of J. Chochorowski (1985, 94–99), and type I. of A. Kozubová (2013b, 93–95, obr. 30).⁴ According to our current knowledge, these types of artefacts first appeared in the Carpathian Basin in the middle of the 6th century BC, and can be linked to newly arrived mobile groups from the Dnieper-Dniester forest-steppe region. Its closest analogues are known from the burial

⁴ Along with the feline and the stag, the eagle/gryphon was amongst the most meaningful and frequently used motifs in Scythian Art. The representation of the full eagle is far less common than renderings of the bird head alone, which frequently receives a stylised interpretation. For further literature see: Horváth 1992.



Figure 4. Gyömrő. Bronze quiver mount.
Photo by: R. Patay, drawing by: A. Fehér

Cegléd-Hordógyár (*Kemenczei* 1986, Abb. 4: 1), Chotín IA skeleton burial 40 (*Dušek* 1966, Taf. 5: 17, cited *Hellmuth* 2007, Abb. 14: 2), and Telna (*Vasiliev/Moga* 1982).⁵ Structurally similar, and only partly different (direction of the arms, appearance of side 'wings', decoration of the bird heads) items are known from burial no. 90 Törökszentmiklós-Surján (*Csalog/Kisfaludi* 1985) and stray finds from Komárom (*Kemenczei* 1986, 122, Abb. 2: 3). East of the Carpathian Mountains, the stray finds from Armašoaia (*Polidovych* 2000, Ris. 2: 6) and Birsești (*Polidovych* 2000, Ris. 2: 4) must be mentioned together with the steppic analogues from burial 12 Olbia (*Skudnova* 1988, cited: *Hellmuth* 2007, 77, Abb. 9.1), burial 3 kurgan 3 Aksai-I. (*Hellmuth* 2010, 645, Taf. 220: 6) and destroyed burials of the Dugin Mounds, near the mouth of the Don River (*Dyachenko et al.* 2000, 45).

DATING OF THE ARTEFACT

The inhumation burial of Cegléd-Hordógyár is dated from the second half of the 6th century to the first half of the 5th century BC (*Kemenczei* 1986, 122). A. Kozubová dated the find from burial no. 40 Chotín IA to the first half of the 6th century BC (*Kozubová* 2013a, 94), whilst A. Hellmuth proposed an older date of the Törökszentmiklós burial, to the second half of the 7th century BC, based on the arrowheads and bronze armour scale found in the grave (*Hellmuth* 2007, 76). Jan Chochorowski dated the burial 12 from Olbia, based on the arrowheads, to the first half of the 6th century BC (*Chochorowski* 1998, 480). The broken quiver mount from Aksai-I. burial 3 in kurgan 3 was excavated in a 2.4m × 1.2m pit burial, found at a depth of 1.7m below the original surface. The skeletal remains of a young man in a supine position with the head to the west were found at the bottom of the pit (*Dyachenko et al.* 2000, fig. 4: 3). Several important artefacts were associated with this grave, for example the datable Greek amphora of Rhodos-Ionian style (800 – 500 BC). Beside the broken bronze quiver fitting⁶, the burial contained a 'Scythian-style' iron sword, 15 bronze and three iron arrowheads (probably kept in a gorytus), a whetstone, a wolf tooth pendant, a bone pipe and a handmade vessel, together with sheep ribs. According to the authors the grave goods from Aksai burial 3, kurgan 3, date the burial to the second half of the 6th century BC. To date, this is one of the earliest burials of the Sauromatian Culture in the Volga-Don area. Finally, Kopylov dated the Dugin Mounds to the end of the 6th century BC (*Dyachenko et al* 2000, 45).⁷ One can see that the closest analogues indicate the quiver mount to date to the middle of the 6th century BC, though we must bear in mind that there is a significant difference between the Gyömrő and the listed objects.

The main difference between the Gyömrő quiver mount and their roughly contemporary(?) analogues from the 'Scytho-Siberian World of Eurasia' is the absence of animal style decoration on its centre and upper arm. The use of geometric patterns instead of animal figures, such as in burial no. 87 Chotín IA (*Kozubová* 2013b, 35, tab. 27: 5), burial no. 7 Băița (*Vasiliev* 1976, 53, 54, 72, Pl. XV: a; XXII), the cremated burial of Maňa (*Benadik* 1983, cited *Polidovych* 2000, Ris. 3: 3) and stray finds from Hungarian unknown sites (*Kemenczei* 1986, Abb. 8: 3, 4.), and Mădăras (*Vasiliev* 1980, cited *Polidovych* 2000, Ris. 3: 5), is likely to be local craftsman innovation. This innovation/adaptation (?) might have appeared in the Carpathian Basin during the second half of the 6th or first half of the 5th century BC, since researchers date both the burials from Chotín and Băița to this period (*Kozubová* 2013a; *Vasiliev* 1976; 1980; *Vulpe* 1990).

⁵ Contrary to T. Kemenczei we do not classify the bronze quiver mount from burial no. 17 Modrany to this group, since its lower arms do not take the form of eagle heads (*Kemenczei* 2009, 48, Taf. 185: 1).

⁶ The upper part of the bronze fitting was missing and was not found in the grave (*Dyachenko et al.* 2000, 45).

⁷ Dating of the above mentioned burials is based on arrowheads with distinctive archaic traits such as those with a bushing, those that are two-pronged and those that are laurel leaf-shaped. All of these traits are characteristic of Scythian and Sauromatian gorytus contents during the 6th century BC.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analogues from datable burials, the decorated bronze quiver mount from Gyömrő can be safely dated to the 6th century BC, more specifically to the middle or second half of the 6th century BC. An issue with the determination of the workshop can be raised in the case of the bronze object. Due to its eastern analogues it is not clear if it was a traded item, local imitation or made by Scythian or Sauromatian(?) itinerant craftsmen. Since its geometric ornamentation of the upper arm is of a style that can only be observed inside the Carpathian Mountains, it is possible that the find was casted in the Carpathian Basin by the Scythian-influenced Alföld group. Detailed chemical analysis, together with further natural-scientific and technical research, might shed new light on its origin and possible place of manufacture. The ceramic artefacts discovered at Gyömrő are not as informative, but do support a date of 600/550 – 450 BC.

Bronze quiver mounts (Pl. II) are characteristic finds from the Scythian Age. Archaeological analogues demonstrate that lost wax casting was used to create this attractive object decorated with eagle/gryphon motifs integrated into the metal surface. The discovery of Gyömrő decorated with the Scythian animal style provides new insight into the complex metal work of the Scythians or the Scythian-influenced groups in the Hungarian Alföld. The bronze object worked for both the living and for the dead and serves as evidence of the high technical and artistic level of the Scythian craftsmen of the 6th century BC. This bronze find clearly represents that Scythian or Sauromatian(?) itinerant craftsmen equipped with a few archaic tools, transported in a sack over long distances, were able to create bronze ornaments of a high aesthetic and technical level (Armbruster 2009, 192).

Last, but not least, we must mention that the latest and 'closest' analogue of the Gyömrő bronze quiver mount has just appeared on Facebook, without a name or location of the site (Figure 5).⁸

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⁸ We are grateful to Benedek Érdi, Alíz Fehér and Katalin Kovács for the drawings of the map and the artefacts, as well as to Balázs Dákó for taking the photographs for the current paper. We are also obliged to Yurij Polidovych for sending his articles dedicated to this topic.



Figure 5. Unknown bronze quiver mount.
Source: Facebook

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RESUMÉ

Kovanie tulca zo skýtskeho obdobia z okolia Gyömrő (Maďarsko)

V príspevku sa venujeme nálezu kovania tulca zo skýtskeho obdobia z Gyömrő v Maďarsku (obr. 1-3), ktoré v roku 2012 odovzdal do Košútovho múzea v Cegléde mladý darca. Na základe analógií z dobre datovaných hrobov, je možné zdobené bronzové obloženie tulca z Gyömrő (obr. 4) bezpečne datovať do 6. stor. pr. Kr., presnejšie do druhej polovice 6. stor. pr. Kr. V prípade tohto bronzového nálezu je vhodné sa zamyslieť nad miestom jeho výroby. Na základe analogických nálezov (Tab. II) východnej proveniencie, nie je možné stanoviť, či sa jedná o tovar získaný obchodom, miestnu imitáciu alebo či ho vyrobili kočovní remeselníci skýtskeho alebo sauromatského (?) pôvodu. Ked'že sa geometrický štýl výzdoby

na hornej časti predmetu spravidla nachádza len v Karpatskej kotline, je pravdepodobné, že predmet bol odliatý v Karpatskej kotlinе v prostredí Skýtmi ovplyvnenej Alföldskej skupiny. Podrobnejšia chemická analýza, spolu s výsledkom ďalších prírodovedných a technologických analýz, môže lepšie ozrejmiť jeho pôvod a miesto výroby.

Nálezy keramiky z Gyömrő (Tab. I) nie sú dostatočne informatívne, ale podporujú datovanie predmetu do obdobia 600/550 – 450 BC. Bronzové kovania tulcov na šípy predstavujú charakteristické nálezy skýtskeho obdobia. Archeologické analógie demonštrujú, že hodnotený atraktívny predmet zdobený reliéfom s motívmi orla/grifa bol vyrobený metódou odlievania do stratenej formy (syn. metóda strateného vosku).

Objav nálezu z Gyömrő s výzdobou skýtskeho zverného štýlu ponúka nový pohľad na komplexné schopnosti Skýtov alebo Skýtmi ovplyvnených skupín na území madarského Alföldu. Bronzový predmet bol vyrobený pre živých aj mŕtvych a je dokladom vysokej technickej a umeleckej úrovne skýtskych remeselníkov 6. stor. pr. Kr. Tento bronzový nález jasne ukazuje, že kočovní skýtski alebo sauromatskí (?) majstri remeselníci, vybavení iba niekoľkými „zastaranými“ nástrojmi, ktoré zbalené do vrecka niesli i na veľké vzdialenosť, dokázali vytvoriť ornamenty na vysokej estetickej a technickej úrovni (Armbruster 2009, 192).

Na záver je potrebné upozorniť na to, že najnovší a analogicky „najbližší“ nález ku kovaniu tulca z Gyömrő sa objavil nedávno na Facebooku, bez mena či určenia miesta nálezu (obr. 5).

Zoznam príloh

Obr. 1. Plán archeologickej lokality č. 26: Gyömrő, Kő-határ-dűlő. Autor: K. Kovács

Obr. 2. Gyömrő, Kő-határ-dűlő a okolie. Autor: B. Érdi

Obr. 3. Gyömrő, Kő-határ-dűlő a okolie na mape 2. vojenského mapovania. Autor: R. G. Scholtz

Obr. 4. Gyömrő. Bronzové kovanie tulca. Foto: R. Patay; kresba: A. Fehér

Obr. 5. Bronzové kovanie tulca neznámeho pôvodu. Zdroj: Facebook

Tab. I. Gyömrő, Kő-határ-dűlő. Fragmenty keramiky zo skýtskeho obdobia z lokality. Kresba a foto: B. Dákó

Tab. II. Mapa výskytu a zoznam analogických bronzových kovaní tulca zdobených vtáčími hlavičkami. Autor: R. G. Scholtz podľa Kemenczei 1986; Polidovych 2000

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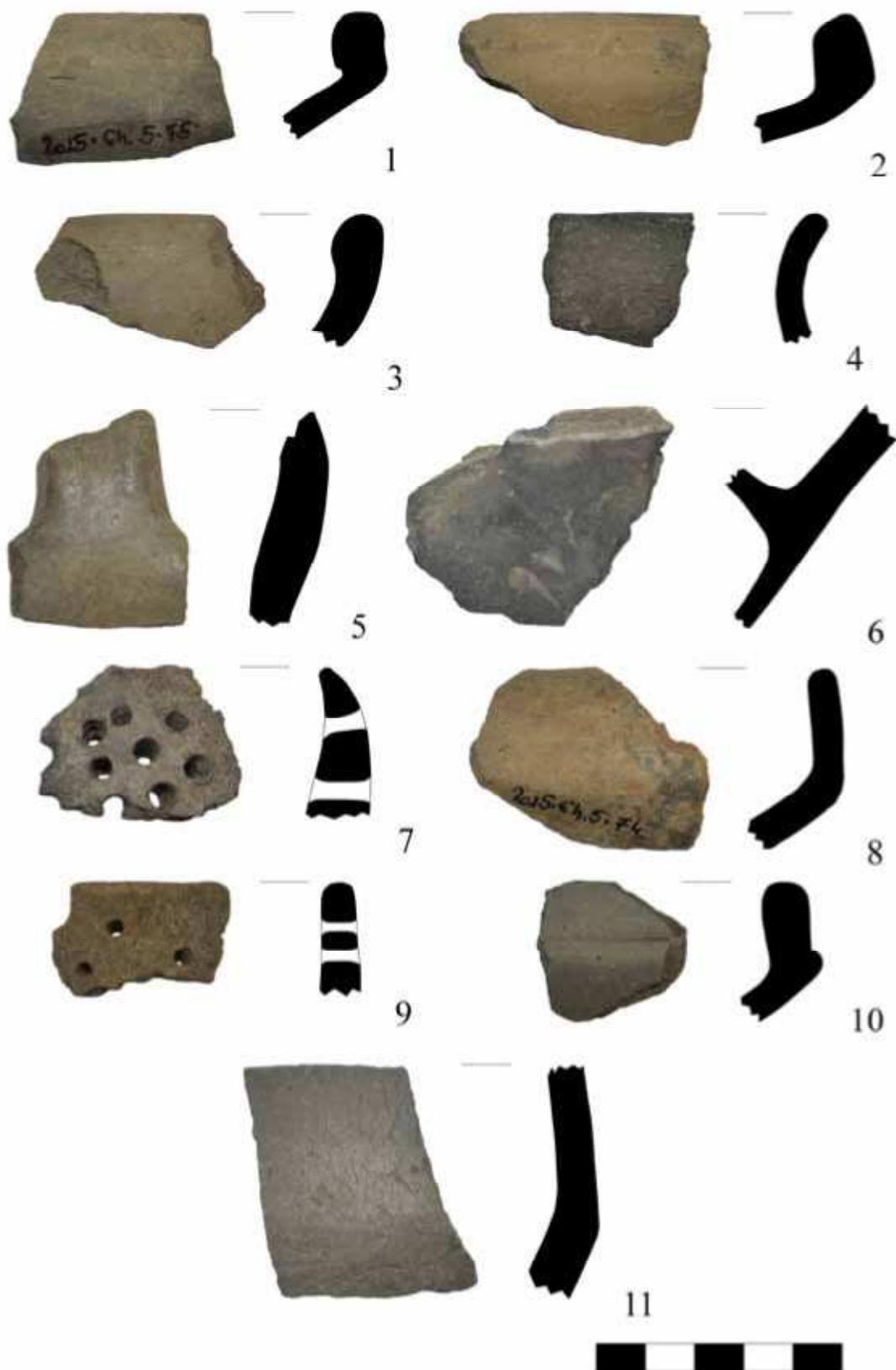
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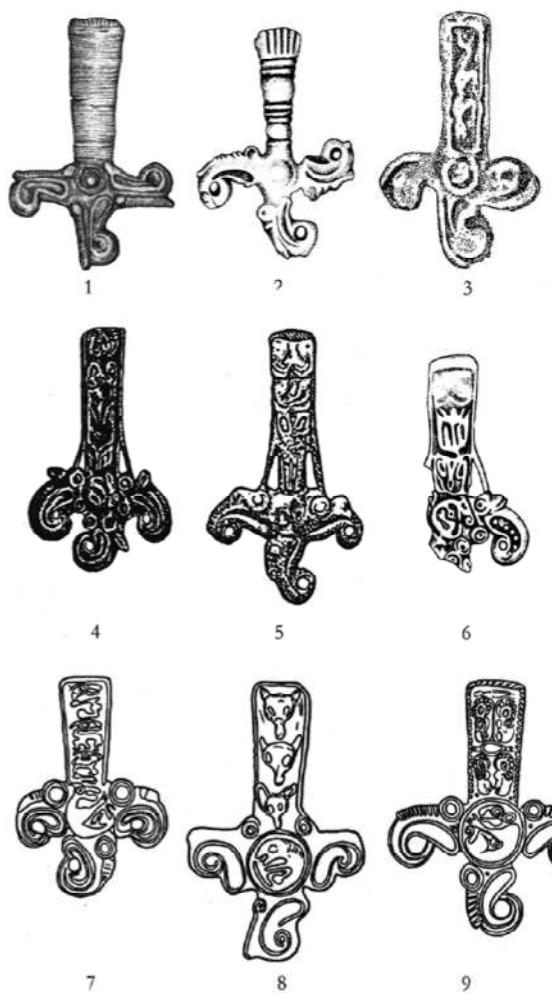
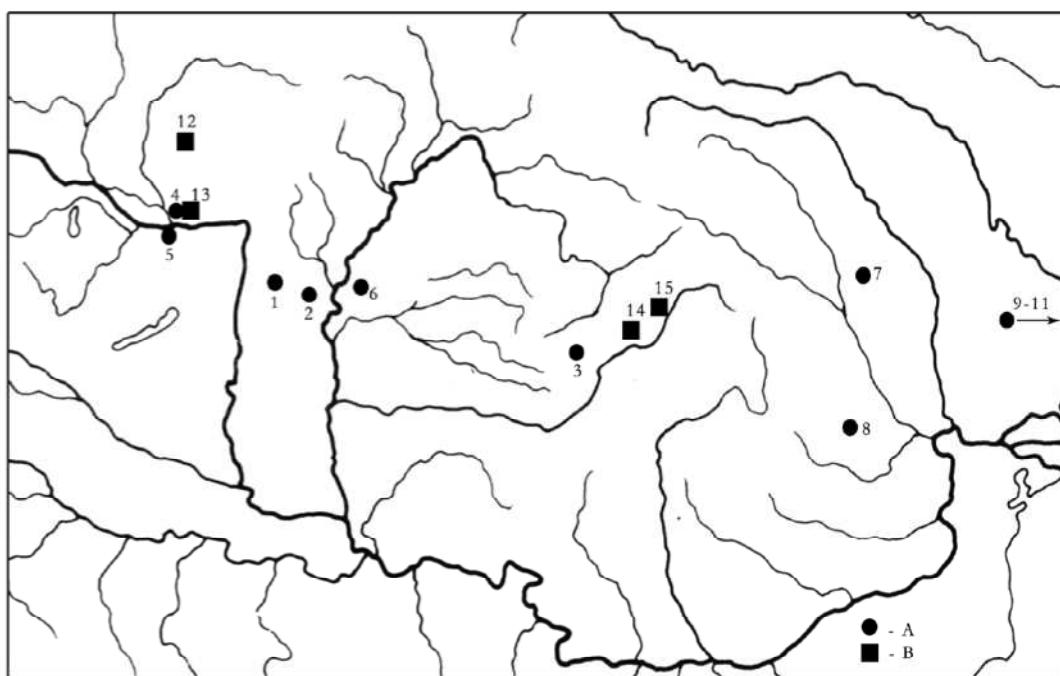
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Pl. I. Gyömrő, Kő-határ-dűlő. Scythian Age sherds from the site.
Photo and drawing by: B. Dákó



Bronze quiver mounts

A) decorated with bird heads
B) decorated with incised lines
(after: Kemenczei 1986,
Polidovych 2000;
Vasiliev/Moga 1982)

- 1.: Győmrő (H)
- 2.: Cegléd (H)
- 3.: Telna (Ro)
- 4.: Chotín IA/40 (Sk)
- 5.: Komárom (H)
- 6.: Törökszentmiklós (H)
- 7.: Armașoaia (Ro)
- 8.: Birsești (Ro)
- 9.: Olbia (Ukr)
- 10.: Aksai I. (Ru)
- 11.: Dugino Mound (Ru)
- 12.: Velka Maňa (Sk)
- 13.: Chotín IA/87. (Sk)
- 14.: Băița (Ro)
- 15.: Mădăras (Ro)

Pl. II. Distribution map and list of the analogous bronze quiver mounts decorated with bird heads.
Author: R. G. Scholtz based on Kemenczei 1986; Polidovych 2000