

Analysis of Middle Bronze Age Ceramics From a Tell Settlement in Northern Hungary: Technology and Social Identity

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This thesis investigates tradition and change of the Early and Middle Bronze Age ceramic technology at the tell of Százhalombatta, Northern Hungary. The Bronze Age of Százhalombatta has been characterised largely by two ceramic traditions that are Nagyrév and Vatyia periods. The material culture of the Nagyrév and Vatyia periods have been understood through formal changes but ceramic technology has never been subjected to rigorous scientific analysis. In order to explain change and continuity in ceramic technology this study will focus on the social nature of technology.

Technology is considered to be a social practice and technology can be one means of investigating social dynamics. Exploring technology is also important since we frame interpretations of the past in terms of continuity and change. Material culture cannot be regarded as a passive reflection of activities governed by strict rules, but should rather be seen as active in the process of social production, reproduction and transformation. Technological identity present in every stage of a production process can in the same way as morphological and decorative styles serve as an expression of social and cultural identity. This specific technological identity may have made Middle Bronze Age people able to express their cultural identity outside their domain, and technology beside morphological and decorative styles could have been one means of expressing identity. It is aimed to comprehend how agents make sense of and act in the world they produce, reproduce and transform through their technology. Ceramic technology is considered to be one of the arenas to construct physically marked and arranged social environment in which people defined social relationships through their technology. It is also considered, that towards the end of Middle Bronze Age people articulated particular identities established in particular social context, which was reflected in the coordination of pottery industry. The representation of identity therefore resides in all aspects of artefact variability even within those circumstances which appear to be explicitly functional.

In this thesis the representation of and access to identities are considered on two levels. The first is the direct representation such as shape, decoration and surface process of the ceramic. The second is the indirect representation through the ceramic technology. Identity can be represented not only on the external level of technology but on the internal level as well, which is less visible and the two levels cannot be dissociated, not only from each other, but from other aspects of society such as social relationships, gender and age rules. Moreover, with relation to social identity, technology may be actively used in the disruption, alteration and creation of social relationships.

By using ceramic petrology this project tries to determine what technological identity means within a given period and settlement and how technology reflects social identity and self-consciousness. The recognition of similar or distinctive technological traits is essential since the choice and preparation of materials used for pottery reflect the tradition and culture very strongly and changes in identity are reflected in technology. Considering the relationship between two periods on the same settlement gives us a cross section of the history of ceramic tradition and technology of Százhalombatta in the Early and Middle Bronze Age, which helps us to a better understanding of the social organisation of the settlement. By comparing the results with other contemporary sites it will be explored what the technological identity at Százhalombatta means. It will be examined whether the technological identity is representative for a particular settlement, a particular group of people or a particular period. Knowing the dimensions of the technological identity is essential to understand the construction of a physically marked and arranged environment in which people defined social relationships through their technology. Through the different levels of technological representations people signaled particular identities grounded in particular places, which were subjected to reproduction and transformation.