

FIELD SURVEY AND MATERIALS

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WE ARE ONE: FIGURAL FINDS FROM THE EASTERN BORDER OF THE LINEAR POTTERY CULTURE DISTRIBUTION

ABSTRACT

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This paper discusses anthropomorphic representations from two Ukrainian sites that can be dated to the Linear Pottery Culture. They can be categorized as applications and incised human representations. Although their posture is similar, their significance was likely different. The applications were fixed to vessels' walls in such a way that they look inside the container, whereas the incised representations look outward, facing anyone that would approach them. We may conclude that applications like the ones from the Ukrainian sites are part of a common set of beliefs comprising collective consumption from the same vessel, but we can only speculate about the original content, which may have been something extraordinary like alcohol or something ordinary like meat, milk or soup. On the other hand, the incised representations with their faces directed away from the vessel wall may be seen as guardians of the vessels' content.

Keywords: Early Neolithic, Bandkeramik, Linear Pottery Culture, Ukraine, anthropomorphic representations, anthropomorphic applications

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1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, research regarding one of Europe's early Neolithic phenomena, the Linear Pottery Culture (LPC), has intensified once more in the eastern regions of the distribution area. The re-evaluation of material gathered in previous excavations, as well as newly conducted field-work, has helped to shed light on a formerly poorly known area comprising large parts of Volhynia in eastern Ukraine (Bardec'kyj *et al.* 2016; Dębiec *et al.* 2014; Dębiec and Saile 2015; Dębiec 2016).

For a long time, knowledge of the eastern border of the LPC distribution was shaped by remarks made by V. Miložčić, who, in reference to J. Pasternak's works, stated that LPC finds from Ukraine could be dated only to a more developed stage in the culture's evolution, and that finds from the oldest phase were still lacking (Miložčić 1951, 111-113). Soon, however, evidence from the oldest phase was collected by V. Pyasets'kyj and G. V. Okhrymenko, and N. Kotova (Okhrymenko 2001, 17-25; Kotova 2003, cf. section 3.4 and pl. 86). For example, a grave from Bayiv recently reviewed by M. Dębiec (Bardec'kyj *et al.* 2013), along with finds from the Rivne settlement (Dębiec and Saile 2015, 6-11) can be attributed to the oldest LPC. The pottery from these contexts features organic chaff, a decoration consisting of broad lines, and vessels with flat bottoms.

The younger phases of the LPC in Volhynia are more widely represented, with settlements at Rovantsi, Holyshiv, Hirka Polonka and others (Okhrymenko 2001, 25-36 and 36-39; Okhrymenko 2009; Danilenko 1969, 28-30; Okhrymenko 1984, 103-107). Music-note decoration is frequent. Finally, Želiezovce-type pottery appears and marks the youngest development of the LPC in this region; an example would be the settlement from Rovantsi (Bardec'kyj *et al.* 2016, Abb. 5; Bardetskiy *et al.* 2017, fig. 5). Both the music-note decoration and the Želiezovce-type pottery point to strong influences from Slovakia, Moravia and parts of Poland.

Absolute data for the Volhynian LPC are still quite rare, and they do not allow us to confidently establish an absolute chronology.

2. FIGURAL FINDS

2.1. The sites (Fig. 1)

Intensified research into the Volhynian LPC has also increased our knowledge of figural finds. Some of these have recently been discussed by the authors (Becker *et al.* 2014), and four more will be presented in the following pages – not figurines in this case, but vessels with anthropomorphic representations: applications and incised human figures. They serve as a link between the eastern border of the LPC and Central European finds of this category, and tie seamlessly into a set of common beliefs.

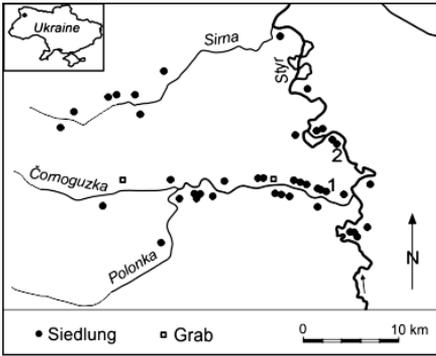


Fig. 1. Location of the sites:
1 – Holyshiv, 2 – Rovantsi

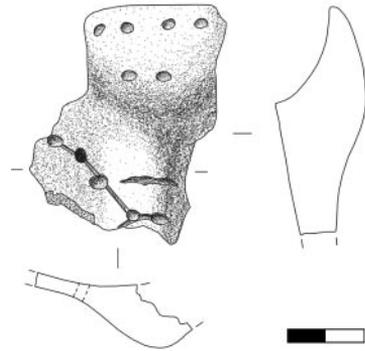


Fig. 2. Rovantsi. Vessel with anthropomorphic application

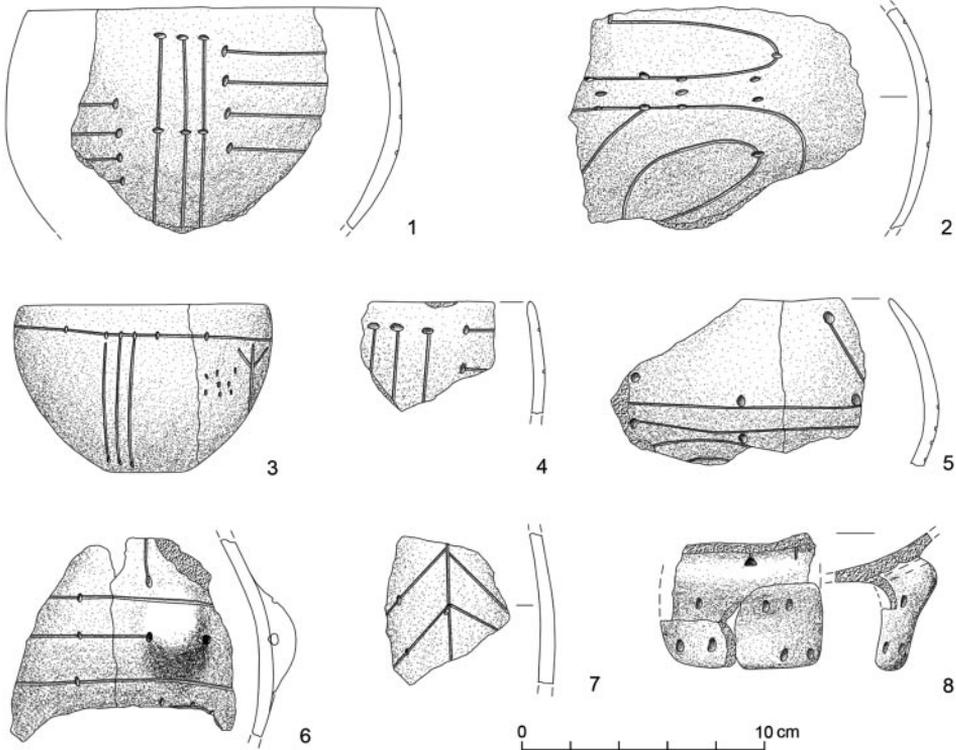


Fig. 3. Holyshiv. 1-8 – LPC pottery discovered on site without precise context

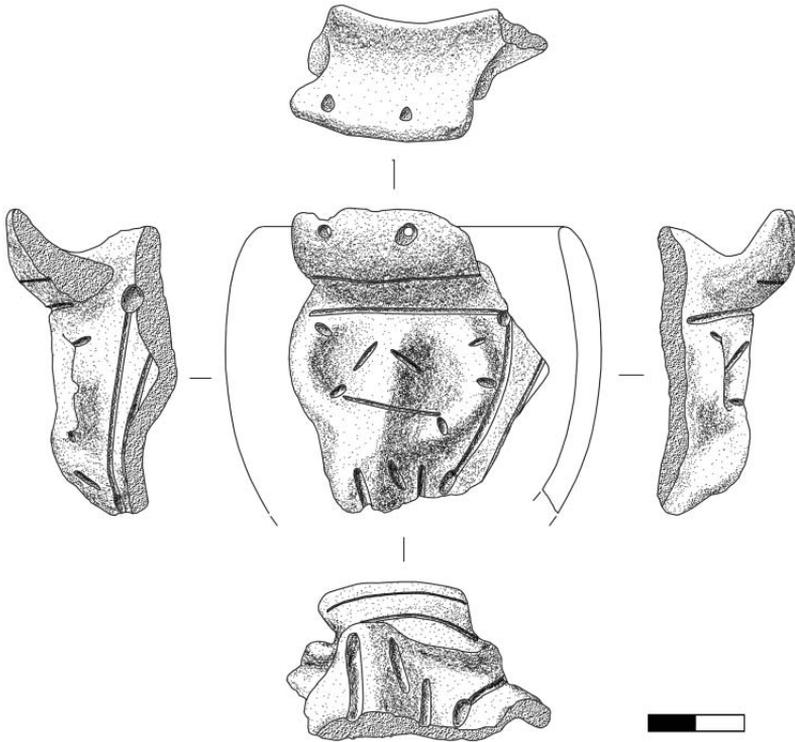


Fig. 4. Holyshiv. Vessel with anthropomorphic application

The first object, an application, was found at Holyshiv-Zarvykhvosty. The site is located on the left bank of the Chornohuzka River, which is a western tributary to the Styr River. It was discovered in the 1970s by M. Matvievko and H. Okhrymenko and excavated by the latter in the 1988-1992. In all, an area of 0.2 ha was uncovered. It yielded several pits dating to the LPC (Okhrymenko 2009, 111 fig. 14). Pit 1 is of special interest here, since a fragment of a vessel with an anthropomorphic representation on it was found within (Fig. 4). Unfortunately, all pottery fragments were published without precise context. However, analysis of the pottery decoration has led us to date the LPC settlement to the middle phase with music-note decoration (Fig. 3). Until now, it has been published only as a photograph of very low quality (Okhrymenko 2001, 82 fig. 62:3; id. 2009, 122 fig. 25:3).

A second, very similar piece was found at the site of Rovantsi. The site is located on the outskirts of Luts'k on the western high terrace of the Styr River. It was discovered before the Second World War and excavated in various campaigns by different archaeologists. In 1968, M. Matvievko explored part of the site and discovered some LPC pits (Matvievko 1971). In one of them, pit no. 6, which was partly destroyed by later Medieval features, part

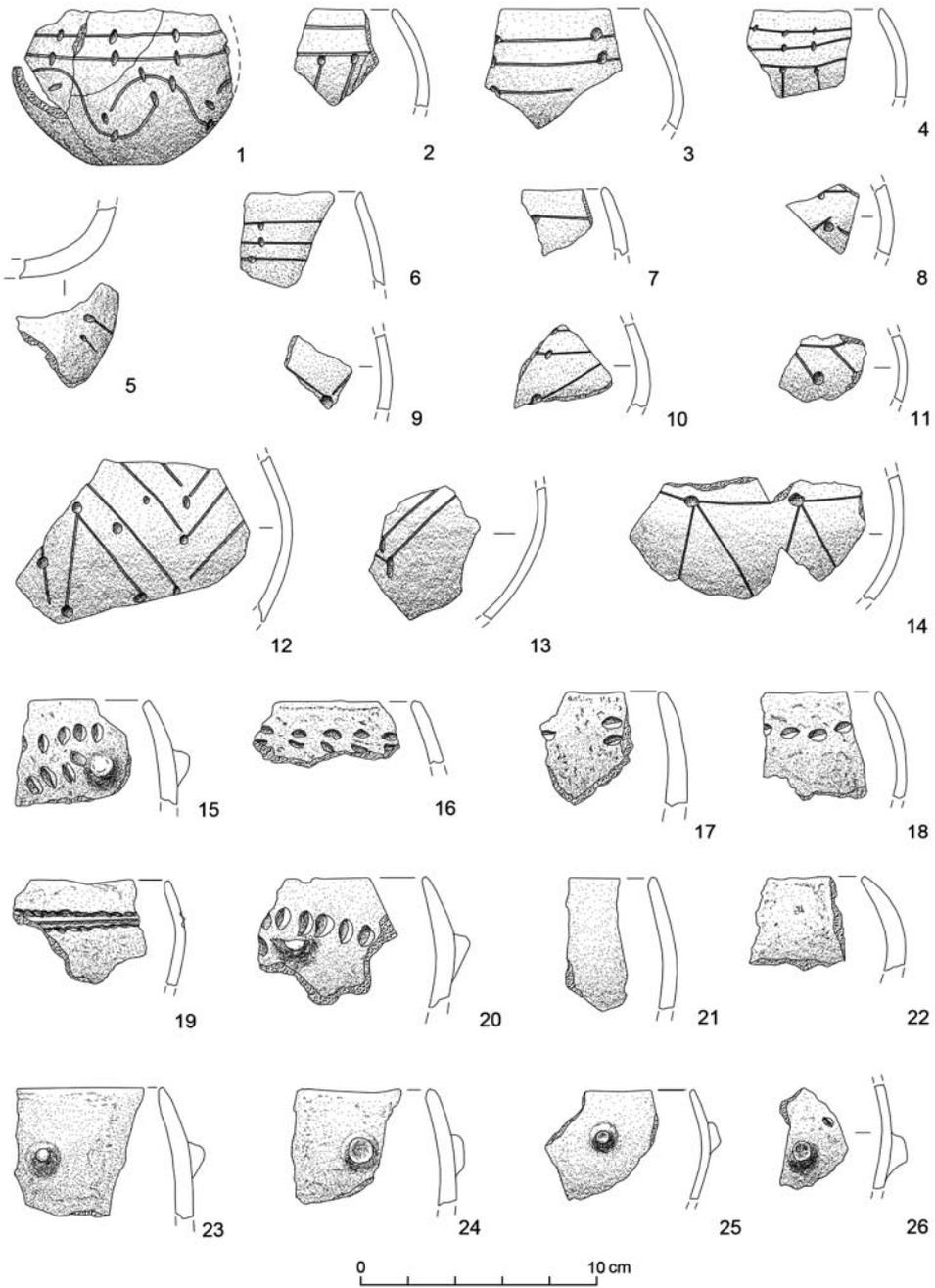


Fig. 5. Rovantsi. 1-26 – LPC pottery from pit no. 6

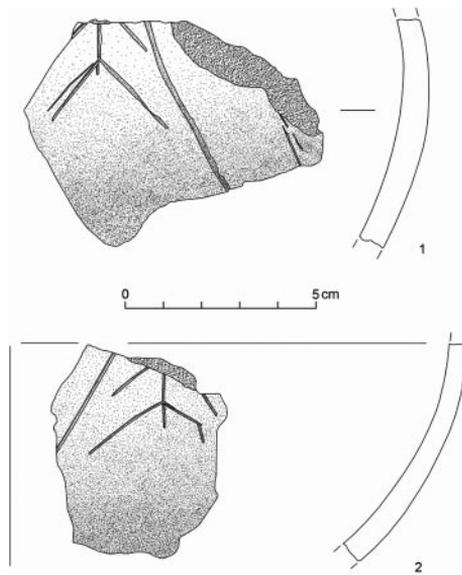


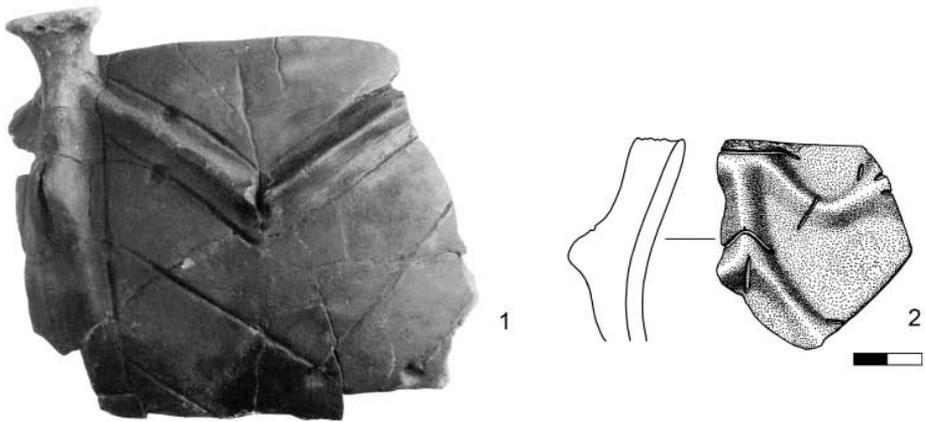
Fig. 6. Rovantsi. Incised anthropomorphic representations

of a vessel with an anthropomorphic application was unearthed (Fig. 2). Again, analysis of the pottery decoration points to the music-note phase of the Volhynian LPC (Fig. 5).

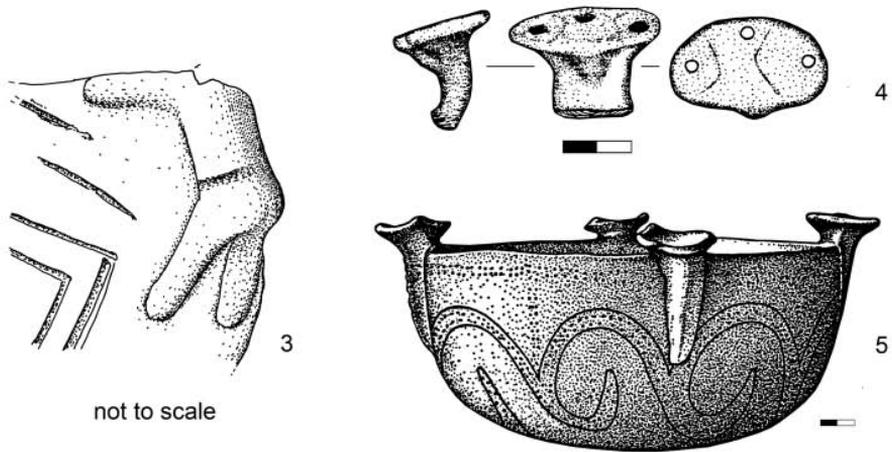
At the same site, two more anthropomorphic representations were found (Fig. 6). They belong to a later phase at the settlement and connect to late *Želiezovce* pottery from Rovantsi.

2.2. The anthropomorphic applications – description and comparisons

The anthropomorphic applications found at Rovantsi and Holyshiv-Zarvykhvosty are very similar, though the latter is more well-preserved. It features a human-shaped figure that is attached to the wall of a hemispheric vessel. Oddly enough, the back of the figure is presented to the viewer, while the front is pointed towards the vessel, which becomes even more obvious when we consider similar examples from other sites all over Europe (Fig. 7). The head – or maybe rather the headdress – is curved outwards and up, shaped like a tiny bowl, and is pierced at the rim in two places. The torso is made of a vertical plastic band, and the arms are placed on the hips. The figure is broken from the waist down. Decoration can be found in different zones: A horizontal incised line runs around the head(dress), and another one encloses the neck. Short lines can be found perpendicular to the arms – three on the right arm, and two on the left. A decoration looking like an upside-down V covers



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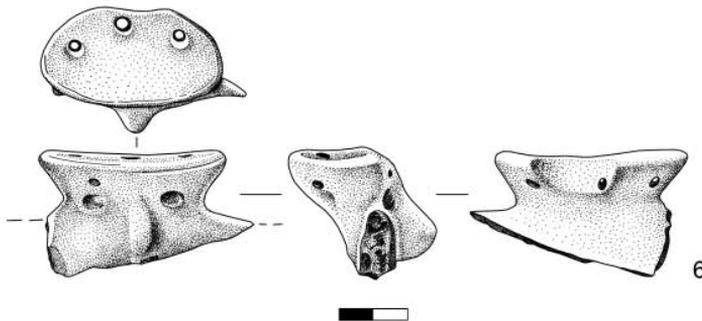


Fig. 7. Anthropomorphic applications from the LPC: 1 – Vedrovice, 2 – Barleben, 3 – Čataj, 4 – Eggendorf am Walde, 5 – Köthen-Geuz, 6 – Torony (after Čizrnář 2008, 165; Jockenhövel 1971, 184 Abb. 2; Becker 2011, 773 Taf. 89,3; Berg and Maurer 1998, 92 Abb. 6; Höckmann 1967, Abb. 3,4; Becker 2011, 772 Taf. 88,5)

the back, while another horizontal line runs around the waist. Below this line, on the buttocks, are remains of a decoration that cannot be evaluated due to poor preservation. However, it gives the impression of a triangle with a vertical incised line in the centre. On the right side, the figure is outlined with an incised line marked by a “music-note” at each end. While it is true that elements such as triangles and short incised lines are part of the regular canon of LPC vessel decoration, in this case they are confined to the shape of the application, rather than simply extended over the application.

The second anthropomorphic application, from Rovantsi, is also highly stylized, though not so well-preserved. Again, the head is curved out and upwards. The torso consists of a vertical plastic band. The arms, waist and legs are fragmented. The head is decorated with two horizontal rows of punctures. On the torso, two horizontal lines can be seen; a diagonal line subdivided by “music-notes” may be considered vessel decoration rather than a decoration of the anthropomorphic figure.

The two anthropomorphic applications fit neatly into a group of similar finds from the Czech Republic, Lower Austria, Hungary, Slovakia, and Germany (Fig. 7; Becker 2011, 129-131 and 772-774 pl. 88-90). Just like the applications described above, they feature a head raised slightly above the rim of the vessel to which they are attached. Their heads are curved outwards, in some cases also upwards, and form something like a tiny vessel in themselves. Their bodies are firmly applied to the vessel wall. Arms, when preserved, can be stretched out sideways, as if embracing the vessel, or bent downwards and then upwards again in the elbows. Legs are modelled as straight vertical or diagonal plastic bands. Apart from a similar posture, there are also parallels in the decoration – for example, pierced heads (or headdresses) and horizontal lines around the waist. Other decorations such as the triangle on the hips, the upside-down V on the back or the lines around the arms on the application from Rovantsi-Hnidava do not appear on other finds of this group.

Applications on vessels in general are a widespread phenomenon within the LPC. Apart from the group described above, there are also applications with a similar posture, though not attached to the vessel wall with their whole body, but just their upper and lower extremities such that they may have served as handles as well; likewise, their posture is such that their gaze is directed to the inside of the vessel with their back turned (Fig. 8; Becker 2011, 125-128 and 768-771 pl. 84-87). In contrast to the group described above, they are richly decorated, especially on the back and waist, and here, we can indeed find good parallels for the decoration on the application from Holyshiv-Zarvykhvosty.

For the sake of completeness, one last group of anthropomorphic applications in the LPC should be mentioned (Fig. 9). There are applications of human-like figures that are applied to the vessel wall, but with their gaze away from the inside of the vessel. Again, they can be found in Germany, Lower Austria, Slovakia and the Czech Republic. One example, found at Hurbanovo-Bohatá (Březinová *et al.* 2007, 217 obr. 24, 2), depicts male genitalia, which is extremely rare for all anthropomorphic finds of the LPC and singular for applications.

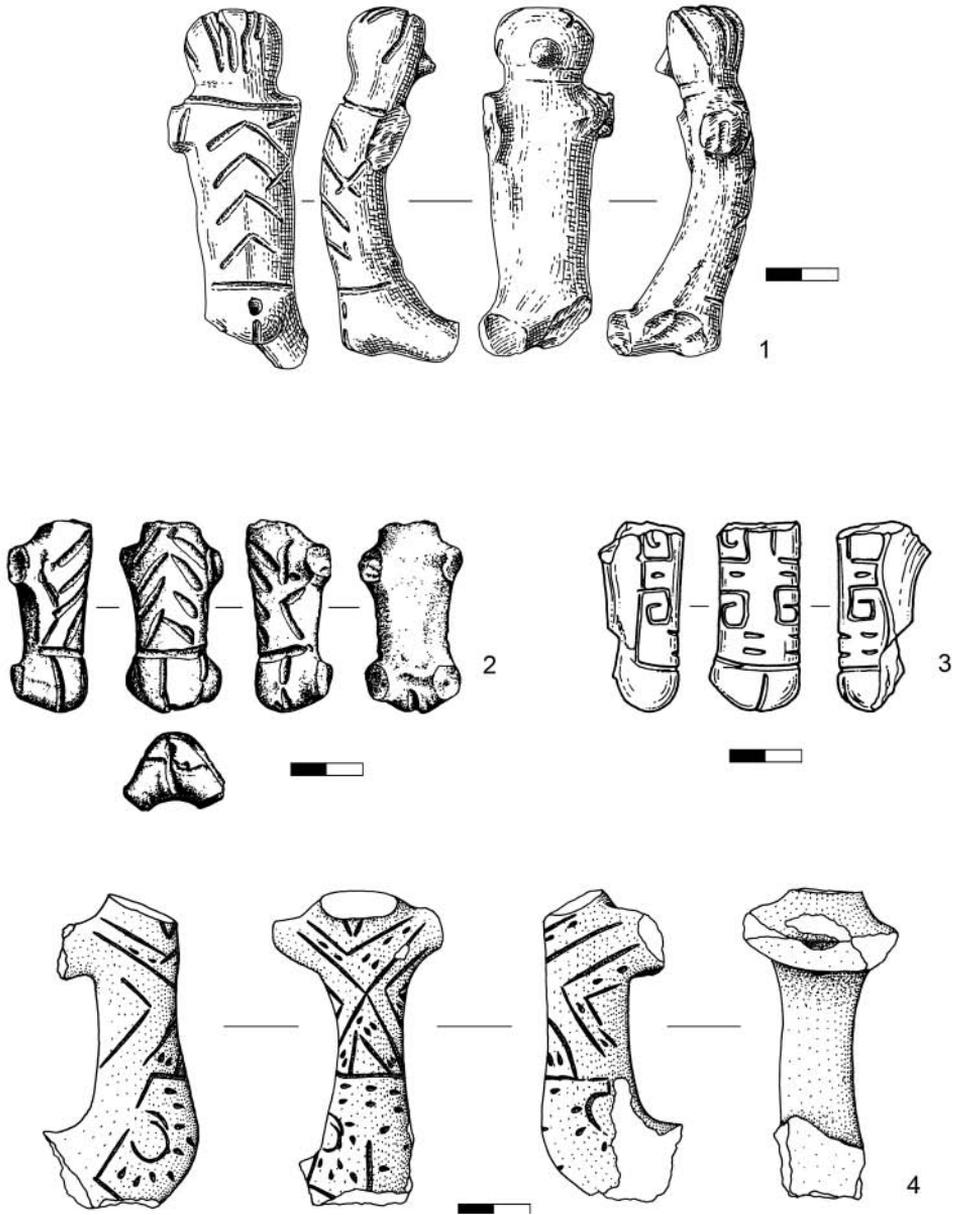


Fig. 8. Anthropomorphic applications from the LPC:

1 – Cífer-Pác, 2 – Stuttgart-Mühlhausen, 3 – Hohenaltheim, 4 – Wandersleben
 (after Kolník 1980, 337 obr. 73,1; Keefer 1993, 97 Abb. b; Bayerische Vorgeschichtsblätter 2006, 302
 Abb. 130,7; Becker 2011, 770 Taf. 86,5)

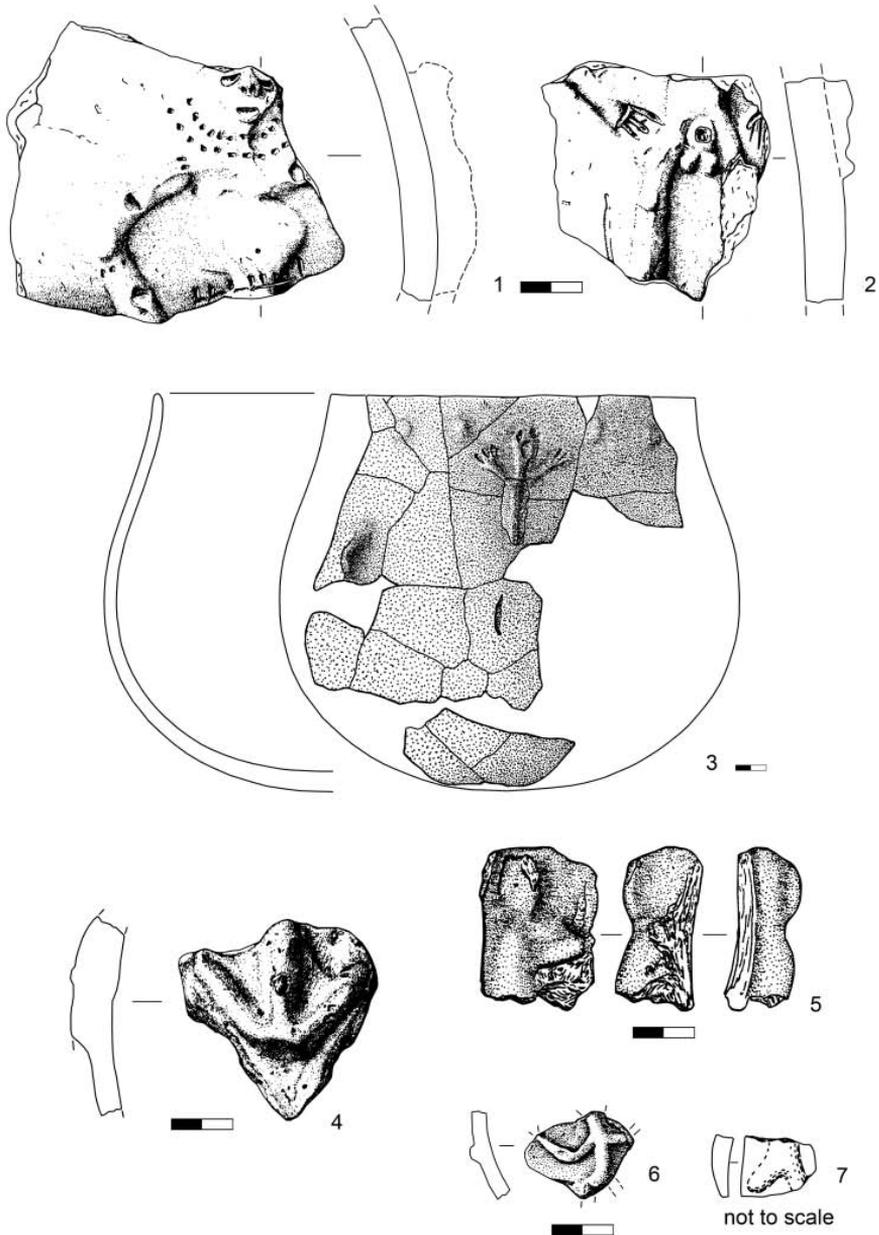


Fig. 9. Anthropomorphic applications from the LPC: 1-2 – Hurbanovo-Bohatá, 3 – Gneiding, 4 – Senden-Hittistetten, 5 – Breiteneich, 6 – Rieden, 7 – Bad Nauheim – Nieder-Mörlen (after Březinová et al. 2007, 217 obr. 24,1-2; Torbrügge 1963, Taf. 16,6; Berg and Maurer 1998, 97 Abb. 29; Bayerische Vorgeschichtsblätter 1991, 55 Abb. 31,7; Ausgrabungen und Funde Unterfranken 1982, 323 Abb. 13,5; Herrmann and Jockenhövel 1990, 133 Abb. 65,7)

To sum up, two large groups of anthropomorphic applications can be found in the LPC: Those that look towards the inside of the vessel, and those that look away from it, towards those handling and using the vessel they are applied to. The applications from Rovantsi and Holyshiv-Zarvykhvosty belong to the first group.

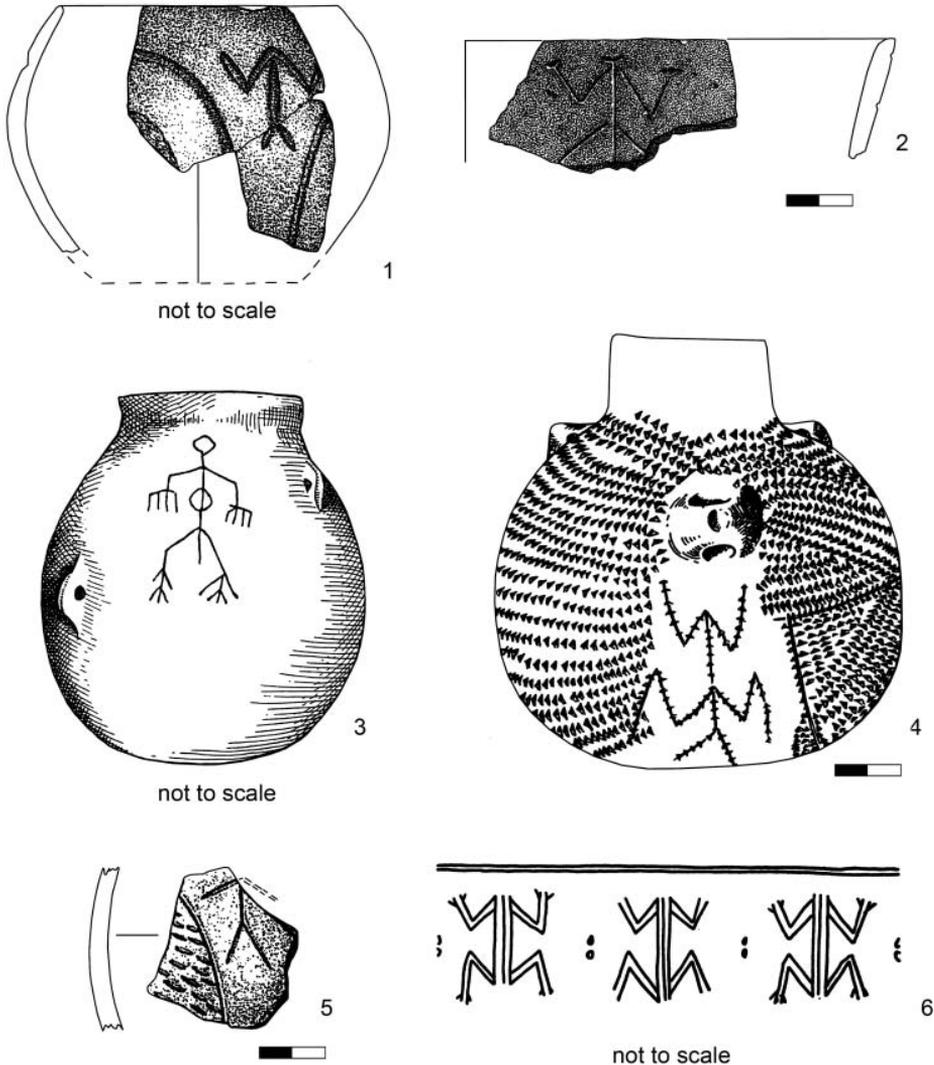


Fig. 10. Incised anthropomorphic representations from the LPC:

1 – Petrivente, 2 – Mórógy, 3 – Nová Ves, 4 – Königsau, 5 – Bad Nauheim, 6 – Praha-Bubeneč
 (after Horváth and Kalicz 2001, 26 fig. 4,2; Zalai-Gaál 2000, 2 Abb. 1; Quitta 1957, 61 Abb. 17,4;
 Kaufmann 1969, Taf. 25-27; Kneipp 1998, Taf. 49,3; Filip 1948, 121 Abb. 19,3)

2.3. The incised anthropomorphic representations – description and comparisons

Again, the incised anthropomorphic representations show great similarities. As is common for this category, they depict a great deal of stylization of the human body. The head is fragmented on both pieces. A vertical line represents the torso. The arms are marked by diagonal lines, pointing downward. The legs are spread, and, in the case of fig. 6.2, the left leg is bent at the knee, giving an impression of motion like dancing or running. In both cases, the torso line is drawn beyond the region where the legs meet. This has been interpreted by some authors as a depiction of male genitalia (Willvonseder 1940, 2). Others, however, see this as a rendering of a woman in the act of giving birth (Kaufmann 1969, 281).

In the older literature, such incised representations were viewed as toads or frogs due to their spread-legged posture (Kern 1917; Jenny 1928). A turning point regarding the interpretation is a study by H. Quitta, who collected examples of incised representations from the Near East, China, southeastern and central Europe, and pointed out their anthropomorphic character (Quitta 1957).

The two incised anthropomorphic representations from Rovantsi can be paralleled easily with other such finds from the LPC distribution area, including examples in Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Germany (Fig. 10; Becker 2011, 138-143). Mostly, heads are either not depicted at all, or are rendered simply as dots or circles. Arms can be pointed upwards or downwards or even stretched out horizontally, whereas the legs are spread out diagonally or bent at the knees as if squatting. These representations occur on all types of LPC vessels (flasks, bowls, hemispherical jars) and were put on both the outside and inside of vessels, but the latter occur mostly in bowls. Occurring sparsely during the earliest phase of the LPC, they flourish in later phases, continuing to be depicted even during the Stroked Pottery Culture.

3. DISCUSSION

A clue to understanding the applications' meaning may be found in their overall posture and decoration. In these respects, they bear close resemblance to anthropomorphic figurines. Both in figurines and in applications, the strangely shaped heads occur, and since sometimes perforations can be noted at the rim of these bowl-like extensions, we may conclude that indeed a headdress is depicted, with the holes originally holding something organic like feathers, strings, beads or the like. For example, we could point to the elaborate headdresses of some female individuals from the Bavarian LPC cemetery of Aiterhofen-Ödmühle, which were made of hundreds of small sweetwater snail shells arranged in rows (Nieszery 1995, 189-194). Another parallel can be found in the characteristic posture with the arms bent at the elbows and set onto the hips, although there are also other arm positions in figurines – for example, outstretched or holding a vessel.

The type of decoration on the applications from Rovantsi but especially from Holyshiv-Zarvykhvosty can be paralleled exactly with that found on figurines from the LPC. For example, figurines from Reikersdorf and Eitzersthal (Lower Austria), Sormás (Transdanubia), Meindling and Gaukönigshofen (Bavaria) all feature a horizontal line running around the neck/shoulders (Becker 2011, 66), whereas incised short lines perpendicular to the arm can be found on figurines from Jacovce (Slovakia), Erbshausen (Bavaria), Döschwitz (central Germany) and Stein (Netherlands; Becker 2011, 66).

Most intriguing, however, is the decoration on the back of the application from Holyshiv-Zarvykhvosty, which is made up of two diagonal lines running together. We believe that this is a decorational element sometimes called a herring-bone or fir-branch motif. This special kind of decoration is widespread in the distribution area of the LPC and also attested for in Ukraine, with a figurine fragment from Khoriv, Rivnens'ka oblast' (Becker *et al.* 2014). As has been discussed elsewhere, there are strong arguments to tie this decoration to the depiction of skeletal elements, namely the ribs, which links it to the other-world or maybe death (Becker *et al.* 2014, 158-159).

Although mostly treated together due to similarities concerning decoration and general formal features, we have to consider the differences between figurines and anthropomorphic applications in the LPC if we want to discuss possible interpretations. The free-standing and three-dimensional figurines in the LPC can be handled, displayed and moved from one place to another to act in front of different surroundings. On the other hand, applications cannot exist without the vessel they are attached to, thus creating a strong contextual bond.

As stated above, there are applications looking towards the inside of the vessel, such as the two that were discussed at the beginning of this paper. Others look away from the vessel's contents, towards anyone or anything approaching or handling it. Probably the meaning of these two variants of anthropomorphic applications differed, but to pinpoint their exact significance is impossible. With respect to the application on the large storage vessel from Gneiding, its gesture and facial expression could be read as a warning to 'Keep away!', but of course, this is mere speculation.

In any case, it may be that these applications and the incised anthropomorphic representations had a similar meaning. They share almost identical bodily postures, although some incised representations were also applied on the inside of vessels.

It seems likely that the applications looking into the vessel direct the attention to its former content which could have been a liquid – milk, blood, water or even something alcoholic or laced with a drug, like milk of the poppy – as well as something more solid like meat, soup, or mash, or even something uncooked / unprocessed like cereal grains, fruit, vegetables or mushrooms. While lipid analysis may yield results regarding the content in the case of milk or something else containing animal fat, the majority of the other substances listed above will not leave any traces. The vessels' shape does not betray their former content: usually, anthropomorphic applications can be found on hemispheric vessels or bowls.

There are two vessels with anthropomorphic applications that are better preserved (Vedrovice, Moravia: Čížmář 2008, 165; Köthen-Geuz, Germany: Höckmann 1967, Abb. 3, 4), and in both cases, there was not only one anthropomorphic application, but up to four or more arranged around the rim of the vessel. The example from Vedrovice is especially interesting in this respect. Although it is fragmented, it is still apparent that the application on it had its gaze directed into the vessel or at the reputed other applications, and holding hands while doing so. A similar, though more stylized arrangement was made on the vessel from Köthen-Geuz. Thus, we may tentatively conclude one thing: whatever the original content, the ensembles seem to indicate that it was meant to be consumed not by a single individual, but by a group of people, sharing it, and creating a bond by eating or drinking together. It would be of special interest to investigate such vessels in detail to try to detect the remains of food or drink.

The applications and incised representations from Holyshiv-Zarvykhvosty and Rovantsi, from the eastern periphery of the LPC culture distribution, are no different from similar finds from the Czech Republic, Hungary, Austria or Germany, with regard to their shape, decoration and construction, and in their possible meaning. They point to a common set of behaviours, rites and rituals that created community between distant regions all over Europe.

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