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978-0-521-76826-9 - Clay in the Age of Bronze: Essays in the Archaeology of Prehistoric Creativity

Joanna Sofaer

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Studies of creativity frequently focus on the modern era, yet creativity has always been part of human history. *Clay in the Age of Bronze: Essays in the Archaeology of Prehistoric Creativity* explores how creativity was expressed through the medium of clay in the Bronze Age in the Carpathian Basin. Although metal is one of the defining characteristics of Bronze Age Europe, in the Carpathian Basin clay was the dominant material in many areas of life. Here the daily experience of people was, therefore, much more likely to be related to clay than to bronze. Through eight thematic essays, this book considers a series of different facets of creativity. Each essay combines a broad range of theoretical insights with a specific case study of ceramic forms, sites or individual objects. This innovative volume is the first to focus on creativity in the Bronze Age and offers new insights into the rich and complex archaeology of the Carpathian Basin.

Joanna Sofaer is a Professor in Archaeology at the University of Southampton. She has published widely on the European Bronze Age and archaeological theory. She is the author of *The Body as Material Culture* (2006), editor of *Children and Material Culture* (2000) and *Material Identities* (2007), and co-editor of *Biographies and Space* (2008).

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JOANNA SOFAER

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For GJAS

*A creative kid who wanted this book to be about pirates (or ninja). Maybe
next time . . .*

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We know the past by pieces
by sherds
broken pieces of pottery found
beneath the earth's crust
having once been a part, expressing totality.

Now still a part more and less so
speaking history to us
being form in fragment.

What can we name it . . .
when a way of life still exists
and itself is a fragment
being part of the past and
projecting tenaciously into our time?

Patterns of existence . . . what for?
this life-way discovered and reported is not a
hard-fact fragment
it is a real existence
flowing
continuously in today from yesterday
making tomorrow.

In our totality of today we can see it only
as a fragment and learn some truth
in its form. Paradoxically in looking
we atrophy it making it hard and fast.

But this must be transcended for today was
yesterday and our living
will see tomorrow.

Potters are water-carriers of history's truths.
Fragments, Charles Counts (1971)

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[More information](#)

CONTENTS

<i>List of Figures and Tables</i>	<i>page</i> viii
<i>Preface and Acknowledgements</i>	xi
Introduction	1
1 Hands	
The Human Body and Clay	15
2 Recycling	
The Reuse of Materials and Objects	40
3 Design	
The Expression of Ideas and the Construction of User Experience	56
4 Margins	
Locations for Creativity	73
5 Resistance	
The Reappropriation of Objects, Actions, and Ideas	94
6 Mimesis	
The Relationship between Original and Reproduction	111
7 Performance	
The Production of Knowledge	130
8 Failure	
Creativity and Risk	149
Afterword	165
<i>References</i>	169
<i>Index</i>	205

FIGURES AND TABLES

Figures

All maps and drawings by Ian Kirkpatrick unless otherwise stated.

I.1	Map of the Carpathian Basin.	<i>page</i> 8
1.1	Pinched out animal figures from Jászdózsa-Kápolnahalom, Szihalom and Piliny.	27
1.2	Actions involved in making a singular pinched out object: pinching out a bird from Vatin.	28
1.3	Actions involved in making a singular object with a void: thumbing out a miniature vessel from Százhalombatta.	29
1.4	Actions involved in making a solid additive form: joining pieces for the 'altar' from Darda.	30
1.5	Thumbed-out ovals joined together to make a rattle from Vatin.	31
1.6	Actions involved in making a hollow additive form: bird rattle made from sheets of clay from Királyszentistván.	32
1.7	Actions involved in making an additive form with a void by thumbing out, patching and adding clay pieces: zoomorphic vessel in the shape of a boar from Vatin-Bela Bara.	33
1.8	Bird vessel from Vatin with the body made from a combination of thumbing out and sheets of clay.	34
1.9	Vessel with bird-head protome from Vajuga-Pesak.	34
1.10	Actions involved in making an additive form by folding and adding: human figurine from Cârna.	35
1.11	Cross section of figurine from Ravno Selo showing a folding-over making technique.	37
2.1	Map of the Carpathian Basin showing the location of Százhalombatta.	45
2.2	Recycled vessel from Százhalombatta used as a token.	49
2.3	Alterations made to ceramic vessels at Százhalombatta.	50

List of Figures and Tables

ix

2.4	Hearth from Százhalombatta using recycled ceramics.	52
3.1	Map of the Carpathian Basin showing Middle Bronze Age cultural groups in the central Carpathian Basin with elaborately decorated bowls.	61
3.2	Swedish helmet bowl from Százhalombatta.	62
3.3	Sun motifs on Swedish helmet bowls.	63
3.4	Wheel motifs on Swedish helmet bowls.	64
3.5	Nagyrev vessels with incised surface decoration.	69
4.1	Map of the Carpathian Basin showing the distribution of the Csepel group.	79
4.2	Examples of Beaker objects from the Csepel group.	82
4.3	Examples of ceramics found in the Csepel group.	84
4.4	Range of identity categories that could potentially be created through the combination of objects in a Csepel group cemetery.	87
4.5	Forms of burial in the Csepel group.	90
5.1	Map of the Carpathian Basin showing the location of sites of the Velika Gorica and Dobova groups.	99
5.2	Urns from Velika Gorica.	105
6.1	Map of the Carpathian Basin showing the location of Vukovar Lijeva Bara.	118
6.2	Graves from Vukovar Lijeva Bara.	119
6.3	Vessels from Vukovar Lijeva Bara.	121
6.4	Turban rim bowl from Vukovar Lijeva Bara.	122
6.5	Lugs on turban rim bowls from Vukovar Lijeva Bara.	124
6.6	Decorative motifs on turban rim bowls from Vukovar Lijeva Bara.	126
6.7	(A) Turban rim vessels showing the same technical signature in the execution of the twist of the rim that were probably made by the same potter, and (B) turban rim vessel made by a different potter with a contrasting signature in twist to the rim.	128
7.1	Map of the Carpathian Basin showing the location of Cârna.	138
7.2	Pottery stacks in graves at Cârna.	140
8.1	Map of the Carpathian Basin showing the location of Százhalombatta and Lăpuş.	156
8.2	(A) Poorly made Nagyrev jug from Százhalombatta, and (B) well-made Nagyrev jug from Százhalombatta.	157
8.3	(A) Vessel from Lăpuş tumulus 5, and (B) vessel from Lăpuş tumulus 4.	160

Cambridge University Press

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Joanna Sofaer

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

x

List of Figures and Tables

Tables

- | | | |
|-----|---|-----|
| 3.1 | Differences in affordance, aesthetics, and user interactions for bowls from the Early and Middle Bronze Age in the central Carpathian Basin | 68 |
| 5.1 | Frequency of graves containing urns with holes and other objects at Velika Gorica and Dobova | 107 |

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For more than a decade I have had the privilege of working in Hungary at the Bronze Age tell settlement of Százhalombatta. I had become fascinated by the particular complexity and diversity of Bronze Age ceramics in the Carpathian Basin. I wanted to explore not only the nature of this diversity, but also the human practices and motivations that lay behind it. The HERA-funded project Creativity and Craft Production in Middle and Late Bronze Age Europe (CinBA), which I led from 2010 to 2013 (grant number 09-HERA-JRP-CI-FP-020) (www.cinba.net), offered an opportunity to understand these in new ways through the lens of creativity. The project brought together colleagues from the Universities of Southampton, Cambridge and Trondheim, the National Museum of Denmark, the Natural History Museum in Vienna, the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb, the Crafts Council and Sagnlandet, Lejre. It aimed to explore the fundamental nature of creativity in a critical period of human history by looking at developments in crafts that we take for granted today: pottery, textiles and metalwork. This volume is the fruit of that project.

Addressing creativity in the archaeological record has been both challenging and enjoyable. The intellectual, methodological and interpretive provocations that it offers have gone far beyond what I had anticipated. As a result it has been incredibly rich and stimulating, and has sparked many new ideas and collaborations. Although CinBA is now at an end, my own creative journey is just beginning.

It has been a joy and a privilege to work with all the colleagues involved in CinBA. I greatly value our discussions and friendship. This book could not have been written without the generosity of many archaeologists in the countries of the Carpathian Basin who kindly showed me material, answered queries and provided me with literature. I would like to thank Jacqueline Balen, Alice Choyke, Monica Constantin, Gabriel

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Finally, this book could not have been completed without the fantastic support of my family. Thank you.

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