

PhD thesis thema

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The settlement structure of the NW part of the Carpathian basin during the middle and late  
Early Iron Age

The Early Iron Age settlement at Győr-Ménfőcsanak (Hungary, Győr-Moson-Sopron county)

Budapest 2016

## I. The topic of the thesis

The research of the thesis focuses to the EIA sites, especially settlements of a smaller region of the Carpathian basin during the Early Iron Age.

The area of the investigation extended onto the so called Small Plain in Slovakia and Hungary (and a very small part in Austria). It is bordered (to go clockwise) by the river Hron on the East, the Bakony-Vértes and Gerecse hills, the foothills of the Alps on the west and the Carpathian mountains (it is 8000 sqkm). There are highlands and lowlands also represented and in the centre of it the Danube crosses the area. From cultural point of view it is also a rich region. The region was the part of the East Hallstatt-circle, namely of its smaller group Kalenderberg culture. Although on the end of investigated period EIA there were cultural changes. The early Latene culture and the Vekerzug culture had occurred in the region.

Only to summarize the earlier investigations in the region. First important sites were excavated yet in the 19th century and the first syntheses also occurred in the first half of the 20th century. The real progress we may see since the second half of the 20th century. In the Hungarian research for example Sopron-Burgstall, the highland settlement and barrow cemetery, the mount of Velemszentvid which was important center in the previous and the next period also, the famous barrows at Süttő, Mesteri and plenty of smaller findings proceeded from surface investigations.

The progress of this research was very similar in the Slovakian area. After first finds from the 19th century, during the 20th century had evolved a more specialized EIA investigation oriented to the period. Important sites as Smolenice-Molpír (highland settlement) and Nové Košariská (6 barrow burial) played a keyrole and had helped the development of this progress. Rescue excavations enriched the basis of analyses such for example in Bratislava-Dúbravka, where a very important lowland settlement had revealed.

The beginning of the research as master work was collecting all the available data about EIA sites in the region. It was planned to build a database for further investigations. The data were collected from archives at regional museums, from official register of the archaeological sites (Forster Gyula Nemzeti Örökségvédelmi és Vagyongazdálkodási Központ) and from archaeological literature.

Field survey were also realized in frame of a project under the direction of Dr. Czajlik Zoltán in the Institute of Archaeological Sciences at Eötvös Loránd University. Based on aerial photographs we were collecting data (territorial, GIS, arch. finds) on selected sites. The results were published in more articles (MRK, OL).

## II. The aims of the thesis

Generally to recognize the hinterland of the famous highland settlements and rich burials of the EIA Hallstatt-culture in the region.

- collect data about lowland settlements
- create a database of information for further investigations
- analyse the relation of highland and lowland settlements, the settlements and the cemeteries
- analyse the inner structure and the environment of the settlements
- to map the settlement structure of the region
- examine the chronological questions
- outline the problematic questions (terminology, cultural borders, chronological phases)

The first of all was work out or build up a catalogue of known data.

The sources were different, so it was important to integrate informations and complete with new one. The final result reflects the conditions in the end of 2014. As everybody know the data are still assemblaging. The majority of finds belong to settlements, but unfortunately the most of them are from small rescue excavations, field survey, sporadic finds or older collections.

It was very important I had obtained the material of the excavation at Győr-Ménfőcsanak, which is a nearly 30 acre extended lowland settlement in the region. In many cases this site was the head of analyses - as by the settlement features categorization. The thesis gave the frame to publicate this important Early Iron Age collection.

There are 13 known highland settlement in the named region, but the majority excavated only partially. In the west Hallstatt circle many of new projects are to investigate the surrounding and the environ of the highland settlements. In the eastern region the number of this research is much less. S. Müller has published a monography about Smolenice-Molpír, in which he also deald with the question of settlement hierarchy. I have tried to topographically analyse the topic in two smaller microregions. To summerize results, the near surrounding of the highland settlement is in the most of cases also inhabited - near Bratislava and Sopron there are many other lowland, but also highland settlements. Unfortunately it is very hard to demonstrate one highland's leading position. The archaeological material denoted the same activities on lowland and highland settlements. Even so we may suppose the highland settlements were centres of a certain region, but this region was probalby rather more given by the natural environment than by a strict hierachical, uniform system. Certain highland sites may have different functions. On the settlement of Smolenice were noted similar activities

and functions as for example on lowlandsettlement at Győr-Ménfőcsanak (agriculture, handcraft), but there were also some hints referring to the importance of military and cult.

A. Posluchny and surely many other researches had tried to determine the functions and criteria of a highland settlements. He was investigating the well known Hallstatt centres in Germany. The result, that there doesn't exist a single general definition for this settlement types were confirmed in our area also.

The extension and the inner structure of the sites wasn't easier task. The most of the sites is known only partially, or fragmentary. We doesn't have exapmles, where the entire site was excavated. Although we have many hints the settlements extended in horizontal way. The one of the best examples is the settlement Tešetice-Kyjovice (Moravia). There are three smaller areas with EIA settlement traces. Assesing the situation and the finds authors deduced, the settlement was developing horizontally beside the river stream. Similar situation is known from our region in many cases. Other field survey in hungarian county Vas discovered an EIA site on a 900 meter long area. The name of that Ikervár has became popular in hungarian research because of the bronze treasure found on the settlement. Koroncó is located in our research territory, where EIA settlement features were found on two sides of a smaller stream.

Archaeobotanical and archaeozoological analyseses has schown the importance of the environment and the natural sources of a site. As already mentioned the vicinity of the water, the extended areas for the agriculture, the planting of grain were important factors. The rich archaeozoological material at Győr- Ménfőcsanak revealed the huge percent of hunted animals. Requisits of meat were supplayd not only by animal farming, but by regular hunting and fishing also. The material of Győr-Ménfőcsanak had revealed many new results for example: the occurence of the pike, the consumption of the beaver , the high number of the red deer bones, the housekeeping of chickens and there were found many fragments of egg shells. Generaly we may state the inner structure of these sites was irregular. The feature were arranged by the natural abilities of an area. Between features in many cases there are bigger empty spaces (presumably because of the farming). Ikervár, Letenye, Koroncó and Ménfőcsanak also revealed the functionally divided areas on a settlement. At Ikervár for example there was found a separate place for cult activities, at Letenye and Ménfőcsanak there were maybe such territories which were used by the whole inhabitation of the site or by bigger groups for handcraft.

EIA settlements excavated on a larger extent were investigated from social point of view mainly on Austrian part. At Göttlesbrunn and Horn Monika Griebl, at Wien-Oberlaa Ch. Ranseder, at Michelstetten S. Preinhold have tried to reconstruct smaller units on the sites, so called households. In our region, S. Müller at Sered', Smolenice and Čataj did the same. I have tried to analyse data from Győr-Ménfőcsanak. These households contain similar elements as building (dwelling) and to that belonging features (storage pits, handcraft features). We may presume similar activities. The households were surrounded by larger empty spaces. In the case of Győr-Ménfőcsanak the settlement was inhabited during the entire EIA, so the majority of the features were disturbed. The reconstruction of households is based mainly on the arrangement of a feature and on the archaeological material, but it has to be

stressed this reconstruction was rather an assumption. I have distinguished two settlement phases, but there wasn't a big break between them. Some households had developed soon continually. Although it is worth to notice, the most of undisturbed features was dated to the second phase.

To outline the inner structure of a site we need to know the function of the archaeological features. The EIA sites in our region were composed mainly from sunked features (with square plan and bigger size or round features called settlement pits). The function of a feature we may suppose based on the archaeological material, their structure and paralels of the other known sites. The question of the dwellings (building for living) is a disputed topic in our research even now. The most of sites has yielded sunked, square features with or without postholes. Only in Sopron-Krautacker and Sered'-Mačianské vršky were excavated so called column buildings (built under floor). The sunked houses have had also overground structure (that means walls), presumably from easy material. L. Timár for example a hungarian archaeologist and architect investigated this question in the Late Iron Age. Based on observations at La Tene settlements, analysing the infilling of objects he had outlined the construction possibilities of these features. It is very important to notice from my point of view, that the people of iron age settlements had built their objects according to the natural sources and the formation of the environments. As plans of features had attested there wasn't a unified building type only the main structure methods could be similar. Other settlements features as storage pits (for food and waste also), dwells, fireplaces and features used by handcraft were also recognized at the EIA sites in the region. The very recent investigations often tends to the economy of sites as the weaving and spinning activities, the trade etc. K. Grömer has published for example many important studies about textile production of this era. In the named area is very characteristic the importance of the textil production. In many cases there were found loomweights in situ which demonstrated the usage of looms. It is worth to notice the sites at Dunajská Lužna - Nové Košariská, Ivanka pri Dunaji and Győr-Ménfőcsanak.

The material culture of these EIA sites was characterized in the thesis by publicating the collection excavated by G. Ilon and his work team (MNM-NOK Szombathely) at Győr-Ménfőcsanak. The example of Győr-Ménfőcsanak represents the generally true aspects at these EIA sites. That means the majority of finds are ceramic fragments and animal bones, and the occurrence of metal objects is very rare (much more oftener at highland settlements). The ceramic of EIA settlements is very simple so called houseceramic for everyday use. The most of them undecorated and simply types as storage vessels, bowls, pots. F. Schwellnus based on Sopron-Krautacker has investigated the function of these vesseltypes. The simply forms and decorations were used during long timeperiod, phases, so the chronological listing was in many cases very difficult rather hypothetical. Developed from burial chronolotypology we practise to classify materials of sites also. There are some smaller observations, details in decorations and shape which may indicate this chronology. For example the occurrence of the graphite in the material of the ceramic or the appearance of the wheeled pottery was characteristic in the late Hallstatt phase. These two mentioned phenomena also refers to the cultural changes on the end of the EIA.

To summarize the investigation of the EIA sites in the NW part of the Carpathian basin has yielded many new details about the life and conditions of the inhabitation from cultural, chronological and social point of view also.

### III. The structure of the thesis

The short introduction was followed by eight chapters.

Chapter 1 described the area of the research from geographical and cultural point of view. The so called Small Hungarian plain in the northwestern part of the Carpathian basin extends mainly in Hungary and Slovakia. It is surrounded by highlands, but the most of the region is a plain, agricultural region also in the recent time. There are important rivers streams crossing the area in West-East (Danube) and North-South (Hron, Rába, Marcal) direction. The environmental factors had influenced the settlement structure of the region yet in the Early Iron Age. The East Hallstatt culture inhabited this region in the named period. The end of the period is characterized by cultural changes.

Chapter 2 discussed the source material of the thesis. Very important part of the research was the examination of the archaeological collection excavated at Győr-Ménfőcsanak by G. Ilon and his workgroup (HMN-NOK Szombathely). The short report of this excavation was dealt in the first part of the chapter 2 (2.1). The source material of the research were collected in many ways as data collecting, field survey, analyses of aerial photographs etc. so it was necessary to outline and resume methods of research and characterize the data.

Chapter 3 concerned on general questions of the Early Iron Age research, especially in our region. The archaeologists in Hungary and Slovakia use in many cases different terminology, or rather we don't deal with the definitions we use. Sometimes it could be confusing to understand our opinion. On other hand, there are many doubtful questions which by our recent knowledge couldn't be answered squarely.

The settlement features of an Early Iron Age site were elaborately described in the chapter 4. The features found at Győr-Ménfőcsanak gave the headline of the determinations. The main categories of the types were analysed in separate subsections. The interpretation of dwellings, storage pits, handwork areas and objects, wells and ditches has relayed by the archaeological finds, the structure and the known parallels from published EIA settlements.

Archaeological material of the excavations at Győr-Ménfőcsanak, meghatározva as EIA, was published in the chapter 5. It is important to notice, the finds from EIA lowland settlements in the discussed region was from the most of the aspects similar. The large percent of ceramic and animal bones was indicative of the agricultural sites. The rare occurrence of metal ware also characterized this part of the East Hallstatt-circle. At the same time the analyses of archaeozoological and archaeobotanical finds has yielded important new knowledges about this period.

The chapter 6 has summarized investigated questions of the EIA settlement structure on the Small Hungarian plain. The different environment of the highland and lowland settlement generated the different character of them. Some questions as the size, the inner structure, the fortification were outlined in subsections, but the entire structure was analysed also (6.3).

The EIA chronology in our region is based mainly on the finds of early excavations, known collections from Sopron-Burgstall, Velemszentvid, burial as for example, Süttő, Mesteri, Nové Košariská, cemetery Nagydém-Középrépáspuszta etc. The classification of the lowland settlements, their periodisation, the datation of the material of field survey was problematic in some cases. The last excavated and published materials (mainly from Austria) gave very important point of reference to analyse the collected finds.

The catalogue of 293 archaeological sites in the discussed territory was represented in the last chapter (chapter 8). There were listed the main data about the finds as name, research, datation, known collections.

The second volume of the thesis contains the tables (1-12) and illustrations (maps - 14, photos, drawings - 169). The catalogue of the archaeological finds at Győr-Ménfőcsanak was attached in digital format (CD).