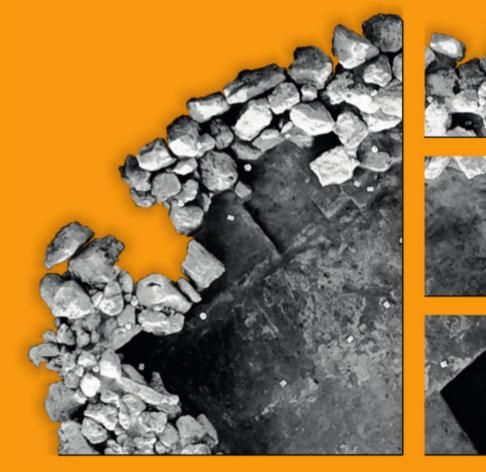
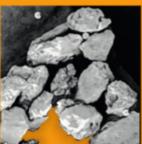
DISSERTATIONES ARCHAEOLOGICAE

ex Instituto Archaeologico Universitatis de Rolando Eötvös nominatae











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The settlement structure of the North-Western 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)

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Abstract

Abstract of PhD thesis submitted in 2016 to the Archaeology Doctoral Programme, Doctoral School of History, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest under the supervision of Miklós Szabó.

The subject of the thesis

The study is devoted to the sites, especially settlements of a smaller region in the Carpathian Basin in the Early Iron Age (EIA).

The area of the investigation extends to the so-called Small Hungarian Plain in Hungary and Slovakia. It is framed by the river Hron, the Bakony-Vértes and Gerecse hills to the east, and borders the foothills of the Alps and the Carpathian mountains to the west (it is 8000 sqkm, *Fig. 1*). Highlands and lowlands are also represented, and the Danube crosses the area in the centre of the territory. Chronologically, this study concerns the period during which the Hallstatt culture existed (8th – 5th century BC), especially in its mature and final stage. Although there were cultural changes in the end of this period, the region was part of the Eastern Hallstatt-circle, namely of its smaller group the Kalenderberg culture. The appearance of the early La-Tène culture and the Vekerzug culture characterized the area of the study.

Let us shortly outline the early EIA research in this region. The first important sites were already excavated in the 19th century, and the first synthesizes also occurred in the first half of the 20th century. The real progress has begun in 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 that was an important centre 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 the first finds of the 19th century, a more specialized EIA research were emerging through the 20th century. Important sites as Smolenice-Molpír (highland settlement) and Nové Košariská (6 barrow burials) played a key role and moved on the development of this progress. Rescue excavations enriched the basis of analyses such as the one in Bratislava-Dúbravka, where an important lowland settlement has been revealed.

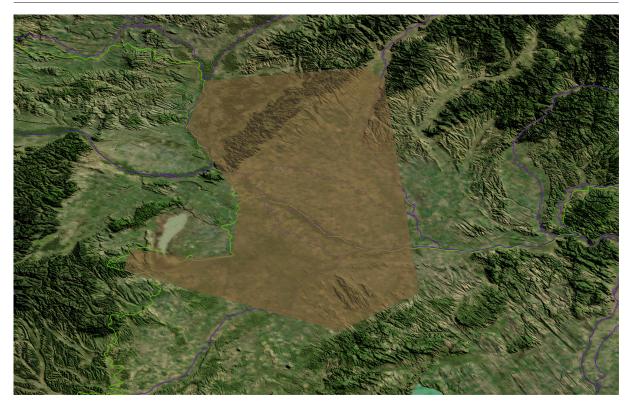


Fig. 1. The north-western part of the Carpathian Basin, the territory of the study.

Before the beginning of the work of this doctoral thesis all the available data of the EIA sites had been collected in the region as a master study. It was planned to build a database for further investigations. The data were gathered from archives of regional museums, from the official register of the archaeological sites and from the archaeological literature. A field survey was also carried out within a project under the direction of Zoltán Czajlik in the Institute of Archaeological Sciences of the Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest. The aerial photographs of certain locations (taken by Zoltán Czajlik) allowed farther enquiries (territorial, GIS) and field prospection. The results have been partly published (Archaeological Investigations in Hungary, Prehistoric Newsletter).

The aims of the dissertation

The Early Iron Age societies have been investigated in our region for a long time. Even so our knowledge is still fragmentary in many aspects. In order to be able to conceive the life of these societies a particular gathering of the source material is necessary. That also means to recognize the hinterland of the famous highland settlements and the rich burials of the EIA Hallstatt-culture in the region. It could be possible through the realization of several minor aims:

- To collect data about lowland settlements
- To create a database of information for further investigations
- To analyse the relation of highland and lowland settlements, the settlements and the cemeteries
- To analyse the inner structure and the environment of the settlements

- To map the settlement structure of the region
- To examine the chronological questions
- To outline the problematic questions (terminology, cultural borders, chronological phases)

First of all a catalogue of the known data had to be worked out or built up. The sources were different therefore it was important to integrate the information to a unified system and complete it with new items. The final result reflects the conditions in the end of 2014. The majority of finds belong to settlements, but unfortunately most of them are from small rescue excavations, field surveys, sporadic finds or older collections.

I obtained the material of the excavation of Győr-Ménfőcsanak from colleague Gábor Ilon (Szombathely), which is a very important part of the database. There is a nearly 30 hectares extended lowland settlement in the region. From many points of view this site had a key role during the analyses – especially by the categorization of the settlement features. The doctoral thesis also provided a frame for the publication of this important Early Iron Age collection.

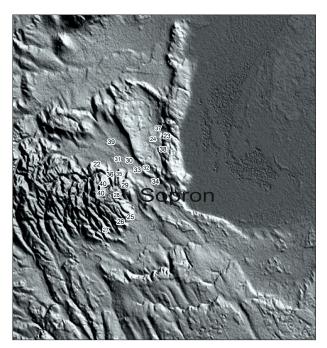


Fig. 2. Early Iron Age archaeological sites in the region of Sopron, Hungary.

There are 13 known highland settlements in the named region. The majority of them was excavated only partially. In the western Hallstatt circle many new projects investigates the surroundings and the environment of the highland settlements. In the eastern region the number of such research is much less. S. Müller has published a monographic study about Smolenice-Molpír. He also deals with the question of settlement hierarchy. I have tried to analyse this subject topographically in two smaller micro-regions. To summarize the results, in most cases the near surrounding of the highland settlements is also inhabited near Bratislava and Sopron there are many other lowlands, but also highland settlements (Fig. 2). Unfortunately the domination of a highland settlement is difficult to attest. The archaeological material proved many similar

activities on lowland and highland settlements. Even so we may suppose that highland settlements were the centre of certain regions. These regions were probably given by the natural environment rather than by a strict hierarchical, uniform system. Certain highland places may have had different functions. At the settlement of Smolenice-Molpír similar activities and functions were noticed than for example in the lowland settlement of Győr-Ménfőcsanak (agriculture, handcraft), but there were also some hints referring to the importance of military and cult. A number of researchers tried to determine the functions and criteria of a highland settlement while investigating the well-known Hallstatt centres in Germany. The results have indicated that no uniform, general definition exists for this settlement type. Locations excavated in our territory also confirmed this assumption. The extension and the inner structure of the places has become a more investigated matter since the last quarter of the 20th century. Most of the sites are known only partially or fragmentarily. Unfortunately there are only few examples where the borders of a site could be determined. The finds and observations verified the horizontal development of the settlements. A significant example was excavated in Tešetice-Kyjovice (Moravia). Three smaller areas of an EIA settlement were found. Assessing the situation and the finds the authors deduced that the settlement had been developing horizontally along the river stream. Similar situations are known in our region in many cases (Koroncó, Ivanka pri Dunaji). In the Hungarian Vas county an EIA site on a 900 meter long plateau was discovered. The name of this site, Ikervár has become widely known because of its bronze treasure.

The archaeobotanical and archaeozoological material emphasized the importance of the environment and the natural sources of the settlements. As it is mentioned above, the vicinity of water, and an open area for agriculture and planting were substantial factors. The large archaeozoological material from Győr- Ménfőcsanak revealed a huge percentage of hunted animals. Requisites of meat were provided not only by animal farming, but also by regular hunting and fishing. The material of Győr-Ménfőcsanak also revealed many new results, for example the occurrence of pike, the consumption of beaver, a high number of red deer bones, and the housekeeping of chickens (attested by many fragments of egg shells). Generally, we presume an irregular inner structure of these settlements. The features (buildings for different activities and living, storage and craftsmens space) were arranged by the natural abilities of the field. In many cases there are open spaces between the features (presumably because of the farming). Ikervár, Letenye, Koroncó and Ménfőcsanak also revealed the presence of functionally divided spaces. For example, in Ikervár a separate place serving cult activities was found, in Letenye and Ménfőcsanak there were territories interpreted as places for the collective use of certain groups.

Several EIA settlements excavated on a larger extent in Austria enabled the looking at some social proposals. In Göttlesbrunn and Horn Monika Griebl, in Wien-Oberlaa Ch. Ranseder, in Michelstetten S. Preinhold reconstructed smaller units in the sites that they named as households. In our region, S. Müller in Sered, Smolenice and Čataj did the same. I have also attempted to look over the situation of the EIA features in the settlement of Győr-Ménfőcsanak. As discussed by many of the researchers, these households contain similar elements such as buildings (dwellings) and features belonging to them (storage pits, handcraft features, ditches, wells, fireplaces etc.). Around and between these groups of features there were open fields, supposedly because of farming. It can be presumed that these units were self-sufficient, realized by similar daily activities. In the case of Győr-Ménfőcsanak the settlement was inhabited during the entire period of the EIA. The majority of the features were disturbed. The reconstruction of households is mainly founded on the arrangement of the objects and inferences drawn by the archaeological material. It has to be emphasized that this outline of the smaller units is an assumption. The settlement could be divided into two phases from a chronological point of view, however, it had been inhabited continuously. The households had been developing uninterruptedly. Moreover, it is worth to mention that most of the undisturbed features refer to the second phase of the settlement.

In order to outline the inner structure of a site, we need to know the function of the archaeological features. The EIA settlements in our region provided mainly sunken archaeological features (with a square plan, ground-space generally 8 to 15 m2, or round features determined as settlement pits). The archaeological findings, the structure and analogies are the headlines to interpret an object. The definition of the dwellings (buildings of everyday activities) is an often disputed topic in the archaeological research even now. The sites concerned in the study yielded sub-terrain (sunken) and semi-sub terrain features with or without postholes. In Sopron-Krautacker and Sered-Mačianské vršky houses/buildings were excavated with postconstruction laid on the terrain. The superstructure of both types built over the ground was made by wood and organic material found in the surrounding areas. There was no unified model, but possibilities were given by the nature, the formation of the terrain and certainly by the human resource.

Archaeological researchers currently often study the economy, production, trade and social context of the named sites. For example the weaving and spinning, the metal production, the agriculture (planting and farming possibilities), the connections and the trade of a community. Traces of the textile production were found in several cases in our region. The loom weights found in situ in the sites Dunajská Lužna - Nové Košariská, Ivanka pri Dunaji and Győr-Ménfőcsanak are worth to notice.

The material culture of the listed EIA sites was characterized by publishing the archaeological record excavated in Győr- Ménfőcsanak (by G. Ilon and his work team, MNM-NÖK Szombathely). This example represents the general traits of an EIA lowland settlement in the studied territory. Namely it is mainly ceramic finds, a large number of animal bones, and the very rare occurrence of metal objects (found more often in highland settlements). The ceramic of these communities was mostly for everyday use called house ware by us. Generally these are simple, handmade and undercoated types of storage vessels, bowls, and pots. Based on Sopron-Krautacker, F. Schwellnus has investigated the function of these vessel types. The simple forms and decorations had been used during a long period of time, so in many cases the chronological assignment was very difficult and rather hypothetical. In most cases material is classified by the typochronology developed by vessels found in burials. Some details of the decorations and shapes may indicate the date of a widely used vessel type. For example the occurrence of graphite in the material of the ceramic or the appearance of the wheeled pottery was characteristic in the late Hallstatt phase. These two mentioned marks also indicate the cultural changes at the end of the EIA period. Synthesis of the investigations in the NW part of the Carpathian Basin has also yielded many new details about the life and conditions of the communities from a cultural, chronological and social point of view.

The structure

The short introduction was followed by eight chapters.

Chapter 1 describes the area of the research from a geographical and cultural point of view. The so-called Small Hungarian Plain in the north-western part of the Carpathian Basin extends mainly in the territory of Hungary and Slovakia. It is surrounded by highlands, but most of the region is an open, agricultural region even today. There are important river streams crossing the area in a West-Eastern (Danube) and North-Southern (Hron, Rába, Marcal) direction. The environmental factors had yet influenced the settlement structure of the region in the Early Iron Age, which was part of the East Hallstatt culture. The end of the period is characterized by cultural changes.

Chapter 2 reveals the source material of the work. An important part of the study was the examination of the archaeological phenomena excavated in Győr-Ménfőcsanak by G. Ilon and his workgroup (HMN-NOK Szombathely). The first part of Chapter 2 (2.1) deals with the short report of this excavation. The contents of the database were collected in many ways as from archives and literature, field survey, analyses of aerial photographs etc., therefore it was necessary to outline and resume the methods of research and to qualify the data.

Chapter 3 concerns general issues of the Early Iron Age research, especially in our region. In many cases archaeologists in Hungary and Slovakia use different terminology, or sometimes we just do not concern about the definitions we use, and thus it is difficult to understand each-other's opinion. On the other hand, there are many doubtful questions which could not be answered certainly by our recent knowledge.

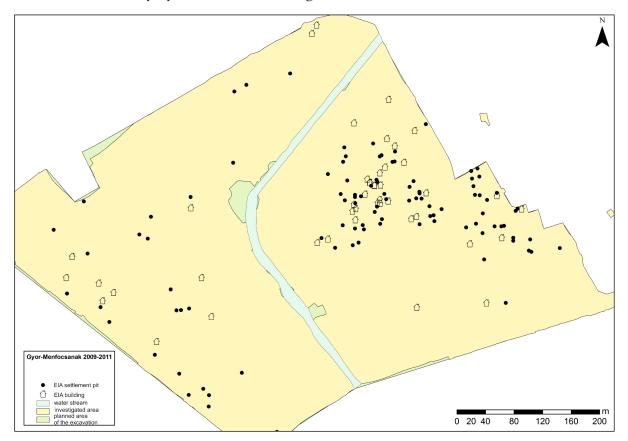


Fig. 3. The excavated area in Győr-Ménfőcsanak (2009-2011) and the plan of the EIA settlement (authors: NÖK II. Reg. Dep. in Szombathely).

The settlement features of an Early Iron Age site are described elaborately in **Chapter 4**. The features excavated in Győr-Ménfőcsanak and their analogies gave basis to the classification (*Fig. 3*). The main categories of the types were analysed in separate subsections. The definition of dwellings, storage pits, handwork areas and objects, wells and ditches is based on the archaeological finds, the structure and the known analogies of published EIA settlements.

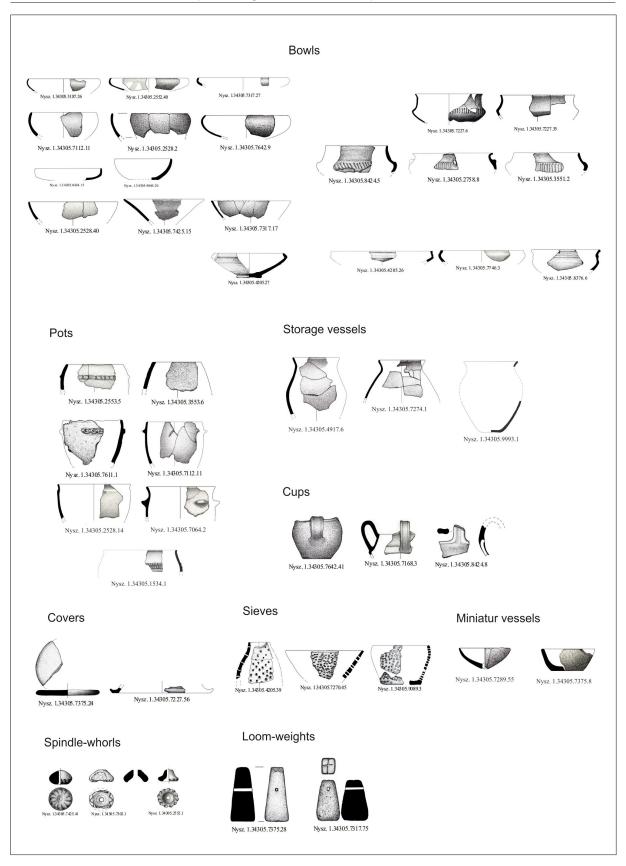


Fig. 4. Selected vessel types of the EIA settlement in Győr-Ménfőcsanak (authors: NÖK II. Reg. Dep. in Szombathely).

The archaeological material of the excavations of Győr-Ménfőcsanak, dated to the EIA, is presented in **Chapter 5** (*Fig. 4*). It is important to notice that in most cases the finds of EIA lowland settlements are similar in the discussed region. At the same time the analyses of archaeozoological and archaeobotanical finds has yielded important new data about the farming and social life of the community.

Chapter 6 summarizes the subject matter of the settlement structure in the Small Hungarian Plain during the EIA. First of all the differences of the highland and lowland settlements generate in their distinct environmental abilities. Some subjects as the size, the inner structure, and the fortification of the settlements is outlined in subsections. Subchapter 6.3 is completely devoted to the settlement structure.

The EIA chronology was mainly formed by finds of the early excavations in our region, for instance the known collections of Sopron-Burgstall, Velemszentvid, and burials as Süttő, Mesteri, Nové Košariská, cemetery Nagydém-Középrépáspuszta etc. **Chapter 7** concerns chronology. The dating and periodization of the settlements has many disputable issues. It is more enhanced in the case of sites known by field survey. The last excavated and published materials (mainly from Austria) provided very important points of reference to analyse the collected finds.

The catalogue of 293 archaeological sites in the discussed territory is represented in the final chapter (**Chapter 8**, *Fig. 5–6*). The items listed in the catalogue include the main information about the finds as name, research, dating, known and published material, references. The second volume of the work contains the tables (1–12) and illustrations (maps – 14, photos, drawings – 169). The catalogue of the archaeological finds of Győr-Ménfőcsanak is supplemented in a digital format (CD).

The Early Iron Age settlement at Győr-Ménfőcsanak

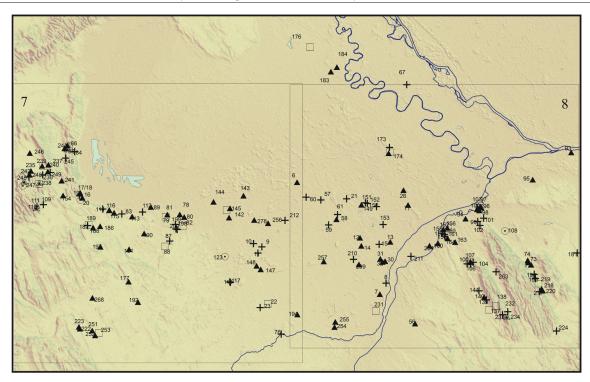


Fig. 5. Distribution of the EIA sites in county Győr-Moson-Sopron, Hungary.

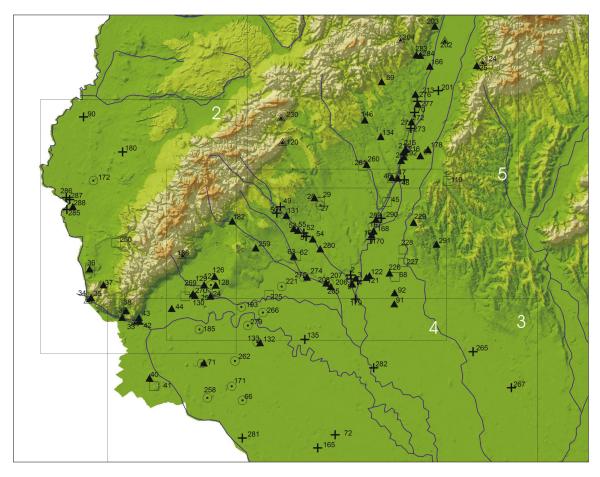


Fig. 6. Distribution of the EIA sites in the south-western part of Slovakia.