

EARLY IRON AGE IN CENTRAL EUROPE

Editorial

Dear Readers,

You are now holding the current, thematic issue of *Študijné zvesti AÚ SAV* journal, dedicated to the Early Iron Age in Central Europe. This issue emerged from the discussions and outcomes of the 4th International Conference on the Early Iron Age in Central Europe, held in Nitra from July 6–9, 2022.

The articles featured here were either presented directly at the conference or are inspired by the themes debated during both the official sessions and informal discussions within the conference forums.

The contributions by leading scholars in Early Iron Age studies span a broad spectrum of research questions. The papers cover results from typo-chronological analyses of individual artefacts or artefact groups, including the cauldron with cross-shaped attachments from Castaneda (CH), nail-shaped head ornaments from the Western Carpathians, eastern-type artefacts from Transdanubia, *Kegelhalsgefäße* from Northeastern Transdanubia, and a *Schnabelkanne* from an unidentified site in Germany. These studies not only help define exchange and trade networks across Europe but also shed light on the social dynamics of Hallstatt period societies. Similarly, the examination of material culture and burial practices at necropolises offers insights into the social stratification of the period, allowing also for the identification of non-standard burial practices (e.g., those associated with elite or deviant burials). The cemeteries sites discussed in this issue come from a diverse array of regions in Europe, including Domasław (PL), Frög (AT), Hurbanovo (SK), Muskervastlwald at Burgstallkogel (AT), and Sâncrai-Darvaş (RO). Notably, the Pilismarót-Basaharc burial ground (HU) is examined through both anthropological and archaeological analyses. Cemeteries, along with their associated artefact groups, contribute significantly to refining the chronological framework of the Hallstatt period. For example, a chronology of the Hallstatt period in Moravia based on an analysis of the graves containing wagon and horse harness items, correlated with other European chronological systems, is presented. Settlement studies, whether focused on hilltop fortified sites or unfortified lowland settlements, address questions of function and socio-economic organization. Several contributions explore the role of settlement sites as elite residences (e.g., the manor house at Holedeč/CZ) or as sites with specific functions within investigated microregions (e.g., Tribeč Mountains/SK, Central Orava region/SK, the Poštela hilltop site region/SI, and the Nagyberki-Szalacska region/HU). These microregional studies are not only concerned with the role of (hilltop) settlements in local settlement structures, but also with the diverse past uses of the landscape – from being used as funerary landscapes (burying in barrows and flat graves) through habitation to the economic activities – often employing an interdisciplinary approach that incorporates archaeobotany, geophysics or LIDAR analysis.

The range of topics addressed in this issue underscores the value of bringing together scholars from various European regions, providing an important synthesis of current research, as well as differing methodologies in the study of the Early Iron Age in Central Europe. The use of diverse methodological frameworks – such as typo-chronological analysis, burial ritual studies, archaeobotanical and anthropological research, geophysical methods, LIDAR, and microregional spatial analysis – offers a multifaceted approach to understanding critical aspects of the period, including social organization, long-distance interactions, the role of hilltop sites, and the structured management of landscapes. Together, these perspectives form a rich mosaic that enhances our understanding of this pivotal historical era.

I hope you find this ‘Early Iron Age’ issue both intellectually stimulating and rewarding in its scholarly contributions.

Lucia Benediková
Managing Editor of the Issue

