

SETTLEMENTS OF THE CELTS IN SOUTHWESTERN SLOVAKIA¹

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The article is focused mainly on summarization of materials provided by documents on existence of settlements, settlement features from the territory of southwestern Slovakia and their possible use as residences. We also raise a question about the size and urbanism of settlements and their specifications from the aspect of a common inhabitant or elite of the then society with higher status.

CONTEMPORARY SITUATION IN SLOVAKIA

With regard to the natural geographical division, we distinguish three main settlement areas in the territory of Slovakia in the La Tène period. Southwestern Slovakia with high density of finds is part of the Celtic settlement in the Middle Danube region. The northern and mountainous areas have separate development with its peak in the Púchov culture. The south of central and eastern Slovakia inclines to the development in the Tisza river basin and Transylvania. In our article, we will focus on the most intensely settled territory in that period, i. e. southwestern Slovakia. In its area, the situation is difficult in the end of the Early Iron Age (Hallstatt period), which is expressed in overlapping of the eastern part of the Kalenderberg culture by the Vekezug group. The Váh river was the boundary. The Celts² – probably only small prospecting groups – arrived in waves in the thus formed environment since the mid-5th century BC. The oldest lowland and upland settlements and burial grounds from that period are concentrated mostly in the westernmost part of southwestern Slovakia, near Bratislava and at the feet of the Little Carpathians. Today, inhumation burial grounds and individual burials in Stupava (Čambal 2012), Bučany (Bujna/Romsauer 1983, 277 nn.), Veľký Grob (Chropovský 1954, 316–319) and in the cadastral area of Bernolákovo (Bazovský 2012, 79–85) are known from this oldest stage of the La Tène period (HaD3/LTA–LTB1). The fortified hillfort on Slepý vrch hill in the cadastral area of Horné and Dolné Orešany villages known for solitary finds and results of excavations from 2004, 2005 and 2008, which studied terraces and parts of fortification, deserve most attention (Pieta/Jakubčinová/Šebesta 2011, 211–214, fig. 93; 97). As for lowland sites, studied features include e. g. features in Trnava-Horné pole, Bratislava-Dúbravka, Rakovice (Bartík/Březinová 1996, 57–86; Březinová/Benediková 2001; Stegmann-Rajtár 1996, 455–471). This group of inhabitants belongs to the first Celtic enclave, which expanded in the territory of southwestern Slovakia across the Danube river from the territory of Lower Austria.

In the mid-4th c. BC, direct occupation occurs. The main colonization wave moving along the right bank of the Danube is associated with settling in the core of the Carpathian basin. It headed to the southeastern areas settled by bearers of the Vekezug culture, who were then forced off from there. The Celtic

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² The name of the Celts is used on the general level as a name for the groups of the then inhabitants having uniform material equipment.

tribes with their numbers and mainly highly developed production potential connected with antique Mediterranean world greatly influenced the whole of the then Trans-Alpine Europe. Trade associated with the so-called Amber Road prospered and they used a monetary system in their everyday life. Their intense settlement in the environment of southwestern Slovakia is evidenced by the density of sites (Březinová 2006) as well as numerous flat burial grounds in the lower Ipel, Hron, Žitava and Nitra river basins since LTB. Warrior burials occur at the burial grounds as well as richly equipped female burials, often with goods in form of luxurious goods, such as jewels or metal ware of antique origin and other prestigious artifacts (Bujna 1998; 2005; 2011; Repka 2014; 2015). Another colonization wave of the Celts is connected with the beginning of the 2nd c. BC and was associated with the north Italic tribes which withdrew to northeast after being defeated by the Romans (191/190 BC). Archaeologically, this process is documented by burial grounds with cremation burials and new settlements. Today, we know about 120 burial grounds in Slovakia where 1,025 burials were studied (Repka 2014, 42). The most intense settlement in the territory of southwestern Slovakia is confirmed in LTC1, in the early stage of the Middle La Tène period (LTB2/LTC1–LTC1 240/230–180 BC). As for settlements, they are mainly habitations of lowland character and we can speak of urbanistic arrangement only in minimum of them, which is caused by the low number of studied features at individual sites. In the second half of the 2nd c. BC (LTC2), changes occurred in the whole central European territory. They were expressed in the demise of burial grounds, appearance of oppida, moving settlement to higher altitudes and occurrence of monuments of the so-called Dacian character (LTD) which survive until the beginning of the Roman period (association with Burebista).

EVIDENCE OF SETTLEMENT OF SOUTHWESTERN SLOVAKIA (Fig. 1)

In the attempt to learn about the original picture of settlement in southwestern Slovakia in the La Tène period, we focused on processing of the available database of published outputs as well as on record of the sites in documentations of museums and mainly in the Institute of Archaeology of SAS in Nitra. This time-consuming step allowed us to collect 425 data on settlement sites in the studied territory (Březinová 2006, 22, map 1). To a great extent, it is a database with a low information value; there is no intentionally studied settlement area dated to the La Tène period. Most of the sites were polycultural, but there were also settlement features belonging to the period of our interest. After some time, we see this step very positively. This database was reduced to settlements where at least one feature was studied, which means 95 sites. 328 features, 212 of which can be described as huts, were archaeologically studied at that time.³ Others were interpreted as pits of various characters, kilns and hearths. Since the publication of the article in 2006, other settlement sites have been investigated and published, e. g. Bratislava-Zlaté piesky (Kuzma 2012), Cífer (Cheben/Ruttkay/Ruttkayová 2012), Bernolákovo-Triblavina (Březinová/Daňová 2019; Čambal/Bazovský 2017), Slovenský Grob (Čambal 2011), Tesárske Mlyňany and Čierne Kľačany (Březinová et al. 2015), Nitra-Svätoplukovo námestie square (Březinová/Ruttkay 2019), Topoľčany (Březinová/Wiedermann 2012), Hajná Nová Ves (Březinová 2013), Sered' (Daňová/Kissová 2021), Branč (Březinová 2021), Tvrdošovce (Furugláš et al. 2019). Settlements from Nitra have been completely evaluated (Březinová/Chropovský 2020). Currently, there are more than 400 features, which include 253 huts.⁴ It is a database confirming the intensity of settlement in southwestern Slovakia in the whole La Tène period, with the highest density of settlement in LTB2/LTC1–LTC1 240/230–180 BC to LTC2–LTC2/D1 180–130 BC. We must critically admit that each studied site contained only a few features which more likely suggest existence of small economically focused units, farmsteads. However, even with this number of sites (connected with the number of burial grounds), we should consider existence of larger settlements or settlements of central character or settlement agglomerations. We follow from the assumption that settlement in individual areas in that time was coordinated and followed certain rules, which is hard to confirm in the current state of knowledge. Important preconditions for settlement definitely included natural properties of individual selected sites. In this regard, a systematic survey and research of regions involving all available prospecting methods – from systematic field walks together with collection of finds and sampling, aerial

³ We use the word “hut” in general to indicate sunken features with various functions.

⁴ Compared to one of the largest lowland settlements of central character with dating to LTC1–LTC2 in Roseldorf, where 449 features were studied, this number seems very low (Holzer 2009).

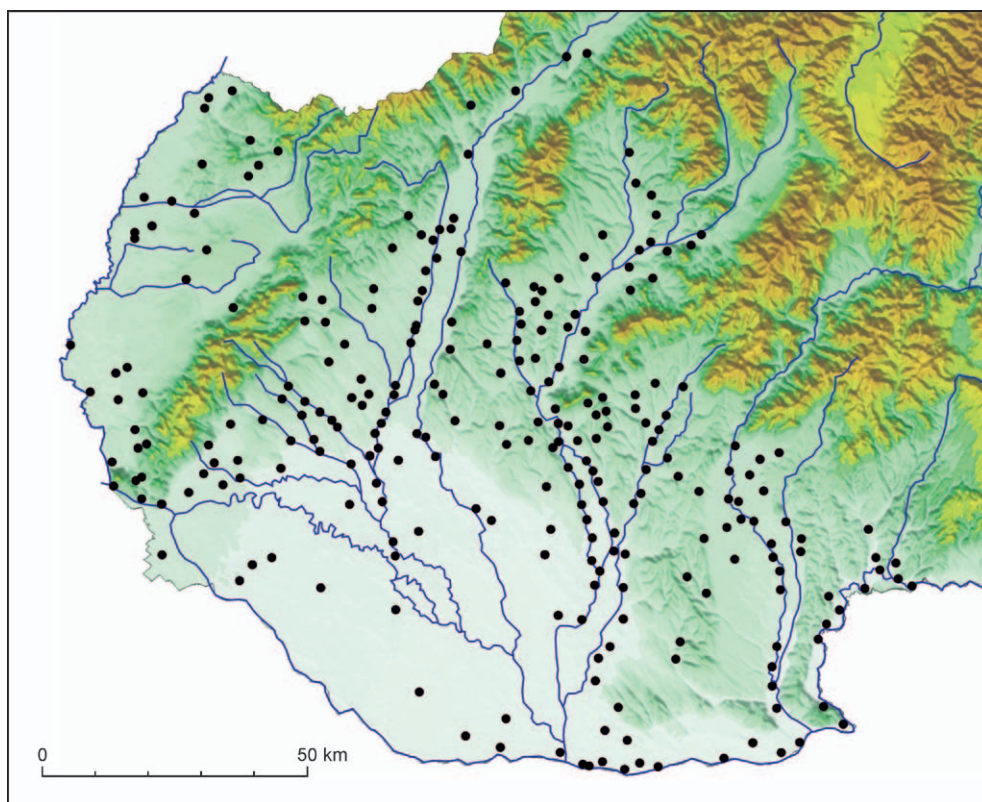


Fig. 1. Slovakia with indicated settlement features dated to the La Tène period in the southwest of the territory (after Březinová 2006).

and geophysical survey, to probing and areal excavations of detected features and settlement areas – would be very helpful in identification of sites and mainly their sizes. Cooperation with experts from natural sciences is logical and it means multidisciplinary approach to the topic.

Characteristics of open settlements

Constant attention has been paid to the definitions of settlements, urbanism, open agrarian settlements, central settlements, economic catchment areas of settlements from the La Tène period in Europe – either at specifically focused conferences, collections of works or independent publications.⁵ First attempts to evaluate the settlement structure in the La Tène period in Slovakia include works by K. Kuzmová (1980) and G. Březinová (2006). In his complex work on the Celtic settlement in Slovakia, K. Pieta (2008, 69–79) divided the sites into agrarian settlements, central and market settlements, exploitation and production zones, production-trade centres, fortifications, refuges and sacral areas. Settlement areas include roads, sources of water and raw materials. Local central settlements were often founded in strategically or communicationally important places, on the courses or crossroads of trade routes (Bratislava-Devín, Smolenice, Trenčianske Bohuslavice), near sources of raw materials (Plavecké Podhradie). Smaller ones are located at the feet of the Little Carpathians (Plavecké Podhradie, Smolenice, Trenčianske Bohuslavice). K. Pieta also presents smaller fortified central settlements, so-called *castella*, such as Trenčianske Teplice, Šurany-Nitriansky Hrádok. Unique findings definitely include the discovery and research of the sacrificial ground in the catchment area of the centre of power on the hill of Udrina, in Slatina nad Bebravou, which brought new information on religious practices of the Celtic population in Slovakia in the 3rd c. BC. Sacrifices included fragments of precious antique bronze figurines and vessels which were exceptional in the territory of central Europe. The discovery has strongly supported the theory on arrival of a new

⁵ E. g. Cowley et al. 2019; Danielisová/Čížmář 2021; Les agglomérations 2015; Paths to complexity 2014; Tankó 2021; Trebsche 2020.

wave of Celtic settlers from the north of Italy to the Carpathian basin; they settled previously deserted mountain areas and – apart from rich material culture – brought new customs and rituals (*Pieta 2018*). Nevertheless, the richness of the sites from the territory of Slovakia with exceptional finds is insufficiently studied and evaluated. In most cases, we have only sketchy materials. Unfortunately, in Slovakia we do not have large open unfortified settlements similar to Roseldorf in Austria, Němčice in Moravia and Lovosice in the Czech Republic, whose size is 30–60 ha and *V. Salač (1990)* suggested to call them “production and distribution centres” with concentrated production and trade. He confirmed it later (*Salač 2005*), when he introduced the term of “centre of the Němčice/Roseldorf type”. There is a concentration of finds, mainly coins, and the so-called religious function is also documented. There are seven sanctuaries in Roseldorf, in Němčice, three square structures were detected by prospecting (*Křivánek/Čižmář 2007*) as well as production of non-ferrous metals and glass (*Čižmář/Kolníková/Noeske 2008; Venclová 2016*).⁶

The project of P. Trebsche in 2010–2012 (*Trebsche 2012*) was dedicated to detailed mapping of open lowland settlements from the La Tène period in Austria using aerial and geographical prospecting. Based on the size and number of features, he divided open lowland settlements into several groups – large settlements (size of 30–40 ha), such as Roseldorf (449 features – LTC and LTD1), medium-size settlements of 1–20 ha, such as Haselbach, Stripfing (up to 7 ha) and settlements and isolated farms or farmsteads with difficultly identifiable size. Most of them are detected in area excavations where they form separate clusters of several features. He also deals with the topic of the La Tène settlements in his work in 2020 (*Trebsche 2020*, 56–171), where he also refers to older books. Based on its size, the site of Ménfőcsanak in Hungary can be classified as a large open settlement within the Carpathian basin (*Tankó 2021*, 218). The question is how many hectares belong to the necropolis and how many belong to the settlement. The pair of the burial ground – country settlement was studied within 54 ha. 277 burials, 16 sunken single-space features (“houses”), 4 wells, 12 pits, some (later secondarily used) ditches and furrows, one surface structure with a circular foundation furrow and 1–3 utility buildings with stake construction built on the terrain surface were uncovered. The author states that with the size of the studied area, Ménfőcsanak is the largest studied La Tène site in the Carpathian basin (*Tankó 2021*, 218). In this regard, it is rather disputable, because it might be the largest La Tène site in the Carpathian basin; however, as for the detected La Tène features, we definitely cannot speak of the largest La Tène settlement. At the site of Šindolka in Nitra-Zobor, 52 features dated to the La Tène period were discovered. 32 of them belong to the group of sunken single-space features (*Březinová 2000*, 8; *Březinová/Chropovský 2020*, 10). Settlement areas and their catchment areas were objects of interest of researchers also in Moravia (*Čižmář/Danielisová 2021*), where two central sites existed subsequently – an older unfortified central agglomeration near Němčice nad Hanou and a younger oppidum of Staré Hradisko. Each of these centres was economically and probably also politically oriented in a different direction – Němčice was connected with the Middle Danube region and the Adriatic territory by the Amber Road, Staré Hradisko developed these contacts into a systematic trade network with contacts to Bohemia and Bavaria. Thanks to the purposeful orientation of the authors on the chronological division of individual settlement sites, it was possible to identify structure of settlement in individual regions, which allowed monitoring of growing density of settlement in the territory in chronological periods. It is interesting that in the Late La Tène period, not only the long-distance trade changes its orientation, but the number of settlement sites is reduced (*Čižmář/Danielisová 2021*, 227).

Settlements in southwestern Slovakia

In the list of settlement sites from the territory of southwestern Slovakia (*Březinová 2006*), the aim was to date the sites on the basis of finds. As we were working mainly with published material, many times we adopted information from other authors of researches. As for locations of settlements, their location in fertile lowlands near rivers, mainly their smaller tributaries, stands out clearly. It was possible to map individual chronological periods, similarly to Moravia later (*Čižmář/Danielisová 2021*, 227). In this article, we will present those belonging to the Middle La Tène period and those which are younger, dated to the Late La Tène period. Thus, we will create two ranges of settlement sites (*Březinová 2006*, 27, map 5, 6). The Early La Tène period is not discussed in this work due to the small number of sites (*Březinová 2006*, map 2). Based on density of settlement in certain areas in southwestern Slovakia, we can assume a larger cluster of settlements which most probably created a settlement agglomeration. In the Middle La Tène

⁶ Confirmed also by current research in 2021 and 2022 (we know it from autopsy).

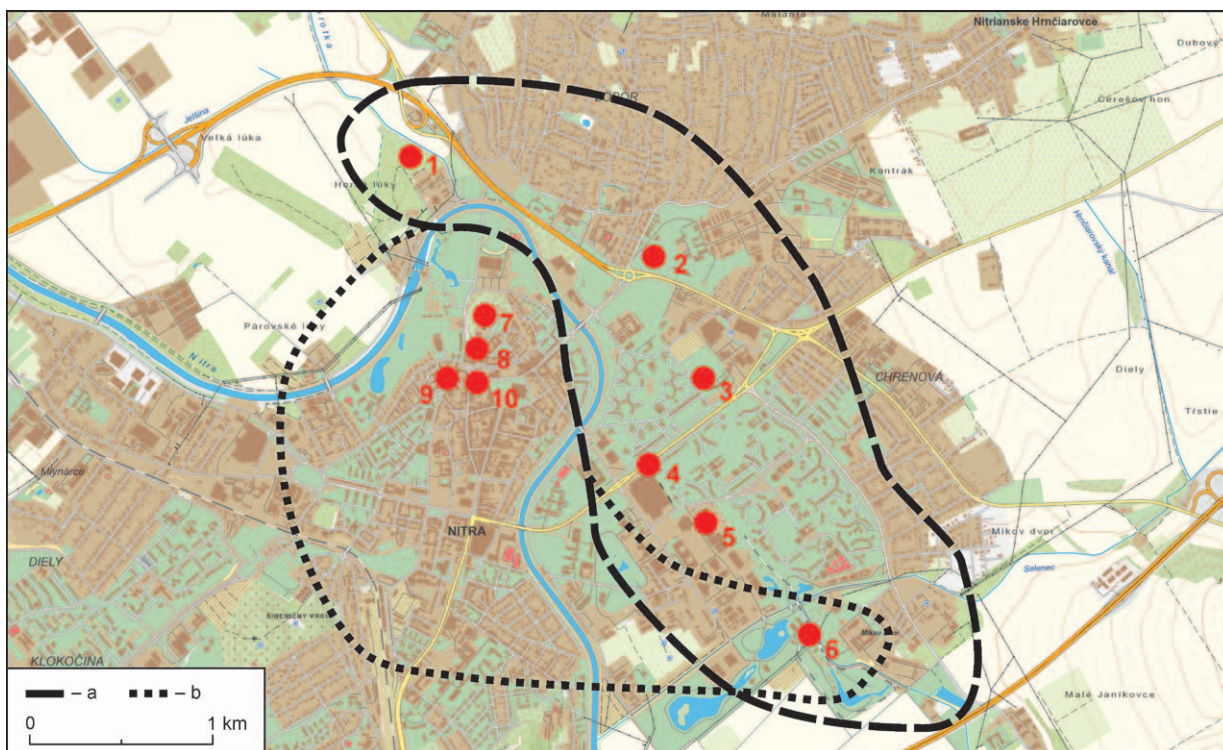


Fig. 2. Nitra. Selected sites with a studied settlement feature. 1 – Šindolka; 2 – Martinský vrch; 3 – Chrenová-Športový areál; 4 – Chrenová II; 5 – Chrenová III; 6 – Mikov dvor; 7 – castle; 8 – Malý seminar; 9 – Svätoplukovo námestie square; 10 – Štefánikova trieda street. Legend: a – settlement sites on the left bank of the Nitra river dated to LTB/C1–LTC/D1; b – sites on the right bank of the Nitra river with connection to the site of Mikov dvor dated to LTD1–LTD2.

period, we expect existence of such agglomeration in Nitra, possibly also in Chotín (*Březinová/Gere, in print*). Similar clusters of settlements with higher intensity of settlement can be expected in Záhorie near Studienka or Zohor, in the area of Čierna Vođa in the current cadastral area of Bernolákovo, Chorvátsky Grob and Slovenský Grob, in the Nitra and Žitava river basins, e. g. in Bajč-Vlkanovo or near Šarovce in the lower Hron river basin (*Březinová 2006, map 1; Kovár 2015*).

Settlement agglomeration (Fig. 2–4)

As we have stated before, there is the highest concentration of previously detected settlement features within the territory of southwestern Slovakia in Nitra. Publishing missing information on settlements on the left bank of the Nitra river (*Březinová/Chropovský 2020*) confirmed the hypotheses that in the course of settlement in the Middle-Late La Tène period (240/23 BC–turn of eras), changes occurred in selection of sites for settling which might have been associated with the arrival of new inhabitants who preferred different parameters. The situation similar to Šindolka, where not all features were contemporary and they were used subsequently in the course of the settlement's existence (*Březinová 1999, fig. 4*), can be observed also at other sites on both banks of the Nitra river. On the basis of published information, the settlements in Nitra had been chronologically classified in three settlement horizons before (*Březinová 1999*). The highest concentration comes from the Middle La Tène period, second horizon, LTC1–C2, i. e. from 240/230–130/115 BC. The main phase of settlement the currently largest studied habitation in Slovakia – Šindolka in Nitra-Zobor (*Březinová 2000*) – is dated identically. Later settlement in the Late La Tène period, third horizon – LTD1–LTD2 (130/115–20 BC) on the left bank of the Nitra river has only been confirmed from the site of Mikov dvor, where we find the latest features 98/80, 216 and 218/82 and as for the right bank of the Nitra river, they are concentrated near the castle hill. There are six sites on the left side of the Nitra, where features (Fig. 2: a) only a few kilometres from each other were studied. On the right bank of the river, there are four sites with detected features and they



Fig. 3. Nitra-Zobor, Šindolka site. Structure of distribution of settlement features in circular clusters around a vacant space (after Březinová 2000). Legend: a – huts; b – pits; c – depressions; d – storage pit.

chronologically include the feature and two kilns from Mikov dvor (Fig. 2: b).⁷ In area 'a', there are 96 features altogether, 62 of them are huts (Fig. 2: a). We assume that this area created a single settlement agglomeration functioning in the Middle La Tène period. The highest concentration of features is in Šindolka – 52 features (Fig. 3), 32 of them were huts; there were 21 features at Mikov dvor, 10 of them were huts (Fig. 4). We could assume that they were two larger settlements, where urbanistic structure can be seen. It means the arrangement of the features in a circle, around a vacant area. There are smaller economic units, farms or independent farmsteads or farmyards, situated between the two larger settlements. One of them is part of further development in the Late La Tène period, i. e. Mikov dvor. Other settlements became extinct in the course of stage LTC2/D1. When dividing the settlements according to their sizes, it is very difficult to determine how large the settlements actually were. They are arranged in the interval of 2–3 km from each other and cover areas of various sizes (Fig. 1; 2). However, the size is also defined by the studied features, while none of the settlements was studied to its full extent. Šindolka is studied most complexly. According to the settlement classification by P. Trebsche (2012), its area makes it a medium-size settlement. As for the site of Chrenová, Športový areál, we assume that it was a small settlement or a farmstead. The same can be assumed of the settlement at Martinský vrch and probably also at Chrenová III. Medium-sized settlements might have existed also at Chrenová II and Mikov dvor. In general, they are unfortified open agrarian settlements. They were mostly situated between altitudes 145 and 149. The relief is medium-rugged with representation of brown soil and warm climate. Distance from a water source of categories IV–V is 100–150 m. We cannot speak of residential function in all the detected structures. Despite the identical technology, some of such features could have been used for production, economic activities (various extensions and stores) or combined purposes. The regularity of the huts' groundplans is not considered a decisive criterion, as none of the

⁷ We will deal with cluster 'b' when solving the settlement at the site of Nitra-hrad (i. e. castle).



Fig. 4. Nitra-Mikov dvor. Structure of distribution of settlement features in circular clusters around a vacant space (after Březinová/Chropovský 2020).

features has it in the proper sense of the word, i. e. without certain idealization. With regard to the fact that they are polycultural sites, we assume that many construction details were destroyed or disturbed, especially those which could be associated with above-ground constructions. Apart from settlements, burial grounds have been recorded in the territory of today's town and its nearby surroundings. According to J. Bujna, seven sites with burial finds from the La Tène period are known from the territory of Nitra (area of about 100 m²). One other site is disputable and another one is located in the neighbouring cadastral area of the village of Lužianky. Altogether, there are approx. 30 burials. In all cases, they are torsos of larger burial grounds which were destroyed by construction in later periods (Bujna 2019, fig. 1).

Farmsteads, farms

A numerous group of settlement finds in the territory of southwestern Slovakia is represented by individually studied features or smaller clusters of features with various character (Březinová 2006, map 1). Again, sunken two-stake features generally called huts are most frequently confirmed. In some cases, approximate area of individual clusters can be defined.⁸ As an example, we can mention the sites of Branč (Fig. 5) and Hajná Nová Ves (Fig. 6). Definitely, they were not large settlements. We prefer the opinion

⁸ In case of a large area studied within a polycultural site with several detected features dated to the La Tène period.

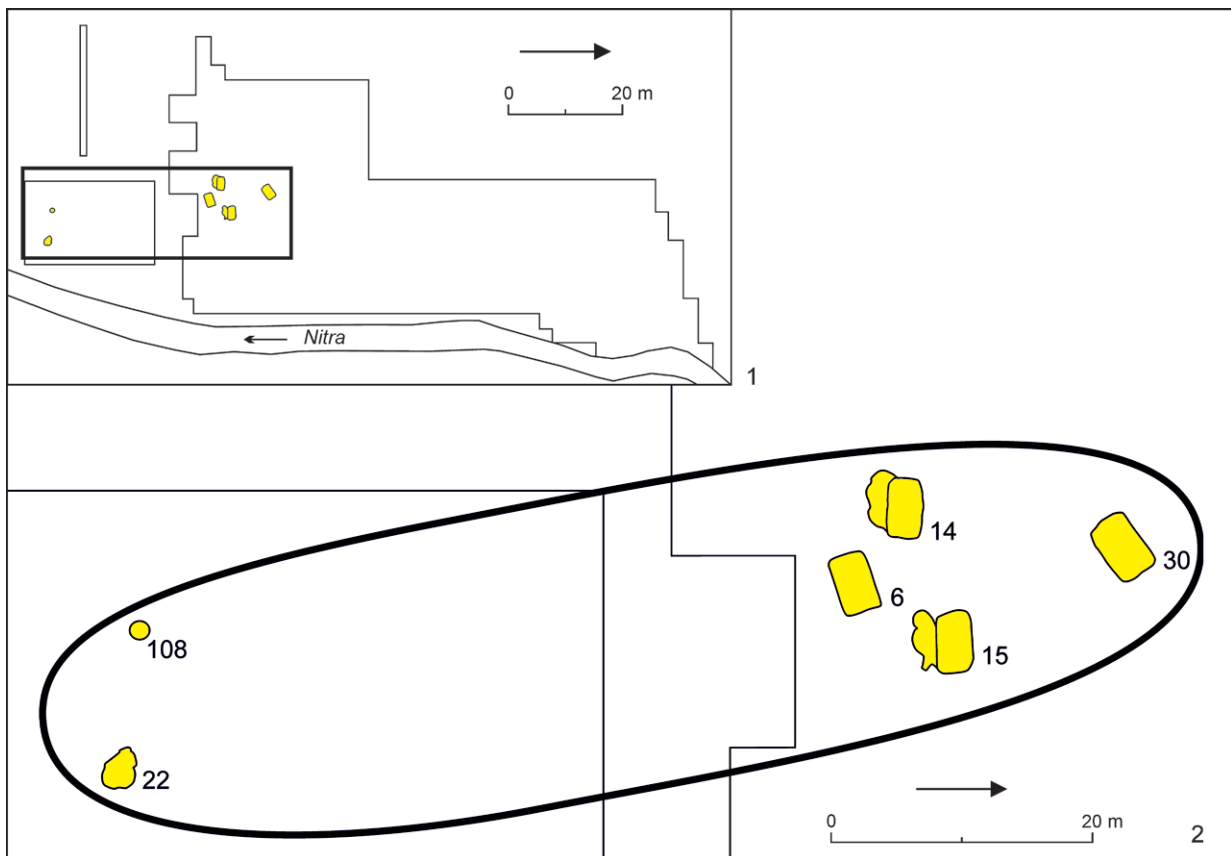


Fig. 5. Branč-Helyföldek site, Branč II. 1 – total studied area of the polycultural site; 2 – section with occurrence of features dated to the La Tène period with delimited probable size of a small farmstead or a farm (after Březinová 2021).

that they were independent farmsteads or farms (Březinová 2013; 2021). As far as the density of settlement is concerned, the settlement in the Čierna voda basin near Bratislava is interesting. The whole area is rather densely settled in LTC2 and LTD (Březinová/Daňová 2019; Čambal/Bazovský 2017, 109–130), which is evidenced by previously collected finds, especially finds of coins. As for chronologically sensitive metal artifacts, there are fibulae of the Alesia, Jezerine, Almgren 18 types as well as Middle and Late La Tène coins obtained by surface collections in the cadastral areas of Chorvátsky Grob, Slovenský Grob and Bernolákovo (Bazovský/Čambal 2012; Čambal 2011; Čambal/Bazovský 2017; Pieta 2008, 81).

Centres of power and administration

The attempt to collect all data on settlements and settlement features headed to the discovery whether there were differences in the shape, size and construction of individual structures, whether we could tell that the then elite of the society lived in them. Unfortunately, we have not arrived at such information. Social classes of the population can be distinguished at the burial grounds (Bujna 1982), but not from the current state of our knowledge of the settlement features and settlements. Despite this finding, we assume seats of the then social elite at several sites as early as the Early La Tène period (Fig. 7).

Horné Orešany and Dolné Orešany, Slepý vrch site (Fig. 7: 3)

The hillfort is situated on the border of Horné Orešany and Dolné Orešany (Trnava dist.), at the site of Slepý vrch (544 m a. s. l.), which is one of the peaks in a side ridge of the Little Carpathians. K. Marková pointed to the intense destruction of this site by treasure hunters with metal detectors. In 2004 and 2005, places of important finds together with fortification were identified and trenches were excavated in selected areas. The top of Slepý vrch hill is enclosed with double rampart fortification which covers area of approx. 2 ha. The gate was located on the western side, on the ridge of the hill. The whole internal

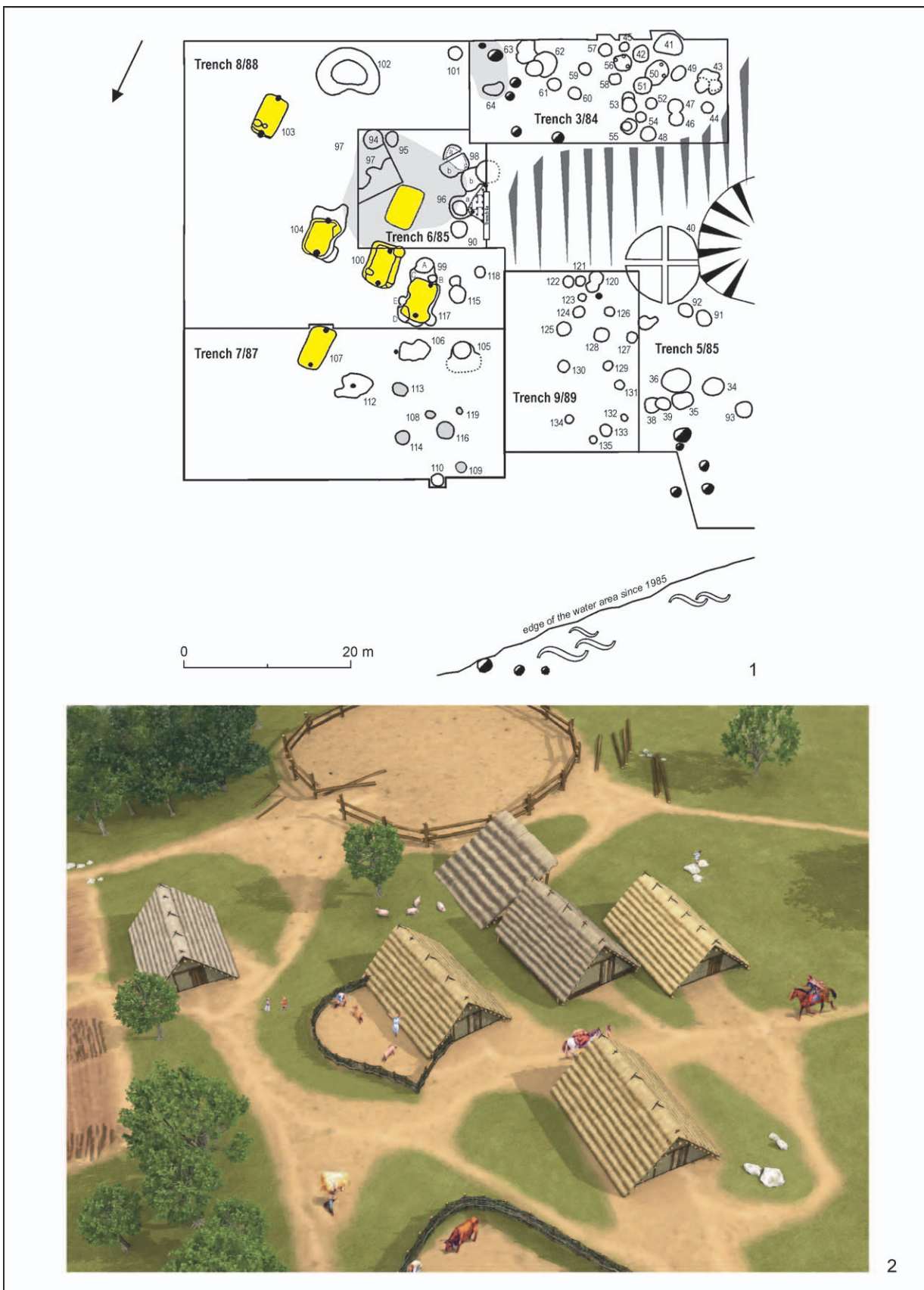


Fig. 6. Hajná Nová Ves-Lúky. 1 – distribution of settlement features; 2 – reconstruction of a farmstead or a separately standing farm (author of the reconstruction A. Arpáš).

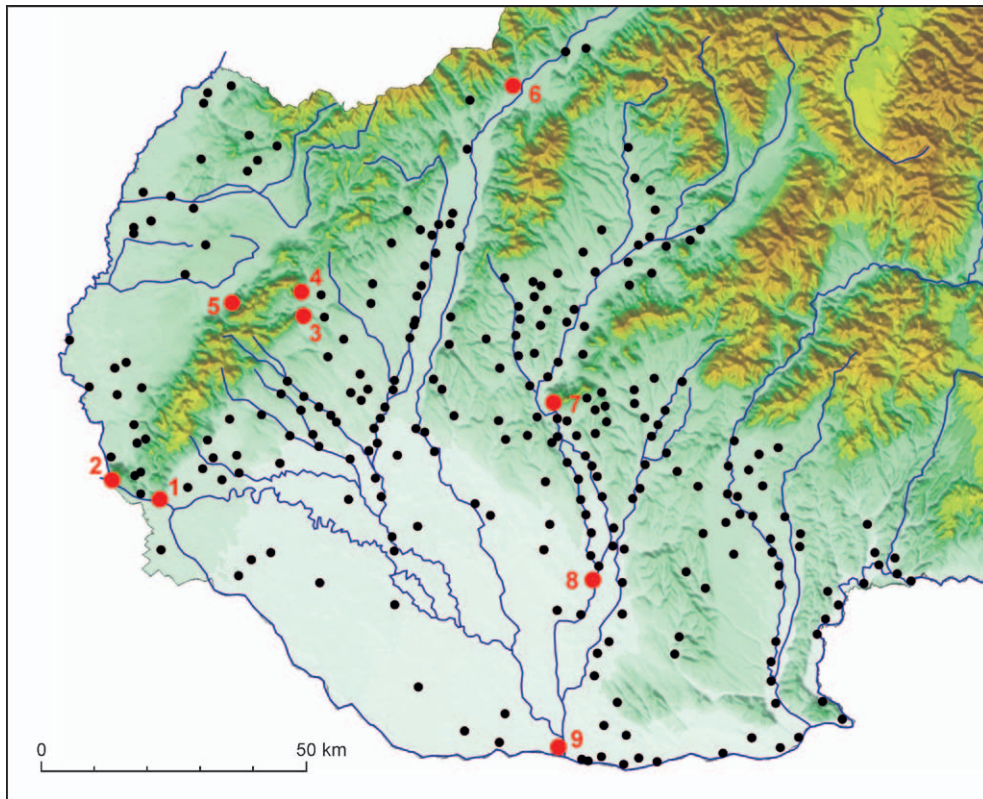


Fig. 7. Southwestern Slovakia with indicated settlement sites probably associated with presence of elites. 1 – Bratislava – oppidum; 2 – Bratislava-Devín; 3 – Horné and Dolné Orešany, Slepý vrch site; 4 – Smolenice-Molpír; 5 – Plavecké Podhradie-Pohanská; 6 – Trenčianske Bohuslavice; 7 – Nitra-castle; 8 – Šurany-Nitriansky Hrádok, Zámeček site; 9 – Komárno.

area of the hillfort was settled, although with various intensity. Some areas outside the fortification on the southern and northwestern slopes of the hill were settled as well; terraced terrain is clearly visible there. Excavations confirmed the places with rather thick settlement layer with several distinguishable horizons. Unique artistic artifacts and numerous weapons are evidence of not only developed crafts but also of presence of a military unit, i. e. the elite of the then society (Čambal/Bazovský 2022, 59; Pieta 2008).

Bratislava (Fig. 7: 1)

In the second half of the 1st c. BC, an oppidum was created in the centre of today's Bratislava, on the crossroads of trade routes, to maintain intense contacts with the Roman Empire. It was a central site of the *Zemplín* type, which is characterized by a small acropolis surrounded by several open settlements of production character. The acropolis of the oppidum was situated on Bratislava castle hill. The above-standard relations of the local elites with the Romans were confirmed by the rescue excavation carried out in 2008–2014 at the courtyard and on the northern terrace of Bratislava castle. In the course of the excavation, remains of stone architectures built by means of Roman construction technique were discovered. Stone structures with high-quality mortar floors have parallels in the territory of the Roman Empire and in the centre of Noricum at Magdalensberg, which maintained close relations with the Romans and was included in the empire in 15 BC. Thus, it is undisputable that Roman architects and craftsmen participated in designing and construction of the buildings. They were built for the elite of the then society. The violent creation of the oppidum, which is documented by numerous finds of scattered skeletal remains and traces of fires, was previously associated with the war with the Dacians (58–44 BC). On the basis of the latest discoveries, it was confirmed that the Roman structures become extinct as late as the Augustinian period and surviving Celtic settlement is assumed as late as the turn of eras (Čambal 2004; Čambal/Bazovský 2022, 77–83). The oppidum in Bratislava with its complete catchment area with residential as well as production features, fortification, ramparts and various pits was classified as a supercentre like Vienna by P. Trebsche

(2020, 89). Its area is more than 90 ha (Vrtel 2012, 164). From the architectonic point of view, the residential features were rather diverse. First of all, there were rectangular sunken features with supporting pillars of the roof ridge in the middle of the shorted sides. There are also buildings with multi-stake construction built on the terrain surface and we can also assume buildings with wall footing (Čambal/Bazovský 2022, 165, 166; Kysela 2020; Musilová/Lesák/Resutík 2012, 197–200; Musilová/Minaroviech 2014).

Bratislava-Devín (Fig. 7: 2)

The fortified upland settlement chronologically belongs to important Late La Tène centres in the area of Bratislava Gate. The oldest settlement is dated to LTD1. It did not disappear after the oppidum in Bratislava had been destroyed and the Celtic-Dacian population survives even after the turn of eras (Harmadyová 2012, 191). Settlement and utility buildings were concentrated on its southern slope, terraces, mainly in the area of the lower part and on the northeastern side. The discovered features include simple above-ground or partly sunken rectangular dwellings with log or two-stake construction and wicker-and-daub walls. There were also kilns, workshops and storage pits. Extensive settlement in the Late La Tène period occupied the whole territory of the hillfort and continued on both sides of the earthen rampart in the village (Harmadyová 2012, 94). The suitable strategical location on the crossroads of routes and above the confluence of two rivers allowed development of the site as a transit and trade centre.

Smolenice-Molpír (Fig. 7: 4)

The site in the district of Trnava is contemporary with the settlement in Plavecké Podhradie-Pohanská. It is suggested by finds of hundreds of fibulae and several coins of the Roseldorf/Němčice type (Čambal 2016, 12–15; Farkaš 2004, 67–94) which confirm intense settlement in LTC2. Nevertheless, the finds do not contain evidence of exclusive artifacts from the La Tène period or any previously studied archaeological contexts connectible with presence of elites (Dušek M./Dušek S. 1984; 1995).

Plavecké Podhradie-Pohanská (Fig. 7: 5)

The fortified site in Plavecké Podhradie, Malacky district, located on the hill of Pohanská, belongs to the most important sites of the La Tène period in Slovakia. The area of the fortified site is 49 ha (Paulík 1976, 10; Pieta 2008, 112). Identification of the spatial structure of the hillfort at Pohanská is impossible due to the minimum studied area, unlike the similar contemporary oppidum of Staré Hradisko, where archaeological excavations studied large areas in the fortification's inner space. Based on the current knowledge of finds obtained from the area of the fortified settlement, several researchers assume that the social elite from the 2nd c. BC might have lived there (Čambal/Bazovský 2022, 70–77).

Trenčianske Bohuslavice (Fig. 7: 6)

Trenčín dist. The site is situated at a strategically and communicationally advantageous location. Two lines of fortification covering an area of about 9 ha are detected there. The inner area around the highest located plateau is interrupted by two entrances. The northern gate probably has a tongs-like groundplan (Pieta 2008, 114). According to the exceptional number of finds – pottery sets, coins, imported goods – it is an important site dated to LTC2–LTD1.

Nitra-castle site (Fig. 7: 7; 8)

The castle hill is the natural dominant of the town's historical centre. It is a rock jutting from the Tribeč Mountains to the flood-plain of the Nitra river in altitude 220 m a. s. l. The meandering stream of the river flowed around the hill from all sides, thus, it was a river island until the beginning of the 19th c. Its top rises above the plain by approx. 50 m. Evidence of settlement in the La Tène period is actually available since the beginning of the research (Bednár/Březinová/Ptáčková 2005, 143; Březinová/Ruttkay 2019). In terms of dating, season 1988–1992 is important, as it uncovered several features and layers. Three samples for ¹⁴C analysis were taken from one of the features and from the charred layer of destroyed remains above it. Age of the samples was dated to the turn of eras. Settlement from the Late La Tène period is also documented in the casemates of the SE bastion by several settlement layers. In general, they are sunken features, some with remains of wooden construction, which might have been used as dwellings or various utility buildings. In the construction technique, the original terrain – the rock – was used apart from wood. Wood was used to build a stake construction and walls. In feature 40, remains of horizontally



Fig. 8. Fortified settlement of Nitra-castle. A – evidence of settlement in the Late La Tène period. 1 – eastern courtyard; 2a–c – western slope; 3 – Malý seminár; 4 – Ponitrianska galéria gallery (after *Bednár/Březinová/Ptáčková 2005*); B – sector A–C/0–1, layer with charred wooden construction from 1990. Legend: a – charred wood; b – clusters of daub destroyed remains; c – bedrock.

laid charred beams – probably wall timbering – were preserved near the wall. Two sections of a palisade furrow were uncovered in sections below the Romanesque defensive wall. In both sections, the palisade furrow was sunken in older layers dated to the Early Bronze Age and Late La Tène period by finds and stratigraphically. P. Bednár interpretes the feature as part of fencing around the area on the top of the castle hill. Since only fragments of its course have been preserved, it is not possible to say how large the enclosed area was. The castle hill in Nitra is connected with the third, Late La Tène stage of settlement in Nitra, which is associated with other sites in the town with at least one studied feature. They are the sites of Malý seminár, Svätoplukovo námestie square, Štefánikova trieda street and Mikov dvor. Together, they make a settlement agglomeration dated to LTD1–end of LTD2 (Fig. 2: limit b).

Šurany-Nitriansky Hrádok, Zámeček site (Fig. 7: 8; 9)

A tell settlement situated near the confluence of two branches of the Nitra river, Nové Zámky dist. It is located about 25 km far from Nitra. In the past, it was a loess promontory with elevation of 6–7 m and original size of approx. 17,000 m² near the confluence of the Čítenka stream with the Nitra river and its side branch. It was named Zámeček (a small castle) after a castel. The main settlement of this site is in prehistory, important finds also come from the La Tène period, Roman period and the Middle Ages. Although the site had been severely damaged, it was well investigated. It is more than probable that in the La Tène period, the Čítenka stream found a new bed in the extinct ditch artificially created in the Early Bronze Age to protect the entrance to Zámeček from the west. A La Tène gate was built in the deep saddle of the western edge, where the supply channel ended in a massive – ca. 25 m wide – circumferential ditch in the Early Bronze Age. In that period, the supply channel was already sludged and mud settled on its surface, later becoming hard. The gate was studied in 1952 and the research continued in the second stage in 1956–1960 led by K. Sedlák (*Točík 1981*). On the southern side, everything suggests a tower structure increasing the protective potential of the gate. Existence of a bridge is also assumed. The fortification as well as the tongs gate of the oppidum characted are evaluated and published in detail (*Pieta 2008; Točík 1981*). There is more evidence of presence of the Celts at Zámeček – in form of a disturbed biritual burial ground. Chronologically contemporary settlements are found at the sites of Hoferské, ca. 400–500 m to the north, and Vysoký breh, about 600–800 m to the northeast (Fig. 9: B). In LTD, Zámeček made a triangular earthen shape of ca. 180 × 200 m, rising above the surrounding terrain by approx. 5–6 m. Its edges were higher, the inner part was bowl-shaped. It was divided into the larger southern part and the smaller northern part by an approx. 2 m wide furrow. Unexpectedly, despite the massive fortification, the settlement is poor in finds and settlement features (Fig. 9: A). Only one hut was reliably identified. It had stakeholes in the middle of

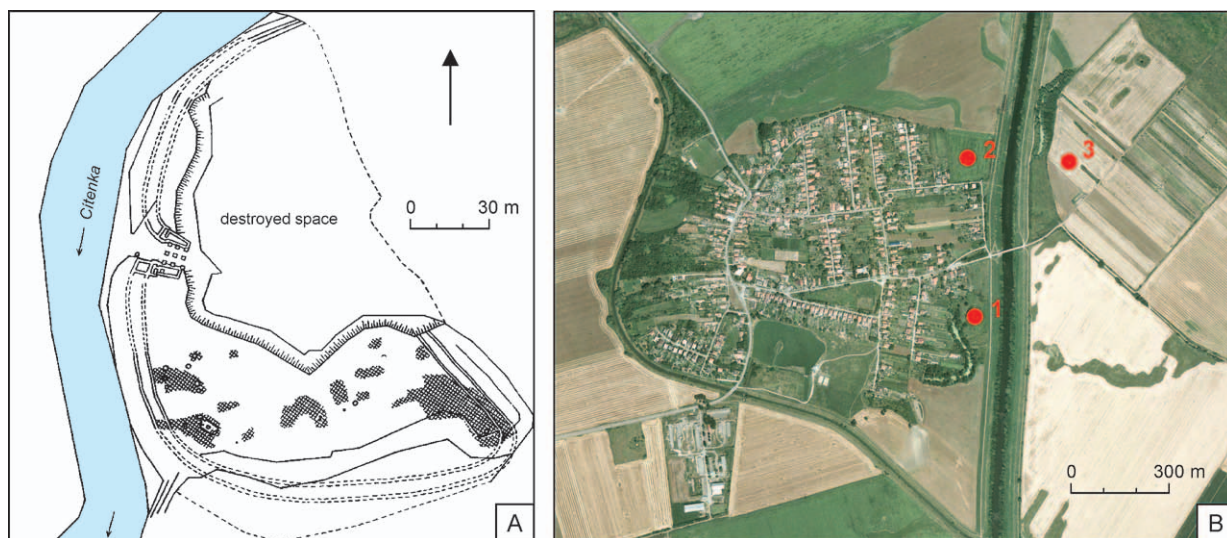


Fig. 9. Fortified settlement in Šurany-Nitriansky Hrádok. A – plan of excavation with indicated settlement in the Late La Tène period (after *Točík 1981*); B – LT settlement at sites. 1 – Zámeček; 2 – Hoferské; 3 – Vysoký breh.

the shorter sides for stakes with a saddle roof. Its size was 650×410 cm. In comparison with the average size of huts from the territory of southwestern Slovakia, which is 14.37 m^2 , this hut with its size of 26.65 m^2 ranks among large features (*Březinová 2006, 18; 2010, 115*).

Komárno (Fig. 7: 9; 10)

Komárno has an exceptional strategical location on the confluence of the Danube and Váh rivers. Although no area excavation has been carried out there, rescue activities provided important finds and features which allow classification of this site among important sites. Features and finds are confirmed at eight locations (Fig. 10). Settlement features are pits of various functions, production features, which

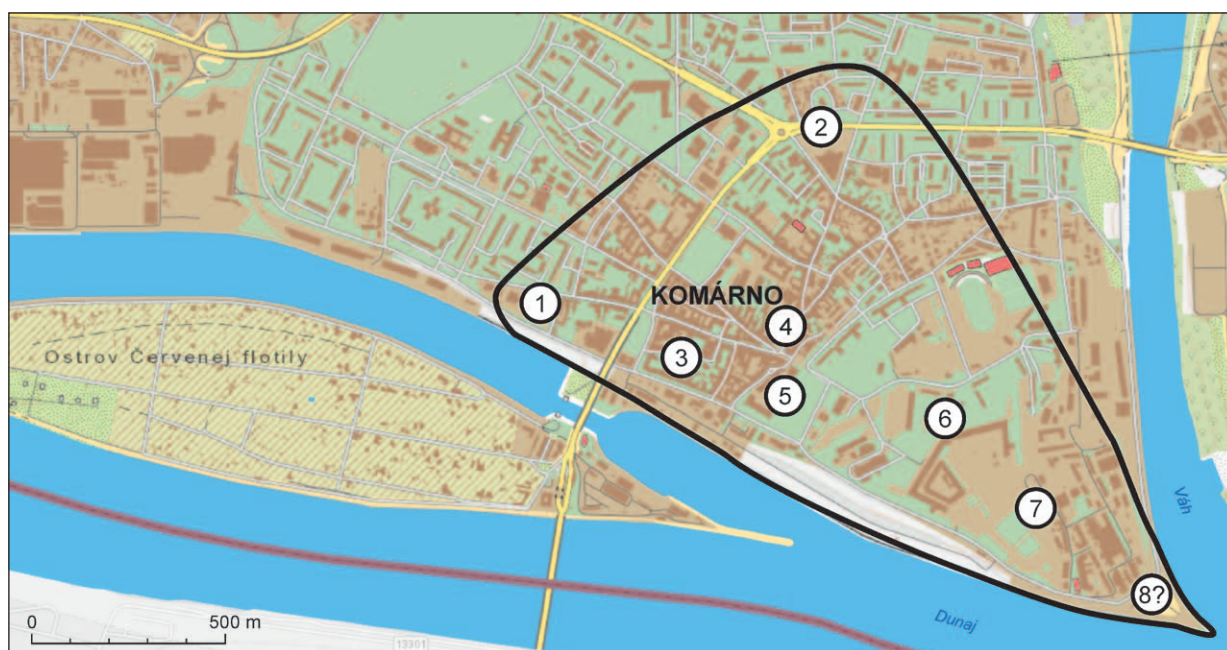


Fig. 10. Komárno, assumed extent of the La Tène settlement of central character. Location of sites from the La Tène period. 1 – Dunajské nábrežie riverbank; 2 – Kossuthovo námestie square; 3 – Palatínova ulica street; 4 – Nádvorie Európy square; 5 – Anglia park; 6 – Nová pevnosť (*new fortress*); 7 – Stará pevnosť; 8? – location of discovery of coins according to the catalogue of the Saint Germain Museum (after *Březinová 2021*).

include the remarkable location of Nádvorie Európy with a battery of six pottery kilns. They produced high-quality goods made on potter's wheel, including painted pottery. We suppose that Komárno in the La Tène period ranked among important localities with concentration of settlement. It had contacts northwards, along the so-called Váh route, as well as southwards and southwestwards (*Březinová/Gere 2021*). These contacts are indirectly confirmed by finds of miniature artifacts, such as fasteners and coins, mainly two coins of the Veľký Bysterec type. Based on metal artifacts and pottery, the La Tène settlement in Komárno can be dated to the end of the 2nd c. and the 1st c. BC. Use of the pottery kilns – due to the lack of coarse, so-called Dacian, pottery – is dated to LTC2/D1–D1. Identically, settlement probably existed at other locations, however, it survives until LTD2 or the turn of eras.

STRUCTURES AT SETTLEMENT SITES

Archaeological literature often uses various names for immovable features which were probably used for residence.⁹ We call them e. g. dwellings, houses, semi-sunken pit houses, huts. These features were built and furnished to create optimum conditions to meet all basic life needs of their residents (*Kuzmová 1980*, 320, 321). The primary elements associated with the hut interior were the hearth and bed. The practical role of the house was mainly protection of its inhabitants from external climatic influences as well as possible threats from enemies or animals. The settlement and house were safe places for people and their work and social activities and they created a coherent space meeting their material and social needs (*Benediková/Andrišek 2012*, 13). In our record of settlements from the Middle and Late La Tène periods from the territory of southwestern Slovakia, we come across identical types of buildings. Out of more than 400 features, 253 are identified as huts or semi-sunken pit houses. They are sunken features with groundplan size between 8 and 23.2 m², while the average groundplan size of such features is approx. 14–16 m². Despite their irregular groundplans, typologically they oscillate between almost square and considerably elongated. The rectangular type is most frequently represented (48.10%). It belongs to the basic type A (*Meduna 1980*) with stakes located on the central axis in the middle of shorter sides. The roof is of the saddle type, with various designs depending on the interior and circumferential construction of the house, sometimes combined with wattle-and-daub. W–E orientation of huts prevailed, sometimes with small deviation to the north or south (83.30%), orientation in the NE–SW direction is less frequent (13.30%) and N–S direction is rare (3.30%). Two stakeholes in the middle of the shorter sides, remains of load-bearing columns, are basic construction elements. Number of such holes is sometimes higher (*Březinová 2006; Tankó 2021*, fig. 48; *Trebsche 2020*). Some semi-sunken pit houses lack stake construction details. Roofs were mainly of the saddle-type, probably thatched with straw, cane, sometimes weighed with stones. Walls were made of vertical stakes, wattled and daubed. Above-ground structures are very rare in the studied territory. To some extent, it is caused by the method of excavation – by removal of the topsoil we lose these details. The floor was beaten and hardened. There are often small pointed dimples interpreted as traces of interior furnishings or some kind of a grate. The “construction” element associated with La Tène dwellings, so-called bench, is a jut in the interior space of a hut. According to our findings, it is not very frequent. E. g. in Nitra-Zobor, Šindolka site, such jut is found in five out of 32 huts. Nevertheless, the asymmetrical layout of central stakes in the sunken area suggests that such “bench” was present in more huts. In all cases, there was identical location of a step-like jut from the interior side of the hut's southern wall. Semi-sunken pit houses were the type of dwelling surviving in later periods. *K. Tankó (2021*, fig. 54) mentions ethnographic parallels from the previous period in Hungary. Some huts or semi-sunken pit houses were also studied at the sites included in the group of territorial centres or centres of power or in agglomeration (Fig. 7) of high importance dated to the turn of the Middle and Late La Tène periods – in Bratislava, Bratislava-Devín, Nitra-castle hill, Šurany-Nitriansky Hrádok. Remains of stone architecture were discovered only at the castle of Bratislava. In other cases, the structure is the same as at open settlements.

⁹ Numerous questions and expert debates have been discussing which features were used for living and which were used for other purposes.

FINAL REFLECTIONS

From the review of the sites settled in the course of the Middle to Late La Tène periods in Slovakia, we have come to a conclusion that architecture of settlement features was identical at open agrarian settlements and at upland sites functioning as centres of power or territorial centres. The stone buildings recorded at the castle in Bratislava, where the elite of the then society definitely resided, remain an exception. As for other sites, we can only suppose that if the elite resided there, their residential spaces were not different from the dwellings of the rest of inhabitants. Evidence of presence of the elites or – better said – identification of their presence in the Early and Middle La Tène periods (LTB–LTC2) in terms of settlements and their structure is problematic. Information value of the presented database of settlements is low, but it suggests more areas for monitoring. There is a great perspective mainly in the areas without architecture where the size of the site can be identified rather easily by means of prospecting (surveys, geomagnetic, aerial, Lidar). The newly discovered sites in Tvrdošovce (Furungláš *et al.* 2019) and Trnava-Biely kostol (Hrnčiarik/Kolon 2021) are positive evidence of such procedure. Results of the previous excavations at the above discussed sites prove that also in the territory of southwestern Slovakia, there is a potential of large settlements where we can study the structure and urbanism of the settlement. The role of the future investigation in the field of settlements should be mainly to identify functional differences between them, elaborate categories of settlements, the extent of division of work between the centres and their surroundings with regard to production of food, and find new centres of settlement using new possibilities and multidisciplinary cooperation and, thus, distinguish the hierarchy of settlement in individual territories.

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Sídla Keltov na juhozápadnom Slovensku

Gertrúda Březinová

Súhrn

V príspevku sú spracované podklady o sídliskách z územia juhozápadného Slovenska. K dispozícii je viac ako 425 sídliskových nálezísk, z toho je na viac ako sto lokalitách preskúmaný aspoň jeden sídliskový objekt. Spolu vyše 400 objektov, kde je 253 chát.¹⁰ Je to databáza, ktorá potvrdzuje intenzitu osídlenia juhozápadného Slovenska v celej dobe laténskej, s najväčšou hustotou osídlenia v LTB2/LTC1–LTC1 240/230–180 pred Kr. až LTC2–LTC2/D1 180–130 pred Kr. Musíme kriticky priznať, že čo skúmaná lokalita, to iba niekoľko objektov, ktoré skôr svedčia o existencii malých hospodársky zameraných jednotiek, dvorcov. Avšak pri takomto počte nálezísk (v prepojení aj s počtom pohrebísk) uvažujeme o existencii väčších sídlisk či sídlisk centrálného charakteru, alebo sídelných aglomerácií. V strednej dobe laténskej predpokladáme existenciu takejto aglomerácie v Nitre, možno aj v Chotíne. Zoskupenia sídlisk s väčšou intenzitou osídlenia sa dajú očakávať aj na Záhorí v okolí Studienky, prípadne Zohora, v priestore Čiernej vody, na dolnom Pohroní v okolí Šaroviec, v povodí rieky Nitry a Žitavy, napr. v Bajči-Vlkanove. V Nitre, v priestore „a“ je spolu 96 objektov, z toho 62 chát (obr. 2: a). Najväčšia koncentrácia objektov je v Šindolke, a to 52 objektov (obr. 3), z toho 32 chát. V Mikovom dvore je 21 objektov, z toho 10 chát (obr. 4). Dalo by sa uvažovať, že ide o dve väčšie sídliská, kde možno hovoriť aj o urbanistickej štruktúre. Ide o usporiadanie objektov do kruhu okolo voľného priestranstva. Medzi týmito dvoma väčšími sídliskami sa nachádzajú menšie hospodárske jednotky, farmy alebo samostatné dvorce, či hospodárske dvory. Iba jedno z nich je súčasťou pokračovania ďalšieho vývoja v období neskorej doby laténskej, a to Mikov dvor, ktoré je naviazané na neskorolátensko osídlenie centrálnej časti mesta a hradného návršia (obr. 2: b). Ostatné v priebehu stupňa LTC2/D1 zanikli. Pri rozdelení sídlisk podľa rozlohy je veľmi ťažké určiť, o aké veľké sídliská v skutočnosti išlo. Sú rozmiestnené v intervale 2–3 km od seba a zaberajú rôznu plochu (obr. 1; 2). Vo všeobecnosti platí, že sú to otvorené agrárne osady neopevnené. Boli z väčšej časti situované medzi vrstevnicami 145 a 149. Je to stredne členitý reliéf so zastúpením hnedozeme a s teplým klimatickým obdobím. Vzdialenosť od vodného zdroja IV. až V. kategórie je 100–150 m.

Pokus zozbierať všetky údaje o sídliskách a sídliskových objektoch smeroval k tomu, aby sme zistili, či sú rozdiely v tvare, veľkosti, konštrukcii jednotlivých stavieb a či by sa z týchto poznatkov dalo povedať, že v nich bývala elita vtedajšej spoločnosti. Žiaľ, k takýmto poznatkom sme sa nedopracovali. Na pohrebiskách sa dajú rozlíšiť sociálne vrstvy obyvateľstva, avšak zo súčasného stavu poznania sídliskových objektov a sídlisk nie. Napriek tomuto zisteniu predpokladáme na viacerých lokalitách už od včasnej doby laténskej sídla elit vtedajšej spoločnosti (obr. 7). Sú to lokality: Bratislava; Bratislava-Devín; Horné a Dolné Orešany, poloha Slepý vrch; Smolenice-Molpír; Plavecké Podhradie-Pohanská; Trenčianske Bohuslavice; Nitra-hrad, Šurany-Nitriansky Hrádok, poloha Zámeček a Komárno. Aj na náleziskách, ktoré sme zaradili do skupiny územných či mocenských centier, prípadne aglomerácií vyššieho významu s datovaním do prelomu strednej a neskorej doby laténskej, bolo preskúmaných niekoľko chát, polozemnic, a to v Bratislave, Bratislave-Devíne, v Nitre na hradnom kopci, v Šuranoch-Nitrianskom Hrádku. Iba na Bratislavskom hrade sa našli aj zvyšky kamennej architektúry. V ostatných prípadoch ide o zhodnú stavbu ako na otvorených sídliskách. Priemerná plocha pôdorysov chát je približne 14–16 m². Napriek nepravidelnosti pôdorysov chaty typovo oscilujú medzi takmer štvorcovými a výrazne pretiahnutými. Najvýraznejšie je zastúpený obdĺžnikový typ s kolmi umiestnenými na stredovej osi v strede kratších strán. Strecha je sedlová, rôzneho vzhľadu, a to v závislosti od vnútornej a obvodovej konštrukcie obydlia, prípadne kombinovaného s výpletom a mazanou. Z prehľadu osídlených polôh počas strednej až neskorej doby laténskej na Slovensku sme dospeli k záveru, že architektúra sídliskových objektov bola zhodná na otvorených agrárnych sídliskách, ako aj na výšinných polohách s funkciou mocenských, či územných centier. Výnimkou zostávajú kamenné stavby zistené na Bratislavskom hrade, kde určite sídlila elita vtedajšej spoločnosti. Na ostatných lokalitách môžeme iba predpokladať, že ak tu bývala elita, jej obytné priestory sa nelíšili od obydlí zvyšku obyvateľstva. Doklady prítomnosti elit alebo presnejšie povedané identifikácia ich prítomnosti v období staršej a strednej doby laténskej (LTB–LTC2) z pohľadu problematiky sídlisk a ich štruktúry je problematická. Vypovedacia hodnota uvedenej databázy sídlisk je nízka, ale naznačuje okruhy ďalšieho sledovania. Veľká perspektíva je hlavne v zameraní pozornosti na nezastavané územia, kde sa rozloha lokality dá pomerne jednoducho určiť prospekciou (prieskumy, geomagnetické, letecké, Lidar). Pozitívnym dokladom tohto postupu sú novozistené lokality v Tvrdošovciach a v Trnave, v Bielom Kostole. Výsledky doterajších výskumov na uvedených lokalitách potvrdzujú, že aj na území juhozápadného Slovenska je potenciál veľkých sídlisk, na ktorých sa dá sledovať štruktúra a urbanizmus sídliska.

¹⁰ V porovnaní s jedným z najrozsiahlejších nížinných sídlisk centrálného charakteru, s datovaním do LTC1–LTD v Roseldorfe, kde bolo preskúmaných 449 objektov, sa zdá tento počet nízky (Holzer 2009).

- Obr. 1. Slovensko s vyznačením zistených sídliskových objektov datovaných do doby laténskej na juhozápade územia (podľa *Březinová 2006*).
- Obr. 2. Nitra. Výber nálezísk, kde bol skúmaný sídliskový objekt. 1 – Šindolka; 2 – Martinský vrch; 3 – Chrenová-Športový areál; 4 – Chrenová II; 5 – Chrenová III; 6 – Mikov dvor; 7 – hrad; 8 – Malý seminár; 9 – Svätoplukovo námestie; 10 – Štefánikova trieda. Legenda: a – sídliskové polohy na ľavom brehu rieky Nity s datovaním do LTB/C1–LTC/D1; b – polohy na pravej strane rieky Nity s prepojením na polohu Mikov dvor s datovaním do LTD1–LTD2.
- Obr. 3. Nitra-Zobor, poloha Šindolka. Štruktúra rozmiestnenia sídliskových objektov do kruhových zoskupení okolo voľného priestranstva (podľa *Březinová 2000*). Legenda: a – chaty; b – jamy; c – jamky; d – zásobnica.
- Obr. 4. Nitra-Mikov dvor. Štruktúra rozmiestnenia sídliskových objektov do kruhových zoskupení okolo voľného priestranstva (podľa *Březinová/Chropovský 2021*).
- Obr. 5. Branč-Helyföledek, Branč II. 1 – celkovo preskúmaná plocha polykultúrnej lokality; 2 – výsek s výskytom objektov datovaných do doby laténskej s ohraničeným pravdepodobným rozsahom menšieho dvorca či farmy (podľa *Březinová 2021*).
- Obr. 6. Hajná Nová Ves-Lúky. 1 – rozmiestnenie sídliskových objektov; 2 – rekonštrukcia dvorca, prípadne samostatne stojacej farmy (autor rekonštrukcie A. Arpáš).
- Obr. 7. Juhozápadné Slovensko s vyznačením sídliskových lokalít, ktoré pravdepodobne súvisia s prítomnosťou elit. 1 – Bratislava – oppidum; 2 – Bratislava-Devín; 3 – Horné a Dolné Orešany, poloha Slepý vrch; 4 – Smolenice-Molpír; 5 – Plavecké Podhradie-Pohanská; 6 – Trenčianske Bohuslavice; 7 – Nitra-hrad; 8 – Šurany-Nitriansky Hrádok, poloha Zámeček; 9 – Komárno.
- Obr. 8. Opevnená osada Nitra-hrad. A – doklady osídlenia v neskorkej dobe laténskej. 1 – východné nádvorie; 2a–c – západný svah; 3 – Malý seminár; 4 – Ponitrianska galéria (podľa *Bednár/Březinová/Ptáčková 2005*). B – sektor A–C/0–1, vrstva so zuhoľnatenou drevenou koštruktúrou z r. 1990. Legenda: a – zuhoľnatené drevo; b – zhľuky mazanícovej deštrukcie; c – skalné podložie.
- Obr. 9. Opevnená osada Šurany-Nitriansky Hrádok. A – plán výskumu s vyznačením osídlenia v neskorkej dobe laténskej (podľa *Točík 1981*); B – LT osídlenie na polohách: 1 – Zámeček; 2 – Hoferské; 3 – Vysoký breh.
- Obr. 10. Komárno. Pravdepodobný rozsah laténskej osady centrálného charakteru. Poloha lokalít z doby laténskej. 1 – Dunajské nábregie; 2 – Kossuthovo námestie; 3 – Palatínova ulica; 4 – Nádvorie Európy; 5 – Anglia park; 6 – Nová pevnosť; 7 – Stará pevnosť; 8? – miesto nálezu mincí podľa katalógu múzea Saint Germain (podľa *Březinová/Gere 2021*).

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