

SUMMARY: PRINCELY BURIAL MOUND OF THE HALLSTATT PERIOD NEAR ROVNÁ IN SOUTH BOHEMIA. MANIFESTATIONS OF THE SOCIAL ELITES OF THE IRON AGE IN THE BOHEMIAN BASIN

INTRODUCTION

A rescue excavation of the disturbed barrow no. 1 in the municipality of Rovná near Strakonice was conducted in 2012-2013. The excavation was necessitated by an illegal dig at the site in 2009, during which five bronze vessels were looted. Today these vessels are held at the Museum of South Bohemia in České Budějovice.

LOCATION OF THE CEMETERY AND THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The site is located in the central River Otava region, with barrows nos. 1 and 2 situated in a shallow saddle 300m east of the closest burials in the barrow cemetery.

EXCAVATION HISTORY

Barrow no. 1 with protruding stones around its perimeter was captured in a period drawing from 1874. B. Dubský dug a small trench in the barrow in 1927-1928.

EXCAVATION OF BARROW NO. 1 AND THE ARRANGEMENT OF GRAVE GOODS IN THE GRAVE CHAMBER

A geophysical survey of barrows nos. 1 and 2 demonstrated that both structures of piled stones have a nearly square ground plan. The excavation of barrow no. 1 showed that the massive construction of a continuous layer of stones covered a square wooden chamber 6.2 m × 6.1 m in size. The wood has not been preserved and the course of the walls was revealed only by negative imprints. On the bottom of the looting shaft in the southeast corner of the chamber, impressions of the bottoms of bronze vessels were identified and documented. The toreutic set was supplemented by seven pottery vessels. Lying nearby was an iron knife and a meat food offering documented by the bones of a calf. Numerous sheep/goat bones scattered in various places reveal additional remnants of meat offerings. The find of bear claws in the southwest part of the grave chamber is remarkable. A later intrusion from the Late La Tène period (feature 11) heavily damaged inhumation burials from the Early Iron Age in the southwest section of the chamber, where components of a costume and jewellery were also found: a large amber ring, a fragment of a small bronze fibula, two small bronze bars with eyelets at their ends and small bronze rings. A bronze toiletry set was found at the south wall, while a bronze fibula with a decorative foot, an assemblage of antler beads, fragments of miniature iron needles with bronze and glass heads, as well as several bone arrowheads were found in the northwest

corner. In the southwest part of the chamber, we recorded horse harness decoration and the metal parts of a four-wheeled wagon. Lying in the northwest corner were the nearly intact remnants of a very small chariot; the rectangular outline of the chariot body was easily discernible, as was the position of both wheels.

Features dug in the bottom of the burial chamber

In the north-western part of sector 2, a distinctive stone construction was identified at the bottom of the burial chamber, forming the surface of an oval pit (feature 11) with oblique walls measuring 160 cm × 212 cm. The stones reached the bottom of the bowl-shaped pit, which was 45 cm below the ground level of the burial chamber at a depth of 45 cm. At the eastern edge of feature 11, similar smaller stone settings were recorded in the same 4th documentation level, covering the surface of a shallow oval pit (feature 12) of 95 cm × 91 cm size.

THE CULTURAL AND CHRONOLOGICAL CLASSIFICATION OF GRAVE GOODS FROM THE GRAVE CHAMBER

Ornament and costume components

A bronze Hochdorf-type toiletry set with red coral inlay is an import from northern Italy, from the area of the Golasecca or Este culture, where similar artefacts were manufactured in the 5th century BC. Both fibulae have red coral inlay preserved in grooves on their bows; similar examples occur especially in areas demarcated by the Inn and Salzach rivers. Fibulae with a decorative foot with a square or rectangular plate can be dated to Ha D3, in the period around 500 BC. Bronze bars with a round loop at the end are interpreted as a decorative component of leather shoes and are documented as early as the Late Hallstatt period and especially LT A. Small antler beads have parallels in Etruscan graves of central Italy and are also known from Hallstatt graves in Slovenia. A parallel to the larger antler bead with turned grooves running around it is known from a Ha D2 princely grave in Hochdorf. One of the small iron needles is furnished with a head made of bronze, the other of glass. Small iron needles with a bronze head can be documented at the end of Ha D in Baden-Württemberg, whereas larger bronze needles with a glass head appear in graves in the early Villanova II phase in Emilia-Romagna. The round amber ring of Baltic origin has the closest parallels especially in south and west Bohemia in the period between Ha D2-3 and LT A.

Bronze vessels

Ribbed cistae with movable handles belong to series II cistae that spread from northern Italy and the eastern Alps all the way to Poland and even Sweden; their common occurrence on Czech territory is also conspicuous. Although production sites have not yet been localised, the centre of their distribution lies in the eastern Alps. They were probably manufactured in workshops situated in a broad band along the southern edge of the Alps. Although they appear sporadically as early as Ha C, their production occurred mainly throughout the entire course of Ha D. A Herbertingen-type cauldron has not yet been documented in Bohemia. These vessel forms are concentrated primarily in the area of Baden-Württemberg and Switzerland, where they

belonged to the inventory of rich elite Ha D2 -D3 graves. The Rhine-Ticino situla falls into the Ha D3-LT A period; the vessel came to the Bohemian Basin from northern Italy and, again, represents the only known specimen in Bohemia. The distribution of this situla was concentrated in the western part of northern Italy, where the majority of these vessels were also produced. Another concentration appears in Slovenia, where the vessels were probably also manufactured. The Hundersingen-type bowl with a beaded rim from the second half of the 6th century BC and the first half of the 5th century BC made its way to Bohemia from central Italy, probably through the western Alps and southwest Germany.

Pottery vessels

Seven pottery vessels were found. A bowl with a carinated body and a situla-like vessel can be dated with a high degree of certainty to Ha D2 -D3.

Horse harness

Bronze decorations of leather straps and antler and iron pegs document the presence of a horse harness. Pegs of this shape appear in Central Europe between the Baden region and Slovakia and date to the period between Ha C1 and Ha D1. Hammered buttons are known from Ha C -Ha D1 graves in Baden-Württemberg, Lower and Middle Franconia, the Upper Palatinate and Bohemia. They are commonly referred to as the Thalmässing type, which is characteristic especially for Ha C. Bronze cast buttons with hollow conical heads with a terminal bead are documented in south Bohemia in Ha D2-D3 graves. The lone specimen decorated with concentric rings is similar to the La Butte type from Ha D2 in Baden-Württemberg and Burgundy. Small bronze sleeves and cuff-like clips from bronze and iron sheet metal have parallels mainly in Ha C graves from northeast Bavaria. A fragment of a bit and a hooked clip from a bridle can also be classified among horse harness fittings; similar clips with a T-shaped crosspiece again date to Ha C.

Four-wheeled wagon

Iron linch pins with a figure-eight head come from a four-wheeled wagon; only one specimen was preserved intact. These Bohemian (Kolín type) linch pins are known primarily from Ha C graves with wagons in Bohemia; they also occurred sporadically in Bavaria and were used on four-wheeled wagons from early Ha C until Ha D1. Fragments of iron face plates and wheel hub rims also come from the four-wheeled wagon. Ornamental bronze hardware belonged to the wagon's body decoration and similar bronze four-wheeled wagon body decoration is documented to the north and northwest of the Alps in Ha C1; therefore, the finds from Rovná can be linked to wagon type 2.

Chariot

An iron bar-shaped pin with loop terminals belonged to the structure of a chariot. A pair of identical bar pins with loop terminals were primarily characteristic of La Tène chariots. Metal pins with eyelets rank here among technical peculiarities that reveal the close ties among the Early La Tène elite between the Cham-

pagne, the Rhine Valley and southwest Bohemia; with the use of leather straps, the pins created an elastic connection between the body and the axle or chassis of the chariot. The iron wheel rims with nails belonging to the small chariot from Rovná are thin, with a width of only 1.1-1.3 cm. Front wheel hubs with nails and a 90° rim are already documented on four-wheeled wagons from Ha D in central and south Bohemia and Bavaria. Numerous bronze bands wound around the wheel spokes served a decorative purpose. Formally they are highly similar to the bronze sheet metal that decorated the wheel hubs of a Ha D3 four-wheeled wagon from Vix. The sides of the body bore well-preserved decoration composed of rows of rectangular and square plates carved from deer antler. A total of 97 variously shaped pieces of these plates were found at the site. Smaller artefacts had engraved decoration in the form of concentric circles, whereas larger specimens featured open-work and depicted geometric and, less often, figural anthropomorphic motifs. Similar decoration on the sides of wagons divided into rectangular metopes is depicted in certain situla art scenes from the 6th-5th century BC. Open-work figures of warriors and animals decorated rectangular friezes on the bronze sheet metal of the body of an Etruscan chariot from the first half of the 7th century BC in the barrow from San Cerbone near Populonia. Parallels to rectangular frames with metal open-worked, figural decoration come from Hallstatt cemeteries in Carinthia and Styria, where they adorned funeral pottery. The body of a four-wheeled wagon from a Ha D2 grave in Upper Franconia was covered with bronze sheet metal with a rectangular frieze with hammered human figures. Four or five engraved rings with a central point often on plates from Rovná appear in the rectangular fields of belt sheet metal from Ha D1 graves, and parallels are also found here in several open-work geometric motifs of antler plates. An antler artefact with highly similar decoration is documented from the Horákov culture settlement in Těšetice. Fragments of scorched rectangular and triangular antler plates decorated with concentric rings are known, e.g. from the Ha D1 princely grave in the Kröllkogel barrow in Kleinklein. Parallels to the decorative columns from Rovná are primarily seen on similar metal columns from wagon body sides from Como-Ca'Morta and Vix.

Tools and weapons

Parallels to the large iron knife can be found in central and northwest Bohemia as early as Ha C, and similar knives also appear in south Bohemia in Ha C - Ha D. Three peg-shaped arrowheads have parallels in Hallstatt graves from Lower Austria and Middle Franconia; in the 6th century BC, they are formally similar to arrowheads that are also documented in Scythian graves.

DATING OF THE FINDS FROM THE STONE MANTLE OF THE BURIAL MOUND AND FROM THE FEATURES RECESSED IN THE BURIAL CHAMBER FLOOR

Early Iron Age

In the course of the excavation of the massive construction consisting of a coherent stone layer, which was done in mechanical layers, we found numerous fragments of ceramic. However, at various levels of documentation, we registered fragments of other Hallstatt pottery that were unlikely to be related to the burial chamber equipment. Fine thin-walled pottery is typical for the phase Ha D2-3. Other ceramic fragments can only be generally assigned to the Ha D stage.

Late Iron Age

In the stone construction of the burial mound, LT C/D ceramics were found in large numbers on the first level of documentation and on all other levels. Together with Late/Final La Tène pottery, also fragments of human bones appeared on the 1st-2nd and 4th-5th levels. Radiocarbon dating of two samples of human bone confirmed a more recent disturbance during the La Tène period. In addition to the pottery of the Late/Final La Tène period, the 5th level of documentation also uncovered La Tène iron objects. The fragment of an iron fibula can be attributed to variant A of the Kostrzewski type. Also noteworthy are the remains of iron links and rings of a belt chain of prism-shaped links, which are to be dated to the LT B2 period.

Early Middle Ages

In sector 2, in the second level of documentation, an elongated stone cist measuring 40 cm × 20 cm made of flat, vertical stone slabs was recognised in the stone layer. At the first and second levels of documentation in sector 2, remains of a newborn were recorded. A fragment of the right neonatal humerus is located just above the stone cist and a fragment of the tibial bone is inside at its edge. The radiocarbon dating of a bone fragment of this newborn falls into the middle phase of the early Middle Ages. In the western part of sector 1, a fragment of the clay vessel from the early Middle Ages was also found in the stone layer of the second mechanical layer.

THE CHRONOLOGY OF IRON AGE BURIALS IN BARROW NO. 1 AND THE PROBLEM OF YOUNGER ADDITIONAL BURIALS IN THE BURIAL MOUND

First and foremost, the chronology of the princely grave is determined by ornament and costume components, whereas the fibulae date to the period around the year 500 BC. The toiletry set, amber ring, bronze and pottery vessels and chariot represent a later assemblage of grave goods corresponding to Ha D3. However, we can also distinguish a second group of grave goods with a decidedly archaic character: a four-wheeled wagon with iron linch pins and certain parts of a horse harness. Based on radiocarbon dating, the earliest human bone is a metatarsal with an absolute dating in the period of 826-778 BC, hence indicating a primary inhumation burial in Ha C1. As such, the four-wheeled wagon can be linked to this oldest burial.

A larger part of the remaining human bones can probably be attributed to the Late Hallstatt princely grave from Ha D3. However, the radiocarbon dates do not rule out the possibility of a third inhumation burial, perhaps from the first half or middle of the 6th century BC.

Fragments of some late Hallstatt pottery vessels were found particularly in documentation levels 1-3 and may derive from disturbed and poorly furnished, additional graves. In the western part of the burial chamber was clearly identified a subsequent intrusion from the Late/Final La Tène period in the form of a shaft or pit (feature 11) and can be interpreted as a secondary grave from LT C2/D. Cases involving subsequent burials are relatively common in south and west Bohemia.

NATURAL SCIENCE ANALYSES

Geophysical survey

A magnetometric and geoelectrical survey were conducted in the area of barrow nos. 1 and 2, and a ditch around their perimeter cannot be assumed. The results of the geoelectrical resistivity survey suggest a distinctly rocky covering to both barrows as well as a very similar, nearly square shape of both destroyed features. Barrow no. 1 was undoubtedly heavily disturbed, whereas the results of the survey in the area of barrow no. 2 indicate a better underground condition of the preserved feature.

Petrographic analysis of the rock from the stone construction of the barrow

The rock types were identified directly at the site by macroscopic evaluation during the archaeological excavation. The material for the construction of the barrow was obtained by collecting loose stones from the surface. The vertical and surface changes found in the rock composition of the barrow are the result of a partial change in the main source locations of the rock supplied during the construction of the barrow and a local concentration of a certain type of rock in the mound apparently corresponding to individual supplies of stone from various sites.

Analyses of organic substances from the surface of bronze vessels

Protein analysis

The detection of food remnants was based on testing for the presence of proteins in samples from the inner and outer surface of bronze vessels. The presence of cereal components is indicated by gluten, which was recorded in varying intensity on samples from the outer walls of the bowl and cauldron and from the inner side of the cauldron and both cistae. Casein was also found inside the cauldron and cista 2, signalling the presence of milk, while the immunoglobulin isotype G indicated that the milk was from a goat. The actual milk components were relatively low in number, suggesting that the milk was just an additive to dishes. Cow milk can be ruled out. Ovomuroid, which points to the presence of bird eggs, was also found in samples from the bowl, situla and cauldron. In addition to the bowl, poultry meat proteins were also identified in all of the other bronze vessels. Pork protein was identified in the majority of samples from the remaining bronze vessels, with the exception of the situla.

Pollen analyses

Due to contamination, the pollen spectra have limited interpretational potential. However, the larger amount of microcharcoals from the surface of the outer wall of the cauldron and situla is unrelated to contamination. These vessels came into contact with fire, perhaps during funeral rituals; they may also have been used for cooking.

Chemical examination of organic remains on bronzes from Rovná

Samples of a dark organic material from grave 1 from Rovná taken at the RGZM (Mainz) stemming from two heavily damaged bronze vessels (a situla and a cauldron; Ha D3) were chemically analysed at the Vienna University of Technology. The chapter describes the samples, the analytical methods used and the results thus obtained.

These results were unexpected: Not a single one of the samples contained the suspected birch bark pitch, but

- former fats were detected in both bronze vessels (together in four samples),
- those from the situla being milk fat (with high probability from goat or sheep milk), and
- those from the cauldron stemming from poultry, having been heated there together with plants and rocket oil (*Eruca sativa*).
- Three samples taken from the situla proved to be a pitch, but not prepared from birch (*Betula pendula*), but from the European beech (*Fagus sylvatica*). This result could therefore be of particular interest, as from now on the appearance of beech pitch on bronze (sheet) in principle has always to be considered.

Charred plant macro-remains and wood from the grave chamber

Plant macro-remains

We recorded only charred plant macro-remains. Remnants of ruderal plants and weeds apparently reflect the environment of a location where some of the rituals related to burial were performed. Only small concentrations of cultivated plants were recorded. Emmer wheat, barley and pea or vetch occurred in the barrow chamber, while La Tène feature 11 contained barley. Hygrophilous or water plants with striking blossoms, suggesting their use for decorative purposes, occurred in samples.

Charcoals

A total of 10 tree species were documented. The representation of coniferous trees is high, while wood from deciduous trees occurred in greater amounts in the barrow chamber.

Phosphate analysis of the barrow

The eastern part of the grave chamber has a high phosphate anomaly that extends beyond the chamber. The amount of food capable of creating such an enormous anomaly is estimated at hundreds of kilograms. Another discovered anomaly reveals the deposition location of the deceased in the southwest corner of the grave chamber, where fragments of human bones were also found.

Anthropological analyses

The assemblage contained a large amount of mostly isolated fragments of bones of various skeleton parts. The largest cluster of bones (area I) was situated at the western edge of the grave chamber. Lower leg bones

belonged to an adult individual with a somewhat robust body structure, probably a male, *adultus* II+ (over 30 years of age). The majority of samples fell into a wide span of the Hallstatt period from the mid-8th century to the 5th century BC and, with the greatest degree of probability, we can determine a Late Hallstatt age, though one metatarsal dating to 826-775 BC can be placed already at the beginning of the Hallstatt period. The bones from area I can be attributed to two adult individuals. In the case of the older burial, all that can be said is that the individual was of an adult age and a more precise anthropological determination is not possible. Area II at the southern edge of the grave chamber contained fragments of bones belonging to at least two individuals – one a more robust adult individual and a second more slender – whereby is not possible to determine with certainty whether it is an adult or a juvenile. Radiocarbon dating of the bone samples from area II confirmed a later intrusion in the La Tène period. Area III to the north was composed of remnants of both jawbones that can be attributed to a young individual, *juvenis-adultus* I (14-25 years old). Radiocarbon dating places this individual in the Late Hallstatt period.

Animal bone analyses

All radiocarbon dating of animal bones falls into the »Hallstatt plateau« on the radiocarbon calibration curve, including the calf in the role of a Late Hallstatt offering. Relatively abundant remnants of sheep/goat found at the bottom of the chamber can also be regarded as part of the Late Hallstatt burial.

Meat offerings

The remains of a calf lying in the eastern part of the chamber represented selected fleshy parts, specifically the proximal parts of all four limbs and a series of left and right ribs placed in the tomb in such a way as to resemble the shape of a complete animal lying on its back. The age of the calf was determined to be 10-15 months.

No more than one individual can be identified in the assemblage of sheep/goat bones scattered over the eastern and western half of the chamber. One rib lay directly in the area of the body of a two-wheeled wagon, creating the impression that the rib was placed on the vehicle. Based on the size and appearance of bones, the age of the sheep was estimated at 1-2 years. Based on radiocarbon dating, a fragment of a pig's cervical vertebra found on the bottom of the chamber can be associated with the Late Hallstatt burial.

Bear claws

The presence of a bear is documented by three distal phalanges, i. e. bones holding claws, obtained from the wet sieving of soil from the south-western part of the grave chamber bottom. These probably come from the front and rear legs of the animal, and the finds can be interpreted with a high degree of probability as remnants of a bear's fur deposited in the grave.

Other animal bone finds

This category is made up of bones found at higher documentation levels or outside the grave chamber and which are apparently unrelated to the actual Hallstatt burial. An adult and juvenile pig, dog, horse, red deer, hare, rodents, insectivores, a frog and birds, including a hazel grouse (*Bonasa bonasia*) are documented.

Antler and bone artefacts

Decorated plates, collars, beads and arrowheads were found in the grave chamber. Occurring in the largest numbers were antler plates that served as inlays on the body of the chariot. The thickness of some compact bone indicates that the antler was from a full-grown red deer. The overall area of the discovered plates suggests that more than one antler was used. The collars from the iron posts of the wagon's body were also made from the stem of a red deer antler, as was the large bead.

Use-wear analyses of antler artefacts

An analysis of artefacts confirmed the application of the fluting technique on longitudinal debris serving primarily the extraction of blanks from the material. The lengthwise reduction of artefacts was performed using the technique of transverse cutting. Traces of debris were homogenised in the following production phase by means of polishing. To create open-work, a perforation was made to serve as the initial point. Cutting and, less frequently, polishing were performed in the next phase. The semicircular open-work was created by gradual polishing or filing. Traces of lengthwise grating were identified on the lower, spongy part of artefacts. The antler collars were grooved by means of longitudinal polishing or filing. The upper side of the artefacts was modified by gentle polishing/smoothing. The rings with a central depression were decorated by very precisely boring with continuous circular rotation, apparently by means of a special borer driven by a pulley. The gradual wearing of the borer is evident on artefacts in the rough edges of the perforations.

Analyses of artefacts from other organic materials

Identification of inlay on the bronze fibulae and toiletry set

An analysis of weathered fragments of material from the inlays on fibulae and the toiletry set confirmed red coral, which was found on all coasts of the Mediterranean Sea. As the coral tentacles used had a small diameter, it is assumed that their original colour was bright red, not pinkish.

Amber analysis

Infrared spectroscopy demonstrated that the amber from the amber rings was of Baltic origin.

Radiocarbon dating of human and animal bones

A total of 21 samples were prepared for dating. A plateau on the radiocarbon calibration curve roughly in the 800-500 BC range complicates an interpretation. Of all the analysed samples, only sample no. 18_092 from a human metatarsal precedes this plateau. This bone produced a narrowly established calibrated age of 826-778 BC (P=95) and confirms the presence of an earlier Ha C1 grave. The relatively broad distribution of the probabilities of individual calibrated dates and their overlapping make it impossible to reliably establish the overall number of Hallstatt burials. The radiocarbon dating of the bones likewise confirmed at least three later disturbances or intrusions. These are captured in the analyses of three human bones, two dated to the La Tène period, the third to the Middle Ages (end of 9th-10th century, in Bohemia Early Middle Ages).

Chemical analyses of bronze and glass artefacts

XRF measurements of selected bronze artefacts

A total of 23 bronze artefacts from the grave chamber were subjected to an orientational measurement of their element composition by means of X-ray fluorescence. The spectrum of selected artefacts includes metal vessels, clothing accessories and components of a horse harness and wagons. All of the analysed artefacts are made of tin bronze. The lowest tin values are found in the Hundersingen-type bowl, and in addition to copper and tin, lead and arsenic are also prominent; as such, this composition is consistent with the assumed Etruscan provenance of the vessel. Both cistae produced similar results – a low proportion of arsenic compared to other vessels. The fibulae and toiletry set differ from the other artefacts with their heavy amount of lead in the alloy. Noteworthy in the case of the toiletry set is the presence of the combination of the elements Ag-As-Sb-Bi, typical for tetraedrite copper (Ösenring metal) originating probably in North Tyrol. Two distinct types of button-like sleeves also differ in the alloy that was used. The decoration on the body of the four-wheeled wagon likewise shows differences in the content of lead and antimony compared to the bronze sleeves of the wheel spokes on the chariot.

Analysis of the glass head of the miniature iron needle

The miniature iron needle has a head of translucent blue glass that was analysed by means of SEM/EDS in three places. The measurement results confirm that the glass belonged to a group of materials designated as *mixed alkali glass*, or LMHK. LMHK-type vitreous materials are typical especially for the Bronze Age in western Europe, and they also occur in Bohemia. In central Europe, LMHK-type glass was still in use at the transition from Ha B3 to Ha C1. A measurement of microscopic metal inclusions on the surface of the glass revealed a significant amount of silver along with gold and copper. The metal particles could perhaps have become attached to glass during the use of the artefact.

RECONSTRUCTION OF THE BURIAL MONUMENT AND AN INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDS IN THE GRAVE CHAMBER

The original appearance of the sepulchral structure

A drawing of barrow no. 1 from the second half of the 19th century captures the large raised platform with stones protruding around its perimeter. The surface forming the top of the sepulchral structure was also documented by a geodetic survey conducted prior to the excavation; several of the larger stones still slightly protruded from the surface of the terrain. The excavation demonstrated that the elevated plateau was composed of a regular group of larger and smaller stones; the mound 60-70 cm high has a ground plan of 25 m × 25 m with large blocks of stones on the sides. One metre to the west was a similar, destroyed formation with a rectangular ground plan with 25-metre sides. As such, the entire burial monument consisted of two adjacent square structures oriented towards the cardinal points. They apparently differed considerably from standard barrows built in the Bronze Age and the Hallstatt period.

Burial rite

An individual, probably male with an age of over 30 years, lay along the western wall of the chamber with his head towards the south. We can assume at least two inhumation burials from the Late Hallstatt period. Due to the disturbance of the grave chamber, it is difficult to decide whether this involved a simultaneous burial of two individuals (man and woman?) or if the second individual was deposited in the chamber at a later time.

Reconstruction of the grave chamber and its inventory

Around the year 500 BC, a roughly 6 m × 6 m timber structure was built for a princely burial at ground level on the site of a defunct Ha C grave. Detailed documentation of the find situation enables a reconstruction of the probable original appearance of a small wagon with richly decorated sides.

THE SYMBOLISM OF THE ARTISTIC EXPRESSION OF THE EARLY IRON AGE ELITE, ITS INSPIRATION AND FUNCTION

The decoration of bronze vessels and wagons corresponds to the symbolic artistic expression of the elite. We can especially trace two aspects: the local religious motifs of the solar cult still persisted, while, at the same time, inspiration originating in the Mediterranean area was gaining prominence. The symbolic images of the Early Iron Age were a significant medium used primarily by the local elite.

Decoration of ribbed cistae

The bases of both cistae are decorated with a pattern of radial lines or bands, while the ends of the arched handles are in the shape of water birds. Sun disc motifs are often combined with scenes of water birds – an old symbolism with its roots in the Urnfield period. The majority of Hallstatt toreutics were apparently made with sun symbolism.

Open-work discs from the body of the four-wheeled wagon

Bronze open-work discs with a cross motif and four triangles appear in southwest Germany and Bavaria in the Middle Bronze Age and Early Urnfield period. Pendants were amulets interpreted as sun symbols. In a Horákov culture grave in Moravia from Ha C2/Ha D1, they reflect the old tradition of the Middle-Danube sun cult.

Decoration of the chariot and its interpretation

The decorative motifs of the antler plates are remarkable. The rings represent sun symbolism, which was gradually transformed from earlier Bronze Age sun motifs at the beginning of the Late Urnfield period into smaller concentric circles. Larger rectangular open-work artefacts depict human figures whose posture recalls fist fighters shown in situla art. The suggestion of raised arms might indicate the depiction of a dance, and the best preserved plate probably showed a warrior armed with two clubs dancing. Figural art portrayed certain ideas and could justify or affirm the social and religious status of a special group in society. When considering the function of this funerary gift, there can be no doubt that it is an artefact equipped with two wheels reminiscent of a chariot. The bones of sheep/goat found in the centre of the body of the chariot as well as next to it reveal a probable meat offering placed on the mobile table top. Given the small size and unusual decoration, it was not a vehicle intended for transport but rather a beautiful piece of luxurious furniture – a mobile table on two wheels, i. e. a »*Tischwagen*«. The chariot probably played an important role in the offering rituals, and it also refers to the status of the buried individual as well as his role in the differentiated social structure.

The Late Hallstatt grave in Rovná, situla art and the birth of the Early La Tène style; transformations in the upper social classes in the 6th-5th century

Recently, it has been shown that the inspiration for figural motifs on situla art was significantly widespread in transalpine Europe. Human figures in the decoration of the body of the chariot from Rovná indicate the strong influence that situla art had on Central European craft and artisan production for the members of the local social elites. A number of similar artefacts from other locations show its presence for two whole centuries and some of the figural motives from the 5th century BC were further adopted and transformed by the new artistic style of the Early La Tène period. The transition from the Late Hallstatt to the Early La Tène period was already taking place around 500 BC, which was also the time of the princely burial in Rovná; however, the indications of the emerging style cannot be demonstrated here. The anthropomorphic motifs from Rovná are quite realistic portrayals of human figures. The subsequent gradual transition of realistic

representation into the abstract characters of the Early La Tène style was probably associated with another world view and religious rules of the newly established, different social elites in the 5th century BC. In the cultural environment north of the Alps, figural and plant motifs taken from the Mediterranean and west Asian-Scythian area underwent a remarkable transformation into the Early La Tène style. In the course of a single generation, the symbolism of the Hallstatt period was replaced by new artistic expression that displayed realistic representations only in encrypted indications. The prominent individual buried in the princely grave from Rovná did not belong to this new elite and still represented the previous perception of the world from the Hallstatt period.

NOTES ON THE FIBULAE WITH ORNAMENTAL FOOT

A completely intact fibula from the Rovná grave belongs to the type with rectangular footplate. Such fibulae are quite widespread and are found in a wide zone around the Alps, stretching from northern Switzerland and eastern France through southern Germany into Bohemia and western Austria. Additionally, such fibulae are also present in northern Italy and Slovenia. However, the detailed analysis of decorations found on the rectangular footplates showed that various centres of production could be distinguished. The foot of the fibula from Rovná was decorated with an incised cross. This kind of decoration is not only known from other examples from Bohemia, but also found on fibulae in eastern France. While the decoration with an incised cross was probably first seen in eastern France, the various examples found in Bohemia make it quite likely that fibulae of this variant were also produced locally.

Regarding the chronology of fibulae with rectangular footplates, it is important to note that such fibulae belong to the family of the »Fußzierfibeln« that is characteristic for Ha D3 (500-450 BC). While examples of fibulae with footplate are known from graves of the early and late phase of Ha D3, it has to be pointed out that the basic form of such fibulae is rather characteristic for the early phase of Ha D3. As the fibula from Rovná therefore represents classical variant of its type, it is highly probable that the fibula dates between 525 and 500 BC.

A second fibula from Rovná is fragmented and therefore lacking the important foot that would determine its type. However, as the preserved parts of the fibula are similar to the other fibula from Rovná, it could be assumed that both fibulae belonged to the same type and were therefore worn as a pair.

THE BARROW FROM ROVNÁ AND THE EARLY IRON AGE SOCIAL ELITE IN BOHEMIA

The earlier burial from Ha C1 belongs to the earliest group of graves with four-wheeled wagons in Bohemia, Bavaria and Upper Austria. This is the first evidence of a grave of this age with a wagon in the south Bohemian River Otava region. Later, at the end of the 6th century and in the 5th century BC, certain areas in Bohemia gained priority standing in the political and cultural environment of Central Europe at the time. It is very likely that the higher intensity of interregional contacts was associated with the relocation of the Amber Road, which was newly routed through the Bohemian Basin from the north and northeast to the south and southwest. The earliest graves of the Late Hallstatt elite appear in southwest Bohemia especially in Ha D3/LT A. A total of five graves with chariots are known in west Bohemia, whereas two or three of these burials can now be considered in south Bohemia. Burials with Etruscan bronze vessels also make up

a significant group of Ha D3-LT A princely graves in the Bohemian Basin. While the inventory of the tomb chamber from Rovná reveals the prominent status of the buried individual, some of the grave gifts also indicate a connection with ritual practices. The composition of the grave goods of some rich burials suggests that certain members of the aristocratic elites probably held sacred functions and had political as well as economic power. The tomb is the result of a burial ritual in the form of a communication meeting that served to represent social identity or status; the luxurious burial of the deceased individual was intended to affirm the existing social relations between the living.

MANIFESTATIONS OF EARLY URBANISM OF THE SOCIAL ELITE IN THE BOHEMIAN BASIN, RELATIONS BETWEEN ITALY AND BOHEMIA IN THE EARLY IRON AGE

In order to identify the highest social units – elites in the Hallstatt and early La Tène periods –, the study of the so-called princely/lordly expressions is used. In general, elites are identified by the existence of three categories of archaeological sources: 1. rich (princely/lordly) graves; 2. exceptional settlements; 3. luxury items/imports. We register princes' or lords' graves according to different main features. Particularly striking is the location of the interment in a large burial mound with a diameter of about 5 m up to 80 m and in a large burial chamber with a length of about 5 m to 7 m. In princely tombs appear luxury goods/imports, Mediterranean goods are an indicator of economic and political power. The graves of the highest social class, which are often referred to as princely, are characterised by Mediterranean imports, often also precious metal artefacts and burial chambers reach unusually large dimensions. Burials of the middle class, sometimes referred to as lordly graves, are also richly equipped, but there are missing Mediterranean imports and the burial chambers are smaller.

The identification of elites is also possible in settlements that bear the characteristics of centres of political and economic power (so-called princely and lordly seats that correspond to the highest and middle classes of society). These are mainly fortified hill settlements; one of the main features of these centres of power is the structural and topographic separation of acropolis and suburbium/outer precinct. Another important feature of the fortified hilltop or just elites' settlements on lowlands enclosed by a palisade or ditch is the appearance of imports and occurrences of precious metal items or other prestigious goods. A characteristic feature of the fortified princely seats in the role of prominent centres of power are, above all, the rich graves in the near or distant surroundings. Some of them have the character of so-called princely graves and contain imports from the Mediterranean. We do not yet know the fortified hill settlements with all these parameters in Bohemia, the hitherto known seats do not fit into the still discussed methodical concept of princely hill settlements. The princes' tombs with the additions of Mediterranean origin have not yet been identified in the vicinity of the fortified hilltop settlements, which are designated in Bohemia as centres of power with connection to the Mediterranean. These imports, on the other hand, seldom occur in the environment of fenced farms and open settlements¹⁰⁴⁹. They point to a connection with the highest stratum of society, which maintained contacts with the Mediterranean. The nature of this link is still being discussed¹⁰⁵⁰.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Härke 1983; Kimmig 1983; Maise 1996; Eggert 1999; ¹⁰⁵⁰ Bouzek u.a. 2017. Krause 1999; Veit 2000.

The beginnings of urbanism north of the Alps are closely linked to the manifestations of the Early Iron Age elite. In the times of the Early Iron Age, early urbanism in the region north of the Alps was both developing and stagnating in dynamic cycles of centralisation and decentralisation, which stands in contrast to the development observed in the Mediterranean world¹⁰⁵¹. If we want to examine and try to interpret the remains of the first planned settlement developments of the Early Iron Age in Central Europe, we need to approach the patterns of residential urban structures in a wider social context. The architecture of the Hallstatt period is understood as a social medium, which means that any built up areas form a material basis for social structures¹⁰⁵².

In Bohemia, the planned concentric structure of settlements can be observed already in some lowland settlements from the beginning of the Iron Age. In Prague-Miškovice, we can find a clear settlement plan divided by stockades and moats into several spaces. The structuring principle of settlement from the period of the Ha C stage is based on a system of polygonal and arched ditch system, to which both the buildings and the paths were oriented. Of particular importance seems to have been an elliptical palisade that enclosed a square building that did not serve as a residential building. The access to the building was allowed only to a restricted group of people, the rest of the community was excluded from the activities and the palisade also prevented looking inside. The ellipse was determined based on the same geometrical principles and with almost identical dimensions as the other three comparable buildings in South Moravia, Lower Austria and Upper Bavaria. This principle of building is fundamentally different from the rectangular princely farmsteads or rectangular parcels known, for instance, from the Heuneburg.

A rectangular farmstead of the nobility (*Herrenhof*) dated to the Ha D1 stage was examined in Štítary-Hostětice in western Bohemia. The owner and his family were part of the military-agrarian aristocracy of the period. The fences and stockades protected and secluded groups of people, cattle, goods but also the production and perhaps also ritual activities. This enclosed settlement unit also included the adjacent settlement with evidence of specialised production. It is assumed that in the Ha C - Ha D1 stages these farmsteads of type *Herrenhof* were not dependent on any higher organisational unit.

In the period comprising the 7th and the beginning of the 6th centuries BC, Bohemia was already partially connected to the system of routes and contacts with northern Italy are manifested in the finds. Isolated brooches of north Italian origin and also some bronze vessels are connected with the older wave of Etruscan imports from the 7th and the beginning of the 6th centuries BC. Primarily, these are a large boat-shaped brooch from Bohosudov, a dragon brooch from Mochov, a bucket with a crescent attachment from Kříš and bowls with a pearl-studded rim of the Hohmichele type from Hradenín and Slatina.

In the second half of the 6th century BC, in the period of the Ha D2-3 stages, there is an increase in the number of fortified hill-top sites with a marked differentiation in these settlements. Some smaller hillforts at strategic positions on hilltops may be regarded as the seats and residences of the local elites, built along the routes of long-distance paths. Their nature reminds one of medieval castles. An example of such a seat of the local elite is known, e. g., from western Bohemia; the one-part hillfort near Svržno provides evidence of intensive construction from the end of the 6th and the beginning of the 5th centuries BC. Rectangular ground level houses built behind the wall and also in the central part were used for residential and production purposes. Significant finds from the Ha D2-3 stages include a western Alpine bronze strip fibula, glass beads and an amber ring. During the time of the hillfort's prosperity, the burial site at Mirkovice, 2 kilometres away, was the location of burial mounds for richly equipped burials of a princely nature. The finds here include, for instance, an Etruscan bronze stamnos-situla and a two-wheel chariot.

¹⁰⁵¹ Collis 2014, 15-18 fig. 21.

¹⁰⁵² Trebsche 2011, 263.

In the 6th to 5th centuries BC, a higher number of smaller hilltop fortified sites of the local elites existed in the Bohemian Basin; these include, for example, the Rubín hillfort. The nature of finds suggests an exceptional social environment, which used imported exotic jewellery from northern Italy as well as specialised craft production. The imports and their imitations reveal the presence of local elites also in certain lowland settlements. Rectangular farmsteads, enclosed by palisades, from the end of the 6th and the beginning of the 5th centuries BC contained finds of Greek ceramics, which reached the territory of Bohemia through the Alpine passes from northern Italy.

In Droužkovice, Attic pottery was found in the central enclosure in the NW corner. This prominent place with a large house, protected by a stockade or a moat on three sides, was also the origin of a golden ring and a handle of a lid of a bronze vessel. This specific area was probably the location of ceremonies and rituals organised by the tribal ruler, associated with ceremonial drinking. Both parts of the circumvallated farmstead in Droužkovice from the first half of the 5th century BC formed an »urban« unit; they were spatially connected, whereas their function differed.

Relics of a rectangular enclosed farmstead were uncovered also in Prague-Pitkovice. The enclosure was probably associated with the complex originating in the 5th century BC, comprising a house with a post construction and a floor at ground level and a half-immersed house with the fragments of a Greek amphora's base and red-figured Attic pottery. Pieces of imported Greek ceramics were also found in other lowland settlements dated to around 500 BC: Prague-Ruzyně, Dobrovíz, Tuchoměřice, Kadaň. A fragment of a small glass aryballos found in Strakonice probably came from Italy.

In terms of the topic of early urbanism and relations between northern Italy and Bohemia, it is necessary to introduce the examples of stone non-fortification elements documented in some of the fortified hilltop settlements. Investigations on the eastern side of the acropolis of the Minice hillfort from the 6th century BC uncovered remains of a remarkable building, with a preserved platform of paved stones, 12 m × 8 m large, with a low stone wall. Another stone paving was discovered in the northern part of the acropolis. We do not know exactly what kind of buildings they were; we can assume a rectangular building with a stone floor and with walls comprising wooden elements, reinforced with a low stone wall around its circumference. The structures on the Minice acropolis are sometimes contextualised with the potential inspiration of builders from the more developed architecture of the Mediterranean world. Four branches of red coral found in the acropolis probably originate from the Mediterranean (Tyrrhenian) Sea. Among the large number of Bohemian hillforts from the 6th and 5th centuries BC, the fortified hilltop sites in Minice, Závist and Vladař are considered important centres of power with evidence of ties to distant regions, especially the Mediterranean area.

The fortified complex of Závist developed from the 6th to the beginning of the 4th century BC. The development of the acropolis in transalpine Europe is truly a unique situation, indicating a site of extraordinary importance. In the first stage, the fortification defined the central area of the hillfort, 27 ha in size. There was a rectangular enclosure on the top of the hill, delimited by the ditch for the palisade; adjacent to the stockade there was a farmstead – a complex of large houses with ground level floors arranged in three rows. The nature of the finds suggests the presence of men and women of a higher social status, members of the elite. After the destruction of this construction, in the second phase the entire fortification complex was enlarged, now covering an area of 90 ha. A new, spacious enclosure was built on the summit with a single large house. This was likely to be a complex of a non-profane purpose, which served for purely cult, or perhaps social and community functions.

A new stage of development on the hilltop started at the beginning of the third phase, which falls within the course of the 5th century BC. The acropolis was enclosed with a wall and a moated ditch in the rock up to 12 m wide and 5 m deep. Several non-traditional, masonry structures were built within the area with such a monumental enclosure. Stretches of stone walls and rectangular platforms were uncovered along with a

triangular structure with internal timbering. The largest rectangular platform has dimensions of 12.5 m × 28 m and a height of 4 m. The upper portion of the building was not preserved; it was probably a wooden structure, as is revealed by a set of burnt wooden beams exposed at the level of the base of the stone platform. The authors of the research attribute purely cult functions to all of these buildings and assume that their builders found inspiration in the Mediterranean world. Jan Bouzek pointed out the similarity of the largest rectangular buildings with stone platforms of wooden Etruscan temples. Stone buildings in the Závist acropolis stood for a maximum of a few decades and were destroyed by fire. The complex was not restored and in the last stage of development the whole area of the acropolis was levelled into a single large terrace 105 m × 80 m in size. Only one small wooden structure was documented in the whole area of the terrace. In the future explanation and interpretation of the constructional development of the acropolis it will be necessary to consider to what extent the cult aspect was mixed with the social and political aspects in this respect. A similar, equally large fortification can be found on top of the Vladař mesa in western Bohemia. The fortification complex stretches over an area of 115 ha and is composed of a separately fortified acropolis and subdivided precinct. The exposed position of the fortified acropolis with a large rainwater cistern was probably the residence of the members of the social elite who controlled the land rich in gold and also maintained remote contacts with the regions south of the Alps. The evidence for this is provided by some of the existing finds discovered on the acropolis. Along with a bronze stylised male figurine wearing a helmet of the Negau type, serving as a foot of a luxurious bronze vessel, imported from the South Tyrol area, we can mention also other artefacts indicating remote contacts, such as an amber bead of Baltic origin. The top platform of the hillfort provided traces of a regular structure with a floor at ground level from the Ha D-LT A periods, which probably comprised of individually fenced farmsteads protected by a robust peripheral wall. The hillfort played its most significant role in the 6th to 5th century BC, when it had become a major centre. In 2009-2010, an international research was performed in the precinct area focused on two uniquely preserved water cisterns. The better preserved one had a square ground plan and was delimited by more than a meter wide dam consisting of timbered chambers of oak beams and a bottom paved with basalt stones; its original volume can be estimated to 900 hl. It was dendrochronologically dated to the first half of the 5th century BC. The preserved wooden buildings of such dimensions, age and function have no analogies in the Central European area. Pollen analysis, as well as analyses of charred plant remains, showed that the immediate surroundings of the cisterns were not probably built up and pastures and meadows prevailed in this location. The research of the precinct fortification demonstrated the remains of three subsequent fortifications dated to the Hallstatt and La Tène periods. The fortified precinct was the location of water cisterns at a time when there was an unusual concentration of cattle and horses as well as people living there. At the end of the Hallstatt and beginning of the La Tène periods, we can observe the trend toward enlarging fortified areas as well as the efforts to secure water resources by fortifications in the development of fortified urban settlements in the vast territory between the Mosel, central Rhineland and Bohemia. Perhaps it was a reaction to the historical events that brought an increased need for protection of people and animals at the time of a growing threat.

The beginnings of urbanism in the temperate zone of Europe in the Early Iron Age can be assessed using a social-anthropological model for prehistoric archaeology distinguishing between a group-oriented society-»corporate mode« and an individual-oriented society-»network mode«. These counterparts also correspond to several understandable correlates, in particularly in architecture. Typical for the »corporate mode« are monumental ritual buildings, the central storage of food stocks and extensive building plans implemented in cooperation. Power and influence consist of the cohesion of corporations, which is created via integrating rituals and ideologies, while individual differences in wealth are suppressed or concealed. The »network mode« stresses individual chiefdom where personal power, prestige and individual wealth

were put on display. The wealth consisted of a personal network of those who held power, inter alia allowing the exchange of prestigious goods and implementation of long-distance imports. Prestigious buildings include characteristic residences, palaces and monumental graves. Both differing models point to societies with a similar degree of social-political complexity, however, with different organisation and behaviour of the elites. The existence of both forms of organisation of society can be traced in Bohemia in the Early Iron Age. The exclusive group that used the ellipse-shaped stockade in Prague-Miřkovice in the 7th century BC might not have constituted the ruling class of the population, but it could also represent another social group of religious or professional nature, such as the cult community, which suggests the corporate form of organisation. The group-oriented society could be indicated also by the fortified complex in Závist: lavish graves are missing in the immediate vicinity, prestigious goods had only an inferior role in the finds from the settlement, the acropolis, representing probably the central sanctuary, was the location of public buildings where group rituals may have also taken place.

Fortified hilltop seats of the late Hallstatt period with richly equipped graves in the vicinity can be associated with the individualised communities. The late Hallstatt princely burial at Rovná in South Bohemia shows luxurious burial rites of a social elite, rich grave goods emphasise the personal prestige and wealth. The set of five bronze vessels reveals ties to northern Italy, in particular the bowl of the Hunderingen type and the Rhine-Tessin situla. The Hochdorf type is represented by the bronze toiletry set decorated with red coral, also an import from northern Italy, originating perhaps from the Golasecca or Este cultures. At the end of the 6th and in the 5th centuries BC, some Bohemian regions were gaining an important role in the political and cultural development of Central Europe. The higher intensity of interregional contacts was associated with the relocating of the Amber Road, which was newly routed through the Bohemian basin from the north and northeast to the south and southwest; local leaders probably provided safe passage through their territories, thus being involved in the organisation and planning of the south- and southwestwards traffic. The routing of the long-distance pathways is revealed, along with the remarkable concentration of sites with finds of amber, also by the imports of Etruscan bronze vessels, brought to the territory of Bohemia at the end of the 6th and in the 5th centuries BC from northern Italy across the Alps. The most frequently represented are bowls with a flat bottom and a steep wall and beaked flagons. In Bohemia, seven Etruscan bronze beaked flagons or their fragments are known, originating mostly from early La Tène princely graves in the western half of Bohemia. In the course of the LT A stage, burials with warrior-style grave goods, including iron swords, had crucial importance; their distribution in Bohemia reveals a newly identified social group controlling the main communication routes at the time. In the LT A stage, large fortified centres played an active role in the new communication region between eastern France and Bohemia; they already started appearing in the late Hallstatt period in the area between Mosel, central Rhineland and Bohemia, i. e. at the northern periphery of the zone of late Hallstatt princely settlements. Such large fortifications serving to protect their own sources of water had only a short period of existence and most of them were abandoned in the 4th century BC.

BRONZE AGE AND HALLSTATT BURIAL MOUNDS IN SOUTH-WESTERN BOHEMIA AND GRAVE CUSTOMS IN THE LA TÈNE PERIOD

Rovná is the only modernly excavated Late Hallstatt princely burial mound in Bohemia with a documented example of secondary Late La Tène interments in an older burial mound. The planned excavation enabled a detailed documentation of the finds distribution in the central burial chamber as well as the recognition of Middle to Late La Tène activities which disrupted the inhumation near the SW wall of the chamber.

Additional burials of the La Tène period in the burial mound Rovná 1

The stone construction of the burial mounds was apparently disturbed in several places. In these areas, large numbers of LT C/D ceramics were found at all levels. In the lower part of the backfill of a pit (feature 11) from the Late or Final La Tène period fragments of LT pottery, an iron fibula of Middle La Tène construction and parts of a chain-belt from rings and prism-shaped links were found. Radiocarbon dating of two samples of human bone confirmed a more recent intrusion during the La Tène period. In view of the radiocarbon dating of the human bones, one must assume one or more secondary post-burials, so-called ritual multi-stage burial rites, in the middle to late La Tène period.

Funeral rituals in Central and Western Europe during the Early and Late Iron Age

Funeral habits were undergoing gradual changes in Central and Western Europe during the last five centuries BC. These changes reflect certain power-political shifts and major transformations in the social-spiritual sphere. Both, the common features and the differences between the West and the East of Europe can be observed in the development of the funeral ritual. A striking difference is between the 5th and 4th century, when the rich graves under the mounds were losing importance, and were replaced by cemeteries with flat skeleton graves. Later, in the second half of the 3rd century BC we can see a remarkable decline in the number of graves, especially compared to the 4th and first half of the 3rd century BC. In LT C1, there was also a fundamental transition from inhumation to cremation and graves almost completely disappearing from the Celtic world east of the Rhine from LT C2. Here we observe a fundamental difference in the development between the western and eastern parts of Europe. The absence of Late La Tène graves in the eastern part of Central Europe is still an unsolved problem and is undoubtedly related to a radical change in the religious sphere. There is no evidence of Late La Tène »Celtic« graves in Bohemia and this sudden abandonment of the habit of depositing the remains of the deceased in graves together with grave goods must have been connected to a strong spiritual process that hit a wide strip of Central Eastern Europe from the Carpathian Basin to Bohemia and later began to influence other Celtic territories of the western part of the continent. In South and West Bohemia, LT B-C/D finds are often recorded in older burial mounds, especially in the mounds of the late Hallstatt period. Similar findings, testifying to the burial or sacrificial rituals on the abandoned necropolises of the Bronze Age and the Iron Age, are known also from some other Central European regions (such as Hungary, Slovakia, Moravia, Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg). Sufficient attention has not been paid to this phenomenon so far.

BURIALS IN EARLY MEDIEVAL BOHEMIA

The latest intrusion in the stone facing of a barrow in Rovná was a stone cist, most probably intended for the bones of a newborn; the radiocarbon dating puts these remains into the period of AD 882-989. Together with scattered ceramic finds from parts of the stone facing, this child's grave proves the use of a prehistoric barrow for the interment of the early medieval population.

The beginnings of the early Middle Ages in Bohemia are usually dated to the second half of the 6th century; they go hand in hand with the first appearance of the Prague-type pottery culture, which is usually connected to the arrival of the Slavs. Contrary to the rich skeleton graves of the preceding Migration period, the new population came with a fundamentally different burial rite. Obviously, the corpses were burned

together with the grave goods and, therefore, the graves seem significantly poorer during the whole period of the cremation rite. Since only a few isolated urn graves are available for the 6th and 7th centuries, we cannot exclude alternative ways of disposing of the burnt bones than interring them in an urn.

In the following 8th and first half of the 9th centuries, cremation remained the usual way of burying. In East, West and particularly South Bohemia, barrows were piled up. In the most fertile and most densely inhabited parts of the Bohemian Basin, i. e. mainly in Central and Northwest Bohemia, except for a few urn graves, there are no graves attested at all until the mid-9th century, when a radical change came about and after centuries the first inhumation graves appeared again in Central Bohemia. This change of funeral behaviour is usually seen in connection with a change of cosmological ideas, or with changes adopted from a foreign environment by the elite and then copied by the whole population. In the Czech early Middle Ages, the connection of both these phenomena has been proven convincingly. Written records of the Frankish Kingdom, as well as luxury items imported from the west (especially weapons and equipment), witness contacts between the imperial elite and the local rulers of Bohemia. A broad range of imported artefacts is to be found mainly in the first inhumation graves from around 850; in case of the richest one, a double grave in Kolín nad Labem, a connection with the baptism of 14 Bohemian princes in 845 in Regensburg, as recorded in the Annals of Fulda, has been thought likely.

The richest male graves from the mid-9th century in Bohemia reflect the tendency to imitate the life style of the Frankish elite, especially through imports. The penetration of a new funeral rite, the inhumation, was part of this imitation. The change of the rite spread from the higher social level to the lower ones in the course of the whole second half of the 9th century. The change of funeral rite was accompanied by the – at least formal – adoption of baptism only in the class of the elite; the largest part of the population of Bohemia would have changed their funeral rite without the influence of Christianity.

The change of the funeral rite was a longer process, advancing not only down the social ladder, but also from the centre to the periphery. Inhumation started to spread to the regions with barrows only around AD 900. Burials of non-cremated corpses in earlier early medieval barrows with cremation burials are frequent. These »bi-ritual« barrows obviously reflect the role of the barrows for a specific community (family?). The interring of unburnt corpses in prehistoric barrows is rather rare. In this respect, the additional child burial in the stone facing of the barrow in Rovná in 10th-century South Bohemia is exceptional; an explanation can be found not only in the understanding of the prehistoric barrow as an ancestral tomb, but, for example, also as an exceptional cultic site. The unusual use of a stone casing can be explained by the material of the facing; it was easier to construct a stone case of loosened stones than to dig a pit.

Around AD 950, burials in mounds vanished and in Bohemia only flat inhumation cemeteries were used. Except for the gradual decline of grave goods, the shape of the graves did not change substantially. Changes can be seen in the arrangement of the graves, first in regular rows and, after their move to churchyards, we encounter superimposed burials mutually disturbing each other in an effort to fit into the restricted space of the sacred ground.