

Geertrui BLANCQUAERT & François MALRAIN

Évolution des sociétés gauloises
du Second âge du Fer,
entre mutations internes
et influences externes



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Amiens
29 mai - 1^{er} juin 2014*

Sous la direction de

Geertrui BLANCQUAERT & François MALRAIN

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F - 80 025 AMIENS CEDEX

ADRESSE ADMINISTRATIVE

47 rue du Châtel

F - 60 300 SENLIS

rap.sanvoisin60@orange.fr (commandes - trésorerie)

rap.daniel.piton@orange.fr (publications- questions diverses)

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DIRECTEUR DE LA PUBLICATION

Daniel PITON

rap.daniel.piton@orange.fr

ADRESSE ADMINISTRATIVE ET
COMMERCIALE

47 rue du Châtel

F - 60 300 SENLIS

rap.daniel.piton@orange.fr

(questions d'ordre général)

rap.sanvoisin60@orange.fr

(commandes - trésorerie)

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THE INTERNAL STRUCTURE OF LATE LA TÈNE SETTLEMENT OF BRATISLAVA

Andrej VRTEL

The intense development of Bratislava-Old Town after 1989 became a key phase in field research, during which the trend toward excavating larger areas or entire parcels became more prominent¹. The beginning of this period was marked by excavations over several seasons on the Main Square, whereas the latest work to date involved excavations at Bratislava Castle². The unprecedented amount of new sources acquired in recent years therefore makes it possible to correct certain earlier ideas about the development and internal structure of settlement in Bratislava in the Late La Tène period³.

GEOGRAPHIC FRAMEWORK, TERRAIN LOCATION AND THE NATURAL CONDITIONS OF THE SITE

The decisive landscape elements in the emergence of Middle and Late La Tène settlement in Bratislava include the dominant castle rock, the navigable river and the proximity of several easily controlled fords. From the perspective of broader relationships, settlement assumed a strategic position at the edge of the Danube strait known as the Devín Gate (*Porta Hungarica*), the junction of major long-distance routes - the Amber Road and the Danube Trail - connecting the Mediterranean with the Baltic region and the Upper Danube region with the Carpathian Basin. This exposed area was therefore defended at the end of the La Tène period by three fortified settlements : Braunsberg, Devín and Bratislava (fig. 1).

Prior to regulation measures in the segment from the Devín Gate, the Danube forked considerably

1 - This article was produced as part of VEGA research project no. 1/0762/14: «Celtic pottery production in the Middle Danube region. Pottery workshops and kilns of the Late La Tène period from the Gate of Devín to the Danube Bend».

2 - The most recent summary is provided in the prepared conference anthology entitled « Bratislava Castle - history, research and restoration ».

3 - The latest works dealing with the issue of the internal structure and organisation of craft production at the Bratislava *oppidum* are PIETA 2001, p. 784-785, fig. 3; PIETA 2002, p. 316; VRTEL 2012, p. 166-168, fig. 238, 239, 241

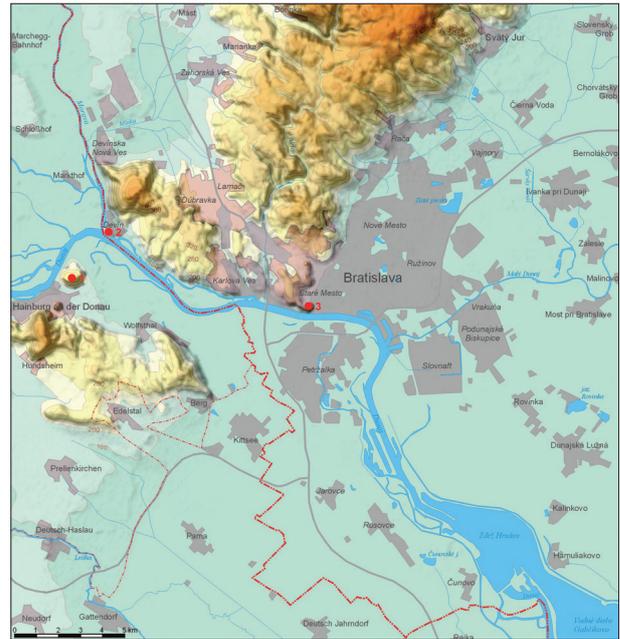


Fig. 1 - Fortified settlements in Devín Gate : Braunsberg, Devín and Bratislava.

into multiple side branches (BAXA 1990, p. 135-136 ; FARKAŠ & BARTÍK 1988, p. 239). In the Late La Tène period, flood activity and the flow of the river decreased to the point where it was possible to use the ford at the base of the castle hill opposite the medieval Water Tower (KRIPPEL 1982, p. 268).

The castle hill (212 m above sea level) is an isolated peak at the southwest end of the granite ridge of the Little Carpathians. The hill's plateau has an approximately oblong shape, the longest sides of which are on a W-E axis. The steep and jagged cliffs of the rock massif over the river on the south side slope gradually toward the east ; the north side has a more moderate grade. The top of the peak is 76 m above the surface of the river.

Most of the studied settlement space is located on terraces on the left bank of the river, whereas the southern part of the suburb is characterised by a gently rising slope at an elevation of 134-137 m above sea level (BAXA 1990, p. 131-132). The

geomorphological parameters with the greatest impact on urban development were the slope and the prevailing orientation of the lower parts of the terrain (NW-SE) running into the Danube basin. L. Zachar suggested that these lengthwise depressions could have divided the local quarters of the *oppidum*. Creating a natural barrier utilisable for fortification purposes was the course of a distinct terrain break at the interface of Kapitúlská and Ventúrska streets at an elevation of 143 m above sea level (PIETA & ZACHAR 1993, p. 148, 184).

Existing cartographic materials tracing the topographic distribution of Late La Tène features do not take into account the natural character of the Danube with its branched riverbed on both sides and also do not provide a reconstruction of the original profile of the terrain, which was substantially reshaped in the first century BC⁴.

THE EVOLUTION OF OPINIONS ON THE BRATISLAVA OPPIDUM

The gradual changes in views on the nature of Celtic settlement in Bratislava can perhaps be followed best in the work of the pioneer Slovak archaeologist Štefan Janšák⁵. Based on the results of the first trenching at Bratislava Castle in 1936 (JANŠÁK 1947), Janšák expressed his conviction that « *in this country we still do not know a settlement or hillfort which could, based on the analogies of Stradonice and Staré Hradisko near Plumlov, have as many important metal finds belonging exclusively to the La Tène period* » (JANŠÁK 1938, p. 114). During the expansion of terrain research following the end of the Second World War and in connection with the breakthrough discovery of pottery kilns on Freedom Square (Námestie slobody), Janšák asked : « *what construction and economic character did the local Celtic settlement have; was it an oppidum with a defensive fortification system or a settlement of craftsmen and merchants?* » (JANŠÁK 1955, p. 218). J. Filip regarded these finds of combustion devices as evidence of mass production in a potters' colony forming part of a large settlement or *oppidum* (FILIP 1956, p. 240).

Another prominent researcher in the period between the 1930s and the 1950s was V. Ondrouch, who is credited with creating a model of Celtic coinage in Bratislava. In his study on the large hoard of Biatic-type coins from Žilinská St, Ondrouch was the first to sketch out the basic spatial layout of the *oppidum* at the *acropolis* and the suburb (ONDROUCH 1958, p. 127). In his opinion, the demise of the

4 - Several examples of elevation differences are pointed out in ZACHAR 1982, p. 31, note 3, tab.

5 - As this article does not aim to provide a detailed history of research, only a brief summary is provided. Nevertheless, Janšák's work offers an adequate representation of the state of Slovak archaeology prior to the commencement of large-scale rescue excavations.

oppidum was caused by the Dacian raid in the Middle Danube in 58 BC, after which local settlement was to have survived only in the form of an insignificant camp (ONDROUCH 1958, p. 129, 151)⁶.

J. Collis contributed significantly to the study of the settlement issue in the Late La Tène period in Slovakia by defining Zemplín-type agglomerations (COLLIS 1972 ; COLLIS 1984, p. 191); however, he regarded Bratislava as an unfortified settlement that was not precisely classified at the time.

L. Zachar, a prominent Slovak archaeologist in the 1970s and 1980s, elaborated the chronology of the site and identified three basic components of the Bratislava *oppidum* : the *acropolis*, suburb and satellite settlement (PIETA & ZACHAR 1993, p. 148-149 ; ZACHAR 1982, p. 47 ; ZACHAR 1987, p. 51). According to Zachar, the size of the inner fortified area (20 ha) placed the settlement in the group of smaller *oppida*⁷. Zachar also suggested that production was separated into specialised precincts in the suburb (PIETA & ZACHAR 1993, p. 184-185).

TRANSFORMATION OF SETTLEMENT

Current knowledge suggests that following the turn of the millennium, development in the territory of Bratislava-Old Town beginning in the Middle La Tène period can be divided into three connected settlement phases. The beginning of settlement at certain locations stretches back to the Middle La Tène period.

Available from the first settlement phases (LT C2) are only isolated finds of features or their small clusters indicating the existence of an open settlement. The most reliable support for dating this pre-*oppidum* settlement thus far is feature 17/07 at Farská 1 in a stratigraphic sub-position with respect to the body of the Late La Tène fortifications⁸. In addition to a fragment of pottery, the fill of the feature also contained a Némčice-type belt link with a massive central rib and side plates dating to LT C2. Also useful for dating the beginning phase of settlement were finds of Middle La Tène pottery and other chronologically sensitive artefacts discovered at the Panská 19 site and during further excavations in the historical centre of the city (PIETA & ZACHAR 1993, p. 146).

6 - Nevertheless, this aspect of his conclusions is problematic in several regards. His thesis on the demise of the Bratislava *oppidum* and the shift to Devín then appeared in many subsequent works (e.g. PIETA & ZACHAR 1993, p. 193, 202-203).

7 - At the time, the overall area of the settlement was estimated at 60,78 ha (PIETA & ZACHAR 1993, p. 148-149, 184, note 26).

8 - Unpublished rescue excavation in the garden at the church of the Sisters of St. Clare; authors B. LESÁK, A. VRTEL

During the second (i.e. classic *oppidum*) phase (LT D1 – D2a), the settlement grew into a vast Zemplín-type agglomeration with a fortified *acropolis* and suburbs divided from each other by an unoccupied corridor (for a definition, see COLLIS 1972 ; PIETA 2001, p. 784-786). The *acropolis* was located on the castle hilltop, where an excavation revealed the remains of a fortification system on the southeast base of the hill. Located in the historic centre of the city, Suburb I was attached to the fortified area, whereas another satellite settlement - Suburb II - was located approximately 400 m to the northeast at the site of today's Freedom Square (fig. 2). The total area could have been around 98 ha. Determining the precise size of the settlement in individual phases faces the problem of dating certain features exclusively according to the pottery finds from their fill (VRTEL 2012, p. 164).

The final third settlement phase, otherwise known as the Celtic-Roman phase (LT D2b - Augustan Age) is characterised by the systematic design of Roman-type development with a regular layout. The typological classification of this settlement formation - stone building complex - remains an unsettled problem. And while its actual size has not been definitively established, it appears that in addition to the peak sections of the acropolis it is also necessary to count on the occurrence of Early Roman buildings in line with the terrain break along Kapitulska St beneath the castle rock on the banks of the Danube at Vydrica (KOVÁR & HANUŠ 2012, p. 182-183, fig. 287-288) and perhaps even below the later Water Tower. Of particular importance in dating the third settlement phase are « key » find contexts with preserved stratified situations and superimposed features (Ventúrska 7;

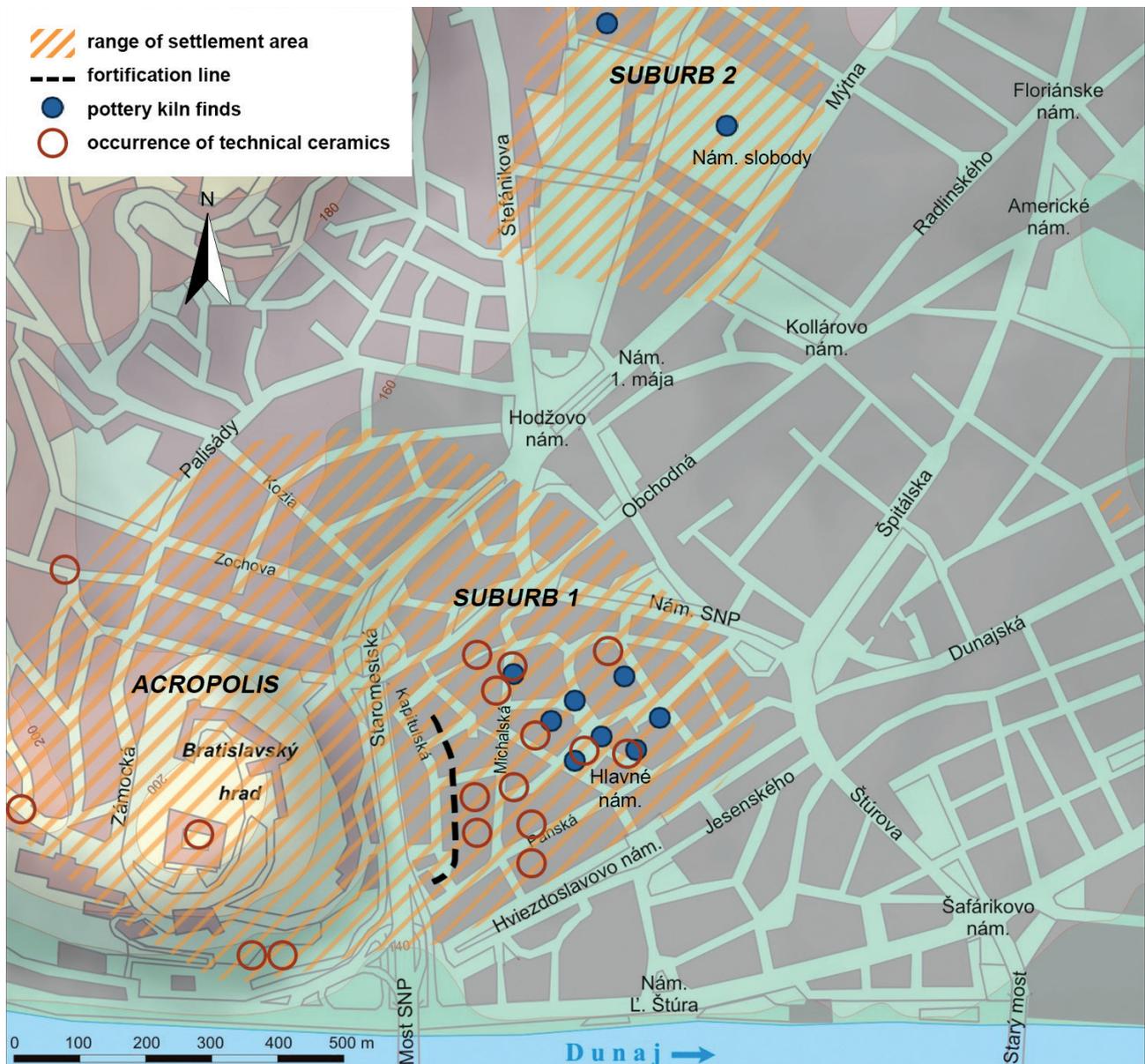


Fig. 2 - Internal structure of Bratislava oppidum.

1. Pre-oppidum PHASE	LT C2	Open settlement
2. Classic oppidum phase	LT D1 – D2a	Oppidum, Zemplín type
3. Celtic-Roman phase	LT D2b – Augustan Age	Roman-type complex

Tab. I - Chronological outline of the settlement on the castle hill with its surroundings

Bratislava Castle – palace courtyard). The dating of the defunct horizon of Roman architecture is based on finds of imported pottery (e.g. a thin-walled Aco beaker) and small metal artefacts. Similarly, the latest settlement features and layers in the suburb are connected with the Augustan Age (northern Italian terra sigillata, Gorica- and Jezerine-type fibulae, etc.).

A description of development would not be complete without at least a brief mention of the character of the second and third settlement phase, both of which bear signs of unexpected events⁹. The definitive destruction of the settlement was apparently caused by a savage military attack, clear evidence of which is finds of disrespectfully deposited skeletons of individuals, traces of fire and interrupted and incomplete construction activity (tab. I).

ACROPOLIS

Starting in the second phase, the settlement space on the castle hill was a fortified area of 20 ha. A ring of fortifications copying the natural terrain break at the base of the hill curved around the acropolis on the southeast side. The greatest amount of information on the structural form of the fortifications came from the rescue excavation at the Farská 1 site. This work captured an eleven-metre segment of the rampart with a wood and earth core and a front stone-faced wall divided by vertical wooden posts (*Pfostenschlitzmauer*). A V-shaped ditch in front of the rampart dug in two stages was an auxiliary defensive element; the restoration of the ditch was observed in multiple locations along its course (cf. PIETA & ZACHAR 1993, p. 150, 184). As for the dimensions of the ditch, at the Ventúrska 7 site, for example, the ditch had a width of 6 m and a depth of 3.8 m (LESÁK 2002; VRTEL 2006, p. 184). Another line of the fortifications of the central area was evidently established at the perimeter of the plateau on the castle hill.

Earlier professional literature linked a gate in the *oppidum* fortification with masonry feature I/67 at Kapitulska St 17-19 - the courtyard of the Provost Palace (NOVOTNÝ 1975, p. 445-446, fig. 2; NOVOTNÝ 1996; POLLA & VALLAŠEK 1991, p. 78-79, fig. 67-69). However, the rescue excavation on the

neighbouring parcel clearly showed that the branch of the drainage channel of the masonry feature covered the fill of the defensive ditch dated to stage LT D2 (LESÁK 2002, p. 114-115). Given the limited scope of the investigated area, it was not possible to resolve the question of whether the captured course of the ditch represented part of the first or second phase of the fortifications. The originally suggested fortification purpose of feature I/67 is also problematic from a practical perspective, since the space with interior terrazzo-like tile divided by a channel and a thirty cm-high masonry stair definitely wasn't suitable for the passage of wagons. Taking into account the stratigraphic situation and the employed construction technique, there should be no doubt about the dating of the architecture to the Celtic-Roman phase.

The greatest concentration of settlement features on the castle hill was recorded in the closely investigated courtyard of the palace of Bratislava Castle. From the perspective of settlement structure, this was an extraordinarily attractive space, one that was separated by its height (212,95 m above sea level) from the rest of the *acropolis*. During the course of the rescue excavation in 2008-2011 headed by B. Lesák, it was possible on an area of 835 m² to capture the individual development stages of the accumulated construction (VRTEL *et al.*, in press).

The first settlement phase was represented by a few disturbed cut features that could be dated very roughly due to the relatively small amount of nondescript pottery.

Manifested more clearly in the second « classical » phase of the *oppidum* was the tendency for settlement features to be situated toward the northern edge of the hilltop. The distance between the outside excavated features from this period does not exceed 29 m. The construction was adapted to the terrain and the basic orientation of the upper plateau. In the free space that apparently opened in front of large structure 115/09 in the direction of the river to the south it was not possible to determine the heights of the surface constructions or sunken structures. The surface of the undeveloped open space was intentionally levelled, the rock carved into and the depressions filled with granite rubble. The find situation of large feature 115/09 with a shallow cut ground plan, a post-built construction and originally stone walls indicates in general a higher degree of living culture than provided by the sunken one-room huts discovered at other locations

9 - Recent professional literature assumed only one «catastrophic» horizon dating to 55-44 BC (see PIETA & ZACHAR 1993, p. 190 ; ZACHAR 1981; ZACHAR & REXA 1988).



Fig. 3 - Courtyard of castle palace, feature with *opus signinum* floor, final phase of settlement

within the oppidum (VRTEL 2011). Evidence of metallurgy activities in the form of a furnace brick with an air hole and a conical crucible with traces of silver melting is noteworthy.

During the third « Celtic-Roman » settlement phase, the density of the built-up area increased and development followed a planned layout in a regular rectangular system around the open space with dimensions of approximately 55,6 × 19 m (VRTEL *et al.*, in press). The open space was surrounded on three sides by stone Roman-type buildings built on top of Celtic structures of a traditional construction. A path ran upward in spiral fashion from the annexe into the open space on the east side. Therefore, the original entrance to the acropolis could have corresponded to the current entrance to the castle through the « Vienna Gate ». The most impressive building from the third settlement phase with a 23,5-metre-long south perimeter wall and with an interior *opus signinum* floor stood somewhat eccentrically in the northeast corner of the space (fig. 3). This exposed point immediately next to the access path was highly visible from various parts of the settlement. Additional buildings stood in a fan-shaped arrangement around the centre on the upper plateau, from the northwest bastion to the « Winter Riding-School » and « Under the Chestnut » sites up to the upper eastern terrace¹⁰.

SUBURB (EXTRAMURAL SETTLEMENT)

An expression of the size of the unfortified area emerges most clearly from the number of investigated locations (over one hundred), the area (78 ha) and the share of the total settlement area (c. 80 %). The problem is that at multiphase sites, where features are often imprecisely dated due to the lack of chronologically sensitive artefacts, there is a greatly reduced possibility to learn the internal structure and to reconstruct the horizontal development of the settlement. Others limiting

factors include the unreliable localisation of earlier finds and the lack of archaeological excavations in certain zones.

Hence, earlier and more recent literature on Bratislava has long stated that Suburb I and II were divided by a 600 m band without evidence of occupation (ČAMBAL 2004, p. 14; PIETA & ZACHAR 1993, p. 148-149, fig. 79). However, as a result of recent excavations of settlement features on Kollár Square, this information has proved to be inaccurate. The acquisition of new information has also revealed settlement at additional sites – in Palisády (BARTÍK *et al.* 2004, p. 23, 25) and Mudroňova streets (BAZOVSKÝ & GREGOR 2009), indicating a larger size of Suburb I than had been previously assumed, even toward the west. The discovery of a settlement feature at Lazaretská St 9 (Könyöki House) was likewise unexpected¹¹.

Still, the greatest intensity of settlement has been determined in the southern part of Suburb I, where the thickness of the Late La Tène cultural layer can reach 100 cm. It appears that as settlement moved in the direction from the centre toward the periphery it took on more of a character of isolated buildings instead of a compact and uniform block. Suburb I was demarcated on the south by the basin and perhaps stretched toward the northeast all the way to the Square of the Slovak National Uprising. For now, the reconstruction of the size of Suburb II is very rough.

Of great importance in determining the character of the suburbs is the study of evidence of the separation of production activities into specialised precincts. Based on research results, L. Zachar repeatedly emphasised in the 1980s that metallurgy, forging, casting and coin minting were concentrated at the southeast base of the castle hill in the direction of the original basin of the Danube, while pottery workshops were located from the line of Sedlárska St all the way to Primatial Square (PIETA & ZACHAR 1993, p. 184, fig. 79-80). From the perspective of the overall layout of the production area, it has been established that metal processing activities were conducted in a considerably broader area lined by the outer ring of fortifications. The main workshop colony was located in the Vydrlica - Panská - Michalská section (fig. 4), another northwest from the castle hill near Mudroňová St. Contrary to earlier opinions, certain work (e.g. with precious metal) could have been performed directly at the acropolis (VRTEL 2011, p. 269, 271, 273).

A total of seventeen complete or disturbed pottery kilns dated to the Late La Tène period

10 - See note 2.

11 - The author is grateful to B. Lesák and J. Kováč from the City Institute for Heritage Protection for providing information on the find from 2013.

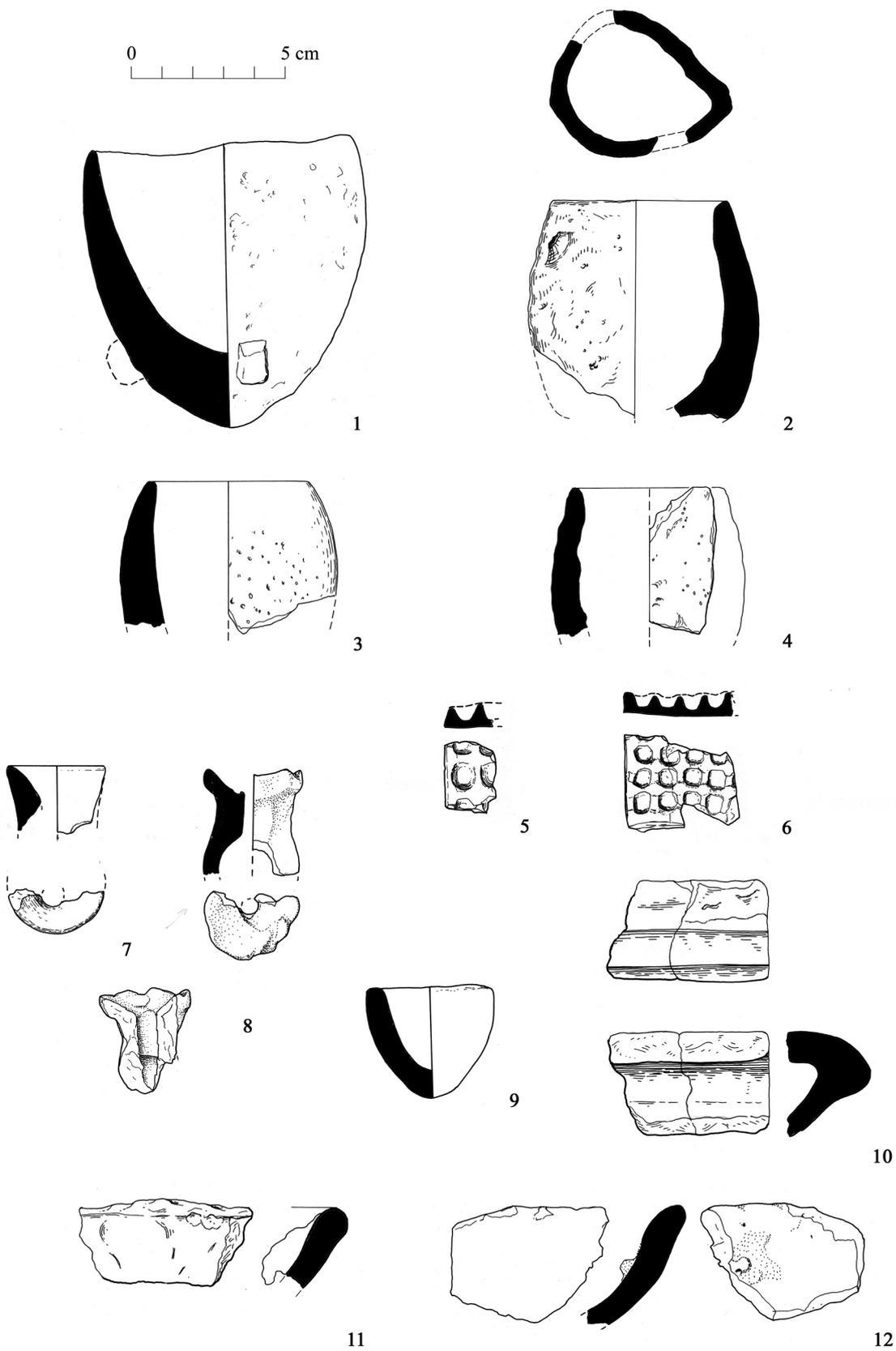


Fig. 4 - Selection of technical pottery from Suburb I.

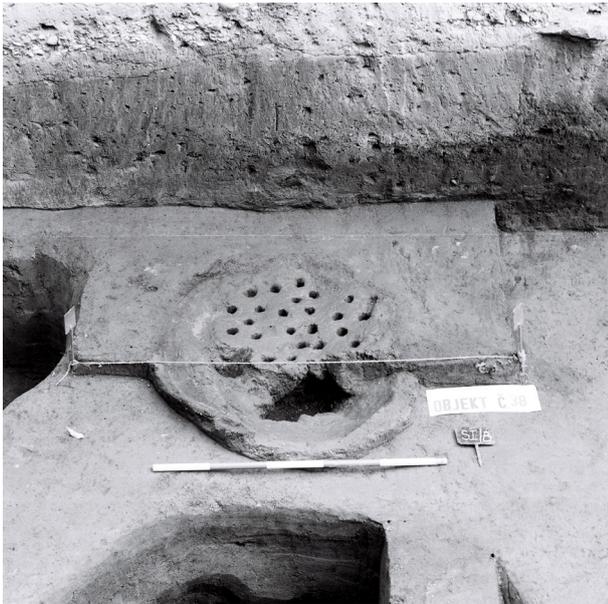


Fig. 5 - Pottery kiln 38/91 discovered on the Main Square.

were discovered in the suburbs (fig. 5). Twelve of these were found in the craft zone near the Main Square (Hlavné námestie), which is the best archaeologically investigated open space in the historic city centre (fig. 6). Additional kiln finds were recorded in Suburb II on Freedom Square and in Štefanovičova St (PIETA & ZACHAR 1993, p. 156-157, fig. 85). It is thought that these workshops were located near clay pits, which later written sources place near Obchodná St (ORTVAY 2004, p. 76).

BASIC ROUTES

Reliably identified remains of defunct routes are not currently available and therefore the most important indicator of movement is the period relief of the terrain and the network of waterways (ZACHAR 1982, p. 33, fig. 2). Basic access to the acropolis from the suburb was evidently provided by a path winding counter-clockwise upwards to the small saddle at today's « Vienna Gate ». The entrance to the acropolis was located at this site on the western peak of the castle hill (the lower end of Mudroňova St). It is interesting that a distinct accumulation of metallurgy workshops was recorded in the bend along the outer side of the fortifications that copied this path. Another path probably ran up the eastern slope. Although until now there has been no speculation on a path leading to the saddle beneath the castle from the west along the edge of the hill known as « Oslí vrch », recently excavated Late La Tène finds suggest this possibility. The main route of the « Danube Trail » was on the south side of the river, away from its floodplain (FARKAŠ 2012, p. 452).

Three important routes probably ran out of the satellite settlement (Suburb II) on Freedom



Fig. 6 - Main Square with highlighted pottery kiln finds.

Square. The first ran along today's Prague route through Patrónka Pass to the other side of the Little Carpathians and the Záhorie region. The second trail traced the foothills of the mountain range to the northeast toward the Rača quarter, and the third ran south-southwest to connect the suburb to the central settlement (ZACHAR 1982, p. 39-40).

CONCLUSION

In summarising current knowledge of the development in Bratislava during the second and first centuries BC, the succession of three typologically distinct settlement formations have been demonstrated, each with a characteristic size, settlement intensity, organisation of space, construction culture and function.

Only a few settlement features have been preserved from the pre-oppidum phase of settlement (LT C2) in Old Town, making it difficult to reliably identify the primary urban concept. In the future it will therefore be necessary to focus greater attention on traces of the unfortified Middle La Tène settlement.

Phase 2 (LT D1 – D2a) in Bratislava was marked by the growth of a large Zemplín-type settlement agglomeration with a classic urban hierarchy :

- a fortified citadel or acropolis (centre)
- Suburb I (undefended area, part of the settlement core)
- Suburb II (a regular satellite settlement separate from the core area).

The existence of other satellites cannot be ruled out (see the area of Lazaretská St). Production zones occupied a relatively large area. The concentration

of pottery production in two separate zones (Main Square and Freedom Square) suggests specialised manufacturing, the products of which were also exported beyond the local market.

The third phase (LT D2b - Augustan Age) witnessed a significant change in the character of building on the castle hill toward the planned construction of a Roman-type masonry complex. The formal and functional classification of the settlement formation in the final development phase remains an unresolved issue: finds of Roman buildings were also made outside the actual confines of the acropolis, and the fortification system remains undocumented. The low representative nature of finds from some locations makes it impossible to clarify in detail the manner in which the suburbs developed in the second and third settlement phases. Hence, the cartographic evaluation of archaeological sources essentially only captures the basic territorial structure and not the transformation of the topography.

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L'auteur

Andrej VRTEL PhD.
Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Komenského
Katedra archeológie
Gondova ul. 2
814 99 Bratislava 1

Résumé

Cet article porte sur l'organisation spatiale et l'urbanisme de l'habitat de La Tène finale à Bratislava. L'environnement naturel du site est d'abord décrit, avec l'accent mis sur la configuration du terrain et le réseau d'eau. Les travaux antérieurs concernant l'*oppidum* de Bratislava sont ensuite brièvement présentés. L'auteur aborde parallèlement les problèmes de l'urbanisme, le cadre chronologique et les questions de la périodisation. En s'appuyant sur un certain nombre de points de repère et sur les observations stratigraphiques il vise à illustrer l'enchaînement des étapes successives de l'évolution du site à partir d'un village ouvert vers une agglomération (*oppidum*) de type Zemplín et un complexe d'établissements romains. Les différentes composantes du site sont évoquées en relation avec les grands axes de communication. Les résultats mettent en évidence aussi la localisation des ateliers et l'étendue des zones artisanales.

Mots-clés : *oppidum*, complexe fortifié de type Zemplín, organisation interne de l'habitat, zones artisanales spécialisées, construction romaine, La Tène finale.

Abstract

The article addresses the spatial structure and development of Late La Tène settlement in Bratislava, describing the landscape elements of the studied environment, especially the configuration of the terrain and water network. The work provides a concise introduction to the main stages in the history of the study of the Bratislava *oppidum*. The issue of urbanism is linked to questions of relative chronology and the internal periodisation of settlement. Key locations with preserved stratified situations provide information on the specific development of the site from an open settlement to a Zemplín-type agglomeration (*oppidum*) up to a Roman building complex. Individual components of the settlement are discussed in connection with basic travel axes. One of the useful outcomes of the work is the mapping of production activities and an elaboration of the size of craft zones.

Keywords : *oppidum*, Zemplín-type fortified complex, settlement structure, specialised craft zones, Roman construction activity, Late La Tène period

Zusammenfassung

Der Artikel beschäftigt sich mit räumlicher Verteilung und Architektur der spätlatènezeitlichen Besiedlung Bratislavas. Er charakterisiert die Landschaftselemente des betreffenden Gebietes, vor allem die Geländekonfiguration und das Gewässernetz. In Kürze stellt er die Hauptetappen in der Geschichte der Erforschung des Bratislavaer *Oppidums* vor. Die urbanistische Problematik verknüpft er mit den Fragen der relativen Chronologie und inneren Periodisierung der Besiedlung. Am Beispiel der wichtigsten Fundorte mit

erhaltener Stratigraphie illustriert er die spezifische Entwicklung der Fundstelle von einer offenen Siedlung über die Agglomeration (*Oppidum*) vom Typ Zemplín bis zum römischen Baukomplex. Einzelne Komponenten der Siedlung behandelt er in Beziehung zu den wichtigsten Kommunikationsachsen. Als einen der größten Beiträge kann man auch die Kartierung der Produktionsaktivitäten und Präzisierung des Umfangs der Handwerkerbezirke betrachten.

Schlagwörter : *Oppidum*, befestigter Komplex vom Typ Zemplín, Siedlungsstruktur, spezialisierte Handwerkerbezirke, römische Bautätigkeit, Spätlatènezeit



55 euros

