VII. THE IRON AGE
THE BEGINNING OF THE IRON AGE: THE PRE-SCYTHIANS
(8th century B.C.)

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In Europe, iron metallurgy first appeared in ancient Greece, whence it spread to Central Europe, where the use of bronze was gradually supplanted by iron from the early 1st millennium B.C.

Iron ores were mined in two areas in the Carpathian Basin during this period. One lay in western Hungary, in the Alpine foreland and the Somogy Hills, the other in the northern mountainous region, in the Bükk and Mátra Mountains. Owing to the availability of local ore resources, the use of iron became quite common by the 8th century B.C., this being the reason that the commencement of the Iron Age, lasting until the Roman conquest, is usually dated from this period.

In the earlier Iron Age, the areas east and west of the Danube were parts of two separate culture provinces. The eastern variant of the Hallstatt culture was distributed in Transdanubia, while the Great Hungarian Plain and the northern mountainous region was part of the steppian pre-Scythian and, later, the Scythian culture province. The two regions were eventually united under the Celts in the last decades of the 5th century B.C.

At first, the local late Urnfield population of Transdanubia only adopted a few elements of the new culture in the early Hallstatt period. The relation between the two neighbouring cultures is reflected in the pottery finds from the tumulus burials unearthed beside the hillfort at Pécs–Jakabhegy that include vessels made in both the late Urnfield and the eastern Alpine Hallstatt tradition. The communities in southern Transdanubia also maintained close ties with the pre-Scythian population of the Great Hungarian Plain, as shown by a bronze harness set, dagger and iron axe of eastern type recovered from grave 75 of the Pécs–Jakabhegy cemetery.

The 8th century archaeological assemblages from the Great Hungarian Plain differ markedly from the preceding Late Bronze Age finds. Earlier villages were abandoned, the deceased were buried according to new rites and the craftsmen made entirely different artefact types.

Two main find categories, namely grave assemblages and hoards, can be distinguished in the archaeological heritage of the Early Iron Age communities living in the Great Hungarian Plain. Very few settlements are known from this period (Hódmezővásárhely, Kompolt), even though this area of Hungary has been extensively researched, as shown by the settlements from other periods. The reason for the apparent lack of settlements is that the Early Iron Age communities of the Great Hungarian Plain practiced a form of nomadic stockbreeding and their transient settlements left few traces in the archaeological record.

Most of the burial grounds from this period are known from the Mátra and the Bükk piedmont and the southern part of the Great Hungarian Plain. A total of fifty-five graves were uncovered at Mezőcsát, twenty-one at Füzesabony–Kettőshalom, thirteen at Füzesabony–Öregdomb, eight at Sirok and eight at Szeged–Algyő. The finds from these cemeteries and other related assemblages have been labelled the Mezőcsát culture by Hungarian prehistorians.

The Early Iron Age communities of the Great Hungarian Plain buried their dead in small family or clan cemeteries. The dead were laid to rest in an extended or contracted position, with pottery and chunks of cattle and sheep meat placed beside them (Fig. 1). Bronze buttons and parts of the costume, as well as antler plaques decorated with geometric patterns were often found in the burials. The wealthier members of the community were buried together with bronze or iron bits, strap distributors (Füzesabony–Öregdomb, Mezőcsát) and iron axes (Doboz).

The bronze and gold hoards from the Early Iron Age,

Fig. 1. Grave 35 of the pre-Scythian cemetery at Mezőcsát
such as the ones found at Biharugra, Fügöd, Prügy, Szanda, Dinnyés, Dunakömlőd, Besenyszöög–Fokoru, Budapest–Angyalföld and Pusztaséges, often contained articles that were not the products of the metal workshops of the Tisza region. These artefact types were not developed by local craftsmen since most of them are demonstrably modelled on similar types in the pre-Scythian assemblages of the steppe north of the Pontic.

Prehistorians have since long been aware of the similarities between the Early Iron Age horse harness and weapons from the Carpathian Basin and the steppe. In their study on the pre-Scythian bits from the Carpathian Basin published in 1939, Sándor Gallus and Tibor Horváth noted that these finds were part of the archaeological heritage of an eastern, mounted nomad population. Some prehistorians shared this view, while others believed that these Early Iron Age harness finds reached the Carpathian Basin through trade or as a result of contact between the élites of these two regions.

The Early Iron Age burials from the Great Hungarian Plain provided important new information for settling this controversial issue since the burial rite resembled the mortuary practices of the pre-Scythian period in the steppe. It therefore seems likely that the Mezőcsát communities were not descended from the local Late Bronze Age population, but had arrived to the Great Hungarian Plain from the east.

According to the Greek historian Herodotus (484–425 B.C.), the steppe was inhabited by the Cimmerians, a mounted nomad people, in the 9th–8th centuries B.C. Some prehistorians have argued that the eastern artefact types and the eastern burial rite of the Early Iron Age in the Danube–Tisza region are proof of the westward migration of a Cimmerian group. However, the Cimmerians were but one of the many groups populating the steppe and thus the identification of this eastern population with a specific steppenean people is no more than speculation.

Bronze and iron harness sets and harness ornaments are typical elements of the Early Iron Age hoards from the Danube–Tisza region (such as the one from Biharugra: Fig. 2). The bit type with a mouthpiece of two jointed canons was developed in the metal workshops of the Kuban valley, north of the Caucasus. The bridle ornament decorated with three interlocking bird heads also reflects the artistic spirit of the steppe.

The Early Iron Age weapons – arrowheads (Kunszentmiklós), maces (Biharugra, Prügy), daggers with an iron blade (Mátra region, Pécs–Jakabhegy), iron axes (Doboz, Pécs–Jakabhegy), spearheads (Dunakömlőd, Pécs–Jakabhegy) and bronze lances (Biharugra, Dunakömlőd, Kakasd) – correspond to the typical equipment of mounted warriors. Each of these weapon types can be traced to an eastern prototype.

On the testimony of the gold hoards, gold metallurgy again flourished during the Early Iron Age in the Danube–Tisza region. The style of this goldwork, however, reflects an
entirely different artistic taste than the ornaments and jewel-
ery of the Late Bronze Age. The diadem of sheet gold and
the four ornamental discs of the hoard discovered at Beseny-
szög–Fokorú in 1877, weighing 2.1 kg, one of the gold cups
in the hoard from Budapest–Angyalföld, the winged beads of
the Pusztaegres–Puszthahatvan hoard are all typical represen-
tatives of this new style that exhibits certain traits of Cimmer-
ian art. Other articles in the Besenyészög hoard included fibu-
lae made in the Thracian style of the northern Balkans, as
well as armrings and neckrings continuing the local metal-
working traditions of the Tisza region (Fig. 3).

Although the Early Iron Age communities of the Great
Hungarian Plain occupied a relatively small territory, they
nonetheless exerted a considerable influence on the crafts of
neighbouring and more distant populations as shown by the
countless horse harness finds from late Urnfield and early
Hallstatt assemblages in Transdanubia, Austria, Bohemia
and southern Germany, as well as the burials of the Villa-
anova–Este culture of northern Italy. These Early Iron Age
communities were in command of skills, such as mounted
warfare and a developed iron metallurgy, that were new to
Central Europe and their spread had a major impact on
both economic and cultural development.

THE MIDDLE IRON AGE: SCYTHIANS
IN THE TISZA REGION
(7th–5th centuries B.C.)

The mid-7th century marked the beginning of a new period
in the territories east of the Danube: the Great Hungarian
Plain and the mountain areas. This region became part of
the extensive eastern culture province created earlier by the
Scythians in the steppe north of the Pontic.

The history of the Scythians is known mainly from the
writings of Greek historians. Scythia and the Scythians ap-
peared on the horizon of the Greek world through their
contact with the Greek colonies dotting the Pontic littoral
e.g. Histria, Tyras and Olbia). The names of the peoples
inhabiting the steppe are known from Herodotus’ writings;
his description of their settlement territories would suggest
that Transylvania was occupied by the Agathyrsi, while the
Tisza region by the Sigynnae. The archaeological record
confirms that these areas had indeed been settled by groups
with a Scythian culture.

Scythia and the Scythians also played a prominent role in
Hungarian historical tradition and in many early theories and
ideas about the origins of the ancient Hungarians. The medi-
eval chroniclers of Hungary – Anonymus, Simon de Kéza,
Márk Káli, János Thuróczi and Bonfini – were the first to
suggest that the Scythians, the Huns and the Hungarians
were one and the same people. These chroniclers ultimately
drew from a chronicle written by a certain Regino (d. 915), an
abbot in the Prüm monastery, who wove together informa-
tion from various Greek and Byzantine sources. In these
writings, however, the label ‘Scythian’ was generally applied
to any eastern people – Huns, Avars, Hungarians, Cuman-
ians – rather than to one specific population group.

The national identity of medieval Hungarian nobility
was determined by these chronicles and the belief in an an-
cestral Scythian homeland and a relation with the Huns.
This belief was widely popular in the 19th century, when
national Romanticism flourished, and they still colour pop-
ular attitudes today.

Since the 19th century, Hungarian archaeologists have
published a number of finds that were identified as the heri-
tage of the Scythians. The studies by József Hampel, Nán-
dor Fettich, Márton Roska and Mihály Párducz have shed
light on the eastern traits and eastern origins of these finds.

BURIALS

The distribution of finds with a Scythian flavour encom-
passes the central and northern areas of the Great Hungarian
Plain, the Northern Mountain Range and the northern part
of the Little Hungarian Plain. Most of the finds were

Fig. 4. Golden stag from
Mezőkeresztes–Zöldhalompuszta
recovered from burials. The best known cemeteries from this period are Tápiószele (455 graves), Csanytelek–Újhalastó (233 graves), Szabadszállás (199 graves), Alsótelekes (183 graves), Oroszha (153 graves) and Szentes–Vekerzug (151 graves). These burials show a colourful variety of burial practices. There were two basic modes of burial: inhumation, with the deceased laid to rest in an extended or a contracted position, and cremation, with the ashes placed in an urn or scattered over the floor of the grave pit. The ratio of these burial modes differed from region to region, depending on whether the community was predominantly of local stock or had an eastern, immigrant ancestry.

The grave goods indicate that the wealthier individuals were buried together with their costume ornaments and weapons. Iron axes, spearheads, knives, daggers, bronze arrowheads, quiver ornaments and whetstones were often placed into male burials and warriors’ graves, while women’s graves contained gold dress ornaments, bronze or gold lockrings, bronze or iron armrings, pins, glass and amber beads, clay spindle whorls and clay stamp seals. Both male and female burials were provided with clay pots, jugs, bowls and cups. A few burials, no doubt the graves of tribal or clan leaders, were lavishly furnished. The stag shaped golden shield ornaments from Mezőkeresztes–Zöldhalompuszta (Fig. 4) and Tápiószentmárton, the gold jewellery, the bronze Spartan hydria (Fig. 5), the eastern Alpine bronze cauldron, the bronze mail and the iron weapons from Ártánd signal the high status of the deceased.

The graves in these cemeteries lay quite close to each other and there was no grave mound above them. Similarly to the steppe region, isolated burial mounds have also been found in the Great Hungarian Plain. The golden stags from Mezőkeresztes–Zöldhalompuszta and Tápiószentmárton were recovered from such kurgans. The wooden burial caskets uncovered at Csanytelek–Újhalastó and the wooden burial chamber containing a rich inventory of grave goods excavated at Cegléd have much in common with the Scythian burials of the steppe.

The burials also shed light on the economy of these communities. The horse burials suggest that horse-breeding played an important role. Fourteen horse burials have been found at Szentes–Vekerzug (Fig. 6), two at Csanytelek–Újhalastó and one at Tápiószele. The horses were usually buried with their harness; these animals were no doubt the saddle horses of the warriors, buried in a separate section of the cemetery. One of the burials at Szentes–Vekerzug also contained a four-wheeled wagon. The custom of burying horses can again be traced to the east, confirmed also by the fact that the horses belonged to the Asian tarpan species.

SETTLEMENT AND ECONOMY

The settlements and their finds clearly show that the Great Hungarian Plain was settled by communities engaged in agriculture and stockbreeding during the Scythian Age. The excavations at Nyíregyháza–Mandabokor brought to light...
sunken huts with wattle and daub walls and a thatched roof resting on wooden posts (Fig. 7). Similar buildings have been uncovered at Endröd and Szolnok-Zagyvapart.

Beside crop cultivation, the economy of these communities was based on a highly developed iron metallurgy and horse-breeding. Exploiting the iron ore deposits in the Northern Mountain Range, the workshops turned out weapons and a wide range of tools and implements, catering to the needs of the population of the Great Hungarian Plain.

The trade in iron products and horse allowed these communities to acquire valuable imports, such as the magnificent bronze hydria from Sparta made around 570–560 B.C. found at Artánd in a princely burial (cp. Fig. 5) and a bronze cauldron, produced in one of the eastern Alpine workshops of the Hallstatt culture.

The various commodities reaching regions east of the Danube include a variety of bronze jewellery and lovely clay vessels. Various products of the metal and pottery workshops in the Great Hungarian Plain were traded from the Balkans to Central Europe. These commodities included iron bits, axes, bronze arrowheads, lockrings, various objects ornamented with animal figures, clay stamp seals and wheel-turned pottery.

Many of the artefact types produced in these workshops originated from the steppe. The Greek wares included the metalwork of the goldsmiths of Olbia, such as the bronze quiver ornaments decorated with animal figures, mirrors and gold jewellery. Many vessel types of Scythian pottery imitated Greek wares and the wheel-turned pottery itself was made using Greek potting techniques.

Trade routes led to the south through the Balkans along the Vardar–Morava valley and along the Lower Danube to the Greek town of Histria. Another route led through the Upper Tisza region, through the Carpathian passes to the Dniester and thence to Olbia on the Black Sea. An ancient trade route leading along the Danube linked the Great Hungarian Plain with Central Europe and the west.

The workshops in the Great Hungarian Plain and Upper Hungary turned out horse harness, weapons and a variety of artefacts decorated with animal motifs in the Scythian style.

**HORSE HARNESS AND WEAPONS**

The most important piece of the horse harness was the iron bit with side-bars. Many of these have been recovered from male graves and the associated horse burials (Artánd, Gyöngyös, Szentes–Vekerzug, Tiszavasvári). This bit type was well suited to controlling and directing horses, this being the reason that the type was adopted by the Thracian and Illyrian tribes of the northern Balkans, as well as by the Hallstatt communities of the eastern Alpine region.

Fine examples of bridle distributors came to light among the finds from grave 16 of Szentes–Vekerzug. The cast bronze discs were covered with gold foil that glittered on the one-time bridle. Ornaments of this type were intended to display the rank and wealth of the mounted warrior.

The most important item of the Scythian warrior’s equipment was his bow and arrows. Its significance was also expressed in the burial rite. Many warriors were buried with a quiver and arrows. The highest number of the distinctive Scythian trilateral arrowheads were found at Cegléd and Mátraszele: thirty-five were brought to light at the former site, and twenty-five at the latter.

Fig. 7. Excavated remains and reconstruction of a Scythian house. Nyíregyháza–Mandabokor

Fig. 8. Antler hafting plates from Nyíregyháza–Mandabokor
The iron weapons – daggers, axes, spears, lances and knives – include a few handsomely crafted pieces, such as the long dagger, called akinakes, the typical weapon of the steppean mounted warriors. Grave 10 at Szentes–Vekerzug and grave 17 at Csárdaszállás yielded short swords whose hilt was covered with an antler plaque carved in the form of an eagle head. Similar antler carvings have been found in one of the pits at the Nyíregyháza–Mandabokor settlement. These finds reflect the spirit of Scythian art (Fig. 8).

ANIMAL STYLE ART

Steppean art was dominated by animal figures: deer, rams, panthers, lions, eagles, griffins and horses abound among the ornamental motifs, as do animal combat scenes. The two golden stags of embossed sheet gold represent the most outstanding relics of goldwork in the Scythian style from the Great Hungarian Plain.

A grave assemblage of a golden stag (cp. Fig. 4), a gold chain decorated with lion figures, 136 semispherical gold spangles and a gold pendant was found in 1928 on the outskirts of Mezőkeresztes, in an area called Zöldhalompuszta. The excavation conducted at the findspot revealed that these finds had originally been deposited beside the ashes of the deceased under a kurgan burial.

Another golden stag came to light from a burial mound containing a cremation burial excavated at Tápiószentmárton in 1923.

The counterparts of these two golden stags are known from the Scythian princely burials of the steppe. These animal figures were made in the workshops of the Greek colonies dotting the Pontic littoral that also catered to the needs of the Scythian élite. They were shield ornaments, intended to display the power and rank of their owner.

The golden stags were earlier dated to the 5th–4th centuries B.C. However, the discovery of Scythian finds in the same style from Kelermes, a site in the Kuban valley dated to the mid- or later 7th century B.C., suggests the Hungarian pieces can hardly be much later and their date is now usually put in the 6th century.

Fine examples of the Scythian animal style have also been found at Gyöngyös and Nagytarcsa. One of the cremation burials discovered at Gyöngyös in 1907 during vine cultivation contained six bronze rattles, each topped with the figure of a deer. Two similar rattles, ornamented with bull figures, were found at Nagytarcsa in 1964, together with a broken rattle, eight cow-bells and four iron bits (Fig. 9).

Several explanations have been proposed for the function of bronze rattles decorated with animal figures, recovered from the steppean kurgans. These range from wagon ornaments to military insignia and tent pole ornaments. The ones from Nagytarcsa appear to have been part of the paraphernalia used by a shaman. The rattle was fixed to a wooden handle and the small iron ball inside the openwork rattle gave a clanking sound when shaken. By shaking these rattles, the shaman no doubt created the mystical atmosphere needed for the ritual.

Other relics of Scythian animal art from the Danube–Tisza region include cross shaped quiver ornaments (Budajenő, Mátraszele, Mezőlak, Törökszentmiklós), bronze mirrors (Muhi, Piliny, Szécsény), swords (Csárdaszállás, Penc, Szentes–Vekerzug, Veszprém), cheek-pieces (Miskolc–Diósgyőr, Szentes–Vekerzug), bridle distributors (Ártánd, Buj, Sajószentpéter) and lockrings (Csanytelek, Piliny, Tiszavasvári).

The rich assortment of articles decorated with animal figures suggest that the Scythian Age communities of the Great Hungarian Plain and the northern mountainous region did not simply adopt certain elements of the animal style born on the Eurasian steppe, but themselves had a mind-set that inspired this artistic view. These finds also indicate that the craftsmen of the Great Hungarian Plain were fully aware of the symbolic meaning of these animal figures and their use of these figures to ornament various articles was a conscious act.

POTTERY

The Scythian Age communities of the Tisza region can be credited with the dissemination of one of the most important prehistoric innovations in the Carpathian Basin, namely the use of a potter’s wheel. Wheel-thrown pottery includes a variety of one-handled jugs, flasks bowls, amphorae, post and urns. The prototypes of these vessel forms can all be traced to the wares produced in the Greek colonies on the Pontic littoral. These vessels and their manufacturing techniques were adopted by the communities with a Scythian culture living in the Middle Dniester region sometime in the later 7th century B.C. The use of the potter’s wheel was transmitted to the Carpathian Basin from this region. The high number of wheel-thrown pottery from the 6th century burial grounds in the Great Hungarian Plain indicates that this innovation spread fairly rapidly (Fig. 10).

Some of the Scythian period finds show a striking similarity with the grave finds of the 7th–6th century kurgans in the Kuban valley, north of the Caucasus, while others resemble the Scythian finds from the forested steppe of the Dniester–Dniester region. Russian scholars have convincingly demonstrated
that by the mid-7th century B.C., the Scythian tribes had extended their rule to the areas west of the Dnieper. This advance eventually also reached the Carpathians and, sometime later, the Danube–Tisza region. The Middle Iron Age population of the Great Hungarian Plain and the Northern Mountain Range was an amalgam of the local population and the newly arrived groups from Scythia. This population created a flourishing economy and craft industry during the 6th century B.C. Their independence came to an end with the Celtic conquests in the late 5th century B.C. The finds from the Celtic period cemeteries and settlements in this region nonetheless suggest that the earlier communities of eastern origin survived, as did many elements of their material and spiritual culture during the centuries of Celtic rule in the Tisza region.

NEW RESEARCH RESULTS

The research of the Hallstatt period showed a definite upsurge from the 1970s both in Hungary and in Europe. The finds from a number of earlier excavated cemeteries were published (Vaszar, Somlóvásárhely), several already known sites were re-investigated (Pécs–Jakabhegy, Nagyberki–Szalacska, Regöly, Százhalombatta, Sütő, Tihany–Óvár, Sop-
ron–Várhegy, Velem) together with the excavation of a number of new ones (Fehérvárcsurgó, Vaskeresztes, Sopron–Krautacker, Szentlőrinc). The results of these new investigations were presented at the international conferences held in Veszprém (1984) and Sopron (1994). The two conference volumes and Erzsébet Patek’s monograph from 1993 offer a good overview of what we know about the Hallstatt period in Transdanubia. A recent exhibition catalogue presents the most outstanding finds from the 1st millennium B.C.

The upswing in Iron Age studies is indicated by the proliferation of studies on regional groups and their interrelations in Slovakia, Austria and Slovenia and discussions of the finds from the Alpine foreland and the western half of the Carpathian Basin. A new regional and chronological framework for the Pannonian assemblages, based on the study of the relevant finds, is now available.

The earlier chronological framework has also been greatly refined, especially as regards little known and controversial transitional periods, such as the Late Bronze Age–Early Iron Age and the Hallstatt–La Tène transition. Although these transitional periods varied from region to region, there is now a general consensus that there was a continuous, unbroken development between the periods in question.

**HILLFORTS AND FORTIFIED SETTLEMENTS**

A glance at the Early Iron Age settlements in Transdanubia reveals that the currently known settlements all lie in the uplands and that most are fortified in one way or another; in contrast, plainland settlements are hardly known, especially from the early phase of this period. This can in part be explained by the lack of research on such sites since a series of extensive flat settlements and their cemeteries, lying at more or less regular distances from each other on river terraces, have been identified and investigated in neighbouring Burgenland and Lower Austria.

The hillforts built along major trade routes or at the intersection of roads and strategically important locations (Fig. 11) were protected with a palisade or a ditch and rampart since the Late Bronze Age Urnfield period (Fig. 12). These constructions continued in the Hallstatt period, and especially during the later phase of the Late Iron Age, in the 2nd–1st centuries B.C. The construction of outer defenseworks was often coupled with the transformation of the settlement’s internal layout (Fig. 13). Traces of these rebuildings have been documented during recent excavations, whose main goal was the clarification of the age of these defenseworks (Velem, Sopron–Burgstall, Gó–Kápolnadomb, Budapest–Gellértgyegy).

The construction of these defenseworks suggests that the population was prepared for times of crisis and that these defended sites also acted as places of refuge for the occupants of neighbouring settlements. This latter assumption, however, is at present mere speculation since the exact reason for the construction of these fortified sites and their actual function still need to be clarified in many cases. Although it seems likely that they acted as a central place (Zentralsiedlung) controlling a particular region, their nature and function no doubt varied from site to site. The rise of these hillforts and the growth of their importance has more recently been explained by a combination of economic factors and the deterioration of the climate and environmental changes brought on by climatic fluctuations at the close of the Late Bronze Age. This issue cannot be resolved at present since very few of these sites have been extensively investigated; at the same time, the impressive
Hallstatt period finds from Velem and Sághegy (Fig. 14) reflect a peaceful industrial activity and an extensive network of contacts with adjacent regions. Social stratification and the desire to acquire valuable commodities, especially prestige articles symbolizing wealth, rank and power, can be demonstrated from the Late Bronze Age on, together with the spread of various customs adopted from the Balkans, central and northern Italy and Slovenia. This is reflected in the burial rites and in the various depictions appearing on vessels, even if the number and quality of Mediterranean imports falls far behind those reaching the western Hallstatt province.

BURIAL MOUNDS AND RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

The roads leading to some of the hillforts, such as the one at Sopron–Burgstall (Fig. 14), Sopron–Warischberg, Somlóhegy, Sághegy, Süttő, Tihany, Százhalombatta, Tátika, Szalacska and Pécs–Jakabhegy are flanked by cemeteries, most of which contain many hundreds of tumulus burials in...
which the occupants of these settlements were laid to rest. Even though the number and size of the burial mounds, as well as the funerary rite and the chronology of these burials varies, they do indicate a certain uniformity in the beliefs concerning afterlife (Fig. 16).

In the first half of the Early Iron Age (Ha C and early Ha D), the deceased were first cremated on a funeral pyre and the ashes were deposited into the grave. This rite gradually gave way to inhumation at the close of the Ha D period. A closer look at these burial mounds reveals that their construction, the number and composition of the grave goods in them varied considerably even within a single cemetery. The graves were constructed of stone or wood, or a combination of both, and an earthen mound supported by a ring of stones was then raised over the burial (Fig. 17).
INURNED BURIALS

Beside tumulus burials, plainland cemeteries with inurned burials were also used in the Hallstatt period. In addition to the urn containing the calcinated bones, these burials also contained a number of smaller vessels and metal artifacts; in some cases, the ashes were not placed into an urn, but simply scattered over the ground. The urn burials were often covered with large stone slabs or with a stone packing. The pottery and metal finds are similar to the grave goods from tumulus burials, although these burials are conspicuously poorer. It was earlier believed that these inurned burials could be associated with the ‘commoners’ and that the two different burial rites reflected social differences. The generally favoured explanation today is that these inurned burials are the graves of the surviving Late Bronze Age communities who clung to their traditional mortuary practices.

The birital cemeteries of the 6th–5th centuries B.C. reflect more stable social conditions, irrespective of the funerary rite. The number of vessels deposited into the graves declined: a bowl, a cup and a flask or a pot (perhaps a drinking set) was the standard pottery assemblage. Beside various costume ornaments and jewellery, the grave goods include weapons in male burials and spindle whorls and knives in female burials. The finds also testify to the lively trade connections of this period. Cemetery analyses allow a number of conclusions concerning beliefs about the afterworld and the society of the one-time communities.

WEAPONS, HORSE-HARNESS, COSTUME: THE FINDS FROM MALE BURIALS

The most important weapon of this period was undoubtedly the lance. Richly equipped burials contained at least two, but sometimes more lances, some of which were provided with a protective cover or a sheath. These weapons were placed into graves until the end of the Hallstatt D period and they have also been recovered from inhumation burials, although the latter usually contained one specimen only. The other weapon type often placed into graves was the double-edged (winged) axe, known also from various depictions, that served as an insignia of rank and power. Socketed axes also occur quite frequently, but these can be regarded as tools, rather than weapons. Offensive weapons, such as swords and daggers, are extremely rare, and the currently known specimens were without exception stray finds; none have been recovered from excavations. Bronze and iron arrowheads are also rare finds, and they are usually found in later, 6th–5th century burials. The range of defensive weapons is much poorer: a single helmet (Fig. 18) and a bronze shield can be assigned here. Male burials usually contained horse harness and, more rarely, wagon fittings. Although the harness sets are often incomplete, the presence of a bit and its fittings, strap distributors and bridle ornaments reflects the importance of horse-breeding in times of both war and peace (Fig. 19). The rimmed iron discs, iron hoops and nails from the tumulus burials of Nagybaráti, Somlóvásárhely, Vaszar, Csönge and Boba were all that remained of the axles and iron tyres of the wagons deposited in these graves. Male costume accessories included bronze and iron pins (such as the so-called Mehrokopfnaadel), the occasional fibula (iron harp fibulae) and the suspension rings attached to the belt, from which the whetstones and the tanged iron knives were suspended.

FEMALE COSTUME AND JEWELLERY

Female burials yielded a variety of personal jewellery and dress ornaments, as well as the occasional tool. Beads made from glass paste, bronze, iron and clay became quite popular by the Hallstatt C period; amber beads and beads made from precious metals appear at a later date,
together with ocellus beads. Cowrie shells, believed to possess apotropaic properties and regarded also as symbols of fertility, were sometimes strung among the beads. Neckrings and bronze chains were also found in some female graves, together with a variety of pendants that were worn around the neck.

Most valuable in terms of dating are the fibulae, an important part of female costume during the Hallstatt period. The arc fibulae were followed by a wide variety of boat fibulae. The so-called Golasecca fibula with a ribbed bow, originating from Italy, has been found at fewer sites; its use can be dated to the late 7th and the 6th century B.C. Another rare fibula is a Balkanic arc fibula type of which only six specimens have been found to date. The latest variants of the boat fibulae were succeeded by Certosa fibulae, fashionable from the early 5th century to the mid-4th century or even later.

The Early Iron Age finds from the Sopron–Burgstall settlement and cemetery date to the 6th century B.C. The unusual bronze fibula decorated with an animal figure testifies to the craftsmanship and artistic imagery of the metal workshops in northwestern Transdanubia, as do the Velem type fibulae (Fig. 20) and the animal headed Certosa crossbow fibulae, distributed in the southeastern Alpine Hallstatt province and the northern Alpine periphery. Fibulae of this type have also been recovered from burials and settlements in the Sopron area (Fig. 21).

The so-called astragalus belt of cast bronze links fixed to leather and held together by a buckle also served for fastening garments. There is only scanty evidence for the use of belts ornamented with bronze plaques. The bronze plaques and rosettes provided with small perforations and ornamented with a variety of embossed and other patterns, as well as the bronze and iron spangles and buttons recovered from cremation burials suggest that female costume was lavishly ornamented.

Together with necklaces and neckrings, bracelets were also highly popular pieces of jewellery. Closed and open varieties of bronze and iron bracelets occur in girls’ and women’s graves. Spindle whorls symbolizing weaving, an important activity performed by women, were often placed into the grave. The most attractive specimens of these spindle whorls date from the Hallstatt period. Bronze sceptres have only been found in female burials; together with votive statuettes, these no doubt played a role in various rituals.

The most eloquent example of the centuries long unbroken development is a breast ornament (Fig. 22) whose prototypes are known from central Italy, although the ornamental technique and the depiction itself link it to the metalwork of northern Italy and the Sulm valley. The 5th century B.C. was characterized by lively cultural and trade connections, reflected also in the variety of the finds. This period saw the emergence of a Celtic culture rooted in local traditions, reflected also by the appearance of new settlements and cemeteries from the Bavarian Danube region to Transdanubia.

MASTERPIECES OF THE POTTER’S CRAFT

Nothing has yet been said about pottery, the perhaps most important corpus of finds from the Hallstatt period. This impressive body of finds, with its wide range of forms and
ornamentations, calls for a more detailed overview. The overwhelming majority of the pottery finds comes from burials; this needs to be emphasized since some of the vessels deposited into the graves were made specifically for this purpose (grave pottery). This is reflected in the poor quality of these vessels and the symbolic depictions on them that can be associated with the funerary cult. Of the vessels found in the burials, only one or two served as urns for the ashes of the deceased. The deposition of vessels into the grave can be associated with the custom of providing the deceased with food and drink. Most of the grave pottery can be regarded as part of drinking sets, made up of larger liquid

Fig. 23. Decoration of the urn from grave 27 of Sopron–Burgstall

Fig. 24. Urn with relief decoration from Süttő

Fig. 25. Decorated urn from a Hallstatt period tumulus at Nagyberki–Szalacska
containers, small dippers and various cups. Another part of these vessels – such as wide bowls, urns with plastic animal heads or stylized animal figures, lids, vessels with incised human and animal representations – and the fire-dogs were placed into the burial because of the religious beliefs concerning afterlife.

The Iron Age sites in the Sopron area, especially the Burgstall and the Warischberg sites, owe their renown to the pottery with figural representation recovered during late 19th century excavations. These symbolic depictions, rooted in Late Bronze Age traditions, were enriched with new elements, many of which reflect cultural influences from northern Italy and the eastern Alpine Hallstatt province. Harking back to classical Greek and Etruscan prototypes, the depictions on bronze situlae were transplanted in a manner that allows the interpretation of individual motifs and the mythological background of the scenes. The scenes evoking epic narratives, festive processes, sacrifices and offerings presented as part of the funerary ritual, as well as depictions concentrating on a single detail with a symbolic meaning – such as the woman with upheld arms in the classical praying posture, a scene with a horse and wagon, a man or woman playing the harp – can be regarded as expressions of a coherent set of beliefs (Fig. 25).


The symposia were occasions not only for festive meals and meetings, for dining and wining with the ‘gods’ and for presenting animal sacrifices, but also for sport races, music and dancing. The depiction of such scenes recurs regularly on the cultic bronze vessels (situlae) containing liquids, but also on the urn from grave 28 of Sopron–Burgstall, accompanied by hunting scenes and the depiction of a wagon.

Although only fragments of the vessel from grave 80 have survived, the presence of the ‘praying’ woman, the horse and the wagon suggests a scene with a meaning resembling the above. The scene with the stylized Tree of Life – resembling a similar painted scene on a vessel from a Slovakian burial – is especially striking since it can be regarded as yet another portrayal of the goddess as the mistress of life and death, as well as a symbol of fertility. The lyre and cithara are both characteristic motifs of the Sopron group of the Hallstatt complex.

The Hallstatt period pottery reflects contact with many different regions. The traditions of the Urnfield culture undoubtedly played an important role in its emergence (Fig. 24). The closest links, however, are visibly with the finds from the cemeteries in western Slovakia, Lower Austria and the Burgenland: the graphitic pottery and the urns decorated with bull heads of the Kalenderberg group. Together with meander and spiral motifs, the bucchero-like ornamentation can be traced to eastern Alpine and northern Italian traditions (Fig. 25). The late Hallstatt D period saw the adoption of new vessel forms and decorative motifs, as well as the increasing cultural influence of the Drava–Sava region in the south (Fig 26); another new element is a demonstrable similarity with finds from northwest Bohemia and Slovakia, indicating yet another direction of cultural contact.

RURAL SETTLEMENTS

Lifeways and mortuary practices can best be reconstructed from the evidence gained from the excavation of settlements. Although our knowledge of settlements remains extremely scanty, it is clear that the Hallstatt period population lived in timber framed, sunken huts with wattle and daub walls. Many of these houses had smaller benches and pits inside them, with the fireplace positioned in one of the corners or in the centre. Storage bins and other pits lay directly beside these houses. In addition to pottery sherds and animal bones, the fill of the sunken part of these houses usually contained loom weights and spindle whorls, suggesting that spinning and weaving were everyday activities. Very few agricultural implements have been found; the few bone artefacts indicate that the appearance of iron tools did not automatically replace the wooden, bone and stone ones. Iron knives no doubt played an important role in food preparation since they are often found near fireplaces. The high number of domestic animal remains indicate that stockbreeding played at least as important a role as crop cultivation.

The Sopron settlement had smaller timber framed, sunken huts with wattle and daub walls in the 6th–5th centuries B.C. The entrance to the houses usually lay on the southeastern side, protected from the wind. Cereals, fruit and meat were stored in large beehive shaped pits or in large storage jars placed into cellar-like roofed structures. Various tools and implements, as well as costume orna-
ments and the occasional lost jewellery was found together with pottery and animal bones in the houses and the pits. A comparison of the beads, dress fastening pins, bracelets and anklets from settlements and burials often enables a more precise dating. Articles made of organic materials, such as wood, leather and textile, and the interior furnishing of houses only survive under exceptional conditions. The spindle whorls and loom weights found in the houses indicate that spinning and weaving were daily activities at the Sopron settlement (Fig. 27).

**CRAFTS AND INDUSTRY**

Pottery manufacture visibly attained a high level of craftsmanship, and in spite of firing at a relatively low temperature, the potters created magnificent wares, characterized by a wide range of forms and sophisticated decoration. The use of stamps to decorate pottery can be noted from the very beginning of the Hallstatt period; the incised and stamped patterns were often filled and enhanced with a light paste. The use of graphite for ornamenting pottery, initially as a variant of painting and, later, by mixing it into the clay (to ensure heat retention) also sheds light on trade relations. Metalworking is indicated by moulds and semi-finished products, found for example at Velem, Sághegy and Keszthely–Apátdomb, although it seems likely that metalsmiths were also active on smaller settlements. Iron articles were probably produced in various Transdanubian workshops since the weapons and horse harness finds show a rather uniform picture both as regards their types and their technical standard. Jewellery and other metalwork include various imports, as well as pieces that were clearly modelled on foreign prototypes. The distribution of certain artefact types can only be explained through trade relations. This trade was conducted along more or less permanent trade routes, outlined by the finds themselves and the sites on which they were found; most of these roads are known from the description of various classical authors.
THE LATE IRON AGE: THE CELTS OF THE LA Tène PERIOD

Erzsébet Jerem

NEW ADVANCES IN THE RESEARCH OF THE CELTS

The international Celtic conference and the accompanying exhibition organized at Székesfehérvár in 1974 represented an important milestone in Celtic studies that showed an impressive revival after World War 2. Not only did the most important finds from the Carpathian Basin finally come to the notice of international scholarship, but a new generation of Hungarian researchers of the Celtic period joined the mainstream of European research. Combined with modern analytical procedures, the stylistic and technological study of distinctive Celtic find types, such as swords, stamped and relief ornamented pottery, as well as pseudo-filigree jewellery, most certainly contributed to a re-assessment of earlier findings in this field. A number of trade and cultural contacts were set in a new perspective, together with the nature and chronology of cultural influences from the classical world. The research of the transition between the Early and the Late Iron Age in the 6th–5th centuries B.C. too received a new impetus and resulted in the identification of the earliest La Tène A assemblages in northwestern Transdanubia and along the Danube. Many aspects of the Romanization of Pannonia were also clarified, as were problems of the survival of the native Celtic population into the Roman Age. The various tribes forming separate political and administrative entities retained their independence until the Flavian age or even longer in the interior of the province. The research of Celtic settlement patterns gained a new impetus from regional field surveys, large-scale excavations and the rescue excavations preceding the motorway constructions. Settlement finds were earlier only known from a few smaller sunken houses; recent excavations in various parts of Hungary have brought to light extensive settlements, enabling observations on the environment of villages and smaller hamlets or farmsteads that, in turn, enriched our knowledge on the economy of this period. The two volumes of a new series, the Corpus of Celtic Finds, have made accessible the finds from hitherto unpublished cemeteries and settlements in Transdanubia and northeastern Hungary. Miklós Szabó’s pioneering studies on the synchronization of historical data and the find assemblages, the creation of a modern chronology have been summarized in a synthesizing monograph published in French. The finds from Hungary presented at major international exhibitions and the accompanying catalogues have made the Celtic assemblages known to international scholarship and the wider public; the conferences accompanying these exhibitions have provided excellent opportunities for setting these finds in a new perspective and for their re-assessment. The joint, Austrian–Hungarian publication of a volume of Celtic studies and the lavish catalogues accompanying the exhibition of Hungarian Iron Age finds in France and Germany can most certainly be seen as the fruits of continuous work in this field of research.

HISTORY OF THE CELTS

Some of the changes in the prehistory of the Carpathian Basin at the turn of the 5th–4th centuries B.C. are also mentioned in the written sources. With the appearance of the Celts, the Danube region caught the interest of the writers of antiquity, and even though the relevant passages of their works have mostly survived in later abridgements, they are immensely helpful in complementing the archaeological evidence.

The influence of the La Tène culture can be felt from the early 5th century B.C. in eastern Austria, on both sides of the Lajta Mountains, in the Fertő Basin and in southwestern Slovakia. The late Hallstatt settlements and cemeteries indicate a continuous occupation, with some surviving up to the La Tène B₂/C₁ period, i.e. the 3rd century B.C. The ‘immigrant’ Celts, the people of the ‘flat cemeteries’ first appear in the early 4th century B.C., a date corroborated by the both the written and the archaeological evidence. According to Justin’s abridgement of the lost works of Pompeius Trogus, a historian of Celtic origin living in the later 1st century B.C., Italy and Pannonia were occupied at roughly the same time; the main drive behind the Celtic expansion was no doubt overpopulation. The same event is recounted by Livy, according to whom Ambigatus, king of the Bituriges, sent his cousins, Bellovesus and Sigovesus into battle with an army of 300,000 Gauls. Most of these troops headed for Italy and advanced as far as Sicily, as shown by a series of battles and the sack of Rome in 388–87 B.C.

The names of the Celtic tribes settling in Hungary are not known. The distribution of early La Tène sites suggests that the conquerors came from the west, with smaller groups advancing along the river valleys, primarily along the Danube and its tributaries in northern Transdanubia to Lake Balaton and the northwestern corner of the lake, including the Zala valley where there is a dense concentration of these early sites. It seems likely that the Celts reached the north–south section of the Danube and crossed the river in the earlier 4th century B.C. as shown by a number of La Tène B cemeteries in the Danube Bend and northeastern Hungary (Fig. 28). Transylvania too came under Celtic rule. The La Tène B cemeteries in northwestern Transylvania and in the Transylvanian Basin offer ample evidence for this rapid expansion. The study of the finds and their origin revealed that additional immigrants from Italy, Champagne and the Upper Rhine region can be reckoned with during the 4th century B.C. This period is characterized by dynamic migrations,
reflected in the great diversity of the find assemblages. No finds predating the La Tène B period have yet been reported from southern Transdanubia and the adjacent areas (Steiermark, Carinthia and Slovenia). According to Pompeius Trogus, the Celts waged a war against the native population of these areas for many years, implying that the communities living south of Lake Balaton resisted the Celtic advance and preserved their independence for almost a century. The communities of the Great Hungarian Plain had no reason to fear an imminent Celtic conquest at this time. This situation changed in the late 4th–early 3rd century B.C., when tribes from the Middle Rhine region set out to conquer new territories in the south. They first fought a series of battles in northern Thrace and then marched against the Balkans under Belgios and Brennos; defeated in 279 and 277 B.C., they were forced to retreat and after breaking up into smaller bands, they looked for new homelands. The sudden and conspicuous increase in the number of sites in southern Transdanubia, northeastern Hungary and the Great Hungarian Plain implies that these areas too came under Celtic control. Celtic graves appear in the Scythian cemeteries of the Great Hungarian Plain from the mid-3rd century B.C., while settlements features yielding distinctively Celtic finds can be dated to roughly the same time, suggesting that the Celtic expansion was relatively peaceful and did not meet with a particularly great resistance. The Scordisci under Bathanatos settled in the Drava–Sava interfluve and founded Singidunum, the ancestor of modern Belgrade. The Scordisci successfully defeated the Dardani, the Pannonian and the Moisoi tribes in the 2nd century B.C.; their rule was first shaken by a defeat suffered from the Romans in 156 B.C. The Celtic rule in the Carpathian Basin was first weakened by the Cimerian attack in 114 B.C. The political situation became a bit complicated at this point. The northern part of the Carpathian Basin was ruled by the Boii, the southwestern regions by the Taurisci, while the southern ones by the Scordisci. The northern Transdanubian, northeastern Hungarian and southern Slovakian territories occupied by the Boii formed a loose confederation of some sort, with a centre in Pozsony (Bratislava). In 88 B.C., the Roman army led by Scipio Asiagenus dealt a crushing blow to the Scordisci – their defeat marked the onset of the Pannonians’ expansion.

In the earlier 1st century B.C., the powerful Dacian Kingdom ruled by Boirebistas inflicted a crushing defeat on the Scordisci and, some time later, on the Taurisci and the Boii. The Dacians advanced as far as the Tisza region and even occupied a part of Slovakia, pressing forward to the Danube in the west.

From this time on, the written sources only mention the names of the regional tribes: the Boii in the northeast, the Eravisci in the Danube Bend, the Hercuniates (Hercuniats?) south of Lake Balaton, the Osus and the Cotinus east of the Danube, and the Anartius and the Taurisci on the eastern fringes of Transylvania.

With its loose political and military organization, the Celtic population did not pose a serious obstacle to the Roman conquest. Although the Celtic population was organized into civitates after the conquest of Pannonia, their tribal territories were left untouched, and even though Romanization affected their culture, the Celts of Pannonia preserved their earlier lifeways, workshop traditions, religion and names for many hundreds of years. The Pannonians proved tough adversaries, who revolted repeatedly against the aggressive Roman expansion – Agrippa and Tiberius fought many bloody battles with them in the last two decades of the 1st century B.C. The Pannonian-Dalmatian revolt, led by the Breucus and Desidates tribes east of the Drava, broke out in 6 A.D. and it took Rome three years to finally crush it.

**CELTIC CEMETERIES AND BURIAL CUSTOMS**

Beside the narratives of the historians of antiquity, our knowledge about the Celtic tribes settling in Hungary comes from the archaeological finds. The excavated settlements and cemeteries offer a fairly accurate picture of the everyday life of the Late Iron Age communities.

Burials are an especially important source of information since the Celts regarded death an important rite of passage, believing that afterlife was on par with life in this world. This attitude is reflected in the composition and arrangement of the grave goods. The available corpus of finds has greatly increased in the wake of new excavations, even if in many cases the excavation techniques and documentation practices fall below the required standards, owing in part to the lack of adequate funding and the necessary infrastructure, and in part to the circumstances under which many rescue excavations are conducted. The determination of the exact date and internal chronology of many cemeteries is often hindered by the
lack of traditional anthropological analyses, especially in the case of cremation burials. Although a variety of sampling techniques and archaeometric analytical procedures for dating and furthering our knowledge about this period are now available (such as the analysis of food and beverage remains, organic materials, plant remains, the determination of tree species, etc.), unless these procedures become a routine exercise, we can only rely on the relative chronology based on the uncertain, and often subjective, comparison of the finds themselves.

The determination of the genuine number of burials in a cemetery, i.e. the actual size of the community that used the burial ground is hindered by the lack of completely excavated burial grounds. While it is true that earlier it was rarely possible to completely excavate a burial site, today this is chiefly impossible owing to objective difficulties (belated notification about the discovery of finds, the site is ploughed up, the site is built over). According to our present knowledge, a number of new cemeteries were established from the mid-6th century B.C., accompanied by the transformation of burial practices and the spread of inhumation. The first burials in the early cemeteries can be assigned to the later part of the Hallstatt D period, the latest ones to the early La Tène B period, although some communities used the same burial ground until the 2nd century B.C. The number of graves in La Tène B cemeteries obviously varied; although a number of smaller burial grounds with a few graves only – probably used by a single family – are known from this period, the Pilismarót cemetery conclusively proves that larger ones with fifty to sixty burials can also be reckoned with (Fig. 29). Some cemeteries were established in the early or late La Tène B period and remained in use until the end of the La Tène C period. The 150–180 years spanned by these burial grounds contained the graves of several successive generations, indicating the permanent settlement of a smaller or larger community. Other cemeteries, used over a briefer period of time and containing fifty to eighty burials, were opened in the 3rd century B.C. and reflect the higher population density during the heyday of Celtic rule in the Carpathian Basin. Relatively few cemeteries are known from the decades immediately preceding the Roman conquest. The lack of burial grounds that can be associated with fortified sites is especially striking; it seems likely that the change in funerary practices can be traced to changes in the historical circumstances and other factors. The flat cemeteries of the Celtic period are fairly well documented; in contrast, the only references to tumulus burials come from reports on excavations conducted by enthusiastic laymen, but even so, their existence cannot be wholly rejected. The determination of the distribution of inhumation and cremation burials, as well as their chronological relation to each other is one of the most important task of future studies since this may also shed some light on the ethnic background of the Celtic period. A comparison of the cemeteries excavated earlier (Sopron–Bécsidomb, Győr–Újszállás, Csabrendek) with the evidence from systematically and professionally investigated burial sites (Rezi, Ménfőcsanak, Sopron–Krautacker, Pilismarót, Kosd, Vác, Muhi) indicates that the two rites were practiced simultaneously in the earliest cemeteries. It seems likely that concurrently with the appearance of flat cemeteries containing inhumation burials throughout Europe, the custom of inhumation also spread in northern Transdanubia and that cremation burials reflect the survival of earlier traditions. Inhumation and cremation burials were both covered with stones or were marked with a single stone; in some cases, a ditch was dug around the grave, a custom that has also been observed in the contemporary cemeteries of Austria and Slovakia. The majority of the inhumation burials have the deceased laid to rest in an extended position, sometimes with one of the arms folded across the chest. A slightly contracted position is rare and usually occurs in graves without any grave goods.

The orientation of the burials varied, with a south to
north or north to south orientation being more frequent than an east to west orientation. There are few observations concerning unusual or unique forms among the grave pits or on the use of coffins. Scattered cremation and inurned burials occur until the very end of the La Tène period, often within the same cemetery.

GRAVE GOODS AND COSTUME

A study of the known burials in terms of gender, age and grave goods (and their regularly occurring combinations) can enrich our knowledge of the Celts and their society in many ways. Many male burials contained weapons. The sword and its fittings were always laid on the right side, spears were found on both sides of the body, usually beside the head and, more rarely, by the feet (Fig. 30). Early graves often lacked a sword. The burial of the deceased with one or more spears suggests a different type of armament. Helmets are extremely rare finds, suggesting that only warriors with outstanding prowess were worthy of wearing one and it is likely that helmets also signalled status. More recent finds have also demonstrated that in contrast to earlier assumptions, shields were used from the end of the La Tène A period. Belts and suspension rings, as well as sword chains were also part of the male costume. A large fibula fastened the cloak at the shoulder, although smaller iron fibulae were sometimes also used for this purpose. There is also evidence for torcs and armlets, worn on the left arm, or an armring worn on the upper arm, as well as for anklets.

The finds from women’s burials indicate the wear of two to three or more fibulae, as well as of armrings and anklets. Other pieces of jewellery included neckings, bead necklaces, rings and belts. Pairs of fibulae linked by a chain, such as the ones from Sopron–Bécsidomb, Ménfőcsanak and Litér, occur from the early La Tène period and have their counterparts among the finds from the Traisen valley, the Burgenland and southwestern Slovakia. These fibula pairs were used for fastening garments at the shoulder, while a third fibula was usually found on the chest (Fig. 31). The right to wear a torc was apparently linked to social rank or status within the family. Sets of armrings and anklets, as well as belts were the most characteristic pieces of jewellery worn by Celtic women. The grave goods from female burials also included simple tools and implements, mostly spindle whorls.

The custom of depositing food and beverage into the grave, and of animal sacrifices as part of the funerary rite is indicated by the vessels and the animal bones, most of which came from pig, sheep and poultry. The carefully documented burials show that a scissor or a knife lay beside the animal bones, implying that these implements were used for carving up the meat. The deposition of the vessels also followed a specific pattern since most were
The assemblages dating from the 5th–4th centuries B.C. offer many clues as to the ultimate origin of certain artefact types, while locally made products betray cultural influences from the earlier local population. Other influences can be traced through various import articles, reaching the Carpathian Basin through trade or with new immigrant groups. Copies of these articles with a distinctive Celtic flavour were then turned out by local workshops in the Carpathian Basin. The heyday of Celtic craftsmanship in this region can be put in the late 4th century and the 3rd century B.C., when the finest swords with elaborate, engraved patterns and bronze belts with enamel inlay were made together with an assortment of other articles reflecting the cultural impact of ‘Scythian’ culture. The concentration of the population on fortified settlements from the 2nd–1st centuries B.C. gave rise to mass-production and the emergence of new product types. Pottery manufacture, ironworking and coinage were the most important among these (Fig. 34).

Child burials are characterized by amulets – beads, bronze pendants, shells, snails and animal teeth – and a variety of fibula and ring ornament (‘Ringschmuck’) sets (Fig. 33).

The finds also reflect the wide circle of contacts maintained by these communities. The assemblages dating from the 5th–4th centuries B.C. offer many clues as to the ultimate origin of certain artefact types, while locally made products betray cultural influences from the earlier local population. Other influences can be traced through various import articles, reaching the Carpathian Basin through trade or with new immigrant groups. Copies of these articles with a distinctive Celtic flavour were then turned out by local workshops in the Carpathian Basin. The heyday of Celtic craftsmanship in this region can be put in the late 4th century and the 3rd century B.C., when the finest swords with elaborate, engraved patterns and bronze belts with enamel inlay were made together with an assortment of other articles reflecting the cultural impact of ‘Scythian’ culture. The concentration of the population on fortified settlements from the 2nd–1st centuries B.C. gave rise to mass-production and the emergence of new product types. Pottery manufacture, ironworking and coinage were the most important among these (Fig. 34).

Fig. 32. Situla shaped vessel, with a Waldalgesheim style incised pattern on the shoulder. Alsópél, later 4th century B.C.

Fig. 33. Masked bead. Vác, grave 29, later 3rd century B.C.

Fig. 34. Celtic pottery kiln and its products. Sopron–Krautacker, earlier 3rd century B.C.
SETTLEMENT HISTORY

Our knowledge of the settlement history of the Celtic population of the Carpathian Basin has been greatly enriched during the past few decades. The La Tène period settlements uncovered in adjacent regions and the field surveys and excavations conducted in Hungary all point to the fact that the Celts did not particularly like upland regions. This is all the more understandable since their economy was based on crop cultivation and animal husbandry, both of which called for settlement near water and arable land. This also explains why small farmsteads and hamlets, vicus-type settlements occupied by a few families, occur beside villages. The largest open settlement known to date was investigated at Sopron–Krautacker (Fig. 35). The observations made on this site and on smaller settlements excavated elsewhere (Iván, Lébény, Kesztely–Úszató, Regöly–Füzfás, Acsa), as well as the findings of the rescue excavations preceding the construction of the M3 motorway (Polgár, Sajópetri) allow a glimpse into the everyday life of the Celts. The sunken oblong houses, measuring 2–3 m by 4–6 m, had a pitched roof resting on timbers aligned along the short side of the house. Smaller huts were probably roofed with thatch or wattling; the postholes and the daub fragments with twig impressions suggest that the walls were of the wattle and daub type (Fig. 36). Benches, smaller pits, fireplaces and the occasional oven made up the interior furnishings of these houses that were ringed by pits on the outside, some of which were used for the extraction of clay, while others functioned as storage bins or refuse pits.

A variety of agricultural implements made from iron
The Iron Age

– ploughs, spades, sickles, scythes – made land cultivation more efficient than ever before. Cultivated species included wheat, barley, rye and millet, as well as various vegetables and vine. Stockbreeding also played an important role. The rich animal bone samples collected at Celtic sites indicate a wide range of domestic animals and are, at the same time, proof of a sedentary lifeway. Animals were kept for their draught power, as well as for their meat and milk, as shown by the high number of cattle, sheep, goat and pig bones. The food offerings placed into graves were usually prepared from the meat of these animals.

The ratio of hunted animals – aurochs, red deer, roe deer and boar – varied from site to site. Hare was not hunted solely for its meat. Antler and bone were used as raw material for tools and implements; pig, deer, dog and horse played an important role in funerary and other cults (Fig. 37).

Fig. 37. Remains of a pig and cattle sacrifice on the floor of a Celtic house. Sé–Doberdő, house 2

The occupants of the major settlements no doubt included various craftsmen, engaged in the production of iron, bronze, leather, wood, bone and clay articles needed for day to day life. Although none of the metalworking centres of the early La Tène period have been identified, the known iron ore deposits and the occurrence of iron slag suggests that iron smelted from bog iron and meadow ore was used for the manufacture of weapons and other articles in northwestern Transdanubia. Iron imported in the form of bars was also used. Evidence for bronzeworking is similarly scanty, but since the ornaments and pieces of jewellery rarely include imports from faraway regions, we may assume that their majority was made in the Carpathian Basin, a supposition supported by the fact that the known types show the survival of local traditions (Fig. 38).

The most experienced metalsmiths worked as weaponsmiths. Spearheads and knives with engraved decoration, daggers with anthropomorphic and pseudo-anthropomorphic hilt, the punched sword blades and engraved scabbards are genuine masterpieces of their craft. The stamped blades enable the determination of individual craftsmen and workshops, as well as the regional and cultural contact of these workshops.

The other major and exceptionally sophisticated craft practiced by the Celts was pottery manufacture. Potting had reached a degree of development by the Hallstatt period that allowed not only the adoption of new pottery making techniques, but also the creation of vessels suited to the

Fig. 38. Crucible from a bronze workshop. Sopron–Krautacker, 4th century B.C.

Fig. 39. Flask with stamped decoration from an early Celtic male burial. Sopron–Bécsidomb, early 4th century B.C.

MASTERPIECES OF CELTIC CRAFTSMANSHIP

The occupants of the major settlements no doubt included various craftsmen, engaged in the production of iron, bronze, leather, wood, bone and clay articles needed for day to day life. Although none of the metalworking centres of the early La Tène period have been identified, the known iron ore deposits and the occurrence of iron slag suggests that iron smelted from bog iron and meadow ore was used for the manufacture of weapons and other articles in northwestern Transdanubia. Iron imported in the form of bars was also used. Evidence for bronzeworking is similarly scanty, but since the ornaments and pieces of jewellery rarely include imports from faraway regions, we may assume that their majority was made in the Carpathian Basin, a supposition supported by the fact that the known types show the survival of local traditions (Fig. 38).

The most experienced metalsmiths worked as weaponsmiths. Spearheads and knives with engraved decoration, daggers with anthropomorphic and pseudo-anthropomorphic hilt, the punched sword blades and engraved scabbards are genuine masterpieces of their craft. The stamped blades enable the determination of individual craftsmen and workshops, as well as the regional and cultural contact of these workshops.

The other major and exceptionally sophisticated craft practiced by the Celts was pottery manufacture. Potting had reached a degree of development by the Hallstatt period that allowed not only the adoption of new pottery making techniques, but also the creation of vessels suited to the

Fig. 38. Crucible from a bronze workshop. Sopron–Krautacker, 4th century B.C.

Fig. 39. Flask with stamped decoration from an early Celtic male burial. Sopron–Bécsidomb, early 4th century B.C.
Celtic taste. A workshop producing vessels with elaborate stamped ornaments was active in the region of Lake Fertő, perhaps at Sopron, in the early La Tène period. Pottery with stamped decoration retained its popularity until the very end of the Celtic period, its influence surviving until the 2nd century A.D., even if the ornamental repertoire and the vessel forms changed over time (Fig. 39).

With the exception of the most common types, the pottery from sites in the Great Hungarian Plain differs from the Transdanubian wares both in form and ornamentation, no doubt as a result of the local traditions from the preceding Scythian period.

One outstanding group of vessels had handles decorated with human and animal heads or human figures (Fig. 40). These vessels reflect cultural impacts from various regions.

From the mid-2nd century B.C. a part of the population moved to the fortified hillforts (Velem, Sopron–Burgstall, Tihany–Óvár, Balatonföldvár, Nagyberki–Szalacska, Regöly, Százhalombatta, Budapest–Gellért-hegy, Esztergom–Vár, Bükkzentlászló; Fig. 41). The reason for this migration can in part be traced to the conflict and armed clashes between the various tribes and in part to some imminent external danger. Be as it may, the craft centres now lay in the defended hillforts; one result of the concentration of craftsmen to a few major settlements was that mass-production began in earnest and that new craft industries also appeared.

The improvement of ironworking is reflected in the wide range of tools and implements manufactured in these hillforts. The efficiency of these tools and implements is proven by the fact that the basic types changed little over the ensuing centuries.

Celtic minting was also practiced on these fortified settlements, functioning also as tribal centres, from the 2nd century B.C. (Fig. 42). These coins, mostly silver mints intended for inter-tribal trade, were copies of a silver tetradrachm known as the Philippeus. Gold coins are rare and by the turn of the millennium even silver coins were replaced by bronze ones. Concurrently with monetary debasement, a change can be noted in the coin design. The coinage of the Boii and the Eravisci usually has a legend with Roman letters, reflecting the influence of Roman prototypes.

The pottery workshops continued to turn out good quality vessels on a mass scale, although the repertory of forms was greatly reduced. Decoration took the form of smoothed-in, geometric and painted patterns (Fig. 43).

Glass articles, such as beads, rings and armrings, including some truly magnificent pieces, were also produced locally.
RELIGION

The hillforts were not only economic, industrial and trade centres, but also the settings for various ceremonies and rituals. Although there is little archaeological evidence for these practices from Hungary, we know that there were special sacred precincts for cult life in the Celtic oppida or their immediate neighbourhood.

The hoard found near the Regöly hillfort was probably deposited as part of a votive gift in the bog between Szárazd and Regöly (Fig. 44). Animal depictions can usually be associated with totemistic beliefs or some sort of fertility cult. The boar statuette from Báta is one of the outstanding creations of Celtic small sculpture in terms of its artistry.

Aside from a monumental stone relic, the Janus-head from Badacsony–Lábdi, Celtic art in Hungary is represented by a wide array of imaginative and superbly crafted small objects.

The Celtic tribes living in Hungary can be credited with the introduction of important technological innovations, such as the mass-production of wheel-thrown pottery and the development of lasting iron tool sets, as well as with laying the foundation of urban civilization and a road network linking distant areas that became permanent from the Roman period.

One of the most important Celtic sites is the settlement and burial ground lying on the northwestern outskirts of Ménfőcsanak, on an ancient terrace of the Rába river. The finds from the cemetery, a total of ten Celtic and seven late Roman burials excavated by András Uzsoki, have been published in Volume I of the Corpus of Celtic Finds. Uzsoki was certain that the one-time burial ground extended beyond the area he had investigated. The Celtic graves were all inhumation burials, graves 4 and 10 were double burials. The warriors’ graves were equipped with spears, swords and knives; one grave also contained the iron mounts of a wooden shield. One of the female burials yielded a lavish set of jewellery: a torc, a necklace, a pair of armbands and a pair of anklets. The investigation of the site has recently been resumed as part of the excavation projects preceding the motorway constructions.

THE CELTIC SITE AT MÉNFOCSANAK
Andrea Vaday

An 80,000 m² large area was investigated in 1993–94 preceding the construction of the Ménfőcsanak bypass between Road 83 and the M1 motorway.

A section of the cemetery lying on an elevation in the floodplain of the Old Rába fell into the investigated area. The earliest Celtic graves from Hungary were uncovered in this burial ground (Fig. 45). It was earlier believed that the Celts only occupied the Burgenland and Transdanubia in...
the 4th century B.C. Now, however, the date of the Celtic occupation can be put earlier in view of the finds from Ménfösanak. The bead necklaces worn together with or without a torc and the fibula pairs for fastening the upper garment from women’s grave indicate an early costume type. The later graves of this cemetery usually contained a third fibula that was most often found lying on the chest. The finds from the earliest burials have their best analogies among the assemblages from Jogasses, Dürnberg bei Hallein (late 6th–early 5th century B.C.), Hlubýne (later 5th century B.C.) and the so-called Marne horizon of Epernay (later 5th century B.C.).

The grave assemblages include both old and new artefact types, often in the same burial, indicating that the immigrant Celts adopted many elements of the local material culture. The military nature of the cemetery is reflected in the numerous weapons placed into the graves: the male graves yielded an assortment of large shields with metal mounts, double-edged swords and spears (Fig. 46).

Many burials were enclosed by a rectangular grave ditch, a phenomenon known also from other Celtic cemeteries, such as the one at Franzhausen in Lower Austria from the 5th century B.C., where graves with single and double burials were similarly enclosed by rectangular or circular ditch. The Franzhausen cemetery also resembles the Ménfösanak one in that it was biritual, containing both inhumation and cremation burials. Graves enclosed by a ditch are also known from Champagne and from other Celtic burial grounds of the Marne region, as well as from eastern Yorkshire. At La Perrière, a cemetery dating from the 3rd century B.C., a row of ‘unmarked’ graves lay between the ones enclosed by a rectangular or circular ditch. Comparable graves have also been reported from Malé Kosihy and Dubnik in Slovakia.

The Ménfösanak cemetery was used by several successive generations. The early graves can be dated to the period preceding the Celtic expeditions against the Balkans, while the late ones to the transition between the early and middle La Tène period. Many graves were double burials. This phenomenon has also been documented in other Celtic cemeteries, for example at Münsingen–Rain and Dürnberg. Some graves were marked with a stone, a practice observed also at Sopron–Bécsidomb, Koss and Cseszegtomaj.

The internal chronology of the Ménfösanak cemetery is fairly clear. The graves enclosed by a grave ditch form distinct groups, with the unmarked burials lying between them. A family member was sometimes later interred in one of the already existing graves. The relative chronology of the burials can be established on the basis of the various features and the finds using the Harris matrix. Of the Celtic cemeteries in the Carpathian Basin, only the forty-seven burials of the Chotin cemetery in Slovakia have been analyzed using this method that enabled the identification of the several generations buried there.

The area investigated at Ménfösanak also included the section of an extensive Celtic settlement, whose excavated features could be dated to the La Tène B₂–B₂/C₁ period (Fig. 47). The survival of the native Celtic population could be traced until the Severan age. The settlement features
The Iron Age included sunken houses, storage and refuse pits, ditches and fences, and a well with an oakwood structure. The exact date of the well could be determined from the dendro-chronological analysis of its wood. Smaller structures, used for storing raw materials, such as blocks of graphite, were also found. Raw graphite was from the 5th century B.C. on imported by the pottery workshops lying far from the graphite sources. The presence of these graphite depots at Ménföcsanak indicate trade relations with the west. Local metalworking is indicated by the remains of a stone-lined smelting furnace, together with iron slag and raw iron bars. Iron too was imported from the west, from Austria.

The analysis of the pottery finds showed that the Ménföcsanak settlement maintained close ties with Sopron–Krautacker in the late 4th and early 3rd century B.C. and with the Celtic potters of Čataj in Slovakia during the 2nd century B.C. The best analogies to the vessels ornamented with stamped and radial patterns can be quoted from Balf, Écs, Koroncó, Hidegség and Sopron, as well as from other sites in the Fertő Basin (Mörbisch, Oggau, Pötttsching).

On the testimony of the written sources, Boirebistas, King of the Dacians defeated the Celtic army led by Kritiasiros in the mid-1st century B.C. and made the territory of the Boii, who had arrived sometime around 60 B.C., a wasteland (*deserta Boiorum*). It would nonetheless appear that the Celtic Boii of Ménföcsanak, the occupants of the latest phase of the settlement preceding the Roman conquest, survived well into the Roman period.