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Mohylová pohřebiště na okrese Písek

1. díl. Cíle, současný stav poznání a metoda sběru dat

Barrow cemeteries in the Písek district

Part 1. Goals, methodology and current state of knowledge

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OBSAH

1. Úvod	5
2. Cíle projektu a obecné metodologické postupy (<i>P. Křišťuf</i>)	7
2.1. Cíle projektu	7
2.2. Obecná metodika výzkumu	9
2.3. Metoda sběru dat	10
3. Definice sledovaného území a přírodní charakteristika okresu Písek (<i>L. Rytíř</i>)	23
4. Dějiny výzkumu mohylových pohřebišť na Písecku (<i>O. Chvojka</i>)	25
5. Katalog mohylových pohřebišť v okrese Písek (<i>J. Fröhlich – J. Michálek</i>)	31
5.1. Katalog lokalit	31
5.2. Doplněk k literatuře původního soupisu	37
6. Shrnutí dosavadních terénních aktivit (<i>L. Rytíř</i>)	69
6.1. Exkurz: Předběžné výsledky výzkumu mohylníku v trati Hrůbata u Dobešic (<i>P. Křišťuf – L. Rytíř</i>)	79
7. Analýza a chronologické zařazení mohylníků na Písecku (<i>O. Chvojka</i>)	81
7.1. Starší doba bronzová	85
7.2. Střední doba bronzová	98
7.3. Mladší doba bronzová	126
7.4. Doba halštatská a časně laténská – stručný nástin	142
7.5. Otázka aktivit ve střední až pozdní době laténské a v době římské	146
7.6. Raný středověk	148
8. Závěr	155
Literatura	157
Summary	163

SUMMARY

The presented book is the first volume of the final outcome of the project „Barrow cemeteries in the Písek district“. Since 2007, this project has been tackled within the framework of the research project „Neglected archaeology“ (MSM 4977751314) at the Department of Archaeology, Faculty of Philosophy and Arts, University of West Bohemia in Plzeň. A part of the mentioned research project is, among others, also the research of the forest environment with numerous barrow cemeteries. In accordance with the methodology of this research intention, all field activities of this project were carried out in the form of non-destructive or less destructive archaeological investigations.

The first part of the publication that you are currently holding in your hands represents an introduction to the issue of barrow burials in the Písek district. **The first chapter**, which is the Introduction, is followed by a description of the goals of the project and of the methodological procedures (**Chapter 2**). The first part of the project, the outcome of which this book is, focused on a literature search into current state of knowledge of barrow burials, setting the main goals of the project, selection of research methodology and creation of a methodology for collection of data in the field.

From the very beginning of project planning, it was certain that it would be necessary to tackle the barrow burials in South Bohemia as a phenomenon continuing in human society for several thousands years. Although the greater part of barrows in the Písek district was investigated in the past, the cultural classification of many of them is sometimes problematic. Finds from earlier excavations did often not survive and even when they did, it is problematic to determine which barrows they come from. The finds collection of dated barrows from the Písek district is so small and spatially scattered that it is impossible to investigate the spatial distribution of barrows in the individual prehistoric and early medieval periods for the time being.

That is why we decided to address the issue of barrow burials as an idea connecting several communities living in a rather extensive time environment and creating strong continuity within prehistoric society. Barrow cemeteries, as we know them today, must therefore be investigated as complexes, which not only underwent major modifications (see below), but at the same time they emerged as a result of continuous development lasting for thousands of years.

The project “Barrow cemeteries in the Písek district” focused on three main issues. The first level are barrow cemeteries in the landscape. We focus on the investigation of their location in the landscape, their mutual relationship, etc. We try to look for regularities in the distribution of barrow cemeteries in the landscape and then compare these with the observations that were made during similar investigations within Bohemia. With the help of research conceived in this way, we try to answer the questions of structuring of space, in which prehistoric communities used to live. This research is particularly based on the theory of settlement areas (*Neustupný 1986b*). It is concerned particularly with the study of the perception of burial areas by prehistoric communities. The main questions are, for example, the location of burial areas within the settlement area and its influence on the structuring of the landscape where the communities once lived. We further concentrate on the study of importance of monumentality and importance of exposed places to prehistoric society, for barrows are a category of archaeological monuments, where we can assume that monumentality played an important role during their construction.

The second level of our study of barrow cemeteries is the inner structure of individual necropolises. This part of research rather deals with the questions of the structure of society and its reflection in the structure of barrow cemeteries. In particular, the spatial arrangement of barrow cemeteries and the size of individual barrows is taken into account. Whereas the previous level concerned the study of the relationship of people to landscape, or possibly the interrelation between different communities, this part of the project studies the relationships between individuals within a community. We assume that the relationships between living members of society remain preserved also after their death and that they can be identified on the basis of form and spatial properties of barrow cemeteries.

The third contribution of the project is the creation of detailed plans of barrow cemeteries with data on the level of preservation of individual barrows. This data can be used for improvement of care for barrow cemeteries which are traditionally said to be well protected against destructive influences in the

forest environment. Such statements are, however, not valid any more. The intensive mechanised forest management of recent years is unfortunately irrevocably damaging archaeological monuments, no less dangerous is the damage to barrow mounds and unfortunately also the non-professional excavations of intact barrows carried out by treasure hunters. A basis for effective protection of these monuments should therefore be their survey.

We decided to use exclusively non-destructive or little destructive archaeological methods for our field research. In the first place, it was the visual surface examination of anthropogenous formations in the terrain.

The whole project is based on an analysis of archaeological contexts directly in the field, this is namely a description of individual barrows and barrow cemeteries. The spatial properties of individual barrows are observed, together with several selected formal properties, which can be investigated through non-destructive methods. All discovered and marked barrows were surveyed with the help of the GPS system, through the so-called coded measurement. The data measured in the field is further processed and its accuracy is further increased with the help of the so-called (post-processing) differential correction.

We further observe selected formal qualities that can be investigated with non-destructive archaeological methods in the field. We observe the size of barrows in the first place. This is why we record the diameter and height of all circular barrows. In cases when the layout is oval-shaped, we measure the length of its main axis, and then its width, which is the longest dimension vertical to the main axis, and again the barrow's height. We also observe possible damage to barrows, their structures, etc. We also take into account the placement of cemeteries in the landscape and their relation to some geomorphological formations. Next, other anthropogenous relics in close vicinity of cemeteries are surveyed. All information is recorded on forms prepared in advance (*Fig. 18-20*).

The **third chapter** describes the geomorphology of the area of interest. The flows of the rivers Vltava and Otava are dominant and to a large extent they determine the landscape character of this area. Then there is the massif of the Písek mountains (Písecké hory) and other geomorphological units. The relatively dense forest in the area of interest creates good conditions for the preservation of barrow cemeteries.

From among the most important scholars who were interested in the investigation of barrow cemeteries in the Písek region (**Chapter 4**) we may mention especially Jan Karel Hraše (*Fig. 21*), Jan Nepomuk Woldřich (*Fig. 22*), Josef Ladislav Píč (*Fig. 23*), Bedřich Dubský (*Fig. 27*) and Antonín Beneš. The following list of barrows (**Chapter 5**) is a brief updated excerpt from a detailed list of barrow cemeteries in the Písek region (*Fröhlich – Michálek 1978*), where 195 cemeteries were registered. The numbering remained the same. The cemeteries discovered over the last 30 years (nos. 196-220) were newly added. In the case of these sites, reference sources are provided where further details can be found. Data for some sites on the original list was concisely updated, too.

A part of the publication is also a summary of previous field activities that took place in barrow cemeteries in the Písek region (**Chapter 6**). The available knowledge, gained through destructive investigations of barrows, is briefly summed up. A part of this chapter is also the publication of preliminary excavation results about the barrow cemetery on the parcel of land called Hrúbata near Dobešice, which took place in 2007 and 2008.

The following part of the publication (**Chapter 7**) sums up the existing knowledge about the construction of barrows, burial practice and artefact component of barrow burials. We have to be aware of the fact that no (or no datable) finds were retrieved from a large part of the 220 barrow cemeteries known to us today (134, i. e. almost 61%) and that the vast majority sites, for which it was possible to determine the time period, were investigated only partly. A statistical overview of all barrow cemeteries and their basic chronological components is presented in *Table 1*, their percentage representation is then shown in *Chart 1*.

The first chronological component identified in South Bohemian barrow cemeteries is the Early Bronze Age. There are 37 barrow cemeteries from this period registered in the area of South Bohemia, of which 10 are reliably proven in the Písek district (*Table 2*). Their vast majority contain only one barrow which is safely dated to the Early Bronze Age (*Table 3*). An exception is represented by the barrow

cemetery on Holý hill in Protivín (site no: 110, *Fig. 69*) where all so far excavated barrows belong to the Early Bronze Age. The comparison of the occurrence of other chronological components in barrow cemeteries of the Early Bronze Age is also interesting (see *Table 4*). All barrows from the Early Bronze Age documented in the Písek district had a distinctive stone structure, as demonstrated especially by the barrows near Těšínov (*Fig. 73, 79*). A basic overview of movable finds according to the individual complexes is presented in *Table 5*. Basically, it is possible to distinguish two chronological groups: the BA2 phase, where especially the richest barrows of this period in the Písek district belong – the barrows near Těšínov (*Fig. 80*) and then the transition period of BA2/B1, whose representative in the Písek region is the cemetery on Holý hill near Protivín (*Fig. 81-82*).

At the time being, there are 31 barrow cemeteries with a component of the Middle Bronze Age reliably proven in the Písek district, which represents approximately 40% of all South Bohemian barrow cemeteries of this period (*Table 6*). Similarly as in the previous period, the vast majority of cemeteries in the Písek district has only one or a few barrows which are reliably dated to the Middle Bronze Age (*Table 7*). So far, components from this period have been documented on 11 sites only. In the case of three sites, it is possible to speculate about continuity from the previous Early Bronze Age (see *Table 8*). The barrows of the Middle Bronze Age in the Písek region had, similarly as in the previous period, distinctive stone structures (*Fig. 85*), all-stone barrows are however not known from this period any more. In the same way as in the previous period, the vast majority of burials of the Middle Bronze Age were deposited at the level of the original surface, or possibly in the barrow mound – burials in pits below the level of the original surface are not documented in this period. From the point of view of funeral rites, cremation burials are dominant, and were documented in 29 cases, whereas the number of known inhumation graves is just four. Similarly as in the previous era, also the burials of the Middle Bronze Age contain relatively rich grave goods, especially in the form of ceramic or bronze objects or gifts (*Table 10*). From the chronological point of view, more convincing complexes for the earliest phase of the Middle Bronze Age (BB1) are still missing – only one burial can be classified as belonging to this time period - one of the inhumations from the excavation of a barrow at Dobešice (site no. 15). For example, the barrow near Dražič (*Jiřík – Rytíř 2004*) is dated to the middle phase of the Middle Bronze Age (BB2) on the basis of the assemblage of pottery fragments, the so-called backfill pottery. The majority of datable barrows only belong to the latest phase of the Middle Bronze Age (BC). Both barrows containing pottery fragments decorated with the so-called Kerbschnitt belong unambiguously to the end of the Middle Bronze Age (BC2/D).

At present, 15 barrow cemeteries and 16 flat cemeteries of the Late Bronze Age are unambiguously proven from the Písek district (*Table 11*). There are at least 225 barrows in barrow cemeteries in the Písek district with a component of the Late Bronze Age, of which, however, only 81 were excavated and only 21 can be classified as belonging to this period. Until now, components exclusively from this period were documented on four sites, seven barrow cemeteries of the Late Bronze Age also contained burials from the previous Middle Bronze Age (see *Table 13*). Also in the Late Bronze Age, barrows used to be stone structures, but were completed with earthen or loamy mounds. All documented burials were cremations, whereas only in two cases there was an urn grave. In four cases the ashes of the deceased were simply scattered at the bottom of the barrow. In at least two cases, burials from the Late Bronze Age were secondarily deposited in earlier barrows. Late Bronze Age barrows contain quite numerous grave goods, rich especially in bronze artefacts (*Table 15*), which is striking compared to contemporary flat graves. The analysis of finds from Late Bronze Age barrows in the Písek district allowed us to differentiate three chronological phases: the transitional Tumulus/Knovíz culture phase (BC2/D), the early phase of the Late Bronze Age (BD) and then the late phase of the Late Bronze Age (HA2, or possibly HA2(B1); barrows from the middle phase of the Late Bronze Age (HA1) and also from the Final Bronze Age are unknown in the Písek region so far. The vast majority of Late Bronze Age barrows in the Písek region can be classified as belonging to the BD phase.

At the time being, we register 57 barrow cemeteries with a component of the Hallstatt or Early La Tène period (*Table 1*). Both inhumation and cremation were practiced, whereas inhumations are far less numerous. Barrows are often richly equipped, sometimes even graves in wooden or stone chambers with rich grave goods occur (e.g. Protivín; *Fig. 106*). From among the „princely barrows“, the first place

without doubt belongs to the two barrows excavated in the year 1858 near Hradiště near Písek (Fig. 107), another „princely“ grave from the Early La Tène period was hidden in the barrow which was destroyed near Nevězice in the year 1884 (Fig. 108).

At the beginning of the Middle La Tène period, the practice of burials in barrows ends, nevertheless, for the whole period of LT B-D, there are activities documented within the area of earliest barrow cemeteries that could possibly be interpreted as additional burials or may be evidence of other ritual activities. These activities have been proven in eight cases in total in the Písek district, as it is visible in Table 17. The linkage between La Tène activities and cemeteries of the previous Hallstatt or Early La Tène periods is quite obvious from it.

Only one isolated activity of the Teutons of the Roman period was documented in the barrow cemetery near Hradiště in the Písek district, in the form of a find of two Roman fibulae (Fig. 111).

While in at least some cases of burial activities in the Bronze and Iron Ages we can speculate about continuous use of barrow cemeteries, the Early Middle Ages represent a totally new epoch with a different attitude to the landscape. There are 8 barrow cemeteries with a component of the Early Middle Ages known from the Písek district, which is a relatively low number, considering the previous epochs and neighbouring regions. Five early medieval barrow cemeteries bear witness to activities in this time period only. In one case, there is a Slavic component present in a barrow cemetery from the Middle Bronze Age and in two cases, it is present in a cemetery from the Hallstatt period (see Table 19). The only barrow cemetery in the Písek district which was excavated and evaluated in a modern way, is the early medieval site at Kožlí near Orlík (Fig. 115-117), unearthed in the years 1986-1991 (Lutovský 1996; *idem* 1998a; *idem* 1998b). All 12 barrows were examined and it was established that the burial rite in the barrows was not unified. There were cremation graves in most barrows, however, non-cremated bodies were found in four graves. The barrows sheltered the so-called „houses of the dead“, the cremated remains were, however, mainly found in barrow mounds or close to their surfaces. The existence of the vast majority of Slavic barrow cemeteries in the Písek region is attested for the course of the 9th century. The earliest barrows were constructed at the end of the 8th century already, while during the 10th century the practice of burying in barrows definitely ends.

Translated by Jan Machula

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