



Bronze Age Settlement in the Pohorje Foothills

IRN 15509	Rogoza near Maribor – archaeological site
Location	Rogoza
Site type	Settlement, barrow cemetery
Excavated area	32,176 m ²
Date	ca. 2000–700 BC
Period	Eneolithic, Bronze and Iron Ages
Excavation director	Mira Strmčnik Gulič
Date of Excavation	1998, 1999

The specific geographic position of modern Slovenia decisively determined the range and type of settlement throughout Prehistory. Two major cultural zones were thus created in the south-eastern Alps during the Bronze Age. Archaeological remains testify to the fact that eastern Slovenia was culturally connected with western Transdanubia, an area between the rivers Drava and Sava and eastern Austria, while the influence of Italy, the western Balkans and the Adriatic can be found in the regions of Notranjska and Kras. The dividing line can be traced in the broader area of the Ljubljana basin where the influences overlapped (Teržan 1999). The nature of settlement in the Bronze Age in Slovenia has been substantially filled out and clarified to a large extent as a result of the latest discoveries during extensive archaeological excavations on the new motorway routes.

The Rogoza archaeological site is located on a slightly raised terrace at the base of the north-eastern Pohorje foothills, at the interface of the Dravsko Polje plain with the edge of the extensive Pannonian plain. The site was discovered and defined by extensive and intensive surveys, the protective regime demanding archaeological excavation prior to construction of an area of 600 x 50 m.

The appearance of the lowland settlement established so far gives the impression of a slightly raised gravel terrace that had been occupied in several different periods.



▲ View of the site area (Photograph by R. Urankar)

◀ View of the site in September 2003 and its ideal reconstruction

The stratigraphic data indicate that the interface between the terrace and the foothills was still pronounced in the period of the initial Eneolithic settlement (Phase I). The location of the settlement and the character of the broader area in this settlement phase are not known, as the occupation layer was exposed to intense post-depositional processes.

The opposite is true of the Phase II settlement, preliminarily dated from the earlier and middle phases of the Urnfield period to the Early Iron Age transition period. The dwelling structures were located on the gravel/sand terrace, which formed a less prominent feature of the landscape in this period. The terrace base was already partially buried by sandy and silty sediments that were cut by a meandering stream channel, which is no longer visible. The stream channel was most clearly recognisable in the area where the houses were concentrated. Further to the south of this area, it is clear that the stream frequently broke its banks, flooding the area in a delta-like manner and simultaneously depositing artefacts from the northern part of the settlement. The dark brown-grey clay layer in the channel contained numerous sherds of prehistoric pottery, as well as stone querns and charcoal fragments, etc. The large number of finds in this feature is due to the erosion and silting up of the lower-lying channel at the edge of the settlement. Two natural channels that ran in a east-west direction were located at the northern edge of the site, below which was a shallow depression, filled with



Plan of the excavated area (Archive of zvkds)

compact grey clay and silty sand with occasional finds in the flood deposits. A stone-surfaced plateau, discovered on the edge of one of the channels, probably served as a stone surface on the frequently used channel bank.

Four single cremation burials beneath barrows were also discovered in the same area. The barrows were positioned in a line in a north-west/south-east direction. Only the outline of the lower, hardly discernible layer of the barrows survived due to intense cultivation. The associated pottery suggests that the barrows can be as-



View of the excavated site to the south (Photograph by I. Bizjak)

signed to the Poštela II phase, which began in the late 8th or early 7th century BC. Similar pottery types were wide-spread in the eastern Alpine and western Pannonian area throughout the Ha C period, which is an indication of their popularity and long-term use.

A south-west/north-east aligned prehistoric path, paved with small river cobbles, was discovered somewhat further to the south, in the northern part of the settlement.

It is certainly the planned nature of the settlement that distinguishes the Rogoza Bronze Age settlement and places it among the most important discoveries of its kind. Numerous remains of wooden dwelling and outbuilding structures of a dispersed type settlement were discovered. The houses stood on the terrace of the stream, the meanders of which had created natural conditions for the expansion of the settlement. The houses were located a few metres apart, usually grouped around a small courtyard, and were mostly of small to medium dimensions. The building technique was typi-



Quern
(Photograph by I. Bizjak)

cal of the Bronze Age, i.e. the so-called post technique: the load-bearing posts were cut into the ground and formed the walls of the house. The walls were made of woven withy and rod wattle, which was coated with clay daub on both the interior and exterior. Withy impressions were preserved in the burnt clay daub. The excavated remains of the regularly spaced load-bearing posts make it possible to reconstruct the basic forms of the former buildings, which had been renovated and repaired on several occasions. The floor plans indicate the

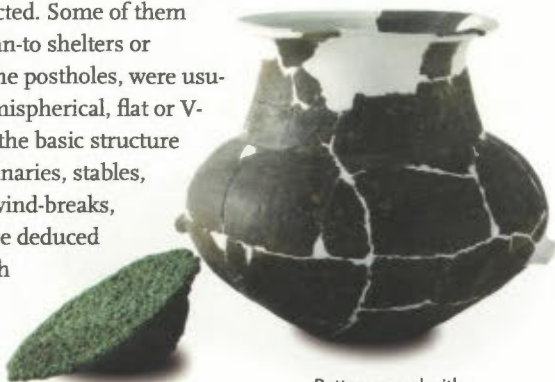


Selection of Late Bronze Age pottery, 12th–11th century BC (Photograph by I. Bizjak)

existence of four distinct basic building types:

- Buildings consisting of two rows of single posts (four to a row).
- Buildings consisting of two rows of even numbers of double posts.
- L-shape buildings.
- Buildings consisting of four rows of single posts.

Some of the buildings were divided into rooms and were sometimes interconnected. Some of them were butted by additional lean-to shelters or sheds. The posts, or rather the postholes, were usually circular in plan with hemispherical, flat or V-shaped bases. Posts formed the basic structure of houses, out-buildings, granaries, stables, sheepfolds, various fences, wind-breaks, screens and the like. It can be deduced on the basis of analogies with other Bronze Age sites (Dular 1999) that houses had ridged roofs, whilst their construction differed according to size. The roofs of smaller houses were supported by a single row of ridge posts, while the larger



Pottery vessel with bronze ingot (Photograph by I. Bizjak)

ones required two or more rows. The roofs were probably thatched with straw and bark.

At least 19 houses have been excavated so far, whilst others will have to be evaluated together with the small finds during the post-excavation analysis. In spite of the large excavated area, the final number of buildings or the full extent of the settlement cannot be defined, because it extends further to the east and west along the former stream channel and beyond it.

An exceptional example on the site is a larger dwelling structure that was divided into several rooms, at least two of which were for domestic occupation and an antechamber. It had a ridged roof, which jutted out over the entrance on the south side. The eastern wall was also extended to provide protection against the wind. Traces of a hearth were discovered next to it.

Hearths were significant structures within the settlement and were mainly built outside the houses. They were circular or oval in plan and were built of river cobbles, coated with a layer of clay. The storage pits that were discovered directly beneath the former ground surface also provided important data. The excavated remains indicate their differing sizes and forms, whilst their contents often also provided a further means of distinction. They could be filled with complete vessels or potsherds, charcoal, daub, or simply filled with earth. They were used for storing pottery and crops. Storage pits with circular lean-to roofs, probably used as granaries, were special structures on the site, as was the still unexplained stone plateau.

The finds are dominated by pottery: bowls with inverted rims, jars, bowls, dishes, amphorae and pithoi, which will provide an accurate date for the site and the individual structures.

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