

Gradišče above Hrašče

IRN 539	Podnanos – Gradišče above Hrašče archaeological site
<i>Motorway section</i>	HC Razdrto–Vipava
<i>Geographical coordinates</i>	x 421973 y 72937 z 368
<i>Primary topographical map sheet TTN5</i>	Ajdovščina 46
<i>Cadastral register</i>	c.c. Šentvid pod Nanosom
<i>Site type</i>	Settlement, barrow
<i>Period</i>	Bronze Age, Early Iron Age, Roman period
<i>Fieldwork method and date</i>	Archaeological survey 1998
<i>Fieldwork director</i>	Božidar Slapšak
<i>Field survey area</i>	260 ha
<i>Site archive kept by</i>	Faculty of Arts, Department of Archaeology, Ljubljana University

The prehistoric fortified settlement at the site of Podnanos – Gradišče above Hrašče was located by the Institute for the Protection of the Natural and Cultural Heritage, Nova Gorica as part of their regular activities during topographical surveys in the 1974/75 season (Osmuk, 1977). On the basis of the evaluation and assessment of the proposed variants of highway route M 10-7 (section 0374 Razdrto–Selo) undertaken for the area by the Institute in 1995, variant 1N was confirmed. This variant proposed a long tunnel in the area of Barnice, which avoided the scheduled area of cultural and natural heritage. The rationalisation of the route was submitted in 1997: three new variants were proposed (Barnice, Barnice 1 and Barnice 2), all of them encroaching upon the periphery of the scheduled archaeological site. The Cultural Heritage Office of the Republic of Slovenia suggested to the investor that further archaeological surveys be performed.

The task included the complementary evaluation of the site as archaeological and landscape heritage (assessment of the nature, preservation, surface visibility and landscape integrality of the archaeological remains), the evaluation of information potential in the preserved archaeological evidence (assessment of the value of the site as an archive of archaeological information) and, above all, a precise spatial definition of the site within the scheduled area. The latter was clearly a priority for the investor in view of the proposals, but it concerned the delicate question of the existing methodology for defining the boundaries of scheduled areas on the basis of modern land plots or boundaries.

The first phase of the multi-stage survey was undertaken (field survey and recording of physical structures of the archaeological site, non-quantitative survey of the surface distribution of archaeological material, archaeological aerial photo-interpretation, the construction of the GIS base for the area in question, analysis of plot division and an analysis of communications). The investor was of the opinion that this phase yielded sufficient data for determining the route and thus further surveys (quantitative surface and sub-surface survey, geodesic



measurements of structural remains, geophysical survey and stratigraphic trial trenching) were unnecessary.

The team recorded the prehistoric fortified settlement at the location of Podnanos – Gradišče above Hrašče, using a combination of aerial photo-interpretation and surface survey. This permitted the determination of its extreme external boundaries (a total surface area of 10 ha), as well as possible expansion phases and some elements of internal organisation (11 sectors) with a considerable degree of certainty. Traces of use outside the boundary of the fortified settlement that cannot be accounted for by recorded recent cultivation of land were revealed by aerial photo-interpretation and should be treated as potential archaeological sites. They are either landscape structures (field boundaries, communications, etc.), the organisation of which does not match the documented 19th and 20th century structures (in the Franciscan cadastral register and the modern cadastral register) or traces that indicate more intensive forms of use (enclosures or settlement remains). Some structures can be associated with recent military activities (entrenchments, trenches or paths across plots).

From the aspect of landscape heritage, it was possible to establish a typical stratified landscape complex with an interesting adaptation to earlier intensive use in the core area of the prehistoric settlement and its immediate surroundings. The dynamics of agricultural use and development of communications were also recorded: local communications (development of field paths associated with more intensive agricultural use), regional (paths to Nanos) and super-regional (“Roman road” and “postal” or main road) in the broader background of the last two centuries.

The prehistoric fortified settlement on Gradišče above Hrašče belongs to the category of “primary hillforts”, which functioned as central settlements at the micro-regional level and are the basic units of the regional settlement system of later prehistory (the Bronze Age and Iron Age). Surface finds confirm a date in the Iron Age, but some material indicates that occupation began as early as the Bronze Age. Roman finds indicate a typical continuity of hillfort settlement in the first phases of the Roman occupation. The site is thus defined as a hillfort with considerable settlement continuity over a period of at least 1,000 or even 1,500 years. The 10 ha defended area places it in the category of larger settlements. Hence, it conforms to the criterion of a central settlement within a micro-region which comprises the upper Vipava valley (Gornja Vipavska Dolina) between the Slatna (Tabor) ridge and the Močilnik stream basin below the village of Razdrto. The supra-regional communication from the Vipavska Dolina valley to-

wards Razdrto (Ocra), known as the "Roman road", runs from the direction of the town of Vipava (Gradišče near Vipava) or Ajdovščina over the Slatna ridge (the saddle 348 m above sea-level between the summit of Tabor 364 m and the gable of Šentvid 420 m), across Barnice and along the slope of Nanos towards Gradišče above Razdrto. This gives the site a special position in the regional communication system. Its status is comparable to that of the succeeding Šentvid (Podnanos) market as the micro-regional trading centre and a post where horses were exchanged at the beginning of the ascent of the main or "post" road towards Razdrto.

As a cultural monument, the hillfort typically dominates its former economic area or micro-region; it is intervisible with the nearby hillforts at Razdrto (Gradišče near Razdrto and Goli Vrh) and Vrhi (Tabor near Vrabče, Gradišče near Štjak) It is only intervisible with the dominant Sv. Pavel hillfort near Planina in the Vipavska Dolina, because the line of sight to the west is blocked by the Slatna ridge. The recent cultivation and local communication forms are significantly organised along the axis of Gradišče and the archaeological structures on its slopes. The military complex on Barnice was part of the so-called "Mussolini line" in the hinterland of the border with Yugoslavia in the 1920s. It revived some of the original functions of Gradišče in an interesting way, and within the transformed context these functions have remained topical to the present.

At the regional level, the prehistoric fortified settlement on Gradišče above Hrašče is considered part of the then current system that commanded the passes over Ocra, as key points on trans-continental routes between the Mediterranean (or Italy) and the Danube region. It can be concluded that the site of Gradišče above Hrašče must be classified as archaeological heritage, which requires the highest degree of protection. Morphological analyses of the site indicated an interesting division of the settlement area. In spite of the limitations imposed by the instability of the underlying geology, heavy erosion and irregular sedimentation of archaeological layers, potentially favourable conditions for the acquisition of archaeological information by excavation were established over a considerable part of the site. No remains could be defined with any certainty outside the area of the fortified settlement by procedures planned for the first phase of surveys. The areas indicated by aerial photo-interpretation therefore require examination by more intensive forms of archaeological research (systematic sub-surface survey, geophysics and trial trenching). The location of the cemetery associated with the settlement is not known.

A comprehensive evaluation of the site within "spatial memory" and an assessment of the effect of planned

interventions can only be undertaken after consideration of all the above-mentioned aspects. These include the precisely defined information potential of the site as an archive of archaeological information, the recognition of surface remains as immoveable cultural heritage, the site as a dominant landscape feature, recorded landscape dynamics associated with the site, as well as the position of the site within the regional context. Our task was to look in that direction.

BOŽIDAR SLAPŠAK

References

- OSMUK, NADA, "Gradišče nad Hraščami (Podnanos)", *Varstvo spomenikov*, No. 21, Ljubljana 1977, p. 190.
- SLAPŠAK, BOŽIDAR, *Poročilo o dodatnih arheoloških raziskavah za odločanje o morebitni racionalizaciji trase hitre ceste M 10-7, odsek 0374 Razdrto–Selo na širšem območju varovanega območja kulturne in naravne dediščine Podnanos – Gradišče nad Hraščami*, Ljubljana 1998.