

“IN THE WAKE OF THE ORDER” AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXHIBITION IN THE KITCHEN

KLÁRA P. FISCHL¹ – TAMÁS PUSZTAI²

Hungarian Archaeology Vol. 11. (2022) Issue 4, pp. 66–70.

The research project focusing on the Bronze Age settlements and their network in the neighbourhood of more than 20 villages at the foothills of the Bükk Mountains has been running for ten years. It started as a cooperation between the University of Miskolc, the Herman Ottó Museum, and the University of Cologne, and became completed later with the Institute of Archaeology, Research Centre for the Humanities of the ELRN and the Hungarian National Museum. The international project bears the name BORBAS – Borsod Region Bronze Age Settlements. The lead researchers are Klára P. Fischl (University of Miskolc, ELRN RCH IA), Tobias L. Kienlin (University of Cologne) and Tamás Pusztai (Hungarian National Museum). In the present summary, we wish to introduce some aspects, key objectives, and results obtained, as well as the conferences, publications and exhibition related to the research project that reached its ten-year mark in 2022. In doing so, we are focusing on the ways of presenting an archaeological programme for a local community and the wider audience.

Keywords: Bronze Age, exhibition, BORBAS 10, order, social return, Hungarian Genius Integrated Talent Support Programme

We have managed to detect order in several layers of the archaeological record during the past ten years of research within the frame of the BORBAS project: in the settlement network, the internal settlement structure, but also in the daily life of the communities that lived 4000 years ago at the feet of the Bükk Mountains in the Southern Borsod area.

We published our conclusions in English in Bonn, Germany, in 2018 (KIENLIN, P. FISCHL & PUSZTAI 2018) after several conference lectures and publications. The depiction of 27 archaeological sites, studied using uniform non-destructive methods that yielded a set of easily comparable data, was well received by archaeologists. Nonetheless, the mayors and inhabitants of the settlements concerned, who had been invited to the book launch, did not know what to do with the publication written in English for professionals. Thus, we prepared a book titled “In the wake of the order” in Hungarian, with particularly the layperson living at the foothills of the Bükk Mountains and in the Southern Borsod region in mind, on the spring of 2022. That volume was published by Martin Opitz Publishing and funded by the National Cultural Fund (NKA) (Fig. 1).

The settlement of Bükkábrány aided us in presenting the results of the BORBAS project. The community of the village created a new exhibition hall named the “Jószerencse háza” (the House of Good Fortune³) in 2020, the sustainability of which was secured by the place also including a hall for conferences and other



Fig. 1. Presentation of two books at the BORBAS 10 conference, one for the academic and the other for the local community

¹ University of Miskolc, ELKH BTK RI/Eötvös Loránd Research Network, Institute of Archaeology – Research Centre for the Humanities, e-mail: fkleri@gmail.com

² Hungarian National Museum, National Institute of Archaeology, e-mail: pusztaimiskolc@gmail.com

³ The name is derived from a traditional greeting of miners; most people in the area live off coal mining [editor's note].

venues including family gatherings, conferences, trainings. This place is frequently visited by locals and local school children, besides, considerable number of people from farther regions. While many municipalities decided to close down their museums and exhibition halls as a consequence of the energy crisis in the autumn of 2022, the sustainable *Jószerencse háza* is still open for the public. Klára P. Fischl and Tamás Pusztai are professional volunteers fostering the exhibition venue. They curated the 2020 exhibition “A vándorló bánya titkai” (The secrets of a wandering mine), which introduced the preventive archaeological work conducted prior to lignite extraction in Bükkábrány since 2007 and was chosen “Exhibition of the year” in 2021 (PUSZTAI & P. FISCHL 2021; <http://www.bvbt.hu>).

The *Magyar Gényusz Program (Hungarian Genius Programme)* was launched in 2022, with an aim to support the creation of exhibitions and the scientific activity of rural museological institutions. This programme opened new perspectives in introducing the results of archaeological research to local communities and integrating them into their lives. Such a complex financial support had long been awaited by the Hungarian museology sector; it now enables not only archaeological excavations or exhibitions but also project elements, basic research, conferences, or exhibitions composed of more relating layers to apply for funding. The financial support of said programme in the same year enabled us to add new layers to the ten-year-old BORBAS programme in the form of an exhibition housed by the *Jószerencse háza*. Our duty was to introduce the archaeological results now to local residents after the professionals, and involve them in the experience of the order observed in that 4000-year-old world.

Based on the book of “In the wake of the order” we accomplished the following in the *Jószerencse háza* in the summer of 2022:

1. We organised a one-month-long field workshop to excavate a dwelling of the off-tell part of the Bronze Age Kálvária-domb site near Bükkábrány in August 2022. The key objective of the dig was not to study the multi-layered settlement core but the external settlement, a feature shared by all the Bronze Age *tell* sites included in the BORBAS project. As a joint result of the geophysical surveys, systematic collection of surface finds, and set of borings for clarifying the stratigraphic relations of the place before the excavations contributed immensely to locating the buried remains of a house to unearth. Such complex systematic preliminary research was carried out on all Middle Bronze Age sites included in the project along the foothills of the Bükk Mountains (Fig. 2).
2. Based on the workshop, an international conference was held on 29–30 August 2022, where researchers from Canada, the United States, Germany, Slovakia, Romania, and Hungary analysed together the order detected during the ten-year-old BORBAS project in the 4000-year-old world at the frontier of the Great Hungarian Plain and the Bükk Mountains. The audience had an opportunity to visit the archaeological remains excavated within the framework of the project and to take part in their joint interpretation (Fig. 3).
3. Zita Horváth, rector of the University of Miskolc, opened the exhibition bearing the same title as the book, “In the wake of the order”, on the final day of the conference in front of the residents and mayors



Fig. 2. Excavation in the external settlement of the Kálvária-domb in Bükkábrány



Fig. 3. Participants of the conference BORBAS 10 visit and discuss the dig at Borsodivánka



Fig. 4. Objects of a kitchen

work – and presenting them together. This was the basic concept of the exhibition: to educate, via these juxtaposed items of old and new, not only about the Bronze Age but also the interpretation of our present-day world. Archaeological artefacts can thus be interpreted by their modern counterparts: a portable Bronze Age hearth by a recent electric hot plate with a Bonyhád pot on top (Fig. 4), a Bronze Age sieve by a recent colander (Fig. 5), and cast bronze axes by an iPhone (both prestige items in their times) in the drawer of a chest (Fig. 6). Plastic toys and die-cast Matchbox cars help interpret the function of animal figurines and cart models collected from the surface of Middle Bronze Age settlements (Fig. 7).

Types of food consumed by residents of the Bronze Age settlements were displayed in a fridge. Based on the evaluation of the archaeozoological record, the most popular fish at the Bronze Age Borsodivánka settlement was pike (Fig. 8).



Fig. 6. Prestige items



Fig. 5. Order in the kitchen drawer

of the 20 settlements concerned by the research. The graphic design of the exhibition was made and prepared by the *Á-Tóth and barátai* graphic studio. Like the book, the exhibition introduced to the locals an order outlined by the results of research in Bronze Age sites in the surroundings of their settlements. With consideration to their daily life, we compared certain aspects of life today and 4000 years ago by pairing items from both times – related to, for example, settlement structure, house design, games, or



Fig. 7. Bronze Age animal figurines and a die-cast Matchbox car



Fig. 8. Lecturers of the conference BORBAS 10 did lean on the exhibition already during the introduction of archaeozoological results



Fig. 9. Mayors of the villages concerned by the project holding the datasheets of the sites in the surroundings of their settlements

The exhibition was designed to be easily moved, including fitting the entire installation in a van of the village maintenance service. It was of key importance that the exhibition tells a story for all settlements concerned by the research project, and more than what was already presented in the book. In this spirit did we create datasheets of the sites, that contained not only descriptions of the particular archaeological sites and the research and survey methods applied but also a recollection of personal impressions that we and our assistance had in the settlements in the past ten years. It was a memorable event when we and our volunteers from all over the country were invited to an “archaeologists’ wellness weekend” in the spa of Bogács after a field walking event, and the mineral water helped regenerate our exhausted muscles after two days of stooping after findings, or when we and nearly all the inhabitants of Gelej village ended up in the wine cellars dug into the Bronze Age site after a field visit.

We also proposed in the exhibition a future utilisation of the results: the Bronze Age settlement network in the surroundings of the villages at the feet of the Bükk Mountains is remarkably suitable for being presented as a thematic bicycle route connecting present-day remnants of a 4000-year-old, harmonious lost world in Southern Borsod. Involving the record of the Hungarian Conquest Period or the Middle Ages is a lot easier and more traditional way of fostering local identity; it is enough to think about the projects and community initiatives focusing on the preservation of medieval castles in Hungary, or the research projects on medieval churches and monasteries realised by community funding. The same results seem more challenging to achieve in the case of relics of a more distant archaeological period.

The exhibition revealed for locals a network formed by the archaeological sites involved. This network – akin to that of medieval monasteries in many Hungarian settlements – may offer an opportunity for the communities of present-day villages to establish twin town relationships based on archaeological ties.

The book introducing the project for locals sold exceptionally well, and many of the mayors indicated already at the opening ceremony of the exhibition that they would be glad to display it in their settlements (Fig. 9). A museum pedagogical program (developed by Krisztina Rónyai), and a series of lectures tailored to all settlements completed the exhibition, thus making the social return of the results of archaeological research absolutely sure.

4. The blog called “Bronz-kór”⁴, nearly as old as the BORBAS project, became supplemented with new digital content and videos. The technical background of the blog has been provided by the Pazirik Ltd. The key concept, the process of the exhibition’s development, and its background have been published in the following blog post: <https://bronzkor.hu/hogyan-epits-kiallitast-hogyan-epult-a-mi-kiallitasunk/>

⁴ The name is a pun meaning both “Bronze Age” and “the Bronze disease”, referring to the almost-unhealthy enthusiasm of the researchers involved [editor’s note].

The latest development related to the blog comprised an introduction of our research methods via YouTube. The series titled “Te is lehetsz régész” (You can also be an archaeologist) comprised five videos by Márton Takács on field walking, the order of archaeological sites, geophysical survey, the production of replica pottery (by Ádám Balázs), and excavation, providing a profound insight into the background of research and the exhibition:

<https://bronzkor.hu/a-rend-nyomaban/>

<https://bronzkor.hu/hogyan-lehetsz-te-is-regesz-1-topografia-rend/>

<https://bronzkor.hu/hogyan-lehetsz-te-is-regesz-2-az-asatas/>

<https://bronzkor.hu/hogyan-lehetsz-te-is-regesz-3-terepbejaras/>

<https://bronzkor.hu/hogyan-lehetsz-te-is-regesz-4-geofizika-video/>

<https://bronzkor.hu/hogyan-lehetsz-te-is-regesz-5-keramiakeszites-video/>

The travelling exhibition, blog, YouTube videos, museum pedagogy programs, workshop, and conference based on the book “In the wake of the order” were compiled in a way that is very similar to the structure of non-destructive research carried out on Middle Bronze Age sites at the feet of the Bükk Mountains within the frame of the BORBAS project. In our hopes, this complex presentation of our results was capable of raising the attention and interest of its non-professional audience.

REFERENCES

Kienlin, T. L., P. Fischl K. & Pusztai T. (2018). *Borsod Region Bronze Age Settlement (BORBAS). Catalogue of the Early to Middle Bronze Age Tell Sites Covered by Magnetometry and Surface Survey*. Universitätsforschungen zur Prähistorischen Archäologie. Band 317, Bonn: Dr. Rudolf Habelt Verlag.

Pusztai T. & P. Fischl K. (2021). A vándorló bánya titkai – régészeti kiállítás a bükkábrányi bányász emlékházban Magyarország egyik legnagyobb ásatásáról. *Magyar Régészet* 10:1. <http://www.magyarregeszet.hu/?p=13413>

P. Fischl K., Kienlin, T. L. & Pusztai T. (2022). *A rend nyomában. 4000 éves települések a Bükkalján és a Borsodi-síkság területén*. Budapest: Martin Opitz.

www.bronzkor.hu