CULTURAL AND LANDSCAPE CHANGES IN SOUTH-EAST HUNGARY

I

Reports on the Gyomaendrőd Project

Edited by
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INTRODUCTION

ARCHAEOLINGUA is a new publication series jointly edited by the Archaeological Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and the Linguistic Institute of the University of Innsbruck. It will publish monographs and collective volumes dedicated to what – in a very wide sense – may be called "Kulturwissenschaft", dealing with all aspects of human culture in prehistoric and early historic settings. Archaeology and Linguistics (again both understood in their widest application) will be the main supporting pillars of this interdisciplinary approach, which is also indicated by the title of the series. To prevent any misunderstanding as to the semantic content of this symbolic title the editors wish to stress that it should be understood as the abbreviation of an additive compound (the linguists would call it a "dvandva"): archaeology + language.

Archaeology is concerned with the recovery and interpretation of factual remnants of earlier cultures. For prehistoric periods, but also for historic periods in the absence of written testimony, this is often enough our only source of knowledge. Linguistics, together with philology and other associated techniques, is able to exploit language itself as a source of information, for instance where vocabulary or names reach back into prehistoric periods and thus may furnish semantic information about concepts of the past; for historical periods information which is contained in the form of written texts may be put to use. In the case of badly recorded, undeciphered or less well known languages this involves special interpretative techniques which often depend on the findings of the archaeologists. Linguistic documents such as inscriptions on material objects recovered by the archaeologist are in this sense also objects of archaeology. On the other hand, archaeological facts may need ethnic or linguistic interpretation. For these reasons archaeology and linguistics are interrelated and interdependent in more than one sense, and in many cases their findings will be mutually illuminating and will thus fit into a wider horizon of understanding cultural networks. It goes without saying that in order to obtain wide-ranging results interdisciplinary ways of approach are necessary: the archaeologist as well as the linguist will need the help of specialists in the fields of history, art, comparative mythology, ethnology, anthropology, genetics, palaeozoology, palaeobotanics, palaeoclimatology – to name only a few.

Besides such studies which – in a general or methodological way – deal with the interrelated subject of "archaeology and language" ARCHAEOLINGUA will publish studies in the prehistory and early history of central and (south)east central Europe, with special emphasis on the Danube-Alpine-Adriatic region which is interrelated in many ways, and within this wider area more specifically on Hungary in her present-day or historical confines. In accordance with the aim of arriving at a comprehensive cultural phenomenology and morphology interdisciplinary methods of research will be considered instruments vital to the task.

The series which will be supplemented by a "Series minor" for the publication of lectures and small monographs intends to become an international forum of interdisciplinary research within the outlines mentioned and will be open to all qualified researchers – individuals and teams – in the field. It will also be in the position to publish the *Acta* of international meetings dedicated to subjects within the above-mentioned range.

ARCHAEOLINGUA accepts contributions in German, English or French. If possible they should be processed by means of one of the current systems of electronic word-processing and submitted both on diskette and as a print-out. Enquiries and all further correspondence should be directed to ARCHAEOLINGUA at the address of the Archaeological Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, care of Erzsébet Jerem, Úri utca 49, H-1250 Budapest.

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The Editors

FOREWORD

Archaeological sites vary widely in type and furnish different kinds of information. Although burial places, in general, yield more attractive finds, they teach us comparatively little about the ordinary life situation and environmental conditions. Settlements on the other hand reflect everyday life in all its apects, e.g., settlement patterns, house types, fortifications, ways of life, religious beliefs and practices, agriculture and animal husbandry (hunting, fishing, gathering), pottery and tool making, metallurgy, diet etc. Even more important, settlements closely interact with their environment. Their inhabitants exploited several ecological niches. Certain cultures preferred well-defined environmental types, while others changed them during the course of their development (e.g., they moved from shore-lines to forested steppes) because they wanted, or were forced, to change their way of life. All in all, settlement and environment represented a unity even as they do now.

It is exactly for this reason that the Archaeological Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences decided to carry out a large-scale archaeological research project on settlements in the early eighties which was started in the area of Gyomaendrőd, Békés County, in 1984.

The aim of this project is the reconstruction of changes in the settlement structure of different prehistoric and early historical periods, the determination of coeval settlement types and, finally, the study of the interactions between environment, settlements and man in this so-called "Microregion". The chronological range of these studies extends from the early Neolithic period till the end of the Turkish occupation (late 17th century).

In the selection of the Microregion, the main consideration was that it should contain a large number of archaeological sites representing, if possible, all archaeological periods. Since we knew that the systematic field surveys of the Archaeological Topography of Hungary had resulted in the discovery of an enormous number of sites, the Gyomaendrőd area seemed most suitable for our purposes. These intensive field surveys produced no less than 226 sites in this area of ca 42 km^2, that is, about 5.4 sites per km^2 which is far more than in any other surveyed region in the country (Jankovich – Makkay – Szőke 1989). The 226 sites discovered in this microregion represent eleven archaeological periods. The most commonly represented periods include the early Middle Ages (10-13th centuries) and the Neolithic. The late Middle Ages, the Turkish occupation period and the Germanic period (4-5th century A.D.) are underrepresented.

The key to the high site density is probably the rich soil that was abundantly watered by the constantly shifting branches of the Körös river. In fact the region divides into two parts: the slopes of the Maros river covered with loess and dissected by pleistocene riverbeds on the one hand, and a part of the Körös basin covered with meadow clay on the other. In fact this geographical division also played an essential role in the selection of this area. We were curious to study the effects of different environments (lying so close to each other) on settlement pattern and evolution.

This project, aimed at the reconstruction of environmental history as well as human settlement evolution in such a comparatively large region, is rather unique. There are only a few similar studies to which it can be compared, such as the German "Küstengebiet" Project (Kossack et al. 1984; Jankuhn et al. 1984) and the German Project "Siedlungsarchäologische Untersuchungen im Alpenvorland" (Becker et al. 1985). They are different in so far as, for instance, the Küstengebiet Project only covered a time span from the 5th century B.C. to the 11th century A.D.

In the Settlement Archaeology Project we have basically considered excavation as the main research method, putting special emphasis on full excavation, at least of smaller settlements from different archaeological periods. The excavation of 226 settlements would be, however,

a task much too great for even a generation of archaeologists. We have excavated, therefore, only the more promising sites or, for example, settlements of the same period in different environments.

Beside excavations we also used extensive field surveys, systematic surface sherd (and other classes of find) collections, aerial photography, geophysical prospecting and core drilling. We applied these methods not only at sites but also in uninhabited areas in order to reconstruct former environments with particular concern given to hydrology.

In the Settlement Archaeology Project, the main part of the field work was done by members of the Archaeological Institute. Nevertheless, specialists from Eötvös Lóránd University, the Eötvös Lóránd Geophysical Institute, the State Geological Survey, the Museum of Natural History and the Hungarian Museum of Agriculture also participated in the field work and the evaluation of the scientific investigations. Finally we must mention the participation of Italian archaeologists led by Dr. Bruno Genito of IsMEO and geophysicists under the leadership of Dr. Mauro Cucarzi of the Fondazione Lerici in the framework of bilateral agreements between the Archaeological Institute on the one side and the two Italian institutions on the other.

As the above enumeration shows, both the excavations and their scientific evaluation have been carried out by means of a carefully planned interdisciplinary approach. Specialists from the following disciplines have been working on the project in close cooperation with archaeologists: remote sensing, geophysical prospecting, palaeohydrology, geomorphology, pedology, petrography, physical anthropology, archaeozoology, malacology, archaeobotany.

The present volume publishes a small selection of articles: in fact, the scientific evaluation of the first excavations in the Microregion. The articles cover a wide variety of topics. Among the reports of strictly archaeological nature there are preliminary and final papers on settlement excavations starting with the early Neolithic Körös culture and ending with the Árpád period and also on excavations of cemeteries of the late Migration period and of the early Middle Ages. Besides these – and emphasizing the multidisciplinary nature of both the field work and the scientific evaluation – one can find articles combining geophysical prospecting with archaeological approaches and/or the application of palaeoenvironmental techniques with geoarchaeology. There is a report of a complete settlement excavation in which archaeological, archaeozoological and -ichthyological components are integrated.

In the meantime, another interdisciplinary volume is being prepared, with special emphasis on internal evolution of a Sarmatian site.

We seriously hope that these volumes will be followed by yet others, and that as the final result of the project we shall be able to work out the outlines of the environmental and human-economic history of the area selected as the scene of the first large-scale research project in the history of Hungarian archaeology.

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Sándor Bökönyi

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