

## OTHER/WORLD – MYSTERIES OF BRONZE AGE LIFE IN NORTHEASTERN HUNGARY

Temporary Archaeological Exhibit of the Herman Ottó Museum in Miskolc

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*The new international travelling exhibit by Miskolc's Herman Ottó Museum has opened in Miskolc on the 13<sup>th</sup> of October 2015 after a brief "world premier" in Poland. The exhibition presents the mysterious world of the Early/Middle and Late Bronze Age in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County. This exhibit approaches the secrets of the period between 2300 and 900 B.C.E. from various aspects, displaying the most modern research methods, the range of possible interpretations of the results up to now and unpublished finds alongside the most beautiful pieces from the museum's permanent collection. As the title suggests, the Different/World exhibit will provide visitors with an exciting journey through time, where they can ponder the differences – or perhaps similarities – of human nature and culture in time and space together with the archaeologists. The exhibition stimulates its visitors to reevaluate everything that they believed they knew about our ancestors' everyday life, rituals and beliefs. Is this world truly different? How might this "different world" of the Bronze Age have really looked?*



Fig. 1: Photograph: István Kiss Tanne

Visitors entering the first room of the exhibit can become familiar with the world of the tell cultures of the Early/Middle Bronze Age (ca. 2300–1400 B.C.E.), the concept of the tell and the process of its development.



Fig. 2: The installation modeling the structure of Middle Bronze Age tell settlements displays the research results of the BORBAS project (photograph: István Kiss Tanne)

First, the non-invasive archaeological research program of the University of Miskolc, the University of Cologne and the Herman Ottó Museum (the [BORBAS Project](#)) is introduced. The goal of this long-term project is to construct as detailed a picture as possible of the Early and Middle Bronze Age settlement structure in the Borsodi Mezőség region through the integrated analysis of aerial images, archaeomagnetic surveys, systematic field surveys and metal detection surveys without performing actual archaeological excavations. Each of the six case studies presented (Tard-Tatárdomb, Emőd-Nagyhalom, Mezőcsát-Laposhalom, Tiszabábolna-Fehérlő-tanya and Tiszakeszi-Szódadomb) outstandingly illustrate the complex cognitive system that may have been the determining factor for the





Fig. 3: Visitors can become familiar with the symbolism of the circle at the center of the room (at the center of the imitation tell) (photograph: István Kiss Tanne)



Fig. 4: A nearly life-size illustrated reconstruction shows the stratigraphy of the tell settlements and the household furnishings of the Middle Bronze Age (photograph: István Kiss Tanne)

the related installation presents the material remains of everyday life selected from the finds discovered at the sites that are well known from the professional literature (e.g. Ároktő, Mezőkeresztes, Tibolddaróc, Füzesabony, Vatta and Nagyrozvágy). During the examination of the finds it is possible to compare the

emergence of the Early and Middle Bronze Age tell settlements. The internal structures of the settlements form concentric circles, which were also an essential decorative motif for the ceramics, metalwork and bone objects of the period. The cognitive analysis of the circle as an archetype was placed at the center of the installation that modeled the structure of the settlements.

In the next unit of the exhibit it is possible to get a glimpse of the tangible world of everyday life four thousand years ago through the previously (partially) excavated settlements within the county. The stratigraphy of the tell settlements is displayed in a nearly life size illustrated reconstruction, while



Fig. 5: Middle Bronze Age tools made from antler (photograph: Gabriella Kertész)

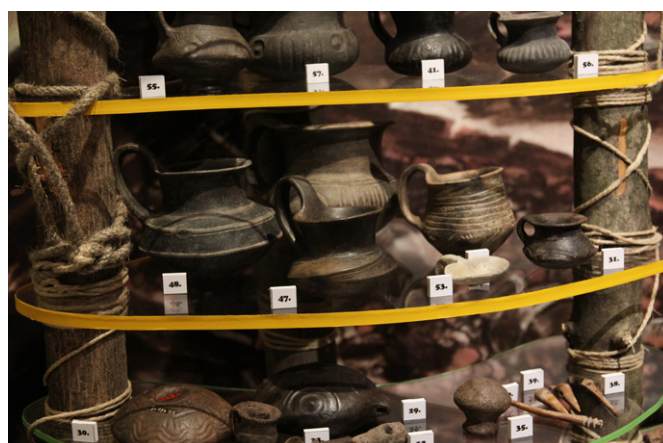


Fig. 6: Pieces of tableware sets from the tell settlements (photograph: Gabriella Kertész)





Fig. 7: Bird-shaped vessel from Mezőcsát  
(photograph: Gabriella Kertész)



Fig. 8: The bronze hoard from Tiszaladány is one of the emblematic Middle Bronze Age finds from Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county (photograph: Judit Koós)



Fig. 9: Reconstruction of the attire of a Middle Bronze Age man and woman from Borsod County (drawing: József Nagy S.)

house types, the lay-outs of their interiors, the work that went on inside them, the personal belongings and tools and the children's toys with their parallels from our 21<sup>st</sup> century material culture.

The final two stations in the Middle Bronze Age room bring to life the Middle Bronze Age people themselves – upon whom we still have little information from the archaeological record – as well as their beliefs. What did they look like? What did they wear? How did they make their marvelous bronze objects? How and where did they bury their dead? What did they give the deceased for their journey to the afterlife? Here the visitor to the exhibit can encounter finds that for the most part have yet to be published and are connected to Early/Middle Bronze Age apparel, metalworking and funerary customs.

Arriving in the second room visitors find themselves in an entirely “different world” than previously; the closed microcosm created by the strict rules of the Middle Bronze Age disappears, providing space (literally) for the world of the Late Bronze Age (ca. 1400–900 B.C.E.). The next section of the exhibit pays its respects to the first burst of globalization for humankind, when space opens throughout Europe, cultural connections become more extensive, human communities become more mobile and the objects used become more universal. The Late Bronze Age communities





*Fig. 10: Photograph: István Kiss Tanne*



*Fig. 11: Late Bronze Age grave from Pácin, with the deposits of vessels from Oszlár and Igrici in the background (photograph: István Kiss Tanne)*

take control of previously unexploited ecological zones and their network of settlements reflects the image of a hierarchical society. Alongside the hill forts appear extensive, open settlements as well as smaller farmstead-type settlements. The emphasis of agriculture shifts towards more intensive cultivation and the rearing of large livestock. New types of technological processes are introduced in both the areas of ceramics and metalworking. Two-colored fired ceramics with a polished surface that imitated the forms of metal vessels appear and bronze objects are manufactured through much more refined processes. These technological innovations are exemplified by a rich selection of objects from the museum's collection. As evidence of the reorganization of society, in connection with the finds from Igrici and Oszlár there is an opportunity to study the custom of feasting and the questions surrounding the deposits of vessels hidden underground in the 1300s B.C.E.

What is truly striking alongside all of this is the spread of the objects of the period over great distances. Parallels to the objects made in the Carpathian Basin at this time appear at such geographically remote places such as the areas of present-day Germany and Scandinavia. These highly detailed bronze objects are most often found by archaeologists as treasure hoards; during the Late Bronze Age precious metals were deposited in quantities and of a quality never before seen. Could these treasures be the legacy of „chieftains”, hidden during turbulent times, or can they be interpreted as the loot of victorious warriors?

Should we consider them stores of raw materials to be used later by masters of bronze work, or perhaps offerings to supernatural forces? Essentially, there are as many possible explanations as there are finds. At



*Fig. 12: Elements of male and female apparel from the Late Bronze Age (photograph: István Kiss Tanne)*



Fig. 13: Various types of finds from Late Bronze Age treasure hoards (photograph: István Kiss Tanne)



Fig. 14: Extraordinary burial from Pácin-Alharaszt



Fig. 15: Ornament of the gods or symbol of power?  
Enormous bronze spiral from Abaújdevecser

the exhibit, visitors can get to know bronze hoard No. II from Bükkszentlászló and hoard No. IV from Pácin as well as the discovery of treasure hoard No. II from Tállya.

the ever increasing number of known so-called “burials within the settlement”. At first glance these finds may seem peculiar, but if we inspect the phenomenon more closely a far more interesting picture unfolds before us. Perhaps it is a new kind of interpretation of the concept of life, death and communal existence? The most astonishing find discovered at Pácin-Alharaszt, the “goat-headed man”, is also displayed at the exhibition.

The secrets of the “different world” of the Bronze Age fully come together in the final room of the exhibit. An extraordinary object is in this dark, mystical separate chamber. The enormous bronze spiral found by József Varga on the outskirts of Abaújdevecser is surrounded by numerous mysteries. Was it used within the context of rituals to communicate with the supernatural, or was it possibly to express their veneration for these forces? This final setting provides an opportunity to contemplate the question accompanying the entire exhibit: Different/World – is there really a difference?

The exhibit may be visited every day except for Mondays from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. until June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016 at the Papszeri Building of the Herman Ottó Museum (3530 Miskolc, Papszer 1).