

## REVIEW

**Asszonyok – Férfiak – Kapcsolatok. Régészeti tanulmányok a késő bronzkori (Kr. e. 1650/1600 – Kr. e. 800/750) Nyugat-Dunántúl történelméhez I-II. (Women – Men – Connections. Archaeological studies on the Late Bronze Age (1650/1600 – 800/750 BC) of Western Transdanubia I-II)**

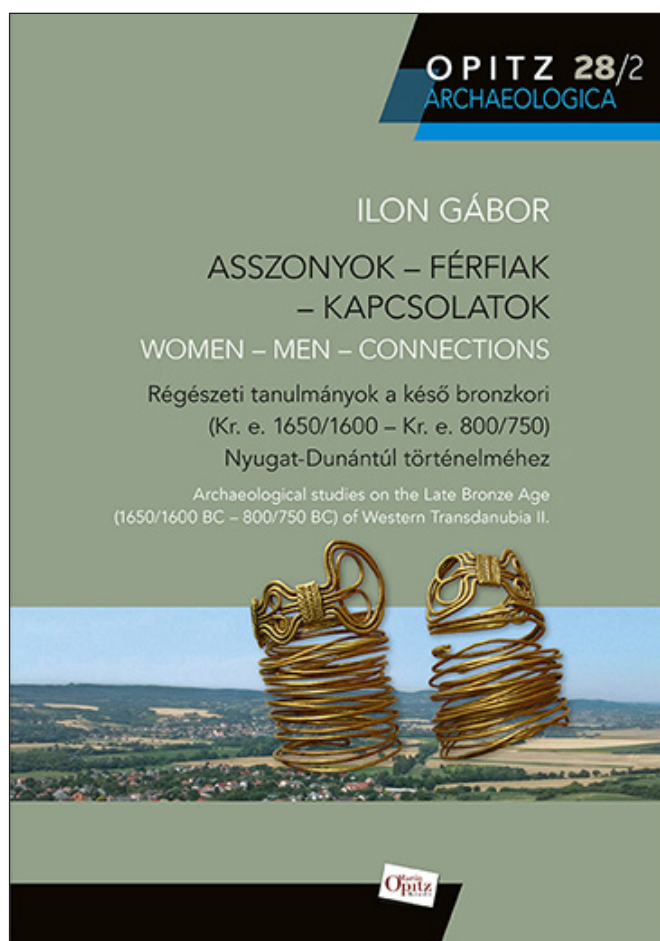
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*Gábor Ilon's two-volume work was published by Martin Opitz Publishing. The author outlines his goals in the introduction of the book: "to provide a summary of the region under study... a readable overview, so that as many people as possible can acquire new knowledge, get familiar with the era, as well as to provide new information for professionals." By summarising the four decades he spent doing archaeological research, revising his earlier writings, and adding studies written by invited researchers to this backbone, he aims to provide a more complete and comprehensive picture of the Late Bronze Age history of Western Transdanubia in the 17th–8th century BC than ever. With great skill and a wide-ranging survey of the respective literature, he traces the history of this period, the two great cultural groups, the Tumulus and the Urn-field complexes, in the area under study, sharing his views on the daily life, place in society, social hierarchy, religious life, and beliefs of the people related to them.*

The first volume consists of eleven chapters, the last containing a bibliography, a list of abbreviations, and the authors' names. Chapter 1 is the introduction, and Chapter 10 is the summary; both are available in full in English translation. For the other chapters, the chapter and sub-chapter headings in the table of contents and the captions in Volume 2 are bilingual.

Chapter 1 contains a 'Subjective and Professional Introduction' and the author's aims. The area under study covers approximately 15,792 km<sup>2</sup> of the counties of Győr-Moson-Sopron, Vas, Veszprém, and Zala. The author outlines the Late Bronze Age history of this area based on the results of archaeo-



*Ilon Gábor: Asszonyok – Férfiak – Kapcsolatok. Régészeti tanulmányok a késő bronzkori (Kr. e. 1650/1600 – Kr. e. 800/750) Nyugat-Dunántúl történelméhez I-II. (Women – Men – Connections. Archaeological studies on the Late Bronze Age (1650/1600 – 800/750 BC) of Western Transdanubia I-II.)*

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logical research and related fields, but he indicates that the emerging picture, although incomplete and full of white spots, is the result of decades of systematic research carried out not only by himself but also by renowned early archaeologists and recent colleagues.

Chapters 2–4 are a kind of introduction to the main topic, the Late Bronze Age. Chapter 2, entitled ‘*Research history and chronological setting*’, is divided into three sub-chapters on research history and the Early and Middle Bronze Age cultures, as well as the emergence, history, and chronology of the two major cultural complexes (the Tumulus and Urnfield cultures) inhabiting the study area in the period in focus. The chapter also includes two case studies framing the third sub-chapter on Late Bronze Age cultures and their chronology in the region. One of them presents an interpretation of the settlement finds discovered in Nagymizdó-Várdomb in 2019, a site assigned to the Magyarád–Věteřov–Böheimkirchen cultural complex representing the formative phase of the Tumulus culture; its appendix is a petrographic analysis of the stone club or mace head found there by Bernadett Bajnóczi and György Szakmány. The other case study is a paper by Attila Molnár on *An Early Iron Age cemetery at Bezi*; this topic points towards a new period, the Iron Age.

Chapter 3 is ‘*Main components of the human environment in Western Transdanubia in the Late Bronze Age*’. The chapter discusses in three sub-chapters the reconstruction possibilities of the human environment, the flora, the fauna, and the impact of farming on the environment. The sub-chapter on flora draws on the research of Pál Sümegi and his colleagues, while the part on fauna is based on, among others, the publications of László Bartosiewicz, István Vörös, and Beáta Tugya, as well as the unpublished analytic results of Gábor Nagy. In the context of the environmental impact of farming, he first considers the potential role of the Tumulus culture in the use of space, while in the discussion of the Urnfield Period, he covers both traditional settlements and the centres of power established on high ground, including Velem–Szt. Vid. The related case study, entitled *Bird-shaped miniature vessel from Velem–St. Vid* was also written by him.

The fourth and last of the introductory chapters is entitled ‘*Bronze Age humans in the region*’. The author starts by drawing attention to the difficulties of reconstructing the Bronze Age population and a brief overview of the situation in the Early and Middle Bronze Ages. Despite the difficulties of investigation (caused by the widespread practising of the cremation rite, which appeared first alongside inhumation and gradually became predominant), the survival of the Middle Bronze Age population into the Tumulus culture and the appearance of other groups in the Urnfield culture could be confirmed. The shortcomings that make it difficult to specify conclusions are also mentioned, including the lack of analyses on the role of plant and animal nutrients, the difficulty of distinguishing between local people and outliers, and the fact that genetic analyses are at an initial stage. The chapter is accompanied by two case studies: a revised and expanded version of a previously published paper by Gábor Ilon on the *History of communities occupying the Répce Valley in the Late Bronze Age* and another by Attila Mrenka, entitled ‘*Without Context? Late Bronze Age finds from a recent survey in the Sopron Museum’s collection area*’.

The outlining of the comprehensive spatial and temporal background and natural setting of the two cultural complexes is followed by the discussion of the main themes appearing in the title in Chapters 5–8. The first one, Chapter 5, revolves around *Women*. The first part focuses on children and young women, their place and roles in the community, childbirth and childcare, and mortality, relying mainly on foreign references. The next sub-chapter discusses mature people and their tasks, for example, in agriculture, i.e. basically, the activities related to farming in and around the immediate vicinity of the house. The part on pottery making goes through the steps of the process from the preparation of the raw material to the firing of the vessels through examples from archaeological sites in Hungary and abroad, briefly discussing some typical Tumulus or Urnfield-style vessel types and ornaments, the pottery inventories of the two complexes, as well as the use and role of vessels in everyday life, burials, and deposits. The sub-chapter on food preparation and eating thoroughly examines the whole process, from the basics to consumption. A case study entitled, ‘*A knife in the grave. Data on the character of Urnfield period knives*’, completes this part. The chapter also includes a discussion of spinning and weaving, including the related raw materials, the tools, and their changes, the representations of spinning and weaving, and the only three surviving textile fragments from the area in focus. The next sub-chapter deals with women’s attire based mainly on grave finds, and costume

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representations on figurines, as well as headdress and neck jewellery, pins and pendants, brooches, arm rings, bracelets, rings, breast ornaments, belt buckles and belts from deposit finds, and concludes with a reconstruction of outer garments and footwear.

The next major chapter revolves around men, their role in the various fields of agriculture, and the consumption of beer and mead. The study mentions the results of analysis of remains obtained from pottery side fragments and the association of certain vessel types with beer-making. It also covers fishing tools, preserved fish bones and scales, the bow and spear used for hunting, and the skeletal remains of killed animals, as well as pastoral and agricultural work, the animals kept and the way in which they were kept, the appearance of the horse in the Carpathian Basin, and the tools of agriculture and their implications. The discussion of building and carving includes the houses with their interiors and furnishings as they can be reconstructed from archaeological finds, the wells that were essential to life, and the making of boats/ships, carts, and coffins. An important subsection is devoted to metalworking, summarising the related archaeological record of the area in focus. The case study concluding the sub-chapter, *On Late Bronze Age moulds in Western Transdanubia*, is connected with this last topic. The expanded and revised versions of several previous studies on metalworking by Gábor Ilon have been included in this work.

The other major sub-chapter on men focuses on the warriors of the period. The archaeological record and international research results make it possible to survey, albeit not in detail, the different weapon types from the earliest sling warriors to the elite mounted soldiers and charioteers. Three case studies accompany the chapter: one on the swords and special daggers of the Tumulus culture, another on the motifs appearing on the swords of Csöngé and Hajdúböszörmény, and a third on some symbols on swords, namely the wheel, the sun, the waterfowl and the Sun Ship. All three case studies were written by Gábor Ilon.

Chapter 7 is entitled '*Spaces of life and death*'. The first sub-chapter is devoted to the settlement network and the buildings. As a theoretical point of reference, the author adopts Albrecht Jockenhövel's approach to settlement classification, published in 1996. The chapter provides an overview of the buildings and settlements of the Tumulus culture, the transitional period, and the Urnfield culture based on excavation data, also covering the topics of water supply, natural reservoirs, wells, and settlement hierarchy. Simmering down previous results, he develops a hierarchy of settlements. The related case study, also written by Ilon, presents the early Tumulus culture settlement at Mesterháza. The other case study in this part is the work of Csilla Száraz on Late Bronze Age settlements in the Zala Hill range and along the Mura River, while the third one, also by Gábor Ilon, is entitled '*Late Tumulus–Early Urnfield Culture settlement at Boba*' and is completed by an appendix by Éva Nyerges on the archaeozoological material of the site.

The second major subchapter focuses on burials and cemeteries. The analysis of the excavated anthropological material may help determine the sex, age at death, and physical condition of the deceased, while archaeological observations can provide insight into the ideas of the community about death, the dead, and the afterlife. Besides, the analysis of clothing remains may give clues about gender and social position. The author presents the basic data of the graves of the two cultures in a sheet. Two case studies complement the text by Ilon: the first, entitled '*Bronze Age hidden by the tree canopy. The role of LiDAR surveys in the research of prehistoric landscapes*', was written by Károly Belényessy and Ernő Wolf, while the second, *Report on a preventive excavation at Farád-Dámföld*, is the work of Dávid Czigány.

The third sub-chapter, entitled '*Deposits hidden in the land – an environment formed by humans*', comprises an attempt to interpret the bronze and precious metal finds and deposits from the region, as well as observations on certain phenomena and a hypothesis based on them. It presents an overview of the literature on deposits, arranging the compiled data into sheets according to the year of discovery of the respective feature, its dating, and its setting within the landscape. Three case studies complete this sub-chapter. The first is a study by Ferenc Ujvári on *A depot from Farád*. The second is an earlier paper by Gábor Ilon, entitled '*On hand symbols...*', while the third is a joint study by Zoltán Mitre and Gábor Ilon, *Late Bronze–Early Iron Age sun sanctuary at Bozsok*.

Chapter 8 bears the title '*Levels and forms of contacts*'. In this chapter, Gábor Ilon explores the Late Bronze Age network of relations in Western Transdanubia based on the political economy model for the Bronze Age

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published by Timothy Earle and colleagues in 2015, as well as in a study with Kristian Kristiansen in 2020. He starts the discussion with a focus on the small study area and gradually widens the perspective, attempting to investigate the relationships and interactions and to outline the Late Bronze Age contact networks of Western Transdanubia. After the theoretical background, he presents the results and conclusions of the petrographic analysis of the stone record of two settlements, the Várvölgy-Nagyláz-hegy hillfort and Némethánya–Felsőerdei-dűlő. The stones arrived from an area of about 800 km in diameter to Várvölgy, while the ones found at Némethánya came from a much smaller area, mostly from the Bakony region. The datasets have revealed that owing to its central role, the hillfort at Várvölgy had access to raw material from a much larger area than the settlement at Némethánya, where stones were obtained from an average-size area. The typological analysis of the stone artefacts also outlined a similar network of connections.

The next two sub-chapters are ‘*Peaceful acquisition and trade*’ and ‘*Aspects of the mobility of people and goods: peaceful and militant – individual and group*’. The conclusion of the analyses in these two sub-chapters is that the region was predestined by its geographical position to play a cultural hub role, which probably involved the migration of groups of diverse sizes in several cases. At the same time, everyday interaction in the region took place mostly within its perimeters. The chapter concludes with three case studies. The first provides *Data to the record of weights and measuring in the region*, the second is a study by Gábor Ilon and Zsolt Kasztovszky entitled ‘*On the occasion of analysing amber finds from Velem–St. Vid*’, while the third, also written by them, presents an analysis of Late Bronze Age glass beads from Western Hungary.

Chapter 9 surveys the oeuvre of Kálmán Miske, an early archaeologist delving into the area and period under study. The volume ends with *Conclusions*.

Volume 2 is a compilation of illustrations, with 432 pages of plates, drawings, photographs, aerial photographs, maps, and reconstruction drawings, completing the chapters and sub-chapters.

The first volume gives a comprehensive picture of the Late Bronze Age of Western Transdanubia on more than seven hundred pages, covering almost all aspects of life in ten chapters. They could only be surveyed briefly in this review. Throughout his work, Gábor Ilon has repeatedly stressed that, due to the shortcomings of research, the picture he shares with the reader reflects the knowledge and understanding of a particular moment and may be refined or revised by future research. Nevertheless, the book covers the history of the area and the period in unparalleled detail, making it an important, albeit difficult, read for those interested in the subject, but also an indispensable contribution to research in the future.