

# Prehistoric Monuments and Collections in Hungary

Series Editor  
ZSOLT VISY

Edited by  
ERZSÉBET JEREM AND ZSOLT MESTER

Technical Editor  
FRUZSINA CSEH

Written by  
FRUZSINA CSEH, ERZSÉBET JEREM, NÁNDOR KALICZ, ZSOLT MESTER,  
GYULA NOVÁKI AND MAGDOLNA VICZE

With contributions by  
SZILVIA HONTI AND PÉTER GERGELY NÉMETH



**ARCHAEOLOGUA**

Budapest 2010

# Introduction

The Itinerarium Hungaricum series was dreamt up and launched by Professor Gyula Hajnóczy, the then president of the Sub-Committee for Archaeological Heritage Management of the Hungarian ICOMOS Committee, in 1995. His vision was to make the findings of archaeological and historical research known to the broader public. In the introduction to the volume presenting the Roman Age sites of Hungary, Hajnóczy described the book as "a baedeker transporting the reader back into the classical age, a vivid account about relics brought to life from the depth of earth through archaeological excavation." The present volume was created by him and the author with the help of Tamás Mezős and Mihály Nagy.

The single volume of the planned eleven volumes in the series published to date is the one on the Roman Age monuments, published also in English, German and Italian. The long interval between the first volume and the present one can in part be attributed to Hajnóczy's untimely death. The preparations for the subsequent volumes gained a new impetus in 2000. As a result of the debates between the members of the editorial board conducted at meetings of the Sub-Committee for Archaeological Heritage Management, the contents and the sub-division of the planned series were slightly changed. We eventually agreed to first present the monuments brought to light through archaeological investigations and that the volumes on medieval monuments would also include the sites lying beyond Hungary's current borders in order to present as full a picture as possible of the Hungarian Middle Ages. This meant that there would be several volumes dealing with these monuments:

- I. Prehistory
- II. Roman Age
- III. Migration period and Hungarian Conquest period
- IVa. Árpáadian Age (Transdanubia)
- IVb. Árpáadian Age (Great Hungarian Plain and Transylvania)
- IVc. Árpáadian Age (Northern Hungary and Upper Hungary)
- Va. Angevin Age to the Battle of Mohács (Transdanubia)
- Vb. Angevin Age to the Battle of Mohács (Great Hungarian Plain and Transylvania)
- Vc. Angevin Age to the Battle of Mohács (Northern Hungary and Upper Hungary)
- VI. Ottoman period
- VII. Age of the Rákóczi Uprising

The writing and editing of the planned volumes is currently in progress under the direction of the guest editors. The editing of the volume presenting the prehistoric sites and monuments was begun by Ildikó Poroszlai, who unexpectedly passed away in 2006. Her work was continued and finished by Erzsébet Jerem.

The current volume of the popular Itinerarium Hungaricum series presenting the prehistoric sites and collection of Hungary is dedicated in loving memory of Gyula Hajnóczy and Ildikó Poroszlai.

*Pécs, 8, September 2009*

*Zsolt Visy*  
President of the  
Sub-Committee for Archaeological  
Heritage Management  
of the Hungarian ICOMOS Committee

# Prehistoric Monuments and Collections in Hungary

Prehistory is the most distant and longest period of the human past, extending from the emergence of human culture to the appearance of writing. In Hungary, the earliest evidence for human occupation comes from Vértesszőlős, dating from 350,000 years ago, while writing was introduced by the Romans after the conquest of Transdanubia in the 1st century AD. The excavated archaeological remains offer a glimpse into the eventful history and colourful culture of the peoples settling here through the finds brought to light from cave sites and open campsites, from rural villages and tell settlements, and from hillforts, cemeteries and other monuments.

The Carpathian Basin (and Hungary) occupied a key position owing to its geographic location and diverse ecological conditions: this region was a meeting point and, at the same time, a bridge between East and West. The high ranges of the Alps and the Carpathians protected this extensive region, whose cultural significance lay in the fact the Danube Valley was the single direct link between Western, Central, and South-East Europe. The continent's second longest river provided a natural route for the migration of human groups, animals and plants, as well as for the flow of materials and cultural goods. Complementing this main communications artery between east and west were smaller roads, such as the Spondylus Road in the Neolithic and the Amber Road in the Iron Age.

Palaeoenvironmental studies have shown that the Central Danube Basin lay at the meeting point of three major European ecological and climatic zones: the western Atlantic, the eastern continental, and the southern Mediterranean, which can be felt to the present in the region's climate. An Atlantic climate dominates most of Transdanubia, a continental prevails in the Northern Mountain Range and the northern part of the Great Hungarian Plain, while a Mediterranean climate characterises the south-eastern corner of Transdanubia and the southerly areas of the Great Hungarian Plain. Similar differences can also be noted in the flora and the fauna, as well as in the distribution of soil types. It is hardly surprising that a similar pattern can be noted in the distribution of archaeological cultures: the groups living in Transdanubia had close ties with the West through Austria and western Slovakia from the Palaeolithic to the Iron Age. The distinctive raw material of the stone tools and implements found on sites in northern Hungary provide ample evidence that the hunters of the Upper Palaeolithic maintained contact with groups living in the Ukraine. Eastern Hungary was repeatedly settled by communities arriving from the steppe in the Copper Age and the Iron Age, while the southerly regions were colonised by immigrants arriving from the Balkans during the Neolithic and the Early Bronze Age. The tell settlements of the Neolithic and the Bronze Age in the Tisza region mark the northernmost boundary of the distribution of this ultimately Mediterranean settlement type, brought here by populations with a highly developed economy.

This, then, is part of the rich cultural heritage surrounding us, even if we are not always aware of it. The preservation of this heritage for future generations cannot be solely the responsibility of archaeologists and historians. No matter how strictly the law is enforced, no matter how great the efforts by professionals, this heritage can only be protected if we all make a contribution towards its preservation. The single most important assurance of this preservation is a familiarity with and an appreciation of our heritage. The relics surviving from prehistory are rarely spectacular monuments. Still, a simple earthen rampart, a broken clay pot, a chipped stone implement, a handful of animal bones or a simple burial are all priceless records because of what they can tell us about the lives of once thriving communities. In order to understand the information preserved in the earth through many centuries and millennia, there is need for the careful excavation and

documentation of these relics, as well as the analytical work of many specialists. Any activity in this field can only be truly successful if archaeologists and the scientists of related fields of research can rely on support from non-specialists who in their daily lives come into contact with the still visible and buried relics of the past. Without the involvement and support of farmers, miners, construction workers, hikers and other folks, the protection of this heritage is an endless and virtually hopeless struggle. One of the main goals of this guidebook is to promote an awareness of the cultural landscape around us, which evolved in the course of the millennia.

In contrast to the Roman Age sites and their architectural relics presented in the first volume of the *Itinerarium Hungaricum* series, most prehistoric sites are not spectacular tourist destinations. We therefore consciously strove to include as many illustrations of the sites and their finds as possible. Modern visualisation techniques, such as virtual modelling, 3D reconstructions, and digital elevation models enable a highly realistic re-creation of the one-time sites and their broader environment. The photos and drawings offer a selection of the material culture of the peoples once living here. The illustrations and descriptions are merely props for letting our imagination soar freely when visiting a particular site or strolling through a museum exhibition, to truly experience a taste of the past. There are a growing number of exhibitions, open-air museums, and archaeological parks which offer excellent reconstructions of a particular aspect of the past.

The sites described in this guidebook obviously only represent a fraction of the over fifty thousand archaeological sites and monuments. The selection of the sites to be included was not an easy task. Seeing that one of the principal tasks of any guidebook is to serve tourism, we finally decided to focus on well-accessible, imposing sites. At the same time, we also included the major sites of a particular archaeological period or culture even in cases when few visible remains survived. The nature of this guidebook and the limitations of scope also meant that it can at best draw attention to the surviving relics and kindle an interest in these monuments: the reader is referred to the works cited in the bibliography to each site and the chapters covering prehistory of a recent volume discussing the archaeology of Hungary (*Hungarian Archaeology at the Turn of the Millennium*. Ed. by Zsolt Visy. Budapest 2003).

As both authors and editors of the present volume, it is our hope that we have succeeded in providing an appetising taste of Hungary's prehistoric sites and monuments. It is our hope that this guidebook will contribute to a better knowledge of, as well as an awareness and appreciation of our archaeological and historical heritage, and that it will promote an interest in preserving this heritage, our cultural inheritance from the preceding centuries and millennia.

In the name of the authors of this volume, we wish our readers an enjoyable and memorable physical and intellectual trip into the prehistoric past.

*Erzsébet Jerem and Zsolt Mester*