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# Archaeological conditions in the area of Banská Bystrica – an overview

## **Eneolithic**

The new social differentiation of Eneolithic populations into craftsmen (metalworkers) working with the processing of metal, and farmers/shepherds was an important shift in civilization. The development of agriculture led to an improvement in soil cultivation by means of animal power (the introduction of the ard) and the strengthening of man's position in society ("patriarchy"). The stratification of society seems to lead to a differentiation between settlements on higher located craft hillforts and the open agricultural settlements supplying them. In mountainous areas, this differentiation is shown as an occurrence of small settlements with traces of copper metallurgy and the presence of the prospectors looking for copper ore. In this period, areas with an occurrence of copper ore became attractive for prehistoric populations. The first groups of prospectors looking for copper deposits came to the upstream areas of the river Hron. These groups can be assigned to the big cultural complex of the Lengyel culture, respectively its final phase – the Ludanice group (4400–4000 BC). The finds from Banská Bystrica-Moskovská Street (Kvietok, 2017a, pp.101-102), Priechod-Kamenná (Fig. 1), as well as pottery fragments found on the heaps in Spania

Dolina-Piesky (Točík and Bublová, 1985, p. 86) belong to this Upper Eneolithic group belong in the given area (Fig. 3.34, 43). The last mentioned finds represent the oldest evidence of human presence in the Špania Dolina copper ore area. In addition to the pottery, stone hammers and mats for grinding ore were also found (Fig. 2) (Točík and Bublová, 1985; Sklenka, 2006; Kvietok, 2014, p. 9, fig.11). These appear during the whole period of prehistoric copper mining. It is most probably that only primary ore mining took place in mountainous areas. Further processing (melting, casting) took place in the settlements. Evidence of such processing was found in Zvolen-Bakova jama, and Banská Bystrica-Moskovská Street (Kvietok, 2014, p.10, fig.13). Evidence of developed metallurgy from this period is present in the finds of copper axes of the Nográdmarczal type from the sites of Hronsek, Banská Bystrica (Novotná, 1955), Podkonice (Kvietok, 2014, p.10, fig.14) (Fig. 3.14 and Fig. 4). The find of a copper axe from the Haklovo site, south of the village of Moštenica can also be assigned to this group (Kvietok, 2018, p. 36) (Fig. 3.22 and Fig. 5). This axe is of the Altheim type. A small thickness and a slightly widened round blade are typical of this type of axe. Axes of this type emerge during the whole Eneolithic, but in the area north of Alps they occur mostly in the upper



Fig. 1: Cave on the site Priechod-Kamenná with eneolithic pottery finds (photo: Midland Adventure/M. Kvietok).



Fig. 2: Crushing pad – Špania Dolina-Piesky (photo: Midland Adventure/M, Kvietok).

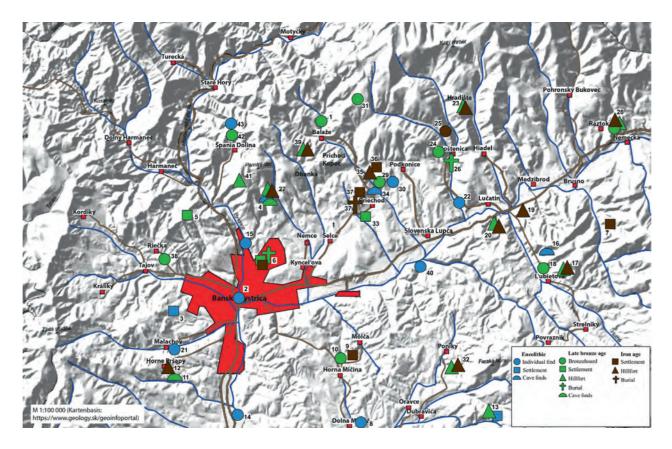


Fig. 3: Map with archaeological sites in the area of Banska Bystricá from Eneoliticum to Iron Age (illustration: Midland Adventure/ M. Kvietok; Deutsches Bergbau-Museum Bochum/J. Garner).

1. Baláže; 2. Banská Bystrica; 3. Banská Bystrica-Moskovská ul.; 4. Banská Bystrica-Netopierska/Kaplnka; 5. Banská Bystrica-Ostrý vrch; 6. Banská Bystrica-Stará Sásová; 7. Brusno-Stará Mara; 8. Dolná Mičiná-travertíny; 9. Horná Mičiná-Hosťová; 10. Horná Mičiná-Malá Môľča; 11. Horné Pršany-Kremenia; 12. Horné Pršany-Veľký Hrádok; 13. Hrochoť-Chochuľka; 14. Hronsek; 15. Kostiviarska; 16. Ľubietová-Kupčovie izbička; 17. Ľubietová-Vysoká; 18. Ľubietová-Ženská dolina; 19. Lučatín-Hradisko; 20. Lučatín-Ostredky; 21. Malachov; 22. Moštenica-Haklovo; 23. Moštenica-Hradište; 24. Moštenica-Pod Vysokou; 25. Moštenica-Skalka; 26. Moštenica-village; 27. Nemce-Hrádok; 28. Nemecká-Hradisko; 29. Podkonice-Igovo; 30. Podkonice-Jalové; 31. Podkonice-Kozinec; 32. Ponická Huta-Na Kláštore; 33. Priechod-Čerence; 34. Priechod-Kamenná (cave); 35. Priechod-Kamenná (hilfort); 36. Priechod-Kamenná (settlement); 37. Priechod-Kopec; 38. Riečka; 39. Selce-Hrádok; 40. Slovenská Ľupča-Driekyňa; 41. Špania Dolina-Horný Diel; 42. Špania Dolina-Glezúr; 43. Špania Dolina-Piesky.



Fig. 4: Eneolithic copper axe-adze of Nográdmarcal typus from Podkonice (Epilengyel) (photo: Midland Adventure/M. Kvietok).



Fig. 5: Eneolithic copper axe of Altheim typus from Moštenica-Haklovo (Epilengyel) (photo: Midland Adventure/M. Kvietok).

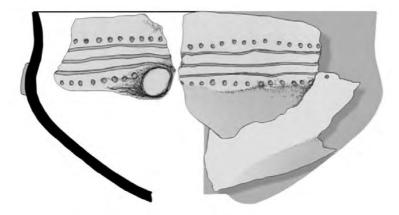


Fig. 6: Pottery of baden culture from L'ubietová, cave Kupčovie izbička (Malček, 2013, fig.69).

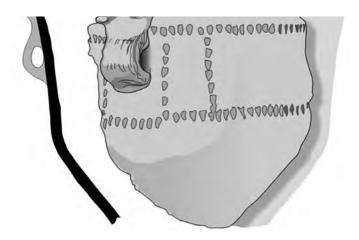


Fig. 7: Pottery of baden culture from Dolná Mičiná (Malček, 2013, fig.69).

Eneolithic, at the end of the Lengyel culture period. This find unequivocally confirms the presence of people in the Moštenica stream valley in the Late Stone Age, almost 6000 years ago.

Settlement finds from the Younger Baden culture (3600-2800 BC) are known mostly from the area south of our researched area - the area of Zvolen. From this area and period, we have pottery finds from L'ubietová, the Kupčovie izbička cave (Malček, 2013, pp.107-108, fig.69) (Fig. 3.16 and Fig. 6). Finds of Baden culture pottery are known from Dolná Mičiná (Malček, 2013, fig. 106) (Fig. 7) and the Chochulka highland site, in the cadastral district of the municipality of Hrochot (Mácelová, 1997a, pp. 69-70) (Fig. 3.8). Other cave sites from the end of the Eneolithic are the Kaplnka and Netopierska caves in Sásová karst. From 1995 to 1996 a rescue excavation took place here. It was conducted by the Department of History, Faculty of Arts of Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, with supervising archaeologist P. Ušiak (1997, pp.179-180; 1998, pp.161-162). Amateur diggers were the reason for conducting this excavation. In addition to finds from the Bronze Age, Roman Age and Middle Ages, the excavation showed evidence of human presence in

the cave as early as in the Late Stone Age. The author of the excavation dates the pottery, on the basis of its decoration, to the Bošáca group, which is a local group towards the end of the Baden culture around the middle of the 3rd millennium BC. Between 1924 and 1926, the collector J. Miklósi excavated both caves. Apart from other finds, he also mentioned moulds for the casting of metal objects. However, these finds were lost, so today we cannot determine whether they should be dated to the Late Stone Age or later periods. In any case, they prove the presence of people working with the manufacture of metal objects. In 1951, J. Bárta (1955, pp. 288-289) from the Institute of Archaeology conducted an excavation in both caves. Compared to the previous culture, the content of copper and copper products is minimal in the material culture of the Baden culture. This is given by the fact that local communities worked in pastoralism more than in ore mining. This is indicated by a statuette representing probably a fat ram with short legs and a nicely modelled head, found at Borová hora and dated to the Eneolithic period (Balaša, 1960, p. 26).

Finds of stone axes and hammers are typical of the Eneolithic period, differing from the polished tools of the



Fig. 8: General view on site Moštenica-Hradište. Typical hillfort site from the late bronze age (photo: V. Adamec - private/collection).



Fig. 9: Bronze spirals and armrings from hoard from Moštenica (Lusatian culture) (photo: Midland Adventure/M. Kvietok).



Fig. 10: Bronze long pins from hoard from Moštenica (Lusatian culture) (photo: Midland Adventure/M. Kvietok).

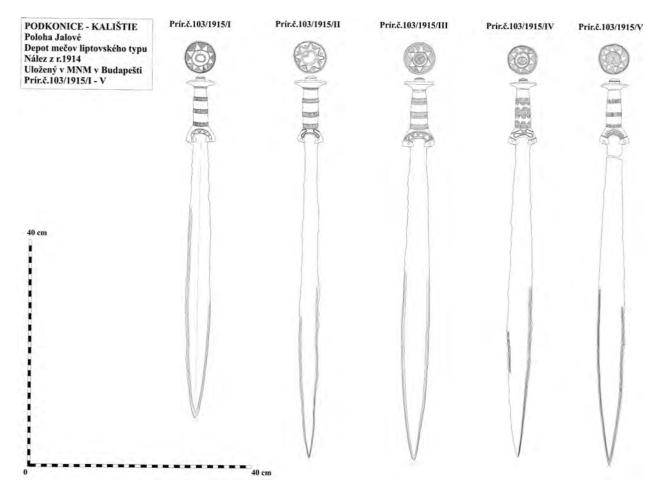


Fig. 11: Bronze swords from Podkonice-Jalové (Lusatian, culture, hoard from 1914) (graphic: Midland Adventure/M. Kvietok).

previous period mostly by the drilled through hole. In this period, stone tools and weapons become the attribute of an individual's social standing and thus also have a symbolic function. In the collection of the Central Slovakia Museum in Banská Bystrica we can find 10 stone hammers with a hole for the handle. Sometimes it is impossible to determine the place of the find. All of them came to the museum as a gift or purchase, never as a find from a scientific excavation, which would allow us more precise dating on the basis of the field situation. Nevertheless, these stone weapons are proof of an older settlement in the wider surroundings of Banská Bystrica in the Neolithic and Eneolithic periods. Around Banská Bystrica there are three main areas where hammer-axes occur. The first one is the area of the villages of Malachov - Pršany - Kremnička, the second is the area of Špania Dolina and the third one lies around Slovenská L'upča (Fig. 3.21, 43, 40). The finds of these objects are concentrated in mountains and caves, so we can assume that only brave and armed people dared to venture there. Out of the finds of stone axes, or hammer-axes, we need to mention above all the find dating from 1938. During the construction of the Banská Bystrica - Diviaky railway a robust hammer-axe was found. It was in the section between Kostiviarska and Ul'anka at a depth of 2 meters (Fig. 3.15). It is made of tuffitic sandstone, deposits of which exist in the north-eastern part of the Kremnické vrchy mountains. A unique warrior axe-hammer comes from Malachovská dolina valley. It is made of pyroxenic andesite, deposits of which lie on the southern slopes of the Kremnické vrchy mountains (Sklenka, 2006; Kvietok and Ferenc, 2012).

# Late Bronze Age

As far as the settlement of our area of interest is concerned, the peak is the period of the Younger and Late Bronze Age (1250–700 BC). Back then, the Zvolenská kotlina valley lay on the border of three important cultural spheres. In the south-east lay the cultural complex of the South-eastern Urnfield culture, represented by the Piliny culture, later the Kyjatice culture; in the south-west there was the complex of the Central Danubian Urnfield culture, represented by the Čaka culture (čakanská kultúra) and the Podolí culture (podolská kultúra) and in the north there was the Lusatian cultural complex. Our area of interest lies in the southern settlement zone of the Lusatian culture.

Typical representatives of Lusatian settlement in the area of the upper Hron river are fortified hillforts and not fortified highland sites. We can say that in almost every



Fig. 12: Bronze hoard from Podkonice (Lusatian culture) (photo: Midland Adventure/M. Kvietok).

bigger valley there lay a Lusatian settlement. Among the most significant ones we can include Moštenica. One of the most significant prehistoric landmarks of the upper Hron river area lies at the Hradište site (Fig. 3.23 and Fig. 8). In 1994, an excavation took place on the top of the site, as well as one of the rubble on the southern slope. Pottery finds can be dated to the end of the Younger Bronze Age and the Late Bronze Age (Veliačik and Mosný, 1996, pp.177-178). A cremation grave by the road on the southern edge of the village of Moštenica dated to the period of the older Urnfields is a little older (Budinský-Krička, 1949, pp. 56-57). One of the most significant finds is that of bronze objects from the north-eastern slope of the hill Vysoká (Fig. 3.24). It consists of 39 bronze objects: 16 needles, 12 bracelets and 11 spirals (Fig. 9 and Fig. 10). The find also includes a small collection of atypical prehistoric pottery (Novotná and Kvietok, 2015).

A distinctive dominant feature of the micro region is Hradisko, in the cadastre of the municipality of Nemecká (Fig. 3.28). The first archaeological finds from the Late Bronze Age were found in the early 1990s. In 1995, a smaller testing excavation took place on the site with the aim of specifying its cultural and time categorization. From the six trenches located on the top came only a small collection of finds, however, it helped us to determine the beginning of the settlement as the Late Bronze Age. With

caution, we may assume that the site was already fortified in the Late Bronze Age. In 2002, a collection of 40 bronze objects found at Hradisko was documented and evaluated. This collection was found by amateur diggers (Mácelová, 1995; Mácelová, Mosný and Pieta, 1997; Ožďáni, 2009).

Pottery from the Younger or Late Bronze Age was found at Hrádok near the village of Selce (Fig. 3.39). In 1979, a smaller trench (2 x 2 m) was dug on the platform south-west of the summit of Hrádok. The cultural layer contained numerous fragments of pottery belonging to the Lusatian culture and fragments of a storage jar from the Late La Tène Period. The majority of Lusatian pottery belongs to the Late Bronze Age, although there are pieces which can be dated to the Early Iron Age (Mácelová, 1980a, pp.134-135). In 1914, in the cadastre of Podkonice, in the area between the villages of Kalište and Podkonice, a hoard of bronze swords was discovered during the construction of a forest road (Kvietok, 2015) (Fig. 3.31 and Fig. 12). Another collection consisted of 12 bronze objects found north of the village of Baláže (Balaša, 1960, pp. 54, 58) (Fig. 3.1). Since these objects were found in the vicinity of medieval roads, we assume that these had been used at least since the Younger Bronze Age. Why these objects were buried under the ground remains a mystery. It could have been a sacrifice to local gods before crossing the mountains, or the objects could have been hidden because

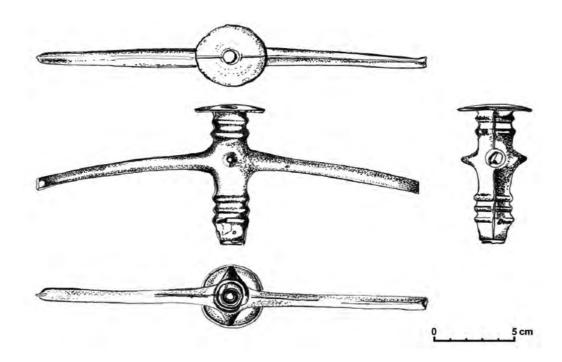


Fig. 13: Bronze axe from Riečka (Piliny culture) (Sklenka/Zachar 2011, fig.4).





Fig. 14: Bronze ingots from Ponická Huta (late bronze age?) (photo: Midland Adventure/M. Kvietok), Fig. 15 (right): Bronze pendant from Ponická Huta (Lusatian culture? Podolská culture?) (photo: Midland Adventure/M. Kvietok).

of some danger.

In 2015, an important collection of bronze objects was found in the south-west area of the cadastre of the village of Podkonice, site Igovo (Fig. 3.29 and Fig. 12). Today it is a part of a private collection (Novotná and Kvietok, 2018). Sporadic finds of pottery belonging to the Lusatian culture from the cadastre of Priechod village were discovered by means of a field collection of finds on the field south of the road connecting Priechod and Selce (Kvietok and Hrončiak, 2001, p.138).

In the western part of our area of interest lies a more distinctive settlement from the Younger and Late Bronze Age, discovered in Banská Bystrica - Sásová (Fig. 3.6). From the above-mentioned city part comes an undated cremation grave discovered during the construction of a family house at Garbanka in 1957 (Balaša, 1960, p. 51), as well as settlement finds from the sites of Kurta, Studničky and Stránska Street, which are dated, with reservations, to

the Hallstat Period (Mácelová, 1980b, pp.136-137; 1997b, p.127). The mentioned sites are dominated by the Hrádok highland site, in the cadastre of the municipality of Nemce (Fig. 3.27), with finds from the Younger Bronze Age up to the Older Iron Age (Kvietok, 2014b, pp. 132-137). Pottery and bronze objects from the nearby Kaplnka and Netopierska caves come from the Younger and Late Bronze Age (Bárta, 1955, pp. 286-301, Bárta, Mácelová and Pieta, 1987, pp. 29-30). A few years ago, some pottery material belonging to the Lusatian culture was acquired in the site of Horný diel (spot height Varta, 985 m above sea level), by means of a field collection (Ušiak and Žuffa, 2001, pp. 207-208). Close to the deposits in Špania Dolina a bronze dagger was found in 2010, in the place called Glezúr (Zachar and Struhár, 2017, pp. 53-82) (Fig. 3.42). In the village of Horné Pršany, in the valley of Rakytovský potok, pottery of the Lusatian culture was found at the Kremenia site (Ušiak and Hrončiak, 2000, pp.179-180) (Fig. 3.11). The



Fig. 16: Bronze and iron artefacts from urnfield cemetery from Priechod (Iron Age) (photo: Midland Adventure/M. Kvietok).

list of sites in the closer surroundings of Banská Bystrica concludes with the highland site in the extreme location of Ostrý vrch, in the city part of Banská Bystrica called Ul'anka (Fig. 3.5). Here, sporadic pottery finds from the transition period between the Younger and Late Bronze Age, resp. from the older phase of the Late Bronze Age were found (Kvietok, 2014b, pp.137-139). In the cadastre of the Riečka village, south-west of the Ostrý vrch site, a double-armed bronze pickaxe was found in 2010 in the valley of the Riečanka river (Fig. 3.38 and Fig. 13). The place of the find lies in the southern part of the non-urban area of Riečka village. It is a nameless, currently forested place on the northern slope of a long ridge forming a natural border between the villages of Riečka and Tajov. The find of the pickaxe from Riečka belongs to the bronze industry of the Piliny culture (Sklenka and Zachar, 2011).

Compared to the area on the right side of the river Hron, the area on the southern, left bank of the river is

significantly less explored. From the past we know of a hoard of bronze objects from L'ubietová - Ženská Dolina (Struhár, 2009) (Fig. 3). In the cadastre of L'ubietová village, in the Vysoká site, an important polycultural site with settlement from the Younger Bronze Age was found in 2013 (Kvietok, 2017b, pp. 445-457). In 2018, the new site of Ostredky was excavated in the cadastre of Lučatín village (Fig. 3.20). Among other things, pottery belonging to the Lusatian culture was found. Sporadic finds of pottery from the Younger and Late Bronze Age come from Chochuľka, in the cadastre of the village of Hrochoť (Mácelová, 1997a) (Fig. 3.13).

The site of Ponická Huta - Na Kláštore is known by the professional public under the name of Baby (Fig. 3.32). According to locals, this name is incorrect, because the name Baby belongs to the group of rocks located east of the prehistoric hillfort. The area of the hillfort itself bears the local name Na Kláštore. From this site come significant

finds from the Late Iron Age and the Migration Period. In 2013, a large collection of pottery was found here, proving that the site was inhabited at the end of the Bronze Age and the beginning of the Early Iron Age (Kvietok, 2014b, pp.139-141). From the site are known also bronze artefacts (Kvietok, 2018b, p. 26) (Fig. 14 and Fig. 15). Out of the latest finds, we can mention a hoard of bronze objects from the cadastre of Horná Mičiná (Kvietok and Zachar, 2018, pp. 215-227) (Fig. 3.10).

The area of hillforts, or highland sites, varies from a few dozens of square meters to a few hectares. This indicates that some had a central function within their urban agglomeration (e.g. Nemecká, Ponická Huta) and others were some kind of security points (e.g. Ostrý vrch, Horný diel), similar to the watchtowers from the times of the anti-Turkish wars in the 16th–17th century. Occasionally we can find settlements and urn graves in this area, mostly in the valleys below the hillforts. Among the oldest is the above mentioned grave in the built-up area of Moštenica. We assume that also in the area of old Sásová there lies a settlement and larger burial ground, even though until today only a few graves has been salvaged. In these cases, only simple urn graves without a tumulus were found.

## Iron Age

The transition period between the Bronze Age and the Iron Age was accompanied by the abandon of the hillforts from the previous period. Some of them bear traces of a violent end. This is shown by the fact that their fortifications bear marks of fire. Such evidence was found on the site of Nemce - Hrádok, where a fortification with remnants of the wooden construction of a rampart was excavated in 2012 (Kvietok, 2014b, p.134) (Fig. 3.27). The fortification showed signs of great heat (burnt stones and pottery deformed by heat). The find of a fragment of bronze needle and indistinct shards from Sásová come from the turn of the Late Bronze Age and the Older Iron Age (Mácelová, 1980). During this period, the population of this region started to search for and mine iron ore, in addition to copper mining. New sites emerged, subsequently lasting until the end of the Iron Age at the turn of the eras. This fact may be proved by new finds from the wider area of the site Hrádok, in the cadastre of Horná Lehota (Pieta and Mosný, 2002, pp.161-162) (Fig. 3.27). During the archaeological excavation here, iron objects dated to the Older Iron Age were discovered, as well as a so-called iron slab, which is in fact a direct remnant of the process of melting iron ore. In the region of the foothills of the Low Tatras the first primitive shaft furnaces for iron melting appear during this period. After more than 2000 years of development, the process reached the stage of high furnaces, such as the one preserved at Tri Vody, in the cadastre of L'ubietová. New important evidence of processing iron and intense blacksmithing activity comes from L'ubietová (Kvietok, 2017b) and Brusno (Kvietok, 2018a, p. 43), where in the last 2-3 years vast fortified facilities were discovered, as

well as terrace settlements. The peak of the settlement was at the end of the Older Iron Age (5<sup>th</sup>—4<sup>th</sup> century BC). Priechod - Kopec (Kvietok and Hrončiak, 2001, p.137) was also probably a newly inhabited site (Fig. 3.37). However, settlement continued on some sites known from the Bronze Age. Above all the hillfort at Ponická Huta bears the evidence of being the central and administrative heart of the wider surroundings (Pieta, 2008, p. 37). Pottery from the Older Iron Age comes from the hillfort in Nemecká (Pieta and Mosný, 1996; Mácelová, Mosný and Pieta, 1997), as well as Moštenica (Kvietok, 2018a, p. 42, Fig. 30, 28, 25). At the end of this period, objects appear (above all dress fibulas) proving the penetration of the first Celtic groups from the west. Such a find is an early La Tène fibula from L'ubietová (Kvietok, 2018a, Tab.VIII:1,4).

We also have the first evidence of the burying of the dead in this period, namely the find of a cremation burial ground in the cadastre of the village of Priechod (Fig. 3.37) and Fig. 16), which is awaiting its scientific excavation (Kvietok, 2018b, pp. 27-28). The finds gathered hitherto point toward the continuation of the cremation rite, which dominated this area at the end of Bronze Age. Similar burial sites have been documented so far only in Orava (Dolný Kubín, Podbiel). In the grave inventory evidence was found of iron objects with analogies on significant hillforts in the Lesser Carpathians (Smolenice-Molpír, Plavecké Podhradie).

As far as the end of the Middle and the beginning of the Late La Tène Period (LTC2) is concerned, it is a period of the increasing influence of surrounding Celtic areas on the mountainous part of Slovakia. A definite shift toward La Tène material culture and a significant increase in the number of settlements led us to the idea of a colonization of mountainous areas from the Danubian lowlands (Pieta, 2008, p. 55). Today we have a well-formed group of sites from the La Tène Period in the area from the bend of the Hron river in Banská Bystrica toward the east. This area is considered a territory of the Orava group, which represents a characteristic content of the pre-Púchov phase (Pieta, 2008, p. 37). The westernmost site in the given area is Veľký Hrádok, in the cadastre of Horná Pršany (Balaša, 1960, pp. 67, 68; Pieta, 1993, Fig. 9.2) (Fig. 3.12). A La Tène Period settlement is also confirmed at Nemce-Hrádok (Fig. 3.27). G. Balaša (Balaša, 1960, p. 72) predicted a Púchov culture settlement in this location. A well-known site is Hrádok, in the cadastre of Selce (Fig. 3.39). Locals know it as Hrádok of "Baláže". Finds from the site include pottery and metal objects of the Púchov culture (Balaša, 1960, p. 68; Mácelová, 1980, p.134; Pieta, 1990, pp.138-149; Fig. 61.8, 11-13, 16, 18, 19).

In 2014, the newly discovered fortified site of Priechod-Kamenná was excavated (Fig. 3.35). It is preliminarily dated to the phase LT D1 – LT D2 (Kvietok, 2015b). Sporadic finds from the La Tène Period are known from the top plateau of the Hradisko site in Nemecká (Pieta and Mosný, 1996a, p.140; Mácelová, Mosný and Pieta, 1997, p.130) (Fig. 3.28). In addition to small, fragmented pottery, a fragment of a black jar handle with three stylized animal

heads prevalent in the pre-Púchov phase of the Middle La Tène Period was found (Pieta and Mosný, 1996a, 140; Fig. 106.1). South of the river Hron we have four confirmed sites. The new ones are the sites of Brusno and L'ubietová-Vysoká (Fig. 3.7, 17). In the case of Brusno, it is a terrace settlement with intense evidence of metallurgic activity. The site is dated to the period of the 6th-mid-3rd century BC. L'ubietová-Vysoká is a highland site with finds from the Younger Bronze Age up to the end of the La Tène Period (Fig. 17). Poniky-Ponická Huta with its intense traces of iron processing is one of the sites that have been known for a longer time (Fig. 3.32). Its beginning dates to the pre-Púchov phase (LTC1). This horizon is represented

by the finds of fibulas with two balls, a studded belt and spear-shaped claps. An iron hoard dated by the Dürnberg type cleaver also belongs within this time frame belongs. However, three smooth fibulas with a joint construction prove the continuity of the settlement even in the stage LTC2. (Pieta, 2008, p. 37).

Pottery dated to the La Tène period also comes from a field collection on the site of Hosťová, in the cadastre of Horná Mičiná village (Kvietok and Hrončiak, 2001, p. 138, Fig. 73.9, 11) (Fig. 3.9). The site lies in Hosťová, on the south-western foot of the Háj hill, north of the road connecting the villages of Horná Mičiná and Môlča.



Fig. 17: Artefacts from hillfort L'ubietová-Vysoká (Iron Age) (photo: Kvietok 2017, tab. VIII).

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