

book reviews

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Milan Zápotocký, Marie Zápotocká – Kutná Hora – Denmark. Hradiště řivnáčské kultury (ca. 3000–2800 př. Kr.) [Kutná Hora – Denmark. Ein Burgwall der Řivnáč-Kultur (ca. 3000–2800 v. Chr.)], Památky archeologické, Supplementum 18, Prague 2008, 586 pp., 162 plates, many figures and maps in the text.

Authors of specialist reports and several chapters: Jaroslav Bílek, Paul Budd, Věra Čulíková, Vladimír Hoffman, Alena Hoffmanová, René Kyselý, Lenka Macháčková, Antonín Majer, Libuše Smolíková, Petr Šída, Jan Turek.

Despite the abundance and diversity of the archaeological literature of recent years, good studies of the source material are still rare. To some extent the reviewed work fills this gap. Its authors, Milan Zápotocký and Marie Zápotocká, not only give the reader a detailed picture of the site which they have examined, but also provide a panoramic view of the epoch from which it comes, the middle Eneolithic in the central part of the Czech Republic, and the research issues associated with it. The volume reviewed here represents a comprehensive, factual summary of ten years of excavations at Kutná Hora-Denemark (a fortified settlement of the Řivnáč culture), and has mainly been prepared by the researchers involved in this fieldwork with contribution of several specialists from other disciplines, resulting in a study which is of an interdisciplinary nature.

The brief introduction (pp. 7–8) which opens the work gives the reader a concise picture of the Czech Eneolithic, its dating and current divisions. The sections of the work following this relate to the site of Denemark itself, covering first the natural environment of the site located just south west of Kutná Hora, on a promontory in a bend of the river Vrchlica (Chapter 1). This is followed by an account of the history and methodology of excavations conducted in 1980–1989 (Chapter 2.1.). Next, comes a presentation of the features examined on the site, detailing their location in the field and separating the elements of fortification from settlement features (Sections 2.2 to 2.4.). The principal and most extensive part of the study was devoted to the remains of the Řivnáč Culture, which dominated the excavated material from the site. The features of this period (Chapter 3.1.) are specified and their function discussed (separately, settlement and defensive features) assigned to the earlier or the later phases of

settlement. The analysis of the movable finds (Chapter 3.2.) includes studies of the pottery, stone and flint artefacts (the authors of which are Vladimír Hoffman and Alena Hoffmanová, Jan Turek, Lenka Macháčková, Petr Šída), and artefacts of bone, antler and metal (with a metallographic analysis by Paul Budd). The next section (3.3.) includes the discussion of the plant macroremains (by Věra Čulíková) and soils (by Libuše Smolíková); there are also the results of phosphate analyses (by Anton Majer), and radiocarbon dates. To sum up, this part of the discussion presents the evolution of the Denmark site from a village to a defended upland settlement and presents a picture of changes in the settlement pattern and in economic and social systems. The work also contains a presentation of the settlement network of the Řivnáč culture, allowing the site to be seen in the context of other upland settlements of this culture (Chapter 3.4.). This part of the work is closed by a synthetic account of the Řivnáč culture in the eastern part of the central Czech Republic (Chapter 3.5.).

The fourth part of the volume provides an overview of the remains from the Denmark site from the other periods than the Řivnáč culture. These include the remains of Eneolithic taxonomic units (Funnel Beaker, Baden and Corded Ware cultures), Bronze Age remains (Únětice and Knovíz cultures), as well as the finds from the Middle Ages and modern times. This part of the text ends with a discussion of the recent history of the region (by Jaroslav Bílek). The volume also contains a comprehensive summary in German, a list of literature and numerous illustrations in the form of 162 plates of drawings and photographs of vessels.

A separate part of the publication is a comprehensive analysis of the animal remains from the Denmark site (author: René Kyselý), including an overview of the evidence, discussion of the methods used, and the presentation of the results of multi-dimensional taphonomic and zoological analysis. This part, written in English, has its own summary and a separate list of references.

The site at Kutná Hora-Denemark deserves attention because of its uniqueness and cognitive value, which the authors emphasize from the start. Due to these considerations the excavations, begun as rescue work, after the first season gained the status of a systematic research programme. This was because of the specific nature of the exposed remains (including the presence of the defences), and the cultural uniformity of the discovered features. Another factor prompting this decision was the value of the information the site could provide for understanding the middle Eneolithic period. This is relatively poorly known in the Czech Republic, but it is a period which the authors consider to be one of the most important turning points in the prehistory of Central Europe, marking the transition from the 'old' European culture to the Bell Beaker culture, already presaging the Bronze Age.

The site, located in a naturally defensive position, on a narrow promontory in a bend of the river Vrchlica, on its left bank, was known owing to some past accidental finds and then to trial trenching in the 1950s. It was a subject of a much larger

excavation campaign in 1980–1989. During the ten seasons of field work (lasting a total of 15 months), almost all the area of the site was investigated, both parts of the raised area of approximately 1100 m² (labelled by the authors as the ‘acropolis’) and the area outside it on lower ground, three times larger (called by the excavators ‘the suburb’).

These studies, directed by Milan Zápotocký (Archeologický ústav ČSAV), and based in the archaeological lab facilities at Bylany, were carefully planned from the methodical point of view (a detailed discussion of the methods of exploration and documentation, as well as a calendar of work is found in Section 2.1 of the discussed volume). The aspect of the methodical and disciplined research is also highlighted in the format of the reviewed publication, especially in the descriptive part: the discussions of the different sectors and features have been subordinated to a single, thought-scheme, which greatly facilitates the use of the work and makes it easy to find particular pieces of information within it.

During the field work 146 features were discovered (residential, economic, defence) and 409 postholes, which make up a complete plan of an upland settlement of the Řivnáč culture. The excavations produced a rich and varied assemblage of artefacts of clay, stone, flint, bone, antler and metal. Also a large number of remains of both wild and domestic animals, sometimes quite exotic (bones of pond tortoise and pelican) were recovered. In a few of the features human remains were found. After the excavations, this huge body of evidence underwent multiple analytical treatments and became the subject of numerous articles and interim studies. Now we have a substantial publication giving a synthetic, yet detailed picture of the site at the height of its development, falling at the beginning of the third millennium BC, and covering the two main phases of its operation. The first of these – the time of the inception on the higher part of the headland (‘acropolis’) of a settlement surrounded on three sides by a palisade and the buildings located on lower-lying land at a distance of about 20–25 m, in the so-called ‘suburb’. In this period there were five post-built houses and 23 sunken-floored buildings within which ovens and hearths as well as storage pits and features of undetermined function were discovered. Most of these features were located in the ‘acropolis’. The second phase of settlement started with the abandonment of the site (probably intentionally) and the burning of the buildings of the ‘suburb’. This was followed by the creation of new defences: a system of fortifications consisting of three parallel rows of curving ditches separated by ramparts which surrounded the ‘acropolis’ from the north and north-east, lacking natural defensive features. The area of the ‘acropolis’ was also defended by a wall of stone and earth from the east and south, while the interior was divided into two parts by a palisade. Traces of structures were only found in one of these segments, in the form of three large negative features, interpreted as the underground parts of buildings on the ground surface. The two phases of the use of the site were separated by a period of disuse which seems to have been short, but its length was difficult to be defined more precisely.

A few highly fragmented human remains, mostly burnt, were found within eight settlement features. These may have come from cremation burials which had been destroyed during the reconstruction of the settlement.

A large number of finds come from the Denemark site and a considerable portion of the reviewed publication is taken up by a presentation of their analysis. Much attention was devoted to the analysis of the context of the finds and discussion of post-depositional processes. There is a presentation of quantitative information which illustrates the disproportion of different kinds of material. The assemblage is dominated by ceramics (about 130 000 pieces, the authors draw attention to the significant degree of its fragmentation). There were also very many artefacts of flint and stone (nearly 3000 specimens); but a far smaller number of bone and antler items (147 specimens), whereas metal artefacts are represented only by two specimens: an axe of symmetrical blade (made of copper with traces of arsenic) and a fragment of a copper wire ring.

Almost half of all the ceramic finds could be only described generally as 'uncharacteristic prehistoric pottery'; while ceramics assignable to the Řivnáč culture comprises 52.2% of the assemblage and the authors of the volume emphasise that this is currently the largest known pottery assemblage of this culture. Most of these finds are assigned to twelve classes, separated into series, groups of types and types of vessels. The principles of this manner of division of the excavated assemblage do not seem, however, to be consistent. Although most of the classes were distinguished on the basis of form and function of the utensils of respective kinds (cups, jugs, mortar-shaped beakers, ladles, bowls, amphorae, storage vessels, barrel-shaped vessels), Class 10 comprises 'ceramics of the Globular Amphora culture' (according to the authors, probably imported), while Class 12 comprises 'small ceramic items' (which include anthropomorphic figurines, pieces of spoons, discs, spindle whorls, a fragment of crucible). There are also inconsistencies in the internal divisions of the classes, as well as in the coding system adopted for different levels within them: the type of vessel is sometimes given a two-digit code, while in other cases it is a three-digit one (eg, 'type 15', 'type 145'). There is a brief characterization (ornamentation, dimensions), given for each of the separate units, with details of the closest analogies and references to other classification systems. The approach is complemented by tabular descriptions. When discussing ornamentation, particular attention was given to stitch-furrow (*Furchenstich*) and corded decoration. The analysis allowed to distinguish, in addition to the two phases generally accepted in the periodisation of the Řivnáč culture, of a third (post-classical) phase.

In the classification of stone tools, the authors used the system previously developed for other finds of the Čáslav Basin¹. There was quite large group of axes, adzes and

¹ Zápotocký, M. 2002. Eneolitická broušená industrie a osídlení regionu Čáslav – Kutná Hora. In I. Pavlů, (ed.), *Bylany Varia* 2, 159–228. Praha.

chisels, including most of the specimens, but there was also a battle axe, a fragment of a mace, and a Neolithic shoe-last axe. There were also semi-finished tools and waste material from tool production. Most of the finds belong to the Řivnáč culture and the authors claim that it is a typical assemblage for upland settlements of this culture, with a predominance of everyday tools and a small number of specimens with bored holes. Tools were made of several kinds of stone: greenish crystal tuff (spilite), diabase, amphibolite, greenish and black slate, as well as flint. Among the axes are a few imported specimens. A unique and very interesting discovery is a polished axe (trapezoidal in shape and square in cross-section) made of striped flint from Krzemionki Opatowskie (in southeastern Poland), which may be related to the Globular Amphora culture and is recognised as an import from the Polish territory – the only such specimen in the Czech Republic. It is considered by the authors to have been a prestige item. Its presence may be associated with the above-mentioned ceramic material of the Globular Amphora culture, probably also imported. This fact is surprising, given the generally small degree of evidence for long-distance contacts in the Řivnáč culture.

On the basis of a series of five radiocarbon dates, the absolute chronology of the Denmark site can be established to the period between 4280 ± 70 b.p. (Bln-3266) and 4110 ± 50 b.p. (Bln-3269); four other dates are considerably later, which the authors explain as caused by the fact that the defensive ditches (or at least upper parts of them) remaining open a long time after the settlement ceased to function.

A spatial analysis of the features enabled the authors to reconstruct the settlement of the Denmark site during the period of the Řivnáč culture, and to show its evolution from a defended settlement with a suburb to a 'stronghold'. In the first phase of its existence the dominant form of building were post-built structures and small sunken-floored buildings, generally on a plan similar to a square (14–18 such features in the 'acropolis', with nine within the 'suburb'); in ten cases, ovens were discovered in their interiors. The sunken-floored features in the 'acropolis' were arranged in rough rows, but in the 'suburb' they had a semicircular layout, their line running parallel to the line of the palisade surrounding the 'acropolis'. Storage pits were situated both in the direct vicinity of the sunken-floored features as well as in the open space in the centre of the complex. It was calculated that in the excavated area there were two storage pits for each residential structure.

The economy of the site was based on agriculture and rearing of livestock – mainly cattle followed by pigs. The high percentage of bones of the aurochs may indicate, according to René Kyselý (the author of the study of the animal remains), an attempt at domesticating that animal, or crossbreeding of domestic and wild cattle. The sheep, goat, dog and horse (wild or domesticated) were all of minor significance in the bone assemblage. The importance of hunting is shown by the predominance of the bones of wild animals over those of domestic species, which is an exception among the Řivnáč culture sites. René Kyselý interprets this as being due both to the outlying location of

the Denmark and a socio-economic crisis brought about by the climate change during the existence of the settlement. The boar, aurochs, red and roe deer, bear and also smaller mammals (beaver, marten, hare, otter) were all hunted, along with birds, though the significance of the latter seems to have been marginal. The presence of pond tortoise and fish bones was also documented. Frogs also seem to have been hunted and the author of the faunal report considers that the accumulation of their bones also suggests that they were eaten. Another interesting and unique find was some bones of the Dalmatian Pelican: René Kyselý considers them to be the evidence of long-distance contacts of the inhabitants of the settlement.

According to the authors, a comparison of the finds from both parts of the settlement, that is, the so-called 'acropolis' and the external enclosure, does not show any significant difference between the wealth or lifestyle of their residents. In the 'acropolis' however a concentration of finds of a ritual and prestige nature was found, and one of the sunken-floored buildings (No. 65) in this part of the site was identified as that of a chief. There are, however, visible differences in the manner in which these areas were defended, only the 'acropolis' having a palisade.

This phase of settlement can be dated on the basis of the radiocarbon dates to the years 3000–2900 BC, corresponding to the classic phase of the Řivnáč culture, but on the basis of an analysis of ceramics, to both the classic and the later phases of the culture. The authors concluded that the duration of this stage was not more than 30–50 years. Due to its marginal location, the site of Denmark was not one of the centres of the local settlement network, a role filled by such a site as Čáslav-Hrádek.

In the second phase of settlement of Denmark, attributable to the later stage of the Řivnáč culture, a defended settlement (stronghold) was built. This was clearly different in terms of concept both from the preceding settlement on the site and from the other well-known upland settlements. In the place of the bipartite settlement with its acropolis and adjacent buildings, there was a single area forming a new 'acropolis' protected by a system of defensive walls and ditches, located in the earlier 'suburb'. The authors of the study believe this complex, though not completed, was the result of an intentional action and the implementation of a specific, comprehensive plan. They also point out that at this time the site was not only a defensive fortification, but had a special (perhaps cultic) significance. There are no data on the economic underpinnings of its operation, it seems that as a 'non-agricultural' site, it would have had to be supplied by the residents of other settlements, probably living in the immediate environment, which in turn may indicate the existence of social stratification.

An important and very interesting part of the reviewed publication are the chapters devoted to discussing the position of Denmark in relation to the other upland settlements of the Řivnáč culture (currently 88 such sites are known, forming three distinct spatial clusters), located at strategic points of land, and in which – according to the authors – we may observe the beginnings of urbanization. Among the new types

of settlement structures, the authors distinguish upland fortified complexes with external enclosures defended by a palisade (Denemark, Stehelčevy-Homolka, Vraný-Čertovka) and small clusters of settlements, consisting of an upland settlement and several smaller sites located within a radius of 1 km (Čáslav-Hrádek, Kouřim). This is a symptom of the emergence of more complex settlement structures, which is evident also in the neighbouring areas, such as in the Cham and Bernburg cultural groups. It should be emphasized that in all the three cases the end of these fortified settlements was connected with a fire; in Denemark, located at the periphery in relation to the others, the settlement was replaced by the above-mentioned stronghold.

The reviewed publication is not a typical monograph of a site. In addition to the description and multifaceted analysis of the material obtained in the course of the excavations, the volume also contains a deeply thought-out, comprehensive interpretation of the uncovered remains, based on excellent knowledge of the source material itself and a full appreciation of their context (or rather contexts: the Eneolithic period, the Řivnáč culture, and other defended settlements). The volume therefore constitutes a kind of regional synthesis of the whole episode of prehistory: focused around the site at Denemark, but taking into account the broader chronological and geographical background. It is also a summary of the authors' own evocative vision of the functioning of this site in prehistory and related transformations, based on in-depth knowledge of specific issues, and supported by solid arguments.

Despite its substantial size, the volume contains no superfluous verbiage, it is a text written in a straightforward manner and its logical, well thought out and clear design means the reader is not drowned by a flood of information, but is able to move smoothly among the data. This is further facilitated by the presence of numerous tables and a lot of good illustrative material (maps, diagrams, photographs).

The reviewed work introduces the reader to many of the issues which are crucial to understanding the Eneolithic of central Europe: the rise and functioning of defended settlements, the course of change in the settlement pattern and society in the fourth and third millennia BC, the development and disappearance of the Řivnáč culture as a specific taxonomic unit. The study does not contain a final answer for all the problems it analyses, but the questions it poses are important ones and the book forces the reader to reflect on particular issues. This volume presents a specific segment of prehistory in an interesting way: from the perspective of both a detailed study and a general overview. It also demonstrates how difficult an undertaking is the presentation of a summary of the results of years of field research and the preparation of a good monograph based on them.

