

## Upper Palaeolithic excavations in Hungary between 1986-1990.

Dates of the U.I.S.P.P. meetings are, in a way, artificially dissecting the flow of Upper Palaeolithic archaeological research. Consequently, the present account is giving a summary on excavations performed on excavations known in the previous terms where actual research took place in the latest years as well as new sites discovered recently.

In the past five years, excavations have been performed in Hungary at Mogyorósbánya, two localities in the vicinity of the village Pilismarót namely Tetves and Bitóc, at Püspökhatvan and Jászfelsőszentgyörgy.

### *Mogyorósbánya (V.T. Dobosi 1986).*

The sedimentological history of the Late Pleistocene in Hungary is known, in the first place, on the basis of stratigraphical investigation of terraces along the Danube in Northern Transdanubia. This evolved and clearly observable system of terraces served the site of numerous characteristic Upper Palaeolithic settlements.

The locality was found in course of field surveys. The ploughed remains of the Upper Palaeolithic habitation layer was partly unearthed by the changes in the current geomorphological relief, wedging on the slopes. The settlement was excavated in 1986.

The site is situated on the border of a loessy terrace over a small stream valley leading towards the main block of the northernmost member of the Transdanubian Mid-Mountains, the Gerecse Mts. In the depth of 80-100 cm, in loessy sediments, remains of a traditional Upper Palaeolithic habitation surface were unearthed.

The cultural layer is arranged into loose oval patches of 8-10 m diameter. The lithic industry is of fragmentary character. The most frequent raw material used is local silex and quartzite pebbles from the flood plains of the "pebble gravettian" industries of the Late Würm, probably to the Tursac phase. C-14 dating of the site is in progress.

It is of special importance that on a site lying considerably far from the geological sources of obsidian the use of obsidian is exceeding 10%.

So far, the excavations opened three habitation surface patches situated some 60-80m from each other. In case the close contemporaneity of the individual spots can be proved, we can suppose the first instance of nuclear families collaborating in hunting in Hungary.

Similar to other sites of the Danube Bend, several trinket-snails were found on the settlements.

The excavations will be continued and we have great hopes that a fourth habitation spot can be added to the chain of settlements known so far.

### **Pilismarót (1987-1990 V.T. Dobosi).**

The sites around Pilismarót belong to the classical Hungarian Upper Palaeolithic material. Since the thirties, several collectings and excavations have been performed at several spots here. In our investigations started in 1980, terraces lying to the North of Pilismarót, on the phase of shore of the river Danube towards Esztergom. As a result of these recent works, the sites known under the name "Pilismarót" have increased to five. In the research period summarized here, two settlements were unearthed, namely Tetves and Bitóc. The two settlements are located some 200 meters from each other, on the border of a loess terrace running steeply towards the Danube. At the margin of a small dry valley separating the two sites we can find Diós, first of the new series of settlements.

The settlement features are fairly uniform : oval patches of 4-6 m without sharp contours. No traces of permanent constructions (postholes, tent base, ring of basement) have been found so far. The habitation layer indicates occasional, short stay on the settlement. The fauna is dominated by reindeer completed by animals with valuable fur (Wolf \*\*, rozsomák \*\* ). The archaeological material is composed of Gravettian

types : blades, few scrapers, burins and blunted bladelets. By the help of these latter types, an important issue of Hungarian Late Palaeolithic research could be cleared; in the Late Pleistocene layers of the cave sites lying nearby, L. Vértes found a microlithic industry that he considered as relics of a cave-dwelling community with special subsistence system.

In the light of the new evidence - namely, that leading types of the open-air settlements agree with that of the cave sites - we can suppose that the North-Eastern Transdanubian caves served as temporary shelters for the Gravettian people hunting in the area.

The stratigraphy of the settlements around Pilismarót is practically identical. The main habitation layer is located some 80-110 cms under the recent surface. Occasional finds can be spotted over this level as well. Finds of a so-called "upper cultural level" can be traced immediately under the humic layers at - 30 cm. This latter unit cannot be authentically excavated due to modern agricultural interferences.

The varied and high quality raw material proves immediate contact with far-lying source regions. Szeletian felsitic porphyry of the Bükk Mts. indicates contacts in the distance of 2-300 km. Blades and flakes of rock crystal can be probably traced back to the region of the Alps.

**Püspökhatvan = Diós (1990 E.Csongráda-Balogh V.T. Dobosi)**

Our most recent test excavation conducted on a small terrace over the rivier Galga. Field surveys conducted here yielded worked fragments. In course of the test excavation of the site, details of a habitation surface were found, so far in very small areas only. At the first approach the site seems to be a workshop where the siliceous raw material of hydrothermal origin outcropping nearby was processed for further use. Conditions of fossilisation were very unfavourable, no organic remains (bones, teeth, antler) were found.

**Verseg-Kertekalja (1986, V.T. Dobosie)**

The site is situated on a terrace lying over a small stream valley dissecting a hilly region covered by thick loess coating. Here, details of an Early Upper Palaeolithic settlement (workshop?) were unearthed. The habitation layer run some 100-140 cms below the recent surface in very limy, dry, "cold" loess. In the left-overs of the single short-time stay remains of mammoth, woolly rhinoceros and reindeer were found. This composition of the fauna can be considered general for the period between the beginning of the last glaciation till the middle of the Würm period, with no sharp limits. The scanty amount of typical artifacts does not support a more definite assignation of the industry. The assemblage is endowed with a fairly archaic character, due to numerous artifacts

made on chopped pebbles. Ornamented shells of Tertiary molluscs can be equally spotted on the settlement.

Inhabitants of the settlement obtained raw material from several sources. Quartzite pebbles were collected locally and we can find hydrothermal silices of the Mátra Mountains lying relatively close to the site. There are instances of so-called "northern erratic flint varieties", coated by thick white layer of patina and of very good quality.

The site is the first authentically excavated Palaeolithic locality in the Mátralja region (nem cserhát\*????). Its topographical significance can be seen in the fact that situated between two areas rich in known sites (NE Hungary - Bükk and Tokaj-Presov Mts. and the wider environs of the Danube Bend), it can be the first element of a possible connecting link at the meeting point of the lowland and mountainous regions.

### **Jászfemsőszentgyörgy-Szunyogos (1990, V.T. Dobosi)**

For decades, it was known as a "topos" of prehistoric archaeology that the Great Hungarian Plain could not serve for an area with Palaeolithic sites, due to several reasons :

- most of the plains is covered by Holocene talus cones and in the young sediments elevated in recent times no Pleistocene finds can be expected;
- consequently, there are no Pleistocene layers in near-surface position in the Great Hungarian Plain and archaeological investigations aimed at recovering contemporary settlements would be fruitless. Both archaeological sites actually recovered supported this view; Szeged-Öthalm and Madaras-Téglavető were found in the depth of several meters in clay pits of a brickyard each;
- extreme weather conditions in the Pleistocene prevented human inhabitation.

Recent results of investigations disproved these views. In the North-Western border of the Great Hungarian Plain, in the region called Jászság, low hills protruding from watery flats, Palaeolithic finds were effectively surveyed. On one of the parabolic dunes composed of sand and loess, in the depth of 100-110 cm, details of a palaeolithic settlement was unearthed, corresponding in all respect to traditional hunters "settlements".

The fauna is composed of the usual Late Pleistocene steppean species : *Lagopus* is of special interest here, represented by fragments of egg-shell.

The bulk of the raw materials come from the hydrothermal silices of the nearby (and visible from the site) Mátra Mountains, but obsidian can be equally found. The site is excelled by its important topographical position among the other seasonal hunting camps.

None of the excavations reported on above were terminated in the study period, the work is to be continued next term. This is of course valid for fieldwork and indoor research as well. The task of the years to come also aims at the intensive study of areas where the lack of Palaeolithic sites is unjustified.

In the field of scientific research on the investigated material, new results were achieved :

- in questions of chronology, connection of Late Würmian geochronological events and archaeological sites;
- separation of the chronological levels of Upper Palaeolithic settlement waves according to archaeological waves (old blade industries - pebble gravettian - young blade industries);
- with the establishment of the comparative raw material collection, the Lithotheca of the Hungarian National Museum, the range of objective information was complemented by an effective tool we can base on in reconstructing the action radius of a palaeolithic community.

**Viola T. DOBOSI**

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\* Holocene times in the Carpathian basin.