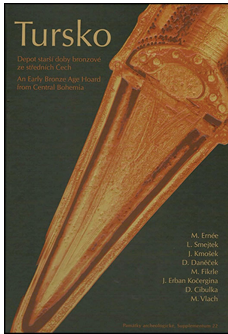


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The first quarter of the twenty-first century saw the expansion of research on the Únětice culture and the Early Bronze Age in Central Europe. The primary trigger was the discovery of the Nebra disc and associated hoard. This sparked a wave of studies and projects that have exploited, among other things, the potential of bio-archaeological research for which the inhumation graves of this period are an excellent starting point. Researchers in Bohemia have followed this trend and their work in recent years on burial sites (Prague-Miřkovice, Vliněves, Mikulovice, Kolín) has overhauled the state of knowledge of the Únětice culture in Bohemia.

While this research was happening, an exceptional hoard was discovered in Tursko. In this book, the team of authors provide an excellent study of the hoard itself; it is also an evaluation of the overall theme of metal sources, metal arts and metal deposition in the Early Bronze Age in Bohemia and in the context of Central Europe. The descriptive, graphic, analytical and synthetic aspects of the publication reach new heights for monographic treatments of hoards.

In 2015, a hoard of at least 111 whole artefacts made from copper and its alloys with a total weight of approximately 28kg and five golden wire ornaments (pp.44, 375) was deposited in a vessel in the cadastre of the village of Tursko, 5km from the eponymous site of Únětice. In terms of the number of copper/bronze and gold artefacts, the diversity of their composition and exceptional nature of certain objects make the hoard one of the largest and most important in the European Early Bronze Age (pp.351, 399).

All types of artefacts were subjected to typological and technological analysis. Some of the objects—such as hammered, engraved and embossed decorated sheet metal ornaments, a tongue-shaped appliqué, discs and two ribbed cuff-shaped bracelets, three solid-hilted daggers in bronze scabbards with partly open front, a ring-headed pin with a ring chain and golden spirals—are mostly associated with elite contexts. However, also important for the interpretation of this complex hoard is the presence of three types of raw material: *Ösenhalsringe*, solid penannular bracelets/rings with ribbed terminals and fragments of copper-casting cakes. On the basis of analogies and typological data, the authors refine the chronology of some of the processed objects, thus blurring the differences of local periodisation. They date the Tursko hoard to the period between the twentieth and nineteenth centuries BC.

A key part of the hoard evaluation, which helped to explain not only the copper sources, but above all the origin and formation of the hoard, is the scientific analysis of metal artefacts. Elemental composition of all artefacts was assessed using scanning electron microscopy with EDS and, for a selection of 35 of them, the concentration of trace elements (INAA and ICP-MS) and the lead isotope ratio (MC-ICP-MS) were also analysed. Five material groups were identified by principal component analysis (pp.288–89, 387–88), the raw materials of which are not only related to the Tyrolean Alps but also to copper from the Lower Tatra region of central Slovakia and to another yet-undefined copper ore source. The provenance of the raw material is precisely explored for individual artefacts and their groups.

The path to understanding the metallurgical production of the Early Bronze Age can also lead through the analysis of the metal hoard. The authors argue for local production based on archaeometric analyses and *chaîne opératoire*. They assume that a metallurgical workshop was in operation in the region, using raw materials from long-distance trade. The main evidence includes artefacts specific to this region, such as the impressive silver-toned blade daggers with metal scabbards known from only two hoards 5.7km apart (Prague-Suchdol ‘Kozí Hřbety’ and Tursko) and a collection of sheet-metal ornaments, which the authors suggest were produced in central Bohemia; the mixed raw material of the two main copper types (alloyed with tin or arsenic) and the fact that the hoard contains mostly unused artefacts support this argument. The higher numbers of identical objects in the hoard and throughout the region point to mass production in the workshop; these were not travelling metallurgists. The conclusion that this metallurgical workshop, connected to both copper distribution routes and nearby deposits of tin (presumably the Ore Mountains), produced bronze ingots alloyed with tin in the form of solid penannular rings with proof holes for export to the southern part of northern Europe (pp.359, 395), is quite original. The authors regard the weight variance of these penannular rings as evidence that the identification of the raw material for sale was based on shape rather than weight. The Tursko hoard was found in the centre of the densely populated Únětice region of Bohemia, which is characterised by the largest number of gold and amber finds as well as rich graves. This wealth may reflect the important redistribution and production position of the region.

Tursko represents a mixed hoard but not a random accumulation. Some of the finds associated with the local elite sphere are in themselves exceptional objects. The authors argue for ‘Überausstattung’ of the objects in numbers and prestige and ‘oversizing’ of the objects in size compared to contemporaneous grave goods. Based on arguments authors suggest the Tursko hoard was a “votive offering through which the people at the time unilaterally communicated with supernatural forces” (pp.370, 400). The hoard was deposited in a dry environment and on level ground at the edge of a settlement; meaning that it was deposited in an environment that would make retrieval possible. All other characteristics, however, convinced the authors that this was a hoard deposition of a ritual character.

The main text in Czech may be considered a weakness for a wider European audience. However, an English summary and English captions for all images are provided. The documentation is a high standard in terms of descriptive, photographic and illustrative quality, with clear tables and excellent graphic design. The excellent handling of the graphic design is characteristic of the recent *Supplements of Památky archeologické*. The team of

authors deserves credit for the publication of an exceptional assemblage, and I look forward to seeing the activity of the Early Bronze Age research group flourish in further impressive monographs.

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The Ada Tepe gold mine in Thrace (southern Bulgaria) represents one of the greatest discoveries in the Balkans during the twenty-first century. Its exploration has contributed considerably to revising some opinions on the Bronze Age in Southeast Europe, especially in terms of interterritorial relations and communications across a broad area from the Balkan Peninsula to Central Asia. Today, it is clear that the eastern Balkans were one of the major crossroads of the continent and a source of precious metals in the Bronze Age.

The results of long-term research at Ada Tepe, as well as other Bronze Age sites in Bulgaria, were presented in 2017 at two exhibitions and a scientific conference organised by the former Institute for Oriental and European Archaeology (now part of the Austrian Archaeological Institute of the Austrian Academy of Sciences), the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna and the National Archaeological Institute with Museum at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. At the beginning of that year, the exhibition *Das erste Gold. Ada Tepe: Das älteste Goldbergwerk Europas* (*The first gold: Ada Tepe – the earliest goldmine in Europe*; Haag *et al.* 2017) was opened in Vienna. In the following October, the next exhibition was opened in Sofia, enriched with exhibits from other sites in Bulgaria and renamed as *Gold & bronze: metals, technologies and contacts in the Eastern Balkans during the Bronze Age* (Alexandrov *et al.* 2018). Besides these two exhibitions, a scientific conference *Searching for gold – resources and networks in the Bronze Age of the Eastern Balkans* was held in Vienna. Most of the papers presented at that conference are now published in the present volume of the same name.

The book *Searching for gold* is thematically divided into four sections. It contains 16 contributions in English and is well illustrated with high-quality colour figures. The first section, ‘Ada Tepe’, is the most extensive, even though it includes only two contributions, the