



IRON AGE DANUBE ROUTE

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MAGAZINE

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our
common
heritage

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THE
ROUTE
Become
a part of
our joint
narrative

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Bronze vessel
with decoration
from Großklein
(UMJ)

← COVER PHOTO:

The pack horse that
two men lead by the reins
carries salt or liquid in skins
(5th–4th century BC).
Novo Mesto, Kandija, grave IV/3, Situla 2.
(© DMNM)

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A home, a stable, a smithy: prehistoric lifeways at the proto-urban hillfort of Pungrt above Ig

Since the development-led excavation in 2020 and 2021, the proto-urban hillfort of Pungrt above Ig, located in the vicinity of the Slovenian capital of Ljubljana, has rapidly been gaining reputation as one of the most significant Early Iron Age sites in Slovenia. The ongoing laboratory analyses of Pungrt settlement deposits and micro-artefact assemblages — undertaken within a research project funded by the Slovenian Research Agency (ARRS, J6-3126) — are part of the first high resolution study of the structured use of space at any hillfort site in Slovenia. As such, they are propelling the development of Slovenian archaeological science in general and Iron Age settlement studies in particular.

The two core methods employed in this research project include soil micromorphology and micro-refuse analysis. The former examines archaeological deposits under a microscope to detect formation processes and distinct depositional events that cannot be identified in the field with the naked eye. When applied to the analysis of the Late Hallstatt floor sequence in Building 21, constructed on the hillfort's lowermost terrace, it has revealed the nature of subsequent floors and accumulated occupation residues. Throughout the building's life-cycle, three types of earthen floors were used, including constructed, clay-rich floors, calcareous mortars, and beaten floors. In addition to longer-term cycles associated with these deposit types, the microstratigraphic sequence in Building 21 contains records of various seasonal and daily activities. These include cyclical re-plastering of floor surfaces with finishing coatings and "red wash"; re-deposited rake-outs in the vicinity of the hearths; and micro-laminations of occupational debris. In its final phase, the nature of the building changed and the structure, originally employed as a dwelling, became a stable.

The micro-refuse analysis of the nearby Late Hallstatt Building 24 has been, likewise, concerned with the reconstruction of daily activities within the structure. By examining minute pieces of refuse measuring 2–6 mm which would, due to their size, have evaded regular cleaning and maintenance practices and become unintentionally trampled into the floor surface, we were able to reconstruct distinct activity areas within the building. Most notably, the seemingly inconspicuous southern room which provided no hints of its use during the excavation itself was identified as a smithy. A significant number of different types of hammerscale suggest that the room was used by a blacksmith forging iron. The hammerscale distribution within the room that had an exit onto a wide street next to the stone rampart also indicated where the smithing hearth and anvil would have stood. In addition, micro-artefacts indicate ore-roasting activity at the hearth and the presence of large furniture in the corner of this workshop. The northern room behind the smithy was, meanwhile, used for domestic activities, including food preparation.

To follow the most recent updates on the ongoing analyses, visit the project's home page: <https://www.ff.uni-lj.si/en/proto-urban-hillfort-pungrt-above-ig-10-hectares-10-microns>

A. P., L. G.





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