Peter Turk
National Museum of Slovenia
Ljubljana

Into the caves, into the waters. From selective burials to communal cemeteries

Some precautionary remarks

The archaeological study of prehistoric funerary customs can quickly lead to misleading or at least oversimplified conclusions. Originally, these customs were founded on understanding death and the descendant's relation to death in prehistoric communities. These customs were related to beliefs created and experienced by the given community, and reflected their worldview. Only small pieces of the remains of this complex field of human behaviour can be deduced archaeologically. This holds even more so in earlier prehistory, with scarce and often heavily distorted archaeological evidence. Still, we can assume safely that – as today – burials were cultural and social events in prehistory as well, carried out by the local community, and that graves were – as today – special, semiotically significant places (Stig Sørensen et al., 2023, 6–9).

It also seems safe to assume that the obvious way of dealing with death as a stressful moment in personal and community life was guided by tradition – the well-established system of ways and manners of making spiritual meaning that implicitly answers how to go through this difficult period (Van Gennep, 1960, 146–165). The traditional ways are those that offer comfort during such ceremonies, and are those that one hangs onto during a time of mourning.

In contrast, traditions seems to be fading rather rapidly when dealing with funeral practices in our times. Cremation and other alternative funeral practices are prevailing more and more over the more traditional inhumation. It is not the intention of this paper to explore this extraordinary phenomenon, but instead it aims to re-reflect the earliest prehistoric funerary manifestations in Slovenia.

DOI:10.4312/ars.17.2.129-141

Something happened slightly more than three thousand years ago

The site of Podsmreka is an important Middle to early Late Bronze Age settlement, explored extensively due to large motorway rescue excavations. Among its considerable settlement remains, there were also five cremation graves in urns (Murgelj, 2022, 53–54, Figs. 2, 4). We date these graves to 14th–13th cent. BC and thus to the beginnings of the so-called Urnfield culture phenomenon (Teržan, 1999, 100–101; Škvor Jernejčič, 2020, 11–24). There are two unusual features regarding these graves: they are situated inside the contemporary settlement, and they contain exclusively cremated remains of infant and juvenile persons. Although we can regard these graves as a starting point of the European-wide phenomenon of cremation burials at this moment in time, these two unusual features point much more to the conclusion of an extremely long-lasting tradition of selective burials (e.g. child burials) inside contemporaneous settlements. We can trace this tradition in Europe from the beginnings of the Neolithic onwards (e.g. Kaczmarek, 2018; Stolle, 2023).

It was only from the Late Bronze Age onwards when burial grounds of the prehistoric people gained the characteristics of cemeteries in the modern sense on the territory of Slovenia. They were placed outside the boundaries of contemporaneous settlements, and all (or at least most of) the community's dead was buried in them.

Some examples of the initial phase of cemeteries from the 14th–13th centuries BC can be mentioned, e.g. the ones from Ljubljana, Zavrč, Obrežje and Dobova.[1] The remarkable graves from this phase are, in fact, very often richly furnished child graves. It seems as if initial impulses for establishing these cemeteries would represent exceptional graves comparable to old traditions (see below). Only after the burial of these initial graves did the burial grounds become common cemeteries for the entire community. Therefore, from the long-term perspective, burying the deceased in preestablished burial grounds is a rather recent phenomenon. We can trace the intentionally arranged cemeteries as a continuous and prevalent way of treating the deceased in today's Slovenia for no more than the last three millennia, and the treatment of the deceased was much more diverse before that.

What was going on before?

The prehistory of burial practices on the territory of Slovenia is not a fluent, uninterrupted narrative. In a relatively small and geographically extremely diverse territory,

1 Škvor Jernejčič, 2021, 120–130 (Ljubljana); Mason, Kramberger, 2022, 58–112 (Obrežje); Blečić Kavur et al., 2018, 189–194 (Zavrč); Kunstelj et al., Nove radiokarbonske datacije z žarnega grobišča v Dobovi (New radiocarbon dates from the urn cemetery in Dobova), lecture held at the archaeological conference Bronasta doba v osrednji Sloveniji (Bronze Age in central Slovenia), Narodni muzej Slovenije, 20th April 2023 (Dobova).

traces of human handling of the remains of the deceased are rare for over more than seven millennia-long period, from the Early Mesolithic to the Late Bronze Age. More precisely, they can be classified from extremely rare in the period between the 8th and 3rd millennia BC to increasingly numerous since the 2nd millennium BC.

After almost a century of systematic research on the Palaeolithic period in Slovenia, there is still no secure data on any discovery of pre-Holocene human bones. In this sense, a more than 60-year-old conclusion from a treatise on this matter is still valid: "*… it turned out that we do not have any reliable evidence for the Paleolithic age of the mentioned human remains*." (Brodar, 1960–1961, 11).[2]

Between the Mesolithic and the Middle Bronze Age, diverse customs of dealing with the deceased can be observed. Unfortunately, the detailed site contexts of most human remains at this time are very vague and sometimes misleading. This also applies to the oldest human bones discovered in the territory of Slovenia, the skull of a young woman from the Mesolithic hunters' camp from the Ljubija stream on the outskirts of the Ljubljansko barje. Contemporaneous with the camp, the skull is dated to the first half of the 8th millennium BC. The traces of its deposition are not preserved; it is thus impossible to determine whether it was a part of the original grave or a remnant of the widespread selective burial of human bones in the Mesolithic sites (Gaspari et al., 2009, 218).

Another intriguing case presents the cemetery with 30 graves in the cave of Ajdovska jama in Posavje dated to the transition period from the Neolithic to the Copper Age (4350–4200 BC) (Horvat, 2009, 28–30; Turk P. et al., 2021, 112–113, Figs. 149, 151). In Ajdovska jama, there were no actual burials. Instead, only the remains of the deceased or rather selected bones were placed into the side corridors after the complicated procedures of excarnation. The deceased who had been laid in this way were equipped with numerous ceramic recipients (originally filled with food offerings), polished stone axes, flint arrows and ornaments. The precise dating of some of the grave goods shows that the libation ceremonies, intended to commemorate the deceased, continued in the cave long after the bones had been laid to rest.

Apart from the burial site in Ajdovska jama, the earliest cemetery in the territory of Slovenia was recently excavated at Krog near Murska Sobota (Šavel, 2009, 59–138). Here, almost two hundred cremated deceased were buried in urns in the mid-4th millennium BC. Unlike Ajdovska jama, there are almost no grave goods in the graves from Krog apart from the urns. Undoubtedly, in the time span from Ajdovska jama to the burials at Krog, a radical change took place in people's spiritual life. There is a gap between the cultural phenomena that took place in Slovenia during the 5th millennium BC and those in the mid-4th millennium BC, a period of several centuries of absence

2 Recently, a proposal for a Middle Palaeolithic age was put forward for a child tooth from Partizanska jama (Jamnik et al., 2015, 720–723), but it was rejected (Turk M. et al., 2018).

of settlements. The radical change from placing the deceased in cave corridors to their burning and placing in urn graves is certainly also a reflection of radically different notions of the afterlife. However, the urn cemetery at Krog is an exceptional case in an area where Copper Age cemeteries are almost completely absent. The Krog cemetery is, in fact, peripheral to the core area of the contemporaneous Copper Age Baden cultural complex in the central and western Pannonian plain (Horváth, 2022).

It is only at the beginning of the Bronze Age, some 1,500 years later, that a few graves (e.g., at Slivnica and Lancova vas) from the end of the 3rd millennium BC are documented.[3] More regular open-air funeral practices seem to resume later, in the Middle Bronze Age with a variety of small barrow cemeteries, never exceeding a handful of inhumated graves, e.g. at Brezje below Brinjeva gora and Morje near Fram (Črešnar et al., 2014, 679–681).

The common feature of the graves between the Mesolithic and Middle Bronze Age is that they are very sparsely scattered – in time and space – across the territory of Slovenia. For most of the time, until the Late Bronze Age, we do not actually know how people buried their dead. Although it would be better to say we do not know how the dead were treated in general, as burial was only one of the possible ways of handling the bodies of the deceased. The only recognizable constant in burials between the Mesolithic and the Middle Bronze Age (8th–2nd millennia BC), are numerous human burials or disposals discovered in caves.[4] Unlike the well-documented grave ritual in Ajdovska jama, we know of only scattered bones and grave goods from poorly explored graves from caves, most often discovered without the presence of archaeologists. We can only reasonably speculate about similar or less similar burial practices as in Ajdovska jama.[5]

Only a few notes can be given regarding keeping the excarnated predecessors' remains close to the activities of daily life in the settlements. Again, the lack of reliable excavation information, as is the case of the Late Copper Age (mid-3rd millennium BC) pile dwellings near Ig at the Ljubljansko barje marshes (the so-called

3 Tica et al. (in press) (Slivnica 3: two Somogyvár–Vinkovci horizon graves); Blečić Kavur, Kovačič, Zgodnjebronastodobni grob iz Lancove vasi (An Early Bronze Age grave from the Lancova vas), lecture held at the archaeological conference Bronasta doba v severovzhodni Sloveniji (Bronze Age in north-eastern Slovenia), Narodni muzej Slovenije, 26th May 2022 (Lancova vas: a Kisapostag horizon grave).

4 E.g. Viktorjev spodmol (Turk M., 2022, 66): possible remains of a Mesolithic grave; Koblarska jama (Leben, 1978, 18s; Jamnik et al., 2002): graves and grave goods from the Middle Copper Age and possibly from the Bronze Age; Krška jama (Murgelj, 2018; Škvor Jernejčič, 2020, 477–479): graves and grave goods from the Middle Bronze Age and possibly from the Early Copper Age; Korinčeva jama near Dolnje Ležeče, Jermanova jama in Posavje, Ciganska jama near Kočevje (Leben, 1978, 14, 18, 19): poorly preserved evidence of Copper Age burials; Jama pod Jamskim gradom near Postojna, Postojnska jama, Šibernica in Bled (Leben, 1978, 14, 17): poorly preserved evidence of Early to Middle Bronze Age burials.

5 Though it exceeds the scope of this paper, it is worth mentioning that cave burials imply not only the obvious connection to the sacred and numinous underworld, to the chthonic, but also to more complex dichotomies, e.g. to the ambiguous feelings of the uncanny and the sublime (see e. g. Mlekuž Vrhovnik, 2021). No doubt, these were also important reasons for cave burials.

first Dežman's pile dwelling), prevents us from drawing any firm conclusions. Originally, six human skulls and nine long extremity bones were collected together with numerous settlement artefacts and animal bones during the excavations in 1875 (Štefančič 1992; Turk P. et al. 2021, 114, Fig. 153). There is no documentation regarding the detailed site context of these bones, so it remains an open question as to whether we are dealing here with some kind of inside-settlement graves, perhaps in the sense of human sacrifice remains,[6] or some other type of keeping selected human remains within the community of the living (Horváth 2022, 71–73).

Recently a thesis was put forward on an additional way of treating the cremated remains of the deceased – their immersion in the waters of the Ljubljanica River (Erjavec et al. 2012). Intensive underwater surveys revealed that apart from a few sections of the river with high concentrations of bronze weapons, most likely votive offerings, there is one section, the site of Kamin near Bevke, where extremely high concentrations of Late Bronze Age ceramics appear. Though mostly fragmented, the recipients are relatively well preserved and formally very close to the vessels, usually used as urns and their covers at contemporaneous Urnfield culture cemeteries. The vessels are typologically dated between the 13th and 10th centuries BC and could be viewed as remains of the burial rite, complementary to the contemporaneous urn cemeteries.

An additional note should be made regarding the discovery of a skeleton in denuded banks at the confluence of Bistra and Ljubljanica with a Late Bronze Age spearhead in his chest (Gaspari 2002). It is located in an area with a high concentration of bronzes deposited in the river as votive offerings, but one cannot ignore similar environmental circumstances of the so-called bog bodies. They were also discovered in the marshy contexts in western and northern Europe, with frequent evidence of violent death on their often extremely well-preserved corpses (Gaspari, 2002, 40–41; Aldhouse Green 2015). The reasons for such a violent death could be either connected to some kind of sacrifice or to some kind of sanctioning.

Both ways of dealing with the death and the bodies of the deceased – keeping their bones close to the community of the living and submerging them in rivers, remain speculative due to extremely scarce evidence. All the way through early prehistory, from the Mesolithic to the Bronze Age, the disposal or burying of the dead in caves remained the major mode of placement of the bodies of the deceased in the area we are considering. The large cemeteries of the entire communities begin to dominate only in the second half, or indeed, only towards the end of the 2nd millennium BC.

6 See for example data on contemporaneous remains of probable human sacrifice at Vučedol (Durman, 2000, 40–50).

What was going on after?

It seems that cave burial also retained its importance in some regions during the Iron Age. This holds true especially for the regions of Notranjska and Kras in SW Slovenia.[7] However, newly established communal cemeteries are also numerous and widespread in these two regions.[8]

Recent evidence about depositing the deceased in waters suggests that this type of burial also existed in the Iron Age. Two of 16 human skulls, discovered in the Ljubljanica River, were radiocarbon dated to the period between the 3rd and 1st centuries BC (Gaspari, 2002, 39–40; Laharnar et al., 2018, 169, Fig. 194). It seems intriguing that these two skulls come from the Late Iron Age, when practically no graves are known from the Ljubljansko barje and its surroundings (Štrajhar et al., 2013, 40). So far, we have no evidence about the funerary practices from nearby large and prosperous settlements in Ljubljana, Ig and Vrhnika. The two submerged skulls from the Ljubljanica River may give us a hint on one of the possible ways of treating the deceased in this period, and if the ritual of submerging the deceased took place in this river during the Late Iron Age, it is highly probable that only some highly valued parts of the body (e.g. skulls) were deposited here.

Unlike previous periods, the 1st millennium BC is marked by numerous cemeteries across the whole territory of Slovenia. The burials often count in the hundreds, and in the thousands in better-explored cemeteries, which were in continuous use for several centuries and in some cases for well over 500 years.[9] Cremation of the deceased is a prevailing funeral rite, although there are remarkable regional exceptions, as seen in the inhumation burials under large, long-lasting family barrows in the Dolenjska region (Teržan, 2010; Tecco Hvala, 2012).

From short-lived villages to long-living agglomerations

It seems that in Slovenia, including its neighbouring regions, the adoption of the so-called Neolithic package (sedentary way of life, agriculture, pasture, pottery, and polished stone tools) during the 5th millennium BC was not complete. Frequently, Balkan and Pannonian Neolithic and Copper Age settlements are accompanied by large communal cemeteries, where all or at least a substantial part of the population of a community was buried. We can observe only the occasional emergence of this

7 E.g. Tominčeva jama and Okostna jama in the Škocjan area (Turk P. et al., 2016, 55, 60), Pečinka and Jelenca jama in northern Kras (Leben, 1978, 14), Liljevka above Grahovo in Notranjska (Laharnar, 2022, 212–213).

8 See for example numerous Notranjska cemeteries (Laharnar, 2022, 43s, 47, 134, 142, 166s, 180, 194s, 216s) and Škocjan area cemeteries (Turk P. et al., 2016).,

9 Recent research resumed in Teržan, 2019, 331–334; Teržan, 2021, 257–259; Teržan 2022, 384–392; Teržan, 2023, 348–352.

phenomenon in cemeteries, as seen in the one at Krog near Murska Sobota, which lies at the SW border of the Pannonian plane.

It is only from the late 2nd millennium BC that a shift towards larger communal cemeteries can be observed. It seems that fragmented communities had short-lasting, small burial grounds of selected individuals (mostly in caves) that strongly prevailed in the focal regions until the Late Bronze Age, when large and long-lasting communal cemeteries dominated. It seems that one major worldview replaced the other three thousand years ago.

Can we infer other main aspects of social behaviour that would possibly correlate to these two major worldviews deriving from archaeological funeral data? If we look at the settlement patterns in the "cave burial" period (5th–2nd millennium BC) and the "cemetery burial" period (from the late 2nd millennium BC onwards), some differences can be seen, especially regarding the duration of settlements. The earlier period settlements are short-lived. High-precision chronologies obtained from dendrochronological data from the Ljubljansko barje pile-dwellings prove that they did not exceed the life span of more than two or three generations at the most (Velušček et al., 2000, 88–96). Even if there is complex stratigraphic evidence to the longevity of some of the Neolithic and Copper Age settlements, recent accurate absolute chronological analyses clearly attest discontinuities with centuries-long hiatuses of no occupation of these settlements.[10] One could reasonably assume a more fragmented and less stratified society from these data.

An important *caveat* should be mentioned regarding simple equations between selective burial of only part of the population and a less complex, unstratified society. Some monumental stone burial mounds, situated at the mountaintops in the western Slovenian Kras region, e.g. the ones at Rabotnica and Medvedjak, contain single inhumation graves in stone cists.[11] We can safely assume that only a small part of the elite of the Middle Bronze Age Castellieri culture was buried in these.[12] The great majority of the deceased were thus treated in an unknown way that did not result in graves. The fact, however, remains that in earlier, pre-Iron Age complex and highly stratified societies burying the deceased in graves was also connected with only a small part of the population.

More complex settlements that were inhabited for several centuries emerged at the end of the 2nd millennium, as is the case with "proto-urban" settlements, such as Ormož and Ljubljana (Dular et al., 2010; Vojaković, 2023). From this time onwards

10 As is the case with the settlements of Gradec near Mirna and Moverna vas (Sraka, 2020, 7, 16, 28).

11 Gabrovec 1983, 48–49. Unfortunately, there is very scarce information on these mounds, partly explored by non-specialists at the end of the 19th century.

12 See e.g. Bratina, 2018, 174–179, Figs. 2 and 4 for some insights in the Castellieri culture hillforts from the Kras and the Vipava valley. Recent research at the contemporaneous central settlement of Monkodonja in southern Istria revealed some cist inhumations, positioned at hillfort entrances, as well as nearby stone burial mounds where, again, only small portion of the elite was buried (Mihovilić et al., 2022, 68, 316–320).

– with the first peak in the Early Iron Age – we can infer the existence of complex chiefdom societies over a wider territory with dynamic hierarchical relations between the main, central settlements, already showing numerous characteristics of detailed urban design, regional centres and local settlements (Dular et al., 2007; Teržan, 2022, 380–384; 2023, 346–348).

Acknowledgement: The financial support for writing this article that was received from the *Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency* (research core funding No. P6-0283) is acknowledged.

References

Aldhouse-Green, M., *Bog Bodies Uncovered. Solving Europe's Ancient Mystery*, London 2015.

Blečić Kavur, M., Kavur, B., Lubšina Tušek, M., Sinhronost – značajna slučajnost pozne bronaste dobe / Synchronicity – a significant coincidence of the Late Bronze Age, in: *Srečanja in vplivi v raziskovanju bronaste in železne dobe na Slovenskem. Zbornik prispevkov v čast Bibi Teržan* (eds. Črešnar, M., Vinazza, M.), Ljubljana 2018, p. 187–197.

Bratina, P., Bronze and Iron Age settlements in the Kras and the Vipava valley, Slovenia, in: *Preistoria e protostoria del Caput Adriae* (eds. Borgna, E., Cassola Guida, P. , Corazza, S.), Firenze 2018, p. 173–180.

Brodar, S., Najdbe kostnih ostankov ledenodobnega človeka na slovenskih tleh / Die Knochenfunde des Eiszeitmenschen auf dem slowenischen Boden, *Arheološki vestnik* 11–12, 1960–1961, p. 5–14.

Črešnar M., Teržan B., Absolutno datiranje bronaste dobe na Slovenskem / Absolute dating of the Bronze Age in Slovenia, in: *Absolutno datiranje bronaste in železne dobe na Slovenskem / Absolute dating of the Bronze and Iron Ages in Slovenia* (eds. Teržan, B., Črešnar, M.), Ljubljana 2014, p. 661–702.

Dular, J., Tecco Hvala, S., *South-Eastern Slovenia in the Early Iron Age / Jugovzhodna Slovenija v starejši železni dobi*, Ljubljana 2007.

Dular, J., Tomanič Jevremov, M., *Ormož. Utrjeno naselje iz pozne bronaste in starejše železne dobe / Ormož. Befestigte Siedlung aus der späten bronze- und der älteren Eisenzeit*, Ljubljana 2010.

Durman, A., *Vučedolski Orion i najstariji europski kalendar / The Vučedol Orion and the Oldest European Calendar*, Zagreb 2000.

Erjavec, R., Gaspari, A., Sledovi bronastodobnih nekropol v Kaminu pri Bevkah / Traces of Bronze Age cemeteries at Kamin near Bevke, in: *Potopljena preteklost* (eds. Gaspari, A., Erič, M.), Radovljica 2012, p. 269–282.

Gabrovec, S., Kašteljerska kultura, in: *Praistorija jugoslavenskih zemalja IV. Bronzano doba* (ed. Čović, B.), Sarajevo 1983, p. 46–49.

Gaspari, A., Človeško okostje z zadrtim bronastim kopjem iz Ljubljanice, *Arheo* 22, 2002, p. 33–44.

Gaspari, A., Trampuž Orel, N., Turk, P., Prehistory, in: *Ljubljanica – a River and its Past* (eds. Turk, P., Istenič, J., Knific, T., Nabergoj, T.), Ljubljana 2009, p. 217–263.

Van Gennep, A., *The Rites of Passage*, London 1960.

Horvat, M., Prvi prebivalci v Posavju / First Inhabitants in Posavje, in: *Ukročena lepotica. Sava in njene zgodbe* (ed. Barachini, I.), Sevnica 2009, p. 25–35.

Horváth, T., The Baden complex in Austria and Hungary – a comparative study, *Ziridava, Studia Archaeologica* 36, 2022, p. 41–84.

Jamnik, P., Leben-Seljak, P., Bizjak, J., Horvat, B., Koblarska jama na Kočevskem – prazgodovinsko grobišče in kultni prostor. Antropološka analiza skeletnih ostankov z opisom pridatkov / Koblarska Cave near Kočevje – a prehistoric cemetery and cult area. Anthropological analysis of the skeletal remains with a description of the grave goods, *Arheološki vestnik* 53, 2002, p. 31–49.

Jamnik, P., Velušček, A., Josipovič, D., Čelesnik, R., Toškan, B., Partizanska jama in plano najdišče pod jamo – novi paleolitski lokaciji v Slovenski Istri / Partizanska jama cave and adjacent open-air site – new Paleolithic sites in Slovene Istria, *Annales – Series historia et sociologia* 25, 2015, p. 705–732.

Kaczmarek, M., Settlements of the Brzesc Kujawski Group of the Lengyel Culture – places of *sacrum* or *profanum*? in: *Sacred space: contributions to the archaeology of belief* (eds. Nebelsick, L. D., Wawrzeniuk, J., Zeman-Wiśniewska, K.), Warsaw 2018, p. 9–15.

Laharnar, B., *From Ocra to Albion. Notranjska between Prehistory and Antiquity / Od Okre do Albijske gore. Notranjska med prazgodovino in antiko*, Ljubljana 2022.

Laharnar, B., Turk, P., *Early Iron Age stories from the crossroads*, Ljubljana 2018.

Leben, F., Osteološke in kultne najdbe prazgodovinskega človeka iz kraških jam Slovenije in mejnega ozemlja / I rinvenimenti di ossa e di oggetti di culto dell'uomo preistorico nelle grotte carsiche della Slovenia e dei territori limitrofi, *Arheološki vestnik* 29, 1978, p. 13–35.

Mason, P., Kramberger, B., *Obrežje*, Ljubljana 2022.

Mihovilić, K., Teržan, B., *Monkodonja 4. Mušego/Mon Sego, grobni tumuli – nekropola gradine Monkodonja i brončanodobni tumuli Istre / Mušego/Mon Sego – Grabhügel – eine Nekropole von der Gradina Monkodonja und die bronzezeitlichen Grabhügel Istriens*, Pula 2022.

Mlekuž Vrhovnik, D., Approaching weird: psychoanalysis and archaeology of caves, *Academia Letters*, Article 190, 2021, p. 1–5.

Murgelj, I., Krška jama – mesto večnega počitka v srednji bronasti dobi / Krška jama – place of eternal rest in the Middle Bronze Age, in: *Srečanja in vplivi v raziskovanju bronaste in železne dobe na Slovenskem. Zbornik prispevkov v čast Bibi Teržan* (eds. Črešnar, M., Vinazza, M.), Ljubljana 2018, p. 53–69.

Murgelj, I., The pottery from the Bronze Age settlement at Podsmreka in the Dolenjska region / Keramika iz bronastodobne naselbine v Podsmreki na Dolenjskem, *Arheološki vestnik* 73, 2022, p. 49–97.

Šavel, I., *Pod Kotom – jug pri Krogu*, Ljubljana 2009.

Škvor Jernejčič, B., The earliest cremation burials in the south-eastern Alpine region from the middle Bronze Age – signs of intercultural connections with the northern Carpathian basin, *Praehistorische Zeitschrift* 95, 2020, p. 447–490.

Škvor Jernejčič, B., Towards an absolute chronology at the beginning of the Late Bronze Age in Slovenia. New radiocarbon dates from Ljubljana, *Archaeologia Austriaca* 105, 2021, p. 117–148.

Sraka, M., Calendar chronologies and cultural dynamics in the 5th millennium BC in Slovenia. Case studies in Bayesian chronological modeling of the settlements at Gradec pri Mirni and Bukovnica and cave necropolis at Ajdovska jama, in: *Beiträge zur Kupferzeit am Rande der Südostalpen, Akten des 4. Wildoner Fachgesprächs am 16. und 17. Juni 2016 in Wildon/Steiermark (Österreich)* (eds. Gutjahr, C., Tiefengraber, G.), Rahden/Westf. 2020, p. 1–42.

Štefančič, M., Skeletni ostanki koliščarjev z Ljubljanskega barja / Skelettreste der Pfahlbaubewohner von Ljubljanaer Moor, *Poročilo o raziskovanju paleolita, neolita in eneolita v Sloveniji* 20, 1992, p. 127–134.

Stig Sørensen, M. L., Rebay-Salisbury, K., *Death and the Body in Bronze Age Europe. From Inhumation to Cremation*, Cambridge 2023.

Stolle, R., The significance of Early Neolithic settlement burials: a case study from central Germany, *Documenta Praehistorica* 50, 2023, p. 1–17.

Štrajhar, M. and Gaspari, A., Ostanki dveh srednjelatenskih bojevniških grobov iz Turjaške palače v Ljubljani / Remains of two Middle La Tène warrior graves from the Auersberg Palace in Ljubljana, *Prilozi Instituta za arheologiju u Zagrebu* 30, 2013, p. 27–43.

Tecco Hvala, S., *Magdalenska gora. Družbena struktura in grobni rituali železnodobne skupnosti / Magdalenska gora. Social structure and burial rites of the Iron Age community*, Ljubljana 2012.

Teržan, B., An Outline of the Urnfield Culture Period in Slovenia / Oris obdobja kulture žarnih grobišč na Slovenskem, *Arheološki vestnik* 50, 1999, p. 97–143.

Teržan, B., Stiške skice / Stična – Skizzen, in: *Stična II/2. Gomile starejše železne dobe / Grabhügel aus der älteren Eisenzeit* (eds. Gabrovec, S., Teržan, B.), Ljubljana 2010, p. 189–325.

Teržan, B., Štajersko-panonska halštatska skupina. Uvodnik in kratek oris / The Styrian–Pannonian Hallstatt Group. An introduction and brief outline, *Arheološki vestnik* 70, 2019, p. 319–334.

Teržan, B., Notranjsko-kraška halštatska skupina. Uvodnik in kratek oris / The Notranjska–Kras Hallstatt Group. An introduction and brief outline, *Arheološki vestnik* 72, 2021, p. 229–262.

Teržan, B., Svetolucijska halštatska kulturna skupina. Uvodnik in kratek oris / The Sveta Lucija Hallstatt cultural group. An introduction and brief outline, *Arheološki vestnik* 73, 2022, p. 347–396.

Teržan, B., Gorenjska v halštatskem obdobju. Uvodnik in kratek oris / The Gorenjska region in the Hallstatt period. An introduction and brief outline, *Arheološki vestnik* 74, 2023, p. 333–352.

Tica, G., Predan, P., *Slivnica pri Mariboru 3*, Ljubljana, in press.

Turk, M., The Mesolithic in Slovenia, *Prilozi Instituta za arheologiju u Zagrebu* 39, 2022, p. 39–80.

Turk, M., Toškan. B., Gračišče, Partizanska jama, *Varstvo spomenikov. Poročila* 54, 2018, p. 64–66.

Turk, P., Hrobat, K., Bratina, P., Katalog arheoloških najdišč Škocjana in okolice / Catalogo dei siti archeologici dell'area di San Canziano, in: *Depo iz Mušje jame pri Škocjanu na Krasu / Il ripostiglio della Grotta delle Mosche presso San Canziano del Carso* (ed. by Teržan, B., Borgna, E. and Turk, P.), Ljubljana 2016, p. 55–62.

Turk, P., Turk, M., *The earliest stories from the crossroads*, Ljubljana 2021.

Velušček, A., Čufar, K., Levanič, T., Parte–Iščica, arheološke in dendrokronološke raziskave / Parte–Iščica, archaeological and dendrochronological investigations, *Arheološki vestnik* 51, 2000, p. 83–107.

Vojaković, P., Prazgodovinska Ljubljana: urbano trgovsko središče na stičišču poti / Prehistoric settlement in Ljubljana: an urban trading centre at the crossroads, *Arheološki vestnik* 74, 2023, p. 531–590.

V jame in vode. Od selektivnih pokopov do grobišč celih skupnosti

Ključne besede: Slovenija, arheologija, prazgodovina, obredi pokopavanja, inhumacija, kremacija, pokop v jamah

Človekov dvoumen, ambivalenten in neracionalen odnos do smrti je prisoten skozi vso človeško zgodovino. Pri soočanju s takim stresnim trenutkom nas običajno vodi tradicija. Uveljavljeno obredje ter navade podeljevanja in vzdrževanja duhovnega smi-

sla nam implicitno pomagajo prebroditi to težavno obdobje. Gledano z dolgoročne perspektive je pokopavanje na predhodno urejenih grobiščih recenten pojav. Na slovenskem prostoru lahko namensko urejena grobišča kot kontinuirano in prevladujočo obliko pokopavanja ugotavljamo šele v zadnjih treh tisočletjih oziroma od pozne bronaste dobe naprej. Pred tem je bilo obravnavanje pokojnih veliko bolj raznoliko. V času od odkritja najstarejših človeških ostankov v mezolitiku (8.–7. tis. pr. n. št) pa do bronaste dobe (2. tis. pr. n. št) so bile na Slovenskem ugotovljene tri glavne oblike pokopavanja. Prva in najpogostejša oblika je bilo izpostavljanje oz. pokopavanje mrtvih v jamah. Drugo obliko predstavlja ohranjanje ekskarniranih teles prednikov v bližini naselij oz. vsakdanjem življenju. Tretja oblika je pokopavanje na grobiščih. Novejše raziskave so pokazale še na četrto obliko, odlaganje pokojnikov v reke in jezera. Toda šele od pozne bronaste dobe dalje je pokopavanje vseh članov skupnosti na skupnem grobišču prevladujoč običaj.

Into the caves, into the waters. From selective burials to communal cemeteries

Keywords: Slovenia, archaeology, prehistory, funeral customs, inhumation, cremation, burial in caves

People's ambiguous, ambivalent, non-rational and nonsensical relation towards death is a constant feature throughout the human past. The obvious way of dealing with such a stressful moment in personal and community life is guided by tradition – the well-established system of ways and manners of making spiritual meaning that implicitly answers how to go through this difficult period.

From the long-term perspective, burying the deceased in pre-established burial grounds is a rather recent phenomenon. We can trace the intentionally arranged cemeteries as a continuous and prevalent way of treating the deceased in today's Slovenia for no more than the last three millennia, from the Late Bronze Age onwards. The treatment of the deceased was much more diverse before that.

From the earliest discoveries of human remains in the territory of Slovenia in the Mesolithic (8^{th}–7^{th} mill. BC) to the Bronze Age (2^{nd} mill. BC), three different major manifestations of treating the remains of the deceased are documented. The first and most numerous was to expose and/or bury the deceased in the caves. The second was keeping the excarnated predecessors' remains close to the daily life in the settlements. The third was to bury human remains in cemeteries. However, recent research revealed the fourth way of handling the dead – the immersion of their remains in the waters. Only from the Late Bronze Age onwards does burying all the deceased of a given community in communal cemeteries become the dominant custom.

O avtorju

Peter Turk je doktoriral na Oddelku za arheologijo Filozofske fakultete Univerze v Ljubljani. Od leta 2000 je zaposlen kot kustos za prazgodovinsko arheologijo v Narodnem muzeju Slovenije v Ljubljani, kjer je tudi urednik monografske serije *Katalogi in monografije*. Njegove glavne raziskave so posvečene depojskim najdbam in praksam deponiranja kovinskih predmetov iz bronaste in železne dobe, bronastim mečem in sekiram ter bronastodobnim naselbinam.

E-naslov: peter.turk@nms.si

About the author

Peter Turk acquired his BA, MA and PhD degrees at the Department of Archaeology, Faculty of Arts at the Ljubljana University. Since 2000, he has been employed at the National Museum of Slovenia as a curator for prehistory and as editor in charge of the museum's archaeological monograph series *Katalogi in monografije*. His main research interests are hoards and the hoarding of metal items in the Bronze and Iron Ages, material studies of some classes of portable finds (bronze swords and axes), as well as Bronze Age settlement studies.

E-mail: peter.turk@nms.si