BURIAL RITE OF THE NYNICE GROUP OF THE FINAL BRONZE AGE AT THE PREHISTORIC NECROPOLIS IN PLZEN-RADČICE

ABSTRACT — One of the characteristic features of the west Bohemian prehistory is the existence of burial grounds used for many centuries without interruption (Stáklavy—Hájek, Hřídeč u Manětína, Nynice). In the recent years we had to add to the group the khiterto largest locality of this type — the necropolis in Plzeň—Radčice. It covers almost three hectares and since the year 1985 it is subjected to archaeological rescue research, prompted by the construction of a new vegetable producing and processing centre. So far 458 graves have been discovered, 109 of them belonging to the Nynice Group of the Final Bronze Age, representing the so far largest assemblage of burials of the Nynice Group. From field observations and from preliminary analyses of the material follows that all Nynice graves were cremations, mostly situated on the ground level of the period, eventually slightly dug into the ground. Most of them are of circular or oval shape, their diameter ranges from 0.5 m to 5 m, but a grave of a square ground-plan has also been found. Their circumference was marked by stones placed vertically, the burial inside the circle was usually covered with flatly placed stones. The bottom of the graves shows traces of burning in a number of cases. Roughly one-fourth of the graves yielded pottery, between one to nine pieces. The vessels were always concentrated into a small area, mostly at the centre. Besides that the filling of the grave often contains also sherds of living-site vessels. The grave filling proper is formed by the remains of the pyre, it is of ashy-burnt black colour and is heavily mixed with charcoals and with minor fragments of charred bones, and sometimes it contains also fragments of bronze artifacts, partially deformed by heat. In most cases they are fragments of pins, bracelets and necklaces, probably belonging to the garments of the deceased, and incinerated together with the body on the pyre. The body of the deceased was in no case incinerated at the burial site proper. In contrast to the eponymous site in Nynice, in Radčice only very few urn burials have been found, the charred bones have been quite coarsely dispersed in the filling material. The question of the final arrangement of the Nynice graves has not yet been resolved. In view of the chronological and spatial development of the burial ground and on the base of other evidences I am of the opinion that the graves were marked in a less conspicuous way, e.g. with a low grave mound, eventually with a wooden post or post structure. Radčice is so far the second burial ground of the Nynice Group of the Final Bronze Age, contrasting very much with the numerous living-site finds (24 hill forts and 22 looted settlements). The explanation of this difference should be looked for also in the khiterto methods applied in the research of polycultural tumuli-type burials.

KEY WORDS: Final Bronze Age — West Bohemia — Nynice-group burial.
River. As proved by the archaeological research carried out by C. Oroš, in the nineteenth-twentieth centuries, and also by the results of the present salvage operation, the area of the burial ground adjoining the east, in the west, a polynuclear settlement and partially also in the west, a polynuclear settlement representing a succession of Neolithic, Eneolithic, Middle, Late and Final Bronze Age, Late Hallstatt and Early Late Tène cultures.

The immediate cause prompting the start of the research has been the construction of a large vegetable growing and processing complex covering more than three hectares of former arable land. Following earthmoving operations, rescue research and survey gave the possibility to determine with considerable accuracy the extent of the burial grounds as well as its chronological and positional development. From the viewpoint of the informative value the studied area can be divided into the following parts:

a) The area of the large green-house of 120 by 96 metres. At the time of starting the rescue research in the year 1982 besides removing the topsoil of 20 cm from the whole site, in the area of the large green-house a layer of the subsoil was also removed, at places to the depth of 0.5 m. Therefore we found in the area only individual burials dated into the Hallstatt, Late Hallstatt and Early Late Tène periods.

b) In the area of the large green-house processing halls and of the boiler house on the western part of the construction site no surface research was made. We followed only the excavation of pole holes and for the supply mains. In this area were found only two Milavéc-type burials, one of them being inhumation.

c) The area of the industrial road (on its southern side adjoining the large green-house), without stripping the subsoil. In spite of the considerable time pressure also in this area more than 120 graves were recognized on a site of 13 by 120 m, among them also the first graves belonging to the Nynice Group of the Final Bronze Age.

d) The area of the cahnage-cutter plant of 0.5 ha on the northern fringe of the locality. During the stripping the topsoil of four burial mounds were discovered; most of them damaged by ploughing and by earlier excavations. Nevertheless we have managed to secure a burial belonging to the West Bohemian Tumulus culture of the Middle Bronze Age, and the remains of a Milavéc fumery barrow.

e) A rescue survey on the south-eastern and eastern fringes of the construction site there, over an area of about 1 800 sq. metres, only two Hallstatt and Late Hallstatt graves were discovered. Their position and the continued earthmoving operations in Rohlic Street indicated that this is the southern and south-eastern limit of the necropolis.

f) The area north of the industrial road researched in the years 1983, 1984, 1987, 1988. We discovered there the core of the burial ground, with maximum density of burials (also in superpositions) of Nynice Group of the Final Bronze Age, along with Hallstatt and Late Hallstatt fumery barrows. On the basis of the above facts we can recon-

In fragments of bronze artifacts showing traces of the said heat. Most frequent are fragments of pins, brooches (mostly type 1, possibly of earlier date), ornaments of the clothes of the deceased, and inerterated with him on the pyre. The black layer of the grave, is the thickest at the centre of the grave, reaching sometimes 25 cm, and towards the margin it is thinning out; in large graves it does not reach the marginal stones. If there are vessels in the grave, they are also filled with remains of the pyre. More frequent are concentrations of charred bones in some of the vessels were found only in few burials. Thus the prevailing majority of the graves of the Nynice group of the Final Bronze Age found on the Radice site cannot be regarded as urn burials. It is somewhat contrasting with the situation at the eponymous locality in Nynice, where urn burials amounted to half of the total (Saldová 1965, 69).

Although the Radice site yielded almost the double of the hitherto known burials of the Nynice Group, we have not managed to come to a final conclusion as to the layout of these graves. Both hitherto known burial grounds of this culture were situated in fields under cultivation for centuries, where the large burrows originally covering the Hallstatt or Middle Bronze Age graves are not perceptible any more. Therefore we cannot exclude a priori that the Nynice graves were originally also covered by barrows, but in view of their small dimensions and density of burials it is very difficult to see how the graves of the Kostelec phase and also earlier pit burials of the Hallstatt Period respect the same conditions. Quite contrary, in the upper part of the Late Hallstatt funery barrows interfere with it, introducing superpositions, it can be supposed that they were sometimes used as a way of a low grave mound, not exceeding the stones marking the circumference. Some graves were evidently marked with stone circles (No. 203), or with a post structure (gr. No. 305).

The pottery found in Radice has, in its shape, ceramic content and occurrence, many analogies with the burials of the Nynice group on the eponymous site. An exceptional shape is the bowl on a stalk, found in grave No. 105. The assortment of the bronze artifacts found in the graves is, however, somewhat poorer, compared with Nynice. There appear the above mentioned pins, bracellete, torque necklaces, their most frequent combination being twisted-wire lunula with pin. The only excep-

REFERENCES


Přírodovědci Dr. J. Buráňová
Západočeské muzeum v Plzni

2013 Plzeň

205