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VĚTEŘOV TRIPLE BURIAL FROM HULÍN

ABSTRACT: In the site "Nivky" near the village of Hulín in Moravia, an Early Bronze Age settlement pit, dated by Věteřov ceramics, has been discovered. In the settlement pit (feature H I) there were skeletons of three individuals – a man and two children. The most interesting fact about this find is the intentional burial or sacrifice of more than one individual in a settlement pit. The Věteřov find from Hulín is not the only case of Early Bronze Age mass burial. Several cases of mass burials are known from recent research in Moravia, and in Lower Austria as well. The finds of so far discovered Early Bronze Age settlement pits are too few to allow for serious comparison, and also their find circumstances differ. However, the fact that all the so far discovered settlement pits contain buried or thrown grown-up individuals together with children, should be noted.

KEYWORDS: Burial rite – Early Bronze Age – Věteřov group – "Nivky" site near Hulín – Moravia.

INTRODUCTION

The people of the Věteřov group lived in Moravia in the final phase of the Early Bronze Age, i.e. in the period 1600 – 1500 B.C. At that time, they belonged to the wider complex of the Maďarovce-Věteřov culture. The Maďarovce group lived in the borderland area of South-Western Slovakia, while the Věteřov group occupied a major part of Moravia and part of the territory in Lower Austria.

The majority of anthropological remains of Věteřov people from Moravia have been found in individual skeleton graves or in settlement pits containing one or more individuals. So far, no extensive cemeteries of the Věteřov group in Moravia have been discovered; neither their absence has been explained (Stuchlíková 1990).

In 1988 during archaeological research (Archaeological Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Science, Brno) in the site „Nivky“ near the town of Hulín, 19 Early Bronze Age settlement features have been discovered (Šebela 1991). They were in loess ground, in a depth of 90 cm below the contemporary level of ground.

The pit of the feature H I with the find of three individuals (Fig. 1) had a round shape of 180 cm in diameter at the top. The walls of the pit converged irregularly, but near the bottom they widened again. The bottom of the pit laid 110 cm below the ground level and had 170 cm in diameter.

MATERIALS

Three human skeletons belonged to an adult man and two children. The adult man's skeleton was very well preserved, the children's skeletons were partly damaged. Methodology according to R. Martin (Martin – Saller 1957, Knußmann 1988) has been used for the anthropological analysis.

Skeleton I/1988

The skeleton of the three-year-old child (Fig. 2) is incomplete and damaged. The skull, especially its left side and the occiput have been deformed by the pressure of earth. The important deformation of the cranial bones have caused the detachment of the occiput from the remaining skull. The cranial base is damaged.

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Deciduous teeth are without caries, dental crowns of the first permanent molars are found in alveolae. The skull is dolichocranial, leptomandibular (Fig. 5-1), its bad state does not allow for determination of any more precise data.

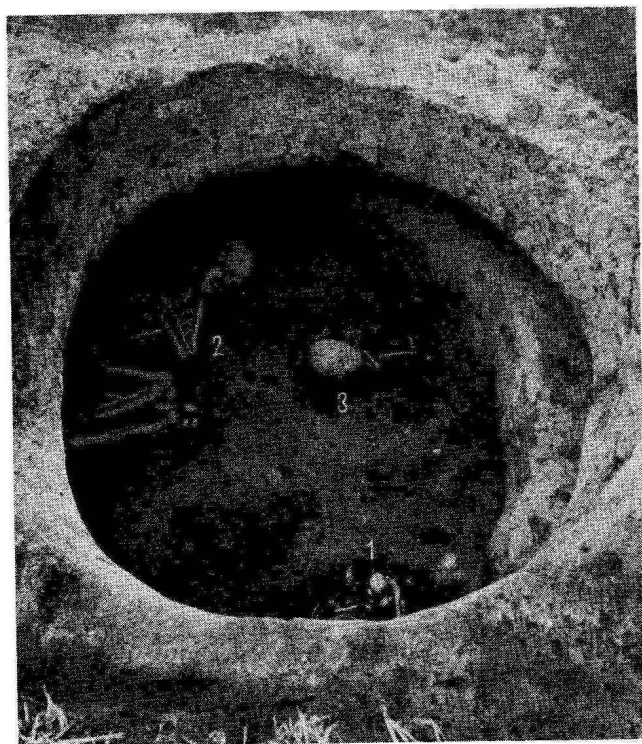


Figure 1. Věteřov triple burial from Hulín (1988), feature H I.

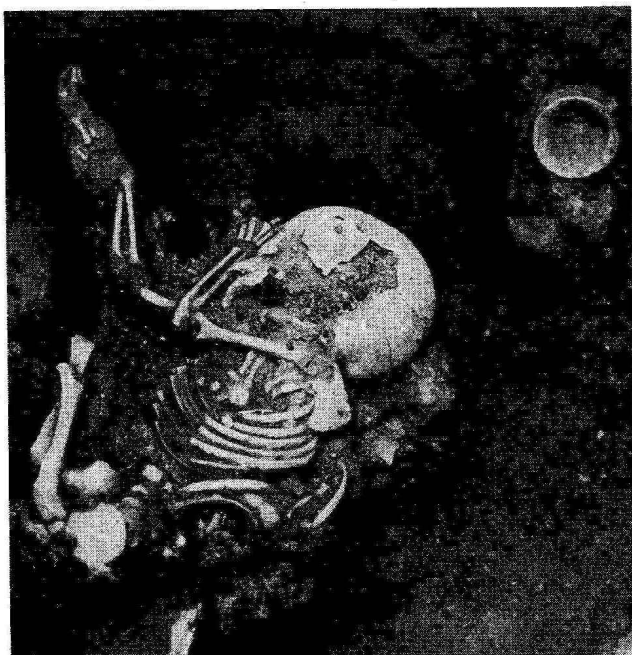


Figure 2. Hulín 1988. Skeleton No. 1 - 3-year-old child.

Skeleton II/1988

The skeleton of the adult man (Fig. 3) has been very well preserved. The skull is robust, the forehead arched with medium-developed superciliary arches and a glabella of the 3rd degree. The scale of the frontal bone is high, without any frontal protuberances. The upper edges of the orbital entries are massive and rounded, the orbits are medium-broad and low (mesoconch). The base of the nose is broad, medium-deep. The nose is high and medium-broad (mesorrhine). The mandible is high and broad, with an important mental protuberance. The gonion angle is slightly inverted. The teeth are without caries, with medium abrasion. An upper incisor and two lower premolars were postmortally lost.

The scale of the temporal bone has a prominent supramastoid ridge. The occiput is arched, with an important external occipital protuberance of the 2nd degree. Cranial sutures are open, articulated, a small bone is intersticed in the inion.

The skull belonged to a man, as documented by prominent supra-orbital arches, developed marginal tubercle and big mastoids.

From the anthropological point of view, the skull (Fig. 5-2) is dolichocranial, orthocranial, accrocranial, eurytopic, mesoprosopic, mesene, mesoconch, mesorrhine. In its absolute size the skull is long, medium-high and broad, with a medium-high face.

The post-cranial skeleton is extremely robust, with important muscular tuberosities, especially on brachial and femoral bones. The femoral bones are hyperplatymeric, the thin ones are platynemic. Of the long bones, the body height of the man has been calculated at 167 cm, i.e. he was of medium height. On the pelvis, there is a very deep acetabulum, a medium broad great ischiadic incisure, without any preauricular sulcus. Quite weak arthritic changes appear in the spine. The size of the femoral head, the narrow shape of the great ischiadic incisure and the general robustness of the skeleton clearly evidence the fact that the skeleton belonged to an adult man of medium body height who, according to the degree of dental abrasion and of cranial sutures condition, died at the age of 25-30 years. Particularly interesting is the fact that the teeth were without caries, while the spine shows slight arthritic changes.



Figure 3. Hulín 1988. Skeleton No. 2 - adult man.

Skeleton III/1988

The skeleton of the five-year-old child is slightly damaged (Fig. 4); for the burial, its arms and legs had probably been bound. The skull is post-mortally deformed, the facial part is detached, the cranial base is incomplete. On the left parietal bone there is an oval depression measuring 5.5 cm. The skull (Fig. 5-3) is dolichocranial, eurytopic, hypsiconch, chamaerrhine and leptomandibular.

During research, soil samples have been gathered from the surroundings of the skeletons. Soil analysis has shown the presence of parasites near the man's and the 5-year-old child's skeletons. The discovered eggs belonged to the following parasites: intestinal worm *Ancylostoma duodenale*, and thread-worm *Ascaris lumbricoides* (Šebela, Vojtková, Vojtek 1990).



Figure 4. Hulín 1988. Skeleton No. 3 - 5-year-old child.

These anthropometric data on skeletal remains from the Hulín triple burial will be the object of further comparative study with other finds from Moravia.

Table 1. Cranial dimensions and indexes.

	Age	Man (No.II) 25-30	Child (No.III) 5
1	Maximal cranial length	185	174
5	Nasion-basion length	97	-
8	Cranial breadth	134	-
9	Minimal frontal breadth	96	-
10	Maximal frontal breadth	115	101 ?
11	Biauricular breadth	119	-
12	Occipital breadth	109	94
17	Basion-bregma height	137	-
20	Auricular height	113	111
23	Cranial circumference	525	490 ?
24	Transversal cranial arc	309	302
25	Sagittal cranial arc	372	354
26	Nasion-bregma arc	122	115
27	Bregma-lambda arc	135	126
28	Lambda-opisthion arc	112	114 ?
29	Nasion-bregma chord	108	102
30	Bregma-lambda chord	122	111 ?
31	Lambda-opisthion chord	101	96 ?
40	Basion-prosthion chord	94	-
43	Upper facial breadth	99	-
44	Biorbital breadth	91	-
45	Bizygomatic diameter	129	-
46	Nasion-gnathion height	88	78 ?

	Age	Man (No.II) 25-30	Child (No.III) 5
47	Total facial height	112	-
48	Nasion-prosthion height	65	51 ?
50	Interorbital breadth	19	-
51	Orbital breadth	35	33
52	Orbital height	29	27
54	Nasal breadth	21	18
55	Nasal height	48	37 ?
65	Mandibular breadth	110	73
66	Bigonial breadth	97	65
69	Symphyseal height	32 ?	24
70	Height of mandibular ascending branch	65	40
71	Minimal breadth of ascending branch	31	25
MI (1)	Cranial index	72.4	-
MI (2)	Length height index	73.5	-
MI (3)	Breadth height index	101.4	-
MI (12)	Frontal index	82.3	80.5
MI (13)	Frontoparietal index	71.6	70.3 ?
MI (38)	Total facial index	86.9	-
MI (39)	Upper facial index	50.0	-
MI (42)	Orbital index	82.8	81.8
MI (48)	Nasal index	44.8	48.6
	Cranial capacity	136.0	-

Table 2. Postcranial skeleton - skeleton No. 2.

HUMERUS		L	P
1	Maximum length	306	307
2	Total length	303	304
5	Maximum diameter of the diaphysis	224	219
6	Minimum diameter of the diaphysis	175	172
7	Minimum diaphysis circumference	630	650
7 : 1	Robusticity index	20.5	21.1
6 : 5	Index of the diaphysis diameters	78.1	78.5
RADIUS			
1	Maximum length	235	234
2	Total length	231	230
3	Minimum circumference	42	40
4	Transversal diameter of the diaphysis	151	149
5	Sagittal diameter of the diaphysis	114	112
3 : 2	Robusticity index	18.1	18.2
5 : 4	Index of diaphysis diameters	75.4	75.1
ULNA			
1	Maximum length	258	256
2	Total length	253	251
3	Minimum diameter of the diaphysis	35	36
11	Sagittal diameter of the diaphysis	147	141
12	Transversal diameter of the diaphysis	110	106
3 : 2	Robusticity index	13.8	14.3
12 : 11	Index of the diaphysis diameter	74.8	75.1
FEMUR			
1	Maximum length	441	445
2	Total length	439	443
6	Sagittal diameter of the diaphysis	27.8	26.7
7	Transversal diameter of the diaphysis	24.7	23.6
8	Circumference of the diaphysis	80.1	81.0
9	Upper transversal diameter	35.1	33.1
10	Upper sagittal diameter	21.9	21.2
8 : 2	Length - breadth index	18.2	18.3
(6+7) : 2	Robusticity index	11.9	11.3
6 : 7	Pilastric index	88.7	88.4
10 : 9	Platymeric index	62.5	64.0
TIBIA			
1	Maximum length	371	369
8	Maximum circumference of the diaphysis	27.6	27.8
8a	Minimum circumference of the diaphysis	34.1	33.4
9	Transversal diameter of the diaphysis	18.8	18.5
9a	Diameter at the foramen nutritium	20.4	20.6
8 : 9	Indices of the diameters of the shaft	68.1	66.7
9a : 8a	Index cnemius	56.6	61.7



Figure 5. Věteřov skulls No. 1, 2, 3 from Hulin – frontal, lateral and vertical views.

VĚTEŘOV MASS FINDS FROM SETTLEMENT PITS IN MORAVIA

The object of this study, the feature H I from Hulin, (Fig. 6) is a triple burial. In a settlement pit, 20 cm above its bottom, a child's skeleton has been discovered, laying on the right side (Fig. 2). At the bottom of the pit there was the skeleton of an adult man in a crouching position, with his hands crossed on his chest (Fig. 3). At a distance of 40 cm from the adult man, still at the bottom of the pit, the skeleton of a very small child was laid in an extremely crouched position (Fig. 4). It is evident that the child must have been carefully bound (Šebela 1991).

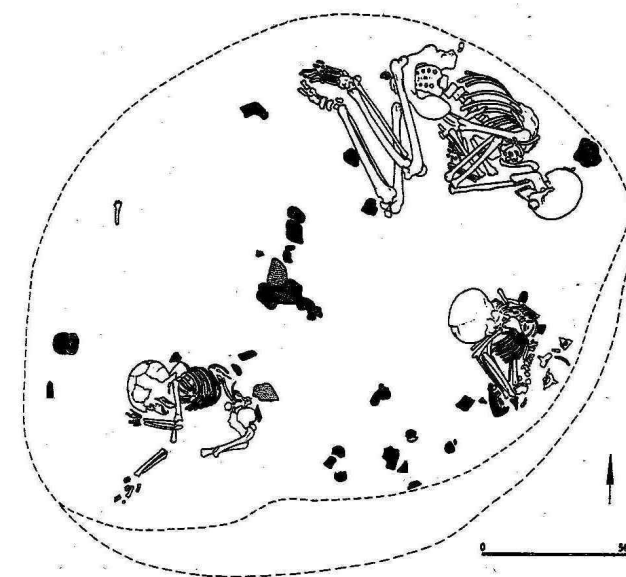


Figure 6. Věteřov triple burial from Hulin (drawing by L. Píchová).

Another Early Bronze Age mass burial with remains of four human skeletons and two animal ones was discovered in Těšetice-Kyjovice in 1991 (Fig. 7) (Dočkalová, Kazdová, Košťálek – in press). At the bottom of a settlement pit, there was the skeleton of an adult woman laid on her belly in a crouching position, with beads; pig bones were dispersed all around the circumference of the pit floor. At the height of 40 cm above the bottom of the pit, the skeleton of an adolescent woman had been thrown, lying prone, face down. Behind the head of the woman, a huge vessel was laid bottom-up in which the remains of an infant have been found.

Further fragments of the cranial bones and other small bones of this infant were spread along the circumference of the pit. The most damaged skeleton was that of an adolescent boy – only his legs were in anatomic position; a big stone reposed on them. The bones of his thorax (clavicles, scapulae, vertebrae, ribs and the right arm) were spread around the skull which laid separate from the body, vertex down. The mandible was at a distance of 15 cm from the skull. In the middle part of the pit, the skeleton of a dog had been thrown over that of a sub-adult woman. Near a well-preserved vessel, there was the skull of a pig; the mandible was found near the opposite side of the pit.

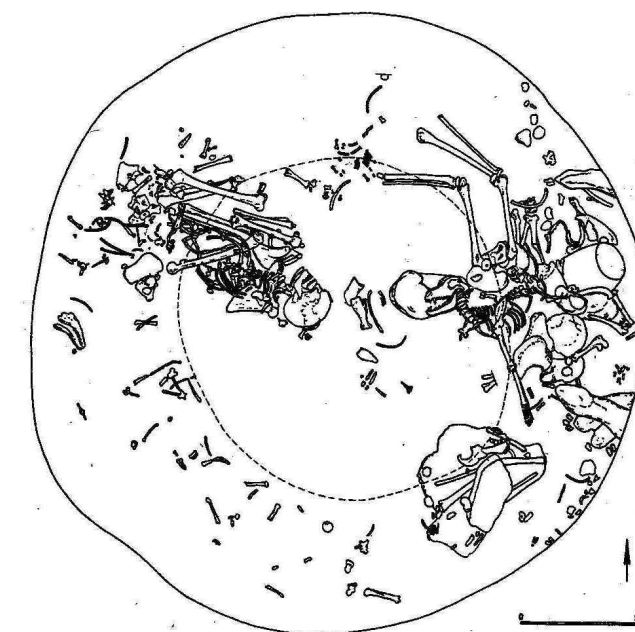


Figure 7. Mass Věteřov burial from Těšetice-Kyjovice [1991] (drawing by L. Píchová).

Another find of a burial with several individuals in a settlement pit is known from Rajhrad and dates back to 1872 (Wankel 1873). At the bottom of a settlement pit (Fig. 8), 6 meters underground, J. Wankel has discovered five human skeletons – a man, a woman, three children and the skeleton of a piglet. The specificity of this burial rite consists in the traces of violence on the man's skeleton, lying prone. Alongside the left part of his body, the piglet's skeleton was laid; the skull of the man had probably been purposefully dissected from the body and

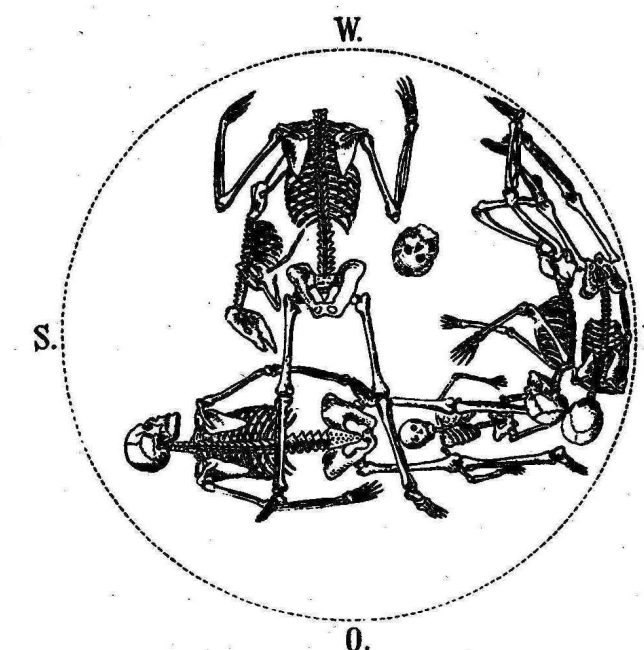


Figure 8. Rajhrad 1872. Burial of several individuals in a settlement pit, according to H. Wankel.

laid on the right side near the pelvis. Although the dating of Rajhrad find is not precise, because it included ceramics of a wider cultural representation (Neolithic - Bronze Age), the find circumstances bear some features corresponding to the character of the Early Bronze Age burial rite. The author estimated the find to be a sacrifice ground owing to the unusual depth of the deposition of skeletons, and purposeful burying (sacrifice) of several individuals.

A find dated approximately to the Early Bronze Age was discovered in Blučina (Fig. 9) in 1962 (Ludikovský 1963): the skeletons of six individuals were in a mild bowl-shaped pit; their disposition was irregular. The find consisted of remains of two women, a man and three children (Stloukal 1963). Unfortunately, the find was published without any more precise interpretation of the find circumstances.



Figure 9. Blučina 1962. Early Bronze Age find, according to K. Ludikovský.

The find of a damaged triple burial in a pit was discovered by chance in 1968 during the construction of a house at Masarykovo náměstí Square in Přerov (Jašková 1970). After removal of 2 meters of earth and dump, a pit was discovered 160 cm underground which was 205 cm wide, 170 cm high and dated by Věteřov ceramics. The skeletons of the older woman and the younger woman with a child were laid on their left side in a crouching position. The specificity of this find has been the way of depositing the bodies on the artificially arranged bottom of the pit, covered by an 8-15 cm thick layer of fresh-water shells which were dispersed on the skeletons as well.

An outstanding find is that of eight skeletons in a settlement pit at Velké Pavlovice from 1981, dated by Věteřov ceramics (Fig. 10). Two skeletons, an adult man and a child, were laid in a crouching position facing each other; another isolated child's skeleton was in an irregular position with the legs bent under its body. The other skeletons - an adult woman and four children - were merely thrown into the pit (Stuchlíková, Stuchlík, Stloukal 1985).

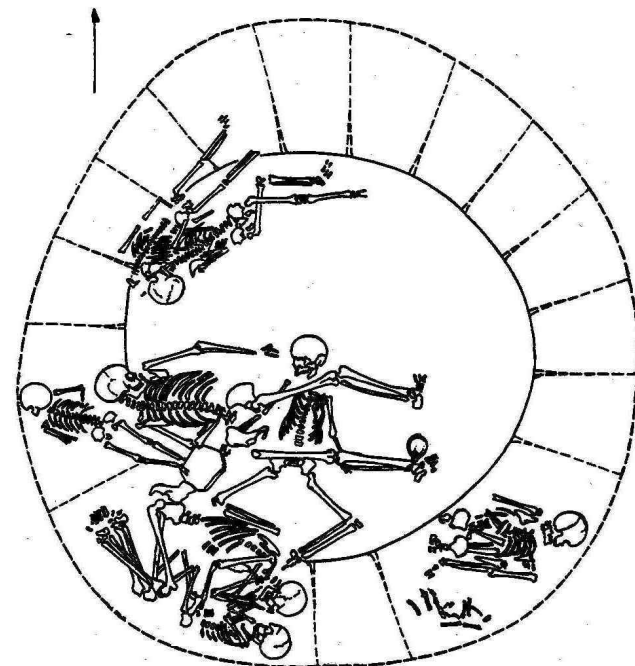


Figure 10. Velké Pavlovice 1981. Burial of eight individuals in a settlement pit, according to J. Stuchlíková a S. Stuchlík.

Table 3. Survey of skeleton finds from Věteřov pits.

	Men	Women	Adolescents	Children + New-born	Animals
Rajhrad	1	1		3	piglet
Blučina	1	2		3	
Přerov		1	1	1	
Velké Pavlovice	1	1		6	
Hulín	1			2	
Těšetice		1	1	1 1	dog, pig

CONCLUSION

Although the mass finds which have been discovered so far in settlement pits in Moravia are not numerous, they have a common feature. Grown-up individuals are always buried together with children, and sometimes also with animals. With a single exception (Rajhrad), death caused by violence has not been proven in any of these cases. Since the burial details vary from find to find, they have to be studied very carefully. Some individuals buried in the pits were in crouching position, but others had been merely thrown in the pits. The fact that stones, pieces of ceramics and other bones, mostly animal ones, had also been intentionally thrown into the pits, is significant as well. It is also essential to distinguish for each pit in which way the burials or sacrifices had taken place, what was their timing and whether they were simultaneous or not.

In the case of the find from Hulín, the skeletons deposited in the pit were those of an adult individual and one child (Fig. 2, 3). The other, bound child (Fig. 4) was thrown into the pit later, during its filling-in. The situation in the site of Těšetice was quite different (Dočkalová, Kazdová, Košťálek 1992). The adult skeleton with beads had been deposited at the bottom of

the pit (Fig. 7). The other skeletons were thrown in the pit on a different level, almost 40-70 cm higher. This burial or sacrifice must have taken place simultaneously. This is documented e.g. by the fact that the skeleton situated on the highest level above the bottom of the pit had a separated foot; this foot has been found, but at the very bottom of the pit. In the upper layers and in the middle of the pit, there was an accumulation of stones. One of the stones was thrown on the child's skeleton; two huge stones were laying at the bottom of the pit.

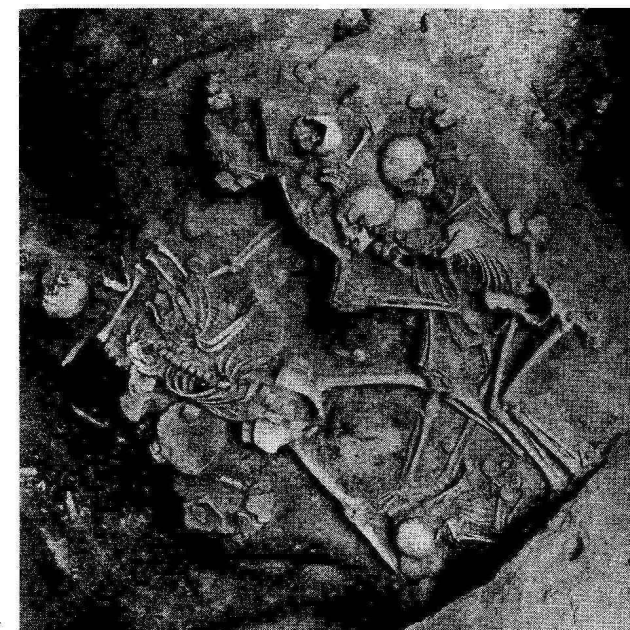


Figure 11. Stillfried 1976. Early Bronze Age burial of seven individuals in a settlement pit, according to Felgenhauer et al.

The finds of buried or sacrificed individuals belonging to the Věteřov culture are not known only from Moravia. There is another find from Stillfried (Lower Austria) dating from 1976 (Fig. 11); its first study has been published by Breitingner (Breitingner 1980), a second one by Felgenhauer et al. (Felgenhauer et al. 1988). The seven individuals (a man, two women and four children), discovered in this Early Bronze Age site, had been purposefully thrown into a settlement pit. The causes of mass burials in settlement pits are still mysterious for us. The explanation of their motive and possible social and economic relations are still to be found.

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