

12 SETTLEMENTS OF THE VUČEDOL CULTURE IN VINKOVCI AND STARI MIKANOVCI

ERVENICA IN VINKOVCI

Due to its favourable geographical position, the Vinkovci area has provided ideal conditions for settlement ever since prehistory. One of the best-known archaeological sites in this area is the site mentioned in the literature under the name of *Tržnica tell* or *Vinkovci-Hotel*. It is located in the very centre of the town of Vinkovci, on the higher, left bank of the River Bosut; this position has provided ideal conditions for settlement, which can be traced back to the period of the Starčevo Culture. The first finds were discovered at this site in the second half of the 19th century (Brunšmid 1902: 118), while a large rescue excavation at the location of the Hotel Slavonija was carried out in 1977/78, on a surface of 2170 m² (Dimitrijević 1979: 267–341). The stratigraphic record shows that this settlement was inhabited during the Starčevo, Vučedol and Vinkovci cultures, and material was also found which belongs to the Lasinja-Sălcuța and Bodrogkeresztur cultures.

During the urban development of Vinkovci in the second half of the 1970s, and through archaeological rescue excavation carried out intensively in the town over the past 50 years, around 12,000 m² of the Vučedol settlement has been uncovered. The settlement spread over two plateaus, on the left and right sides of the Ervenica brook, while it was enclosed by the Bosut on its southern side (Gale 2002; Miloglav 2007; 2012a). Thanks to some old military maps (Chapter 10), it is possible to identify the course of the Ervenica, filled in within the territory of the town in the middle of the 20th century (*Fig. 39, p. 99*). Today, the only indication of the former brook is a natural depression in Matija Gubec Street, where there is an elevated plateau which drops down towards the Bosut on one side, and towards the former bed of the Ervenica brook on the other side.

The area of Ervenica is located on an elevated plateau to the south-east of the town's main square. It has been mentioned in the archaeological literature for a long time. At the beginning of the 20th century, Josip Brunšmid wrote that the lower part of the Ervenica street (nowadays Matija Gubec Street) was settled as early as the Stone Age (Brunšmid 1902: 120). Here, the first test-pit excavations were carried out by Slobodan Dimitrijević in 1957, and they resulted in the discovery of settlements of the Starčevo and Sopot cultures and a Celtic settlement (Dimitrijević 1966: 6, 36). Dimitrijević recorded finds belonging to the Vučedol Culture only in the position of Poljski Jarak, a ditch, near the eastern perimeter of Ervenica, which was used for draining water overflow from the street. In this part of Ervenica, Matija Gubec Street connects to the Bosut (Dimitrijević 1956: 413, T. III: 1; Dimitrijević 1979a: 138, Map II/3).

From an archaeological point of view, the area of Ervenica is very interesting; unfortunately, the modern urban development prevents systematic exploration which could complete our understanding of inhabitation in this location. Small-scale rescue excavations have been carried out over a number of years, because Ervenica is within a protected archaeological zone. Such excavations are always complex and demanding, because of the modern-day urban infrastructure which makes archaeological and geophysical investigations difficult. In addition, the disturbed stratigraphic picture and limited surface that can be excavated make it impossible to obtain a comprehensive picture of the settlement. On the other hand, rescue excavations are the only

method available for recording and documenting archaeological sites located under modern-day towns, and they offer an opportunity to record grids and the appearance of past settlements.

Since the 1990s, archaeological investigations at Ervenica have been limited to small surfaces excavated when new residential and business facilities were built in Matija Gubec Street. Thus far, traces of a Vučedol settlement have been recorded at street numbers between 4 and 19 (Krznačić Škrivanko 1994; Gale 2002; Miloglav 2007; 2012a) (*Fig. 40, p. 100*). According to the investigations carried out to date, traces of inhabitation at the time of the Vučedol Culture have not been identified further to the east of the locations in the vicinity of street numbers 14 and 19. For the time being, Dimitrijević's finds made at the position of Poljski Jarak remain the only chance finds that cannot be archaeologically interpreted.

The site discussed and presented in this book was excavated in 2007, at 14 Matija Gubec Street in Ervenica. It comprised a surface area of 250 m² (Krznačić Škrivanko 2008). The stratigraphic record of the site showed remains of the Sopot Culture, several settlement phases all belonging to the late-classic Vučedol Culture, traces of settlement during the Late Iron Age and a badly damaged and disturbed layer belonging to the Roman period. Although the site consists of several layers, the biggest mark has been left by the Vučedol Culture. In total, remains of the floors of six residential houses were recorded, set in a NE-SW direction, consisting of a yellow packed-loam base and traces of upper house daub. In addition, there were also 14 pits and holes for posts. Unfortunately, due to the small excavation surface, none of the identified house floors has been excavated in its entirety, because each of them extends, at least in part, into the profile. Based on their width of around 4.5 m, they correspond to the regular width of the houses excavated at the site of Vučedol (Forenbaher 1994). The pits were oval, between 0.5 and 2 m in diameter. Traces of floor renovation, and also radio-carbon dates (*Table 1*), demonstrate that this site was settled in two phases, probably within one or two generations (Miloglav 2012) (*Fig. 41, p. 101*). As far as house-floor renovation goes, a similar situation has been recorded at the neighbouring position of the Hotel Slavonija (Dimitrijević 1979: 283).

DAMIĆA GRADINA IN STARI MIKANOVCI

The site of Damića Gradina (the *Damić Hillfort*) is located in the very centre of Stari Miknovci, on the southern slopes of the Đakovo-Vinkovci loess plateau, which gradually descends towards the south and turns into a plain by the River Sava. The hillfort has been named after its former owners, the Petričević family, known in the village by their nickname of 'Damići' (the *Damićes*). In the archaeological literature, the site was first mentioned in the early 18th century by the travel writer Marsigli (Virč 1979). He also provided a drawing, ground plan and cross-section of the settlement, with clearly visible remains of a fortification system, consisting of a ditch and earthen rampart, and the location of a late-mediaeval defence tower in the southern section of the hillfort. Josip Korda mentioned the site in 1954, remarking that "the 'Damić hillfort' rises in the centre, and remnants of the Neolithic and La Tène (Celtic) period have been identified there" (Korda 1954: 81). In 1980, when the foundations for the elementary school were built, archaeologists of the Vinkovci Town Museum carried out an extensive rescue excavation (Iskra-Janošić 1984) (*Fig. 42, p. 102*).

The excavation ascertained continuity of settlement during the periods of the Sopot, Baden, Vučedol, Vinkovci and Bosut cultures. The final phase of inhabitation in this hillfort was the for-

tified settlement in the late phase of the Middle La Tène period, in the second half of the 1st c. BC (Dizdar 2001; Potrebica & Dizdar 2002). Since the plan envisaged the construction of the school building in the eastern half of the hillfort, excavations were carried out there, in five trenches 2 and 4 m wide (*Fig. 43, p. 102*).

The results have shown that the hillfort was enclosed by an earthen rampart – fired at two levels, built in the period of the Sopot Culture – and by a ditch, which was probably linked to a small brook flowing to the east of the hillfort. The hillfort plateau is circular, between 117 and 125 m in diameter, while the diameter at the base of the hill is about 170 m. It descends gradually to the south, from a relative height of 8 m, while its height in the north-eastern part of the plateau exceeds 9 m (Iskra-Janošić 1984: 149).

To the east of the hillfort there was a brook which filled the ditch with water. Nowadays it can still be seen on the north-eastern, northern and north-western sides of the hillfort. The entrance to the hillfort was on its most accessible, south-eastern, side (*Fig. 44, p. 103*).

According to the excavation records, house floors which were renovated in the same spot (*Fig. 45, p. 103*), and radio-carbon dates (*Table 1, p. 104*), the Vučedol population of Damića Gradina also lived in this location over several generations.

At both sites, two settlement horizons (or two levels of house floors) have been processed. It can be assumed that the houses were renovated by new generations, which means that several generations lived in the same location – a common occurrence during the Aeneolithic. This assumption could explain the wide range of dates obtained and the pottery material, which displays no major or important differences in diverse stratigraphic units. The ‘plateau’ in the calibration curve in the period 2900–2600 BC ought to be taken into consideration, too.