

**The Late Bronze Age settlement Baley (North-West Bulgaria).  
Stratigraphy and features (Abstract)**

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The prehistoric site Baley is located on the right bench of Timok River some 2 km south of its flowing into the Danube River. The settlement is located on a small eminence of the second non-flooded river terrace. The natures of the cultural layers of the site as well as its close proximity to the contemporary site were the reasons that it had been subject of continuous anthropogenic destructions during the years. The archaeological investigations of the site, led by R. Katinčarov (NAIM-BAS) and A. Iotzova (RHM-Vidin) lasted 18 years (1970-1977, 1979-1987, 1989). According to the investigators, there are four main stages in site's development during the Late Bronze Age (marked as IV-I) as well as Early Iron Age pits. Building levels IV and III are separated by a flood.

During the excavations 42 dwelling features have been investigated: twelve houses with distinguished form and dimensions (3 from building level IVa, 5 – from level III, 4 – from level II); 22 parts of dwellings presented by floors (2 – from level IVa, 5 – from level III, 10 – from level II, 5 – from level I) as well as 8 hearths and ovens that have not been associated with a particular floor level (5 – from level III and 3 – from level II). The Baley houses are rectangular-, irregular trapezium- or apsis-shaped with one or two chambers. Only one house had an antechamber. The hearths have oval or round shape.

All three investigated dwellings from level IV were two- chambered, one of them named as “the megaron” – with an ante-chamber. The last one had a rectangular form with an East-West orientation and dimensions 14,36/14,40 x 5,75/5,80 m. The two other dwellings had a North-South orientation and dimension 8,20 x 3,50 m и 8,30 x 3,40/4,05 m respectively. Five dwellings from level III have been investigated. Three of them had an irregular trapezium- or trapezium form and different orientation, one – with two chambers. Their dimensions vary from 6,60 - 7,50 m of the long sides to 2,90 - 5,20 m of the short sides. The two other dwellings had a rectangular form, one of them – with apsis. The dimensions of both dwellings is 5,85/5,15 to 4,20/4,80 m and 8,60/8,80 to 4,50/3,80 m with main orientation North-South. Three of the investigated dwellings from level II had an irregular trapezium- or trapezium form; the last one had a rectangular shape. Their orientation was North-South, just one dwelling had a East-West orientation. The long sides dimensions vary from 4,80 to 9,85 m, the short ones - from 2,0 to 4,10 m.

The analyses of the investigations showed that pits №№ 1, 2, 7, 11, 13/1976 are located beneath dwelling features from level IV. They have been assigned to an earlier level of the site (named IVb). That assignment proves to be correct by the fact that in 1977 and 1979 beneath the houses from level IV archaeological materials have been found as well.

The connection of the above mentioned pits and materials to an earlier building level (IVb) is currently an assumption but, if it is correct than its dwellings should have been located south-southeast from the investigated surface. The dwellings of level IVa are located in the south-eastern part of the investigated region grouped in the lines A-F/5-12. A total number of 11 pits are related to that level all of them located some 30 m north-west of the dwellings. Level III dwelling features are located in the north-western sector grouped in two lots: the western one in the lines F-K/12-20 and the eastern one in the lines A-F/4-11. The two lots are separated by a narrow (1.30 m) street. Four pits are related to that level located between the two lots of dwellings. Level II features are located in the western sector grouped into 3 lots of dwellings: in the lines B-E/10-14; lines F-J/12-14 as well as lines F-I/16-17. Apart from these 3 lots are the two dwellings in lines M and L respectively. The 21 pits from level II are located east from the dwelling area. The level I dwellings have most probably been located in the north-eastern part of the site that has been destroyed in the last 70 years. Parts of floor levels have been investigated in that sector. The 15 pits from level I are located south-southwest from the above mentioned floor levels.

Pits № 3/1976, № 17/1976 as well as

the pit in box-grid D-12/1980 date to the Early Iron Age. During the excavations Early Iron Age materials have been discovered all over the investigated sectors, a fact that leads to a conclusion of the existence of ore Early Iron Age pits destroyed in later periods. Mapping the EIA materials shows that probably the Early Iron Age pits have been located in the southern part of the site.

Considering the Baley stratigraphy as well as the settlement – necropolis connection close analogies with the Ghidici – Balta Țarova, Ostrovul Corbului and Mala Vrbica sites are discussed.

In 2010 the necropolis of the site has been discovered. It is located some 450 m southeast from the settlement. The settlement-necropolis distance is common for the Encrusted Pottery Culture so far. The Baley discovery confirmed the already existing idea that the necropolises of that Culture had been located not far from the settlements, at high places that are not threatened by floods.

In conclusion, the Baley site with its' 5 building levels shows to be the basic one for understanding the characteristics of the Encrusted Pottery Culture as well as the nature of cultural phenomena and changes during the second half of the second millennium BC in Lower Danube and adjacent regions.