

A CONTRIBUTION TO THE PREHISTORY AND PROTOHISTORY OF THE KARLSBAD REGION

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The springs of Karlsbad were probably known already in prehistoric times. The legend that the springs were discovered by Emperor Charles IV is presumably an adaptation of the legend of the foundation of Teplitz. On the other hand, the special attention which this emperor paid to these warm springs — known already before his visit there — can be demonstrated historically.

In the prehistoric era the country between the Horner Berg and Buchberg, between Aberg and Hutberg, was already covered by a network of important roads, which can still be traced today. An important military road traversed the Eger valley. All of the defended points of this region were oriented on this old „high road“. It was protected and controlled not only by the ramparts of Taschwitz, which have been examined in detail, but also by those of the vanished village of „Thiergarten“ near the present-day „St. Leonhard“ and the fortifications on the „Buchberg“ and the „Ewiges Leben“, both of which the author has surveyed for the first time. The „Thiergarten“ ramparts on the mountain north of the springs have yet to be examined by means of excavations, and the question of their periodization is therefore still open.

In addition to the evidence known before 1945, the finds of the intensive Czech research of the last few years at Taschwitz, Dallwitz, Schankau, Weheditz and Zettlitz have pointed to the main areas of prehistoric settlement in the Karlsbad basin. Under the castle of Engelhausen, neolithic remains were uncovered; mesolithic traces have been discovered since the war to the north and the south of the Eger and on the northern slopes of the Aberg. The Czech investigations have thus far been dominated mainly by the concept of the „sedličaner“ tribe, which linguistic studies have associated especially with the territory north of the Eger. More recent Czech Hallstatt and La Tène finds on both sides of the Eger, however, also furnish a strong indication of Celtic settlement in the area.

Šimek attempts to show that the Taschwitz ramparts were exclusively Slavic, even though the excavations of 1938 clearly brought Germanic finds to light. The old area of Slav settlement in this region was evidently centered in the poorly wooded districts north of the Eger sloping down to the foot of the Erzgebirge. Only the saga of the „Drahomira“ castle south of the Eger indicates that an earlier area of Slavic settlement also existed in this region. Whether this castle was located on the site of the Drahowitz farm (Meierhof) has not yet been established. Šimek conjectures that the Gau castle of the „sedličané“ was located south of Zettlitz, approximately between the site of the present town and the heights beneath which the main railway station of Karlsbad is situated. Open working has now completely eradicated the old face of this terrain. Šimek rejects the speculation, raised in pre-war German publications, that the „Wasserburg“ west of the Premlowitz farm could have

been the Slavic Gau castle. But the „Hausberg“ which he regards as the Gau castle is probably not to be appraised any differently than the one near the Dallwitz farm. Near each of these tower hills were also located large farmsteads. The fact that they were situated on old roads makes it appear likely that they were positions designed to secure the roads, each being assigned a supply base. Presumably these fortifications go back to Charlemagne, who after his military campaign against the Slavs in 805, which probably took place on the „Frankensteig“, had every reason to secure the militarily most important points on this important gateway for incursions into Bohemia. The reconstruction of the original roads shows that all the river crossings were so situated as to facilitate their protection, and that well-distributed „Hutberge“ were available to enable a larger area to be surveyed.