

Eberdingen-Hochdorf, Kr. Ludwigsburg, Baden-Württemberg

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Resumo

A cultura ocidental de Hallstatt tardia proporcionou impulso decisivo na formação da cultura de La Tène. O fenômeno dos sítios aristocráticos fortificados e suas tumbas principescas com relações próximas com o mundo mediterrâneo no séc. VI a.C. é único na pré-história da Europa Central. O presente artigo tem por objetivo apresentar os achados recentes do assentamento aberto de Eberdingen-Hochdorf em meio ao contexto do fenômeno principesco hallstattiano.

Palavras-Chave: Período hallstattiano; tumbas principescas; assentamentos principescos

Abstract

The late Western Hallstatt Culture has given decisive impulse on the formation of the La Tène culture. The phenomenon of defended aristocratic sites and of their princely burials with their close relations to the Mediterranean world in the 6th century is unique in the prehistory of Central Europe. The present paper aims to present the recent discoveries of an open settlement in Eberdingen-Hochdorf amid the context of the Hallstatt princely phenomenon.

Keywords: Hallstatt period; princely burials; princely settlements

The Late Western Hallstatt Culture, that means the 6th and the first half of the 5th centuries BC in South West Germany, Northern and Central Switzerland as well as in Eastern France, has given decisive impulses on the formation of the La Tène culture. The phenomenon of defended aristocratic sites and of the tombs of their princes in the 6th century BC with their close relations to the Mediterranean world is unique in the prehistory of Central Europe. Not only has it uncovered sensational finds, but it has also given reason for many theories and models, especially among Anglo-Saxon authors. The confrontation of the local Hallstatt culture with the Greek, Etruscan and Upper Italian world results in new cultural appearances, which have contributed essentially to the formation of the La Tène culture on one hand, and have finally caused the breakdown of this aristocratic class on the other hand.

The chieftain sites (*Fürstensitze*) are mainly established on the top of hills, dominating the lower surrounding plains from their prominent positions, like Mt. Lassois near Châtillon-sur-Seine in Burgundy and others.

They show a rather regular expansion with detached settlements being located at a distance of about 100 km to each other and one gains the impression that individual territories can be recognized.

The topographic situation of the Mt. Lassois, a hillfort, is very similar to the Hohenasperg, North-West of Stuttgart to which I will come back. The situation of the famous Heuneburg on the upper Danube is somewhat different. The site is located on a terrace above a ford of the Danube. Excavations have been carried out here since 1950. They enable us to present this settlement as an example of such a fortified chieftain site. The Heuneburg is surrounded by a number of large burial mounds, which start at the same time as the settlement of the fortress, with the beginning of the 6th century. The most ancient tumulus is the Hohmichele, a mighty funeral monument, measuring 13 m high with a diameter of about 100 m. The central chamber of this barrow was completely robbed, a double burial of man and woman equipped with a four-wheel wagon, bronze vessels and numerous smaller objects were deposited in a side funeral chamber.

The burial mounds which are located directly in the surroundings of the Heuneburg are dated somewhat younger. They contain the characteristic golden necklaces, wagons, harnesses and bronze vessels. These barrows were raised on the ground of a former settlement, which existed at a time when the fortress was at the top of its importance and which was given up after a destruction by fire. It must remain open, whether this concept actually reflects the southern model of a fortress (*arx*) and *suburbium*. So far, the existence of such an external settlement was only documented at the Heuneburg. However, with a surface of only 3 hectares, the fortified Heuneburg figures among the smallest sites of its kind.

During the first half of the 6th century southern influence becomes very obvious in the fortification of phase IV of the Heuneburg. A previous fortification, built according to local techniques (wood, stone, earth) was upgraded to an imposing massive perimeter wall of sundried mudbricks and a base of limestone, a technique clearly originating from the south. Numerous square bastions jutting out towards the northwest are built mainly at the exposed front of the fortress. They document southern construction plans as well, which were probably carried out by Greek or Mediterranean masons or architects. About one third of the inner surface of the fortress was excavated, showing a division of quarters apparently separated to their function, a further indication on southern influence. The objects discovered in this settlement demonstrate very well again southern connections. About 100

Attic black-figured sherds were found, which however do not belong to the period of the mudbrick wall. Most are dated around 530 BC. Massiliote amphorae were used for the transport of oil and wine. Influence from Italy is evident as well, for example, in a vessel of the Este culture. The casting model of an attachment in form of an Etruscan silen demonstrates that southern bronze vessels were imitated and cast. In the course of its history the Heuneburg seems to lose of importance. Its existence ends with the late Hallstatt period and does not survive to the times of Early La Tène.

The rise of these chieftain sites has found different explanations. Some models suggested, that connections with the South by way of the importation of luxurious goods have led to the formation of this upper class, which, controlling the distribution of these luxuries, were thus enabled to consolidate and extend their power. This and some similar models however are very unlikely. For bargaining, southern merchants obviously travelled to trading or political centres, which were already existent, i.e. they went to central market places with a corresponding concentration of power, which made trading worthwhile. Regions without such chieftain sites were of no interest; they were excluded from these commercial contacts.

Taking a look at the Hallstatt settlements in Bavaria for example, one will notice a lack of these chieftain sites (*Fürstensitze*) there. In this region the upper class seems to live in fortified farmsteads. We now know a significant number of them, most of which were discovered by aerial photography. Such defended farms (*Herrensitze*) are absent in their turn from regions with the chieftain sites. Only farther east, hillforts can be observed as in Sticna, Sopron or the Burgberg near Großmugl. However, these settlements are somewhat older than their counterparts in the west and they possess no Mediterranean imports. The equipment of their graves as well differs completely from the west. They are warrior funerals with sword, helmet and armour. Coming back to the west again to the Hohenasperg and the surrounding barrows. During medieval and modern times the Hohenasperg has been strongly transformed by building activities, so all archaeological layers seem to be erased on the summit. Covering an area of about 6 hectares, the dimensions of the site are twice as big as the Heuneburg. For the assessment of the history of this hillfort, we depend on the surrounding burials, situated either directly at the foot of the hill or up to a distance of 10 km. Similar to the Heuneburg, the most ancient graves are located at the greatest distance, whereas the recent ones tend to be closer to the settlement. Three of the most important show the development of the aristocratic society in the course of about 3 or 4 generations: the tumulus of Hochdorf, dated around 550 BC, the Grafenbühl around 500 BC and finally the lateral chamber of the Kleinaspergle around 450 BC containing a funeral of La Tène A. It is so far the most recent grave in the Hohenasperg region.

The tumulus of Hochdorf was investigated in the years 1978/79. Together with the burial of Vix it contains the only central grave chamber, which was not disturbed by looters in antiquity. At the time of its discovery, the barrow, with an original height of around 6m and 60m in diameter, was almost completely worn down by erosion and cultivation. The mighty funeral monument could be excavated to the full extent, which gave extraordinary information on the tumulus construction and the progress of the funeral. For the funeral ceremonies a platform was banked up in front of the open decorated burial chamber with an entranceway of paved stones. This entrance leads to the chamber from the north. The outside of the tumulus is enclosed by a stone ring and strong oak posts, holding together the

earth. The grave pit in the centre of the tumulus, measuring 11 x 11m in size and 2.5m in depth, contains an outstanding chamber construction: the inner burial chamber of 4.7 x 4.7m made of looped oak beams is protected by a second chamber of 7.4 x 7.4 m. The gap between the two and also the roof is packed with about 50 tons of stones, effectively sealing the tomb in the ground like a “bank *tresor*” against grave robbers.

A man was buried in this grave, about 40 years old and of unusual tall stature. He was about 1.85 m tall. Certainly he was no warrior, because in contrast to the graves of the eastern Hallstatt culture, weapons for defence or attack are absent from these graves. Neither does the flat cone shaped hat made of birch bark, adorned with circle patterns and punched decorations give a warrior-like impression. Nor can the characteristic antenna dagger be regarded as a weapon; it is a symbol of social rank. The golden necklace, which we find in nearly all chieftain tombs, seems equally to be such a sign of status. The famous, almost life-sized statue of sandstone, which was discovered at a tumulus near Hirschlanden, at about 10km distance from Hochdorf, shows such a Hallstatt prince wearing a hat, antenna dagger and torque.

Artefacts, which were used in daily life, as a comb, razor, toilet-set, a little iron knife, a quiver with arrows and finally a small pocket with 3 fishing hooks, are numbering among his personal belongings, giving some hints about the character of the person buried. Among the typical equipment of such a rich grave are a four-wheeled wagon with harnesses for 2 horses as well as a drinking service and a dinner set. These are arranged to serve for 9 persons. Nine drinking horns are suspended from the southern chamber wall. 8 of them are made of aurochs horns, whereas the ninth consists of iron, it can hold 5 litres of beverage. A large bronze cauldron was found, decorated by 3 bronze lions on the rim as well as 3 handles with roll attachments. This piece seems to be produced in Magna Graecia and is likely monumental as the famous krater of Vix. These bronze objects of enormous size are certainly no commercial goods, but sovereign gifts, demonstrating very clearly the social position of their owners. However, the cauldron of Hochdorf did not contain Greek wine, but, as pollen analysis proved, was filled with about 400 litres of local honeymeade from late summer's harvest. The piece of furniture, on which the dead was laid, can be added to the equipment of a *symposion*. The bed is singular, measuring 2.75 m in length and being supported by 8 female figurines cast in bronze, which stand on little wheels, so that the bed could be rolled. The southern custom of lying during festivities seems to be adopted here, in fact it is very difficult to decide finally about the origin of this bronze bed – I think it was produced by an upper Italian craftsman, who worked in the region of Hohenasperg and that this piece was not imported. Finally the four-wheeled wagon, 4.5 m long including the pole, was entirely covered with decorated iron sheet, revealing the high technical standard of this early Celtic society, which was certainly the cause for their prosperity.

The deceased was wrapped in coloured textiles of finest weaving. The whole chamber as well was lined with fabrics and decorated with flowers.

The grave of Hochdorf is still a very traditional burial; only the Greek cauldron was imported and looks somehow exotic among the other grave goods. Southern influence becomes obvious mainly in the banqueting equipment. The drinking horns as well as the bier go back to Greek or upper Italian inspirations. The grave of the Grafenbühl looks completely different, being younger by one or two generations. Unfortunately the grave chamber was looted in antique times, so only few scattered remains were preserved of the

originally very rich funeral equipment. For this reason, the reconstruction is rather different from that of the Hochdorf grave and very speculative. But it is certain, that Grafenbühl was much richer furnished than Hochdorf. Of course nothing is left of the golden equipment. However small residues of fine gold threads from brocade attest its original splendour. Only a few parts of the wagon have been saved and among other things a tripod with bronze lion feet belonged to the drinking and dinner set. Inlay of amber and ivory reveal the existence of a Greek wooden *kline*, as was found in shaft grave 3 of Kerameikos in Athens. A sphinx with an amber face, lion feet of ivory, an ivory handle of a fan or mirror are listed among further imported goods. By the way, they were already antique objects when deposited, mostly dating back into the 7th century. An Etruscan iron rattle with an ivory handle is very instructive – being no luxurious article but a musical instrument, which demonstrates very clearly, that at the time around 500 BC not only southern luxuries were imported but also southern ideas and customs. The funeral equipment of the Grafenbühl makes a very hybrid impression and is much less traditional than that of the Hochdorf tumulus.

This development continues up to the tumulus of the Kleinaspergle, which is about 50 years younger. The dead man or better dead woman was cremated - the southern funeral customs seem to have gained access here. Among some objects, showing the typical style of Early La Tène, we find a drinking service entirely corresponding with southern models. Cauldron, stamnos, ribbed bucket, a beaked flagon, the ends of two drinking horns and two Attic red figured cups. The flagon was not imported; its attachment shows the artistic style of Early La Tène in its best articulation.

The example of these 3 graves has demonstrated clearly the development of the aristocratic society during the 6th and early 5th century. The most ancient tombs are enclosed in monumental barrows, their equipment is still very traditional, isolated large and very precious imported goods have rather an exotic effect in the grave context. However, they show clearly the importance of the buried persons for the south. Imports from the south become more frequent, smaller and less expensive objects appear in the graves, finally attic ceramics. Southern ideas are adopted in the artistic style, imitated and interpreted on the one hand, but also southern habits as banquet customs or burial rites find a quick access on the other hand. The attachment of the wine flagon from the Kleinaspergle represents the final product of this development.

Compared to the burial archaeology we know very little of the settlements. Around the Hohenasperg there is not one systematic excavation, we have some information by rescue excavations. These show open hamlets of limited size, which seem to shift their location during time. They start at the end of Ha D1 and go up to beginning of LT B. Then there is a general break in the necropolis as in settlements. The discovery of a settlement only 400 m from the Hochdorf tumulus and its systematic excavation from 1989 to 1993 now gives us very useful information on these settlements and also new ideas on the function of the *Fürstensitze*. As these excavations have only ended in April of 1993 and the analysis of the settlement structures and the finds as well have only started, I will only give a very short preview of the first results. On a slight southern slope above the actual village of Hochdorf an area of altogether 3 hectares could be excavated which covered a complete settlement. As structures we find here traces of houses of very big size (140 m²), sunken-floor huts between 3 and 8 m long, storage pits, granaries, and fences that delimit

rectangular areas. All these structures show a rectangular system, so the settlement seems to be pre-planned. A reconstruction shows a rather regular open, undefended hamlet of about ten to twelve housesteads, a settlement plan that resembles the later oppida structures. The finds are exceptional and show the social status of this settlement. Wheel-turned local pottery is very frequent and over-represented in comparison to other sites. Six red figured attic sherds from kylices, dated at around 425 BC are among the outstanding finds. A balance with a scale to tare, cast in bronze and 11.5 cm long is surely imported and could be used for checking the weight of metal coins. Iron forging, bronze casting and mainly textile production is largely attested. We hope, that research on the animal bones and the botanical rests, which can be done in a research program will give further information on the social structure, economical background and specialisation in this settlement and might also reveal some details of commerce with the south. First results are rather promising. Some finds date from late HA D1, from the time of the princely Hochdorf grave. Then we have a lot of material from LT A to LT B1, the time when this settlement was really used. The settlement contemporary to the principal grave is not yet found.

The presence of social outstanding persons in this settlement is by the Greek potsherds in LT A, but also the structure and the general finds put it aside. We might call it a countryseat belonging to the Hohenasperg, a form of settlement known throughout the ages up to now. Actually, there are no traces of a palace inside the Heuneburg area, but very big houses outside, which might not be a *suburbium*, but the living quarters of the nobility. The term *Fürstensitz* as defined by Kimmig surely is still valid but has to be differentiated. The sites with southern imports of Bragny, Bourges or Lyon are all very different and surely no *Fürstensitze* in the classical sense.

If I resume my opinion on the highly debated subject of the *Fürstensitze*, it is clear, that each of them has its individual duration, different importance and rather varying economical background. These different developments seem to be influenced very strongly by individual personalities.

During the 7th century many settlements on hilltops emerge in the region of the Western Hallstatt culture, out of which some develop central power with supra-regional importance. They are mostly located along trading routes as for example the tin route to Britain (Mt. Lassois and certainly Bourges), or the routes along the valleys such as the rivers Rhine, Neckar or Danube. Technical know-how was especially developed at these centres, promoting the manufacture of textiles, the forging of iron and bronze objects and ceramics on potters wheel. These centres maintain intensive commercial contacts with upper Italy; here the Golasecca culture is playing a special part. After the foundation of the Greek colony of Massilia around 600 BC, trading relations with Southern France are taken up as well.

The specific merchandise exchanges is not yet known, but it is sure that Greek vessels of bronze and pottery can only be regarded as secondary symptoms of this trade. At this point further investigations are necessary, mainly settlement excavations including analysis of botany and osteology. These close connections result in the adaptation of southern influences and ideas into the artistic style, which is partly imitated but also transformed into personal stylistic expression; a fact that finally leads to the creation of the La Tène style.

The funeral equipment of the social leaders become increasingly exotic and extravagant, in the course of the 5th century the princely sites as well as their surrounding

rural villages have an end. The degeneration of the so-called princely society in its third or fourth generation seems to be an essential reason for this decline. For about 200 years, until the formation of the later oppida civilisation, a general stagnation can be observed in the region of the former *Fürstensitze*, while the development beyond this region takes a much more vivid course as on the Central Rhine, Champagne or Bohemia. The famous Celtic migrations do not seem to be the cause of the end of the princely sites but more the result. It is only by the end of the 2nd and in the 1st century that we know extraordinary discoveries from Southwest Germany again, as for example the wooden statues excavated from the pit of Schmiden, dated to 123 BC.

The Celtic civilisation has left no traces at all in today's Southwest Germany. People regard it as a rather mysterious period, far away, and they do not have any emotional relation with it at all. This is rather different in regions at the periphery like Ireland, Galicia or Brittany.

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