

Introduction:

Manching is one of the largest *oppidum* in Europe and one of the most researched Celtic *oppida* (H. Wendling, 2013, p.132). The *oppidum* of Manching is located in south Bavaria, Germany, east of the current town of Manching (K. Vandemoortele, 2011, p. 82). It is situated where the river Paar, meets the Danube (S. Sievers, 2002, p.943). Manching is not the original name of the *oppidum*, it is named after the current town as the original name is unknown (K. Vandemoortele, 2011, p. 82).

The first person to interpret Manching as an *oppidum* was Officer Arnold (K. Vandemoortele, 2011, p. 84). Between 1892 and 1893 Fink excavated the rampart and an area presumed to be the gates and streets and the cemetery (K. Vandemoortele, 2011, p.84). This was continued by Birkner and Weber between 1902 and 1903 (K. Vandemoortele, 2011, p.84). Manching has yielded critical information about Celtic urbanisation and society (H. Wendling, 2014, p.137).



Particularities:

Water is necessary for the survival of settlements and Manching is in an ideal place for access to clean water as there were a number of springs that could be used, one of which is still used in modern Manching today (K. Vandemoortele, 2011, p. 88).

Sievers states that the land surrounding Manching can be used for agriculture as specific types of grain that thrive in a wet environment such as barley and spelt are found in the *oppidum* (S. Sievers, 2003, p.19). Although, the soil is poor in nutrients which suggests that agriculture was not the main motive for the foundation of a settlement in this area (K. Vandemoortele, 2011, p. 88).

Manching is located near iron ores which may have been a reason for creating the *oppidum* and the growth of it (S. Sievers, 2003, p. 76). Bog iron has been found in the Feilen moors and the Danube moors near Manching that date back to the *oppidum* (K. Vandemoortele, 2011, p. 89). Jacoby has suggested that iron was smelted within the *oppidum* area on a small scale (K. Vandemoortele, 2011, p. 89). However, Kramer and Schubert have argued that the bog iron had ran out by the time of the *oppidum* (K. Vandemoortele, 2011, p. 89). These iron ores would have contributed to the wealth and prosperity of Manching (H. Wendling 2014, p. 138).

Landscape:

During excavations constructions were uncovered flanked by trenches (S Sievers, 2002, p. 943). This included building of unknown function such as storage pits, commercial buildings and longhouses (S. Sievers, 2002, p. 944).

Archaeological remains at Manching have not suffered much erosion except in places near the river Paar as the settlement is on a flat plain (K. Vandemoortele, 2011, p. 84). Although Manching is on a plain, unlike most *oppidum*, as it is surrounded by moors and the rivers (K. Vandemoortele, 2011, p. 97).

Due to differences in culture layers across the plain stratigraphy studies are minimal and are mostly concentrated on ditches and pits (K. Vandemoortele, 2011, p. 84).

The geographical positioning of Manching at the confluence of the Paar and Danube allowed for economic growth (S. Sievers, 2002, p. 943). This suggests that Manching played a prominent role in trade and communication between the east and west of the Celtic world (H. Wendling, 2014, p. 197). A town wall was constructed from wood and stone during the second century BC (S. Sievers, 2002, p. 943). The *oppidum* had about seven kilometres of ramparts that enclosed an area of 380 ha (K. Vandemoortele, 2011, p. 84).

Manching: Trade and Society

An *oppidum* is typically defined as a place for production and trade, chronologically it is situated in the Late La Tene period and between Slovakia and Britain geographically (K. Vandemoortele, 2011 p. 4).

Society:

It has been suggested by scholars that religious thoughts and practices were essential in the establishment and growth of communities in the late La Tene period (H. Wendling, 2013, p. 138). Access to the elaborate sanctuaries was limited to specific social groups and the pits appear to be more private than communal (H. Wendling, 2013, p. 138). These are important distinctions of the social differentiations in settlement organization and can be compared with Manching and other Iron Age Celtic settlements (H. Wendling, 2013, p. 138).

Close to Manching there are three “Viereckschanzen” that have not been sufficiently explored and it has been suggested that they may hold extensive evidence on social and economic interactions happening in that area (H. Wendling, 2014, p.147)



Trade:

The river runs through the north of Manching and contains old meanders which can be used to suggest a Celtic harbour and landing place (S. Sievers, 2002, p. 9343).The ‘harbour’ would have been used to unload amphorae, wine and fish sauce, as fine fish bones from the Mediterranean have been found near the south of the settlement (S. Sievers, 2002, p. 944). This suggests that there was imports and long-distance trade connections that linked them with the Mediterranean (S. Sievers, 2002, p. 944 and Gebhard et al., 2004, p. 199). The role of Manching in trade and communication would have helped in the establishment of the *oppidum* and its evolution (H. Wendling, 2014, p. 137)

Archaeological evidence shows that valuable goods such as glass and jewellery were transported over large distance in the Celtic world and that gold coins were used as a currency for this distance trade (Gebhard et al 2004 p.212).

Material Evidence:

During excavations at Manching between 1996 and 1999, a small bronze hippocampus and a horses’ hoof carved from antler horn were discovered (S. Sievers, 2002, p. 944). Sievers states that these goods are suggestive of a person belonging to an elite societal structure who was active within a religious community when compared to structures found in ‘Viereckschanzen’ (S. Sievers, 2002, p. 944).

There are collections of prestige goods that have been found such as glass dishes and special weapons including daggers and fragments of chain mail (S. Sievers, 2002, p. 944). These weapons may have been used by equites (S. Sievers, 2002, p. 944). There was also a lead weight discovered weighing 62 g with a divine bust (S. Sievers, 2002, p. 944).

Archaeological evidence of precious items and coin hoards suggests that in times of conflict there was social and political instability (H. Wendling, 2014, p. 139).



Comparisons:

Manching is different from other *oppidum* as the economy was not sustained purely from agriculture and stock; rather, Manching had specialised production of pottery, bronze, iron, glass jewellery and coins (H. Wendling 2014, p. 139). Wendling states that this is a transformation from into a “new economic environment” from the farming and cattle breeding that was previously the main way of life for ‘Celtic’ peoples (H. Wendling, 2013, p. 136).

Wendling suggests that similarities between ‘Celtic’ settlements at the time of Manching suggest a common origin (H. Wendling, 2013, p. 136). The rectangular walls have been interpreted at “urban dependencies of a persistent rural elite” (H. Wendling, 2013, p.136). This evidence has been used to suggest an origin of “agricultural aristocracy” and the wealth of these large *oppida* (H. Wendling, 2013, p. 136).

Conclusion:

Trade was an extremely important part of the *oppidum* of Manching, without the extensive trade routes the settlement would not have survived for as long as it did. Their capacity to trade influence their society and in part created aspects similar to a social hierarchy. Archaeological evidence found at Manching establishes how prominent trade was to society at that time not only in Manching but also across the ‘Celtic’ world.

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