

Manching: Urban or Proto-Urban

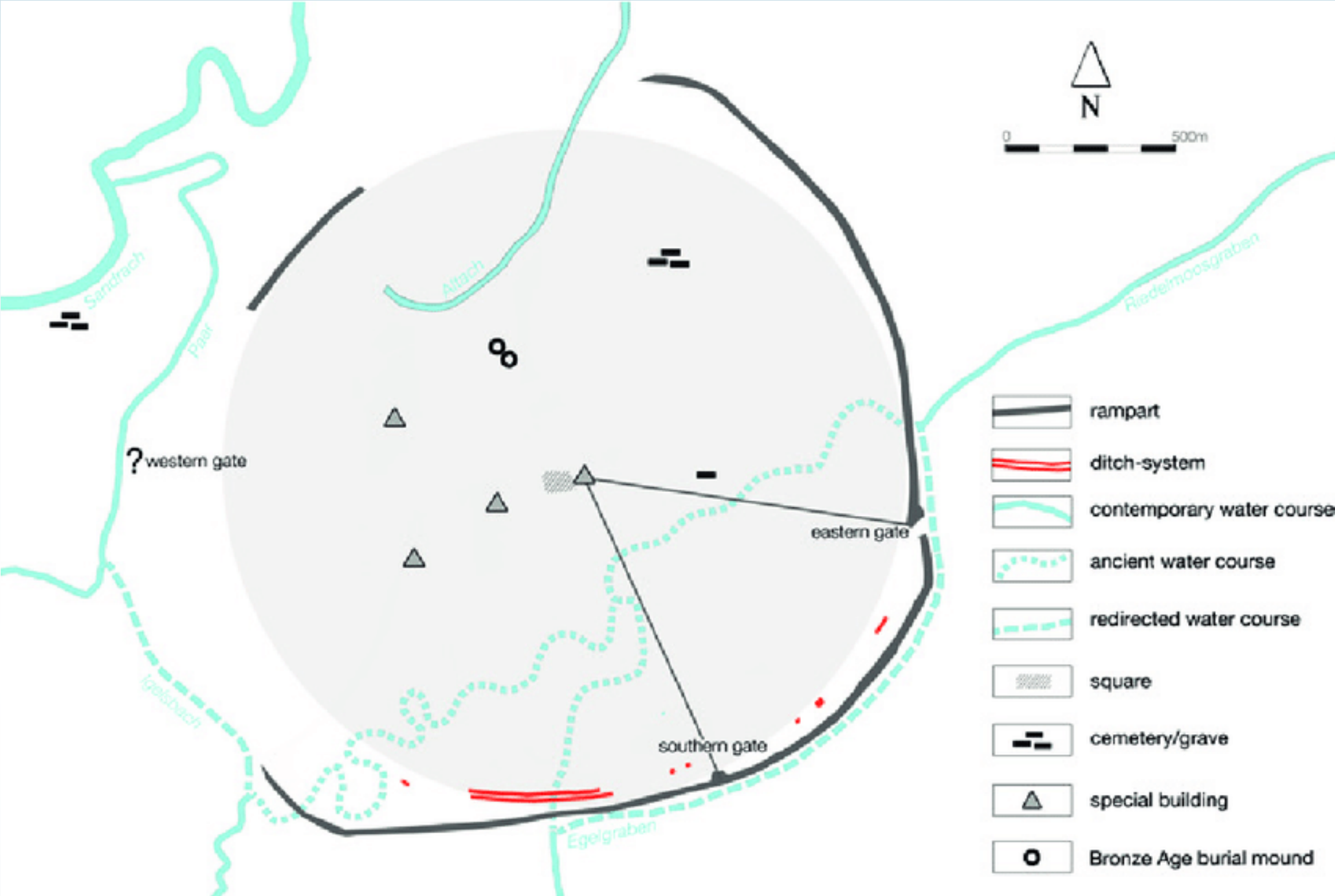
OBJECTIVES:

Manching represents a good case study to analyse aspects of “Celtic” society that defies the typical stereotypes attributed to the “Celts”. As such it displays a highly complex and hierarchised society breaking the image of the ‘head-hunting warriors’ that is so prevalent in common representation of the Celtic world.

OVERVIEW

The site of Manching, located in modern-day Germany. The site has a unique setting on one of the Danube’s tributaries, the Paar river (Siveres, 2002). As a result this has led some scholars such as Werner Kramer who excavated the site in the 1960s to deduce the possibility of the existence of a “Celtic” harbour here (Siveres, 2002:943). Given the site’s proximity to the river Paar and the large evidence to support the fact that this was a trading settlement, the possibility of a harbour once being here still holds validity

Figure 1: Site plan of Manching



Fortifications: Murus Gallicus

Founded around 300 BC, it was continuously occupied until 100 BC. While comparable settlements had been abandoned Manching was continuously occupied and there was the addition of ramparts in 120 BC (Colins,1995:162) that enclosed a 850 acres (Collis,2004). The Murus Gallicus type of fortification was constructed at Manching in 120 BC also. The Murus Gallicus as described by Caesar in his Gallic wars was a type of wall that had a rubble core and stone exterior and timber beams. consequently this shows how significant the site was in the Iron age rather than abandoning it, it was fortified and improved. Furthermore the type of fortifications here and its proximity to the Paar river it suggests that these factors alone make the site important in the Iron age. Consequently these fortifications also suggest that Manching is an urban site due to the fortifications being such large scale 850 acres is a substantial area to fortify

Death and burial (social hierarchies, wealth, elite display...?)

Manchings roots lie in the 4th century BC with many different hamlets and villages that have been theorised to have come together and formed the settlement of Manching, with evidence from nearby cemeteries at Hundsrucken (Collis, 2004) such development outwardly from this is evident that this is a site that could be argued as being urban as careful planning has gone into the site. The graves that have been excavated at Manching are all very “typical Celtic burials” that were found in the La Tene period and show the unity of burials within the La Tene sphere of influence as shown in figure 3. The men were buried with object such as swords and shields (Collis, 2004), which could again be attributed to the site's wealth at the time as objects such as Iron are recyclable and being buried with one indicates that there was either a surplus of them or they were high status. The remains of an elite burial being discovered at the site which would support the notion that it was a hierarchical site. A burial trench has been uncovered inside was a copper vessel and a bronze cart, along with weapons. The finds from the burial trench showed signs that they had been burned (Sivers, 1998) this might also represent an offering moreover, it is important to note that the remains that have been excavated from Manching that cannot be attributed to the Roman conquest as they predate the Gaelic wars (Lange, 1983). Instead, these are more attributed to the multitiered burial practice or trophy skulls. In this manner Manching is similar to the other sites in the Celtic world by practising what can be interpreted as trophy head hunting or human sacrifice (Lange, 1983) Head hunting at this site could have been used as another indicator of social status or it could have served a religious purpose.

Figure 3: map showing “Celtic culture”

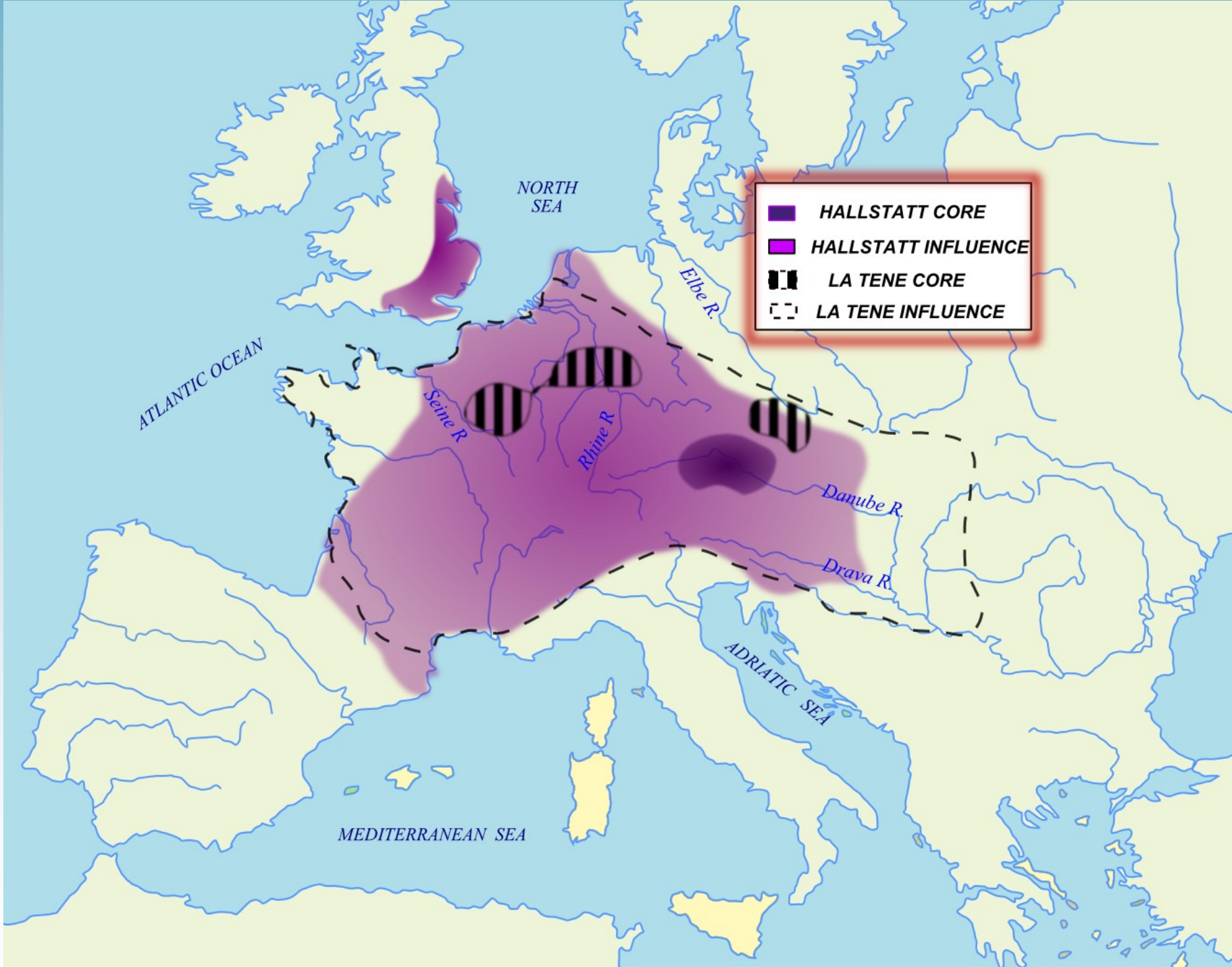


Figure 5: Cult tree: a representation of the presumed “Celtic” Tree of Life

The representation depicted here (Left) is thought to show the Celtic tree of life. As such It represented the boundary that separates our world with the afterlife. While this may be a religious significance, it has also been suggested that it might have been used a kind of Civic Emblem (Moscati etal. 1991:530) If this is the case it reflects a society that has a clear defined identity and has taken their own Emblem in order to distinguish themselves form other neighbouring groups. Which evidence would support due to these leaves being found Although this is just one possibility, due to the wider religious connotations associated with this type of pattern it is equally likely that it is more religious in its orientation due to this type of vegetal motif be-

Bibliography

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Appendix

Figure 1 site plan of Manching Briestel, J, T. (2015) available at: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Schematic-map-of-the-oppidum-of-Manching-featuring-important-landmarks-and-the-inscribed_fig2_315891552 (Accessed: 19/1/2019)

Figure 2 Map of Celtic cultures: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Hallstatt.png> (Accessed: 20/1/2019)

Figure 3 Celtic tree of life: Sauber, W.(2015) https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:KMM_-_Goldbaum_1.jpg (Accessed: 23/1/2019)

Figure 4 Litch pins: Balkan Celts (2015) <https://balkancelts.wordpress.com/tag/manching-celtic/> (Accessed: 28/1/2019)

Figure 4: Bronze linchpins from a chariot at Manching_ 2nd century



not coins that were considered to be typical of southern Germany (Zieguarus in sievers, 2000). As such it enabled Manching to develop itself and the identity of the site as being a focal point of trading within the wider community. One find that highlights the importance of commerce at the site is a 62g lead weight with a divine bust that was the second of its kind to be found at Manching(Sievers, 2000). These suggest that Manching is an urban site with bountiful evidence for craft specialisation on a large scale to support the identity of the site, as items such as those in figure 4 show the pins are proof of specialised craft

IDENTITY

This brings about the question of identity. It is possible that the settlement here could be attributed to the Bohemian “Celts” that lived and worked here (Sievers, 2000). The amount of gold coins could be attributed to the some of the local people being of Bohemian decent although other prevalent factors could play a part in why they are here. However, without more evidence of human burials at the site there is not sufficient DNA evidence (Lange,1983) to reinforce the notion of Bohemian Celts thus this claim is disputed it is also probable that they could have been acquired through warfare as the coins were seemingly found in a religious context perhaps used as an offering? As the presence of a divine bust might suggest. Despite this, the other archaeological evidence does not seemingly support this as the coins were found with other materials that would be attributed to crafting of metals and minting of money. Therefore it is most likely that this site was used as a large trading hub given the amount of specialised resources that were discovered there. As opposed to the coins coming from Bohemian “Celts”

Conclusion

Manching is a unique site in the “Celtic” world, it breaks all the typical stereotypes that have been associated with the “Celts”. The finds at Manching reflect a complex civilisation that has craft specialisation and while only thrived for a century, the finds are clearly reflective of this as the pins depicted. While these finds make Manching similar to other sites in the “Celtic” world there is also unique burials such as a chariot burial which is not in conjuncture with other burials of this time. Other finds show that the practice of headhunting may have occurred at Manching but there is ample evidence to support that the society was complex than perceived.