

The Oppidum in Manching

The Basics

The settlement was located in close proximity to the merging of the River Paar and the River Danube (Museum -manching.de, 2019). In modern day the settlement remains are in Manching a district southwest of Ingolstadt.



The settlement was one of the largest in Central Europe and was surrounded by a wall built in the style of Murus Gallicus—a Celtic architectural style, the wall was renewed several times representing urban/modernisation alongside attempts at self-preservation.

The Rampart

Around the settlement at Manching is an impressively built rampart that was built out of timber and stone. This rampart signifies a form of urbanisation that states its power over surrounding areas that are just as socially developed (Wendling 2013). A rampart or any form of huge laborious public work can represent and signify a multitude of different things, sometimes intentionally and other times not as much. First and foremost a rampart shows that this is a militaristic culture either offensively or defensively. We know hilltop settlements with palisades were not uncommon as we have remains of several for example Camulodunom. A wall with such grandeur can also just be a sign of craftsmanship and also the abundance of resources that a settlement has access to.

The fortitude of these walls and how common they were however is still somewhat of a mystery, as the key primary source on this region during the time period is Caesar and his documentation of the ‘Gallic wars’ (Kramer 1960). Caesar’s accounts are of course questionable as he was using his documentation of the Gallic Wars as primarily propaganda above all else, to gain himself ‘Kudos’ and show just what a powerful foe he was able to overcome. Therefore he may mention more of these Oppida’s or at least the well defended than were actually present in his campaign.

Urbanisation and Social Progress

Due to the amount and the consistently good quality of the items excavated within the walls and also the impressive condition of the wall itself, it can be implied that ‘urbanisation’ didn’t take place in this society until after the rampart was built (Wendling 2013). Although there were other La Tene settlements that were just as urbanised and culturally relevant that did not confide their settlements within fortifications, it was generally accepted that ‘Oppida’ were symbolic of pre-Roman urbanisation nonetheless (Wendling 2013).

The settlements that did not confine themselves within walls were deemed to be part of a larger trade network and involved in trade heavily within central Europe— Some examples of sites under this criteria are the ones at Aulnat, Basel-Göfäbrük(Wendling 2013).



Along with the rampart was the temple at which many of the ceramic pots were found. A religion able to join people together in communal rituals, and thus were able to keep social relations within the settlement stable and developing (Wendling 2013). The Rampart and the temple are the greatest symbols of what the settlement at Manching idealised and stood for, with one came the other. We can tell by the depositions of broken weapons that they were more than likely used in religious ceremonies (Wendling 2013).

The hilltop fortress at Maiden-Castle which came before the La Tene period have several formidable ramparts, these ramparts were similarly refurbished more than once like the ones at Manching,, the settlement here became extremely prominent and thought to be densely populated and urbanised for its time(English Heritage 2019). It would seem that prioritising the walls upkeep outside a city would either attract more people to live there as it is safe or these ideologically similar communities were successful during time periods where conflict was almost unavoidable just due to sheer presence of these ramparts and what they stood for alone.

Interestingly enough there is evidence to suggest lots of craftsmanship within the walls of Maiden-Castle such as metalworking and textile work(English heritage), similar to how the settlement worked with coinage and the pottery they created, both these settlements seem to somewhat lock themselves away from the vast trade network, consequently also slowing the influence of unwelcomed culture.

The advancement of the social “norms” within the community at Maiden-Castle seems to have been extremely similar to that of Manching. As they developed, the community re arranged their housing and created more efficient pathways suggesting a more civilised social way of life (English Heritage).

Was it the confinement of the walls and self-sustainability of these settlements that caused them to advance so similarly or was it in fact just a common trait amongst the ‘Celtic’ communities throughout Europe in one way or another?

<- Reconstruction of Maiden-Castle Illustrated by Peter Dunn

Ceramic Objects

At the site, many ceramic objects were found, many of these were containers located around a building that has been identified to be a temple or a building of similar stature and importance. The containers being in such close proximity to this temple suggest that acts of communal ritual involving food consumption took place (Wendling 2013). Although a considerable amount of ceramic items were found at this site in Manching it is to be recognised that very few of them are vessels of transportation like Amphorae; at least compared to other sites (Wendling 2013). This is quite significant as it could most likely down to two reasons: either the society that lived in this Oppinda did not trade many supplies with outside influences and instead were an easily self-sustained community, or they made many of their Ceramics within their own community perhaps taking influence from other cultures but primarily refusing to just use foreign goods.

A number of these ceramic objects in fact have inscriptions on their faces representing ownership showing signs of standardised social understandings and exchanges.

No Trade? From coin moulds to glass beads, we can tell that trade was actually a major part of this and the surrounding communities all over central Europe (Hyperfine Interactions 2004).The fact that trade was so highly accepted and accessible by this Oppinda yet they used their own pottery and cultural vessels emanates an overwhelming sense of pride.



Ceramic Vessels placed alongside Weapons and other assortments of iron utensils
Image:RGK

Picture available at :

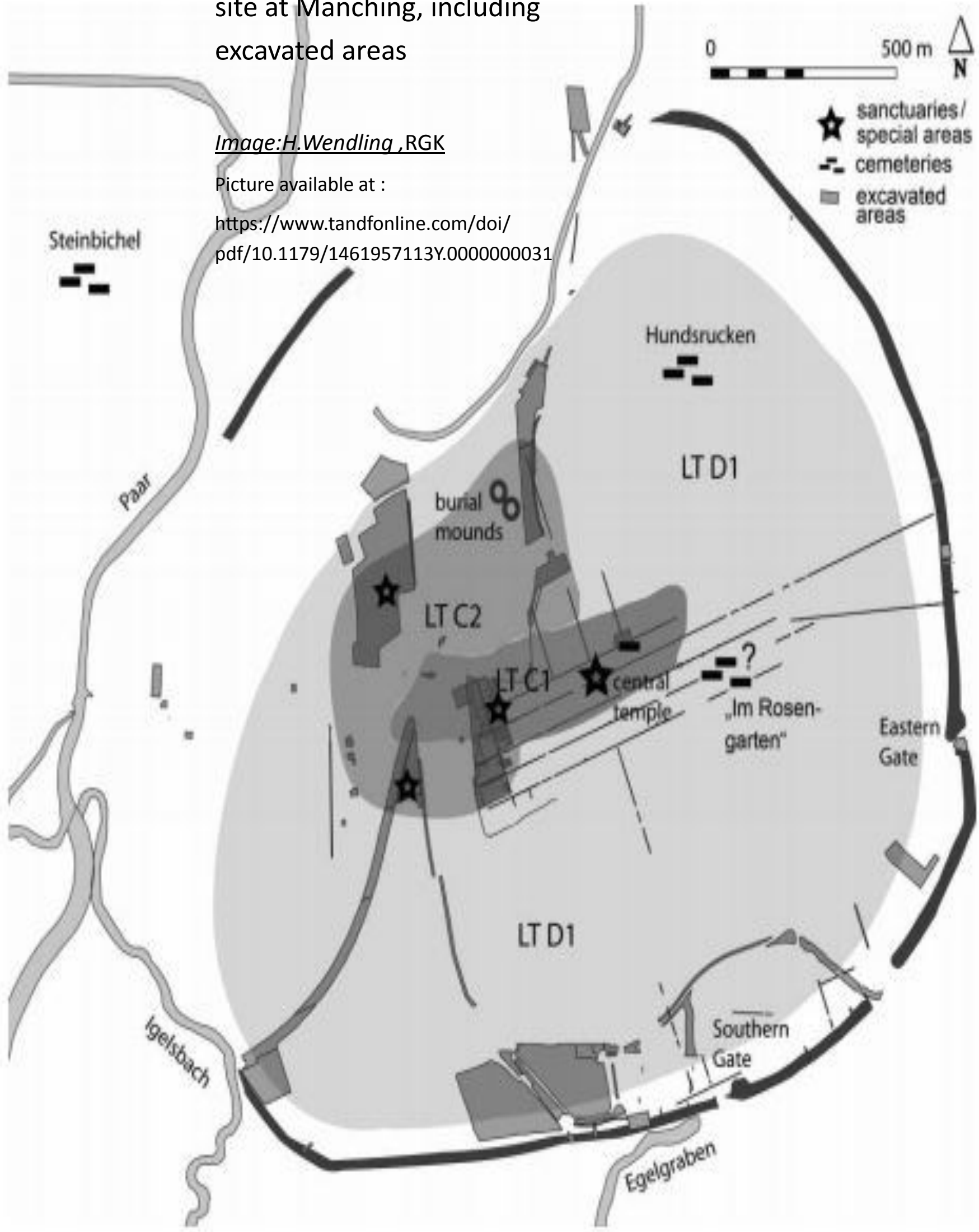
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1179/1461957113Y.0000000031>

Schematic overview of the site at Manching, including excavated areas

Image:H.Wendling ,RGK

Picture available at :

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1179/1461957113Y.0000000031>



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