

Lange calculates that a minimum of 3750 people lived at the oppidum for a period of around 150 years and 2680 people lived there for 125 years (Lange 1983, p. 37-42). This would therefore drive the general assumption that there was most likely a social hierarchy. It is generally assumed that Manching had an 'elite' class, which may have been referred to as the 'warrior' class that would have possessed all the main resources/elaborate items and would have owned most of the land.

In fact, Sievers said that central authority is clear due to things like coin production and construction works. He does however also state that this *does not necessarily* mean that there was an elite class, only that Manching had a strong organisation (Sievers 2002, p. 170).

The large enclosures at Manching are assumed to be elite residences, however, this is a potentially problematic assumption as items that might be considered to be traditionally associated with the elite were not found in relation to these large enclosures, rather scattered around, and therefore do not prove anything about social hierarchy and the elite at Manching.

Weapons discovered at Manching also do not necessarily prove or indicate the presence of a warrior class. Weapons were discovered, in fact, all over the Manching settlement rather than exclusively in one place. Weapons were, however, found near 'sanctuaries' which could possibly represent the presence of cult activities or something related to religion.

Manching: Religion and the Elite

The oppidum at Manching is the best studied oppidum (a 'Celtic' fortified town) in central Europe, however due to its large size it's estimated that only around 3% of the site has actually been excavated. Arguably, excavations present Manching in a religious context rather than presenting a social hierarchy, despite the general assumption that there must have been one.

LOCATION AND BACKGROUND

The oppidum at Manching is a large Celtic proto-urban settlement near Ingolstadt in Bavaria, Germany and is a La Tene period oppidum surrounded by a significantly large Murus Gallicus walls. This is one of the largest oppida in Europe and is also one of Europe's most intensely explored Celtic oppida.

However, considering its size (380 hectares) only roughly 3% of the site has actually been excavated (around 30 hectares) (Wendling 2014, pg. 137)

It is located near both the Danube and Paar rivers, giving it effective communication routes.



The settlement dates back to the 3rd century (around 250 BC) and lasted until around 50-30 BC. However, the settlement can actually be dated back to the 4th century by using the dating of burials in the nearby cemetery at Hundsrucken. Although Manching originated as a minor settlement, it developed into the large settlement it is known for, now possessing an urban centre for day to day life.

- Many animals were found to have been slaughtered at Manching, however, they seem to have been slaughtered for nourishment as opposed to ritual purposes. This means that Manching was quite likely both a place for butchering and a cattle market.

No less than 40 000 fragments of animal bones were recovered between 1955-1963 and 35 752 were discovered from 1984-1987 (Boessneck et al 1971, pg. 5; Maier et al 1992, pg 267). Boessneck et al calculated that, assuming the Oppida lasted for 100 years, 200 horses, 1500 ruminants, 2000 cows and 2000 pigs were simultaneously present (Boessneck et al 1971, pg. 11-12). The bones not only suggest the cattle market but also ritual practice.

Presumably, Manching operated a two-phase funerary practice based on the burial of bones.

- The deceased body is laid out somewhere after their death and then after some time (we are not completely sure how long this time period would have been) before the body became completely decomposed, specific *long* limbs were cut off the body. For example, arms and legs which were then left in the soil.
- The remaining bones were cremated.

Similar funerary practices can be seen at sites at Bad Nauheim, Danebury, Bohemia and a few others. Bad Nauheim also demonstrated the removal of limbs



CONCLUSION

Sievers suggests that the discoveries at Manching imply that a religious function may have been a decisive factor for the development of Manching into the huge settlement that it became (Sievers 2003, pg. 36). The excavated items are indicative of a variety of ritual and in turn give us an insight into the daily life at Manching; whether this be through bones or objects.

To conclude the implications of a social hierarchy at Manching, there is not enough sufficient and *clear* evidence to suggest that the oppida possessed a distinct hierarchical structure, however, we cannot deny that there is still a significant chance that there could have been, despite the fact that we cannot necessarily see one based on the currently excavated evidence at this settlement. It seems that excavations instead prove that Manching took part in many religious activities.

EXCAVATIONS/FINDINGS

- More than 450 pieces of Celtic gold
- Small bronze purse containing 5 small gold coins
- Over 200 different types of iron tools
- Golden cult tree

This 'cult tree' was discovered in 1984 which could be considered evidence of a social elite or might have held religious meaning. It is generally interpreted as a cult tree due to a number of characteristics; it is gold plated and wooden and the ritual interpretation is based on the uniqueness of the object and on a similarity to other sacred trees from Celtic mythology and also due to ancient garlands worn at events such as funerary rituals.



West of the settlement, a cremation burial cemetery was found which can give us an indication of the way the occupants of Manching lived in relation to funerary rights and possibly hierarchical structure; when excavations took place at the gatehouse, a Silenus mask and 2 pierced male skulls (Van Endert 1987, pg. 31-57) were found. The bones of a six year old child were also discovered buried in the passageway. These bones were accompanied by various other human bones buried in the same location. It has been suggested that this could have been a **ritual** to protect the gate– the gate was a passage in and out of the oppidum and may be associated with rites of passage. Approximately 5000 human bones were discovered and quite often were deposited in pits, regularly mixed with animal bones.

In comparison to other oppida, Manching was huge (Green 2012, p.162) and also quite flat in comparison.

In terms of social status and religion, Manching differs from that of similar settlements. For example;

GLAUBERG: HESSE, GERMANY

- “Princely” burial mounds; deceased assumed to be warriors due to them being buried alongside swords and weapons. It is also assumed that due to ‘high quality’ tomb furnishings, tombs discovered here belonged to those of a higher class.

This is problematic as weapons were found all over Manching, showing that weapons do not necessarily equate to elite class.

TITELBERG: LUXEMBOURG

- Remains of a large hall found (14mx14m) could have been a meeting place that was used for political purposes or similarly to Manching, religious activities.
- Many animal bones were discovered as well as silver and bronze miniature weapons that indicate ritual– extremely similarly to Manching (Metzler et al 2006, p. 121-210).

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