

Christof J. Schuppert, **GIS-gestützte historisch-geographische Untersuchungen frühkeltischer Fürstensitze in Südwestdeutschland**. Forschungen und Berichte zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte in Baden-Württemberg, Band 126. Verlag Konrad Theiss 2013. 250 Seiten mit 112 Abbildungen.

The history of the so-called »princely seats« (»Fürstensitze«) of the Hallstatt period is almost as long as that of the related »princely graves« (»Fürstengräber«), two terms tightly bound since Wolfgang Kimmig's landmarking article »Zum Problem späthallstädtischer Adelsitze« of 1969. Just as for the graves the discussion circles around an adequate terminology and a socio-political definition of the people buried in them (princes, chiefs, village elders – just to name the most common), so is the terminological and socio-economic-political status of the settlements widely debated. The start of the newest era in this debate can be seen in the publication of the Vix 1997 conference proceedings under the title »Vix et les éphémères principautés celtiques« (ed. P. Brun / B. Chaume), where several variants of the Kimmig model ranging from princely

seats, central places, and specialized settlements to ports of trade were discussed. From 2003 onwards, the Sonderforschungsbereich (SFB) 1171 »Frühe Zentralisierungs- und Urbanisierungsprozesse«, sponsored by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, intensified the debate, with several sub-projects aiming at re-defining the economical, social and political framework of the »princely seats« (www.fuerstensitze.de). In these projects, authors largely drew from geographical concepts of central settlements, such as Walter Christaller's central places (*Die Zentralen Orte in Süddeutschland. Eine ökonomisch-geographische Untersuchung über die Gesetzmäßigkeit der Verbreitung und Entwicklung der Siedlungen mit städtischen Funktionen* [Darmstadt 1933]), and their subsequent adaptations to »complex centers« by Eike Gringmuth-Dallmer in 1996 and 1999. Despite these (not conclusive) attempts and a renewed initiative of Patrice Brun and Bruno Chaume to settle the problem in a comprehensive overview article (*Bull. Soc. Préhist. Française* 110, 2013, 319–352), the question of the nature of the Late Hallstatt central settlements – to use as much as possible a neutral term – remains open.

There are several reasons for this. While there are relational arguments to evaluate centrality and complexity of settlements in geographical terms, many of them are not applicable to the archaeological record. Likewise, settlement hierarchy – another key element of the discussion – is an outcome of network analysis; it is not applicable to a single site or a single category of sites. However, we are far from a synthetic view of Late Hallstatt settlements in most areas concerned by the »Fürstensitz« phenomenon. More traditional approaches such as the original one by Kimmig argue with intrinsic archaeological observations (e. g. presence of a suburbium, rich graves, imported pottery) that only apply to very few well-known and excavated sites, for example the Heuneburg or the Mont Lassois. Moreover, the issue of relating the individuals buried in »princely graves« with a sound probability the power elite of the Hallstatt period to the central settlements in term of residence is a tricky one: direct evidence is still lacking, and the system poorly understood.

How then could the function and significance of the central settlements be assessed independently, without relying on pre-conceptions or interdependent arguments? In a 2011 master seminar held together with Karsten Lambers, then Bamberg University, the author of these lines evaluated the possibilities of addressing the question of the relevance of the »Fürstensitze« by means of landscape, environmental and context analyses, and including geographical factors in the investigations. The approach was successfully tested in a case study on the Mont Lassois (Côte d'Or, France), where the Zurich Institute of Archaeology has been engaged with excavations since 2009. The study, even though preliminary, clearly evidenced the potential of an economico-geographical setup, opening new perspectives for analysis and interpretation on a basis of

testable evidence (cf. <http://www.archaeologie.uzh.ch/static/onlineart/MontLassoisNaturraeume.htm>).

Christof Schuppert now has chosen a very similar approach for his GIS-based historico-geographical and context analysis of early Celtic princely seats in South-west Germany. Issued from the above-mentioned SFB 1171, he concentrates on a selection of sites – the Heuneburg, Glauberg, Hohenasperg and Ipf – leaving aside the Mont Lassois and other more recently investigated situations like that of Bourges (cf. L. Augier et al., *Un complexe princier de l'Âge du Fer. Le quartier artisanal de Port Sec sud à Bourges* [Cher][Tours and Bourges 2012]), as well as less well-known, but not less complex cases such as the Üetliberg near Zurich or Châtillon-sur-Glâne in Switzerland.

The volume of two hundred fifty pages is consistently structured and well presented, with lots of maps and diagrams, and a complete bibliography. It is subdivided into six larger chapters, addressing in turn the theoretical bases of the »Fürstensitz« model and its evolution, the testimonial evidence of historico-geographical sources, the methodical foundation of GIS-based analyses, then the four above-mentioned case studies, and finally a comparison of the investigated sites with regard to the initial research questions on »centrality«, like the relationship of presumed princely seats or central places to their surroundings.

In his recapitulation of previous research, Schuppert focuses on a series of hierarchical approaches to the topic (summarized in fig. 7), in particular firstly the identification of »central places« using indicators of centrality and, derived from the former, the concept of »complex centers« by identification of functions, and secondly systemic approaches by network analysis, of which the concept of »gateway communities« or »ports of trade« (cf. K. Polanyi, *Journal Economic Hist.* 23, H. 1, March 1963, 30–45) is the most paradigmatic. In addition to this, the question of »urbanization« is raised, along the lines sketched by Bernhard Hänsel, Heiko Steuer and, more specifically, Albert Nijboer for central Italy.

The author then switches to his own approaches, questioning the heuristic potential of historico-geographical sources such as maps and other referential cartography, charters and similar official records, historic pictures, and aerial imagery. The method of choice for combining this varied information into manageable spatial formats is the use of a geographic information system (GIS), with all the problems of positioning, referencing, and integration that go along with it. Of the four discussed case studies (cf. supra), the Hohenasperg near Stuttgart is probably the most obvious to demonstrate the potential and validity of the chosen approach, since the site – because of its extended latter-day development – lacks any substantial archaeological investigation on-site, and thus samples out for most of, for example, Kimmig's criteria. However, the presence of rich late Hallstatt burials in the immediate surroundings qualifies the site for a »princely seat«.

The context analysis by means of a digital LiDAR scan, aerial photographs, historical maps, and written sources reveals a great deal of new information on the topography of the site and its proximity, access courses, road networks, former land use, and water supply – essential information to assess the site's resource potential and economic embeddedness, connectivity in terms of transport and contacts, and historical developments. Though the site is found to be lacking some of the expected centrality functions in comparison to the other studied cases (summarized in tab. 20), there are good arguments to postulate that the importance of the place in the late Hallstatt period was due to the same factors that led to the establishment of a central place in the Middle Ages: agricultural produce and handling of goods.

In the concluding chapter, the author compares, in function of the parameters worked out for the individual central settlements, the key location factors of each site. Considerable differences become apparent here, which is no new insight, since many writers have pointed to the fact that there does not exist a standard protocol for presumed princely sites. The difference here is that the various factors are assessed in an independent and qualitative manner. Among the various models of interpretation (cf. *supra*), the author has a clear but reasoned preference for dendritic models and »gateway communities« (fig. 109–112), and hence for trade as the driving force in the establishment of the Hallstatt central settlements.

Schuppert's book is an exciting and very well documented contribution to a widely debated topic that, without doubt, will trigger still more discussions, in particular concerning the alleged urban and protourban character of at least some of the Late Hallstatt central settlements. With its focus on context analysis, it opens new paths for investigation, and demonstrates that a new framework of interpretation should be built from a site's natural and historical setting, not only from its structural and material evidence.