

Der Trichtinger Ring und seine Probleme. Kolloquium anlässlich des 70. Geburtstags von Professor Dr. Dr. h. c. Kurt Bittel. Heimat- und Altertumsverein Heidenheim an der Brenz e. V. 1978. 65 Seiten, 16 Abbildungen.

On 11 March 1928 during drainage excavations on the eastern bank of the Neckar in the district of Oberndorf at Trichtingen (now Kr. Rottweil) was found one of the most splendid and certainly most discussed objects ascribed to the pre-European Iron Age. The Trichtingen ring – with two bull's heads as terminals and made of silver on an iron core, 295 mm in diameter and weighing more than 6 kilogrammes – now preserved in the Württembergisches Landesmuseum, Stuttgart, made a most suitable topic around which to organise a colloquium in honour of Kurt Bittel, a colloquium arranged with great enterprise on 9 July 1977 by the Heimat- und Altertumsverein of his home town, Heidenheim.

Towards the conclusion of the colloquium Bittel recounted how, when completing his dissertation 'Die Kelten in Württemberg' (subsequently published as *Röm.-Germ. Forsch.* 8 [1934]) he enquired of P. Goessler – whose son attended the Heidenheim colloquium – how he should deal with this intriguing new find. Goessler's advice was since the piece presented so many problems it was best left to one side (p. 63 f.). Goessler's own accounts in many respects remain definitive: *IPEK* 5, 1929, 46 ff.; *Der Silberring von Trichtingen. Festschr. Arch. Ges. Berlin zur Feier des 100jährigen Bestehens d. Arch. Inst. d. Dt. Reiches* (1929); for more recent discussions see J. V. S. Megaw, *Art of the European Iron Age* (1970) no. 216; W. Krämer, *Jahrb. DAI* 94, 1979, 388 f.; however, it is clear from the present publication that opinions remain as divided today as they were some 50 years ago.

The colloquium opened with a paper by Bittel's pupil, F. Fischer entitled 'Archäologie und Geschichte, Konkret' (p. 9–37). Fischer, while agreeing with Goessler's suggestion of an origin in Eastern Europe, in the so-called Celto-Dacian or Thraco-Celtic area, is of the opinion that a second century BC date is too late. Following the often-cited occurrence of animal-headed rings in Achaemenian art, Fischer quotes stylistic parallels from Western Asia and Greece, which he considers demand a date for Trichtingen in the late fifth or early fourth century BC. Considering what purpose the ring may have served, Fischer lists other isolated or hoard finds of precious metal in the Celtic Iron Age (Abb. 14; Liste p. 35–37) and, once more referring to Goessler's suggestion of a possible association between the Trichtingen ring and a local sanctuary (? Viereckschanze), regards the find, originally imported as a gift or as part of a diplomatic exchange, as having filled a cultic role, a local offering (a view recently emphasised by L. Pauli for the Erstfeld, Kt. Uri gold hoard: *Die Kelten in Mittel-Europa* [1980] cat. no. 197; for Trichtingen see op. cit. cat. no. 190).

In the discussion, led by W. Kimmig and quoted verbatim (p. 41–65) opinion divided largely between the classical scholars and ancient historians and the prehistorians. Thus, W. Krämer (p. 44) emphasises particularly the buffer-ended torcs worn by the Trichtingen bulls as a form not known in Europe prior to the third century BC and largely supports Goessler's original dating (see also Krämer, *Jahrb. DAI* 94, 1979, 388); he also comments on the use of iron as a core as a technique with other examples in the Celtic world and indicates that the undulating punched decoration on the body of the ring has good later La Tène parallels.

W. Dehn, continuing the arguments for a Thraco-Celtic lower Danubian source for the ring, reasonably emphasises that eastern elements may be long-lasting indeed in the Celtic world, the bronze drinking horn mount from a Middle La Tène grave at Jászberény-Cseróhalom, Kom. Szolnok being a case in point. This piece with its Hellenistic inspired sea-dragon protome also wears a torc as Krämer indicates (see É. F. Petres and M. Szabó, *A Keleti Kelta Művészet – Eastern Celtic Art. Az Istvan Király Múz. Közleményei* D: 93, 1974, cat. no. 165; Krämer, *op. cit.* 387 f. and figg. 12–13).

In contrast, H. Luschey (p. 47 f.), J. Schäfer (p. 51) and H.-G. Buchholz (p. 52–56) ignoring largely the just-mentioned arguments, bring mainly stylistic classical and oriental evidence to suggest, for example, a link with the art of the period of Darius the Great's incursions into the Danube basin, and contemporary Greek or possible even Urartian metalwork of no later than fourth century date – Fischer even admits to having toyed with the idea of an actual Western Asiatic origin for Trichtingen itself (p. 51). When I state that Buchholz' comments on the significance from Sumerian times of the sacred ring and the cow and bull in Assyrian iconography are more interesting than apposite it must be clear that I remain unconvinced by the classical/oriental viewpoints which seem largely presented as assertions rather than actual hard evidence.

Similar discussions have revolved around the sixth-fifth century inlaid figurine from the Býčí Skala, Okr. Blansko cave in Moravia (cf. Megaw, *op. cit.* no. 35; W. Angeli, *Krieger und Salzherren. Ausst.-Kat. RGZM 4* [1970] cat. no. 9 and esp. 141 ff.) variously regarded as a Greek, oriental or Eastern Hallstatt product. Suffice it here to emphasise yet again as P. Jacobsthal and others have done on many occasions the ability of Celtic craftsmen to absorb and retain foreign elements from many sources. Thus citation by Buchholz of 'Greek' influence in the shepp of ram's head of the early La Tène brooch from Panenský Týnec, Okr. Louny (Megaw, *op. cit.*, no. 65) I do not find particularly significant; one might just as well cite the Klein Aspergle, Kr. Ludwigsburg gold drinking horn mounts (Megaw, *op. cit.*, no. 44) which I have considered with the torc allegedly from Vieille Toulouse in the context of Celtic rings with animal terminals as F. Maier here points out (p. 50; see Megaw, *op. cit.*, no. 45). There are also the 'orientalising' lions of the cast bronze torc fragment from the Glanberg, Kr. Büdingen (see most recently O.-H. Frey, *Fundber. Hessen* 19–20, 1979–1980, 609 ff.) which no less than Trichtingen support an argument for the take-over by native European craftsmen of eastern originating elements (on this general topic see also Megaw, *Alba Regia* 14, 1975, 15 ff.).

In the concluding section of the discussion of Trichtingen, members of the colloquium turned to more general issues, in particular following Gero von Merhart's dictum that 'die Vorgeschichte ist eine historische Disziplin'; in this context it is perhaps understandable that Dehn found some difficulty in relating the Trichtingen find to the title of Fischer's introductory paper. This review is no place for a debate as to whether – as indeed I would tend to agree – archaeology is a historical discipline (on which topic see most usefully, despite much more recent views, R. J. C. Atkinson, *Archaeology, history and science* [1960]). On the other hand, as with so many fine objects ascribed to the European Iron Age, Trichtingen's very uniqueness and lack of association makes any discussion a matter not for the elucidation of historical facts but for informed speculation. And that element of fantasy, as W. Kimmig commented in his concluding remarks (pp. 64 f.) is perhaps the continuing fascination of archaeology, a fascination to which over so long a period Kurt Bittel has contributed.