

MELANIE AUGSTEIN, *Das Gräberfeld der Hallstatt- und Frühlatènezeit von Dietfurt an der Altmühl „Tankstelle“*. Ein Beitrag zur Analyse einer Mikroregion. Universitätsforschungen zur Prähistorischen Archäologie 262. Verlag Dr. Rudolf Habelt, Bonn 2015. € 132.00. ISBN 978-3-7749-3846-5. 2 parts, 650 pages.

Dietfurt-Tankstelle is one of several large and well-documented Iron Age cemeteries near Dietfurt, Riedenburg, Beilngries und Kelheim in the lower Altmühl valley in Bavaria. Burial practices in the region included cremations and inhumations deposited in pits, flat graves and burial mounds. The burial mounds include wooden or stone chambers as well as characteristic stone linings of the mound base; the graves were set closely together and mounds tended to be extended, which led to a bee-hive appearance of the cemetery structure. Linking the buried individuals to grave structures and objects deposited within is a complex task, as multiple and collective body depositions are common.

Melanie Augstein's book opens in the traditional manner with a presentation of the site and the excavation history. Despite the recent date of excavation (2002–2003), conditions were less than ideal. The rescue excavation by the Bayerisches Landesamt für Denkmalpflege at the occasion of the construction of a petrol station was affected by bad weather, some of the excavation techniques applied were unsuited to the complexity of the site and potentially led to significant data loss (p. 12), and no physical anthropologist was present at the excavation. The chapter on structure and extension of the cemetery (pp. 19–28) demonstrates that Dietfurt-Tankstelle is comparable to other cemeteries in the region, in terms of the variety and complexity of burial forms and grave constructions. The cemeteries Dietfurt-Tennisplatz (K.-H. RÖHRIG, *Das hallstattzeitliche Gräberfeld von Dietfurt a. d. Altmühl*. Arch. Main-Donau-Kanal 1 [Buch am Erlbach 1994]) and Dietfurt-Tankstelle are most likely part of one large cemetery, which still has not been fully apprehended; magnetic prospection was carried out east of the excavated plot in 2009. Unusually, the cemetery seems to have included a pyre place, an area of 3 x 2.5 m with significant traces of fire, cremated human and animal remains, as well as fire-affected bronze fragments and pottery (p. 23); matching pottery links this structure to a specific grave.

Grave architecture on the cemetery includes square wooden grave chambers, lined and covered by stone packings, with a side length of 2–3 m. The chambers were covered by a shallow mound of soil; the base of the mound was lined by stones. The single flat graves as well as the 'small cremation graves' also sometimes included stone architecture and covers. At least 40 % of the 'small cremation graves' were marked by a characteristic stone.

The section on burial practices (pp. 45–62) considers a range of themes: cremation and inhumation, bi-ritual graves, multiple and collective burials, manipulated bodies, re-opened and disturbed graves as well as different forms of depositing cremated remains. The variety of burial forms is stunning, but the small number of individuals buried in each mode hinders more wide-reaching conclusions as to why certain bodies were buried in a certain way.

The presentation of small finds (pp. 63–91) discusses components of dress and jewellery, as well as non-ceramic grave goods in terms of the typo-chronological significance. Fibulae, neck, hair, arm and leg rings, belt hooks, pendants, beads of amber, glass and ceramics, a bone disk, spindle whorls and loom weights, a rattle and miniature birds were found at Dietfurt-Tankstelle; the small finds of the site fit well into the known spectrum of early Iron Age material culture.

Ceramic vessels represent the main body of material culture at Dietfurt-Tankstelle and accordingly, their discussion is given a large amount of space in the monograph (pp. 93–163). Two to twenty vessels were documented in most graves, but it was not always easy to understand to which

person they relate; the pottery associated with secondary burials was sometimes stacked on top of the vessels of the primary deposition (p. 104). Functional aspects of vessel forms, preservation, fragmentation, material composition and firing as well as colour are discussed. Much attention was paid to the formal classification of pottery types, despite the acknowledgement that this classification is unlikely to match the one of the prior users of the pottery (p. 106). Types, sub-types and variants are differentiated without a clear purpose of this classification. A presentation of decoration elements, techniques, motifs and patterns follows. Melanie Augstein sees decorations as part of a semiotic communication system, and her approach to discuss the age and gender identities of people buried with pottery vessels decorated in a virtually identical manner from Dietfurt-Tankstelle and neighbouring sites promises an exciting new research avenue. Unfortunately, the anthropological material is presently too limited for far-reaching conclusions.

The chronology of the cemetery (pp. 165–180) is established using several different methods, including a consideration of the building sequence of graves in terms of horizontal and vertical stratigraphy, as well as small finds and ceramic development. The cemetery covers the phases Hallstatt C, D and La Tène A in continuous use. It is entirely up to the reader to translate these phases into absolute dates.

An important chapter is the integration of osteological and archaeological data on sex, gender and age (pp. 187–225). The aging and sexing of the anthropological material was spread over years and several different specialists, who were, in the end, not able to consolidate their findings. For this reason, two separate anthropological reports are printed in Part II. Melanie Augstein demonstrates that she is well positioned to review and integrate the findings of the physical anthropologists in an interdisciplinary manner, despite a research environment in which the disciplines archaeology and physical anthropology are traditionally separate fields.

The minimum number of buried individuals at Dietfurt-Tankstelle is 99, from a minimum of 72 graves (of which 60 contained human remains that were subject to analysis). More men than women were identified, possibly because of differential burial patterns. Several individuals showed traces of nutritional deficiency, inflammation or degenerative disease – these were individuals recovered from graves archaeologists would describe as wealthy or high status. There does not seem to be a direct relationship between status and health (p. 202).

In the following analysis of how age and gender relate to various aspects of the burial practice, Melanie Augstein excluded all graves from Dietfurt-Tankstelle that do not fit the criteria of ‘closed finds’ (one-off depositions, complete and undisturbed contexts, cf. M. K. H. EGGERT, *Prähistorische Archäologie. Konzepte und Methoden*⁴ [Tübingen 2012]), which left only nine graves, but added graves from Dietfurt-Tennisplatz (RÖHRIG 1994) and Riedenburg-Untereggersberg (F. NIKULKA, *Das hallstatt- und frühlatènezeitliche Gräberfeld von Riedenburg-Untereggersberg, Lkr. Kelheim, Niederbayern. Arch. Main-Donau-Kanal 13* [Rahden / Westf. 1998]) to expand the data base of the micro-region.

The author discovered some interesting age and gender-led trends: For example, primary depositions of cremated men in wooden chambers date to the oldest cemetery phase (Ha C), while women inhumed in burial chambers tend to date to Ha D. Wooden chambers are reserved for adults and their size depends on age and gender of the deposited person; children were almost always buried with other people, except for one child in a flat inhumation grave. Bronze dress elements such as fibulae, head dress, neck-, arm- and leg rings have a distinct female connotation at Dietfurt-Tankstelle. The gender of children cannot be read from associated grave goods; indeed, it remained unclear if gender was a category applied to children at all. Bronze neck rings and spiral hair rings seem to be reserved for adult women, and may have been added to the costume on the

occasion of marriage or motherhood (pp. 210–211). An attempt to link form and motifs and patterns of decoration of ceramic vessels to the age and gender of the buried individuals was not fruitful. Melanie Augstein insists, however, that pottery had significance as a medium of messages, even if its significance was not linked to age and gender; she suggests a significance in terms of genealogy or territoriality instead (p. 224).

Animal bones (identified by Monika Doll, tables 4 and 6 in Part II, pp. 419–422, pp. 427–429) were found in 60 % of graves with wooden chamber (p. 234). They either come from young animals deposited as a whole or represent specific cuts of meat. Pig and sheep / goat were most popular (the latter particularly in women's graves), cattle had the least importance for funerary rites. These findings contrast with the characterisation of animal bones from contemporary settlements, where cattle are represented in larger quantities and the animal bone record is more varied.

The staging of the human body in the grave is subject to a separate chapter (pp. 237–247). In particular, Melanie Augstein discusses bodies that have been placed in supine position, but – unlike the majority of bodies – with the upper limbs flexed and placed across the chest. This particular pose is likely achieved through fixing or binding, and in graves is often associated with adult, high-status women. In human representations, conversely, it primarily occurs with men. Traditionally, the pose has been interpreted in terms of death and mourning, but in this context it may be worth revisiting Ian ARMIT and Philomena GRANT's interpretation of the warrior of Hirschlanden (*Gesture politics and the art of ambiguity: the Iron Age statue from Hirschlanden. Antiquity* 82, 2008, 409–422), which addresses left / right symbolism and gender ambiguity. The curious lack of engagement with the international, archaeology of the body written in English is perhaps most felt in this chapter.

In the following section of the book (pp. 251–304), Melanie Augstein puts the cemetery of Dietfurt-Tankstelle into its regional and supra-regional context. Postholes and pits of a settlement, which included at least five similarly sized and aligned nine-post buildings, have been recovered a mere five meters west of the cemetery. The ceramic fragments and animal bones from the settlement are not specific enough to securely date them as contemporary to the cemetery, but there is no spatial overlap. A comparison with other well-documented micro-regions such as Kinding, Landersdorf and Niedererlbach established the principles of early Iron Age land use in north-eastern Bavaria: the settlement system typically encompasses large, open settlements with several contemporary cemeteries, rectangular *Herrenhöfe* (manor houses), which may be fortified with ditches and palisades, and the occasional fortified hilltop settlement.

The book ends with a short reflection on early Iron Age social structures in north-eastern Bavaria (pp. 307–312), which, sadly, adds little new. It is true that discussions of the south-west German Hallstatt society have been largely overshadowed by the *Fürstensitze / Fürstengräber* (princely seats / princely graves) phenomenon, but increasingly, other areas are brought into the discussion for more depth (e. g. R. SCHUMANN, *Status und Prestige in der Hallstattkultur. Aspekte sozialer Distinktion in ältereisenzeitlichen Regionalgruppen zwischen Altmühl und Save. Münchner Arch. Forsch.* 3 [Rahden / Westf. 2015] and K. REBAY-SALISBURY, *The Human Body in Early Iron Age Central Europe. Burial Practices and Images of the Hallstatt World* [London 2016]). No real status analysis has been attempted at Dietfurt-Tankstelle, which is understandable in the light of the available material. Melanie Augstein supports the view that the variety of burial practices and grave structures point to a stratified society, perhaps, however, horizontally rather than vertically stratified. She concludes that age, gender and kinship are important factors that feed into the construction of a person's social status and the way societies were structured, which in turn is in some way reflected in the way people were treated after death. The summary and bibliography are followed by two separate reports on the human remains.

The first, authored by Michaela Harbeck and George McGlynn (although the actual analysis was carried out by Franziska Eck), presents 24 cremations and 48 inhumations from Dietfurt-Tankstelle (pp. 361–403). The description of noteworthy cases ends abruptly mid-sentence on page 365 – one wonders how much of the text is missing at this point. Kristin v. Heyking and Franziska Immler's contribution on human remains recovered from small cremation graves and under stone covers (Steinpflaster) forms a separate article (pp. 379–403). Both articles list individual data on inhumation burials (including preservation, representation, morphological sex and age, body height, pathologies) and cremation burials (including weight, degree of cremation, anatomical elements present, morphological sex and age).

Part II of Melanie Augstein's book starts with a number of lists, including identifications of ores and slags (by Guntram Gassmann, p. 407), an overview of the typological classification of pottery (pp. 408–418) and identifications of animal bones from the graves and settlement area (by Monika Doll, pp. 419–422, pp. 427–429). The catalogue of graves includes descriptions of the contexts, drawings, lists of objects and anthropological assessment of human remains; they are organised by context in the order of recovery at excavation, almost in the manner of a 'thick description', which preserves a lot of detail, but makes it difficult to quickly grasp how bodies and objects relate (pp. 432–501). A catalogue of features excavated near the grave, for example post holes and layers with concentrations of sherds and charcoal, follows (pp. 504–510). The third catalogue lists features of the settlement such as buildings and post holes (pp. 512–535). Plates 1 to 78 show illustrations of finds at a scale of 1:3 (ceramics) and 1:2 (metal and other small finds), organised by grave context. Except for a few metal finds, all drawings of finds were made by Melanie Augstein herself. Especially the reconstruction drawings of pottery from fragmented material, which she had to piece together herself, require skill and testify to the enormous effort that went into this dissertation project. Plate 79 to 99 are profile drawings of settlement features, plate 100 to 112 show plans of features and supplement 1 and 2 map graves and other features of "Dietfurt-Tankstelle" and "Area 16".

Melanie Augstein's monograph on the cemetery and adjacent settlement of Dietfurt-Tankstelle is based on her doctoral dissertation at the University of Tübingen, completed in 2011 and supervised by Manfred K. H. Eggert; the book follows the tradition of German dissertations. The background of this research is thus not an overarching research question, but the publication and interpretation of a discrete complex of archaeological material. Eggert's shadow is apparent in both the writing style, with far too much essential information hidden in overlong footnotes for my taste, and the slightly pessimistic view on the potential of archaeological data for knowledge gain. Nevertheless, the book contains a range of very interesting, thought-provoking ideas.

The review of age and gender from an archaeological perspective, however, is based almost entirely on German literature and appears separate from the international discussion. This is, for example, apparent in the use of the word "biotisches Geschlecht" instead of "biologisches Geschlecht" for sex, which has recently become popular with representatives of the Tübingen School. It is meant to refer to "everything connected to life" rather than "life being subject of research" (M. K. H. EGGERT / U. VEIT [eds], *Theorie in der Archäologie: Zur jüngeren Diskussion in Deutschland* [München 2013] 279). I believe using biotic instead of biological is wrong for two reasons. First, biotic refers to living components of a community such as organisms, plants and animals in common language. Biotic processes are responsible for the decomposition of a dead body, for example, because bacteria, worms and small rodents are involved. Probiotic and prebiotic foodstuff stimulates the growth of microorganisms in the intestinal flora, to name another example. Sex, however, is not dependent on our microbiome; for humans, chromosomal combinations are responsible for sex (in some reptiles, environmental temperature plays a significant role). Sec-

ond, biological sex *must* refer to the study of life (biology); sex does not exist prior to biology, it is a human-made categorisation (cf. J. BUTLER, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* [New York 1993]). Using the word “biotisches Geschlecht” (biotic sex) risks biological determinism, where sex and age are taken as the “natural facts”, on which gender is built. Male and female are no absolute categories but points on a continuum, which physical anthropologists rate on the basis of skeletal morphology of each individual. “Biological sex” encompasses chromosomal sex, which is increasingly being addressed by aDNA analyses, and endocrinologic sex, the hormonal background of most phenotypic manifestations of sex. This in turn includes morphological sex, which refers to the form and structure of the body; it is precisely this kind of sex that both physical anthropologists and archaeologists of the body normally discuss, and there is no reason why it should not be correctly named “morphologisches Geschlecht” (German) or “morphological sex” (English). In fact, as molecular genetic studies on human bone material become more popular, it will be essential to differentiate data generated on the basis of the skeletal morphology and the genome. I therefore suggest abandoning “biotic sex” and “biological sex” altogether for a more nuanced understanding of sex, in which there will be room for variation beyond the binary sex system.

In my opinion, however, the development of a separate terminology is but one symptom of a worrying trend: the growth of a parallel, yet internal, German discussion on archaeological theory, inspired by but disconnected from the international – and therefore English language – discourse. If this is a reaction to the fact that German literature is increasingly ignored outside of central Europe (because other languages have gained more importance as second and third languages), the remedy is not separatism but building bridges: perhaps by as small a contribution as adding an English abstract or a glossary of frequently used technical terms.

These points of critique should not diminish the value of Melanie Augstein’s monograph to contribute to a better understanding of north-eastern Bavarian burial practices and their regional setting. In fact, it is vital that sites like Dietfurt, presented and analysed in such a thorough and methodologically sound manner, gain a better international recognition. This may in turn give rise to a richer and more nuanced picture of the central European early Iron Age in supra-regional syntheses, offsetting the overpowering impression from other early Iron Age burial landscapes. The addition of an English abstract and a better internet presence of the monograph series *Universitätsforschungen zur prähistorischen Archäologie* that includes a blurb and table of content would help to reach a wider readership. This, however, is not the responsibility of the author, but the publisher and the editors of the series.

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