

JEANNOT METZLER / CATHERINE GAENG / PATRICE MÉNIEL / MARIA-PIA DARBLADE-AUDOIN / NICOLAS GASPAR / LYDIE HOMAN / GABRIELLE KREMER / NICOLE METZLER-ZENS, *L'espace public du Titelberg*. Tome 1–2. Dossiers d'Archéologie du Centre National de Recherche Archéologique volume 17. Centre National de Recherche Archéologique, Luxembourg 2016. € 40.00. ISBN 978-2-87985-341-3. 971 pages with 774 figures and supplement.

For around four decades, Jeannot Metzler and his team have been carrying out exemplary research at the Late La Tène *oppidum* of Titelberg (Luxembourg) and its environs. Their intensive research, always accompanied by comprehensive publications, have made this site one of the best-investigated *oppida* in temperate Europe. Metzler's PhD thesis publication (J. METZLER, *Das treverische Oppidum auf dem Titelberg* [G.-H. Luxembourg]. *Zur Kontinuität zwischen der spätkeltischen und der frühromischen Zeit in Nord-Gallien*. Dossiers Arch. Mus. Nat. Hist. et Art 3 [Luxembourg 1995]) was the first of a series of volumes that also include the cemetery of Lamadelaine (N. METZLER-ZENS et al., *Lamadelaine: une nécropole de l'oppidum du Titelberg*. Dossiers Arch. Mus. Nat. Hist. et Art 6 [Luxembourg 1999]) as well as the publication of 1st century BC elite burials in the wider surroundings, such as Clemency (J. METZLER et al., *Clemency et les tombes de l'aristocratie en Gaule Belgique*. Dossiers Arch. Mus. Nat. Hist. et Art 1 [Luxembourg 1991]) and Goeblingen-Nospelt (J. METZLER / C. GAENG, *Goebange-Nospelt: une nécropole aristocratique trévière*. Dossiers Arch. Mus. Nat. Hist. et Art 13 [Luxembourg 2009]).

The present book, divided into two volumes, represents a detailed account of the fieldwork carried out in the so-called public space of Titelberg. This is an area of ca. 10 ha that occupies the eastern part of the *oppidum*, separated from the rest of the site by a large ditch and a mudbrick wall built on a stone base. In addition to the three main authors – Jeannot Metzler, Catherine Gaeng, and Patrice Méniel – numerous other colleagues have also contributed to the publication: Maria-Pia Darblade-Audoin, Nicolas Gaspar, Lydie Homan, Gabrielle Kremer, Nicole Metzler-Zens, Lothar Bakker, Jean-Paul Guillaumet, and Jean-Marie Welter. The book is structured in nine chapters, seven in the first volume (including the bibliography) and two in the second. The first volume is subdivided into a “descriptive” and an “interpretative” part, whereas the second volume is dedicated to the extensive catalogue. While the sharp division claimed between “description” and “interpretation” could be questioned on methodological grounds, overall the authors should be congratulated for having produced a very detailed, clear, and at the same time ambitious book.

Chapter 1 (pp. 19–23) is a rather brief introduction to the site of Titelberg and its history of research, with the various excavations usefully summarised in Figure 2. The second chapter (pp. 23–66) is devoted to the ditch that delimits the public space, which was first identified through aerial photography and subsequently excavated. After an introduction to the geology of Titelberg, the authors summarise the excavations carried out over nearly three decades. Numerous images including plans and photos, all of them of high quality, illustrate the features uncovered for the different phases. The account starts with the excavations from 1986–89, which established that the ditch was not – as initially suspected – part of an enclosure from the Roman army but rather had a Gallic origin and was aimed at separating a public space that included ritual activities from the rest of the *oppidum*. This was particularly suggested by the presence of both real and miniature weapons, animal bones, and human skull fragments. The fieldwork from 1997–2001 was preceded by the geophysical survey carried out in 1993 by the University of Kiel, which helped to establish the subsequent excavation strategy that took place, with some interruptions, until 2014.

The new excavations incorporated part of the Gallo-Roman road at the point where it crossed the Late Iron Age ditch. In fact, a common characteristic of much of the research at Titelberg is the recovery of both pre-Roman Gallic finds and structures, on the one hand, and evidence from the

Gallo-Roman period, on the other. In the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD, a *vicus* extended over part of the ancient *oppidum*, and it is only through the careful analysis of the excavators that we also know a considerable amount about the pre-Roman occupation.

The assessment of the ditch is aided by the recovery of abundant fibulae and some coins from the infill. The ditch was dug in La Tène D, extending over more than 500 m and crossing the *oppidum* roughly north to south, thus separating the 10 ha of the public space from the rest of the site. This area represents roughly a quarter of the overall area of the *oppidum*. The establishment of the ditch would probably have been contemporary to the erection of the *murus gallicus*.

Chapter 3 reviews the investigations that have taken place inside the public space (pp. 67–112). As previously indicated, the excavations were guided by the results of the geophysical prospection, which identified, among other features, a Gallo-Roman *fanum* (temple). From 1995 to 2013, a large area was excavated within the public space. The main task was the excavation of the *fanum* and its immediate surroundings, uncovering an area of ca. 2000 m². The main discovery belonging to the first chronological phase of the public space is the existence of several palisaded corridors, which the excavators later in the book interpret as installations related to political assemblies. They have their origins in the first half of the 1st century BC and seem to have been in use for several decades. In the second phase, the most important structure is a large, 15 × 14 m three-aisled building that was erected on the highest point of the Titelberg *oppidum*. The monumentality of this structure and its prominent location suggest a communal function, which could have lasted until the beginning of the Gallo-Roman period. In addition, the excavations uncovered, among other structures, evidence of an esplanade and an altar.

A fundamental transformation within the excavated area of the public space occurred during phase three. In the second decade BC, the ditch was filled in and the monumental building and the nearby structures were intentionally removed to leave space to a new layout. The latter included bronze smiths' workshops along the principal thoroughfare as well as a court area probably surrounded by porticos on the space previously occupied by the large building. Changes continued in following decades, until finally a Gallo-Roman *fanum* was erected on the highest point of Titelberg in the 2nd century AD. Despite the various architectural transformations that took place over time, the special significance of this location extends from at least the 1st century BC to the 3rd century AD and underlines its key symbolism for the inhabitants of Titelberg and its surroundings. The excavators have successfully managed to disentangle the complex stratigraphy of the public space, presenting a detailed account of the fieldwork results and a largely convincing interpretation of the evidence.

Chapter 4 (pp. 113–298) is the most extensive within the first volume, being dedicated to the finds identified during the research. The account starts with the human and animal bones. Particularly important and abundant are the animal remains, which are carefully examined by species and then in terms of their selection and distribution. This work benefits from decades of experience by the renowned zooarchaeologist P. Méniel, the most experienced specialist in the study of animal remains from ancient Gaul. The chapter continues with a presentation and discussion of other find categories, ranging from coins to brooches, military objects, and pottery, to name just some of the most important.

This is followed by what the authors term the “interpretative part” of the book, comprising Chapters 5 and 6. The former (pp. 301–393) includes the bulk of the interpretations about the development of Titelberg's public space over time, whereas the shorter Chapter 6 (pp. 394–450) is focused on wider comparative thoughts that include a brief analysis of, and reflection on, the origins of the *oppida* in the territory of the *Treveri* and beyond. In these two chapters, the authors do not shy away

from going into detailed and sometimes far-reaching conclusions. In the case of the public space of Titelberg, they connect the different building phases with historical processes and sometimes even specific events. They rightly emphasise that the public space fulfilled functions that were political, religious, and economic, and that these three components very often went hand in hand rather than constituting separate realities. In Chapter 6, the authors go even further and place the results from Titelberg within a much larger narrative about the characteristics and origins of the *oppida* in 'Celtic' Europe. The location of many of these sites would often have been linked to the religious significance of certain locations (see also M. FERNÁNDEZ-GÖTZ, Reassessing the oppida: The role of power and religion. *Oxford Journal Arch.* 33,4, 2014, 379–394. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/ojoa.12043>). The first volume concludes with an extensive bibliography (pp. 451–481), which includes a wide range of publications in various languages comprising both a detailed record of previous investigations at Titelberg and works of a comparative nature.

The second volume, of nearly 500 pages, constitutes a detailed, descriptive catalogue of the various find categories. The text information is accompanied by numerous drawings and photos, all of them of high quality, thus representing an enormous object database for our knowledge of the Late Iron Age and Roman periods in eastern Gaul.

The overall assessment of the book must be very positive: with this publication, the authors have set another milestone in the investigation of Titelberg, underlining its position as one of the best researched *oppida* in continental Europe alongside iconic sites such as Bibracte (FR) and Manching (DE). The evidence from the public space provides fascinating insights into the political and religious activities of the 1st century BC and early centuries AD. In this regard, within Gaul the only site so far that has produced evidence comparable in importance (although partly different in nature) to Titelberg is the *oppidum* of Corent (FR), thanks to the long-term excavation of the sanctuary and its surroundings by Matthieu Poux and his team (cf. M. POUX / M. DEMIERRE [eds], *Le sanctuaire de Corent (Puy-de-Dôme, Auvergne). Vestiges et rituels. Suppl. Gallia 62* [Paris 2016]. doi: <https://doi.org/10.4000/books.editions-cnrs.46720>).

Given the scale of the analysed evidence in this Titelberg monograph, it seems churlish to express any criticisms. Of course, some scholars might diverge in their interpretation of some of the specific proposals made by Jeannot Metzler and his co-authors, but leaving some nuances aside this reviewer considers them to be largely convincing. Moreover, the very fact that the authors have presented the evidence in such a clear and detailed way provides a formidable foundation for future studies. It is precisely this level of detail and complexity that would perhaps have benefited from some brief summaries in at least some of the chapters, reviewing their main content and highlighting the key findings and interpretations. It would also have been beneficial to include an extended summary in another language such as English or German at the end of the first volume, in order to increase its international readership. Leaving these minor remarks aside, the book represents a fundamental addition to our knowledge of the *oppidum* of Titelberg and, more widely, to our understanding of the political and religious life of Late Iron Age and Roman Gaul.

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