

Raymund Gottschalk, **Spätromische Gräber im Umland von Köln**. Rheinische Ausgrabungen 71 (Verlag Philipp von Zabern, Darmstadt 2015). 402 S., 174 Abb., 157 Taf. ISBN 978-3-8053-4956-7. Gebunden, € 89,90.

The current publication is the result of Dr. Gottschalk's continued work on late Roman burials in the Cologne area. The first results of this research were presented as a doctoral thesis at the Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität in Bonn in 2003, followed by a shortened version in print (Gottschalk 2003). New excavations and important sites were published separately in the years after, for instance the late Roman cemetery of Hürth-Hermühlheim (Gottschalk 2007; 2008). Some elements of Late Roman burial rituals were published in separate articles as well. During this continued research, it has become apparent that a Late Roman date could not be supported for all the material included in the initial research. The current volume presents the primary burial evidence for proven late Roman sites not separately published before, as well as an analysis of all burial material of late Roman times in the region. The study area is confined to the Roman administrative area surrounding the city of Cologne; the burials within the city are not included. Late Roman is defined as the period between the later 3rd and the middle of the 5th century AD.

The volume starts with several short chapters of an introductory nature. Chronological and regional parameters, the state of research, and the relation between burial evidence and habitation history are all treated. Physical anthropology is also presented as an introductory subject, since the limited numbers of age and sex determinations that were available did not allow for statistically relevant applications.

The first more elaborate chapter concerns the grave forms and burial customs. Most attention is devoted to the morphological appearance of graves: burials in stone sarcophagi (sometimes used for cremated remains, sometimes for inhumation graves), lead sarcophagi, tile graves, or earth graves, under which label wooden coffins, wooden burial chambers and burials without containers are included. The shift from cremation to inhumation rites is of course commented upon in passing but this treatment is not elaborate. Further attention is devoted to small alcoves in the grave pits, in which grave goods were placed, and the regional custom of depositing platters on the body with the bottom facing up.

By far the largest chapter is devoted to the study of the grave goods. All the grave goods from the region are typologically sorted, described and dated. The author expresses his mastery of archaeological material culture by describing a wide variety of finds in considerable de-

tail, often referring to finds of other periods and other regions. Valuable are two excursions, the first on finger rings with depictions of 'source miracles' and the other on grave goods with Christian motifs. These contain descriptions, explanations of the depictions and symbols, as well as many pictures of and references to similar finds. From a methodological point of view, it is important to note that this chapter also contains interpretations on the role of the various groups of material culture in the burial ritual or their significance as indicators for the identity of the deceased. This point will be elaborated in the methodological observations below.

The focus on the typology and dating of the finds is explained in the chapter on chronology, which states that dating the material assemblages by typology is the principal dating method. A regional seriation of burial assemblages would have been the ideal chronological framework, but key datasets like Krefeld-Gellep and Hambach 132 were not available at the time of analysis. The chapter proceeds to analyse the period of use and generations of burials that can be seen in some well-studied and more or less completely excavated cemeteries, like that of Eschweiler-Lohn and Jülich-Nord of Römerstraße. At least three generations of graves are observed in Eschweiler-Lohn, which started in the first half of the 4th century and continued at least until the period around AD 400.

The final chapter treats the patterns in grave inventories and types of cemeteries, meaning the differences in the composition of grave inventories through time. These changes and differences are observed in relation to the nature of the cemeteries, being connected to settlements in the countryside or to military or civilian centres. It is observed that relatively many of the richer grave inventories date to the later 3rd century. These inventories are generally ascribed to girls or women belonging to families connected to the court at Cologne, which was the capital of Roman and Gallic emperors for some decades. Grave inventories of the 4th century have a different composition. Rich inventories and those with multiple brooches are for instance rare. The classification method of H. Pöppelmann (2011) is followed by Gottschalk, in which the number and nature of grave goods in combination with the mode of burial (*sarcophagi* or not) determines its category and interpretation. Category A, B and C are burial assemblages of different composition associated with Roman population groups, while category D (split into D1 and D2) is connected to Germanic immigrants.

A summary in German, extensive catalogue, literature and 157 plates complete this very thorough work.

As noted above, the chapter on chronology is rather short. After indicating that typological approach of the

burial assemblages forms the main dating method, the chapter proceeds to discuss generations of burials within one cemetery. Other aspects of chronology remain largely undiscussed. Radiocarbon dating may not have been possible and may therefore remain unmentioned, but the same is not true for coin dating. It would have been instructive to be informed about the followed approach with regard to coin dating. This is not to say that coins are not treated in the volume. In the chapter regarding the grave goods, there is a section on coins (p. 135-140), in which the dates, the function in the burial ritual (whether or not to be seen as payment for the journey to the other world) and the interpretation of burials with just coins and no other grave goods are discussed.

Two points are relevant here. First, coin dating is treated in passing but not fundamentally in the section of chronology, while there are issues to be clarified. In the 20th century, there was a tendency to date grave inventories soon after the coin date providing the *terminus post quem*, but it has become increasingly realized that coins may have circulated very long before being deposited. Coin supply was not at all stable in the 4th century (Gorecki 1975; Stribrny 1989) with older coins kept circulating for decades. It would have been instructive to know the role of coin dates in the chronology of Gottschalk's work, and also the cases in which the coin date does or does not match the pottery dates. There is a table in which the graves with coins are listed (p. 136-137). Revealing is the different treatment of middle Roman and late Roman coinage. The date of middle Roman coinage is not given, these coins are simply referred to as 'old pieces' ("Altstücke"), while the date of late Roman coins is given in years AD. This implies that late Roman coins are not seen as old pieces, in other words, as giving a relevant date. Of course, Gottschalk considers these dates as *terminus post quem*, not as exact dates, but a methodical consideration in what cases the coin dates do not match the pottery dates, or in what cases 4th century coins are present in 5th century contexts in the study area, could have contributed to the discussions on the extended use of coins and on the ending date of the burials.

The second methodological point is that significant interpretations regarding the identity of the deceased, for instance their cultural or ethnic background, are undertaken in several sections while treating material culture, and not in one separate chapter. This reveals implicit but important theoretical assumptions, which are analysed and explained in the next section.

In line with the German archaeological tradition, Gottschalk's work is very complete and thorough on the descriptive level. On the level of interpretation, however, the work is unbalanced. Ambiguous is the ap-

proach towards the ethnic interpretation of artefacts and burials with these artefacts ("ethnische Deutung").

In the 20th century, it was common to associate material culture to groups of people, and to identify migrants if material culture of a certain area appeared in another area. Brather stated that ethnic interpretation was not only seen as a legitimate research objective in German archaeology, but as the central task: Archaeologists were to identify groups known from the written sources in the archaeological record (Brather 2004, 11-27). For the late Roman period, the works of Werner and Böhme associated certain forms of jewellery and weapons with Germanic people in Roman military service (the *laeti* and *foederati*). Their material culture became synonymous to migration and ethnic Germans, either Franks or Saxons (Werner 1958; Böhme 1974; 1999, among others).

In line with this traditional approach, ethnic interpretation is practiced at many different locations in the current work. The author treats the ethnic interpretation of shears (p. 109-110), firesteel (p. 115), bone combs with triangular grip plates (p. 120), weapons (p. 133-134) and brooches (p. 196-200). Furthermore, the burial categories of the types A to C following Pöppelmann (2011) are connected to a Roman population, while category D is associated with Germanic customs (p. 238-240).

To academics from outside the German archaeological tradition, it is surprising that "ethnische Deutung" is not treated separately as an interpretation, but is a logical topic following the descriptions of groups of material culture. At the same time, however, the work under review here shows subtle criticisms and doubts regarding the ethnic ascriptions. When treating the ethnic meaning of shears, firesteel and bone combs, the author is careful to refer to others, thereby showing contrary interpretations. Coins also provided arguments against a linear ethnic interpretation. The custom of placing a single coin in the mouth, and the absence of other grave gifts, are often considered to be a Roman burial rite (p. 138). Gottschalk does however note that this custom occurs in cemeteries which also contain Germanic elements, and therefore he questions this ascription. Because of this mix of perceived Roman and Germanic elements, the author treats the subject of acculturation, but does not doubt ethnic ascription altogether.

Fundamental objections about the ethnic ascription and about the linear association of material culture and groups of people were expressed in the later 20th century mainly in British archaeology. Changing material culture was associated with social change rather than moving people, and therefore no ethnic meanings

were attached to types of objects in theoretically informed studies. S. Jones (1997) analysed ethnic expressions in the context of the broader concept of identity. Identity has many layers and contains aspects of age, gender, profession, social standing, religion and ethnicity. Importantly, identity is a situational construct: It varies in different circumstances. It is unlikely that complex, overlapping and changing ideas corresponded to a single material object, and even more unlikely that everyone understood these signals in a single way (Jones 1997). It was also highlighted that the importance of ethnicity is a modern construct. Brather (2004) and Härke (2004) show that ethnic ascriptions fit into European political processes of the later 19th century and argue that it is highly unlikely that ethnicity was expressed in material ways before that period.

Specifically inclined towards late Roman burial assemblages was the work of Halsall, who gives several arguments against a Germanic interpretation of the so-called weapon graves. Firstly because cremation is the burial rite in the Germanic area and weapon graves are inhumation graves mostly. Secondly, the weapons in the burials were Roman of manufacture, and thirdly, the provenance of much of the jewellery of the accompanying female graves is unknown. For instance, the famous tutulus brooches are claimed to be Germanic by Böhme, but Halsall shows that a Roman manufacture and subsequent Germanic copying was more likely than an initial Germanic manufacture (Halsall 2000). Theuws' additions to Halsall's work are directly relevant for the reviewed work, since he uses material from Gottschalk's region. Theuws uses the example of the grave from Bonn, Jakobsstraße (p. 162; 168), where a sword, a dagger, a crossbow brooch of a Pannonian design and a glass bowl with Christian motifs are placed with a buried man in a stone sarcophagus. Should we follow ethnic ascriptions, then this deceased man was a Roman because of the sarcophagus, a Christian because of the symbols, a German because he bore weapons and a Pannonian soldier or veteran because of the style of crossbow brooch (Theuws 2009).

After deconstructing ethnic ascriptions, Theuws offers an interesting explanation for the weapon graves. He states that the graves should be separated into the 4th century graves with primarily axes and spears, and late 4th/early 5th century graves with swords and shields. The early group should not be seen as weapons. Spears are used for hunting and axes could be used for clearing forest, to bring it into cultivation again. He sees in these tools symbols for elite authority, and he refers to the glass dishes with hunting scenes which are also seen in Gottschalk's work (p. 66 ff.). The later inventories with swords and shields are genuine weapons and must be understood as claims to power, in a time-

frame when Roman military authority was retreating to the south. So instead of viewing the weapon graves as being an imported custom belonging to Germanic immigrants, Theuws sees them as expressions of newly formed elite identity (Theuws 2009).

Fehr (2008) and Brather (2004) participated in these discussions, and Gottschalk knows these works and shortly refers to the discussion (p. 243). He then chooses to return to the state of research of Böhme. When the doubts against linear ethnic interpretation of Gottschalk himself are taken into account, this choice is a bit surprising. This places the work back into the traditional framework and it seems that an opportunity for interpretative innovation, present in the basic material of this study, is missed.

Given the amount of data and the size of the catalogue and plates of the current work, it was already a huge task to include the late Roman burial material for the study area alone. It would simply have been too much to integrate the material from within the city of Cologne as well. However, two cemeteries including many late Roman burials were already published before the start of Gottschalk's research (Friedhoff 1991; Päffgen 1992). A comparison between the burial assemblages of Gottschalk's work and those of Friedhoff and Päffgen should be taken on in the future. The city and the surrounding countryside were of course inextricably linked, and should be analysed together. It may well be that for instance the presence of rich female burials from the 3rd century in Gottschalk's study can be placed into demographic context when the 3rd century male and military graves in the cemeteries of the city are addressed as well.

A second wish for the future is an overarching archaeological chronology of the late Roman period for the Lower Rhine area. Gottschalk's reason for not engaging in a general seriation for the larger region, namely the fact that Krefeld-Gellep and other key sites were still under treatment, is very valid, but since these studies are completed now, an overwhelming amount of good data has become available. Gottschalk's work plus Krefeld-Gellep (Pirling 1966-1999; Pirling/Siepen 2003; 2006) and Nijmegen (Steures 2012) shed light on the late 3rd and 4th century primarily and to a lesser extent also the 5th century. The material for the late 4th and 5th century can be additionally served by processing Hambach 132 (Brügglér 2009) and Rhenen (Wagner/Ypéy 2012). Placing these burial assemblages in a chronology of material culture will reveal to what extent and precision archaeological dating in the 4th and 5th centuries is possible.

To summarise, Gottschalk has presented an important work, which is thorough and complete regarding the burial material from the countryside surrounding Co-

logne. The chapters on typology, dating and application of the material culture are valuable, especially the excursions of Christian motifs, finger rings and luxury glasswork. Specialists in Roman material culture, in burial archaeology or those interested in the area surrounding Cologne should consult this book.

At the level of interpretation the work is very traditional, and an opportunity for innovation regarding long-standing beliefs on ethnic and cultural interpretations was missed. A comparison between the study area and the city of Cologne as well as a regional chronology based on the material presented are not undertaken in the current work, and this remains a task to be done. In these matters, Gottschalk's work will form an important building block for future studies.

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