

Report on the 2nd Linzer Gespräche zur interpretativen Eisenzeitarchäologie

Between 3-5 November, the 'Interpreted Iron Ages' conference was held in Linz for the second time, once again organised by the Upper Austrian Museum and the University of Wales, Bangor. With about 100 participants, the number of conference delegates has about doubled compared to 2004.

32 papers, spread out over three days, covered various aspects of current interpretative Iron Age research. The conference was started by papers on the terms 'Iron Ages' and 'Celts', followed by discussions of the problem of presenting the often patchy information we have about life in the Iron Age to the public, and general problems with the classification of chronological phases in the context of continual cultural change. The first afternoon was dedicated to scientific approaches: DNA and anthropological analyses were presented, and the specific problems presented by the Hallstatt salt mine themselves and finds from the mines for Dendrochronology and photographic documentation. The second morning, which was reserved for the English language papers, offered a range of views extending beyond Central Europe. Topics ranged from the presentation of a project on changing burial practices in the Bronze Age, via a discussion of Villanova period cemeteries near Bologna, Iron Age mountain sanctuaries in Serbia, a discussion of the possible origins of the Arras Culture, an assessment of the settlement landscapes of a Scottish region to a discussion of the evolution of early feudal societies in Wales. In the afternoon, 'mobility' was the topic of both a paper on nomadic cultures and one on Mediterranean literary sources of the 1st millennium BC. This was followed by four papers on Iron Age burial practices, with a paper on La Tène period costume traditions, another one on the phenomenon of the Hallstatt period small cremation burials, one on the interpretation of Mediterranean imports in late Hallstatt burials, and finally a discussion of whether tools found in burials characterise craftsmen, or indicate something different.

The third morning was dedicated to textiles: innovations in weaving technology at the beginning of the Hallstatt period, interpretation of images on pottery from Sopron as evidence of possible cuts of costumes, the experimental reconstruction of the Thorsberg trousers including the presentation on a live model, and finally a discussion auf Daunian loom weights emphasised the importance of this area of craft in Iron Age economies. The final afternoon saw presentations on the different distribution in settlements and burials of pig bone in different regions of Europe, on the differences between Hallstatt and La Tène period horses in Austria, and on the Coligny calendar. The conclusion was a double act on processes of interpretation in the humanities and the sciences, which resulted in a quite intensive discussion, which nicely concluded the day and the conference.

Debates between presenters and in the audience once again were one of the main elements of the 2nd 'Interpreted Iron Ages'. Even though the programme was densely packed, there was sufficient time for discussions, which is mainly thanks to the various speakers, who largely stuck admirably to the allotted times. All contributions of the debates were protocolled and will be published as part of the conference proceedings.

The publication of the conference proceedings (in the monograph series 'Studien zur Kulturgeschichte von Oberösterreich') is expected for mid 2007.

Much like the first, the second installment of this biannual conference can be seen as a full success. This was evident from the number and quality of contributions and the once again very intensive, yet thoroughly positive discussions. We as the conference organisers want to thank all speakers and all other delegates for their contributions to both the discussions and the general climate at the conference. We hope to see many of you again at the 'Interpreted Iron Ages 3'.

As the date for the '3rd Interpreted Iron Ages', we have chosen 7-9 November 2008. Registrations for papers or posters, including a c. 500 word abstract, are welcome and can be sent to us any time.

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