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# The northeastern Austrian group in the early and middle La Tène periods (NAG)

Peter C. Ramsl

## Short theoretical introduction: 'Cultural group – social group'

Nowadays, the term 'culture' is frequently discussed within the context of globalization, perhaps because of the seeming loss of its identity-related connotations (Burmeister, Müller-Scheeßel 2006, p. 10). Thus the definition of culture has moved from its earlier connotation as an 'entity' to that of a 'simple construct'. Furthermore, it had been employed to indicate ...*Begriff zur Bezeichnung einer bestimmten Gruppe von Menschen samt der von ihnen hervorgebrachten geistigen und materiellen Produkte...* [...a term to designate a particular group of people, together with their spiritual and material products...], or as a holistic generalization to signify ...*ethnische, kulturelle (einschließlich religiöser), soziale oder auch ökonomische Einheiten...* [...ethnic, cultural (including religious), social or even economic units...] (Kistler, Ulf 2012, p. 26-27), in contrast with the existing patterns of fragmentation, diversity, or otherness. More recently, culture has been defined anthropologically from the perspective of individual or group identity envisaged as a social process, thus influencing the concept of 'identity' in archaeology as well (Díaz-Andreu, Lucy 2005, p. 1). In the past, identity has usually been equated with ethnicity, but anthropological studies have shown that identity also incorporates features related to other types of social affiliation, such as age, religion, gender, and status. More recently, statistics have been deployed in archaeology to identify different social groups within ancient communities (*e.g.* Tremblay Cormier *et al.* 2017).

A short overview of the state of research into the systematization of the settlement records and hierarchies of structures and regions in Central Europe is provided here as background to the definition of the NAG. It was principally Jiří Waldhauser (1978; 1993), who pioneered the classification of settlement analysis and development in Central Europe and who laid out the basic framework with his work team (starting in 1975). He introduced the system which distinguished five varieties of settlement: group 1 (small, short term settlement), group 2 (middle sized, short term settlement), group 3 (large, long term settlement), group 4 (long

term, extended settlement) and group 5 (settlement agglomeration). He discussed the use of the terms 'Siedlungsareal', 'Wohn- und Wirtschaftseinheit', 'Satellitensiedlungen', 'Hinterland', and 'Weiler-Gehöft-Dorf-Agglomeration'. Finally, he developed a scalar model, consisting of micro areas (Mikroareal), settlement areas (Siedlungsareal), regions (Region) and macroregions (Makroregion). Following in his footsteps, Raimund Karl (Karl 1996) adopted the basics of this approach and applied it to North-East Austria. In his system, farmsteads (Gehöft) were followed by villages (Dorf) and then towns (Stadt, Oppidum). He suggested that the organisation of the landscape was built up of small scale structures – settlement areas (kleinräumige Strukturen – Siedlungsareale), local structures – microregions (Lokalstrukturen – Mikroregionen), large scale local structures – regions (großräumige Lokalstrukturen – Regionen), supra regional structures – macro regions (Überregionale Strukturen – Makroregionen), nested within overarching social relationships – consisting of 'peoples' (übergeordnete gesellschaftliche Beziehungen – Völker). Subsequently Peter Trebsche (Trebsche 2014), discussed the development of hierarchies in La Tène settlements in north-east Austria. As well as small farmsteads and 'medium-sized settlements' (which were the missing links in the research data which were available to him), he mentioned large lowland settlements.

The most recent attempt at systematization was published in the Prague 'Keltové' catalogue of 2018 (Danielsová, Venclová 2018, figs 101 and 102). In this, the authors distinguished open, enclosed and fortified settlement types – single grouped settlements, both rural based or / and specialized. They also draw attention to the change from decentralisation to centralisation during the La Tène period.

Key characteristics of the NAG are described in the following paragraph, which also considers a model for the types of settlement units encountered there.

The late Hallstatt and early La Tène burials known from this region demonstrate strong connections between Lower Austria and eastern France, more particularly with Champagne, the Ardennes, Picardy, and the Île-de-France (Ginoux, Ramsl 2014).

The finds from settlements also indicate long distance connections and innovations in ceramics are also apparent (Ramschl 2014a).

To analyse this topic in greater depth, following the approach already signalled by Ramschl (2018a), the smallest units have initially to be studied in order to progress to the larger ones – following a method of arriving at synthesis, which was previously defined for example by I. Kant (1800, § 117. 3).

The smallest units within the study area were local societies, each with their villages and farmsteads. They buried their dead in community cemeteries, which are the basic elements used in our research. The women were buried with their annular jewellery, which was, at first sight, a very local – intrasocietal – phenomenon. Sometimes parallel use of different costumes is apparent (Ramschl 2011, 250); these were used by different groups placing their dead in the same cemetery during the same sub-period (see also related phenomena in Rustoiu 2013).

The next step in the analysis is to identify regional groups: the settlements and nearby cemeteries can be assembled into local units such as those known in the valley of the River Traisen or around the Leitha Hills. These units can be compared to those from similar areas like the Weinviertel (Austria), the Váh-region (Slovakia) or the Sopron area of Hungary. Where sufficient links including similarities in material culture can be established between particular units, they can be amalgamated into larger entities.

In this research area, inter-regional connections are apparent between bigger geographical units like Lower Austria and Moravia, Southwest Slovakia, and Transdanubia in Hungary.

The uppermost tier of our model may be termed 'International', which implies wide-ranging contacts over longer distances. It is apparent that every region has different but strong connections with a range of others. Looking westward, Lower Austria has very deep connections with the Champagne area (Eastern France) during La Tène A, but subsequently also with Switzerland, the Rhineland and, less remarkably, with Northern Italy. All the aforementioned regions, however, have connections with each other, thus creating a cultural network. 'International' (in the sense of interregional) connections can be seen for example by the presence of 'foreign' artefacts, which means artefacts which do not form part of the local material culture, though they are to be seen as signs or reflections of contacts that require to be verified rather than incontrovertible evidence. The connections visible in material culture can also be, as Sabine Rieckhoff remarked, evidence for: '*... diffusion, selective acceptance or creative transformation of foreign cultural elements, but also the rejection of it.... by economic or social interests...*' (Rieckhoff 2009, p. 363). Another kind of interaction which demonstrates a relationship of some sort is the transfer of technology. Technical innovation or technological transfer can demonstrate – beyond simply cultural diffusion – the routes of cultural interaction. Trade is one variety of this in the late Hallstatt and early La Tène periods. The prevalence of distant connections influenced economic and social relations within local communities.

## The state of research

The Traisen Valley in central Lower Austria provides an excellent exemplar of an archaeologically-rich area. Its proximity to important trade routes like the East-West connection along the Danube, but also the North-South route along the Traisen and Kamp valleys meant favourable economic conditions. Therefore, in terms of general Middle European conditions, a very dense pattern of settlement developed here. In the Early Bronze Age and again in the Early La Tène period, in particular, major phases of settlement and burial activity are apparent. Josef Szombathy, Ambros Zündel und Josef Bayer have undertaken significant research in the Traisen valley, extended, over recent decades, by further studies undertaken by the Department of Heritage team under the leadership of Johannes-Wolfgang Neugebauer (results summarized in Neugebauer 1992 and in several volumes of 'Fundberichte aus Österreich'). Here, through development-led work related to the construction of the S 33 motorway and the extraction of gravel in the vicinity, the most important discoveries, both quantitatively and qualitatively, in the central part of Lower Austria have been made. They are now on display at the local museums in Nußdorf ob der Traisen as well as in St. Pölten and at Asparn/Zaya.

In this valley, with its extensive terraced landscapes, finds were made that are attributable to all time periods. For the Hallstatt period, several cemeteries and settlements such as Franzhausen, Gemeinlebern, Wagram ob der Traisen and Reichersdorf – to name just some examples – are known. It is most interesting that in several of these settlements and cemeteries we can see a continuum from (at least) the late Hallstatt to the La Tène period. The cemetery at Franzhausen was in use from Hallstatt C to the early La Tène period on present information. The most important cemeteries are located at Kuffarn (Urban 2012a, p. 974-975), Oberndorf in der Ebene (Ramschl 2012b, p. 1402-1403; Ramschl in prep.), Ossarn (Urban 2012b, p. 427-1428), Gemeinlebern (Ramschl 2012c, p. 622-623), Herzogenburg-Kalkofen (Urban 2012c, p. 760-761), Walpersdorf (Ramschl 2012d), Inzersdorf (Urban 2012d, p. 832-834), and Getzersdorf (Ramschl 2012e, p. 635), Reichersdorf (Urban 2012e, p. 1569), Franzhausen (Ramschl 2012f, p. 566-567), and Pottenbrunn (Ramschl 2002a; Ramschl 2012g, p. 1522-1524); there are also important barrows at Rassing in the Perschling valley (Preinfalk 2005).

To establish a link with the general discussion of settlement forms (above), the evidence from the known, excavated Iron Age settlements is rehearsed here. The remains of settlements of the Early La Tène period are known from Inzersdorf-Walpersdorf, Franzhausen and Wagram. For the Middle La Tène period settlement is known from Angern and Gemeinlebern, and for the Late La Tène period at Herzogenburg-Kalkofen, Göttweiger Berg and Etzersdorf (Neugebauer 1992, p. 38).

'Hillforts' have been explored near Gars-Thunau (Karwowski 2006; Karwowski 2012, p. 612) and on the Oberleiserberg (Kern, Karwowski, Militký 2012, p. 1399-1402) as well as along the Danube such as the Freinberg (Urban 2012f, p. 570) and Gründberg (Urban 2003) near Linz, Leopoldsberg (Urban 1999)

at Vienna and the Braunsberg (Urban 1995). Large lowland settlements are known at Göttlesbrunn (Karl 2012, p. 651-652), at the Sandberg in Roseldorf (Holzer 2007; Kern 2012, p. 1609-1610), and at Haselbach (Trebsche, Fichtl 2016).

Because of its strategically advantageous position at the border with the Carpathian Basin and its rich and fertile soil, the area around the Leitha Hills in eastern Austria has always been densely settled throughout prehistory. On its western side, on the terraces above the River Leitha, many La Tène period settlements and cemeteries have been discovered over the last 150 years (Neugebauer 1992, fig. 7). The most important include Mannersdorf (Ramsl 2011), Au (Nebehay 1971; Nebehay 1973), Pöttsching (Jerem 2012, p. 1507-1508), and Loretto (Ramsl 2012h, p. 1197-1198). This area has also been investigated within the framework of the FWF Project (P1644), which provided detailed maps of the Iron Age landscape.

## Geographical definition

The geographical area of the North-East Austrian Group (NAG) is defined as Lower Austria and the northern part of Burgenland (fig. 1) – though not corresponding strictly with the current administrative borders of these provinces

## Characteristics of the NAG

### Hallstatt D3/to La Tène A

The transition from Hallstatt D to La Tène A can be observed in several cemeteries such as Franzhausen (Ramsl 2012f) and Oberndorf (e.g. Ramsl 2018b), though it can also be recognized in settlements such as Inzersdorf-Walpersdorf (Ramsl 1998).

A very good example is provided by Grave 121 from Oberndorf (in the Traisen valley). The gravegoods from it included a) the earliest La Tène annular jewellery with cast bar bracelets, as well as b) heavy cast anklets in the late Hallstatt tradition, and c) the most recent version of a drum-footed fibula (type Weidach), which dates to the very end of the late Hallstatt period. This combination gives a first insight into the initial phase of the La Tène culture here. As frequently discussed the combination of cast bracelets with a drum-footed fibula can also be seen at Bučany, grave 1 (Bujna, Romsauer 1983, Taf. 1) or for example at Dürrnberg-Hexenwandfeld, grave 290 (Tiefengraber, Wiltzsche-Schrotta 2014, p. 98). On the other hand, Grave 31 from Oberndorf in der Ebene (an extended male inhumation, aged 20-30 years) from the 1982 excavation campaign (OBD 82/31) can be cited. This contained a *Fußzierfibel* with disc-shaped foot decoration (Fnr. 6) associated with an open-work belt hook (Fnr. 8). Artefacts similar

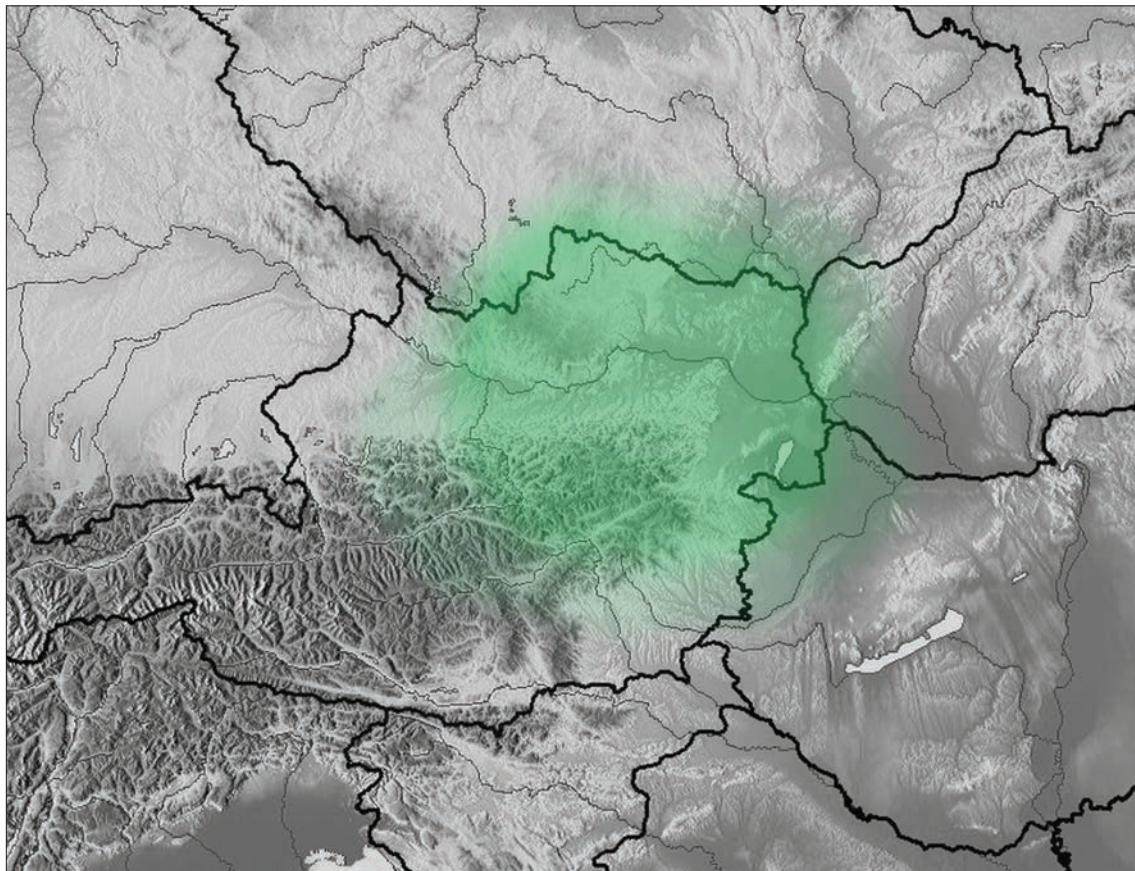


Fig. 1. Geographical expansion of the North-East Austrian group (NAG).



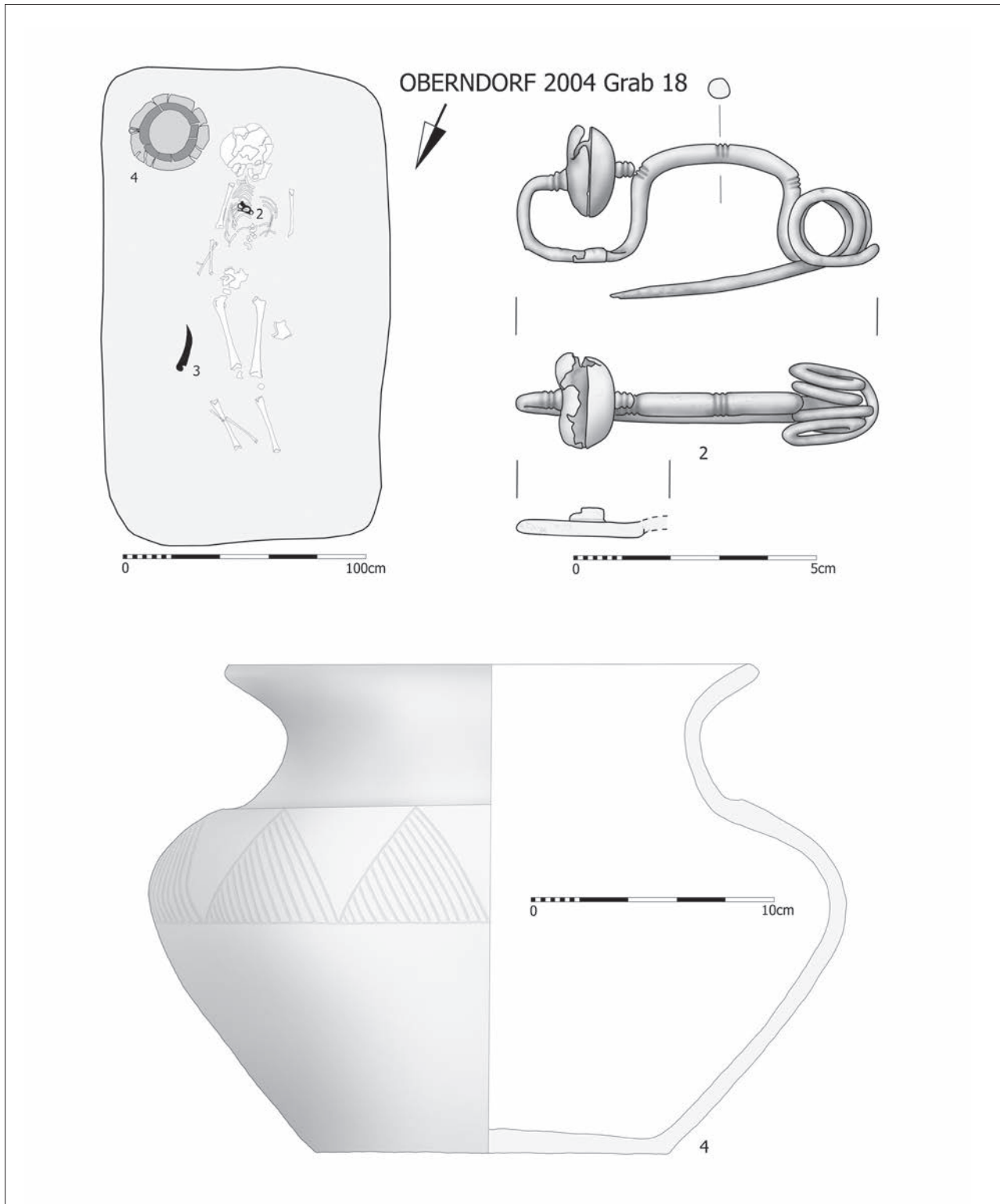


Fig. 2. Developed LT A fibula and traditional ceramic decoration from Oberndorf, grave 18/2004.

to this fibula are known from Budapest-Csepel island (Horváth 2016, pl. 3, 4). In addition, there are ceramic bowls (nos 12 and 16) in Grave 290, which can be compared with the 'bowls with thickened edges' from the settlement of Inzersdorf-Walpersdorf (Ramsl 1998, type plate I, p. 1198) as well as shoe buttons, which are typical for the earliest La Tène period (see Schönfelder 1999), as had already been identified in Northeast Austria, for example in Herzogenburg, grave 2 (Neugebauer 1992, 75, fig. 28/5).

What we are dealing with in this grave is a fibula, originally a late Hallstatt type, which evolved into the initial phase of La Tène A (the late Hallstatt *Fußzierfibel*, such as the so-called 'Fußpaukenfibeln' or foot-drum fibula) with a long crossbow construction and inner chord, a simple bow, and an undecorated foot-drum. It changed considerably through time to the extent that in the early La Tène period the crossbow construction became shorter and this type occurred in different, local variants (Dehn, Stöllner 1996, p. 3-4, fig. 2). Open-work iron belt-hooks with 'Koppelringen', appear also at Dürrnberg, grave 12 (Penninger 1972, pl. 11/9) and at Kuffarn, grave 8 (Nebehay 1993) in the 'La Tène A – early' sub-period (Stöllner 2002, p. 324-333). In contrast, grave 121 from Oberndorf in der Ebene with a drum-footed brooch of the 'Weidach' variant (Neugebauer 1992, p. 42, fig. 8) can be dated just into the latest Hallstatt horizon (Ha D3). Here too typical late Hallstatt annular ornaments occurred, with two heavy, ribbed anklets. The filiform bracelets may already indicate the transition to early La Tène jewellery (Stöllner 2002, p. 63).

## La Tène A

From the beginning of La Tène A, the La Tène art style came to the fore and the number of La Tène cultural markers increased. Apart from further developments of the traditional Hallstatt fibulae construction from multiple parts with new ornamentation, the new, La Tène style single-piece construction appeared and new kinds of brooches were developed. In graves, we can see (apart from the transformations described in the previous section) the appearance of new components and combinations of jewellery.

In women's burials, in La Tène A1, armrings (made of thin, cast rod, with more or less decoration) prevailed, and were recovered alongside ceramics that were still coil-built. In male graves, open-work belt-hooks (Waffengurt) and hinged Koppelringe, were combined with long, broad swords.

In La Tène A2, as well as rectangular belt-hooks, and (occasional) penannular bracelets and anklets (made of thin cast rod) were found with peannular torcs in women's burials, alongside occasional wheel-turned ceramics with both internal and external stamp- and compass-decoration. Men also got rectangular belt-hooks, Large cleavers (Hiebmesser) appeared in graves of both sexes.

### *Strong Hallstatt tradition*

During the developed stage of La Tène A, as in grave 18 (Fnr. 4) or grave 37 (Fnr. 6) (Ramsl in prep.) from the 2004 campaign

at Oberndorf, a strong Hallstatt tradition is still perceptible for example in ceramic decoration (fig. 2).

## *Traditional workshops versus innovative workshops*

### The products of traditional workshops

On the one hand, strong local, traditional workshops are apparent in the record. These produced local, 'low-tech fibulae', for example, such as can be seen in the example from Oberndorf, grave 1982/4 (which seems to have been intended to resemble a Certosa fibula). A similar construction, where a plate was directly riveted to the pin is also known from Rassing and Horné Orešany (Pieta 2007, Abb. 7/10) in western Slovakia (Malé Karpaty/Lesser Carpathians). Handmade, graphite pottery still bearing Hallstatt decoration remained common in this period, as can be seen at the ceramics from Oberndorf (e.g. pot no. 3 from grave OBD 2004/16; see also Ramsl 2018b, Abb. 12; for decoration, see the bowl no. 6 from grave 2004/37).

Continuing production by local craftsmen manufacturing simple products can also be seen in weapons, e. g. in the scabbard mouth from grave 4 at Pottenbrunn (Ramsl 2002a, Taf. 27). This tradition, which can also be recognized in the low quality of the sword blades, which were still produced in La Tène B (Herdlits 2002), continued until about the third century BC. It may not have been necessary (for example because of the preferred combat style etc.) to produce weapons to a high specification.

### Innovative workshops

Contrastingly, there is evidence for innovative workshops, which produced enormous quantities of compass-based ornament, on metal, bone, and ceramics. Examples are known from Ossarn, which included a belt-hook made of bronze (Megaw, Megaw, Neugebauer 1989; Ramsl in prep.), and, in the settlement of Inzersdorf, a handle made of antler (Ramsl 1998, Abb. 17). Oberndorf, grave 1982/6 (Ramsl in prep.), furnished a small bowl (see also Ramsl 2014b, pl. 5/5) with inner arc decoration ('Bogenfries'). Ceramics from buildings 939 and 1043 at Inzersdorf (Ramsl 1998, 37) and Pottenbrunn, grave 1930/1 (Ramsl 2002a, Taf. 22) were similarly decorated. In several cases, the puncture produced by the compass-point is still visible on such vessels (fig. 3).

With regard to weapon production, the high quality output is shown by the scabbard from Gemeinlebarn, which was found in 2010 (fig. 4) (Preinfalk, Preinfalk 2014). In this case, it was fitted with a high-quality cast bronze chape, which can be compared with that from Hallstatt (Megaw 1987) and 'Karnischtraun' in Styria (Windholz-Konrad 2003, 46-47).

This item seems to be similar to the chapes of the La Tène B scabbards from Pottenbrunn (e.g. in Graves 520 (from 1930), 23 or 854, and 975). It can be hypothesised that this scabbard may have been made in another (innovative) workshop while the blades were manufactured by a local blacksmith. In the case of the Gemeinlebarn sword it is debatable whether the item is an import (brought by its owner) or whether it was a local product.

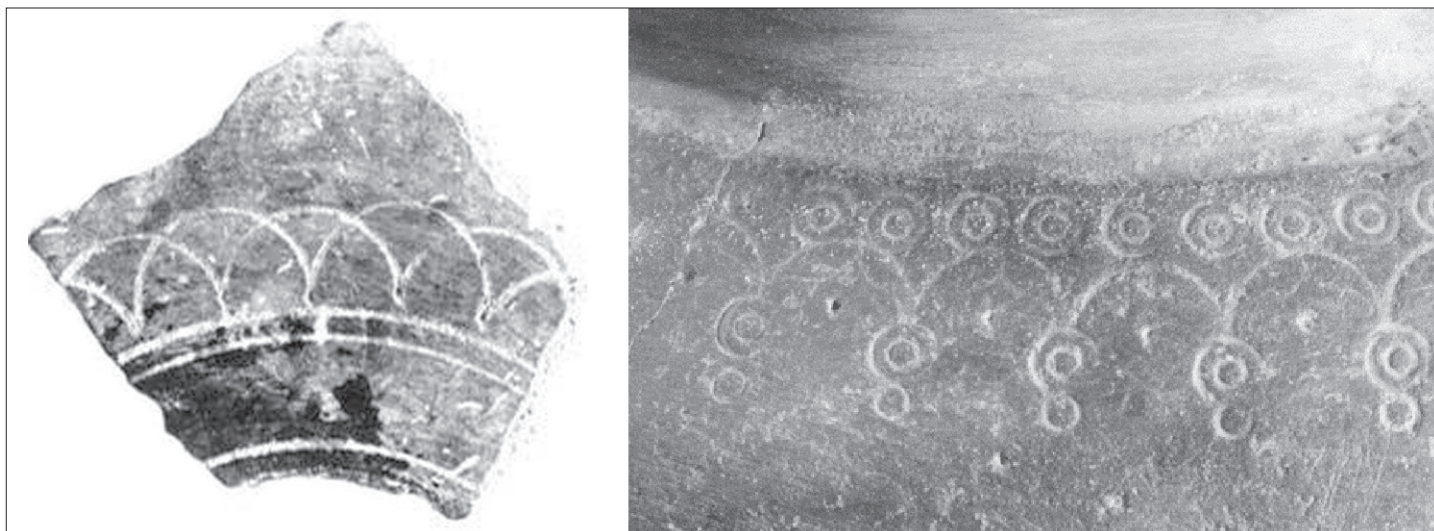


Fig. 3. Examples for ceramics with compasses decoration with puncture.

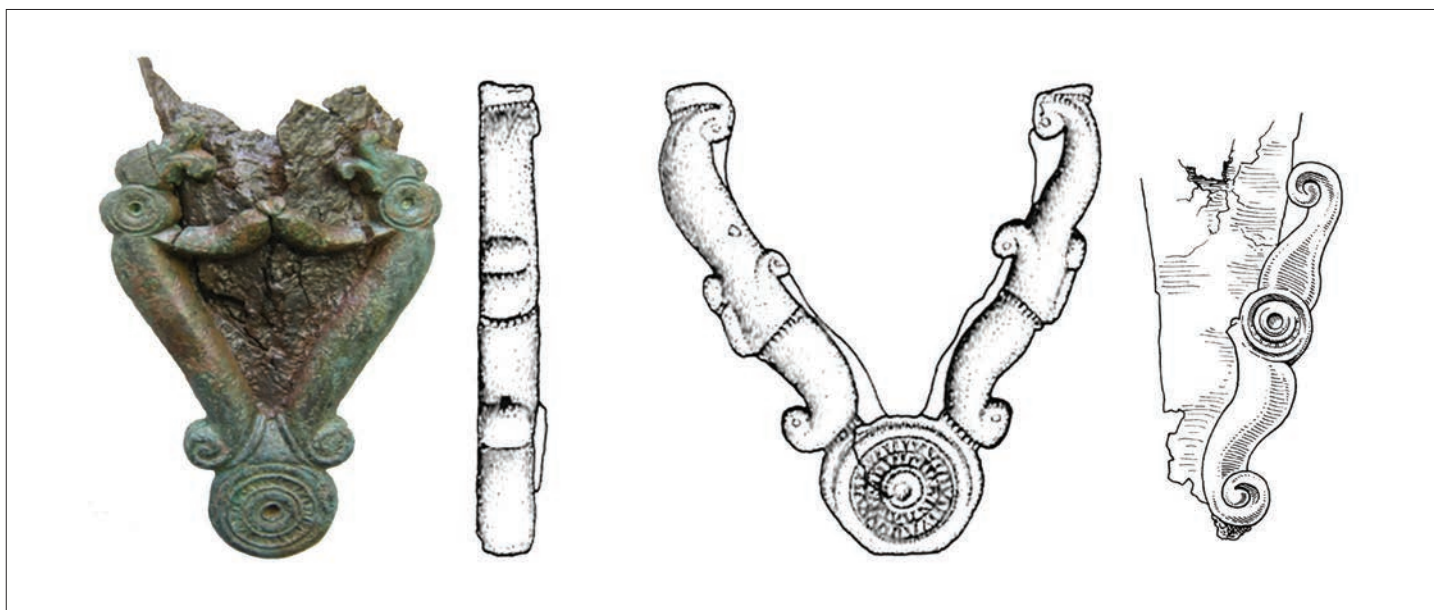


Fig. 4. Cast scabbard chapes from Gemeinlebarn, Karnischtraun, Hallstatt, and Dürrnberg.

The appearance of innovative traits has also to be mentioned in regard to ceramic production (fig. 5). The origin of 'Geriefte Drehscheibenkeramik' is unknown, but this ceramic series was certainly influenced by Mediterranean techniques as known *e.g.* from central Italy ('bucchero-shaped') (Lang 1974, p. 26-30). Comparable vessels from Tessin and Provence are often mentioned (Balzer 2009, p. 147-148). The technological tradition exemplified in so-called 'Geriefte Drehscheibenkeramik' (Grooved wheel-turned pottery) arrived via the Rhône, the Rhine (and Swiss Late Hallstatt sites), and then travelled down the Danube (passing the Heuneburg) to Lower Austria, where it was found in Inzersdorf-Walpersdorf (Ramschl 1998, p. 27). Contrastingly, arriving from the East, was the tradition of wheel-turned Vekerzug ceramics, which appeared in the Traisen valley. Only outward-looking societies (or more precisely their elites)

are ready to accept new and innovative things. This underlines the importance of the Traisen valley (and its surroundings) in the development of the La Tène culture in the NAG area.

### *Cremation burials*

Particular variants of cremation burials occur in the La Tène A NAG region. The following treatments of the cremated remains have been observed:

- Urn burial in ceramic urns: these are mostly bottle-shaped vessels as at Pottenbrunn, grave 48, or the pots may be accompanied by further sherds (as at Ossarn, grave 1984/6).
- Burial of the cremated remains in a container made of organic material: This burial type can be assumed when the cremated bones are found in a sharply defined area. The containers



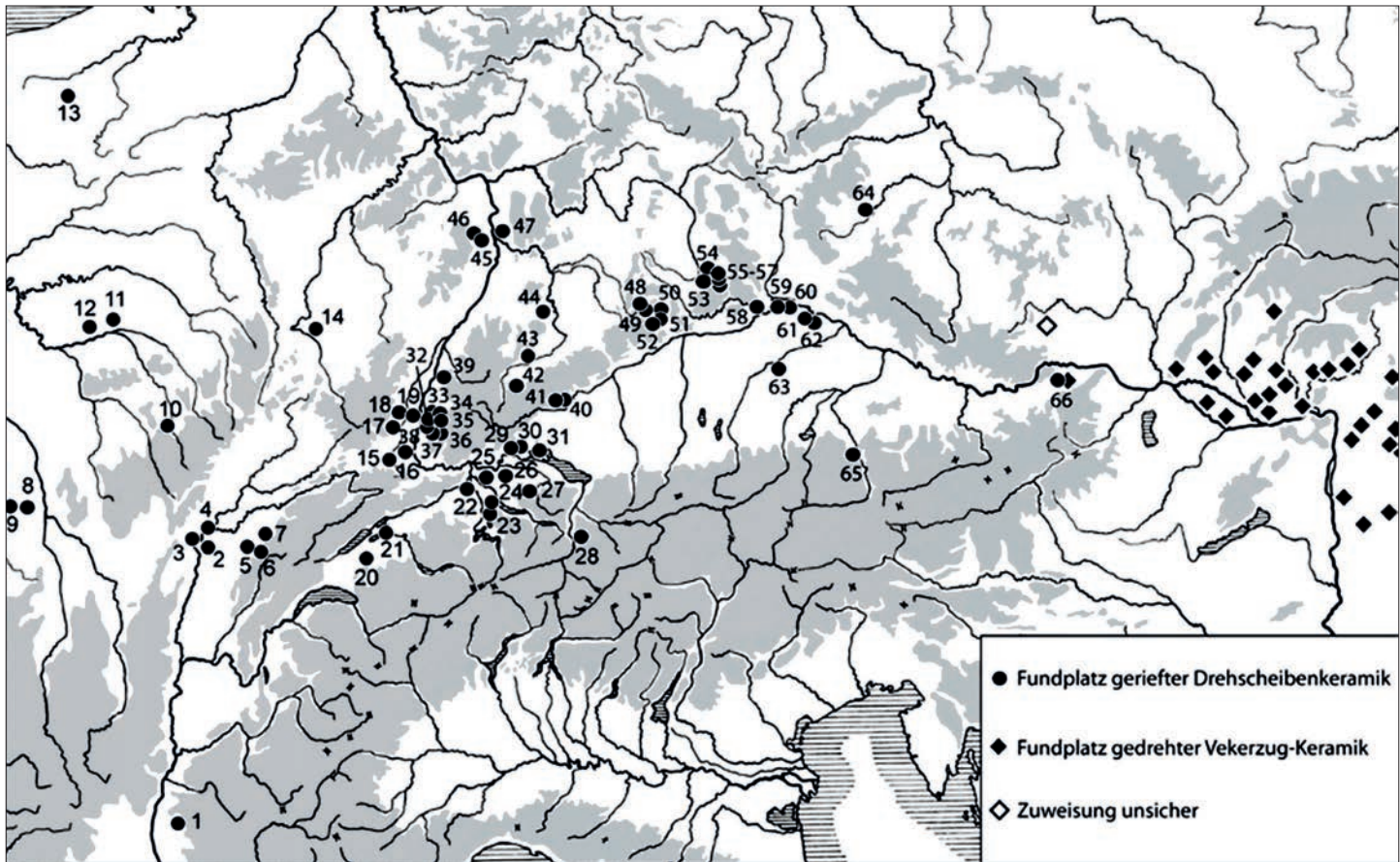


Fig. 5. Distribution of Geriefte Drehscheiben Ware and wheel-turned pottery of the Vekerzug group.

for the cremated remains could have been small boxes (as at Pottenbrunn, graves 975, 1006), or buckets, or textile bags or similar items.

– Scattered cremations: If the cremated remains are not found in an urn, but on the bottom of the grave pit or in the grave filling, these are described as scattered cremation graves. A distinction can be made between cremated remains in a limited area of the grave pit (as at Pottenbrunn, grave 340), those covering the entire area of the grave pit (Pottenbrunn, grave 1002) or those found outside a wooden box, in which some of the grave goods had been placed (Pottenbrunn, grave 975).

Special cases are represented by multiple cremation graves, such as Inzersdorf, grave 282 or Au am Leithagebirge-Kleine Hutweide, grave 2. Also various combinations of cremations and inhumations in a single grave are known. Examples include Pottenbrunn, grave 400 (one skeleton, one scattered cremation); Oberndorf, grave 2004/44 (one skeleton, one urn); Ossarn, grave 1966/1 (an urn beside the skeleton) and grave 1966/4a (a skeleton with two urns and a scattered cremation).

According to the preliminary reports (Neugebauer 1993, p. 447), a total of 63 Early La Tène graves were recovered at Franzhausen up until 1992, but according to the writer's research based on the find lists, up to 77 graves may have been examined. In terms of the absolute number of La Tène A cremation graves recovered by cemetery, Franzhausen is at the top of the

list, followed by Walpersdorf with 13 and Oberndorf with seven cremations. It is noteworthy that only one La Tène A-period cremation with weapons was discovered, namely at grave 1 from Herzogenburg-Kalkofen (Eibner 1981, p. 30).

### La Tène B1

In the sub-period LT B1, we can see the further development of fibulae. The Early La Tène Marzabotto brooches 'Drahtfibeln' (also called Marzabottofibel) (Dehn, Stöllner 1996, p. 1-54.), which occur for example in grave 28/1982 at Oberndorf, were replaced at the transition to the sub-period LT B1 by the Dux / Duchcov type (Ramsl 2012i). Earlier, during La Tène B1a, fibulae of early La Tène construction with symmetrical bows ('Pre-Duchcov horizon') appeared. The closely related Münsingen fibula with its disc-shaped foot, named after the cemetery of Münsingen-Rain in Switzerland, arose in the same horizon (Rieckhoff 2012). These included fibulae (predominantly made of bronze) with four- to six-fold coils, an external chord and, usually, disc-shaped foot decoration with a projection; but there is also a variant with annular foot decoration as in Grave 54/7 at Pottenbrunn. The inlay decoration is made of coral, red enamel or hammered sheet bronze (which is often glued with resin), but also of iron. Female burials wore dress which required two brooches (one at each shoulder sometimes with a thin chain between them); certain



burials had even more fibulae. With regard to annular jewellery, they have at least one bracelet on each wrist and one anklet at each ankle. Different kinds of neck ornaments are found, such as cast or hollow sheet bronze torcs but also including chains adorned with amber or glass beads. In addition, arm-rings appear around upper arms. It is remarkable that in different areas – but sometimes in the same cemetery – so-called ‘parallel costumes’ appear, *i.e.* one woman wore hollow sheet bronze bracelets while another burial from the same period next to it is furnished with cast bracelets. Fashions in the wearing of annular jewellery changed (at least) from generation to generation. Rectangular belt-hooks were also worn; and small pendants with eyelets sometimes appear to have been worn at the head.

Men wore one or two (possibly asymmetric) fibulae. One group of males was armed with short, slim-bladed swords placed in iron sheet scabbards with a dragon/griffin pair ornamentation at their mouths. Belts were equipped with rectangular belt-hooks and/or by up to three flat rings. As well as swords, spears and shields are common. A group of (older) men without weapons were given finger-rings made of precious metal and – sometimes – even a spindle-whorl.

### *Conserving vs. innovative communities*

Given the current state of research, it is possible to sub-divide the communities represented in the cemeteries. Some seem to be more ‘local’ in their characteristics, such as Franzhausen and other small grave-groups such as Au/Leithaberge. On the other hand, at Pottenbrunn and Mannersdorf for example, some graves contain exceptional artefacts, which are probably non-local in origin, show the presence of high-level craftsmen and artisanal techniques and/or long distance connections. In the following paragraphs, some examples of such graves will be highlighted.

Grave 54, from the 1981 excavation at Pottenbrunn (Neugebauer, Gattringer 1981) produced a hollow bronze pendant which was found at the neck of a 25 year old woman (Ramsel 2002a, Taf. 39/4; Gerold 2002, p. 308). As has been previously described (*e.g.* Neugebauer, Megaw, Megaw 1997), this artefact was made of hammered bronze sheet, which was soldered together and finally silvered. It was attached to with a double loop-in-loop silver chain (Ramsel 2002b). The model for the design and decoration of this item should be sought in the torcs with buffer-shaped ends from the Rhineland and eastern France, like Bussy-le-Château ‘Mont Desclus’ or Praunheim (Neugebauer, Megaw, Megaw 1997) (fig. 6, n°1).

An example of long distance trade or contact is provided by the situla from Mannersdorf, grave 13, which belongs to the ‘situle a kalathos tipo D’ type (after Giuliani Pomes 1957, p. 39-40) and is probably an import from northern Italy. The nearest known example of this series is from the cemetery of Arbedo-Cerinasca (Bouloumié 1986, p. 70); the core area of its distribution seems to be in Tuscany, as at Populonia and Bologna-Certosa (fig. 6, n°2).

Advanced gold-smithing can be seen in bracelet no. 7 recovered from grave 115 at Mannerdorf/Lgb. Each half of this gold bracelet consists of four long beaded wires, a piece of ‘cord wire’

and a granule: The centrepiece of the narrow hoop is formed of a long piece of wire, round in cross-section, which was bent in the middle and then the two strands were intertwined. The resulting ‘cord wire’ is bordered by two beaded wires which have been soldered to it at certain points. The techniques used in the making of this piece (the production of round rod wire by ‘twisting’, bead wire production by ‘rolling’ by means of a single or polygonal tool, and soldering methods) had been among the standard Mediterranean techniques for the production of high-quality gold-smithing for centuries, but would not have been unknown in the Celtic area at the time this bracelet was crafted (La Tène B1, 380-325 BC) (Bühler, Kutchera 2011, 604-609). Apart from this exceptional bracelet, several finger-rings were recovered from the Pottenbrunn and Mannersdorf cemeteries. Other (much less prestigious) bracelets are known from La Tène graves in the NAG area (Neugebauer 1992; Ramsel 2002a; Ramsel 2011) (fig. 6, n°3).

The last example to be considered is the well-known ‘Battle-standard’ from grave 180 at Mannersdorf. This weapon is remarkable because it is one of the largest of its kind in the La Tène culture area, with a length of 46 cm and a breadth of 24.8 cm. Moreover – in comparison with similar artefacts – its blade is undoubtedly decorated with the most diverse ornamentation encountered on any of the type. The openwork ornaments were probably chiseled out of the leaf while hot. Thereafter, its edges were probably finished with files or similar tools. This is evidenced by the slightly undulating edges of the reserved parts (Ramsel 2007). As has often been mentioned, this spearhead is itself interpreted as a standard, rather than as a combat weapon (Neugebauer 1992; Megaw 1994, etc.). This can already be assumed on the basis of its huge size and its shortness of the socket. With similarities to the spear head from grave 520 at Pottenbrunn (Ramsel 2002a, plate 59/5; Herdits, Ramsel 1998) the Grave 180 battle-standard is an outstanding artefact on account of its material, design, and manufacturing technique. Standards can be used in military operations to signal combat movements or to identify individual troop units or special fighters or to show the leader’s position. They have the function of a ruler’s banner or field marks, which serve in military operations as a signal for combat movements and for marking troop units and special fighters. The meanings of such an exceptional standard assuredly included, as well as being a symbol of domination and power (in combat), certainly also its possession of magical properties that could ward off damage of every kind. As far as identifying the region of origin is concerned, the number of comparable pieces from the northern French-Belgian area stresses that there was a ‘workshop circle’ for their manufacture in this area (Megaw 1994, p. 402). The shape of the spear head, with its pointed tip, however, has its distributional centre of gravity in the east (with the exception of the find from Plessis-Gassot) (fig. 6, n°4).

### *The earliest cremation burials with weapons*

Another distinctive characteristic of the NAG concerns the particular characteristics of its cremation burials. For La Tène B, important evidence is contained in publications of the cemeteries at Pottenbrunn (Ramsel 2002a) and Au am Leithaberge-Kleine



Fig. 6. 1. Situla from Mannersdorf 13; 2. Silvered hollow pendant - Pottenbrunn 54; 3. gold jewellery from the cemetery of Mannersdorf; 4. Battle standard from Mannersdorf 180.

Hutweide (Nebhay 1973). At Pottenbrunn there are eight cremation graves and at Au / Lbg. nine are recorded for this period. In grave 2 at Au (Kleine Hutweide), the cremated remains of two individuals were found. Almost twice as many scattered cremations as urn burials were observed. Four of the tombs at Pottenbrunn were surrounded by approximately square burial enclosures, two of which (POT 854 and 855) also had post settings within these ditched enclosures. Also noteworthy is a new pattern in the evidence, which can be distinguished in the structure of the graves. Twelve of the total of 25 tombs attributable to this sub-period included weapons. In one tomb, Au 13, a double set of weapon equipment was found, although only the remains

of a single person were buried there (Nebhay 1973, Taf. X-XIII). In the early phase of La Tène B1, cremation burials with weapons suddenly appeared. In this period, between approximately 400 and 350 BC, the first phase of increased mobility and migratory movements within the Celtic world are highlighted. The 'mobile warriors' suggested for the period were equipped with short, narrow-bladed, swords, accompanied by scabbards which were decorated at the mouth by a pair of dragons or griffins – the so-called dragon pair. The new burial rites of this phase could be related to the military events of that period. Warriors who had died on these campaigns or even while serving as mercenaries could have been cremated far from home by their comrades and

their mortal remains (in the form of the cremated bones) thereafter returned to their homeland.

This thesis is strengthened by the fact that hardly any battle injuries are attested in the skeletons from the contemporary inhumation graves (Novotny in prep.). War should therefore have been an external event, taking place elsewhere. Other graves, which contain grave goods but no human remains, could also point in this direction. The empty tombs of Pottenbrunn (nos 232, 961, 972 and perhaps 1002) would thus represent cenotaphs, which served as a reminder of those warriors whose actual remains were buried abroad. Graves with two sets of weapons but a single interment, as at Grave 13 at Au am Leithagebirge or Grave 374 at Potzneusiedl (Sauer 2007, p. 38-39) could also indicate a similar practice. But the double sets of weapons could also be indicative of 'brotherhood in arms', as postulated by Markus Egg (Egg 1999, p. 344-355).

## La Tène B2

Brooches with large spherical foot decoration (as at Mannersdorf grave 109/2 and Pottenbrunn grave 855/6) are attributable to the horizon before fibulae of middle La Tène construction. At the transition phase from LT B to LT C, iron fibulae of variant Pottenbrunn-Horný Játov, with a large double spring and long extended foot appeared, as at Pottenbrunn 520/18 and Mannersdorf 3/18.

Beginning with La Tène B2, there was a fundamental change in the approach to the suspension of the sword, which manifested itself in belts made up of entirely different components (Rapin 1995). There are two parts to a belt chain, between which the sword/scabbard was flexibly mounted. The other ends of the chain were completed by a leather strap. It is possible that the leather belt parts were braided together. Thus, there are belt chains with doubly and multiply twisted links, which can also be ornamented with Plastic decoration *e.g.* (Mannersdorf, Grave 230 and Dubník, Grave 30). These date from La Tène B2 to the end of C1 (Bujna 2011, p. 74-82). Belt chains in loop-in-loop technique are rare (including in the NAG), but appear for example in Carnuntum (Ramschl 2006, p. 54) and Guntramsdorf (Urban *et al.* 1985). Belt chains with flat-forged links and punched decoration (type Panzerkette) represent another variant in terms of the suspension of the sword and can be found in Lower Austria at Neunkirchen, grave 2 (Caspert 1929, fig. V).

## La Tène C

In this phase, the dominance of inhumation over cremation graves is remarkable, in so far as the data can be trusted. North of the Danube, in this sub-period, the orientation of graves changed from south-north to north-south. Cremation graves (primarily antiquarian finds) appear only exceptionally, for instance at Flatz (Haider 1984), Horn (Maurer 1976), Sommerein (Adler, Offenberger 1983, p. 254-255), Zöfing (Neugebauer, Neugebauer 1981) and Vienna-Oberlaa (Pittioni 1930, p. 49).

The female costume in these graves expanded to include glass and sapolite bracelets, as in Graves 96 and 151 from

Mannersdorf (Ramschl 2011, p. 104-105). Beginning in La Tène C, a series of novel belt chains appeared as part of women's costume. These include belt chains with octagonal chain links and lancet-shaped hooks made of iron (for example in Mannersdorf Grave 96/4); belt chains with cruciform intermediate links (Austrian-Czechoslovakian type) made of bronze with enamel insets, as in Raggendorf (VB Gänserndorf) (Lauerermann 2009, p. 319); belt chains with circular links with double ring chains; as well as belt chains with flat links and triple ring chains, such as those from Oberrohrbach, Bez. Korneuburg (Lauerermann 1989).

The contemporary male graves include, besides (now longer) swords (as in Neunkirchen, grave 1; Neugebauer 1992, Abb. 30/2), long and broad spear heads and band-shaped shield buckles as at Inzersdorf (Neugebauer 1992, Abb. 30/1), as well as big iron fibulae of Middle La Tène construction.

## Change of orientation

The standard orientation of inhumation graves of the Early La Tène period in eastern Austria is from southwest to southeast. In the cemetery of Mannersdorf am Leithagebirge, 52 % of the burials are oriented to the south-southwest, 17 % to the southwest, and the rest mostly to the south and southeast. Graves in the cemeteries of the Traisen valley, on the other hand, tend more to the southeast: at Pottenbrunn, 38 % of the tombs point to the southeast, 25 % to the south-southeast and 12 % to the south. At Oberndorf ob der Traisen, the main orientations were south-southeast and south, whereas at Ossarn south-southwest and south-southeast were preferred. In the Middle La Tène period (LT C), a change in orientation in favour of south to north is apparent in cemeteries north of the Danube. This can be seen from the graves at Poysdorf (Blesl 2010, fig. 5; Preinfalk, 2003, p. 27), Absdorf (Willvonseder 1932, p. 274), Klein-Reinprechtsdorf (Stift-Gottlieb 1935), Jetzelsdorf (Ruß 2004, p. 771-774, Ruß, Wiltschke-Schrotta 2008), Steinebrunn (Lederer 1980, p. 460), and Bernhardsthal (Pittioni 1936, p. 79), all lying in the Weinviertel. It is noteworthy that in neighbouring Moravia, inhumation burials were basically already oriented from north to south in the Early La Tène period (Čižmářová 2004, p. 91-93). The only exception is the burial ground at Brno-Chrlice where a south-north orientation prevailed (Čižmářová 2004, p. 94).

## Common traits of the NAG: a conclusion

The common characteristics of the NAG can be summarized as follows. The study area has strong connection with other areas such as the Champagne (twisted necklet; sphinx fibulae), Switzerland (fibulae which are moulded in section; female costumes), the Upper Palatinate of Bavaria, (Early La Tène fibulae, Ceramic stamps), and Rhineland (fibulae with plastic decoration) as well as with Italy (horse-shaped fibulae, bracelets with Hercules-knots, bronze situlae) and the Alpine areas (horse-shaped fibulae, massive fibulae with large foot discs, inner Alpine pottery). The contents of the early phase seem stylistically retarded and old fashioned, which is visible for example in the



pottery types, as mentioned above. Only from La Tène B1, do key changes occur in this assemblage.

Another unique trait, the special arrangements noted around individual graves, can be considered. Many of the cemeteries contain grave enclosures. These are defined by either more or less circular or approximately square-to-rectangular trenches, which are placed around individual or, more rarely, several grave pits. Different arrangements are recognizable from cemetery to cemetery. On the one hand, there are examples with isolated, unconnected enclosures such as at Franzhausen (Neugebauer 1992, fig. 13). On the other hand, the enclosures can be juxtaposed with each other in various ways. Inzersdorf, for example, includes two- and three-fold examples (Neugebauer 1996, pl. 2), whereas at Pottenbrunn up to four enclosures are connected (Ramsl 2002a, fig. 147), and at Mannersdorf even larger and more complex systems of juxtaposed enclosures are recognizable (Ramsl 2011). Comparing the forms of these enclosures

with other regions, different patterns can be seen. The La Tène cemeteries of southwestern Slovakia (e.g. Holiare, Horný Jatov and Palárikovo) (Benadik *et al.*, 1957, Benadik, 1975, fig. 1) have only a few such 'Grabgärten' (two to four per cemetery), usually found encircling the so-called rich graves. This pattern may also be due to the chronological range of these cemeteries, as those of Slovakia extend far into the Middle La Tène period.

Analysing the complex structures of these enclosures more closely, it becomes clear that some of them can be interpreted as ritual places and / or the settings for fires. In the case of the cemetery of Franzhausen (Neugebauer 1992, fig. 13) it is noticeable that in its northern part there are (almost without exception) simple circular enclosures; in the southern part, however, approximately square enclosures were identified. At the limit between these two sectors only double enclosures were found – circular in the north and square in the south – which did not enclose graves. These could therefore be interpreted as ceremonial places belonging to two different groups.

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## Abstract

In order to describe any small-scale cultural group, it is first necessary to consider the theoretical and/or methodological issues involved. Starting from the smallest usable sociological and archaeological unit which survives, the individual burial, it is possible to see that different kinds of costume are represented within a cemetery. Each of these costumes is decided on by the surviving associates of the deceased person, *i.e.* the local society. The cemeteries themselves concurrently served different farmsteads and villages. The next level to be considered consists of regional areas like the Traisen valley or the Váh region in Slovakia, which were occupied by local units of near-neighbours. Their shared material culture was provided by local workshops or mobile craftsmen. Widening the scale of analysis, several regional areas can be grouped together into broader zones such as Lower Austria or Transdanubia. An even-larger unit, which connects the trans-regional groups occupying these broader zones can be described as operating at an international level. Connecting areas from Romania to France, from Northern Italy to Belgium, the so-called 'La Tène culture' is built up of different regional groups, communicating by the use of shared cultural markers, which give the impression of a uniform culture. This represents what is here termed the 'international level'. In this paper, the 'North-eastern Austrian Group' (NAG) of the early and middle La Tène periods is described. It is made up of a variety of local units, such as those occupying the Traisen valley or the Leitha Hills. Archaeological analyses of them over recent decades enable a picture of the broader north-eastern Austrian cultural group (NAG) to be sketched.

## Zusammenfassung

**Die nordostösterreichische Gruppe in der Früh- und Mittelatènezeit.** Um eine kleinräumige Kulturgruppe zu beschreiben, müssen zunächst die theoretischen und/oder methodischen Fragen berücksichtigt werden. Ausgehend von der kleinsten erhaltenen, brauchbaren soziologischen und archäologischen Einheit, der Einzelbestattung, kann man erkennen, dass innerhalb eines Friedhofs verschiedene Arten von Ausstattungen vertreten sind. Über jede dieser Ausstattungen entscheiden die noch lebenden Mitmenschen des Verstorbenen, d.h. die örtliche Gesellschaft. Die Gräberfelder selbst dienten gleichzeitig verschiedenen Gehöften und Dörfern als Bestattungsort. Die nächste Ebene, die zu berücksichtigen ist, besteht aus regionalen Gebieten wie dem Traisental oder der Váh-Region in der Slowakei, die von lokalen benachbarten Einheiten gebildet werden. Ihre gemeinsame materielle Kultur wurde von lokalen Werkstätten oder mobilen Handwerkern geprägt. Um den Umfang der Analyse zu erweitern, können mehrere regionale Gebiete zu größeren Zonen wie Niederösterreich oder Transdanubien zusammengefasst werden. Eine noch größere Einheit, die die überregionalen Gruppen, die diese größeren Zonen darstellen, miteinander verbindet, kann als „auf internationaler Ebene operierend“ bezeichnet werden. Die sogenannte „La-Tène-Kultur“, die Gebiete von Rumänien bis Frankreich, von Norditalien bis Belgien verbindet, besteht aus verschiedenen regionalen Gruppen, die durch gemeinsame kulturelle Kennzeichen kommunizieren und daher den Eindruck einer einheitlichen Kultur vermitteln. Dieses repräsentiert, was hier als „internationale Ebene“ bezeichnet wird. In diesem Beitrag wird die „Nordost-Österreichische Gruppe“ (NAG) der frühen und mittleren La-Tène-Periode beschrieben. Sie setzt sich aus verschiedenen lokalen Einheiten zusammen, wie z.B. denjenigen, die sich im Traisental oder um das Leithagebirge befinden. Archäologische Analysen dieser Einheiten in den letzten Jahrzehnten ermöglichen es, ein Bild der größeren nordost-österreichischen Kulturgruppe zu zeichnen.