

BOOK REVIEW – RECENZE

Jan Kysela – Petra Goláňová – Tomáš Mangel – Jan Mařík (eds.): Reflections of the Iron Age. Studies dedicated to Natalie Venclová. Institute of Archaeology of the CAS, Prague – University of Hradec Králové – MUNI Arts – Faculty of Arts Charles University, Praha – Brno – Hradec Králové 2026, ISBN: 978-80-7581-063-2, 640 pages.

It is rare for a researcher to be honoured with a second *Festschrift*, but as this volume makes clear, Natalie Venclová is a rare kind of researcher. Over the course of six decades, her research has expanded our understanding of a range of topics, not only for Czech Iron Age archaeology but, in many cases, at a European scale also. The contributions to this volume reflect the breadth and depth of research topics that she has examined in her ongoing career. One of the most notable things about this volume is the wealth of new discoveries. *Festschriften* have developed a (not entirely baseless) reputation over the years as being a place where papers that could not otherwise be published are allowed to be printed. As a former professor of mine once remarked a '*Deadschrift*'. This is certainly not the case here. Several of the papers present newly discovered finds, in some cases of national significance. Additionally, the positive role that Natalie Venclová has played in the careers of many of the authors is apparent from the dedications and words of thanks found in several papers.

This is a substantial publication, with 34 papers split across four chapters. Although this volume is dominated by Central European archaeology (Bohemian, Moravian, Slovakian, and Polish), all of the contributions are in English. This will no doubt prove useful in helping to spread understanding of Central European Iron Age archaeology to the (increasingly monoglot) Anglosphere. This wealth of information is also available at a very reasonable price of 830 CZK (€34.26) which works out at a mere 0.65 CZK per page (well below a cent).

There is no overriding theme which unites the papers, nor does this volume make any claim to offer a paradigm shift in Iron Age archaeology (although individual papers do offer some very interesting and thought-provoking insights). Rather, it is an exhibition of new discoveries, theoretical perspectives, and methodological approaches. Nevertheless, the editors have attempted to create a sense of narrative from the various contributions. Chapter I, titled *From Materials to Objects*, is dedicated exclusively to small finds, whilst Chapter IV, *From Regions to Landscapes*, is, as the name suggests, concerned with archaeological landscapes. Chapter II, *From Objects to People*, and Chapter III, *From People to Regions*, seek to create a logical progression from Chapters I to IV. The approach is not always successful. However, this is due to the challenge of categorising submissions with a variety of approaches and topics, rather than any failure on the part of the editors. Likewise, the editors are to be commended for the inclusive nature of this volume, which contains submissions from both long-established, renowned researchers (Vincent Megaw, Pavel Sankot, Anthony Harding) and young, up-and-coming colleagues (Leona Kohl, Carole Quatrelivre) among others.

As noted, and as is to be expected from a *Festschrift* which honours Natalie Venclová's work, the geographical focus of the papers is primarily Central European. Nevertheless, the geographical scope extends as far west as the Paris Basin (Carole Quatrelivre and Oliver Nakoinz) and south to the Adriatic (Boris Kavur) and Romania (Mariana Egri and Aurel Rustoiu). A few papers, such as Anthony Harding's survey of Bronze Age faience beads (Chapter I) and Jan Kysela's study of La Tène hilts (Chapter II), are noteworthy for their international scope. This volume will be especially welcomed by glass specialists, with seven contributions dedicated to glass-related topics. Ceramics (four papers), numismatics (three), and brooches (three) are also well-represented. Rather than review the contributions on a chapter-by-chapter basis, it is more efficient to consider them thematically, starting with glass and faience.

Anthony Harding's paper on Early Bronze Age faïence (Chapter I) provides an excellent, international review of the evidence for these artefacts. Crucially, it underlines that faïence was produced locally in Central Europe and not, as once theorised, introduced from the eastern Mediterranean. Jan John and Ondřej Chvojka's paper on Late Bronze Age glass beads from Břežnice (Tábor distr.; CZ) offers a detailed overview of new finds, demonstrating that beads from cremation burials at the site likely had different geographical origins. In Chapter II Jana Matzerová and colleagues discuss a fascinating discovery: a Phoenician head-shaped pendant from Prague-Radotín (CZ). As the authors note, the presence of a potentially 4th century BC Mediterranean import to Bohemia raises new questions about long-distance contacts during this period. Malwina Urák's review of Haevernich's Group 8E glass bracelets in the same chapter is an excellent example of the role which typological studies still have to play in archaeology. This is a paper which clearly adds to recent work on glass bracelets by *Rolland (2021)*. As someone with an Atlantic research focus, I particularly enjoyed Urák's discussion surrounding the discovery of the bracelet from Brech (dep. Morbihan; FR).

Tereza Jošková (Chapter III) considers the evidence for La Tène B–D glass jewellery from Pardubice and Chrudim (CZ). Here, a unique find is also presented: a fragmentary group 3c bracelet from České Lhotice (with a wonderful footnote about the risks of archaeologists selling reproductions of their work near archaeological sites). A concise, but no less interesting, survey of glass finds from southwestern Slovakia is also offered by Gertrúda Březinová and colleagues. In Chapter III Maciej Karwowski examines glass ornaments from the production centres at Etzersdorf, Haselbach, Ronthal, and Roseldorf (AT). The patterns identified here, especially with regards to the main phases of glass production at these sites in La Tène C1b and La Tène C2, will no doubt be of interest to those examining glass production, urbanisation processes or other patterns of manufacture in Central Europe (e.g. *Thér – Mangel 2024*). In the final paper discussing glass, Boris Kavur provides some thought-provoking conclusions about production and trade by considering Early Iron Age glass beads with prunts.

The ceramics papers begin with Radoslav Čambal's preliminary report (Chapter I) on La Tène Period finds from Tvrdosovce (Nové Zámky distr.; SK). This includes a charming find of a La Tène C1/C2 anthropomorphic ceramic handle with stamped decoration. Irena Ostrá and Karel Slavíček's discussion of a late La Tène painted vessel from Hněvotín (Olomouc distr.; CZ) proposes the intriguing possibility that it was produced locally, and not at the nearby oppidum of Staré Hradisko. Tomáš Mangel and colleagues (Chapter II) offer a detailed and fascinating discussion of a horse (or donkey) graffito on a sherd from Čistěves (Hradec Králové distr.; CZ). Building upon *Venclová's (2018)* study of zoomorphic motifs on La Tène pottery, the authors highlight the dynamic nature of zoomorphic graffito during the Late Iron Age. In Chapter III, Mariana Egri and Aurel Rustoiu combine ceramics, typological studies and a discussion of inter-regional contacts when reviewing *krater*-shaped vessels from Dacia. At first glance, this paper appears to be a straightforward typological study, but the authors effectively demonstrate the multiple, interregional origins of these vessels and thereby pose new questions about how we understand contacts and cultural exchanges in South-Eastern Europe.

Metalwork is well represented, with brooches being the most common theme. Joanna Ewa Markiewicz and colleagues' comments (Chapter I) on use-wear analysis on copper-alloy small finds from Nowa Cerekwia (Głubczyce distr.; PL) will no doubt be a welcome reference source for any researchers examining object biographies, especially fibula brooches. In Chapter II, Vincent Megaw and András Márton offer a story and origin for an early La Tène fibula brooch in the Louvre Museum's Campana Collection (in true Megaw style). Moving from the past to the present, Karol Pieta introduces new finds of zoomorphic brooches from Udiča (Považská Bystrica distr.; SK). This includes a beautiful example of a *Maskenfibel*, which in future years will almost certainly come to be recognised as one of the finest representatives of this group. In Chapter III, Viktoria Čistáková and colleagues introduce new late Hallstatt and early La Tène brooches from Central Bohemia with comments about the local and interregional significance of these finds.

Weaponry is also represented, with both Pavel Sankot and colleagues and Tomasz Bochnak (Chapter I) demonstrating the value of consulting museum collections, in this case La Tène and Tyniec group weapons, respectively. Marko Dizdar's study of late La Tène Scordiscan buttons provides a thorough and detailed overview of these objects and serves as an excellent reference paper for future studies. The metalwork papers also include two of the most striking discoveries (Chapter II). These are Przemysław Dulęba and Jacek Soida's presentation of a copper-alloy finger-ring from Samborowice (Pietrowice Wielkie distr.; PL) and David Vích and colleagues' discussion of new discoveries of two *Kronenhalsringen* from the border of Bohemia and Moravia. The Samborowice ring was decorated with a double-omega pattern, well-attested from Central Europe, but also finding echoes as far west as Britain (Jope 1996). The *Kronenhalsringen* belong to a Scandinavian tradition, and offer a fascinating contribution to the evidence for contacts between Northern and Central Europe in the La Tène Period (e.g. Martens 2023).

In contrast to other themes, all of the numismatic contributions are collected in Chapter III. I will readily admit that my knowledge of Iron Age numismatics in Western Europe is bad. My understanding of coinage in Central Europe is effectively non-existent. As a result, there is a limit to what I can say on this topic. Marek Budaj and Radoslav Čambal provide a review of the evidence for new finds of coins from Southwestern Slovakia, including some nice associated metalwork. Tomáš Smělý offers a different approach to Iron Age coinage with his analysis of how the monetary system of the Bratislava oppidum functioned, and what this system may tell us about the origins of the ruling elite. Wioletta Pazowska then introduces the Kuyavian coinage group in a brief analysis which demonstrates how Central Poland was not a peripheral region in numismatic terms in the La Tène D phase. Despite the limitations of my own knowledge, I found all three papers accessible and easy to follow.

Papers dealing with landscape studies and social modelling are unique in that they are all in the same chapter: Chapter IV. Leona Kohl begins with a supposedly preliminary analysis ('supposedly' because there is a very high standard of research here) of chronological and cultural variations in Austria's Traisen valley. This valley is central to understanding the early La Tène Period in Eastern Austria. Much of the most important literature on this region is published in German, so an English-language account is very useful for spreading understanding about these sites to colleagues unfamiliar with the extant literature. Carole Quatrelivre and Oliver Nikoinz's paper on Late Iron Age societies in the Paris Basin is equally fascinating. The methodological approach alone (which was pioneered by Carole Quatrelivre in her *Prix européen d'archéologie Joseph Déchelette*-winning doctoral thesis) has much potential. Likewise, the discussions of different social structures will also be of use to ongoing debates about modelling Iron Age societies (e.g. Moore – González-Álvarez 2021). Sabine Hornung continues the theme of dynamic regions and societies by considering the landscape context of Europe's smallest oppidum: the Hunnenring (Otzenhausen distr.; DE). Thanks to her ongoing research at the site, Hornung is able to demonstrate how landscape use and communities changed in the western Hunsrück between the late La Tène and early Roman Periods. A key takeaway from Hornung's paper is the value of supporting long-term fieldwork projects and the discoveries which they can enable. Lastly, Petr Šída and colleagues conclude with a thought-provoking account of how forest-herders in the Bohemian Paradise can be contextualised within the wider later prehistoric North Bohemian world.

Mortuary archaeology is represented by two papers, in addition to Leona Kohl's contribution. Sándor Berecki offers a new interpretation of a La Tène teenager's grave from Fântânele-Livada (Transylvania; RO) as well as a wider survey of the evidence for adolescent graves in the Carpathian Basin. A brief discussion of recent excavations in Plav (České Budějovice distr.; CZ) is provided by Ondřej Chvojka and colleagues, and with it the possibility that a La Tène settlement may be associated with a Hallstatt burial ground.

The remaining papers cannot be placed in one of the above categories. Nevertheless, these include some of the most interesting contributions. Petra Goláňová (Chapter II) examines the evidence for

textile production in Moravia and neighbouring regions by focusing on finds of spindle whorls in graves. Although, as Goláňová notes, the evidence for spindle whorls in graves is limited, she draws on a variety of datasets to construct a very interesting discussion on the often overlooked topic of Iron Age textile production. Immediately after, Jan Kysela, in what must be the most ambitious paper in this volume, conducts an overview of the iconographic evidence for La Tène sword hilts. The breadth of his study, which ranges from the Isles of Scilly in Britain to Palmyra in Syria, is remarkable not just for its scope, but for the fact that Kysela could fit it into a single chapter. Finally, in Chapter III, is perhaps the most unique paper in this contribution: Miloš Hlava's study of the relationship between Josef Ladislav Píř and Innocenc Ladislav Červinka. A contribution considering Czechia's two most important prehistorians of the late 19th and early 20th century appears particularly suitable for a volume honouring Natalie Venclová, as her work (along with other key figures such as Pavel Sankot and the late Jan Bouzek) has played such a key role in later prehistoric Czech archaeology in the last six decades.

On the basis of my own research interests, there are several papers which stand out. The first two are David Vích and colleagues' announcement of new finds of *Kronenhalsringen* and Jana Matzerová and colleagues' paper on the Phoenician head-shaped bead. These papers offer fascinating hints at the degree to which communities in Bohemia were connected with groups to the south and north.

Jan Kysela's review of La Tène hilts demonstrates an envious understanding of interregional data. The same is true of Mariana Egri and Aurel Rustoiu's study of Dacian *krater*-shaped vessels. Tomáš Mangel and colleagues' paper on the graffito sherd from Čistěves stands out not only because of the nature of the find, but also how the authors draw attention to the changing way in which graffito was applied to La Tène ceramics. As someone who has mostly written on mortuary practices, Leona Kohl's discussion of the Traisen valley is another paper that appeals to me. Finally, the methodological approaches discussed by Maciej Karwowski, Carole Quatrelièvre and Oliver Nakoinz could certainly be applied to other regions and data types (and hopefully will be).

In terms of critique, there is very little to be made. It would have been useful if more details were provided on some of the cultural groups mentioned. For example, the Tyniec group is referred to twice, but readers unfamiliar with its characteristics are not informed how the Tyniec group differs from the Przeworsk and La Tène cultures. The counter argument to this, of course, is that (ignorant British) archaeologists should find these things out for themselves! As noted, the editors have attempted to create a coherent structure from such a wide range of papers. At the same time, I am left wondering if this volume would have been better served by being grouped thematically. Even in Chapter IV, which is the most thematically coherent, the structure could have been arranged differently. Petr Šída and colleagues' paper on the Bohemian Paradise would have been better served by appearing at the start of Chapter IV. This would have allowed the chapter to move westward from Bohemia, before concluding in the Paris Basin. Lastly, a useful inclusion would have been a bibliography of Natalie Venclová's work to date, as has appeared in some British and Irish *Festschriften* (e.g. Gosden *et al.* 2007; Cooney *et al.* 2009). These minor points aside, this is an excellent volume, and the editors and contributors deserve much praise for their hard work.

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