



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE « BRONZE 2014 »
June 17-20, 2014 - Strasbourg, Hôtel du département

The Middle Bronze Age and the origins of the Late Bronze Age in Western Europe, from the coasts of the Mediterranean to Scandinavia (17th-13th century BC)

More than 20 years after the CTHS conference at Stasbourg/Haguenau *Dynamique du Bronze moyen en Europe occidentale*, the « Bronze 2014 » conference proposes to revisit this chronological period in the light of recent discoveries and new research.

In Western Europe, the Middle Bronze Age develops over a period of three centuries from the 17th to the 14th century BC followed by a transitional period during the 14th-13th centuries BC (the recent Bronze Age in the Mediterranean), period that is marked by continuity and major changes that announce the Late Bronze Age.

During the last twenty years preventive archaeology has grown exponentially in France and in the rest of Europe, providing data that has largely renewed research. The 2014 Strasbourg conference aims to present papers giving a general overview of this new research.

The conference will take place at the Hôtel du Département du Conseil Général du Bas-Rhin in Strasbourg and will be organised around three themes:

- *Regional Syntheses*
- *Periodisation: absolute and relatif timelines*
- *Socio-economic models of the Middle Bronze and the emergence of the Late Bronze Age*



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Session 1. Regional Syntheses

Following the well established tradition of the Bronze conferences organised by the APRAB, the objective of the Strasbourg meeting is to review our knowledge of Middle and Early Late Bronze Age societies in Middle and Western Europe, an area spanning from the Atlantic Ocean to the Alps, from the Baltic Sea to the Western Mediterranean. Material culture (chrono-typology, cultural phases, technology, social and economic domains), funerary practices, settlement types and the modalities and rhythms of landscape occupation will be at the centre of discussions and syntheses.

The first day of the conference will be devoted to the presentation of papers relating to France and its borders. Regional workgroups (organised according to administrative boundaries) were set up in 2012 to produce these overviews. This work will then be used to elaborate interregional syntheses for which groups will be created as much as possible according to cultural affinities. General outlines of the themes that need to be addressed were proposed in order to facilitate comparisons between each geographical region.

Session 2. Periodisation: absolute and relatif timelines

The Middle Bronze Age and the beginning of the Late Bronze Age is particularly representative of the current problems incurred by Protohistorians concerning chronological systems.

The multiple chronological systems and the problems of directly comparing and correlating them will constitute a first discussion theme. For example, major difficulties can be found within a same geographical area (the north Alps for example) that uses several regional reference systems. These marked differences lead us to consider and reconsider the methods, criteria, contexts and the objects used in the construction of the reference systems. Do the objects, be they metallic or ceramic, used in the periodisations evolve at the same rhythm? And what of other evidence that pertains to material culture and social practices?

We will also be examining the historical conformity of the proposed chronological divisions and their possible application to the rest of Western Europe. Is the traditional division between the Middle and Late Bronze Age really pertinent? From a cultural and social standpoint, are the systems used in Central Europe (Bz C, D and Ha A1) or in the Mediterranean (Middle, Recent and Late Bronze Age) more efficient?

Traditional periodisations work hand in hand with chronometric methods of dating, even if their use is not systematic all over Europe. Radiocarbon dating has

become much more precise over the years, but it is the ever increasing number of analyses that are carried out that has changed how this tool is used. From the simple compilation of dates to Bayesian probabilities, what are today's possibilities and what do they bring to chrono-typology?

Could however other techniques such as thermoluminescence or archaeomagnetic dating be more adapted to dating this chronological period as radiocarbon analysis suffers from irregularities in date calibration particularly for the 14th century BC?

Also, with the abandon of Bronze Age settlement on the shores of the North Alpine lakes during this period, what is the latest on dendrochronology? Do other areas, in particular those south of the Alps have the means of completing the frame of reference for the Middle/Late Bronze Age?

As many aspects pertaining to chronology will be tackled in session 1, we will mainly concentrate on general syntheses that cover vast areas, new approaches and methods as well as the historiography or the epistemology of chronological systems.

Session 3. Socio-economic models of the Middle Bronze and the emergence of the Late Bronze Age

The climate was colder and wetter during the Middle Bronze Age. What are the consequences of this deterioration of the climate on the economy? Is it at the root of major crises that caused the abandon of existing field systems or inversely led to agricultural diversification and the occupation of new areas? Such major events such as the abandon of the North alpine lakes or the collapse of the *terramare* system in the Po valley have already been identified and these need to be re-examined. Similar to the Besançon conference (*Environnements et cultures à l'âge du Bronze en Europe occidentale*, CTHS 2004), approaches analysing the interaction between societies and their environment will of course find their place in the conference's programme. In addition, it will also be necessary to tackle the consequences of these crises in terms of paleodemography, population mobility, etc.

Certain areas such as the *Terramare* see the development of real agglomerations linked to intensive agriculture whereas in other areas, traces of settlements are still quite difficult to identify. How do we interpret these differences from a social point of view?

In relation to material culture, this period is also distinguished by an intense acceleration of metal production, by the more and more sophisticated weapons and

tools and an increase in the number of hoards. The developments in how objects were consumed and the increased need for raw materials lead us to reflect on the status of bronze production and of the bronze worker within Bronze Age society.

The long distance exchange of objects across Europe, the exchange of ideas and techniques, of religion and the mobility of people also define this very dynamic period. For the most of this part of Europe, the funerary context of the Middle Bronze Age is characterised by inhumations under burial mounds which are gradually replaced at the transition with the Late Bronze Age by cremations in urns with metal and pottery grave goods. This transition phase also sees the appearance of the culture of la céramique cannelée (grooved ware pottery) covering an area from Middle Europe to the Paris basin. What links these phenomena and what is their historical value? Do the Middle Bronze Age and the beginning of the Late Bronze Age constitute a coherent cycle of social development or even a historical period on their own? What is the role played by this transitional period in the development of the Late Bronze Age; a preface or a break from Middle Bronze Age traditions as is seen in Mediterranean societies around 1200 BC?

These thoughts must not however conceal the many possibilities of contributions on chronological sequences which cannot be overlooked when seeking to comprehend this period.

Informations

The conference will take place over 3 days, with 12 half hour papers (20 minutes per paper, 10 minutes discussion time) per day. Poster sessions with 5 minute presentations will also be organised. All conference papers will be published.

Papers can be given in French, English or German, the powerpoint texts do however need to be in English (or translated into French for the papers given in English). Colleagues that wish to present a paper or a poster (preferably in sessions 2 and 3) are invited to return the proposition form before December 31st 2013 at the following address : bronzemoyen2014@gmail.com.

Any questions or queries concerning the conference can also be sent to this address.

Registration forms must be received before February 15th 2014 submitted with two short abstracts (about half a page) written in French and English and a full page illustration (drawing or BW photo).

Full registration fees are 40 €, students 20 € and include full access to the conference, the pre-acts, coupons for coffee breaks and cocktails and tourist information about the Strasbourg area. Lunches are not included. The Hôtel du département is near to the « Petite France », Strasbourg's tourist centre with many restaurants to choose from.

Registration fees must be paid by cheque (in euros) to APRAB and sent to the following address, foreign colleagues are requested to pay at the conference.

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The conference is organised by APRAB in the tradition of the international « Bronze » meetings, in partnership with the University of Strasbourg and the MISHA of Alsace, the UMR ARCHIMEDE of Strasbourg, the UMR 62 98 ARTEHIS of Dijon, INRAP, the Pôle Archéologique Interdépartemental Rhénan (PAIR), the Direction régionale des Affaires culturelles - Service régional de l'Archéologie d'Alsace and the University of Freiburg.

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