

# Pompous ladies and guarded children – Early Iron Age special burials at Dürrnberg ‘Eisfeld’ (Austria)

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## ABSTRACT

The Dürrnberg ‘Eisfeld’- necropolis was intermittently excavated from 1963–2003. One of the largest and most important cemeteries of the northern alpine salt centre, the ‘Eisfeld’ is characterized by the size and abundance of grave furnishings. Similar to other Dürrnberg sites, the cemetery includes vertical sequences of grave chambers, and various multiple and secondary burials. 110 graves contained 194 buried individuals, with 84 females and 56 males as indicated by anthropological analysis. The cemetery was in use from Ha D1 until LT B1 with a focus in Ha D2/3 and LT A. Predominant inhumations are complemented by cremations, the relics of two pyres, and drystone remains of funeral architecture. Regular grave goods include food and drink, iron knives, jewellery, and some weaponry. Some female and children burials stand out with regard to exclusive grave goods including gold jewellery, imported vessels, cult items, and amulets. Burial mounds of considerable size conveyed power and wealth and promoted communal identity.

## KEYWORDS

Hallstatt period; La Tène period; cemetery; infant burial; female burial; gender; identity; cult; cultural appropriation.

## DÜRRNBERG ‘EISFELD’ – GENERAL FEATURES

The Dürrnberg near Hallein (Salzburg, Austria) is situated in a favourable position at some major transalpine communication lines connecting mainly the upper Adriatic, northern Italy, and Etruria with the central European Iron Age Cultures north of the Alps. Certainly, its salt made Dürrnberg one of the ‘biggest players’ in European Hallstatt and La Tène economies (DOBIAT – SIEVERS – STÖLLNER 2002; STÖLLNER *et al.* 2003; WENDLING 2017; ZELLER 2001; 2002a; 2003).

Since 2012, research results on the Dürrnberg cemeteries have been published in several volumes of *Dürrnberg-Forschungen* (LAVELLE – STÖLLNER 2019; MOSER – TIEFENGRABER – WILTSCHKE-SCHROTTA 2012; TIEFENGRABER – WILTSCHKE-SCHROTTA 2012; 2014; 2015; WENDLING – WILTSCHKE-SCHROTTA 2015). Volume 10 deals with the Eisfeld cemetery, which is the largest burial ground on Dürrnberg both in terms of surface area and number of burials (RABSILBER – WENDLING – WILTSCHKE-SCHROTTA 2017). This most southern and, at around 800 m above sea level, highest necropolis spreads out in a north-eastern direction alongside a major road just above the modern centre of Bad Dürrnberg (**Fig. 1**). The site stretches on a natural plateau from west to east (**Fig. 2**). A number of graves had been documented in a series of rescue excavations from the 19<sup>th</sup> century (PENNINGER 1972; MOOSLEITNER – PAULI – PENNINGER 1974; PAULI 1978). Consistent excavations carried out at ‘Eisfeld’ by Kurt W. Zeller made up by 2003 for a total of 104 graves with 194 buried individuals (ZELLER 2004a; 2004b).

Funeral activity at the ‘Eisfeld’ necropolis spans a period from Ha D1 to LT B1. According to the high number of burials dating to the late Hallstatt period, Eisfeld was probably used as a burial ground by the so-called *Gründergeneration*, i.e. the founding generation and initi-

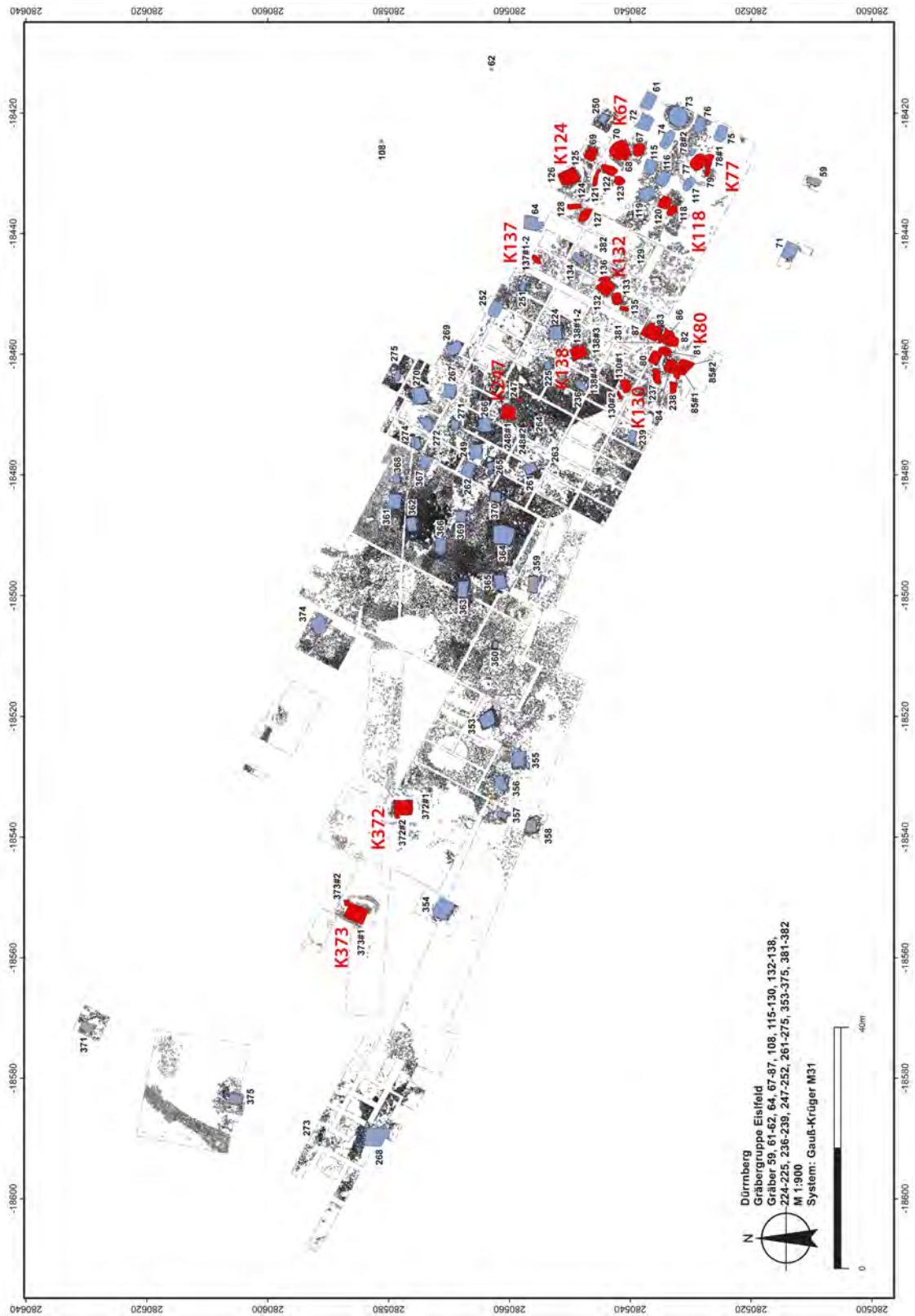


Fig. 1: Dürrenberg 'Eisfeld'. Graves and grave complexes of the late Hallstatt / early La Tène cemetery (graphics by Keltenmuseum Hallein, Dürrenbergforschung).



**Fig. 2: Aerial view towards the centre of the modern Dürrenberg village with the location of the Iron Age cemetery at the 'Eisfeld' (photo by Keltenmuseum Hallein, Dürrenbergforschung).**

ators of salt mining at Dürrenberg. A considerable number of burials, and the overall quantity of grave goods, confirm the continuous use of the necropolis. 88 individuals date to the late Hallstatt period and 63 individuals to the first phase of the early La Tène period (LT A). Two graves dating to LT B1 indicate the decline and end of local funeral activity, whereas at other Dürrenberg cemeteries, burials were executed also during LT B2 and until LT C (RABSILBER – WENDLING – WILTSCHKE-SCHROTTA 2017, 712–715; LAVELLE – STÖLLNER 2019).

## CONSECUTIVE BURIAL AND FUNERAL MONUMENTS

150 individuals out of a total number of 194 identified burials were inhumations, which mostly had been deposited in a wooden burial chamber. The majority of individuals were buried in a supine position with laterally bent arms. As with other Dürrenberg cemeteries, many grave chambers were consecutively used as collective graves and thus may be interpreted as vaults (**Fig. 3**). Consecutive burials or re-opening of graves frequently resulted in the dislocation of grave goods or human remains of earlier inhumations (RABSILBER – WENDLING – WILTSCHKE-SCHROTTA 2017, 731–732; WENDLING – WILTSCHKE-SCHROTTA 2015, 318–320; WENDLING 2018a; 2020). The number of individuals buried in collective graves varies between seven individuals in grave 268, five individuals in grave 77 and 125, and four burials in grave 250. Grave 125 shows that, apart from the collective burial of unburnt individuals, also cremated bodies were successively placed into the grave chambers. However, at present, it is unknown how this subsequent deposition of bodies in a vault-like grave chamber was actually carried out technically. No mode of access like top trap doors or lateral entrances that would explain this frequent



**Fig. 3: Dürrnberg 'Eisfeld', grave 249. Consecutive Hallstatt period burials of a female (left) and a male individual (right) in one single grave chamber (photo by Keltenmuseum Hallein, Dürrnbergforschung).**



**Fig. 4: Dürrnberg 'Eisfeld', grave 363. Consecutive Ha D3 period inhumation and cremation burials in a small grave chamber (photo by Keltenmuseum Hallein, Dürrnbergforschung).**

phenomenon at the Dürrnberg burial chambers have yet been unequivocally identified (cf. LAVELLE – STÖLLNER 2018). The size of burial structures varies from small chambers (e.g.  $2 \times 1.1$  m, grave 363) to chambers with larger dimensions such as grave 364 ( $2.3 \times 2.2$  m) (Fig. 4). A direct relation between the number of consecutively buried individuals and chamber size can be discerned only in some rare cases. The modification and re-structuring of grave chambers or stone revetments, which is attested at Dürrnberg's 'Römersteig' necropolis, has not been observed at 'Eisfeld' (WENDLING – WILTSCHKE-SCHROTTA 2015, 160–167; WENDLING 2018a).

The wooden grave chambers were surrounded by stones and finally covered by a burial mound. While stone covering of grave chambers is only occasionally attested, stone revetment along the sides of the wooden chamber may have been a stabilizing feature. Beyond any structural purpose, the lining of stones along the chamber walls may also have played a symbolic role. Similar notions may have led to the circular covering of grave mound 73, which produced an ostentatious visual feature of gleaming white limestone (Fig. 5). This monument is also one of the rare examples of an amorphous or circular inner burial space.

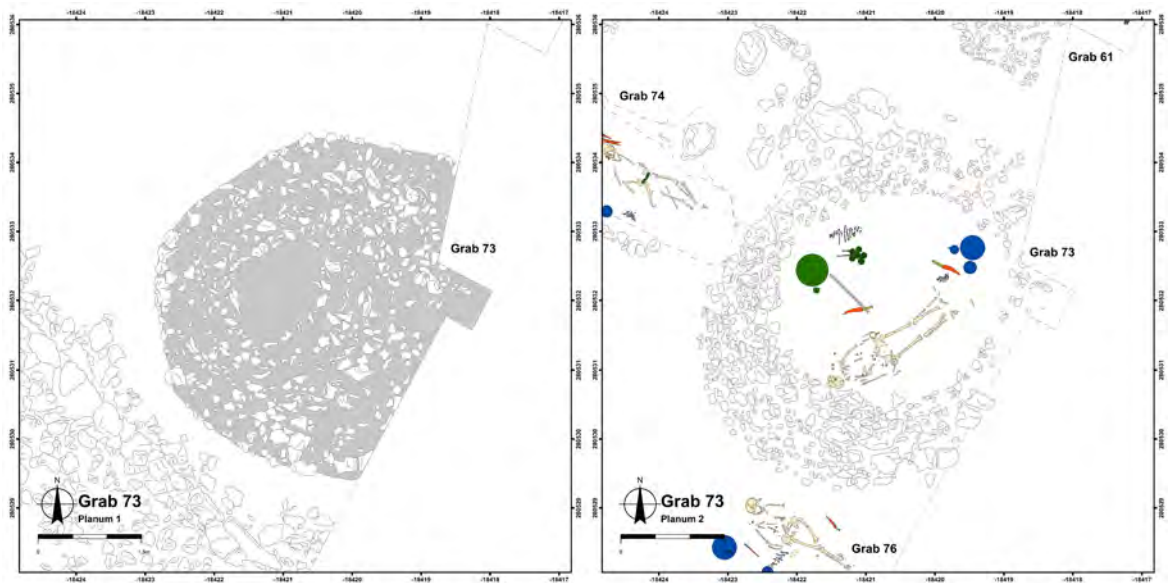
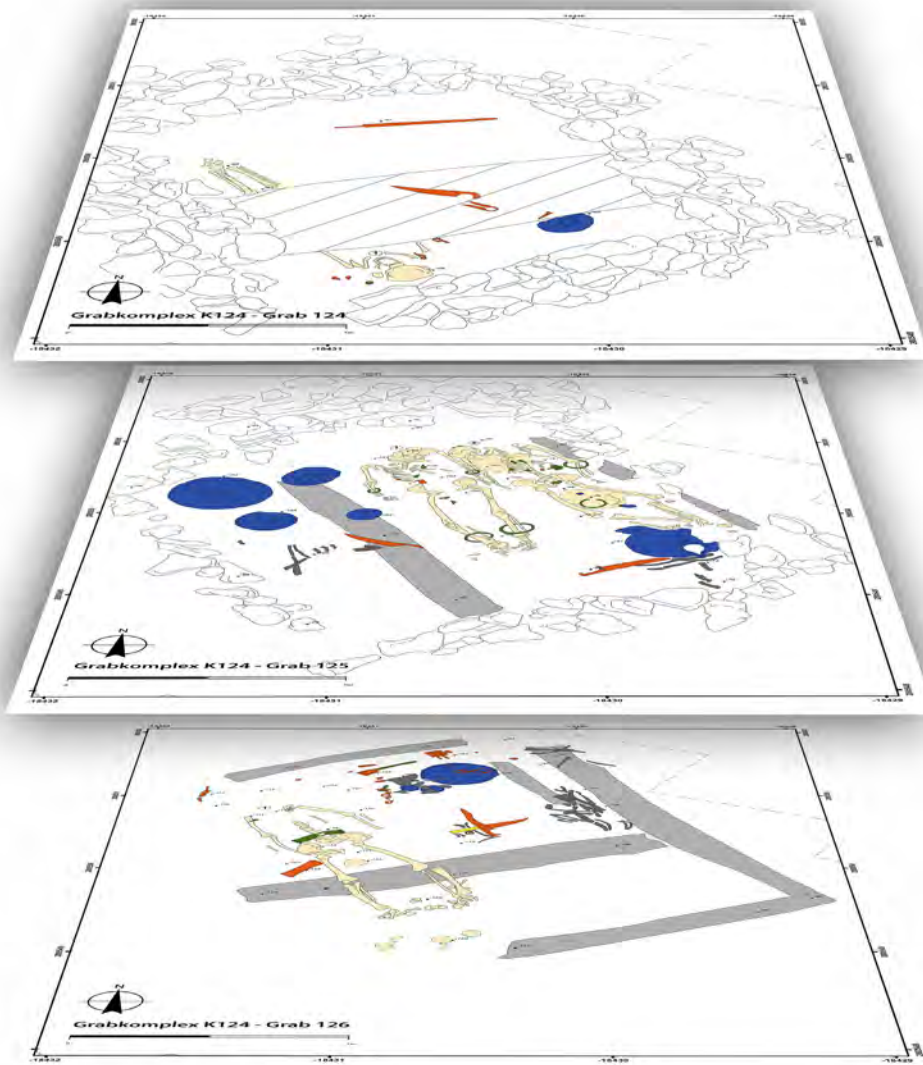


Fig. 5: Dürrnberg 'Eisfeld', grave 73. A circular burial mound covered by a bright limestone mantle (graphics by Keltenmuseum Hallein, Dürrnbergforschung).

Due to intensive agricultural activity and natural erosion, no burial mounds were identified on the actual surface. However, it was possible to reconstruct the size and layout of some tumuli according to circular stone alignments at the foot of the mounds. Frequently, features were partly preserved only 0.1–0.25 m below the natural surface. In the southern part of the cemetery, the terrain rose considerably and thus caused a coverage of features of more than 0.7 m. The average diameter of the mounds at Eisfeld is estimated at 6–8 m. However, some burials, such as graves 126, 138 or 373 rise to a maximum diameter of c. 12 m. Apart from graves covered by burial mounds, some individual graves do not reveal any traces of a wooden chamber or stone cladding and have presumably simply been dug into the ground.

As a characteristic feature of Dürrnberg funeral architecture, the vertical addition of new chambers to an ancient burial chamber (the so-called *Stockwerksbauweise* or storey construction) can be observed extraordinarily well at the Eisfeld burial ground (WENDLING 2018a; 2020; ZELLER 1980). This vertical superposition is best illustrated by grave complex K124 (Fig. 6). Several phases of mound enlargement coincide with subsequent vertical re-building

and superposition of burial chambers (RABSILBER – WENDLING – WILTSCHKE-SCHROTTA 2017, 260–290): The upper part of an existing burial mound had been removed up to the ceiling of the chamber. This roof served as a platform for a second chamber, which had been subsequently erected on top of the initial structure and again covered with an earthen mound. This second vault had been used to bury several individuals, both cremated and inhumated. Eventually, in a third phase of vertical growth, another chamber was built on top of the second one, which housed the remains of a male individual buried in LT B2. Thus, a multi-generation funeral activity is attested, which connected the living community by ancestral ties. A significant spatially alternating succession of the bodies emphasizes this personal and emotional relationship of deceased and bereaved or a particular social connection between the individuals buried in those chambers. In every subsequent phase, the above space in the superimposed chamber was deliberately kept void by depositing the bodies at the other, adjacent side of the chamber.



**Fig. 6: Dürrnberg 'Eisfeld', grave complex K124. Vertical succession of three superimposed grave chambers 124, 125, and 126 (graphics by Keltenmuseum Hallein, Dürrnbergforschung).**

The alternating position of the deceased presumably created an ‘undisguised view towards the sky’, which gives a hint on the perception of the afterlife in a process of ritual transition.

Social bonds would also have determined the horizontal correlation of successive burials or graves in so-called ‘grave complexes’. Grave complexes K67 and K80, for example, consist of several different graves grouped closely together (**Fig. 1**). However, it is quite difficult to identify the relative sequence of grave structures. Clusters of separate graves gradually began to form a comprehensive burial monument and thus became part of the landscape (WENDLING – EGGERT 2018). Similar phenomena of gradually ‘merging’ mounds have been documented at other Dürrnberg cemeteries and at Iron Age burial complexes at other sites, e.g. the late Hallstatt necropolis of Schirndorf in Bavaria or at the early La Tène period cemetery of Mannersdorf in Lower Austria (MÜLLER-SCHESSEL 2009; RAMSL 2011). Apart from the horizontal and vertical correlation of burial chambers, some secondary burials in a strict sense exist at Eisfeld. These simple inhumation or cremation burials had been dug into existing tumuli. However, it is not clear to what extent this practice of secondary burials reflects social, economic or judicial differences between the buried individuals or their descendants.

Interconnected linear dry-stone walls made of large blocks of rock were excavated in the south eastern part of the necropolis (RABSILBER – WENDLING – WILTSCHKE-SCHROTTA 2017, 39–40) (**Fig. 7**). Whether these walls were built to divide the steep area into larger terraces or form an integral part of the burial monuments remains unclear. The interrelated orientation of these *Blockmauern* (block walls) and adjacent graves suggest an architectural connection of both features. The size, layout, and bright colour of the stones may have enhanced the visual effect and monumentality of individual graves.



**Fig. 7:** Dürrnberg ‘Eisfeld’. Linear drystone structures as part of an elaborate funeral architecture (graphics by Keltenmuseum Hallein, Dürrnbergforschung).

## ONE CEMETERY – DIFFERENT RITUALS

As a bi-ritual cemetery, apart from inhumation, cremation was a frequent ritual phenomenon at Eisfeld. 21 out of 38 cremations were deposited in grave chambers, whereas nearly an equal number of burned remains were buried in separate individual burials. The situation is similar to other Dürrenberg cemeteries with equal ratios of cremations and inhumations (WENDLING – WILTSCHKE-SCHROTTA in print). However, coexistent cemeteries, as for example at the Hexenwandfeld or the Moserfeld necropoleis also exhibit distinct differences with a significantly smaller number of cremated bodies. For the moment, it is difficult to suggest any satisfying explanation for the parallel execution of those burial rites. Neither sex, chronological differences nor age or any other socio-economic or identity-related distinction suggest reproducible reasons for ritual differentiation.

Two features in the cemetery represent cremation sites or ancient sites of a pyre (*Verbrennungsplatz*; RABSILBER – WENDLING – WILTSCHKE-SCHROTTA 2017, 35–39). A smaller cremation site (VP1) was located south of grave complex K124. Another, considerably larger site (VP2) was identified in the centre of the burial ground. The date and period of use of those cremation zones can only vaguely be determined by embedded objects and stratigraphic sequences with associated graves. The latter occasionally provides contradictory data, whereas object-related chronology suggests a beginning of cremation in Ha D2/3 with a climax in LT A (RABSILBER – WENDLING – WILTSCHKE-SCHROTTA 2017, 37).

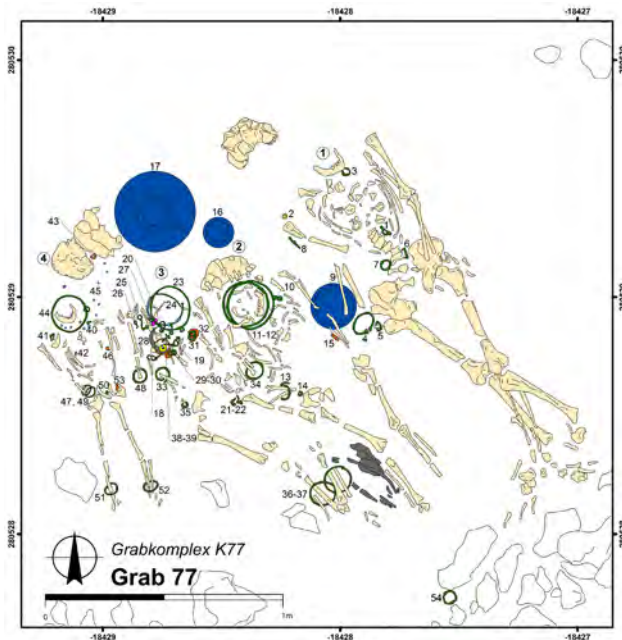
The remains of 176 individuals were analysed by physical anthropology (RABSILBER – WENDLING – WILTSCHKE-SCHROTTA 2017, 649–697). Anthropological determination of the sex of 91 individuals resulted in the identification of 48 men and 43 women. Seven individuals showed indifferent sexual characteristics, while 79 individuals could not be assigned either sex. The combination of anthropological and archaeological data resulted in a further specification of sex with 84 female, 56 male and two indifferent individuals, and three individuals with ambiguous sex estimation. Neither archaeological nor anthropological sex determination lead to any substantive results in 49 cases. Anthropological determination of age resulted in 54 subadult individuals and 125 adults. Only 29 of these adult individuals reached a mature or senile bone age.

## LADIES AND CHILDREN – IRON AGE IDENTITIES

Age determination at the Eisfeld cemetery reveals a quite substantial proportion of subadult individuals in the sample ( $n = 54$ ; 27.8%). More than a third of these individuals are children, which makes a proportion of 10.8% ( $n = 21$ ) of the overall sample of burials ( $n = 194$ ) (RABSILBER – WENDLING – WILTSCHKE-SCHROTTA 2017, 670–671). Obviously, this high ratio of dead children buried at the Eisfeld indicates a persistent phase of danger in the first years of any Iron Age individual. This tenuous situation in the childhood is a result of individual illnesses, hard work in the salt mines but also reflects general living conditions with malnutrition and hardship. Infant burials also occur in variable numbers at other Dürrenberg cemeteries and at the main settlement in the Ramsau valley (WILTSCHKE-SCHROTTA 1999). Here, they figure inside and in the close vicinity of houses but do not contain any items which may be interpreted as grave goods. In contrast, the Eisfeld stands out with regard to variability of grave goods and particularly the use of amulets. Early La Tène period grave 77, for example, contained several children and juvenile individuals, which were fitted with a range of small, presumably religious items (RABSILBER – WENDLING – WILTSCHKE-SCHROTTA 2017, 125–138)



(**Fig. 8**). These include necklaces with glass amber beads, miniature weaponry, a boar's tusk, and a small bronze triangle, or triscel. An almost identical set of special finds is associated in an Early La Tène burial of two children in grave 71 (**Pl. 3/1**): It includes glass, amber, stone, and iron beads, pendants in the shape of miniature weaponry and shoes, a small bronze spoked wheel and triangle, deliberately mutilated jewellery and a set of bronze jingle bobs (RABSILBER – WENDLING – WILTSCHKE-SCHROTTA 2017, 87–98).



**Fig. 8: Dürrnberg 'Eisfeld', grave 77. Consecutive Early La Tène period burials of adult, juvenile and infant individuals furnished with variable sets of amulets and costume fittings (graphics by Keltenmuseum Hallein, Dürrnbergforschung).**

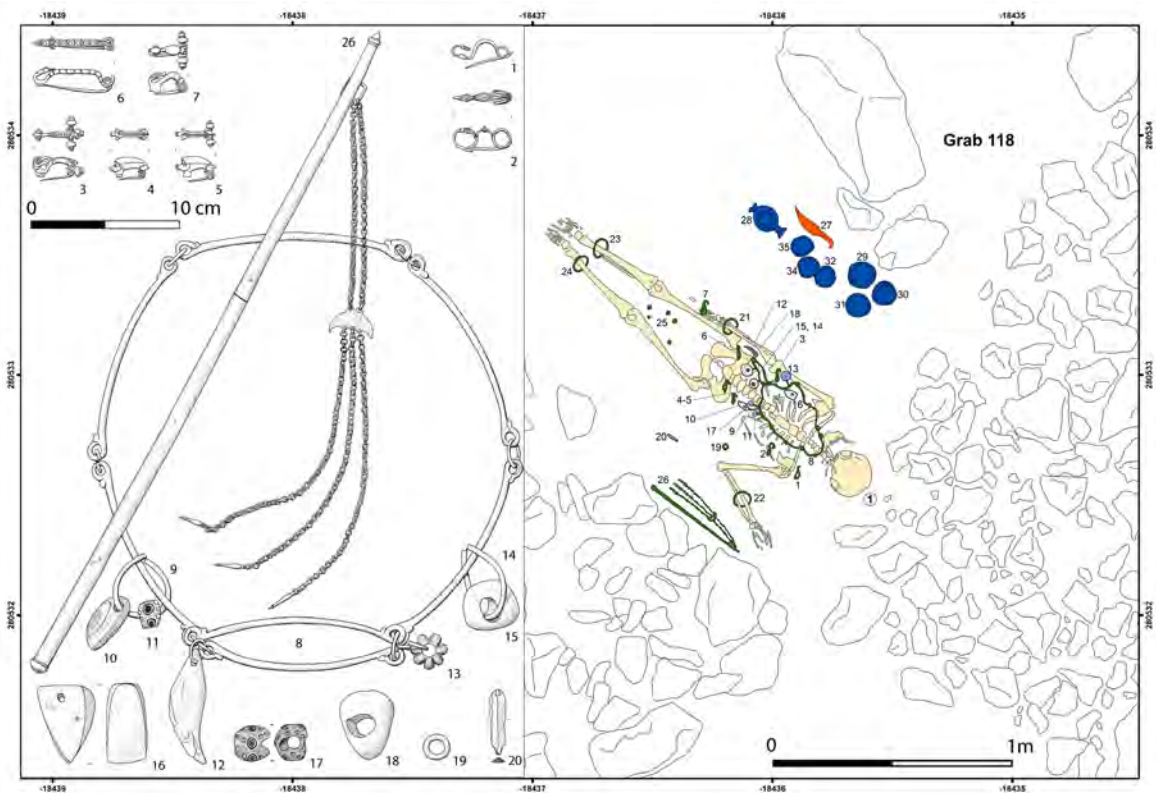
As results of sex determination of children skeletons are extremely precarious, analysis of directly associated objects may help to distinguish girls and boys. However, other archaeological, and ethnographic evidence suggests that children of either sex are not generally distinguished according to custom fittings or clothing up to a certain age (BURMEISTER – MÜLLER-SCHEESSEL 2005). This uniformity does not necessarily exclude dualistic colour symbolism but certainly does not involve items, which may easily be distinguished archaeologically. Thus, infant individuals fitted with bracelets or anklets do not unambiguously follow 'regular' distinction as female according to costume rules in adulthood. In fact, during childhood, sex or rather gender may have been consistently attributed on the basis of the regular social environment. Innumerable transcultural analogies indicate that this sphere is fundamentally female.

Irrespective of actual sex or gender, special objects like those in graves 71 and 77 ostentatiously conveyed meaning and probably had an apotropaic and protective purpose (PAULI 1975). The assumed *post mortem* fitting of a dead person with amulets suggests belief in an afterlife or the notion of a possibly dangerous journey in a harmful transitional phase. Both in life and in death children were in need of protective elements reassuring safe passage from one life period into another. Most likely, the amulets associated with children only represent a material expression of a larger variety of 'rites de passage' (TURNER 1964; TURNER 1969, 95–96).

Identical objects were sometimes also associated with adult or juvenile women who may have suffered death in an equally perilous phase of life. Extended risk potential during the early years of female adulthood is documented in the statistical documentation of age at death in several Dürrnberg cemeteries (e.g. RABSILBER – WENDLING – WILTSCHKE-SCHROTTA 2017, 671; cf. however WENDLING – WILTSCHKE-SCHROTTA 2015, 265). Amulets associated with

a young female individual in grave 118 may indicate the need for protective measures during pregnancy as a period of increased risk (RABSILBER – WENDLING – WILTSCHKE-SCHROTTA 2017, 218–228) (**Fig. 9**). Lacking any remains of a foetus, however, this burial does not unequivocally support the notion of a woman deceased in labour, as for example the woman and her unborn child in grave 308 of the ‘Putzenfeld’ cemetery (WENDLING 2018c; ZELLER 2003, 526). Furthermore, a scourge-like bronze object in grave 118 was presumably used in cult ceremonies and may thus indicate the woman’s ritual role in life, which may have required additional cult and amulet items (**Fig. 9:26**). Beyond this, associations of amulets and other elaborate grave gifts in several graves suggest close links between magical-religious beliefs and socio-political ‘performance’ of both deceased individuals and the bereaved. However, it remains uncertain to what degree the dead fulfilled roles of social and religious status *pre mortem* or if dead members of society were used as a sort of projection screen for socio-political and ideological purposes of the descendants. Apart from very poorly equipped burials, modest or rather average grave furnishings include meat, frequently complemented by a large iron knife, meals and drinks offered in consistent combinations of ceramic vessels, and characteristic costume fittings (fibulae, bracelets, anklets, amber and glass pearl necklaces) (RABSILBER – WENDLING – WILTSCHKE-SCHROTTA 2017, 719–730).

Beyond this standard repertoire of grave offerings, some female graves stand out with additional items of blatant value – gold jewellery, whole sets of bronze vessels or exotic imports. These exceptionally rich graves attest for the presence of a dominant and distinguished social group at the Dürrnberg, but may also shed light on the identity and status of some distinguished women in the Dürrnberg community. One of the most distinguished burials is

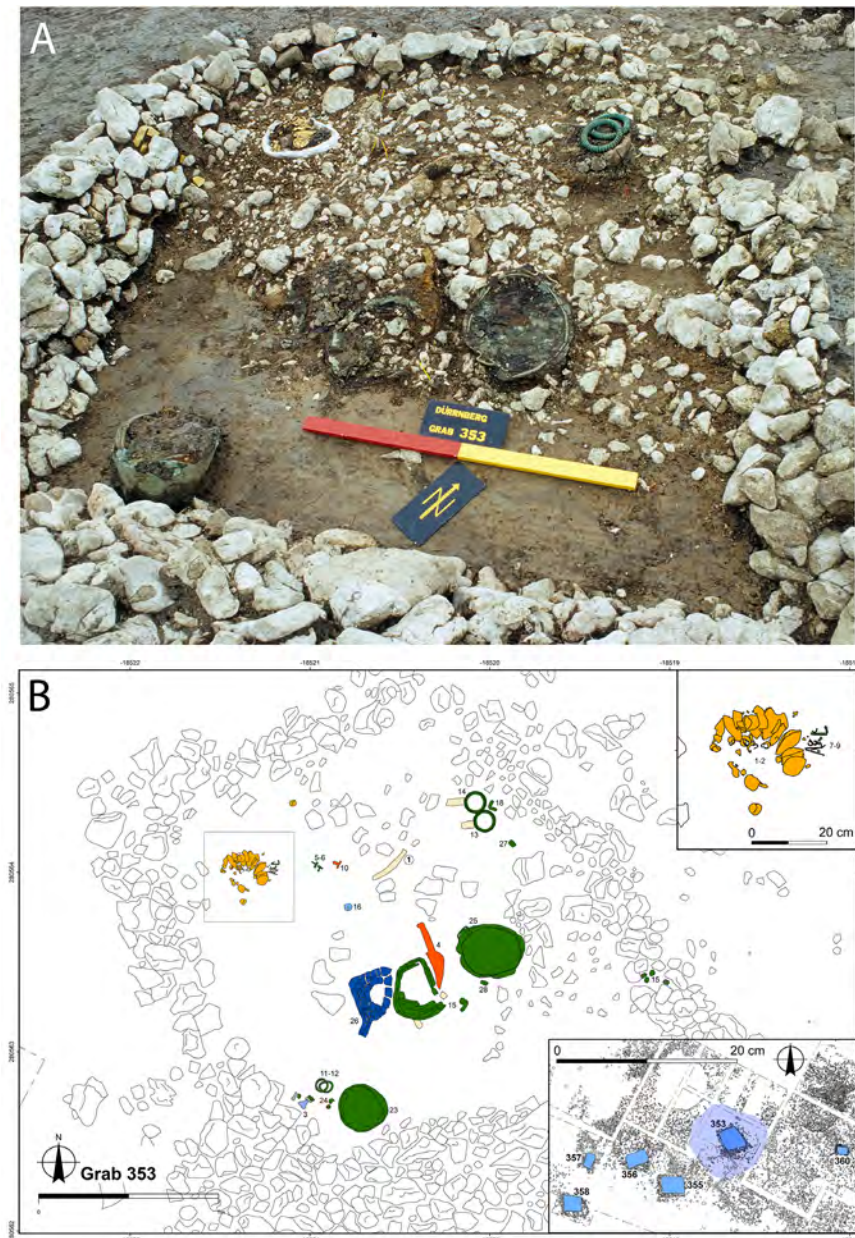


**Fig. 9:** Dürrnberg ‘Eisfeld’, grave 118. Late Hallstatt female burial with amulets and scourge-like cultic rod (graphics by Keltenmuseum Hallein, Dürrnbergforschung).

grave 353, covered with a relatively large mound of c. 12 m in diameter. In Ha D2/3 a young, about 20 year-old woman was buried in a relatively large chamber of approximately 2.8 × 2.3 m side length (RABSILBER – WENDLING – WILTSCHKE-SCHROTTA 2017, 501–517; WENDLING 2019) (Fig. 10). Grave goods include elaborate bronze jewellery, e. g. a band-shaped belt plate, a number of elaborate fibulae and a set of prestigious bronze and ceramic vessels (Fig. 11). Due to their material value and manufacturing costs, metal vessels are a clear sign of economic and social power. The bronze bucket, a *situla* of Rhenish-Tessinian type was probably used as a container for alcohol (Fig. 11:23). The distribution pattern of those *situlae* indicates a provenance of the Dürrnberg specimen from Ticino or today's Slovenia. The ceramic beak-spouted jug was used as a serving vessel, imitating the shape of bronze jugs, which were imported down the line from Etruria (Fig. 11:26). The supposedly inferior material is unlikely to have diminished the symbolic value of the object, which rather relied on knowledge of the form and use of exotic (wine) pitchers. The Hatten-type bowl served for cooking or stewing over an open fire (Fig. 11:25). Comparable basins are extremely rare and occur only in exceptionally rich grave inventories: In addition to the specimen from Hatten, a piece from Skalice in the Czech Republic marks the eastern boundary of the distribution. In between, a basin from the pompous tomb at Ludwigsburg 'Römerhügel' (Baden-Württemberg, Germany) and a set of three vessels from the nearby 'princely grave' of Hochdorf display the imminent association with elite tombs of the late Hallstatt period (KRAUSSE 1996, 81–85, 291–296). The Dürrnberg basin joins in this exquisite circle of extraordinarily furnished tombs and is evidence of the prominent social position of parts of the Dürrnberg population. The vessel set is supplemented by a wooden cup from which only bronze fittings have been preserved (Fig. 11:24). A handle attachment in the form of bovine horns fits well into the stock of similar cups from the East Alpine Hallstatt cultures.

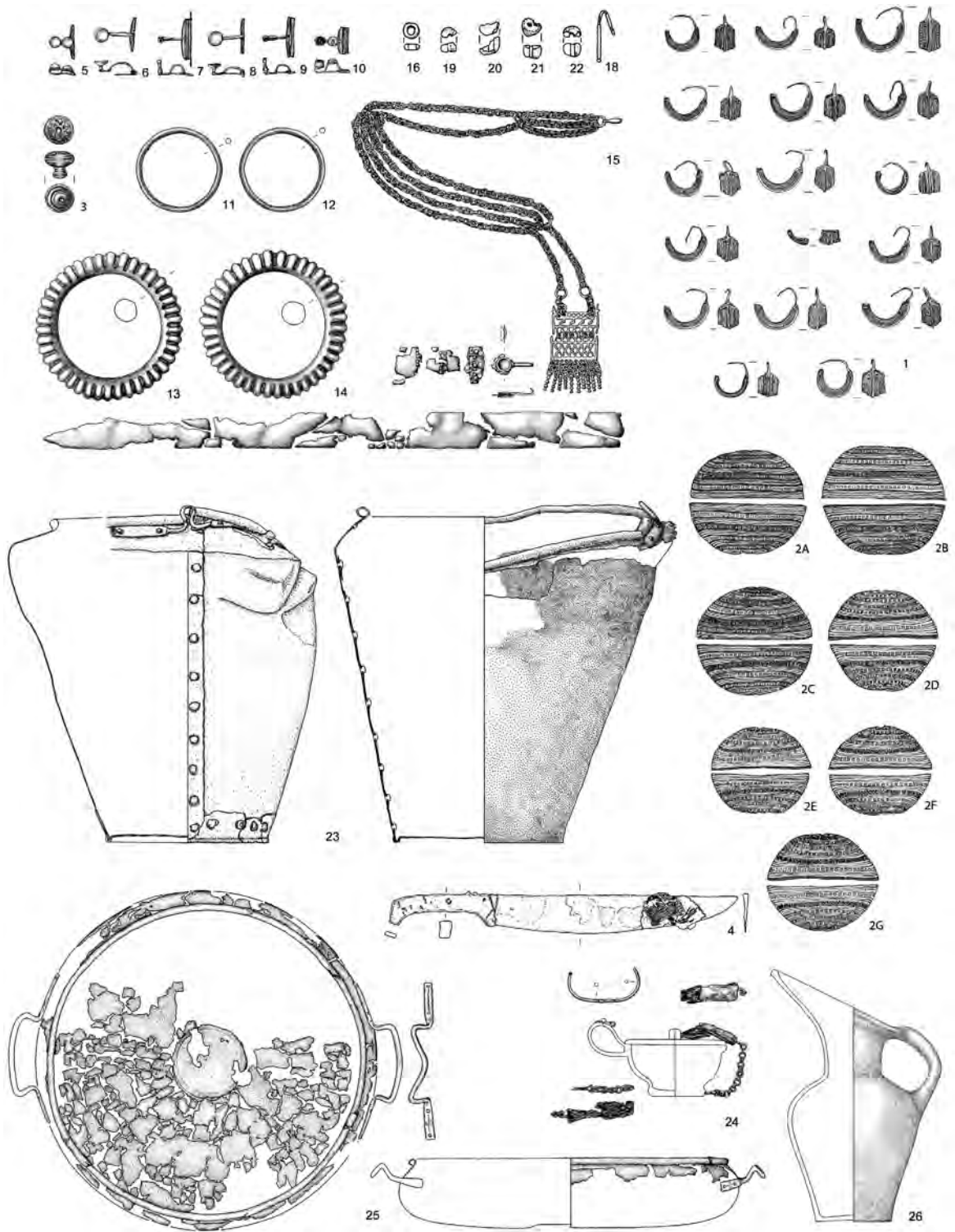
The most extraordinary finds, however, are seven gold sheet balls, which are most delicately decorated with rows of embossed patterns (RABSILBER – WENDLING – WILTSCHKE-SCHROTTA 2017, 705–711; WENDLING 2019, 173–178). Each ball weighs about 2 g and together with 17 massive golden hair rings formed a very conspicuous headdress (Fig. 11:2A–G; Pl. 3/2). Those sophisticated golden balls rarely figure in late Hallstatt female burials, for example at Hundersingen 'Bettelbühl', Ditzingen-Schöckingen (Baden-Württemberg, Germany) and at a few other sites in the Western Hallstatt province (*Westhallstattkreis*) (BOFINGER *et al.* 2016; 2017; KRAUSSE – EBINGER-RIST 2018; PARET 1951; 1952; ZÜRN 1987, 95) (Fig. 14). Both precious material, skilled manual work, and the balls' overall rarity indicate their use as a distinct social marker in late Hallstatt communities.

Ethnographic analogies of similar headdresses may indicate paths of interpretation and encourage further discussion: Modern gold crowns (so-called *Goldhauben*), wedding or virgin crowns, which are part of the female festival costume in certain regions of south eastern Germany and Austria constitute an ostentatious sign of social differentiation (LIPP 1980) (Fig. 12). However, in spite of the same gleaming shine of the Hallstatt gold balls and the modern gold bonnets, corresponding traditional costumes or social structures, let alone centuries-old traditions are highly unlikely, to say the least. Furthermore, it can hardly be ruled out that the balls had been made as a 'funeral costume' exclusively for the burial of the deceased. Again, the modern folk culture may provide an appropriate analogy. In many areas of early-modern Germany, deceased women were decorated with a filigree headdress of silver wire, glass beads and ribbons, the splendour of which, in addition to individual affection and sadness, probably also reflected the social position of the bereaved (MÜLLER 2007). Similar concepts may have evoked the ornamentation of the young woman from grave 353. In any case, their precious burial inventory attests to high rank and contacts to distant regions of the Iron Age world.



**Fig. 10: Dürrnberg 'Eisfeld', grave 353. Elaborately furnished inhumation of a late Hallstatt period woman containing a set of bronze and ceramic vessels and golden headdress (graphics by Keltenmuseum Hallein, Dürrnbergforschung).**

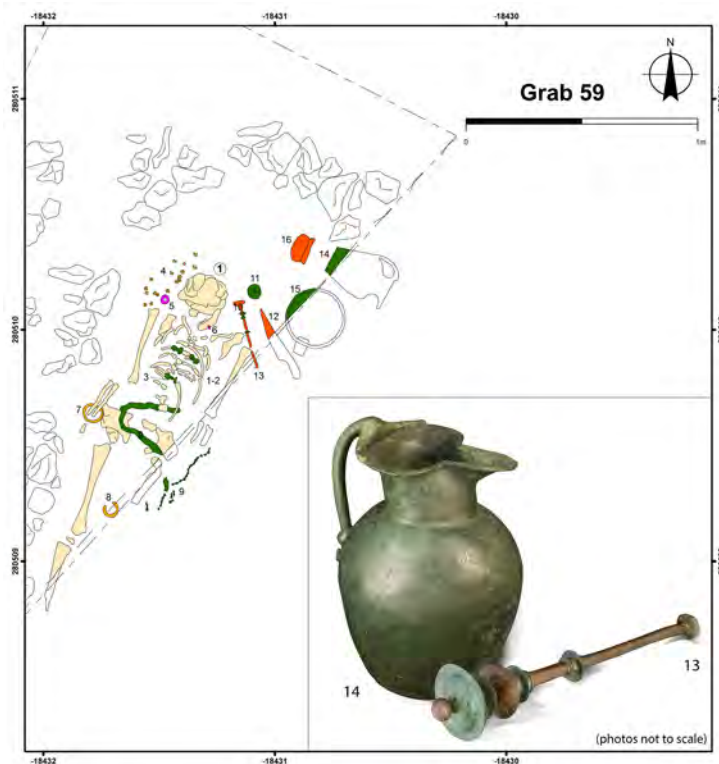
Similar ornate jewellery of ten identical 'hair rings', yet without the pompous balls, occurs in grave 73 together with a similar series of vessels (RABSILBER - WENDLING - WILTSCHKE-SCHROTTA 2017, 104–112) (Fig. 5 and Pl. 3/3). This set includes a large bronze *situla*, a small bronze cup and some ceramic vessels. The 20–25 year-old lady's dress fitting is composed of a gold-plated iron fibula and amber jewellery. Wealth and an over-abundance of grave goods in graves 73 and 353 again are reflected in grave 59, which contained the remains of a 25–35 year-old woman. She was equipped with extraordinary gold-plated bronze fibulae, gold bracelets, amber beads, an elaborate bronze belt plate, a spindle-like baton and an imported Etruscan bronze jug (RABSILBER - WENDLING - WILTSCHKE-SCHROTTA 2017, 40–47) (Fig. 13).



**Fig. 11: Dürrnberg 'Eisfeld', grave 353. Grave inventory: 1 - golden 'hairrings'; 2A-G - golden hollow balls; 3 - glass spindle-whorl; 4 - iron knife; 5-22 - bronze, gold and amber costume fittings; 24 - wooden cup with bronze fittings; 25 - bronze Hatten-type bowl; 26 - beak-spouted ceramic jug. 1-2: scale 1:3; 3-26: scale 1:6 (drawings by Keltenmuseum Hallein, Dürrnbergforschung).**



**Fig. 12:** In analogy to the 19<sup>th</sup> century gold bonnet from Linz (Austria), the pompous golden headdress from grave 353 may have been part of a festival costume or a sign of prominent social rank (Salzburg Museum, Inv.-Nr. 275-61; photo by R. Poschacher).



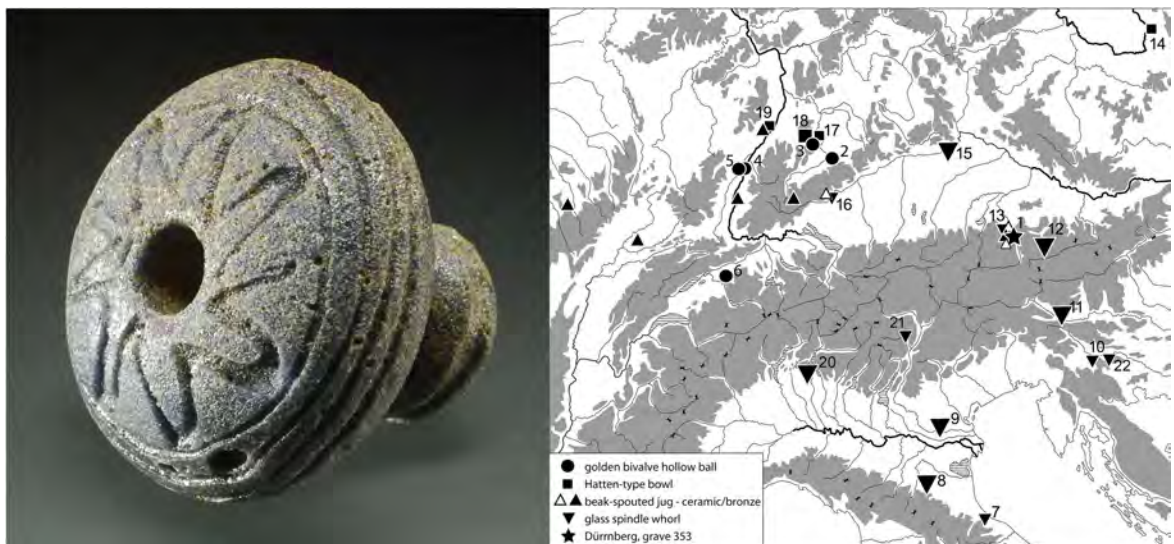
**Fig. 13:** Dürrnberg 'Eisfeld', grave 59. Inhumation burial of an adult woman fitted with elaborate gold, bronze and amber jewellery, an imported Etruscan jug (14), and a spindle-like cult baton (photos and graphics by Keltenmuseum Hallein, Dürrnbergforschung).

The garment of the young woman in grave 353 can thus be interpreted in terms of special Hallstatt period female identities and social age structure. The latter refers to the bronze belt, which was deliberately deposited next to the body and was not worn correctly. Other women of advanced age (adults, mature or senile women in graves 59, 61, 68, 119, 138, 224, 249, 361, and 372) had also been fitted with a bronze belt in the correct position worn around the waist

(STÖLLNER 2002, 93–96) (**Fig. 13**). The atypical position of the belt next to the young woman's body in grave 353 thus suggests a deviant social meaning: this may involve a prospective provision with an element of dress, which was not yet appropriate for the deceased and thus placed in an irregular manner.

Another special item in grave 353 gives insight into the religious roles and social identity of Dürrnberg women during the Hallstatt period. A glass spindle whorl rather unusually occurs in a transalpine context (**Fig. 14**). Three examples figure in a grave at Ilmenau in Bavaria (CLASSEN 2012; CLASSEN – WIEDMANN – HERZIG 2010). A similar item was recently discovered in a richly furnished grave near the Heuneburg (Baden-Württemberg, Germany; KRAUSSE – EBINGER-RIST 2018). Several inner alpine examples of glass whorls from Hallstatt graves and an object from Frög cemetery in Carinthia point to the area of origin of those special items in Early Iron Age Europe (TOMEDI 2002). Thus, the concentration of glass and similar bronze spindle whorls in upper Italy and the Este culture correlates with a special cultural meaning in these areas. Among other objects, here, whorls communicate the role of adult women as 'mistresses of the household' but also convey religious concepts involving fate, prosperity, and notions of recurrent creation (METZNER-NEBELSICK 2007; 2009). Beyond this, elaborate equipment and costume have occasionally been interpreted as representation of priestesses or 'sacred women', e. g. at Stična (SL) (GUŠTIN – PRELOŽNIK 2005).

In association with unique distaff-formed or whorl-like cultic batons both in the Este culture and in Dürrnberg grave 59, the glass spindle-whorl in grave 353 suggests a special social identity of some Dürrnberg ladies, too (ZELLER 2002b). Beyond a religious function, the sets



**Fig. 14:** Glass spindle whorl from grave 353 and distribution of similar whorls and other items found in grave 353: 1 - Hallein-Dürrnberg 'Eisfeld', grave 353. 2 - Kirchheim/Teck. 3 - Ditzingen-Schöckingen. 4 - Nordhouse 'Bürkelmatt', tumulus 4, grave 4. 5 - Nordhouse 'Bürkelmatt', tumulus 4, grave D. 6 - Urtenen-Schönbühl 'Grauholz'. 7 - Verucchio. 8 - Bologna. 9 - Este. 10 - Magdalenska Gora. 11 - Frög. 12 - Hallstatt. 13 - Salzburg 'Hellbrunner Berg'. 14 - Skalice. 15 - Ilmenau. 16 - Hundersingen 'Bettelbühl', tumulus 4. 17 - Ludwigsburg 'Römerhügel'. 18 - Eberdingen-Hochdorf. 19 - Hatten 'Eschenbusch', Hügel 9. 20 - Como. 21 - Sanzeno. 22 - Stična. (photo and graphics by Keltenmuseum Hallein, Dürrnbergforschung; distribution of jugs after HERRMANN – FREY 1996, 61 Abb. 66; glass whorls complemented after TOMEDI 2002, 161–162).

of prestigious metal and ceramic vessels characterize Dürrnberg women as distinct social actors (METZNER-NEBELSICK 2009). However, the pompous headdresses of golden balls and rings cannot unanimously be identified as a distinct functional ornament, of a priestess for example, or as a social marker in a broader sense.

Beyond this socio-religious sphere, graves 59 and 353 also communicate the eminent role of women in the social transformation of late Hallstatt society towards an emerging La Tène culture. Both cases exemplify the cultural appropriation of exotic and external elements (WENDLING 2017; cf. EGG *et al.* 2009). Bronze and glass spindles figure as unique social and religious markers, which clearly relate to models derived from Este, Etruria, and other cultures of the Italian peninsula (MANCA –WEIDIG 2014). An original Etruscan beaked flagon in grave 59 is not imitated, but transformed into an indigenous ceramic vessel in grave 353, which then gives direct impulse to one of the most intriguing icons of early Celtic art – the famous Dürrnberg bronze spouted jug (MOOSLEITNER 1985; WENDLING 2018b).

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Pl. 3/1: Dürrnberg 'Eisfeld', grave 71. Costume fittings and amulets of an Early La Tène period infant burial (graphics by Keltenmuseum Hallein, Dürrnbergforschung).



**Pl. 3/2: Dürrnberg 'Eisfeld', grave 353. Pompous headdress with seven golden bivalve hollow balls and a selection of a total of 17 massive golden 'hairrings' (photo by Salzburg Museum, R. Poschacher).**



**Pl. 3/3: Dürrnberg 'Eisfeld', grave 73. Massive golden 'hairrings' match the identical objects in grave 353 (photo by Salzburg Museum, R. Poschacher).**