

Ceci n'est pas une chronologie.

The construction of an alternative brooch chronology using the example
of the brooches of the oppidum Bibracte (Burgundy, France)

Abstract

This work is about the brooches from the oppidum Bibracte. Commonly brooches are classified and chronologically interpreted as types. However, inherent methodological issues are evident, in particular for today's chronological system of the late iron age. To overcome these issues, I consider a theoretical approach by John Collis (2009), and develop a new method to construct chronologies in general and to date the brooches of Bibracte in particular. Thereby I primarily use the concept of a chronological horizon, that has only a beginning but never ends, and rather focus on brooch attributes than on types.

Based on the aforementioned, I construct an alternative brooch chronology using 122 stratified brooches from five excavations in Bibracte, whose stratigraphies are dated absolute in time by ceramic finds. The herein constructed chronology consists of eight brooch horizons, that are defined by the first appearance of 130 individual brooch attributes and of eight attribute combinations. The brooch chronology obtained in this manner allows to date any brooch or fragment of a brooch replicable and inter-subjectively verifiable for future work; the brooches can be dated automatically by means of the enclosed database. Moreover, the method presented is transferable to other archaeological sites and materials.

On the basis of the alternative brooch chronology of Bibracte, various results about the settlement activity of the oppidum, the utilization period of the associated cemetery and the development of the brooch production in Bibracte are obtained.

Collis 2009: John Collis, Die Konstruktion von Chronologien. In: Raimund Karl/Jutta Leskovar (Hrsg.), Tagungsbeiträge der 3. Linzer Gespräche zur interpretativen Eisenzeitarchäologie. Interpretierte Eisenzeiten. Fallstudien, Methoden, Theorie. Stud. Kulturgesch. Oö. 22 (Linz 2009) 373–422.