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ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH AT THE BRONZE AGE AND EARLY IRON AGE CEMETERY NEAR KOGELEBERG HILL IN UPPER AUSTRIA DURING WORLD WAR II

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the archaeological activities carried out between 1940 and 1944 by prisoners of the German Nazi concentration camp Gusen, focusing on the excavations conducted at the ruins of Spielberg Castle and the Bronze and Early Iron Age cemetery discovered near Kogelberg Hill in Upper Austria. Although undertaken under conditions of extreme coercion and violence, these works resulted in exceptionally detailed documentation, which today constitutes a unique source for the study of prehistoric communities in the Danube region. Archival materials preserved in the State Archaeological Museum in Warsaw and in Viennese collections include excavation records, sketches, photographic albums, and artefacts collected by prisoners assigned to the Spielberg Commando, Kogelberg Commando, and the Museum SS Gusen unit.

At Kogelberg, approximately 200 graves were investigated, including inhumations, cremations, and one biritual burial. The assemblages – ceramics, bronze weapons, ornaments, and distinctive vessel types – indicate

the use of the site from the Middle Bronze Age through the early phases of the Urnfield Culture, with occasional later intrusions. Particularly notable are objects reflecting both strongly local stylistic traditions and eastern influences linked to Carpathian and Noua cultural spheres. The work of the Museum SS Gusen commando resulted not only in the conservation and exhibition of the finds within the camp but also in the preparation of several internally published volumes documenting the excavation results.

The study highlights both the scientific importance of the prehistoric materials and the extraordinary circumstances of their recovery. The archaeological commandos provided prisoners with relative protection, while their meticulous work ensured the preservation of evidence from a burial ground likely destroyed during wartime construction. This unique intersection of archaeology and coercion offers rare insight into both prehistoric Upper Austria and the lived experience of prisoners who used archaeological labour as a means of survival.

Keywords: World War II, Gusen, concentration camp, Urnfield culture, Bronze Age, Early Iron Age

Introduction

The German Nazi concentration camp (German: *Konzentrationslager* – KL) Gusen was established in May 1940. It was a Sub-camp (Nebenlager) of KL Mauthausen. It was located in Upper Austria in the Perg district, approximately twenty kilometers east of the city of Linz (Fig. 1). Its location was chosen due to its prox-

imity to a granite quarry, the extraction of which was overseen by the German Earth and Stone Works company – Deutsche Erd- und Steinwerke GmbH (DEST). The quarrying operations relied on the forced labour of prisoners.

The history of the Gusen concentration camp, including the living conditions, the terror, and the forced labour, has been documented in numerous scholarly



Fig. 1. Location of the Gusen concentration camp (compiled by M. Krajewska, S. Domaradzka).

studies and memoirs of former prisoners.¹ Some of these sources mention archaeological excavations carried out by camp prisoners between 1940 and 1945, the existence of an archaeological museum within the camp, as well as publications developed and released by prisoners between 1942 and 1944.

The collections of the State Archaeological Museum in Warsaw include archival materials documenting archaeological research and acquired artefacts: a book with documentation and two photo albums. These were donated by Kazimierz Murasiewicz, the son of one of the Gusen camp prisoners, Tadeusz Murasiewicz, who was a member of the archaeological commandos participating in excavation work and the organization of the camp museum. The surviving artefacts and some

of the documentation were transferred to the Museum of Natural History in Vienna.²

Spielberg Commando (Burgruine Spielbergkommando)

Approximately two kilometres from the Gusen concentration camp, on an island in the Danube River, lay the ruins of the medieval Spielberg Castle (Fig. 2). In mid-November 1940, the administration of KL Gusen ordered prisoners to carry out cleaning and maintenance work there.³ To perform these tasks, a thirty-person commando⁴ unit was formed, called Burgruine Spielbergkommando or the Spielberg Commando,

¹ Gusen, <https://www.gusen.org/bibliography/>, accessed: March 9th 2025.

² Trnka, Landenbauer-Orel 1992, 48–49.

³ Murasiewicz 1942; Gelinek 1946, 1; Pollak 2015.

⁴ In camp jargon, a commando referred to a work unit or a group of prisoners assembled to perform specific tasks. These units could consist of anywhere from a few to several hundred individuals.

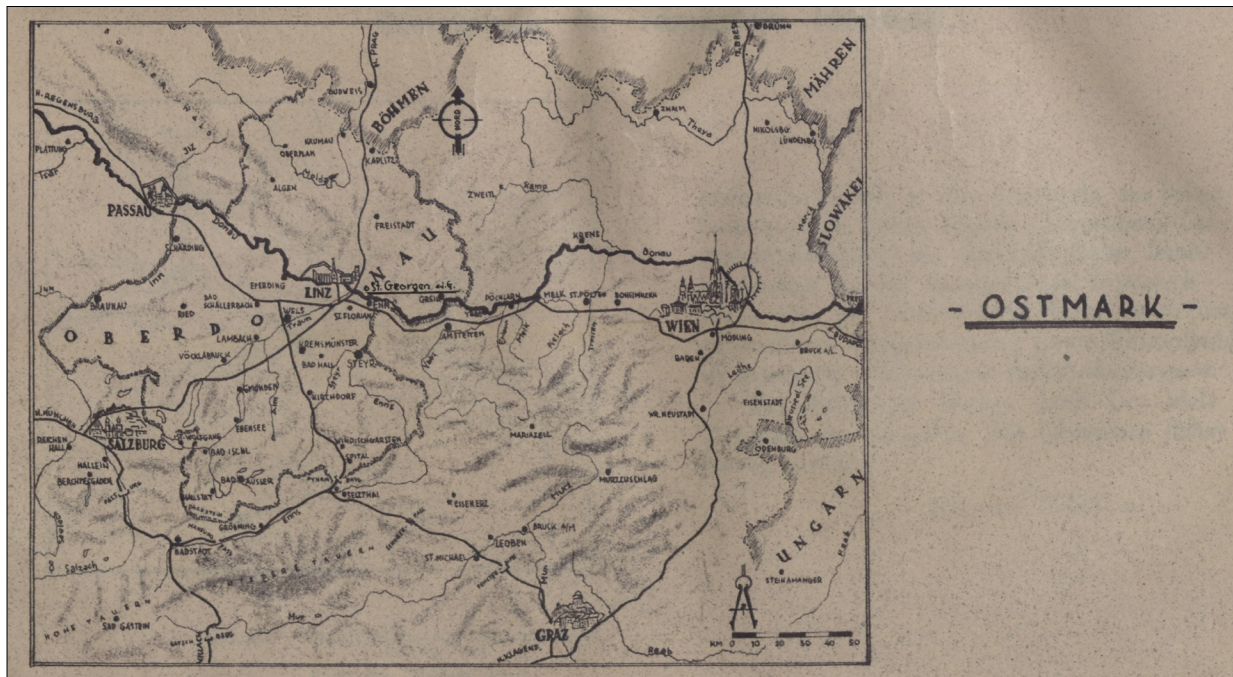


Fig. 2. Location of the Gusen concentration camp. Map based on preserved original documentation (source: State Archaeological Museum in Warsaw).

which consisted of Catholic priests.⁵ On December 6, 1940, the priests were transferred to KL Dachau.⁶ However, work at the Spielberg castle site was to continue,⁷ so a new commando unit was formed, consisting of Poles from various professions. This group undertook not only cleaning tasks but, most importantly, excavation work. These efforts led to the discovery of numerous artefacts, including coins, weapons and armour from various eras, blacksmith wares, sculptures, two Roman tombstones from the 2nd century, architectural decorative elements, and ceramics (Fig. 3). The prisoners who were part of the Spielberg Commando built a small barrack in the castle courtyard, where they stored the artefacts

and documentation, performed basic conservation work, and kept the tools used for excavations.⁸

Ausgrabungen Kogelberg Commando

In early May 1941, construction began on a railway line connecting the quarries to the nearby town of St. Georgen. Along the route near Kogelberg Hill, a cemetery was discovered. News of this discovery reached prehistorian Professor Oswald Menghin⁹ who informed Kurt Willvonseder,¹⁰ the head of the Vienna Institute for Monument Protection, as well as Wolfram Sievers,¹¹

⁵ Gębik 1962; Dobosiewicz 1979; Pollak 2015.

⁶ KL Dachau – a Nazi concentration camp established in the spring of 1933 on the outskirts of the city of Dachau, approximately 15 kilometres north-west of Munich. The camp was liberated on April 29th, 1945.

⁷ Gębik 1972, 236; Iwiński 1989, 144.

⁸ Gelinek 1946, 1; Mursiewicz 1962, 194; Gębik 1962, 79.

⁹ Oswald Menghin (1888–1973) was an Austrian prehistorian, a member of the Austrian Academy of Sciences and a professor at the University of Vienna, where he served as rector from 1935 to 1936. Menghin joined the NSDAP (*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*) in 1940. After World War II, he was listed as a major war criminal, but proceedings against him were dismissed in 1956.

¹⁰ Kurt Willvonseder (1903–1968) was an Austrian prehistorian. He studied Germanic studies and prehistory at the University

of Vienna, earning his doctorate under Oswald Menghin in 1929. From 1930 to 1937, he worked as an assistant at the Institute of Prehistory at the University of Vienna. Between 1937 and 1939, he served as a research assistant at the Central Office for Monument Protection (*Zentralstelle für Denkmalschutz*) in Vienna. Willvonseder joined the SS in 1939 and the NSDAP in 1941. Starting in late 1939, he led the Department of Prehistory at the Vienna Institute for Monument Preservation (*Abteilung für Vor- und Frühgeschichte am Wiener Institut für Denkmalpflege*).

¹¹ Wolfram Sievers – a German bookseller, studied history, philosophy, and religious studies at the Polytechnic in Stuttgart. In 1929, he joined the NSDAP, and in 1935, the SS. From 1935 to 1945, he served as the Secretary-General of Ahnenerbe.

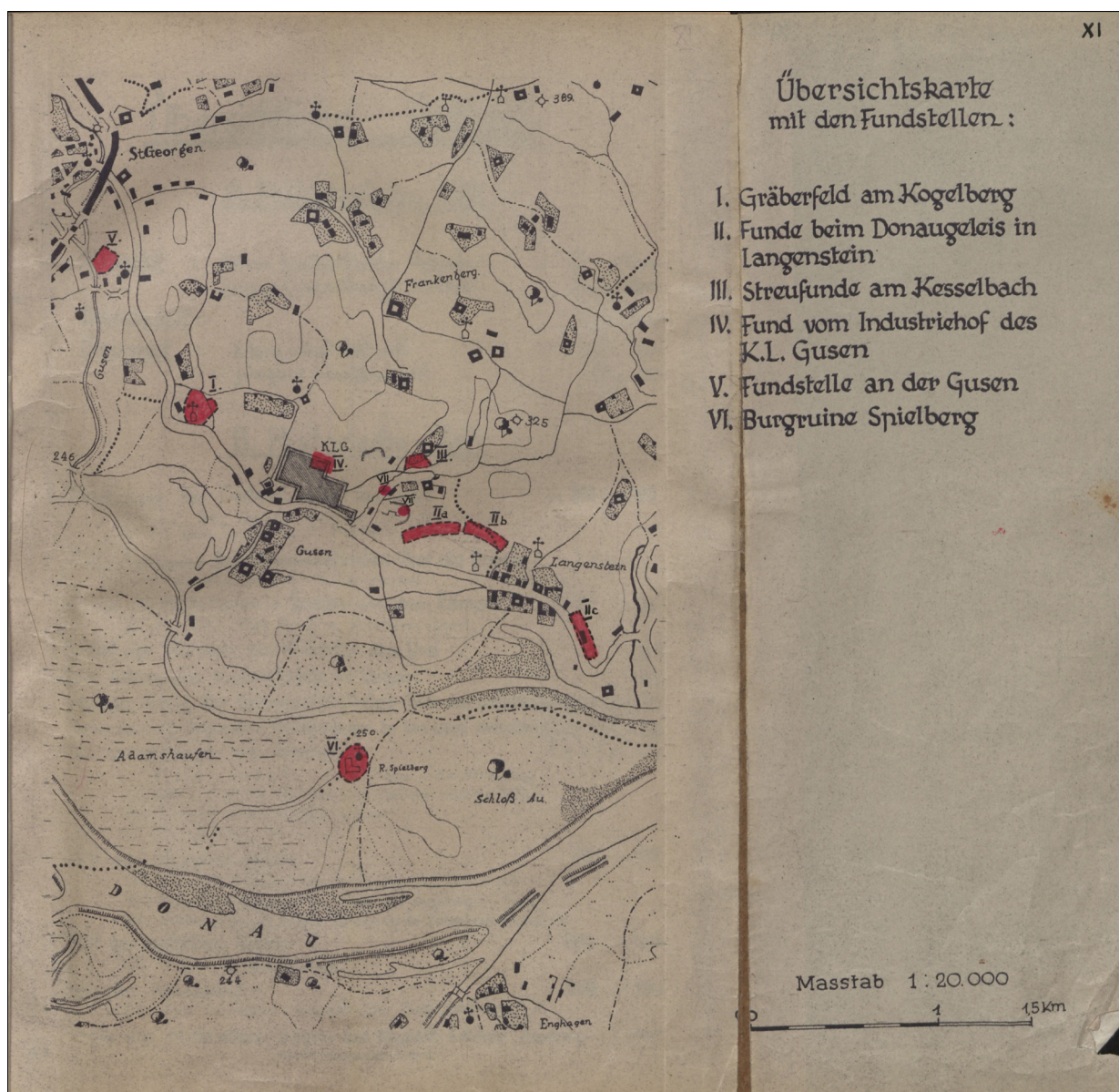


Fig. 3. Distribution of finds. Map based on preserved original documentation (source: State Archaeological Museum in Warsaw).

the General Secretary of the Ahnenerbe.¹² Sievers responded with a written order dated April 20, 1942, directing Gusen Commandant Karl Chmielewski to cooperate closely with Willvonseder, who visited the site on May 24, 1942.¹³ In September 1942, construction work was

halted, and the Ausgrabungen Kogelberg Commando was formed.¹⁴ Excavation of the cemetery graves began. K. Willvonseder returned to KL Gusen on October 3, 1942, but due to his numerous professional responsibilities, he could not personally oversee the excavations.

¹² *Ahnenerbe* – a Nazi research organization founded in 1935 as *Studiengesellschaft für Geistesurgeschichte, Deutsches Ahnenerbe e. V.* (Research Society for Intellectual Ancient History, German Ancestral Heritage) by Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler, agronomist and animal husbandry expert Richard Walther Darré (1895–1953), and historian Herman Wirth (1885–1981). Its aim was to prove Nazi theories of Aryan racial superiority

through historical, ethnographic, anthropological, and archaeological studies. In 1938, the SS Excavations Department (established by H. Himmler in 1935) was incorporated into the structure of Ahnenerbe.

¹³ Pollak 2015, 260.

¹⁴ Murasiewicz 1962, 197–198.

Instead, he appointed two staff members from the institute: Hertha Orel¹⁵ to supervise and lead the scientific research and Josef Vockenhuber¹⁶ to handle written, graphic, and photographic documentation. Excavations at the Kogelberg archaeological site continued from May 1942 to October 1943. The team investigated around 200 burials, including skeletal graves, urn graves, and objects of an unclear function, labelled as 'Fundstelle' in the documentation. Numerous bronze artifacts and ceramics were recovered, and photographic and graphic documentation was created. Two books of records and two albums of photographs depicting the site and artefacts survive to this day.

On the basis of the preserved collections and Viennese archives, almost half a century later, the first attempt at a comprehensive scholarly study of the cemetery was undertaken.¹⁷

The Cemetery

The cemetery at Gusen was discovered near the confluence of the Gusenbach stream and the Danube River (Fig. 4). During the excavations, no traces of a settlement were discovered that could have been associated with the people buried there. Later, post-war research also failed to locate such remains. Only settlement traces connected with earlier occupations were recorded in the vicinity: Late Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, and Neolithic, as well as later periods dating to the Early and Middle Bronze Age, the Hallstatt and La Tène periods, and the Early Middle Ages.¹⁸ The location of the discovered relics suggests that the cemetery was situated at the crossroads of trade routes running east–west and north–south. The absence of such remains may indicate either their complete destruction or a location that could not be detected with the methods applied or available during the searches.

It is difficult to say anything certain about the original layout of the cemetery. Prisoners created plans and sketches with annotations, which allowed merely a partial reconstruction. The documentation in-

dicates the presence of inhumation graves, cremation burials, and a single biritual burial (Fig. 5, 6). Based on photographs, drawings, and descriptions made by the prisoners, various types of urn graves within stone structures can be distinguished: some were surrounded or covered by stones, while others had a stone slab placed at the bottom of the burial pit. Additionally, cremation graves with elongated stone constructions of larger dimensions were identified. Stone structures without traces of cremated remains were interpreted as cenotaphs.¹⁹ The documentation prepared by the prisoners indicates that the grave goods consisted mainly of vessels (Fig. 7), some of them possibly 'graphitic'.²⁰ Their forms, decoration, and the copper-alloy artifacts accompanying some burials suggest that the cemetery was used over a long period, with the main phase corresponding to the development of local Urnfield groups, *c.* 1300–1100 BC.²¹ One of the richest finds was burial no. 5/1945, described in the documentation as a so-called 'Kriegergrab'. It contained, among other things, a bronze Gusen-type cup, an Asenkofen-type sword with a hilt tang (Gusen variant), a Gusen-type razor, and a spearhead (Fig. 8).²² Unfortunately, the documentation does not clarify whether these items constituted a closed assemblage. If so, they could be related to the Riegsee/Baierdorf phase. As for the documented pins, the earliest-dated specimens suggest that this area was used for funerary purposes already in the Middle Bronze Age (*c.* Br B1 phase – Lochham, Kosider phase) by groups of the Tumulus Culture, while later examples indicate the continuation of burials into the early phases of the Urnfield Culture.²³ In summary, the research carried out by Gusen prisoners and the documentation they prepared indicates that in 1941–43 around 200 graves were excavated, datable mainly to the early and older phases of local Urnfield groups (BrD and HaA1 phases). The biritual burials would represent a transitional period from inhumation to cremation rites. Burial 5/1941 and most of the documented cremation graves can be dated to the Middle and the beginning of the Late Bronze Age.²⁴ Among

¹⁵ Hertha Orel, later known as Hertha Ladenbauer-Orel after marriage (1912–2009), was an Austrian archaeologist and Anglicist. She studied English and archaeology under Prof. Oswald Menghin at the University of Vienna, where she earned her doctorate in 1938. She worked as a research assistant at the Vienna Institute for Monument Preservation. Her responsibilities included overseeing rescue excavations and cataloging archaeological collections in state museums.

¹⁶ Josef Vockenhuber (1910–1950), a turner from Hallstatt (Upper Austria), participated in excavations of Iron Age archaeological sites starting in 1937. In 1940, he began working at the Vienna Institute for Monument Preservation, where he was involved in inventory and conservation work as well as res-

cue excavations. While at KL Gusen, he documented excavation work and created photographic records of objects and artifacts at the site. He was not a member of the NSDAP. In 1945, he was conscripted into the Volkssturm.

¹⁷ Trnka, Ladenbauer-Orel 1992.

¹⁸ Trnka, Ladenbauer-Orel 1992, 51.

¹⁹ Trnka, Ladenbauer-Orel 1992, 78.

²⁰ Trnka, Ladenbauer-Orel 1992, 81.

²¹ Trnka, Ladenbauer-Orel 1992, 81–86.

²² Trnka, Ladenbauer-Orel 1992, 86–87.

²³ Trnka, Ladenbauer-Orel 1992, 87.

²⁴ Trnka, Ladenbauer-Orel 1992, 94.



Fig. 4. Layout of graves at the cemetery near Kogelberg Hill. Map based on preserved original documentation (source: State Archaeological Museum in Warsaw).

the grave goods documented by Gusen prisoners during World War II, many objects show distinctly local stylistics. Examples include characteristic C-shaped bracelets decorated with wide flutings along their circumference. This type appears in the early phases of the Urnfield Culture (Riegsee and Baierdorf phases) in the Danubian regions (southern Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and Bohemia),²⁵ also reaching into the Carpathian Basin.²⁶ In the Ha A1 and Ha A2 phases, similar forms become common in Mecklenburg-Brandenburg groups, likely influenced by southern German Urnfield tradi-

tions, though they are less massive and more gently profiled.²⁷ Ribbon bracelets ending in pairs of spiral discs, on the other hand, are typical of the Bohemian-Palatinate and Middle Danubian Tumulus Culture, dated to Br C2/Br D (Plzeň-Jaikalka horizon, Riegsee phase).²⁸ Alongside local stylistics, objects of Carpathian origin can also be distinguished, reflecting eastern contacts and the influx of cultural models. One particularly interesting find is a kantharos-type vessel from cremation burial no. 22/1942 (Fig. 9). This form is unique at the site. The vessel is made of high-quality clay, with a light-

²⁵ E.g., Lochner 1991, Taf. 29.2.

²⁶ E.g., Müller-Karpe 1959, 100, 144; von Brunn 1968, 177–178; Kaczmarek 2012, 299.

²⁷ Kaczmarek 2012, 299.

²⁸ Kaczmarek 2012, 321.

gray, smooth surface, a slightly everted, distinct neck, and a rounded biconical body decorated with groups of vertical flutings. Two tall strap handles end in horizontal discs. Comparable examples are known from the Baierdorf-Velatic group inventories, as well as from Leobersdorf and Unter-Radl.²⁹ This style is also characteristic of the Noua culture (Noua-Sabatinovka-Coslogeni complex). Noua cemeteries and settlements appeared at the transition from the Early to the Middle Bronze Age in Transylvania, especially its central part. As an intrusive group to the cultural traditions of the Carpathian Basin, it is thought to have played a significant role in destabilizing local settlement structures.³⁰ Noua pottery is divided into two main categories: kitchenware and tableware. The latter indicates specialized craftsmanship. The most widespread forms include kantharos-type cups³¹ classified locally as Type I cups with conical or rounded bodies, carefully made, often with smoothed surfaces, and two tall handles rising above the rim. Their presence in the Noua culture is linked to influences from Middle Bronze Age cultures (Br D–Ha A1), particularly Monteoru, Wietenberg, and Tei, where they occur mainly in funerary contexts.³² They are thus often considered ritual or ceremonial vessels, though everyday use cannot be excluded. Several subtypes and variants can be distinguished morphologically.³³ They occur at sites such as Plovdiv, Kamenitsa District,³⁴ Topolița,³⁵ Oglinzi-fața Slatinei³⁶ or Zoltan-Oldalramenő.³⁷ Vessels referring to Noua stylistics also appear at the Lăpuș cemetery.³⁸ Their occurrence in cemeteries of the early Middle Danubian Urnfield Culture, including the Gusen specimen, is especially intriguing. It has been suggested that the Noua expansion led to the westward movement of Wietenberg people or other groups rooted in Early Bronze Age traditions.³⁹

Eastern influences are also evident in the presence of fluted pottery (Fig. 10). Vessels decorated with vertical flutings occurred, for example, in graves no. 2/1941, 29/1942, and 24/1942.⁴⁰ This type of ornament is found across different cultures and groups over a wide area. It appears already in the Early Bronze Age, e.g., in the Bohemian-Palatinate Tumulus Culture, where it is dated from ca. the Br B/C transition. It is also recorded in the Middle Danubian Tumulus Culture –

particularly in the Middle Bronze Age, the pre-Lusatian culture, and in western Slovakia in the Carpathian Tumulus Culture. In the Carpathian Basin especially, it may have a local basis. This ornament is almost absent west of the Danube, while it is common in Vojvodina within the Vatina Culture. It also appears in the Rei and Monteoru cultures. Scholars note that these areas, from Lower Austria to western Romania, overlap with the distribution of the earlier Baden Culture.⁴¹ Motifs based on fluting techniques spread during the Middle Bronze Age, and at the beginning of the Urnfield period take the form of wide, diagonal flutings.⁴²

The latest finds, including burials of the “Lanzengräbe” type, are dated to the Younger Hallstatt Period, and some to the medieval period.⁴³

The discoveries at Gusen provide significant insights into the prehistoric communities in Upper Austria during the Bronze and Early Iron Ages. However, the context of their recovery is particularly remarkable. The excavations, conducted under extreme conditions by prisoners who were not professional archaeologists, resulted in detailed and professional documentation. This work was not only a testament to human resilience and ingenuity but also, for some, a means of survival.

Archaeological Museum (Museum SS Gusen)

In August 1941, the commandant of KL Gusen, K. Chmielewski, ordered the transfer of artefacts from a barrack at the ruins of Spielberg Castle to the camp and the establishment of an archaeological museum in one of the camp's barracks.⁴⁴ This museum became part of the camp's structure and was named Museum SS Gusen. A special unit, the Museum SS Gusen commando, was created to manage it, consisting of 2 to 7 prisoners at various times.

The museum displayed artefacts from archaeological excavations conducted by prisoners between 1940 and 1944 at the ruins of Spielberg Castle and the Kogelberg burial site. Written, drawn, and photographic documentation from these excavations was also kept there. From 1944 onward, SS personnel began adding discoveries

²⁹ Trnka, Landenbauer-Orel 1992, 86.

³⁰ Przybyła 2005, 52.

³¹ Sirbou 2023, 7.

³² Sirbou 2023, 7.

³³ Sirbou 2023, 8, 28, Fig. 6.

³⁴ Dimitrova, Bozhinova 2024, 16.

³⁵ Mățău et al. 2022, 198, Fig. 2.

³⁶ Diaconu, Dumitroaia 2016, 207, Fig. 4.2.

³⁷ Sztáncsuj, Puskás 2022, 230, Fig. 15.15.

³⁸ E.g., Kacsó 1975, Fig. 11.1.

³⁹ Przybyła 2005, 52.

⁴⁰ Trnka, Landenbauer-Orel 1992, Fig. 1.6, 12.3, 12.9.

⁴¹ Przybyła 2005, 121.

⁴² Przybyła 2005, 137.

⁴³ Trnka, Landenbauer-Orel 1992, 95.

⁴⁴ Dobosiewicz 2000, 61; Gelinek 1946, 1; Gębik 1972, 178–179; Iwiński 1989, 157; Murasiewicz 1962, 197.

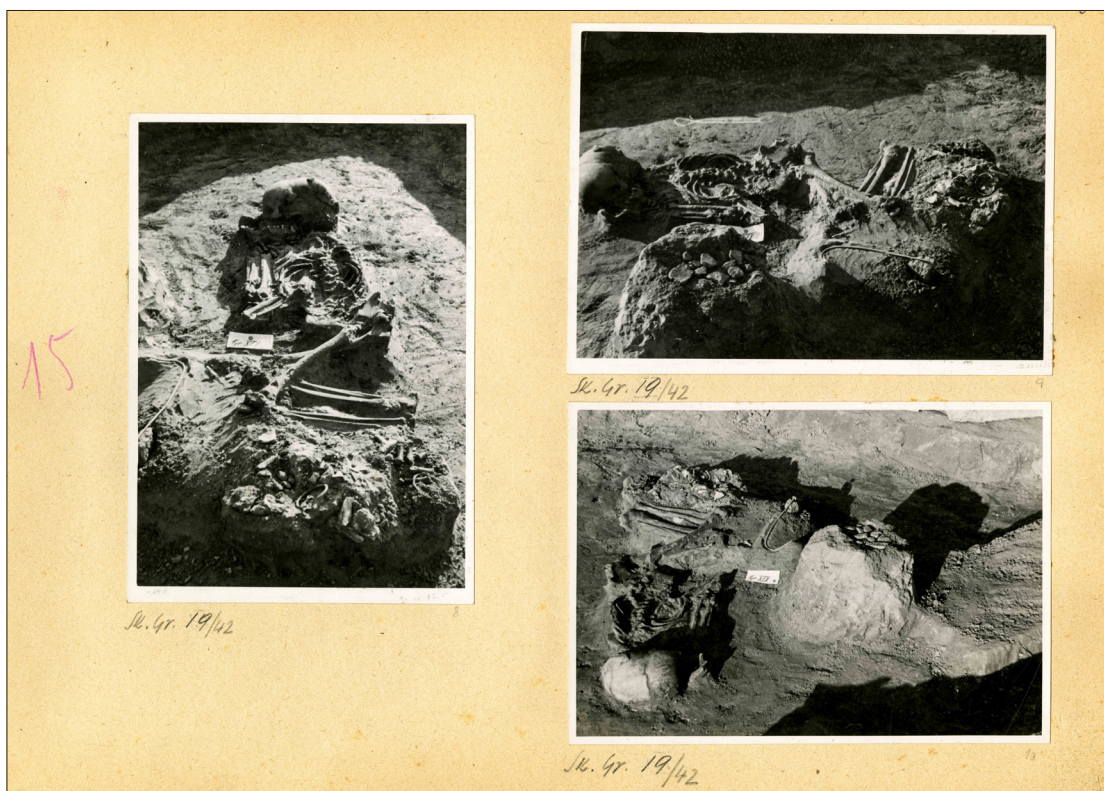


Fig. 5. Documentation of inhumation burials (photographs from the collection of the State Archaeological Museum in Warsaw).

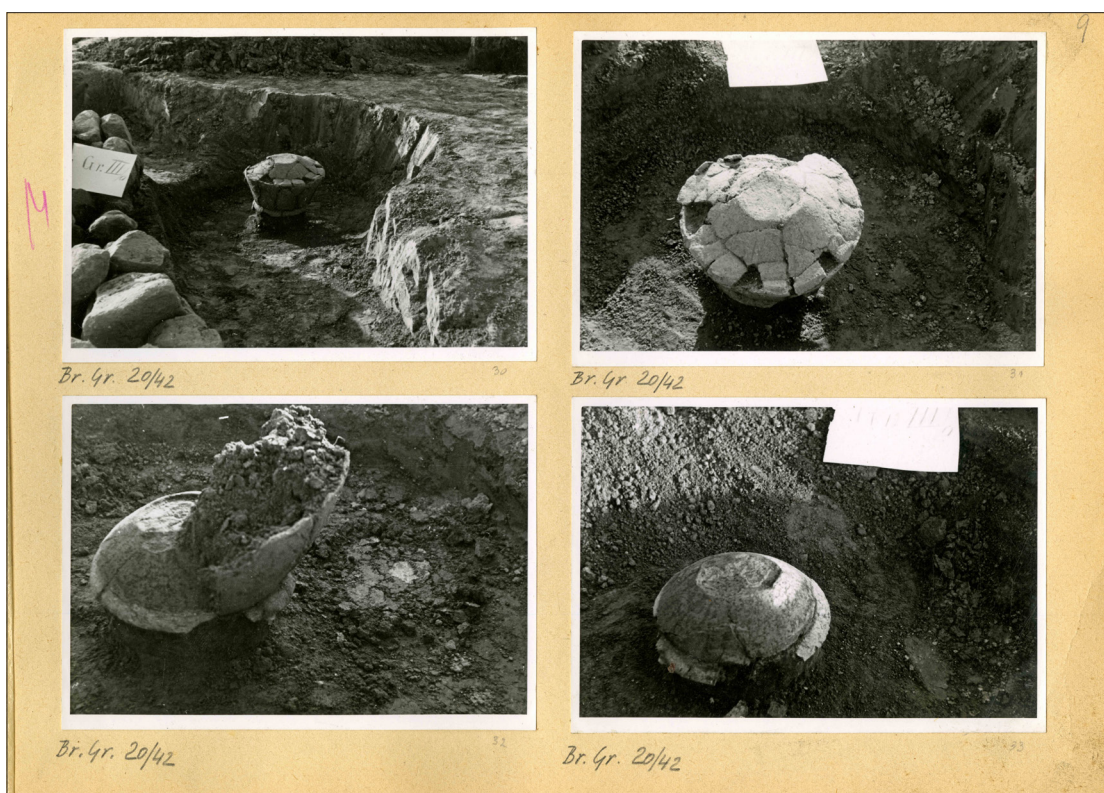


Fig. 6. Documentation of cremation burials (photographs from the collection of the State Archaeological Museum in Warsaw).

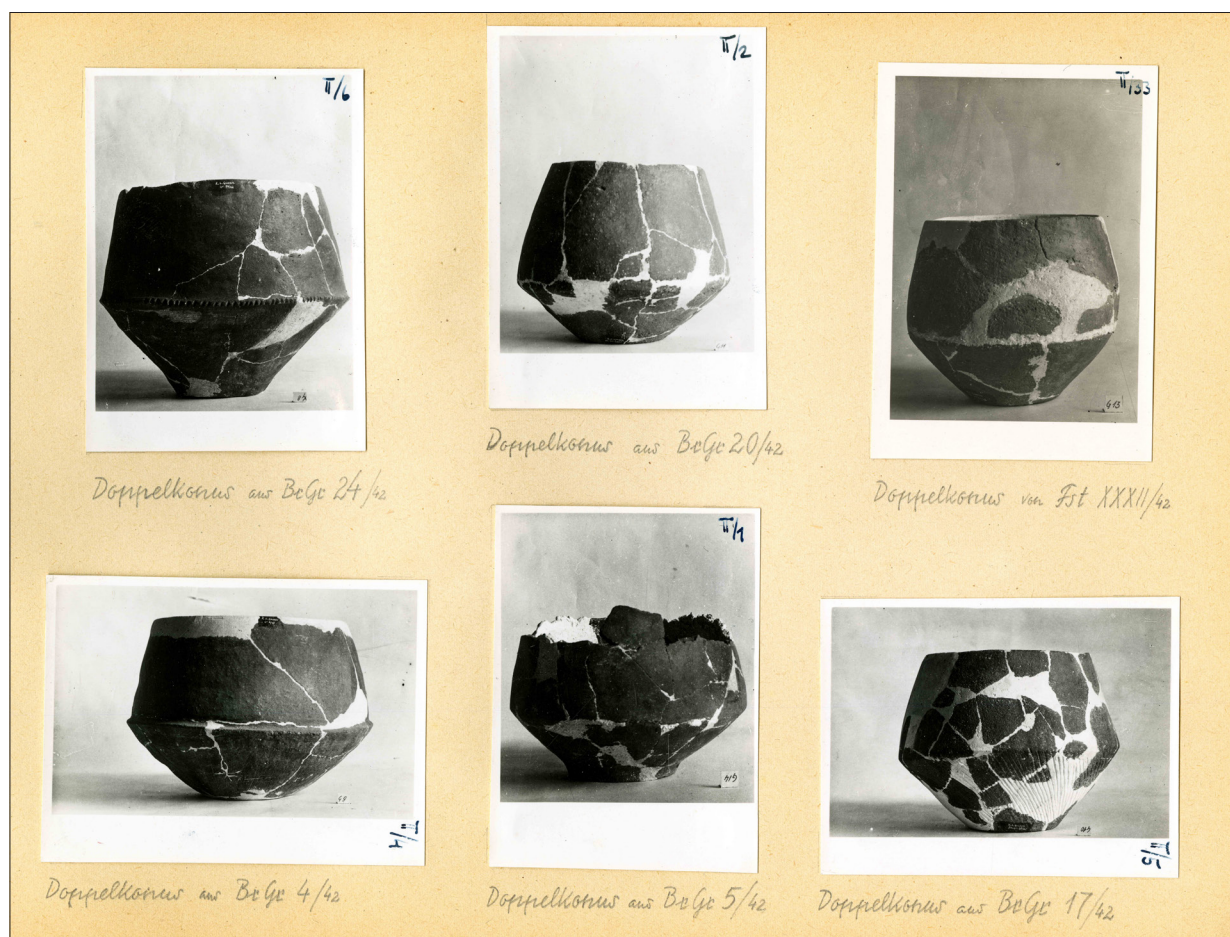


Fig. 7. Documentation of ceramic vessels recovered from graves (photographs from the collection of the State Archaeological Museum in Warsaw).

made during groundworks at sites such as Austerfeld, Dornbergergut, Donaugleis, Kastenhofengut, Mayrgut im Grubkof, Wasserversorgung, and Wimmingsmühl.⁴⁵ The collection also featured paleontological and geological objects found during the construction of underground halls for Messerschmitt aircraft factories and the remains of Allied planes shot down near the camp.⁴⁶

By the commandant's orders, the museum was to be open daily. Throughout its operation, the exhibition was visited by prominent guests touring the camp, including Heinrich Himmler.⁴⁷ Prisoners were strictly prohibited from entering it as visitors, even the ones who were assigned various tasks at the camp.

Prisoners in the Museum commando were responsible for collecting, conserving, documenting, and display-

ing artefacts. Remarkably, they even managed to publish part of their documentation while in the camp.

The idea to compile and publish a book documenting the excavation work conducted by Gusen prisoners arose in the autumn of 1942. Permission for the editorial work was granted by the camp commandant. The project garnered the interest of Professor Menghin, who was persuaded to write a scientific introduction to enhance the publication's credibility. The graphic design, all drawings, maps, and handwritten texts, including captions for illustrations, were prepared by prisoners. The binding was done in the camp's bookbinding workshop, while printing – using ozalid paper – was carried out in the construction office of the railway branch line. The book was titled *Ausgrabungen in der Umgebung*

⁴⁵ Dobosiewicz 2000, 66.

⁴⁶ Murasiewicz 1962, 211.

⁴⁷ Heinrich Luitpold Himmler (1900–1945), politician, head of the SS (from 1929), Gestapo (from 1934), and German police

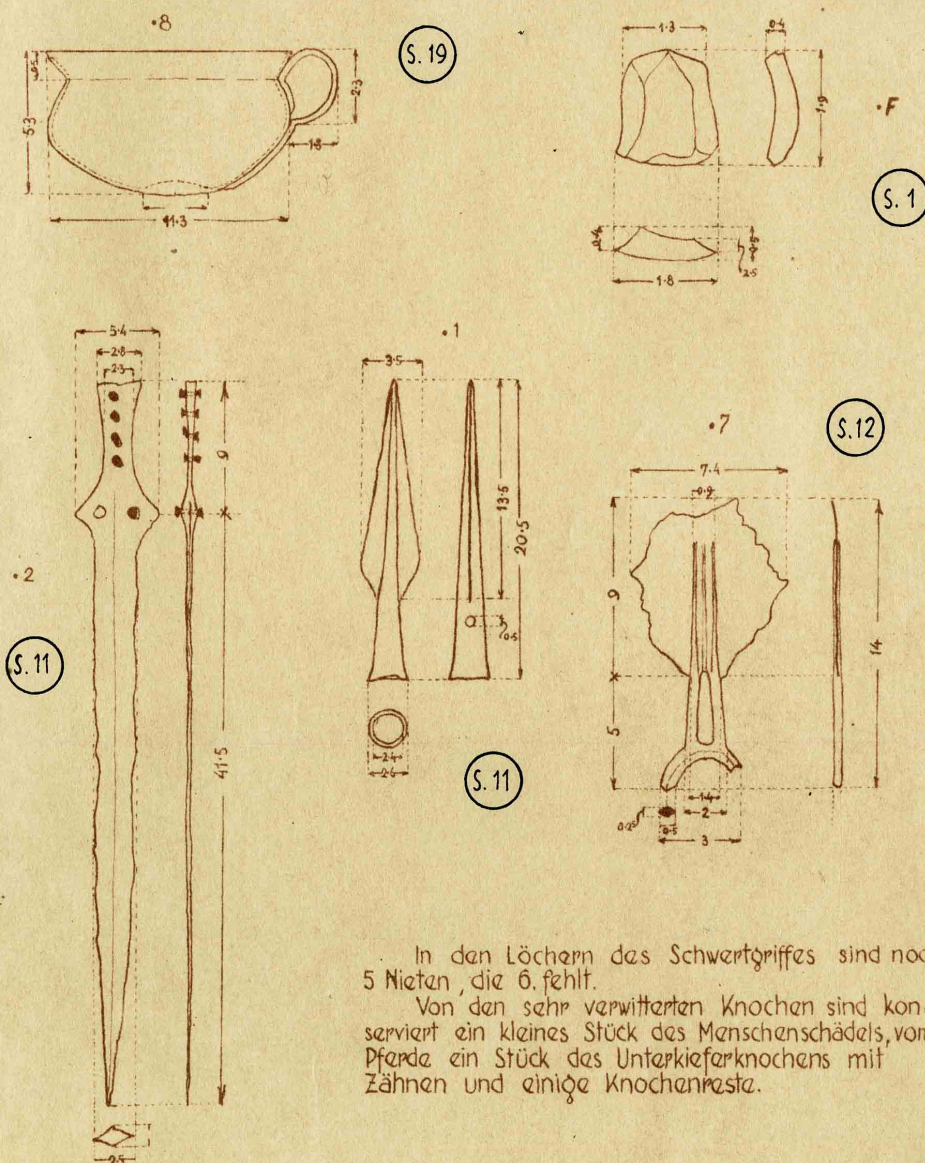
(from 1936). He served as Germany's Minister of the Interior from 1943. Himmler had a keen interest in archaeology. In 1935, he founded the organization Ahnenerbe.

Etwas westlich von diesen Knochen wurde etwa 0.2 m tiefer eine neue Lage von Steinen aufgedeckt. In derselben Schichte fanden sich Herdspuren (6), infolge Brennens geröteter Ton und Knochenstücke.

Als Beilagen fand man im kleineren Steinbogen: eine Lanzenspitze aus Bronze (1), daneben ein Schwert (2) und ein Rasiermesser (7) aus Bronze.

In einer Entfernung von 25 m nach Westen und von 45 m nach Süden, aber 4.5 m tiefer von dieser Steinsetzung wurden: ein Brandplatz mit Asche und Holzkohlenstücken, gebrannte Erde und verschiedene Urnen- und Gefäß-Bruchstücke aufgedeckt.

IV. Übersicht über die Grabbeigaben (nach der Zusammensetzung)



In den Löchern des Schwertgriffes sind noch 5 Nieten, die 6. fehlt.

Von den sehr verwitterten Knochen sind konserviert ein kleines Stück des Menschenschädels, vom Pferde ein Stück des Unterkieferknochens mit Zähnen und einige Knochenreste.

Fig. 8. Documentation of metal grave goods (photographs from the collection of the State Archaeological Museum in Warsaw).

III. Protokoll

22./x.42.

Am westlichen Ende der Steinpackung unter dem größten Stein ein Fußgefäß aus braunem Ton, graphitiert, stark zerdrückt und sehr mürbe. Am Bauch senkrechte Kanalur. Wst. 0.6 - Dabei lag noch ein Teil eines runden stabförmigen Henkels, Form und Ansatz nicht feststellbar. 50 cm, südlich dieses Gefäßes Wandstücke eines anderen, aus rotbraunem Ton mit Fingertupfenleiste, Wst. 1-1.4. In der Mitte, 50 cm nördlich, außerhalb der Steinpackung ein Boden eines Gefäßes aus rotbraunem Ton, Wst. 1 cm. 1 m östlich des ersten Gefäßes 4 Gefäße, teils zerdrückt und sehr mürbe:

1. Fußschale aus schwarzem Ton mit fast wagrecht ausladendem Mundsaum, der oben mit gestrichelten Dreiecken verziert ist; an der Innenwand des Gefäßes an der oberen Begrenzung eine umlaufende Zickzacklinie. Außen unterhalb des Mundsaumes ein kleiner durchbohrter Buckel. Wst. 0.4.
2. Eine Schale aus schwärzlichem Ton, graphitiert, vom Halsansatz bis über die Bauchwölbung hinaus in Abständen von 3 cm, fünf senkrechte Hohlkehlen. 2 gegenständige hochgezogene Henkel mit abgeplatteten Knöpfchen am oberen Bogen. Der Henkel ist im Schnitt trapezförmig. Henkelbreite am Bauchansatz 2.5 cm, oben beim Knöpfchen 1.3, Höhe des Gef. 7 cm, Bdm. 5, Wst. 0.4-0.5.
3. Eine Schale aus schwarzem Ton mit Bodendelle und kleinem gepratetem Henkel, Wst. 0.4.
4. Eine stark zerdrückte Schale aus dunkelbraunem Ton, graphitiert, Wst. 0.5. Form nicht feststellbar.

Um die vier Gefäße herum viele verbrannte menschliche Knochen.

IV. Übersicht über die Grabbeigaben (nach der Zusammensetzung).

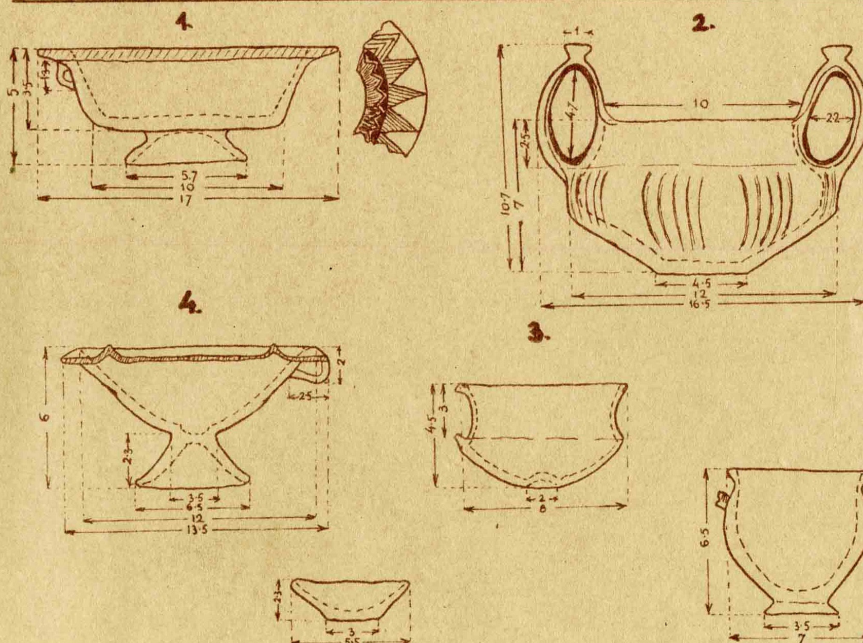
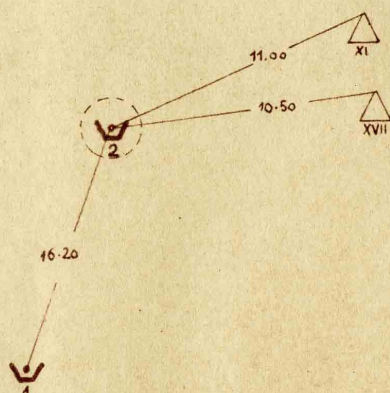


Fig. 9. Drawings of ceramic vessels (source: State Archaeological Museum in Warsaw).

Kogelberg Brand-Grab 2/41 (v)

I. Entfernungsangaben



II. Protokoll

Steinpackung bei Beginn der Erdarbeiten zerstört. Form nicht mehr feststellbar. Auf der Grabstelle wurden gefunden:

- 1) Gefäß mit gegenständigen Henkeln auf der Schulter aus schwarzem Ton
- 2) Gefäß mit breiter, fast senkrechter Kannelur auf der Schulter und Bandhenkel zum Mundsäum aus braunem Ton
- 3) kleines Gefäß (derzeit in Wien)
- 4) Scherben zweier Gefäße, nicht zusammensetzbar, von beiden:
Bodenteile und größere Seitenstücke mit Mundsäum aus braunem Ton.

III. Übersicht über die Grabbeigaben (nach der Zusammensetzung)

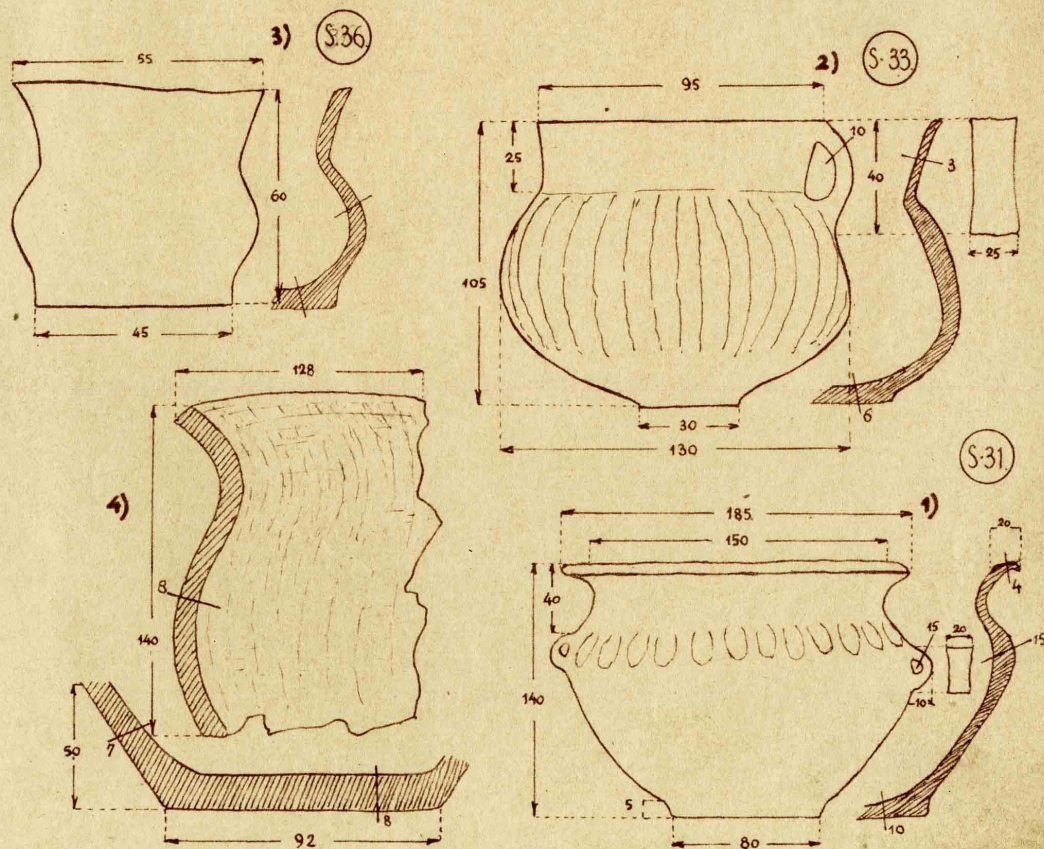


Fig. 10. Drawings of ceramic vessels (source: State Archaeological Museum in Warsaw).

des KLM-Gusen (Oberdonau). Three editions were published in the camp: the first one in December 1942, the second, extended with materials obtained in 1943, in April 1943, and the third (covering materials from 1941–1944) in October 1944.

In the latter half of 1944, members of the Museum commando decided to compile and publish all materials from the excavations in which they had participated. The resulting publication was titled *Quellenmaterial zur wissenschaftlichen Bearbeitung der Ausgrabungen in der Umgebung des K.L.M. Gusen-Oberdonau 1940–43*. However, the work was interrupted by the liberation of the camp on May 5, 1945.

At the end of 1942, members of the Museum commando also produced a pocket calendar for 1943. The 46-page booklet, measuring 8 x 11 cm, contained drawings of archaeological and numismatic finds, views of the Spielberg Castle ruins, a comprehensive calendar for 1943, brief information on excavation work and its findings, maps, a plan of Spielberg Castle, and a chronological overview. The print run was limited to 100 copies.

Due to Allied air raids in October 1943, part of the museum's archaeological collection was sent to shelters in Behringersmühle in the Forchheim district, north of Nuremberg.⁴⁸ In the second half of 1944, Allied bombing around Mauthausen-Gusen intensified. On October 5, 1944, the camp authorities received a telegraphic order from the Reichsleiter's office to place the Gusen collection under special SS protection. That same month, crates containing the artefacts were hidden in a cave in Pottenstein, Upper Franconia.⁴⁹

After the war, the Gusen museum collection was included in the official list of items sought by the Federal Monuments Office. As a result, the recovered crates were handed over to the Austrian state by the American and Soviet occupation authorities. In November 1948, the artefacts were transferred to the Federal Monuments Office in Vienna. In September 1950, they were officially incorporated into the Prehistoric Department

of the Museum of Natural History in Vienna, where they remain to this day.⁵⁰

Summary

The burial site discovered during the archaeological excavations at the Gusen concentration camp deserves attention for its significant finds, which provide a wealth of information regarding burial practices from the Bronze Age and early Iron Age. They are associated with local urn-field groups and were also used for funerary purposes during the developed Hallstatt culture in the early Iron Age. From the scientific standpoint, these materials provide valuable insights into the prehistory of modern Upper Austria.

However, the historical context of the discovery cannot be overlooked, namely the conditions under which the research was conducted and the extraordinary struggle for survival faced by the prisoners involved. The archaeological work at KL Gusen was carried out by prisoners who were not professional archaeologists. The archaeological labour units – Spielberg commando, Kogelberg commando, and Museum SS Gusen commando – were directly supervised by the camp commandant and operated with a degree of autonomy. Working in these units granted prisoners unique privileges: accommodation in a better housing barrack, single bunks, new uniforms and underwear, leather shoes instead of wooden clogs, extra food rations, and, most importantly, reduced physical and psychological abuse.

These archaeological commandos served as refuges for prisoners in need of protection and increased their chances of survival. This was an entirely unique situation, where near-professional archaeological research was conducted by groups of non-archaeologists. Their diligent efforts to document, excavate, describe, and display archaeological artefacts in an almost professionally organized museum within the camp simultaneously improved their survival odds and left behind a unique record of a burial site that likely no longer exists.

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⁴⁸ Gelinek 1946, 3; Murasiewicz 1962, 208; Dobosiewicz 2000, 69.

⁴⁹ Trnka, Landenbauer-Orel 1992, 47–112.

⁵⁰ Pollak 2015, 270.

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