

## **Keltski meč z Ljubljanskega barja pri Iški Loki. K razlagam posamičnih in skupnih najdb orožja v vodnih in močvirnih okoljih**

### **Celtic sword from the Ljubljansko barje near Iška Loka: A reflection on the interpretations of individual and group finds of weapons in rivers and wetlands**

Andrej GASPARI

#### **Izvleček**

Prispevek obravnava posamično najdbo keltskega meča iz šotnih plasti na Ljubljanskem barju. Meč je bil naključno odkrit leta 1989 med izkopom jarka na barjanskem zemljišču severovzhodno od Iške Loke, nekaj sto metrov severno od kompleksa bakrenodobnih koliščarskih naselbin. Meč z rezilom rapirjaste oblike je žigosan z dokaj realistično podobo moške glave v profilu, usmerjene proti nosilcu, ki spominja na upodobitve glav na okvirno sočasnih keltskih srebrnikih. Glede na žig in redko obliko visokega zvončastega branika meč najverjetneje sodi v končni del srednjelatenske stopnje Lt C2 po srednjeevropski kronologiji, okvirno v sredino ali na začetek druge polovice 2. st. pr. n. št. Najdba nakazuje obstoj visokega barja v mlajši železni dobi ter dopolnjuje že znane posamične najdbe in zbirne nepoškodovanega orožja iz struge Ljubljanice pri Blatni Brezovici in Bevkah, ki jih povezujemo s kulturnimi dejanji. Vzgib za odložitev meča v odročnem predelu barja je morda odraz zavedanja o obstoju bližnje starodavne naselbine.

**Ključne besede:** mlajša železna doba; Kelti; meči; vodne najdbe; Ljubljansko barje; žig; moška glava

#### **Abstract**

The article discusses the stray find of a Celtic sword in the Ljubljansko barje. The sword was found by chance in 1989, in a layer of peat while excavating a ditch on the marshland northeast of Iška Loka, a few hundred meters north of a complex of Copper Age pile-dwelling settlements. It has a rapier-like blade stamped with a fairly realistic depiction of a male head in profile, oriented toward the bearer, reminiscent of the representations on roughly contemporary Celtic silver coins. Given the specific and rare shape of the high campanulate guard and the presence of the stamp, the sword most likely dates to the final part of the Middle La Tène period (LT C2), i.e. the middle or beginning of the second half of the 2nd century BC. The find indicates the existence of high marshes in the Late Iron Age and complements the known complexes of undamaged weapons found in the riverbed of the Ljubljanica at Blatna Brezovica and Bevke that we associate with ritual practices. The deposition of the sword in this remote marshy environment may, albeit with reservation, be linked to the knowledge of an ancient settlement existing nearby.

**Key words:** Late Iron Age; Celts; swords; water finds; Ljubljansko barje; stamp; male head



Sl. 1: Lokacija najdišča na barju v bližini Iške Loke (podlaga: po GisKD).

Fig. 1: The findspot in the Ljubljansko barje near Iška Loka (basemap: after GisKD)

Anton Uršič je pri kopanju jarka na svojem zemljišču v bližini Iške Loke aprila 1989 našel železen meč latenske sheme in ga zaupal v hrambo Osnovni šoli Ig. Septembra 1993 so učenci zanimiv predmet prinesli na sejem zbiralcev starin, ki ga je organiziral Mestni muzej Ljubljana (danes Muzej in galerije mesta Ljubljana). Meč je bil restavratorsko pregledan, opisan, izrisan in fotografiran, v sodelovanju z Narodnim muzejem pa je bil izdelan tudi rentgenski posnetek. Osnovne podatke o najdbi je zabeležila in leta 1998 v 37. številki revije Varstvo spomenikov – poročila objavila Božena Dirjec, sodelavka Mestnega muzeja.<sup>1</sup>

Meč je Osnovna šola Ig slabi dve leti pozneje zaupala v konserviranje delavnici Narodnega muzeja Slovenije, kamor ga je 5. julija 1999 prinesla učiteljica Ida Zgonc. Tudi ob tej priložnosti je bil

narejen rentgenski posnetek, meč pa je bil še enkrat fotografiran in narisano. V muzejski dokumentaciji je evidentiran v zapisniku o najdbi v zasebni hrambi št. ZN 116. Po končani konservaciji je bil meč 14. decembra istega leta vrnjen gospo Zgonc. Iz zapisnika o najdbi izhaja, da je bila stranka seznanjena z možnostjo predaje meča muzeju za odškodnino. Meč je danes neznan kje.

## NAJDIŠČNE OKOLIŠČINE

Meč je bil najden pri kopanju jarka za odvodnjavanje zamočvirjenih barjanskih tal na ledini z imenom Parti, in sicer tik ob jugozahodnem vogalu parcele s številko 1377, k. o. 1700 – Ig, neposredno pod kolovozom (parc. št. 2822), ki v smeri sever–jug spremlja pravokotno nanj umeščene parcele (sl. 1; 2). Po navedbah najditelja, takratnega lastnika

<sup>1</sup> Dirjec 1998.



Sl. 2: Anton Uršič na mestu najdbe meča, 36 let po odkritju.

Fig. 2: Anton Uršič at the findspot of the sword, 36 years after the discovery.

zemljišča, je na meč naletel po odstranitvi nasutja za "štradon", in sicer v navidezno homogeni plasti šote na globini 50 do 70 cm pod površino. Šota, v kateri je meč ležal približno vodoravno, se je nadaljevala v globino.

Gospod Uršič, ki pozna arheološko dediščino Ljubljanskega barja in je pristojne institucije redno obveščal o zanimivih najdbah na svojih zemljiščih v okolici Iške Loke, tudi o dveh čolnih izdolbencih,<sup>2</sup> ne pri izkopu omenjenega jarka ne pri oranju parcele med kolovozom in dobrih 500 m oddaljeno strugo potoka Iščica ni naletel na druge predmete kulturno-zgodovinskega pomena. Najdišče meča sicer leži približno 750–800 m severno od kompleksa t. i. Dežmanovih kolišč, znotraj območja enote dediščine Ig – Kolišča na Igu (EŠD 190), od leta 2014 varovane kot kulturni spomenik državnega pomena (Uradni list RS, št. 2/2014).

Okoli 170 m vzhodno od mesta najdbe meča je na vizualizaciji lidarskih podatkov opazna vijugava linearna depresija v smeri sever–jug, v kateri lahko glede na podobno usmeritev, širino in sinusoidnost verjetno prepoznamo nekdanje rečno korito Iščice. Položaj meča v šotni plasti nakazuje, da se je v železni dobi na tem območju širilo visoko barje, katerega nastanek in razvoj se postavljata v čas po koncu poselitve območja poplavne ravnice oz. umikajočega se jezera, domnevno najpozneje v prvi polovici 2. tisočletja pr. n. št.<sup>3</sup>

## OPIS

Opis temelji na fotografijah, risbi in rentgenskem posnetku predmeta iz leta 1999. Meč označujejo razmeroma dolg ročajni trn, zvončast branik in rezilo rombičnega preseka, od katerega je v celoti ohranjen samo osrednji, najmasivnejši del med vrhom branika in konico, ostrini pa manjkata. Konica je odmljena le v terminalnem delu. Ohranjena dolžina meča je zelo blizu originalni in znaša 80,55 cm (sl. 3; 4: 1; 5).

Ostrini sta močno nazobčano korodirani in ohranjeni izključno v neznatnem delu tik ob prehodu v rame rezila oz. ob braniku. Na tem mestu je širina rezila 4,28 cm, na okoli 65,32 cm dolgem poteku proti konici pa jo lahko le ocenimo na podlagi debeline boljše ohranjenih delov. Na razdalji 30,8 cm od branika jo lahko na podlagi boljše ohranjenosti leve strani (ohr. š. 3 cm) ocenimo na vsaj 3,4 cm ali več, na razdalji 48,7 cm od branika oz. 17,2 cm pred konico pa na podlagi boljše ohranjenosti desne strani (ohr. š. 2,49 cm) na vsaj 2,7 cm ali več. Ne glede na ozadje močne korodiranosti se zdi, da stanje rezila, ki se dokaj enakomerno zožuje proti konici, vsaj deloma odseva prvotni obris, čeprav ni mogoče povsem izključiti niti možnosti, da sta bili ostrini večji del poteka bolj ravni oz. vzporedni.

Rezilo ima v bližini ročajnega trna še izrazit presek v obliki sploščenega romba, katerega grebena pa se kmalu izgubita. Na začetku druge tretjine rezilo dobi lečast presek, ki je od zadnje tretjine proti konici – tudi zaradi korodiranosti – praktično povsem sploščen.

<sup>2</sup> Svolfšak 1997; Erič 2008, št. 9 in 12.

<sup>3</sup> Glej Budja, Mlekuž 2008; Velušček, Čufar 2014.



Sl. 3: Meč z Ljubljanskega barja pri Iški Loki. Detalj ročajnega trna z branikom in rezila z žigom (arhiv NMS).  
Fig. 3: Sword from the Ljubljansko barje near Iška Loka. Detail of the hilt, guard and blade with the stamp (Archives of the National museum of Slovenia).

Ročajni trn (d. 13,6 cm) ima pravokoten presek in stranici, ki se rahlo in enakomerno širita, nato pa prek značilne zvončaste razširitve z navpičnima spodnjima deloma stranic preideta v ravni rameni rezila. Na prehod je nameščen železen branik zvončaste oblike, ki ga na fotografirani in narisani strani označujejo razmeroma visok in širok, polkrožno zaobljen osrednji del ter nagnjena ravna kraka.

Ohranjeno površino rezila in priležnega dela ročajnega trna zaznamuje nepravilen ("psevdomasciran") vzorec rahlo valovitih vzdolžnih pramen trše kovine, privzdignjenih nad vmesne pasove izcejene korodirane površine. Vzorec se sluti tudi ob ostrinah in ni omejen na osrednji pas rezila.

Okoli 3 cm pod rameni je na desni strani rezila odtisnjen žig, ki v pozitivu prikazuje moško glavo v levem profilu. Teme glave je obrnjeno proti konici, obraz pa proti levi ostrini (sl. 5). Celotno polje od roba do roba odtisa meri 1,4 cm v višino in 1,1 cm v širino. Prepoznavni so zaobljena brada, dolg nos z ostrim vrhom in ravnim hrbtom, oko, diadem z naprej usmerjenimi ozkimi listi, obrobljenimi s tankima črtama, ki morda ponazarjata biserni niz, ter naprej usmerjeni prameni las.

## DISKUSIJA

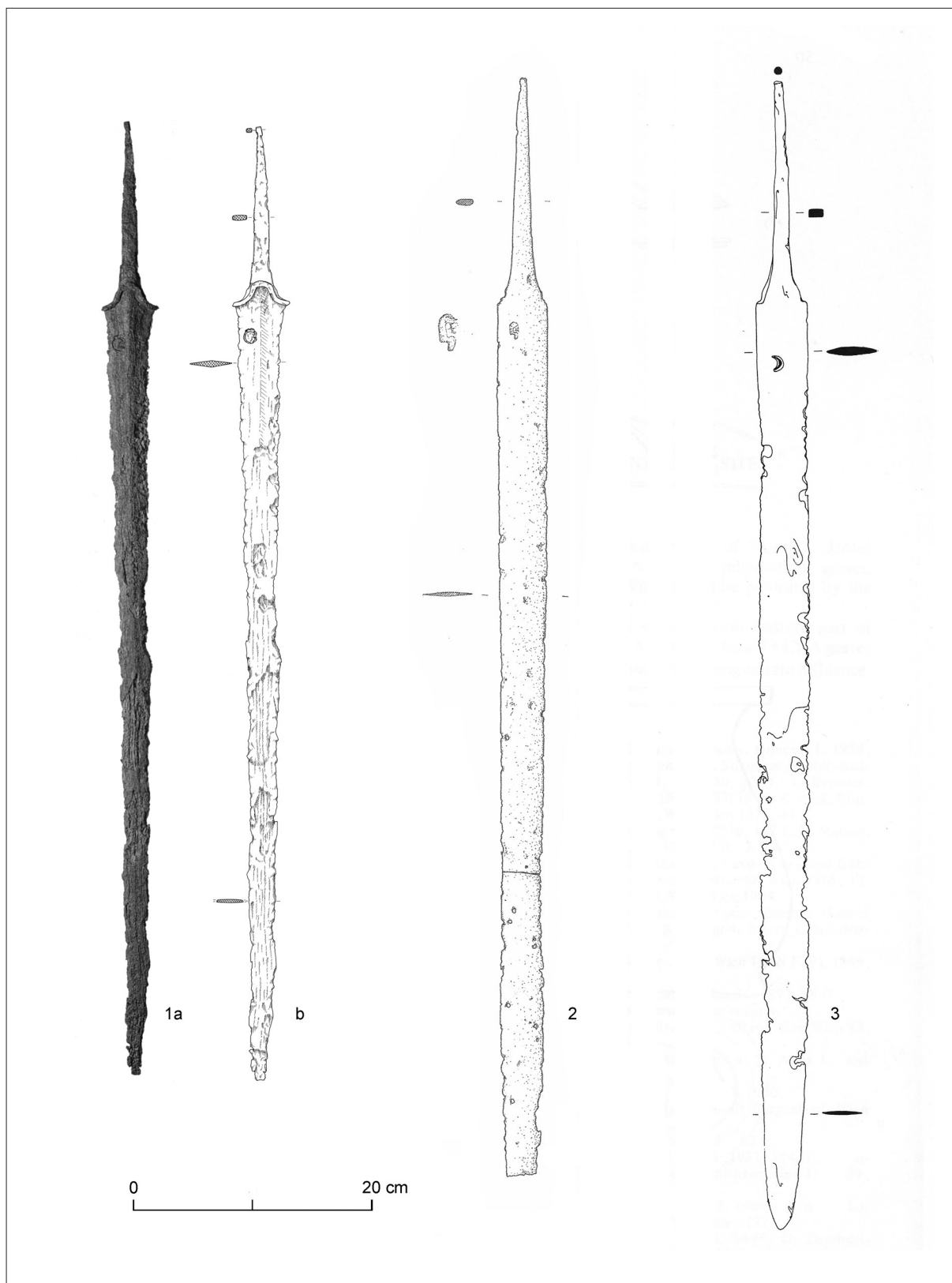
### Meč

Mere in razmerja posameznih delov orožja ter le pogojno tudi presek rezila okvirno ustrezajo nadregionalno razširjenemu tipu mečev iz mlajšega dela srednjega latena (Lt C2) (sl. 3; 4: 1; 5).<sup>4</sup> Te zaznamujejo braniki praviloma visokega zvončastega obrisa, natakknjeni na izrez v vzhodju zaobljeno napetih ramen, s katerima ročajni trn prehaja v rezilo. Slednje ima lečast ali sploščen rombičen presek in praviloma vzporedni ostrini, ki v zadnji petini preideta v kratko konico, pri določenem delu mečev pa se rezilo zelo počasi in enakomerno oži. Na keltskem zahodu se poleg rezil z ostrimi konicami pojavljajo tudi primerki z zaobljenim vrhom. Razpon dolžin rezil tega časa (65–85 cm), ki še v stopnji Lt C1 ne presega nekaj centimetrov, domnevno nakazuje razlike med orožjem pešcev in konjenikov ter obravnavano orožje postavlja v domeno prvih.<sup>5</sup>

Ob izteku srednjega latena in prehodu v stopnjo Lt D1 je prišlo na območju med severno Galijo, severno Italijo, Baltikom in Podonavjem do izrazitega podaljšanja in diverzifikacije presekov rezil, katerih dolžina skoraj praviloma presega 80, neredko celo 90 cm. Na zahodu v stopnji Lt D1 prevladujejo meči z rezili lečastega in sploščenega rombičnega preseka, občasno z nizkimi sredinskimi rebri v zgornjem delu rezila, in ozkimi žlebiči vzdolž celotne dolžine, pogosto s sledovi površinske kemične dodelave, znane že iz prejšnje faze. Konice so izrazito podaljšane, izvlečene in nasploh ostre. V tej stopnji se pojavijo meči z rezili trirombičnega preseka z dvema širokima žlebičema, novosti, ki je povečala trdnost ob hkratnem

<sup>4</sup> Lejars 1996, 89–90; Drnić 2015, 24–25.

<sup>5</sup> Rapin 1999, 59; Drnić 2015, 24.



Sl. 4: Meči z ozkimi rezili stopenj Lt C2 in D1: 1 – Ljubljansko barje; 2 – Boljevci; 3 – Mariano al Brembo (1 – risba: Ida Murgelj; foto: arhiv NMS; 2 – po Drnić 2015, sl. 6: 3; 3 – po De Marinis 1977, t. 11: 5a).

Fig. 4: Swords with narrow blades of the phases Lt C2 and Lt D1: 1 – Ljubljansko barje; 2 – Boljevci; 3 – Mariano al Brembo (1 – drawing: Ida Murgelj; photo: Archives of the National museum of Slovenia; 2 – after Drnić 2015, Fig. 6: 3; 3 – after De Marinis 1977, Pl. 11: 5a).



Sl. 5: Meč z Ljubljanskega barja pri Iški Loki. Detajl žiga (arhiv MGML).

Fig. 5: Sword from the Ljubljansko barje near Iška Loka. Detail of the stamp (Archives of the Museum and Galleries of Ljubljana).

zmanjšanju teže. Rezila so na splošno razmeroma ozka, široka okoli 4 cm.<sup>6</sup>

Na prostoru med jugovzhodnimi Alpami in jugovzhodno Panonijo so meči s trirombičnim presekom rezila vodilna, praktično ekskluzivna oblika stopnje Lt D1, podobni meči pa so dokumentirani tudi v Transpadani, srednji Evropi severno od Alp, jugovzhodni Transdanubiji in na najdiščih ob južni obali Baltika.<sup>7</sup> Zaznamujejo jih vzporedni ostrini, kratka ostrina ali zaobljen vrh ter visok zvončasti branik, ki ima v posameznih primerih raven vrh. Osrednje rebro rezila se podaljša v ročajni trn rombičnega preseka, ki se konča v manjšem gumbu. Žlebova sta zelo pogosto okrašena z gosto vtolčenimi vdolbinami. Med meči s trirombičnim presekom rezila z območja mokronoške skupine so tudi primeri z ročajnimi trni pravokotnega preseka, kar se sklada z značilnostmi pripadajočih nožnic s prehoda Lt C2 v Lt D1, sorodnih kompletom tipa A2 po J.-P. Guillaumetu in M. Szabu.<sup>8</sup> Meče s trirombičnim presekom navadno spremljajo nožnice z zgornjimi okrepitvami v obliki dvojne črke S ter simetričnima ovalnima ali koničastima ploščicama zanke za obešanje, ponovno oblikovne in tehnične rešitve, vpeljane že v predhodni stopnji Lt C2.

<sup>6</sup> Lejars 1996, 90; Łuczkiwicz 1997, 178–182; Biborski 1999, 81–85; Drnić 2015, 29–34.

<sup>7</sup> Božič 1999, 210; Drnić 2015, 29–34; Dizdar, Potrebica 2014, 357–361; Gruškovnjak, Omahen, Toškan 2018, 235–236.

<sup>8</sup> Guillaumet, Szabó 2002.

Na območju jugovzhodnih Alp in južne Panonije se meči s trirombičnim presekom prenehajo uporabljati v 1. st. pr. n. št. Primerki z razmeroma širokimi rezili lečastega preseka iz stopnje Lt D2, značilni za keltski zahod,<sup>9</sup> so znani samo z delom rezila in spremljajoče nožnice z lestvastim koničnikom z zaobljenim zaključkom iz Ljubljanice.<sup>10</sup> V izteku latenske dobe (po 60–35 pr. n. št.) se na obravnavanem prostoru pojavijo okoli 82 cm dolgi meči s 3,4–4,1 cm širokimi rezili lečastega preseka, ki jih označujejo ozek sredinski žleb ali žlebova, vzporedni ostrini in izvlečena konica, dolgi ročajni trni pravokotnega preseka s poševnimi rameni, opremljeni z visokimi zvončastimi braniki in zaključnimi gumbi držajev iz medenine.<sup>11</sup>

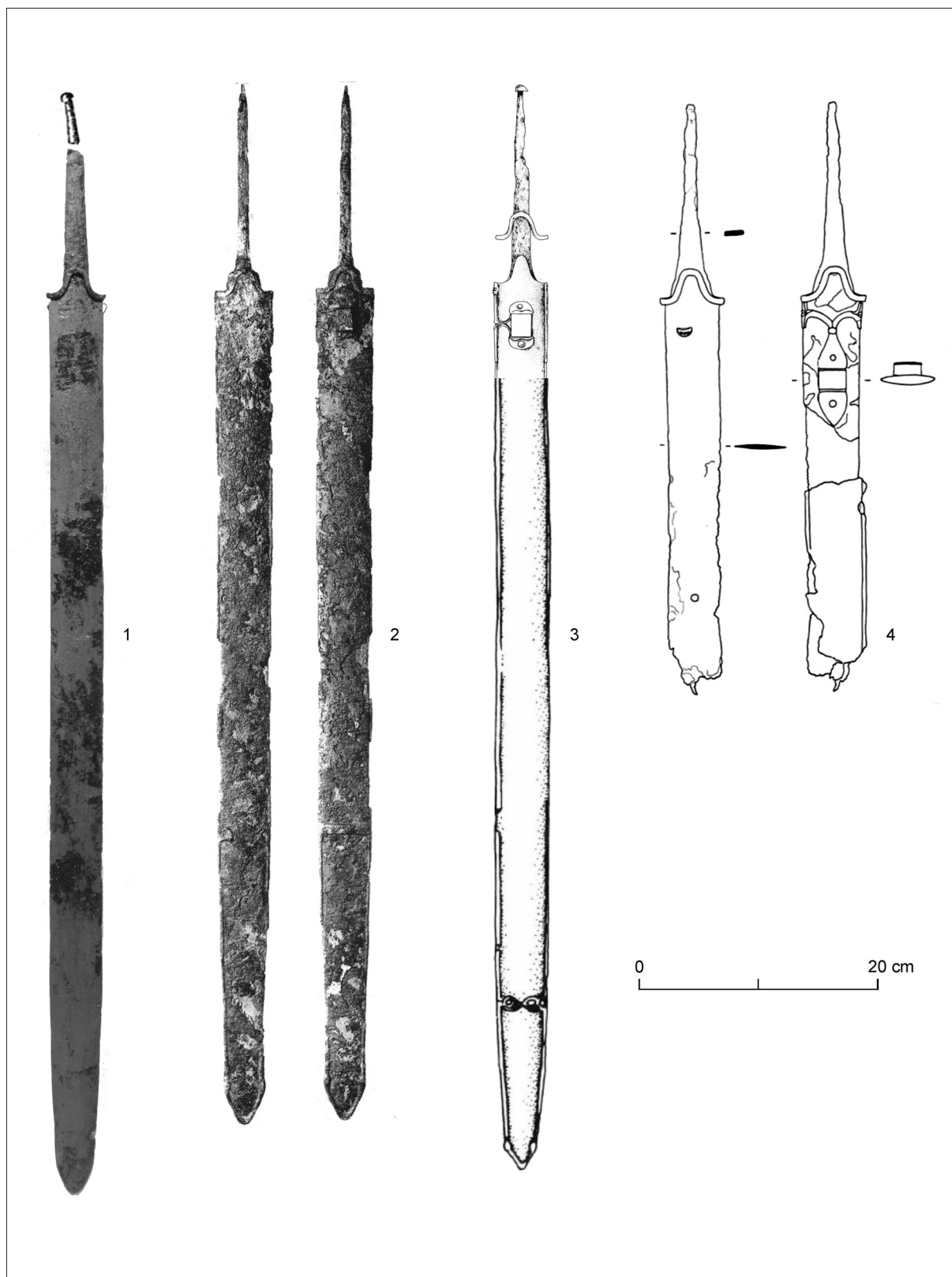
## Rezilo

Pri meču iz bližine Iške Loke vzbujata pozornost nenavadna kombinacija razmeroma ozkega rezila, dolgega trna in zvončastega branika s širokim, polkrožno zaobljenim sredinskim delom. Obliki rezila najdemo podobnosti le pri redkih mečih latenske sheme, ki so si stoletja narazen. Pri najstarejši med identificiranimi primerjavami gre za

<sup>9</sup> Lejars 1996, 90, sl. 6: 5, 7: 10; Pernet, Carlevaro 2006, 40, sl. 2.9: 3a.

<sup>10</sup> Gaspari 2002a, 69–71, sl. 26.

<sup>11</sup> Istenič 2010.



Sl. 6: Meči s polkrožno zaobljenimi braniki. Stopnja Lt C2: 1 – Skorba; 2 – La Tène; 3 – Hart/Wildon; 4 – Nosate (1 – PM Ptuj - Ormož; 2 – Navarro 1972, t. XL: 2a, 2b; 3 – po Szabó, Petres 1992, t. 80; 4 – po Tizzoni 1984, sl. 4).

Fig. 6: Swords with a campanulate guard with a semicircularly rounded central part. Phase Lt C2: 1 – Skorba; 2 – La Tène; 3 – Hart/Wildon; 4 – Nosate (1 – Provincial museum Ptuj-Ormož; 2 – Navarro 1972, Pl. XL: 2a, 2b; 3 – after Szabó, Petres 1992, Pl. 80; 4 – after Tizzoni 1984, Fig. 4).

82 cm dolg meč s 4,5 cm širokim rezilom iz bogato opremljenega groba 1 v Castellunchiu v Umbriji, datiranega v konec 4. st. ali na sam začetek 3. st. pr. n. št. Kot opozarja Lejars, dimenzije meča povsem odstopajo od mečev zgodnjelatske sheme in ustrezajo primerkom iz 2. st., težave pri opredelitvi pa povzroča tudi nožnica z zaokroženim zaključkom koničnika in sistemom za obešanje s paroma stranskih obročkov. Dejstvo, da je branik zaobljenega obrisa po obliki zelo blizu obravnavanemu,<sup>12</sup> lahko verjetno pripišemo naključju. Podobno obliko ima 83,9 cm dolg meč z grobišča Kupinovo v Sremu, ki ga I. Drnić na podlagi poševnih ramen in sploščenega rombičnega preseka umešča v zgodnejši del stopnje Lt C1. Do 4,3 cm široko rezilo se od ram enakomerno oži proti kratki konici. Poleg ram se od obravnavanega primerka loči tudi po krajšem, 10,9 cm dolgem trnu trikotnega obrisa.<sup>13</sup>

Med meči, pripisanimi stopnji Lt C2, izpostavljamo okoli 92 cm dolg meč z lokacije Boljevci v Sremu. Zaznamujeta ga dolgo rezilo lečastega preseka, ki se enakomerno oži proti kratki konici, ter razmeroma dolg trn ovalnega preseka z usločenima ramenoma in zajedo za branik. Tik pod levim ramenom je na rezilu vtisnjen žig s podobo vepra (*sl. 4: 2*).<sup>14</sup>

Podoben obris ima tudi rezilo okoli 96 cm dolgega meča iz groba v kraju Mariano al Brembo (Milano), ki ga P. Agostinetti idr. na podlagi para fibul tipa Nauheim I umeščajo v horizont Lt D1b oz. v čas med letoma 120 in 80 pr. n. št.<sup>15</sup> Meč označujejo daljši, okoli 16 cm dolg ročajni trn in napeti rameni, ki z ravnim kolonom prehajata v rezilo lečastega preseka. To je najširše na vrhu (ca. 3,9 cm), nato pa se komaj opazno oži do začetka zadnje šestine, kjer preide v konico. Pod rameni je na desni strani rezila žig v obliki polmeseca (*sl. 4: 3*).<sup>16</sup>

## Branik

Kot omenjeno, se branik meča z Barja loči tako od branikov večine mečev stopnje Lt C2, v okviru katerih izrazito prevladujejo visoke zvončaste izvedbe z razmeroma ozkim osrednjim delom z zaobljenim ali redkeje oglato zaobljenim vrhom, kot tudi njim podobnih branikov mečev poznolatske sheme z rezili trirombičnega preseka. Med najdbami z eponimnega najdišča La Tène ima podoben, vendar ne povsem enak obris branika le nekaj mečev. Izpostavljamo 83,8 cm dolg meč s klasično oblikovanim rezilom, shranjen v 4,7 cm široki nožnici (*sl. 6: 2*).<sup>17</sup>

Braniku izanskega meča so podobni primerki s sicer manj izrazito polkrožno zaobljenimi osrednjimi deli ter vodoravnimi in na koncu rahlo zavihanimi kraki. Mednje sodi branik na 87 cm dolgem meču z do 4,3 cm širokim rezilom lečastega preseka iz groba v Skorbi, za katerega Skrabar poudarja izdelavo iz "najboljšega jekla". Sledovi na zelo poškodovani površini dajejo slutiti o vlaknasti strukturi rezila, ki ima pod levim krakom branika vtisnjen žig v obliki polmeseca (*sl. 6: 1*).<sup>18</sup> Zelo podoben branik je nameščen na 91 cm dolgem meču s 4,3 cm širokim rezilom lečastega preseka v nožnici skupine GSA 6 s t. i. žabjo spojko zanke za obešanje iz groba v Hartu pri Wildonu (*sl. 6: 3*),<sup>19</sup> ki je prav tako značilna oblika celotne stopnje Lt C2. Primer branika z nekoliko ožjim in oglatim osrednjim delom, ki si z obravnavano obliko deli poševna kraka, ponuja fragment meča brez znane celote iz kraja Nosate (Milano), shranjen v nožnici, katere zadnjo stran zaznamujejo simetrični ploščici zanke za obešanje in iz zgornje izhajajoča okrepitev v obliki črke Y (tip GSA 10).<sup>20</sup> Na desni strani 4,5 cm širokega rezila lečastega preseka je vtisnjen žig v obliki polmeseca (*sl. 6: 4*).<sup>21</sup> Masivni branik polkrožne oblike z ravnima krakoma (v. 2,9

<sup>12</sup> Lejars 2014, 404–405, sl. 3.

<sup>13</sup> Drnić 2015, 22, t. 2: 2.

<sup>14</sup> Drnić 2015, 27, sl. 6: 3.

<sup>15</sup> Agostinetti et al. 2014, 42.

<sup>16</sup> De Marinis 1977, 37, t. 11: 5 a, b; Deutscher 2012, 349, kat. št. 125.

<sup>17</sup> De Navarro 1972, 415–416, t. XL: 2a, 2b (št. 93).

<sup>18</sup> Skrabar 1923, 146, t. 3: 1; Deutscher 2012, kat. št. 140.

<sup>19</sup> Szabó, Petres 1992, 102, t. 80.

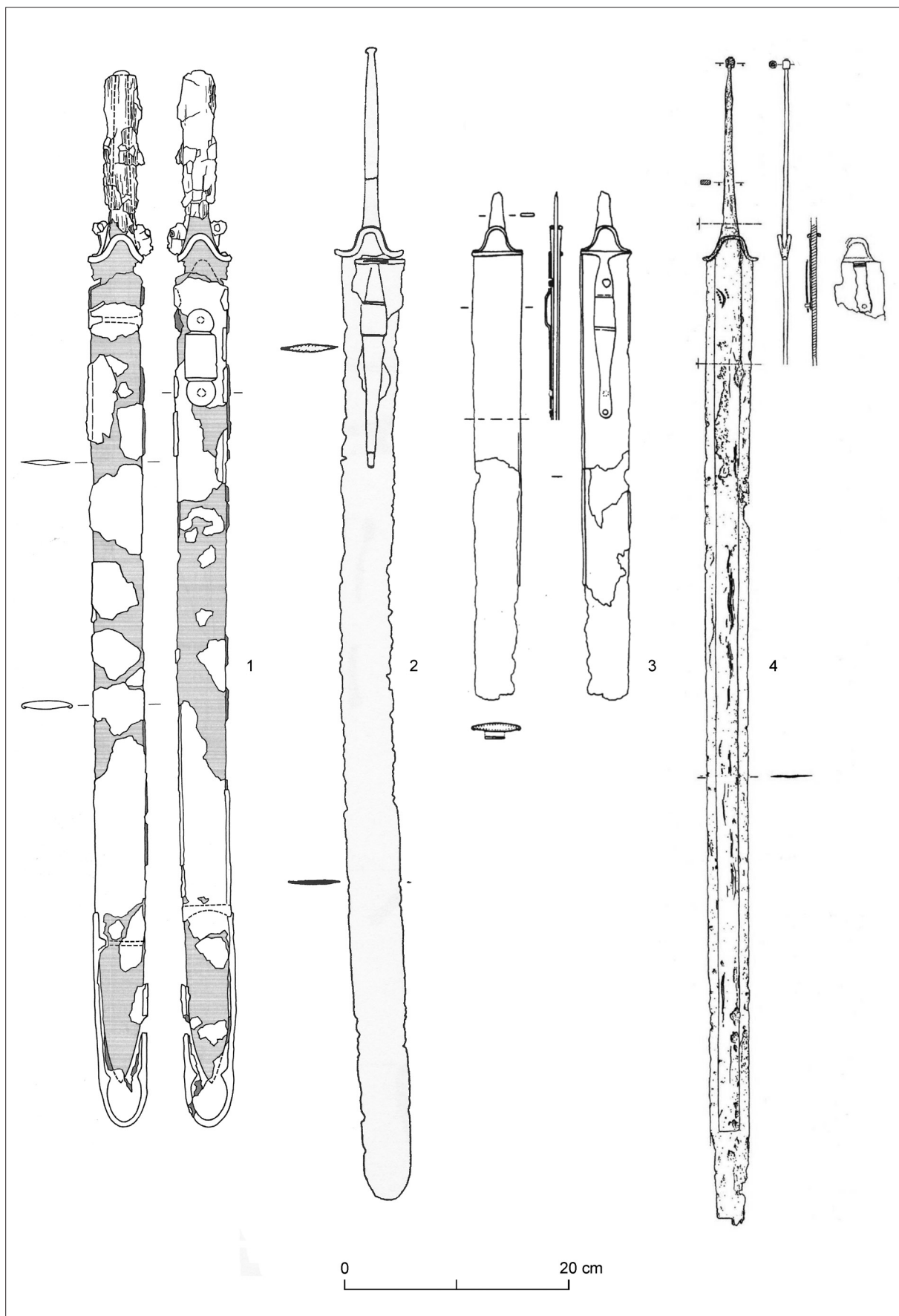
<sup>20</sup> Lejars 1994, 30; Drnić 2015, 38; Dizdar 2013.

<sup>21</sup> Tizzoni 1984, 100–102, sl. 4; Deutscher 2012, 349, sl. 9: u (kat. št. 127).

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*Sl. 7: Meči s polkrožno zaobljenimi braniki. Stopnja Lt D: 1 – Giubiasco, gr. 427; 2 – Mépieu; 3 – Saône / Lux; 4 – Saône / Chalon (1 – po Pernet, Carlevaro 2006; 2 – po Pernet 2010, t. 54: 2; 3 – po Guillaumet, Szabó 2002, sl. 14: 4; 4 po Marchal 2014–2015, kat. št. 23).*

*Fig. 7: Swords with a campanulate guard with a semicircularly rounded central part. Phase Lt D: 1 – Giubiasco, grave 427; 2 – Mépieu; 3 – Saône / Lux; 4 – Saône / Chalon (1 – after Pernet, Carlevaro 2006; 2 – after Pernet 2010, Pl. 54: 2; 3 – after Guillaumet, Szabó 2002, Fig. 14: 4; 4 – after Marchal 2014–2015, Cat. No. 23).*



cm; š. 4,7 cm), podoben obravnavani, je znan tudi med braniki brez pripadajočih mečev in izvornih celot z grobišča Kupinovo. I. Drnić ga tipološko umešča v stopnji Lt C–D1.<sup>22</sup>

V okviru mlajših analogij so braniki ločno izbočene oblike običajno nameščeni na meče z rezili lečastega preseka, shranjene v nožnicah skupine A2, ki so značilne za keltska grobišča v severni Italiji, Galiji in Porenju. Nožnice tega tipa se pojavijo v izteku stopnje Lt C2, v času stopnje D2 jih ne izdelujejo več.<sup>23</sup> Med primeri mečev z ločno zaobljenimi braniki z ravnimi in praviloma zavihanimi kraki ter rezili sploščenega rombičnega ali lečastega preseka navajamo najdbe iz groba 24b na najdišču Povegliano Ortaia pri Veroni (Lt D1),<sup>24</sup> iz grobov 425 in 427 (sl. 7: 1) iz Giubiasca (Ticino) (Lt D)<sup>25</sup> in meča z nekropole Mépieu (Rhône-Alpes) (Lt C2–D1), od katerih je eden shranjen v nožnici z asimetričnima ploščicama za pripenjanje (sl. 7: 2),<sup>26</sup> ter meče v nožnicah iz struge reke Saône v Chalonu (sl. 7: 4) kot tudi iz okolice krajev Lux (sl. 7: 3) in Saint-Marcel.<sup>27</sup>

Avtorja, Guillaumet in Szabó, kot značilnosti mečev, shranjenih v nožnicah skupine A2, navajata ločno oblikovani branik pravokotnega preseka in rezilo, ki ima ostro konico in poševni ali ravni rameni ter pogosto nosi sledove površinske kemične obdelave – jedkanja osrednjega pasu. Na rezilu 101,2 cm dolgega meča iz Saône z območja Chalona je na desni strani znižanega osrednjega polja pod branikom vrezan znak proti ostrini odprtega loka, ki ga levi spremlja niz petih točk, na desni pa štiri točke, s pridržkom pojasnjen kot astralni simbol.<sup>28</sup> Med mlajšimi primerjavami vzbuja pozornost podobnost z oblikovanostjo rezila (*forme d'une rapière*) nekaj krajšega (73,5 cm) meča iz Alezije, ki ga zaznamujejo še sploščen rombični presek rezila, poševni rameni in tanek ročajni trn pravokotnega preseka. Rezilo je na prehodu v ročajni del bistveno širše (š. 5,8 cm) od obravnavanega, se pa oba zelo podobno zožita. S. Sievers je previdno zapisala, da se zdi rimski izvor tega meča in še enega primerka s podobnim rezilom verjetnejši od keltskega, vendar je menila, da je

ta opredelitev zaradi maloštevilnosti primerjav nezadostno podprta.<sup>29</sup>

Med meči z rezili trirombičnega preseka, na katerih srečamo primerljivo oblikovane branike, ti najpogosteje nastopajo v manj masivnih izvedbah in večkrat v različici z navzgor zavihanimi zaključki krakov. Med geografsko najbližjimi analogijami navajamo meč z grobišča v Mokronogu, shranjen v nožnici z ožjim zvončastim ustjem, že tipični predstavnik stopnje Lt D1.<sup>30</sup>

### Okras rezila

Krašenje rezil keltskih mečev se začne v srednjem latenu in je posebej množično izpričano za pozni laten, ko je drugače od starejših obdobij dokumentirano bistveno redkejše krašenje nožnic.<sup>31</sup> Okras rezil neredko sovпада z njihovim žigosanjem.<sup>32</sup>

Po A. Rapinu se izpostavljanje strukture rezila na območju latenske kulture pojavi okvirno v drugi tretjini 2. st. pr. n. št. in odseva kovaško obvladovanje heterogenosti kovine,<sup>33</sup> tj. varjenja izmenjujočih se lamel temnejšega naogljichenega železa in svetlejšega, čistega železa, ki je ustvarilo valovit vzorec, poudarjen z zaključno kemično obdelavo površine z jedkanjem oz. selektivno korozijo.<sup>34</sup> T. i. plamenasti vzorec (*Flammenmuster*), psevdodamascirani (*Pseudo-damast*, *Flammendamast*) oz. kačasti vzorec (*snake-patterned*) je domnevno povezan z dvigom kakovosti izdelave rezil v lamelni tehniki in namenjen boljši prepoznavnosti prestižnih kosov oborožitve.<sup>35</sup>

Takšno strukturo, ki jo lahko potrdi samo usmerjena metalografska preiskava, so glede na spoznanja raziskav posameznih mečev simulirali tudi tako, da so na rezilo privarili tanke kovinske žice ali snope žic ter površino dokončali s poliranjem. V nekaterih primerih se zdi, da je bil valoviti vzorec izdelan brez varjenja, samo z jedkanjem površin, omejenih z zaščitnimi pasovi voska.<sup>36</sup> Za jedkanje so uporabljali naravne kisline, npr. kis, medtem ko so okrasa proste površine zaščitili z voskom, katranom ali mastjo.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Drnić 2015, 134, t. 11: 9.

<sup>23</sup> Guillaumet, Szabó 2002, 222.

<sup>24</sup> Vitali et al. 2010, 208, sl. 9: 4.

<sup>25</sup> Pernet, Carlevaro 2006, 323.

<sup>26</sup> Pernet 2010, 212, t. 54.

<sup>27</sup> Guillaumet, Szabó 2002, 222, sl. 12: 1, 4, 6.

<sup>28</sup> Marchal 2014–2015, kat. št. 23; Deutscher 2012, kat. št. 95.

<sup>29</sup> Sievers 2001, 151, kat. št. 150, sl. 8, t. 53.

<sup>30</sup> Gabrovec 1966; Božič 1999, 198.

<sup>31</sup> Wyss 1968, 668.

<sup>32</sup> Deutscher 2012, 260.

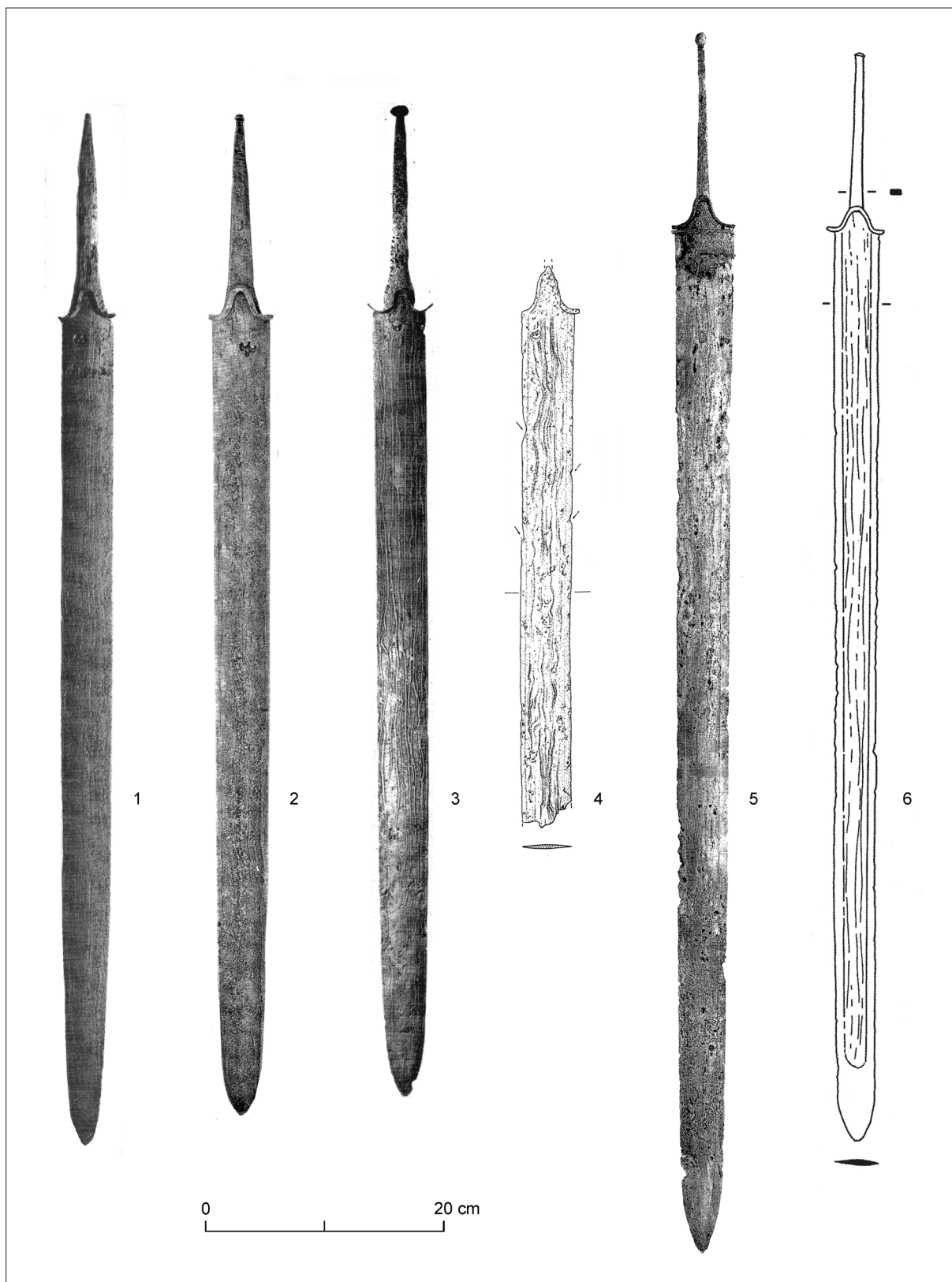
<sup>33</sup> Rapin 1999, 62.

<sup>34</sup> Glej Pleiner 1993, 147.

<sup>35</sup> Lejars 2011, 139–140.

<sup>36</sup> Wyss 1968, 666; Pleiner 1993, 153.

<sup>37</sup> Wyss 1968, 666; Pleiner 1993, 63, 110–111, 152.



Sl. 8: Meči z jedkanimi rezili: 1–3 – La Tène; 4 – Sorantri; 5 – Port; 6 – Saône (1–3 po De Navarro 1972, t. XX: 4; XXVI: 2; XXIX: 4; 4 – po Righi 2001, sl. 7: 1; 5 – po Wyss, Ley, Müller 2002, t. 17: 52; 6 – po Bonnamour 2009, sl. 4: 1).  
 Fig. 8: Swords with etched blades: 1–3 – La Tène; 4 – Sorantri; 5 – Port; 6 – Saône (1–3 after De Navarro 1972, Pl. XX: 4; XXVI: 2; XXIX: 4; 4 – after Righi 2001, Fig. 7: 1; 5 – after Wyss, Ley, Müller 2002, Pl. 17: 52; 6 – after Bonnamour 2009, Fig. 4: 1).

Pri mečih iz La Tène je jedkanje v posameznih primerih zajelo celotno površino rezila (*sl.* 8: 1, 3),<sup>38</sup> v drugih pa se zdi, da so poskušali izpustiti robove ostrin (*sl.* 8: 2).<sup>39</sup> Metalurška preiskava, izvedena na odvetem vzorcu enega od teh mečev, je pokazala, da med valovitimi in ravnimi črtami ter preostalo površino ni prepoznavnih stikov, kar naj bi pomenilo, da rezilo ni bilo izdelano v lamelarni tehniki ("pattern welded").<sup>40</sup>

V poznem latenu se na keltskem zahodu jedkanje pojavlja pri mečih s trirombičnim, sploščenim rombičnim in lečastim presekom, z ostro ali manj izrazito konico ter tako ravnimi ramami kot zvončastimi braniki. V primeru mečev iz reke Thielle pri Portu je praviloma zajelo samo osrednji del rezila med z voskom pokritima robovoma ob ostrinah, katerih širine segajo od 4 do 13 mm in ki so zelo jasno dvignjeni nad osredjem, tudi če zgolj za delček milimetra (*sl.* 8: 5).<sup>41</sup> Podobno velja za meče skupin A2 ter B1 in B2 iz Saône (*sl.* 8: 6).<sup>42</sup>

Opisani način zaključne obdelave rezil mečev je dokumentiran tudi v vzhodnokeltskem svetu, vendar z občutno manjšim številom primerkom, ki so omejeni na stopnjo Lt C2. Omenjeni meč z ostankom nožnice z grobišča Kupinovo ima poglobljen osrednji del rezila z vidno valovito teksturo, ostro ločen od višjih robov ob ostrinah, pod branikom pa žig v obliki vepa.<sup>43</sup> Fragmentirani meč s kultnega mesta na hribu Sorantri, ki ga označuje antropomorfní žig na desni strani rezila pod visokim zvončastim branikom (*sl.* 8: 4),<sup>44</sup> je verjetno iz konca stopnje Lt C2.

## Žig

Meč ima v površino rezila ob levi ostrini, nekaj centimetrov pod branikom, vtisnjen žig. Razprostranjenost žigov na območju latenske kulture kaže, da gre za splošno keltski fenomen, medtem ko meče z žigi v germanskem prostoru običajno interpretirajo kot uvoz iz keltskega sveta. V zadnji

pregledni objavi<sup>45</sup> je L. Deutscher zajela 155 mečev z žigosanimi rezili. Žigosane so tudi redke sulične osti, a je zanje značilnejši gravirani ali jedkani okras. Žigi na rezilih mečev upodabljajo ljudi in živali (veper, konj, ptica, bik), mitološka bitja ali astralne simbole. Na mečih z antropomorfnimi ročaji se žigi pojavijo že v izteku zgodnjega late-na, žigosanje pa je pogosteje izpričano v obdobju od začetka stopnje Lt C1 do izteka latenske dobe (Lt D2).<sup>46</sup> Meči z žigi so najbolj značilni v stopnji Lt C2, v poznem latenu pa njihovo število močno upade in na območju vzhodne latenske kulture skoraj niso več izpričani. Antropomorfní žigi vseh tipov se pojavljajo samo do prehoda v poznolaten-sko stopnjo Lt D.<sup>47</sup> Nasprotno pa so zgolj za poznolaten-sko obdobje značilni t. i. mešani žigi s prikazi konjenikov in kozorogov, znani samo iz reke Zihl pri Portu, ki označujejo konec tradicije žigosanja mečev.<sup>48</sup>

Študija žigosanih mečev in njihovih najdiščnih kontekstov je pokazala, da primerki z žigi po načinu odložitve, prisotnosti okrasa na nožnici, po značilnostih izdelave in kakovosti rezil ne odstopajo od nežigosanih primerkov. Meči z žigi se pojavljajo tako v bogato opremljenih grobovih (npr. Odžaci, Wallertheim) kot tudi v običajno opremljenih pokopih bojevnikov.

Najpogostejši so posamično vtisnjeni znaki, ki se tipično pojavljajo ob levi ostrini pod branikom, znani pa so tudi meči s po dvema ali tremi žigi. Eksperimenti so potrdili, da je žigosanje praviloma potekalo pri zelo visokih temperaturah, kar ob upoštevanju posledic segrevanja na že dokončane meče pomeni, da so bili meči žigosani proti koncu postopka izdelave rezila.<sup>49</sup>

Razlage tovrstnih žigov segajo od oznak kovačev, tj. proizvajalcev, lastniških znakov izdelkov, namenjenih izbranim bojevnikom, ali oznak njihove pripadnosti, prek domnev, da gre za simbole, ki odsevajo magično-religiozne predstave lastnika oz. označevalca, do poimenovanja mečev kot individualnih entitet, morda zaradi njihove epske preteklosti – fenomena, ki je sicer pogosteje izpričan v srednjem veku. V nasprotju z zoomorfnimi žigi, ki so večinoma usmerjeni proti konici ali ostrini, so antropomorfní motivi precej pogosteje usmerjeni

<sup>38</sup> De Navarro 1972, kat. št. 45 (382, t. XX: 4), kat. št. 62 (397, t. XXIX: 4), kat. št. 89 (414, t. XXXIX: 3a–b).

<sup>39</sup> De Navarro 1972, kat. št. 55 (391, t. XXVI: 2a).

<sup>40</sup> De Navarro 1972, 397, glej str. 282, op. 2.

<sup>41</sup> Wyss, Ley, Müller 2002, 36–37, kat. št. 20–22, 25, 28, 31, 47–49, 52.

<sup>42</sup> Guillaumet, Szabó 2002, sl. 14: 1–7, 16: 2, 18: 2; Bonnamour 2009, sl. 3: 2, 3; 4: 1–3; 5: 4.

<sup>43</sup> Drnić 2015, 28, sl. 7.3, t. 7: 2.

<sup>44</sup> Righi 2001, 114, sl. 7: 1; Deutscher 2012, kat. št. 126.

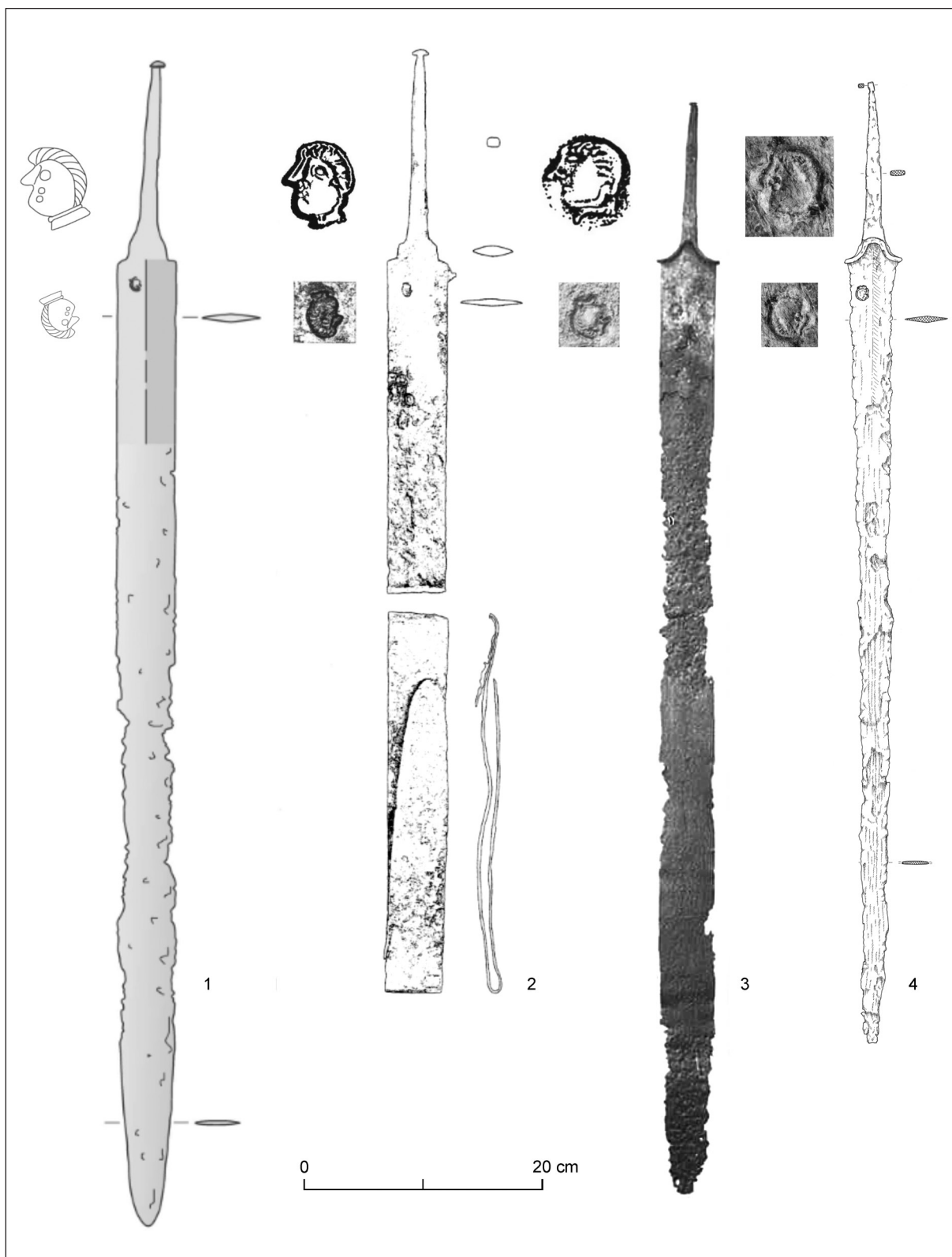
<sup>45</sup> Deutscher 2012.

<sup>46</sup> Deutscher 2012, 255.

<sup>47</sup> Drack 1954/1955, 223; Dulęba 2009; Deutscher 2012, 293.

<sup>48</sup> Deutscher 2012, 293.

<sup>49</sup> Deutscher 2012, 317.



Sl. 9: Meči z antropomorfnimi žigi – moškimi glavami iz profila: 1 – Mazovija; 2 – Wallertheim, grob 31/1951; 3 – Odžaci; 4 – Ljubljansko barje (1 – po Biborski, Kaczanowski 2010, sl. 1: 1, 1a; 2 – po Biborski, Kaczanowski 2010, sl. 2; 3 – po Guštin 1984, t. 6: 11, 7: 1).

Fig. 9: Swords with anthropomorphic stamps – mens heads from the profile: 1 – Mazovia; 2 – Wallertheim, grave 31/1951; 3 – Odžaci; 4 – Ljubljansko barje (1 – after Biborski, Kaczanowski 2010, Fig. 1: 1, 1a; 2 – after Biborski, Kaczanowski 2010, Fig. 2; 3 – after Guštin 1984, Pl. 6: 11, 7: 1).

proti nosilcu meča.<sup>50</sup> Razmeroma majhne dimenzije in usmerjenost na dolgih latenskih mečih vtisnjenih podob nakazujejo, da so imeli žigi pomen predvsem za nosilca, ne pa za zunanji učinek,<sup>51</sup> kar še bolj utrjuje domnevo, da gre primarno za simbole, ki naj bi meču in mečevalcu zagotavljali zaščito in uspeh v boju.

Med antropomorfnimi podobami nastopajo doprsja, celopostavne podobe ter frontalno in s profila upodobljeni obrazi, ki so bili leta 2012 znani s šestimi primeri.<sup>52</sup> Na teh so obrazi praviloma obrnjeni na levo in so torej usmerjeni proti desni ostrini. Gre za dokaj naturalistične prikaze, med katerimi po dovršenosti izstopa žig na meču iz groba 1 v Ilbesheimu (Lt C2/D1), ki ga spremlja še pod njim odtisnjen žig s podobo stilizirane ptice.<sup>53</sup> Eno najbližjih primerjav za upodobitev in izvedbo žiga na meču iz bližine Iške Loke nosi eden od dveh mečev iz dvojnega pokopa z vozom iz Odžakov v Bački (Lt C2) (*sl.* 9: 3).<sup>54</sup> Meč z dolžino 92 cm, ki priča o orožju konjenika, označujejo rezilo lečastega preseka (š. 4,6 cm) v vzporednima ostrinama in kratko konico, srednje visok zvončasti branik in ročajni trn pravokotnega preseka. Ohranjeni zgornji del pripadajoče nožnice nosi na sprednji strani vodoravno objemko, na zadnji pa mostiček zanke za obešanje z dvema koničastima ploščicama, od katerih je zgornja na vrhu razcepljena v obliki črke Y (GSA tip 10 / skupina 10).<sup>55</sup> V isti časovni horizont sodita tudi drugi dve bližnji primerjavi za žig, in sicer na posamično odkritem meču z ostankom nožnice z neznanega najdišča v Mazoviji (Poljska) (*sl.* 9: 1) ter meču iz groba 31/1951 iz Wallertheima (Kr. Alzey, Rheinland-Pfalz) (*sl.* 9: 2), za katera je bilo podano mnenje, da bi lahko predstavljala odtis istega orodja – pečatnika. Za to po mnenju avtorjev govorijo ujemanje upodobitev (obris glave, frizura, oči in usta) in identične dimenzije obeh žigov, zelo podobna pa sta si tudi zadržna meča in pripadajoči nožnici.<sup>56</sup>

Upodobitve obrazov iz profila so v keltski umetnosti sicer znane le še z novcev, katerih motivi so bili inspirirani ali prevzeti z grško-makedonskih in rimskih predlog, čeprav je v večini primerov navezava žigov na upodobitve na konkretnih novčnih

tipih zelo otežena in ni mogoče ugotoviti, ali gre dejansko za podobe božanstev, lokalnih herojev ali sploh določenih oseb.<sup>57</sup>

Nekateri motivi na znakih z mečev in na novcih se ujemajo v takšni meri, da je upravičeno sklepanje o sorodnem načinu izdelave in podobnem orodju oz. pečatu. To še posebej velja za obravnavani žig in njemu podobne, kjer je motiv odtisnjen v pozitivu.<sup>58</sup> Pri žigu na meču iz okolice Iške Loke je blizu domneva, da gre za stilizirano upodobitev Apolona, ki se tudi po dimenzijah glave oz. celotnega odtisa približuje keltskemu drobižnemu denarju iz jugovzhodnoalpskega prostora, katerega premeri večinoma znašajo 8–9 mm in odsevajo videz velikih srebrnikov. Reinterpretirane podobe Apolona z diademom označujejo avere nekaterih novcev obeh glavnih obdobij kovanja okoli sredine 2. st. pr. n. št. (četrtinke drahme tipa s trirogeljno čelado)<sup>59</sup> in časa po okoli 82/80 pr. n. št. (oboli tipa Eis/Led). Verjetni razlog za posnemanje grško-rimskega Apolona oz. njegovih imitacij v karnijskem, tavrščanskem in noriškem kovanju<sup>60</sup> je njegovo morebitno enačenje z domačim božanstvom Belinusom, čigar čaščenje je bilo razširjeno po celotnem keltskem svetu, najbolj prepričljiva evidenca za to enačenje v obliki posvetilnih napisov, svetišč, literarnih pričevanj in morda umetnostne plastike pa izvira iz širšega območja Akvileje in njenega alpskega zaledja.<sup>61</sup> Pomen Apolona/Belena za lokalno skupnost in italske prišleke odseva tudi v domnevnem obstoju morda prav temu božanstvu posvečenega kulturnega mesta v okolici izliva Zrnice v Ljubljano pod Blatno Brezovico, kot bi lahko nakazovali najdbi dveh bronastih kipcev v značilni drži darovalcev iz 2./1. st. pr. n. št.<sup>62</sup>

Omejena izpovednost motiva na žigu kljub omenjenim sorodnostim s podobami na keltskih novcih jugovzhodnoalpskega prostora ne omogoča zanesljive datacije ali celo določitve izvora orožja v regionalnem kontekstu, vendar ga tudi ne izključuje. Območje mokronoške skupine<sup>63</sup> bi namreč smeli označiti za eno glavnih produkcijskih središč orožja v vzhodnokeltskem svetu, kar za srednji in pozni laten ne podpirajo samo dokumentirane množine

<sup>50</sup> Deutscher 2012, 272.

<sup>51</sup> Deutscher 2012, 319.

<sup>52</sup> Deutscher 2012, 280, sl. 13.

<sup>53</sup> Deutscher 2012, 280, sl. 5: b, 13: f.

<sup>54</sup> Guštin 1984, 121–127, tab. 7.1; Dizdar 2013.

<sup>55</sup> Lejars 1994, 24, 30, 36–38, 52–53, 160.

<sup>56</sup> Biborski, Kaczanowski 2010, 157.

<sup>57</sup> Deutscher 2012, 292.

<sup>58</sup> Zieghaus 2014, 26.

<sup>59</sup> Kos 2013.

<sup>60</sup> Glej Schachinger 2020.

<sup>61</sup> Glej Bilić 2016.

<sup>62</sup> Istenič 2001; id. 2002; Gaspari, Krempuš 2002; Murgia 2018.

<sup>63</sup> Pregledno Laharnar 2020.

orožja ter izkazana inventivnost pri oblikovanju nadregionalno priljubljenih oblik (npr. ščitne grbe tipa Mokronog-Arqua, okrogle ščitne grbe in čelade tipa Novo mesto, morda tudi meči tipa Mali Bilač). Čeprav so arheološke in arheometalurške raziskave sledov predelave železove rude v mlajši železni dobi južno od Karavank oz. v osrednjem območju mokronoške skupine šele na začetku, obstajajo dokazi za sodelovanje v trgovini s kakovostnim železom, npr. z najdbami značilnih (pozno)latenskih dvojnokoničastih ingotov (nem. *Doppelspitzbarren*),<sup>64</sup> vprašanje udeležbe Tavrisikov v proizvodnji slovitega "noriškega" železa oz. jekla<sup>65</sup> in izkoriščanju ležišč zlata v alpskem zaledju Akvileje pa ostaja brez določnejših odgovorov. Povezava med keltsko kovno avtoriteto, pod okriljem katere je novčarska delavnica izdelala zadevni pečat, ter nadzorom nad izkoriščanjem železa in izdelavo orožja se zarisuje sama po sebi.<sup>66</sup>

### Datacija

Na podlagi primerjalne analize oblike zvončastega branika, okrasa rezila in žiga lahko meč datiramo v poznejši del stopnje Lt C2 oz. okvirno v sredino ali na začetek druge polovice 2. st. pr. n. št.

### KOMENTAR K NAJDIŠČNIM OKOLIŠČINAM

Najdbo povsem funkcionalnega meča v močvirski šoti težko pripišemo naključni izgubi tako dragocenega predmeta v težko prehodnem in domnevno neobljudenem močvirskem svetu. Odložitev meča prej razumemo kot ritualno dejanje, votivni akt na izbranem kraju v naravi. Izbira kraja morda ni bila naključna, prav blizu so namreč ostaline prastare koliščarske naselbine. Podobno lahko interpretiramo že izansko najdbo okrašenega bronastega bodala iz starejše bronaste dobe.<sup>67</sup>

Arheološko dokumentirani konteksti v močvirskem in vodnem okolju, ki so dali oprijemljive empirične pokazatelje za njihovo interpretacijo kot sledov ritualnega ozadja odlaganja skozi daljše časovno obdobje, dajejo slutiti, da je trenutno

poznavanje tega fenomena – pretežno omejeno na naključno odkrite posamične najdbe ali skupine najdb – tudi stvar stanja raziskanosti. Čeprav domneve o obstoju kulturnih mest dolgega trajanja del raziskovalcev zavrača,<sup>68</sup> včasih brez upoštevanja ključnih tafonomskih okoliščin in tudi s šibkimi nasprotnimi argumenti, je pojav značilnih zvrsti pretežno kovinskega gradiva na močvirskih in barjanskih lokacijah nadregionalni fenomen mlajše prazgodovine širšega evropskega prostora.

Ponavljajoče se daritve na določenem kraju razkrivajo, da povod za njegovo izbiro ni bil posledica individualne odločitve, temveč je bil samemu kraju pripisan pomen, ki ga je naredil za vrednega deponiranja. Za nastanek takega kraja je bil lahko ključen izvorni obstoj prepoznavne topografske značilnosti oz. posebnosti (v močvirnem in vodnem okolju npr. retja, izviri, sotočja, tesni, rečni prehodi ...), ki je s pripisanimi pomeni dobila značaj "kognitivnega konstrukta" oz. relacijskega, ustvarjenega prostora, v katerem se prepletata materialni in nematerialni svet.<sup>69</sup> Ni nemogoče, da je bila izvirna izbira oz. prepoznavna povezana z lokacijo izjemnega vremenskega pojava, morda davnega travmatičnega dogodka, nesreče ali spopada, ki se je ohranil v kolektivnem spominu, navsezadnje tudi obstoj prastarih, skrivnostnih in nerazložljivih ruševin ali drugih ostalin.

Izolirana, posamična najdba meča brez nožnice kaže na individualno daritev bojevnika, katere ozadje se zelo verjetno razlikuje od povodov za odložitve srednje- in poznolatskega orožja ter denarja in prestižnih predmetov v reko Ljubljanico. Slednji so domnevno potekali v okviru ceremonialnih daritev širše skupnosti v okolju rečnega svetišča dolgega trajanja, kjer so posamezniki in skupine v odvisnosti od povodov in priložnosti redno darovali in izvajali kulturna opravila kot medij za komunikacijo z nadzemeljskimi silami ali bitji. Večina latenskih mečev iz Ljubljane med ledino Lipovec pod Blatno Brezovico in Kaminom pri Bevkah je bila namreč odkrita skupaj z nožnicami, brez sledov manipulacije, pri čemer za vsaj dva primera prilagajajočih se delov istega orožja ni mogoče ugotoviti, ali so poškodbe nastale pred potopitvijo ali po njej.<sup>70</sup>

Argumentacija, ki implicira, da je pojav mečev v nožnicah mogoče razložiti tudi z bitkami na rekah ali obrežjih, med katerimi naj bi keltski

<sup>64</sup> K začetni analizi skupne najdbe večjega števila ingotov pri Lescah leta 2007 glej Trampuž Orel 2012, 25, sl. 5: 1.

<sup>65</sup> Hofeneder 2017.

<sup>66</sup> Glej npr. Creighton 2000.

<sup>67</sup> Velušček 2024, 67–70.

<sup>68</sup> Npr. Murgia 2018, 47–56; Velušček 2024, 67–70.

<sup>69</sup> Glej npr. Vachta 2016, 171–185.

<sup>70</sup> Gaspari 2007; id. 2009.

bojevniki uporabljali predvsem sulične osti oz. drugo podobno orožje, meče pa, če sploh, samo za obrambo v zadnji fazi spopada mož na moža, se ob upoštevanju objavljenih razmerij med meči v nožnicah in tistih brez njih ter ob omejenih prostorskih možnostih za bitke večjih intenzivnosti na Ljubljani ne zdi prepričljiva. Avtorji poleg tega svojo tezo opirajo na visokem deležu mečev v nožnicah na prizoriščih spopadov in navajajo tovrstne najdbe iz Alezije,<sup>71</sup> kjer pa interpretacije orožja sploh niso enoznačne.<sup>72</sup> Ob tem dodajmo, da na vidnih oz. ohranjenih delih ostrin mečev in suličnih osti iz Ljubljane ni zasekanin, škrbin ali drugih prepričljivih sledov bojne uporabe. Ritualno ozadje odlaganja/metanja orožja v strugo, tj. namero, odseva tudi strukturiranost najdb, ki se med drugim odraža v pomenljivi odsotnosti ščitnih grb, kar zelo zmanjša moč argumenta o drugačnem ozadju deponiranja, ki se opira na Florov pasus o metanju predhodno razlomljenega orožja poraženih Panoncev v reko (*Epitome* 4.12)<sup>73</sup> in katerega namen nekateri interpretirajo izključno kot poniževanje sovražnika brez značaja žrtvovanja ali druge ritualne motivacije.<sup>74</sup>

Odsotnost ščitnih grb Ljubljano in druga rečna najdišča latenske Evrope loči od okvirno sočasnih kulturnih kompleksov in svetišč v severni Galiji (Gournay-sur-Aronde in Ribemont-sur-Ancre v Pikardiji),<sup>75</sup> vzhodnoalpskem prostoru (hrib Sorantri v Karniji<sup>76</sup> in Teurnija<sup>77</sup>) in Panoniji (Osijek),<sup>78</sup> pa tudi z eponimnega vodnega kulturnega mesta La Tène<sup>79</sup> in sorodnih obsežnih daritev vojnega plena v južnoskandinavskih močvirjih.<sup>80</sup> Argumentacija, da ima odsotnost ščitnih grb pri rečnih najdiščih tafonomsko ozadje v plovnosti ščitov,<sup>81</sup> v primeru Ljubljane prav tako ne zdrži, saj kljub razmeroma dobri preiskanosti celotnega toka čez Barje podatkov o najdbah latenskih grb

ni, nasprotno pa je bila iz struge nad izlivom Bistre najdena bronasta ščitna grba iz 3. st. n. št.<sup>82</sup>

Odsotnost ščitnih grb, ne pa npr. čelad, ki so v Ljubljani zastopane s primerkom tipa Novo mesto in čelado italsko-etruskega tipa (najdeno v bližini obeh kipcev votantov na območju izliva potoka Zrnica), je opazna značilnost tudi pri korpusu najdb iz spodnjega toka reke Save.<sup>83</sup> Arheološko dokumentirani primeri orožij v neposredni povezavi, npr. najdba poznolatske sulične osti s prirjavenim ostankom druge osti pod izlivom Bistre, kažejo, da so potopitve lahko potekale v konvolutih, podobno kot je to izpričano za orožje iz svetišč v severni Galiji<sup>84</sup> ali v primeru dveh, s pločevino bronaste nožnice spetih mečev iz domnevnega tropeja v Aleziji, datiranega v čas pred Cezarjevim obleganjem.<sup>85</sup>

Druge kategorije predmetov iz zadevnega dela Ljubljane, za katere domnevamo kulturno ozadje, vključujejo bronasti okov keltskega pivskega roga, bronasto ročko in zajemalko italske provenience, omenjena kipca darovalcev, posamične dele noše ter morda tudi primere železnega orodja, sekire z enostranskimi plavutmi in kose.<sup>86</sup>

V skladu s predhodno objavljenimi domnevami o votivnem značaju depojev keltskega denarja pomemben del sodobne numizmatične znanosti poudarja ritualne vidike kot pomemben, če ne prevladujoč del tafonomije novčnih najdb mlajše železne dobe, ter prepozna teze o njihovi vlogi v denarnem gospodarstvu kot pretirane.<sup>87</sup> P. Popović je že leta 1984 opozoril, da keltskega denarja ne gre obravnavati kot sredstva za blagovni promet in trgovino, temveč da je imel prvenstveno vlogo statusnega simbola v rokah vojaške aristokracije, ki je lasten denar uporabljala predvsem za vzdrževanje politične moči, plačevanje oboroženega spremstva ali izmenjavo daril v okviru sklepanja ali potrjevanja zavezništva.<sup>88</sup> Glede na kraja odkritja depoja keltskih srebrnikov iz Kamina leta 1981 in keltske tetradrahme na obrežju pri izlivu Zrnice leta 1944,<sup>89</sup> v neposredni bližini mesta skupne najdbe keltskega in rimskega republikanskega denarja leta

<sup>71</sup> Testart 2012, 305–308, 393–394; Murgia 2018, 54.

<sup>72</sup> Glej Sievers 2008.

<sup>73</sup> Forisek 2003.

<sup>74</sup> Testart 2012, 314–324, 329–331, 400, 429–431; Murgia 2018, 54. Glej Drnić 2014.

<sup>75</sup> Pregledno Rose, Fernández-Götz 2019.

<sup>76</sup> Passera et al. 2017.

<sup>77</sup> Gugl 2000, 124–126, 167–169.

<sup>78</sup> Dizdar, Filipović 2020.

<sup>79</sup> David 2010, 26–27.

<sup>80</sup> Pregledno k južnoskandinavskim daritvam od predrimske do rimske železne dobe glej Jørgensen, Storgaard, Thomsen (ur.) 2003.

<sup>81</sup> Schönfelder 2007, 467.

<sup>82</sup> Gaspari 1999; Istenič 2019, 135–139.

<sup>83</sup> Drnić 2014.

<sup>84</sup> Rose, Fernández-Götz 2019, 181, sl. 15.8.

<sup>85</sup> Rapin 2001, 52–53.

<sup>86</sup> Turk et al. 2009, kat. št. 34, 38, 40–42.

<sup>87</sup> Glej Wigg-Wolf 2018, 15–16; Bilić 2022, 144.

<sup>88</sup> Popović 1987, 132.

<sup>89</sup> Vuga 1982.

1992,<sup>90</sup> se zdi, da je ritualno dogajanje na reki obsegalo tako zakope votivov kot začasno ali trajno izpostavljanje orožja na drevesa ali konstrukcije na trdinskem obrežju in/ali njihovo prepuščanje vodnemu toku.

V zvezi z mnenji, ki vztrajno suponirajo (ponavljajoče se) naključne izgube vrednih predmetov pri plovbi ali prečkanju, je primerno znova poudariti naravne značilnosti rečnega toka Ljubljanice, ki je bila v prazgodovini nesporno osnovna komunikacijska os čez Ljubljansko barje kot del nadregionalne povezave med severnojadranskim zaledjem in srednjim Podonavjem ter tako nedvomno deležna intenzivnega vodnega prometa. Zaradi izdatne globine (večinoma 2,5–7 m, mestoma 10 m) in razmeroma široke struge (10–30 m, večinoma 15–20 m) s strmimi podvodnimi brežinami iz glinenih in meljastih sedimentov, ki jo je od neobljudene močvirne ravnine ločil z drevesi in grmovjem porasli pas trdinskega obrežja, je bila plovba razmeroma varna.<sup>91</sup> Upoštevaajoč mirno naravo toka, ki se spremeni ob pretočnih viških pozno jeseni in spomladi, se tudi izgube pri prečkanju s čolni ali brodovi niso mogle zgoditi ravno pogosto, skoraj neverjetno pa se zdi, da bi premoženje večje vrednosti redno padalo s plovil na odsekih, ki jih označuje majhna sinusoidnost. Izrazito koncentriranje gradiva, ki bi lahko nakazovalo potencialno nevarna mesta v redkih ostrih zavojih (npr. Dinver in Podpeč), ni bilo zaznano.

V tem kontekstu je zanimivo, da na obravnavanem odseku struge na zahodnem delu Barja popolnoma manjkajo značilna siva keltska lončenina ter poznorepublikanske italske amfore in fino namizno posodje s konca 2. st. in iz prve polovice 1. st. pr. n. št., ki so razmeroma izdatno zastopani v naselbinskih depozitih na obrežju Ljubljanice na lokaciji Stara pošta na Vrhniki (Nauportus) in s posamičnimi odlomki tudi v sosednjem delu struge.<sup>92</sup> Njihova odsotnost v barjanskem odseku struge preseneča toliko bolj, ker je uporaba Ljubljanice za prevoz obsežnih količin blaga v tem času dokazana z odkritjem treh zmogljivih plovil, kar 30 m dolge ladje šivanega tipa pri Lipah, ostankov zelo podobne ladje na Vrhniki in tik zraven potopljenega čolna – izdolbenca z dovršenimi tehničnimi rešitvami, vseh treh dati-

ranih v čas izteka 2. st. ali prve polovice 1. st. pr. n. št.<sup>93</sup> Korpus najb iz časa med sredino 1. st. pr. n. št. in tiberijskim obdobjem zaznamuje opazna količina finega namiznega posodja in kuhinjske keramike ter za čas pred vzpostavitvijo rimske ceste po severnem robu Barja nenavadno skromne količine zgodnjecesarških amfor, dokumentirane pa so poznejše nezgode plovil z opeko ali drugim težjim tovorom.<sup>94</sup>

O vzgibih za izbiro kraja in odložitve obravnavanega meča na Barju lahko samo ugibamo, enako tudi o morebitni povezavi z zavedanjem o obstoju bližnje koliščarske naselbine, ni pa dvoma o tem, da je bil to odročen in težko prehoden močvirni ambient. Med sorodne posamične in skupne najdbe iz šotnih plasti, ki dokazujejo obstoj visokega barja v železni dobi in za katere se prav tako domneva votivno ozadje, spadajo npr. halštatska tulasta sekira in certoška fibula iz okolice Vnanjih Goric,<sup>95</sup> skupni najdbi štirih republikanskih denarjev med Babno gorico in Ižico (kovani v obdobju 123–90 pr. n. št.)<sup>96</sup> in petih novcev, odkritih v bližini Medvejce (kovani med letoma 42 pr. n. št. in 4 n. št.)<sup>97</sup> ter posamični najdbi republikanskih srebrnikov v barju pri Lavrici (kovan leta 87 pr. n. št.)<sup>98</sup> in na Rudniku (kovan 89 pr. n. št.)<sup>99</sup>

Verjetno lahko računamo z odlaganjem predmetov v retja oz. manjša jezerca v bližini naselbin ali poti, ki so prečkale močvirje po mostovžih ali ozkih pasovih trdine ob potokih. Ponavljajoči se sestavi večinskega dela mlajšeprazgodovinskih najdb z Barja ustrezajo ugotovitvi, da po koncu bronaste dobe na večjem delu srednje in zahodne Evrope pride do upada običaja deponiranja orožja v barja in močvirja, med latenskimi in rimskimi predmeti pa so zastopani predvsem novci in deli noše.<sup>100</sup>

Posamičen pojav izdrtega meča bi lahko nakazoval daritev lastnega ali nasprotnikovega orožja po dvoboju, ki se je odvil na posebej izbranem kraju v močvirju po vzoru skandinavskega običaja urejanja sporov (*holmgang*), ali v okviru širšega spopada kje drugje. V tem oziru so posebej zanimive sporočene najdbe človeških okostij ali njihovih deartikuliranih delov, na katere so naleteli pri izkoriščanju šote oz. kopanju jarkov in pri potapljanju oz. raziskavah

<sup>90</sup> FMRSI IV 110; Kos, Šemrov 2003; Gaspari et al. 2017, 133–134.

<sup>91</sup> Gaspari et al. 2017, 169–170.

<sup>92</sup> Gaspari et al. 2017, 131.

<sup>93</sup> Gaspari et al. 2017, 132–134, 138–141.

<sup>94</sup> Npr. Gaspari 2009.

<sup>95</sup> Vuga 1980, 203, op. 12, sl. 2: 12; id. 1982, 12, sl. 5.

<sup>96</sup> FMRSI I 147.

<sup>97</sup> FMRSI I 204.

<sup>98</sup> FMRSI I 154.

<sup>99</sup> FMRSI I 160/1.

<sup>100</sup> Kurz 1995, 102–103.

struge Ljubljance, zlasti na zahodnem delu Ljubljanskega barja.<sup>101</sup> Glede na celovitost ostankov gre za trupla brez dokumentiranega vzroka smrti (celovit skelet v barju južno od Blatne Brezovice, 200 m od Ljubljance)<sup>102</sup> in alternativne oblike pokopov (npr. čoln z lobanjo in vesloma v strugi Stare Ljubljance pri železniškem mostu),<sup>103</sup> domnevne žrtve utopitev (ženska pod čolnom deblakom s konca 2. st. pr. n. št. na Vrhniki)<sup>104</sup> in osebe, umrle nasilne smrti s profanim ali ritualnim ozadjem (tak namig je bil podan za dve lobanji iz struge pri Podpeči, radiokarbonsko datirani v čas med koncem 3. in prvo polovico 1. st. pr. n. št.).<sup>105</sup> Pri domnevno osamljenih najdbah lobanj oz. njihovih odlomkov brez podrobnejše proučitve ni mogoče sklepati o ozadju njihovega pojava na konkretnih lokacijah ali celo o njihovi morebitni selektivni uporabi v alternativnem pogrebem obredju ali izpostavljanju v okviru vojaških svetišč – tropejev, ki je dokumentirano tudi za mlajšo železno dobo.<sup>106</sup>

Med sledovi nasilnih smrti na Ljubljanskem barju velja znova omeniti človeški skelet z zadržo bronasto sulično ostjo, ki je bil odkrit leta 1938 v strugi dolvodno od izliva Bistre in ga prej kot sled vojaške konfrontacije na topografsko markantnem delu rečnega prostora<sup>107</sup> razumemo kot ritualizirano usmrtitev osebe oziroma njeno žrtvovanje v okviru kulturnega dogajanja.<sup>108</sup> Odsek Ljubljance na širšem območju izliva Bistre in dolvodnega dela struge namreč interpretiramo kot kompleks odlagališč dolgega trajanja z viški v srednji bronasti dobi in na začetku kulture žarnih grobišč, v mlajšem halštatu ter mlajšeželeznodobnih stopnjah Lt C2 in D. Validnost teze bi lahko preverile prihodnje raziskave struge in obrežja, saj zaradi značilne morfologije in zakonitosti sedimentacije pomemben del rečnih depozitov ostaja nepreiskan.

<sup>101</sup> Gaspari 2002a, 188–190.

<sup>102</sup> Vuga 1977; id. 1979.

<sup>103</sup> Gaspari et al. 2017, 158–159.

<sup>104</sup> Glej Gaspari et al. 2017, 32–34.

<sup>105</sup> Laharnar, Turk 2017, 169, sl. 194. K interpretacijam človeških trupel v vodnih okoljih Burmeister 2013.

<sup>106</sup> Schwartz 2012.

<sup>107</sup> Glej npr. izjemno pričevalnost najdiščnih kontekstov in najdb v dolini reke Tollense, ki predstavljajo ostanke večjega spopada v 13. st. pr. n. št. Po dozdajšnjih ugotovitvah in domnevah je večja skupina mladih moških, nekje z juga, prišla v dolino, kjer so jo, morda pri prečkanju reke, napadli lokostrelci in bojevniki s kiji. V bitki naj bi bilo udeleženi okoli 2000 bojevnikov (Inselmann et al. 2024; Krause 2023).

<sup>108</sup> Gaspari 2002b; id. 2004, 44.

### Ekskurz: značilnosti odlaganja v okviru pokonfliktnih ritualov

V nadaljevanju se omejujemo na krajši povzetek analize arheološko oprijemljivih značilnosti odlaganja v nesporno kulturnih kontekstih med severno Galijo in južno Skandinavijo iz obdobja med letoma 200 pr. n. št. in 200 n. št.,<sup>109</sup> ki kažejo pomenljivo ujemanje s kompleksi najdb iz Ljubljance. Tipično za južno Skandinavijo je, da se je obredje izvajalo na prostem ter v tesni povezavi z močvirji in rekami. V prvo skupino spadajo najdišča s poškodovanimi in celimi kosi orožja, ki obsegajo tako mešane kot manjše, na določen tip orožja (meči, sulične osti) omejene odložitve (npr. Kildebæk Mose in Moderupgård na Danskem ter Tidavad na Švedskem). Ostanke človeških teles so redki, ko pa se pojavijo, so v omejenem številu, niso sočasni z odložitvami orožja in navadno ne kažejo znakov manipulacije postmortem. Drugo skupino najdišč, ki pripadajo kulturno-geografsko različnim tradicijam, zaznamujejo horizonti z lokalno keramiko, žrmljami, poljedelskim orodjem, navpično zabitimi koli in palicami za pritrjevanje daritev ter deartikuliranimi ostanki živali, kar naj bi odsevalo široko razširjeni običaj odlaganja vsakdanjih stvari. Regionalno obarvane preference te skupine odsevajo v izbiri lokacij in sestavnih delih rituala, vključno z novci, keramiko, živalskimi ostanki in kovinskim gradivom. Tretja skupina obsega najdišča z izjemno velikimi količinami orožja in človeških ostankov, med katerimi so npr. Alken Enge, Illemose, Krogsbølle in Kragehul (Danska), Skedemosse (Švedska), Kalkriese, Oberdorla in Manching (Nemčija), Kessel (Nizozemska), Basel-Gasbrik and La Tène-Corneaux-Port (Švica) ter Digeon, Gournay, Nanteuil in Ribemont (Francija). Nastanek pokonfliktnih ritualnih mest v severni Galiji je značilnost 3. st. pr. n. št., del teh lokacij pa je ostal v uporabi tudi pozneje, z jasno spremembo praks po okoli letu 50 pr. n. št., ko se daritve omejujejo na keramiko, novce in živalske ostanke. V Skandinaviji se ritualna mesta zgoščajo v 1. st. n. št., pri čemer jih nekaj (npr. Ejsbøl, Illemose, Thorsberg in Illerup) vsebuje predrimске horizonte z odloženim orožjem, pri drugih pa gre za predhodnike darovanja bojnega plena iz časa med 2. in 5. st. n. št. Avtorja študije, M. Løvschal in M. Kähler Holst sklepata, da je pokonfliktna rituala, zlasti tiste večjega obsega (tretja skupina), označevalo manj pogosto, a doživljajsko in senzorično

<sup>109</sup> Løvschal, Kähler Holst 2018, 32.

zelo vznemirljivo obredno dogajanje, ki je včasih vključevalo inscenacije ritualnega ravnanja s človeškimi ostanki ali orožjem. Dokumentirana sočasnost večjega števila vzorčenih ostankov umrlih v zadevnih depozitih in perimortem poškodbe, dobljene v boju, nakazuje situacijo sistematičnega, morda ritualiziranega čiščenja bojišč, na katerem so bila človeška trupla pred pobiranjem namerno izpostavljena propadanju. Na drugih lokacijah so bili ugotovljeni postmortem razkosavanje trupel, ločitev glave od telesa, čeljusti od lobanje ter razbijanje posameznih kosti. Vseobsegajoče uničenje vojnega plena ter dodelano razkosavanje človeških in živalskih trupel nakazuje, da je zbiranje večje množice ljudi, tako gledalcev kot sodelujočih, ki je sledilo večjemu dogodku množičnega nasilja, čustveni sprostitvi in travmi, ustvarjalo priložnosti za spontani vznik novih običajev in obnašanj. Takšna ritualna eksegeza je prispevala k poistovetenju, povezovanju in asimilaciji posameznikov v sicer zaključene, čeprav lahko zgolj začasno povezane skupine bojevnikov ali pripadnikov plenilskih skupin. V številnih primerih so bile izbrane lokacije prežete z ritualnim pomenom in so ostale v rabi še dolgo po glavni epizodi pokonfliktnega obredja.<sup>110</sup>

Zelo pomembne namige dajejo arheološko raziskani vojaški konteksti iz rečnih strug v nemški deželi Meklenburg-Pomorjansko na južni obali Baltika, od katerih se kompleks najdb iz reke Uecker pri Pasewalku, datiran v drugo polovico 2. st. in prvo polovico 3. st., navezuje na horizont vojaških daritev južnoskandinavskega prostora stopenj B2/C1 po skandinavski kronologiji rimske železne dobe. Pri spremljavi strojnih izkopov na 800 m dolgem odseku stare rečne struge so odkrili meče, grbe, ročaje ter robne okove ščitov, sulične osti, pušično ost, fibule in rimske novce ter ostanke lesene konstrukcije, v njeni bližini pa množico človeških in konjskih kosti z usekaninami, od katerih človeške pripadajo večinoma odraslim moškim. Prometno-geografski kontekst govori za prizorišče enega ali morda več spopadov iz časa markomanskih vojn, po katerem so pobiti premaganci skupaj z orožjem in osebno opremo končali v reki, vprašanje, ali se je to zgodilo v okviru obredja po bitki, pa ostaja odprto.<sup>111</sup>

<sup>110</sup> Løvschal, Kähler Holst 2018, 36–37.

<sup>111</sup> Schmidt, Voß 2021, 288–294.

## SKLEP

Tako kot v prejšnjih in poznejših obdobjih so bili meči v mlajši železni dobi poleg očitne ofenzivne funkcije verjetno dojemani kot predmeti z veliko močjo in simbolnim pomenom. V odročnih močvirjih so izgube predmetov takega značaja kot posledice neprevidnosti med premikom ali zavrženja med bitko male verjetne, tudi zaradi omejenih možnosti za takšne ali drugačne profane dejavnosti, pri katerih so sodelovali oboroženi posamezniki ali skupine bojevnikov. Odlaganje mečev v vode in močvirja ali njihove zakope bi lahko razlagali kot votivna dejanja po ugodnem izidu dvoboja ali bitke, ki se je odvila nekje drugje, morda jih lahko razumemo tudi kot materialne metafore za smrt posameznika.

Oblika zvončastega branika in psevdodamascirani okras rezila omogočata umestitev meča z Ljubljanskega barja pri Iški Loki v poznejši del stopnje Lt C2 oz. v sredino ali na začetek druge polovice 2. st. pr. n. št., kar se sklada s ponujeno opredelitvijo podobe v rezilo vtisnjene žiga in njegovo previdno navezavo na avere sočasnega keltskega drobižnega denarja. Žigu s prikazom Apolona oz. njegove keltske različice Belinosa na rezilu zadevnega meča bi smeli torej pripisati apotropejsko vlogo, razširjenost motiva pa skupnemu miselnemu in predstavnostnemu svetu keltskih skupnosti.

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## Celtic sword from the Ljubljansko barje near Iška Loka: A reflection on the interpretations of individual and group finds of weapons in rivers and wetlands

### Translation

In April 1989, Anton Uršič was digging a drainage ditch on his property near Iška Loka and came across an iron sword of a La Tène design, which he gave to the primary school at Ig for safekeeping. The pupils of the school brought the interesting object to an antiques fair that the City Museum of Ljubljana (now the Museum and Galleries of Ljubljana) organised in September 1993. The sword was examined by a conservator, described, drawn and photographed, and an X-ray image made in cooperation with the National Museum of Slovenia. Božena Dirjec (City Museum of Ljubljana) recorded the basic information on the find and published it in 1997, in Vol. 37 of *Varstvo spomenikov – Poročila*.<sup>1</sup>

The primary school then entrusted the sword to the conservation workshop of the National Museum of Slovenia; teacher Ida Zgonc delivered it there on 5 July 1999. Another X-ray image was taken, the sword was again photographed and drawn. It was noted in the museum records in a report on a find in private keeping No. ZN 116. After conservation, the sword was returned to Ida Zgonc on 14 December of the same year. The report No. ZN 116 shows that the owner had been informed of the possibility of handing the sword over to the museum in exchange for compensation. The present whereabouts of the sword are unknown.

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

The sword was found while digging a drainage ditch through the marshy soil of the Ljubljansko barje (Ljubljana Marshes), in an area called Parti. More precisely, it was found at the southwest corner of parcel No. 1377, cadastral municipality 1700 – Ig, directly below the cart track (parcel No. 2822) running in a north–southerly direction along the parcels located perpendicularly to it (*Figs 1 and 2*). According to the finder, then the owner of the land here, the sword was unearthed after having removed the bedding for the *štrardon* (road across the Ljubljansko barje flanked by drainage ditches). It lay roughly horizontally at a depth of 50 to 70 cm below the surface, in a seemingly homogeneous layer of peat that continued further down.

Uršič is a local landowner acquainted with the archaeological heritage of the Ljubljansko barje, who has been regularly informing the competent institutions of interesting finds, which include two logboats,<sup>2</sup> on his land near Iška Loka. While digging the drainage ditch and ploughing the land between the cart track and the bed of the Iščica stream some 500 m away, he reported finding no other objects of cultural or historical significance. It should be added that the findspot of the sword lies roughly 750–800 m north of the complex of the Dežman pile-dwelling settlements, within the

<sup>1</sup> Dirjec 1997.

<sup>2</sup> Svoljšak 1997; Erič 2008, Nos. 9 and 12.

heritage unit Ig - Kolišča na Igu (EŠD 190), listed since 2014 as a cultural monument of national importance (Uradni list RS, 2/14).

Roughly 170 m east of the findspot, LiDAR data visualisation revealed a sinuous sunken line running north–south, which may be identified as a former bed of the Iščica given the similar orientation, width and sinuosity as the current stream. The position of the sword in the peat layer indicates the area was covered by high marshes in the Iron Age, which formed after floodplain or retreating lake had no longer been inhabited, presumably during the first half of the 2nd millennium BC at the latest.<sup>3</sup>

### DESCRIPTION

In the absence of the sword itself, the description is based on its photographs, drawings and the X-ray image from 1999. It has a relatively long tang, campanulate guard and diamond-sectioned blade of which only the thickest, middle part survives, while the cutting edges and tip are almost entirely missing. The surviving length of the sword is very close to the original and measures 80.55 cm (*Figs 3, 4: 1; 5*).

The cutting edges are heavily corroded to a serrated form and only preserved in a short section near the guard. The blade is here 4.28 cm wide, while the width along the 65.32 cm of its surviving length can be estimated from the thickness of the better-preserved parts. The width at a distance of 30.8 cm from the guard, where the better-preserved left side is 3 cm wide, can be estimated at 3.4 cm or more. At 48.7 cm from the guard or 17.2 cm from the tip, the better-preserved right side with a surviving width of 2.49 cm shows the blade was at least 2.7 cm wide in this section. Despite the extensive corrosion, the shape of the blade that tapers fairly evenly towards the tip presumably reflects its original outline, though we cannot exclude the possibility that the cutting edges were largely parallel.

The blade clearly shows a flattened diamond-shaped section near the tang. The central ridge on both sides disappears further down and the blade becomes lenticular in section at the beginning of the middle third and almost completely flat in the bottom third, partly due to corrosion.

The tang (length 13.6 cm) is rectangular-sectioned and broadens slightly and evenly to reach a campanulate expansion at its base that has vertical sides at the junction with straight shoulders. Fitted at the tang-blade junction is an iron campanulate guard that has, judging from the side known from the photographs and drawings, a relatively high and wide semicircular central part and slanted straight terminals.

The preserved surface of the blade and the adjoining part of the tang exhibits an irregular ('pseudo-damascene') pattern of slightly wavy longitudinal bands of harder metal raised above the intermediate strips of corroded surface. The pattern is also faintly discernible along the cutting edges and not confined to the central band of the blade.

The right side of the blade, roughly 3 cm below the shoulder, bears a stamp in positive relief depicting a male head in left-facing profile. The crown of the head is turned toward the tip, and the face toward the left edge of the blade (*Fig. 5*). The stamp measures 1.4 cm in height and 1.1 cm in width. Clearly recognisable are his rounded beard, long nose with a sharp tip and straight bridge, the eye, a diadem with narrow forward-pointing leaves bordered by thin lines, which may represent a beaded rim, and forward-directed locks of hair.

### DISCUSSION

#### Sword

The size and proportions of the individual parts of the weapon, conditionally also the cross-section of the blade, broadly correspond to those of a supra-regionally widespread form of swords from the late part of the Middle La Tène period (LT C2) (*Figs 3; 4: 1; 5*).<sup>4</sup> This form is characterised by a guard of a predominantly high campanulate outline, a step at the base of lightly curved shoulders, and a blade of a lenticular- or flattened diamond-shaped cross-section and generally parallel cutting edges that converge into a short point in the final fifth of the length, though there are also examples where the blade gradually and evenly tapers towards the tip. In addition to examples with a sharp tip, the swords of this form in the Celtic West also include examples with a rounded tip. The considerable range of the blade lengths on the swords of this

<sup>3</sup> See Budja, Mlekuž 2008; Velušček, Čufar 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Lejars 1996, 89–90; Drnić 2015, 24–25.

period (65–85 cm), which had varied by no more than a few centimetres in earlier (LT C1) swords, presumably indicates a difference in their usage by either the infantry or the cavalry;<sup>5</sup> in this case, the sword under discussion would be the weapon of a foot soldier.

Towards the end of the Middle La Tène period and transition to LT D1, the blades in the area between northern Gaul, northern Italy, the Baltic and the Danube basin became considerably longer and their section diversified, with the blade lengths almost invariably exceeding 80 and not infrequently even 90 cm. In the West, swords with lenticular- and flattened diamond-sectioned blades predominated in LT D1. Some of these have a low midrib in the upper part and narrow fullers running along the entire length, frequently also traces of chemical surface treatment already known from the previous phase. Their points are markedly lengthened, drawn out and generally sharp. A novelty of this phase are swords with a pair of wide contiguous fullers that create a tri-diamond cross section, which is a feature that increased rigidity while simultaneously reduced weight. These blades are generally relatively narrow, measuring roughly 4 cm in width.<sup>6</sup>

In the area from the south-eastern Alps to south-eastern Pannonia, swords with a tri-diamond-sectioned blade represent the leading, even practically exclusive, form in LT D1. Similar swords are also documented in Transpadana, central Europe north of the Alps, south-eastern Transdanubia and sites along the southern coast of the Baltic.<sup>7</sup> The swords of this form have parallel cutting edges, a short sharp point or rounded tip and a high campanulate guard that in some cases has a flat top. The midrib of the blade continues into a diamond-sectioned tang terminating in a small knob. The two grooves on the blade are very often decorated with densely punched impressions. The swords with a tri-diamond-sectioned blade from the Mokronog group in Slovenia include examples with a rectangular-sectioned tang, which corresponds with the features of the associated scabbards from the LT C2–D1 transition, related to the A2 type sword-scabbard sets according to J.-P. Guillaumet and M. Szabó.<sup>8</sup> Swords with a tri-diamond-sectioned

blade are usually associated with scabbards reinforced in the upper part with double S fittings and bearing symmetrical oval or pointed suspension plates, which are formal and technical solutions also already introduced in LT C2.

Swords with a tri-diamond-sectioned blade in the area of the south-eastern Alps and southern Pannonia ceased to be used during the 1st century BC. Examples with a relatively wide lenticular-sectioned blade from LT D2, characteristic of the Celtic West,<sup>9</sup> are known here only as fragments of blades and associated scabbards with a ladder-shaped chape with a rounded terminal from the River Ljubljanica.<sup>10</sup> At the end of the La Tène period (after 60–35 BC), the swords from the area under discussion are around 82 cm long and have a 3.4–4.1 cm wide lenticular-sectioned blade characterised by one or two narrow central grooves, parallel cutting edges and an elongated point, while the tang is long and rectangular-sectioned with slanted shoulders, high campanulate guard and brass pommel knob.<sup>11</sup>

## Blade

The unusual feature on the sword from Iška Loka is the combination of a relatively narrow blade, a long tang and a campanulate guard with a wide semicircular central part. There are only rare swords of a La Tène construction that have a similarly shaped blade, and even these are several centuries earlier. The earliest of the parallels is an 82 cm long sword with a 4.5 cm wide blade from the rich Grave 1 at Castelluccio in Umbria, dated to the late 4th or beginning of the 3rd century BC.<sup>12</sup> As T. Lejars notes, the dimensions of this sword deviate entirely from those of the Early La Tène construction and correspond closely to those from the 2nd century BC, while the scabbard with its rounded chape terminal and a suspension system consisting of paired lateral rings further complicates its identification. The close resemblance between the rounded outline of its guard to that of the sword from Iška Loka can probably be seen as coincidental. Another similarly shaped blade belongs to an 83.9 cm long sword from the

<sup>5</sup> Rapin 1999, 59; Drnić 2015, 24.

<sup>6</sup> Lejars 1996, 90; Łuczkiwicz 1997, 178–182; Biborski 1999, 81–85; Dizdar, Drnić 2015, 29–34.

<sup>7</sup> Božič 1999, 210; Drnić 2015, 29–34; Dizdar, Potrebica 214, 357–361; Gruškovnjak, Omahen, Toškan 2018, 235–236.

<sup>8</sup> Guillaumet, Szabó 2002.

<sup>9</sup> Lejars 1996, 90, Figs 6: 5, 7: 10; Pernet, Carlevaro 2006, 40, Fig. 2.9: 3a.

<sup>10</sup> Gaspari 2002, 69–71, Fig. 26.

<sup>11</sup> Istenič 2010.

<sup>12</sup> Lejars 2014, 404–405, Fig. 3.

Kupinovo cemetery in Srem, which I. Drnić dates to the early part of LT C1 on the basis of its slanting shoulders and flattened diamond section. The Kupinovo blade, up to 4.3 cm wide, tapers evenly from the shoulders to a short point. Apart from the shoulders, the sword further differs from the Iška Loka example in its shorter tang (10.9 cm) of a triangular outline.<sup>13</sup>

The swords dated to LT C2 include a roughly 92 cm long example from Boljevci in Srem. It has a long lenticular-sectioned blade that tapers evenly towards a short point, a relatively long oval-sectioned tang with curved shoulders and a notch for the guard, as well as a stamp of a boar just below the left shoulder (*Fig. 4: 2*).<sup>14</sup>

A similarly shaped blade belongs to an approximately 96 cm long sword from the Mariano al Brembo grave (Milano), which P. Agostinetti et al. attribute to LT D1b (120–80 BC) based on the associated pair of Nauheim I brooches.<sup>15</sup> The sword has a roughly 16 cm long tang and curved shoulders that have a horizontal junction with a lenticular-sectioned blade. The blade is widest at the top (ca. 3.9 cm), barely perceptibly tapers to the point that takes up the final sixth of the blade and bears a crescent stamp below the right shoulder (*Fig. 4: 3*).<sup>16</sup>

### Guard

As noted above, the guard of the Iška Loka sword differs both from the guards of most LT C2 swords (among which high campanulate forms with a relatively narrow central part and rounded, rarely rounded angular top predominate) and from the similar guards on swords of a Late La Tène design with a tri-diamond-sectioned blade. The swords from the eponymous La Tène site include only a few that have a similar, though not identical, guard outline. One of these is an 83.8 cm long sword with a classically shaped blade inserted in a 4.7 cm wide scabbard (*Fig. 6: 2*).<sup>17</sup>

Guards similar to that of the Iška Loka sword include examples with a less pronouncedly semi-circular central parts and horizontal arms slightly

upturned terminals. Among them is the guard of an 87 cm long sword with an up to 4.3 cm wide lenticular-sectioned blade from a grave at Skorba in Slovenian Styria, for which V. Skrabar emphasised its manufacture from ‘the finest steel’. The surface of this blade is heavily corroded, but there are traces that indicate a fibrous structure of the blade, which bears a crescent stamp below the left arm of the guard (*Fig. 6: 1*).<sup>18</sup> A very similar guard is fitted to a 91 cm long sword with a 4.3 cm wide lenticular-sectioned blade surviving in a scabbard of the GSA 6 group with a frog suspension from a grave at Hart near Wildon (*Fig. 6: 3*),<sup>19</sup> which is also a form characteristic throughout LT C2. A guard with a somewhat narrower and more angular central part, but similarly slanting arms, is on a stray find of a sword fragment from Nosate (Milano), kept in a scabbard with a pair of symmetrical suspension plates on the back and a Y-shaped upper reinforcement (GSA 10 group);<sup>20</sup> the right side of its 4.5 cm wide lenticular-sectioned blade bears a crescent stamp (*Fig. 6: 4*).<sup>21</sup> A semicircular guard with straight arms (h. 2.9 cm; w. 4.7 cm), similar to the that on the Iška Loka sword, is known among the guards without associated swords or known grave groups in the Kupinovo cemetery, which Drnić typologically attributes to LT C–D1.<sup>22</sup>

The later analogies have campanulate guards with an arched central part that are usually mounted on swords with lenticular-sectioned blades in scabbards of Group A2, which are characteristic of Celtic cemeteries in northern Italy, Gaul and the Rhineland. Scabbards of this type appear towards the end of LT C2 and were no longer produced in LT D2.<sup>23</sup> The swords with a guard with an arched centre and straight, usually upturned arms, and a blade of a flattened diamond or lenticular section include examples from Grave 24b at Povegliano Ortaia near Verona (LT D1),<sup>24</sup> Graves 425 and 427 (*Fig. 7: 1*) from Giubiasco (Ticino) (LT D)<sup>25</sup> and two swords from the necropolis at Mépieu (Rhône-Alpes) (LT C2–D1), one of which was kept in a

<sup>13</sup> Drnić 2015, 22, Pl. 2: 2.

<sup>14</sup> Drnić 2015, 27, Fig. 6: 3.

<sup>15</sup> Agostinetti et al. 2014, 42.

<sup>16</sup> De Marinis 1977, 37, Pl. 11: 5 a, b; Deutscher 2012, 349, Cat. No. 125.

<sup>17</sup> De Navarro 1972, 415–416, Pl. XL: 2a, 2b (No. 93).

<sup>18</sup> Skrabar 1923, 146, Pl. 3: 1; Deutscher 2012, Cat. No. 140.

<sup>19</sup> Szabó, Petres 1992, 102, Pl. 80.

<sup>20</sup> Lejars 1994, 30; Drnić 2015, 38; Dizdar 2013.

<sup>21</sup> Tizzoni 1984, 100–102, Fig. 4; Deutscher 2012, 349, Fig. 9: u (Cat. No. 127).

<sup>22</sup> Drnić 2015, 134, Pl. 11: 9.

<sup>23</sup> Guillaumet, Szabó 2002, 222.

<sup>24</sup> Vitali et al. 2010, 208, Fig. 9: 4.

<sup>25</sup> Pernet, Carlevaro 2006, 323.

scabbard with a pair of asymmetrical suspension plates (Fig. 7: 2),<sup>26</sup> as well as swords in scabbards from the riverbed of the Saône at Chalon (Fig. 7: 4) and from the vicinity of Lux (Fig. 7: 3) and Saint-Marcel.<sup>27</sup>

J.-P. Guillaumet and M. Szabó note that swords in the scabbards of Group A2 share a rectangular-sectioned guard with an arched centre and a blade with a sharp point, slanting or straight shoulders, and often bear traces of chemical surface treatment, namely etching of the central band. The 101.2 cm long example from the Saône near Chalon has an up to 3.85 cm wide blade with a sunken central field and a mark stamped or incised on the right side below the guard, tentatively interpreted as an astral symbol.<sup>28</sup> Noteworthy among the later parallels is the similar shape of the blade (*forme d'une rapière*) on a somewhat shorter (73.5 cm) sword from Alesia, which has a flattened diamond-sectioned blade, slanting shoulders and a flattened rectangular-sectioned tang. Its blade is significantly wider (5.8 cm) at the blade-hilt junction compared with the Iška Loka sword, though both share a similar taper. S. Sievers cautiously proposed that a Roman rather than Celtic origin seems more likely for this and for another sword with a similar blade, though she considered the available evidence insufficient for confirmation.<sup>29</sup>

The guards of a similar shape on the swords with a tri-diamond-sectioned blade are most commonly less substantial and often in variants with upturned terminals. The geographically closest parallels include a sword from the cemetery at Mokronog, surviving in a scabbard with a narrow campanulate mouth, which is already typical of LT D1.<sup>30</sup>

### Decoration on the blade

The blades of Celtic swords began to be decorated in the Middle La Tène and decoration was particularly popular in the Late La Tène period, when it in turn became considerably less common to decorate scabbards than in earlier periods.<sup>31</sup> The

decoration on blades often coincides with stamps on the blades.<sup>32</sup>

According to A. Rapin, highlighting the structure of the blade first appears in the areas of the La Tène culture in the second third of the 2nd century BC and reflects the blacksmiths' mastery of the heterogeneous composition of the metal,<sup>33</sup> that is welding of alternating lamellae of darker, carbonised iron and lighter, purer iron, thus creating a wavy pattern accentuated by a final chemical surface treatment through etching or selective corrosion.<sup>34</sup> This flame (*Flammenmuster*), pseudo-damascene (*Pseudo-damast*, *Flammendamast*) or snake pattern was presumably associated with an improved mastery of the lamellar technique and was intended to readily distinguish the prestigious pieces of weaponry.<sup>35</sup>

The examination of certain swords has revealed that such a structure, which can only be confirmed through targeted metallographic analysis, was sometimes simulated by welding thin metal wires or bundles of wires onto the blade surface and finishing it by polishing. In some cases, the wavy pattern appears to have been created without welding, solely by etching surfaces delimited by protective strips of wax.<sup>36</sup> Natural acids, such as vinegar, were used for etching, while the undecorated areas were protected with wax, tar or grease.<sup>37</sup>

Etching on some of the swords from La Tène covered the entire surface of the blade (Fig. 8: 1,3),<sup>38</sup> while others rather display an attempt to leave the cutting edges untouched (Fig. 8: 2).<sup>39</sup> The metallurgical analysis of a sample taken from one such sword revealed no points of contact between the wavy/straight lines and the rest of the surface, suggesting the blade had not been made using the lamellar or pattern-welding technique.<sup>40</sup>

In the Late La Tène period, etching in the Celtic West occurs on swords with a tri-diamond-, flattened diamond- and lenticular-sectioned blade, with a sharp or less pronounced point and with both straight shoulders and campanulate guards. On the swords from the River Thielle at Port,

<sup>26</sup> Pernet 2010, 212, Pl. 54.

<sup>27</sup> Guillaumet, Szabó 2002, 222, Fig. 12: 1, 4, 6.

<sup>28</sup> Marchal 2014–2015, Cat. No. 23; Deutscher 2012, Cat. No. 96.

<sup>29</sup> Sievers 2001, 151, Cat. No. 150, Fig. 8, Pl. 53.

<sup>30</sup> Gabrovec 1966; Božič 1999, 198.

<sup>31</sup> Wyss 1968, 668.

<sup>32</sup> Deutscher 2012, 260.

<sup>33</sup> Rapin 1999, 62.

<sup>34</sup> See Pleiner 1993, 147.

<sup>35</sup> Lejars 2011, 139–140.

<sup>36</sup> Wyss 1968, 666; Pleiner 1993, 153.

<sup>37</sup> Wyss 1968, 666; Pleiner 1993, 63, 110–111, 152.

<sup>38</sup> De Navarro 1972, Cat. No. 45 (382, Pl. XX: 4), Cat. No. 62 (397, Pl. XXIX: 4), Cat. No. 89 (414, Pl. XXXIX: 3a–b).

<sup>39</sup> De Navarro 1972, Cat. No. 55 (391, Pl. XXVI: 2a).

<sup>40</sup> De Navarro 1972, 397, see also p. 282, Note 2.

etching generally covered only the central part of the blade between the wax-covered strips along the cutting edges that measure from 4 to 13 mm in width and are clearly raised above the central part, if only by a fraction of a millimetre (*Fig. 8: 5*).<sup>41</sup> A similar observation has been made for the swords of Groups A2 and B1–B2 recovered from the River Saône (*Fig. 8: 6*).<sup>42</sup>

The described method of surface finish is also attested in the Celtic East, though in a significantly smaller number of examples and limited to LT C2. The mentioned sword with the remains of its scabbard from the Kupinovo cemetery has a sunken central part of the blade with a clearly visible wavy texture, sharply separated from the raised part at the cutting edges and bearing a boar stamp below the guard.<sup>43</sup> The fragmented sword from the cult site on the hill of Sorantri, bearing an anthropomorphic stamp on the right side of the blade below a high campanulate guard (*Fig. 8: 4*),<sup>44</sup> probably dates towards the end of LT C2.

### Stamp

The sword bears a stamped mark on the blade near the left cutting edge, a few centimetres below the guard. The distribution of stamped swords across the areas of the La Tène culture shows that stamping was a general Celtic phenomenon, while the examples found in the Germanic areas are usually interpreted as imports from the Celtic sphere. The most recent comprehensive publication on the subject by L. Deutscher<sup>45</sup> lists 155 swords with stamped blades. There are also rare examples of stamped spearheads, though these weapons are more commonly engraved or etched. The stamps on sword blades depict humans and animals (boar, horse, bird, bull), mythological beings or astral symbols. They already appear on swords with anthropomorphic hilts towards the end of the Early La Tène period. Stamping is common from the beginning of LT C1 to the end of the La Tène period (LT D2),<sup>46</sup> most frequent in LT C2,

while the number of stamped swords decreases significantly in the Late La Tène period, when they are all but absent in the eastern La Tène area. Anthropomorphic stamps of all types occur only up to the transition into the Late La Tène phase of LT D.<sup>47</sup> In contrast, the mixed stamps depicting horsemen and ibexes, known only from the River Zihl at Port and marking the end of the sword-stamping tradition, are characteristic solely of the Late La Tène period.<sup>48</sup>

A study of stamped swords and their contexts has shown that they do not differ from the unstamped examples in either the manner of deposition, presence of scabbard decoration, production features or blade quality. The stamped swords occur both in rich graves (e.g. at Odžaci, Wallertheim) and in warrior burials with a standard array of grave goods.

Stamps mostly occur singly, positioned near the left cutting edge below the guard, though there are also swords with two or three stamps. Experiments have confirmed that stamping was generally carried out at very high temperatures, which indicates they were stamped before the end of the production process to avoid the effects of heating on the already finished blades.<sup>49</sup>

Interpretations of such stamps range from the marks of smiths or makers, to marks of ownership (of a particular warrior) or their affiliation, to symbols conveying magical or religious beliefs of the owner or marker and to marks naming the sword as an individual entity, perhaps due to their epic past – a phenomenon more frequently attested in the Middle Ages. In contrast to zoomorphic stamps, which are primarily oriented towards the tip or one of the cutting edges, anthropomorphic motifs are much more often turned towards the sword bearer.<sup>50</sup> The relatively small size and orientation of the stamped figures on the long La Tène swords suggest the stamps were of significance mainly to the bearer rather than for outward display,<sup>51</sup> reinforcing the hypothesis that they primarily served as symbols intended to provide the sword and its owner with protection and success in battle.

The anthropomorphic stamps comprise busts, full-length figures and heads shown frontally or in profile; six examples of head stamps were known

<sup>41</sup> Wyss, Ley, Müller 2002, 36–37, Cat. Nos. 20–22, 25, 28, 31, 47–49, 52.

<sup>42</sup> Guillaumet, Szabó 2002, Figs 14: 1: 7, 16: 2, 18: 2; Bonnamour 2009, Figs 3: 2, 3; 4: 1–3; 5: 4.

<sup>43</sup> Drnić 2015, 28, Fig. 7.3, Pl. 7: 2.

<sup>44</sup> Righi 2001, 114, Fig. 7: 1; Deutscher 2012, Cat. No. 126.

<sup>45</sup> Deutscher 2012.

<sup>46</sup> Deutscher 2012, 255.

<sup>47</sup> Drack 1955, 223; Dułęba 2009; Deutscher 2012, 293.

<sup>48</sup> Deutscher 2012, 293.

<sup>49</sup> Deutscher 2012, 317.

<sup>50</sup> Deutscher 2012, 272.

<sup>51</sup> Deutscher 2012, 319.

in 2012.<sup>52</sup> The heads in profile are usually facing left, that is, towards the right cutting edge. They are relatively naturalistic depictions, particularly the mark on the sword from Grave 1 at Ilbesheim (LT C2/D1) that is combined with another stamp, of a stylised bird.<sup>53</sup> One of the closest parallels in both motif and execution to the stamp on the Iška Loka sword is found on one of two swords from the double wagon burial at Odžaci in Bačka (LT C2) (*Fig. 9: 3*).<sup>54</sup> The 92-cm-long sword, identified as a cavalry weapon, has a lenticular-sectioned blade (width 4.6 cm) with parallel cutting edges and a short point, a medium-high campanulate guard and a rectangular-sectioned tang. The surviving upper part of the associated scabbard bears a horizontal clasp on the front and a suspension loop fitting with two pointed plates on the back, the upper of which has a Y-shaped split at the top (GSA 10 group).<sup>55</sup> Two further close parallels belong to the same chronological horizon, namely the stray find of a sword with scabbard remains from an unknown site in Mazovia (Poland) (*Fig. 9: 1*) and the sword from Grave 31/1951 at Wallertheim (Alzey-Worms district, Rhineland-Pfalz) (*Fig. 9: 2*). It has been suggested that the two might be stamped with the same tool or die, given the identical size and corresponding details of the depictions (outline of the head, hairstyle, eyes and mouth), as well as the shape of the swords and their scabbards.<sup>56</sup>

In Celtic art, depictions of human heads in profile are otherwise known only from coins, whose motifs were inspired by or derived from Greek-Macedonian and Roman models. It is mostly very difficult to establish direct connections between sword stamps and specific coin types, hence impossible to determine whether the images represent deities, local heroes or identifiable individuals.<sup>57</sup>

There are, however, some motifs on sword stamps and coins that correspond very closely, making it reasonable to infer a related production technique and the use of a similar tools or die. This is particularly true of the stamp on the Iška Loka sword and its parallels, all stamped in positive relief.<sup>58</sup> The close correspondence of motifs suggests that the stamp on the sword from Iška Loka may be a

stylised representation of Apollo. This identification is further supported by the size of the head and of the stamp as a whole, which are similar to those on Celtic small-denomination coins from the south-eastern Alpine area that predominantly measure 8–9 mm in diameter and are modelled on the large silver coins – tetradrachms. Reinterpreted images of Apollo with a diadem occur on the obverses of certain coins from both main minting phases, i.e. around the mid-2nd century BC (quarter-drachms of the Kugelreiter type)<sup>59</sup> and after c. 82/80 BC (oboli of the Eis / Led type). The reason for using the Graeco-Roman Apollo or his Celtic equivalents in the Carnic, Tauriscan and Norican coinages<sup>60</sup> possibly lies in his identification with the indigenous deity Belinus/Belenos/Belenus, whose cult was widespread throughout the Celtic world. The most convincing evidence of this identification is the votive inscriptions, sanctuaries, literary sources and perhaps sculpture from the wider area of Aquileia and its Alpine hinterland.<sup>61</sup> The significance of Apollo/Belenus for both the local community and the Italian newcomers is reflected in the possible existence of a cult site dedicated to this very deity, near the confluence of the Rivers Zrnica and Ljubljanka below Blatna Brezovica, where two bronze statuettes identified as Apollo/Belenus in the characteristic offering pose were found, dating to the 2nd/1st century BC.<sup>62</sup>

Despite the similarities with the coin imagery from the south-eastern Alpine Celtic area, the stamp is poorly diagnostic in terms of date and origin, neither confirming nor excluding its origin within the region. The region of the Mokronog group<sup>63</sup> may, in fact, be regarded as one of the main centres of weapon production in the eastern Celtic areas, supported for the Middle and Late La Tène periods not only by the substantial quantities of recorded weapons, but also by the inventive capacity to design forms that enjoyed a supra-regional popularity (e.g. shield bosses of the Mokronog–Arquà type, round shield bosses and helmets of the Novo Mesto type, possibly also swords of the Mali Bilač type). The archaeological and archaeometallurgical research of the iron-ore processing in the Late Iron Age south of the Karavanke Mountains, that is, in the central area

<sup>52</sup> Deutscher 2012, 280, Fig. 13.

<sup>53</sup> Deutscher 2012, 280, Figs 5: b, 13: f.

<sup>54</sup> Guštin 1984, 121–127, Tab. 7.1; Dizdar 2013.

<sup>55</sup> Lejars 1994, 24, 30, 36–38, 52–53, 160.

<sup>56</sup> Biborski, Kaczanowski 2010, 157.

<sup>57</sup> Deutscher 2012, 292.

<sup>58</sup> Ziegler 2014, 26.

<sup>59</sup> Kos 2013.

<sup>60</sup> See Schachinger 2020.

<sup>61</sup> See Bilić 2016.

<sup>62</sup> Istenič 2002; Gaspari, Krempuš 2002; Murgia 2018.

<sup>63</sup> Overview in Laharnar 2020.

of the Mokronog group, is in its initial phase, but has already provided evidence for the involvement of the Taurisci in the trade in high-quality iron, notably in the form of characteristic (Late) La Tène double-pointed ingots (*Doppelspitzbarren*).<sup>64</sup> The Tauriscan role in the production of the renowned 'Norican' iron or steel<sup>65</sup> and the exploitation of gold deposits in the Alpine hinterland of Aquileia, however, remains unclear. In view of the above, it seems plausible to posit a connection between the Celtic minting authority, under which a mint made the die, and the control over the exploitation of iron and weapon production.<sup>66</sup>

### Dating

The comparative analysis of the campanulate guard, the decoration on the blade and the stamp suggest the sword dates to the late part of LT C2, i.e. roughly to the middle or the beginning of the second half of the 2nd century BC.

### COMMENTARY ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

The fully functional sword discovered in the marshy peat can hardly be seen as an object of value accidentally lost in an inaccessible and presumably uninhabited marshy environment. Its deposition here is more likely a ritual act, a votive offering made at a select natural location. The location was presumably selected for a specific reason rather than by chance, possibly influenced by the knowledge of an ancient pile-dwelling settlement situated nearby. A similar interpretation can also be proposed for the decorated bronze dagger from the Early Bronze Age that was unearthed in the Ig area.<sup>67</sup>

The archaeologically documented contexts in marshy and water environments that have provided tangible, empirical evidence for their interpretation as places of ritual deposition in use over extended periods suggest that the current understanding of this phenomenon – largely limited to chance finds of individual objects or groups – also reflects the

state of research. Although some researchers reject the hypothesis of cult places of a long duration, sometimes disregarding key taphonomic circumstances and relying on weak counterarguments,<sup>68</sup> the occurrence of characteristic types of mainly metal artefacts in marshy and boggy contexts represents a supra-regional phenomenon of the later prehistory across large parts of Europe.

Repeated offerings at a specific location reveal that the choice of place was not the result of an individual decision, but of that location carrying a specific significance that rendered it worthy of deposition. The choice of such a location may have been linked to a distinctive topographical feature (in marshy or watery settings this may be springs, confluences, narrows or river crossings) that, through the meanings ascribed to it, took on the characteristics of a 'cognitive construct', i.e. a relational, created space in which the material and immaterial worlds intertwined.<sup>69</sup> It is not impossible for the original choice or identification of such a location to be associated with an extraordinary weather event, an old traumatic event, accident or conflict preserved in collective memory, or even with the presence of mysterious and inexplicable ancient ruins or other remains.

The isolated, stray find of a sword without its scabbard indicates an individual offering of a warrior, the background of which most likely differs from the reasons behind the deposition of Middle and Late La Tène weapons, coins and prestige objects in the River Ljubljanica. The latter are generally thought to have taken place as part of ceremonial offerings by a wider community in the setting of a long-lived river sanctuary, where individuals and groups regularly made offerings for a variety of motives and on different occasions, and carried out cult acts as a means of communicating with supernatural powers or beings. Most of the La Tène swords recovered from the Ljubljanica between Lipovec below Blatna Brezovica and Kamin near Bevke were found in their scabbards and show no traces of manipulation. There are also at least two examples of weapons surviving as corresponding fragments, for which it has not been possible to determine whether the damage occurred before or after immersion.<sup>70</sup>

Some scholars argue that the finds of swords in scabbards could also be explained as the remains

<sup>64</sup> For a preliminary analysis of the group find of numerous ingots near Lesce in 2007, see Trampuž Orel 2012, 25, Fig. 5: 1.

<sup>65</sup> Hofeneder 2017.

<sup>66</sup> See e.g. Creighton 2000.

<sup>67</sup> Velušček 2024, 67–70.

<sup>68</sup> E.g. Murgia 2018, 47–56; Velušček 2024, 67–70.

<sup>69</sup> See e.g. Vachta 2016, 171–185.

<sup>70</sup> Gaspari 2007; id. 2009.

of battles fought on rivers or riverbanks, during which Celtic warriors supposedly relied primarily on spearheads or other weapons and only used swords, if at all, for defence in the final phase of hand-to-hand combat. This argument, however, does not seem convincing when considering the published ratio between swords with and without scabbards and the limited spatial conditions for large-scale fighting on the Ljubljana. Moreover, these scholars base their argument on the high proportion of swords in scabbards at battle sites, referring to such finds from Alesia,<sup>71</sup> though interpretations of the weapons from this site are far from unequivocal.<sup>72</sup> It should also be noted that the visible or surviving cutting edges of swords and spearheads from the Ljubljana display neither cuts nor other convincing traces of combat use. In contrast, the ritual or intentional nature of depositing or throwing weapons into the river is further reflected in the array of the recovered weapons, for example in the telling absence of shield bosses. This substantially weakens the argument for explaining the deposition based on a passage in Florus' *Epitome* (4.12) that describes the weapons of the defeated Pannonians being 'broken to pieces and hurled into the current',<sup>73</sup> which some interpret solely as an act of humiliating the enemy without an underlying sacrificial or other ritual motivation.<sup>74</sup>

The absence of shield bosses distinguishes the Ljubljana and other riverine sites of the La Tène period from the roughly contemporary cult complexes and sanctuaries in northern Gaul (Gournay-sur-Aronde and Ribemont-sur-Ancre in Picardy),<sup>75</sup> the eastern Alpine region (Sorantri hill in Carnia<sup>76</sup> and *Teurnia*<sup>77</sup>), Pannonia (Osijek)<sup>78</sup> and also from the eponymous water cult site at La Tène<sup>79</sup> and similar large votive deposits of war booty in southern Scandinavian bogs.<sup>80</sup> The suggestion that the absence of shield bosses at river

sites might have a taphonomic cause related to the buoyancy of shields<sup>81</sup> does not hold true for the Ljubljana either, as no La Tène bosses have been recorded despite a relatively good state of research along the stretch of the river across the marshes, while a bronze shield boss from the 3rd century AD was recovered from the riverbed above the confluence with the Bistra.<sup>82</sup>

The absence of shield bosses, but no other defensive weapons such as helmets (represented in the Ljubljana by a helmet of the Novomesto type and an Italo-Etruscan helmet, the latter found near the two statuettes of donors at the confluence with the Zrnica stream) has also been observed in connection with the finds from the lower reaches of the Sava.<sup>83</sup> Archaeologically documented cases of groups of weapons, such as a Late La Tène spearhead rusted onto the remains of another spearhead recovered below the mouth of the Bistra, indicate that the depositions may have occurred in bundles, as is attested for the weapons from sanctuaries in northern Gaul<sup>84</sup> or for the two swords bound by a bronze scabbard plate from the presumed tropaeum at Alesia, dated to a time before Caesar's siege.<sup>85</sup>

Other categories of objects from the relevant section of the Ljubljana believed to be of a cult nature include a bronze fitting of a Celtic drinking horn, a bronze jug and ladle of Italian provenance, the two afore-mentioned donor statuettes, individual items of dress and possibly also iron tools such as scythes and single-flange axes.<sup>86</sup>

In accordance with the published hypotheses on the votive nature of Celtic coin hoards, a significant part of contemporary numismatic scholarship emphasises the ritual aspect as an important, if not predominant, element in the taphonomy of Late Iron Age coin finds, deeming the hypotheses of their role in the monetary exchange as overstated.<sup>87</sup> As early as 1987, P. Popović noted that Celtic coinage should not be regarded as a vehicle for an exchange of goods and for trade, but rather as a status symbol in the hands of the military aristocracy, who primarily used it as a means of maintaining political power, paying ar-

<sup>71</sup> Testart et al. 2012, 305–308, 393–394; Murgia 2018, 54.

<sup>72</sup> See Sievers 2008.

<sup>73</sup> Forisek 2003.

<sup>74</sup> Testart et al. 2012, 314–324, 329–331, 400, 429–431; Murgia 2018, 54. See Drnić 2014.

<sup>75</sup> Overview in Rose, Fernández-Götz 2019.

<sup>76</sup> Passera et al. 2017.

<sup>77</sup> Gugl 2000, 124–126, 167–169.

<sup>78</sup> Dizdar, Filipović 2020.

<sup>79</sup> David 2010, 26–27.

<sup>80</sup> For an overview of southern Scandinavian offerings from the pre-Roman and Roman Iron Age, see Jørgensen, Storgaard, Thomsen 2003.

<sup>81</sup> Schönfelder 2007, 467.

<sup>82</sup> Gaspari 1999; Istenič 2019, 135–139.

<sup>83</sup> Drnić 2014.

<sup>84</sup> Rose, Fernández-Götz 2019, 181, Fig. 15.8.

<sup>85</sup> Rapin 2001, 52–53.

<sup>86</sup> Turk et al. 2009, Cat. Nos. 34, 38, 40–42.

<sup>87</sup> See Wigg-Wolf 2018, 15–16; Bilić 2022, 144.

med retinues or exchanging gifts in the context of forging or strengthening alliances.<sup>88</sup> Considering the findspots of the hoard of Celtic silver coins at Kamin (1981) and of the Celtic tetradrachm on the riverbank near the mouth of the Zrnica (1944),<sup>89</sup> both in close proximity to the site of a group find of Celtic and Roman Republican coins recovered in 1992,<sup>90</sup> it seems that the ritual practices on the river involved both votive deposits and either temporary or permanent exposure of weapons on trees or structures along the solid riverbank and/or their deliberate release into the watercourse.

With regard to the opinions assuming (continuous) accidental loss of valuable objects during navigation or crossing, it is worth reiterating the natural characteristics of the Ljubljanica. In prehistory, the river was undoubtedly the main line of communication across the marshes of the Ljubljansko barje and formed part of a supra-regional route linking the northern Adriatic hinterland with the Middle Danube region, hence undoubtedly subject to intense water traffic. Navigation on the river would have been relatively safe given its considerable depth (mostly 2.5–7 m, in places up to 10 m) and a relatively wide channel (10–30 m, mostly 15–20 m) with steep underwater banks of clay and silt, as well as a strip of firm bank overgrown with trees and shrubbery separating it from the uninhabited marshy plain.<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, the river has a calm current that only increases in late autumn and spring. This suggests that losses during crossing by boat or ferry could not have been frequent, and it seems almost implausible for valuable property to have regularly been falling into the water, particularly in sections marked by low sinuosity. There are also no marked concentrations of finds that would indicate potentially dangerous spots in the rare sharp bends (for example at Dinver and Podpeč).

Moreover, we should note the complete absence of the characteristic Celtic greyware, as well as the Late Republican Italian amphorae and fine tableware from the late 2nd and first half of the 1st century BC in the relevant section of the riverbed, in the western part of the Ljubljansko barje. These finds, on the contrary, are relatively abundant in the settlement deposits on the bank of the Ljubljanica

at Stara pošta in Vrhnika (*Nauportus*) and also represented by individual fragments in the riverbed at that site.<sup>92</sup> Their absence in the section further downstream is all the more surprising because the discovery of three sizeable watercraft clearly shows the Ljubljanica was used for transporting large quantities of goods at this time. The three watercraft comprise a 30-metre-long sewn cargo ship found at Lipe, a very similar vessel detected at Vrhnika and beside it a lobgoat of sophisticated technical features, all three dated to the late 2nd or first half of the 1st century BC.<sup>93</sup> The assemblage dating between the mid-1st century BC and the Tiberian period is characterised by a notable quantity of fine tableware and kitchenware, and an amount of Early Imperial amphorae that is unusually modest for the time before the construction of the Roman road along the northern edge of the Barje, while the documented shipwrecks carrying bricks or other heavy cargo are later.<sup>94</sup>

We can only speculate as to the motives behind the choice of location and the deposition of the discussed sword in the Ljubljansko barje, as well as on a possible knowledge of the nearby pile-dwelling settlement from earlier prehistory. What is certain is that this would have been a remote and poorly accessible marshy environment. There is a number of known individual or group finds from the peat layers that indicate the existence of high marshes in the Iron Age and are presumably votive in nature, for example a Hallstatt socketed axe and a Certosa brooch from the vicinity of Vnanje Gorice,<sup>95</sup> a group find of four Republican denarii found between Babna gorica and Ižica (minted between 123 and 90 BC),<sup>96</sup> five coins near Medvejca (minted between 42 BC and AD 4)<sup>97</sup> and individual finds of Republican silver coins in the marshes near Lavrica (minted in 87 BC)<sup>98</sup> and Rudnik (minted in 89 BC).<sup>99</sup>

We may speculate that objects were being deposited in springs or ponds near settlements or paths crossing the marshes over wooden walkways or narrow strips of firm ground along streams. The similar composition of most late prehistoric finds from the Ljubljansko barje corresponds with the

<sup>88</sup> Popović 1987, 132.

<sup>89</sup> Vuga 1982.

<sup>90</sup> FMRSI IV 110; Kos, Šemrov 2003; Gaspari et al. 2017, 133–134.

<sup>91</sup> Gaspari et al. 2017, 169–170.

<sup>92</sup> Gaspari et al. 2017, 131.

<sup>93</sup> Gaspari et al. 2017, 132–134, 138–141.

<sup>94</sup> E.g. Gaspari 2009b.

<sup>95</sup> Vuga 1980, 203, Note 12, Fig. 2: 12; id. 1982, 12, Fig. 5.

<sup>96</sup> FMRSI I 147.

<sup>97</sup> FMRSI I 204.

<sup>98</sup> FMRSI I 154.

<sup>99</sup> FMRSI I 160/1.

observation that the practice of depositing weapons in bogs and marshes declined across much of central and western Europe after the end of the Bronze Age, while the deposits dating from the La Tène and Roman periods mainly comprised coins and items of dress.<sup>100</sup>

The isolated find of a sword without its scabbard may indicate the offering of one's own weapon or that of the opponent after a duel fought at a specific location in the marshes, as was the Scandinavian custom of resolving disputes (*holmgang*), or as part of a broader conflict elsewhere. Particularly interesting in this respect are the reported finds of human skeletons or disarticulated body parts that came to light during peat extraction or excavation of ditches, as well as diving and research activities in the riverbed of the Ljubljana, especially in the western Ljubljansko barje.<sup>101</sup> The preservation of these skeletal remains suggests they were either bodies of an unknown cause of death (in the case of a complete skeleton in the marshes south of Blatna Brezovica, 200 metres from the Ljubljana),<sup>102</sup> alternative forms of burial (logboat with a skull and two oars in the old bed of the Ljubljana near the railway bridge),<sup>103</sup> presumed victims of drowning (woman under a logboat from the late 2nd century BC at Vrhnika)<sup>104</sup> and individuals who died a violent death of a profane or ritual nature (such an interpretation has been proposed for two skulls from the riverbed at Podpeč that are radiocarbon-dated between the late 3rd and the first half of the 1st century BC).<sup>105</sup> Without a detailed study, it is impossible to make inferences on the nature of the specific locations of the presumably isolated finds of skulls or their possible selective use in alternative funerary rituals or exposure within military sanctuaries – *tropaia* – the existence of which has been documented in the Late Iron Age.<sup>106</sup>

The evidence of violent deaths in the Ljubljansko barje include a human skeleton with an embedded bronze spearhead, which was found in 1938 in the riverbed downstream from the confluence with the Bistra. Rather than the result of a military conflict in a topographically prominent part of the river

landscape,<sup>107</sup> it is seen as the ritual execution or sacrifice of a person as part of cult activities.<sup>108</sup> The section of the Ljubljana in the broader area of the Bistra confluence and the section downstream from it has been interpreted as a complex of deposition sites of a long duration with peaks in the Middle Bronze Age and beginning of the Urnfield culture, the Late Hallstatt period and the LT C2 and D phases of the Late Iron Age. The validity of this hypothesis could be verified by future investigations of the riverbed and its banks, as a considerable part of the river deposits remains unexplored owing to the characteristic morphology and sedimentation features.

#### Excursus: characteristics of deposition within post-conflict rituals

The text below provides a summary of the research analysing the archaeologically diagnostic characteristics of post-conflict deposition in clear cult contexts between northern Gaul and southern Scandinavia, in a span from 200 BC to AD 200,<sup>109</sup> as they show significant parallels with the assemblages from the Ljubljana. In southern Scandinavia, rituals typically took place outdoors and in close connection with marshes and rivers. The first group of sites yielded both damaged and complete pieces of weaponry. The assemblages range from mixed to smaller deposits limited to specific types of weapons such as swords and spearheads (for example Kildebæk Mose and Moderupgård (Denmark) and Tidavad (Sweden)). Human remains are rarely present and then only in small numbers, they are not contemporary with the weapon deposits and usually show no signs of post-mortem manipulation. The second group of sites, belonging to culturally and geographically distinct traditions, is characterised by horizons with local pottery, querns, agricultural tools, vertically driven piles and posts on which offerings were attached, as well

<sup>100</sup> Kurz 1995, 102–103.

<sup>101</sup> Gaspari 2002a, 188–190.

<sup>102</sup> Vuga 1977; id. 1979.

<sup>103</sup> Gaspari et al. 2017, 158–159.

<sup>104</sup> See Gaspari et al. 2017, 32–34.

<sup>105</sup> Laharnar, Turk 2017, 169, Fig. 194. On the interpretation of human bodies in watery environments, see Burmeister 2013.

<sup>106</sup> Schwartz 2013.

<sup>107</sup> See, for example, the clear evidence of both contexts and artefacts from the Tollense valley, which hosts the remains of a major conflict taking place in the 13th century BC. The current findings and hypotheses suggest that a large group of young men, from regions further south, entered the valley and was attacked, perhaps while crossing the river, by archers and warriors armed with clubs. The battle is thought to have involved around 2,000 warriors (Inselmann et al. 2024; Krause 2023).

<sup>108</sup> Gaspari 2002b; id. 2004, 44.

<sup>109</sup> Løvschal, Kähler Holst 2018, 32.

as disarticulated animal remains, which are thought to reflect a widespread custom of depositing everyday items. Regionally specific preferences within this group are evident in the choice of locations and in the elements of the ritual such as coins, pottery, animal remains and metal objects. The third group comprises sites with exceptionally large quantities of weapons and human remains, for example at Alken Enge, Illemose, Krogsbølle and Kragehul (Denmark), Skedemosse (Sweden), Kalkriese, Oberdorla and Manching (Germany), Kessel (Netherlands), Basel-Gasbrik and La Tène-Corneaux-Port (Switzerland), as well as Digeon, Gournay, Nanteuil and Ribemont (France). The emergence of post-conflict ritual sites in northern Gaul is a characteristic of the 3rd century BC, with some sites remaining in use later and showing a clear change in practice after around 50 BC, when offerings become restricted to pottery, coins and animal remains. In Scandinavia, ritual sites are most numerous during the 1st century AD, with some (e.g. Ejsbøl, Illemose, Thorsberg and Illerup) including pre-Roman horizons with deposited weaponry, while others represent the precursors of war-booty offerings dating between the 2nd and the 5th century. The authors of the study on this practice, M. Løvschal and M. Kähler Holst, conclude that post-conflict rituals, particularly those on a larger scale (third group), were marked by less frequent yet experientially and sensorially intense ritual activities that sometimes included performances involving the ritual treatment of human remains or weaponry. The documented contemporaneity of a large amount of sampled human remains within the relevant deposits, together with the presence of perimortem combat injuries points to systematic, possibly ritualised, battlefield clearance, during which human corpses were deliberately exposed to decay before collection. Other sites revealed evidence of post-mortem dismemberment, decapitation, separation of the jaw from the skull and breaking of individual bones. The total destruction of war booty and the elaborate dismemberment of human and animal bodies suggest that the gatherings of large numbers of people, both spectators and participants, following major episodes of mass violence, emotional release and trauma, created opportunities for a spontaneous emergence of new customs and behaviours. Such ritual exegesis contributed to the identification, cohesion and assimilation of individuals within otherwise closed, though possibly only temporarily connected, groups of

warriors or members of raiding groups. In many cases, the selected locations were imbued with ritual significance and remained in use long after the principal episode of post-conflict rituals.<sup>110</sup>

Very significant indications come from the archaeologically investigated military contexts from the riverbeds in the German region of Mecklenburg-Pomerania, on the southern Baltic coast. Among these, the assemblage from the River Uecker near Pasewalk, dated to the second half of the 2nd and first half of the 3rd century, corresponds to the horizon of military offerings in southern Scandinavia that dates to B2/C1 of the Scandinavian chronology of the Roman Iron Age. Monitoring machine excavations along an 800 m long stretch of the former riverbed brought to light swords, the bosses, handles and edge binding of shields, spearheads, an arrowhead, brooches, Roman coins and the remains of a wooden structure, in its vicinity also a multitude of human and horse bones bearing cut marks, with the human remains mainly belonging to adult men. The traffic and geographical context suggests this was the site of one or more battles from the time of the Marcomannic Wars, after which the dead of the defeated side ended up in the river together with their weapons and personal equipment. It is as yet unclear whether this occurred as part of a post-conflict ritual.<sup>111</sup>

## CONCLUSION

As in earlier and later periods, swords in the Late Iron Age were probably regarded not only as offensive weapons, but also as objects of great power and symbolic significance. In remote marshland, the loss of such an object by accident while travelling or by discarding in battle is highly improbable, also because of the limited possibilities for any kind of profane activity involving armed individuals or groups of warriors. The deposition of swords in water and marshes or their burial could be interpreted as votive acts following a favourable outcome of a duel or battle fought elsewhere, or perhaps as a material metaphor for the death of an individual.

The campanulate guard and pseudo-damascene decoration of the blade suggest the sword from Iška Loka in the Ljubljansko barje dates to the later part of LT C2, that is, in the middle or beginning

<sup>110</sup> Løvschal, Kähler Holst 2018, 36–37.

<sup>111</sup> Schmidt, Voß 2021, 288–294.

of the second half of the 2nd century BC. This corresponds with the proposed identification of the stamp on the blade and its tentative association with the obverse of contemporary Celtic small coins. The stamp depicting Apollo, or his Celtic counterpart Belenus, on the blade of the sword could therefore be attributed an apotropaic role, while the distribution of the motif reflects the shared conceptual and representational world of Celtic communities.

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Andrej Gaspari  
Oddelek za arheologijo  
Filozofska fakulteta Univerze v Ljubljani  
Aškerčeva 2  
SI-1000 Ljubljana  
andrej.gaspari@ff.uni-lj.si  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8252-0258>

*Slikovno gradivo: Sl. 4b* (risba: Ida Murgelj, NMS). – *Sl. 6: 1* (foto: Aleš Farič, PM Ptuj-Ormož).  
*Illustrations: Fig. 4b* (drawing: Ida Murgelj, NMS). – *Fig. 6: 1* (photo: Aleš Farič, PM Ptuj-Ormož).

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