

## Borilna tehnika halštatskodobnih boksarjev: poskus ponovne interpretacije situlskih upodobitev

Tomaž LAZAR

### Izvleček

Prispevek poskuša rekonstruirati borilno tehniko boksarja z ročkami, upodobljenega v situlski umetnosti. Primerjalna analiza zgodovinskega razvoja boksa v evropskem prostoru kaže, da se ta halštatskodobna veščina po vsej verjetnosti ni veliko razlikovala od podobnih borilnih športov, ki so jih poznali stari Grki, pa tudi ne od poznejšega angleškega boksa z golimi pestmi. Od njih in slednjega se je bistveno ločila le po uporabi ročk, ki so bile očitno namenjene obtežitvi pesti. V nasprotju z nekaterimi drugimi raziskovalci, ki so obravnavali to tematiko, zato ocenjujemo, da je šlo za tehnično dodelano borilno veščino, katere cilj je bil fizično premagati oziroma onesposobiti nasprotnika, ne pa za spretnostno igro izbijanja ročk.

**Ključne besede:** situlska umetnost, halštatska doba, antična Grčija, boks, borilne veščine, borilni šport, ritual

Boks z ročkami je borilni šport, pogosto upodobljen na umetnoobrtnih izdelkih halštatske dobe. Nenavadni prizori športnega oziroma ritualnega boja, ki časovno sovpadajo z grškim antičnim boksom in olimpijskimi igrami, so v preteklosti že pritegnili pozornost strokovnih krogov. Najizčrpnjšo avtorju znano študijo, ki se poglobljeno ukvarja s tehniko halštatskih borcev, je prispeval zdravnik Erich Zimmermann.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Zimmermann 2003; gl. tudi tam navedeno literaturo in slikovno gradivo. Poleg upodobitev v slogu situlske umetnosti se tovrstni motivi pojavljajo npr. tudi na Tirolskem, kjer z najdišča Landeck izvirata majhna bronasta kipca boksarjev z razkrcenimi rokami, v katerih držita ročke (Torbrügge 1987, 145). Podobno reliefno upodobitev zasledimo tudi na t. i. prestolu Corsini ter risbah z najdišča Capo di Ponte (Zimmermann 2003, 226); dvobojevalca z ročkami

### Abstract

The article attempts to reconstruct the fighting techniques of the boxers with dumbbells, as depicted in situla art. A comparative analysis of the historical development of boxing in Europe indicates that this Hallstatt period discipline in all probability did not differ greatly from similar martial sports known to the ancient Greeks, nor the later English bare knuckle boxing. The main difference was the use of dumbbells, which were evidently intended to weigh down the fists. In contrast to certain other researchers who have discussed this theme, it is considered that Hallstatt boxing represented a technically sophisticated martial art whose aim was to physically defeat or incapacitate the opponent, and not merely a skillful game of knocking the dumbbells out of the opponent's hands.

**Keywords:** Situla art, Hallstatt period, ancient Greece, boxing, martial arts, combat sport, ritual

Upodobitve boksa z ročkami je mogoče interpretirati zelo različno. Pri pregledu virov je najprej razvidno, da ne moremo govoriti o rokoborbi, temveč o boksu oziroma boksu podobnem športu, ki je temeljil na ročnih udarcih. Nikjer namreč nimamo dokazov, da so halštatski borci uporabljali brce ali druge nožne tehnike, niti ne, da so uporabljali mete, vzvode, prijeme ali podobne elemente rokoborbe. Še več, ker v dlaneh držijo ročke, tega niti ne bi bili zmožni izvesti. Za tako splošne ugotovitve zadostuje že bežen pregled predlog. Teže pa je podati poglobljeno interpretacijo boksarske tehnike.

Resnični raziskovalni problem, s katerim se moramo soočiti, je, da nimamo ohranjenih ne-

sta znana z upodobitve na bronasti cisti iz Kleinkleina na avstrijskem Štajerskem (Schmid 1933, 250, t. 1); pri nas na to temo tudi Gale 1997, str. 26.

posrednih pisnih poročil, s katerimi bi lahko vsaj približno nadgradili likovne vire. Situlske upodobitve so tako prisiljene govoriti same zase – to pa je z gledišča današnjega zgodovinarja vse prej kot zadovoljivo, saj je naše vedenje o kulturi in miselnosti njihovih stvariteljev zelo skromno. Poleg tega je situlska umetnost zajela geografsko in etnično raznolik prostor od severne Etrurije do vzhoda Slovenije, od Venetov do Retijcev, Histrov in zgodnjih keltskih plemen.<sup>2</sup>

Preden poskušamo analizirati halštatske borilne prizore, še bolj pa rekonstrukcije borilnih tehnik, je treba ovrednotiti raziskovalne probleme ter izbrati ustrezno metodologijo. Pri tem nas omejujejo že pomanjkljivosti primarnih virov. Tolčeni reliefi na situlah in pasnih sponah so zahteven medij, v katerem celo vrhunsko izučnemu torej ni lahko realistično prikazati tako dinamičnega dogajanja, kot je boksarski dvoboj. Brez pravega občutka globine in perspektive pa na podlagi dvodimenzionalnih upodobitev težko zanesljivo sklepamo o gardu,<sup>3</sup> obrambnih in napadalnih tehnikah, torej elementih, ki so ključni za razumevanje halštatskega "boksa". Ta ovira je še večja, ker o železnodobnih spopadih z ročkami ne govori noben ohranjen pisni vir. Deloma se lahko opremo le na grška poročila. Toda ta obravnavajo grške borilne športe, ki s halštatskimi morda nimajo nobene povezave.

Da upodobitve bojevnikov ali družbene elite na halštatskih situlah pogosto močno spominjajo na življenje starih Grkov, je vse prej kot nova ugotovitev. Na to so v preteklosti opozorili že številni pisci, ki so poskušali prizore iz situlske umetnosti pojasniti v luči našega znanja o stari Grčiji, o kateri smo že zaradi bogatih pisnih virov neprimerno bolj obveščeni. Zato je povsem razumljivo, da so halštatske borbe z ročkami primerjali z grškim boksom. Ali je takšen pristop ustrezen ali ne oziroma ali je šlo v resnici za sorodna, podobno motivirana športa, na to pa ni preprosto odgovoriti. Zimmermann je na podlagi svojih izsledkov ugotovil, da gre za zelo različni veščini, ki dejansko nimata pravih skupnih točk. Vendar argumenti, ki jih navaja, niso povsem prepričljivi. Zlasti jim manjka eksperimentalna dimenzija, kar na splošno velja za bolj ali manj vse znanstvene prispevke, ki se ukvarjajo s problematiko situlskih dvobojev. To je pravzaprav zelo nenavadno, saj situlskih prizorov dejansko ne moremo uteme-

ljeno interpretirati brez praktičnega poznavanja boksa in sorodnih borilnih veščin. Akademski raziskovalci, ki nimajo lastnih izkušenj z borilnimi športi, namreč pogosto postavljajo hipoteze, ki se ob resnejšem poskusu dejanske rekonstrukcije izkažejo za neutemeljene ali zavajajoče.<sup>4</sup> Druga nevarnost takšnega akademskega pristopa je, da se utegnemo v umetnostnozgodovinski analizi pretirano osredotočiti na podrobnosti, ki v ohranjenem gradivu morda niti niso dovolj zanesljivo prikazane, da bi bile resnično merodajne, obenem pa spregledamo veliko pomembnejše sporočilo širšega konteksta. Zato morda ne bo odveč, če se poskušamo tega vprašanja lotiti še enkrat, iz nekoliko drugega zornega kota.

### EKSPERIMENTALNI PRISTOP

Če želimo analizirati halštatske borilne veščine, se moramo najprej spoznati z osnovami boksa. A že tu naletimo na resno oviro – boks namreč ni statičen šport, temveč se nenehno razvija. Že samo v zadnjih sto letih se je močno spremenil, po eni strani zaradi uporabe rokavic, novih pravil, drugačnega načina točkovanja in poteka borb s časovno omejenimi rundami, po drugi zaradi različnih vadbenih smernic in pristopov, ki so jih zagovarjali boksarski trenerji, v ringu pa bolj ali manj uspešno udeleževali njihovi učenci. Velika večina trenerjev se ne ukvarja z zgodovino športa ali rekonstruiranjem starejših borilnih slogov, saj to ni njihov namen. Svojim gojencem poskušajo posredovati predvsem tisto znanje, ki jim bo zagotavljalo uspeh v današnjem ringu, v skladu s sodobnimi pravili boksarskega tekmovanja.

Kot pri vsaki drugi športni disciplini tudi pri boksni ni enega samega sloga, ki bi ustrezal vsem tekmovalcem, temveč je treba boksarsko tehniko razvijati glede na posameznikov telesni ustroj in njegove sposobnosti. Visokorasel športnik po navadi boksa drugače od nižjega in bolj čokatega. Kdor ima nadpovprečno razvite reflekse, morda ne potrebuje visokega in zaprtega garda, saj se lahko z gibanjem telesa izmakne večini udarcev. Nekomu bolj ustreza ofenzivni, drugemu defenzivni slog in še tega bo dober boksar pri vsakem spopadu poskušal prilagoditi svojemu trenutnemu nasprotniku. Zanimariti ne smemo tudi bolj ali manj modnih slogov borbe, ki se pojavljajo v različnih obdobjih. Dvoboji sodobnih šampionov so videti

<sup>2</sup> Prim. Kastelic 1962a. Za širši pregled gl. Turk 2005a.

<sup>3</sup> Gard je v borilnih veščinah osnovni položaj, ki zagotavlja tako dobro ravnotežje in obrambo kot tudi primerno izhodišče za hitro, optimalno izvedbo napada.

<sup>4</sup> Prim. Georgiou 2005, 5.

precej drugače kot tisti izpred pol stoletja. Tedanja "zlata" generacija bokсарjev je uporabljala številne tehnike, ki jih danes le še redko vidimo, denimo nizki, čepeči (kravč) gard ali "bolo"<sup>5</sup> aperkat. Še več razlik bi opazili, če se po časovni osi premaknemo proti koncu 19. stoletja, v dobo prvih generacij bokсарjev, ki so pri tekmovanju uporabljali rokavice. Predvsem pa bi komaj prepoznali dogajanje v ringu pred splošno uvedbo pravil markiza Queensberryja, torej v času, ko so se bokсарji spopadali še z golimi pestmi, ko jih niso varovala stroga pravila in so bili dovoljeni tudi rokoborski prijemi in meti. Zato boks, kot ga poznamo danes, ni nujno najprimernejši za interpretacijo halštatskih bojev z ročkami. Toliko koristneje pa si lahko pomagamo s poznavanjem njegove predzgodovine iz 18. in 19. stoletja, ki jo preko številnih lahko dostopnih virov še razmeroma dobro poznamo, ter borilnih večšin antične Grčije in Rima. Kot dodatna iztočnica so lahko drugi podobni športi, ki ne izvirajo nujno iz evropskega prostora, a temeljijo na podobnih biomehaničnih načelih.

Med temi borilnimi sistemi obstajajo velike razlike, vendar jih po drugi strani povezuje nekaj splošnih konceptov, ki jih zasledimo v skoraj vsaki preizkušeni, praktično naravnani veščini. Poskusimo jih nanizati v zaporedje najpomembnejših temeljnih pravil:<sup>6</sup>

- bokсар najprej zavzame primeren položaj, ki mu zagotavlja ravnotežje ter učinkovito izvedbo obrambe in udarcev;

- od načina borbe je odvisno, kako bokсар razporedi ravnotežje – ofenzivni borec bo usmeril več teže na prednje stopalo, defenzivni pa na zadnje;

- v bokсарskem položaju desničar praviloma vodi z levo nogo, telo pa po navpični osi bolj ali manj zasuka od nasprotnika; bolj ko je telo zasukano proč od nasprotnika, lažje se bokсар brani, a toliko teže udarja z roko, ki je zadaj;

- položaj rok v gardu je izjemno pomemben; večina bokсарjev vodi s šibkejšo roko, močnejša pa je zadaj; vsaj ena od obeh rok je v gardu dvignjena in bolj ali manj iztegnjena naprej proti nasprotni-

ku, da lahko bokсар po potrebi primerno zavaruje svojo glavo in vitalna mesta na trupu;

- šibkejša roka pogosto prevzame glavno težo obrambe, bokсар poskuša z njo načeti nasprotnikovo obrambo ali nadzirati razdaljo;

- z močnejšo roko bokсар zadaja odločilne udarce; to je še posebej opazno pri tehnično slabših ali neizsolanih borcih, ki pogosto zanemarijo udarjanje s šibkejšo roko;

- dober bokсар udarcev ne izvaja zgolj z močjo rok, temveč s kompleksnimi, bliskovitimi gibi vsega telesa; to je mogoče doseči bodisi linearno, s hitrim korakom naprej v smeri napada, bodisi s sukanjem bokov in telesa po navpični osi; v vsakem primeru je usklajena koordinacija gibanja izjemno pomembna za prenos bokсарjeve teže in pravilno izvedbo udarca z optimalno močjo;

- udarce je treba izvajati neposredno iz garda, brez predhodnega nakazovanja ali "telegrafiranja"; če je le mogoče, bokсар ne udarja posamično, temveč v kombinacijah – s hitrim zaporedjem udarcev najprej razbije nasprotnikovo obrambo, najmočnejši udarec pa prihrani za konec, ko ga poskuša zadati v katerega od nasprotnikovih razkritih vitalnih delov telesa.

Brez pretiranega poenostavljanja lahko predvidevamo, da so izkušeni bokсарji v vsej človeški zgodovini ta pravila poznali in tudi dobro razumeli. Kako natanko so jih iz teorije prelili v ring, pa je bilo odvisno od številnih dejavnikov – najprej od posameznikovega telesnega ustroja in načina borbe, od tega, ali so se borili z golimi rokami ali rokavicami oziroma drugimi podobnimi pripomočki, ter ne nazadnje od tekmovalnih pravil. Pri tem je bilo zlasti pomembno, ali so bili bokсарjem dovoljeni le udarci s pestjo ali so lahko uporabljali tudi druge vrste ročnih ali nožnih udarcev ter rokoborske prijeme in mete.

Zavreči moramo tudi splošno zakoreninjene predsodke, po katerih naj bi bile v preteklosti borilne veščine primitivne ali vsaj tehnično manjvredne v primerjavi s sodobnimi športi, utemeljenimi na "znanstveni" podlagi. Ta mit je denimo zlasti trdoživ v krogu športnih sabljačev, ki srednjeveškemu mečevanju odrekajo vsakršno prefinjenost in povsem neutemeljeno verjamejo, da se je njihova veščina začela razvijati na višji kakovostni stopnji šele v zadnjih dveh ali treh stoletjih.<sup>7</sup> Podobno napako bi utegnili zagrešiti pri obravnavi boksa, kar pa je povsem nesprejemljivo, saj primarni viri jasno

<sup>5</sup> Tako imenovan po podobnosti z zamahom mačete ali velikega noža – bola, ki so ga uporabljali za sekanje sladkornega trsa.

<sup>6</sup> Morda najboljši tehnični učbenik boksa je sestavil legendarni šampion Jack Dempsey, verjetno najslavnejši borec prve generacije sodobnega boksa, ki je dobro poznal tudi starejše tehnike iz časa borb z golimi pestmi, še vedno pa slovi tudi kot eden najmočnejših ofenzivnih bokсарjev vseh časov (gl. Dempsey 1950).

<sup>7</sup> Prim. Hutton 1892.

kažejo, da je ta večina obstajala v zelo razviti obliki že vsaj v antični Grčiji. Predpostavljamo lahko, da so kompleksne in učinkovite borilne sisteme, ki so temeljili na zakonitostih biomehanike, poznali že v pradavnini, kar še posebej velja za kulture, v katerih so visoko cenili bojevniki spretnosti. Za njihov razvoj ni bilo potrebno nikakršno teoretično znanje niti formalna znanstvena podlaga, temveč le natančno opazovanje delovanja človeškega telesa ter preizkušanje borilnih tehnik v praksi. Zato moramo nemudoma ovreči domnevo Luckeja in Freya, da halštatski dvoboji "gotovo" niso mogli biti tehnično tako izpopolnjeni kot sodobni boks – izjava, ki je nista niti poskusila strokovno utemeljiti.<sup>8</sup>

### ZGODOVINSKI RAZVOJ BOKSARSKE TEHNIKE

V današnjem boksu opazamo, da borba po navadi poteka na razmeroma kratkih razdaljah, pri čemer se boksarja večino časa gibljeta tik zunaj dosega levega direkta. Težo običajno enakomerno razdelita med obe stopali, telo je vzravnano ali rahlo sključeno naprej, brada pa spuščena na grodnico zaradi zaščite čeljusti. Ker nosita debele rokavice in so njune pesti poleg tega tudi bandažirane, tesno povite s povoji, lahko tudi v koščene predele nasprotnikovega telesa udarjata z vso močjo. V gardu so dlani načeloma le rahlo pokrčene pravokotno na tla. Pri levem ali desnem direktu boksar bliskovito iztegne roko, tik pred zadetkom pa jo krčevito stisne v pest in jo zasukava v vodoravni položaj, tako da je dlan usmerjena proti tlam. To sukanje pesti direktu v zadnji fazi izvedbe zagotovi še dodatno silo. Položaj rok je po navadi visok – vsaj močnejša roka je blizu obraza v višini glave s pestjo, usmerjeno navzgor, prednja, šibkejša roka pa je rahlo iztegnjena v višini glave ali ramena. V takem gardu se lahko boksar pred udarcem zavaruje tako, da se preprosto pokrije z dobro oblazinjeno rokavico. Ruvanje v sodobnem boksarskem ringu ni dovoljeno, zato si lahko borca privoščita tudi izmenjavanje udarcev iz neposredne bližine. V samem klinču udarci s pestmi po navadi niso učinkoviti. Borci ga zato kot nekakšen pat položaj velikokrat izkoriščajo za predah ali poskušajo na ta način vsaj začasno ustaviti premočnega nasprotnika.<sup>9</sup>

Po drugi strani je bil klasični gard angleških boksarjev v 18. ali 19. stoletju precej bolj razpo-

tegnjen. Tehnično izurjeni boksarji (za razliko od agresivnejših, telesno močnih, "naravnejših" borcev) so v tistem času najraje zavzeli vzravnan položaj z rahlo pokrčenimi nogami. Pokončna drža z dvignjeno brado je kljub navidezni ranljivosti veljala za znak moškosti, saj naj bi izražala pogum in odločenost za boj. V tem položaju je boksar večino teže nosil na zadnji nogi. Vodil je s šibkejšo roko, ki jo je po navadi skoraj v celoti iztegnil, s pestjo, usmerjeno proti nasprotnikovim prsim ali bradi. Z močnejšo roko, pokrčeno ob prsni, si je zavaroval predvsem pleksus, lahko pa jo je tudi nekoliko iztegnil.<sup>10</sup>

Takšen gard je imel več pomembnih prednosti. Z iztegnjeno prednjo roko je boksar lažje nadziral razdaljo in nasprotniku preprečeval, da bi se mu nevarno približal. Z nazaj pomaknjenim trupom in pokončno vzravnano glavo je vitalne dele svojega telesa še bolj odmaknil udarcem. Še v drugi polovici 19. stoletja je bilo na številnih tekmovanjih v Veliki Britaniji in Združenih državah Amerike dopustno nasprotnika spotakniti ali vreči na tla. Ker so tedanja pravila boksarju dovoljevala, da tekmeča napade takoj, ko poskuša vstati – torej v najranljivejšem trenutku –, je bila dobra obramba pred meti zelo pomembna. Zaradi dolgega garda in previdnega nadzora razdalje so se boksarski spopadi do poznega 19. stoletja večinoma bili bolj od daleč, kot smo vajeni danes. V starem angleškem boksu so zato šolani borci najpogosteje uporabljali direkte, linearne udarce z velikim dosegom. Zlasti levi direkt (oziroma direkt z vodilno, prednjo roko) so izvajali z izpadnim korakom naprej, podobno kot sabljači. To tudi ne preseneča, saj je bil razvoj boksa v tistem času tesno povezan s sabljanjem.

Pri borbi brez rokavic so izkušeni boksarji skrbno odmerjali udarce. Natančen zadetek z golimi členki na občutljivo mesto je lahko nasprotnika hudo poškodoval ali v izjemnih primerih celo ubil. Toda močan udarec nezaščitene pesti v lobanjo, konico komolca ali kateri drug trdi, koščeni del človeške anatomije je imel resne posledice tudi za napadalca, saj si je lahko na ta način zlomil členke in se sam nehote onesposobil. Mnogi boksarji, denimo znameniti angleški mojster Broughton in njegov tekmeček Slack, so nasprotnika najraje ciljali v telo, predvsem v pleksus, saj je bilo tako manj možnosti, da si ranijo pesti. Poleg udarcev s členki so občasno uporabljali tudi t. i. "kladivo", močan

<sup>8</sup> Lucke, Frey 1962, 27.

<sup>9</sup> Prim. Gale 1997, 36–40; Dempsey 1950, 11. poglavje.

<sup>10</sup> Prim. Price 1867; Fewtrell 1790, 27–31.

zamah s spodnjim delom stisnjene pesti, ki je bil lahko v ustreznih okoliščinah zelo učinkovit.<sup>11</sup>

Pri obravnavi situlskih iger so zlasti zanimive primerjave z antičnim boksom. Že marmorna reliefa iz templja Nintu v Iraku (2700–2600 pr. n. št.) ter v isto obdobje datirani terakotni relief iz Ešnuna kažejo bokсарja v gardu, ki v vseh osnovnih potezah spominja na stav angleških bokсарjev iz 18. in 19. stoletja, torej iz časa, ko so tudi formalna tekmovanja še potekala z golimi pestmi. Podobne mlajše upodobitve, na katerih je najopaznejši visok, razpotegnjen bokсарski gard, poznamo iz Babilona, Mezopotamije in kretske-mikenske kulture.<sup>12</sup>

Boks in rokoborba sta v antični Grčiji dosegla zelo visoko raven in verjetno v nobenem pogledu nista zaostajala za sodobnimi športi. Boks je bil v antični Grčiji in pozneje v Rimu precej bolj krvav, kot je običajno v današnjem ringu. Slovel je kot najnevarnejša športna disciplina, celo bolj kot *pankration*, ki ga bomo omenili v nadaljevanju.<sup>13</sup> To je bila posledica razmeroma ohlapnih pravil, ki bokсарjev niso posebej varovala, prepovedovala pa so vsakršno rokoborbo ali klinč, v katerem bi se lahko borca vsaj za kratek čas odpočila. Sistema rund in vmesnih počitkov načeloma niso poznali. Razen v izjemnih primerih je bilo spopada konec šele, ko se je eden od tekmovalcev predal ali je bil nokavtiran; sodniške odločitve po točkah torej ni bilo. Nasprotnika je bilo dovoljeno udarjati tudi, ko je padel.<sup>14</sup>

Pomembna značilnost grškega boksa je bila uporaba usnjenih bandaž (*himantes*). To niso bile bokсарske rokavice v pravem pomenu besede, temveč predvsem pripomoček, s katerim si je borec utrdil dlan in zapestje, podobno kot tradicionalni tajski bokсарji. Takšne bandaže zagotovo niso bile namenjene temu, da bi nasprotnika kakor koli obvarovale pred poškodbami, temveč ravno nasprotno. Bokсарju so omogočale, da s pestjo udari močnejše in z manj tveganja, da si poškoduje roko. V 4. st. pr. n. št. so začeli bokсарji pod usnjenimi jermeni nositi še dodatno podlogo. Tako je nastal rokavici podoben pripomoček (*sphairai*), ki so ga očitno uporabljali v dveh različicah. Mehkejša je bila namenjena varni vadbi, pri trši, tekmovalni, pa so bandaže na členkih okrepili z debelejšimi, bolj togimi usnjenimi jermeni. Tako so postale že pravo orožje, s katerim je bilo mogoče nasprotnika

hudo poškodovati.<sup>15</sup> Sčasoma se je ta težnja še stopnjevala, saj so Rimljani jermene na členkih včasih dodatno opremili z železnimi zakovicami ali svinčenimi utežmi.<sup>16</sup>

V klasičnem grškem boksju je bil gard običajno visok. Borec je stal vzravnan ali nekoliko nagnjen naprej, praviloma pa je obe roki držal iztegnjeni precej daleč pred seboj v višini glave, redkeje prsi. To mu je omogočalo dobro obrambo in hiter napad, ki je bil praviloma usmerjen v glavo. Zdi se, da so se borci udarcem v telo izogibali, morda zato, ker po njihovih izkušnjah niso bili dovolj učinkoviti. Prav zato je bil njihov gard še višji, kot je običajno danes. Grški bokсарji so že uporabljali zelo napredne metode vadbe, za vadbo udarcev pa so poznali tudi bokсарske vreče.<sup>17</sup>

Sintezo veččin boja z golimi rokami je v grškem svetu predstavljal *pankration*, nevaren in vsestranski borilni sistem, ki je zajemal udarce z rokami, nogami, komolci, kolena, glavo, mete, ruvanje in druge elemente rokoborbe (*sl. 1*). *Pankration* je bil po eni strani vojaška veččina, namenjena dejanski uporabi na bojišču, kadar je bojevnik izgubil orožje. Prakticirali so ga tudi kot izjemno priljubljeno, precej aristokratsko tekmovalno disciplino, v kateri je bilo dovoljeno pravzaprav vse – po pravilih na olimpijskih igrah sta bili edini izjemi grizenje in iztikanje oči –, vsekakor pa je dopuščala udarce v vitalne dele telesa, ki so v športnih tekmah načeloma prepovedani. V tem pogledu bi edino sodobno primerjavo našli v valetudu oz. mešanih borilnih veččinah (angl. Mixed Martial Arts – MMA) ali vojaški samoobrambi.<sup>18</sup> Kot zmes kikboksa in rokoborbe je bil osnovni stav pri *pankrationu* podoben bokсарskemu, le da se je borec ustopil bolj frontalno, podobno kot rokoborec. Gard je bil po navadi še daljši kot pri boksu, s skoraj v celoti iztegnjeno levico in pogosto tudi desnico, pomaknjeno daleč naprej.<sup>19</sup>

## HOMER IN HALŠTATSKI BORCI

Čeprav so to pred nami storili že mnogi, vseeno še enkrat povzemimo znameniti odlomek iz Ho-

<sup>11</sup> Fewtrell 1790, 49–53.

<sup>12</sup> Frelih 1989, 99–104.

<sup>13</sup> Georgiou 2005, 51–52.

<sup>14</sup> Swaddling 1992, 62–63.

<sup>15</sup> Guhl, Koner 1994, 224; Swaddling 1992, 64; Georgiou 2005, 45–46.

<sup>16</sup> Zelo znan opis takšnega borilnega pripomočka (lat. *caestus*) je v 5. spevu Eneide prispeval Vergil (Bradač, *Eneida* 1992, 107).

<sup>17</sup> Guhl, Koner 1994, 224–225; Swaddling 1992, 64–65.

<sup>18</sup> Georgiou 2005, 4, 7; Swaddling 1992, 60–62.

<sup>19</sup> Georgiou 2005, 82–83.





Sl. 1: Spopad pankratiastov na grški posodi (Georgiou 2005, sl. 46).  
 Fig. 1: A *pankration* match on Greek vessel (Georgiou 2005, fig. 46).



Sl. 2: Boksarja na situli z Vač (Zimmermann 2003, sl. 1).  
 Fig. 2: The boxers on the situla from Vače (Zimmermann 2003, fig. 1).





Sl. 3: Položaj bokсарjev na situli Kuffarn, grob 1 (Zimmermann 2003, sl. 2).

Fig. 3: The boxing stance on the situla from Kuffarn, grave no. 1 (Zimmermann 2003, fig. 2).

merjeve Iliade, ki opisuje pogrebne igre, prirejene v spomin padlega Patrokla. Ta kljub pesniški svobodi velja za enega najstarejših, posebno dragocenih opisov boksarskega spopada, za nas pa je pri tem zlasti pomemben njegov kontekst.

Boksarski dvoboj na Patrokolovih igrah ima tako ritualno kot tekmovalno vlogo. Epeios in Eurialos se spoprime v čast preminulemu junaku za dokaj visoko nagrado – zmagovalcu pripada “močna mezgica”, poražencu dvoročni vrč. Tekma poteka pred številčnim občinstvom. Epeios, ki sicer v bojevanju z orožjem ni najspretnější, slovi kot “mojster v borbi na pest”. Eurialos sprejme njegov izziv in spopadeta se očitno gola, opremljena le s pasom in bandažami ali preprostimi rokavicami iz volovske kože. Tekma je ostra, nekaj časa neodločena, a favorit Epeios naposled nokavtura svojega nasprotnika z udarcem v obraz. Čeprav lahko predvidevamo, da je tekmovalca motivirala k zmagi nagrada, vseeno ni šlo za kruto gladiatorstvo, temveč predvsem za športno merjenje moči, kjer so veljala nepisana pravila ali kodeks časti. Kakor hitro je namreč Epeios s pestjo pokosil Eurialosa, ga je obzirno ujel, da ne bi nezavesten padel na tla, in ga pridržal pokonci, dokler ga niso odnesli njegovi tovariši.<sup>20</sup>

Kot so opozorili številni raziskovalci, nas Homerjev opis neizogibno sili v primerjavo z reliefi na situli z Vač (sl. 2): gola, opasana borca ob čeladi

s perjanico, ob vsakem več opazovalcev, morda sodnikov, v bližnjem kontekstu vladar s služabnikom, v zgornjem pasu pa še več konjenikov in dva lahka, enovprežna voza s po dvema potnikoma.<sup>21</sup> Dogajanje, ki se v skoraj enaki obliki ponovi na situlah iz Kuffarna (sl. 3), Matreja,<sup>22</sup> Bologne (situla Arnoaldi, sl. 4) ter na pasni sponi z Magdalenske gore (sl. 10), je presenetljivo podobno Patrokolovim pogrebnim igram. Na podobno ritualno vsebino bogato okrašenih situl kaže tudi njihov najdiščni kontekst grobnega pridatka. Ne glede na stilistične razlike bi na vsebinsko povsem podobne motive naleteli na približno sočasnih grških upodobitvah. Zimmermann se je za razliko od večine svojih predhodnikov v svoji analizi izrazito distanciral od te interpretacije, saj je nekritično enačenje halštatskega in starogrškega sveta metodološko sporno in nas utegne zavesti k prenažljenim sklepom.<sup>23</sup>

Vendarle velja razmisliti, ali ni metodološko še manj dopustno *a priori* zavračanje očitnih podobnosti, ki verjetno niso le naključne in tudi ne zgolj površinske. Frelihova študija kaže, da pri motivu boksarskega dvoboja še zdaleč ne gre za nov ali enkratni pojav, saj je v situlsko umetnost očitno zašel preko veliko starejših predlog, ki temeljijo na vzorih iz mitologije Bližnjega vzhoda. Tem lahko sledimo že vsaj od prve polovice

<sup>21</sup> Kastelic 1962a, 53 ss, pril. E.

<sup>22</sup> Na situli iz Matreja poleg čelade stoji še sulica. Prim. Frelih 1998, 25.

<sup>23</sup> Prim. Zimmermann 2003, 227, 236.

<sup>20</sup> Sovre, *Iliada* 1965, XXIII, 651–699.





Sl. 4: Položaj boksarjev na situli Arnoaldi, grob 2 (Zimmermann 2003, sl. 6).

Fig. 4: The boxing stance on the situla from Arnoaldi, grave no. 2 (Zimmermann 2003, fig. 6).

3. tisočletja pr. n. št., od 16. st. pr. n. št. na Kreti in v mikenski Grčiji, to izročilo pa se je v grškem svetu ohranilo še dlje in najbrž prav od tam ali pa s posredovanjem Feničanov prišlo v severnoitalijanski in podalpski prostor. V situlski umetnosti so prizori boksarjev morda izgubili del svojega prvotnega simbolnega pomena, kljub temu pa so ostali priljubljen umetniški motiv.<sup>24</sup>

Najprej se lahko ustavimo pri bojni opremi: tako halštatski kot starogrški veljaki so se bojevali s kopjem, ščitom in mečem, v kovinskem oklepu in čeladi, uporabljali pa so tudi enak tip lahkih

vprežnih vozov.<sup>25</sup> To dokazuje, da se je vladajoči sloj v obeh družbah pretežno bojeval na podoben način in je zato najverjetneje razvijal podobne borilne spretnosti.<sup>26</sup> Podobno kot v Homerjevem epu je pri halštatskih spopadih z ročkami zmagovalcu namenjena nagrada – čelada, v enem primeru posoda. Na situlah z Vač, Providencea in Kuffarna

<sup>25</sup> Npr. Oakeshott 1996, 37–50. Prim. tudi upodobitve na situli iz Certose: Ducati 1970.

<sup>26</sup> Na pasni sponi z Vač najdemo tudi kompleksnejši bojni prizor, ki vključuje dva konjenika in dva težko obo-rožena pešca. To kaže, da je halštatska družba poznala tudi konjenico, vendar ni gotovo, ali je bila ta v tedanjem času kaj dosti bolj razširjena kot v stari Grčiji, kjer je imela zgolj pomožno vlogo (Kastelic 1962a, 51–52; gl. tudi Lauer mann 1997, 23–25).

<sup>24</sup> Freligh 1989, 99–114; Huth 2003, 165 ss; Lucke, Frey 1962, 27–29.



neposredno ob borcih stoji še nekaj oseb. Njihova vloga ni povsem jasna, toda vsaj na upodobitvi iz Kuffarna ob vsakem tekmovalcu stoji razkošno opravljen moški z dolgo razcepljeno šibo oziroma palico (*sl.* 3). Torej gre očitno za sodnika, to pa skupaj z religioznim kontekstom – verskimi obredi in žrtvovanjem – nakazuje, da imamo opraviti z ritualnim športnim spopadom, formalizirano dejavnostjo, ki je omejena z določenimi pravili in ima poleg tekmovanja za dragoceno nagrado najverjetneje tudi močan simbolni pomen. Ob tem je posebej povedno, da najdemo sodnike v enaki vlogi upodobljene na grški keramiki, kjer prav tako nosijo dolge, včasih razcepljene palice ali biče, ki jih uporabljajo za nadzorovanje tekmovalcev, kadar kateri od njihju napravi kaj nedovoljenega.<sup>27</sup>

## OSNOVNI BORILNI POLOŽAJ

Po mnenju Ericha Zimmermanna naj bi tipični prizor, ki ga najdemo na situlah z Vač, iz Kuffarna, Providencea, Matrijeja, Arnoaldija in z Magdalenske gore kazal trenutek, v katerem boksarja prvič zamahneto drug proti drugemu. Sta precej oddaljena drug od drugega, tako zelo, da bi še z izpadnim korakom komaj dosegla nasprotnikove vitalne točke. Zato naj bi z nekakšno varianto levega direkta, ki je vsaj v sodobnem boks najpogostejši udarec in praviloma prvi v kombinaciji, zgolj merila v nasprotnikovo pest in drug drugemu poskušala izbiti ročke iz prijema.<sup>28</sup>

Ta razlaga ne vzdrži temeljite presoje. Najprej je opazno, da teža boksarjev na upodobitvah večinoma izrazito počiva na zadnji nogi, ne pa na prednji, kakor je nujno potrebno, če poskušamo udariti s prednjo roko. Na to kaže tudi položaj prednjega boka, ki je še vedno pomaknjen nazaj. Stav boksarjev je razmeroma širok – razdalja med stopaloma je precej velika – in nizek, kar kažejo pokrčene noge. Široki stav, ki je denimo še vedno priljubljen v karateju in nekaterih drugih daljnjevzhodnih borilnih veščinah, boksarju zagotavlja dobro stabilnost, vendar na račun zmanjšane gi-

bljivosti, saj upočasni premikanje nog. A pokrčeni položaj nog na omenjenih upodobitvah ne kaže izpadnega koraka, kot meni Zimmermann, saj bi morala v tem primeru boksarja jasno prenesti težo na prednje stopalo.

Nadalje levega direkta nikakor ni mogoče zadati s pestjo, zasukano za polni obrat v levo, tako da je palec obrnjen proti tlom. To je ugotovil že Zimmermann sam, saj mu ni uspelo prepričati izšolanega boksarja, da bi mu demonstriral udarec na tak način – biomehanično preprosto ni izvedljiv in bi najbrž povzročil poškodbe občutljivih ramenskih vezi.<sup>29</sup> Prav to je eden od ključnih argumentov, ki ga moramo podrobneje raziskati, saj je ključ do odgovora na naslednje bistveno vprašanje.

Po Zimmermannovi hipotezi naj namreč halštatski boksarji ne bi uporabljali varovalnega garda, s katerim bi se ščitili pred nasprotnikovim udarcem. Če sledimo njegovi interpretaciji, naj bi situlski borci na začetku spopada nasprotnika najprej napadli z varianto levega direkta, medtem ko so desno roko puščali nizko zadaj za desnim bokom. Takoj po izvedbi udarca naj bi z levico zanihali nazaj, desnico pa izprožili naprej in z njo poskušali zadeti cilj. Tako razmišljanje predpostavlja, da halštatski borilni sistem dejansko ni poznal pravega garda. Vendar je to eden tistih temeljnih elementov, ki je skupen pravzaprav vsem borilnim športom. Za izkušenega borca je preprosto nepredstavljivo, da si v boksarskem spopadu vsaj z eno roko ne bi poskušal zaščititi glave in vitalnih delov na trupu. Nizek, odprt boksarski gard je običajna napaka neizkušenega boksarja. Dovolj povedno je, da so se temu posmehovali že stari Grki, med katerimi je spuščanje garda pomenilo nepoznavanje borilnih veščin.<sup>30</sup>

Zdi se, da na ta vprašanja lahko podamo verjetnejšo interpretacijo. Po našem mnenju upodobitve na situlah z Vač, iz Kuffarna, Providencea, Matrijeja in z Magdalenske gore boksarjev še ne kažejo v dejanskem boju, temveč zgolj v gardu oziroma stanju pripravljenosti, še zunaj neposrednega dosega udarcev (*sl.* 5).<sup>31</sup> Na ta način je mogoče odgovoriti na vse glavne problematične točke, ki so begale Zimmermanna. Iztegnjena levica ne kaže levega direkta – to je glede na nenavaden položaj zapestja, razdaljo med nasprotnikoma in njun stav nemogoče –, temveč je tisti obrambni element garda, s katerim boksar drži

<sup>27</sup> Georgiou 2005, *sl.* 8, 17, 46, 49, 55, 128, 71, 74, 76, 89–92, 95, 97, 98. Zanimivo je, da na zgornjem in srednjem pasu situle z Magdalenske gore goniči priganjajo žrtvene živali s povsem enakim pripomočkom, kar niti ne prese- neča. Enako leseno rogovilo ali bič, s katerim usmerjamo udomačene živali, bi lahko uporabili v boksarskem dvo- boju, če bi bilo treba ločiti pretirano razgreta tekmovalca (Kastelic 1962a, 53 *ss.*, pril. F; prim. tudi Frey 1962, 6).

<sup>28</sup> Zimmermann 2003, 236.

<sup>29</sup> Zimmermann 2003, 230, 236, op. 31.

<sup>30</sup> Georgiou 2005, 83.

<sup>31</sup> Prav takšno razlago sta že pred pol stoletja podala Lucke in Frey (Lucke, Frey 1962, 27).

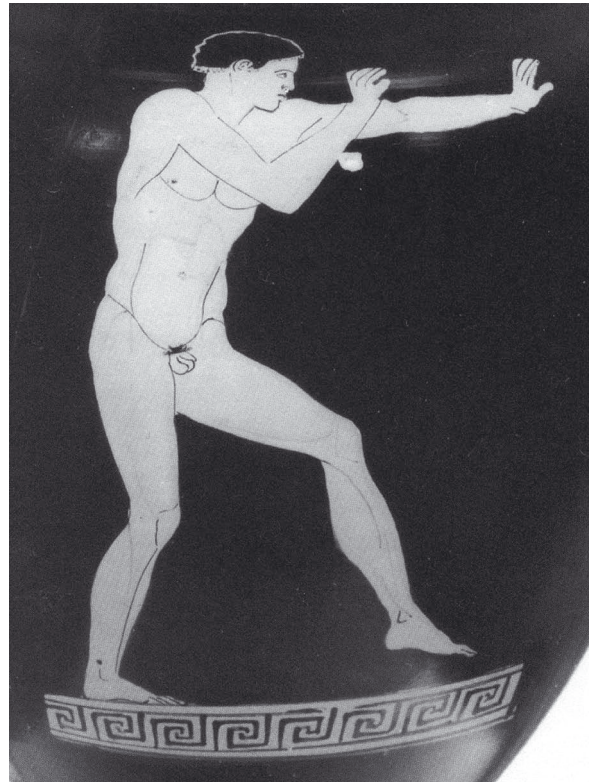


Sl. 5: Rekonstrukcija osnovnega borilnega položaja (foto: Tomaž Lauko).  
 Fig. 5: A reconstruction of the basic fighting stance (photo: Tomaž Lauko).



Sl. 6: Opozorilo, da torevske upodobitve zaradi pomanjkanja globine ne morejo zanesljivo posredovati občutka perspektive – isti položaj kot na *sliki 5* smo fotografirali s strani. Gledalcu, ki dogajanje opazuje naravnost pred seboj, se zdi, da se prednji pesti boksarjev stikata, toda vtis je lahko varljiv. V našem primeru stranski pogled pokaže, da je pravokotno med rokama tekmovalcev okrog 30 cm praznega prostora (foto: Tomaž Lauko).

Fig. 6: A warning that toreutic images because of their lack of depth need not reliably transmit a sense of perspective – the same stance as in the previous photograph was taken from the side. For the viewer watching the events from straight in front, it may seem that the front fists of the boxers are touching, but the impression can be deceptive. In this case, a view from the side shows that there was around 30 cm of empty space between the fighters' hands (photo: Tomaž Lauko).



Sl. 7: Dolgi gard v grškem *pankrationu* na atiški amfori (Georgiou 2005, sl. 36).

Fig. 7: A long guard in Greek *pankration* on an Attic amphora (Georgiou 2005, fig. 36).





*Sl. 8a:* Dolgi gard z levo pestjo v nevtralnem navpičnem položaju; roka je sproščena (foto: Tomaž Lauko).

*Fig. 8a:* A long guard with the left fist in a neutral vertical position; the arm is relaxed (photo: Tomaž Lauko).

nasprotnika na varni razdalji (*sl. 6*). Dolgi gard z bolj ali manj iztegnjeno prednjo roko je bil običajen v angleškem boks 18. in 19. stoletja,<sup>32</sup> a tudi v starogrškem boks in pankrationu. Dve posebno lepi upodobitvi takega borilnega položaja najdemo na dveh antiških amforah, od katerih eno hranijo v Antični zbirki v Berlinu, drugo pa v Antični zbirki in gliptoteki v Münchnu (*sl. 7*).<sup>33</sup> Halštatski gard je torej z razporeditvijo teže na zadnjo nogo precej defenziven, kar še bolj poudarja položaj trupa, ki je bodisi vzravnani bodisi nekoliko sključen naprej, a vedno vsaj za približno 45° zasukan v stran po navpični osi.

Ko so halštatski boksarji pest levice v gardu obrnili v skrajni položaj navzven v smeri urinega kazalca, so se s tem odpovedali vsakršni možnosti, da bi z levo roko v enem gibu zadali učinkovit direkt. To pomeni, da je ofenzivna vloga vsaj pri prvem udarcu iz osnovnega levega garda pripadala močni desnici, levica pa je imela ob tem prvenstveno obrambno vlogo. A razloge za takšen položaj leve pesti nam pomaga pojasniti praktičen preizkus: ko pest levice v povsem iztegnjenem položaju obrnemo z dlanjo popolnoma navzven, s tem nekoliko dvignemo tudi levo ramo in triceps. Na ta način si dodatno zakrijemo levo spodnjo stran obraza, kar je pomembna prednost, saj je čeljust pri boks



*Sl. 8b:* Na situlskih upodobitvah je boksarjeva prednja roka s pestjo povsem zasukana navznoter za 180°. Ta položaj je biomehanično obremenjujoč in ne dopušča takojšnje izvedbe udarca, vendar hkrati nekoliko dvigne komolec in ramo ter na ta način dodatno zavaruje boksarjevo čeljust (foto: Tomaž Lauko).

*Fig. 8b:* On the situla images the boxer's front hand with the dumbbell is completely turned inwards 180°. This position is biomechanically burdensome and does not allow an immediate strike. However, it raises the elbow and shoulder slightly, additionally protecting the boxer's jaw (photo: Tomaž Lauko).

verjetno najranljivejši del obrazne anatomije. Močan udarec na to točko bo zelo verjetno onemogočil ali nokavtiral nasprotnika (*sl. 8b*).

Na prvi pogled nenavaden položaj rok je vsaj deloma posledica uporabe ročk. Te so boksarje precej omejevale pri obrambi, saj so onemogočale odbijanje, prestrezanje ali lovljenje nasprotnikovih udarcev z odprtimi dlanmi. Iz upodobitev (*sl. 2–4*) je razvidno, da je halštatski boksar v osnovnem položaju desnico pomaknil precej daleč nazaj za desni bok, približno v višino pasu. Komolec desne roke je v tem položaju vedno pokrčen za približno 90°. Desnica je torej pripravljena, da zada dolgi kroše, morda celo aperkat ali podoben krožni udarec, ki bo do nasprotnika sicer potoval veliko časa, a bo cilj zadel z izjemno močjo, ki jo še poveča masa ročke. Težko si je predstavljati, da bi bil še tako vzdržljiv in odporen boksar zmožen prestati več takih zadetkov, zato je bilo zelo pomembno, da nasprotnika zadrži na primerni razdalji. Tako imamo še en dejavnik več, ki govori v prid dolgega garda z naprej uperjeno levico.

Upodobitve, ki smo jih pravkar analizirali, so si v vseh poglavitnih potezah zelo podobne. Dovolj verjetna se zdi domneva, da so situlski torevti boksarske spopade uprizarjali vsaj deloma stili-

<sup>32</sup> Price 1867, zlasti poglavje *The Arm*; Fewtrell 1790, 29–30.

<sup>33</sup> Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, inv. št. 5844; Antikensammlung, München, inv. št. SL 473; Georgiou 2005, sl. 35, 36.

zirano oziroma so ob tem precej natančno sledili obstoječim predlogam.<sup>34</sup> Če je šlo za upodobitev športnega ali ritualnega dogodka, ki je bil po dojemanju sodobnikov del običajne umetniške kompozicije, bi bilo najbrž dopustno predvidevati, da je ta kompozicija poskušala predstaviti posebej značilno in prepoznavno fazo borbe, ki je ni bilo pretežno ponazoriti niti v mediju, kot je tolčena pločevina. V tem pogledu ne bi našli primernejšega motiva kot podobe borca v osnovnem gardu.

### VPLIV ROČK NA BORILNO TEHNIKO

Edini pravi odmik od grških predlog, ki ga zasledimo v situlski umetnosti, je uporaba nenavadnih pripomočkov – ročk. Prav njihov obstoj dokazuje, da situlski mojstri niso zgolj ponavljali “orientalskih” ali grških motivov, temveč njihove upodobitve boksarskih dvobojev bolj ali manj realistično kažejo dejavnost, ki je bila v takšni obliki značilna le za njihovo okolje.<sup>35</sup>

Izvora in vloge boksarskih ročk ni preprosto pojasniti. V sodobni vadbi lahke, največ nekajkilogramske ročne uteži občasno uporabljamo pri boksu s senco za izboljšanje hitrosti in moči udarcev. Enak namen so imeli posebej obteženi leseni meči in ščiti, s katerimi so v rimski armadi urili rekrute.<sup>36</sup> Teoretično bi bilo mogoče, da so takšen vadbeni pripomoček poznali halštatski bojevniki in je z vadbo postopoma postal tekmovalni rekvizit – to se je navsezadnje v novem veku zgodilo z boksarskimi rokavicami, ki

<sup>34</sup> Zimmermann 2003, 238.

<sup>35</sup> Huth 2003, 166.

<sup>36</sup> Publius Flavius Vegetius Renatus, *Epitoma rei militaris*, I/XI. “*Antiqui, sicut inuenitur in libris, hoc genere exercuere tirones. Scuta de uimine in modum cratium conrotundata texebant, ita ut duplum pondus cratis haberet, quam scutum publicum habere consuevit. Idemque clauas ligneas dupli aequae ponderis pro gladiis tironibus dabant. Eoque modo non tantum mane sed etiam post meridiem exercebantur ad palos. Palorum enim usus non solum militibus sed etiam gladiatoribus plurimum prodest. Nec umquam aut harena aut campus inuictum armis uirum probauit, nisi qui diligenter exercitatus docebatur ad palum. A singulis autem tironibus singuli pali defigebantur in terram, ita ut nutare non possent et sex pedibus eminent. Contra illum palum tamquam contra aduersarium tiro cum crate illa et claua uelut cum gladio se exercebat et scuto, ut nunc quasi caput aut faciem peteret, nunc a lateribus minaretur, interdum contenderet poplites et crura succidere, recederet adsultaret insiliret, quasi praesentem aduersarium, sic palum omni impetu, omni bellandi arte temptaret. In qua meditatione seruabatur illa cautela, ut ita tiro ad inferendum uulnus insurgeret, ne qua parte ipse peteret ad plagam.*”

so jih dolgo uporabljali zgolj za vadbo, v športnih tekmovanjih pa so se dokončno uveljavile šele pred dobrim stoletjem.<sup>37</sup> Posebej domiselno razlago je predlagal Zimmermann: cilj halštatskih boksarjev naj ne bi bil nič drugega kot izbijanje nasprotnikove ročke s svojo lastno. Tako naj sploh ne bi šlo za borilni šport v pravem pomenu besede, temveč za spretnostno igro.<sup>38</sup>

Ob natančnem pregledu primarnih virov najdemo za to hipotezo le malo trdnih argumentov. Splošni zadržek je že dejstvo, da bi bila takšna igra v praksi tako rekoč neizvedljiva. Odebeljena glava ročke v gibanju je majhna, izmuzljiva tarča, in tudi če bi nam jo uspelo zadeti z vso močjo, telesno razvitemu atletu rekvizita skoraj zagotovo ne bi mogli izbiti iz pesti, zlasti še, če bi si ga dodatno privezal okoli roke, kot kažejo številne upodobitve. Prijem človeške pesti je namreč zelo močan in se pod stresom ali ob prejemu udarca še refleksno okrepi, ročke na reliefih pa so prekratke, da bi učinkovito delovale kot vzvod ter tako povečale prenos sile ob neposrednem zadetku. Še manj prepričljiva je teza, da so se z ročkami opremljeni tekmovalci ciljali s pestjo na pest. Takšni udarci bi bili enako boleči tudi za napadalca in bi zelo hitro povzročili poškodbe členkov in kosti, ne da bi dosegli kakršen koli pozitiven učinek. Če bi nasprotnika že hoteli razorožiti, bi to verjetno lahko dosegli le na en zanesljiv način – da ga nokavtiramo oziroma onesposobimo z udarcem v vitalni predel.

Skoraj enako dogajanje kot na situlah z Vač, iz Kuffarna, Providencea, Matreija (ter v slabši izvedbi še na situli z Magdalenske gore) je mogoče videti na tisti z grobišča Arnoaldi (sl. 4) v Bologni. Ta je za Zimmermannovo interpretacijo izjemno pomembna, saj je edina, ki naj bi kazala prav tiste podrobnosti, na katerih je zgrajena njegova razlaga – zlasti ciljanje nasprotnikovih ročk, pri čemer naj bi boksar na desni eno ročko že izgubil. Treba je poudariti, da je za razliko od prejšnjih štirih primerkov situla iz Arnoaldija precej slabše okrašena, njena pozna datacija (ok. 400 pr. n. št.) pa spodbuja domnevo, da je torej v tem primeru zgolj ponavljal starejši, nekoč uveljavljeni motiv, ki ga niti ni dobro razumel oziroma je v njegovem času že izgubil svoj nekdanji pomen.<sup>39</sup> Veliko površnejša izvedba detajlov otežuje zanesljivo interpretacijo, zato zahteva posebno previdnost. Po Zimmermannu naj bi prizor kazal tisto fazo spopada, v kateri se levi boksar izmika

<sup>37</sup> Prim. Brown 1997, 85.

<sup>38</sup> Zimmermann 2003, 236–238.

<sup>39</sup> Huth 2003, 165.



udarcu nasprotnika, ki napada z desnico in poskuša zadeti njegovo ročko. Ker je nazaj pomaknjena roka desnega boksarja prazna, naj bi to dokazovalo, da mu je nasprotnik eno ročko že izbil iz pesti.<sup>40</sup>

Če ponovno ocenimo spopad na situli iz Arnoaldija v kontekstu prejšnjih upodobitev, bi bilo mogoče predlagati drugačno razlago dogajanja. Prvič ni mogoče z gotovostjo trditi niti tega, katera od nog in rok obeh boksarjev je leva ali desna. Ostale podrobnosti je še težje razbrati. Že sama kompozicija je razmeroma nerodna. Če bi jo razumeli povsem dobesedno, desni nasprotnik pravzaprav stoji na prednjem nasprotnikovem stopalu! Nenaravni so tudi telesni proporci levega boksarja, čigar noge so v primerjavi z ostalimi deli telesa opazno prekratke. Torej situle iz Arnoaldija obrti očitno ni obvladal tako dobro kot starejši mojstri.<sup>41</sup> Zato se je težko znebiti občutka, da mu je pri boksaškem prizoru zmanjkalo prostora oziroma bi moral človeški figuri ustrezno pomanjšati. To nakazuje tudi zadnje stopalo levega boksarja, ki ga že zakriva izbočeni greben, pod katerim sledi nov pas upodobitev.

Da desni boksar izvaja desni (ali tudi levi) direkt, je v resnici vse prej kot jasno razvidno. Pričakovali bi, da bo boksar pri močnem direktu večino teže prenesel naprej, na upodobitvi pa borec stoji še vzravnano in njegovo težišče je bližje zadnji nogi. Zato imamo pred seboj po vsej verjetnosti že dobro znan, a slabše izveden motiv boksarjev v osnovnem borilnem položaju, torej v levem gardu. Nenavadno visok gard levega borca je po našem mnenju le posledica dejstva, da se je torej uštel pri proporcijah in velikosti figur, zato boksarjeve roke ni mogel jasno upodobiti v pravilnem položaju. Torej tova površnost je obenem najverjetnejši razlog, zakaj v zadnji roki desnega boksarja ni ročke. Morda je v resnici zasukana pravokotno na opazovalca in je zato njen odebeljeni konec viden le s strani. Mogoče pa je, da je umetnik nanjo preprosto pozabil, kakor je navsezadnje zelo nejasno prikazal tudi ročko v prednji roki boksarja na levi.

Igra z ročkami se zato ne zdi logično utemeljena, niti ne poznamo nobenega zahodnega borilnega športa, ki bi potekal po vsaj približno podobnih pravilih ali bi uporabljal podobne rekvizite.

Pač pa poznajo zelo podobno orožje pod imenom javara (*yawara*) na Japonskem, v obliki lesene, redkeje kovinske palice z odebeljenima koncema, skupne dolžine okoli 15 cm. Pri japonskih borilnih veščinah javaro uporabljajo kot obtežilnik pesti, namenjena pa je zlasti zadajanju močnih udarcev z zgornjim ali spodnjim robom palice na nasprotnikove vitalne točke.<sup>42</sup>

Večina piscev, ki se je soočila s to tematiko, ni dvomila, da so na situlah upodobljene ročke dejansko orožje.<sup>43</sup> Svojo interpretacijo je s praktičnega vidika morda še najbolj formuliral Frey na primeru situle iz Kuffarna. Po njegovem mnenju so bile ročke morda kovinske, prevlečene z usnjem, namenjene za povečevanje moči udarcev, ki so jih tekmovalci lahko blokirali le s svojimi rokami. Na reliefih so ročke prikazane v navpičnem položaju, a Frey domneva, da je to bolj posledica omejenega občutka perspektive v torevtiki. Dejanski položaj boksarjevih dlani naj bi bil verjetneje bližje vodoravnemu, saj je po njegovem mnenju le na ta način mogoče zadati učinkovit udarec s katerim od odebeljenih koncev ročke.<sup>44</sup>

Zanimivo je, da se je Frey do tega problema opredeljeval nedosledno, saj je s soavtorjem Luckejem v publikaciji, objavljeni istega leta, zavrnil teorijo, po kateri naj bi bile ročke dejansko mišljene kot orožje. V razpravi o situli iz Providencea tako trdita, da so bile ročke zgolj zaščitni pripomoček iz mehkih materialov, ki naj bi preprečil poškodbe.<sup>45</sup> Bistvena pomanjkljivost njune teze je, da bi morala takšna zaščitna oprema pokrivati tudi členke, prav ti pa so jasno odkriti. S stališča borilnih športov si je težko predstavljati, da bi imele ročke kakršen koli drug namen kot okrepiti udarce in nasprotniku prizadejati bistveno hujše poškodbe, kot je to mogoče doseči le z golo pestjo.<sup>46</sup> Kot smo že omenili, je prišlo do podobnega razvoja tudi v antični Grčiji in Rimu – tendenca, ki se najprej kaže v rabi bandaž (*himantes*) ter naposled trših, rokavicam podobnih pripomočkov (*sphairai*), iz katerih v Rimu nastane obteženi *caestus*. Skrajno evolucijo takšnega orožja na Zahodu predstavljajo kovinski bokserji, zelo nevarno, danes skoraj povsod po svetu prepovedano samoobrambno orožje. Ker je na več upodobitvah razvidno, da so

<sup>40</sup> Zimmermann 2003, 232–233.

<sup>41</sup> Na slabšo izvedbo upodobitev opozarjata tudi Kastelic in Freljih. Po Freljihovem mnenju je torej situle iz Arnoaldija poskušal slediti močno razširjenemu motivu, ki pa ga ni bil sposoben prikazati na visoki umetniški ravni, zato je njegova upodobitev zelo shematična in stilizirana (Kastelic 1962a, 39 ss; Freljih 1989, 109).

<sup>42</sup> McCauslin Moynahan 1963. Gl. tudi <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yawara> [zadnji dostop: 26. 10. 2011].

<sup>43</sup> Fogolari 1962a, 16.

<sup>44</sup> Frey 1962, 6.

<sup>45</sup> Lucke, Frey 1962, 27.

<sup>46</sup> Gale 1997, 26–27.

si halštatski borci ročke privezovali na dlan, lahko sklenemo, da so na ta način pravzaprav ustvarili varianto obtežene boksarske rokavice, konceptualno podobne grškim in antičnim borilnim rekvizitom. Morda je del tega pripomočka tudi bandaža levega boksarja na situli iz Providencea. Kakor je opazil Zimmermann, sicer drži, da ta bandaža na upodobitvi ni neposredno povezana z ročko.<sup>47</sup> Nikakor pa ne smemo zanemariti možnosti, da je bila v resnici sestavni del zapletenejšega privezovalnega sistema, ki ga torej v svojem mediju ni mogel natančneje prikazati, čeprav je to vendarle precej podrobno nakazal v primeru levega boksarja na situli z Vač (*sl. 2*).

V praksi uporaba ročk bistveno vpliva na borilno tehniko. Žal ne vemo, iz kakšnih materialov so bile te izdelane v halštatski dobi. Ker v arheoloških najdbah za zdaj še niso evidentirane, bi bilo logično domnevati, da so bile izrezljane iz trdega lesa ali kosti. Izključiti ne moremo niti domneve, da je šlo za preprosto kovinsko palico, na vsakem koncu ovito z mehkejšo oblogo.<sup>48</sup> Na ta način bi ustvarili sicer učinkovito, a vendar ne nujno smrtonosno orožje ravno prave mase, da bi z njim lahko zadali zelo močan in še vedno razmeroma hiter udarec, a tudi ob neposrednem zadetku z odebeljenim koncem ne bi smrtno poškodovali nasprotnika, če ga ne bi zadeli prav na posebno občutljivo mesto. Zanimivo je, da male ročne uteži podobnih dimenzij, ki jih uporabljamo danes pri športni vadbi in tudi boksanju s senco, praviloma tehtajo največ 2 ali 3 kg, več pa ne, da ne obremenjujemo pretirano ramenskih vezi. To je hkrati tudi največja dopustna masa, s katero izurjen športnik še lahko zada dovolj hiter udarec, ki se mu nasprotnik ne bo zlahka izognil.

Ob podrobnem pregledu likovnih predlog se zdi upravičena domneva, da so imele ročke precejšnjo maso. To bi zadovoljivo pojasnilo, zakaj so halštatski boksarji uporabljali razkrečeni stav s spuščeno zadnjo roko. Če so se namreč pred napadom zavarovali iz iztegnjeno prednjo roko, so lahko zadnjo razbremenili in jo sprostili v višini boka. Na ta način so si lahko pomagali tudi pri lovljenju ravnotežja, kar nikakor ni bil zanemarljiv dejavnik, če upoštevamo vztrajnost obteženih pesti.

## OBRAMBA IN UDARCI

Grški mojstri boksa in pankrationa so poznali najrazličnejše metode obrambe – od hitrega gibanja nog do eskiviranja, izmikanja, lovljenja, pariranja in blokiranja udarcev.<sup>49</sup> Nekateri od teh metod v halštatski različici borilnih veščin niso prišle v poštev. Z ročko v dlani ima boksar precej manj možnosti za izvajanje različnih obrambnih tehnik. Če svojega pripomočka noče izpustiti, mora ves čas stiskati pest. To mu onemogoča prijeti nasprotnika, loviti ali blokirati njegove udarce z odprto dlanjo. Po drugi strani lahko z obteženo pestjo zadamo veliko močnejši udarec. Že če se s pestjo oklenemo majhnega predmeta z zanemarljivo maso, kot je denimo škatlica vžigalic, bomo na ta način dejansko, še bolj pa psihološko, pomembno okrepili občutljivo kostno zgradbo prstov in roke ter tako povečali moč udarca. Na tem mestu spomnimo na znanega britanskega inštruktorja W. E. Fairbairna iz 2. svetovne vojne, ki je prav to tehniko priporočil za nenadni krožni udarec na čeljust. Po njegovih izkušnjah je s takšnim udarcem z vžigalično škatlico mogoče vsaj z dvotretjinsko verjetnostjo nokavtirati nasprotnika (*sl. 9*).<sup>50</sup>

Tudi z ročko v pesti lahko izvedemo vsakega od treh osnovnih udarcev v sodobnem boksu – direkt, kroše ali aperkat. Udarna površina so v tem primeru še vedno členki, vendar imamo zaradi dodatne obtežitve in utrditve pesti bistveno več možnosti, da onesposobimo nasprotnika, če nam le uspe udarec izvesti dovolj hitro.<sup>51</sup> Še večji učinek bi imel zadetek z odebeljenim koncem ročke. Vendar pa tak udarec predpostavlja nekoliko drugačno tehniko: krožni zamah, ki je v nasprotnikovo glavo usmerjen od strani, od spodaj navzgor ali od zgoraj navzdol.

Kakšne vrste udarcev so uporabljali halštatski boksarji, ne moremo z gotovostjo pojasniti. Od vseh omenjenih situlskih upodobitev namreč niti ena ne kaže dejanskega izvajanja udarca. Kako je bil videti aktivni napad halštatskega boksarja, se lahko prepričamo le na pasni sponi z Magdalenske gore – prizor, ki je za razliko od ostalih statičnih motivov edini nedvoumno dinamičen (*sl. 10*). Levi boksar je proti nasprotnikovi glavi pravkar

<sup>49</sup> Georgiou 2005, 84–86.

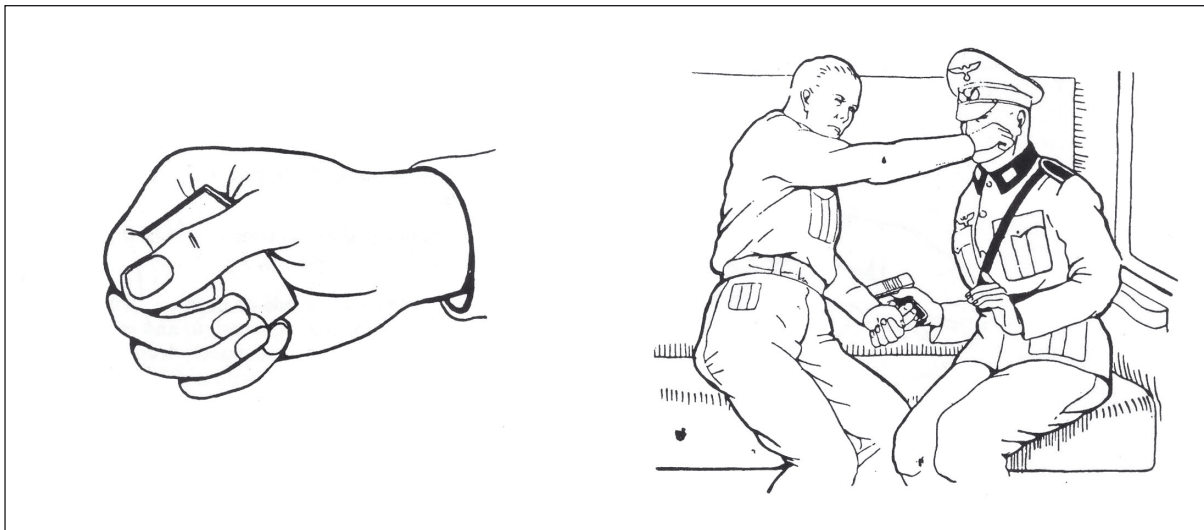
<sup>50</sup> Fairbairn 1942, 66, sl. 74–75.

<sup>51</sup> Za primerjavo – danes so za boksarska tekmovanja predpisane 8- oziroma 10-unčne rokavice (227–284 g), za sparing pa uporabljamo težje, bolj oblazinjene 14- do 20-unčne (397–567 g). Izurjen boksar je tako povsem sposoben izvajati bliskovite kombinacije močnih udarcev z vsaj pol kilograma obtežitve na vsaki roki.

<sup>47</sup> Zimmermann 2003, 230; Lucke, Frey 1962, 26.

<sup>48</sup> Za dobro diskusijo o tem vprašanju gl. Zimmermann 2003, 238–239.





Sl. 9: Tehnično sorodni udarec (prim. sl. 8) z vžigalčno škatlico iz znamenitega Fairbairnovega priročnika *All-In Fighting* (po Fairbairn 1942, 74–75).

Fig. 9: A technically similar blow with a matchbox from the famous manual by Fairbairn, *All-In Fighting* (from Fairbairn 1942, 74–75).



Sl. 10: Napad in obramba halštatskodobnih boksarjev na pasni sponi z Magdalenske gore (gomila II, grob 13): napadalec udarja z desnico, njegov nasprotnik se umika (Zimmermann 2003, sl. 8a).

Fig. 10: Attack and defense of Hallstatt boxers on the belt plate from Magdalenska gora: the attacker strikes with his right hand, his opponent retreats (Zimmermann 2003, fig. 8a).

silovito zamahnil z desnico, z obratom telesa po navpični osi. Ker cilja ni pravočasno zadel, bi se mu lahko zgodilo, da bi zaradi vztrajnosti ročke v desnici izgubil ravnotežje, kar bi ga spravilo v ranljiv položaj. Da bi se temu izognil, je levo istočasno spustil nazaj ter na ta način preprečil, da bi ga odneslo pregloboko naprej. Nekaj podobnega, a v defenzivnem manevru, je napravil desni bokсар. Da bi se izognil udarcu, je s prednjo (levo) nogo vzvratno napravil polni korak ter z levo roko zamahnil globoko nazaj. Hkrati je dvignil in iztegnil desnico s pestjo, zasukano navzven. Ko je zrcalno zamenjal gard iz levega v desni, si je glavo ponovno zavaroval pred napadom, izključiti pa ne moremo niti možnosti, da zamah desnice ni bil zgolj defenziven, temveč tudi oblika protinapada, usmerjenega na izpostavljeni nasprotnikov komolec.

Levi bokсар je svoj napad že končal, saj je njegov trup opazno nagnjen naprej, desnica pa iztegnjena. Njegova dlan je zasukana navzven, zato smo lahko prepričani, da udarec ni bil linearen, saj direkta tako ni mogoče izvesti. Zato lahko sklepamo, da je napadalec iz osnovnega levega garda zadel različico dolgega desnega krošeja. Cilj, nasprotnikovo glavo, je poskušal zadeti bodisi s členki obtežene pesti bodisi z enim od odebeljenih koncev ročke – najverjetneje z zgornjim, usmerjenim na čeljust, lice ali levo stran glave, če pa bi bil doseg udarca nekoliko prekratek, bi nasprotnika še vedno lahko oplazil s spodnjim (*sl. 11*).

### SKLEP

Ker je ohranjenih virov malo, njihova izpovednost pa omejena, nam železnodobnih borilnih veščin nikoli ne bo uspelo povsem zadovoljivo rekonstruirati. Vendarle lahko domnevamo, da je šlo pri halštatskem boksu za disciplino, ki ni nastala in obstajala sama zase, temveč se je razvila iz podobnih disciplin, kot so jih v Mezopotamiji in Sredozemlju poznali že vsaj v zgodnjem 3. tisočletju pr. n. št. Najverjetneje je ta prenos potekal preko grških ali feničanskih oziroma etruščanskih posrednikov.<sup>52</sup> V situlski umetnosti najdemo še dva zanimiva namiga, ki potrjujeta to hipotezo.

Doslej še nismo omenili prizora dvoboja z ročkami na situli z grobišča Este - Benvenuti (severna nekropola, grob 73). Ta je podobna zgoraj obravnavanim upodobitvam, a se razlikuje v ključnem detajlu – na njej sta oba bokсарja upodobljena v



*Sl. 11a–c:* Tri možnosti zadajanja krožnih udarcev z ročko v pesti. Udarčna površina so lahko členki (a), spodnja krogla (b) ali zgornja krogla ročke (c) (foto: Tomaž Lauko).  
*Fig. 11a–c:* Three possibilities of striking circular blows with a dumbbell in the fist. The hitting surfaces can be the knuckles (a), the lower ball of the dumbbell (b), or the upper ball (c) (photo: Tomaž Lauko).

klasičnem gardu antičnega boksa, z obema rokama iztegnjenima proti nasprotniku. Defenzivni položaj obeh bokсарjev, ki se v trupu močno nagibata nazaj, dokazuje, da si ne zadajata udarcev, kot je domneval Zimmermann, temveč še vedno stojita v gardu.<sup>53</sup> Njun borilni položaj se tako v ničemer ne

<sup>52</sup> Freligh 1998, 23–25.

<sup>53</sup> Zimmermann 2003, 232, 236.



razlikuje od grških in še starejših bližnjevzhodnih likovnih predlog, le da sta opremljena z ročkami.<sup>54</sup> Shematično upodobljena boksarja v enakem gardu, po vsej verjetnosti prav tako opremljena z ročkami ali vsaj zelo masivnimi bandažami, najdemo tudi na bronasti posodi iz Kleinkleina na avstrijskem Štajerskem.<sup>55</sup>

Na prvi pogled težko razložljivo odstopanje morda postane bolj razumljivo, če pogledamo primerjalno kronologijo upodobitev boksa na situlskih reliefih.<sup>56</sup> Če drži, da je primerek iz grobišča Este - Benvenuti treba datirati v čas okrog leta 600 pr. n. št., gre za najstarejšo znano situlo z motivom boksarjev. Izvira iz severne Etrurije, prostora, kjer so bili vplivi z vzhoda še posebej močni.<sup>57</sup> Najdbe iz Kleinkleina so datirane v 7. st. pr. n. št.<sup>58</sup> Nekateri menijo, da je posoda z boksarskim prizorom morda še starejša, njeni motivi pa izvirajo iz orientalske mitologije.<sup>59</sup>

Na podlagi dveh primerov ne moremo postaviti trdne hipoteze, a nas lahko vseeno spodbujata k razmišljanju. Najpozneje v 7. st. pr. n. št. so boksarji v severnoitalijansko-vzhodnoalpskem prostoru očitno že uporabljali ročke, vendar je bila njihova borilna tehnika tedaj še v vseh pogledih praktično enaka antičnemu grškemu boksu. Kot kažejo ostale upodobitve, je generacijo ali dve pozneje prišlo do sprememb – boksarji so začeli uporabljati višji, daljši gard, v katerem so prednjo pest zasukali z dlanjo navzven, da bi se zanesljiveje zaščitili pred nasprotnikovimi udarci, zadnjo roko pa spustili nazaj za bok, kar jim je omogočalo lažje lovljenje ravnotežja in zadajanje močnih udarcev. Najverjetnejši odgovor, zakaj je prišlo do tega, je zelo preprost: boksarji so najbrž začeli uporabljati težje ročke, s katerimi ni bilo več tako preprosto boksati. Zato so morali nekoliko spremeniti borilno tehniko, zlasti še, ker so masivnejše ročke zaradi večje vztrajnosti vplivale na njihovo ravnotežje.

Če sprejmemo tezo, da so bile ročke halštatskodobnih boksarjev dejansko hladno orožje, namenjeno obtežitvi pesti in morda celo neposrednemu zadajanju udarcev, je njihov šport iz današnje perspektive videti krut ali naravnost brutalen.<sup>60</sup> Prav to je najbrž hote ali podzavestno napeljal nekatere

raziskovalce k iskanju alternativnih razlag, s katerimi bi lahko situlske dvoboje interpretirali kot veliko manj nevarno igro. Vendar pa se moramo zavedati, da družbene norme in vrednote sodobne družbe niso pravo merilo za presojanje halštatskega sveta. Za akademskega raziskovalca je zadajanje udarcev z ročkami morda nepredstavljivo, toda miselni svet železnodobnih bojevnikov je bil usmerjen povsem drugače. Nepopustljiv odnos grških boksarjev, ki so se v športni spopad odpravili dobro vedoč, da tvegajo pohabljenje ali smrt, morda najboljše simbolizira Euridamas – kot pravi znamenita anekdota, je nekoč raje skrivaj pogoltnil zobe, ki mu jih je z močnim udarcem izbil nasprotnik, kot da bi jih izpljunil in s tem priznal, da je poškodovan.<sup>61</sup> Podobno odločnost in pripravljenost na morebitne poškodbe bi v boksarskem ringu še vedno opazili, čeprav danes strožja pravila zagotavljajo veliko boljšo varnost tekmovalcev. Preziranje nevarnosti je pravzaprav univerzalna vrednota bojevniške družbe – oziroma kot bi dejali zgodovinarji analistične šole, pojav dolgega trajanja. Halštatski boksarji se najbrž niso izpostavljali nevarnosti nič bolj kot udeleženci srednjeveških turnirjev, na katerih so topo orožje in posebno zaščitno opremo uporabljali šele od poznega 13. stoletja. Pred tem pa se njihova tekmovalja skoraj niso razlikovala od resničnega boja, ki je zahteval tudi smrtne žrtve.<sup>62</sup>

Upravičeno bi bilo domnevati, da je enake ideale gojila vojaška elita halštatske družbe, ki je – kolikor lahko zaupamo likovnim virom – izjemno cenila orožje in bojevanje. Ob egipčanskih, mezopotamskih, grških in feničanskih analogijah lahko situlske boksarske dvoboje razumemo kot obredno, z mitologijo navdahnjeno merjenje moči ali morda iniciacijo mladega prestolonaslednika, na kateri se je potrdil kot sposoben bojevnik.<sup>63</sup> Zelo vprašljivo je, ali bi v očeh halštatske vojaške elite za takšen preizkus spretnostna igra izbijanja ročk sploh zadostovala. Prej bi lahko domnevali, da se je moral bodoči vladar javno izkazati na precej težji preizkušnji – in kaj bi bil boljši dokaz njegovih bojevnških vrlin kot zmaga v silovitem boksarskem dvoboju z obteženimi pestmi?

## Zahvale

Za pomoč pri slikanju borilnih tehnik se zahvaljujem fotografu Tomažu Lauku ter demonstratorjema Boštjanu

<sup>54</sup> Prim. Frelih 1989.

<sup>55</sup> Schmid 1933, 250, t. 1b.

<sup>56</sup> Kromer 1962a.

<sup>57</sup> Kromer 1962a, 24; Huth 2003, 164–166.

<sup>58</sup> Schmid 1933, 272, 278–279.

<sup>59</sup> Frelih 1989, 113.

<sup>60</sup> Prim. Lucke, Frey 1962, 27.

<sup>61</sup> Georgiou 2005, 24.

<sup>62</sup> Keen 1999, 129 ss.

<sup>63</sup> Huth 2003, zlasti 195 ss.

Laharnarju in Davidu Franckiju, Petru Turku pa dolgujem zahvalo za konstruktivne pogovore, nasvete in podporo pri urejanju prispevka.

Članek in angleški prevod sta nastala tudi s finančno podporo ARRS v okviru raziskovalnega programa Predmet kot reprezentanca: okus, ugled, moč (raziskave materialne kulture na Slovenskem).

- BRADAČ, F. (prev.) 1992, *Vergil, Eneida*. – Ljubljana.
- BROWN, T. 1997, *English Martial Arts*. – Hockwold.
- DEMPSEY, J. 1950, *Championship Fighting*. – London.
- DUCATI, P. 1970, *La situla della Certosa*. – Roma.
- FAIRBAIRN, W. E. 1942, *All-In Fighting*. – London.
- FEWTRELL, T. 1790, *Boxing Reviewed. The Science of Manual Defence*. – London.
- FOGOLARI, de' G. 1962a, Orientalna komponenta v situlski umetnosti. – V: *Umetnost alpskih Ilirov in Venetov. Situle od Pada do Donave*, 9–21, Ljubljana.
- FOGOLARI, de' G. 1962b, Die orientalisierende Komponente in der Situlenkunst. – V: *Situlenkunst zwischen Po und Donau. Verzierte Bronzearbeiten aus dem ersten Jahrtausend v. Chr.*, 62–71, Wien.
- FRELIH, M. 1989, O motivu dveh boksarjev v situlski umetnosti. – *Zbornik za umetnostno zgodovino* 25, 99–114.
- FRELIH, M. 1998, Mitološki in religiozni substrat starih sredozemskih kultur v motiviki situle z Vač. – *Argo* 41, 20–29.
- FREY, O.-H. 1962, *Die Situla von Kuffarn*. – Veröffentlichung aus dem Naturhist. Museum Wien, N. F. 4, 3 ss.
- GALE, J. 1997, *Boks. Skrivnosti plemenite umetnosti*. – Ljubljana.
- GEORGIU, A. V. 2005, *Pankration - An Olympic Combat Sport*. – New Jersey.
- GUHL, E. in KONER, W. 1994, *The Greeks. Their Life and Customs*. – Twickenham.
- HIRTZEL, F. A. (ur./ed.) 1942, *Vergilius Maro, P., P. Vergilii Maronis opera*. – Oxford.
- HUTH, C. 2003, *Menschenbilder und Menschenbild. Anthropomorphe Bildwerke der frühen Eisenzeit*. – Berlin.
- HUTTON, A. 1892, *Old Sword-Play*. – London.
- KASTELIC, J. 1962a, Umetnost situl od Pada do Donave. – V: *Umetnost alpskih Ilirov in Venetov. Situle od Pada do Donave*, 31–59, Ljubljana.
- KASTELIC, J. 1962b, Die Situlenkunst vom Po bis Donau. – V: *Situlenkunst zwischen Po und Donau. Verzierte Bronzearbeiten aus dem ersten Jahrtausend v. Chr.*, 19–55, Wien.
- KEEN, M. 1999, *Das Rittertum*. – Düsseldorf.
- KROMER, K. 1962a, Pripombe h kronologiji situlskih spomenikov. – V: *Umetnost alpskih Ilirov in Venetov. Situle od Pada do Donave*, 23–29, Ljubljana.
- KROMER, K. 1962b, Zur Chronologie der Situlendenkmäler. – V: *Situlenkunst zwischen Po und Donau. Verzierte Bronzearbeiten aus dem ersten Jahrtausend v. Chr.*, 72–80, Wien.
- LAUERMANN, E. 1997, Überblick über Kampf und Bewaffnung von der Urgeschichte bis in die römische Kaiserzeit. – V: H. Windl (ur.), *Waffen und deren Wirkung in Ur- und Frühgeschichte: gegeneinander – nebeneinander – miteinander*, Katalog des NÖ Landesmuseums, N. F. 414, 112–43.
- LUCKE, W. in O.-H. FREY 1962, *Die Situla in Providence (Rhode Island). Ein Beitrag zur Situlenkunst des Osthallstattkreises*. – *Römisch-Germanische Forschungen* 26.
- McCAUSLIN MOYNAHAN, J. 1963, *The Yawara Stick and Police Baton*. – Springfield.
- MURRAY, A. T. (prev./transl.) 1947, *Homer, The Iliad II*. – Cambridge, London.
- OAKESHOTT, E. 1996, *The Archaeology of Weapons. Arms and Armour from Prehistory to the Age of Chivalry*. – Mineola.
- PRICE, E. 1867, *The Science of Self-Defence*. – New York.
- SOVRE, A. (prev.) 1965, *Homer, Iliada*. – Ljubljana.
- SCHMID, W. 1933, Die Fürstengräber von Klein Glein in Steiermark. – *Prähistorische Zeitschrift* 24, 219–282.
- SWADDLING, J. 1992, *The Ancient Olympic Games*. – London.
- TORBRÜGGE, W. 1987, *Nastajanje Evrope*. – Umetnost v slikah 3, Ljubljana.
- TURK, P. 2005a, *Podobe življenja in mita*. – Ljubljana.
- TURK, P. 2005b, *Images of Life and Myth*. – Ljubljana.
- ZIMMERMANN, E. 2003, *Fighten. Faustkampf in der Situlenkunst - Kampf der Fäuste (Boksanje v situlski umetnosti - boj s pestmi)*. – *Arheološki vestnik* 54, 225–241.

## The fighting techniques of the Hallstatt period boxers: an attempt at reinterpretation of the situla art

### *Translation*

A relatively large number of depictions of boxers with dumbbells can be found on the artistic items and craft works of the Hallstatt period, which have several times already been the subject of research, most recently in the study by Erich Zimmermann.<sup>1</sup> The images can be interpreted in extremely varied ways, but it is clear that we are dealing with a sport similar to boxing. There is no evidence that the Hallstatt fighters used kicks or elements of wrestling. As they were holding dumbbells in their hands, they would not even have been able to grapple with the opponent.

The reconstruction of the Hallstatt boxing technique is a difficult task, as there are no preserved written records that would supplement the images on the situlae. Very little is known of the culture and mentality of their creators, who came from different geographic and ethnic areas.<sup>2</sup> We are also hindered by the limitations of artistic sources. Embossed reliefs are a demanding two-dimensional medium in which it is not easy to realistically depict dynamic events. Without a real sense of depth and perspective it is difficult to make reliable conclusions about key elements of Hallstatt "boxing": the guard position,<sup>3</sup> and defensive and offensive techniques. Given the lack of written sources, we can only draw a partial comparison to the approximately contemporary Greek martial arts, which in fact might well have no actual connection to the Hallstatt ones.

It is hardly a new finding that the depictions of warriors or the social elite on the Hallstatt situlae strongly resemble the lives of the ancient Greeks. This therefore forces a comparison of

the Hallstatt fighting with the Greek boxing. But there is no simple answer as to whether they were truly related sports. Zimmermann concluded that they were very different disciplines, although his arguments lack an experimental dimension, which is true in general for all scientific contributions about the problems of the situla duels so far. This is actually unusual, as without a practical knowledge of boxing and related martial arts it is impossible to interpret the situla depictions in a reasonable manner, rather one can slip into hypotheses that more serious investigation shows to be unfounded or misleading.<sup>4</sup> The second danger of such an academic approach is that through an art historical based analysis we might concentrate too much on doubtful details, while overlooking more important messages in the broader context. So it may not be redundant to attempt to address this issue once again.

### THE EXPERIMENTAL APPROACH

If we wish to analyze the Hallstatt martial arts, we must first become acquainted with the fundamentals of boxing. Boxing is definitely not a static sport, but is constantly evolving. Even in just the last hundred years it has changed greatly, on the one hand because of the use of gloves and new rules, and on the other because of various training guidelines and boxing strategies. The vast majority of coaches are not concerned with the history of the sport, but instead attempt to pass on to their pupils knowledge that will ensure success in today's ring.

As in every sports discipline, in boxing there is no single universal style, rather it is necessary to develop boxing techniques in reference to the individual's physical build and ability. We should also not forget the more or less fashionable styles of fighting that appeared at various times. A match between two contemporary champions is considerably different than one fought half a century ago. An even greater difference would be noted moving further back in time towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Zimmermann 2003; also see there the cited literature and illustrations. In addition to depictions in the situla art style, such motifs also appear, for example, on statues from the Tyrolean site of Landeck (Torbrügge 1987, 145). Similar relief images can be noted on the so-called throne of Corsini, drawings from the site of Capo di Ponte (Zimmermann 2003, 226), and on a bronze cist from Kleinklein in Austrian Styria (Schmid 1933, 250, pl. 1). Also on this theme, see Gale 1997, 26.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Kastelic 1962b, 19 ff. For a broader overview see Turk 2005b.

<sup>3</sup> The guard is the basic fighting position that provides both good balance and defense, as well as an appropriate starting point for carrying out an attack.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Georgiou 2005, 5.



century, particularly before the general acceptance of the rules of the Marquis of Queensberry. Boxers still fought with bare hands then, and wrestling holds and throws were still allowed. Hence modern boxing is not necessarily the most suitable aid in interpreting the Hallstatt duels. Of more use would be knowledge of its predecessors from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, as well as the martial arts of ancient Greece and Rome. Additional clues could also be offered by non-European martial arts that are based on similar biomechanical principles.

While great differences exist among these systems, they share some common concepts:<sup>5</sup>

- The boxer first assumes a suitable stance that ensures balance and an effective execution of defensive moves and blows;

- The manner of fighting is dependent on how the boxer arranges his balance – an aggressive fighter will put more weight on the front foot, a defensive fighter on the back foot;

- In the boxing stance, as a rule a right handed person will lead with the left foot, and with the body somewhat rotated on the vertical axis from the opponent; the more the body is rotated away from the opponent, the more easily the boxer can defend himself. However, throwing effective punches with the rear hand becomes increasingly more difficult;

- Most boxers lead with the weaker hand, the stronger is kept back; at least one hand is raised in guard and is more or less extended towards the opponent, so the boxer can protect his head and vital points on the body;

- The weaker hand often plays the main role in defense; with it the boxer attempts to open the opponent's guard or control the distance;

- With the stronger hand, the boxer throws decisive punches; this is particularly apparent in unschooled fighters, who frequently neglect using the weaker hand;

- A good boxer does not hit merely using the power of his arm, but rather with complex, swift, highly coordinated movements of the entire body; this can be done either linearly, with a rapid step or lunge forward in the direction of the attack, or by twisting the hips around the vertical axis;

- The punch should be thrown directly from the fighting stance, without any previous warning or "telegraphing"; if possible, the boxer should not throw individual punches, but combinations of blows.

Without excessive simplification, it can be assumed that experienced boxers throughout all of human history would have understood these rules. The generally rooted prejudices should also be discarded, according to which in the past the martial arts would have been primitive or at least technically inferior in comparison to modern sports – a myth that is particularly persistent in fencing circles.<sup>6</sup> A similar error could be made in reference to boxing, which is completely unacceptable, as the primary sources clearly demonstrate that this art existed in a highly developed form at least as early as in ancient Greece. It can be assumed that sophisticated systems of martial arts had already been known in the distant past. No theoretical knowledge nor formal scientific basis would have been necessary for their development, only detailed observation of the workings of the human body. Therefore we must promptly refute the assumption of Lucke and Frey that the Hallstatt duels "certainly" could not have been as sophisticated as modern boxing – a statement that they did not even attempt to justify.<sup>7</sup>

### THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF BOXING TECHNIQUES

In present-day boxing, most fighting takes place at relatively short distances, just outside the range of the jab or straight left punch. The boxer's weight is usually equally divided between the two feet, the body is upright or slightly hunched forward, with the chin lowered towards the breastbone. Since the fists are protected by hand wraps and thick gloves, it is possible to hit the bony parts of the opponent's body with full force. The position of the hands is usually high – the stronger hand is near the face, while the forward weaker hand is slightly extended at head or shoulder height. In such a guard, the boxer can easily block punches with well-padded gloves. Wrestling or grappling is not permitted in the modern boxing ring, hence the fighters can afford to exchange blows from the immediate vicinity.<sup>8</sup>

On the other hand, the classic guard of English boxers in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries was considerably more elongated. Technically trained fighters at that time preferably stood in an upright position

<sup>5</sup> Perhaps the best technical boxing manual was composed by the legendary champion Jack Dempsey. See Dempsey 1950.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Hutton 1892.

<sup>7</sup> Lucke, Frey 1962, 27.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Gale 1997, 36–40; Dempsey 1950, ch. 11.

with slightly bent legs. The upright posture with a raised chin, despite the apparent vulnerability, was considered a sign of masculinity. In such a stance, the boxer bore most of the weight on the back foot. He led with the weaker arm, which was usually almost entirely extended. With the stronger arm, contracted by the chest, he primarily protected the plexus, but could also extend the arm slightly.<sup>9</sup>

Such a stance offered several advantages. With the extended front hand the boxer could easily prevent his opponent from getting dangerously close to him. With the body set back and the upright head, the vital parts were further removed from the opponent's reach. As late as the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, at numerous competitions in Great Britain and the USA, it was still permitted to trip or throw the opponent onto the floor. As the rules at the time allowed the boxer to attack an opponent on the ground as soon as he tried to get up, a good defense against throws was very important. Another result of the extended guard was that boxing matches up to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century usually occurred at a longer distance than we are used to today. In the old English style of boxing, the schooled fighters most often used the straight punch. In particular, the jab was delivered with a lunge, much like a fencing thrust. This is also not surprising, as the development of boxing in that period was closely tied to fencing.

In fights without gloves, experienced boxers carefully measured their blows. An exact hit with bare knuckles at a sensitive spot could badly injure the opponent or in exceptional cases even kill him. But a heavy blow of the unprotected fist to the skull, tip of the elbow, or some other hard, bony section would have had serious consequences for the attacker as well, as he could easily break his knuckles in this manner. Many boxers, such as the famous English competitor Broughton and his archrival Slack, primarily targeted the body of the opponent, particularly the plexus, as there was then less chance to injure one's fists accidentally. In addition to punches, they sometimes also used what was known as the hammerfist or backfist strike.<sup>10</sup>

In discussing the situla duels, comparisons to other depictions of ancient boxing are particularly interesting. A marble relief from the temple of Nintu in Iraq (2700–2600 BC) and a terracotta relief dated to the same period from Eshnunna depict boxers in stances, which in all the basic

features are reminiscent of the posture of the English bare knuckle boxers. Similar later depictions are known from Babylon, Mesopotamia, and the Cretan-Mycenaean culture.<sup>11</sup> Boxing and wrestling reached a high level in ancient Greece, and probably did not lag behind the modern sports in any manner. Boxing in ancient Greece and later in Rome was considerably more bloody than today. It was considered the most dangerous sports discipline, even more so than *pankration*.<sup>12</sup> This was the result of relatively lax rules, which did not particularly protect the boxer. Also, wrestling or clinching were banned, depriving the fighters of any opportunity to rest at least for a little while. A system of rounds and rests between them was unknown. The fight usually ended only when one of the contestants surrendered or was knocked out. The opponent could also be hit even on the ground.<sup>13</sup>

A significant characteristic of Greek boxing was the use of leather wraps (*himantes*). These were not true boxing gloves, rather an aid used to strengthen the hand and fist, similarly as in traditional Thai boxing. Such wraps were not intended to protect the opponent in any way from injury, but exactly the opposite. They enabled the boxer to punch harder at less risk of damaging his hand. In the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, boxers began to wear additional padding under the leather straps. In this manner a device similar to a glove was created (*sphairai*), which was evidently utilized in two versions. The softer ones were intended for safe practice, and the harder ones for competition. In the latter case, the wraps on the knuckles were strengthened with thicker, more rigid leather bands. In this manner, they became true weapons that could badly hurt an opponent.<sup>14</sup> Over time, this trend escalated, as the Romans sometimes outfitted the bands on the knuckles with iron rivets or lead weights.<sup>15</sup>

In classic Greek boxing, the guard was usually high. The boxer stood upright or slightly leaning forward, as a rule he held both hands extended fairly far in front at head height, more rarely at chest height. This enabled a good defense and rapid attack, which was usually directed at the head. It seems that the boxers avoided punches to the body,

<sup>11</sup> Frelüh 1989, 99–104.

<sup>12</sup> Georgiou 2005, 51–52.

<sup>13</sup> Swaddling 1992, 62–63.

<sup>14</sup> Guhl, Koner 1994, 224; Swaddling 1992, 64; Georgiou 2005, 45–46.

<sup>15</sup> A very well known description of such a martial device (Lat. *caestus*) is in Book 5 of Vergil's *The Aeneid*. Hirtzel, *Vergilii opera* 1942, book V, verses 400–405.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Price 1867; Fewtrell 1790, 27–31.

<sup>10</sup> Fewtrell 1790, 49–53.

perhaps according to their experience they were insufficiently effective. This was the reason that their guard stance was higher than is usual today. The Greek boxers used highly advanced training methods, and even had boxing bags.<sup>16</sup>

A synthesis of bare handed fighting in the Greek world was called *pankration*, a versatile composite sport that included blows with hands, feet, elbows, knees and head, as well as grappling (*fig. 1*). Pankration was considered a military skill and it was also practiced as an exceptionally popular competitive discipline, where in fact everything was permitted except biting and eye gouging. In this sense modern comparisons can be drawn to the combat sports such as *vale tudo* or MMA (Mixed Martial Arts) and military combatives.<sup>17</sup> The basic stance in pankration was similar to that in boxing, although the fighter stood more squarely. The guard was usually longer than in boxing, with the left arm almost entirely extended and the right hand moved well forward.<sup>18</sup>

### HOMER AND THE HALLSTATT FIGHTERS

Although this has already been done many times, once again it is necessary to summarize the famous passage in Homer's *Iliad* that describes the games in honor of the fallen Patroclus. This, despite poetic license, is one of the oldest and particularly valuable descriptions of a boxing fight, and for our discussion its context is particularly important. The boxing duel at Patroclus' games has both a ritual and a competitive role. Epeios and Euryalus clash before a numerous audience in honor of the deceased hero for a tempting prize. They evidently competed naked, outfitted only with a belt and hand wraps or simple gloves of ox hide. The match was tough, and the favorite Epeios finally won with a knockout. However, this was not a fierce gladiator-like match, but rather a fair contest – for as soon as Epeios had mowed Euryalus down with his fist, he carefully caught him so he would not fall unconscious to the ground.<sup>19</sup>

Homer's description inevitably forces us to a comparison with the relief on the Vače situla (*fig. 2*): naked, belted fighters on each side of a helmet with a plume, by each several observers,

perhaps judges, in the nearby context a ruler with a servant, in the upper band several horsemen and two single-drawn light chariots each with two occupants.<sup>20</sup> The events, which also appear in almost identical form on the situlae from Kuffarn (*fig. 3*), Matrei,<sup>21</sup> Bologna (Arnoaldi situla; *fig. 4*), and on the belt plate from Magdalenska gora (*fig. 10*), are surprisingly similar to the funeral games for Patroclus. A similar ritual content of the richly decorated situlae is also indicated by their context of discovery as grave goods. Regardless of the stylistic differences, motifs entirely similar in content can be encountered on the approximately contemporary Greek depictions.

Zimmerman, in contrast to the majority of his predecessors, markedly distanced himself from such interpretations and warned of the pitfalls of an uncritical equation of the Hallstatt and ancient Greek worlds.<sup>22</sup> It is, however, worth considering if it is not methodologically even less acceptable to reject *a priori* evident similarities. Frelih's study indicates that the motif of boxing duels was not a new one, as it evidently entered situla art through much older concepts from the mythology of the Near East. They can be traced there from at least the first half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC, and from the 16<sup>th</sup> century BC on Crete and in Mycenaean Greece. This tradition was preserved further in the Greek world and most probably from there, but with the mediation of the Phoenicians, it arrived in the northern Italian and pre-Alpine region. In situla art, the scenes of boxers may have lost part of their original meaning, but they nonetheless remained a popular artistic motif.<sup>23</sup>

Both the Hallstatt and ancient Greek aristocrats fought with spear, shield and sword, in metal armor and helmet, and they also used the same kind of light chariot.<sup>24</sup> This does prove that the ruling class in both societies fought in a similar way, and hence most probably developed similar martial skills.<sup>25</sup> Similarly as in Homer's epic, in

<sup>20</sup> Kastelic 1962b, 47 ff., insert E.

<sup>21</sup> On the situla from Matrei, a spear also stands by the helmet. Cf. Frelih 1998, 25.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Zimmermann 2003, 227, 236.

<sup>23</sup> Frelih 1989, 99–114; Huth 2003, 165 ff.; Lucke, Frey 1962, 27–29.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Oakeshott 1996, 37–50. Cf. also the depictions on the situla from Certosa: Ducati 1970.

<sup>25</sup> On the belt plate from Vače a more complex martial scene can be noted, which includes two horsemen and two heavily armed foot soldiers. This shows that Hallstatt society did have cavalry, although it is not certain if in

<sup>16</sup> Guhl, Koner 1994, 224–225; Swaddling 1992, 64–65.

<sup>17</sup> Georgiou 2005, 4, 7; Swaddling 1992, 60–62.

<sup>18</sup> Georgiou 2005, 82–83.

<sup>19</sup> Murray, *The Iliad* 1947, 542–547.



the Hallstatt fights with dumbbells, the winner received an award – a helmet, and in one case a vessel. On the situlae from Vače, Providence, and Kuffarn, several other people are standing right by the fighters. Their role is not entirely clear, but at least on the image from Kuffarn by each competitor stands a luxuriously dressed man with a long cleft stick or rod (*fig. 3*). This was evidently a judge, and this together with the religious context indicates that we are dealing with a ritual sport contest that was defined by certain rules. Judges can be found depicted on Greek pottery in the same role, as they are similarly bearing long and sometimes cleft rods or whips, which they used to control the competitors.<sup>26</sup>

### THE BASIC FIGHTING STANCE

According to Erich Zimmermann the typical scene that can be found on the situlae from Vače, Kuffarn, Providence, Matrei, Arnoaldi, and Magdalenska gora would depict the moment when the boxers first struck at each other. As the boxers are fairly distant from one another, even with a lunge they would barely reach the opponent's vital points. According to Zimmermann's reasoning, the fighters are supposedly aiming at each other's fists with some form of a straight left punch, attempting to knock the dumbbells out of the opponent's grip.<sup>27</sup>

This explanation cannot withstand a thorough assessment. First, it is apparent that the weight of the boxers in the images mostly rested distinctly on the rear leg, and not the front one, as would be the case when delivering a strike with the front hand. This is also indicated by the position of the front hip, which is still kept back. The stance of the boxers is relatively wide – the distance between the feet is quite large – and low, as shown by the bent legs. Such a stance ensures good stability, although at the expense of reduced mobility. The

---

that period it was considerably more widespread than in ancient Greece, where it had merely an auxiliary role (Kastelic 1962b, 45–46; also see Lauermaun 1997, 23–25).

<sup>26</sup> Georgiou 2005, fig. 8, 17, 46, 49, 55, 128, 71, 74, 76, 89–92, 95, 97, 98. It is interesting that on the upper and middle band of the situla from Magdalenska gora, herders are driving sacrificial animals with completely identical devices. Such cleft rods or whips would certainly have been useful in a boxing match if it were necessary to separate excessively eager competitors (Kastelic 1962b, 47 ff., insert F; cf. also Frey 1962, 6).

<sup>27</sup> Zimmermann 2003, 236.

contracted position of the legs on the above depiction does not indicate a lunge, as thought by Zimmermann, for in that case the boxer would have clearly transferred weight to the front leg.

Further, a straight left punch or jab cannot be thrown with a fist rotated clockwise with the thumb down. This had already been established by Zimmermann himself, as he could not convince a trained boxer to demonstrate a blow in that manner – it was quite simply biomechanically unfeasible.<sup>28</sup> This is the key to answering the following question. If we follow Zimmermann's interpretation, then the situla fighters at the beginning of the match would first attack the opponent with a variant of the left jab, while they lowered the right hand back towards the right hip. After delivering the blow, they would swing the left hand back, and immediately extend the right hand forward toward the target. Such thinking assumes that the Hallstatt martial artists actually did not use a proper guard, although this is one of those fundamental elements that are common to all martial sports. It is inconceivable for an experienced fighter to not attempt to protect vital parts with at least one hand. A low and open guard is a common mistake of an inexperienced boxer, and was even mocked by the ancient Greeks.<sup>29</sup>

It seems that a different interpretation would be more likely. In our opinion, the images of the boxers on the situlae from Vače, Kuffarn, Providence, Matrei, and Magdalenska gora do not depict actual fighting, but merely show boxers in the basic stance (*fig. 5*).<sup>30</sup> In this manner it is possible to elucidate all the main problematic points that confused Zimmermann. The extended left arm does not indicate a straight punch being thrown with the left hand – that is impossible in terms of the unnatural position of the fist, the distance between the opponents, and their stance. Rather, it is a defensive element used by the boxer to keep his opponent at a safe distance (*fig. 6*). A similar extended guard was usual in English boxing in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries,<sup>31</sup> and also in ancient Greek boxing and pankration. Two particularly attractive depictions can be found on two Attic amphorae, one in the Berlin Museum, and the

---

<sup>28</sup> Zimmermann 2003, 230, 236, n. 31.

<sup>29</sup> Georgiou 2005, 83.

<sup>30</sup> Such an interpretation was also offered more than half a century ago by Lucke and Frey (Lucke, Frey 1962, 27).

<sup>31</sup> Price 1867, esp. the chapter *The Arm*; Fewtrell 1790, 29–30.

other in the Glyptothek in Munich (*fig. 7*).<sup>32</sup> The Hallstatt stance is hence quite defensive with the weight distributed on the back foot. This is further emphasized by the position of the torso, which is either upright or slightly hunched forward, but always rotated sideways at least 45° around the vertical axis.

When the Hallstatt boxers turned their left fist clockwise in the guard position they deprived themselves of any possibility that an effective punch could be thrown with the left hand in one movement. This means that in the basic left guard, at least when throwing the first blow the offensive role would be left to the powerful right hand, while the left hand would play a primarily defensive role. The reasons for such a position of the left fist can be explained by a practical test: when the left fist in an extended arm position is turned with the palm completely outwards, this slightly raises the left shoulder and triceps. In this manner the lower left side of the face is additionally covered, to protect the jaw as a particularly vulnerable point (*fig. 8b*).

The seemingly unusual hand position was at least partly a result of the use of dumbbells. They considerably constrained the boxers in defense, as they made it impossible to intercept the opponents' punches with an open palm. It is evident from the depictions that the Hallstatt boxer in the basic position had moved the right hand fairly far back behind the right hip, approximately at waist height. The elbow of the right arm in this position was still bent at about a 90° angle. The right hand was thus prepared to deliver a long hook, perhaps even an uppercut or similar roundhouse punch, which would travel to the opponent a long time but would hit its target with exceptional force, further increased by the mass of the dumbbells. It is hard to imagine that any boxer could withstand several such hits, hence it was very important to keep the opponent at a suitable distance. Thus we have yet another factor that argues in favor of the long guard with the stiff left arm pointing forward.

The images that we have just analyzed are all very similar in general. The assumption seems plausible that the toreutic craftsmen of the *situlae* at least partially depicted the boxing matches in a stylized manner or by following an existing

template.<sup>33</sup> If it were a depiction of a sporting or ritual event that seemed to contemporaries to be part of normal artistic compositions, it would probably be admissible to assume that this composition attempted to present some particularly typical phase of fighting. In that respect, a more appropriate motif than boxers in the basic fighting stance could hardly be found.

### THE INFLUENCE OF DUMBBELLS ON THE FIGHTING TECHNIQUE

The only real deviation from the Greek models that can be traced in *situla* art is the use of dumbbells. This proves that the *situla* craftsmen did not merely repeat "oriental" or Greek motifs, rather their depiction of boxing duels indicates activities that were characteristic in such a form only for their surroundings.<sup>34</sup> In modern practice, light hand weights are occasionally used in boxing to improve the speed and power of punches. Weighted wooden swords and shields, used by the Roman army to train recruits, had the same purpose.<sup>35</sup> It would theoretically be possible that such a training tool would have been known to the Hallstatt warriors, and through practice it was gradually introduced into competitions – this did in fact occur in the modern period with boxing gloves, which were first used merely for training.<sup>36</sup> A particularly imaginative interpretation was proposed by Zimmermann: the aim of a Hallstatt boxer would not have been anything other than to knock the opponent's dumbbells out of his hands with their own. Thus this would not be a true combat sport, rather a game of dexterity.<sup>37</sup>

In a detailed review of the sources, few firm arguments can be found for this hypothesis. In practice, such a game would barely be feasible. The rounded head of the dumbbell represents a small and elusive target, and even if you managed to hit it with full force, it could almost certainly not be knocked out of the fist of a physically developed athlete, particularly if it was tied onto the hands, as is shown in numerous images. The grip of the human fist is very strong and upon receiving a

<sup>32</sup> Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, inv. no. 5844; Antikensammlung, München, inv. no. SL 473; Georgiou 2005, fig. 35, 36.

<sup>33</sup> Zimmermann 2003, 238.

<sup>34</sup> Huth 2003, 166.

<sup>35</sup> Publius Flavius Vegetius Renatus, *Epitoma rei militaris*, I/XI.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Brown 1997, 85.

<sup>37</sup> Zimmermann 2003, 236–238.

blow it further clenches in reflex. Even less convincing is the thesis that competitors outfitted with dumbbells would try to hit the opponent's fist with their own knuckles. Such blows would be painful in equal measure for the attacker and would lead to injury.

Nearly the same scenes as on the situlae from Vače, Kuffarn, Providence, Matrei (and in a poorer version on the situla from Magdalenska gora) can also be seen on the situla from the Arnoaldi cemetery in Bologna. This was exceptionally important for Zimmermann's interpretation, as it is the only one that would show the very details on which his interpretation was constructed – particularly the targeting of the opponent's dumbbells, as it appears that the boxer on the right is lacking one dumbbell. It should, however, be noted that in contrast to the above four examples, the decoration of the Arnoaldi situla is much more poorly executed, and its late dating (ca. 400 BC) leads to the possibility that the craftsman in this case was merely repeating an older motif that he perhaps did not fully comprehend.<sup>38</sup> The poorly detailed, superficial workmanship of the decoration requires particular caution. According to Zimmermann, the scene would depict the phase of the fight in which the boxer on the left is avoiding a blow from his opponent, who is attacking with his right fist and trying to hit the adversary's dumbbell. As the pulled-back hand of the boxer on the right is empty, this would supposedly prove that his opponent had already knocked one dumbbell out of his grip.<sup>39</sup>

In the context of the previous depictions it would be possible to suggest a different explanation. First of all, it is not possible to claim with certainty even which of the legs and arms of the two boxers are left or right. If the composition were to be interpreted quite literally, then the boxer on the right would actually be standing on his opponent's front foot! The bodily proportions of the boxer on the left are also awkward, as his legs are noticeably too short. The maker of the Arnoaldi situla had apparently not mastered the craft as well as his predecessors.<sup>40</sup> It also seems that he was lacking space for the boxing scene. This is shown by the rear foot of the boxer on the left, which is already covered by a protruding ridge.

That the boxer on the right is throwing a right (or even left) straight punch, is anything but clear. One would expect that a boxer in that case would shift most of his weight forward, while on the depiction, the fighter is still standing upright and his weight is closer to the rear leg. Therefore, we are most probably looking at the already well-known, but poorly reproduced motif of boxers in the basic fighting position. The unusually high guard of the fighters would seem to be merely a result of the craftsman's miscalculated proportions and size of the figures, which prevented him from depicting the boxers' arms in the correct position. The carelessness of the craftsman is also the most likely reason there is no dumbbell in the rear hand of the boxer on the right. Perhaps it is actually turned at an angle to the observer and hence is visible only from the side. It is also possible that the artist simply forgot about it, as after all he very unclearly depicted the dumbbell in the front hand of the boxer on the left as well.

A game with dumbbells does not seem logically justified nor do we know any western martial art that would be conducted in a similar manner. But a similar hand weight, called *yawara*, is known from Japan in the form of wooden, and more rarely metal, rods with thickened ends, which are used as weapons in self-defense.<sup>41</sup> Most previous writers have not doubted that the Hallstatt dumbbells are in fact weapons.<sup>42</sup> Frey perhaps best formulated his interpretation on the example of the situla from Kuffarn. According to him, the dumbbells might have been metal, covered with leather, intended to increase the power of a blow. On the reliefs they were depicted in a vertical position, and Frey considered that this was more a result of the limited sense of perspective in toreutic art. The actual position of the boxers' palms would most probably be closer to horizontal, as in his opinion only in this manner is it possible to inflict a blow with either of the thickened ends of the dumbbells.<sup>43</sup>

It is interesting that Frey dealt with this problem inconsistently, as in a work written with his co-author Lucke and published in the same year, he rejected his own theory. In their discussion about the situla from Providence, Frey and Lucke claim that the dumbbells were merely a protective device

<sup>38</sup> Huth 2003, 165.

<sup>39</sup> Zimmermann 2003, 232–233.

<sup>40</sup> The poor workmanship of the images was also noted by Kastelic and Freljih. Kastelic 1962b, 30 ff.; Freljih 1989, 109.

<sup>41</sup> McCauslin Moynahan 1963. Also see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yawara> [last checked 26<sup>th</sup> October 2011].

<sup>42</sup> Fogolari 1962b, 67.

<sup>43</sup> Frey 1962, 6.



made from soft material used to prevent injuries.<sup>44</sup> The essential shortcoming of this thesis is that such protective equipment would also have to cover the knuckles, which were clearly uncovered. It is hard to imagine that the dumbbells would have any other purpose than to strengthen blows and inflict more serious injury on the opponent than could be achieved with only a bare fist.<sup>45</sup> As was already noted, a similar development also took place in ancient Greece and Rome – a tendency first exhibited in the use of leather thongs as wraps (*himantes*), then harder implements similar to gloves (*sphairai*), and finally the weighted *caestus*. The extreme evolution of such weapons in the West can be seen in the form of brass knuckles. As is evident on several depictions, the Hallstatt fighters tied the dumbbells to the palm, in this manner actually creating a variant of weighted boxing gloves. Perhaps part of this device was also the wraps of the boxer on the left on the situla from Providence. As was noted by Zimmermann, the wrappings on the depiction were not directly attached to the dumbbell.<sup>46</sup> Nonetheless, we should not ignore the possibility that in fact this was an integral part of a complex attachment system that the toreutic craftsman could not illustrate in detail in his medium, although it was depicted in considerable detail on the hand of the left boxer on the situla from Vače (*fig. 1*).

The use of dumbbells has significant impact on the fighting technique. Unfortunately, we don't know from what material they were made in the Hallstatt period. As they have still not been documented among archaeological finds, it would be logical to assume that they were made from a hard wood or from bone. We can also not exclude the possibility that they were metal rods, covered on each end with some softer coating.<sup>47</sup> In this manner an effective and yet not necessarily deadly weapon of just the right weight would be created. Small dumbbells, such as are used today in shadowboxing, as a rule weigh at most 2 or 3 kg. That is the greatest mass with which a trained athlete can still throw a rapid blow without excessive straining of the shoulder tendons. Upon reviewing the situla images, it seems justified to assume that the dumbbells were relatively heavy. This would explain why the Hallstatt boxers used a

wide, straddling stance with the rear hand lowered. If they protected themselves from attack with the extended front arm, they could relieve the rear one and relax it at hip height. In this manner they also aided in catching their balance, which was not to be neglected, if we consider the momentum of the weighted fists.

## DEFENSE AND ATTACK

The Greek masters of boxing and pankration were familiar with various methods of defense – including rapid footwork, slipping, bobbing, weaving and parrying blows.<sup>48</sup> Some of these methods were not applicable in the Hallstatt martial art. Holding dumbbells in the palm, a boxer has considerably less possibilities to implement defensive techniques. On the other hand, a much stronger punch can be delivered with a weighted fist. Even if an object with a negligible mass is clenched in the fist, such as a box of matches, in this manner the bone structure of the fingers and hand will be strengthened, increasing the power of the blows. Mention should be made of the British instructor W. E. Fairbairn from World War II, who recommended such a technique for a surprise roundhouse punch to the jaw. In his experience, it is possible to knock out an opponent this way with an at least two-thirds chance of success (*fig. 9*).<sup>49</sup>

With dumbbells held in the fists it is also possible to perform each of the three basic punches in modern boxing – the straight punch, the hook, and the uppercut. The area of impact in these cases is still limited to the knuckles, but there is a much greater probability of incapacitating the opponent due to the weighting and consolidation of the fists as long as the punch is delivered sufficiently quickly.<sup>50</sup> Even more effective would be a hit with the thickened end of a dumbbell. Such a blow, however, would require a somewhat different technique: circular swings, directed towards the opponent's head from the side, either upwards from below or downwards from above.

<sup>48</sup> Georgiou 2005, 84–86.

<sup>49</sup> Fairbairn 1942, 66, fig. 74–75.

<sup>50</sup> For boxing matches, 8- or 10-ounce gloves (227–284 g) are used, while heavier, more thickly padded 14- to 20-ounce gloves (397–567 g) are intended for sparring. A trained boxer is thus quite capable of implementing a swift combination of powerful blows with at least half a kilogram of weight on each hand.

<sup>44</sup> Lucke, Frey 1962, 27.

<sup>45</sup> Gale 1997, 26–27.

<sup>46</sup> Zimmermann 2003, 230; Lucke, Frey 1962, 26.

<sup>47</sup> Zimmermann 2003, 238–239.

Exactly what types of blows were used by the Hallstatt boxers cannot be explained with certainty. In our opinion, not a single one of the situla images discussed above in fact depicts the actual implementation of a punch. What an active attack by a Hallstatt boxer actually looked like can only be seen on the belt plate from Magdalenska gora – the only scene that is definitely dynamic (*fig. 10*). The boxer on the left has just swung his right hand with considerable force towards his opponent's head, with his body rotating along the vertical axis. Missing the target, he could lose his balance. To avoid this, he has dropped his left arm back at the same time. Something similar, but in a defensive maneuver, was carried out by the boxer on the right. To avoid the blow, he took a full step backwards with his front (left) leg, and reached deeply back with his left arm. At the same time he raised and extended his right arm with the fist rotated outwards. When the guard stance was exchanged in mirror image from left to right, the head was again protected against attack. Perhaps the swing of the right arm was not merely defensive, rather it was aimed for the opponent's elbow.

The boxer on the left has already concluded his attack, as his torso is noticeably leaning forwards, and his right arm is extended. His palm is rotated outwards, hence we can be sure that his blow was not linear, as a straight punch cannot be delivered in that way. So it can be concluded that from a basic left guard he threw a version of a long right hook. He attempted to hit his opponent's head either with his knuckles or with one of the thick ends of the dumbbells – most probably with the upper one, aimed towards the jaw, face, or left side of the head, but if the punch was slightly too short, the opponent could still be hit with the bottom end of the dumbbell (*fig. 11*).

## CONCLUSION

As there are few preserved sources, and their narrative value is limited, it is impossible to completely reconstruct the Iron Age martial arts with any degree of certainty. Nonetheless, it can be assumed that Hallstatt period boxing did not exist in a vacuum, but instead developed from similar disciplines, such as were known in Mesopotamia and the Mediterranean from at least the early 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC. It is most likely that this transfer took place through Greek, Phoenician or Etruscan

mediators.<sup>51</sup> A further two interesting hints can be found in situla art that confirm this hypothesis.

So far we have not yet mentioned the scenes of a duel with dumbbells on the situla from the Benvenuti cemetery in Este. It is similar to the images discussed above, and depicts boxers in the classic guard of ancient boxing, with both arms extended towards the opponent. The defensive position of both boxers, with torsos leaning back strongly, proves that they are not trading blows, as Zimmermann thought, but are rather still standing on guard.<sup>52</sup> The fighting position hence does not differ in any element from the Greek and even earlier Near Eastern artistic models, except that the fighters are outfitted with dumbbells.<sup>53</sup> A schematically depicted boxer in an identical stance, and also equipped with dumbbells or perhaps massive hand wraps, can also be found on a bronze vessel from Kleinklein in Austrian Styria.<sup>54</sup>

The deviations, at first glance difficult to explain, perhaps become more understandable if we review the comparative chronology of the depictions.<sup>55</sup> If it is considered that the example from Este (Benvenuti) should be dated to the period around 600 BC, then it is the earliest known situla with the motif of boxers. It comes from northern Etruria, an area where the influences from the East were particularly powerful.<sup>56</sup> The finds from Kleinklein are dated to the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC.<sup>57</sup> Some think that the vessel with the boxing scene is perhaps even earlier, with motifs deriving from Oriental mythology.<sup>58</sup> No firm hypothesis can be established on the basis of two examples alone, but nonetheless it can inspire further thinking. At the latest in the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC the boxers in the northern Italian – eastern Alpine area evidently already used dumbbells, although the fighting techniques were still practically identical to those of ancient Greek boxing. As shown by the other depictions, a generation or two later a change had occurred – the boxers had begun to use a higher, longer guard, in which the front fist had the palm rotated outwards to more reliably protect against blows from the opponent, while the rear hand was lowered back to the hip, which enabled the boxers to more easily retain their balance. This most likely

<sup>51</sup> Frelüh 1998, 23–25.

<sup>52</sup> Zimmermann 2003, 232, 236.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Frelüh 1989.

<sup>54</sup> Schmid 1933, 250, pl. 1b.

<sup>55</sup> Kromer 1962b.

<sup>56</sup> Kromer 1962b, 73–75; Huth 2003, 164–166.

<sup>57</sup> Schmid 1933, 272, 278–279.

<sup>58</sup> Frelüh 1989, 113.

occurred simply because the boxers had begun to utilize heavier dumbbells. Hence they had to change the fighting techniques, as the heavier dumbbells with their greater momentum began to significantly affect their balance.

If we accept the thesis that the dumbbells of the Hallstatt period boxers were truly intended as a weapon, then their sport can be considered brutal.<sup>59</sup> This is probably what directed certain researchers to seek an alternative explanation that would allow the situla duels to be interpreted as a less dangerous game. However, modern social norms are not truly valid for judging the Hallstatt world. For an academic researcher, the idea of exchanging blows with dumbbells in the fists might seem unthinkable, but the mentality of the Iron Age boxers was entirely different. The uncompromising attitude of the Greek boxers, who set forth into sport competitions well knowing that they risked mutilation or death, is perhaps best symbolized by Eurydamas, who once secretly swallowed knocked-out teeth rather than spit them out and thus admit that he was wounded.<sup>60</sup> A similar determination can still be noted in the modern boxing ring. Contempt for danger is a universal value of a warrior society – and a phenomenon of *longue durée*. The Hallstatt boxers, after all, were not exposed to greater hazards than the participants in medieval tournaments, where rebated weapons and special protective equipment were utilized only from the late 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>61</sup>

On the basis of the period artwork it can be assumed that the same ideas were cherished by the warrior elite of the Hallstatt society. From Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Greek and Phoenician analogies, the boxing duels on situlae can be understood as a ritual contest or perhaps an initiation of a young heir to a throne, where he confirmed himself as a warrior.<sup>62</sup> It is highly questionable if in the eyes of the Hallstatt military elite a game of knocking dumbbells out of the opponent's hands would be at all sufficient for such a test. It could rather be assumed that a future ruler had to publicly prove himself in a considerably more difficult challenge – and what would be a better proof of his martial skills than a victory in a violent boxing match with weighted fists?

### Acknowledgements

For their help in photographing the boxing techniques, I would like to thank the photographer Tomaž Lauko and the demonstrators Boštjan Laharnar and David Francky. Also, I am indebted to Peter Turk for constructive discussions, valuable advice, and editing support.

*Translation: Barbara Smith Demo*

Tomaž Lazar  
Narodni muzej Slovenije  
Prešernova 20  
SI-1000 Ljubljana  
tomaz.lazar@nms.si

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Lucke, Frey 1962, 27.

<sup>60</sup> Georgiou 2005, 24.

<sup>61</sup> Keen 1999, 129 f.

<sup>62</sup> Huth 2003, esp. 195 f.