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# CELTIC ART IN EUROPE

## MAKING CONNECTIONS

*Essays in honour of Vincent Megaw on his 80th birthday*

Edited by

*Christopher Gosden, Sally Crawford and Katharina Ulmschneider*

Hardcover Edition: ISBN 978-1-78297-655-4

Digital Edition: ISBN 978-1-78297-656-1



© Oxbow Books 2014  
Oxford & Philadelphia

[www.oxbowbooks.com](http://www.oxbowbooks.com)

Published in the United Kingdom in 2014 by  
OXBOW BOOKS  
10 Hythe Bridge Street, Oxford OX1 2EW

and in the United States by  
OXBOW BOOKS  
908 Darby Road, Havertown, PA 19083

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Hardcover Edition: ISBN 978-1-78297-655-4  
Digital Edition: ISBN 978-1-78297-656-1

A CIP record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Celtic art in Europe : making connections : essays in honour of Vincent Megaw on his 80th birthday / edited by Christopher Gosden, Sally Crawford and Katharina Ulmschneider.

pages cm

Contributions in English, French, and German.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-78297-655-4

I. Art, Celtic. I. Gosden, Chris, 1955- editor. II. Crawford, Sally (Sally Elizabeth Ellen) editor. III. Ulmschneider, Katharina, editor. IV. Megaw, J. V. S., honouree.

N5925.C45 2014

704.03'916--dc23

2014021184

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Printed in the United Kingdom by Berforts Information Press Ltd, Eynsham, Oxfordshire

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‘...TO BOLDLY GO WHERE NO MAN HAS GONE BEFORE.’  
DEDICATED TO RUTH AND VINCENT...

*Boris Kavur and Martina Blečić Kavur*

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**What do we have?**

The bed of the river Cetina, running through Sinjsko polje, in central Dalmatia (Croatia) was a well known archaeological site from the 19th century on. At the end of the 1980s, the quantity of archaeological finds deriving from the river increased – finds, mostly weapons and armour, ranged chronologically from the Neolithic to the medieval period. In the early '90s the area in focus was between the confluence with the stream Ruda and the bridge in Trilj. The main objective was to determine the origin of the artifacts, but the archaeological survey in the river did not yield any finds or structures and consequently it was considered that the finds discovered in the river Cetina, might have actually derived from the river Ruda (Milošević 1992a, 46; 1992b, 88).

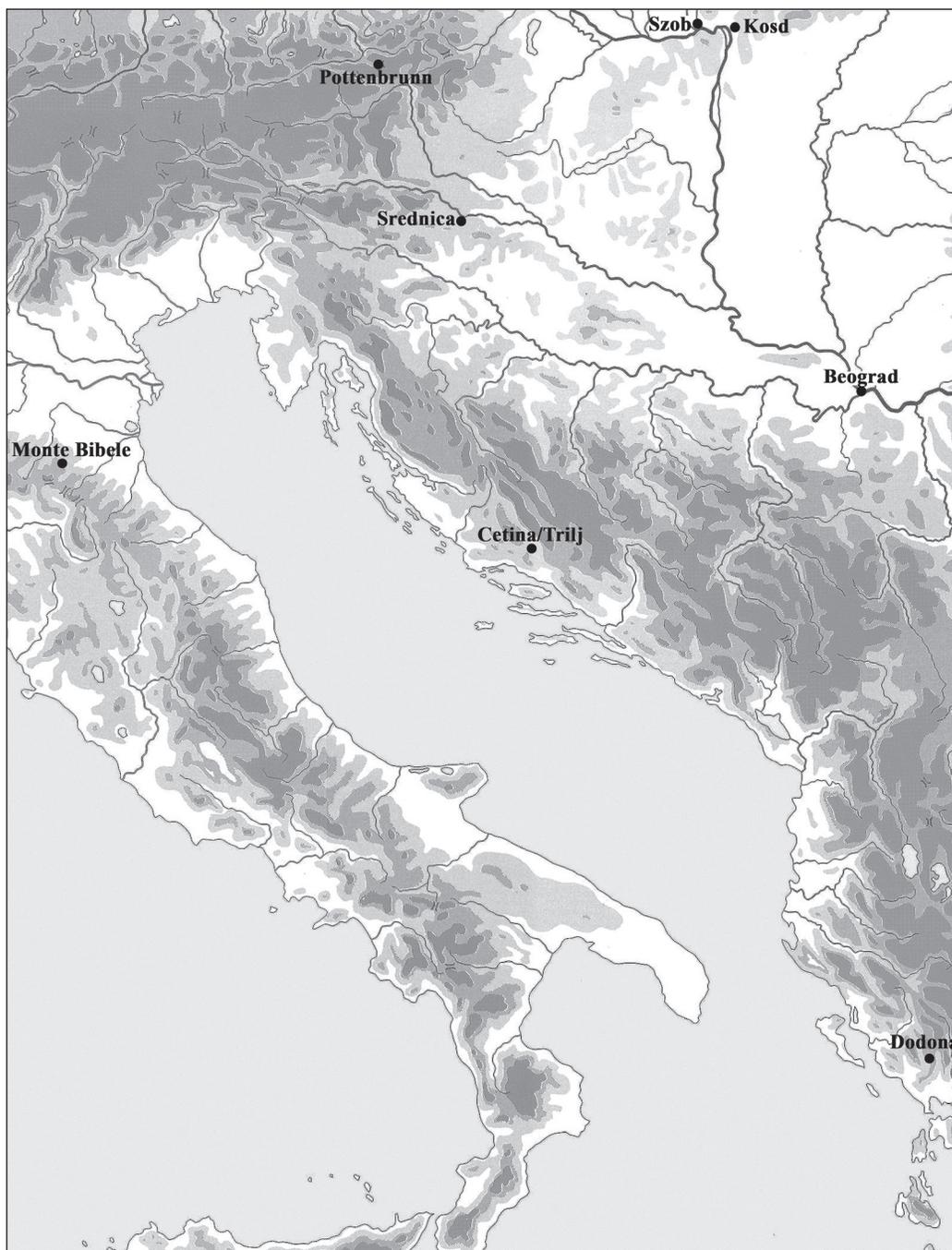
Amongst other prehistoric finds kept in the private property of Milan Gilić, was also an Early La Tène style sword. It was briefly mentioned by Ante Milošević as a ‘*curiosum*’ on the site, and a photograph of the chape end was published in a preliminary report in 1992 (Milošević 1992b, 87, fig. 2). A few years later it was mentioned again in the *Archeological topography of the Cetina* (Milošević 1998, 291, fig. 482). In another preliminary presentation in 1999 it was mentioned that the sword was discovered in 1990 at the site of Mali Drinić in the river Cetina below the confluence with the stream Ruda (Milošević 1999, 208, fig. 6). The same photograph of the find was reproduced again in the exhibition catalogue *Numini Hippi Fluvii*, but for the first time it was also mentioned that the prehistoric finds might have been ritually deposited in the river (Milošević 2003, 27) (Fig. 29.1).

Since its discovery, although the sword has been

mentioned and its picture reproduced at least four times in Slovenia, Croatia and Germany, it has not drawn any attention. Despite the fact the same photograph was reproduced every time and that its quality was rather bad, the sword’s general form – and most importantly, the form of the chape end and its decoration – were clearly visible.

More than 20 years after its discovery, and taking into consideration that it was a river find which was not conserved, the sword is still in a rather good state of preservation – although its surface is completely covered with corrosion and several fragments of the scabbard are missing. The whole find is 70 cm long while the scabbard is 62 cm long. The preserved hilt is short – only 10.5 cm long and strangely formed – pointed towards the end, allowing the assumption that this form is a consequence of its weathering, and that the original grip was at least a little bit longer.

The scabbard is almost completely preserved, but completely embedded in corrosion – it tapers only slightly but throughout. It consists of two chambered plates where the front plate overlaps the reverse one with edges – the overlaps extend to the point of the sheath. Its mouth is campanulate with concave sides and almost 6 cm wide. The upper edge of the mouth is decorated by a barely visible hatched band running between two incised lines. The front plate is decorated, but the decoration is only barely visible due to the corrosion. There are two incised lines running parallel to the edge of the sword all along the edges. On the top of the scabbard, several concave, convex and circular incised lines have been preserved which are visible, and which are the remains of a depicted dragon pair. Unfortunately we can identify only a few elements of



*Fig. 29.1. Map with major sites mentioned in the text.*

the dragons – on both sides we can recognize the pointed ear and the concave upper line of the head. On both sides also several lines forming the beak can be recognized – it seems as if the upper jaw ends with an inward-curved end while the lower jaw can be identified only as a line. Below the ears there is a point of rupture, and the dorsal lines of the back can be further followed. They run transversely in a convex form to the central part of the sword where they end in two upwards rolled spirals. In several spots, where

the corrosion was broken off, we can see that the surface between the dragons was covered with hammered points. In some places, mostly below and between the dragons, we can see traces of fan-shaped hatched ornaments.

The chape end is open and heart-shaped. It is short (some 11 cm long) with two circular clamps on the upper, and a slightly concave bridge on the lower side. The clamps are of the round type and decorated with two circular incisions with a triangular cross section, creating the visual impression

of an elevated circular button in the middle encircled with a thin line.

On the point of rupture, where the chape end widens, there are two circular, slightly flattened buttons tapped into the inner side. The concave rods of the chape end between the circular buttons and the chape clamps are decorated with incised transverse lines. The larger chape clamps are circular – on the reverse side they are plain and decorated only with a thin circular line running along the edges, while on the front side they are decorated with a motive of a triskele ending with open-beaked dragon heads. The rods forming the end of the chape are a little bit convex and thickened towards the curved tip (Fig. 29.2).

### What is it?

Sword scabbards with an open reinforced chape end were, accepting the suggestion of Ian Stead, named as the Kosd type by Éva Petres and Miklos Szabó. They further subdivided them into four groups designated ‘A’ to ‘D’ according to the form of the chape end – oval shapes were included in the designations type A and B, conical ones as type C, and deltoid shaped ones as type D (Petres and Szabó 1985, 91). The last ones formed the smallest group, and mapping them, Peter Ramschl observed that their occurrence is concentrated in the Carpathian basin (Ramschl 2003, 256, fig. 12). In the revision of grave number 22 from the necropolis of Belgrade-Karaburma we have further supplemented the list of these swords, but also pointed to their occurrence outside of this region – in Northern Italy and in Dalmatia, in the river Cetina (Blečić Kavur and Kavur 2010, 71).

Contrary to other forms of chape ends, the ones included in the Kosd D type tend to be rhomboidal shaped, shorter, with circular buttons on the clamp positioned above the middle of the chape end, with a wider opening of the chape end, with a more concave upper and convex lower part. But when observed on a larger scale, they are, outside of the Carpathian basin and within as well, much more variable, and widening the perspective we could propose a further division of the later type, observing them in the Celtic world – in the territory between France and Romania.

Generally we would agree that it would be better to describe the chape ends as ‘heart-shaped’ as already proposed by P. Ramschl (2002, 79). All of the swords are approximately 70 cm long with scabbards long up to 62 cm – commonly they tend to be less than 4 cm wide with scabbards up to 5 cm wide. The chape ends tend to be short and the rods between the clamp plates and the circular buttons are as short – as short as the clamp plates. Observing their general form we can divide them into two groups (Fig. 29.3). In the first group we can include the swords with a more curved and shorter chape end (for example Pottenbrunn grave 520 and Cetina near Trilj) while in the

second group we can include the more pointed and elongated chape ends (for example Monte Bibele, Monte Tamburino grave 118 and Kosd grave 15) (Fig. 29.3).

### *The first group*

In the first group – the curved heart-shaped chape ends with clamps positioned on the middle of the chape end – we should include scabbards from the swords discovered in grave 21 in Gourgançon (Charpy 1987, Pl. IX, 14) and the stray find discovered in the vicinity of Chalon-sur-Seine in France (Charpy 1987, Pl. VII, 17); graves number 121 and 94 from the necropolis of Monte Tamburino at Monte Bibele (Vitali 1987, 359, fig. 35b; Lejars 2008, 207, 215) and the sword from the old Rilli collection from Numana in Italy (Lollini 1979, 67, T. VI, B); the old grave number 2 from 1930 (Ramschl 2002, T. 22) and grave number 520 from Pottenbrunn in Austria (Ramschl 2002, T. 58, 15a); as well as grave number 3 from Novajidrány-Sárvár in Hungary (Hellebrandt 1997, 77, fig. 6). Finally we have to add to this group the sword discovered in the river Cetina near Trilj in Croatia. Perhaps we could add also the heavily corroded scabbard from grave number 8 from Trivio di Serra S. Quirico in the Marche region in Italy (Lollini 1979, 78; T. XVII, B) and the isolated find from Chens-sur-Léman in Switzerland (Bocquet 1991, 99, fig. 3, 13). The latter differs from all the others due to the form of its buttons above the chape clamps which are not circular but pointed and turned up on the outer side.

Unfortunately none of the preserved scabbards was decorated – only the chape clamps of the scabbards from Pottenbrunn grave 1930/2, grave number 94 from Monte Bibele and grave number 3 from Novajidrány-Sárvár were decorated with plastic convex buttons with triskeles positioned in the middle of a circle with lateral incisions, while the sword from Cetina had buttons decorated with triskeles ending in the form of dragons heads with open beaks. It was only the sword from Cetina which had a dragon pair depicted on the mouth of the scabbard.

### *The second group*

In the second group – the pointed heart-shaped chape ends with clamps positioned slightly above the middle of the chape end – we should include the scabbards from graves discovered mostly in the Carpathian basin; from grave number 8 from Getzersdorf in Austria (Baumgartner 1906, 291, fig. 111); grave 15 from Kosd (Szabó and Petres 1992, 147, Pl. 29; Szabó 2008, 234, fig. 18, 2b); the accidental find from Szob (Szabó and Petres 1992, 186, Pl. 68); grave number 4 from Rezi-Rezicseri in Hungary (Horváth 1987, 156, Pl. XVII, 2; Szabó and Petres 1992, 175, Pl. 57); grave number 137 from Pişcolt in Romania (Németi 1988, 89, fig. 10, 1a); accidental find from Ruma-Borkovac (Todorović

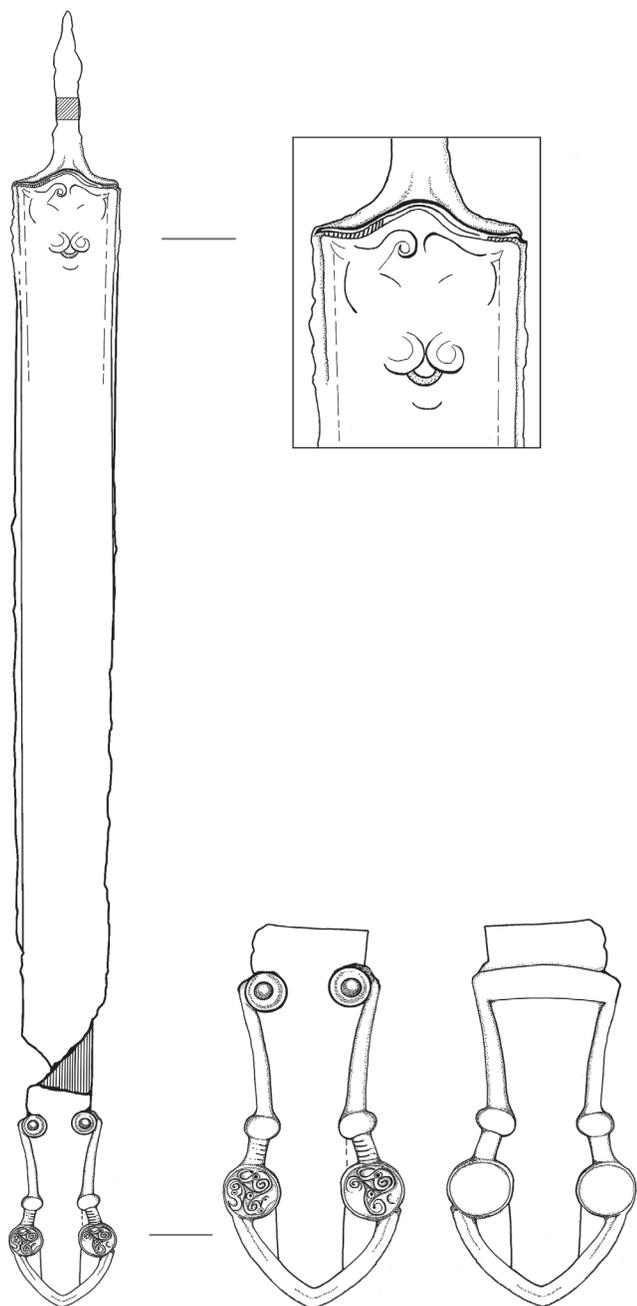


Fig. 29.2. The sword from the river Cetina near Trilj (Croatia). General view and details.

1968, T. XLI, 3); and grave number 22 from Belgrad-Karaburma in Serbia (Blečić Kavur and Kavur 2010, 70, fig. 66, 8). But we should also add the scabbards from graves number 70 (Vitali 1987, 356, 358, fig. 35a; Ginoux 2007, Pl. 43; Lejars 2008, 196), number 118 (Lejars 2008, 213), number 127 (Lejars 2008, 218) and number 135 (Lejars 2008, 221) from Monte Tamburino, and from grave number 32 from Monterenzio Vecchia in Monte Bibele from Italy (Bernadet *et al.* 2007, 244, fig. 15). Most probably we

should also add two poorly preserved accidental finds – the scabbard of the sword from Szob in Hungary (Szabó and Petres 1992, 186, Pl. 68) and the fragment of the scabbard from Ruma-Borkovac in Serbia (Todorović 1968, T. XLIII, 10). The latter is questionable since its chape clamps do not appear circular in form – making them look more knob-like in shape and lacking the clearly pronounced buttons on the very slightly thickened rod above them.

The mouths of scabbards from Kosd, Szob, Rezi-Rezicseri, Monte Bibele and most probably Pişcolt were decorated with a Type I dragon pair, according to José Maria De Navarro. Several of the chape clamps were also decorated – the scabbard from Kosd had an incised rosette while the scabbards from Szob and Rezi-Rezicseri had an almost identical decoration of a point inside a circle with lateral incisions. Only the scabbard from Ruma-Borkovac, decorated with a Hungarian style ornament, had incised vegetable ornaments on the chape clamps and transverse incisions on the rod above them.

### Chronology

In an analysis of scabbards with open chape ends of a non-circular form, Thierry Lejars demonstrated that they should be dated to the last horizon of the Early La Tène period (LT B2) while early forms already make their appearance in the LT B1 (Lejars 1994, 44–47). In terms of the division of swords as proposed by É. Petres and M. Szabó (1992), we can conclude that the majority of swords included in group Kosd C could be dated to the LT C while the swords from group Kosd D could be still included in to the period LT B2. This is also reflected in their size – the majority of the swords from the first group are longer than 70 cm while the majority of the swords from the second groups are shorter (Blečić Kavur and Kavur 2010, 69), but when observing them in detail, we can conclude that the swords with more curved chape ends tend to be shorter and narrower than the examples with the more pointed ones.

When presenting the preliminary results of the chronological analysis of the graves from Monte Bibele, Daniele Vitali concluded that the swords included in group Kosd D should be dated at the end of LT B2 and the beginning of C1, which was in chronological terms between 320 and 280 BC (Vitali 1987, 356, 368, fig. 39). A slightly earlier dating was proposed by P. Ramsel who, on the basis of the analysis of the swords from the cemetery of Pottenbrunn, suggested that the examples with a heart-shaped chape end could be dated to the later part of the LT B2 (Ramsel 2002, fig. 148).

One of the most important and interesting details, enabling a more precise dating of the sword from Cetina near Trilj, are the decorated chape clamps. They have deep plastic relief decoration in the form of triskele with open-

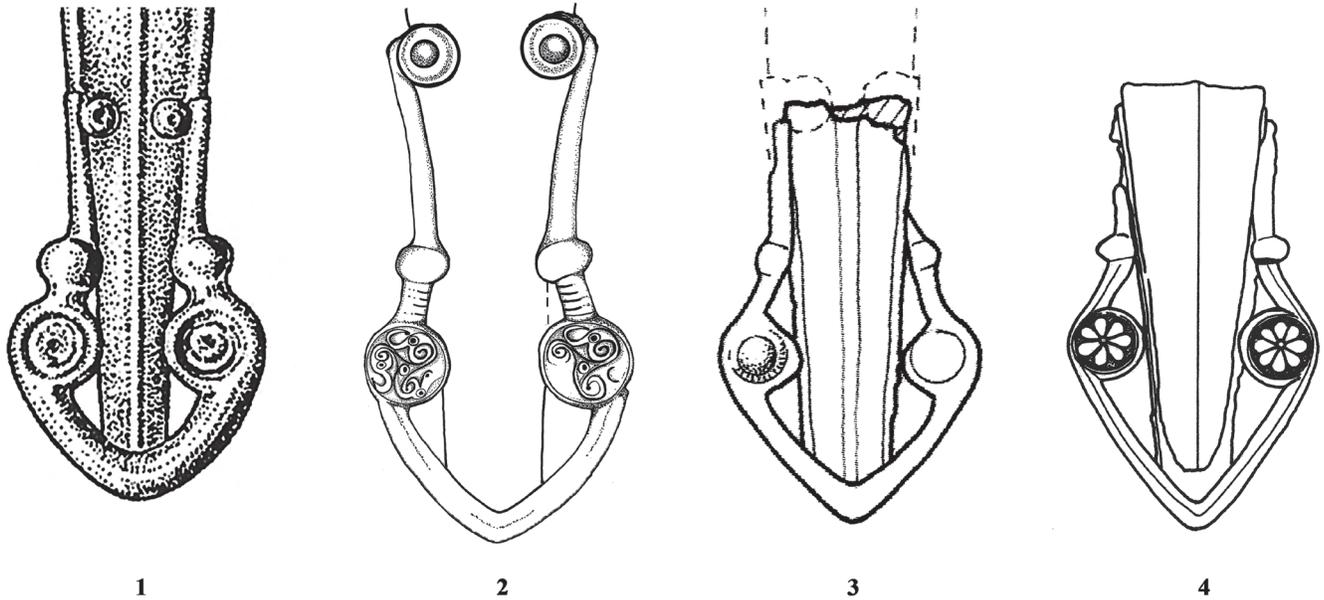


Fig. 29.3. Division of scabbards with open reinforced heart-shaped chape ends. 1. Pottenbrunn, grave 520 (Ramsl 2002, T. 58, 15a); 2. Cetina near Trilj; 3. Monte Bibele, Monte Tamburino, grave 118 (Lejars 2008, 213); 4. Kosd, grave 15 (Szabó and Petres 1992, 147, Pl. 29).

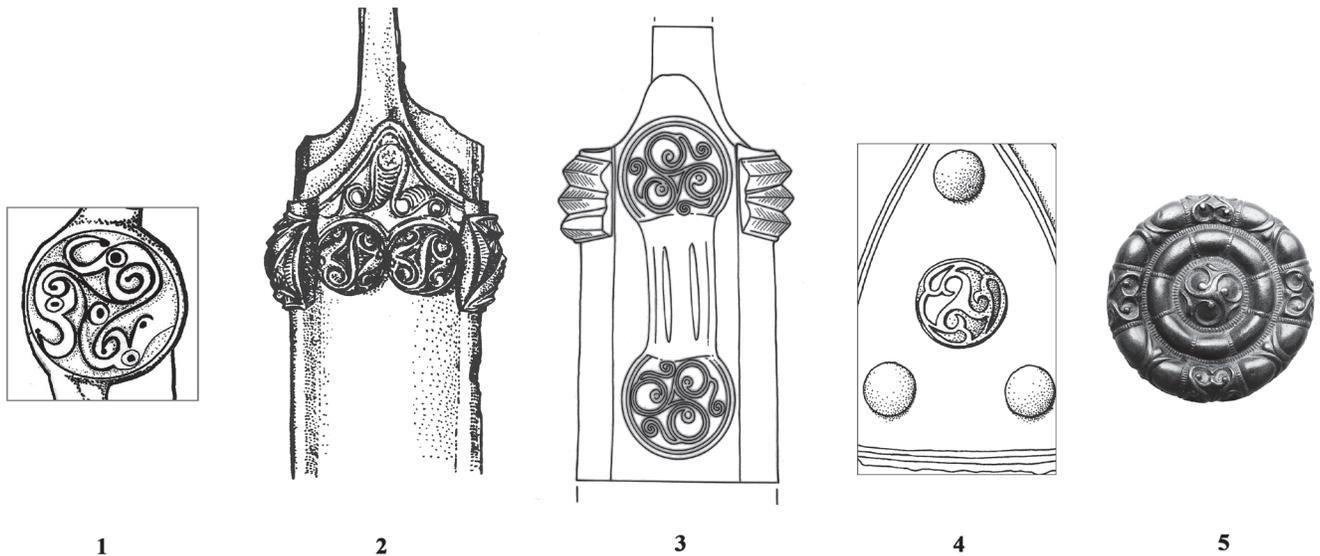


Fig. 29.4. Evolution of a motive – from dragons to geometric motives. 1. Cetina – triskele ending in dragon heads with open beaks; 2. Szob – two dragon heads facing one another (Szabó 1989b, 20; Pl. 2, 1); 3. Srednica near Ptuj – the deconstructed dragon's head (Lubšina Tušek and Kavur 2009, 137, fig. 9); 4. Apahida – triskele with vegetable offshoots (Rusu 1969, 292, fig. 10, 3); 5. Ciumești – triskele with vegetable offshoots (Rusu 1969, Taf. 146).

beaked dragon-head terminals. The eyes of the dragons are clearly depicted and the ends of the widely open beaks are curled (Fig. 29.2, Fig. 29.3, Fig. 29.4).

They form a rare motive present mostly in a developed but reduced form in the Carpathian Basin. Among the older swords the best analogy would be the decorated plastically modelled buttons on the scabbard reinforcement of the

sword from Szob, where on each button two dragons were depicted facing one another. The eyes are clearly visible and the ends of the beaks are also curled (Szabó 1989b, 20, Pl. 2, 1) (Fig. 29.4.2). Perhaps another such example is the unfortunately badly-preserved lower loop plate from the Hatvan-Boldog type sword from Gáva-Katóhalom in Hungary. The loop plate is circular, decorated with a band

of hatched ornament along its edge while in the centre, inside a circle, from the damaged remains we can recognize in the lower right angle the head of a dragon with an eye clearly depicted and a curled beak (Szabó and Petres 1992, 131, Pl. 13, 255, Ill. III, 1). Perhaps we could assume a similar decoration on the chape clamps on the reverse of the eponymous sword from Hatvan-Boldog which is unfortunately also badly preserved (Szabó and Petres 1992, 136, Pl. 18).

In an attempt to demonstrate the development of the decoration of the Hatvan-Boldog type swords in the Carpathian basin we have added, along with the two Hungarian swords from Hatvan-Boldog and Gáva-Katóhalom, the find from Srednica near Ptuj in Slovenia (Lubšina Tušek and Kavur 2009, 136, fig. 7). The latter had its loop plates decorated with a further developed form of the same decoration – the dragon's head was deconstructed – the eye was omitted, the curved lower jaw of the beak was transformed into a circle, while the upper jaw of the beak was reduced to a vegetable off-shoot (Lubšina Tušek and Kavur 2009, 137, fig. 9; Megaw and Megaw 2012, fig. 4) (Fig. 29.4.3). Generally in LT C1 the motive becomes reduced to a triskele where the ends only just still resemble open beaks as, for example, on the lower loop plate of the sword from Szob (Szabó and Petres 1992, 179, Pl. 61) or on the decorative buttons on the upper side of the scabbard reinforcement of the sword from the vicinity of Balassagyarmat (Szabó 1989b, 20–1, Pl. 2, 2a; Szabó and Petres 1992, 121, Pl. 3). Further, the motive can be observed on other elements of weaponry, such as the decorative button attached to the triangular reinforcement of the helmet from Apahida in Romania (Rusu 1969, 292, Abb. 10, 3; Szabó and Petres 1992, 57, fig. 33). Here, the endings of the triskele still look similar to the open beaks of dragons, although their morphology is reduced (Fig. 29.4.4).

Unquestionably the most important find of such a motive is the decoration of the inner circle of the two small roundels on the clamp of the chain mail from the grave from Ciumești in Romania (Rusu 1969, T. 146; Szabó 1989a, 18; Pl. 1, 2a). The endings of the triskele demonstrate the further development of the reduction started in the decoration of the loop plate from Srednica. The dragon's heads are completely reduced – the lower jaw of the beak forms a circle ending with a point while the upper jaw becomes detached and reduced only to a line. The ornament was discussed by Aurel Rustoiu and Vincent Megaw (2011, 233) from a different perspective – they observed it in connection with the distribution of the Vegetal Style. Further they have noted in their discussion the matching or actually overlapping distribution of swords decorated with dragon pairs and the *style végétal continu* as defined by Stéphane Verger (1987).

Looking at the known finds decorated with the motive of triskeles – the ones ending with dragons heads and the reduced and transformed example – we can conclude that the plastic decoration of the chape clamps of the sword

from Cetina, with its triskele finishing in the form of the dragon's head is, according to the form's elaboration and semantic meaning, closely comparable to the decoration of the older Kosd type A swords from the Carpathian basin. It seems that triskeles made in plastic style and composed from dragon heads may be dated to LT B2, while later in phases LT B2/C1 and C1, the stylistic development of the dragon's heads becomes reduced and deconstructed – they are transformed into a geometric pattern composed of a triskele containing three circles (Fig. 29.4).

### What does it mean?

The first finds demonstrating contacts between the communities of the Alpine area and the cultures of the central and eastern Mediterranean world can be dated back to the Early Iron Age. Not only artifacts from the western Mediterranean discovered in central Europe, but also finds demonstrating the opposite movement of contacts and cultural flow – mostly female attire – were discovered in Greek and Sicilian sanctuaries (Verger 2003; 2011). Coming from the most important Pan-Hellenic sanctuaries, such as the Hearion in Perachora where anklet rings, bracelets and decorative discs were discovered, they could be dated to the period Ha D1 according to central European chronology. That this was a tradition obviously sustained in the following centuries is demonstrated by the presence of walnut-shaped anklet rings in Isthmia (Caskey 1960; Krämer 1961), as well as fibulas of the Middle La Tène schema from Dodona (Megaw 1968, 187–8; 2004, 100) and the sanctuary of Apollo in Delos. Discussing the latter fibula, M. Szabó formulated three hypotheses regarding its origin – it might have been a present from the 'Celtic world', or the property of a slave originating from the same environment, or booty captured from the Celts in Asia Minor. In his opinion the first hypothesis was most likely, since he noted that the majority of isolated artifacts originating from Balkan territory were discovered in sanctuaries of the Greek world (Szabó 1971, 514). Later, Ferdinand Maier observed that the majority of these finds could be included in a consistent chronological horizon encompassing the end of the Early and the beginning of the Middle La Tène. This horizon could be linked to the events of 279 and 278 BC, since according to his opinion, the presence of finds in sanctuaries indicated that they were parts of *trophaia* (Maier 1973, 477). He included the Early La Tène style sword from Dodona and the anklet rings from Isthmia in the same horizon, although M. Szabó demonstrated that the context of their discovery predated the event (Szabó 1971, 503).

The sword from Dodona is an old discovery kept in the National Museum in Athens and originating from the collection of Constantin Carpanos (Szabó 1971, 504). The only information about its origins states that it was

discovered in Dodona in the Epirus (Meier 1973, 464). Discussing it some 45 years ago, J. V. S. Megaw assumed that it could be connected with the armament of Celtic mercenaries, whose military service diffused their artifacts all across the eastern and central Mediterranean (Megaw 1968, 191). Decades later, when returning to this topic, he was more precise and noted that the finds from Isthmia could be connected to the mercenaries present during the actions of Timoleon of Corinth on Sicily, and the finds from Dodona to the troops housed in the garrison of Phoenice not far from Dodona (Megaw 2004, 97–99). In his conclusion, he drew attention again to the fact that these artifacts were discovered in ritual or sacred places: ‘recalling the Celtic propensity for depositions particularly in watery contexts’, and raising the question of whether they were deposited there by their original owners (Megaw 2004, 104).

But to shed light on the problem we should look across the sea and further back in time. In the years 369–368 BC Dionysius the Elder from Sicily had already sent Celtic mercenaries to help Sparta in their battles against the Thebans (Occhipinti 2006, 79; Sordi 2002, 496; Treister 1996, 245). The short description of this action in the *Hellenica* of Xenophon is the first incontestable description of Celtic people in ancient sources (Freeman 1996, 20). He must have established contact with the Celts at least some years before in the framework of his plans to build up a maritime empire in the Adriatic to act as a counterpart to the Carthaginian empire in the Western Mediterranean. These mercenaries were battle-hardened Italic Celts who, as Timothy Bridgman suggested, were collaborating with Syracuse even before Dionysius the Elder presumably coordinated them in the military action that finally led to the sack of Rome (Zuffa 1978, 139; Bridgman 2003, 49). In the next decades they were active as mercenaries of Syracuse in their campaigns against Kroton and Locri (Bouzek 2002, 55; Szabó 1991, 333) and crucially during the campaign against Corsica, when Sardinia and Pyrgy were also taken (Sordi 2002, 494), consequently making plausible the assumed origin of the finger rings discussed long ago by J. V. S. Megaw (1965/1966, 97; Lejars 2006, 79).

It was in Sicily, when Dionysius the Elder was accused of being a barbarian-lover, that the propaganda machinery from Syracuse coined the myth explaining that Poliphemus and the nymph Galatea were the parents of Keltos, Galata and Illyros, consequently bringing their favorite mercenaries into the Mediterranean cultural circle with their constructed genealogy (Bridgman 2003, 49–50). It was a period when their detachments – armed with their own equipment and fighting in their own tradition, according to Dionysius’ program, as noted by Mikhail Yu. Treister – had entered the Mediterranean to be employed in the distant parts of the *oikumene* (Treister 1996, 248). When concluding his presentation of the Celts in Italy, Thierry Lejars referred back to this decision of Dionysius the Elder to supply his

mercenaries with their traditional weapons, to demonstrate how they were integrated into the Mediterranean communities but at the same time were able to preserve their identity (Lejars 2006, 91). According to many classical authors, their identity and reputation for toughness in battle ensured that, in the centuries to come, no ruler would wage war without Celtic mercenaries (Freeman 1996, 21). Consequently, the Celtic sword represented not only a weapon, but also a symbolic object designating the status of the individual and his affiliation with a group of warriors identifying themselves as being ‘Celts’ – a group of mercenary warriors keeping their privileges in the Mediterranean and sustaining their contacts with prehistoric communities in the north: a weapon, decorated with unique symbols, which was removed from public display and violently destroyed when its owner passed over into the community of the dead.

## Conclusion

Taking into consideration the proposed revision of absolute chronology for the central Balkan Celtic presence (Blečić Kavur and Kavur 2010, 73–76; Kavur and Guštin 2011, 129–130), and in accordance with the chronological observations of D. Vitali (1987), the sword from Cetina near Trilj predates the catastrophic events in the Balkans in 279 BC – due to its size and form the same could be assumed also for the sword from Dodona. The earliest deposition of Celtic weapons in Greek sanctuaries, as confirmed by the epigraphic evidence from an inventory list from the treasury of the old temple of Athena on the Acropolis in Athens, took place even before the middle of the 4th century BC (Freeman 1996, 23). Clearly the ritual deposition of these weapons, loaded with symbolism, should be observed as a part of the process taking place in the 4th century BC when the Celts from Northern Italy entered the Mediterranean as mercenaries engaged in the political ambitions of Dionysius the Elder from Syracuse, thus becoming the ‘Adriatic Celts’ (Guštin 2005a, 112–113; 2005b, 50–52). The general form of the sword (as well as other finds of Celtic provenience discovered in the river Cetina) subtly suggest that we should look for their origin in Northern Italy, while the plastic decoration of the chape clamps of the sword from Cetina, with its triskele finishing in the form of the dragon’s head are, according to its form elaboration and semantic meaning, closely comparable to the decoration of the younger group of Kosd A type swords from the Carpathian basin dated to Lt B2. Still, in general traits the distribution of the swords we have included in our first group – the swords with the curved heart-shaped chape ends and with clamps positioned on the middle of the chape end – demonstrate a wide distribution similar to the general distribution of the Hatvan-Boldog (or Munsingen or Kosd A) type swords as demonstrated by Thomas Stöllner (Stöllner 1998, Beilage 3).

This brings us again to the observations of M. Szabó, who compared the finds from Italy and stressed their founding role in relation to the Carpathian basin to demonstrate the evolution of the dragon pair motive (Szabó 1989a). Furthermore, J. V. S. and M. R. Megaw were the ones who pointed out that the oldest swords decorated with dragon pairs discovered in Italy, were discovered on the territory of the Boii, who were assumed to have been of Central European or Danubian origin (Megaw and Megaw 1990, 71).

The oldest examples of the second group just look as if they were a form further developed from the first one in the region of Northern Italy. In many elements, the sword from Cetina resembles the Hatvan-Boldog type swords from the Carpathian basin – above all the Plastic Style decorative knobs on the chape plates decorated with a triskele with dragon heads. Understanding the structure of the image, isolating the individual forms and observing the relations among them, we are able to identify individual elements used in the artistic vocabulary to reproduce a realistic image. The decoration of the chape clamps stands at the beginning of the process of simplification and abstraction of the form: a process so typical for Celtic art which is just a reflection of the basic deconstruction of different elements used, deconstruction enabled by the profound understanding of the mythological schemes behind the images. But most problematic of all is the barely-visible incised decoration of the dragon pair on the top of the scabbard – the wide open beaks with the upper jaws curved into the mouth, the angle of the back lines and the curled tail suggest that we might be looking at a dragon pair of the older, II type according to J. M. De Navarro. On the other hand, the majority of the swords from this group, which represent the 'classical' swords with heart-shaped open chape ends from the Carpathian basin, were decorated with dragon pairs of the II type and some of them already exhibit decorative elements of the Hungarian sword style.

## Conclusion

To review the story – the sword was discovered in the river Cetina in Dalmatia in Croatia far away from any other Celtic sword discovered in the region (Guštin 1984, 343, fig. 28). Originating from the area of Northern Italy, it was fabricated in a workshop in the region around today's Bologna, most probably controlled by the Boii. It was manufactured as a local product reflecting the traditions of the universal Early La Tène forms such as the shape of the scabbard, but it featured several decorative elements linking it to the new stylistic features developing in the workshops of the Carpathian basin. It was discovered in an area where these specific weapons were not used in the Late Iron Age – it was ritually deposited together with several other Celtic

artifacts in a river at a place where similar sacrifices had already been performed over several centuries (Milošević 1999, 206–210; Blečić Kavur and Pravidur 2012, 77), being one of the few swords decorated with dragon pairs ritually deposited in a sanctuary or in water (Stöllner 1998, Beilage 2). We cannot be sure whether it was deposited as a war trophy or by its owner, but we can be pretty sure that it was brought across the Adriatic by Celtic mercenaries in the 4th century BC who were determined to '...boldly go where no man has gone before'.

## Acknowledgments

We have to thank Milan Gilić (Sinj) who was kind enough to allow us to see and publish the sword from Mali Drinić. Also we have to thank Angela Tabak (Muzej triljskog kraja, Trilj) and Ivana Ožanić Roguljić (Institut za arheologiju u Zagrebu, Zagreb) for their help and support, and professor Mitja Guštin (Institut za dediščino Sredozemlja, Univerza na Primorskem, Koper) for his valuable comments.

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