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## The antler implement from Soběsuky, feature no. 3472/91 An essay on early La Tène figural art in Bohemia

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### Introduction

Rescue excavations carried out between 1985–1992 at the extensive multi-period settlement of Soběsuky, northwestern Bohemia, with its attendant cemeteries has so far only briefly been described (e.g. *Holodňák 1991*); in addition, a detailed analysis of the millstones, which, originating from a number of geological sources, are such a feature of the site, has also appeared; this study identifies three main groups as local, inter- and supra-regional (*Holodňák – Mag 1999*). One find however deserves specialist study in advance of further and more detailed publication.

This, an antler implement discovered in 1991 in feature 3472 (Muzeum Žatec inv. no. 7546), has previously only been briefly described and illustrated – it must be said – in far from perfect line drawings (*Waldhauser 2001*, 454 and ill. = ‘Soběsuky 7’; *Kruta – Lička eds. 2004*, no. 6/3; *Kruta et al. 2006*, cat. no. 6/3). The implement was stratified with a range of mainly LT A wares (*fig. 1, 2*) as well as a sandstone millstone fragment of Mag’s Černovice type (*Holodňák – Mag 1999*, 407 and *fig. 8: 3*). The antler piece currently measures some 164 mm in length and has been carved from a single piece of fine-grained antler, both ends of which are missing; there is also a lateral break across at the point where the surviving animal’s head and fore-paw join the main blade; the cross-section is basically rectangular. As has been previously observed, originally there was a ‘Siamese twin’, a second animal, the remaining features of which can be seen when the knife is turned through 180° – most of the body remains with its rear haunch and elongated leg and whose tail doubles as the hind leg of the complete animal (*fig. 3*).

Detailed photography shows quite clearly the combination of free-hand carving following faintly scribed lines set at right-angles (see particularly the deep zig-zag groove delineating the belly and hind leg(s) of both the intact and incomplete animals: *fig. 4a*). The globe-shaped feature which forms a link between the handle and the blade also seems to have been carefully laid out; just visible between the snout and fore-paw of the complete animal can be made out a carefully scribed arc with a second, deeper cut arc forming the upper part of the same paw. In the latter case the line appears to have been cut in a number of short jabs leaving a corrugated groove. Particularly noticeable is that the handle and in particular the rear surface of the blade have been carefully finished by application of a rasp or file (*fig. 4b*), a point which will be discussed further below.

### Soběsuky: the stylistic affinities

Only one carved bone handle is even remotely comparable to Soběsuky and that is the fragmentary iron knife with a handle carved out of a cow rib which formed part of a hoard of tools (*fig. 7*) from the LT A sunken hut feature 21/82 of the settlement at Libčice nad Vltavou–Chýnov, okr. Praha–západ (*Sankot – Vojtěchovská 1986; 2001*, no. 18 and *fig. 4: 1–2; Sankot 2002c*). While we shall briefly discuss below other elements in the hoard, the bone is once more decorated with a series of concentric circles which must also have been executed with a metal tool. Identified by its excavator as a ram, Sankot draws attention both to other contemporary early La Tène objects and to the possibilities of links with nomadic or Scythian animal representations. We will not recapitulate here the still on-going discussions as to possible eastern influences on early La Tène art except to observe that the very occasional finds on Czech soil of undoubtedly nomadic origin – such as the iron axe-head from Kaliště–Bezděkov, okr. Klatovy, barrow 79 (*Šaldová 1971*), hardly form the basis for the introduction of a new art style. In fact strong arguments may be advanced against nomadic or Scythian influence, largely on chronological grounds and if one is looking for stylistic parallels for the Chýnov handle then the closest is to be found in an early La Tène brooch from the ‘Hexenwandwiese’ on the Dürrenberg-bei-Hallein, Ldkr. Salzburg. Ignoring the bird which, in a typical Celtic double entendre, grows out of the

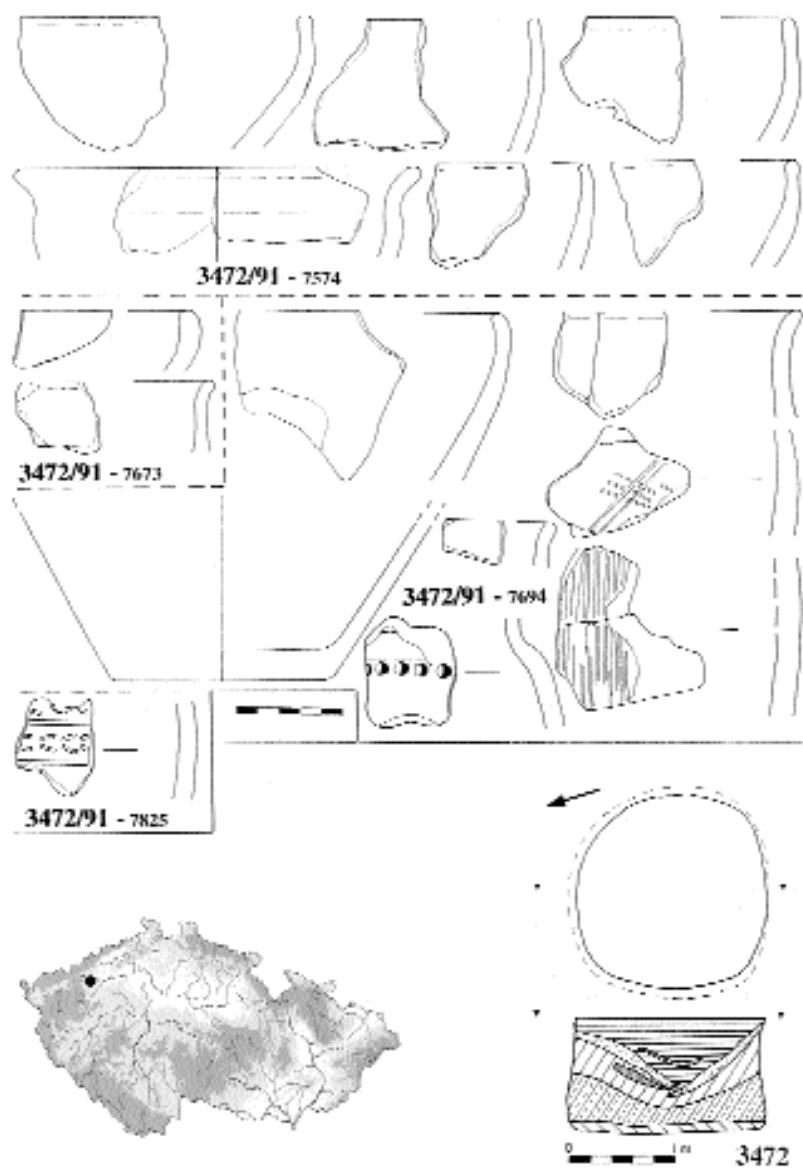


Fig. 1. Soběsuky, okr. Chomutov. Feature no. 3472/91. LT pottery associated with the antler ?weaving implement. Drawings: P. Holodňák.

Obr. 1. Soběsuky, okr. Chomutov, obj. 3472/91. Laténská keramika nalezená společně s parohovým nástrojem. Kresba: P. Holodňák.

rear haunches of the quadruped forming the body of the brooch, the elongated snout, lentoid eyes and laid-back ears of the animal – boar? ovicaprid? dog? – offers a ready comparison with Chýnov (fig. 8a; Guggisberg 1998, 551–558; Frey 2002, 199–200, Abb. 184; contra Megaw 2005b, esp. 40, fig. 13, 15). Elongated snouts, lentoid eyes and laid-back ears are features also of the chape animals

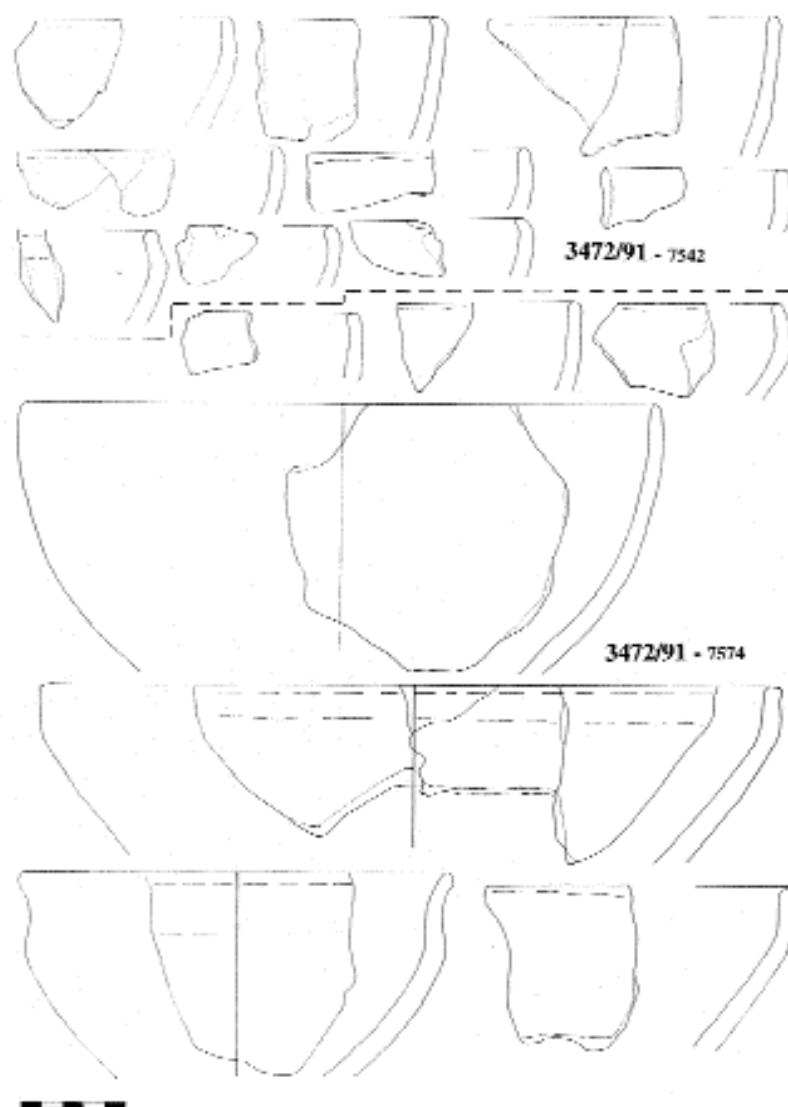


Fig. 2. Soběsuky, okr. Chomutov. Feature no. 3472/91. LT pottery associated with the antler ?weaving implement. Drawings: P. Holodňák.

Obr. 2. Soběsuky, okr. Chomutov, obj. 3472/91. Laténská keramika nalezená společně s parohovým nástrojem. Kresba: P. Holodňák.

(fig. 6b) on the famous bronze scabbard and iron sword from Hallstatt, VB Gmunden, OÖ (Upper Austria), grave 994 with its military procession long held to reflect influence – this time with reason – from ‘Situla’ art (Megaw 1970a, no. 30; 2001, 80–81, ill. 92; Frey 2002, 193–195, Abb. 171; for further discussion of this piece and its significance for Celtic warfare see Frey 2004b; Barth – Urban 2007).

Another object which includes not one but a pair of long-snouted quadrupeds is the triangular openwork cast bronze belt-kook with incise-decorated rectangular plate from the rich warrior’s grave

no. 2 from barrow 1 below the Glauberg-Glauburg, Wetteraukreis (*fig. 8c*; Frey 2002, 199; Baitinger – Pinsker 2002, Kat. Nr. 2. 3. 1; Megaw 2002, 188–189, *fig. 17b*). Here is an *interpretatio celtica* of the so-called ‘Ticino’ or ‘Castaneda’ class of belt-hooks (*Gürtelhaken*) centred in the Transalpine region several of which are variations on the Classical *potnos* (or *potnia*) *theron* – master (or mistress) of the wild beasts (see most recently Megaw 2005a; Bondini 2005, esp. 303–308). Another variety of belt-plaque more commonly found south of the Alps comes from Újezd nad Mží, okr. Plzeň-sever, cremation grave 2 with a third from a barrow burial at Hosty, okr. České Budějovice (Beneš – Sankot 1997; Sankot 1997), yet further indication of the links which extend not only to the west but to the south of our area.

The Glauberg animals with their marked crests which are certainly suggestive of boars, support between their snouts a human head which is in fact the hook of the mount. But at the same time, reversing the mount, one can ‘read’ the snouts as forming the wings of what is so common in early La Tène art, an ambiguous form or *Mischwesen* to use Frey’s term (Frey 2005; for an earlier essay on animals in Celtic art see Gebhard 1991). Here it is a bird with a human head, a striking and much more realistic example of which is the clean-shaven helmeted bird-man brooch from Ossarn, Herzogenburg, VB St Pölten, NÖ, grave 17/1984 (*fig. 9a*; Megaw – Megaw – Neugebauer 1989, 500–506, Abb. 11 and 13; Baitinger – Pinsker 2002, Kat. Nr. 72.1). In turn, the only other comparable helmeted head – albeit this time bearded and with a moustache – from Bohemia is the tiny fragment of a brooch from ‘Čertův Kámen’, Kšice u Stříbra, okr. Tachov (*fig. 9b*; Megaw 1970a, no. 104; 1971; Kruta *et al.* 2006, cat. no. 6/2). But a feature of the Glauberg belt-hook of greater significance for Soběsuky is the elongated ‘S’ elements with their eye-like terminal spirals which support the fore-legs of the ?boars. The hind leg of the complete Soběsuky animal is also an ‘S’ albeit in this case with only one terminal spiral, the reason for this being clear when the piece is reversed – the ‘S’ becomes the tail of the second (and now incomplete) animal.

The division between the twin Soběsuky animals is clearly delineated by the incised zig-zag groove which emphasises the way in which both animals’ rear legs are stretched back. A faint lay-out line can also be seen running over the back of the complete animal (*fig. 4a*). The sole remaining fore-leg is extended, in relief rather than carved in the round, with down-curved stylised claws as can be seen on the Droužkovice mount, also in okr. Chomutov (*fig. 5*; Baitinger – Pinsker 2002, Kat. Nr. 76; Megaw – Megaw 2002; Kruta *et al.* 2006, cat. no. 6/10), and the backward looking ‘sphinxes’ poised as guards on the rim of the beaked flagon from Glauberg-Glauburg, barrow 1, grave 1 (Baitinger – Pinsker 2002, Kat. Nr. 1.1; Megaw – Megaw 2002, 182, *fig. 14*). What is not so clear is how to interpret the smaller terminal coil just in front of the tail/leg. Is this an ‘alternative’ tucked-up foreleg complete with claws? Such ambiguity, such shape-changing is, as already noted, a common feature of La Tène figural representation with the fragmentary sheet gold fragments from the rich ?woman’s grave at Bad Dürkheim, Kr. Neustadt, the most striking example; when rotated the image changes from a clean shaven youth to a bearded old man (Megaw 1969; 1970a, no. 59; 1970b, 271–272, *fig. 4*; 2005, 42, *fig. 19*).

Looked at as a whole, how may one identify the Soběsuky animals, if indeed they are meant to represent any specific species? Ambiguity is a key element in the majority of La Tène figural art; only rarely can we with any certainty point to attempts at reproducing individual species (for possible exceptions: Megaw 1981). But we can add here another object from northwestern Bohemia. Apparently from a settlement at Libkovice, okr. Most, but unfortunately now lost, this is the sherd from a bowl stamped with a frieze of hares (*fig. 10a*; Megaw 1970a, no. 29; Megaw – Megaw 2001, 95, ill. 124; Schwappach 1974; Frey 2002, 195, Abb. 176, 1–3). It is not so much the apparent formal relationship of the Libkovice stamps with ‘Situla’ art (*fig. 10b*) which are significant here but rather the way that the animal’s movement is indicated by its extended fore-legs and tucked-up hind legs. They seem to be either crouching or running and there are other animals depicted with a similar stance such as the deer with backward-turning heads on the Matzhausen, Kr. Neumarkt, *Linsenflasche* (Megaw 1970a, no. 27; Baitinger – Pinsker 2002, Kat. Nr. 77). But more important still is the frieze identified some years ago on the rim of the bronze sieve from Hoppstädten, Kr. Birkenfeld, barrow 2

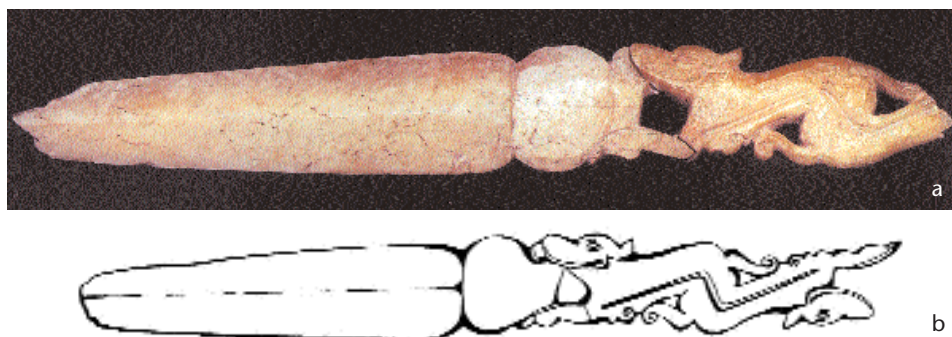


Fig. 3. Soběsuky, okr. Chomutov. Feature no. 3472/91; a – antler weaving implement, length 164 mm; b – reconstruction of original form. Photo: Regionální muzeum K. A. Polánka, Žatec. Drawing: P. Holodňák.  
Obr. 3. Soběsuky, okr. Chomutov, obj. 3472/91; a – parohový tkalcovský (?) nástroj, délka 164 mm; b – rekonstrukce původního vzhledu. Foto: Regionální muzeum K. A. Polánka, Žatec. Kresba: P. Holodňák.

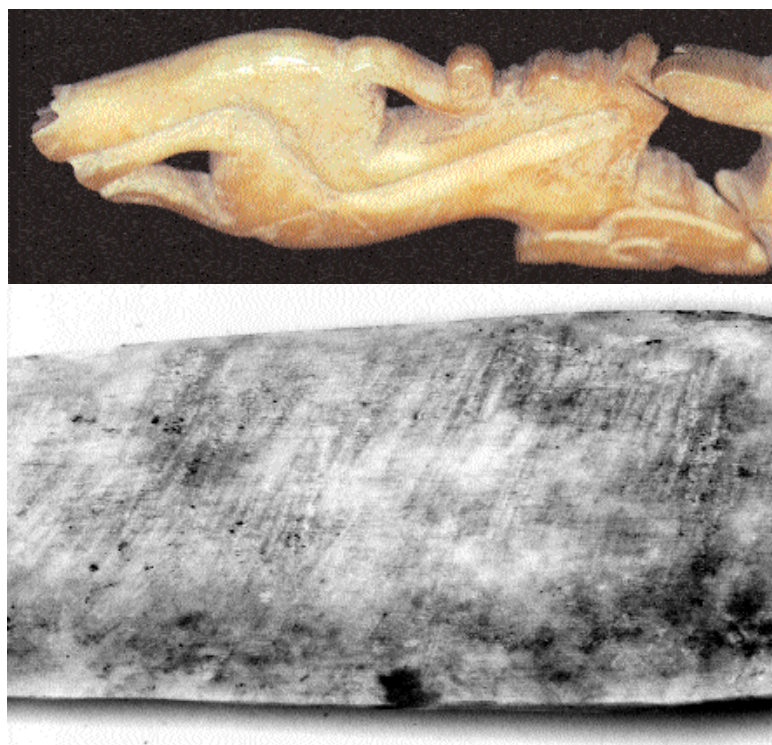


Fig. 4. Soběsuky, okr. Chomutov. Feature no. 3472/91. Details of antler weaving implement; a – detail of frontal surface showing detail of lay-out lines and chisel cuts; b – detail of rear surface showing file marks. Photos: J. V. S. Megaw.

Obr. 4. Soběsuky, okr. Chomutov, obj. č. 3472/91. Parohový nástroj: a – detail přední strany s patrnými obvodovými liniemi a záseky dláta; b – detail zadní části s patrnými stopami po opracování pilníkem. Foto na obr. 4–8, 9b, 11b, 13b: J. V. S. Megaw.



Fig. 5. Droužkovice, okr. Chomutov. Bronze mount (?) from vessel lid. Length 52 mm. Photo: J. V. S. Megaw.

Obr. 5. Droužkovice, okr. Chomutov. Bronzová opěrka (?) z víka nádoby. Délka 52 mm.



Fig. 6. 'Eisfeld', Dürrnberg-bei-Hallein, Ld. Salzburg. Grave 102. Bone hook. Length 36 mm. Photo: J. V. S. Megaw.

Obr. 6. Eisfeld, Dürrnberg-bei-Hallein, Ld. Salzburg, hrob 102. Kostěný hák. Délka 36 mm.

(fig. 9a; Megaw – Megaw – Nortmann 1992). Here the pointed ears, rounded muzzles and bushy tails are very close to the pair of animals engraved – probably in the same workshop or in a closely related one – on the bronze scabbard of an iron sword from Hochscheid, Kr. Bernkastel-Wittlich, barrow 2 (fig. 11b; Haffner 1992, esp. 97, Faltaf. 1; Megaw – Megaw 2001, 58, ill. 57; Baitinger – Pinsker 2002, Kat. Nr. 114). Additional but less certain comparisons with quadrupeds may be found on the engraved sword scabbards from Glauberg-Glauburg, barrow 1, graves 1 and 2 and the belt-plaque from the former grave some of which are definitely equine in character but others of which could certainly be seen as dogs (fig. 12; Baitinger – Pinsker 2002, Kat. Nr. 1.16, 2.9 esp. 154–157; Frey 2002, 196–197; 2004a, esp. 113–117, fig. 1, 3–5). If not *Mischwesen*, then hunting dogs – rather than the more iconic boar (Gebhard 1991, esp. 92–103; Eibner 2001; Frey 2005, 569) – would not be over-fanciful. Further from our Soběsuky animals in detail but not so far in profile are the three handle beasts on the pair of beaked flagons with coral and enamel inlay from Basse-Yutz, Moselle; once more these we have firmly argued are dogs, albeit transmogrified from Etruscan lions (fig. 13; Megaw – Megaw 1990, 54–59, pl. 11–15) as we believe is the case with the mount from Droužkovice (fig. 5). Indeed all the pieces just referred to and, we would now add Soběsuky, may be regarded as incorporating representations of dogs (in general Polenz 1975; Frey 2005, esp. 569) and the archaeology of dogs in the earlier La Tène period supports what is known from later periods, our surviving Classical texts and the Insular hero tales – that the dog was associated with domestic activities and the hunt, as well as with death and burial (Green 1992, esp. 23–25, 44–60, 102–116).

As to the design of the Soběsuky 'dog', its single surviving eye, oval in shape, is a common early La Tène visual short-hand while the whole exhibits a typically Celtic economy of line (fig. 3). Like the hares of Libkovice (fig. 10a), Soběsuky reminds one of what many years ago we first – only half-jokingly – referred to as 'the Disney style', albeit that this term was coined with reference to somewhat later material than that which we have been studying here (Megaw 1970b, esp. 275, fig. 5: 1, pl. 30). Like the best cartoonists, La Tène craftpersons seem to have had a natural ability at stylisation, half-abstractness often linked to a feeling of playfulness which successfully transmits to the viewer the intended meaning. At its very best there can be no comparison between a La Tène image and that of its supposed Mediterranean progenitors; one only has to set the Bohemian hares side by side with those poor starved figures on 'Situla' art (fig. 10b). It is a truism in the study of early Celtic art that only rarely can one with any certainty detect the external model for an indigenous



Fig. 7. Libčice nad Vltavou – Chýnov, Praha-západ. Feature 21/82. Fragmentary iron knife with bone handle. Length 115 mm. Photo: J. V. S. Megaw.

Obr. 7. Libčice nad Vltavou – Chýnov, Praha-západ, obj. 21/82. Fragment železného nože s kostěnou rukojetí. Délka 115 mm.

variation; one exception is the Celticised silen mask at the base of the handle of the beaked flagon from the rich ?woman's grave from Kleinaspergle, Asperg, Kr. Ludwigsburg; the flagon is itself of course based on an Etruscan form and the face is very close to those on imported *stamnoi* such as that from the second rich grave at Weiskirchen, Kr. Merzig-Waden (Megaw – Megaw 2001, 55, ill. 47–48; Frey 2002, 202–203, Abb. 187; Baitinger – Pinsker 2002, Kat. Nr. 91.1, 93.1).

In Bohemia, the most striking example of several of what should be termed 'adaptation' rather than 'copying' of imported forms is without a doubt the fragmentary imitation kylix from the early La Tène settlement at Plzeň-Roudná, okr. Plzeň (*Bašta – Bašťová – Bouzek 1989; Chytráček 2002, 126–8 and Abb. 7: 4; Kruta et al. 2006, cat. no. 4/10; Megaw – Megaw 2007*). Internally, it has a painted 'Greek key' pattern but the exterior has a series of confronting 'S' or lyres, a motif which elsewhere we have claimed as a particularly central and eastern European element in LT A/B (Megaw – Megaw 2006). Here certainly is support if support is needed for continuing in the footsteps of Jacobsthal when trying to assess the role of the Graeco-Italian world as stylistic midwife at the birth of early Celtic art (Echt 2004). On the other hand, the assured quality of the decoration on such relatively humble objects as a pottery bowl and a bone implement, both most likely of local production, supports what has been said at the outset which is that in early La Tène there was indeed a distinctive regional development particularly in western Bohemia many aspects of which may be seen as evolving out of the indigenous, later Hallstatt population (Chytráček 1999; Sankot 2003). As to the depiction of animals in general in early La Tène art here is no need to evoke external long-range influences either from the Orient or from the world of the nomads; we have put the case against both elsewhere and we shall not repeat the arguments here – save to emphasise as far as the latter goes that there is a major chronological and distributional gap between the Graeco-Scythian animal art of the Black Sea region and that of central Europe (Megaw 1975; 2005; Megaw – Megaw 1990, 54–9; 2001, 65–9). This is not totally to deny arguments of Jacobsthal (1944, esp. 25–59) in looking not only south but far to the east for the foundations of early Celtic animal art but it is as much a mistake to deny independent creativity as it is to emphasise seeming stylistic similarities between cultural traditions – as for example between Norse animal interlace, late Maori carving and Chou period bronzes (Carter 1957, esp. 156, pl. 40)!

One of the odd gaps in the material remains of the later European Iron Age is that, unlike the absence of carved wood which can only be ascribed not to lack of skill but to questions of conservation, it is remarkable how little finely worked bone or antler has survived – or has been recognised. Here we are faced with what must be regarded as the permanent loss of a potential treasure-house of artistic endeavour. In the early La Tène phase there is in fact only one other carved bone object of any quality known to us and this is the ?belt hook from gr. 102, 'SK V' in the 'Eisfeld' cemetery





Fig. 8. a – ‘Hexenwandwiese’, Dürrnberg-bei-Hallein, Ld. Salzburg (stray find). Two views of bronze brooch. Length 42 mm. b – Hallstatt, VB Gmunden, OÖ. Grave 994. Detail of bronze scabbard chape. Maximum width ca 50 mm. c – Glauburg-Glauberg, Wetteraukreis. Barrow 1, grave 2. Detail of bronze girdle-hook. Maximum length 102 mm. Photos: J. V. S. Megaw.

Obr. 8. a – Hexenwandwiese, Dürrnberg-bei-Hallein, Ld. Salzburg (náhodný nález). Dva pohledy na bronzovou sponu. Délka 42 mm. b – Hallstatt, VB Gmunden, Horní Rakousko, hrob 994. Detail bronzového nákončí pochvy. Max. šířka ca 50 mm. c – Glauburg-Glauberg, Wetteraukreis, mohyla 1, hrob 2. Detail bronzové pásové zápony – háčku. Max. délka 102 mm.

on the Dürrnberg-bei-Hallein, Ld. Salzburg (fig. 6; *Stöllner 1998*, esp. 119–121, Abb. 14: 98; 28: 3). As *Stöllner* comments, *contra* claims of a relationship with ‘Situla’ art of Slovenia and the Atestine region, this raptor whose body and wings are, in a typical piece of Celtic shape-changing, formed out of a Celticised lotus-bud, may be readily compared with such LT A brooch terminals as that from the same grave (*Stöllner 1998*, Abb. 14: 91; *Frey 2002*, 198, Abb. 180) or the largest of the four *Maskenfibeln* from Wittighausen-Oberwittighausen, Main-Tauber Kr. (*Megaw – Megaw 2001*, ill. 110) to which one may add the chape of a sword from Hallstatt now in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (*Jacobsthal 1944*, no. 97; *Megaw 1987*). Here certainly is evidence of skilful carving – including the use of compasses – but in terms of style, there are no points of comparison with our Soběsuky piece.

Amongst other pieces of carved bone are several knife handles such as that for a folding iron knife from Pottenbrunn, St Pölten, NÖ (Lower Austria), cremation grave 48/16. This, from a context we shall note again below, consists of two bone plates each decorated with a central diamond and five concentric dot-and-circle motifs, both obviously having been executed with a metal implement (*Ramsl 2002*, 89, Abb. 86, Taf. 36: 16 – wrongly captioned ‘15’). The design has some general resemblance to contemporary stamped pottery in its combination of incised lines and concentric circle impressions such as those on the body of a *Linsenflasche* from Maña, okr. Nové Zámky, inhumation



Fig. 9. a – Ossarn, Herzogenburg, VB St. Pölten, NÖ. Grave 17/1984. Detail of bronze brooch. Total length 24 mm. Photo: Fasching. b – 'Čertův Kámen', Kšice, okr. Tachov. Barrow 3. Fragment of bronze brooch. Height 16 mm. Photo: J. V. S. Megaw.

Obr. 9. a – Ossarn, Herzogenburg, VB St. Pölten, Dolní Rakousko, hrob 17/1984. Detail bronzové spony. Celková délka 24 mm. Foto: Fasching. b – Čertův Kámen, Kšice, okr. Tachov, mohyla 3. Fragment bronzové spony. Výška 16 mm.

grave 19 (Benadík 1954, esp. obr. 148 above and 149 below; 1983, 21 and Abb. 4, 5) and the biconical pot from Komjatice, okr. Nové Zámky, inhumation grave 1 (see most recently Megaw – Megaw 2006, list 12, fig. 18).

### The place of Soběsuky in the development of early Celtic art

Recent work has confirmed the presence in western Bohemia of a significant regional development in early La Tène metalworking (Chytráček 1999; 2002; Salač 2006; Sankot 2002a; 2002b; 2003; 2006a; 2006b), a fact that, until recently, has been largely neglected – including by ourselves (Megaw – Megaw 2002, 188–189). However, representations or, more properly, stylised representations of humans and animals remain uncommon. For example, incomplete though her listing might be, Binding (1993; see also Frey 1996, esp. Abb. 2 and Liste 2) has shown that the region seems to lie on the north-eastern edge of the concentration of *Masken-* or *Tierfibeln*, several of which must be regarded as poor local attempts to copy their presumed models; examples from Western Bohemia are the brooches from barrows at Kyšice and Nová Huť, and that in human form – a great rarity in early La Tène iconography – from inhumation grave 74, Manětín-Hrádek, all in okr. Plzeň-sever (Megaw 1970a, nos. 31, 68, 70; Chytráček 1999, esp. 80, Abb. 1; Baitinger – Pinsker 2002, Kat. Nr. 42, 53, 70; Kruta et al. 2006, cat. nos. 6/4–6). In the present context, perhaps one of the most interesting pieces of figural representation is the ?flagon mount, mentioned above, from the early La Tène enclosure at Droužkovice, okr. Chomutov, which, even if not locally produced, demonstrates the early dissemination into in our region of those foreign elements which formed the basis of so much of early La Tène representational art (fig. 5).

Salač (2006) has emphasised the importance of trade in raw materials, long-distance or inter-regional as with salt and local or intra-regional as with quern-stones, the latter particularly significant in the context of Soběsuky with its evidence of stone sourced from a number of carefully selected localities (Holodňák – Mag 1999). In addition, there can be no doubt as to the continuing influences

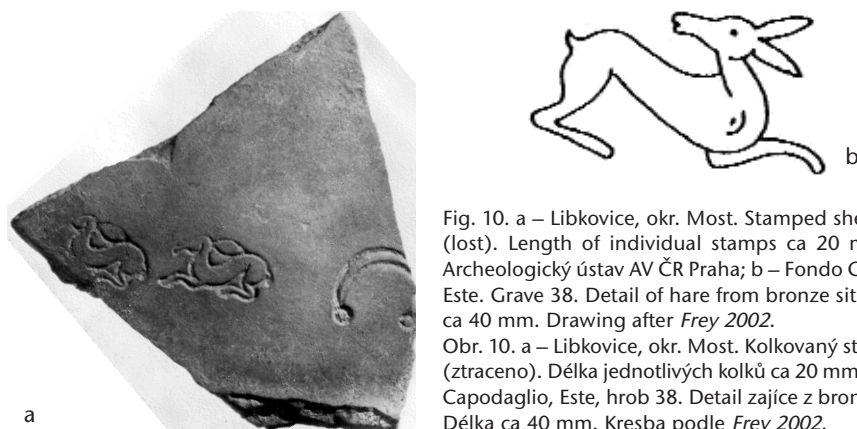


Fig. 10. a – Libkovice, okr. Most. Stamped sherd of bowl (lost). Length of individual stamps ca 20 mm. Photo: Archeologický ústav AV ČR Praha; b – Fondo Capodaglio, Este. Grave 38. Detail of hare from bronze situla. Length ca 40 mm. Drawing after Frey 2002.

Obr. 10. a – Libkovice, okr. Most. Kolkovaný střep z misky (ztraceno). Délka jednotlivých kolků ca 20 mm. b – Fondo Capodaglio, Este, hrob 38. Detail zajíce z bronzové situly. Délka ca 40 mm. Kresba podle Frey 2002.

from the west and, particularly, the south with such major industrial and trading centres as the Dürrnberg clearly playing a vital role (Stöllner *et al.* 2003, esp. 179–185). In line with what has been recently written of the *Fürsten-* or *Prunkgräber* of the Hunsrück-Eifel (Nortmann 2003) and southwest Germany (Krausse 2006) the evolution of early La Tène rich burials from north-eastern France across to western Bohemia can be seen as making major cultural statements confronting the Italo-Greek world with which Europe beyond the Alps was already in contact, contacts which certainly included western Bohemia (Chytráček 2002) – in the context of Soběsuky one may recall the Etruscan flagon handle from nearby Čínov, okr. Louny, an isolated but apparently secure find (Chytráček 1983, 445, obr. 4: 2; Vorlauf 1997, Kat. Nr. 183, Taf. 31: 183). Where rich tombs, some with chariots, such as that discovered in 1863 at Hořovičky, okr. Rakovník, and Chlum, okr. Rokycany, show the taking over of western traditions and their transformation to suit local styles (Chytráček 1999, 370; Kruta 2006, cat. nos. 6/1, 7/1). Sankot, in the course of his studies of early La Tène metalworking techniques in western Bohemia, has demonstrated the existence of local workshops producing *phalerae* and other forms incised with compass-drawn decoration (Sankot 2002d; 2003, esp. 131–133; see also Chytráček 1990), where the type may be introduced but where the decorative schemata have their foundations in the late Hallstatt period and play a part in the decoration of stamped pottery (Linksfeiler 1978; Schwappach 1979; Goláňová 2006; Kruta *et al.* 2006, cat. nos. 5/3–13).

Soběsuky in the early La Tène period cannot be regarded as having been a major trading and production settlement in the sense that the Dürrnberg was nor could it have had the draw the salt-mining centre obviously had for craftpersons and their products (Stöllner *et al.* 2003, 177–179). But, like the Dürrnberg, Soběsuky must have relied on agricultural activities including stock raising and meat processing (compare Stöllner *et al.* 2003, esp. 164–172) and these, like pottery production and interregional exchange, on-site smelting, weaving and the working of wood and bone must be regarded as common features of many – indeed most – larger-scale early La Tène settlements in western Bohemia of which Radovesice, okr. Teplice, is a good example (Waldhauser *et al.* 1993, esp. 207–211).

### The Soběsuky bone implement and early La Tène craftworking

Two aspects remain to be examined – firstly how the Soběsuky piece adds to our knowledge of contemporary crafts-techniques and secondly what if anything may be deduced as to its possible use. There is evidence that at least two separate implements were employed to carve the Soběsuky dogs – a fine chisel or gouge which was tapped with a hammer to produce the incised grooves with their cord-like profile and a rasp which has been used extensively on the flat reverse (fig. 4a; 4b). We must also presume that a broader carving implement was employed to model the animals' bodies while there are also traces of the use of the rasp on the upper surface.

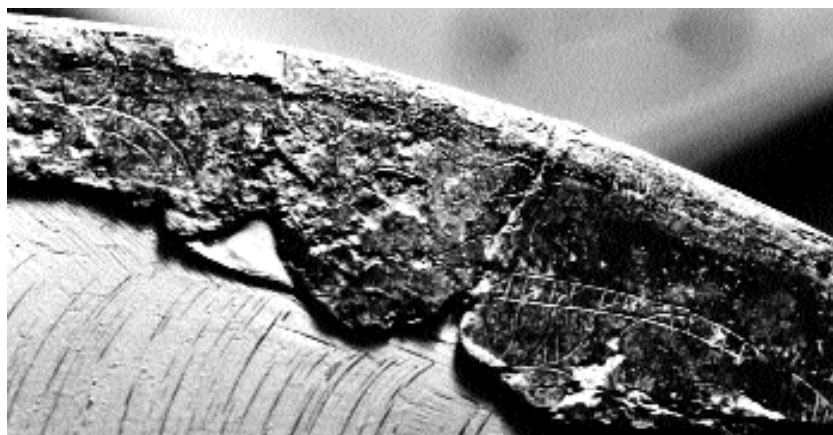
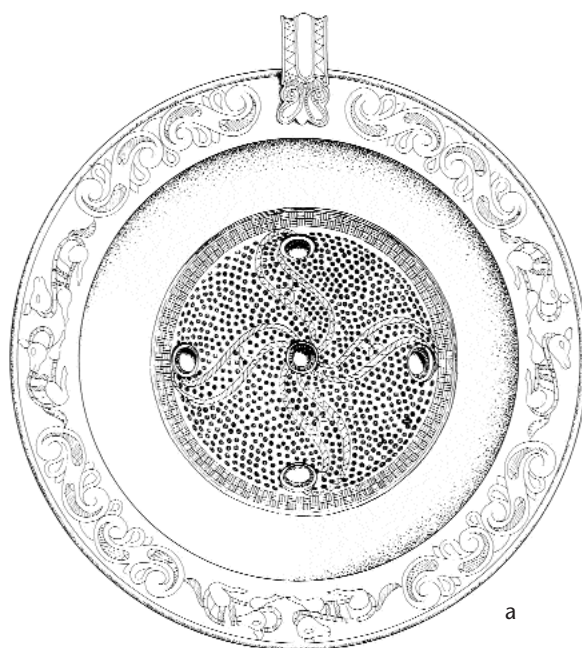


Fig. 11. Hoppstädten, Kr. Birkenfeld. Barrow 2. a – reconstruction of bronze sieve; b – detail. Diameter ca 180 mm. Drawing: Rheinisches Landesmuseum Trier, Photo: J. V. S. Megaw.  
 Obr. 11. Hoppstädten, Kr. Birkenfeld, mohyla 2. a – rekonstrukce bronzového cedníku; b – detail. Průměr ca 180 mm. Kresba: Rheinisches Landesmuseum Trier.

Clearly the carver of the Soběsuky antler implement was skilled at his craft but it remains true that evidence for wood, bone and metalworking tools in the Iron Age remains relatively limited. There are however finds dating from Ha C onwards demonstrating the use of files and rasps which include occasional association with high-status burials (for a useful summary see *Teržan 1994*, esp. Abb. 1). Such tools – which in effect have remained unchanged in form and use for several millennia – are most commonly found in archaeological context in the later La Tène phases; they include the enig-

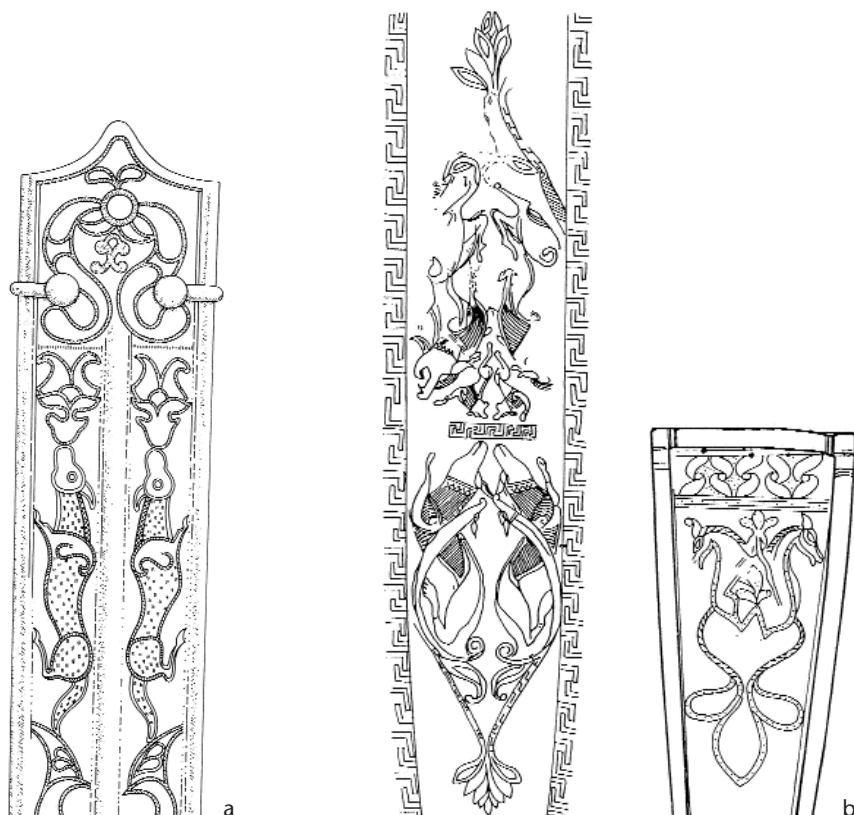


Fig. 12. a – Hochscheid, Kr. Bernkastel-Wittlich. Barrow 2. Reconstruction of engraved decoration on bronze scabbard. Width ca 49 mm. Drawing after *Haffner 1992*. b – Glauburg-Glauberg, Wetteraukreis. Details of engraved decoration on bronze scabbards from (left) barrow 1, grave 1 and (right) barrow 1, grave 2. Drawings after *Frey 2002*.

Obr. 12. a – Hochscheid, Kr. Bernkastel-Wittlich, mohyla 2. Rekonstrukce ryté výzdoby na bronzové pochvě. Šířka ca 49 mm. Kresba podle *Haffner 1992*. b – Glauburg-Glauberg, Wetteraukreis. Detaily ryté výzdoby na bronzových pochvách z mohyly 1, hrobu 1 (vlevo) a mohyly 1, hrobu 2 (vpravo). Kresba podle *Frey 2002*.

matic LT D mound of Celles, Cantal, persuasively interpreted as a specialist site for bone-working (*Guillaumet 1983*, esp. fig. 10; 1996, 55–59; *Megaw 1985*, esp. 172–176).

There are, however, a number of earlier La Tène finds which are significant for our purposes. These range from individual hoards to, once more, associations with high-status burials. In the absence of a previous summary of the material, some published examples presumed to be contemporary with, or a little later than the Soběsuky implement may be listed here:

#### Austria

Kleine Hutweide, Au a. Leithabirge, NÖ (Lower Austria), cremation grave 13. Two iron chisels and other grave goods including an iron ‘Duchcov’ brooch and an iron hammer associated with a bent sword and fragmentary scabbard. LT B (*Nebhay 1973*, esp. 14–16, Taf. 11; 1993, 53–57).

Nikolausberg bei Golling, Ldkr. Salzburg. Blacksmith’s hoard from multi-period Iron Age settlement and cave site including iron tongues, anvil and hammer. LT B or later (*Moosleitner – Urbanek 1991*).

Pottenbrunn, St. Pölten, NÖ (Lower Austria), cremation grave 48/17. In addition to sheers and three single-edged knives or *Hiebmesser* – one with a decorated bone handle as noted above – a whetstone and four awls as well as scrap. LT B (*Ramsl 2002*, esp. 139–40, Abb. 89, Taf. 36–37).

#### Czech Republic

‘Černov’, Ježkovice, okr. Vyškov. Hoard of iron tools from a hill-fort including axes, single-edged knives and gouges. LT A (*Čížmář 1990; Kruta et al. 2006*, cat. no. 8/3).

Libčice nad Vltavou – Chýnov, okr. Praha-západ, feature 21/82. Iron tools found in pot under floor of hut including a small saw blade, chisel, two hammers and fragments of files; evidence of bone-working. LT A-B1 (*Sankot – Vojtěchovská 1986; 2001; Kruta et al. 2006*, cat. no. 8/1 – the same context as produced the fragmentary bone-handled knife noted above (fig. 5).

Radovesice, okr. Teplice. A range of iron implements from the late Ha/early LT settlement with associated cemetery including a hammer and fine chisels/engraving tools (*Waldhauser et al. 1993*, 209–211, Abb. 45–46).

‘Na Špejchaře’, Tuchoměřice-Kněživka, okr. Praha-západ. Found in a hut twelve small crucibles of clay, a small single-edged knife, a fine file, both of bronze and a pair of iron compasses. LT A (*Kruta et al. 2006*, cat. no. 8/2).

#### France

La Chaussée-sur-Marne, Marne, male inhumation grave 126. Together with a single-edged knife, parts of a shield and two spears, a set of iron carpenter’s tools including a whetstone, a couple of files and a rasp. LT A (*Legendre – Piechaud 1985*).

‘La Gorge Meillet’ or ‘Les Usages’, Somme-Tourbe, Marne, chariot grave. Suite of five iron chisels or engraving tools, an awl and a small metalworker’s hammer found by left hand of lower inhumation (though the association of this last is not certain). LT A (*Foudringier 1878; Verger 1994*, 293–312, fig. 200 = no. 92.1).

#### Germany

‘Burg’, Dietzhöhlzal-Rittershausen, Lahn-Dill-Kreis. Two iron hammers, two fine chisels or engraving tools and a field anvil from a smith’s hoard in a defended settlement with considerable evidence of textile production. LT A (*Baitinger – Pinsker 2002*, 73, Abb. 45, ill. on p. 266, Kat. Nr. 8, esp. 16–18).

#### Slovakia

Chotín, okr. Komárno, grave 34/72, male inhumation grave including iron axe head, two single-edged knives, a whetstone, three awls and a file. LT B2-C1 on the basis of the associated brooches and ‘bent’ fingerings (*Rati-morská 1981*, esp. 62–63, tab. 24: 9–16).

While Libčice is the only early La Tène site which has a proven association of metal tools and worked bone, there seems no doubt that many of the tools noted here were multi-purpose, that is, used for wood-, bone- and metalworking as the need arose. Equally, compasses and fine engraving tools suggest specialist activities such as producing the carefully laid out geometric designs on the bronze *phalerae* and related objects which we have already briefly noted. And a detail: where tools have been found associated with burials it is to be noted that in every case when sex can be determined these are male.

The purpose to which the Soběsuky implement may have been put is more problematic. While it is unfortunate that it is incomplete, there is no marked use-wear observable on the surface of the antler. A clue may be found in the evidence for weaving which has been found on the site as indeed is common on other Bohemian settlements of the Hallstatt and earlier La Tène periods (e.g. Radovesice: *Waldhauser et al. 1993*, 207–209, 335–336). So too the finds from Soběsuky bear witness to the fact that textile production was part of commonly performed domestic activities over the whole period of the site’s occupation. Spinning is evidenced by numerous spinning whorls, the process of weaving itself by loom weights, most commonly of a truncated cone shape, with a horizontal piercing in the upper part. Such weights served the purpose of stretching vertical threads of the warp of the vertical loom and their occurrence, especially in the sunken houses, is striking. One can generally



Fig. 13. Basse-Yutz, Moselle. Detail of handle of flagon no. 2 (cast bronze with 'enamel' in-fill). Length of head ca 43 mm. Photo: (left) British Museum; (right) J. V. S. Megaw.

Obr. 13. Basse-Yutz, Moselle. Detail držadla konvice č. 2 (litý bronz s „emailovou“ výplní). Délka hlavy ca 43 mm. Foto vlevo: British Museum.

assume that the raw materials for weaving were processed locally – wool, for the manufacturing of coarse textiles intended for production of everyday garments and flax, more suitable for production of fine linen textiles. In the early La Tène period – the phase of the site's occupation to which the antler implement discussed in this paper belongs – weaving is confirmed from the loom weights from features 638, 565, 3147 and 3564.

With this in mind, a weaving shuttle or sword beater – used to 'beat' or bed down a weft thread – are possible candidates but a third identification is as a more specialised beater used in the production of complex braids or tablet weaving. While there are no actual examples of tablet weaving so far known from Bohemia, Moravia or Slovakia (*Belanová 2005; Bender Jorgensen 2005*) the technique is well-known from the Austrian salt-mines (*Groenmann van Waateringe 2003; Grömer 2005a; Stöllner 2005*). While it is also true that no similar implement has been yet identified – and here the emphasis is on *yet identified* – north of the Alps, a series of bones, flat on one side and slightly curved on the other has been found in grave 89 of the well-known Villanovan cemetery of Verruchio, Emilia Romagna. Given the wealth of textiles and related implements in the site, not only have these been interpreted as beaters but they offer a credible comparison with Soběsuky implement (*Raeder Knudsen 2002; see also Grömer 2005b* and for a well-illustrated discussion of early Iron Age textiles and fashion *Hagmann ed. 2007, esp. 69–78*).

### Conclusion

To conclude, while there seem to be no good grounds for considering that the Soběsuky antler was carved other than in – or very near – the site where it was found, it is not impossible that it was brought into the site from a neighbouring settlement. Certainly the very quality of the carving indicates that here is no everyday implement but rather that it must have been associated with an individual – man or woman – of high local status. However, what is really significant about the antler implement is the very ordinariness of the settlement and the context in which it was found. The style of the carving fits well with the range of early La Tène representational art, not least in western Bohemia, and in itself is evidence that such a style was amongst other evidence for interregional exchange, rapidly being absorbed into the local craftworker's repertoire. That even so utilitarian an object as a weaving beater has been decorated should come as no surprise; to early La Tène craftpersons a sword scabbard, horse harness or the even more wealthy trappings of a chieftainly grave but also a brooch or a knife-handle all became the raw material with which to produce complex

visualisations of both this world and the Otherworld. *Otto-Herman Frey (2004)* has recently once more emphasised the complex nature of early La Tène iconography in central and western Europe, the representing of both the natural world and of supernatural beings, the monsters or *Mischwesen*. Thus, the Soběsuky implement might be seen to weave together the mundane and the imagined worlds which, in the Iron Age, were simply two aspects of one complex whole.

*Our first debt is to Petr Holodňák for inviting us to publish a study of this fascinating piece and for providing information and illustrations. François Maresse (Musée royal de Mariemont, Morlanwelz) kindly afforded JVSM the opportunity in 2006 to study and photograph the implement. For discussions concerning its possible stylistic affinities and related issues our thanks go to Otto-Herman Frey (Marburg/Lahn), Natalie Venclová and Pavel Sankot (Prague) and Martin Schönfelder (Mainz) and for expert advice on the object's possible use in weaving, Tereza Belanová (Nitra) and Lise Raeder Knudsen (Vejle).*

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## Parohový nástroj z objektu 3472/91 v Soběsukách, okr. Chomutov Úvaha o časně laténském figurálním umění v Čechách

Na parohovém nástroji z objektu z doby laténské je vyřezáno vyobrazení dvou vzájemně se doplňujících zvířat – patrně psů. Tento příspěvek řadí předmět stylisticky do kontextu časně laténského umění ve střední Evropě a umožňuje připojit jej na seznam množících se dokladů, že severozápadní Čechy hrály v procesu geneze raného keltského umění jistou regionální roli. Podobně jako na dalších soudobých sídlištích, i v Soběsukách byly nalezeny početné doklady výroby textilu, což je možné chápat jako další argument podporující hypotézu, že tento parohový předmět mohl být tkalcovským člunkem, nebo ještě spíše mečíkem používaným při výrobě splétaných stuh.

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