

A MIDDLE LA TÈNE PERIOD SWORD FROM THE MUSEUM OF DURRËS, ALBANIA

UNA ESPADA DE PERIODO LA TÈNE MEDIO DEL MUSEO DE DURRËS, ALBANIA

POR

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ABSTRACT - RESUMEN

The present paper examines a sword dated in the La Tène Period, currently exhibited in the Archaeological Museum of Durrës, Albania. According to the scientific staff of the Museum the archaeological context of the sword has not been specified but the blade had been found in the necropolis of the city. The analysis of the sword is based on its typological features but also the historical, the archaeological and ethnological aspects of the region had been taken into consideration. The most significant feature of the blade is of course the bending. This feature led us to correlate the examined object with the Celts, who practiced this ritual of the intentional destruction “killing” a weapon. This is the first folded sword which had been found in the territory of the modern-day Albania.

El presente artículo examina una espada fechada en el Período La Tène, actualmente exhibida en el Museo Arqueológico de Durrës, Albania. Según el personal científico del Museo no se ha precisado el contexto arqueológico de la espada, pero la hoja habría sido encontrada en la necrópolis de la ciudad. El análisis de la espada se basa en sus características tipológicas, pero también se han tenido en cuenta los aspectos históricos, arqueológicos y etnológicos de la región. La característica más significativa de la hoja es, por supuesto, la flexión. Esta característica nos llevó a correlacionar el objeto examinado con los celtas, quienes practicaban este ritual de “matar” un arma. Esta es la primera espada doblada que se encontró en el territorio de la actual Albania.

KEYWORDS - PALABRAS CLAVE

Durrës; Museum; sword; weapons; Celts; La Tène

Durrës; Museo; espada; armas; celtas; La Tène

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INTRODUCTION

Strabo (7.5.8) and Eratosthenes (in Stephanus of Byzantium=*Δυρράχιον*) described Epidamnus as a city on a peninsula named Dyrrachium. Thucydides (1.25) called it an isthmus. Appian (B Civ. 2.39) described Dyrrachium as a port, while Epidamnus as located in a height. In 2001 an archaeological survey conducted by the *Durrës Regional Archaeological Project* (DRAP), an international rescue project, took place north-west of the port of the city in the uplands area, between the city and the modern-day village of Porto Romano. This area formed the hinterland of the ancient polis, including the ancient cemeteries on the hills of Dautaj, Kokoman and Villa, indeed the peninsula that Strabo and Eratosthenes mention (Fig. 1).¹ Nowadays, all this area is suitable for the cultivation of grain crops and fruit trees.



Figure 1. View of the city of Durrës from tract A 077 and a general map from the Durrës area (Davis *et alii*, 2003: 45, fig. 6).

¹ Davis *et alii*, 2003 : 42-46, 69.

The oldest tombs discovered so far date back to the late of the 7th and beginning of the 6th B.C. The tombs of the Hellenistic period constitute most of the tombs unearthed so far in the necropolis. They also present grouped based on tribes or families. And it's not a due to chance, but an old tradition among the Illyrians.²

Unfortunately, most of the tombs had been destroyed due to the agricultural process in this area and the frequent robbing. Among the plentiful scattered artifacts, steles with Greek and Latin inscriptions have been recovered. The inscriptions in Greek, which are seen in the greatest number of monuments, give us a wealth of names. Many of them have the suffix *-ην* instead of *-ων*, a characteristic which is to be found in the names of Apollonia too, but not in those inscriptions of the other countries. Therefore, in our case, it may be the influence of the Hellenes in the country, which is peculiar only for these Illyrian places in Albania. Almost all Greek inscriptions can be dated between the 3rd - 1st B.C. The Illyrian names in the steles indicate that the Illyrian element has always been present in Dyrrachium.³

According to the researchers, the late Hellenistic, and the Roman findings (Fig. 2) are rare in the area that had been investigated. Judging from the historical sources of the last three centuries B.C, this fact cannot be explained, because the texts mention little evidence about the Hellenistic-Roman city.⁴ We are aware that in 317 B.C. Glaucias, king of the Illyrian Taulantii tribe that inhabited the area around Durrës, offered asylum to young Pyrrhus of Epirus, after his father Aeacides, was expelled as king of the Mollossians (Plut. Pyrrh. 3).⁵ In 314 B.C. Cassander marched north from Aetolia to Illyria and defeated Glaucias and the allied cities, Dyrrachium and Apollonia. He installed a garrison in Dyrrachium (Diod. Sic. 19.67.6-7). Later, Pyrrhus incorporated Durrës in his Epirote Kingdom.⁶ In 229 B.C. the city of Durrës sought the support of Rome when it was besieged by the armies of Illyrian queen Teuta (Polyb. 2.9-10).⁷ Finally, in 148 B.C. the city of

² Hidri, 1996: 160.

³ Budina, 1962: 133-136.

⁴ Davis *et alii*, 2003: 71.

⁵ Walbank, 1988: 154-155.

⁶ Cabanes, 1988: 147-153.

⁷ Errington, 1989: 81-94.

Durrës was incorporated into the newly formed province of Macedonia.⁸

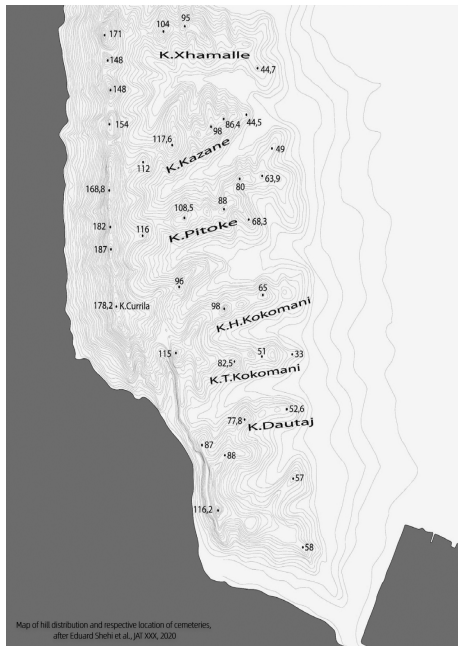


Figure 2. The necropolises (Shehi *et alii*, 2020: 82, fig. 1).

DESCRIPTION

In the Museum of Durrës, a very interesting sword blade (Fig. 3) is exhibited. The blade is double edged with a lenticular cross section. The shoulders are bowed. In place of a pommel at the tip of a tang, there is an oval, or a disc shaped rivetted button. The hilt is divided by the blade

by a thin bowed guard, which follows the curves of the blade shoulders. The surface of the blade is badly corroded with any trace of fuller(s) running towards the ending. The total length of the sword is estimated 53,5cm. The blade width at base is 5,1 cm, the width at tip is 4,862 cm. The thickness of the blade near handle is 0,5 cm and 0,47 cm near the tip. The handle has 11,3 cm length, 1,188 cm width, near the blade the width is 0,864 cm, the width at the tip of the handle is 0,519 cm and the thickness of the handle (near blade junction) is 0,272 cm at the tip. Concerning its typology analysis, the sword could be dated in the Middle La Tène Period.

Among the *spatha*, sword two spearheads and a curved dagger are displayed (Fig. 4). However, we don't know if they accompanied the sword in the same grave, but we are presenting some typological details of the knife, which are considered to be critical. Even though the knife might haven't been found together with the sword, it is interesting to investigate its typology. In particular, the dagger has the cutting edge in its inner side and a sharp point and can be paralleled with the curved knife of the Thracians, the *sica*.⁹ The curved daggers were already known during the 5th century B.C. Herodotus (484-425 B.C.) wrote that Thracians used spears, light shields and short swords (“Θρήκες δὲ ἐπὶ μὲν τῆσι κεφαλῆσι ἀλωπεκέας ἔχοντες ἐστρατεύοντο, περὶ δὲ τὸ σῶμα κιθῶνας, ἐπὶ δὲ ζειράς περιβεβλημένοι ποικίλας, περὶ δὲ τοὺς πόδας τε καὶ τὰς κνήμας πέδιλα νεβρῶν, πρὸς δὲ ἀκόντια τε καὶ πέλτας καὶ ἐγχειρίδια μικρά”).¹⁰ Clemens of Alexandria (153-217 A.D.) speaks about the Thracians, “*who first invented what is*

⁸ Wilkes, 1992: 212.

⁹ Rustoiu, 2006: 67.

¹⁰ Herodotus, VII, 75.

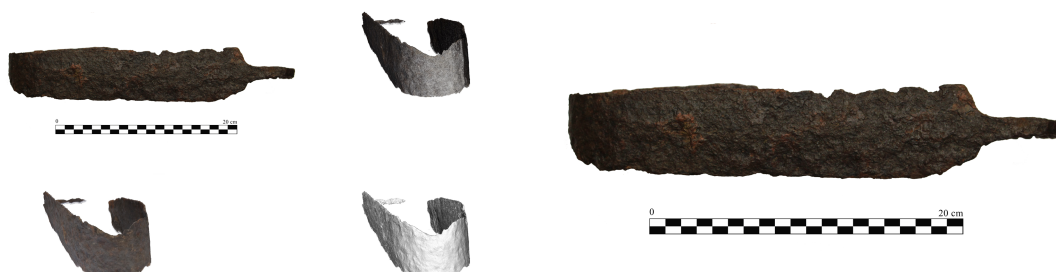


Figure 3. Sword and the 3D representation (elaborated by Romir Mazari).

called a scimitar (*harpes-άρπη*), a curved sword, and were the first to use shields on horseback. Similarly, also the Illyrians invented the shield (*πέλιτη*).¹¹



Figure 4. Knife and Spearheads (elaborated by Romir Mazari).

The average length of the Celtic La Tène blades was 62 cm, although they could be much longer, 85.5 cm in length.¹²

The practice of “killing” objects, the deliberate bending or deformation of objects, more notably, weaponry, before deposition within burials, ritual sites or watercourses has its origins within the Bronze Age, continuing well into the Early Middle Ages.

The ritual of Killing the Objects appears on the Balkans with the Celtic east-wards expansion of the late 4th – 3rd century B.C., with numerous examples recorded from Celtic burials stretching from the Adriatic Sea in the west to the Black Sea in the east. This practice was a common one in Thrace with examples of the intentional destruction of weapons having been recorded in numerous Celtic warrior burials discovered on the territory of today’s Bulgaria, ranging from the 3rd century B.C.¹³

A particular high concentration of burials with “killed” weapons comes from Scordisci territory in north-central and north-western Bulgaria. The latest recorded evidence of this practice comes from the Stara Planina (Balkan) mountains of central Bulgaria where the ritual is to be observed at sites such as Taja (Stara Zagora reg.),¹⁴ where ritually killed La Tène swords and other Celtic weapons have been found in burials dating to the 3rd-4th

c. A.D., indicating that in certain parts of Thrace some Celtic groups retained their independence and identity into the late Roman period.¹⁵

Why were swords bent? Obviously, this is the most difficult question to answer in a coherent and definitive manner. Some researchers mention that this practice was due to practical reasons because long weapons like swords were too big to fit the pit of the cremation graves. Moreover, making the weapon impossible to be used by destroying it, would prevent a possible robbery of the grave where the aim would be to take away the valuable weaponry.¹⁶

Another interpretation relates the sword with the supernatural and magical powers which may possess. In this case the sword being considered an extension of the warrior’s arm during the battle and thus being part of his body which, together with the body, was consequently “killed”.¹⁷ In addition, the deformation of a sword was implemented from the winning side after a battle or a skirmish, prevented the deceased to seek revenge, cutting the links with the mortal nature of the sword’s owner.¹⁸

Apparently, ritually bend swords are not only connected with the Celtic people, but also with Dacians and the Germanic people.¹⁹ The provincial Roman world was also familiar with these funerary practices. In a cremation grave from Neeritter, in the Netherlands, probably belonging to a veteran of an auxiliary unit, buried in the manner of the local ritual, and dated to the 1st century A.D., the sword was intentionally bent.²⁰ The ritual bending of weapons put in graves proves to be a habit of the funerary rituals extending in various regions over a considerable period as represented in various cultures. The custom of depositing bent weapons in graves can be observed in the Getic world from the Lower Danube during the 4th and the 3rd centuries B.C.

A sword (Fig. 5) of the Middle La Tène Period from the Belsh region is housed in the Museum of Elbasan (inv. 198). Only the blade is surviving. Its length is 88 cm, straight with two cutting edges and back slightly accentuated. The thin, straight tang is inserted in a wooden handle. The Celtic or-

¹¹ Stromateis, I, 16, p. 132.

¹² Stead, 1984: 9, 61.

¹³ Tapavički-Ilić and Filipović, 2011: 458-523.

¹⁴ Kisiov, 1990: 66-70.

¹⁵ Domaradski, 1993: 267-276.

¹⁶ Pinter, 2001: 56-58.

¹⁷ Rustoiu, 2008: 91.

¹⁸ Ibid.: 93.

¹⁹ Popa, 2008: 359-365; and Shchukin, 1989: 28.

²⁰ Roymans, 1996: 35.

igin of the blade is attested by identical specimens of the same period in the Celtic necropolises of the Central Balkans.²¹ It is though different from our sword from Durrës Museum. It belongs to the La Tène II types of blades, characterized by the relative short and narrow blade, unlike the spatha from Durrës, which edges run almost parallel to a blunt tip. This sword as our spatha stands out from the dominant sword finds of the region, which are of machaira typology. Unfortunately, the sword from the Elbasan Museum and the spatha from the Durrës Museum are assumed to be sole examples of La Tène Period swords in modern day Albania, carried by their owners, serving as mercenaries in the local armies.

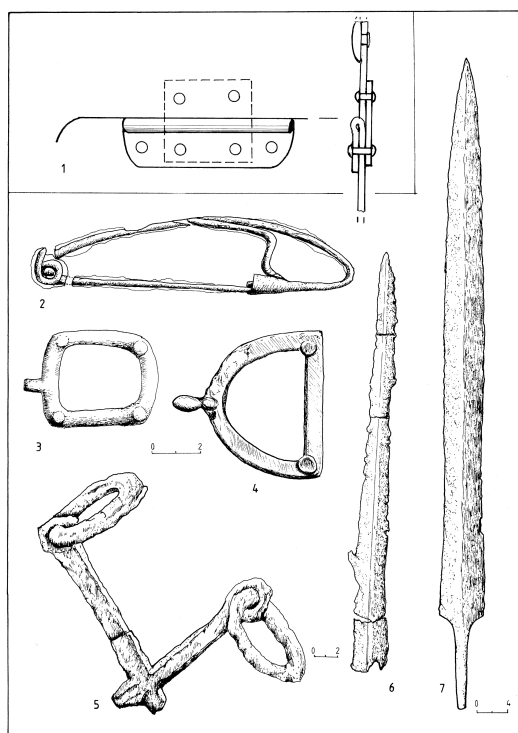


Figure 5. Armament from Elbasan Museum, Belsh region (Ceka, 1996: 331).

HISTORICAL SOURCES ON CELTIC SWORDS

The ancient writers mention that the long sword was the primary weapon of the Celts. However, they criticized its effectiveness and quality

against the roman short sword, the *gladius*. Polybius (200-118 B.C.) or later was one of earliest historiographers who dealt with the Celtic warfare. Polybius, writing of the battles of *Cannae* (216 B.C.) and *Telamon* (225 B.C), says that the Gauls fought with great courage “although man for man as well as collectively they were inferior to the Romans in point of arms. The shields and swords of the latter were proved to be manifestly superior for defence and attack...” This was because the Gaulish swords “could only give one downward cut with any effect but after this the edges were so turned and the blade so bent that unless they had time to straighten them out with their foot against the ground, they could not deliver a second blow... their blade has no point”. On the other hand, “the Romans, having excellent points to their swords, used them not to cut but to thrust... for that of the Roman can thrust with as deadly effect as it can cut while the Gallic sword can only cut, and that requires some room”.²²

CELTS IN NORTHWESTERN BALKANS

Until recently our knowledge of the events surrounding the Celtic migration into southeastern Europe at the beginning of the 3rd century B.C. has relied exclusively on Greek and Roman historical sources, with little or no reference to modern archaeological evidence. However, over the past decades a wealth of new archaeological data from the region concerned finally allows us to furnish a more accurate picture of events surrounding this dramatic episode in European history. Archaeological evidence contributes the most in tracing the Celtic presence. The evidence for the migration of Celtic peoples further to the east also takes the form of the appearance of new material culture, often associated with new burial rites of which cremation was now the most common. Many objects are distinctive “eastern Celtic” varieties of widely distributed types.²³

A testimony of the Illyro-Celtic rapprochement is given to us by Appian in the form of a legend that the sons of the Cyclops Polyphemus and the nymph Galatea, Keltos, Illyrios and Galas, who came from Sicily, became leaders of the peoples called Celts, Illyrians and Galatians. The

²¹ Ceka, 1996: 330.

²² Polybius, *Histories*, vi, 39.

²³ Szabó, 2001: 1712.

passage isn't historically accurate because it confuses Celts and Gauls, but at least gives us an impression of the symbiosis between Celts and Illyrians. From the second half of the 1st millennium, we have a dynamic appearance of the cultures of La Tène in the territory of the northwestern Balkans. In the northeastern part of Illyria, it is observed by several chronographers, such as Livy, Pausanias, Diodorus, that during the years of 280-279 B.C. hundreds of thousands of chariots and soldiers crossed the Alps and arrived in Illyrian territories of the northeast, in Dardania, heading to south and east, to Macedonia and Thrace. We deduce that the Celtic army passed to the periphery of the Dardanian territories, descending from lands of the Scordisci through the valley of Margos (Morava).²⁴

A second testimony of the Celtic presence in the Illyro-Epirot events is that of the garrison of the Phoinike in 230 B.C. According to Polybius, the 800 Celtic mercenaries, who from this garrison, negotiated with the Illyrian army of Queen Teuta, surrendered the city against a reward.²⁵

CELTIC MERCENARIES IN THE BALKANS

Migration has long been one of the defining themes of the pre-Roman Iron Age in Europe. Classical authors record migrations by Celtic peoples into Italy and Greece in the 4th and 3rd centuries B.C. and their testimonies are corroborated by archaeological evidence. The Celtic invasions played a vital role shaping the Iron Age Europe. It is often mentioned in the modern bibliography that the Celts were tempted by the wealth of the Greek cities during their apogee in the Classical period. However, most migrations are characterized as local in a geographical scale and some as circular. The Celts immediately started to play a vital role as mercenaries in the armies the Hellenistic Kingdoms, but they were deployed also by Carthaginians, Etruscans, and Romans, though in some instances they were auxiliaries rather than mercenaries an important distinction. According to Justin (Epitome 25.2), no king of the east "carried on a war without a mercenary army of Gauls, nor if they were driven from their thrones, did

they seek protection with any other people than the Gauls".²⁶

The first Celtic mercenary activity in south-eastern Europe is recorded in 367 BC when Dionysios of Syracuse took a band of them into his service and sent them to the aid of the Macedonians against Thebes.²⁷ However, it is not until the expansion into the Balkans and Asia-Minor at the end of the 4th -beginning of the 3rd century B.C. that Celtic mercenary forces become a major political and military factor in the region. Following the destruction of two successive Macedonian armies by the Celtic forces of Bolgios and Brennos in 280/279 B.C., a political and military gap had been created in Macedonia, and two main contenders to the Macedonian throne emerged, Antigonos Gonatus and Pyrrhus. Antigonos was the first to "employ" a large Celtic force, led by a chieftain called Cidérios. Having entered negotiations with the Celts, Antigonos not only promised to pay each of them with Macedonian gold but gave aristocratic hostages as security. Moreover, Pyrrhus hired his own Celtic mercenaries. In summary, the presence of many Celtic mercenaries in Epirus is related to the armies of the Macedonian kings, in which they served in.²⁸

From the literary sources, it is obvious that the importance of mercenaries in Mediterranean armies, particularly those of the Hellenistic kings, is well documented leading scholars to question whether some classical representations taken to show invading or migrating Celts might be of mercenaries. For instance, to strengthen this argument, The grave goods from the La Tène C1 burial at Ciumești, Romania, the deceased portrayed himself as a Hellenistic officer, who had been buried with his armament, the famous iron helmet surmounted by a bird whose wings flap, a suit of chain mail, and two bronze greaves, reminding us the Royal Tombs at Vergina, Macedonia, Greece.²⁹

CONCLUSIONS

Since the archaeological context, where the sword from the Durrës Museum is not attested, we are obliged, in order to draw some additional

²⁴ Ceka, 1996: 327-328.

²⁵ Polybius, Histories, II, 5.

²⁶ Fitzpatrick, 2018: 2-12.

²⁷ Diod. XV, 70,1.

²⁸ Polyæn., Strat., IV, 6, 17; and Walbank, 1984: 221-257.

²⁹ Fitzpatrick, 2018: 30.

conclusions, to focus our study mainly, apart from the typological features, on the bending feature of the *sword* and the scarce historical sources. If the sword would have been found in a sepulchral context, this would indicate that the deceased had been buried along with their armament and the ritual of “killing” the sword would have been practiced honoring the Celtic warrior. This is very interesting because it is an undoubtedly indication of a permanent presence of Celt inhabitants in the city Dyrrachium.

It is vital to mention briefly, how the people of the region of Dyrrachium treated their dead to understand their customs. Analyzes of the data suggest that the cremation rite prevailed in the 6th century. Based on the data from this necropolis alone, it is difficult to judge who were the bearers of this rite. This must indeed be considered on a wider Mediterranean plan because cremation is probably a phenomenon arrived at Dyrrachium with the settlers. However, it is not excluded that this rite was also practiced by the natives, which suggests the existence of groups of tombs in the necropolis, a feature believed to be the result of the structure social of the population of this city. It was impossible to follow in the continuity of the cremation rite to the tombs dated back in the 5th century B.C., due to the problematic archaeological context.³⁰

However, the indigenous population practiced the burial rite. In fact, for more than a century they prevented the spread of the rite of cremation. The fact that the burial rite was a characteristic of the population locality of Dyrrachium is also attested by some other data which emerge the study of the constituent elements of this ritual such as the types of tombs, the grave goods accompanying the skeletal remains, the way the skeletons been placed etc. A general overview of all these periods leads to the conclusion that the rite of cremation is a temporary phenomenon and relates in all cases to the population immigrated to Dyrrachium. This idea is consolidated by the renewal of this rite in the 1st century B.C. and especially in the 1st-2nd centuries A.D. with the installation of Romans in the region. In conclusion, we can say that the rite of burial is practiced without discontinuity. It is present from the beginning of the existence of the necropolis and continues for six consecutive

centuries, sometimes also parallel to the rite of cremation.³¹

A very significant burial of a Celtic warrior comes from the large necropolis of Gorna Porta, in the middle of the medieval town core of Ohrid (ancient Lychnidos), in Northern Macedonia. The Ohrid region, with the city of Lychnidos, as its center and a crossroad of the Illyrian, the Epirote, and the Macedonian kingdoms, has always been a clashing point of the various cultures and influences.

The warrior grave no. 58 was discovered in 2002. The cremated deceased was buried in the middle of a simple pit without any visible associated construction. The parts of the armament and the warrior equipment were placed one above another in a small pile. Deposition in a pile on the bottom of the pit, together with cremated bones put in some organic wooden or textile container, is typical for Celtic graves. Based on these facts and because of the clearly determined differences to numerous local burials we may assume, with certainty that the deceased in grave 58 was of Celtic origin. Among the weapons, which demonstrate the typical weaponry of Celtic warriors from the Middle La Tène Period in the 3rd and at the beginning of the 2nd centuries B.C. an iron sword had been excavated, which it seems to have a rather pointy end to be categorized as a typical *spatha* (Fig. 6).³²

In addition, in the Deboj necropolis some *spathas* had been excavated which could be paralleled to our sword. More precisely, in the grave no. 114 among the grave goods a sword has been unearthed.³³ The sword from grave no. 114 is 80.5 cm long, and 4.95 cm wide. A ridge runs down the center of the sword and divides the blade, unlikely though to the sword from Durrës which does not seem to preserve one. The handle of the sword is made from the same piece of metal as the blade and has a flattened conical form. Its length is 7.5 cm, and the width is 1.7 cm. The preserved remains of the scabbard are preserved on the blade of the sword. The sword is in very poor condition, and it is impossible to tell if there is any extra decoration, and thus to make a more detailed analysis. Based on the other findings in the grave we can date this sword to the end of the 4th and the

³⁰ Hidri, 1996: 161.

³¹ Hidri, 1996: 161.

³² Gustin, 2001: 259.

³³ Ardjanliev, 2014: 80, fig. 4.

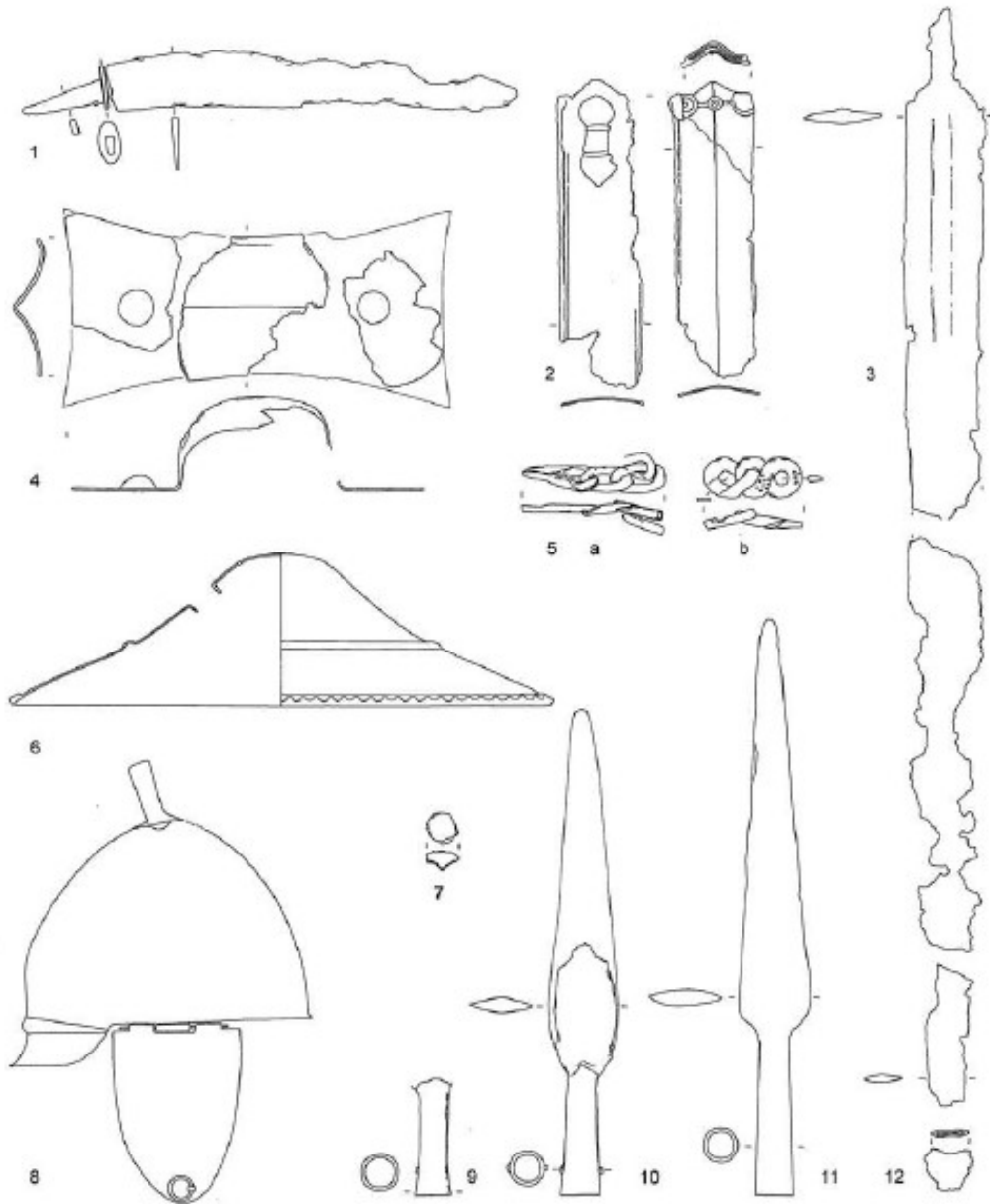


Figure 6. Armament from Lychnidos, Ohrid, grave no. 58 (Gustin, 2001: 259).

beginning of the 3rd century B.C. Similar swords had been found in the graves no. 144 and no. 156. The sword from the grave no. 144 is in a very poor condition.³⁴ It is 72.5 cm long and 4.5 cm wide. The sword is made of iron and has two cutting

edges. As with the previously described sword from grave 114 here the handle is made from the same piece of metal as the blade and has a flat conical form. The handle is 7.5 cm long and 0.8 cm wide. On this part of the blade there are fossilized remains of the scabbard. Based on other findings from the grave, we dated the sword to the middle of the 3rd century B.C. As for the iron

³⁴ Ibid.: 81, fig. 5.

sword found in grave no. 156 is the same as the two swords described previously with a double-edged blade.³⁵ It is 71.5 cm in length and 4.95 cm wide. As described with the other swords, here the handle is made from the same piece of metal as the blade, but in this case its shape is flat and rectangular. The dimensions of the handle are 7.5 cm long and 1.5 cm wide. his sword blade also had fossilized remains of the scabbard adhered to it. his sword is accurately dated by the coin of Antigonus Gonatas (277/6-239), which was found in the same pit. Based on their associated grave goods, these graves date to the first half of the 3rd century B.C., otherwise known as the La Tène C1 according to the Central European chronology.³⁶

Celtic warrior burials such as those at Lychnidos provide valuable archaeological evidence that Celtic warriors held high positions in the Greek world during this period, becoming an intrinsic part of the military and social structure of the Hellenistic city states. The appearance of these types of weapons and armour is not surprising if we consider the available historical information. As we have already mentioned, during the reign of Antigonus Gonatas the Macedonian army consisted mainly of mercenaries, among which the "Celts" had a very prominent role.

The outstanding status of the warrior from grave no. 58 is apparent also by the additional two spearheads and by the presence of a second shield of unusual round form, both very uncommon for the Early and Middle La Tène weaponry of the Celtic world. The Celtic warrior burials evidently played an important role in the society of ancient Lychnidos. It also appears that because of this mercenary activity Celtic groups were also granted land in Macedonia in payment for their services, specifically around the towns of Edessa, Beroe and Pella.

Concluding, it is also crucial to mention the issue regarding the link of a certain object, such as a weapon, in particular a sword in our case, with the ethnicity and the cultural identity of its owner. Luc Baray, in his recent study about the social phenomenon of the distribution of Celtic mercenaries across the Mediterranean region and beyond, explains that a discovery of a weapon of Celtic type doesn't automatically make the defunct a Celt, a fortiori a Celtic mercenary. To strengthen

his hypothesis, he analyzes and demonstrates the paradigm of the geographical distribution of the openwork belt clips across the Mediterranean. According to V. Kruta and other scholars back in the 70s, the geographical distribution of certain types of belt clips can be interpreted with the continuous movements of Celtic mercenary troops, between northern Italy, center of creation of certain style with a Celtic-italic origin. However, Baray suggests that a lot of belt clips are one of a kind, even though they share several common traits in style and morphology. By an imitation and creation phenomenon, sometimes original, those openwork clips could have been produced and used in several regions of North-Alpine Europe or southern Italy, and not the result of population's movements, more particularly of mercenaries. As a result, it is considered difficult, in an archaeological point of view, to say for sure that a particular artefact belonged to a mercenary, because the distinction between the mercenaries and the auxiliaries fighting in army corps is very hard to be determined. Luc Baray concludes that the La Tène-type weapons may have been used by non-Celtic populations as well. So, a La Tène type item found in a grave is not enough evidence to consider this one as a Celtic one and even less a mercenary's one or if it is considered as a product of circulation.³⁷

From the archaeological point of view, a very characteristic example of a circulation of an object by imitation or by creating a mixture of styles is an iron sword³⁸ (IL 296) which was discovered in a Well K14:4 in the sanctuary of Zeus at Nemea (today Archaia Nemea, Corinthia, Greece) in 1978. The typology and technical characteristics of the sword correspond to those of La Tène swords from Central Europe, mainly with those of the early 3rd century B.C. The scabbard is decorated with what resembles a crudely drawn pair of dolphins facing one another. It was very likely superficially inspired by the motif of dragons facing one another common on La Tène swords. However, according to the researchers, it is likely the artisan who decorated the sword was not familiar with this widespread motif of monsters facing one another in the La Tène world. This feature is among the most curious features of La Tène swords. So, we may deal with a case where lo-

³⁵ Ardjanliev, 2014: 83, fig. 6.

³⁶ Ibid.: 79-83.

³⁷ Baray, 2014: 199-209.

³⁸ Kysela & Kimmey, 2020: 188, fig. 2.

cal population adopted a Celtic weapon as part of their material culture. This fact could be testified also by the literary sources, where according to Diodorus Siculus (XVI.94), Philip II was assassinated in 335 B.C. by a fellow Macedonian with a Celtic sword (*Κελτική μάχαιρα*). To sum up, according to the writers the sword may have been produced and used in the Mediterranean by the locals, who were apparently already familiar with Celtic swords in the early 3rd century B.C.³⁹

However, in our case, we have the clear evidence of the implementation of a custom, commonly practiced by the Celtic people, which is the bending feature of the sword, which led us to extract some initial conclusions, demonstrated in our current article. To sum up, it remains uncertain if the Celtic owner of the bent spatha could have such a glorified position in the local society of the city of Dyrrachium, but the wish of the deceased, this ritual to be practiced, indicates that the customs of his tribe, were well respected by the local community.

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³⁹ Ibid.: 187-206.

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