

KELTIKÉ MAKHAIRA. ON A LA TÈNE TYPE SWORD FROM THE SANCTUARY OF NEMEA

An iron sword (IL 296) was discovered in Well K14:4 in the sanctuary of Zeus at Nemea (today Archaia Nemea, Corinthia/GR) in 1978 (fig. 1, N). Although promptly published (Stephen G. Miller 1979; 2004) and displayed in the local archaeological museum, and known therefore for four decades now, it has received only very little attention so far (the only exception being a brief note in Baitinger 2011, 76). The present paper is an attempt to make up for this disinterest.

DESCRIPTION

The iron sword has a straight symmetrical two-edged blade tapering towards the point with some preserved wooden elements of the hilt (fig. 2). The measurements of the sword are as follows: overall L. c. 83 cm; blade L. c. 72 cm; blade W. at the hilt 4.9 cm; tang L. c. 11 cm; L. of the preserved wooden handle 6.5 cm; W. of the guard 5 cm; L. of rivets in the hilt 24 mm. The sword has not been weighed. The object was restored after its discovery; no information about the nature and extent of this intervention has been preserved, however. It underwent a mechanical cleaning and was heavily restored with epoxy¹. A later and duly documented conservation in 2010 aimed mostly at the stabilisation of the object.

The blade is bent but complete. In several spots (particularly in its upper fourth and towards its very end), the remains of iron sheet cling to the blade surface. The blade section is very slightly rhomboid, with a flat midrib. In its present state, the blade profile seems to taper strongly; this is, however, partially due to the state of preservation since the left side² of the edge has been more damaged than the right side. A careful

Fig. 1 Places in the Aegean mentioned in the text (selection): **Ar** Argos. – **Cs** Cas-sandraia. – **De** Delos. – **Df** Delphi. – **Do** Dodona. – **Er** Eretria. – **Is** Isthmia. – **N** Nemea. – **Oh** Ohrid. – **Pg** Pergamum. – **Sp** Sparta. – **Vg** Vergina. – (Map base R. A. LaFleur / T. Elliot, Ancient World Mapping Center [awmc.unc.edu/]).

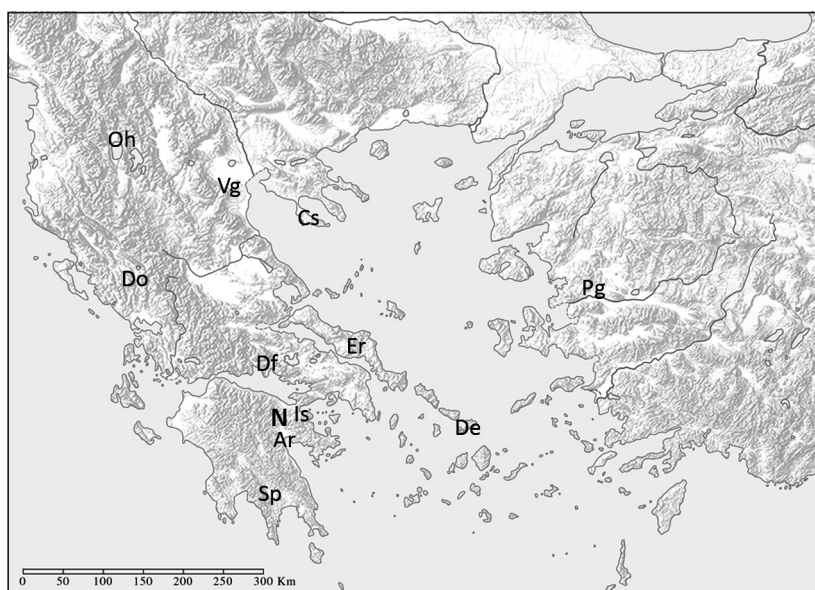




Fig. 2 a-b the Nemean sword. – c detail of the front side. – (Drawing and photos J. Kysela). – a-b scale 1:5.

observation of the course of the midrib makes it clear that the profile taper – though present – was originally less pronounced, and the blades ran slightly more parallel to each other. The state of preservation did not permit any observations concerning the distal taper of the blade. The blade gets much thicker towards the very end, which is principally made up of the corroded remains of the scabbard. Considering the bend of the blade, it is very probable that the scabbard was partly drawn off the blade by this deformation, and the subsequent accumulation of rust solidified in this position. The actual blade tip needs not correspond with the currently visible tip (of the scabbard) but may end somewhere within the 15 cm of the thickened portion of the blade. The blade (and the weapon) may therefore be, in reality, up to about 10 cm shorter,

and the blade taper yet less pronounced. This assumption can only be verified with an X-ray examination of the weapon.

The remains of the scabbard preserved on the blade consist mainly of fragments of iron sheets. Structural elements of the scabbard (chape, side gutter of either plate, suspension loop, clamps, scabbard mouth, etc.) have not been detected.

The hilt is mounted on a tang, which is rectangular in section. The transition between the blade and the tang is hidden inside the remains of the hilt, but in several points of the hilt (notably on the right side and best of all on the reverse), the shape of the shoulders is visible, starting in a rather abrupt right angle and then continuing diagonally upwards.

The remains of the hilt consist of the following parts: the iron bell-shaped cross piece/hilt lining; the wooden guard, including two metallic transverse pegs; and the actual wooden handle. At the current state, the handle seems to be separated from the wooden guard by a short washer; a comparison with the photograph taken shortly after the find suggests that this may be, in reality, only an accumulation of epoxy consolidating a particularly fragile part of the hilt. There is no trace of the pommel, once held in place by the peened end of the tang.

The iron hilt lining has a very low flat profile; it is best preserved on the front side (on the back and the right side of the blade it is hard to distinguish, on the left side it is not preserved). The wooden cross piece is preserved only in its central part. Its sides are missing, exposing partly the blade shoulders and the two iron pegs running through the hilt. The pegs are circular in section with only tiny flared heads. The handle is slightly barrel-shaped in profile and very slightly oval in section.

Particularly curious is the decoration on the front side of the scabbard. It consists of two roughly symmetrical elements executed by a linear inlay, possibly gold; no relief work seems to have been involved in their creation. These elements have roughly the shape of schematically drawn dolphins facing one another³ with their breast fins (two short lines) stretched towards each other and with their tails raised. On the left-hand »dolphin« there seems to be a »back fin« preserved, to which only an empty groove corresponds in the other beast.

All the structural features of the described artefact, as well as its general shape, correspond very well with the weapon category of »Celtic« or »La Tène swords«. The only less characteristic element thereof is the decoration of the scabbard, to which we will return.

THE FIND CONTEXT

The sanctuary of Zeus at Nemea was a small Panhellenic sanctuary located in the northeast Peloponnese. Large-scale ritual activity occurred in two phases: the first in the 6th and 5th centuries BC and the second in the 4th and 3rd centuries BC⁴. During the first phase (with the introduction of the games traditionally dating to 573 BC), the sanctuary was small, with a temple, altar, heroön, and auxiliary buildings. This was followed by a period when the games and festivals were transferred to Argos, and the sanctuary saw a reduced amount of activity. Upon returning for a second phase at the end of the 4th century BC, the custodians of the site were allowed to rebuild and reorganize⁵. While the temple, altar, and heroön were rebuilt and refurbished in their original locations, the stadium was moved to a new location, well outside of the temenos. Three new facilities were added: the bathhouse, the xenon, and a series of houses. These investments to the religious infrastructure, which touched all areas of the sanctuary, were a unified effort to revive the site. This renewal was only short-lived as by 271/270 BC the games returned to Argos. While the Nemean games held at Argos are not documented epigraphically until 251 BC (SEG XXV, 362. 16-18; Stroud 1984, 204 n. 35),

the numismatic evidence from the stadium at Nemea suggests that there was little to no human presence, at least in the stadium, after 270 BC (Nemea II, 96-97). The only attempt to restore the games in Nemea occurred in 235 BC when Aratos of Sikyon, for propagandistic reasons, tried to host the games at Nemea while the games were held concurrently in Argos (Plut., Aratos XXVIII, 3-4). For the remainder of the Hellenistic period, the games continued in Argos, while the sanctuary itself saw limited, likely local, activity.

Unlike the other major Panhellenic sanctuaries, specifically Olympia and Delphi, Nemea did not produce large quantities of votives. There are a few marked votives or ritual objects at Nemea, thus the presence of a sword, such as IL 296, is striking in the archaeological record if it indeed was a votive. Two exceptions are found at the heroön and the spring where votive deposits date to the 6th and 5th centuries BC. These ceramic deposits from the first phase are not mirrored with clear evidence of offerings from the second phase. In this context, the twelve wells excavated in Nemea provide a major source for understanding the site's history as well as the activities taking place there (Kimmey 2017; in print).

Well K14:4, in which the sword under study was discovered, is the only Nemean well with remains from the Greek period of sanctuary activity that is located in the vicinity of the temple, near its southwestern corner⁶. It was 8.05 m deep and lined with rubble in its entire depth; the mouth was formed by blocks of worked stone. In the first excavation report, Stephen G. Miller (1979, 78) dated the fill of the well to the late 3rd century BC on the grounds of two fragments of lapidary inscriptions, connecting it with the reintroduction of the games to Nemea by Aratos in 235 BC and even arguing that this layer »represents Aratos dumping Argive monuments and inscriptions down the well«. A recent restudy of the deposition and the associated finds (Kimmey 2017, 171-195; in print) suggests another explanation. The deposits can be divided into two separate depositional events, resulting in two distinct fills: the Upper and the Lower fill.

The contents of the Lower fill with a range in date from the 5th to the 3rd century BC include – apart from mostly numerous ceramics – three fragments of 4th century BC stone inscriptions, a series of bronze vessel fragments dating to the 6th/5th century BC, as well as the iron sword discussed in this article. The coins mostly date to the 4th century BC with the significant exception of a bronze coin of Ptolemy III Euergetes dating to the end of the 3rd century BC; an identical coin was, however, found also in the Upper fill, and both coins likely entered the well simultaneously with one making its way through the debris to the Lower fill. The artefacts in the Upper fill range from the 6th to the 2nd/1st century BC. It consists mostly of pottery with four coins, one Classical (Argive from 425-330 BC), one Hellenistic (Ptolemy III as cited above), and two unidentifiable due to the preservation. This restudy suggests that the Lower fill corresponds with the primary use of the well during the second phase of the sanctuary in c. 330-270 BC, perhaps even with a construction date in the 4th century BC; after the site's second abandonment, the well was left open resulting in an accumulation of artefacts throughout the 3rd century BC to the early Roman era making up the Upper fill. The well was finally sealed sometime during the Late Hellenistic/Roman period.

With all probability, the sword was present in the sanctuary and deposited in the well before 270 BC. It is difficult to judge what role it played. While most of the pottery found in the well served purely utilitarian purposes and ended up in the well as a result of either accidental deposition or intentional waste disposal, the bronze vessels, fragments of which were discovered in the Lower fill, could have some connection to the nearby temple. The explanation which first comes to one's mind – that of a votive offering – is only possible due to the date of the bronze vessels themselves, about the end of the 6th century to the beginning of the 5th century BC. Their likely journey in the sanctuary from dedication to disposal in the well is part of a larger trend for bronze vessels at Nemea (Kimmey 2017, 284-286). The sword, however, is harder to identify as a votive considering the general dearth of obvious votives in the Hellenistic phase of the Nemean sanctuary, as well as because the habit of offering weapons to sanctuaries seems to have died out in the Greek world by the end of the Classical period (Baitinger 2011, 164-167).

ANALYSIS AND COMPARISONS

Shape and dimensions

As mentioned above, the sword is roughly 83 cm in overall length, though the length might be deceptively »prolonged« due to the additional scabbard accumulation at the tip. If we estimate that the sword is about 7 cm shorter than measured, then the blade would be c. 65 cm with an overall length of 76-78 cm. These measurements are significant when identifying the classification of the sword within a larger typology.

The described features of the Nemean sword (a pointy blade, low shoulders, a midrib) are characteristic of early LT B1-B2/C1 swords (e.g. de Navarro 1972; Sievers 2010, etc.). The very pointy profile of the blade is rather extreme, even by the Early La Tène standards (the edges usually run parallel till roughly two-thirds of the blade before they converge into the tip), but there are examples of similar progressive blade tapering from various regions (fig. 3)⁷. In other cases, the illusion of gradual tapering is made by a very soft long curve of the edge – this is the case of the blades from Monte Bi-bele (prov. Bologna/I), for example. Extremely tapering profiles are depicted in the (probably 4th/3rd century BC) swords from Marzabotto (prov. Bologna/I; de Mortillet 1870-1871), Montefortino (prov. Ancona/I; Brizio 1899), Todi (prov. Perugia/I; Bendinelli 1916, fig. 35) though this may be due to imprecise 19th/early 20th century drawings. Two examples very close to the Nemean sword in terms of both the blade shape and the geography come from tombs 114 and 144 in the Hellenistic cemetery in Ohrid/MK (Ardjanliev 2014, 79-82).

While a blade width of c. 5 cm remains (a higher-end) standard for the blades of La Tène swords throughout their development, its length varies dramatically over time and is thus considered one of possible chronological indicators (shorter blades are characteristic of earlier periods gradually growing through the Middle and Late La Tène). The values for the width of La Tène sword blades range from 3.3 to 6.5 cm, with the majority within the span of 4-5.5 cm. The Nemean sword, measuring 4.9 cm in width, thus falls nicely within the standard range, whereas the length of the blade is somewhat more unusual. A blade length of 72 cm (or even 65 cm) for the Nemean sword is quite extreme for Early La Tène standards, though it is not impossible for Early La Tène swords to be longer than the 65 cm norm. The Nemean sword length falls at a measurement that has usually been a chronological marker between LT B and LT C. For some scholars, the division between LT B and LT C blades lies exactly at the value of 65 cm (Stead 1983; Sievers 2010). In some La Tène cemeteries, such a development is obediently followed – for instance in Mannersdorf (Bez. Melk) in Lower Austria, the two earliest swords (LT B1) measure 62 and 68 cm in overall length, whereas those from LT B2 range between 70.4 and 80 cm (Ramsel 2011, 162). In Bavaria, the blade sizes range from 55-66 cm × 4.2-5.6 cm in LT B2 (there are no earlier swords) and 60-65 cm × 4.4-6 cm in LT B2/C1, to 70-75 cm × 4-5 cm in LT C1b and to 70-82 cm × 4-4.8 cm in LT C2 (Sievers 2010, 5-7). The blade length, therefore, can aid in dating the swords, but other factors must simultaneously be considered.

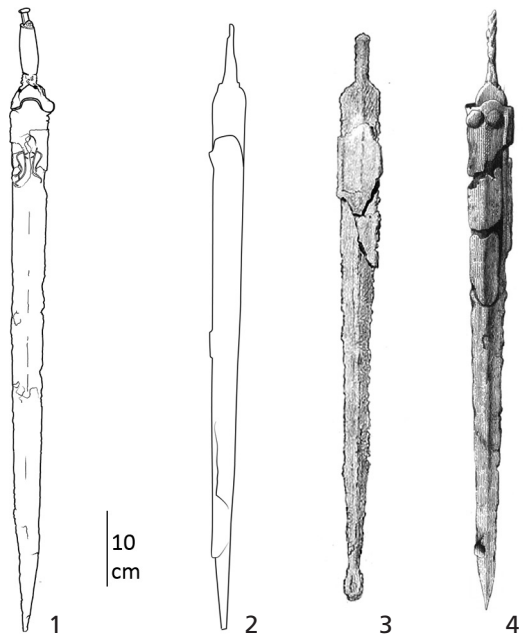


Fig. 3 The Nemean sword (1) in comparison with swords from Ohrid (2), Montefortino (3), and Marzabotto (4 – not to scale). – (1 drawing J. Kysela; 2 after Ardjanliev 2014, fig. 4; 3 after Brizio 1899, pl. VI, 20; 4 after de Mortillet 1870-1871, pl. XXII, 1).

Things are, however, not so simple. In a study of swords from the Marne region, I. M. Stead (1983) observed a steady development of the blade length from the mid/late 4th century BC (45-56 cm blades) through the late 4th/early 3rd century BC (two clusters at 55-61 cm and 65-72 cm), up to >71 cm in the 3rd century BC. Even with this developmental pattern, he realized a significant spread of values in the late 5th-early 4th century BC (LT A-B1a?) with blade lengths varying between 45 to 75 cm and clustering between 60 and 67 cm. Such Early La Tène swords with extreme dimensions are worth a side note. Despite the simplifying scheme of La Tène swords growing longer, the period of their early development, i. e. in LT A and LT B1 (2nd half of the 5th-mid 4th century BC), is more complex. The 32 LT A swords from Bohemia were studied as a whole by P. Sankot (2003). The blade sizes range from 46 up to the extreme 76.5 and even 80 cm (swords from Nynice and Kralovice 1 respectively [both okr. Plzeň-sever/CZ]), with an average of 67 cm but no obvious clustering of values. P. Sankot explains this variability convincingly as the research for the ideal size, which was established only in the following period. These schemes observed in the Marne Region and Bohemia are valid for entire Celtic Europe: in each of its regions, we find a medley of various blade shapes and sizes, including some massive ones⁸.

Such long swords carry over to LT B1. Examples can be named from the cemeteries of Dürrnberg (Bez. Gmunden/A) (overall dimensions): gr. 28/2 – 76.5 cm × 3.9 cm (Penninger 1972, pl. 25, 2), gr. 46/1 – 78 cm × 4.7 cm (Penninger 1972, pl. 50, 2). At this period, however, the sword dimensions are no longer completely random. The developmental scheme presented by A. Rapin considers three blade »modules« for the 4th century BC that includes the scabbards in the dimensions: A: 65-70 cm × 5-6 cm; B: 60-64 cm; C: c. 50 cm × 3-4 cm. Group A corresponds to those discussed – rather rare – long heavy weapons; the last of which falls out of use in the early 3rd century BC (Rapin 1999). It is from this point that the relatively linear development towards still longer blades began – the short swords disappeared and the mid-size ones started growing so that the difference between them and the long blades became imperceptible. For instance, in the »Celto-Etruscan« necropolis of Monte Bibebe, the weaponry has been divided into three chronological groups (Lejars 2008, 134-138. 147-155) with the following blade dimensions: early to mid-4th century BC: 63-70 cm × 4.8-5.6 cm; 4th/3rd century BC: 58-64 cm × 4-4.8 cm; first half of the 3rd century BC: 62-73 cm × 4.5-6.2 cm. The larger sized outliers of Rapin's earliest group appear, for instance, in Münzingen (Ct. Bern-Mittelland/CH), with a single 68 cm long blade (LT B1b) as opposed to the 15 LT B1-B2 examples ranging from 52 to 60 cm (Hodson 1968). In Jenišův Újezd (okr. Teplice/CZ) in Bohemia, there were over a dozen swords, two or four of which – though still dated to LT B1 – are particularly long: gr. 33: overall length 78 cm, scabbard 68 cm × 46; gr. 115 (LT B1b): overall length 78.5 cm, tang 14 cm (Waldhauser 1978, 99)⁹.

The LT B2 swords are very numerous and larger specimens with a blade length in the excess of 65 or 70 cm are represented among them in large quantities¹⁰. Such dimensions become the norm throughout the 3rd century BC. In all of the listed 4th-3rd century swords, the tangs measure 9-11 1/2 cm (de Navarro 1972, 63-64). The Nemean sword thus fits into these more standardized dimensions of the LT B period, with a length between 65 and 72 cm and a tang measuring 11 cm.

Not more than a quick glimpse of the following periods of the La Tène culture is necessary. In the eponymous site of La Tène (Ct. Neuchâtel/CH; late 3rd century BC), a mixture of Early and Middle La Tène forms enabled J. de Navarro (1972) to draw on this corpus to create the first serious classification of these artefacts. In terms of size, de Navarro (1972, 38) mentions a non-extant Early La Tène sword with a blade length of 72.4 cm; the majority of his Early La Tène swords have blades of 63-66 cm, while those of his Middle La Tène group A range from 62.6 to 74 cm and those from the yet more recent Middle La Tène group B from 68.4 to 81.4 cm. Another 25 swords from La Tène are kept in the Schwab collection in Bienne and have been studied only recently (Lejars 2013). There are no Early La Tène intruders among them. The blades measure between 60 and 77.4 cm, with a cluster of 17 pieces falling into the range of 65-75 cm. The overall

lengths of these swords range, however, between 77.5 and 92.4 cm. This is caused by lengthening of tangs; in the Schwab collection, the 25 tang lengths range between 13 and 18.9 cm, with the majority clustering between 14/15 and 17 cm. This reflects a substantial transformation of the hilt design in the Middle La Tène period with earlier bilobate pommels ceding to trilobate and ovoid ones (Lejars 2013, 119; Rapin 2002, note 3). Values, similar to those from La Tène, result from the study of a roughly contemporaneous hoard from Bern-Tiefenau/CH (Müller 1990).

If we have a quick look at the Late La Tène weapons in northern Gaul, where the evidence is relatively most abundant, the preserved blades of LT C2 (2nd century BC) measure 70-80/85 cm with the 16-18 cm long tangs, while in LT D1 (from c. 130 BC onwards), the blades regularly stretch to over 90 cm (Lejars 1996). The swords from the battlefield of Alesia (départ. Côte-d'Or/F) exemplify the last developmental stage of the Celtic sword: blades' dimensions span there between 70 and 85 cm of length and 3.3-5.1 cm of width while the tangs are never shorter than 12 cm and reach as much as 17 cm of length (Sievers 2001).

With a possible blade length between 65 and 72 cm, the Nemean sword would fit comfortably within the development of La Tène swords. While the Nemean example is somewhat non-standard, the overall corpus of Celtic swords is complex, as the discussion above has demonstrated. Nevertheless, while swords of this size are often associated with later periods of La Tène culture, from LT C1 onwards, weapons with the length of 65-75 cm appeared quite regularly, starting already in LT A and LT B1. Apart from the blade length, other parameters of the Nemean swords, such as the pointed blade and the short hilt tang, point to an earlier date that is LT A and LT B. In general, the Nemean sword finds numerous comparisons with La Tène swords created in the 4th-3rd centuries BC.

The hilt

A feature worth noting on the Nemean hilt is the iron bell-shaped lining of the guard. This element is once again characteristic of Celtic swords – though present (or preserved) only in a minority of them – serving to strengthen the construction particularly in the part where the hilt rubs against the scabbard mouth. Though occasionally present in the 4th century BC and systematically from the 4th/3rd century BC, it is most common in later period swords (3rd/2nd-1st century BC: cf. Lejars 2013). A. Rapin, based on the earliest (French) find, sets its appearance »between the middle and the third quarter of the 4th century« (Talon et al. 1995, 399 note 22). In Monte Bibele, it first appears in two tombs (33 and 66) of the middle phase (LT B2 = late 4th-early 3rd century BC), though the sword from tomb 33 fits better by its shape and dimensions into the previous phase (LT B1 = mid 4th century BC; Lejars 2008, 150). Also in Bohemia, there is a rare LT B1a/b example in the cemetery of Tuchomyšl (okr. Ústí nad Labem/CZ), t. 3 (Waldhauser 1987, 154 pl. 34, 2). The iron lining of the crossguard, therefore, seems to have been known – however rare – throughout Celtic Europe as soon as the mid 4th century BC and became relatively frequent towards the end of the same century and more common (though never the norm) from the 3rd century BC on.

As far as its shape is concerned, these liners very conveniently copy the curve of the scabbard mouths, which are useful chronological indicators: over time the scabbard mouths grow higher and thus the liners more concave. In our case, the low arch of the liner (a campanulate variety of the type A2 after de Navarro 1972) speaks clearly in favour of its early (LT B) date.

A trait which (among others) makes the Nemean sword exceptional is its partly preserved wooden hilt. We have rather clear knowledge concerning the hilt construction of Celtic swords thanks to their metallic parts (rivets, washers between the handle and the guard/pommel, and guard and pommel linings), to the pictorial evidence, and the so-called (pseudo)anthropomorphic swords that translate the usual hilt shape in

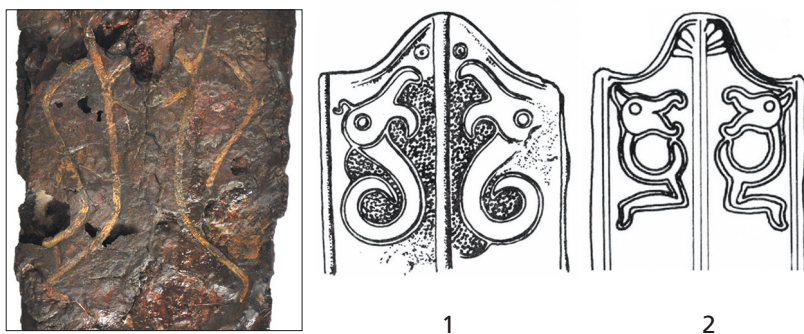


Fig. 4 Scabbard decoration: the Nemean sword in comparison with: **1** the »dragon pair« (Montigny-Lencoup; dép. Seine-et-Marne/F). – **2** »gryphons« (Kosd; Kom. Pest/H). – (After Szabo/Petres 1992, fig. 16, 1).

metal. For obvious reasons, there are not more than a handful of preserved hilts (Emmerling 1977; Haffner 1992; Rapin 2002; Schönfelder 2003; Stead 2006, cat. nos 172. 174. 184). What remains of the Nemean hilt cannot help us better classify the sword but it may – if properly analysed in future – enhance our knowledge of this topic.

A transverse iron rivet is visible on either side of the guard. Such rivets are present in a fair number of swords from the 5th century BC onwards¹¹, though they usually have broad decorative heads¹². In the most common arrangement, there are two rivets in the sides of the guard (there may also be another – not a transverse rivet but only a decorative stud – one in its centre, at the base of the handle), and the same arrangement repeats itself in the pommel (Emmerling 1977; Rapin 2002). The Nemean hilt shows that the pegs may have been much more common, but – inconspicuous objects as they are with their small purely functional heads – they may have decayed during the deposition or were lost in the excavation.

Iron washers could have been inserted between the handle and the guard. Once again, evidence for such a hilt construction is not abundant but available from all regions and phases of the La Tène culture¹³. At the same time, we should keep in mind that the seeming washer needs not be more than an accumulation of epoxy – should this be the case, the tang may be in reality even shorter than its present 11 cm.

There is no trace of pommel left, but we can reconstruct its shape without much hesitation: the extremely short exposed portion of the tang (17 mm) could only have supported a very low bilobate or winged pommel mirroring the shape of the guard (Rapin 2002).

The rest of the scabbard

A particularly eye-catching element of the sword is the decoration on its scabbard. In this case, the connection of the golden »dolphins« facing one another to the world of La Tène swords is somewhat less straightforward than in the other features discussed above but still undeniable. The depiction obviously emulates the motif which very often embellishes this point on La Tène scabbards. Its execution, however, clearly shows that the artisan who produced it had no training in and understanding for Celtic art and very possibly no clear idea of what exactly he was copying (fig. 4).

The motif of monsters facing one another on the front scabbard plates is among the most curious features of La Tène swords. This decoration is widespread: N. Ginoux (1996) analysed 149 scabbards, but, at about the same time, A. Rapin (1999) discussed nearly 300 items (including unpublished pieces); further examples have continued to appear over the last two decades (cf. also Drnić in print). The implementation of this motif is extremely rigorous in its heyday in the 4th and early 3rd century BC, when only two kinds of stylized animals were depicted – either »dragons« (called also »zoomorphic lyre«: fig. 4, 1) or »gryphons« (fig. 4, 2).

Each of these motifs may be further subdivided into several sub-groups (unimportant for our purposes; cf. Ginoux 1996; 2007). The dragons and gryphons are always clearly distinguished in their iconography, which never intermixes. Each of these two motifs embellishes a different type of sword, which in turn are characteristic of very specific sets of weaponry. This established pairing of iconography with a specific sword type is only rarely swapped. The slightly earlier dragons are present exclusively on long and heavy swords (scabbards 65-70 cm long) associated in the burial assemblages with the long spear-heads and spear-butts. The gryphons, on the other hand, always ornate scabbards of shorter and lighter swords (c. 50-60 cm) but later shift to mid-size examples. It is in association with these mid-size swords that metallic sword-belts and shield bosses appear in the late 4th century BC, while these innovations take longer to be integrated with the use of the heavy swords with pairs of dragons. Towards the middle of the 3rd century BC, the motifs mingle into new decorative schemes, and the rigour of their implementation loosens and disappears with the great military transformations of the 3rd century BC (Rapin 1999)¹⁴. This rigour shows that these motifs certainly had more than just a decorative purpose: they were markers of specific classes of warriors, if not of particular social or ideological personas. Various iconographic precursors of this scheme of animals facing one another appear in the Celtic art as early as the 5th century BC, but the motif of a pair of dragons seems to have constituted itself as a decorative scheme for the scabbards sometime before or around the middle of the 4th century BC and undergone some evolution before first griffon pairs follow in the last decades of the 4th century BC (Ginoux 1996). On the Celtic scabbards, the motif of animals facing one another is mostly engraved or embossed into the plate; in some cases, the animals may be made separately and soldered or riveted onto the surface. Examples of golden inlay of this decoration are rare though documented¹⁵. The outstretched S-shaped »dolphins« on the Nemean sword are inspired by the sinuous dragons rather than by the curly gryphons. Also the »fins« (two on the belly and one on the back) resemble more closely the distribution of protrusions on the dragons (the open beak and a curl on the nape) rather than on the gryphons. Most curiously, this identification of the »dolphins« as (misunderstood or inept) »dragons« is further supported by the dimensions of our big sword itself. The interpretation of this semi-informed creation depends greatly on the interpretation of the sword itself.

IL 296 as a Celtic sword

To sum up, the iron sword IL 296 displays all the characteristics of a Celtic sword except for the style of the decoration on its scabbard. Although some of its traits – notably the blade taper – are rather unusual, we can find analogies for each of them among the Transalpine, Italian, and Balkanic examples. In terms of finer classification, it has all the features of earlier 4th-mid 3rd century BC weapons: its overall dimensions, the short tang, the converging edges, the pointy tip, the low arch of the guard, as well as the decorative scheme on its scabbard. These are all traits of LT B swords, thus a date after the middle of the 3rd century BC seems improbable due to the typological features, such as the converging edges and the short tang. There are some surprisingly precise size analogies among the LT A swords (c. 450-380 BC), but the iron guard lining, the rectangular rather than square section of the tang, as well as the dragon pair on the scabbard are all too recent features. Discussing the various analogies, the most quoted date was probably LT B2: it is the most common date of blades with converging edges; it is when blades with dimensions close to ours become generally used and when iron guard lining became widespread... and this is, after all, the time when Celts brought thousands of their swords to Thrace and the Greek mainland. This needs, however, not be the only possibility, and a LT B1 date is not excluded. All the observed features are already present around the middle of the 4th century BC. The rarity of these early comparanda is not necessarily due to their exceptionality but

rather to the general paucity of evidence from this period, in particular in comparison with its abundance in LT B2. A sword like this would be a high-tech piece but not out of place in the middle of the 4th century BC: it would be one of the long heavy weapons adorned with a pair of dragons, making part of the heavy panoply, which includes a spear with long spear-head and spear-butt.

CELTIC SWORDS OUTSIDE THE CELTIC WORLD – THE CASE OF ITALY

The Celtic sword was a formidable combat tool, and the impression it made on the 4th century BC inhabitants of the Mediterranean made some of them adopt it for their use. This was particularly the case with those peoples whose military tactics did not rely on phalanx or other close formations; these Celtic type swords could be also effectively used by cavalymen or light troops. In Italy therefore, this kind of sword – to some degree taken into account by the Latins or Etruscans – was warmly embraced by e. g. the Ligurians, Piceni, and Samnites (Dore 1995; Tagliamonte 2008; Lejars 2015).

A general overview of Celtic swords in Italy shows that they were discovered in a variety of contexts. Finds from sanctuaries may (but need not) represent spoils from the fight with Celts (Samnium/I: an overview in Tagliamonte 2008; Juno sanctuary in Gabii [prov. Roma/I]: Lejars 2015). The same is true of the rare settlement finds, like the sword from southeastern gate of the small Etruscan fortified settlement of Ghiaccio forte near Vulci (prov. Viterbo/I; Firmati/Rendini 2002, 49-50. 107).

On the other hand, there is some evidence that shows the explicit adoption by Italian locals. The burials in which the Celtic sword is the only non-local element is a clear proof of the local adoption of these weapons (Liguria: Paribeni 2007). Several cases demonstrate that these swords were not just simply »adopted« as useful tools but also actively integrated into the receiving societies: some of the Samnite examples were discovered attached to the characteristic Samnite bronze *cinturoni* rather than Celtic ones. In the relief decoration of the Etruscan aristocratic »Tomba dei rilievi« in Cerveteri (prov. Roma/I; mid 4th century BC), swords of the Celtic type are represented along with those of the Greek type, as well as with greaves and Montefortino type helmets (Blanck/Proietti 1986, 46-47 figs 3-5. 32). A clear proof, even an explicit statement of the fact that »Celtic« swords were in no way used and produced exclusively by the Celts is a rare sword from the sanctuary of San Vittore-Fondo Decima in Lazio (prov. Frosinone/I), which bears a gold-inlaid Latin inscription on its blade *Tr[ebonios].Pomponio[s] C.[f?][m]e.fecet.Roma[i]*, i. e. »Trebonius Pomponius made me in Rome«.

These phenomena are considerably less studied in the eastern parts of the ancient world.

THE SWORDS IN LATE- AND POST-CLASSICAL GREECE

Our knowledge of Greek swords of the late Classical and Hellenistic periods is quite fragmentary¹⁶. Pictorial evidence suggests that the types of swords employed were the same as in the Archaic and Classical periods, i. e. the short sword with a straight leaf-shaped blade and a short cross-guard, termed *xiphos* by the modern research, and the curved single-bladed cleaver with C-shaped hilt, the *kopis* or *makhaira*. Archaeological evidence – most famously the weapons from the royal tombs in Vergina (perif. Imathia/GR) tumulus¹⁷ – attests that this was the case in the 4th century BC. For the following centuries, the finds are rather few (or possibly unpublished). On the other hand, depictions of *makhairai* (or short swords with a bird-head hilt which may but needs not be mounted on a *machaira* blade) are common through the 3rd and 2nd century BC (Pekridou 1986, 55-61), and *xiphoi* were still commonly represented in art, though in their case we cannot

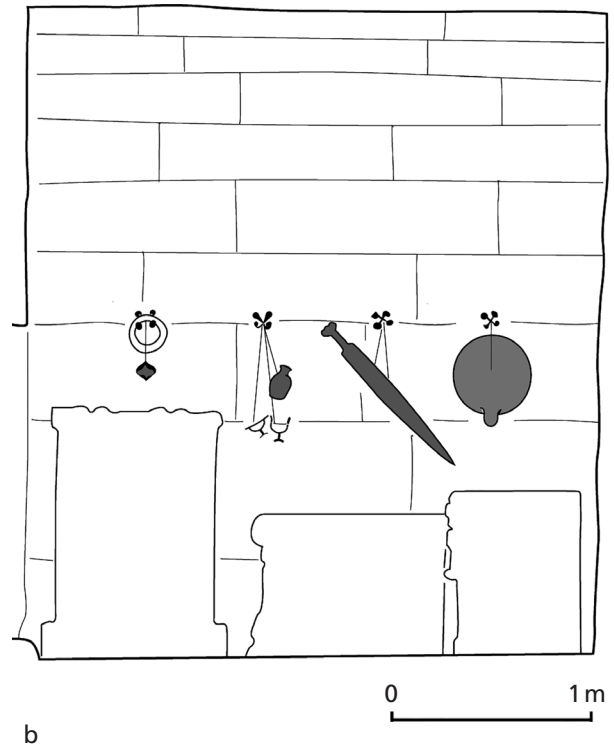


Fig. 5 Depictions of polylobate pommel swords in the Hellenistic world: **a** Dioskurides stele, Sidon (Lebanon). – **b** Tomb of Erotes, Eretria (Euboea/GR). – **c** Lyson and Kallikles tomb (perif. Imathia/GR). – **d-e** Athena Polias sanctuary, Pergamum/TR. – (a after Brown 1957, pl. XX, 2; b after Huguenot 2008, pl. 73, 4; c after Stella G. Miller 1993; d-e after Bohr 1885, pl. XLIV).

be sure whether these representations reflect their actual use or their transition into the realm of imaginary heroic weaponry particularly favoured by the Romans during this period (Waurick 1983). If not replaced, they were at least accompanied by another type of hand weapon depicted with some regularity, straight swords with polylobate pommels.

Swords with polylobate pommels are known mainly from depictions in which they are often represented as sheathed. An unsheathed sword of this category is being wielded by the *thureophoros* Dioscurides on his famous 2nd century BC funerary stele from Sidon (Lebanon) (**fig. 5a**; Brown 1957, pl. XX, 2; Sekunda 2001, fig. 15). The blade of the weapon is extremely pointy, basically triangular, the guard is represented as a simple rectangular block, and the pommel is straight and bilobate. We do not have to trust this depiction in all its details (the extremely thrust-oriented nature of the blade contradicts the stance of the warrior), but it is clear that this is not the old-style *xiphos*, although the scabbard with its massive chape and held high under the soldier's left armpit is still of the old type. The same sword type is found in the early 2nd century BC Lyson and Kallikles tomb (perif. Imathia/GR) (**fig. 5c**; Stella G. Miller 1993). In each pediment, two swords are painted as if hung on nails – a bird-head sword on the left and a sword with a bilobate pommel on the right. Their hilts seem to be articulated by coloured washers. These swords are sheathed in scabbards with high elaborate scabbard mouths, very much like those of the bird-head swords (like that of Dioscurides and akin to those used in the entire Greek world for centuries for carrying *xiphoi*). They are suspended on broad sashes with each end attached to the sheath from another face. This is a very original solution favouring the Greek way of carrying a sword and very different from both the Celtic and the Roman approach.

Another similar sword with a bilobate pommel and suspended identically is depicted among the spoils on the balustrade of the temple of Athena Polias in Pergamum/TR (**fig. 5d-e**; Bohr 1885, 111-112 pl. XLIV). The scabbard, however, lacks the high mouth thus making visible the shape of the guard, which is more similar to that of La Tène swords than the rectangular bar on the Dioscurides stele. Only the baldric attachment makes it clear that this is not a »Celtic« sword. Another panel of the balustrade depicts a straight sword with a trilobate pommel. In this case, its suspension system is not depicted, and therefore, there is no way to decide whether it is a Celtic or a Greek sword – the hilt was identical in both cases.

N. Sekunda (2001) supplemented the list of the polylobate pommel swords with several more entries and argued that this new type was an innovation introduced under the Roman influence in the first half of the 2nd century BC¹⁸. Be that as it may, these swords certainly fall into the category of short-swords as they were worn below the left armpit. Wearing in this way the Nemea sword with its 65-70 cm long blade would be awkward, to say the least.

The bilobate pommel swords probably used the same construction as the Nemean sword (i.e. a peened tang). Unfortunately, there is no evidence about their presence in the Greek world before the 2nd century BC, and their length is very different from the Nemean exemplar, which, therefore, cannot be reasonably linked with them.

There is, nevertheless, at least one iconographical source which might be important for our considerations. The Tomb of Erites, a vaulted Macedonian-type tomb in Eretria (Euboea/GR) was decorated with paintings representing objects suspended on the wall; the eastern wall included a sword (**fig. 5b**; Huguenot 2008, 80 pl. 73, 4). The painting is completely lost today, but its reconstruction based on sketches and a verbal description makes it sufficiently clear that the weapon was not of a classical Greek type but – with its massive transverse pommel and parallel edges – was closer to Celtic weapons. Its dimensions (100 cm × 10 cm) are, of course, completely implausible for any bladed weapon of the ancient Mediterranean, but we cannot expect the painting to be perfectly realistic. The construction of the tomb (and painting of its walls) is dated to the second quarter of the 3rd century BC based on historical considerations, although archaeological evidence suggests the first quarter of the 3rd century BC as entirely possible (Valeva 2011, 524-525).

CELTIC PRESENCE IN GREECE

Unlike Italy swept by the Celtic invasion in the early 4th century BC, information about Celts in Greece proper is rare until the Celtic invasion in 280/279 BC. There are, nevertheless, several mentions or hints on Celtic presence in the Greek world in the 4th century BC¹⁹.

The first clear historical mention of Celts coming to Greece, even the Peloponnese, in the 4th century BC are in accounts of two expeditions sent by Dionysius of Syracuse to aid the Spartans against the Thebans and Arcadians in 369 and 368 BC (Xen. hell. VII, 1.20-23; VII, 1.28-31). Among Dionysius' troops, there were also Celtic and Iberian mercenaries, which famously made up significant proportions of the tyrant's armies. Alexander the Great met Celts twice (both times peacefully). In 335 BC, »Celts from the Ionian coast« (whose much-discussed precise origin needs not trouble us here, but possibly southern Italy or the Balkans) came to pay a visit to and establish a friendship with the king after his victories on the Danube (Arr. an. I, 4.6; Strab. VII, 3.8). In 324/323 BC, another Celtic delegation reached him in Babylon. Arrianos (an. VII, 15) defines them vaguely as »European« but lists them along with the Scythians and Iberians, not with Italic peoples. Diodorus (XVII, 113.2) on the other hand specifies that they were neighbours of the Illyrians and Thracians, adding that it was the first time they became known in the Greek world. We do not know if he refers here to the Balkan Celts or Celts in general. In both cases, however, this statement is imprecise, given the previous Greek contacts with Celts in southern Italy, in the Peloponnese in 369 BC, and on the Danube in 335 BC.

Other accounts mention in passing the presence of Celts on the northern periphery of the Greek world in the 4th century BC. A war between the Celts and the Illyrian Autariatae is variously dated to 359 BC or before 324 BC but surely before 305 BC, the year of death of Theopompos, the author of this information (Polyain. 7.43 A11, Theopomp. FGrH 115 F39-40 = Athen. 10.443 b-c; discussed in Tomaschitz 2002, 92-93). Cassandros ruling Macedonia in 317-297 BC fought (unspecified) Celts (Plin. nat. 31.53; Sen. nat. III, 11:3; cf. Tomaschitz 2002, 95-96).

The massive Celtic invasion of Thrace in 280 BC and Greece in 279 BC was short-lived and failed to advance even to Delphi. In its aftermath, however, the Celts became massively involved mainly in northern Greece (Baray 2017a). Already in 279 BC, they were employed by Apollodoros, tyrant of Cassandreia; in 279/278 BC, others accepted the invitation of Nicomedes of Bythynia to migrate to Asia Minor. In 278 BC, possibly, Antigonos II Gonatas defeated a Celtic army at Lysimacheia, and already in 277 BC, he employed thousands of Celtic mercenaries. By 275 BC, Pyrrhus, upon his inglorious return from his Italian campaign, made an alliance with another group of Celts. In his service, they gave him victory over Antigonos, sacked the royal tombs in Vergina, and followed him on his last campaign in 272 BC to the Peloponnese, fighting in his ranks at Argos and Sparta.

It is not necessary to continue with the enumeration of enrolments of Celtic mercenaries by the Greeks and their alliances with Celts (after all, from this period on the focus in such Celts' deployment shifts from Greece proper to further east). It is more interesting to realise events that go beyond this narrative scheme: in 266 BC in Megara, the Ptolemies incited a mutiny of Celts in the service of Antigonos Gonatas. The insurgents were annihilated, including women and children (Pomp. Trog. XXVI; Iust. XXVI, 2. 1-6). In evaluating the life of Aratos, Plutarch scolds him for – among other things – leaving Acrocorinth in the hand of the Celtic and Illyrian garrison (Plut., Aratos XXXVIII, 6). These sparse mentions without further details and without the need to introduce them indicate that at least in the 3rd century BC Celts were a common sight in Greece, which did not need to be accounted for.

Despite relatively numerous written sources, the Celts left almost no archaeological traces in the Greek world. Finds of artefacts of the La Tène culture, while relatively common in Thrace (Emilov 2015), can be counted in low single digits in Greece (latest overview cf. Kavur/Blečić Kavur 2018). One »Celtic« sword

known from Dodona (Epirus/GR; Megaw 1968, 191) can be classed roughly to LT B; there are, however, few typological traits available and no eloquent context permitting us to be more precise and to decide if it is a spoil from the great Celtic invasion, from a Celtic mercenary fighting in Epirus as suggested by J. V. S. Megaw, or if there is a link to Thrace as proposed by M. Szabó. One brooch of eastern Celtic origin dated to the 3rd century BC was found in Delos (Mykonos/GR; Szabo 1971). Other La Tène fibulae from various locations in Greece are generally quite recent (2nd century BC and later) and difficult to link with the Celts (and are irrelevant for our purposes), as is also the case with the »Celto-Italic« helmet (in reality simply Italic if not directly Roman) from Piraeus (Athens/GR), today in New York (Maier 1973).

Finally, a pair of LT B2 anklets of undoubtedly central European origin, found in a well in Isthmia (Corinthia/GR; Krämer 1961) has been subject of much discussion (summarised in Kavur/Blečić Kavur 2018, 151-155) in the effort to frame it correctly with the Celtic invasion of 279 BC. On the other hand, B. and M. Kavur (2018) convincingly argue that the typology and find context of the anklets suggest that they must have reached Greece several decades earlier. After all, the invasion of 279 BC concerned northern and central Greece; the Celts did not reach the Peloponnese until 272 BC when they served as mercenaries in the ranks of Pyrrhus.

Overall, if written records of the Celtic presence in Greece are selective and scratchy, then the archaeological evidence is almost absent, and the little of it that is available does not help our understanding at all.

This meagre archaeological image is not only characteristic of Greece. The recent review of the evidence of the Celtic presence in Asia Minor (Coşkun 2014) ended on a similarly pessimistic note – the La Tène artefacts from Asia Minor are as a rule late (end of the 2nd-1st century BC) and most probably are not local but from the broader Black Sea region. We may guess that much evidence remains unrecognised or unpublished but such hopes are of little help here.

CONCLUSION (AS MUCH AS CAN BE SAID)

To conclude, the sword IL 296 corresponds in all its formal characteristics to Celtic swords of the 4th-mid 3rd century BC. The most numerous formal analogies date to LT B2 (end of the 4th-beginning of the 3rd century) though some equally convincing parallels are one generation older, from the mid 4th century BC. The sword is at any event completely different in its shape, construction, size, and military application from what was the norm in Greece of the time. It is also a rare example of an artefact of the La Tène type in Greece and – curiously enough – from a region for which there are few and little telling mentions of the Celtic presence. Even more stunning is the chronology of both the object itself and its find context on top of it: from both of these perspectives the sword may predate the Celtic invasion of Greece and the heyday of Celtic mercenary activity there by decades (if of 4th/3rd century date) if not by an entire century (if from the mid 4th century).

To account for this unexpected presence, we have to resort to more or less daring hypotheses. First, it is not entirely impossible to link the sword directly with the presence of Celts. The sanctuary of Nemean was abandoned as a site of Panhellenic games almost a decade after Celts invaded Greece and (more importantly in our context) two years after Pyrrhus brought his Celts to the Peloponnese. But this timeline is extremely tight, especially considering that at least the scabbard is likely not a Celtic product but an imitation, which adds another layer of complication. However, we need not stick to these few recorded events – Celtic embassies found their way through the Greek world to Babylon. A pair of anklets from a 4th century BC context in nearby Isthmia is a convincing hint at a low-profile Celtic presence in Greece long before the Delphi campaign (Kavur/Blečić Kavur 2018). After all, in the 3rd century BC, Celts though ubiquitous in Greece were not worth mentioning unless they seriously entered the stories of Greeks. The occasional Celtic presence before the invasions of 279 BC is highly probable though it must have been entirely below the perception level of any ancient writer.

The idea of the direct Celtic presence can be translated into yet another hypothesis. We have seen that the first recorded instance of the Celtic presence in Greece (even in the Peloponnese) was the incursion of mercenaries of Dionysius of Syracuse in 369 and 368 BC. In connection with Dionysius (famously keen on employing barbaric mercenaries and cultivating special relations with Italian Celts), one more piece of text is worth quoting: »[4...] As for the armour, [Dionysius] distributed among the [workers] models of each kind, because he had gathered his mercenaries from many nations; [5] for he was eager to have every one of his soldiers armed with the weapons of his people, conceiving that by such armour his army would, for this very reason, cause great consternation and that in battle all of his soldiers would fight to best effect in armour to which they were accustomed« (Diod. XIV, 41). Completely aware of stretching the evidence to or beyond the acceptable limits, we shall point out that this reference would provide us with a comfortable – however fantastic – narrative framework to accommodate the Nemean sword. Had the sword been forged in the armouries of Orthygia, we could approach its typology with less rigour and would have a nice explanation of the stylistic dissimilarity – and iconological misunderstanding – of its scabbard decoration *vis-à-vis* its supposed models. From a typological point of view, the date in the beginning of the 360s is quite early for most of the comparanda. Long and pointy swords are not exceptional in the mid 4th century BC, but features such as the iron lining of the guard or the motif of animals facing one another only started appearing in this period. We must also recall that swords of this period are very scarce in comparison with those of the late 4th century BC, and our knowledge of this early period may be very lacunary. We may note here that among the 4th century BC swords, those that best approached the dimensions of the Nemean piece often come from its earlier rather than latter half and that, in particular, the Italian cemeteries of Monte Bibeles-Monte Tamburino and Montefortino offered several close examples. The interest of Italian Celts for the other Adriatic shore has also been realised in at least on other probable cases of individual migration (Blečić Kavur/Kavur 2010). On the other hand, in the 360s BC the Nemean sanctuary was not hosting biennial Panhellenic games and was functioning on a very small scale to support local religion.

Last but not least, we must take into consideration that the sword need not be Celtic at all. It may have been made after a Celtic model in the Mediterranean, and a hint in this direction could be the not-so-completely-La-Tène-style execution of the decoration on its scabbard. As we have seen, such as »non-Celtic Celtic swords« are common in 4th-3rd century BC Italy. In Greece, swords of Celtic derivation did not become relatively common until the 2nd century BC, and only through the mediation of Rome, but it is worth realizing that one of the closest analogies to our sword in terms of dimensions and size comes from the Hellenistic (late 4th-early 3rd century BC) tomb 114 in Deboj-Ohrid, in present-day North Macedonia. It is accompanied by Hellenistic pottery, and the burial does not differ in any way from others in the cemetery (Ardjanliev 2014). This situation repeats itself in several other (somewhat later) instances from the same cemetery, while in a burial from a nearby site of Ohrid-Gorna Porta, Celtic weaponry is mixed with spears and a shield of Macedonian type (Guštin/Kuzman/Preložnik 2014). We have no clue as to whether those buried in Ohrid were (or perceived themselves) as Celts or local Dassaretai, but an analogy with the situation in Italy would strongly suggest the latter: local population adopting a Celtic weapon as part of their material culture. This case can be complemented by one seldom-quoted written source: according to Diodorus Siculus (XVI.94), Philip II was assassinated in 335 BC by a fellow Macedonian with a Celtic sword (Κελτική μάχαιρα)! Let us also recall the depiction of what strongly resembles a Celtic sword in the (Macedonian type) tomb in Eretria potentially dated to the first quarter of the 3rd century BC.

These hints mostly from the periphery of the Celtic world lend further credence to the returning theme of these lines – the inconspicuous presence of Celts and La Tène material culture through the Greek world long before the invasions of 279 BC, a presence not considered worth recording by the historians, and presence that left almost no archaeological traces (or whose archaeological traces have not yet been recognised, published, or fully appreciated, as has long been the case with the Nemean sword).

We are not and will never be able to say if the Nemean sword was brought to Peloponnese by a Celt (possibly coming from the Balkans or Sicily) or by a Greek, Macedonian, Thracian, or Paionian, who – like Pausanias, the murderer of Philip II – appreciated its combat characteristics (e.g. being a rider or skirmisher). Because of other evidence, it seems very probable, however, that already in the late 4th and early 3rd century BC many Greeks were able to recognise this sword as a *keltiké mahaira*.

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Notes

- 1) I am grateful to Matěj Kmošek and Martin Fořt for discussion on the technological and conservation aspects of the sword and for the effort to reverse-engineer the conservation process.
- 2) We consider the face with preserved decoration on the scabbard to be the front and opposite to be the back face. Consequently, we describe the edges as left and right when the sword is seen from its front side with hilt up and point down.
- 3) We do not suggest that the motif was actually meant to represent dolphins – we use the term purely as a visual aid.
- 4) The dates of 573-415 BC and 330-270 BC have been suggested for these phases by the original excavator (S. G. Miller in: Nemea I, xxx) are not securely tied to such specific dates, as they are based on, to some extent, conjectural evidence. While S. G. Miller suggests that »all major structures at Nemea are automatically to be dated« to these general dates, it oversimplifies the history and use of the sanctuary (Kimmey 2017, esp. 57-72).
- 5) Scholarship seems to agree that the games were returned to Nemea around 330 BC, possibly through the patronage of the Macedonian leaders, whose involvement in the Corinthia is evident at other sites, including Isthmia, and thus seems to be the clearest answer for the return of the games to Nemea (Buraselis 2014, 170-172; Marchand 2002, 501; Stella G. Miller 1988, 145; Stephen G. Miller 1982; 1992, 2004; Nemea II, 90).
- 6) Another well is located directly to the north of Well K14:4, Well K14:3, which contained material solely dating to the 3rd and 4th centuries AD.
- 7) Dražičky, okr. Tábor/CZ (LT A; Sankot 2003); Greiβing, Lkr. Straubing-Bogen/D (LT B2; Krämer 1985); Bášť, okr. Mělník/CZ (LT B2; Pecinová/Baloun/Sankot 2014); Holubice-Dílce, okr. Praha Západ/CZ, gr. 32 (LT C1), gr. 37 (LT B1b), gr. 60 (LT B1b/c; Čižmářová 2009); Domamyslice, okr. Prostějov/CZ (LT B1a; Čižmář 1973); Žatčany, okr. Brno-venkov/CZ (LT B1a; Čižmářová 2011); Mannersdorf, Bez. Melk/A, gr. 180 (LT B2), gr. 225 (LT B2; Ramsel 2011); Maribor-Pobrežje, Podravska/SLO (Božič 1987, 869 tab. 85, 1); Lacroix-Saint-Ouen, dép. Oise/F (LT B2; Talon et al. 1995); A. Rapin seems to suggest vaguely that the long narrow point is characteristic of this period unlike the shorter points of LT B1 though the data from Central Europe does not support this view.
- 8) Hallstatt, Bez. Gmunden/A: t. 994 overall length 78.5 cm (Egg/Hauschild/Schönfelder 2006); Pottenbrunn, Bez. St. Pölten/A: gr. 4 (LT A2): overall length 83 cm, scabbard 76 cm × 5.1 cm (Ramsel 2002); Dürrnberg, Bez. Gmunden/A: gr. 13 (LT A): 75 cm × 6 cm (Penninger 1972, pl. 13, 6), t. 39/2: 80.9 cm × 5 cm (Penninger 1972, pl. 36, 8), gr. 44/6: 77 cm × 5.2 cm (Penninger 1972, pl. 44, 15); Visegrád, Kom. Szentendre/H, overall length 76 cm, blade 64.2 cm × 4.5 cm (Rapin/Szabó 1998); Saint Sulpice, dép. Oise/F, gr. 34 (LT A2): blade 63.3 cm (Kaenel 1990, 107 pl. 36), etc.
- 9) In two other cases from the same cemetery (t. 38 – 78 cm, scabbard 68 cm × 6 cm; t. 106 – 80 cm, blade 68 cm), the date is not clear enough (LT B1b or LT B2).
- 10) We may randomly pick several examples from Italy and the Balkans close in dimensions to that from Nemea: Bologna, via della Dozza/Arcoveggio, gr. 4b: overall length 77 cm × 5.2 cm, tang 11.5 cm (4th/3rd century BC; Ortalli 1990) or Casalecchio di Reno (prov. Bologna/I): blade dimensions gr. 53: 64 cm × 5 cm; t. 65: 65 cm × 5 cm (mid 4th-early 3rd century BC; Ortalli 2008); Todi (prov. Perugia/I), t. VIII: overall length 80 cm (late 4th/early 3rd century BC; Bendinelli 1916, 654-655 fig. 35); Orehova vas near Maribor (Podravska/SLO), gr. 1: overall length 88.2 cm × 6 cm (Grahek 2015, 295 fig. 3A, 1); Kobariid-Bizjakova hiža cult place (Goriška/SLO): overall length 81 cm (Mlinar/Gerbec 2011, cat. no. 5); Belgrade-Karaburma/SRB: t. 62, overall length 85 cm (Todorović 1972, 26 tab. XXII, 1); Deboj-Ohrid: gr. 114: 80.5 cm × 4.95 (Ardjanliev 2014, 80). In Pişcolt (jud. Satu Mare/RO), large swords seem to be the norm rather than exception: gr. 36: overall dimensions including the scabbard 79 cm × 4.2 cm (LT B1b/B2; Némethi 1988, 54 fig. 4, 10); gr. 124: overall length including scabbard 77 and 73 cm (LT B2; Némethi 1989, 86 fig. 8, 1a-c); gr. 137: overall length including scabbard, missing tang, 73 cm (LT B2; Némethi 1989, 86 fig. 10, 1); gr. 40: overall dimensions including scabbard 76 cm × 5.3 cm (LT B2; Némethi 1992, 62 fig. 3, 5).
- 11) Some scholars tend to consider rivets a LT B1 invention (e.g. Pauli 1978, 221; Sankot 2003, 19), but they are clearly already present in the late 5th century BC wooden hilt from Altrier/LU (Rapin 2002, fig. 8A).
- 12) It is not clear what purpose the headless pegs may have served in the wooden hilt – unlike the headed rivets binding the construction together, the pegs would make it more fragile.
- 13) Mainly in the early phases, these may be only »rings« of rust developed on the tang in the gaps between the single wooden

- parts which anyway hints at a tripartite division of the hilt; from LT B2 and mainly LT C1, actual washers are present regularly: Leprignano?, prov. Roma/I, LT A (Lejars 2014; 2015); Visegrád?, LT A (Rapin/Szabó 1998); Dürrnberg?, t. 45, t. 46/1 (both LT B1; Penninger 1972); Žatčany?, okr. Brno-venkov/CZ, LT B1 (Čižmářová 2011); Hammersmith, London/GB, LT B2 (Stead 2006, cat. no. 17); Staňkovice, okr. Louny/CZ, LT C1 (Holodňák 1988); Iža/SK, LT C1b (Szabó/Petres 1992); Balasagyarmat, Kom. Nógrád/H, LT C1b (Szabó/Ptaetres 1992); Halmajugra, Kom. Gyöngyös/H, LT C1b (Szabó/Petres 1992); Magyarszerdahely, Kom. Nagykanizsa/H, LT C1b (Szabó/Petres 1992); Szob, Kom. Pest/H, LT C1b (Szabó/Petres 1992); Dalj, Osijek-Baranja/HR, LT C1b (Szabó/Petres 1992); Dobova, Posavska/SLO, LT C1b (Szabó/Petres 1992); Ritopek, Beograd/SRB, LT C1b (Szabó/Petres 1992).
- 14) The absolute validity of this scheme is now called in question by Drnić in print.
- 15) Baron-sur-Odol, »Le Mesnil«, dép. Calvados/F (Bertin 1974); Radovesice, okr. Litoměřice/CZ (Sankot 2000, 362-364 figs 1A, 1. 3; 2); Alba Julia, jud. Alba/RO (Crişan 1974); Gödöllő, Kom. Pest/H (Szabó 1985, 62 fig. 10).
- 16) One of the rare dedicated overviews unfortunately focuses on the quite distant area of Central Asia and the Pontic region (Litvinskiy 2001, 277-294).
- 17) Cf. e.g. a late 4th century BC *makhaira* was discovered in the tumulus of Prodromi (Thesprotia, Epirus/GR) along with full armour (Choremis 1980, 15-16 figs 9-10).
- 18) A possible representative of this class or of its further development (though more probably a late Republican *gladius*) has been recently discovered in Fayyum in Egypt (Davoli/Miks 2015).
- 19) For all issues concerning the written sources on Celtic presence in the Mediterranean world, we refer to the recent masterly syntheses by Luc Baray (2014; 2017a; 2017b).

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Keltiké makhaira. Zu einem Latèneschwert aus dem Heiligtum von Nemea

Ein zweischneidiges Eisenschwert wurde 1979 in einem Brunnen im Heiligtum des Zeus in Nemea (Griechenland) ausgegraben. Darauf sind Überreste eines hölzernen Griffes und einer eisernen Blechscheide mit Goldeinlage erhalten. Typologie und technologische Merkmale des Schwertes entsprechen denen der Latèneschwerter Mitteleuropas, hauptsächlich denen des frühen 3. Jahrhunderts v. Chr. Die Scheide ist mit etwas verziert, das einem grob gezeichneten Delphinpaar ähnelt, das sich gegenübersteht. Sehr wahrscheinlich wurde es oberflächlich durch das Motiv der einander gegenüberstehenden Drachen inspiriert, das bei Latèneschwertern häufig vorkommt, wenn auch ohne stilistische (und wohl auch ideologische) Verbindung zwischen ihnen. Das Schwert wurde einige Zeit vor der Aufgabe des Heiligtums im Jahre 270 v. Chr. im Brunnen deponiert, und es ist daher sehr wahrscheinlich, dass es bereits vor der keltischen Invasion von 279 v. Chr. in Griechenland in Gebrauch war. Einige Besonderheiten der Waffe und des Fundkontextes lassen vermuten, dass das Schwert nicht aus Mitteleuropa nach Griechenland gebracht, sondern im Mittelmeerraum von den Einheimischen hergestellt und benutzt wurde, die offenbar bereits im frühen 3. Jahrhundert v. Chr. mit keltischen Schwertern vertraut waren. Das Schwert ist somit ein weiteres Zeugnis für recht enge Kontakte zwischen Latènekultur und Mittelmeerraum in der Zeit vor den großen Zusammenstößen, die die Schriftquellen dokumentieren.

Keltiké makhaira. On a La Tène Type Sword from the Sanctuary of Nemea

A two-edged iron sword was unearthed in a well in the sanctuary of Zeus in Nemea (Greece) in 1979. Remains of a wooden hilt and an iron sheet scabbard with a gold inlay are preserved on it. 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 BC. 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, albeit with no stylistic (and probably also ideological) link between them. The sword was deposited in the well sometime before the abandonment of the sanctuary in 270 BC and it is therefore very likely that it had already been in use in Greece before the Celtic invasion of 279 BC. Some peculiarities of the weapon and its find context make us believe that the sword was not brought to Greece from Central Europe but created and used in the Mediterranean by the locals, who were apparently already familiar with Celtic swords in the early 3rd century BC. The sword thus bears another testimony to quite close contacts between the La Tène and Mediterranean worlds in the periods predating the major clashes documented by written sources.

Keltiké makhaira. Au sujet d'un type d'épée La Tène du sanctuaire de Némée

En 1979, une épée en fer à deux tranchants fut découverte dans un puit du sanctuaire de Zeus à Némée (Grèce). Elle portait encore les restes d'une poignée en bois et d'un fourreau de tôle en fer damasquiné d'or. La typologie et les caractéristiques techniques correspondent à celles des épées laténiennes de l'Europe centrale, particulièrement du début du 3^e siècle av. J.-C. Le fourreau est décoré d'un dessin sommaire qui ressemble une paire de dauphins antithétiques, inspirée probablement par le motif des dragons antithétiques qui se retrouve fréquemment sur des épées laténiennes, mais sans lien stylistique (et probablement pas idéologique non plus) entre eux. L'épée fut déposée dans le puit quelques temps avant l'abandon du sanctuaire en 270 av. J.-C. et il est fort probable qu'elle fut utilisée en Grèce avant l'invasion celte de 279 av. J.-C. Certaines particularités de cette épée et le contexte de sa découverte incitent à penser qu'elle ne fut pas importée d'Europe centrale, mais fabriquée et utilisée par des gens vivant dans le bassin méditerranéen et connaissant déjà bien les épées celtes au début du 3^e siècle av. J.-C. Cette épée témoigne ainsi de contacts très étroits entre les mondes laténien et méditerranéen avant les grands chocs documentés par les écrits.

Traduction: Y. Gautier

Schlüsselwörter / Keywords / Mots clés

Griechenland / Nemea / latènezeitliches Heiligtum / Schwert

Greece / Nemea / La Tène sanctuary / sword

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