

An Early La Tène find of fine metalwork from Hosty (South Bohemia): a first analysis

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For Pavel Sankot, marking many years of friendship and early Celtic art

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Introduction

The confluence of the Vltava and Lužnice rivers represents one of the remarkable areas in southern Bohemia, and not only from the point of view of its natural beauty. The archaeological significance of this region is underlined by the existence at this point near the village of Hosty of an important Early Bronze Age settlement with clear evidence of long-distance contacts (BENEŠ 1984; BŘICHÁČEK 1991). The recent discovery of a collection of Early La Tène fine metalwork described in this paper¹ reflects the long-distance contacts between Bohemia and the Marne as well as providing stylistic analogies over the same area.

Discovery of the hoard

In 2015, a group of four metal objects was discovered by a metal-detectorist (*Fig. 1*). A year later, the find was reported to the Museum of South Bohemia in České Budějovice and arrangements were made for conservation and documentation after which it was returned to the discoverer². The site is located in the cadastral area of the village of Hosty, okr. České Budějovice, on a steep forested slope running down to the Lužnice river, about 1500 m from the confluence of Vltava and Lužnice (*Fig. 2*). The coordinates of the find spot are 49.24464° (latitude) and 14.39475° (longitude), 373 meters above sea level. In the vicinity, further Early La Tène metal artefacts were found.

¹ An introduction to this find was presented to the 18th international meeting of *Keltové* held in Plumlov, Moravia, 16.–19.5.2017.

² Czech law does not regulate the use of metal detectors; however, detectorists are obliged to report all archaeological finds to a museum or heritage office. In England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, following the Treasure Act of 1996, and in Scotland where the Common Law of Treasure Trove is still followed, in effect anything discovered is the property of the

Crown and must be reported to the relevant authority. The provisions for the finder to receive at least part of the value of the find and the establishment of a regional network of reporters has resulted in general acceptance by metal detectorists and a marked reduction in illegal activities. We support the idea of collaboration with those metal detectorists who are cooperative and of analysing and evaluating the detectorists' finds, despite their often considerably reduced or completely lost contextual information.



Fig. 1. Hostý, okr. České Budějovice, South Bohemia. The finds after restoration. – Scale 2:3.

In November 2016, the site was visited by Jan John and Ondřej Chvojka. The location of the discovery was confirmed by further surveying with a metal detector, during which three further bronze fragments clearly originating from the same hoard were found (fragments of artefacts no. 2 and 3) (*Fig. 3*). In May 2017, a 80 × 80 cm test trench was excavated at the site, but no other finds or traces of the original position of the hoard were found. The undisturbed bedrock was reached at a depth of 20 cm. It is possible that the individual pieces making up the hoard had been disturbed in the past by erosion.

The location itself – a steep slope in rocky terrain (*Fig. 4*) – excludes the possibility that the objects come from a rich grave or burial mound, and the lack of supporting evidence makes further interpretation impossible³.

³ On this question see briefly below, ‘The Hostý find: its local context and external relations’, p. 53.

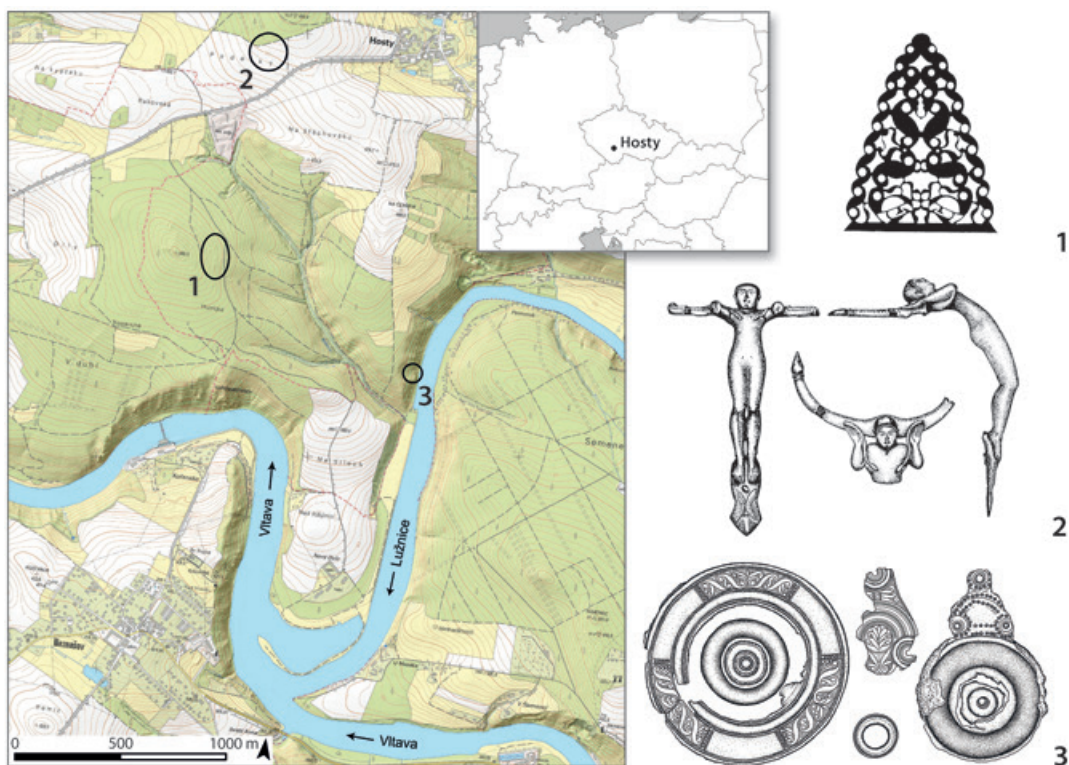


Fig. 2. Map showing the area of the confluence of the Vltava and Lužnice and location of contemporary Early La Tène metal finds (various scales). 1 Belt-hook from 'Tomkùv kopec' burial mound. 2 Handle from an Etruscan beaked flagon. 3 The Hosty finds.

Description of the artefacts recovered (*Fig. 5*)

1. Cast bronze ring decorated with two rows of impressions, the upper roughly oval in form and the lower produced by a series of irregular stabbing impressions (*Figs 5,1; 6*). Dark green patina, weight 15.2 g, outer diameter 28 mm, inner diameter 15 mm, height approx. 7 mm.
2. Fragment of a pear-shaped bronze sheet with a complex surface decoration (executed by stamps and engraved ornament some with the aid of compasses; *Figs 5,2; 7a–c*). Weight 3.8 g, preserved length 63 mm, width 36 mm, thickness 0.8 mm. Light green patina, on the underside traces of iron corrosion products. Part of two of originally three fixing holes presumably for rivets are preserved.
3. Larger bronze phalera (comprising five fragments in total; *Figs 5,3; 8–10*). The central part has an iron backing plate with two eyelets (one broken). The centre with a cast ornamental rivet has two concentric repoussé rings of cable ornament while the rivet itself has a third ring of cable ornament (*Fig. 8*). The edge of the phalera is reinforced by iron wire. Maximum diameter 127 mm, thickness of bronze sheet 0.5 mm, total weight 82 g.
4. Smaller bronze phalera (two fragments; *Figs 5,4; 11*). Total weight 65 g, maximum diameter 83 mm. The artefact consists of an iron backing plate to which an upper sheet of bronze is attached. The iron plate has a thickness of about 3 mm and is not complete.



Fig. 3. Hosty. Fragments of bronze sheet discovered in 2016. Note that the scratch marks are certainly a factor of the unearthing of the finds and are not contemporary with its manufacture. – Scale 3:1.

Originally, the iron plate followed the outline of the upper one in bronze, the central feature of which is a square sectioned bronze rivet with an upper baluster-shaped cone. The tongue of the bronze plate has a maximum length of 120 mm and is 0.5 mm thick. While the main roundel, with a diameter of c. 80 mm, is bereft of any decoration, three further rivets are located on the tongue, each with a decorated head of a different profile, one of them being shaped similarly to the surviving central rivet on phalera no. 3. Around each rivet are two concentric rings roughly drawn with the aid of a compass; the rest of the tongue is decorated by what must originally have numbered some 50 stamped impressions made with a ring punch and somewhat roughly set out (*Fig. 11*). Although it is difficult to assign degrees of skill or accomplishment to the work of Iron Age craftsmen, it would seem that those responsible for phalera no. 4 were not of the first rank, particularly when compared with the makers of phalera no. 3 (*Figs 5.3; 9*).



Fig. 4. Hosty. Find spot (marked by white arrow), view from the west.

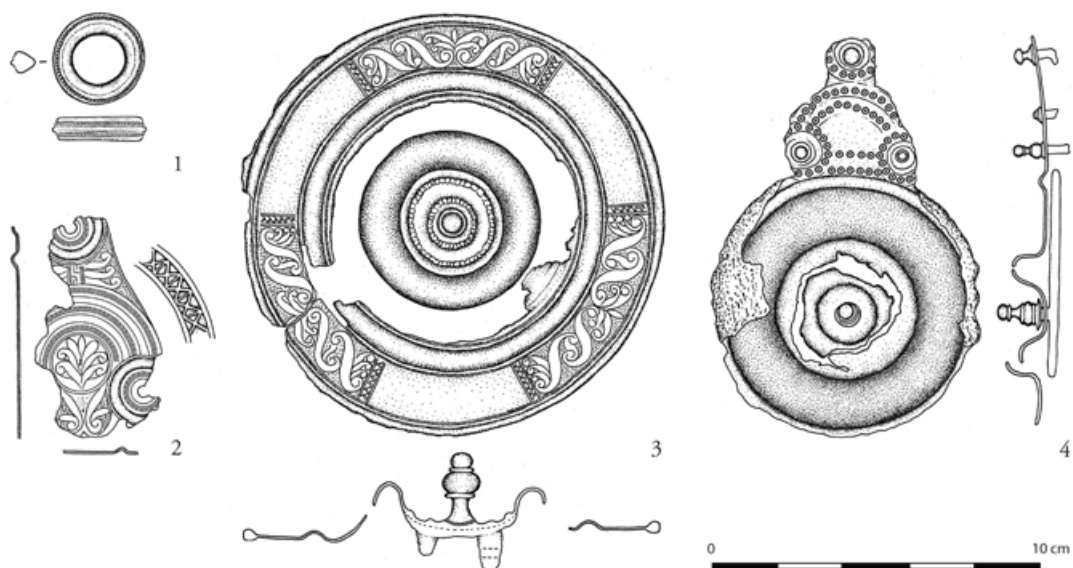


Fig. 5. Hosty. The finds.



Fig. 6. Hosty. Artefact no. 1. Cast copper alloy ring with detail of decoration. – Scale 3:1 (above).



Fig. 7. Hosty. Artefact no. 2. a The whole of the surviving piece. b Detail of the main floral motive with enlargement of punched ornament. c Detail of the apex of the ornament with step pattern.



Fig. 8. Hosty. Artefact no. 3. Detail of centre disk showing rivet and punched and cast decoration. Diameter: c. 46 mm.

XRF analysis

All four objects were examined using X-ray fluorescence analysis (*Tab. 1*). Analysis was carried out using a hand-held spectrometer Niton XL2 GOLDD with factory calibration for metals. Measurements were done in a non-destructive way on the surface of the artefact; therefore, the results are undoubtedly influenced by corrosion processes. In particular, the tin content is strongly overestimated in all cases. The material of which the individual pieces were made was in all cases a tin bronze but with a variable lead content. The difference in lead content indicates that artefacts no. 2 and 3 are not two fragments of the same object, although there is some similarity in terms of the style of decoration.

Otherwise, there is little to remark about the results of the analysis except to note the variation in the relative values of Sn in what is otherwise a normal tin-rich copper alloy; that this is particularly noticeable in comparing the two phalerae suggests the use of two separate alloys in the casting process.

Artefact no.	Cu	Sn	Pb	Sb	As	Ag	Bi	Fe
1 (ring)	22.13	66.59	8.55	0.30	0.12	0.37	0.30	1.42
2 (sheet)	32.27	48.46	18.24	0.08	0.38	–	0.09	0.40
3 (phalera 1)	49.81	41.95	6.06	0.21	0.50	0.26	0.35	0.39
4 (phalera 2)	66.47	28.42	1.69	0.15	0.87	0.13	0.21	1.01

Tab. 1. Results of surface XRF analysis. All values are in percent, numbers in the left-hand column refer to the numbering of the artefacts.

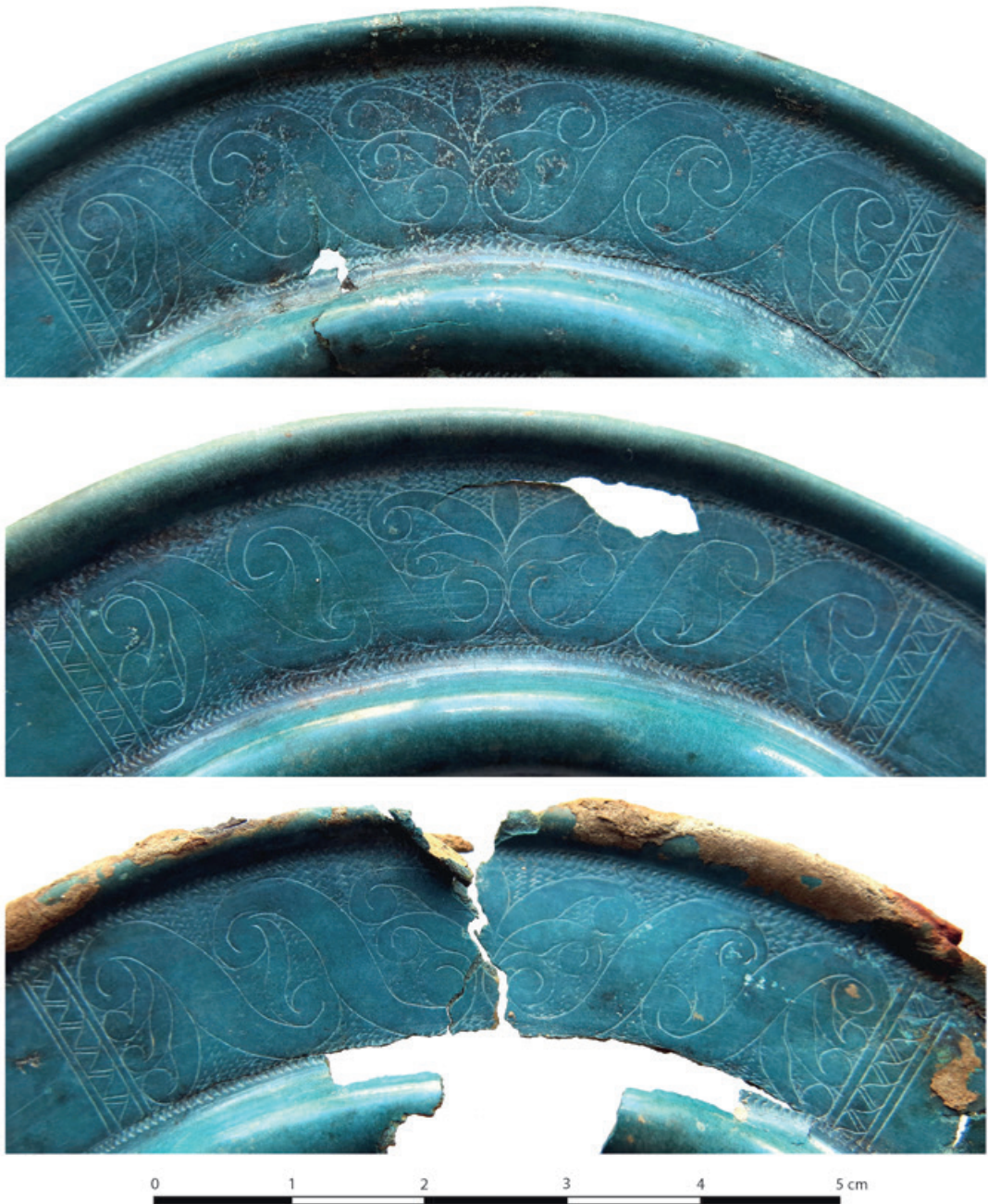


Fig. 9. Hosty. Artefact no. 3. Details of three areas of engraved decoration on rim of phalera. – Scale 2:1.

An excursus on style

We must move to consider three key aspects of the Hosty bronzes: what can be said about their decoration and their stylistic affinities locally and further afield; what purpose did the bronzes fulfil, and, following on from that, to what chronological period may they be ascribed.

First, then, to add a commentary on the individual pieces. The ring, no. 1, has been cast presumably by the *cire perdue* or lost wax method, the decoration having been impressed into the original model. Close to no. 1 as to size is a pair of cast bronze rings 47 mm in diameter with rilled margins recently published from a chariot burial at Prunay ‘la Voie de Baconne’ (FR), grave T. 26. Running round the outer edge of the rings, which are a fraction larger than the Hosty example, is a series of ‘St Andrew’s crosses’, comparable to those on Hosty no. 2 (LAMBOT 2018, 218–219 figs 262–264; see further p. 52).

More interesting is the larger and more or less complete disk no. 3. As the cross-section shows, the disk has been formed with a raised rim and two broader inner bands. Unfortunately, the area between the second and third bands is damaged. However, the main motif, which occurs equidistantly three times on the flat part of the disk just inside the rim (*Fig. 9*), is a classic variant on what Paul JACOBSTHAL (1944, 85–87) termed ‘vertical lyre-compositions’ involving the adding of floral elements – Jacobsthal’s ‘lotus buds’ – to the extended leaves or lyres. Here, the clearest guide to its evolution is to be found in Otto-Herman Frey’s (1995) dissection of the ornament of the incised decoration on the body of the spouted flagon from the Waldalgesheim, Kr. Mainz-Bingen (DE), chariot grave. For the present purpose, one can cite examples almost at random from the western centres of Jacobsthal’s ‘Early style’ starting with the ‘whirligig’ or triskel ornamented gold mounts in the second Schwarzenbach, Kr. St. Wendel (DE), barrow (JACOBSTHAL 1944, cat. nos 34 PP300–304) with a variant on the palmette (P400), which combine into bands of lyres to be seen at their most complex on the Waldalgesheim flagon (JACOBSTHAL 1944, cat. nos 387 P335; FREY 1995, 175–177 fig. 116,2). Closest to Hosty, though less precisely composed, are the motifs on an openwork gold leaf band, probably intended to decorate a drinking horn, from a disturbed barrow grave at Dörth, Rhein-Hunsrück Kreis (DE) (JACOBSTHAL 1944, cat. nos 26 PP402 – using the now superseded location of ‘Waldgallscheid’; FREY 1995, 175 fig. 116,1; HANSEN 2010, list 2,13) (*Fig. 12,1*). On Hosty, each panel has a central flower with three pairs of petals supported on each side by two ‘S’s which end with three petals truncated by a vertical double line and triangular fill-in, save in one case where the engraver has omitted one petal. A detail is that the decorative panels of Hosty no. 3 are bordered by a continuous line of curve-sided triangles produced by what is variously termed a walked scorper or rocked graver with a chisel end (LOWERY ET AL. 1971, esp. 170 pl. XIa)⁴ (*Fig. 10*).

Returning to the three bands of decoration as a whole, there is another chain of whirligigs to offer as a comparison to Hosty. This is the band of incised decoration on the lower part of the sieve from Hoppstädten, Kr. Birkenfeld (DE), barrow 2 (HAFFNER 1976, cat no. 2 esp. pl. 3,2; for a reconstruction of the frieze on the rim of the sieve see MEGAW et al. 1992) (*Fig. 12,2*). Two further points of detail shared by the bronzes from Hosty and Hoppstädten are to be noted; the background of the main chain design is set off by a dotted or rather, on the piece from Hosty, a stabbed or occasionally rocked action and that the ends of each panel and, on Hoppstädten, the lower edge of the design is marked by a series of free-hand drawn triangles.

Turning to the smallest of the Hosty decorated fragments, no. 2 (*Figs 5,2; 7*), whose maximum surviving length is less than 70 mm, it can be deduced, despite its fragmentary

⁴ This paper is still a valuable introduction to the range of engraving techniques which must have been available to Iron Age smiths.



Fig. 10. Hosty. Artefact no. 3. Detail of rocked tracer work. – Scale 3 : 1.



Fig. 11. Hosty. Artefact no. 4. Detail of compass- and stamped-ornament. – Scale 2 : 1.

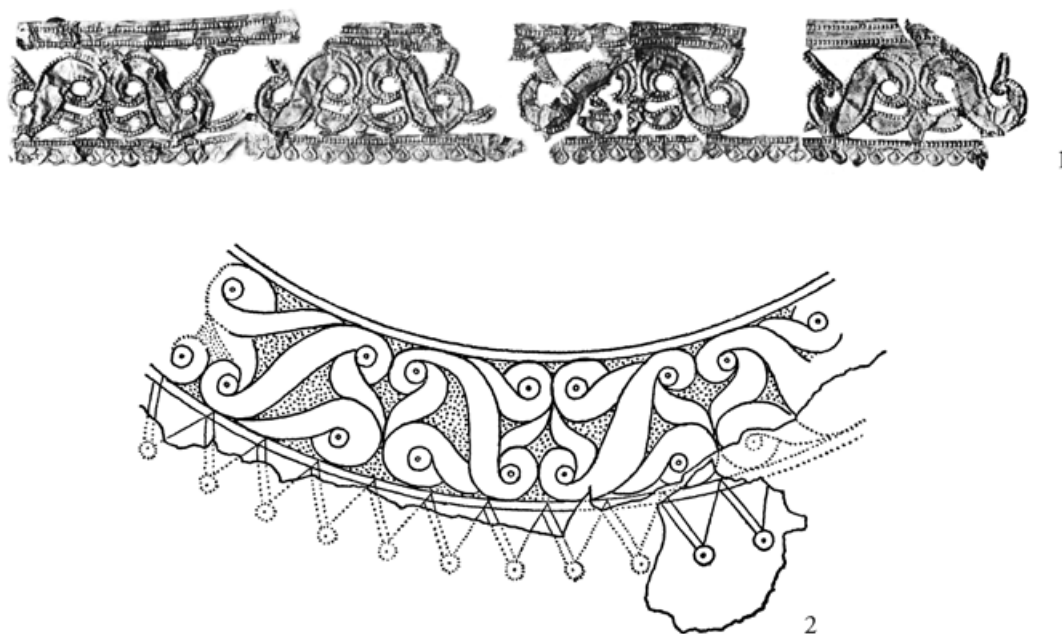


Fig. 12. 1 Dörth, Rhein-Hunsrück Kreis. Detail of gold openwork band. Width 30 mm. 2 Hoppstädten, Kr. Birkenfeld, barrow 2. Detail of incised decoration on rim of bronze sieve. Width of lower frieze 30 mm. – Scale 2:3.

nature, that it was basically triangular in shape, the apex having originally had two smaller roundels which cut into the circumference of the main circular feature and a third forming the apex. Judging by the broken centres, the two partially surviving circles appear to have originally been rivetted to the backing plate. The main decorative feature is a floral composition of S-curves or comma-leaves executed free-hand (JACOBSTHAL 1944, 83–84 PP323–325) set in the centre of twelve scribed circles (Fig. 7b). That all of these have been set out from the centre of the main floral or palmette feature with the aid of compasses is clear from three indentations visible (Fig. 7a). In a fine demonstration of La Tène *horror vacui*, the space between the smaller outer roundel and the central feature has one incised variant of the ‘Greek key’ or of what Jacobsthal termed meander, step, or stair patterns (JACOBSTHAL 1944, 75–76). The step-pattern, known in the western as well as the eastern La Tène area as on the unique pair of the Basse-Yutz flagons, dept. Moselle (FR), which also exhibits use of the rocked scraper (MEGAW / MEGAW 1990a, 46–47 fig. 18 pl. 6), is supported on each side by petals executed rather roughly in free-hand. The interstices between the upper roundel and the main circular feature are filled with rocked tracer work and rough stabbing cuts. To be noted is that the stabbing action borders or occasionally cuts through the line of the petals which one can only presume were originally in groups of three either side of the step pattern.

Variants of these step patterns executed with a rocked tracer occur on a number of Bohemian bronzes such as the belt-hooks of *kastenförmig* type from Cítoliby (SANKOT 1994b, esp. 447–449 fig. 6) and Želkovice, both in okr. Louny, the latter also having rocked tracer bordering similar to Hosty (SANKOT 1994b, esp. 50–52 fig. 4). Pavel Sankot regards metalwork and pottery employing rocked tracer, compass-based, and what he

terms the circle-and-lozenge motifs – circles divided internally by four arcs – as evidence of a heretofore unknown eastern workshop. Other evidence of the early establishment of regional specialisation is the group of bronze phalerae associated with the earliest La Tène chariot graves in Bohemia; with a diameter of c. 120 mm, their decoration is limited to compass-drawn arcades of the margins and centres, the so-called *Bogenstil* (CHYTRÁČEK 1999, 370–377 figs 6–14; 2012, 195–202; Sankot 2003a, esp. 130–133). In the eastern group, the use of circle-based ornament particularly on pottery is paramount as, following Frank SCHWAPPACH (1974), was pointed out in the pioneering study of compass ornament in Early La Tène by Majolie LENERZ-DE WILDE (1977, cat. nos 2–4; 44–68); there is a relative absence of mask and plant motifs with, of course, Hosty being an exception. While Sankot's circle-and-lozenge motif is more common in the west, it seems that the early fifth century was a period which saw evidence for the east-west exchange of various motifs and for the retention as well as the abandonment of others (see also MEGAW / MEGAW 2010).

One aspect of Hosty no. 2 remains to be considered. Equidistant from the centre of the main decorative element and each set between two scribed circles, there are three zones filled with a contiguous panel of diagonally divided squares which Celts of the present day would have had no difficulty in recognising as 'St Andrew's crosses'; the two, only partially surviving, smaller raised circles each have a single panel decorated in the same manner, both having been produced by application of a single stamp. It is difficult to find a close comparison for this motif. But as has been noted with regard to Hosty ring no. 1, the most significant parallel is the decoration on a pair of bronze rings from the chariot grave of Prunay 'la Voie de Baconne' (see p. 49 above). Moreover, one of the bronze discs from the fourth of four barrow graves containing chariot burials first identified in 1880 in the vicinity of Cuperly (Marne, FR) has around its outer edge the 'St Andrew's cross' motif. However, these are incised and not stamped or cast in the metal (JACOBSTHAL 1944, cat. no. 179; VERGER 1994, cat. no. 34,4 fig. 82,1)⁵. Equally, there are a few examples on Marnian pottery which are not particularly close (JACOBSTHAL 1944, PP150–151) but which match the incised decoration on a pottery stamp (?) from a La Tène B–D settlement at Šakvice, okr. Břeclav (HORÁLKOVÁ 1992, fig. 5,1; MEGAW / MEGAW 2006, 378 fig. 25). Moving eastwards, there are a couple of *kammstrichverzierte Graphittonsitulen* with very similar stamps to those on the Hosty bronzes included by Jiří MEDUNA (1980, pl. 67,1; 130,90) in his study of settlement sites in Moravia from, respectively, Křenovice, okr. Přerov, and Žárovice, okr. Prostějov. But like the pair of bronze arm-rings from the La Tène B2 grave 47 at Maňa, okr. Nové Zámky, with a continuous row of 'St Andrew's crosses' containing raised dots between the arms (BENADIK 1983, pl. 12) and similar motifs on pottery from the Carpathian Basin (RUSTOIU 2018), these seem unlikely pendants for Hosty. However, amongst the La Tène A evidence for on-site pottery production in the agglomeration of Bourges (Cher, FR), there are not only sherds bearing stamped 'St Andrew's crosses' with dots between the arms but identical stamps have been found at Liniez 'La Grand Jaunet' (Indre, FR) some 50 km as the crow flies from Bourges. Even more interesting as evidence of on-site pottery production is the discovery at another site of the Bourges complex of a bone stamp, one end of which has been carved with a 'St Andrew's cross' (AUGIER ET AL. 2009, esp. 43–44

⁵ One of two bronze fittings with complex openwork associated with this grave has addorsed 'dragons' and at its centre a fine palmette (Jacobsthal 1944, cat. no. 200). Here, we may note differing styles

in associated finds – as at Hosty – though whether this is indicative of differing hands is not so easy to decide.

fig. 3). Thus, there is further evidence that the Hosty motif was used in the western Early La Tène region, and it must be expected that examples of the use of this cross motif on stamped pottery and metalwork await identification.

One detail we have yet to comment on is the presence of five of the original rivets with baluster shaped heads. The two largest – those in the centre of nos 3 and 4 – are similar in profile though not in size. These may be compared to the types of the decorated rivets most frequently used to fix *manipules* or shield-grips studied in the analysis of the chariot burials of Champagne by Stéphane VERGER (1994 vol. 1, esp. 427–437; 1994 vol. 3, fig. 36) – surely one of the most important and referred-to unpublished theses. In fact, decorative rivets were also used in the production of other objects of sheet bronze such as the helmet found in the chariot grave of Berru, ‘le Terrage’ (VERGER 1994 vol. 1, 88–97 figs 15; 21) and in Écurey-sur-Coole, ‘les Côtes en Marne’, grave 13 (VERGER 1994 vol. 1, 178–182 figs 92; 93; 96)⁶, where similar rivets were not only used to fix a shield hand-grip but were associated with harness-fittings as a central rivet for a decorated disk of bronze with an iron backing, the disk having a diameter of c. 165 mm. Nor are these decorated rivets confined to north-eastern France and southern Bohemia; as an example, from the La Tène A occupation of the important hillfort of the Ehrenburg, Ldkr. Forchheim (DE), in Upper Franconia comes a rivet, its head decorated with a triskel infilled with dots (ABELS 1994, fig. 9,20).

The Hosty find: its local context and external relations

We have noticed at the outset the fact that the location of the site makes the question of its original status difficult and indeed is a question for which no certain answer can be supplied: what was the initial purpose of the Hosty bronzes, and indeed what was the final reason that their deposition fulfilled? Were they discarded as so much scrap? The first thought one has is that all the objects in the Hosty hoard could be interpreted as parts of horse-harness; a striking point is that the maximum diameter of the large Hosty disk, no. 3, is close to that of disks from the Marnian chariot graves and the Bohemian examples cited here, although we cannot offer direct analogies to some of them (nos 2 and 4), nor can we interpret their function. Indeed, the finding of harness in a hoard can be considered exceptional. Most of these items, like the decorated phalerae we have discussed here, are known from rich graves⁷.

While one might consider that the bronzes from Hosty could originally have formed part of a trader’s hoard or even part of a ritual deposit, the lack of supporting evidence makes further interpretation impossible⁸. Certainly, Early La Tène hoards are in fact very rare in Bohemia and usually are composed mainly of iron tools (SANKOT 2006a, 102–103). The only comparable find in the region is the hoard of twelve decorated La Tène A bronze phalerae, discovered in the 19th century at Jaroměř, okr. Náchod. These phalerae are

⁶ This last listed in error ‘Figure 956’.

⁷ Bernard Lambot *in litt.* has suggested that the basically triangular outline of Hosty no. 4 might suggest a helmet cheek-piece or *paragnathide*; at a maximum length of c. 110 mm, no. 4 may be compared to the length of c. 94 mm for of the Agris (Charente, FR) ‘parade helmet’ (ELUÈRE ET AL. 1987). But the

length of the rivets would seem to militate against this interpretation.

⁸ See also BRADLEY 1998 and 2017 for a range of interpretive possibilities; JOY 2016 suggests a new approach concentrating on processes of collection and assemblage.

interpreted as part of the accoutrements connected with the local aristocracy with links to long-distance trade routes (VOKOLEK / SANKOT 2001).

It is worth mentioning that, although there is no sign of contemporary activity in the immediate area of the Hosty find, Jaroměř, like Hosty, lies on an important trade junction at the confluence of two rivers, the Labe and the Metuje, and the Hosty hoard is not the first case of Early La Tène decorated artefacts which have been found in the general neighbourhood. There are a number of burial mounds in the district, and in 1913 one of these was excavated at 'Tomkův kopec' revealing a La Tène A cremation burial (WALDHAUSER 2001a, 223 'Hosty 2'). Subsequently, the associated grave goods, all in iron, were shown to have comprised a bent sword, no less than three *Hiebmesser* or single-edged knives, a pair of suspension rings – presumably for a sword belt – and an openwork belt-hook (*Fig. 2,1*) (SANKOT 1997), a variant of a form found south of the Alps which we have termed the 'Ticino' type (MEGAW 1971); here the explicit 'master (or mistress) of the beasts' has been translated in a typical La Tène manner into a series of ambiguous backward-looking creatures and faces, which in turn may be seen as the ultimate source for the 'dragon-pair' swords of La Tène B (MEGAW / MEGAW 1990b). Similar is the belt-hook from Újezd nade Mží, okr. Plzeň-sever, found in the second of three cremation graves with, as at Hosty, two suspension rings; there were also two miniature pots, the belt-hook being the first of this form to be found in the region (BENEŠ / SANKOT 1997).

A further metal-detector find, allegedly from Hosty, is the handle from an Etruscan beaked flagon in the shape of a naked youth (*Fig. 2,2*) (BOUZEK 2013, 186). Unfortunately, once more, the detailed circumstances of the discovery are, according to Jiří WALDHAUSER (2001a, 222; 2001b) unknown, but it appears that the handle was found west of the village some time before 1996. While some doubt must remain as to its provenance, its form – VORLAUF 1977, 157–162 Typ 2b – is precisely that found in the élite graves of Bad Dürkheim, Kr. Bad Dürkheim (DE), and Schwarzenbach, Kr. Merzig-Wadern (DE), barrow 2. Now thought to have been manufactured in Picenum and to be dated to the first quarter of the fifth century BC or in La Tène A1 (BARDELLI 2017a, 67–69 fig. 1 pl. 17–18; 2017b, 28–32 fig. 51), these imports have played an important part in establishing a date for and contributing to the new local art style, not least in the case of the well-known Chlum, okr. Rokycany, élite warrior's burial. Its composite plaque of gold on a silvered bronze and iron backing is decorated with what is basically a plant-base motif involving a complex compass lay-out⁹. Miloslav CHYTRÁČEK (1999, 373–374; 2012, 206–297 fig. 15) regards Chlum as belonging to a new developmental period in La Tène style in Bohemia; indeed, it may have been a local production. The recent publication of two decorated brooches from South Bohemian barrow graves (SANKOT ET AL. 2019) adds to the evidence of clearly provincial minor local works; that from Zahrádka u Mirkovic, okr. Český Krumlov, in its attempt to follow the new iconography of Early La Tène *Maskenfibeln* may be added to two brooches from the region of Pilsen, also apparently from barrow graves: Kyšice, okr. Plzeň-město, and Nová Hut', okr. Plzeň-sever (KRUTA 1970, 159–160 pl. 1,2; 137 pl. 1,3; BAGLEY 2014, cat. nos 704; 715). All four are dated to La Tène A.

We have commented incidentally on the various metalworkers' techniques involved in the manufacture of the Hosty bronzes. Not only the basic skills of casting and hammering were required but engraving tools and punches of more than one type were available to

⁹ For the most recent analysis of the lay-out see MILITKÝ ET AL. 2018, esp. 145–146 fig. 79B, a

reconstruction of the compass-based design by Jan Kysela.

the metalsmith – as well as of course the necessary knowledge of geometry to execute their designs¹⁰. We know all too little about workshop practices in the Earlier Iron Age – how many could have been employed in making a range of pieces like these comprising the Hosty hoard, were they based in certain centres, or were they largely itinerant, La Tène tinkers as it were¹¹? Thomas STÖLLNER (2007) has made a study of the occurrence of particular tools in Iron Age graves and hoards. While he is chiefly concerned with the possible ritual significance and apparent social status of the smith, he includes a useful bibliography of writings on Iron Age craftsmen and their tools. From Bohemia, there is the deposition in an urn below the floor of a hut in the Late Hallstatt / Early La Tène settlement of Libčice nad Vltavou-Chýnov, okr. Praha-západ, of a range of tools indicative of a specialist craftsman (SANKOT / VOJTĚCHOVSKÁ 2001). Most important here are the collection of tools found in another La Tène A open settlement west of Prague at Tuchoměřice, okr. Praha-západ, which included a pair of compasses with associated small-scale iron tools strongly indicative of the presence of a specialist craftsman (SANKOT 2006b, esp. 153–158 figs 6–7; in general on compasses and the significance of compass-based designs see: LENERZ-DE WILDE 1977, esp. 5–7).

It is only to be expected that one should be able to identify regional specialities and to observe that outstanding pieces must have commanded a number of individuals with differing skills, as in the case of the Basse-Yutz flagons (MEGAW / MEGAW 1990a, esp. 82–89 appendix 1). The engraved Bohemian phalerae are another case, while, mindful of our earlier comments on the use of rocked tracer work, we must cite the extraordinary Early La Tène sword from Meroux, ‘Bois du Côtes’, Territoire de Belfort (FR)¹² (MEGAW 1968). This incorporates on its sheath no less than five different variations of Greek keys and comma-chains constructed around a layout of single and concentric ring gravers or punches (*Fig. 13,1*). This apparently isolated find from the Vosges has its closest cousins in motifs executed in rocked tracer work in a small group of La Tène belt-plaques from secondary La Tène A graves in western Switzerland, incorporating poor versions of the step motif or Greek key, comma spirals, and whirligig chains set against a stabbed background (KAENEL 1990, 33–58; Bofflens, ‘Bois de Tranchecuisse’, corpus no. 2¹³; Lausanne, ‘Vermand de Blaney’, barrow 2, grave 2, corpus no. 3; Rances, ‘Le Montet’, grave 1b, corpus no. 7, *Fig. 13,2*).

Where were the Meroux scabbard and the belt-plaques manufactured? It is tempting to classify Meroux as a particular masterpiece and the belt-plaques as the work of lesser craftsmen or pupils. We can but guess, but from closer to our key area there are other outstanding products which we may cite. From the bed of the river Lužnice at Veselí nad Lužnicí, okr. Tábor, was dredged the decorated bronze front of a sword sheath from a sword ritually bent before deposition and found in an area which has surrendered a number of other seemingly ritual deposits (BENEŠ / SANKOT 1994; SANKOT 2003b, 29 fig. 15,2 pl. 15) (*Fig. 14,1*); its incised decoration is of a quality and complexity of design rarely

¹⁰ In a fascinating analysis of what he terms ‘coherent geometry’, Robert STEVICK (2004) offers an improvement on the work of LENERZ-DE WILDE (1977) through the detailed calculation of the relationships of one part of a compass-based design to another as applicable to both Insular and Iron Age metalwork and sculpture.

¹¹ An interesting discussion of the probable pattern of master and apprentice which might have existed in Celtic society in the Iron Age as it was in the medieval period is provided by Raimund KARL (2005).

¹² The original location ‘Bavilliers’ is incorrect; see RILLIOT 1975.

¹³ See also JACOBSTHAL 1944, cat. no. 358.

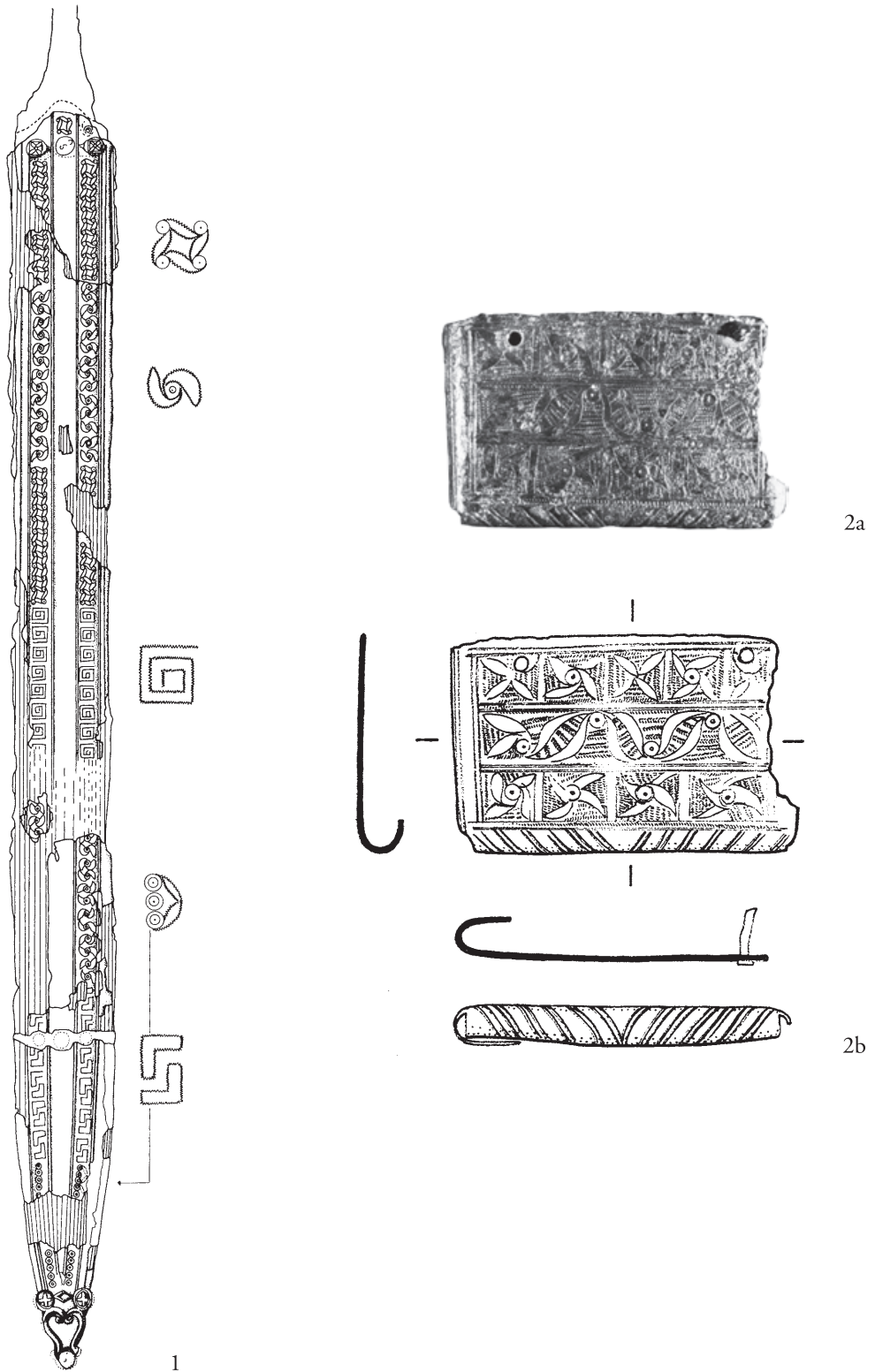


Fig. 13. 1 Meroux, Territoire de Belfort. Incised decoration on front of bronze sword scabbard. Total length 820 mm. 2 Rances, 'Le Montet', Ct. Vaud. Bronze belt plate. Maximum width 105 mm. – 1 Scale 1:4; 2 Scale 1:1.



Fig. 14. Details of incised decoration on front of scabbards from: 1 Veselí nad Lužnicí, okr. Tábor. Width c. 60 mm. 2 Dražičky, okr. Tábor. Width 51 mm. 3 Bussy-le-Château, Marne. Incised decoration on bronze frontal plate of scabbard of a short sword. Maximum width c. 26 mm. – 1–2 Scale 2:3; 3 Scale 1:1.

paralleled in Early La Tène metalwork. There are of course surviving craftsmen's works which markedly contrast in quality when set beside the Veselí sword. An example of poor or again perhaps apprentice work is the nearby contemporary sword from Dražičky, 'V Rybníčkách', okr. Tábor (SANKOT 2003b, 9–10 figs 10–11 pl. 8–9) (*Fig. 14,2*), another piece with no recorded association; here the incised decoration at the mouth of the scabbard attempts to produce the same basic floral design as on Veselí without understanding what they are copying.

Sankot and his colleagues are surely correct in placing in a western La Tène context Veselí with its two longitudinal ribs on the scabbard. Their convincing interpretation of the complex incised floral-based or lotus design, all ten elements of it, plot the various compass points from which the various elements of the overall design have been constructed. Stylistically, once more, the similarities to western La Tène metalwork are on balance convincing. However, rather than a comparison between its dual lay-out and its construction of the basic design from a combination of compass- and freehand layouts and that of the Chlum gold mount, we would point to the Bussy-le-Château, dept. Marne (FR), short sword (SCHWAPPACH 1974) (*Fig. 14,3*). Its incised scabbard, where the lower part of what is once more a dual composition is a typical palmette, the upper is a predecessor of the



Fig. 15. Münsingen-Rain, Kt. Bern, grave 6. Front and reverse of bronze belt-plaque (?). The cloth impression on the reverse is modern (attached during conservation). Maximum width c. 75 mm. – Scale 2:3.

‘dragon-pair’ of later La Tène swords. Details to note on Bussy are the circle-and-lozenge motifs, the source for their occurrence in the eastern La Tène zone, and that the fill-ins have parallel hatching as with Veselí, while on Veselí the groups of three points associated with the simple three-petal motifs at the base of the lay-out are a feature of later eastern La Tène ‘Sword style’ (MEGAW ET AL. 2000, esp. 32 fig. 7).

Dating the individual objects in the Hosty find presents no great problem since we may assume that all the parts of the find were made at more or less the same time and that the stylistic parallels we have cited place the Hosty bronzes firmly in an early phase of La Tène. While there is much to be done – and surely more finds to be made – what these heterogeneous associations point to is that the period to which we may ascribe Hosty is one where for a number of reasons Bohemia attracted contacts from many sources which in turn gave rise to the region’s own individual stylistic developments.

Purpose apart, we are on more secure ground in regarding the Hosty find either as imports from the west or as objects made locally by experienced craftsmen from that region. At the turn of the Hallstatt and La Tène periods, southern Bohemia was part of an extensive commercial network, as evidenced by the findings of imported bronze vessels (TREFNÝ 2007) as well as glasses of Mediterranean origin (MICHÁLEK / VENCLOVÁ 1992).

A final foot-note

There are always new finds to be uncovered and new theories to be advanced. At the 42^e *colloque* of AFEAF held in Prague in May 2018, a paper entitled ‘La Bohême et la Bavière du Sud au V^e siècle av. J.-C. Similitudes et différences dans la culture matérielle quotidienne’ was read by Claudia Tappert, Jana Klementová, and Pavel Sankot. In describing the multi-period open settlement site of Hostivice-Sadová, okr. Praha-západ, they illustrated a small triangular cast bronze object, with a maximum length of 40 mm, and one circle at the apex and two slightly larger at the base or much the same size and lay-out as the ‘tongue’ of Hosty no. 4. The apex retains a broad-headed rivet which at present obscures

most of the decoration, each of the larger pair has a central triskel or whirligig constructed from three comma-leaves set within a double circle, the background being filled with free-hand hatching; almost all of the remaining area of the mount is filled with small triangular impressions. Very similar stamp marks appear on an openwork iron fitting which the excavators also interpret as a belt-plaque. This was found at Černouček, okr. Litoměřice, within the fill of a ditch of what may have been a ritual enclosure with a central inhumation (BRNIČ / SANKOT 2005, esp. 58–59 fig. 13,7 photo 23). In his discussion of amulets found in graves at Dürrnberg, Ld. Salzburg (AT), Ludwig PAULI (1975, 30 figs 9,8; 14) draws attention to two triangular bronze mounts found in graves, both possibly belt-plaques; the more accomplished piece being from the oppidum of Ensérune (Hérault, FR) and the second from a female grave, Münsingen, grave 6, Kt. Bern (CH) (JACOBSTHAL 1944, cat. no. 365; HODSON 1968, 42 pl. 1,675) (*Fig. 15*)¹⁴. Both have areas of wedge-shaped impressions, that from Münsingen with a maximum height of c. 75 mm has three rivet holes set at the angles, but only one retains its rivet, the head of which is decorated with a circle-and-lozenge; there are two sizes of dot-and-circle, the larger at the angles with, probably originally, some eight smaller ones. JACOBSTHAL (1944, cat. no. 365) observed that the opposing sides were composed of two backward-looking birds, but the apparent horns or crests of each might rather suggest a rampant beast – or perhaps a beast with one body and two heads. Can there be anything more than a slight formal link which might bring together Hosty no. 4 and other triangular bronzes of similar size but from disparate locations? To quote Rudyard Kipling, that, oh my children, is another story ...

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¹⁴ Vanessa Haussener of the Bernisches Historisches Museum points out that the excavator of Münsingen, Jacob Wiedmer-Stern, notes in his journal that this piece, from the grave of a young woman

between 14–20 years, was found between the right forearm and the pelvis, which certainly would be the right place for a belt fastening.

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Zusammenfassung: Ein Fund der Frühlatènezeit mit Feinschmiedearbeiten aus Hosty (Südböhmen): eine erste Analyse

In diesem Beitrag werden bislang unpublizierte Funde vorgestellt, die zu unserer Kenntnis des Ost-West-Kulturaustausches während der Stufe Latène A beitragen. Im Jahr 2015 fanden Sondengänger ein Depot mit vier Metallobjekten auf einem bewaldeten Hang in Südböhmen, nahe dem Dorf Hosty (okr. České Budějovice). Eine erste Untersuchung zeigt, dass es sich wohl um Zierelemente aus Bronze und Eisen für Pferdegeschirr oder Wagen handelt. Stilistisch lassen sich diese Artefakte eher mit dem westlichen als dem östlichen Latène A-Gebiet verbinden; sie zeigen eine ganze Reihe unterschiedlicher feiner Metallbearbeitungstechniken. Am Schluss dieses Beitrags wird der Fund von Hosty in den Kontext weiterer frühlatènezeitlicher Feinschmiedearbeiten aus der Region gestellt.

Abstract: An Early La Tène find of fine metalwork from Hosty (South Bohemia): a first analysis

This article presents a recent find which adds to our knowledge of east-west cultural exchange in the La Tène A period. In 2015, a metal detectorist discovered a hoard of four metal objects on a wooded slope in southern Bohemia near the village of Hosty, okr. České Budějovice. A preliminary examination shows these to be decorative harness- or chariot-fittings made of bronze and iron. Stylistically, their association is with the western

rather than the eastern La Tène A area, and they exhibit a range of fine metal-working techniques. A concluding section of this article places the Hosty find in the context of other early fine metalwork from the region.

Résumé: Une découverte d'orfèvreries de La Tène ancienne à Hosty (Bohème du Sud): une première analyse

Cet article présente des objets qui n'ont pas encore été publiés jusqu'ici et qui contribuent à élargir nos connaissances des échanges culturels entre l'Est et l'Ouest durant la phase La Tène A. En 2015, des prospecteurs ont découvert un dépôt contenant quatre objets métalliques dans la pente d'une colline boisée, près du village de Hosty (okr. České Budějovice, Bohème du Sud). Un premier examen révèle qu'il s'agit de garnitures de harnais ou de char en bronze et en fer. Le style de ces objets se rattache davantage à la sphère occidentale de La Tène A. Ils présentent toute une série de fines techniques métallurgiques. A la fin de l'article, on situe ce dépôt dans le contexte d'autres produits d'orfèvrerie de La Tène ancienne provenant de cette région.

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References of figures:

Fig. 1; 3–4; 6–11: J. John. – *Fig. 2:* J. John, drawings after WALDHAUSER 2001a; 2001b. – *Fig. 5:* T. Kolegar. – *Fig. 12,1:* After JACOBSTHAL 1944, pl. 24,26. – *Fig. 12,2:* After HAFFNER 1976, pl. 3,2 f. – *Fig. 13,1:* After GINOUX 1994, pl. 6,1 (after MEGAW 1968, 130 fig. 1, drawing A. S. M. Bartlett). – *Fig. 13,2a:* After KAENEL 1990, 58 fig. 17. Photo Musée Cantonal d'Archéologie et d'Histoire, Lausanne. – *Fig. 13,2b:* After STÖLLNER 2002, 98 fig. 40,3 and KAENEL 1990, 369 pl. 3,1b.3. – *Fig. 14,1:* Drawing: Vl. Tesař (after BENEŠ / SANKOT 1994, 551 fig. 2; 4 and SANKOT 2003b, 81 fig. 15,2a). – *Fig. 14,2:* After SANKOT 2003b, 76 fig. 10,1a (cf. FILIP 1956, 33 fig. 6,3). – *Fig. 14,3:* After SCHWAPPACH 1974, 107 fig. 3. – *Fig. 15:* Photos Christine Moor, © Bernisches Historisches Museum, Bern (cf. HODSON 1968, pl. 1,675). – *Tab. 1:* Authors; K. Ruppel.