

**”Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University**  
**Doctoral school of the Faculty of History**

**DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF THE FUNERARY RITUALS  
REFLECTED BY TOOLS FOUND IN THE EARLY AND  
MIDDLE LA TÈNE PERIOD BURIALS FROM THE  
CARPATHIAN BASIN**

**-Abstract of the PhD thesis -**

**COORDINATING PROFESSOR:**

**Prof. univ. dr. Lucrețiu MIHĂILESCU-BÎRLIBA**

**PhD STUDENT:**

**Andrei-Valentin GEORGESCU**

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## **Introduction**

The ability to turn raw materials into finished products using tools and utensils is one of the main characteristics of humanity. The metamorphic nature of the technological process meant that most of the time, its practical sphere is intertwined with the spiritual nature of people. The word technology itself comes from the Greek *techne* which meant "to make things appear" and which in certain contexts also had the role of expressing a magical process<sup>1</sup>. For this reason, craftsmen and artisans enjoyed a special status in pre-industrial societies. The tools and utensils they used became symbols of their identity. At the same time, the production process has come to metaphorically embody other aspects of daily life such as: death, birth, illness, healing, love, luck or misfortune. In such a context, tools were endowed with symbolic properties, and people's belief in their magical powers gives them the status of social agents, capable of manipulating supernatural forces.

In most cases however, craft activities and the role of tools have mostly been analysed from the perspective of a technological process. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to provide a symbolic and social perspective upon the role of tools and utensils.

The timeframe upon which this study focuses is characterized by a dynamic culture, triggered by the increased mobility of the population. In the La Tène period, individuals or groups of people from Central Europe have started a colonizing process of many regions, among which is the Carpathian Basin

This process led to the distribution of the material culture specific to "Celtic" communities, creating the impression of an ethnic unity spread throughout most of the Central and Western Europe. However, looking at the

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<sup>1</sup> Luck 2006, 470; Jørgensen 2012, 132

problem in more detail, we can see that this colonization did not manifest itself identically throughout the area, and the different way in which newcomers interacted with the natives encountered generated many local cultural aspects<sup>2</sup>.

In this mixture of cultural elements of different origins, there were many approaches that wanted to identify ethnic features based on material culture. The most commonly used method in this process was the analysis of funeral inventories. Debates regarding the relevance of analysing the material culture in establishing the way in which the ethnic identity was expressed have a long history in the archaeological literature.<sup>3</sup> However, the elements of rite and ritual, as well as the objects deposited as an offering, reflect more aspects of the deceased's life than ethnic identity. Certain objects and practices are determined by the age, sex or status of the deceased. Others may indicate various economic or cultural contacts established during the life with members of other communities. Also, while some offerings are made especially for the funeral ritual, others may represent objects passed down from one generation to another and which, for various reasons, end up being deposited for the afterlife<sup>4</sup>.

Therefore, in this perspective, the aim of this paper is to try and identify the role of tools and utensils played in the construction of the deceased's identity. Based on a statistical and contextual analysis, I wanted to correlate the funeral customs that involve the use of these objects with the different levels of identity, expressed in the final ritual of passage. The relevance of the study is also determined by the fact that such pieces have

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<sup>2</sup> Rustoiu – Berecki 2014, 249; Rustoiu 2019, 356; for similar processes in different time periods see: Burmeister 2000, 552; Gilchrist 2008, 121

<sup>3</sup> Kossina 1911; Jones 1997; Curta 2001; Brather 2002; Reher – Fernández-Götz 2015

<sup>4</sup> Olivier 1999, 117–118

not been approached from this perspective, especially in studies concerning the La Tène period in the Carpathian Basin.

### **The research area and timeframe of the study.**

The Carpathian Basin is both a geographical and a historical concept. Geographically it is bordered by the Carpathian Mountains to the north and east, the Dinaric Alps to the south and the Eastern Alps to the west<sup>5</sup>. The region comprises most of the middle course of the Danube and is characterized by a steppe relief, with piedmont areas in the eastern and western extremities. In addition to the Danube River, many tributary streams run through this territory, favoring economic and cultural exchanges throughout time. The most important are the Sava and Drava Rivers, which connect southern Pannonia with the Adriatic coast, the Mureş River which connects the inner Carpathian area to the Pannonian Plain and the Tisza River. Today, this territory is part of western and south-western Romania, northern Serbia, northern Croatia, eastern Slovenia, eastern Austria, south-western Slovakia and the whole of Hungary.

From a historical point of view, the region represented in the pre- and protohistoric period a bridge between the northern Black Sea steppes and the Balkan Peninsula on one end and the Central and Western European area on the other. Thus, being an intensely transited area, it represented the perfect context for the mixture of many influences and the creation of hybrid cultures. From a chronological perspective, this paper focuses on the period of the Celtic colonization in the Carpathian Basin. Due to the fact that this process was a gradual one, certain phases of the La Tène period can be found only in some regions. The earlier phases, dating from the second half of the 5th century BC (La Tène A) are found mainly in eastern Austria, in

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<sup>5</sup> Royden – Horváth 1988, 9

necropolises such as the ones from Inzersdorf <sup>6</sup>, Mannersdorf<sup>7</sup> or Pottenbrunn<sup>8</sup>. During this period, in the rest of the Carpathian Basin, we find communities with cultural traits specific for the latter phases of the Early Iron Age. Starting with the 4th century BC (La Tène B1), the Celtic communities began the gradual colonization of the Carpathian Basin. In the first phase, new communities are founded in Transdanubia and southwestern Slovakia, and by the end of this century the eastern Carpathian Basin is being reached<sup>9</sup>. During this period, in southern Pannonia, there are no known traces of habitation belonging to Celtic communities. However, evidence of contacts between indigenous and La Tène populations are visible in material culture<sup>10</sup>.

A first possible historical mention of the Celts in this area dates from 335 BC and is connected to Alexander the Great's expedition at the Danube. According to opinions expressed by Fl. Medeleț and D. Boteva, the conflict took place somewhere in the north-western part of the Balkan Peninsula.<sup>11</sup> On this occasion, after the defeat of the Getae and the Triballi, Alexander receives an envoy from the Celts living in the Ionian Gulf. Their presence in the area is also attested by a series of archaeological discoveries specific to the La Tène culture, discovered in the northern Balkans.<sup>12</sup>

The end of the early La Tène period (La Tène B2) is marked by the "Celtic Invasion of the Balkans". Judging by the evolution of certain cemeteries in the Carpathian Basin, we can assume that some of the contingents that made up the expedition around 280-277 BC were comprised

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<sup>6</sup> Neugebauer 1996

<sup>7</sup> Ramsel 2011

<sup>8</sup> Ramsel 2002

<sup>9</sup> Rustoiu 2008

<sup>10</sup> Popović 1996

<sup>11</sup> Medeleț 1982; Boteva 2002

<sup>12</sup> Theodossiev 2005, 86–88; Emilov 2015, 367–368.

of members from communities in this area<sup>13</sup>. Following the failure of this expedition, some of the participants returned to the Carpathian Basin, where they founded new communities. This hypothesis is supported by the large number of necropolises that begin their use during this period<sup>14</sup>.

The La Tène communities experienced a relatively similar development in the Carpathian Basin until the middle of the second century BC (La Tène C1). After this phase, their evolution differs depending on the region. In the eastern Carpathian Basin, we see the emergence of a new elite, composed of mixed ethnic elements, known as the "Padea-Panaghiurski Kolonii group", which will evolve to form the Dacian culture, specific to the end of the Late Iron Age in Transylvania. In the southern Carpathian Basin, Scordiscan and Tauriscan communities continued to exist until the Roman conquest. In the western Carpathian Basin, rural communities specific to early and middle La Tène are giving way to centralized societies with Oppidum-type settlements.

Regarding the chronologies based on the morphological evolution of certain objects, throughout time a series of typologies have been developed that divided the La Tène era into several phases and sub-phases.<sup>15</sup> However, sometimes the use of complicated chronological systems prevents us from understanding the evolution of certain customs<sup>16</sup>. For this reason, I chose to use the system developed by W. Krämer, which was better suited for observing evolution of certain rituals and customs of the La Tène communities from the Carpathian Basin.<sup>17</sup>

### **The Cultural Context.**

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<sup>13</sup> Rustoiu 2006, 213–216

<sup>14</sup> Rustoiu 2006, 214; Rustoiu 2016a, 244

<sup>15</sup> Božič 1981; Gebhard 1989; Bujna 2003; for a short review of the La Tène period chronological systems see: Berecki 2008

<sup>16</sup> Rustoiu 2016a, 235

<sup>17</sup> Krämer 1962



As previously stated, the spread of the La Tène culture through the colonization by the Celtic communities of the Carpathian Basin, was a gradual process, carried out over a long period of time. The depopulation of areas of Central and Western Europe is synchronous with the disappearance of proto-urban settlements and the burial tombs of the so-called "Hallstatt princes". The reasons behind this process have not been determined exactly. So far, several hypotheses have been proposed, ranging from climate change to internal unrest caused by growing social inequities.<sup>18</sup>

The newly formed communities have rural characteristics and social stratification is less visible<sup>19</sup>. The rich tumulus burials that signalled the elite's control over important trade routes with the Mediterranean world disappear. They are replaced by flat graves, in which the rank of the buried person is most often indicated by the presence of weapons. Imported objects become very rare, a sign that most of the old economic connections have been broken. Notwithstanding, this period is a flourishing one for many craft activities. Freed from the patronage of the Hallstatt aristocracy, artisans gain increased mobility, being in constant search of new markets and sources of supply for raw materials. This dynamic led to the spread and improvement of production techniques, which determined some researchers to call the period of the IV-III centuries BC "The Golden Age of the Celtic Aristocracy"<sup>20</sup>.

During their expansion into the Carpathian Basin, Celtic colonists encountered populations of different ethnic background and that were organized in different types of communities. In the north and east of the region they encountered communities belonging to the Vekerzug culture, characterized by predominant Scythian cultural traits<sup>21</sup>. The social

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<sup>18</sup> Collis 2003, 126; Megaw 2003; Fernández-Götz 2014, 121–141; Fernández-Götz 2017

<sup>19</sup> Crumley 2008; Jeunesse 2019

<sup>20</sup> Buchsenschutz et al. 2012

<sup>21</sup> Vasiliev 1980; Chochorowski 1985; Kemenczei 2009; Kozubová 2019

organization of these communities was similar to that of the newcomers, having a rural structure, controlled by a small elite class. We do not know how these elite were absorbed into the new communities. What is certain is that the new ruling class chose to manifest its identity using the La Tène culture model. The most important cultural influence, that is archaeologically noticeable, which the indigenous communities exert on the newcomers, is represented by the handmade pottery. Their synchronous use with wheel-thrown La Tène pots may suggest the existence of hybrid culinary practices, consequence of the cohabitation of the two groups of population.<sup>22</sup>

In southern Pannonia, the Celts encountered Illyrian populations. The colonization of the region took place later than in the rest of the Carpathian Basin, most likely after the invasion of the Balkans. Here, the Celtic settlers encountered communities that had already undergone significant social transformations at the end of the first Iron Age. Unfortunately, the archaeological information in this region comes either from sites that have been looted in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, such as the Kupinovo necropolis, or from research that has not yet been fully published. What is certain is that the mixture of Celtic populations with the indigenous led to the emergence of two distinct ethnic groups, identified in ancient historiography as Scordisci and Taurisci.

Until recently, the research of the Late Iron Age in the Carpathian Basin was focused mainly on funerary discoveries. They provided extremely important information about the typological and chronological evolution of objects, but also about beliefs in the afterlife. However, very little was known about everyday lives or how production was organized. The direction of research changed towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when a series of projects and also excavations determined by infrastructure investments,

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<sup>22</sup> Rustoiu – Berecki 2016, 288

significantly enriched the information about the habitat of the La Tène period in the Carpathian Basin. One of the most important settlements researched was found at Sajópetri, in northeastern Hungary.<sup>23</sup> In addition to houses, archaeological excavations have revealed numerous workshops where traces of metallurgical, ceramic and textile production were found. The internal organization of the settlement seems to have taken into account the functionality of each of the existing structures. At a distance of about 30 km from Sajópetri, in the village of Polgár, another settlement dating from the same period was researched<sup>24</sup>. The settlement was smaller than the one in Sajópetri. However, traces of metallurgical and textile production were identified here. Moreover, the way in which the buildings were constructed seems to have taken into account certain functional criteria. The existence of traces of production in settlements at close distances might suggest two hypotheses. The first one implies that production was done locally, each settlement using their own products, at least in the case of common goods. The second presumes that the communities were served by itinerant craftsmen, who travelled periodically to meet their requirements. A similar situation is found in the lowlands of the Banat region, where two recently discovered settlements provide important information on how production was organized in this area. Remnants of metallurgical production were identified both in the settlement discovered in the Freidorf district of Timișoara and in the one from Moșnița Veche-Dealul Sălaș. The two settlements are less than 15 km away from each other. In addition to this, many pieces of shist<sup>25</sup>, but also tools for spinning and weaving prove that ceramic and textiles were produced in both settlements.

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<sup>23</sup> Szabó 2007

<sup>24</sup> Szabó et al. 2008

<sup>25</sup> A metamorphic rock that is not local but is used as temper for wheel-thrown pottery.

The increase of study concerning settlements and the activities that took place in them will be able to further enrich our knowledge about the different ways in which production was organized, the status of craftsmen and implicitly, the symbolic role played by the tools used by them.

### **The Research Methodology.**

This paper relied mainly on the analysis of 1114 funerary contexts identified in the most important necropolises from the Carpathian Basin. Data coming from isolated graves or partially published cemeteries were also used.

The timeframe upon which this study focuses is stretching from La Tène A to the La Tène C2 sub-phases. However, most of the finds analysed come from the La Tène B1-C1 interval.

The main issue encountered while developing this study was the unequal value of the data. Thus, a series of cemeteries like the ones from Kupinovo<sup>26</sup> or Apahida<sup>27</sup>, whose inventories were excavated in the later part of the 19th century weren't properly documented and provide little information concerning the grave assemblages. Therefore, I have not included these sites in the analysis. Furthermore, another issues concerned the proportion of the site excavated. Most of the cemeteries have only been partially excavated, while some were even partly destroyed by modern works.

Others, like the necropolises from Zvonimirovo<sup>28</sup> or Brežice<sup>29</sup> were only partially published.

The way in which some of the data were published also influenced the research. Thus, sites like the ones from Mannersdorf<sup>30</sup>, Pottenbrunn<sup>31</sup>,

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<sup>26</sup> Drnić 2015.

<sup>27</sup> Zirra 1976.

<sup>28</sup> Dizdar 2013.

<sup>29</sup> Jovanović 2011.

Dubník<sup>32</sup>, Malé Kosihy<sup>33</sup>, Ludas<sup>34</sup>, Pişcolt<sup>35</sup> or Pećine<sup>36</sup> have good illustrations of the archaeological material and the topography of the graves is presented in detail. An intermediate situation is encountered in the case of the cemeteries from Chotín<sup>37</sup> or Bajč<sup>38</sup>, where grave plans have incompletely been published, therefor in some cases the position of objects in graves has been approximated using the given description. A less fortunate example is the group of necropolises from south-western Slovakia, published by B. Benadik and his collaborators<sup>39</sup>. This publication lacks grave plans for most of the contexts and the illustration of the archaeological material consists predominantly of poor quality photos.

Another aspect that varied in the study sample was the anthropological analysis. Most of the human remains found in the western Carpathian Basin have been anthropologically investigated. However, the situation is somewhat different in the eastern part of the studied area, where such analyses are rare. In the cases where the gender of the deceased was not anthropologically determined, I tried to assume it based on the funerary inventory<sup>40</sup>. However, not all funerary contexts contained gender specific items. Furthermore the lack of bone analysis prevents us from understanding the construction of children's identity through the burial ritual.

The methodology used in this study was flexible, adapted to the number of cases existing for each type of tool analysed. Thus, for the tools

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<sup>30</sup> Ramsel 2011.

<sup>31</sup> Ramsel 2002.

<sup>32</sup> Bujna 1989.

<sup>33</sup> Bujna 1995.

<sup>34</sup> Szabó et al. 2012.

<sup>35</sup> Némethi 1988; Némethi 1989; Némethi 1992.

<sup>36</sup> Jovanović 2018.

<sup>37</sup> Ratimorská 1981.

<sup>38</sup> Benadik 1960.

<sup>39</sup> Benadik et al. 1957.

<sup>40</sup> The presence of weapons defined the grave as being male, while certain jewelry and their style of wear were used to determine female burials.

and utensils discovered in large numbers, such as scissors, razors, whetstones or spindle-whorls, I used a multivariate analysis. The variables used concerned the funeral inventory (type and number of jewellery and weapons), the funeral rite, the dating of the complex and the position of the tools in the grave. The later variable is important for determining the role of certain objects in funerary ritual. Thus, objects closest to the body are garments and clothing accessories, whose role is to create in the memory of the community a fixed image of the deceased that resembles the one in real life<sup>41</sup>. The next group of objects are the ones placed in the vicinity of the body. Usually, these objects are weapons or toolsets. Their role was probably meant to symbolise the status of the deceased. Often the functional role that these objects fulfilled in everyday life was different than the one in the funerary ritual. For example, the presence of weaponry in graves doesn't necessarily imply that the deceased took part in any military actions, but rather illustrate its belonging to the ruling class. In this perspective, tools can play a similar role, signaling certain rights or privileges acquired during life. The third category of objects is the ones placed furthest away from the body. This includes vessels placed as offerings (possibly used in the funeral banquet), the animal offering sometimes accompanied by the tool used for its sacrifice or objects used in preparing the body for burial.

A similar approach was used for cremation burials. In this case the objects were analysed based on their position in relation with the charred human remains. In cemeteries like the ones from Pişcolt or Mátraszőlős certain rules of arranging the objects in the graves can be noticed, which are similar to the ones found in inhumation burials. A different situation can be found in southern Pannonia, where no clear rule of arranging the objects can be detected.

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<sup>41</sup> Nilsson Stutz 2015, 7

Concerning the tools and utensils whose numbers were not relevant for a statistical analysis, I chose to discuss each context independently.

The results were interpreted using models adopted for other historical periods or drawn from ethnoarchaeological studies. Also, the comparison with earlier period of times was used as a mean for tracing the origins of the customs.

### **Summary of the results.**

Of the many rites of passage described by A. van Gennep more than a century ago, funeral rites are most often recognized through archaeological research<sup>42</sup>. Nonetheless, various other initiation rites can be identified through the symbolic objects acquired as a result of their passage. One such symbol is the wedding ring, still used today as a symbol of the marriage between two people. In ancient Rome, the reach of adulthood by male citizens was signalled by the wear of a *toga virilis*. Similar symbols are frequently placed as grave offerings, in order to better recreate the identity of the deceased. In most of the cases the interpretation of these symbols is difficult in the absence of written sources. The purpose of this study was to identify the symbolism behind the deposition of an artefact group, which were most often ignored in previous studies.

The first custom which was analysed was the placing of shears in graves. The tradition as well as the objects themselves were adopted from the Mediterranean world, but the morphology of the tools and the significance of the ritual were adapted to suit the needs of the La Tène communities. While in southern Europe, shears are utensils found in toiletry kits placed in women's graves; in the La Tène communities they are more common in men's graves. Their positioning near the right hand similar to swords, emphasizes the role of these tools in expressing the individual's status.

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<sup>42</sup> van Gennep 1960; Liston – Papadopoulos 2004.

Moreover, some of the shears have been subject to similar treatment as the weapons have like ritual destruction or decoration. In other cases, shears have been placed near or inside vessels that were not in the proximity of the human remains indicating that these tools might have been used for preparing the body for the funerary ritual. Shears are found either as individual offerings or as part of toolkits alongside razors or whetstones. The most frequently found toolkit contains all three utensils. This custom is found throughout the entire Carpathian Basin as often encountered in graves with weapons. Most likely, this kind of offering is reserved for persons of high status. However, not in every case the deceased was buried alongside weapons, which might suggest that, the aristocracy was multi-layered, with each layer expressing its identity in a different way.

The most numerous objects come from the razor category. The custom of placing razors in graves is known since the Bronze Age. For this period it has been connected to grooming activities that were characteristic for the warrior elite<sup>43</sup>. During the La Tène period, these tools are being manufactured out of iron and have a different morphology, being suitable for other activities as well. Their common association with shears meant that they were probably used for hair removing processes. It is well-known from literary sources that in the Celtic world, some social classes chose to differentiate themselves through distinctive hair-styles<sup>44</sup>. Furthermore, the iconography of Celtic art also reflects the importance of hair-style in signalling the social status. The tonsure visible on the stone head from Mšecké Žehrovice was interpreted as possibly belonging to a druid<sup>45</sup>. High status of the individual depicted in the sculpture is also illustrated by the torque modelled around his neck. In fact, although Celtic anthropomorphic

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<sup>43</sup> Treherne 1995; Frieman et al. 2017; Arnoldussen – Steegstra 2018.

<sup>44</sup> Aldhouse-Green 2004, 305–308.

<sup>45</sup> Venclová 2002.



sculptural art is not characterized by excessive realism, it is keen to reproduce the symbols that signal the status of the depicted person.

On one of the most famous artistic manifestations of the European Iron Age, the Gundestrup Cauldron, the main characters distinguish themselves through more elaborate hair-styles than the secondary ones. However, one of these main characters, identified as either the Celtic god Cenrunnos, or a depiction of Orpheus, is distinguishing himself through a complete absence of facial hair. This style is in contrast with the elaborate fashion in which the facial hair of the other main characters is depicted. I. Mazarov interpreted that this character could represent a member of a sacred chaste, whose members are required to proceed through numerous initiation rites and respect certain norms. The lack of facial hair could be interpreted this character when through these stages.<sup>46</sup>

The zoomorphic decorations on some of the razors are another argument for the symbolic importance of these objects. Most likely, these zoomorphic razors were used in some ritual processions, a hypothesis which might be sustained by the fact that some of them were made from bronze. The use of different metal than usual might suggest that iron was probably considered impure for such sacred uses.

The morphology of some of these razors, as well as their association with crafting tools might indicate that some were used in production activities. Such razors were found together with tools used for tannery or surgical practices.

Another type of knives identified in the La Tène graves from the Carpathian Basin are the short knives. From a morphological perspective, these knives can be split into two categories. In the first one I included the foldable knives which are more commonly found in male graves. That also

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<sup>46</sup> Mazarov 1991, 54.

contained weapons. The second category comprises of short knives that have a handle which equal or longer than the blade. This type of tool is more frequently found in women's graves. An exception is provided by grave 28 from Malé Kosihy in which the cremated remains of two infants were found. Tools are extremely rare in children's graves, but this could be owed to the small number of children burials identified. The presence of short knives in children's grave is also known in early Saxon burials. H. Härke noticed that in this period of the time the length of the knives placed in the grave was connected to the age of the deceased.<sup>47</sup>

A category of tools that has been frequently analysed in the archaeological literature are knives found on the food offerings. The large massive knives, typical of the Central European La Tène culture have been called *Hiebmesser*. Due to their size and often association with burials containing military equipment, they have been interpreted as weapons. U. Osterhaus was the first to signal their frequent placement alongside the food offerings suggesting that these tools were used for sacrificing the animal that was served during the funerary banquet<sup>48</sup>. Along with the Celtic colonists these large knives arrive in Hungary, Transylvania and southern Pannonia. In the same time, in the eastern Carpathian Basin we also find curved knives frequently placed on the food offering. The use of these curved knives might suggest some traditions that are more common for eastern La Tène culture<sup>49</sup>.

One of the most archaic burials customs that implies the use of tools is the placing of whetstones in graves. This custom is known as early as the Copper, but the purpose of these stones has raised numerous debates<sup>50</sup>. Microscopic analysis of some of these tools found in prehistoric and

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<sup>47</sup> Härke 1989.

<sup>48</sup> Osterhaus 1981.

<sup>49</sup> Rustoiu 2016b.

<sup>50</sup> Ježek 2013.

migration period graves from Europe have shown that some of them have been used as touchstones. Unfortunately similar analyses have not been made on stones coming from Late Iron Age graves. Thus, the frequent associations of these tools with iron shears and razors might suggest that they were in fact used for sharpening these blades. The statistical analysis of La Tène graves containing whetstones revealed that these tools are typical for male burials. They are found both in burials with or without weapons. Some of them had holes drilled in their upper part, suggesting that they might have been hung from a belt, probably to be displayed as a symbol of status.

As we have previously seen, beauty and body care had an important role in the Celtic communities. Besides razors and shears, smaller tools like tweezers, nail and ear cleaners or awls were also used. Their placing in graves as offerings is a tradition that can be traced from the Early Iron Age in Central Europe. For this reason, in the La Tène period this custom is more frequently found in the western Carpathian Basin, especially in early La Tène graves. In the eastern part of the study area such objects appear towards the end of the early La Tène period. However, their presence in female graves might indicate a southern origin of this custom in this area.

Textile production is one of the oldest human activities. It is also an activity shrouded in superstitions and rituals. Its importance is suggested by numerous iconographic representations and ancient descriptions. Traces of textile production are found in almost all the rural settlements from the La Tène milieu, proving that this craft was widespread and common. However, tools used in this process are not often found in graves. One explanation could be that most of the utensils used in this process are made from perishable materials, the most frequent ones that are found are spindle-whorls which are made from burnt clay. Placing spindle-whorls in graves has been identified as a custom typical for female burials and was interpreted as a sign of their

occupation in life. The statistical analysis of these tools indeed revealed that most of them are found in female graves, but a good proportion are also found in male graves, some even containing weapons. Moreover, some of the spindle-whorls were discovered in graves with certain particularities which might include them in the "deviant burials" category. Using this data together with numerous ancient sources describing rituals involving the use of spinning and weaving tools we can conclude that the placing of such items in graves was not linked to the crafts practiced by the deceased in life. More likely, their presence in graves is a consequence of certain rituals determined by events that occurred in the life of the individuals (death at childbirth, illness, dishonourable deeds etc.)

The so-called craftsmen burials have been an attractive subject for archaeologists of all eras. More precisely, their scarcity determined numerous researchers to investigate the way in which their identity was marked in the burial ritual. The most common mean of identifying craftsmen graves was through the presence of tools. Although, this method of identification was sometimes criticized<sup>51</sup>, it is the most relevant available so far for this purpose. The scarcity of graves with crafting tools is also a reality for La Tène period in the Carpathian Basin. The few such tombs known to date illustrate different ways in which artisans were perceived in the community. În unele cazuri, meşterii erau parte a aristocraţiei comunitare, statut semnalat prin prezenţa armelor şi complexitatea truselor de unelte care. In some cases, craftsmen were part of the community aristocracy, a status signaled by the presence of weapons and the complexity of the tool kits that accompanied them in the afterlife. In other cases, their status was signaled only by the presence of a single tool, having the role of *pars pro toto*. The analysis of the craftsman burial from Fântânele provided an opportunity to

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<sup>51</sup> Ježek 2015.

investigate the mobility of metalworkers. The finding of a ceramic lamp specific to the outer Carpathian area, has led to the idea that the person spent a certain period of life in that region, where he would have become familiar with how to use such tool.<sup>52</sup> The mobility of metalworkers is also documented in numerous ethnoarchaeological studies: These studies seem to indicate that constant relocation was not a way of life, but took place periodically, being caused by various factors. It is probably due to this constant relocation that metalworkers were considered liminal characters, not being fully adopted within a community, therefore rarely seen in the burial record. Other occupations, such as tannery, seem to be better represented in funerary finds. The most important information comes from the necropolis at Ludas, where three graves were found containing toolkits used in this activity. Among these, two contained weaponry, some with elaborate decorations signalling the inclusion of these craftsmen in the local aristocracy. Grave 904 is remarkable through its inventory but also due to the young age of the deceased. His short lifespan could not have permitted him to acquire the prestige illustrated through the grave goods. Therefore, one can assume that he might have been a contender for inheriting the role of chief artisan in the community. The high number of graves with tannery tools found in this cemetery suggests that in this community might have been an important centre for leather-making in which apprentices could also have been schooled.

In the vicinity of Ludas, at Sajópetri, a settlement as well as a cemetery was investigated. The settlement excavation revealed numerous traces of crafting activities like: metalworking, pottery making or textile production. Thus, it was considered an important production centre for the Carpathian Basin. Despite this, no tools used in these activities were found

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<sup>52</sup> Rustoiu 2009.

among the funerary finds. This could be owed to the possibility that the craftsmen identity was expressed in a different manner. It could also be the case that the cemetery does not belong to the settlement that was investigated, but rather to a different one, unidentified yet.

The last part of this paper focused on the so-called graves with "special instruments". Often have these graves been considered to have belonged to druids. The quest for identifying druids described by Caesar is one of the most common endeavours of Celtic archaeology. Evidence coming from of graves with "special" instruments point to the existence of specialists capable of performing certain surgical procedures. Traces of such interventions were visible through osteological analysis, especially in the western Carpathian Basin. Such activities require advanced knowledge of the human body which could have been obtained after traveling in the Mediterranean area. Just like the metal craftsmen, the way in which these specialists were integrated in the society varied from one community to another. Thus, we can observe that in the western part of the Carpathian Basin, they were seen as members of the aristocracy, fact suggested by the presence of weaponry in their graves. However, in the eastern part of the study area they seem to have a liminal role, similar to the one of shamans.

The comparison of such characters to Caesar's druids it should be made with caution. First of all the time gap between the social and cultural realities described by the roman general and that of the early and middle La Tène period comprises a couple of centuries. Moreover, the social organisation of the communities from the *Oppida* period is significantly different than the one of the 4<sup>th</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries BC rural communities.

The analysis of tools and utensils found in the early and middle La Tène period graves revealed new ways through the Iron Age populations expressed their identities. Some of them were gender specific, while others

were found both in male and female burials. The absence of these items in child burial suggests that these customs were only allowed for the adult population of the communities. Tools and utensils were present only in a fraction of the graves from each community showing that the ritual was not common for every person and that it was probably reserved for persons of a certain status or that managed special deeds throughout life.

Comparison of the results obtained with other periods or cultural areas shows in some cases the perpetuation of older traditions. Sometimes connections with the Mediterranean world can also be traced.

Other aspects noticed in this study were certain regional variations of some of these burial customs which show different cultural influences or traditions.

This endeavour showed the importance of interpreting objects placed in grave according based on their relation with the human remains but also with the rest of the inventory. It also proved the relevance of large-scale studies in tracing the origins of certain customs and identifying regional patterns.

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