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# Hallstatt C sword graves in Continental Gaul. Rise of an elite or new system of representation of self in a context of crisis?

Pierre-Yves Milcent

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# CONNECTING ELITES AND REGIONS

Perspectives on contacts, relations and differentiation during the  
Early Iron Age Hallstatt C period in Northwest and Central Europe



edited by  
Robert Schumann &  
Sasja van der Vaart-  
Verschoof

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# Hallstatt C sword graves in Continental Gaul

Rise of an elite or new system of representation of self in a context of crisis?

*Pierre-Yves Milcent*

*“Howbeit no huge barrow do I bid you rear with toil for him,  
but such a one only as beseemeth”*

Homer, *Iliad*, XXIII, 245-246

## **Abstract**

355 Hallstatt C swords are recorded in Gaul. With the exception of about 41 specimens found in rivers, these swords, for which the context of discovery is known, come from graves in barrows. These sword graves fall into two main geographically distinct groups of unequal size. The smallest group corresponds to about 34 cremation burials found in the northeast of Gaul, possibly extending towards the northwest. It spreads from Champagne in France to south Gelderland in the Netherlands and was called the Mosan group by E. Warmenbol. This group presents cultural characteristics of Atlantic and Nordic affinities. The second group, numerically larger, corresponds to 170 inhumation burials distributed from the Upper Rhine to the southwest of the Massif Central. It is this group, belonging to Hallstatt cultures, that we will primarily address.

In each of these two groups of sword graves, the deposited and preserved artifacts are sparse. In the inhumation burials the sword is placed with a scabbard or a textile cover next to the deceased, often on the right side of the body, alone or accompanied by one to three vessels. A razor and bracelet regularly are associated with the body. Other categories of objects are rare. The deceased and the accompanying artifacts are arranged under a barrow, whose architecture varies by region, but whose size remains modest. The layouts associated with the barrow, including enclosures, are simple.

In the past, archaeologists connected these sword graves with an emerging elite, of either foreign (before the 1980s, the dominant theory being invasions by eastern horsemen) or local origin. Some even considered that they were the beginning of an ongoing and increasingly complex socioeconomic process that would culminate with the princely wagon burials at the end of the first Iron Age.

The perspective, given by taking into account more global data not only from the beginning of the first Iron Age but also the end of the Late Bronze Age, today suggests a very different interpretation of this phenomenon. Aside from five graves generally attributable to the late Ha C (Chavéria, Magny-Lambert, Marainville-sur-Madon, Ohnenheim, Poiseul-la-Ville), the Ha C sword inhumations finally appear rather poor; and, register in a context of profound break with the Late Bronze Age, apparently even inside a context of a crisis with multiple causes (the crisis of the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC). These sword tombs therefore do not demonstrate the development of a more powerful elite than in preceding period; quite the contrary, but, a new self-representation system through the adoption of a renewed material culture and the recomposition of funeral practices with standardized rules.



## Résumé

*Sur l'ancien territoire de la Gaule, 355 épées du Hallstatt C sont répertoriées. A l'exception de 41 exemplaires trouvés dans des cours d'eau ou des milieux humides, les épées dont le contexte de découverte est connu proviennent de tombes sous tumulus. Ces tombes à épée se répartissent principalement en deux groupes géographiquement bien distincts et de taille inégale. Le groupe le plus petit correspond à une quarantaine de sépultures à crémation que l'on trouve dans le nord-est de la Gaule, avec une possible extension en direction du nord-ouest. Il s'étend de la Champagne, en France, au sud du Guelderland dans les Pays-Bas et a été qualifié de groupe Mosan par E. Warmenbol car il couvre surtout le bassin de la Meuse. Ce groupe mosan présente principalement des caractéristiques culturelles d'affinités atlantiques et nordiques. Le second groupe, plus important numériquement, correspond à 170 sépultures à inhumation distribuées du Rhin supérieur au sud-ouest du Massif central. C'est de ce groupe, appartenant aux cultures hallstattiennes, que nous parlerons. Dans chacun de ces deux groupes de tombes à épée, le mobilier déposé et conservé est peu abondant. Dans les tombes à inhumation, l'épée est placée auprès du défunt, généralement dans un fourreau et au côté droit, seule ou plus souvent accompagnée de vases (entre un et trois vases). Un rasoir et un bracelet sont régulièrement associés. Les autres catégories d'objets sont rarement déposées. Le défunt et le mobilier de ces sépultures sont disposés sous un tumulus, dont l'architecture varie selon les régions, mais dont la taille reste modeste. Les aménagements associés au tumulus, enclos notamment, sont simples. Par le passé, les archéologues ont souvent mis ces sépultures à épée en relation avec l'émergence d'une élite, qu'elle soit supposée d'origine étrangère (théorie dominante des invasions de peuples cavaliers orientaux avant les années 1980), ou locale. Certains ont même considéré qu'elles marquaient le début d'un processus continu de complexification socio-économique qui culminerait avec les tombes à char princières de la fin du premier âge du Fer.*

*Le recul donné par une prise en compte plus globale des données pour le début de l'âge du Fer, mais aussi la fin de l'âge du Bronze final, permettent aujourd'hui de proposer une interprétation très différente du phénomène. A part cinq sépultures dont quatre attribuables à l'extrême fin de la période (Chavéria, Magny-Lambert, Marainville-sur-Madon, Ohnenheim, Poiseul-la-Ville), les tombes à épée du Ha C apparaissent finalement assez pauvres et s'inscrivent dans un contexte de profonde rupture avec l'âge du Bronze final, apparemment même dans un contexte de crise aux causes multiples, la crise du VIII<sup>e</sup> s. av. J.-C. Elles ne manifestent donc pas le développement d'une élite plus puissante qu'aux époques précédentes, bien au contraire, mais un nouveau système de représentation de soi, à travers l'adoption d'une culture matérielle renouvelée et la recomposition des pratiques funéraires selon des normes strictes et interrégionales.*

## Introduction

This paper summarizes the context and interpretation of Ha C sword deposits in Gaul<sup>1</sup>. I focus on the contexts of Hallstattian graves, that is to say the inhumations from the south and east of Gaul. In the past, archaeologists connected these sword graves with the emergence of elites of either foreign (before the 1980s, the dominant theory being invasions by eastern horsemen) or local origin. Some even considered them as the beginning of an ongoing and increasingly complex socioeconomic process culminating in the princely wagon burials at the end of the first Iron Age. By taking into account global data not only from the beginning of the first Iron Age but also the end of the Late Bronze Age, a very different interpretation is suggested.

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1 Gaul is considered here in a pure geographic sense according to the definition given by Julius Cesar in the opening of the *Bellum Gallicum*. Therefore it is the geographic area between Pyrenees, Alps and Rhine. This area shows no cultural or ethnic homogeneity at the beginning of the Iron Age.

## History, contexts, and geography of discoveries

The first exploitable discoveries of Ha C swords in Gaul date back to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, but most were made in the last third of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and in the 1960-90s. Funeral documentation was collected by H. Gerdsen during the 1980s (Gerdsen 1986). Recent work has improved and enriched this body of work (Beylier 2012; Cicolani *et al.* 2015; Dhennequin 2005; Milcent 2004).

The swords of the Ha C are distributed mostly in eastern Gaul, are rare in western Gaul and unknown in the southwest of France (355 Ha C swords are known, found in France (288), Belgium (24), Netherlands (24), western Germany (12), western Switzerland (6) and 1 in the Italian Alps near the French border; Fig. 1). In northwest Gaul, the near-absence of archaeologically identifiable burials explains this contrast, rather than a lack of research. In these western regions funerary practices were different during the first Iron Age and generally informal and archaeologically invisible. The elites of these Western regions are nevertheless identifiable archaeologically, but in different forms from those known elsewhere. Large enclosed residences often with palisades, similar to the *Herrenhöfe* of Bavaria, are found in much of the Atlantic Gaul during the first Iron Age (as early as the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC). These elite residences remain almost without equal in Hallstattian Gaul (Milcent forthcoming 1). Two metal hoards in Pfalz yielded a few swords (5?). Elsewhere in Gaul, no hoard contains a piece of a Ha C sword, as demonstrated by J. Gomez de Soto (2014).

But we now know that there are very few metal hoards from the Ha C in Gaul (in France for example, most of the Armorican axe hoards and the Launacian hoards date Ha D1-2: Milcent forthcoming 2). 41 swords (11.5% of the total) come from rivers or wetlands without any significant concentration, excepting perhaps northern Gaul, and were found especially in areas where there has been a lot of dredging and archaeological surveys. Today, we mainly interpret these water finds as the result of involuntary losses during Ha C, unlike during Late Bronze Age (Cicolani *et al.* 2015).

The other swords (276: 77.7% of the total) come from 272 (probable) burials where the context of discovery is known. These swords come mainly from southern and eastern Gaul, and we only know the burial custom for 213 graves. These graves belong to two main groups of unequal size.

The first consists of 34 cremation burials in the northeast, usually buried in a medium-sized barrow. Swords are often broken or bent and cremated bones are deposited in urns. These homogeneous burials are spread in and around the Mosan basin and referred to as the Mosan group by E. Warmenbol (1993). The grave goods show many affinities with the Atlantic cultures, especially during the first part of Ha C, but the funeral practices are more or less similar to those from northwest Germany. With few exceptions at the very end of Ha C, the links with the *stricto sensu* Hallstattian groups appear superficial.

The other 170 graves are inhumations buried in barrows or pits probably covered by a barrow, in central, eastern and southern Gaul. These burials are characteristic of cultural Hallstattian groups from Gaul. These are the ones that I will study.

The Hallstattian sword graves of Gaul are clearly differentiated from those found in the *Osthallstattkreis*. To a lesser extent, they are also distinct from the sword tombs of the upper basin of the Danube. This is why the traditional

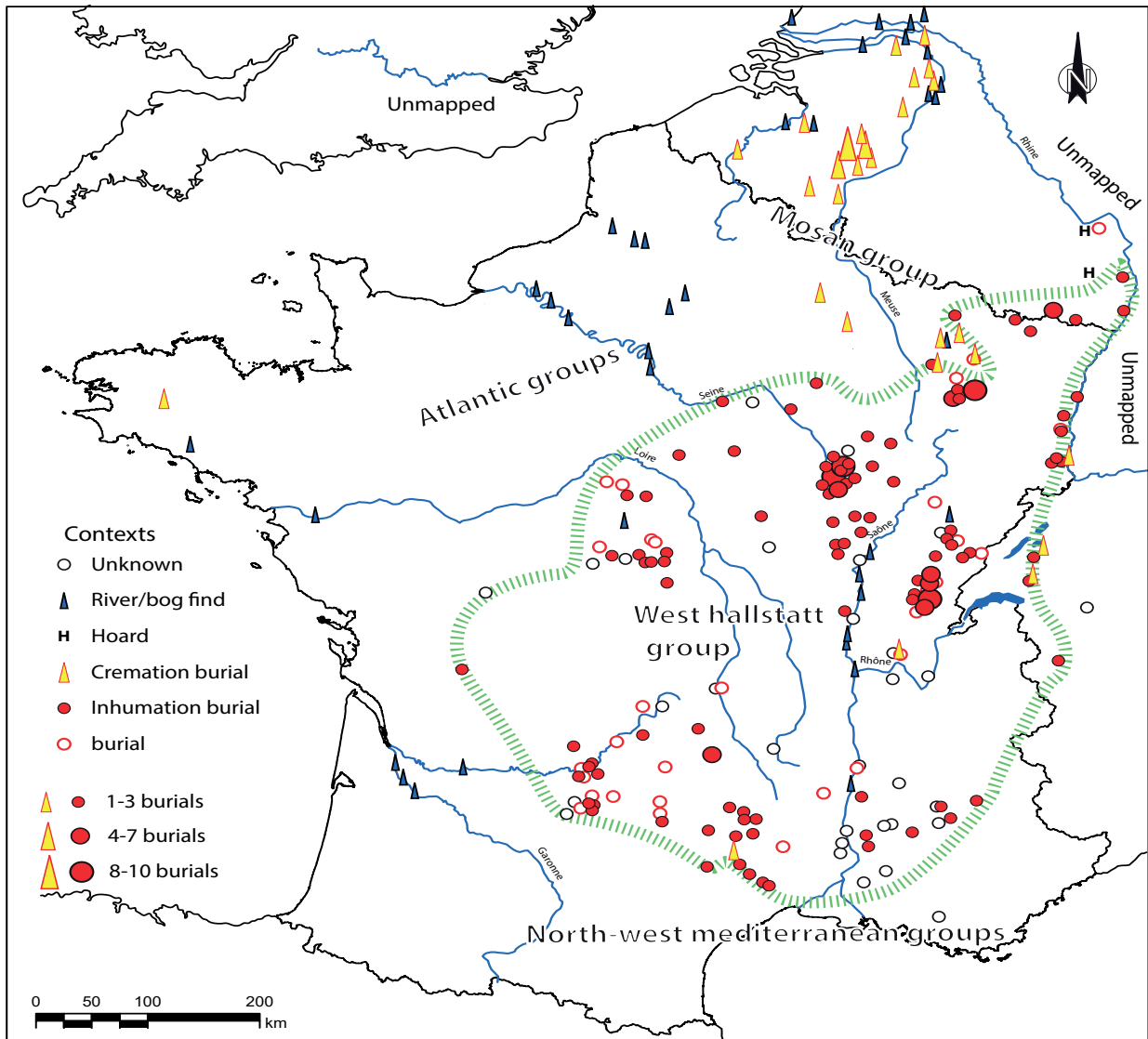


Fig. 1. Distribution map of the Ha C swords in Gaul.

concept of *Westhallstattkreis* presents a problem of definition and no longer seems relevant. This concept actually gives an impression of continuity and even cultural homogeneity, that would run from the centre of France to Bavaria. As demonstrated by W. Reinhard (1993; 2003), this continuity does not exist; from one side to the other of the upper Rhine Valley, the differences in rituals and burial furnishings among sword tombs are marked (see Reinhard 2003, 43 fig. 24). To take another criteria, the forms and patterns of the fine ceramics of the Ha C show that products discovered in the Hallstattian areas west of the Rhine have simple decoration (Fig. 2,2), and have little in common with those from Central Europe that are richly engraved and painted (Fig. 2,4). The case of sword graves of Gaul will reinforce this point of view and will show that it is probably necessary to distinguish not two, but three large Hallstattian areas: Eastern (middle basin of the Danube), Central (upper basin of the Danube) and Western (regions from the upper Rhine to the southern Massif central).

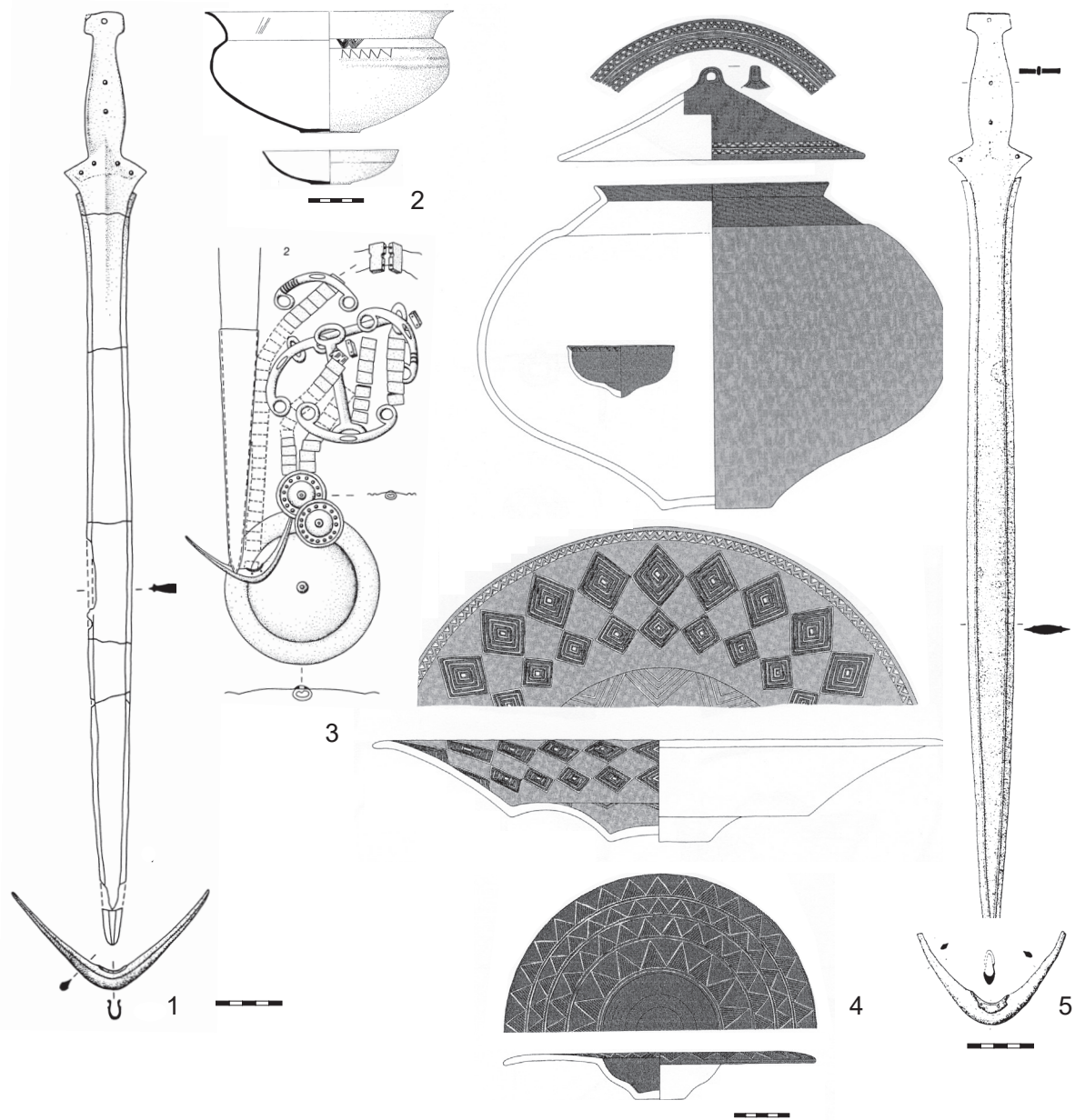
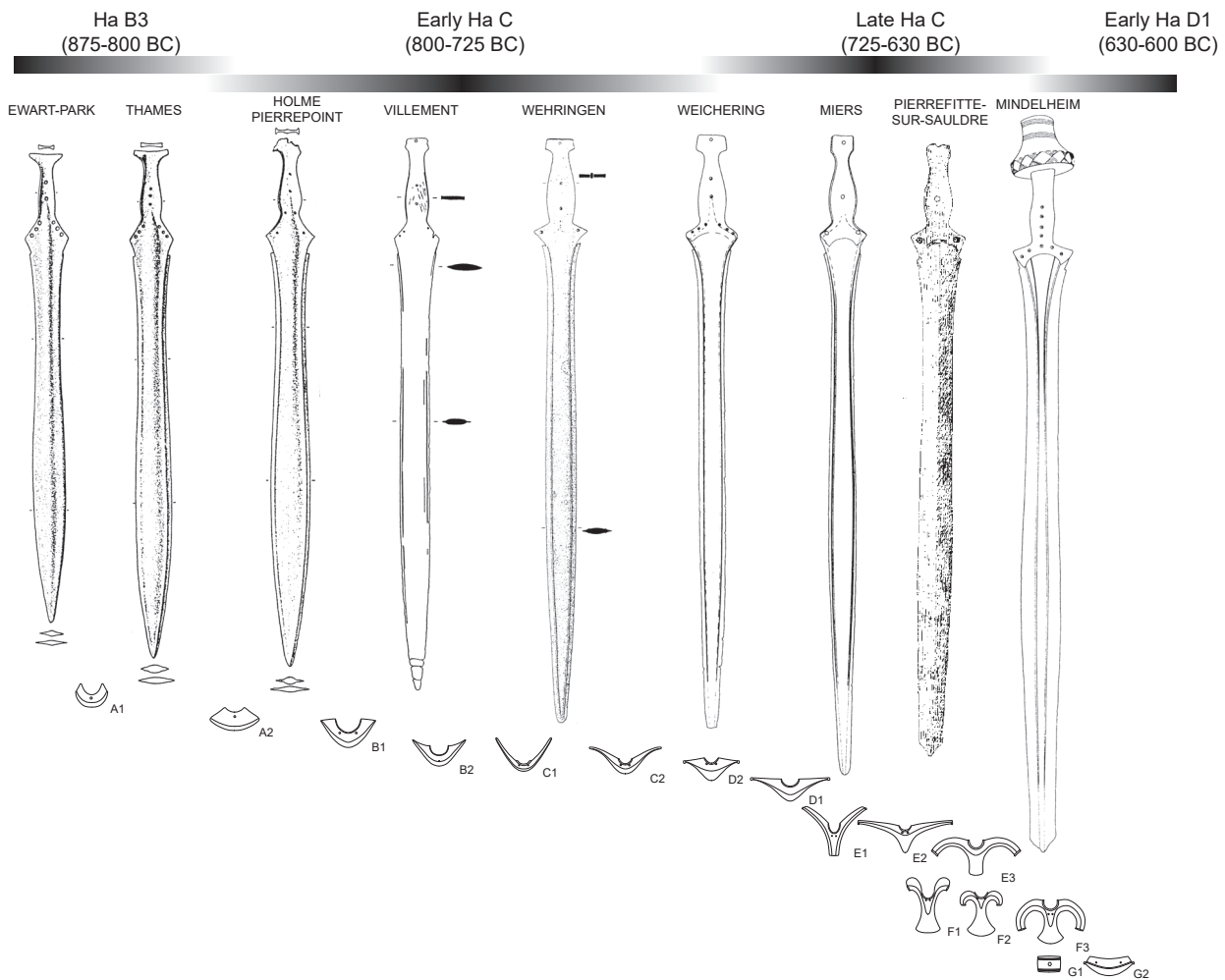


Fig. 2. Examples of decorated fine ceramics deposited in Early Ha C sword burials from eastern Gaul (1-3: Chavéria T.16, Jura) and south Germany (4-5: Wehringen barrow 8, Bavaria). 1-2: after Vuallat 1977; 3-4: after Hennig 1995).

First, however, the chronology and the production groups of these swords need to be reviewed.

### Chronology and evolution of swords of the Gündlingen family

Almost all Ha C swords in Gaul belong to the family of swords with leaf-shaped blade and flat tanged grip, called Gündlingen (from my point of view, the Gündlingen swords do not indicate a type, but a family of weapons characteristic of Ha C in temperate Europe and encompass all models of swords from Ha C, including the Mindelheim type).

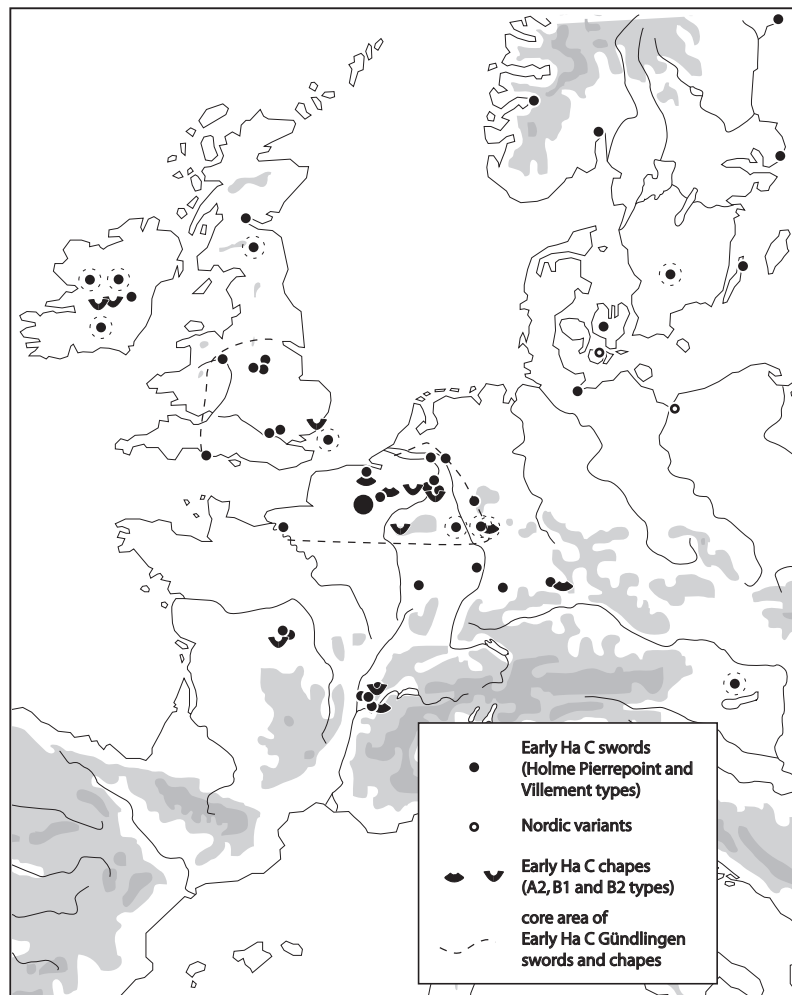


Their relative chronology today is accurate, at least for the bronze ones which are much better preserved than iron specimens (Milcent 2004, 95-107). The general shape of the swords and chapes are the best indicators of chronology: the associations of different types of swords and chapes enable us to identify two major stages: the Early Ha C and the Late Ha C, with a short transitional horizon between the two (Fig. 3).

The Early Ha C (equivalent to Ch. Pare's (1999) Ha C0) is represented by the successive sword types Holme Pierrepont, Villement and Wehringen, and their iron equivalents, as well as by bag and V-shaped chapes from the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC. The Weichering type, associated with open V-shaped chape, is at the transition between Early and Late Ha C. This Early Ha C stage is not well documented, except in the northwestern regions of Europe. Therefore, it is rarely understood and taken into consideration in summary works which prefer to focus either on the end of the Late Bronze Age or the Late Ha C. Today it is clear that the swords of the Gündlingen family are essentially part of a weaponry tradition of the Atlantic Late Bronze Age, developed first in the British Isles and northern Gaul. The geographic distribution of the oldest Gündlingen swords and their chapes (Fig. 4), their affinities with earlier Atlantic models of the Ewart Park type from the Atlantic Late Bronze Age clearly exhibit this North Occidental origin.

Fig. 3. Chronological evolution of the Gündlingen sword family during Ha C, with their Atlantic Late Bronze Age prototypes and their chapes.

Fig. 4. Distribution map in Europe of the earliest Gündlingen family swords and their chapes at the beginning of Early Ha C (800-750 BC). After Milcent 2004, 109-110, fig. 57-58, with additions: Belgium: Aalst (East Flanders) „Hofstade“ (Holme Pierrepont sword and A2 chape); Germany: Stolzenau (Niedersachsen) (Holme Pierrepont sword); Great Britain: Jackfield (Shropshire) River Severn (Villement sword); Weymouth (Dorset) ‘Backwater’ (Villement sword); Ireland: Edenderry (Villement sword), Holme Pierrepont sword and Villement with no precise location; Netherlands: Maastricht-Vroendal (Limburg) (Villement sword and B2 chape).



This is not an isolated case: many other Hallstattian objects have prototypes in the Atlantic Late Bronze Age (Milcent 2009a, 246 fig. 14). Therefore, the adjective „Hallstattian“ generally used to describe these Ha C swords is problematic and purely conventional. These facts therefore contradict the traditional hypotheses that these weapons were brought by invasions of horsemen from Eastern Europe. Swords of the Gündlingen family, moreover, are never associated with harnesses of ridden horses, but only with parts of horse tack related to a four-wheeled wagon. To the east of the Rhine, on the other hand, swords of family Gündlingen of Early Ha C are rare (the tomb of Wehringen barrow 8 is the best-known; Friedrich/Hennig 1996; Fig. 2,4-5) and correspond to imports or to Atlantic imitations. Save for these exceptions, the contemporary swords of the Early Ha C in Central Europe carry on the Continental tradition of swords with a massive bronze grip from the end of the Bronze age (for example types Mörigen, Weltenburg, Tachlovice; Milcent 2009a, fig.7,1-9).

The Late Ha C (equivalent to Ha C1-2) is represented by sword types Miers and Pierrefitte-sur-Sauldre, often made of iron (Fig. 3). Their chapes have more or less curved wings or, for the latest, a sub-rectangular shape. These date from the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century or the first two thirds of the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC. East of the Rhine the beginning of the Late Ha C corresponds to the generalization

of these swords of Atlantic tradition and the abandonment of styles inherited from the tradition of the Central European Late Bronze Age (we only know a few exceptions like the burial of München-Trudering „Am Mitterfeld“ in Bavaria, where an evolved Weltenburg sword is still associated with a Late Ha C chape of F1 type).

At the end of Late Ha C, very long swords in bronze or iron appear: the Mindelheim type. These swords are late models imported from Central Europe and exhibit oriental technical characteristics. The latest swords of Ha C are also the longest. They are sometimes even accompanied by artifacts characteristic, in principal, of the beginning of the Ha D1: snake shaped fibula at Viala-du-Pas-de-Jaux (Aveyron), first antennae daggers at Nuits-Saint-Georges (Côte-d'Or) „Concoeur et Corboin“, crescent razors with high extremities like at Magny-Lambert (Côte-d'Or) „Montceau Laurent“. Therefore this Mindelheim horizon belongs to the transition from Late Ha C to Early Ha D1. I emphasize the importance of this late dating of the longer swords, since, as in the past, the Mindelheim horizon had been mistakenly attributed to an older stage. The Mindelheim horizon is not only well documented in Central Europe, but also in the East and northeast of Gaul because it sees the development of rich graves, with wagon and bronze dishes. Similarly, it is marked out in Northern Europe by exceptional non-funerary metal deposits (hoard of Hassle in Sweden with an Etruscan cauldron and cordoned situlae from the second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC especially). In the western regions, on the other hand, it is documented only by relatively poor sets of artifacts. In all, this chronological evolution shows the early appearance of iron swords and a late continuation of bronze swords: there is no succession, but rather a coexistence of two very different technical traditions (Atlantic and Continental) over almost two centuries, the Atlantic one gradually taking the ascendancy over the other with mixing on the Continent. During Ha C, swords become longer. One may even wonder whether the longest swords at the end of the period, were still functional for combat (in the Gomadingen burial found in 1885 (Baden-Württemberg), an unusable repaired Mindelheim sword was deposited for example). In Gaul, their study does not allow one to establish a clear relationship with either usage on horseback or from a wagon, as one might have thought in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The geographic distribution of the Early Ha C bronze swords in a burial context shows no true concentration in Gaul. We cannot identify a clear diffusion direction. This configuration without polarity is characteristic of a network development. On the other hand, this deduction cannot yet be made for iron swords whose detailed history is much more difficult to reconstruct due to their degradation by oxidation.

## **Dominant characteristics of the inhumation burials with swords in Hallstattian Gaul**

Let us now look at the principal characteristics of inhumation burials with Ha C sword. Regarding the dead, we have very little information due to the ancientness of most of the excavations. The dead are buried on their back in a stretched out position, and half the time with the head pointing north or south; west orientations are avoided with exceptions (Fig. 2,5). The sword is always parallel to the body, very often on the right side of the body (43/60 known cases), often with the tip pointing toward the feet (25/40 known cases) (Fig. 5,2). One good example

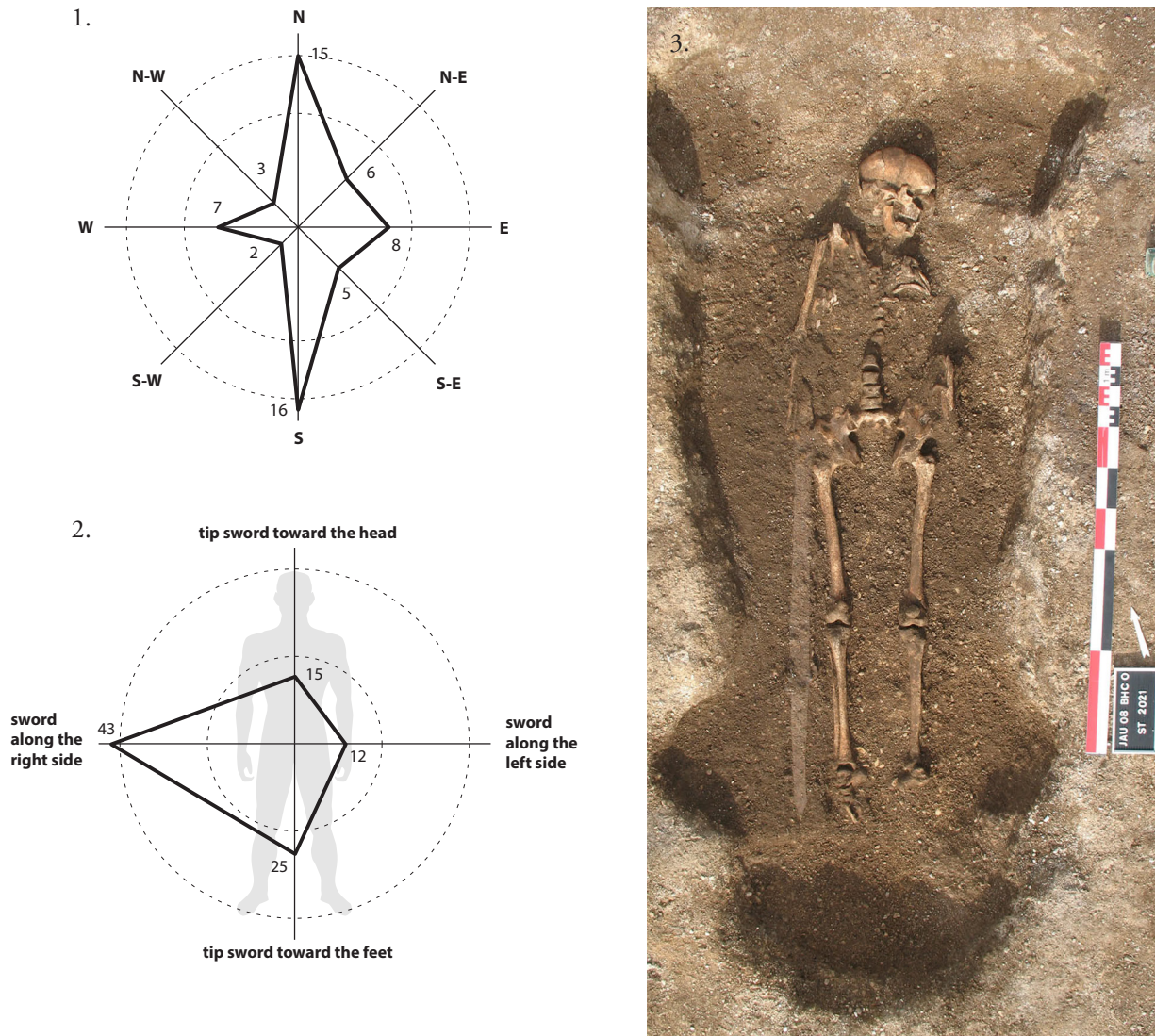


Fig. 5. 1: Graphic of the orientation frequency (according to the cardinal points) of the head of the deceased buried with a sword during the Ha C in Gaul. – 2: Graphic of the position frequency of the sword in the inhumation burials during the Ha C in Gaul. – 3: A tomb under barrow representative of the most common funerary practices in Hallstattian Gaul: Jaulnes (Seine-et-Marne) “Le Bas des Hauts Champs”; burial of an elderly man, with his head toward the North, an iron sword on the right side with the tip toward the feet and a bracelet on the left wrist; the tomb is located on a more ancient barrow. (Photography N. Ameye, Inrap).

comes from a recent excavation at Jaulnes in Seine-et-Marne (Fig. 5,3). However, it should not be assumed that the sword was in a functional position: indeed, there was no trace of suspension elements (in contrast for example to the sword tombs of the Late Bronze Age from Saint-Romain-de-Jalionas and Chavéria) and the substantial length of many swords is not in agreement with the hypothesis of a normal arrangement along the leg and hip. Numerous cases of swords found with the point near the head or the grip at head height of the deceased also show that these were not deposited in a functional manner. On a daily basis, one could imagine that these swords would be worn instead at either an angle or horizontally on the chest or back, or even on the shoulder, as was the case in some Mediterranean cultures.



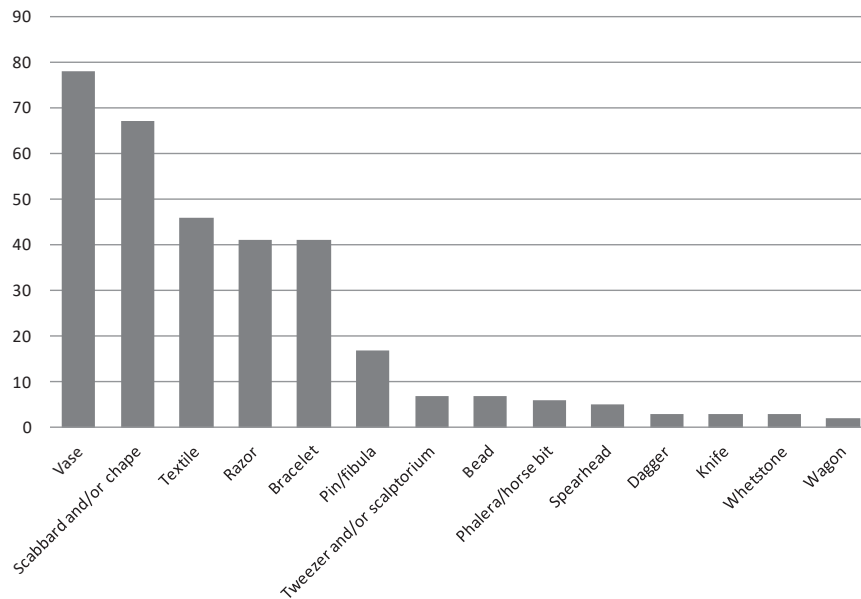


Fig. 6. Histogram of the frequency of the types of objects deposited in Ha C sword burials in Gaul.

Biological age and sex are very rarely determined with confidence. All 21 decedents for which the age is known were adults. There were six adults with no precise determination and only three young adults. In contrast, twelve dead were 30 years old or more (three of them were probably 50 years old or more). Among these cases, we know that ten dead were males (no females are determined). In other burials, the lack of typically feminine objects and the frequency of razors, objects certainly masculine and for adults, lends support to these general rules. Swords and objects from burial tombs under tumuli are deposited according to rather homogeneous and widely spread geographically funeral codes. Swords are deposited intact, with six exceptions corresponding to burials located along the margins of Hallstattian Gaul (Haroué in Lorraine, Cazeville and Chabestan in Mediterranean France). The presence of a scabbard is regularly attested by imprints on the blade or the association with a chape (67 cases; Fig. 6). Textiles are often observed (46 cases) on the blade and sometimes the grip of the sword, especially on iron specimens because organic matter is preserved more easily by mineralization when in contact with iron oxidation. Among well-studied cases, six show the association of two different fabrics. The identified fabrics are woven in flax, hemp, nettle, or wool, without identifying a genuine preference for one of these fibers. These textiles might well have been part of the scabbard or part of a wrapping: the distinction between the two cases is rarely possible without a very precise study.

In burials the swords are regularly accompanied by other objects, but in limited number (two on average<sup>2</sup>). In descending order of frequency, we first find drinking vessels (three per tomb at a maximum in 78 cases except in the Rhine Valley and the surrounding area where the number of vessels can be higher as it is common for more easterly regions<sup>3</sup>). W. Reinhard has already pointed out, in fact, that the upper Valley of the Rhine constitutes a limit for Hallstattian sword tombs notably from the point of view of deposits of vessels (Reinhard 2003, 41 fig. 24). West

2 I do not take into account the many rings known in the sword tombs because they could have had very different purposes and are often directly related to the hanging of other objects, razors in particular.

3 Exceptions: Wörth in the Pfalz, Obenheim and Ohnheim in Alsace, Matran in the Fribourg's canton.

of the Rhine, these deposits are scaled down and correspond to an individual drinking service, while to the east, the vessels are more numerous and form rather a drinking and dining service for few people. This distinction in funeral rituals also explains the general absence of remnants of deposits of solid foods, for example in the form of connecting animal bones or a meat knife, in Hallstattian tombs from Gaul unlike the Central and eastern provinces of the Hallstattian world. The vessels of these tombs are often represented by a pot for liquids, more or less globular, and a drinking cup. Their decoration, if it exists, is limited to a few grooves, incisions and sometimes graphite painting. Most are in ceramic; but 14 tombs yielded at least one bronze vessel of local or imported origin.

Grooming utensils are the next best represented objects with 40 tombs with razors in bronze or iron, six tombs with other grooming utensils (*scalptorium* or tweezers) and one tomb with a razor and grooming utensils combined. We generally find these utensils near the head or pelvis. If the razor tombs are dispersed evenly geographically, we observe that the tombs with *scalptorium* and/or tweezers are rather concentrated in southern Gaul. Once more, it had already been noted that the deposit of the razor was rather a funeral practice specifically widespread in regions of Hallstattian Gaul (Olivier/Reinhard 1993, 108 fig.3; Reinhard 2003, 41 fig. 19; 60 fig. 37). The deposits of bracelets, observed in 41 sword tombs, is almost as common as that of a grooming instrument. With exceptions, the arming, which could be made of iron or bronze, was worn by itself, on the left wrist (16 cases) rather than on the right wrist (five cases) of the deceased. Staying on the topic of clothing and jewelry, the presence of a pin or a fibula is distinctly less common with 17 cases. These recurrent associations give a simple uniformity to the burials from Gaul in comparison with sword graves in Central and Eastern Europe which have more grave goods (especially with drinking and eating ceramics), and diverse and less standardized artifacts. Indeed other objects appear in sword inhumations from Gaul, but in a more or less anecdotal fashion:

- beads (one or two in each burial, made from ceramic, amber, glass or gold) for seven cases,
- *phalerae* and/or pairs of horse-bits for six cases and two in association with a four wheeled wagon,
- spearheads for four or five cases;
- knives for three or four cases,
- daggers for three cases,
- whetstones for three cases,
- fingerring for two or three cases,
- axe for one possible case.

The scarcity of pins, metallic items for sword suspension and other weapons also shows that these items were selected according to fairly strict interregional customs and were not a full deposit of personal equipment. I also stress the absence of objects for eating meat or solid food. The deceased is not presented in the tomb as a real warrior with all his functional equipment, nor as an important person who could host ceremonial meals, but rather as a person whose status is evoked by a conventional selection of few grave goods. This evocation seems metonymic or very connotative, which poses, of course, interpretation problems. Here we have a very different funeral ideology from those that were at work at the same time in Central Europe for some very rich burials.

## The sword tomb in its burial context

I am now going to expand the research focus to the barrows and necropolises that sheltered these sword tombs. Once again, accurate information is often lacking. However, we know that the documented inhumations were always sheltered by a barrow. This tumulus never appears isolated because it belongs to a necropolis.

Inside the mound, the tomb can occupy three types of positions:

- central and founding location, in a pit dug in the ground: this is rare;
- central and founding location, but on older ground: this is the most frequent case;
- adventitious location to an older barrow, usually dated from the Chalcolithic. This is common in the south of France where Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age burial mounds are very numerous.

The last two cases pose a well-understood conservation problem: if the mound is eroded, the sword tomb disappears as well. Barrow architecture is poorly documented. The variability seems high and depends a lot on the natural environment, notably geology. Earth, clumps of turf and wood are used where stone is rare, and vice and versa. The founding burial tombs with sword, and with no other burials in quite small barrows: around 8 to 15 m in diameter and 50 cm to 2 m high (between three and 85 m<sup>3</sup>; Fig. 7). This is true as well of the rich sword tombs, as for example at Poiseul-la-Ville (Chaume/Feugère 1990). Larger mounds exist, but they are not so widely represented. These bigger barrows always show traces of successive expansion: some older barrows are enlarged to accommodate the sword burial, or Ha C barrows are enlarged later to deposit more recent tombs, notably at the Ha D. The latter case is known at Marainville-sur-Madon in Lorraine where two tumuli with central sword tombs had been significantly expanded in order to install female tombs with wagon (Olivier 2002). As for the reused mounds of the Chalcolithic period or from the beginning of the Bronze Age in the South of the Massif Central, one could see the desire to associate themselves with a place of memory and in this way obtain additional prestige for the deceased in the Ha C. More prosaically, it is noted that many other tombs from the early Iron Age reuse the oldest mounds in this area and that they are not distinguished by artifacts or funerary practices in particular. The reoccupation of the oldest mounds for sword burials does not appear as a limited privilege. It seems rather dictated by expediency of not having to build a new monument at the time of burial. In summary, the little data available shows a rather limited investment in materials and working time, even if the barrows containing the sword tombs are not the smaller ones from Ha C. The great princely mounds in Gaul, which required a lot of investment arose before or after Ha C: they date from the Early Bronze Age (like the Plouvorn „Kernonen“ or Lannion „La Motta“ barrows), Late Bronze Age (like the Saint-Romain-de-Jalionas, Chavéria T.3 and T.9, or Sublaines barrows) or from the end of the first Iron Age and the beginning of the La Tène period (barrows from Apremont, Vix, Bourges, Lavau for example).

In extensively excavated necropolis, the sword mounds do not appear segregated or in any particular position. The same necropolis, whether large or small, often yields several sword tombs. This is the case at Chavéria and Doucier (Jura), Poiseul-la-Ville (Côte-d'Or) and Rubenheim (Saar) with four tombs, at Saint-Georges (Cantal) with five tombs, Diarville (Meurthe-et-Moselle) with six tombs, Clayeures (Meurthe-et-Moselle) with seven tombs, at Magny-Lambert

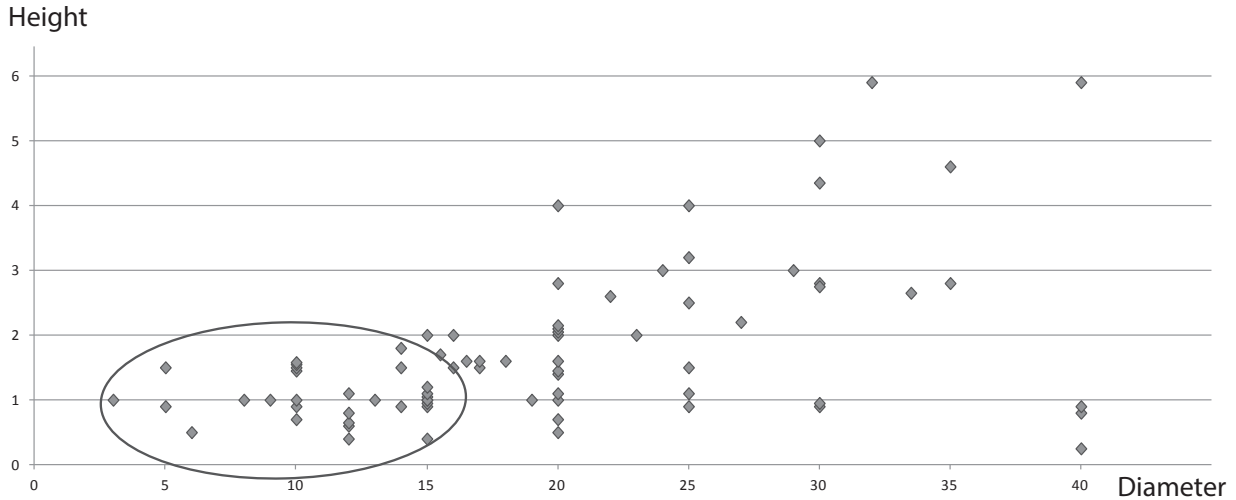


Fig. 7. Graphic of the size of the tumulus of inhumation sword tombs whose diameter and height are known in Gaul. The ellipse corresponds to the barrows which we think were set up for Ha C sword tombs and have not been reused or expanded for future burials.

(Côte-d'Or) with ten tombs. One could think that we are dealing in several of these cases with necropolises used by several family clans.

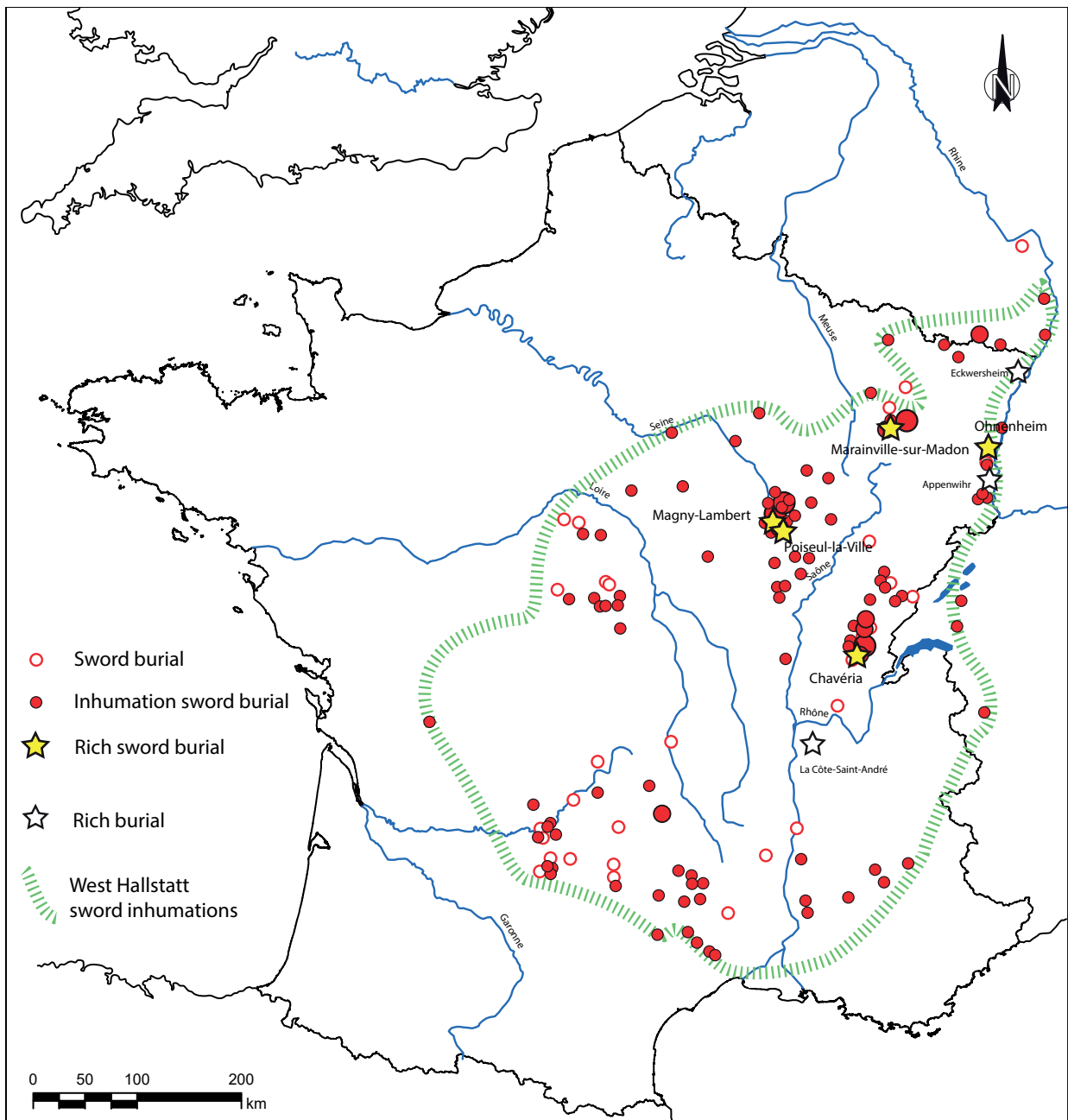
But what one should take away is that sword tombs relate to necropolises which, for the most part, seem created during the Ha C or even reactivated through the construction of tumuli. Rare indeed are the examples of strict continuity with the Late Bronze age. Indeed, during the Late Bronze Age, burials rarely formed a grouped necropolis that was used over a long period. On the other hand, recurring discoveries of tombs from Ha D and Lt A1 in necropolises with Ha C sword graves demonstrate that the use of these sites extended beyond Ha C and that these necropolises were probably designed to last. Therefore, many of the deceased buried with a sword in Ha C might have been considered founding ancestors. Since the works of A. Saxe and L. Goldstein (Morris 1991), the idea that the creation (or reactivation) of a necropolis is a way for a community to affirm ancestral rights over a territory and its resources in a context of competition has been emphasized. The transition from rather scattered graves or loose necropolises, during the Late Bronze Age, to rather concentrated graves in dense necropolis (re)starting from the Ha C, certainly signaled a profound change in value related to the territory. This relationship to the territory where the dead play an important role was interpreted, by Saxe and Goldstein, in terms of accentuated pressure on land resources and even development of land ownership by groups rather patrilineal and patrilocal (Morris 1991). What we know of the identity of the deceased accompanied with a sword would agree with this interpretation.

### Synthesis: wealth and status of the deceased

By way of summary, I now examine the wealth of artifacts and funerary investment in order to try to identify the status of the deceased accompanied by a sword. The objective criteria to try to clarify this status are the abundance, quality and origin of the artifacts, and their degree of rarity. It is also the size of the grave and the barrow that covers it. Other criteria should be taken into account, but the gaps from the old documentation frequently do not allow this. One can think, for example, of the techniques in making the artifacts, especially swords, or the quality of the funerary architecture. Similarly, it should be possible to work out the relationship of the sword tombs to the settlements, landscape, territory or other tombs.

Overall, most sword inhumation tombs in Gaul represent a medium or a low investment: the construction of the tomb and mound required little work and very few items. These funerary objects are rather simple and mundane like ceramics and small metal objects. Gold, for example, the metal representing power and wealth par excellence, is represented in only one burial in the form of a small bead (Diarville T.3 S.1). In this case, would the sword be the exception and the only prestige good in the tomb? Probably not, in fact: swords, with some exceptions, most likely have a regional origin, as shown by small local typological variations. These swords show no particular enrichment, neither in the material used, nor the decoration, which would show them to be anything other than a weapon for warfare, except perhaps for the latest and longest (Mindelheim swords for

*Fig. 8. Distribution map of the rich Ha C sword inhumations in Hallstattian Gaul. In addition: rich burials of Ha C, more or less destroyed before or during their discovery (with Ha C sword at the origin?).*



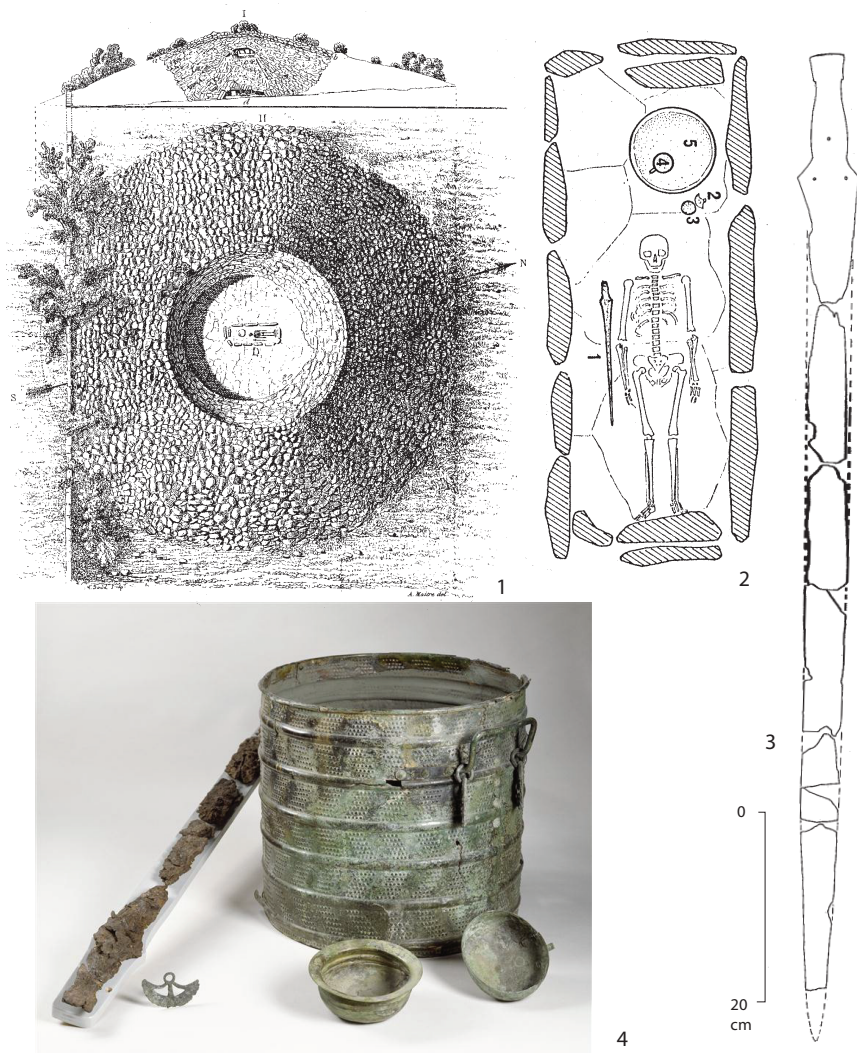


Fig. 9. Barrow, burial and grave goods of a Late Ha C – beginning Ha D1 rich sword inhumation: Magny-Lambert (Côte-d’Or) ‘Montceau Laurent’ (barrow 4 on the necropolis plan). Notice that the barrow shows a complex stratigraphy, reoccupation and clear evidence for a successive expansion. (Plan of the barrow and the burial by A. Maître, sword drawing after Nicolardot 1987 63 fig.68, photography of the Grave goods by H. Lewandowski (RMN)).

example). This is not a real surprise because swords usually do not belong to the category of rare and precious objects since the Late Bronze Age in Gaul. These are relatively common items, especially if we compare them to the truly exceptional objects and prestige goods of Late Bronze Age, which are, for example, bronze helmets and cuirasses, gold jewels, bronze flesh hooks and rotary spits, or large bronze buckets and cauldrons. The end of the Bronze Age in Gaul shows that communities already had a fairly large stock of metal and were able to produce large quantities of swords: a few thousand are indexed and these constitute a very small part of what existed. It is likely that tens of thousands of swords were produced at this time. During Ha C the development of iron metallurgy made this production easier. It thus becomes impossible to seriously argue the idea that these Ha C swords would be rare to the point of representing prestige goods. However, these Ha C swords were certainly not available to everyone and would remain costly items. But it is necessary not to simplify this picture. Indeed, there exists a small group of burials in Hallstattian Gaul that differ from all others by a rich funeral deposit (Fig. 8):

- at Chavéria (Jura), barrow 16 contained an Early Ha C burial with a bronze Wehringen sword and a harness for a two horse team (Vuailat 1977; Fig. 2,1-3);
- at Magny-Lambert (Côte-d'Or), the Montceau Laurent inhumation with a very long iron sword and a crescent bronze razor had a drinking service in bronze (Nicolardot 1987; Fig. 9). One beaker is in a local form. Two other bronze vessels were imported from the north of Italy, perhaps from the region around Bologna, where we find comparable vessels: one is a large ribbed situla with fixed grips and the second is a ladle. The wide situla is well-dated by its zoomorphic pendants of the Bisenzio type from the late 8<sup>th</sup> to the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC (Chaume 2004). The same can be said of the ladle. Wear and tear of the imported vessels, especially the ladle which shows traces of cracks and repairs, implies that these luxury items had been used for a long time before becoming part of the funeral deposit. The highly developed form of the sword and the razor<sup>4</sup> reinforces the idea that the Montceau Laurent tomb belongs to the very end of the Late Ha C;
- at Poiseul-la-Ville (Côte-d'Or), the burial of barrow 3 has given a very long iron sword, a bronze arming, two iron razors, and a set of bronze Etruscan vessels: a Kurd type bucket and a Colmar type phiale, dated in Italy from the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> to the first quarter of the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC (Chaume/Feugère 1990). Like the Montceau Laurent burial, this inhumation is dated by the sword around the end of Late Ha C and it shows a long use of the vessels before the deposit;
- at Ohnenheim in Alsace, an adventice tomb with a Mindelheim sword with an ivory pommel from the very end of Late Ha C was linked with a four-wheeled wagon. The wagon of Ch. Pare type 4 is richly decorated with bronze appliqués and perhaps imported from southern Germany (Pare 1992). It is probable that the inventory of the tomb is incomplete due to the mediocre conditions of the excavations;
- at Marainville-sur-Madon in Lorraine, we are dealing with the richest tomb from Hallstattian Gaul (Olivier 2002). It contained a long iron sword of the Mindelheim type imported from Central Europe at the end of Late Ha C (Fig.10,2). The ivory pommel had amber incrustations. A large bronze cauldron and a carinated bronze cup were both imported from central Italy (Fig. 10,3-4). A harness (Fig. 10,5-6) and a four-wheeled wagon of Ch. Pare type 5A, with Austrian style decorations and imported from Central Europe, completed the funerary artifacts (Fig. 10,7-8).

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4 The same type of razor is indeed associated with an antennae dagger from the beginning of the Ha D1, in the tomb of Saint-Héliier in Côte-d'Or.

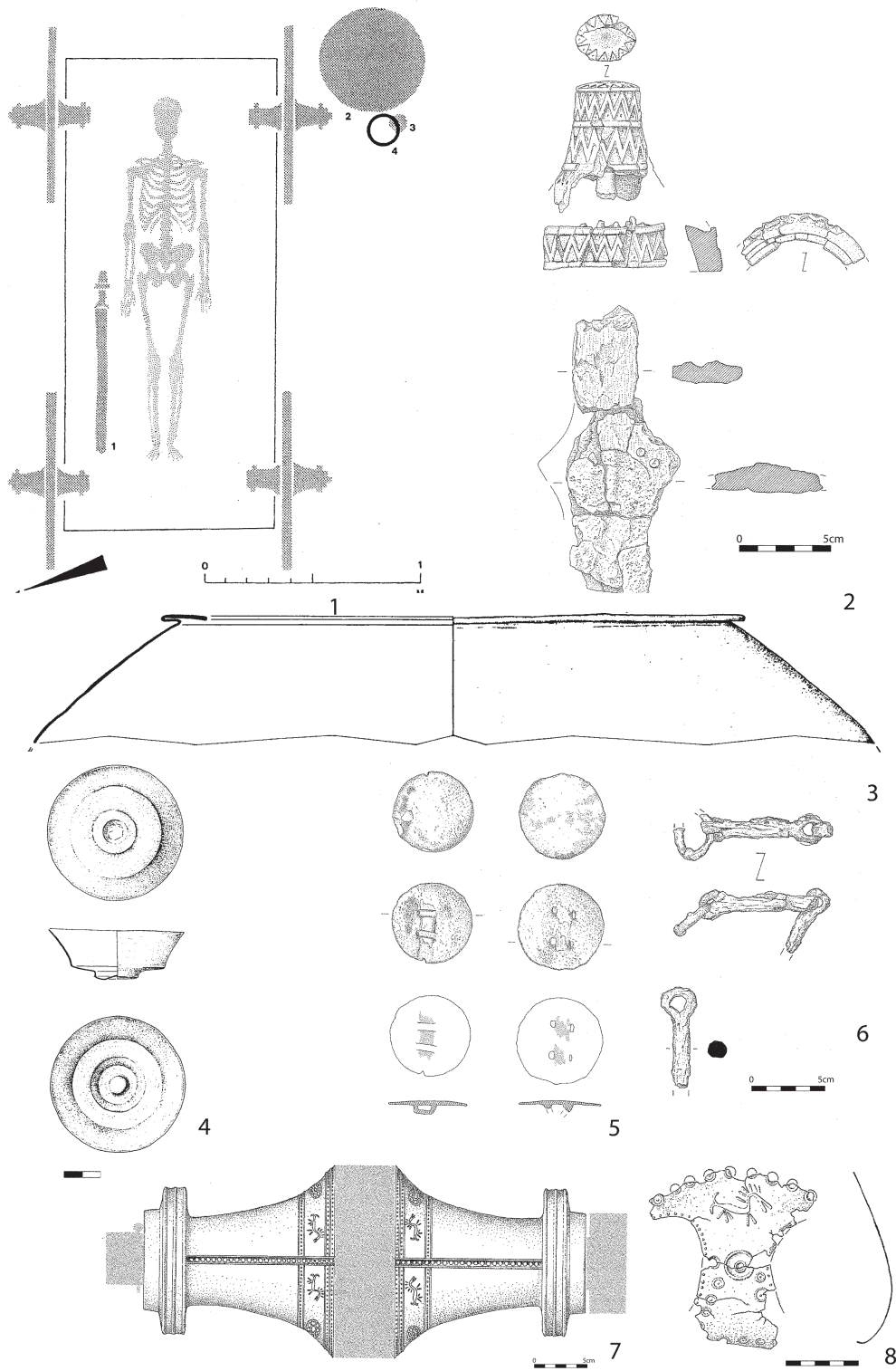


Fig. 10. Plan and grave goods of a Late Ha C/beginning Ha D1 rich sword inhumation: Marainville-sur-Madon (Vosges) „Sous le Chemin de Naviot“ (after Olivier 1988, 276 fig. 2; 2002, 67 fig 15).



To sum up, there are only 5 sword inhumations<sup>5</sup> out of 170 that stand out. Except for Chavéria T.16, these richest burials date from the end of the Late Ha C or even from the early Ha D1. They are scattered in the eastern regions of Gaul, that is to say, in contact with the central Hallstattian domain, like for Marainville-sur-Madon. For Ohnenheim, very close to the river Rhine, the burial could in fact belong to the central Hallstattian domain because the limit with the west Hallstattian domain was not precisely on the Rhine in Alsace, but probably on the Vosges. This very small group of rich burials in Gaul thus appears even more marginal.

## Discussion

To sum up, sword inhumations under tumuli from Ha C in Hallstattian Gaul show a great homogeneity over a very large area (600 km from the Vosges to the Charente, 700 km from the Saar to the south Massif central). The codification of the funerary practices appears standardized and strict, favoring limited artifact deposition in both variety and number of objects. The burials that deviate from the norm, that is to say, the richest, are rare (~3%), arising late in the Ha C and geographically limited. One could wonder what such a homogeneity of funerary practices represents: is it the manifestation of a social reality (existence of an elite claiming a social class identity?), or a cultural reality, even ethnic? Aside from the sword deposits, these burials hardly stand out. One notes that, indeed, other burials from Hallstattian Gaul present fairly homogeneous features: the majority are inhumations under tumulus with modest funerary deposits. This uniformity and this soberness of funerary practices could thus derive primarily from a cultural characteristic. This is why it would be tempting to correlate this vast funerary province from Hallstattian Gaul (Fig. 8) to what we know of the geography of the Celtic people of Gaul and their neighbors just as ancient writers (Strabo and Julius Caesar mainly) drew it for the end of the Iron Age. More or less, the area encompassing sword inhumations under barrow overlaps indeed with Celtic Gaul, while the regions where they are absent correspond to those that have been attributed to the Belgians, Armoricans, Aquitanians and Ligurians. We can also ask ourselves more precisely about the place occupied in the societies of Hallstattian Gaul, of those buried with a sword while they were still alive. The first point to emphasize is that the Ha C sword burials belong to a mundane or common phenomenon. They are possibly as numerous as La Tène sword tombs in Gaul during the Middle La Tène period. Except for some very specific and rare cases, they do not demonstrate an exceptional investment in grave goods or construction

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5 It is possible that there are a few others. In Alaise „Combe Beron“ in the Doubs, we point to the discovery of a bronze (lost) bucket with an antennae sword from the transition of the Late Ha C/ Ha D1. In Alsace, the Kastenwald burial at Appenwihr with an Etruscan pyxis, a Colmar type phiale and a footed bronze cup (Jehl/Bonnet 1966), as well as the tomb in Eckwersheim „Burgweg Rechts“, with a Kurd type bucket and a hemispherical cup, delivers Italian luxury dishes that remind one of deposits known in the rich sword tombs of the Late Ha C (Poiseul-la-Ville and Frankfurt Stadtwald especially). No swords were reported in these Alsatian tombs, but that could be a problem of differential preservation (the tomb of Eckwersheim was partially destroyed). The same problem is raised with the tomb with the 4 bronze casted wheeled wagon and Etruscan bronze dishes (a Kurd type bucket and a basin) from La Côte-Saint-André (Isère): indeed, only a portion of these artifacts are known (Chapotat 1962). On the other hand, among the rich sword tombs, we do not set aside those which were accompanied by a simple goblet or a locally made bronze cup, notably the group from the South of the Massif Central (Milcent/Delrieu 2007). The tomb of Chaffois (Jura) is also set aside because it is probably a female inhumation from the Ha D1 in which a piece of a sword pommel of the Mindelheim type figured as an amulet (Milcent 2013b).

of the barrow. One can imagine that each masculine head of a family or clan could be buried with a sword. This sword, which was a weapon, could also become a marker of a dominant social status, even if, with some exceptions, this is absolutely not a luxury good in a strict sense. It is also a deposit which demonstrates the elites' enhanced values, through funerary practices, of a warrior like, heroic and patriarchal ideology. Moreover, some additional values are affirmed: the deposit of drinking vessels in small number expresses the valorization of commensality practices of drinking together, but in small groups, and not those of the banquet as in Central Europe. The presence of toiletries (razor, tweezers,...) with hanging systems show that they could be carried and exhibited daily showing a certain idea of body care.

However, I admit we should remain cautious regarding the extent of these interpretations: funerary practices also form a message to the community, and above all, the graves teach us what societies were willing to disclose of themselves through choices motivated by diverse reasons: practical, individual, socio-economical, political and cultural. What I mean to say is that the marked difference in wealth that appears between the sword tombs of Hallstattian Gaul and those known in Central Europe does not necessarily signify a very differentiated socio-economic reality. It would be naive to interpret this difference in burial deposits as indicating that the societies west of the Rhine were poorer and less hierarchical than those to the East. One could envisage for example that the Hallstattian elites in Gaul had made the choice (or had been forced) to drastically limit the importance of funerary deposits and the investment in the development of the tomb. Even if it is in a very different socio-political context, one will recall that sumptuary laws existed in Greece and Rome, in slightly later periods, which restricted the exhibition of wealth and splendor for funerals. To reiterate a distinction made by A. Testart (2001), the tombs of Hallstattian Gaul could also indicate the choice by the elites of a funeral policy of redistribution during the funeral while the elites of Central Europe, not necessarily richer or more powerful, clearly made the choice of a funerary policy of deposits, with sumptuous burials. The relative modesty of the sword tombs in Hallstattian Gaul should be interpreted first as a choice, taking into account fairly strict rules governing the selection of funerary deposits, rather than as a reflection of a possible poverty, even if, objectively, contemporary settlements<sup>6</sup> do not allow, for the moment, to consider the existence of very rich or powerful elites.

Now the relative modesty of the vast majority of elite tombs from Ha C must be placed in its historical context. During Early Ha C, in the first two thirds of the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC, a climatic, socio-economic, and cultural value crisis actually impacts Hallstattian societies in Gaul. This crisis marks the break between the Bronze and Iron Ages. It corresponds to deep changes: abandonment of settlements on high positions and fortified sites, scattering of settlements, disappearance of metallic hoards on land, scarcity of metallic objects immersions in rivers, dislocation of

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6 Only one significant Ha C elite residence is identified today in Hallstattian Gaul, while, to this day, many domestic dwellings have been excavated in the centre and east of France. The elite residence mentioned above is a small, fortified site with large buildings from Early Ha C located in Villiers-sur-Seine (Seine-et-Marne) and of which the foundation dates back to the end of the Bronze Age (Peake *et al.* 2009). We do not yet know which of the two phases of occupancy (Ha B3 and the Early Ha C) is the richest. Some other sites fairly nearby and contemporary, for example at Préfontaines in Loiret (Milcent 2009b, 472 fig. 21,2), are perhaps also of high status judging by their protection by means of a palisade.

long distance networks from the Late Bronze Age, moving from cremation without tumulus to inhumations under mounds, real development of iron metallurgy, disappearance of „pictogram“ style decoration on fine potteries and abandonment of the Late Bronze Age Continental elite set, etc. (Cicolani *et al.* 2015; Milcent 2004; 2009b). At this time, only the network connecting eastern and southern Gaul to the medio- and north-Atlantic cultures seems to have been maintained. This is visible with the strong Atlantic influences on elite equipment (swords, razors, horse harness and wagons, feasting items, etc.). This network has a very large scope since the elite metallic productions of medio- and North Atlantic style find their way everywhere from the British Isles to Austria and from Scandinavia to the South of France (Milcent 2009a). With the end of 8<sup>th</sup> and especially with the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC, the Late Ha C marks a slow recovery, as evidenced by the very rare sword tombs which are richer than the others. The exotic objects discovered in these rich tombs show that the network of connections were reoriented and that relationships are now preferentially oriented toward the middle basin of the Danube on one hand and toward northern and central Italy on the other hand (Milcent 2004, 113-115).

## Conclusion

The Ha C sword graves in Hallstattian Gaul do not correspond to the emergence of an elite, as these elites already existed in the Late Bronze Age. They also do not correspond to their development, quite the contrary. These burials mark a way to represent a dominant social status with different methods than those in effect during the Late Bronze Age. This is first a change of funerary ideology that suddenly makes a social group visible in the eyes of archaeologists. These funerary representation elements are not really new. They are rooted, in fact, in an earlier tradition anterior to the Late Bronze Age which dates back to the Middle or Early Bronze Age. These periods are also known for male inhumations under a barrow and accompanied by a rapier or dagger. So this is a reactivation of a past funerary ideology, perhaps following a period of crisis that required a reshaping and new legitimization of the elites. However, it is likely that the sword tombs, as a likely vector of the (re)creation of necropolises with barrows, correspond to a structuring mutation of the elites. We note, in particular, the hypothesis of Saxe/Goldstein in considering that they could indicate new economic forms of differentiation and control, changing through land appropriation or claim for the benefit of certain elite families. In a certain fashion, the sword tombs from Hallstattian Gaul would be the symmetric counterpart to the rise of a phenomenon which we observe at the same time in Atlantic Gaul, namely the emergence of large real estates identified by important enclosed settlements, often with palisades, associated with large storage capacity (storage pits and especially raised granaries) and set up for managing and pasturing cattle (Milcent forthcoming 1). This emergence or development of large land ownership probably, constituted for the elites, a new way to solve the problems caused by the crisis of the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC.

Finally, there is a remarkable fact. The sword graves of Ha C do not really carry forward into the next period. In Ha D, the weapon graves effectively almost disappear in Hallstattian Gaul. Going forward, it is essentially the women who bring rich artifacts into their graves, notably metallic. These female burials seem neither less numerous nor wealthier than those before. But unlike previous male

graves, these are used even more often as founding tombs for barrows which are enlarged to become family burial necropolis (Milcent 2003; 2013). In the same way, we do not perceive any strong link between the sword tombs of Ha C and the development, clearly much later, of true princely tombs. The sword tombs of Ha C are therefore a fairly original phenomenon in Gaul, which has no real immediate past and no immediate posterity.

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## CONNECTING ELITES AND REGIONS

The Early Iron Age Hallstatt C period in Northwest and Central Europe is marked by the emergence of monumental tumuli with lavish burials, some of which are known as chieftain's or princely graves. This new burial rite reflects one of the most noteworthy developments in Early Iron Age Europe: the rise of a new and elaborate way of elite representation north of the Alps.

These sumptuous burials contain beautiful weaponry, bronze vessels and extravagantly decorated wagons and horse-gear. They reflect long-distance connections in material culture and elite (burial) practices across the breadth of Northwest and Central Europe. Research into this period, however, tends to be regionally focused and poorly accessible to scholars from other areas – language barriers in particular are a hindering factor.

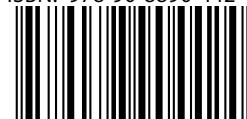
In an attempt to overcome this, *Connecting Elites and Regions* brings together scholars from several research traditions and nations who present regional overviews and discussions of elite burials and material culture from all over Northwest and Central Europe. In many cases these are the first overviews available in English and together they make regional research accessible to a wider audience. As such this volume contributes to and hopes to stimulate research on the Early Iron Age Hallstatt C period on a European scale.



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