

THE CELTS IN ITALY

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In Italy, we find the oldest traces of a 'Celtic' settlement near the Lombardy lakes. In that region, the so-called Lepontic inscriptions occur, which date back to around 500 BC (Figure 27.1). Today it is generally believed that these inscriptions are in a Celtic language (Lejeune 1971; Prosdocimi 1991). The same area was occupied by the so-called Golasecca culture between the seventh and fifth centuries BC; it is named after a find-spot on the river Tessin, near its exit from Lake Maggiore. In order to place the culture in a wider perspective, it can only be viewed in the context of Italic developments. There is no sign of a break, by which one could conclude the massive immigration of a foreign ('Celtic') ethnic group. It is easy to demonstrate that the Golasecca culture developed from older local roots, which themselves go back to the so-called Fazies Canegrate group of about 1200 BC. On the other hand, the Canegrate culture complex is clearly related to Urnfield cultural developments beyond the Alps. This circumstance might explain the origins of the population, which is not 'Italic' in linguistic terms (Pauli 1971: 48ff.).

HISTORICAL SOURCES

The great wave of immigration by Celtic tribes into Italy in later times is reported on by numerous ancient historians. The main source is Polybius (Walbank 1957). He became a friend of Scipio Aemilianus after having been brought to Rome as a hostage; because of the friendship to Scipio, he became involved in politics in the second century BC. His universal *History* starts with Hannibal's war around 220 BC and the ascent of Rome to a 'world power'. He goes back to the more distant past to explain the growth and development of power politics. This is particularly relevant for his treatment of the wars against the Celts in Italy. From the relatively more recent past, he could look back to the Roman suppression of the Insubres and the other Gauls in the plain of the river Po after their defeat at Telamon in 225 BC, as well as the fighting with Hannibal, in which the Celts had been involved. Concerning Hannibal's crossing of the Alps, Polybius remarks (III.48.12) that he got his information from contemporaries and that he knew the area from personal observation. He had to use older sources for the Roman wars with the Celts before that

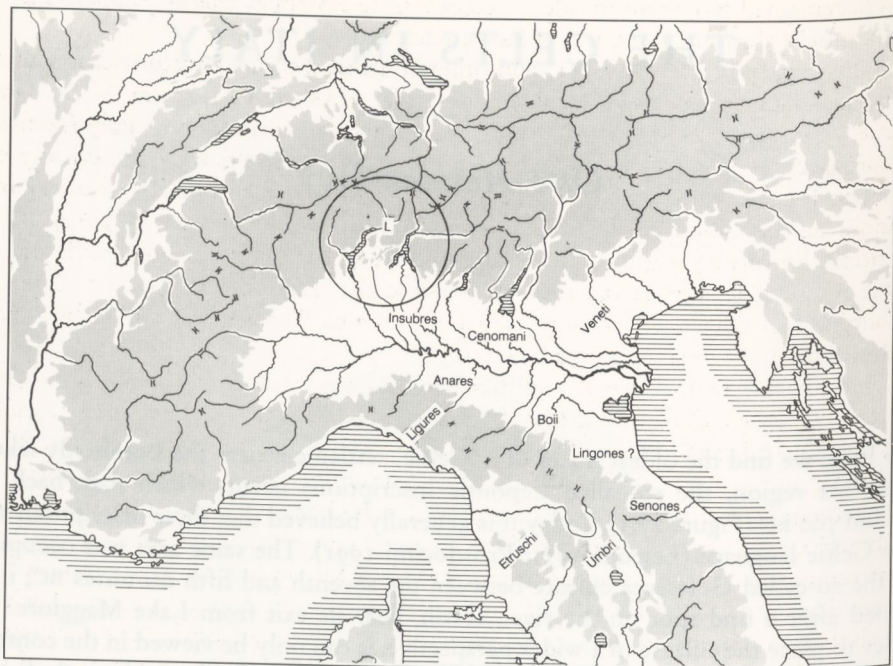


Figure 27.1 Italic and Celtic peoples in northern and central Italy. L = Lepontic area.

time: it is likely that the main source was the lost work of the Roman senator Fabius Quintus Pictor from fifty years earlier.

Polybius gives the date of 387/386 BC (the battle of Allia and the following conquest of Rome) as the starting-point of the fighting between Celts and Romans. Contemporary with this he mentions, among other things, the siege of Rhegion by Dionysius I (1.6.2). The two events are also connected by other ancient historians, too. Probably they had a common source in Timaios's *History of the Greek West*, which presumably derived information from Philistos.

Polybius gives an account of the migration of the Celts to Italy and their earlier history, 'which should touch only upon the main points, but goes back to the beginnings, when this people settled in the country' (II.14.1; 35.10). Thus there is only a general reference to the expulsion of the Etruscans, the former rulers of the plain of the river Po, the reasons for it and the immigration itself.

Of particular importance is the enumeration of the various Celtic tribes (II.17.4-7), which from west to east successively settled the land as far as the Adriatic Sea. Among others, he mentions the Insubres in western Lombardy, the Cenomani to the east as far as the river Adige, the Boii in the area around Bologna, the Lingones as far as the Adriatic Sea and the Senones further to the south in the Picenum area, probably extending as far as the region around Ancona (Figure 27.1). The Insubres are described as the most numerous people among the Celts. In the whole of the northern Italian plain, only the area north of the river Etsch, controlled by the

Veneti, remained free from invaders. According to Polybius, this all happens only a 'short time' before the conquest of Rome (II.2.18.1).

Following Diodorus (XIV.113) and other sources, we may conclude that a rapid sequence of events ensued. Pliny, for example, gives us an account of a certain Cornelius Nepos, who came from the Transpadana, the north-west of Italy (*Natural History* III.125). It was reported that the old town of Melpum – presumably an Etruscan foundation – was conquered by the confederation of Boii, Insubres and Senones on the same day as the occupation of Veii by Camillus, i.e. in 396 BC. The intention, by this equation, to bring together the history of his country and that of Rome is unmistakable. It is, however, possible that the date is based on a similar chronology for the Celtic invasions as that of Polybius. The weakness of the historical tradition becomes clear from this biased report.

On the other hand, Livy gives a different account in his *Roman History*, which was written in the time of Augustus (v.34f.; cf. Ogilvie 1965: 700ff.). On the one hand, he lists the tribes of the Celts or 'Gauls' invading Italy in the same sequence as Polybius, so that a common source is likely. But, on the other hand, another tradition seems to have become incorporated into his account; thus he begins his report by stating that Ambigatus, the king of the Gaulish Bituriges, had sent his two nephews away with a great retinue in order to avoid overpopulation in his own country – and that had already happened under the rule of Tarquinius Priscus. This would bring us back to the sixth century BC. Following the signs of the flights of birds, one Bellovesus marched into Italy, accompanied by an entire population wave. The names of the groups are as follows: the Bituriges, Arverni, Senones, Aedui, Ambarri, Carnutes and Aulerci.

At first, the crossing of the Alps seems to have been impossible for this campaign. The Gauls, however, interpreted the arrival of Greeks looking for a homeland on the lower Rhône as a sign from the gods. They supported the Greek foundation of Massilia (Marseilles) against the efforts of the Sali, the rulers of this area. After this divinely favoured action, they succeeded in crossing the Alps. They defeated the Etruscans at the Tessin, as Hannibal later did the Romans. Since they heard that the region was called 'Insubrian', the same name as an area occupied by the Aedui in central Gaul, they regarded this as another divine omen that they should settle there. Thereupon they founded a town which they called Mediolanum (Milan). The Cenomani followed shortly afterwards; later the Boii, Lingones and Senones arrived.

Probably this report of the migrating groups under Bellovesus is founded on a Greek source (Grilli 1980). This conclusion is based on linguistic peculiarities and the association with the history of Massilia. Thus, the writings of Timagenes or Poseidonios come into question. In addition, traces of a Celtic migration legend are considered as a possibility (Dobesch 1989). Without any doubt, Livy's Roman history is influenced by the spirit of the Augustan era. It is in this context that the piety of the Gauls must be understood, a piety which finds its expression in their invariable obedience to signs of the gods. Internal discrepancies, which derive from the ideas of that time, can only be hinted at here.

The huge host of warriors under the leadership of Bellovesus consisted of a multiplicity of levies which, following later Roman reports, lived very close to each other

in central Gaul. Therefore it is suspected that Livy, in this point, is influenced by the ideas of his time. In addition, the occupation of a country by founding a town is a Roman pattern, which should not be applied to the Gauls for such an early period since archaeological evidence is missing for towns north of the Alps at this time. More credible is the description of Polybius who, in his text *In the Beginnings*, states that the Celts lived in undefended villages and simple houses and that their occupation, apart from warfare, was agriculture alone. Thus, they lived a 'simple life'. 'Other knowledge and technical skills (which are preconditions for town life) were completely unknown' (II.17.9-10).

It could be suggested that Livy, by presuming such an early immigration, was trying to characterize in a positive light the descendants of the Insubres and Cenomani, who had already held Roman citizenship in his time. Did he want to contrast these two tribes with the later-arriving Boii and Senones, who had been expelled by the Romans after long hostilities? Yet questions of this kind cannot be further dealt with here. We do not have other texts which could verify Livy, even if there are sporadic indications of a Celtic presence in northern Italy as early as the sixth century BC (Dobesch 1989: 57). All in all, the sequence of the Celtic immigration to Italy remains problematic because of the contradictory and, in part, very fragmentary nature of the documentary evidence.

However, these sources yield other important details. The names of the major Celtic tribes, which had unquestionably settled in Italy and which are clearly mentioned in further sources, are met with in Caesar's Gallic War north of the Alps about 50 BC. We must conclude that only splinter groups from the tribes crossed the Alps. The correspondence of the names makes clear that the development of Celtic tribes had progressed considerably at the time of the immigration and that, in consequence, they possessed an awareness of their own identity.

The subsequent fate of the Celts in Italy can be readily documented after the military struggles for Etruscan Clusium (Chiusi), the first Roman defeat at the Allia and the conquest of Rome (397/386 BC) (e.g. Polybius I.6.2-3; II.18.2). Livy gives more details about the conquest of Rome. He informs us that it was carried out by the Senones (V.35.3), who later on were also at the centre of the fighting; he describes the events in vivid detail and with a bias towards Roman policy (V.37ff.). On the whole, the surviving historical sources concentrate predominantly on the fighting between Celts and Romans.

In the later fourth and early third centuries BC, numerous military expeditions were made according to the reports of Polybius and Livy, which make it clear that raiding and plundering was the everyday life of the Celts (see Dobesch 1982: 57f.). The statement of Polybius has already been noted: 'apart from agriculture, the Celts were exclusively dedicated to war' (II.17.10). 'In the beginning they had suppressed many of the neighbouring peoples' (II.18.1). In addition, the Celts often served as mercenaries, for example under the tyrants of Syracuse from Dionysius I onwards (Justin 20.5.6; Xenophon, *Hellenica* VIII.1.20, 28-32; Diodorus XV.70.1), or under the Carthaginians (Griffith 1935). On the other hand, the Celts, who became rich in Italy, were repeatedly attacked by the people of the Alps and by more distant tribes (Polybius II.18.4; 19.1). Time and time again, they recruited auxiliary troops from beyond the mountains for their battles in Italy (for example Polybius II.19ff.;

III.48.6). It is self-evident that such connections beyond the mountains presuppose further contacts of considerable extent.

In the course of time, Rome developed and strengthened its military affairs. Thus, a joint force of Senones and Samnites was utterly destroyed at Sentinum in 295 BC. Ten years later, after an initial reverse at Arretium (*Arezzo*), the Romans definitively conquered the Senones (Polybius II.19.7–12). In the middle of their old territory, the Roman colony at Sena (*Senigallia*) was founded. The final partition of the country, the 'Ager Gallicus', was carried out in 232 BC (Polybius II.21.7–8).

Conflict with the Boii and Insubres dragged on longer. Following an initially successful Gaulish campaign their forces, reinforced by Gaesatae from the Rhône valley, were destroyed at Telamon in 225 BC (Polybius II.27ff.). Shortly afterwards, the Romans advanced into the Po valley (Polybius II.31ff.) and inflicted further decisive defeats on these tribes. Then they founded the first colonies in the area: Placentia (*Piacenza*) and Cremona (Polybius III.40.3ff.; Velleius I.14.8). Hannibal was extensively supported by the Celts on his move to Italy (Polybius III.60ff.; Livy XXI.39ff.). But according to Livy's testimony, this revolt was quickly suppressed after the Second Punic War had ended. Surprisingly, the Cenomani, who up to then had avoided fighting, now turned against the Romans; they were, however, soon pacified. After many expeditions, the Insubres were finally defeated in 194 BC. The fighting with the Boii dragged on until 191 BC. They were hit hardest by their defeat because they were forced to vacate half of their lands (Livy XXXVI.39.3). We must, in all probability, reckon with a significant population withdrawal back across the Alps (Strabo V.213, 216). Already two years after their defeat, their capital Felsina (*Bologna*) was transformed into the Roman colony with Latin status, Bononia (Livy XXXVII.57.7–8). The two other tribes were treated less harshly. The process of 'romanization' extended rapidly to the whole of the Po valley. As early as 49 BC 'Gallia Cisalpina', the term by which the area was now known, obtained Roman citizenship (Dio Cassius XLI.36.3).

In 186 BC a Celtic group attempted to settle in the area where Aquileia was founded five years later; they were, however, forced to withdraw (Livy XXXIX.22.6–7, 54ff.). This also happened to another Celtic group shortly afterwards (Livy XL.53.5–6). A series of confrontations with the Alpine peoples continued into the time of Augustus.

The descriptions of the fighting by Polybius and Livy contain, in addition, numerous accounts which tell us more of the daily life of the Celts. We learn of their competitiveness, their personal appearance and their clothes, their golden bracelets and torques, as well as the weapons of their warriors (e.g. Polybius II.28ff.). Their long swords, only usable for slashing, were inferior to the Roman weapons in close combat (Polybius II.30.8; 33.5). Amongst other things, as for example their inferior defensive weaponry, this might have been one of the reasons why the Celts, as so often emphasized, had so little staying power in battle. But their attack was feared nonetheless. The references to standards and war trumpets (e.g. Polybius II.29.6; 31.5, and especially frequent in Livy) might point to the development of mobile warrior-bands. With this type of fighting, ambushes were common (Polybius III.71.2). A typical Celtic weapon, the chariot, seems no longer to have played a major role in the fighting in Italy (maybe still in the battle of Sentinum: Livy

X.28.9–11; chariots are only mentioned at the battle of Telamon: Polybius II.23.4; 28.5). Of importance too is the ‘knightly’ character of Celtic fighting, which is especially reflected in the single combats which precede battles (Livy VII.9f.; VII.26.1–6). Such a challenge was then unknown to the Romans and, therefore, filled them with consternation. An additional sign of such a ‘knightly ethos’ is the fact that whole bands swore an oath of allegiance to their leaders (Polybius II.17 12).

It is particularly significant that the social order was transformed during the Celtic rule in northern Italy. Kings are mentioned time after time during the initial battles. Yet the Boii, Insubres and Cenomani no longer had kings at the time of their defeat. Kings are only mentioned at this time with reference to the Celts beyond the Alps. Instead, a ruling aristocracy seems to have evolved. Polybius generally talks about ‘leaders’. On the other hand, Livy repeatedly uses such terms as ‘senate’ or ‘*principes*’ and ‘*seniores*’ for the leading figures.

During the same period, the system of settlement was changing. While a rural population is frequently mentioned during the later battles, there is now a greater number of towns which may be considered as tribal capitals (Mediolanum: Polybius II.34. 10; Strabo V.1. 6; Brixia: Livy XXXII.30.6; Felsina: Livy XXXIII.37.4). In the case of Felsina (Bologna), it is evident that this was a development of an earlier Etruscan centre. The towns must also have had fortifications, as is apparent from the sieges of Acerrae and Clastidium (Polybius II.34.4–5; Livy also reports on the siege of Comum Oppidum (XXXIII.36.14). How the buildings within the towns looked and whether the shrines were situated within the walls (compare e.g. Polybius II.32.61) is not revealed to us.

It emerges clearly, however, that the Gauls adapted themselves gradually to the developed urban cultures which they encountered in northern Italy. It was inevitable that the initiation of such urban culture brought about not only social but also great economic changes.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

In contrast to the considerable evidence of the written sources, only briefly summarized above, the corresponding archaeological remains are far less extensive. Yet as early as 1871, at the international congress of anthropology and prehistoric archaeology in Bologna, E. Desort and G. de Mortillet were able to identify Celtic remains in the ruins of the Etruscan town at Marzabotto in the valley of the river Reno south of Bologna (*Congrès* 1873: 278, 476; see de Mortillet 1871). Comparable finds in their native countries, Switzerland and France, had been described by both scholars as ‘Celtic’. Research continued, especially under E. Brizio who, as early as 1887, presented a synthesis of the Gaulish finds from the province of Bologna, which had come to light in the course of the intensive excavations there, and who also published a report on the great Senonian cemetery of Montefortino in the hinterland of Ancona (Brizio 1887, 1899). But a significant upsurge in the archaeological research of the Celts began only after the Second World War. The best indications of this are the exhibition ‘The Gauls and Italy’ held in Rome in 1978, and the great, wide-ranging exhibition which took place in Venice in 1991 (*I Galli* 1978; Moscati *et al.* 1991; further syntheses with bibliography: Peyre 1979; ‘Les Celtes’ 1987).

Nevertheless the available archaeological evidence remains inadequate, so that it is still difficult to build up a detailed picture. In the territory of the Boii and Senones, a greater number of graves is now known, including those published by Brizio, with the addition of some more recently excavated examples. Less satisfactory is the situation in the area of the Cenomani where only at the cemetery of Carzaghetto (Ferraresi 1976) is it possible to make sound interpretations. We know least about the Insubres. Most relevant finds date to the period of the Roman conquest. Remains of the fourth century BC which might be susceptible to detailed analysis are lacking. This applies also, in large measure, to the third century BC. The limited evidence available to us is insufficient to allow us to determine whether we are here dealing with Celts recently arrived from north of the Alps (perhaps imposed on an older 'Celtic' substratum) or not. There is more evidence only for the lake region and the adjacent alpine valleys (cf. e.g. *I Galli* 1978: 76ff.; Peyre 1979: 27ff.; Stöckli 1975).

Kruta-Poppi's distribution map of swords of Celtic type dating to the fourth and third centuries BC is informative (Figure 27.2) (Kruta-Poppi 1986). The territories of the Senones, Boii and Cenomani stand out clearly. The central area of the Insubres around Milan is, however, thinly settled in contrast to the situation along the foothills of the Alps. It is of great interest that the Ligures in the hinterland of Genoa/La Spezia, as well as the Umbrians, adopted this weapon characteristic of their feared neighbour. A few find-spots are even further dispersed. The Venetian area almost entirely lacks swords, although here, in particular, developing 'celticization' is evident. Thus, Polybius points out that, apart from their language, the Veneti are little different from the Celts in their customs and dress (11.17.5). The absence of swords must be

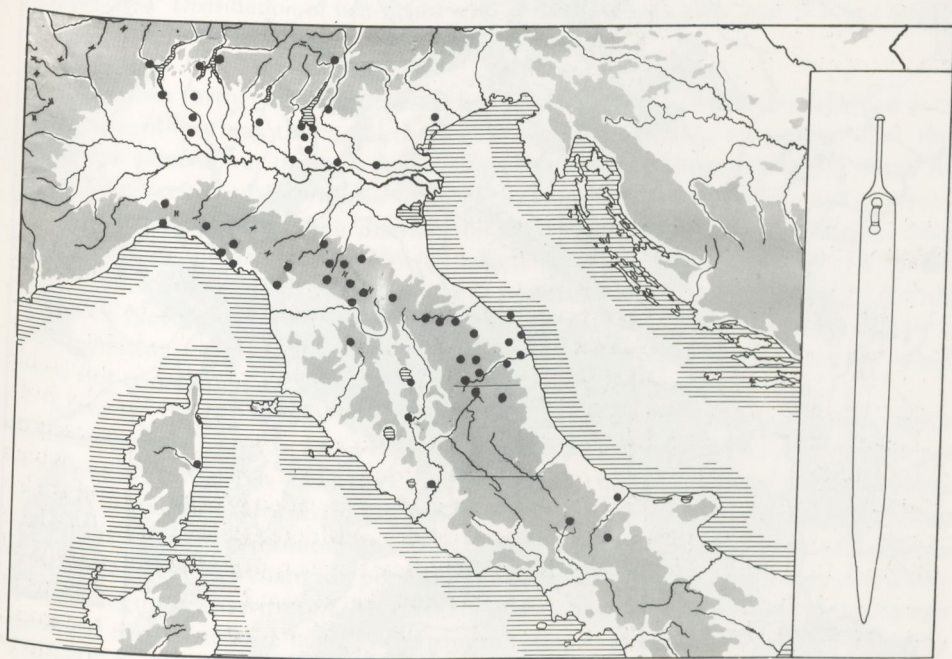


Figure 27.2 Distribution of swords of Celtic type in Italy. (After L. Kruta-Poppi.)

explained in terms of different burial ritual. Before the Gaulish invasion it was not customary, anywhere on the Po valley, to place weapons in the grave; this custom was retained by the Veneti.

While the finds already referred to belong to La Tène B and C1 according to the middle European chronological scheme, there is a number of earlier objects, which must also be linked to Celtic influences. These include torques, bracelets and fibulae, but above all openwork belt-hooks of bronze and iron, which were used to fasten the warrior's belt (Figure 27.3). North of the Alps, these hooks are typical of La Tène A, i.e. the fifth century BC. In northern Italy, too, finds dating approximately back to the fifth century BC occur. Undoubtedly such hooks and belt-rings were also produced in Italy, as is particularly well shown by a number of richly embellished bronze examples. Motifs such as 'birds and the tree of life' or a human figure between lyre-shaped gryphons ('lord of the beasts') hint at a long tradition in the Mediterranean. Occasionally, hooks with comparable decoration can be found north of the Alps. This leads to the conclusion that craftworking links across the Alps already existed (Figure 27.4). However, the earliest specimens seem to come from more distant areas of central and western Europe. Thus a number of Italian types are paralleled in France, i.e. in the possible areas of origin of the tribes invading Italy (Figure 27.4). On the other hand, other types are lacking in northern Italy, for example the mask ornament which we know from the area of the middle Rhine and

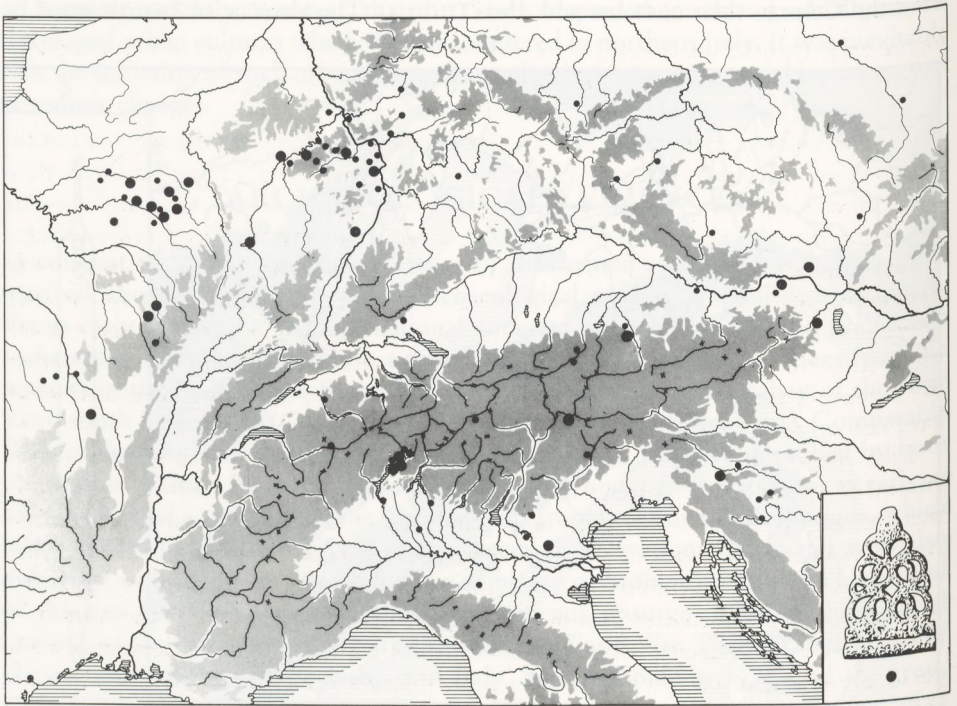


Figure 27.3 Distribution of openwork early La Tène belt-hooks.

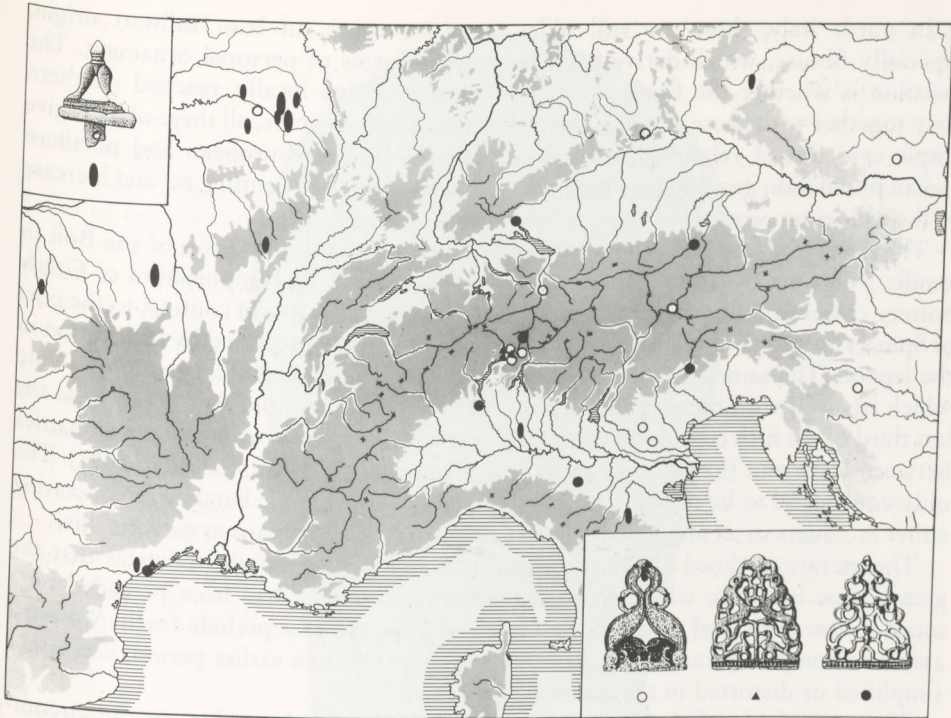


Figure 27.4 Distribution of belt-hooks with opposed 'dragon pairs' and of a type originating in northern France.

from regions further to the east. Since such belt-hooks can hardly be regarded as the products of normal trading activities, it seems reasonable to suggest that their dispersal came about through personal contact between those who wore them. Are they witnesses to an early phase of Celtic migration into Italy? (Frey 1987; 1991).

It is noticeable from their distribution that the hooks and associated rings occur frequently in the area of the Veneti, which the Celts supposedly did not invade. There are, however, signs that there it was not only men who wore such belt embellishment. Nevertheless, it might be that here we have an adoption of a typical part of the menacing Celtic warrior's apparel, without the accompanying weapons which have not come down to us because of the differing burial customs.

Likewise the belt-hooks and rings occur frequently in Ticino and in the region around Como. They are often found associated with swords. The novel custom of weapons as grave goods – as in the Celtic heartlands – indicates a change in burial ritual. As well as traditional forms, La Tène A fibulae are also relatively frequent. Since most cemeteries were in continuous use up to this period, it seems unlikely that the change in forms represents a change in population, a point also emphasized by the continuity of the 'Lepontic' inscriptions. More likely is the conclusion that Celtic weapons and personal ornament were taken over from outside. As these belt-hooks are absent in central Switzerland, it could be that it was the as yet poorly recognized Insubres, who settled in the plain around Milan, who inspired these innovations (Stöckli 1975).

In north Italy, there are still older, intrusive types, of late Hallstatt origin, especially fibulae, which derive from transalpine forms of personal ornament. The question is whether the fibulae, which were also copied locally, reached northern Italy together with those wearing them (Frey 1988). In any case, all these objects give ample evidence of relationships between central/western European and northern Italian population groupings, which extend back to the sixth century BC and increase in the following century.

The decline of the Etruscan towns is another sign of the invasion of the Boii in Emilia Romagna (Rivoldini 1960; *La formazione* 1987). The importation of Greek pottery ceases in Bologna and Marzabotto around 400/390 BC, in contrast to the port of Spina, situated at the estuary of the river Po, which was protected by its location in the lagoon. The same situation is evident at other Etruscan centres, giving us a date which fits well with the written accounts of the Celtic invasion. And, as early as the last third of the fifth century BC, there are gravestones in Bologna which depict battles between Celts and Etruscans (Figure 27.5) (Ducati 1928; 293ff.; Sassatelli 1983). The only conclusion to be drawn from these pictures is that Celtic bands were operating either as raiders or as mercenaries in the vicinity of the Etruscans as early as this.

The picture outlined above, though unclear in certain details, indicates that the great Celtic invasion, which affected the Etruscan towns, had been preceded by a much longer period of Celtic intrusions, which served as a prelude for it. We must assume a complex process, which, having taken place at an earlier period, was either simplified or distorted in the classical sources.

The way of life of the foreigners, who had adapted themselves to the circumstances in Italy, is displayed by grave goods of the fourth and third centuries BC in the area of the Boii and Senones. Let us take as an example the grave furnishings of a man in Montefortino in the hinterland of Ancona (Figure 27.6) (Brizio 1899). Here, although this is not a particularly rich grave, we find a substantial service for drinking and eating, consisting of various bronze containers as well as pottery of Greek and indigenous character. In addition, there are dices and gaming-pieces, as often occur in Etruscan graves. A *strigilis* shows us that the Celts took part in sports, as did the Greeks and Etruscans; the *strigilis* was used for scraping off the oil and sand after athletic exercises. Only the typical sword reveals the Celtic origin of the deceased. Similarly, Italian objects occur frequently in the graves of women.

Of all grave finds in the Senonian cemeteries, only various weapons display a 'Celtic' form (Kruta 1981). Many helmets are decorated in a mixed local style (as in Figure 27.8), which combines Celtic and Italian ornamental features. Two swords have bronze sheaths, which are embellished in a pure La Tène style and which, for example, have clear parallels in France (Figure 27.7) (Kruta *et al.* 1984). Apart from these weapons of the men, there are a few Celtic fibulae and rings, including a gold torc from a woman's grave at Filottrano (Grave 2) (Landolfi 1987: 452ff.), which also resembles artefacts from central Europe. All in all, there are only a few objects which are clearly related to the La Tène culture north of the Alps. Unfortunately, no associated settlements have as yet been investigated in this area. Therefore, the picture we have of the Senones remains one-sided, based as it is on burial evidence alone.

However, better evidence has recently been forthcoming in the region of the Boii. A new excavation in a small settlement in the Apennines to the south of Bologna gives



Figure 27.5 Etruscan grave stela from Bologna. The lower register shows a fight between an Etruscan on horseback and a Celt. (Museo Civico Archeologico, Bologna.)

us an idea of the process by which the settled Celts adapted themselves to the Italian environment (Vitali 1985, 1987). At the eastern downward slope of Monte Bibele, areas of settlement were uncovered which extend over several terraces. Foundations and remains of stone houses were uncovered which form built-up complexes clustered closely together and separated from each other by alleys. There is also a well. The first impression suggests that this is a small Etruscan centre. Remnants of iron and copper slag hint at metal prospection in the Apennines. The finds include various iron instruments as well as local pottery and black Firnis-wares from Etruscan Volterra. Sometimes the vessels have engravings, so-called graffiti which include Etruscan names. Only the fragments of a few glass arm-rings and several coins clearly indicate a Celtic presence. It is not yet clear whether the settlement was already in existence before 400 BC. It flourished in the fourth and third centuries BC.

Near the settlement a cemetery was discovered which was used for both cremations and inhumations. There was no discernible order in the arrangement of the male and female graves. It is noticeable that in the centre of the cemetery there are graves without weapons which contain, among other items, 'Italic fibulae', the



Figure 27.6 Grave goods of a Celt from Montefortino in the hinterland of Ancona.

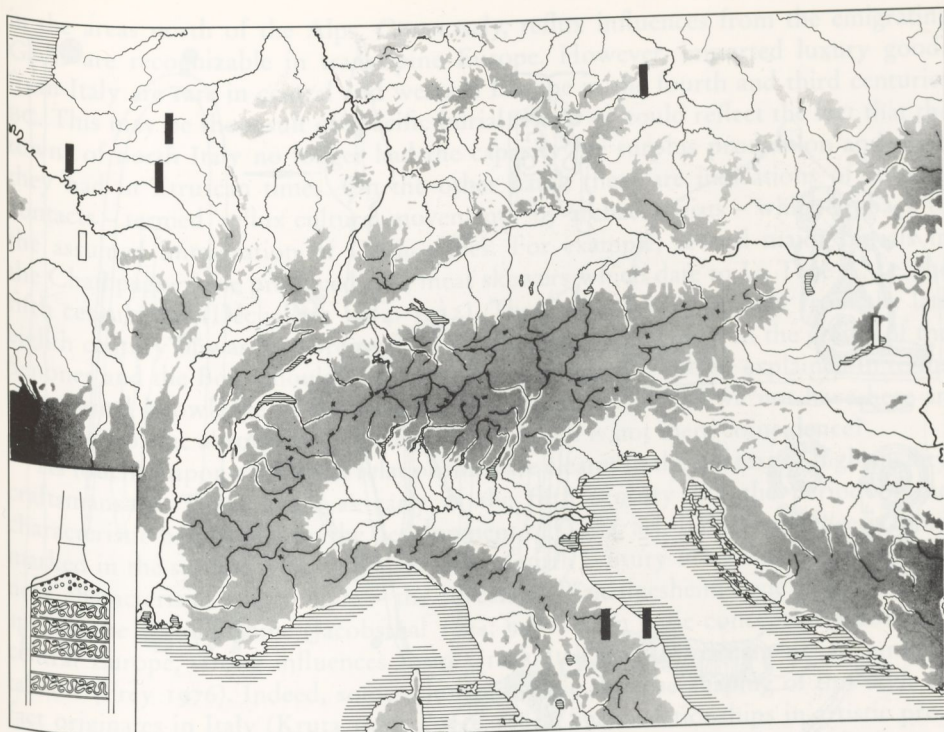


Figure 27.7 Decorated bronze sword sheaths in the Waldalgesheim style of the fourth century BC (solid symbols) and of later date (open symbols).

so-called Certosa fibulae; these are probably the oldest. They are surrounded by other graves, in which there are typical Italian objects including pottery, along with Celtic fibulae, beginning with examples belonging to La Tène B1. The men are now frequently accompanied by weapons such as the characteristic swords, spears and also helmets of 'Celtic' manufacture (Figure 27.8). Though these deceased give the impression of Gauls who became rich in the locality, the same is not so clear as regards the women, for many were excavated who were accompanied by pottery vessels upon which Etruscan names were engraved.

Similar finds have come from Bologna itself (e.g. Kruta 1980). They show clearly that a mixing of population had taken place which went beyond the simple adaptation by the Celts of the customs and the luxury items extant at that time in Italy.

In the territory of the Boii, too, settlement finds are unfortunately scarce. For Celtic Bologna in particular, we can reconstruct only a very vague picture. From burials in the immediate vicinity, however, or, for example, from the filling material of wells, it is evident that Celts lived there, having adapted to an urban way of life, and that the occupation of the towns continued, though in reduced form. Similar observations can be made in the suburbs of the Cenomanian Brixia (Brescia). To date we know least about Mediolanum (Milan) (e.g. Frey 1984).

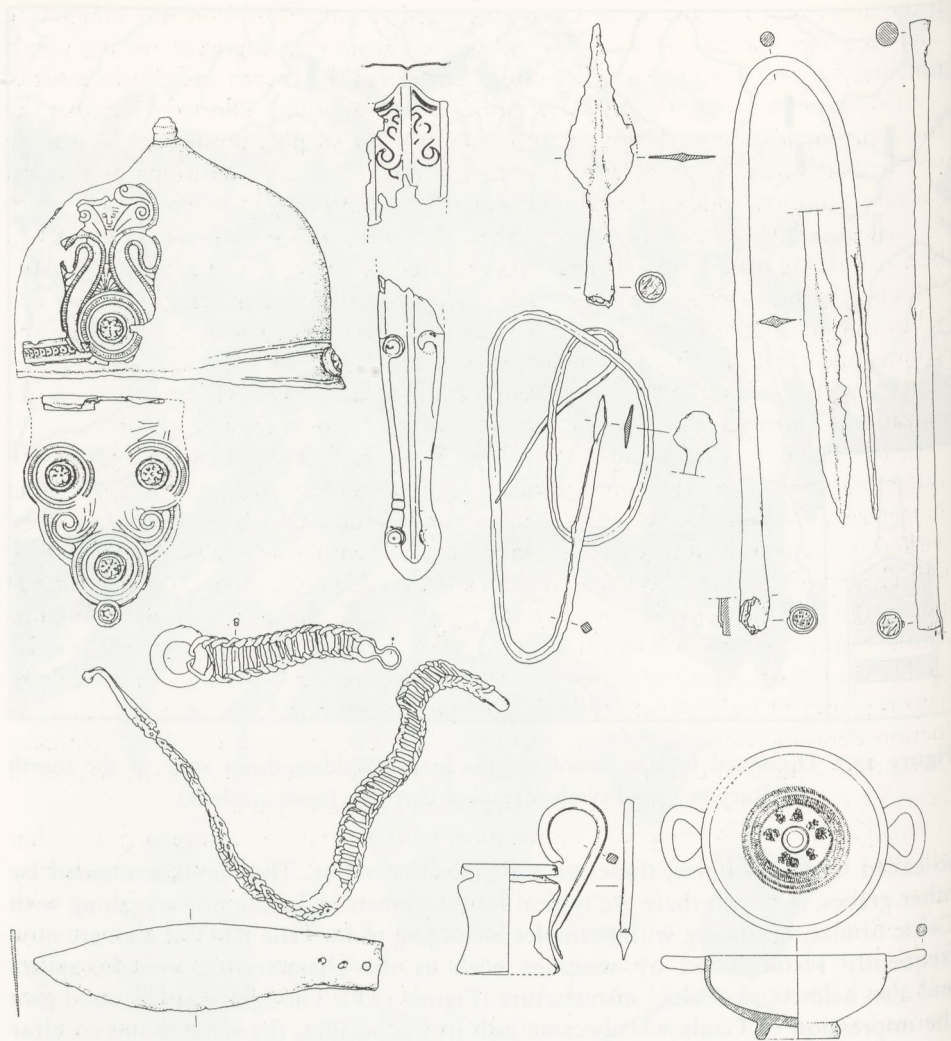


Figure 27.8 A Celtic grave from Monte Bibele in the Bologna region
(scale approx. 1:5).

The process of assimilation between the Celts and the Italian population stops abruptly in Picenum and the area of Bologna, after the Boii and the Senones had been defeated and largely expelled. For the area north of the river Po up to the valleys of the Alps, the picture, however, is different. Here continued development of Celtic culture in the second and first centuries BC is recognizable in the archaeological remains (Arslan 1991; Tizzoni 1981; 1984; 1985; Stöckli 1975).

Corresponding with the written sources, the archaeological evidence shows also that the Celts in Italy maintained close contact with their relations in western and central Europe. The development of personal ornament and of weapons parallels that

in the areas north of the Alps. Conversely, reflux influences from the emigrating Gauls are recognizable in transalpine Europe. However, imported luxury goods from Italy are rare in central and western Europe in the fourth and third centuries BC. This may be the result of specific burial rituals or could reflect the fact that the towns of north Italy no longer had the capacity for surplus production and trade they had in Etruscan times. On the other hand, there are indications of cultural contacts – termed ‘reflux cultural movements’ by archaeologists – which go back to the assumed immigration of Celtic tribes. For example, several major burials in the Champagne have produced iron meat skewers which date to La Tène A, i.e. the fifth century BC (Déchelette 1914: 1412). These often occur in Italy from the late eighth century onwards; moreover, they are a recurring element in the graves of the Senones and the Boii. Should not this transfer of a burial rite be explained in terms of personal knowledge of the customs of another land? Do we not have here an indication of the absorption of foreign ideas which is not mere coincidence?

As touched upon earlier, the relationships are clearer in the context of high-quality craftsmanship. These begin as early as the fifth century BC, the period of the characteristic belt-hooks. In the development of Celtic art, Italian influence is more marked in the second stylistic phase, in the fourth century BC. Even though the by now characteristic tendril style – the so-called ‘Waldalgesheim-style’, after a find-spot in the middle Rhine (Jacobsthal 1944: 94) – is, in basic conception, rooted in central Europe, strong influences from Greek/Italian ‘plant ornament’ are unmistakable (Frey 1976). Indeed, some scholars believe that the shaping of this style in fact originates in Italy (Kruta 1982; Peyre 1982). Such relationships in artistic production continue into the third century BC. The extent and intimacy of contacts across the Celtic world at this time is shown by swords with scabbards bearing a recurring dragon-motif (Figure 27.9) (Megaw and Megaw 1990).

Finally, the development of urbanization in Italy may well have had a lasting influence on the Celtic world (Figure 27.10) (Frey 1984). In this regard, there are, again, only a few signs of direct links. Among these, however, are certain types of location new to the major settlements of central Europe, including siting in the middle of a plain, as is indicated by the place-name ‘Mediolanum’, rather than their being protected by steep heights or by rivers. Above all are details of their fortifications for which the Italic *agger* is an obvious prototype. Of course this does not mean that the emergence of towns to the north of the Alps can only be explained in terms of relationships with Italy. Larger market-places near rivers or on the coast, as well as other sites, might well, with time, have developed an urban character. But the written sources, which give us plenty of detail about Italian towns, give also an impression of social organization and administrative institutions, which we can recognize later in Caesar’s descriptions of the war in Gaul, and which form an essential element of Gaulish urban culture. Influences were thus already in place, later encountered by Caesar in Gaul, which formed the basis for a ‘civilized’ way of life and which paved the way for the rapid romanization of the whole country.

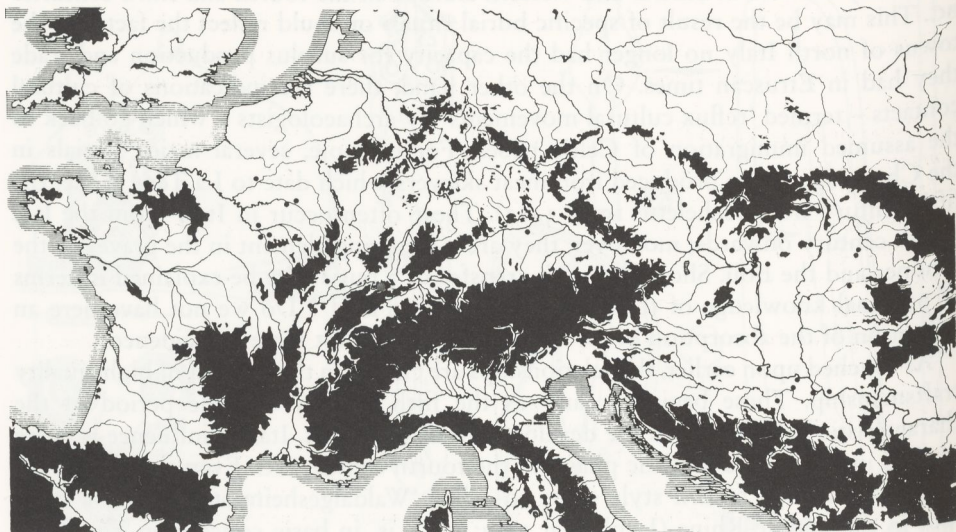


Figure 27.9 Distribution of sword sheaths with dragon pairs. (After J.V.S. Megaw.)



Figure 27.10 Distribution of the most important Celtic oppida.

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