



**HAL**  
open science

# Mobility and Exchange across the Borders. Exploring social processes in Europe during the first Millennium BCE

Veronica Cicolani

► **To cite this version:**

Veronica Cicolani. Mobility and Exchange across the Borders. Exploring social processes in Europe during the first Millennium BCE: Proceedings of the XVIII UISPP World Congress (4-9 June 2018, Paris, France) Volume 9, Sessions XXXIV-4 and XXXIV-5. Proceedings of the UISPP World Congress (9), Archaeopress, 2021, 978-1-78969-730-8. halshs-03173935

**HAL Id: halshs-03173935**

**<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-03173935>**

Submitted on 18 Mar 2021

**HAL** is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.



Distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution - NonCommercial - NoDerivatives 4.0 International License

# Mobility and Exchange across the Borders. Exploring social processes in Europe during the first Millennium BCE, theoretical and methodological approaches

Veronica Cicolani

Chargée de recherche CNRS, UMR8546 AOrOc CNRS-PSL  
Orcid\_ID: [orcid.org/0000-0003-0326-299X](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0326-299X)

Over the last few decades, interaction studies have been substantially renewed thanks to the application of new methods and perspectives. In European Archaeology, especially for the Iron Age period, we are indebted to a long tradition of international studies, which had begun in the 19th century. For a long time, the traditional approaches have been based on the identification of exogenous products and their spread. This is mostly due to the well-known role of the luxurious Mediterranean imports discovered in princely sites and burials in European Protohistoric research (Brun, Chaume 1997; Brysbaert and Gorgues 2017). The prestigious nature of such sumptuous discoveries, such as the famous crater of Vix (Burgundy, 1952/53), the *kline* of Hochdorf (1978) or the vessels of Lavau tomb (2017), as well as their different origins - have influenced and oriented the research at the expense of a more global vision of the society.

Prehistoric Europe was then perceived as a cultural system in which structural changes are closely related, if not totally dependent, on the contribution of the Mediterranean civilizations, thus excluding all forms of originality and autonomy. This representation, still in force up to about twenty years ago, has been slowly deconstructed thanks to the contributions of Social Anthropology, theoretical models inspired by Micro-Economic and Gender Studies (e. g. Szabó 2006 especially Adam and Bats in this volume; Dietler 2005; Wager 2009; Verger 2013; Pernet and Verger 2013), but mainly thanks to the recent discoveries and international research programmes.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, the critical review of the *Fürstensitze* model, based on the concept of center-periphery and an economic system, based mainly on the exchange of prestige goods between north alpine and Mediterranean elites (Kimmig 1969, updated and further developed by Frankenstein, Rowlands 1978 ; Chaume 2004 in Guggisberg: 79-106; Bonomi and Guggisberg 2015), allows to overcome this selective vision of Protohistoric societies (e.g. Kienlin and Zimmermann 2012; Pernet and Verger 2013; Schumann and van der Vaart-Verschoof, 2017; Twiss 2007).

Indeed, current Protohistoric research now strives to better identify all the active members of society such as artisans, shopkeepers, commoners, women, locals or foreigners, whose role has often been considered as marginal in the scientific literature. Today, protohistoric interactions must be regarded as a complex and dynamic network of proxies acting on different social, cultural and economic levels but closely interconnected (e.g. Knappett, 2011; Nakoinz and Knitter, 2016; Feugnet et al. 2017; Cicolani 2017; Cicolani and Huet 2019).

Recent studies on the production of indigenous communities have highlighted a codified cultural and social organization, complex and specific, where the exogenous contributions, both material and ideological, are freely integrated and /or reinterpreted (Dubreucq et al. in press). On the other hand, the discovery of workshops and settlements with large artisanal districts in the transalpine areas raised again the question of the part played by craft production and trade of daily items (ceramics, bronze vessels, costume gears but also biological products like fermented drinks

---

<sup>1</sup> For example the international research project of “Vix et son environnement” at the University of Burgundy, the DFG project of “Frühe Zentralisierungs- und Urbanisierungsprozesse - Zur Genese und Entwicklung ‘frühkeltischer Fürstensitze’ und ihres territorialen Umlandes”, and the more recent ANR-DFG projects “Die Sitzbank von Hochdorf” and “Celtic gold”.

or bee products) in the organization and evolution of ancient societies. In such a framework, the sociological interpretation of long-distance interactions cannot disregard the accurate identification of all proxies that allowed the transmission of various kinds of goods across a large part of Europe over time.

Today, thanks to new and enlarged datasets, it is possible to consider both quantitative and qualitative aspects (archaeometric, biological, biochemical and molecular analyses, statistical processing, spatial analyses, mathematical modelling) and go beyond the mere typological analysis to bring out the diversity of social agency and the complexity of networks involved in all the social processes of production, consumption, adaptation and dissemination.

If the discovery of far-fetched products and objects physically bear witness to human interactions, that cannot alone explain the complexity of underlying social and cultural processes.

It is precisely at this stage of theoretical renewal and critical review of archaeological data that this publication is located. This volume is dedicated to the proceedings from the XXXIV-IV and XXXIV-V sessions held at the 18 UISPP World Congress in Paris (June 2018) and presents a selected number of papers. Its purpose is to stimulate a debate around human interactions and cultural transfers as crucial factors in social processes among ancient European societies. The main goal is to open up new analytic perspectives on this topic and critically review the traditional markers and approaches already applied to the identification of human mobility during the First Millennium.

In this framework, the papers herein collected provide different examples from various archaeological contexts (settlements and/or tombs) and regions using new methodological approaches able to illuminate the diversity of cultural transfers.

Thus, from a methodological point of view the spread of foreign products can be modelled to highlight the underlying timing, strategies and logics. Applying mathematical and spatial data modelling (e. g. Graph, Least-cost path analysis), we can visualise and order complex and heterogeneous data, such as archaeological records, but also identify connected networks and sub-networks as Aurelia Feugnet, Clara Filet and Gorin Camille illustrate in the first paper. Different kinds of tools and models, here clearly explained, can be used to define the social organisation of exchanges and propose a deeper study of cultural Protohistoric networks and their evolution. Thanks to a systemic approach and large-scale methods, we can go beyond the traditional distribution maps of archaeological records and produce a more extensive analysis of past human mobility and their entangled social practices.

Another current approach is the analysis of biological contents from ceramics or bronze vessels. The Magi programme, here presented by Dominique Frère and his team, is precisely focused on the identification of biological products used in funeral rituals and often still preserved in some ceramic and bronze vessels, even if in micro traces. Crossing Archaeobotany and molecular chemistry we are now able to identify the nature of biological remains used during ancient rituals and thus have a deeper knowledge of ancient practices and tastes. They also translate the transfers of traits and local adaptations, which are often difficult to identify through traditional research methods. Therefore, the recent analysis of the biochemical evidences contained in the Etruscan caldron shows the consumption of red wine by the local Celtic elite in contrast with the mead present in the famous caldron of Hochdorf. The aromatic substances also highlight the use of plants from the local area to obtain a flavoured wine according to a common practice in the Etruscan and Greek cultures, likely here adapted to local taste.

An interesting point of view is also presented in the third paper by Caroline Trémeaud: through the lens of Gender Studies she rethinks the organisation of Protohistoric societies in Western Europe. Combining statistical methods and gender analysis applied on a dataset of more than 700

princely graves, the author underlines the different rhythms of the evolution of princely tombs in Europe and the complex system of connections that seems to link different areas across different periods. The spatial movements and gradual enrichment of grave goods are evaluated by applying a wealth index created by the author to rank the princely graves. Using this approach it is possible to calculate the link between the richness of the grave and their number. Thus, combining wealth index and gender interpretation of the grave (goods, architecture, biological data if available) it is possible to highlight different dynamics of social representation across Europe, spanning over a long period from the final Bronze Age to the La Tene B.

From a more traditional perspective, the mobility across Europe can be pointed by tracking foreign clues in indigenous contexts. Connecting stratigraphic, quantitative and qualitative data in sites showing the coexistence of local and foreign products, it is possible to better understand the different levels of integration, transformation and adaptation of stylistic-formal traits, aesthetic tastes or artisan practices that could testify direct or indirect human mobility.

Thus, bronze ornaments are the most common items, showing a greater morphological and stylistic variability. These features are good cultural markers, able to draw distinctions between different cultural areas of production and consumption. As described in the Linda Papi's paper, the typostylistic study, focused on openwork Latenian belt-hooks found in the Northern Italy Protohistoric burials, shows the different level of their integration in local costume in order to understand their reception and adaptation in local communities. If the belt clips are a clothing element usually found in Northern Italy male graves since the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age, this ornament also becomes a female ornament from the 6th century BC. The latenian model, openwork belt-hooks, seems to follow the same pattern, being a male cultural marker and an ornament adopted by some local women. This case study shows that human mobility can be detected by tracking specific material evidence and mainly by examining the cultural value of their integration within a local context.

At a larger scale, the spread of Roman bronze vessel in the Northern West part of the Gaul during the 2nd and 1st centuries BC, is another interesting case study of acculturation phenomena. In this framework, Quentin Sueur proposes a critical review of the Romanisation concept and the linked notion of acculturation based on a large dataset of Roman bronze vessels found in the *Gallia Belgica* area. The analysis highlights the capacity of indigenous populations to adopt Mediterranean products in local practices. Imported metal tableware does not erase regional customs but rather integrates with them changing its original function in some instances. Hence, the contextual and comparative analysis of more than 600 items from 149 sites shows that we are not dealing with an inert form of assimilation, but rather with phenomena of hybridization through a complex system of means and/or symbolic value adaptations.

More complex is the picture for the Eastern part of the Celtic world. Here, local traditions, foreign goods and indigenous items seem to characterise local communities. Julie Clerc offers an overview of this core area in contact with many different cultural groups. By adopting a regional perspective and a comparative approach of archaeological data from graves and settlements dated from the 4th and 3rd centuries BC, the author suggests a shift in the perception of internal and exterior networks. While traditional approaches often focus on foreign goods from Western-Celtic and Mediterranean worlds, the updated dataset shows that their presence is still limited. The internal social evolution is more indebted to local transfers and innovations between local and Celtic communities than to long distance contacts. Thus, the relations with the local populations of the intra-Carpathian and Balkan zone play the most important and enriching roles in the development of the Celtic or Celtic/mixed populations of this region during the 4th and 3rd centuries BC. Furthermore, these exchanges seem to be the result of a significant mixing, frequent contacts and reciprocal transmissions mostly visible in the objects of daily life like ornaments.

Finally, materials exchanges can also translate semantic transfers, as Vincent Georges suggests in his paper. Focused on the spatial and anthropological spread of geometric patterns engraved on bronze bracelets in Europe, the author identifies different regional and/or intertwined *graphic semioses* that seem strongly correlated with a specific elite expression or protocol framework. The popularity of these different geometric patterns across Europe from the end of the Bronze Age until the end of the First Iron Age suggests the existence of complex alliance systems, partly based on marriage alliances and used by elites as tool and/or language to keep their authority within aristocratic households.

To conclude, this volume does not expect to put forward an exhaustive analysis of all methodological and theoretical approaches to human mobility in the first Millennium BCE. However, the various case studies presented at the congress and published herein may contribute to renew the scientific debate on mobility and cultural interactions, considering them as important factors of social changes in ancient societies. Thanks to the updated approaches and perspectives here presented, this volume can serve as a stimulus for further research and discussions that would gradually assess the role of each social group or actor actively operating in the processes of production, spread and consumption of various goods and products.

### Acknowledgements

I wish to thank to all the peerreviewers for their work :

Liliana Cicolani, Martin Doppelt, Katherine Gruel, Thomas Huet, Yan Kysela, Delphine Isoardi, Thierry Lejars, Claude Mordant, Sandra Péré-Noguès, Lionel Pernet, Matthieu Poux, Lorenzo Zamboni.

### Bibliography

- Bonomi, S. and Guggisberg, M. 2015. *Griechische Keramik nördlich von Etrurien mediterrane Importe und archäologischer Kontext, internationale Tagung, Basel 14.-15. Oktober 2011*. Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag.
- Brysbaert, A. and Gorgues, A. (eds), 2017. *Nobility versus artisans? The multiple identities of elites and 'commoners' viewed through the lens of materials and technologies during the European Bronze and the Iron Ages*. Leiden: Sidestones Press 2017
- Brun P. and Chaume, Br. 1997. *Vix et les éphémères principautés celtiques. Les Vie-Ve siècles av. J. -C. en Europe centre- occidentale. Actes du colloque de Châtillon-sur-Seine (27-29 octobre 1993)*. Paris: Errance.
- Cicolani, V. 2017. *Passeurs des Alpes. La culture de Golasecca entre Méditerranée et Europe à l'âge du Fer*. Paris: Hermann.
- Cicolani, V. 2020. Interactions techno-culturelles en Italie nord-occidentale aux VI<sup>e</sup>-V<sup>e</sup> siècles av. J.-C. : nouvelles recherches , *MEFRA*, 131-1, <https://doi.org/10.4000/mefra.10093>
- Cicolani, V. and Huet Th. 2019. Essai de modélisation des échanges et des réseaux de circulation dans les Alpes centrales au premier Âge du Fer, in *Circulations montagnardes, circulations européennes, La conquête de la montagne: des premières occupations humaines à l'anthropisation du milieu*, 142 *Colloque CTHS*, Pau, 2017. DOI <https://doi.org/10.4000/books.cths.7827>.
- Dietler, M. 2005. *Consumption and Colonial Encounters in the Rhône Basin of France. A Study of Early Iron Age Political Economy* (Monographies d'archéologie Méditerranéennes 21). Lattes.
- Dubreucq, E., Cicolani, V. and Filippini A. 2020. Productions métalliques au premier et au début du second âge du fer dans le domaine nord-alpin centre-occidental (7<sup>e</sup>-5<sup>e</sup> siècles av. J.-C.) : quand créativité et spécialisation caractérisent les artisans, in Hamon C., Mordant C., Bauvais S. Peake R. (eds) *Specialised productions and specialists, Paris, XVIII congrès mondial de l'UISPP, 4-10 juin 2018*. Paris: Séances de la Société Préhistorique Française.
- Frankenstein, S. and Rowland, M.-J. 1978. The internal structure and regional context of Early Iron Age society in south-western Germany. *Bulletin of the Institute of Archeology* 15: 73-112.
- Guggisberg, M. 2004. *Die Hydria von Grächwil : zur Funktion und Rezeption mediterraner Importe in Mitteleuropa im 6. und 5. Jahrhundert V. Chr.* Akten Internationales Kolloquium anlässlich des 150. Jahrestages der Entdeckung der Hydria von Grächwil durch das Institut für Archäologie des

- Mittelmeerraumes der Universität Bern, 12. -13. Oktober 2001. Berne Bernisches Historisches Museum.
- Knappett, C. 2011. *An Archaeology of Interaction. Network Perspectives on Material Culture and Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Nakoinz, O. and Knitter, D. 2016. *Modelling human behaviour in landscapes*. New York: Springer.
- Pernet L. and Verger, S. 2013. *Une Odyssée gauloise*. Arles: Éditions Errances.
- Schumann, R. and van der Vaart-Verschoof, S. (eds), 2017. *Connecting elites and regions. Perspectives on contacts, relations and differentiations during the Early Iron Age Hallstatt C period in Northwest and Central Europe*. Leiden: Sidestone Press.
- Stöllner, T. 2012. Mining and Elites: A Paradigm Beyond the Evidence in European Metal Ages, in T.L. Kienlin and A. Zimmermann (eds), *Beyond Elites. Alternatives to Hierarchical Systems in Modelling Social Formations* (Universitätsforschungen zur Prähistorischen Archäologie 215): 433-448.
- Szabó, M. (ed.) 2006. *Les Civilisés et les Barbares du Ve au IIe s. av. J.-C., Actes de la table ronde de Budapest, 17-18 juin 2005. Les Civilisés et les Barbares du Ve au IIe s. av. J.-C., Actes de la table ronde de Budapest, 17-18 juin 2005*. Bibracte, 12/3: 193-204.
- Twiss K. (ed.), 2007. *The Archaeology of Food and Identity*. Carbondale: Center for Archaeological Investigations Press. University of Southern Illinois.
- Verger, S. 2013. Partager la viande, distribuer l'hydromel. Consommation collective et pratique du pouvoir dans la tombe de Hochdorf, in *L'Âge du Fer en Europe. Mélanges offerts à Olivier Buchsenschutz* (Mémoires 32): 511-520. Bordeaux: Ausonius éditions.
- Wager E. C. 2009. Mining ore and making people: Re-thinking notions of gender in Bronze Age Mining communities, in T. L. Kienlin and B. Roberts (eds) *Metals and societies. Studies in honour of Barbara S. Ottaway* (Universitätsforschungen zur prähistorischen Archäologie 169): 105-115. Bonn: Habelt.