THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF

CELTIC ART

D. W. Harding

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Tempering the much adopted art-historical approach, Harding argues for a broader definition of Celtic art. Contrary to recent attempts to deconstruct the Celts as an ethnic entity altogether, he argues that there were communities in Iron Age Europe that were identified historically as Celts, regarded themselves as Celtic, or who spoke Celtic languages, and that the art of these communities may reasonably be regarded as Celtic art. Though the La Tène styles represent the summation of achievement of Celtic art, the origin and geographical distribution of Celtic art extend well beyond the La Tène culture zone.

Though art-historical considerations remain essential, Harding shows that Celtic art should also be viewed within its broader archaeological context. From Central Europe to the Atlantic west, Celtic art was essentially a social and political art, as well as a religious art, and a medium through which identity could be asserted. It was fundamentally embedded in Celtic society, custom and belief. This new study will be indispensable for anyone wanting to take a fresh and innovative perspective on Celtic art.

Dennis W. Harding is Abercromby Professor of Archaeology at the University of Edinburgh. His most recent book *The Iron Age in Northern Britain* was published in 2004.

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PREFACE

My interest in Celtic art arose initially during my postgraduate years under the supervision of Professor Christopher Hawkes at the Institute of Archaeology in Oxford. In 1966, as a temporary Assistant Keeper in the Ashmolean Museum, I benefited from sessions in discussion with Professor Martyn Jope, whose book on *Early Celtic Art in the British Isles* (2000) had just that year been advertised as forthcoming. Jope had a remarkable capacity for seeing perspectives that others missed. After studying an object for some minutes, he would ask a question that suddenly focused attention on a quite novel aspect of its ornament, always crediting the student with a perception equal to his own. In 1972, a symposium on Celtic art at the Maison Française in Oxford, at which I participated, brought together a number of senior scholars and those who were emerging as the authorities of the next generation, notably Hawkes, Piggott and Jope, Klindt-Jensen, Paul-Marie Duval, Frey and Kruta among others, the outcome of which was a stimulating if idiosyncratic volume, *Celtic Art in Ancient Europe* (1976), edited by Duval and Hawkes. For the next thirty years, I taught Celtic art as integral to the European and Insular Iron Age in the University of Edinburgh, and the present volume is therefore very much the product of my study of the subject over the past forty years.

Reflecting upon my teaching of Celtic art over that period, I now regret its limitations in two principal respects. First, in common with long-standing convention in Continental Europe, I too readily equated Celtic art with La Tène art. I now believe that exclusive equation to be too restricting, and it is perhaps on account of the otherwise distracting debate about Celts and Celticity in later prehistoric Europe that I felt obliged to address the question of defining Celtic art. Second, my lectures, in common again with many archaeological, as opposed to art-historical treatments of the topic, came to a conclusion with Romanization, and scarcely looked further into the early historic period. Without suggesting that Later Celtic art, or Early Christian art, is in any meaningful sense a resurgence of earlier traditions, I believe its study can usefully inform our understanding of the processes that combined to create the more outstanding manifestations of Early Celtic art. It is with these processes, social, economic and technological, and the archaeological context and environment of Celtic art, that this book is concerned, as much as with the art-historical aspects of the subject.

Any book on Celtic art plainly requires adequate illustration, and it has to be admitted that this has presented a considerable challenge. Some objects are self-evidently treasures of great technical and artistic accomplishment, and deserve colour

illustration, as the publisher has generously provided. Other artefacts are less photogenic; in some cases ornament is extremely fine or barely visible through corrosion, or is such that it is hard to illuminate for photography from a single angle. In such cases it was considered better to illustrate with line-drawings rather than unsatisfactory photographs. Except where specifically acknowledged, all the line-drawings were redrawn by the author, sometimes from more than one source, for two reasons. First, it was considered preferable to have a uniform style in the drawings. Second, many published drawings, for example, of scabbard ornament, were evidently not drawn for the scale of reduction intended, with the result that detail has either bleached out or blackened in. In the present volume, all the drawings have been tested for reduction by reduced photocopies, so that the published versions should be at least as good as these, in all of which the detail survived, despite the scale of reduction. Regrettably, only a limited number are drawings from the original artefacts, so that those based upon previously published drawings or images should be regarded as interpretative rather than authoritative.

Obtaining photographic images proved more problematic than was anticipated, in some cases taking nearly a year to obtain, and in other cases never arriving at all before the book went to press. Recognizing that digital imagery has taken over from traditional photography, it is a matter of concern that so few museums seem to retain the facility or inclination to make new images on request, and even more so the implication that older photographic archives have not been maintained. I wish nevertheless to record my gratitude especially to the following individuals and institutions for their courtesy and service in providing photographic and illustrative material:

The Historisches Museum der Pfalz, Speyer, and especially Peter Haag-Kirchner, the Landesmuseum für Vorgeschichte, Dresden, the Württembergisches Landesmuseum Stuttgart, the Landesdenkmalamt Stuttgart, the Hessische Landesmuseum, Darmstadt, the Swiss National Museum, Zurich, the Musée des Antiquités Nationales and the RMN Paris, the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, the Musée des beaux-arts Angoulême, the Department of Prehistory and Europe and the Photography and Imaging Department of the British Museum, the Library Manuscripts Department of Trinity College Dublin, the National Museum of Ireland and especially Mr Finbarr Connolly, the Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nürnberg, the Badisches Landesmuseum, Karlsruhe, the Rheinisches Landesmuseum, Bonn, the Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte, Munich, the National Museum of Prague, the National Historical Museum of Romania, Bucharest, the Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, the Museum of Antiquities of Newcastle upon Tyne, the National Museums of Scotland, the Moesgård Museum and the National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen, who were among the first to respond, the Musée historique and archéologique de l'Orléanais, the Musée Saint-Raymond, Toulouse, the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, Leiden, the Landesmuseum Joanneum, Graz, the Historisches Museum, Berne, and the Musée du Chatillais, Chatillon-sur-Seine. I owe a particular debt to Prof. Dr Irwin Scollar for help in expediting the project, to Suzie and Gery Hermanau, and Dr Eberhard Sauer for help in German correspondence (not invariably comprehensible even to native speakers), to Ian Morrison for solving innumerable computer crises and to the many colleagues and friends who have encouraged me to completion. Most of all my thanks are due to my wife, Carole, who has lived with it and tolerated it for so long.

All sources are otherwise acknowledged individually with the photographs.

Finally, I should record my thanks to the University of Edinburgh for allowing me sabbatical leave in the session 2005–6 to complete the book, and to the Research Committee of the School of Arts, Culture and Environment for a subvention towards the cost of photographic material and reproduction fees.

D. W. Harding
Gullane,
June 2006

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DEFINITIONS, MATERIAL AND CONTEXT

Few topics in archaeology have spawned as many perceptions and misconceptions as Celtic art. An Internet search for 'Celtic art' immediately offers patterns of 'Celtic' interlace and knot-work, elements of later Celtic art in fact derived from Mediterranean or Germanic origins, or images of high crosses of ninth-century date or later and related icons of the early 'Celtic' church. For coffee-table books a dust-jacket depicting the Gundestrup cauldron is considered representative, notwithstanding the fact that it was almost certainly of Thracian manufacture, and discovered in northern Jutland, well beyond the limits of Celtic Europe. In academic publications, Celtic art is generally synonymous with the La Tène ornamental style of the pre-Roman Iron Age, but even this equation should not pass unqualified. Since in recent years the concept of Celts and Celtic as an ethnic descriptor has itself been questioned, it seems appropriate now to re-define and re-assess what we mean by Celtic art.

History of research

The identification of distinctive styles of ornament on Iron Age metal-work as 'Celtic' has its origins in the mid-nineteenth century, and is particularly associated with John Kemble, whose work was published posthumously in 1863, together with contributions from R. G. Latham and A. W. Franks, under the title *Horae Ferales*. Franks used the term 'Late Keltic' to describe objects such as the Battersea shield and horse-gear from the Polden Hills hoard, in contrast to earlier material of the Bronze Age that was also regarded as Celtic on the basis of contemporary studies of human craniology. 'Late Keltic' was still being used at the end of the century, notably by Arthur Evans (1890) in his report on excavations at Aylesford in Kent, but fell out of use thereafter with the decline in fashion of craniological and ethnic correlations. Notwithstanding his later Aegean interests, Arthur Evans was a pioneer in the study of Celtic art, his Rhind Lectures in Edinburgh of 1895 anticipating Paul Jacobsthal by nearly half a century in recognizing the classical influences on the early La Tène style. On the Continent, cultural and even chronological identifications of some of the classic assemblages were still more tentative, with early discoveries of chieftains' burials in the Rhineland being assigned to the Roman period, while related finds were alternatively attributed to Teutonic times. One of the pioneers in the field of La Tène studies, Ludwig Lindenschmit, had classified finds from the site of La Tène on Lake Neuchâtel, but had not identified them as native Celtic, and likewise believed that objects like the Durkheim torc were Etruscan imports. In 1871, de Mortillet recognized metal-work

at Marzabotto near Bologna as similar to material from the Marne, and inferred that here was the archaeological evidence for trans-alpine Gauls of the documentary sources. As late as 1889, Adolf Furtwängler published the Schwarzenbach bowl as the product of a workshop in the vicinity of Massilia on the analogy of east Greeks on the Black Sea producing high-status metal-work for Scythians. In effect, the equation between La Tène metal-work and Iron Age Celts was not fully established until Joseph Déchelette's *Manuel d'Archéologie préhistorique, celtique et gallo-romaine* was published immediately prior to the First World War.

After the publication in 1944 of Paul Jacobsthal's *Early Celtic Art*, the equation between La Tène art and Celtic art was effectively taken as read, and it is only in the past decade that this been seriously challenged. Unfortunately that challenge has been in the context of a wider 'deconstruction' of the 'myth' of the Celts, promoted more vigorously among English archaeologists than among their 'Celtic' neighbours in Britain and Ireland, and equally not so widely canvassed in Continental Europe. Judicious re-appraisal is unlikely to proceed while the polarized rhetoric of the Celticity debate still rages. It is self-evident that Celtic art studies in modern times owe a fundamental debt to the magisterial work of Paul Jacobsthal. In acknowledging this debt, however, we should recognize that *Early Celtic Art* adopted the perspective of a classical archaeologist, whose interest in the art of the European Iron Age had been triggered by the Celtic embellishment of the Klein Aspergle kylix (Pl. 3), noted while the author was studying Greek vases in Stuttgart in 1921 (1944, vi). Accordingly, the strength of Jacobsthal's perception was his appreciation of the various stylistic influences from classical art that impacted especially upon the earlier phases of north-alpine La Tène art. Because of the vicissitudes of late 1930s Europe and the war years, *Early Celtic Art* was produced under extremely difficult circumstances. But it has to be acknowledged that it often reads more like a scholar's notebook than a research synthesis, and its catalogue could hardly be described in contemporary terms as user-friendly.

Like many scholarly landmarks, however, *Early Celtic Art* has both stimulated further study and impeded it by imposing a framework and terms of reference that now need to be challenged. Jacobsthal concluded that 'Celtic art is an art of ornament, masks and beasts, without the image of Man' (ibid., 161). In effect, his Early Style, Waldalgesheim Style, Sword Style and Plastic Style are not *art* styles, but *ornamental* styles, as Jope evidently recognized when he referred to the *La Tène ornamental style* in Britain (1961a). Social anthropologists would not define art so narrowly, and would certainly include a range of artefacts whose role was not solely utilitarian, whether explicitly ornamented or not (Layton, 1991). It was the restricted interpretation of Celtic art as synonymous with La Tène ornamental styles that presumably caused Jacobsthal to dismiss Celtic art in Spain (1944, v). The impact of the La Tène ornamental styles in the Hispanic peninsula was, as we shall see, minimal. But if Celtic art is alternatively defined in terms of the range of weaponry and defensive armour, personal ornaments and accessories to ceremonial or ritual activities, for example, all of which from documentary sources appear to be fundamental to Celtic society, then the evidence from South-Western Europe seems as mainstream to the study of Celtic art as is the La Tène art of Central and West-Central Europe. We should surely pay homage to Jacobsthal's achievement; but after more than sixty years it is time that the theoretical framework of Celtic art studies was reviewed, and that some of the fundamental assumptions of study were challenged.

Most studies of Celtic art since Jacobsthal have been concerned primarily with discerning a sequence of 'styles' and their inter-relationships. In effect, though the principal contributors – Jacobsthal, Martyn Jope, Paul-Marie Duval, Otto-Herman Frey, Miklós Szabó and others – were archaeologists, their approach to Celtic art has been substantially from an art-historical viewpoint. This approach is important, and should not be deprecated simply because it is now less fashionable than socio-economic or cognitive reconstruction. Vincent Megaw recognized the need to set the study of Celtic art in the context of Celtic society, and has contributed significant papers to which the present study is indebted. Accordingly, this treatment of the subject will attempt to evaluate Celtic art not just in terms of stylistic developments over time and space, but in the context of Iron Age society, as far as it can be reconstructed from the evidence of archaeology. What was the role, symbolic, ritual or social, of ornamented metal-work and sculpture? What does it tell us of the technological skills and status of jewellers or armourers in Celtic society? Were there 'workshops' and 'schools' headed by master craftsmen, and, if so, did they operate under princely patronage or in a commercial market environment? What was the nature of the long-distance connections that are manifest in stylistic influences? Do these reflect population movements, movement of craftsmen, trade or diplomatic exchange? And how does this high-status expression of Celtic art compare with decorative arts in more mundane media, like pottery, wood or textiles? How might the role of art objects that survive archaeologically have functioned in the context of non-tangible art forms such as oral poetry, song and dance? And, finally, are there significant discernible changes over time or between different regions of Europe in the role of art in society?

Celtic ethnicity, Celtic languages and 'Celtic' art

The first questions that should be addressed in a book that incorporates the phrase 'Celtic art' in its title are whether the term 'Celtic' is justified, and in what sense is it being applied? Chapman (1992) cast doubt on the belief that Celts in Iron Age Europe existed as an ethnic group at all. Collis (2003) was more qualified in his critique, noting that Caesar's identification of the inhabitants of his third part of Gaul, who were known as 'Celtae in their own language, but "Galli" in ours' (*de Bello Gallico*, 1, 1), might endorse the concept of a Celtic ethnic identity. He also cited among others the case of the Romanized poet Martial, who in the first century AD claimed to be half-Celtic and half-Iberian. However inadequate or confusing the sources may be, the ancient writers evidently thought of Celts as an ethnic identification. The real problem therefore is the correlation of ancient ethnic Celts with Celtic languages, on the one hand, and with any coherent set of archaeological material, on the other.

The earliest usage of the term 'Keltoi' by ancient writers is by Hecateaus and Herodotus in the late sixth and fifth centuries BC, in reference to one of the recognized groups of barbarian neighbours of the Greeks. Herodotus' grasp of European geography and his understanding of ethnography may have been tenuous, but it is important that the recognition of Celts as an ethnic identity, however ill-defined or imprecisely located in Central and Western Europe, pre-dates the appearance of the La Tène culture in the mid-fifth century BC. Since it is likely that the emergence of the Celts considerably pre-dated their first impact upon Greek historians or geographers, there is a

case for believing that Celts in Continental Europe existed from at least the later Bronze Age.

Later classical sources are by no means consistent in their references to Celts for various reasons. The problem is compounded by the various usages in Greek and Roman sources of the terms Keltoi, Galatai, Celti and Galli. The fact that tribal groups are identified by Caesar among the Celtae or Galli, the Belgae and Aquitani, for example, suggests that there may have been a hierarchy of levels within which the native communities identified themselves, and that 'Celt' was therefore almost certainly a supra-tribal and perhaps supra-regional descriptor. In this case it seems possible that Caesar's fundamental division of Gaul into three parts mistakenly equates entities at different levels. 'Belgium' plainly included a dozen or more tribal groupings, as did 'Aquitania', so these would appear to be 'middle-order' entities. Their contrasting by implication with 'Celtic' Gaul might suggest that neither Aquitania nor Belgium were Celtic, but if Caesar was unaware of a 'middle-order' designation for the rest of Gaul, he might have resorted to the 'supra-regional' name as shorthand for 'the rest'.

The absence of references to Celts in the very partial documentary record, either for Britain or for other regions of Continental Europe, particularly east of the Rhine, is no guarantee that the inhabitants of those regions were not part of the wider Celtic community. Collis' (2003) preference for regarding France west of the Rhine as the probable Celtic heartland in part derives from the fact that, through Caesar, this is where Celts are most clearly located, and in part from the fact that the documentary sources point most clearly to these regions as the homeland of Celtic migrants of the early fourth century into Italy. Yet this is not to say that regions east of the Rhine were not also Celtic from an early date, even though the surviving documentary sources are more equivocal. Caesar's distinction between Gauls and Germans along the Rhine (as opposed to Teutonic Germans of Northern Europe), quite evidently was a red herring introduced by him for political reasons. Strabo (*Geography*, IV, 4, 2; VII, 1, 2) was in no doubt that Gauls and Germans were related by kinship, and explained that the Romans called the Germans 'Germani' (L. *germanus* = true, genuine, as a natural brother) to emphasize that they were blood brothers of the Gauls. Accepting the historical migrations of Gauls into South-Eastern Europe as originating west of the Rhine, then plainly the situation in north-alpine Central Europe may have been affected by this phase of expansion, but there must be a strong possibility that people of Celtic ethnicity and speech occupied Europe east of the Rhine from a much earlier date. For Strabo, at any rate, Celtica at the supra-level extended north of the Alps to the mouth of the Rhine and to the Pyrenees and the Ocean in the west.

The equation of ethnic Celts of antiquity with Celtic languages has aroused equal controversy. It is true that the group of Indo-European languages now known as 'Celtic' have only been so designated since George Buchanan's pioneer work of the sixteenth century, being more widely adopted from the early eighteenth century. It is equally self-evident that much of Victorian and modern 'Celtomania' has no sound scholarly foundations in ancient history or archaeology. Yet however the language group is designated, it is clear from linguistic, epigraphic, numismatic and place-name evidence that by the early Roman Empire it covered a wide region of Central and Western Europe, including the Hispanic peninsula, northern Italy, Britain and Ireland. In the absence of evidence for wholesale population incursions of the late pre-Roman period to account for such linguistic super-strata, it seems reasonable to regard this as

the language group of the various communities whose archaeological material culture has been systematically identified by archaeologists as early Iron Age or even later Bronze Age (Harding and Gillies, 2005). Across the territory covered by the proxy-map of Celtic languages, there is plainly no uniformity of material culture, though there may be common elements. It is certainly not co-terminous with the La Tène distribution, nor with that of Hallstatt or the Urnfield series before that, though these Central European cultures certainly fall within the putative Celtic zone, and the Urnfield distribution is perhaps closest of any to a pan-European phenomenon. But in Atlantic Europe in particular there are sizeable regions, such as northern and western Britain, southern Ireland, western France and the Hispanic peninsula, where Urnfield, Hallstatt and La Tène material culture made minimal impact. While we might share Collis' view (2003, 195) therefore that 'there is likely to have been some feeling of common identity across Europe, at the level of a shared language', there can be little doubt that regional patterns of material culture must indicate some quite striking differences, notably between Central Europe, on the one hand, and the Atlantic seaboard, on the other.

How far Celtic languages can be projected backwards in time is much more contentious. Renfrew (1987) saw the emergence of Celtic languages in Europe as an indigenous development from a much earlier introduction of Indo-European with the first farmers, but this view scarcely takes account of the complexity of the evidence, and has not gained widespread support among linguists. In any event, we should not expect patterns, linguistic, archaeological or ethnic, to have remained immutable over centuries. Nor should we necessarily therefore expect close correlations between archaeological and linguistic distributions, or linguistic and ethnic distributions, any more than we would now expect the level of correlation between archaeological cultures and ethnic groups that was firmly envisaged by Gustaf Kossina or Gordon Childe in the earlier twentieth century.

If we are prepared to accept 'Celtic' as a language group, variants of which were widely spoken by Iron Age communities in Central and Western Europe, and even that the concept of Celtic ethnicity, however ill-defined in the classical sources, implies a measure of commonality of identity between neighbouring groups, what should the term 'Celtic' mean in the context of Celtic art? Most studies of Celtic art since Jacobsthal have been principally focused on La Tène art, a term that conventionally includes insular British and Irish metal-work, even though diagnostic or typical types of Continental La Tène are really relatively poorly represented here. Yet in contrast to the general pattern of Iron Age material culture, in which Britain is decidedly peripheral to Central Europe in the number and range of definitive types, in the field of ornamented metal-work from the third century BC onwards at least the British inventory is as spectacular as anywhere in Celtic Europe. In Ireland not only are key La Tène types such as safety-pin brooches represented by barely three dozen known examples, compared to a thousand or more in the Duchcov hoard from the Czech Republic alone, but even those few are of distinctive insular types, quite without parallel in Continental Europe. Other so-called La Tène types, such as Y-pendants and spear-butts, are likewise not at all characteristic of Continental La Tène, to the extent that one might question how La Tène the Irish assemblage actually is. Yet the La Tène in Ireland would normally be regarded as an important sub-group within the overall family of Celtic art.

Apart from distinctly regional sub-groups like the Irish La Tène, there are other areas of Atlantic Europe that might well qualify as 'Celtic' on the basis of linguistic or allied evidence, but where the impact of La Tène material culture is minimal or non-existent. Ireland south of a line from Dublin to the Galway Bay presents a particular problem that will be discussed in due course. But south-western France and the Hispanic peninsula beyond the Iberian zone are regions where La Tène or La Tène-related types are relatively few, and where ornament of material artefacts is not nearly as prolific or distinctive as in the La Tène tradition. In Spain, apart from the area of documented Celtiberians, there are regions to the south-west and north-west where place-names and allied evidence suggest the presence of Celtic speakers. These regions too, therefore, will need to be considered if we are to justify the title of 'Celtic' art beyond simple convenience and convention. If, then, there are regional populations that were Celtic-speaking but not characterized archaeologically by a La Tène culture, we should question reciprocally whether all bearers of La Tène culture were necessarily Celtic-speaking. Self-evidently the *exclusive* equation of Celtic identity with La Tène material culture is mistaken, but could the exclusive equation of La Tène with Celtic also be erroneous?

Finally, in this section, we should consider the chronological limits of Celtic art. Most Continental studies conclude with the Roman Empire, which effectively brought an end to the La Tène art style. In Britain, on the fringes and beyond the Roman frontiers, and in Ireland, by contrast, the 'long Iron Age' extends well into the first millennium AD. Though any elements of continuity from earlier Celtic art into the 'Pictish' period in Northern Britain, or into Early Christian art in Ireland, need to be carefully scrutinized, nevertheless these communities were Celtic-speaking, and may legitimately be included in the broader discussion of Celtic art here proposed. Indeed, consideration of the composition, context and potential meaning of these later styles may prompt questions relevant to the study of earlier Celtic art.

Materials and techniques

Attempting to define an art object in the context of later prehistoric societies is likely to be contentious. A flint axe, a bronze pin or a pottery vessel may be technically accomplished and aesthetically pleasing to handle, but we would not necessarily regard them as art objects. Yet many bronze pins or brooches that presumably served a utilitarian function as dress accessories may conform to a form and style not dictated by function alone that consciously or unconsciously identified the individual or community that made them, or satisfied the social or ritual conventions that governed their use. More elaborate objects may be ornamented in a manner that permits the identification of recurrent motifs and images, the arrangement of which according to conventions that might be compared to the rules of grammar constitutes a particular 'style' in the sense used by Jacobsthal. 'Art' is plainly not synonymous with 'ornamentation', but may be implicit in the object itself. It is probably an anachronistic coincidence that the Neuvy figurines (Figure 10.4A) should appeal to modern aesthetic taste, but they and other artefacts, like the boar images from across Iron Age Europe, must surely have had significance as art or cult objects to contemporary communities, or sects within those communities. Associations, as in graves or hoards, should be informative, and while we may legitimately be concerned with detailed analyses of individual items, it is

important not to overlook their associations in order to evaluate significance or 'meaning' in context.

The media of Celtic art were various, though metal-work predominates in the literature because it was the medium of high-status artefacts of the greatest technical competence. Bronze and iron are frequently found in combination on objects such as scabbards or parade armour that are sometimes further embellished with glass ('enamel') or coral inlay. Bronze-working skills had reached an advanced level by the later Bronze Age, with the development of complex casting techniques like the *cire perdue* or lost-wax method, the use of beaten sheet-bronze for body armour as well as buckets and cauldrons, the invention of drawn wire and rivets to assemble and reinforce such vessels, and the capacity to combine different alloys for strength or flexibility. With the notable exception of the Hungarian series of La Tène scabbards, bronze is the dominant medium of decoration, which may be achieved in two basic ways, by engraving or in relief. Engraving is achieved in a variety of techniques, using tracer, graver, scriber or scorper. Among these, the rocked graver, used to create a tremolo line, is one of the more common devices witnessed on beaten bronze. Relief ornament can be achieved by casting the design as an integral part of the artefact itself, either using a two-piece mould or by the lost-wax technique. An alternative with beaten bronze artefacts is fashioning the design in *repoussé* by hammering with punches from the reverse side. The use of compasses to outline the design may be implicit in the design itself, or sometimes betrayed by surviving compass dots in pivotal positions. More elaborate examples of metal-working may incorporate a variety of different materials and techniques, arguing for highly skilled craftsmen, perhaps operating in dedicated workshops or even 'schools'.

Iron working was also attested in Europe by the Urnfield late Bronze Age, and by the La Tène Iron Age had superseded bronze for swords and edge-tools. Whether bronze-smiths had adopted iron technology, or whether iron workers represented a separate group skill remains uncertain, but the two are certainly found in combination in many of the prestige items of early Celtic art. The technical complexity of an object like the scabbard from grave K3 at Kirkburn in Yorkshire (Figure 5.7, 4; Stead, 1991a, Figure 53), with its copper-alloy front-plate, iron back-plate, suspension-loop, chape-binding, chape and hilt with red 'enamel' studs, together with rivets and washers for assembling, betrays an expert armourer. But was he also the same craftsman who ornamented the front-plate with its engraved tendril design, or were there teams of individual specialists collaborating within the workshop?

Of the precious metals, gold is predominant in Celtic art: silver is not unknown, but is very much in the minority within the La Tène tradition. The technical proficiency of gold-working is equally of the highest quality, as may be seen, for example, in the multiple-strand construction of the electrum torc from Snettisham, Norfolk, hoard E (Pl. 10a), bedded into hollow-cast terminals with relief ornament. Relief ornament here was generally effected in *repoussé*, though in two of the Ipswich torcs it was achieved by *cire perdue* casting. Particular technical traits, like the soldered ballusters of the Rodenbach series, may be indicative of a local tradition or even a related group of workshops.

Glass (as opposed to faience) is a material that first appears in quantity in the later Bronze Age, principally in the form of glass beads, and this remains its most popular use in the Iron Age. The central grave at the Hohmichele was notable for the

discovery of hundreds of beads, the remnants of grave-goods that tomb-robbers did not stop to gather up. Some glass beads in the Iron Age are of such a simple form that their dating cannot be closely defined and their distribution is wide and hardly diagnostic. Others display recurrent traits, like bosses or spiral inlay, some with marked regional concentrations, and some of which from chemical analysis may be attributed to local workshops. By the middle and late La Tène period, bracelets in translucent blue, green, yellow and clear glass are known, some with elaborate mouldings, fluting or inlaid ornament around their edges. Glass is not simply used for objects themselves, but as an inlay to embellish larger objects, like the shields of later pre-Roman Iron Age Britain, sometimes clustered in a raised bed or metal framework (*champlevé*). In the later Iron Age, the use of *millefiore* glass embellishment is characteristic of the metal-work of Early Christian Ireland. It is therefore intriguing that Jacobsthal was so dismissive of the relevance of glass to his analysis of early Celtic art (1944, v).

Stone as a medium has a limited but not insignificant role in the archaeology of Celtic art. The subtleties developed in metal-smiths' workshops are not always amenable to rendering in stone, though the designs on the Pfalzfeld pillar (Figure 3.8A) and Turoe stone (Figure 8.6), for example, bear an obvious relationship to the metal-working styles. Relief elements might be transposed into stone sculpture more readily than incised designs, and embellishment achieved in metal-work with coral or glass inlay might have been simulated on stone with paint. Life-sized stone figures and fragmentary heads, sometimes from contexts or with attributes that have been interpreted as indicating divinities, are found in Iron Age Europe in funerary or related contexts from the late Hallstatt and early La Tène periods, and may have once had their counterparts in wood. Stone *stelae*, like those of the Breton early Iron Age, are in general not extensively carved, though they could easily have been painted with natural pigments that have not survived. Equally in the Irish Iron Age, Turoe and Castlestrange may have been the exceptions among a greater number of natural boulders in prominent locations that could have been painted to similar effect.

Among domestic artefacts, pottery is the most obviously available medium for ornamentation. Despite the selective introduction of the potter's wheel from the fifth century BC, much of the pottery of Iron Age Europe remains plain and undistinguished, and was presumably manufactured domestically or locally until the later La Tène period. Where finer wares occur, including decorated vessels or those with surface slip, they are frequently from funerary contexts, perhaps suggesting special production for the occasion. A question that needs to be addressed is whether we should necessarily expect a correlation between the ornamental styles of fine metal-work and the motifs and designs displayed on pottery, with the implication that pottery might prove to be the poor relation in that comparison, or whether the role and meaning of ceramic ornamentation were quite different from that of fine metal-work. In plotting distributions of art style-zones, therefore, we should be cautious about apparent contrasts that might reflect the medium in use rather than real differences in style if like were compared with like. Any system of classification based upon the stylistic developments in pottery is unlikely for technical reasons to accord with the system devised by Jacobsthal for the sequence of La Tène art styles on the basis principally of fine metal-work.

Among the least well preserved of the media upon which Celtic art might have been displayed are perishable, organic materials such as wood, bone and textiles. Some

examples survive, such as the textiles from late Hallstatt graves that show patterns comparable to the geometric designs of sheet bronze metal-work, or such as the lathe-turned wooden vessels from the Somerset 'lake-villages', the ornament of which reflects that of pottery vessels of similar type. We might imagine that the plaster walls of buildings could have been painted with designs proclaiming identity or invoking supernatural protection. Above all, perhaps at times of conflict or for seasonal festivals, the human body itself would almost certainly have been a medium for ornamentation. Body painting if not tattooing was doubtless a widespread practice, though it is unlikely to survive archaeologically other than in exceptional circumstances as in the burials in permafrost from Pazyryk in the Altai. Nevertheless Caesar's reference to natives dying themselves with woad, or Roman descriptions of Britons beyond the northern frontier as 'Picti' almost certainly indicates similar practices.

Artefacts, associations and context

A trawl through *Early Celtic Art* would readily reveal that the categories of metal-work that constitute the core of La Tène art are weapons and defensive armour (including equestrian gear), drinking vessels and services, and personal ornaments. There is of course much else besides, but it is from these three categories that the image, or perhaps the caricature, of the Celt derives, the aggressive, swaggering warrior, drunken and intemperate, and given to extravagant personal display. Encouraged by the classical sources, this image is easily exaggerated, even in scholarly texts, but we should also beware the fashion for 'pacification' and 'sanitization' of prehistory. From the Urnfield late Bronze Age there was an increase in the number and technical complexities of long swords and daggers, and in the Hallstatt and La Tène Iron Ages in elaborate scabbards, compatible with a society that placed great prestige on martial accomplishments. Defensive equipment, notably the insular series of shields, included prestigious display items which, unless backed by leather or wood would have been ineffective in actual combat. A problem arises therefore in evaluating the relative requirements of ceremonial prestige and military utility, allowing for the fact that in Celtic warfare the ritual component may well have been fundamental. Though specific types may differ regionally and through time, the basic warrior's equipment of the European Iron Age, sword, spear and shield, and less commonly helmets or body armour, has its antecedents in the late Bronze Age.

Personal ornaments show less obvious continuity. Pins occur in a profusion of types in the Urnfield period, and are the predominant dress-fastening in much of north-alpine Europe. Various ornamental brooch types are known, however, from the later Bronze Age north and south of the Alps. Some of the later Italic types were adopted in the late Hallstatt Iron Age north of the Alps, and the safety-pin type of brooch became the standard dress-fastening of the La Tène Iron Age. Other fashionable ornaments are neck-rings or torcs, arm-rings or bracelets (located variously between shoulder and wrist), finger-rings and leg-rings. Whether these were simply dress-accessories or had additional social significance, as indicators of age or marital status, for example, is arguable on the basis of studies of Iron Age inhumation cemeteries in Central Europe. Gold ornaments are relatively rare in the European late Bronze Age. Regional groups like the Irish 'dress-fasteners' and 'sleeve-fasteners' reflect a flourishing industry based

on local resources, while Carpathian sources doubtless continued to supply eastern Central European goldsmiths throughout the later prehistoric period.

The aristocratic drinking service of the late Hallstatt and early La Tène Iron Age displays a degree of novelty in the appearance of Greek or Etruscan types such as two-handled *stamnoi* or the beaked flagon, the latter adopted and adapted by Celtic craftsmen to reflect the decorative tastes of their patrons. In fact, the distribution of some Italic types, such as the cordoned bucket, extends well beyond any definition of Celtic Europe into the Germanic north European plain and southern Scandinavia, suggesting rather different distributional mechanisms from the more concentrated distribution of beaked flagons, for example, in the middle Rhine, Moselle and Saar. Perhaps Celtic chieftains not only exploited the southern sources for their own use, but acted as entrepreneurs for wider distribution, themselves re-distributing goods in exchange for northern raw materials. At the same time there are also 'native' Hallstatt types in the drinking service, and it may be a matter of debate how far the import was simply of a few exotic types and how far the social role of drinking, and what was drunk, were significantly changed. Late Bronze Age communal drinking vessels of beaten bronze were of native design and manufacture, whether of the central European Kurd bucket type, or regional Atlantic variants from Britain and Ireland. Cauldrons too in sheet bronze represent an Atlantic tradition, no longer regarded as derivative from the eastern Mediterranean. The Mediterranean connection remained important through to the late La Tène, however, when Italic bronze wine-flagons and ancillary equipment appears as far north-west as England, and when wine-amphorae have a widespread distribution through Gaul and into southern and south-eastern England.

Wine was evidently introduced to Celtic Europe through the Greek colony of Massilia by the sixth century and from Etruscan Italy in the following centuries. Grapes were certainly cultivated in Italy by the time of the Second Punic War; in southern Gaul, wine was first produced around the first century AD, and by the third century AD viticulture had been established in Bordeaux and Burgundy, and in the Moselle and Rhine shortly thereafter. There is some evidence of fruit wines in the Bronze Age, but otherwise the principal alcoholic drinks would have been beer and mead, the production of which undoubtedly continued despite the alternative attractions of Mediterranean wine for those who could get it. In fact, there may be some evidence, archaeological as well as documentary, to suggest that beer and wine may have been favoured differentially among different communities in Iron Age Europe.

Much of this high-status material has been well preserved because it derives from graves. Not only has it survived through burial within a pit or under a barrow, but it was generally deposited intact and whole in the first place, by contrast to domestic refuse that would only be abandoned when broken beyond repair or recycling. The instance nevertheless of grave-goods in burials is not universal, and many later prehistoric cemeteries, even those from the Hallstatt and La Tène culture zone, may yield relatively modest assemblages. The presumption therefore has been that lavishly equipped tombs, like the late Hallstatt Hochdorf and Vix burials, or those of the early La Tène period from the Rhineland, were chieftains' graves or *Fürstengräber*, the relative status of their occupants being inferred from the range and quality of associated grave-goods. The dangers inherent in this simplistic assumption, and in its converse, that less well-equipped graves were of individuals of lesser social status, are manifest. Identification of sex too has been made too glibly on the assumption that weapons

indicate a male and personal ornaments a female burial. This too supposes that the grave-goods are the property of the deceased, rather than being part of the funerary rite itself. Grave-goods may tell us far more about the community or kin group responsible for the burial, or about the rites and requirements of the funerary process, or about the political and social circumstances in which the tomb was built, than they do about the individual or individuals whose remains were deposited in it. The unfinished board game in the late La Tène doctor's grave at Stanway or the nine drinking horns and nine bronze plates from the Hochdorf burial hint at other players in the rites of passage and other guests at the funerary feast, while the not infrequent pairing of vessels like the Basse-Yutz, Lorraine, flagons and *stamnoi* again may reflect rules of deposition rather than being just the property of the deceased.

Inference of the social status of the dead from associated grave-goods is perhaps best exemplified by 'warrior' burials, in which the absence of a wider range of grave-goods might well indicate the role of the deceased. But this inference too has been challenged as imposing one particular set of presuppositions on the archaeological data. Not surprisingly the occurrence of 'warrior' burials across Central Europe in the middle La Tène, with the 'triple panoply' of sword, spear and shield, was inevitably linked a generation ago with Gaulish migrations of documented history. The recurrence of this martial assemblage nevertheless should be indicative in some regard of the special status of the dead. Yet can we really suppose that the dead of the early La Tène vehicle burials in the Champagne were in life all charioteers, or was the vehicle a ceremonial attribute like a gun-carriage in more recent state funerals that happened to be interred in some instances with the dead?

In any event these distinctive burials are concentrated within particular regions of Iron Age Europe at certain periods, but are by no means representative of any pan-European pattern. There are extensive areas of Europe, including Britain and Ireland over protracted periods of time, that have minimal evidence of any form of burial that might be recognized as regular or recurrent; indeed, the assumption that there should be such a norm has rightly been challenged. There could have been a variety of different practices for disposal of the dead, not all of which entail interring the remains in an archaeologically conspicuous deposit. Excarnation or cremation and scattering, for example, might leave very ephemeral traces archaeologically. Perhaps instead we should ask why some communities *did* choose to make a spectacular display in burial. In the case of the late pre-Roman Iron Age burials of the Welwyn group, for example, some of which date into the early years of the Roman occupation, we might regard the lavish funerary deposits as a chauvinistic display of identity in the face of an alien and intrusive culture. Whatever the circumstances, it seems unlikely that conspicuous burials were simply intended for the disposal of the dead, but that they were part of the political and social fabric of the hierarchies that built them. As such, the accompanying grave goods are hardly a representative selection of what the deceased possessed or enjoyed in life; they are instead a statement by the community or its leaders affirming their own status and authority in the temporal and cosmic order.

A second major source of objects that display Celtic art among other utilitarian artefacts is hoards. Iron Age hoards may not be as common as are hoards of the Bronze Age, but there are notable examples like Duchcov in the Czech Republic or Hjortspring in Denmark, or even the multiple pit hoards from Snettisham in Norfolk (Pl. 10b). The purpose of these hoards is now widely regarded as votive (Bradley, 1998),

though the probability that hoards were buried for safekeeping in times of insecurity should not be discounted, particularly in areas of political instability like the frontiers of the Roman Empire. The very variable incidence of Bronze Age hoards in Europe, regionally and through time, might support the idea that they were in some instances at least prompted by political instability (Harding, A., 2000, 355–6). Bradley and others have studied the relative composition of hoards and graves, in an attempt to assess whether these two forms of ritualized deposit were similar or complementary in their composition, in which we might well expect to find regional variations in practice. A particular variant on the theme of votive deposit is the deposit of hoards, collectively or cumulative, in water, whether river, lake or marsh, a practice too which has an older ancestry than the Iron Age. The site of La Tène itself is often highlighted as an example of a water deposit, the nature of which remains contentious, not least because of the adjacent structural remains of bridges and wharf-side buildings. Special deposits like the broken weaponry from Gournay-sur-Aronde and Ribemont-sur-Ancre readily prompt a ritual interpretation, but many hoards are less spectacular and may yet have had a more mundane explanation.

Coin hoards are a special case. The interpretation of coin hoards may depend upon our understanding of the purpose of coinage in the first place. It seems probable that the initial use of coinage in Celtic Europe, from around the third century BC, was for fulfilling social obligations such as the provision of dowry or payment of fines, rather than for exchange within a market economy, which is only practical with the development of lesser denominations or 'small change'. Payment for the services of mercenaries has been suggested as one possible catalyst for the adoption of coinage, and the fact that some of the Continental hoards number tens of thousands of coins might argue for community control rather than individual wealth. Nevertheless, Louernius, king of the Arverni, was able to distribute largesse by scattering gold and silver coins in quantity among his followers, if the Poseidonian tradition is to be believed. Numismatists have generally assumed that coin hoards might coincide with periods of political unrest such as the Gallic Wars, but smaller coin hoards are also found in ritual contexts.

The fact that artefacts of the 'Celtic art' class less frequently come from settlement sites or fortifications, unless buried as a hoard within their environs, need occasion no surprise, since these are not contexts like graves or votive hoards from which the objects were not expected to be retrieved. What survives archaeologically, therefore, is by definition domestic debris, generally fragmentary and not considered worthy of salvage. Smaller items like brooches may have been lost, and therefore have been found in some numbers from hill-forts like the Mont Lassois in Burgundy or from later La Tène *oppida* like the Mont Beuvray, Manching or Stradonice, where they may have been manufactured. These sites may also yield informative if fragmentary remains of glass and pottery, which may be compared to the assemblages from contemporary burials.

Craftsmen and production

Despite the fact that archaeological classification for more than a century and a half has been based upon the Three Age technological model, actual metal-working sites or evidence for the role of craftsmen is remarkably sparse in the archaeological record. Settlement sites may yield what is uncritically described as 'slag' (begging the question

which stage in the metal-working process it represents), but in minimal quantities compared to the actual by-product of bronze or iron-working on even a limited scale. Crucibles and fragments of moulds are found, but again it is not always taphonomically clear that they represent *in situ* activity. Excavated evidence of metal-working was recovered from the late Hallstatt occupation at the Heuneburg in south-west Germany, where a 'workshop quarter' was identified on the basis of smelting furnaces and related structures. Graphic testimony of metal-working on site was provided by the casting mould for a 'Silenus mask' for the handle attachment of an Etruscan bronze flagon. In Britain and Ireland several hill-forts of later Bronze Age and Iron Age date have yielded evidence of bronze-working, notably Rathgall in Co. Wicklow (Raftery, 1976; 1994a), the Breiddin in North Wales (Musson, 1991) and South Cadbury in Somerset (Barrett *et al.*, 2000), though the structures associated with this activity are rather ephemeral in each case. By the late La Tène period, iron production in quantity is attested by the profusion of iron implements from the *oppidum* at Manching in Bavaria, though the structural evidence here, and at Kelheim, where the volume of slag indicates very large-scale production of iron, amounts to broken debris from furnaces and hearths for smelting and smithing. The problem archaeologically in locating the actual production sites is hardly surprising. Because of noxious fumes and risks of fire, industrial processing was likely to be located away from the focus of settlement, and ethnographic evidence suggests that the mystique attached to the smiths' craft may equally have set them aside from the domestic community.

Professional metal-working, however, was not restricted to hill-forts or *oppida*. The scale of production at Gussage All Saints, Dorset, was sufficient to convince Spratling (1979, 141) that it was not simply a seasonal activity. Furthermore, it is clear that output was concentrated on the production of harness equipment and chariot fittings rather than everyday domestic goods. A similar pattern of specialization is reflected in the later Iron Age in Atlantic Scotland, as at Beirgh in west Lewis and Eilean Olabhat in North Uist. It is evident, therefore, that metal-working was conducted at a variety of levels, from the professional and specialist to the seasonal and domestic, and that the archaeological evidence for these activities, other than through the products themselves, might prove hard to recover.

Iron ore is widely available across Europe, and it is probable that local supplies were exploited without necessitating extensive mining operations. Copper and tin, on the other hand, did require deeper mining. Information regarding mining techniques, and more especially about the communities involved in mining, is less easily inferred. Modern research at the salt-mine settlement at Dürrnberg-bei-Hallein (Stöllner, 2003) paints a bleak picture of conditions underground, with miners suffering from parasite infestation and child labour making up a significant part of the workforce. It is hard to reconcile this with the relative wealth of graves from the early La Tène cemetery, probably not of the miners themselves, but of the wealthy elite that controlled the highly productive output of salt and salt-cured beef. Stylistic similarities between the flagon from grave 112 at the Dürrnberg and that from the Glauberg in Hessen argue for long-distance networks among the master craftsmen and their patrons, but there is no reason to assume that the manual labourers of the mining community enjoyed the benefits of their wealth creation.

Indicative of the status of craftsmen in Celtic society are occasional examples of burials, such as graves 469 and 697 at Hallstatt, or in some of the Celtiberian warrior-graves,

in which tools are included among grave-goods. On the basis of Urnfield and Hallstatt graves in Central Europe with metal-working accessories, Anthony Harding (2000, 239–40) has suggested that bronze-smiths may have been accorded special treatment in death as in life. Pauli raised the possibility that the early La Tène chariot-burial at the La Gorge-Meillet burial might have been that of a master craftsman on the basis of its possible association with hammer, punches and related tools (Pauli, 1978, 459). Whether we recognize the role of warrior-craftsman depends again upon whether we regard grave-goods as 'possessions' or symbols of office of the deceased, whether we view them as votive offerings, or whether they are indicative of those groups in society who contributed to the funerary rites. At any rate, it underscores the dangers of simplistic interpretation.

The relative absence of evidence for metal-working, more especially for permanent metal-working sites or workshops, encouraged Childe's (1930, 44ff) belief that bronze-workers were full-time craftsmen, but operating on a peripatetic basis from village to village, a model that has proved remarkably enduring. The Megaws endorsed this model for the early La Tène period (1995, 357), though recognizing the probability of some static workshops in princely patronage. Certainly the wide-ranging sources of supply and specialist skills implicit in prestige objects like the Basse-Yutz flagons implies mobility of materials, skills and ideas, but this need not mean an independent class of itinerant craftsmen. Craftsmen may indeed have been mobile, but more probably within the constraints of a hierarchically-controlled society. Recognizing the products of individual workshops or 'schools' on the basis of stylistic similarities, therefore, is a tenuous principle. Technical traits, like those displayed by the Rodenbach series of balluster rings or Haffner's (1979) Weiskirchen type of gold-leaf plaques, on the other hand, may be a more reliable indicator of the distribution area of a workshop or related 'guild' of craftsmen. In particular, the use of a specific formula in the compass-drawn designs of the latter might be evidence of the exclusive or 'secretive' nature of some groups of artists.

Ethnographic analogies (Rowlands, 1971) suggest a variety of models for the role of metal-workers in non-state societies, and it seems probable that in Iron Age Europe, given the range of craft skills involved and the great diversity of production, several different systems were in operation. Some undoubtedly involved long-distance sources of supply, of amber or coral, for instance; other more basic needs, such as supplies of iron ore, could have been met from local resources. It is inherently unlikely that the warrior elite would have relied upon itinerant tinkers for their weapons and defensive armour, and the employment of master-craftsmen under princely patronage seems probable too for the finer pieces of personal ornament, even if the individual specialists in sheet bronze-work, lost-wax casting, ornamental engraving, gem-setting, gold-working and the like were drawn from a wider pool through diplomatic liaisons.

An important and under-used source of potential light on the role of craftsmen in Celtic society is early Irish or Welsh literary sources (Gillies, 1979). Recognizing the pitfalls of treating these as a 'window on the Iron Age' (Jackson, 1964), they nevertheless articulate traditions that could well have had a greater antiquity. Gillies identified several recurrent themes that he believed might have a 'respectable antiquity' in Ireland and Wales. One of these was the belief in a triad of craft gods, Goibniu the smith, cognate to the Roman Vulcan, Luchta the wright and Creidne the bronze-smith, all linked by their role in providing spears used in battle by the ruling

Tuatha Dé Danann. Though there is no basis for assuming a pan-Celtic pantheon on the basis of insular evidence, it seems likely that smiths with particular attributions featured in the supernatural cosmology of the European Iron Age. A second recurrent theme from early Celtic literature, not just in reference to the supernatural or mythological world, but apparently in everyday life as well, is the high regard accorded to craftsmen. The smith 'from his role as armourer in a warlike society, and from his part in the creation of ornament and decoration for an intensely vain honour-culture' (Gillies, 1979, 75) was rewarded for providing through his craft endorsement of the social hierarchy that the poet provided in words. Master-craftsmen were thus ranked among freemen together with the physician, whose graves equally have been identified archaeologically by their associated assemblages. It seems possible that some of these specialized craft skills were hereditary, but the early Irish historical and genealogical texts also offer clues to the possible existence of 'occupational castes' or perhaps communities whose tribal deity was associated with particular occupational skills.

Motif, style and meaning

The conventional approach to archaeological classification, the recognition of types and type-sequences, study of their recurrent associations, and the plotting of spatial distributions of key types, has been criticized over the past generation as descriptive rather than explanatory or interpretative. Accepting that analysis is not an end in itself but a means of distilling order from the mass of data available as an essential preliminary to interpretation, this study of Celtic art will retain a framework that attempts to identify styles, broadly in chronological sequence, and that sees the recognition of recurrent themes and individual motifs as a basis for meaningful comparisons. A study of individual or recurrent motifs, like the pelta or triskele of La Tène art, is not simply an exercise in academic pedantry, but is essential to an understanding of Celtic art, just as the understanding of words is an essential prerequisite to a critical appreciation of poetry. To attempt a critical appreciation without this fundamental understanding is simply dilettantism. Jacobsthal, Fox and others have written about the 'grammar' of Celtic art, by which they meant the repertory of motifs, and their adaptation or integration into the overall composition. Some of these motifs are derived from external sources, such as the palmette and lotus of the early La Tène styles, though they are rapidly transformed, not through technical ineptitude but through positive re-interpretation, into a novel, Celtic form. Much the same processes are evident in the transformation of Greek models and classical imagery on Celtic coinage, not disintegration in the hands of inept or uncomprehending barbarians but a re-invention of the originals.

Style has been defined as the 'totality of conventions which make up the art of a particular area at a particular period of time' (Shapiro, 1953) and in the context of Celtic art by Ruth and Vincent Megaw as the 'combination of technical and iconographic elements to produce a particular form or effect' (Megaw and Megaw, 2001, 20). Jacobsthal used the term to define his principal landmarks in the development of La Tène art, Early Style, Waldalgesheim, Sword and Plastic, with regional variants like the Hungarian and Swiss Sword Styles. A review of this sequence might suggest a greater diversity still of local styles at different periods, particularly if we take a broader sweep of the media represented rather than allowing fine metal-work and a classical perspective, as was Jacobsthal's, to predominate.

The recurrence of some key motifs, and even combinations of motifs, encourages the belief that these had a 'meaning', and that it was part of the purpose of communication rather than simply the decorative embellishment of a functional artefact. In as much as art is created in a social environment, and in the context of its beliefs and values (Layton, 1991, 43) then Celtic art doubtless conveyed a meaning, overtly or subconsciously, to those who were aware of its significance. The role of art in ethnographic contexts, however, would suggest that this meaning might be known to the community as a whole or only to a select group within it. Once again, this might argue for a plural understanding of Celtic arts, the art of fine metal-work perhaps communicating with a different social group from the art of domestic pottery or textiles, for example. Only very occasionally can we expect archaeological evidence to provide 'answers' to these issues; but the limitations of the evidence should never deter us from asking the questions.

2

'AN ART WITH NO GENESIS'

Later Bronze Age and Hallstatt origins

Jacobsthal's dictum, that early Celtic art was 'an art with no genesis' (1944, 157) is one of the more famous quotations in the archaeological canon. He was, of course, referring to the genesis of the La Tène style, but even if we argue for a broader definition of Celtic art, the apparently sudden appearance of the La Tène Early Style still warrants explanation. There is no contradiction in Jacobsthal's generalization and his identifying the triple sources of influence on the Early Style as 'the East, Italy and Hallstatt' (ibid., 155), since in this analysis he was dissecting the grammar of early Celtic art rather than its genesis as a technical, social or cognitive phenomenon. It remains true that early La Tène art appears in north-alpine Europe in the second half of the fifth century BC without clear archaeological evidence of cataclysmic change on the scale of population displacement or colonization, and without a revolution in industrial technology that might have generated a productive capacity hitherto lacking. Attempts have been made to depict the decline of the late Hallstatt strongholds (*Fürstensitze*) in south-west Germany as the outcome of radical social change (Pauli, 1985), but even if the evidence is interpreted in this way it is tangential to the regional foci in which early La Tène art first appears. Two approaches to the clarification of the genesis of Celtic art might be proposed. The first would be to examine older north-alpine traditions to see what antecedents there might have been for the recurrent themes of early La Tène art. The second approach would be to examine the cultural, technical and social milieu of the preceding periods in order to evaluate the environment out of which early La Tène art so suddenly and apparently without antecedents emerged. Both might help to redefine Celtic art in the broader sense of the art of later prehistoric communities that might reasonably be regarded as Celtic.

The late Bronze Age industrial revolution

The introduction of iron technology might be regarded as evidence enough for an industrial revolution, though in fact its introduction and progressive adoption in Europe were protracted over more than a millennium. Iron tools were in circulation in South-Eastern Europe in the mid-second millennium BC, and by the later Urnfield (Hallstatt B) phase, some swords were being made and embellished in iron in eastern Central Europe, and occasionally much further west (Gomez and Mohen, 1981; Pleiner, 1981b; Shramko, 1981). Bronze technology itself at the outset of the Urnfield period underwent a step-change of no less significance. Casting techniques developed the use of multiple-piece moulds, and in due course the *cire perdue* or lost-wax technique,