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An enigmatic Iron Age wooden artefact discovered on the Col Collon (3068 m a.s.l., Évolène, Ct. Valais / CH)

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PHILIPPE CURDY · PIERRE-YVES NICOD
with the collaboration of MAURO FERRINI

AN ENIGMATIC IRON AGE WOODEN ARTEFACT DISCOVERED ON THE COL COLLON (3068 M A. S. L., EVOLÈNE, CT. VALAIS / CH)

With global warming, and for the past few decades, the alpine glaciers have freed archaeological vestiges trapped in the ice for years, centuries, sometimes millenniums. These artefacts are often fragile, made of perishable material and exceptionally well preserved by the freezing process. They greatly enrich our knowledge of past populations. Most of these discoveries are made by alpinists, hikers, or high-altitude workers who, due to the lack of knowledge about the importance of these vestiges, have sometimes failed to signal them to the authorities responsible for their preservation and conservation. The wooden artefact presented in this publication, recovered by scientists 20 years after having been collected on the Haut Glacier d'Arolla (Ct. Valais/CH), illustrates this problem.

GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE COL COLLON

The Col Collon (figs 1-3) is a high-altitude pass (3068 m a. s. l.) located in the Pennine Alps between the Val d'Hérens (Evolène, Ct. Valais/CH) and the Valpelline (Bionaz, Aosta Valley/I). Although relatively high, and covered in ice, the pass has been until recently regularly used by mankind and livestock, as well as for the trading of wine and other merchandise[1].

Fig. 1 Localisation of the Col Collon (Evolène, Ct. Valais/CH, 3068 m a. s. l.) and other passes mentioned in the text. – (Ground map © Swisstopo).

Fig. 2 Location of the Col Collon (Evolène, Ct. Valais/CH, 3068 m a. s. l.) on the topographic map, from 1999 (the year the wooden sculpted artefact was discovered). – (Ground map © Swisstopo, permission BA20092).

The oldest object discovered in the surrounding area is a Grand-Pressigny flint dagger blade[2], dated to the Final Neolithic (2900-2400 BC). It was found 4 km north of the pass, 2600 m a. s. l., not far from the track that leads to the pass through the narrow Bertol valley. This discovery seems to confirm that the Col Collon was travelled at least as early as the 3rd millennium BC.

At the pass itself, numerous wooden and leather artefacts were found during recent prospections[3] (more specifically within a Swiss National Science Foundation project[4]). The oldest finds are small pointed wooden sticks, functionally undetermined, and radiocarbon dated to the 8th-5th century BC (Iron Age) (**fig. 4**)[5]. A long walking stick or route marker stake is dated from the 4th to the 2nd century BC (**fig. 5**)[6]. Other discoveries have been dated to the Middle Ages and modern times (leather shoes and wooden or felt objects).

Fig. 3 The Col Collon and the Haut Glacier d'Arolla, September 2018. – (Photo © P.-Y. Nicod).

Fig. 4 Batch of pointed sticks from the Col Collon. Iron Age, 8th-5th century BC. – (© Valais History Museum, Sion; photo M. Martinez).

Fig. 5 Walking stick or route marker stake from the Col Collon. Iron Age, 4th-2nd century BC. – (© Valais History Museum, Sion; photo M. Martinez).

Fig. 6 Sculpted wooden object from the Col Collon. Iron Age, 2nd-1st century BC. Length 52 cm. – (© Valais History Museum, Sion; photo M. Martinez; digital processing C. Bernard).

HISTORY OF THE DISCOVERY

In August 1999, 15 years before the first archaeological investigation at the Col Collon, two mountaineers, Silvia Venturino and Mauro Ferrini, collected a sculpted wooden object, soaked in meltdown waters, on the Haut Glacier d'Arolla. After drying it, Mauro Ferrini hanged it on the wall of his living room in Torino (I), and regularly treated it with wax and anti-dust spray.

In March 2004, Silvia Venturino came across an article by Francis Tracq, in the journal »Panorami«, which told of the discovery of a wooden statue on the Collerin Glacier, in the French Department of Savoy[7]. She

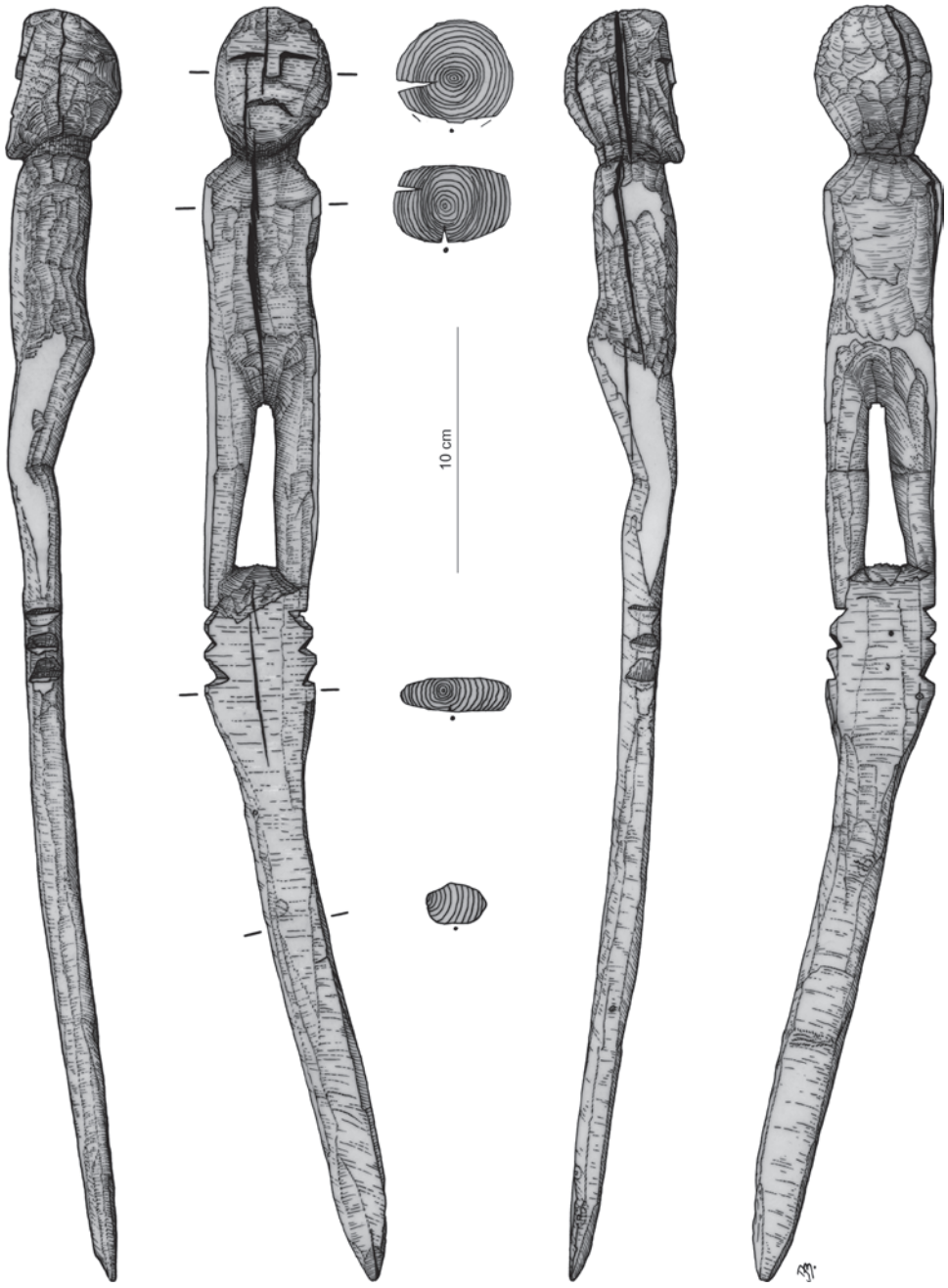

Fig. 7 Sculpted wooden object from the Col Collon. Iron Age, 2nd-1st century BC. The homogeneously grey surfaces correspond to non-worked areas. Length 52 cm. – (© Valais History Museum, Sion; drawing D. Baudais; digital processing L. Morel / C. Bernard).

sent the journal's editorial staff a photograph of the Col Collon object to obtain some precisions as to its date and function. The request was forwarded to Francis Tracq, who did not address it.

14 years later, in January 2018, Francis Tracq – solicited to lend the Collerin statue for an exposition on glacial archaeology at the Valais History Museum[8] – gave Pierre-Yves Nicod, the exposition's curator, a copy of Silvia Venturino's e-mail. With her help, Pierre-Yves Nicod and Philippe Curdy contacted Mauro Ferrini. Made aware of the importance of the find, the latter graciously donated it to the Valais History Museum in 2018, where it became part of the archaeological collections[9].

DESCRIPTION OF THE ARTEFACT

The object is carved from a complete roundwood stem of larch wood[10], a species still growing today in the Pennine Alps at 1400 m a. s. l. or higher[11]; the wood reveals 21 growth rings visible at the upper extremity of the artefact. Carved with a metal tool, it represents a full-length human figure, resting on a notched pedestal, itself placed on top of a spear-shaped and slightly pointed shaft (**figs 6-7**). It seems to have been polished, but this appearance could be the result of the wax treatment applied by its discoverer.

The artefact measures 52 cm long: the human figure is 24.5 cm, the »pedestal« 3 cm, and the shaft 24.5 cm. The figure's head and shoulders are 4.7 cm large; the shaft presents a width of less than 3 cm. The head is the thickest element (4.3 cm), followed by the body (3.2 cm at the thorax and pelvis). The pedestal and shaft, meanwhile, are less than 1.5 cm thick.

The human figure is represented in full-length, without arms or sexual characteristics. The face is schematic, the brow and the nose made of notches, horizontal for the former and in a rectangle for the latter. The hair is indistinct, the mouth marked by two notches forming a caret symbol. The long and pointed chin is distinguishable, as well as the stocky neck separating the head from the body. The trunk and the legs are both 9 cm in length. The narrow hips seem to signal a male individual. They are, however, very distinguishable in profile view and marked by the wood growth. A slight bending is visible at the knees, and the calves are rounded. The figure has no feet, the lower legs resting directly on the pedestal. We note the absence of any clothing or ornaments. The pedestal, rectangular in shape and section, presents three notches on each side.

ABSOLUTE DATING

After the artefact entered the Valais History Museum collections, a first wood sample was taken inside a crack on the right side of the figure for ^{14}C dating (40943-E1)[12]. This analysis yielded a date extending from 360 to 116 cal BC (**fig. 8**). Considering the contamination risk due to the products used by the object's discoverer, a second sample was taken at the heart of the wood on the left side of the shaft's extremity (40943-E2). The result was 174-1 cal BC (**fig. 8**).

While the two calibrated dates present an overlap of about 60 years, from 174 to 116 BC, their mismatch is considered problematic, because of the few growth rings observed. The second measure seems to be more reliable since it was made from a sample that should not have been affected by the cleaning products. In the future, this larch wood artefact will probably be more precisely dated, thanks to further progress made on the dendrochronological referential of conifers[13].

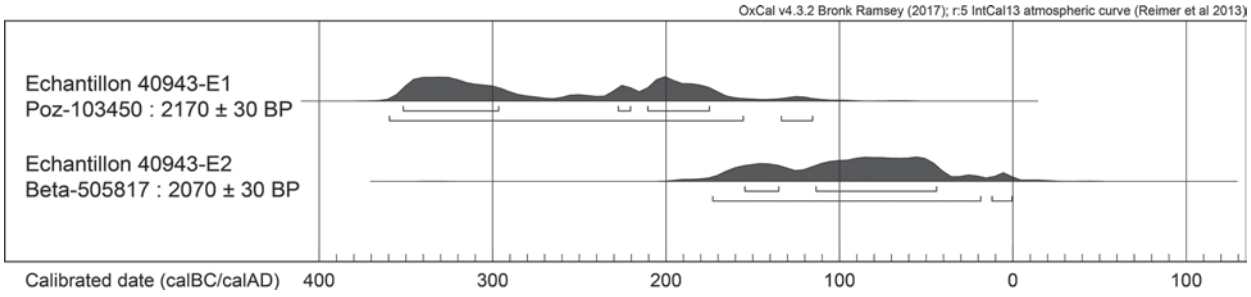

Fig. 8 Probability density curves of the radiocarbon dates obtained from the Col Collon object. Horizontal bars: standard error 1σ (on top) and 2σ (at the bottom). – (© OxCal v4.3.2 Bronk Ramsey [2017]; r:5 IntCal13 atmospheric curve [Reimer et al. 2013]; Illustration P.-Y. Nicod).

Fig. 9 Examples of Celtic wooden figurines: **a** Col Collon (Ct. Valais/CH). – **b** Seurre (dép. Côte-d'Or/F). – **c** Kingsteigton (Devon/GB). – **d** Yverdon-les-Bains (Ct. Vaud/CH). – **e** Wittemoor (Schleswig-Holstein/D). – (a © Valais History Museum, Sion, M. Martinez; b © Bibracte, A. Maillier, Denon Museum, Chalon-sur-Saône; c adapted from van der Sanden/Capelle 2002, 52; d © Archaeology & History Museum, Lausanne, Y. André; e adapted from van der Sanden/Capelle 2002, 66). – Various scales.

PARALLELS

The radiocarbon dates oriented the research towards artisanal wooden productions from the Celtic and early Roman periods. Unfortunately, the lack of stylistic details and the absence of signs of use lead to difficulties in interpreting this sculpted object.

Iron Age wooden statues

In Western Europe, several Iron Age anthropomorphic wooden sculptures were discovered in wetlands (lakes, rivers, and peatland). Some present affinities with the one from the Col Collon.

A Celtic statue discovered in the Saône river, at Seurre (dép. Côte-d'Or/F) presents the full-length figure of a man (around 60 cm length), the upper body of which has been burned (**figs 9b; 11i**)[14]. The legs, buttocks, hips, and erected sex are clearly visible; the only preserved foot is rather crude, with no individualisation of the toes. The arms do not figure on the preserved bust portion. The statue rests upon a pointed base, in order to be fixed in the ground or upon another support. A radiocarbon date (LY-1807: 2510 ± 130 BP; 926-263 cal BC, 2σ) and ceramic sherds associated with the object allow it to be dated to the Early Iron Age.

Another Celtic statue recently discovered in an old Seine river stretch at Pont-sur-Seine (dép. Aube/F), presents some similitudes (**fig. 11k**)[15]. Sculpted from a yew branch, 95 cm high and 4 cm in diameter, it has been radiocarbon dated to 360-180 cal BC (Beta-403483: 2190 ± 30 BP)[16]. Only a few anatomical traits are visible. The head, 5 cm high and 3 cm large, is the most detailed part: the hair, nose, eyes, and mouth are all relatively precisely depicted. Other sculpted elements include the pelvis and the feet, but the arms are absent. According to the authors, the figure could represent a Celtic divinity protecting the bridge against river floods.

In a similar context, but at a more voluminous scale, are the wooden statues dated to the 1st century BC discovered on the shores of Lake Geneva, at Villeneuve (Ct. Vaud/CH) and Geneva (Ct. Geneva/CH), and on the sud-west shore of Lake Neuchâtel, at Yverdon-les-Bains (Ct. Vaud/CH; **figs 9d; 11j**)[17]. They present some resemblance with the Valaisian object: a flat profile, a well-marked chin and a roughly detailed face. The Villeneuve statue rests on a pointed stake, probably to be fixed in the ground. The Geneva statue, with clothes and weapons, was placed on a quadrangular base. These monumental figures are interpreted as water divinities[18]. Recent work shows that wooden statues would have been erected in cultural buildings in dry areas as well, and would therefore have undergone very poor preservation conditions, explaining their absence from the archaeological record[19].

At a wider geographical scale, north of Europe or in the British Isles, some protohistoric statues from peatlands or wetlands also offer many similarities, such as the schematic representation of the body or the absence of arms[20]. These, however, all are monumental sculptures, made of oak or yew, destined to be presented raised, sometimes on a support. A few smaller statues are more comparable, such as the 34 cm oak figurine of Kingsteigton (Devon/GB; **figs 9c; 11h**), radiocarbon dated to 745-183 cal BC (OxA-1717: 2310 ± 70 BP), or that of Broddenbjerg (Viborg, Midtjylland/DK), 88 cm and dated around 535-520 cal BC. Both have eyes, nose, and chin resembling those observed on the Col Collon artefact.

Finally, regardless of size, the indented »pedestal« that separates the body from the shaft in the Valaisian piece reveals some similarities with those of the monumental statues of Wittemoor (Schleswig-Holstein/D), dated to the 2nd century BC (**figs 9e; 11l**). These were placed on each side of a path made of logs (»trackway« or »Bollenweg«), dated to 135 BC by dendrochronology[21].

Wooden statues from the Roman period

From a geographical point of view, the nearest example is the figure found at Eschenz (Ct. Thurgau/CH), interpreted as an *ex-voto*[22]. Made of oak, 62 cm high, it is dated to the Augustan period[23]. Although the facial proportions are close to those of the Col Collon artefact, the length of the nose, the detailed ears, as well as a cloak covering the body are all marked differences.

Fig. 10 The Col Collon object compared to Roman and contemporary distaffs: **a** Iron Age, Col Collon (Ct. Valais/CH). – **b** Roman period, Aelium Cetum (Sankt Pölten, Niederösterreich/A). – **c** Roman period, Lauriacum (Lorch, Oberösterreich/A). – **d** 1st half of the 20th century, Bulgaria. – **e** 20th century, Rhône-Alpes/F. – (a © Valais History Museum, Sion, M. Martinez; b © Stadtmuseum St. Pölten, N. Gail, Wien; c © OÖ. Landes-Kultur GmbH; d-e © Innsbruck University, Institute for Archaeologies, B. Nutz). – Various scales.

Another oak statue was found in a Roman sanctuary at Oedenburg (Biesheim-Kunheim, dép. Haut-Rhin/F) and dated to 14-53 AD[24]. With a length of 120 cm and a maximum width of 10.5 cm, it exhibits a face 13 cm long with eyes, nose, and mouth made through linear notches similar to those observed on the Col Collon artefact[25].

Still on French territory, other parallels can be found among the numerous wooden *ex-votos* from Gallo-Roman sanctuaries (1st-4th century AD), like those of the Seine springs in Burgundy (Source-Seine, dép. Côte-d'Or/F)[26], of the Roches springs near Clermont-Ferrand (Chamalières, dép. Puy-de-Dôme/F)[27], of Magny-Cours (dép. Nièvre/F)[28], and Montbouy (dép. Loiret/F)[29]. The few full-length figures represented, however, have much larger proportions, were more accurately shaped, and none rest upon a shaft ending in a blunted point.

Iron Age and Roman period tools

All these examples refer to statues or figurines for which a ritual purpose is assumed. The Col Collon artefact, rather than a figurine *stricto sensu*, could be a tool or utensil, the human character being the handle and the shaft the functional part. In this case, similarities can be seen in the Celtic daggers with anthropoid hilts, dated to the 5th-2nd century BC[30]. Here, the handle shows a full-length small figure, with arms raised over the head. Wooden swords from the Iron Age should also be kept in mind, like those of Breiddin in Wales/GB (**fig. 11f**)[31] or Yverdon-les-Bains/CH (dated to the middle of the 2nd century BC; **fig. 11g**)[32]. Mention should also be made of weaver swords, such as those from Hallstatt-Dammwiese (Bez. Gmunden, Oberösterreich/A), dated to the Late La Tène period[33].

More convincing parallels are the numerous Roman bone distaffs, bearing a full-length person – usually a Venus like the one from Lauriacum (Lorch, Bez. Linz-Land, Oberösterreich/A) or Aelium Cetum (Sankt

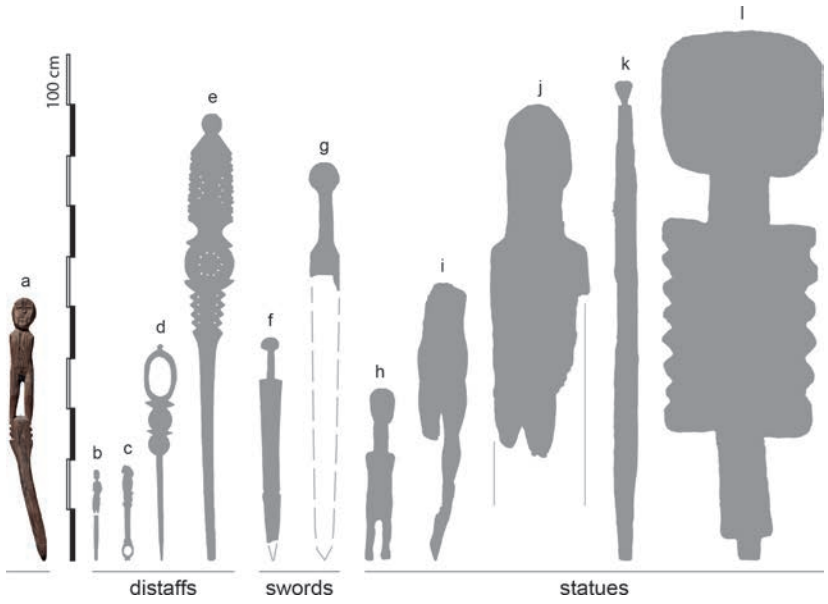

Fig. 11 The Col Collon object compared to wooden and bone objects mentioned in the text and/or illustrated in **figs 9-10**. – **a** Col Collon object (Col Collon, Ct. Valais/CH). – **b** distaff, Roman period (Aelium Cetum, Sankt Pölten, Niederösterreich/A). – **c** distaff, Roman period (Lauriacum, Lorch, Oberösterreich/A). – **d** distaff, 1st half of the 20th century (Bulgaria). – **e** distaff, 20th century (Rhône-Alpes/F). – **f** wooden sword, Second Iron Age (Breiddin Hillfort/GB). – **g** wooden sword, 2nd century BC (Yverdon-les-Bains, Ct. Vaud/CH). – **h** wooden statues (Kingsteignton/GB). – **i** wooden statue, First Iron Age (Seurre/F). – **j** wooden statue, 1st century BC (Yverdon-les-Bains, Ct. Vaud/CH). – **k** wooden statue, 2nd century BC (Pont-de-Seine/F). – **l** wooden statue, 2nd century BC (Wittemoor/D). – (a © Valais History Museum, Sion, M. Martinez; b adapted from Gostenčnik 2012, 76; c © OÖ. Landes-Kultur GmbH; d-e © Innsbruck University, Institute for Archaeologies, B. Nutz; f adapted from Musson/Britnell/Smith 1991, fig. 67; g adapted from Curdy/Klausener 1985, fig. 6; h adapted from van der Sanden/Capelle 2002, fig. 40; i adapted from Bonenfant et al. 1998, fig. 6; j adapted from Brunetti 2001, 24; k adapted from Collas/Vernou 2018, 53; l adapted from van der Sanden/Capelle 2002, fig. 52). – Same scale.

Pölten, Niederösterreich/A) (**figs 10b-c; 11b-c**)[34]. In this context, the resemblance of our piece with a spinning tool finds echoes in sub-recent and modern craftsmanship[35]. Some modern wooden distaffs from Savoie, Aosta Valley, or more distant regions present, just like the Col Collon artefact, a segmentation into three elements (**figs 10d-e; 11d-e**): a top part with various motifs or a human figure, a median part with notches, and an elongated bottom part ending in a blunted point. The yarn is placed on the top section; the intermediary part blocks the material to be spun, and the shaft is handheld, or for longer pieces slipped through the belt of the spinner.

DISCUSSION

Based on the most reliable radiocarbon date, the wooden artefact from the Col Collon can be attributed to the last two centuries BC. It seems to be local craftsmanship, since the wood used, larch, is endemic to the Pennine Alps[36]. Beyond these two affirmations, this object remains a bit of a mystery. The difficulty in interpreting this object comes from the fact that there are no traces of use on the object itself, no archaeological context at the discovery location, and a few possibilities for direct comparison. It could be a cult object placed in a specific location, such as a narrow mountain pass, or a tool accidentally lost by its owner. In the first case, we could have a »glacier version« of the Celtic wooden statues erected near springs or waterways[37]. It could be also a marker of a territorial boundary. If this artefact had a functional utility, only

its similarities with antic and contemporary distaffs can be underlined, without rejecting other possibilities (dagger, sword, weaving knife, etc.).

Fig. 12 Maple sickle handle found at Testa Grigia (Zermatt, Ct. Valais/CH, 3440 m a. s. l.). Iron Age, 4th-2nd century BC. Length 28,8 cm. – (© Valais History Museum, Sion; photo M. Martinez).

Cultural attribution to the Celtic world?

At the end of the La Tène period, the area was occupied by different Celtic tribes: *Nantuates*, *Veragri*, *Seduni* and *Uberi* in the Upper Rhone Valley, *Salassi* in the Aosta Valley south of the Col Collon. During the last decades BC, the whole region came under Roman control. On the northern side of the pass, according to archaeological data, the Val d'Hérens valley seems to have been densely settled[38]. It was part of the *Seduni* territory[39]. South of the pass, however, the absence of archaeological finds does not allow any precision about the cultural components of the Valpelline region (Aosta Valley). In conclusion, to the best of our knowledge, the Col Collon figure is certainly a local Celtic production but with no convincing parallels among regional craftmanship.

Testimony to transalpine travels

The discovery of this particular wooden artefact as well as various other Iron Age objects at the Col Collon bear witness to the importance of this route in exchanges and goods circulation between the High Rhone Valley and the Aosta Valley. Several other glacial discoveries show that these elements are not isolated finds and that throughout the Pennine Alps, other passes were travelled during protohistorical periods[40]. It is worth mentioning here the wooden sickle handle, discovered at 3444 m a. s. l. near the Aventine pass (Testa Grigia, Zermatt, Ct. Valais/CH; **fig. 1**)[41]. This ergonomic handle is dated to the La Tène period (**fig. 12**)[42]. Bearing a strong similarity with some wooden handles from Late Bronze Age Swiss dwellings, it, however, provides good comparisons throughout the Celtic world[43].

It should be noted that to pass over the Alpine massif through a South-North axis, particularly in the Upper Rhone Valley, the shortest way requires crossing successively two passes[44]. In the Bernese Alps, several glacial archaeological finds dating to the Iron Age allow for a northern extension of the passage axes identified in the Pennine Alps. A bowl dated to the La Tène period, made of spruce, was discovered at the Lötschenpass (Bern and Valais/CH; **fig. 1**)[45]; and contemporaneous woods have been found at the Schnidejoch (Bern and Valais/CH; **fig. 1**)[46]. These two passages allow the traveller to connect with the Swiss Midlands north of the Valais, by going through the valleys of Kandertal and Simmental.

The discoveries mentioned also confirm the long-time hypotheses as to the role of alpine passes during the Iron Age[47]. The growing influx of men and merchandise gave the local alpine populations some prosperity, thanks to the knowledge and control of the itineraries within these remote areas. In the Upper Rhone Valley, the richness of the Don Bosco Celtic cemetery at Sion (Ct. Valais/CH)[48] or the repeatedly occupied settlement of Brig-Glis/Gamsen at the foot of the Simplon pass (Ct. Valais/CH)[49] bear witness to this prosperity.

CONCLUSION

Apart from the artefacts issued from Neolithic and Bronze Age lacustrian dwellings, wooden objects are rare in Switzerland and neighbouring countries. Although its exact function remains undetermined, the artefact from the Col Collon gives us precious indications about the transalpine circulation during the last centuries BC. On the other hand, the circumstances of this find – 20 years before the object was transmitted to the scientific community – illustrate the major issue of glacial archaeology: the majority of these discoveries are made by non-professionals, as it is impossible for heritage institutions to control such a large and difficult to access territory. In the Valais Alps, global warming will lead to a diminution of close to 80 % of the surfaces currently covered by glaciers by 2060. For these reasons, it is necessary to establish a coordinated response among Alpine heritage institutions of neighbouring countries and to involve non-archaeologists in the localisation, gathering, and preservation of these fragile vestiges[50].

Acknowledgements

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Notes

1) Eschmann-Richon 2014.
2) Curdy 1995, 123.
3) Field surveys: 2013 (Philippe Curdy, Hilaire Dumoulin, Olivier Millioud), 2017 (Philippe Curdy, Pierre-Jérôme Rey), 2018 (Pierre-Yves Nicod, François Mariéthoz, Marie-France Hendricks, Philippe Curdy).
4) Rogers et al. 2016.
5) Determination Werner H. Schoch (Labor für quartäre Hölzer, Langnau/CH): *Salix* sp., *Betula* sp., *Alnus viridis*, Maloideae. All sticks have a diameter of 1 cm or less, and a pointed extremity made through one or several strikes with a sharp instrument. Six radiocarbon dates were carried out, all falling between 760-400 cal BC (2σ): Poz-95587, 2460 ± 35 BP (COL17/3.1-E1); Poz-95591, 2460 ± 30 BP (COL17/4.1-E1); Poz-86365, 2440 ± 30 BP (COL13/1-E3); Poz-62503, 2425 ± 35 BP (COL13/1-E1); Poz-68695, 2405 ± 30 BP (COL13/1-E2); Poz-95588, 2405 ± 30 BP (COL17/3.2-E1).
6) It is a softwood perch (*Picea*/*Abies*, det. W. H. Schoch, Labor für quartäre Hölzer, Langnau/CH), 130 cm long, pointed at one end and dated to 359-97 cal BC (2σ): Poz-95589; 2160 ± 35 BP (COL17/24-E1).
7) Tracq 2004.
8) »Mémoire de glace: vestiges en péril / Aus dem Eis: Spuren in Gefahr«; october 2018 - march 2019 (Nicod 2018).
9) Museum inventory n° »40943«. We wish to thank Silvia Venturino, Francis Tracq and Mauro Ferrini for their precious collaboration.
10) *Larix decidua*; determination Werner H. Schoch (Labor für quartäre Hölzer, Langnau/CH).
11) Burga/Perret 1998.
12) Operation made by Benjamin Schäefer (ConservArt, Sion/CH).
13) Oral communication Fabien Langenegger (Laboratoire de dendrochronologie de Neuchâtel, Hauterive/CH).
14) Bonenfant/Guillaumet 1998.
15) Collas/Vernou 2018; Collas 2018. Thanks to Rémy Collas for his collaboration and informations.
16) Collas 2018, 267.
17) Haldimann 2002. – Brunetti 2001.
18) Most springs and rivers had a tutelary god/goddess during the Celtic period (Jufer/Luginbuhl 2001).
19) Poux 2019.
20) van der Sanden/Capelle 2002. – Coles 1990.
21) Hayen 1971. – Brunning/Mc Dermott 2013.
22) Bürgi 1978.
23) Recent dendrochronological analyses place it at 9 BC, with an uncertainty range of ten years (Belz et al. 2008).
24) Reddé 2011, 356-358.
25) Thanks to Caty Schucany and Michel Reddé for the information.
26) Deyts 1983.
27) Romeuf/Dumontet 2000.
28) Rocque/Tisserand 2014. – Tisserand/Nouvel 2013.
29) Thévenot 1968.
30) Drilhon/Duval 1985.
31) Earwood 1993, 32. 34.
32) Curdy/Klausener 1985, 238 fig. 6a.
33) Grömer 2010, 123 fig. 57; the biggest measures 34 cm long, with a 9 cm handle and a blade of 25 cm.

34) Gostenčnik 2012, 76.

35) We thank the following people for the information provided: Thomas Antonietti, Corinne Artaz, Marta Bazzanella, Werner Bellwald, Alexis Bétemps, Rodolfo Chasseur, Mirko Cianci, Olivier Cogne, Mauro Cortelazzo, Laura Decanale, Nurye Donatoni, Jean-Claude Duclos, Jean-Charles Fellay, Emilie Girard, Jean Guibal, Beat Hächler, Stefan Hächler, Pascal Kober, Guillaume Lebaudy, Dante Marquet, Gisèle Pannatier, Régis Picavet, Samuel Pont, Antoinette Rast-Eicher, Isabelle Raboud-Schüle, Luca Raiteri, Claudine Remacle, Gabriele Sartorio, Federica Tamarozzi, Raul dal Tio and particularly Dante Marquet who gave us a rich documentation on the distaffs of the Aosta Valley.

36) Burga/Perret 1998.

37) It could be a topical divinity – just like Poeninus at the Col du Grand Saint-Bernard (Wiblé 1998).

38) Traces of settlements from the Late Iron Age and the Early Roman period at Evolène/Gréféric (Ct. Valais/CH; Wiblé 2007, 400-402) and Vex/Le Château (Ct. Valais/CH; David-Elbiali 1990, 32); tombs from the La Tène and Roman period at Hérémence, at Les Haudères, Vex and in the Val des Dix (Ct. Valais/CH; Sauter 1950, 100); closer to the Col Collon, a rock shelter with protohistoric hearths (Baudais et al. 1987, 12 fig. 15) dated to the Late La Tène - Early Roman period (B-4871: 2140 ± 50 BP, 179 cal BC - 63 cal AD).

39) Local Celtic leg rings attributed to the *Seduni* at Hérémence (Ct. Valais/CH; Curdy et al. 2009, 208; Sauter 1950, 100).

40) Rogers et al. 2016. – Curdy et al. 2016. – Hafner 2015.

41) Providoli/Curdy/Elsig 2015, 46-47.

42) Two radiocarbon dates place this object between 373 and 112 cal BC: Poz-59841: 2165 ± 30 BP; Poz-62498: 2215 ± 30 BP.

43) Wooden handle with an iron sickle dated to the middle of the 1st century BC in Toulouse (Vidal 1991, fig. 11, 24). Thanks to Markus Egg and Martin Schönfelder for the information provided.

44) Curdy 2010.

45) This vessel was perhaps used to transport embers, according to first interpretations (Gubler 2019, fig. 2).

46) Hafner 2015, 230. 240. A 70 cm long stick (inv. n° AS09/58; species: Maloideae, det.: W. Schoch) presents cut traces at one end and is dated to 174-19 cal BC (Poz-33732: 2060 ± 35 BP).

47) Pauli 1991. – Schmid-Sikimič 2002. – Curdy 2010.

48) Brunetti 2017, 469-471.

49) Benkert et al. 2014. – Paccolat et al. 2019.

50) Curdy 2019. – Nicod 2018.

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Zusammenfassung / Summary / Résumé

Ein rätselhaftes hölzernes Artefakt aus der Eisenzeit vom Col Collon (3068 m über dem Meeresspiegel, Evolène, Kt. Wallis/CH)

Seit einigen Jahren gibt es infolge der globalen Erwärmung eine Zunahme von Entdeckungen im Zusammenhang mit der Gletscherarchäologie, insbesondere im Alpenmassiv. Dieser Artikel präsentiert ein hölzernes Artefakt aus den letzten zwei Jahrhunderten v. Chr., das in 3000 m Höhe auf dem Haut Glacier d'Arolla, nahe der italienisch-schweizerischen Grenze, gefunden wurde. Dieses Objekt stellt eine schematische menschliche Figur in Lebensgröße ohne Arme dar, die auf einem Schaft ruht, der in einer abgestumpften Spitze endet. In stilistischer Hinsicht können die hölzernen Statuen der keltischen Welt als Referenz dienen, aber was die Funktion betrifft, findet dieses Stück Vergleiche bei Gebrauchsgegenständen und Werkzeugen wie Spinnrocken, Webmessern oder Miniaturschwertern. Zusammen mit anderen Holzobjekten, die auf dem Col Collon und anderen zentral-westlichen Alpenübergangsrouten entdeckt wurden, zeugen diese Artefakte vom Austausch und Warenverkehr zwischen Süd- und Nordeuropa in vor- und frühgeschichtlichen Epochen. Dieses Stück, das 20 Jahre nach seiner Entdeckung an Wissenschaftler weitergegeben wurde, ist insofern emblematisch für die Glazialarchäologie, als die meisten Funde von Laien gemacht wurden. Heute besteht im Alpenraum eine echte Dringlichkeit, die Bemühungen zwischen den archäologischen Institutionen und den Institutionen des Kulturerbes zu koordinieren und Nicht-Archäologen in die Lokalisierung, Sammlung und Erhaltung dieser zerbrechlichen Überreste einzubeziehen.

An Enigmatic Iron Age Wooden Artefact Discovered on the Col Collon (3068 m a. s. l., Evolène, Ct. Valais/CH)

For several years, as a consequence of global warming, there has been an increase of discoveries related to glacial archaeology, in particular in the Alpine massif. This article presents a wooden artefact dated to the last two centuries BC, found at an altitude of 3000 m on the Haut Glacier d'Arolla, near the Italian-Swiss border. This object represents a schematic full-length human figure, with no arms, resting on a shaft ending in a blunted point. In stylistic terms, the wooden statues of the Celtic world can serve as a reference, however, as far as function is concerned, this piece finds comparisons in utensils and tools like distaffs, weaver knives or miniature swords. In conjunction with other wooden objects discovered on the Col Collon and other central-western Alpine passage routes, these artefacts all bear witness to the exchanges and goods circulation between Southern and Northern Europe in pre- and protohistorical eras. This object, which was transmitted to scientists 20 years after its dicovery, is emblematic of glacial archaeology in that most finds are being made by non-professionals. Today, in the Alpine region, there is a true urgency to coordinate efforts among archaeological and heritage institutions, and to involve non-archaeologists in the localisation, gathering and preservation of these fragile vestiges.

Un énigmatique objet en bois de l'âge du Fer découvert au col Collon (3068 m, commune d'Evolène, Ct. Valais/CH)

Depuis plusieurs années, conséquence du réchauffement climatique, les découvertes relevant du domaine de l'archéologie glaciaire se multiplient, en particulier dans le massif alpin. Cet article présente une pièce en bois datée des deux derniers siècles av. J.-C., découverte à 3000 m d'altitude sur le Haut Glacier d'Arolla, à proximité de la frontière italo-suisse. L'objet représente un individu schématique en pied, sans bras, reposant sur une hampe lancéolée. Si les statues en bois d'époque celtique peuvent servir de référence stylistique, on peut également rapprocher cette pièce d'ustensiles ou d'outils tels que quenouilles, couteaux de tisserand ou épées miniatures. Associée aux autres objets en bois récoltés lors de prospections sur le col Collon et sur d'autres passages des Alpes centre-occidentales, cette pièce apporte un témoignage de premier rang sur l'importance que jouaient les cols alpins aux époques protohistoriques dans les échanges et les circulations entre le sud et le nord de l'Europe. Cet objet, signalé au monde scientifique 20 ans

après sa découverte, est emblématique du domaine de l'archéologie glaciaire, où la grande majorité des découvertes sont le fait de non-professionnels. Il y a aujourd'hui urgence à coordonner les efforts entre les institutions en charge du patrimoine archéologique alpin et à impliquer la participation de non-archéologues dans la localisation, la récolte et la préservation de ces fragiles vestiges.

Schlüsselwörter / Keywords / Mots clés

Alpen / Eisenzeit / Holzobjekt / Figur / Gletscherarchäologie / transalpiner Verkehr
Alps / Iron Age / wooden artefact / figurine / glacial archaeology / transalpine circulation
Alpes / âge du Fer / artefact en bois / statuette / archéologie glaciaire / circulation transalpine

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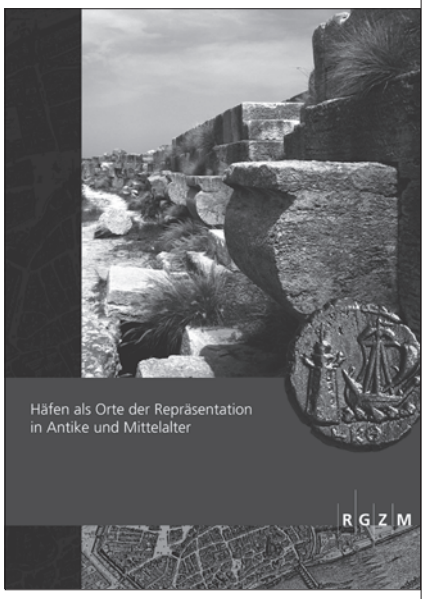

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Häfen als Orte der Repräsentation in Antike und Mittelalter

Der vorliegende Band ist das Ergebnis des Workshops »Häfen als Orte der Repräsentation in Antike und Mittelalter«, der 2015 im Rahmen des DFG-Schwerpunktprogramms 1630 »Häfen von der Römischen Kaiserzeit bis zum Mittelalter in Europa« in Mainz veranstaltet wurde. Die in ihm versammelten Beiträge gehen der Frage nach, ob und in welchem Maße Häfen repräsentative Funktionen erfüllten, und nehmen unterschiedliche Ebenen der Repräsentation in den Blick. Die architektonische Gestaltung von Häfen und Hafenstädten wird ebenso thematisiert wie ihre Rolle als Schauplatz herrschaftlicher Repräsentation. Geographisch und zeitlich weit gestreut, behandeln die Beiträge Plätze im Mittelmeerraum sowie in Nord- und Mitteleuropa, und zwar von der griechischen Antike bis zum Mittelalter. Neben archäologischen Zeugnissen bilden auch schriftliche und ikonographische Quellen den Ausgangspunkt für die Betrachtung diverser Aspekte der Repräsentation.

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Die spätantiken Gürtel mit kerbschnittverzierten Metallbeschlägen

Studien zu Militärgürteln des 4.-5. Jahrhunderts

Die eingehende Analyse der in den letzten Jahren stark angewachsenen Zahl der kerbschnittverzierten Gürtelbeschläge bestätigt deren Funktion als repräsentative und symbolträchtige spätrömische Militärgürtel, die offensichtlich zur Zeit Kaiser Valentinians I. in Gallien speziell für Elitetruppen des Feldheeres eigens neu entworfen wurden, sich in abgewandelter Form bis ins erste Drittel des 5. Jahrhunderts gehalten haben und vor allem bei Militärstandorten im Landesinneren sowie entlang der Reichsgrenze zu finden sind. Durch Truppenverlegungen und die besondere Mobilität von Heeresverbänden im ausgehenden 4. und beginnenden 5. Jahrhundert verbreiteten sich die »Kerbschnittgürtel« in viele entlegene, auch grenzferne Regionen des Weströmischen Reiches. Aus der Armee ausgeschiedene Veteranen brachten diese regulären Militärgürtel mit in ihre jeweiligen Heimatorte, wo sie häufig als Grabbeigaben dienten. Kerbschnittverzierte Schnallen und Beschläge sowie deren spätere Nachfolger als wichtige archäologische Zeugnisse des spätrömischen Militärwesens geben dank ihrer geplanten Gestaltung und ihres gelenkten Wandels Auskunft über die Struktur und Wirksamkeit der spätantiken Armee bis zur Mitte des 5. Jahrhunderts.

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