

‘Prestation Economy’: a model for Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age burial deposition in Central-Western Europe*

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Resumo: Desde os anos de 1970, enterramentos ricos como aqueles de Vix e Hochdorf têm sido analisados como ícones de um fenômeno pan-regional – a emergência de Estados tradicionais, a qual é largamente sustentada pelo impacto de sua interação com as sociedades mediterrâneas. Contudo, nas últimas duas décadas, tem havido uma crítica significativa a um tal modelo interpretativo. No seio desse debate, o presente artigo afirma que o registro arqueológico fornece evidência de que depósitos rituais (também e juntamente com outras formas de dom e contra-dom) constituíam parte significativa do que podemos chamar “*economia de prestações*”. A fim de tal demonstrar, este artigo analisa os enterramentos e respectivos depósitos funerários das regiões de quatro “centros principescos” (*Fürstensitze*) – a saber: Bourges, Châtillon-sur-Glâne, Mont Lassois e Hohenasperg.

Palavras-chave: Idade do Ferro Européia – Ritualização – Economia Política – Enterramentos – Depósitos funerários.

Introduction

The dynamics of prestige and power have been central for the understanding of West Hallstatt societies. Most approaches, centring on mechanisms and structures of power in chiefdoms, have excluded the linkage between

political economy and ritual. Taking for granted an established opposition of ‘sacred’ and ‘profane’ spheres, and generally based on functionalist or structuralist approaches of ‘ritual’, a number of works on those prehistoric societies convey the image of the world and life divided in clear established categories, with

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'ritual' remaining distant from everyday life. However, the archaeological evidence hints at a rather distinct context, where ritual is part of daily life, becoming distinct through means of performance and through experience; this linkage has started to be explored in a number of works on the archaeology both of Northwestern Europe and the Mediterranean (e.g. Bradley 2003, 2005; Brück 2004; Fontijn 2002; Giles 2007; Hill 1995; Hingley 1997; Nijboer 2001 amongst others).

Therefore, my aims here are threefold: first, regarding the internal dynamics of West Hallstatt societies, to question the interpretation of a 'prestige goods economy'. Secondly, to propose the model of what I call a 'prestation economy' and show how this can be perceived in the burial record. Third, and finally, to point out how the deposits of prestations in burials suggest a distinction between private and public ceremonies.

I must, however, underline that my goal here is not so much to retrace the life of those objects as to consider their action in their final deposit, i.e. to understand their significance and employment at the moment of their withdrawal from circulation in society. The present study takes into consideration the assemblages of burials from Late Bronze Age to the beginning of Late Iron Age (ca. 1200-400 BC) from the regions of four emblematic cases of the 'princely phenomenon', namely: Bourges (Centre, France), Mont Lassois (Burgundy, France), Châtillon-sur-Glâne (canton de Fribourg, Switzerland), and Hohenasperg (Baden-Württemberg, Germany) (Fig. 1).

Protohistoric burial practice

Burials are important markers in social life, for they punctuate the collective and personal memory, and establish the link between the present and past generations. Several authors perceive death and burials to be the moment of transition and transformation, and of re-establishment of the social order, with the separation of the deceased from the world of the living and their passing to the world of the dead. This transition is ordered by stipulated rules, and sumptuary and political regulations, in addition to individual family

traditions. Thus, burial deposits are carefully structured by the living, whose choices and attitudes articulate elements of social structure, gender and political relations, as well as views of the Otherworld and of death, innovations and tradition (cf. Barrett 1990; Fleming 1973; Parker Pearson 1999; Pearson 1998). In this sense, funerary display not only reveals hegemonic views, but it also shows individual choices.

Generally, one can define the Central-Western European burial assemblages as: a) Late Bronze Age: construction of large burial mounds (*tumuli*) with a predominance of cremation rites; b) Early Iron Age (the so-called Hallstatt period): *tumuli* continued to be built (in some cases they were even reused), though cremation gave place to inhumation as the preferred burial rite; c) Late Iron Age (so-called La Tène period): there is the creation of large cemeteries of flat graves with the reappearance of cremation burials. Such is the oversimplified outline, for the broad picture of burial practice in protohistoric Central-Western Europe is much more complex.

Regional analyses¹ have nonetheless been showing that cremation and inhumation rites coexisted throughout protohistory. Moreover, cremations proved to be rather heterogeneous. They could be performed directly on the ground or on a funerary pyre that could either be built in the vicinity of the burial place, at the gravesite or even at distant places. Cremation burials presented: a) separation of corpse remains – bones from ashes and/or corpse remains from the rests of funerary platform; b) form of deposition: in a heap, in a metal urn or in a pottery urn; c) type of grave: flat or tumulus. Such differences denote not solely difference in ritual practice, but also distinct attitudes towards the deceased, which are particularly emphasized in the burial of remains in graves or funerary monuments, creating an intentional and evident marker in the collective and familial memory.

(1) For some recent analyses of burial typologies and assemblages see Baray (2000, 2003); Burmeister (2000); Evans (2001); Hochuli *et al.* (1998); Kurz (1997); Müller *et al.* (1999); Pare (1992) and Olivier (1995, 2000a-b).

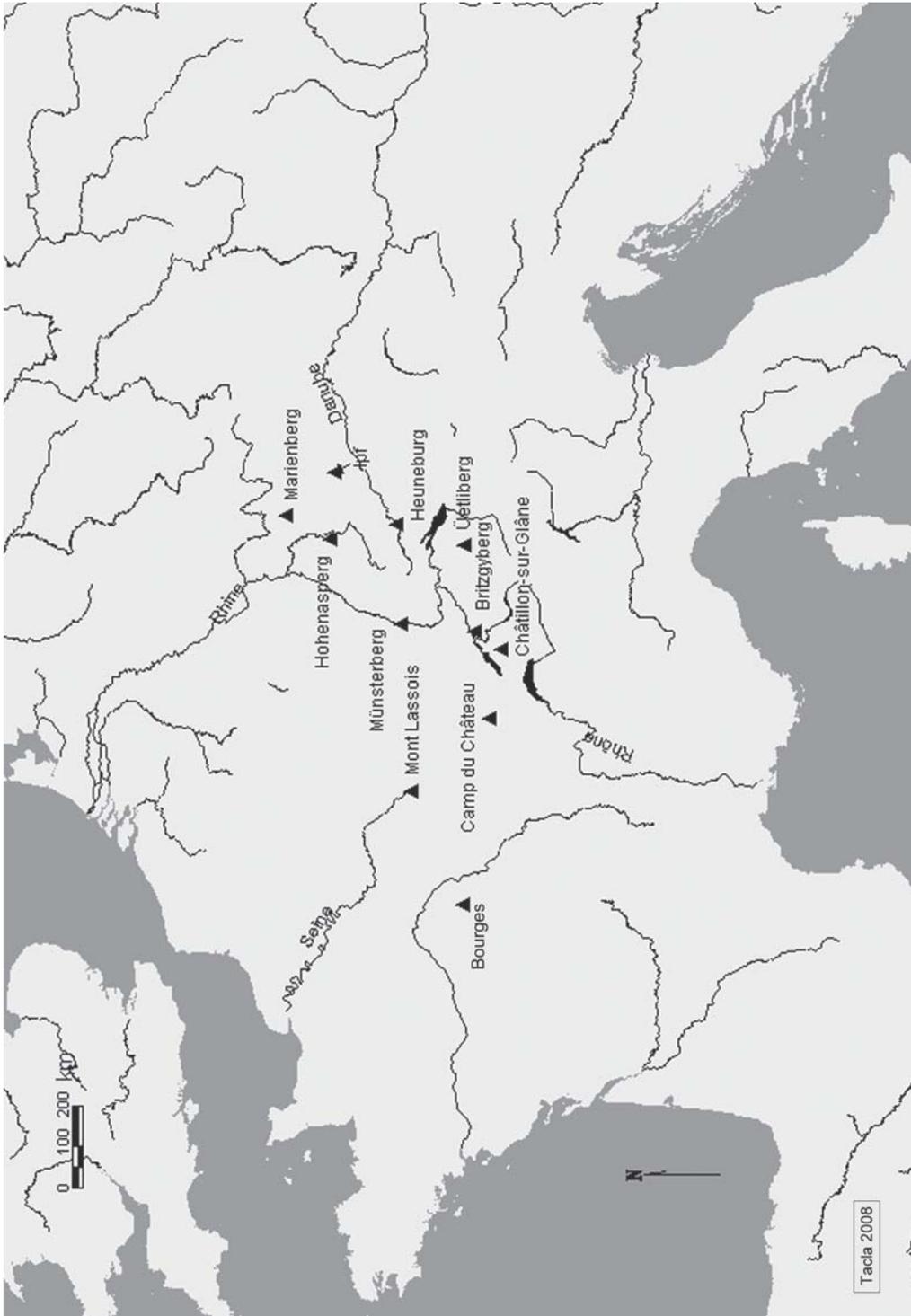


Fig. 1. Location map of so-called Finstentz.

Such variety in ritual performance and final deposition also occurs in inhumations, which appear in single, double or multiple burials in one grave that could be a central or secondary grave placed under a same mound. The preparation of the dead, the feast, corpse disposal, deposition of offerings, and the like, were not rigidly standardized and conformed to both regional patterns and to individual choices. Then, although dorsal decubitus with extended legs and arms along beside the body is the most frequent position in single burials, there are also occurrences of bodies placed crouched, or in lateral or abdominal decubitus.

The typology of burial mounds also varied considerably. Mounds were surrounded by ditches, circles of stones or wooden posts, with or without stone-cairns, and filled-up with earth or with both stones and earth. Likewise other monuments, burial mounds demanded the mobilization of a large amount of labour and the organization of work through various stages – the excavation of the pit, building the grave chamber, deposition of the body and grave-goods, the excavation of the ditch, building the mound, and the placement of stones, the stakes or stelae. Thus, it is generally assumed that the larger the investment of energy, the higher was the social rank (cf. Tainter 1978: 125-28) and the clearer the evidence of chiefdom organization (Earle 1987: 290).

The construction of mounds encompassed a chain of actions that had a significant role in the funerary ritual. Thus 'conspicuous' and 'inconspicuous monuments'² implied different

ritual times and performances. Bartel (1982: 54) proposed a general model for the sequence of funerary behaviour and Olivier (1999) suggested a sequence of time and performance for the burial of the Hochdorf chief. The construction of mounds punctuated different stages of the performance. The preparation of the burial site occurred in parallel with the preparation of the body and the organization of the ceremony, which engaged mourners, friends/allies, builders and other members of the community.

Within this scenario, the period referred to as of the West Hallstatt societies is broadly characterized by inhumation burials placed under large tumuli, which could contain one or more graves. The interpretation of such burials has privileged the discourse of emergence, domination, and legitimation of powerful elites. In this perspective, the opulence of certain graves (the so-called *Fürstengräber*) placed under conspicuous monuments (in contrast to graves more simply furnished and placed in inconspicuous monuments) primarily represents a statement of power, domination and dependency among the hierarchies of chiefs and elite members. The present discussion focuses exactly on such issue, but, before turning to the matter of prestige and grave-goods deposition, it is necessary to understand the distinction of certain dead personae and the construction of memory and ancestry.

Between dead and ancestors

In not belonging to the material world, the dead are seen either as potentially harmful or helpful to the living (cf. Parker Pearson 1993: 203). A number of works on West Hallstatt societies have considered the fear and reverence evoked by the power of the dead. This power is usually interpreted as two sorts of dead: 'dangerous spirits' and the 'memorable dead'. According to Pauli (1975: 171), the former are identified in burials with amulets, which could represent unmarried women and/or childless women. Prisoners or criminals that were victims of ritual death could equally be seen as 'dangerous spirits' and, therefore, they were placed apart from the other deceased people. On the other end of the spectrum, the heroes and ancestors represented the

(2) Peters (2000), when analysing the Bronze Age round barrows in the Stonehenge environs, proposes the categorization of mounds as 'conspicuous' and 'inconspicuous' due to their dimensions and contents. Conspicuous mounds have 'impressive features' (above 20 m diameter) and contained a large amount of deposits, including imported goods, whereas inconspicuous mounds are more ordinary and rather unnoticeable in size. Such terminology is here used in relation to the size (mounds' diameter for the height could not always be assessed, especially due to erosion and agricultural destruction). One could also consider the use of such terminology in relation to large grave-goods deposits. However, it is not possible to affirm for all cases the coincidence of rich grave-good deposits and mounds of large dimensions.

'memorable dead' and were, consequently, placed in funerary monuments, often with a rich assemblage of funerary deposits. In order to keep the balance and distinction between the 'world of the living' and the 'world of dead', it is assumed to be of prime importance to establish physical boundaries by means of ditches, stone cairns, and/or post-row circles (cf. Arnold 2002: 130-131). These would then guarantee that those worlds would meet only through ritual performance in sacred places; thus shielding the living against the 'dangerous dead' placed in cemeteries, and enabling powerful ancestors to be invoked for protection as well as to legitimate the status of their descendants. However, would that be so?

Although contact with the dead was facilitated in sacred places, their world was not so distant from that of the living. The category usually referred to as 'special deposits'³ shows that the hypothesis of a 'protective intention' of the deposit of amulets in burials, as well as of the use of stones and ditches in the construction of burial mounds, is ungrounded. The dead, and in particular the ancestors, were present in everyday life. Nonetheless, an emphasis on the role of ancestors in prehistoric Europe has been challenged as a transposition of modern concerns to the prehistoric societies (cf. Whitley 2002). In reply to such a challenge, I sustain that not only does the archaeological record of prehistoric Europe evince distinct forms and attitudes regarding the social memory, but it also shows the ancestors as being of paramount significance to the understanding of these societies.

Remembrance and oblivion were present in everyday life, embedded in communal space as

(3) The term 'special deposits' is employed, in the British archaeology, to identify deposits of human remains (isolated bones and partial or complete skeletons) found in storage or 'domestic' pits, or even in structures that resemble these. The most famous examples were found in Danebury (England), but they equally occur in other Iron Age settlements in England, in Germany (at the Lower Rhine and Northern Württemberg), in France (at Cher, Champagne, Marne, Île-de-France and Dordogne), and in Switzerland. For more details on 'special deposits' see Cunliffe (1992) and Hill (1995).

well as in private spheres and histories. A closer link with some 'selected' dead is to be observed in the placement of burials inside the settlements, in cemeteries and monuments, as well as in their worship in sanctuaries. This does not necessarily mean that the ancestors provided an explanation for every social phenomenon, but rather that they had a role of significance in the construction of communal history, as well as in the definition of lines of inheritance. The creation of permanent burial places was not only related to '... the pollution brought into the community by deceased (...), [but also to] the cultural centrality of the physical remains of the dead' (Chapman 1994: 47). For kinship was crucial to legitimise social order, the right to property, and the possession of land. It lay between the definition of boundaries, the marking out of territories and, in a wider sense, the determination of the known-world and the position of a group within it.

In fact, ancestry was crucial for the legitimisation of rank and leadership. All the more, as I argue herein, the Hallstatt societies were based on a prestation economy, in which the possession of inalienable heirlooms and the offering of prestations enabled the creation and maintenance of relationships, and defined both personal and family prestige and identity. Their memory was not only marked by monuments on the landscape, but also by the deposition of artefacts that signalled relationships. Hence, it is in the analysis of both the employment of material culture and monuments in the production of social memories that one can devise the overlapping of political dynamics in communal life.

Connerton (1989) remarked that ritualised performance is at the heart of the process of remembrance, for ritual practice shapes and establishes both the personal and collective memories.⁴ The collective experience of ritual performance implies continuity through repetition

(4) Connerton points out that there are three types of memory: personal (recollection of individuals' lives), cognitive (acquired knowledge, memorised data), and habit (the memory of practices, of performances). The latter is the sort of memory that shapes social life, for it encompasses practical knowledge of cultural, social and religious rules.

of past performances and events that install a hegemonic memory in communal life. Collective commemoration ceremonies are, therefore, instrumental in establishing a common view of the past and a sense of belonging. Yet, we should notice that it is not intention, meaning or messages that is retained in the memory, but the ritual performance itself. In other words, it is the practice that inscribes memories (cf. Connerton 1989: 73).

In this sense, the distinction between burials and memorials suggests that the ritualised performance of funerals and the construction of monuments involves two types of memory: a short-term memory linked to the commemoration of personhood, and a long-term memory related to the celebration of ancestry and heritage.⁵ The short-term memory is clearly evinced in burials that denote more intimate ceremonies. In contrast, long-term memory operates in large communal burial ceremonies, as well as in reused monuments.

Both intimate and communal ceremonies play a significant role in the socio-political dynamics. However, the latter are extraordinary statements for their contemporaries and descendants alike, since they actually become physical and mnemonic milestones of events and personalities, metaphors of power and prestige, and constituents of individual and collective identities. Such identities are produced in numerous contexts of social life and reified in ritualised performance. Thus, burials were not a direct expression of the personal identities and the status of the deceased, but rather an arena where several levels of relationships (kin, friendship, political alliance, as well as bonds to places) were articulated in the construction of personal and communal identities. 'Identity is not something that people have, an unchanging set of qualities; rather it is an ongoing act of production – an inherently fluid set of properties under continual construction and revision' (Brück 2004: 311). It is important to notice that these were relational

societies, where personhood was defined by interpersonal relationships as much as by personal associations to places.

The 'prestige goods' approach

Since the 1970's, scholarly research on West Hallstatt societies has remained deeply concerned with macro-scale phenomena, in particular with the definition of *Fürstentum* and the consolidation of a 'prestige goods economy'. Such a model, proposed on the seminal paper of Frankenstein and Rowlands (1978),⁶ established that a system of domination and hierarchy (paramount chiefs, vassal chiefs, sub-chiefs and village chiefs) was based on the monopoly of the control of the production by skilled craftsmen and of access to goods imported from the Mediterranean. The restricted access to rare goods legitimised their social rank, investing them with special status and prestige, which allowed the elites to control their subordinates, who became dependant for the supply of imported goods to legitimate their own power and position at a local level (see Fig. 2 below). Thus, in return for such goods, minor chiefs gave agricultural surpluses and their loyalty to upper rank chiefs, who had the capacity to support a network of allies. Moreover, Frankenstein and Rowlands claimed that such controlled access to prestige goods enabled higher chieftains to enlarge their personal network by marriage alliances (exchanging prestige goods for women), which reinforced their pre-eminence in society.

Whereas, on one side, Frankenstein and Rowlands' model has been largely accepted by scholars like Wells (1980, 1984, 1985) and Biel (1985) amongst others, on the other, a number of works have contested the basis and principles of such a model. Champion (1982, 1985, 1994) criticized their presumption of redistributive centres, whereas Gosden (1985) argued against the existence of such a stable system of alliance in European Iron Age societies. Bintliff (1984), on the other hand, argued

(5) Woodward (2000) has discussed the existence of these two types of memories in the construction of the British barrows.

(6) This argument was equally presented in Frankenstein's PhD thesis submitted in 1977, which was published in Spanish in 1997.

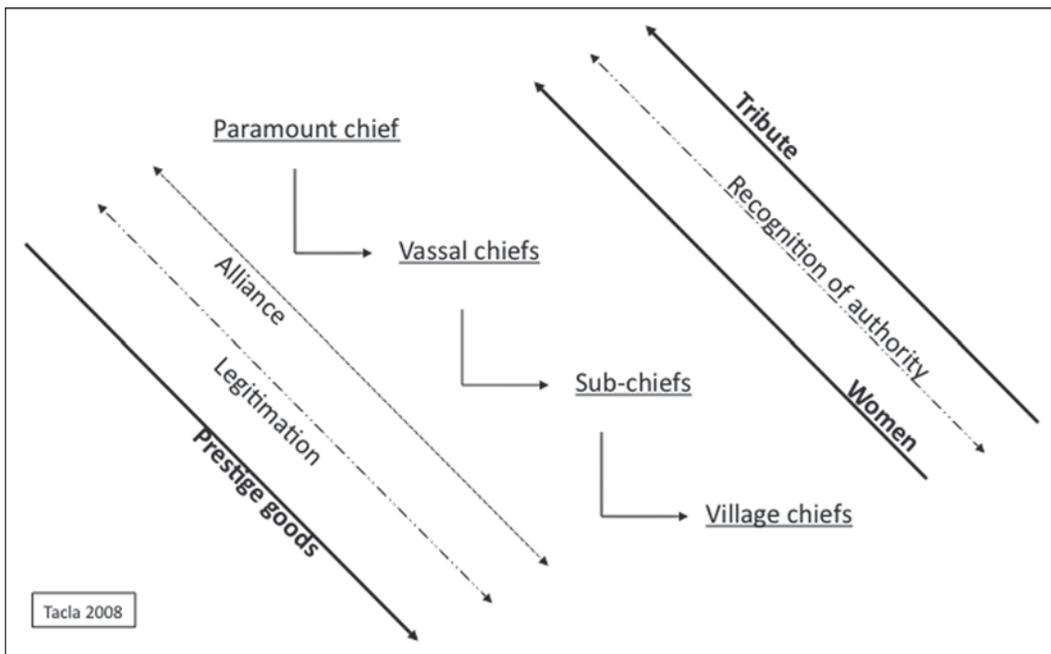


Fig. 2. Structure of the model proposed by Frankenstein and Rowlands 1978.

that Frankenstein and Rowlands overestimated the significance of burials as signs of rank, overlooking the probable continuity from LBA chiefdoms and, furthermore, overemphasizing the significance of Mediterranean imports. For, in fact, the influx of imports is too localized and restricted to be able to support that sort of system.⁷

(7) The sixty-seven fragments of imported ware found in Heuneburg constitute a total of thirteen Attic vessels and four non-Attic, whereas in Châtillon-sur-Clâne there were sixty-one fragments (mostly attic) and in Mont Lassois the three hundred sherds represent circa twenty-five vases (Champion 1994; Shefton 2000). It is certain that these cannot be taken as absolute numbers, for, in most cases, the area excavated is rather small and for Mont Lassois it is unknown (Joffroy did not specify the size of the area he dug). In this case, as Brun (1997: 326) has mentioned, the figures would assume the following proportion: in Châtillon-sur-Clâne 1/7m² of Attic pottery and 1/6m² of amphorae, whereas in Heuneburg it is 1/37.5m² and 1/25m² respectively. Nonetheless, it is relevant to say that such imports lasted solely for a restricted period. Additionally, recent works on Greek colonisation (Arafat and Morgan 1994, Tsatskheladze 1998) have refuted the relevance of trade of grain, slaves and wine in the contacts between Greek colonies and barbarian polities.

Eggert (1991), thought not directly discussing Frankenstein and Rowlands' model, underlines the problematic nature of the concept of 'prestige goods', for its usually deployed as a synonym for imported goods. Taking the discussion further, authors like Witt (1996) aimed at emphasising agency and resistance in contacts with the Mediterranean signalling at internal developments, which Dietler (1990, 1994, 1995, 1999) interprets according to the *habitus* of the elites in the strategies of domination and legitimation of their power.

However, it will be noticed that besides this overvaluation of the Mediterranean influence, one of the key problems in Frankenstein and Rowlands' model is that it relies on the assumption of a political economy based on concepts of debt and dependency. 'Debt' is the key principle of traditional views on gift-giving. It acts as a mechanism to regulate relationships in a gift economy, which is moved by mutual obligations – to give and receive presents (cf. Gosden 1989). This actually binds people in a web of debts that can never be completely paid off as every gift offered establishes a new debt. In this case, reciprocity would maintain social cohesion and

the stability of the system. Nevertheless, it implies notions of modern western economics, which assumes the existence of a moral constraint to regulate relations as a substitute for market rules, juridical law or institutionalised political hierarchy (cf. Rowlands 1994: 2; Weiner 1994: 393-394). Furthermore, this sort of perspective oversimplifies gift-giving practice, overlooking the matter of ownership (the social life of the object itself) and its linkage to the production of social distinction – aspects that are at the core of the political economy in those societies.

A 'prestation economy': defining principles

As an alternative to the 'prestige goods economy', I propose a model based on the notions of 'ritualisation' and 'prestation'. Prestation is a term that can be used to qualify all sorts of things that are given – such as gifts, offerings, tributes and debt payment (King 2004: 217).⁸ Firstly, one could ask why do I keep using the concept of 'prestation', even though I say that there is no notion of debt or reciprocity implied in such relationships? The answer to that question actually lies at the heart of 'ritualisation', for many rites and ceremonies, especially those evinced in the archaeological record, require the offering of a gift.

The analyses of ritual done by Bell (1992) as well as by Humphrey and Laidlaw (1994) have clearly shown that ritual is practice, in Bourdieu's sense (1977, 1990). Thus, 'ritualisation' is a way of acting, a form of performance that implies not solely fixed habits, mimetic behaviour and established routines, but also involves rationality, improvisation and innovation (Bell 1992; Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994) (see Fig. 3 below); so the same rite can be performed in different ways. In fact, ritualisation is a situational (bound to a context) and strategic practice (Bell 1992: 7-8), a process that confers distinction to selected moments, places and relationships in a given time and society. Therefore, it is not restricted to a

certain domain of life, but permeates the social texture and life in society as a whole, ordering the world through the creation of general dispositions, and founding discreet identities in society.

As shown in this diagram (Fig. 4), ritualisation and prestation are the two vertices of what I call a 'prestation economy'. In this diagram, we can see that ritualisation creates socio-political distinction, so that it defines social distance, power relations, and forms of authority. On the other hand, ritualisation does not operate as a means of control or coercion, nor does it assume the predominance of a group or ideology. Instead, it 'is a strategic arena for the embodiment of power relations' (Bell 1992: 170) that engenders power relationships, and constitutes ways of negotiation and competition, consent and resistance. Even though ritualisation can configure a means of legitimation of power and of the status quo, it is neither a mechanism to disguise power strategies, nor an instrument to express or symbolize them (Bell 1992: 195). This ability of producing hierarchy, of creating distance amongst people places ritualisation in the heart of social dynamics, which can be archaeologically perceived in settlements, funerary monuments, hoards and sanctuaries; the observations here presented focus mainly on burial practice in comparison to votive deposits.

As previously mentioned, the assumptions of debt and redistribution made in the model of 'prestige goods economy' produce the conception of societies tightly controlled by powerful chieftains through both kinship alliances (exchange of women) and unbalanced reciprocity. These were used as a means to create inequality and dependency, which were therefore sustained by the need for acquiring 'prestige goods' in order to supply networks of subordinate chiefs.

Such presumptions actually rely on the inference of grave-good deposits as denoting a display of wealth and hierarchy. This pursues the logic that rich burials represented the deceased's and/or his/her lineage wealth and belongings, whereas more simple burials corresponded to persons of lower social rank who did not receive such imported items. This

(8) Here, I am focusing on two types of prestations: gifts and offerings. Thus, these terms will be used as equivalent to 'prestation' along this work.

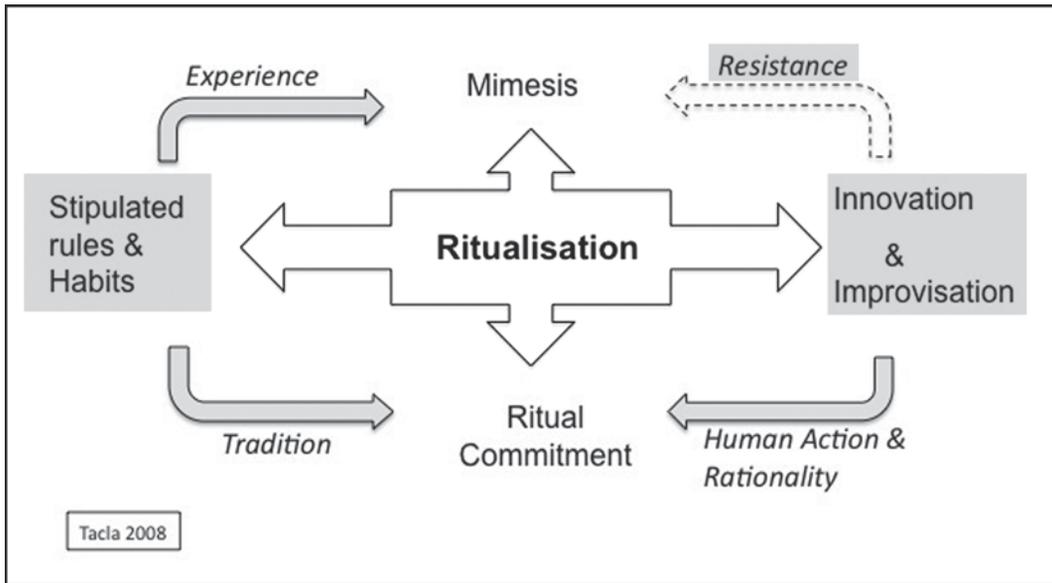


Fig. 3. Diagram of the dynamics of ritualisation. Shaded areas highlight the parts that can be observed in the archaeological record and based the present analysis.

has actually led to a unilateral perception of burial practice, detaching it from the broader context of depositional practice. It is certain that resistance, either open or surreptitious, is hardly evinced in the archaeological material. Nevertheless, the analysis of burials in the regions of Bourges, Châtillon-sur-Glâne, Mont

Lassois and Hohenasperg do not evince a chain of dependency, but rather patterns of concentration coinciding with the act of giving gifts and offerings.

Such phenomenon corresponds to what Weiner (1992, 1994) defined as the paradox of ‘keeping-while-giving’, i.e. the capability of certain

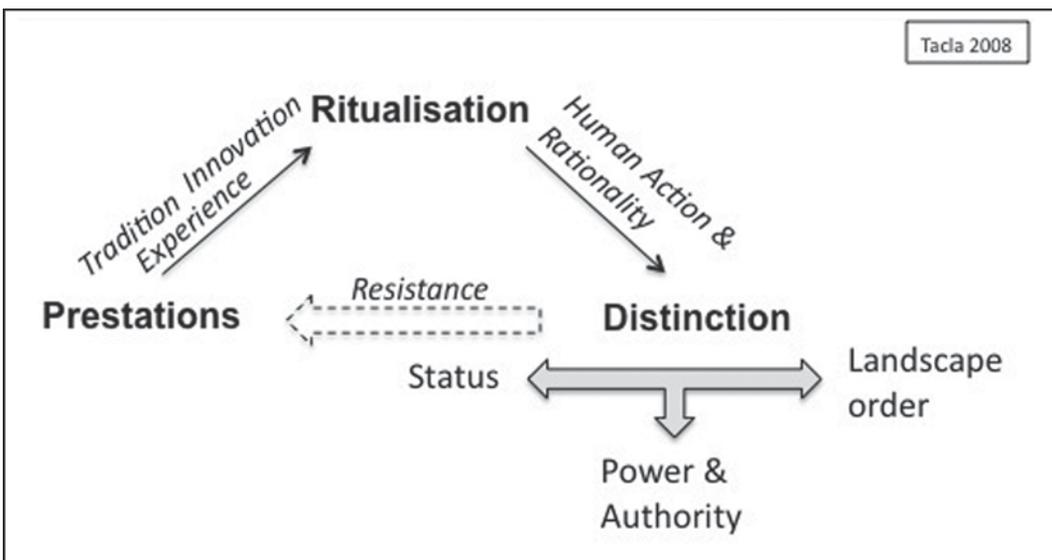


Fig. 4. Diagram of a prestation economy.

individuals to keep inalienable possessions (objects of high symbolic density)⁹ against their social demand (and possibility of imminent loss), giving instead alienable possessions (objects of lower symbolic density).¹⁰ This means that inalienable possessions are rarely put in circulation, being given solely in special circumstances (particularly for the establishment of alliances, in case of war, of community distress or for the occasion of death of 'political dignitaries'). Consequently, the prestations deposited in burials were of inalienable character, for their possession underpins the distinction of the owner/receiver, 'transforming difference into rank' (Weiner 1992: 18). It is almost certain that there were different kinds of inalienable possessions. At a first look, one can distinguish the items according to provenience and typology (i.e. local/imported items, *keimelia*/utilitarian items,¹¹ decorated/non-decorated objects, and so forth). However, prestations are not simply valued for their richness, but notable for their history and trajectory too.

Even though, the history of ownership of such objects (probably the most important factor to define inalienable prestations) cannot be archaeologically traced, it is important to keep in mind that prestations were given to overcome the distance between people, enabling relationships. Prestations created hierarchical distance amongst

people, since the possession, as well as the borrowing of inalienable items, represents an acquisition of prestige. This is apposite to all those who make use of inalienable objects, for such items comprise the character and distinction of its owner (Weiner 1992: 102-104). Thus, if prestige is *transferable* not solely through generations or inside the same kin group, the offering of inalienable items in the funeral performance acquires a different perspective. In fact, they become central instruments in the community's political economy.

Prestations to the dead

Most of the works discussing Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age burials in Central and Western Europe focus on their interpretation as symbols of status, markers of social hierarchy and expressions of the emergent power of chieftains. As previously pointed out, while funerals and the creation of monuments are significant instruments in the politics of such societies, the quantity and the character of grave-goods are not simply a sign of rank, of professional specialization or of wealth. As Pearson (1998: 40) emphasises, possessions are also inherited, kept or given away. Thus, when considering their deposition in burials, one has to take into account the observance of pre-set rules of funerary rites, the audience and the performance of the rites, since all contribute to the understanding of mortuary practice and the social usage that charged the ceremonies.

In this sense, the selection of the objects was established by those individuals involved in the ritual performance, particularly the closer relatives, members of the kin group and, sometimes, allies and friends. These selected objects had a specific role and were representatives of personal bonds as well as of a former life. As we shall see later, not all grave-goods consisted of prestations. Furthermore, some objects, as well as their disposition within the grave, could be related to aesthetic and decorative purposes, as in the case of textiles and flowers. These are linked to the ritual performance (cf. Pearson 1998). Although it can be said that the complete sequence of

(9) Symbolic density constitutes the symbolic value attributed to an object in society (Weiner 1994: 34). An inalienable possession has its own social trajectory, being unique in its value and in the relationships it represents.

(10) It is important to note that there was no equivalence between such prestations, since gifts of lower symbolic density are not correspondent to high-density items (Cf. Weiner 1994: 394).

(11) According to Scheid-Tissinier (1994: 41-49), the term *keimelia* refers to prestige gifts, items of high value, in many cases (in the Homeric poems) defined as the treasures of the palaces, which included objects made out of precious metals (such as vases, weapons or jewellery). Hence, Fischer's (1973) belief that the imported metal vessels found in West Hallstatt societies were *keimelia* – i.e. diplomatic gifts of remarkable character. Kromer (1982), on the other hand, believed that the Hallstatt chiefs received such gifts on the occasion of visits to Massalia.

funeral practice (and in particular prayers, processions, wailing and the mourning of the deceased) is not directly manifested in the material evidence, the archaeological record offers us the opportunity to explore several aspects of such ritual practices – their dynamics and their connotations.

Having said this, I shall then turn my attention to the matter of identifying the presence of prestations in the archaeological record. I have argued elsewhere (Tacla 2008) that the material culture shows a clear selection of materials and artefacts both in burials and in depositions in natural places. The analysis of the latter shows the offering of prestations in rituals performed at watery locations (mainly rivers, confluences, and springs) and at dry locations at promontories and plains (both near or inside settlements). Such finds highlight: 1) the existence of both prestige and ‘ordinary’ items; 2) the predominance of ‘apparently’ ordinary items; 3) the preponderance of the value of metal objects; 4) the emphasis on feast items, as well as on weapons and sacrifice tools; 5) the use of objects that define personal and collective identities.

On the other hand, the evidence of prestations in burials is rather more complex, for not all artefacts deposited in mortuary context consist of prestations and some most probably represented prestations received in other contexts (during the deceased’s life) and were deposited together with his possessions and other funerary prestations. Thus, how can one distinguish amongst these categories?

A priori, the position of artefacts in the burial can be interpreted as a sign of such distinctions, so that objects placed on or next to the deceased’s body are interpreted as his/her own belongings, whilst gifts could be seen at the edges of the grave (cf. Evans 2001; King 2004; Olivier 1999). However, this organisation of objects is not the sole discrimination criterion. King (2004), when analysing Anglo-Saxon mortuary data, proposes six indicators of funerary prestations, two of which are applicable to the present cases: 1) duplication of artefacts, and 2) unburnt inclusions in cremations. To these, I propose to add: 3) objects that had special treatment (e.g. breaking or wrapping) and

4) objects tailor-made for the funeral, which despite being rare denote significant distinctions in ritual performance.

In the regions under discussion, Late Bronze Age and Hallstatt burials show clear evidence of prestations represented by multiple deposits of ‘utilitarian items’ such as toilette items (like combs), tools and weapons (similar to those found in Late Bronze Age hoards and isolated finds), as well as status symbols (like torcs¹²). In addition, prestations related to banqueting sit in a significant position in funerary ritual, with the deposition of multiple items such as bowls, cups, drinking-horns, and plates, as well as the offering of a wide range of vessels composing full banqueting sets. These could consist of coarse and fine local pottery ware (as noticed particularly in the unburnt inclusions in cremations), fine imported pottery, and metal vessels of local or foreign manufacture.

With regard to the cremation burials, few contained objects (usually ornaments) that were cremated with the deceased, and are therefore interpreted as personal belongings. On the contrary, the majority of such burials uncovered various sorts of offerings – food offerings (rather rare), weapons, tools, and a range of pottery vessels that support the interpretation of prestations.

In addition, the analysis of the deposits indicates two sorts of special treatment of prestations: wrapping and breaking. A priori suggesting antithetical actions – on one side the careful wrapping protecting of particular objects and on the other the ritual destruction of other items – both measures constitute special (and significant) handling of objects in ritual performance. Breakage of objects in burials is a frequent practice in these regions (as it is throughout central-western Europe) during Bronze and Iron ages. Occurring both in so-called ‘rich’ and ‘poor’ graves, the ritual destruction of funerary prestations applies both to status signs like

(12) As Castro (1998) argues, torcs were sacred objects that, like other jewels and adornments, were used as symbol of the status of an individual and, therefore, were also employed in exchanges.

swords, daggers, and metal vessels, as well as to utilitarian items like pins, axes, spears, knives, and razors.

On the other hand, the wrapping of objects in textile or leather is rarer, being restricted to 'richer' burials from Hallstatt and La Tène periods. In these regions, such practice is identified in a variety of objects: wagons,¹³ metal vessels,¹⁴ swords, razors, knives, bracelets, and fishhooks.¹⁵

Finally, tailor-made objects were rarely offered as funerary prestations, the only exceptions being seen in the case of Hochdorf central grave, where a gold cup and gold ornaments were made exclusively for the burial. This is probably not due to effective costs, but to the socio-political weight given to the life of objects, in particular to their history of ownership, which constituted a significant aspect of the value attributed to the objects themselves. Moreover, the confection of items tailor-made for funerals would imply an expenditure of time that is usually not available between the death and the burial ceremony.

Although each category of prestation is used according to the specificity of the context (ritual and relationships included) and the distinction of the persons involved in the exchange, all sorts of prestation are normalised by stipulated principles of selection. Such rules structured not only the offering of prestations amongst people, but also the prestations given to the gods, the dead and the ancestors. All such prestations were valued by their social prestige, by their reference

to ritual and to some extent to what could please the gods in order to gain their favour and protection.

In the four regions studied herein, it becomes clear that the more prominent prestations were composed of metal artefacts¹⁶ which we know, by and large, from classical sources to be highly appreciated by barbarian peoples (cf. Lezzi-Hafter 1997: 365; Tacla 2001: 66; Tsetskhladze 1998: 60). Therefore, the typology of prestations shows a hierarchy of prestations that, nevertheless, fitted into the same categories of expected gifts, all corresponding either to ornaments, weapons, tools or items of banqueting service.

Those deposits ought to be considered in the context of the complete process of ritualised practice, i.e. the rules of selection, pattern of deposition, ritual experience, type of ritual, audience and further implications and usages. This showed that the presence of prestations in

(13) Banck-Burgess (1999: 26-28) points out that the wrapping of a wagon (or wagon parts) occurs in Burgundy (five cases), Baden-Württemberg (six cases) and Belgium (one case).

(14) Joffroy (1979: 75) mentions that there were vestiges of textiles over the crater and the silver bowl from Vix T.1 (the latter probably wrapped). However, a good part of the remaining textiles might have been eliminated during the restoration of the metal objects; so, at the present moment, vestiges of textiles are only found in sections of the wagon wheels (cf. Rolley 2003: 287).

(15) The same can be seen in other regions, for example, at Apremont/La Motte G.1, which contained several iron items (as well as the wagon) wrapped in textile. The occurrence of both treatments is known elsewhere, for example in Gündlingen/Zwölferbruck, where there was a broken sword-tip wrapped in cloth.

(16) In fact, the power, special properties and symbolic meaning of metals (in particular of ironworking) for European Iron Age populations has been discussed in a number of works. Budd and Taylor (1995) called our attention to the link between magic and metallurgy in prehistoric Eurasia, suggesting that in European prehistory there was an association between the role of shamans and smiths. Along the same lines, Hingley (1997) observed the peculiar condition of iron smelting and smithing process in Wessex hillforts. Thus, drawing from ethnographical research on African ironworking, Hingley suggested that European prehistoric ironworking was associated to the idea of regeneration and to agricultural production, stressing 'the magical and impressive nature of the acts of iron working...' (Hingley 1997: 15). Other scholars further developed these observations. Creighton (2000), for instance, applied the shamanic interpretation to coin production, whereas Aldhouse-Green (2002) argued in favor of an 'alchemy of ironworking', i.e. the magical character of smithing whose mystique derives from the mastering of fire, for it is considered as a craft that involves a special ritual and requires magical properties (Aldhouse-Green 2002: 16). Bradley (2005: 150-164) claims that metalworking was not considered a daily activity, and therefore shows how its practice involved special significance and ritualised performance. Giles (2007), on the other hand, sets the discussion further by establishing the interrelationship between political authority and metal objects, highlighting the metaphors of power and transformation (e.g. procreation, regeneration, life and death) embedded in metal production, use and deposition.

burials denotes a more elaborated ritual performance, which marks distinct types of funerals, so that burials without an accumulation of prestations were more likely to be private, rather than public, ceremonies.¹⁷ Nonetheless, one should keep in mind that those who attended the funerals knew what was absent in the deposits, i.e. which items (inalienable or not) were kept by the members of kin.

This is particularly noticeable in the occurrence of looted burials. Some of them were completely robbed, but in several a few objects were left *in situ*. These usually included pottery,¹⁸ ornaments and, as Pauli (1975) points out, apotropaic objects (e.g. amber beads, amulets/pendants, objects with amber and coral inlay, rattle plates),¹⁹ which hints at a preference for certain objects in the robbery of burials. For instance, Zürn (1975: 102) attributes the strange position of the skeleton in Gschnait T.1 to a probable robbery of a torc. Moreover, in the cases of Saint-Colombe-sur-Seine T.3 and Carrières à Bachons G.1, which were robbed shortly after the burial and only one side of the burial was disturbed with the rest remaining intact,²⁰ it is clear that the robbers knew what they were

looking for. This becomes more evident in the example of Grafenbühl's central grave which, looted 10-20 years after the burial (Zürn 1969), had all the metal vessels removed, as indicated by the two bronze tripod feet, which had broken off, left behind in the tomb.²¹

Thus it would appear that the sort of item that they were after conforms to what Fischer's *keimelia* – for they were imported metal objects that stood out for their wealth, like the Vix crater, the cauldron from Hochdorf, tripods and vessels from Grafenbühl, La Garenne and Römerhügel. In fact, the examples of burial robbery allude to a form of resistance to the obligation of giving prestations and of keeping certain items out of the exchange, representing, therefore, a means by which to recover or acquire inalienable objects, reinserting them in the community's political dynamics. Undoubtedly, one cannot trace back punishments or sanctions for such practices. However, their reduced occurrence shows that it was not well received by the community and penalty measures might have existed (as Strabo (4.1.13) mentions for later periods).²²

Final remarks

In this paper, I have concentrated on the burial assemblages of four micro-regions only. However, the ideas and conclusions have shown to be of a wider scope, which can be verified in other cases and cultural regions, for they actually correspond to protohistoric Pan-European trends. It is also of remarkable importance to highlight the significance of grave-robbing for our understanding of protohistoric political economy, particularly in the perspective of a 'prestation economy'.

Most cases in the four study-regions proved to be private ceremonies. Intimate

(17) The lavishly furnished, ostentatious burials did not necessarily represent the richness of the deceased, as 'the absence of objects may reflect the nature of the funeral, not the poverty of the deceased' (Pearson 1998: 32). This, as Pearson emphasizes, shows a distinction between 'public' and 'private' ceremonies, i.e. celebrations with diverse degrees of intimacy and communal involvement that underscore more the relationships than the status of the deceased and of the living themselves.

(18) For the case of Bois de Murat, the period of the robbery is not known, but nineteen Etruscan bronze plates, an iron rod and a bronze leg were left in the chamber.

(19) These are usually classified either as personal belongings (for personal charms and protection) or as means of protection for the living against the threat of dangerous dead (cf. Pauli 1975).

(20) In Joffroy's (1966-1987) opinion, probably due to the absence of any valuable metal goods, the robbers had stopped, not disturbing the entire burial. However, in my view, this is not the case, for the violation of just one side of the grave and the objects left behind suggest, instead, knowledge of the burial, its contents and their precise location.

(21) Similar is the case of Hohmichele G.I, which was robbed a few years after the burial.

(22) In fact, for later periods, as Strabo (4.1.13) mentions, there were sanctions against robbery of offerings in sanctuaries and the same probably applied to burials.

ceremonies appear in burials with a small selection of grave-goods, for the absence of large offerings suggests the attendance by a small group, most likely the closer relatives of the deceased. In this sort of ceremony, the commemoration of personhood is evinced not in the status symbols, but in personal items, as well as in the presence and ritual engagement of the intimate relations of the deceased. These ceremonies mainly culminated in the construction of ordinary, inconspicuous monuments. Alternatively, communal funerary ceremonies evince large ritualised performances, which did not only engage close personal, but also extended relations of the deceased. In such rituals, there was a clear need to define the personhood of the deceased, likewise of those in the audience. This was done by means of reification of relationships through the offering of prestations, deposit of symbols of status (demarcation of status), deposit of personal items, and the construction of conspicuous monuments.

At the same time that it commemorates the deceased's personhood, the shared experience of public funerary performances establishes a common and hegemonic memory that founds ancestry and creates a collective identity. Consequently, prestige is a significant variant in the production of such memory and identity, for it founds and regulates social distance.

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TACLA, A.B. 'Prestation Economy': a model for Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age burial deposition in Central-Western Europe. *Revista do Museu de Arqueologia e Etnologia*, São Paulo, 18: 133-153, 2008.

Abstract: Since the 1970's, rich burials like those of Vix and Hochdorf have been analysed as the icons of a pan-regional phenomenon – the emergence of traditional states, which is largely underpinned by the impact of their interaction with Mediterranean societies. However, during the last two decades, there has been significant criticism of such an interpretative model. In the core of such a debate, this paper argues that the archaeological record provides evidence that ritual deposits (likewise and alongside other forms of gift-giving) constituted a significant part of what I name as 'prestation economy'. In order to demonstrate that, this paper analyses the burials and their grave-goods from the regions of four *Fürstensitze*, namely: Bourges, Châtillon-sur-Glâne, Mont Lassois, and Hohenasperg.

Keywords: Gift-giving – European Iron Age – Ritualisation – Political Economy – Burials – Grave-goods.

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