The story of Surmir, the archer, Gothic architecture and the Bell Beaker phenomenon
L’histoire de Surmir, l’archer, l’architecture gothique et le phénomène campaniforme

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Introduction

This paper uses the fictional character of Surmir the Bell Beaker archer and noble man as a kind of guide through the archaeological reconstruction of mid-3rd millennium BC society and culture in Europe. The life story of Surmir was told to bring the reality of life in the Copper Age closer to the broader public (Turek 2017a). How can we follow the life story of a man we do not know much about in detail, whose fate emerges in the hazy contours of fragmentary archaeological records? We do not know his real name, the date or exact place of his birth, or how many years he lived. The role model of Surmir is the so-called Amesbury archer discovered near Stonehenge in 2002 (Fitzpatrick 2011) and his hypothetical birthplace was located in the foothills of the Alps in Sion (Switzerland). His life story is a tortuous mosaic that emerges from and is submerged in the dusk of the earliest Bronze Age.
When investigating prehistoric societies, we most often focus on issues such as social relationships and cultural and social processes. The personality of an individual in this evaluation is usually missing. It is very difficult, if not impossible, to capture the character and the personal fate of a particular person on the basis of material culture analysis. However, we should bear in mind that, even in prehistoric societies, individuals induced changes in cultural norms which were then followed by wider social processes (Neustupný 1997). Therefore, we should not overlook the role of individuals – personalities – when observing cultural and social processes. Post-processual archaeology even prefers to tell stories of the past based on the principle of subjective approach and “personal history” (Trigger 1989).

The narrative part of the text (in Turek 2017a) has continuously been supplemented by the interpretation of archaeological reconstructions and scientific procedures through which archaeologists have led us to these conclusions. Here I will present an extract of the narrative about Surmir in order to clarify some relevant processes in prehistoric society and to explain the results of our research in relation to the non-professional public. This raises questions. Are we able to tell the comprehensive life story of someone living in the Copper Age? Are our discoveries relevant to today’s public? Are our reconstructions comprehensible and meaningful? I believe that such a reflection and broad discussion can be useful for our future work and for formulating new questions in our research.

The emergence of the Bell Beaker World

The geographic spread of artefacts and decorative styles depends on more than just the migration of people. In this paper I will discuss possible reasons for the rapid spread of cultural uniformity during the 3rd millennium BC in Europe. The ways in which the “Bell Beaker package” spread over most of Central and Western Europe might have differed from region to region. Prestigious artefacts circulated through exchange, migration by infiltration, interregional marriages and mobility of individuals. This, however, does not explain why people from geographically and culturally distant regions suddenly shared a certain uniform style and symbolic system. The new symbolic system and the set of significant artefacts helped to reinforce collective identity and maintained a range of spiritual activities. Within the individualised funerary practices people emphasised communication with ancestors and a display of social status, as well as confirmation of social hierarchy and reinforcement of a genealogical system of hereditary wealth of individuals and families. I believe that this unification and rapid spread of common uniformity occurred because of a shared ideology that used the new assemblage, the Bell Beaker package, as a formal expression of symbolical and cosmological unity (Turek 2015b including further references).

To what does the Bell Beaker phenomenon actually correspond? First of all, it is not an archaeological culture, as defined by the traditional culture-historical paradigm. This concept was set up at the time of the migrationist model of dissemination of material culture and cultural identity, when images of massive migrations of prehistoric populations prevailed. In recent decades there have been an increasing number of references that point to the spread of the Bell Beaker style as a cultural uniformity. But again, this interpretation does not explain the true nature of the rapid spread of cultural uniformity, which, in fact may have been ideologically and perhaps also
cosmologically inspired. First of all, it should be emphasised that the Bell Beaker phenomenon is essentially synthetic, i.e. composed of multiple artefact elements, culturally stylistic local traditions and a symbolic system, which developed in different places in Europe and possibly also in Northwest Africa. The ideologically disseminated cultural uniformity was granted an overall unprecedented level of quality through the association of several both innovative and local traditional elements. The emergence and spread of the Bell Beaker phenomenon across Europe is compared here to a similar process undergone by the European Gothic style. Between 1140 and 1144 AD a new choir was built in the St. Denis Abbey near Paris, with a quite different design compared to that of earlier Romanesque buildings. The building featured three main elements that became typical for the newly emerging architectural style: sharp-pointed Gothic arch, flying buttress and rib vault. None of these architectural elements, however, was a Gothic invention. They had been occasionally used before. But it was the deliberate combination of these designs that resulted in a new aesthetic quality. If we compare this process with the origins of the decorative Bell Beaker style, we can notice a similar combination of spatially and genetically distant elements. I am fully aware of the considerable difference in the complexity of society toward the end of the Eneolithic and in the High Middle Ages, but I think that these are two very similar processes in terms of theory of culture and dissemination of cultural influences. An additional interpretive inspiration can be found in the way the Gothic style spread further. The new style was primarily driven by religious orders, which represented a very limited community as regards numbers, and was established in a culturally and linguistically foreign environment. When the Cistercians, for example, founded a new monastery in a foreign land, their architectural style was initially very pure and compact, very different from the local cultural tradition. Only later can we observe the influence of distinct Cistercian architectural elements on the style of the local sacred as well as secular architecture.

6 It may also be inspiring to compare the distribution of the Bell Beaker phenomenon to the way in which Buddhism entered Han China via the Silk Road in the 1st and 2nd century AD (Hill 2009). In this case we can see the importance of a trade route for the amicable acceptance of traders bringing with them a new religion and the acceptance of their spiritual influence.

7 I do not think that the spread of the Bell Beaker package in the 3rd millennium BC was in any way related to a sect worshipping a prehistoric cult, but I find it very useful to note how a small migrant community can contribute to the expansion of a certain style, in particular if that style is part of the presentation of its spiritual tenets. We can use the example of the spread of Gothic art to demonstrate that the expansion of material culture does not necessarily require major population shifts and that the contacts and political decisions of individuals were often sufficient for a new style to be adopted. In the case of the Bell Beaker period, such a cultural transfer can be represented for example by Surmir, the Amesbury archer. He was probably a major character who came to the British Isles bearing with him the knowledge of the important and sought-after technology of copper production. We may assume that he was a prospector, metallurgist, merchant and magnate and a powerful man. As we know from early historical societies, social power often played a major role in cult and religion. Surmir, therefore, may have belonged to a group of “high priests” spreading the “Bell Beaker faith” throughout Western Europe (?).
Copper Age ceremonial warfare

Specific weapons and the beauty of warfare were crucial for maintaining the structure and hierarchy of Copper Age/Early Bronze Age society (Turek 2017a including additional references). During the 3rd millennium BC archery symbolism, together with the Bell Beaker phenomenon, spread over most of the European continent (Turek 2015a including further references). To introduce this global issue related to the Copper Age, part of the life story of Surmir, the Bell Beaker warrior, archer and big man, is quoted here as it was published in the book of biographies of world historical personalities (Turek 2017a).

"Part of the social status of Surmir’s father was the role of warrior. This privilege was hereditary, so it was also predestined for Surmir as the eldest son. Part of the honour and social standing of great men involved regularly giving a display of their strength, bravery, warriors’ skills and the beauty of their weapons. Several times a year men took part in archery competitions during religious holidays. The men competed together, but their goal was not to kill their opponents. The idea was to hit a distant target from different locations and distances, which was part of the customary archery ritual. The chief judge of this kind of competition was the community shaman, an old wrinkled man whose face carried the traces of an undefined disease and painful rituals and wisdom. The ultimate proof of courage was to face the enemy’s shots. Only the best from the previous games reached this stage of the ritual. Surmir’s father was unbeatable in archery, and his son followed in his footsteps. When Surmir was five years old, his father carved a wristguard from oak tree bark and tensioned a string into a small bow. For Surmir, archery was the best form of play. It is true that his arrows did not have flint heads but rather rounded ends, but Surmir that did not let that prevent him hunting song birds, which he then took to his mother and proudly laid on the doorstep the way a cat would do with a mouse that it had just caught. Later, when he was seven, his father began to teach him to shoot with a big bow and real arrows. He proudly killed his first hare, and he continued to perfect his archery technique. Unfortunately, fate did not allow his father to experience Surmir’s initiation into archery. His father’s death occurred not even in the native valley, but far away on the shore of the ocean. His father was a real warrior. During Surmir’s childhood his father took part in several battles in the valleys. Mostly, these were grazing disputes, and in one case copper brokers came to the valley. Surmir’s father never murdered unnecessarily, but was always ready to defend his loved ones. Attacks on and the slaughter of whole villages was not out of ordinary at that time. When Surmir’s uncle was killed in battle, his father carried his body on his back to the village. Archery was the most important war activity. Ever since he was a little boy, Surmir listened to the myths about the god of the sun related to archery. When Surmir was small, he watched with admiration as his father tightened his decorative stone wristguard, fastened the flint tips onto the arrows, sharpened and polished his copper dagger, and prepared for the festive adornment of his body. It was immediately visible from his equipment and decorations that he was the greatest warrior in the whole valley, brave and powerful. There was no need for his father to fight, as did the young warriors; his impressive war gear and his war dance were enough to confirm his position.

Later, after his father’s death, Surmir inherited one of his father’s wristguards. It was made of red stone and it was the most beautiful of any wristguard. It was a gift fit for the gods. Only the most powerful warriors could wear a red stone wristguard. Surmir kept this wristguard for rest of his life.

When his father died, Surmir went to the cemetery where his family had their dolmen, a family tomb, with stelae of ancestors lying face down in front of the...
entrance. His father’s stone had stood there since the time he had become a “big man”. One of Surmir’s uncles was already there and, together with the shaman, was preparing his father’s stela for his funeral. The stela was a big flat stone slab that depicted his father’s body. His uncle was holding an axe and a chisel and added rays from the sun to the shoulder of his father’s statue, the symbol of his departure for eternity. Below this was depicted all his father’s gear, his rich belt, daggers, bow and arrows. Surmir stroked the surface of his father’s grave stone. The glittering dust of the freshly carved relief clung to his palm. His uncle grabbed him by his shoulders and hugged him tightly. The next day they laid his father’s body ceremonially in the tomb, embellished the statue in a way reminiscent of his glory and power, and prepared it for the future rite of passage. Throughout the year Surmir, his mother and his little brother came and brought offerings. Mash in a bowl, beer in a cup, and meat on a large burdock leaf. A year after the death the ritual of the liberation of the soul took place. Family and friends gathered in front of the dolmen, danced, sang and drank beer. Then the men tied ropes to Surmir’s father’s gravestone and in a few pulls pulled it face-down onto the ground. This was the definitive end of the father’s power in the world of the living. Surmir was convinced that he had caught sight of his father’s soul as it left the tomb, and with the thunder of the falling stela it flew up to the sky. His father’s soul finally departed to take its place among the ancestors." (Turek 2017b).

The symbolic expression of archery

Human culture is deeply structured by a variety of symbols and rituals. Some artefacts with an originally practical function may have been bestowed with a prestigious and symbolic meaning, especially in times when important technological innovations were introduced or in the context of social ceremonies and warfare ritual activities. During the 3rd millennium BC warfare symbolism became extremely important in the representation of social power, status and gender categories. Weapons were presented during funerary ceremonial, as well as, in the world of the living as symbolical attributes of power and prestige. Such highly symbolic artefacts were also used during ceremonial warfare contests in order to emphasise male strength, fighting skills and accuracy and to reinforce the position of individual contestants within the community (Sosna 2011, Sosna 2012, Turek 2015a, 2017b, Nicolas 2017). Prestigious weapons were also depicted on figural grave stones (such as at Petit Chasseur, see fig. 1) or sometimes on rock art (e.g. Cemmo at Val Camonica, see fig. 2 and 3). Archery became extremely important in the symbolic expression of warfare during the Bell Beaker period.
1. Warrior stelae with bow and arrow from Petit-Chasseur, Sion (canton Valais), Switzerland

(photograph by Jan Turek)

2. Cemmo, Val Camonica, engraved copper daggers

(photograph by Jan Turek)
3. Cemmo, Val Camonica, engraved copper daggers

The Bell Beaker archery symbolism interrupted the preceding tradition of battle axes as the main warfare symbols. At the beginning of the 3rd millennium BC, after more than a millennium of the production and celebration of battle axes these merely symbolic artefacts gained an even more important role in burial rites, social prestige and perhaps even cosmology. During the Corded Ware period (2900-2500 BC) in Central and Eastern Europe, stone tools and weapons played a significant socio-symbolic role, as attributes of power and warfare in burial equipment, but probably also in living society (Heath 2017: 39). In the Corded Ware material culture the weapons were mainly stone battle axes (fig. 4) and mace heads (fig. 5), representing the male gender category in terms of symbolic representation of prestigious objects that played a decisive role in social competition (Turek 2017b).
4. Corded Ware facetted battle axe from Vikletice, North Bohemia

(photograph by Jan Turek)

5. Corded Ware child burial equipped with a stone mace head from Libeznice, Central Bohemia

(photograph by Jan Turek)
The Bell Beaker depiction of a bow on a figural grave stones (an example: 157 cm high, 85 cm wide, see fig. 1) from Petit Chasseur (Gallay 2011) has a predecessor in the incised decoration of the interior of the Corded Ware tomb of Leuna-Göhltzscht (Merseburg District) depicting a bow and quiver with arrows (194 cm long, 95 cm wide, see Behrens 1973, Probst 1991: 403). The increasing social importance of archery is commonly demonstrated among Bell Beaker burial customs (Turek 2004). In the Eastern Bell Beaker province archery sets consisted of arrows with flint arrowheads, stone wristguards, quivers and bows (both as yet undiscovered). Antler re-touching tools and sets of flint flakes indicate the craft of arrowhead production symbolically represented in the burial context (Turek 2003). Another symbolic artefact highlighting the prestige of archery is the bow-shaped pendant mainly made of wild boar tusk (Hájek 1957, Piggott 1971, Turek 2004, Růžičková 2009). These decorative artefacts are perhaps connected to those made of halved wild boar tusks that were probably used for the processing of the bow surface. Additional Bell Beaker artefacts indirectly connected to archery were sandstone arrow shaft smoothers known also from burial contexts.

It will also be observed further how archery and its symbolism played an important role in prehistoric societies not only in hunting, but also, and mainly, in warfare. In many cultures around the world archery competitions were held as a part of ceremonial warfare display and also became an important feature of cosmology.

3rd-millennium ceremonial warfare – battle axes and archery prestige

I have repeatedly presented the concept of ceremonial warfare and the role of symbolic weapons in ritual combats and ceremonies, including the funerary practices of the 3rd millennium in Central Europe (Turek 2007, Turek 2005). Here I want to discuss the possible procedures of the warriors’ competition known as ceremonial warfare in two different Copper Age contexts. The Corded Ware (2900-2500 BC, see map – fig. 6) phenomenon is renowned for its battle axes and mace heads (fig. 4 and 5). These weapons suggest some kind of man-to-man combat during ceremonial fighting. Besides skill, fighting strategy and weapon dexterity, physical strength would be required from a successful combatant. Competition may have been different during the Bell Beaker period (2500-2300/2200 cal. BC, see map – fig. 6 and fig. 9). Bows and arrows offered some distance between combatants and for ceremonial competitions within the same community it may well be the case that warriors took part in some kind of ceremonial archery competition that involved no risk of injury. Such a competition would test accuracy and skills rather than strength and could possibly be open to female archers (fig. 10) as well (Turek 2011a).
6. Map of Corded Ware and Bell Beaker distribution in Europe

9. Bell Beakers from Tišice, Central Bohemia

(photograph by Jan Turek)
It is likely that in the case of Corded Ware funerary artefacts some forms of weapons are symbolic, within prehistoric society, of the social status of a particular social category (warriors). Within prehistoric communities such objects apparently played
the same role as or a similar role to real functional weapons and symbolically represented the principle of “ceremonial warfare” (Neustupný 1998: 27-30). Neustupný further states:

“This kind of warring, however, demonstrates that those who waged such wars were somehow related to each other: the warring parties apparently accepted certain ceremonial rules for which symbolic weapons were appropriate. ... Thus, we arrive at the conclusion that ceremonial fighting took place between communities joined by the relationship of otherness; it was not meant to divide them. ... Ceremonial fighting using ceremonial weapons was an occasion for individuals to display their bravery. They risked being killed, but their fight was a ceremony rather than a defence of their life.” (Neustupný 1998: 28-29).

This kind of ceremonial weapons and ritual contest might well use imitation weapons made of soft rock (Turek & Daněček 2001). Based on the currently available evidence (Turek 2011b) it is not clear whether these imitations were used only as funerary goods, or also in society on a more regular basis in a variety of social activities.

**Wristguards in action**

As is the case in present-day sport archery, the wristguard was also an important part of an archer’s equipment in the past. It can be presumed that there was always some kind of protection for the archer’s wrist in most prehistoric periods. However, we have to bear in mind that the Asian method of archery involves an arrow to the right of the bow so there is no need for wrist protection as the string does not come into contact with the wrist (Korfmann 1972: 217). In European prehistory, it is possible to assume the arrow was to the left of the bow (Vencl 1984). A better description would be to use the term ‘with the arrow near to the wrist’, because in the case of a left-handed archer the arrow would be to the right of the bow, and the right wrist would still need to be protected. Throughout different prehistoric periods specific artefacts occurred (usually made of bone or antler) that may be interpreted as wristguards. However, only at the end of the Eneolithic period and the beginning of the Bronze Age (Late Eneolithic – Bronze Age Reinecke A1/2; c. 2500-1700 cal. BC) is the use of stone wristguards (Turek 2004, Fokkens et al. 2008) well documented. Bearing in mind the importance of wrist protection of archers it must be assumed that such protective devices were commonly used and may have been made of various organic materials (leather, wood, bark, textile etc.) as is documented within some present-day non-industrial societies. These artefacts are however not likely to be documented by archaeological methods. For example, the Marind-Amid people of Papua New Guinea use grass bracers to protect archers’ forearms (Fokkens et al. 2008, fig. 11). Such organic artefacts unfortunately did not survive from European prehistory. Inuit wristguards made of walrus tusk had a similar arched shape and a binding system with four holes (Fokkens et al. 2008, fig. 12). An example of how a practical wrist protection became a prestigious artefact may be demonstrated by a Navajo leather wristband with a decorative silver plate attached (Fokkens et al. 2008, fig. 13). The silver ornament did not enhance the protective function of the wristguard, but rather turned it into an archer’s ornament.
Questions related to the use of stone wristguards (fig. 7 and 8) concern the way in which they were worn and fastened on the archer’s wrist. H. Fokkens et al. (2008) carried out an analysis of locations of wristguards in funerary contexts in relation to the skeleton of the buried person. All wristguards were found on or nearby the left forearm. Fokkens further studied the position of wristguards on forearms analysing a collection of 31 graves from England and Central Europe that offered relevant archaeological records. About 60% of the wristguards were found on the exterior side of the wrist (Fokkens et al. 2008: 113, fig. 2, 116). Allowing for possible displacement of the wristguards during post-depositional processes it seems that most of the buried individuals had the wristguard on the exterior wrist. Fokkens further interprets this position as an evidence that wristguards were worn as a decorative attachment on a leather (?) bracer (Fokkens et al. 2008: 118, fig. 10). In addition to Fokkens’ interpretation it may be possible that this may have been the usual way of wearing and displaying the decorative stone wristguard: the method used to fasten it to the forearm made it possible to turn the wristguard into the inner wrist position when needed for shooting an arrow (as suggested in the post-mortem position on the wrist of the buried individual). Thus, it would be natural that at the time of the funeral most of the individuals had their wristguard in the “presentation” position and not in the “ready to shoot” position.
7. Bell Beaker stone wristguards from Bohemia

(photograph by Jan Turek)

8. Bell Beaker stone wristguards from Bohemia

(photograph by Jan Turek)
Many of these questions seem different when we consider them through analogies with ethnoarchaeological observations. In discussions about the role of archery and warfare in traditional societies it is useful to take a look at the reality of archery combat in ethnographic contexts. Therefore, I am going to retell the highly inspiring description of tribal war among the Kapauku people of Papua New Guinea Highlands as it was observed and recorded in a 8-mm film by Leopold Pospisil in the 1950s (L. Pospisil, personal communication 1991). Pospisil was one of the first Westerners to have the unique opportunity to live with the Kapauku people and to study their law and societal structure (Pospíšil 1963). In this film, he documented a tribal war between two currently enemy communities. He describes the event as a seemingly chaotic combat that took place in the high grass zone where men of both sides hid and every so often stood up and fired an arrow at the enemy. There were only a few warriors on both sides and no fatalities. It seems that the killing of the enemy was not the priority and there was no physical contact and man-to-man combat between warriors. Women fearlessly walked amongst the warriors, collecting arrows and pulling the injured men off the battleground. No one of the enemy would hurt the women as this would make them, for the rest of their life, objects of mockery and contempt by other men of the community. This observation depicts fighting as a display of pride and strength and bravery, rather than combat that aims to kill the enemy and murder its entire community.

Archery mythology and Bell Beaker identity

Archery played an important social role in ancient civilisations. Famous archers played decisive roles in the legends of Medieval Europe, such as William Tell and Robin Hood. The scene on the famous Scythian electrum vase from the Kul-Oba kurgan dated to the 4th century BC depicts a legendary figure pulling a bow string in competition. References to the prestige of archery skills may be found in Homer’s Iliad and Odyssey. The legends of mythical archers are, however, not exclusively a European prerogative. Of a much earlier date are the Hindu epic mythological stories such as the Mahabharata, telling the story of the decisive battle of the Kurukshetra war between Kauravas and the Pandavas Bharata lineages and Ramayana describing the battle between Rama and daemon Ravana, who kidnapped his wife Sita. The battle of Ramayana supposedly took place in 3102 BC, and despite the fact that the written text source is dated to the 1st millennium BC, the story itself is much older. In these stories, archery was related to virtues and values such as noble descent, bravery, strength and accuracy (Arya 1998, Bhasin 2007). Such symbolism was perhaps also valued by European prehistoric farmers. Within a system of ascribed hereditary status (Turek 2015a) archery became an important symbol of power, wealth and identity. This was perhaps also connected to the role of archery in ceremonial warfare. Warfare symbolism structured prehistoric societies more significantly than some important agricultural means of production, such as the plough, yoke, or sickle, which never appear in Copper Age burial assemblages. Nor is the significance of archery as a symbol for hunting very likely for the European Copper Age society. As we know from the zooarchaeological analysis of rare Bell Beaker settlement finds in Central Europe, the percentage of wild species is generally very low, so the archery arsenal was not all produced for wild game hunting (Turek 2005). We also have to bear in mind that microscopic use wear analysis suggests that only about 20% of flint arrowheads from...
the studied Bohemian collection show traces of having been fired (Sosna 2011). This means that most of the Bell Beaker arrows were only used as a prestigious symbol or even produced for ceremonial or funerary purposes.

It is very likely that during the Bell Beaker period archery symbolism was connected to the Bell Beaker ideology which, together with the prestigious objects package and copper metallurgy, spread over most of Western and Central Europe. It is also possible that archery symbolism and a solar cult as the core values of the ‘Bell Beaker mythology’ may have (Turek 2005) shaped Bell Beaker cosmology. Unfortunately, the true nature of such a cosmology remains a mystery. New ideology or religion was perhaps triggering cultural transfer across the continent and Bell Beaker archers (fig. 11) – elite men – may have been ‘missionaries’ of the Bell Beaker faith. Such cultural transfer can be represented for example by the Amesbury archer (Fitzpatrick 2011). Andrew Fitzpatrick (2009: 176) described the burial context as:

“An individual who, according to an analysis of strontium and oxygen isotopes in his teeth and bone mass, came from Central Europe (Chenery & Evans 2011: 185-186) was buried with an abundance of artefacts in the south of England. The man we now call the Amesbury Archer lived between about 2,500 and 2,300 years BC (2470-2280 cal BC: OxA-13541; 3895±32 BP). He was buried 5 km south-east of Stonehenge in a small, below ground, timber chamber that may have been surmounted by a low burial mound. Standing 1.75 m tall, the Archer lived to be 35 to 45 years old, but for much of his life he had been disabled because of a traumatic injury to his left knee. At his death, his mourners buried him in the way that was typical for the Bell Beaker burial rite which was common across much of Europe. He was placed on his left side in a flexed position, slightly curled up as if he was asleep, with his head to the north-east. The offerings placed beside him – the accoutrements of a hunter or warrior and other symbols of status – are also typical of the time. Archery is represented by two stone wristguards and many flint arrowheads that are the equivalent of a quiver of arrows. Other offerings included two gold basket-shaped ornaments, perhaps used as hair tress ornaments, three copper knives, four boars’ tusks, many flint tools but also flint flakes or blanks for making new tools, and tools of stone and of antler, including an antler tool for pressure-flaking flint. A black stone, a so-called cushion stone, was a metalworker’s tool.”

Considering the structure of the artefacts found in his grave (Fitzpatrick 2009, Fitzpatrick 2011), we can assume that his arrival in Britain and his exclusive social status there were associated with the spread of the technology of copper and gold metallurgy, which had been previously unknown in the region. This important exportation of a strategic technology would, however, not have sufficed in itself to establish an entire archaeological culture within a territory with a long and strong cultural tradition. The model of infiltration (Neustupný 1982) was only viable given a high degree of preparedness of the local society for the adoption of a new culture and its sufficient motivation for such a development. Even Neustupný (1982: 285) argues that the success of infiltration was contingent upon the level of cultural and economic development of the newly infiltrated region. As far as the spread of the Bell Beaker phenomenon is concerned, the communities in the British Isles were prepared not only to adopt a new technology they desired to master, but also to adopt the style of a new culture and probably also the concomitant ideology. Neustupný (1982: 289) further assumes that the infiltration must have been based on economic interests, but I believe that economic interests were just part of the two-way communication between communities and regions. In this respect, it is appropriate to note once again possible
analogical circumstances related to the spread of an artistic style in the context of medieval religious orders that represented different spiritual approaches to faith and at the same time introduced a new lifestyle and economy into freshly 'colonised' territories. Talking about the dissemination of Bell Beaker individuals along with ideology, I do not therefore necessarily mean the spread of an entirely new cult, but more likely a new direction in the cosmology of European farmers. It is in this regard that we cannot ignore the importance of individual mobility for the dissemination of cultural norms and ideas. The Amesbury archer already mentioned was probably a major character who came to the British Isles with the knowledge of the important and sought-after technology of copper production (for the importance of specialisation and the magical social importance of copper see Kuna 1989, Neustupný 1996, Brodie 1997). As a great prospector, metallurgist, merchant and magnate, he perhaps did not leave continental Europe for Britain only as a powerful man, but also as a 'spiritual leader'. As we know from early historical societies, social power often played a major role in cult and religion. The Amesbury archer, therefore, may have belonged to a group of 'high priests' spreading the 'Bell Beaker faith' throughout Western Europe (Turek 2015b).

**Ceremonial warfare and genesis of early historic sports**

Warfare played an important role within prehistoric and protohistoric communities. Weapons confirmed the social status of individuals and as such they were depicted on grave stelae (fig. 1) and in rock art (fig. 2 & 3) and were represented in funerary assemblages (fig. 10a-b). As discussed earlier (Turek 2017b), ceremonial fighting became part of social communication within and between communities. People developed rituals of ceremonial man-to-man combat, archery competitions, horse races and perhaps even ball games (Květina et al. 2009). Such events became an important part of structuring society as well as mediating relations with other communities and supernatural powers. The creation of such traditions served several social, ideological and religious purposes. Many of these institutionalised modes of warfare became archetypes of ancient and modern sports. There is no doubt that most of the ancient Greek Olympic sports were related to the preparation of warriors for wartime engagements. Also, later Medieval and Renaissance sports focused on either man-to-man combat as demonstrations of individual strength and fighting skills, or on the strategic struggle of two communities. Such a sport was Florence's *Florentino Calcio* (the rules first recorded in 1580) or *La Soule*, a very violent French predecessor of rugby, in which one community attempted to take the ball into the neighbouring village, even at the cost of occasional loss of life. Equestrian competitions, such as the traditional *Paglio* in Siena, though of a non-combative character, had and still have a very violent background in fighting between supporters of local teams (personal observation 2007). Polo, for example, which originated in ancient Persia, spread across central Asia and was brought to Britain from India (Chehabi & Guttmann 2002).

Also, the rudimental symbolic use of some ancient weapons survives to the present day. Examples are halberds used by the Vatican Swiss guard and sabres used by ceremonial royal/presidential guards. The royal sceptre is also a very elaborate, decorative and purely symbolic version of a mace. Bows and arrows, foil, épée and sabre are still used in modern Olympic sports. Present-day military parades and army manoeuvres are also...
part of ceremonial propaganda showing off the most powerful and modern weapons, and they are on the current end of the evolutionary trajectory of warfare that started in Europe as early as the Copper Age (Anglo 2000, Turek 2017b).

Conclusions

24 Archaeologists tend to reconstruct the human existence of our ancestors through their excavated remains or a variety of iconography (Fowler 2004), such as we attempted in this paper. However, it is necessary to bear in mind that the body itself does not represent the complete person. There are also the person’s mind, soul and relationships with other members of the community. This is the gap we tried to bridge with the life story of Surmir.

25 The personality and character of an individual is usually missing in archaeological records. As we discussed earlier, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to capture the character and the life story of a particular person on the basis of material culture analysis. It is, however, important to emphasise that in prehistoric society too individuals quite often induced decisive changes in cultural norms, sometimes by breaking traditional taboos and introducing a new order of social relations. Only then might their example have been followed by the wider society, launching far-reaching social processes (Neustupný 1997). The role of individuals and their personalities is thus a very important issue in the observation of cultural and social processes. Furthermore, post-processual archaeology prefers to tell stories of the past based on the principle of subjective approach and “personal history” (Trigger 1989). Perhaps such an approach may offer an important key to better understanding prehistoric reality including more effective ways of explaining our discoveries to the current broader public.

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ABSTRACTS

The ways in which the “Bell Beaker package” spread across most of Central and Western Europe may have been different from region to region. Prestigious artefacts circulated through exchange, migration by infiltration, interregional marriages and mobility of individuals. This, however, does not explain why people from geographically and culturally distant regions suddenly shared a distinct uniform style and symbolic system. The new symbolic system and the package of significant artefacts helped to reinforce collective identity and maintained a range of spiritual activities. Within these individualised funerary practices people emphasised communication with their ancestors and a display of their social status, as well as confirmation of social hierarchy and reinforcement of a genealogical system of hereditary wealth of individuals and families. I believe that this unification and rapid spread of shared uniformity occurred as a result of a common ideology that used the new assemblage of the Bell Beaker package as a formal expression of symbolical and cosmological unity.

Les façons dont le « package campaniforme » a été diffusé dans la majeure partie de l’Europe centrale et occidentale ont probablement été différentes d’une région à l’autre. Des artefacts prestigieux circulaient par échange, migration par infiltration, mariages interrégionaux et mobilité d’individus. Mais cela n’explique pas pourquoi des personnes qui se trouvaient dans des régions géographiquement et culturellement éloignées ont subitement partagé un style et un système symbolique uniformes. Le nouveau système symbolique ainsi que le set d’artefacts significatifs contribuaient à renforcer l’identité collective en maintenant une série d’activités spirituelles. Au sein de pratiques funéraires individualisées, l’importance de la communication avec les ancêtres est soulignée, le statut social des défunts mis en lumière, au même titre qu’une hiérarchie sociale, se trouve confirmée et un système de descendance basé sur la richesse héréditaire d’individus et de familles est renforcé. Cet article soutient l’hypothèse selon laquelle cette uniformisation et la diffusion rapide d’une uniformité commune surviennent à ce moment-là à cause d’une idéologie commune qui se servait du nouvel ensemble du set campaniforme en tant qu’expression officielle d’une unité symbolique et cosmologique.
INDEX

Mots-clés: âge du Cuivre, phénomène campaniforme, mobilité, société préhistorique, préhistoire européenne
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