ADRIENNE C. FRIE

HORSES AND THE EMBODIMENT OF ELITE MASCULINITY IN THE DOLENJSKA HALLSTATT CULTURE

Summary. *In later prehistory horse ownership was a manifestation of wealth and physical prowess, and demonstrated access to distant lands. Because of the expense and restricted availability of horses, they are often reduced to indicators of status without more nuanced considerations of how lived human-horse interactions enmeshed them in these status displays. To complicate the simple horse/status object equivalence, this article presents a specific case for the symbolic and social significance of horses in Early Iron Age south-eastern Slovenia through the lens of equine iconography, and argues that horses and particularly equestrianism were essential to embodying elite masculine identity. Broadly, this article seeks to move beyond equating high-status goods with high-status people by discussing how particular events, bodily abilities and human-animal relationships were all intertwined in the materialization of social distinction for a particular group.*

INTRODUCTION

The introduction of the horse as a domestic animal into south-eastern[1] and central Europe significantly changed the economic, social and symbolic landscape, and reconfigured existing modes of interaction (Clutton-Brock 1992, 58; Dular 2007, 737; Greenfield 2006, 222, 230). Possession of horses was an expensive and laborious undertaking because horses require specific feed and care and are slow to reproduce (Bartosiewicz 2011, 6; Clutton-Brock 1992, 19–22). However, possession of such costly animals also demonstrated the long-ranging social connections that were required to obtain them, as well as the potential for future long-distance journeying, a requirement for cultivating the distant contacts essential in creating and maintaining elite status in this period (*sensu* Helms 1993). In addition, those with access to horse power were able to move themselves and their goods more quickly across greater distances, potentially reconfiguring territorial control and notions of territory more generally (Clutton-Brock 1992, 12–13; Dietz 2003, 189). There is no doubt that by the Early Iron Age, horses set those who possessed them apart from the rest of the populace (Dular 2007; Kmet'ová 2013a; 2013b). However, the traditional focus

1 The first domestic horses identified in the Balkans date to the Early Bronze Age (*c.*2700–2200 BC) at sites in modern Serbia (Greenfield 2006, 222, 230).

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on the expense and restricted availability of horses has tended to preclude more nuanced considerations of human-horse interaction, and horses are often reduced to indicators of status and wealth in our archaeological interpretations. The sheer physical presence of horses, the nature of human-horse relationships, and their myriad symbolic associations have been much less in evidence. In an effort to move beyond the simple horse/status object equivalence, this article presents a specific case for the rich symbolic and social significance of horses in an Early Iron Age culture in order to contextualize their importance for embodying a particular elite masculine identity.

The Dolenjska Hallstatt archaeological culture in south-eastern Slovenia was an important centre for the production of figural art depicting animals. One of the most frequent subjects of zoomorphic depictions was the horse, notably in the form of *situla* art on plate bronze artefacts, but also in the round on personal ornaments, figurines and ceramics. In the Dolenjska Hallstatt culture, depictions of animals were entangled in recursive relationships with those producing and utilizing these objects, and the representation of animals on artefacts ultimately deposited as grave goods demonstrates the social influence of animals beyond their role in economic or subsistence activities (Gosden 2005; Lesure 2005; Mlekuž 2007; Wells 2012). The discussion here will focus on how horse depictions were part of a larger suite of materials and activities involving horses, which were mobilized in the presentation of a particular identity – the elite male.

Contextual patterns in horse imagery demonstrate that it was strongly male-oriented, which is supported by deeper investigations of the co-occurrence of horses and humans in representations. The strong connection between horses and males peaks in the transition from the sixth to the fifth centuries BC, which is interpreted in the context of broader developments in the Dolenjska Hallstatt culture, specifically incursions of bands of mounted Scythians in the decades after 600 BC (Dular 2007, 475–6; Dular and Tecco Hvala 2007, 90, 251–2; Teržan 1998, 526–7). In this period of violence and unrest, the significance of the horse for both attack and defence increased rapidly, as local mounted warriors were essential to protection against foreign raiders. Following this period the social value of equestrian identity increased and was actively embodied by elite males.

Often the importance of horses is taken for granted as simply part and parcel of the accoutrements of the elite warrior – analogous to a sword, or, in this part of south-eastern Europe, more often an axe or a helmet (Kmet'ová 2013b; Kmet'ová and Stegmann-Rajtár 2014, 161–2; Potrebica 2001; Treherne 1995, 105). While horses certainly played a role in displays of warrior and elite status, they also provided something far more valuable – they allowed the actual embodiment of distinction, allowing certain men to set themselves apart from the rest. This was not only because possessing a horse indicated their wealth or position in the social hierarchy, but also because riders were able to physically and perhaps even ideologically distinguish themselves through their extraordinary abilities – demonstrating their mastery not only over people, but also over the natural world (Arnold and Counts 2010). Equestrianism in this context became both a symbol of a particular form of social potency and a conveyance for a particular elite male identity, literally as well as figuratively. The symbolism of the horse was manifested in both artistic representations and mortuary behaviour. This article presents a new perspective on the ways that horses were embedded in expressions of social distinction in the Dolenjska Hallstatt culture, an approach that may prove useful for other areas as well. More broadly, the aim is to move beyond equating high-status goods with high-status people by discussing how particular events, human-animal relationships and material culture were all enmeshed in the construction and presentation of social distinction for a particular group.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF RIDING IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

There is disagreement about whether the earliest domestic horses in continental Europe were initially ridden, or solely used for pulling wheeled vehicles and carrying goods. Evidence of bitting on horse teeth indicates that bridles with bits were utilized early in the domestication process (Bendrey 2007; Brown and Anthony 1998; Levine 1999), and metal bits are attested from 1300 BC in central Europe (Sherratt 1997, 217). However, in this period there are no clear differences between bits, cheek pieces and other bridle elements used in hitching horses to wagons and chariots versus those used for riding (Dietz 2006, 161; Uckelmann 2013, 401). Since the distinction between using horses for draft versus riding cannot be determined based on material culture, the clearest evidence for the early use of horses comes from iconography.

Iconographic evidence for horse-drawn chariots in Europe appears in the Middle to Late Helladic period (the Late Bronze Age in mainland Greece, *c*.1600–1500 BC) on *stelae* from the Shaft Graves at Mycenae (Heurtley 1921–23). Images just a century or two later on the Kivik cist and Trundholm sun wagon, far to the north in Scandinavia, demonstrate the rapid spread of horse-drawn vehicles (Kristiansen and Larsson 2005, 186–93, 294–6). The earliest known representations of horseback riding in south-eastern Europe are from rock art in the Valcamonica and Valltellina valleys in northern Italy, where images of riders have been dated to the local Period IV (1200–16 BC; Anati 1994, 189–90; de Saulieu 2013, 297). Based on these depictions, equestrianism did not develop until the Late Bronze Age in this area, and did not become ubiquitous until around 1000 BC (Clutton-Brock 1992, 73; Renfrew 1998; Uckelmann 2013). By the Early Iron Age the frequency and distribution of equestrian imagery had increased markedly. There are numerous depictions of human-horse interactions on *situla* art from the northern Adriatic, beginning in the seventh century BC (Fig. 1). *Situla* art is defined as toreutic figural art that appeared on bronze objects, specifically vessels, belt plates and earrings, and is one of the hallmarks of the Dolenjska Hallstatt culture (Frey 1969; Križ 2012; Turk 2005). The increase in horse depictions is also visible in the material culture from the broader region. There are images of horses pulling chariots and wagons as well as horses being ridden on the famous Strettweg wagon, Kleinklein cists, Sopron ceramic vessels, Hallstatt rider axes and lead figurines from Frög (Dobiat 1984; Egg 1996; 2012; Gleirscher 2011; Kromer 1959).

The move from using horses for pulling vehicles to individual riding animals is an important conceptual change that should not be underestimated. Riding necessitated an entirely new form of interspecies engagement and physical interaction, between particular people and particular horses (Argent 2013; Brittain and Overton 2013; Game 2001). The training required for both humans and horses to accustom a horse to being ridden is intensive, and requires effective communication between human and horse (Argent 2010, 162; 2013, 180–1; Dietz 2003). This expansion of equestrianism in the Early Iron Age is indicative of a larger shift in the symbolic significance of horses and the social importance of the human-horse relationship. However, while this was a widespread phenomenon, the incorporation of equestrianism into individual cultures and the ideology surrounding human-horse interaction were shaped by local experiences.

EARLY IRON AGE DOLENJSKA

The Dolenjska Hallstatt culture is an Early Iron Age culture that lasted from approximately 800 to 300 BC in south-eastern Slovenia, in the regions now known as Dolenjska and Bela krajina (Fig. 2). The Dolenjska Hallstatt culture was part of the larger Eastern Hallstatt cultural complex and

Figure 1
The Vače *situla* from Grave 1881/1 at Reber near Vače (© National Museum of Slovenia, photo Tomaž Lauko. Reproduced by permission of the National Museum of Slovenia). [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

is marked by the adoption of iron technology, the building of large hillforts, and the shift to inhumation burial under large burial mounds where social hierarchies were expressed via the differential distribution of grave goods (Dular 2003; Dular and Tecco Hvala 2007; Gabrovec 1976).

An exceptional aspect of the Dolenjska Hallstatt culture is the explosion of figural art that has been recovered almost exclusively from mortuary contexts, most notably in the form of *situla* art, but also in the round on personal ornaments. *Situla* art as a phenomenon is limited to the area around the *Caput Adriae* and spans the second half of the seventh century BC to the turn of the fourth century BC. After a curious absence in the sixth century, *situla* art peaks in Dolenjska in the fifth century (Križ 2012, 56–8; Turk 2005, 17–18). The art is named for the vessels most commonly associated with this cultural phenomenon, *situlae*, sheet-bronze buckets used for the mixing and serving of alcoholic beverages (see Fig. 1; Križ 2012, 55). Because of their depositional contexts, as well as the activities represented on them, *situlae* are traditionally interpreted as figuring heavily in elite activities and displays (Eibner 1981; Turk 2005). Horses are ubiquitous in *situla* art, frequently being led or ridden in processions, as well as pulling wagons and chariots, and in scenes depicting hunting or violence. But these images did not exist in a vacuum – all the artefacts depicting horses were deposited in mortuary contexts dating throughout the 500-year period of the Early Iron Age, and it is necessary to interpret these representations with reference to the burials in which they

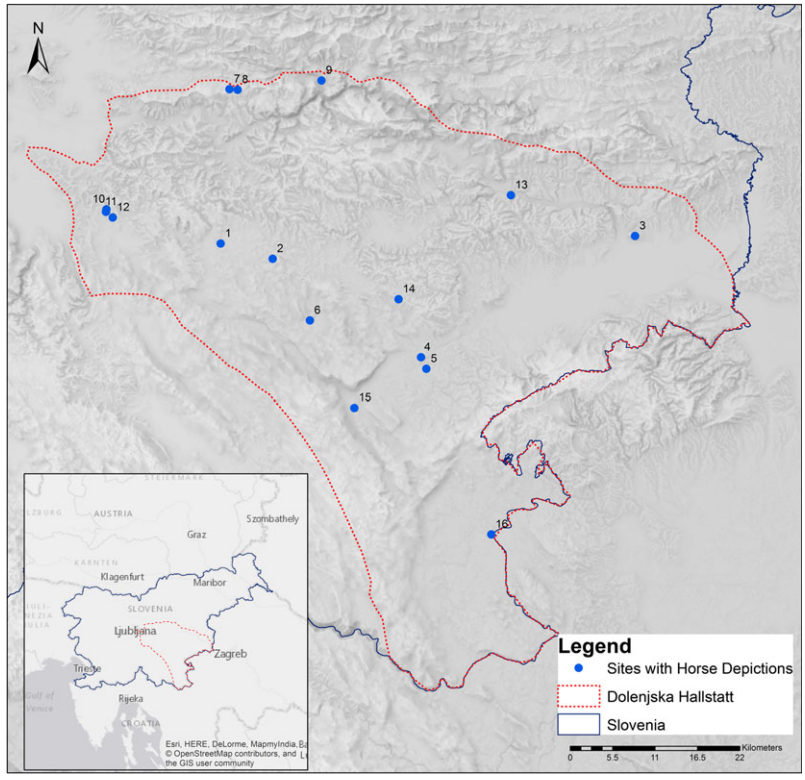

Figure 2

Map of the Dolenjska Hallstatt culture, sites with artefacts depicting horses are marked. Sites: 1. Stična – Gomile (Tumulus 5/stray find, Graves 48/9(?), 48/72, 48/99, Vas vir/11); 2. Medvedjek (Grave I/8); 3. Libna (unknown provenience); 4. Kapiteljska njiva (Graves A/30, B/64, III/12, III/46, III/50, XXIX/2); 5. Kandija (Graves II/5, III/33, IV/3); 6. Gomile near Dobrava (Grave 14/15); 7. Vače – Ravne njive (Graves 4, 1883/11-1, finds with unknown provenience); 8. Vače – Reber (Graves 14, 1881/1, Grave with the Mounted Warriors Belt); 9. Zagorje ob Savi (Grave with the Belt Plate); 10. Magdalenska gora – Laščik (Graves V/31, V/43); 11. Magdalenska gora – Preloge (Graves 2/a, 2/b, 2/c, 2/p, 2/11, 2/17, 2/38, 2/46, IV/16, IV/30a, IV/38, VI/30, VII/stray find, 13/53, 13/150); 12. Magdalenska gora – Voselca (Grave 2/11); 13. Mali Lukovec (Grave 4); 14. Brezje pri Trebelnem (Grave VII/1); 15. Dolenjske Toplice (Graves II/23, V/33, XI/8, XI/21); 16. Podzemelj (finds with unknown provenience). [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

were found, as well as the period of deposition, to explore the changing social role and symbolic associations of the horse.

MATERIALIZING DIFFERENCE

Taking on the study of elites and social status in general can be a fraught exercise. Trying to extrapolate status primarily from grave goods and other archaeological remains is problematic, especially in a prehistoric context without contemporary texts that might illuminate configurations of power and authority. One issue is the conflation of wealth and power, and another is that when we identify prestigious or exotic objects, it is not always clear that our estimation of value is equivalent to value assessments in the past. However, we nonetheless discuss elites frequently in studies of Iron

Age Europe, and it is necessary to explicitly address their presence and identification. We must also engage with the overlapping nature of social status and other social identifications, including, but not limited to, gender, age and role. Here I follow Bettina Arnold and define status as 'a vertical, hierarchical category of social differentiation', as opposed to role, which is horizontal and heterarchical, in that it may be unranked or ranked in a number of different ways (e.g. gender; Arnold 2011, 153–4; see also Arnold 2006, 150–1; Crumley 1995; Levy 2006).

In continental Early Iron Age contexts, the focus in studies of rank has traditionally been on identifying 'princes' (*Fürsten*), based on extraordinary grave goods and grave constructions. In earlier models the implicit assumption was that these individuals of paramount rank indicated complex social systems analogous to those found in medieval feudal configurations of power (Arnold 2004, 151; Frankenstein and Rowlands 1978; Kienlin 2012, 15). More recently the straightforward identification of elevated status has been problematized and attention has shifted from the way that materials may identify status to the intertwined nature of material culture and personal agency for constructing, maintaining and challenging social structures (Arnold 2011; Chapman 2000; DeMarrais *et al.* 1996; Kienlin 2012). In addition, our heavy reliance on grave goods to interpret social structure has been problematized, and for the past several decades we have been cognizant of the fact that material deposited in graves cannot be read as a direct reflection of lived identity (Carr 1995; Parker Pearson 1999).

With these caveats in mind, we must confront the reality that there is enormous disparity in the grave goods deposited with Hallstatt peoples, and differential access to certain items does seem to indicate status disparities that presumably had some bearing in both life and death. Grave goods, while certainly not the whole picture, can provide a window into the materialization of various social distinctions such as gender, age, role and status. Grave goods themselves require explicit attention in terms of how they intersect with individuals. These artefacts were bound up in networks of meaning encompassing the living, the dead, material culture and a variety of other material and immaterial entanglements. Certain grave goods can be interpreted as plausibly enmeshed in networks of meaning that reference high social status due to their inherent qualities or relational associations – e.g. rare or exotic raw materials, high levels of craftsmanship, non-local source, important ritual or communal function, or connection to esoteric knowledge or abilities (Gell 1992; 1998; Gibson 1979; Helms 1993). These are items that were not accessible to the majority of the community, and those who possessed them in life or were gifted them in death were set apart.

When I speak of elites and masculinity here, I am recognizing these forms of identity on the basis of their grave goods. Based on the patterning evident in the deposition of equine iconography, its content, and the historical context, I propose it is possible to identify and trace the way that horses broadly, and equestrianism in particular, became an important component in the embodiment of distinction for a particular subset of society. From the late sixth and throughout the fifth century, certain men highlighted the bodily and relational distinction of equestrianism in order to buttress their social distinction, by referencing it with objects, representations and, in certain cases, the animals themselves.

DOLENJSKA EQUINE ICONOGRAPHY

The project upon which this article is based identified 65 artefacts depicting horses at 16 sites, a subset of a larger survey of artefacts depicting animals from 68 Dolenjska Hallstatt sites, both settlements and cemeteries (Fig. 2). However, these artefacts were only found in mortuary contexts

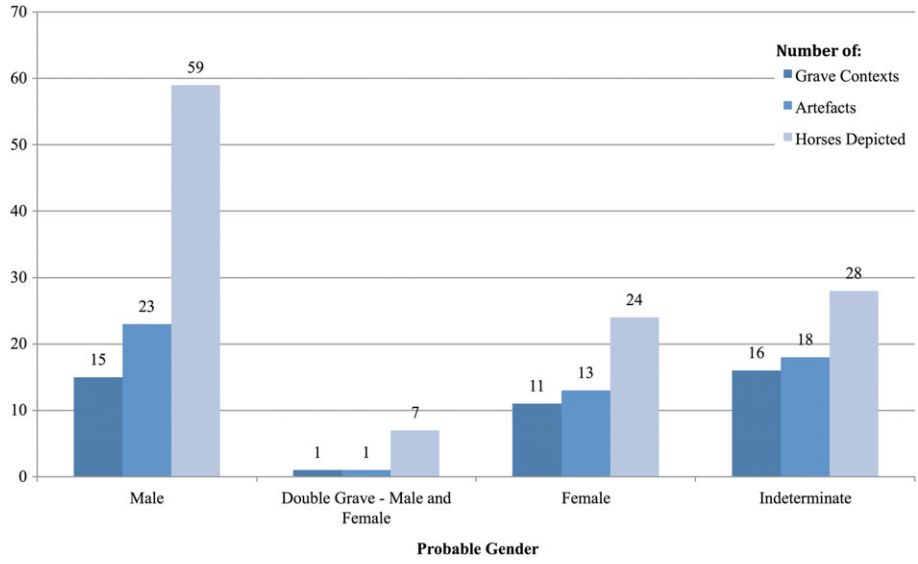

Figure 3
Grave contexts with horse imagery divided according to probable gender. [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

– 55 of them came from secure grave contexts, while 10 could not associated with a particular grave. The close association of equine images with graves is evocative, since artefacts found in grave contexts indicate particular choices made by the living community, influenced by their perceptions of the deceased. Mortuary practices utilizing equine iconography explicitly alluded to lived interactions with horses and relationships between particular people and horses (Frie 2016, 75–6).

Gendered differences in the association with horse imagery were strongly marked (Fig. 3). The probable gender of the individuals buried in these grave contexts was identified on the basis of diagnostic artefacts, since the soil in Dolenjska and Bela krajina is extremely acidic and bones are rarely preserved (Dular and Tecco Hvala 2007, 212). Though identifying gender on the basis of grave goods is inherently problematic without the use of other lines of evidence such as osteological analysis, in Dolenjska Hallstatt cemeteries where skeletal remains have been preserved and analyzed, it has been possible to confirm that certain artefacts were strongly gendered (males: weapons, defensive gear, whetstones; females: earrings, anklets, spindle whorls), and may conservatively be used as a proxy when other evidence is not available (Angel 1968; Dolinar-Osole 1956; Gabrovec 1956; Hencken 1978; Teržan 1985). There were a similar number of male and female graves with artefacts depicting horses (male graves: 15; female graves: 11; indeterminate: 16); however, there were many more artefacts depicting horses in male graves (males: 23; females: 13; indeterminate: 18).

There are also some distinctions evident in the types of artefacts depicting horses that were associated with males versus females (Table 1). Solely male graves contained belt plates, ceramic vessels and *phalerae*,[2] while only some singular items were exclusive to female graves. The most

2 Decorative elements of horse harnesses.

TABLE 1
Artefacts with horse imagery divided by probable gender (excludes artefacts recovered as stray or unprovenanced finds).

	Male		Double Grave –Male and Female		Female		Indeterminate	
	Artefacts	*Contexts*	*Artefacts*	*Contexts*	*Artefacts*	*Contexts*	*Artefacts*	*Contexts*
Phalera	9	5					1	1
Belt Plate	4	4						
Helmet	1	1						
Situla	3	3	1	1	3	2	1	1
Fibula	4	2			7	6	15	13
Ceramic Vessel	2	2						
Pendant					1	1		
Sceptre					1	1		
Bronze Lid					1	1		
Bone Figurine							1	1
Total	*23*	*15*[i]	*1*	*1*	*13*	*11*	*18*	*16*

[i] *The total number of grave contexts do not add up in this column because Grave III/12 from Kapiteljska njiva had a situla, belt plate and phalera depicting horses (Križ 1997, 19, 24–8, 58).*

common artefacts, crossbow *fibulae*[3] with forward-facing horse heads, appeared in both male and female graves, as did *situlae* decorated in the *situla* art style. It is important to note that most of the objects depicting horses were probably prestigious items, and many were important for personal display via bodily adornment, e.g. helmets, scabbards, sceptres, belt plates – or community display, particularly the *situlae*. Even the *phalerae* were meant for elaborate display of horse bodies. These artefacts were probably not everyday items available to the majority of the community; rather, in their material and decoration they demonstrated wide-ranging contacts and access to resources, in much the same way that possession of living horses would have done.

There are other important gendered distinctions. Not only were males buried with almost twice the number of artefacts depicting horses, but in addition the number of horses depicted on artefacts in male graves is significantly higher (Fig. 3; males: 59 horses depicted in total; females: 24; indeterminate: 28). The strong association between men and horse imagery is further supported by the artefacts decorated in the *situla* art style (belt plates, *situlae*, a bronze lid) that depict horses and humans together in narrative scenes. Women are very rarely depicted in *situla* art; in fact, the 15 *situla* art items in this dataset include only three objects depicting a total of four women. In contrast, 98 men are depicted (Table 2). A closer analysis of the horse imagery reveals an interesting and important distinction: while women possessed artefacts depicting horses, or were at least buried with them, women were rarely depicted on the same artefacts as horses, and were never depicted in direct contact with a horse (see Fig. 4, top image, for a rare depiction including women). In contrast, men were depicted leading horses, riding horses, and driving or riding in wagons and chariots pulled by horses (Figs. 4 and 5). These *situla* art scenes depicting horses may be characterized as focused on elite male activities in general – a rider observing a dumbbell boxing match (Figs. 4 and 5, top

3 *Fibulae* are safety pins for fastening clothing.

TABLE 2
Horse-human co-occurrence in Dolenjska Hallstatt depictions. Table only includes artefacts that depict both humans and horses.

	Horses		**Humans - Male**		**Humans - Female**		**Humans - Indeterminate Gender**	
	Artefacts	*Horses*	*Artefacts*	*People*	*Artefacts*	*People*	*Artefacts*	*People*
Situla	8	30	7	75	1	2	6	22
Belt Plate	5	6	5	14	1	1		
Lid	1	2	1	7	1	1	1	4
Fibula	4	12	2	2			2	2
Figurine	1	1					1	1
Phalera	1	1					1	1
Total	*20*	*52*	*15*	*98*	*3*	*4*	*11*	*30*

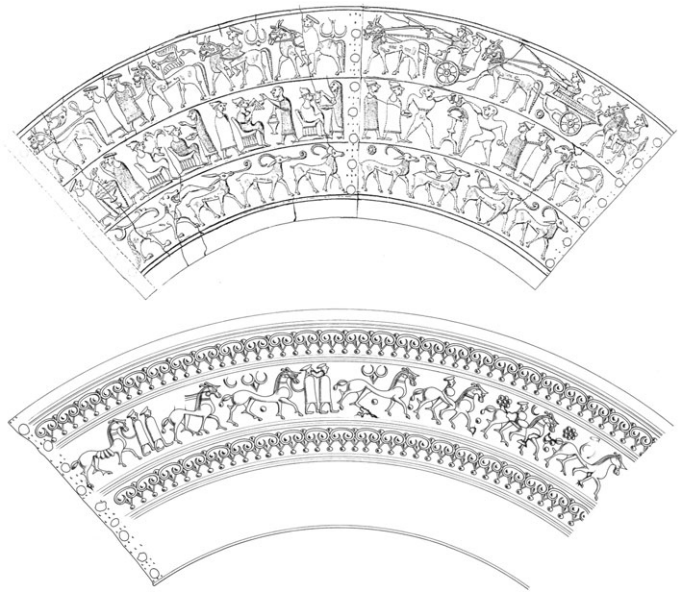

Figure 4
Top: Vače - Reber Grave 1881/1 (Turk 2005, 35 fig. 52; © National museum of Slovenia, drawing Francè Starè. Reproduced by permission of the National Museum of Slovenia); bottom: Kandija Tumulus IV, Grave 3 (Križ 2012, 86-7; © Dolenjski muzej. Reproduced by permission of the Dolenjski muzej).

images), a hunter on horseback (Fig. 5, middle), a battle scene with armed warriors (Fig. 5, bottom), and many processions, some with chariots and wagons (Fig. 4). These depictions have been proposed to represent only the highest strata of society, and it is important to emphasize that they depict an almost exclusively masculine sphere (Eibner 1981; Križ 2012, 58–9; Kromer 1980, 225–40; Teržan 2007; 2011; Turk 2005, 34–40).

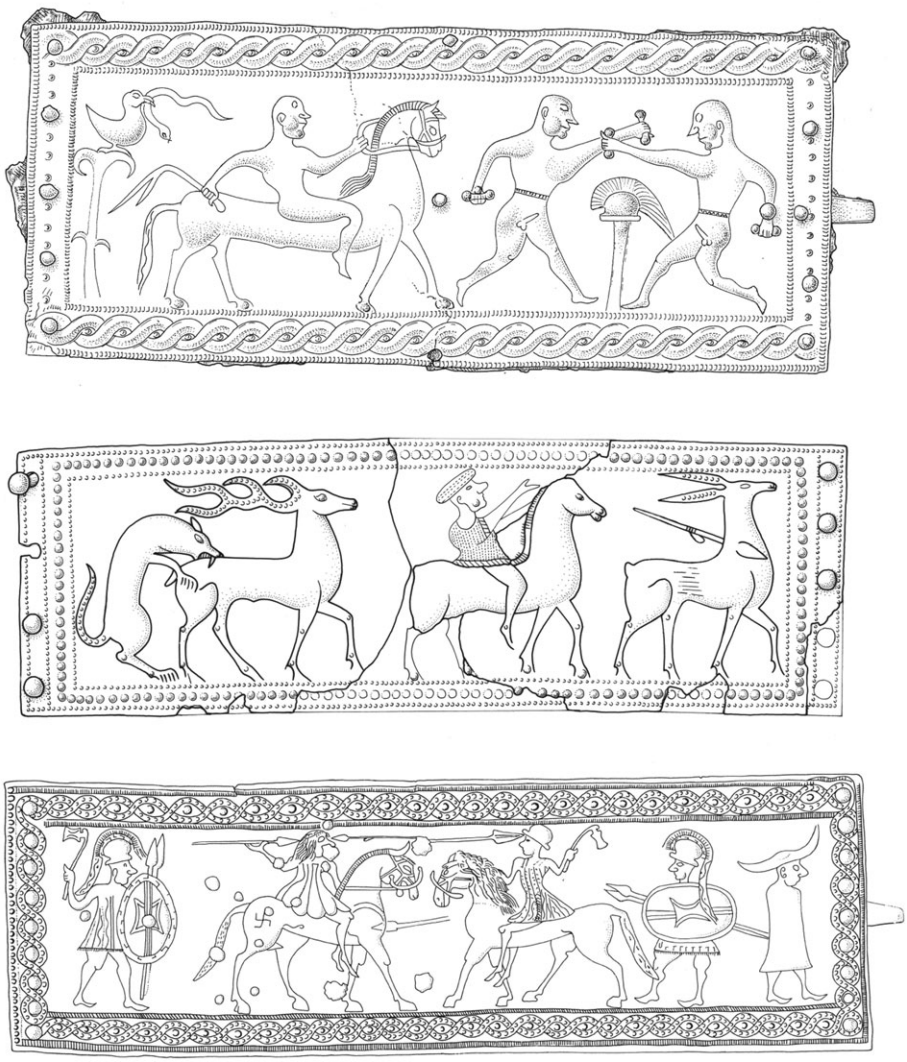

Figure 5
Belt plates depicting men and horses. Top: Magdalenska gora, Preloge Tumulus 2, Grave 46 (Tecco Hvala *et al*. 2004, pl. 41 no. 1; © Snežana Tecco Hvala. Reproduced by permission of Snežana Tecco Hvala); middle: Zagorje ob Savi, Grave with the Belt Plate (Turk 2005, 32 fig. 43; © National Museum of Slovenia, drawing Ida Murgelj. Reproduced by permission of the National Museum of Slovenia); bottom: Vače - Reber, Grave with the Mounted Warriors Belt (Turk 2005, 39 fig. 58; © National Museum of Slovenia, drawing Vesna Svetličič. Reproduced by permission of the National Museum of Slovenia).

While there is a clear association between high-status males and horses in figural representations, understanding the significance of these depictions is a more complex matter. There is a disparity in associations between horses and humans in figural representations, but why? Were interactions with horses solely the purview of elite men? To better understand these patterns, it is necessary to examine in what situations horses and men co-occur and their broader social context.

THE SOCIAL CONTEXT FOR THE INCREASING IMPORTANCE OF HORSES

Previous research on the social significance of horses in Dolenjska Hallstatt culture has focused on horse burials associated with human graves (Dular 2007; Kmet'ová 2013a; 2013b; Kmet'ová and Stegmann-Rajtár 2014). Whole horse bodies, and occasionally horse crania and other parts of horses, have been found primarily in graves of high-status males. When the chronological patterns of horse burial and horse depictions are compared (Figs. 6 and 7), it is clear that both phenomena follow the same broad trends and peak *c*.500 BC. However, horse burials and horse imagery are mutually exclusive except in a single case, Grave IV/3 at Kandija near Novo mesto,

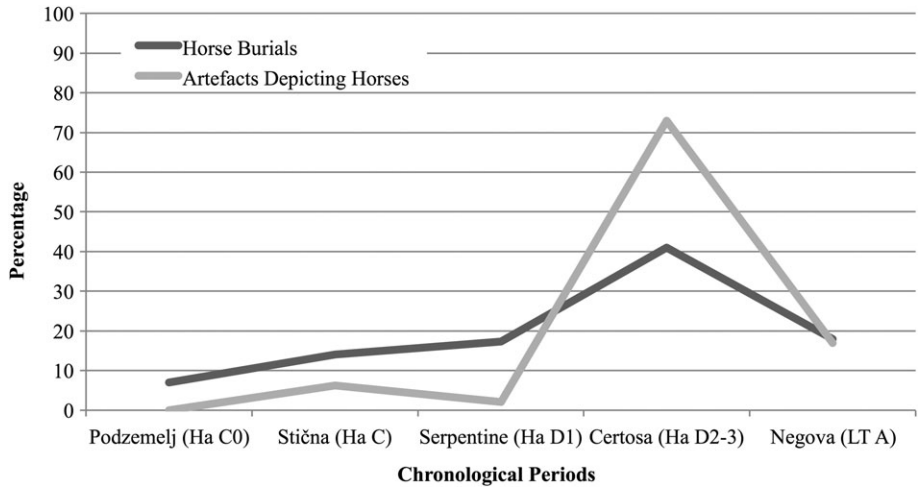

Figure 6
Chronological distribution of horse remains and artefacts depicting horses in Dolenjska Hallstatt graves (modified from Dular 2007, 745 fig. 9).

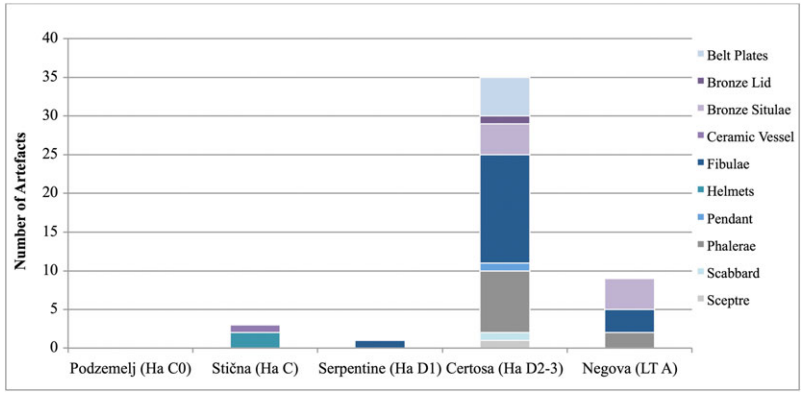

Figure 7
Chronological distribution of artefacts depicting horses from the Dolenjska Hallstatt area. [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

which was the elaborate double burial of a man and a woman containing horse imagery as well as remains of a probable horse sacrifice (Hundt 1973; Knez 1986, 88–90). It is not clear why horse imagery and horse bodies are mutually exclusive; however, this pattern is clearly not incidental – there are 55 graves with equine imagery and 41 horse burials that are part of the larger study sample, and only one grave contains both.

When these temporal patterns in horse imagery and burial are interpreted with reference to broader cultural developments, some possible explanations emerge. The first half of the Early Iron Age, the Podzemelj and Stična periods (Fig. 8), is characterized by burials with weapons and occasional burials with horses. The Stična phase was the floruit of Dolenjska Hallstatt communities,

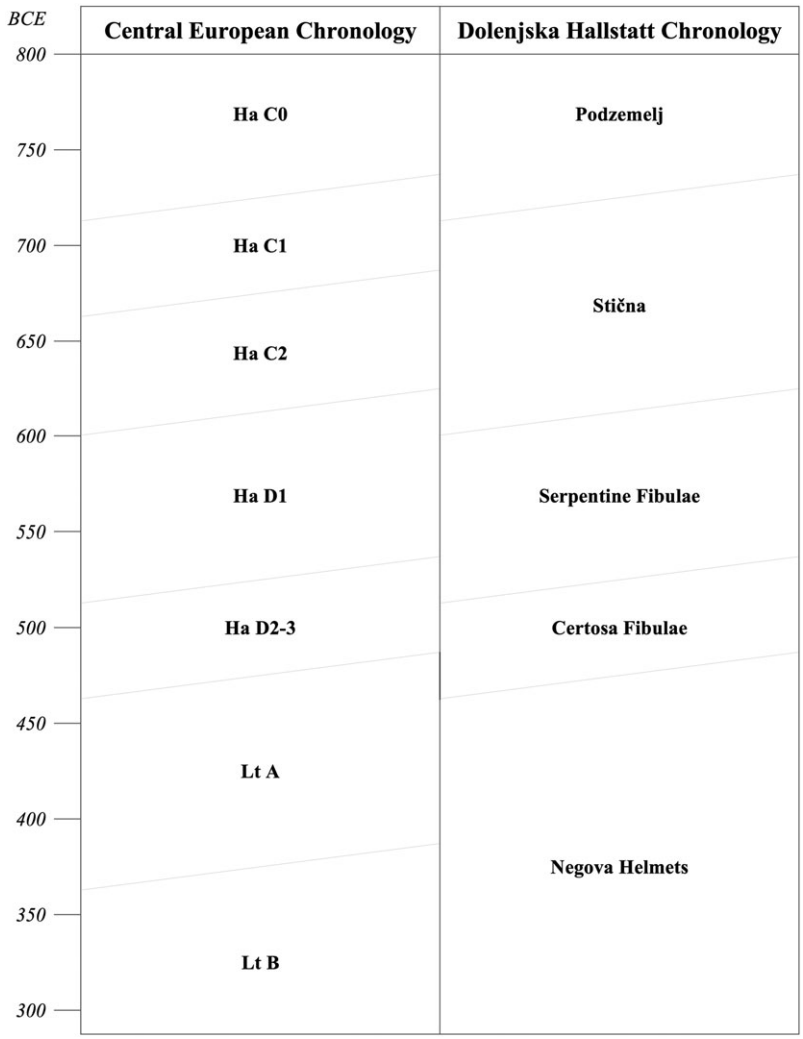

Figure 8
Chronological phases of the Western Hallstatt region broadly, and the local Dolenjska Hallstatt chronology (adapted from Tecco Hvala 2012, 47 fig. 11).

with incredibly wealthy burials demonstrating widespread contacts with neighbouring cultures, particularly those in northern Italy. However, from this period there are relatively few artefacts depicting horses – two helmets and a ceramic vessel. *Circa* 600 BC a key cultural shift occurred. While horse and weapons burials from these earlier periods can be considered expressions of prestige, a continuation of patterns that emerged in the Late Bronze Age, it is believed that similar activities after 600 BC had gained new meaning. This is because the Serpentine Fibulae phase (600–520 BC) was a period of significant unrest that has been linked to episodic incursions of Scythians from the east which threw Dolenjska Hallstatt communities into a political and economic crisis (Dular 2007, 475–6; Dular and Tecco Hvala 2007, 251–2; Teržan 1998, 526–7; 2008, 308). This unrest is evident in both settlement and mortuary contexts – hillforts in north-eastern Dolenjska are abandoned, other hillforts have fortifications rebuilt following episodes of burning, and new, small hillforts are founded in former hinterlands (Dular and Tecco Hvala 2007, 143–6, 251–2, fig. 82; Tecco Hvala 2012, 141–2; Teržan 1976, 393; 1998, 526–7). The elaborate burials of the Stična phase are clearly interrupted, and *situla* art in this region disappears entirely for the duration of the Serpentine Fibulae phase, along with most equine images.

After this period, there is a cultural renaissance in the Certosa Fibulae period, with an explosion of figural art, and a return to a more elaborate burial program. This period is characterized by a shift to increasing displays of violent potential with a new prominence of weapons in burials (Tecco Hvala 2012, 141–2; Teržan 1985, 95–6 fig. 17; 1998, 526–7; 2008, 319–20). Elite weapons burials peak in the Certosa Fibulae phase, and burials with horses follow the same pattern. In-depth analysis of the grave goods from several important sites has led to the proposition that this pattern is explained by the development of a proto-military hierarchy with horsemen at the top as commanders, followed by infantrymen armed with two spears and an axe, and men with just one weapon at the bottom (Tecco Hvala 2012, 141 fig. 55; Teržan 1985, 95–6 figs. 16 and 17). This military hierarchy was probably strongly bound to the social hierarchy at the time, where prominent elites led bands of men connected to them through patronage, kin-relationships and other more personal ties (Dular 2016, 80; Kristiansen 1999, 181–2; Vankilde 2006, 483). If the social disruption evident after 600 BC was related to foreign incursions by mounted warriors, or even local raiding, the subsequent development of more rigid hierarchies based on warrior identity and a focus on displaying the ability to both attack and defend on horseback is perhaps not surprising (Potrebica 2001; Tecco Hvala 2012, 142; Teržan 1998, 536; 2008, 319).

The Certosa Fibulae phase has yielded the largest number and variety of artefacts depicting horses. *Situla* art reappears in significant quantities, on both belt plates and *situlae*. *Situlae* depicting horses appear with both men and women, and are considered signs of paramount status and indicators of participation in elite regional networks. *Fibulae*, however, problematize the straightforward association between horses and elite males, since they appear with both men and women and are not restricted to wealthy graves. These may exemplify the radically increased symbolic significance of horses in this period, which crosscut gender, despite the apparent restriction of human-horse interactions to men. Locally-made *phalerae* in the form of horse-head swastikas are also frequent in this period, and clearly reference Scythian designs (Frey 1981; Pare 2012, 156–7; Tecco Hvala 2012, 162–3).

There is a final shift at the very end of the Early Iron Age, in the Negova Helmets phase. In other areas of Hallstatt Europe, movement of so-called Celtic populations had already radically changed the social and material culture ushering in the Late Iron Age. These developments are delayed in the Dolenjska Hallstatt area, though the unrest of the surrounding regions resonated in this period. The Negova Helmets phase is characterized by the rapid expansion of burials with weapons,

though the disparity in the quality and quantity of weapons decreases. This is also visible in the horse iconography, which now only appears on *phalerae*, *fibulae* and *situlae*. None of these are new forms; rather, they show continuity with the previous period. In addition, the visibly elite warrior burials have vanished and there are fewer burials with horses, though now almost a third of male burials contain weapons (Tecco Hvala 2012, 141–2). In this period we may be seeing the democratization of warrior status where larger parts of the population were armed, though the dramatic displays of equestrian prowess no longer maintained the same cultural currency as they did in the period when the memory of foreign mounted warriors was still fresh. It may also be that these markers of warrior status had become so prevalent that by the Negova Helmets period there was a loss of exclusivity in these elements of the male warrior panoply, and a concomitant decrease in their utility and desirability for marking paramount status (Arnold 2001, 21; Miller 1982, 89; *sensu* Veblen 2007).

HORSES AND THE EMBODIMENT OF ELITE MASCULINITY

Horses have long been noted as an aspect of elite male status in many parts of Hallstatt Europe (Dular 2007; Kmeťová 2013a; 2013b; Kmeťová and Stegmann-Rajtár 2014). They are often discussed as part of the elite warrior package that developed as a transcultural phenomenon in the Bronze Age, and that continued to be an important expression of elite masculinity in the Early Iron Age (Harding 2007; Kristiansen 1999; Potrebica 2001; Robb 1997a; 1997b; Shennan 1993, 144–54; Treherne 1995; Vankilde 2006; 2014). I propose that these elite warriors probably represent a hegemonic masculinity – that is, a masculine ideal utilized to maintain a system of privilege (Alberti 2006, 406; Carrigan *et al*. 1987, 89–100; Skogstrand 2010, 40–1). While this form of masculinity may have been presented as the ideal for men in local society, it was not necessarily a role that was available for most men in society to inhabit (Skogstrand 2010, 40). This hegemonic masculinity was a complex presentation of self that drew on politics of gender, power, status and the potential for violence, and one that through its enactment also reinforced the necessity and rightful place of these men. They embodied the ideal of the elite male warrior – placed in a high position in the local hierarchy, who cemented their power through their self-presentation as one who could both attack and defend, the manifestation of power and potential violence to allies as well as enemies (Shennan 1993, 154; Skogstrand 2010, 44; Treherne 1995, 108–9; Vankilde 2006, 480–2).

In this time the horse was a privileged animal and certainly not every family would have possessed one. Based on the rigorous training required of both horses and riders, it is unlikely that those individuals who did not have regular access to horses and training would have been able to participate in equestrian activities, and it may even have been a proscribed activity. There would have been relatively few individuals able to ride, possibly all men based on the iconographic evidence. This would have set horses apart from other domestic animals, and riders apart from other men, reinforcing the distinction of the horse and rider as a human-animal hybrid form unique in its symbiotic qualities (Frie 2016, 75–6).

The importance of the distinctive nature of horses and their strong ties to their riders are not only evident in the iconography, but are seen in the burial record as well. Horses are the only animals buried with their bodies intact in Dolenjska Hallstatt graves, presumably having been sacrificed during funerary rituals (Dular 2007; Frie 2016, 74–7; Gruškovnjak 2016, 293–330; Kmeťová 2013a; Kmeťová and Stegmann-Rajtár 2014 – see Fig. 4, top image, depicting a horse being led by a man with an axe). The sacrifice and burial of a horse with a male individual displayed the man's status by referencing his association with this restricted animal in life while

demonstrating the ultimate ownership and conspicuous consumption of this valuable animal by taking it to the grave. In addition to status, the significance of equestrianism cannot be overlooked as an impetus for horse sacrifice. It may be that the close relationship between rider and horse necessitated the sacrifice of the horse upon the death of the rider as an appropriate continuation of their cooperative relationship from life into death (Frie 2016, 75). If this was the case, human-horse burials may be analogous to the double burials of humans, where a significant interpersonal relationship is assumed to have necessitated the burial of two individuals in a single grave (Arnold and Fernández-Götz, forthcoming).

The elite masculine ideal maintained its importance throughout the Bronze and into the Iron Age, and peaked in certain regions and times. In the case of Dolenjska Hallstatt society, equestrianism was an important component of a peak in the expression of elite masculinity in the transition from the sixth to fifth centuries BC. This was because the association with horses, particularly riding, was an important element in the embodiment of distinction. Elite male riders were able to more effectively defend against foreign attackers during this period of unrest, and may have been the only individuals who were able to match the threat embodied by mounted raiders. The martial threat posed by newly mounted local warriors was accompanied by an equally important ability to engage physically with non-human animals in a way that was impossible for most of the community. This served to further distinguish their power and physical prowess, facilitating the embodiment and crystallization of the elite warrior ideal.

CONCLUSION

Once horse depictions are analyzed with a close attention to gendered context, iconographic content and broader cultural developments, a clear pattern can be discerned. Horses maintain a low-level importance throughout the first half of the Early Iron Age, with a shift in the late sixth century when horses become much more strongly associated with displays of elite masculinity, particularly the potential for violence embodied by the mounted warrior. The temporal congruence between an increase in horse imagery and the use of horses in presentations of elite masculinity is not incidental, and these developments can be linked to a period of recovery after major social upsets caused by incursions of Scythian raiders. The significance of horses on both sides of the conflict led to an elevated importance of the mounted warrior. Interestingly, it is not during the period of unrest that the importance of horses is highlighted in local iconography and burial programmes; rather, this was delayed until the period of rebuilding that followed. Two explanations may account for this, which are not mutually exclusive – during the period of unrest artistic production was very limited, evidenced by the absence of *situla* art and low numbers of figural artefacts in general. In addition, the importance of horses was probably self-evident during the time when Scythian incursions and local raiding were frequent. It was in the subsequent, more stable, period that elites justified their continued social importance by presenting themselves as equestrian warriors like the local defenders of the preceding period. The horse with a rider had become the preeminent symbol of power and protection in peacetime as well as war.

It is important to note that neither artistic representation nor mortuary activity should be taken as perfectly reflective of life. Many of these burials were displays orchestrated by paramount elites, those who probably commissioned the *situla* art and other objects with equine iconography. Mortuary ritual is a social performance, one affected by far more variables than a desire to bury individuals with the things that were most central to their lived identity (Carr 1995; Parker Pearson

1999). What is notable is that there was a coherent presentation of the social importance of horses, one that peaked following a period of significant unrest that has been linked to incursions of foreign mounted warriors. Whether or not equestrianism was central to daily life or defence in the Certosa Fibulae period, it was depicted as a bodily practice significant for a small subset of the population – the elite male.

The entirely novel trans-species relationship engendered by riding had significant repercussions for the perception of horses, as well as their riders, in local society. The ability of a rider to work physically in concert with a horse and extend his power over a non-human animal may have been viewed with awe, and may have created a sense that horses had elevated social or intellectual abilities. This was such a potent representational scheme because equestrianism allowed not simply the presentation of distinction, but the actual embodiment of distinction through heightened bodily powers and the extension of physical control into the animal world.

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Religious Studies and Anthropology Department
University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh
800 Algoma Boulevard.
Swart Hall 314
Oshkosh, WI 54901
USA
E-mail: friea@uwosh.edu

Department of Anthropology
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
3413 N. Downer Ave.
Sabin Hall 390
Milwaukee, WI 53211
USA

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