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MOBILITY OF MATERIALS AND PEOPLE IN THE IRON AGE EUROPE

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Iron Age, or the La Tène period (4th - 1st century BC), is usually perceived as highly "mobile", in the sense of historical narrative: 1) so called "Celtic expansion" in the 4th and 3rd centuries that should have involved especially the personal mobility, 2) intensive political and economic contacts across wide European territory during 2nd and 1st centuries BC, that have been explained by the significant expansion of the contact network. However, archaeological record and namely the exact data give a rather confused picture. While, during the period in question, we have recorded several both cultural and socio-economic changes (new materials, introduction of coinage, change in burial customs), our data are extremely difficult to interpret in relation to addressing these paradigms. We have decided to approach the question of "mobility" in the Iron Age through the study of materials. Especially copper alloys, in the form of jewellery and personal or prestigious items, have been accompanying people throughout their lives. Exact data on trends in using these materials are solid part of the archaeological narration and their importance is therefore indisputable.
Through mobility of materials and/or artefacts studied by provenance analyses and mixing models we can examine socio-economic and cultural processes behind them, and establish theoretical frameworks also for the mobility of people. Our methodology involves evaluation of bulk and trace composition, accompanied by isotopic (namely Sr, Pb) tracers. Even in periods when traditional provenance questions are much more difficult to answer, we believe that even the mixing of sources tends to follow certain trends that can be traceable by available analytical methods. By establishing these "trends" historical events related to "mobility" can be explained. By examples from the individual case studies we will demonstrate our methodological approaches to mobility of both people and materials during the course of Iron Age.

Keywords
Iron Age, isotope analyses, copper alloys, mobility of materials

Note/comment