



## Golasecca

Of Trade and Men in the Iron Age  
8<sup>th</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BC.

27 November 2009 - 26 April 2010

Musée d'Archéologie nationale,  
Château de Saint-Germain-en-Laye  
Place Charles de Gaulle  
78105 Saint-Germain-en-Laye cedex

An exhibition organised by the  
Réunion des Musées Nationaux and  
the Musée d'Archéologie Nationale

The Celts' trading partners in the early Iron Age were traditionally the Etruscans and the Greeks. Yet studies carried out in northern Italy since the 1970s demonstrate the dynamism of the peripheral communities which have proved to be significant intermediaries in the trade between temperate Europe and the Mediterranean, especially the "Golasecca culture". This exhibition aims to show the specific features of this culture within the communities of the Alpine arch. The archaeological reassessment has been made possible by a review of nineteenth-century work and the latest academic studies.

The interest, knowledge and passion of the young scholar Giovanni Battista Giani led to the systematic excavation, preservation and detailed recording of many tombs and chance discoveries reported by peasants in the district of Golasecca since the late eighteenth century. Several finds underlined the specific place of Golasecca culture in the development of western Hallstatt culture. Because of its wealth and its specific features between the Italic and Celtic cultures, "Golasecca culture" has been the subject of much scientific debate in Europe ever since.

When the museum of "Celtic and Gallo-Roman antiquities" was opened in 1867, a large collection of Golasecca material culture (pottery, metal items, finery) was one of the first purchases. In the 1870s, Gabriel de Mortillet and Alexandre Bertrand, then in charge of the new Musée des Antiquités Nationales, were among the first to take an interest in this culture, working in liaison with contemporary Italian scholars: P. Castelfranco, B. Biondelli and G. Chierici.

A study of settlement patterns shows the emergence of urban centres (Como and Castelletto Ticino-Sesto Calende). In the 6th-5th centuries BC, these centres were characterised by several social strata (peasants, craftsmen, commercial elite) and a functional distribution of space, divided into quarters for housing, production (pottery and metalworking), trade (river ports and warehouses) and sanctuaries. These facts point to a complex organised social structure in which peasants, craftsmen and merchants lived alongside an elite that benefited from the group's productivity and from middle and long-distance exchanges.

Moreover, the Golaseccans were distinguished by their early acquisition of writing (first half of the 6th century BC) due to the adaptation of the north Etruscan alphabet to a phonetic system belonging to the Celtic language group.

Celtic language skills, the precocious use of writing as an instrument for market control, and flourishing craft production all contributed to the Golaseccans' successful management of trade across the Alps. Merchants, peddlers and craftsmen ranged throughout Europe in search of raw materials such as tin or more precious materials such as amber. They transported precious or even luxury items manufactured in the Mediterranean for the Celtic elites north of the Alps. Political marriage alliances strengthened the links that the Golaseccans forged with all the most powerful trading partners in proto-historic Europe: the Celts, Etruscans, Greeks and Picenians, from at least the late Bronze Age.

The exhibition includes burial goods from several tombs, such as the *situla lid* from Grandate, on loan from the municipal museum of Pio Giovo, Como, the *ribbed fibula with very long pendants* from the museum of antiquities in Turin, burial goods from the grave on the "route de Dun", from the Musée du Berry, Bourges, furniture from the Arbedo deposit, from the archaeological museum of Bellizona, Switzerland; as well as items from the Musée d'Archéologie nationale, such as objects from tomb no. 4 in Monsorino, surveys, drawings and watercolours by Abel Maitre (19th century); a set of artefacts from Trezzo sull'Adda, from the archaeological collection of the Palazzo Sforzesco, Milan.

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**Curators:**

Christine Lorre, curator of the department of comparative archaeology Musée d'Archéologie nationale  
Veronica Cicolani, PhD student at the University of Tours working at the Musée d'Archéologie nationale

**Exhibition design:** Cécile Degos

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**Open:** every day except  
Tuesdays, from 10 am to 5.15  
pm.

**Access:** RER line A, station  
Saint-Germain-en-Laye in  
front of the château  
(20min from Charles-de-  
Gaulle-Etoile)  
Bus 258 from La Défense.  
Motorway from the west A13,  
RN 190, RN 13, N 186.

[www.rmn.fr](http://www.rmn.fr)

**Admission:**  
Single price for the  
exhibition only: € 4.50  
Full price including the  
permanent collections: €  
6.50, concession: € 5  
Groups: € 6 / pers.

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