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DRAGOȘ MĂNDESCU

**THE “DARK” SECOND CENTURY BC IN TRANSYLVANIA.  
IN SEARCH FOR THE MISSING LINK BETWEEN THE FALL  
OF THE CELTS AND THE RISE OF THE DACIAN CULTURE**

ABSTRACT

D. Măndescu 2013. *The “dark” second century BC in Transylvania. In search for the missing link between the fall of the Celts and the rise of the Dacian culture*, AAC 48: 111–134.

The article deals with the well and long debated issue of the disappearance of Celtic culture from Transylvania during the first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, followed by the emergence and flowering of an archaeological culture attributed to the Dacians. A comprehensive review is made of historiographic theories promoted in literature over the years on the replacement of cultural facies in the eastern Carpathian Basin: the Dacian scenario, the Bastarnian scenario, the mixed Bastarnian and Getian scenario and finally, the Padea-Panagjurski Kolonii scenario. Special attention is paid to the archaeological record on the Old Dacian element in Transylvania (e.g., the settlements at Bratei and Olteni, the cemeteries at Olteni and Săvârșin) in the period of Celtic supremacy and to the relationship between indigenous and non-native populations in the study area during the Late Iron Age. The discussion is rounded off with an analysis of interaction between the inhabitants of Transylvania and their neighbours, e.g., Scordisci and the Bastarnae. The author proposes to interpret the rise of the Dacians as an effect rather than cause of the disappearance of Celts from Transylvania.

**Key words:** Carpathian Basin; Transylvania; Late Iron Age; Celts; Dacians; Bastarnae; settlements; cemeteries; chronology

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INTRODUCTION

During the late stage of the Middle La Tène, the Eastern Celtic culture is characterized by continuity — a legitimate outcome of an evolutionary trend observed during the earlier age (Szabó 1992, 56)<sup>1</sup>. The 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC coincides with phase III B of the Eastern Celtic civilization (according to J. Todorović), the culmination of Celtic culture in south-eastern Europe (Todorović 1968,

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170–173). Transylvania<sup>2</sup> (Fig. 1), a constituent part of an area of culture proper to Eastern Celts for almost two centuries, makes for an evident disharmony within the general landscape. This land, rich in pastures and salt and ores,

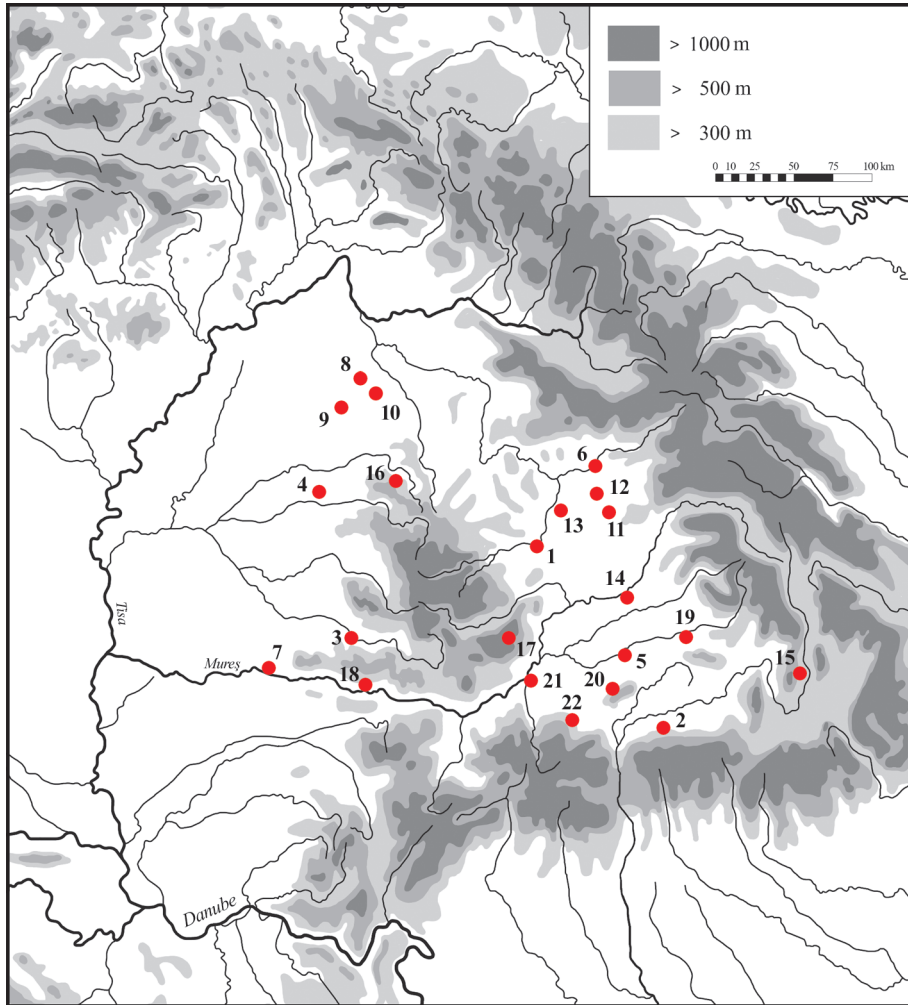


Fig. 1. The map of Transylvania in the Late Iron Age, with some of the localities mentioned in the paper (jud. — județul; all sites — Romania); drawn by D. Măndescu and I. Jordan.

1 — Apahida, jud. Cluj; 2 — Arpașu de Sus, jud. Sibiu; 3 — Berindia, jud. Arad; 4 — Biharea, jud. Bihor; 5 — Bratei, jud. Sibiu; 6 — Cepari, jud. Bistrița-Năsăud; 7 — Cicir, jud. Arad; 8 — Ciumești, jud. Satu Mare; 9 — Curtuișeni, jud. Bihor; 10 — Dindești, jud. Satu Mare; 11 — Dișșa, jud. Bistrița-Năsăud; 12 — Fântânele, jud. Bistrița-Năsăud; 13 — Jucu de Sus, jud. Cluj; 14 — Morești, jud. Mureș; 15 — Olteni, jud. Covasna; 16 — Panic, jud. Sălaj; 17 — Piatra Craivii, jud. Alba; 18 — Săvârșin, jud. Arad; 19 — Sighișoara, jud. Mureș; 20 — Slimnic, jud. Sibiu; 21 — Șeușa, jud. Alba; 22 — Tilișca, jud. Sibiu.

<sup>2</sup> Transylvania is understood in this paper as the eastern part of the Carpathian Basin covering the regions in central and western present-day Romania, corresponding to the historic provinces of Transylvania, Crișana and Banat.

where the Celtic cultural phenomenon had found, on many occasions, a series of exceptional ways to express itself, differs markedly from other "countries" of Eastern Celtica.

Like almost everywhere in the Celtic world, numerous Celtic cemeteries were abandoned across the Carpathian Basin by the middle of La Tène C. This phenomenon has been explained in terms of deep-going change on the level of religious beliefs (Krämer 1952, 330–337) and sometimes in a profane context, too, such as population discontinuity due to specific circumstances caused by the migration of the Cimbri (Szabó 1992, 59). This phenomenon is also observed in Transylvania where the Celtic burials cease early into La Tène C2-Polenz period (Polenz 1971 for the relative chronology; Polenz 1982 for the absolute chronology of this period), but soon after the end of the funerary horizon the presence of the Celts is no longer archaeologically documented as they were replaced soon after by the Dacians (Babeş 1988, 25, Footnote 98).

Not a few of the Middle La Tène Celtic cemeteries in Transylvania are definitely in use at the beginning of La Tène C2, during the first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC: Ciumeşti, Dindeşti, Dipşa, Jucu de Sus and especially Apahida (Zirra 1971, 211–212, Fig. 20; Horedt 1976, 129) are landmarks of the last horizon of Celtic burials in Transylvania. Given the presence in them of long Middle La Tène iron fibulae (Fig. 2:1–6), some other Celtic burials as those at Fântânele-“Livadă” (Crişan 1975, 46, Fig. 1:10), Cepari (de Roska 1944, 55–56, Fig. 7:4) and Curtuişeni (Nánási 1973, 36–37, Pl. IV:1, 3, 6) must also belong in the same funerary horizon. These long iron fibulae which represent the last series of Middle La Tène fibulae in the Carpathian Basin (Hunyady 1944, 81, Fig. 31:2, 10), forms with a slightly curved bow, an elongated foot, often decorated with one or more prominence, and a short four- or six-coil spring, were recognized by V. Zirra as “[...] representative for the latest Western La Tène horizon in Transylvania and Crişana” (Zirra 1974, 153). Sharing many similarities with variant A of Kostrzewski (Shchukin 1989, 26, Fig. 4: 37–38) these fibulae are typological forms proper for the end of La Tène C1 and do not completely go out of fashion during La Tène C2. Analogies from the neighbouring areas, i.e. Serbia-Čubra (Popović, Sladić 1997, 114, Fig. 2:1), Croatia — Osijek-“Donji Grad” (Todorović 1968, 52, Pl. 18:3), or even Bohemia — Praha-“Ponetovice” (Filip 1956, 526, Fig. 34:1; 94:1) where this kind of fibula has been recorded in an evidently La Tène C1 archaeological context (Cižmar 1975, 429), are dated to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC.

The “crisis” of Celtic settlements in Transylvania seems to be more of a false problem resulting from the status of research (Dietrich, Dietrich 2006, 20–22, Fig. 5). Thus, only in north-western Romania, in Carei Plain, between the Barcău and Crasna rivers, at least 12 settlements recorded as “Celtic” have been identified, dated to the Middle La Tène. Some of them still remain without investigation: Andrid, Berea-“Colina cu Măcriş”, Berea-“Nyúlvár”, Berveni, Biharea, Carei-Bobald III, Cămin, Ciumeşti-“Bostănărie”, Dindeşti-“Observator”, Sanislău-Gara C.F.R., Urziceni, Valea lui Mihai-“Grădina lui Crişan” (Németi

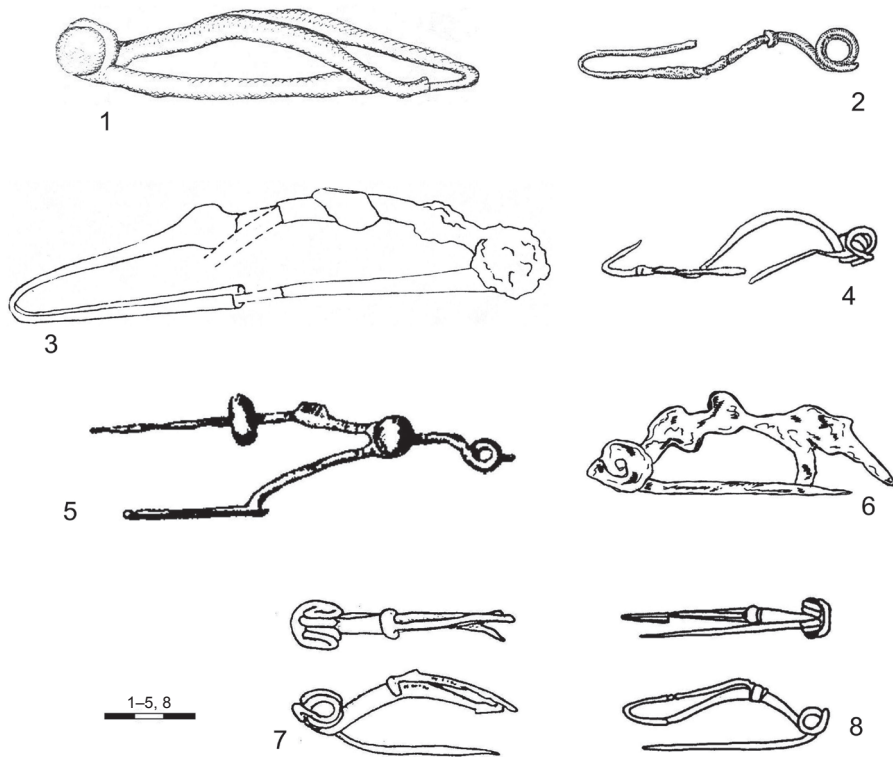


Fig. 2. Fibulae from Late Iron Age Transylvania: long iron fibulae of Middle La Tène design (1–6 [iron]) and Mötschwil type (7–8 [bronze]); computer design D. Măndescu.

1 — Apahida, județul Cluj, Romania; after I. H. Crișan (1971b, 69, Pl. XVI:7); 2 — Cepari, județul Bistrița-Năsăud, Romania; after M. de Roska (1944, 58, Fig. 7:4); 3 — Ciumești, județul Satu Mare, Romania; after Vl. Zirra (1967, 62, Fig. 30:M.11:II); 4 — Fântânele, județul Bistrița-Năsăud, Romania; after Șt. Dănilă (1978, 261, Fig. 5:4); 5–6 — Curtuișeni, județul Bihor, Romania; after M. de Roska (1944, 61, Fig. 14:10) and Z. Nánási (1973, 42, Pl. IV:1); 7 — Biharea, județul Bihor, Romania; after S. Dumitrașcu (1985, 63, Pl. XXVIII); 8 — Panic, județul Sălaj, Romania; after A. Rustoiu (1997, 175, Fig. 19:1).

1992, 109–111). Another group of almost twenty Middle La Tène “Celtic” settlements was identified on the Middle Mureș: Aiud — two sites, Cetea, Geoagiu, Gligorești, Lancrăm, Micoșlaca, Noșlac, Oarda, Ocna Mureș, Ohaba Ponor, Pianul de Jos, Rădești, Sebeș, Șeușa, Șona, Uioara de Jos, Vințu de Jos — two sites (Ferencz, Ferencz 2001, 39–40, Pl. 1). Apparently at least some of them, if not the majority, were in use also during La Tène C2. These settlements are the last ones proved to be Celtic in Transylvania — here, on the territory of the future nucleus of the Dacian kingdom there is an obvious absence of Celtic *oppida*, settlements typical for the late stages of the La Tène culture.

Though rare, forms recognized as diagnostic for La Tène C2 are not entirely missing from Transylvania. In fact, upon closer inspection these chronological indicators even turn out to be quite abundant (Pupeză 2008, 73–74, Fig. 1:2–3, 5–6, 8–9; Dietrich, Dietrich 2006, 28–30). First, we have to

note the fibula type of advanced Middle La Tène design, with a slightly curved and elongated bow, and a similar foot. The spring, with an external cord, is of four coils. The middle of the bow is expanded and the narrow foot is fixed to the bow with a muff, near the spring. This is obviously type Mötschwil which, although known for a long time as a form distinctive for the second part of Middle La Tène period (Viollier 1916, Pl. 8:292–303), entered archaeological literature only in 1953 and takes its name from an eponymous cemetery (Tschumi 1953, 67, Fig. 180:1–4). The Mötschwil type fibula is recognized as a form diagnostic for La Tène C2 in the Northern Alpine region (Polenz 1982, 122); it continued in use until the end of this period (Stähli 1977, 83, Pl. 3:1–23). One of the most relevant occurrences of this kind of fibula is in the last horizon of the cemetery at Münsingen-Rain (horizon V, equivalent to La Tène stage IIb of O. Tischler and J. Wiedmer-Stern; see Hodson 1968, 38, Pl. 89:T193:611; Pl. 123:73). Even if the largest concentration of Mötschwil type fibulae is encountered in central Northern Alpine Europe (with some distinctive local variants found here), for instance, in western Switzerland (Kaenel 1990, 253–254) and central Germany (Polenz 1971, 40, Fig. 58–59) during the same chronological period this form of fibula spread also to the territory of the Eastern Celts. In Slovakia it belongs in Tène C2 (Bujna 1982, 336, Fig. 45, Pl. 2) and on the territory of the Taurisci, in today's Slovenia and western Croatia, this fibula is a leading form of the Mokronog 2–4 horizon (Guštin 1984, 319–339, Beilage 1), equivalent to the Central European Middle La Tène.

Only two Mötschwil fibulae are recorded in Transylvania (Fig. 2:7–8), both of them in Crișana, on the north-western fringe of our study area. One of them was discovered at Biharea (Dumitrașcu 1985, 63, 67, Pl. XXVIII; see Fig. 2:7), in a settlement of an indisputably Celtic character (Dumitrașcu 1982), the other, at Panic (Fig. 2:8), “[...] in a Dacian habitation in which the Celtic pottery was not found at all” and is interpreted as an import from the Puchov culture area, in Slovakia (Rustoiu 1997, 35, 97, Fig. 19:1). Although it was affirmed that the Mötschwil fibula from Panic was discovered in a Dacian settlement the archaeological inventory to which it belongs is still unpublished. No evidence was identified at Panic of a Dacian settlement; the only reference in archaeological literature is to a pit (“pit No. 1”) which held some fragments of a Celtic situla but there is no mention of finds of Dacian pottery (Băcuet, Crișan et al. 2001, 175).

As to the dating of these late Celtic finds from Transylvania the researchers' opinions are divergent. These small differences are the consequence of the evolution of chronological research and different ways used to correlate various Central-European chronological systems of Celtic La Tène culture. Anyhow, the date of the disappearance of the Celts from Transylvania was placed within the frames of the Middle La Tène, between late La Tène C1 (Crișan, Rustoiu, Palko 1995, 38) and La Tène C2 (Horedt 1976, 129). In terms of absolute chronology, this corresponds to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, either the first half (Zirra



1975, 47) or soon after the middle of this century (H o r e d t 1976, 129). In the same direction, M. Babeș suggested possibly the most plausible date for the end of the Celtic funerary horizon in Transylvania — La Tène C1-C2-Polenz, in absolute chronology a date of around 175 BC (B a b e ș 2001, 521).

The surprising duration of the Celtic presence in Transylvania some authors have argued for (N é m e t i 1993, 128–129; R u s t o i u 1997, 32, Footnote 21), in absolute chronology as late as “130/120 BC”, or, in relative terms, “the end of subphase C1a-Waldhauser” may be due solely to an idiosyncratic understanding of the chronological system proposed by J. Waldhauser; actually, the period La Tène C1a introduced by the Czech scholar dates to almost a century earlier, in the late decades of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century (W a l d h a u s e r 1979, 135; W a l d h a u s e r et al. 1987, 32–38, Table 1; see also: B u j n a 1982, 319–338, Fig. 4–5, Table 2; S h c h u k i n 1989, 227).

As has been demonstrated, both the Celtic grave fields and settlements in Transylvania datable to La Tène C1 but also in part to La Tène C2 are fairly numerous (Dietrich, Dietrich 2006, 35–45, Fig. 3); the frequency of these latest Celtic traces in Transylvania would document stability of settlement in this area rather than its slow extinction. But what could have precipitated the sudden disappearance of the Celts from Transylvania and how did this process unfold?

### THE DACIAN SCENARIO

Widely promoted, this scenario assumes the disintegration of the Celts and their assimilation into the Dacian environment. In 1926 V. Pârvan, the founder of the Romanian archaeological school, came to the conclusion that Celtic tribes settled in Dacia gradually were overcome and acculturated by the Getae (P â r v a n 1926, 461–462). The champions of this scenario envisioned the existence of a long-standing symbiosis of the Celtic overlords and the autochthonous population (i.e. the Dacians). The consequence of this extended cohabitation (and eventually, miscegenation) of nearly three centuries’ duration would have been, inevitably, the integration of the Celts (former conquerors) into the large and quiet mass of obedient autochthonous Dacians, and, finally, the assimilation of the Celts by the Dacians (B e r c i u 1970, 82, 85; C r i ș a n 1980, 424). The early 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC brought “[...] incrementa dacorum per Rubobostem regem” (Trogus Pompeius, Prologus Libri XXXII, p. 318) and also, the beginning of the dissolution of the Celts as an ethnic entity in Transylvania (F e r e n c z 2007, 160) and next the process of their assimilation by the Dacians towards the mid–2<sup>nd</sup> century BC (C r i ș a n 1971a, 157–158).

Under a second variant of the Dacian scenario the Celts withdrew in the direction of the Middle Danube in circumstances of an increasing pressure from the Dacians (B a b e ș 1988, 25). The disappearance of Celts from Transylvania



is placed in a context of a general political and military decline of the Celts in Central Europe, “[...] the process being locally accelerated by the rising up of Dacian highlander tribes” (Zirra 1975, 47). The scenario of assimilation of the Celts by the Dacians is definitely dropped even if the sudden disappearance of the Celts at the beginning of the La Tène C2 stage is thought to be related to that same “[...] incrementa Dacorum [...]” recorded in the written sources (Trogus Pompeius, Prologus Libri XXXII, p. 318). This ancient testimony is interpreted as an echo of victories of the Dacians from the mountains over the Celts from the plateaus and plains (Zirra 1974, 152–153).

The lack of Dacian settlements in Transylvania datable to La Tène C2 is thought to be the result of insufficient amount of field research (Crişan, Rustoiu, Palko 1995, 38). The idea of an assimilation of the Celts by the Dacians was contradicted by evidence demonstrating that Celtic cultural elements continue to be the dominant ones until the very end (Shchukin 1989, 80). Logical arguments were subsequently put forward: the owners of a superior culture and a higher force, the Celts surely are the ones to assimilate the Dacian ethnic element rather than the other way round (Babeş 2001, 251). It is also important to take into consideration the quantitative element: at the time of their disappearance in Transylvania the Celts outnumbered the Dacians (Pupeză 2012, 405).

But when did the Dacians appear in Transylvania? During the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, when the Celts arrived and settled steadily in Transylvania, they did not find there a *terra deserta*, instead they enjoyed the status of conquerors over a mosaic of tribes, some of them of northern Thracian stock, ancestral to the Dacians, others — bearers of Szentcs-Vekerzug cultural facies, still others — of Scythoid stock, and finally, the surviving elements of the Thracised old Agathyrsi (*Αγάθυρσοι*) represented by the Ciunbrud archaeological group.

In contrast to the non-local Poieneşti-Lukaševka culture environment from the east of the Carpathians the presence of the autochthonous element in the La Tène Celtic environment in Transylvania is much better documented (Babeş 2001, 520). The main marker of differentiation and ethnic separation continues to be pottery and, to a much lesser extent, other types of archaeological items (Pupeză 2008, 84). In some Celtic settlements, such as Ciumeşti, Cicir or Galaţii Bistriţei, next to Celtic pottery local pottery is present in a significant quantity but there are cases when a Celtic settlement is doubled by a contemporary Dacian one, located in close proximity (Zirra 1975, 55). The presence of the autochthonous element is also documented by finds from Celtic cemeteries.

Grave inventories containing hand-modelled pottery, recognized as autochthonous, recorded in cemeteries at Aradul Nou, Aţel-Bratei, Cepari, Ciumeşti, Curtuişeni, Dezmir, Giriş-Tărian, Sanislău and Şeica Mică, never more than one fifth of all assemblages (Zirra 1975, 56), indicate, if not a cohabitation of the two ethnic elements, then at least the sharing of a space allotted for “the city of the dead”.

Among the many pieces of evidence attesting cohabitation of Celtic and autochthonous elements in a single settlement, or the sharing of the same burial site (Crișan 1966) a classic example is the settlement at Morești, on Mureș River, which yielded both Celtic and Dacian pottery, sometimes in the same assemblage (e.g. dwelling No. 6), but also, Bastarnian pottery distinctive for the Eastern Carpathian Poienești-Lukaševka archaeological culture (Horedt 1979, 35–52, Fig. 17–20:9–10, 16–17; 21:1–4; see Fig. 5:1–4). A bronze fibula of Middle La Tène design discovered at Morești (Horedt 1979, 48, Fig. 22:3; Berecki 2008, 71, Pl. 51:5) dates this site to a period not earlier than the end of La Tène C1-Reinecke. This chronology is supported by the find at the same location of a Celtic bridle bit, type La Tène C (Horedt 1979, 50, Fig. 22:21). The association of this bridle bit type with local variations of the Mötschwil fibula in the deposit from Veliki Vetren (Stojić 2002, 33, 67, catalogue No. 24–27, 202) demonstrates that this form of La Tène horse harness fitting continued in use into La Tène C2. Consequently we cannot rule out completely a slightly longer duration of the mixed Celtic-Dacian habitation at Morești.

A higher density of discoveries that we can attribute to the Dacian ethnic element is recorded in the Mureș Valley where several settlements have yielded both Celtic and Dacian pottery, for instance, Vladimirescu-Arad (Pădureanu, 1979, 148–150, Pl. VI–IX) which site is dated by a fibula of a type common in late Iapydian and Liburnian cemeteries to 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC (Pădureanu 1994, 287–288, Pl. I:8) and Cicir — with a dwelling containing hand-modelled Dacian wares, wheel-made Celtic pottery and a few ornaments in Celtic style (Crișan 1968, 246). Also investigated in the same area, at Săvârșin, was a small Old Dacian grave field with six cremation burials, dated to 4<sup>th</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BC (Barbu, Hugel, 1999, 108–109).

In Transylvania the horizon with Celtic features is overlaid in time by the first finds attributed to the classical phase of Geto-Dacian culture. The onset of this autochthonous archaeological culture documents the stage of a maximum cultural flowering of the Getae and Dacians and is dated to around mid-2<sup>nd</sup> century BC (Babes, 1979, 15–16). A find of major relevance for dating these beginnings is the dwelling identified at Schela Cladovei, on the left bank of the Danube, which yielded an assemblage of Dacian pottery (including the Dacian cup, leading form of the classical phase of Geto-Dacian culture) as well as Celtic pottery, in great quantity, and even a fragment of a Rhodian amphora handle with a Καλλικρατίδας II stamp (Boroneanț, Davidescu 1968, 254–255, Fig. 6). This eponym, V. Grace's period III (210–175 BC), was dated more precisely between the years 188–186 BC (Grace 1985, 8–9, 45).

What the pre-classical phase of Dacian culture in Transylvania looked like may be observed in the archaeological inventory of pits explored at Bratei (Bârzu 1976): low frequency of metal objects, coarse, poorly fired hand-modelled pottery testify to a modest material culture with its roots in the early Iron Age. The potter's wheel continued to be virtually unknown and this only a half of century prior to the debut of "classical" phase of Geto-Dacian culture.

Next to the low-quality local pottery, a few Celtic items were also discovered at Bratei: potsherds from wheel-made vessels and a fibula with an eight-shaped bent bow, a form dating the site to the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC.

In the domain of funerary finds the most convenient example is that of a small Old Dacian grave field (4<sup>th</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BC) discovered and investigated recently at Olteni, in south-eastern Transylvania. It is a site with cremation graves and meagre grave goods; all vessels are hand-modelled, their form and ornamentation Old Geto-Dacian: pots and jars with massive knobs (Fig. 3:1, 3), some with an ornamental alveolate cordon under the rim (Fig. 3:2), bowls with an inverted rim (Fig. 3:4), a tureen with a high rim and four lugs (Fig. 3:5–6). Associated with the cemetery was presumably a settlement, a very modest one, with nothing to impress, discovered nearby (Cavruc 2008, 109–148; Sîrbu 2009, 141–143, Fig. 1, 8–13).

A brief glance at the earliest Dacian settlements in Transylvania belonging to the classical phase of Geto-Dacian culture, with special attention focused on chronology, may suggest the date of emergence of the Dacians in our area.

In southern Crişana, at Berindia, archaeological excavations have identified the remains of earliest Dacian settlement in the area, dated to the period immediately postdating the Celtic decline. The single-phase Dacian settlement at Berindia yielded a small number of artifacts which place it easily in the first horizon of the classical phase of Geto-Dacian culture, synchronic with La Tène C2-Polenz: a potsherd from an embossed decorated bowl, a fibula of Middle La Tène design and another, also of Middle La Tène design, but with a decorative enamelled plate on its foot (Dumitraşcu, Ordentlich 1973, 63, 66, Fig. 13:1; 15–16). Fibulae of Middle La Tène design with an enamelled plate found in Dacia, the specimen from Berindia among them, are treated as imports from the Scordiscian zone, dated fairly late, to the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC (Beldiman 1990–1993, 186, Fig. 2:2; Rustoiu 1997, type No. 5, 38–39, Fig. 25:12). At the same time it is important to note that in the main area of concentration of these fibulae, on the territory of the Scordisci on the Danube, now Serbia, this type is dated a little earlier, based on its distinctive construction design, namely, to the Beograd 2 horizon (Guştin 1984, 340, Table 1: type 51), which generally corresponds to the La Tène C-Reinecke. Finds from Berindia included a small number of potsherds from Celtic vessels (jars with a thickened rim, slightly graffitied, with striated ornamentation) and a Celtic bronze fitting from a yoke (Dumitraşcu, Ordentlich 1972, 62, 67, Fig. 18). Given the in-substantial depth of the culture deposit which documents a single occupation phase at Berindia (only 25–30 cm of thickness), all the artifacts named here probably have the same chronology.

In central Transylvania the earliest classical Dacian settlement would be the one identified in Wietenberg Hill nearby Sighişoara. The authors of the monograph of the site propose to date its origins to around 125 BC (Horedt, Seraphin 1971, 23–24) but this dating is open to a discussion. This is

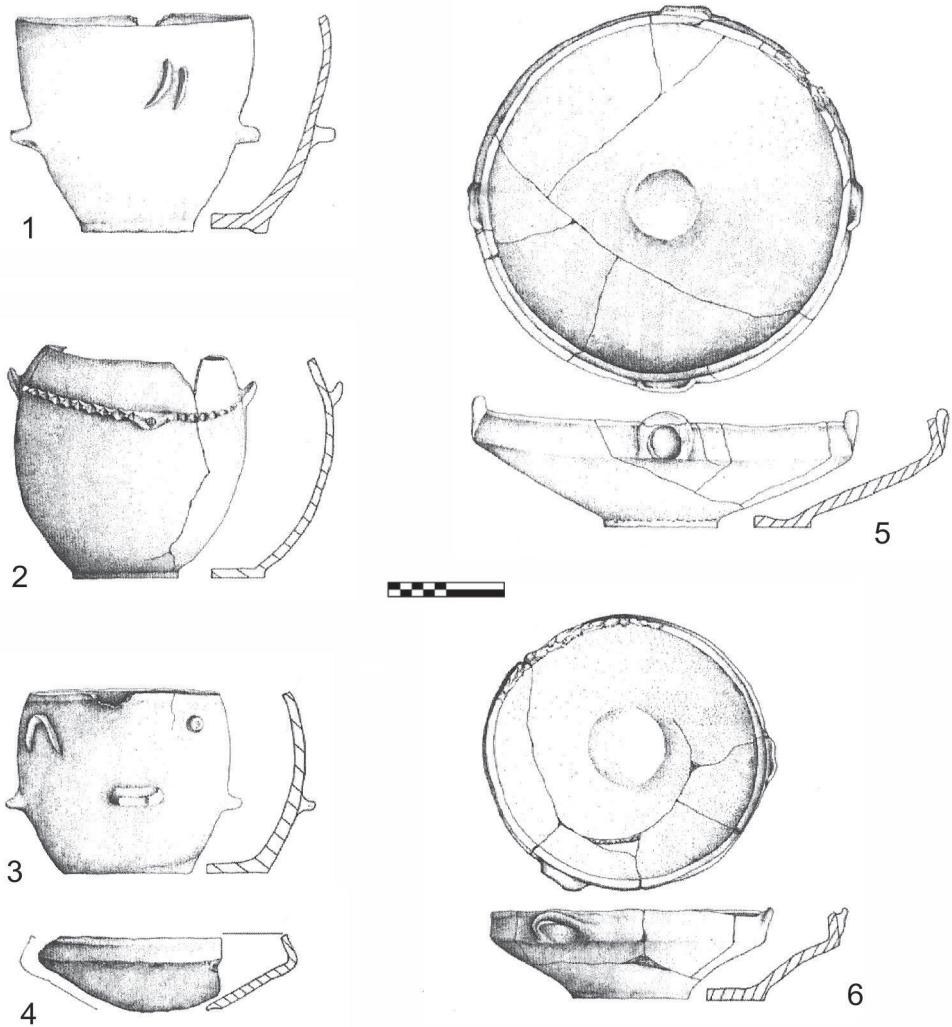


Fig. 3. Old Geto-Dacian hand-modeled pottery from the cremation cemetery at Olteni, județul Covasna, Romania; after V. Sirbu (2009, 160, Fig. 12:1-3, 5, 7-8); computer design D. Măndescu.

because the fibulae finds from Sighișoara point to a more recent date: the earliest of these specimens, of Middle La Tène design, is a form classified to the type “with knobs”, made of silver (Horedt, Seraphin 1971, 81, Fig. 64:16). In Dacian silver hoards this type is placed in La Tène D, or, in the first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC (Spânu 2002, 96-100). The bronze fibula discovered at Sighișoara, a Kostrzewski variant H, is also considered as the earliest (Horedt, Seraphin 1971, 80, Fig. 63:8), with a latter chronology, too, at the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC (Völling 1994, 159-163, 234, Fig. 4:a, Table 17). It is notable also that the settlement at Sighișoara is

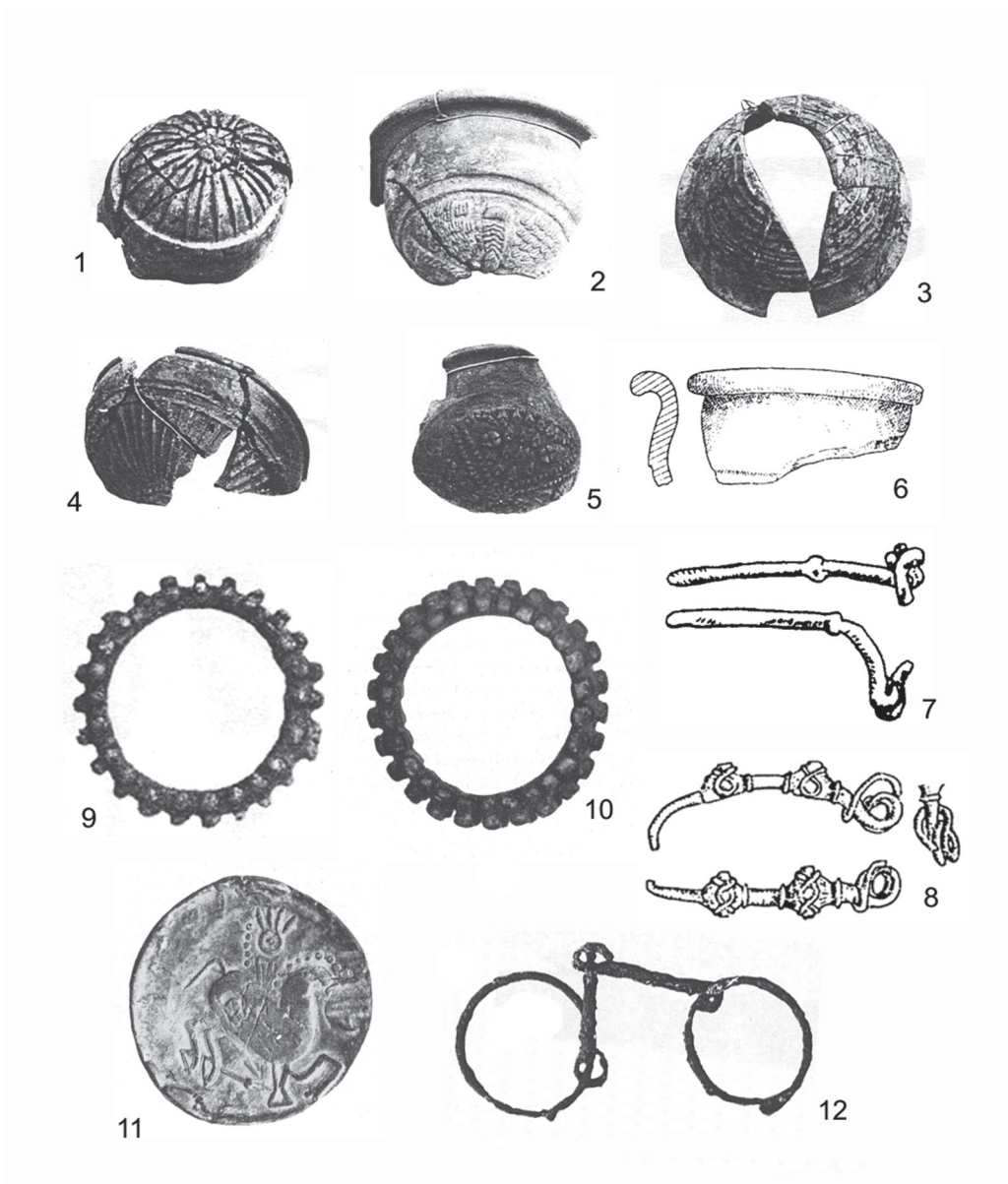


Fig. 4. Archaeological inventories from Dacian settlement sites in Transylvania (1–6 embossed decorated bowls; 7–8 fibulae; 9–10 rings; 11 coin; 12 bridle bit; 1–6 ceramic; 7, 12 — iron; 8–10 bronze; 11 silver; different scales); computer design D. Măndescu.

1–5, 9, 12 — Sighișoara, județul Mureș, Romania; after K. Horedt, C. Seraphin (1971, Fig. 47:4–6, 8, 11, 63:28; 65:19); 6–7 — Slimnic, județul Sibiu, Romania; after I. Glodariu (1981, 135, Fig. 43:4, 14); 8 — Tilișca, județul Sibiu, Romania; after N. Lupu (1989, 76, Fig. 27:29); 10–11 — Piatra Craivii, județul Alba, Romania; after M. Macrea, O. Floca, N. Lupu, I. Berciu (1966, 54–55, Fig. 26–27:c).



one of a small number of sites inside the Carpathian arc where we find embossed decorated Dacian bowls (local imitations of Hellenistic prototypes — *cf.* Fig. 4:1–5) — this is a category of archaeological inventory regarded as distinctive to the onset of the classical phase of Geto-Dacian culture (Babeș 1975, 136, Fig. 7). A bronze ring (Fig. 4:9) with parallel and thick sheaves of juts (Horedt, Seraphin 1971, 64, 80, Fig. 47) is a form on the transition from La Tène C2 and La Tène D1 (Zirra 197b, Fig. 3:18), still a later dating for this bracelet form has been suggested, not earlier than 1<sup>st</sup> century BC (Glodariu 1984, III 2 type, 64, 66–67, Fig. 4:8). A similar artifact (a bronze ring type Glodariu III 2) is recorded in the Dacian fortress at Piatra Craivii (Fig. 4:10) with a culture deposit dated to a period not earlier than the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> BC by a Dacian coin, type Aiud-Cugir equivalent to Pink 251 (Fig. 4:11) discovered there (Preda 1973, 279). No Celtic pottery was found at Sighișoara but a bridle bit of La Tène C type (Fig. 4:12) discovered here (Horedt, Seraphin 1971, 82–83, Fig. 65:19) has numerous analogies in Celtic grave inventories recorded in Transylvania, e.g., at Aiud, Sind (de Roska 1944, 71, Fig. 50), Curtuișeni (de Roska 1944, 57–58, Fig. 14; Nánási 1973, 31, Pl. VII:6), Dipșa and a few other sites with late Celtic burials (Zirra 1974, 143–147, Fig. 5; Zirra 1981). Finally, a notable find is a bronze “Celtic” coin discovered there as well (Horedt, Seraphin 1971, 87).

For the southern area of Transylvania the dwelling No. 12 from Slimnic may be cited as one of the earliest archaeological units belonging to the classical phase of Geto-Dacian culture. A fragment of an embossed decorated bowl (Fig. 4:6) and a fragment of a large iron fibula of Middle La Tène design (Fig. 4:7) present in the archaeological assemblage excavated from this dwelling (Glodariu 1981, 26–27, 34, 55, Fig. 43:4, 14) date this feature to 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. Needless to say there was not at all Celtic pottery in this assemblage.

A site in southern Transylvania worth mentioning is the Dacian fortress at Arpașu de Sus. Although most of the pottery found there is characteristic for the period 1<sup>st</sup> BC–1<sup>st</sup> century AD, a few hand-modelled and wheel-made forms, among them, vessels with horizontal “blind” handles and bowls with horseshoe-like ornaments under the rim (Macrea, Glodariu 1976, 74, Fig. 43:17–21), are reminiscent of older ceramic traditions and styles, peculiar to the Getae of the Lower Danube region; the dating of these wares to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC cannot be rejected so easily.

The Dacian settlements named earlier we have to add another: Tilișca. Probably the most ancient artifact of all the items discovered there is a fragmented bronze fibula of Middle La Tène design (Fig. 4:8), its bow decorated with two ornate figure eight knobs (Lupu 1989, 76, Fig. 27:29), without analogy in Old Dacian material. A similar fibula of Middle La Tène design is known from Dühren, in the Neckar valley, Baden-Württemberg (Déchelette 1914, Fig. 535:2). The distinctive ornamental knobs on the bow with the double figure eight design reflect continuity of older ornamental motifs known from the

Eastern Celtic environment, as may be seen from a fibula of Early La Tène design from Calfa dated to around mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century BC (Shchukin, Tchebotarenko, Shcherbakova 1993, 67, Fig. 1).

With the above overview of early finds attributable to the Dacian culture in Transylvania it becomes quite clear that an increased presence of the Dacians is recorded here during the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. At first there is evidence on Dacian culture in the south (especially south of the Mureş River) and in the east of the province (Pupeză 2012, 410), not coincidentally, in areas bordering on the territory outside the Carpathian arc which were inhabited by the Getae.

### THE BASTARNIAN SCENARIO

The sudden end of the horizon of Celtic grave fields in Transylvania is viewed as the direct consequence of the coming of the Bastarnae to the Eastern Carpathian territory and of their Balkan campaigns (179–168 BC). In their passage through the Balkans the Bastarnae would have passed also through Transylvania (at least during their third expedition, in 168 BC) and, led by Clondicus, would have involved the Celts in their movement, dislocating them from their homeland for ever (Shchukin 1989, 80). The Bastarnae destroyed the Celtic settlement structures in Transylvania. In the wake of this destruction came a process of cooperation and the merging of the Celtic remains and the Dacian inland population (Shchukin 1989, 278–279).

The beginnings of the Poienişti-Lukaševka archaeological culture, which is identified with the Bastarnae, are dated in Eastern Dacia (present-day northern and central Moldavia) to the first quarter of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC (Babeş 1993, 153). At the same time, the earliest record on Bastarnian presence on the Lower Danube dates from around 200 BC. This chronology is supported by finds of Bastarnian pottery recorded in a reliably dated layer of a Getian settlement in south-western Dobruja (Irimia, Conovici 1989, 121–122, Fig. 24:3–11) and by the written record, most notably, in the *Periegesis* of Pseudo-Scymnos with its reference to the “[...] newcomer (επιήλυδες) Bastarnae”, a piece of information very likely taken from the writings of Demetrios of Callatis (cca. 200 BC; cf. Pseudo-Scymnos, Fragmenta 8, v. 797, p. 137).

The event which led to the disintegration of Celtic communities from Transylvania and to the decline of cemeteries associated with them was, according to some researchers, the third expedition of the Bastarnae in 168 BC. On their way to Macedonia, where king Perseus of Macedon had enlisted them to do battle for him with the Romans, the Bastarnae, led by their “regulus”, Clondicus, could have passed through Transylvania, a much shorter route than the one avoiding the Carpathians to the east and next, to the south. Smashed and expelled, or alternately, brought under the rule of the Bastarnae, the Transyl-



vanian Celts, attracted by the stipends offered by Perseus, may have joined the Bastarnae in their march to Macedonia (Shchukin 1989, 72, 80–81).

Indeed, a clue that cannot be overlooked so easily, despite numerous insights offered by the interpretation of sources, is to be found in the writings from the Augustan period of Livy, namely, in his *Ab urbe condita libri*. Narrating the events related to the Macedonian wars of more than a hundred and fifty years earlier, in his *Liber XL* Livy evidently refers to the Bastarnae who, in 179 BC, forded the Danube in a great force (“[...] gens Bastarnarum [...] ab suis sedibus magna peditum equitumque manu Histrum traiecit”; cf. Livy, XL.57.2., p. 246) on the request of king Philip V of Macedon, who hoped to use them as soldiers of fortune against the Dardanians. Also relevant is the mention that these Bastarnae were very similar to the Scordisci, from whom they “differed neither in language and manners” (“[...] nec enim aut lingua aut moribus [aequales] abhorrere [...]”; cf. Livy, XL.57.7., p. 248). As to the expedition of the Bastarnae of 168 BC which is related in *Liber XLIV* countless Bastarnae under the command of their king, “[...] Clondicus, regulus eorum [...]” (Livy, XLIV.26.11., p. 264) — the same personage which appears previously in *Liber XL* as *dux (Bastarnarum)*, obviously) arrived in Macedon upon the request of king Perseus, they are openly referred to with the ethnonym of *Galli* (Livy, XL.58.8., p. 250).

Bastarnian archaeological finds in Transylvania are extremely scarce. As mentioned earlier, distinctive Bastarnian pottery, hand-modelled, black-polished, with a faceted rim and x-shape handle was discovered in a mixed Dacian and Celtic settlement at Morești (Fig. 5:1–4), on a chronological floor dated to the first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC (Horedt 1979, 46, Fig. 21:1–4; Berecki 2008, 67–68, Pl. 36:1–3; 41:–3; 44:2, 4–5; 45; 48–49). The location of the site at Morești right on the bank of the Mureș River suggests it lay on the transit route through Transylvania the Bastarnae may have used.

A relatively recently confirmed find of Bastarnian pottery from Transylvania associated with Celtic potsherds comes from Șeușa (Fig. 5:5), also on the Mureș River, downstream of Morești, a late Iron Age unfortified settlement (Ferencz, Ciută 2005, 239–240, Pl. III:3–5; Ferencz 2007, 91, 159–160, Pl. 89:1, 4). A bronze fibula of Middle La Tène design, Babeș type II 2 (Babeș 1993, 92) with a spring of a large diameter recovered from the same archaeological context at Șeușa points to a chronological horizon synchronous with the beginnings of the Eastern Carpathian Poienești-Lukaševka culture.

The presence of Bastarnae in Transylvania, to the west of the Eastern Carpathians, is confirmed indirectly by a literary source too. In *Epitoma Historiarum Philippicarum Pompei Trogi* M. Iunianus Justinus mentions a clash between the Bastarnae and the Dacians under the leadership of Oroles, their king. This episode is dated by many scholars to around 200 BC. The Transylvanian site of the battle (Vulpe 1960, 243–244) is suggested by the fact that Dacians are mentioned, discriminated unambiguously by Trogius Pompeius —

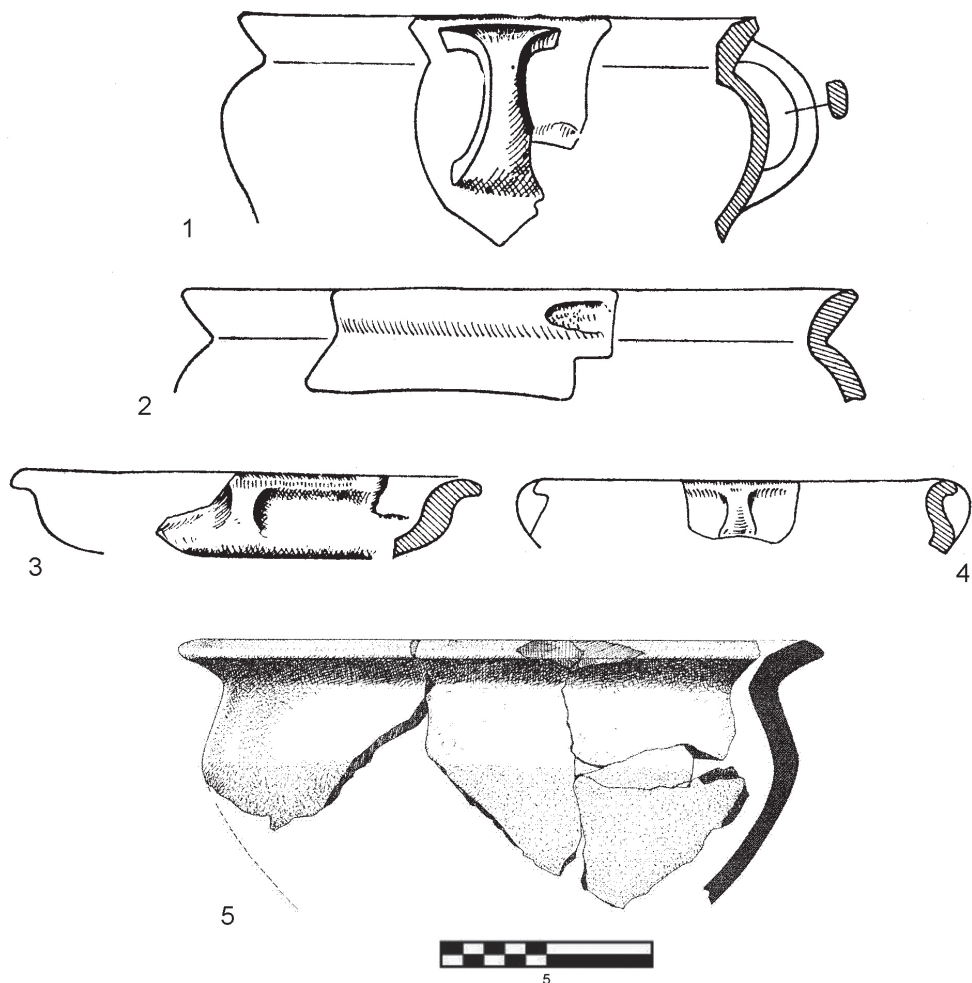


Fig. 5. Bastarnian hand-modeled pottery (type Poienești-Lukaševka) from Transylvanian finds; computer design D. Măndescu.

1-4 — Morești, județul Mureș, Romania; after K. Horedt (1979, 47, Fig. 21); 5 — Șeușa, județul Alba, Romania; after I. V. Ferencz, M. M. Ciută (2005, 253, Pl. III:5).

and later by Justinus — from the Getae of the Lower Danube (“Daci quoque suboles Getarum sunt [...]”; cf. *Epitoma...*, XXXII.3.16., p. 237).

There are also some views to the effect that too much credit should not be given to the Bastarnian ceramics (which are just overestimated potsherds and document long-distance commercial exchange) found in the Mureș Valley (Berecki 2009, 15) and that the Bastarnian journey to the Balkans, through Transylvania, is not at all a logical one and not necessarily to be accepted (Pupeză 2012, 416–418).

### THE MIXED BASTARNIAN & GETIAN SCENARIO

Another scenario to explain the disappearance of the Celts from Transylvania implies both the coming of the Bastarnian tribes to northern and central Moldavia and the decisive role played by the native Eastern Carpathian populations (i.e. northern Getae): the autochthons of Moldavia are chased away by the Bastarnae and cross the Carpathians into Transylvania, where, like the domino principle, they dislocate the Celts (Woźniak 1974, 64).

In the archaeological record we may expect to discover such a movement of the Getian population from Moldavia towards Transylvania, through the Eastern Carpathian passes, if we admit a relevant statistics of Dacian unfortified settlements from eastern Transylvania: 210 known sites, of which 17 (8%) were settled in the period 3<sup>rd</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, 25 (12%) during the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century and, finally, 168 (80%) from the period 1<sup>st</sup> century BC — 1<sup>st</sup> century AD (Crișan 2000, 239-240). At this point it is relevant to examine the Eastern Carpathian archaeological landscape. In the zones to which the Bastarnae had come, heavily settled in the past by the Getae, very much in evidence in the period 4<sup>th</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century BC, and drastically reduced starting from 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, both in number and significance, from which time this space will remain a peripheral one for the classical phase of Geto-Dacian culture which will never reveal there its own traits (Babeș 1980, 11-13).

Tangentially to this scenario we need to cite opinions — even if they lack consistency of argumentation — to the effect that since the onset of Poienesti-Lukaševka culture there is evidence on the infiltration of Transylvanian Dacian features into the ceramics of the Germanic allogeneic people of Moldavia, which understudy the Poienesti-Lukaševka archaeological material occurrence in Transylvania (Tkaciuk 1984, 233, 236-237). On some occasions the illustration of the oldest Dacian horizon in Transylvania has been exaggerated. The site at Moigrad assigned to this so-called “first horizon” (Tkaciuk 1984, 237) must be got rid of, like the “argument” on the presence there of a Germanic pot. The site at Moigrad dates back to the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC and the pot (Macrea, Protase, Rusu 1961, 368, Fig. 8:13), rather than brought here through the agency of the Bastarnae is an import from the Przeworsk culture environment, definitely not from the Poienesti-Lukaševka culture.

### THE PADEA-PANAGJURSKI KOLONII SCENARIO

Some four decades ago attention was drawn in literature to two funerary sites, divided by the Danube, one in north-western Bulgaria the other in southern Oltenia (Woźniak 1974, 74-138; 1976, 390-394). Weapons of Celtic and Thracian description present in the grave inventories have led to their identification as warrior burials while harness mounts are understood to document the predominance of horsemen.

It has been argued that the northward expansion into Transylvania (Rustoiu 2008, 149) of these warrior elites from the Danube River bank in Oltenia, buried in graves type Padea (to the north of the Danube the counterpart of the Panagjurski Kolonii group — Sîrbu 1993, 24–26, 77–79), identified tentatively as a trans-regional ethnically mixed amalgam of Dacians, Triballi and Scordisci, is the cause of the disappearance of Celts from Transylvania around 175–160 BC (Rustoiu 1996a, 149; 2001, 46; 2008, 142–152, 162–163, Fig. 74; Rustoiu, Comşa 2004, 286; Sîrbu 2004, 35).

These horsemen warriors supposedly were attracted to Transylvania by its rich salt resources. The preferred route of access would have been the one taken by Celts a century and a half earlier in the search of the same natural resource (Ferencz 1998, 2019; Berecki 2009, 15), i.e. the Mureş River valley, from the West to the East (Rustoiu 2002, 33–37).

The placing of the Padea-Panagjurski Kolonii group in the south-western area of inner-Carpathian Transylvania, in the Mureş Valley, was enabled by the analogies of rite and ritual displayed by a small number of Transylvanian grave deposits, at e.g., Cugir, Blandiana, Teleac, Tărtăria, Hunedoara and Călan (Rustoiu 1996b, 149; 2008, 142), and also a Thracian knife-sword of a form characteristic for Padea-Panagjurski Kolonii weaponry (Rustoiu 1994, 296–297, Fig. 2) with numerous analogies, especially with the core of the group from north-western Bulgaria (Torbov 1997). The weapon is part of a group of La Tène finds from Transylvania in the Baron Teleki Domokos collection where they were put together arbitrarily during the 19<sup>th</sup> century to form a set known as “the Celtic grave from Silivaş”. It is possible that Transylvanian Celtic communities were soon integrated into the newcomers’ structure (Rustoiu 2008, 162–163).

The scenario outlined above has two weak points: the first of them belongs to the cultural sphere, while the second is a chronological one. First, the claim that the burial tradition of Padea-Panagjurski Kolonii is archaeological evidence of a population or even of an amalgam of ethnic groups needs to be substantiated. The spread of this culture tradition over a relatively large area may be a reflection of a diffusion of ideas, rather than of a human migration. Generally it is well known how easily these components circulate among the elites which define the peculiarity of Padea-Panagjurski Kolonii group, namely the en vogue weaponry and the funeral behaviour, thus, the invoked funerary finds from Transylvania could be very appropriate to illustrate the relationship of elites in the Carpathian Basin (= inner-Carpathian) with the inhabitants of the neighbouring regions (Spânu 2003, 7). The Padea-Panagjurski Kolonii grave goods “package” documents standardization of the military equipment of the mounted warriors on a large territory and implies the dissemination of a trans-regional fashion rather than of a unitary cultural group. It is clear that this “culture group” takes its name from a grave site found to the south of the Balkan mountain range (Dimitrova, Gizdova 1975), outside its main diffusion area. Second, we need to recall that V. Zirra interpreted the

historical concordance of these archaeological remains — conventionally referred to as Padea-Panagjurski Kolonii concept — as a military alliance of Scordisci, Triballi and Dacians formed to counter the increasing Roman menace, especially after the defeat of king Perseus of Macedon in the Battle of Pydna in 168 BC and, two decades later, the establishing of the Roman province of Macedonia (Zirra 1976, 179, 181). The earliest graves, type Padea, in Oltenia date from the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. The most expressive “Padea-Panagjurski Kolonii monuments” of Transylvania, as the tumulus grave at Cugir, date from the first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC (Spânu 2003, 6–7). This pertains to the date of the Celts’ extinction from Transylvania (the second quarter of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC), the chronological limit raises an impediment hard to overrun.

### CLOSING REMARKS

Instead of conclusions on the issue of the current paper we need to suggest the following: it remains difficult to disentangle the real meaning of the coincidence between the date of the onset of the Eastern Carpathian Poienеști-Lukaševka culture and the disappearance of Celts from Transylvania. On the territory of the later Poienеști-Lukaševka culture, Celtic La Tène C2-D imports are extremely rare, unlike those attributed to La Tène B-C1, which, though not very abundant, are still present (Woźniak 1974, 163). It may be more prudent to view the issue of the Celtic withdrawal from Transylvania as a complex process, explained by a scenario in which they departed to the West in response to the political developments in Central Europe (Babeș 2001, 251), first, the mounting Germanic pressure, the coming of the Bastarnae to eastern Dacia, and subsequently, the real threat announced by the beginning of the Dacian upsurge raising.

In our opinion, the rise of the Dacians should be considered more an effect rather than the cause of the disappearance of Celts from Transylvania. An assimilation by local Dacians of the Celtic bearers of a superior “barbarian” culture should have left more traces in the classical phase of Geto-Dacian culture than just the legacy, still in need of validation, in metal-working, or the more apparent although of later date, in weaponry (Crișan 1980, 424–425) and some personal ornaments (Rustoiu 1996b, 152–155).

The same influences were received in various proportions by different other “barbarian” populations from the temperate zone of Europe with whom the Celts came in contact, like the Illyrians or the Germanic tribes without involving the problem of “melting” the Celtic tribes in their mass.

Moreover, the later noticeable traces of a Celtic influence in the archaeological materials from the classical phase of Geto-Dacian culture of early 1<sup>st</sup> century BC (some types of weapons, ornaments and clothing accessories) could

be traced back to the last bursts of prestige manifested by the elites of the neighbour Scordisci tribes and not to any local perpetuation of the influences generated by the Celts who once inhabited Transylvania.

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*Address of the Author*  
*Dragoș Măndescu*  
*Muzeul Județean Argeș*  
*Str. Armand Calinescu 44*  
*110047 Pitești, România*  
*e-mail: dragos\_mandescu@yahoo.com*

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