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## Spatial delimitation, group identities and the question of definition as regional archaeological cultures

Ralf Gleser

### Introduction

Viewed from the perspective of prehistory, the 'Celts' represent a particular challenge. Written sources allow us to identify collectively acting population groups and to separate them from each other. Moreover, there is evidence from which the size of these groups can be inferred. This begs the question of what kinds of collectives we are dealing with. At the same time, we have to reappraise how the concept of archaeological cultures can be applied to them. Furthermore, the question arises of what factors may have led to a common awareness among specific parts of the population. In the following discussion, I would like to propose answers to these questions and substantiate them using the example of the *Treveri* and the *Mediomatrici*.

It is Iulius Caesar who first writes about the *Treveri* and the *Mediomatrici* in the account of his deeds, the *Commentarii de bello Gallico*. They are two Celtic population groups who acted very differently during the Gallic War. When compared, the *Commentarii* provide more information on the *Treveri* than on the *Mediomatrici*. Regarding the latter, Caesar provides the very valuable information that they had joined a large coalition against the Romans and apparently dispatched 5,000 warriors to Vercingetorix subsequently for the rescue of Alesia. Thus, the *Mediomatrici* were a distinct group that acted collectively. The same statement is doubtlessly true for the *Treveri*. They encountered Caesar as a homogeneous population group, even though their ruling class was politically divided. According to Rolf Hachmann (Hachmann 1976, p. 87 note 6), there is every reason to believe that Caesar refers to outwardly delimitable collectives with an internal structure in all cases where population groups are mentioned, but not to arbitrarily selected parts of the population in Gaul. Caesar denotes the *Treveri* several times as *civitas* (cf. Hachmann 1976, p. 101), and at one point indirectly also refers to the *Mediomatrici* as such (*De bello Gallico*, VII, 75, 1). How big were these two collectives and what distinguished them from each other? Apparently, there were no intensive contacts between the *Treveri* and the *Mediomatrici*, although they – as may be gathered from later sources – settled in the vicinity

of each other. Nowhere do they make an appearance together, according to Caesar; therefore, there never were any military coalitions. For example, in 53 BC, the adherents of the treveran princeps Indutiomarus did not flee to the *Mediomatrici*, but instead rescued themselves into exile to the right bank of the Rhine (see Haffner 1984, p. 28; Heinen 1985, p. 25). Even a century later, this difference is tangible: In the turmoil of the Batavian rebellion the *Mediomatrici* remained, unlike the *Treveri* (cf. Heinen 1985, p. 72), loyal to Rome (cf. Hornung 2016, p. 375).

### *Treveri* and *Mediomatrici*: Settlement areas and population numbers

Regarding the extension of the settlement areas and population figures of both *civitates*, little to no data can be gained from Caesar's reports. According to Caesar, the settlement area of the *Treveri* extended from the Maas / Meuse to the Rhine; it is traversed along its entire length by the mountains of the *silva Arduenna*. In their area lies the confluence of the Rhine and the Moselle. The term *silva Arduenna* refers to the Ardennes, the Eifel and probably the Hunsrück (Haffner 1984, p. 27; Miron 2012, p. 1867). Further details on the north-southern extension of the treveran settlement area cannot be found in Caesar's war reports. Therefore, it is understandable that on maps, for example those published by Stephan Fichtl a few years ago, the localization of the *Treveri* is not exactly defined (Fichtl 2000, p. 29, fig. 1, p. 33, fig. 2). However, both localizations recorded there are probable, because the area stretching from the Lower Saar via the river Nahe as far as the Palatinate Forest can indeed be added to the settlement area of the *Treveri*. Except for a short mention (*De bello Gallico*, IV, 10, 3) that the Rhine passes through the territory of the *Mediomatrici*, Caesar remains silent about the settlement area of the *Mediomatrici* (cf. Fichtl 2012, p. 190). From later sources we know that the *Mediomatrici* were the southern neighbours of the *Treveri*. Their settlement area can be identified in the area between Maas / Meuse to the Rhine, at the middle reaches of the Moselle and the upper reaches of

the Saar, since the name of the *civitas* has been preserved in the place-name of the city of *Divodurum Mediomatricorum* (Metz) – their capital in Roman times (Fichtl 2012, p. 190).

Evidence for the extension of both *civitates* is offered retrospectively regarding the medieval dioceses, since the chief places of the *civitates* became bishoprics in Late Antiquity. Accordingly, the settlement area of the *Mediomatrici* ranged originally from the Ardennes in the west to the Black Forest in the east, corresponding roughly with the bishoprics of Verdun, Metz, and Strasbourg (Fichtl 2002, p. 316, fig. 1; Fichtl 2006, p. 42, fig. 1). For the *Treveri*, the early Medieval dioceses have only limited significance. Besides the area of the bishopric of Trier, the regions on the left bank of the Rhine, belonging to the dioceses of Mainz, Worms, and Speyer, can be attributed to their settlement area (Fichtl 2002, p. 316, fig. 1).

According to Clément Féliu (Féliu 2014a, p. 385 with fig. 1; Féliu 2014b, p. 232, fig. 2), the spatial extension of the *civitas Mediomatricorum* constituted around 17,000 square kilometres in late Celtic times. For the original extension of the *civitas Treverorum*, we may assume an area approximately similar in size. In a recent paper, based on these figures, I have attempted to calculate the population size of the *Treveri* (Gleser 2015, p. 98-100). Estimates have long been available for the *Mediomatrici*: Valuable information regarding their population numbers has been provided, among others, by the German ancient historian Julius Beloch, who not only calculated the absolute number of the *Tres Galliae* by approximation, but who also gave details regarding the single *civitates*. For the *Mediomatrici*, Beloch calculated a population of around 60,000 people (Beloch 1899, p. 436), which corresponds to 3 to 4 inhabitants per square kilometer. Günter Stangl, however, recently proposed the smaller figure of around 36,000 people (Stangl 2008, p. 278, tab. 7.5.1), which equates to about 2 inhabitants per square kilometer. Since the area of the *Treveri*'s settlement region does not differ substantially from that of the *Mediomatrici*, we may presume a total of c. 30,000 to 60,000 people there during the time of the Gallic War (cf. Gleser 2015, p. 100).

As I already mentioned, *Treveri* and *Mediomatrici* were groups that acted collectively what leads to the conclusion that they were communities with a consciously perceived common identity. The population figures stated above show that these collectives would have had quite considerable sizes, although they may be rather low in head count compared to others in Gaul.

As mentioned at the beginning, I will now pose three questions: 1) What kinds of human communities are we dealing with in these cases? 2) Is there archaeological evidence for different identities? 3) What can this sense of unity be attributed to?

### Pattern of human communitization: Local, regional and supra-regional communities

As far as the first question is concerned, it is vital to include the results of cultural anthropology and evolutionary biology, since

these subjects can shed light upon general laws of human social relations. Principally, we can assert that although humans lived in very small groups during the Palaeolithic, they have the ability to form large communities (Wuketits 1997, p. 142), and indeed did so in subsequent periods. Different spatial levels of interpersonal relationships are to be distinguished. Through social bonds across different levels, people build ever larger communities, originating from their family groups. From a certain level, the boundaries of the settlement communities are exceeded, and supralocal communities are formed. In small-scale traditional societies, local groups consist of nuclear and extended families, also referred to as 'bands' and 'clans' in ethnology (Gamble *et al.* 2014, p. 53-55; Murdock 1965, p. 1-22, 65-78). In sedentary societies, these units usually form the village communities. For the everyday life of such local groupings, a group awareness is generally assumed that hardly reaches beyond the closer kinship associations (cf. Wotzka 1997, p. 172-173). Merely for special occasions, for example important feasts, do local groupings aggregate to form larger communities, thereby also finding marriage partners, trading, and forging military alliances (Wotzka 1997, p. 173). Such endogamous units are sometimes called 'mega-bands' in the archaeological literature (Newell *et al.* 1990, p. 17, fig. 1.) or 'endogamous bands' respectively 'tribes', by social anthropologists (Gamble *et al.* 2014, p. 41; Newell *et al.* 1990, p. 16-17). These endogamous units can furthermore come together to form even larger groupings, often sharing a dialect or language. Such entities, which consist of several regional collectives, are mostly called 'ethnic groups' or 'ethno-linguistic communities' (Gamble *et al.* 2014, p. 41). According to Christoph Antweiler, ethnic groups are defined as collectives of people 'whose norms, values, and behavioural patterns partly overlap, who have a partly common, historically developed collective identity and who marry among each other more often than with other groups' (Antweiler 1988, p. 10, translation by the author).

Gaul's communities during Caesar's times feature, in line with the results of cultural anthropological research, at least four levels of socio-political organisation (Fernández-Götz 2012, p. 516, fig. 5): two on a local level – those of family and local settlement organizations – and two levels resulting from supraregional communitisation, *i.e.* the *pagi* and the *civitates*. Evidently, Caesar uses the term *pagus* (cf. Tarpin 2002, p. 199) to denote subgroups of even larger collectives, the *civitates*. On significant occasions, several *pagi* felt closely connected. Thus, the levels of communitisation of Gallic populations display congruences with the concept of lineage – clan – tribe – ethnos (Wotzka 1997, p. 164), discussed in modern ethnological research. Such a schematization, however, is an academic construct, an '*akademisch motiviertes Konstrukt*' (Wotzka 1997, 174), having emanated from a specific superordinate cultural-anthropological theory of ethnicity.

Hans-Peter Wotzka has studied the area sizes and / or the extent of ethnographically documented populations in Africa and the archaeological cultures (of the Neolithic) in Europe and compared the findings (Wotzka 1997, p. 168, and fig. 3). He can plausibly demonstrate that the expansion of ethnic groups in Africa has a significant accumulation below 1,500 square kilometers (46% of all cases). A second pronounced intersection

of the distribution is below 3,000 square kilometres, with 63% of all cases examined by him located in the range of 1 to 3,000 square kilometers. Wotzka also investigated which scales of identity groups that appear as collectives in ethnological data come into consideration (Wotzka 1997, p. 172). He highlights that in Africa such groups – referred to as clans or subtribes – typically settle in areas of less than 500 square kilometers and rarely extend to 1,500 square kilometers (Wotzka 1997, p. 174). Areas of 3,000 square kilometers and more can be considered extreme. Wotzka has also noticed that the areas attributed to archaeological cultures in Europe tend to be larger than those of ethnic groups in Africa. This observation might be an emanation of the fact that in tropical zones of our planet smaller population groups are more easily able to survive than in temperate zones. If we compare the areal extents of the identity groups in Africa with the areas for the two *civitates* considered here, which are about 17,000 square kilometers, it is to be noted that the Gallic identity groups are larger in area and certainly in terms of their absolute population. Even the *pagi* of the two Gallic ethnic groups tend to be larger than the African identity groups. If we take at least six *pagi* in the area of both *civitates* as a basis, which we will justify shortly, their extent is on average around 3,000 square kilometers, with circa 5,000 to 10,000 people respectively. It seems again justified to put the term *pagus* on a level with the term ‘tribe’ as part of an ethnos and to equate the term *civitas* with the ethnos or the ethnic groups themselves.

## The question of materialisations of cultural homogeneity

Members of ethnic groups are characterised by cultural relationships, which can lead to cultural homogeneity, at least in some areas of social life. Cultural relationships encompass shared features based on common traditions in immaterial and material culture (Newell *et al.* 1990, 25), independently of whether people are consciously aware of this or not (*cf.* Krausse 2006, p. 46). Taking into consideration the size of settlement areas as a crucial factor, prehistoric archaeology has the possibility to search for materialisations of cultural homogeneity and indirectly for group consciousness in our source material. In this respect, the second question I wish to answer is: Can materialisations of cultural homogeneity among the *Treveri* and the *Mediomatrici* be detected in the archaeological evidence? It should be stated at this point that there are no ‘archaeological cultures’ in the sense of Gordon Childe, that could be delimited from each other by distinct combinations of features. The sources have been passed down too unevenly for this. It has long been known that from Hunsrück and Eifel, the settlement area of the *Treveri*, much more archaeological source material from the late Iron Age is brought to light than from northern Lorraine and Alsace, the tribal area of the *Mediomatrici*. To find possible ‘ethnic’ groups within larger areas of similar material culture, we would rather have to look for strategies of self-definition between local and

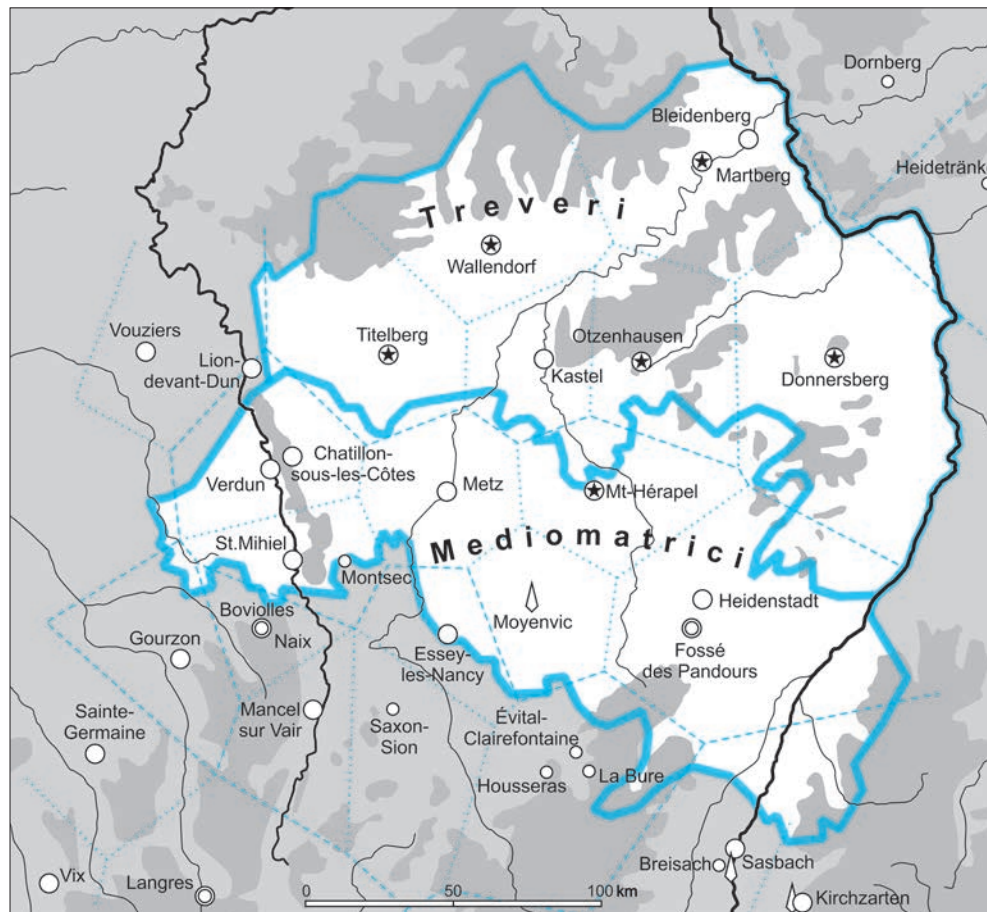


Fig. 1. Map showing the central locations of the *Treveri* and the *Mediomatrici* with Thiessen polygons after Fichtl 2006, p. 47 fig. 4 (circle. Oppidum; circle with star. Oppidum with sanctuary; triangle. Open settlement).

regional societies that interact regularly and may even use similar material culture at a regional scale, making them very challenging to spot archaeologically (Barth 1969). An examination of settlement evidence can cast light upon congruences in the territorial outlines of the two ethnic groups (fig. 1). Concerning the *Treveri*, seven larger settlements are known which, except for the 'couple' Martberg and Bleidenberg – a problem that is not discussed here –, are distributed so evenly in the region that they may pass for centres of six or seven smaller communities (Metzler *et al.* 2006, p. 213, fig. 8; Fernández-Götz 2012, p. 515, fig. 4; Fichtl 2012, p. 86). These settlements are likely to have served as central locations with political, religious and economic functions for subgroups of the ethnic groups, which are known from the written sources as *pagi* and whose dimensions include about 2,500 square kilometers. Settlements in the *Mediomatrici* territory are much less researched than those of the *Treveri* and more settlements are known that are right next to each other (especially the 'couple' Fossé des Pandours/Heidenstadt). Although the classification of the settlement area into six subdivisions (*cf.* Fichtl 2006, p. 47, fig. 4; Fichtl 2012, p. 86; Féliu 2014a, p. 386) has a stronger hypothetic character, settlement of both *civitates* suggests a well comparable social order with a pronounced hierarchical structure. For the *Treveri*, this is further substantiated by burial evidence. Here, we can determine an extraordinary density of preserved sources for Gaul. Over the past century, a

unique mass of burials from the later La Tène period has been documented for the settlement area of the *Treveri* (*cf.* Roymans 1990, p. 238, fig. 9.12). Moreover, a decisive effort in burial rites is traceable, and there are even elite burials in a narrower sense. Recently, Sabine Hornung has mapped elite burials of the later La Tène period in northeastern Gaul against the background of the borders of the *civitates* (fig. 2). These burials are characterized by Roman import and/or wagon and yoke parts and even riding accessories (*cf.* Gleser 2005, p. 325-341, 425-439). From this arises a concentration on the territory of the *Treveri* (and at the same time also of the Remi; *cf.* Hornung 2016, p. 444, fig. 377, p. 459, fig. 386). It becomes apparent that especially the *pagi* of Otzenhausen, Martberg, Titelberg, and Donnersberg (for the latter most of the known elite burials cannot be dated exactly, *cf.* Gleser 2005, p. 328, fig. 50 and p. 330, fig. 51) carried out ritualised funerals with elaborate accompanying measures, including the disposal of tangible goods. Burials of the *Mediomatrici* are preserved in much smaller number. Rituals were practiced with less effort. At least, their materialisations in the archaeological record appear to be considerably plainer. There, the most elaborate burial groups consist of a few, simply equipped sword-graves (*cf.* Reinhard 2010, p. 42, fig. 33).

In the last years, numerous distribution maps for artefacts have been published that allow for an archaeological assessment of the territories of the *Treveri* and the *Mediomatrici*. Coins

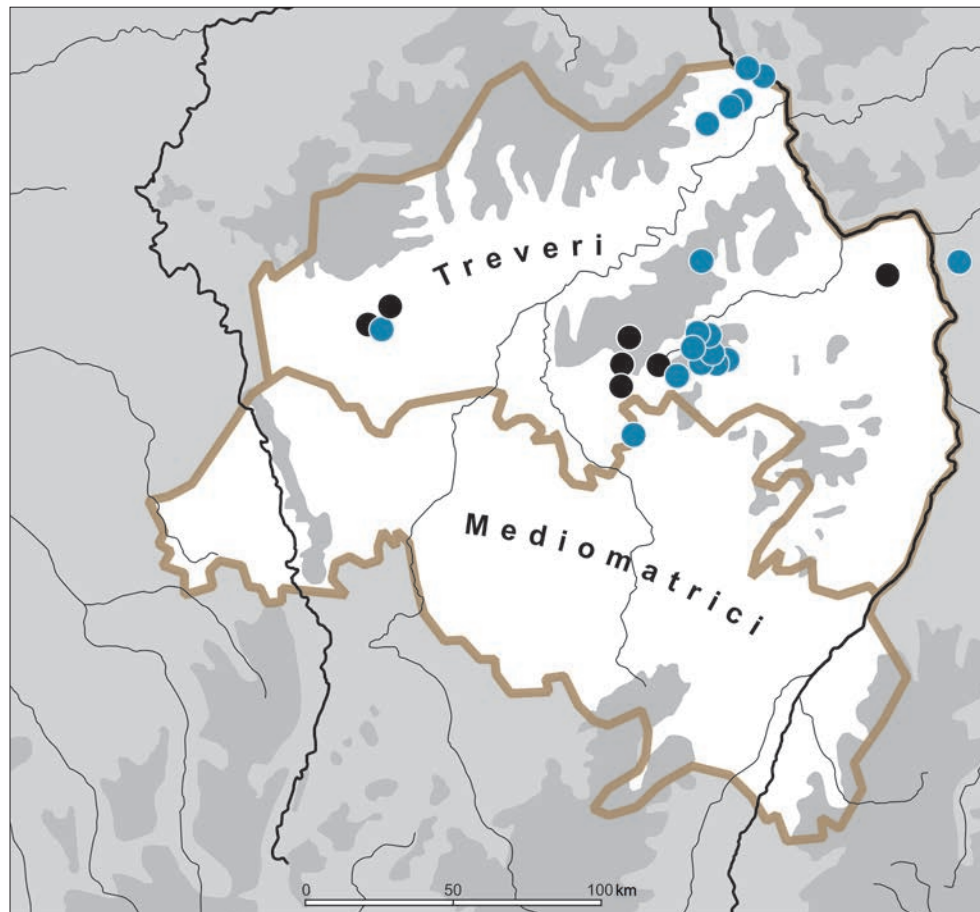


Fig. 2. Distribution of elite graves of La Tène D1b/2a against the background of the borders of the *civitates* of the *Treveri* and *Mediomatrici*. Combination of the maps after Gleser 2005, p. 328, fig. 50, p. 330, fig. 51 and p. 336, fig. 54; Hornung 2016, p. 444, fig. 387 and p. 459, fig. 386 with modifications (black dot: grave with Roman import; blue dot: grave with wagon- and / or yoke parts).

are particularly important in this context: Coin production is proven for both *civitates* from the 2nd century BC onwards, which suggests economic prosperity to a comparable extent. In northeastern Gaul, on the one hand, coin finds suggest large-scale trade connections spanning several *civitates*. A good example for this are the so-called Leuci potin coins with a wild boar ('au sanglier') which have been produced in at least two places: at Boviolles (Meuse) and at Saverne (Bas-Rhin). They occur in large numbers at all Gaulic *civitates* in the Moselle, Sarre, and upper Rhine regions (Féliu 2014b, p. 240, fig. 6). The border between *Mediomatrici* and Rauraci can be determined with potins 'au sanglier' vs potins 'à la grosse tête' (cf. Fichtl 2012, p. 100). On the other hand, the distribution of several other coin types is essentially restricted to the ethnic groups (fig. 3). Although the coins certainly reflect more than economic ties, and their transmission also depends on factors of ever-changing settlement geography, quite a number of coin types traditionally attributed to the *Treveri* have, indeed, essentially come to the fore within the demarcations of the settlement area of this ethnic group. These are, for example, silver coins of the 'type with an angular nose' (Scheers 54) or the potin coins types Scheers 199 and 200 (Loscheider 1998, p. 79-81 and 101-105; Hornung 2016, p. 264, fig. 215, p. 265 fig. 216). Such coins were common in all the *pagi* of the *Treveri* and help to demonstrate regionally limited economic and traffic zones. For the *Mediomatrici*, the

same tendency can be seen especially for the bronze coins 'aux deux oiseaux' (Scheers 141; cf. Féliu 2014a, p. 392, fig. 3e) and the bronze coins Scheers 138 which bear the signature MEDIO / MEDIOMA (Féliu 2014b, p. 241, fig. 8b). These examples show that contacts were more intense among the population groups within their territory and with the precise names conveyed by Caesar than across the borders.

The distribution of vessel shapes depicts a different situation. Bertrand Bonaventure has greatly improved our knowledge in this respect with his doctoral thesis on the pottery production of the *Mediomatrici* and *Leuci* (Bonaventure 2011). He was able to show that the *Treveri*, *Leuci*, and *Mediomatrici* had a part in different 'culinary traditions'. Storage vessels made from whitish clay of the type Goeblingen-Nospelt can, for example, only be found in the western settlement area of the *Treveri*, *Mediomatrici*, and *Leuci* (Bonaventure 2014, p. 138, fig. 8). Storage vessels from the Zürich-Lindenhof type, however, connect the *Mediomatrici* of the eastern settlement area especially with the Rauraci and Helvetii of the upper Rhine region (Bonaventure 2014, p. 144, fig. 12). Because of the rapid change of the chronologically sensitive pottery forms, it is difficult at the current state of research to draw any binding conclusions from the distribution of ceramics. But certainly, it is true that, concerning the produced and used vessel shapes, we can distinguish different, west- and east-oriented zones of influence. Possible borders run rather in a

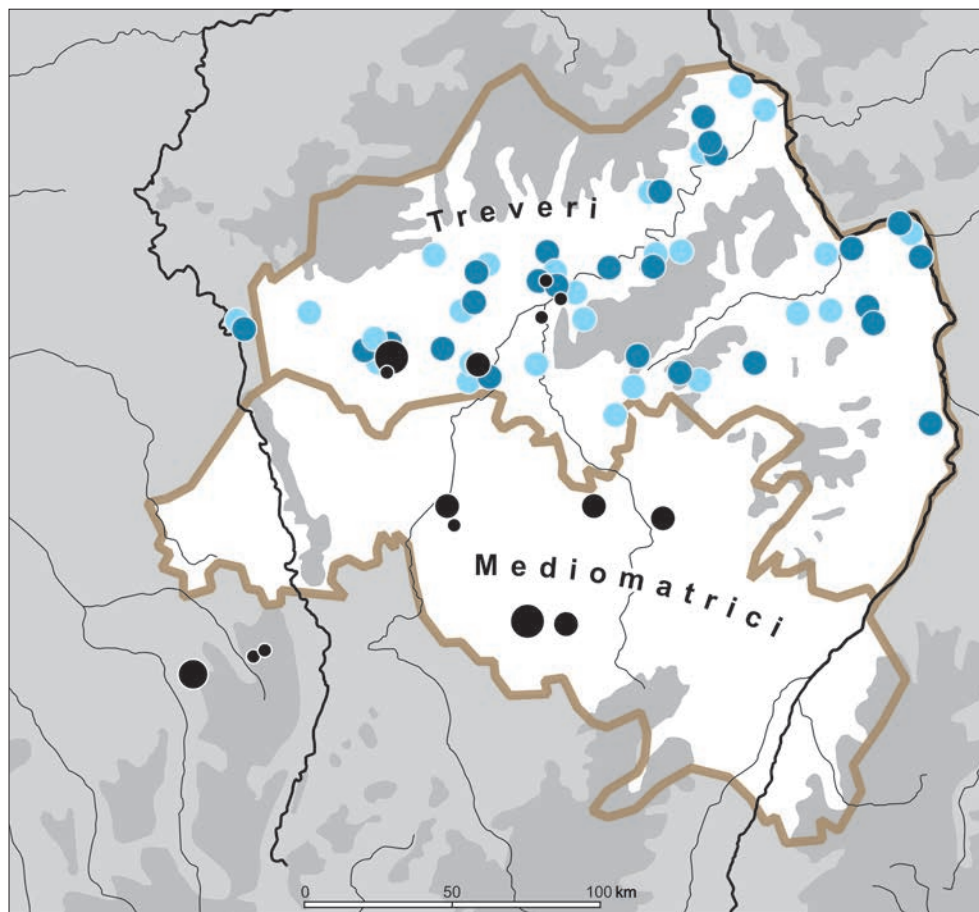


Fig. 3. Distribution of selected La Tène coin types against the background of the borders of the *civitates* of the *Treveri* and *Mediomatrici*. Combination of the maps after Hornung 2016, p. 265, fig. 216 and Féliu 2014a, p. 241, fig. 8b (light blue dots: Scheers 199; blue dots: Scheers 200; black dots: coins which bear the signature MEDIO / MEDIOMA [Scheers 138]).

south-north direction, thus crossing the borders of the *civitates*. Bonaventure (2011, p. 262, fig. 154) provided a map, for example, where a large area bordering on the western upper Rhine is discernable that stretches over the borders of the *Treveri* and *Mediomatrici*, ranging from Strasbourg in the south to Mainz in the north. With this, he builds upon work by Muriel Zehner, who tried to outline the distribution of hand-made vessels with a T-shaped compressed rim and a temper containing fossil shells (Zehner 2002, p. 331, fig. 2, p. 332, fig. 4). However, details for sites in Germany are still to be worked out; therefore, this map image is of very fragmentary character. There are, however, also vessel shapes that are confined to the borders of the *civitates*: wheel-thrown goblets from the Hoppstädten type (Gleser 1999, p. 67-72 with fig. 28) are a good example for this, which I take to be products of workshops from the eastern *Treveri* area – especially the *pagus* of Otzenhausen – and which indeed appear concentrated there (fig. 4). The distribution of vessel shapes as a whole confirms the situation described by Hans-Peter Wotzka for ethnology. According to that, tribal borders do not usually coincide with material borders. Rather, material culture varies spatially (Wotzka 1997, 174).

Finally, when looking at the Mediterranean imports (Fitzpatrick 1985; Roymans 1990, p. 152 fig. 7.2, p. 156, fig. 7.6; Gleser 2005, p. 333-341 with fig. 53-55; Féliu 2014b, p. 238, fig. 5; Hornung 2016, p. 262, fig. 213, p. 438, fig. 374), a clear

spatial concentration becomes visible once again in the area of the *Treveri*. This is not least due to the elaborate death rituals. However, Roman wine amphorae are also known from almost all central locations of the *Treveri*. By contrast, much less Roman imports have been documented for the *Mediomatrici*. This observation might indicate that, despite its location on a main thoroughfare in eastern Gaul, this *civitas* appeared to have participated less in trade with the Roman Empire, and the population there did not use Italian wine in its burial rites.

### About the roots of the group identities

*Treveri* and *Mediomatrici* are historically real parts of Gallic populations (*ethnoi*) who perceived themselves evidently as communities with a common identity. This is consonant with the general statement that ethnic groups are endogamous groups that postulate their own delimitating self-image by means of selected traditions (Orywal, Hackstein 1993, p. 598). The construction of fortified settlements and the systematic subdivision of the territories of both *civitates* points to actions of larger collectives for both ethnic groups. Especially the *Mediomatrici*, however, are not precisely subsumable in the sense of an archaeological culture. Still, numismatic evidence is consonant with Caesar's record, which allows to identify a delimitable population group in

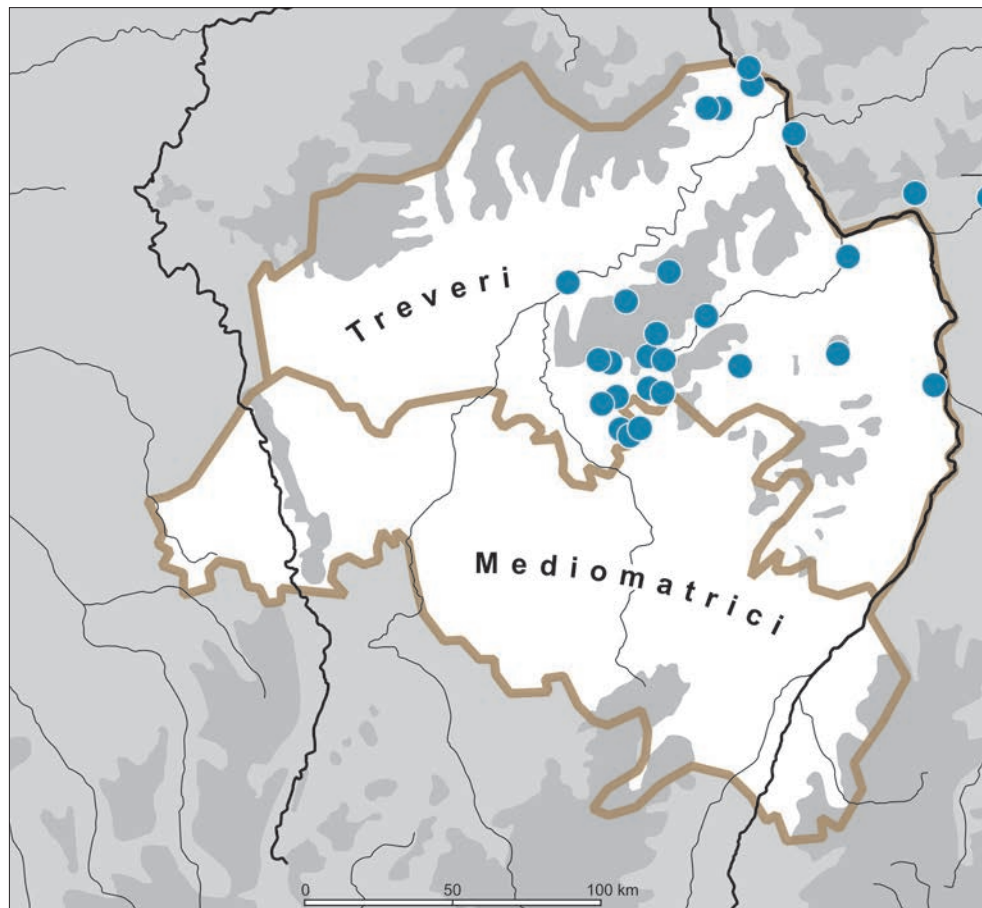


Fig. 4. Distribution of goblets of the Hoppstädten type (blue dots) against the background of the borders of the *civitates* of the *Treveri* and *Mediomatrici* (revised version of Gleser 1999, p. 70, fig. 28 with additions).

northeastern Gaul. The *Treveri* can be better identified on the basis of archaeological sources. Coins that directly pass on the name *Treveri* are, however, unknown. For most of tribes of this ethnos, especially elaborate burial rites are characteristic which require explanations. That is to say the question arises if and how these burial rites are connected to a Treveran identity. In my opinion, there are indications for considerations in this direction. Nothing speaks against searching for the roots of this phenomenon in the preceding Hunsrück-Eifel culture. According to Oliver Nakoinz and others, it, too, represents a clearly definable archaeological culture with elite burials (Nakoinz 2005, p. 202-205). Between the Hunsrück-Eifel culture and the cultural phenomena of the younger La Tène periods in that region a clear continuity is visible (cf. Fichtl 1994, p. 96). According to my theory, the burial rites of the *Treveri* preserve long-standing ideas and notions from the times of the colonisation of the Hunsrück and the Eifel during the late Hallstatt and early La Tène periods. Florian Schneider suggests that the prominent phenomenon of elite burials of the Hunsrück-Eifel culture appear delayed with respect to phases of inland colonisation (cf. the maps provided by Hornung 2008, p. 186, fig. 114, p. 187, fig. 115, p. 188, fig. 116) where they may have expressed the retroactive results of a renegotiation regarding spatial access authorization and exploitation rights (Schneider 2012, p. 224-225). It cannot be ruled out that this traditional core continued into Caesar's times. I will even take one step further and pull together the name '*Treveri*' – it must have been a self-designation – with the time of the colonisation: If we translate the name correctly, as it is common since the 17th century, with 'very strong' or 'very competent' (cf. Baumgarten 1888, p. 14), this sense of self could be rooted in the first settling of the low mountain range regions deeply seated in the collective memory of the population. The often-interpreted remark by Tacitus, *Germania*, 28,4 stating that the *Treveri* raised claims to a Germanic origin may also find its explanation in this. Referring the term 'Germanic' people in its original sense to the arming with a spear and including the observation that swords and daggers were apparently originally uncommon, at least as grave goods, in the Hunsrück-Eifel culture (Haffner 1976, p. 111-114; Schneider

2012, p. 119; cf. Hornung 2008, p.81, fig. 41; Reinhard 2013, p. 9, fig. 2) – exactly like, for example, in the populations of the German low mountain range and the North German Plain (e.g. the Jastorf culture; cf. von Schnurbein 2009, p. 160, fig. 171 and p. 182, fig. 192) – this sense of self could also be explained as a late reminiscence of the time of the colonisation. Still, it cannot be denied that contemporaneous finds of the *Treveri* display strong connections to regions settled by Germanic tribes (cf. Schönfelder 1994, p. 219, fig. 3; Méniel 2002, 229, fig. 5; Bockius, Łuczkiwicz 2004, 113, Karte 38, p. 116, Karte 39, p. 125, Karte 40).

Northeastern France and the bordering southern Saarland, however, belong to the area of the western Hallstatt culture already since the 7th century BC, which could be shown by Walter Reinhard and others with the help of the distribution of burials with swords as grave-goods (Reinhard 2010, p. 27, fig. 16; Reinhard 2013, p. 9). Thus, during Caesar's times, a very old border zone becomes apparent between two different population groups in the Saar-Moselle region who had cultivated their own collective identities based on their origin. Whereas there is some evidence for the sense of self of the *Treveri*, the core of that of the tribes of the *Mediomatrici* remains in the dark. Their name is without a doubt a self-designation. The distribution of coins with the signature MEDIO / MEDIOMA may indicate that this name originally goes back to the *pagi* located at the Moselle and between Moselle and Saar (Metz, Mt.-Hérapel, Moyenvic). The transfer of the name to the entire *civitas* could have been stimulated only by the critical situation of the Roman occupation. If we take the term literally and translate the component 'medio' (in analogy, for example, to the formation of Mediolanum = Milan in Italy) with a geographic reference to 'in the middle', the denomination *Mediomatrici* could have had the meaning 'the mother tribe in between' or 'those who live in the bogs in between'. The question remains, however, what might have led to such a common awareness and what archaeological evidence can be found for it.

In any case, the archaeological record in the area of the *Treveri* demonstrates that cultural expressions are often representative only of some *pagi* and not of the *civitas* as a whole.



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## Abstract

Our knowledge of the *civitates* of the *Treveri* and *Mediomatrici* in the late Iron Age stems primarily from Caesar's descriptions in the account of his deeds, the *Commentarii Belli Gallici*. In the Gallo-Roman period, both names survived as denominations of administrative units within the province of *Gallia Belgica*. These terms certainly refer to historical realities, although on closer inspection their meaning is difficult to define precisely. Issues arise from the names themselves, for neither do we know how Caesar acquired his knowledge of these names nor to what they corresponded. Furthermore the translation of the noun *civitas* (in Latin, usually a term for the community of citizens from a town, township or state) causes difficulties in connection with the population groups of late Iron Age Gaul. Often, this descriptor is translated as 'tribe', 'group of tribes', 'people' or 'nation/ethnic group'. However, we know today that archaeological cultures cannot be readily equated with such identity-groups. This article initially advances general thoughts regarding the denomination of 'tribes' and 'ethnic groups' in the context of evolutionary biology and ethnographic research. Then, based on the latest research, the question to be addressed is whether and how the *Treveri* and *Mediomatrici* are manifested as archaeological cultures and how these entities can be distinguished from one another in a prehistoric context. Finally, a hypothesis on the identity of the *Treveri* is formulated.

## Résumé

**Trévires et Médiomatriques – Délimitation spatiale, identités collectives, cultures archéologiques régionales.** Les connaissances sur les *civitates* des Trévires et des Médiomatriques à la fin de l'âge du Fer nous proviennent essentiellement des *Commentarii Belli Gallici* de Jules César. Durant la période gallo-romaine, les deux noms ont survécu en tant que dénominations d'unités administratives de la province de *Gallia Belgica*. Ces termes se rapportent sûrement à des réalités historiques dont le contenu est difficile à définir. Nous ignorons tout d'abord comment César a eu connaissance des noms des peuples et ce qu'ils recouvraient. De plus, la notion de *civitas* (qui désigne en latin une ville, son territoire et sa population) pose problème quand on l'applique aux peuples de la Gaule de la fin de l'âge du Fer. Elle est souvent rapprochée de celle de « tribu », « groupe de tribus », « peuple » ou « groupe ethnique ». Mais nous savons aujourd'hui que les cultures archéologiques ne peuvent pas être aussi simplement appliquées à ce type de groupes et d'identités. Le présent article présente tout d'abord des réflexions générales sur les notions de « tribu » et de « groupe ethnique » dans le contexte d'une recherche ethnologique et biologique évolutionnaire. La question de la définition des cultures archéologiques trévire et médiomatrique et de leurs limites est ensuite abordée, à partir de recherches récentes. Enfin, une hypothèse sur l'identité des Trévires est formulée.