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# The dynamics of collective identities and cultural encounters in the eastern Carpathian Basin during the Late Iron Age

Aurel Rustoiu, Mariana Egri

## Introduction

Archaeological evidence suggests that, at the beginning of the Late Iron Age, the territories situated eastward of the middle Danube (the Great Hungarian Plain and Transylvania) went through a process of colonization which involved several Celtic groups. In this case, the term 'colonization' is used to describe the movement of a part from a community, or of some groups consisting of people coming from different communities, organized by members of the elites or around some principles, ideas, etc., the scope being to permanently occupy a new territory outside the 'ancestral' space (see Rustoiu 2014a, with previous bibliography; for different forms of human migration in the Iron Age see Ramsel 2003; Ramsel 2015; for other types of cultural encounters see Gosden 2004). The process itself cannot be regarded as a simple population movement from one territory to another, since it presumed a diverse range of interactions between the newcomers and the indigenous populations. The former brought over their own individual and group identities and agendas, seeking to impose their own norms, habits and ideology. At the same time, the latter more likely tried to maintain their own identity constructs, perhaps by exerting various forms of resistance, though others could have showed a degree of openness towards the integration into the newly established communities. The resulting variety of community interactions more likely contributed to the transformation of individual and group identities in this region, leading to the creation of new ones.

These incoming groups originated mostly from Transdanubia (the regions westward from the middle Danube), but also from other Central European areas (Rustoiu 2012, p. 361-364; Rustoiu 2015, p. 13-16). Unfortunately, the few available results of the strontium isotopes analyses performed on skeletons from some Late Iron Age Transylvanian cemeteries have proved to be rather inconclusive since they cannot indicate precisely the origin of the colonists or the size of the incoming groups involved in this process. In this context, it is worth mentioning that similar inconclusive results came from the analysis of skeletons belonging to other historical periods, and it has recently been suggested

that strontium isotopes analysis is not suitable in the case of Transylvania due to the particular geology of the region (unpublished information kindly provided by Dr Szilárd Sándor Gál, Mureş County Museum, Târgu Mureş, Romania). As a consequence, the origin of the colonist groups has to be presumed mainly by taking into consideration the distribution of artefacts specific to certain cultural environments. Among the commonly cited examples (Kruta 2000, p. 249; Kaenel 2007, p. 395; Hauschild 2010, p. 174; Rustoiu 2012, p. 363 etc) are the neck rings with discs inlaid with enamel or coral (*Oberrheinische Scheibenhalsringe*). These are widespread in the middle and upper Rhine basin, but are also encountered in the middle Danube region (fig. 1, n°1) (Müller 1989). At the same time, bronze helmets having analogies in Picenum, Italy (Schaaff 1974, p. 186-190, fig. 31-32; Schaaff 1988, p. 317, fig. 40), in an area occupied by the Senones in the 4th-3rd centuries BC, also appear sporadically to the east, one example being discovered near Haţeg, in south-western Transylvania (fig. 1, n°2) (Rustoiu 2017, p. 41-42, fig. 5). Aside from costume accessories or elements of military equipment having distant origins, the majority of foreign artefacts which circulated in the eastern Carpathian Basin came from the Central-Eastern European regions. This is the case, for example, of the slashing knives of the Osterhaus 1A type (*Hiebmesser mit bogenförmig ausgeschnittener Griffplatte und stark gekrümmter Klinge* – Osterhaus 1981, p. 2-5, 17-20, note 2, fig. 1, map 1), whose origin and highest concentration are attested in Lower Austria and western Hungary; they were also spreading eastward due to the movement of the first colonist groups (fig. 1, n°3) (Rustoiu 2016, p. 238, fig. 2).

Recent archaeological investigations focusing on funerary contexts or the internal organization of the settlements have shown that the colonists' arrival determined a social reconfiguration of many local communities, as well as the appearance of new communities which displayed various degrees of cultural hybridization (Rustoiu 2014a; Rustoiu, Berecki 2016; Rustoiu, Berecki, Ferencz 2017). Starting from these observations, one aim is to discuss the social and cultural outcome of the interactions between Celtic colonists and indigenous communities,

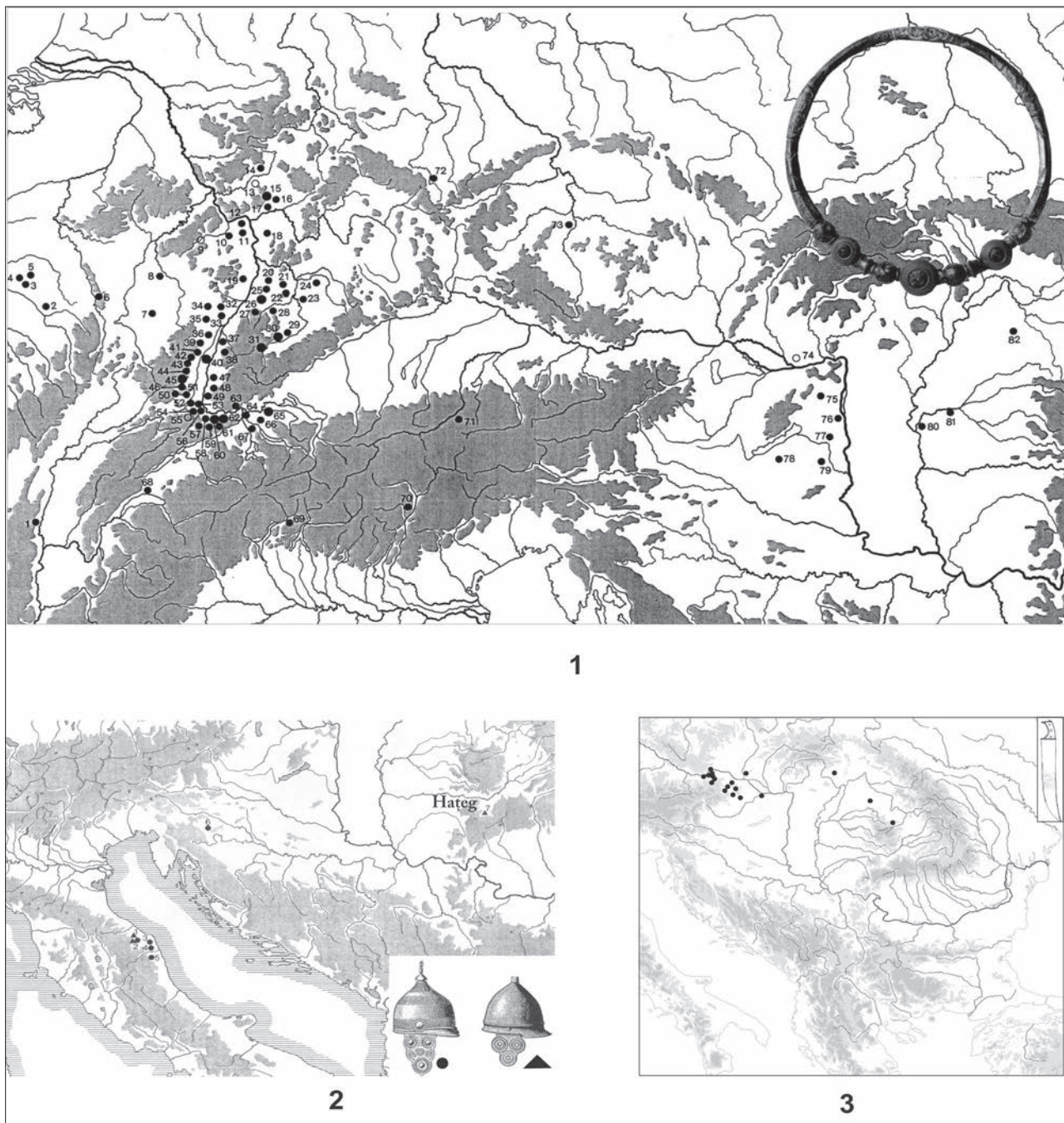


Fig. 1. 1. Distribution map of the neck rings with discs inlaid with enamel or coral (*Oberrheinische Scheibenhalsringe*) (after Müller 1989); 2. Distribution map of the bronze helmets with mobile trefoil-shaped cheek-pieces (after Schaaff 1974; 1988); 3. Distribution map of the slashing knives (*Hiebmesser*) of the Osterhaus 1A type in the Carpathian Basin (after Rustoiu 2016).

including the processes that led to the creation of new means of expressing community identities. Another scope is to identify the manner in which some indigenous communities from the same area, which were apparently unaffected by Celtic movements, used to express their collective identity. A comparison of the specific patterns defining the areas which remained under indigenous control and those from the regions dominated by the newcomers could allow the identification of the social structures which shaped different collective identity constructs in this region and the nature of inter-community interactions.

### The indigenous communities before the Celtic colonization. An archaeological overview

Before analysing the Celtic colonization, it is necessary to briefly present the cultural layout from the Great Hungarian Plain and Transylvania at the end of the Early Iron Age. Previous archaeological studies have already noted the existence of several areas characterised by different cultural patterns (fig. 2).

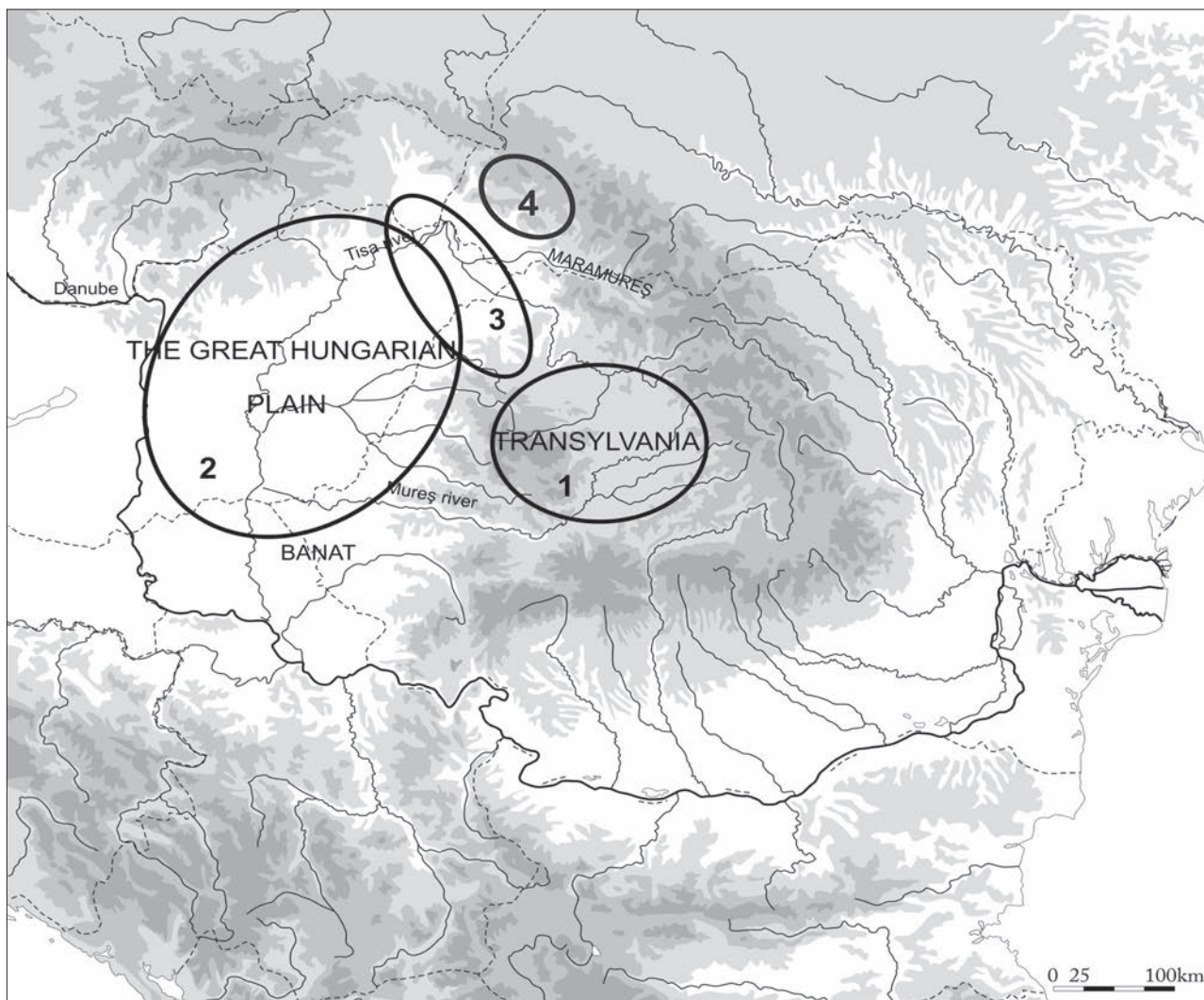


Fig. 2. Map of the main geographic entities mentioned in text and the cultural groups of the end of the Early Iron Age in the eastern Carpathian Basin: Ciumbrud group (1), Vezerzug culture (2), Sanislău-Nir group (3) and Kushtanovica group (4).

In the Great Hungarian Plain, the end of the Early Iron Age, which covers the period between the middle of the 7th century and the middle of the 4th century BC, was largely defined archaeologically by the arrival of several groups from the eastern steppe and forest steppe in the northern Pontic region. These groups came in successive stages, bringing over new social and cultural practices and identity constructs. The entire period in question was called the 'Scythian Age' (*Skythenzeit*) (Párducz 1973), in spite of the fact that archaeological evidence pointed to the more likely existence of a mixture of indigenous and incoming communities during this period. This cultural mixture is more clearly observed in the funerary practices.

The cemeteries contain flat burials in which the deceased were either inhumed (in a supine or crouched position – fig. 3, n°1) or cremated (with the remains laid in the pit or in urns). Sometimes horses were also buried together with their complete harness or with carts (fig. 3, n°2). The graves belonging to the warlike elites contained weaponry specific to the nomadic populations from the northern Pontic region (arrows, daggers of the 'akinakes' type, swords, armour elements etc). On the other

hand, tumulus burials or those containing funerary chambers made of timber, whose inventories included gold artefacts decorated in the animal style specific to the elites of the northern Pontic region, are less numerous. This entire archaeological phenomenon was named in specialist literature either the Vezerzug culture (Párducz 1973, p. 40; Chochorowski 1985) or the Alföld group (Kemenczei 2009).

In the upper Tisza basin, cremation graves predominate, the remains being laid in simple pits or in urns, while the grave-goods of eastern origin are scarce. These features made I. Némethi to define this archaeological phenomenon as the Sanislău-Nir group, which occurred at the periphery of the Vezerzug culture area (fig. 3, n°3) (Némethi 1982).

During the same period, cremation was the preferred funerary ritual, with the burnt remains covered by tumuli, in the foothills and mountainous areas from the upper Tisza basin in modern Transcarpathian Ukraine (fig. 3, n°5). These mortuary practices are attested from the 7th to the 3rd century BC, when some costume accessories originating from the La Tène area started to appear in some funerary inventories. These finds could indicate

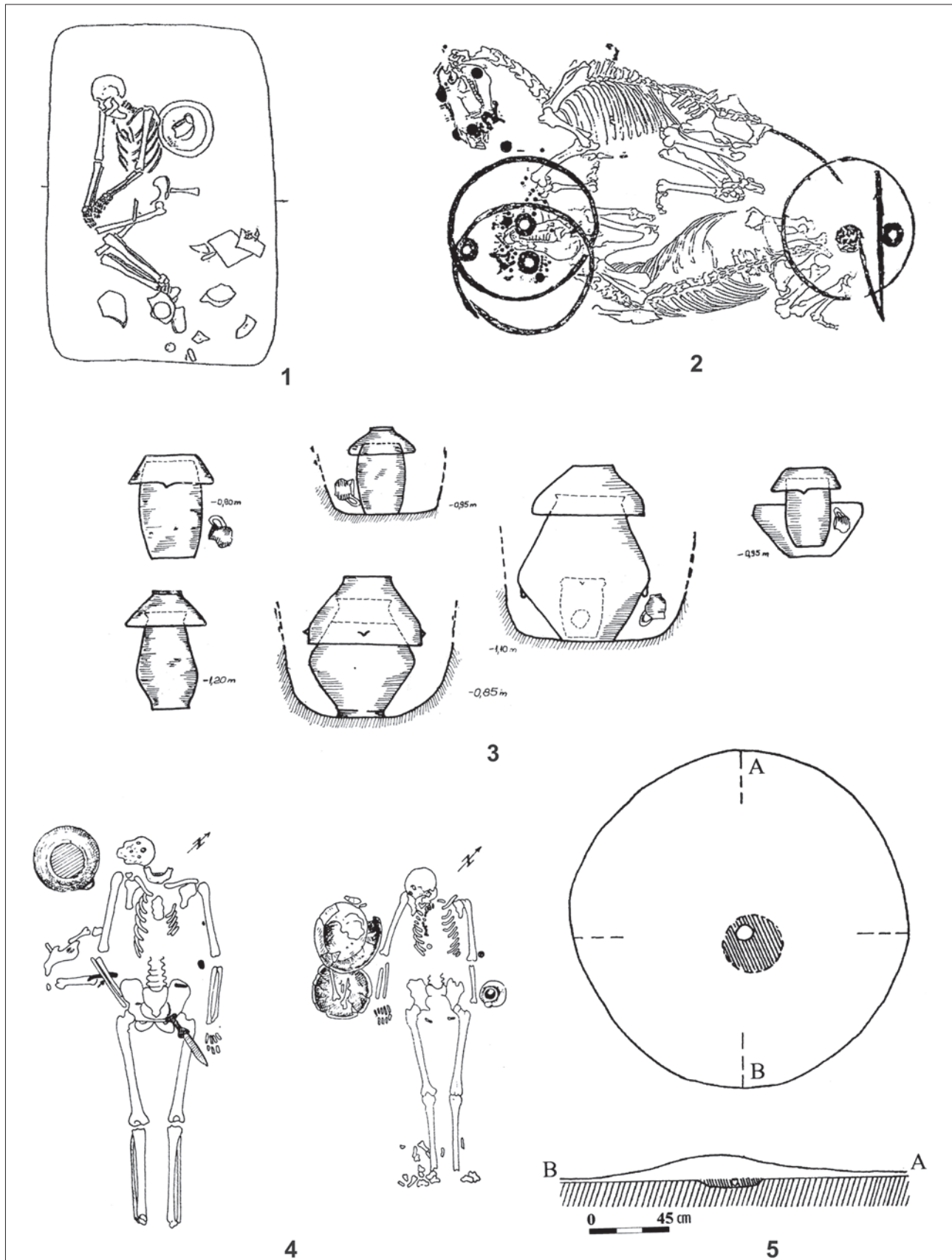


Fig. 3. Burials specific to the cultural groups of the end of the Early Iron Age in the eastern Carpathian Basin: Vekerzug culture (1-2), Sanislău-Nir group (3), Ciumbrud group (4) and Kushtanovica group (5). 1. Inhumation grave from Szabadszállás; 2. Inhumed horses from Szentes-Vekerzug (all after Kemenczei 2009); 3. Cremation graves in lidded urns from Sanislău (after Némethi 1982); 4. Inhumation graves from Ciumbrud (after Vasiliev 1980); 5. Tumulus cremation grave from Kushtanovica (after Popovich 1995-1996).

that some connections were established with populations that settled in the lowland areas of the north-eastern Carpathian Basin. This regional archaeological phenomenon was identified in specialist literature as the Kushtanovica group, after the eponymous cemetery from Transcarpathian Ukraine (Popovich 1995-1996).

In Transylvania, the end of the Early Iron Age is less clearly defined archaeologically. The 'Scythian' horizon (known as either the Agathyrsi or the Cimbrud group) is represented by cemeteries with flat inhumation burials, and rarely cremations, which were mostly dated to the 7th-6th centuries BC (fig. 3, n°4) (Vasiliev 1980; Vulpe 1984). This proposed dating has recently been confirmed by a series of radiocarbon analyses (unpublished, performed by the HEKAL Laboratory, Debrecen, Hungary; for the method used see Molnár *et al.* 2013). The connections with populations from the northern Pontic forest steppe are attested by the funerary rites and rituals, as well as by certain grave-goods. In general, the cemeteries are small, some consisting of only a few graves and others of not more than a couple dozens. This has been interpreted as a result of the pastoralist – nomadic lifestyle of these communities (Vasiliev 1980).

However, one large cemetery was recently identified at Sâncrai, on the middle Mureş valley, in south-western Transylvania, and 95 graves have already been unearthed (archaeological investigations directed by A. Rustoiu). The size of the Sâncrai cemetery could indicate that some of these communities went through a process of sedentarization, leading to some changes in their lifestyle. This hypothesis is also supported by a comparative analysis of the diet of some individuals buried in cemeteries from eastern

Transylvania and that of the deceased from Sâncrai. The analysis of dental tartar sampled from a series of skeletons coming from these two micro-zones indicates that in eastern Transylvania the diet was largely based on meat and dairy, which is specific to the pastoralist populations, while the community from Sâncrai preponderantly consumed cereal-based food. Nevertheless, these investigations only started recently and more samples from both micro-zones are waiting to be analysed (dental tartar analyses are made by Szilárd Sándor Gál, Mureş County Museum, Târgu Mureş, Romania).

Unlike in the Great Hungarian Plain, the funerary discoveries from Transylvania which belong to the 5th-4th centuries BC are scarce. The cemetery at Băița, interpreted some decades ago as evidence of the Scythians' assimilation by the indigenous Thracian populations (Vasiliev 1976), should be discussed today from a different perspective. The cemetery in question includes five inhumation graves containing inventories specific to the 'Scythian' horizon and seven cremations (fig. 4, n°1). In the latter cases, the burnt human remains and the grave-goods were placed in large rectangular pits resembling those of the inhumation graves. Recently, Mircea Babeş has noted that similar graves, dated to the 5th-3rd centuries BC, are encountered on a wider area from the east of the Carpathians and the lower Danube to the upper Tisza basin. These burials seem to indicate the practising of prolonged funerary rites and rituals in successive stages. More precisely, the deceased were first inhumed; after a while the graves were reopened and the human remains were removed to be cremated; the burnt remains were then laid again in the same funerary pit (Babeş, Mirițoiu 2011; 2012). On the plan of

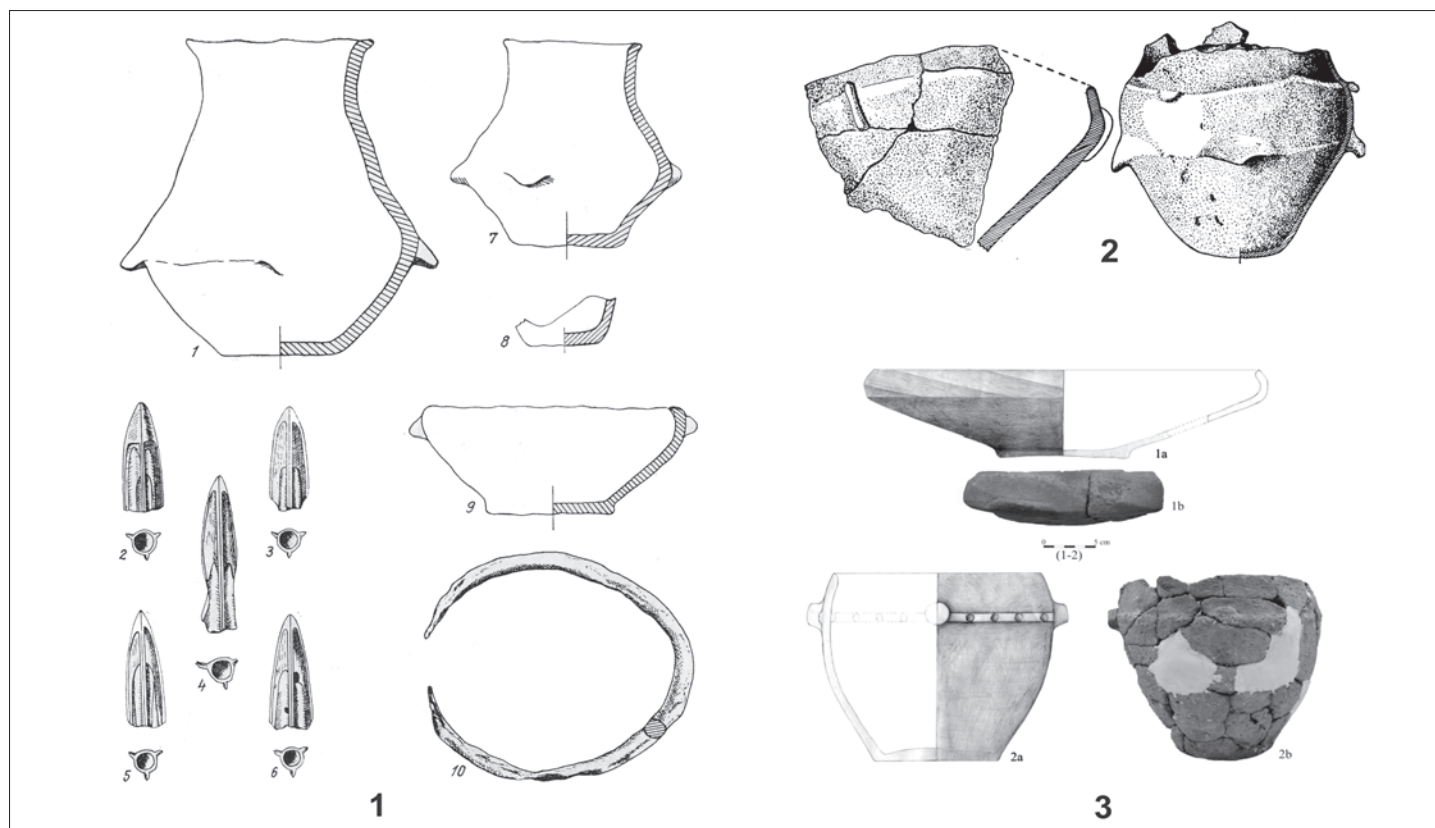


Fig. 4. Funerary inventories of the 5th-4th centuries BC. 1. Cremation grave from Băița (after Vasiliev 1976); 2. Inhumation grave from Războieni (after Crişan 1965); 3. Cremation grave from Bacea (after Cristescu, Bărbat 2016).

the cemetery at Băița, the cremated graves are located somewhat eccentrically in comparison with the inhumations, illustrating perhaps a later phase of the cemetery. Along the same lines, the appearance of such practices could indicate some changes in the funerary rites and rituals, perhaps leading to burials which are more 'discrete' archaeologically. This could also explain the general scarcity of graves in the area in question during the 5th-4th centuries BC. Among the latter are some graves discovered at Războieni (fig. 4, n°2) (Crișan 1965, p. 63-64, 70-75) and the few cremations from southern Transylvania, identified at Săvârșin (RepArad 1999, p. 106-109, no. 1) and Bacea (fig. 4, n°3) (Cristescu, Bărbat 2016).

Accordingly, the archaeological layout of the eastern Carpathian Basin is characterised by a wider cultural diversity during this period, the common point being the existence of a range of connections with the steppe and forest steppe areas from the north-western Black Sea and with the Greek Pontic cities. The latter connections are attested by some bronze vessels, like the hydriae from Artand in eastern Hungary and Dobroselie (formerly Bene) in Transcarpathian Ukraine, which were part of

some funerary inventories (Rustoiu, Egri 2011, p. 42, fig. 14; Rustoiu, Egri 2014, p. 118-120, fig. 2-3). However, these eastern cultural elements were filtered and adapted to the needs of each of the aforementioned groups. The evolution of these communities was interrupted after the middle of the 4th century BC by the arrival of Celtic groups coming from the west.

### The arrival of Celtic groups and the transformation of profane and funerary landscape

The process of Celtic colonization proceeded in successive stages during the second half of the 4th century and at the beginning of the 3rd century BC. Several groups gradually advanced from the west to the east; their movements are documented by some cemeteries displaying characteristic elements of the funerary rite, ritual, and inventory (fig. 5) (Rustoiu 2008, p. 69-70, fig. 27; Rustoiu 2012). Archaeological evidence indicates that it was not a mass migration or an invasion, since the number of

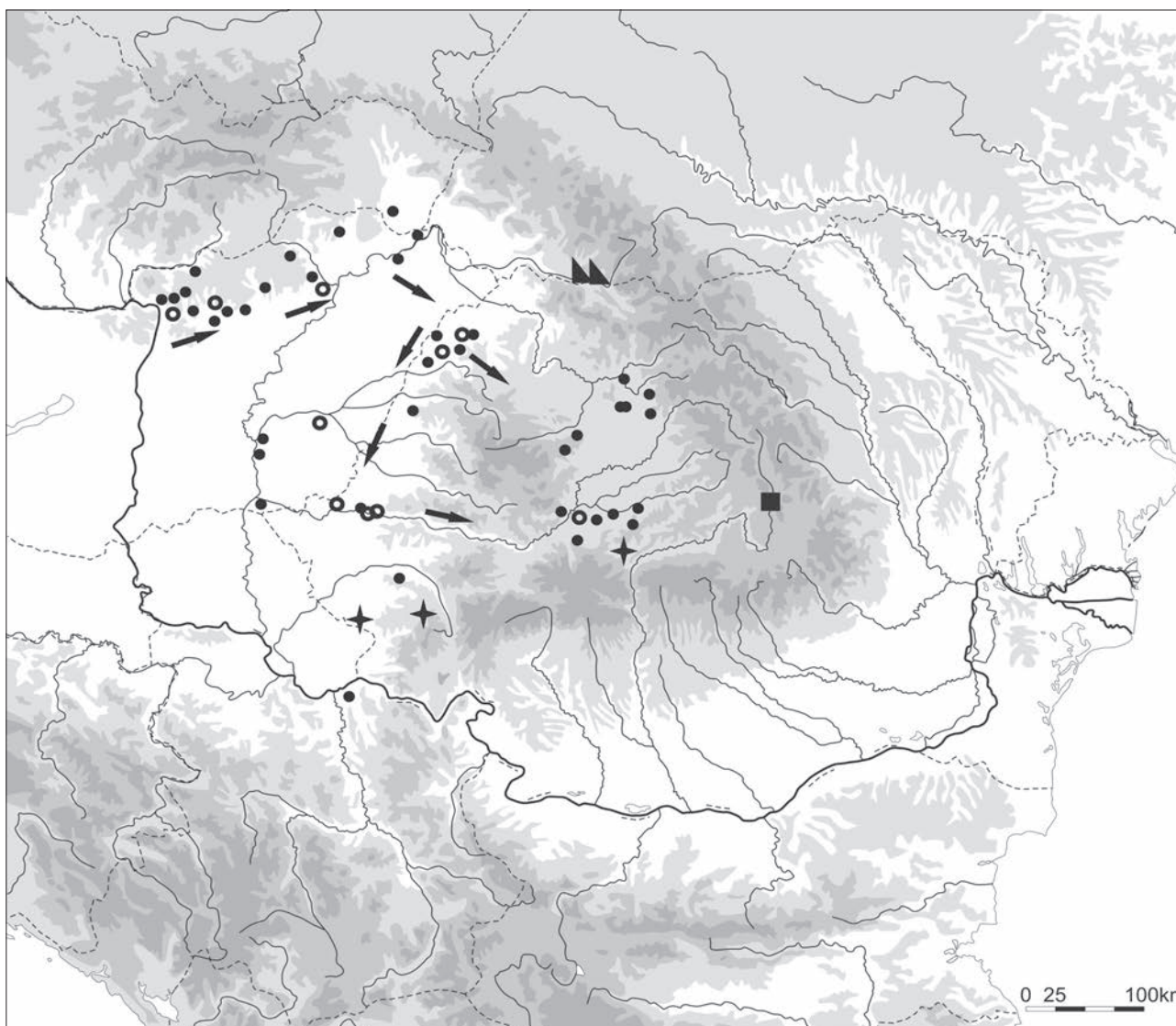


Fig. 5. Map of the cemeteries beginning in the La Tène B1/B2 period (circles) or in the La Tène B2 period (black dots); the advancing directions of the colonist groups towards the eastern Carpathian Basin; the indigenous fortified settlements on the Tisza River (triangles), the settlement and cemetery from Olteni (square), and the graves with Chalcidian helmets (stars).

colonist burials belonging to the earliest phases of the cemeteries is always small. Among the earliest dated discoveries, from the LT B1/B2 phase, are the first burials from the cemeteries at Vác, Muhi, Novajidrány and Hatvan-Bajpuszta in Hungary, and Pişcot and Aradu Nou in western Romania (Hellebrandt 1997; 1999; Némethi 1988; Rustoiu, Ursuțiu 2013). The majority of the cemeteries from the region in question started to be used in the LT B2. Among them are the cemeteries at Ludas, Curtuiușeni, Remetea Mare, and Fântânele-Dâmbu Popii (Szabó *et al.* 2012; Teleagă 2008; Rustoiu, Ursuțiu 2013; Rustoiu 2016).

The Celtic groups brought in the eastern Carpathian region a series of funerary practices specific to their homelands. This is the case, for example, of the rectangular or circular funerary enclosures (also known as *Grabgärten*) which occurred in the LT A and LT B1 in Lower Austria, western Hungary or western Slovakia (Neugebauer 1996; Ramsel 2011; Vaday 2006; Bujna 1989 etc). Recent archaeological excavations identified similar enclosures also in north-eastern Hungary and Transylvania. Some examples come from the cemetery at Gyöngyös in Hungary, or at Viștea and Gâmbaș in Transylvania (Tankó *et al.* 2016; Rustoiu 2016, p. 240, pl. 4; Bălan *et al.* 2015, pl. 3). The earliest dated graves from these cemeteries belong to the beginning of the LT B2. Accordingly, the use of funerary enclosures in the eastern Carpathian Basin could indicate the perpetuation of older funerary practices among some communities established far away from their homeland.

In several cases from the same region, the newcomers reused the funerary grounds which previously belonged to the local communities. In the Great Hungarian Plain, this practice was observed, for example, in the cemeteries at Muhi-Kocsmadomb and Orosháza-Gyopáros (Almássy 2010). Sometimes, for example at Aiud, Fântânele-Dâmbu Popii, Fântânele-La Gâța or Sâncraia in Transylvania, the chronological gap between the burials of the end of the Early Iron Age and those of the newcomers covers more than one century (fig. 6, n°1). Earlier burial grounds more likely became places of memory integrated into the local collective identity constructs as symbolical references to a mythical past, providing a physical connection with the ancestors. Their later reuse reflects the cohabitation of the newcomers with the locals, as well as the will of the former to incorporate identity markers which were relevant in the local environment into the identity constructs of the newly established communities as a means of legitimization.

Regarding the landscape use, the rural settlements were surrounded by their agricultural lands, being located on fertile floodplains or river terraces. Unlike the settlements, the cemeteries were usually located on heights in the vicinity: hilltops or slopes, high terraces or promontories (fig. 6, n°2) (Berecki 2015; Rustoiu, Berecki 2018). Among the most relevant examples are the cemeteries at Aiud, Blandiana, and Ciumești (Zirra 1967; Zirra 1980; Ferencz 2007; Berecki 2015; Rustoiu, Berecki 2018). In this way, the cemetery of any community was visible from the settlement and the nearby roads, and also from other neighbouring settlements. Taking into consideration these norms of organizing the habitat and the funerary space, it might be presumed that

the cemeteries marked symbolically the community's ownership of a territory acquired by, or inherited from, the ancestors.

Available archaeological evidence suggests that during the Celtic horizon, most communities from the eastern Carpathian Basin consisted of a small number of people (between 15 and 25), organized in family groups or clans. This social structure can be observed in the internal organization of the settlements and also in that of some cemeteries.

In settlements, dwellings were grouped at a certain distance away from one another, for example at Ciumești (Zirra 1980) and Cicir (fig. 7, n°1) (Rustoiu 2013a) in western Romania or at Polgár (fig. 7, n°2) (Szabó *et al.* 2008), Kálmánháza and Nyíregyháza-Oros (Almássy, Pop 2014) in eastern Hungary, the last two being only partially unearthed along the new motorway. Other similar examples are known in the western Carpathian Basin at Göttesbrunn in Lower Austria (Karl, Prochaska 2005, p. 69-76; Karl 2013) or Oberschauersberg in Upper Austria (Trebsche 2014, p. 347-348, fig. 7).

The internal organization of the cemeteries in burial groups is encountered, in many forms, in different sites from the Carpathian Basin. For example, the burial ground at Mannersdorf started to be used in three different spots, with the 'founding' burials belonging to some women (Ramsel 2011, p. 210-211, fig. 177-178a). At Chotin, in south-western Slovakia, the location of the burials also suggests their organization in three groups (fig. 8, n°3) (Ratimorská 1981, p. 18, fig. 2; Gebhard 1989; Rustoiu 2008, p. 78-79, fig. 36). Lastly, separate groups of burials have been identified at Vác-Gravel pit (fig. 8, n°1) and Muhi-Kocsmadomb (fig. 8, n°2) (Hellebrandt 1999, p. 99-102, 233-236, fig. 99, 192; Almássy 2010), as well as in other cemeteries which were first used during the initial stages of colonization in the eastern and south-eastern Carpathian Basin, for example at Pećine (Jovanović 2014, fig. 1; Jovanović 2018). A similar internal organization was also presumed for the cemeteries at Ludas-Varjú-dűlő and Sajópetri-Homoki-szőlőskertek (Szabó *et al.* 2012, fig. 188; Szabó 2014, fig. 4, 12), albeit the grouping of burials is comparatively less visible on their plans. All these examples indicate that the cemeteries were organized, at least in the initial phase, according to certain social rules and rituals specific to the original homeland of the colonists.

Thus the analysis of the anthropic landscape and of the manner of organizing the funerary space and the habitat indicates that the newcomers tended to impose the social patterns and structures specific to their homelands. Along the same lines, it can be presumed that the manner of grouping the graves in cemeteries on the basis of family or clan affiliations more likely mirrored the internal organization of the habitat within the rural settlements, which was in turn largely determined by the social structure of the communities. At the same time, a series of elements of the funerary rite and ritual, some highly visible in the surrounding landscape, for example the funerary enclosures having stone or timber walls, or the burial stone markers (stelae), were also brought over from the homeland. However, the manner of using the landscape also involved the incorporation of certain elements predating the Celtic colonization, which may suggest a certain degree of influence coming from the indigenous





Fig. 6. 1. Cemeteries at Fântânele-Dâmbu Popii: red – area with graves belonging to the 'Scythian horizon'; green – area with graves belonging to the 'Celtic horizon' (photo S. Berecki). 2. Topographic distribution of the cemetery and settlement at Blandiana (after Rustoiu, Berecki 2018).

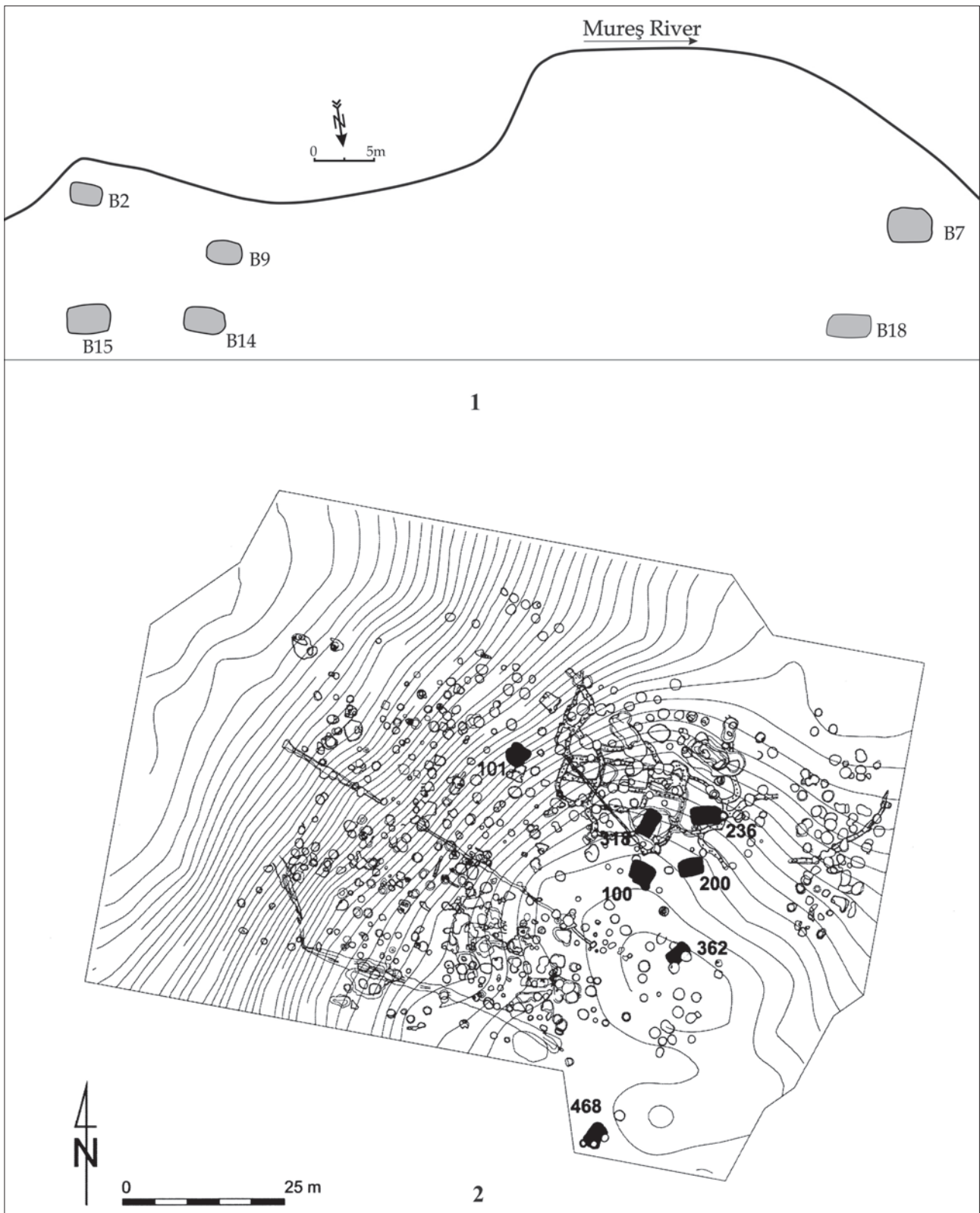


Fig. 7. Internal organization of some settlements in groups of houses. 1. Cicir (after Rustoiu 2013a); 2. Polgár (after Szabó *et al.* 2008).

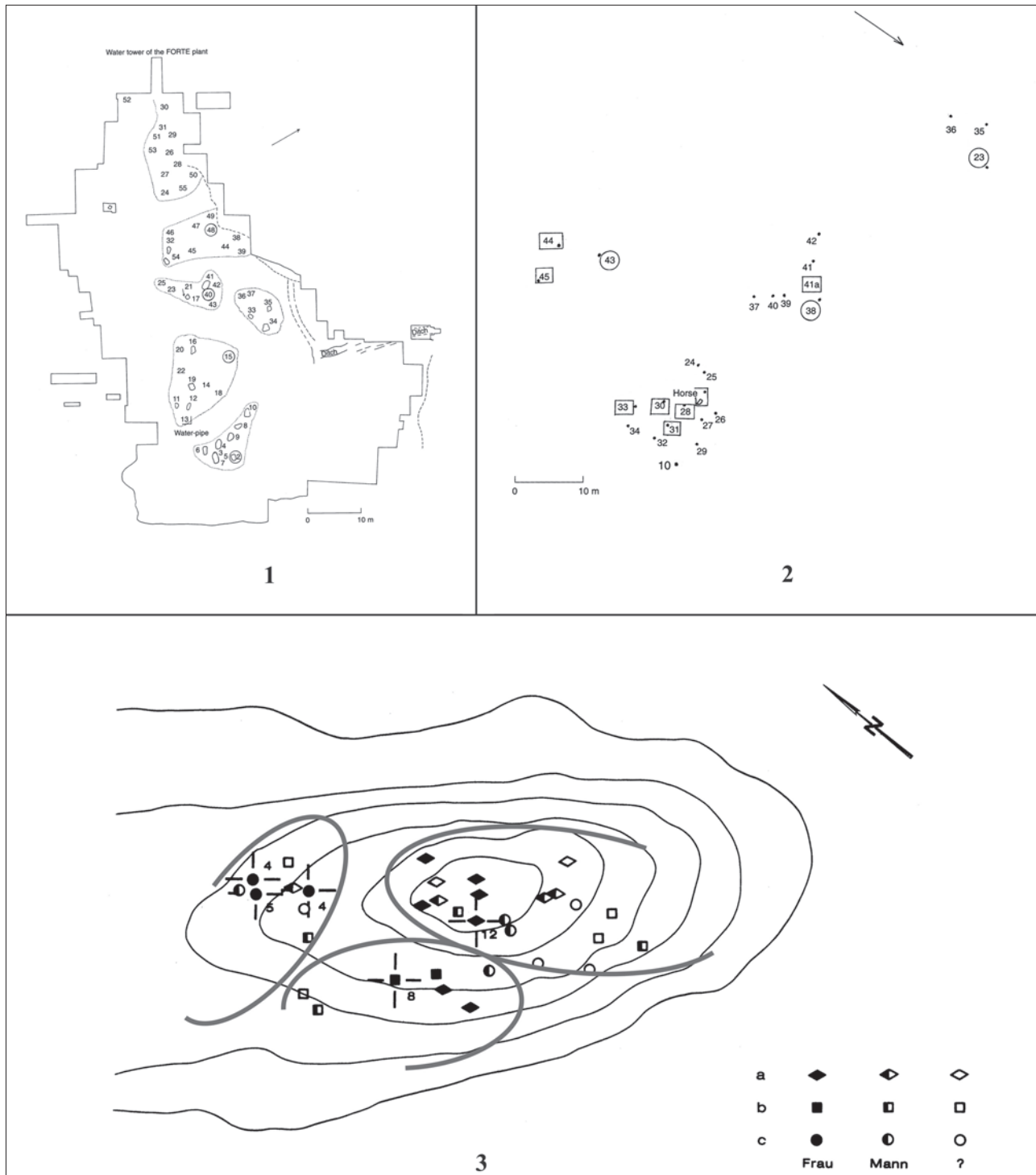


Fig. 8. Internal organization of some cemeteries in groups of burials. 1. Vác-Gravel pit; 2. Muhi-Kocsmadomb (both after Hellebrandt 1999); 3. Chotin (after Ratimorská 1981, Gebhard 1989, and Rustoiu 2008).

communities and their traditions. The reuse of older funerary grounds belonging to the indigenous communities could imply perhaps the invention or manipulation of some traditions and mythologies which were meant to legitimize the presence and authority of the newcomers. However, the same practice could have also allowed the accommodation of indigenous traditional

beliefs, practices, and sensibilities related to their ancestors. In this context, one important question concerns the manner in which the indigenous population responded to these transformations and to the imposition of new social and cultural models. A careful analysis of the characteristics of the funerary practices could provide at least a partial answer.

### Assimilation and resistance

The analysis of the cemeteries from eastern Hungary and Transylvania indicates that although the arrival of Celtic groups contributed to a social and cultural reconfiguration of the regions in question, the interactions between the newcomers and the indigenous people differed significantly from one community to another.

In some cases, especially in the Great Hungarian Plain, the indigenous populations largely maintained their funerary rites and rituals, at least during the initial phase of cohabitation with the newcomers. It can be therefore presumed that they managed to preserve their own identity which was expressed in funerary ceremonies, among other things. For example, some graves from the cemeteries at Muhi-Kocsmadomb, Pişcolt or Remetea Mare illustrate the persistence of indigenous funerary rites, rituals and inventories (fig. 9, n°3-4) (Rustoiu 2008, p. 70-76; Rustoiu,

Berecki 2016). On the other hand, the number of funerary contexts that can be ascribed to the indigenous people is small in comparison with that of the graves displaying rituals and inventories specific to the Central-Eastern European areas which were the original lands of the colonists (fig. 9, n°1-2). This pattern could suggest that the locals were gradually assimilated into the Celtic communities which settled in the region in question. Consequently, some of the burials usually defined as ‘Celtic’ could have belonged instead to some members of the indigenous population which were integrated into the newly established communities.

In other situations, mostly in Transylvania, the indigenous populations seem to become ‘invisible’ from the funerary point of view. One possibility is that the locals were integrated relatively fast into the new communities which resulted from the colonization. On the other hand, as mentioned above, the funerary practices of the indigenous populations apparently became

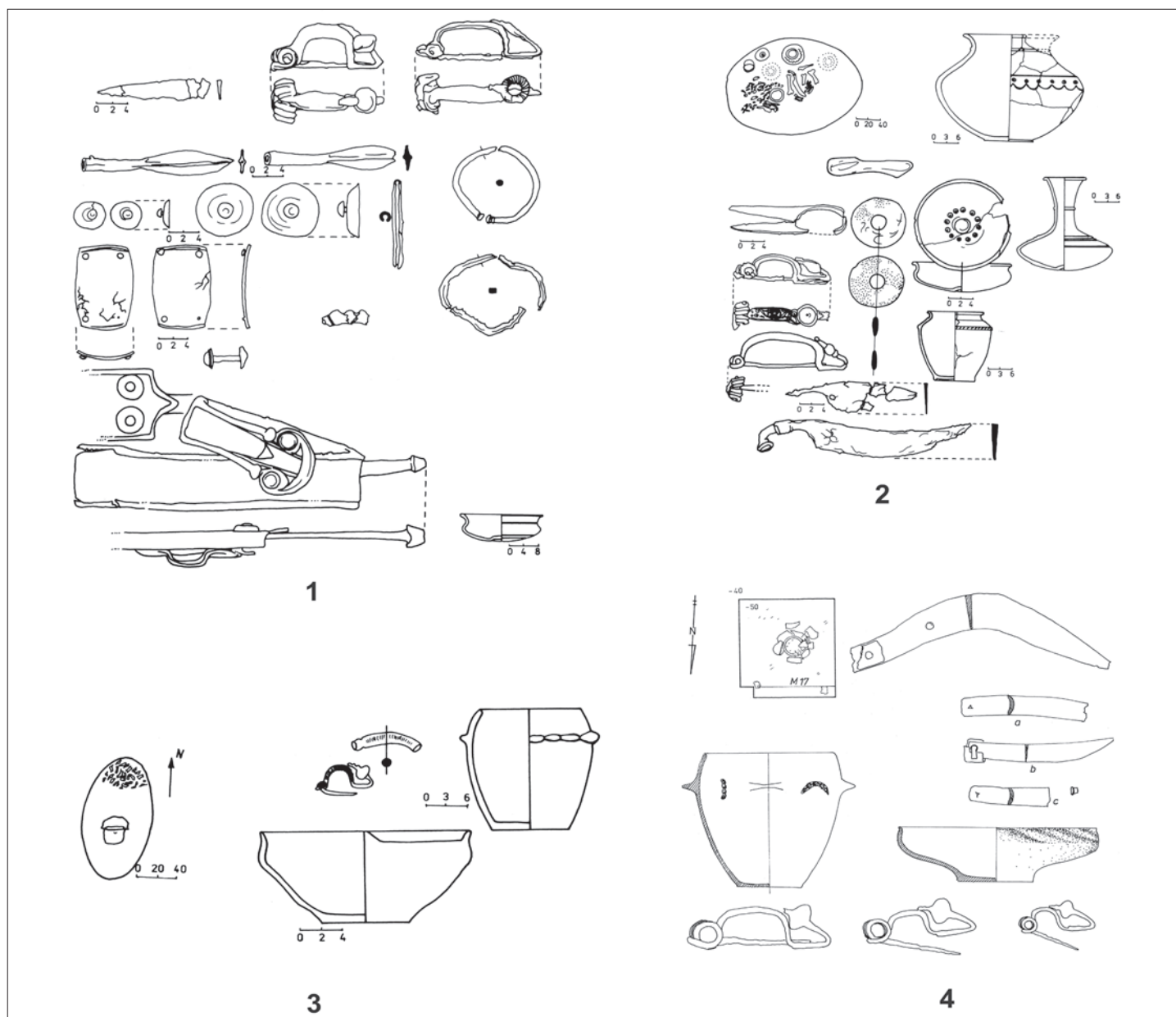


Fig. 9. Graves containing La Tène inventories with weapons (1) and without weapons (2) from Pişcolt. Indigenous burials from Pişcolt (3) (all after Némethi 1988) and Remetea Mare (4) (after Rustoiu, Berecki 2016).

more 'discrete' archaeologically at the end of the Early Iron Age. This phenomenon could explain, up to a point, the difficulty in identifying the funerary practices of the locals during the initial phase of Celtic colonization.

Another related question concerns the manner in which the indigenous people were integrated into the newly established communities. In this context, it is worth mentioning that until now settlements or cemeteries which could be ascribed exclusively to either the locals or the newcomers have not been discovered. Accordingly, it has to be presumed that both the 'colonists' and the 'colonized' (as defined in Given 2004) cohabited in the same areas and settlements. In the Great Hungarian Plain, this cohabitation can be observed indirectly due to the presence of indigenous and colonist burials in the same cemetery. For example, M. Hellebrandt observed that in the Muhi-Kocsmadomb cemetery, in Hungary, 'Scythian' and 'Celtic' graves are grouped around some graves containing weapons and always displaying La Tène funerary characteristics (fig. 8, n°2) (Hellebrandt 1999, p. 233-236, fig. 192; see also Rustoiu 2014a, p. 148, fig. 13.2). This pattern could also indicate the subordinate status of the indigenous people and the dominance of incoming elites.

The cohabitation of the indigenous people with the newcomers contributed to a cultural hybridization which had different symbolic and practical effects from one context and region to another. For example, some indigenous burials identified in the

communal cemeteries, like grave no. 203 at Pişcolt (fig. 9, n°3) or grave no. 17 at Remetea Mare (fig. 9, n°4), contained some costume accessories of the La Tène type among their grave-goods (Rustoiu, Berecki 2016, p. 290-296). Their presence seems to suggest the tendency of the locals to integrate into the new communities by adopting some clothing styles specific to the newcomers. This was a relevant action since bodily ornamentation in general played an important role in social communication, serving as a visual expression of the social, ethnic, professional, etc. affiliation of any individual (see, for example, Eicher 1995).

Another relevant feature is the presence of indigenous pottery alongside the Central European La Tène pottery in settlements and cemeteries (fig. 10). From the functional point of view, the assemblage recovered from each dwelling usually includes all categories of local forms (sometimes described as 'Scythian') combined with the La Tène ones: kitchenware, storage vessels, tableware (see, for example, the settlements at Ciumeşti and Cicir: Zirra 1980; Rustoiu 2013a; for a typology of the 'Scythian' and La Tène pottery from the settlement at Sajópetri see Szabó, Czajlik 2007, p. 229-252, fig. 47). The 'hybrid' tableware is also encountered in funerary inventories from a series of cemeteries, sometimes in large numbers. For example, at Fântânele-Dâmbu Popii around 80% of the graves dated to the earlier phases of the cemetery (LT B2a and LT B2b) contain ceramic vessels specific to the local communities alongside typical La Tène artefacts (wheel-made pottery, jewellery,

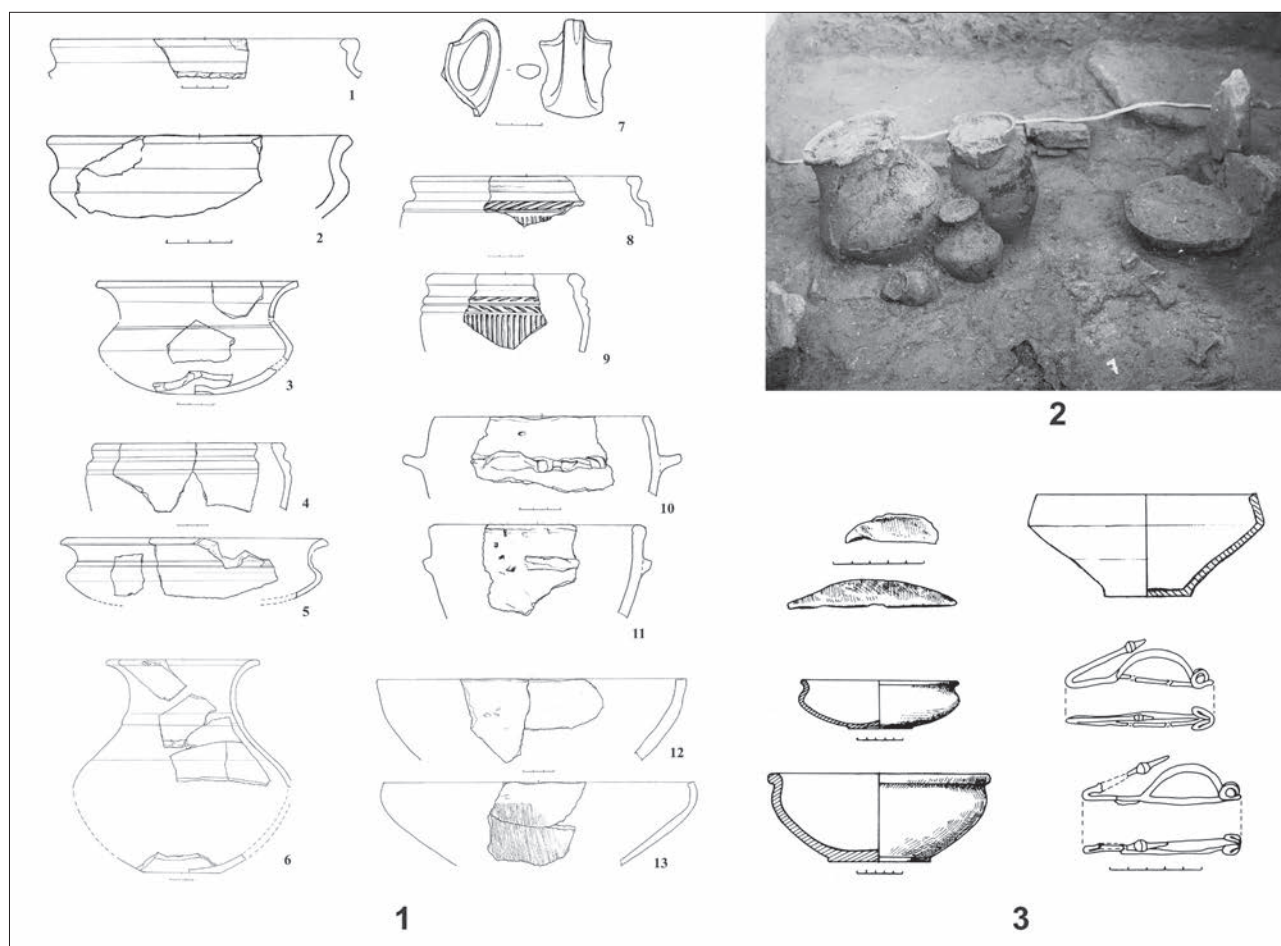


Fig. 10. La Tène and indigenous pottery from settlements (1) and cemeteries (2-3). 1. Dwelling no. 9 at Cicir (after Rustoiu 2013a); 2-3. Graves from Fântânele-Dâmbu Popii (after Rustoiu, Berecki 2016).

costume accessories, weapons etc) (Rustoiu 2008, p. 77-78, fig. 35; Rustoiu, Berecki 2016, p. 288-291, fig. 4).

This feature might suggest that the cohabitation of the locals with the newcomers also determined the hybridization of culinary and dining practices. A similar phenomenon is commonly encountered in the contact zones between populations having different culinary traditions, and this has also happened, for example, in Transylvania until modern times.

A revival of certain ancestral traditions brought over from the homeland of the first generations of colonists can be noted during the last phase of the 'Celtic horizon' in Transylvania, in the LT C1 (second half of the 3rd century BC). This includes some types of costume accessories and jewellery or the use of older decorative motifs on ceramic tableware. These are highly visible elements, so the more likely intention of the users was to signal or enhance certain meanings in public settings. Some of the most

relevant examples come from the cemetery at Fântânele-Dâmbu Popii. Grave no. 62 contained the metal accessories of two different female costumes. One costume included one bracelet made of undulating iron wire, specific to the LT B1/B2, alongside other artefacts that can be dated to the LT C1. Only a small number of similar bracelets were discovered in the Carpathian Basin in earlier dated contexts. The costume from Fântânele-Dâmbu Popii illustrates a common scheme of bodily ornamentation corresponding to some particular trends specific to the LT C1, and at the same time includes a prized, older piece (perhaps having a perceived magic or/and sentimental value due to its connections with the past) from the homeland of those who colonized Transylvania (Rustoiu, Megaw 2011; Rustoiu 2013b, with further bibliography).

Regarding the tableware, some vessels used as grave-goods at Fântânele-Dâmbu Popii were decorated with different motifs which included stamped circles (fig. 11). The manner in which

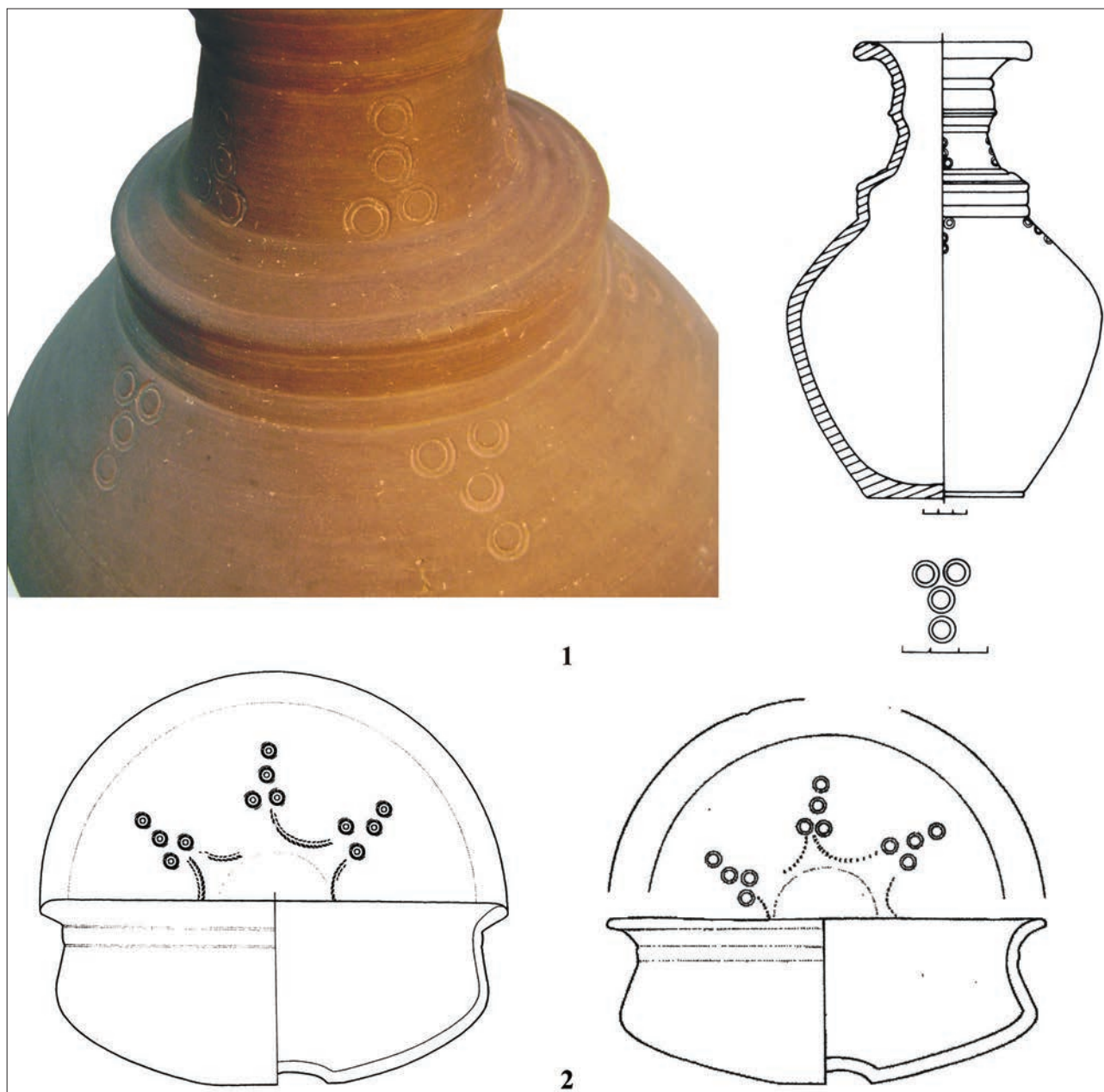


Fig. 11. Ceramic vessels decorated with stamped motifs. 1. Fântânele-Dâmbu Popii – grave 17: LT C1 (after Rustoiu 2014b); 2. Mannersdorf: LTB1 (after Ramsel 2011).

these stamped motifs were combined on one of the vessels coming from grave no. 17, dated to the LT C1, is relevant for the aforementioned revival (Rustoiu 2014b). Four stamped circles form a T-shaped motif, each group being symmetrically repeated six times. The same composition, as well as the same decorative rhythm, is encountered on a series of early La Tène bowls belonging to the so-called 'Braubach' type. Among the examples, the vessels from Győr-Újszálás and Kosd can be listed (Hunyady 1942, pl. 59, n°1,4, pl. 60, n°1), as well as the finds from graves no. 10 and 114 at Mannersdorf, dated to the LT B1 (Ramsel 2011, pl. 46, n°1, pl. 125, n°6). Thus the vessel from Fântânele-Dâmbu Popii is also a visual example of remembering and preserving earlier traditions from the homeland of the 'colonists' who moved eastward at the end of the LT B1 and the beginning of the LT B2, by transferring some ancestral symbols on vessels used in funerary ceremonies which were performed a few generations later.

This revival of older traditions occurred in a period of apparent stability in the eastern Carpathian Basin, after the turmoil generated by several migrations and invasions which marked the first half of the 3rd century BC. However, this apparently peaceful period was characterized by significant demographic changes, some resulting from earlier population movements and others from certain structural changes within the local societies, which can be observed sometimes in the internal organization of the settlements and cemeteries. These social changes seem to be associated with an increasing dominance of certain groups within the communities, and some of them could have used older symbols and practices as a way of legitimising their power and authority.

### Communities of the peripheries and the preservation of indigenous traditions. Other cultural models and identity constructs

It has to be noted that the newcomers did not settle in the entire eastern Carpathian Basin. Archaeological evidence indicates that in the Maramureş depression, the upper Tisza valley, and the mountainous depressions from eastern Transylvania the local communities largely continued their way of life, unrelated to the one brought over by the Celtic groups.

In Maramureş (fig. 5), archaeological investigations of the last few decades unearthed some fortified settlements dated to the 4th-3rd centuries BC. Such settlements have been identified at Bila Cerkva (fig. 12, n°1) (Rustoiu 2002a, p. 57-59; Rustoiu 2005, p. 13-14) and Solotvino (Rustoiu 2002b, p. 46-56; Rustoiu 2005, p. 11-13), on the right bank of the Tisza River, in Transcarpathian Ukraine. Both sites were fortified with earthen walls having multiple palisades made of timber and wattle-and-daub. The habitation consisted of dwellings built above ground and storage pits. Their ceramic inventory included handmade vessels which resembled the Early Iron Age ones (fig. 12, n°2). In general, the internal organization and layout of the fortified settlements, as well as their ceramic inventories, have analogies in Thracian settlements to the east of the Carpathians.

The settlements from Bila Cerkva and Solotvino illustrate the development of local communities from Maramureş from the Early to the Late Iron Age, away from the influence of any incoming foreign groups. The main features of the settlements from Maramureş indicate that the local populations probably had an internal social organization similar to those living to the east and south of the Carpathians – communities ruled by warlike elites and concentrated around large fortified settlements. This model of social organization was different from the one which characterized the early and middle La Tène rural communities from Transylvania. The sites from Maramureş, the upper Tisza valley and the eastern depressions belong to a peripheral area of the model of social organization usually defined as Thracian. Their peripheral location more likely hampered the development of regular trading connections with the Greek Pontic or eastern Scythian regions. Unlike in the settlements from Maramureş, for example, the inventories from several sites located to the east of the Carpathians contain numerous Greek vessels, as well as hoards containing gold and silver artefacts of foreign origin (see Măndescu 2010).

Recent archaeological investigations made in the depressions from eastern Transylvania also document a particular evolution of local communities (fig. 5). For example, a cremation cemetery dated to the 4th-3rd centuries BC has been discovered at Olteni (Covasna County) (fig. 12, n°3), together with a contemporaneous rural settlement (Sirbu *et al.* 2006; 2008). The funerary rite and ritual, as well as the inventories, have analogies to the east of the Carpathians (see Buzdugan 1968; Babeş, Miriţoiu 2011; 2012). Similar to the Maramureş depression, the community from Olteni seem to have remained untouched by Celtic cultural influences during this period. Furthermore, the local social patterns resemble the mentioned model of social organization which characterized the communities from the east of the Carpathians.

Lastly, a series of areas from Banat and southern Transylvania seem to have also been oriented towards the lower Danube region during the period of first Celtic arrivals (fig. 5). This orientation is attested by the cremation burials from Cuptoare-Sfogea (fig. 12, n°4) and Mercina in Banat, and Ocna Sibiului in southern Transylvania, whose inventories contained Chalcidian bronze helmets specific to the northern Balkans (Rustoiu, Berecki 2012, with previous bibliography), illustrating the social and cultural connections established between the elites of these communities and those from the south of the mountains.

### Conclusions

The interactions between Celtic colonists and local populations differed from one community to another in the eastern Carpathian Basin. These variations are mostly the result of different social and cultural features which characterized the indigenous communities from various areas of the eastern Carpathian Basin at the end of the Early Iron Age. In general, the newcomers and especially the elites imposed their own norms related to the construction and expression of individual and collective identity, which they largely brought over from their homeland. This

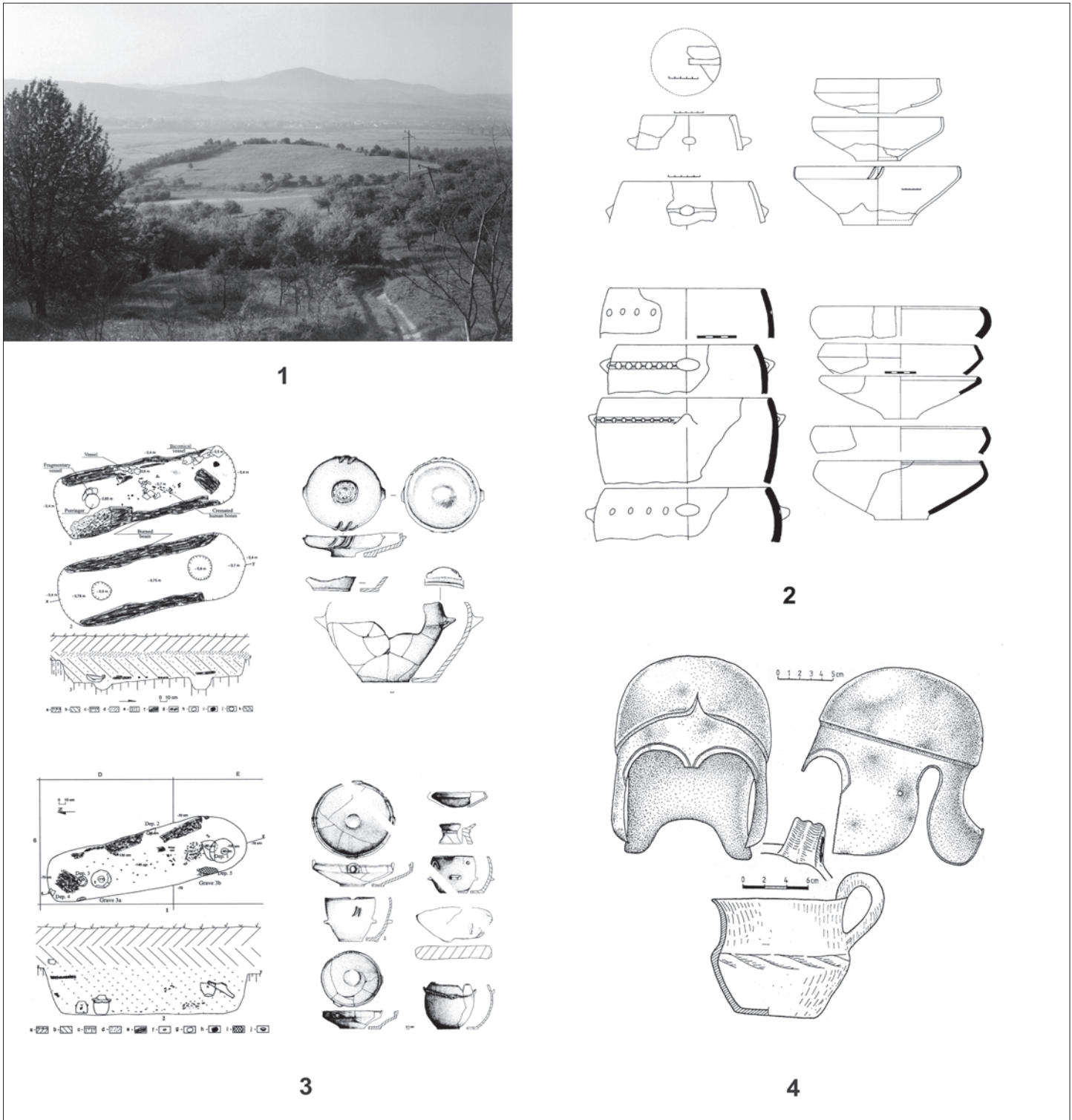


Fig. 12. 1. Fortified settlement at Bila Cerkva; 2. Indigenous pottery from the settlements at Solotvino and Bila Cerkva (all after Rustoiu 2005); 3. Cremation burials at Olteni (after Sîrbu *et al.* 2006); 4. Grave with Chalcidion helmet from Cuptoare-Sfogea (after Rustoiu, Berecki 2012).



tendency is illustrated by the preservation of specific funerary rites and rituals, among other things. Particular styles of bodily ornamentation that were meant to define the social status and function of certain privileged groups within the communities were also preserved. One good example is the placing of panoplies of weapons in burials belonging to the warriors.

At the same time, the indigenous populations expressed different degrees of resistance towards the new identity norms imposed by the newcomers. In some cases, the locals continued to practise traditional funerary rituals, aiming to preserve certain elements of their own identity. In other cases, they were assimilated relatively fast and ended by dissimulating their identity behind some visual elements belonging to the newcomers. The adoption of some styles of bodily ornamentation brought over by the colonists partially reflects this process of integration.

The cohabitation of the newcomers with the local populations contributed to the cultural hybridization of the communities and the appearance of new identity constructs. The resulting material culture and social practices were different from those of the colonists' homeland from Central and Western Europe and also from those of the end of the Early Iron Age in the eastern Carpathian Basin. Among the effects of this process of hybridization that are visible archaeologically are the manners of organizing the

communities, the habitat and the surrounding landscape, as well as the funerary space. Though the norms and concepts of the newcomers predominated, some of the local beliefs and traditions influenced the landscape's perception and manipulation. Along the same lines, the effects of cultural hybridization can also be observed in the culinary and dining practices.

Lastly, it seems that the local communities from Maramureş, the upper Tisza valley and the mountainous depressions in eastern Transylvania followed their own paths of development, given that their evolution was not disturbed by the arrival of any foreign groups, as it had happened in most of the eastern Carpathian Basin. These particular examples are allowing a better understanding of the evolution of local communities from Transylvania and of the impact of Celtic colonization in the entire region in question.

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## Abstract

The article discusses the impact of Celtic colonization, which happened at the beginning of the Second Iron Age, on the indigenous communities of the eastern Carpathian Basin. Archaeological evidence demonstrates that the new arrivals living side-by-side with the local populations contributed to the cultural hybridization of the communities and the appearance of new formulations of identity. These processes are directly related to the manner in which the two groups interacted during the initial phases of colonization. In order to provide a meaningful comparison, the evolution of neighbouring areas unaffected by Celtic colonization is also discussed.

## Résumé

**La dynamique des identités collectives et de recontres culturelles dans la partie orientale du Bassin Carpathique pendant le second âge du Fer.** Le présent article traite de l'impact de la colonisation celtique, au début du second âge du Fer, sur les communautés autochtones de l'est du bassin des Carpates. Les indices archéologiques montrent que la cohabitation entre les nouveaux arrivants et les populations locales ont favorisé l'hybridation culturelle des communautés et l'apparition de nouvelles formes d'identité. Ces processus sont directement liés à la manière dont les deux groupes ont interagi durant les phases initiales de la colonisation. Afin de fournir une comparaison significative, l'évolution des zones limitrophes, qui n'ont pas été affectées par la colonisation celtique, est également présentée.