

Introduction

Maciej Karwowski, Peter C. Ramsi

The Klement/Oberleiserberg conference was initiated at a ceramic workshop on May 16, 2011, “The latest La Tène ceramics in the Middle Danube Region and their links to borderlands”, which was organised within the framework of the FWF-funded project “Celtic Hilltop Settlement on Oberleiserberg” (FWF Project no. P22615-G21). The organisation of this workshop was financially supported by the (former) Prehistoric Commission of the Austrian Academy of Sciences. This meeting was not a typical conference, but a discussion of original finds. The participants had the opportunity both to present the ceramic finds from settlements from their own research and to familiarise themselves with finds from other sites. The workshop attracted 39 researchers from six countries, namely Austria, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovenia and Germany. Especially important at this occasion was that the colleagues from Slovenia realised the significance of the similarities in their region on the basis of original finds in a concrete and tangible way. It has been suggested, and ultimately decided, to hold a conference on the subject of the contacts between the La Tène culture in the Middle Danube region and the east Alpine/Adriatic area. This volume is the printed result of this conference, which was held from June 14–15, 2012 at the Event Centre Schüttenkasten in Oberleis-Klement, Lower Austria.

The conference was attended by around 40 researchers from eight countries: Austria, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovenia, Croatia, Hungary and Germany. The thematic focus of the contributions was the nature of contacts and relations between the settlement areas of the La Tène culture, which are associated with the Celtic tribes of the Boii and Taurisci on the basis of numismatic and written sources.

The Taurisci are historically and archaeologically well documented and generally acknowledged; the term “Boii”, however, has always sparked fierce debate. “Boii” is here understood as a technical term for a specific terri-

tory (Bohemia, Moravia, southern Poland, northeastern Austria and southwestern Slovakia), which is connected by the gold-based “Boii” monetary system (see also the contribution by Milítký in this volume).

Taurisci and Scordisci

The largest thematic block of this conference volume comprises discussions that deal with the nature of the settlements of the Taurisci in the basins of the Drava and Sava, i.e. in Slovenia and Croatia, and the Scordisci towards their southeast. In these papers, the local peculiarity of settlement patterns and archaeological finds are addressed, as are the intensive contacts with adjacent areas, especially towards the north.

In his contribution, **Boris Kavur** addresses the earliest Celtic burials in the area of Styria (Austria and Slovenia), which can be dated to the end of the La Tène B phase. Inhumations still dominate the cemetery record and male burials are characterised by undamaged swords with decorated scabbards and open-worked chapes. They form a regional group of the first Celtic settlers in this area, which shows a strong cultural and thus aesthetic connection to the Celtic society in the east.

Marko Dizdār discusses the settlement network of the Scordisci in Vinkovci in the eastern Slavonia region (Croatia) during the Late La Tène period. Rescue excavations were carried out on multi-period prehistoric settlements along the Bosut River, where the latest strata date to the La Tène period. Many simultaneous lowland settlements were identified during fieldwork, including Blato, with large amounts of metal and glass finds, which point to the existence of a complex settlement pattern. Various workshops must have existed in these settlements, particularly with pottery kilns, which produced many kinds of ceramic vessels for both local needs and trade.

Ivan Drnić presents cast Late La Tène fibulae from the area of southeastern Pannonia. The specimens from

Dalj, Novi Jankovci and Novi Banovci are to be regarded as copies of the type Oberleiserberg, but coming from local workshops. Here a technology transfer is to be observed, because these fibulae consist on the one hand of a tin-bronze alloy, and on the other hand of a leaded bronze alloy. These cases show the interactions between Lower Austria and southeastern Pannonia in the Late La Tène period.

Dragan Božić suggests combining two groups of bronze fibulae of the Middle-La Tène-construction under the name “fibulae of the Zvonimirovo type”, namely the “fibulae of Middle La Tène construction with rhombic expansion of the bow”, coined by Biba Teržan in 1971, and “fibulae of the Zvonimirovo type”, coined by Marko Dizdār in 2006. Both groups have the following elements in common: a large knob on the bent-back foot, semi-oval in cross-section and ornate, a pronounced collar decorated with a blank or cross-hatched triangle, and a wide bulge between the knob and the collar.

Boii

The next section of the volume deals with the territory of the Boii. Most authors emphasise the crucial importance of the north–south axis (“Amber Route”) in the La Tène culture in central Europe, which ran through the Moravian Gate to the Middle Danube and further south to the Adriatic coast.

Jiří Militký considers issues of relations and contacts between the Boii and the areas inhabited by the tribes of the Taurisci and Norici. Coins are particularly important for understanding Celtic communities of the Middle to Late La Tène period in central Europe. Far-reaching contacts between individual sites and regions can be traced relatively reliably through them. The number of coins of the Taurisci and Norici from the areas of the Boii in Bohemia and Moravia is surprisingly large with 35 coins collected from 13 sites. These imports began before the oppida period, but most of the coins of the Taurisci and Norici can be associated with the latter chronological horizon. Intense commercial exchanges often took place in central settlements and in oppida. It seems that during the oppida period, the Taurisci and Norici were in regular contact with different regions of the Boian world, which, in the light of the archaeological evidence, was certainly not as tightly defined as might appear.

Maciej Karwowski presents an analysis of the finds from the Oberleiserberg, Lower Austria, which demonstrates the relations and contacts of the Danube region with the areas inhabited by the tribes of the Taurisci and Scordisci. The evidence goes beyond the coins discussed in the chapter by Jiří Militký to include other categories

of finds. Some of these finds represent imports, others point to the spread of ideas or supra-regional stylistic influences. No other site of the La Tène culture north of the Danube has such an extensive collection of finds that point to close contacts with the Celtic south.

Monika Dębiec and **Maciej Karwowski** discuss the *Knotenringe* (“knot rings”) in their contribution. Small bronze rings with various arrangements of knobs are characteristic for the oppida period in the eastern La Tène culture. A significant increase in discoveries of such *Knotenringe* in recent years in the zone of Boian coinage allows us to classify them typologically and study their distribution. The *Knotenringe* are an example of the transfer of ideas along the Amber Route corridor. Their function, however, still remains unknown.

Radosław Čambal and co-authors examine a typical vessel form found in the last phase of the Late La Tène period at the oppidum of Bratislava and in its hinterland. The pots with bulbous, thickened, straight or everted rims were either handmade or produced on a potter’s wheel. Pots of this type often occur together with fibulae of the Jezerine, Gorica, Alésia and Almgren 18 types, as well as with coins of the Karlstein type. Outside the territory of the Bratislava oppidum these vessel types are also found in Styria and Lower Austria (Oberleiserberg). These finds point to new possibilities for interpretation, as well as to possible geopolitical contexts. Perhaps the pottery can be identified as “Norican ware”, which is closely associated with the political power and territorial expansion of the Kingdom of the Norici into the territory of southwestern Slovakia in the last third of the 1st century BC.

General Themes of the Eastern Celtic Area

In this section of the book, local specifics of the La Tène culture in the east, such as pithouses, are discussed as characteristic elements of the local material culture. Furthermore, the role of the “Amber Road” will be evaluated, questioning whether it was the sole north–south axis, or if other road systems such as the “Bastarnian Road” existed in the east. There might have been a direct connection between the Bastarnae and the Dacians in addition to the connection between the Boii and the Taurisci.

In his contribution **Péter Prohaszká** presents the treasure of Óhuta (now Miskolc Bükkzentlászló, Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County, Hungary) discovered in 1846. Contradictory information concerning the context of the finds could be clarified thanks to a detailed examination of the historical documentation. The treasure consisted of at least three different types of coins and other gold artefacts. The tetradrachms with a boss on the obverse (*Buckelavers*), and the later variant of the tetradrachms

of the Audoleon type were minted during the 1st century BC. The drachm with the head of Pallas comes from the Thracian area. The spiral gold ring and the chain are, in the author's opinion, means of payment and not jewellery. The types of coins indicate that the treasure was hidden in the course of the 1st century BC.

Piotr Łuczkiwicz presents a silver coin, which was discovered during large-scale rescue excavations on the Polish-Ukrainian border in Hrebenne. Despite heavy wear and tear the size and the weight, and especially the legend, points to a Geto-Dacian imitation of a stater of Philip II of Macedon (359–336 BC) of the Huși-Vovriești type. Such coins only occasionally appear north of the Carpathians. They were minted from the end of the 3rd to the middle of the 2nd century BC. The context of the find in a settlement and with pottery in pits indicates a date from the LT C1/C2 transition up to LT D1.

Lőrinc Timár discusses a typical La Tène form of architecture in his contribution: buildings with sunken floors (pithouses). They were spread all over the Carpathian Basin, not only in the Late Iron Age, but also in the Middle Ages and modern times. Despite their small size and simple structure, the interpretation of their remains from the Middle La Tène period remains problematic. The function of the sunken buildings and their internal organisation within the structure of the settlement are closely linked. However, only specific types of buildings could be assigned to a specific function so far. The present chapter gives an overview of the basic questions and focuses on future research directions.

Contacts between the Middle Danube Region and the Romans

This raises the question of the oppidum of Bratislava around the mid-1st century BC. In addition, the influence of the *regnum Noricum* and the Romans is discussed. The later developments in the context of Germanic colonisation (Maroboduus), a controversial topic, are also presented here.

Margaréta Musilová reports in her contribution on the ongoing research at Bratislava Castle, which the reconstruction and renovation of the castle, and the archaeological excavations, reinitiated. The Celtic rulers at the oppidum of Bratislava probably played a crucial role in Roman diplomacy and their plans to subjugate the Dacians and Illyrians in the Balkans. Architectural remains of the 1st century BC were found for the first time in this area: architecture and masonry in Roman style – a palace with Roman pavement and mosaic in *opus signinum*. The quality of these structures indicates intensive contact with Italy and the Mediterranean. The

discovery of a hoard of Celtic gold and silver coins under the floor of the *domus* in the former riding hall was a particular highlight. The gold staters bear the names of the Celtic rulers Biatec and Nonnos. According to the author, the discovery of the Arx Boiorum not only changes our views on the history of Bratislava and its surroundings, but also on the development of central Europe during the Late La Tène period.

In his chapter, **Igor Bazovský** presents the unique find of an ornate hearth from the 1st century BC discovered in 2011 during the construction of an underground garage on Alexander Dubček Square in Bratislava. Long-term use is indicated by traces of re-plastering of the building's clay floor and hearth, which was located approximately in its centre. The clay hearth itself was decorated with an incised ornament in the form of a four-pointed star. Decorated hearths are known to have existed since the Early Bronze Age; their geographical range extends from England to Ukraine and they are often associated with religious ideas.

The contribution by **Michael Erdrich** discusses the role of Prince Maroboduus of the Marcomanni as the Romans asserted their dominance in the Middle Danube region. The life and work of Maroboduus was recently re-interpreted in the light of a detailed reading of the exact words of the ancient authors, concluding that Maroboduus took power over the tribe of the Marcomanni voluntarily and without Roman influence, and that his migration to Bohemia shortly afterwards was not controlled by Rome. This view is worthy of discussion for various reasons, especially in the light of the extremely successful wars of aggression by the Romans against Germanic tribes in the period in question. Instead, the author argues for a constructive organisation of the Roman domination and takeover of the Middle Danube region, which at the time was not under any military control, in which Maroboduus played a central role dependent on Rome.

Of the 20 papers presented at the conference, 14 written contributions were obtained for this volume. The contribution to archaeological knowledge consists on the one hand of the presentation of contexts of finds in many categories (coins, fibulae, *Knotenringe*, architecture and settlement features). On the other hand, new insights have been gained into the relationship between the area of Boii coinage and settlement areas of the Norici, Taurisci and Scordisci.

The paradigm shifts in Iron Age archaeology and the veritable explosion of new archaeological material – which has changed the nature of the data at our disposal – have

found their expression in this volume, an example being the growing amount of information available from large-scale open settlements.

Our volume appears almost at the same time as two other edited collections, "Fingerprinting the Iron Age"³ which has those paradigm shifts at its core, and the proceedings of a conference held in Český Krumlov in 2013 – "Boier zwischen Realität und Fiktion" (The Boii between Reality and Fiction).⁴ Although there is some overlap among authors, the three volumes admirably complement each other and bear witness to the current lively interest in this and related subjects.

Finally we should mention that a further workshop has been organised in Oberleis-Klement in June 2015, dedicated to the study of hand-made pottery of the La Tène culture within the FWF-funded project "Celtic Pottery in North-eastern Austria".

It was important to provide a forum for new and ground-breaking contacts between researchers in this field and their (often yeasty and fervent) discussions during the 2012 conference, as well as to provide space for publication. Therefore space is given here for controversial presenta-

tions of new archaeological findings and considerations that are sure to lead to new dialogue. Overall, the objective of this meeting, the challenging of conventional ways of thinking about chronology in the Late La Tène period and a presentation of new approaches to the interpretation of archaeological evidence, was met. The statements in the individual articles represent the opinion of the authors and were only translated into a "diplomatic" language in extreme cases, so as not to endanger further discourse.

References

- KARWOWSKI, SALAČ, SIEVERS 2015
 M. KARWOWSKI, V. SALAČ, S. SIEVERS (Eds.), *Boier zwischen Realität und Fiktion. Akten des internationalen Kolloquiums in Český Krumlov vom 14.-16. November 2013. Kolloquien zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte 21*, Bonn 2015.
- POPA, STODDART 2014
 C. N. POPA, S. STODDART (Eds.), *Fingerprinting the Iron Age: Approaches to Identity in the European Iron Age: Integrating South-Eastern Europe into the Debate*. Oxford 2014.

3. POPA, STODDART 2014.

4. KARWOWSKI, SALAČ, SIEVERS 2015.