

## **CROSS-CULTURAL CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE MIDDLE AND LOWER DANUBE REGIONS DURING THE LATE IRON AGE**

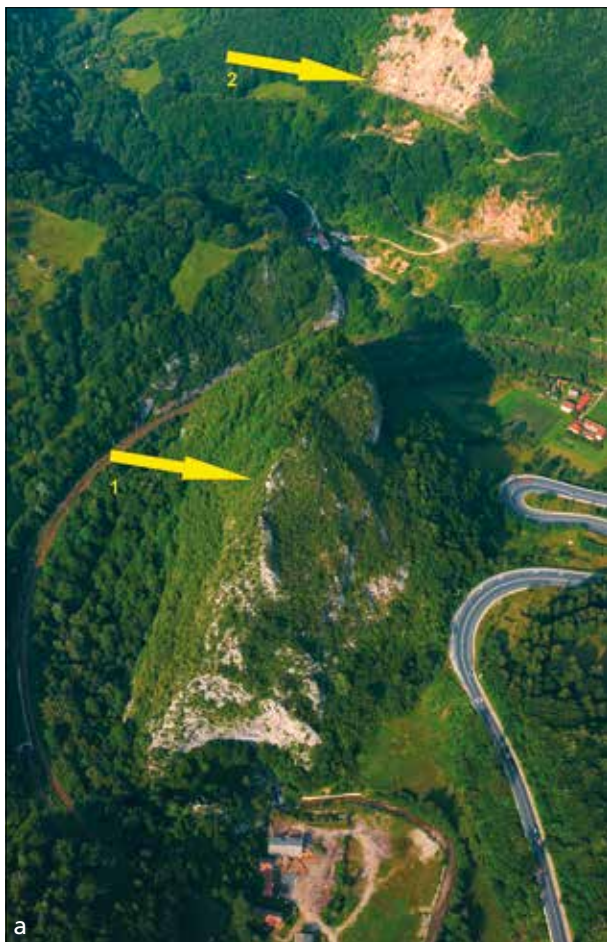
### **THE SILVER BRACELET FROM BĂNIȚA (JUD. HUNEDOARA/RO) REVISITED**

Throughout history, the middle and lower Danube basin, linking the Central-Eastern European region with the northern Balkans and the Pontic region, was an area that enabled many cross-cultural connections between populations having different ethnic identities. Constituting a meeting point for communities with diverse origins, this large geographical space encompassed during the Late Iron Age a genuine ethno-cultural mosaic. The Celtic colonization of the middle Danube area during the 4<sup>th</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BC played an important part in the genesis of the aforementioned ethnic and cultural configuration<sup>1</sup>. Despite the major differences in communal and social organisation, this phenomenon led to, among others, the appearance of complex connections between Celtic elites and the ones belonging to the populations from the northern Balkans or eastern Mediterranean areas<sup>2</sup>. The contacts and social networks established between the elites of the middle Danube region and the northern Balkans aristocracy determined the circulation of cultural goods from one territory to the other, including »intellectual« goods which cannot be easily traced archaeologically<sup>3</sup>. The differences in organisation, social structure and means of expressing ethnic and social identity contributed to the emergence of hybrid forms in the material culture, adapted to the visual and symbolic demands of each specific group. This hybridization can be noticed, for example, in the composition of the costume and in bodily ornamentation, which combines La Tène elements with others of Greek or northern Balkans origin. In this regard, the relationship between the craftsman who has the specific technical knowledge and the clients who wish to acquire goods which comply with their personal functional, visual, and symbolic values (the so-called desirable goods<sup>4</sup>) is significant. Their importance resides in the possibility of identifying the mechanisms of technological transfer or the »reproduction« of »foreign« objects by means of particular technical procedures<sup>5</sup>.

From this perspective, the silver bracelet from Bănița (jud. Hunedoara/RO) is part of a small group of jewellery attesting connections between different cultural areas, as it will be shown below. Its features reflect the use of a specific technology, typical for the La Tène cultural milieu from the middle Danube region, with the purpose of creating jewellery inspired from prototypes originating in the lower Danube area inhabited by the Getae.

### **THE SILVER BRACELET FROM BĂNIȚA**

The bracelet has been published for the first time in 1966 by Octavian Floca in a brief synthesis regarding the Dacian fortress at Bănița, which had been archaeologically investigated several years before (**fig. 1**). The bracelet was illustrated in a photograph next to other objects identified in the fortress but without further information regarding the context of discovery<sup>6</sup>. As a result, most scholars who referred to this artefact considered that it belonged to the assemblage of finds from inside the fortress and therefore dated it to the



**Fig. 1** Aerial (a) and ground view (b) of the Dacian fortress from Bănița (jud. Hunedoara/RO) (1) and of the hill with the stone quarry where the silver bracelet was discovered (2). – (Aerial photo Z. Czajlik; ground photo I. V. Ferencz).



**Fig. 2** The silver bracelet from Bănița (jud. Hunedoara/RO). – (Photo I. V. Ferencz).

period of the Dacian kingdom (1<sup>st</sup> century BC-1<sup>st</sup> century AD), as a product of the Dacian goldsmiths<sup>7</sup>. Though several other authors have proposed a later dating for the silver bracelet, to the 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>8</sup>, their opinion has already been rightfully criticised over two decades ago<sup>9</sup>.

A recent enquiry made by the authors of this article into the registers of the Muzeul Civilizației Dacice și Romane of Deva brought new and relevant information regarding the context of discovery. Thus, the bracelet was registered in the inventories of the Deva Museum under position number 551 from 2<sup>nd</sup> of September 1960, with the inventory number 13992.

According to the information from the same register, the bracelet comes from »Peștera Bolii, at the height of the old stone quarry (Hochman quarry)« and it was acquired by the museum for the sum of 150 lei.

Therefore, the bracelet was not discovered in the Dacian fortress from Bănița, but on a nearby hill where a limestone quarry functioned (fig. 1). The hill, called Peștera Bolii, lays 500m east-northeast away from the height on which the Dacian fortress is positioned, on the left bank (opposite from the fortress) of the Bănița creek. For these reasons, the chronology of the bracelet can no longer be linked to the functioning period of the fortress. However, a morphological and typological analysis can more accurately clarify the dating of the object.

The bracelet was made from silver sheet; the hollow body was modelled by hammering the sheet around a core made of organic materials (probably wax or resin) (fig. 2). Traces of the small chisels used during the manufacturing process are still visible on the inner sides. The middle part has a trapezoid cross-section and the ends are flared (trumpet-shaped). Both ends were covered with a round »lid« made of a silver sheet, affixed by bending over the edge of the flared ends of the bracelet. Regarding the decoration, each end displays two pairs of protuberances which were modelled in the repoussé technique (fig. 3). These knobs were subsequently decorated with incisions made with a fine chisel which depict pairs of eyes in a stylized manner. A series of small lines, zigzags, semi-circles and dots were incised

with a chisel and a punching tool between the pairs of eyes and behind them. Overall, the decorative pattern suggests the intention of representing stylized zoomorphic heads. The external diameter of the bracelet is 6.8cm, while the internal ones are of 5.3 and 4.2 cm respectively; the artefact weighs 30g.

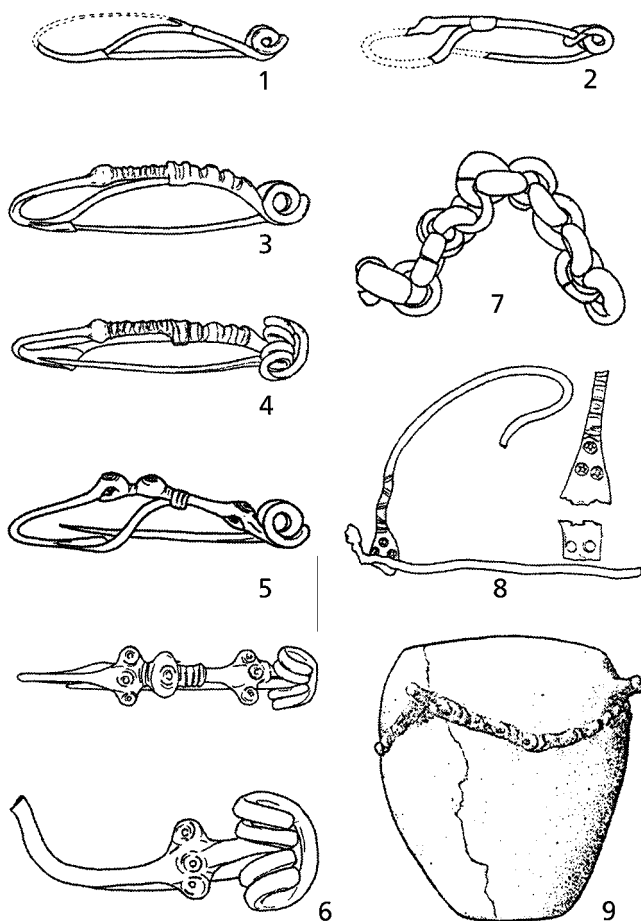
Taking into consideration the manufacturing technique and the morphology, the tubular bracelet from Bănița has no parallels among the products of the Dacian goldsmiths, as it has been presumed over the time, since the annular jewellery from pre-Roman Dacia was made of metal wire or bars<sup>10</sup>. However, a close analogy comes from a cremation grave from Vrșac-At (Južnabanatski okr., Vojvodina Region/SRB). The first to notice the morphological resemblance between the bracelet from Bănița and the one from Vrșac-At was F. Medeleț<sup>11</sup>.

### THE GRAVE FROM VRȘAC-AT

The cremation grave from Vrșac-At, discovered in 1972, was part of a larger cemetery destroyed by sand mining<sup>12</sup>. The cremated bones, belonging to a woman, and the funerary inventory (mostly damaged during the cremation process) were deposited in a ceramic hand-made bell-shaped vessel, decorated with knobs and alveolar cordons arranged in garlands (fig. 4, 9). The funerary urn contained a few bronze drops damaged by fire, fragments from a bronze chain (which probably linked a pair of brooches), an iron chain



**Fig. 3** The silver bracelet from Bănița (jud. Hunedoara/RO). Details of the ornamented ends. – (Photo I. V. Ferencz).



**Fig. 4** The inventory of the grave from Vršac-At (Južnobanatski okr./SRB): **1-6. 8** bronze. – **2. 7** iron. – **9** pottery. – (After Jovanović 1973-1974, figs 1-5). – Different scales.

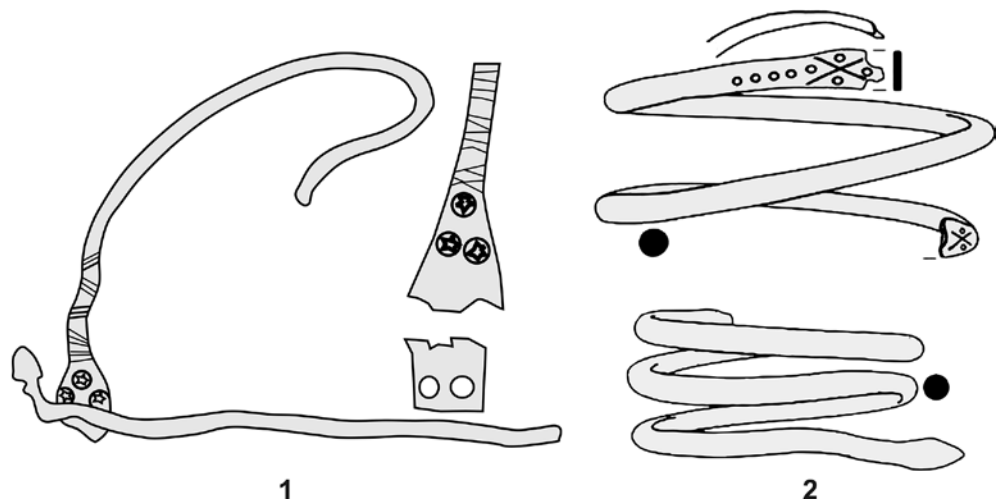
(fig. 4, 7), fragments from a bronze spiral bracelet with flattened ends decorated with punched rosettes (fig. 4, 8), and six brooches of the Middle La Tène scheme. One of the brooches was made of iron (fig. 4, 1), another one of bronze (fig. 4, 2), and the last four were also made of bronze and formed two pairs (fig. 4, 3-6). The fragmentary silver bracelet can be added to the inventory (fig. 5). The ends of the bracelet are well enough preserved in order to notice their close morphological resemblance with the ones of the bracelet from Bănița<sup>13</sup>. The subsequent restoration of the bracelet from Vršac-At did not consider the symmetry of the two ends; therefore, the object was not properly reconstructed<sup>14</sup> (fig. 5). Nevertheless, the preserved fragments allow the examination of the manufacturing technique, which is almost identical with the one displayed by the bracelet from Bănița, indicating that the two objects were probably made by the same craftsman.

Regarding the chronology, the grave from Vršac-At was dated to the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century and the beginning or first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC<sup>15</sup>. By re-analysing the funerary inventory, it is possible now to reconsider the dating initially proposed by B. Jovanović. The brooches from the inventory of the Vršac-At grave represent important dating elements. The iron brooch of the Middle La Tène scheme having a bilateral spring made of four coils and an internal chord has good parallels in, among others, cemeteries from south-western Slovakia, where it is dated to the phase Lt C1<sup>16</sup>. The iron brooch was probably paired with the small fragmentary bronze brooch. Even though they are not identical from a morphological viewpoint, they can be chronologically assigned to the same phase of the La Tène period<sup>17</sup>. The pair of Middle La Tène scheme bronze brooches having a bilateral spring and an external chord has numerous analogies in cemeteries from the Carpathian Basin dated to the Lt C1. One can mention here, among other discoveries, the brooches



**Fig. 5** The silver bracelet from Vršac-At (Južnobanatski okr./SRB) before and after restoration. – (After Jovanović 1973-1974, pls 2-3). – Different scales.

**Fig. 6** Bronze and silver spiral bracelets:  
**1** Vršac-At. –  
**2** Bunești. – (1 after Jovanović 1973-1974, fig. 2; 2 after Spânu 2014, fig. 8, 15-16). – Different scales.



from cemeteries in south-western Slovakia<sup>18</sup>, from Hungary at Bodroghalom (Kom. Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén)<sup>19</sup> or in Romania at Ciumești (jud. Satu Mare)<sup>20</sup>. Lastly, the pair of brooches of the Middle La Tène scheme having a bilateral spring and an external chord, and a bow and foot ornamented with plastic knobs, also has more or less close parallels in the area of the Carpathian Basin, as well as further west, in Bavaria or Bohemia. The finds come from graves dated to the Lt C1. This is the case of the brooches having knobs shaped in the same style on their foot from Vác (Kom. Pest/H)<sup>21</sup>, of a brooch from Ciumești<sup>22</sup>, of another one discovered at Manching-Steinbichel (Lkr. Pfaffenhofen a. d. Ilm/D)<sup>23</sup> or of several other pieces identified in cemeteries from Bohemia which were morphologically inspired by those in the Danubian region<sup>24</sup>.

The iron chains composed of small simple rings are frequent in the Carpathian Basin and can be encountered in Bavaria as well. Chronologically, they appeared in the Lt B2 and remained in use during the Lt C1<sup>25</sup>. M. Dizdar has recently observed that in the southern part of the Carpathian Basin this type of chains is rare and that the discovery from Vršac-At represents an exception in the La Tène milieu during the Lt C1 period<sup>26</sup>.

Therefore, based on the bodily ornaments of La Tène type, the grave from Vršac-At can be dated to Lt C1 (approximately between 260/250 and 190/175 BC), similarly to the dating proposed by M. Dizdar in his analysis dedicated to the iron chains composed of simple rings from the south-eastern Carpathian Basin<sup>27</sup>. However, apart from these ornaments of Central European type, the grave's inventory contains several other objects foreign to the La Tène cultural area: the ceramic vessel used as urn, the bronze spiral bracelet and the silver bracelet.

The bell-shaped vessel with four knobs represents a common shape in the ceramic repertoire of the Getae from the lower Danube area between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BC<sup>28</sup>. Similar vessels have been discovered in the region, both in settlements (for example at Poiana [jud. Galați/RO]<sup>29</sup>) and in cemeteries (for example at Zimnicea [jud. Teleorman/RO] or at Gruia [jud. Mehedinți/RO]<sup>30</sup>). In the »Celtic« cultural environment from Transylvania such vessels are present in settlements dated to the Lt C1 (see, for example, the settlements at Ciumești and Morești [jud. Mureș/RO]<sup>31</sup>). The presence of indigenous pottery in cemeteries from Banat is not uncommon. These vessels can be found, for example, in the cemetery at Remetea Mare (jud. Timiș/RO)<sup>32</sup>. In some cases, it is quite clear that the graves containing this type of vessels belong to the local population which was integrated or assimilated within the colonist communities. In other instances, the local and La Tène pottery form together table sets which reflect the emergence of mixed culinary habits as a result of cohabitation between »colonists« and »colonized« populations.

The bronze spiral bracelet (figs 4, 8; 6, 1) is also foreign to the repertoire of La Tène type jewellery (the iron spiral bracelets from the La Tène cultural area have a different morphology<sup>33</sup>). This type of bracelet made of

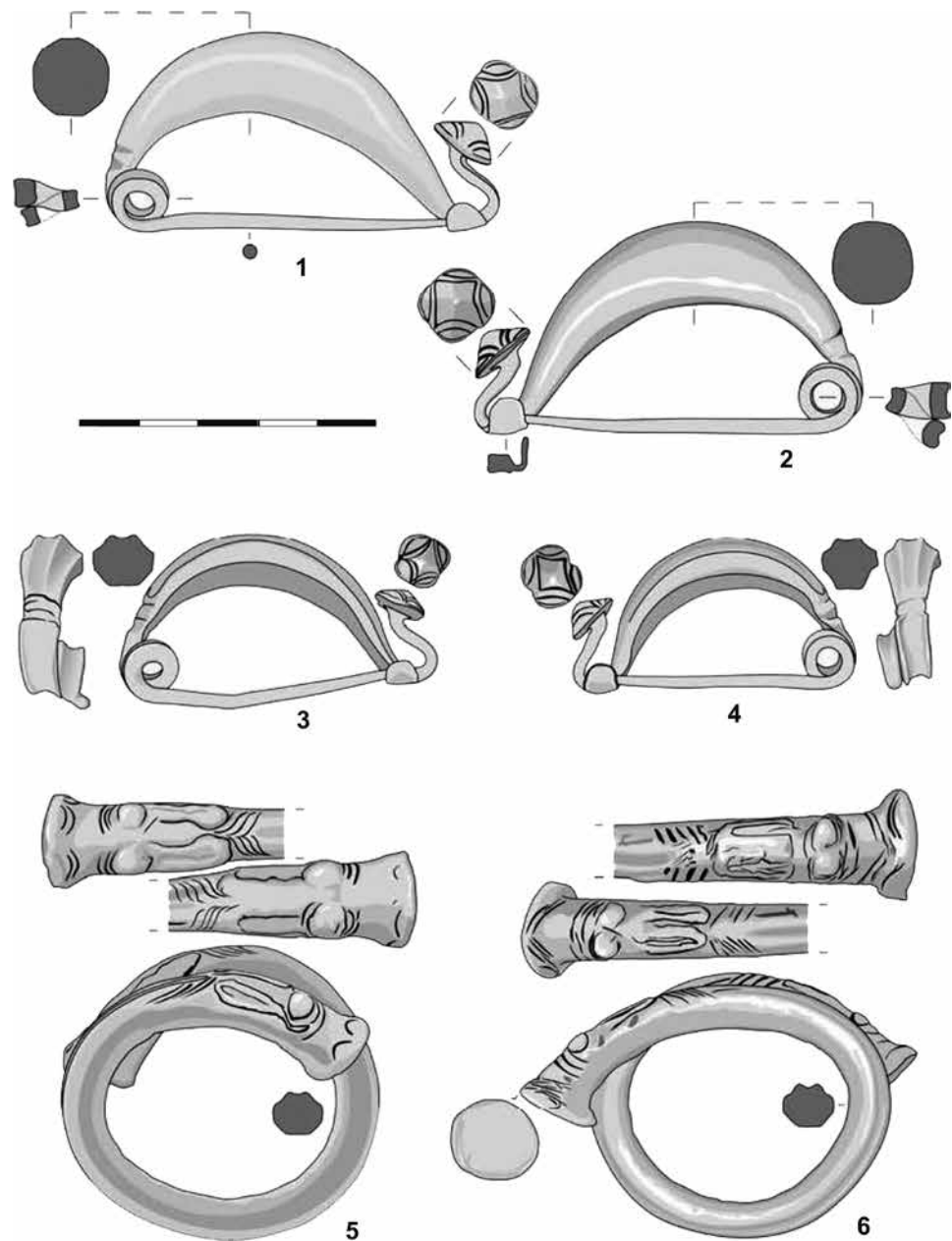
bronze or silver, with ends usually decorated with linear or cross-shaped incisions and dots or modelled in a zoomorphic manner, is rather frequent in settlements and cemeteries from the lower Danube. Among the discoveries one can mention the bronze and silver bracelets from the settlements to the east of the Carpathians at Bunești (jud. Vaslui/RO) (fig. 6, 2) and Saharna Mare (r. Rezina/MD)<sup>34</sup>, as well as the discoveries from the cemeteries at Enisala and Telița (jud. Tulcea/RO), in Dobrogea<sup>35</sup>. Made of gold or silver, these spiral bracelets were part of the costume worn by the 4<sup>th</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BC aristocracy and were discovered in hoards containing jewellery and harness items, such as Cucuteni-Băiceni (jud. Iași) in eastern Romania and Mateuți (r. Rezina/MD)<sup>36</sup>.

Regarding the silver bracelet from the grave at Vrșac-At, the object was manufactured using a technique familiar to the workshops from the La Tène milieu, but the shape and decoration were inspired by another cultural area. These aspects will be discussed further below.

### **THE SILVER BRACELETS FROM VRȘAC-AT AND BĂNIȚA: MANUFACTURING TECHNIQUE, DECORATION AND ORIGIN**

The bracelets from Vrșac-At and Bănița were made of a silver sheet. Silver and gold jewellery are quite commonly encountered in the inventories of the cemeteries from the Carpathian Basin in Lt B2 and C1<sup>37</sup>. At the same time, large numbers of »barbarian« coins imitating tetradrachms issued by Philip II appeared in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC<sup>38</sup>. Regarding the origin of the silver used to produce such jewellery, two general hypotheses have been proposed over time<sup>39</sup>. One of them is based on the supposed mining, in one way or another, of the complex ores containing gold, silver and copper from some areas in the Carpathian Basin, for example in Transylvania or Serbia. The second hypothesis starts from the idea that these local resources could not be exploited during the Late Iron Age because the indigenous populations lacked the necessary technological knowledge, so the silver needed for jewellery was obtained by melting foreign coins<sup>40</sup>. This second hypothesis could be eventually taken into consideration if the silver would have been obtained from melted Greek or Roman coins, but it fails to explain the origin of the silver used to issue local coins. At the same time, silver jewellery was already produced in the Carpathian Basin before the appearance of local or Mediterranean coins in the region. Accordingly, even if in some situations the local craftsmen melted silver coins to make jewellery, this more likely had happened in peripheral areas which had limited or no access to the main sources of silver and their distribution networks. This could have been the case of the hoard containing jewellery and local tetradrachms which were found at Epureni (jud. Vaslui/RO), to the east of the Carpathians, which is discussed below. In this context, it has to be noted that the weight of each category of jewellery from this hoard (a pair of small brooches, another of large brooches and a pair of bracelets) corresponds to those of two, five and seven coins respectively, of the type included in the same hoard. This pattern could suggest the use of coins as a source of silver for manufacturing the set of jewellery<sup>41</sup>. On the other hand, a series of previous chemical and metallographic analyses carried out on coins and jewellery from Transylvania have shown that the metal was obtained from non-ferrous sources in the Apuseni Mountains from the same region. The Transylvanian silver is always associated with gold in various proportions, as well as with copper, thus having a specific compositional signature<sup>42</sup>.

Returning to the bracelets in question, it was already mentioned that the one from Bănița weights 30g. Since local tetradrachms, which are numerous in eastern Serbia, western Romania and Transylvania, usually weight about 13-14g, there is no relevant proportional relation between their weight and that of the bracelet from Bănița, as it was the case of the jewellery and coins from Epureni. It can be therefore presumed that the ornament in question was more likely made of silver obtained from other sources and not by melting



**Fig. 7** Silver brooches and bracelets from the hoard at Epureni (jud. Vaslui/RO). – (After Spânu 2014, fig. 1).

coins. In this context, it has to be noted that the metallographic analyses of the jewellery included in the hoard from Orešac-Židovar (Južnobanatski okr., Vojvodina/SRB), dated to Lt D1 and containing objects having different origins, indicated that the Hellenistic, Roman and indigenous ornaments have different metal compositions. Among them, the jewellery specific to the Scordiscian environment were made of silver which was very probably coming from local sources. At the same time, these analyses have also shown that the craftsmen controlled the alloy's composition using specific technologies<sup>43</sup>. Nevertheless, future metallographic analyses could also provide important evidence regarding the origin of the silver used in the manufacturing of the bracelet from Bănița.

The manufacturing of tubular ring-shaped jewellery (bracelets and anklets) made of bronze or iron sheet represents an older tradition from Lt B1 and B2 in the Central European regions, which continued during



**Fig. 8** Bronze bracelet from the fortified settlement at Bunești (jud. Vaslui/RO). – (After Spânu 2014, fig. 3).

Lt C1<sup>44</sup>. This technique was used in the manufacturing process of the bracelets from Vrșac-At and Bănița although the discussed objects have a trapezoid cross-section and not a circular one like the ones of the La Tène type. On the other hand, the zoomorphic motifs on the ends of the bracelets have no parallels in the La Tène decorative repertoire from the second half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC<sup>45</sup>. It is more likely that the craftsman adapted in a stylized manner a foreign zoomorphic motif. Again, the closest analogies can be found in the lower Danube basin.

The aforementioned hoard from Epureni contains 79 coins of the Huși-Vovriești type (barbarian imitations of tetradrachms issued by Philip II of Macedon), two pairs of silver brooches belonging to the »Thracian« type (fig. 7, 1-4), and a pair of bracelets made of silver wire having the ends decorated with a zoomorphic motif (fig. 7, 5-6). Based on the chronology

offered by the objects from this inventory, the hoard was hidden in the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC<sup>46</sup>, but the dating can be rather extended to the second half of the century<sup>47</sup>.

The bracelets from Epureni have flared ends decorated with incised semi-circles. The rest of the decorative motif consists of eyes and ears rendered in relief and incised wavy lines behind them. The bodies of the bracelets have a polygonal cross-section. The zoomorphic ornaments are represented in a rather naturalistic manner which allows the identification of dog heads or wolves with wide opened mouths. This decorative motif can also be observed on other silver or bronze bracelets from the lower Danube region, for example in the cemetery at Telița<sup>48</sup>. Likewise, another bronze bracelet with a polygonal cross-section and zoomorphic ends was identified in the settlement at Bunești (fig. 8), positioned in the vicinity of the area where the hoard from Epureni was discovered<sup>49</sup>. In this case, each end of the bracelet has two pairs of protuberances depicting either the eyes and nostrils of stylized animals or two pairs of eyes, similar to the bracelets from Vrșac-At and Bănița.

The morphology and decoration of the bracelets from Epureni and Bunești suggest that these objects represented the inspiration source for the silver pieces from Vrșac-At and Bănița. Regarding the bracelets made of a silver sheet, the rather clumsy attempt to imitate the polygonal cross-section of the eastern Carpathian bracelets led to a hollow body having a trapezoid cross-section. Moreover, the craftsman who produced the bracelets from Vrșac-At and Bănița imitated the flared ends and the zoomorphic decoration using his own technical knowledge and relying on his subjective perception of the images depicted on the pieces from the lower Danube. It cannot be excluded that the representations of canine heads on the bracelets of the Getae were seen and understood by both craftsman and client as images of the pairs of dragons and griffons depicted on the scabbards of the La Tène type swords from Central and Western Europe.

Since the prototypes of the silver bracelets from Vrșac-At and Bănița can be found among the silver and bronze pieces from the regions inhabited by the Getae on the lower Danube, it is important to question the manner of interaction between the two cultural areas, as well as the mechanisms which favoured the transfer of decorative symbols from one cultural milieu to another.



## INTERCOMMUNAL RELATIONS AND INDIVIDUAL MOBILITY

The communities from the middle Danube area that emerged after the Celtic colonization established a series of social contacts with the local populations from the northern part of the Balkan Peninsula during the 4<sup>th</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BC. The purpose of these contacts was to regulate the intercommunal relations between the new and the old political entities from the region. The works of some ancient authors reflect the perceived outcome of these intercommunal alliances. In this regard Titus Livius (XXXIX, 35; XL, 5; XL, 57; XLI, 19) writes that in 179 BC the Bastarnae crossed to the south of the Danube in the northern Balkans, being called by King Philip V of Macedon who intended to use them as mercenaries against the Dardani and afterwards against the Romans. The unexpected death of the king prevented the fulfilment of the »contract«, but the Bastarnae, under the rule of their King Clondicus, confronted the Dardani for several years. During these hostilities, the Bastarnae were helped by some Thracian communities from the Balkans and collaborated with the Scordisci from the Danube.

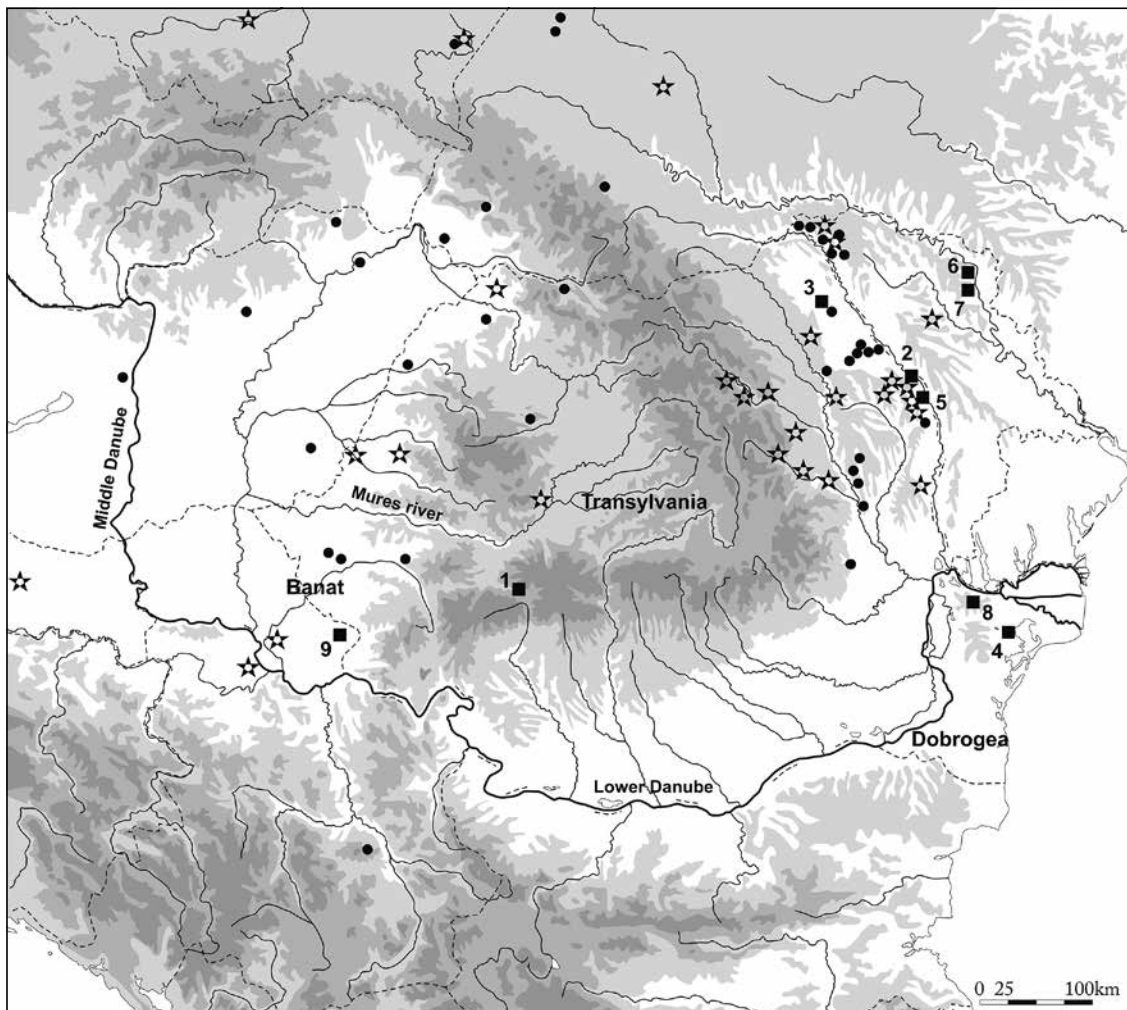
The account of the Roman historian indicates that the movement of the Germanic expedition in the Balkans, the friendly relations with several Thracian communities from the region, as well as the alliance with the Scordisci were all based on a series of previous agreements. These intercommunal communication mechanisms, controlled by the elites, were complex and implied negotiations and agreements concluded and enforced in different ways.

One of these mechanisms of intercommunal communication is represented by the direct diplomatic contacts established between the rulers of different communities. Relations of intercommunal interest were regulated in this manner, as well as other aspects like the supra-regional balance of power during the course of major military campaigns. The movement of armed groups across wider areas implied the crossing of territories controlled by other communities. At the same time, access to food resources or to markets, which provided useful goods for the ongoing campaign was necessary. When these resources were not procured by force, access to them was regulated during previous negotiations. It is significant in this regard that during the major campaigns from 280-278 BC, targeting Macedonia and Greece, the Celtic forces advanced along the valleys of the Morava and Vardar rivers. However, the settlements and the important commercial centres positioned along the mentioned route, like the one at Kale-Krševica (Pčinja okr./SRB)<sup>50</sup>, did not experience any violent destructions.

The negotiations were commonly concluded with gift exchanges. According to some ancient written sources, jewellery, clothing, metal vessels, harnessed horses sometimes accompanied by slave grooms etc. were among the objects offered as gifts.

Another way to develop intercommunal social networks was represented by marriage alliances. Among the illustrative archaeological examples are one La Tène grave from Telești (jud. Gorj/RO) in Oltenia, positioned in the area of the Getae, and grave no. 3 from the La Tène cemetery at Remetea Mare, including elements of rite and ritual specific to the north-eastern Balkans<sup>51</sup>. In both mentioned cases the preservation of the jewellery and costume accessories indicate that these women had a privileged position within their new communities and their origin was not hidden behind local elements of dressing. However, different situations have also been documented. Grave no. 17 from Remetea Mare can be given as an example. In this case, the funerary ritual is similar to the ones encountered in local cemeteries from the lower Danube, but the costume accessories are of the La Tène type<sup>52</sup>. This fact shows the tendency of integrating a woman from the indigenous community into the group of newcomers by adopting a fashion style, which visually expresses her adherence to a new community.

In all these cases, in order for the funerary ceremony to be carried out correctly from the ritual point of view, the respective women must have been accompanied by a number of persons (an entourage) who were

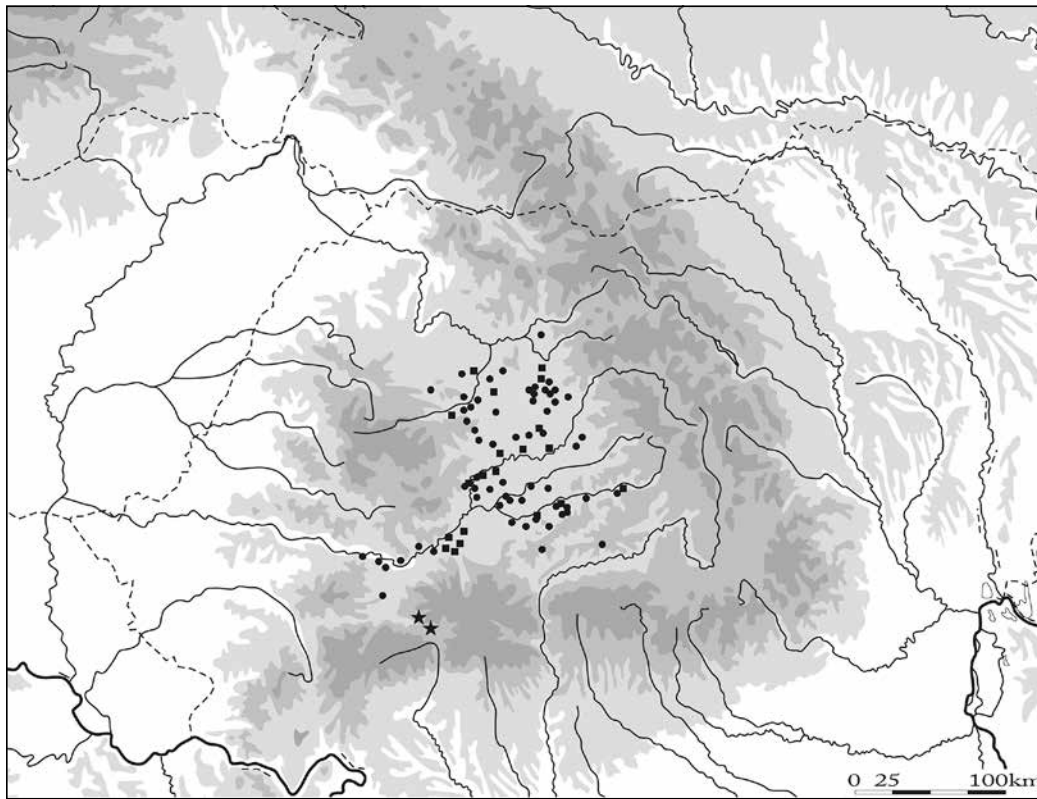


**Fig. 9** The distribution of the Huși-Vovriești type coins: individual discoveries (●) and hoards (☆). – Places mentioned in text (■) with discoveries of simple bracelets with zoomorphic decoration and of spiral bracelets: **1** Bănița. – **2** Bunești. – **3** Cucuteni-Băiceni. – **4** Enisala. – **5** Epureni. – **6** Mateuți. – **7** Sahara Mare. – **8** Telița. – **9** Vrșac-At. – (Map A. Rustoiu after Preda 1998, fig. 10 with additions).

familiar with the traditional practices from their homeland. Therefore, a marriage alliance implied the mobility of a greater number of individuals, even if only temporary, during the lifespan of the woman involved in the relationship. Beyond the circulation of goods from one area to another, this fact allowed the transfer of specific behaviours and ideologies between different communities.

These forms of individual mobility and intercommunal contacts probably determined the preference for a series of La Tène type jewellery like, for example, the Pestrup<sup>53</sup> type brooches in the Thracian and Illyrian areas. Nevertheless, such bodily ornaments were integrated into the local dressing style according to the local rules regarding the composition of the costume and the bodily ornamentation.

At the same time, the emergence of northern Balkans or Mediterranean jewellery in the Celtic area from the middle Danube reflects the same process. Among these adornments, foreign to the La Tène cultural milieu, one can mention, for example, the filigree silver beads from grave no. 1 at Remetea Mare<sup>54</sup> or the gold jewellery from the hoard found at Regöly (Kom. Tolna/H)<sup>55</sup>. These gold or silver jewellery with filigree or granulation decoration played an important part in the diffusion of the taste for this ornamentation style in



**Fig. 10** The distribution of settlements (■) and funerary discoveries (●) in Transylvania during the Lt B1/B2-C1 and the location of the discoveries from Bănița and Ohaba Ponor (jud. Hunedoara/RO) (★). – (Map A. Rustoiu after Berecki 2015, 39).

the Carpathian Basin. However, the craftsmen from the Celtic environment adapted the specific decoration to their own bronze casting technique. In this way, they invented the pseudo-filigree and pseudo-granulation ornamentation, based on a morphological and not on a technological transfer.

Concerning the connections between the communities from the east of the Carpathians and those in the Scordiscian territory around Belgrade and the »Celts« from Banat, these existed before the arrival of the Bastarnae in Moldavia and the appearance of the Poinești-Lukašovka culture associated to them. This hypothesis is sustained, for example, by the distribution of the coins of Huși-Vovriești type imitating the tetradrachms issued by Philip II (fig. 9)<sup>56</sup>. These coins, identified mostly in hoards, were issued in one or more fortified settlements from Moldavia, as it is the case of the settlement at Bunești. Their presence, as individual finds or in hoards, along some of the commercial routes from Transylvania and Banat, illustrates that they were handled by means of long-distance intercommunal connections. These connections implied, among others, an individual mobility determined by the movement of diplomatic envoys or by the practice of exogamous marriages.

In this regard, the funerary rite and ritual associated with the burial of the woman from Vrșac-At more likely indicate that she came from a local community in the lower Danube region and probably arrived in the Celtic environment from Banat as a result of an exogamous marriage. The La Tène type dress accessories (pairs of brooches, some of them linked with bronze chains, the iron chain worn around the waist) point to the tendency of integrating the deceased into her new community. However, the spiral bronze bracelet from her homeland, which was preserved in the costume, evoked the memory of her origin. Moreover, probably

at her demand, a »Celtic« craftsman made a silver bracelet with zoomorphic ends inspired by prototypes from the eastern Carpathians area.

But this was not the only object manufactured in the workshop in question, as it is suggested by the bracelet from Bănița. The context of this discovery raises, however, other interpretative problems. The object was found on a hill from a mountain area with no traces of human habitation or cemeteries which can be dated to the Lt B2-C1. As a matter of fact, the rural settlements of this period from Romania's inner Carpathians region were positioned on plateaus or on plains, along water courses, in an environment favourable for farming and animal husbandry (fig. 10)<sup>57</sup>. From this point of view, the mountain areas seem to have been avoided by the Celtic communities. Therefore, it cannot be excluded that the bracelet was a votive offering placed in a sacred location from an isolated, probably forested area from the vicinity of the entrance to the Peștera Bolii cave. This is not the only example of this kind from the region. Not far from Bănița, in the Bordu Mare cave from Ohaba Ponor (jud. Hunedoara/RO), a silver brooch of the Middle La Tène type having the foot decorated with »8«-shaped loops was also discovered as an isolated item. This case could also be interpreted as a votive offering, the more so as other finds which can be dated to Lt C1 have not been discovered inside the cave<sup>58</sup>. These sacred places were used for longer periods of time. During the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, after the founding of the Dacian fortress at Bănița, the placing of votive offerings continued on the Peștera Bolii hill, where the silver bracelet was identified. This is suggested by the discovery, in the same place, of a monetary hoard composed of Thasian tetradrachms. The reuse of sacred places positioned in the vicinity of fortresses or fortified settlements during the period of the Dacian kingdom was also observed in other cases, such as the site at Hunedoara-Grădina castelului (jud. Hunedoara/RO)<sup>59</sup>.

## CONCLUSIONS

As it has been shown at the beginning of this paper, the silver bracelet from Bănița was not discovered inside the Dacian fortress from the modern village, as it has been considered for a long time, but in another context, which allows it to be perhaps interpreted as a votive offering. For this reason, its dating no longer depends on the chronology of the Dacian fortress. The similar bracelet discovered at Vrșac-At, in a grave containing a funerary inventory belonging to a woman and dated to Lt C1, indicates that both objects which display a similar technique of manufacturing and decoration were produced in the same workshop.

However, the morphological and ornamental prototypes of these bracelets from the Celtic area are to be found in the silver and bronze examples from the lower Danube region. It is quite clear that the craftsman who manufactured the bracelets from Vrșac-At and Bănița imitated the prototypes by resorting to a familiar technique, used for a long period of time in the Central European area. At the same time, he interpreted the original zoomorphic decoration according to his subjective perception, influenced by the iconography of the La Tène cultural milieu.

Regarding the way in which this transfer of decorative symbols from one cultural area to another was carried out, the important part played by the social connections between the communities from the middle and lower Danube regions has to be stressed. These social contacts had taken various forms. Among them, the intercommunal alliances based on exogamy determined a significant degree of individual mobility which was able to generate »visible« and »invisible« cultural exchanges between communities situated at long distances, with different ethnical and cultural identities. The bracelets from Vrșac-At and Bănița illustrate precisely these exchanges manifested not only in the material culture but also in the sphere of beliefs and ideas.

Translation: S. Mustață

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## Notes

- 1) Rustoiu 2014.
- 2) Rustoiu 2012.
- 3) Venclová 2002, 74-75. – Stöllner 2010, 283-286 fig. 5.
- 4) Egri 2014.
- 5) Rustoiu/Berecki 2014.
- 6) Floca 1966, 31 fig. 12. – No other archaeological investigations were later carried out in the fortress at Bănița but it was recently included in programmes of aero-photographic investigations in south-western Transylvania: see Berecki/Czajlik/Sóos 2012; Berecki/Czajlik/Rupnik 2013; Czajlik/Berecki/Rupnik 2014.
- 7) Horedt 1973, 139; Medeleț 1992, 226; 1994, 193; Rustoiu 1996a; 1996b, 100-101. – Spânu 2012, 58. 215 positions the object in the Dacian fortress, but considers it to be a »Celtic-Scordiscian import«; etc.
- 8) Miclea/Florescu 1980, 63. – Ferenczi 1989, 213.
- 9) Rustoiu 1996a.
- 10) See Horedt 1973; Rustoiu 1996b, 93-102; Spânu 2012, 57-61.
- 11) Medeleț 1992, 226; 1994, 193.
- 12) Jovanović 1973-1974; 1974.
- 13) Jovanović 1973-1974, pl. 2.
- 14) Jovanović 1973-1974, pl. 3; 1974, 40.
- 15) Jovanović 1973-1974, 30; 1974, 40.
- 16) Bujna 2003, 74-75 type EF-H/L2 fig. 51, 53.
- 17) Ibidem 59-60 type BF-Hy1-2.
- 18) Ibidem 57-59 type BF-Hx2B.
- 19) Hellebrandt 1999, 188 pl. 68, 5.
- 20) Zirra 1967, 10-11 fig. 5; Némethi 1992, 97 fig. 26/M 156, 2. – See also a similar brooch from the settlement at Ciumești: Zirra 1980, 49 pl. 14, 1.
- 21) Hellebrandt 1999, 66-67 pls 30, 11. 13; 31, 3.
- 22) Zirra 1967, 41-42 fig. 22.
- 23) Krämer 1985, 85 pl. 19, 3.
- 24) Sankot 2014, 258-259 fig. 3, 1-2.
- 25) Bujna 2011, 67-73. – Krämer 1985, pls 36, 4; 52, 4; 61, 6. – Gebhard 1989, figs 23, 15; 27, 4. – Dizdar 2016.
- 26) Dizdar 2016.
- 27) Ibidem.
- 28) Moscalu 1983, 47-48 type III/e.
- 29) Vulpe/Teodor 2003, 70 fig. 148, 2. 7.
- 30) Alexandrescu 1980, fig. 14, 6-21. – Crăciunescu 1999, fig. 4, 2.
- 31) Zirra 1980, pls 21, 1; 34, 4. – Berecki 2008, pls 13, 1; 15, 3; 22, 1; etc.
- 32) Rustoiu/Ursuțiu 2013. – Rustoiu/Berecki 2016, 294-296.
- 33) See Bujna 2005, fig. 89.
- 34) Spânu 2014, figs 8, 15-16; 9, 3-4. – Niculiță et al. 2011, 194-195 fig. 2, 2.
- 35) Simion 2003, 314 fig. 14, 5; 335 fig. 5, 16.
- 36) Petrescu-Dâmbovița/Dinu 1975. – Kašuba/Haheu/Levițki 2000, 75-76 pl. 47.
- 37) See, for example, Waldhauser 1998; Ramsel 2011, 107-108. – A recent study concerning the saddle-shaped rings from the Carpathian Basin has also demonstrated that the ratio between the items made of gold, silver and bronze was roughly 1:2:4 during Lt B2a and mostly during Lt B2b-C1. This ratio more likely indicates a »free« distribution and circulation of the precious metals that differed from the restrictive control of these materials imposed by the elites of other communities: see Rustoiu 2016.
- 38) Pink 1939. – Preda 1973. – Popović 1987.
- 39) Medeleț 1992, 228-229. – Rustoiu 1996b, 39-40.
- 40) Spânu 2012, 88-93.
- 41) Spânu 2014, 70-72.
- 42) Stoicovici/Stoicovici 1972; 1973.
- 43) Živković et al. 2014.
- 44) Bujna 2005, fig. 16, 89. – Müllauer/Ramsel 2007. – Munir 2010.
- 45) See, for example, Megaw 1970; Megaw/Megaw 2001.
- 46) Spânu 2014, 82.
- 47) Măndescu 2010, 120-121 fig. 17.
- 48) Simion 2003, 335 fig. 5, 5. 17.
- 49) Spânu 2014, 69 fig. 3.
- 50) Popović 2005, 145-160; 2006, 523-532; 2007a; 2007b; Popović/Vranić 2013.
- 51) Rustoiu 2011.
- 52) Rustoiu/Berecki 2016, 294-296.
- 53) Anastassov 2006, 14 fig. 4, 5. 7 – distribution map; 2011, 229.
- 54) Rustoiu/Berecki 2014, 253 pl. 6.
- 55) Szabó 1975, 152-155 fig. 7 pls 7-10; 1991, 127 figs 1-2; 2006, 114-115 fig. 20.
- 56) Preda 1973, 111-131. – Florkiewicz 2009, 105-107 fig. 2. – Spânu 2014, fig. 14. – Łuczkiwicz 2016.
- 57) Ferencz 2007. – Berecki 2015.
- 58) Ferencz 2007, 43-44 pl. 105, 3.
- 59) Sîrbu et al. 2007.

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### Zusammenfassung / Summary / Résumé / Rezumat

#### Kulturübergreifende Beziehungen zwischen den Gebieten an der mittleren und unteren Donau in der jüngeren Eisenzeit. Eine erneute Diskussion zum silbernen Armreif von Bănița (jud. Hunedoara/RO)

Die gesellschaftlichen und kulturellen Beziehungen zwischen den Gemeinschaften an der mittleren und jenen an der unteren Donau durchlebten unterschiedliche Formen. Die dadurch entstandenen zwischengemeinschaftlichen Bündnisse, die u. a. auf der Exogamie beruhten, hatten ausreichend ausgeprägte individuelle Mobilitäten zur Folge, um »sichtbare« und »unsichtbare« kulturelle Austauschprozesse zwischen weit voneinander entfernten Gemeinschaften mit unterschiedlichen ethnischen und kulturellen Identitäten zu ermöglichen. Der silberne Armreif von Bănița (Rumänien) und das ähnliche Stück von Vršac-At (Serbien), beide aus dem keltischen Lt C1-Horizont, beleuchten solche Austauschprozesse, die nicht nur auf der Ebene der Sachkultur, sondern auch auf jener des Glaubens und der Ideen stattfanden. Sie wurden durch Metallverarbeitungstechniken hergestellt, die im keltischen mitteleuropäischen Bereich anzutreffen sind, sie ahmen aber Formen und Verzierungen von Schmuckstücken nach, die im getischen Bereich an der unteren Donau verbreitet waren.

Übersetzung: L. Ruscu

#### Cross-cultural Connections between the Middle and Lower Danube Regions during the Late Iron Age. The Silver Bracelet from Bănița (jud. Hunedoara/RO)

The social and cultural connections between the communities from the middle and lower Danube regions had taken different shapes. Among them, the intercommunal alliances based on exogamy determined a significant degree of individual mobility which was able to generate »visible« and »invisible« cultural exchange between communities situated at long distances, with different ethnical and cultural identities. The silver bracelet from Bănița (Romania) and a similar one from Vršac-At (Serbia), both originating from the Celtic environment of the Lt C1, illustrate this kind of exchanges which involved not only material culture but also beliefs and ideas. Both bracelets were manufactured using metal-processing techniques encountered in the Central European Celtic area, albeit they imitate the shape and ornaments of some jewellery from the lower Danube regions inhabited by the Getae.



## Relations interculturelles entre les régions du moyen et du bas-Danube au deuxième âge du Fer.

### Le bracelet de Bănița (jud. Hunedoara/RO) réévalué

Les contacts sociaux et culturels entre les communautés des régions du bas et du moyen Danube ont pris des formes très diverses. Les alliances intercommunautaires fondées sur l'exogamie ont engendré des mobilités individuelles assez importantes permettant l'identification d'échanges culturels plus ou moins visibles entre des communautés aux profils différents d'un point de vue ethnique et culturel. Le bracelet en argent de Bănița (Roumanie) et son pendant assez similaire de Vrșac-At (Serbie) (les deux remontant à l'époque celtique de Lt C1) montrent de tels échanges illustrant non seulement la culture matérielle mais aussi le monde des croyances et des idées. La technique de production est spécifique aux régions celtiques centre-européennes mais leur forme imite des formes et des décors des parures typiques des territoires du Bas-Danube, habités par les Gètes.

Traduction: G. A. Florea

## Conexiuni inter-culturale între regiunile Dunării mijlocii și de Jos în a doua epocă a fierului.

### Brățara de argint de la Bănița (jud. Hunedoara/RO) rediscutată

Conexiunile sociale și culturale dintre comunitățile din zona Dunării mijlocii și cele de la Dunărea de Jos au cunoscut forme diverse. Dintre acestea, alianțele inter-comunitare bazate printre altele pe practicarea exogamiei au determinat o mobilitate individuală suficient de pronunțată pentru manifestarea unor schimburi culturale »vizibile« și »invizibile« între comunități aflate la distanțe mari și cu identități etnice și culturale diferite. Brățara de argint de la Bănița (România) și brățara similară de la Vrșac-At (Serbia), ambele provenind din orizontul celtic Lt C1, ilustrează astfel de schimburi manifestate nu doar la nivelul culturii materiale, ci și al unor credințe și idei. Ele au fost confecționate prin tehnici de prelucrare a metalelor întâlnite în zona celtică central-europeană, dar imită forme și ornamente ale unor podoabe din zona Dunării de Jos locuită de geți.

### *Schlüsselwörter / Keywords / Mots clés / Cuvinte cheie*

Rumänien / La Tène-Zeit / mittlere und untere Donau / Silber / Schmuck / Fernbeziehungen / Exogamie  
Rumania / La Tène period / middle and lower Danube / silver / jewellery / long-distance relations / exogamy  
Roumanie / époque de La Tène / moyen et le bas-Danube / argent / bijoux / relations à longue distance / exogamie  
România / epoca La Tène / Dunărea mijlocie și de jos / argint / podoabe / relații la distanță / exogamie

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