

ETHNIC AND CULTURAL IDENTITIES IN LATE IRON AGE TRANSYLVANIA

Summary of the habilitation thesis

This habilitation thesis is structured in three main chapters, following the legal requirements for this kind of work. The first chapter presents the most important scientific results achieved by the candidate after being granted the doctoral degree. The second chapter comprises the strategy of subsequent academic development and the proposed new directions of scientific investigation deriving from the aforementioned results. Lastly, the third chapter comprises the related bibliography.

After being granted the doctoral degree in 1996 for the thesis “Metalurgia bronzului la daci (sec. II a. Chr. – I p Chr.). Tehnici, ateliere și produse de bronz”, the author of the present habilitation thesis reached the conclusion that, in order to fully understand the complexity of the Dacian civilization, one has to also investigate the evolution of Late Iron Age communities in Transylvania from multiple, interdisciplinary perspectives. Accordingly, the interpretation of archaeological data and ancient written sources has to be performed using theoretical models and methods specific to the cultural anthropology, which have an important investigative potential. Thus the concept of “identity” concerns aspects deriving from the interactions between different human groups (variously defined on ethnic, social, political, professional, religious or gender affiliation) which consider themselves or are perceived by outsiders as distinct. From this point of view, the analysis of the manner in which Transylvanian Late Iron Age communities constructed a variety of ethnic and cultural identities, as well as that of their evolution, are among the most important scientific achievements of the candidate.

The results of these investigations regarding ethnic and cultural identities were included in several scientific papers presented at national and international conference in Romania and abroad; in some cases the author was invited as *key speaker* (for example the Iron Age Conference at the University of Cambridge, UK, in 2011). At the same time, numerous studies were published in scientific journals indexed in international databases like ISI Thompson and other recognized BDI, or in journals and collective volumes by publishers accredited by the CNCS. Aside from them, the candidate authored several books and chapters in syntheses

published by accredited publishers from Romania and abroad, and contributed to the influential Lexicon of Celtic Archaeology, published by the Austrian Academy of Science.

Returning to the most important scientific results of the investigations related to the subject of the habilitation thesis, it has to be noted that the period taken into consideration consists of two distinct cultural and historical horizons. The first comprises the “Celtic horizon” (4th – 2nd centuries BC), which was oriented toward the Central European cultural models, while the second comprises the “Dacian horizon” (2nd century BC – 1st century AD), which was mainly oriented toward the northern Balkans and the Mediterranean models.

The “Celtic horizon” originated from the migration of some groups from the west to the east, so it was not a simple diffusion of some elements of material culture of the La Tène type. A series of innovations from other sciences allowed the adoption of new investigative methods in the interpretation of archaeological evidence (for example the analysis of strontium isotopes), which have revealed a significant degree of individual and collective mobility across entire Europe during the Late Iron Age. These population movements often took the shape of “colonization”. Still, it wasn’t a simple relocation from one area to another, as it implied a complex process of interaction between “colonists”, having their own identity and attempting to impose their own lifestyle and beliefs, and “colonized”, also having their own identity and ways of life. The latter groups either resorted to various forms of resistance or were more-or-less interested in integrating themselves in the new communal structures. These interactions contributed to the transformation of many collective identities through cultural entanglement, or the construction of new identities through cultural hybridization; in many cases these processes also involved the manipulation or invention of traditional concepts and practices.

Thus, the Celtic arrival to the east of the middle Danube basin contributed significantly to the cultural reconfiguration of these regions. The manner in which the “colonists” interacted with the natives markedly differed from one community to another, and this can be observed by analysing both the funerary practices and the settlements’ organization.

The evolution of these communities was abruptly interrupted during the 2nd century BC by the arrival of new groups of population. Archaeologically, these are defined by different ways of expressing ethnic and cultural identity, which is shown by particular types of settlement organization, the appearance of hilltop fortresses, different funerary practices and military elites with a different social-political hierarchy. For example, the funerary contexts from Transylvania

which succeeded chronologically the Celtic cemeteries point to the northward migration of some warlike elites from the northern Balkans or the lower Danube, which ended the Celtic domination in the region and imposed new structures of power. These military elites were later structured into a coherent social and political class. The result of this process was the appearance of the Dacian kingdom, which reached its maximum extension under King Burebista, a contemporary of Caesar.

At the same time, these investigations also brought into discussion the manner in which individual social and cultural identities were defined within the community, for example those of the warriors, the craftsmen of all kind, the women, or the children. Furthermore, the role played by different social groups in communal mobility or inter-community interactions and exchanges was also investigated.

Regarding the teaching experience of the candidate, this is proven by a series of specialist courses designed and taught at the Faculty of History and Philosophy of the UBB Cluj-Napoca, the supervision of BA and MA theses at the same faculty and the training of many undergraduate and graduate students within the research projects and archaeological fieldwork teams.

Lastly, the proposed plan of further career development in scientific research includes a series of new investigative directions with a multi-disciplinary approach, which will focus on aspects regarding the community dynamics and its role in the development of identity constructs, as well as the impact of social and spatial mobility on these constructs.