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Brendan Mac Gonagle**CELTO-SCYTHIANS AND CELTICIZATION IN UKRAINE
AND THE NORTH PONTIC REGION***

The article provides an overview of the available linguistic, numismatic and archaeological evidence pertaining to the expansion of the La Tene culture into the area of modern Ukraine and the North Pontic region from the 3rd century BC onwards. A distinction is observed between the situation in western Ukraine where the process of Celtic migration — colonization is reflected in the archaeological evidence, and further east where the presence of Celtic “warrior bands” — mercenary groups have been identified. The testimony in ancient sources to the emergence of mixed Celto-Scythian populations in this area is also considered.

Key words: Celtic expansion, Celtic weaponry, La Tene Culture, Celtic eastwards expansion, Celto-Scythians, Bastarnae.

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Брендан Мак Гонагл**КЕЛЬТО-СКИФЫ И КЕЛЬТИЗАЦИЯ В УКРАИНЕ И В СЕВЕРНОМ ПРИЧЕРНОМОРЬЕ**

В статье приводится обзор имеющейся лингвистических, нумизматических и археологических свидетельств, относящихся к распространению латенской культуры на территории современной Украины и Северного Причерноморья с III века до н.э. Различие наблюдается между ситуацией в Западной Украине, где процесс кельтской миграции — колонизации находит свое отражение в археологических свидетельствах, и ситуации на Востоке, где были выявлены кельтские «группы воинов» — группы наемников. Также были истолкованы свидетельства древних источников о появлении смешанного кельто-скифского населения в регионе.

Ключевые слова: Кельтская экспансия, кельтское оружие, латенская культура, кельтская экспансия в восточном направлении, кельты-скифы, бастарны.

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From the beginning of the 3rd century BC the territory of today’s Ukraine, previously defined by the Scythians of the North Pontic steppes and Hellenistic influences from the Black Sea zone, was supplemented by the Celtic culture from the west. The influence of the latter can be roughly divided into 2 separate spheres — the area of today’s Western Ukraine, where comprehensive evidence of Celtic migration/settlement is to be observed, and the central/eastern part where La Tène material testifies to the presence of small Celtic groups, and the development of a Celto-Scythian (Bastarnae) population, well attested to in ancient historical sources.

Western Ukraine

Celtic presence in Ukraine is best recorded on the Tisza river, where their arrival is marked by new building, pottery making and metal-working techniques, and the emergence of new economic and political centres (Eremenko 1997; Kazakevich 2012). From the middle of the 3rd century BC, the La Tène culture was dominant in the upper Tisza area, where Celtic economic, cultural and iron production centres, such as

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those at Gališ-Lovačka near Mukačevo (Kobal' 1995—1996: fig. 1—11) and Novo-Klinove (Kotigoroško 2003: 31—38) developed.



Fig. 1. Excavations at Nove Klynove in 1966.



Fig. 2. Short sword with X — shaped hilt from Gališ-Lovachka (2nd century BC) (after Kazakevich 2012).

At the moment, over two dozen La Tène sites have been identified on the Ukrainian Upper Tisza, the best documented of these being the major Celtic settlement(s) on the Galish and Lovachka hills, near the modern town of Mukachevo. The military equipment from Galish-Lovachka included a short sword with an X-shaped handle (fig. 2), 2 La Tène swords, 12 curved daggers, 27 spearheads, 2 javelin heads, 14 arrow heads, and 9 iron chain belts, as well as finds of horse equipment and chariot fittings (Bidzilya 1971: 72—76, 80, fig. 17: 28—30). “More than 30” Celtic coins of the Macedonian types (Philip II and III “imitations”) have also been discovered at the site (Mac Gonagle 2014). A Celtic glass production complex has been identified at Dyjda, and a number of highly specialized centres of metallurgy with the remains of forges have been found in this area. The largest of these, at Nove Klynove, comprised circa 200 forges (Kazakevich 2012). Nove Klynove lies slightly to the south-east of the aforementioned Celtic sites near Mukacheve, and slightly to the north-east of the Celtic settlement/burial complex at Ciumești (Satu Mare district) in Romania (Rustoiu 2006; Rusu 1969).

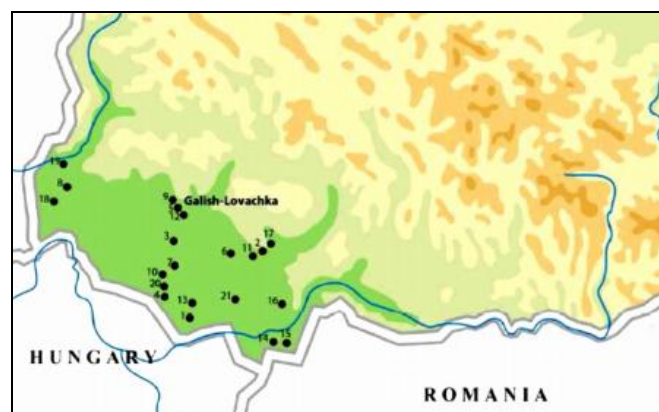


Fig. 3. Main Celtic sites and finds from the Upper Tisza Basin (after Kazakevich 2012).

Major finds of Celtic coinage in this area include those registered at the Gut and Mala Kopanya sites. In the occupation layers at the Celtic settlement at Gut (Garazdivka, Berehiv's'kyj district) over 100 Celtic coins of the “Philip II type” were discovered in a ceramic vessel, among them examples of the Huși-Voriești type attributed to the Celto-Scythian Bastarnae (Mac Gonagle 2014). The latter type have recently been discovered in hoards along with other Celtic coins at sites such as Pelczyska in southern Poland (Rudnicki 2003), and the examples from Gut are further evidence of the close political and economic links between the Bastarnae and Celtic tribes north of the Carpathians. Noteworthy also is the chance discovery of a pottery vessel at Mala Bigan, in the same Berehiv's'kyj district, which contained small figurines of a boar and a man, a bronze ankle ring and a La Tène (C1) glass arm ring (Bidzilya 1971: 21—30; 46; Kazakevich 2012).



Fig. 4. Bronze Celtic boar figurine from Mala Bigan (after Kazakevich 2012).

ethnic names, among them Καρρόδουνον, Μαιτώνιον, and Ἡρακον (Falileyev 2005, 2007: 4—9; Sims-Williams 2006: 218—219), and the name of the *Kamula* mountain (Kazakevich 2012: 172; Tischenko 2006: 220;). In the vicinity of the latter is situated the burial complex at Gryniv, notable finds from which include 5 late Le Tène swords, and burial No 3 in which the famous Gryniv scabbard was discovered. A further 2 late La Tène swords have been recorded in a burial at Nyzhnya Stynava (Stryjs'kyj district) in the Lviv region (Bandrivsky, Josypyshyn 1997: 9—10), also in Western Ukraine.

The burial contained an iron fibula, sword/scabbard, spearhead, 3 knives, a spur, shield umbo, pottery of local and Balkan origin, and shears. The presence of shears in Celtic burials is well documented among the Celts of central and eastern Europe, and many of the objects in the burial, as at the aforementioned Mala Kopanya site, had been ritually killed — i.e. broken, bent or otherwise deformed, according to the well documented Celtic custom.

Fig. 5. The Gryniv scabbard was discovered in burial No 3 at the cemetery and dated to between the second and fourth decades of the 1st c. AD. (after Kazakevich 2010).

At the Mala Kopanya hillfort (Vynogradiv's'kyj district), which is situated slightly to the north-east of the aforementioned Celtic settlements at Nove Klynove and Ciumești respectively, in addition to a large amount of Celtic material including 7 ritually “killed” late La Tène swords (Kazakevich 2012) a substantial amount of Celtic coins of the “Philip II types” have been documented (Mac Gonagle 2014).

On the Dneister river traces of a Celtic speaking population are to be found in several place- and



Also noteworthy are Celtic coins registered in the Dniester Estuary area of Ukraine, most of which originate among the Celtic tribes of today's northern Bulgaria, indicating strong political and economic links between the Balkan Celts and those in western Ukraine (Mac Gonagle 2014).



Fig. 6. Celtic Coins from the Dniester Estuary area (Odessa Museum, Numismatics Collection) (after Mac Gonagle 2014)

While archaeological evidence in the aforementioned areas of western Ukraine clearly indicates the classic pattern of Celtic migration into this area (Kazakevich 2012: 179), the situation further to the east, where classical authors speak of a Gallo-Scythian (Plut. Marius. 11: 4—5) or Celto-Scythian (Strabo. 11: 6: 2) population is more complex. This is further complicated by the emergence of the Celto-Scythian *Bastarnae* tribes in this region. Identifiable Celtic material therefore logically becomes less frequent as one moves eastwards, Notable exceptions from today's central Ukraine include the Celtic bronze “face mask” from Kanivs’kyj (Cherkas’ka region). The mask was discovered together with a neck ring and early La Tène arm rings (Kukharenko 1959: 49), and is executed in the distinct Celtic ‘Plastic Metamorphosis’ style which became common in the La Tène B1 — C2 period.



Fig. 7. Celtic bronze “mask” from Pekari (Kanivs’kyj, Cherkas’ka region), Central Ukraine. (National Museum of the History of Ukraine).

At present the easternmost penetration of the La Tène culture has been recorded at the Mutyn site on the river Seim, where a dozen rich late La Tène warrior burials have been discovered. Dating to the late 1st century BC, the burials at Mutyn have so far yielded 13 late La Tène swords, scabbards, spearheads, chain-mail and shield umbos, as well as 5 late La Tène helmets. At least two of the latter are of the Balkan Celtic Novo Mesto type, further examples of which have been discovered at Boiko-Ponura and Yashkul in the Russian Federation (Mac Gonagle 2013; Kazakevich 2012; Terpilovskiy 2010).

The epigraphic decree in honour of Protogenes mentions the Celts (Γαλάται) threatening the vicinity of Olbia in the late 3rd c. BC (Vinogradov 1989: 181—183). Linguistic traces of Celtic presence also include an ethnic name from a Greek inscription found in the Bukovyna region, which Falileyev has reconstructed as Γαλατικού (Falileyev 2007: 7). Claudius Ptolemy further mentions several place- and ethnic names on the lands of Scythia Magna which are undoubtedly Celtic (Falileyev 2005, 2007: 4—9; Sims-Williams 2006: 218—219). Celtic place and ethnic names are also mentioned by Greek authors (Plut. Marius: 11, 12; Strabo 11: 6: 2, 3). Plutarch, who used the records of Posidonius (late 2nd c BC), noted the ethnic entity Κελτοσκοφθαι, stating that the Celtic lands stretched to the Moeotis littoral zone (Azov Sea): “... to the Maeotic Lake on the east, where it bordered on Pontic Scythia, and that from that point on Gauls and Scythians were mingled. These mixed Gauls and Scythians had left their home and moved westward, not in a single march, nor even continuously, but with each recurring spring they had gone forward, fighting their way, and in the course of time had crossed the continent. Therefore, while they had many different names for different detachments, they called their whole army by the general name of Galloscythians” (Plut. Marius: 11: 4—5).

It is also worth noting that the Scythians are mentioned in the Protogenes Decree in a fashion that illustrates that their power was no longer what it once was, and they are seeking protection from ‘invaders’ — the Γαλάται. From this point onwards the term “Scythian” becomes a purely geographical designation (Hovell Minns 2011: 119). Besides the aforementioned linguistic traces, substantial archaeological evidence of Celtic influence on the culture of this region has been recorded. This includes a burial from the north Pontic region, in which a Celtic sword and scabbard (LT B2 — C1—C2) were found at Vyshhatarasivka, which are similar to examples found at Pavolche, Kalново and Kazanlak in north-western and eastern Bulgaria, and reflects the penetration of Celtic warrior groups into this area (Kazakevich 2012). The earliest depiction of Celtic oval shields appear in the second to third quarter of the 3rd century BC, i.e. the period of Celtic migration into the region. It was used, for example, as an emblem on the obverse of bronze coins issued by Leucon II, the king of Bosphorus (Zogroff 1977).



Fig. 8. Oval shield depicted on coinage of Leucon II, king of Bosphorus (Circa 240—220 BC).

A unique find was made in 1982 at Nymphaeum, a wall-painting showing a ship named Isis with four Celtic shields on board, which provides the opportunity to establish the date of the oval shields' appearance in Bosphorus to the beginning of the second quarter of the 3rd century BC (Grach 1984). Starting with the late 3rd — early 2nd century BC, oval shields are carved on Bosphoran grave reliefs, and from the 2nd century BC onwards a series of terracotta figurines of warriors with the same shields appear (Denisova 1981: 91—92). All the known finds of terracotta figurines with oval shields in the Northern Black Sea area are in the Bosphoran kingdom, mainly in the capital, Panticapaeum (Eichberg 1987: maps 4—5). Finds of silver umbos for oval shields were also recorded during excavations in 1983 and 1985 at the sanctuary in Gurzufskoe Sedlo in the Crimea, near Yalta, where a large amount of La Tène material has been discovered. The specific nature of the majority of La Tène material from the sanctuary indicates that it is of original, i.e. Celtic, origin (Novičenkova, Zkontny 2015). Further evidence of Celtic presence in the Bosphor Kingdom comes in the form of two late La Tène swords discovered in royal burials in the area. The first was discovered in Scythian Neapolis in the burial of Skilurus (late 2nd c. BC), the king of Crimean Scythia Minor (Zaitsev 2003: 54—

55, fig. 76). The sword in the Skilurus burial had been ritually ‘killed’ according to the well documented Celtic practice. Another Celtic sword (LTD1) was found in the mausoleum at Neapolis, the closest parallels for which may be found in late La Tène weapons from Switzerland. Other graves at the Skilurus mausoleum contained large quantities of Celtic fibulae (Kazakevich 2012).

In addition, circa 20 helmets of the Montefortino type, usually associated with Celtic mercenary activity, have been found in the North Pontic and Azov area. While many of these helmets may have penetrated into eastern Europe due to contact with Rome during the 1st c. BC — 1st c. AD, earlier examples, such as that from Bilen’ke, dated to the 4th — 3rd c. BC, should be attributed to the earliest Celtic presence in this area. Two Celtic Montefortino type helmets (from Mar’yivka Domaniv’kyj (Mykolayivska reg) and Vesela Dolyna Bilgorod-Dnistrovs’kyj (Odes’ka reg.) come from votive hoards which also contained Scythian artefacts and Hellenistic bronze vessels. The funeral rite exhibited in such complexes originates in the Balkan and Danubian region (Zaycev 2007: 266).



Fig. 9. The Celtic Montefortino type helmet from Bilen’ke (Bilgorod-Dnistrovs’kyj Regional Museum).

During the Mithridatic Wars of the 1st c. BC, the Pontic King Mithridates VI had a bittersweet relationship with the Celtic groups in the region. At the beginning of the wars the Galatians, like the Bastarnae and Scordisci in Thrace, had supported the Pontic King against Rome. During this early period it appears that Mithridates’ relationship with the Celts of Asia-Minor was a particularly close one, and Mithridates reportedly had a relationship with a Celtic Princess called *Adobogiona*, the daughter of the Galatian King Deiotarus. The result of this relationship was that Adobogiona bore Mithridates a son, born in 87—86 BC, who would later become Mithridates I of the Bosphorus (Mayor 2009; Strabo 13: 4: 3).

However, after defeat at the Battle of Chaeornea in 86 BC, in which the Galatians had fought for the Pontic king (App. Mith.: 41), Mithridates began to suspect treachery even in his closest allies. This paranoia culminated in a bloody pogrom against those whom he suspected would turn against him. The Galatian leaders were invited to a lavish banquet by Archelaus, one of Mithridates commanders, where they, along with their wives and children, were massacred: “First, he put to death the tetrarchs of Galatia with their wives and children, not only those who were united with him as friends, but those who were not his subjects — all except three who escaped” (App. Mith.: 46).

The murder of the Galatian chieftains was to prove a fatal error for Mithridates, and provoked a swift and brutal backlash from the Asian Celts. One of the Galatian leaders, Deiotarus, the father of Mithridates’ mistress Adobogiona, “raised an army from the country people forthwith, expelled him and his garrisons, and drove them out of Galatia, so that Mithridates had nothing left of that country” (App. Mith.: 46). However, the Celtic revenge attacks quickly escalated and extended beyond Galatia. During the conflict Eumachus, Mithridates’ satrap in the region, had overrun Phrygia and killed a great many Romans, with their wives and children, subjugated the Pisidians and the Isaurians and also Cilicia. These Pontic garrisons the Celts now also attacked, driving out Mithridates’ forces, and slaying a great number of them.

Ὁ δῆμος
Ἄδο[βο]γιώναν Δηιοτάρου
γυναῖκα δὲ Βρογιτάρου τοῦ Δηιο-
τάρου Γαλατῶν Τρόκμων
τετράρχα ἀρετῆς ἕνεκεν καὶ
εὐεργεσίας τῆς εἰς ἑαυτόν.

Fig 10. Dedication from Pergamon to the Galatian Princess *Adobogiona*, daughter of Deiotarus, and mother of Mithridates I of the Bosphorus (after de Filgis 1986: 135—137).

However, despite the fact that the Asian Celts had turned against Mithridates, the Balkan Celts and Bastarnae remained allied with him against Rome (App. Mith.: 69, 111; Justin. 38: 3, Memn. 27: 7; McGing 1986: 61). At the Battle of Chalcedon, for example, the Bastarnae dealt a severe blow to the Romans – “In the land battle the Bastarnae routed the Italians, and slaughtered them” (App. Mith. 71; Memn. 27: 7), and Celtic forces remained loyal to Mithridates until his final defeat in 63 BC: “Seeing a certain Bituitus there, an officer of the Gauls, he said to him, “I have profited much from your right arm against my enemies. I shall profit from it most of all if you will kill me, and save from the danger of being led in a Roman triumph one who has been an autocrat so many years, and the ruler of so great a kingdom, but who is now unable to die by poison because, like a fool, he has fortified himself against the poison of others. Although I have kept watch and ward against all the poisons that one takes with his food, I have not provided against that domestic poison, always the most dangerous to kings, the treachery of army, children, and friends.” Bituitus, thus appealed to, rendered the king the service that he desired” (App. Mith. 111).

Even after the end of the Mithridatic Wars, the Balkan Celts and Bastarnae continued to resist Roman expansion on the Lower Danube and Pontic region. For example, in 61 BC a “barbarian” coalition, led by the Bastarnae, dealt a spectacular defeat to the Roman army of *Gaius Antonius Hybrida* (“the Monster”) at the Battle of Histria. With the defeat of Mithridates, Rome apparently believed that the region had been conquered. However, as Hybrida’s army marched to occupy the city of Histria, a large force of Bastarnae cavalry swept down on the Romans. Hybrida, caught unawares, detached his entire mounted force from the marching column and retreated, or, as the Roman historian Dio Cassius rather bluntly puts it — “and thereupon he ran away...” (Dio. Cass. XXXVIII). Without cavalry support, the Roman infantry were left exposed, and massacred. The Bastarnae subsequently captured several of the Roman vexilla (military standards), which made the humiliation complete.

Many of the Celtic traditions survived in the North Pontic area even after they had declined in central Europe, and some Celtic place and ethnic names appear in late Roman sources in the vicinity of the Bosphorus kingdom. Noteworthy here is the Boisci ethnicon which has been associated with the Celtic Boii tribe (Falileyev 2009: 288—292), and the *Celtae* who are mentioned in the context of the Gothic Wars (Kazakevich 2012). In this context one should note that the Celto-Scythian *Bastarnae* continued to be a considerable force in the region. The “Late Bastarnae” are mentioned in the epitaph of Plautius Silvanus from 74—79 AD (ILS 986), and in the late 2nd century the *Historia Augusta* mentions that in the rule of Marcus Aurelius an alliance of tribes including the Bastarnae took advantage of the emperor's difficulties on the upper Danube to invade Roman territory (SHA. Marc. Aurel. II: 22). They were also among the tribes who participated in the ‘Gothic’ raids between 248 and 269 (Schukin 1999). Thus, for example, in 250—251 the Bastarnae were involved in the Gothic and “Sarmatian” invasions which culminated in the Roman defeat at the Battle of Abritus in north-eastern Bulgaria, and the slaying of the emperor Decius (Herwig 1988: 45—46).

This would explain the Celtic element in the Gothic migrations and attacks on Roman territory, a phenomenon which is confirmed by anthropological studies which have identified a Celtic component among the Goths (Rudych 2004: 394), and La Tène influences in the “Gothic” Cherniakhov culture (Schukin 2005:165). In the later Roman period the policy of *Ethnic Engineering* also had the long term effect of further complicating the ethnic mix in the region. Under the Emperor Probus (276—282) 100,000 of the

Bastarnae were settled in Thrace (SHA. Prob.: 18), and shortly afterwards Emperor Diocletian (284—305) carried out another “massive” transfer of the Bastarnae population to the south of the Danube (Eutrop. IX: 25). However, these forced migrations would not have consumed the demographic potential of the “great nation”, and the remaining Celto-Scythian population participated in the complicated ethnogenesis of the early medieval peoples, among them the Slavs.

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