DISCUSSION – DISKUZE

Celtic migrations and the spread of La Tène Culture: A consideration of possible explanatory models

Keltské migrace a šíření laténské kultury: úvaha nad možnými vysvětlujícími modely

Martin Schönfelder

Migrations and mobility are key issues within archaeological research. The La Tène culture of Central Europe (450–20 BC) underwent deep transformative processes in the 4th and 3rd century BC, traditionally named as the 'Celtic migrations' and attested by written sources, and the spread of La Tène culture across Europe, which is explicitly conceived here as a phenomenon in its own right. Is it possible to corroborate one with another? In this article, I propose three models which may help to explain the main processes behind the archaeological phenomena of the 'Celtic migrations'. These explanatory models and new results are based on long-term research of the La Tène societies of the 4th/3rd century BC, which were deeply rooted in the ideals and behavioural norms of the 'princely' elites of the 5th century BC.

Iron Age – La Tène – mobility – migration – mercenaries

Migrace a mobilita jsou klíčová témata archeologického výzkumu. Laténská kultura ve střední Evropě (450–20 př. n. l.) prošla ve 4. a 3. století př. n. l. hlubokými transformačními procesy, které se projevily dvojím způsobem. Jeden z projevů, doložený v písemných pramenech, tradičně označujeme jako „keltské migrace". Za další projev považujeme soudobé šíření laténské kultury po Evropě, které je v tomto textu explicitně pojato jako samostatný fenomén. Je možné potvrdit jedno druhým? V tomto článku navrhuji tři modely, které mohou pomoci vysvětlit hlavní procesy stojící za archeologickými fenomény „keltských migrací". Tyto interpretační modely a nové výsledky vycházejí z dlouhodobých výzkumů laténských společností 4./3. století př. n. l., které byly hluboce zakořeněny v idejích a behaviorálních normách „knížecích" elit 5. století př. n. l.

doba železná – laténská kultura – mobilita – migrace – žoldnéři

Introduction

By way of the 'Celtic migrations', Central Europe and La Tène culture entered history (for definitions and research overview see *Kaenel 2007*; *Fitzpatrick 2018*). The material culture of the 'Celts' was identified fairly early on (*de Mortillet 1870/1871*; *Collis 2003*) and the characterisation of these people as wild warriors was attributed, at least in the press, by popular illustrations and museum exhibitions. The chariot with two furious warriors in the entrance hall of the Keltenmuseum Hallein is a good example. In the early years of research 'Celtic migrations' were tracked by archaeologists using a simple historical model: they took Greek and Roman written sources at face value and assumed the accounts of these writers to be the historical truth, or close to it (e.g. *Kruta 1978*; *1981*; *Frey 1996*). The topics of mobility and migration are now a fundamental focus of current archaeological research (*Fernández-Götz et al. 2023*).

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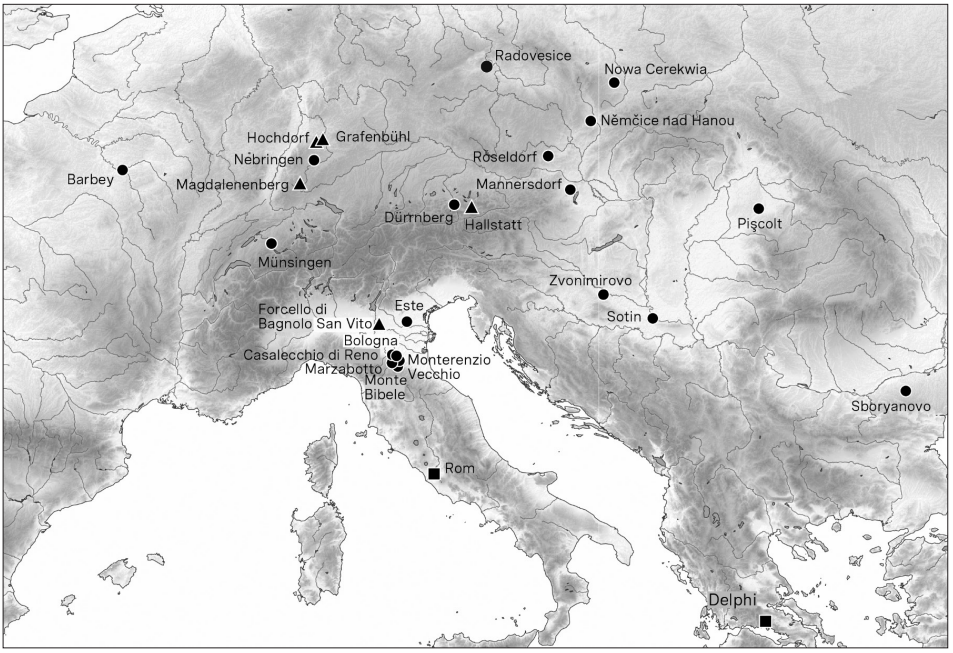

Fig. 1. Sites mentioned in the text and other selected key sites of the 'Celtic migrations' (map M. Ober, LEIZA).

Until today, little work has been done on the background of the migrations and cultural spreads in the Iron Age. They have been stated and described but not questioned. Individual keywords were mentioned but not put to the test on the archaeological find material for the areas with 'Celtic' influence in Italy and the Danube region (*Fig. 1*). In the following text, migrations and cultural spreads will be taken up here and further deepened.

The traditional views

Over the last decades, archaeology has considered how La Tène culture (supraregionally defined by the relevant fibulae, weapons, and art) was spread over the eastern part of Central Europe. Informative results have been obtained for the Carpathian Basin, where a leapfrog movement of La Tène groups or 'colonists' is assumed along the northern border of the Carpathian Basin, from Slovakia to Romania, as described by Aurel Rustoiu (*Fig. 2*; *Rustoiu 2012*, 362, Fig. 3). These groups spread further south, to Serbia and into Croatia (*Popović 1996*; *Ljuština 2013*; *Drnić 2020*). La Tène finds have been identified in even greater numbers as far south as Bulgaria (*Megaw et al. 2000*; *Anastassov 2011*) and Moldavia (*Munteanu et al. 2020*), fibulae even further afield (*Hellström 2018*).

Bands and fraternities of young warriors have been suggested as the main protagonists of the 'Celtic migrations' (*Wendling 2013*). The model of the *ver sacrum* ('sacred spring' – a generation of young adults earlier determined by religion had to leave the community) is currently the preferred explanation (e.g. *López Sánchez 2018*, 185; for its origins see:

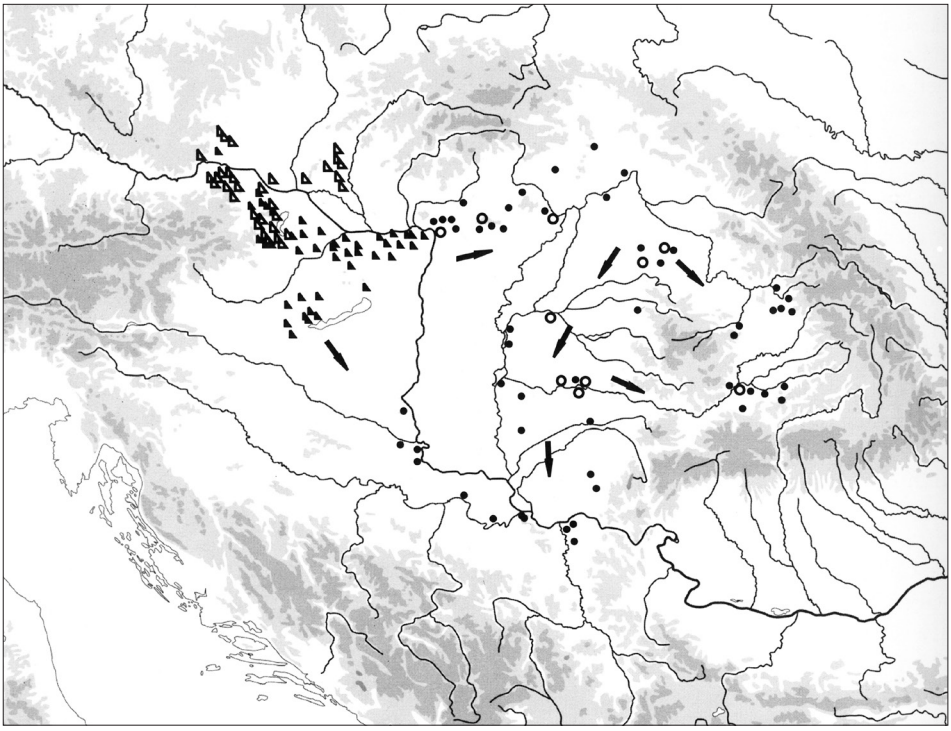

Fig. 2. Distribution map of early La Tène burials from the Carpathian Basin and directions of 'Celtic colonisation' following the ideas of Aurel Rustoiu. White triangles – cemeteries LT A; black triangles – cemeteries LT B1; white dots – cemeteries beginning in LT B1/B2; black dots – cemeteries beginning in LT B2 (after *Rustoiu 2012*, 362, Fig. 3; reproduced with kind permission of A. Rustoiu).

de Cazanove 2000). In contrast to the conventional view of whole groups of 'colonists' (*Rustoiu 2012*) or warriors (*Wendling 2013*), a rather supplemental model will be proposed here; the prevailing views regarding the general directions of these movements and their chronology are, however, accepted.

Continental European Iron Age archaeology has, so far, participated little in more theoretical debates regarding the 'entanglements', which might have occurred within migrations in general (see *Pollex et al. 2005*; *Ulf 2014*), and in the 'period of the Celtic migrations' in particular. Manuel Fernández-Götz has illustrated the current challenges quite clearly stating that long-distance movements of populations should not be excluded in our considerations on cultural change (*Fernández-Götz 2016*; *2019*; see also *Fernández-Götz et al. 2023*).

The written sources available for the 'Celtic migrations' tell us about push and pull strategies as recounted in legends (see *Tomaschitz 2002*; *Urban 2007*). In the story of Ambigatus, king of the Bituriges, overpopulation is the reason for migration to the East and South (*Livius, Ab urbe condita* V, 34; *Foster 1967*), whereas the legend of Arrun tells about imported wine, olive oil, and figs, luring the Celts to warmer climes (*Livius, Ab urbe condita* V, 33; *Foster 1967*; *Plutarch*, *Camillus* 15, 3–6; *Perrin 1968*; *Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Antiquitates Romanae* 13, 10–11; *Spelmann 1963*). Similar to this story is that told about

Helicon the Helvetian; a craftsman, who had visited Italy and who attracted his fellow tribesmen south with local fruits (*Plinius, Naturalis historia* XII, 2, 5; *Rackham 1960*). All these legends explain the motivation(s) of the Celts to Mediterranean readers, similar to the well known legends about Greek colonisation in the Classical Period. Today, few believe these legends have any connection with the reality in antiquity, and are now recounted solely as anecdotal models.

A decline of the climate and the associated crop failures around 400 BC, attested by ice cores and other climate proxies (*Maise 1998*), were a potential trigger for the 'Celtic migrations' to Italy (even if the details are hard to prove: *Nortmann – Schönfelder 2009*; *Schneider 2012*, 221–222). The Italian migrations climaxed in the conquest of Rome in 390/387 by Brennus following the battle of the Allia (*Plutarch*, *Camillus* 22, 4; *Perrin 1968*). In the following years, La Tène culture (and the 'Celts'?) spread to the East, the Carpathian Basin, to Greece (Delphi 279 BC), and finally to Galatia (*Jovanović 2014*); though these later movements cannot be connected to the climatic evidence.

The generally high degree of mobility within the La Tène society (cf. *Woolf 2016*; *Fitzpatrick 2018*) is attested by research on strontium isotopes and other methods of a statistically relevant number of burials from several cemeteries. Analyses focused both on the core area of the La Tène culture and on the new areas which are supposed to have received settlers (*Hauschild et al. 2013*; *Scheeres et al. 2013*; *2014*; *Alt – Schönfelder 2017*). New scientific data from promising projects (*Sorrentino et al. 2018*; *Laffranchi 2019*; *2022*) must be further correlated with archaeology.

But how did La Tène really spread?

A major question remains unasked (for the wrong questions on this subject see *Anthony 1990*, 897–899) and unresolved: How did the La Tène culture spread? No real answers had been presented until now, as the historical texts had been in the focus.

The 'migrations' to Italy should be the primary focus of study, as they are, at present, the only ones which can be accepted as involving a genuine movement of large groups of people to a distant location. The model presented here can be called the *baggage train model*. Additionally, two other models – *marriages with long-distance partners* and *fostering of children* – provide further potential explanations for the reasons how La Tène culture spread over large areas of Europe.

These models are based on systematic observations of La Tène finds in eastern and southern Europe: first, these are individual weapons or rarely entire panoplies, which spread quickly and set standards, and second, clothing accessories and women's jewellery, which are found also as individual objects, occasionally as entire sets. Trade goods (tin, amber and others) and diplomatic gifts (bronze vessels, textiles and others) existed but in this period we are not yet moving in an economically shaped coinage economy. The mobility of objects in a proto-market economy was therefore always connected with the personal relationships of people (*Brück 2015*).

Concerning the mobility of goods and the people involved, we should imagine a system of long-established networks between the South and North, in which mainly western alpine groups (chiefly the Golasecca culture: *Cicolani 2017*; *Cicolani – Zamboni 2023*) played a major role. A range of goods had been crossing the Alps since the Hallstatt Iron

Age – bronze vessels (*Naso 2017*; *2019*), brooches (*Ettel 2005*; *vice versa*: *Frey 1971*; *De Marinis 1987*), and raw materials like coral and others (*Fürst et al. 2016*). The Alps may have hindered transport, but never prevented contacts existing.

The models proposed here are intended to enrich the discussion on the spread of La Tène culture; the mobility of warrior groups to Italy or Greece is not to be denied.

Crossing the Alps with a baggage train

For some time it has been evident that no Celtic tribe crossed the Alps in its entirety. Central Europe was not emptied around 400 BC. Although the levels of human activity appear to decrease in the LT B1b/B2 phase (around 350/300 BC), this is mainly due to the change in burial rite from tumuli in LT A to flat burials in LT B. Furthermore, we can observe rather de-centralised settlement patterns with even more scattered burials (see *Mennessier-Jouannet et al. 2007*; e.g. Dornach, Lkr. München, Germany: *Irlinger – Winghart 1999*, 76–78, 91–92). The large proto-urban and fortified settlements, known in LT A, such as in Bohemia (*Chytráček et al. 2010*) or northern Bavaria (*Pare 2009*; *Schußmann 2010*, 149–151), are no longer occupied in LT B2. The archaeological traces of 'Celtic tribes' in northern Italy do not correspond to an entire population with women and men in equal portions, as can be seen in the Bologna cemeteries, at Monte Bibele and in Monterenzio Veccio (prov. Bologna, Italy; *Vitali 1992*; *2003*; *Vitali – Verger 2008*). A significant mixing of populations at the latter two sites can be documented by strontium isotopes (*Sorrentino et al. 2018*), even though the local geology is changing fast and like this restricts any strong statements (see *Scheeres et al. 2013*, 3617–3618). Small children and seniors might never have been part of such a demanding adventure. Evidence for Celtic women, in the form of LT A/B1a female jewellery from the time of the 'real migrations', is likewise rare.

If the *Senones*, the latest 'tribe' which arrived in Italy, had been attacking Rome in 387 BC, the largest population movements would presumably have occurred in the years before. According to the current absolute chronology (*Sormaz – Stöllner 2005*), this would have taken place at the end of the LT A phase. During LT A there are no substantial La Tène traces in Italy (see *Vitali 1992*; *2003*). The only potential site assigned to the *Boii* is Casalecchio di Reno on the southwestern outskirts of Bologna (*Ortalli 2008*). Rare examples of Celtic female bronze jewellery, mainly in the form of *Hohlbuckelringe* in Marzabotto (prov. Bologna; *Kruta Poppi 1975*), are typical of LT B2, i.e. the second half of the 3rd century BC (*Fig. 3*; see *Fábry 2008*, 129, Fig. 2 and 3; *Geschwind 2020*).

In sum, the Alps appear to have been rather crossed by bands of young Celtic warriors in more or less organised tracks, perhaps starting in some central European regions under the initiative of leaders, to whom they gave tribal names to the travelling warriors. The small number of women could be explained by female companions in the baggage train of these expeditions, which passed through those parts of the Alps under control of the communities of the Golasecca culture (*Schönfelder 2010*).

Such a model of the 'Celtic migrations' is a good possibility for explaining the spread of La Tène weapons considered as victorious weapons, and some other accompanying finds in a short period of time in this one part of the Mediterranean world. Weapons with a perceived or real feeling of superiority crossed the Alps in large numbers, thereby creating local demands for such weapons across a broad area of northern Italy (*Reinecke 1940*; *Dore 1995*). This in turn would have stimulated local production and imitation of such weapons

Fig. 3. Hollow boss rings (*Hohlbuckelringe*) from Marzabotto (prov. Bologna, Italy; photos and drawings with kind permission of H. Geschwind).

(*Vitali 1996*). The distribution of La Tène objects in Greece might have followed other mechanisms, as discussed in more detail below.

The baggage train model also helps to explain the distribution of Celtic names for tribes and individuals in Northern Italy. Any attempt to explain the spread of La Tène culture, however, would appear to require an additional model. How did female jewellery and other parts of the La Tène cultural package spread, especially in the Carpathian basin, and over the great distance from the far West to the East, and *vice versa*? Some forms, like *Hohlbuckelringe* or pseudo-filigrane decoration on bronzes, inspired or said to be inspired by the Eastern Celts, have also been found in the west e.g. in France (cf. *Duval 1977*; *Kruta 1985*).

These interpretations are not new but at the same time, they lead to a dead end if we want to examine generally the spread of La Tène culture into its margins. Especially in the Carpathian Basin, La Tène women's jewellery is more numerous than weapons. So here we need complementary or other proposals.

Adopting habits of the elite: marriages with long-distance partners

The 5th century BC was still a time of princely graves (*Fürstengräber*) and princely sites (*Fürstensitze*) in some parts of Central Europe. Impressive burial barrows and opulent gold jewellery reflect a society with significant social divisions (*Haffner 1991*; *Hunter – Joy 2015*). These princely elites or aristocracy followed, at least for a few generations, a seemingly homogenous lifestyle, judging by the burial rite used to identify them. For example, imported bronze vessels were used for over two to three centuries in a specific way (*Naso 2017*; *2019*). The same can be said for weapons, gold jewellery, and the use of exotic raw materials, like glass, amber, and coral. By contrast, the criteria for distinguishing between 'minor nobles' and 'normal people' is not well-defined. Based on the evidence for upper societal echelons, a pronounced elite funerary style evolved over time, involving a whole range of prestige accessories, undergoing different changes in different parts of Europe (see recently *Bardelli 2017* for the upper Rhine region; *Schönfelder 2016* for Champagne region).

Personal connections and heroic narratives are likely reasons for such a dynamic periphery, though in the core area, a mainly homogenous elite behaviour seems to have existed. Personal contacts may have taken place in private and public spaces and probably also at funerals (for the performative character, see *Wendling 2018*). The funeral ceremonies were likely oriented not only to the needs of grieving locals, but also to other elite persons, as they would have better understood the numerous ornate grave goods. The distribution of similar types of gold jewellery in princely graves, such as gold torques, but also in the graves of 'princesses', like gold beads (*Wendling 2019*, 173–181) and ear/hair rings, show that women were also involved in these elite networks (*Metzner-Nebelsick 2009*; *Trémaud 2017*; *Winger 2017*). The basis for this phenomenon is probably exogenous elite marriages.

Isotopic studies of inhumations from the Magdalenenberg–Tumulus (Schwarzwald-Baar-Kreis, Germany) show that at least some women interred with foreign objects may have had non-local origins based on their isotopic values (*Oelze et al. 2012*; *Koch 2017*). Preliminary studies of the aDNA from 6th century BC late Hallstatt princely graves are beginning to show genetic relations between elites over some distance. For example between the Hochdorf and Asperg 'Grafenbühl' (both Lkr. Ludwigsburg, Germany; a distance of some 11–12 km; *Krausse 2005*). These studies are still in their early stages, and it is hoped that further analyses will provide more satisfactory results.

Concerning the circumstances of this time, it seems that *exogenous marriages* were one of the most important expressions of elite behaviour: they demonstrated bonds to other communities by marriages, by a foreign tongue, and maybe even by the use of foreign jewellery. Such displays of elite behaviour must have been important for the local nobility and were likely recompensed for by a *vice-versa* exchange of marriage partners. Elite marriages enabled personal networks to develop in the Early Iron Age. Such networks probably did not reach beyond the Alps, but rather to neighbouring regions, including the key sites at the salt mines of Hallstatt and Dürrnberg. Here, we also find foreign objects (*Schumann 2015*, 120–123; *Pauli 1978*, 443–455), for example the Upper Rhine *Einknotenring* golden bracelet from Dürrnberg grave 200 (*Zeller 1992*; *Guggisberg 2000*, 112–113, Fig. 120) and the aforementioned gold beads (*Wendling 2019*, 173–181). From Hallstatt and Dürrnberg, the contacts extended further south (*Wendling 2014*).

Following the transition to LT B around 380 BC, a different La Tène society emerged. The princely elites represented in Ha D and LT A are less visible. Rather, many more men

sought to express themselves, or were expressed, as warriors resulting in imports and banqueting becoming less prevalent in the burial record. Instead of being buried with elaborate 'princely' objects, many men received a full panoply of weapons (shield, spear and sword). Grave enclosures, as signs of separation from others, became popular for these 'modest' elites in many parts of Europe (*Becker 1995*; cf. *Repka 2020*). It appears that from LT B2 onwards there was some sort of a levelling of the elites.

Traditionally, archaeologists concentrated on imports and on the warriors when discussing social developments within the La Tène society, especially as 'rich' female elites are far less visible beyond more or less heavy bronze jewellery (for a new focus on women in the southern Carpathian Basin see *Dizdar 2018*; *2020*). But if we accept that there was a fundamental change in society, we must consider the role women or families played, not solely those males who sought to portray themselves as warriors and followed aristocratic habits.

It seems that an elite burial was a perceived necessity for large sections of La Tène society; nevertheless, much more in demand was an aristocratic lifestyle. It is also likely that, compared to the Hallstatt period, a larger part of society got involved in long-distance marriages. These marriages were arranged, confirmed, and renewed. This model is better able to explain the greater number of La Tène objects in former non-La Tène environments. La Tène weapons were adopted and LT B ring jewellery and fibulae spread in all directions: to western and southern France, the Alpine regions, and the Carpathian Basin. A fascinating case study is some of the heavy and enamel decorated bronze torques with discs (e.g. *Scheibenhalsringe*, type D according to Felix Müller), which are typical of the southern Upper Rhine valley, but individual examples of which are known from Champagne, Ticino, and the northern Carpathian Basin (*Fig. 4*; *Müller 1989*, 85–88). Fibulae of the Münsingen group can also be added to these objects exchanged over long distances (see *Bujna 1998*; *Guštin 1998* for subtypes in detail). Although these artefacts rarely appear as sets of objects, collectively they give an image of distribution. Its core was in Central Europe (albeit with gaps, due to restricted numbers of discoveries depending on the local topography) and isolated finds come from female graves in the periphery. They need not be direct evidence of individual female mobility, indeed they could already have belonged to a second generation. Within the Carpathian Basin, locally made female La Tène jewellery also spread and some specific regional distribution patterns can be observed (*Dizdar 2018*; *2020*). Therefore, this is a period when Central European connections existed and imports from the Mediterranean played a much-reduced role than in the preceding period of the 'princes' – even though this was the time of 'Celtic' raids into Hellenistic Greece. Booty did not pay – but this is a different story (*Schönfelder 2007*). This rise in individual mobility is, therefore, a key development for understanding the spread of La Tène culture.

Affirmation of family ties: fostering of children

Children buried with rich funerary equipment represent a new phenomenon in the Early Iron Age (*Schumann 2015*, 295–303). The puzzle of its origins is yet to be solved. Robert Schumann has questioned the interpretation of these burials as indicators of inherited social status since they are not frequent. In any case, these burials show that children could have had an important meaning in the minds of local communities. If these well-equipped infant burials do not represent the heirs of early La Tène elites, we must search for other explanatory models. Here, we have to agree with Schumann, even if it leaves well-trodden paths.

Fig. 4. *Scheibenhalsringe* from the southern Upper Rhine valley discovered in the Carpathian Basin: A – Pişcolt grave 108, jud. Satu Mare, Romania; B – Distribution map of Müller's group D *Scheibenhalsringe* (after *Müller 1989*, Pl. 52. Suppl. 3; reproduced with kind permission of F. Müller).

Fostering children of allied families was a widespread phenomenon on the continent during the Middle Ages and in the Celtic-speaking areas of the Atlantic (*Parkes 2006*). It helped to generate a spirit of noble community in the Middle Ages over a long distance. Children were forced to leave home, but in doing so they learned to understand a little bit more about the world and the social systems of their parents and the foster parents.

Raimund Karl has proposed a system of fostering children, at least for young boys, for the late Pre-Roman Iron Age based on the written sources of the British Isles and by transferring ideas from the 'Celtic' Middle Ages to the past (*Karl 2005*). The giving of children as hostages is a well-known model of Roman cultural propagation for the late Republic

(*Creigthon 2000*). Therefore, it seems legitimate to reflect on such phenomena in the societies of La Tène culture as well. The idea of fostering children had been neglected for a long time in archaeology, but with modern isotope studies, it may become increasingly relevant for the Pre-Roman Iron Age.

Isotopic studies in larger La Tène cemeteries, like Nebringen (Lkr. Böblingen, Germany; grave 20, 14–15 years) and Radovesice II 'Na Vyhlídce' (okr. Litoměřice, Czech Republic; grave 6, child, >6 years), show that also children could have foreign origins (*Scheeres et al 2013*, 3620; *2014*, 507). In light of their rather normal grave equipments, these observations require an explanation. Some rare graves with special children's weapons can be cited here: for girls with simple small ring jewellery, the numbers are relatively high; for boys it looks different. A grave dated to this LT B2 phase is known from Barbey (dép. Seine-et-Marne, France) at the Seine and Yonne rivers confluence. It contained a 12–14 years old boy with a bronze torque and equipped with a child-size sword (*Rapin 2002*). Another example of such a short weapon comes from Este 'Campodaglio' grave 38 (prov. Padua, Italy; *Vitali 1996*, 588–592). This is remarkable, as weapons for little 'princes' were not produced for 'princely burials' in the LT A phase, but for elite warrior burials in the LT B phase. A similar weapon of short size (only 46.9 cm) from Grave 15 in Radovesice was deposited – for whatever reasons – in a normal adult grave (*Waldhauser 1987*, 119–120, Pl. 21).

A proposal of foster children brought up in a foreign land, as evidenced by the strontium evidence, seems plausible, if we accept, that elite behaviour was emulated by a large part of the population.

Further raids

Further raids of 'Celtic' armies reached Greece in 280–277 BC, and large groups of warriors were hired as mercenaries (*Jovanović 2014*; *López Sánchez 2018*). In these cases, the baggage train model can be applied again. It is important in these instances to discuss the potential origin of these armies. 'Celtic' armies and mercenaries did not necessarily need to have originated in Central Europe and travelled to the southernmost parts of the Balkans. What is meant by the label 'Celtic' in the Greek? Language? Armament? A way of fighting? Tribal structures? Or simply their 'barbarian' character?

We can be sure that some warriors were recruited in the large, unenclosed middle La Tène settlement of Němčice nad Hanou in Moravia on account of the numismatic evidence. Coins found here came from the very areas of the Mediterranean where mercenaries were recruited (*Kolníková 2012*). Further examples of such potential recruitment sites include Roseldorf in Lower Austria (*Holzer 2014*) and Nowa Cerekwia in Upper Silesia, even north of the Carpathians (*Rudnicki 2014*). At present, however, we do not know how Celtic, how La Tène these armies may have been, which individuals and ethnicities installed themselves in Bulgaria according to written sources, who raided Greece and who became mercenaries. It might be that large parts of these armies had been coming together in the newly latènised regions in the Carpathian Basin – or that they may have had some 'Illyrian' origin (*López Sánchez 2018*, 190–191). La Tène relics in Greece are very scarce and do not seem to be connected with the key date of the 279 BC raid (cf. *Kysela – Kimmey 2020*).

Conclusions

The spread of a new cultural phenomenon to another region is one of the key questions in prehistory. Models of migration of tribes and warrior groups in the 'period of Celtic migrations' have evolved over the last 100 years following the prevailing theoretical and political opinion of the time. None of these models have been detailed enough. None have been fully persuasive, as the historic 'Celtic migrations' do not explain the spread of the Celtic La Tène culture; up to now, no consistent picture has been achieved. Within this perspective, Italy and the Balkans do not follow the same scheme and both have previously been contradicted by former tendencies towards a diffusionist vision of development in Europe. Perhaps for these reasons, European Iron Age archaeology has displayed an aversion to the topic of contact and mobility in modern edited volumes on the topic of contacts and mobility (*Lehoërff – Talon 2017*; *Boivin – Frachetti 2018*).

We have presented here three specific models to explain the large-scale occurrence of La Tène objects and the spread of the La Tène culture, which are coherent with the picture of the archaeological finds in the southern and eastern margins of the La Tène culture. They are supported by strontium isotopes analyses at key sites. The *baggage train model* explains what people had seen in the past: tribes on the move, even if it had only been a large band of warriors with a baggage train in the 'Celtic way', including some women.

Families with an open mind and aspirations of upward mobility within the warrior elite of the 4th and 3rd century BC finally spread La Tène culture all over Europe. This phenomenon is based on the evolving social structures. Societies, which needed 'princely tombs' to keep up continuity, developed later into societies, which needed elite behaviour in the form of *elite marriages* and *fostered children* on a much bigger scale. This rise in tight-knit personal networks helped to spread La Tène culture.

The ideas presented in this paper have developed over some time. The research was initiated by a DFG financed project on Iron Age mobility 'Mobilität und Migration in der Eisenzeit (4./3. Jh. v. Chr.). Archäologische und bioarchäometrische Ansätze zum Nachweis von Einheimischen und Zuwanderern'. Further discussions with Kurt W. Alt (Krems), Markus Egg (Mainz), Andrew Fitzpatrick (Leicester), Sebastian Fürst (Saarbrücken), Heidi Geschwind (Niederweimar), Raimon Graells y Fabregat (Alicante), Corina Knipper (Mannheim), Andrew Lamb (Hradec Králové), Pavel Sankot (Prague) and others have helped to develop these ideas. I am grateful to Heidi Geschwind (Niederweimar), Felix Müller (Bern), and Aurel Rustoiu (Cluj-Napoca) for the possibility to use their illustrations (digitally revised by Vera Kassühlke, RGZM), and Andrew Lamb for revising the English language.

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MARTIN SCHÖNFELDER, Leibniz-Zentrum für Archäologie, Ludwig-Lindenschmit-Forum 1, D-55116 Mainz, Germany; martin.schoenfelder@leiza.de