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TRANSYLVANIA AND THE OF INDO-EUROPEAN MIGRATION PROBLEM. THE ROMANIAN PARADIGM

FLORIN GOGĂLTAN

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In this article, I discuss the manner in which the model proposed by Marija Gimbutas regarding the Indo-European migration in Europe was perceived by Romanian specialists. The article is also an extension of my efforts to understand the relations between prehistoric Transylvania and the North-Pontic steppe. Approached from this historiographic perspective, the subject illustrates a situation symptomatic of Romanian archaeology: the lack, with few exceptions, of serious debates on this controversial subject, the frequent repetition of unverified opinions, statements supported by invalid arguments, etc.

Keywords: Marja Gimbutas, Indo-Europeanization, North-Pontic steppe, Transylvania, Romania.

Šiame straipsnyje aptariama, kaip Rumunijos mokslininkai priėmė Marijos Gimbutienės pasiūlytą indoeuropiečių migracijos į Europą modelį. Taip pat šiame darbe autorius siekia išaiškinti priešistorėje gyvavusių ryšių tarp Transilvanijos ir šiaurės Ponto stepių. Straipsnis parodo, jog iš istoriografinio konteksto akivaizdu, kad tema atskleidžia Rumunijos archeologijos mokslo padėtį: rimtų diskusijų šia prieštaringa tema stoka (su keliomis išimtimis), dažną nepagrįstų nuomonių kartojimą bei neteisingais argumentais paremtus teiginius.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: Marija Gimbutas (Gimbutienė), indoeuropeizacija, šiaurės Ponto stepė, Transilvanija, Rumunija.

On this occasion, I wish to present the way in which M. Gimbutas' theory about the Indo-Europeanization of Europe was received by Romanian scholars. I will also point out the starting moments of the debates on what was the impact of North-Pontic communities on the local environment. Approached from this historiographic perspective, the subject illustrates a situation symptomatic of Romanian archaeology: the lack, with few exceptions, of serious debates on this controversial subject, the frequent repetition of unverified opinions, statements supported by invalid arguments, etc. (Anghelinu 2003; Palincas 2006; Dragoman, Oanță-Marghitu 2006; etc.). These circumstances led Professor Al. Vulpe to take a rough stance against those who thought that the Indo-Europeanization problem has already been solved (Vulpe 2008). The article is also an extension of my efforts to understand the relations between

the prehistoric communities of Transylvania and the North-Pontic world (Gogaltan 2011; 2016; 2021).

It is known that the theoretical discourse has had little to no impact on Romanian archaeologists (Anghelinu 2007). As presented in the article, their arguments in regards to the Indo-European problem, if such thing ever existed, were based on the relationship between professor and disciple, or, plainly, on personal intuition. This approach was subject to some changes only after 1989. Naturally, a new generation of archaeologists developed, ready to bring a different style to their participation in the scientific process. Often starting as a rejection of the moral authority claimed by some established archaeologists in the old regime, the validity of their scientific opinions is also questioned. Personal relationships suffered as well; however, there were visible transformations, driven by a growing

independence thanks to better access to bibliographic sources, thus breaking the monopoly of personal libraries. New academic models prevailed, while the scientific discussions turned to a more critical view, a natural reflection of the social turmoil that overwhelmed Romania at the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first century (Dragoman, Oanță-Marghitu 2013). However, this new reality had a limited impact over the Indo-European problem; therefore, the Gimbutas model remained an educational template, still unquestioned and unreviewed.

*

In 1888, G. Téglás was the first archaeologist to find analogies for a syenite mace-head uncovered at Cetea (western Transylvania) (Fig. 1) in the very place that is the Caucasus (Kuban) (Téglás 1888, 417). The first time when professional research was conducted on mounds from Romania was during the First World War. In 1917, C. Schuchhardt and P. Traeger probed two such monuments near Constanța, proving their burial function (Schuchhardt, Traeger 1919). Having published a stone stela found in a ravaged burial mound from Hamangia, V. Pârvan took the next step of establishing that there were analogies for the Transylvanian stelae from Baia de Criș and Gherla and he correctly pointed out that they belong to the Bronze Age. However, he believed that they come from Central, North and West-Europe, and that the Transylvanian ones were the easternmost (Pârvan 1925, 429).

The hypothesis that connections existed between the north of the Black Sea and their western neighbours was promoted by V. G. Childe already in the 1920's (Childe 1925; 1926). Childe talks more about Transylvania in his classic *The Danube in Prehistory*. A series of 'intrusive cultural groups' are to blame for the emergence of barrows bearing red ochre laden skeletons in crouched position. These

mounds 'indubitably attest to relations between the Hungarian plain and South Russia across the Carpathians' (Childe 1929, 206). Other mounds from Transylvania, found in the valleys of the Olt and Mureș rivers, which contained crouched skeletons, could be tied to ochre graves found along the Tisza (Childe 1929, 208). Responding to this theory, the Decea Mureșului cemetery was put by I. Nestor in a separate group, which would have contained local (Bodrogkeresztúr) elements and south Russian influences ('südrussischen Affinitäten'). However, Nestor did not agree that actual steppe nomads had arrived in Transylvania (Nestor 1933, 73–76).

After I. Andrieșescu published in 1929 the zoomorphic stone sceptres from Sălcuța and Fedeleșeni (Andrieșescu 1929), the way was open for discussing this type of artifact. V. Dumitrescu gave rise to the hypothesis that these heads, which look a bit like hippos, would demonstrate Copper Age links between the Lower Danube and Egypt (Dumitrescu 1934, 190–200). Upon investigating the contents of the Dobrujan Casimcea grave, D. Popescu compared a zoomorphic stone sceptre with finds from the North Black Sea area ('Russie méridionale'). Among these, he drew connections with some artifacts of the same type from Transylvania: Decea Mureșului, 'Käsberg (Brașov)' and 'Vaia' (Popescu 1941, 91).

In the beginning of his career, professor K. Horedt gave much attention to a series of stone mace-heads from Cetea, Decea Mureșului, Feldioara, etc. (Horedt 1940), and a snake-like ax from 'Alba Iulia' with an animal head stylized next to the blade's edge (Horedt 1945), all from Transylvania. He also tied them with the north of the Black Sea (Fig. 2).

In 1941, I. Nestor and M. Petrescu-Dîmbovița saved the contents of several Bronze-Age graves discovered at Ploiești-Triaj in southern Romania. In 1943, an untouched mound was dug up (Nestor 1944). Unfortunately, the results of this research were published only 45 years later (Comșa 1989). Nonetheless, the earlier finds, marked the 1950s

debate on ochre mound burials in Muntenia and Moldova, according to their identification in the steppe and pre-steppe of the south USSR (Petrescu-Dîmbovița 1950). M. Petrescu-Dîmbovița was also the first to use in Romania the term Yamnaya burials ('înmormîntări de *tip yamy*') coined by V. A. Gorodtsov at the beginning of the 20th century (Kaiser 2019, 24) and then adopted by V. G. Childe ('yamno graves') (Childe 1942, 130–131).

The new archaeological finds after the Second World War prompted more researchers to take up Childe's newer or older views. The most renowned was and is M. Gimbutas (Gimbutas 1956; 1965; 1994; 1997). In the 1970s, M. Gimbutas developed the theory of the three main Kurgan migration waves (Gimbutas 1977; 1979). While there was general agreement for the first (4400–4300 BC) and the third wave (3000–2900 BC), researchers were divided when it came to the second migration wave, which supposedly lead to major cultural changes on the Middle and Lower Danube circa the mid-4th millennium BC (Gogâltan 2016, 419).

Just as I. Nestor before the Second World War, V. Dumitrescu had a more nuanced view (Dumitrescu *et al.* 1954, 540–544; Dumitrescu 1955; 1957, 89–96; 1962; 1972). According to him, if the Casimcea grave belonged to the 'circle of the Black Sea steppe culture', the horse-head sceptres from Fedeleşeni and Sălcuța 'must be considered local mimicry of the type of sceptres found in Casimcea, made of another stone' (Dumitrescu *et al.* 1954, 542). This statement was later reconsidered. Their wide range from Oltenia to Caucasus was now due to 'tribal exchange' (Dumitrescu 1955, 929; 1957, 95). They were 'crafted also in the Black Sea steppe, but reached where they were found through trade between tribes' (Dumitrescu 1955, 929). The abstract sceptre from Văleni, Transylvania (Gogâltan 2011, 107, Abb. 5/2, with the old references) (Fig. 3) has been tied to the Caucasus 'through the tribes of the Black Sea steppe' (Dumitrescu *et al.* 1954, 544), and the zoomorphic



Fig. 1. The syenite mace-head uncovered at Cetea, Romania (after Teglas 1888).

1 pav. Kuoka iš sienito, aptikta Cetea, Rumunija (pagal Teglas 1888).

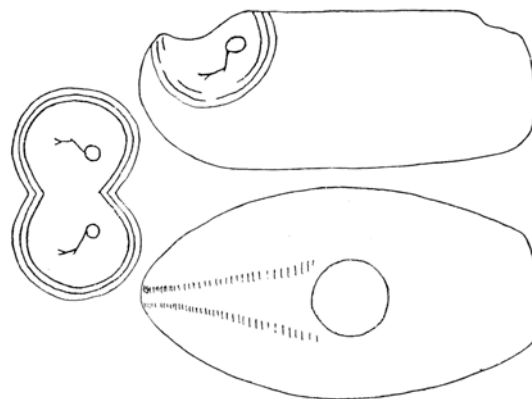


Fig. 2. Stone ax from 'Alba Iulia' (after Horedt 1945).

2 pav. Akmeninis kirvis iš „Alba Julija“ (pagal Horedt 1945).

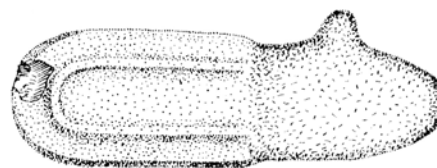


Fig. 3. The abstract stone scepter from Văleni, Romania (after Gogaltan 2011).

3 pav. Abstrakčios formos akmeninis skeptras, Valeni, Rumunija (pagal Gogaltan 2011).

one from Suvodol had reached Macedonia through 'exchanges between tribes' (Dumitrescu 1962, 97).

Other interesting views were put forth by yet another founder of an archaeological thought school from the 1960s in Romania. D. Berciu thought that the Decea Mureşului cemetery was part of an independent Copper Age group or culture from Transylvania, with strong ties to the world north of the Black Sea (Berciu 1960a, 59–60). As to the diffusion of stone sceptres 'they were linked with the historical moment of the gradual migration of nomad shepherds [...]' (Berciu 1954, 546). In his opinion, there would have been five such waves from east and north-east, which lead to the formation of mixed cultures (Berciu 1960b, 73). Furthermore, 'on a social level, the entering of shepherd tribes, which were, in this respect, on a higher level of organization, sped up the integration of local tribes in the patriarchal order of things, and on the other side, it contributed to changing the language of these European regions towards Indo-European' (Berciu 1960b, 75). This view abruptly turned around when similar artefacts were found in Serbia and Bulgaria. These suggested instead an Aegean-Anatolian influence (Berciu 1962, 401, 407). From this point, Indo-Europeanization flowed in reverse: 'Their diffusion in the Terek basin, in the North Caucasus and towards the Caspian Sea and Lower Volga could possibly have begun from the South, through the Derbent mountain-pass, likewise in the chronological framework of that general structural stage of the Indo-European languages' (Berciu 1962, 407).

In the 1950s, an ever greater number of burial mounds were excavated in eastern and southern Romania. Their inventory could be seen as the characteristics of a 'culture of red ochre graves' (Zirra 1960). Anthropological studies made on them seemed to bring further proof of links to the Black Sea steppe (Necrasov, Cristescu 1957). It was not long before this became the 'official' interpretation (Berciu 1960b, 72; Nestor 1960, 126). Also around that time, in a history

of Transylvania, C. Daicoviciu surprisingly stated: 'Proto-Thracians, the newcomers, part of a long and important wave of migration, are, as is generally believed, Indo-European peoples [...]. Newer theories hold, however, that Indo-Europeans were on the territory of our fatherland since the beginning of the Palaeolithic Age' (Daicoviciu 1960, 19). Such a hypothesis had not yet been formulated by Romanian archaeologists, but it quickly found its followers among non-specialists.

P. Roman, the representative of a new generation of archaeologists, noticed differences in funeral rite and ritual. He correctly dated the ochre graves to a wider span of time from the Copper Age to the Early Bronze Age (Roman 1964). The contribution of A. D. Alexandrescu about menhir-statues refers directly to the situation in Transylvania. As the three artefacts from Baia de Criş were republished (Fig. 4), she concluded that they belong to an eastern type. They were not necessarily linked to the kurgans. Rather, they were a result of 'a second entry of eastern elements in Transylvania', which corresponded to the final stage of the Coţofeni culture (Alexandrescu 1963, 149). This view is still held to be true today, 55 years after it was first put forth (Rişcuţa 2001; Gogăltan 2016, 430–434).

In 1970s and 1980s Romania, research on burial mounds received less financial support from the authorities. The effort that had to be put in conducting such excavations was likely considered to be not worth it due to insufficient results. Therefore, the discussion turned to historiography. Just as I. Nestor (Nestor 1970, 72), H. Daicoviciu would write that 'the penetration of shepherd tribes would mark the beginning of the process of the Indo-Europeanization of the peoples of these lands' (Daicoviciu 1971, 18). V. Dumitrescu would come back to discussing the horse head-shaped stone sceptres after reading an article by M. Gimbutas. He would revert to the hypothesis that 'the stone sceptres from Oltenia and Moldova need not be tied to the entering of steppe



Fig. 4. The menhir-statues from Baia de Criș, Romania (after Alexandrescu 1963).
4 pav. Menhyro tipo skulptūros, Baja de Kriš, Rumunija (pagal Alexandrescu 1963).

tribes in this area. They are not local imitations, being made in places inhabited by tribes north of the Black Sea and got here through exchange' (Dumitrescu 1972, 48). On the other hand, M. Brudiu wrote that the few newer found abstract and animal-like stone sceptres prove relationships between the Cucutenian world and groups of people from north of the Black Sea (Brudiu 1975, 177; Brudiu, Coman 1979, 103). I also found I. Ferenczi's conclusion to be interesting. After probing the only certain Yamnaya barrow from Transylvania, which is located in Câmpia Turzii, he wrote that the communities from north of the Black Sea which got all the way inside the Carpathian Basin were not Indo-European. This was supposedly proven by the anthropological features of the individuals, and by the strong influences local people had on them (Ferenczi 1974, 133).

For this time, M. Dinu seems to have been the greatest partisan of M. Gimbutas' theories. He claimed unabashedly that the mounds from the

steppe and forest steppe between the Volga and the middle course of the Danube, including the Balkan Peninsula, can be seen as part of Indo-Europeanization (Dinu 1974, 262). He further stated that: 'En admettant que les civilisations mixtes de transitions de type Cernavoda-Renie et Horodiștea-Foltești-Gorodsk-Ousatovo, utilisant de tombes planes avec ou sans ocre, représentent la première synthèse historique réalisée par les premiers Indo-européens dans l'espace carpato-danubien, alors, le processus de l'indo-européanisation de la population locale ne peut plus être attribué aux tribus aux tombes tumulaires à ocre, qui comme on l'a déjà vu, sont postérieures aux civilisations susmentionnées' (Dinu 1974, 273).

In 1980, the articles from the second International Congress of Thracology were published. Definitely not by chance, this was another moment when the Indo-Europeanization theory was activated, as there was a desire to identify the origin of the Thracians.

During his prestigious scientific career, E. Comşa also undertook serious work on the topic of the westward migration of the steppe peoples (Comşa 1976; 1978; 1980; 1989; 1998; etc.). He repeatedly insisted on connections between the local communities and the steppe people, which ‘contributed to this long process, which ended through the Indo-Europeanization of the people from the Carpatho-Danubian regions, and subsequently, the forming of the old Thracian communities’ (Comşa 1978, 363). Furthermore, ‘Dans ses territoires, les débuts du processus d’«indo-européanisation» se situent à la fin du IV^e millénaire’ (Comşa 1998, 29). During the same conference, M. Dinu restarted the debate on Indo-Europeanization, this time focusing on a series of discoveries, including from Transylvania, which were supposedly connected to a migration from Eastern Europe. It was about indications of horse taming and the emergence of the wagon. His conclusion was in line with the Gimbutas’ model: ‘Donc, si l’interprétation philologique est juste, ces découvertes constituent des indices de la présence des Indo-Européens dans l’espace carpatho-danubien et balkanique bien avant la pénétration des tribus tumulaires’ (Dinu 1980, 47).

A. Dodd-Oprişescu is another specialist who showed constant interest for the connecting elements between the North-Pontic steppe and Transylvania (Dodd-Oprişescu 1978). As she was well versed in the topic, she thought of the ‘Decea Mureşului group’ as a foreign entity in the late Tiszapolgár-Bodrogresztúr horizon (Dodd-Oprişescu 1980, 556). In a debate for and against migration, she proved to have a welcome non-partisan position about the stone sceptres: ‘We are waiting for more things to be uncovered, and until then, we should stay away from theories which turn out to be extremist’ (Dodd-Oprişescu, Mitrea 1980, 92). She took a similar stance regarding the corded ornaments (Dodd-Oprişescu 1981, 525). However, about the Cucuteni C pottery, she reminded them that ‘only Cernavodă I communities are likely to

be the first Indo-European groups to have entered the Western regions north of the Black Sea’ (Dodd-Oprişescu 1980, 556).

P. Roman also had a strong position about the Indo-Europeanization phenomenon of South-Eastern Europe. For him, the first groups in the north-eastern and eastern regions, which moved west at the beginning of the ‘Late Copper Age’, had contributed to ‘deepening the Indo-Europeanization process and to the shaping of the Thracian peoples’ (Roman 1981, 22–23). In 1989, during the Congress of Thracology at Tulcea, P. Roman took part with a presentation about ‘The Indo-Europeanization Phenomenon and the making of the Thracian Kind’. I will cite a paragraph from the introduction of this article. It should help us get the author’s view about who the Indo-Europeans were: ‘Altogether, when explaining the spread of the Indo-Europeanization phenomenon, researchers failed to see that the moving groups of people put in motion also other, non-Indo-European ethnic groups. On the other hand, Indo-Europeanization of a given land could take long, and even be interrupted by non-Indo-Europeans coming back, or by the natives absorbing the Indo-European immigrant communities’ (Roman 1989, 49–50). The next pages contain archaeological information from the ‘second half of the 4th millennium and the 3rd millennium BC’. Unluckily, we do not find out anything else neither about these Indo-Europeans, nor about who the ‘Non-Indo-Europeans’ are.

*

Now, just as in the last 55 years, it is still a matter of hot debate whether items such as the abstract and animal-like sceptres or four-knobbed stone maces came from the east or from the west. However, because they lack archaeological contexts, the discussion stagnated. Since B. Govedarica and E. Kaiser published their synthesis article on abstract and zoomorphic stone sceptres (Govedarica, Kaiser

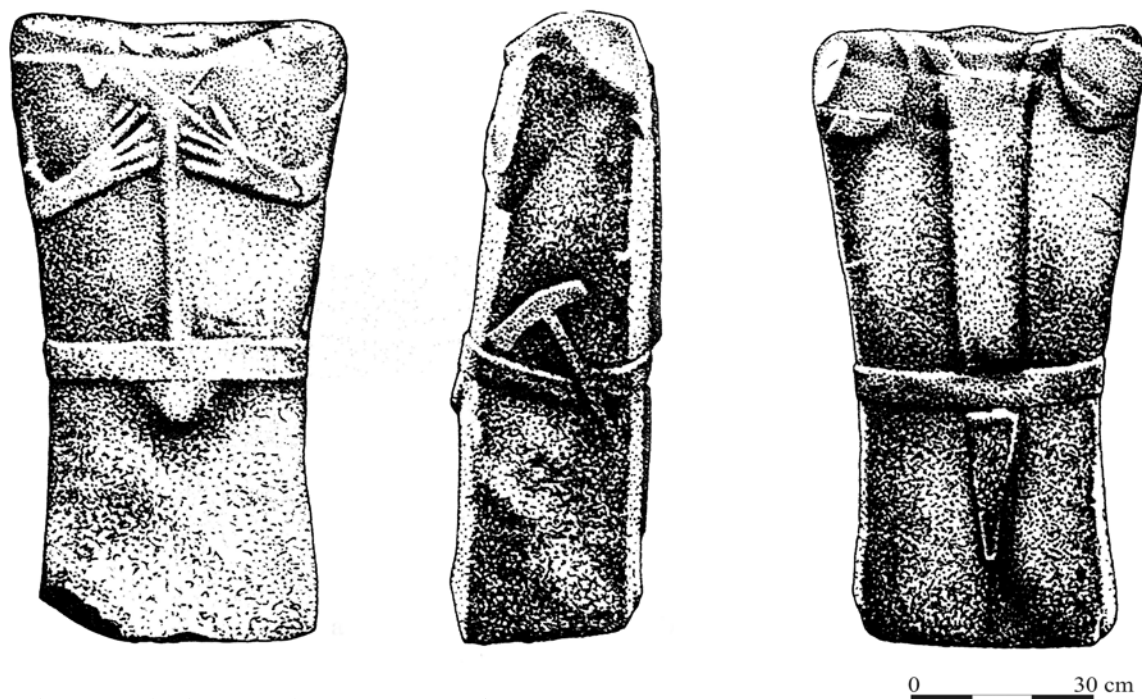


Fig. 5. The stone stelae from Baia de Criș, Romania (after Rîșcuța 2001).
5 pav. Akmeninės stelos, Baja de Kriš, Rumunija (pagal Rîșcuța 2001).

1996), and B. Govedarica on four-knobbed stone maces (Govedarica 2006), new finds (Burtănescu, Țurcanu 1997; Ciugudean 1998; Frînculeasa, Mirea 2007; Niculică 2008; Ilie 2012; Garvăn, Munteanu 2012; Garvăn 2018) and viewpoints (Harțuche 2005; Dergačev 2007, 56–90, 102–103, 112–119, 140–143, 210–212) were published. Opinions stay divided: some lean towards a Carpatho-Danube-Balkan origin (Burtănescu, Țurcanu 1997, 76, 82; Harțuche 2005, 82; Frînculeasa, Mirea 2007, 41–42), others still follow the migrationist theory of M. Gimbutas (Ciugudean 1998, 32; Dergacev 2000, 38, 42, 49–50; Măndescu *et al.* 2000, 21; Dergačev 2007, 465–468; Niculică 2008, 30–32).

In Transylvania, H. Ciugudean is also known for his investigation of a great number of burial mounds dated to the Early Bronze Age (Ciugudean 1991). Therefore, his topic of choice for his PhD does not come as a surprise (Ciugudean 1996). What really amazes me is that, given the times, his

opinions did not match the expectations of his coordinator, who took an undeservedly critical stance (Roman 2000). Finds from the mounds proved that Yamnaya elements were there also in the middle of Transylvania. This could explain why inhumation was adopted by the native population. Aside this ‘traditionalist’ view, one can also see the ‘emergence of barrow cemeteries as a result of a local development of a post-Neolithic society, which finds itself in the middle of a gradual process of transformation’ (Ciugudean 1996, 132). As it is hard to specify the chronological relations between the incomers from the North-Pontic steppe and the natives, and because the Yamnaya distribution area does not overlap with the Livezile distribution area, it is hard to determine what role the foreign groups might have played in the making of the Western-Transylvanian barrow phenomenon. The new theoretical interpretations on the nature of the contacts between the world of the North-Pontic steppe and the east of Central

Europe, including some new archaeological finds, have made Ciugudean see the role of the Yamnaya communities in Transylvania as ‘disseminated Transylvanian goods towards the Lower Danube or to the Tisza Plain’ (Ciugudean 2011, 30), nothing to do with Indo-Europeans.

N.-C. Rîșcuța, by publishing the new finds from Baia de Criș (Fig. 5), has brought an important contribution to the study of stone stelae. He was probably influenced by P. Roman (his PhD coordinator), when he stated that ‘along with the monuments from Baia de Criș, these can be dated within the second arrival stage of Indo-European shepherds, which is archaeologically documented, and which corresponds to the third Kurgan wave, and to the Yamnaya culture’ (Rîșcuța 2001, 152). The argument is oversimplifying and fallacious: where they come from, the stone stelae are used by the Yamnaya communities. It is a well-known fact that the Yamnaya are Indo-European. Therefore, stone stelae are proof of Indo-Europeans coming to Transylvania.

In the level pertaining to the Decea Mureșului group, in the settlement at Seușa-Gorgan (western Transylvania), a broken ‘Cucuteni C’ pot with seashell and snail shell temper was found (Fig. 6). It was ‘attributed to the so-called Indo-Europeanization process’ (Ciută, Marc 2010, 20). No further information was supplied.

In Moldova, G. Dumitroaia and F. Burtănescu are among the PhD students of P. Roman who dealt with the Early Bronze Age. Their PhD’s spatially or chronologically overlapped to some degree, but not all of what they wrote was the same. G. Dumitroaia, even if he belonged to a generation still under the influence of the old historical discourse, stated that the people of the transition from the Copper to the Bronze Age had a ‘so-called Indo-European origin’ (Dumitroaia 2000, 161). The analysis of F. Burtănescu regarding the Early Bronze Age from Moldova is well grounded and remains the go-to book when it comes

to relations between the local cultural phenomenon and the ones coming from north of the Black Sea and Central Europe. The population movements are seen correctly as carrying ‘cultural messages, but, sometimes, possibly, also some ethnic elements’ (Burtănescu 2002, 83), but the Indo-Europeans no longer have anything to do with this. One has to remember his territorial and cultural division of the Western Yamnaya region into areas of ‘compact primary peopling’ (including South-East Moldova, Bărağan and Dobrouja), areas of ‘come-and-go / migration’ (along the Danube) and an area of ‘compact secondary peopling’, as it seems to have been the case of eastern Hungary (Burtănescu 2002, 260). I would add here Western Romania, and maybe Transylvania.

The Early and Middle Bronze Age on the Lower Danube was of interest to I. Vasiliu, who was writing his PhD under the supervision of I. Paul at the University of Alba Iulia. During that time, he published some ‘ochre burials’ (Vasiliu 1995a; 1995b; 1995c; 1995d). At the time, many agreed with the way he explained why they were here around Lower Danube: ‘Indo-European communities had moved around the Lower Danube, and we only know about them from burial mounds’ (Vasiliu 1995a, 73). The options that he proposed later got more complex: aside the traditional explanation of how this practice diffused through the many Yamnaya groups, it is also possible that they were adopted by the native people in the context of the economic and social changes that took place in the Early Bronze Age (Vasiliu 2004, 131).

For G. Simion (Simion 2003) or M. Brudiu (Brudiu 2003), at the beginning of the 2000s, there still was a migration of Indo-European peoples to the Lower Danube, following exactly the narrative proposed by M. Gimbutas. M. Irimia had tried to somewhat organize relatively and culturally (based on P. Roman’s chronology) all the discoveries of the Early Bronze Age from Dobrouja, without any mention

of the Indo-Europeans (Irimia 2003). Furthermore, M. -D. Liuşnea, by analyzing the riddle of the Early Bronze Age in South-Eastern Europe, reached the conclusion that ‘The premises, the conditions, and the consequences of changes that took place at the end of the Copper Age are much more complex than one could think at first, but from this viewpoint, one has to reconsider the whole Indo-Europeanization process’ (Liuşnea 2007, 97).

R. Băjenaru, in his PhD published 10 years later, made a synthesis of information about the different types of burials from Muntenia, from simple flat inhumation pit graves to simple pit barrows. By analyzing them, he reached a conclusion which was in line with that of his mentor, A. Vulpe: ‘Despite some finds identical to the North-Pontic ones, the presence of such burial practices in SE Europe does not have to be seen necessarily as a result of a huge migration of shepherd, war-like and Indo-European people, which left the steppe and crushed the flowering Copper Age Carpato-Danubian civilization’ (Băjenaru 2014, 234).

Around this time, A. Frînculeasa was interested in studying the Yamnaya graves from Muntenia (Frînculeasa 2007). Trying to overcome the well-known clichés, he wrote that the current state of the research is rather subjective and does not give us an objective picture of what was more often than not named ochre graves.

I. Motzoi-Chicideanu left us with the widest funerary archaeology synthesis about the Bronze Age in our area. Obviously, he could not avoid the topic of the so-called Indo-European problem. He was well known for his aversion to the Institute of Thracology and those who have promoted it (P. Roman). However, I do not think that this was the sole reason why he harshly criticized the opinions of those who looked for a thousand-year old national identity. He was right to say that people ignored the fact that ‘the Indo-European problem is first and foremost a linguistic one, and that archaeology does not have the tools to

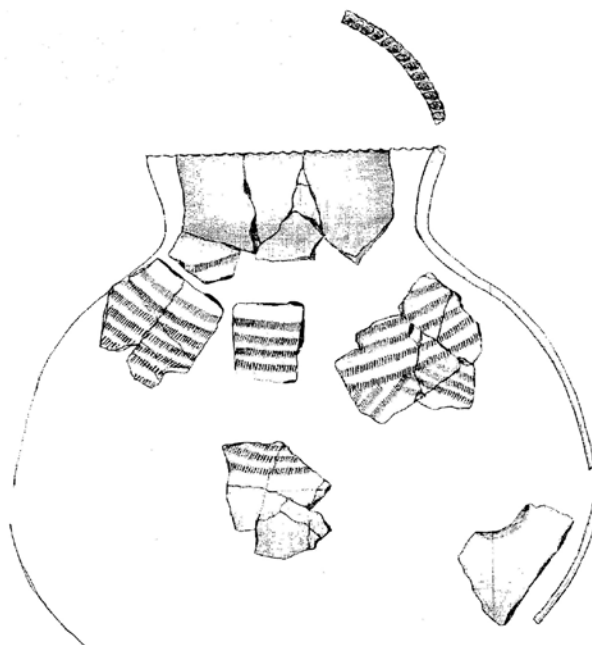


Fig. 6. A “Cucuteni C” pot from Seuşa-Gorgan, Romania (after Ciută, Marc 2010).

6 pav. Kukutenio C kultūrai priskiriama puodynė, Seuşa-Gorgan, Rumunija (pagal Ciută, Marc 2010).

solve it’ and ‘the importance of the so called Indo-Europeanization was exaggerated, sometimes seen as starting as early as the Neolithic’. The archaeological cultures of Bronze Age Romania and bordering lands have been seen more and more as Thracian, although we do not have until today any attestations of language (Motzoi-Chicideanu 2011, 33).

*

I would like to finish this historiographic presentation with the thoughts of the late Professor A. Vulpe about the links with the North-Pontic steppe, and with this, about the problem of Indo-Europeanization. In his opinion the early shaft-hole axes supposedly did not come from the Caucasus, and were not passed around by eastern peoples (Vulpe 1974, 249). Besides, ‘the alleged Indo-European people’ did not bring about a break in the South-Eastern

civilizations, and ‘if we want to follow the Indo-Europeanization theory at this stage in history, we can accept it as an absorption by the newcomers of the former peoples and of a great part of their culture’ (Vulpe 1979, 2266).

20 years later, the whole discussion resumed in the new treatise of *Istoria românilor* (The History of the Romanians). The importance raised by the ‘Indo-European problem’ and the fact that it is a ‘word whose meaning was generalized more often than it should’ (Vulpe 2001, 241), drove him to write about it in a separate subchapter of the same treatise. With the least possible amount of references, he debates matters of linguistics, and later touched upon the other hypotheses put forth by D. Antony and C. Renfrew about the spread of Indo-European languages. Regarding the theory of M. Gimbutas, A. Vulpe thought that it is ‘a point of view which is little more than a working hypothesis’ (Vulpe 2001, 246).

By analyzing migrations, in the context of the east→west model, he turned his attention to the movement of people, which took place between Central Asia and Europe in the pre- and protohistory, much like those that happened at the end of Antiquity up to the arrival of Genghis Khan’s Mongols (Vulpe 2006, 30). The supposed migrations of shepherd people also belong to this model, where they put an end to Copper Age cultures such as the Cucuteni, Karanovo-Gumelnița, and so on. These migrations are also the alleged cause of the spread of primitive Indo-European languages. In his view, the use of the inductive method of interpretation on archaeological artefacts leads to dangerous historical generalizations. It would be better to follow the new trend in archaeology (*New Archaeology*), which developed the deductive method, which starts from generalizations (premises) to specific instances. Thus, the processualist method allegedly includes the changes in the environment with all their effects on economic, social and spiritual structures (Vulpe 2006,

37). Therefore, there can be causes other than migration to explain the end of the Copper Age ‘cultures’. In this sense, he writes about changes in economy from a mainly agrarian one to a pastoral one, which is essentially influenced by the climate. He adds further factors that can bring about this change: the passing around of goods in very wide areas, brought on by new technological advances (such as the wagon and draught animals), and the quick adoption of new inventions (Vulpe 2006, 39–40).

In another article, which contained his thoughts on a debate about Indo-Europeans, A. Vulpe stated that as an archaeologist and historian, he cannot explain the diffusion of Indo-European languages from the Atlantic to Bangladesh or Sri Lanka. According to him, in order to do this, one has to identify the alleged *Urheimat* (Homeland) and then one has to prove that a fully developed ‘culture’ moved from one place to another. Besides, such an event cannot even be proven, since any moving community takes on several structural changes (economically, socially or ideologically), which affects the unity it had in the beginning. The fact that there are artefacts spread around a more or less large area can be explained in multiple ways and does not necessarily mean that migrating people are the cause. Obviously, this phenomenon also cannot be denied: ‘In other words, the circulation of artefacts does not necessarily imply also the circulation of people over long distances, much less of ethnic groups, but can explain the migration of lexical items, which depend on the nature of the given artefacts’ (Vulpe 2008, 25). Long story short, he points out the migrationist models of C. Renfrew, which, besides, seem to him unlikely to be true, and those of M. Gimbutas, which were accepted in Romania by specialists such as P. Roman and G. Simion. His conclusion is that ‘I do not believe that I can join either position regarding the Indo-European languages. I do not think that a satisfying solution can be found in the current state of research’ (Vulpe 2008, 27).

In the preface of R. Băjenaru's PhD, A. Vulpe raised a question which he admitted to have asked himself many times: 'what could have possibly driven these cattle herders of the steppe – these supposed Indo-Europeans – to leave the environment in which they subsisted, migrating towards the swampy forests of Central Europe or those of the Lower Danube?' (Vulpe 2014, 14). The answer should be searched for by making clear the climatic conditions of the Early Bronze Age.

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The opinions of A. Vulpe, as well as some contributions made by E. Kaiser (Kaiser 2003), Y. Rassamakin (Rassamakin 2004), B. Govedarica (Govedarica 2004), R. Harrison, V. Heyd (Harrison, Heyd 2007), and many others, filtered through the perspective of current archaeological realities in Transylvania, encouraged me to decide to create a theoretical model which I deemed appropriate for understanding the relations between local prehistoric communities and the north-Pontic world.

The existence of clear contacts (collective or individual) in the second half of the 5th millennium BC contributed to the transfer or diffusion of technological innovations. Apart from metal objects (made from copper or gold), certain types of artefacts also circulated in a vast area during this time: specific stone maces, large flint blades, stone or bone sceptres with abstract or zoomorphic shapes, axes decorated on the sharp edge with schematic animal heads, and pottery with crushed shell temper. Even if we might have a vague idea, we cannot fully understand, based on tangible evidence, the full spectrum of the economic repercussions set in motion by these influences. Even less can be said about a possible renegotiation of the social structures in Transylvania during the late Tiszapolgár and Bodrogkeresztúr ceramic cultures (Gogâltan 2011, 102–104).

It is not possible to discuss collective contacts between Transylvania and the Pontic steppe in the middle of the fourth millennium BC, because the second Kurgan migration wave, as proposed by M. Gimbutas, cannot be proven. Only from the first half of the third millennium BC is there documented evidence of the presence of Yamnaya communities in the mid-Mureş Valley. Relevant archaeological discoveries are scarce, making it hard to establish the intensity of potential contacts with the local Coţofeni medium. Considering this, there is insufficient evidence to prove the steppe populations were responsible for the major changes that occurred in Transylvania at the beginning of the Early Bronze Age. Based on certain metal artefacts or distinct funerary practices, potential individual connections were often presumed. However, for the period towards the end of the first half of the third millennium BC, I consider certain stone or metal weapons and adornments, as well as the funerary mounds and the stone anthropomorphic stelae, to be in fact representations of social status for the elites involved in a trans-regional dialog (Gogâltan 2016, 438) (Fig. 7). The existence of Yamnaya funerary monuments in western Romania (Banat and Crişana) is a reality. The lowland area, part of the Great Hungarian Plain, along with eastern Hungary and the Serbian Banat can be included in the distribution area of the Yamnaya communities (Frînculeasa 2020b, Fig. 1; Diaconescu 2020, Fig. 1; Gogâltan 2021, Fig. 1).

Similar interpretations concerning the relationship between Pontic communities and the regions they influenced between the fifth and third millennia BC can be found in recent studies by the Romanian specialists interested in the movement of peoples and products (Frînculeasa *et al.* 2015; Preda 2015; Frînculeasa 2019; Preda-Bălănică *et al.* 2020). The current theoretical models concerned with mobility or the transfer of technological knowledge are in a similar position.



Fig. 7. Transilvania and the Indo-Europeanization phenomenon. Drawing by Gelu Florea.
7 pav. Transilvanija ir indoeuropeizacijos fenomenas. Gelu Florea pieš.

In the last years, the research of funerary mounds in Romania became increasingly connected to a wider spectrum of inter-disciplinary approaches, catching up with European trends. A few examples are eloquent in this regard. A coherent project focused on the mound phenomenon was developed by A. Frînculeasa and his team in southern Romania (Frînculeasa *et al.* 2017; 2019; Frînculeasa 2020a; etc.). Needless to say, the results are remarkable and capable of changing our way of interpreting such burial practices and their impact on the local environment. Efforts to get enough absolute dates, anthropological and metallographic analyzes, were also made by S. Ailincăi and his team while investigating the mounds in Rahman and Dobruja (Ailincăi *et al.* 2016). The research performed on the four tumuli in Silivașu de Jos (2006–2017), proved the appearance of a new burial rite and ritual (individuals lying supine, oriented westwards). This demonstrates the presence of Yamnaya communities in south-western Transylvania (Diaconescu, Tincu 2016, 115;

Diaconescu 2020, 23), an opinion supported by other researchers as well (Preda-Bălănică *et al.* 2020, 96; Gogăltan 2021).

If this positive trend will be continued, there is hope to integrate the thousands of burial mounds in southern and eastern Romania into a vivid prehistory, with or without Indo-Europeans.

The so-called Cucuteni C ceramic style, also linked several years ago with the North-Pontic area, was analyzed in regards to its technological characteristics, targeting the chemical and mineralogical composition of the temper used. Interestingly enough, the conclusion suggested that the potters tended to use nonstandard materials (Mățau *et al.* 2015).

The strontium and oxygen isotopes analyzed on a skeleton from the barrow of Sárretudvari suggested that some individuals from the Apuseni Mountains (western Transylvania) traveled to the north-western Hungarian plains (Gerling 2015, 59–61, 223). Although the first timid steps were taken in

this direction (Gerling, Ciugudean 2013; Hervella *et al.* 2015), the current genetic data available for prehistoric Transylvania is far from sufficient in order to include this area in some of the European studies dedicated to the reconstruction of Bronze Age populations (Beck *et al.* 2020). From a genetic point of view, the contribution of the steppe populations in the development of the Indo-European languages is considered as an undisputed fact (Haak *et al.* 2015). Hopefully, further research projects will bring more light into this matter.

The linguistic debate regarding the Indo-European homeland has also been added to the archaeological interpretations (Anthony, Ringe 2015). However, the scientific conclusions are still very reserved, unable to overcome some restraints. Nonetheless, 'The evidence presented thus far supports the Gimbutas - Mallory interpretative line' (Alexianu 2016, 83).

Once again, I took this opportunity to present my opinions in regards the so-called Indo-European problem. Therefore, I would like to close this investigation into the history of research with the thoughts of the father of the Romanian modern school of archaeology A. Vulpe: 'I strongly believe that the beauty of Indo-European research, in all of its aspects, is precisely in this unending discussion and critical evaluation of the hypotheses which are put forth' (Vulpe 2008, 28).

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TRANSYLVANIA AND THE OF INDO-EUROPEAN MIGRATION PROBLEM. THE ROMANIAN PARADIGM

Florin Gogâltan

Summary

The hypothesis that connections existed between the people north of the Black Sea and their western neighbours was promoted by V. G. Childe already in the 1920s. A series of intrusive cultural groups are to blame for the emergence of barrows containing red ochre laden skeletons in a crouched position. These mounds 'indubitably attest to relations between the Hungarian plain and South Russia across the Carpathians'. Other mounds from Transylvania, found in the valleys of Olt and Mureş rivers, which contained crouched skeletons, could be tied to the ochre graves found along the Tisza.

New archaeological finds after the Second World War prompted more researchers to take up Childe's newer or older views. The most renowned was and is M. Gimbutas. In the 1970s, M. Gimbutas developed the theory of three main Kurgan migration waves. While there was general agreement for the first (4400–4300 BC) and the third waves (3000–2900 BC), researchers were divided when it came to the second, which supposedly led to major cultural changes in the Middle and Lower Danube circa the mid-4th millennium BC.

The existence of clear contacts (collective or individual) in the second half of the 5th millennium BC contributed to the transfer or diffusion of technological innovations. Apart from metal objects (made from copper or gold), certain types of artefacts also circulated in a vast area during this time: specific stone maces, large flint blades, stone or bone sceptres with abstract or zoomorphic shapes, axes decorated on the sharp edge with schematic animal heads,

and pottery with crushed shell temper. Even if we might have a vague idea, we cannot fully understand, based on the tangible evidence, the full spectrum of the economic repercussions set in motion by these influences.

It is not possible to discuss collective contacts between Transylvania and the Pontic steppe in the mid-4th millennium BC, because the second Kurgan migration wave, as proposed by M. Gimbutas, cannot be proven. Only from the first half of the third millennium BC is there documented evidence of the presence of Yamnaya communities in the mid-Mureş Valley. Relevant archaeological discoveries are scarce, making it hard to establish the intensity of potential contacts with the local Coţofeni medium. Considering this, there is insufficient evidence to prove the steppe populations were responsible for the major changes that occurred in Transylvania at the beginning of the Early Bronze Age. Based on certain metal artefacts or distinct funerary practices, potential individual connections were often presumed. However, for the period towards the end of the first half of the third millennium BC, I consider certain stone or metal weapons and adornments, as well as the funerary mounds and the stone anthropomorphic stelae, to be in fact representations of social status for the elites involved in a trans-regional dialogue. The existence of Yamnaya funerary monuments in western Romania (Banat and Crişana) is a reality. The lowland area, part of the Great Hungarian Plain, along with eastern Hungary and the Serbian Banat can be included in the distribution area of the Yamnaya communities.

TRANSILVANIJA IR INDOEUROPIEČIŲ MIGRACIJOS PROBLEMA. RUMUNIJOS PARADIGMA

Florin Gogâltan

Santrauka

Hipotezę apie ryšių tarp šiaurinių Juodosios jūros regionų bendruomenių ir vakarinių jų kaimynų palaikymą iškėlė V. G. Childas dar praėjusio amžiaus 2-ajame dešimtmetyje. Dėl kultūrinių grupių judrumo ir jų sąveikos susidarė savitas pilkapių kompleksas, kuriuose palaikai buvo laidojami suriesti ir padengti ochra. Šie pilkapiai „neabejotinai liudija Vengrijos lygumos ir pietų Rusijos ryšius per Karpatus“. Kiti Transilvanijos pilkapiai, rasti Olto ir Murešo upių slėniuose, kuriuose taip pat laidoti suriesti, galėjo būti susiję su ochros kapais, rastais palei Tisą. Nauji archeologiniai radiniai po Antrojo pasaulinio karo paskatino daugiau tyrinėtojų, tarp jų ir Mariją Gimbutienę, perimti naujesnius ar senesnius V. G. Childo požiūrius. Ji sukūrė trijų pagrindinių kurganų migracijos bangų teoriją. Tyrėjai sutarė dėl pirmosios (4400–4300 m. pr. Kr.) ir trečiosios bangos (3000–2900 m. pr. Kr.), bet nuomonės išsiskyrė dėl antrosios migracijos bangos, kuri tariamai lėmė didelius kultūrinius pokyčius Vidurio ir Žemutinio Dunojaus regione, maždaug IV tūkstantmečio pr. Kr. viduryje. Aiškių kontaktų (kolektyvinių ar individualių) egzistavimas antroje V tūkstantmečio pr. Kr. pusėje prisidėjo prie technologinių naujovių perdavimo ar sklaidos. Be metalinių objektų (pagamintų iš vario ar aukso), didžiuliam areale tuo metu cirkuliavo ir tam tikros rūšies dirbiniai: savitos akmeninės kuokos, didelės titnago skeltės, abstrakčių ar zoomorfinių formų akmeniniai ar kauliniai skeptrai, kirviai, puošti schemizuotų gyvūnų galvų atvaizdais ir keramika su smulkintų kriauklių priemaišomis. Net jei turėtume miglotą idėją, remdamiesi

apčiuopiamais įrodymais, negalime iki galo suprasti viso šių įtakų sukeltų ekonominių pasekmių spektro. Neįmanoma diskutuoti apie kolektyvinius Transilvanijos kontaktus su Ponto stepių bendruomenėmis IV tūkstantmečio pr. Kr. viduryje, nes antroji kurganų migracijos banga, kurią pasiūlė M. Gimbutienė, neįrodyta. Tik nuo pirmos III tūkstantmečio prieš Kr. pusės yra duomenų, leidžiančių manyti, kad Murešo slėnio viduryje išsikūrė Jamnajos bendruomenės. Vis dėlto sunku nustatyti galimų kontaktų su vietine Coțofeni kultūra intensyvumą. Atsižvelgiant į tai, nėra pakankamai įrodymų, patvirtinančių, kad stepių populiacijos lėmė pagrindinius pokyčius, įvykusius Transilvanijoje ankstyvojo bronzos amžiaus pradžioje. Remiantis tam tikrais metaliniais dirbiniais ar skirtingais laidojimo papročiais, dažnai buvo daroma prielaida, esą tarp šių bendruomenių galimi individualūs ryšiai. Tačiau pirmos III tūkstantmečio pr. Kr. pusės pabaiga datuojamus akmeninius ar metalinius ginklus bei papuošalus, taip pat pilkapius ir akmenines antropomorfines stelas galima interpretuoti kaip socialinio statuso reprezentacijas. Tai buvo bendruomenių elitas, dalyvavęs tarpregioniniame dialoge. Nėra abejonių, jog Jamnajos laidojimo paminklų yra vakarų Rumunijoje (Banate ir Krišanoje). Žemumų plotas, Didžiosios Vengrijos lygumos dalis, su rytų Vengrija ir Serbijos Banatu gali būti įtrauktas į Jamnajos bendruomenių paplitimo zoną.

Vertė Agnė Čivilytė

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