

GALLO-SCYTHIANS - Celtic Ukraine

“...to the Maeotic Lake on the east, where it bordered on Pontic Scythia, and that from that point on Gauls and Scythians were mingled”.

(Plutarch, Mar. 11:4-5)



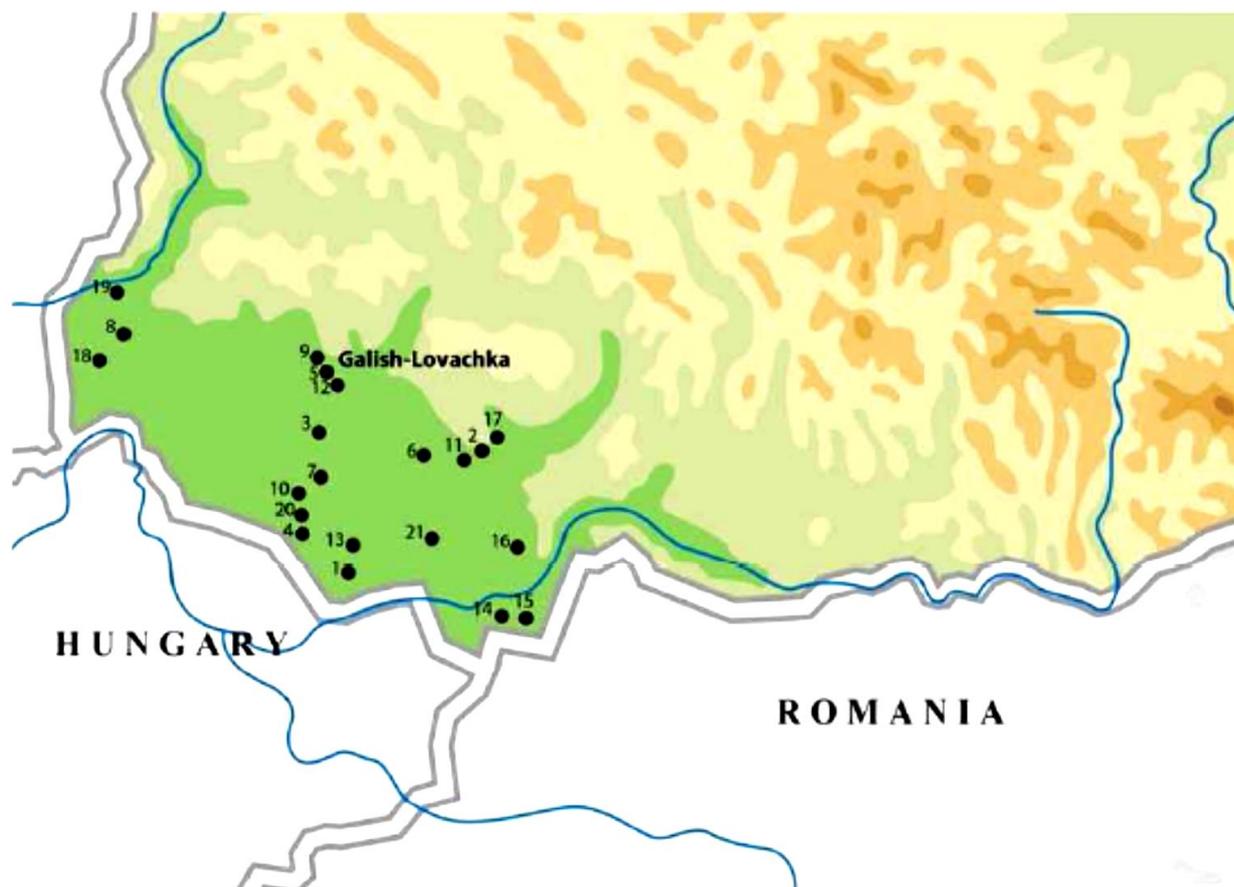
From the beginning of the 3rd c. BC the territory of today's Ukraine, previously defined by the Scythians of the North Pontic steppes and Hellenistic influences from the Black Sea zone, was supplemented by the Celtic culture from the west. The influence of the latter can be roughly divided into 2 separate 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 (Kazakevich 2012 a). At the moment, over two dozen La Tène sites have been identified in 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 Mukacheve. The Celtic military equipment from Galish-Lovachka included a short sword with an X-shaped handle, 2 La Tène swords, 12 curved daggers (see 'Daggers' article), 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 (see 'Celtic Coinage in Ukraine' article). 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 op cit.). 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 (see 'Prince of Transylvania' article).



Excavations at Nove Klynove in 1966



Celtic sites and finds from the Upper Tisza Basin

(after Kazakevich 2012a)

Major finds of Celtic coinage in Western Ukraine have been registered at the Gut and Mala Kopanya sites. In the occupation layers at the Celtic settlement at Gut (Garazdivka, Beregivs'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 (see 'Celtic Coinage from Ukraine'). The latter type have recently been discovered in hoards along with other Celtic coins at sites such as Pelczyska in southern Poland (Rudnicki 2003; See 'The Celts in Poland'), and the examples from Gut are further evidence of the close political and economic links between the Bastarnae and other Celtic tribes north of the Carpathians. Noteworthy also is the chance discovery of a pottery vessel at Mala Bigan, in the same Beregivs'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 op cit).



Boar and human figurines, and Celtic glass arm ring from Mala Bigan

(after Kazakevich 2012a)

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 op cit.) a substantial amount of Celtic coins of the 'Philip II types' have been documented.



Celtic coinage from the Mala Kopanya site. The coins are of a type associated with the Transylvanian Celts.

(see Balkancelts 'Celtic coinage from Ukraine')

On the Dneister river, traces of a Celtic speaking population are to be found in several place- and ethnic names, among them Καρρόδουνον, Ματῶνιον, and Ἡρακτον (Claud. Ptol. III.5.15; Sims-Williams 2006: 218-19, Falileyev 2005, 2007:4-9), and the name of the *Kamula* mountain (Tischenko 2006:220, Kazakevich 2012a: 172). In the vicinity of the latter is situated the Celtic cemetery at Gryniv, notable finds from which include 5 late Le Tène swords, and burial # 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 Lvivs'ka region (Bandrivsky, Josypyshyn 1997: 9-10), also in western Ukraine.



The Gryniv Scabbard

The Gryniv scabbard was discovered in burial # 3 at the cemetery and dated to between the second and fourth decades of the 1st c. AD. The burial contained an iron fibula, sword/scabbard, spearhead, 3 knives, a spur, shield umbo, pottery of local and Balkan origin, and shears (Kazakevich op cit.). The presence of shears in Celtic burials is well documented among the Celts of central and eastern Europe (see also 'Kalnovo' article), 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 known Celtic custom (see 'Killing the Objects'; on the scabbard see also 'Gryniv Scabbard' article).

The recent discoveries of a rich Celtic burial complex at Mutyn on the river Seim in the middle Dneister basin has supplemented our knowledge of Celtic settlement in this area of western Ukraine. Excavations in 2009-2010 revealed 'a dozen' Celtic warrior burials, dating to the 1st c. BC, containing 13 late La Tène swords, scabbards, spearheads, chainmail, helmets and shield bosses (Kazakevich 2012a).



Novo Mesto type helmet from the river Sava near Stara Gradiška in Croatia. Two of the five Celtic helmets recently discovered at the Mutyn site in western Ukraine are of the Novo Mesto type.

(see 'Eastern Celtic Helmets' article)

Also noteworthy are Celtic coins registered in the Dneister 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 Thracian Celts and those in the area of western Ukraine (see 'Celtic Coinage from Ukraine').



Celtic Coins from the Dneister Estuary area

(Odesa Museum, Numismatics Collection; Celtic Coinage from Ukraine)

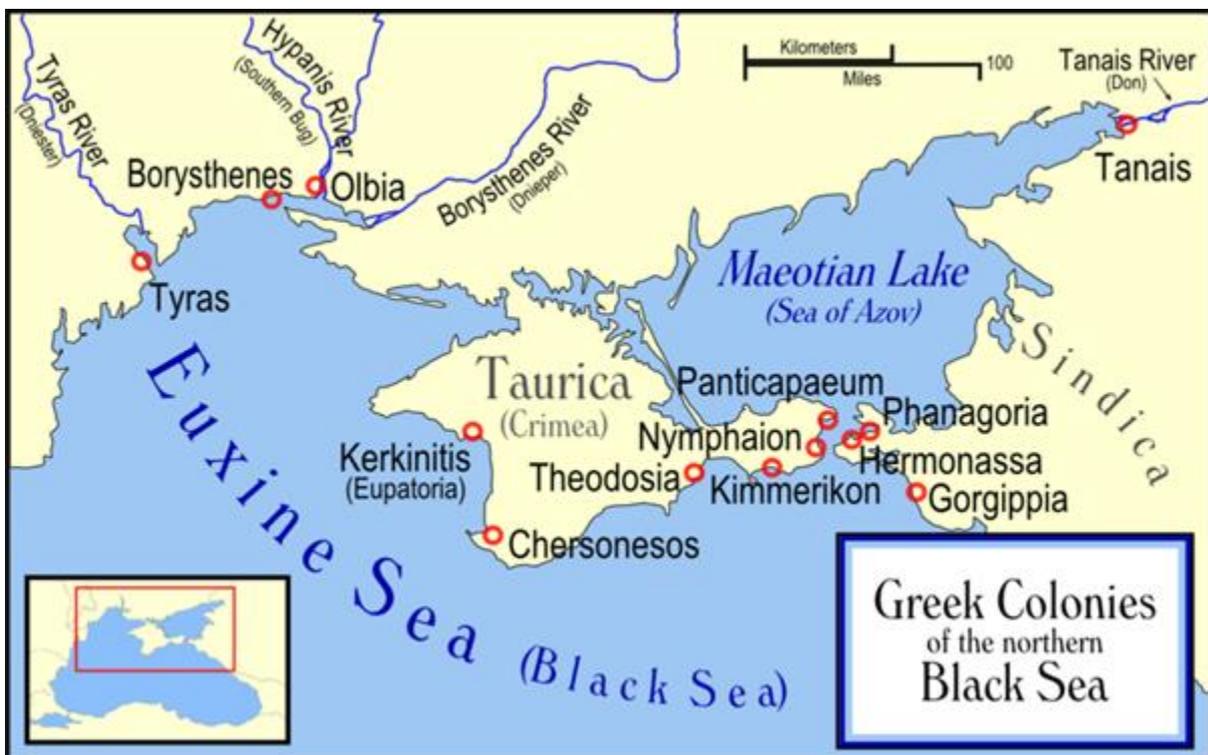
CENTRAL/EASTERN UKRAINE

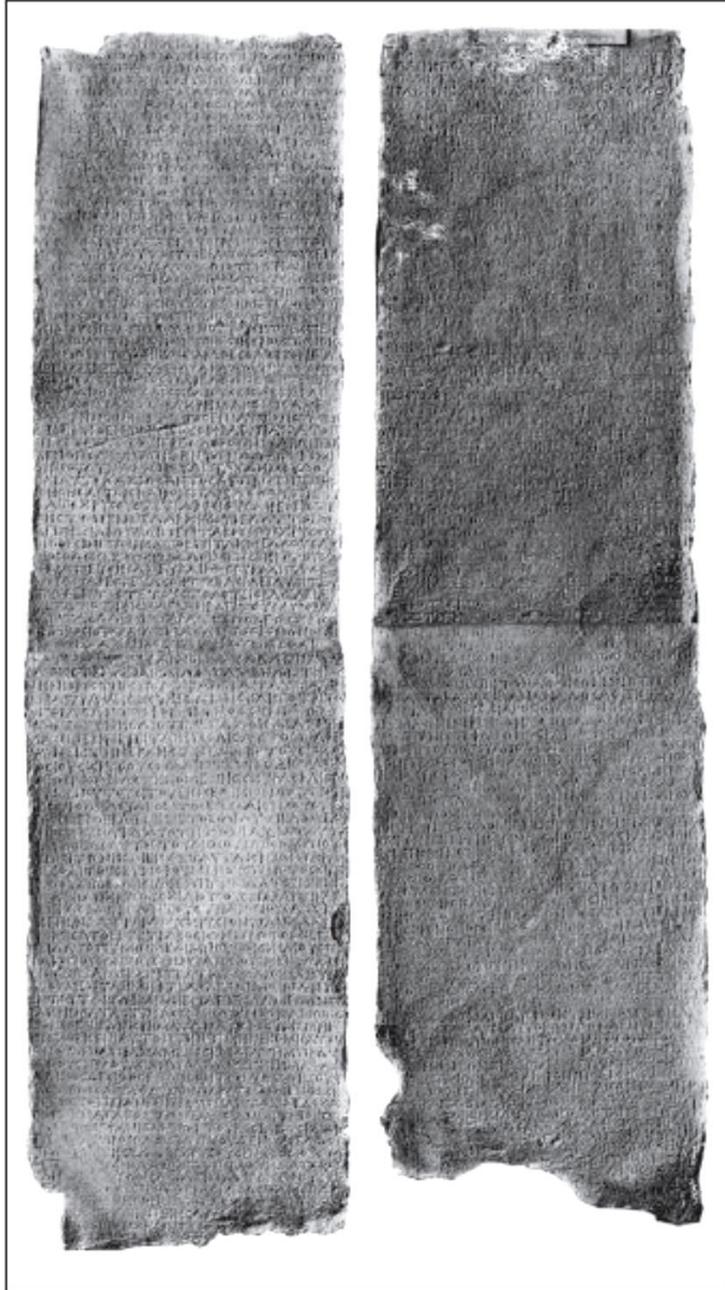
While archaeological evidence in the aforementioned areas of western Ukraine clearly indicates the classic pattern of Celtic migration in this area (Kazakevich 2012a: 179), the situation further to the east, where classical authors speak of a Gallo-Scythian (Plutarch. Marius 11:4-5) or Celto-Scythian (Strabo 11:6,2) population is more complex. This is further complicated by the presence of the Celto-Scythian *Bastarnae* tribes in this region (see below; also *Balkancelts* 'Bastarnae' and 'Peucini' articles).

The epigraphic decree in honour of Protogenes mentions the Celts (Γαλαται) threatening the vicinity of Olbia (an ancient Greek city on the shore of the Southern Bug estuary) in the late 3rd c. BC (Vinogradov 1989: 181-183). Further linguistic traces of Celtic presence in this area include an ethnic name from a Greek inscription found in the Bukovyna region, which Falileyev has reconstructed as Γαλατικού (Falileyev 2007:7). Claudius Ptolemy also mentions several place- and ethnic names on the lands of Scythia Magna which are undoubtedly Celtic (Sims-Williams 2006: 218-219; Falileyev 2005, 2007: 4-9). Celtic place and ethnic names are also mentioned by Greek authors (Strabo VI, 2, 3; Plutarch Mar. 11.12). Plutarch, who used the records of Posidonius (late 2nd c BC), noted the ethnic entity Κελτοσκούθαι, stating that the Celtic lands stretched to the Maeotis 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”.

(Plutarch. The Life of Marius 11:4-5)





The Protogenes Decree from Olbia (IOSPE 1(2) No. 32)

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 Γαλαται. 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 eastern Bulgaria, and reflects the penetration of Celtic warrior groups into this area (Kazakevich 2012a). The earliest depiction of Celtic oval shields (see 'Shields' article) appears 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 (Zogrof 1977).



Oval shields 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, also came in excavations of 1983 and 1985 at the sanctuary in Gurzufskoje Sedlo in the Crimea, near Yalta.



Statuettes of Celtic Warriors from the North Pontic Area

(after Kazakevich 2012a)

Further evidence of Celtic presence in the Bospor 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 (see ‘Killing the Objects’). 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 2012a).



"The tomb of Skilurus"

Skilurus ruled over the Tauri and controlled the ancient trade emporium of Pontic Olbia, where he minted coins. In order to gain advantage against Chersonesos, he allied himself with the Rhozolani, whom Strabo (VII:3) states were the most northern of the Celto-Scythian Bastarnae tribes. In response, Chersonesos forged an alliance with Mithridates VI of Pontus (on whom see below). Skilurus died during a war against Mithridates VI, a decisive conflict for supremacy in the Pontic steppe. Either Skilurus or his son and successor Palacus were buried in a mausoleum at Scythian Neapolis, which was used from ca. 100 BC to ca. 100 AD.

A further interesting find from today's central Ukraine is 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 (see 'The Triangular Bull' and 'The Art of Rejection' PDF. articles).



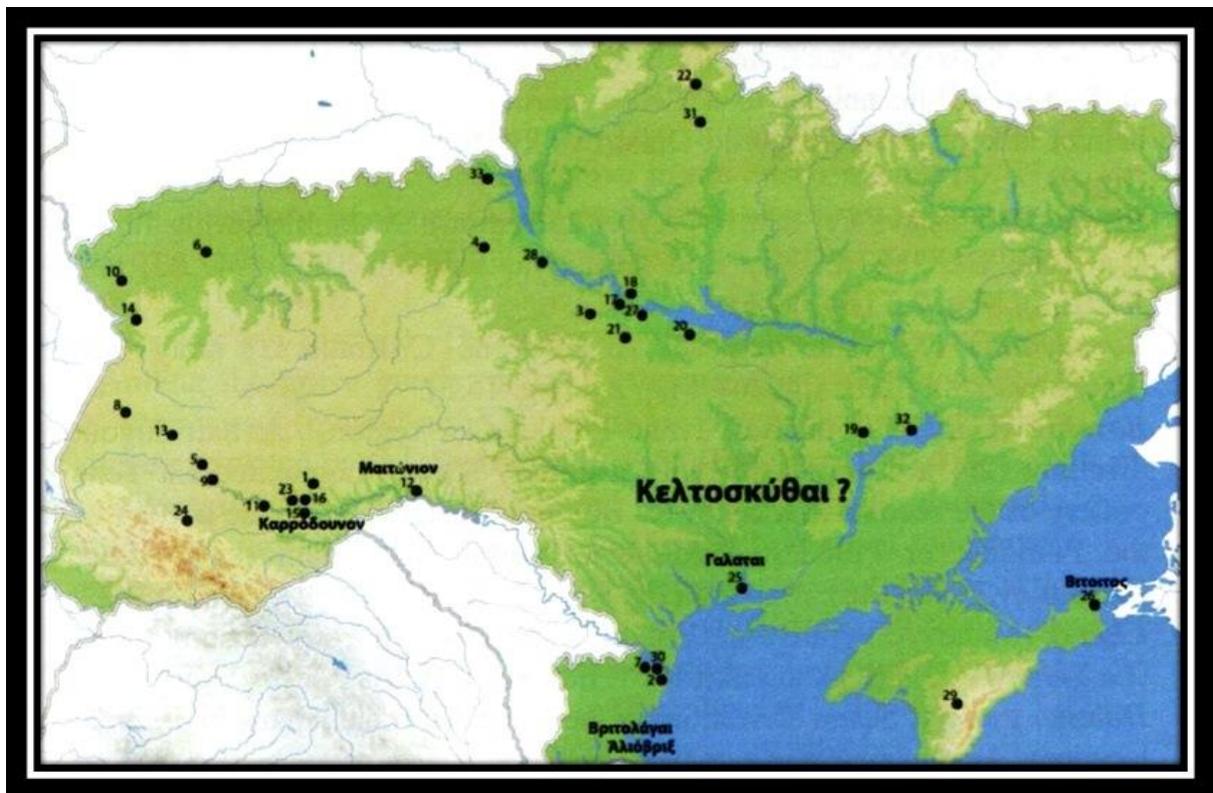
The Celtic bronze 'mask' from Pekari (Kanivs'kyj, Cherkas'ka region), Central Ukraine

(National Museum of the History of Ukraine)

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 such helmets probably 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 Domanivs'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), and thus these votive hoards should be attributed to the Celto-Scythian Bastarnae tribes, as should the easternmost finds of Celtic Novo Mesto type Celtic helmets from southern Russia, also found in a mixed Celto-Scythian context, such as those from Boiko-Ponura (Krasnodar), and another from Yashkul (Kalmykia) which most resembles the Novo Mesto type helmets from Slovenia and Croatia (Kazakevich 2010, Mihaljević, Dizdar op cit.; see 'The Power of 3' article).



The Celtic Montefortino type helmet from Bilen'ke (Bilogorod-Dnistrovs'kyj Regional Museum)



Main La Tène sites and finds east of the Carpathians

(after Kazakevich 2012a)

THE MITHRIDATIC WARS

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 (see below), had supported the Pontic King against Rome (see 'Akrosas' article). 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 Galatian Princess called *Adobogiona*, the daughter of the Galatian King, Deiotarus (on whom see 'Deiotarus - The Celt Who Ruled Armenia' article). 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 (Strabo 13.4.3; see also Mayor 2009).



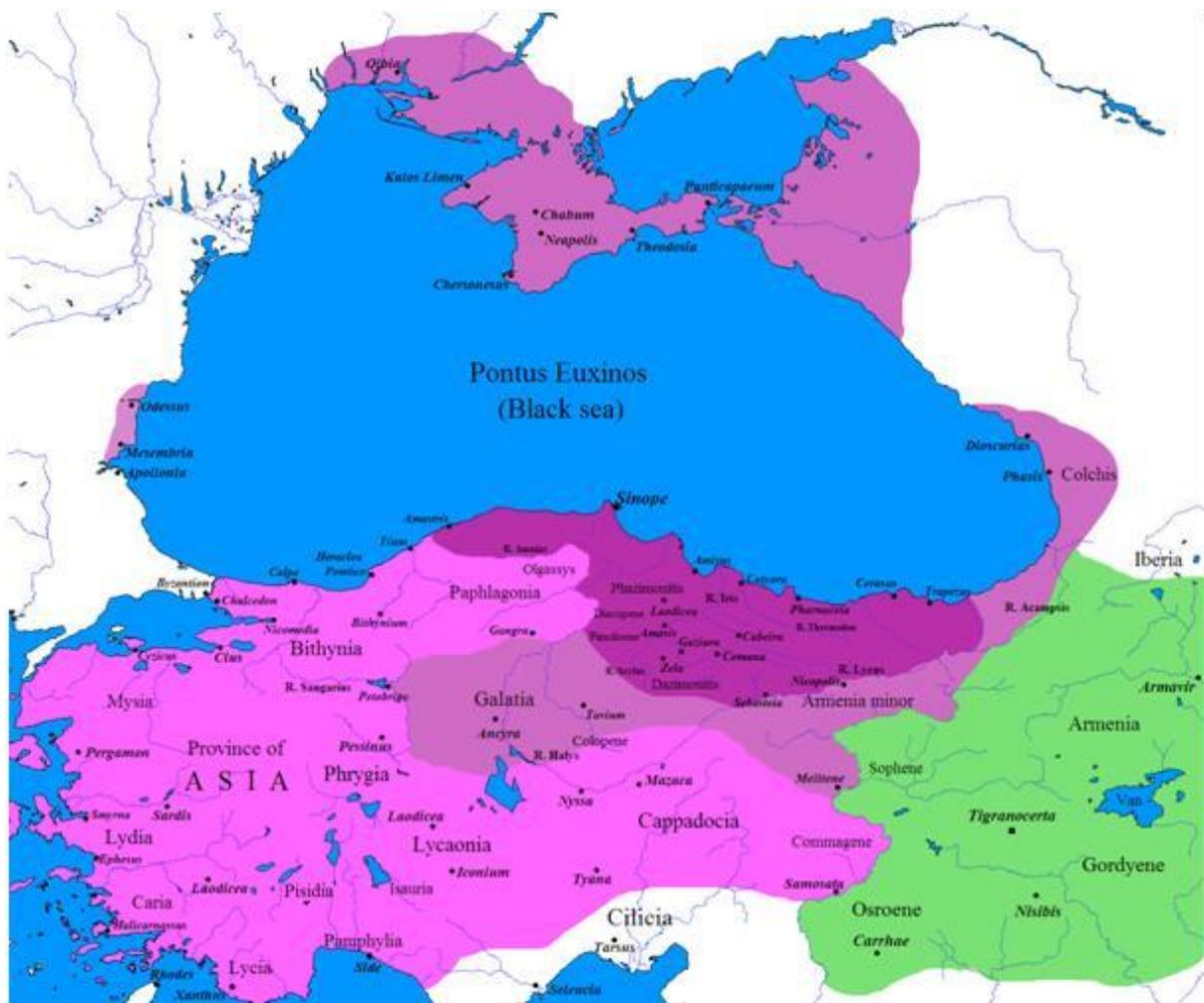
Kingdom of Pontos, Mithradates VI AV Stater. Pergamon mint, (88/7 BC)

However, after defeat at the Battle of Chaeronea 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"* (loc cit). 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" (Livy Per. 94a).



Map of the Kingdom of Pontus - Before the reign of Mithridates VI (darkest purple), after his conquests (purple), and his conquests in the first Mithridatic wars (pink).

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

Dedication from Pergamon to the Galatian Princess *Adobogiona*, daughter of Deiotarus, and mother of Mithridates I of the Bosphorus

(after de Gruyter 1986: 135-137)

However, despite the fact that the Asian Celts had turned against Mithridates, the Thracian Celts and Bastarnae remained allied with him against Rome (App. Mith. 69, 111; Justin 38:3, Memnon 27:7; see also McGing 1986:61; also Balkancelts ‘Akrosas’ and ‘Coralli’ articles). 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*” (Memnon op cit., App. Mith. 71), and Celtic forces remained with 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; On Bituitus see also The Thracian Myth’).

Even after the end of the Mithridatic Wars, the Thracian Celts and Bastarnae continued to resist Roman expansion on the Lower Danube and Pontic region (see ‘Scordisci Wars’). 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 (on these events see also 'Akrosas' article).

TWILIGHT

Many of the Celtic traditions survived in the North Pontic area even after they had declined in central Europe (Treister 2005), and some Celtic place and ethnic names appear in late Roman sources in the vicinity of the Bosphor 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 (SHA XXV. 6.2; see Kazakevich 2012b).

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 (CIL XIV 3608), and in the late 2nd century the *Historia Augusta* mentions that in the rule of Marcus Aurelius (161-80), an alliance of tribes including the Bastarnae, took advantage of the emperor's difficulties on the upper Danube (the Marcomannic Wars) to invade Roman territory (*Historia Augusta Marcus Aurelius* II.22). They were also among the tribes who participated in the 'Gothic' raids between 248 and 269 (Schukin 1999). Thus, for example, in 250-1 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 (251) (Herwig 1988: 45-46).

This explains 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; Kazakevich 2012b), 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 (276-82) 100,000 of the Celto-Scythian Bastarnae were settled in Thrace (Historia Augusta *Probus* 18), and shortly afterwards Emperor Diocletian (284-305) carried out another 'massive' transfer of the Bastarnae population to the south of the Danube (Eutropius IX.25; see 'Ethnic Engineering'). 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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Mac Congail