

IDENTITY IN LANDSCAPE

Connectivity and Diversity in Iron Age Transylvania

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....	9
Foreword (Aurel Rustoiu).....	11
I. Archaeological landscapes. Mobility and identity in Iron Age Transylvania.....	13
II. Residing the landscape. Settlements.....	19
III. Consecrating the landscape. Cemeteries.....	37
IV. Revering the landscape. Ritual sites.....	67
V. Controlling the landscape. Fortified settlements and hillforts.....	81
VI. Impact of identities on the landscape.....	111
Geographical and settlement names in Hungarian.....	115
Bibliography.....	117
Abbreviations.....	135

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FOREWORD

MODELLING LANDSCAPES, BUILDING GROUP IDENTITIES

Long time ago, Mircea Eliade noted that “the upright position [of the human beings] already signals the overcoming of the primates’ condition. We can only stand up when we are awake. Due to the upright position, the space is organized in a structure that is not accessible to the pre-hominids: in four horizontal directions starting from a central *up – down* axis. In other words, the space is organized around the human body, extending ahead, behind, to the right and the left, up and down. Beginning from this original experience – of being thrown into an environment whose expansion was apparently unlimited, unknown and threatening – various manners of *orientatio* emerged; we cannot live too long with the confusion generated by disorientation” (ELIADE 1991, 13). Thus, right from the beginning, the human beings invested the surrounding space with symbolical meanings and organized it according to well-defined principles. This organization of the man-made landscape was different from one community to another due to the different models of social and economic organization which they created or adopted at particular moments in time. Accordingly, landscape archaeology can offer a wealth of information regarding the cultural identity of various communities. As T. Greider and L. Garkovich noted nearly three decades ago, “our understanding of nature and of human relationships with the environment are really cultural expressions used to define who *we* were, who *we* are, and who *we* hope to be at this place and in this space. Landscapes are the reflections of these cultural identities, which are about *us*, rather than the natural environment” (GREIDER – GARKOVICH 1994, 2).

The manner in which the landscape in general, and the man-made space in particular, has been studied during the last decades is very diverse, especially due to the increasing attention paid to the importance of these aspects in the better understanding of the evolution of different communities from one region or another. One of the methods used in this kind of studies implies the evaluation of the transformations which occurred in the landscape organization through time and from one community to another based on aero-photographic surveys. The present book aims to bring into discussion the ways in which the Iron Age communities from Transylvania chose to model the landscape through time and from one micro-region to another, and the relationships between these choices and the construction of different group identities.

The interest of the author for these topics is not new. Well-known for using a multi-disciplinary approach in the investigation of Iron Age settlements and cemeteries, Sándor Berecki has already conducted many aero-photographic surveys to analyse various archaeological sites from Transylvania, either on his own or in collaboration with other reputed specialists (for example with Professor Zoltán Czajlik from the ELTE University of Budapest). The results of these investigations have been published in a series of syntheses (see, for example, BERECKI *ET AL.* 2012;

BERECKI 2015a) or in specialist studies (CZAJLIK *ET AL.* 2011; 2014 etc.). At the same time, S. Berecki has also studied the landscape organization during the Iron Age from the theoretical or symbolical perspective, publishing a number of articles that have focused on particular archaeological sites (BERECKI 2009; BERECKI – CIOATĂ 2010; RUSTOIU – BERECKI 2018 etc.). All of these preliminary studies have allowed the author to offer a comprehensive approach of the topic of landscape archaeology in this book.

The book begins with an introductory theoretical chapter, which provide the framework for the discussion regarding the ethnic and cultural transformations experienced by the communities from Transylvania during the Late Iron Age. From this perspective, human mobility played an important role in the ways in which collective identities were built and negotiated during the ‘Scythian’, ‘Celtic’ or ‘Dacian’ horizon. Among many other things, the strategies through which different communities chose to model the profane and the sacred landscape were also directly connected with the expression of collective identity constructs.

Starting from this theoretical and methodological chapter, the author guides us in the following chapters through the Transylvanian archaeological landscapes, this being a surprising and often charming journey through the villages, cemeteries and sacred places of the local Late Iron Age communities. The final stage of this period, belonging archaeologically to the ‘Dacian horizon’, was characterized by major transformations in the landscape organization, defined by the appearance of the fortresses and fortified settlements. Their presence indicates, on one hand, the appearance of a new model of social and economic organization which was different from the one characterizing the rural communities of the ‘Celtic horizon’, and on the other hand, the emergence of new collective identity constructs. In order to discuss the characteristics of the habitats from the period of the Dacian kingdom, S. Berecki has opted to compare the Transylvanian landscape organization with the one specific to the so-called horizon of the great urban centres (*oppida*) from the Celtic Central-Western Europe.

The last chapter comprises the concluding discussion regarding the impact of various models of social and economic organization and of the respective collective identity constructs on the transformation of the Transylvanian landscape during different chronological and cultural horizons of the Iron Age.

The book authored by Sándor Berecki, written in a rigorous but pleasant style, is representing an important contribution not only to the Romanian historiography but also to the European one dealing with the topics of landscape archaeology due to the innovative ways in which is discussing the relationship between landscape transformations and collective identity constructs. Thus, I am convinced that this contribution will open the way towards a series of innovative approaches in the landscape archaeology of Transylvanian and the areas outside the Carpathians.

Aurel Rustoiu

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