

An Introduction to the Study of Native Pottery from South-Carpathian Roman Dacia

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The archaeological research carried out over the last few decades in Roman Dacia south of the Carpathian mountains increased a lot in frequency. Consequently the inventory of discovered archaeological objects including the native pottery has been enriched. The presence of this kind of pottery was found in the Roman forts¹, in the civilian settlements of these forts², in the rural settlements³ and their cemeteries⁴. To them there could be added other accidental discoveries as a result of surface digging research⁵. The results of all these researches and especially those from Locusteni yielded enough information to make up an image about the native pottery discovered so far in this Roman territory.

The hand-made pottery

Pots. By their profiles the pots are of bitronconic, curved, oval and cylindrical shape.

The category of bitronconic pots contains few examples. They have outside turned-down rim and flat base (no. 1, 2).

The second category includes a large number of curved pots. Some of them have the opening much larger than the flat-bottom ones and the maximum in diameter in the upper part (no. 3-5). Others have the mouth a little larger than the flat or a little concave base (no. 6-9). Very similar to these are some pots which have a slender profile. The mouth is larger than the flat or a little concave bottom. The maximum diameter is in the middle or in the lower part (no. 10-17). All these types have some variants.

The third category contains a few pots tall oval shape (no. 18-21). The maximum diameter is at the middle part. One of them has the mouth diameter similar with the bottom diameter and vertically rim (no. 20).

The fourth category includes the cylindrical pots. The rim is outside turned down and the bottom is flat or a little concave (no. 22-24).

Conic cups (Dacian cups). They are considered to be a specific pattern as part of the Moeso-Geto-Dacian pottery. In literature they are known as "Dacian cups". Usually they are classified by their number of ears. In the typology which we propose, we consider that the profile of pieces has priority over the decorative elements. Adopting this criterion as a starting point in analysing of the pottery we will get an increased coherence inside the types and between the different types.

The conic cups so far found in Roman Dacia south of the Carpathian mountains could be divided into two types and more variants. The first type contains the

cups with the rim in continuation of the cup wall and it was made by narrowing (no. 25-29). The second type includes the cups with the upper part enlarged or turned down outside (no. 30-35).

Dish. One piece of this kind was discovered at Locusteni (no. 36). The rim is turned down inside and the bottom is flat.

Tronconic trays. One piece of this kind has been discovered so far. The rim is rounded and the bottom is flat (no. 37).

Conic jar. One single example has been found at Scornicești. It has a conic shape (no. 38).

Lid. One lid of a cap-form was discovered at Scornicești. It has a conic button attached on top (no. 39).

Wheel-made pottery

Pots. The curved pots are represented by some examples. They have outside turned down rim and flat bottom (no. 40-41).

Jugs. They have bitronconic shape and enlarged or obliquely turned down rim (no. 42-43).

Dishes. The discovered dishes have tronconic shapes. The rim is thickened with the outside rounded edge, or is horizontally outside turned down. The flat bottom is more or less outlined (no. 44-46).

Fruit-dishes. One type contains a fruit-dish of little depth and biconic cup (no. 47), and the second is represented by one piece which has a deep cup (no. 48).

Strainers. Two pieces of this kind were discovered at Scornicești. One has a conic shape and flat bottom (no. 49). Unfortunately the second is only a fragment (no. 50).

Conclusions

In Roman Dacia south of the Carpathian mountains the native pottery continued to be produced.

The hand-made pottery consists of pots, conic cups, trays, a dish, a crucible and a lid. The most frequent of them was the pot, followed far behind by the conic cup. The others are represented by a few complete examples found so far.

The paste used to make jars usually contained sand, to which sometimes gravel was added. In the case of the discoveries from Locusteni, the main part of the objects were sandy and brittle, so once discovered they crumble.

Concerning the colour of jars found at Locusteni the main is certainly the brick colour which prevails over the others. Far behind in number of pieces, are the dark colours.

As decoration the relief motives prevail over the incised ones. The celled girdle is applied on the maximum of the diameter belt, never misses upon pots, less on conic cups. Just a few jars were decorated with cut girdle, simple girdle or rounded buttons. The most frequent incised motives are the bands with horizontal

lines or warred lines. Sometimes the incised motives were mixed with the relief motives. We have to say that, while the pots are clearly provided with motives, the conic cups were mainly undecorated.

In archaeological sites where the research was more sustained (Locusteni, Stolniceni, Daneți and Scornicești) besides the hand-made pottery wheel-made pottery was discovered too. There have been found pots, jugs, dishes, fruit-dishes and strainers.

The fruit-dish is a specific Dacian jar. Two examples were discovered at Locusteni. In the second-third centuries A.D. this form is rarely met in Roman Dacia within the Carpathians⁶. Also, for the moment in the Muntenia's archaeological sites no such piece was found⁷. Instead it was mentioned in the Carpic area⁸. The presence of this type jar on the Roman Dacia territory does not mean that the Carpic penetrated this province, but it shows reminiscences of Dacian Late La Tène⁹.

We want to mention the discovery of some wheel-made conic cups at Locusteni¹⁰ and Stolniceni-Buridava¹¹. As an exception such wheel-made cups appeared in Dacian Classic La Tène¹² and in third-fourth centuries A.D. at Hotnita¹³.

The wheel-made or hand-made pottery represents, in all archaeological sites, a smaller part compared to the Roman pottery. Inside the Locusteni settlement it represents 10% of all pottery and in its cemetery 41%¹⁴. The explanation is that in funeral practices the native pottery was preferred to Roman one¹⁵.

A distinct matter is represented by the use of jars. If in majority of cases the use is given by its shape, in case of the part jars of the cemetery of Locusteni, they had other use besides the primary one. But it could not be excluded that this secondary use of jars would not have been applied in ordinary life. Thus the conic cups and the fruit-dishes found in this cemetery were used as lids.

The native pottery found in the Roman fort of Cătunele is dated at beginning of the second century A.D.¹⁶ A part of jars discovered at Locusteni were dated as having been made in the second century A.D.¹⁷ The Locusteni and Daneți cemeteries and settlements of Scornicești (no.1), Colonești-Guești and Stolniceni-Buridava have been dated between the middle of the second century A.D. and the first half of the third century A.D.¹⁸ The discoveries from Scornicești (no. 2), Ipotești and Colonești-Mărunței settlements as those from Chilia cemetery are situated after the Roman period¹⁹. The continuation of native pottery can be observed also at Locusteni after the Roman period²⁰. At the end, we mentioned the fact that in the Roman fort at Stolniceni-Buridava has been discovered Dacian pottery in all six levels of dwelling from the second century A.D. until the end of third century A.D.²¹

The persistence of native pottery in Roman Dacia does not represent an isolated phenomenon concerning the Roman Empire. It is enough to remember that the

native pottery continued to be made in both provinces of Moesia²² and Pannonia²³. The native pottery is a natural continuation of the Pre-Roman pottery. Therefore it is hard to distinguish a first century A.D. from one made under the Roman occupation in Roman Dacia south of the Carpathians²⁴.

Concerning the making technique one can easily observe the very reduced number of wheel-made jars in Roman Dacia south of the Carpathians and also in Roman Dacia within the Carpathians. The most plausible explanation for that is the fact that the Roman provincial pottery took place over its role and place. In the big ceramics centres from Romula, Stolniceni-Buridava, Enoșești-Acidava, Slăveni and Drobeta was produced a large number of such pieces, of more fair prices and also of good quality²⁵. These penetrated the rural environment. At one moment this kind of ceramics was made in the little centres of indigenous rural settlements. Such shapes seem to have existed at Slimnic in Roman Dacia within the Carpathians²⁶, at Locusteni, Slăveni and Stolniceni-Buridava in Roman Dacia south of the Carpathians²⁷, where Roman provincial pottery was also made.

The low number of wheel-made native jars found in Roman Dacia south of Carpathians do not allow us to ascertain that there were some changes. More than that they were identical to the same jars which were found in archaeological sites of Dacian Late La Tène. As well as the paste and decoration are not different.

The hand-made pottery represents the biggest part of native pottery from Roman Dacia south of Carpathians. Except some Dacian forts, especially the forts in the Orăștie mountains, this kind of pottery is frequently found in Dacian Late La Tène²⁸. Persistence of it in the Roman period might be explained by the incapacity of the great centres of Roman ceramics to supply a sufficient quantity of jars and, secondly, it is possible that the prices were too high compared to Dacian hand-made pottery.

The hand-made potterie of the Roman period are more slender than these made before the Roman conquest²⁹. Considering the newer or the older discoveries from Late La Tène, we think that the change had begun before the Roman conquest³⁰.

Concerning the profile of tronconic cups in the Roman period no changes compared to Classic La Tène. A special case is a tronconic cup found at Scornicești which, instead of ears, had a button at the base. The discovery of one identical example in the Dacian fort of Sprâncenata gives us evidence of cultural and ethnical continuity in Western Muntenia between the first century B.C. and the second-third centuries A.D.³¹

The paste used to make the hand-made jars in Late La Tène and in the second-third centuries A.D. is generally similar composition (sand and small gravel). The idea that in the Roman period the native hand-made pottery may have lasted more because of its resistance, since it was used for cooking food, is contrary to

the fact that the jars found at Locusteni were generally very brittle, many of them falling apart once they were dug out³².

It is considered that in the Roman period the ornaments of hand-made jars are simplified. This phenomenon had begun before the conquest of Dacia. Thus, the pots from Classic La Tène are in many cases decorated with a single celled girdle on the shoulder or on the part where the maximum diameter is³³. This is the most frequent motive of Roman period. The celled girdle associated with horizontal lines or waving lines had appeared since the Classic La Tène³⁴. At Ocnița-Buridava³⁵ and Sprâncenata in Classic La Tène were found jars with rounded buttons and horizontal lines identical to one found in the Locusteni cemetery of the Roman period³⁶. The using of cells in the decoration of jars was known in Late La Tène too³⁷. We think that in most cases the use of complicated decorations decreased a lot in Classic La Tène and this process was continued also in second-third centuries A.D. This kind of decoration persists on a few jars discovered at Scornicești³⁸ and Locusteni³⁹. By these exceptions in Roman Dacia south of Carpathians the decoration lies on the upper part of jar until the outside edge of the rim. In Classic La Tène decoration lies even on the low half of the jar.

The archaeological research carried out so far offers us an introspective image of the native pottery in Roman Dacia south of Carpathians. We are sure that new materials and future research will contribute to a better and more exact outlining of the typology of this pottery.

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NOTES

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11. Bichir 1983, 12.

12. Crișan 1969, 307 pl. 47/4, 7.

13. Sultov 1980, 384 fig. 110.

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16. Petolescu 1986, 162.

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18. *Locusteni*: Popilian 1980, 101-103; *Daneși*: Popilian 1982, 92; *Colonești-Guești*: Bichir 1984, 93; *Stolniceni-Buridava*: Tudor 1967, 655-656.

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27. See notes 2 and 25.

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Sources of illustrations

Plate 1

No. 1: Popilian/Niță 1982, 50 fig. 2 M 6, 1. - No. 2: Popilian 1980, 19 pl. 28 M 197, 1. - No. 3: Popilian 1980, 19 pl. 7 M 38, 1. - No. 4: Popilian 1976a, 221 pl. 74 no. 951 = Popilian 1976b, 285 fig. 3/1 = Popilian 1980, 29 pl. 17 M 110, 1. - No. 5: Popilian 1980, 42 pl. 28 M 195, 1. - No. 6: Popilian 1980, 41 pl. 27 M 189, 1. - No. 7: Popilian 1980, 29 pl. 17 M 111, 1. - No. 8: Popilian 1980, 31 pl. 18 M 122, 2. - No. 9: Popilian 1980, 50 pl. 35 M 257, 1.

Plate 2

No. 10: Popilian 1980, 48 pl. 34 M 239, 1. - No. 11: Popilian 1980, 19 pl. 7 M 39, 1. - No. 12: Popilian 1976a, 220 pl. 74 no. 943 = Popilian 1976b, 285, fig. 3/6 = Popilian 1980, 25 pl. 13 M 84, 1. - No. 13: Popilian 1980, 26 pl. 13 M 91, 1. - No. 14: Popilian 1976b, 285 fig. 3/5 - Popilian 1980, 42 pl. 28 M 196, 1. - No. 15: Popilian 1976a, 220 pl. 74 no. 945 = Popilian 1976b, 285 fig. 3/8 = Popilian 1980, 36 pl. 23 M 155, 1. - No. 16: Popilian 1980, 24 pl. 12 M 79, 1. - No. 17: Preda/Grosu 1993, 50 pl. 8/2. - No. 18: Popilian 1980, 15 pl. 3 M 13, 2.

Plate 3

No. 19: Popilian 1976a, 221 pl. 74 no. 949 = Popilian 1976b, 285 fig. 3/13 = Popilian 1980, 15 pl. 3 M 15, 1. - No. 20: Popilian 1976a, 220 pl. 74 no. 946 = Popilian 1976b, 285 fig. 3/9. - No. 21: Popilian 1980, 35 pl. 22 M 149, 1. - No. 22: Popilian 1980, 46 pl. 31 M 225, 1. - No. 23: Bichir 1984, 32 pl. 17/10 = Bichir 1986, 118 pls. 4/2 and 14/1. - No. 24: Preda/Grosu 1993, 50 pl. 8/3. - No. 25: Popilian 1976a, 220 pl. 74 no. 939 = Popilian 1976b, 285 fig. 2/3 = Popilian 1980, 15 pl. 3 M 15, 2. - No. 26: Popilian 1976a, 220 pl. 74 no. 940. - No. 27: Popilian

1976a, 220 pl. 74 no. 938 = Popilian 1976b, 285 fig. 2/2. - No.28: Popilian 1980, 36-37 pl. 23 M 162, 2. - No. 29: Popilian 1980, 36 pl. 23 M 155, 2. - No. 30: Popilian 1976a, 220 pl. 74 no. 942 = Popilian 1980, 29 pl. 17 M 110, 2.

Plate 4

No. 31: Popilian 1976a, 220 pl. 74 no. 937 = Popilian 1976b, 285 fig. 2/1 = Popilian 1980, 15-16 pl. 4 M 17, 2. - No. 32: Popilian 1980, 42 pl. 28 M 196, 2. - No. 33: Popilian 1980, 29 pl. 16 M 108, 2. - No. 34: Bichir 1984, 31 pl. 17/7 = Bichir 1986, 117 pls. 3/8 and 11/6. - No. 35: Bichir 1984, 31 pl. 17/4 = Bichir 1986, 117 pl. 11/3. - No. 36: Popilian 1980, 26 pl. 14 M 92, 1. - No. 37: Bichir 1984, pl. 17/2. - No. 38: Bichir 1984, pl. 17/3. - No. 39: Bichir 1984, pl. 17/1. - No. 40: Popilian 1976a, 221 pl. 74 no. 956 = Popilian 1976b, 285 fig. 3/10 = Popilian 1980, pl. 2 M 11, 1. - No. 41: Popilian 1976a, pl. 74 no. 946 = Popilian 1976b, 285 fig. 3/12 = Popilian 1980, 15 pl. 3 M 12, 2. - No. 42: Popilian 1982, 48 fig. 1 M 2, 3. - No. 43: Bichir 1984, 35 pl. 17/14 = Bichir 1986, 118 pl. 14/11.

Plate 5

No. 44: Bichir 1984, 36 pl. 18/1 = Bichir 1986, 118 pls. 4/3 and 13/1. - No. 45: Bichir 1984, pl. 18/3 = Bichir 1986, 118 pls. 12/1 and 13/3. - No. 46: Bichir 1984, pl. 18/5 = Bichir 1986, 118 pl. 13/5. - No. 47: Popilian 1980, 16 pl. 21, 2. - No. 48: Popilian 1980, 43 pl. 28 M 204, 2. - No. 49: Bichir 1984, 36 pl. 17/11 = Bichir 1986, 118 pl. 4/1. - No. 50: Bichir 1984, 36 pl. 18/10 = Bichir 1986, 118 pl. 13/10.

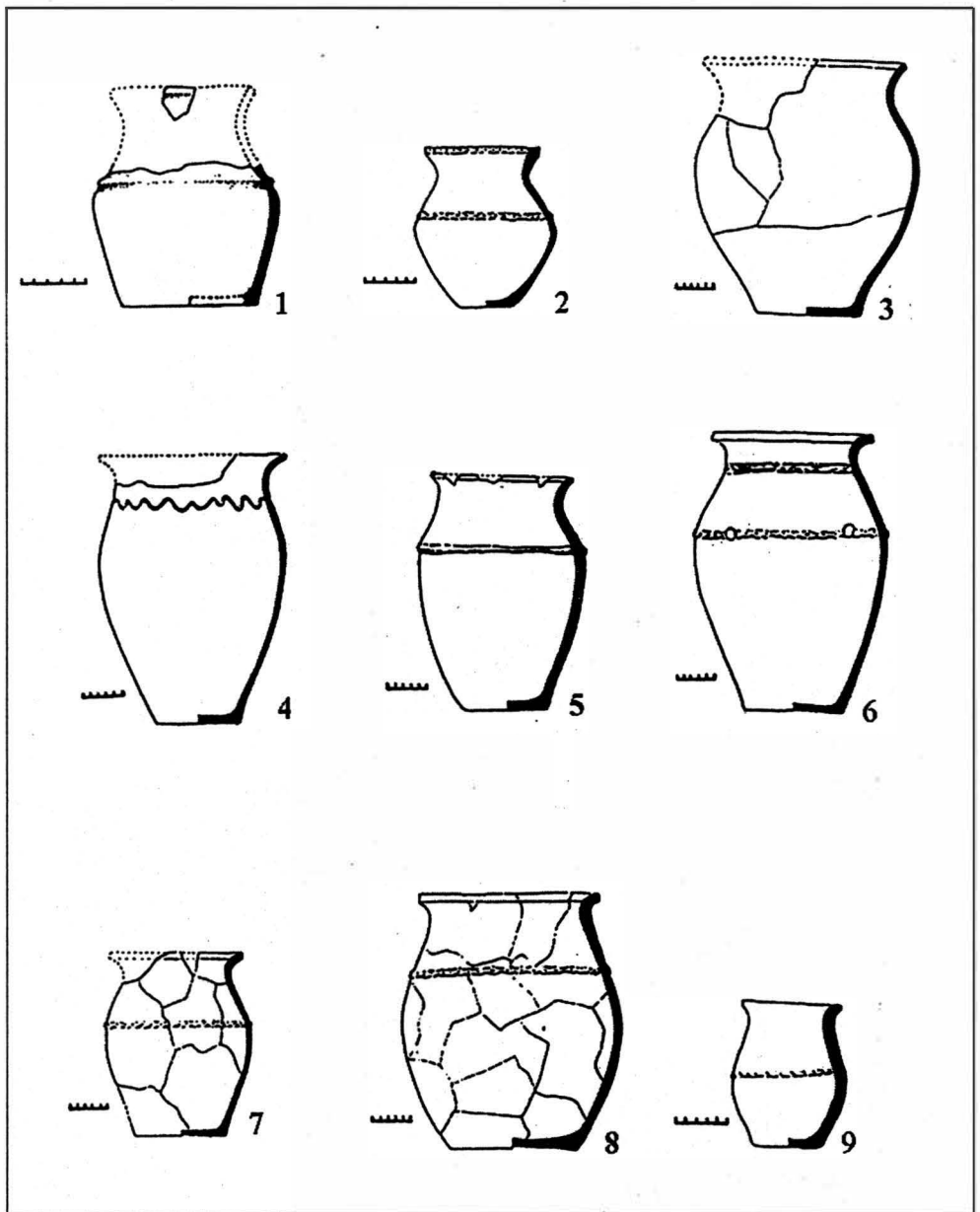


Fig. 1. Dacian hand-made pottery. 1 Daneți, 2-9 Locusteni.

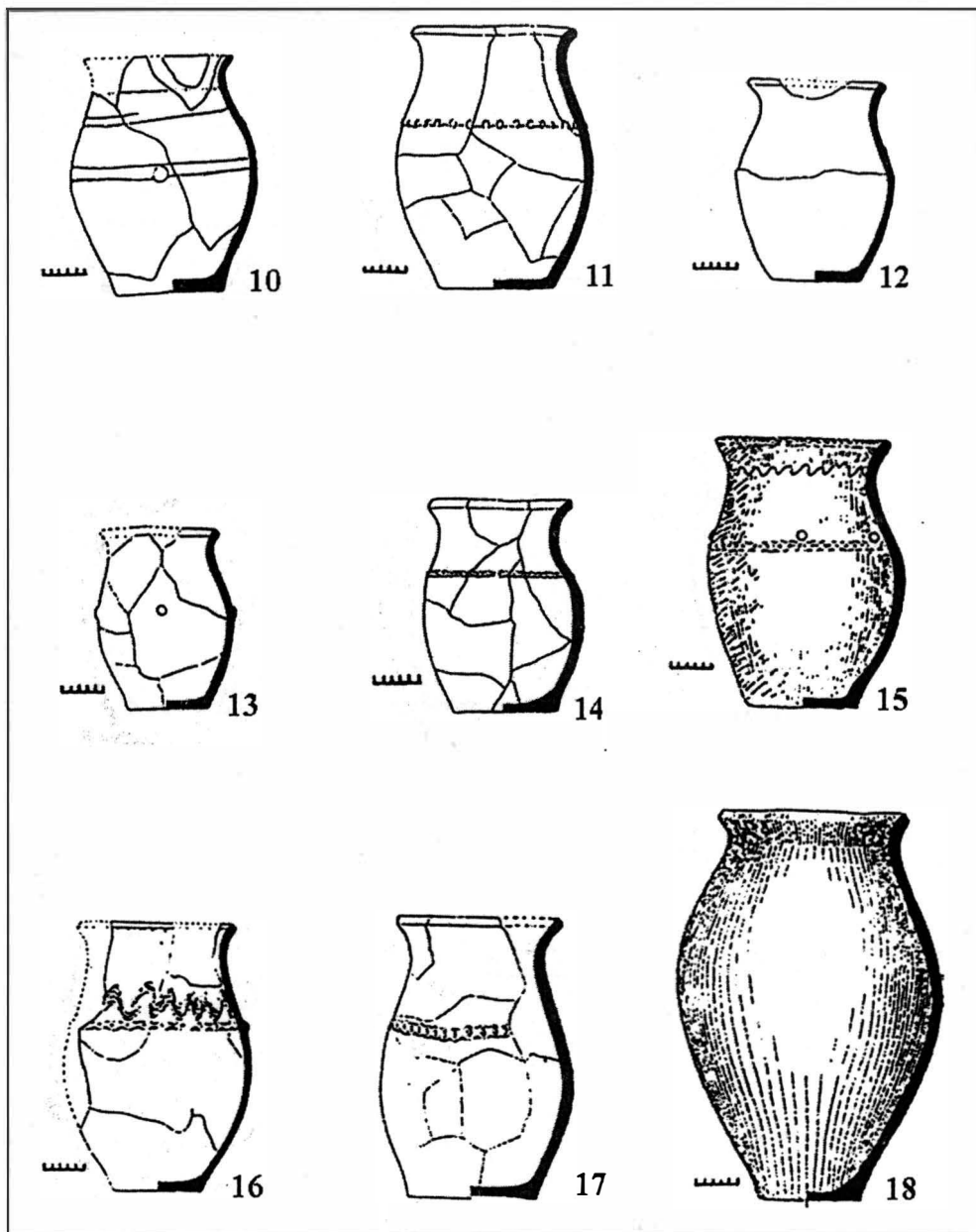


Fig. 2. Dacian hand-made pottery. 10-16, 18 Locusteni, 17 Enoșești-Arcidava.

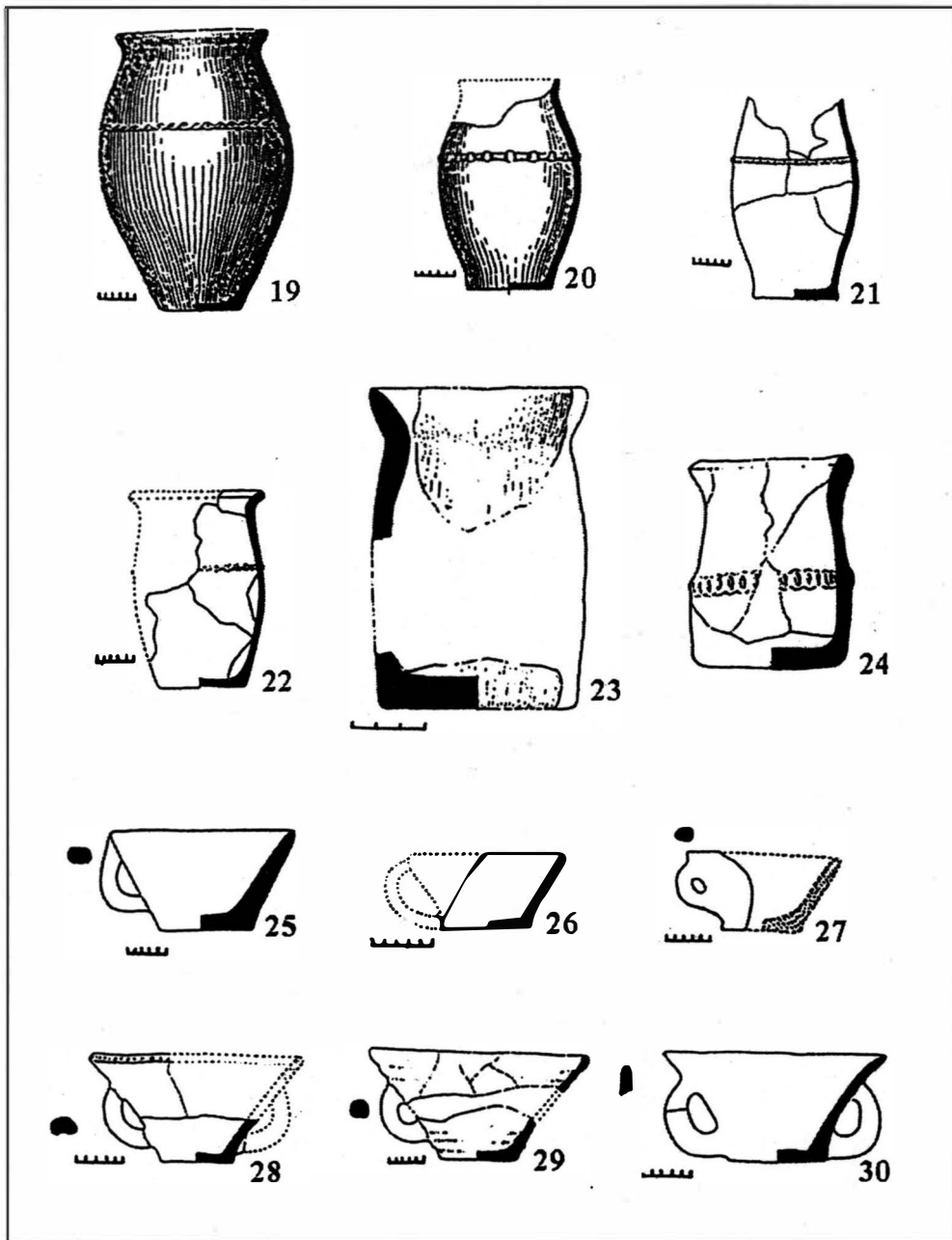


Fig. 3. Dacian hand-made (19-28, 30) and wheel-made pottery (29).
 19-22, 25, 28-30 Locusteni, 23 Scornicești, 24 Enoșești-Arcidava, 25 Drobeta,
 26 Leu-Albota.

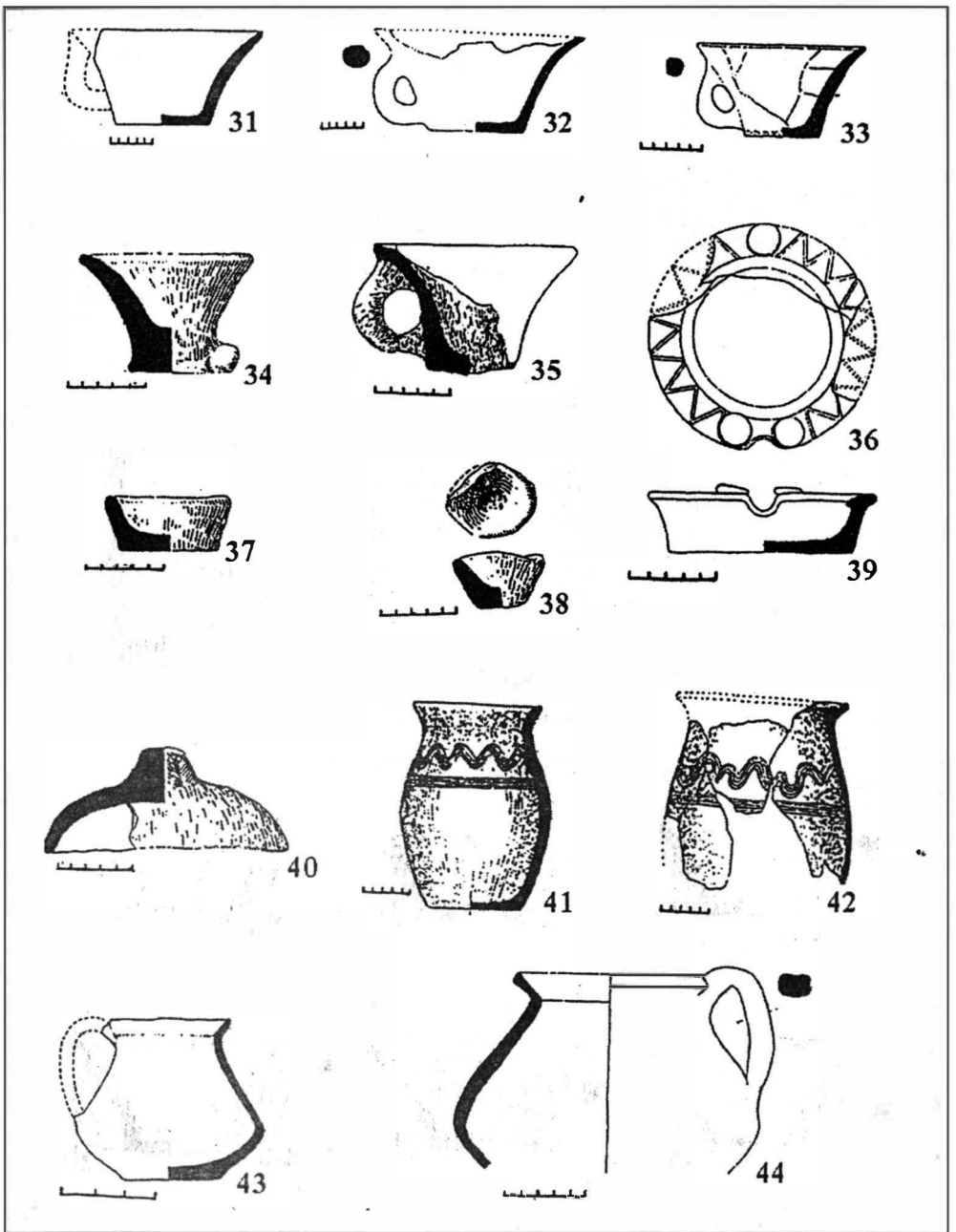


Fig. 4. Dacian hand-made (31-39) and wheel-made pottery (40-43).
 31-33, 36, 40, 41 Locusteni, 34, 35, 37, 38, 39, 43 Scornicești, 42 Daneți.

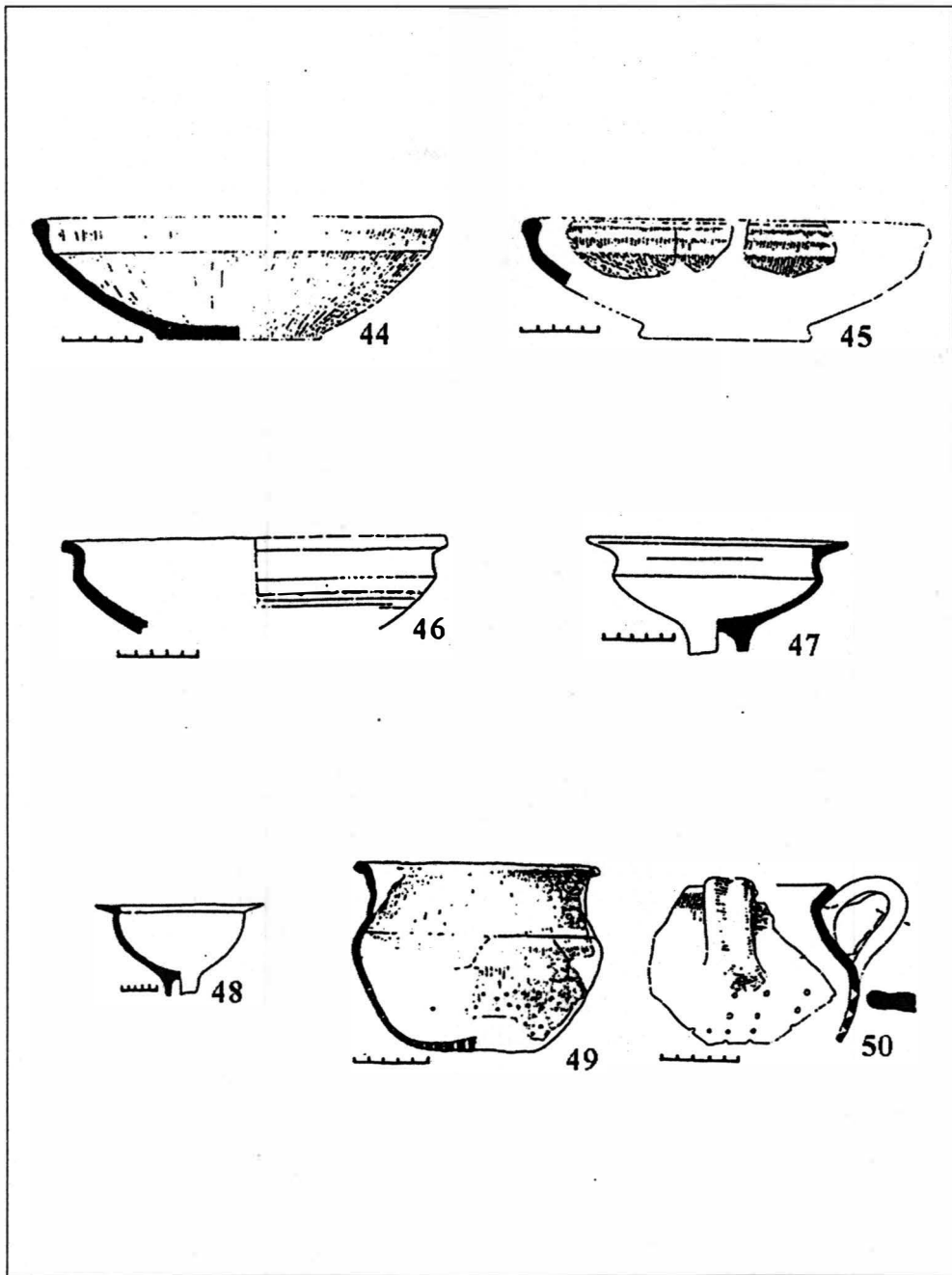


Fig. 5. Dacian wheel-made pottery. 44-46, 49, 50 Scornicești, 47, 48 Locusteni.