

NEW ASPECT OF EARLY LATÈNE EPOCH IN DACIA DISCOVERED AT ALEXANDRIA

The origin and formation of the Latène epoch culture in Dacia presents numerous aspects connected on the one hand with its autochthonous character and on the other hand with the various influences coming from abroad, whose cultural elements are seen against the local background. The existence of several zones of influence, with different attributes, which have manifested their impact in a different and unequal way, in point of both time and intensity — together with an insufficient knowledge of the material discovered — make it difficult for us to study the problem as a whole. That is why, embarking upon a number of studies limited to certain regions with unitary cultural aspects, based on archaeological discoveries with a clear and new documentary contents will be able to serve in future for a thorough acquaintance with the genesis of Latène culture in Dacia and hence with the epoch and history of the Geto-Dacians.

The discovery at Alexandria of important archaeological traces reveals a very early phase of the second Iron Age in Dacia and at the same time, leads to conclusions of a more general nature on its beginnings in the region between the Carpathians and the Danube.

On the occasion of the rescue diggings made in 1956—57, in the prefeudal settlement on the left bank of the Vedea, near the bridge in the immediate vicinity of Alexandria, Bucharest region and as a result of the intimation made by an inhabitant of that town, one succeeded in identifying and cognizing an important settlement dating back in the Iron Age. The place of the discovery is on the territory of Alexandria municipality, north of the town, about two hundred metres from the bed of the Vedea. After some limited tentative diggings in October 1957¹, one passed on to more extensive diggings in the autumn of 1958. Because the area where archaeological traces are to be found was cultivated with vine for the most part, the diggings were concentrated only in a relatively restricted zone, not yet cultivated with vine. The slope

¹ The results obtained on the basis of these first tentative diggings were laid down by us in the preliminary report on the diggings at Alexandria in 1957

and are published in « Materiale », VI, 1959, p. 251—262.

being rather steep in that part of the ground, one started by sounding the settlement through long parallel sections, perpendicularly on the inclined slope of the terrace. Ten such sections, sometimes up to 56 metres long, were traced and dug.

Following the researches made, three mud-huts were discovered. They all have a round, slightly irregular form, with a diameter varying between three and four metres. Their foundation lies at a depth of between 0.60 and 1.20 metres, taking into account the fact that the shallowest depths correspond to the lowest part of the slope. No trace of pillars was found, these being probably left outside the circumference of the mud-hut. When disengaging the structure of the mud-huts by disposing of the earth inside them, rests of pottery were brought to light, together with traces of isolated hearths and certain objects of metal and burnt clay.

The ceramic material is the main part of this discovery, being particularly important, as concerns both the methods of work and the variety of forms. Taken under its technical aspect, this ceramic falls into two large categories: hand-made pottery and wheel-made pottery.

The first category of hand-made pottery includes several types of pots differing among them in point of shape and paste: The most characteristic are the fragments of large vases in the form of nearly cylindrical urns, with vertical walls slightly opening towards their brim (fig. 1/1—5 and 2/2, 2, 3, 10, 12). Their walls are very thick, sometimes up to 0.020 m. These types of pots are made of rough paste including in its composition a mixture of pounded potsherds. Usually they have alveolar stripes and notched prominences applied under their brim while their bellies sometimes have little ears (fig. 1/1—5 and 2/2, 3, 10, 12). Then we come across a group of pots which used a fine yellowish-brick coloured paste, whose surface is covered with engobe and beautifully polished. Here we remark small vessels represented by dishes with a concave bottom and walls arching inwardly (fig. 3/1, 2) the fragment of a cup with handle (fig. 2/7) and a little bowl (fig. 2/1), as well as potsherds like tankards with a long neck and funnelshaped brim (fig. 3/3).

We mention in the same ceramic category a few potsherds which use a fine paste of greyish colour. It is a fragment of dish with the brim arching inwardly and another broken from a bowl with a high and straight neck, with the brim turned horizontally outwards. In the latter we find the presence of a relief stripe, with notches, which we also come across on the outside margin of the brim, while in the inside, immediately below the brim, there are two waving incised lines. Initially the bowl was provided with two super-erected handles, applied on the outside of the brim (fig. 2/9).

The second category includes, as we were saying, all the broken ceramics wrought on the wheel. Here too we meet with a wide range of shapes. Among these we distinguish the fragments belonging to large bowls, whose form is somewhat like two truncated cones, the bottom being ringshaped, sometimes with horizontal handles (fig. 1/9—10) as well as fragments of large jars and pots, with a high and straight neck and the brim turned horizontally outwards (fig. 3/4—6, 14). There is a rather large number of broken dishes with the walls slightly arched inwards, below the outer margin of the brim, having an incised line which encompasses the pot (fig. 3/7, 11—13). All these types of vessels are

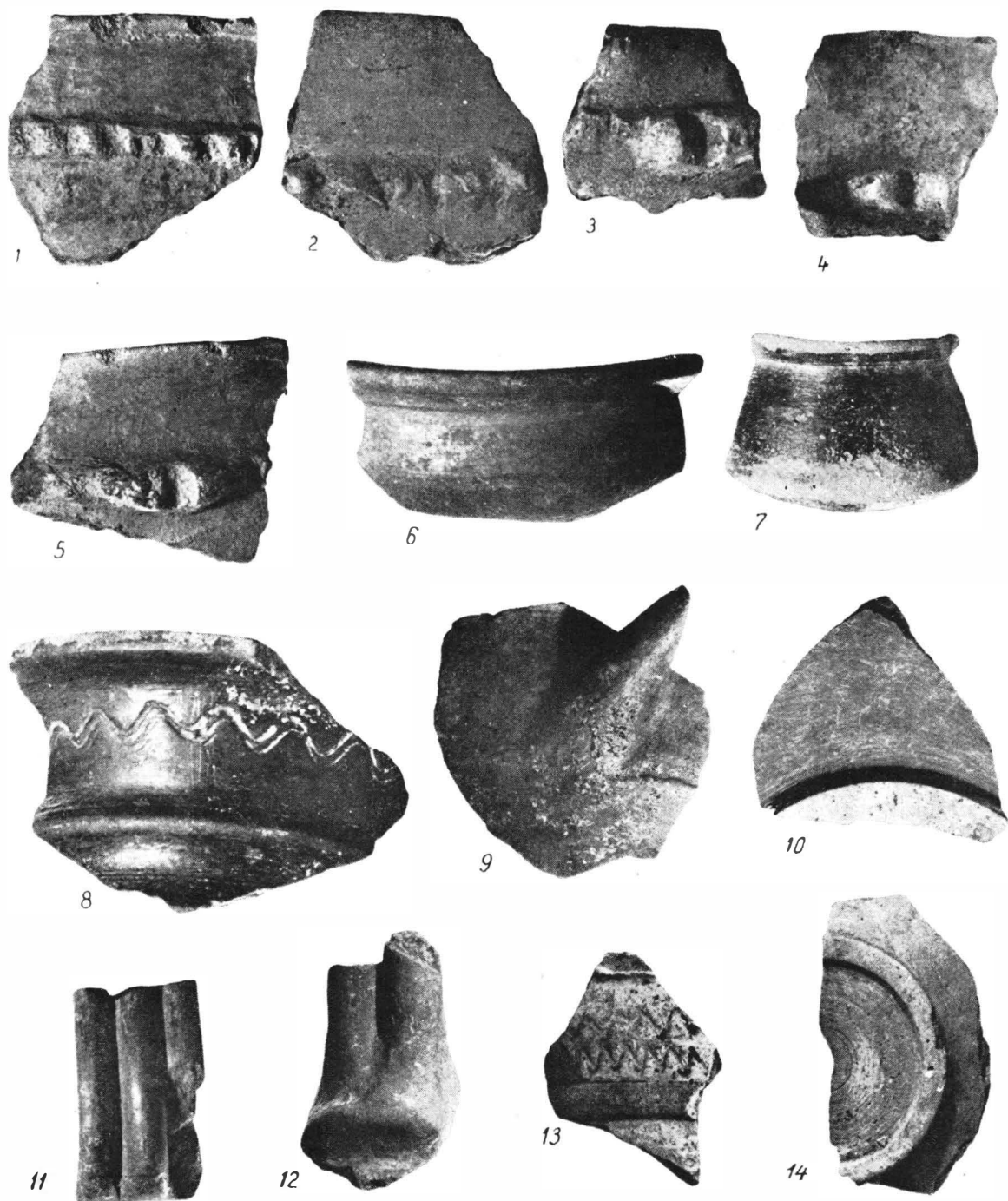


Fig. 1. — *Alexandria*. Potsherds found in mud-huts; 1—5, hand-made ceramics; 6—14 wheel-made ceramics.

made of a fine paste, of a yellowish brick colour, being covered by an engobe which gives the paste a beautiful lustre.

Also in this category we include the ceramics in which we find a grey paste, with dark shades, sometimes going down to black and often having a glossy slip on the surface. The shapes are to a great extent similar to the preceding ones and among them we can remark broken dishes and bowls with a high and strait neck, with a horizontal brim, adorned with waving lines (fig. 1/8 and fig. 2/4—6 and 11) relief stripes and fluted ornaments (fig. 2/8). Among the most outstanding ceramic rests we remark the fragments of two cup-shaped pots, with the body like two truncated cones having on the surface an engobe of black colour (fig. 1/6, 7 and fig. 3/9, 10) and two handles of which a double one, prominent at the point of connection with the pot (fig. 1/12), the other being made up of three cylindrical stripes applied longitudinally on one handle, which was initially flat (fig. 1/11).

The objects discovered are not numerous. In the last analysis they just amount to three bronze fibulae, a zoomorphic figure (fig. 4/4) and a few fusaroles of burnt clay (fig. 4/5). Two of the fibulae were discovered in mud-hut no. 2 and the other in mud-hut no. 3. They all have at the basis the same type of fibula with bow-shaped body, more or less open, with a triangular plate and the extremities in the form of a single spiral. The first fibula is complete and well preserved. Its bow has a rhombic section and is adorned on one of the two sides, with a zig-zagging incised line. The plate, slightly broken in a corner, is also decorated with incised lines, either zig-zagging or combined in the form of a fir-tree branch (fig. 4/3). The next fibula, very well preserved, is identical to the preceding one, but for the fact that it has a more open bow and the plate is absent, having been broken for a long time past (fig. 4/1). Out of the third fibula, the body alone is preserved, which is very arched and round in section (fig. 4/2).

An analysis of this material, even in a summary way, evidences the importance of the discoveries made at Alexandria, on archaeological and historical planes. The ceramic for instance exhibits new aspects, not only as concerns the technique but also the shapes which give an entirely peculiar note to this archaeological complex. But if we analyse certain types of pots separately, we can go so far as to establish their descent and evolution, from cultures which are not always proper to the north Danubian area.

First of all, as concerns the hand-made ceramic we generally establish the presence of certain forms characteristic of the first Iron Age. Bag-shaped urns with an alveolar stripe and with handles are of a shape often met with in the Hallstattian epoch and continue to exist during the Latène culture in the same region. The type of small dishes, with a concave bottom, as well as the larger bowls are also specific to the first Iron Age, being rather widespread in its final phase. The similitudes for both types of vessels hold good only as far as the shapes are concerned, because in the present case the paste which is finer and more consistent and of orange colour represents a main characteristic of the cultural group at Alexandria. The other ceramic types, either hand-made or wheel-made will not be found in any of the contemporary cultures — much better defined — in the Carpathian-Danubian zone. As we shall see, the analogies direct our attention towards the neighbouring region in the south where the origins of many of them

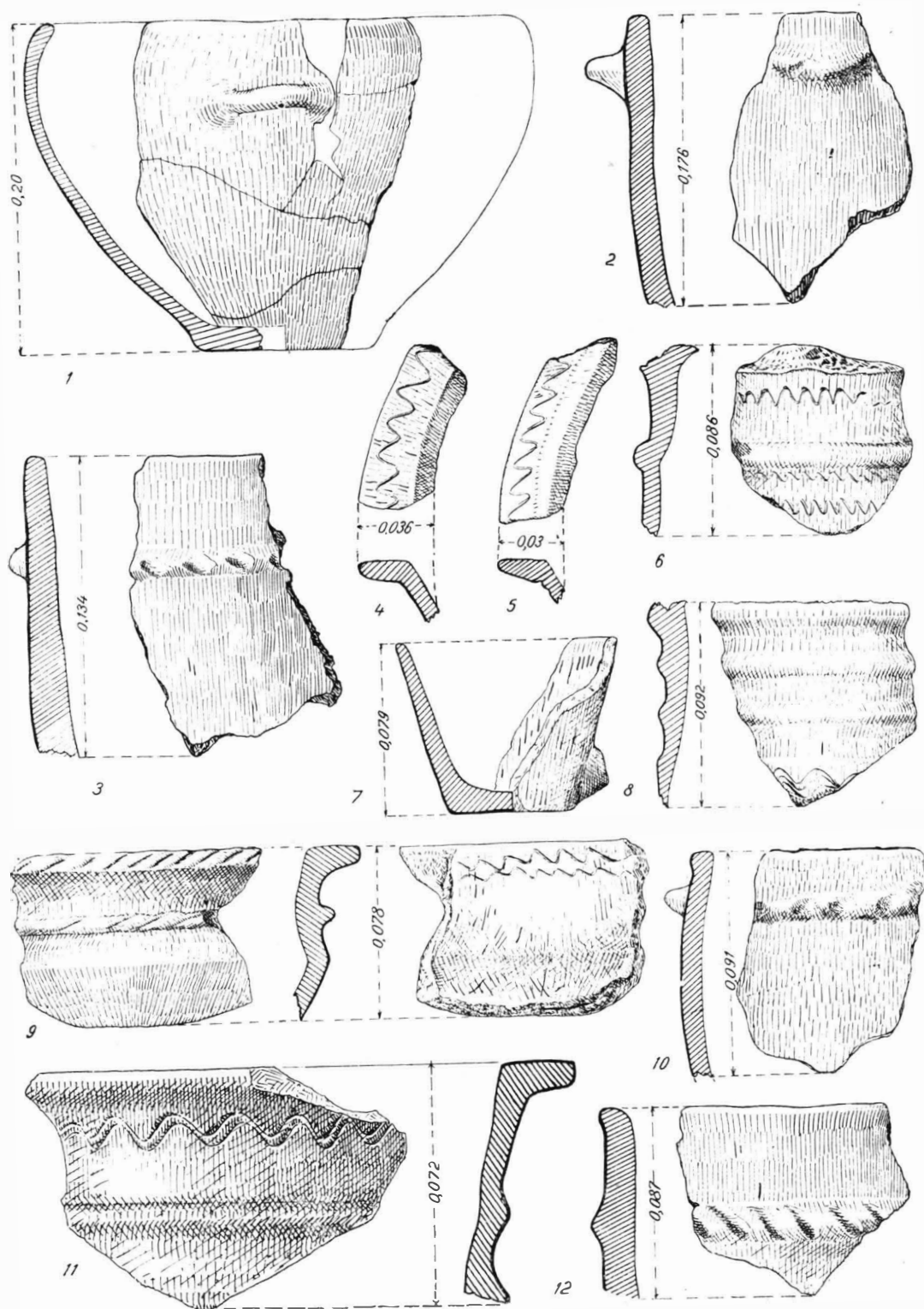


Fig. 2. — Alexandria. Ceramics found in mud-huts; 1—3, 7, 10, 12, hand-made pots; 4—6, 8, 11, wheel-made pots.

will have to be sought, even if certain discoveries of similar material are signalled here and there, north of the Danube.

The fragment of bowl made of grey paste, with waving incised ornaments and notches on the margin (fig. 2/9) belongs in the series of similar pots found

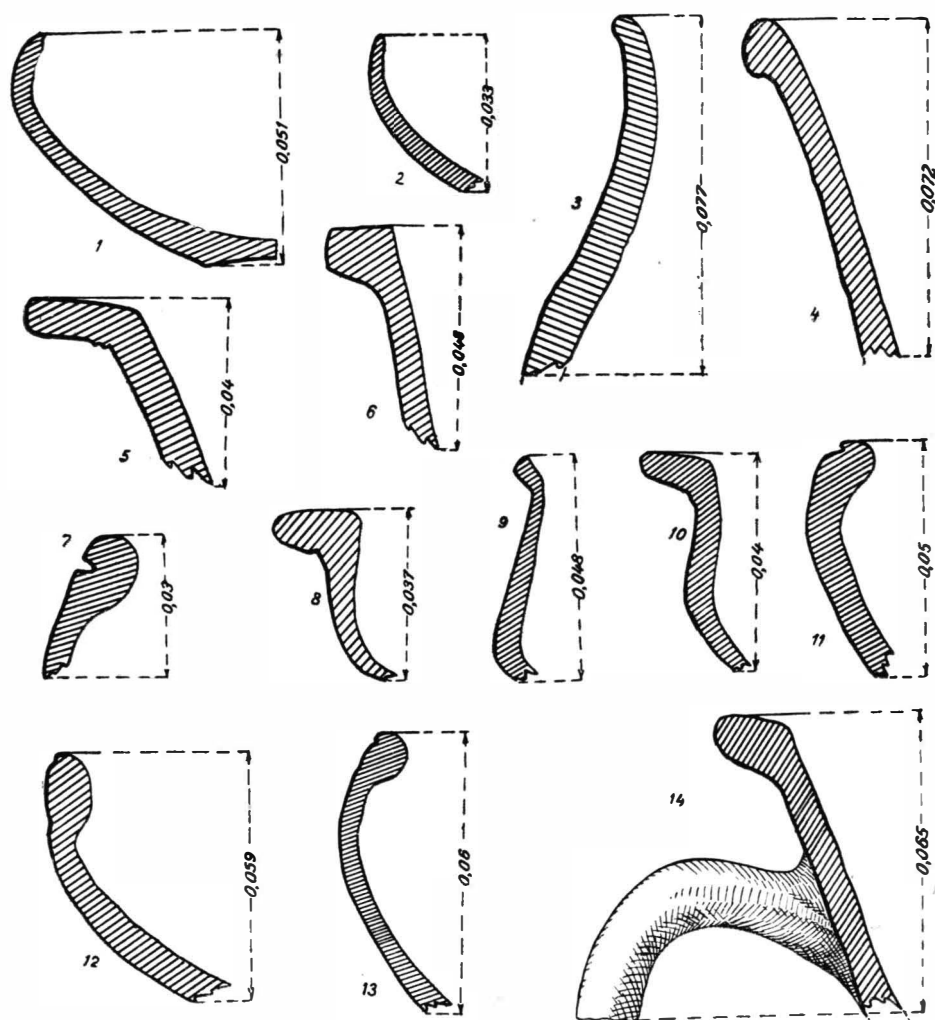


Fig. 3. — Alexandria. Profiles of pots; 1—3, hand-made ceramics; 4—14, wheel-made ceramics.

at Grojdibod ², in Oltenia and in the Greek-native settlement at Tariverde-Dobrudja, dating back in the 6th—5th century before our era ³. Beyond the Danube, in the People's Republic of Bulgaria, the same type of pot with over-erected ears is signalled at Bukjovtsh ⁴ (Oriahovo), as well as in other points on the right of

² D. Berciu, *Colecția de antichități « Gh. Georgescu »*, Corabia, Caracal, 1937, p. 39, fig. 18/1, 6.

³ During the excavations made in recent years at Tariverde, Constantza region, one has come across

a number of ceramic fragments with similar paste and background in the habitation levels of the archaic Greek epoch.

⁴ V. Mikov, *Археологические Вести*, in « *Izvestia-Institut* », XXI, 1957, p. 300—301, fig. 9.

the Danube. The dishes made on the wheel, with the upper margin arching inwards and an incised line on the outside immediately below the brim (fig. 3/7, 11—13) present in the Alexandria settlement by numerous fragments, are identical under all aspects with those found in the culture layer and in the mud-hut pits at Tariverde, dating in the archaic Greek epoch, and attributed for certain to the second half of the 6th century before our era ⁵.

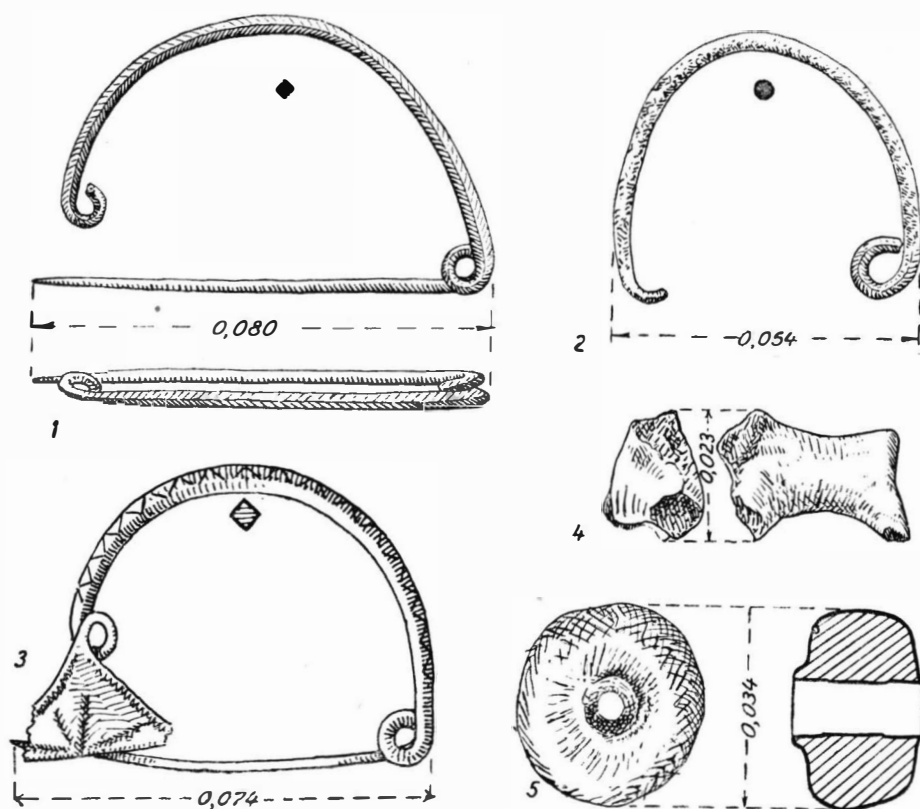


Fig. 4. — Alexandria. Metal and bone objects found in mud-huts. 1—3, fibulae; 4, animal-like figure; 5, fusarole.

The fragments of jugs, in the shape of two truncated cones, also made on the wheel (fig. 3/9—10) are altogether identical with the pot discovered in the necropolis at Gogoșu ⁶, in a complex of buildings which seems to date back in the 5th century before our era.

The fragments of pots, about which we were saying that they originated in some high bowls provided with lateral handles, parallel to the walls of the pot (fig. 1/2 and fig. 3/4—6, 14) find their likes south of the Danube. In this respect we mention the urn-bowl in the necropolis at Lovec, and Teteven ⁷, as well as

⁵ Em. Condurachi and co-workers, *Șantierul, arheologic Histria — sectorul Tariverde*, in « Materiale », II, 1956, p. 417, 488, fig. 140.

⁶ D. Berciu and Eugen Comșa, *Săpăturile arheologice de la Balta Verde și Gogoșu (1949—1950)*,

in « Materiale », II, 1956, p. 417, 488, fig. 140.

⁷ V. Mikov, *Могилни некрополи отъ Ловчанско и Тетевенско*, in « Известия-Institut », VI, 1930—31, p. 161, fig. 142.

those in the tombs discovered at Mezek and Svilengrad⁸, dating back in the 5–6th centuries before our era. Also in the People's Republic of Bulgaria we find analogies for fragments of pots with a high neck (fig. 3/5–6). In this respect we quote certain profiles of pots with a similar aspect found in the necropolis at Brezovo⁹, together with objects and ceramics of Greek origin, from the 5th century before our era. Many of these types of pots have also been brought to light by recent diggings at Histria¹⁰, in a Greek milieu of the archaic epoch.

As far as the fibulae discovered and presented above are concerned, the situation seems much clearer. We have shown that all three fibulae belong to the same type, which we know under the name of Glasinac type¹¹. It is specific to the Hallstattian epoch and is widespread in the north and west Balkan region¹². In Rumania this type is also known from a number of objects discovered in settlements and graveyards found especially in the Danube plain. The most numerous fibulae of this type have been found in the necropoles at Gogoşu and Balta Verde¹³, side by side with ceramics from the first Iron Age, being dated in the 6–5th century before our era. Another object is signalled in a tomb discovered at Zimnicea¹⁴. In the Hallstattian level of the settlement at Popeşti¹⁵, Bucharest region, a fibula has also been discovered with a triangular holder plate, dating back in the 6th century before our era. A similar fragmentary fibula has been found at Stoicani¹⁶, in the south of Moldavia, in a tomb dating from the first Iron Age — only that it is wrought in iron. During the diggings at Tariverde in 1955¹⁷, a mud-hut of the archaic Greek epoch produced an object similar to those at Alexandria, being accompanied by Attic ceramics, with black figures, from the end of the 6th century before our era.

The same type of fibula is evidenced by the neighbouring region south of the Danube — through a few objects discovered, one in the necropolis at Dolna Kremena¹⁸ (Vraţa reg.), and another two in a tumulus of the graveyard at Lovéc and Teteven¹⁹, from which wheel-made urns were also brought to light. To them are related certain ceramic fragments from the Alexandria settlement.

⁸ Ivan Velkov, *Разкопките около Мезекъ и гара Свиленградъ*, in « Isvestiia-Institut », IX, 1937, p. 141, fig. 134 and 153.

⁹ Idem, *Могили и гробни находки отъ Бръзово*, in « Isvestiia-Institut », XII, 1938, pp. 273–276, fig. 79 and 80.

¹⁰ During the researches at Histria one discovered ceramic fragments of a similar aspect, but the results have not yet been published.

¹¹ This type of fibula, with different variants, was widespread as early as the 9th century before our era. (See Vl. Milojević, *Die dorische Wanderung im Lichte der vorgeschichtlichen Funde*, in AA, 1948–1949, p. 35.

¹² For details in connection with this type of fibula and its distribution, see Vl. Milojević, *op. cit.*, pp. 13–135, and F. Maier, *Zu einigen bosnisch-herzegowinischen Bronzen aus Griechenland*, in « Germania », 34, 1956, pp. 63–75. Certain aspects are taken up and discussed by D. Berciu in « Dacia »,

N. S., I, pp. 354–357, on the occasion of an account on F. Maier's study, mentioned here. As concerns the dating, see also Chr. Blinkenberg's paper, *Fibules grecques et orientales*, Copenhagen, 1926, p. 80, III, 4 a; cf. R. Vulpe, *Şantierul arheologic Popeşti*, in « Materiale », III, 1957, p. 230, no. 1.

¹³ D. Berciu and Eugen Comşa, *op. cit.*, pp. 374, 436–437, fig. 110/2 and 159/2.

¹⁴ In the collections of the National Museum of Antiquities, *Cimitirul hallstattian de la Stoicani*, there is an inedited object, mentioned however by N. Petrescu-Dimboviţa, in « Materiale » I, 1954, p. 203.

¹⁵ Radu Vulpe, *op. cit.*, pp. 229–230, fig. 22/1.

¹⁶ M. Petrescu-Dimboviţa, *op. cit.*, p. 193.

¹⁷ Em. Condurachi and co-workers, *op. cit.*, pp. 80–81, fig. 61/1.

¹⁸ R. Попов, *Предисторический изследования въ Врачанското Поле*, in « Isvestiia-Institut », II, 1923–1924, p. 110, fig. 44.

¹⁹ V. Mikov, *op. cit.*, p. 166, fig. 147.

All fibulae mentioned are similar to each other by the shape and the triangular plate situated at the end of the holder. Certain minute differences, can be seen however and may be considered variants of the same type. For instance, certain fibulae have a body of rhombic section, while others have a circular one. The triangular shape of the plate also varies from one object to another. Generally speaking, the fibulae in question are not ornamented. Out of the series already mentioned, the only object with ornamental elements is that found at Alexandria. As far as we can see, these minute differences are not connected with any evolution in the course of time. For the time being at least, we do not see any possibility of chronological serialization. The presence of the different variant signals in complexes not differentiated in time — both in the Alexandria settlement and in the necropolises at Gogoşu and Balta Verde entitles us to consider them contemporary to each other. They can be dated according to the archaeological levels at which they are found, mostly in the 6th century before our era, being placed, as it seems, rather in the latter half of that century. Whether this type of fibula, as indicated by the discoveries at Gogoşu, continues to exist in the 5th century before our era, is a problem which remains to be solved and confirmed by subsequent discoveries.

The analogies upon which we have dwelt, in connection not only with the ceramics but also with the fibulae discovered at Alexandria give particularly precious indications for dating the settlement and establishing its cultural framework.

As for the first aspect of the problem, it may be seen that types of pottery similar to those at Alexandria, have been found especially south of the Danube, in complexes which make it possible to trace them back to the 6th century and some of them even to the 5th century before our era. The fibulae of the Glasinac type offer indications for an older stage, better defined from the chronological point of view. In keeping with all data supplied by these last documents, the settlement at Alexandria should be placed in time towards the end of the 6th century at the latest. However, considering both types of discoveries and especially the presence of ceramics wrought on the wheel, we think that the cultural group discussed can certainly be dated as early as the first half of the 5th century before our era, without excluding the possibility, in all likelihood, for some of the elements to belong to the end of the 6th century before our era.

Concerning the cultural framework of the discovery made at Alexandria, the situation is more complicated and much more difficult. The researches made in Rumania have established that material cultures which belong to the first Iron Age are specific to the 6—5th centuries before our era, in the Carpathian-Danubian region. Such traces of material cultures have been made relatively precise, from both the chronological and the cultural points of view, and their areas of spreading have been well established. The new archaeological group, taken as a whole and not by species of ceramics and objects taken separately, does not fit into the framework of any aspects of Hallstattian culture north of the Danube, despite the similitudes which nevertheless exist between them.

What particularly characterizes this discovery and separates it from all the other late cultural aspects of the first Iron Age is, besides certain technical qualities of its own, the presence in a prevalent number of the wheel-made pottery.

It is not a question of imported ceramics in order to justify its discovery side by side with hand-made material of Hallstattian tradition, but of local pottery which belongs to an area of culture stretching more to the south and which we find grouped under this form for the first time in Rumania.

This new cultural aspect may be considered as representing a stage of transition from the first to the second Iron Age in the zone between the Danube and the Carpathians. Here, better than anywhere else can be seen the first aspects of the Latène culture in the respective region, at a time when the forms of culture of the Hallstattian epoch were still widespread. Referred to the time in which the discussed archaeological traces are placed, the Alexandria settlement may be included in the later cultures of the first Iron Age. When seen, however, from the point of view of its contents and technical achievement, specific to the Latène epoch, it may be considered as an initial, remote phase of the second Iron Age, what we could call "Proto-Latène".

When analyzed under this last aspect, the Alexandria archaeological complex offers precious indications both on the role played by the Greek factor in the formation of the Danubian valley Latène, as well as on the area from which it comes, and the form in which the Hellenic influence is exerted.

The archaeological investigations in Rumania both in the past and today have established that the second Iron Age is not much older than the fourth century before our era. Vasile Pârvan²⁰, although accepting the 4th century as the date of its beginning, takes the year 300 as a starting point considering it is a date from which the certain existence of the Latène culture on the territory of all Dacia could no longer be contested. Its genuine flourishing takes place, according to the same author, in the 2nd—1st centuries before our era²¹. Subsequent researches have to a great extent proved the correctness of this viewpoint, at the same time establishing that the beginnings of the second epoch can be traced back towards the middle of the 4th century. In this respect we can recall the results of the archaeological excavations in the Geto-Dacian settlements at Poiana (Tecuci)²² and Zimnicea²³, Bucharest region, where the oldest level of habitations is dated with drachmae minted by the Greek town of Istros in the 4th century before our era and respectively with coins from Philip II and Alexander The Great, kings of Macedonia.

The beginnings as well as the development of the Latène civilization in Dacia are attributed by V. Pârvan to a mighty Celtic influence. He sees in the culture of the second Iron Age in the Carpathian-Danubian region a penetration of the forms of Celtic culture, which the Getae accepted freely and eagerly, finding in them certain affinities with their own culture. Firmly admitting therefore western influences as early as the first Iron Age, the well-known Rumanian archaeologist and historian considers that Dacia in the Latène period was a country connected with the life of Central Europe, making clear that "the whole region between the middle course of the Danube, the upper Elbe and

²⁰ V. Pârvan, *Getica*, Bucharest, 1926, p. 460 and 464.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 466.

²² R. Vulpe, *Şantierul arheologic Poiana-Tecuci*, 1950, in SCIV, II, I, 1951, p. 187 and SCIV, III,

1952, p. 202; idem, *La civilisation dace et ses problèmes à la lumière des dernières fouilles de Poiana*, en *Basse-Moldavie*, in « Dacia », N. S., I, 1957, p. 146.

²³ I. Nestor, *Raport sumar asupra campaniei de săpături de la Zimnicea*, in SCIV, I, 1950, pp. 98—100.

the lower Danube were subject to ample Celtic influence ²⁴. These statements were analyzed from a severe critical standpoint by Ion Nestor ²⁵ on making public the Celtic discoveries at Mediaș, which enabled him to reach the conclusion that the Celtic influence on the Geto-Dacian culture played a much smaller role than it had been previously believed.

Numerous settlements from the second Iron Age, known today either by research at the surface or by systematic excavations, contain archaeological traces, especially ceramics, specific to the Geto-Dacian population, thus refuting Vasile Pârvan's thesis according to which the Latène culture in Dacia had a Celtic character and was accepted and developed by the Getae ²⁶. Discoveries made after the death of the great researcher, as well as their analysis have permitted the clarification of the forms and of the autochthonous, specific, character of the Geto-Dacian culture, so that within a short time one has succeeded in distinguishing the Celtic elements from the local ones. The technical and typological analysis of the traces of material cultures from the second Iron Age reveals however the presence of elements of Celtic influence. The distribution of the Celtic population down to the frontiers of Dacia and then their penetration on today's territory of Rumania could not remain without effect. Certain shapes of burnt clay pots and certain technical aspects of these, where we find a fine paste of grey colour, to which the skilful processing of iron is added, betrays influences of Celtic culture, grafted on the autochthonous background, born and developed from older local roots, under new historical circumstances.

As it seems, the Celtic influence was exerted especially in the inter-Carpathian regions, where the penetration of Celtic tribes too was more massive. It also spread to the other regions of Dacia, but in a less evidenced form.

Another influence exerted over the Geto-Dacian Latène on a vaster area and in different historical conditions, is represented by the Greek element coming from the Pontic Greek colonies and the Greek world in the south. This phenomenon of the penetration of Hellenic influences north of the Danube is observed and followed by V. Pârvan under various aspects, from its beginnings up to the time when the elements of Roman culture appeared. The importance of the respective phenomenon is repeatedly stressed by the same author who made special studies ²⁷ for it. According to V. Pârvan, Hellenism represents, together with Celticism, the second capital influence which characterizes the second Iron Age in Dacia ²⁸. He notices that it is exercised not only from the east and south-east, but also from the south, from Thracia and Macedonia. He also stresses that the connections and trade with Dacia were carried out not so much through the Greeks on the Pontus Euxinus but especially through Thasians, Rhodians and Cnidians ²⁹.

Without any doubt the conclusions reached by V. Pârvan, concerning the penetration of the Greek influence in Dacia, —based on rich and suggestive archaeological references —roughly speaking still hold good. The proof will be made by the results of the subsequent researches which will make much clearer the

²⁴ V. Pârvan, *op. cit.*, p. 462.

²⁵ I. Nestor, *Keltische Gräber bei Mediaș*, in «Dacia» VII—VIII, 1937—1940, pp. 154—182.

²⁶ V. Pârvan, *op. cit.*, p. 466.

²⁷ Idem, *La pénétration hellénique et hellénistique dans la vallée du Danube*, in BSH, X, 1923, pp. 23—46.

²⁸ Idem, *Getica*, p. 607.

²⁹ *Ibidem*.

role played by the Hellenic influence and the contribution made by it towards the formation of the north Danubian Latène culture. We make a point of underlining that there is no question of an influence exerted equally and generally over the whole Geto-Dacian territory. It is reduced mainly to the region between the Danube and the Carpathians, where the Celtic influence is either less felt or totally absent.

Various opinions have been expressed on the way and direction in which the Greek influence was exerted to a larger extent north of the Danube. Although these opinions had certain points in common, as far as the basic idea is concerned, they are however situated on different positions. Ion Nestor for instance, proceeding from a number of facts and archaeological data sees a penetration of the Greek influence from the Hellenic south, not directly but through the southern Thracians³⁰. Therefore the elements of Greek culture take part in the formation of the Geto-Dacian culture only after having passed through the Thracian intermediate. The close connections of the north Danubian zone with the southern Thracian mass and with the Greek colonies on the Black Sea Coast in Thracia were emphasized by the same author on the occasion of the diggings at Zimnicea in 1949³¹. We are able to reach a similar conclusion while following the spreading of Macedonian coins especially those minted by Philip II, among the Geto-Dacian tribes in the Carpathian-Danubian zone³².

The recent publication of the discoveries at Cernavoda has given D. Berciu³³ the opportunity to declare in favour of a powerful influence of the Histro-Pontic Greeks on the formation of the Latène culture in Dacia. Undoubtedly it could be a mistake not to acknowledge the importance of the Greek colonies in Dobrudja for the development of the native society. Following the Greek products and the coins spread from the three west Pontic towns in the autochthonous milieu evidences the outstanding role played by them in the evolution of the local population. What seems to be obvious enough, is the fact that the spreading of the Greek products cannot be mistaken for their contribution to the formation of the Latène culture in Dacia and also that the zone of influence of the west Pontic towns, taken in this respect, is limited to the territory of Dobrudja, and south Moldavia with certain ramifications along the lower reaches of the Danube. However, most of the north Danubian region still remains under the south Thracian influence, through which elements of Greek culture penetrate. This is directly and irrefutably proved by the discovery at Alexandria and as a matter of fact also by the frequent Hellenic and Hellenistic products from the southern Greeks as well as numerous Graeco-Macedonian coins never absent from any Geto-Dacian settlements in that region.

The problem of the Greek contribution to the formation of the Latène culture in Dacia has only been treated so far on the basis of the elements of Greek culture found in the native milieu. At the same time, nowhere have the two cultural aspects been found so happily blended as in the Alexandria complex.

³⁰ I. Nestor, *Keltische Gräber bei Mediaș*, pp. 178—179.

3.—4, 1956, p. 281.

³¹ Idem, *Raport sumar Zimnicea*, pp. 96, 100.

³³ D. Berciu, *Descoperirile getice de la Cernavoda (1954) și unele aspecte ale începutului formării culturii Latène geto-dace la Dunărea de jos*, in « *Materiale* », IV, 1957, pp. 281—313.

³² C. Preda, *Triburile geto-dace și circulația monedelor lui Filip II la nord de Dunăre*, in SCIV, VII,

By its peculiarities, this discovery can serve as the starting point in studying and cognizing the genesis of Getic culture in the Wallachian plain, with all its implications.

As we mentioned at the beginning of this paper, the ceramic material at Alexandria clearly evinces forms of the first Iron Age, characteristic of our regions. The large pots, shaped like cylinders or like two truncated cones, as well as the dishes with concave bottom, specific to the north Danubian Hallstatt, represent the old local background upon which will appear cultural elements with different forms and characters. These are the new elements, born out of a blending of the old tradition with elements of external influence. The foreign contribution present in the cultural group at Alexandria betrays an indirect Greek influence, transmitted and transformed by the southern Thracians. The utilization of the potter's wheel, the fine paste of grey or orange colour, as well as certain shapes used in manufacturing a part of the pottery found at Alexandria, forms the new aspect, which opens the road to the second Iron Age in Dacia, where the Graeco-Thracian influence plays an important role. We don't think we can admit a direct Hellenic influence at that date, in the region we refer to, for reasons we consider well-grounded. First of all we see that numerous aspects of the new cultural group are frequently met with in discoveries on the right side of the Danube, with which they are connected, representing, it seems, a cultural and ethnical unit. The southern Thracians with a more developed economic and social life succeed in knowing the forms of the second Iron Age at an earlier time, and at the same time in appropriating directly and to a greater extent the Greek influence, which they gradually transmit in the northern direction too. In the second place, we have seen that in the Alexandria complex no specifically Greek object or potsherd has been found. These were beginning to appear in these regions rather sporadically, — only towards the end of the 5th century or the beginning of the 4th century before our era, we know it through the discoveries at Coțofenii din Dos³⁴, Tei-Bucharest³⁵ and Zimnicea — in Wallachia — as well as through those at Frumușita³⁶, southern Moldavia. But not even in these cases are we sure of direct connections with the Greek traders, because, the elements of Hellenic culture were not necessarily brought and circulated by the Greeks alone.

The presence in the midst of the Thracian-Getic environment, if not at the end of the 6th century, then certainly in the first half of the 5th century of some Latène beginnings, with wheel-made pottery, and not in the vicinity of the Greek colonies, where we can speak of a zone with a direct and mighty influence of more advanced forms of culture, as it would be expected, seems rather strange. This odd phenomenon does not seem unexplainable. For a long time many research workers have been speaking of a Hellenic influence on the development of the Geto-Dacian society in the neighbouring zone. Each time one took into consideration either only the Greek documents found in the native environment, or unconvincing arguments. Sometimes one even proceeded empirically. Never however has one found first rate cultural elements which should prove the process of rapid development of the Geto-Dacian tribes in

³⁴ I. Nestor, *Der Stand der Vorgeschichtsforschung in Rumänien*, in *BerRGK*, 1933, pp. 157, 162, pl. 19/8.

³⁵ Cf. I. Nestor, *Vorgeschichtsforschung* . . . , p. 162, pl. 19/4.

³⁶ Idem, *Raport sumar Zimnicea* . . . , p. 65.

Dobrudja under the impact of the influence exerted by the West-Pontic citadels. Despite the absence of this documentary basis, the process mentioned cannot be contested.

In our opinion, a first explanation lies in the fact that many of the cultural achievements encountered in this region are attributed to the Greeks. For instance we recall the circumstance that the series of grey ceramics made on the wheel, found near the Greek colonies, in settlements with an autochthonous ethnical character, both in the Rumanian People's Republic and especially in the People's Republic of Bulgaria, are presented in their ensemble as original Greek products. It used to be, and it still is, difficult to judge matters differently. Nevertheless, the discovery at Alexandria of types of pottery (dishes) identical in form and technique with those found in the Tariverde settlement, together with Hallstattian Greek and local products, raises the problem whether part of these products does not represent however the work of the local people since they also appear in complexes, as is the case in point, where specifically Greek elements of culture are altogether absent. Even if we cannot give a conclusive answer in this respect, the problem posed as such is still unsolved and the future researches are to follow and tackle it.

A second explanation, which does not run counter the previous one, has its peculiar signification. Being found in the immediate zone of the colonies where Greek products are abundant, being brought here not for the Greek necessities but in order to be exchanged for farm produces of the natives, a rather natural process takes place, in which the local population, keen on the products of Greek manufacture, superior in point of technique and artistic execution, procures, according to possibilities, as many imported products as possible. The large quantities of Greek manufacture goods, ceramics in the first place, succeed in meeting all local requirements and in eliminating the want of new native products, less attractive and possibly less easily fashioned. We think it is only thus that we shall be able to explain the great number of Greek pots in the Tariverde settlement, side by side with which local products of older traditions are found as well. Such an explanation could also serve as a criterion for establishing the ethnical character of the Tariverde station, where we see and find a population in which the native element should be predominant.

Adopting therefore such a hypothesis on the absence of native elements of advanced culture in the region immediately adjacent to the west Pontic colonies, we shall be able to understand why the latter appear in the midst of the native milieu, far from the Greek world, at Alexandria, Grojdibod, Hotărani³⁷, and later at Zimnicea and in the graveyards in Dobrudja, at Satu-Nou³⁸ and Murighiol³⁹,

³⁷ Pots like those at Alexandria are to be found in the Gh. Georgescu Corabia collection and in Oltenia's Regional Museum at Craiova, cf. D. Berciu, *op. cit.*, p. 303.

³⁸ In the autumn of 1958, on the territory of Satu-Nou, southern Dobrudja, the discovery was made of a Dacian graveyard from the 5—4th century before our era, with local ceramics of Hallstattian type, grey pots made on the wheel and Greek pottery.

The rescue diggings were undertaken by B. Mitrea and C. Preda.

³⁹ A Dacian graveyard of the same nature and with the same material as that at Satu-Nou has been discovered at Murighiol, northern Dobrudja. The result of the excavations made by Expectatus Bujor are published in SCIV, V, 3—4, 1955, pp. 571—579.

where the need for new products could not be supplied by the sporadic Greek traces.

The discovery of a new cultural group different from the general pattern of the final phase of the first Iron Age in the Danube plain gives rise however to some wonder. For instance, the archaeological researches in Rumania in recent years have not brought to light other settlements of the same type. Possibly, this situation is due to a mere accident and the future researches may increase the number of such discoveries. As a matter of fact, if we also take into account the accidental discoveries at Grojdibod and Hotărani, as well as the few indices in the necropolis at Gogoșu, we can see how various other points with similar materials start grouping themselves around this complex. All of them however, are closely connected with the forms of culture of the 5th century before our era, south of the Danube. This could prove the existence of a cultural and ethnical unity of the north Danubian zone with that inhabited by the southern Thracians. The moment at which these archaeological vestiges are placed, coincides with the period when the state of the Odrydes was formed under Teres and probably also with its flourishing phase at the time of the well-known king Sitalkes⁴⁰. A mighty and vast state formation, like that of the Odrydes, supposes the existence not only of a political unity but also of economic and cultural ones. The extension of the frontiers of that state down to the Danube — including certain Getic tribes north of Hemus⁴¹, will make the cultural forms specific to this region spread throughout the realm, thus influencing, both directly and powerfully the Thracian-Getic population on the other bank of the Danube.

By its nature and specific, the new archaeological complex gives us the possibility to view in a new light the problem of the origin of the potter's wheel and the date at which it is known for the first time in Rumania. The archaeological reference material gathered so far suggests that the utilization of the potter's wheel in Dacia cannot be traced earlier than the 4th century before our era. It was almost unanimously admitted that the merit of having brought it for the first time and spread it in the regions inhabited by the Geto-Dacians devolves on the Celtic tribes in migration. The numerous ceramic fragments made on the wheel at the Alexandria settlement, as well as the considerations made around them, enable us to establish that the potter's wheel was introduced through the Thracians, from the southern Greeks and that it began to be used by certain Geto-Dacian tribes as far back as the first half of the 5th century before our era, if not even earlier, therefore much before the coming of the Celts. We must make it clear however that at the time there could be a question of the utilization of the potter's wheel on a smaller scale and only in the region adjacent to the Danube. It follows therefore that we must attribute to the Celts the desert of having brought and spread it in the northern region of Dacia, from the end of the 4th century onwards.

Summarizing, therefore, the more general considerations included in the previous pages, we can say that the discoveries on the vine-clad hill in the north

⁴⁰ R. Vulpe, *Histoire ancienne de la Dobroudja*, Bucharest, 1938, p. 53.

⁴¹ Herodot, IV, 80; cf. R. Vulpe, *op. cit.*

of Alexandria evidence a new cultural group, blending elements from the end of the first Iron Age with those which mark the clear and rather early beginning of the second Iron Age in Dacia. At the same time, the problem of the origin of the Latène culture in the Wallachian plain is solved at least in part; at its basis lies the local Hallstattian background upon which elements of Graeco-Thracian culture are grafted. In this way, we think that a new and rather important link has been added to the explanation and knowledge of the culture and history of the Geto-Dacian population between the Carpathians and the Danube.

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