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## GRAECO-BARBARIAN CONTACTS IN THE EARLY IRON AGE CENTRAL BALKANS

The subject of this paper are the products of archaic Greek craftsmanship found on the territory of the Central Balkans. The appearance of these imported goods in the archaeological pattern of the Early Iron Age in these parts poses a series of problems while offering different possible solutions.

Although the finds from Glasinac, Trebenište, Atenica, Novi Pazar have been the subject of exhaustive studies,<sup>1</sup> placing this problem in a broader context of the Early Iron Age in Europe could offer new possibilities for interpretation.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, this paper has been conceived as an attempt to reconstruct the social and economic circumstances of the period when this phenomenon noted and already scientifically researched, first appeared. This approach required the application of knowledge gathered by other sciences related to archaeology, principally history and social anthropology.

The first question in a paper conceived in this way has to be the cause for the presence of Greek products in the Balkan hinterland. It is, therefore, necessary to study the social

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<sup>1</sup> A. Benac, B. Čović, 1957; B. Čović, 1983; M. Đuknić, B. Jovanović, 1960, 1961; R. Filow, K. Schorpil, 1927; M. Garašanin, 1957; B. Jovanović, 1975, 1979; K. Killian, 1976; Đ. Mano-Zisi, Lj. Popović, 1966; I. Marović, 1976; A. Palavestra, 1984, 1987—1988, 1989; M. Parović-Pešikan, 1960, 1961, 1964, 1982, 1985, 1986; Lj. Popović, 1956, 1958, 1964, 1975; V. Popović, 1964; C. Rolley, 1982; D. Srejić, 1989; R. Vasić, 1965, 1969, 1975, 1982, 1983, 1986; V. Vasilev, 1988.

<sup>2</sup> Z. H. Archibald, 1983; M. N. Austin, P. Vidal-Naquet, 1986; J. Boardman, 1980; P. Bosch-Gimpera, 1965; T. K. Earle, J. E. Ericson, 1977; N. Finley, 1975, 1983; F. Fischer, 1973, 1982; N. Herskowitz, 1965; R. J. Hopper, 1979; W. Kimmig, 1975, 1983; K. Kromer, 1986; J. A. Sabloff, C. C. Lamberg-Karlovsky, 1975; E. Service, 1975; A. M. Snodgrass, 1980; P. S. Wells, 1980, 1984.

and economic conditions of life of both communities taking part in the contact.

Two historical facts have most often been cited in archaeological literature as the causes of Greek imports in the Balkans: changes in the social organization of the barbarian tribes and the forming of a social class of tribal aristocracy, and, on the other hand, the strengthening and expansion of the Persian Empire, which disrupted the life of Greeks in Asia Minor, and, later, in Greece itself.<sup>3</sup>

The social stratification of the tribal community and the formation of a social class of tribal aristocracy is a phenomenon characteristic of the level of social development of most of the inhabitants in Europe in the 7th century B.C.<sup>4</sup> Important evidence at the disposal of archaeology in the study of this phenomenon are the tombs of tribal chiefs — elaborate constructions with opulent offerings. Products of Greek craftsmanship were nearly always found as part of their inventory.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, the crater from Vix,<sup>6</sup> which was part of the grave inventory of a Celtic princess, is the reflection of the same social process as the bronze vessels from the tumuli of the Glasinac warriors. The basic question which this paper will seek to answer is what kind of process took place.

On the other hand, the interest of the Greeks for trade with the barbarian hinterland has been explained by changes in the political and economic situation on their eastern borders, where the Persian Empire was gradually becoming a major power. Conquering the states of Asia Minor with which the Ionian Greeks had peaceful relations, this new power disturbed the geopolitical balance. In the middle of the 6th century B.C. (B.C. 546). Persian Emperor Cyrus conquered Lydia, a kingdom with firm, friendly ties with the Greek *poleis* on the eastern shores of the Aegean sea. The Greeks were thus faced with a serious peril which obstructed their free activity in the eastern market. They were forced to look for new countries in which to exchange their products.

This great historical event doubtlessly influenced the situation in the Balkans, but it appears that it did not necessarily have to have been decisive. Namely, as P. Alexandrescu wrote: "We have . . . no indices whatsoever that the relations between Persia and Athens suffered from the economic point of view"<sup>7</sup> at the time when these two states were at war. Greek attitude towards economy and trade was substantially different from that of theoreticians

<sup>3</sup> M. Garašanin, 1957; A. Palavestra, 1984; R. Vasić, 1965, 1983, 1987.

<sup>4</sup> A. Palavestra, 1984, 1987.

<sup>5</sup> F. Fischer, 1982.

<sup>6</sup> R. Joffroy, 1954.

<sup>7</sup> P. Alexandrescu, 1973, 37



from the 18th century and onwards. Anthony Snodgrass,<sup>8</sup> evaluating the economic activity of the Greeks of the Archaic Period, arrived at the conclusion that a very limited number of these decisions were made consciously, and that the majority of economic realities were the result of political decisions, or, even more indirectly, of changes in moral values. The basic economic activities of 7th and 6th century Greece were, according to A. Snodgrass, agriculture, war and cult. Trade and crafts were activities of lesser importance, left to the social groups with greatly reduced political rights, or with none at all — the metics and slaves<sup>9</sup>. It is also important that the *polis* itself did not take part in the trade enterprises of its citizens, nor did it associate political with commercial interests. Activities in the Greek *polis*, except for war, were largely left to private initiative.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, it is not very likely that the changes in political relations in the East conditioned such a radical change in the trade plans of the Greeks.

The history of the Graeco-Persian Wars backs up the arguments for this view of relations in the Balkans in the 7th and 6th centuries B. C. The Persian Empire was, in fact, expanding, but the Greeks, even those living in Ionia, were not aware of the danger threatening them until the second half of the 6th century, when it became imminent<sup>11</sup>. Judging by their war plans and negotiations, the Greeks living in the homeland were long since convinced that a quick joint action against the Persians was not impescindible. Having all this in mind, it is possible to interpret the appearance of luxury Greek goods in the possession of the Balkan tribal aristocracy in a different way. The events in the East certainly had repercussions in the Balkans, but it could have happened only later, at the beginning of the 5th century B. C., when the contact between the Greeks and the barbarians was already established, and when the Glasinac princes had already been buried with the oldest bronze vessels. It is, therefore, necessary to search for the causes and possibilities for this contact at a much earlier date.

Colonisation, which the Greeks undertook towards the end of the 8th century B. C. changed the political, economic, cultural and demographic patterns of the Old World. Although there are numerous incompatible theses on what first led the Greeks to settle in new countries<sup>12</sup>, it cannot be doubted that the lack of arable land and natural resources figured prominently in their decision. The Hellenes settled on the shores of the Mediterranean,

<sup>8</sup> A. Snodgrass, 1980, 124.

<sup>9</sup> M. M. Austin, P. Vidal-Naquet, 1986, 6.

<sup>10</sup> M. Finley, 1975, 1983; A. G. Woodhead, 1972, 33.

<sup>11</sup> J. Bury, R. Neiggs, 1975, 141.

<sup>12</sup> J. B. Bury, R. Meiggs, 1975; N. G. L. Hammond, 1959; A. M. Snodgrass, 1980; A. G. Woodhead, 1962.



and their presence in this region influenced the life of the autochthonous population. This completely different, and in many ways more developed culture, with which they came into direct contact, opened up new possibilities of thinking and behaving. Written sources<sup>13</sup> and epigraphic material<sup>14</sup> both indicate that some barbarians took part in the life of the new settlements on the shores, learning and accepting new customs and fashions, sometimes completely abandoning their kinsmen. Of course, the contacts between Greek colonists and the barbarians more often resulted in the exchange of goods and information beneficial to both sides.

From this we can conclude that at the moment when the earliest Archaic Greek import appeared in the Central Balkans, at the end of the 7th century B. C. (Ilijak, tumulus II, grave 1), two peoples met, one of which was in full expansion and seeking space for further development, and the other one which was undergoing important internal changes and forming a new social group — the tribal aristocracy. The founding of Dyrrachium, a colony of Corcyra, in 625 B. C., could be the point in space and time when this contact came about.

The nature of the Greek products which ended up in the Balkan hinterland could shed more light on the problem. First of all, it is important to point out that we are speaking only of a limited quantity of archaeological material, even if the possibility of new discoveries is allowed for. Most of the material consists of finely executed metal vessels. The pottery is of far inferior quality, and less numerous. The rest is made up of warriors equipment, mainly armour, golden jewellery and glass beads. The meager quantity and lack of variety in the material make untenable the hypothesis that Greek products in eastern Bosnia and Serbia were to be found there as a consequence of commercial ties with Greek cities of the southern Adriatic, the Hellespont or southern Italy. However, the prominent place of metal vessels in this material, both in quality of execution and quantity of material found, points to the possibility that the cause of contact between Greeks and the barbarians could be explained by the role ascribed to these objects in the Old World. An explanation is put forward in the analysis of the term *keimelia* offered by Franz Fischer<sup>15</sup>.

Communities which did not possess the knowledge of writing, i. e., the possibility of recording their important diplomatic treaties in writing, had to mark their alliances in other ways. The Old-Greek word *keimelion* denotes objects, primarily precious

<sup>13</sup> Herodot, IV, 76, 78—80.

<sup>14</sup> S. Anamali, 1970; V. Blavatsky, 1971; E. Coundrachi, 1970; D. Rendić-Miočević, 1950—1951; V. Toçi, 1972, 1973.

<sup>15</sup> F. Fischer, 1973.

metal vessels, but also horses and women, obtained as war booty, or awarded as specially significant mementoes or honours. This mode of behaviour has been recorded in the Homeric poems, Caesar's war memories and in old Irish tradition. As the Central Balkan barbarians certainly did not possess the art of writing at the time when they made contact with the Greek colonists, and as their social organization can in many ways be considered similar to that of the Gallic tribes described by Caesar, it could be surmised that this custom was a part of their tradition.

The historical pattern at the moment when the earliest products of Greek craftsmanship were buried with the Glasinac prince (as described above), and the possible interpretation of the meaning that these objects had for the tribal chiefs leave open the question — what sort of treaty the autochthonous population of the Balkan hinterlands made with the Greeks settled in the southern Adriatic. A possible answer is based on information about the nature of the Early Iron Age culture in these parts offered by prehistorians<sup>16</sup>. These predominantly warring tribes were at similar material and cultural levels, even though they were ethnically heterogeneous. In constant conflict over territories, they kept altering the political map of the Central Balkans, and thus placed modern researchers in a difficult situation<sup>17</sup>. At the time when the earliest archaeological evidence of contact between Greeks of the Archaic Period and the Balkan barbarians was established (grave 1, tumulus II on Ilijak, middle of the 7th century B. C.), an important military and political power in the Balkan hinterland were the Autariatae tribe, who apparently lived in the area which is now eastern Bosnia. The sphere of strong Autariatae influence stretched to the shores of what is now Albania, an area in which new Greek cities were founded<sup>18</sup>. The survival of the Greek colonies on the southern Adriatic thus depended on good diplomatic relations with this tribe. Therefore, the bronze vessels represented material confirmation of a treaty on peaceful relations in the territory they shared.

The attribution of the Greek material to particular production centres in the Greek world and the determination of the roads by which the goods arrived in the centre of the Balkans take up a large and important part of the papers so far published on this subject<sup>19</sup>. Conclusions on the place of origin of individual

<sup>16</sup> B. Cović, 1987; A. Palavestra, 1984.

<sup>17</sup> B. Cović, 1967; F. Papazoglu, 1969; D. Srežović, 1979; R. Vasić, 1972.

<sup>18</sup> B. Cović, 1987.

<sup>19</sup> M. Đuknić, B. Jovanović, 1961; B. Jovanović, 1975; Đ. Mano-Zisi, Lj. Popović, 1966; M. Parović-Pešikan, 1960, 1964, 1982, 1986; Lj. Popović, 1956, 1975; C. Rolley, 1982; R. Vasić, 1975, 1982, 1983, 1986.

objects definitely represent a significant contribution to the solving of the problem of Greek imports in the Central Balkans. The question of routes by which the goods travelled, however, has to be treated differently, in view the hypotheses described above. The reasons which cast doubt on the hypothesis of the principally commercial character of the connections between the barbarian Balkans and the Greek world have already been mentioned — very important being the small quantity of material, which would not justify the long and dangerous journey from the places of manufacture to the places where they were found. Another important argument is that the earliest Greek objects found in these parts could not, by their character, belong to regular commercial transactions, as they had special character and significance, both for the manufacturers and for those they were buried with<sup>20</sup>. The type of bronze vessel found in the tumuli of the Glasinac princes in the second half of the 7th century is connected with Greek religious beliefs, and, as such, was certainly not produced for mere commercial purposes. The fact that these objects were put in the graves of a barbarian princes does not necessarily mean that the inhabitants of the Balkans adopted Greek religious beliefs, but certainly backs up the hypothesis that Greek bronze vessels had the special meaning of marking the high status of tribal chiefs. When the problem is put like this, the answer offered by the construction of a trade route using convenient natural communications is not satisfactory. This type of conclusion is rendered particularly difficult by the fact that Greek products attributed to different, sometimes very distant, production centres sometimes turn up in closed archaeological assemblages. A case in point is the earliest known assemblage of these objects, the warrior's grave in Ilijak. A bronze vessel with an embossed rim and a vessel with a ribbed belly, both products connected with Italic production centres, were found in the same grave with a *skyphos* analogous to the pieces found at the Athenian Acropolis<sup>21</sup>.

The contradictions described above can be reconciled by a different reconstruction of the manner in which the Greek products became the possession of the Balkan tribal aristocracy.

Dyrrachium is in a dominant position, as a port on the naval route from the Greek homeland to Magna Graecia. This fact was probably one of the decisive factors in the choice of location for the founding of the new settlement. At Dyrrachium, as at other ports, trading ships carrying goods from one end of the Mediterranean to the other exchanged part of their cargoes for local goods<sup>22</sup>. Products from distant regions can thus be

<sup>20</sup> F. Fischer, 1973.

<sup>21</sup> A. Benac, B. Cović, 1957; B. Cović, 1983; M. Parović-Pešikan, 1960.

<sup>22</sup> R. J. Hopper, 1979.



found in all parts of the Greek world; they arrived there as a result of exchange between the Greeks themselves. The inhabitants of southern Adriatic towns freely used these goods in their diplomatic ventures in the hinterland. This description of the process of communication between the autochthonous Balkan population and the Greeks of the Archaic Period reconciles some of the contradictions of the earlier interpretations.

It is beyond doubt that the nature of the contact between these two communities changed in time, and that the commercial moment gained in importance. Consequently, the kind of goods which the barbarians acquired from the Greeks changed, too. Aside from the pottery and metal vessels which prevail in the earliest Glasinac princes' graves, the second half of the 6th century saw the arrival of the first parts of warrior equipment of Greek production in the Balkans. This meant mostly helmets of the special Graeco-Illyrian type which was never very popular in Greece itself<sup>23</sup>. However, their open-faced design was probably convenient for the barbaric manner of waging war. The inhabitants of the Central Balkans became aware of the offer of the Greek workshops, and began to choose those things which were best suited to their way of life. Therefore, we are no longer speaking only of objects given by the Greeks as diplomatic gifts to the autochthonous population of the hinterland. The commercial character of the relations between the Greeks and the barbarian world, which was exceptionally prominent in later history, became apparent in the Balkans in the second half of the 6th century.

The consequences of such a contact between the north and south of the Balkans are numerous, and important both for the Greek and barbarian cultures. The exchange of goods, which made possible increased production of the Greek *poleis*, and the mixing and mutual enrichment of cultures are only some of the aspects of this problem. Archaeological material from these parts testifies to the undoubted influence of Greek applied art on the taste of the barbarian population<sup>24</sup>. Changes in their social organization can be said to have been speeded up by contacts with Greek culture<sup>25</sup>. The appearance of Mramorac-type jewellery points to the existence of a social class of tribal aristocracy which, by its social and economic powers lagged behind the princes, but stood out from the majority of the population. This secondary stratification of the barbarian community attests to the growing complexity of tribal organization. The inflow of luxury goods from the south certainly quickened this process.

<sup>23</sup> M. Garašanin, 1957; I. Marović, 1976; M. Nikolanci, 1960; A. M. Snodgrass, 1964, 1982; R. Vasić, 1982, 1982—1983.

<sup>24</sup> D. Garašanin, 1960; M. Garašanin, 1973; M. Parović-Pešikan, 1985, 1986b; R. Vasić, 1965, 1973, 1986b.

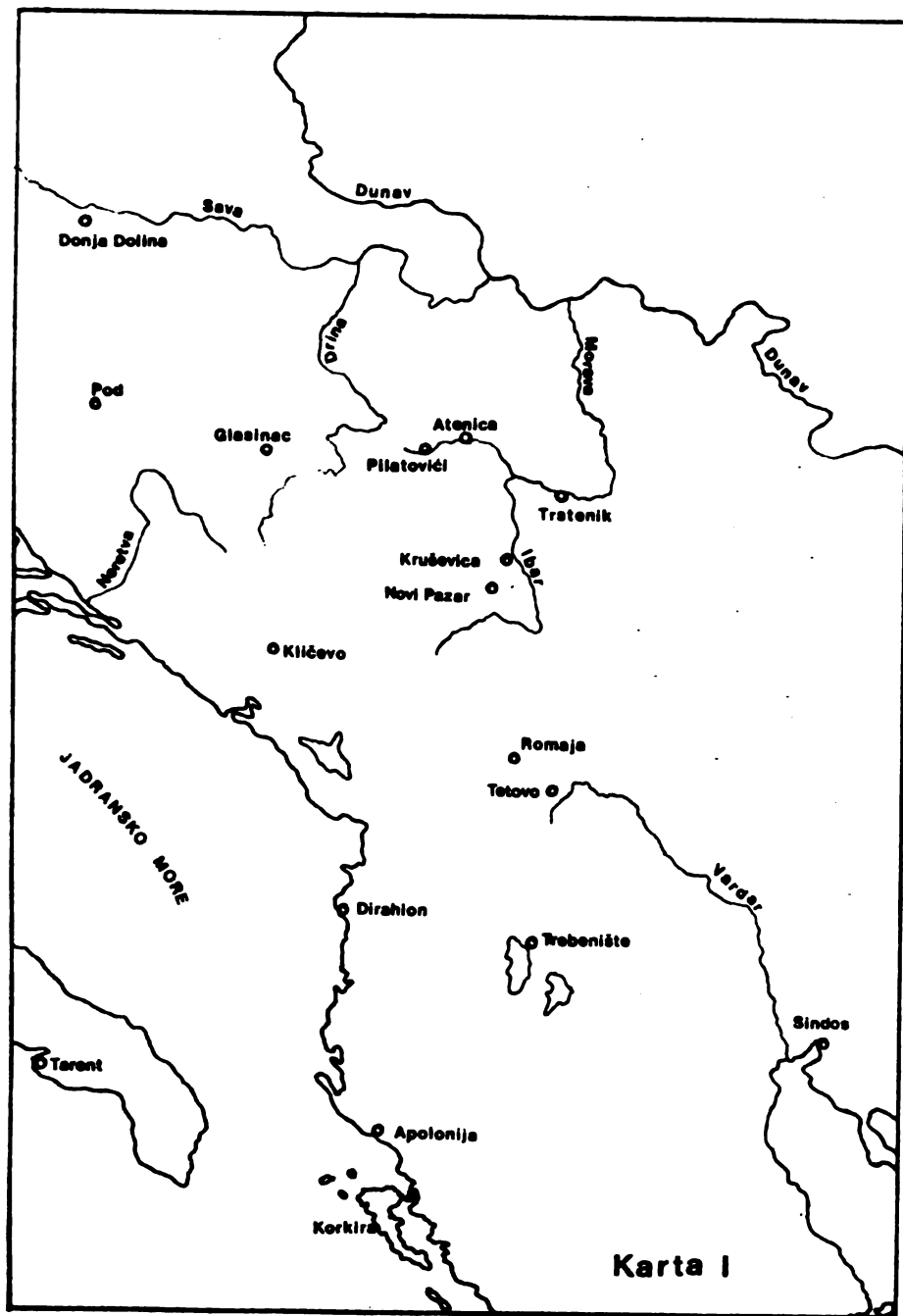
<sup>25</sup> M. Finley, 1983; R. Vasić, 1986b; P. S. Wells, 1980, 1984.

Without questioning the undoubted significance which trade with the south had for Early Iron Age cultures in the Central Balkans<sup>26</sup>, this interpretation would suppose that the developed phase of commercial relations between the north and south of the Balkans was preceded by activity primarily conditioned by political and social factors. This conclusion is primarily backed up by the nature of the earliest imported Greek objects, which could not have been traded. A historical reconstruction of the social and political conditions under which both communities taking part in the contact lived further points to the necessity of diplomatic relations between them. It is very likely that the ultimate purpose of these negotiations was the establishing of trade relations beneficial to both the Greeks and the barbarians, which is confirmed by more recent archaeological material. However, it had to be preceded by a phase of initial diplomatic contacts, documented by the exceptional bronze vessels from the graves of the Central Balkan tribal aristocracy.

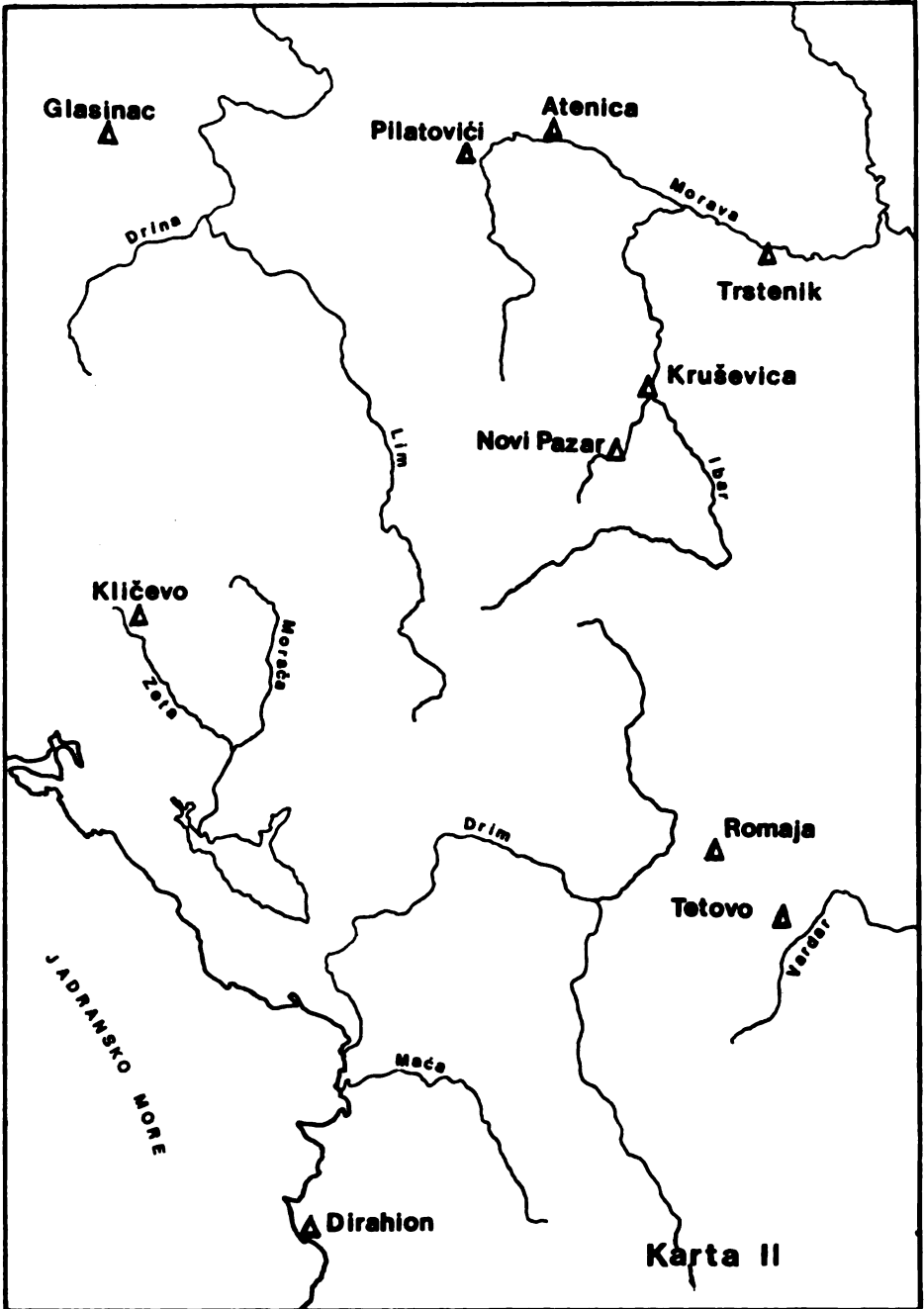
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<sup>26</sup> A.Palavestra, 1987—1988; 1989.





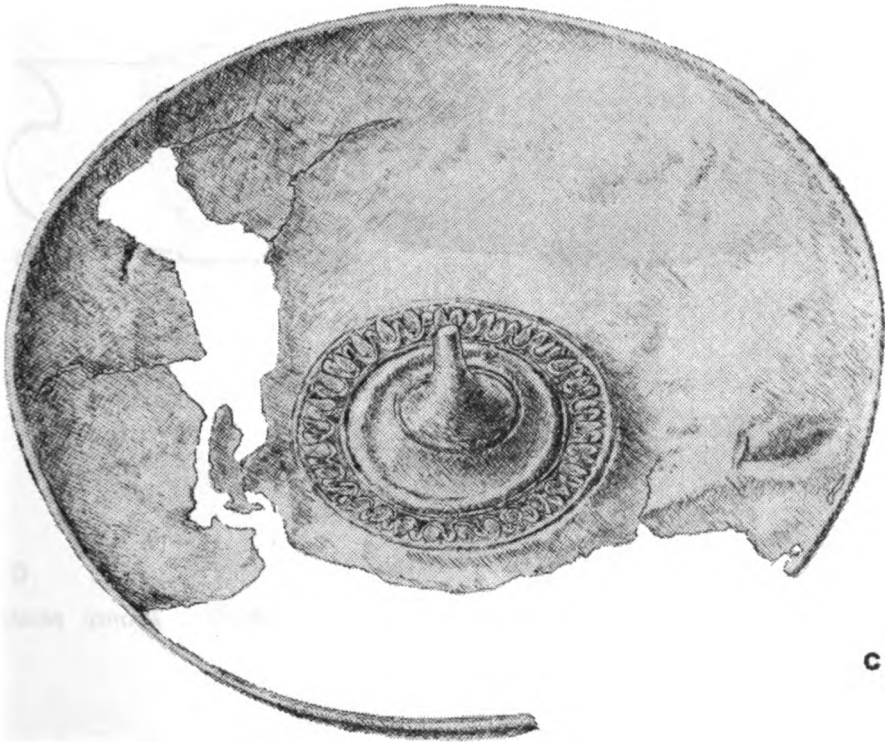




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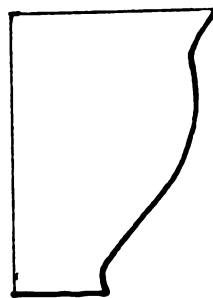
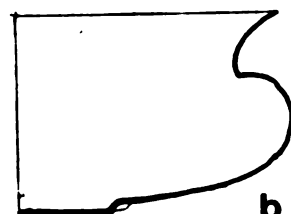
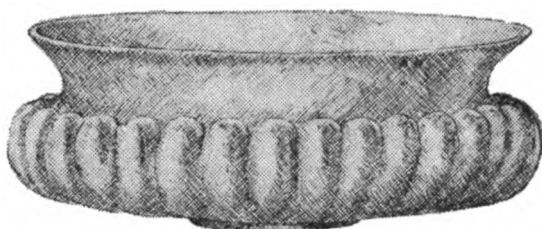
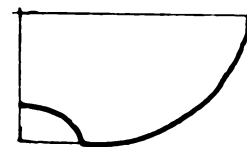
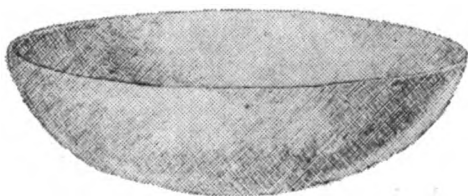


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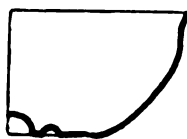
c

*T I a Golden applique, Atenica; b Golden applique, Atenica; c Silver phiale mesomphalos, Novi Pazar*

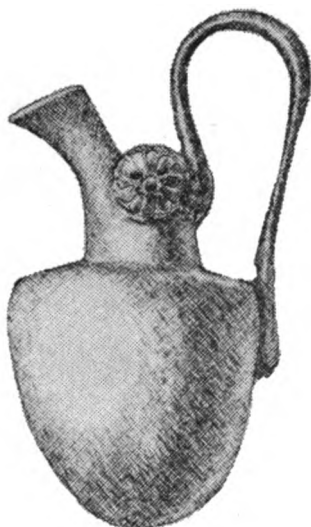
**a****b****c**

***T II a*** *Bronze skyphos, Ilijak; b* *Bronze bowl, Citluci; c* *Bronze phiale mesomphalos, Brezje*





**a**

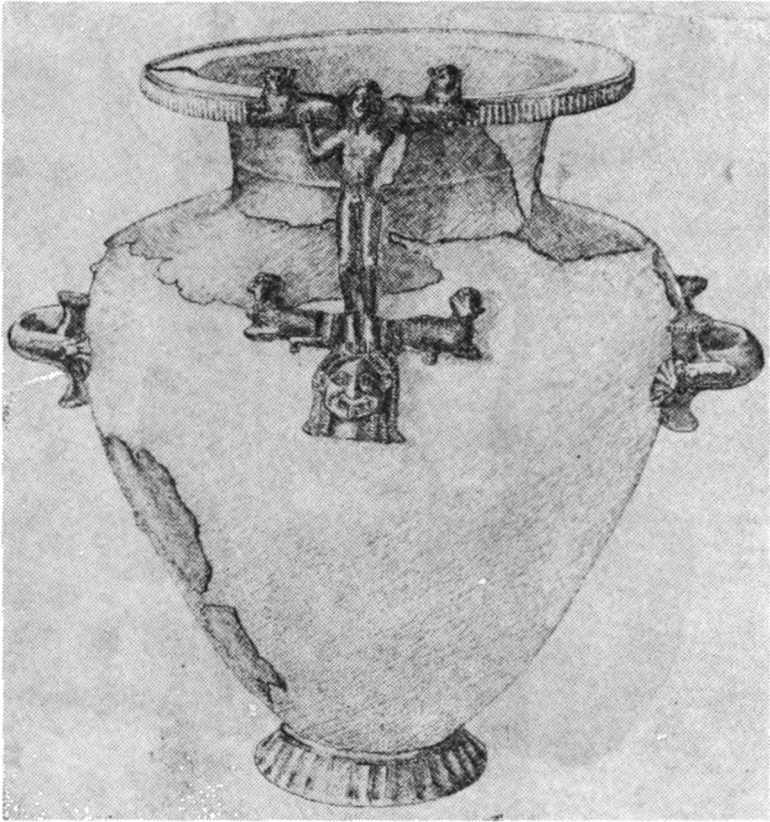


**b**



**c**

*T III a Bronze phiale mesomphalos, Osovo; b Bronze oenochoe, Novi Pazar; c Bronze basin, Novi Pazar*



*T IV Bronze Hydria, Novi Pazar*



*T V Statuete of Menad, Tetovo*

**КОНТАКТИ ГРКА И ВАРВАРА У РАНОМ ГВОЗДЕНОМ ДОБУ  
ЦЕНТРАЛНОГ БАЛКАНА**

**Резиме**

Узроком појаве архајског грчког импорта на тлу централног Балкана дуго су сматране трговачке везе грчких полиса на Медитерану и варварских племена насељених у унутрашњости. Неке новије интерпретације сродних појава у средњој и западној Европи омогућују другачије тумачење. Чињеница да највећи део грчког материјала из наших области чини бронзано посуђе fine израде упућује на помисао да се ради о посебној дипломатској делатности, потврди савеза између грчких колониста на јужном Јадрану и варварских племена која су контролисала залеђе. Анализе писаних извора указују на овакву праксу обележавања уговора о мирољубивим односима код заједница које нису располагале писмом.

Понскад се унутар исте затворене целине, најчешће гроба племенског старешине, појављују производи различитих, међусобно удаљених грчких области, што је тешко објаснити истовременим трговачким везама варварске заједнице са обаалама Понта, јужном Италијом и матичном Грчком. Међутим, сваки је грчки полис располагао робом произведеном на другом крају Медитерана, као нормалном последницом размене међу самим Хеленима. Стога се предаже непосредни контакт између колониста насељених на јужном Јадрану и њихових северних суседа, условљен потребом да се уреде односи на земљи коју су били принуђени да деле.

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