

In our country, the study of the ancient glassware is still a pioneer field. However, the rather large number of such finds discovered during archaeological excavations shows that they should be studied, too, because they are among the indicators of the economic life in the ancient period.

A fruit of the artistry and innovation in the technological field, the glassware was included rather rapidly within the daily tableware. Starting with the Hellenistic era, one can talk of a genuine industry of glassware, favoured by the improvement of certain techniques of production, as well as by the fluidisation of the cultural contacts between the East and the West. In this period, the workshops in Alexandria or on the Levantine coast became famous for the production and decoration of certain types of ware. As they had direct access to the raw material sources, the Sidonian artisans set the foundations of a large-scale production, which made the glassware more accessible. The most diffused and appreciated shape proved to be the hemispheric or conical bowl with massive walls, decorated on the inside, below the rim, with horizontal incised grooves.

Though it diffused rapidly throughout the entire Mediterranean basin, the shape is practically absent from the Black Sea, except for the sanctuary of Gurzuf in Crimea, where 27 items having a ritual value, were discovered as they were broken within religious ceremonies. Surprisingly, the Hellenistic bowls are relatively well represented in the Geto-Dacian settlements, which may suggest that they were brought here directly from Asia Minor and from the Eastern Mediterranean area, hence avoiding the Western Pontic colonies, where no such items have been discovered thus far.

If we add the few late shards of alabastra made by sand core-forming technique – discovered in both the East-Carpathian and the Walachian settlements –, we see that the glass tableware arrived rather early in this area, due to the commercial contacts with the Pontic and Aegean-Mediterranean regions. The fact that this outlet functioned at high level (as proven by the other categories of imports discovered here) demonstrates the existence of a wealthy social class, capable of absorbing these material influences.

The extension and consolidation of the Roman hegemony in the Mediterranean basin in the first century BC overlapped an essential event for the subsequent development of the glass industry: the invention of the glassblowing technique. This allowed an emphasized development of the shape repertory, as well as the spheres of their functionality. The improvements of

blowpipe use, as well as the new technological progress concerning the possibilities of colouring and decorating the glass, allowed the glass artisans at the beginning of the first century AD to create genuine masterpieces, among which it is worth underlying the *cameo* tableware.

The literary sources of the epoch, noted the importance of the new glassmaking technique; the new type of glass became a constant presence in the daily life and it was used in both nutrition and cosmetics, or even funerary offering. The archaeological discoveries confirm this evolution, thus proving that the quantity of the blown-glass tableware increased and that it gradually replaced both the moulded glassware and the pottery or metal tableware, copying their shapes.

Because of this “technological revolution,” more and more workshops emerged, especially in the areas with raw material sources, meaning in Levant, Egypt, or Northern Italy. Specialised in high quality tableware, many of these workshops marked their products with the names of the artisans. The inscriptions on the tableware preserve numerous names of artisans, many of which have a Graeco-Oriental or even Roman resonance. The fact that these products had an extended diffusion area proves the stability of the economic relations between various provinces, as well as the dynamic of the trade factor within the Roman Empire.

The fortified settlements within the East-Carpathian area were also included rather early in this dynamic of trades, though they were not under the direct authority of Rome. While the Roman politics made its way to Lower Danube, the number of contacts with the dynasts and the local elites north of the river increased; the most visible influences are traceable mostly in the material culture vestiges. Strategically placed on the Siret Valley, the *dava* settlements managed to polarise a significant amount of import goods, brought by the merchants from the Empire. Furthermore, this space had the great advantage of a double opening – to the Danube and to the Black Sea – through the Western Pontic Greek colonies. To this, one may also add the massive influences from the Bosporan Kingdom and from the cities situated on the Northern Black Sea coast, both directly and through the Sarmatians.

Hence, the Dacian *davae* mentioned by Ptolemy in his work of the second century BC managed to develop and to prosper on a long-term basis, as proven also by the thickness of the archaeological culture layer, which comprises several habitation levels. These settlements are rather large, they have fortified precincts and dwellings made of wattle and daub. An overall view emphasizes on numerous similarities regarding their configuration and development,

especially in the period of peak flourishing of the Dacian civilisation, in the second century BC – second century AD.

As I already stated, an interesting element is represented by the analysis of the imported products discovered here. Among them, the highest percentage belongs to the pottery – especially amphorae, as well as various types of ceramic tableware (simple or ceramic slip). Numerous items are part of the *terra sigillata* category, made of fine fabric, covered with red engobe, which defines from a quantitative point of view this category of luxury pottery.

To these, one may add numerous bronze tableware items (among which some bear the name of fabricants coming from the Italic space), medical and cosmetic instruments, as well as various types of fibulae used as clothing accessories. The overall view is completed by the huge amount of coin finds, which consolidate the idea of an active and dynamic commerce with the Roman world.

In its turn, the glass tableware was integrated within this commerce, as proven by the numerous shards discovered in the *davae* on the Siret River. On a general note, the glass material is rich and typologically diverse, given that almost all shapes of tableware characteristic to the first century AD are encountered. Most finds were discovered in the settlement of Poiana, whose importance is emphasized by the quality and quantity of archaeological discoveries, a fact underlined several times throughout this work. A sample with a similar structure was found at Răcățău, while the material of Brad and that of Barboși present certain differences regarding the number and typology of the items. In the settlement of Brad, an issue to be considered is the unclear archaeological context for certain tableware items. Hence, I was able to identify a series of items datable to the mediaeval and modern periods, discovered in the Geto-Dacian habitation level, which were considered ancient tableware. At Barboși, the Roman habitation overlapping the older level of the autochthonous settlement makes it very hard to set a more clear dating of the material, all the more as some of the shapes were still produced and used in the second-third centuries AD. Concerning the settlement of Bîtca Doamnei, only one alabastron fragment was discovered here, reason for which no assessments can be made regarding the glass tableware for this settlement.

Concerning the typological and functional weighting, the glass material discovered in the East-Carpathian space features a relatively unitary overview. The most numerous are the serving vessels (bowls, trays) and the drinking vessels (glasses, mugs, and cups), which represent almost

three quarters of all the finds. This situation is similar to the structure of the glass material discovered in several settlements within the Western half of the Roman Empire, at least for the first century AD. The values of tableware are the highest in both the military and the civilian settlements, thus underlying the practical utility of glass in the daily life. The Geto-Dacian environment makes no exception from this pattern, and the same goes for the Germanic barbarian settlements north from the Rhine. They all show what the local population prefers, especially for high quality drinking vessels, brought from the glass producing centres of the Roman Empire. Furthermore, distinctions can also be made concerning the qualitative rapport between the material discovered here and the contemporary material discovered in the settlements throughout the Roman Empire. Taking as comparative point of reference the similar discoveries in Moesia Inferior, situated near the space in question, one can notice a significant difference concerning the quality of the items. The Western Pontic space seems to have had little economic unity, which is also reflected in the reduced capacity to absorb the so-called “luxury” imported products.

However, the same thing cannot be said about the Greek cities on the Northern Black Sea coast, which had great access to the barbarian States in the south of today Russia and Ukraine. Their prosperity – due especially to the grain commerce – allowed a fluidisation of the trade relations with the Aegean and Oriental space, reflected in the richness and variety of import products. The glass tableware discovered in the necropolises of Panticapaeum, Chersonessos, Olbia, Kep, Gorgippia, Tanais, or Nymphaion underlines the existence of a highly diverse and valuable material, with numerous analogies to be found in the discoveries of the Geto-Dacian *davae*. Hence, it can be assumed that these were the access routes for the glass tableware on the Siret Valley; thus, the North Pontic cities played the role of intermediaries.

However, we should not neglect the role of the Danube Valley in merchandise transportation in Antiquity; nonetheless, the lack of similar discoveries south from the river makes the hypothesis of direct penetrations from the west into the Italic space rather questionable. Finally, another hypothesis may suggest the possibility of a local production by itinerant artisans, arrived here from the Mediterranean world, looking for profit and for new outlets.

The glass tableware discovered outside the borders of the Roman Empire has proven superior, if not quantitatively, then at least concerning the quality. I have tried to demonstrate

this through a comparative study of the Roman glass imports in areas which represented first-rank economic partners of Rome – the Northern Pontus, Arabia, India, and China.

Naturally, considering how difficult it was to transport such a fragile material as glass, the number of discoveries drops as the distance from the exporting centres increases. Hence, in China, the Roman glassware is extremely rare; it was most probably brought by sea, through India.

For that matter, the transport by sea was the most indicated for such loads, because the Egyptian harbours at the Red Sea provided numerous glassware finds. The commercial routes led either to Arabia and from there towards the western coasts of India, or towards the east of the African continent, to the coasts of Somalia.

The famous Silk Route represented another transport route on land, towards the east, but it is hard to believe that the glassware could have “handled” such a journey safely. Thus, the tableware deposit of Begram seems to have been brought by water, at least until the coasts of Arabia, from where caravans would have transported them.

Of course, a comparison between these regions and the Geto-Dacian space can be made only on a general level, concerning the type of exported ware and the targeted customers. The social and economic differences between the Barbarian populations also reflects in the quality of these categories of imports, seen as prestigious objects, meant to emphasize on the person’s rank.

The entire issue of the centre-periphery type of rapports, reflected in the merchandise circulation, requires a multidisciplinary approach, capable of outlining – in its turn – new research directions. The study of glass tableware – as integrant part of this approach – can only be beneficial for an emphasis on these relations, within a revitalizing and invigorating process of the historical study.