NOTES ON THE START DATE OF THE POIENEȘTI-LUCAȘEUCA CULTURE

Abstract: In this study, we analyse the issue of the start date of the Poienеști-Lucașeuca culture. Based on the dating of certain categories of items discovered in both funerary and habitation sites but also on the information supplied by certain written sources we set the chronological limit of this culture to the last quarter of the 3rd century BC.

Keywords: *the Carpathian-Dniester forest steppe, recent pre-Roman Iron age, the Poienеști-Lucașeuca culture, chronology.*

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As proven by the archaeological finds, during the last decades of the 3rd century BC in the east-Carpathian area occurred a series of ethno-cultural, socio-economic and political changes which resulted in the establishment of the Poienеști-Lucașeuca¹ culture (hereinafter P-L) in the Carpathian-Dniester forest steppe.

Archaeological investigations, both systematic excavations and field research performed in the last six decades in several sites ascribed to the P-L culture, like those at Borosești², Botoșana³, Dolhești Mari⁴, Ghelăiești⁵, Lozna Hlibicoc⁶, Lucașeuca⁷, Poienеști⁸ and Orheiul Vechi⁹ (fig.), supplied important data which improved the knowledge of this cultural aspect. Nonetheless, these remains raise key issues, like for instance their origin and chronology that are incompletely resolved, in the specialty literature debates being still ongoing¹⁰.

One of the less clarified issues is that of the start date of the P-L culture, hence we decided to discuss this topic herein. Firstly, we shall briefly present the most important views on this matter.

In a first stage of the research, the excavator of the eponymous cemetery at Poienеști, R. Vulpe, dated the begging of the P-L type cemetery around 200 BC¹¹. On the other hand, the author of the archaeological investigations in the cemetery and settlement at Lucașeuca, G.B. Fedorov, placed the lower

¹ BABEȘ 1985; TEODOR 1987; TEODOR 1992; BABEȘ 1993; MUNTEANU 1995; BABEȘ 2003; MUNTEANU 2004; IARMULSCHI 2013.

² BABEȘ 1993, 183-192.

³ TEODOR 1980.

⁴ ANDRONIC 1994.

⁵ BABEȘ 1969.

⁶ TEODOR 1992.

⁷ ФЕДОРОВ 1960.

⁸ VULPE 1953; BABEȘ 1993, 208-214.

⁹ POSTICĂ/MUNTEANU 1999.

¹⁰ BABEȘ 1985; TEODOR 1992; CONOVICI 1992; BABEȘ 1993; ТКАЧУК 1999; BABEȘ 2003; MUNTEANU 2004; ПАЧКОБА 2006; IARMULSCHI 2013.

¹¹ VULPE 1953, 490-494; VULPE 1955, 107.

chronological limit of these sites by early 2nd century BC¹².

At his turn, the well-known Bucharest-based scholar M. Babeş set the start of the culture in the first half of the 2nd century BC¹³ or the interval between 200-175 BC¹⁴. In his last studies, the author places the lower chronological limit of the culture around 200 BC¹⁵.

The analysis of the stamps on the Greek amphorae within the environment of respective culture as well as the discovery of P-L type pottery in level IV of the Getae fortress at Satu Nou Valea lui Voicu, made N. Conovici date the start of the culture to the last two decades of the 3rd century BC¹⁶, idea also expressed by O. Munteanu¹⁷.

Within the context of specifying the lower chronological limit of the P-L culture, it is also worth mentioning V. E. Eremenko's view, who based on the association of inventory pieces in the cemetery at Poienişti, set the start of the culture to the last quarter of the 3rd century BC¹⁸. Practically similar conclusions also reached V. Iarmulschi, who dated the start of the P-L cultural aspect to the last two decades of the 3rd century BC¹⁹.

Given the archaeological finds in both cemeteries and habitation sites but also the information supplied by literary sources we shall attempt below to express once more our view on this topic.

As mentioned in the specialty literature, one of the earliest sites ascribed to the P-L culture is represented by the eponymous cemetery at Poienişti²⁰. The oldest graves in this cemetery – G. 3, 105, 340, 390, 392, 434, 535, 556 and 572²¹ – contain in the chronologically relevant inventory the following items: brooches type II.2, II.5 and belt fittings of type III.3 (Babeş typology)²².

The brooches with bronze bow spheres (Babeş type II.5) (fig. 2,2) are one of the earliest dating elements of the P-L culture. Such dress accessories are frequent in the Cimbrian Peninsula and date to stage IIA of the pre-Roman Iron age in Martens's chronology²³. Such brooches are also known in the islands of Bornholm, Fühnen and Gotland²⁴, where they mark the start of the recent pre-Roman Iron age, which in absolute date corresponds to the last decades of the 3rd century BC²⁵.

The presence of such brooches in the area east of the Eastern Carpathians during the last quarter of the 3rd century BC is also proven by the recent finds in the Scythian barrow cemetery at Hlinoie²⁶. The excavators date though the brooches with bow spheres identified in the site there between the second quarter of the 3rd century BC and early

2nd century BC²⁷, which we believe is not precisely accurate. As specified in the specialty literature²⁸ such brooches are dated mainly to the last decades of the 3rd century BC. In fact, such chronological framing is further confirmed by the finds in G 31/1 at Hlinoie, where beside such a brooch²⁹ (fig. 2,13) was also found a Synopean amphora, bearing on handle the name of magistrate Διονύσιος τοῦ Κλεισταγόρου³⁰ (fig. 2,12). The activity of this eponymous was placed between mid 10'ties of the 3rd century – the 90'ties of the 2nd century BC³¹.

Relevant for dating the early stage of the cemetery at Poienişti and, implicitly, the start of the P-L culture are brooches of type II.2 and belt fittings of type III.3 (fig. 2,1.5). We mention that in the Getae cemetery at Zimnicea a brooch similar to type II.2 was found in grave C10G108³². Respective complex was placed to horizon IV of the site (ca. 230/225-100 BC), more precisely during an initial phase of this stage³³. In the Celtic cemetery at Male Kosihy such brooches were broadly dated to the 3rd – 2nd centuries BC³⁴, while in the cemetery at Pişcolt such specimens were framed by the end of LT C1 – early LT C2³⁵, respectively the last quarter of the 3rd century – early decades of the 2nd century BC³⁶.

To the end of the 3rd century BC also leads the chronological framing of type III.3 belt fittings. We specify that within the sites on the mid course of the Elbe, such pieces are commonly dated to LT C1/C2³⁷, while in Pomerania – to phase II.a, according to Reinecke³⁸.

Therefore, based on the earliest pieces discovered in the eponymous cemetery at Poienişti, we set the lower chronological limit to the last quarter of the 3rd century BC. Now, let us see what kind of information is supplied by the habitation sites on this matter.

In terms of settlements, they commonly contain little datable materials. Most often, the chronologically relevant remains within the P-L settlements are represented by Hellenistic amphorae. Within the environment of said culture, such finds were reported in 37 habitation sites³⁹. Important for the discussion herein is that some handle fragments preserve the stamps containing the name of the magistrate or producer, both being highly relevant for dating such sites by analogy with the Greek world.

Thus, one of the earliest settlements ascribed to the P-L aspect seems that at Roşiori Dulceşti. We mention that from L. 1 at Roşiori Dulceşti comes the fragment of a Synopean handle, orange, bearing the stamp of magistrate Πόχρηστος Ἀπολλουίδου⁴⁰ (fig. 2,9), active between 253-252 BC⁴¹. Since in the same complex was discovered a base

¹² ФЕДОРОВ 1960, 25.

¹³ BABEŞ 1985, 201-202.

¹⁴ BABEŞ 1993, 153.

¹⁵ BABEŞ 2001, 522; BABEŞ 2003, 237.

¹⁶ CONOVICI 1992, 3-12; CONOVICI 1996, 369-372.

¹⁷ MUNTEANU 1995, 24-25.

¹⁸ ЕРЕМЕНКО 1997, 114.

¹⁹ IARMULSCHI 2013, 41.47.

²⁰ BABEŞ 1993, 131-134.145; ЕРЕМЕНКО 1997, 114; BABEŞ 2010, 545; IARMULSCHI 2013, 32.

²¹ BABEŞ 1993, 132-133, Abb. 33; IARMULSCHI 2013, 31-32, Fig. 3.

²² See BABEŞ 1993, 59-118.

²³ MARTENS 1996, 234, Abb. 12.

²⁴ BIEGER 2003, 37-46.

²⁵ BRANDT 2001, 85-87; BIEGER 2003, 86-87.

²⁶ ТЕЛНОВ/ЧЕТВЕРИКОВ/СИНИКА 2016, 889, 956, Fig. 442/16.

²⁷ ТЕЛНОВ/ЧЕТВЕРИКОВ/СИНИКА 2016, 957.

²⁸ BIEGER 2003, 86-87.

²⁹ ТЕЛНОВ/ЧЕТВЕРИКОВ/СИНИКА 2016, 216.

³⁰ ТЕЛНОВ/ЧЕТВЕРИКОВ/СИНИКА 2016, 215, Fig. 105/4-5.

³¹ КАЦ 2007, 436; ТЕЛНОВ/ЧЕТВЕРИКОВ/СИНИКА 2016, 957.

³² ALEXANDRESCU 1980, 30.

³³ MÂNDESCU 2010, 179, Fig. 24.

³⁴ BUJNA 1995, Pl. 3316.

³⁵ NÉMETI 1989, 128, Fig. 19/16; ZIRRA 1997, 117, Fig. 24/21.

³⁶ For the absolute chronology of the La Tène period see – GEBHARD 1989; ШУКИН 1994; BRANDT 2001.

³⁷ MÜLLER 1985, 84, Abb. 13.

³⁸ REINECKE 1988, Taf. 4.

³⁹ BABEŞ 1993, 72; IARMULSCHI 2012, 195.

⁴⁰ HÂNCEANU 2016, 44-45, Pl. XX,6.

⁴¹ GARLAN 2004, 83, Tab. IV.

of a Rhodian amphora, specific to recipients of the second half of the 3rd century BC, of which a spindle weight was made⁴² (fig. 2,10), this complex was dated to the second half of the 3rd century BC⁴³. Therefore, we believe that respective site was established no later than the last decades of the 3rd century BC.

To the earliest settlements of P-L type also belongs the site at Lunca Ciurei⁴⁴. Among the materials which support such view count, firstly, two handles of Rhodian amphorae bearing the name of magistrate Xenophantos I⁴⁵ (fig. 2,7-8). The activity of this eponymous was framed to period IIb (219-210 BC), according to Finkielsztejn⁴⁶.

In the site at Goroșovo⁴⁷ we are dealing with an inhabitancy which very likely started also in the last quarter of the 3rd century BC. We specify that in L. 1 and L. 8 in this settlement were discovered fragments of sapropelite bracelets⁴⁸ (fig. 2,6). Such jewellery is specific in the Central-European Celtic world to LT B2/C1⁴⁹. Based on these data, we believe that the site was established in a period when such items were still fashionable, respectively LT C1b, which in absolute data corresponds to the last quarter of the 3rd century – first quarter of the 2nd century BC⁵⁰.

It is possible that the site at Dănești La Meri⁵¹ was also established in the last quarter of the 3rd century BC. This is supported by the discovery in the site of a brooch made of a single bronze wire with bilateral spring of four coils, outer chord, extended body and foot attached to the bow, just below its junction, through a socket⁵² (fig. 2,3), specific to LT C1⁵³.

Among the earliest settlements of P-L type may also be deemed the settlement at Borniș⁵⁴, as proven by the brooch of type III.1⁵⁵ (fig. 2,4), specific to the first two phases of the culture⁵⁶ and the Rhodian amphora fragment discovered still there⁵⁷ (fig. 2,11). We mention that the amphora fragment was imprinted with the name of magistrate Xenophanes⁵⁸. Based on known associations, his activity was placed between 202-201 BC⁵⁹ or 189 BC⁶⁰.

Thus, taking into account the finds in the eponymous cemetery at Poieniști as well as some of the habitation sites, we believe that the lower chronological limit of the P-L culture must be set in last two decades of the 3rd century BC. Our view is supported by some literary sources (Pseudo-Skymnos, v. 797), who mentions the Bastarnae by the Lower

Danube in the last quarter of the 3rd century BC⁶¹. Very likely, in relation to the same date may be placed the *Olbian decree in honour of Protogenes*, should we deem those Galatii and Scirii⁶² as the Bastarnae recorded by the written sources. Furthermore, as also mentioned in the specialty literature⁶³, the Barbarian tribes north the Danube, who left the remains of the P-L culture and were summoned by the kings of Macedonia, Philip V (Titus Livius, XL, 57,2) and Perseus (Plutarch 12) to aid the resolution of certain external affairs of their kingdom, were at the time well established in the east-Carpathian region, and, likely, acted in such manner that their power was recognized.

Within the same context we mention that, very likely, once they reached the Carpathian-Dniester forest steppe, the Bastarnae tribes had to fight the local population⁶⁴. Both archaeological traces – the destruction of the Getae fortifications, which likely ceased to function in the last quarter of the 3rd century BC, one of the reasons being the entry into the central and northern regions of Moldova of the Bastarnae tribes⁶⁵ – and the written sources – the clashes with Oroles (Trogus Pompeius XXXII,3,16) – suggest this.

Summarizing the above, we believe that the lower chronological limit of the P-L culture should be set to the last quarter of the 3rd century BC, both the archaeological materials (brooches of type II.2, II.5, belt fittings of type III.3, the sapropelite bracelets, the amphora material etc) and written sources (for instance Pseudo-Skymnos), who mentions the Bastarnae to the north of the Lower Danube in this period support such argument.

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- ⁶¹ CONOVICI 1992, 11-12; MUNTEANU/IARMULSCHI 2005, 19; IARMULSCHI 2013, 47.
- ⁶² Entirely erroneous, in our view, is the assertion of Ju. A. Vinogradov and K. K. Marčenko that, archaeologically, the Scirii – recorded in the *Olbian decree in honour of Protogenes* – may be identified with the Tiraspol cultural group – ВІНОГРАДОВ/МАРЧЕНКО 2014, 153. To this effect, we wish to underline that, as early as almost five decades ago, M. Babeș mentioned that the Scirii are very likely a tribe akin to the Bastarnae. They, according to the Bucharest-based researcher, beside other tribes from the north of Central Europe, like for instance the Peucinii, Sidonii and Atmonii recorded by the ancient written sources (STRABON VII, 3,17), must be identified with the P-L cultural aspect – BABEȘ 1969, 214; BABEȘ 1993, 169; BABEȘ/COMAN 2005, 147. For the issue of the ethno-cultural origin of the Tiraspol group see ТЕЛНОВ/ЧЕТВЕРИКОВ/СИНИКА 2016.
- ⁶³ CONOVICI 1996, 371; MUNTEANU/IARMULSCHI 2005, 18; IARMULSCHI 2013, 47.
- ⁶⁴ It is important to underline that in the specialty literature there is the view that between the Getae culture and the P-L cultural aspect there is a chronological gap of at least one century quarter see ІЦУКИН 1994; ТКАЧУК 1999. The issue of the continuity/discontinuity in LT C1 shall be discussed in another study.
- ⁶⁵ ZANOCI 1998, 111; ARNĂUT 2003, 166; HAHEU 2008, 55.

⁴² HÂNCEANU 2016, 45, 48.

⁴³ HÂNCEANU 2016, 48.

⁴⁴ TEODOR 1987; BABEȘ 1993, 204-206.

⁴⁵ MATEEVICI 2009, 269, cat. no. 5-6.

⁴⁶ FINKIELSZTEJN 2001, Tab. 18.

⁴⁷ ПАЧКОВА 1983.

⁴⁸ ПАЧКОВА 1983, 17,29,30, Fig. 12,7-9; IARMULSCHI 2013, 44.

⁴⁹ BUJNA 1982, 331; IARMULSCHI 2013, 45.

⁵⁰ ІЦУКИН 1994, 116; IARMULSCHI 2013, 45.

⁵¹ ZAHARIA/BURAGA 1979, 245.

⁵² ZAHARIA/BURAGA 1979, 245, Fig. 2/6; TEODOR 1988, 43, Fig. 5/4; BABEȘ 1993, 90, Taf. 44/21.

⁵³ CÎZMAR 1975, 429, Abb.8; BRANDT 2001, 57-58, Abb. 11a/2.

⁵⁴ POPOVICI 1981-1982.

⁵⁵ The author of the find ascribed erroneously the brooch to the Roman-Byzantine period – POPOVICI 1988, 250.

⁵⁶ BABEȘ 1993, 142, Abb. 44; IARMULSCHI 2013, 40.

⁵⁷ POPOVICI 1981-1982, 155, Fig. 2; POPOVICI 1988, Fig. 1/1.

⁵⁸ POPOVICI 1981-1982, 155

⁵⁹ CONOVICI 1992, 10; MUNTEANU 2004, 148.

⁶⁰ FINKIELSZTEJN 2001, Tab. 19.

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Fig. 1. Sites of Poienești-Lucașeuca type mentioned in the text. 1 – Borniș, Neamț county; 2 – Borosești, Iași county; 3 – Botoșana, Suceava county; 4 – Dănești La Meri, Vaslui county; 5 – Dolhești Mari, Suceava county; 6 – Ghelăiești, Neamț county; 7 – Goroșovo, region Ternopol'; 8 – Lozna Hlibicioc, Botoșani county; 9 – Lucașeuca, r. Orhei; 10 – Lunca Ciurei, Iași county; 11 – Orheiul Vechi, r. Orhei; 12 – Poienești, Vaslui county; 13 – Roșiori Dulcești, Neamț county.

Fig. 2. Chronologically relevant items (various scales): 1 – brooch of type II.2; 2 – brooch of type II.5; 3 – the brooch at Dănești La Meri; 4 – the brooch at Borniș; 5 – belt fitting type III.3; 6 – the spropelite bracelet at Goroșovo; 7-8 – stamped amphora handles from Lunca Ciurei; 9-10 – fragments of Greek amphorae discovered at Roșiori Dulcești; 11 – fragment of Rhodian amphora at Borniș; 12-13 – Synopean amphora and brooch with bow spheres in G31/1 at Hlinoie. 1-2.5 (after BABEȘ 1993); 3 (after TEODOR 1988); 4 (after POPOVICI 1988); 6 (after ПАЧКОВА 1983); 7-8 (after TEODOR 1987); 9-10 (after HÂNCEANU 2016); 11 (after POPOVICI 1980-1981); 12-13 (after ТЕЛНОВ/ЧЕТВЕРИКОВ/СИНИКА 2016).