

# EPHEMERIS NAPOCENSIS

XXIII

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# SITULA SHAPED POTTERY FROM THE FORTIFIED SETTLEMENT FROM DIVICI-GRAD, CARAȘ-SEVERIN COUNTY, ROMANIA

Andreea Drăgan<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** *The fortified settlement from Divici-Grad, jud. Caraș-Severin, is set in the immediate vicinity of the Danube, in the Iron Gates area. According to the archaeological data from the settlement its habitation began in the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC and was later seized around the Roman conquest of Dacia. The variety of artefacts recovered from the site points to the important role that the river had in fostering interaction in the area. Many of the finds illustrate La Tène characteristics, among which are distinguished the pots imitating graphite-clay situlae, an emblematic item of the La Tène ceramic production.*

**Key words:** *graphite-clay pottery, La Tène, Dacia, Iron Gates, interaction*

## Archaeological context

The first archaeological excavations on the hill Grad from the village of Divici, Caraș-Severin county, have begun in 1985 in connection with the infrastructural works on the Danube bank. Given the importance of the finds, the site was afterwards continuously researched until 1997. The main fortification elements and the area of the central plateau were documented in two long trenches (S<sub>1-2</sub>) that intersected in a right angle. Another fourteen smaller trenches were focused in the north-western sector of the plateau (C<sub>1-4, 10-14</sub>) and the south-eastern part of the hill top, excavated during the first years of research (C<sub>5-9</sub>).

The fortified area encompasses the triangular upper plateau of the hill Grad of approx. 7000 m<sup>2</sup>. Its surface was organized in three terraces, starting with the highest, in the north-western area, to the second and third, lowest, towards the south-eastern and southern part. The higher part of the 1<sup>st</sup> terrace was defended on three sides by a stone wall with crushed stone and clay core, strengthened in the north-east with vertical wooden beams. Its track was interrupted on the south-eastern edge. The wall replaced an earlier earth *vallum* with palisade built during the first inhabitancy horizon of the settlement. The terraces were further delimited by smaller stone walls. The fortified area on the hill top could be reached from the north-west on a saddle, cut by with two *valla*, that connects Grad with the neighboring hill. On the latter other three *valla* have been observed.

On the upper terrace the most important structures identified are two tower-houses. They were built in stone with brick storey during the second (T2) and the last (T1) inhabitancy horizons. The older tower, built behind the stone wall that surrounds the upper part, was replaced during the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD with a similar building, this time integrated in the stone wall

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enclosure. Given the importance of these structures, judging by their architecture, position and finds, the research has focused in their area.

The earliest vestiges are represented in just one house (L1/1996)<sup>2</sup> where among the finds there was a fibula of middle La Tène scheme with a high number of spires characteristic to the La Tène D1 phase (the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century–first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC)<sup>3</sup>. The following inhabitancy horizon is far better documented, in houses L3, B1/1990, C1/1996, the hearth V.3/1996, the platform P1/1996, and pits Gr. 1a–1b/1995–1996, Gr. 2/1996 and Gr. 4/1996. These are contemporary with the tower-house T2 and can be dated based on a Nauheim fibula type<sup>4</sup> and Late Republican Roman metal strainers<sup>5</sup> during the second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC and the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. It could be established that the house L1/1994, hearths V1/1995 and V2/1996, and pits G1/1991, Gr. 1/1993 and G1/1994 were contemporary to the earliest tower-house T1, from the last inhabitancy horizon. Their existence during the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD could be determined by a high number of fibulas, as well as Roman coins from the time of Claudius, Titus and Vespasianus<sup>6</sup> (Fig. 2).

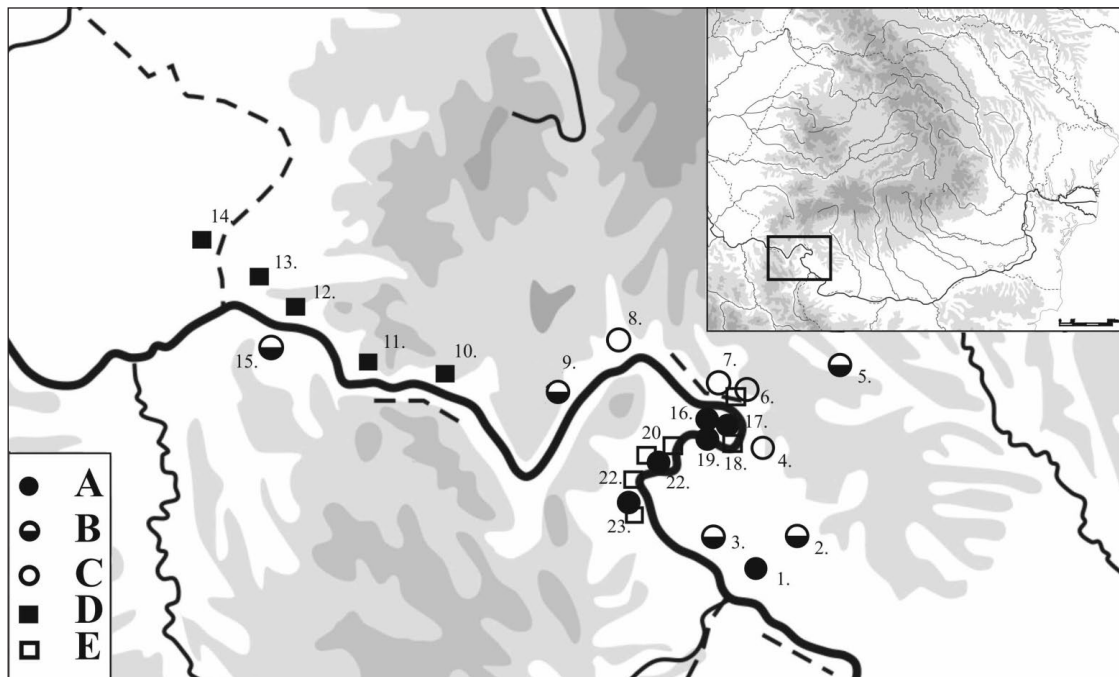


Fig. 1. Iron Gates area during the end of the second Iron Age. A – necropolis; B – isolated burials; C – isolated funerary finds. D – fortified settlements. E – open settlements. 1 – Gruia. 2 – Viiășu. 3 – Balta Verde. 4 – Hinova. 5 – Corcova. 6 – Ostrovul Șimian. 7 – Drobeta-Turnu Severin. 8 – Orșova. 9 – Dubova. 10 – Liubcova-Stenca. 11 – Pescari-Culă. 12 – Divici-Grad. 13 – Socol-Palanački Breg. 14 – Židovar. 15 – Kumane-Prevod. 16 – Mala Vrbica-Ajmana. 17 – Mala Vrbica-Konopište. 18 – Zbradila-Korbovo. 19 – Vajuga-Pesak. 20 – Velesnica. 21 – Ljubičevac. 22 – Brza Palanka. 23 – mouth of the river Slatinska.

Other structures have been identified on the second terrace. Here was excavated a stone tower, built in the last inhabitancy level of the settlement over an older building that resembles

<sup>2</sup> GUMĂ/RUSTOIU/SĂCĂRIN 1997, 374–375.

<sup>3</sup> GUMĂ/RUSTOIU/SĂCĂRIN 1997, fig. 6/1; RUSTOIU 1997, 33–36, tip 2d; RUSTOIU 2006/2007, 18, fig. 2/5.

<sup>4</sup> RUSTOIU 1997, 46, tip 13.

<sup>5</sup> RUSTOIU 2005, 67–68, fig. 8/2.

<sup>6</sup> GUMĂ/RUSTOIU/SĂCĂRIN 1995, 410; GUMĂ/RUSTOIU/SĂCĂRIN 1997, 380; RUSTOIU 2006/2007, 19–20, fig. 2/7–14.

in its construction water tanks. Aside from these, the pit G4 was in use in the second inhab- itancy level, while the rest of the structures belong to the earliest horizon, resp. houses L1 and L2, and pits G1–3, 5–6. Numerous artefacts come also from the neighboring hill, next to the access saddle (terrace A), and from the foot of the hill Grad, on the Danube, from an open settlement<sup>7</sup>.

The inhabitancy of Divici-Grad has been disrupted sometimes during the conflicts of the Romans with the Dacians at the turn of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries AD, to which the end of the fortification appears to be connected, suggested by the discovery of Roman military equipment in the destruction layer<sup>8</sup>.

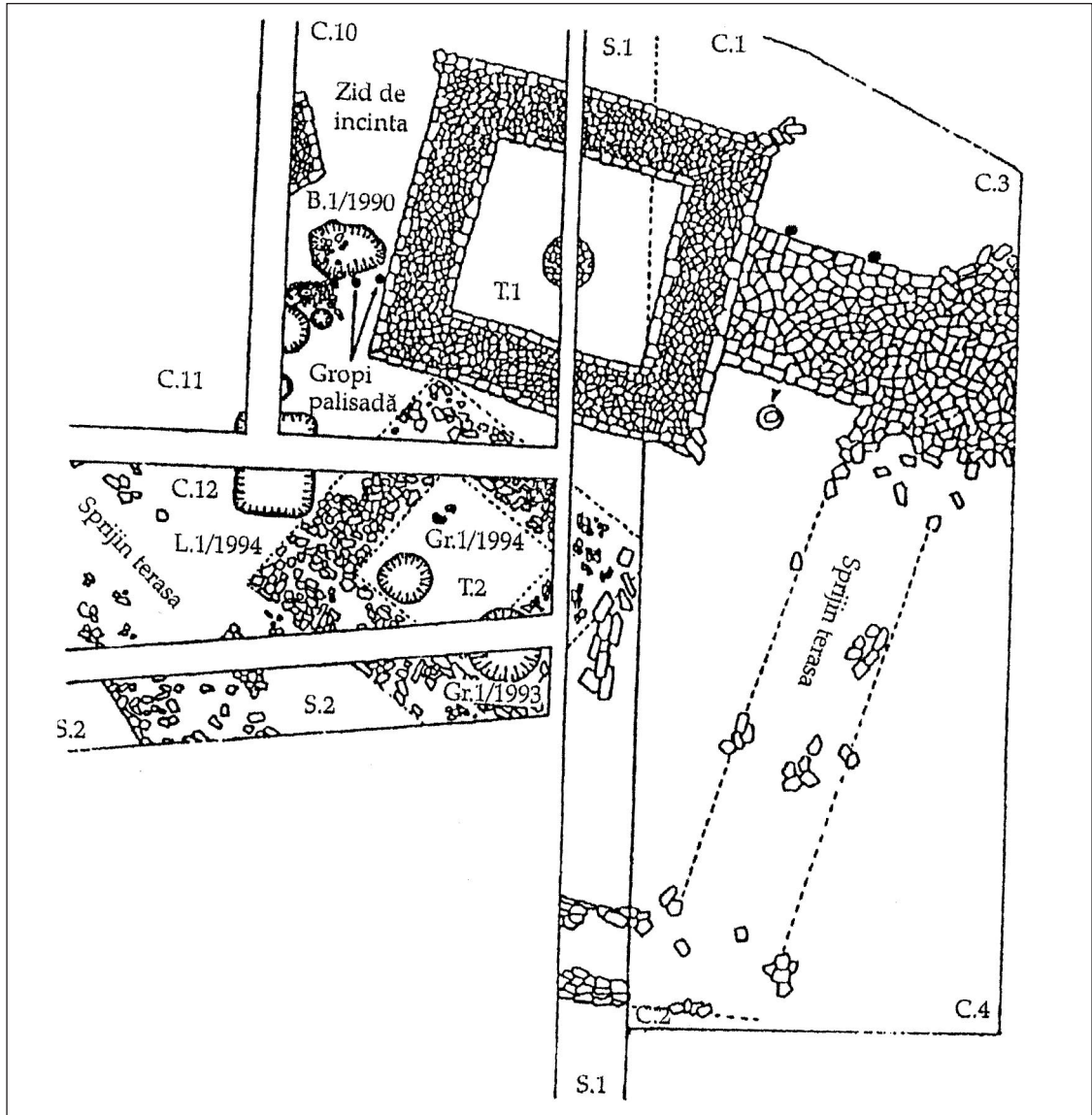


Fig. 2. The fortified settlement from Divici-Grad. Archaeological research in the north-western part of the fortified area (after RUSTOIU 2006/2007).

<sup>7</sup> The results of the archaeological research have been published in: GUMĂ/LUCA/SĂCĂRIN 1987; GUMĂ/RUSTOIU/SĂCĂRIN 1995; GUMĂ/RUSTOIU/SĂCĂRIN 1997.

<sup>8</sup> GUMĂ/RUSTOIU/SĂCĂRIN 1997, fig. 8; RUSTOIU 2006/2007, 20.

A large amount of finds have been discovered in the settlement of Divici-Grad, the metal artefacts having an important contribution to the establishing of the chronology of the site. On the whole, pottery is unsurprisingly the most numerous and at the same time very diverse. A thorough analysis of the ceramics from Divici-Grad, encompassing clay determination, classification of forms and, based on these, production aspects, will allow the shaping of a general image over the interaction with closer or farther areas at Divici-Grad and in the Iron Gates of the Danube. The aim of this paper is limited to a particular type of pottery that has its beginnings in the Central European La Tène milieu, and which was otherwise more rarely used in the final phase of the Late Iron Age in Dacia, namely ceramic *situlae* without graphite-clay<sup>9</sup>.

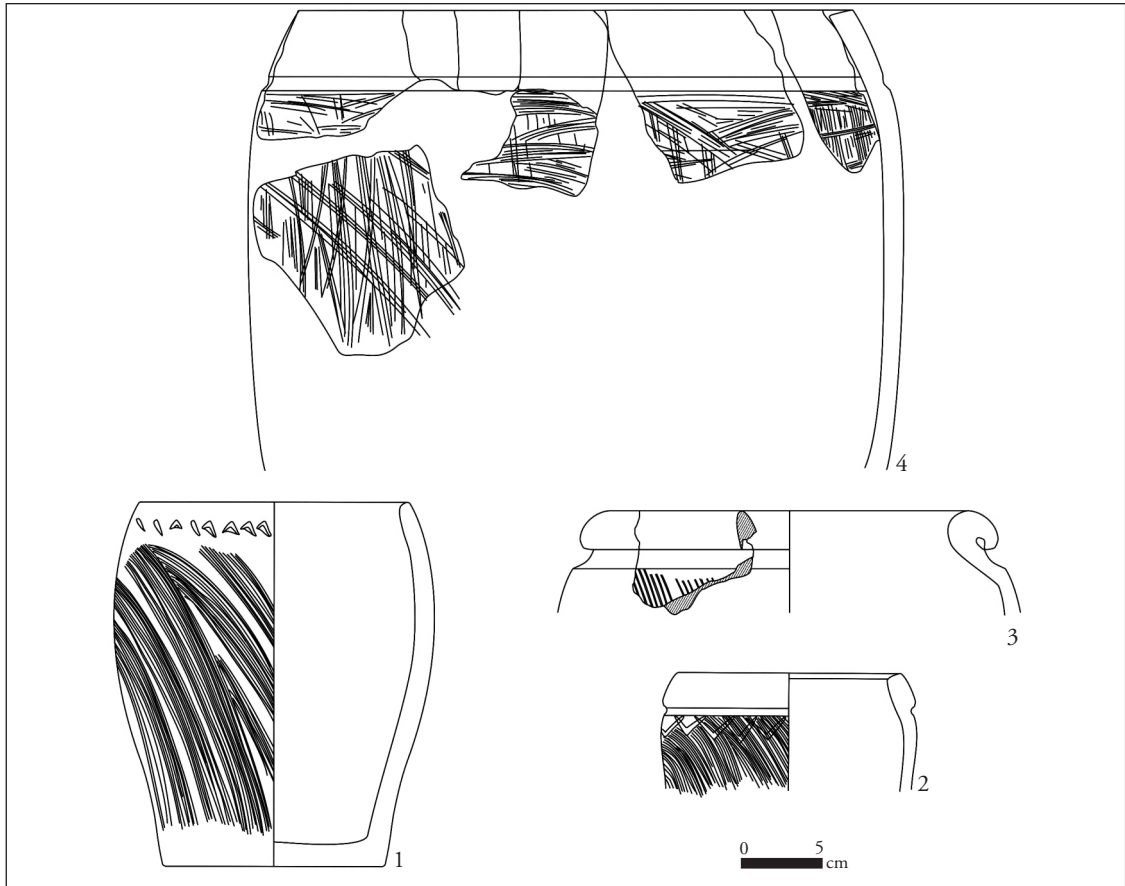


Fig. 3. The fortified settlement from Divici-Grad. Situla shaped pottery.

### Situla shaped pottery without graphite-clay

This group of pottery has its model in the graphite-clay *situlae* characteristic for the middle and later phase of the La Tène ceramic development. They have a general taper shape with thickened lip separated from the rest of the pot by a groove, usually covered on the entire surface with vertical combed decoration, while other decorative variations are also possible<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> My gratitude goes towards Dr. Aurel Rustoiu, member of the research team of the Dacian fortification from Divici, and the management of the Mountainous Banat Museum (Muzeul Banatului Montan), Reșița, where the materials are deposited. This work was also possible with the financial support of the Sectoral Operational Programme for Human Resources Development 2007-2013, co-financed by the European Social Fund, under the project number POSDRU/107/1.5/S/77946 with the title „Doctorate: an Attractive Research Career”.

<sup>10</sup> KAPPEL 1969, 65–75, Pls. 22 and 16–20.

The shape has been largely used and adapted in Europe, including for vessels that are no longer produced with graphite-clay. Its distribution reflects the significance of contact with the La Tène milieu. The pottery without graphite-clay maintains the general characteristics of the *situlae* in their taper shape, thickened lip delimited from the body by a groove, and vertical or net-like comb decoration. However, as a result of the process of appropriation to local ceramic developments several variants have occurred, characterized by the alteration or absence of certain elements described above<sup>11</sup>.

Likewise, the *situla* shaped pottery without graphite-clay from Divici-Grad is represented by several types that illustrate the development of the local ceramic production and that of the larger cultural context of the settlement. Their local production is proved by the use of clays that are very frequent in the composition of hand-made pottery from the settlement. It's doubtful that *situlae* were shaped in all cases directly after the graphite-clay prototype, considering the very small number of graphite-clay pottery at Divici-Grad<sup>12</sup>. Furthermore, as it can be seen in the following description of the main forms of *situlae* without graphite-clay from Divici-Grad, these have numerous analogies in the surrounding areas.

### **Egg-shaped pots (Pl. II/1)**

Although their ovoid shape recalls the slightly arched cone-shaped pots widespread in Dacia until the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C., their connection is doubtful. First of all, there is the chronological issue, the egg-shaped pottery from Divici-Grad being found in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> inhabitancy horizon (beginning with the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC). Second of all, the comb decoration doesn't characterize early cone-shaped pots from Dacia, on to which there were usually applied different shapes of buttons and belts<sup>13</sup>. Nonetheless, while in Dacia the pots develop beginning with the La Tène D1 phase towards the increase of the body curving and lip flaring, egg-shaped pottery continues to be widely spread across Europe during the later phase of La Tène and still in Roman times<sup>14</sup>. They are very common in the Púchov milieu in Slovakia<sup>15</sup> and in Little Poland, sometimes associated with comb decoration specific to graphite-clay *situlae*<sup>16</sup>. Egg-shaped pots with graphite-clay decoration features are known also in the settlement from Manching<sup>17</sup> and, more rarely, in Budapest<sup>18</sup>. The nearest analogies for the finds from Divici-Grad come however from the Scordiscan area. One pot from Saraorci has a decoration of triangular impressions under the lip very similar to a pot from Divici-Grad, while other finds from the area illustrate the adaptation of the egg-shaped pots to the graphite-clay *situla* form, reflected in the diverse variants of lip demarcation, sometimes very superficial<sup>19</sup>. A pot similar to those discovered at Divici-Grad comes from the settlement at Arpaşu de Sus, undetermined chronologically<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> BONÍS 1969, 188; MEDUNA 1980, 68–71; WOZNÍAK 1990, 121; JOVANOVIĆ/JOVANOVIĆ 1988, Pr. 5 (pots, hand-made pots).

<sup>12</sup> So far, after thoroughly analyzing the pottery from seven habitation structures only one fragment has been identified of an unidentifiable vessel. Although the study is not complete, it can be considered representative for the archaeological material as a whole.

<sup>13</sup> PUPEZĂ 2010, 144–146.

<sup>14</sup> BONÍS 1969, 189–190, Pl. 36/1 and 62/10; STÖKLI 1979, 46–47, Pls. 56/782–797, 57/789–790, 794–796; PIETA 1982, 102–103; WOZNÍAK 1990, 121, T. XXX/d, XXXI/a.

<sup>15</sup> PIETA 1982, 102–103.

<sup>16</sup> WOZNÍAK 1990, 121, T. XXX/d, XXXI/a.

<sup>17</sup> STÖKLI 1979, 46–47, Pls. 56/782–797, 57/789–790, 794–796.

<sup>18</sup> BONÍS 1969, 189–190, fig. 36/1, 62/10.

<sup>19</sup> POPOVIĆ 2000, Pl. 4/2–4, 6, 10.

<sup>20</sup> MACREA/GLODARIU 1976, 41, fig. 27/4.

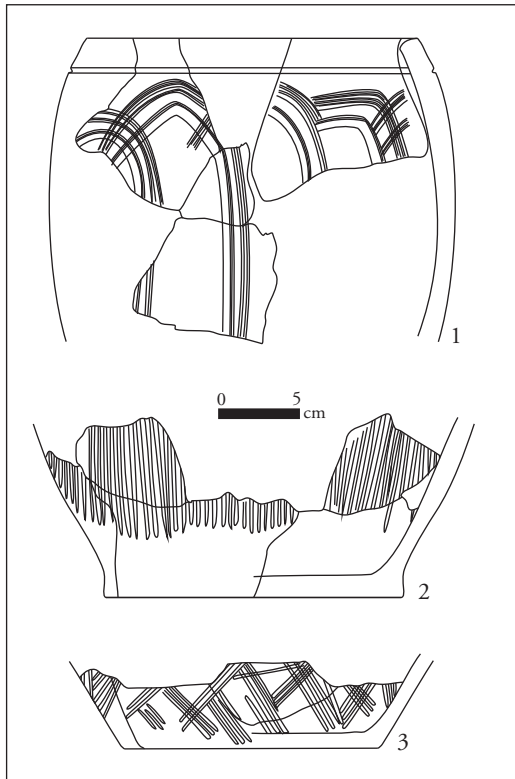


Fig. 4. The fortified settlement from Divici-Grad. Situla shaped pottery from the tower-house T1.

### Pots with inverted rim, separated by a large groove from the body (Fig. 3/4)

They seem to have developed on the previous form, on to which a groove was added below the rim. So as to avoid repeating the information, they have the same distribution area as simple egg-shaped pots. However, in this case comb decoration becomes generalized.

### Pots with inverted thickened rim, separated by a large groove from the body (Fig. 3/3)

Their form is closer to the *situla*-shaped pottery, having a thickened rim with a large groove below. They can't be connected with the development of egg-shaped pots, although their use coincides geographically with the latter. The comb decoration is rarely missing on this shape<sup>21</sup>, often with an additional horizontally displayed decoration under the groove that separates the lip from the rest of the body.

So far, only one fragment is known from a pot with **flaring rim in the shape of a roll, separated from the body by a large groove** (Fig. 3/3).

The intention the intention of the potter to closely copy the graphite-clay *situlae*, which the pot greatly resembles, is obvious. Below the large groove under the lip there can be seen the beginning of a vertical comb decoration organized in groups. The particularity of this vessel is the unusual manner by which the potter created the thick round rim appearance characteristic to the graphite-clay *situlae*, bending the rim to its maximum so that it touches the upper part of the groove. The pot is modeled on potter's wheel using well refined clay, fired in a reducing atmosphere. The fragment has traces of secondary burnt.

The finds described above from Divici-Grad were produced using frequently encountered clays in the composition of various pottery forms from the settlement. These have different texture, ranging from fine to coarse. Their firing was also made in both oxidizing and reducing atmospheres. Although potter's kilns are yet unknown at Divici-Grad, all of the above and the hand working of most of these pots point to a local production. They were generally decorated with vertical or, more rarely, net-like grooves, accompanied by a horizontal pattern of impressions or incisions under the rim, some of the ornamentation closely resembling the graphite-clay *situlae* (Fig. 4). Aside from its esthetic role, the decoration had a practical purpose, increasing the adherence of the surface. This would have improved the handling of the pots that, according to the traces of secondary burnt discovered on many of the finds, were used in fire related preparation of food and liquids. However, this doesn't rule out other functions, such as storage in the case of larger pots.

<sup>21</sup> BONÍŠ 1969, fig. 59/18.

## Conclusion

The fortified settlements from the Iron Gates area of the Danube, lining up on the left bank of the river gorge, were associated owing to their geographical setting and the traits of the archaeological finds with the Dacian political structures (Fig. 1). However, on the same basis the distinctiveness of the area can be demonstrated, especially in the case of the settlement from Divici-Grad, so far better known. The particular developments in pottery use that can be observed at Divici-Grad must be related to its closeness to the Danube that, far from isolating the area, has fostered interaction. The results of this are illustrated in the variety of the artefacts, an important part of them showing La Tène characteristics. Among the latter are distinguished the pots imitating graphite-clay pottery, an emblematic item of the La Tène ceramic production.

*Situla*-shaped pottery without graphite-clay exemplifies the role that the Danube had in connecting the settlement from Divici-Grad in more directions. One of these was towards the territory ascribed to a Scordiscan population, neighboring in the west the Iron Gates. From much farther comes a series of finds, in particular the painted pottery made in the Eastern Celtic style, which is characterized by the shared technological aspects of this type of ceramic production, but at the same time display certain traits that resemble the products known upstream, in Hungary<sup>22</sup>. It can be concluded that the *situla*-shaped pottery production from Divici-Grad is fully synchronized with the developments of ceramic manufacture in the European area during the Late La Tène, where the *situla*-shaped pottery without graphite-clay continues to be used in Roman times as part of the provincial ceramic set.

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