

KANTHAROS CUPS IN SÂNCRĂIENI-HOARD: RESTORATION AND MANUFACTURING ISSUES*

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Keywords: hoard, late Latène Dacia, silver *kantharos* cups, craftsmen, modern restoration

Abstract: The technological and stylistic differences of the *kantharos* cups elements in Sâncrăieni allow us to identify several distinct artisans: (1) the artisan of the engraved bowls (the bowls of cups no. 4-8); (2) the artisan of the imported cup no. 1; (3) the artisan of cups no. 2 and 3, probably of the 3rd type of stems as well and (4) the artisan of the 2nd type of stems. Artisans 1, 3 and 4 are local, whereas the 2nd one is Greco-Roman. One can also assume that there is a chronological gap between craftsman no. 1, on the one hand, and the 3rd and 4th, on the other – it's probably a matter of one generation. In any case, the less than harmonious collaboration of a number of craftsmen with different manners of ornamentation, led to a lack of unity in style of the elements constituting the *kantharos* cups that were produced in a “barbaric” environment (cups no. 2-8). This lack of stylistic unity, as well as the disassembling of the cups in Sâncrăieni prior to their burial brought forth dilemmas that proved insurmountable to modern restoration. It would have been preferable, therefore, to avoid interventions of an irreversible nature and to preserve the separate elements of the *kantharos* cups in the state in which they had been discovered.

Rezumat: Tezaurul de la Sâncrăieni a fost descoperit în urma dinamitării unor stânci într-o carieră de piatră în anul 1953. Din inventarul tezaurului fac parte două brățări, o fibulă și 15 cupe cu sau fără picior (cupe de tip *kantharos* și *mastós*) și două monede – o drahmă emisă la Dyrhachium și o copie barbară a unei tetradrahme emise la Thasos. Toate piesele au fost realizate din argint, iar majoritatea cupelor cu picior prezintă registre aurite. Elementele constitutive ale cupelor cu picior și torți, au fost descoperite în cea mai mare parte separate unele de altele. După toate probabilitățile, această separare nu se datorează exploziei moderne, ci demontării cupelor înainte de îngropare.

Elementele constitutive ale cupelor de tip *kantharos* (fig. 1-8) au fost reasamblate la scurt timp după descoperire în laboratoarele muzeului de la Miercurea Ciuc. Intervenții ulterioare asupra cupelor au mai fost efectuate și după integrarea lor în patrimoniul Muzeului Național de Istorie a României. De această dată, piciorarele montate inițial cupelor nr. 2 și nr. 5 au fost schimbate între ele (fig. 9). De asemenea, piciorul fragmentar fixat inițial cupei nr. 7 în poziție corectă a fost sudat în mod eronat în poziție inversă (fig. 10). După toate probabilitățile, corespondența dintre torți și cupe a fost reconstituită în mod corect, în conformitate cu originalul. Din păcate, procedeele de restaurare modernă folosite în cazul cupelor de la Sâncrăieni (îmbinări și completări prin sudare la cald) au un caracter ireversibil. Ele au condus la acoperirea îmbinărilor străvechi și parțial a decorului gravat, la deteriorarea straturilor de aurire și la modificarea considerabilă a greutateii cupelor. Nu au fost publicate buletine ale proceselor de restaurare.

Elucidarea dilemelor restaurării cupelor de tip *kantharos* de la Sâncrăieni nu poate fi realizată fără reexaminarea morfologiei, tehnologiei și a sistemului ornamental al elementelor care compun aceste piese. Pentru verificarea corespondențelor și a posibilelor non-corespondențe dintre aceste elemente este necesară o descompunere virtuală a pieselor, clasificarea separată a elementelor lor constitutive și dezbateră *argumentată* a posibilităților de recompunere a cupelor (fig. 12). Acest demers permite nu numai determinarea restaurărilor conforme cu originalele sau a celor incerte ci și evidențierea mai multor indicii legate de proveniența și geneza cupelor de tip *kantharos* de la Sâncrăieni.

(1) Se poate considera că restaurarea aspectului original a fost realizată cu certitudine numai în cazul cupelor nr. 1, 3 și 6. În celelalte cazuri, restaurările moderne, deși plauzibile, au un caracter arbitrar (fig. 12).

(2) Profilarea complexă a piciorului, rafinamentul execuției torților, morfologia lor complexă, geometria elegantă a profilării piciorului și mai ales realizarea acestuia la strung disting cupa nr. 1 ca import de origine, foarte probabil italică. Prin contrast, toate celelalte cupe de tip *kantharos* de la Sâncrăieni pot fi considerate produse ale unui mediu “barbar” de creație în metal prețios. În acest sens pledează absența urmelor de prelucrare pe strung, geometria imprecisă a formelor, stângăcia redării ornamentelor și nu în ultimul rând o serie de neconcordanțe și diferențe stilistice dintre decorul calotelor și al picioarelor.

(3) Foarte probabil, calotele cupelor nr. 4-8 nu au fost concepute inițial ca elemente constitutive ale unor cupe de tip *kantharos*, ci ca recipiente de tip *mastós* de sine stătătoare. Aceste piese pot fi percepute ca transpunere în argint a cupelor “megariene” sau “deliene” cu decor în relief și a copiilor lor barbare. Doar într-o fază ulterioară, aceste boluri au fost transformate în *kantharoi* prin adăugarea picioarelor și a torților. În acest sens pledează suprapunerea atașelor torților peste decorul gravat și mai ales dublarea buzei cupei nr. 6 în vederea îmbinării ei satisfăcătoare cu plăcile unor torți realizate separat.

(4) Convertirea unor cupe de tip *mastós* în cupe de tip *kantharos* ar putea reflecta nu numai o simplă opțiune a meșterilor barbari. Ea poate fi percepută și ca o schimbare de tradiție și ca o rafinare a ceremoniei banchetului de epocă târzie elenistică. Acest proces este sincron pătrunderii importurilor republicane târzii în Dacia. Cupa nr. 1, de posibilă proveniență italică, poate fi considerată ca cel mai vechi recipient de tip *kantharos* din metal prețios din această regiune. Foarte probabil, importul acestei cupe a oferit unul dintre principalele surse de inspirație pentru transformarea calotelor nr. 4-7 (și 8 ?) în *kantharoi*, ca și pentru crearea unor noi astfel de cupe (nr. 2-3).

* This article represents a developed form of one of the parts of the presentations “Interpretatio Barbarica in the Dacian Treasure in Sâncrăieni” presented at the Symposium ‘Architecture. Restoration. Archaeology’, May 2004.

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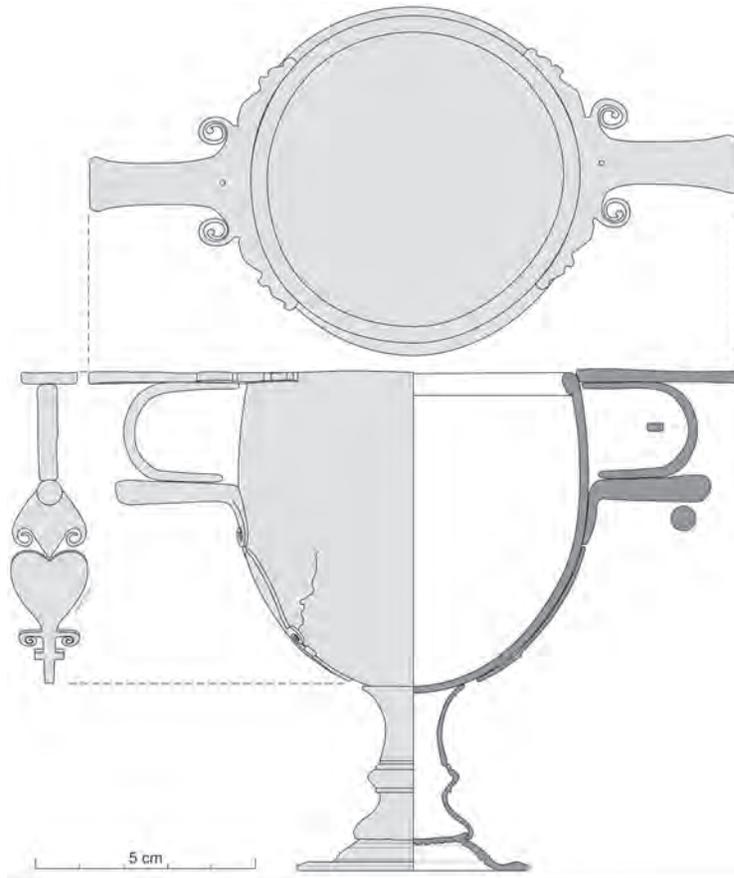


Fig. 1. Cup no. 1. Drawing according to the original (MNIR-Bucharest, November 2002).

(5) Observațiile de mai sus, coroborate cu unele observații de ordin stilistic (fig. 13), permit identificarea identităților distincte ale mai multor meșteri care au creat cupele de tip *kantharos* de la Sâncrăieni: (1) meșterul calotelor gravate (calotele cupelor nr. 4-8); (2) meșterul cupei de import nr. 1; (3) meșterul cupelor nr. 2 și 3, probabil și al picioarelor de tip 3 (fig. 12 și 13/2-3) și (4) meșterul picioarelor de tip 2 (fig. 12). Dacă meșterul nr. 2 este greco-roman, meșterii nr. 1, 3 și 4 sunt locali. Între meșterul 1 și meșterii 3-4 poate fi presupusă chiar și o diferență cronologică – probabil o diferență de o generație. În orice caz, colaborarea mai puțin armonizată a mai multor meșteri cu maniere diferite de ornamentare, a determinat lipsa de unitate stilistică a elementelor constitutive ale cupelor de tip *kantharos* produse în mediul “barbar”. Această lipsă de unitate stilistică, precum și demontarea cupelor de la Sâncrăieni înaintea îngropării lor a dat naștere unor dileme insurmontabile pentru restaurarea modernă. Din acest motiv, ar fi fost preferabilă evitarea intervențiilor cu caracter ireversibil și păstrarea elementelor constitutive ale cupelor de tip *kantharos* de la Sâncrăieni în starea în care au fost ele descoperite.

The hoard in Sâncrăieni (Harghita, România) includes eight cups with stems and holders (*kantharos* type), seven semispherical cups (the *mastós* type), two bracelets, a fibula and two coins. This is the largest set of silver tableware in late Latène Dacia (1st. century BC). Its exceptional weight (3650 g) makes it heavier than any other Dacian silver hoard. The way the *kantharos* cups form in Sâncrăieni

(Fig. 1-8) were manufactured and the way they were restored are extremely important for understanding the meanings of this hoard.

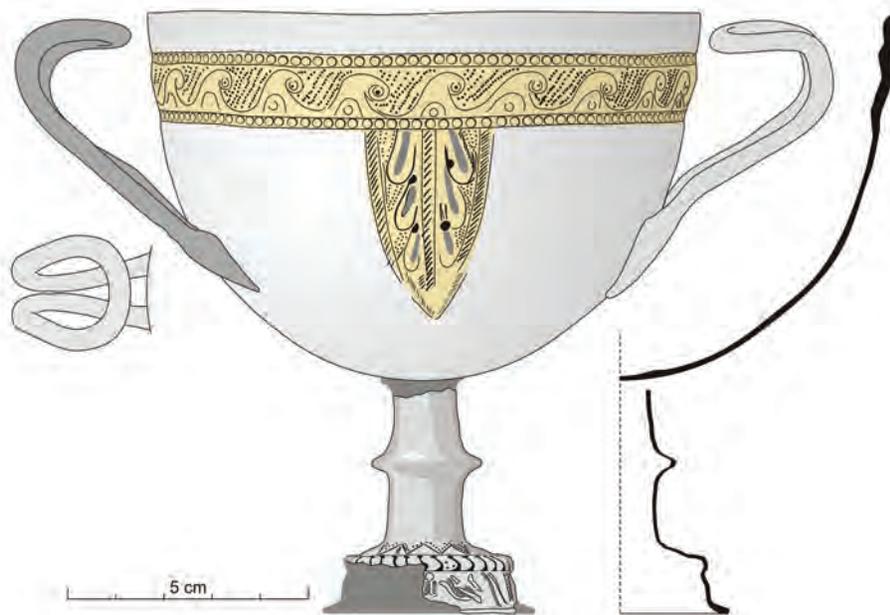
The hoard in Sâncrăieni was discovered in the andesite quarry “7 Noiembrie”, in the attempt to blast a cliff that was threatening to crash on the workers. The inventory was saved during three consecutive days (between 11 and 13th of august 1953) from two separate places: (1) More cups and handles (probably *kantharos* cups), along with a pair of bracelets and a fibula have been identified *in situ*, near the roots of a brier bush (*Rosa canina*) situated on top of the blasted rock. (2) Other cups (maybe the *mastós* type, no handles are mentioned) and two coins have been discovered under the blasted cliff, between the rocks that had been scattered by the explosion. This is where some fragments of the ceramic pot¹ were also found.

Right now it is impossible to say if the pieces in the two sets had been buried together or at least close to one another.² What is however certain is that, at the time of their discovery, the handles of the *kantharos* cups were already separated from the cups. Therefore, their separation was not caused by the explosion. The handles had been separated before the hoard was even buried. The original welding of the stems to the cups

¹ Kovács 1954, pp. 15-16, pl. VI (photography of the discovery site); Popescu 1958, p. 157.

² Székely 1954, pp.18-22; Popescu 1958, p. 165 (no. 8), p. 175 (no. 14), p. 177 (no. 15); Popescu 1967 (see also the description of pieces no. 9, 10, 14, 15).

Fig. 2. Cup no. 2. Drawing according to the original (MNIR- Bucharest, November 2002).



was kept in only three out of eight cases (cups no. 3, 4 and 6). At the time of the discovery, the other stems were also separated from the cups and this separation probably occurred in the antiquity too.

The inventory of the hoard was hosted at first by the Harghita Regional Museum in Miercurea Ciuc (Muzeul Raional Harghita). In 1971, most of the pieces were transferred to The National Museum of History (that will be referred to as MNIR – Muzeul Național de Istorie a României).³ Two supports of the *kantharos* cups and a fragment of a frieze from a *mastós* cup are still in the Museum in Miercurea Ciuc (inv. no. 4081-4082).⁴ Each of the institutions has restored the *kantharos* cups. Here is the up to date technical data of the eight *kantharos* cups and of the *kantharos* fragments that have been kept separately:

Cup no. 1 – cup with stem and two handles; height: 11.35 cm; diameter of the margin: 7.5 cm; maximum width with handles 14.75 cm; current weight: 214 g; location: MNIR Bucharest, inv. 14556/139371. Fig. 1.

Cup no. 2 – cup with stem and two handles; height: 12.4 cm; diameter of the margin: 11.5 cm; maximum width with handles 17 cm; current weight: 302 g; location: MNIR Bucharest, inv. 14557/139372. Fig. 2.

Cup no. 3 – cup with stem and two handles; height: 12.9 cm; diameter of the margin: 10.3 cm; maximum width with handles 15.5 cm; current weight: 250 g; location: MNIR Bucharest, inv. 14562/139377. Fig. 3.

Cup no. 4 – cup with stem and two handles; height: 14.8 cm; diameter of the margin: 12.4 cm; maximum width with handles 18.5 cm; current weight: 250 g; location: MNIR B Bucharest, inv. 14559/139370. Fig. 4.

Cup no. 5 – cup with stem and two handles; height: 14.3 cm; diameter of the margin: 11.9 cm; maximum width with handles 19.1 cm; current weight: 248 g; location: MNIR Bucharest, inv. 14555/139375. Fig. 5.

Cup no. 6 – cup with stem and two handles; height: 12.6 cm; diameter of the margin: 13.4 cm; maximum width with handles 20.2 cm; current weight: 346 g; location: MNIR Bucharest, inv. 14560/139374. Fig. 6.

Cup no. 7 – cup with stem and two (?) handles (one of the handles is missing); height: 9.5 cm; diameter of the margin: 12.1 cm; maximum width with handle 15.7 cm; current weight: 212 g; location: MNIR Bucharest, inv. 14558/139373. Fig 7- up.

Cup no. 8 – only the bowl was kept; height: 6.8 cm; maximum diameter 9.1 cm; current weight: 140 g; location: MNIR Bucharest, inv. 14550/139365. Fig. 8 - up.

Basis of *kantharos* (1) – height of the fragment: 1.5 cm; diameter: 4.7 cm; location: M. Miercurea Ciuc. Fig. 7- down.

Basis of *kantharos* (2) – height of the fragment 2.2 cm; diameter: 6.7 cm; location: M. Miercurea Ciuc. Fig. 8 - down.

³ The author had the opportunity to personally document the cups from Sâncrăieni in October-November 2002. I would like to thank C. Mușțeșanu, who was, at the time, the manager of MNIR.

⁴ Fragments re-identified by Crișan 2000, pp. 69-71 had been previously illustrated by Székely 1954, pl. XII/2 and XIV/7.



Fig. 3. Cup no. 3. Drawing according to the original (MNIR- Bucharest, November 2002).

The first publication dedicated to the hoard from Sâncrăieni belongs to Székely.⁵ One of its best merits is that it illustrates the objects before the restoration process. Everything that was published later uses photos and drawings that had been made after the reconditioning of the pieces from Sâncrăieni

Restoration dilemmas. The cups from Sâncrăieni suffered two different restoration processes. The first was made shortly after their discovery, in the museum laboratories in Miercurea Ciuc. The second one was made in Bucharest, after relocating the hoard there. In both cases the stems and the handles have been glued to the cups although nothing proved the authenticity of this association. Only the first intervention was referred to in the specialized literature.⁶

However, reports of the modern interventions on the cups in Sâncrăieni have never been published. Unfortunately, irreversible procedures (such as welding and addition of a lead-based alloy) were used during modern restoration operations; they ended up covering the ancient joints entirely and parts of the engraved decoration, as well as damaging the gold-plating of the pieces. Some modern additions focused on insuring the stability of the recipients (fig. 11).

A modern handle was added to cup no.2, similar to one of the separated, antique one. During the first restoration, a hemispherical stem base was fitted to the same cup. This combination was illustrated in publications dating from the 6th and 7th decades of the 20th Century.⁷ On the illustrations included in the publications after 1971, the same cup appears with a truncated-cone base stem, which until then had been fitted to cup no. 5.⁸ The stems of cups no. 2 and no. 5 have simply been interchanged during the second restoration (Fig. 9).

Drawing number XII in Székely's publication⁹ presents cup no. 7 (as numbered in the current publication) with a truncated-cone base stem (Fig. 10). Although made together, from the same silver sheet, the stem and the base were separated from each other upon discovery. While the base remained in Miercurea Ciuc,¹⁰ the rest of the stem was sent to Bucharest, along with cup no.7. While documenting the item in 2002, the author of this work observed that the stem had been wrongly fitted to cup nr. 7: the broader end of the stem, which was meant to be fitted to the base, had been welded to the cup, while the narrow end was pointing downwards (Fig. 10).

⁵ Székely 1954.

⁶ Popescu 1960, p. 448.

⁷ Székely 1954, pl. VIII, Popescu 1958, pp. 177-178, fig. 21-22; Popescu 1960, p. 449, pl. I/7; Popescu 1967, R17j/15; Dumitrescu 1968, fig. 50; Berciu 1969, p. 190, fig. 118.

⁸ Daicoviciu 1972, pp. 200-201, fig. 42-lower left; Iliri și daci 1972, pl. XXXV/D228; Mărghitan 1976, pl. XXIX. The catalogues of the international exhibitions in 1979-1980 (I Daci 1979, 140, fig. 345a; Die Daker 1980, 49, fig. 27) used clichés made by the 2nd restoration. More recent catalogues (Goldhelm 1994, 174-175, Oberländer-Târnoveanu, Trohani 2009, pp. 37-40) haven't illustrated the entire hoard from Sâncrăieni.

⁹ Székely 1954, pl. XII/1 (cup) and pl. XII/2 (stem).

¹⁰ Crișan 2000, fig. 8.



Fig. 4. Cup no. 4. Drawing according to the original (MNIR- Bucharest, November 2002).

There are obvious uncertainties in the work done by modern restorers on the Sâncrăieni cups. These uncertainties were caused by at least two factors: (1) the majority of *kantharos* cups have been partially disassembled prior to burying and were further damaged upon discovery; (2) certain disaccords of technical, morphological and ornamental nature are noticeable between the separate elements of the cups – a contradiction in the unity of style of the pieces. These disaccords are a result

of the characteristics of the antique manufacturing of the eight cups.

All of the eight cups were created by assembling several distinct elements, welded together: the bowl, the stems and the handles. In order to verify technological and stylistic correspondences and non-correspondences we must virtually disassemble the pieces, classify their pieces separately, and discuss the possibilities of reassembling the cups.

We distinguish three types of bowls, three types of stems and four types of handles that I shall indicate by referring to the cups as they have been documented in 2002 (Fig. 1-8).

<i>Elements</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Cups</i>	<i>Morphology</i>
BOWLS	1	cup no. 1	Slim, oval shape; inward curving rim
	2	cups no. 2 and 3	Hemispheric shape; ornamented frieze under the brim; vertical lip
	3	cue 4-8	Hemispheric shape; inferior and middle part with ornaments: splay brim
STEMS	1	cup no. 1	Stem with complex profile joined to a disc-like basis crafted separately with a special instrument
	2	cups no. 2, 3, 6, 7	Tall truncated conic stem and a low truncated conic basis, both made on the same plate; pour engraved ornamentation
	3	cups no. 4 and 5 and fragments from Miercurea Ciuc (Fig. 8/ down).	Cylindrical stem manufactured separately from the semispherical basis; complex ornamentation made by metal molding and engraving
HANDLES	1	cup no. 1	Handle made of three distinct elements: (a) superior plate, (b) bar in the shape of letter C and (c) straight bar with loop-shaped endings
	2	cups no. 2 and 3	Curled handle with lance-like endings
	3	cup 4	Handle with superior sheet and two parallel rope molding bars
	4	cups no. 5, 6, and 7	Handle with superior sheet and two parallel rope molding bars that form curls and are joined together in a Hercules's knot



Fig. 5. Cup no. 5. Drawing according to the original (MNIR - Bucharest, November 2002).



Fig. 6. Cup no. 6. Drawing according to the original (MNIR - Bucharest, November 2002).

Original correspondences. The bowl type 1, the stem type 1 and the handles type 1 illustrate a careful and elaborated handcraft. Together they form a technological unit. The absence of any kind of ornamentation on all the elements expresses an almost classical sobriety in contrast with the rich ornamentation of the elements of the other cups. Technologically and stylistically, cup no. 1 distinguishes itself as an object crafted in a Greco-Roman, probably an Italic workshop. This origin is indicated by the analogies between the handles of cup no.1 with examples of the late republican toreutics in the discoveries from Arcisate,¹¹ Giubiasco¹² or Palmi¹³ etc.

It is highly probable that the modern restorers correctly attributed the handles type 2, 3 and 4 to the bowls type 2 and 3, according to the traces left by the welding on the walls of the bowls.

Dilemmas, non-correspondences and their meaning. In attempting to solve the case of how the stems type 2 and 3 and the bowls type 2 and 3 (Fig. 8) have originally been assembled, we come upon what seems to be an unsolvable dilemma. The dilemma is quite easy to express, but not as easy to solve: how do we stylistically report two type 2 bowls and five type 3 bowls to four type 2 stems and three type 3 stems?

The number of the type 2 stems (four) as well as the number of the type 3 stems (three) is bigger the number of the type 2 bowls, but at the same time is smaller than the number of the type 3 bowls (five). In other words, contrary to Popescu's opinion¹⁴ there was no direct numerical or stylistic correspondence between the morphology and the ornamentation of the stems and the bowls. It is in this sense that we must emphasize the stylistic differences between the representations of the *akanthus* on the bowl of cup no. 4 and on cup no. 2 and on the base of the type 3 stems (Fig. 13). It is this kind of differences that reflect stylistic dissimilarities and that therefore indicate different origins.

Concordantly, the bowls and the stems have been crafted separately. Such a conjuncture should be explained by a less harmonized and probably unsynchronized collaboration of the craftsmen. The chasm of the manufacturing process and the incorrect assembly of some ornamental elements of the same cup reflect the lack of rigueur and the lack of interest in the stylistic uniformity of the final products, the lack of continuity, of experience and of tradition in craftsmanship (group creation).

The chasm of the manufacturing process is also proved by a technological detail on cup no.6 that researchers haven't emphasized until now. The brim of this cup has been doubled by welding a new, wider brim. It is very probable that the sheets of the handles have been crafted separately of the cup. The circle that the brim of this cup describes proved too small for the circular arc described by the sheets. That means that the



Fig. 7. Cup no. 7. Up (bowl, handle and stem): drawing according to the original (MNIR - Bucharest, November 2002); down: superior part of the stem in the correct position and basis held in the Museum in Miercurea Ciuc (after Crişan 2000, fig. 8).

¹¹ Küthmann 1958, p.120, pl. 11.

¹² Gabelmann 1982, pp. 24-26, fig. 14-17.

¹³ Guzzo 1980, 196, no. 4-5, p. 200, fig. 7, p. 202, fig. 9.

¹⁴ Popescu 1960, pp. 448.

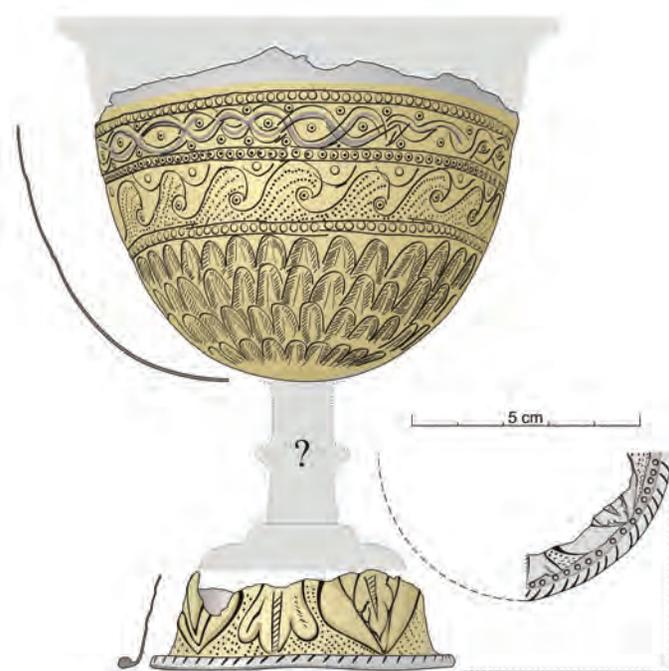


Fig. 8. Cup no. 8 (drawing according to the original, MNIR-Bucharest, November, 2002) and basis held in the Museum in Miercurea Ciuc (after Crişan 2000, fig. 8)

brim of the cup had to be broadened. One may also presume a chronological gap between the moment the cup was created and the moment the handles were crafted.

The same time gap can be accepted in other cases. The attaching parts of the handles cover the preexistent engraved golden decoration on the bowls of cups no. 4-7. As these bowls were decorated, the craftsman did not foresee any spaces destined to the welding of the handles. Most probably, the craftsman that created the type 3 bowls (cups 4-8) meant to transpose the model offered by the ceramic Delian/Megarien cups and by their local imitations into precious metal. In other words, it was initially intended to make stem-less cups, similar to the ones richly ornamented in the Mediterranean regions.¹⁵ Converting a *mastós* cup into a *kantharos* cup came afterwards. It might reflect more than just an option of the barbaric craftsmen it might reflect a change in tradition and a polishing of the banquet ceremony of the late Hellenistic age. This process is synchronized with the entry of late republican imports into Dacia. It's probably this import of cup no. 1 into Dacia that offered the local craftsmen a new kind of luxury silver recipient.

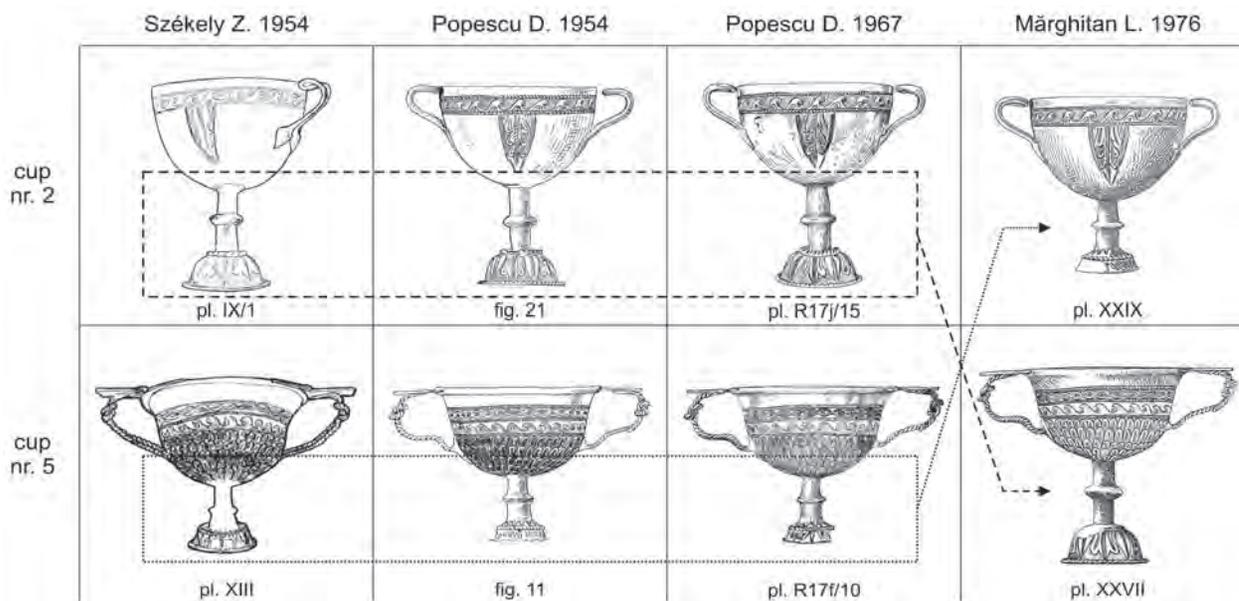


Fig. 9. Drawings of cups no. 2 (up) and no. 5 (down) that have been published in time. We must remark that the stems have been moved from one cup to the other, probably in the early '70s of the past century.

¹⁵ Küthmann 1958, pl. 8-9; Oliver 1977, pp. 75-79, no. 40-43.

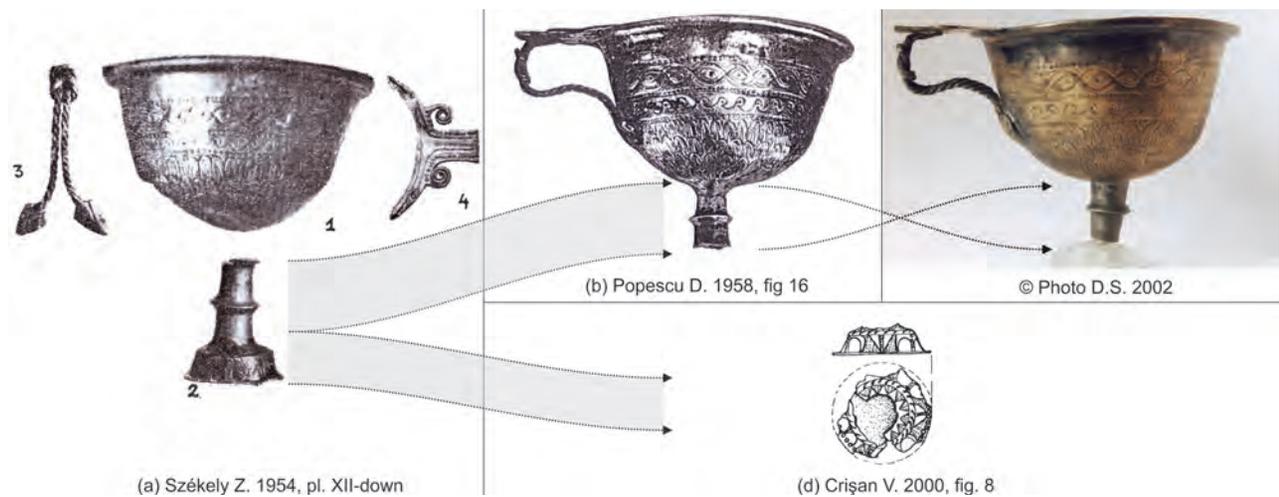


Fig. 10. (a-c) Photographs of cup no. 7 before (a) and after the restoration in the '50s (b), after the restoration in the '70s-'80s (c) and drawing of the basis (d, after Crişan V. 2000, fig. 8). The superior part of the stem is in MNIR - Bucharest, where it has been wrongly welded to the bowl (c) and the lower part (d) is being kept in the Museum in Miercurea Ciuc.



Fig. 11. Modern filling of the stem of cup no. 2 (photo D.S., November 2002).

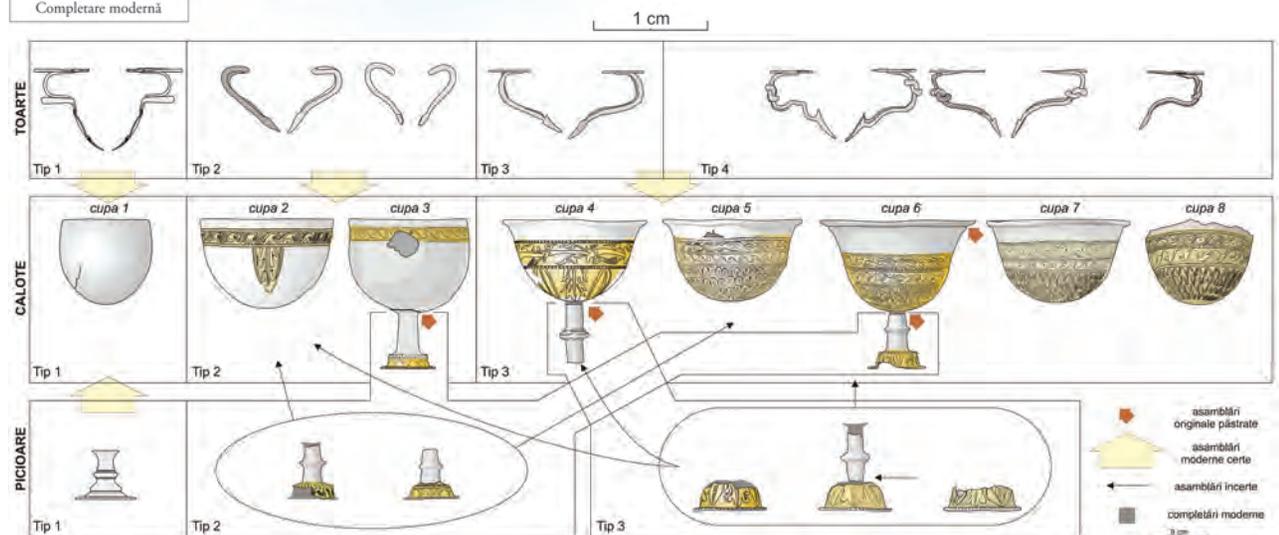


Fig. 12. Typological classification of constituent elements of the *kantharos* cups in Sâncrăieni. Different arrows are used to mark the combinations between the handles, the bowls and the stems that are certain and the ones that are uncertain.



Fig. 13. Different representations of the akantus: (1) on the bowl of cup no. 4, (2) on the bowl of cup no. 2 and (3) on the bowl of cup no. 5. Photo. D.S., November 2002.

The technological and stylistic differences the elements of the *kantharos* cups in Sâncrăieni allow us to identify several distinct artisans: (1) the artisan of the engraved bowls (the bowls of cups no. 4-8); (2) the artisan of the imported cup no. 1; (3) the artisan of cups no. 2 and 3, probably of the 3rd type of stems as well (fig. 12 and 13/2-3) and (4) the artisan of the 2nd type of stems (Fig. 12). Artisans 1, 3 and 4 are local, whereas the 2nd one is Greco-Roman. One can also assume that there is a chronological gap between craftsman no. 1, on the one hand, and the 3rd and 4th, on the other – it's probably a matter of one generation.

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Excerpt from ARA Reports 3, 2012.