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Anatolian Studies, Vol. 6, Special Number in Honour and in Memory of Professor John Garstang.
(1956), pp. 45-48.

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ANATOLIA AND THRACE

SOME BRONZE AGE RELATIONS

By V. GORDON CHILDE

INTIMATE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN Anatolia and Thrace had been suspected ever since Kazarov¹ published his finds from Kyrillovo. Despite the peculiarities in their handles, the vases and bronzes look so distinctively Anatolian² that Thrace seemed just a provincial extension of the Early Troadic Bronze Age culture as known in 1914. Since 1945 new finds from Mikhalits,³ taken in conjunction with Mikov's discoveries at Karanovo⁴ and those of Hamit Zubeyr Koşay,⁵ at Büyük Güllücek⁵ have put these relations in an entirely new light. Mikhalits, near Svilingrad where a *depos amphikypellon* had been found in 1941,⁶ lies so close to the present frontier that fuller excavation since 1945 has been impracticable. But the observations made in that year alone are sufficiently illuminating. The site is not a tell, but occupies the crest of a natural ridge, and was defended by a stone wall enclosing an area of

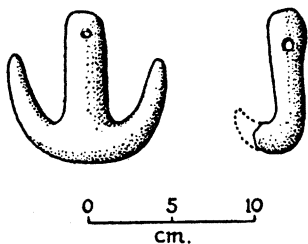


FIG. 1. Clay "anchor ornament" and "hook", Mikhalits.

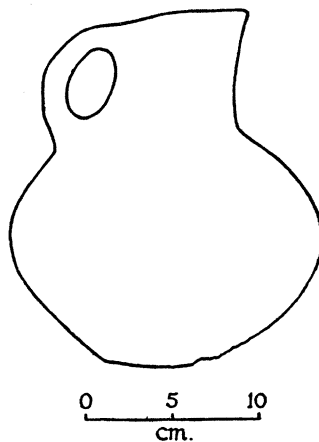


FIG. 2. Jug of dark faced ware, Mikhalits.

80-90 m. in diameter. The houses inside were rectangular and provided with low domed ovens (1.10 m. in diameter but only .38 m. high internally). Bones of cattle, sheep, dogs, red and roe deer, and horses are reported. The relics include polished stone adzes and battle-axes, antler axes with round shaft-holes, spools, whorls, models of animals and battle-axes, arcs, hooks and anchor ornaments (Fig. 1) of clay, and much

¹ PZ., VI, 1914, 67-88.

² Bittel, *Prähistorische Forschungen in Kleinasien*, Istanbul, 1934.

³ *Fouilles et Recherches*, I, Musée National Bulgare, Sofia, 1948, pp. 7-20.

⁴ *Sovetskaya Arch.*, XXIV, 1955, p. 125.

⁵ *Bulletin*, XII, 1948, pp. 471-485.

⁶ *Fouilles et Recherches*, p. 22.

monochrome pottery, generally black but sometimes shading off to orange-brown. Among the shapes so far restored are a jug with oblique rim (Fig. 2), many cups with crested handles (Plate I, *a*) and bowls with crested or trumpet lugs rising from the inturned rims (Plate I, *b*). The Troadic character of the assemblage is quite obvious; particularly striking and significant analogies are presented by the clay hooks⁷ and arcs,⁸ the crested handles⁹—many handles are “thrust” in the Troadic manner¹⁰—and the bowls with trumpet lugs growing from the rim.¹¹ The spools and animal models, like the stone and antler tools, too, would be quite at home in the Troad; anchor ornaments¹² are, however, explicitly European—Early Macedonian and Early Helladic—and stone-work, hooks, and several ceramic types would be equally appropriate in an Early Macedonian context. Is, then, Mikhalits culturally intermediate between Thermi and Kritsana? That would be an over-simplification.

On the one hand, horses and model battle-axes are not Anatolian at all in the third millennium; the latter are found on Tripolye sites in Transylvania and Romania¹³ and buried in children's graves of the Fatyanovo culture in Central Russia, as in the Swedish and Finnish Boat-axe graves.¹⁴ Moreover, cord ornament, freely used on some Mikhalits sherds (Plate II, *b*), though represented on a few Early Helladic sherds from Macedonia and Central Greece,¹⁵ is really more at home north of the Danube in the Ukraine, and in the parklands and forests further north. On the other hand, the best Anatolian parallels to the rare incised patterns on Mikhalits pots (Plate II, *a*) come not from north-west but from north-east of Anatolia, from Büyük Güllücek¹⁶; and there, and at Alaca Hüyük, are handles with vertical projections as at Kyrillovo and generally in what is now called the Vesilinovo culture (Plate I, *c*). So north-east Anatolia must somehow be brought into the picture. But such handles seem to be missing at Mikhalits, and the relations of Mikhalits to the Vesilinovo culture remain to be determined.

The latter was generally supposed to be relatively late, and to appear at the end of a long chalcolithic period represented by the Mound Culture.¹⁷ This is now denied by Mikov and Detev¹⁸ on the strength

⁷ Lamb, *Thermi*, p. 159; Pl. XXIV, 31, 78; *Schliemann Sammlung*, 8831–5.

⁸ Mikov compares *Schliemann Sammlung*, 8240.

⁹ Blegen, etc., *Troy I*, Fig. 236, 25.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, Fig. 235, 3; 244, 1–10; *Thermi*, Pl. XVI, 1.

¹² *AJA.*, LI, 168.

¹³ *Hăbășești: Monografie Arheologică*, Acad. Repub. Pop. Romine, Bucuresti, 1954, pp. 469–472.

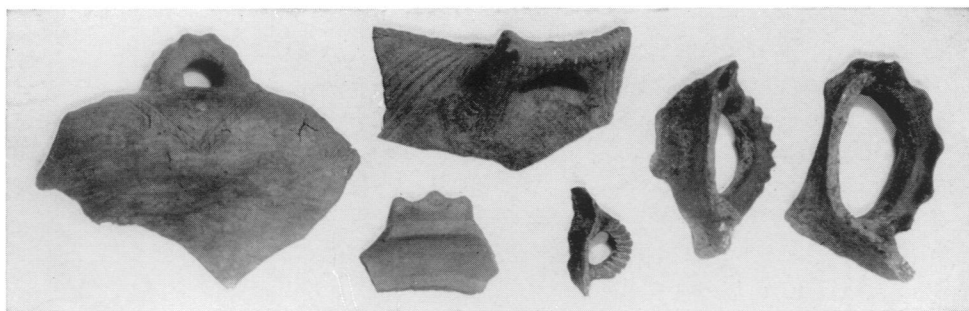
¹⁴ Hausler in *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Martin-Luther Universität, Halle-Wittenburg*, V, 1955, 102.

¹⁵ Milojević, *Germania*, XXXIII, 1955, 151–4.

¹⁶ See note 5.

¹⁷ e.g., by Gaul, “The Neolithic Period in Bulgaria” (*American Sch. Preh. Research, Bull.*, XVI), 1948, pp. 229–234.

¹⁸ *Sov. Arkh.*, XXIV, p. 125; *Godišnik Narod. Arkh. Muzei*, Plovdiv, II, 1950, pp. 4–20.



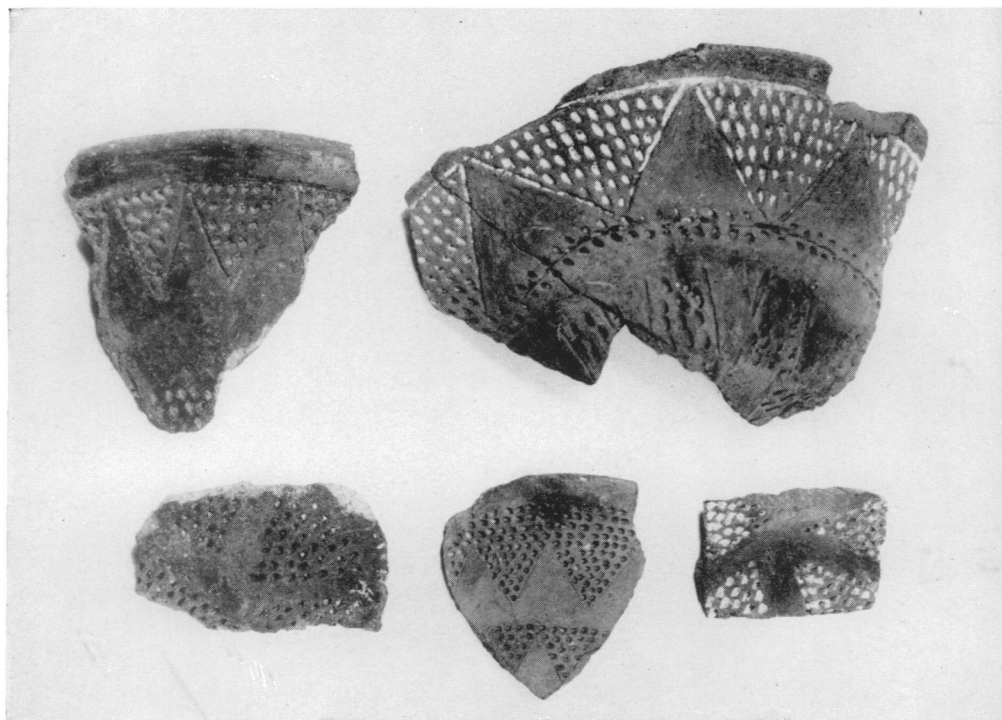
(a) Handles from Mikhalits.



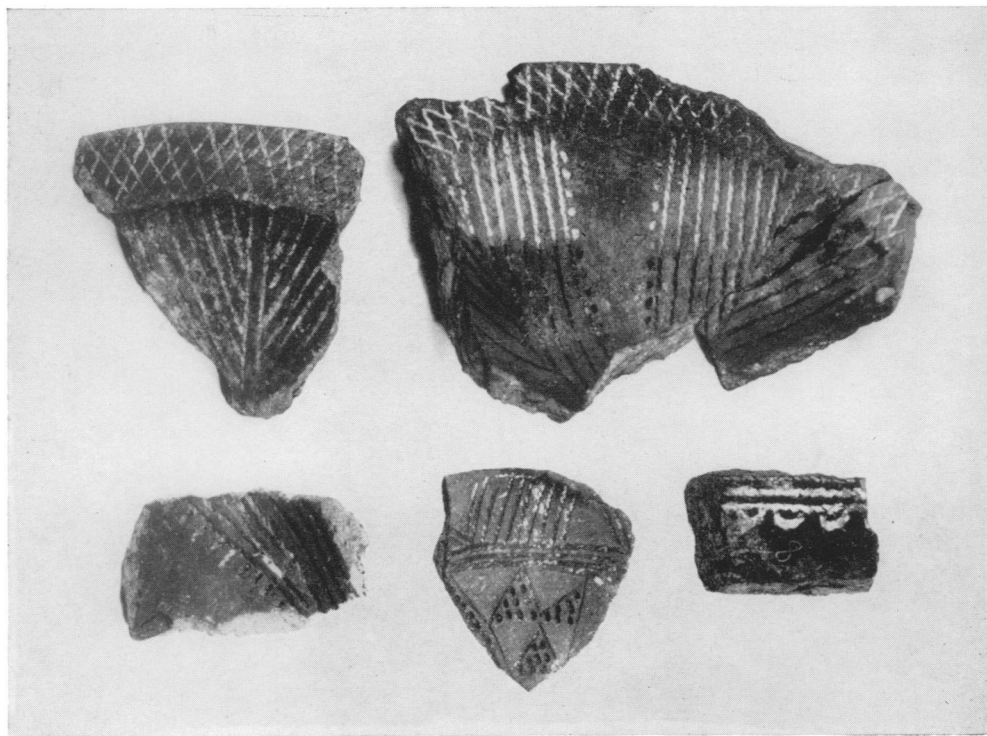
(b) Crested and trumpet lugs from Mikhalits.



(c) Vase of Veselinovo type from Karanovo II. ($\times \frac{1}{2}$)
National Museum, Sofia.



(a) External decoration.



(b) Internal decoration.

Decorated sherds from Mikhalits. National Museum, Sofia.

of their stratigraphical observations at Karanovo and Baniata. In both sites the culture sequence begins with Gaul's "West Bulgarian painted culture". This has so far no parallels in Anatolia, but is just a facies of the Starčevo culture that initiates the Neolithic succession, not only in Bulgaria but throughout the Balkans¹⁹ and in Romania and Transylvania,²⁰ and that even in Thessaly is "pre-Sesklo".²¹ The Veselinovo culture, or at least plain pots with Veselinovo handles like those from Alaca, immediately succeeds this Starčevo horizon in Karanovo II and Baniata II. Only later in Karanovo IV and Baniata III does the Mound Culture appear with its graphite-painted pottery and curious ritual objects that have no good parallels in Anatolia²²; but in Karanovo V and Baniata IV, as also at Ezero near Nova Zagora,²³ reappears plain unpainted pottery that in fabric and to some extent in shapes—jugs with oblique mouths, "thrust" handles, even bowls with trumpet lugs rising from the inverted rims, though generally spouted—looks very Anatolian.

It is to-day disputed whether Mikhalits should be equated with Karanovo II (Veselinovo) or with Karanovo V (Ezero). The former equation, to which Mikov inclines,²⁴ would be perfectly compatible with the most natural interpretation of the Mikhalits finds; they would denote an Anatolian expansion into Thrace in the time of Troy I and Thermi, and the long-lasting Mound Culture would happily fill in much of the gap in the late third and early second millennia left by the apparent absence of Middle Bronze Age material from Thrace. But if Karanovo V and Baniata IV—and the best parallels I have seen do in fact come from Ezero—be equated with Mikhalits and so with Troy I and dated to the third millennium, Veselinovo in the form represented at Karanovo II and Baniata II becomes excessively ancient. It would be hard to find anything in the Troad or even on the plateau from which it could be plausibly derived, and the idea of a spread from Europe into Asia Minor, hinted at long ago by Hillebrandt and Tompa, would deserve serious consideration, for which, however, this is not the place.

In either case it seems quite possible that in Thrace the Veselinovo culture may have persisted at some sites, side by side with the Mound Culture at others—the Veselinovo layers at the eponymous site were 5 m. thick and substantial changes in the pottery are suggested by Mikov's

¹⁹ Arandeljovic-Garašanin, *Starčevacka Kultura* (Univerz. v Ljubljani), 1954; Milošević, *Chronologie der jüngeren Steinzeit*, Berlin, 1949, pp. 65–85.

²⁰ *Studii și Cercetări de Istorie Veche*, București, II, 1951, pp. 57–64.

²¹ Milošević, *Arch. Anz.*, 1954 (*Jhb. d. Inst.*, LXIX), pp. 11–25.

²² Fragments with excised decoration like von der Osten, *The Alishar Hüyük*, 1930–2 (*OIP.*, XXVIII, 1937), Fig. 65, find parallels in "altars" from Veselinovo levels in Thrace.

²³ Material in museum of Nova Zagora unpublished; some vases bear cord impressions and one vase, in black ware with red blotches, is paralleled at Maltepe near Sivas, *Belleten*, 44, 1937, p. 670, no. 11.

²⁴ Personal communication to the writer.

very schematic sketch.²⁵ If so, it would be unnecessary to postulate two incursions from Anatolia, on either view. So the new Bulgarian finds at the moment raise fresh problems for Anatolian archaeology ; perhaps a mere statement of these might be an appropriate tribute to one who himself has contributed so conspicuously to the solution of others.

²⁵ Mikov, "Selisča mogila otu bronzovata epokha do s. Veselinovo," *Izvestiya Bulgar. Arkheol. Institut*, XIII, 1939.