

AN EXAMPLE
OF INTERCULTURALITY:
THE EUROPEAN SOUTHEAST
IN THE FIRST MILLENNIUM B.C.

“Archaeology has revolutionized the study of history. It has broadened the horizons almost as much as the telescope did for the vision of astronomy in space; just as the microscope revealed to biology that under the form of large organisms is hidden the life of infinitesimal cells. Finally it has modified historic study in the same manner that radioactivity altered chemistry.”

V. Gordon Childe,
Progress and Archaeology,
London, 1945, p. 2.

Fifteen years ago, at the XII International Congress of Historic Sciences (Vienna, 1965), when historians finally decided to address the problem of “acculturation” (a concept and term first formulated and defined by sociologists), their reaction, with few exceptions, proved to be rather hesitant.

As Professor Alphonse Dupront emphasized in his report,

Translated by R. Scott Walker

“The word *acculturation*, from the beginning and still today, remains ambiguous. Its imperfect boundaries, its obvious imperialism, complicate in advance research, definition, discussion. To accept it is to shove our entire problem into the fragile area of cultural history”. But he added, “The operation is useful and even necessary.”¹ This French scholar, concerned with submitting to an impartial and rigorous judgment the results of a survey conceived and applied according to a program foreign to history, tried to present the facts of a problem once seen in a completely different manner and spirit, in order to save at least the “kernel” of truth implied in the concept of acculturation.

Even if limited to “the study of the process of cultural transmission”, to use the extremely nuanced formula of one of the creators of this concept,² research into the origin, the dimensions and the progress—real or imagined—of the relations between “accultured” and “acculturating” peoples *a priori* bears the imprint of a postulate which cannot be generalized in advance before proceeding to a comparative analysis of the specific conditions of each of the partners who have entered into contact. Such an analysis must deal with all forms of expression, spontaneous or borrowed, of every civilization at each stage of its confrontation with another civilization if we hope to arrive at least at a common methodology, if not at generally accepted conclusions.

Despite the fact that, for lack of anything better, this term is at present more or less accepted, we must still point out that for most historians it has lost nothing of its congenital ambiguity, just like the concept it designates. Rather, another formula would seem to me more fitting. That would be the formula introduced in the last international debates organised by UNESCO: *interculturality*. This new formula has the advantage of taking in a much wider and more varied spectrum of contacts, exchanges, transformations, previously unknown syntheses and is valid in all parts of the world at any period of history. On the other hand, this formula is filled with greater prudence, that quality which historians must exercise toward documents before drawing conclusions. And this prudence is even more necessary

¹ A. Dupront, *De l'acculturation*, XII Congrès international des sciences historiques, Vienna, 1965, Rapports I, Grands thèmes, p. 8.

² Melville J. Herskovist, *Man and His Works*, New York, 1948, p. 525.

when we deal with new areas, where interdisciplinary research is the condition *sine qua non* for any effort proposed as a means of linking a scientific reality capable of verification with a consistent concept worthy of being commonly accepted.

Characterized by an obvious logic, this new approach to the historic process explains certain revisions which have occurred lately in the work of sociologists also. Apart from the desire to eliminate what is arbitrary from an entire series of badly established generalizations, we note the desire to find a method of research which is close to the ethnological, linguistic and historic truth found in the heart of those societies considered as undergoing the process of acculturation.

This article is not the place (nor are we the right person) to review the criticisms made in this report by historians toward the specialists of cultural anthropology. In any case their competence and spirit of initiative cannot be denied, for they have opened new research horizons, taking in all areas relative to the way of life, the past and the present of peoples "without history". But it does seem to me permitted to attempt at least a modest contribution to help escape the quite dangerous deadlock in which historians find themselves confronted by sociologists.

Historians, rightly, should underscore the error of treating as negligible the heterogeneity of indigenous civilization. And, as a matter of fact, sociologists have not considered this heterogeneity as much as they should have. Moreover, it is no less true that ethnologists would be correct in addressing an analogous reproach to historians who have not always considered the essential fact that evolved civilizations also present a heterogeneous character, evident as soon as they are compared one to another. An analysis in this sense would be all the more necessary since, in the sphere of one and the same society of this category, the historian is obliged to separate out an "educated" culture which is the domain of history and a "popular" culture, the study of which is thought to be the concern of ethnologists. This division is rather arbitrary, for it separates the two components of the one society or related societies. This terribly fundamental problem has never received the attention it merits even though its importance was noted two centuries earlier by Herder. Attention should have been focused on the origin of these

cultures as well as the zones and periods where they came into contact. The historian could only gain from such an analysis, which would show him to what degree and under what conditions the question of acculturation could be extended to the study of the inner acculturations of a more or less evolved society.

I would like to cite as examples several recent studies which indicate a real turning-point marked by the historians. There is the volume of Marcel Benabou, *La résistance africaine à la romanisation*,³ and the work recently conceived and written in a critical and penetrating spirit by one of the masters of ancient history, Professor Arnaldo Momigliano. Even the title of this work, *Alien Wisdom: The Limits of Hellenization*,⁴ alerts us to the knowledge of the rapid and real progress made by archaeologists and historians of antiquity in the space of the last decades under the new tendency of research into intercultural exchanges.

I would add at once that historians of antiquity and archaeologists have a great advantage, despite serious *lacunae* in their documentation: the distance in time. This distance is perhaps the only means of permitting a verification, at once diachronic and synchronic, of the effects flowing from contacts between diverse human groups, contacts considered in all their variety, in all their forms of expression throughout the stages and conditions of coexistence—peaceful or in conflict—sufficiently known in their historic development. This is what Fernand Braudel, a pioneer in research of this kind, termed correctly “a long-term question”.

Moreover, specialists of ancient history and of history of the high Middle Ages have another advantage: the immense mass of archaeological documents whose great variety—which ranges from the simplest tools to veritable artistic masterpieces—complements written sources (inscriptions, literary works, myths and legends implicitly or explicitly expressing a certain mentality). These archaeological documents are capable of providing an increasingly important contribution to a clearer and better defined vision of the phenomenon of interculturality during long periods of human history. Moreover, verified as to the context of their origin, in-

³ Paris, Maspéro, 1975.

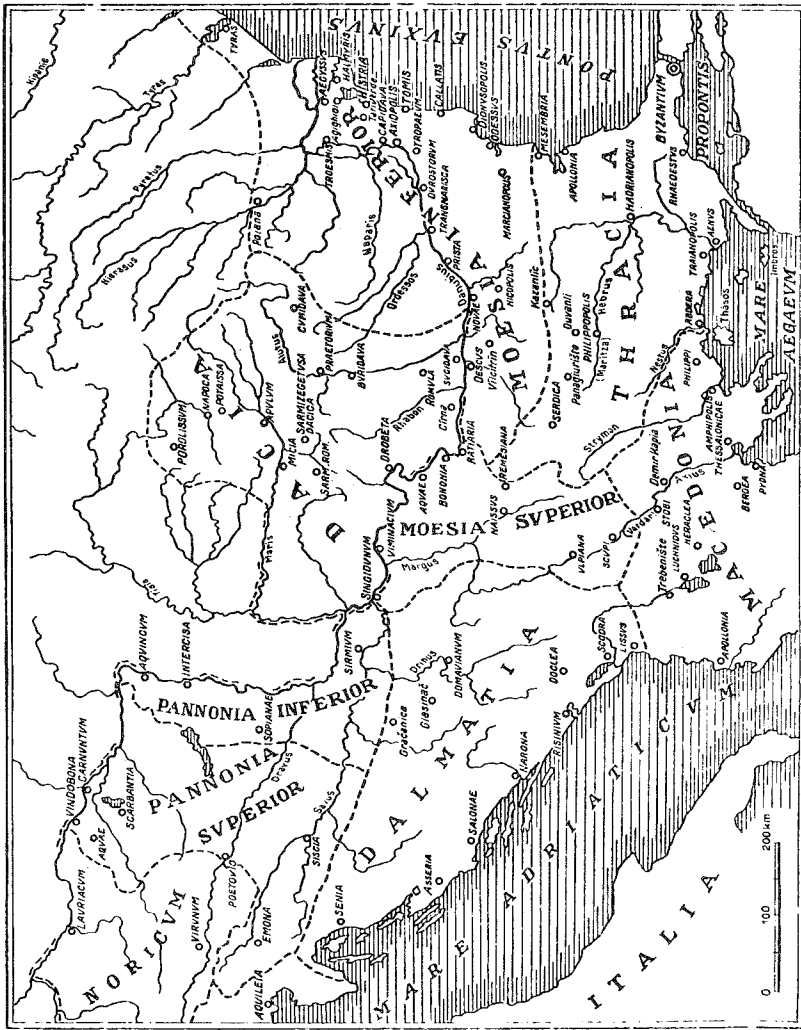
⁴ *Alien Wisdom*, Cambridge, 1974.

terrogated with every scientific precision, these documents deserve to be treated as one of the most distinct voices of history. A “silent” voice, but oh how eloquent it is if one only has the patience and the gift to make it speak! Then it reveals some of the various and appealing aspects of real history. It is the voice of ordinary men, the expression of their way of life, of their technical aptitudes, their progress. It is also the voice of their mentality. As proof of its efficacy, I propose to apply this new means of scientific investigation to the study of one of the richest cultural syntheses of our continent: the civilization of the peoples and tribes of the European southeast and of the Pontic Zone in the first millennium B.C.

THRACIAN AND ILLYRIAN FARMERS,
GREEK SAILORS, SCYTHIAN NOMADS

At the dawn of the first millennium B.C., in the European southeast and east, forms typical of the first iron age (Hallstatt A-B) were crystallizing. Greeks, Illyrians, Thracians, Geta-Dacians, direct descendants of the bronze age population, during this wildly agitated period correctly identified as “obscure”, acquired their physiognomy typical of Paleo-Balkan populations. In the east European zone the written sources have called the protagonists of this renewal the Cimmerians. Their raids into Asia Minor (as far as Urartu where they were stopped by the Assyrians) led them to pass through the canyons of the ancient route of the Caucasus. This is the same trail by which the Scythians in turn arrived, coming in contact with Iranian civilization at the moment when they had succeeded the Cimmerians north of the Black Sea. Scythian civilization, characterized above all by its “animal style”, supplied a new and excellent contribution of eastern Europe for the enrichment of the cultural patrimony of the entire region from the east to the center of the old continent.

All these aspects, some ancient and others more recent, were to fuse together, projected on a new technological and economic background born of the progressive replacement by iron of that alloy, expensive as it was rare, bronze. Much more abundant, iron deposits determined the changes which the iron sword and plow were to signify. Here we have to deal, obviously, with a profound



The Balkan-Danubian region in the Greco-Roman era.

transformation whose scope for the renewal of economic, social and political life must rightly be emphasized. At first evident in the purely technological domain, this transformation ultimately expressed the definitive outcome of contacts of the Greek and Carpathian-Balkan bronze era with civilizations originating in the peripheral zones of eastern and central Europe. Their epi-centers, around the fourteenth century B.C., were in the central Danube basin for the first and strongest of these civilizations, that of the “fields of funerary urns”; and in the central basin of the Volga for the second, the civilization of “wood-framed tombs” (*srubnie* in Russian). From all appearances this later civilization represented the Iranian branch of Indo-Europeans, precursors of the Scythian nomads. The most developed groups of the middle and final bronze age in the Carpathian area, and particularly those belonging to the civilization of Monteoru, in the course of the fourteenth century, somewhere in the middle Dniepr basin, were confronted with groups of the *srubnie* type who were in full development precisely at mid-century. The victory (a relative victory in any case) was to return again in the following stage to elements originating in eastern Europe who led a pastoral life and who were gifted with great dynamism. This process reproduced that which had already occurred more than one thousand years earlier in the same region and in analogous circumstances between groups both pastoral and nomadic in nature belonging to the Kurgan civilization and the farmers of the final phase of the Carpatho-Balkan Aeneolithic era, magnificently represented in the region of contact by the civilization of painted pottery of the type Cucuteni-Tripolje.

New cultural ensembles, which archaeologists designate with the name “Dorian” or, even better, Protogeometric and Geometric in Greece, Glasinac and Periam-Pecica in Yugoslavia, and Noua-Sabatinovka in western Romania (after the two similarly named sites in Romania and the Ukraine), are found at the basis of this process which brought about in this region the coming of the first iron age, whose amplitude for tribes of southeastern and eastern Europe can be termed exceptional from a technological point of view as well as linguistically and socio-economically.

About the same time Greece underwent what is called the “Dorian invasion,” a term which seems increasingly inappropriate

ethnically since the Mycenaean debacle was brought on not by this little obscure Hellenistic group, but by the invasion, or more properly the enormous pressure, of the tribes of the “fields of funerary urns”, whose point of departure was in the middle Danube basin. In the Carpato-Balkan regions, the archaic populations who inhabited them and who had caused to flourish bronze age art and technology (under Aegean influence and especially under Mycenaean impact), acquired at that time their definitive physiognomy as a result of the pressure and the invasion of the same tribes of the “fields of the funerary urns”. Profound socio-economic and political upheavals brought them to their individualization as tribes, and they appear in Greek literature as Illyrians, Thracians and Geto-Dacians. But the inheritance bequeathed by bronze age civilization is clearly outlined, particularly in the framework of the process which crystallized the destruction of Mycenaean palaces, to an actual “hoarding” in the Carpato-Balkan zone of immense deposits of bronze, all of which indicates the insecurity of the period.

The first human agglomerations of this dawning age bear the name “ash-men” (*zalniki*) in the east Carpathian area and in eastern Bulgaria; this epithet derived from the frequent fires which destroyed their modest wattle and daub habitations. Their characteristic pottery is of a primitive design, shown by the famous “bumpy” pottery (*Buckelkeramic*) found in southern Romania and eastern Bulgaria, as well as in level VII b 2 of Troy. In any case west of the Carpathians in Romania, in Yugoslavia and in western Bulgaria, the situation was much different. Thanks to bronze age traditions and the renewal of certain anterior connections, iron age civilization here developed at a much more rapid pace with a more perfected pottery which often recalls typical examples of the bronze era. The confrontation of these two currents proper to the Carpato-Balkan sub-zone and their mutual contamination also enveloped in time the eastern zone of Europe. This was the final touch delivered to the Hallstattian civilization of this part of the world, definitively crystallized since the eighth century B.C.

Archaeological research has given us an eloquent picture of these restructurings. As a result, it was only from the eighth century B.C. that there was once again in eastern and southeastern

Europe a human society engaged in a forward march, although under the circumstances very little was different from one zone to another. Those who apparently made the most rapid and even spectacular progress in many respects were the Greeks whose formative role in the genesis of European civilization will never be sufficiently appreciated.

Certainly one could ask if this Greek civilization, which flourished so in antiquity but which eventually passed into the possession of the entire Mediterranean area, belongs in this present study which deals exclusively with the creation of the civilization which developed in eastern and southeastern Europe. It seems to us that this question can have only a positive response. As a matter of fact, it is not only apparent that Greece and the Aegean Isles are a component part of Europe, but it is also a fact of capital importance that Greek civilization has its roots profoundly planted in the Balkans. Moreover, its impact on the Balkan, Adriatic and Pontic regions was felt with exceptional force, contributing in large measure to the birth of a magnificent, completely exceptional, Balkan-Hellenic synthesis. Greece thus reimbursed its debt, we might say, to the world of the Balkans which had contributed so much to its development. What, then, were the particular traits of this ancient Greek civilization? What are the paths which were opened to it by the doors of the Balkans, the Adriatic basin, of the Pontus Euxinus?

The first characteristic of the cultural work of the Greek city-states, even since their distant origins, is the privileged place given to man. If ever one forgot the radical reworking of mental categories in the Greek world at the end of the archaic age, one could rediscover the origin of the famous adage of Protagoras, "Man, the measure of all things", in the epic works of Homer or in Hesiod who described with unprecedented vividness a world of gods modeled in the image of man. But the arrival of the *polis*, which recognised for the first time in history a status of sociopolitical, and hence intellectual, autonomy even for the humblest of its citizens, is without doubt the necessary condition for an innovative society because it is oriented toward man and built, after a fashion, on man's measure.

The beginnings of a philosophy in the sixth century B.C. marks this change which has rightly been termed "the explosion of

mythic thinking”; philosophy from Thales to Heraclitus, from Anaximander or Pythagoras to Democritus and to the Sophists discovered the natural order of a universe which man can know. Even before philosophy, however, the institutions of the city-state and the reflections they provoked as well as a literature increasingly preoccupied with human actions evolved the mental structures of a civilization dominated by man.

In the same sense the evolution of Greek art, whose more direct language was easily able to exercise influence beyond Greece, realized a dazzling progression toward that anthropomorphism which defined the world of the city-states. Although the rigorous order of geometric pottery testifies already to a growing desire to create visual order and spatial rhythm, the increasingly large area given over to anthropomorphic decoration in the later evolution of Greek pottery, so frequently exported, familiarized east European civilization with this innovative artistic language. The organic relation of the human representations with the design of the vases makes them bear quite far the echo of an artistic experience which reached its fullness in the great works of the late archaic period and the classical age.

Ultimately what characterizes this revolution, esthetic as well as intellectual, is the unprecedented value given to man. Man as the object of representation, first of all, for the perfect mastery which Greek artists exercised over matter led to the creation of a universe of human perfection. But also, and even more profoundly, of man as subject, creator of the image; for it is man’s own perceptions and his own vision of the world which established the discourse of Greek art and attained the level of norm and esthetic ideal.

It is true, certainly, that the omnipotence of the Greek model in the universe of forms has been frequently contested, just as it is also true that such an experience can never be repeated in all its organic development and all its plenitude. However, it is no less true that, in that which it possesses of more authentic and more alive, this model constitutes the first anthropocentric civilization in history by responding to all the revolutions of thought realized by the Helladic culture. From Dedalic art to archaic *korai*, from Antenor to Polyclitus or to Phidias, the sudden growth of the image-symbol and the invention of an artistic language which

masters forms, space and the universe bears witness to an intellectual experience which constructs the world of the imagination according to human measures. Unique and unrepeatable certainly, this experience nevertheless was to fertilize a multitude of historic areas, among which eastern Europe is far from being the least important.

When Greek artisans created images of the animal world which were emblematic in the usage of Scythian or Thracian “kings”, while for their own political universe they disposed of an art whose distinctive and essential trait is anthropocentrism, this phenomenon (not so much a matter of contemporaneity but rather a kind of unfolding) seems in its own way exemplary for the complexity of problems posed by the study of cultural relations of Greece with the east European area. For let us not forget that this area became quite early and for many centuries a privileged zone of contact and confrontation between Greek civilization and the Illyrian cultural horizon on the one side and Thraco-Scythian culture on the other.

The influence of Greek culture in the peripheral zones of the Mediterranean world has often been discussed and in recent decades with a better historical understanding of these problems. In fact one could ask what is the correct meaning to be given to this word “peripheral”, since today we can very well reverse the perspectives and see in the Greek development a particular experience, however promising for the future, in that narrow coastal strip located at the edges of the vast continental world which has its own historic and cultural individuality. And if the influence of Greek civilization is an incontestable fact in the history of these regions, still the reciprocity of these cultural exchanges must be emphasized as well as their respective limits which mark, ultimately, the autonomy of the areas of civilization.

Reciprocity first. Let us remember that if echoes of Greek influence (from the shapes and techniques of ceramic ware to the more sensitive area of religious syncretisms) can be found everywhere in east European civilization, it is no less true that a dialogue was established between Greece and the vast geographic and human outposts of the “barbarian” world and that this dialogue contributed to Hellenic growth. This is true for the exchange of material riches (ore, grain, honey and even slaves) whose constant

flow was indispensable to the life of the city-states and stimulated them toward an unprecedented perfection and expansion of their artisan production. But this is equally true at the level of institutions and social relations, for it was only by opening up to constant exchanges with the continental outposts that the artistic and commercial vocation of several Greek city-states was awakened. Often invisible and no doubt indirect, this impact of the "barbarian" world on the Greek *polis* remained fundamental.

However, exchanges in the area of spiritual creations were not always as direct as one liked to think formerly. Let us take the most frequently cited example of the high Archaic period: the development of Dionysiac religion and of Orphic currents in Greek religion. In accordance with ancient tradition whereby the Thracian origins of these currents were scarcely ever doubted, it was thought that this showed clearly that extra-Hellenic influences were at work in the very heart of the city-state civilization. But the discovery of a Mycenaean tablet with the name of this divinity makes the appearance of Dionysiac cults in the archaic period a phenomenon of exclusively Greek social and religious history. Dionysius, like Abaris, Orpheus or Aristaeus, are names which the Greeks found for thinking about that which had no part in the order of the archaic *polis* at a time where this order was being challenged. These are not foreign gods or heroes in the strict sense, but rather *those who come from elsewhere*. They are the signs of the "Other" relative to the political world of such and such a city-state. In Greek tradition, Orpheus and Dionysius only existed as rethought and integrated into the constant structures of this tradition.

If the Greeks were unable to assimilate the influences of the Thracian or Scythian world without politicizing them because their civilization had as its essential matrix the city-state with its structures, they were also unable to export to the non-Hellenic world the model of a unique cultural creation produced by an absolutely original sub-structure. For if the flowering and the exceptional creativity of Greek civilization cannot be reduced simply to the socio-political structures of the city-state, these structures were no less the necessary and fundamental condition of a culture whose force persists even to our own time. The anthropocentrism of literary, plastic, philosophical and even religious ima-

gery confers a personality of the most clearly designed forms on this Greek civilization so profoundly embedded in a social and political universe where man evolves first of all as citizen—owner of a piece of land in the political *chôra*, warrior for his city-state and thereby acquiring the right to participate in communal decisions. Situating himself at the center of the political world, the Greek found himself consequently at the center of the universe. His first philosophy which disproved mythology and discovered a familiar and natural order in the *kosmos*; his esthetic language which does away with symbolic imagery by mastering forms, rhythms and spaces; his literature which challenges legend and politicizes it: all these multiple forms of an unheard-of cultural growth giving man power over the universe would be unthinkable without the prior presumption of a possible, rational and efficient action of citizens on the political universe. This is why the Greek experience could not be repeated nor transferred elsewhere even if Greek techniques and merchandise penetrated deep into the interior of the continent. This is why the Greek world of city-states can belong only to a certain degree to the east European area. This is why, finally, we should hardly imagine the immense problem of the cultural contacts of Greece with Illyrian, Thracian or Scythian societies as a simple dialogue whose participants were the dominant Mediterranean civilization on the one hand and the interior regions which were gifted with a peripheral and continental ability to imitate on the other.

The impact of Greek civilization on Illyrians, on Thracians and Geto-Dacians, on the Sinds and the Scythians goes back (in a sporadic fashion, true enough) as far as the final stage of the bronze era and precisely to the Mycenaean period. But this impact is charged with an exceptional force particularly from the seventh century B.C. which is the period of the foundation of Greek colonies on the Adriatic and the Pontus Euxinus. It is evident that this process of colonization could only take place to the extent that the native populations were able for their part to achieve socio-economic and political progress. This is what happened during the eighth and seventh centuries B.C., not only making possible, but indeed necessitating contacts with the society which at that time was at the very summit of European civilization, i.e. Greek society. A new and important chapter now opens in the

history of the civilization of the European southeast and east. Exchanges supported by material goods mark this period, introducing into indigenous areas (Illyrian in the western zone of the Balkans, Scythian-Sarmatic north of the Black Sea, Geto-Dacian and Thracian in the Carpato-Balkan regions) a whole series of unknown techniques and forms of civilization.

Nevertheless, it would be erroneous to think that these contacts and exchanges were in only one direction whose unchangeable point of departure could only be the Greeks, so dynamic in their activities, so creative in spirit on the cultural and artistic levels. And such an error was committed for a long time by considering the indigenous populations as the passive beneficiaries of this process. This error was due above all to the fact of having confused the rather conservative mentality of the native southeast Europeans—Illyrians, Thracians, Geto-Dacians—who always remained very attached to their Hallstattian traditions, characterized in art by the predominance of geometric decoration,⁵ with a so-called “passivity” refuted in any case by archaeological digs as well as written Greek sources. In reality this process was and had to remain quite complex for several centuries. Upon close examination it is evident that rare are those areas of economic, political or even cultural activity where the two components of the new synthesis which was formed, (Greeks on the one side, indigenous on the other) did not mutually influence each other, functioning always in the manner of communicating vessels. Again there is nothing surprising in the fact that the confrontation between the

⁵ Using an analysis based on sources and testimony which are different from our own, Mircea Eliade arrived at an identical conclusion. “The paradox of Dacia, and, in general, of the entire Balkan peninsula, is that it constitutes at the same time a ‘crossroads’ where various influences meet as well as being a conservative zone, proven by the elements of archaic culture which survived there even until the beginning of the twentieth century. In other words, we must not think that the arrival of a superior culture eliminated by its very ‘success’ the preceding forms of culture. Such a phenomenon can be verified only in modern times and especially at the level of material culture. And in this case, ‘acculturation’ is never definitive”. Mircea Eliade, *De Zalmoxis à Gengis-Khan* (chapter *Le prince Dragos et la chasse rituelle*, § *Indo-Aryens, Finno-Ougriens, Altaïques*), “Bibliothèque historique”, Payot, Paris, 1976, p. 158.

We find ourselves, then, before a situation which seems strange, but which derives from the very socio-economic and psychological structure of the populations of southeast Europe faced with the structures of other peoples with whom these populations came into contact.

refined civilization of the Pontic Greeks, with their vast Mediterranean experience behind them, and the developing and quite varied civilization of the Illyrians, of the Thracians and the Dacians, as well as of the Scythians produced a most brilliant fixture of which the Greco-Scythian animal art is the principal expression.

It should be remembered that in the first centuries of Greek colonization, which coincide with the first iron age or Hallstatt C-D of the seventh-fifth centuries B.C., the beneficiaries of exchanges with Greek products (arms, bronze dishes and painted pottery, jewels, wine and oil) were found exclusively in the ranks of the tribal aristocracy. This fact was amply proven by the archaeological vestiges of Demirkapia, Trebenište, Radolište and Novi Pazar in Yugoslavia or by those at Duvanlj in Bulgaria. One can also hold as certain that the diffusion of these kinds of products and particularly typically Greek technologies and forms among the indigenous people proceeded with even more power during the second iron age (La Tène). During this era, Hellenic language, technology and art held a dominant place everywhere in the Balkans as well as north of the Black Sea. This period (fourth to first centuries B.C.) witnessed the birth of a quantity of other indigenous agglomerations, an undeniable sign of demographic growth. But beyond this diffusion of Greek products on an ever greater scale, we also can note remarkable progress at the very heart of the indigenous production. Attested to notably by arms, jewels, various metal objects and pottery, this progress illustrates a kind of cultural *koine* characterizing the second iron age. Arms and especially gold jewelry of indigenous provenance figure abundantly in the picture, veritable products of a princely art. A whole series of treasures of this sort were found at Trebenište in Yugoslavia, at Agighiol and Peretu in Romania and at Ruse in Bulgaria, and they speak of an advanced process of social and political stratification. This culminated south of the Balkans with the foundation of the state of Odryses and north of the Black Sea with the birth a Greco-indigenous civil formation *sui generis*, the kingdom of the Bosphorus whose capital was the Greek city of Panticapaeum and which was governed for many centuries by the dynasty of Spartocids.

These are a number of good reasons to incite historians of east and southeast Europe to bestow merited attention on the study

of the Greek colonization of the Adriatic and Black Sea basins, while at the same time noting the impact on central and southeast regions of our continent of civilizations who drew their origins from the eastern steppes of Europe. This is an essential condition for those who wish to follow the stages which completely transformed ancient indigenous civilizations and led to new syntheses, crystallized especially around the middle of the first millennium B.C.

The beginnings of this period are situated in the seventh century B.C. They were marked by the foundation of Greek colonies on the Adriatic: Epidamnus (later to become Dyrrhachium) and Apollonia. The first Greek colonists arrived in the Black Sea basin only after having founded on the two banks of the straits the cities of Cyzicus and Byzantium, the latter, true key to two seas and two continents, being destined for a quite exceptional role. It was the great Ionian metropolis of Miletus, when Hellenic civilization reached its highest point in the seventh and sixth centuries, which assumed the colonization of the Pontic basin. According to ancient tradition, Miletus founded ninety colonies, a figure no doubt exaggerated. However, the extent of its colonizing activity should not be underestimated. Its activity in this vein was to contribute to a veritable mutation at the heart of those civilizations which flourished in the coastal regions of the sea already called "Black" by the Scythians, this "hospitable sea" (*Pontus Euxinus*), which ended up, to a certain extent, a kind of Greek lake. Then came Olba and Tyra, Panticapaeum and Phanagoriek, Theodosia and Hermonassa on the Russian shore; Histria, Tomis and Callatis, Odessos, Messembria and Apollonia on the Romanian and Bulgarian coast; Phasis Pytios and Dioscurias, Sinope, Amisos and Trebizond on the eastern and southern banks of the same sea. These all became commercial centers, sources of artistic and artisan creation, metropolises for all the native populations of the surroundings. Scythians, Meotes and Sinds, Iberians and other Caucasian peoples, Illyrians, Thracians and Geto-Dacians were the first beneficiaries of contacts established in this manner. But let us emphasize that it was not a matter of a passive reception of all these goods, all these technologies, this abundance of new ideas. It can be noted, then, that there was a large diffusion of Greek goods—wine and oil, pottery and jewelry, arms and works of art—sought especially by a

rich tribal aristocracy. Likewise it can be noted that, especially from the fourth century on, the development of Greek commerce and the transfer of techniques perfected by the Greeks was to accelerate the evolution of the native civilizations in the second iron age (La Tène). It is no less true, however, that the economic, political and artistic contribution of these native populations was to be crucial not only for the development of the civilization proper to that zone but also for its role in the southeast and east European context. From this double point of view it would suffice to mention the role of the Scythians and Thracians in the magnificent synthesis which brought together for the first time the civilization of the Eurasian steppes and that of Greece, both equally charged with traditions and symbols. In this aspect the Pontic experience and above all the Scythian-Greek experience goes far beyond the limits of a simple contact within the Black Sea basin to take on in the final analysis the aspect and the proportions of a phenomenon of interculturality between Europe and Asia whose interest and extent we cannot emphasize too much. This is why it is necessary to look more carefully at this encounter which, especially in the Hellenistic era (fourth-second century B.C.) ultimately determined a veritable mutation felt in Asia as well as in Europe.

In fact, well before their arrival in the north Pontic zone and at the end of a long period of wandering in search of new pastures for their flocks, the nomadic Scythians had created a typical art. This art represents one of the richest and best-known chapters of the animal style which dominated for centuries not only in eastern Europe, but also in the immense space extending from the Urals to China.⁶ The priority given by all these nomadic populations to herding and hunting must have been concretized,

⁶ The area defined by the very title of this article forbids us the pursuit, beyond the Urals, of the "Siberian sources" of Scythian art. In fact, thanks to the excavations of Soviet archaeologists, at the present time we know a sufficient number of monuments which were anterior to, or contemporary with, Scythian art of the Pontus Euxinus. We should remember in this respect the very interesting results obtained by the excavations of the kurgan of Arjan at Trouva (eighth century) in the Kazakhstan, or those of a truly sensational value at Pazyryk (Altai), dating from the sixth-fourth centuries B.C. These suffice to explain the origin of the vitality of Scythian art. Cf. S.I. Roudenko, *Frozen Tombs of Siberia*, London, 1970.

during their long marches across the endless steppes which still today connect Europe and Asia, in the common magic symbols expressed by an artistic repertory of which animals constituted the essential element. The animal style was thus born *before* the arrival in the sixth century of the Scythians in the region of the north Pontic Steppes. Their arrival there and particularly their way of life, which was completely foreign to the native population as well as to the Greek colonists recently settled on the shores of Pontus Euxinus, could only shock these and fill them with distrust. If Homer (*Illiad*, XIII, 5-6) speaks only of "Hippemolgoi who live only on milk", Aeschylus is already able to describe with a great deal of precision the existence of the "Nomadic Scythians who live in dwellings of woven reeds, perched on wagons with good wheels, and who sling long-bows over their shoulders" (*Prometheus Bound*, V, 709-711): "The nomadic Scythians plant nothing", noted Herodotus (IV, 19) which explains the great astonishment of Greek geographers and historians. This was even better formulated several centuries later by Strabo when he mentioned the Scythians who "lead no doubt a nomadic existence, but who are able, nevertheless, to survive thereby" (II, 1, 17).

Despite these fundamental differences and despite the initial mistrust between populations so foreign one to another (a mistrust illustrated by the story of the unfortunate Skyles, son of the Scythian king Ariapeithes, who married a Greek woman from Histria and was killed in a plot hatched by his xenophobic and, we might say, "orthodox" countrymen), a *modus vivendi* finally evolved. This marked a period of coexistence which was beneficial from a material and spiritual point of view for both groups, the Scythians and the Greeks. The evolution of Scythian art from the sixth century B.C. proves not only this coexistence, but also (and quite eloquently in the perspective of this present essay) a process in the course of which two different worlds, marked by diverse mentalities, were led somehow to an exchange by assimilating certain essential elements of each specific civilization. From this exchange there came a fusion between the two worlds, a fusion which can be sensed in the monuments of Greco-Scythian art of the sixth-fourth centuries.

It is known that the crystallization of Scythian animal art commenced in about the ninth century B.C. during the phase

known under the name of “the civilization of the wood-framed tombs” (*srubnie*). Its typical traits were formed as a result of contacts with the Middle East, especially contacts with the Assyrian and Iranian areas, shown by a study of the Scythian treasure of Ziwiye in Iranian Kurdistan. In fact even while the Scythians began their march toward the west, the oldest Scythian creations of the Pontic zone (such as the tumuli of Kelermes in Crimea or the Melgunov treasure along the Dniepr dated to the beginning of the sixth century) show themselves to be profoundly marked by forms which are specific to western Asia. The animals reproduced on the gold cup of Kelermes as well as cultic scenes on the sword in the same treasure or those on pieces from the Melgunov treasure are reminiscent, in their theme and their style, of traditional representations of Assyrian and Urartic art. On the other hand, the golden deer of the shield of Kostromskaïa (today in the Hermitage) is the proof of a properly Scythian art. Thus Scythian art, in this century and in a new context, began its brilliant north Pontic career. Its development will lead it during the sixth-fourth centuries to that magnificent Greco-Scythian synthesis which is worthy in every respect to be considered a unique phenomenon in the general history of civilizations.

Above all else this Greco-Scythian art represents the confrontation of two absolutely different attitudes. The animal, rich in a very special symbolism, was the essential element of the Iranian vision of the world. Winged griffons and stags with their schematic silhouettes, no doubt, played a magic role just like the helmets of gold or silver decorated with apotropaic eyes. Both were intended to insure the horseman and his mount strength, endurance, speed, resistance. In central Europe and in the Balkans, anywhere there was gold jewelry or harnesses decorated in this zoomorphic style, there is ample proof either of the effective presence of the Scythians, or of an evident phenomenon of acculturation born of Scythian impact on the populations of east and southeast Europe.

Along the edges of the Black Sea, the art of the Scythians received a new impulse which enriched its iconographic repertory while honing its capacity to penetrate to the heart of the peoples living in the northern basin of the Black Sea. We find, in fact, in Scythian products executed in this zone three stylistic tendencies

particularly eloquent concerning the origin of the Greco-Scythian synthesis. A first tendency, still under the influence of oriental taste, indicates the unceasing connections with Assyria and Urartu in an initial phase and with the kingdom of the Achemenides in a later phase. This tendency is characterized by its expressive realism, even more pronounced in the traits borrowed from monumental art. The second is a Hellenizing tendency; the form and decoration of works of art of Scythian tradition, mentioned in the Fourth Book of the *History* of Herodotus, are imbued to such an extent with characteristics proper to the decorative art of the Greeks that it is probably correct to affirm that these objects must have been made by Greek artists for a Scythian clientele recruited primarily among the aristocracy of the "royal" Scythians. With their famous objects of gold and silver decorated with scenes taken from the legends of a Scythian Hercules and his three sons who inherited his bow and his kingdom, the tumuli of Solocha, Certomlyk, Kül-Oba, etc., abound in works of art of this category. There was, finally, a third tendency which we can consider the synthesis of the other two. It is illustrated by an admirable fusion of decorative elements of ancient oriental inspiration with subjects and artistic forms of an undeniable Hellenic tradition.

Thus the art of the Scythians derived, on the one hand, from its ancient tradition which had already crystallized during a period prior to their migration in the Pontic zone, and, on the other hand, from those quite fruitful contacts both with the Middle East and particularly Iran, and with the world of the Greek colonies. It created true masterpieces whose equivalent can be found nowhere else in the world. The phenomenon goes beyond the boundaries of eastern Europe. It is the fruit of the confrontation between traditions of two continents, Asia and Europe, of two clearly opposed human attitudes, which, each in its own way, were unique in Europe. It is not just a question of different visions of the world, the one incarnated in the noble animals of the royal hunt, the other in man "measure of all things". It is also the opposition of two profoundly different and immediately divergent thought processes. If the nomads of the steppes bent reality in order to extract vital principles while at the same time submitting reality to the constraints of ornamentation, the Greeks, with their art, aimed at the perfection of form, while trying always to

remain faithful to appearances, to the visible. For them it was a matter of seizing the real to present it in its volume and its perspective.

This extraordinary Greco-Scythian synthesis could not remain without echo among the neighboring populations. Telling, in this respect, is the direction of the evolution followed by the Thracians and the Geto-Dacians. Their direct contacts with these two sources of inspiration explain the intensity of certain artistic directions which were their own. Also their own were a series of characteristic aspects—expressions in the final analysis, of their experience in the area of civilization.

Romanian and Bulgarian archaeological researches prove that from the seventh century B.C. the tribal aristocracy of the Thracians and the Geto-Dacians was marked by a certain conservative spirit, but also by its capacity to absorb Greek luxury products imported from Rhodes and Cyzicos, from Chio, Athens, Thasos. In the Romanian territory of Doboudja and especially at Histria as well as in Bulgaria at Odessos and Apollonia, archaeological excavations have brought to the surface material vestiges which cast an essential light on the Thracio-Hellenic and Geto-Hellenic syntheses in the interval of the fifth-third centuries. These new syntheses are all the more interesting in that they bear the mark of zoomorphic elements created and articulated by the Scythians who, about the same time, left their particular imprint on all the monuments of this category existing in the Carpatho-Balkan territory. Let us recall here the gold helmets with animal decoration at Bačeni, Cotofenesti, Peretu and Agighiol in Romania, as well as the magnificent works of art of Ruse or those which constitute at least a part of the deposit of Duvanlj in Bulgaria. In the southern Balkans at the apogee of artistic contacts between Greeks and Thracians is situated the princely mausoleum of Kazanlyk with its exceptional paintings. These syntheses are illustrated, moreover, in this same region by the truly extraordinary treasure of Panaguirište which belonged no doubt to some Thracian king of the Odryses but the pieces of which were certainly executed by a Greek artist. Seuthopolis, the capital of the kingdom of the Odryses, was the object of a methodic study by Bulgarian archaeologists. From the results they achieved, we dispose of an important series of remains concerning Aulic and urban, social and

religious realities of the greatest interest for the Greco-Thracian synthesis which occurred during the fourth-third centuries B.C.

The situation in the western zone of the Balkans was somewhat different, where, from the first centuries of the first millennium B.C. there flourished a remarkable Hallstattian civilization, better known especially since the archaeological excavations in the immense necropolis Glasinać. Another Hallstattian group, profoundly marked by the influence of the Italic civilization of Este, formed in the northern basin of the Adriatic. The direct or indirect contacts with the Hellenic south and especially with Corinth, as well as an exceptional metallurgical activity, offer the explanation of the rapid progress realised by Illyrian tribes during the sixth-third centuries. Highly appreciated by the rich Illyrian warrior aristocracy, some Greek models were adopted by native artisans. We find examples of their activity in the funereal furnishings of Trebenište and Radolište, around the lake of Ohrid, or, a little further north, at Novi Pazar.

Several centuries later, Celtic tribes and tribes from the southeast descended into central Europe and furnished in turn an impetus to the development of Balkan civilizations, particularly during the second iron age. As a matter of fact this was not just another historic stage, but also the growth of a certain number of unheard-of technological and artistic elements which constitute the characteristic traits of a civilization of the La Tène type which developed in the entire zone north of the Aegean. These elements were common to the Thracians and Illyrians as well as the Dacians who lived north of the Danube, and the Carpathians. It is under the sign of the Aulic character already mentioned that the development of Dacian arts and crafts can be found. Their important progress is attested primarily by the imposing royal monuments of Sarmizegetuse, capital of the Dacian kings: first Burebista, founder of the first Dacian state some 2050 years ago, and then Decebalus, the great adversary of the Romans, to which can be added a large number of Dacian *oppida* localized to the south and east of the Carpathians.

On the other hand let us not forget the exceptional role played throughout this entire period by the Transcaucasus, the Colchis, rich with the gold of the Argonauts. Its merits are not found only in the fact that it served as constant conduit for products of the

Hellenic south toward the north using the network of colonies (Phasis, Dioscurias and Pityos), but also for having continued to direct toward the north by the ancient Caucasian route and through Kouban, previously unseen elements of Iranian art and technology.

In this respect notable progress can be detected in the period from the third century B.C.-third century A.D. On the one hand this progress concerns the integration of Caucasian and north-Pontic territory into the Greco-oriental world created by the conquest of Alexander the Great; likewise it affected the enrichment of Pontic civilization with new oriental elements. The fact was due above all to the role played in this part of the world by the Pontic Kingdom and the kingdoms which were frequently rivals of Armenia and Iberia. In this double respect there is a particularly interesting note to be found in the archaeological excavations of Mzkheta, the capital of Iberia which later became an ally of Rome. These excavations exposed a number of statues (first Greek and then Greco-Roman), a characteristic pottery, vases of silver and bronze. The resulting image shows that the men of this country wore the toga during the Roman era and the women of the court wore their hair in the Roman style. This image, no doubt, is to be connected to an aristocratic milieu, that of the court, but also one apt to appreciate and to procure for itself polychrome silverplate with gold wires and plaques, these in turn set with semi-precious stones of different colors. But this latter is an Iranian technique, *cloisonné* work, which would soon dominate not only the entire Orient but also the Scythian-Sarmatic world in the region which extended north from the Black Sea. *Cloisonné* work had an exceptional popularity even in Europe. Its diffusion was in large part due to the workshops of Panticapaeum and Olba, whose production is rightly termed enormous, as well as to those who carried it throughout the ancient world, the Sarmatic aristocracy in an early stage and then the Gothic aristocracy in a following period. But this new phase was preceded by another, no less interesting and no less fertile for the southeast European zone and the north of the Pontic basin, namely the period of the Roman conquest.

This brings us to the end of the last millennium B.C. It is a true "*fin de siècle*". In fact already since the second century B.C.,

after their Greek "dalliance", Illyrians, Thracians and Geto-Dacians opened a new chapter of their cultural history under the sign of Rome. By its wealth and its special interest which no one could fail to remark, this chapter is worthy of its own consideration.

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