

# ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERIES IN DAREL VALLEY MUZOT : AN IRON AGE GRAVE CULTURE SITE

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It was in October 1999 that one of the manuscript collectors in Peshawar informed me that his friend from Darel was possessing manuscript written in unknown script. I was asked for help to identify the script and know the contents of the manuscript (Pl.I)<sup>1</sup>. Due to the historical importance of the region and its antiquities, I rushed to Darel to have a look on this unique manuscript<sup>2</sup>. It was on 21 of October that I got a chance to visit Manikyal – Darel and discover such an important valley for its scenic and historical beauty. This visit gave me a chance not only to see the said manuscript but also to discover some important sites in such a short span of time. It is not easy to write a detailed report on all these discoveries but it will also not out of place to give at least a list of some important sites additional to those discovered by Tusa<sup>3</sup>.

- 1) Lal Kot rock-carving site, situated in the vicinity of Lal Kot
- 2) Kuera Khan Das. Rock-carving site, situated above Samigal
- 3) Berili Nala, a settlement site, the last Nala of Samigal
- 4) Danro Das, a settlement site situated between Gumari and Manikyal
- 5) Kot, in side Gimán Nala, opposite to Gumari,
- 6) Guru, a settlement site, situated on the right side of Gumari,

Situated to the south, beyond the Gilgit range, Darel and its surrounding is called a zone of transition because of its different political and cultural system. Darel, mentioned by Fahsien as To-li and Xuang Zang as Ta-li-lo<sup>4</sup>, archaeologically is one of the richest side valleys

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<sup>1</sup> The manuscript consists of twenty pages. They are stuck to each other and the owner did not allow me to study and make photographs of all the pages.

<sup>2</sup> No other manuscript has so far been discovered in the area of Chilas.

<sup>3</sup> Tusa 1985.

<sup>4</sup> Stein 1921:6

of the Upper Indus region. Among other antiquity coming from Darel, the most important cultural materials are grave goods<sup>5</sup>.

Even though, the first reference of graves in Darel can be found in Stein book, *Innermost Asia*, recent research of scholars, like Prof. A.H. Dani, related to the graves culture in the Northern Area of Pakistan is of utmost importance<sup>6</sup>. The Pak-German team, headed first by Prof. Jettmar and now by Prof Harald Hauptmann are also showing their keen interest to the study of graves culture in the Northern Areas of Pakistan. The result is that quite varied data have already been collected hoping that its study will bring some new ideas regarding the grave culture of this particular area.

Ancient graves are very common, and similar graves can be found in large number in the Northern Areas of Pakistan and the region of Chitral. But, although, there is a close similarity amongst the burial system, the graves and the grave goods of the Northern Areas of Pakistan, still there exist some differences between Muzot graves (Darel) and those already published by Dani; it needs of course to be underlined.

### **MUZOT:**

Situated in Samigal Payan, Muzot is a small village of few houses situated on the slope of a mountain on the main Darel road. In the reduced plain area of Muzot, few graves were excavated by a local during leveling his fields or may be he was searching for antiquities.

### **GRAVES AND BURIALS:**

According to the excavator, the graves were circular in shape formed with small pebbles<sup>7</sup>. The body was laid on its left side in a crouched position, the head towards the east. Some of them accompanied with axe, knife and pots. While other were with small pots, hairpins, bangles, leaf-shaped copper objects and buttons.

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<sup>5</sup> These materials recovered during illegal excavations, are going on in large scale to the antique shops at Gilgit or Mangaora (Swat).

<sup>6</sup> Dani 1998.

<sup>7</sup> All the information. regarding Muzot graves, given in this paper has been collected from the autochthons.

## **GRAVE GOODS:**

The materials recovered from Muzot graves consist of:

### **Pots:**

Among the grave goods found in the excavated barrows consist of hand made and wheel made pots. They can be classified broadly into two different groups<sup>8</sup>.

#### **a) Large size jars**

Among other materials, so far, sixteen large size jars have been recovered from the site. All of these were broken into pieces wishing to find a treasure inside. The only things available to them were ashes and bones sometimes with miniature pots. After analysing the broken and scattered pieces, I could not find any sign or mark of painting or engraving on it<sup>9</sup>.

#### **b) Medium and small size pots:**

More than twenty pots were recovered from these. They are varied in size and shape. But the predominant types are a) A vessels in red ware with medium texture, high neck normally with three grooved parallel liner decoration applied dots on regular interval just below the slightly out turned flaring rim (Pl. II). The body is mostly shallow with flat base, gritty profile, well-fired, comparable to Gandhara Grave Culture vessels<sup>10</sup>.

b) The second common variety is a jug type vessel having short globular body, short and slightly out turned flaring rim, provided with short handle at neck<sup>11</sup>. The pot is brownish in colour, flat base (Pl.III).

### **Arms:**

- i) Axes, normally in iron, are similar to the so-called Trunnion Axe and few examples are of shaft hole axe (Pl. IV).
- ii) Knives: Knives are in large number but are mostly of similar types (Pl.IV).

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<sup>8</sup> I am thankful to Mr. Mohammad Naeem, Surveyor and Draughtsman in the Department, for helping me in describing the pots.

<sup>9</sup> Thee owner of the land was claiming that the jars were used for making wines.

<sup>10</sup> Dani 1967: Fig. 36.3

<sup>11</sup> Similarity can be seen between Dani's (1967) Fig. 34.2.

- iii) Hollow spearheads. Few examples of hollow spearheads are also recovered from the graves (Pl.V).

### **Jewellery:**

Among jewellery, the most prominent are:

- i) **Bangles** (Pl.VI)<sup>12</sup>. Bangles are of two types. The light and simple one and the heavy decorated with animal and floral designs. The last category of bangles was already sold out in the Bazaar of Gilgit, before I could get photographs of it.
- ii) **Necklaces** (Pl. VII). Leaf-shaped objects, piled probably in a thread, were used as neck ornaments. They are showing loops.
- iii) **Hairpins** (Pl. VIII)<sup>13</sup>. They are in large number and show different forms. The most common are:
  - a) Copper pin with rounded head
  - b) Copper pin with conical head
  - c) Copper pin with three pronged top
- iv) **Beads**. Beads are wide in number and having different shape, size, weight and are of varied precious stones.
- v) **Buttons** (Pl.IX). The characteristic features of Darel graves are the buttons. So far not a single button have been recorded from graves in the Northern Areas of Pakistan. It is important to be noted here that my guide from Shatial confirmed that similar buttons were also discovered in the graves situated in Shatial, opposite to Darel valley, on the main Karakorum High Way.

### **Conclusion.**

The materials show central Asian influence, especially the iron objects, and these burials might represent a local variant of a very large central Asian cultural complex. Secondly, the leaf-shaped copper objects, predominantly found in the graves of the Northern Areas of Pakistan, seems to be components of neck ornament and might not be arrow or spear

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<sup>12</sup> Some other pieces of bangles recovered from the graves show tissue impressions (Pl. X).

<sup>13</sup> During a verbal discussion with Prof. Farooq Swati of the Department of Archaeology, University of Peshawar, according to him the proposed hairpins might also have been used as drapery pins, very common in the Doric customs.

heads as proposed by Dani<sup>14</sup>. According to the person who found it, these objects were lying near to the neck of the skeleton.

Third, the graves materials from the Northern Areas of Pakistan are different from the so-called Gandhara Grave Culture materials except certain similarities in the shapes of certain vessels<sup>15</sup> but they have resemblance with those coming from the Region of Chitral.

The last point is that Muzot graves can be classified, on the basis of their materials, into two groups. The first group, female graves, contain generally, neck ornaments, hairpins and the buttons. The second group, male graves, contain axes, spearheads and knives. As far as vessels are concerned, it can be found in both types of graves. This is what the excavator observed during digging.

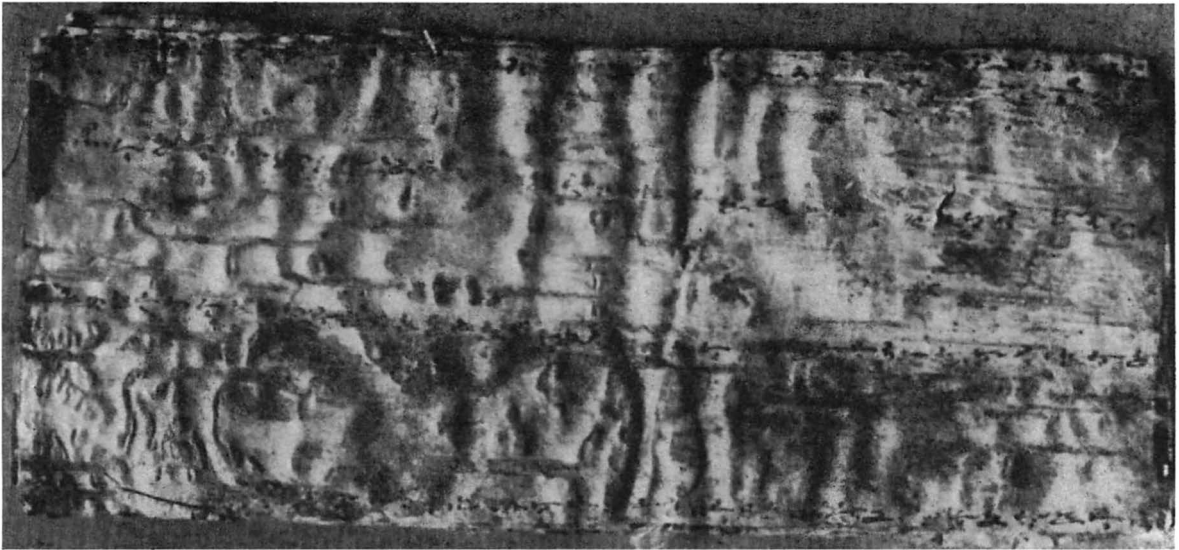
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<sup>14</sup> Dani 1998: Pl. 33 and 34.

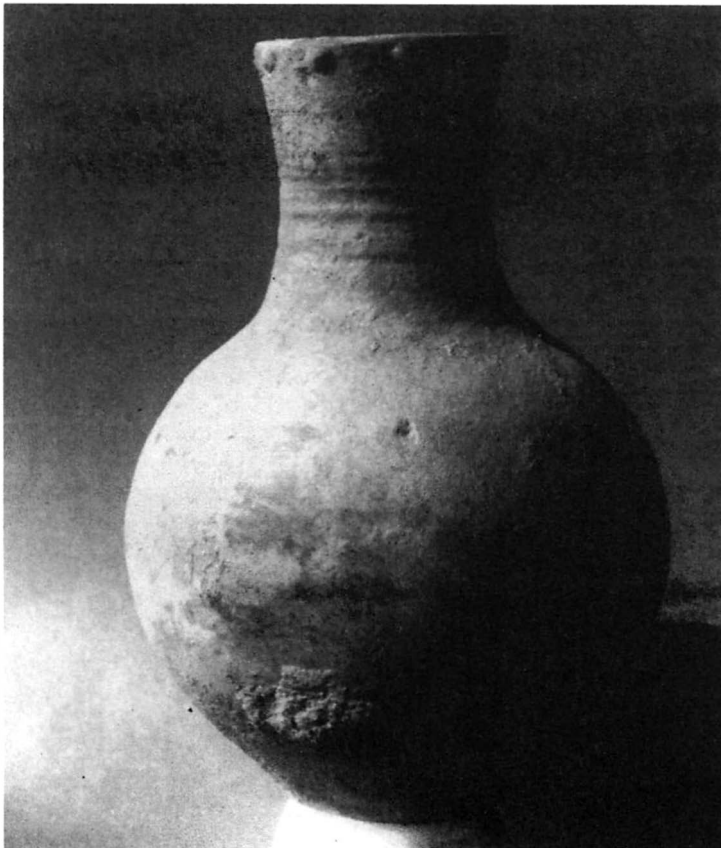
<sup>15</sup> See for example Dani Fig. 34.2, Fig. 36. 213 and our Pls. II and III.

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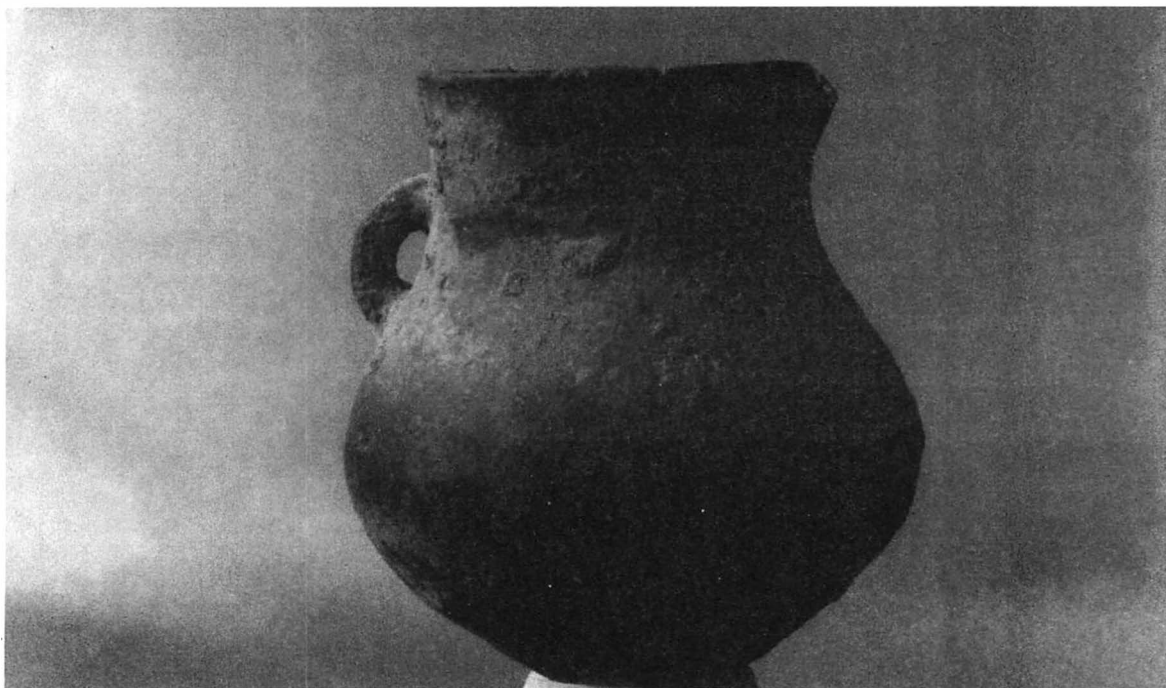
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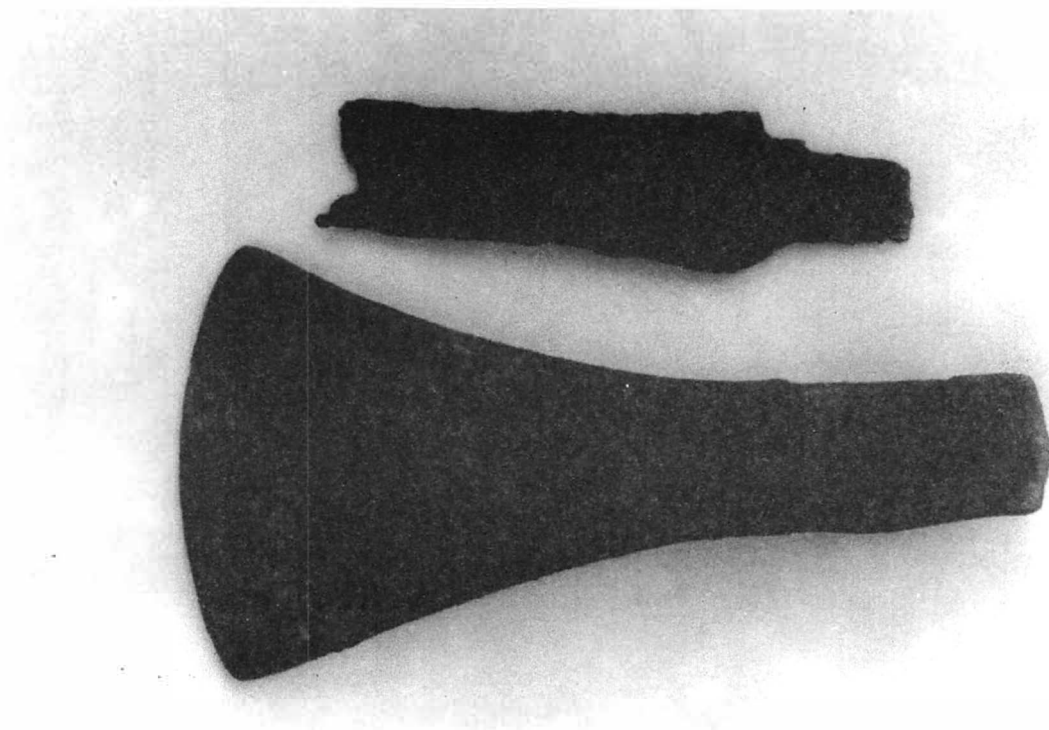
**Pl. I: Twenty pages Brāhmī (?) manuscript written on birch bark.  
Provenance Chilas region.**



**Pl. II: A high neck vessel, Muzot graves, Darel.**

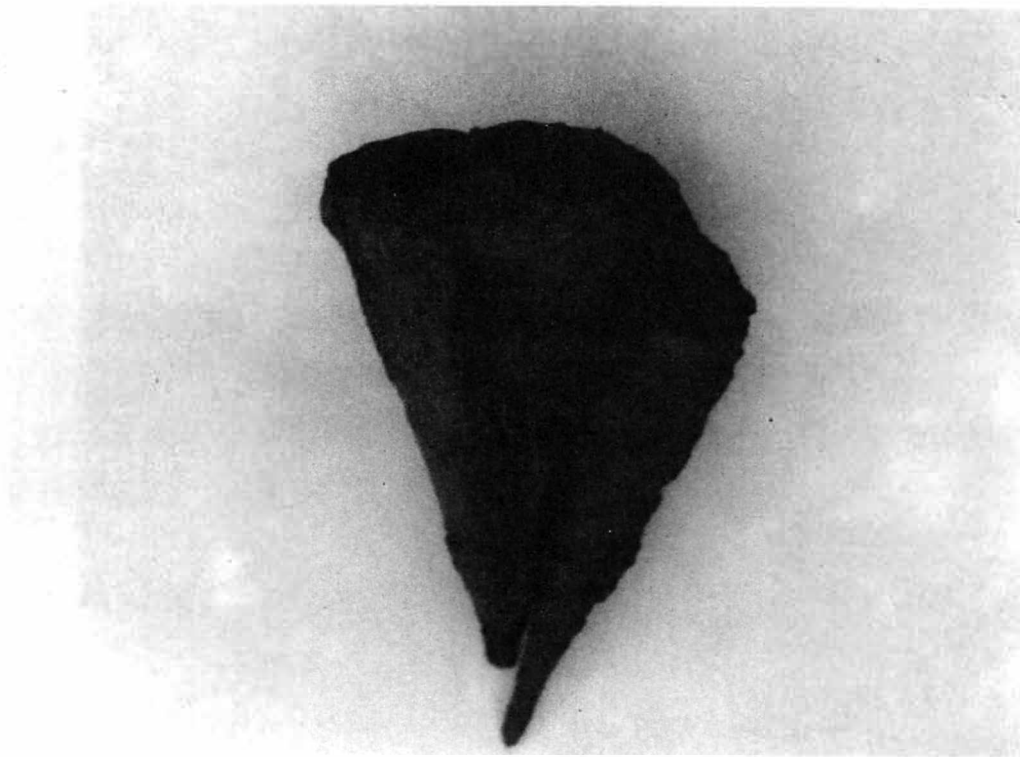


**Pl. III: Jug type vessel, Muzot graves, Darel.**

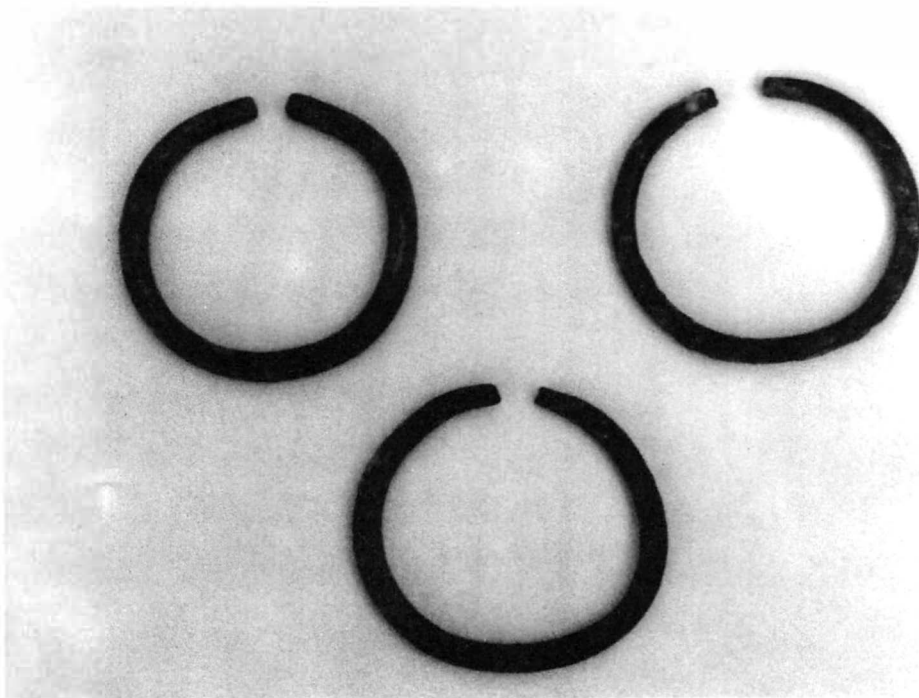


**Pl. IV: Bronze knife and an iron axe. Muzot graves, Darel.**

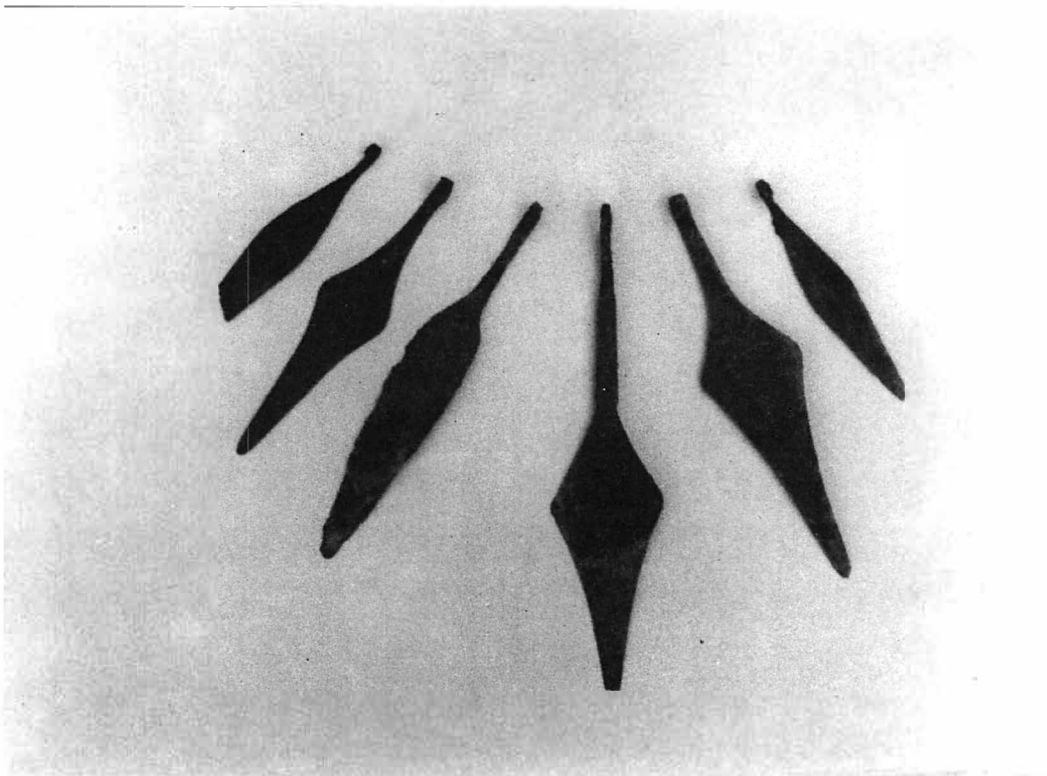




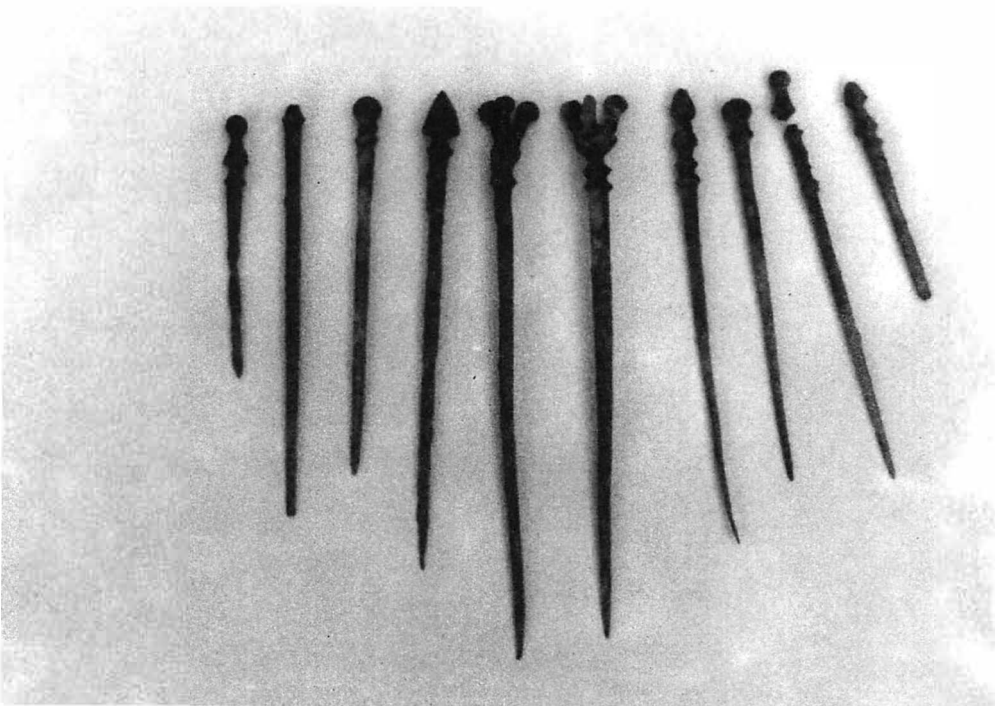
**Pl. V: Hollow spearheads. Muzot graves, Darel.**



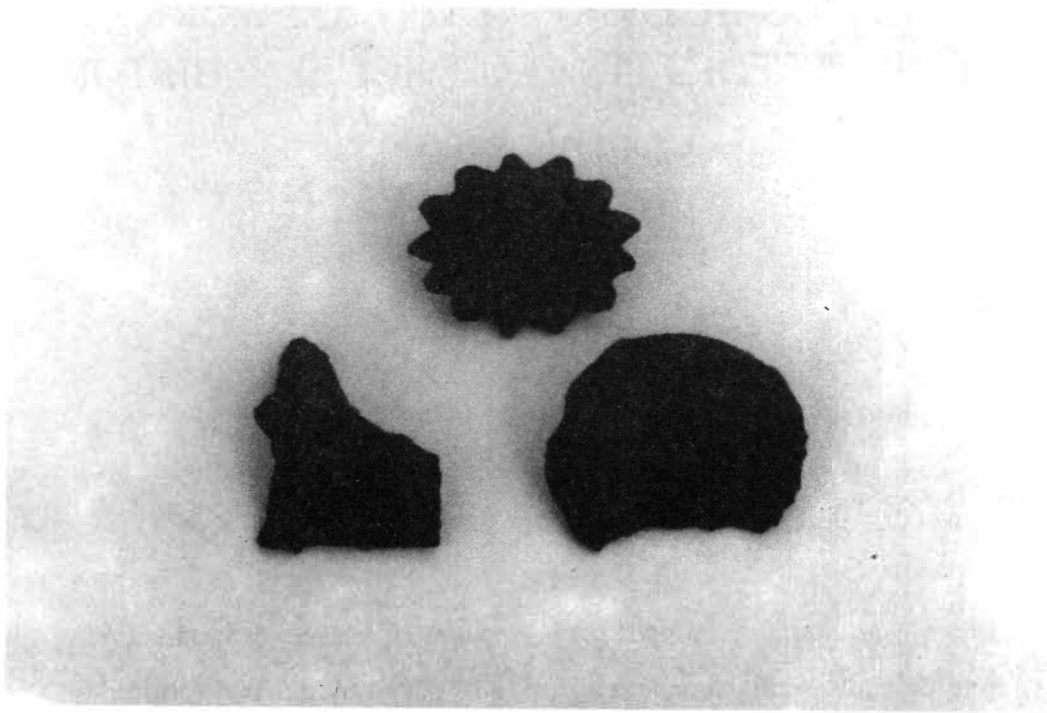
**Pl. VI: Bronze bangles from Muzot graves, Darel.**



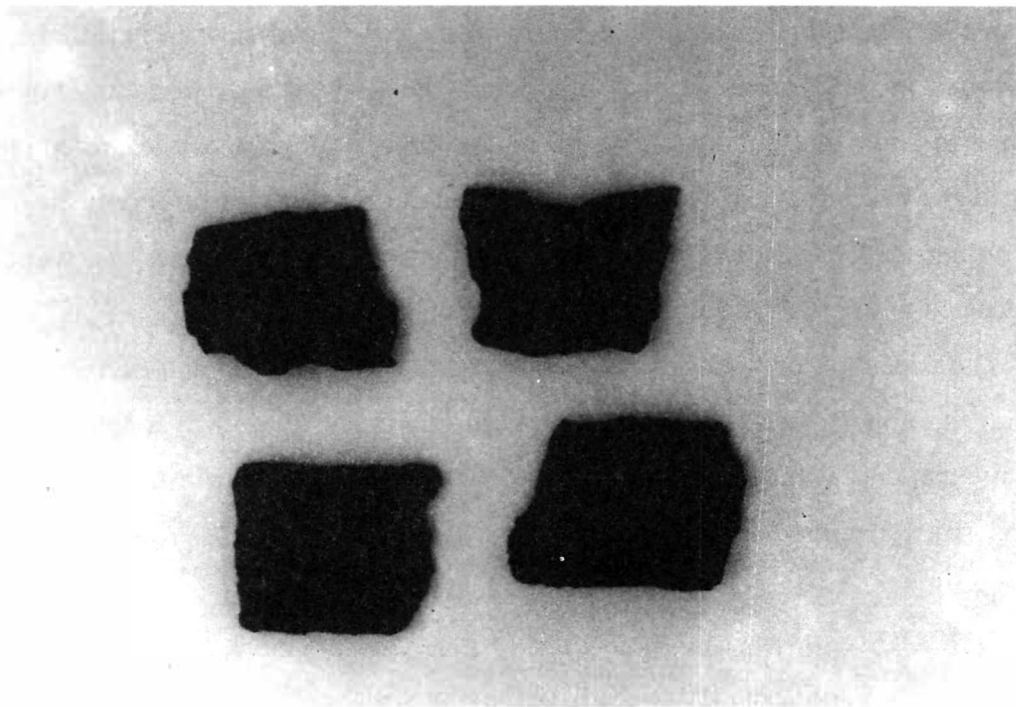
**PL. VII:      Looped leaf-shaped objects used as neck ornament.  
                 Muzot graves, Darel.**



**Pl. VIII:      Different types of hairpins from Muzot graves, Darel.**



**Pl. IX: Buttons recovered from graves at Muzot, Darel.**



**Pl. X: Bangle pieces showing tissue impressions.  
Provenance Muzot graves, Darel.**