

ABOUT THE EARLY MEDIEVAL CERAMICS FROM OLTINA „CAPUL DEALULUI” (CONSTANȚA COUNTY)

Abstract: Așezarea fortificată din punctul „Capul Dealului”, situată între localitățile Satu Nou și Oltina (în sud-vestul Dobrogei), pe un promontoriu din apropierea Dunării, a fost semnalată încă din prima jumătate a secolului al XX-lea de către P. Polonic. Numeroasele descoperiri fortuite din acest punct, ca și din teritoriul apropiat, au determinat acordarea unei atenții sporite din partea cercetătorilor în vederea achiziționării materialelor respective, dar mai ales inițierea săpăturilor sistematice, începând cu anul 2001. În campaniile arheologice din 2001-2007 au fost cercetate trei secțiuni în perimetrul cărora au fost identificate mai multe complexe de locuit, câteva instalații gospodărești și gropi menajere, precum și un abundent și divers material arheologic constând în fragmente ceramice, monede, sigilii, cruciulițe simple sau reliquar, obiecte din bronz și fier (aplice și țiște, cuțite, seceri, vârfuri de săgeți), gresii de ascuțit, fusaiole, greutăți pentru plasa de pescuit, lupe și fragmente de zgură de fier, material faunistic etc. Dintre acestea cele mai numeroase sunt fragmentele ceramice, iar studiul prezent, care vizează materialul apărut în campaniile din 2003 și 2007, este unul preliminar urmând ca în viitorul apropiat analiza să fie extinsă și asupra ceramicii apărută în alte campanii sistematice. Faptul că materialul ceramic apărut în cele trei secțiuni este unitar, iar numeroase fragmente au fost descoperite în strat, i-a determinat pe autori să facă o prezentare pe categorii (ceramica de uz comun; ceramica decorată cu vopsea; ceramica cenușie; ceramica cu smalt verde-oliv; amfore), doar o mică parte a acestuia fiind plasată pe complexe. Categoriile ceramice apărute în așezarea medievală timpurie de la Oltina „Capul Dealului” nu diferă, din punct de vedere tipologic și cantitativ, de cele prezente în așezările perioadei istorice respective cercetate în teritoriul istro-pontic. Pentru acest sit este de subliniat numărul destul de mare de vase confecționate din pastă caolin, precum și rara prezență a celor cenușii ornamentate prin tehnica lustrului și a celor cu smalt verde-oliv. Ele sunt lucrate îngrijit, decorul este realizat cu atenție în cele mai multe cazuri, iar unele vase sunt confecționate la roata semirapidă. Este de remarcat și numărul destul de mare de funduri de vase cu marcă de olar. Pe baza monedelor, a ceramicii și a altor elemente, în acest stadiu al cercetărilor, așezarea de la Oltina „Capul Dealului” se datează în secolele X – XI.

Key words: ceramics, settlement, 10 – 11th centuries.

The fortified settlement of the area „Capul Dealului”, situated between the villages Satu Nou and Oltina (in the South-Western part of Dobruja), on a promontory near the Danube, surrounded to the North by the river, and on the South by Oltina lake, has been mentioned even from the first part of the 20th century by P. Polonic¹. The numerous accidental discoveries in this area, as well in

* Muzeul de Istorie Națională și Arheologie Constanța.

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¹ Polonic 1935: 19.

the neighbourhood, determined researchers to pay a special attention in order to purchase these materials², but mostly to initiate systematic diggings beginning with 2001³. Based on the accidental discoveries, mostly numismatic ones, there was assumed the hypothesis of the existence in this settlement of various living phases, between the 2-11th centuries with some discontinuities, and based on the documentation at the very place – during the archaeological campaigns between 2001-2003 – it was established that the early medieval settlement of „Capul Dealului” was protected, to the North, by an earth wave, 410 m in length, 2.5 m in height, together with a 3 m sq depth ditch to the West⁵. Otherwise, during the five campaigns until now, only the earth wave and the city defence system ditch have been uncovered, the 4 m width wall, mentioned by P. Polonic or even its foundation mark are still objectives far to be achieved. Only the rare presence inside the digging or in the valleys and wooded areas on the promontory of some small squared seem to represent until now the poor evidence of the defence wall existence, wall of which, as P. Polonic mentioned, the Turks extracted stone, even from the 8th decade of the 19th century, which they used to sell in Călărași as building material⁶.

During the archaeological campaigns between 2001-2007, there have been studied three sections: S1, of 35 x 3 m, on E-V direction, in the SV sector of the site; S2, of 30 x 4 m, on N-S direction, placed at a small distance from the first section, to the NE, and S2A, of 15 x 4 m, continuing S2, to the North. In the sections areas, there have been identified, partially, numerous living complexes, there are to be added to these some household arrangements and house holes, as well an abundant and diverse archaeological material, including ceramics fragments, coins, seals, small simple or reliquary crosses, bronze and iron objects (applied ornaments and nails, knives, sickles, arrow points), sharpening whetstones, plates, weights for the fishing net, magnifying glasses and fragments of iron slag, fauna material etc⁷. Among these, the most numerous are the pottery fragments, and our study aiming the material discovered during the campaigns between 2003 and 2007, it is a preliminary one, we are going to extend the analysis in a very short time as well upon the ceramics discovered during other systematic campaigns.

The fact that the pottery material discovered in the three sections is unitary, and numerous fragments have been found inside the stratum, determined us to make a presentation on categories, only a small part is to be placed on complexes.

There has been identified the Complex 3, inside S2, during the 2003 campaign, and this one proved to be a house. The identification inside the Eastern profile, as a consequence of the animals actions during the two years break, of

² Custurea 2000: 151; Chiriac 2000-2001: 343-348; Custurea 2000-2001: 583-594; Custurea, Ionel 2002-2003: 433-438; Custurea 2006: 415-421.

³ Chiriac, Custurea 2002: 222.

⁴ Mănușu-Adameșteanu 2001: 39-40; Custurea 2006: 415-416.

⁵ Chiriac, Custurea 2002: 222 ; Chiriac et alii 2004: 223.

⁶ Chiriac et alii 2004: 223.

⁷ Chiriac et alii 2004: 222-224; Custurea, Talmațchi, Mototolea, Chiriac 2008: 211.

some bricks, as well as the presence inside the stratum of some traces of burnt earth and ashes, determined us to make, in 2007, a 2 x 2 m case (Cas. A/2007), which excavation led to the discovery of a household arrangement, the Oven 1/2007, with only one room. The oven is situated in the South-Eastern corner of the 3/2003 Complex, it is rectangular shaped, with round corners, and it is surrounded on the Eastern and Southern sides by a stones series limiting the house area. The fireplace of the house was slightly deepened compared to the floor and was made of shaped stone blocks fixed with bonding material (loess) only on the Southern side of the oven. The oven roof, partially broken because of the animals actions, was made of brick sizes river stones fixed with loess, upon which here was put a 6.5 – 7.5 cm thick clay stratum⁸. In the clay roof of the fire arrangement there were fixed some ceramics fragments, and inside the Southern wall, among the stones covering the very fireplace there were a pot bottom as well as a tile fragment (plate III). The ceramics resulting from the uncovering of the Oven 1/2007 included: a fragment of the upper part of a pot burnt oxidantingly on the surface and made of sand paste and small lime of which is still preserved the simple round turned lip and a shoulder part, representing an incised ornament (a six lines waved strip, followed by horizontal lines); fragment of the upper part of a pot burnt oxidantingly on the surface and made of sand paste with medium granules, of which is still preserved the slightly turned lip and a shoulder part decorated with incised horizontal lines; fragment of a pot shoulder burnt oxidantingly on the surface and made of sand paste, preserving an incised ornament representing horizontal lines in a background upon there was applied in the upper part, a four waves lines strip; the lower part of a pot burnt oxidantingly and made of sand paste and medium lime granules, at semirapid wheel, having a 10 mm thick wall, 14 cm the bottom diameter and 13 mm thick of the bottom, presenting on the exterior of the flat area a drop of olive-green enamel; 11 fragments of small sizes, belonging to pots burnt oxidantingly and made of sand paste and decorated with incised lines and a whitish-grey fragment.

A house of the 5/2003 Complex sheltered as well, on a burning level and wood burnt beams, an amphora with „ribs” and very high bails⁹ (plate IV/1, VIII), and in 2007, in the house pit¹⁰ near the Oven 2/2007, there have been discovered numerous ceramics fragments (plate IV/2-11), among which we mention: the lower part of a kaolin pot (jug?) on which there are poorly preserved polished ornament traces-the – burning is complete, with pink tint, the pot wall is 8 mm thick and the bottom is 6.5 mm thick; two pots bottoms made of kaolin and sand paste; the upper part of kaolin pot preserving the simple round lip and a part of the pot shoulder decorated with a series of fine cut horizontal lines, preceded by a series of alveoli; the upper part of a surface oxidantingly burnt pot, made of paste sand and mica, still preserving the simple round lip and a part of a shoulder with a series of

⁸ Custurea, Talmațchi, Mototolea, Chiriac 2008: 211.

⁹ Chiriac et alii 2004: 223.

¹⁰ Custurea, Talmațchi, Mototolea, Chiriac 2008: 211.

horizontal lines preceded by a waved line; some pot fragments burnt at the surface and nonoxidantingly, made of paste and sand.

Taking into consideration the main ceramics categories, discovered in the early medieval settlement of Oltina „Capul Dealului”, we mention these already known groups in the special bibliography for this historical period¹¹.

1. The common use ceramics. This category represents about 90 – 92 % of the whole medieval early ceramics discovered in „Capul Dealului” during the campaigns 2003 and 2007. It is made at the slow wheel and semirapid wheel, using paste with sand, with sand and rare small grits, with sand and rare small or medium lime granules, or with sand and silvery mica. Most of the fragments were burnt oxidantingly on the surface (the core is grey), but there are situations when there is a complete burning. Of 90-92 % of this category, 20% is represented by the ceramics made of kaolin paste, with sand or, exceptionally, white clean. Generally, the burn is complete, mentioning that some pots have a reddish tone, due to the presence of the ochre granules in the raw paste. We also included here the pots burnt nonoxidantingly, but made of common sand paste.

The shapes included in this category are the pots without handles, the pot with handle, rarely the bowl and the rushlight (plate I/2). Generally, the pots are medium in size, rarely small or large, they have slightly prominent shoulders, a pyriform body, rarely globular, a short neck and different lip types (plate II/5-12). The mouth diameter goes from 8 to 18 cm, the bottom diameter from 4.8 to 14 cm, the walls width between 5 and 12 mm, and the bottoms thickness between 5 and 13 mm.

The decoration elements covering the pots walls are made by incision using a stick or a comb with thick and uniformly set teeth, or by pressing the soft paste using the nail, the knife point, or the cogged wheel (plate V). The horizontal lines series appears more frequently as unique decoration element or associated with one/two elements. It is fine made or more deepened, and its variants are to be found both on the pots burnt oxidantly and the nonoxidantingly or on the kaolin pots. Among the decorative variants found on the first category of ceramics, we notice: a series of horizontal lines finely cut; a series of horizontal lines finely cut set at irregular distances, not very accurately made; series of horizontal lines upon which there were incised sections of inclined lines, near the shoulder; a large wave line with a small incline, followed by a large wave lines strip; strips of three-four lines incised upon horizontal lines, near the shoulder; a series of horizontal lines, upon there was incised a waved line near the shoulder; two strips of three-four waved lines, accurately made, with a sharp incline, set near the shoulder, followed by a series of horizontal lines; series of horizontal lines upon which there was cut a strip of two waved lines, near the shoulder, and under it also upon the horizontal lines inclined sections of five lines; on the shoulder strip of six waved lines followed by a series of horizontal lines which beginning superposes slightly the inferior part of the waved line; alveoli series in the upper part of the shoulder

¹¹ Barnea 1962: 352-364.

followed by a series of finely cut horizontal lines; series of horizontal lines upon there were incised sections of five short inclined lines (2.7 cm, 1.2 cm) near the shoulder; strips of ten horizontal lines with areas not decorated in between; series of inclined cuts under the neck, followed by an irregular waved strip, followed at its turn, by horizontal lines; inclined sections of seven short lines followed by a series of horizontal lines; squared cuts made using the crogged wheel; two series of rectangular cuts framed by cut horizontal lines; strips of waved lines forming loops etc. On the whole, we mention that the decorated fragments with cuts made using the cogged wheel are rather rare. Neither the alveoli and the cuts are not constantly present.

There is to be included also in this category small pot (8.3 cm height) without handles, nonoxidatingly, made at semirapid wheel, using paste with sand. It was decorated with a five lines strip on the shoulder, followed by a strip of five horizontal lines in the area of the maximum diameter, then, under it, a strip of eight waved lines. The first two elements are accurately made, but the last one slightly trembled. The bottom of the pot is 4.8 cm in diameter, and it has a ring in relief to the exterior side. The lip is simple, slightly opened, and it is 8 cm opened. The pot was accurately made and it is homogenously shaped (plate I/1, V/1).

We also included here a bowl fragment, burnt nonoxidatingly, 6.7 cm height and 8 mm thick. It has a slightly inclined lip and a flat edge, and on the exterior side it was decorated with a series of horizontal lines, 3.1 cm thick, upon there was incised a strip of waved lines, on the upper part.

During the two campaigns there were discovered about 30 pots bottoms with potter stamps, all in relief, representing: a circle, two concentric circles, a triangle, a wheel with four spokes, a simple cross gammata, wheel with four spokes inscribed into the circle, a wheel with more than four spokes etc. (plate I/3-8, II/1-4, VI/1-11).

2. The ceramics decorated with paint. During the two archaeological campaigns there were discovered around 20 kaolin pottery fragments preserving traces of red, brown and brown-blackish paint on the external surface. These fragments belong to jugs and pots with or without handles, made at the wheel and usually totally burnt and they have a larger surface covered by paint, or they have a decoration representing vertical stripes, which sometimes meet horizontal lines or they form larger spots in the inferior zone. Some fragments have painted, as well as another cut decoration (plate VII/1-6).

3. The grey ceramics, made of fine paste of different shades, it is rather rare and fragmentary, there are small fragments, most of the time. When existing, the decoration represents vertical polishment on the whole fragment surface, slightly inclined polished lines, polishes inclined lines meeting and forming rhombuses. In some situations, the polished decoration was put also on three sides slightly in relief, or over strips of two fine incised horizontal lines, continuing their initial pattern (plate VII/7-10).

4. The ceramics with olive-green enamel is as rare as the grey one and it is also fragmentary (plate VII/11-14). The fragments also belong to pots made at rapid or semirapid wheel, and using fine grey or pink paste, completely burnt.

5. Amphoras. The only sample found complete is the one previous mentioned in the Complex 5/2003, the rest including only fragments of the pots bodies or handles. The amphora with raised handles from Oltina (2003, S2, Complex 5, square 14, -1.50 m) is included in a category of early medieval amphoras, also found in other centres on the Dobrujan territory¹².

It was discovered in a house, in a very well defined framework, beside other numerous Byzantium *folles* and a small cross, dated in the 11th century. There was also discovered an important quantity of fish bones and scales under the amphora, near a small oven in the above mentioned house.

It is a sample, which, by fortune, has been preserved almost complete. There are missing only some fragments of the body and lip. It was made of good quality clay, which, after burning, became redish to orange, with traces of a secondary burning.

It is pyriform in shape, with a lit bit long neck and the handles going straight, from the body of the amphora reaching the upper lip part, closing exactly under it. The amphora is 52 cm in height, and the handles 22 cm in height, being raised with almost 3 cm comparing to the lip. This one opens to the exterior like a funnel, supported by the handles. The lip diameter measured from the exterior is 12 cm, and the pot mouth diameter is 6 cm.

It has two decorations patterns, one of them going from the lip to the handles basis, and the other one on the very bottom of the pot. Practically, we see five rows of grooves set in concentric circles. Just under the superior pattern there are two vertical cuts on the amphora body, about 6 cm each, set in parallel, as a stamp. Other two shorter lines (about 2 cm) are cut almost on the same direction with the symbols above mentioned, but in the upper part of the amphora.

Comparing with other areas, as well as with the Dobrujan sites¹³, and with the archaeological materials identified *in situ* beside our sample, the amphora from Oltina can be included chronologically in the first half of the 11th century.

Surveying the categories of ceramics discovered in the early medieval settlement of Oltina „Capul Dealului” we notice they are not different, as typology and quantity comparing, to those found in the settlements of the historical period studied in the Danubian-Pontic territory. Thus: the common use ceramics can be also found in Dinogetia-Garvă¹⁴, Aegyssus-Tulcea¹⁵, Nufăru¹⁶ (Tulcea county), Capidava¹⁷, Păcuil lui Soare¹⁸, Basarabi¹⁹, Hârşova²⁰ (Constanţa county) etc.; the

¹² Barnea 1954: 518-520; Florescu, Florescu, Diaconu 1958: 209.

¹³ Jakobson 1951: 339, pl. 10, 33-34; Jakobson 1979: 109-111, pl. 68, 1, 2.

¹⁴ Ştefan, Barnea, Comşa, Comşa 1967: 134.

¹⁵ Vasiliu, Mănuclu-Adameşteanu 1984: 148.

¹⁶ Damian et alii 1997 : 40.

¹⁷ Florescu, Florescu, Diaconu 1958: 162-163, 193.

¹⁸ Diaconu, Vilceanu 1972: 71.

¹⁹ Barnea 1962: 352.

ceramics decorated with paint can be found in Basarabi²¹, Capidava²², Dinogetia-Garvăn²³, Păcuiul lui Soare²⁴ etc.; the grey one in Păcuiul lui Soare²⁵, Dinogetia-Garvăn²⁶, Capidava²⁷ etc.; the ceramics with olive-green enamel in Dinogetia-Garvăn²⁸, Aegyssus-Tulcea²⁹, Capidava³⁰, Basarabi³¹, Păcuiul lui Soare³² etc.; and the amphoras are present mostly in the large settlements³³, but not only³⁴. We emphasize, for the site of Oltina „Capul Dealului”, the great number of pots made of kaolin paste, as well as the rare presence of the grey ones decorated by polishing, as well as those with green-olive paste. As regarding the decoration elements for the exterior of the pots, we consider it is included into the second phase of evolution propounded by us in a previous study³⁵ - the second half of the 9th century-the beginning of the 11th century - when the decoration of the ceramics produced by local workshops became more various and rich, being easier to be included in registers and of a superior aesthetic level. We also, mention that the paste of the pots discovered in „Capul Dealului”, during the two systematic research campaigns, is generally of a better quality, well tempered and with small impurities. In the same time, the pots are accurately made, the decoration is mostly very attentively made, and some of the pots are made at the semirapid wheel. It is also to be noticed the great number of pot bottoms with potter stamps, which, together with those discovered in the previous years, include the settlement of Oltina in the same series with Hârșova³⁶, Castelu, Istria, Păcuiul lui Soare (Constanța county)³⁷, Isaccea³⁸ and Ostrov³⁹ (Tulcea county) as number of discoveries, being possible to find other clear evidence for pottery craftsmanship here in the future.

²⁰ Aricescu, 1971: 357; Panait, Rădulescu, Ștefănescu, Flaut 1995-1996: 128.

²¹ Barnea 1962: 357.

²² Florescu, Florescu, Diaconu 1958: 173, 179.

²³ Ștefan, Barnea, Comșa, Comșa 1967: 163.

²⁴ Diaconu, Vilceanu 1972: 85.

²⁵ Diaconu, Vilceanu 1972: 85.

²⁶ Ștefan, Barnea, Comșa, Comșa 1967: 164, 168 fig. 103.

²⁷ Florescu, Florescu, Diaconu 1958: 171, 203.

²⁸ Ștefan, Barnea, Comșa, Comșa 1967: 230.

²⁹ Vasiliu, Mănușu-Adameșteanu 1984: 149.

³⁰ Florescu, Florescu, Diaconu 1958: 179, 206.

³¹ Barnea 1962: 361.

³² Diaconu, Vilceanu 1972: 89.

³³ Florescu, Florescu, Diaconu 1958: 209; Ștefan, Barnea, Comșa, Comșa 1967: 249; Damian et alii 1997: 40.

³⁴ Barnea 1962:363; Vasiliu, Mănușu-Adameșteanu 1984: 148.

³⁵ Paraschiv-Talmațchi 2007: 25-30.

³⁶ Aricescu, 1971: 357.

³⁷ Paraschiv-Talmațchi 2006: 23.

³⁸ Paraschiv-Talmațchi, Stănică 2005-2006: 283-304.

³⁹ Paraschiv-Talmațchi 2006: 23.

In way of conclusion, we stress that, in this research stage, based on coins, ceramics and other elements discoveries, the settlement of Oltina „Capul Dealului” is dated in the 10-11th centuries⁴⁰.

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⁴⁰ Chiriac et alii 2004: 223; Custurea 2006: 415.

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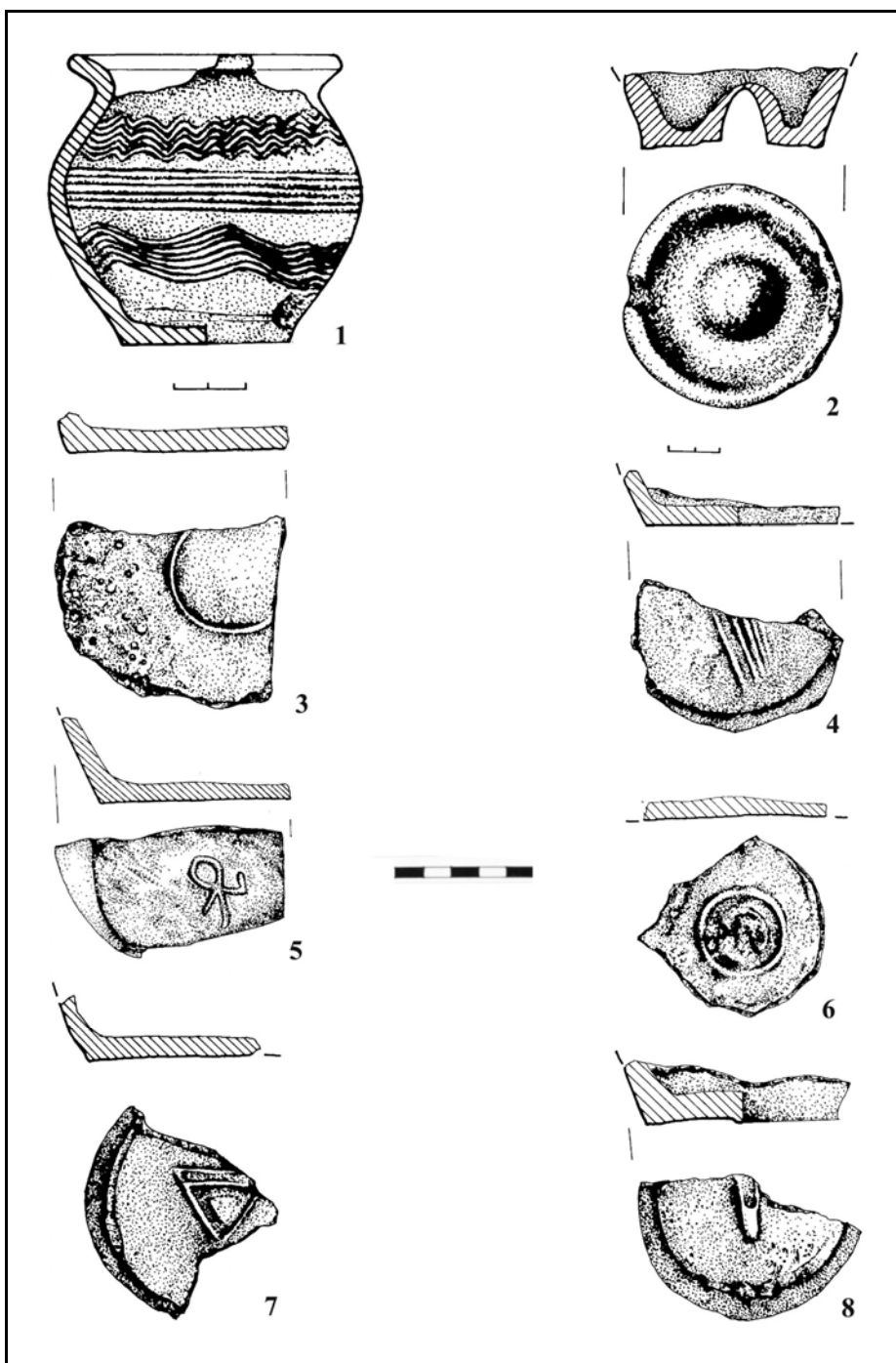


Plate I: Common use ceramics discovered in Oltina "Capul Dealului" in 2003: pots (1), rushlight (2), potter stamps (3-8).

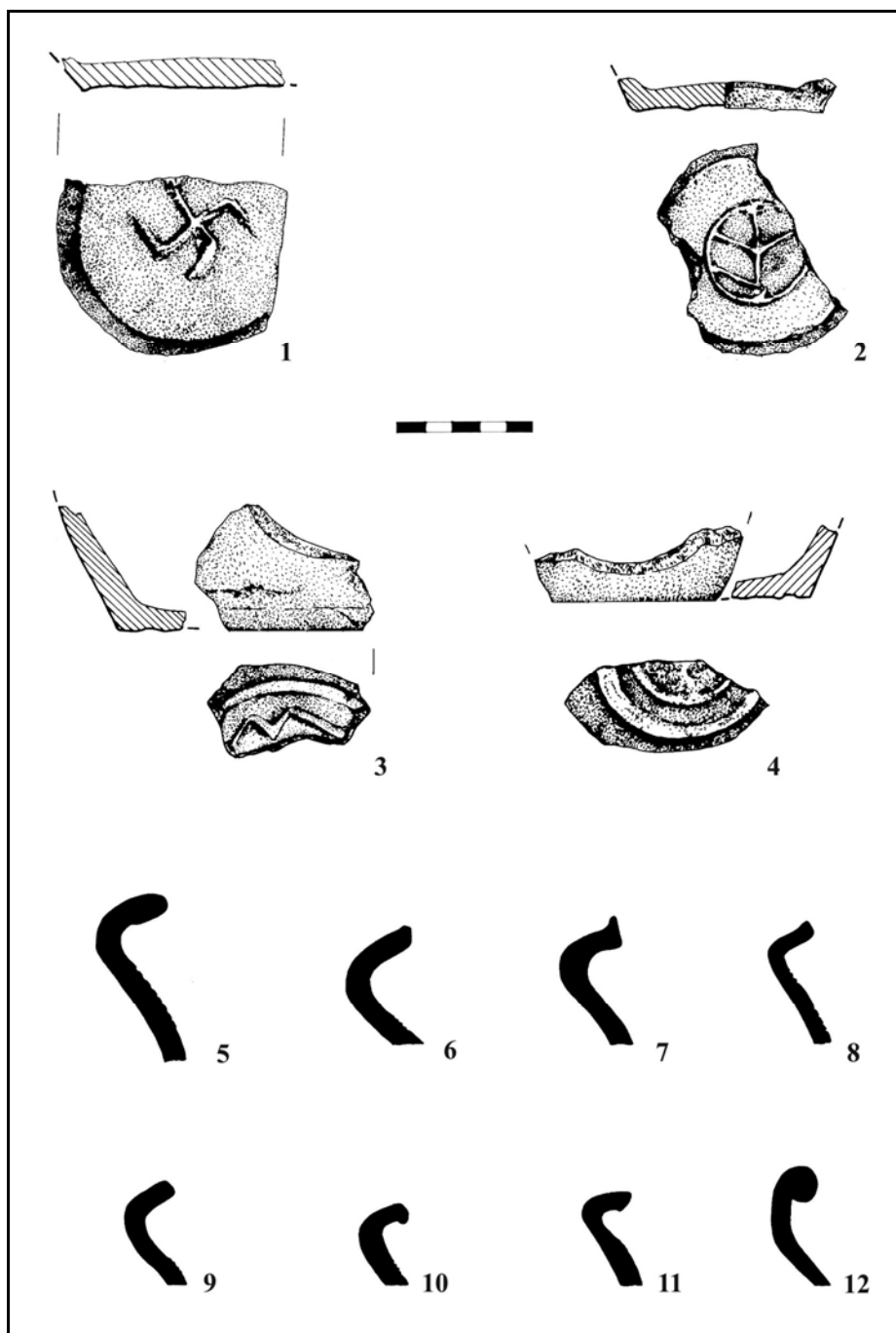


Plate II: Potter stamps discovered in Oltina "Capul Dealului" in 2003 (1-4); lip types (5-12).

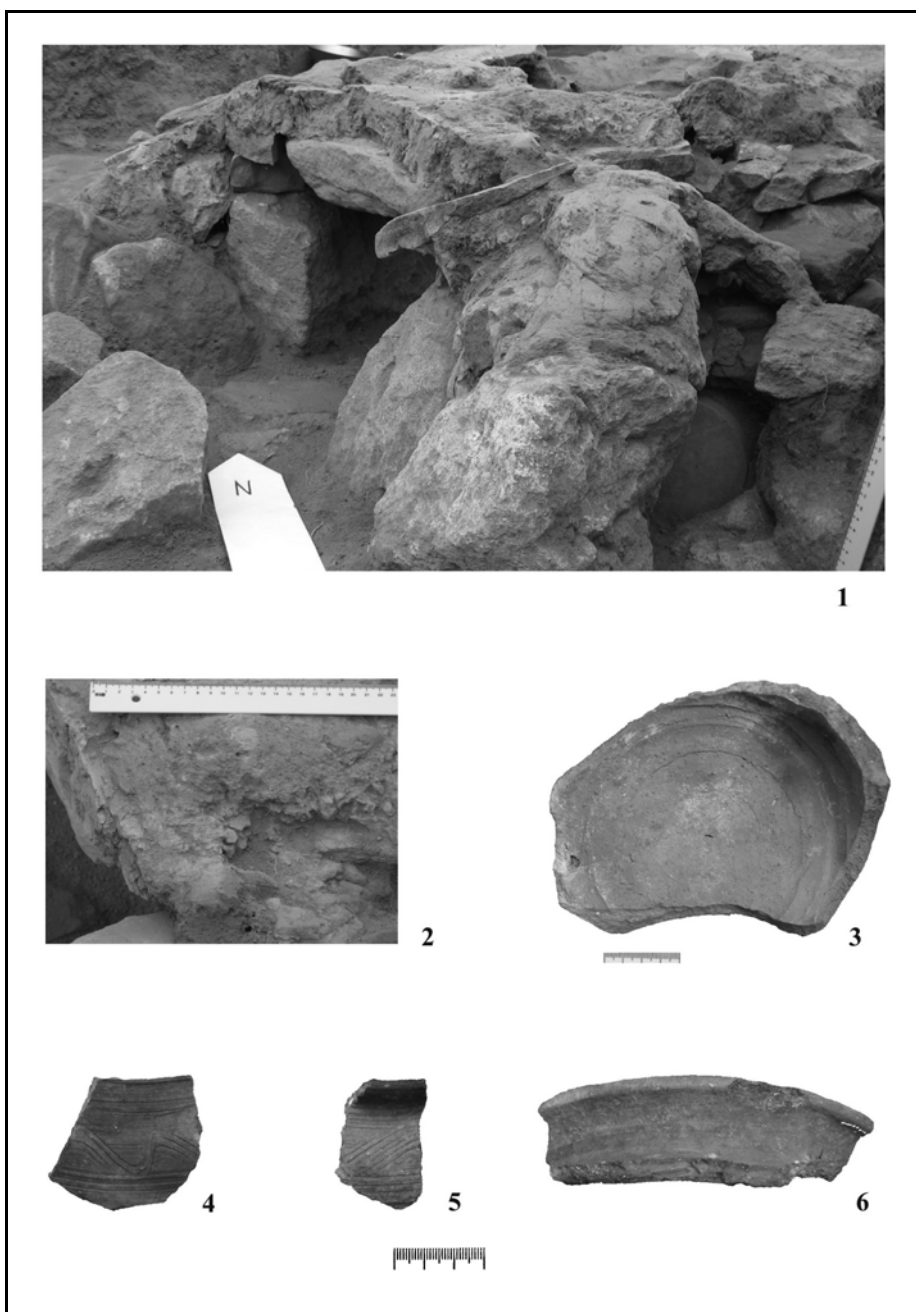


Plate III: Ceramics after the Oven 1/2007 was uncovered.

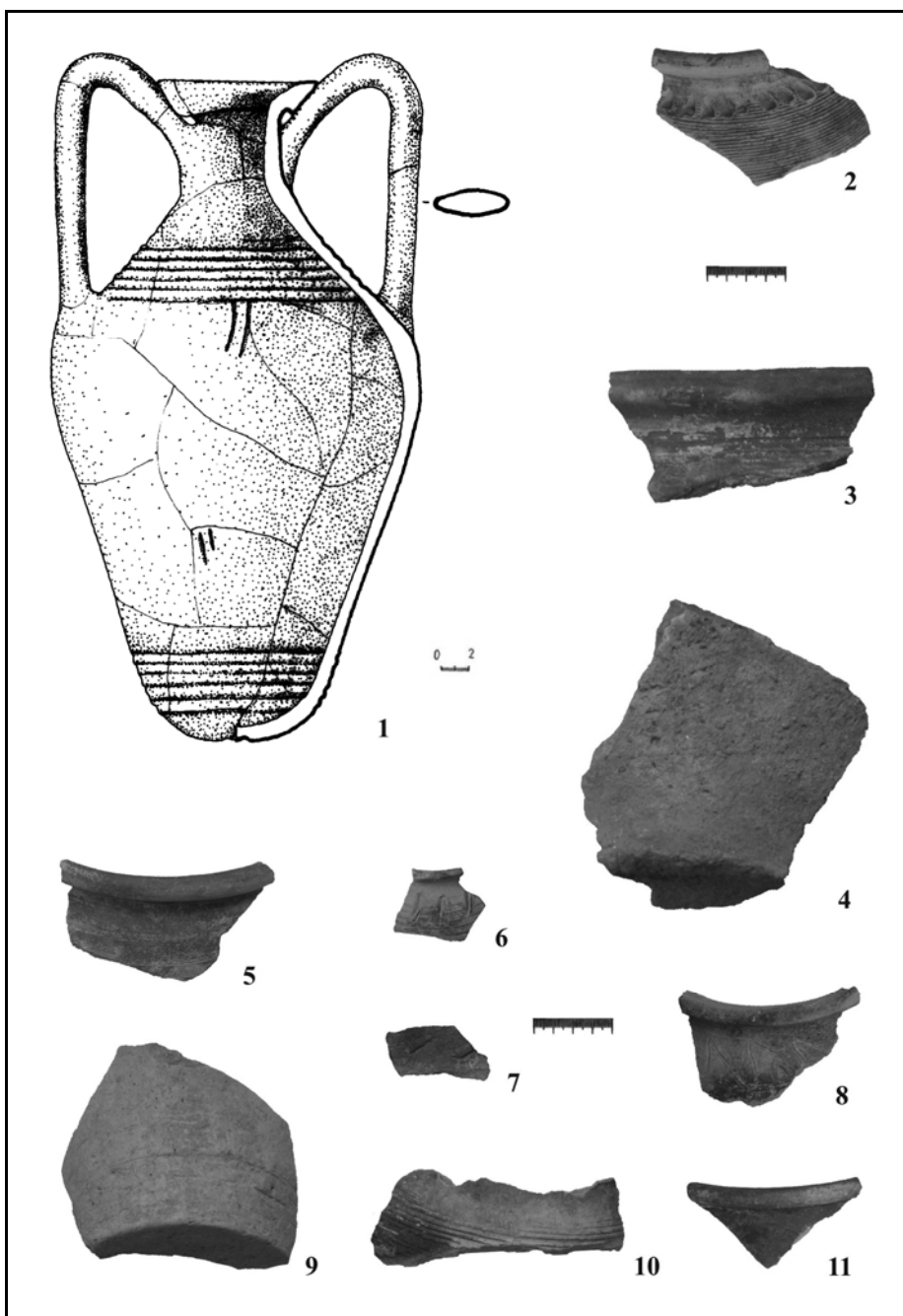


Plate IV: Ceramics discovered in 5/2003 Complex (1); ceramics discovered in the Pit 1/2007 (2-11).

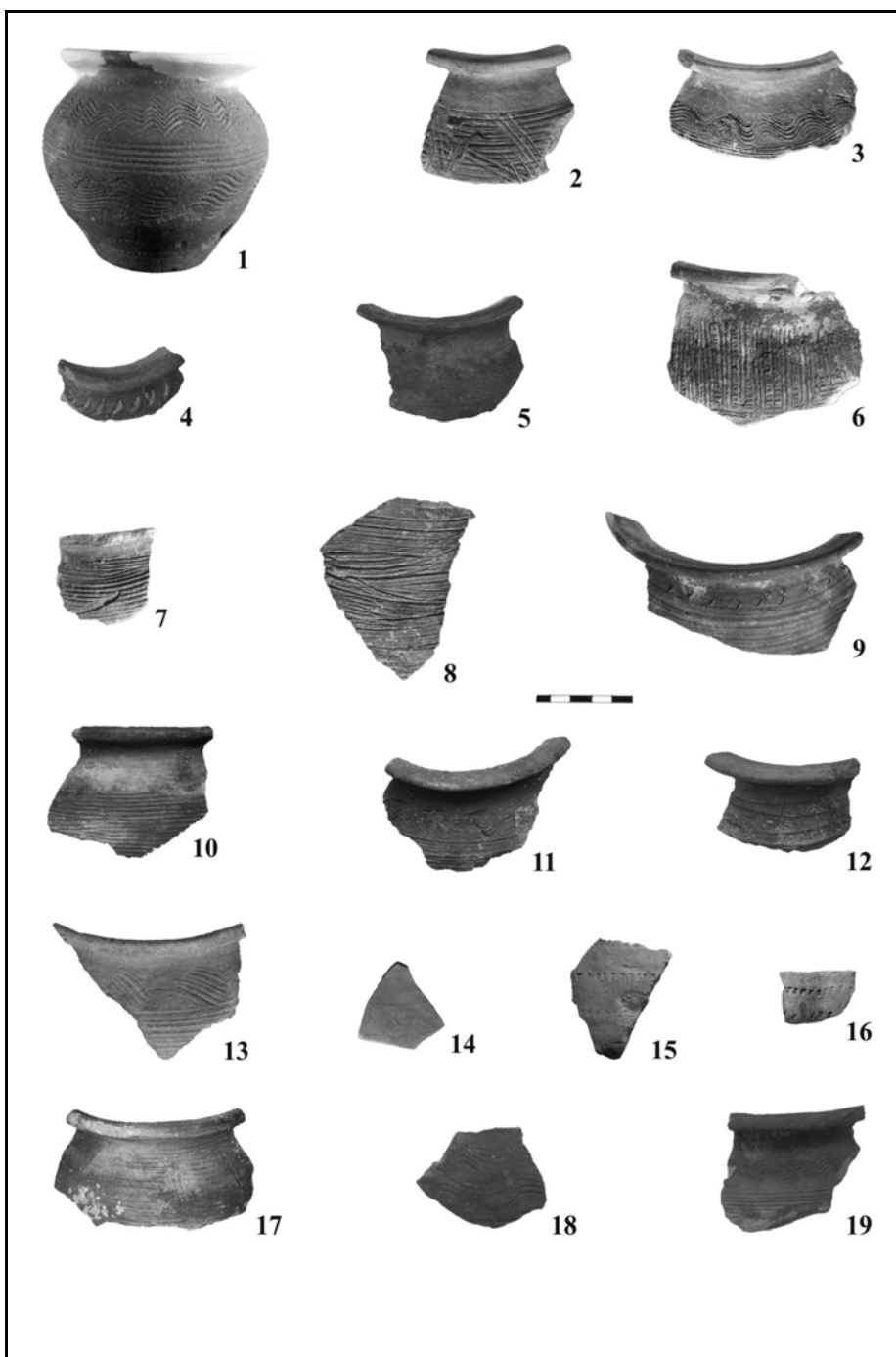


Plate V: Common use ceramics discovered in Oltina "Capul Dealului".

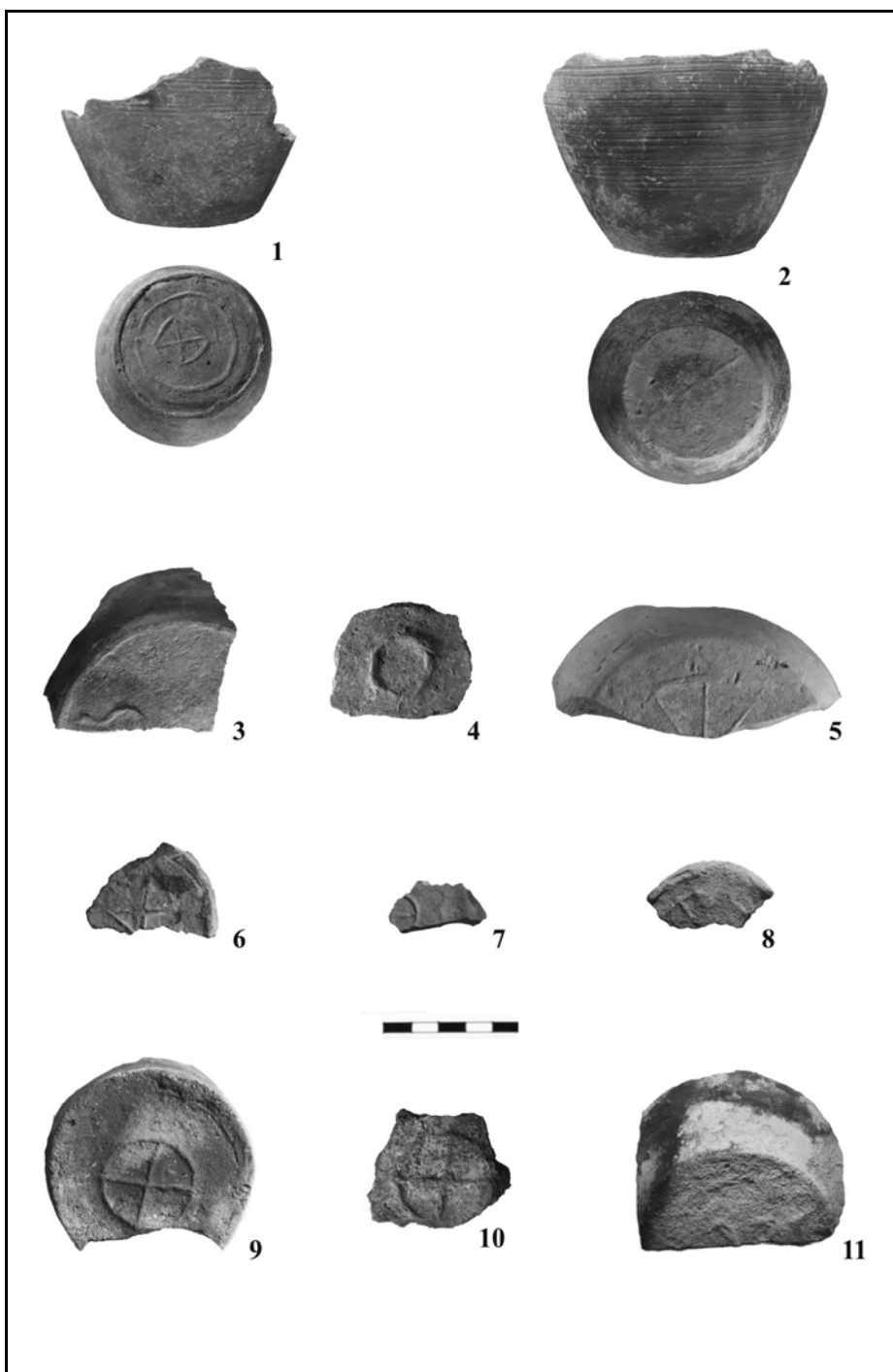


Plate VI: Potter stamps discovered in Oltina “Capul Dealului” in 2007.

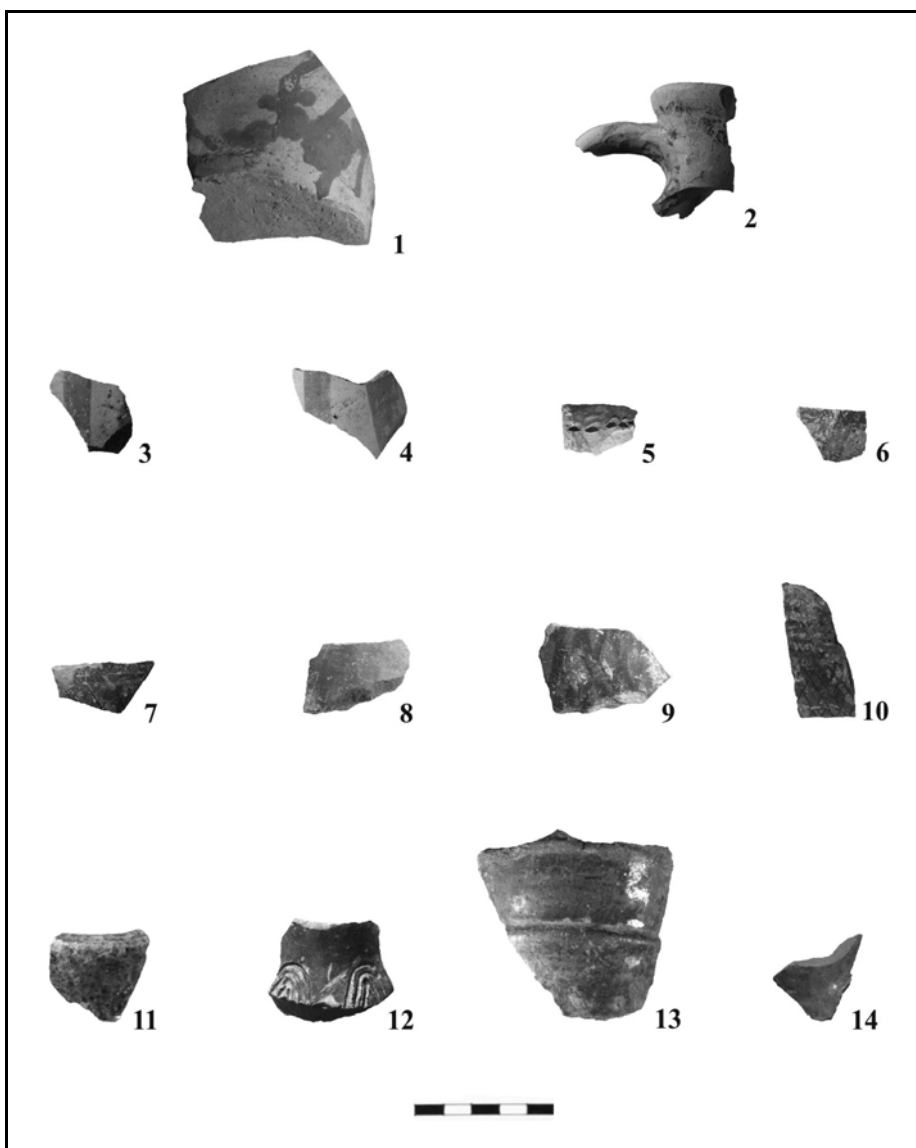


Plate VII: Ceramics decorated with paint (1-6); grey ceramics with polished decoration (7-10); ceramics with olive green enamel (11-14).



Plate VIII: Amphora discovered in 5/2003 Complex.

