

A COMPARISON BETWEEN THE DECORATION OF THE EARLY BRONZE AGE CERAMICS OF THE NORTHERN AND THE SOUTHERN PARTS OF THE WEST PONTIC AREA

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Abstract: *The decoration of the ceramics is one of its most quickly changing elements. As such it is often used as the major tool for relative chronology. Style characteristics can also be used as an instrument for regional and pan-regional analysis determining different archaeological cultures. From that point it is possible to define the similarities and differences in the culture of the North and the South parts of the West Pontic area which could be completed by analysing the decorative styles from the ceramics found in underwater settlements from the Southeast Bulgaria: Sozopol, Urdoviza, Atia, Burgas, and such found in the Northeast parts in the Varna lakes. Part of the material from the Northwest parts is already published and considerable amount of the other is still unknown. The main goal of the research is to distinguish the typical, distinctive, exceptional and aberrant features and to consider relationships and their significance. It is important to divide the different types of decoration based on the shape of the vessel and its placement.*

Rezumat: *Decorarea ceramicii este unul dintre elementele care se schimbă cel mai rapid. Ca atare, este adesea folosit ca instrument principal pentru cronologia relativă. Caracteristicile stilului pot fi de asemenea utilizate ca instrument pentru analiza regională și pan-regională care determină diferite culturi arheologice. Din acest punct, este posibil să se definească similitudinile și diferențele din cultura din nordul și sudul zonei vestice a Pontului, care ar putea fi completată prin analizarea stilurilor decorative din ceramica găsită în așezările subacvatice din sud-estul Bulgariei: Sozopol, Urdoviza, Atia, Burgas și altele găsite în partea de nord-est a lacurilor Varna. O parte din material din părțile de nord-vest este deja publicată, iar o cantitate considerabilă de alte elemente nu este încă cunoscută. Scopul principal al cercetării este de a distinge caracteristicile tipice, distinctive, excepționale și aberante și de a lua în considerare relațiile și semnificația lor. Este important ca diferitele tipuri de decor să fie împărțite în funcție de forma vasului și de plasarea acestora.*

Key-words: *Early Bronze Age, underwater excavations, ceramics, decoration, Bulgarian coast.*

Cuvinte-cheie: *Epoca bronzului timpuriu, arheologie subacvatică, ceramică, decorare, coasta Bulgariei.*

The two regions – Northern and Southern of the West Pontic area – are characteristic with the same type of underwater settlements, dating to the Early Bronze Age. They differ in term of the excavation methods used. At the moment there are 17 known settlements from Bulgaria. They are spread out in those two main regions. The northern group is represented by 12 settlements from the area of the Varna lakes (Rodopa, Varna I, Varna II, Topolite, Ezerovo I, Ezerovo II, Arsenala, Strashimirovo I and Strashimirovo II, Beloslav, Poveljanovo, Baltata). The exact number of settlements in the region is still controversial, first due to the close proximity of the settlements to one another; and second, the diverse information given by their researchers. There are 5 known settlements from the southern region – Urdoviza, Ropotamo, Sozopol, Atia, Burgas.

The materials from the northern area derived mainly from dredging works done in the lakes during the construction of modern ports causing deprivation from their original archaeological context¹. Only a random part of the materials has been published, mainly from one of the settlements – Ezerovo II²; and few finds from Strashimirovo³. In the framework of the current

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¹ Ivanov, 1993, p. 19.

² Tončeva, 1981, pp.41-62; Margos, Tončeva, 1962, pp. 1-16; Roman *et al.*, 1992, pp. 66-70.

³ Maproc, 1973, pp. 267-284.

comparative analysis, a part of these exact materials was redrawn by the author while visiting the Archaeological Museum in Varna^{**}.

As opposite to the northern region, the materials from the submerged settlements to the South were discovered mainly during proper archaeological excavations at the sites of Sozopol, Kiten and Ropotamo. The only exception are the finds from Atia and Burgas which derived from dredging operations⁴. However, most of the known material derived from the sites of Sozopol and Kiten, which have been excavated for several seasons on a large area⁵, and part of the finds were published⁶. The known vessels from Ropotamo do not bear any decoration⁷. The rest of the pottery presented here is acquired recently. The fact that the materials from the northern part can be connected with those from the South with clearer context as well as the presence of recently discovered materials from the south, both bring a modern perspective on the problem of the submerged settlements on the West Pontic area. This could be achieved with analysing of the decorations of the vessels.

A decorative style communicates through its visual elements: images, representations and icons. It represents the typical pattern an artist defines and fills space. Style is a mediator of a visual communication. It is a link between the artist and the observer. An analytical issue for an archaeologist is to become acknowledged what is being communicated and to whom via a particular decorative style. Pottery's movability is an advantage in messaging the transition from familiar to unfamiliar; or from sacred to profane contexts. On one hand, clay pots used to have domestic functions such as cooking or storage. Their decoration may be only for adornment or for testifying the skill of the potter. On the other hand, the more complex the decoration styles used to be, the most probable is being displayed and seen by more people, further being recognized as culturally significant or emotionally charged, by not only one household⁸.

The decoration of the ceramics is one of its most rapidly changing elements. As such, it is often used as the major tool for relative chronology. Style characteristics can also be used as a tool for a regional and a pan-regional analysis in the recognition of different archaeological cultures. Hereby, it is possible to define similarities and differences in the cultures of the northern and the southern parts of the West Pontic area, mainly by analysing the decorative styles of the ceramics discovered from submerged settlements along the south-eastern coast of Bulgaria (Sozopol, Urdoviza, Atia, Burgas), and such found in the north-eastern coast (submerged settlements in the lakes of Varna). The decoration styles can be specified on only whole vessels or large fragments. This is important so that the different types of decoration can be divided based on the shape of the vessel and its placement. This is the reason why ceramics such as that is being used in the current research. The main focus of the research is to distinguish the typical, distinctive, exceptional and aberrant ceramics' features and also to consider relationships and examine their significance.

When dealing with decoration style is important to define the differences between the naturalistic, the abstract and purely decorative⁹. The naturalistic style is the representation of an object as it is found in nature. It could not be and usually is not a photographic representation rather than reflection of the skill and knowledge of the artist. Generally, there is a simplification of the shapes. The distinction of symbolic and abstract from purely decorative always seems demanding. It is truly exaggerated to apply a symbolic meaning to an object, moreover when the study concerns prehistoric people from which there has no record of their believe system or religion left¹⁰. That is why analyse of the symbols will not be a focus of this research. The connotative part of the design

^{**} I want to express my gratitude to V. Slavchev for granting me access to those materials.

⁴ Lazarov, 1974, pp. 107-109.

⁵ Angelova, Draganov, 2003, p. 12.

⁶ Angelova, Draganov, 2003, pp. 17-19; Leshtakov, 1991, pp. 23-38.

⁷ Karayotov, 2002.

⁸ Shepard, 1956, p. 260.

⁹ Rice, 2015, p. 389.

¹⁰ Shepard, 1956, p. 259.

would be left and the shape would be regarded as the tool for determining the similarities and differences between different regions. This includes the adaptation of the design to the vessel's shape, composition or structure, as well as use of elements and motifs; and other following characteristics such as symmetry, relation between figure and ground, balance of dark and light.

The analysis of the style focuses on identifying formal qualities; by grouping vessels or sherds into classes or types, by the presence or absence of certain features such as motifs or different techniques of decoration. These categories are used to reconstruct local and regional site sequences through series of arguments based on relative similarities and inferences of gradual stylistic change. The geographical distributions of particular stylistic components or combinative styles on pottery also permits hypotheses about contacts between sites or regions.

The decoration style presented on the pottery from the West Pontic region could be regarded as modest, especially when compared with the style from previous periods like the one on the Late Chalcolithic pottery. The main motives are simple and more likely composed of one or two elements. A large portion of the design on vessels represents a repetition of a motif, the elaboration of a line, or the panelling of a band and the subdivision of its rectangles. There are six main types of decoration that is found on the pottery from the West Pontic region – pressed, carved, plastic, stamped, incised and cord-impressed, and sometimes combinations of the above. The decoration is observed separately for the different types of vessels registered in the settlements – plates, bowls, cups, jugs, askoi, pots, amphorae, containers and landing-nets. They are illustrated in tables where the different designs are presented enlarged above the shape of the vessels so they could be easily perceived.

Plates (Fig. 1)

Plates are considered part of the fine ware used for serving and eating food. They have simple conical or semispherical form, rarely S-shaped profile. The decorated parts are around the rim. Both plates from Sozopol and Urdoviza have pressings on the rim that result in the appearance of a wave-like curve. In the case of Urdoviza, the one is combined with a plastic knob. Part of the rims from the Sozopol's ceramics have carved lines that gives a serrated-like appearance. The rim of the Urdoviza plate has smaller carved dips on its surface. Another example of a plate with a carved rim is discovered in Ezerovo as well. All those decoration styles are simple and give the same artistic impression.

Another type of decoration that is found on the pottery assembly is the plastic knobs. They can be with circular or oval shape. The latter can be found both horizontal and vertical. They are located directly beneath the rim. In the case of Urdoviza the knobs are found on top of the rim or beneath the handle. This type of decoration could also have a more practical function: it could be used for easier and more stable positioning of the vessel. Such elements are found on a plate from one of the settlements in Varna Lake. The knob in this case is combined with stamped decoration, similar to one example from Sozopol.

Stamped decoration is quite common in the ceramic complex from the Early Bronze Age layer in the West Pontic region and appear on almost all types of vessels, including plates. Stamps on the pottery are made with tools that have different edges, such as the crescent moon, drop-like, circular, ellipsoid or triangular. Each of these markings creates the element of the decoration style. A large portion of the design on vessels is simple and represents a repetition of an element, therefore creating a panelling of a band. Exceptions are the designs which become complex and particular weight or prominence is given more to secondary lines rather than to the primary structural ones.

A common case in Sozopol is when the stamped elements form a band that is usually located on the most prominent part of the vessel's body. In one of the cases the stamped band is situated right below the rim. One exception is when the pointed marks are stamped on an angle with bilateral vertical symmetry forming a triangle-like motif.

The stamped decorated plates from Urdoviza have more complex patterns. There is a tilted line on a plate's rim made with a dotted tool that is translated through the whole circle of the rim. Also, more

tilted lines with a combination of vertical ones appear along the inner side, and form a coniferous tree like pattern. Unfortunately, the fragment is quite minor to be concluded what motif on was.

There are two instances of combination between plastic and stamped decoration from Sozopol. The first combines knobs with a band of crescent-mooned stamp. The second is a combination of a plastic band with a stamp on the upper and lower parts of the band with a rain-drop like ending tool.

Two of the plates from Urdoviza combine the stamped decoration with carved rims. In one of the cases there is a third type of decoration – indices lines. They outline a rectangular space filled with dotted stamps. Similar motifs examples are found on the site of Ezerovo. One of the plates has the same design but the other pattern looks more like triangular one. The fragments presented in the publication of the site are quite minor in size; as a consequence, the pattern remains incomplete. The other plate from Urdoviza also has a complex design. Created with stamped element is a triangle-like motif. The same motif example is also found in Ezerovo.

The incised type of decoration is used for the application of elaborate designs that is only surpassed by the designs made with cord-impression. When considering the plates incised pottery are found only in Urdoviza the sites from Varna Lake and yet are not found in Sozopol's pottery. One of the examples from Urdoviza has on the top of the rim a pattern with minor incisions in splatted lines with bilateral vertical symmetry, therefore forming a triangle-like motif, similar to the one on the stamped plate from Sozopol. Six triangular spaces outlined by lines and filled in with shorter ones are presented on the outer body's surface. The base of the vessel is divided into eight parts; each one represents a symmetrical triangular shape, four are left blank and four are filled in with stamped ornament. The decoration of the base may be accepted as a clue for the dual use of such vessels as both lids and plates. According to Goranka Tončeva, the chief researcher of the site of Ezerovo, these vessels belong to the group of the lids¹¹. Another example of a plate with triangles is decorated with this pattern inside and outside. The triangles are outlined with incised lines and filled in with parallel lines to one of the sides of the triangles.

The lids from Ezerovo also have geometrical patterns on the inner and outer surface. They have ample geometrical incised decoration that is similar to the one from Urdoviza, where the main motif is the triangle.

The cord-impressed decoration on plates is registered in Sozopol, Urdoviza, Atia, Ezerovo and Strashimirovo. The designs are complex and diverse. In Sozopol there are two plates with such design. The first has double or triple festoons hanging from the rim of the vessel and are translated around it. The base with a decoration on the inner surface is preserved from the second vessel. Only a fraction of the design could be seen because of a crack. There is one vertical wave line and a double curved one from each of the sides.

The examples from Urdoviza combine different types of decoration except of the cord-impression. The first one has carved lines on the rim. Cord-impressed vertical parallel lines are observed on the outer surface of the body. Due to the minor size of the fragment, the complete design is invisible but most likely it continued throughout the whole diameter of the body; herein reminds of a sun-like motif. This type of motif is quite characteristic for this type of vessels, especially for the decoration done with incisions and cord-impression. The second one has cord-impressed decoration on the rim, which pattern is also presented on the base but with an inclusion of a carved cross element. As a result, it gives the appearance that the vessel is separated into four relatively equal parts. The rim decoration represents triangular-like form moulded by three parallel oblique lines. The third one has the same pattern on the rim but the parallel lines are two. On the outer surface it has dual vertical lines translated around. It is combined with tiny incisions on the transition to the base. The inner part of the vessel is amply decorated with triangular pattern which is outlined by three parallel vertical lines and filled in with parallel horizontal ones.

¹¹Tončeva, 1981, p. 52.

The example from Atia bears decoration on the inside and the outside parts of the vessel. On the inner part of the rim there are some parallel vertical translated lines. The inside is covered by a triangular design made by four lines that begin from the rim and end up together on the base. The outer surface also has triangular band motifs but on two levels. They are separated by two horizontal parallel lines. The upper triangles are larger than the bottom ones. Both are composed of the same elements. They combine two types of decoration – cord-impressed and stamped. The triangles are outlined with straight incised lines and inside are filled in with drop-like stamped ornament.

The plates from Ezerovo bear close resemblance to those from Sozopol and Urdoviza. The motifs are close to those found in the other settlements – parallel lines and triangular shapes. Likewise the ones from Urdoviza, the whole body is covered on the inside and the outside. The motifs create a sun-like design. There are parallels with the plate with festoons from Sozopol and with the examples from Ezerovo. The other patterns mainly resemble triangular designs similar to those from Uzdoviza.

There are several cord-impressed bases from Strashimirovo with ample cord-impressed decoration similar to the one from the other plates from the other settlements. Again here, the triangular motif is preferred. The fragments are minor but the partially preserved motifs seem to mould the same type of design.

Bowls (Fig. 2)

Bowls are into the semi-fine category as they are also used for serving food but are usually from a coarser dough. The forms are also simple – semispherical, conical and S-shaped. The decoration is more simplified than the plate's one.

The simplest decoration, as the one in plates, is the curved rim made by pressing the wet clay. There are some examples from Sozopol with both shorter and longer interval between the dents. This decoration can be also found in Urdoviza but lacking in the Northwest Pontic area.

The carving of the rims is commontype of decoration for the bowls. This is clearly distinctive in the variety presented in Sozopol. The cuts can be either deep, shallow, close to each other or spread out. Some carvings are crossed out on the outside part of the rim creating crossed-like pattern. One plate from Urdoviza has large carving that gives to the rim dented appearance. It is found together with regular carved rims. The same carved rims are also found in Ezerovo.

In Sozopol the stamped ornamentation on bowls is most diverse in regard of the tools used – ellipsoid, rain-drop like and triangular. In two instances with a combination of carved rim with stamped ornamentation are represented which is the most common decoration for the pots. Vessels decorated only with stamped ornamentation are registered in Urdoviza and Ezerovo. The latter is combined with plastic knob.

The plastic decoration on bowls is also widespread. It usually consists of plastic knobs either on the rim or below it. They can create a band, sometimes with a pair of knobs, or they may also be mirrored. Such examples are found in Sozopol, Urdoviza and Atia. The following example from Sozopol has a clear parallel in Ezerovo and Strashimirovo. Its design is made by short plastic band placed as slanted lines that are translated on the whole rim.

Incised and cord-impressed decoration on bowls is found only on bowls from Urdoviza and Ezerovo. In the first example from Urdoviza the incisions are placed on the most prominent part of the body and on the transition between the neck and the body. On the next, there is an incised horizontal line from which triangles outlined by incised lines and filled in with stamped ornament. Below the triangles is another horizontal incised line that is crossed by short vertical incisions. There is a quite similar bowl from Ezerovo with a band of incised triangles hanging from the rim of the vessel. The second one from Ezerovo also has the pattern: a band of triangles, even though they are filled in with incised lines, parallel to one of the sides of the triangles. Not all are filled in completely. Part of them have an empty space in the middle and are outlined with parallel to the sides of the triangle lines. The second example from Urdoviza has incisions on the base. The

incisions separate the base into four equal parts and mirroring each other interchange blank spaces with filled in with incised lines that begin at the edge of the base and end at its center.

There is only one example of cord-impression decoration on bows from Urdoviza. It is located on the external part below the rim. The pattern is composed of slanted lines that have vertical bilateral symmetry which forms a triangular-like pattern. The same pattern can be seen near the base but it is created using a stamp imitating the cord-impressed ornament. The bows from Urdoviza also have triangle patterns but more complex. It is similar to those designs made with incisions.

Cups (Fig. 3)

Cups are part of the fine ware but are rarely decorated. There is one with carved rim from Urdoviza. Two with plastic knobs from Sozopol. One on the top part of the handle and one on the most prominent part of the body, creating a band. Incised decoration is found in Sozopol and Ezerovo, one is on the rim and the other near the base. Due to the small quantity of decorated vessels, the cups are not appropriate material for the comparative analysis.

Jugs (Fig. 4)

Jugs are one of the most common shapes found from the Early Bronze Age sites in the West Pontic area. Most of them are adorned and all types of decoration is presented. Pressings that mould a wave-like rim are found on one jug from Urdoviza. A jug from Sozopol is ornamented with knobs pressed from the inner part on the transition between the neck and the body. So far, the two examples are single finds.

The plastic decoration is one of the most preferred methods for decorating jugs. From Urdoviza and Ezerovo the ribbon-loop handle is frequently observed. Plastic knobs became evident on the ceramics from most of the sites. They can be observed as a band of two, three, five or more units. Sometimes they flank the lower base of the vertical loop handle. They are found and on the most upper part of the vertical loop handle. Such examples are registered in Sozopol, Urdoviza, Atia and Ezerovo.

There are two quite similar jugs from Urdoviza and Ezerovo. They both have plastic decoration on the front neck of the vessel and on the backward side below the handle. It represents a curved plastic band that looks like a “W” in the case of Urdoviza and like an “M” in Ezerovo.

Jugs with carved rims are presented in Sozopol. Usually this type of decoration is combined with stamped decoration on the most prominent part of the body. A part of the jugs from Sozopol have only stamped decoration. Similar can be found in the Ezerovo and Atia's pottery. Another similarity between Sozopol and Ezerovo is the carvings on the sides of the vertical loop handles.

There is one jug from Urdoviza that has a complex design and includes stamped, plastic and incised decoration. The incisions are short shallow vertical carvings on the inner and outer edge of the rim. It has ten plastic knobs. One is located on the highest point of the vertical loop handle, two are flanking the lower base of the handle. The other form a band on the most prominent part of the body – three in front and two on either side. The knobs are stamped on their peak with the same drop-like stamp as the rest of the decoration. The stamped decoration forms a band around and between the knobs creating triangles. Similar decoration could be found on a jug from Ezerovo.

The incised decoration is rare. It is recorded only in Sozopol. Usually it is in combination with a stamped one. An incised line is placed on the end of the neck to separate it from the body. Some stamping band could be placed around or below it. In one case there are hanging hook-like patterns made by stamping.

The cord-impressed decoration on jugs is a common feature for all assessed settlements. Only two fragments are found in Sozopol. Because of the preservation only of an obscured part, general conclusions about the pattern should be given with a precaution. The other example is found only on one handle from Sozopol. It presents three parallel cord-impressed lines that run vertically in the handle and continue on the body. Such is found on amphorae from Ezerovo but not on a jug.

The collection of urns with cord-impressed decoration in Urdoviza is the most numerous loads of combinations and modifications could be found. A one specific jug resembles two reflected almond like figures on the shoulders of the vessel.

Like the incised decoration from Sozopol a cord-impressed band is used to create a line that separates the neck from the body. In some cases two parallel lines are observed as well. An advanced form of this separation is the combination of a line or lines with plastic knobs or wave or a zig-zag cord-impressed band made by two parallel lines. Each of the decorations mentioned above become evident from a single example. A version with a band separating the neck and the body is found in Burgas. A similar design is found from Ezerovo. In this case below the separating line hang festoon like ornaments made by three parallel cord-impressed lines. It is similar to a plate found in Sozopol.

Askoi (Fig. 5)

The askoi are not decorated as much as the other fine pottery such as plates and jugs, even though some of them have an ornamentation. The plastic decor consists of plastic band on the vertical handle that is moulded to look like a ribbon – ribbon looped handles. Such are the examples from Urdoviza and from Ezerovo. Some plastic bands on the base of the neck are found only from Ezerovo. Similar bands that create a hook or anchor like ornament can be observed on some jugs from Urdoviza. The ornamentation exist in Sozopol as well but it is made with a stamp.

Other type of decoration that is found on askoi is the stamped one. It usually covers the transition between the neck and the body and also it represents a band made by the ornament of the stamp. Such are the cases with one askoi from Sozopol and one from Ezerovo. One askoi from Burgas has complex dotted stamped ornament. It is composed of two bands that go joined together across the body of the askoi below the neck and get departed so one can get around the lower base of the handle. The bands are filled in with oblique lines. The two bands have horizontal bilateral symmetry. There is one askoi from Sozopol that has carved rim and some horizontal carvings on the sides of the vertical loop handle. Such decoration is observed also on jugs.

Pots (Fig. 6)

The pots are the most common shape from the settlements. Their utilitarian function as cooking and storage vessels makes them a necessity in any household. Because of that they are used and observed daily. They can also be used in mortuary rituals, feasts or other community activity involving food. Their decoration is quite simple and may be for adornment or for testifying the skill of the potter. More complex decoration styles are also observed, though rarely.

All types of decoration techniques are represented yet not in all settlements. Only in Sozopol there is decoration made by pressing the wet clay. One is a pot with a wave-like rim, the other is a pot with pressed from the inside knobs on the most prominent part of the body. It has only one preserved, but most likely it continued as a band around the whole diameter of the body of the vessel. Similar decoration is found only in Sozopol – the other case being a jug.

Plastic knobs are more common. In Sozopol there are three fragments adorned this way. One has six single knobs forming a band around the body on its most prominent part. The other has double knobs also forming a band. They are only two preserved pairs but their location suggests that they were four pairs. They are also on the most prominent part of the body where they are combined with two vertical parallel bands made by stamped decoration. The rim is also decorated with carvings. The third vessel with a plastic decoration is fragmented and it cannot be certainly concluded if it is a knob or a band. This pot also has carved rim.

There is one pot from Urdoviza with plastic knobs. These are located at the transition between the neck and the body of the vessel. There are three preserved but because of their location it can be suggested that they were at least four. This decoration is combined with stamped one. It creates a vertical band around the vessel and from each knob there are three short parallel vertical lines. It also has a carved rim.

The plastic decoration is also observed in Ezerovo. The first fragment has two knobs located below the rim and positioned one below the other. The second one has a pair of knobs on the most prominent part of the body, similar to the one from Sozopol. There is one fragment similar to the third fragment from Sozopol.

The most common decoration found in all settlements is the carved rim. It can be found separately or with combination of stamped ornament on the most prominent part of the body. The stamps could be pointed, crescent moon, drop-like, circle, ellipsoid or triangular. There is one pot from Kiten only with a stamped decoration. The stamped band can appear double or triple as shown by the examples from Urdoviza and Sozopol.

The incised decoration is not as common. There is one example from Kiten. It is located on the transition between the neck and the body. It consists of short oblique lines that have vertical bilateral symmetry and create a triangular-like pattern. A fragment of such is found in Strashimirovo as well. More complex ornamentation is found from Ezerovo. There the incised triangles are combined with carved rim and stamped band. The other example from the site has also a triangle motif beginning from the carved rim.

The most complex type of decorations is the cord-impressed. The elaborate motifs and combination of elements create an intricate design that separates them from the rest of the pots. There is one example from Sozopol. The decoration is located on the neck of the vessel. It consists of short oblique lines with vertical bilateral symmetry that creates a triangular-like pattern like the incised vessel from Urdoviza. On the transition between the neck and the body is a cord-impressed horizontal band. Double plastic knobs are positioned below it.

The pots from Urdoviza with cord-impressed decoration have more intricate design, nevertheless the same idea for decorating the neck of the vessel is observed. However, further details are included. Such as a stamped band combined with the knots or a plastic waved like band. The first example also has carved rim. The cord-impressed decoration on the neck can be regarded as bands, which are separated by horizontal lines. The first vessel has four such bands. The first three are composed of oblique parallel lines that are reflected once. The forth is composed of oblique lines with vertical bilateral symmetry that creates a triangular-like pattern and some are filled in with lines parallel to one of the sides of the triangle.

The second and the third pots with cord-impressed decoration from Urdoviza are quite similar. They have two bands of oblique lines that have horizontal bilateral symmetry. They are separated by one or two horizontal lines. The top and the bottom of the bands are also outlined with two or three horizontal lines.

The cord-impressed pot from Ezerovo differs from those found in Urdoviza and is closer to the one from Sozopol and those with incised decoration due to the pattern of hanging triangles on the neck of the vessel. There is one specific decoration that is found only on pots and only in Ezerovo – stamping with fingers.

Amphorae (Fig. 7)

Amphorae are part of the coarse ware. They are not as common as a shape and are infrequently decorated. Nonetheless, there are examples from part of the settlements. Pressed decoration is registered only in Sozopol. It is pressed wave-like rim. Plastic knobs are found in Atia and in Ezerovo. They are placed at the base of the neck of the vessel and create a band.

Stamped decor is found in Sozopol and in Ezerovo. The one from Sozopol imitates the pot decor of a band on the transition between the body and the neck. Those from Ezerovo have more complex design. The first example has a band triangles made via stamp beginning from a band created of stamped ornament on the vase of the neck of the vessel and continuing to the most prominent part of the body. The second example looks like a pot from Urdoviza with a round shaped stamp that forms a band around the neck and each handle has three parallel vertical lines.

There is only one example of incised decoration and it is from Ezerovo. It imitates the pot decor with hanging triangle on the shoulders of the vessel.

Cord-impressed decoration is more common. It is found in Sozopol, Urdoviza and Ezerovo. Two examples are from Sozopol. The first one has a horizontal band on the shoulders of the vessel and festoon hanging from it which is filled in with three oblique parallel lines. The other fragment with a decoration below the handle looking like a triangle, but is rather damaged for the reconstruction to be sure. The example from Urdoviza is composed of three horizontal bands on the transition between the neck and the body of the vessel.

The decor from Ezerovo is more diverse. There are bands around the neck, festoons, and hanging triangles. One of the examples has the whole neck covered with horizontal parallel lines. Other unique aspect from Ezerovo is the presence of the handles with cord-impressed decoration.

Containers (Fig. 8)

Containers are rather specific vessels in a way of forms and use. They are amply decorated, mostly with cord-impressions. Each vessel has different motives in the ornamentation. There are horizontal parallel bands on the body from one vessel from Sozopol. The other has triangle shaped lines that give the illusion of a sun-like ornament. It is combined with plastic knobs and a wave-like cord-impressed line below the rim. The wave-like ornament is also found in Urdoviza but here it is combined with vertical parallel lines and cross-like motifs. The example from Ezerovo has oblique parallel lines densely located from one another, further creating a triangular shaped design. In the case of the containers is observed uniqueness in the form and in the decoration. The common aspect is the preferred technique of decoration – cord-impression.

Landing-nets (Fig. 9)

The so-called landing nets are distinctive forms which are found only in the West Pontic area. They have a round body and an oblique rim placed on one side. On the uppermost part of the body is attached a vertical handle through three or four legs. Their function remains unknown. Although G. Tončeva uses the term „landing nets”¹² which is one possible function of the vessel. Not all of them are decorated but when they are it is done thoroughly. Only small number of such vessels are found from Urdoviza and Ezerovo. The decoration is cord-impressed with one exception from Ezerovo where the rim is carved. Distinctive for them is that the decoration used on the handles creates anthropomorphic ventures like the vessel from Urdoviza or zoomorphic ones in the case of the vessel from Ezerovo.

Conclusions

The decoration from the Early Bronze Age from the northern and southern parts of the West Pontic region delivers the same characteristic with few exceptions. The preferred motifs are geometric, mainly the triangle-shaped, or bands that underline a prominent part of the body, when the ornaments are simple. Characteristic for the circular shaped vessels like plates and bowls is motifs that with their repetition create a sun-shaped form. The same techniques are used for decorating – pressing, carving, plastic decoration, stamped, incised and cord-impressed, and sometimes combinations of the ones mentioned above. The most used combinations are between carved, stamped and plastic. The similarities between the decoration from the settlements in the Northern and Southern parts of the West Pontic suggests that they belong to the same cultural group. The most diverse use of decoration is noticed in Ezerovo where all features from Sozopol and Urdoviza can be found. This can be based on the chronological difference between the settlements. Unfortunately the only absolute chronology done is in Urdoviza that dates the

¹² Tončeva, 1981, fig. 18.

settlement to the Early Bronze Age II¹³. One aspect remains certain as far as the style analysis could conclude; the two regions had unquestionable connection according to the belief system and the everyday life during all of the mentioned periods of inhabitation.

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Figure 3. Cups.

Figure 4. Jugs.

Figure 5. Aaskoi.

Figure 6. Pots.

Figure 7. Amphorae.

Figure 8. Containers.

Figure 9. Landing-nets.

Abbreviations

IJNAUE	– International Journal of Nautical Archaeology and Underwater Exploration, London.
ИНМВ	– Известия на Народния музей Варна, Варна
ИВАД	– Известия на Варненското Археологическо Дружество, Варна
Dacia N.S.	– Dacia. Nouvelle Série: Revue d'Archéologie et d'Histoire Ancienne, București.
Pontica	– Pontica. Muzeul de Istorie Națională și Arheologie, Constanța.
Thracia 1-3	– Thracia. Primus congressus studiorum thracorum, Sofia, 1972-1974.

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¹³ Kuniholm *et al.*, 1998.

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	10 cm	Sozopol	Urdoviza	Atia	Ezerovo	Strashimirovo (Marqos, 1973)
Pressed						
Carved						
Plastic						
Stamped					 (Toncheva 1981)	 (Roman et al. 1992)
Incised					 (Mangos, Toncheva 1962)	 (Toncheva 1981)
Cord-impressed					 (Toncheva 1981)	 (Roman et al. 1992)

Figure 1







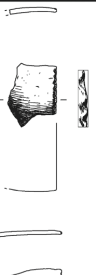















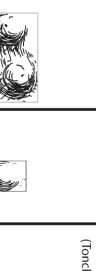





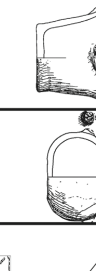







	10 cm	Sozopol	Urdoviza	Atia	Ezerovo	Strashimirovo (Murgos, 1973)
Pressing						
Carved						
Stamped						
Plastic						
Incised						
Cord-impressed						

Figure 2

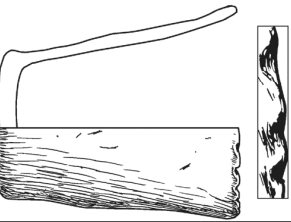
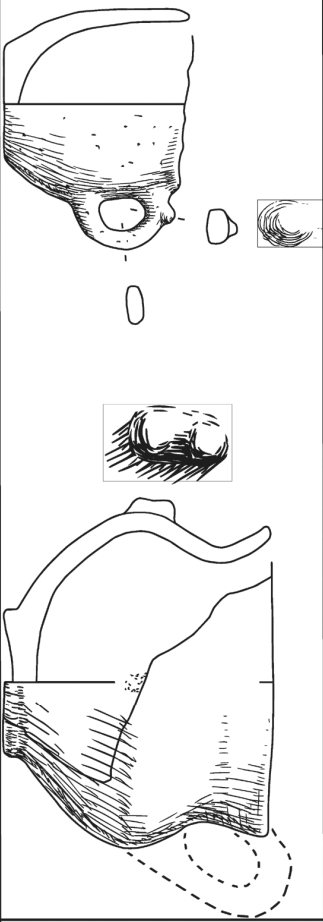
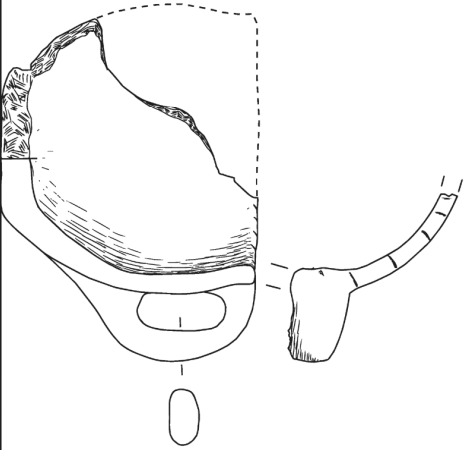

<div><div><div>5 cm</div><div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div></div></div>		Sozopol	Urdoviza	Ezerovo
Carved				
Plastic				
Incised				 (Roman et al.1992)

Figure 3
63

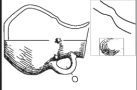

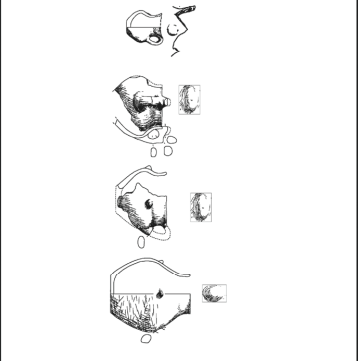
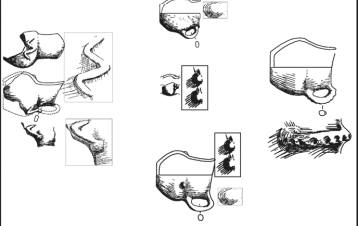

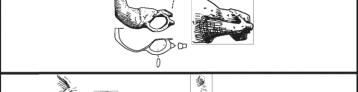
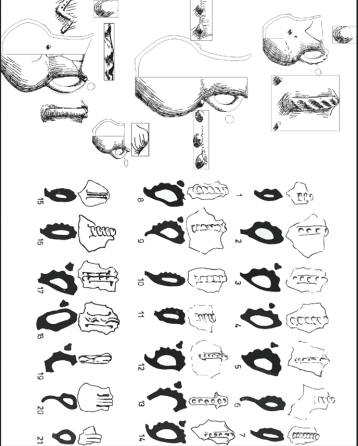



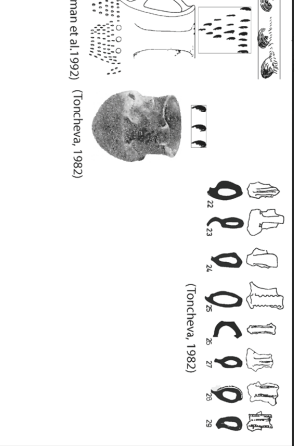

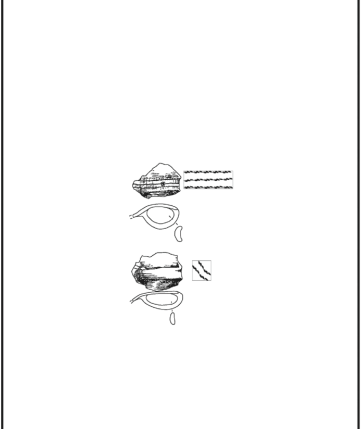
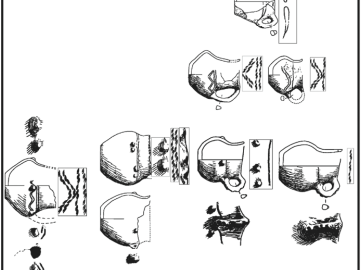
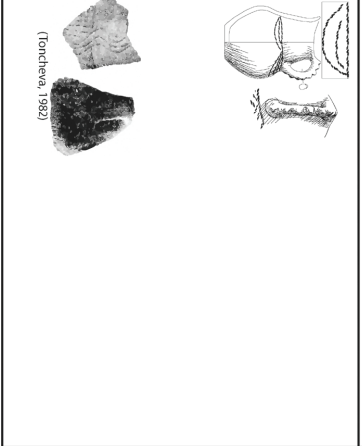

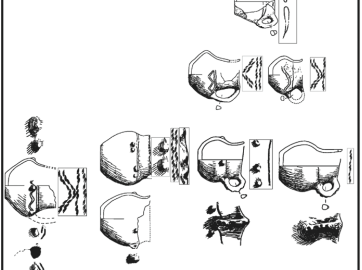
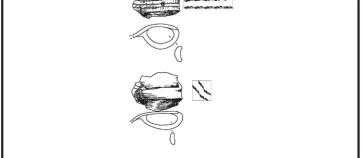
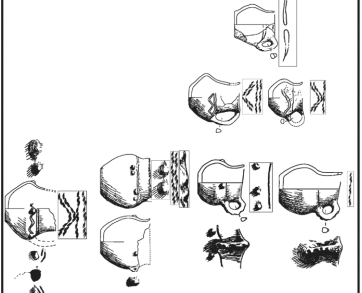
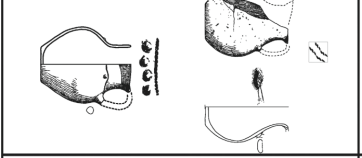
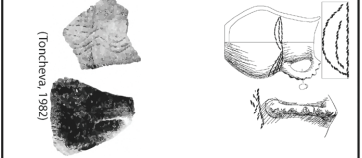
Lăcuș, 10 cm	Sozopol	Urdovița	Burgas	Atia	Ezerovo	Strashimirovo (Margoș, 1973)
Pressing						
Plastic						
Carved						
Stamped						
Incised						
Cord-impressed						

Figure 4


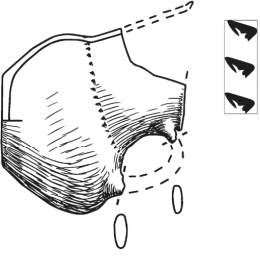
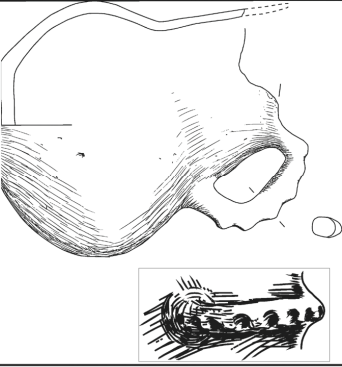
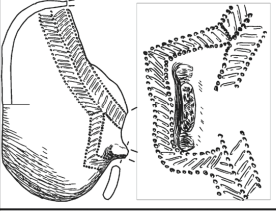
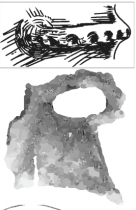
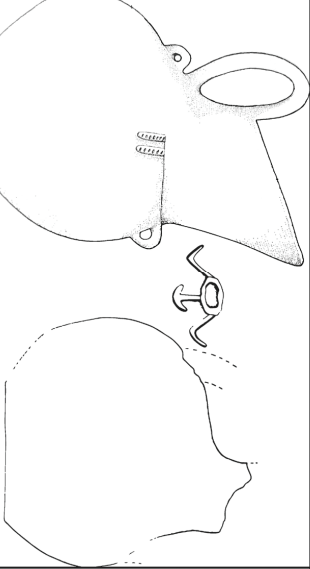
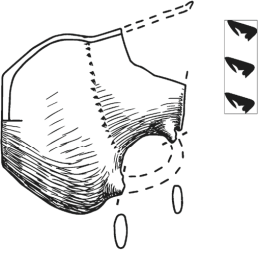
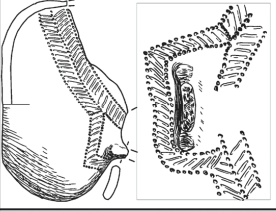
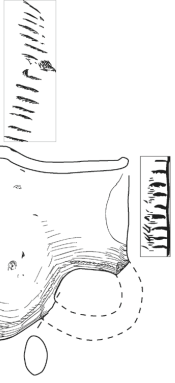
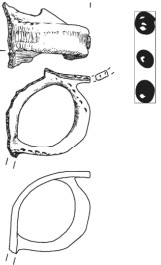
	Sozopol	Urdoviza	Burgas	Ezerovo
Plastic				 (Toncheva, 1982)  (Roman et al. 1992)
Stamped				
Carved				

Figure 5

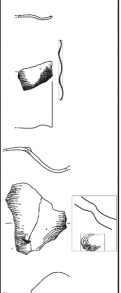
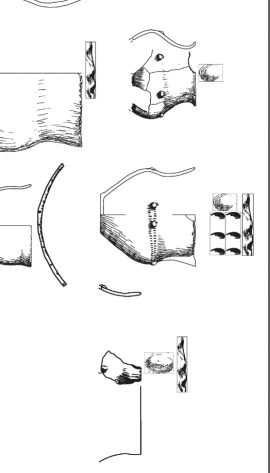
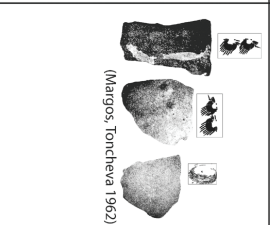
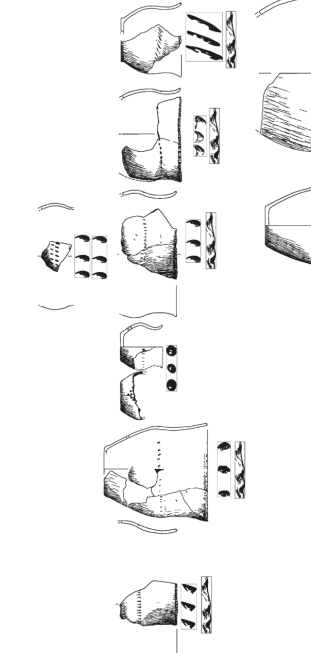
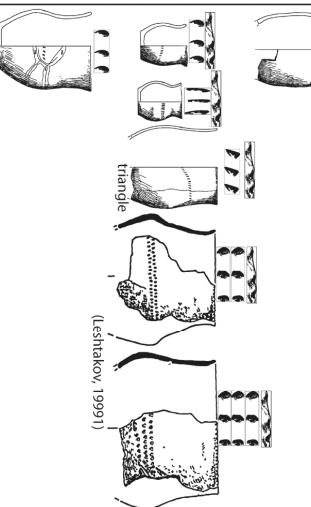
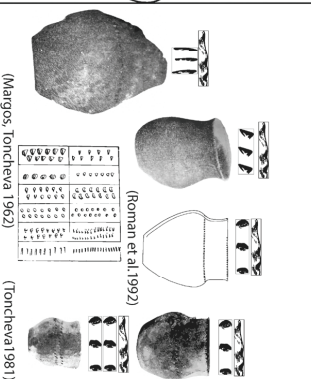
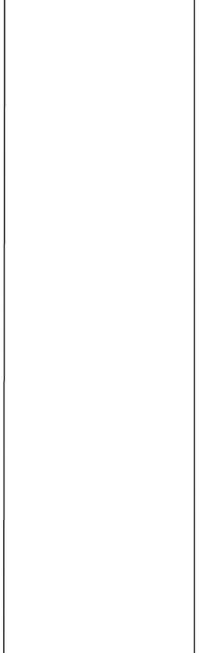
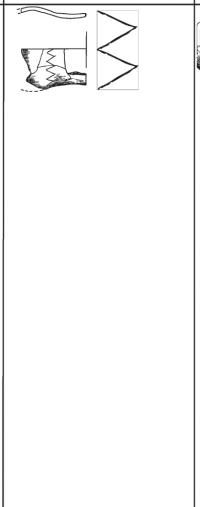
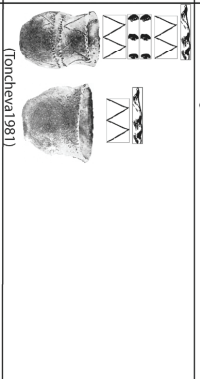

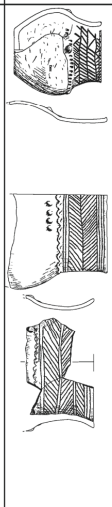
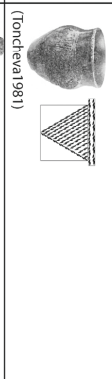



Lundin ¹⁰ cat	Sozopol	Urdoviza	Ezero	Strashimirova (Margos, 1973)
Pressing 				
Plastic 		 (Margos, Toncheva 1962)		
Carved 		 (Leshakov, 1991)	 (Roman et al, 1992) (Toncheva 1981)	
Stamped 		 (Toncheva 1981)		
Incised 		 (Toncheva 1981)		
Cord- impressed 		 (Toncheva 1981)		
Finger tip marks 		 (Margos, Toncheva 1962)		

Figure 6
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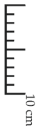
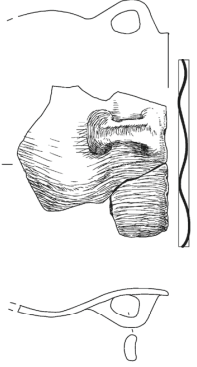
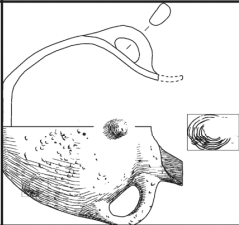
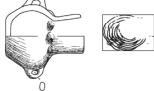
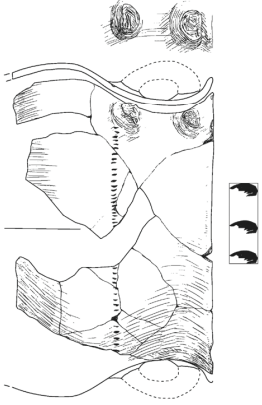
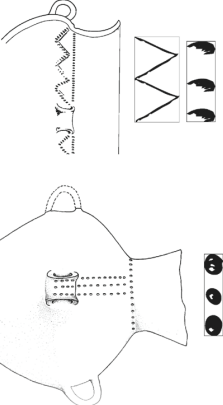

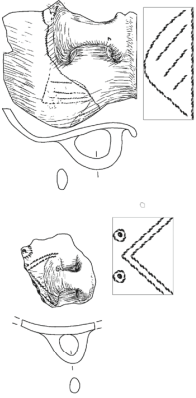
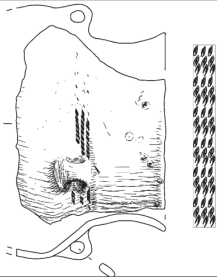
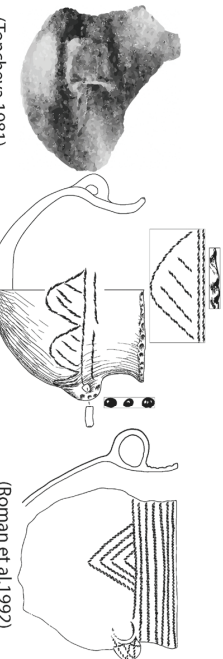
	Sozopol	Urdoviza	Atia	Ezerovo
Pressing				
Plastic				
Stamped	 rain-drop			 (Roman et al. 1992)
Incised				
Cord-impressed				 (Toncheva 1981) (Roman et al. 1992)

Figure 7

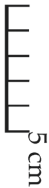
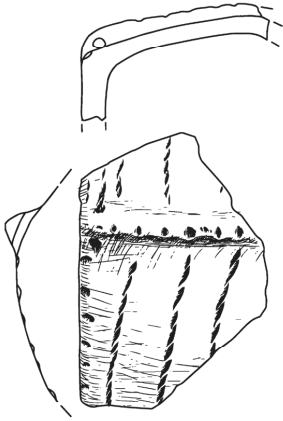
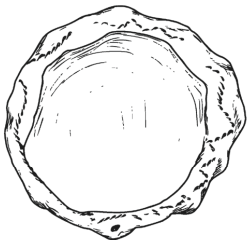
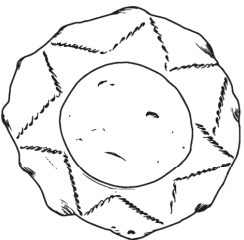
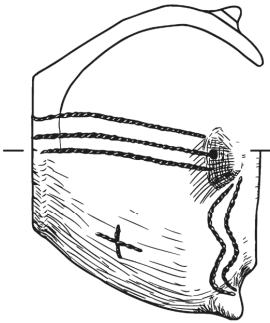
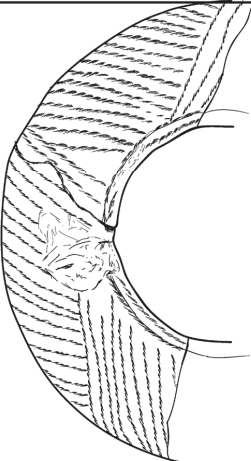
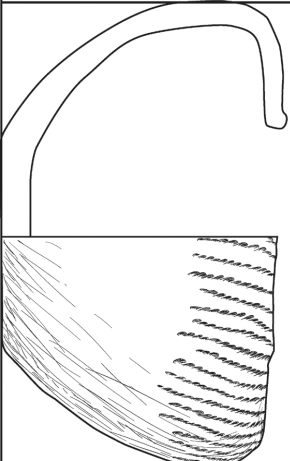
 5 cm	Sozopol	Urdoviza	Ezerovo
Carved Plastic Cord- impressed	  		 

Figure 8

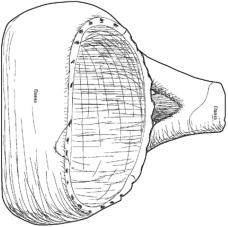
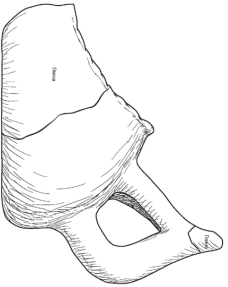
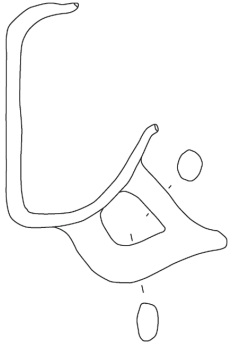
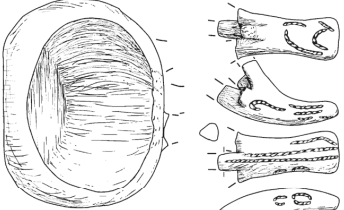
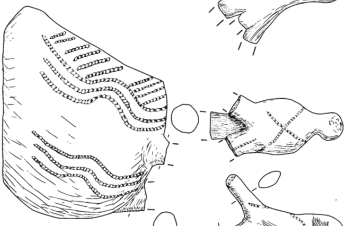
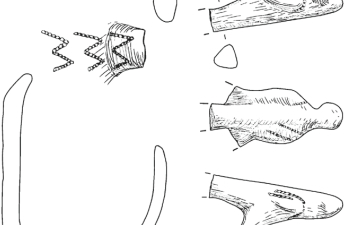
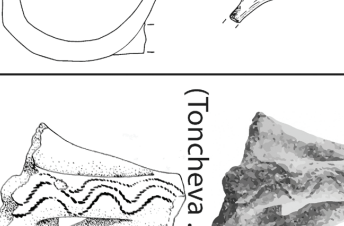
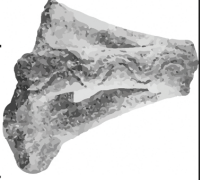
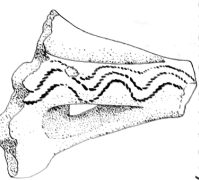
Urdoviza		Ezerovo	
<div> 5 cm</div>			
Carved		 	
Cord-impressed	   	 <p>(Toncheva .1981)</p>  <p>(Roman et al.1992)</p>	

Figure 9
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