

GREY CLAY CERAMICS FROM TYRAS

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Abstract: *The authors discuss a gray ceramics category common for the area north of the Black Sea and especially the discoveries made in and around ancient Tyras. Regarding this subject, they also take into consideration all preceding researches and publications. In all cases the analyses of clay composition are also mentioned.*

The study is structured on the different periods in which such ceramics is documented, with the produced vessels types:

1. *Ceramics from the 5th century B.C. – oinochoe and deinokos;*
2. *Ceramics of Hellenistic time – jugs, craters and crater shaped vessels, bowls, pots, fish plates, plates, cups, bottles, lekanes and flasks;*
3. *Gray clay ceramics of Dacian type – jugs, bowls, censers and fruit vases;*
4. *Roman grey clay ceramics – bowls, jugs, pots, cups and plates;*
5. *Tchernyakhovo type ceramics – bowls and jugs.*

Grey clay ceramics in Tyras do not rank first within pottery table-ware, but nevertheless, appear in all layers and complexes of this ancient centre. Although one cannot exclude the possibility of their discovery in Tyras, fragments of grey clay pottery vessels which could be unquestionably assigned to the late archaic and early-classical periods not yet been found. Grey pottery from the ancient Greek and Barbarian settlements of both North-Western and Northern Black Sea Coast already attracted the attention of researchers, but mainly for the Roman and late-Roman periods¹. Grey clay ceramics of pre-Roman times are studied at a lesser degree². All researchers engaged in this category of ceramics came up against a number of problems, resulting at first, from the fact that grey clay table-

¹ GUDKOVA, 1991; GUDKOVA, KRAPIVINA, 1990; GUDKOVA, MALYUKEVICH, 1999.

² BUJSKIKH, 2006; KRAPIVINA, 2007.

ware was not really studied as a category of ceramic material in itself and also because at that time only very few publications were devoted to it. In ancient times, on all important centres, this group of ceramics could be either imported or produced by local potters able to take into account the specific tastes of the inhabitants of the Greek cities. In our view, the colour of a certain category of ceramics cannot be considered as an indicator of a specific *ethnos*³, but when combined with other characteristic features of shape, decoration, revetment, it can characterize separate ethno-cultural entities. It is beyond doubt and there is a thesis, according to which, in every ancient centre, a number of differences are discernable between one or another form of grey clay tableware despite of a certain likeness⁴. In this paper, our aim is not to give a descriptive overview of the grey clay ceramics from Tyras. It is a task of subsequent laborious researches, with the support of scientific methods. More modestly, our aim is to give an idea of this category of table-ware, to determine the possible intercultural influences and to wonder about the possibility of local manufacture for such and such group. Here, materials collected during the last 12 years of investigations are fully taken into account, as well as the results of the preceding excavation campaigns in Tyras.

Actually, we have distinguished four large groups of grey clay pottery, above all chronologically based, and seized this opportunity to draw ethno-cultural comments. The shapes of Hellenistic and Roman times, obviously resuming earlier patterns, are most numerous; pots of Dacian look and tableware of Tchernyakhovo type are tackled about (the latter ones belonging to the late antique period of Tyras history). Furthermore, a small group of vases of earlier date – 5th / beginning of the 4th cent. B.C. - is considered. However, owing to the fact that, until now, the connection with well dated layers has not been established, the number of fragments of this group is very small and, moreover, very fragmentary, thus hampering typological attribution and dating.

CERAMICS FROM THE 5TH CENT. B.C.

Although layers from the end of the 4th – 5th cent. B.C. were not exposed in Tyras, the ceramics of this time are rarely met. The finds of grey wares of this time are yet more insignificant. Provisionally, only two types of vessels have been recorded: *oinochoai* and *deinoi*.

Oinochoai as a type is represented by single fragmentary finds (**Fig. 1/1**). The mouth is splaying outwards with a flattish handle, arching between inner rim and lower part of shoulder. The general profile seems related to Krapivina's type 3⁵. The clay is dense without visible inclusions. The comparison of these fragments with some pottery groups from the 5th cent. B.C. in Tyras was not possible.

Deinos is represented by only one insignificant fragment of rim which can be very likely attributed to this chronological period (**Fig. 1/2**). Generally this form of vessel is extremely rare not only in Tyras but also in the Lower Dniester area. The mouth has a characteristic flattened rim, slightly projecting (Ø 28 cm). The clay is

³ KRAPIVINA, 2007, p. 98.

⁴ KRAPIVINA, 2007, p. 98.

⁵ KRAPIVINA, 2007, p. 101.

dense with inclusions of crushed cockleshell and chamottes.

Most probably, all fragments belonging to these two types of vessels are issued from two different centres of manufacture, or at least from two different workshops.

HELLENISTIC WARES

Until now, no detailed information is available about local manufacture at Tyras during the Hellenistic period. Supposedly, such production did exist, as well as on other settlements of the North-Western Black Sea coast, though the date of its emergence remains unknown. Quite surprisingly, in Tyras, neither workshop complexes, nor related wasters are documented as yet. Conversely, the manufacture of terracottas in Tyras during the Hellenistic period is precisely determined. Grey tableware of Hellenistic date from Tyras included various shapes, both open (bowls, salt-cellars, dishes, krater-shaped vessels, kantharoi, cups, lekanai) and closed (jugs, oinochoai, pots). All of them show an obvious genetic likeness with ancient ceramics, both of red clay and with glazed revetment.

Jugs represent the most numerous groups of grey wares of Hellenistic time from Tyras (**Fig. 1/3-6**). The greater part consist of vessels with narrow cylindrical neck (rim Ø ca. 10.5-12 cm) which sharply passes to a wide ring-footed body. The mouth is always with projecting rim; the vertical handle is flattened, with upper attachment either just below the rim or directly to the mouth, and lower attachment just below the shoulder. Occasionally, there is an horizontal fillet under the rim. Jugs in Tyras obviously resemble the jugs of Hellenistic time from Olbia - types II and III after Parovich-Peshikan (Parovich-Peshikan, 1974, with. 96-97), dated 4th – 3rd cent. B.C. These jugs follow the natural development line of earlier jugs⁶. The fragmentary vessels of this form show differences not only in type but also in clay, which differs in density and in the presence of inclusions.

It is also necessary to mention that isolated pieces are burnished on the outside. This type of vessels does not differ from black or brown glazed vessels of Hellenistic date, down to the 1st cent. B.C.⁷.

Kraters and Krater-shaped vessels (**Fig. 1/7-11**) are sometimes met in the Hellenistic layers. It is possible to distinguish two variants of this shape: one with low cylindrical neck and another one without neck. Rims are sharply bent outwards and almost horizontal (Ø 14 to 21 cm). Sometimes the body is decorated with horizontal fluting. Handles are horizontal or arch over the upper part of the body. The clay is dense, but there are differences in inclusions, which are either completely missing or abundant (cockleshell and chamottes).

Bowls form quantitatively the main group among grey wares in Tyras. In spite of its large amount, this form is represented mostly by fragments of rim and bottom, but there also several specimens of complete shapes (**Fig. 1/12-17**).

As a rule, these vessels have rounded walls and ring-foot or, less frequently, vertical walls with no separated edge and flat base; fairly frequent are horizontal projecting knicked rims decorated with concentric grooves, while slightly inward curving rims are also met. The diameters of halos vary as of 13 to 30 cm. Clay is

⁶ KRAPIVINA, 2007, with. 100.

⁷ MOORE, ROTROFF, 1997, 246.

mainly dense with inclusions of lime and crushed cockleshell, but there are variants of porous clay with such inclusions (probably differences are caused by temperature condition of firing). On a few fragments, burnishing is applied both longitudinally and transversally inside and outside. This form is widespread in all ancient centres and the considerable amount of these form vessels was made in loco; it especially concerns vessels not having the lacquered coverage. It should be noted that Tyras materials allow us to follow the evolution of this form. If for earlier forms stockier proportions are characteristic, later bowls became higher, their walls thinner. The same evolution is to be observed in Olbia⁸.

Pots are represented in Tyras by a small amount of fragments (**Fig. 1/18-19**). There are mainly vessels with a short throat, sometimes it is absent, and with outside bent halo; a handle is sometimes fixed. Similar vessels were also found in Olbia⁹. On the whole, the pots of Hellenic time are repeated after earlier time forms¹⁰. Clay is stratified with inclusions of lime.

Fish plates – represented by isolated fragments (**Fig. 1/20-21**). As a rule for this shape, it has a conical bowl and a central depression, surrounded by a raised edge. The clay is dense in all cases and differs only by composition of admixtures, either chamottes, pyroxenes or lime particles.

Plates (**Fig. 1/22-25**) – only isolated fragments are known from Tyras, with squat conical bowl and offset projecting rim. On one of the fragments a conical stick and a decorative pattern is fixed as waves. Clay is dense with the admixture of chamotte and lime particles.

Cups (**Fig. 1/27**) are also represented by a small amount of fragments. They have a rounded body, an outturned rim, an intermediate element on the neck, a flat handle, attached immediately under the rim and bent outside. In the literature, similar vessels are sometimes reported under the appellation of *kantharoi*. Parovich-Peshikan determines them as a type IV, dated to the 3rd-2nd cent. B.C.¹¹. It appears that such items might well correspond to local imitations.

Kantharoi, executed from grey clay, are represented by only one type of vessels (**Fig. 1/26**). It has a strongly elongated cylindrical form, the lower swollen rounded part of which was transformed into an inverted cone, separated from the upper part by a flat discus-shaped ledge. The nearest analogies are to be found *apud* Parovich-Peshikan, who ranges similar vessels within his separate type Ib¹². This variant provisionally refers to the finishing stage of Hellenism - end of the 2nd cent. B.C. The clay of the fragment is dense with a small amount of mica. The surface is rough, without traces of additional treatment.

Lekanai (**Fig. 1/29-30**) are represented by isolated fragments of lower part and lid. From the lower part there is a wall fragment with rim with a rabbet for a lid and a small vertical handle-attachment. The clay of the fragments is dense, with the two-bit inclusions of crushed cockleshell. The lid is 8 cm in diameter, while the lekane rim fragment is 18 cm.

⁸ PAROVICH-PESHIKAN, 1974, with. 86-87.

⁹ PAROVICH-PESHIKAN, 1974, with. 98, 100.

¹⁰ KRAPIVINA, 2007, with. 102.

¹¹ PAROVICH-PESHIKAN, 1974, with. 80-82.

¹² PAROVICH-PESHIKAN, 1974, with. 77-78.

Flasks - the shape of Hellenistic time in grey ware is fixed not only in Tyras but also in other towns of the Northern Black Sea coast. In particular, direct analogies can be found in Olbia with Parovich-Peshikan's type IV¹³. There are mainly fragments of elongated neck with flattened rim simply bent outwards (**Fig. 1/28**); occasionally the neck is decorated with a band of pale diluted clay. The clay of these fragments is dense with two-bit inclusions of sand, in a single case, of lime. These vessels are dated to the late Hellenism period – viz. second half of the 3rd – beginning of the 2nd cent. B.C.¹⁴.

Single finds of grey clay salt-cellar fragments are known in Tyras, as well as lamps and also fragments of grey bowls with relief decoration (**Fig. 1/31-34**). Lamps are represented by an opened type fragment with small flange inward, interpreted as a local imitation of early Greek types of Hellenistic period. Its clay is dense, without visible inclusions.

The next group of grey clay ceramics is also typical for the Hellenistic period as an imitation of black and brown glazed wares – these are salt-cellar, represented by a single, but almost complete fragment; clay is dense without visible inclusions (**Fig. 1/32-33**).

Grey relief bowls, very rare in Tyras, are represented by fragments; they consist of ordinary vessels with the slightly bent rim and clay is dense, without admixtures (**Fig. 1/31**). The form of vessels is typical for the Hellenistic period and repeats the form of «Megarian» bowls. They were produced in Asia Minor, but the image is strongly smoothed out and badly evident.

Thus, Hellenistic grey wares from Tyras have many analogies all along the North-Western Black Sea coast, both of shapes and of clay. One can distinguish four main groups according to their characteristics of clay.

1. Clay stratified with numerous inclusions of crushed cockleshells, lime and mica flakes;

2. Dense clay without visible inclusions;

3. Stratified porous clay with small inclusions of lime and chamotte;

4. Dense clay with admixture of crushed cockleshell.

It is also necessary to assume that single specimens are burnished on the exterior.

To judge from the variety of types and shapes of grey wares of Hellenistic time represented in Tyras, and also taking into account the clay features, it is possible to assume that such wares were brought to Tyras from four different workshops or production centres.

Clay is stratified with numerous inclusions of crushed cockleshell, lime and mica; not only jugs, but also bowls and pots were made from this type of clay. Not only jugs, but also pots, bowls and salt-cellar were made of stratified porous clay, containing little lime inclusions and chamottes.

Clay is dense, without visible, or with a small amount of crushed cockleshell or lime, typical for jugs, dishes, fish-plates and flasks. It is also possible to assume that some of them were made in Tyras.

As for grey wares from the beginning of the Roman period, it is possible to

¹³ PAROVICH-PESHIKAN, 1974, with. 110.

¹⁴ THOMPSON, 1934, 368.

admit the coexistence of both tableware, related to ancient ceramic traditions, and ceramics, related to the barbarian world. It cannot be excluded that, in this case, they could both have been brought to Tyras and made by local masters, transmitters of these skills. Especially important is the fact that a considerable presence of quite a lot of Barbarians among the inhabitants of Tyras is ascertained from the Hellenistic period. It is necessary to underline that in late-Hellenic period their number increases. Thus, the percentage of Barbarian (mainly Getic) tableware in the layers of the 2nd-1st cent. B.C. rises to more than 10% of the total amount of pottery fragments (amphoras excluded).

GREY WARES OF DACIAN TYPE.

This group of ceramics is connected with the neighborhood of Tyras which was in close contact with the Getic-Thracian world; it reached the city under the influence of barbarian population. Was this population producing pottery of this type locally or was this ware brought for necessities - this question remains open until now. This group is not so numerous as the previous, but also represented by a large variety of forms: jugs, bowls, censers, cups, fruit-stands¹⁵.

Jugs are represented by a small amount of pieces, but recognizable enough (**Fig. 2/1-2**). These vessels have a slightly concave rim profile and cylindrical neck. The diameter of these type vessels is from 10 to 14 cm. Clay is mainly dense with the two-bit inclusions of crushed cockleshell and chamotte. The vessels surface is glossy, although there are also fragments without burnishing.

Bowls are the most numerous group of ceramics of Dacian look from Tyras (**Fig. 2/3-7**). Mainly they are vessels with vertical or slightly bent outside halo, with a 20-27 cm diameter. All bowls can be divided into two groups by clay grain and admixtures. The first group consists of vessels made of dense, good sediment clay with inclusions of crushed cockleshell and limestone. The second is a group made of stratified, porous clay, with plenty of admixtures of chamottes, together with lime and mica.

Censers are not a numerous group (**Fig. 2/8**). These small vessels are mainly represented with round grooved bottom and direct walls. Because of their bad safety, it is difficult to judge the forms of vessels by features, but probably they are traditional for the entire Thracian world. Clay of the vessels is porous, with plenty of crushed cockleshell and lime inclusions. Besides ceramics censers, sculptured censers were also found in Tyras.

Fruit-stands are represented in Tyras by a small amount of fragments, parts of vessels feet and bowls; complete pieces are missing (**Fig. 2/9-12**). One vessel consists of a hollow, cylindrical shaped foot and a large bowl (Ø 35.5 cm). The clay of these vessels is stratified, porous with inclusions of crushed cockleshell and chamottes.

ROMAN GREY CLAY CERAMICS.

This group forms the subject of a fairly comprehensive study in a common paper by V.V. Krapivina and A.V. Gudkova, giving a general classification of grey

¹⁵ CRIȘAN, 1969.

wares from Tyras, Olbia and monuments of Chernyakhovo culture and their comparative analysis¹⁶.

Bowls are one of the most widespread forms of grey wares in Roman times Tyras (**Fig. 3/1-4**). Most pieces consist of rounded bowls with inwards curved rim (\varnothing 19 – 24 cm) ribbed with an S-profiled pattern. Clay of most fragments is dense with two-bit inclusions of crushed cockleshell and lime. Some pieces are burnished.

Jugs of this time from Tyras are characterized by monotony of types (**Fig. 3/5-11**) and develop on local basis, similarly with Olbia. Clay of most vessels is dense, with admixtures of lime crumb. The surface of the vessels is different, from rough to burnished, decorated with burnished and plastic decorative patterns, such as lines and notches. The diameter of the vessels varies from 8.5 to 14 cm.

Pots in Tyras are rare and extremely fragmentary. But a few fragments presented by us can light up the general look picture of ceramics in this group. Mainly preserved were rim fragments, in a single case a body (**Fig. 3/12-14**). They are sometimes burnished with an horizontal roller or horizontally fluted on the body. The rim diameter is 12-14 cm. Similar types of table vessels are known in the region as far back as the Archaic period. Surface of vessels is glazed. Clay is in most cases stratified with inclusions of crushed cockleshell and chamottes.

Cups - the greater part of cups fragments found in Tyras are from vessels with straight or slightly rounded walls (**Fig. 3/15-19**). Halos are straight or slightly bent outside, by a 5-6.5 cm diameter. Sometimes under the halo there are horizontal incised lines. Cups are the characteristic and inalienable attribute of grey clay ceramics complexes in Roman time. Most of them are repeated after form glass or red glazed vessels and have burnishing tracks on the surface. Clay of these vessels is dense with the two-bit of inclusions of chamottes and mica.

Plates can be traced back to ancient tradition; in the ceramic complexes of barbarian cultures they are not known and save traditional forms from the archaic period (**Fig. 3/20-24**). Plates are differentiated on a circular pallet (a more numerous group of fragments) and without it. The collar edge is bent outside or straight, mowed inward. Two groups differentiate on clay: vessels made of dense clay without admixtures and from clay with the inclusions of lime, crushed cockleshell and chamotte. Most fragments are glazed.

Besides the above described categories of ceramics, there are in Tyras single finds of grey louteria and also ceramics the shapes of uncertain attribution to a particular group (**Fig. 3/25-26**). The Roman grey clay ceramics also differ by the clays variety used for its production. We select two large groups of ceramics, different by clay. It is dense clay with the two-bit inclusions of crushed cockleshell and lime crumb - characteristic forms for this clay type are bowls, cups, jugs and plates; the second group is distinguished by the stratified clay of less closeness with the inclusions of crushed cockleshell and chamotte, typical form - pots.

Comparative analysis of both grey clay ceramics of Roman time from Tyras

¹⁶ GUDKOVA, KRAPIVINA 1990.

and similar ceramics from the settlements of this time from Budzhak and Lower Dniester brought researchers over to the assertion that a good few types of grey clay bowls and jugs are the products of Tyras potters¹⁷.

TCHERNYAKHOVO TYPE WARES

Tchernyakhovo grey wares from Tyras form a numerous batch of ceramic material, though not so powerful as one would expect. In spite of the abundance of fragments, entire forms are missing and there are mainly fragments of two categories of vessels: bowls and jugs.

Bowls are one of the most widespread types of Tchernyakhovo ceramics (**Fig. 4/1-13**). They are represented by a large variety of types:

- Opened, with an inward curved halo – it is a typical Tchernyakhovo form of grey clay tableware (**Fig. 4/1-4**). Such bowls are often decorated with polished and lamellar decorative pattern. It is the most frequently met ceramics category in Tyras.

- Opened, with vertical skirting – also typical for a Tchernyakhovo culture form of ceramics, but unlike the above-described, it was adopted by ancient masters and is an imitation of red glazed ceramics (**Fig. 4/5-9**).

- Ribbed with an S-like type pattern – they constitute a Tchernyakhovo typical form (known in the sculptured variant), although not so numerous as the previous types of bowls (**Fig. 4/10-13**). Both the burnished and burnished variants of these vessels are met among finds from Tyras.

The clay is porous, with inclusions of lime and crushed cockleshell. Generally, vessels were burnished on both sides and adorned with a decorative pattern such as hatched waves, zigzag and net. The vessels diameter varies from 16 to 23 cm.

The jugs of Tchernyakhovo culture display a wide range of shapes and variants. The most general feature is the biconical or rounded form of the body (**Fig. 4/14-19**). The neck of these jugs is high and cylindrical. The shapes imitate metallic tableware as well as red gloss Roman tableware. The clay of the vessels is dense, without visible inclusions (except sparse chamottes). The surface of these vessels is often decorated with glossy patterns such as waves, zigzags and horizontal bands (**Fig. 4/20-22**).

Pottery of this group has been fairly well studied after the finds of Tchernyakhovo settlements on the North-Western Black Sea coast¹⁸.

Thus, grey clay ceramics seem to be as well represented in Tyras as on other ancient centres of the North-Western Black Sea coast, and since its first period of existence, viz. late archaic & classical periods. They are to be found in all layers of Tyras down to the end of the late-antique period. It is possible to assert that these ceramics could come either from different, probably nearby centres or locally made. Part of them reveals the influence of barbarian traditions or are simply originating from the world of the Barbarians. It is not at all excluded that masters potters operating in Tyras had contributed to the transmission of these traditions. The class of grey clay pottery offers in itself a fairly continuous line of

¹⁷ GUDKOVA, 1979; GUDKOVA, 1999, with. 299.

¹⁸ GUDKOVA, 1999.

development of ancient ceramic traditions. The absence of any pottery workshop complexes makes it difficult to isolate the local products.

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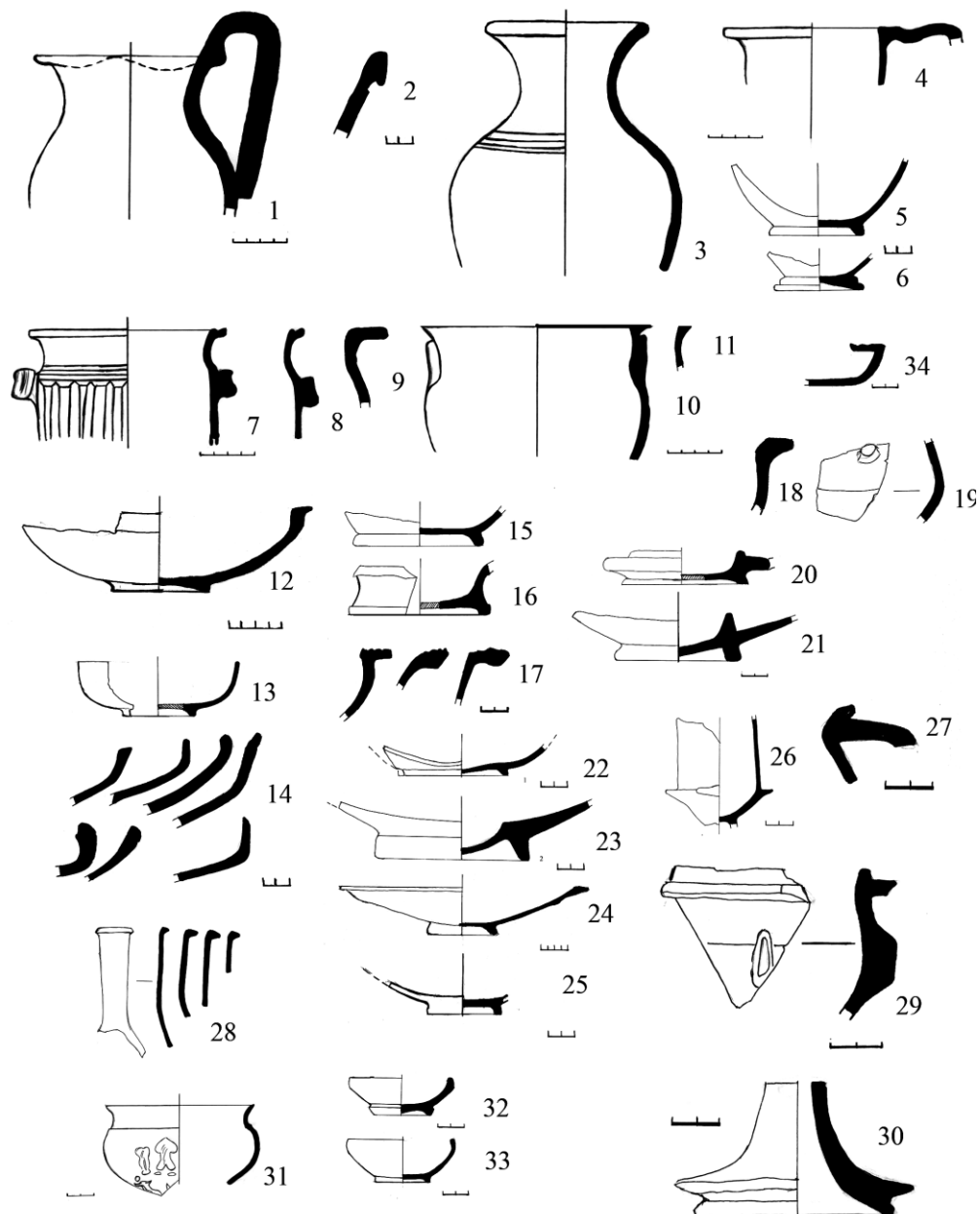


Fig. 1 – Fragments of grey clay ceramics 5th cent. B.C.

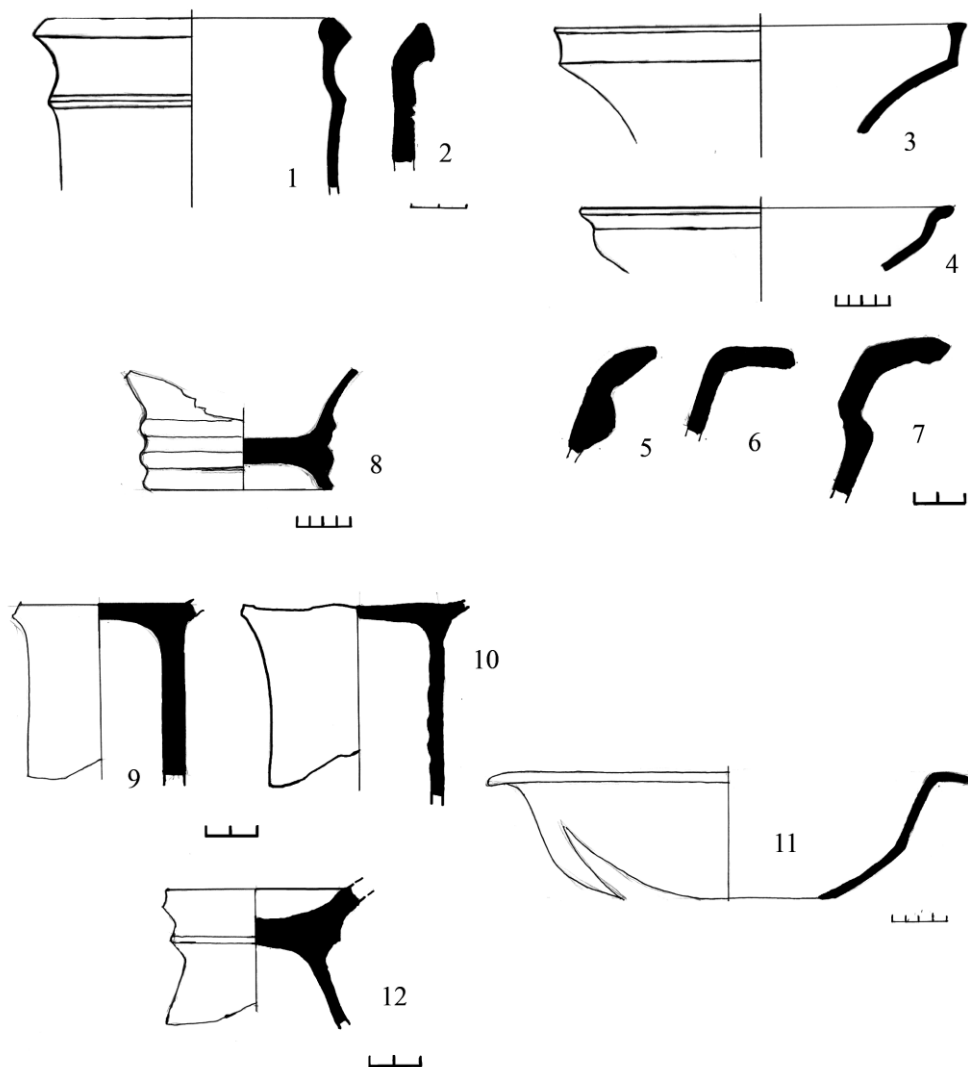


Fig. 2 – Fragments of grey wares of Dacian type.

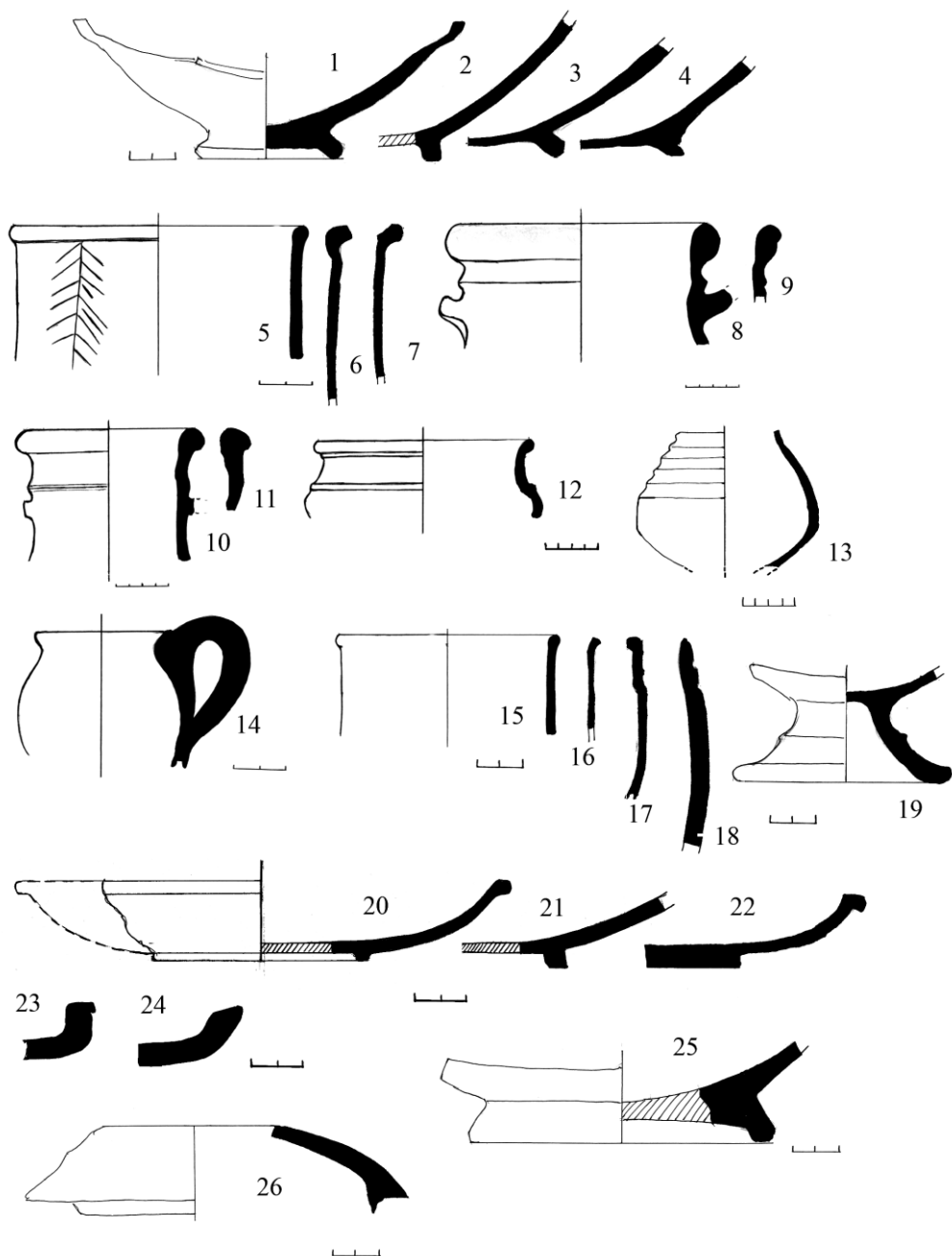


Fig. 3 - Fragments of Roman grey clay ceramics.

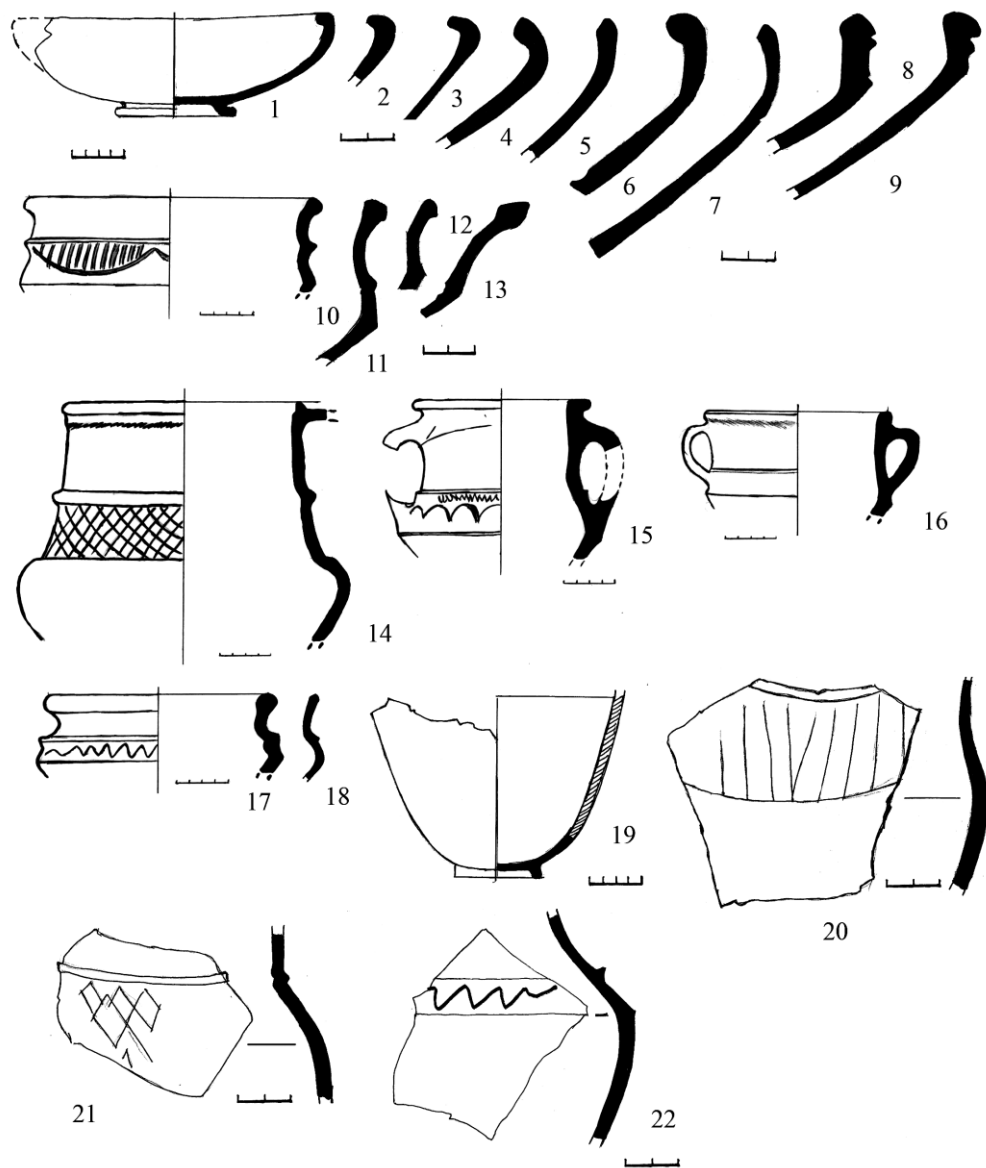


Fig. 4 - Fragments of Tchernyakhovo type wares.