
NEW DATA CONCERNING ROMAN “STEPED PIT” GRAVES IN NORTHERN DOBRUJA

Florin Topoleanu*

Abstract: The fortunate find of a partially complete funerary stele in a tumulus located between the villages of Stejaru and Vasile Alecsandri prompted an archaeological excavation during the fall of 1983. In the researched mound, preserved on a height of 1 m and with a diameter of between 25 and 28.5 m, 16 graves were identified, belonging to the so-called “stepped pit” type. Of those, 10 graves contained funerary offerings composed of ceramic eating and drinking vessels, as well as lamps and bronze military equipment pieces. The five discovered coins, minted between the reigns of Antoninus Pius (145-161) and Iulia Domna (211-217), determined the dating of this necropolis between the middle of the 2nd century and the beginning of the 3rd c. AD. Furthermore, in the perimeter of the burial mound we have also identified nine offering spaces outside the graves, containing small ceramic fragments from ritually-broken vessels. The majority of the artefacts were produced in Western Pontic workshops. This necropolis belongs to a sizeable Roman rural settlement located to the west.

Rezumat: Descoperirea fortuită a unei stele funerare fragmentare, într-un tumul aflat între comuna Stejaru și satul Vasile Alecsandri, a determinat o cercetare arheologică de salvare în toamna anului 1983. În movila cercetată, cu un diametru de 25-28,5 m și o înălțime de 1,00 m, au fost descoperite 16 morminte „în trepte”. Un număr de 10 morminte aveau inventar funerar compus din vase ceramice pentru servitul mâncării și de băut, opaițe și piese de echipament militar din bronz. Încadrarea cronologică a necropolei, între jumătatea sec. II și începutul sec. III p.Chr., este asigurată de cinci monede datate între domnia lui Antoninus Pius (145-161 AD) și Iulia Domna (211-217 p.Chr.). În perimetrul movilei au fost identificate nouă suprafețe pe care au fost depuse ofrande exterioare alcătuite în principal din mici fragmente ceramice provenind de la vase sparte ritual. Cea mai mare parte a pieselor a fost produsă în atelierele vest-pontice. Mormintele aparțin unei întinse așezări romane rurale aflate în partea de vest.

Keywords: Roman tumular graves; Roman stepped pit graves; 2nd-3rd c. AD; lamps; military equipment; rural settlement.

Cuvinte cheie: necropolă tumulară romană; morminte romane „în trepte”; sec. II-III p.Chr.; opaițe; echipament militar; așezare rurală.

INTRODUCTION

During the summer agricultural campaign of 1983, the ploughs have uncovered a fragmentary funerary stele from the mantle of a tumulus located between the Stejaru commune and the village Vasile Alecsandri. The tumulus is the last in an E-W row of 15 tumuli visible at that time. The large quantity of pottery fragments in the area, the inscription preserved *in situ* – a relatively rare occurrence –, as well as the danger of

* Institutul de Cercetări Eco-Muzeale “Gavrilă Simion”, Tulcea, Romania; e-mail: topflorin@gmail.com

total destruction by ploughing are elements that prompted a salvage excavation of the mounds.

The Stejaru commune, at that time unknown in archaeological literature and therefore unmentioned in the national List of Historical Monuments (Rom. *Lista Monumentelor Istorice*), is located in the southern part of the Tulcea County, near the ancient NW limit of the territory of *Histria* and the ancient road that ran through Dobruja on a N-S direction. Around it, at relatively similar distances, are other ancient settlements, such as *(L)ibida*, approx. 10 km to the NE, *Ulmetum*, 30 km to the SSW, *Beroe*, 30 km to the W, *Argamum*, 33 km to the E, *Histria*, 32.5 km to the SE and *Noviodunum*, 55 km to the NW (Fig. 1).

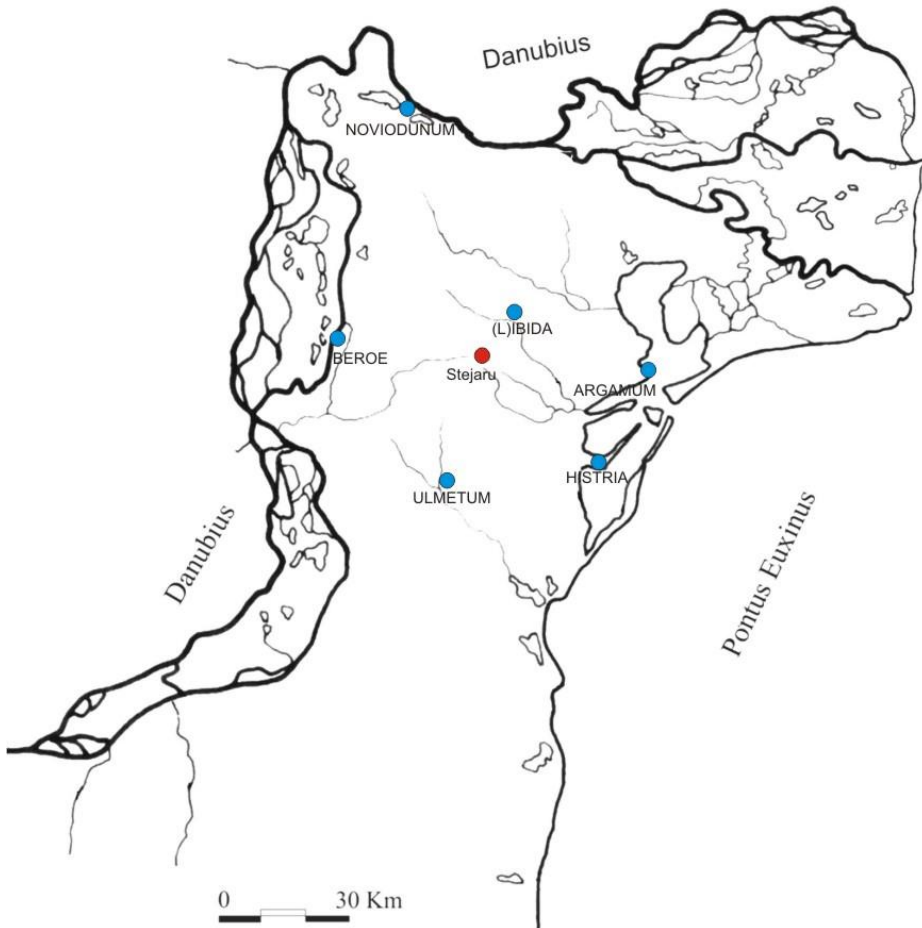


Fig. 1. Map of Dobruja. Location of the Stejaru commune.

Prior to this article, a preliminary report on the salvage excavations in Stejaru was presented in 1985, at a conference organized by the Lower Danube Museum (*Muzeul Dunării de Jos*) in Călărași, and the Numismatic Cabinet of the ICEM received several dozen coins, bought, donated or found there during surface surveys in the area of the tumular necropolis. In 2010 was published a lamp with the stamp *A. FILUMINUS*, discovered in grave (conventionally marked *m.*) 12,¹ and in 2019 was published a pottery kiln discovered near the Vasile Alecsandri village.² Finally, in 2020, a fragmentary Mithraic relief³ found in the rural settlement to which the tumular necropolis belonged was also published (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. Orthophotoplan, tumular necropolis and rural settlement.

The excavated mound (M I), preserved with a diameter of 25 (NS) – 28.50 (EW) m and a height of 1.00 m from the contemporary living surface, was divided into four quadrants (Q 1-4) by 0.80 m-wide crossed baulks, oriented N-S and E-W (Fig. 3). The baulks, as well as the excavation of the surfaces, allowed us to establish the mound's stratigraphy. Thus, at the base there is a layer of dark-yellow *loess*, superposed by a 0.30-0.40 m-thick dark brown layer, representing the ancient living surface, which was perforated, at different levels, by the graves' pits. The mound's mantle, built of alternating layers of yellow and brown soil, was ploughed down to a depth of 0.30-0.40 m.

¹ Topoleanu 2010, 167-172.

² Nuțu 2019, 200-201.

³ Alexandrescu, Topoleanu 2020, 186, fig. 4.

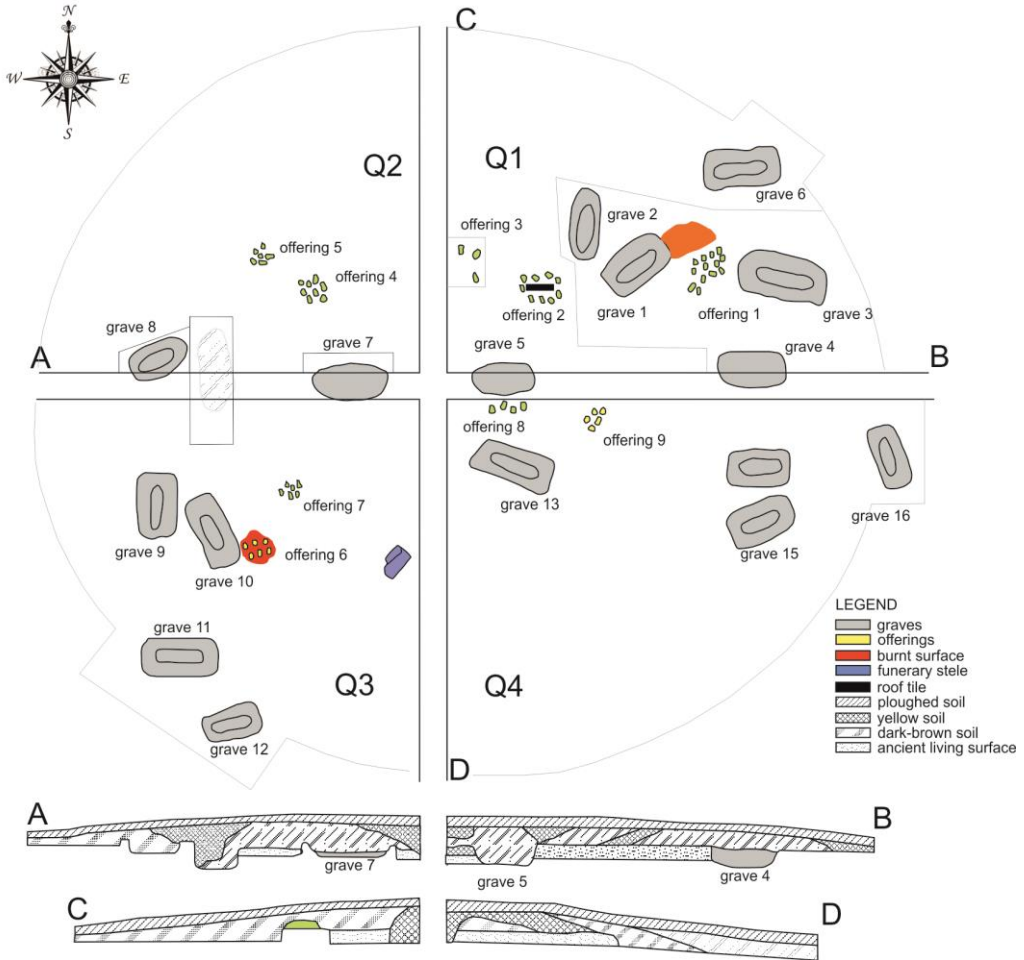


Fig. 3. Plan of the mound in Stejaru.

The funerary stela, carefully worked in limestone, was discovered in a slightly oblique position to the east, in S1, and had clearly been moved from its original position by the ploughs that tore repeatedly through its upper part. The preserved dimensions are: $H_p = 1.27$ m, $W = 0.79$ m and $Th = 0.20$ m. The lower part, undecorated and uninscribed, is 0.80 m high. The inscribed field is 0.39 m wide (the length is only partially preserved), and is delimited by a 2.5 cm-wide frame and a 2 cm-wide chiselled band. From the decoration only the representation of a drinking vessel (a 0.20 m-high, 0.22 m-wide *kantharos*) is left, from which stem on both sides vines with leaves and bunches of grapes. Only the last line of the inscription is preserved, written

in 5 cm-high and 3 cm-wide letters (allowing for a text of 8-9 letters on each line) and with a *haedera* underneath:

[.]

SIVIO POS(uit)

The first preserved letter could also be a *C*, but it is more likely an *S*. Although it was tempting to read the beginning of the line as *SIMO*, which could have been part of *carissimo*, a closer inspection of the stone eliminated this possibility, as there no vertical bars for a *M*, so the third letter is clearly a *V*. It is more likely the last part of a name ending in *-SIVIUS*, in the Dative. Such individual or family funerary monuments are common in Dobruja during the 2nd-3rd c. AD (Fig. 4/a-b).

16 on-the-spot cremation graves (numbered in the order of discovery) were discovered in the tumulus. The specialized literature mentions this type of funerary complexes under the name of *busta*, *busta pyre*, *tombe bustuaire*, *pyre grave*⁴ or, more recently, *burnt-pit funerary complexes*.⁵ The graves' pits can be simple, concave, oval, circular, rectangular with rounded corners, or cross-shaped.⁶ What is certain is the fact that this type of burials "... represents the most commonly used cremation complexes in *Moesia Inferior*"⁷. There are two theories regarding the origin of Roman period *busta*-type burials. The more largely accepted is that they have a Greek origin, the other that they represent a Roman influence⁸. All the graves in M I in Stejaru are of the "stepped pit" type, with a rectangular pit containing a step representing the cremation platform, and a smaller, lower level for depositing the burnt remains.⁹ We must mention that, from the 196 "burnt-pit funerary complexes" published for *Moesia Inferior*, most are covered by mounds (138), and approx. 128 are of the "stepped-pit" type.¹⁰

⁴ Alexandrescu 1966, 247-282; Bucovaľă 1967, 119; Barbu 1971, 47-48; Lungu, Chera 1986, 93; Simion 1994, 92 etc.

⁵ Oța 2013, 14-77. In a relatively recent study on funerary rite and ritual in *Moesia Inferior*, Liana Oța published a necessary, carefully documented synthesis, on a subject that was, in many cases, overlooked or incompletely approached in the Romanian archaeological literature.

⁶ Oța 2013, 13-14, with bibliography.

⁷ Oța 2013, 16.

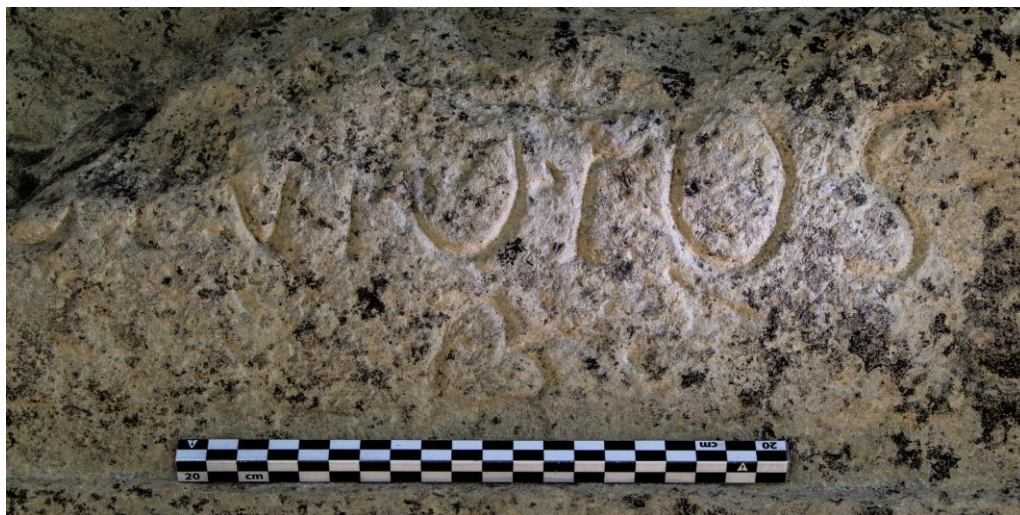
⁸ Oța 2013, 30-33, with bibliography.

⁹ Alexandrescu 1966, 248, type JAaVI; Barbu 1971, 50-51; Barbu 1977, 208; Simion 1984, 82; Simion 1994, 92; Lungu, Chera 1986, 93-94; Sanie 1981, 81.

¹⁰ Oța 2013, 18.



a



b

Fig. 4. The funerary stele.

The upper pits are rectangular, most with vertical limits and slightly rounded corners. Some were dug in a hurry, so their sides are of different lengths. Such an example is grave 3 in S I, which has a 2.95 m-long S side and a 2.50 m-long N side. The grave's short sides are 1.30 m (E) and 1.20 m (W) long. Smaller differences were found in the case of grave 6 in S II, where the longer sides are 2.50 m (S) and 2.30 m (N) long. The length of the upper pits thus varies between a maximum of 2.95 m in grave 3 and a minimum of 1.80 m in grave 12. The pit's depth varies between 0.80 m and 0.20 m.

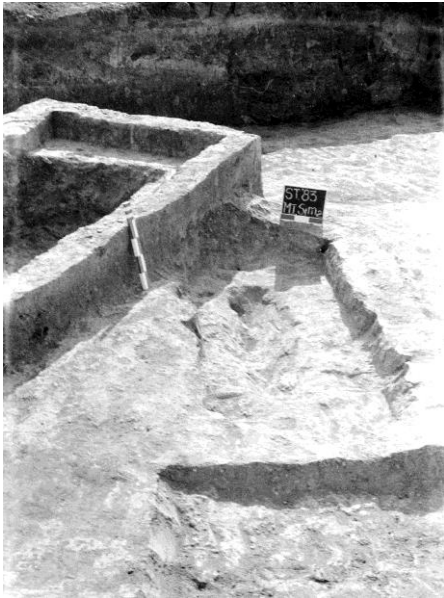


Fig. 5. Graves 1 and 2.



Fig. 6. Graves 3 and 1.

The lower pits, used for depositing the burnt remains, are long and oval, concave, and have a maximum length of 2.10 m in the case of grave 13 and a minimum of 1.20 m in that of grave 16, with a maximum width of 0.45 m in grave 11 and a minimum of 0.30 m in grave 8 and *m.* 16, while the general depth varies between 0.15-0.20 m. The step that delimits the upper pit from the lower pit, used for the construction of the pyre, has a width of between 0.25 m in grave 4 and 0.50 m in grave 7 and grave 8.

All the excavated graves have the limits burnt to the colour red, with the flames also affecting the ancient ground around the pit on a surface of 0.20-0.30 m. Another common trait of the 16 burials in Stejaru is the care with which the funeral pyre was constructed, as the latter ensured a complete, powerful cremation of the body. This is the reason for which in only two cases we could determine the body's orientation, using skull fragments: to the W in grave 8 and to the N in grave 16. In the other

graves, the cremated remains (very small bone fragments, ash, charcoal fragments, nails used in the pyre's construction) remained on the spot.



Fig. 7. Mormântul 4 / Grave 4.



Fig. 8. Mormântul 10 / Grave 10.

The most common orientation (six graves) is E-W (*m.* 4, 5, 6, 7, 11, and 14), followed by four graves oriented NE-SW (*m.* 1, 8, 12, and 15), two oriented NNW-SSE (*m.* 10 and 16), two oriented N-S (*m.* 2 and 9) and another two oriented WNW-ESE (*m.* 3 and 13). Four of them were partially covered by the E-W baulk (*m.* 4, 5, 7, and 8) (Fig. 7). All the technical data presented above, concerning the orientation and dimensions of the burials, is common for graves discovered in *Moesia Inferior*¹¹.

In the four excavated quadrants the graves can be grouped into two zones: S 1 and the northern part of S 4, and S 3 with the southern part of S 2. This configuration is also confirmed by the E-W profile, in which we identified two nuclei of brown soil, so that the tumulus could have started as two smaller separate mounds, gradually connected in time "by the building up of the central part", but also by the continuous ploughing of the area. Similar situations were documented in the tumular necropolis of *Noviodunum* (Isaccea),¹² where we find the closest analogies for the Stejaru necropolis. In these conditions it is rather difficult to identify the main/initial burial and therefore to attribute the funerary inscription. It seems that the first burials were those in S1 (*m.* 1-4), dug 0.10-0.15 m higher than the rest of the funerary complexes. The rich inventory and the peculiar external installations of *m.* 1 constitute arguments

¹¹ Oța 2013, 39-45.

¹² Simion 1984, 82.

that lead us to identify it with the main burial, to which the inscription can be attributed (Fig. 5).

Another aspect to be considered in this type of burials is the funerary ritual. In the Stejaru necropolis the offerings, mainly pottery vessels ritually broken, were laid in the pyre, after the cremation, or on the lower pit's filling and sometimes on the pit's step, which allowed us to collect complete pots or profiles, with no secondary burns. Only in few cases were the offerings burned in the pyre. A common element in all the excavated graves are the nails used for the construction of the pyre, found in the lower pit, together with charcoal fragments, ash and cremated bone fragments. Strong traces of secondary burns are seen on four of the five coins discovered in the complexes (cat. nos. 24, 26-28), a lamp (cat. no. 9), and an appliqué (cat. no. 22). Six of the graves had no inventory (m. 3, 4, 6, 7, 11, and 14), with no stratigraphic indications that they were robbed. After the cremation, the graves were filled up with earth in two stages. In the first stage the lower pit was filled, in order to protect the cremated remains. At this moment, the offerings were laid on the lower pit's fill or on the step where the funerary pyre had been. This is why only a few pots have secondary burns. This is very well illustrated by the lamps, the most common type of pottery discovered in MI (see catalogue of discoveries). In the second stage the grave was filled up at least up to the ancient living surface.

If this way of laying the offerings in the perimeter of the graves is common to all the published cremation necropolises, the ritual installations on the funerary platforms represent a peculiarity. In the four excavated sections were identified nine surfaces in which, at different stages of the funerary ceremonies, offerings were laid (O. 1-9) (Fig. 6), such as small pottery fragments from vessels ritually broken in other locations.¹³ Our conclusion is based on the fact that only in two cases was the complete profile of two cups preserved (O. 2-3) and could be restored (cat. nos. 2-3). We can only mention the other fragments, some atypical or even too small to be identified, belonging to small cups, mugs, plates, pitchers, cooking bowls, lamps, local pottery types and to glass objects, as a typological attribution would be uncertain. Three such offerings were laid on levelled surfaces and burned in advance (O. 1, 4, and 6) and two can be clearly connected to certain graves (O. 1 and 10). The offering of the main grave, *m.* 1, has a special configuration, with most objects laid on both sides of the prolongation of the pit's NE side (Fig. 6) and a few ceramic fragments ritually laid around the stele's base (O. 2). The baulk between S 2 and S 3 superposes a pit oriented N-S, with no lower level, filled in the E part with dark brown soil and in the W part with yellow soil, and contained several atypical pottery fragments at the base. We

¹³ Funerary ritual attested in the tumular necropolis of *Histria*, Alexandrescu 1966, 269-270; Barbu 1977, 209.

believe that this was a pit prepared for but not used for another burial, without excluding the possibility of a cenotaph¹⁴. Finally, roughly in the middle of the E baulk of S 3 was discovered an altar, partially damaged in ancient times, of which only one vertical tile was preserved *in situ*, with the imprint of a second, horizontal one. Such ritual installations were also identified in the tumular necropolis of *Noviodunum*.¹⁵

The funerary inventory is made up of common pottery, bronze military equipment and coins that ensure the necropolis' datation between the middle of the 2nd and the beginning of the 3rd c. AD. The most common category of discoveries is the clay lamps, a common situation in graves discovered in *Moesia Inferior*.¹⁶

CATALOGUE¹⁷

COMMON TABLEWARE

1. Bowl, fragmentary, restored; inv. no. 33188; S 3, m 10, ritually broken on the first step; Pl. I/1; Pl. VII/1, m. 10;
*Dimensions*¹⁸: H = 4.20 cm; Dmax = 11.10 cm; Dm = 10.00 cm; Db = 5.07 cm;
Technique/material: produced on the potter's wheel; good-quality finishing, especially in the upper part; fine paste, with limestone fragments, small pebbles and very rarely silver mica; light red colour (10R6/4), red compact slip (10R5/8), partially applied on the lower half;
Description/decoration: hemispherical; wide rim, triangular in section; ring base with a circular incision;
Bibliography: unpublished;
Analogies: Suceveanu 1982, 100, Thermae II, phase A, no. 11, pl. 5/11; Suceveanu 2000, type XVI, 61-62, no. 5-9; Chera, Lungu 1985, 207, pl. 2/14; Hayes 2008, 200, no. 795, fig. 25 (Çandarlı ware); Di Giovanni 2014, 73-74, fig. 4; Iliescu, Botiș 2018, 200, fig. 4/9;
Datation: end of the 2nd-beginning of the 3rd c. AD (Septimius Severus coin, 193-211 AD);
Origin: Asia Minor workshop (*Pergamum*?).
2. Bowl, fragmentary, restored; inv. no. 33218; S 1, O 2 ritually broken at the base of the funerary stele; Pl. I/2; Pl. IX/2, O. 2;
Dimensions: H = 4.74 cm; Dmax = 8.79 cm; Dm = 8.28 cm; Db = 3.60 cm;

¹⁴ It is prudent not to include this type of installation in the graves' statistics.

¹⁵ Simion 1984, 78-79, M XXVIII, XXXI, XXXIII.

¹⁶ Oța 2013, 190.

¹⁷ I would like to warmly thank my colleagues Camelia Geanbai for the drawings, Camelia Kaim for the drawings' processing and Gabriel Dincu for the photographs.

¹⁸ Catalogue abbreviations: L = length, W = width, Th = thickness, D = diameter, Dd = disc diameter, Db = diameter of the base, Dfh = diameter of filling-hole, Dwh = diameter of wick-hole, Dm = diameter of mouth, Dmax = maximum diameter, H = height, Hp = preserved height, H..... / = basin height/total height; WIN = without inventory number.

Technique/material: produced on the potter's wheel; well-balanced, with thin walls; fine paste, rare limestone fragments, reddish brown (2.5YR6/3), dark reddish-brown and black paint (2.5YR4/2 and 2.5YR3/3), unevenly applied, that ran down on the lower half;

Description/decoration: truncated cone-shaped; slightly convex, high rim, reaching inwards, delimited from the body by an internal incision and a rib on the outside; flat base, decorated with a circular incision;

Bibliography: unpublished;

Analogies: Robinson 1959, 47, H7, pl. 68/H7, 54, J29, type IC, pl. 62/J29; Popilian 1976, 111, 205, type 2, no. 705, pl. LIX - variant; Suceveanu 1982, 105, no. 5, pl. 8/5; Suceveanu 2000, 73, type XVIII, no. 20, pl. 27; Băjenaru 2013, 50, no. 17, pl. 3/17; Iliescu, Botiș 2018, 203, fig. 7/5;

Datation: 2nd-3rd c. AD;

Origin: Pontic workshop(?).

3. Bowl, fragmentary, restored; inv. no. 33185; S 2, O 5, ritually broken; Pl. I/3; Pl. IX/3, O.5;
Dimensions: H = 3.80 cm; Dmax = 8.90 cm; Dm = 8.11 cm; Db = 3.80 cm;
Technique/material: produced on the potter's wheel; slightly off-balance; fine paste, containing rare limestone and mica particles; light brown colour (7.5YR – light brown), greyish-brown slip (10YR5/2 – grayish brown), partially exfoliated; used;
Description/decoration: hemispherical; rounded rim, slightly reaching inwards; ring base;
Bibliography: unpublished;
Analogies: Robinson 1959, 11, F11, pl.60/11 - variant; Simion 1984, 87, 8/b, pl. XVII/5; Chera, Lungu 1985, 207, pl. II/15; Suceveanu 2000, type IV, no. 6, pl. 2/6; type V, no. 13, pl. 3/13;
Datation: 2nd-3rd c. AD;
Origin: Pontic workshop (?).
4. Mug, miniature, complete profile, restored; inv. no. 33182; S3, m. 10, ritually broken on the first step; Pl. I/4; Pl. VII/4, m.10;
Dimensions: H = 6.47 cm; Dmax = 5.39 cm; Dm = 4.12 cm; Db = 2.10 cm;
Technique/material: produced on the potter's wheel; carefully finished, well-balanced, with thin walls; clean, reddish clay (2.5YR6/6), red slip (2.5YR5/8), unevenly applied; no traces of use;
Description/decoration: biconical body with a maximum diameter in the lower half; high everted rim; handle with a rectangular section, set between the rim and the body's maximum diameter; profiled base, rounded and flat; the body is decorated with fine grooves;
Bibliography: unpublished;
Analogies: Popilian 1976, 198, type 2, no. 606, pl. LIV/606; Bârlădeanu-Zavatin 1977, 129, M2/1, pl. IV/3; Simion 1984, 86, 5/a, pl. XVI/1-2; Suceveanu 2000, type XXXII, no. 32, pl. 43/32; Iliescu, Botiș 2018, 203, fig. 7/8;
Datation: 2nd-3rd c. AD (coin from the reign of Geta, 198-211 AD);
Origin: local, West Pontic workshop.
5. Mug, fragmentary, handle missing, complete profile, restored; inv. no. 33183; S 3, m. 12, ritually broken on the lower pit's filling; Pl. I/5; Pl. VIII/5, m. 12;
Dimensions: H = 7.94 cm; Dmax = 7.73 cm; Dm = 6.80 cm; Db = 3.30 cm;

- Technique/material:* produced on the potter's wheel; good-quality finishing, thin walls; fine clay, with small pebbles and limestone particles, reddish grey colour (10R5/2), dark grey slip (2.5YR4/1), unevenly applied;
Description/decoration: globular body, everted rim; tall, ring base;
Bibliography: unpublished;
Analogies: Rădulescu 1975, 338, no. 7, pl. V/1-5; Popilian 1976, 199, type 3, no. 614, pl. LV/614; Sanie 1981, 99, pl. 16/2; Simion 1984, 86, 5/b, pl. XVI/3-8; Simion 1994-1995, 124-125, fig. 8/a-b; Suceveanu 2000, type XXXII, 99-107, pl. 42-44;
Datation: 2nd-3rd c. AD (coin from the reign of Septimius Severus, 193-211 AD);
Origin: local, West Pontic workshop.
6. Pitcher, fragmentary, only the lower part preserved; inv. no. 33196; S 1, m. 1; ritually broken on the pit's fill; Pl. I/6; Pl. VI/6, m. 1;
Dimensions: Hp = 6.30 cm; Db = 4.10 cm;
Technique/material: produced on the potter's wheel; medium-quality finishing; fine clay, with limestone fragments; brick-red colour (10R6/8), red slip (2.5YR5/8), partially preserved; used;
Description/decoration: globular body, decorated with grooves; flat, profiled base, with a circular incision;
Bibliography: unpublished;
Analogies: Popilian 1976, 101, type 12, variant e, pl. XLIX;
Datation: 2nd-3rd c. AD;
Origin: West Pontic workshop.
7. Cooking pot, fragmentary, with only the lower part preserved; inv. no. 33197; S 1, m. 1, ritually broken on the pit's filling; Pl. I/7; Pl. VI/7, m. 1;
Dimensions: Hp = 5.30 cm;
Technique/material: produced on the potter's wheel; fine, heavy paste, with very rare limestone particles, reddish yellow colour (5YR6/6 – reddish yellow), light red slip (10R6/8 – light red), partially preserved, slight traces of secondary burning in the lower part; used;
Description/decoration: globular body, thick walls, ring base;
Bibliography: unpublished;
Analogies: Popilian 1976, 89, type 10, pl. XXXVI;
Datation: 2nd-3rd c. AD;
Origin: West Pontic workshop.

LAMPS

Loeschcke VIII

8. Lamp, fragmentary; handle and part of the discus missing; inv. no. 33176; S I, m. 1, discovered on the pit's filling; Pl. II/8; Pl. VI/8, m.1;
Dimensions: Lp = 7.43 cm; D = 6.11 cm; Dd = 4.15 cm; Db = 3.22 cm; Dwh = 1.08 cm; H = 2.61 / 3.04 cm;
Technique/material: produced in a mould; bad-quality finishing; fine, dense paste, homogenous, with rare limestone and silver mica particles; reddish-brown colour (2.5YR6/4), self-slip; no traces of use on the nozzle, partial secondary burn on the lower valve;

Description/decoration: round basin, very concave discus, with the filling-hole towards the handle, narrow shoulder, short nozzle, rounded towards the exterior, with the wick-hole partially in the shoulder; round base, slightly concave, decorated with two concentric incisions; the discus is decorated with the representation of a shell, set with the hinge plate towards the handle; shoulder with triangular eggs; the nozzle has a badly-executed heart-shaped decoration; on the base the letter Δ was negligently incised (incised deeper at the angles) *ante cocturam*;

Bibliography: unpublished;

Analogies: Perlzweig 1961, 85, no. 143, pl. 6; Iconomu 1967, 68, no. 222-226, fig. 100; Iconomu 1986, 46, type IX, variant VI; Bucovaľă, Paşca 1991, 203, M36/1, pl. II; Rusu-Bolindeţ 2011, 277, pl. VII/15; Georgescu 2016, vol. II, 47-49, no. 127-128, 130-131, pl. 22;

Datation: 2nd-3rd c. AD;

Origin: West Pontic workshop (Tomis?).

Loeschcke VIII

9. Lamp, fragmentary, part of the discus missing; inv. no. 33174; S 2, m 8, discovered in the pyre; Pl. II/9; Pl. VII/9, m. 8;

Dimensions: L = 7.71 cm; D = 5.90 cm; Dd = 4.45 cm; Db = 2.53 cm; Dwh = 1.13 cm; H = 2.21/4.00 cm;

Technique/material: produced in a good-quality mould, carefully finished, well-balanced; rough, heavy paste, with limestone fragments; strong black secondary burn (5Y3/1-very dark gray);

Description/decoration: round basin; slightly concave discus, decorated with a deep incision; narrow horizontal shoulder; rounded nozzle; annular handle; round, concave base; the discus is decorated with a 15 petal-rossette with incisions at the extremities, the shoulder with a vegetal motif (vine leaves?), the nozzle with a heart-shaped, and on the base there is a good-quality stamp of a bunch of grapes, with a branch and leaves on both sides;

Bibliography: unpublished;

Analogies: Iconomu 1967, type XX, 18-20, 108, no. 540, fig. 130; Sanie 1981, 165, no. 30, pl.43/9 a-b; Suceveanu 1982, 108-109, no. 98, 99, pl. 10/98; Chera, Lungu 1985, 206, pl. I/8; Iconomu 1986, type XIII, 57, pl. III/4; Bucovaľă, Paşca 1988-1989, 150, no. 3, pl. 13/ a-b; Bucovaľă, Paşca 1991, 228, no. 3; Nicolae 1994, 205, pl. IV/3A, 3B; Baumann 1995, pl. XXVIII/1, XLV/5; Chera 1997, 226, fig. 7a – lower right; Rusu-Bolindeţ 2011, 274-275, pl. VI/11; Topoleanu, Croitoru 2015, 144-146, no. 40; Georgescu 2016, 228-234, no. 590-601, pl. 79-81; Iliescu, Botiş 2018, 205-206, fig. 9/4; unpublished analogies in the Tulcea and Constanţa museums;

Datation: 2nd-3rd c. AD;

Origin: local, West Pontic workshop.

Loeschcke X; Buchi 1975, X

10. Lamp, fragmentary; handle missing, broken semi discus; inv. no. 33180; S 3, m 12, found in the pit's fill; Pl. II/10; Pl. VIII/10, m. 12;

Dimensions: Lp = 8.16 cm; D = 5.46 cm; Dd = 3.33 cm; Db = 2.90 cm; Dwh = 1.24 cm; H = 2.55 cm;

Technique/material: produced in a used mould; bad-quality finishing; off-balance; fine, soft clay, containing limestone particles, rare iron oxide and mica; yellowish colour (2.5Y7/4-pale yellow), light brown slip (10YR7/4 - very pale brown), partially preserved; secondary burn traces on the lower valve; no traces of use on the nozzle;

Description/decoration: round basin, with a massive prolonged nozzle, disc open on 2/3 of the surface, bordered by a profiled rib that opens up at the nozzle, forming a channel with parallel sides that engulfs the wick-hole; narrow shoulder, convex and sloping, slightly concave, decorated with circular incisions; the shoulder is also decorated with two lateral symmetric buttons and a vegetal motif – vine; on the base is imprinted, in profiled capital letters on three rows, the name of the producer *A / FILVMI / NVS*; the *A* is missing the horizontal bar, the *F* has the upper horizontal bar sloping upwards and the second horizontal bar missing, the *L* has the horizontal bar sloping downwards, and the letters *V* and *S* are in ligature; the height of the letters varies between 0.66 cm (*M*) and 1.28 cm (*VS*);

Bibliography: Topoleanu 2010, 167 – 172;

Analogies: Sanie, Dragomir, Sanie 1973, 201, no. 40, fig. 5/4; Sanie 1981, 165, no. 22;

Datation: 2nd-3rd c. AD (coin dated to the reign of Septimius Severus, 193-211 AD);

Origin: local, West Pontic workshop.

Loeschcke VIII; Iconomu 1986 type IX

11. Lamp, complete; inv. no. 33177; S 1, m 5, found on the pit's fill; Pl. III/11; VII/11, m. 5;
Dimensions: L = 7.45 cm; D = 5.90 cm; Dd = 3.71 cm; Db = 3.26 cm; Dfh = 0.61 cm; Dwh = 0.96 cm; H = 2.50 / 4.28 cm;
Technique/material: produced in a good-quality mould; well-balanced; good-quality finishing; fine paste, rare limestone particles; reddish colour (2,5YR6/6), reddish slip (5YR5/8), unevenly applied and traces of red paint (2,5YR5/8); no traces of use on the nozzle;
Description/decoration: small, round basin; concave disc decorated with two concentric incisions, with the filling hole on the left side; narrow shoulder, slightly convex; short nozzle, with a heart-shaped decoration, rounded on the outside; annular handle; round base, slightly concave, decorated with two concentric incisions; the disc is decorated with the image of a rooster facing left;
Bibliography: unpublished;
Analogies (selective): Iconomu 1986, 44-51, type IX, variant I, pl. II/5; Rusu-Bolindeț, 2011, 273-274, pl. IV/7 a-c; Topoleanu 2012, 114-116, no. 54-56, pl. VIII/54-56; Georgescu 2016, 129 - vol. 1, 50-76, no. 135-196, pl. 23-30; Iliescu, Botiș 2018, 205-206, fig. 9/1-2;
Datation: end of the 2nd-beginning of the 3rd c. AD (colonial coin, Severan dynasty, approx. 193-222 AD);
Origin: West Pontic workshop (*Tomis?*).
12. Lamp, fragmentary; broken disc and base; inv. no. 33178; S 3, m. 10, discovered in the fill; Pl. III/12; Pl. VII/12, m. 10;
Dimensions: L = 7.00 cm; D = 5.50 cm; Dd = 3.30 cm; Db = 2.87 cm; Dwh = 1.20 cm; H = 2.25/4.22 cm;

Technique/material: slightly used mould; good-quality finishing; fine clay, with rare limestone and mica fragments; greyish-brown colour (10YR6/2), slip color identical with that of the paste; secondary burn traces;

Description/decoration: small basin; concave disc, bordered by two circular incisions; short, round nozzle; lamellar handle; slightly concave base; worn-out disc decoration (maybe rooster?); nozzle with a badly-executed heart-shaped decoration;

Bibliography: unpublished;

Analogies: same type as no. 11;

Datation: end of the 2nd – beginning of the 3rd c. AD (coin dated to the reign of Septimius Severus, 193-211 AD);

Origin: local, West Pontic workshop.

13. Lamp, fragmentary; incomplete disc; inv. no. 33175; S 4, m. 16, found on the step; Pl. III/13; Pl. IX/13. m. 16;

Dimensions: L = 7.90 cm; D = 6.14 cm; Dd = 3.82 cm; Db = 3.60 cm; Dwh = 1.19 cm; H = 2.90/4.65 cm;

Technique/material: produced in a used mould; low-quality finishing; slightly asymmetric disc; fine clay, rare limestone and mica particles; reddish-brown colour (5YR6/4), reddish-brown slip (2,5YR4/4), unevenly applied; secondary burn on part of the lower valve; traces of use on the nozzle;

Description/decoration: round basin, taller than other similar types; round disc, slightly concave; wide shoulder, convex and sloping; short nozzle, rounded on the outside; annular handle; round, flat base; the disc decoration is difficult to identify (rooster?), the nozzle has a badly-executed heart-shaped decoration;

Bibliography: unpublished;

Analogies: same type as no. 11;

Datation: 2nd-3rd c. AD;

Origin: local, West Pontic workshop.

14. Lamp, fragmentary; missing handle, nozzle and disc; inv. no. 33171; S 3, m. 9, found in the fill; Pl. IV/14; Pl. VII/14, m.9;

Dimensions: Lp = 6.79 cm; D = 6.34 cm; Dd = 3.52 cm; Db = 3.60 CM; Dwh = 1.25 cm; H = 2.91/ 3.16 cm;

Technique/material: produced in a used mould; low-quality finishing, visible especially at the joints; fine clay, with rare limestone, iron oxide, vegetal remains and mica fragments; light grey colour (7,5YR7/1-light grey), traces of reddish slip (5YR6/6-reddish yellow); secondary burn trace on the upper valve; used;

Description/decoration: round basin, taller than similar types; round disc, slightly concave; wide shoulder, convex and sloping; round and slightly concave base; the nozzle has a badly-executed heart-shaped decoration;

Bibliography: unpublished;

Analogies: same type as no. 11;

Datation: 2nd-3rd c. AD;

Origin: local, West Pontic workshop.

15. Lamp, fragmentary, with only the handle and part of the shoulder preserved; inv. no. 33181; S 1, m 2, ritually broken, found on the pit's fill; Pl. IV/15; Pl. VI/15, m.2;
Dimensions: Lp = 6.39 cm; Hp = 4.15 cm;
Technique/material: very used mould; medium-quality finishing; fine clay, with rare limestone and mica particles; grey colour (7,5YR6/1), greyish black slip (5YR4/1), applied partially; used;
Description/decoration: round basin, slightly concave disc; narrow shoulder, convex and sloping; annular handle; the disc is decorated with the representation of a low-profiled rosette, and on the shoulder there is a badly-preserved vegetal (?) motif;
Bibliography: unpublished;
Analogies: same type as no. 11;
Datation: second half of the 2nd-beginning of the 3rd c. AD;
Origin: local, West Pontic workshop.
16. Lamp, fragmentary; only part of the lower valve is preserved; inv. no. 33172; S 4, m 15; ritually broken, found on the pit's fill; Pl. IV/16; Pl. VIII/16, m.15;
Dimensions: Lp = 7.27 cm; Db = 3.30 cm; Hp = 2.09 cm;
Technique/material: produced in a mould; bad-quality finishing; fine clay, with limestone and mica particles; reddish colour (2,5YR6/6), self-slip; traces of secondary burns;
Description/decoration: round basin; short nozzle; round, flat, slightly concave base;
Bibliography: unpublished;
Analogies: same type as no. 11;
Datation: beginning of the 3rd c. AD (coin dated to the reign of Iulia Domna, 211-217 AD);
Origin: local, West Pontic workshop.

Loeschcke type VIII; Hayes 1992, type 1;

17. Lamp, fragmentary; only the handle and part of the shoulder and disc are preserved; WIN, *pass.*, found in the ploughed earth; Pl. IV/17; Pl. X/17, *passim*;
Dimensions: Lp = 3.64 cm; Hp = 2.30 cm;
Technique/material: produced in a slightly used mould; good-quality finishing; fine clay, with limestone particles; grey colour (7,5YR5/1), self-slip; used; strong secondary burn on the inside;
Description/decoration: round basin; small, concave disc, surrounded by two fine ribs; wide, convex shoulder; short, lamellar handle, with rounded upper part; the shoulder is decorated with four parallel rows of small globules, and the handle with two median grooves;
Bibliography: unpublished;
Analogies: Hayes 1992, type 1, 80, 83-84, no. 1-12, fig. 29/ 1-2, pl. 18/1-12, "Asia Minor" types; Ionomu 1967, type XXVIII, 25-26, fig. 49-50, no. 698-714; Ionomu 1986, type XXXVII, 80-83, pl. VI/6-8; Topoleanu 2000, 208-214, no. 541-560, pl. LXVII-LXX;
Datation: 6th-7th c. AD;
Origin: local, West Pontic workshop.

Loeschcke VIII; Hayes 1992, type I - variant

18. Lamp, fragmentary; only the handle, part of the shoulder and the base are preserved; inv. no. 33179; *pass.*, found in the ploughed earth; Pl. IV/18; Pl. X/18, *passim*;
Dimensions: Lp = 3.53 cm; Hp = 3.76 cm;
Technique/material: produced in a good-quality mould, good-quality finishing; fine, homogenous, clean clay; pink colour (7,5YR7/4), dark brown slip (5YR4/3), strongly exfoliated; used;
Description/decoration: round basin; small, concave disc; wide shoulder, slightly convex and sloping; lamellar handle, with rounded upper part; used; the shoulder is decorated with incised circles, widely set apart, the handle with three median grooves, and the lower valve with the "fish tail" motif, set under the handle;
Bibliography: unpublished;
Analogies: Bailey 1988, 371, fig. 162, Eph.B; Hayes 1992, type 1 – variant;
Datation: 6th c. AD;
Origin: local, West Pontic workshop.

MILITARY EQUIPMENT¹⁹

19. Clamping ring (*cingulum*); inv. no. 36908; O1; pl. IV/19; IX/19, O1;
Dimensions: Dmax = 7.07 cm; Th = 0.82 / 0.46 cm;
Technique/material: cast; finished; good-quality bronze;
Description/decoration: oval cross-section; ancient patina;
Analogies: Crummy 1995, 139, fig. 132/4253; Bounegru *et alii* 2011, 113-114, no. 219-222;
Bibliography: unpublished;
Datation: end of the 2nd-beginning of the 3rd c. AD;
Origin: specialized workshop (Pannonia? Durostorum?)
20. Clamping ring (*cingulum*); inv. no. 36909; O1; pl. IV/20; pl. IX/20, O1;
Dimensions: Dmax = 4.83 cm; Th = 0.73 / 0.60 cm;
Technique/material: cast; finished; good-quality bronze;
Description/decoration: oval cross-section; ancient patina;
Bibliography: unpublished;
Analogies: Crummy 1995, 139, fig. 162/4254; Palágyi 2003, 25, no. 11.14; Amon 2004, 161, pl. XLI/13-14;
Datation: end of the 2nd-beginning of the 3rd c. AD;
Origin: specialized workshop (Pannonia? Durostorum?)
21. *Cingulum* button; inv. no. 36910; O1; pl. IV/21; pl. IX/21, O1;
Dimensions: total H = 1.88 cm; D = 1.66/1.73 cm;
Technique/material: cast; finished; good-quality bronze;
Description/decoration: hemispheric calotte in the upper part; disc-like base; ancient patina;
Bibliography: unpublished;

¹⁹ I would like to thank my colleague, dr. Liviu Petculescu, for the recommended references.

- Analogies:* Sanie 1981, 175, pl. 50/2,5; Bărbulescu 1994, 101-102, fig. 16/6; Crummy 1995, 119, fig. 123; Petculescu 1995, 119, pl. 3/9; Petculescu 1999, 896, no. 5-16, pl. 2; Bounegru *et alii* 2011, 115, no. 223-226; Bishop, Coulston 2006, 182-184, fig. 118/9-12; Palágyi 2003, 24, no. 11.8; Amon 2004, 158, pl. XLI/1-2; Ciugudean 2010, 449-451, fig. 1/1-3; Komoróczy *et alii* 2020, 190, fig. 18/17, 198, fig. 30/27;
Datation: end of the 2nd-beginning of the 3rd c. AD;
Origin: local, West Pontic workshop.
22. Belt appliqué, restored; inv. no. 36911, m.13, strong, secondary burn in the pyre; Pl. IV/22; Pl. VIII/22, m.13;
Dimensions: Lp = 4.38 cm; W = 1.00 cm; H = 0.70 cm;
Technique/material: cast in mould; finished; good-quality bronze;
Description/decoration: sharp oval, with trefoil endings, decorated with three small circles; widened-head rivets; used;
Bibliography: unpublished;
Analogies: (for the trefoil endings) Schleieiermacher 2000, no. 277-286, Tafel 35; Bounegru *et alii* 2011, 108, no. 203; Amon 2004, 146, pl. XXXVII/5; Komoróczy *et alii* 2020, 198, fig. 30/20;
Datation: end of the 2nd-beginning of the 3rd c. AD;
Origin: local, West Pontic workshop.
23. Belt appliqué, restored; inv. no. 36912; S 1, O 1; Pl. IV/23; Pl. IX/23, O1;
Dimensions: H = 2.90 cm; W = 3.20 cm; Th = 0.78 cm;
Technique/material: cast; cut out; finished; bronze;
Description/decoration: appliqué with a heart-shaped decoration; two round holes in the upper part; with widened-head rivets; used;
Bibliography: unpublished;
Analogies: Sanie 1981, 175, pl. 51/3,5; Crummy 1995, 137, fig. 157/4237; Petculescu 1999, 896, no. 17, pl. 2 - variant; Palágyi 2003, 12, no. 2.8.9; Droberjar 2020, 187, pl. 7/2-3 – more complex variant;
Datation: end of the 2nd-beginning of the 3rd c. AD;
Origin: local, West Pontic workshop.

COINS²⁰

24. ANTONINUS PIUS; inv. no. 44016; S4, m. 15; partially destroyed by the pyre; pl. V/24; pl. VIII/24, m. 15;
 AE, As; 10h; 8.38 g; 25×24 mm;
 Obverse: head of the emperor Antoninus Pius with laurel crown, facing r.; legend: (ANTONIN)VS AVG (PIVS P P);
 Reverse: probably Minerva, facing r., holding a shield;
 Catalogue: probably RIC III, no. 831, Rome mint, Roman Empire, 145-161 AD.

²⁰ I would like to thank my colleague, dr. Gabriel Talmațchi, for identifying the coins.

25. SEPTIMIUS SEVERUS, inv. no. 44012; S3, m. 12; used; Pl. V/25; VIII/25; VIII/25, m. 12; AE, assarion (Roman provincial); 12h; 17×16.5 mm; 2.55 g;
Obverse: head of the emperor Septimius Severus with laurel crown, facing r.; legend: (AY K Λ CE) CEYHPOC;
Reverse: Eros with crossed legs, leaning on a reversed torch touching stones; legend: NIKOΠOΛEIT ΠPOC IC;
Catalogue: PICK 1898, no. 1368, Nicopolis ad Istrum mint, province of *Moesia Inferior*, 193-211 AD.
26. GETA (CAESAR); inv. no. 44014; S3, m. 10; burnt in the pyre, partially affected, broken, welded; Pl. V/26; Pl. VII/26, m.10;
AE, assarion (Roman provincial); 1h; 16×15.5 mm; 2.03 g;
Obverse: head of Caesar Geta facing r.; legend: A CEIT TETAC KAI;
Reverse: Nemesis facing slightly l., holding rod in r. hand, with l. hand leaning on a wheel set down on the side; probably four petals in the exergue; legend: NIK(A)EIQN;
Catalogue: RecGen no. 514, Nicaea mint, Province of Bythina, 198-211 AD.
27. SEVERAN DYNASTY; inv. no. 44015; S1, m. 5; strongly deformed in the pyre; Pl. V/27; Pl. VII/27, m. 5;
AE, assarion (Roman provincial); ?-h; 17×14.5 mm; 2.83 g;
Obverse: head of a Severan emperor facing r.; legend: ??;
Reverse: illegible; the coin received a powerful strike in the central field, which resulted in a bent flan and the destruction of the iconographic representation; legend: ??;
Catalogue: mint??, probably 193-235 AD.
28. JULIA DOMNA (CARACALLA); inv. no. 44013; S1, m.2; burnt in the pyre; part of the coin missing; Pl. V/28; Pl. VI/28, m.2;
AE/AR (fourré), denarius; 6h; 18×16.2 mm; 2.62 g;
Obverse: draped bust of the empress facing r.; legend: IVLIAPIA FELIXAVG;
Reverse: Venus sitting on a throne, facing l., r. hand extended, l. hand holding sceptre; legend: VENVSGENETRIX;
Catalogue: RIC IV, no. 388c (Caracalla), Rome mint, Roman Empire, 211-217 or 216 AD.

FINAL REMARKS

The funerary inventory of the excavated mound, even if reduced numerically, is remarkable through the variety of ceramic shapes and bronze objects, as well as through peculiar ritual elements, which set apart the Stejaru necropolis from the others known in Dobruja.

The common pottery, represented by bowls, small mugs, pitchers or cooking pots belong to types known throughout the Empire, with a large circulation between the 2nd-3rd c. AD, produced in local workshops. Two notable exceptions are the Pergamum (cat. no. 1) and Pontic cups (cat. no. 2), which come from well-known workshops. We must stress here the fact that all seven pots were only partially

preserved, even if, usually in necropolises the state of preservation is much better than in settlements.

The relatively large number of lamps discovered in the mound (39.2% of the total number of finds) offers precious information concerning the funerary ritual, the local production, and significantly contributes to dating the necropolis and the nearby rural settlement. We must mention here that "lamps seem to represent the most commonly discovered object in funerary inventories in *Moesia Inferior*".²¹

Thus, the shell that decorates the first lamp's disc (cat. no. 8, pl. II/8, VI/8) is a well-attested motif throughout the Empire on several types of lamps, especially during the 1st-3rd c. AD²². The stamp Δ, or its variant ΔI, is considered the mark of a Tomitan workshop²³, whose second usual variant of disc decoration is a bull²⁴. An argument for the production of this type in *Tomis* could be the lamp discovered in a funerary context, with similar dimensions and identical decoration, both on the disc and on the shoulder.²⁵

The decoration of the next lamp (cat. no. 9, pl. II/9, VII/9) sets it apart from the lamps discovered in the area. The unusual elements are the incisions on the external endings of the rosette's petals on the disc, but especially the anepigraphic stamp on the base. This is made of several round incisions made by hand in the unfired paste and grouped as a bunch of grapes, sometimes with leaves and/or vines. With very few exceptions,²⁶ this type of lamp is known in relatively large numbers in Dobruja, where it is attested in *Tomis*, *Histria*, *Callatis*, *Carsium*, *Telița-Amza* or *Barboși*. Considering the large number of discoveries, the main workshop seems to have been located in *Tomis*, but we cannot exclude the possibility that they came from other centres where other early types of lamps were produced. The certain datation of the lamp from Stejaru to the end of the 2nd-beginning of the 3rd c. AD, as confirmed by analogies, certifies a new type of lamp produced in the territory of Dobruja, along with those marked *Lucianus*, *Titianus*, *Euctemon*²⁷ or *A. Filuminus*.²⁸

A remarkable piece is the Loeschcke X-type lamp, the variant with the cut out disc (cat. no. 10, pl. II/10, VIII/10). The Loeschcke IX and X types had a wide circulation in the entire Roman world during the 1st-3rd/4th c. AD, and are known in

²¹ Oța 2013, 193.

²² Loeschcke 1919, pl. XIV; Perlzweig 1961, 85, no. 143, pl. 6; Bailey 1980, 84-85, fig. 99; etc.

²³ Iconomu 1986, 157.

²⁴ Oța, Gramaticu 2003, *pass*; Oța 2009, *pass*.

²⁵ Georgescu 2016, vol. II, 47-48, no. 127, pl. 22.

²⁶ Vasilčin 1976, 112-113, no. 5, pl. 1/5.

²⁷ Iconomu 1967, 18-20.

²⁸ Topoleanu 2010.

archaeological literature as *Firmalampen*, due to the producer's stamp on the base. The specific shape, compact and resilient, determined many producers to copy or imitate them in local or provincial workshops, and in many cases the North Italic stamp was replaced with one containing the name of the owner. It is also the case of *A. Filuminus*, the workshop's owner, who has a seemingly Oriental name, maybe Greek, peregrine or freedman. The letter *A* could be the abbreviation of the *cognomen* *A(urelius)* or *A(ulus)*, and *Filuminus* is a *cognomen* in the Genitive.²⁹ For the stamp there is only one analogy, with an identical writing, on a fragmentary lamp discovered in the fort at Barboși (Galați County), for which the publisher proposed the restitution *FILVM (enis)*³⁰. The two attestations of the same stamp in a small area suggests a local production, maybe in the same workshop that produced the *FLAVI* lamps, which have a similar shape and a very similar type of writing.³¹

The next lamp (cat. no. 11, pl. III/11, VIII/11) belongs to a well-known series, produced and – in many cases – signed in the workshop of *Euctemon* from *Tomis*³². The shape's popularity led to its copying in local and even peripheral workshops, but with most copies a bad-quality production and lacking the master's mark on the base. The decoration stamped on the disc of the Stejaru lamp, the rooster, is part of the series signed by *Euctemon* (along with those types decorated with a crater, bunch of grapes, a vulture, a gladiator, the Nereid riding a hippocampus, etc.) and is a very good-quality production, carefully modelled, as is the case of the lamp from Stejaru. Even if it is not signed, it was most likely produced in the owner's workshop, maybe even in *Tomis*.

The next five lamps (cat. no. 12-16, pl. III/12-13, IV/14-16) from the same type as the one before, and lacking a signature on the base, were produced in modest local workshops, with no aesthetic concerns, some asymmetric or off-balanced, with a strictly-functional role. Such pieces are found in great numbers in Early Roman sites and in local museum collections³³. Thus, more than half of the lamps from Stejaru (6 out of 11) belong to the *Euctemon* series, which reflects the dominant shape in Dobruja at the end of the 2nd and beginning of the 3rd c. AD.

Finally, the last two fragmentary lamps (cat. no. 17-18, pl. IV/17-18, pl. X/17-18), found in the ploughed earth in the perimeter of the researched mound and

²⁹ Topoleanu 2010, 168.

³⁰ Sanie, Dragomir, Sanie 1975, 201, no. 40, fig. 5/4; Sanie 1981, 165, no. 32.

³¹ Topoleanu 2010, 169-170.

³² Iconomu 1967, 18-20, type XX; Iconomu 1986, 44-51, type IX; Iconomu 2013, 92, 93-95, pl. II-V.

³³ Iconomu 1967, type XX, 18-20, 70-119, no. 238-634; Topoleanu 2012, 114-127, no. 54-68; Topoleanu, Croitoru 2015, 130-144, no. 33-39; Topoleanu 2016, 74-77, no. 19-30, pl. III-IV; Georgescu 2016, vol. II, 50-228, no. 135-589, pl. 23-79; *Argamum, Noviodunum*, unpublished material, under study.

characterised by a shoulder decorated with globules, are unanimously considered as coming from Asia Minor (*Ephesus, Miletus*). They were widely circulated in the Empire's east, were produced also in provincial workshops and, together with the North African and Danubian/Balkan lamps, they dominated the 6th and beginning of the 7th c. AD. In Dobruja, their production is certainly attested in *Halmyris*, where the ruin of a pottery kiln was discovered, containing approx. 30 such lamps, many of them wasters products with the same production defects.³⁴

In conclusion we can say that the lamps discovered in the mound at Stejaru, one in each of the nine graves with funerary inventory out of a total of 10, were produced in rural and urban workshops in Roman Dobruja. We cannot exclude the presence of specialized pottery kilns in the same rural settlement to which the necropolis belonged. As far as this hypothesis is concerned, even in the absence of physical-chemical analyses or of a conclusive stratigraphic context, we believe the lamp with the mark representing a bunch of grapes (cat. no. 9) could have been produced locally, as the stamp was obtained manually by repeated impressions in the unfired paste so, out of the 20 known pieces, no two are identical. The workshop of *A. FILUMINUS* could have also functioned at Stejaru, where his stamp was found on a bad-quality, off-balanced lamp, produced in a used mould – all characteristics of a low, local, peripheral production. But we cannot exclude the possibility that the lamp was produced in workshops at *Durostorum-Ostrov* (Ferma 4), the only centre in the area that certainly produced *Firmalampen*³⁵. Finally, at least part of the next lamps (cat. no. 11-16), could have been produced in the workshops of the rural settlement at Stejaru. The same can be said about the last two lamps (cat. no. 17-18), dated to the 6th-7th c. AD, whose presence can suggest a continuous inhabiting of the nearby settlement.

A special element of the funerary inventory at Stejaru is the presence of the military equipment. I must stress that, in the remarkable study of the funerary world of Province *Moesia Inferior*, in the chapter dedicated to the graves' inventory, no such pieces are mentioned,³⁶ even if it is well-known that "... the military element is essential in the colonization of the rural space..."³⁷. Thus, the clamping rings (cat. no. 19-20) and the *cingulum* button (cat. no. 21), found together as an offering in the main burial (*m. 1*), represent an exceptional find. The pieces are made of good-quality bronze, have a preserved ancient patina, which proves their production in a

³⁴ Topoleanu 2000, 208-214, no. 541-560, pl. LXVIII-LXX.

³⁵ Elefterescu 2016, 159-185.

³⁶ Oța 2013, 189-255.

³⁷ In Romanian "...elementul militar este esențial în colonizarea teritoriului rural...", Oța 2013, 32.

specialised workshop. For the rings,³⁸ the published analogies on the territory of Romania come from *Apulum*.³⁹ There were also found *cingulum* buttons⁴⁰, as were in Barboși (Galați County),⁴¹ Mătășaru (Dâmbovița County)⁴² and in *Potaissa*⁴³. If the bronze pieces from *Dacia* can be attributed to Western workshops, maybe Pannonian, for the Dobrujan rings there is the possibility they were produced in *Durostorum-Ostrov*. In support of this hypothesis comes the discovery of waste metal pieces,⁴⁴ and especially that of a bi-valve mould for casting large, 6.5 cm-diameter, rings.⁴⁵ The oval appliqué with trefoil endings (cat. no. 22), which adorned a narrow leather belt, with no exact published analogies, is characteristic of a post-Marcomanic period⁴⁶. The appliqué (cat. no. 23) found together with the rings and the *cingulum* button as an offering in *m.* 1, usually published as a harness piece, has no exact analogies. The last two pieces are of bad quality, with no exact analogies and were most likely produced in local, hard-to-identify workshops.

The presence of a Roman veteran's grave, to which we can also attribute the funerary stele, is not surprising for the area. In (L)Ibida, only 10 km to the NE from the settlement and necropolis of Stejaru, was discovered a military diploma⁴⁷, and two others are under study and soon to be published.⁴⁸

The five coins (cat. no. 24-28), even if badly damaged by the funerary pyre, have a decisive contribution to establishing the chronology of the necropolis and complete the information provided by the rest of the funerary inventory.

In the archaeological campaign of 1983 we also undertook a field survey. Approximately 300 m E of the necropolis was identified a large rural settlement, in a spot called by locals "La Abazaua". On the settlement's site, delimited by the deep valleys of two streams, we found many Early Roman pottery fragments and even fashioned building blocks. On the settlement's E side, in the valley of the Ciripciu

³⁸ Published only as clamping rings and not as belt adornments, as they were not associated with swords, etc.; information from M. Petculescu.

³⁹ Bounegru *et alii* 2011, 113-114, no. 219-222; Amon 2004, 161, pl. XLI/13-14.

⁴⁰ Bounegru *et alii* 2011, 115, no. 223-226; Ciugudean 2010, 449-451, fig. 1/1-3; Amon 2004, 158, pl. XLI/1-2.

⁴¹ Sanie 1981, 175, pl. 50/2, 5.

⁴² Petculescu 1999, 896, no. 15-16, pl. 2/15-16.

⁴³ Bărbulescu 1994, 101-102, fig. 16/6.

⁴⁴ Nuțu 2019, 52-53.

⁴⁵ Elefterescu 2010, 163-166, pl. 2; Elefterescu 2013, 184, pl. IV.

⁴⁶ Information from M. Petculescu.

⁴⁷ Mihăilescu-Bârliba 2008, 199-210.

⁴⁸ Information from D. Paraschiv.

stream, we found an aqueduct tube. Along with the fragmentary Mithraic relief⁴⁹, this is probably where part of the 30 coins – bought from two inhabitants of the Vasile Alecsandri village, donated or found during the field survey – come from⁵⁰. These coins were issued during a period ranging from the reign of Septimius Severus to that of Valentinianus I, coins with a 4th-5th c. AD module, an anonymous A2 class *foliis* or late, Austrian coins.⁵¹

We had an entirely new perspective of the area after we obtained access to the orthophotoplan (Fig. 2) and the finalizing of the General Urban Plan (Rom. P.U.G.) of the Stejaru commune by specialists of the Museum of History and Archaeology of the “Gavrilă Simion” Eco-Museal Research Institute in Tulcea. Thus, if in 1983 one could still see approx. 15 tumuli, we found out from the aerial plan that in fact they were approx. 38, most flattened down to the present treading level, set on an almost straight E-W line on a length of 800 m. The necropolis evidently organized as a funerary sacred area, the stone wall buildings, the aqueduct and the inventory of the research mound – all indicate a strong, well-organized rural community, with a social composition that included a military and artisanal element. The settlement’s development was influenced by the nearby road that cut across Dobruja from North to South, the presence of water sources which ensured an agricultural potential and, last but not least, the proximity of important urban centres.

The two fragmentary lamps (cat. no. 17-18) dated to the 6th c. AD, which were found in the ploughed earth on the researched mound, raise the issue of the continuity of inhabiting the area. At the present state of research, we have several relevant pieces of information. Thus, half of the mentioned coins are preliminarily dated to the 4th-5th c. AD, and the kiln for producing construction material that was researched NE of the Vasile Alecsandri village probably functioned at the middle of the 4th c. AD⁵².

The results of the archaeological salvage excavation and the finalizing of the General Urban Plan led to the identification of a large number of archaeological sites in the perimeter of the Stejaru commune, and introduced in the scientific circuit an archaeological area that had remained unknown until now, but which has a potential that promises to be exceptional.

⁴⁹ See note 3 and fig. 2

⁵⁰ Chihaia Stere in 1975 and Calenciuc Mircea in 2014.

⁵¹ Unpublished, partially identified and to be published by Mihaela Iacob.

⁵² Nuțu 2019, 200-201, fig. 14.



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



Pl. I. 1-3. Bowls; 4-5. Small mugs; 6. Jug; 7. Pot.



8



9



10



Pl. II. 8-9. Lamps.



11



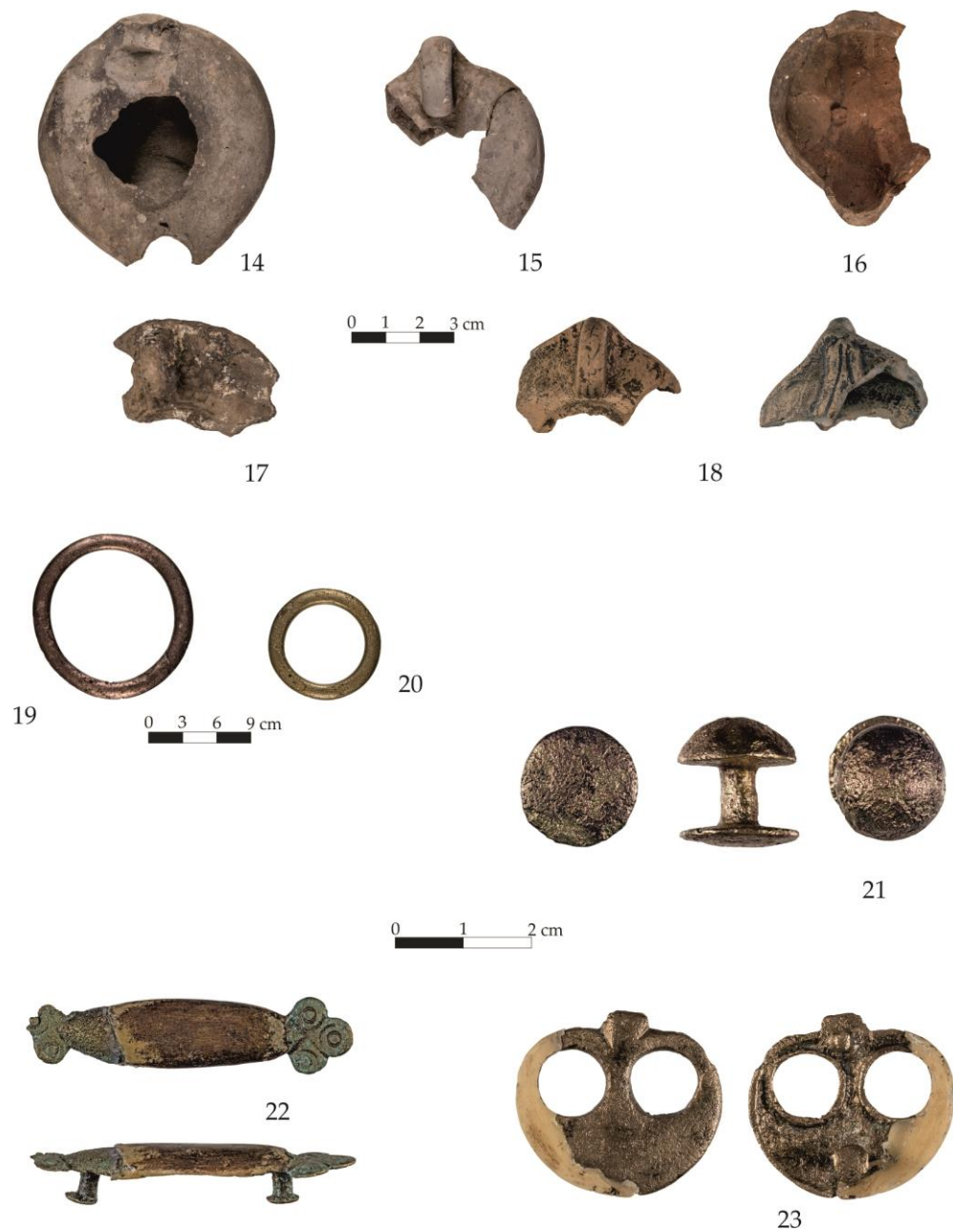
12



13



Pl. III. 11-13. Lamps.

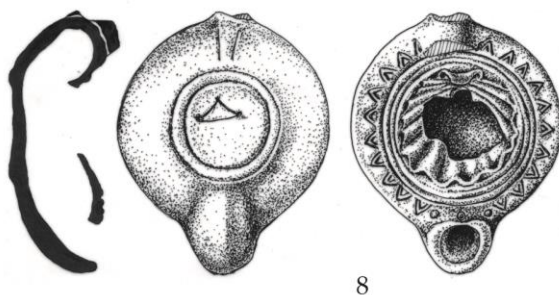


Pl. IV. 14-18 Lamps; 19-23 Military equipment.

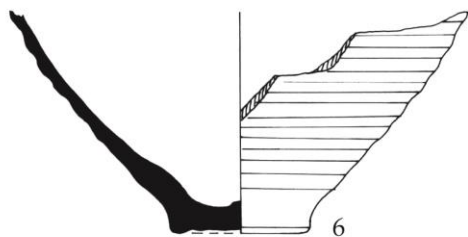


Pl. V. 24-28. Coins.

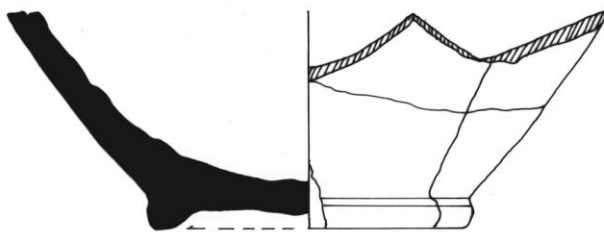
Q1, grave 1



8



6



7

Q1, grave 2



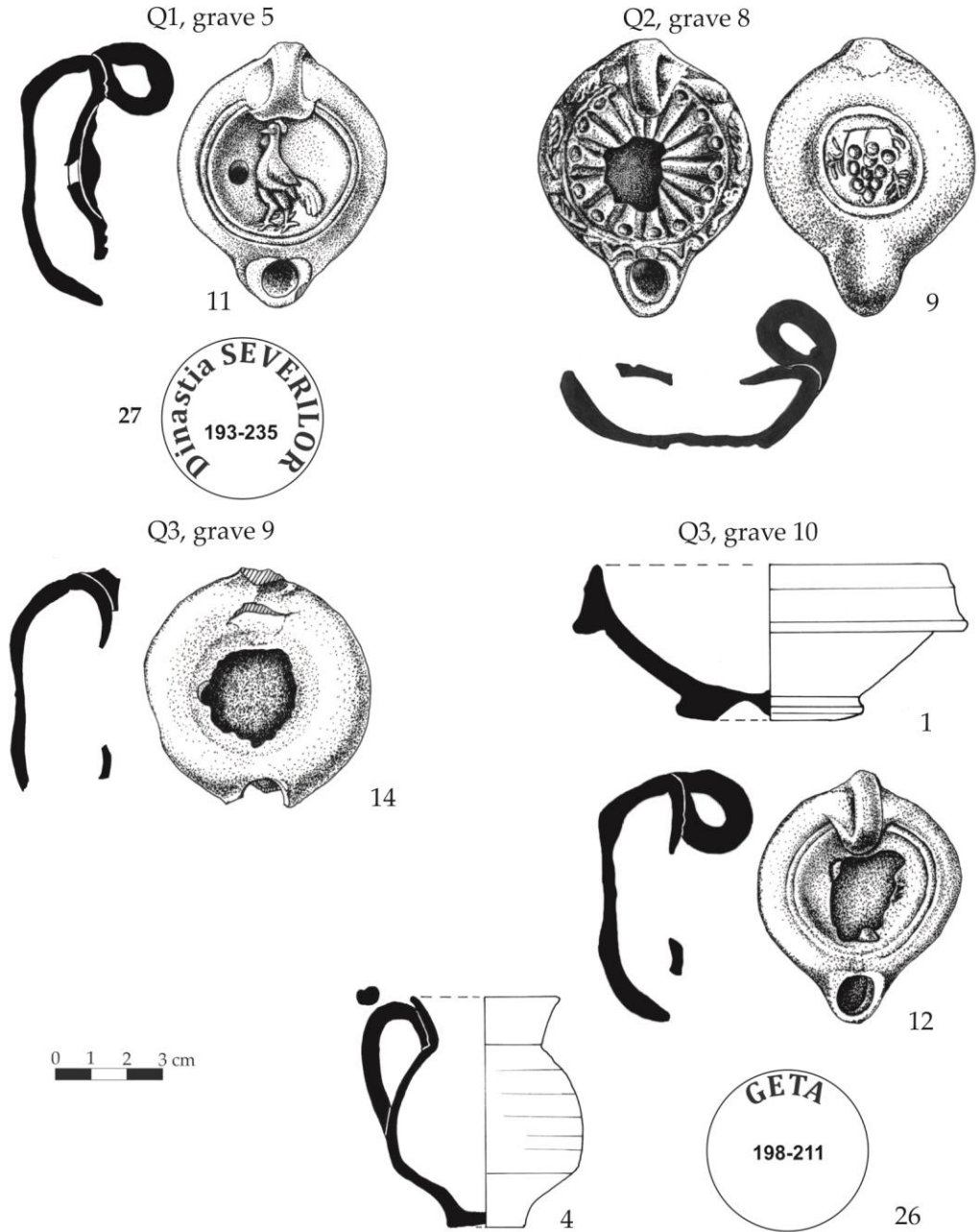
15



28

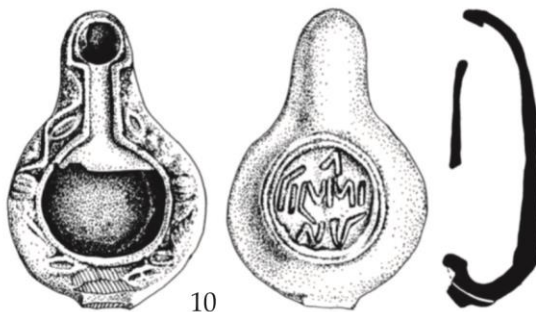
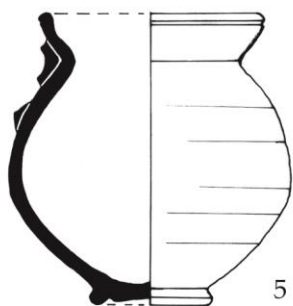


Pl. VI. Inventory of Q 1, grave 1, grave 2.

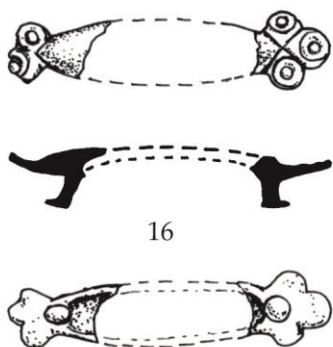


Pl. VII. Inventory of Q 1, grave 5; Q 2, grave 8, 9; Q 3, grave 10.

Q3, grave 12



Q4, grave 13

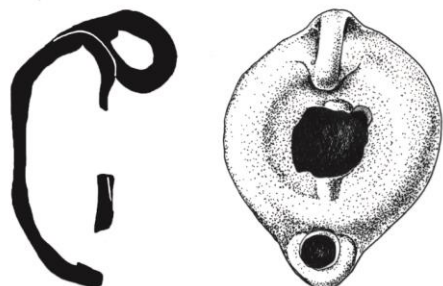


Q4, grave 15



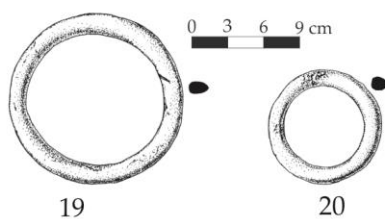
Pl. VIII. Inventory of grave 12; graves 13, 15.

Q4, grave 16



13

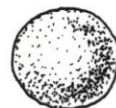
Q1, offering 1



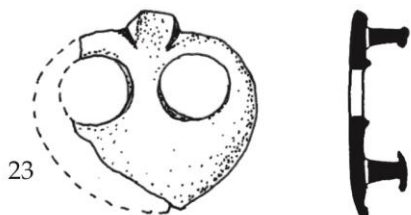
19

20

Offerings



21



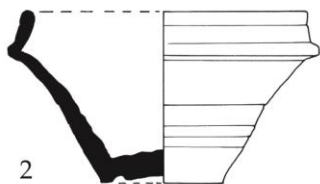
23



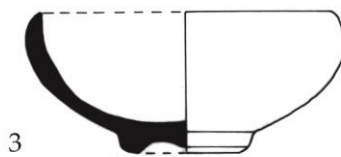
0 1 2 cm

Q1, offering 2

Q1, offering 5

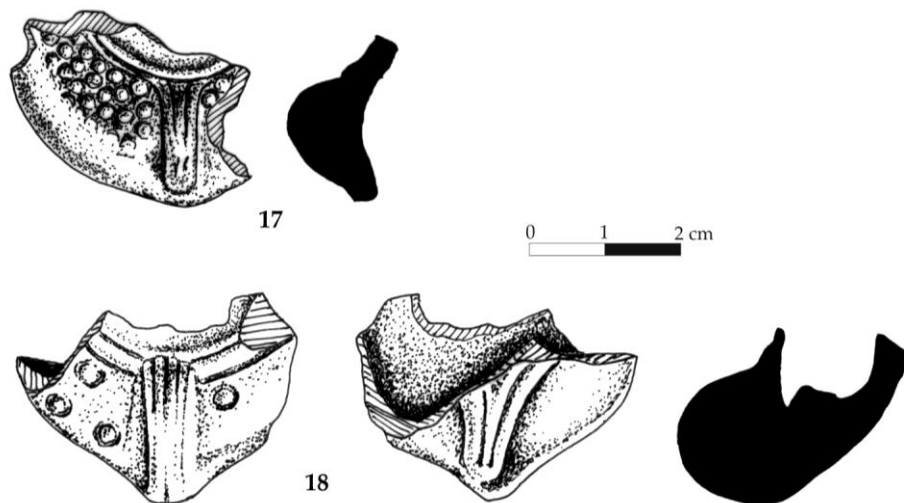


2



3

Pl. IX. 13. Q 4, grave 16; 2-3, 19-21, 23. external offerings Q 1, Offerings 1-2, 5.



Pl. X. Lamps passim, no. 17-18.

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