

ARCHAEOLOGIA BULGARICA



3
1999

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Articles

<i>Nikolova, L.</i> : Dubene-Sarovka IIB1-3 in the Upper Stryama Valley (towards the periodization and chronology of Early Bronze II in the Balkans)	1
<i>Golubović, S.</i> : (YU): A Grave in the Shape of a Well from the Necropolis of Viminacium	9
<i>Boteva, D.</i> : Two Notes on D. Clodius Albinus	23
<i>Kullef, I./Djingova, R./Kabakchieva, G.</i> : On the Origin of the Roman Pottery from Moesia Inferior (North Bulgaria)	29
<i>Dintchev, V.</i> : Classification of the Late Antique Cities in the Dioceses of Thracia and Dacia	39
<i>Daskalov, M./Dimitrov, D.</i> : Ein Paar anthropozoomorphe Bügelfibeln (des. sog. Dnjeprtyps) aus Südbulgarien	75
<i>Atanasov, G.</i> : On the Origin, Function and the Owner of the Adornments of the Preslav Treasure from the 10 th Century	81

Reviews

<i>Harhoiu, R.</i> : Die frühe Völkerwanderungszeit in Rumänien. Bukarest 1998. (<i>Curta, F.</i> USA)	95
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ARCHAEOLOGIA BULGARICA is a four-month journal (thrice a year; 20 X 28 cm; ca. 100 pages and ca. 80 illustrations per a number; coloured cover) which presents a publishing forum for research in archaeology in the widest sense of the word. There are no restrictions for time and territory but Southeastern Europe is the accent.

Objective: interdisciplinary research of archaeology.

Contents: articles, reviews and news.

Languages: English, German and French.

Intended readers: Scholars and students of the following fields: Archaeology, Numismatics, Epigraphy, Ancient History, Medieval History, Oriental Studies, Pre- and Early History, Byzantine Studies, Anthropology, Palaeobotany, Archaeozoology, History of Religion, of Art, of Architecture, of Technology, of Medicine, Sociology etc.

On the cover: a stone portrait of Roman emperor Diocletian (?) (284-305), National Museum of Archaeology-Sofia.

Archaeologia Bulgarica	III	1999	3	9-22	Sofia
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A GRAVE IN THE SHAPE OF A WELL FROM THE NECROPOLIS OF VIMINACIUM

SNEŽANA GOLUBOVIĆ

Systematic archaeological researches on the territory of the southern necropolises of *Viminacium* began in 1977. In extensive archaeological excavations more than 13 000 graves have been revealed. They cover the period from prehistory to the Middle Ages. The greatest number is of the graves from the period of Roman domination. At the very beginning of the excavations a specific mode of burial - graves in the shape of a well - was revealed. During the excavations of *Singidunum* (Valtrović 1885, 33-43) and *Sirmium* (Milošević 1996, 39-53) this form of burials was discovered too. However, the best-known and well-documented graves in the shape of a well were explored in Gaul (Fouet 1958, 186; Labrousse 1974, 475-476). Systematic excavations of the necropolis of *Viminacium* give an opportunity to their researchers to explore the specific burial mode by applying current archaeological methodology¹ for the first time. Thus, by the number of 27 graves excavated cautiously, archaeologists are given the possibility of reconstructing the funerary rite and of solving its ethnogenesis. The analyzed burials had been researched in the period from 1979 to 1992 in four localities at *Viminacium*. Other four graves with sacrificial outward appearance were researched during the campaign in 1996 (fig.1). On this occasion a grave in the shape of a well, excavated in 1990, will be presented. It contains a wooden chamber, which is a specificity for the necropolises of *Viminacium*.

The grave in the shape of a well (No 1146) is excavated in the locality of "Pećine" (fig. 2) at the relative depth of 2.00 m. On the surface, it has a shape of a round pit (1.05 m diameter) filled with dark-brown soil. The pit grows narrower. Its diameter on the bottom is 0.70 m. At a relative depth of 4.50 m the wooden chamber is found. The further excavations stopped at a relative

depth of 8.40 m after water had appeared.

STRATIGRAPHY (FIG. 2)

0.00 m

Piles of greenish stone are found on the surface of the northern and southern side of the round pit.

0.00 - 0.60 m

A layer of dark-brown loose soil containing small number of pottery fragments, soot, animal bones and a human bone (*fibula*).

0.60 - 1.80 m

At a relative depth of 0.60 m the whole surface is floored with fragments of bricks, *tegulae* and sherds. Piles of large and small greenish stones are found on the northern and southern side, just like the ones on the surface. This layer contains dark-brown loose soil with high percent of soot and just a few lumps of burnt soil. Two iron nails are found at a relative depth of 0.80 m, in a layer of sand and *tegulae*, on the southern and eastern side. The diameter of the grave pit begins to diminish at a relative depth of 1.60 m.

1.80 - 2.80 m

A 0,10 m thick "ring" of yellow clay appears along the inner edge causing a diameter of 0.80 m at this depth. This layer contains a dark-brown loose soil, a large number of pottery fragments and a few animal and human bones. The osteological analyses show that the animal bones belong to large ruminants. As for human remains parts of shoulder blade (*scapula*) are found.

2.80 - 3.30 m

The round pit changes its shape into irregularly rectangular one. Fragment of a sharpened beam (0.08 m length) was found in the middle of the pit but decayed almost immediately. The irregularly rectangular shaped pit edges with a "waist-band" of soil containing traces of decayed wood.

3.30 - 4.30 m

¹ The excavations at *Singidunum*, conducted by the end of the last century, were mostly of a rescue nature, just as those at *Sirmium*. Therefore, graves from *Singidunum* were not well documented and graves in *Sirmium* were almost completely destroyed.

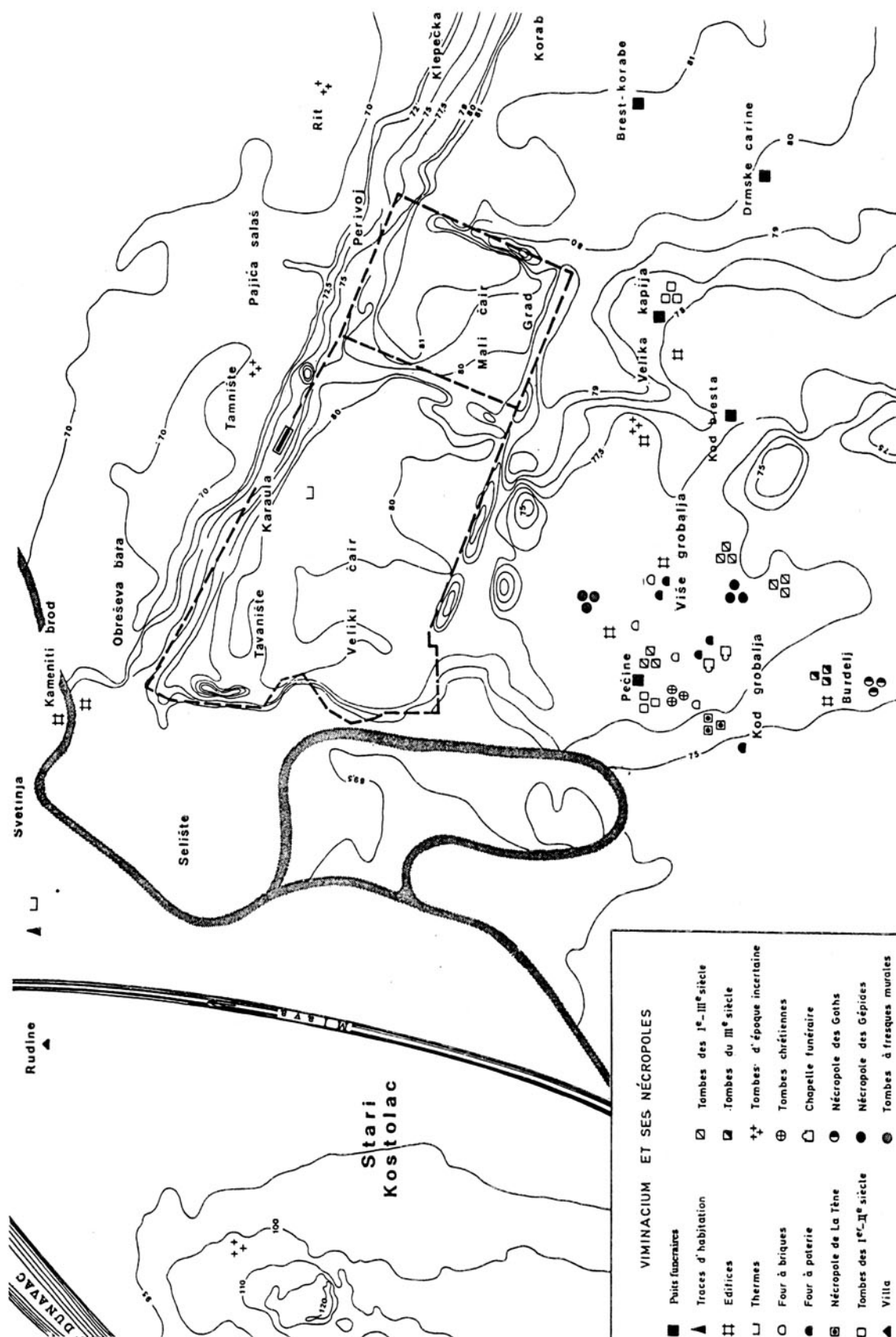


Fig. 1. Situation of the cemeteries at Viminacium (after Mirković 1986, 60).

The pit changes its shape again into round one (0.80 m diameter). A presence of an organic tissue colors the soil in red. There are many pottery fragments and animal bones. A human bone (*femur*) is found as well.

4.30 - 4.50 m

The kind of the soil filling does not change. However, there are no archaeological materials at all.

4.50 - 6.00 m

The pit reaches a diameter of 0.80 m. A waist-band of gray clay soil is recorded, thickness of 0.10 - 0.25 m. The almost rectangular space in it is filled out with loose soil containing sand and soot. Remnants of vertically placed boards are found between this space and the gray clay layer. This wooden chamber has slightly elliptical ground plan, measuring 0.65 m in the northeastern and 0.52 m in the southwestern direction. The abundance of various clay vessels' fragments is significant for this layer. Sherds of white slip amphorae are found on the southeastern side, at a relative depth of 4.90 m. Bones of a dog lay at a relative depth of 4.50 m.

6.00 - 6.70 m

The waist of grayish clay appears only sporadically in a thickness of 0.05 m. From the relative depth of 6.20 m downwards the abundance of soot, pottery fragments and osteological material becomes significant. At a relative depth of 6.20 m two human skulls are found (marked as A and B). A neck of an amphora with inscription on its handle is also found at this level (fig. 9). It is the same amphora whose sherds appear at a depth of 4.90 m.

6.70 - 7.00 m

The round ground plan at this level is edged with fragments of *imbrices*, *tegulae*, and bricks, together with greenish stone.

7.00 - 7.20 m

A layer of lime mortar, thickness of ca. 0.20 m, contains granules of sand, tiny sherds and fragments of *tegulae* and bricks.

7.20 - 7.70 m

Five fragments of carbonized boards are found in a layer of dark-brown loose soil at a relative depth of 7.30 m, in the northern half of the pit. They were set down in different direction and are

recorded down to a depth of 7.70 m. Among them an iron nail and an iron cramp in the mortar layer are found - probably parts of a wooden coffin or of a bier burnt on a pyre. At a relative depth of 7.70 m the round pit is edged with fragments of bricks. Some of them have an almost 0.20 m diameter. All fragments were vertically fitted.

7.70 - 8.00 m

A layer of gray clay soil contains sand at the edges. Relatively few sherds are found.

8.00 - 8.40

A layer of sand. At a relative depth of 8.40 water appears and further excavations are not possible. In this layer, practically in the water, parts of a wooden chamber are found. It is constructed of sharpened boards. They are almost entirely decayed. A red burnt amphora, completely preserved, is discovered in that chamber. The vessel contains sand and water. A few calcinated sherds are extracted from the sand².

OSTEOLOGICAL MATERIAL

Bones of the following animals are registered in the pit: sheep or goat, pig, ox, dog and bird.

Human bones are found as well: a thin bone of a lower leg - *fibula* (0.00 - 0.60 m); left shoulder-blade - *scapula* (1.80 - 2.80 m); a large rugged bone of a leg - *femur* (3.30 - 4.30 m). Most human bones are found in the layer 6.20 - 7.50 m: two skulls; two large rugged bones of a leg (*femur*) that belong to different persons - one of them has obvious traces of burning; two long bones of an arm (*humerus*) with clear traces of burning on *caput humeri*; three shoulder-blades (*scapula*); two larger bones of a lower leg (*tibia*); two thin bones of the lower leg (*fibula*).

POTTERY

Two major groups can be distinguished correspondingly to the grave pit's depth: 0 - 4.30 m; 4.30 - 8.00 m. Their material is completely different.

Most pottery fragments from the first group (down to a depth of 4.30 m) belong to 33 fragmented vessels and to a whole one. Bowls are the most numerous and are represented with eight types, mainly red fired, with considerably coarse fabric and a red colored outer surface (fig. 3/1-8). Just a fragment of *terra sigillata* (form Drag. 37,

² Possibly derived of human bones. Unfortunately, osteological analyses were not achievable.

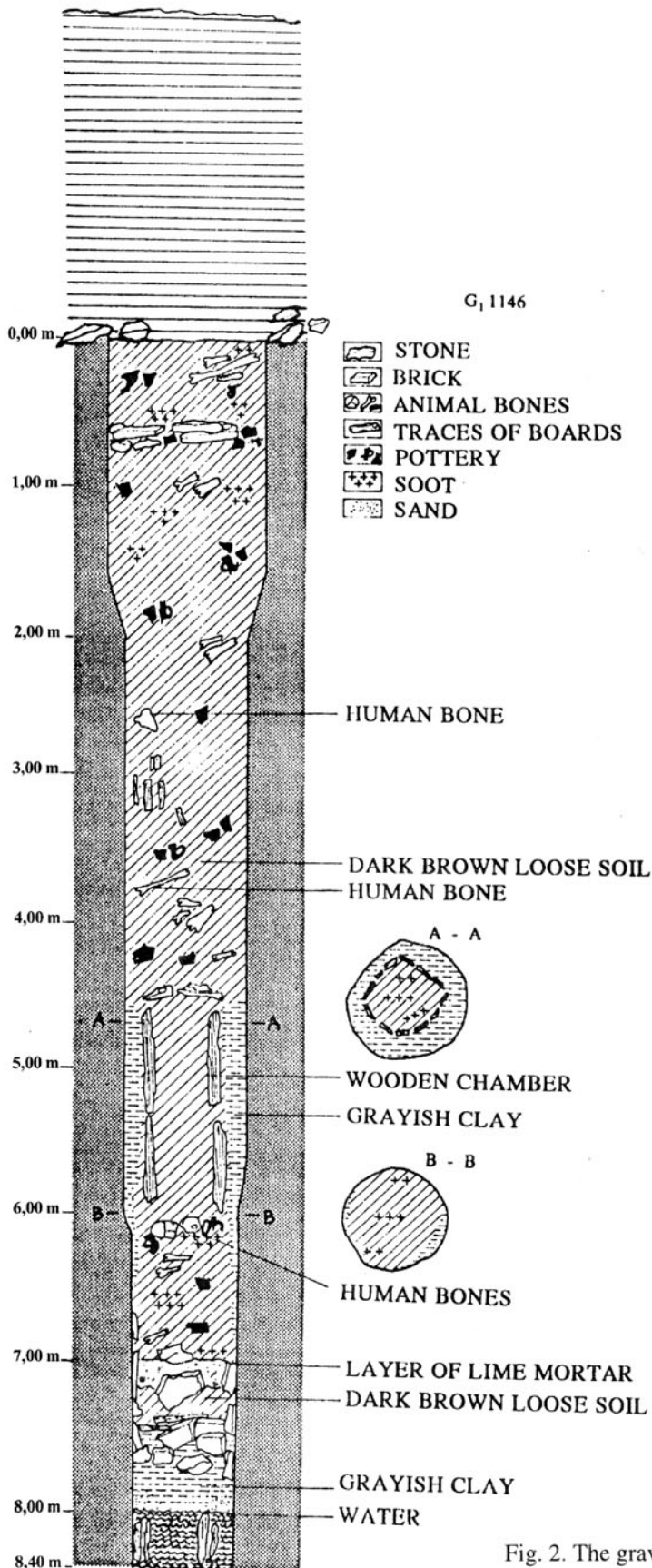


Fig. 2. The grave No 1146 in a shape of a well - section.

Rheinzabern) is found. Its decoration is organized in two friezes (fig. 3/8). The lower one consists of double leaves' ornament. A fine scarlet burnt bowl (fig. 7/4) is the only whole vessel.

Pots are presented with three types of coarse fabric, red and gray burnt (fig. 3/9-11) with a rough outer surface. Plates, represented with six types, were red burnt and with a red colored surface. (fig. 3/12-17). Among the other material in the grave pit, the sherds of amphorae are rather abundant. Three most frequent types are made of less purified clay, were red fired and mostly with white slip on the outer surface (fig. 4/1-3). Other vessels with lids and beakers sherds (fig. 3/18-21) of brown, dark gray and yellowish-white fabric and of sandy structure are represented. Ribbed and gutter decorations are recorded on beaker surfaces.

Pottery contents from the relative depth of 4.30 - 8.00 m includes fragments of 27 vessels and 10 more having all elements for their reconstruction. The most abundant are still bowls fragments (fig. 5/1-7) made of medium purified clay, predominantly red burnt. Surface is most often red colored. Only one fragment of *terra sigillata* decorated with a motif of ovum was found. Pots are represented with five types of sandy fabric, red and brown burnt and most often are red colored. Whole vessels are: a pot made of kaolin clay (fig. 7/3), and a deformed pot made of purified clay, brown burnt and brown colored (fig. 6/3). Plates, presented with two types, (fig. 5/8, 9) were made of medium purified clay, red burnt and with red colored surface.

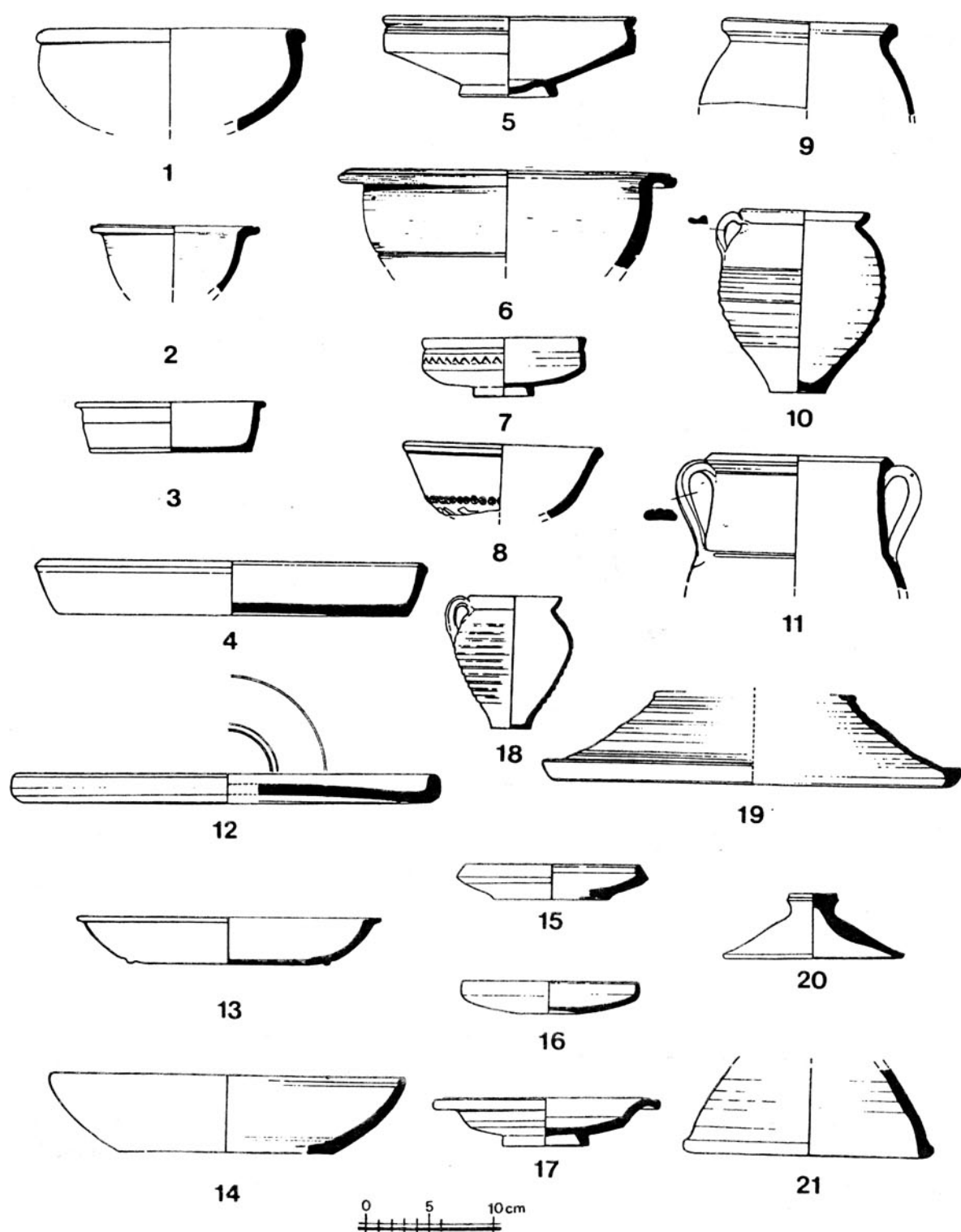


Fig. 3. Types of pottery found down to a depth of 4.30 m.

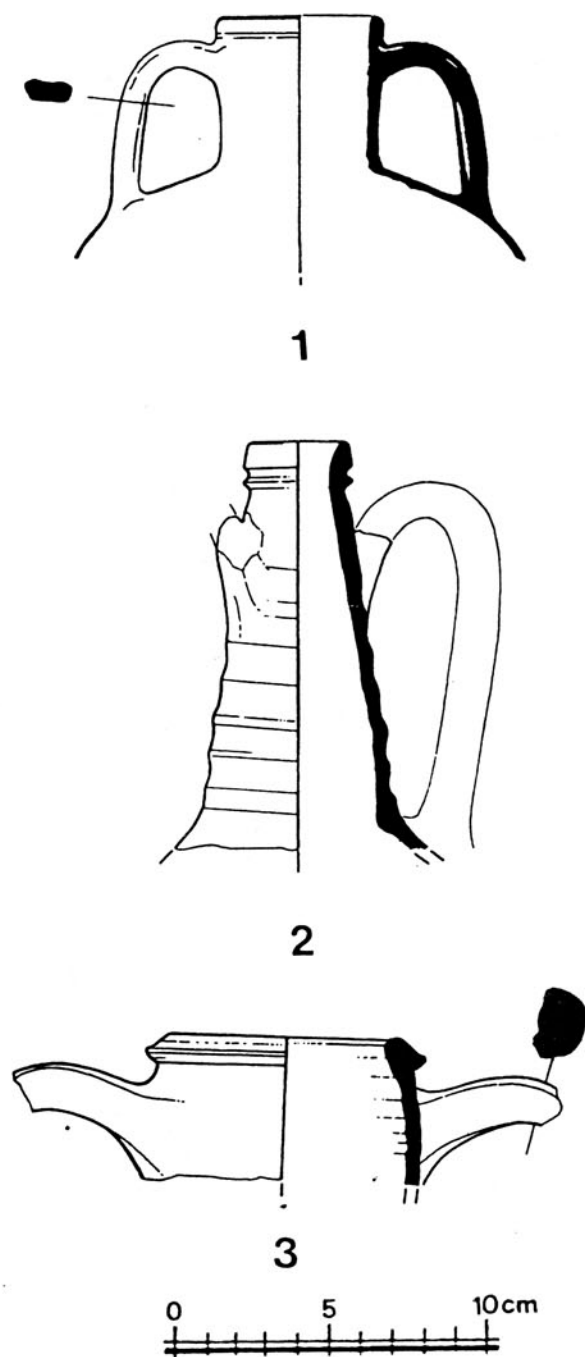


Fig. 4. Amphorae found down to a depth of 4.30 m.

An intact vessel is the plate made of fine purified clay, gray burnt. The surface is black colored and decorated with an ornament made by a serrated wheel (fig. 6/4). Two brown burnt lids of sandy fabric (fig. 7/1, 2) and other two, of the same fabric but dark gray burnt, derived from the layer 6.20 - 8.00 (fig. 6/1, 2).

Jugs are represented only with one red fired and red colored fragment (fig. 5/10) while amphorae are presented with two types. An amphora with the stamp HPAKLA of yellowish fabric with a white slip on the outer surface (fig. 9) is the first one. The other type is recorded with three dishes (fig. 6/5, fig. 8/1, 2) made of medium purified clay, red burnt with an orange colored outer surface.

GRAVE GOODS (FIG. 10)

1. Bronze coin. O: head right IMP GORDIANVS PIVS FEL AVG. R. A female figure standing left - personifying the town, flanked by a lion and a bull - symbolizing the two Upper Moesian legions - P M S C-OL in ex. AN III (fig. 10/1; Brešković 1976).
2. Bronze coin - very worn, corroded (fig. 10/2).
3. Fragment of the right half of a clay red colored mold in the shape of a fish, 9 x 4 cm (fig. 10/3; Premk 1995, 151).
4. Fragment of a clay candle lamp - disc and handle, burnt red and colored red (fig. 10/4).
5. Fragment of a clay candle lamp, burnt red and red colored (fig. 10/5).
6. Bone pin with a slightly prismatic head - a small part is missing (fig. 10/6).
7. Two fragments of a corroded iron knife - 6 cm length (fig. 10/7).
8. Bronze hinge fibula (fig. 10/8) - 3.2 cm length (Bojović 1983, T. XXIII-XXVII).
9. Bronze ring - 2.6 cm diameter (fig. 10/9).
10. Bronze coin - very worn, corroded (fig. 10/10).

Pottery sherds found along the whole depth of the grave pit date this grave entirely to the period from the 2nd half of the 2nd c. to the end of the 2nd third of the 3rd c. A few fragments of *terra sigillata* had been recorded (second half of the 2nd century), but ceramic vessels made in the local Upper Moesian workshops are much more represented. This chronology, established by the ceramic material, is supported by the coin of *Gordianus* from the upper part of grave pit, as well as bronze hinge brooch (fibula) found at the relative depth of 7.00 m.

The appearance of the graves in the shape of

wells in the territory of Upper Moesia starts a discussion on genesis and religious meaning of the burial form. Graves in the shape of a well are best known from Gaul and from the rest of Western Europe. They are usually separated from other burials (inhumation and/or cremations). So they represent rather uncommon form of a funeral.

Considering long term archaeological excavations, certain reconstruction of the grave forms and funerary rites are possible to be made. Grave pits of a round shape have a depth from 3.20 to 9.60 m, while their diameters are from 0.75 to 3.00 m. Their form of a cylinder is gradually narrowing down the bottom. Unfortunately, most of these graves have never been explored to the bottom because of water appearance, rolling down the soil or methane occurrence. These are the most significant troubles confronting the researcher while excavating this kind of graves. The situation in Gaul where the largest number of explored graves are, is almost identical. The chemical structure of the soil had very often a most powerful effect on the organic material decay³. Wooden chambers appeared in seven of the researched graves. An analogous type having grave chambers built of stone slabs appeared in Gaul and on sites in south Germany (Fount 1958, 186; Maniere 1966, 101-159). Instead of stone slabs in the necropolis of *Viminacium*, boards, obtaining the shape of a grave pit thus forming the wooden chamber, were used. One piece of board analyses, made at the School of Forestry in Belgrade, came to the result of fir-tree (fig. 11)⁴.

In other graves in the shape of a well in *Viminacium*, which do not have wooden chambers, the bottom had often not been reached, so the possibility of their existence cannot be excluded.

Wooden chamber appearance at a certain depth, mostly 7.50 m, is almost a rule. Anyway, these wooden chambers represent a characteristic feature of the graves in the shape of a well recorded in the necropolis of *Viminacium*.

The appearance of grave chambers in Gaul is a long term period, which is not typical either for the earliest or for the latest burials. The same with reference to this kind of graves is researched in *Viminacium*.

The archaeological material found in graves in the shape of a well does not differ essentially from that found in other graves with cremation in *Viminacium*. These artifacts were locally manufactured. In fact, there were very few imports from central Gaul's and Italic manufactures and generally, very few luxurious items.

All graves in the shape of a well from the necropolis of *Viminacium* - with a single filling as well as with few beds of filling - belong to the period from the end of the 1st to the middle 3rd century.

The great number of the explored graves in the shape of a well appearing, before all, in Gaul, then on sites in England (Ross 1967) and in south Germany (Schwarz 1962), point at the Gauls as bearers of this burial form.

Considering historical sources we have evidences for Gauls' presence at *Viminacium*. They arrived in Upper Moesia in the military campaign by the end of the 1st century AD. The army concentrated on the Danube during the period of *Domitianus'* wars, was formed by soldiers recruited in Italy and western Roman provinces. On the oldest military diploma from Moesia the names of ten cohorts included III, IV, V, VII and VIII *Gallorum* had been recorded. This Gaelic cohorts descended from the Rhine at the same time as *legio I Italica* and *V Alaudae* did in the year 75 AD (Mirković 1986, 33).

The number of soldiers recruited in western Roman provinces (Gaul, Dalmatia) was enlarged during the 2nd decade of the 2nd century. Veterans were a dominant, urban, privileged social class which possessed slaves - most often one or two, just in one case ten (Mirković 1986, 45). The first of the graves in the shape of a well could have belonged to some of the soldiers who arrived in the military raid by the end of the 1st century AD,

³ The earliest grave is dated by a bronze coin of *Domitianus* and ceramic material from the end of the 1st to the end of the 2nd century, and the latest grave with a bronze coin of *Gordianus*, bronze hinge fibula and ceramic material into the period from the end of 2nd to the half of 3rd century.

⁴ Preserved fragments of a board made the reconstruction of the wooden chamber possible.

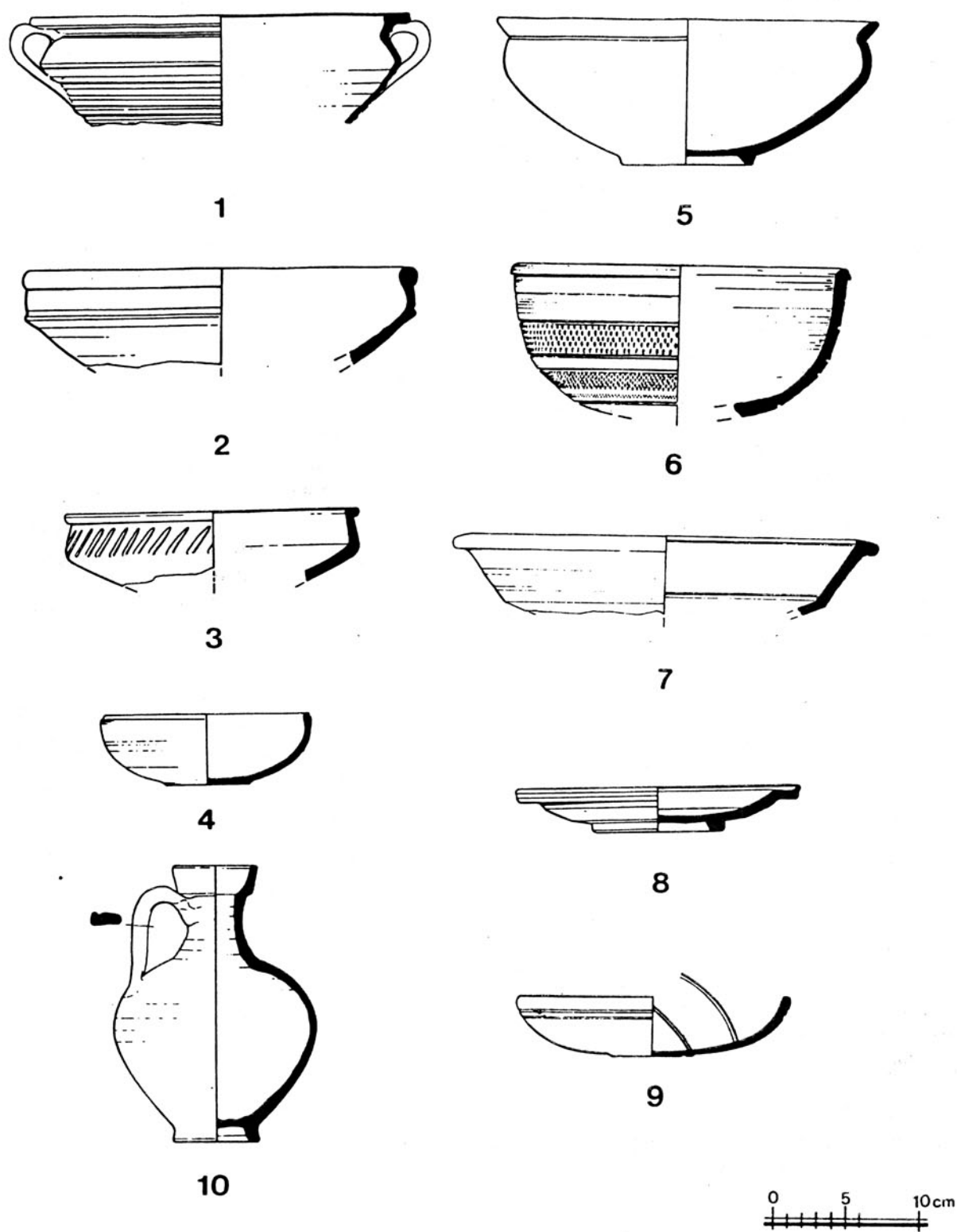


Fig. 5. Types of vessels from depth of 4.30 - 8.00 m.

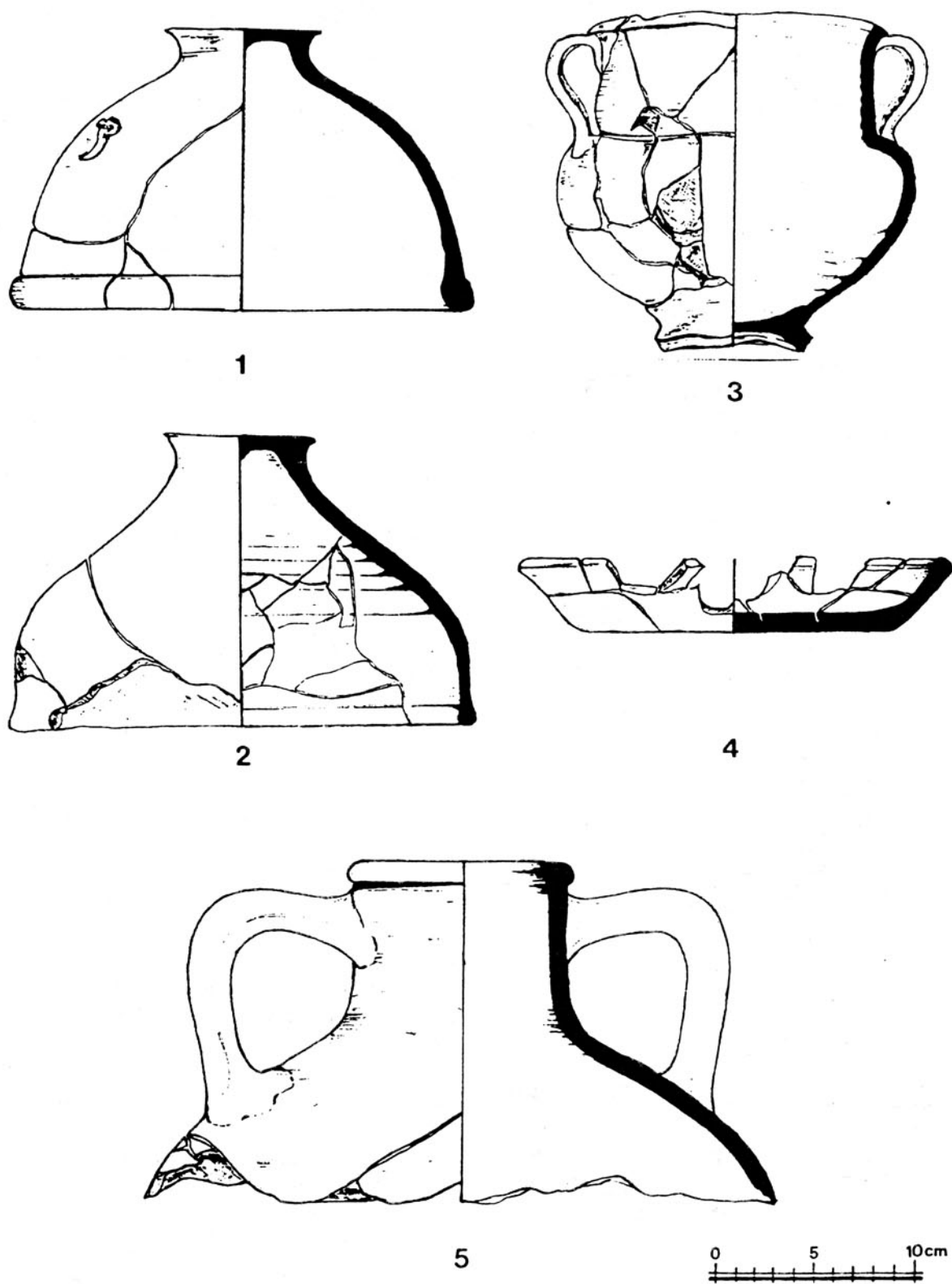


Fig. 6. Pottery from depth of 4.30 - 8.00 m.

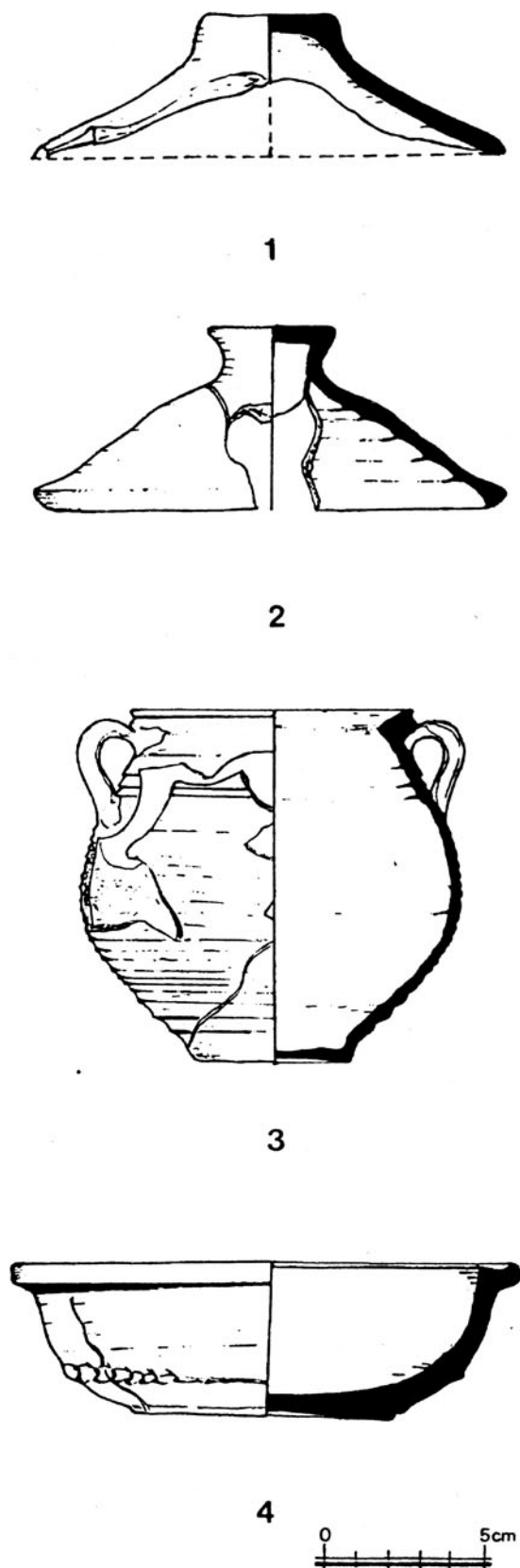


Fig. 7. Ceramic vessels.

while the other could have belonged to veterans beginning to settle down on the territory of *Viminacium*.

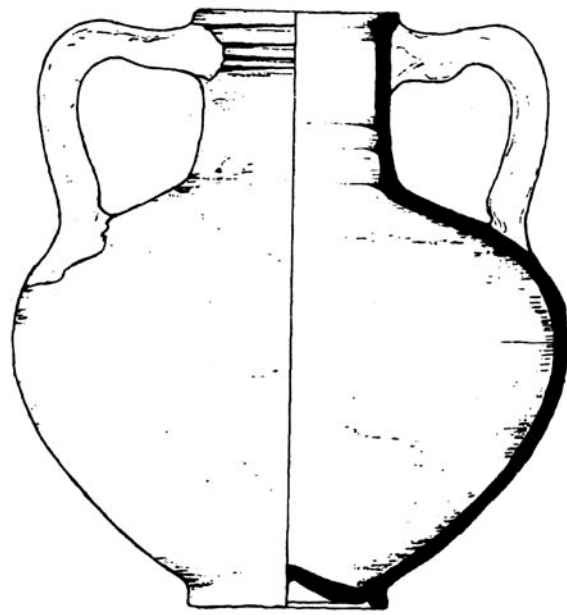
Grave form genesis and ethnic interpretation could be comprehended to a certain degree through the cult of skulls for whose presence in the graves in shape of well, we have obvious proofs. Skulls, even completed human skeletons were found in six graves. In one of them, nineteen skulls interred secondary had been found. Analyses of preserved eight came to result of all male individuals⁵.

The antique sources are abundant with description of human sacrifices, particularly by the barbarian tribes. *Strábon* and *Diódoros*, describing customs of the Gauls, explained that Gaelic warriors when leaving the battle fields, took heads of killed enemies, impaled them on spears or hung them around the neck of horses and after that hung them above the entrance of the houses. The heads of respected rivals were embalmed by cedar oil and then kept in coffins to be shown with great pride to strangers as a sign of extraordinary bravery. They were so valuable to their owners that they refused to give the skulls even for their reciprocal weight in gold (Papazoglu 1968, 47-61).

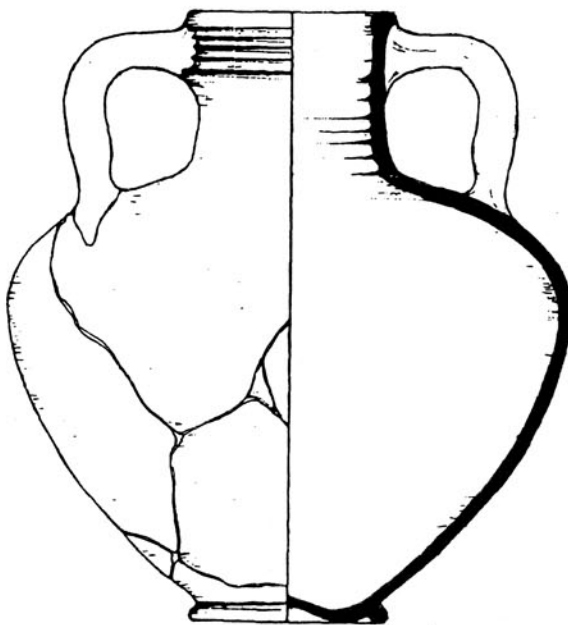
The situation with graves in the shape of a well in *Viminacium*, in which entire human skeletons or skulls were found, could be accepted as an archaeological evidence for the cult of the skull in *Viminacium*, whether it be war trophies or ritual sacrifices to the gods. There is a possibility that the skulls belonged to slaves previously deceased and placed after their master's death in his grave as symbolical servants. The custom is rather frequent in the graves explored in Gaul.

It is quite certain that the graves in the shape of a well were used as sacrificial pits (Jovanović 1984, 135; Vidal 1986, 55-65). Abundance of animal bones is common for all researched graves of this type in *Viminacium*. Undoubtedly, most of them derived from funeral feasts, however in few cases a burial of a whole animal appears. The practice of animal sacrifices, especially of dogs,

⁵ I am especially thankful to Prof. Dr Živko Mikić for the anthropological analysis.



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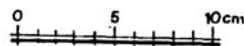


Fig. 8. Amphorae from depth of 4.30 - 8.00 m.

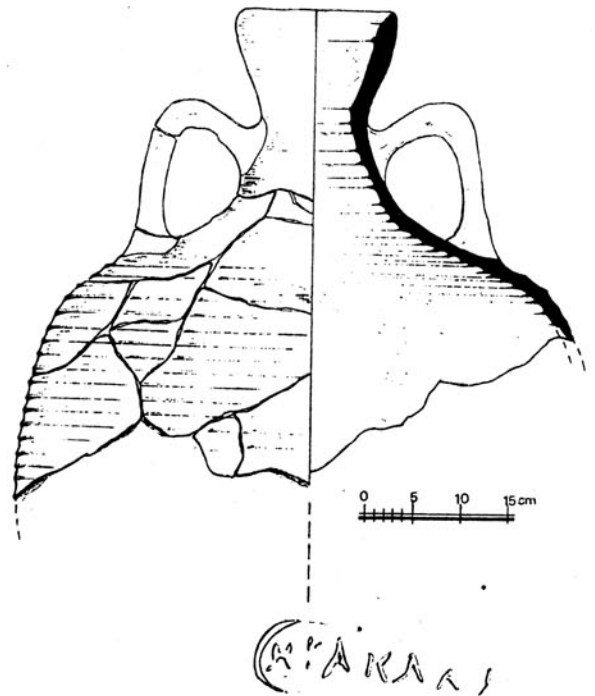


Fig. 9. Amphora with an inscription on the handle.

has been confirmed on numerous sites from the period of La Tene. In Celtic mythology, dog is associated with the cult of dead (Petres 1972, 365-383)⁶. Sacrificial horses are associated with Celtic cults too, as this custom was not known in the Roman funeral practice. In Celtic cosmogony, the horse had always been connected with the goddess *Epona*. Dog bones were found in two and horse bones in five graves in the shape of a well in the necropolis of *Viminacium*.

The archaeological excavations have not confirmed until present (Zotović 1996, 137) Celtic Gods. The assumption that Gauls had their own community in *Viminacium* and transferred the specific funeral custom from their native country seems most probable. They could have arrived in the military raid with Roman army, so the burial mode may be considered as one of the

⁶ On the site of Pákozd, in the surrounding of Lake of Velence, in the northeastern Transdanubia, few sacrificial pits from the period of La Tene were found. They contain animal and human skeletons.

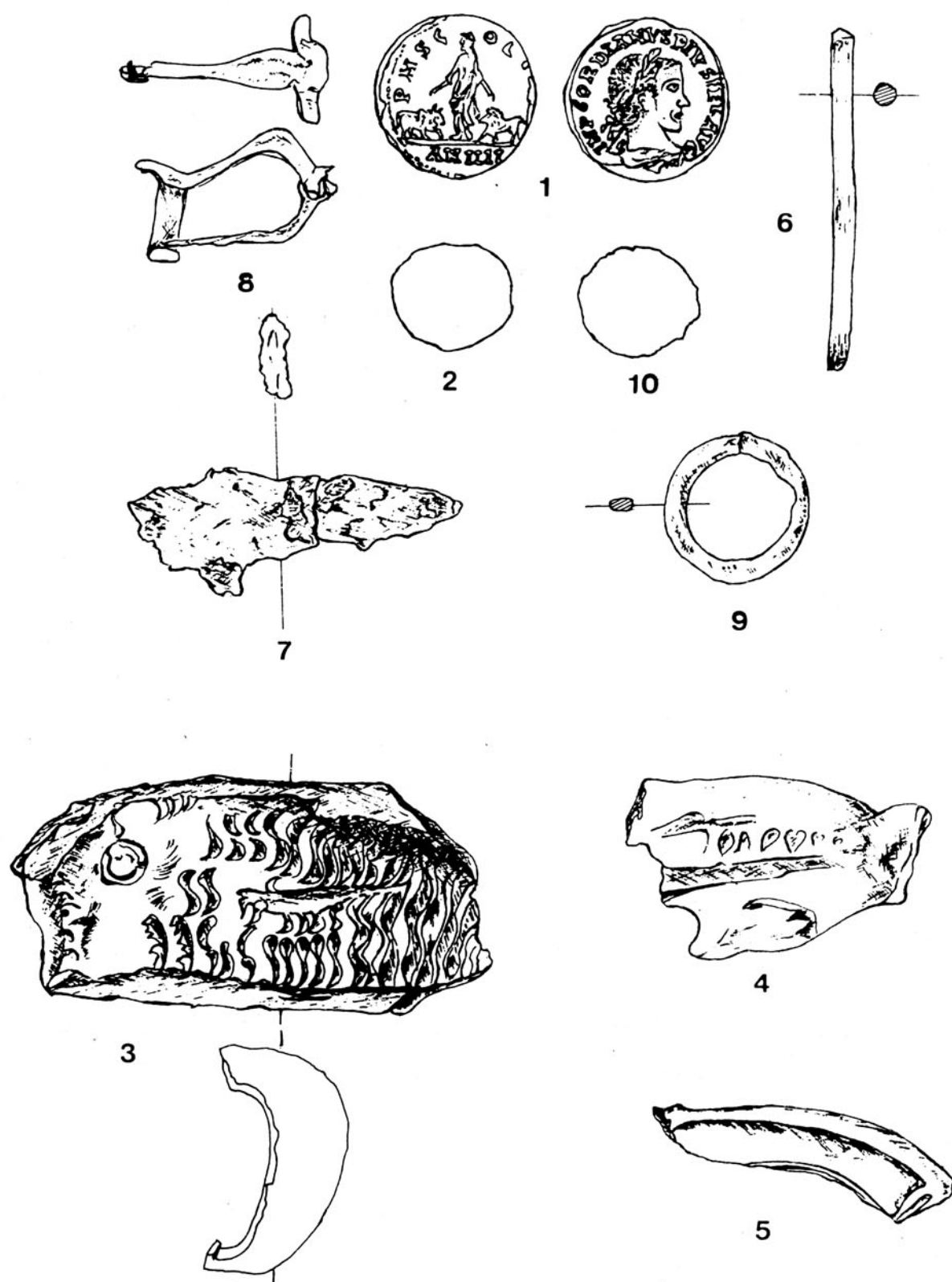


Fig. 10. Grave goods.

Romanization results. For the moment that is the only possible explanation. Many problems still remain, for example, why this grave mode is not known from the larger territory of the Roman Empire, respectively, everywhere where Gaelic settlers were inhabited. According to the results of previous excavations, the burials in the graves in the shape of a well lasted ca. 150 years and among all the sites on the territory of *Pannonia* and *Moesia superior*, the ones from *Viminacium* occupied the largest area.

Future excavations would certainly help to find the answer to the numerous questions. This would provide ground for a further elaboration. The results could definitely assist to obtain a better picture of the funerary rites on the territory of Upper *Moesia*.

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ГРОБ С ФОРМА НА КЛАДЕНЕЦ ОТ НЕКРОПОЛА НА ВИМИНАЦИУМ

Снежана Голубовић

(резюме)

Публикува се гроб, разкрит през 1990 г. в местността "Печина" в рамките на некропола на римския град Виминациум (днес Костолац в Сърбия; фиг. 1).

Гробната яма е кръгла в горната си част – диаметър 1,05 м. Постепенно се стеснява надолу като диаметърът на дъното ѝ е 0,70 м. На дълбочина 4,50 м е разположена камера от дърво, която е характерна за некропола на Виминациум. Разкопките са преустановени на дълбочина 8,40 м поради поява на подпочвена вода (фиг. 2).

По цялата дълбочина на гробната яма са регистрирани фрагменти от керамични съдове (фигури 3-9). Повечето са произведени в местни, горномизийски гърнчарници. Открити са само няколко фрагмента от тера сигилата. Според този керамичен материал гробът се отнася към периода втора половина на II век – края на втора третина на III век. Тази датировка се подкрепя от монета на император Гордиан, намерена в горната част на ямата (фиг. 10/1), както и от бронзова шарнирна фибула, открита на дълбочина 7,00 м (фиг. 10/8).

Гробовете-кладенци на територията на римската провинция Горна Мизия са предмет на оживен спор за техния произход, етническа принадлежност и религиозен смисъл. Този тип гробно съоръжение е най-добре познато в Галия и други области от Западна Европа. Там такива гробове са обикновено отделени от останалите погребения, независимо дали последните са трупополагания или кремации. В този смисъл гробовете-кладенци са твърде рядка форма на гробно съоръжение.

Най-вероятно този погребален обред е донесен във Виминациум от преселници гали (келти). Допустимо е да са дошли като римски войници, при което този специфичен погребален ритуал може да

се тълкува като мода и вид романизация. Според резултати от досегашни археологически проучвания в такива съоръжения са погребвани хора в продължение на около 150 години. Във Виминациум тези гробове заемат най-голяма площ сред всички известни некрополи в римските провинции Панония и Горна Мизия.

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