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## THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE FIRST LOCAL USE OF THE POTTER'S WHEEL IN THE CENTRAL BALKANS

*Abstract:* It is generally accepted that the potter's wheel was introduced to the area of the Central Balkans by the Celts. The fact that fragments of wheel-thrown pottery (dating from the 6th to the 4th centuries B.C.) have been found on some thirty Early Iron Age sites in the Central Balkans questions this widely accepted premise. Bearing in mind that the use of the wheel on the territory of Paionia dominates pottery manufacture as early as the 6th century B.C., it is possible to suggest that the appearance of such vessels in the area of the Central Balkans may not be accidental.

Until the present, the issue concerning the appearance of the wheel in the Central Balkans has never been accorded much attention. Once established, the theory about the potter's wheel having been introduced into the region by the Celts has survived to this day.<sup>1</sup> This premise, based on the results of excavations in the Danube river valley, has been automatically applied to the entire area of the Central Balkans. It thus came to be that all finds of gray wheel-thrown ceramics were ascribed to the Celts although such conclusion is not self-imposing, especially in view of the fact that there are only four reliably identified Celtic sites south of the Sava and the Danube: three of them by the Danube and only one further south, by the Morava (Gradac by Leskovac).<sup>2</sup>

Other finds of wheel-thrown ceramics dating from the Early Iron Age have been regarded as Greek imports, without further justi-

1 B. Jovanović, 1987, 807, 845.

2 Praistorija jugoslavenskih zemalja V, map 6.

fication of the claim. Many researchers, faced with finds of wheel-thrown ceramics in the Early Iron Age strata, were confused by its appearance so that the relevant literature often contains only mentions of it without detailed analysis.

The fact that more than 30 published or partly published Early Iron Age sites dating from the 6th to the 4th centuries B.C. are known to hold wheel-thrown pottery testifies to the importance of this phenomenon which is not to be easily disregarded (Map 1).

Besides, not only that the area of Paionia and Pelagonia - closely connected with the Central Balkans, as evident from both ceramic and metal finds of the period - is rich in wheel-thrown vessels, but this technique indeed started dominating the production of ceramicware as early as the 6th century B.C.

The sites in northern Macedonia which geographically belong to the Central Balkans and which constituted, as it has already become certain, a part of Paionia, are to be mentioned here in connection with the cultural circle encompassing also the regions of eastern Kosovo and southern Serbia. The similarity of the material found at the sites of this circle and their affiliation with the material from central and eastern Macedonia proves, once again, the connection between Paionia and the Central Balkans. Thereby, in turn, the questioning is justified of the thesis that the transfer of such a significant technological discovery as the wheel, from Paionia to the north, took as long as three centuries. Except for being wheel-thrown, the pottery dominating this area of Paionia and Pelagonia during the 6th century B.C. was also gray, which is yet another technological innovation originating from the south, from Greece. Just like the wheel it reached Paionia and Pelagonia through Aegean Macedonia.

During the Early Iron Age, as already mentioned, the regions of northern Macedonia, southern Serbia and eastern Kosovo all belonged to the same cultural circle. That area shares a great deal of cultural similarity with the north-Paionian sites in the Bregalnica river valley, especially during the period between the 8th and the 6th centuries B.C. That similarity is so obvious that one may almost treat them as parts of a single complex. The situation changes up to a point during the 6th century B.C. with a stronger penetration of Hellenic influence from the south which spread through the north-Paionian regions. This is not the case with the territories of eastern Kosovo and southern Serbia. These, however, were never entirely left out from the process of Hellenization, which is confirmed by the material dating from the 6th-4th centuries B.C. Wheel-thrown vessels are to be found on the following sites: Belačevac, Hisar and Gornje Gadimlje in the eastern parts of Kosovo, and Donja Toponica, Krševica and Oraovica in southern Serbia.

The settlement near Belačevac is known to have fragments of wheel-thrown ceramics in its later strata.<sup>3</sup> Most of them are gray and, as for their forms, footed goblets and one urn could be recognized. They belong to

3 M. Jevtić, 1983, 31.

the later phase in the life of this hillfort settlement, i.e. to the 6th century B.C. It should be noted that these vessels appear along with hand-made pottery not any different from the one of the previous phase. This would indicate that there were no population changes despite the evident difference intervening between the late and the early horizons (a burnt-out layer and the building of the dry-stone walls) which testifies to certain turbulent events followed by the exertion of Greek influence, wheel-thrown ceramics having been one of its results.<sup>4</sup>

The ceramics from Belaćevac find its closest analogies in the ceramics from the hillfort on Hisar. There we find fragments of wheel-thrown vessels as well as of imported Greek ceramics.<sup>5</sup> Such ceramicware has also been found in the upper layers of two other sites in Kosovo: Gornje Gadimlje and Cernica. Except for the information that fragments of Saint Valentine vases were found on both sites, there is no further data on them.<sup>6</sup>

On the territory of southern Serbia wheel-thrown pottery was found at the sites of Donja Toponica, Oraovica and Krševica.

On the necropolis of Donja Toponica such finds belong to the graves of the later phase. The following was found:

- in grave 6, or beside it, a fragment of the belly of a Greek kylix with the handle preserved (Pl. I,1);
- in grave 12, a handle of another kylix (or skyphos) (Pl. I, 2);
- in grave 16, a fragment of the belly of a thin-walled vessel (Pl. I, 3);
- in grave 19, a fragmented small bowl with a broadly open rim;
- in grave 20, a fragment of the belly and the bottom of a small vessel.

V. Trbuhović dates this necropolis into the times following the Celtic campaign on Delphi,<sup>7</sup> while other authors point out that the necropolis must have been used in two phases, the first certainly belonging to the Early Iron Age.<sup>8</sup> The existing bibliography contains no precise information about the more recent phase of this necropolis. As far as the wheel-thrown pottery of this phase is concerned, the author says that "as a rule" it is "the Greek import and only by rare exception the gray Celtic ceramics". Future research will show whether that ceramicware is indeed of Celtic origin or, as it happened many times before, it was automatically ascribed to the Celts because of its being wheel-thrown and gray coloured.

Oraovica-Kacipup is a hillfort settlement in the vicinity of Preševo. Chronologically, it has been placed in the period from the close of the 7th and the beginning of the 6th century up to the end of

4 N. Djurić, 1970, 281-299.

5 M. Jevtić, 1983, 32; N. Djurić, 1970, 290.

6 M. Parović-Pešikan, 1992, 341.

7 L. and V. Trbuhović, 1970, 42.

8 M. Jevtić, 1983, 28; R. Vasić, 1987, 674.

the 2nd and the beginning of the 1st century B.C. Stratigraphically, it has been divided into five horizons. The ratio of the wheel-thrown to the hand-made pottery, within these five horizons, offers an extremely interesting picture.

Horizont	Potters's wheel		Hand made		Σ
I	841	40.03%	986	53.97%	1827
	462	62.69%	275	37.31%	737
II	56.14%		6.01%		
	241	41.07%	307	58.92%	521
III	26%		6.71%		
	139	17.51%	655	82.49%	794
IV	16.89%		14.32%		
	8	0.24%	3337	99.76%	3345
V	0.97%		72.95%		
	823		4574		

*Table 1. Statistic of the pottery from Oraovica (after M. Vukmanović & P. Popović)*

As expected, the earliest horizon (V), contains a very low percentage of wheel-thrown ceramics - a total of 0.24%. In horizon IV the situation is entirely different - 17,51%. Fragments of an antique 5th-century skyphos as well as two gray bowls with inward rims, similar to the finds from Krševica, all belong to this horizon. Horizon III contains as much as 41,07% of wheel-thrown ceramics, and horizon II - 62,69%. In terms of chronology, horizons IV-II are not clearly differentiated although they are quite definitely set apart from horizons V and I. They are, therefore, dated into the period between the 5th and the 2nd centuries B.C. It is interesting that the percentage of wheel-thrown ceramics in horizon I, which clearly stands out as La Ténian, decreases not only in comparison with the previous horizons, but the hand-made ceramics appear to be more abundant again, as opposed to the horizon II. Researchers tend to explain this phenomenon as the result of the barbarization and impoverishment which came as a logical consequence of Celtic conquests in the region.<sup>9</sup> (Pl. II).

It is characteristic of the Hellenistic oppidum Krševica near Vranje that only one fourth of the total number of vessels is hand-made, which confirms high degree of Hellenization of this fort dating from the 5th-4th centuries B.C.<sup>10</sup> (Pl. III)

An even greater degree of Hellenization has been noted at the sites of northern Macedonia. Imported Greek vessels appear in far greater number, along with a greater number of locally produced

<sup>9</sup> M. Vukmanović, P. Popović, 1982, 209.

<sup>10</sup> I. Mikulčić, M. Jovanović, 1968, 353-375.

wheel-thrown gray vessels. At the same time, though, we still come across the typical hand-made Iron Age pottery. As proven by finds of ceramic refuse, deformed vessels and kiln bases, a workshop producing copies of Greek painted vases existed at the site of Studeničani (Pl. IV,1). This site dates from the 5th-4th centuries B.C.<sup>11</sup> Such an exceptional find has been noted neither in southern Paionia nor in Pelagonia although these territories, being close to Greece, must have been more Hellenized at the time.

Somewhat further north, in the area of western and southwestern Serbia, where the period is characterized by the finds of the Glasi-nae cultural complex, the wheel-thrown ceramics were found at five sites - two of them on the Pešter plateau: Melaje and Glogovik, two in the vicinity of Novi Pazar: Gradina by Pazarište and Gradina on Postenje, and one in Kosovo: Romaja. The westernmost site of this complex is the Bandera site close to Bela Crkva.

The site of Glogovik is known only by some fragments of varnished vessels,<sup>12</sup> while more precise information is available in the case of Melaje and Gradina by Pazarište. Besides several fragments of black-varnished vessels, a hemispherical goblet on a short, conical foot with a thickened "T"-profiled rim has been found at the site of Melaje.

Fragments of wheel-thrown vessels decorated with densely distributed lines of diluted and unevenly spread red-dark brown varnish have been found at the site of Gradina by Pazarište. Proceeding from their decoration, we may conclude that the vessels might have been produced in the 7th or at the beginning of the 6th centuries B.C.<sup>13</sup> At the site of Gradina on Postenje, among the Early Iron Age ceramics a fragment of a Saint Valentine vase has been discovered, dated by M. Parović-Pešikan into the last quarter of the 5th century B.C.<sup>14</sup> The Iron Age ceramics from this site having not been published yet (except for the mentioned fragment of the Saint Valentine vase) further finds of less attractive wheel-thrown ceramics are to be expected.

At the site of Romaja (grave 1, tumulus I) there was a fragment of a kylix of fine fabric, fired to a reddish dark brown colour (Pl. IV, 2). Grave 5 held a fragmented spherical jug of fine fabric and reddish surface (Pl. IV,3). Grave 12 held a fragment of the belly with horizontal handle belonging to a wheel-thrown vessel (Pl. IV, 4). All three vessels come from the second burial phase of the tumulus, i.e. from the period of the 6th-5th centuries B.C. Most of the researches (N. Djurić, J. Glišić and J. Todorović) consider them as Greek imports, apparently because they lack evidence of them being local products

11 I. Mikulčić, 1982, 20.

12 M. Jevtić 1983, 39.

13 M. Jevtić, 1992, 8-10.

14 M. Parović-Pešikan, 1992, 339.

rather than because they do have evidence of them actually being imported.<sup>15</sup>

In Bela Crkva (grave 5, tumulus I) discovery was made of entirely crushed remains of a wheel-thrown thin-walled fine fabric vessel. Because of its poor state of preservation it could not be reconstructed, but its plaster cast reveals the shape of a Greek skyphos.<sup>16</sup>

The princely tombs of southwestern Serbia are a separate and specific phenomenon.

The princely tomb in Novi Pazar, dating from the close of the 6th and the beginning of the 5th centuries B.C., contained two imported Greek vessels - a black-figure olpe with the depiction of Dionysus, and a black-figure kylix with the representation of a dog. There were no other finds of wheel-thrown vessels, not even in fragments: whether because there had never been any or because a part of the tumulus was destroyed when the Church of the Holy Apostles was being built, it still remains a mystery.<sup>17</sup>

The situation is somewhat different in the case of the princely tomb, tumulus II to be more precise, in Atenica. There, among the imported ceramics, discovery was made of a jug with a slanted cut rim, as well as of several fragments of gray wheel-thrown ceramics which could not be so assuredly identified as an import.<sup>18</sup>

Although the Greek origin of the imported ceramics from Novi Pazar and Atenica is indisputable, not all the authors agree as to the route by which these ceramics reached the Central Balkans. While some believe that they arrived via southern Italy along with other luxury items found in princely tombs,<sup>19</sup> others allow for the possibility that the Macedonian route was used.<sup>20</sup>

The same dating and the same dilemma concerning the routes of import applies to the princely tomb in Pilatovići and its material (a considerable amount of ceramic fragments of Greek origin). Unfortunately, the material from Pilatovići has not been entirely published. The situation with the material from Pečka Banja is similar. It is for this reason that we lack both a complete picture of the phenomenon of princely tombs in our parts and an insight into the nature of the material which they kept.<sup>21</sup>

In the Great Morava basin, wheel-thrown ceramics appear at the sites of Sarina Medja and Crvene Livade close to Jagodina, in the village of Majur at the site of Obala, at the site of Stubline in Supska, in Ljuljaci and at the sites of Zvezdana and Gaj-Novine by Bunar.

15 N. Djurić, J. Glišić, J. Todorović, 1975, 108.

16 M. Garašanin, D. Garašanin, 1958, 30.

17 Dj. Mano-Zisi, I. J. Popović, 1969, 13, T. I-II; R. Vasić, 1987, 644-646.

18 M. Djukić, B. Jovanović, 1966, 49-50, T.XXVI; M. Jevtić, 1983, 21; R. Vasić, 1987, 646.

19 A. Palavestra, 1984.

20 R. Vasić, 1987, 645, 648; M. Parović-Pesikan, 1988.

21 A. Palavestra, 1984, 59, 60.

In the later horizon of the Sarina Medja site there were fragments of gray wheel-thrown ceramics which M. Stojić treats as skyphos imitations,<sup>22</sup> along with the find from Stubline by Supska.<sup>23</sup> The author is convinced that these two finds, as well as those from the sites of Zvezdana and Gaj-Novine in Bunar, belong to the same horizon. In all of these cases we are dealing with locally manufactured vessels characterized by thin walls, fine fabric and gray colour.<sup>24</sup>

The third stratum of the Crvene Livade site also held some fragments of thin-walled wheel-thrown vessels of gray or dark brown colour. For reasons already mentioned, as in the case of the above quoted finds, the author identifies them as parts of skyphos and expresses doubts as to their belonging to this layer. This reasoning is based on the widely accepted premise that the local production on the wheel began with the arrival of the Scordisci.<sup>25</sup>

The material found at the site of Obala near the village of Majur is described by M. Jevtić<sup>26</sup> as "a few finds of ceramics which could be dated into the Early Iron Age and were found beneath a layer containing gray wheel-thrown ceramics". More precise information about the layers or the quantity of this pottery is published neither in this book nor in the preliminary report by S. Vetnić.<sup>27</sup>

At Ljuljaci, within tumulus I, the discovery was made of a ceramic jug (one of the rare entirely preserved examples), along with several fragments of wheel-thrown vessels. It is this jug, among other finds, which helps dating this site into the end of the 6th and in the 5th centuries B.C.<sup>28</sup> (Pl.I,4).

The northernmost site holding wheel-thrown ceramics is Ruženka, located to the south of Mihajlovac on the Danube. Several larger fragments of wheel-thrown vessels of conical shape, having fine fabric and light brown colour, were discovered in a pit.<sup>29</sup> Further information on the character of this find is not available in literature.

All the sites mentioned so far belong, either continuously or in at least one phase of their existence, to the period between the 6th and the 4th centuries B.C. These are the times when Celts were not yet present in these regions and gray wheel-thrown pottery already outnumbered hand-made products in the neighbouring territory of Paionia. The Early Iron Age sites in the Central Balkans containing wheel-thrown ceramics reveal an early Hellenization of the region at the time, of which the obvious and indisputable finds of Greek imports are not the only proof. Indeed, for the insight into the phenomenon of Hellenization the other group of wheel-thrown vessels may

22 M. Stojić, 1986, 82, T. 35/6.

23 M. Stojić, 1986, T. 35/10.

24 M. Stojić, 1986, 82.

25 M. Stojić, 1986, 80-82.

26 M. Jevtić, 1983, 15.

27 S. Vetnić, 1967, 43.

28 D. Srejšević, 1989/1990, 149, T. 1, 4.

29 M. Jevtić, 1983, 12.



appear to be far more significant: those whose quality excludes their being defined as import, but which reveal the adoption of Greek influence by the Paleo-Balkan tribes of the region in the sphere of everyday life. Bearing in mind the fact that the number is not negligible of the sites in the Central Balkans holding wheel-thrown pottery which cannot be reliably identified as imported, the near future may bring a revised dating of the first local use of the wheel into the 5th century B.C. at the latest. The discovery of a potter's workshop at Studeničani seems to be an encouragement in that direction.

*Translated by Jelena Erdeljan*

## ВРЕМЕНСКИ ОКВИРИ ПРВЕ ЛОКАЛНЕ УПОТРЕБЕ ВИТЛА НА ЦЕНТРАЛНОМ БАЛКАНУ

### Резиме

Проблему појаве витла на централном Балкану до сада није поклањана већа пажња. Једном постављена теорија да су Келти донели витло на ове просторе опстала је све до данас. Ова тврдња, заснована на истраживањима у Подунављу, преношена је аутоматски на читав простор централног Балкана. Тако се догодило да су сви налази сиве керамике рађене на витлу приписивани Келтима, иако то не мора увек бити случај, поготово када знамо да поуздано утврђених келтских локалитета јужно од Саве и Дунава има четири и то три уз Дунав, а само један јужније, уз Мораву (Градац код Лесковца). Остали налази керамике рађене на витлу који припадају старијем гвозденом добу проглашавани су грчким импортом, без даље провере да ли је таква тврдња оправдана.

Чпњеница да се за преко тридесет публикованих или делимично публикованих локалитета старијег гвозденог доба датираних од VI до IV в.с.е. зна да су имали керамику рађену на витлу говори о озбиљности ове појаве, коју не треба занемарити.

Осим тога, простор Пеоније и Пелагоније који је био тесно повезан са централним Балканом, што се види како на керамици тако и на металним налазима тог времена, не само да има посуда рађених на витлу, већ овај начин рада доминира у керамичкој продукцији већ од VI в.с.е.

Налазишта старијег гвозденог доба централног Балкана на којима има керамике рађене на витлу показују у којој мери је овај простор хеленизиран већ у ово време и то не само очигледним и неоспорним налазима грчког импорта. За појаву хеленизације, могла би бити много значајнија она друга група налаза на витлу рађених посуда које се својим квалитетом не могу сврстати у импорт, а које показују, још увек стидљиво прихватање грчких утицаја у сфери свакодневног живота припадника палеобалканских племена са ових простора. С обзиром да број локалитета централног Балкана који имају керамику рађену на витлу за коју се не може са сигурношћу рећи да је импортована није занемарљив, може се очекивати у скорој будућности померање датовања прве локалне производње на витлу, ако не пре, оно бар од V в.с.е. Чини се да налаз грнчарске радионице из Студеничана охрабрује у том правцу.

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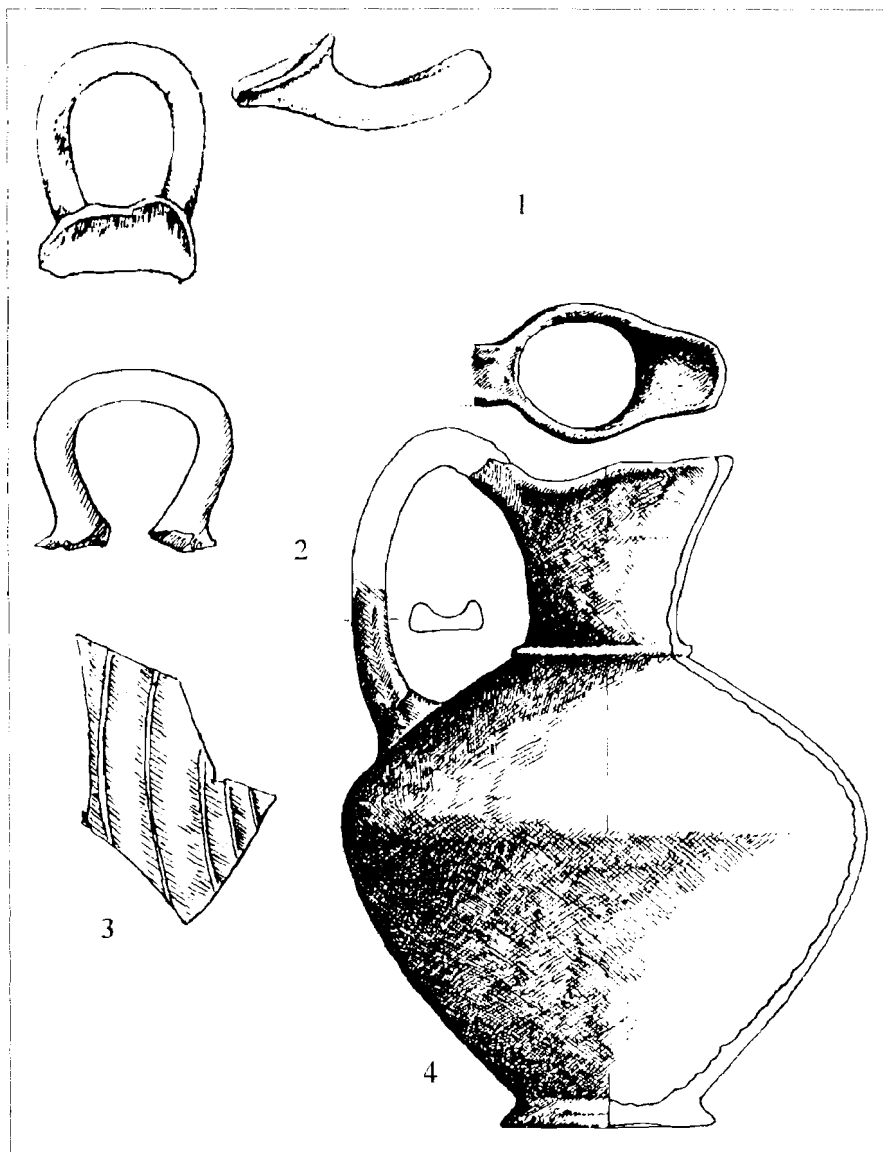
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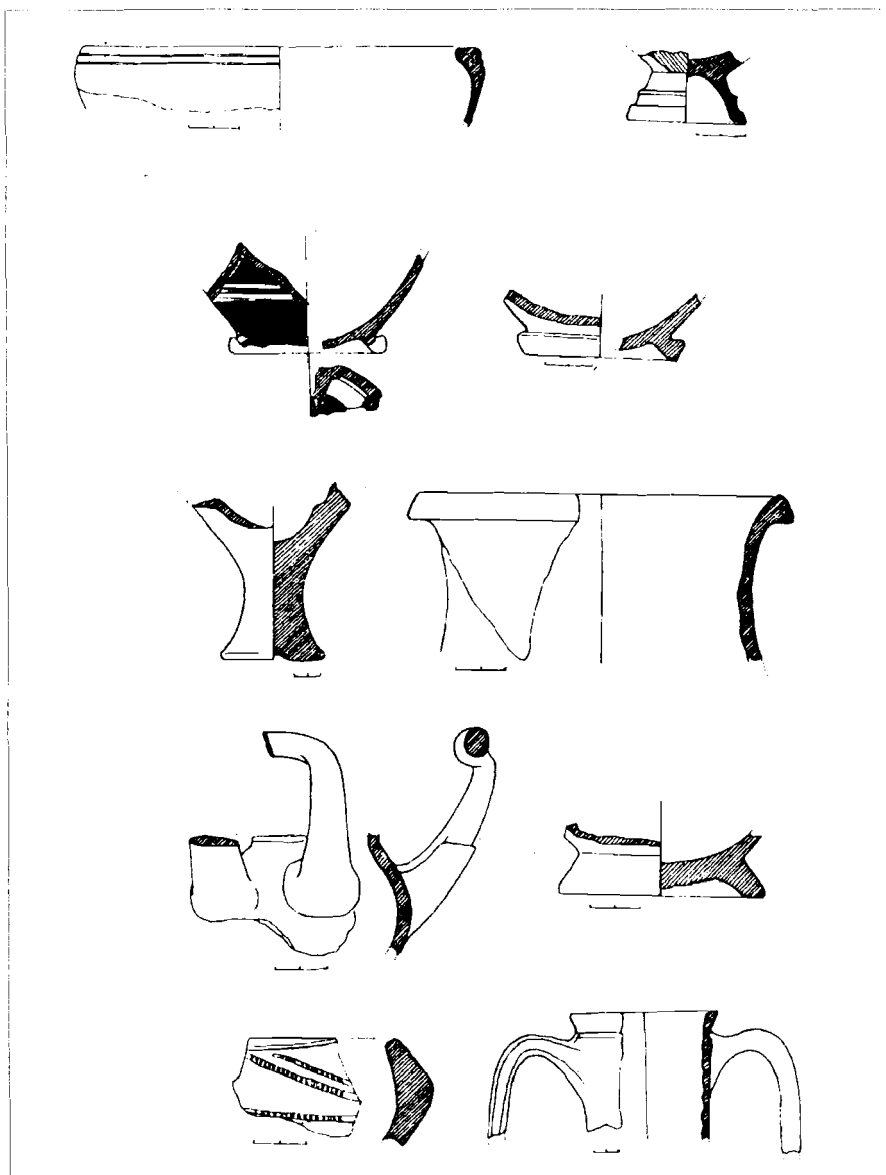
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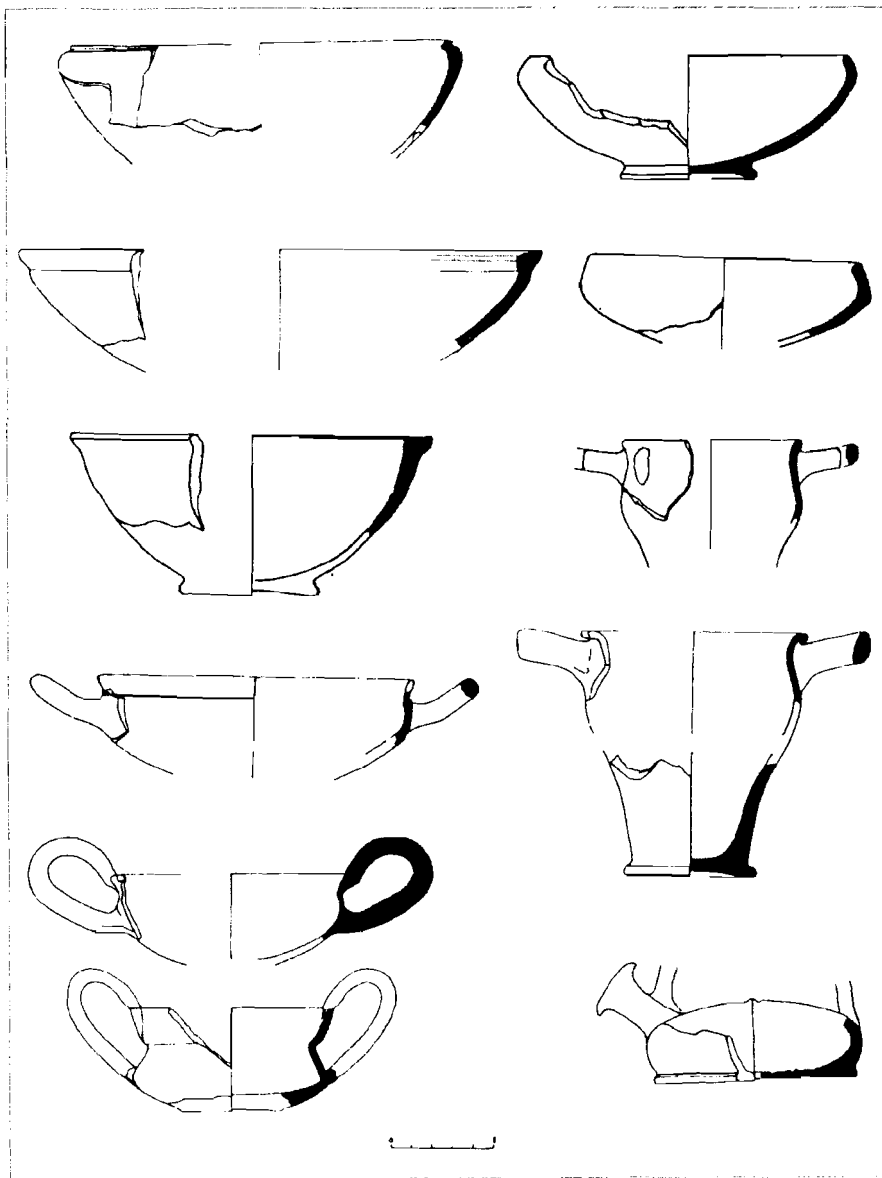
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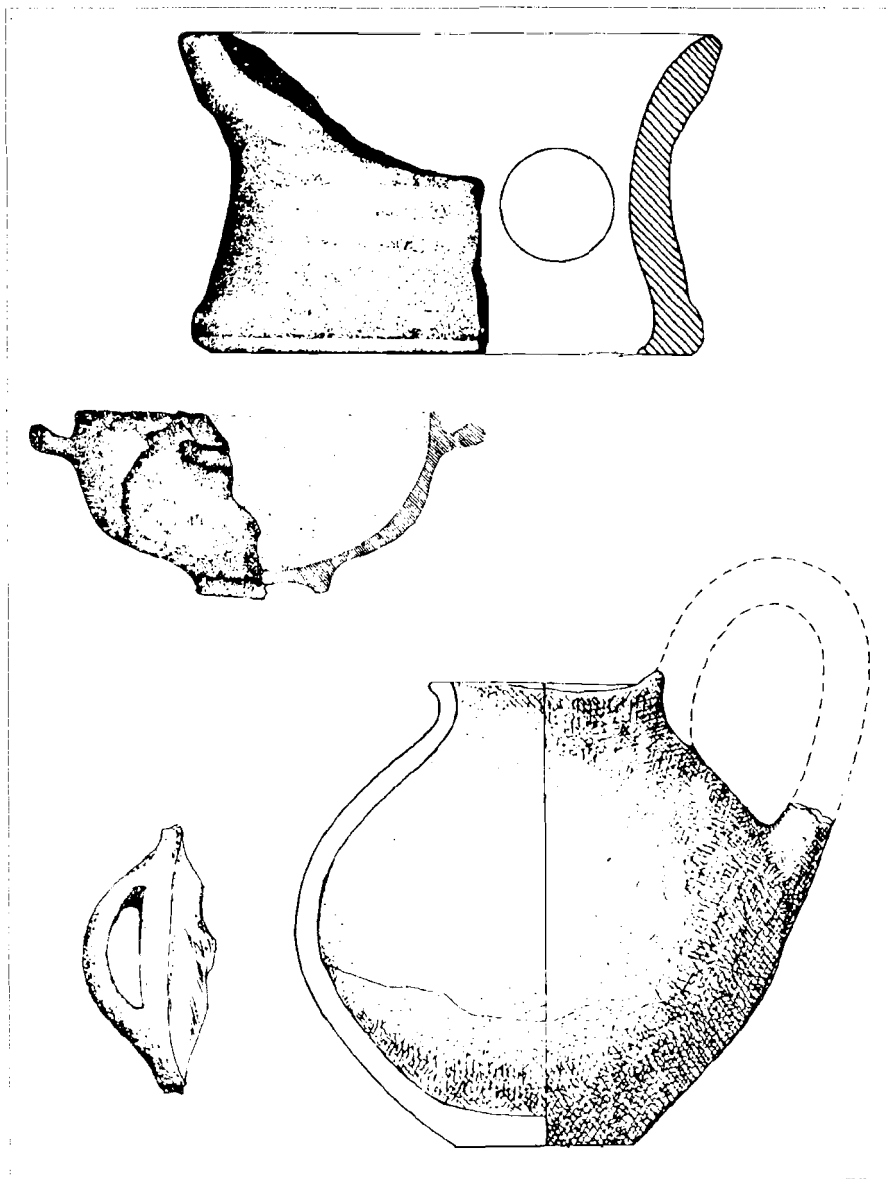
Pl. I, 1-3 Donja Toponica; 4 I. Juljaci



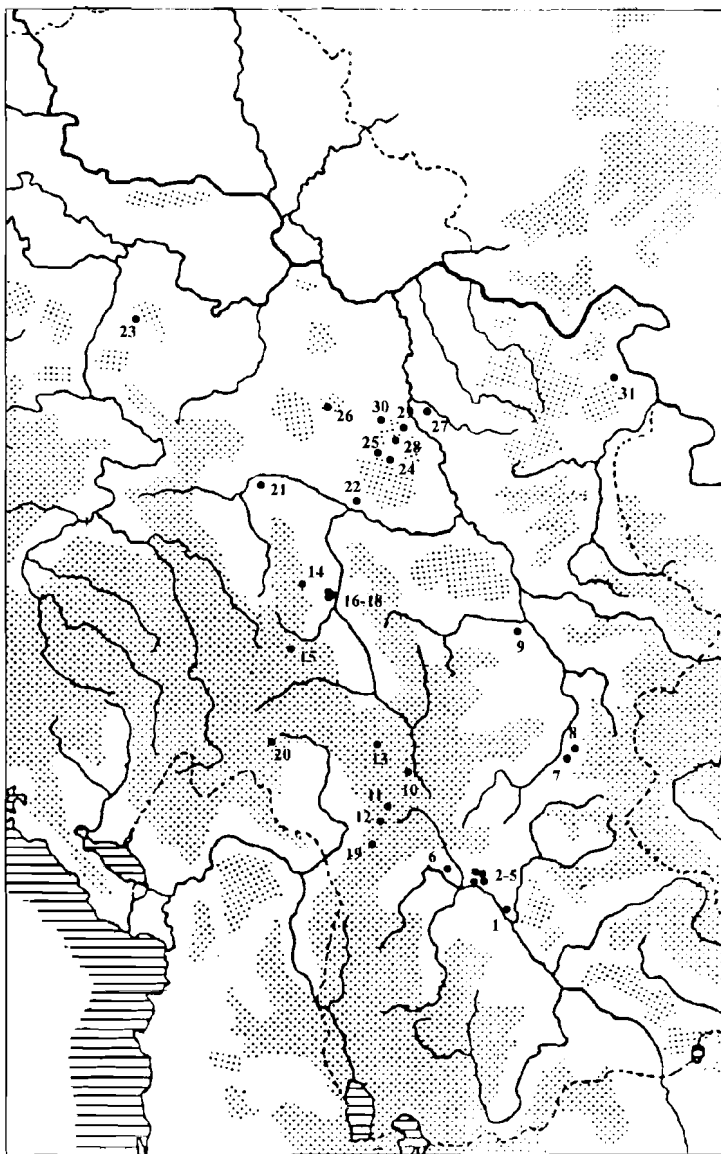
*Pl. II, Oraovica*



Pl. III, Krševica



*Pl. IV, 1, Studeničani; 2-4, Romaja*



Map 1: 1. Brazda, 2. Studeničani, 3. Skopje - Kale, 4. Govrlevo - Gradište, 5. Varvara - Kale, 6. Sredni Nrezi, 7. Oraovica, 8. Krševica, 9. Donja Toponica, 10. Gornje Gadimlje, 11. Hisar, 12. Cernica, 13. Belačevac, 14. Melaje, 15. Glogovik, 16. Novi Pazar - Petrova crkva, 17. Postenje - Gradina, 18. Pazarište - Gradina, 19. Romaja, 20. Pečka Banja, 21. Pilatovići, 22. Atenica, 23. Bela Crkva, 24. Gaj-Novine, 25. Zvezdana - Bunar, 26. Ljuljaci, 27. Supska - Stubline, 28. Majur - Obala, 29. Crvene livade, 30. Sarina Meda, 31. Ruženka.