

EXCAVATIONS AT THE NAMAZGA V LATE GRAVEYARD OF GONUR 1
(MURGHAB DELTA, TURKMENISTAN).
PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE 1993 FIELD SEASON

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The second excavation campaign carried out by the "Centro Studi e Ricerche Ligabue" at the Middle Bronze Age cemetery of the large urban centre of Gonur depe 1 took place between August 24 and October 10 1993¹.

Researches carried out during the 1992 field season (Salvatori 1993; 1994) yielded the location of a large graveyard to the west of Gonur-depe 1 where excavations directed by V. Sarianidi (1990) brought to light a sequence encompassing the periods usually labelled (Kohl 1992) as Namazga V Late and VI (from the last quarter of the IInd to mid IIIrd millennium BC). Test trenches opened at different locations in the area ensured we were in front of a culturally homogeneous and large cemetery. Nevertheless we realized that the cemetery went through an intensive looting practice of uncertain date while surely ancient. Such a practice was oriented to the search for bronze, gold, silver and stone objects, living sometime *in situ*, or broken in and around the robbers pit, the pottery funerary items (Salvatori 1993).

The graves, or better the majority of them, are immediately evident after the surface cleaning thanks to the reddish colour changing of the upper part of the ovoid to circular robbers pits refilling. Others features (simple pit graves usually undisturbed and fireplaces) were easily detected because of the presence of a burnt mud cup. For what simple pit graves concerns, the 1993 season confirmed the general lacking of funerary goods with the dead that are mostly children and young adults. Furthermore we were able to ascertain the relatively complex procedure in use for this kind of burials. After the pit excavation, usually a shallow one, a fire was lighted which produced the formation of a quite compact reddish burnt layer along the walls. After the walls hardening by fire, the dead was placed in the pit in a crouched position, laying on one side, and than covered with the excavated soil. After an almost complete earthen refilling

of the pit, at a depth of 10-15 cm below the surface a second fire was lighted and this covered with a silt layer hardened to red by the embers.

For what concerns the pits characterised by a rubified seal of sandy silt soil we thought erroneously, last year, to be entrance pit to catacomb graves. We were indeed surprised to notice that the graves had been systematically visited in antiquity. The deposit inside the pits and the chambers was characterized by alternate sandy and silt micro stratified thin layers surely deposited in a long period of time through an evident secondary and natural re-deposition process. The presence of human bone fragments and sherds at different depth in the filling was an obvious confirmation of the rolling in of some of the disturbed items and bones from the edges of the looters pit. Only during the 1993 season we were able to recognize the very shape of the graves. The complete removal of the pedogenized surface layer shown the traces of large rectangular pits of variable dimensions (m 2×1.30 to 3.50×2) and mostly isooriented with the longer dimension on a north-south or northwest-southeast axis. Many of those rectangular pits, as expected, were recut by sub circular pits as a clear signal of robbers activity. Fortunately some of the rectangular pits had no traces of later recutting and so it was possible to concentrate excavation activities mainly on those undisturbed graves.

This grave typology seems to be relatively homogeneous in formal terms and very similar to the one know from the slightly later cemetery at Sapalli tepe (southern Uzbekistan) (Askarov 1973).

As referred above, after a 20 cm. lowering of the present surface the traces of sub rectangular pits are detectable. On the base of the excavated sample they are, usually, between 60 and 100 cm deep. Along the western wall of the pit, closed with a series of unfired mud bricks, a subterranean chamber was excavated. Mud bricks,

generally of standard size (20×40×15 cm) were placed usually against the chamber entrance. The chamber was not empty but filled after the deposit of the dead with sand and sandy silt. Variability in mud bricks pattern of disposition could be valued only after a large number of undisturbed graves will be excavated. The rectangular pit was refilled with the excavated earth and we have found no evidence of structural elements to be interpreted as burial signals. We can only suggest that the filling, at least for a number of years, made a kind of diamond-shaped relief on the burial spot because the earth volume, which, after excavation, is obviously greater than before. Such, though low, reliefs, presumably rectangular in shape as the pit itself, were visible in the graveyard area and could have been a clear signal to the robbers whose pits almost ever centre the original rectangular pits.

The main excavation area during the 1993 season was an extension to the east and to the south of the small trench explored in the previous campaign (Fig. 1). We have opened a surface of 1100 m² with the evidence of 74 graves and 7 fireplaces. Density is about 1 grave every 15 m². The undisturbed graves percentage is 31%, while considering only the catacomb graves the percentage of undisturbed structures is only 15.3%.

Test trenches (C and D) were opened elsewhere to fix the western boundary of the graveyard which is coincident with the traces of an ancient meandering river-bed, easily detectable on aerial photographs, which flowed from south to north fifty meters to the west of our main trench. To the south of the main excavation area the graveyard lays for at least 600 m (test B). To the north it doesn't seem to extend more than 50 meters. With the next 1994 season we will try to trace back the eastern boundary of the cemetery and better specify its southern edge.

Of the 94 located features we excavated 42 including 5 fireplaces; 7 simple pit graves, 2 of which visited in antiquity; and 26 catacomb graves, 7 of which undisturbed.

Some of the looted graves gave back nor a sherd. Others, the majority, yielded pottery sherds, often allowing the reconstruction of almost complete vessel shapes, entire vessels and

stone objects. For what concerns looted graves we were able to notice that if the robbers pit is located in the southern portion of the original rectangular pit at list a part of the pottery furniture of the graves, usually located to the north of the dead head, was often lived *in situ*. Even the pottery furniture was otherwise destroyed when the robbers pit is located in the centre or in northern half of the original rectangular pit. In the last case the first thing encountered by the robbers reaching the burial chamber was the pottery furniture.

As noticed above at least some of the catacomb graves were left undisturbed by the almost systematic ancient looting. These allowed us to trace back with certitude grave type, filling and closing practices, disposal of the dead and pattern of distribution of the accompanying furniture, which some time turns to be of particular complexity.

Grave inventory and description*.

Trench A:

Grave 10

Delimited during the 1992 season has been dug in 1993. Catacomb grave looted in antiquity. Chamber on a south-north axis.

FURNITURE: few rim fragments of a biconical beaker in the refilling of the robbers pit.

INHUMED: disturbed fragments from the long bones of a subadult individual.

Grave 11

Catacomb undisturbed grave. Rectangular pit with the main dimension oriented on a south-north axis (m 2.60×1.60; depth m 0.80). The chamber was obtained through a deepening of the western portion of the pit floor and with a limited excavation of its western wall. After deposition it was sealed with a series of ten unfired mud bricks. The floor of the chamber was at -1.20 m from the surface (Fig. 2).

FURNITURE (*dimensions are in cm):

1) Pear shaped bottle with narrow neck and everted rim. H. 18.7, ϕ max. 11.2, ϕ at the mouth 6.1, ϕ at the base 6, th. 0.9 (Fig. 3/1).

2) Large biconical beaker on a low concave foot. H. 21.3, ϕ max. 13.3, ϕ at the mouth 9.8, ϕ at the base 6.8, th. 0.5 (Fig. 3/2).

3) Truncated conical bowl with vertical slightly concave rim. Slightly flared low foot. H. 8.1, ϕ max. 18.6, ϕ at the mouth 18.3, ϕ at the base 5.3, th. 0.4-1.1 (Fig. 4/1).

4) Truncated conical bowl with vertical rim and plain base. H. 8.6, ϕ max. 18.4, ϕ at the base 4.8, th. 0.4-0.9 (Fig. 4/2).

5) Truncated conical bowl with slightly inverted vertical concave rim. Low sub cylindrical foot. H. 9.8, ϕ max. 21.5, ϕ 21.5, ϕ at the base 4.6, th. 0.4-1 (Fig. 4/3).

6) Dark grey flint harrow-head. H. 2.8, W. 1.6, th. 0.4. (Of dubious pertinence: it was in the silty deposit above, but separated from, the left knee of the dead) (Fig. 4/4).

7) Necklace made by a bundle of nine twisted golden lamina wires, with both ends capped with a golden cylindrical beads. The necklace is completed with a composite pendent made with three golden vertically hanging wires spaced by a plain rectangular golden lamina. Along each wire three cornaline, turquoise and cornaline beads are arranged while at each end a golden finial in the shape of snake-like head is fixed. Pendent measures: H. 3.1; L. 2.3.

Pottery furniture was lain along the north-western edge of the chamber. The necklace was worn.

INHUMED: The dead, a female, was lying crouched on the right side with the head to the north.

Grave 12

Catacomb grave looted in antiquity. Chamber oriented on a north-south axis.

FURNITURE: 1) Large bell-shaped cup on conical solid stand. Light green ware. Inside decoration made by tarallel horizontal red bands. H. 20.9, ϕ max. 18.8, ϕ at the base 7.5, th. 0.5 (Fig. 4/7).

2) Pear shaped or biconical beaker. H. 13.2, ϕ max. 12.1, ϕ at the mouth 8.6, ϕ at the base 5.2, th. 0.5 (Fig. 4/5).

3) Truncated conical bowl on low cylindrical foot; vertical, slightly concave, rim. H. 7.2, ϕ 17.8, ϕ at the base 4.7, th. 0.5-0.9 (Fig. 4/6). Nr 2 was lying at a depth of -1.60 m from the surface, in the secondary filling of the looters pit. Fragments of the same pot were found together with nrs 1 and 3 along the northern

border of the chamber. The other two pots as well were fragmented.

INHUMED: a large number of human bone splinters were scattered in the secondary filling of the chamber and of the robbers pit as well.

Grave 13

Simple oval-shaped pit grave (?) looted in antiquity. The pit had a fired mud bed at a depth of -0.20 m below the surface, cut through by a rectangular pit which reached a depth of -0.45 m. No traces of human bones neither of pottery sherds have been found.

Grave 14

Catacomb grave looted in antiquity.

FURNITURE: 1) Cylindrical beaker with flaring rim. H. 19.8, ϕ at the mouth 10.8, ϕ at the base 7.2, th. 0.6-1 (Fig. 5/1).

2) Rim, neck, and shoulder fragment from a small jar. h. 4.8, ϕ at the mouth 4.4, th. 0.35 (Fig. 5/2).

Nr 1 was found in the robbers pit filling at a depth of -0.40 m; nr 2 was lying no more in situ, while complete, on the chamber floor at a depth of -0.80 m below the surface.

INHUMED: no traces of human bones.

Grave 15

Catacomb grave looted in antiquity. Chamber oriented on a north-south axis.

FURNITURE: 1) Fragment of truncated conical bowl with clipped rim.

2) Base of biconical small jar (?).

The two fragments were lying in the secondary filling respectively at -0.30 and -0.45 m from the surface.

INHUMED: no traces of human bones.

Grave 16

Catacomb grave looted in antiquity.

FURNITURE: 1) Globular miniature jar. Low cylindrical foot; concave neck. H. 7, ϕ max. 7.4, ϕ at the neck 4.3, ϕ at the mouth 4.2, ϕ at the base 3.8, th. 0.4 (Fig. 5/3).

2) Biconical small jar on low cylindrical foot; cylindrical neck. H. 8.3, ϕ max. 8.8, ϕ at the mouth 5.3, ϕ at the 3.8. th. 0.4-1 (Fig. 5/4).

3) Truncated conical bowl on low flared foot; vertical, concave, rim. H. 9.6, ϕ max. 18.8, ϕ

at the base 6.7, th. 0.5 (Fig. 5/5).

4) Hemispherical bowl on high flared foot. Burnished red ware. H. 11.7, ϕ max. 21.7, ϕ at the base 6, th. 0.6 (Fig. 5/6).

5) Base and lower wall of unrecognisable pot type.

6) Rim fragment from a biconical beaker.

7) Biconical bead from a grey nummulitic stone. Bipolar piercing hole. H. 1.2, ϕ 2 (Fig. 5/7).

8) Several gypsum inlaid of two slightly different shape (Fig. 5/8).

A: rectangular with one end pointed and the other one rounded. H. 1.7, L. 0.7, sp. 0.2;

B: rectangular with one end rounded and the other one straight. H. 1.5, L. 0.7, sp. 0.2.

Nrs 1-7 have been found at the base of the robbers pit, at -0.70 m below the surface. Nr 8 pieces were scattered in the chamber secondary filling.

INHUMED: human bone splinters were scattered everywhere in the secondary filling.

Grave 17

Catacomb grave looted in antiquity.

FURNITURE: 1) Fragmentary (1/3) truncated conical bowl on high solid conical foot and slightly distinct rim. H. 11, ϕ max. 22.9, ϕ at the base 6.5, th. 0.4 (Fig. 6/1).

2) Rim fragment from unidentifiable pot (jar?). Both sherds were found in the secondary filling.

INHUMED: few human bone splinters.

Grave 18

Catacomb grave looted in antiquity.

FURNITURE: 1) Truncated conical cup with clipped rim. H. 14.8, ϕ 16.8, ϕ at the base 6, th. 0.3-1.2 (Fig. 6/2).

2) Fragmentary lower part from a biconical jar with moulded base. H. 1.9; ϕ max. 20; ϕ at the base 9.3; th. 0.6 (Fig. 6/3).

Both items were found in the secondary filling.

INHUMED: no traces of human bones.

Grave 19

Catacomb grave looted in antiquity.

FURNITURE: 1) Jadeite large biconical bead. H. 2.7, ϕ 1.5 (Fig. 6/4).

2) Fragmentary small truncated conical bowl with vertical, concave, rim.

3) Fragmentary lower part of a biconical jar with moulded base.

4) Five sherds from different unrecognisable shaped pots.

The sherds were found at different depths in the secondary filling of the robbers pit, while the jadeite bead was lying on the chamber floor.

INHUMED: few segments from long bones in the secondary filling of the chamber.

Grave 20

Sub-rectangular shaped fireplace with walls hardened by fire and charcoal deposit at the base (m 0.80×0.55; depth m 0.50).

Grave 21

Catacomb grave looted in antiquity. Of this grave the original pit has been dug and the bricks closing the chamber entrance in the northern undisturbed sector were cleaned.

FURNITURE: 1) Large bell-shaped cup on high flared stand. H. 21, ϕ max. 20, ϕ at the base 7.7, th. 0.5 (Fig. 7/1).

2) Biconical beaker. H. 12, ϕ max. 10.6, ϕ at the mouth 6.6, ϕ at the base 4, th. 0.4 (Fig. 7/2).

3) Truncated conical bowl with short vertical, slightly concave, rim. H. 8.2, ϕ max. 18.8, ϕ at the mouth 18.4, ϕ at the base 3.9, th. 0.6 (Fig. 7/3).

4) Four fragments of a truncated conical cup with clipped rim.

Nrs 1-3 have been found *in situ*. Nr. 4 was collected in the robbers pit filling.

INHUMED: several skeletal elements pertaining to an adult male have been found both in the chamber and in the secondary pit. The human bones were largely disturbed. Portions of the skulls have been found both in the chamber and in the robbers pit secondary filling.

Grave 22

Simple pit grave (m 0.80×0.50; depth m 0.60) with walls hardened to red by fire and a fired mud cover. On the pit floor a badly preserved skeleton of an infant has been cleaned. He was lying crouched on the right side with the head to the south.

Grave 23

Shallow (0.13 m), sub rectangular fireplace (m 0.80×0.60).

Grave 24

Catacomb grave looted in antiquity.

FURNITURE: 1) Jar conical neck fragment. Grey-black burnished ware. Handmade. H. 7.7, upper ϕ 4.6, ϕ lower 8.4, th. 0.7 (Fig. 7/4).

2) Fragment of clipped rim cup. Traces of a decorative red band on the interior of the rim.

3) Fragment of truncated conical bowl with distinct, concave, rim.

4) Idem.

5) Biconical green stone bead with bipolar piercing hole. H. 1, ϕ 1.8 (Fig. 7/5).

6) Lapis lazuli splinter.

All the items were found at different depth in the robbers pit filling.

INHUMED: few human bones splinters.

25-28

Not excavated looted graves.

Grave 29

Simple pit grave of sub-rectangular shape with walls hardened tored by fire (m 1×0.66; depth m 0.40). At a depth of -0.10 m a layer of charcoal mixed with hearth was recognised. The inhumed was laying at a depth of -0.40 m, crouched on the left side with the head to the north (Fig. 7/6).

30-33

Not excavated looted graves.

Grave 34

Catacomb grave looted in antiquity. Of this grave the original rectangular entrance pit was excavated (m 2×1.20; depth m 0.50; chamber floor at -0.70 m). Pit orientation: north-south.

FURNITURE: 1) Biconical small jar with everted rim. H. 9, ϕ max. 10.4, ϕ at the mouth 6 (5.3), ϕ at the base 4.3, th. 0.4 (Fig. 8/1).

2) Hemispherical bowl on conical, solid, foot. H. 7, ϕ max. 21.3, ϕ at the base 4.9, th. 0.4 (Fig. 8/2).

3) Truncated conical bowl with vertical rim. H. 6.8, ϕ max. 17.2, ϕ at the base 4.5, th. 0.5

(Fig. 8/3).

4) Jar wall fragment. Black ware burnished with a motive of parallel zigzag lines. H. 11.5, th. 0.7 (Fig. 8/4).

5 and 6) Foot fragments of indeterminable pots.

7) Rim fragments from a biconical beaker.

All the items come from the filling of the looters pit.

INHUMED: only tibia, fibula and foot bones of both the legs have been preserved in situ. From their position is possible to understand that the dead was crouched on the right side with the head to the north. Other human bones were collected in the robbers pit filling.

Grave 35

Simple pit grave sub rectangular in plan (m 0.80×0.60; depth m 0.55). The opening was covered by a layer of mud hardened to red by fire. The charcoal deposit remain of that fire was at a depth of -0.15 m below the surface. The pit walls were hardened to red before the dead deposition. A very badly preserved human skeleton was cleaned at a depth of -0.60 m lying crouched on the right side with the head to the north.

Grave 36

Catacomb grave looted in antiquity (chamber floor at m -1.20).

FURNITURE: 1) Truncated conical clipped rim cup. 15.4, ϕ max. 16.8, ϕ at the base 5.3, th. 0.6 (fig. 8/5).

2) Fragmentary biconical beaker. H. 11.6, ϕ max. 12.2, ϕ at the mouth 8.5, th. 0.5 (Fig. 8/6).

3) Fragmentary biconical beaker (not restorable).

4) Foot of large bell-shaped cup.

5) Highly fragmentary truncated conical bowl with distinct, vertical rim.

6) Small fragments of a truncated conical bowl with distinct, sub vertical rim.

Almost all the items were collected in the lower section of the robbers pit filling. Nr 5 was lying along the northern edge of the chamber.

INHUMATED: large part of the skeleton was found at the base of the robbers pit mixed to the pottery items described above.

Grave 37

Undisturbed catacomb grave. Sub rectangular entrance pit with the longer side on a north south axis (m 2×1.20; depth m 0.60; chamber floor at -1.10 m). The chamber was on the western wall sealed by a well arranged mud bricks wall (Fig. 9/1).

FURNITURE: 1) Globular jar with truncated conical base. Rim missing. H. 18.7, ϕ max. 19.5, ϕ min. 7.6, at the base 8.3, th. 0.8 (Fig. 9/3).

2) Truncated conical bowl on low cylindrical foot. Vertical, concave rim. H. 7.6, ϕ max. 18.8, ϕ at the base 5.1, th. 0.4 vs. 0.9 (Fig. 9/4).

3) Sub cylindrical cup on high flared foot. Stylised tree engraved on the outer wall after firing. H. 16.1, ϕ max. 12.4, ϕ at the mouth 11.3, ϕ at the base 7.3, th. 0.6 (Fig. 9/2).

4) Truncated conical bowl on conical risen foot. Sub vertical rim. H. 10, ϕ max. 19.5, ϕ base 5.4, sp. 0.6 vs. 1 (Fig. 9/5).

5) Biconical jar on slightly risen cylindrical foot; high, distinct, sub cylindrical neck with slightly everted rim. H. 21.4, ϕ max. 17.8, ϕ at the mouth 9, ϕ at the base 8, th. from 0.8 to 1.4 (Fig. 10/1).

6) Truncated conical bowl on flared foot. Sub vertical rim. H. 9, ϕ max. 19.3, ϕ at the base 4.8, th. 0.4 vs. 0.9 (Fig. 10/2).

7) Onion-like shaped small jar. Grey-black ware. Sub cylindrical neck and slightly everted rim. H. 10, ϕ max. 12.1, ϕ at the mouth 6.2, ϕ at the base 5.1, th. 0.5 (Fig. 10/3).

8) Chlorite biconical spindle-whorl. Bipolar hole. H. 1.9, ϕ 2.8 (Fig. 10/4).

9) Calcite biconical spindle-whorl. Bipolar hole. H. 1.5, ϕ 2.5 (Fig. 10/5).

10,11) Bronze wire earrings. 1) H. 2.1, L. 1.2, th. 0.3. 2) H. 2, L. 1.1, th. 0.3 (Fig. 10/6).

12) Lenticular chalcedony bead. Bipolar hole. H. 0.7, L. 0.9, th. 0.2 (Fig. 10/7).

13) Necklace pendent made with two parallel golden wires ending in a double spiral head. The two wires are held together by a rectangular golden spacer over which two turquoise beads are on the wire. H. 2, L. 2.5 (Fig. 10/8).

14) Fragmentary golden and silver twisted lamina (the proper necklace).

15) Conical golden brooch (or "catch"?) with

bent edge. At the depressed centre two spot, projection-welding secured the ending point of the necklace lamina wire (nr 14). ϕ 2, H. 0.5, th. 0.1 (Fig. 10/9).

16) Hemispherical bronze or copper bowl. H. 6.8, ϕ 11.5, th. 0.2 (Fig. 10/10).

17) Bronze pin with conical head. L. (10.4), ϕ 0.4 (Fig. 11/1).

18) Bronze, compartmented and ajoure stamp seal. ϕ 2.9, H. 1.6, th. 0.4 (Fig. 11/4).

19) Unfired clay spindle whorl (?).

20) Bronze pin with conical head (found on the left parietal bones). L. 7.8, ϕ 0.3 (Fig. 11/2).

21) Bronze needle. L. (8), ϕ 0.4 (Fig. 11/3).

22) Bronze cosmetic flagon with resin-like stopper. H. 6.7, ϕ max. 4.5, ϕ at the mouth 2.3 (1.1), ϕ at the neck 1.6, ϕ at the base 2.1, th. 0.3 (Fig. 11/5).

23) Bronze cosmetic stick with flattened lozenge-shaped head and the other end thickened. H. 16.2, L. max. 1.3, H. of the head 3.5, th. 0.15, ϕ 0.4 (Fig. 11/6).

24) Bronze palette with short, bent, tang. H. 18.2, L. max. 6.9, th. 0.3 (Fig. 11/7).

25) Disk-shaped bronze mirror with plain edge. ϕ 8.8, th. 0.2 (Fig. 11/8).

INHUMED: adult female lying crouched on the right side with the head to the north.

38-39

Not excavated looted graves.

Grave 40

Small, sub circular shallow pit with small kidney-like shaped chamber to the west (ϕ m 0.85; chamber floor at -0.20 m). Undisturbed.

FURNITURE: 1) Biconical beaker. H. 15.1, ϕ max. 11, ϕ at the mouth 8.2, ϕ at the base 5.5, th. 0.5 (Fig. 11/9).

2) Truncated conical bowl on low cylindrical foot. H. 9.8, ϕ max. 14.1, ϕ at the base 5.9, th. 0.6 (Fig. 11/10).

INHUMED: traces (a dark-brown outline) of an infant lying on crouched on the left side with head to the north.

Grave 41

Simple pit grave with a sub rectangular plan (m 0.80×0.60; depth 0.60 m). Walls hardened to red by fire. The skeleton was lying crouched on

the left side with head to the north at a depth of -0.60 m below the surface (Fig. 12/1).

FURNITURE: two bone pins with conical head have been found lying on the right parietal bones. L. 10.4, ϕ 0.3 (Fig. 12/2).

INHUMED: poorly preserved almost complete skeleton.

Grave 42

Undisturbed catacomb grave. Rectangular entrance pit with the longer side on a north-south axis (m 1.50 \times 0.90; depth 0.50 m). The chamber was on the western wall sealed by a series of unfired mud bricks at angle against the chamber entrance (Fig. 12/3).

FURNITURE: 1) Biconical beaker on low sub cylindrical foot. H. 13.6, ϕ max. 11, ϕ at the mouth 7.5, ϕ at the base 0.4, th. 0.35 (Fig. 12/6).

2) Truncated conical bowl on risen cylindrical foot; distinct, vertical, concave rim. H. 9.2, ϕ max. 21.8, ϕ at the mouth 21.5, ϕ at the base 4.6, th. 0.5 vs. 0.9 (Fig. 12/5).

3) Biconical miniature pot. Unfired clay. H. 6, ϕ max. 6.5, ϕ at the mouth 4.6, ϕ at the base 3, th. 0.5 (Fig. 12/3).

Nrs 2-3 were lying on the inhumed head, along the northern edge of the chamber. Nr 1 was found close to the inhumed hands.

INHUMED: only a dark-brown outline of the inhumed was found, clearly showing that the dead was lying crouched on the right side with the head to the north.

43

Not excavated fireplace.

Grave 44

Undisturbed catacomb grave. Rectangular entrance pit with the longer side on a north-south axis (m. 1.20 \times 0.60; depth 0.40 m; chamber floor at -0.60 m). No traces were found of a mud brick closing of the chamber, which was opened on the western wall of the entrance pit (Fig. 13/1).

FURNITURE: missing.

INHUMED: adult female crouching on the right side with head to the north.

45-46

Not excavated looted graves.

47

Not excavated fireplace.

48-50

Not excavated looted graves.

Grave 51

Catacomb grave looted in antiquity. This grave was excavated because of its unusual size, even if it was clear from the beginning that it was looted. The entrance pit was 1.60 m large for 3.40 m long. A robbers pit was evident on its northern edge. With the exception of the northern portion and of the chamber, the structure was found intact. The western and the southern walls of the entrance pit were lined with an unfired mud bricks wall. The chamber, unusually large was found accurately emptied by the looters.

52-53

Not excavated looted graves.

54

Not excavated fireplace.

55

Not excavated looted grave.

Grave 56

Undisturbed catacomb grave (m 1.30 \times 0.96; depth 0.50 m; chamber floor at -0.60 m). At the base of the rectangular entrance pit a circular depression was excavated which gave back a layer of charcoal mixed with mud. In the entrance pit earth filling several nodules of fired clay were noted, leading to conclude that the pit was cut through a simple pit grave. The chamber entrance was sealed with two unfired mud bricks (Fig. 13/2).

FURNITURE: 1) Pear shaped beaker. H. 14.4, max. 11.7, at the mouth 8.8, at the base 4.5, th. 0.5 (Fig. 13/3).

INHUMED: fairly preserved human skeleton crouched on the right side with the head to the north.

57

Not excavated looted grave.

58

Not excavated fireplace.

59-63

Not excavated looted graves.

64

Not excavated fireplace.

65

Large trapezoidal fireplace (m 1.10×0.70/1; depth 0.30 m).

66

Not excavated looted grave.

Grave 67

Simple very shallow pit grave without any trace of firing (m 1.10×0.60; depth 0.20 m). The grave disturbed because very close to the surface. FURNITURE: few sherds from a cup on stand were scattered around the inhumed skull. INHUMED: very badly preserved human remains. The body was lying on the right side with the head to the north.

68-69

Not excavated looted graves.

70

Not excavated fireplace.

71

Not excavated looted grave.

Grave 72

Undisturbed catacomb grave. Sub rectangular entrance pit with the longer side on a north-western-south-eastern axis (m 1.40×1; depth 0.45 m.; chamber floor at -0.50 m). The chamber was along the south-western wall, sealed by a wall of unfired mud bricks. Here again, as for Grave nr 56, we found, on the entrance pit floor, the trace of a circular depression with a charcoal deposit inside. This last feature were cut through by the excavation of the grave chamber. As in the case of Grave 56, here too several backed clay nodules were noticed in the entrance pit filling. It seems possible to hypothesize that the pit was excavated in the

same place of an older simple grave pit (Fig. 13/4).

FURNITURE: 1) Large bell-shaped cup on high flaring foot. H. 20.6, ϕ max. 21, ϕ at the base 7.5, th. 0.7 (Fig. 14/4).

2) Biconical beaker. H. 11.9, max. 10.5, ϕ at the mouth 7.9, ϕ at the base 3.9. th. 0.5 (Fig. 14/3).

3) Twin pottery vessel (one half missing). Sub globular small jar with everted rim and plain base. H. 7, ϕ max. 7.8, ϕ at the mouth 5.5, ϕ at the base 5.4, th. 0.7 (Fig. 13/5).

4) Biconical beaker. Outline distorted by over-firing.

5) White stone spindle-whorl (?). Biconvex lenticular in section. Bipolar piercing hole. H. 0.9, ϕ 2.7 (Fig. 13/7).

6) Bronze cosmetic stick with thickened rounded head and the other end pointed. H. 15.4, ϕ 0.7 (Fig. 14/2).

7) Unfired clay cosmetic flagon. H. 7, ϕ max. 4.1, ϕ at the mouth 2.7, ϕ at the base 2, th. 0.4 (Fig. 14/1).

8) Bronze, compartmented and ajoure stamp seal decorated with an eagle with spread wings. ϕ 4.4, H. 2, th. 0.5 (Fig. 13/6).

INHUMED: fairly preserved human skeleton crouched on the right side with the head to the north.

73-76

Not excavated looted graves.

77

Not excavated possibly undisturbed grave.

78

Not excavated fireplace.

79

Not excavated looted grave.

80-81

Not excavated fireplaces.

Trench B:

(Trench B grave numbering was modified beginning with nr 100 = nr. 11 of the previous campaign. See Salvatori 1993).

Grave 101

Simple pit grave looted in antiquity.

FURNITURE: missing.

INHUMED: fragmented sections of leg long bones and of the pelvis of an adult individual.

102-105

Not excavated looted graves.

Grave 106

Shallow simple pit grave looted in antiquity.

FURNITURE: 1) Bell shaped cup on high flaring stand. H. 18.5, ϕ max. 14.5, ϕ at the base 7.1, th. 0.6 (Fig. 14/5).

2) Fragmentary bell shaped cup on high flaring foot. The lower part of the body is stepped. H. 16.8, ϕ max. 12.1, ϕ at the base 6.2, th. 0.6 (Fig. 14/6).

INHUMED: no traces of human bones were found.

Grave 107

Catacomb grave looted in antiquity.

FURNITURE: 1) Biconical beaker on low sub cylindrical foot. H. 12.2, ϕ max. 11.7, ϕ at the mouth 7.7, ϕ at the base 5, th. 0.6 (Fig. 15/1).

2) Truncated conical bowl on risen flared foot; distinct, vertical, rim. H. 9.6, ϕ max. 18.5, ϕ at the base 5.8, th. 0.5 vs. 0.9 (Fig. 15/2).

3) Truncated conical bowl in low sub cylindrical foot. Distinct, slightly inverted rim. H. 7.8, ϕ max. 18.8, ϕ at the base 4.6, th. 0.4 vs. 0.9 (Fig. 15/3).

4) Gypsum lump.

INHUMED: no traces of human bones.

Trench C:

(Numbering from 200).

200-204

Not excavated looted graves.

Grave 205

Simple pit grave (?) looted in antiquity.

FURNITURE: 1) Fragmentary spouted vessel with traces of applied animal figurine.

2) Pottery sherd decorated before firing with an incised stylized tree.

3) Fragmentary globular bottle with high cylindrical neck and everted rim.

INHUMED: no traces of human bones.

Trench D:

(Numbering from 300).

Grave 300

Undisturbed catacomb grave. Sub rectangular entrance pit with the longer side oriented on a north-south axis (m 2×0.90 ; depth 1 m). Chamber on the western side sealed with a well arranged unfired mud bricks wall (Fig. 15/4).

FURNITURE: 1) Biconical beaker on low sub cylindrical foot. H. 14.1, ϕ max. 11.9, ϕ at the mouth 8.4, ϕ at the base 4.6, th. 0.5 (Fig. 16/1).

2) Pear-shaped small jar. H. 17.3, ϕ max. 15.2, ϕ at the mouth 11.3, ϕ at the base 6.5, th. 0.7 (Fig. 16/3).

3) Truncated conical bowl on low cylindrical foot; distinct, slightly inverted rim. H. 7.7, ϕ max. 18.7, ϕ at the mouth 18.5, ϕ at the base 4.9, th. 1 (Fig. 16/4).

4) Small bowl possibly cut out from a the lower part of a pear-shaped beaker. H. 4.4, ϕ max. 8.3, ϕ at the base 5, th. 0.8 (Fig. 16/5).

5) Bronze pin with slightly flattened and bent head. H. 12.5, ϕ 0.5 (Fig. 16/2).

6) Two silver earrings. H. 1.8, L. 0.7 (Fig. 16/6).

INHUMED: well preserved young female skeleton crouched on the right side with the head to the north.

Comments

Even if heavily disturbed by the activity of ancient looters (the plundering antiquity is assured by the secondary pit refilling process, which seems to have been naturally completed during a long span of time. In fact it is characterised by a series of micro-stratified sand and mud alternate layers. Moreover, at least part of the burial ground is at present covered by stabilized sand formations. On the other side we have yet no one bit of evidence to speculate on the time the plundering activity took place) the graveyard we discovered in the area to the west of Gonur 1 North turns to be of relevance in the study of the formative phases of the urbanization process which took place at the end of the IIIrd

millennium BC in the regions later known as Margiana and Bactria (Hiebert & Lamberg-Karlovsky 1992; Tosi 1988).

Materials recovered from the few undisturbed graves since now located corroborate the hypothesis which consider the Murghab delta Middle to Recent Bronze Age Civilisation as belonging to a wider cultural region encompassing both Bactria and Margiana as well. The new evidence coming from the Gonur graveyard points to a well established cultural *koine* of the Bactria-Margiana macro-region since the last fourth of the IIIrd millennium BC (Namazga V Late Period). Some of the grave furniture objects — above all bronze stamp seals, cosmetic bronze flacons, golden and silver ornaments — clearly prove that the bulk of the objects coming from plundered graves from northern Afghanistan (southern Bactria) is to be dated to the same cultural phase we are bringing to light with the Namazga V Late graveyard at Gonur 1. The general picture is one of a very dynamic cultural

entity, which developed along the northern border of the Middle eastern urbanisation sphere (Amiet 1986) keeping up trade relationships with north-western Iran (black burnished ware fragments from graves 24 and 34 are, indeed, clear imports from the Gurgan Plain area); with the greater Elam (typical Bactria-Margiana imports were found at Susa: Amiet 1986, and, above all, at Shahdad: Hakemi 1972; Salvatori 1978); with the syrian area (Mari: Beyer 1989). To the south-east, trade-oriented exchange with the Indus Valley Civilisation seems to be firmly settled by the presence of distinctive Namazga V Late materials at Quetta (Jarrige 1987), Sibri (Santoni 1984, 1988; Jarrige 1985) and possibly Mergharah VIII (Jarrige, Hassan 1989; Santoni 1984) and Nousharo (Jarrige 1994) in northern Baluchistan.

*Soprintendenza ai Beni
Ambientali e Architettonici
del Veneto Orientale - Venezia*

* All the object drawings are 40% reduced.

¹ With the author the following people took part in the 1993 campaign of the "Centro Studi e Ricerche Ligabue" Italian Mission: Dr. Donatella Usai (Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli), archaeologist and designer; Mr. Gabriele Rossi-Osmida (Centro Studi e Ricerche Ligabue - Venezia), responsible for logistics;

Prof. Andrea Drusini (Padua University), physical anthropologist.

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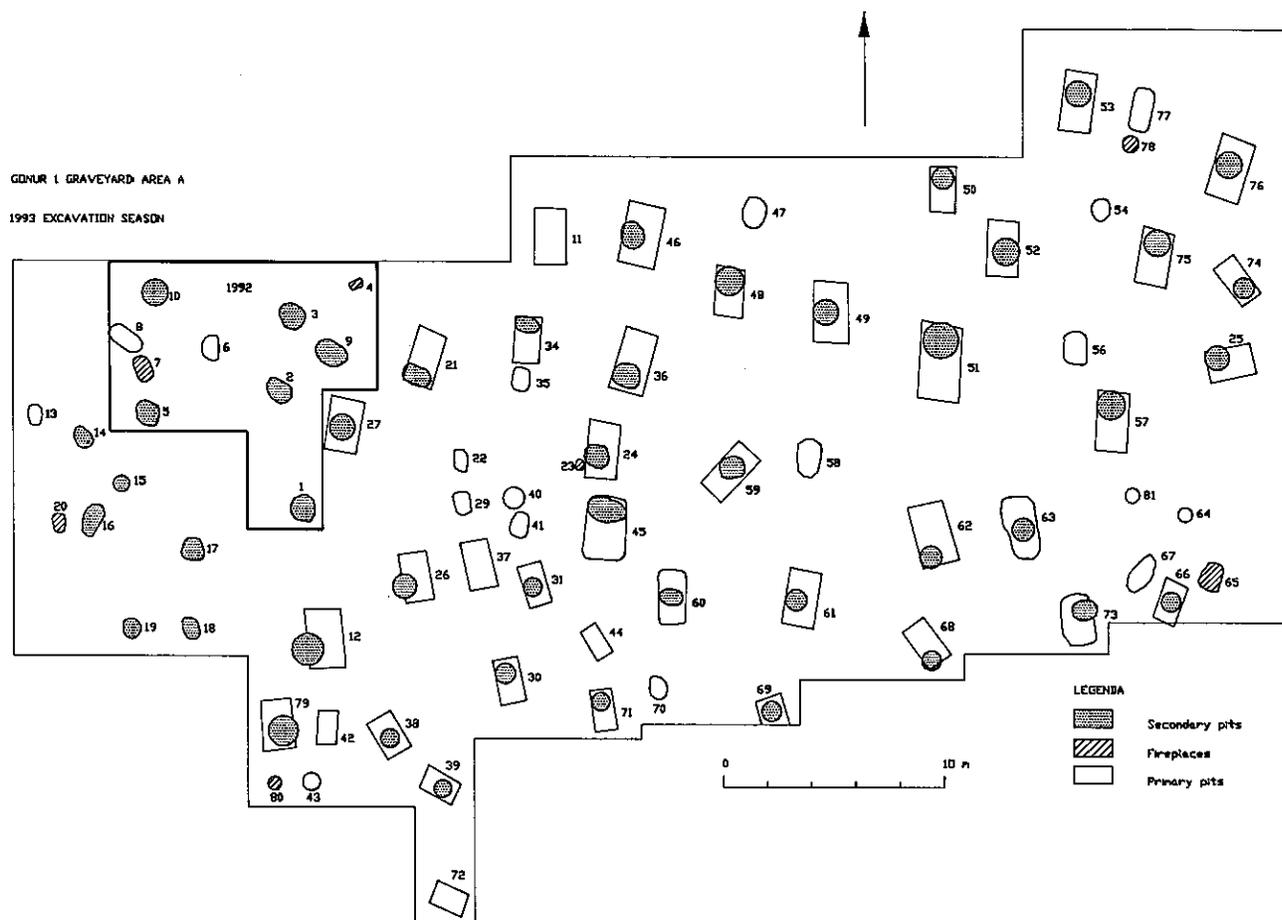


Fig. 1

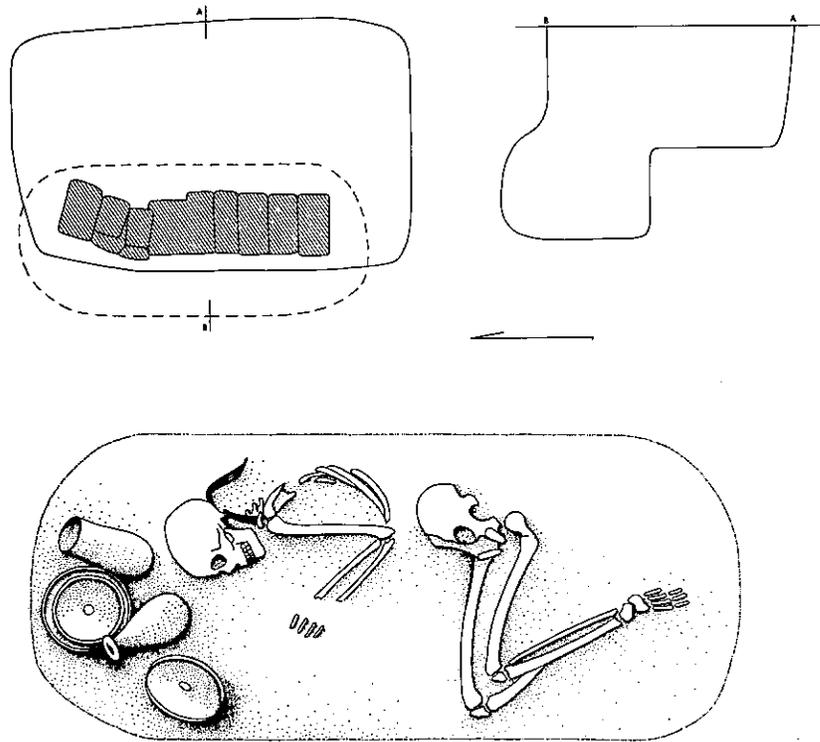


Fig. 2

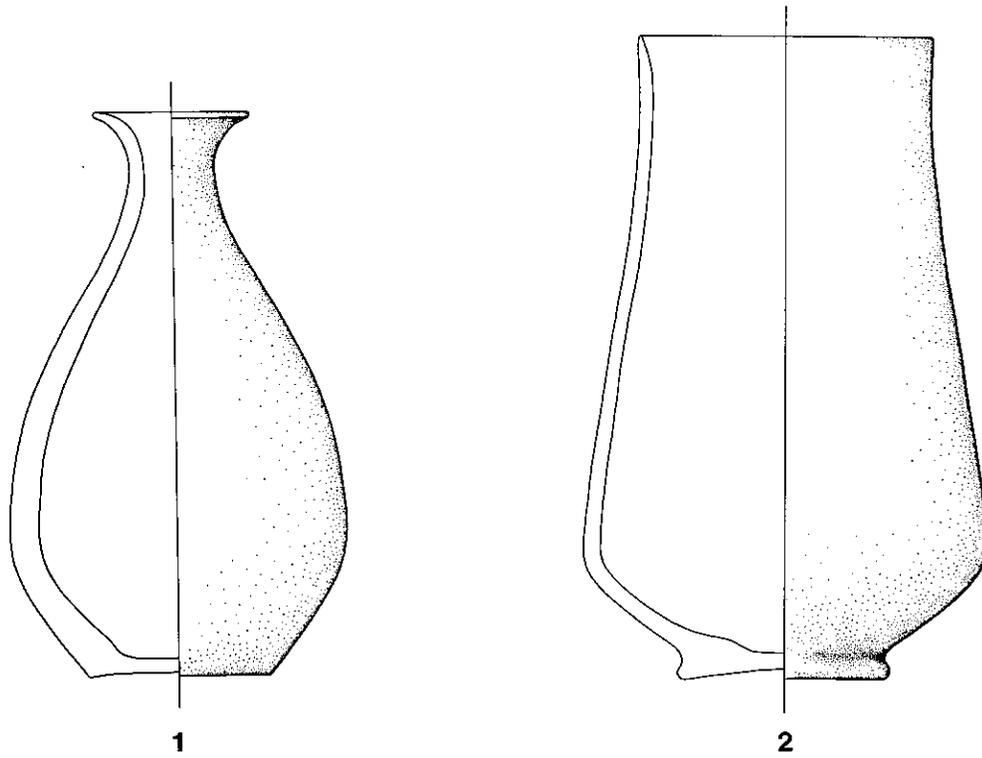


Fig. 3

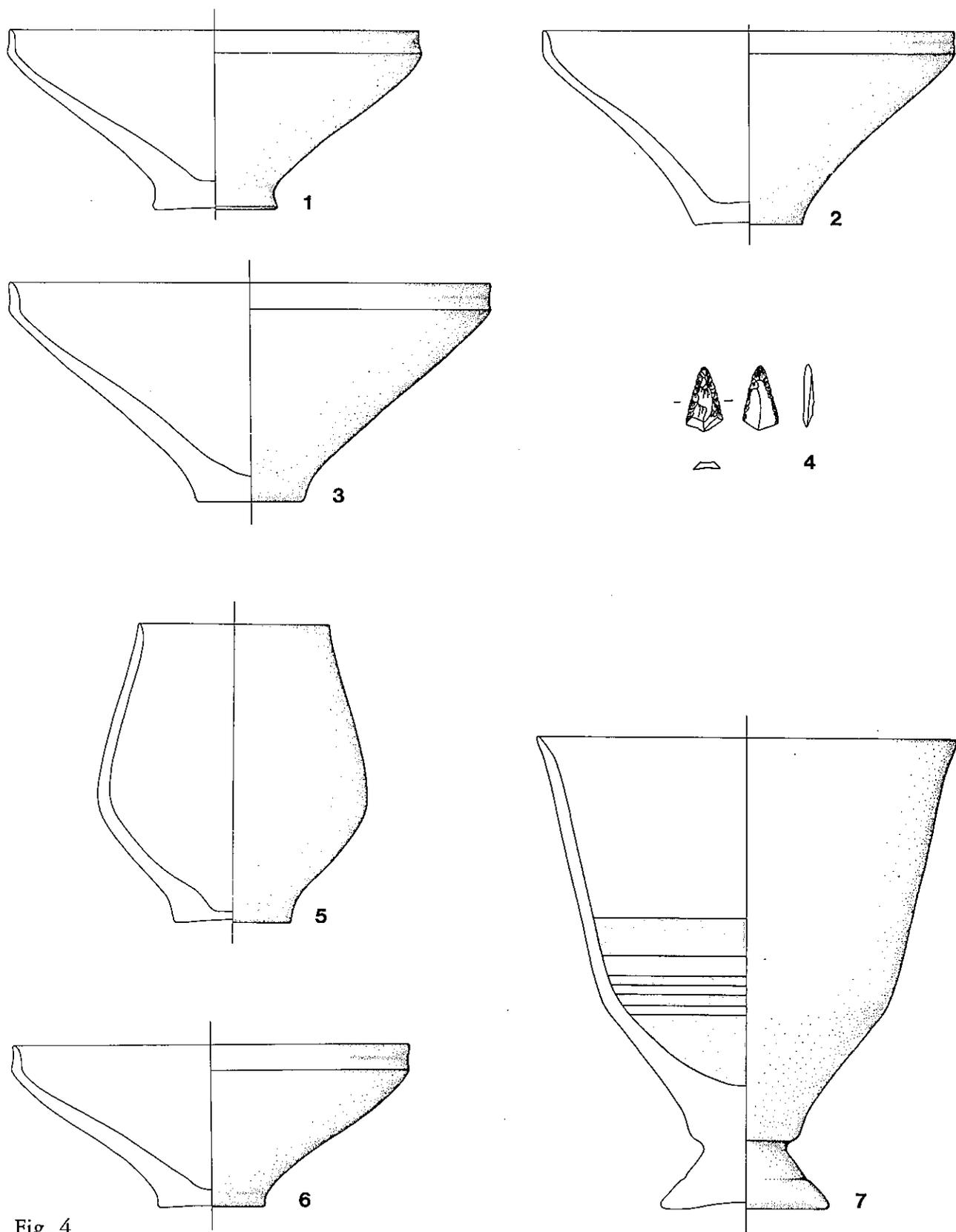


Fig. 4

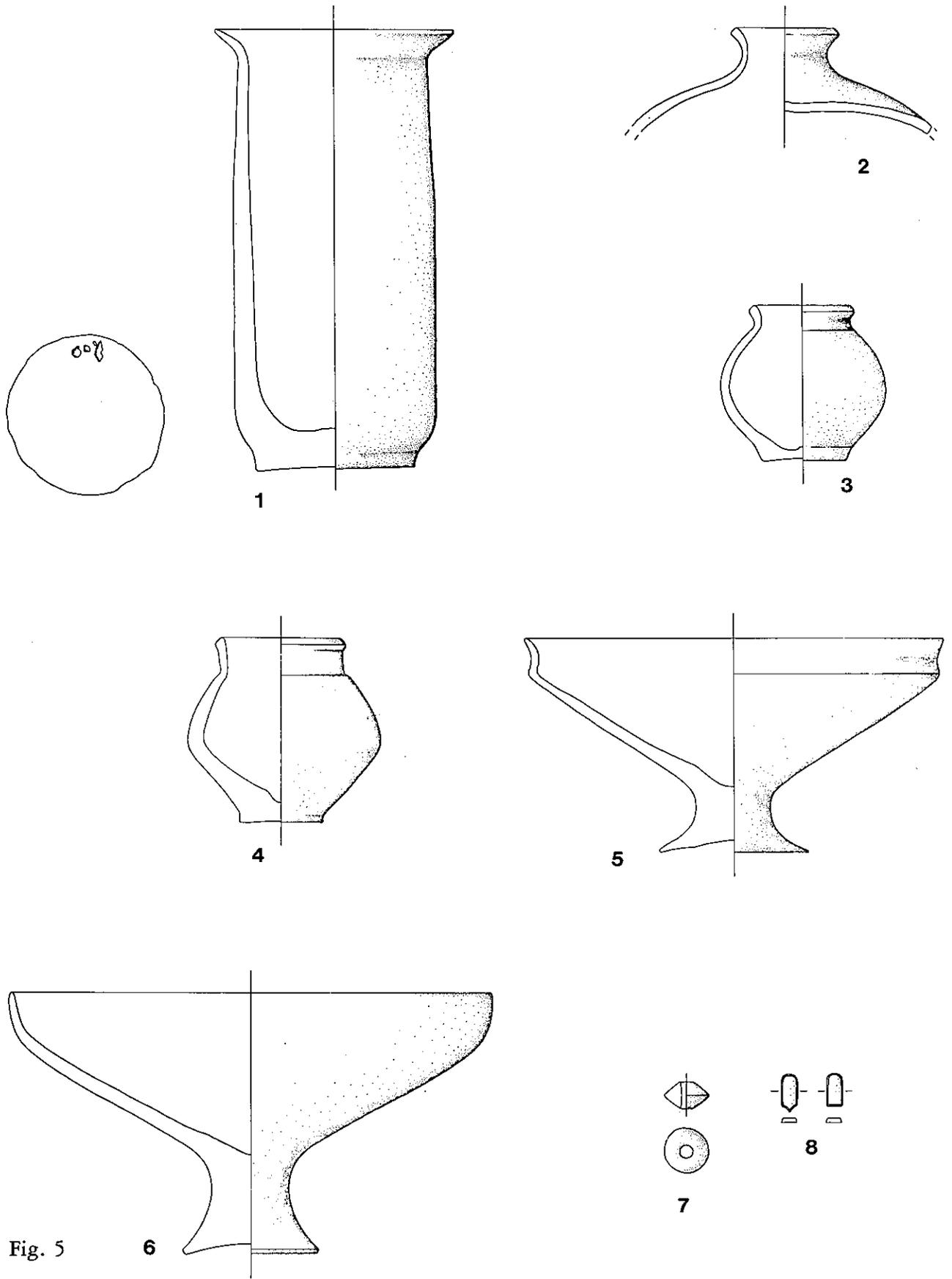


Fig. 5

6

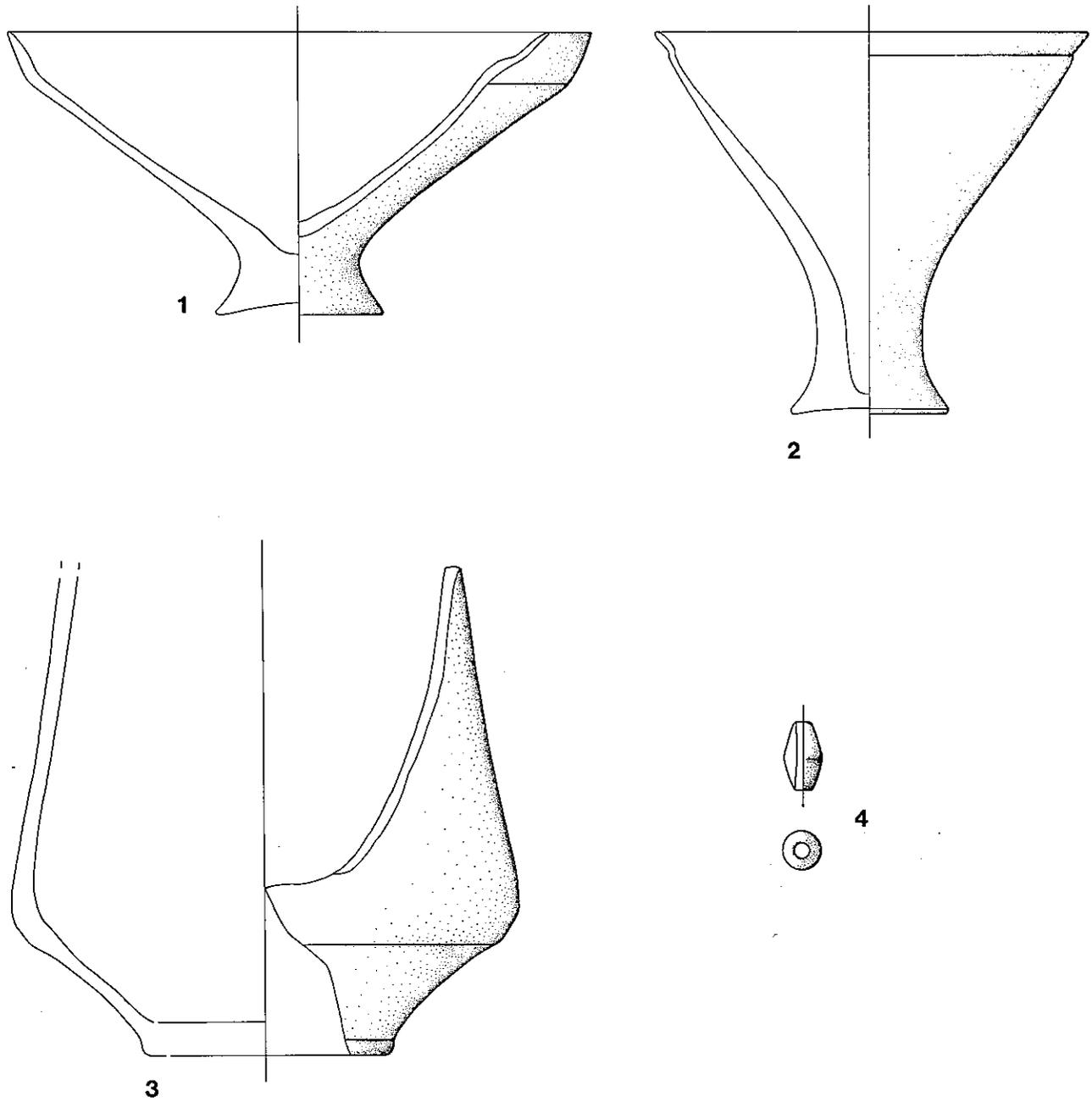


Fig. 6

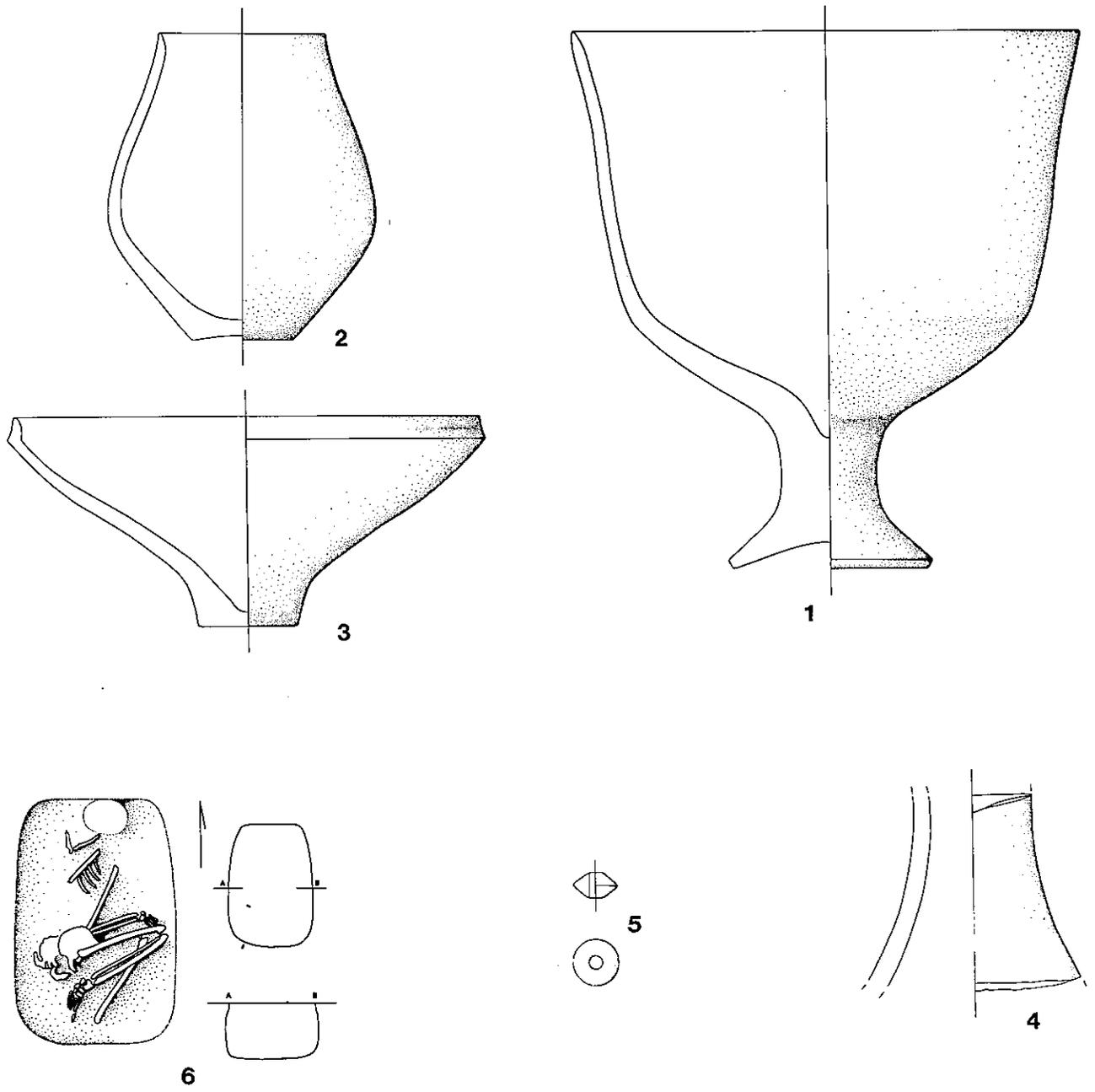


Fig. 7

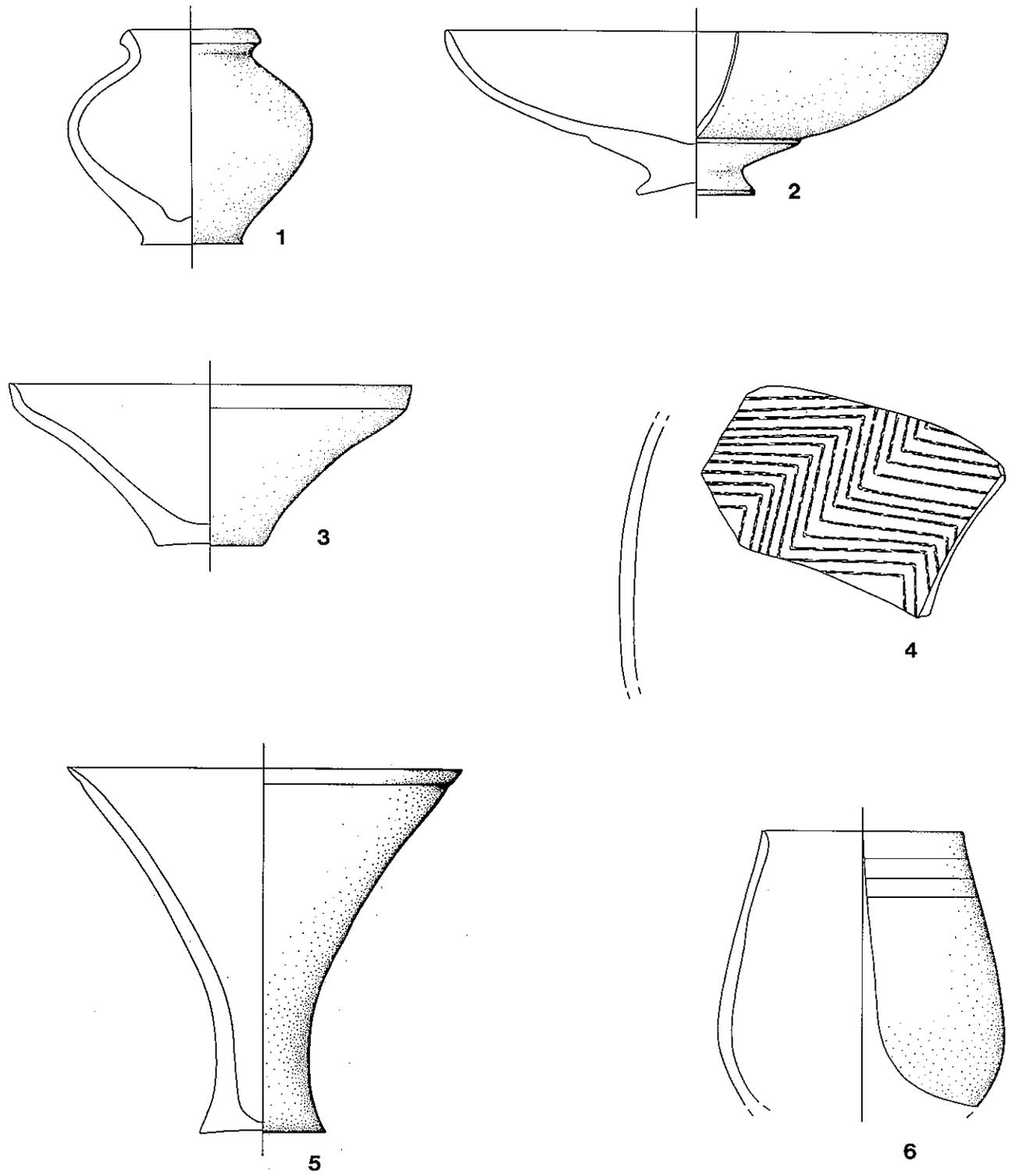


Fig. 8

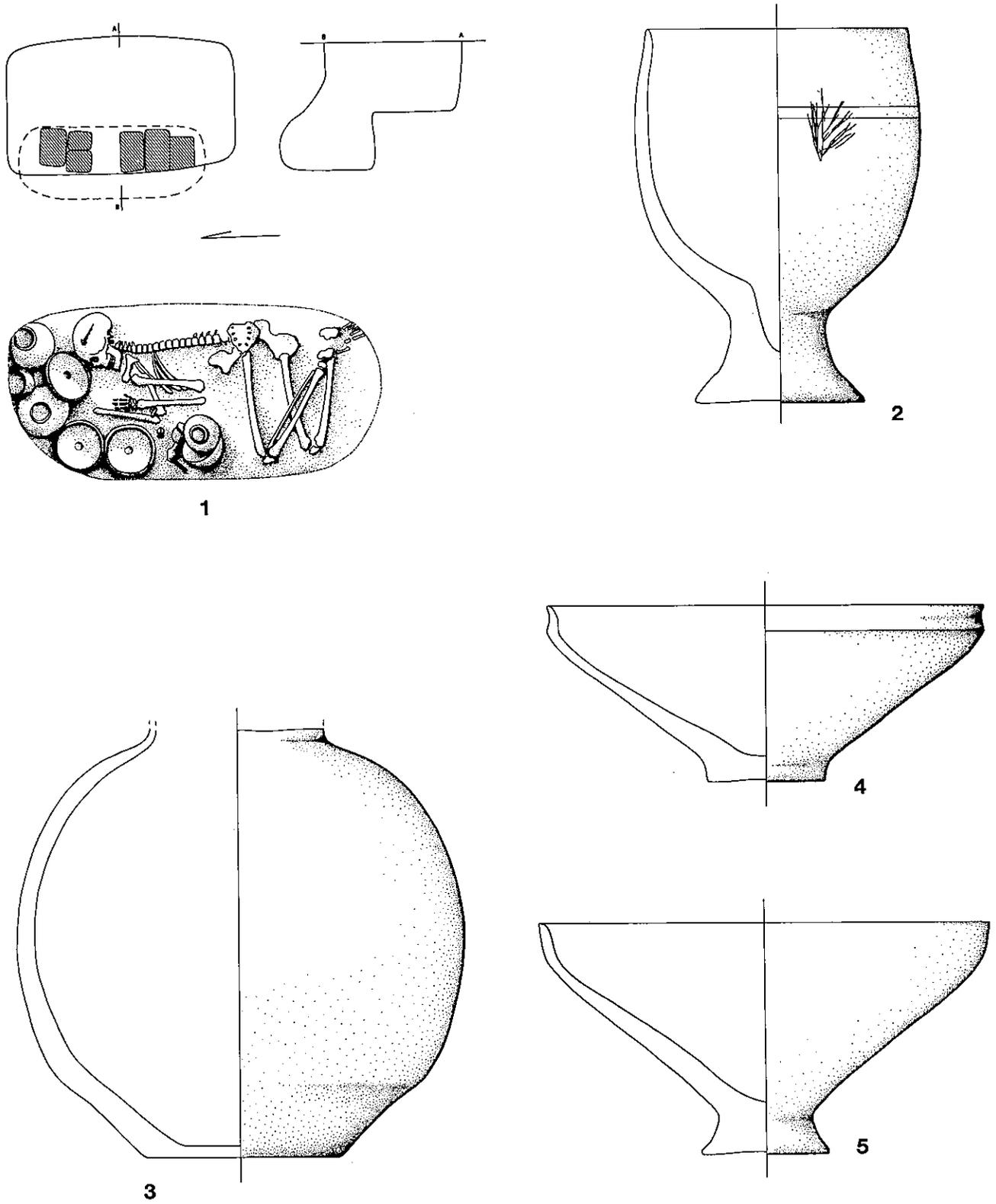


Fig. 9

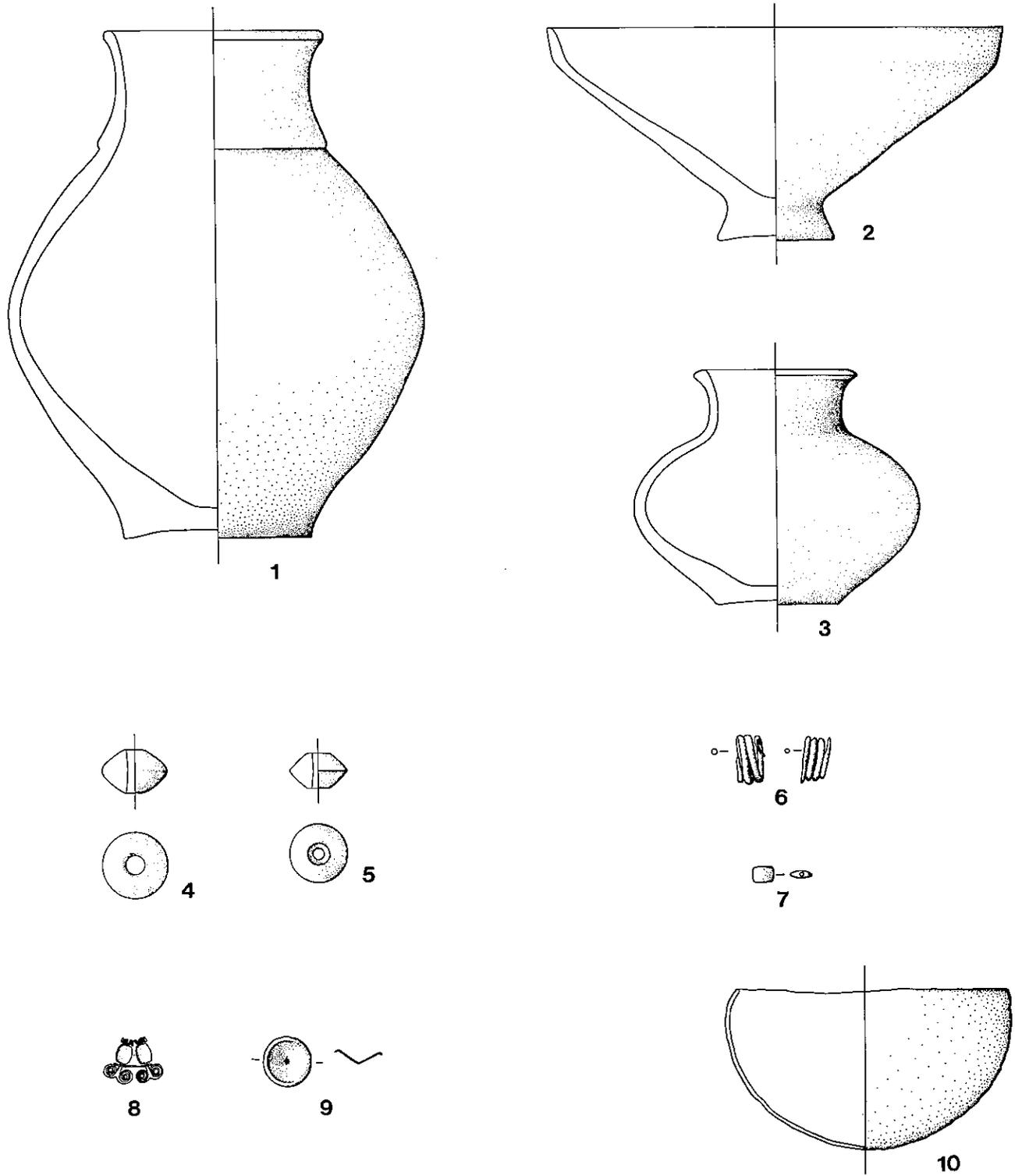


Fig. 10

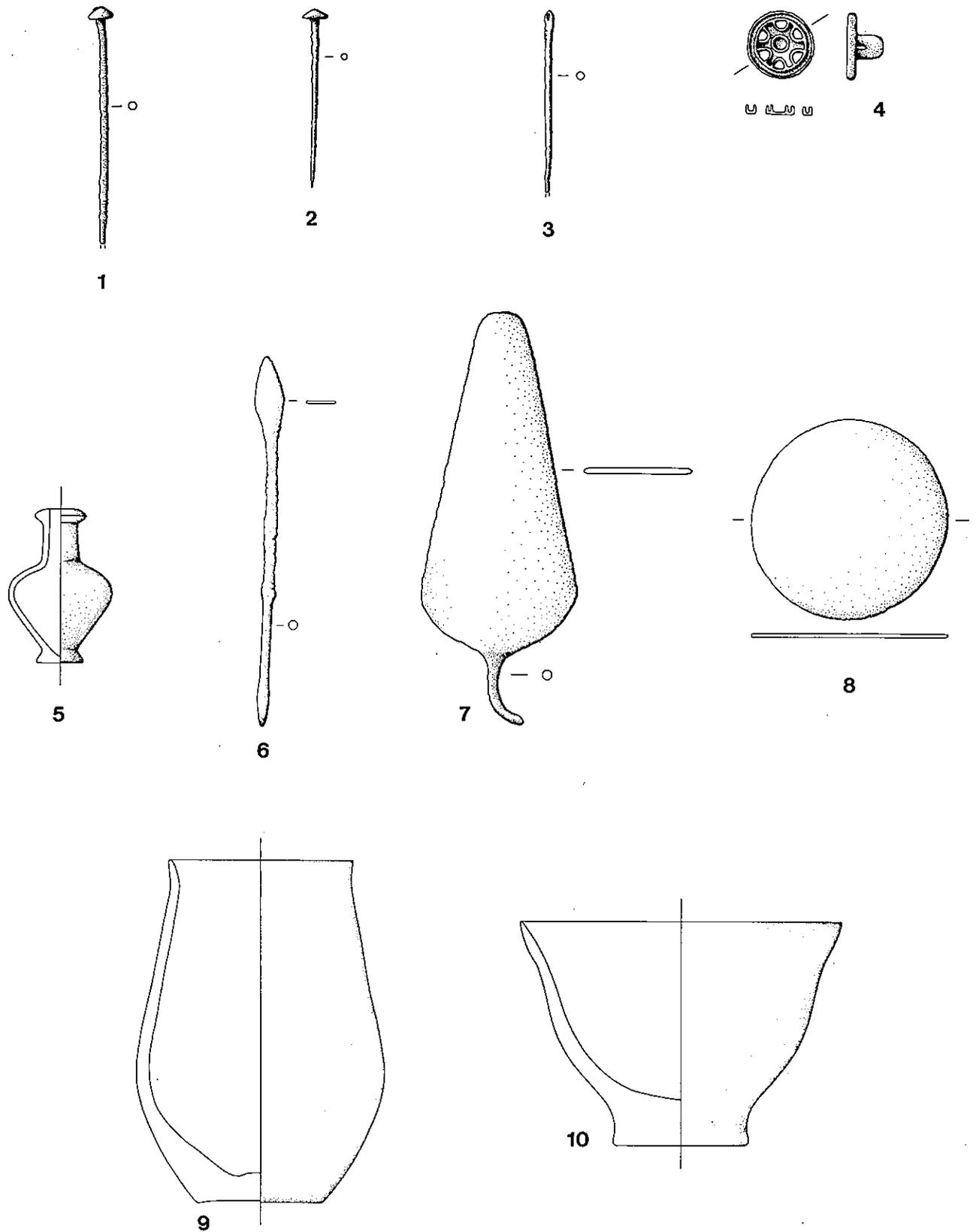


Fig. 11

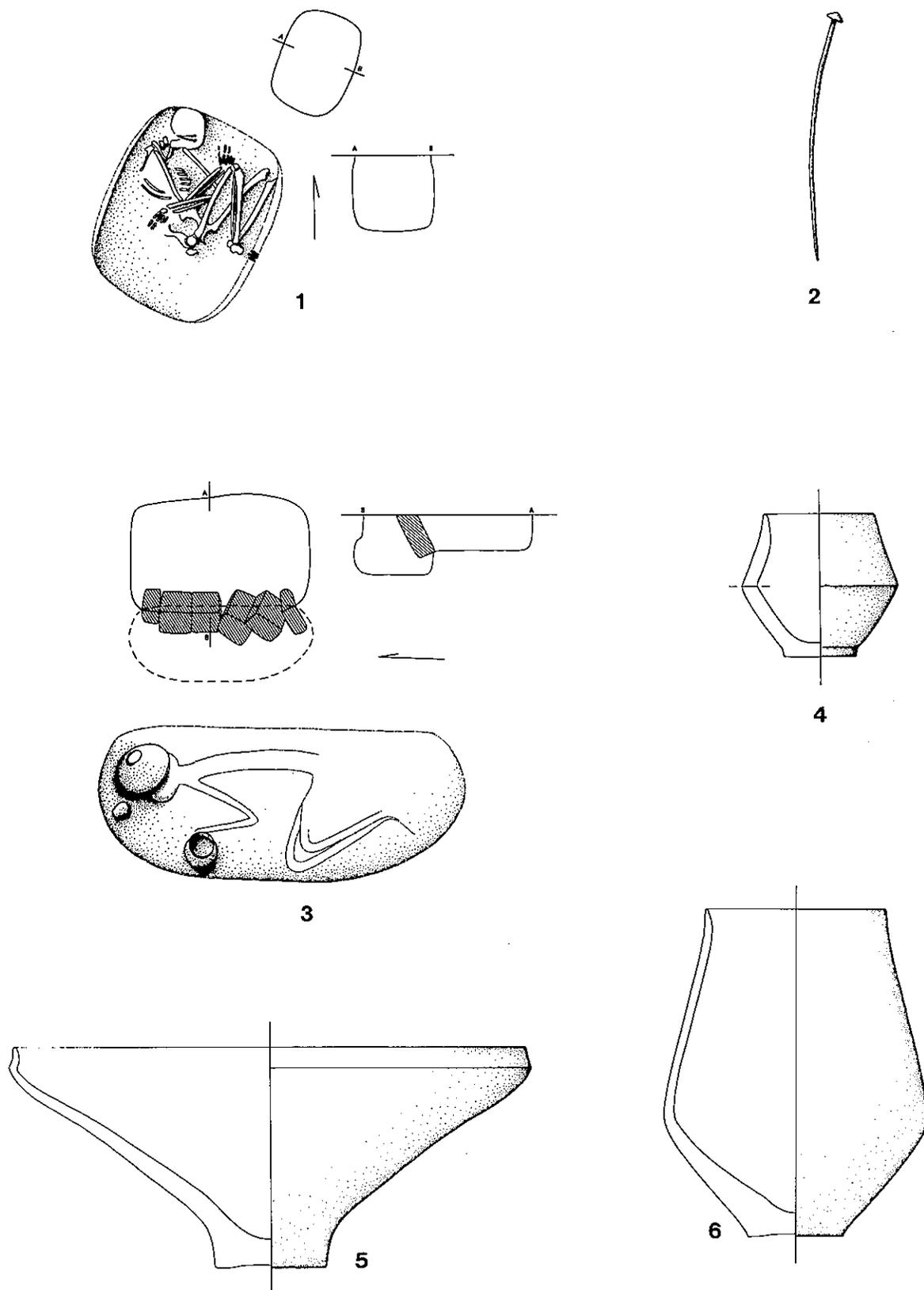


Fig. 12

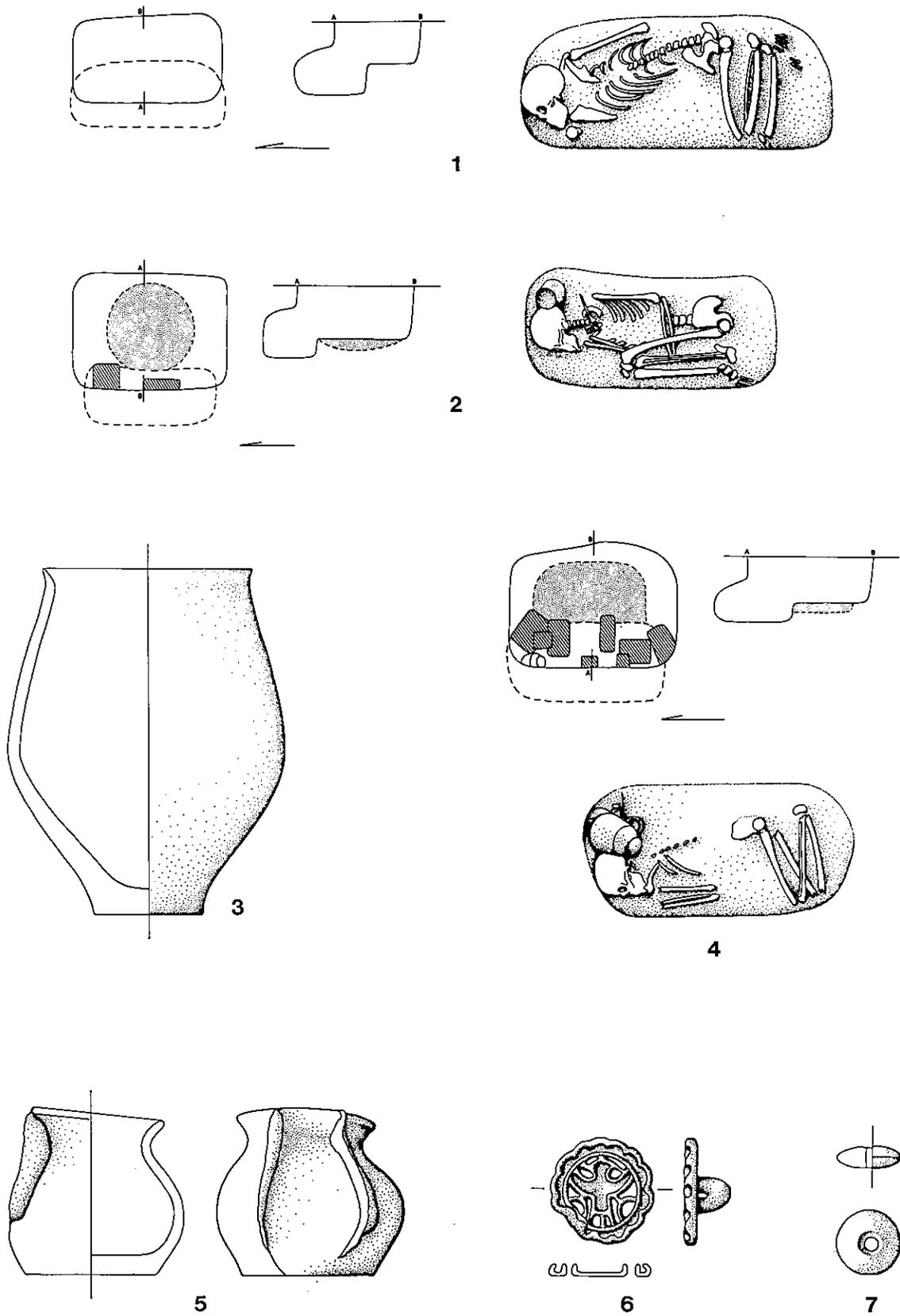


Fig. 13

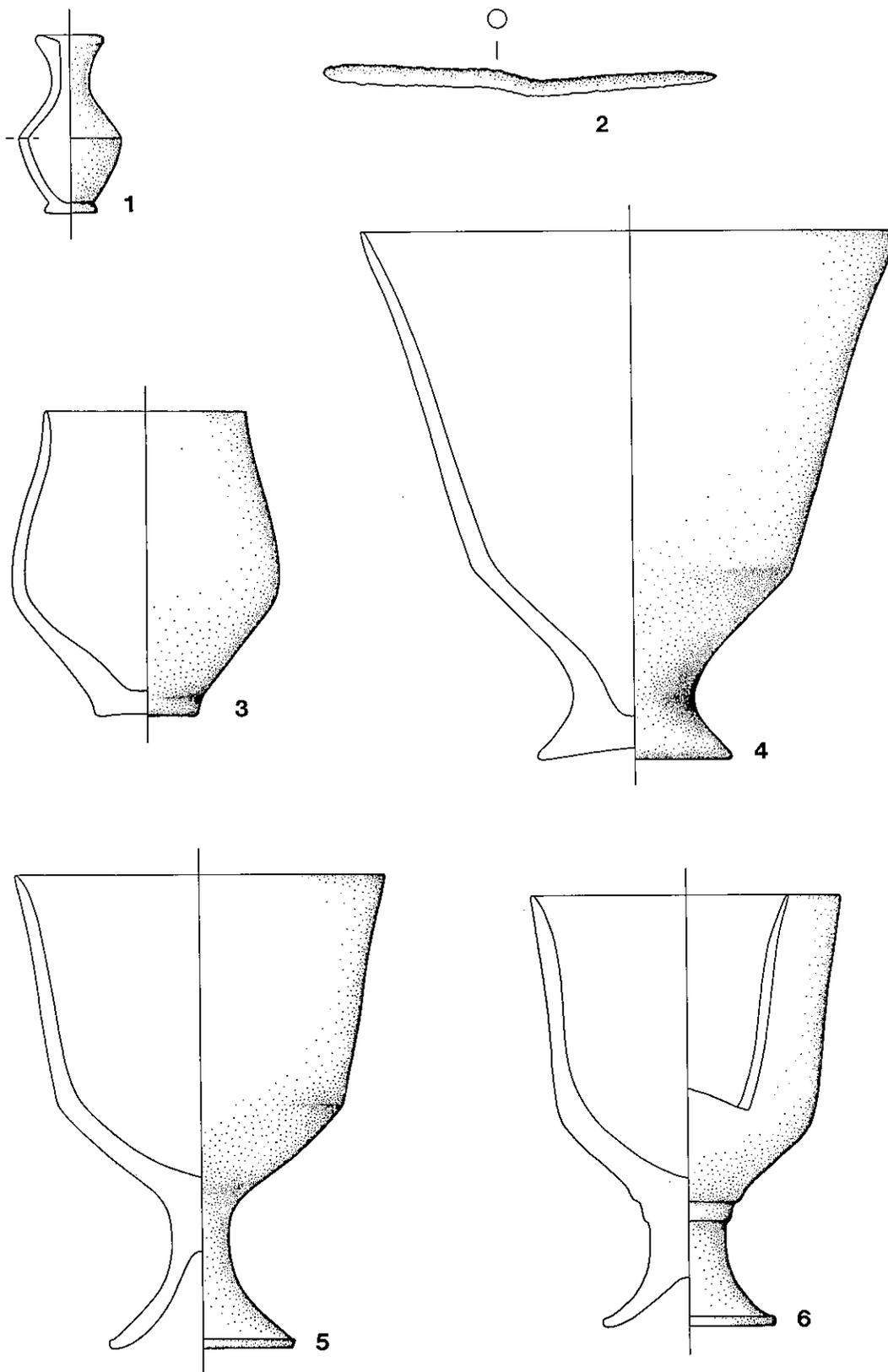


Fig. 14

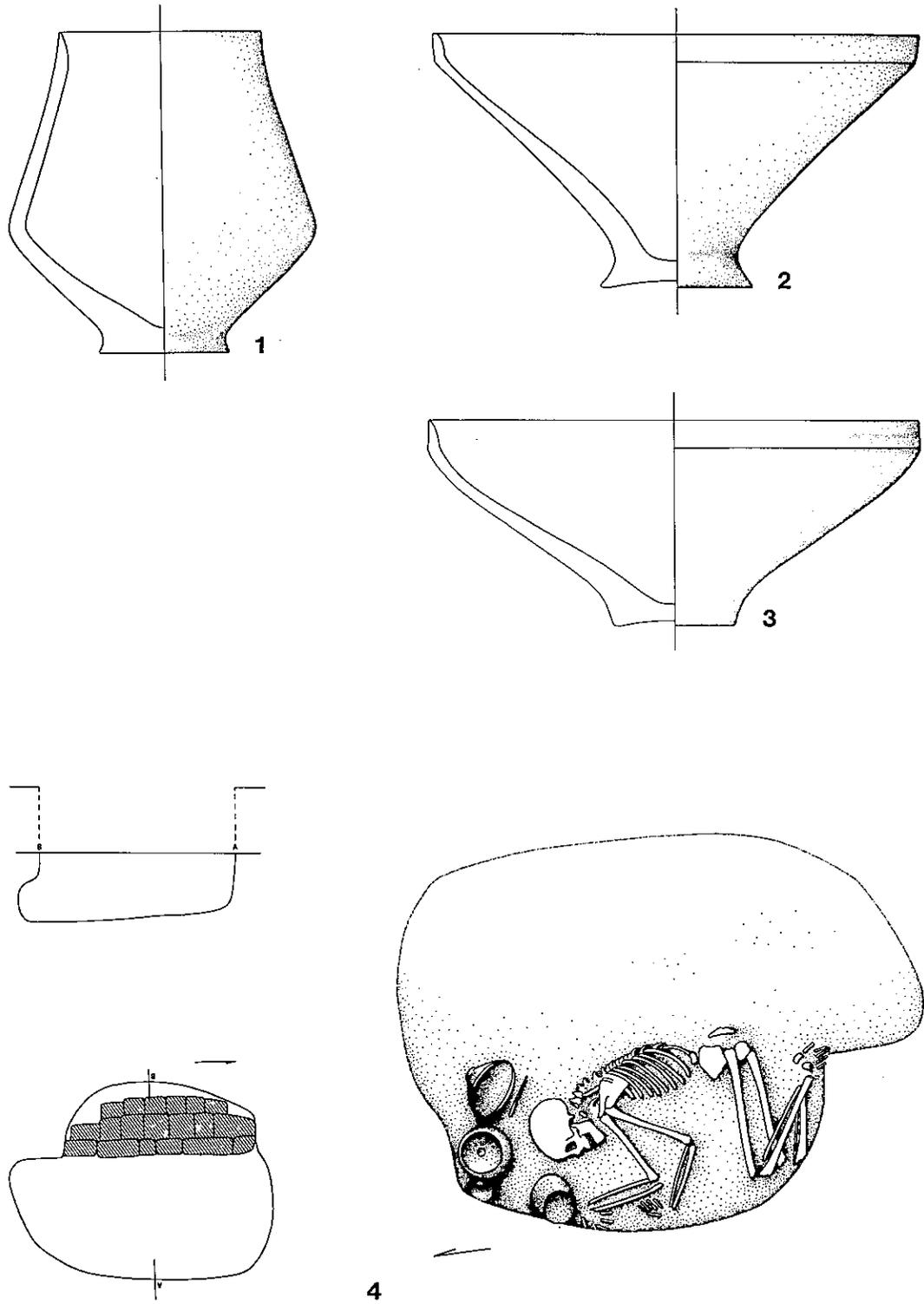


Fig. 15

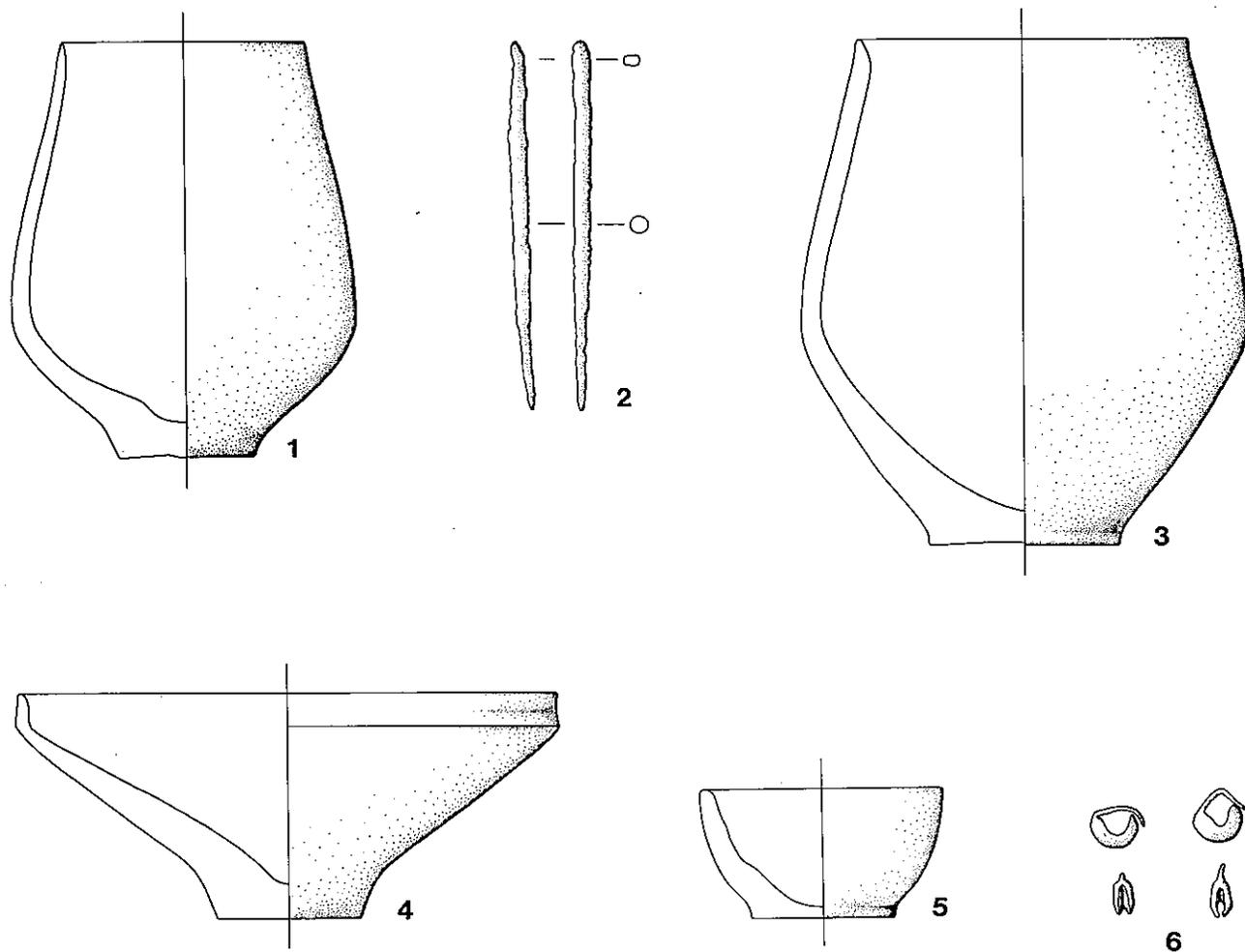


Fig. 16