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## FINE WARES FROM THE EXCAVATIONS OF THE LATE ROMAN FORT AT *ULMETUM* (PROVINCE OF *SCYTHIA*)

### Chronology of the late 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> century main contexts

*The fine pottery collected from the habitation layers of the first period of the fortification at Ulmetum (c. 380/390–470/480 AD) benefits from a very good absolute chronology, based on the association with rich numismatic material. Varying amounts of penetration of African, Asia Minor and Pontic vessels are noticeable in this important military site in the province of Scythia. Products with limited regional or local distribution are also present.*

The recent excavations in the late Roman fort at *Ulmetum*<sup>1</sup> revealed two main periods of occupation: late 4<sup>th</sup> and the first three quarters of the 5<sup>th</sup> century (c. 380/390–470/480, with three phases) and second half of the 6<sup>th</sup>–beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> century (c. 540/550–596/600?, with two phases)<sup>2</sup>. The pottery contexts corresponding to these stratigraphic sequences provide an important set of fine wares, which, together with substantial numismatic material, ensure solid chronological frames for the habitation layers. In the limited space available here I present the material from the main contexts recorded for the first period of the fortification (phases 4–2).

**Phase 4** (late 4<sup>th</sup> century). In the area fortified during the reign of Theodosius I the lowest occupational layer consists of sunken floor huts and the artifacts belonging to north-Danubian and north-Pontic barbarian populations established as *foederati* in the province of Scythia. The end of this phase is probably violent, accompanied or immediately followed by *intra muros* burials. The chronology of the contexts is based on coins from the Theodosian period, of which the latest are of the *Salus Reipublicae* type (388–395).

For the first level of *intra muros* occupation the frequency of fine wares is low. African Red Slip (ARS) prevails, with forms Hayes 61A, 62A (El Mahrine<sup>3</sup> 5.2) and 67 (El Mahrine 9.1/Bonifay 41B) (**fig. 1,1–3**), all stamped in style A(ii). The

scarcity of Phocaean Red Slip ware (LRC, here exclusively form 1, **fig. 1,4**) is typical for this period. A good parallel for this context is a late 4<sup>th</sup> century deposit from Somma Vesuviana (Italy), with an almost identical ARS 61A dish bearing the same decoration<sup>4</sup>.

After a possible short-term break (illustrated by the above-mentioned funerary horizon), in the levelling contexts dated to the end of the 4<sup>th</sup>–early 5<sup>th</sup> century (so-called **N4/N3 contexts**, with coins from the period 395–408) ARS is present with the same forms 61A and 62A/El Mahrine 5.2 (**fig. 1,5–6**) and we have also the new LRC form 2A (**fig. 1,7–8**)<sup>5</sup>.

**Phase 3** (first half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century). It is possible to distinguish between contexts belonging to the early / first quarter of the 5<sup>th</sup> century (stage **3A**, with a great amount of coins dated in the period 395–423, including a coin hoard with the last pieces from 408–423) and those dated to the second quarter of the 5<sup>th</sup> century (stage **3B**, with coins of the period 425–455, especially the cross in wreath type). **Stage 3A** is a period of intensive stone-building activity inside the fort. The contexts are represented mostly by pits<sup>6</sup>, usually with not so much material, but with a secure dating based on coins and the association with other categories (amphorae, cooking wares). In the pit fills we see the sporadic appearance of ARS – Hayes form 64.4<sup>7</sup> (**fig. 2, 9**) and the continued growth of LRC: forms 1B and 1D large<sup>8</sup> (**fig. 2,10–11**) and stamped

<sup>1</sup> The identification of the site from Pantelimon village, Constanța county (Romania) with *Ulmetum* fortress mentioned by Procopius (De aedif. IV, 7) is primarily due to the extensive excavations conducted by Vasile Pârvan between 1911–1914 (V. PÂRVAN, Cetatea Ulmetum [I–III]. An. Acad. Române. Memoriile Sec. Ist. 34, 1912, 497–607; 36, 1913, 245–328; 36, 1913, 329–420; 37, 1915, 265–304). Archaeological investigations were resumed in 2004.

<sup>2</sup> C. BĂJENARU ET AL., Sector sud (bazilică). In: Cronica cercetărilor arheologice din România. Campania 2009 (București 2010) 137–138; C. BĂJENARU ET AL., Sector sud (bazilică). In: Cronica cercetărilor arheologice din România. Campania 2010 (Sibiu 2011) 96–97; C. BĂJENARU/D. VASILESCU, Sector est. In: Cronica cercetărilor arheologice din România. Campania 2012 (București 2013) 99–100.

<sup>3</sup> M. MACKENSEN, Die spätantiken Sigillata- und Lampentöpfereien von El Mahrine (Nordtunesien). Studien zur nordafrikanischen Feinkeramik des 4. bis 7. Jahrhunderts. Münchner Beitr. Vor- u. Frühgesch. 50 (München 1993).

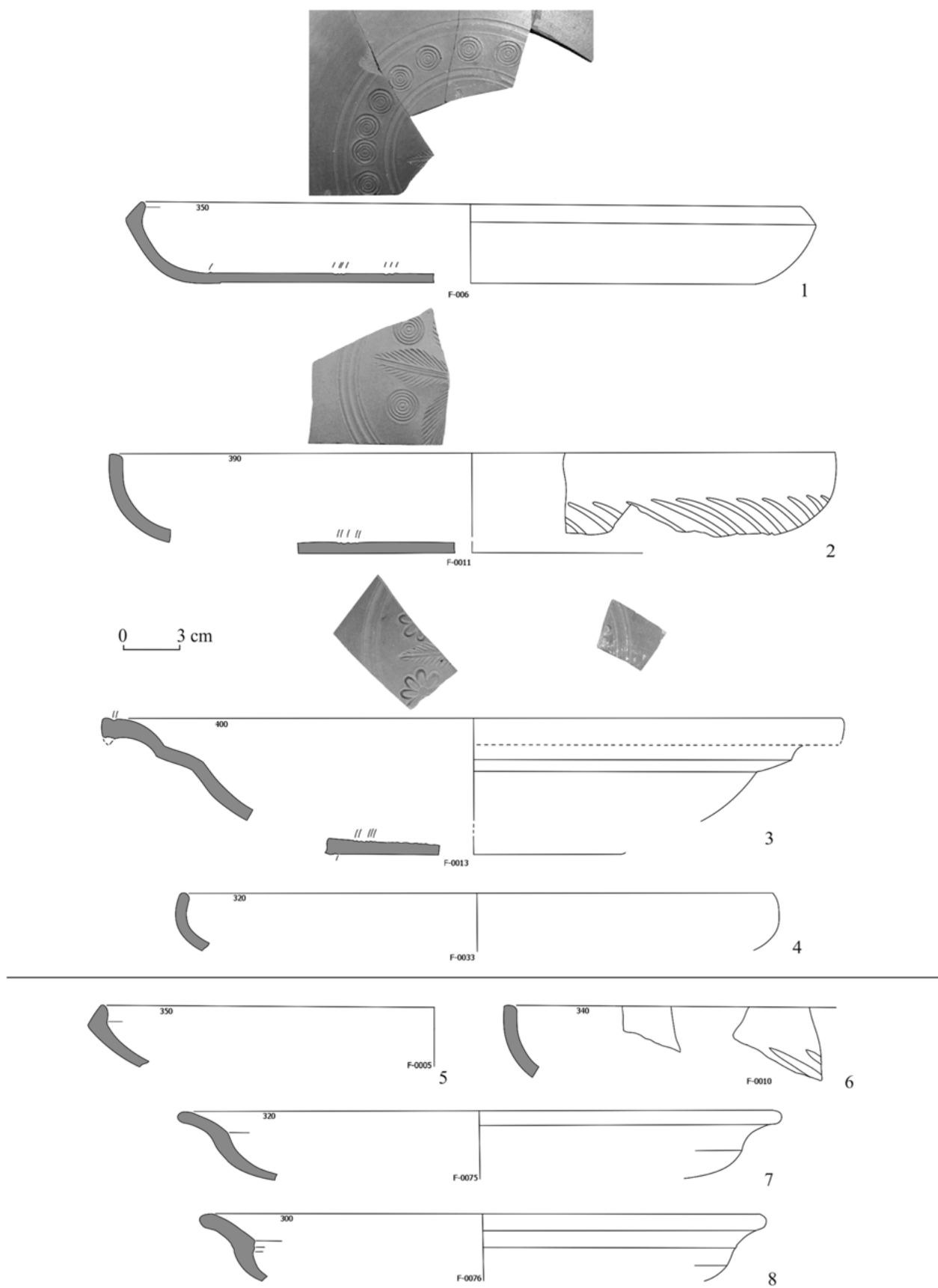
<sup>4</sup> M. AOYAGI/T. MUKAI/C. SUGIYAMA, Céramique de l'Antiquité tardive d'un site romain de Somma Vesuviana, Italie. In: M. Bonifay/J.-Chr. Trégliat (eds.), LRCW 2. Late Roman Coarse Wares, Cooking Wares and Amphorae in the Mediterranean: Archaeology and Archaeometry 2. BAR Internat. Ser. 1662 (Oxford 2007) 440–441 (contexte 1) fig. 3,2 (ARS 61A).

<sup>5</sup> For the revised starting date of this form (early 5<sup>th</sup> century) see HAYES 2008, 85; 87.

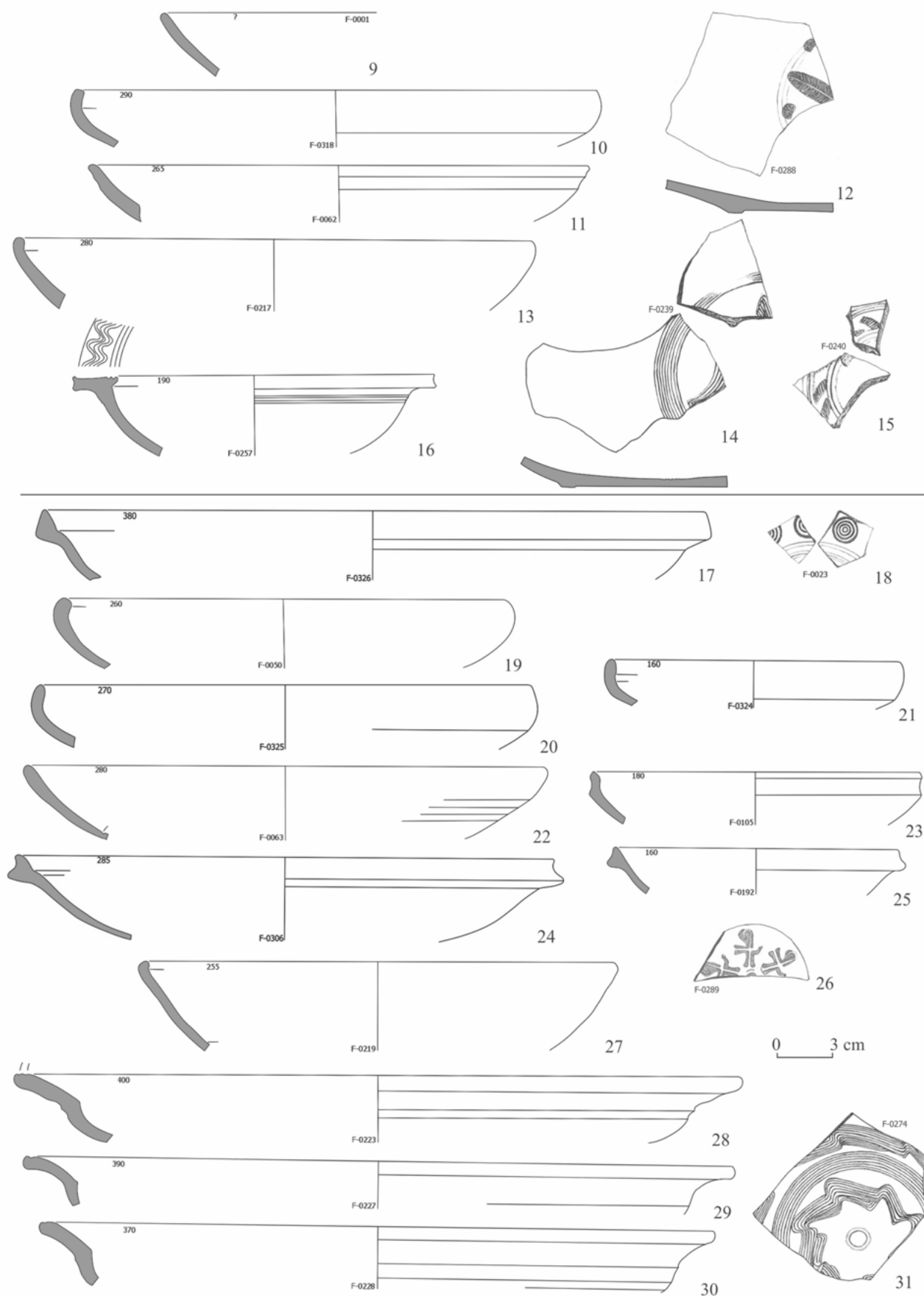
<sup>6</sup> G15 (coins 388–401), G23 (coins 388–395), G2 (coins 395–423), G9 (coin 402–408), G10 (coin 408–423), G12 (no coins).

<sup>7</sup> HAYES 1972, 111 fig. 18 form 64.4; A. CARANDINI (a cura di), Atlante delle Forme Ceramiche I. Ceramica Fine Romana nel Bacino Mediterraneo (Medio e Tardo Impero). EAA (Roma 1981) 87–88 tav. 27,7.

<sup>8</sup> OPAIT 1985, 157 Typ IX B, Abb. 3,15,17; ARSEN'EVA/DOMŽALSKI 2002, 431 form 1D/2 fig. 15; HAYES 2008, 237 cat. 1236 fig. 37.



**Fig. 1.** Phase 4 (late 4<sup>th</sup> century): **1–3** ARS; **4** LRC. – “Horizon 4/3” (end 4<sup>th</sup>–early 5<sup>th</sup> century): **5–6** ARS; **7–8** LRC.



**Fig. 2.** Stage 3A (first quarter of the 5<sup>th</sup> century): 9 ARS; 10–12 LRC; 13–15 Pontic; 16 local/regional. – Stage 3B (second quarter of the 5<sup>th</sup> century): 17–18 ARS; 19–26 LRC; 27–31 Pontic.

motifs of group I probably on form 2 (fig. 2,12). At this stage Pontic Red Slip ware, with canonical forms 1 and 3 and the typical combed decoration<sup>9</sup> also appears (fig. 2,13–15). A local/regional ware imitating silver bowls (with combed decoration on the rim) is also attested (fig. 2,16). This could be a later variant of a type which occurs frequently in the province of Scythia during the 4<sup>th</sup> century<sup>10</sup>.

**Stage 3B** is well documented in the Eastern sector, where the first occupational layer of the barracks attached to the Northern wall of the fortress is well-dated, by a coin hoard with *terminus post quem* 408–423 and a burned layer with *terminus ante quem* mid-5<sup>th</sup> century (dismantlement and total reconfiguration). In the same area there are two pits filled towards the middle of the 5<sup>th</sup> century: G19 (last coin 425–455) and G20 (last coin 440–455). Some fragments were also recorded in the occupational layers in the Southern sector. ARS is seldom found – form 61B (variant B3 of Bonifay<sup>11</sup>) and some very small sherds stamped in style A(ii) (fig. 2,17–18). LRC is becoming more common: forms 1B (fig. 2,19–21), 1D large (fig. 2,22), 1/3A transitional (fig. 2,23), 3A (fig. 2,24), 3 small (fig. 2,25) and various stamped motifs (e.g. the cross-monogram with closed rho<sup>12</sup>, fig. 2,26). Pontic vessels come with the same standard forms and decoration: form 1 (fig. 2,27), form 3 (fig. 2,28–30 and probably 31).

The most important find of stage 3B is a dumped fill in a massive rectangular structure partly dug into the ground, used probably for food storage. A gold *tremissis* of Pulcheria (cross in wreath, c. 430–440) and bronze coins of Theodosius II (types cross in wreath, *Concordia Aug* and *VT/XXX/V*) secure a *terminus post quem* the year 435. A thick earthen floor of phase 2 seals this closed context and provides a *terminus ante quem* early in the third quarter of the 5<sup>th</sup> century<sup>13</sup>. Sixty-one fine vessels were recorded, without atypical walls and bases. The ARS imports are Hayes forms 61A – perhaps residual?, 64.4 and 67 (fig. 3,32–35). The last one could be recognized as variant El Mahrine 9.1/Bonifay 41B and bears stamped decoration in style A(iii) with large grille-pattern. The overwhelming quantity of Phocaean ware is noticeable, with an almost complete set of forms/types in use at that time. We can see the appearance of a new transitional form 1/3A (fig. 3,38–39), the new form 2C (fig. 3,43–45) and the

various rim treatment on form 3A (fig. 4,55–59). The small versions of the main forms are well-represented: form 1B (fig. 3,46–48), form 1D (fig. 3,49–50), form 2B (fig. 3,51–54), form 3 (fig. 4,60–64:). The stamped decoration follows mostly the earlier scheme (Hayes group I, fig. 4,65–66), but motifs belonging to group II also appear (fig. 4,67 – a variant of Hayes motif 34 – cross on lozenge). It can be easily noticed the total absence of the typical second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century variants of form 3 (B–E), confirming Hayes' chronological setting for these types. In the same deposit there are also four well-preserved Pontic products: form 1 (fig. 4,69), form 3 (fig. 4,70), form Ivanova<sup>14</sup> 4.1 (fig. 4,71), form 7 (fig. 4,72) and the first imports of the so-called “Light-Colored” ware<sup>15</sup> (fig. 4,73). Local imitations of silver bowls are also encountered (fig. 4,74). One interesting discovery is a fine ware made in a soapy micaceous fabric, often with a slightly lustrous orange-red or reddish-brown slip, decorated with notches or wavy motifs on the rim (fig. 4,75–78). One fragment displays stamped decoration with S-shaped motifs. This tableware category was probably produced in the diocese of Thrace, as evidenced by a series of discoveries from Bulgaria<sup>16</sup>. The ware seems to be attested also in *Asia Minor* at Aizanoi (in *Phrygia*)<sup>17</sup>.

**Phase 2** (third quarter of the 5<sup>th</sup> century) is characterized by a significant recovery of the housing structures destroyed in the mid-5<sup>th</sup> century Hunnic attacks. A range of contexts belong to occupational levels in the Southern sector or pit fills (G8, G11). Coins of Marcian and Leo I are good chronological indicators<sup>18</sup>. Typical for this period is the massive presence of LRC, dominated by form 3 (fig. 5,85–91, with types A, C, D and E). Late examples of forms 1D, 2A and 2B also occur (fig. 5,79–84), as well as the new form 8 (fig. 5,92). Decoration with single stamps at the centre (groups IIC and III) is the norm but a late palm-branch style (motif 1j?) is attested

<sup>9</sup> ARSEN'EVA/DOMŽALSKI 2002, 422–428 figs. 5–7 (form 1); 8–12 (form 3). Cf. OPAIT 1985, 154–155 Typ IVA and Typ II.

<sup>10</sup> A. OPAIT, Local and Imported Ceramics in the Roman Province of Scythia (4<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> centuries AD). Aspects of Economic Life in the Province of Scythia, BAR Internat. Ser. 1274 (Oxford 2004) 73 (bowls type II) pl. 53,4.6–7.

<sup>11</sup> BONIFAY 2004, 167–170 type 38 variant B3 (middle and second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century).

<sup>12</sup> HAYES 1972, 363 motif 61 fig. 78f.

<sup>13</sup> The assemblage from Ulmetum can be paralleled with the cistern fill from S. Giacomo degli Schiavoni (Italy): U. ALBARELLA/V. CEGLIA/P. ROBERTS, S. Giacomo degli Schiavoni (Molise): an early fifth century AD deposit of pottery and animal bones from central Adriatic Italy. Papers British School Rome 61, 1993, 157–230, dated 420–430 AD. A mid-5<sup>th</sup> century date is proposed by P. REYNOLDS/M. BONIFAY/M. A. CAU, Key contexts for the dating of late Roman Mediterranean fine wares: a preliminary review and 'seriation'. In: M. A. Cau/P. Reynolds/M. Bonifay (eds.), LRFW 1. Late Roman fine wares: solving problems of typology and chronology. A review of the evidence, debate and new contexts. Roman and Late antique Mediterranean Pottery 1 (Oxford 2011) 19.

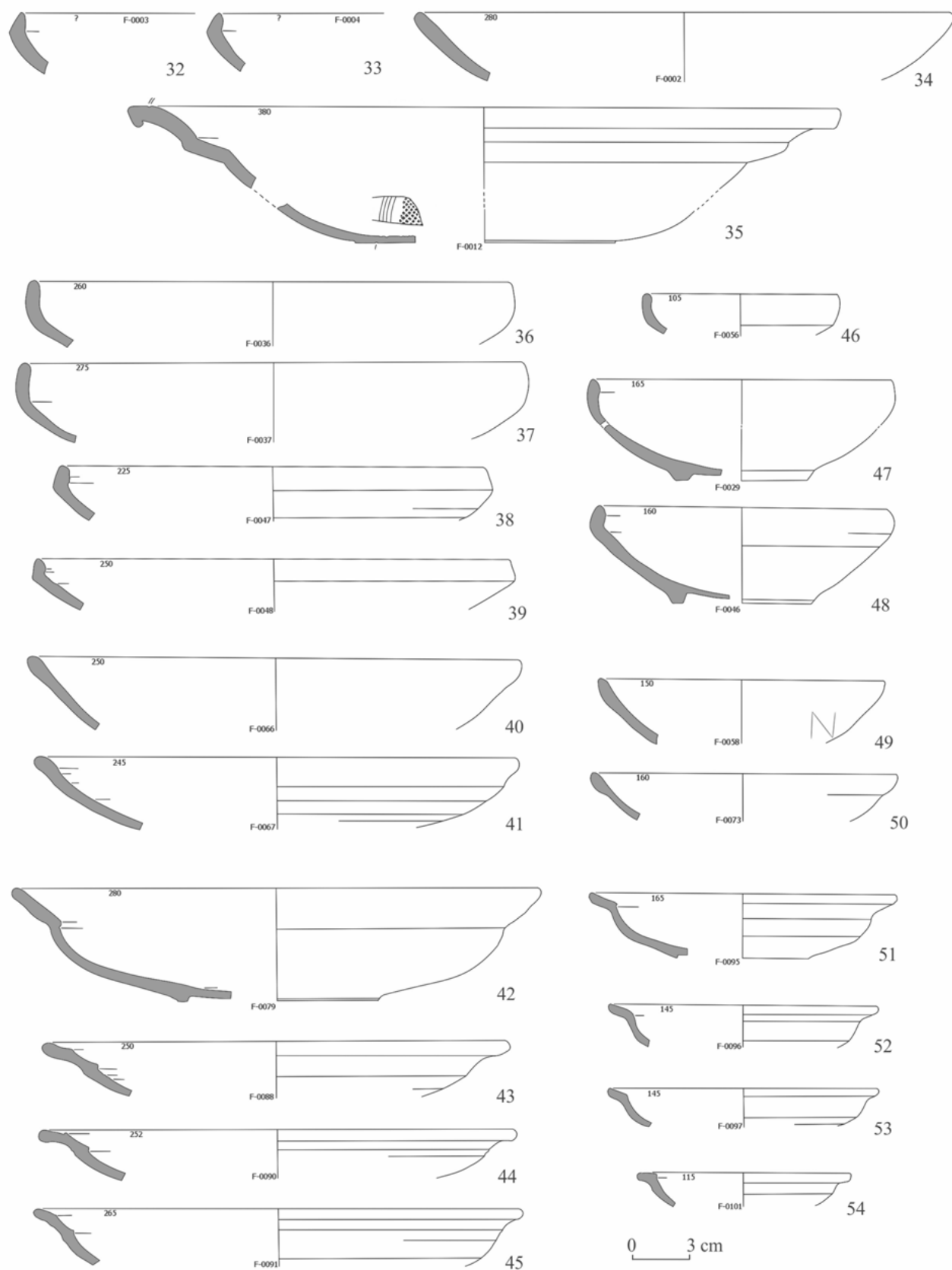
<sup>14</sup> O. S. IVANOVA, Krasnolakovaja keramika iz razkopok mogil'nika v balke Almalyk-Dere (Mangup). Mat. Arh., Ist. i Etnogr. Tavrii 15, 2009, 39 form 4.1 fig. 10,41. Cf. K. DOMŽALSKI, Late roman pottery from Pompeiopolis. In: L. Summerer (ed.), Pompeiopolis I. Eine Zwischenbilanz aus der Metropole Paphlagoniens nach fünf Kampagnen (Langenweissbach 2011) 165 pl. 2,10.11.

<sup>15</sup> HAYES 1972, 408–410 fig. 92,2; HAYES 2008, 91–92 cat. 1434–1435 fig. 43. Recent finds from Parion in Troad claim for a production in the North-Eastern Aegean basin or in the Propontis region: H. E. ERGÜNER, Late Roman Light Coloured Ware from Parion. In: H. Meyza (ed.), Late Hellenistic to Mediaeval fine wares of the Aegean coast of Anatolia. Their production, imitation and use (Warszawa 2014) 175–191 (with a tentative typology).

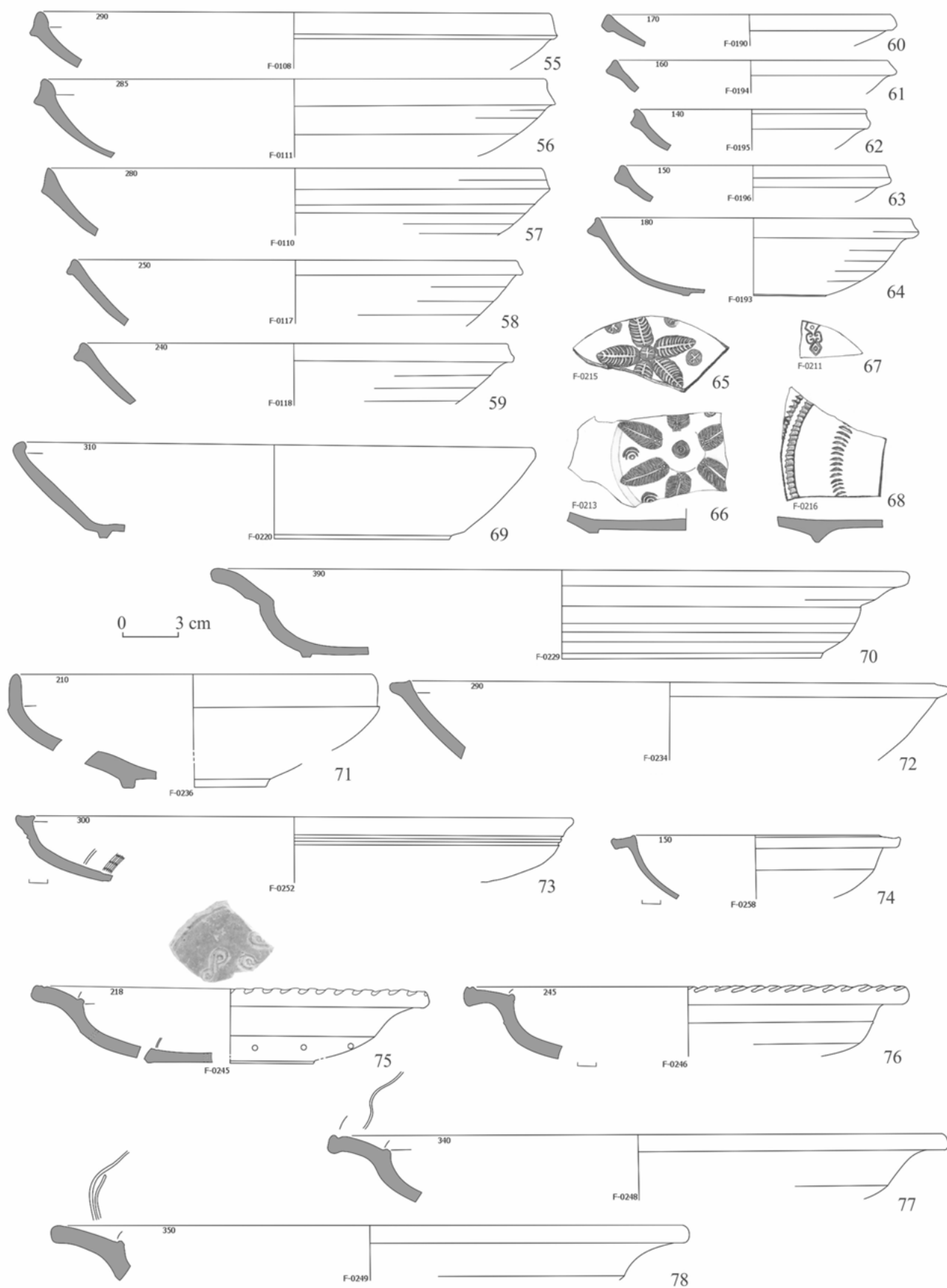
<sup>16</sup> Identified as a distinctive ware by C. RAUH, Zu einigen spätantiken/frühbyzantinischen Gefässen aus Karasura. In: M. Wendel (Hrsg.), Karasura. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte und Kultur des alten Thrakien I: 15 Jahre Ausgrabungen in Karasura (Langenweissbach 2001) 81–87 Taf. 1,1–2; 2,1–2. See also V. G. SWAN, Dichin (Bulgaria): interpreting the ceramic evidence in its wider context. In: A. G. Poulter, The transition to Late Antiquity on the Danube and beyond. Proc. British Acad. 141 (Oxford 2007) 267 fig. 4,36–39.

<sup>17</sup> Described as local production in G. ATEŞ, Die rote Feinkeramik von Aizanoi als lokaler Kulturträger (Wiesbaden 2015) 102–106 cat. 184–189 Taf. 31–32 (Schale 45) cat. 199–200 Taf. 35 (Schale 53, Schale 54).

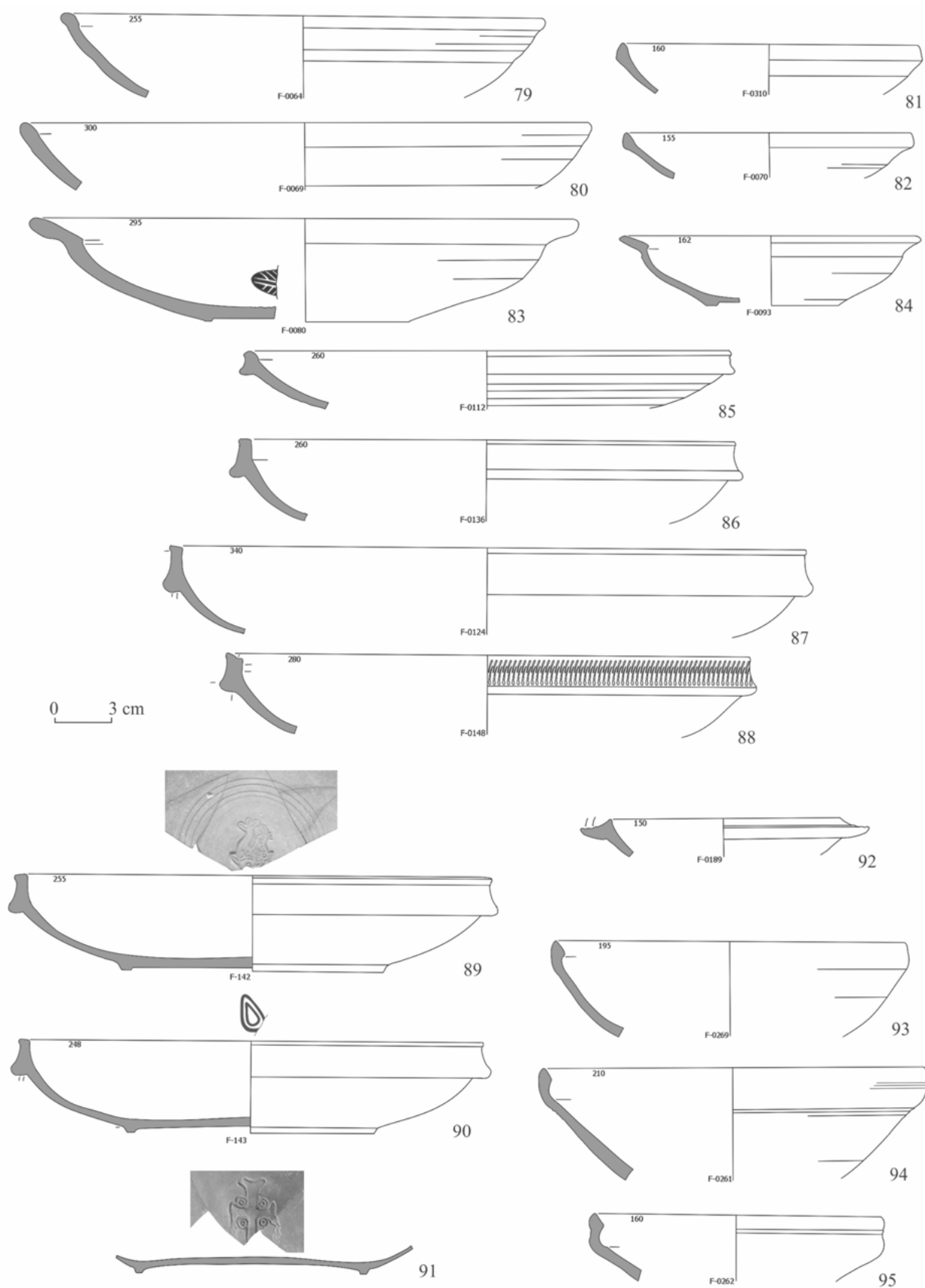
<sup>18</sup> See contexts of the same date in Athens (HAYES 2008, 291–305) and Beirut (P. REYNOLDS, Fine Wares from Beirut Contexts, c. 450 to the Early 7<sup>th</sup> Century In: M. A. Cau/P. Reynolds/M. Bonifay [eds.], LRFW 1. Late Roman fine wares: solving problems of typology and chronology. A review of the evidence, debate and new contexts. Roman and Late antique Mediterranean Pottery 1 [Oxford 2011] 208 figs.1–4).



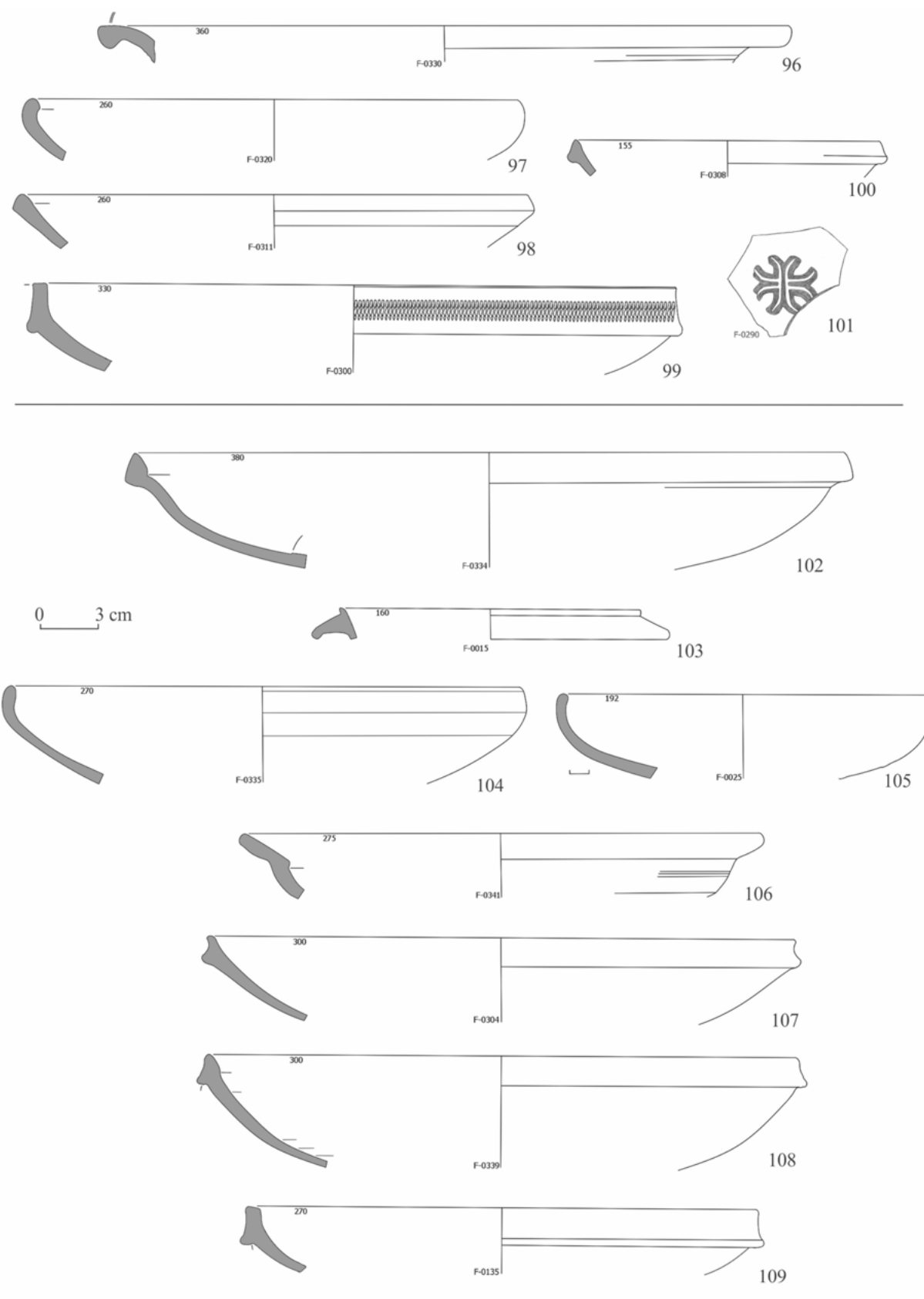
**Fig. 3.** Stage 3B – closed context of c. 435–450 AD: 32–35 ARS; 36–54 LRC.



**Fig. 4.** Stage 3B – closed context of c. 435–450 AD: **55–68** LRC; **69–72** Pontic; **73** “Light-Colored”; **74** local/regional; **75–78** regional Thracian ware.

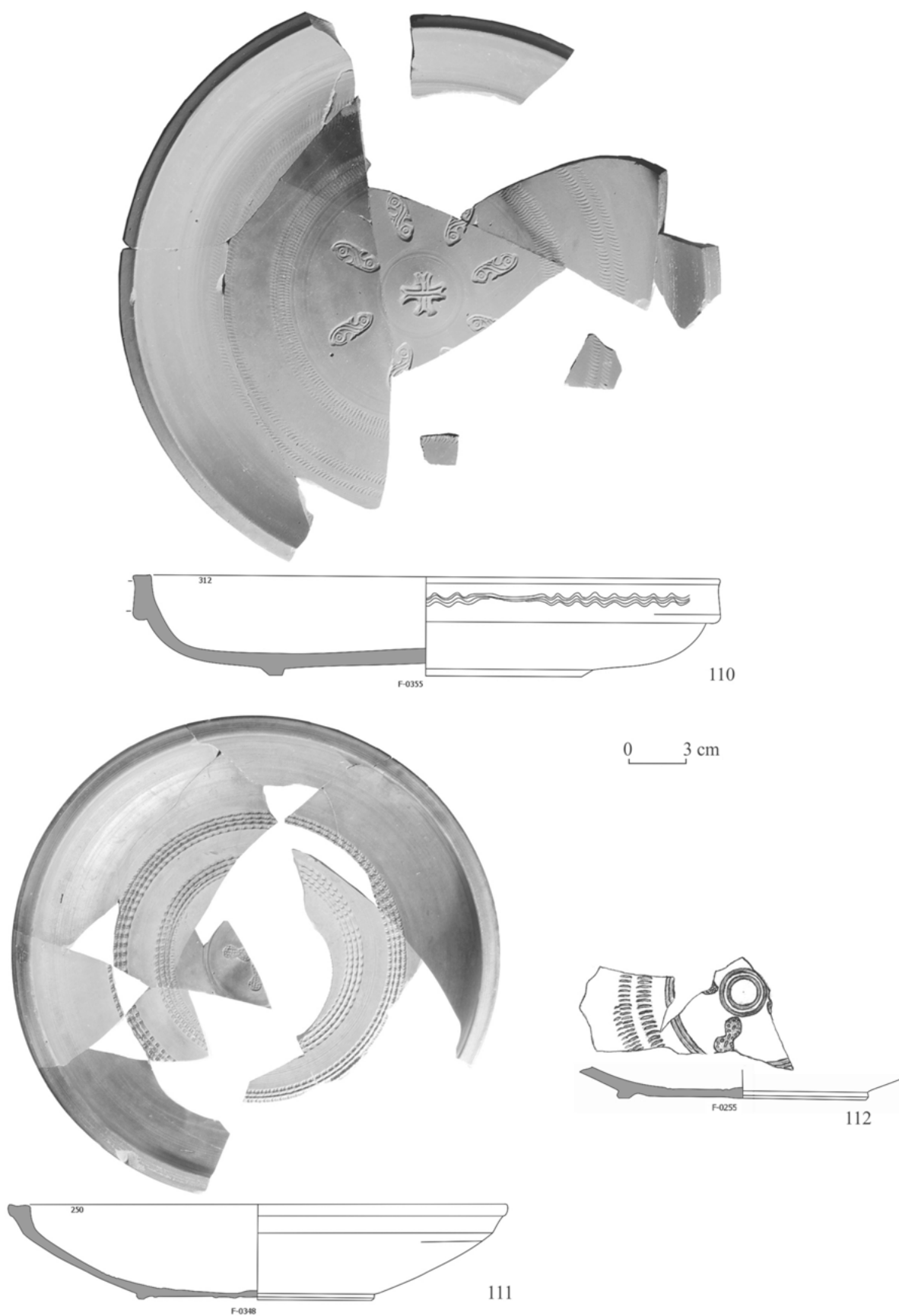


**Fig. 5.** Phase 2 (third quarter of the 5<sup>th</sup> century): **79–92** LRC; **93–95** Constantinople? “early local”.



**Fig. 6.** Phase 2 – destruction contexts, c. 470/480 AD (**96–101** *praetorium*; **102–109** northern barracks): **96.102–103** ARS; **97–101.104–109** LRC.





**Fig. 7.** Phase 2 – destruction contexts, c. 470/480 AD (northern barracks): **110** LRC; **111–112** “Light-Colored”.

on form 2A (**fig. 5,83**). Three pieces (**fig. 5,93–95**) belong probably to a less-known category – the so-called “Early Local Fabrics” found in the earliest deposits (5<sup>th</sup> century) at Saraçhane in Istanbul<sup>19</sup>. The ware has been recently identified in the province of *Scythia* at *Histria*, *Halmyris* and *Libida*<sup>20</sup>.

A massive destruction layer marks the end of phase 2, clearly datable by coins of Leo I (457–474). The event could be connected with the unrest in the Balkans caused by confrontations between Ostrogothic *foederati* in the years 470–480. It is followed by a period of abandonment, attested both by Procopius (De aedif. IV,7) and archaeologically. In the destruction horizon of the pre-Justinianic “old fort” (**figs. 6–7**) over 80 % of the fine wares are LRC (mostly forms 3

B–E, but with the continuation of forms 1B, 2A and 3A and their variations). Stamped decoration of group IIA, with double-ribbed Greek cross at the centre (Hayes motif 69), match those founded in contemporary Athenian deposits<sup>21</sup>. African form 61B (Bonifay variant B3) is attested again (**fig. 6,102**), along with form 67 (Bonifay variant C)<sup>22</sup> (**fig. 6,96**), both dated to the middle and the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. Typical vessels of “Light-Colored” ware bear rouletting and „*planta pedis*” stamped decorations (**fig. 7,111–112**). Pontic Red Slip ware is only residual, and the local/regional products of the first half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century have disappeared.

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<sup>19</sup> J. W. HAYES Excavations at Saraçhane in Istanbul 2. The Pottery (Princeton 1992) 92–93 deposit 7 no. 1 and deposit 10 no. 4 fig. 31,7.1, 10.4.

<sup>20</sup> C. BĂJENARU, Some rare late Roman fine wares discovered in the Central sector of the late Roman city at Histria. In: Histria. Histoire et archéologie en Mer Noire. Pontica Suppl. 3 (Constanța 2014) 241.

<sup>21</sup> HAYES 1972, 365 motif 69 fig. 78 o, p, q.

<sup>22</sup> BONIFAY 2004, 171–173 (type 41 variante C).

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