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ROMAN KITCHENWARE DISCOVERED IN THE MILITARY ENVIRONMENT IN DOBRUDJA¹

The aim of the present paper is to present the kitchenware category which comes from the military camps of Dobrudja (Durostorum, Troesmis and Noviodunum). The study includes published and unpublished ceramics produced locally in each site and imported, the last one in low proportion. The kitchenware includes pots, casseroles, frying pans, strainer, bowls, buckets and lids. The pots were divided into 13 types, one of which is imported from the Aegean area and one belonging to the local population (traditional La Tène pots). The casseroles were divided into three types, imported from the Aegean area. There are five types of pans. Among them, one type comes from the Western part of the Empire, and it belongs to the Pompeian red slip ware. The bowls were divided into nine types, most likely produced within each site. Other categories of kitchenware that have been discovered in smaller quantities are: mortaria (two types), buckets (one type) and strainers (one type). The kitchenware from the military camps of Dobrudja dates back to the period between the 1st and 3rd centuries AD.

After the settling of Roman troops in *Moesia Inferior*, at *Noviodunum* (Danubian fleet *Classis Flavia Moesica*), *Troesmis* (*legio V Macedonica*), and *Durostorum* (*legio XI Claudia*) several pottery workshops must have been founded (e.g. see the pottery workshops from *Durostorum*). At the beginnings of Roman domination in Dobrudja, the pottery demands of the army were met by imports, either from the surrounding provinces, or from the units' areas of origin, as proven by the imports of ceramic kitchenware, tableware, and drinking vessels. Hence, they were compelled to open their own workshops, using soldiers or by appealing to various entrepreneurs (*negotiatores* or *conductores*)², or by encouraging the local population to increase pottery production³. The role of entrepreneurs in the pottery supply of the Roman military camps in Dobrudja can also be deduced from epigraphic sources, but it would not be cautious to state that they specialized in imported pottery, as this was only a secondary concern. In this regard, we mention the four inscriptions discovered at *Troesmis* and the inscription found at *Durostorum*, which attest the existence of communities that also comprised merchants. In the case of *Troesmis*, two different communities are mentioned, as follows: *veterani et cives Romani consistentes ad canabas legionis V Macedonicae* and *cives Romani Troesmi consistentes*⁴. At *Durostorum*, an inscription dated to the reign of Antoninus Pius attests the presence of *cives Romani et consistentibus in canabis Aelis legionis XI Claudiae*⁵. The commercial character of some of these communities is provided, in our opinion, by the

similarity between the phrases *cives Romani qui consistunt* and *cives Romani qui negotiantur*.

The commercial role of these communities, to the benefit of the army⁶, is plausibly because such associations had the support of the central power, which exempted them from certain taxes, and thus stimulated their engagement in the service of the State⁷. It is difficult to state whether these groups attested in the area of Roman Dobrudja did commercial services for the army, due to the lack of a document attesting it beyond doubt. However, our hypothesis cannot be excluded, considering the potential benefits of such association with the State and with the army; it was a secure and quasi-permanent market which required all types of supplies, including ceramic kitchenware. Under these circumstances, we can posit that Roman militaries used all three ways of procuring ceramic kitchenware, which shows their pragmatism and adaptability, as well as the functioning of market production and the relation between demand and supply. Whereas at the beginnings of Roman army stationing in Roman Dobrudja, foreign pottery⁸ forms unknown to the local population (such as pans, *mortaria*, casseroles) penetrated, the subsequent generalization and diffusion of such vessels into areas other than the military ones is natural, because great civilian settlements (*canabae*) were built around these camps⁹. From our point of view, the diffusion of certain types of containers, specific to military setting, to the rural and urban population must have occurred through the population who lived in the rural or urban areas typically around a legion, ala or cohort camp. The ethnic structure of these settlements is diverse, considering that both natives

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² WELLS 1992, 201.

³ GREEN 1977, 124-125.

⁴ BOUNEGRU 2003, 126.

⁵ BOUNEGRU 2003, 126.

⁶ BOUNEGRU 2003, 51-52.

⁷ WELLS 1992, 201.

⁸ ETTINGER 1977, 52.

⁹ WELLS 1992, 201; WHITTAKER 1990, 12.

and Romans lived there, including some veterans who never returned to their places of origin. We believe that these veterans kept in touch with their former army colleagues, thus benefiting from certain items used daily in camps, which they either bought or obtained by trade.

Regarding the kitchenware forms identified at the three sites (*Noviodunum*, *Troesmis*, and *Durostorum*), the most numerous ones are the pots, followed – at a significant distance – by pans; the third place is occupied by bowls, the fourth place by lids, the fifth by *mortaria*, the sixth by storage vessels, and the seventh by buckets and strainers.

The archaeological material presented in this article comes from the pottery workshops of *Durostorum*, *Troesmis* and *Noviodunum*¹⁰. The area of ovens at *Durostorum* was identified to the northeast of settlement and is being investigated by C. Mușețeanu and D. Elefterescu. In the two authors' opinion, these facilities had operated during the chronological interval between the beginning of the 2nd century and the 4th century AD. In this period of about two centuries, the workshops at *Durostorum* produced a variety of pottery with various functions, from fine pottery or lamps, to kitchenware or containers used for worship.

The kitchen ceramics originating from *Troesmis* and already known were discovered as a result of the archaeological research conducted in this area, however these were sporadic and mainly focused on the civil settlement. In his study carried out on the early Roman pottery from *Troesmis*, based on his observations on paste and engobe, A. Opaît identified three types of clay used for the production of local pottery: coarse yellowish-white (pots, bowls, pans), brownish-beige and fine, sandy, yellowish-beige with red or brown engobe (pots, cups, mugs, craters, bowls, dishes, plates and trays).

The kitchenware originating from *Noviodunum*, as yet unpublished, was discovered at several points in the citadel, as follows: The Large Tower (Turnul Mare) and The Corner Tower (Turnul de Colț).

The kitchenware pottery discovered at *Noviodunum*, *Troesmis*, and *Durostorum*, comprises both local and imported products, but the first category prevails. As for provincial vessels, they were made by local artisans and fired in special kilns; the handmade pottery pertains to the bonfire type.

Most vessels are made of soft pale beige fabric with gravel, limestone, iron oxide, and silver mica. The current state of research does not allow us to determine whether they were produced only in one centre; so far, only the pottery workshops of *Durostorum* – that manufactured such containers – are attested archaeologically. The hypothesis of production in other *officinae*, such as those of *Noviodunum* and *Troesmis*, cannot be rejected, either.

In all three sites, the vessels made of such kaolin fabric are the most numerous finds (e.g., 73 % by sherd count of the pots presented here are made of a kaolin fabric). The second type of fabric, orange-coloured with limestone and silver mica in composition, is less common (27 %). One centre that produced such vessels is *Durostorum* (of course, we include here the vessels discovered at this site), while the rest were produced in other

centres. The imported vessels were also found to belong to the orange-coloured with silver mica category. There must have been another production centre in the Aegean area, based on the petrographic characteristics of the fabric (7.5YR/7.8 yellow orange); its composition comprises a significant amount of iron oxide, limestone and silver mica, but we do not exclude the possibility that the vessels were produced at *Noviodunum* and *Troesmis*.

In the pottery studied, we identified 13 types of pots (41 %), among which only one (type XIII) was imported, in our opinion, from the Aegean area. From the perspective of functionality, many items show traces of secondary burning, which is consistent with their use for cooking. They date to the 1st–2nd centuries AD.

Type I (plate 1,1–2) occupies a prominent place in the ceramic kitchenware, having 31% of the total number of pots. The vessels with a semi fine paste of greyish-white (kaolin) colour are the majority among the findings. In terms of functionality, a large number of items show secondary burn marks, which indicates their use for preparing food. The pots included in this type are dated to the 2nd and the 3rd centuries AD. According to the existing analogies, it seems that the vessels included here were primarily made in Lower Moesia.

Type II (plate 1,3–4), representing 26 %, is the evolved form of the previous type of pots. The paste, used mainly for manufacturing the vessels included here, is whitish-beige as well as brick-red.

Type III (plate 1,5–6) is represented only by two items, which stand for 2% of the findings.

Type IV (plate 1,7) marks a similar percentage, of 2%.

Type V (plate 1,8–9) is present in a proportion of 5%.

In type VI (plate 1,10) were included two vessels, representing 1% of the findings

Type VII (plate 1,11–12) – the La Tène traditional pots – represent 10% of all the pots. They have the same characteristics as almost the entire La Tène traditional category, also identified at other sites within the province of *Moesia Inferior*. A characteristic of this category is simplified decoration, represented exclusively by alveolar cordons in relief, generalized since the end of the 1st century AD and the beginning of the next century.

The fabric of the vessels discovered in the three centres is semi-coarse, with gravel and limestone in composition, and made by oxidation firing. The Geto-Dacian pottery flourished in the 1st–2nd centuries AD; however, with the start of the 3rd century AD, it registered a decrease; then from the start of the 4th century, it disappeared altogether. The La Tène pottery continued to be used in the Roman period because the great workshops were unable to satisfy the demands of the military; later, this pottery was used because the Roman provincial pottery was much more expensive. From a morphological perspective, they continue the tradition of the old ceramic forms used during the classical period of the Geto-Dacian civilization (1st century BC–1st century AD), which suggests, as has been ascertained before, the continuity of life and activity of the native population within the space between the Danube and the Black Sea.

Coming back to the issue of handmade pottery, as presented earlier, we can pinpoint that their lower numbers in

¹⁰ I am grateful to PhD. Aurel Stănică who allowed me to study the pottery found in the military camp of *Noviodunum*.

the 3rd century AD and their disappearance in the next century may have been caused by the activity of the great workshops within the province. The presence of Getic pottery in military settings is an extra argument for the idea according to which the Roman army got its pottery supplies also from rural areas.

Type VIII (**plate 1,13**) appears in 1% of finds and may be found only at *Durostorum*.

Types IX–XII (type IX: **plate 1,14**; type X: **plate 1,15**; type XI: **plate 1,16**; type XII: **plate 1,17**) appear in small percentages, up to 4% of the total number of findings.

It is worth mentioning that pots pertaining to type XIII (**plate 1,18**) comprise only ten items (3%). The origin of this type of pots – ranking the penultimate within such discoveries – should be searched for in the Hellenistic kitchenware from the eastern part of the Empire (especially the Aegean area). In our opinion, these may have penetrated the Lower Danube area, alongside the Kăpitan II and San Lorenzo 7 amphorae or any other category of imported materials.

Storage vessels were divided into two types (type I: **plate 1,19**; type II: **plate 1,20**), representing 5% and 3% respectively of the total amount of discoveries.

Casseroles represent 8% of the pottery kitchenware available to us, discovered in the three sites in question; this category is divided into three types (type I: **plate 1,21**; type II: **plate 1,22**; type III: **plate 1,23**). Their presence proves the close commercial connection between the province of *Moesia Inferior*, especially the port centre of *Noviodunum*, as well as *Troesmis* and the eastern part of the Roman Empire. At the same time, they highlight the adjustment of the space between the Danube and the Black Sea to the economic realities of the Roman Empire and to the Aegean kitchen. The vessels may have arrived here as auxiliary products, embarked on ships that transported other items, such as amphorae. The generalisation of this type of vessels (especially of those that we included in type II) – in the territory of Dobrudja, somewhere in the first half of the 2nd century AD – should not be surprising. Though they may have penetrated the Lower Danube area initially through the army, the civilian population soon adopted them into the repertory of pottery forms. Our hypothesis is supported by the discovery – among others – of casseroles that we had previously included in type II at *Argamum*, in a civilian setting and in a context dated to the first half of the 2nd century AD. It is interesting that the vessels discovered here (*extra muros* sector) are not original, but very good copies of the casseroles made in the Phocaeian area, with semi-fine fabric, limestone, and small pebbles in composition, probably produced locally¹¹.

Another category of vessels discovered at *Noviodunum*, *Troesmis*, and *Durostorum* is the one of pans, which represents 13% of the kitchenware. They were divided into five types, taking into account their morphological characteristics.

Type I (**plate 1,24**) seems to be somewhat earlier than the second, dated by most experts to the second half of the 2nd century AD. We believe these pans were made locally given the fabric of which they are made.

Type II (**plate 1,25**) is dated to the second half of the 2nd century AD. Type III (**plate 1,26**) is reflected by four pans representing 16%.

Among these pans pertaining to type IV (**plate 1,27**), we can mention a pan with a stamped base, bearing the stamp of the *legio IX Claudia*. It pertains to the *tabula ansata* type (with semicircular handles). We provide the following reading and interpretation: *LEG(io) XI P(ia) F(idelis)*.

The type V (**plate 1,28**) of pans (two items – 8%) is imported and can be included in the category of Pompeian Red Slip ware, attested here for the first time in Roman Dobrudja. We believe that the first four types are local, while type V was imported from the western part of the Empire.

Concerning the presence of bowls in our area of research, numerous items were discovered (33 items – 18%). They are divided into nine types, and were probably manufactured within each site or in other sites of the province.

Bowls pertaining to the first type (**plate 1,29**) are widely disseminated, almost in the entire province of *Moesia Inferior*, both in early Roman settlements and in the province of *Dacia*, and originate locally.

The bowls included in type II (**plate 1,30**) are underrepresented in the discoveries, by two specimens only. Both were discovered in *Noviodunum*; they date back to the end of the 2nd century–first half of the 3rd century.

In regard to the type III (**plate 1,31**) bowls, only one fragment found in *Noviodunum* was included.

The bowls of type IV (**plate 1,32**) are represented only by a single item.

Those belonging to type V (**plate 1,33**) are found at all three sites under question.

Type VI (**plate 1,34**) of such vessels appears only at *Noviodunum* and *Troesmis*. Type VII (**plate 1,35**) was identified at *Noviodunum* only and has good analogies in *Dacia*. Type VIII (Pl. I/36) is currently only in *Troesmis*. Type IX (**plate 1,37**) occurs in all the three sites with similarities in *Dacia* as well.

It is worth highlighting the significant amount and typological diversity of bowls among the finds. They may have had several functions, such as heating or serving food. From this point of view, bowls had a universal character; on the other hand, only one person used the bowl, which suggests bowls had a unique owner. Another possible explanation for the typological diversity is the way we interpret ancient economy. We can consider these bowls as substitutes for sigillata bowls; though the latter may have been more refined, they were also more expensive than the former. Hence, for practical reasons, soldiers preferred local bowls, to the detriment of terra sigillata bowls, which, though present among the finds, were probably purchased by officers or under-officers, who were paid enough to afford such types of ware¹². However, we should not ignore the hypothesis that they used bowls because they lacked other similar vessels made of glass and/or metal¹³.

Another pottery category discovered in the Roman camps and attested among the finds as representing 6% of kitchenware pottery are *mortaria* (type I: **plate 2,38**; type II: **plate 2,39**). Though discovered at all three sites, only the items of *Durostorum* feature the manufacturer's stamp, while one item found at *Troesmis* does feature such a stamp, but it is not readable. The hypothesis of the existence at *Durostorum*

¹¹ HONCU 2016, 303, Pl. II/21.

¹² BREEZEL 1977, 136.

¹³ GREEN 1977, 125.

of workshops producing *mortaria* in the 2nd and 3rd centuries does seem plausible, considering that the discovery of the stamps supports this idea.

Only a couple of lids (**plate 2,42**) were discovered: they represent 7 % of kitchenware pottery, and belong to one type only. The relatively reduced number of lids compared to the vessels they covered can also be explained by the fact that lids were not used for a certain type of vessel, but had a universal character.

The pottery analysed here also includes a series of large vessels with vertical walls, oblique, everted rim, and flat base. We included them in the category of vessels for water (buckets **plate 2,40**), thus far attested only by this item of *Troesmis*. Such vessels were also found at *Durostorum*, but these have not been published. The vessels in question were probably used as substitutes for metal buckets, which were much more expensive and hard to procure.

The last category of vessels is that of strainer (**plate 2,41**), attested only at *Troesmis* by one item (1 % of all the pottery kitchenware). Their rarity is explained by the fact that there were such items made of metal, and they were far more practical.

This analysis leads to the following question: can we ascertain a pottery production specific to the military milieu? In our opinion, two hypotheses are viable in the current stage of the research. The first accepts the existence of military workshops that manufactured vessels for the legions, while the other rejects this assumption, but supports the presence of civilian workshops, which increased their production to meet the legions' demand for pottery.

The military workshops that produced pottery for the legions are attested in several Roman provinces. In the territory we have been studying, a brick was attested at *Durostorum* with the following legend: *LEG(io) XI CL(audia) F[II]G(lina) KAS(tri)*, which denotes the existence of workshops pertaining to the camp of the *legio XI Claudia*, thus rejecting the existence of civilian and private workshops. Whether these workshops may have produced kitchenware pottery, besides bricks and tiles, is difficult to ascertain. However, recent investigations have found the existence of several workshops; due to the lack of stamps attesting a connection with military settings, they can be considered private workshops. More than ten years ago, when the monograph dedicated to the pottery workshops of *Durostorum* was published and the argument of private *officinae* emerged, scholars did not know of the existence of a moulded pan, bearing the signs of the legion. This discovery argues for the hypothesis that there was such a workshop, which produced such items for the militaries of the *legio XI Claudia*. Though the idea of military pottery production may be plausible, we believe that it could not have been enough to supply the entire army.

As for the arguments supporting the second hypothesis, it is worth mentioning that, in the opinion of P. Selway, in that period, there were two markets for pottery supply: one rural and one urban. Such an opinion articulates that the production of military workshops was insufficient; hence, militaries needed extra pottery from other production centres, for instance from the civilian workshops near the camp. The army's demand for pottery may have led to the constitution of new workshops, and to the introduction of new vessels, with obvious Greek and local influences (see the bowls pertain-

ing to type I, type VII). Regardless, the permanent demand for pottery kitchenware and drinking vessels generated a consistent and permanent production within the workshops of the province. For the time being, it is not cautious to talk about a pottery "industry", at least for the area in question; however, future findings may bring new arguments to confirm or infirm the aforementioned statement.

In the following lines, we will discuss another important issue for understanding the pottery discoveries in Dobrudja: were there vessels specific only to the military setting?

As far as we know, there is no black or white answer to this question. Of course, certain categories of vessels were encountered only in the military setting, which could lead to the assumption that certain vessels pertained only to soldiers. Such pottery forms are specific to militaries in a period when the Roman lifestyle began to penetrate the region of Dobrudja; this is a rather short interval, between the end of the 1st century and the first half of the 2nd century AD. If we add – to the aforementioned arguments – the culinary habits and the specific diet of soldiers, then we can posit that our statement is justified and perfectly valid. Later, when new cities and settlements were founded near camps, the pottery forms began to permeate, and vessels used only by militaries disseminated in the urban and rural areas, too. Hence, for the time being, it is impossible to ascertain that forms were made exclusively for military camps.

However, it is necessary to complete and nuance the statement above. It is understood that the local population may have also used certain ceramic forms that circulated at a certain point within a legion camp; thus, the pottery may have been used in parallel in both settings. However, we must make a distinction when ordering the vessels chronologically, in order to pinpoint the moment when they passed from the repertory of pottery made for militaries to the repertory of pottery for the civilian population. We also have to determine whether they were veterans that lived in the civilian setting, urban or rural.

An example that may support our hypothesis is the discovery at Ibida (Slava Rusă) of two casseroles – pertaining to types I and II of this presentation –, dated to the reigns of emperors Hadrianus and Antoninus Pius. Their dissemination from the military to the civilian setting – through former militaries or even through active militaries – is also supported by discoveries attesting the presence of a military factor in this settlement (military diploma, *tabula ansata*, and the two epigraphs)¹⁴, which constitutes additional evidence to support our hypothesis.

The presence of imported pottery – originating from the Aegean area – proves that the sites of *Durostorum*, *Troesmis*, and *Noviodunum* represented an easy outlet, which accepted without difficulty such types of pottery. Finally, we underline that the situation of these types of pottery is not very different from the general situation of the province of *Moesia Inferior*, in terms of demand for household items (which includes the pottery that we have studied).

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¹⁴ MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 2011, 116–117 cat. no. 1–3 and 14.

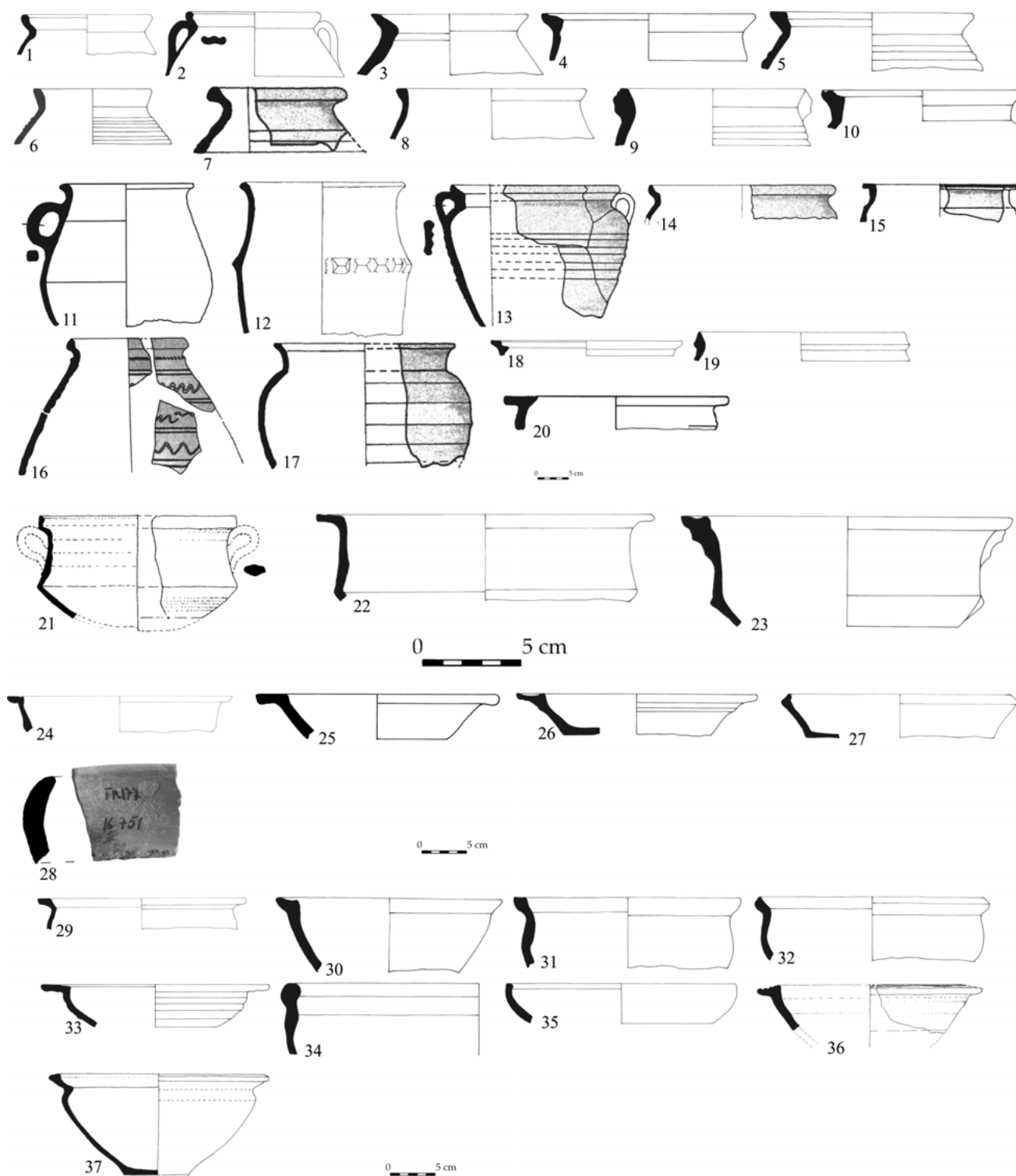


Plate 1. 1-6. 8-10. 19-20. 22-35 *Noviodunum*; 11. 12. 21. 36. 37 *Troesmis* (after OPAI 1980);
7. 13-17 *Durostorum* (after MUSETEANU/ELEFTERESCU 2003).

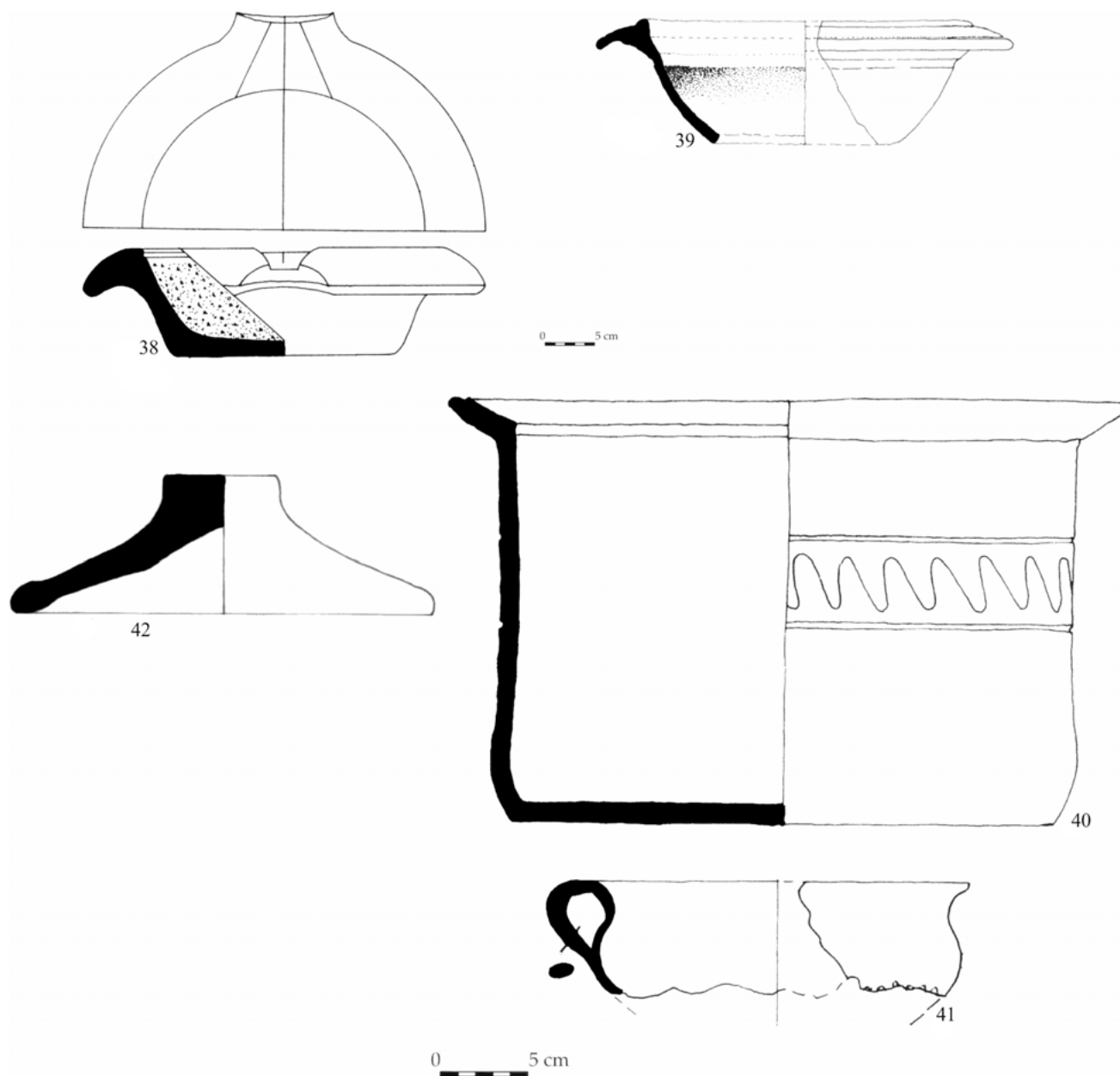


Plate 2. 42 *Noviodunum*; 38–41 *Troesmis* (after OPAI □ 1980).

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