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## CERAMIC BASINS FROM THE “KILNS OF VINGONE” IN SCANDICCI (FLORENCE/ ITALY)

### Aegean shapes in pottery production in the area of Roman *Florentia*

This article is a partial preview of the book about to be published by the Soprintendenza ai Beni Archeologici della Toscana by G. Capecchi, G. de Marinis, A. Patera and E. J. Shepherd on the ceramic production of the Vingone kilns situated in the borough of Scandicci, south-west of the city of Florence, in Tuscany (fig. 1).<sup>1</sup>

The production area of Vingone, which was discovered in 1980 during excavation works on a large building site, was brought to light by the Soprintendenza ai Beni Archeologici della Toscana (Director of the dig G. de Marinis). As well as the remains of at least three kilns, the finds included a considerable amount of pottery and bricks.

Of the pottery produced by the kilns,<sup>2</sup> highly significant in terms of number was a series of large basins (diameters ranging from ca. 30 to 50 cm) with rims and walls modelled in various fashions and a base which probably took the form of a ring-foot, fitted with horizontal handles. According to their morphologies, the basins have been divided into seven different types.

The archaeometric analysis conducted by the Soprintendenza ai Beni Archeologici della Toscana, for which reference is made to the book currently being printed, has shown that the clays used in the Vingone basins are of local provenance.

The Type 2 basins of Vingone (fig. 2) constitute almost half of the total number of basins and may be distinguished by rims which curve outwards considerably and by a lip composed of two rounded strips, the top one jutting out, divided from each other by one or two grooves, by the convex external profile of the body and by the rod-shaped handles set horizontally at the point of attachment between the rim and the body. The Type reveals several variants which seem to indicate a morphological evolution towards a simpler shape: from the Types 2 (fig. 2,1–3) and 2.1 (fig. 2,4), with a clearly moulded double rim, to the concave short-brimmed Type 2.3, maybe so shaped to be covered with a lid, where the double rim is no longer perceptible (fig. 2,5).

Many comparisons show the clear morphological links of these large basins to some of those produced during the Hellenistic age in the Aegean area, north-eastern Europe and the Balkans.

The Type 2 Vingone basins have in fact clear similarities with the some of the *lekanai* with a carinated body and outer red slip, of a slightly smaller diameter (25–30 cm) in fine ware of the Hellenistic Age from Gortyn<sup>3</sup> (fig. 3,1–2) and from Phaistos<sup>4</sup> (fig. 3,3).

This type of *lekanis* proves widespread in the eastern Mediterranean basin during the Hellenistic period: some of the specimens from *Apollonia* in *Illyria* show a great similarity with the Vingone basins (fig. 3,4–5);<sup>5</sup> other comparable specimens, also two-handled and with a ring-foot, used as sepulchral urns and dating to the third quarter of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC are from Iankovo in ancient Thrace (modern-day north-west Bulgaria) (fig. 3,6).<sup>6</sup>

A further comparison may be made with a basin from the excavations in the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore in Corinth (diam. 31.8 cm), with horizontal handles decorated on the interior with “X”s and zig-zag motifs. This has been dated from the middle to the third quarter of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD but attributed to the Hellenistic tradition and compared to a *thymiaterion* on account of the attachment of a cylindrical-stemmed base (fig. 4,1–2),<sup>7</sup> an element which might suggest a similar structure for the Vingone specimens too, where in fact large, stemmed *thymiateria* were produced.

The most important comparison however relates to the northern Etruscan area and is composed of two basins with a convex external profile in grey ware with a double rim of a shape and size similar to those produced in Vingone, found in the excavations in the Palazzo dei Vescovi in Pistoia, dated between the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC and attributed to the production of Fiesole (fig. 4,3).<sup>8</sup> Considering the geographical vicinity, it is probable that the production of Vingone was an imitation of the Fiesole production in grey ware.

<sup>1</sup> G. CAPECCHI/G. DE MARINIS/A. PATERA/E. J. SHEPHERD (eds.), *Le fornaci del Vingone a Scandicci. Un impianto produttivo di età romana nella valle dell'Arno*. Monographic issue of *Rassegna di Archeologia* (Firenze in press). I am grateful to the Editors, particularly to Dr. Elizabeth Jane Shepherd, and to the Soprintendenza ai Beni Archeologici della Toscana (Dr. Fulvia Lo Schiavo, Soprintendente; Dr. Anna Rastrelli, Functionary of the area) for allowing me to study some classes of the ceramic material from this site and to participate in the poster session of the 25<sup>th</sup> Congress of the RCRF in Durres, Albania. The line drawings of fig. 2 are by Fabio Mosca; the graphic editor is Michele Giugni.

<sup>2</sup> The current writer was appointed to study thin-walled pottery, common ware, grey ware, coarse ware and terra sigillata italica (the last not produced at Vingone).

<sup>3</sup> J. PAPADOPOULOS 1997, 112; 121 nn. 158–159 pl. III,3–4.

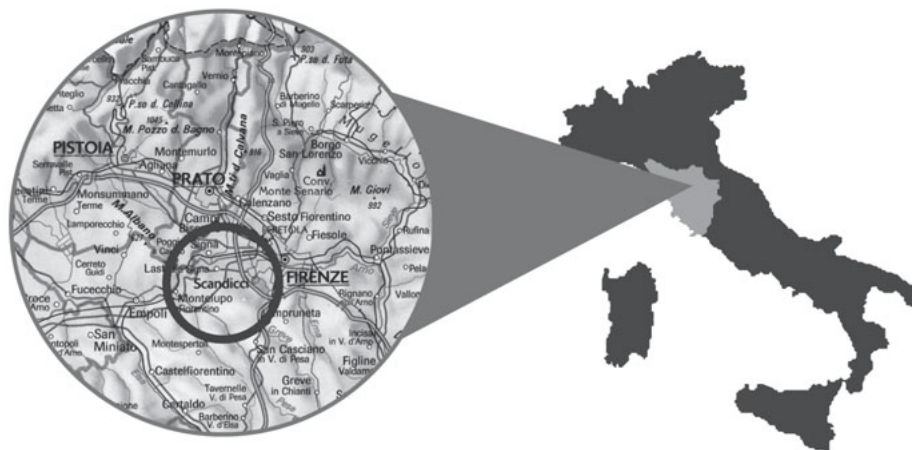
<sup>4</sup> PORTALE 1994, 249–256 pl. 207 γ.

<sup>5</sup> VREKA 1994, 211 nn. 52–53 pl. 156,52; 157,53.

<sup>6</sup> BOZKOVA 1994, 223–230 esp. 227 fig. 174.

<sup>7</sup> WARNER SLANE 1990, 119–122 n. 261 fig. 30 pl. 16.

<sup>8</sup> G. DE TOMMASO 1987, 127 n. 535; id. 1985, 308–310.



**Fig. 1.** The site of Vingone in Scandicci (Tuscany/Italy).

A basin with a double carinated rim and two horizontal handles, similar to the Vingone specimens, belongs to a funerary group dated to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC from Ischia di Castro in the territory of the town of Vulci.<sup>9</sup> More generic comparisons in the Etruscan area may be found in some basins produced around the middle of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD in the kilns of *Umbricius Cordus* at Torrita di Siena.<sup>10</sup> Carinated basins with similar morphology and dimensions (diam. 30–33 cm) come from some Augustan-Tiberian contexts (probably extending to Claudian) at Cassa di Risparmio di Modena.<sup>11</sup> There are also some parallels from Deposit no. 6 at Cosa, dated between the Augustan and the early Claudian period.<sup>12</sup>

A series of ‘tureens’ in coarse clay, some of which have a yellowish slip and are blackened by fire on the outside, seem to have the same morphological inspiration and come mainly from the buried layers of Hellenistic homes in *insula 5* of *regio VI* at Pompeii, dated from 2<sup>nd</sup>/1<sup>st</sup> centuries BC until the final era of life of the city, as well as a group of bowls of a medium-large size (diam. 20–30 cm), also indicated as ‘tureens’, with a similar convex body and flared, concave rim to hold a lid, dated between the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC and 1<sup>st</sup> century AD (**fig. 4,4–7**).<sup>13</sup>

The shape can also be found in black glaze ware: a specimen from the first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC of local or regional production is documented in Norchia (**fig. 5,1**).<sup>14</sup>

The persistence, throughout the peninsula, from the Emilian Po valley as far as the southernmost tip, of the Hellenistic traditional shape of these basins can also be found in

the specimens at Segesta, where, between the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC and the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD similar basins were imported from central-southern Italy and from Africa, and were probably also locally produced (**fig. 5,2–3**).<sup>15</sup>

The Vingone basins therefore belong to a very well documented morphological and productive tradition of common ware of the Hellenistic age throughout the Aegean basin, as well as in Campania and Sicily, the Balkans and north eastern Europe, the influence of which also affected the contemporary production of the Po valley and the Etruscan area, continuing until the beginning of the imperial age.

<sup>9</sup> G. GAZZETTI, L’alta valle del Fiora. Statonia e Sovana – Statonia. In: A. Carandini (ed.), *La romanizzazione dell’Etruria. Il territorio di Vulci* (Milano 1985) 78 fig. 72 (5th from the top left).

<sup>10</sup> G. PUCCI (ed.), *La fornace di Umbricio Cordo. L’officina di un ceramista romano e il territorio di Torrita di Siena nell’antichità* (Firenze 1992) 130 n. 120.

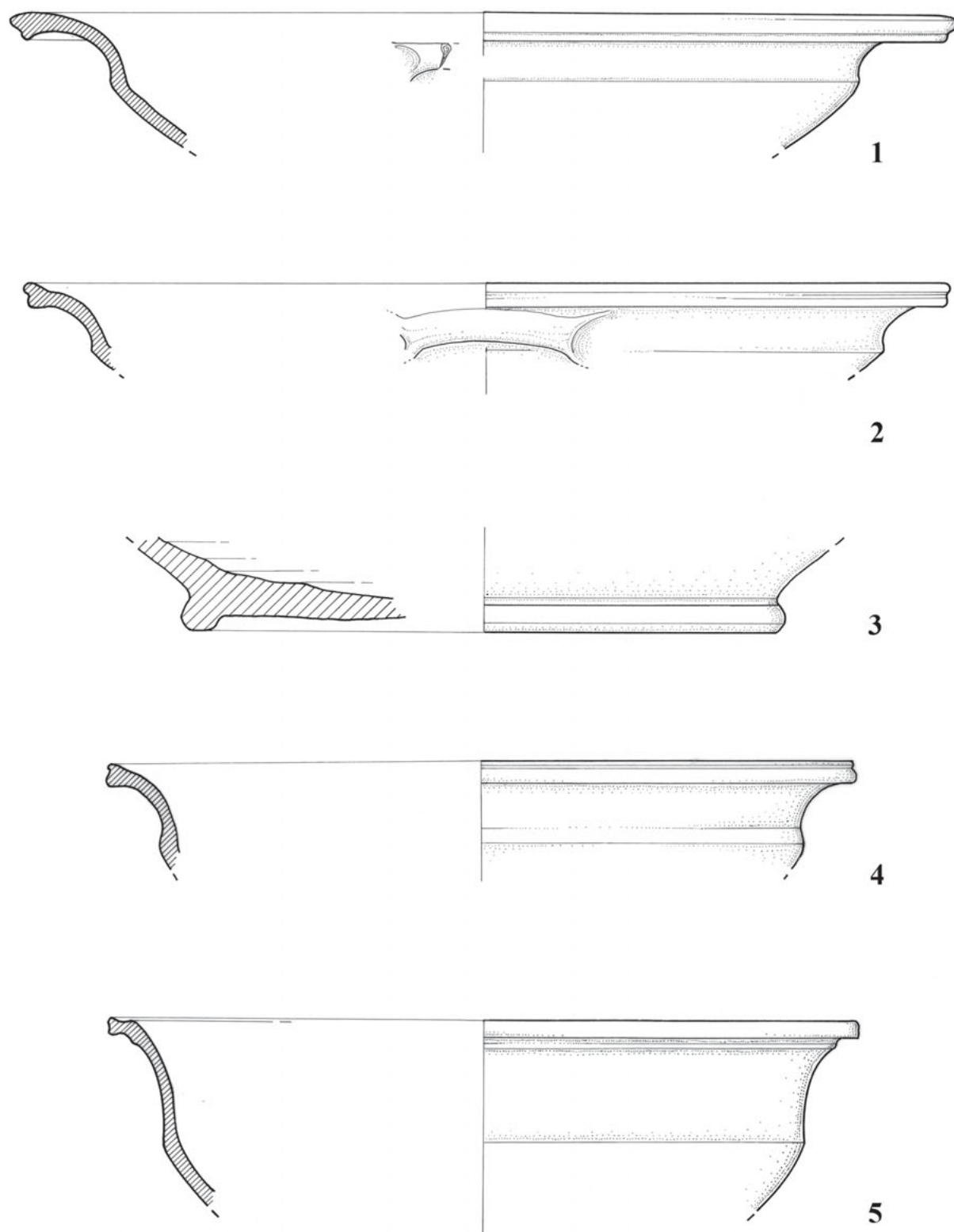
<sup>11</sup> Modena dalle origini all’anno Mille. Studi di Archeologia e Storia II (Modena 1989) 433 fig. 377,1.4 (S. Macchioro).

<sup>12</sup> S. L. DYSON, Cosa: The Utilitarian Pottery. *Mem. Am. Acad. Rome* 33, 1976, 127 n. 78. 22II-78.

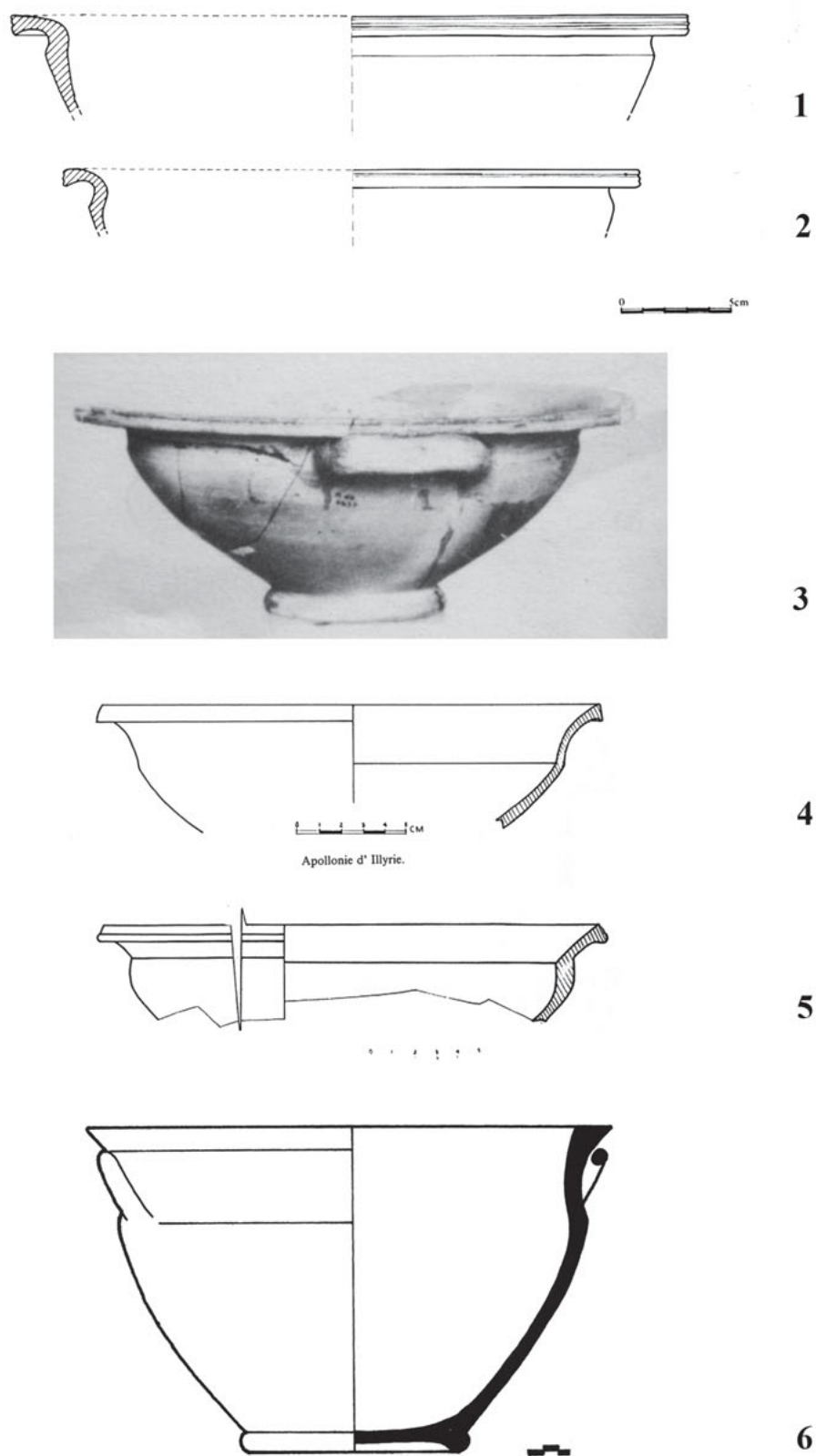
<sup>13</sup> CHIARAMONTE TRERÈ 1984, 149–151 n. 1 tav. 91,1–4.

<sup>14</sup> MOREL 1981, 329 forme 4752a1 tab. 145.

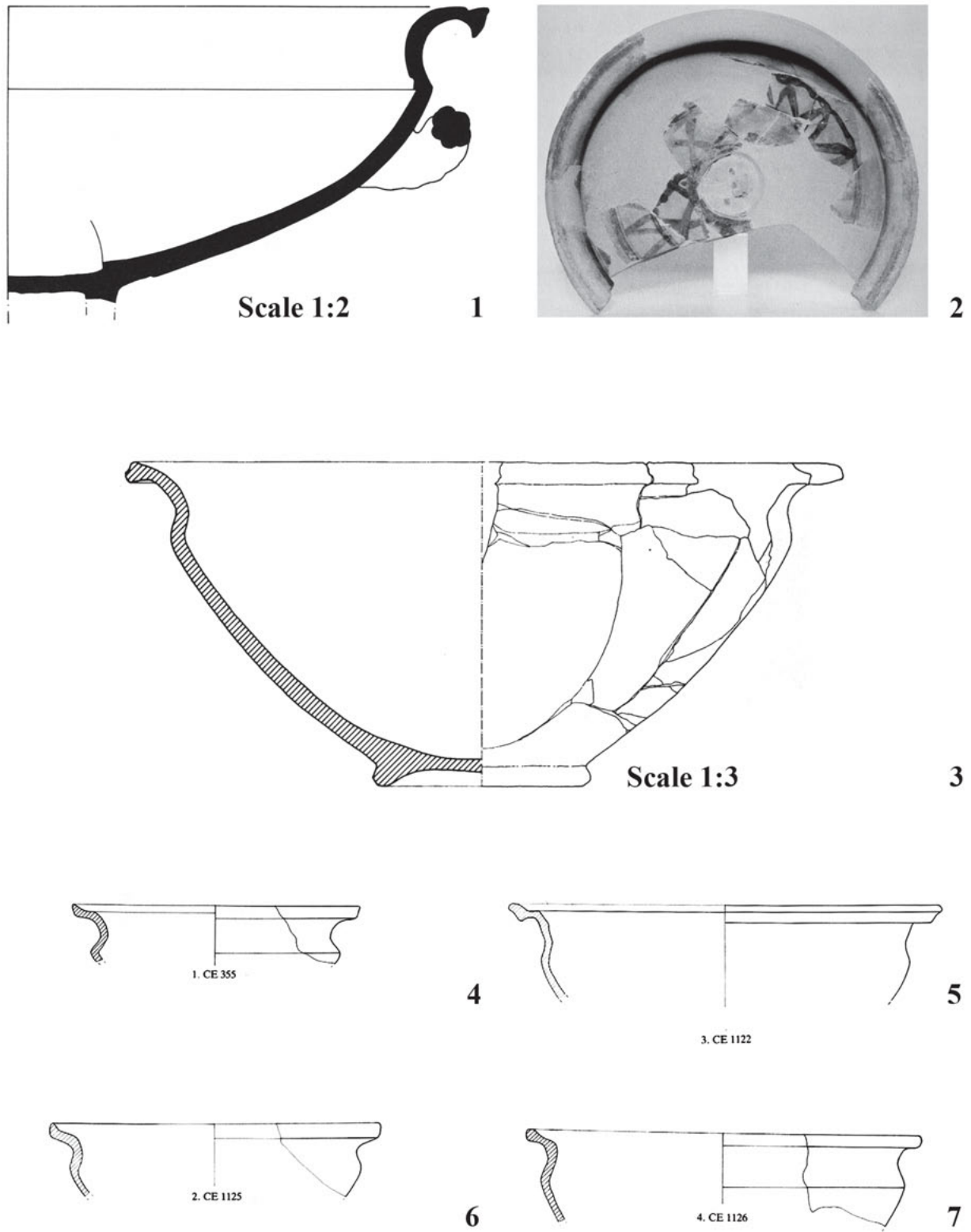
<sup>15</sup> ALAIMO ET AL. 1997, 55 fig. 4 (Ba11); fig. 8 (Ba13); fig. 6 (Ba73).



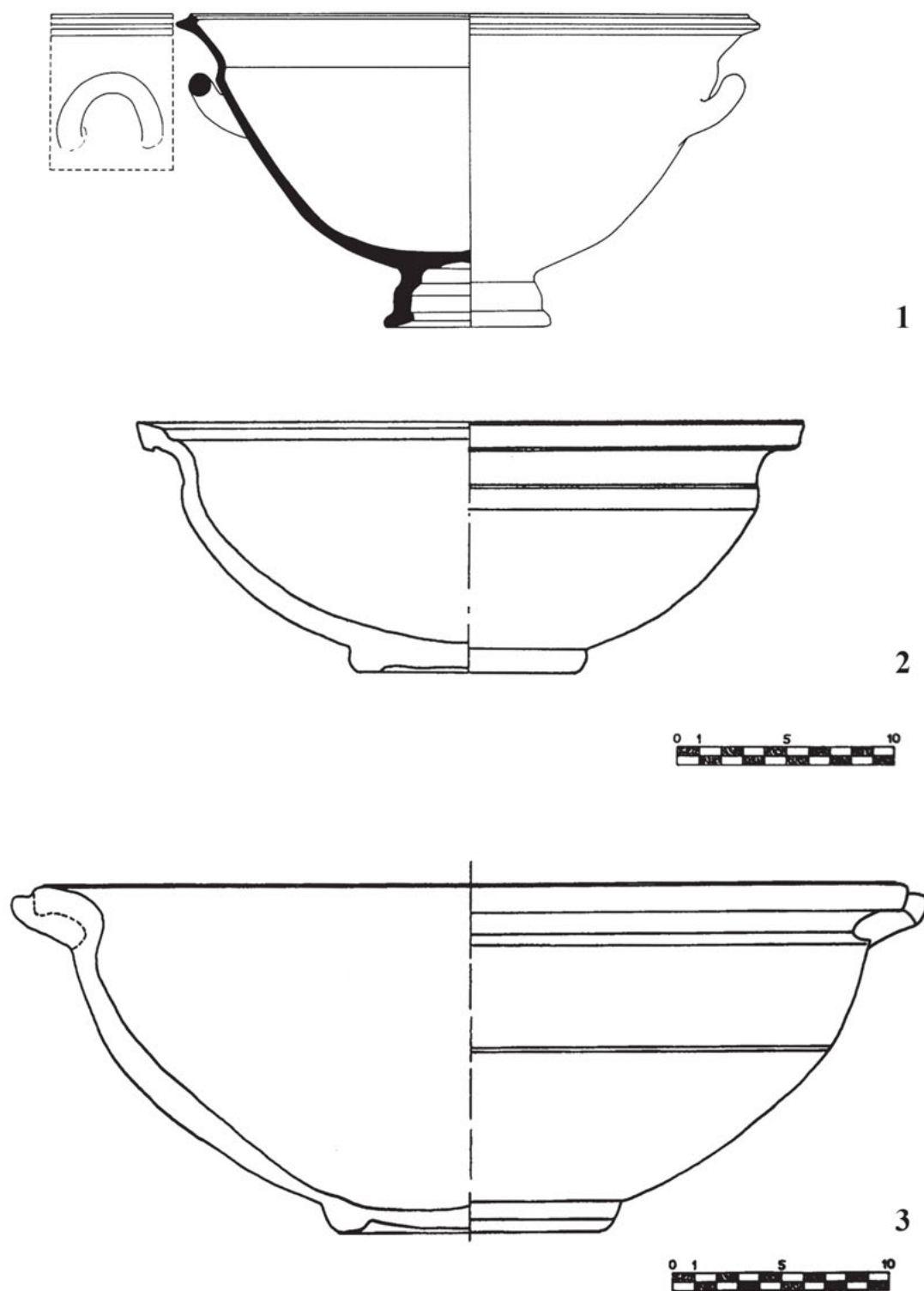
**Fig. 2.** 1–3 Vingone Basins Type 2; 4 Basin Type 2.1; 5 Basin Type 2.3. – Scale 1: 3 (Drawings: Fabio Mosca).



**Fig. 3.** 1–2 Gortyn; 3 Phaistos; 4–5 Apollonia; 6 Iankovo. – Scale 1: 4.



**Fig. 4.** 1–2 Corinth, 1 scale 1:2, 2 not to scale; 3 Pistoia, scale 1: 3; 4–7 Pompeii, scale 1: 4.



**Fig. 5.** 1 Norchia. Black glazed ware; 2–3 Segesta. – Scale 1: 3.

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