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ANALYSIS OF THE GREEK AMPHORAE
DISCOVERED IN THE BARROW NO. 7
AT CRIHANA VECHE
(REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA)

Abstract: *The article presents an analysis of the amphora material from the excavation of grave no. 2 of the Scythian burial mound no. 7 near the village of Crihana Veche in the Republic of Moldova. In the burial mound of the local aristocrat, which was twice robbed in ancient times, along with the remnants of ornaments, weapons, and other objects used in the funeral ceremony, fragments of Greek amphorae were found (both in the burial and in the grave goods), which belonged to only one Greek center of production – Thasos. More than 27 Thasian amphorae in which expensive wine was brought in, as well as other ritual funerary objects, indicate that the man buried there had a special position in the local hierarchy. Also important for research are five amphora stamps on the handles of the Thasian amphorae, which confirm the dating of amphora fragments and indicate the exact sequence of activity of two Thasian magistrates, which previously did not have a basis of support. This funerary complex is singular for the fact that only Thasian amphorae of the same type were found in the burial (usually Heracleian amphorae were put in Scythian burials), which indicates the uniqueness of this complex in the territory between the Prut and Dniester Rivers, and the north-west Black Sea region as a whole.*

Keywords: *Barrow; amphorae; stamps; Thasos; magistrate; manufacturer*

In the autumn of 2014 a group of researchers from the Institute of Cultural Heritage of the Academy of Sciences of Moldova in collaboration with the National Archaeological Agency carried out archaeological investigations in the estate of Crihana Veche village, Cahul District (Ceban and Agulnicov 2015; Ceban *et al.* 2015), in an area where other burial mounds have also been found in the last 20 years (Pl. 1: 1).

Barrow no. 7 was built in the mid-4th century BC by Scythian culture bearers. It is located about 2.75km north of Cahul International Airport and 0.02km west of the Cahul-AIC L686 route. The mound of barrow no. 7 was plowed each year during agricultural work and to the beginning of research it had irregular circular configuration in plan (Pl. 2). The object was of a height of about 1.40m and had a diameter of about 48 x 42m. The village of Crihana Veche is located 50km from the Lower Danube (the village of Giurgiulești) (Pl. 1).

In the investigations two graves were found: one of a child and a central burial belonging to a man. The central grave, even though it was robbed in ancient times, contained artifacts of significant value. Among the archaeological remains discovered were 60 arrowheads (Pl. 3: 1), a Scythian sword handle plated with engraved bone plates with silver wires (Pl. 4), a *kiathos* (Pl. 3: 3), seven silver beads (Pl. 5: 2), two silver plaques representing heads of griffins (Pl. 5: 10–11), beads made of Egyptian faience (Pl. 5: 8–9), pieces of bone (Pl. 5: 1, 4, 6) and many fragmented iron plates of scale armor.

Grave 1

(Scythian culture?) Grave 1 was discovered in the process of excavation of the mound, 5.5m to the south-west from the central landmark of the barrow, at a depth of 0.60–0.65m (Pl. 2). The contour of the grave pit could not be detected. The deceased was deposited in the supine position with the head toward the west. At 10cm from the skull to the left, from the northern side, a small jar was placed. The preservation status of the skeleton was precarious. A few skull fragments and milk teeth were discovered. Under the deceased a thin layer of rotten wood was found, with a thickness of 0.1–0.2cm. Per anthropological measurements the skeleton belonged to a child aged 7–8 years (Pl. 6: 3).

Grave 2 (Scythian, principal)

It was found in the central part of the barrow at a distance of 2.35m north-east from the landmark, at a depth of 0.95m (Pl. 2).

The burial chamber has a rectangular shape with rounded corners. Dimensions: 6.2 x 2.6m; the depth from the level of the contour detection is 1.55m (Pl. 7). The burial chamber walls in some places were covered with a thin layer of chalky gray-white substance. The burial pit was located on the east-west axis, with a deviation of about 5° north. At a distance of 0.3m from the western end of the pit of grave 2, under the central control, and 1.5m north of the landmark a pit was discovered, which in the eastern part has an underground canal dug in sterile clay, which led to the burial chamber of the tomb (dromos?). The access pit dimensions were 2.45 x 0.8m, and the depth was 1m from the level of the pit contour detection and 0.9m from the ground level. We can say from the filling of the pit, the arrangement of human skeletal remains, and the grave goods that grave 2 was robbed at least twice. Because the skeletal remains of the deceased were scattered in different parts of the pit, the bones were discovered at different depths.

Multiple Greek amphorae fragments were discovered in Agglomeration 1, in the ditch with the remains of a funeral feast (Pl. 6: 1–2). Analysis of the fragments allowed affirming the presence of at least 27 Thasian amphorae in grave 2 of barrow 7. The vessels are attributed to the truncated biconical type based on the 13 amphorae feet with the base preserved, with a maximum diameter of bases of between 6.5 and 7.2cm, and a significant dent of a truncated conical shape inside (Pl. 9). Other fragments of bottoms and feet without bases confirm the above-mentioned number of amphorae. All fragments of lips both with and without handles (15) have a trapezoidal-triangular shape in profile. Analysis of the clay of the 27 amphorae of Thasos indicates their manufacture in various workshops on the island (currently there are known about 20 pottery workshops on Thasos) (Avram 1996, 33–38; Garlan 1999, 3–4). A single basic feature of the clay usually used to make Thasian amphorae, i.e. yellowish-reddish clay with multiple inclusions of golden mica, as well as morphological characteristics of vessels, indicate the vessels as Thasian. All the amphorae are of the same conical and truncated biconical type, the truncated biconical variant, series II-B-2, the production and dissemination of which took place between the second and third quarters of the 4th century BC, according to the classification and chronology of Monachov (2003, 144).

Further supporting this dating and classification of the amphorae fragments discovered in Crihana Veche are six amphora stamps executed in relief and located in the upper part of the handle (Pl. 10). Four of the stamps are made by the same matrix and belong to the magistrate with the *phiale* symbol, and to the manufacturer Πυλάδης, with a tripod as a second emblem. The fifth stamp belongs to the same magistrate with the *phiale* symbol; the second symbol – grape – is that of another manufacturer Λυσικλῆς. Both types of stamps have the same dating, F1 group, namely 355 BC (Garlan 1999, 212, nr. 597). The sixth stamp belongs to another magistrate, whose name remains unknown to us, as in the case of the five stamps mentioned above. It has the symbol – pellet – and, possibly, – torch. The third symbol on the sixth stamp – a star with six rays – belongs to the same manufacturer, Πυλάδης, whose name appears on the first four stamps. It is known that the magistrate with the *phiale* symbol worked temporally with the magistrate with the pellet symbol. The discovery of stamps in barrow 7 at Crihana Veche allow us to affirm that the activity of the latter took place a year earlier than that of the *phiale* magistrate.

Research of the fragments and stamps of Thasian amphorae discovered in the given site allows us to conclude that the entire batch of Greek amphora from grave 2 of barrow 7 from Crihana Veche is represented by one and the same amphora type II-B-2 of the Thasian amphorae and denotes the wholesale purchase of a large batch of wine from Thasos, which probably was made with a specific purpose (sic). The large number (about 27 amphorae) of Thasian vessels (Thasian wine is considered one of the most expensive on the local market in the 4th–3rd centuries BC) is an additional argument indicating the social position of the deceased (grave 2) from this barrow. The average capacity of Thasian amphorae of type II-B-2 is 8.2–11.76l (Monachov 2003, 144).

Usually, in the vast majority of Scythian funerary complexes from the north-west Black Sea region the wine in amphorae deposited in the grave or used in the funeral feast was, in most cases, Heracleian, because this wine was of good quality but cheaper than wine from Thasos, and (Saprykin 1986, 98) thus enjoyed great demand among the Scythians (the purchasing power of whom was lower than that of sedentary tribes of the northern Thracians, who preferred wine from Thasos) (Mateevici 2007, 117). In rare cases, the graves of wealthy individuals with a high social position in the Scythian world also included (along with amphorae from Heraclea Pontica) amphorae from other centers producing Greek wines that were more expensive than Heracleian, to emphasize the wealth and importance of the deceased

(along with various sacrificial objects made of precious metals, weapons, ornaments, etc.).

The fact that the five stamps of the magistrate with the phiale symbol and the manufacturers Πυλάδης and Λυσικλῆς belong to the same year of production according to Y. Garlan's timeline, namely 355 BC, confirms once again a wholesale purchase of amphorae with wine from Thasos and it was made, in our view, for a specific purpose. Thorough research of the small but very important group of Thasian stamps made it possible to date the period of activity of the magistrate with the pellet symbol one year earlier than the period of work of the other magistrate with the *phiale* symbol (which was still uncertain in publications of researchers who believed that these two magistrates, the *phiale* and the pellet, worked in close periods, but it was not clear which preceded the other (Garlan 1999, 14–15; Avram 2008, 39–42). We believe that the Scythian community which inhabited this area in the 50s of the 4th century BC purchased the Thasian wine before the event (the death of this high-ranking person), and it is quite possible that from this purchase there remained only one amphora, which was later placed in the tomb of the deceased (grave 2) or could have been used during the funeral feast, to increase the number of vessels with Thasian wine (which in this case, along with other objects made of precious metals, indicates the position of the deceased in the local community and social hierarchy). This assumption seems logical enough to us. There is no doubt that the deceased buried in the funerary complex of Crihana Veche was one of the leaders of this Scythian community, so in his burial not only multiple weapons and jewelry made of precious metals were used, but also a considerable number of amphorae with expensive wine. The findings of numerous Thasian amphorae in the rich Scythian burials (of local 'aristocrats') are also supported by the material found during the excavation of the Berdjanskij tumulus, where 20 Thasian amphorae of the same type were found (Monachov 1999, 284–289, Табл. 117–120). All this, taken together, serve as an indication of the importance and superiority of the deceased. In terms of quantity of Greek amphorae, grave 2 from barrow 7 of Crihana Veche is the second in the Prut-Dniester area after that of Parcani (Ternovca), where about 50 vessels were discovered. However, most of the amphorae found at Parcani were from Heraclea Pontica, and only a few were from Thasos and Chios (Manzura *et al.* 1992, 178; Mateevici 2007, 85). Based on this, it can be argued that tomb 2 of barrow 7 from Crihana Veche is unusual in the Scythian world of the north-western Black Sea coast thanks to the discovery of about 27 Thasian amphorae of the same type.

Catalogue

1. Θάσιον

Phiale, tripod →

Πυλάδ(ης)

Stamp of the magistrate whose symbol is indicated as the *phiale*. Manufacturer's name is indicated in the second line: Πυλάδης in the nominative, omitting the last two letters. In the spelling of the ethnicon, omicron is used instead of omega. Incidentally, in all stamps of this magistrate such a transcript of the ethnicon is used. The stamp dates to 360s–350s BC, Gr. F1 (355 BC according to the timeline of Y. Garlan 1999). V. Kats (2007, 415) dates the activity of this magistrate to the late 60s of the 4th century BC (cf. Bon and Bon 1957, no. 1504 [the same matrix]; Garlan 1999, no. 597 [the same matrix]) Pl. 11: 1.

2. [Θάσιον]

[Phiale], tripod ←

[Πυλάδ](ης)

Stamp of the magistrate whose symbol is indicated as the *phiale*. Manufacturer's name is indicated in the second line: Πυλάδης in the nominative, omitting the last two letters. Pl. 11: 2.

3. Θά[σ]ιον

Phiale, tripod ←

[Πυλ]άδ(ης)

Stamp of the magistrate whose symbol is indicated as the *phiale*. Manufacturer's name is indicated in the second line: Πυλάδης in the nominative, omitting the last two letters. Pl. 11: 3.

4. Θ[άσι]ον

Phiale, tripod ←

[Πυλάδ](ης)

Stamp of the magistrate whose symbol is indicated as the *phiale*. Manufacturer's name is indicated in the second line: Πυλάδης in the nominative, omitting the last two letters. In the spelling of the ethnicon, omicron is used instead of omega. The stamp dates to 360s–350s BC, Gr. F1 (355 BC according to the timeline of Y. Garlan 1999). Stamps nos. 3 and 4 are made by means of the same matrix. Pl. 11: 4.

5. Θά[σιον]

Phiale, grapes ←

[Λυσικλ](ῆς)

Stamp of the magistrate whose name is indicated as the *phiale*, and the second symbol – grape – is the symbol of manufacturer Λυσικλῆς.

As with other stamps of this magistrate, in the spelling of the ethnicon, omicron is used, not omega! The stamp dates to 360s–350s BC, Gr. F1 (355 BC according to the timeline of Y. Garlan 1999). The workshop from Kéramidi (cf. Bon and Bon 1957, no. 1107; Avram 1996, no. 60; Garlan 1999, no. 593). Pl. 11: 5.

6. Θάσιον

Pellet, torch ←

Πολά(δης) six-rayed star

Stamp of the magistrate whose symbol is indicated as the pellet, it is likely that the torch symbol (which appears next to the name of the manufacturer using as symbol star with six rays) is also an emblem of magistrate. The activity of this magistrate predates the one with the symbol *phiale*, which could be about 354 BC. Pl. 11: 6.

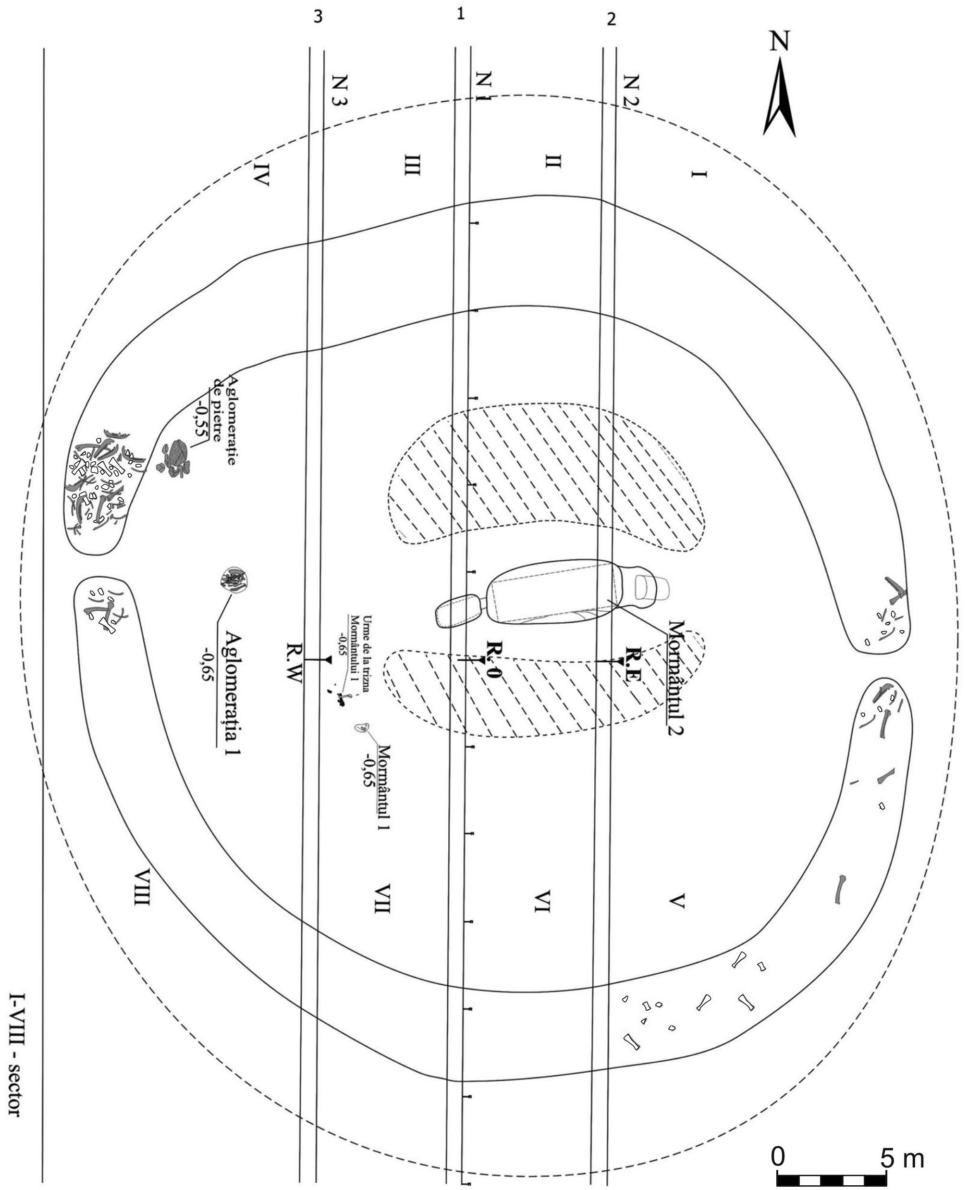
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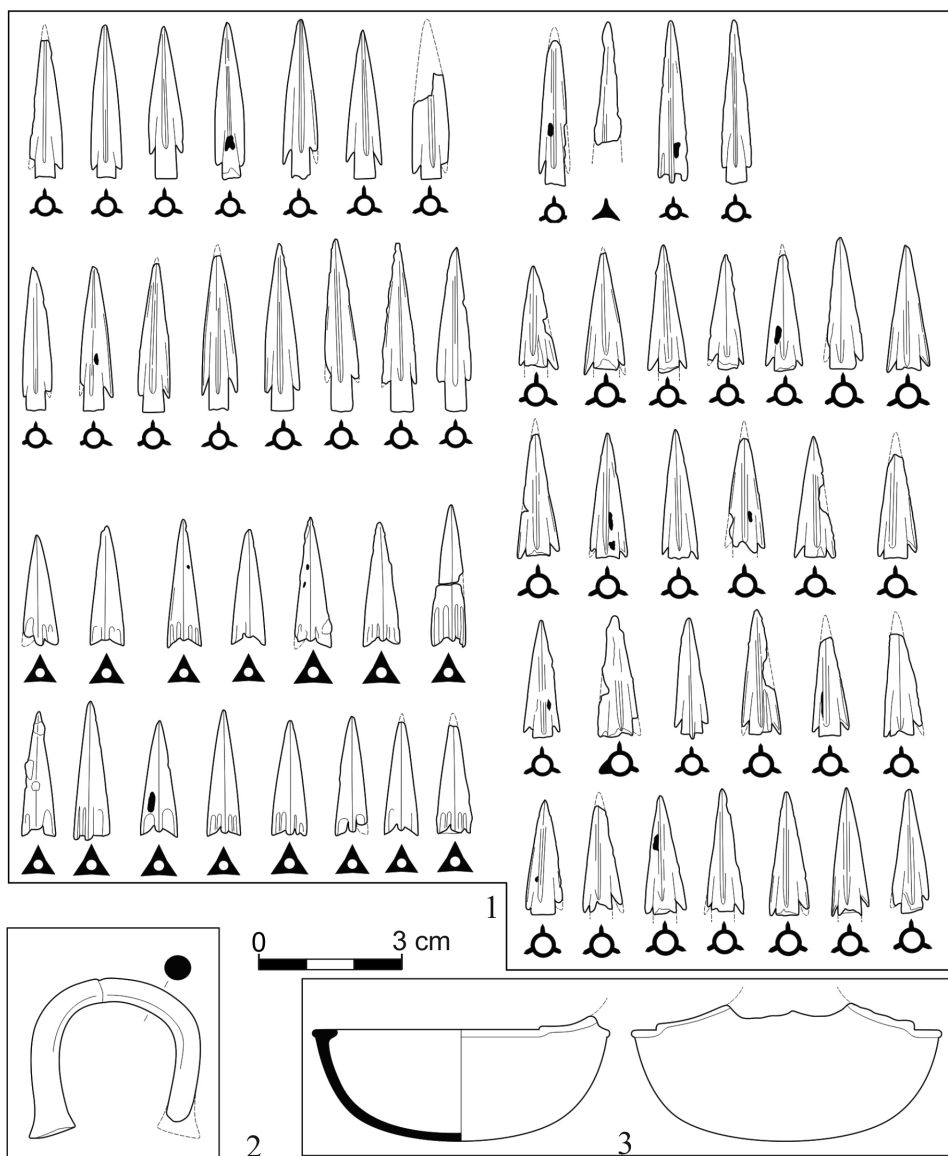
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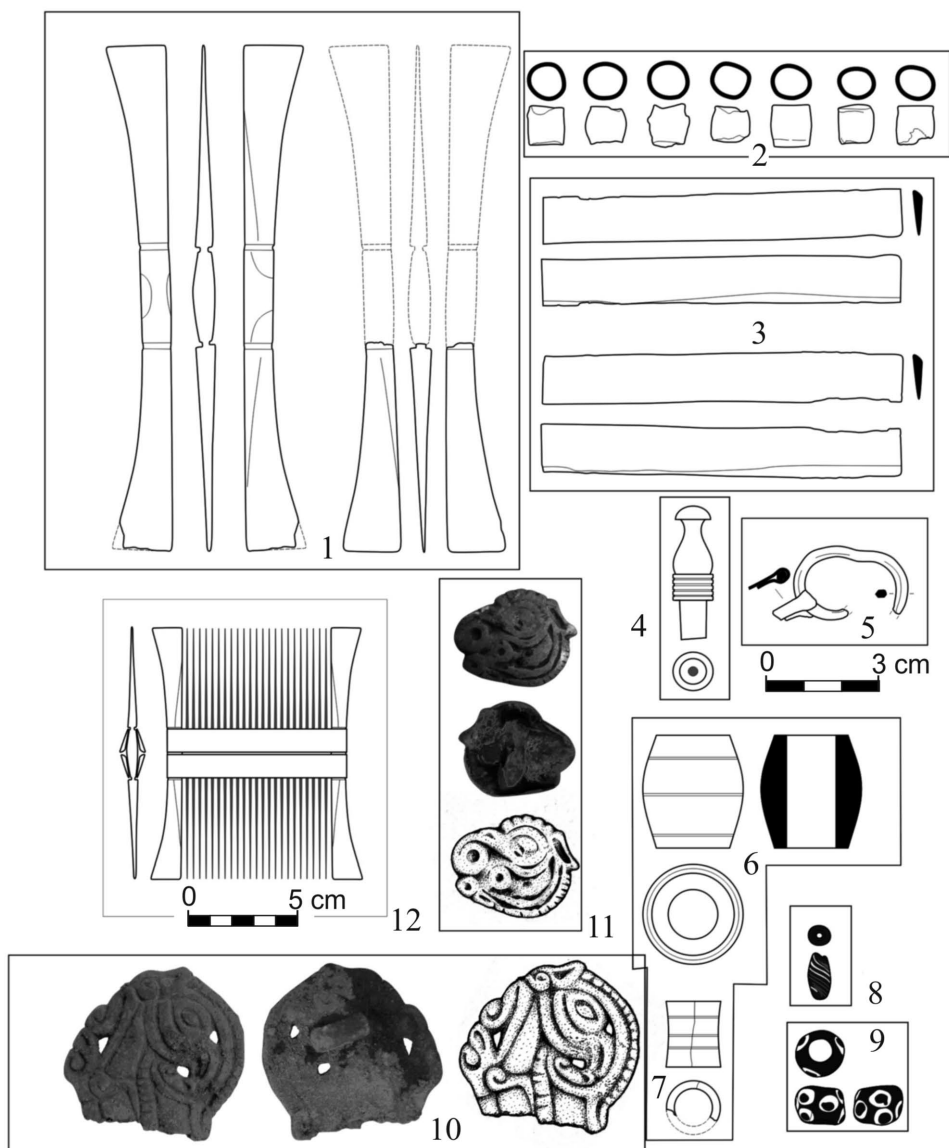
Pl. 2. Crihana Veche 2014. Barrow 7. General plan of the barrow 7.



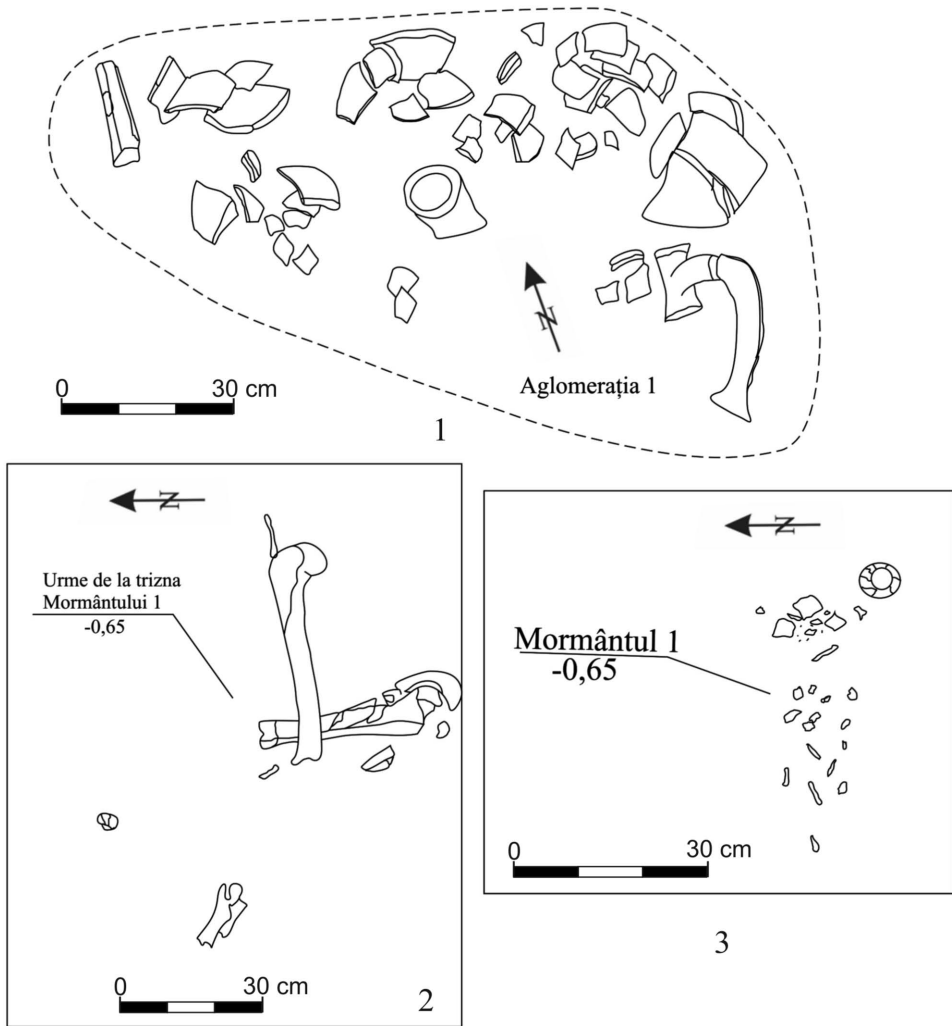
Pl. 3. Crihana Veche 2014. Barrow 7. Findings from the grave 2.



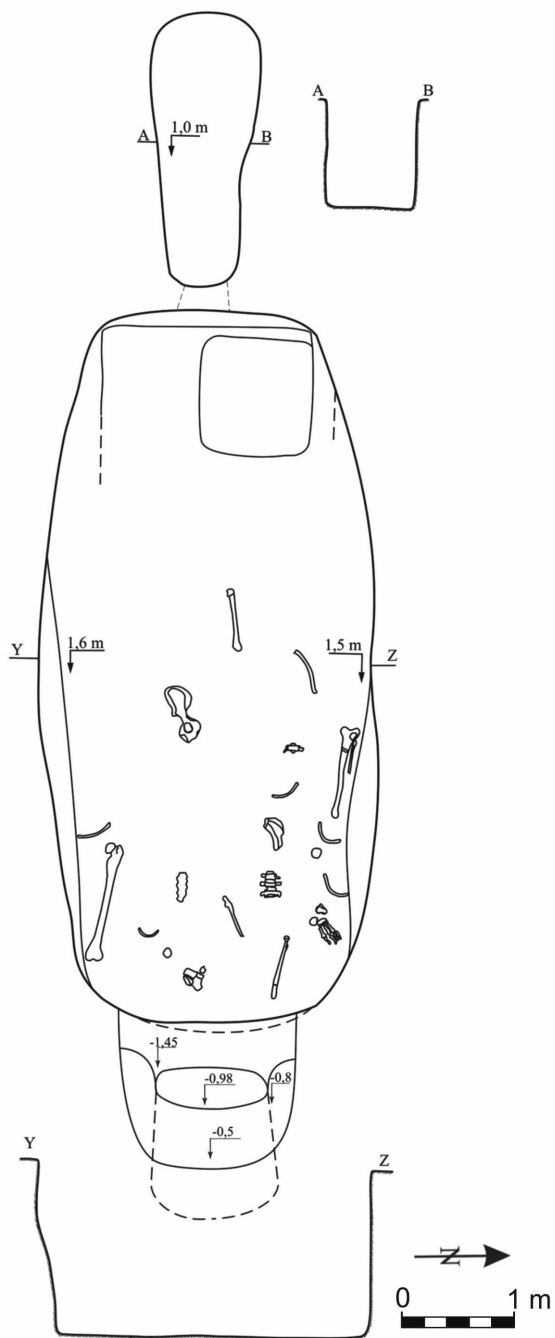
Pl. 4. Crihana Veche 2014. Barrow 7. Grave 2. Sword handle.



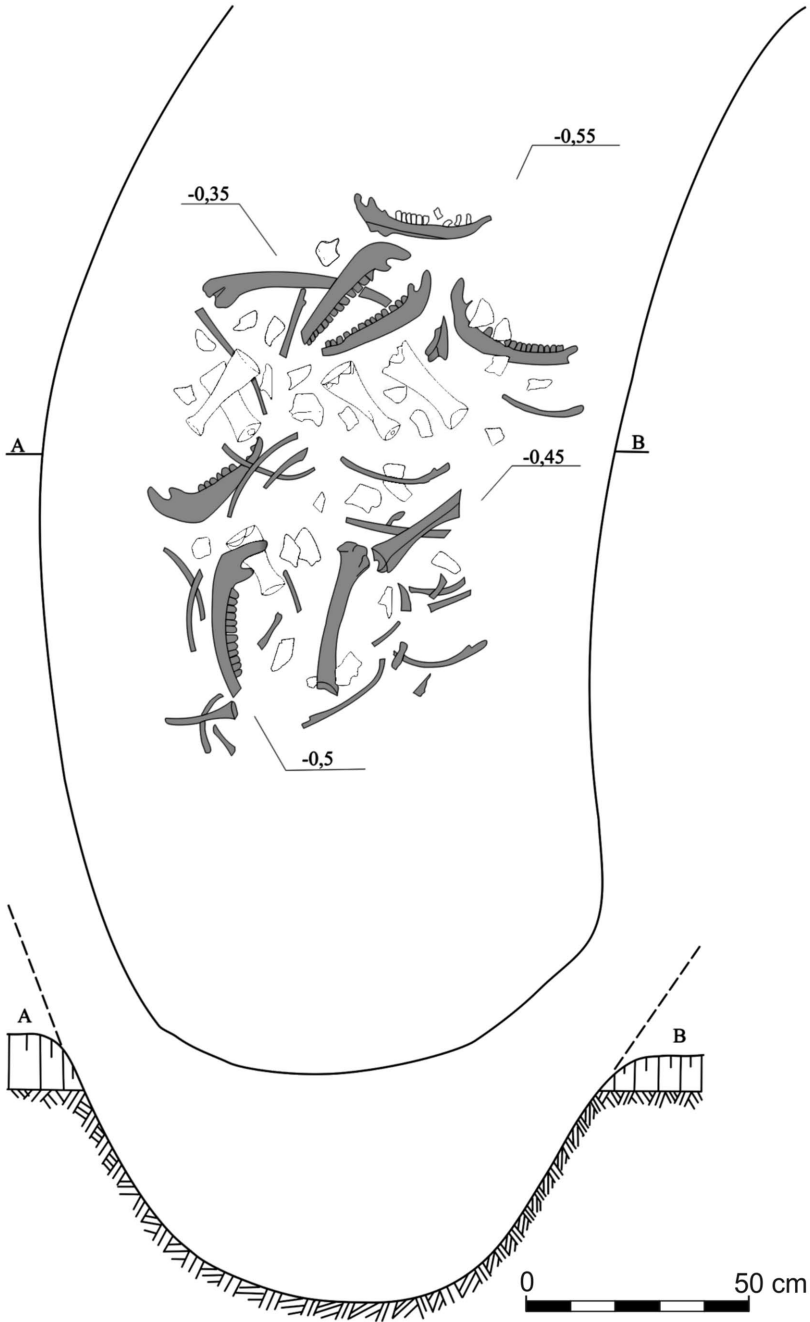
Pl. 5. Crihana Veche 2014. Barrow 7. Grave 2. Findings.



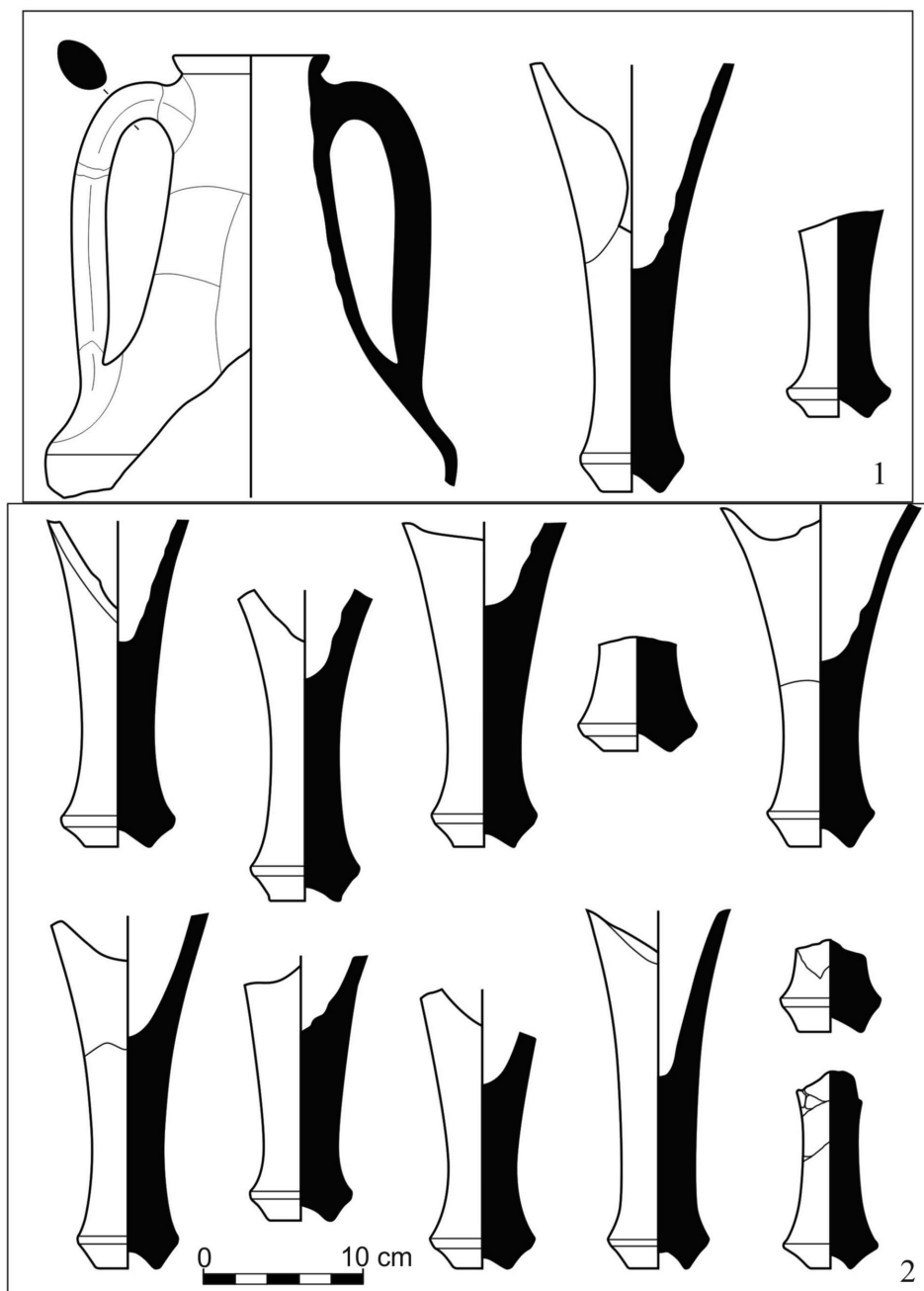
Pl. 6. Crihana Veche 2014. Barrow 7. Archaeological complexes within the barrow 7.



Pl. 7. Crihana Veche 2014. Barrow 7. Grave 2.



Pl. 8. Crihana Veche 2014. Barrow 7. Agglomeration of Greek amphorae mixed with animal bones in the western part of the excavation.

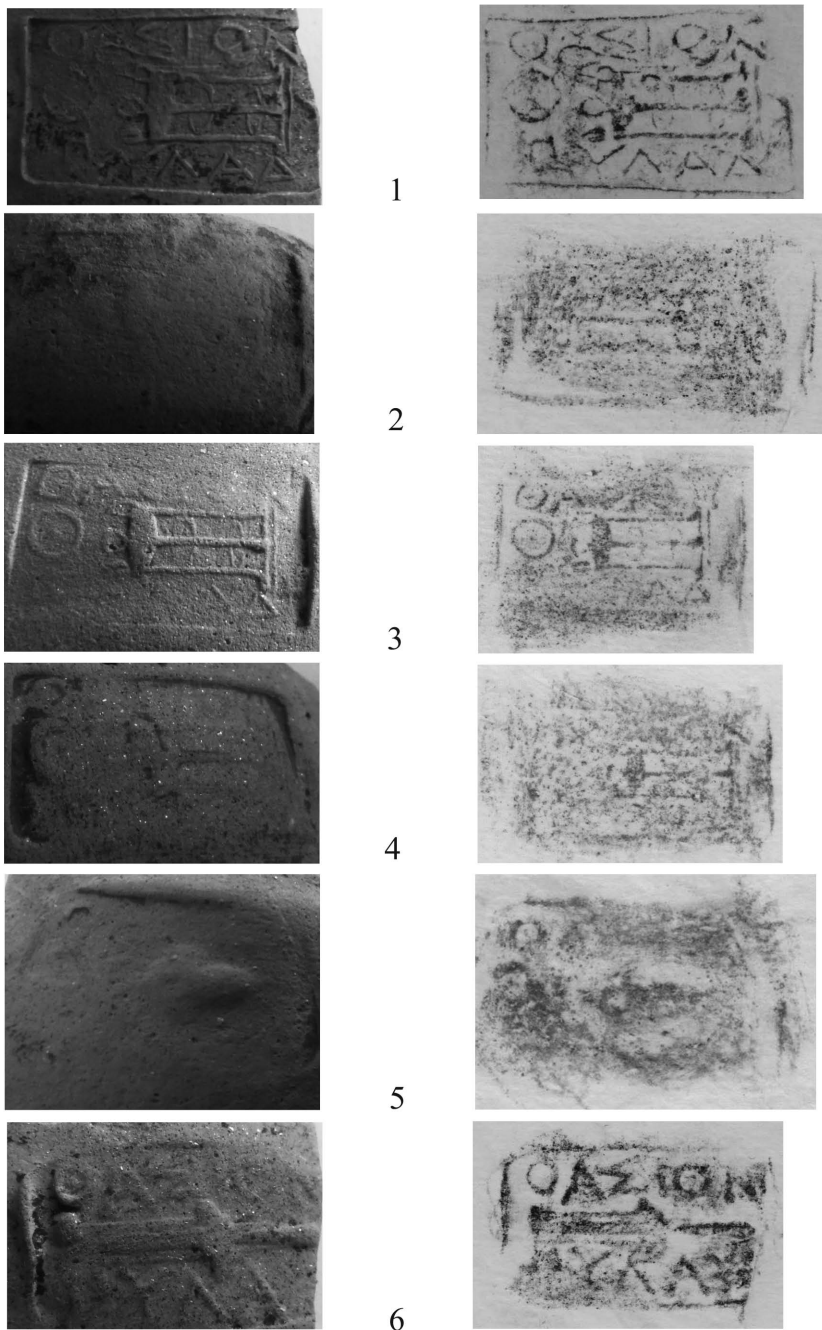


Pl. 9. Crihana Veche 2014. Barrow 7.

- 1 – Greek amphora fragments discovered in the agglomeration;
- 2 – Fragments of amphorae discovered on the western end of the northern trench.



Pl. 10. Crihana Veche 2014. Barrow 7. Stamped handles of amphorae.



Pl. 11. Crihana Veche 2014. Barrow 7. Amphora stamps.