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ANDIRONS AND THEIR ROLE IN EARLY TRANSCAUCASIAN CULTURE

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Introduction

Andirons constitute one of the distinctive features of the Early Transcaucasian culture.[2] Along with handmade black and red burnished pottery, they are a determinant of the homogeneity of the area in which the Early Transcaucasian culture has been identified. The origins of this culture, dated to the 2nd half of the 4th millennium BC, can be sought in the Kura and Araxes basin, where the Early Transcaucasian culture probably developed from local traditions.[3] In the Early Bronze Age elements connected with the Transcaucasian culture spread throughout a substantial area. Outside Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and North Caucasus (Dagestan, Chechnya, and Ingushetia), sites of the Early Transcaucasian culture are known from northeastern and central-eastern Anatolia, Syria, Palestine and northwestern Iran. Many problems, which are constantly under discussion, arose around the Early Transcaucasian culture. Northern provenience of the influences is not being questioned, nor is the connection between the Khirbet Kerak Ware found in Syro-Palestine and Transcaucasian and eastern Anatolian traditions. Nonetheless the presence of the components of the Early Transcaucasian culture outside its place of origin has been interpreted in various ways. Some archaeologists see the appearance of pottery and andirons of Transcaucasian origin in Syria and Palestine as a result of a migration wave from the north.[4] According to Hood, it was 'an outpouring of barbarians from the North upon the more civilized peoples from the South.'[5] Despite these early opinions, they were not violent and destructive invasions of barbarians, but rather peaceful migrations. The appearance of Khirbet Kerak Ware in Syria and Palestine is not accompanied by distinct traces of destruction in the archaeological material. Todd criticizes supporters of the migration theory for being too injudicious. He explains the

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[2] This culture is known also under other names: the Kura Araxes culture (Kuftin 1941) and the Outer Fertile Crescent culture (Kelly-Buccellati 1979); its Palestinian branch is called the Khirbet Kerak culture (Albright 1926). In similarity to the culture itself the andirons are also referred to by different names. In many works concerned with the Early Transcaucasian culture, terms that occur besides 'andirons' include 'pot-stands', 'fenders', 'movable hearths' and 'hearth stands'. The term 'andiron', as used in this work, refers to clay hearth stands.

[3] Opinions differ with respect to the chronological horizons of this culture and its place of origin. An abundant literature deals with the Early Transcaucasian culture and its problems. On this subject see, i.a., Kuftin 1944; Hood 1951; Lamb 1954; Burney 1958; Amiran 1965; Hennessy 1967; Kushnareva and Chubinishvili 1970; Burney and Lang 1971; Todd 1973; Munchaev 1975; Kelly-Buccellati 1979; Sagona 1984; Miroschedji 1984; Marro 2000, Kiguradze 2000.

[4] Hood 1951; Amiran 1952; Amiran 1965.

[5] Hood 1951: 118.

presence of Khirbet Kerak Ware at Levantine sites as a result of cultural contacts and interchange of ideas.[6] Both Hennessy and Miroschedji suggest that the appearance of Khirbet Kerak Ware in Palestine might have been the effect of activities of professional and wandering potters.[7]

Andirons served as hearth stands, used while preparing meals.[8] In the Early Transcaucasian culture, where they appeared in great numbers and in surprisingly varied forms, they must have played an exceptionally essential role. Both the discovery of 'sacred hearths' with anthropomorphic elements at Pulur/Sakyol and ethnographic observations of pastoral and nomadic societies, in which the domestic hearth is an important element in cult, give grounds for the thesis that andirons, besides their everyday function, could have also played a role in some rituals.[9]

Types and Characteristics of Andirons in the Early Transcaucasian Culture

At sites of the Early Transcaucasian culture two main types of andirons can be observed: andirons with horn-like projections and horseshoe-shaped andirons. Andirons with horn-like projections are known from Transcaucasia (*inter alia* from Shresh Blur, Ararat, Dzhraovit, Mokhra Blur, Tignis, Khizanaant Gora, Zgudris Gverda, Kiultepe-Nakhichevan, and Baba Dervish) and from the northern Caucasus (Serzhen-Iurt, Lugovoe), where they constitute a popular group.[10] The andirons with a flat and usually rectangular base and with two projections resembling horns modeled on one of the short sides imitated bull figurines, as indicated not only by the 'horns' but also by the depiction of a tail at the 'back' of the object (Fig. 1: 1, 2, 4). They were frequently equipped with a handle, usually placed in the centre of the upper surface, which was helpful in taking the andiron off the hearth. A related group is constituted by andirons with four horn-like projections and a handle on the upper surface (Serzhen-Iurt, Dzhraovit)[11] (Fig. 1: 3). Some of the horned andirons' prism-like bodies are pierced with horizontal, vertical or skewed holes, which may have been used to remove the stand from the fire (e.g. Lugovoe)[12] (Fig. 10: 3). The two-horned objects can be considered a simplified form of andirons shaped to look like schematic bull figurines. Those of the latter kind, apart from having two horn-like projections and a handle, are equipped with four legs and look like actual clay figurines of that period. They are known from Mokhra Blur, Shresh Blur and

[6] Todd 1973: 181-206.
[7] Hennessy 1967: 79; Miroschedji 2000: 264.
[8] On the subject of andirons see e.g.: Hood 1951; Lamb 1954; Diamant and Rutter 1969; Miroschedji 1984; Amiran 1989; Takaoğlu 2000; Miroschedji 2000.
[9] Ritual function of andirons had been suggested before by i.a. Amiran 1989 and Takaoğlu 2000.
[10] Abibullaev 1982; Kikvidze 1972; Kuftin 1947; Munchaev 1961; Munchaev 1975; Khanzadian 1969; Esaian 1980. The abundance of andirons with horn-like projections in the Caucasian and Transcaucasian regions has been connected, by some scholars, with the bull cult (Munchaev 1975: 170, 364). They may also reflect the significant role of pastoralism and animal husbandry in the economy of this region. The key importance of these activities is also confirmed by the dominance of animal representations, mainly bulls and rams, in the Caucasian figural statuary. The gold and silver bull figurines discovered in the Maikopsky grave-mound are among the most outstanding (Munchaev 1975: 213, fig. 34).
[11] Munchaev 1975: 361-364, fig. 78: 7-10; Esaian 1980: fig. 14: 3.
[12] Munchaev 1961: fig. 42: 2; Munchaev 1975: 362, fig. 79: 9.

other sites in the Transcaucasian area[13] (Fig. 1: 5-8). What is noticeable is the scarcity of andirons with horn-like projections outside Transcaucasia and the Caucasus (that is in eastern Anatolia and Syro-Palestine), at sites where remains of the Early Transcaucasian culture have been found. A small number of andirons with prism-like horizontally pierced bodies and very short, horn-like projections on their shorter sides are known from the Malatya-Elazığ region (e.g. Pulur/Sakyol, Han İbrahim Şah, and Arslantepe)[14] (Fig. 10: 1).

A bigger and more varied group is constituted by the andirons in the form of a horseshoe. Most of them have handles, placed usually at the back, as well as internal knobs helpful in supporting the vessel over the fire. Just like the Early Transcaucasian vessels many andirons are characterized by a burnished surface. Some of the horseshoe-shaped andirons were decorated with anthropomorphic and zoomorphic representations covering the raised central part and endings. Andirons in the form of a horseshoe are known from sites throughout the region of the Early Transcaucasian culture.[15] The horseshoe-shaped andirons that have been discovered in Georgia come from Khizanaant Gora, Ozni, Zgudris Gverda, and other sites.[16] Andirons from Amiranis Gora in southern Georgia are distinct for their anthropomorphic decoration[17] (Fig. 2: 1-3). The raised central part of one of the andirons depicts a human head, possibly crowned with horns. In Armenia, andirons and hearths with anthropomorphic representations are more frequent.[18] They appear on several sites including Shengavit, Tignis, Garni, Mokhra Blur, Arich, Armavir, and Arevik (Fig. 2: 4-8; Fig. 3, Fig. 4). Schematically rendered faces, usually represented simply by eyes and nose, which are seldom accompanied by ears and mouth, were located mainly on the raised central part, or on the projecting endings of the andirons. An interesting example comes from Shengavit[19] (Fig. 3: 7); it is horseshoe-shaped and stands on three legs, the two front ones being decorated in the upper parts with plastic representations of rams' heads (andirons of this type are also known from the Shirak plain – *inter alia* from Arich and Amasiya).[20] Two other andirons from Shengavit bear a schematic anthropomorphic decoration[21] (Fig. 3: 8). Another andiron fragment from Shengavit, which bears a representation of a human face on its raised central part,

[13] Areshian 1972: 257; Esaian 1980: fig. 15: 3-5; Kuftin 1944: fig. 59.

[14] Koşay 1976: pl. 32: 5; Ertem 1974: fig. 58: 3; Palmieri 1973: fig. 75: 8, 10. In this work andirons with horn-like projections have been discussed in relation to the Early Transcaucasian culture. Outside this region similar objects with horn-like projections have been found i.a. in Alişar and Mersin (Garstang 1953: fig. 90, 106; von der Osten 1937: 270, fig. 278). Similar to the Transcaucasian andirons one of the Mersin examples, shaped as a rectangular prism, is equipped not only with horn-like projections, but also with a handle in the centre of the upper surface. On other objects with horn-like projections found in the Near East and potential relationship between the horned objects from Anatolia and the Minoan 'horns of Consecration', see Diamant and Rutter 1969.

[15] Not many examples of this type of andirons are known from the sites in the northern Caucasus, where the objects with horn-like projections mainly occur. Andirons from the northern Caucasus are found in smaller numbers and less numerous variants than on the southern side of the Caucasus.

[16] Kikvidze 1972: fig. 8: 5; Khanzadian 1969: 166.

[17] Chubinishvili 1963; Chubinishvili 1971: 66-68, pl. XXII.

[18] Esaian 1980: 13-14; Khanzadian 1969: 157-170, fig. 6, 7.

[19] Kuftin 1944: 119-120, fig. 74: 3.

[20] Khachatrian 1975: 72.

[21] Kuftin 1944: 118-119, fig. 74: 1, 2.

rests on a foot[22] (Fig. 4: 2). Three short, knob-like feet support some of the andirons from Arevik [23] (Fig. 4: 4, 5).

Andirons are accompanied by Early Transcaucasian Ware at Early Bronze Age sites in northeastern Anatolia (an area where the pottery characteristic of the Early Transcaucasian culture is usually identified as Karaz Ware). Horseshoe-shaped andirons are known, for example, from Karaz.[24] Until recently, no andirons with anthropomorphic decoration had been known from this area, which still remains rather poorly known in terms of archaeological data. In the 1990s, fragments of such objects were discovered at Büyüktepe Höyük and Sos Höyük near Bayburt[25] (Fig. 5: 1, 2). Anthropomorphic elements adorn two fragments of a horseshoe-shaped andiron which has been found at Cinis Höyük in the region of Erzurum.[26] Pieces of andirons have been recorded in the Sivas region, on the western outskirts of the Early Transcaucasian culture. Besides the fragments from Höyük Değirmeni, which belonged to two separate horseshoe-shaped andirons, a fragment with anthropomorphic decoration is also known from Tatlıcak[27] (Fig. 5: 3). On this fragment, below the plastically rendered face, there is a projection with an opening beneath. All the pieces are very friable, which indicates unplanned or very poor firing. Some examples of andirons appeared at Gelinciktepe in the region of Malatya.[28] One of the fragments of a horseshoe-shaped andiron with a raised central part, as well as one of the Tatlıcak examples, had been furnished with a hole, which could have been useful when removing the andiron from the hearth.[29]

The Malatya-Elazığ area is where the local Anatolian traditions melted with Transcaucasian and Syro-Mesopotamian culture. The upper Euphrates region owed its attractiveness to the proximity to sources of metals, to its fertile soils, vast pastures and location upon the intersection of trade routes connecting this region with the south – with Syria and Mesopotamia. The latter one, being poor in raw materials, primarily sought metals in the upper Euphrates area. This region also received groups of people from Transcaucasia, who arrived there probably in several waves of peaceful migration. Beginning with the end of 4th Millennium BC, during their seasonal wanderings in search of grazing lands, the immigrants could have met with the settled inhabitants of the Malatya-Elazığ region. Many of the newcomers could have abandoned their pastoral way of life. In the Keban region, the greatest numbers of horseshoe-shaped andirons with anthropomorphic representations functioning as permanent hearths were found at Pulur/Sakyol where they were designated as 'sacred hearths'.[30] In level X, in two

[22] Khanzadian 1969: fig. 7: 2.
[23] Khanzadian 1969: fig. 6: 1, 5.
[24] Koşay and Turfan 1959: 395-396.
[25] Sagona, Pemberton and McPhee 1993: 71, fig. 2: 1; Sagona, Erkmen, Sagona and Howells 1997: 187, fig. 13: 1.
[26] Takaoğlu 2000: 11-16.
[27] Ökse 1993: 136, fig. 1a: 2, 3, 4.
[28] Palmieri 1967: 134, fig. 24: 3, 7.
[29] Fragments of andirons with anthropomorphic decoration were noted by Mellaart during his survey of the Konya Plain (Emirler, Evdereşe) in conjunction with the so-called Scored Ware (Mellaart 1963: 224, fig. 13: 18, 19). Examples of andirons with anthropomorphic decoration are also known from Alişar (von der Osten 1937: fig. 100: e 1732, 183: d 1683, 205: e 607, e 858, e 1283a).
[30] Koşay 1976: 145-148.

neighboring rooms (79 and 80), 'sacred hearths' of a similar form were situated opposite the entrance, near the back wall.[31] These 'sacred hearths' are decorated with numerous faces, and resemble sitting figures with their hands extended forward in an encircling gesture. One of the faces is located on the raised central part, while others can be found below the principal face and also on the raised endings of the hearths (Fig. 6: 2). Room 80 also yielded many vessels, among them black burnished jars decorated with anthropomorphic reliefs. Clay objects (described as 'portable altars'), decorated with schematic facial representations on the raised ends, were discovered near the 'sacred hearth'[32] (Fig. 6: 3, 4). These objects have openings in their bases, indicating that they may have been supported on poles. The 'sacred hearth' discovered in room 83 is distinguished not only by its size – ca 50 cm in height and 60 cm in width – but also by its special decoration[33] (Fig. 6: 1). The raised central part was covered with a relief image of a face, while double images of faces were also found on each ending of the hearth.[34] Among characteristic installations in the rooms in which 'sacred hearths' have been found are stone slabs, located behind the 'sacred hearths' and described by their discoverers as 'altars'.[35] If rooms containing 'sacred hearths' are interpreted as shrines, then there would be at least four of them in level X at Pulur/Sakyol. None of the rooms with "sacred hearths" is a separate, freestanding structure; on the contrary, they all belong to densely spaced residential complexes. The rooms' measurements and plans are alike, and, in most cases, so are installations therein, the most characteristic of which is a clay horseshoe-shaped hearth. Distinctive features of rooms interpreted as shrines (79, 80 and 83) are anthropomorphic elements on hearths and other objects, such as 'portable altars' (room 83), and stone slabs.[36]

At Korucutepe and Norşuntepe horseshoe-shaped andirons of different sizes form groups of three, in which the biggest andiron embraces the middle one and this one, in turn, holds the smallest one.[37] Three andirons from Korucutepe were found inside a freestanding building of a public character designated as a 'hall' by the discoverers. The andirons stood on a round hearth platform in front of a podium built against the eastern wall[38] (Fig. 7). The andirons' shape is typical for the Keban region: their outer faces form reversed triangles.[39] The outermost andiron from the Korucutepe 'hall' was 81 cm, the middle one 43 cm, and the inner one 17 cm high. Traces of fire are in evidence, both on

[31] Koşay 1976: 133-134, 145-146, pl. 19, 37.
[32] Koşay 1976: 145-146, pl. 32: 6, 7, pl. 36.
[33] Koşay 1976: 136-137, 146, pl. 21.
[34] From Pulur/Sakyol other 'sacred hearths' are also known. A hearth shaped as a sitting figure comes from level IX (room 61), while in level XI (room 101) and level X (room 74) hearths with a relief depiction of oxes' heads were found (Koşay 1976: 131, 132, 146).
[35] Koşay 1976: 131-134, 136.
[36] Apart from the 'sacred hearths', which are typical for Pulur/Sakyol, this site has also yielded portable horseshoe-shaped andirons, in some cases furnished with a handle (Koşay 1976: 13, fig. 33: 2, fig. 35).
[37] A similar installation is known from Kültepe from the karum II period (Özgüç 1986: 9, pl. 27: 2). This analogy, as well as other examples from Anatolia, can be found in the article by Diamant and Rutter 1969: 154-155.
[38] van Loon 1978: 20-21, pl. 27-29, 84: C, D.
[39] The shape of the andirons from the Korucutepe "hall" is not unique in the region of Elazığ. Other examples are known from, *inter alia*, Tepecik (Esin 1972: pl. 109: 1, 2, 110: 4), Korucutepe (van Loon 1978: pl. 23A, 80A) and Pulur/Sakyol (Koşay 1976: fig. 33: 2).

the platform, which is partly fired and blackened, and on the andirons. Van Loon believes this set of andirons to have been an altar.[40] An argument in favor of such a hypothesis is, in his opinion, the fact that the andirons were placed against a podium in a freestanding structure with thick walls and an entrance on bent axis. Unlike the 'hall' from Korucutepe, the room at Norşuntepe where the 'triad' of andirons has been found lies within a residential quarter, where, in addition to dwellings, kitchens and storerooms have been identified.[41] Both at Norşuntepe and at Korucutepe the groups of andirons were placed in front of a bench stretching along the wall. In the Elazığ region it is not an unusual location for hearths. Many hearths accompanied by andirons were placed not in the centre of rooms, as was generally the case in Early Bronze Age Transcaucasia, but beside walls, frequently in front of a podium or bench. It seems that the 'triads' of andirons uncovered at Korucutepe and Norşuntepe constitute a later stage in the development of these installations – the groups of three andirons from Korucutepe E and Norşuntepe VIII are dated to an early phase of the Early Bronze III (ca 2550-2100 BC).

At Yanik Tepe, a site in northwestern Iran, where levels with Transcaucasian pottery and architecture were identified, Burney mentions a 'curious incised object' found in level 3A and interpreted as a part of a hearth[42] (Fig. 8: 1). In the upper part, the object is decorated with a schematic image of a face below which there is a geometrical pattern of a chessboard of incised rhomboids – some of them filled with hatched lines, some with smaller concentric rhomboids.

The Braidwoods mention finding in the Amuq region (e.g. Tell al-Judaidah, Tell Ta'yinat) hundreds of andiron fragments, accompanied by Transcaucasian pottery (designated in the publication as Red-Black Burnished Ware), characteristic of Amuq H-I[43] (Fig. 8: 2, 3). The raised parts of the andirons were usually covered with impressed or plastic decoration: a schematic face in the upper part with a geometric ornament beneath. Levels with Transcaucasian pottery, including some pieces of andirons with anthropomorphic decoration, were discovered at Tabara el-Akrad. Hood described them as pot-stands[44] (Fig. 8: 4, 5). He supposes that these objects could have been used to support pots above the 'cooking holes', which are characteristic for Transcaucasian levels at this site.[45] The best-preserved example of an andiron with anthropomorphic decoration was found on the floor of a room from level III. Its surface is blackened, which suggests it had contact with fire. Apart from the Amuq region and Tabara el-Akrad, Khirbet Kerak Ware is also known from the lower Orontes Valley, down to Hama in the south, as well as from sites on the Mediterranean coast of Syria (e.g. Ras Shamra, Qala'at er-Russ, and Tell Sukas).[46]

[40] van Loon 1978: 98.
[41] Hauptmann 1972: 110, pl. 65: 2; Hauptmann 1976: 77, pl. 60; Hauptmann 1979: 68-69, pl. 39.
[42] Burney 1961: 148, pl. LXXIV: 60.
[43] Braidwood and Braidwood 1960: 371-373, fig. 290-291, 307: 21-22.
[44] Hood 1951: 139-140, pl. XI: A, B, fig. 9.
[45] Hood 1951: 123.
[46] Miroschedji 2000: 257-258. Philip and Millard, having analyzed the spatial distribution of Khirbet Kerak Ware in Syria-Palestine and its dating in this region, put forward the hypothesis that Khirbet Kerak Ware arrived via a sea route along the Levantine coast, not by a land route as it is traditionally accepted. This would provide an explanation for the lack of Khirbet Kerak Ware between Hama and northern Palestine (Philip and Millard 2000: 286).

In Palestine, Khirbet Kerak Ware, which is foreign to the local ceramic repertoire, appears in the beginning of EBIII (ca 2700/2650 BC) and disappears around 2450 BC.[47] Khirbet Kerak Ware is most profuse at sites in northern Palestine, around Lake Tiberias and in the northern Jordan Valley. It is far less frequent south of the Plain of Esdraelon, where, according to some authors, it may have arrived by means of commercial exchange.[48] In Palestine fragments of andirons with anthropomorphic decoration were found at Beth Yerah (Khirbet Kerak)[49] (Fig. 8: 6, 7) and Beth Shan,[50] where they were identified as 'fenders' (fig. 8: 8). From Tell 'Ay comes a fragment of a horseshoe-shaped andiron, which was described as a brazier or a pot-stand.[51]

In addition to these basic categories other kinds of hearth stands were also used. In the northern Caucasus region (*inter alia* in Lugovoe, and Serzhen Iurt) and in Transcaucasia (*inter alia* Khizanaant Gora, Garni, Shengavit, Kiultepe-Nakhichevan, Tkviavi, Zemo-Avchaly, and Zgudris-Gverda) cylindrical, or spool-shaped, stands were in use[52] (Fig. 9: 1, 2). They are rather small objects, most often measuring ca 10 cm in height, with a horizontal hole bored approximately in the middle. Cylindrical hearth stands along with a vessel have been found *in situ* in a hearth at the site of Lugovoe.[53] Clay spool-shaped stands with wide, flat bases are known from sites in the upper Euphrates region, e.g. from Pulur/Sakyol, Korucutepe, and Değirmentepe[54] (Fig. 9: 3, 4). The objects found at Korucutepe were described as 'skewer supports' (one of the fragmentarily preserved stands was perforated).[55] Another group, which is present in the northern Caucasus, is constituted by perforated stands in the shape of a rectangular prism, with raised shorter sides characterized by two or three grooves in their concave upper surface (Fig. 10: 4). Such stands are known from Lugovoe.[56] From this site also comes a stand in the shape of a rectangular prism with rounded corners and with drill holes in its upper surface and in one of the sides[57] (Fig. 10: 2). At Sos Höyük, prism-like stands of the truncated pyramidal type have been discovered; the perforations did not pierce their whole body[58] (Fig. 9: 5, 6). Prism-like stands with horizontal holes have been encountered in the Keban region, *inter alia* at Han İbrahim Şah, as well as in the region of Malatya, where a similar object has been found at Arslantepe.[59] Aşvan Kale provided a

[47] Philip and Millard propose ca 2800 BC as the date of Khirbet Kerak Ware's appearance in northern Palestine, based on new radiocarbon evidence (Philip and Millard 2000: 284).
[48] Miroschedji 2000: 259.
[49] Amiran 1952: pl. 6D; Amiran 1989: 9, fig. 2.
[50] Fitzerald 1935: pl. X: 18.
[51] Marquet-Krause 1949: pl. LXXV: 1521. In northern Palestine andirons have also been reported at 'Afula, Yaqush, Tell esh-Shuna (Miroschedji 2000: tab. 1).
[52] Munchaev 1961: fig. 4: 1; Munchaev 1975: 361-363, fig. 78: 1-3; Kikvidze 1972: fig. 8: 4; Kuftin 1947: fig. I: 2, 4.
[53] Munchaev 1961: 111, fig. 35.
[54] Koşay 1976: pl. 33: 4; van Loon 1978: 98-99, fig. 132C; Duru 1979: 77, fig. 23: 3-4.
[55] Spool-shaped stands were also used at Tarsus and Pulur (Goldman 1956: 320, fig. 442: 23-24; Koşay and Vary 1964: pl. XXVI).
[56] Munchaev 1961: fig. 43; Munchaev 1975: 362, fig. 79: 10.
[57] Munchaev 1961: fig. 44: 3; Munchaev 1975: fig. 79: 8.
[58] Sagona, Erkmen, Sagona and Howells 1997: 187, fig. 13: 2-4. Analogous stands, which belong to the truncated pyramidal type, are known from Tarsus (Goldman 1956: 324, fig. 16-20).
[59] Ertem 1974: fig. 58: 2; Palmieri 1973: fig. 75: 7.

fragment of an andiron, or a part of a hearth, shaped as a rectangular prism with a pierced body and anthropomorphic elements placed on the surface of one of its shorter sides[60] (Fig. 10: 5). In the Early Transcaucasian culture hearth stands in the shape of a tripod were also used. Stands of this type, with a flat upper surface, and resting on three legs, are known from Transcaucasia, mainly from Armenia, where they have appeared at sites such as, Arevik, Shresh Blur, Shengavit, Dvin, and Garni[61] (Fig. 11: 1, 2). Some of the tripod hearth stands (e.g. those from Shresh Blur and Arevik) stand out for the decoration of their sides. One of the components of this decoration is a tendril corresponding to those encountered on Transcaucasian vessels and clay hearths. A tripod from Değirmentepe in the Keban region has a flat upper surface and holes in two of its sides[62] (fig. 11: 5). From Serzhen Iurt are small, just 6 cm high and 9 cm wide, hearth stands furnished with four legs.[63] In the territory of Armenia, (e.g. Arevik and Shengavit), flat circular stands have been discovered [64] (Fig. 11: 3, 4). The upper face of these circular stands was decorated with motives such as spirals and tendrils, which are also present on Transcaucasian vessels.

Hearths in the Early Transcaucasian Culture

Besides andirons, which are also occasionally called 'portable hearths', other characteristic features of the Early Transcaucasian culture are clay hearths, many of them decorated. In Transcaucasia and eastern Anatolia circular clay hearths were used, which had several projections directed inwards from the edge of the hearth. Such hearths, with internal projections forming a clover pattern are known *inter alia* from Khizanaant Gora, Kvatskhelebi, and Shengavit.[65] In the region of Transcaucasia circular hearths with a hollow in the middle were also in use (in Amiranis Gora hearths of this type measured up to 1.2 m in diameter) alongside cylindrical thick-walled hearths which were built into the floor, like those discovered at Kiultepe-Nakhichevan, where they occupied the centre of round houses.[66] Karaz yielded circular clay hearths with three raised projections in the middle, which were decorated with floral elements in high relief.[67] At Sos Höyük, inside one of the rooms dated to EB II a circular clay hearth was discovered, originally equipped with central projections and decorated with tendril motifs in relief.[68] The circular hearths with central projections, which are characteristic for Transcaucasia and eastern Anatolia hardly ever appear in the Elazığ region. Yet such hearths have been discovered at Norşuntepe in, among others, levels XVI and XVII where they furnished houses built in the wattle-and-daub technique.[69] Both the type of the hearths and the method of

[60] Sagona 1994: fig. 135: 6.
[61] Khanzadian 1969: 168, fig. 9: 1, fig. 10.
[62] Duru 1979: 77, pl. 22: 1.
[63] Munchaev 1975: 343, fig. 78: 5, 6.
[64] Khanzadian 1969: 164, fig. 5.
[65] Kikvidze 1972: fig. XV: 1; Munchaev 1975: fig. 19; Khanzadian 1967.
[66] Chubinishvili 1963; Abibullaev 1959: 443; Chubinishvili 1971: pl. XVI: 2.
[67] Koşay and Turfan 1959: 397.
[68] Sagona 2000: 334, pl. 5.
[69] Hauptmann 1979: 70-72, pl. 26, 40.

construction of the houses point to a Transcaucasian influence. In the Keban region, circular and horseshoe-shaped hearths are among the commonest types. The horseshoe-shaped hearths were usually installed upon low clay platforms, which were the actual hearths, where a fire burned. On circular hearths portable andirons could have been placed.[70] Andirons and clay pot stands have been discovered standing on a circular grooved hearth at Değirmentepe,[71] while at Tepecik bowls resting on pot stands have been found on a circular clay hearth.[72] Horseshoe-shaped hearths were utilized in the Malatya region. In one of EB II rooms at Arslantepe, an excellently preserved hearth was excavated, the sides of which were decorated with double moulding.[73]

The Nature of the Cult and Rituals in the Early Transcaucasian Culture – the Significance of Andirons and Hearths

Due to the paucity of material of unequivocally religious nature along with lack of written sources it is difficult to trace the religious beliefs of inhabitants of Transcaucasia and eastern Anatolia in the Early Bronze Age. With the exception of the rooms at Pulur/Sakyol, which have been interpreted as sanctuaries and which possess a certain similarity to shrines from Beycesultan, archaeological material dating to the Early Bronze Age from this region has yielded few traces of religious life. While attempting to define the role of andirons and to reconstruct the realm of the sacred, it is worthwhile to look at the natural conditions as well as lifestyle and economic background which might have had an influence on the form of religious beliefs of the peoples of Transcaucasia. Pastoralism, the growth of which was enhanced by the mountainous areas of Transcaucasia and eastern Anatolia with their vast grazing lands, played a significant role in local economy. Many Early Bronze Age sites were merely temporary camps, which were used when herds were driven to seasonal pastures. According to Cribb, the Early Transcaucasian culture was not, strictly speaking, a nomadic one, but could have encompassed a significant yet variable nomadic element.[74] In the Early Bronze Age Transcaucasia, we have 'a form of periodic nomadization alternating with lengthy phases of settlement'.[75]

Andirons, along with other components of its material culture, reflect the itinerant lifestyle of the Transcaucasian society. It is noteworthy that the number of andirons in Transcaucasia rose in the late 4th Millennium BC, when the importance of pastoralism increased, and so did human mobility. In conditions of considerable mobility, these portable objects could have played an important, also cultic, role. Andirons may have served as portable 'shrines'. Unlike fixed clay hearths, they could have been taken on

[70] van Loon 1978: 16, 19, pl. 23A, 82A, 83B, 84B; Koşay 1976: 123-124, fig. 34; Ertem 1972: 72, pl. 41: 1; Hauptmann 1976: 77, fig. 60; Hauptmann 1979: 67-70, fig. 38-39, 25: 2; Duru 1979: 76, pl. 12: 2, 18: 1, 21: 1, 3, 24: 4.
[71] Duru 1979: 72, pl. 21: 3.
[72] Esin 1972: 154, pl. 106.
[73] Frangipane 1992: 214, fig. 1b. Horseshoe-shaped hearths appear also outside the scope of the Early Transcaucasian culture. Hearths of this type, situated on clay platforms, belonged to the equipment of houses at Kültepe-Kanış (karum II); Özgüç 1959: 96.
[74] Cribb 1991: 221-223.
[75] Cribb 1991: 223.

numerous journeys, in search of seasonal pastures for instance, and therefore enabled the performance of cultic activities on the move. The Transcaucasian portable hearths from the 3rd Millennium BC find their contemporary counterparts in small metal tripods that are commonly used by modern nomads.[76] Apart from the andirons, the itinerant lifestyle of Transcaucasian peoples is also reflected in architecture, e.g. in house plans, their construction methods and in localization of settlements. The Neolithic (when agriculture had become the main mode of economic subsistence) sees the preeminence of oval houses built of mud brick with hearths situated usually near the walls (e.g. Shulaveris Gora). Inside the houses of the Early Transcaucasian culture in the Early Bronze Age, decorated hearths of a developed form appear; they are, in most cases, placed in the centre of the room. This arrangement of the interior, with a central hearth, platforms around the walls, and a pillar supporting the roof in the middle of the room, resembles the inside of a nomads' tent. Another manifestation of the itinerant lifestyle is the wattle-and-daub structure, characteristic of the Early Transcaucasian culture. Buildings erected in this technique are rectangular in plan, yet their corners are rounded; both their plan and the construction method make them reminiscent of certain nomads' tents. Such houses have been unearthed at Kvatskhelebi and Khizanaant Gora, as well as at Sioni in Transcaucasia.[77] This building tradition had been brought by groups of people from Transcaucasia into the upper Euphrates region, where e.g. at Norşuntepe, Değirmentepe and Taşkun Mevkii wattle-and-daub structures and rectangular mud-brick houses were built at the same time.[78]

Not many of the excavated rooms, especially among those in Transcaucasia, can be convincingly interpreted as temples or shrines.[79] The search for temples as separate structures is rarely successful and not merely because of insufficient field research. It has become necessary to take into consideration the possibility that the people in Transcaucasia and eastern Anatolia in the Early Bronze Age did not need to erect special structures in order to perform their rituals. With andirons and hearths, which belong to the traditional equipment of a house of the Early Transcaucasian culture, the rituals could have taken place in ordinary houses, in the family circle. The existence of un-centralized household cult does not rule out the possibility of existence, at least in some settlements, of separate rooms which may have been erected to serve as shrines. The andirons inside them could have taken on a more 'monumental' and elaborate form. 'Monumental' andirons, or rather permanent hearths imitating andirons, have been found at sites in the Keban region (Pulur/Sakyol, Norşuntepe, and Korucutepe). Norşuntepe and Korucutepe belong to the biggest settlements in the Elazığ area, and the Early Bronze Age III (ca

[76] Cribb 1991: 220. In the Early Transcaucasian culture hearth stands in the form of tripods were also known.

[77] The wattle-and-daub dwellings are similar to some structures of the 'kula' type, known from Iran and Afghanistan (Cribb 1991: 221).

[78] Hauptmann 1979: 70-72, pl. 26, 40; Hauptmann 1982: 48-49; Duru 1979: 69-75, pl. 69, 71: 1; Sagona 1994: 5-6.

[79] At Kvatskhelebi discoverers thought House 1 from level C1 to have been a temple. The plan of the building differs from the standard plan of other houses in the settlement. Besides the central hearth, on the nearby bench painted red, fragments of an andiron were found, along with vessel lids and an anthropomorphic figurine (Dzhavakhishvili and Glonti 1962: 60). In addition to the red-painted bench from Kvatskhelebi, the walls of the room, which yielded the andiron "triad" at Norşuntepe were covered with red plaster (Hauptmann 1972: 110).

2550-2100 BC), the period which witnessed the andiron 'triads', was a time of development and prosperity for the region. Public structures discovered at these sites (e.g. storerooms at Norşuntepe, or the 'hall' at Korucutepe) testify to the affluence of these centres and to the growth of the socio-economic complexity, hence it is hardly surprising that the cult also obtained an institutionalized and more monumental form.

Andirons do not testify only to a homogeneity of material culture; they also attest that in settlements of the Early Transcaucasian culture, scattered from Transcaucasia and eastern Anatolia to Syro-Palestine and Iran, similar rituals may have been conducted. The form of the rituals escapes our knowledge, but it is to be assumed that fire played an important role, either serving a cultic function, (it was probably the fire itself that made the andirons and hearths sacred) or heating the contents of a vessel placed inside the andiron during the ritual. The supposition that a vessel was placed inside a horseshoe-shaped andiron is supported by the presence of internal knobs on the andiron as well as by hearth pebbles, which could have functioned as warm-up plates maintaining temperature inside the vessel. Dozens of pebbles were found at Korucutepe, some of them inside or beside hearths.[80] From the same site comes a pebble and a bowl, both found inside a horseshoe-shaped andiron.[81] A similar plate was discovered inside the andiron 'triad' from Korucutepe, which probably served a public purpose.[82] A big flat stone, which could have had a similar function as the Korucutepe examples, was found upon a round hearth platform of the 'sacred hearth' in shrine 83 at Pulur/Sakyol.[83] This may indicate that during some rituals in the Pulur/Sakyol shrine a vessel (with its contents) was used, which was placed upon a stone plate inside the hearth. The rooms at Pulur/Sakyol which have been interpreted as shrines (*inter alia* room 79, 80 and 83), were furnished not only with 'sacred hearths' but also with big ovens and small horseshoe-shaped hearths, which could have been used for heating and cooking. Therefore the 'sacred hearths' could have served a separate ritual function. At Tabara el-Akrad a role similar to that of the 'warm-up plates' could have been played by 'cooking holes' which, along with pottery and andirons, are the most characteristic features of the Khirbet Kerak culture at this site.[84] These shallow holes had usually been dug near the hearth and were carefully filled with pebbles and potsherds. The diameter of the 'cooking holes' (ca 25 cm) corresponds to the average width of the andirons. The practice of using pebbles and potsherds in the construction of 'cooking holes' is reminiscent of the structure of certain ovens and hearths. At sites throughout the Malatya-Elazığ region, such as Değirmentepe, Tepecik, Korucutepe, and Arslantepe, the floor of the hearths and ovens was often paved with potsherds and pebbles, which were occasionally plastered with clay.[85]

[80] van Loon 1978: 103-104.
[81] van Loon 1978: 13, pl. 80A.
[82] van Loon 1978: 21.
[83] Koşay 1976: 146, pl. 21.
[84] Hood 1951: 123.
[85] Duru 1979: 75-76, pl. 21: 1, 2; Esin 1976: 112; van Loon 1978: 9-10; Frangipane 1992: 213-214.

The Role of Fire in the Early Transcaucasian Culture and Ethnographic Analogies

Fire played a crucial role in rituals performed with andirons and hearths. The significance of fire in various cultures is common knowledge.

> "Fire with its warmth and light, fulfills a vital requirement of human life. Yet the same element can wreak sheer destruction. Both the positive and negative functions are united in fire's role as an instrument of melting, refinement and purification. In a religious context, fire has, through its widely varying character, come to play a very large role in cult, myth and symbolic speech. The abundance of variations is great in different religions, cultures and epochs and is partly universal to all mankind and partly historically conditioned, particularly in the Indo European context."[86]

Fire is the symbol of life and home, a place around which the life of a family concentrates. Life and fire were so closely bound that a custom common to many different cultures demanded that the household fire should be extinguished when a death in the family occurred.

In the face of a lack of written sources which could shed some light at the nature of religious beliefs of the pastoral societies from the 3rd Millennium BC Transcaucasia and eastern Anatolia, some information can be sought in the results of ethnographic research. Shamanic religion of the nomads from the steppes of Central Asia is one of the sources suitable for a comparative analysis. In shamanism, fire, and above all the domestic fire, was an object of worship.[87] The spirit of the fire represented the guardian spirit. The choicest morsels had been thrown into the fire before each meal in a request for a blessing. It was forbidden to 'offend' the fire by throwing refuse or impurities into it, and no sharp tools could be used around it. The Mongolians believed that inserting a knife into the fire, or using an axe next to it was a sin, as it could cause injure to the fire's spirit. The spirit of the domestic fire was generally imagined as a female deity. Kindling the fire was women's task. The woman, the hearth and home were related by complex ideas pertaining to warmth, cooking and light.

Ethnographic data confirm that the hearth (Turkish: *ocak*, Persian: *chaleh*) is among the most characteristic and important elements of household equipment.[88] It is also the hearth that remains as the most conspicuous piece of archaeological evidence of a deserted nomad's camp. For the Mongolians, each element of construction of the yurt has a certain symbolic significance connected with the religious sphere.[89] An exceptional space is the area dedicated to the domestic fire. Marking out the area on which a yurt will be built, is begun by the head of the family by placing stones upon which the fire stand will be supported. New fire in the yurt must be lit with tinder and not with matches. The central part of the yurt, where the fire burns, is called "the disused area". It is often strewed with sand and must not be crossed.

In shamanism, fire is believed to purify and to repel evil forces. This belief in the purifying force of fire played an important role in religious ideas of the nomadic

[86] Eliade 1987: 340.
[87] Kałużyński 1988: 128.
[88] Cribb 1991: 92.
[89] Szyjewski 2001:418-420.

Mongolians.[90] The pope's envoy to the court of the Grand Khan, Giovanni de Plano Carpini, had to pass between two fires, through a kind of gateway, made of two spears stuck into the ground and bound with a rope overhead, before he was received by the ruler of the Golden Horde Batu Khan. This practice, which was employed also on other occasions when there was a necessity for spiritual purification, was aimed at taking away the envoy's powers of wrongdoing and stopping him from casting spells. It was also meant to bar the way for the evil spirits that accompanied him.[91]

As a source of warmth, the hearth is particularly important in the climate of the Transcaucasian and eastern Anatolian regions, where the winters are long and exceptionally severe. The harsh weather conditions, so unfriendly and unfavorable for men, were probably what added greatly to the outstanding and essential role of hearths and andirons in the Early Transcaucasian culture, where they appeared in elaborate and varied forms, (such as andirons with horn-like projections, horseshoe-shaped andirons, circular, cylindrical and prism-like stands, andirons shaped as tripods, etc.). Even today, in certain parts of Turkey the hearth is considered a sacred spot. Koşay describes a custom from the Turkish village of Ispir, in the vicinity of Erzurum. Each time flames suddenly erupt from the fire, the phrase '*gil haşşa*' is shouted.[92] In Turkish and in some Caucasian dialects '*gil*' means 'home', 'a family' or 'a clan'. Another practice known from Turkey, is the throwing some salt or butter into the fire. Women from the Kara-Keçili tribe, when starting the fire in the morning, chucked a lump of butter into it, shouting '*ot ana ot ata*'.[93] Of course, sprinkling salt or casting fat into the fire created an effect enhancing the blaze of flames.[94]

Many of the horseshoe-shaped andirons were adorned with anthropomorphic figures, which are mostly interpreted as representations of deities or idols. At Pulur/Sakyol, the rooms in which 'sacred hearths' were found have been interpreted as shrines dedicated to the fertility goddess.[95] Takaoğlu attempts to explain the role of the hearths found in northeastern Anatolia and dated to the 3rd Millennium BC, by seeking similarities with the Hittite *hašša,* regarding the andirons with anthropomorphic decoration as a personification of the god of the hearth.[96]

Due to the lack of textual evidence, a detailed interpretation of the anthropomorphic and zoomorphic representations on the andirons is impossible, as is a reconstruction of the rituals performed with the andirons. Nonetheless, it seems plausible to treat the andirons, not only as characteristic features of the material culture and objects

[90] Kałużyński 1988: 122.
[91] Even before the advent of Zarathusthra, trials by fire were practiced in Indo-Iranian territories. The accused person could prove his or her innocence by walking uninjured between two piles of wood set ablaze. Pagan Slavs welcomed the beginning of summer by celebrations which included purifying practices such as jumping over a bonfire (Szafrański 1988: 461).
[92] Koşay 1976: 147.
[93] Koşay 1976: 147-148.
[94] This effect was already known to the Hittites. In Old Hittite texts divinations based on observation of fire are attested (Popko 1989: 50, 123). During Hittite magical rituals, the old woman sprinkled the fire with salt or splashed it with water. The hearth was an important factor in Hittite religion (Popko 1978: 48-59).
[95] Koşay 1976: 145-146.
[96] Takaoğlu 2000: 14-15.

of everyday use (i.e. hearth stands), but also as an important element of the religious life of the Transcaucasian society. The monumental version of andirons, the so-called 'sacred hearths' with anthropomorphic decoration found at Pulur/Sakyol and the 'triad' of andirons from Korucutepe, which did not have a mere function in the process of food preparation, may all be brought forward as one of the arguments in favor of defining the ritual role of andirons. Ethnographical parallels with nomadic groups from eastern Turkey and Central Asia also attest to the importance of domestic fire. Andirons were, above all, connected with household cult. The hearth was the centre of family life. As such, it could have not only served domestic activities but also could have been an 'altar' – a place where rituals were performed, in which the andirons played a significant role.

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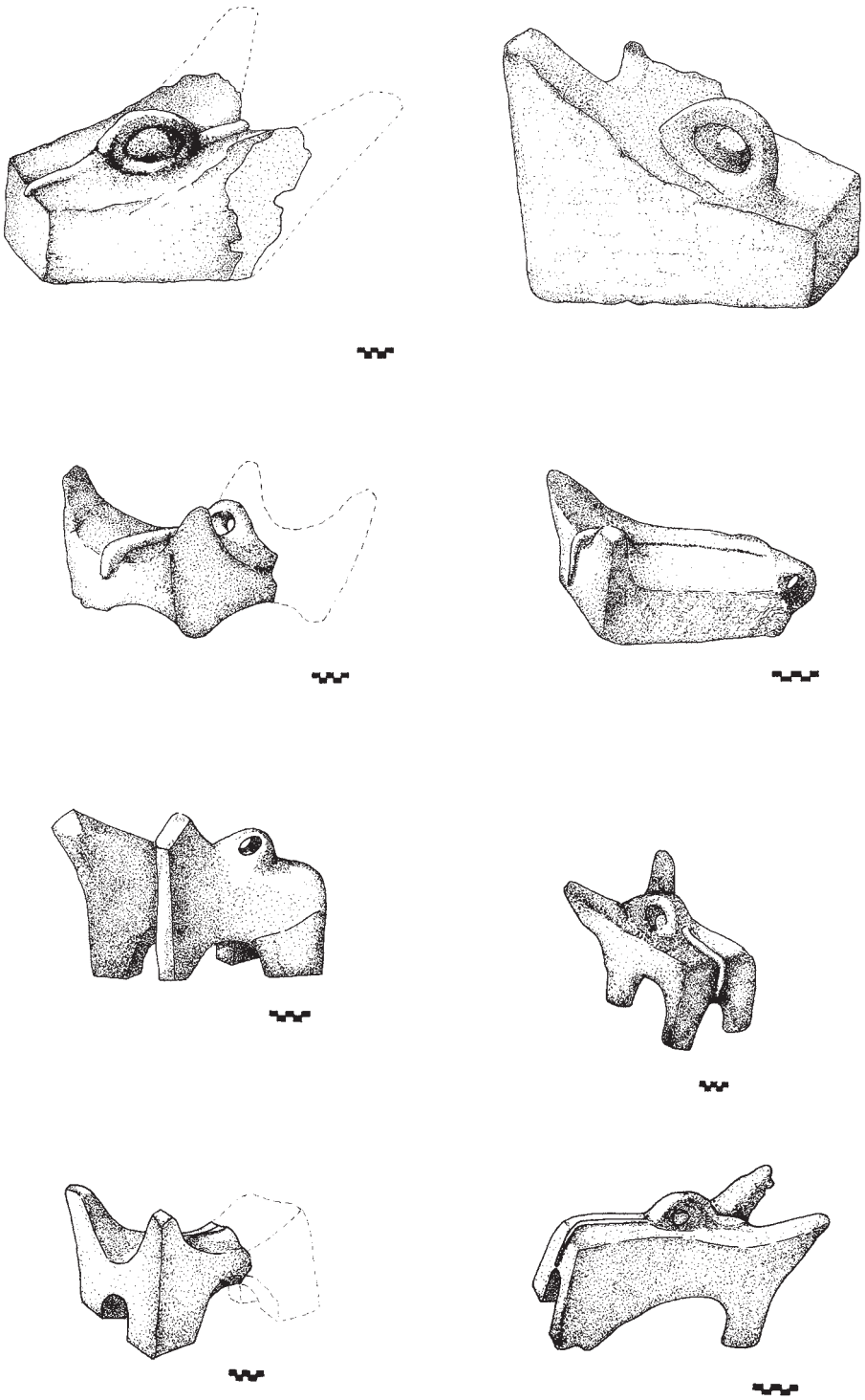


Fig. 1.

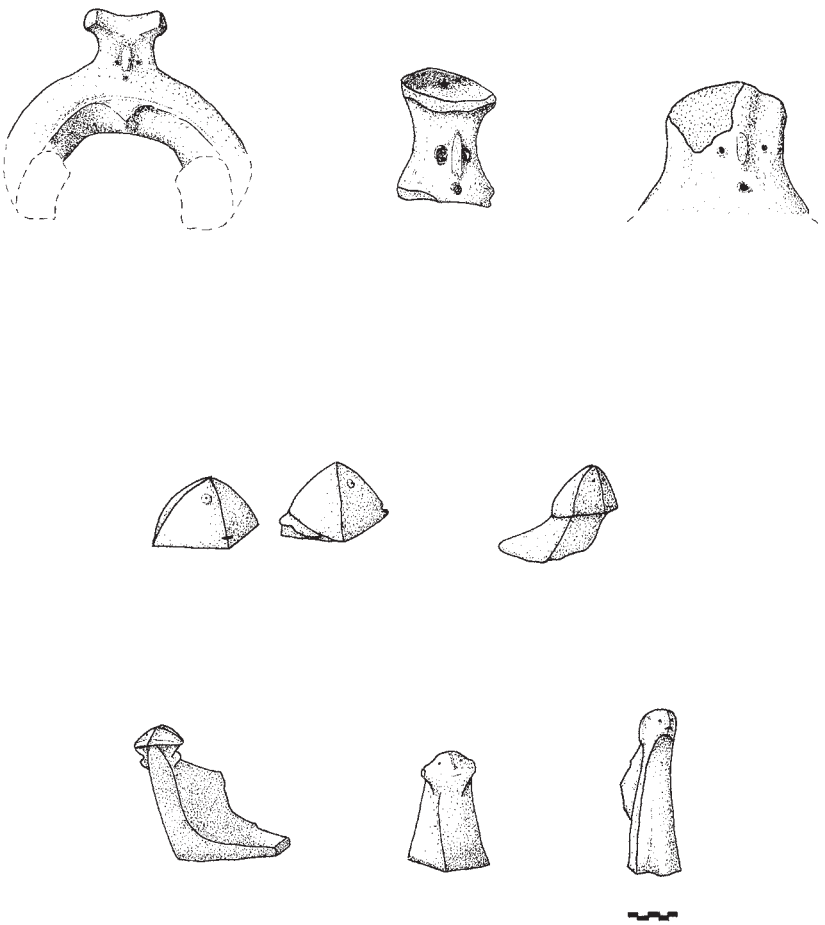
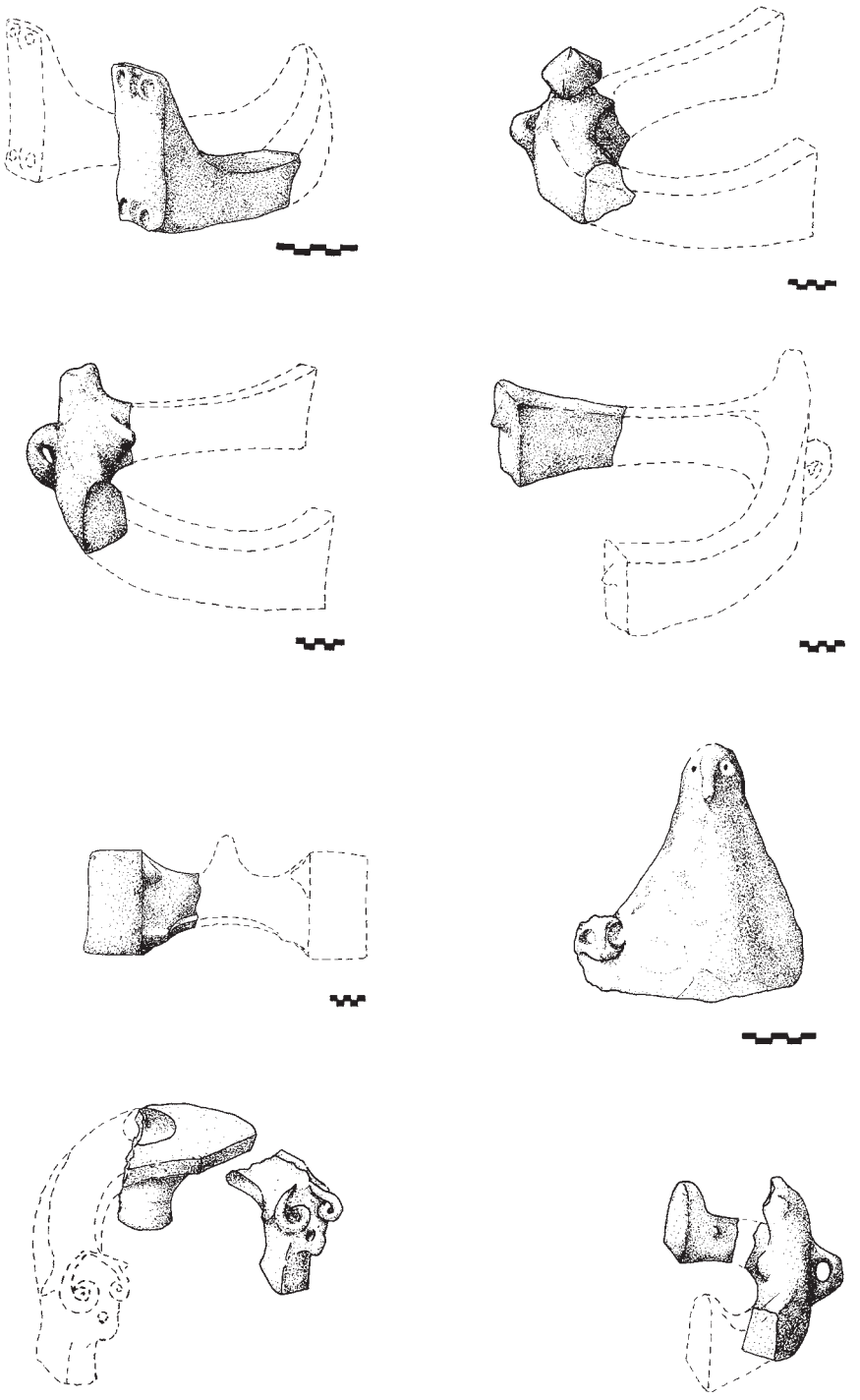


Fig. 2.



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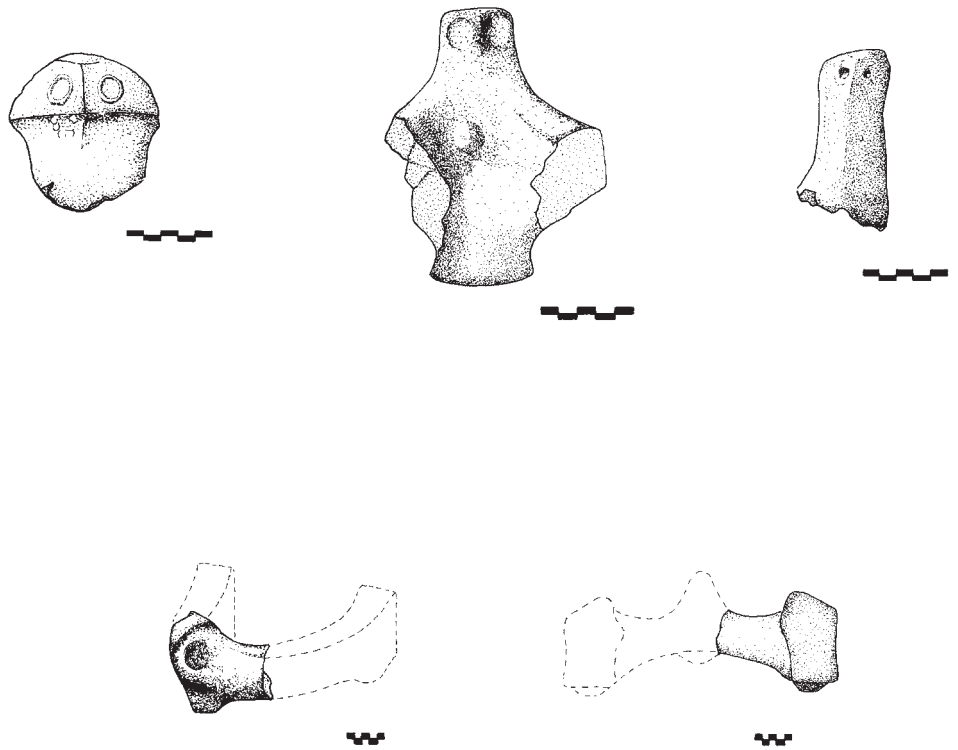

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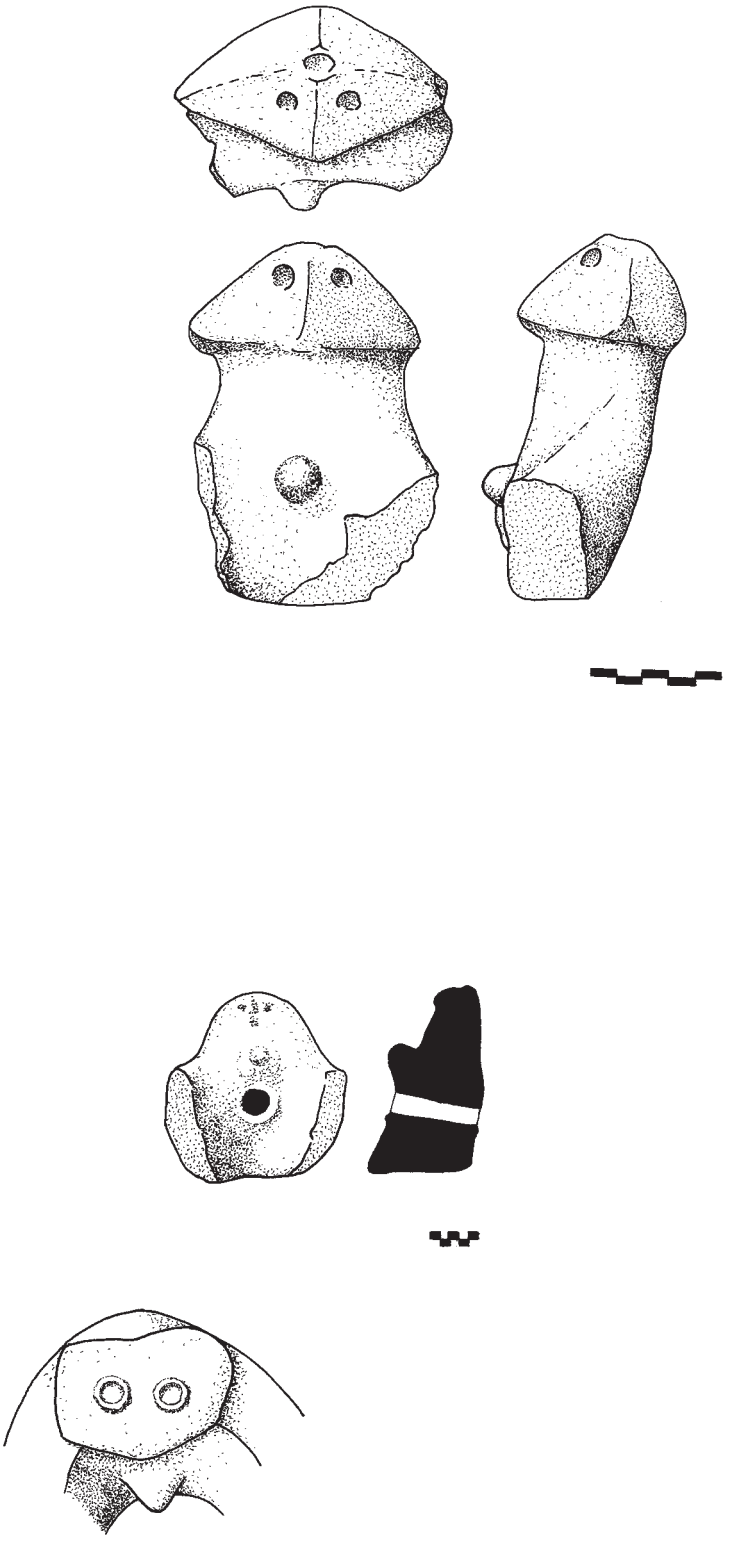

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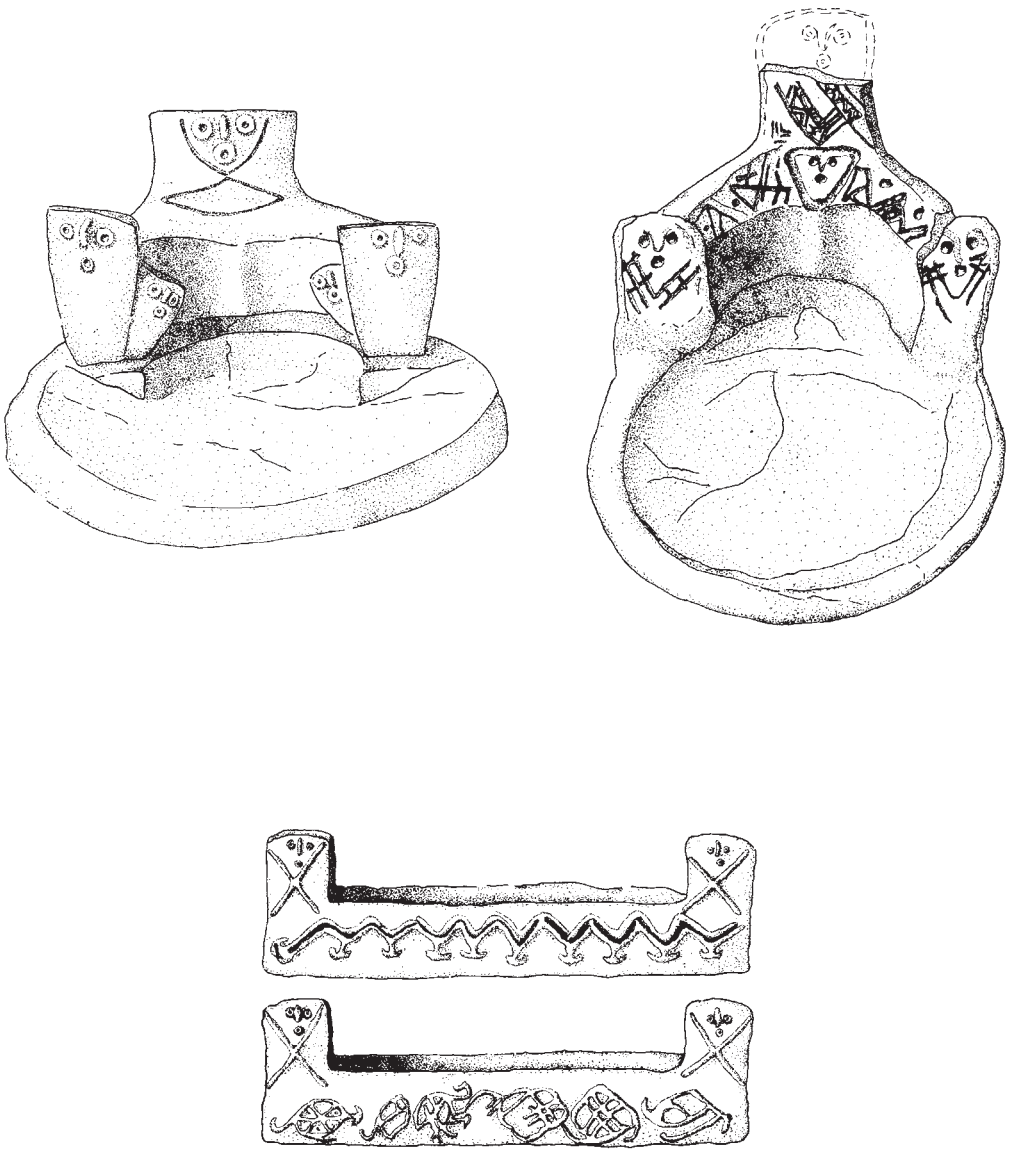

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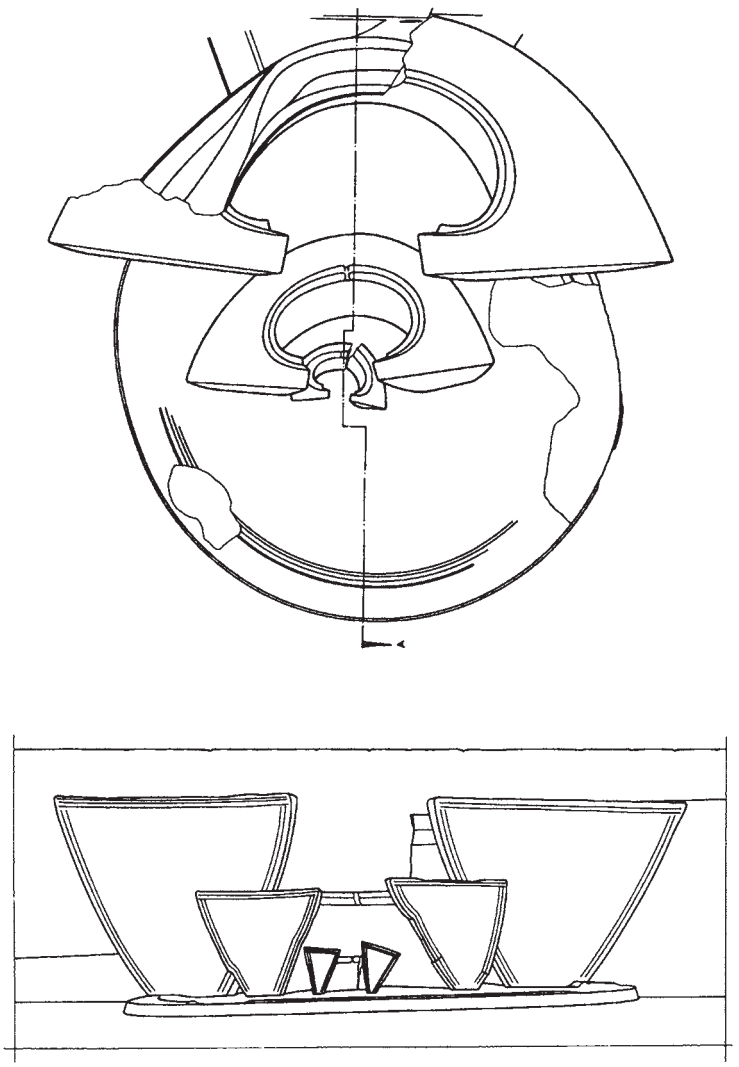
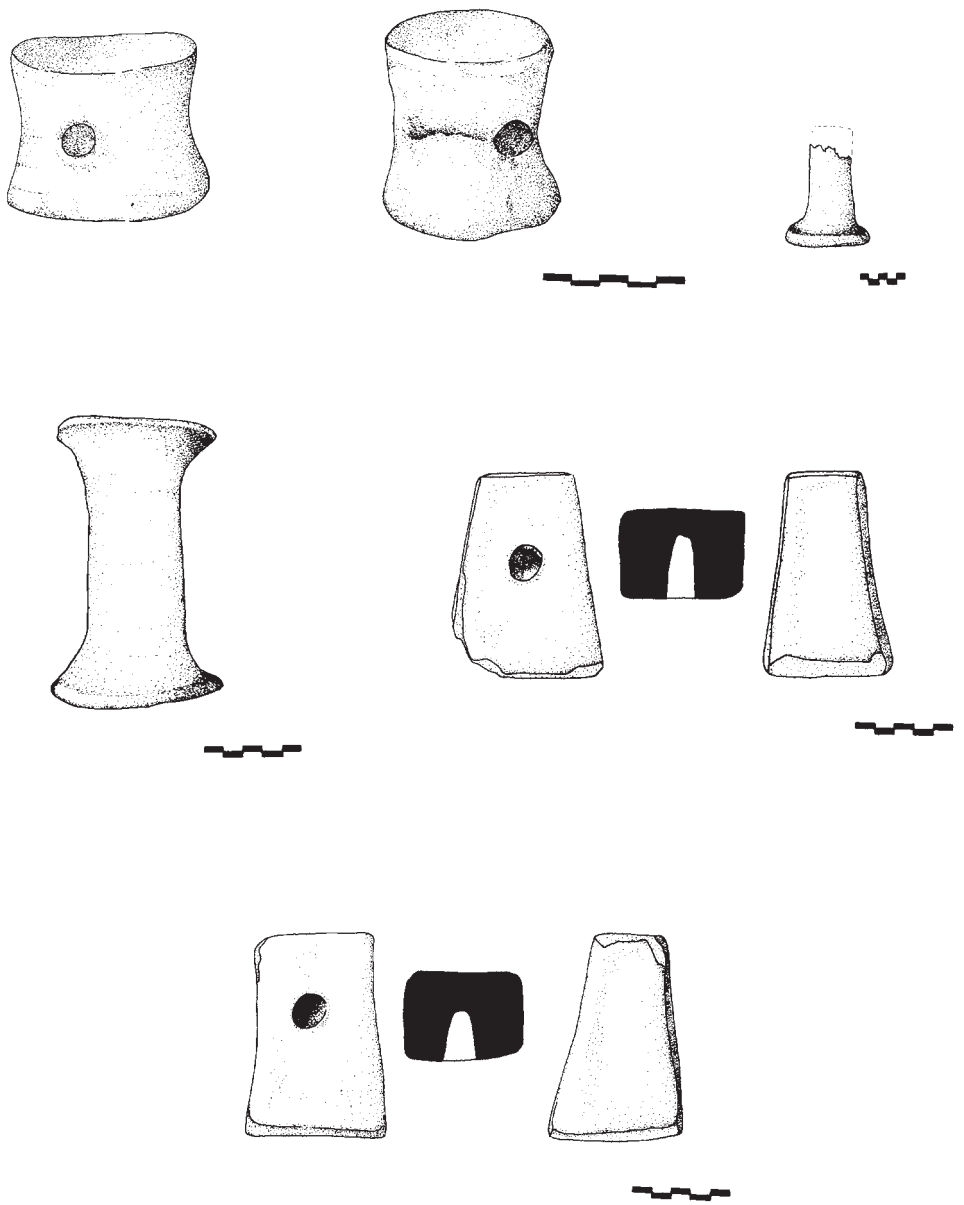


Fig. 7.

Fig. 8.



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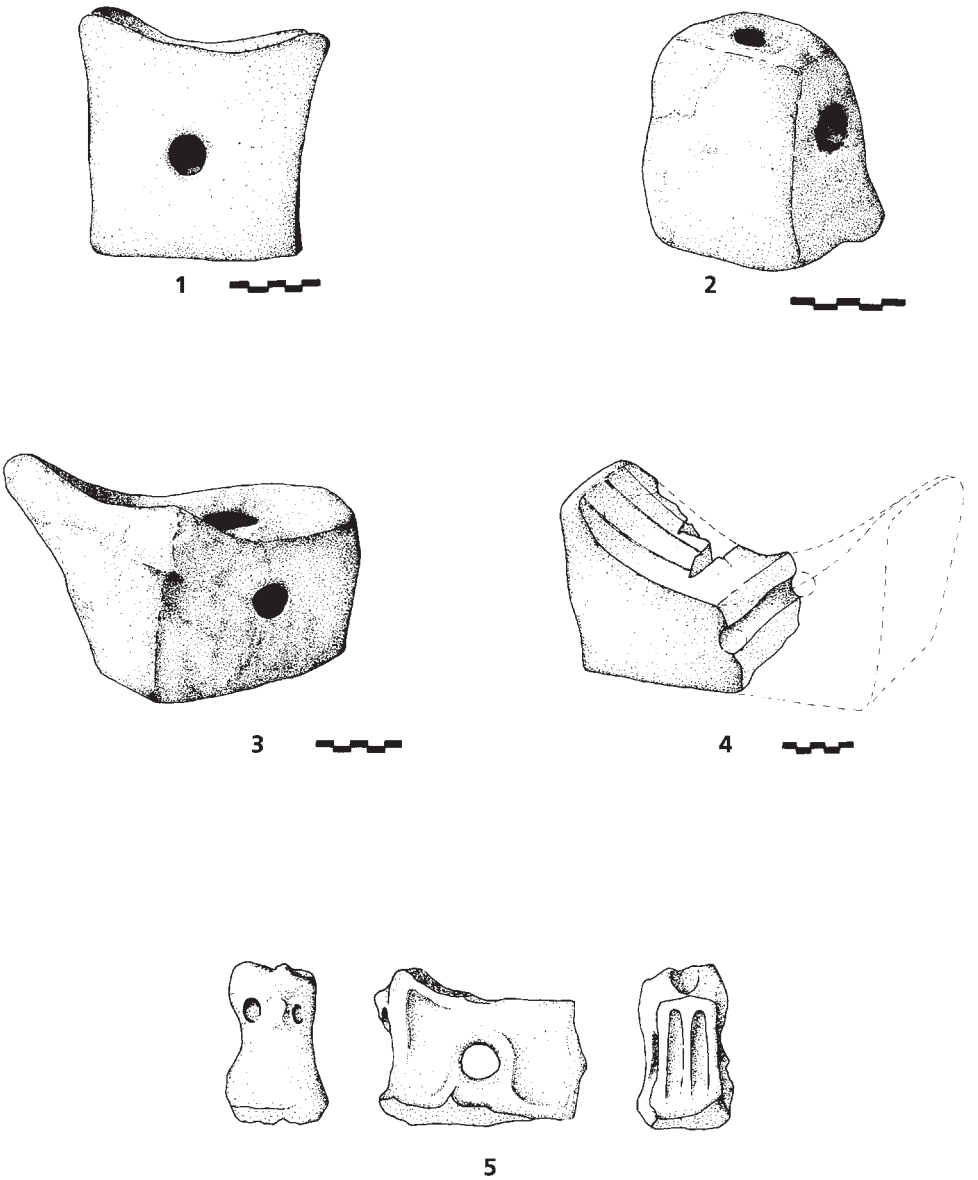

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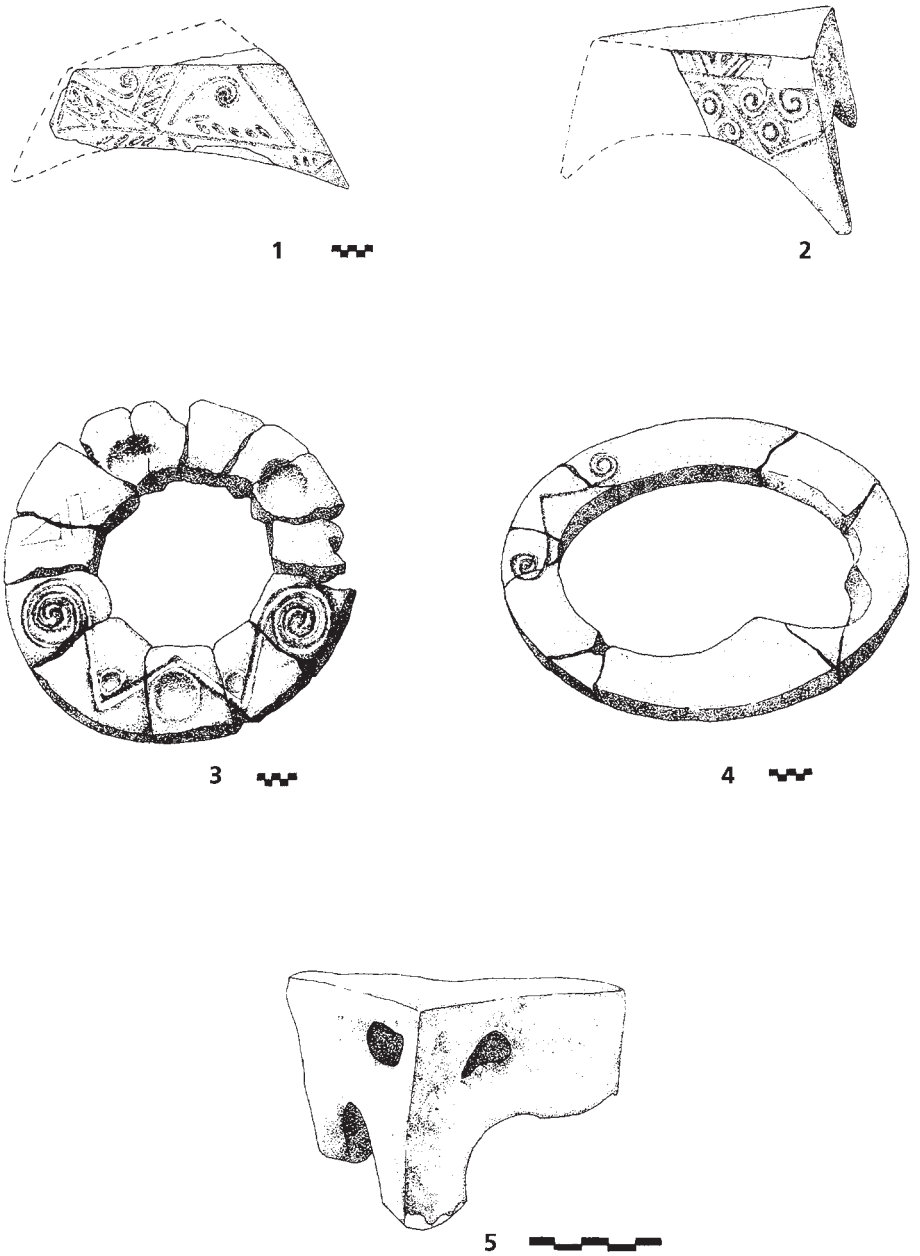

Fig. 11.