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THE BRONZE CAULDRON OF AVRĂMENI (BOTOȘANI COUNTY). ASPECTS OF COLLECTIVE AND INDIVIDUAL MOBILITY DURING THE LATE IRON AGE IN THE TERRITORIES BETWEEN THE CARPATHIANS AND THE VOLGA.

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Abstract: In 1942, following readjustment works of the road connecting the Săveni and Avrămeni communes, a barrow was destroyed, resulting the find of a bronze cauldron. A. Nițu deemed the vessel of Avrămeni as part of the series of cauldrons coinciding with the civilisation and expansion of the Sarmatians by the Don and Lower and Mid Danube in the 1st – 4th century AD and dated it to this chronological span. Gh. Bichir argued that the Avrămeni cauldron is somewhat later than that of Piatra Șoimului (Calu), which the scholar dated to the 1st century BC.

The vessel's shape resembles that of a "bell" cast together with its handles, while the biconical foot was made separately, the two parts being attached by a bronze cast-made plug. On the body, the vessel displays several repair traces. According to its features and specificities, the Avrămeni cauldron belongs to type Demidenko II.1.B, being the single of the type in the area between the Don and the Carpathians. The remaining resembling specimens come from 2nd – 1st century BC complexes from territories left of the Lower Don and the Kuban region.

The author believes that according to its shape, the curved vertical handles decorated each with a knob as well as its making manner and foot attachment, the Avrămeni vessel is an artefact joining elements specific to the Sauromatian cauldrons used in the Volga and Lower Don area, but also in the Kuban region also in the 2nd – 1st century BC.

Within the context of its analysis are also discussed the cauldrons of Bubueci and Velikoploskoe, both from "ritual hoards/deposits" part of a larger group of such features of the 3rd – 1st century BC from territories comprised between the Volga – the pre-mountain area from North Caucasus in the east and the Lower Danube - Prut to the west.

The cauldron of Bubueci belongs to type Demidenko I.3.A. It has a body cast together with the handles, while the biconical foot, surviving fragmentarily, was cast separately. Similarly to the Avrămeni vessel, that of Bubueci is the most western find of a cauldron of the type. The body shape, curved vertical handles decorated each with three knobs, the lip shape and its making manner, how the handles start from the cauldron rim as well as how they were made, indicate that the vessel combines elements specific to the Sauromatian and early Sarmatian cauldrons.

DOI: 10.14795/j.v7i3.560

ISSN 2360 – 266X

ISSN-L 2360 – 266X

In the case of the Avrämeni and Bubueci cauldrons, as well as those similar, the author concludes they are either a continuation of ancient casting traditions or were produced sometime earlier, yet continued to be used for a good period of time after their production cease. The exhibited repair traces and presence far from their territories of origin, where they were made and used, as well as their find together with 2nd – 1st century BC artefacts confirm, according to the author, their use for a longer time span.

In the case of the Avrämeni vessel, its deposition might have occurred sometime during the 2nd century BC as well as between the end of the 2nd – first decades of the 1st century BC. With respect to the dating of the “ritual hoard/deposit” of Bubueci, the author believes it dates no earlier than the 2nd century BC, and that its framing sometime between mid 2nd century BC and early 1st century BC is very likely.

In the case of the Velikoploskoe cauldron, its body shape and sizes resemble those of the Demidenko VI type cauldrons emerging in the 2nd century BC, yet the remaining elements specific to this vessel type are missing. The rudimentary attachment procedure of the foot to the body, rim shape, its making manner, as well as how the handles start from the vessel rim, are according to the author, specific to the Sauromatae and early Sarmatian cauldrons (types Demidenko I-III, V) used in the first centuries BC, which hinders its ascribing to a certain type. Therefore, it was concluded that the Velikoploskoe vessel seems to be intermediary between the 5th - 3rd century BC cauldrons, mainly Sauromatae, and those of the early and mid Sarmatian periods between the 2nd century BC and mid 2nd century AD. Its elements and making manner allow, according to the author, for its dating to the 2nd – 1st century BC, likely only sometime during the 2nd century BC, which is not contradicted by the remaining artefacts in the find.

Keywords: *the Sarmatians, Sauromatae, bronze cauldrons, the north and north-west Pontic area, the Don, the Volga, the Kuban region, ritual hoards/deposits, chronology, Avrämeni.*

Compared to other product classes, metal wares from the nomad environment of the Euroasian steppes, either in bronze or silver, are, alike those from other cultural environments, of special interest and represent an artefact class of higher value compared to other products. They often provide a more accurate dating of the features where they were found, as well as of the other artefact classes they were discovered together with. Among the Scythian and Sauromatian-Sarmatian antiquities from Euroasian steppes also count the bronze cauldrons. Their majority have a semi-spherical body provided with two vertically set curved handles and a biconical foot. These vessels from the nomad environment were subject, alike other artefact classes, to fashion and taste. Subsequent to certain innovations in terms of technological making processes they suffered over the course of time many appearance changes. Their features, making and casting are key for their typological and chronological framing. When discovered in burials, hoards, deposits or other closed complexes, they provide dating elements for also other material classes. The cauldrons' find within closed complexes beside artefacts with accurate chronological framing sometime facilitates acquiring new information that allow clarification of important aspects related to their dating, ascribing and use.

The remaining in use of certain cauldrons for a time exceeding their production and coexistence with other more evolved types made according to innovative techniques are an indication of their value for their holders. Repair traces on some of cauldrons are also indicative of their value for their owners. Their presence in burials or ”ritual hoards/deposits”

evidences, beside other artefact classes, the social standing of the individuals within their group and the fact that not everyone could afford the purchase and ownership of such vessels.

Bronze cauldrons count among the important artefacts of the material culture of the Sauromatae and Sarmatians and represent an important source for their history and culture in the Euroasian steppes during the 5th century BC – 3rd century AD¹. Any new find of such vessels within graves, “ritual hoards/deposits” or funerary settings, contributes to clarifying certain aspects of the funerary rite and ritual depositions where these artefacts were used. Also, it must be mentioned that the new finds may supply important information regarding the types and classes of graves or complexes where they were deposited, as well as the variations of funerary ritual and ritual actions using cauldrons².

Today, it is increasingly obvious that these bronze vessels were broadly used in the nomad environment of the Euroasian steppes, being multifunctional, as confirmed by the archaeological finds.

In the Sauromatae-Sarmatian environment cauldrons were used, alike in the Scythian world, for boiling the meat of sacrificed animals³, food making, as well as for preparing and pouring drinks. They were used, as indicated by a series

¹ See in this respect DEMIDENKO 2008, 55-64.

² For bronze cauldrons in the funerary ritual of the Sauromatae and Sarmatians see DEMIDENKO 2008, 50-54; DEMIDENKO/MIMOKHOD/USPENSKIJ 2019.

³ BOKOVENKO 1977, 234; DEMIDENKO 2008, 58-59.

of finds, also in ritual ceremonies, yet also as censers⁴. Their find within graves, ritual complexes or funerary settings confirm their multifunctional role⁵.

The object of this study is the bronze cauldron of Avrămeni (Botoșani county), removed from a barrow cut in 1942 subsequent to readjustment works⁶ of the road connecting the Săveni commune, lying on the Bășeu valley, to the Avrămeni⁷ commune. The barrow⁸, destroyed by these works, lay to the right of the Săveni-Avrămeni road⁹, situated east the village, nearby Movila Avrămeni Est¹⁰ and 1 km south-south-east from Movila Făgădău¹¹. Shortly after, the vessel entered the possession of E. Căzărescu who donated it in 1950¹², together with the entire archaeological collection collected from the Târgu Ocna basin he owned, to the Museum of Antiquities in Iași, turned in 1954 the History Museum of Moldova. Currently, the cauldron is in the collection of this museal institution of Iași, in the basic exhibition.

The cauldron's body resembles that of a "bell", with thick flat rim by horizontal flattening, slightly everted and the foot is biconical (Fig. 1-3). Unfortunately, part of the upper side of the wall with the rim was broken from ancient times (Fig. 3). The vessel is provided with two half-circular handles, oval in cross-section, set vertically and decorated each with a vertical knob with thickened head (Fig. 4-5). The two handles start from the vessel rim and were cast together with the vessel body. In certain parts of the body, walls are unequally thick¹³. On the wall surface, there is a larger circular patch of irregular thickness and other few dots like rivets, visible on either wall sides (Fig. 8). The biconical foot, cast separately from the body and handles, has enlarged base and is hollow on the inside. The irregularly outlined upper side of the foot juxtaposes the cauldron bottom (Fig. 7). The two parts were attached via the orifices on the vessel body bottom and from the upper side of the foot by a bronze plug made by casting, thus fixing the foot to the vessel wall (see Fig. 16/2). Inside, the head of this plug is concave and circular in shape with irregular outline (Fig. 6).

Cauldrons sizes are as follow: total height - 37 cm; height to the rim - 32.5 cm; handle height from vessel rim to knob top - 4.5 cm; handles' width by the base - 5.8 cm and 6.8 cm; maximum diameter - 26.5 cm, foot height - 8 cm; diameter of foot base - 10 cm; thickness of wall in the broken part - 0.3 cm¹⁴.

⁴ DEMIDENKO 2008, 59.

⁵ For the origin, provenance, production and other aspects related to the Sarmatian period cauldron see DEMIDENKO 2008, 55-64, with complete bibliography.

⁶ NIȚU 1953, 9, Fig. 4; PĂUNESCU/ȘADURSCHI 1989, 305, Fig. 14/17; ȘOVAN 2016, 44-45.

⁷ NIȚU 1953, 9.

⁸ Movila La Pădurice toponym. Long.: 26° 57' 56", Lat.: 48° 0' 38" (ȘOVAN 2016, 44-45).

⁹ ȘOVAN 2016, 44.

¹⁰ ȘOVAN 2016, 44.

¹¹ NIȚU 1953, 9.

¹² At that date, Manager of the Museum of Antiquities of Iași was Dumitru Tudor. He was delegated to the management of the Museum by the Rector of the University of Iași (MĂRZA 2018, 75).

¹³ In the upper part of the body, walls thickness is slightly smaller than in the lower part.

¹⁴ Measurements alike photos illustrating the vessel were made by dr. Ioan

The presence in the barrow mantle of a cauldron does not indicate, as believed, it comes with certainty from a grave, especially since many cases are known where in the mantle of certain barrows were deposited artefact classes unconnected with the graves inside, they being ritual depositions (hoards/deposits). In this respect, it must be mentioned that during the excavation of that part of the Avrămeni barrow from where the cauldron was removed, neither traces or remains of a grave nor other objects indicative of a grave were discovered, which shows that the vessel was likely a ritual/votive deposition.

A. Nițu argued based on the tall foot, simple handles and lack of body decoration that the Avrămeni vessel is similar to the series of Scythian cauldrons, yet that it also differentiates from Hunnic and Avar cauldrons with lavishly decorated surfaces and handles¹⁵. The same author noted that it is still different from those Scythian and that it resembles more those Sarmatian of the first centuries AD. Also, A. Nițu believed that the vessel of Avrămeni is part, together with the specimen of Piatra Șoimului (Calu), of the same cauldron series intermediary between the Scythian and the Hunnic-Avar specimens, which coincides with the Sarmatian civilisation and expansion from the Don and Lower and Mid Danube in the 1st - 4th century AD¹⁶, thus agreeing with a dating of the Avrămeni vessel to this chronological span. This view was adopted and expressed more recently by also other scholars, who believe the vessel to be Scythian-Sarmatian¹⁷.

Such framing of the Avrămeni cauldron was influenced by R. Vulpe's dating of the cauldron of Piatra Șoimului (Calu) to the 3rd century and even later¹⁸, accepted also by A. Nițu¹⁹. Gh. Bichir, who dated the vessel of Piatra Șoimului (Calu) to the 1st century BC²⁰ argued only that the Avrămeni vessel is somewhat later than the cauldron of Piatra Șoimului (Calu)²¹. Recently, following the analysis of the vessel of Piatra Șoimului (Calu)²², it was stated that according to its features and specificities, the cauldron belongs to type Demidenko VI.1. A²³, and also that together

Iațcu, museographer with the History Museum of Moldavia in Iași, whom we thank this way for expediency and granted support.

¹⁵ NIȚU 1953, 11.

¹⁶ NIȚU 1953, 11.

¹⁷ PĂUNESCU/ȘADURSCHI 1989, 305, 313.

¹⁸ VULPE 1941, 62.

¹⁹ NIȚU 1953, 11.

²⁰ BICHIR 1976, 207; BICHIR 1993, 139 with complete bibliography.

²¹ BICHIR 1976, 207.

²² BĂRCĂ 2020.

²³ DEMIDENKO 2008, 17-18, 89-95, 113, 114-115, Fig. 8, type VI.1.A, Fig. 49/2, 50-51, 52/1, 85-95. Following the analysis of all complexes where cauldrons ascribed to type VI were discovered, it was noted they emerge in the Volga and Lower Don area in the 2nd century BC, while the specimens dated to the 2nd - end of the 1st century BC are not many. The number of these cauldrons increases significantly in complexes from the chronological interval comprised between the end of the 1st century BC and first half of the 1st century AD, yet most frequently they are found in the Sarmatian graves of the second half of the 1st century - first half of the 2nd century AD (DEMIDENKO 2008, 17-20, 25, 35). Therefore, these cauldrons are specific mainly to the mid Sarmatian period. Regarding the VI.1.A type cauldrons, it must be mentioned that earliest specimens come from a series of complexes of the second half of the 2nd - end of the 1st century BC (DEMIDENKO 2008, 17, 89-90, cat. no. 28-33, 161, 163). Vessels coming from graves of the end of the 1st century BC - first half of the 1st century AD are also not many, most part of the VI.1.A type cauldrons come from graves dated to the second half of the 1st century - early 2nd century AD (DEMIDENKO 2008, 17, 18). Recently, it was noted that 2nd - 1st century BC exemplars as well as those from the first half of the 1st century AD mainly have hemispherical body,

with other cauldrons characteristic to the Mid Sarmatian period from the north and north-west of the Black Sea (the current territory of Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova)²⁴, reached the east Carpathian area sometime in the second half of the 1st century AD, yet no later than the events by early 2nd century AD²⁵.

According to its features and specificities, the Avrămeni cauldron belongs to type II in S. I. Demidenko's typology, in which two variations were identified II.1.A and II.1.B, the cauldron here belonging to type II.1.B. Vessels of the type are characterised by a "bell"-shaped body, thickened and flat rim slightly everted, biconical foot and lack of body decoration²⁶. With a single exception, all cauldrons in the type have their body and foot made separately²⁷. In parenthesis, starting with the 5th century BC in the Sauromatae environment, there are two casting methods of the cauldrons: **1** - body, handles and foot cast concurrently; **2** - body cast together with handles to which was attached the also cast foot, via one or two rivets²⁸. The two casting methods coexisted in the 3rd - 1st century BC²⁹.

Cauldrons in type II.1.B, similar to the specimen at Avrămeni, come from T 2 G 9 at Ponuro-Kalininskaya orositelnaya sistema³⁰ (Fig. 10/2) and the "ritual hoard/deposit" from a destroyed barrow at Novodzherelievskaya³¹ (Fig. 9/2), both finds being situated in the Kuban region (Russia) (Fig. 18/7-8). To these adds the specimen discovered by chance in 1927 on the Zolotaya kosa coastline³² (Fig. 10/1), Miussk peninsula, Sea of Azov (Russia) (Fig. 18/5) and that in T 37 in the Lebedevka VI cemetery³³, located in the territories left the Lower Volga (Kazakhstan). The Lebedevka VI vessel has conical body, short foot and the diameter slightly smaller than other specimens, significantly different from the other specimens in type II.1.B, including by the fact that all parts were cast concurrently (first casting method)³⁴.

Based on the funerary furnishing, among which a golden disk brooch, T 2 G 9 at Ponuro-Kalininskaya orositelnaya sistema was dated to the second half of the 2nd century BC³⁵. The "ritual hoard/deposit" at Novodzherelievskaya, synchronous with the richly grave

amongst not being found specimens with a more ovoid body shape with marked shoulders, while cauldrons from the last chronological time span have more ovoid body and marked shoulders (BĂRCĂ 2020, 82).

²⁴ See in this respect BĂRCĂ 2020, 82-85.

²⁵ BĂRCĂ 2020, 85-86.

²⁶ Cf. DEMIDENKO 2008, 16, 87, 113, cat. no. 17-18, 151, Fig. 6, type II.1.B, Fig. 82. We thank this way dr. Sergej Demidenko for his kindness to confirm the typological framing of this cauldron.

²⁷ For the casting manner, making and attachment of the two body parts of the Sauromatae-Sarmatian cauldrons see DEMIDENKO 2008, 33-42.

²⁸ DEMIDENKO 2020, 33.

²⁹ DEMIDENKO 2008, 33.

³⁰ MARCHENKO 1996, 35, note 1, 87-88, 111, Fig. 101/5; DEMIDENKO 2008, 16, 113, cat. no. 151, Fig. 82/nr. 151, 149/5.

³¹ SHEVCHENKO 2005, 126, 130, 131, Fig. 3/2.

³² KOSYANENKO/FLEROV 1978, 194, Fig. 2/2; SMIRNOV 1984, 24, Fig. 5/1; MELYUKOVA 1989, Pl. 68/2; DEMIDENKO 2008, 16, 87, cat. no. 17, Fig. 82/ no. 17.

³³ DEMIDENKO 2008, 16, 87, cat. no. 18.

³⁴ Its appearance and features make us argue the vessel should be framed to a particular type.

³⁵ See for the grave goods and dating MARCHENKO 1996, 29, 35, note 1, 87-88, 111, 159, Fig. 101.

from the same barrow, destroyed in 1974, very likely in ritual relation with it³⁶, was dated to the first quarter of the 1st century BC³⁷. Should we consider the chronological framing of the many artefacts in the two destroyed complexes and agree they were buried at the same time or shortly one after the other, then their dating sometime in the first half of the 1st century BC seems more plausible.

The Avrămeni vessel is identical, including also in sizes and proportions with those on the Zolotaya kosa coastline, the "ritual hoard/deposit" of Novodzherelievskaya and T 2 G 9 at Ponuro-Kalininskaya orositelnaya sistema. All preserve repair traces on their body, evidence of prolonged use. Also, all four cauldrons have their body cast together with their handles and the foot separately. In the case of the Novodzherelievskaya and Ponuro-Kalininskaya orositelnaya sistema vessels it was also noted they exhibit traces indicative of purposeful damage, case possible also in the Avrămeni vessel, should we keep in mind that it has a body part broken from Antiquity. The cult significance of the Sarmatian cauldrons and their purposeful deterioration has been often mentioned by scholars³⁸. With respect to the cauldron of Novodzherelievskaya, its body is decorated midway with a relief belt imitating the string (Fig. 9/2), with a functional role³⁹. This element allows ascribing the vessel to a new variation in type Demidenko II. Regarding respective belt in relief, together with the curved vertical handles decorated each with three vertical knobs with thickened head as well as the circular dents or projections below the rim and in the handle area⁴⁰, they emerge in the early Sarmatian environment from the region south of the Ural Mountains in the 4th century BC⁴¹.

It is certain that the vessel of Avrămeni, a place located at ca. 10 km west the upper course of the Prut (Fig. 17/1) is the single cauldron of the type (Demidenko II.1.B) from the space between the Don and the Carpathians. The remaining specimens in type II.1.B., similar to that of Avrămeni, come from territories left of the Lower Don and the Kuban region (Fig. 18). In the territories from the right of the Don, a cauldron of type Demidenko II, which yet belongs to variation A, comes from a chance find from south-east Donetsk region (Ukraine) (Fig. 17/21). It differentiates from the specimens in variation B by the presence of wavy decoration on the body⁴². The most eastern find ascribed to type II is the specimen in the barrow grave from the Lebedevka VI cemetery (western Kazakhstan), yet which, as

³⁶ For the analysis of the finds in the Novodzherelievskaya barrow and identification of the two complexes see SHEVCHENKO 2005, while for the analysis and chronological framing of the artefacts see MARCHENKO 1996, 22, 23, 34-36, 40, 41, 44-46, 78-79, 88-89, 110, 111, 130; MARCHENKO/LIMBERIS 2008, 340-341, cat. no. 18, Pl. 31-33.

³⁷ SHEVCHENKO 2005, 131.

³⁸ KAPOSHINA 1965, 50; MAKSIMOV 1966, 51-54; SKRIPKIN 1970, 209; BOKOVENKO 1977, 234-235; MAKSIMENKO 1983, 209; MARCHENKO 1996, 111.

³⁹ See in this respect DEMIDENKO 2008, 35.

⁴⁰ The circular dents or projections below the rim and in the handle area evidence the use during the casting process of the clay "plugs" (DEMIDENKO 2018, 36-37, 62).

⁴¹ DEMIDENKO 2008, 34-36, 62.

⁴² KOSYANENKO/FLEROV 1978, 194, Fig. 2/1; DEMIDENKO 2008, 16, 87, cat. no. 16, Fig. 81/no. 16. It is believed this vessel is a connection with those in type Demidenko I.1.V, with the same body decoration type (DEMIDENKO 2008, 16).

mentioned above, is substantially different both from the specimen at Avrămeni and other similar.

The body shape, curved vertical handles decorated each with a knob as well as the making and attachment manner of the foot indicate that the Avrămeni vessel is an artefact mixing elements specific to the Sauromatae cauldrons used in the Volga and Lower Don area yet also in the Kuban region also in the 2nd – 1st century BC⁴³. The Avrămeni cauldron, the most western find of such cauldrons represents, in our view, additional evidence of their remaining in use until mentioned chronological interval.

In the territory west of the Prut, beside the Avrămeni vessel, another bronze cauldron of Sarmatian date comes from Piatra Șoimului (Calu), mentioned above.

In the study discussing the latter, where we focused also on Sarmatian date cauldrons on the territory of Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, we concluded that in given territories the number of bronze cauldrons is not high, as well as they belong to types specific mainly to the mid Sarmatian period, most coming from complexes dated to the chronological interval comprised between the second half of the 1st century – first half of the 2nd century AD⁴⁴. Out of the cauldrons from above mentioned territories are distinguished those of Bubueci⁴⁵ (Republic of Moldova) (Fig. 11) and Velikoploskoe⁴⁶ (Ukraine) (Fig. 14-15). Both vessels come from “ritual hoards/deposits” part of a larger groups of such complexes (ca. 55) from territories comprised between the Volga – pre-mountain region from North Caucasus in the east and the Lower Danube – Prut in the west⁴⁷.

They are commonly composed of harness pieces (bits, hackamores, hooked frontal appliques, *phalera*, circular appliques with decoration in relief, half-moon shaped appliques or in the shape of letter U, links etc.), weaponry pieces (arrowheads with three wings with socket or peduncle, lance heads, swords, quiver hooks) and military equipment (helmets, armour fragments), bronze vessels (cauldrons, *situlae*) and silver wares (cups), rarely buckles, massive polychrome beads designed for decorating the bridle, mirrors etc.⁴⁸. It is noteworthy that main artefacts in all these complexes are harness pieces⁴⁹. Artefacts are usually

⁴³ For additional details regarding the making, traditions and innovations in the making of the Sauromatae-Sarmatian cauldrons see DEMIDENKO 2008, 33-35, 61-62.

⁴⁴ BĂRCĂ 2020, 82-85, Fig. 6-14.

⁴⁵ Cf. NEFEDOVA 1993, p. 17-18, Fig. 1/1-2; BĂRCĂ 2002b, 215-216, Fig. 1/5; BĂRCĂ 2006, 164-165, 297, Fig. 37/5, 188/3. We used as findspot the place at Bubueci, since this is how the location of the find is known among the specialists.

⁴⁶ DZIS-RAJKO/SUNICHUK 1984, 157-158, Fig. 2/13; BĂRCĂ 2006, 371, Fig. 137/8; BĂRCĂ 2006a, 220, Fig. 45/8; SIMONENKO 2008, 56, Pl. 9/2; MORDVICEVA/REDINA 2013, 389, Fig. 2a.

⁴⁷ The diffusion area of these “ritual hoards/deposits” is very extended and does not coincide with the borders of none of the archaeological cultures of the last centuries BC from the area between the Volga – the pre-mountain region of North Caucasus in the east and the Lower Danube – Prut to the west. Even more, some come from contact areas, while other were discovered in territories inhabited by populations related to different archaeological cultures/ethno-cultural groups coexisting for a period in the same geographical areas.

⁴⁸ See SIMONENKO 1993; SIMONENKO 2001; SIMONENKO 2005; SIMONENKO 2015; REDINA/SIMONENKO 2002; BĂRCĂ 2004; ZAJTSEV 2008; ZAJTSEV 2009; ZAJTSEV 2012a; GLEBOV 2016.

⁴⁹ ZAJTSEV 2008, 147-148; ZAJTSEV 2012a, 69. Their composition allows their division into two main groups. The first is characterised, in various combinations, by the presence of elements related to only horse equipment,

placed compactly, often inside bronze vessels or helmets. In a few cases at a significant distance from a few of these “ritual hoards/deposits” were discovered amphora and pottery fragments⁵⁰, however in some cases, their connection raises many questions.

Concerning their dating, without further details and mention of expressed views, currently it is mutually agreed that the chronological boundaries of this phenomenon are the 3rd – 1st century BC⁵¹. Yu. P. Zajtsev concludes their majority are from the 3rd century – first half of the 2nd century BC⁵² and that those from the second half of the 2nd century – 1st century BC are not many⁵³.

Subsequent to the analysis of the artefacts from most “ritual hoards/deposits” and given the dating and diffusion of several artefact classes we noted that part of those ascribed to the 3rd century group – first half of the 2nd century BC date no earlier than the 2nd century BC. Even more, some of those framed in this chronological group contain artefacts indicative of a dating sometime between the second half of the 2nd century – first half of the 1st century BC⁵⁴, yet their analysis and detailed argumentation form the subject of another paper.

The cauldron of Bubueci⁵⁵ (Fig. 11) also has a “bell”-shaped body, alike the examples of Avrămeni (Fig. 1-3), Ponuro-Kalininskaya orositelnaya sistema (Fig. 10/2), Novodzhelievskaya (Fig. 9/2) and the Zolotaya kosa coastline (Fig. 10/1), except that the two semicircular handles, oval in cross-section and vertically set are decorated each with three vertical knobs with thickened head. The body, still preserving in a few spots repair traces, was cast together with the handles, and the biconical foot, surviving fragmentarily, was separately cast. The upper part of the foot, of irregular outline, juxtaposes the cauldron’s bottom (Fig. 11/3). For the lack of clearer drawings or photos, it is difficult to say with

while in the second they are mixed with harness pieces (arrowheads, lance heads, spears), military equipment (helmets, armours), metal vessels (silver cups, bronze cauldrons, *situlae*) (ZAJTSEV 2012a, 69).

⁵⁰ ZAJTSEV 2012; GLEBOV 2016, 146, 152-157; DEDYUL’KIN 2016, Fig. 1.

⁵¹ See SHCHUKIN 1994, 97-98; DZIGOVSKIJ 2003, 57 sqq.; ZAJTSEV 2008, 149-150; ZAJTSEV 2009, 134; ZAJTSEV 2012a, 67-71; MARCHENKO/LIMBERIS 2009, 72-73; MORDVINTSEVA 2013; DEDYUL’KIN 2016, 185, 186; POLIN 2014, 641; POLIN 2018, 275; POLIN/KARHAUKH 2012, 143; SIMONENKO 2018, 27-35; TEL’NOV/CHETVERIKOV/SINIKA 2012, 12-13; GLEBOV 2016, 156, 158; GLEBOV/GORDIN/DEDYUL’KIN 2020, 373-375; VLASKIN/GLEBOV/KUZ’MIN 2018, 63.

⁵² ZAJTSEV 2008, 150; ZAJTSEV 2012a, 69, Fig. 1/I.

⁵³ ZAJTSEV 2012a, p. 69. On the map with “ritual hoards/deposits” finds drafted by Yu. P. Zajtsev, their majority (40) figure as dated to the 3rd – 2nd century BC and the other (11) as from the 2nd – 1st century BC (ZAJTSEV 2012a, Fig. 1).

⁵⁴ Among the complexes related to this phenomenon and, in our view, not older than the 2nd century BC, count those of Trușeti, Bădragii Noi, Brăviceni, Bubueci, Tvardița, Velikoploskoe, Gordashevka, Nogajchinsk, Kvashino, Klimentov, Starobel’sk, Korenovsk, Krasnyj IV, Restumov II, Kachalinskaya; Khankaľsk etc., as well as those with Montefortino helmets (Antipovka, Belen’koe, Marėvka, Novoprochorovka, Privolė, Rogovskaya, Sergievskaya, Tokmak-Mogila, Veseloya Dolina, Veselyj). Good part of the latter may be related to the Mithridatic wars of the first half of the 1st century BC.

⁵⁵ The cauldron of Bubueci was discovered in a barrow mantle and had inside deposited an Attic bronze helmet with hemispherical dome and crest, two frontal bronze appliques, two horse cheek pieces of bronze sheet, two *phalera* and four appliques/*phalera* depicting centrally a human mask in relief. Cf. NEFEDOVA 1993, 15-20; MORDVINTSEVA 2001a, 108-114; BĂRCĂ 2002b, 215-230; BĂRCĂ 2004, Fig. 14; BĂRCĂ 2006, 297-298, Fig. 37 with complete bibliography.

certainty whether the foot was attached to the vessel body by one or two rivets. According to its features, the vessel of Bubueci is almost identical with that in the Sarmatian grave (T 5 G 10) of Kalininskaya⁵⁶ (land of Krasnodar, Russia) (Fig. 12/1, 18/9), dated to the 1st century BC⁵⁷ and ascribed to type Demidenko I.3.A⁵⁸. To the type is also ascribed the vessel in T 2 G 3 at Azov⁵⁹ (left to the Don mouths, Rostov region, Russia) (Fig. 12/2, 18/6), dated based on amphorae to the last third of the 4th century – early 3rd century BC⁶⁰. However, the Azov vessel is of somewhat smaller sizes and body walls are not slightly downturned like in the specimens of Bubueci (Fig. 11) or Kalininskaya (Fig. 12/1). Similarly to the vessel in T 5 G 10 at Kalininskaya, as well as that of Bubueci, is cauldron no. 2 in the “ritual hoard/deposit” of Debal’tsevo⁶¹ (left to river Severskij Donets, Donetsk region, Ukraine) (Fig. 12/3, 17/20, 18/4), which was omitted by the complex publishing authors, ascribed to the Scythians and dated to mid 3rd century BC⁶². Another “inexplicable” aspect is that for cauldron no. 2 at Debal’tsevo the specimen in T 5 G 10 at Kalininskaya was not mentioned as parallel, only that in T 2 G 3 at Azov⁶³, although both belong to type Demidenko I.3.A⁶⁴. The Azov vessel is yet somewhat smaller, the rim shape is different, while the body walls are not slightly downturned as in the specimens of Debal’tsevo, Bubueci or Kalininskaya. It would have been much more accurate to indicate as parallels for cauldron no. 2 at Debal’tsevo the specimens of Bubueci and Kalininskaya. It is certain that currently, the vessel of Bubueci (the Prut-Dniester interfluvium) is the most western part of a cauldron of the type, its closest parallel, including geographically, being cauldron no. 2 at Debal’tsevo (interfluvium Dnieper-Don) (Fig. 18).

Last but not least, the body shape of these cauldrons, arched vertical handles decorated each with three knobs, rim shape and its making manner, and how the handles start from the rim and their making manner evidence they are artefacts that merge elements specific to Sauromate and early Sarmatae cauldrons⁶⁵.

The authors publishing the “ritual hoard/deposit” of Debal’tsevo stated that the vessel of Bubueci resembles much cauldron no. 1 (Fig. 13/1) in the find⁶⁶ and not cauldron no. 2 (Fig. 12/3). Cauldron no. 1 of Debal’tsevo⁶⁷ belongs yet without a doubt to type Demidenko VI.1.A⁶⁸ alike the specimen of

Bulakhovka⁶⁹ (left of the Dnieper) discovered in the mantle of a barrow where there were also discovered deposited together three silver cups (*mastoi*)⁷⁰, five gilded silver *phalerae*⁷¹, golden dress appliques as well as harness appliques and links⁷². With respect to the specimen of Bulakhovka⁷³, the connection between the bronze cauldron and the remaining pieces in the “ritual hoard/deposit” is questioned⁷⁴, although, based on object classes and their dating, it is possible that the cauldron was deposited during the same ritual act⁷⁵.

Vessels of type Demidenko VI emerged no earlier than the 2nd century BC, as confirmed by other more recent finds from the “ritual hoards/deposits” of Kachalinskaya⁷⁶ (left to the Don), with a specimen of type Demidenko VI.1.A or Restumov II⁷⁷ (right to the Don) with a cauldron of type Demidenko VI.2.A. In type VI the specimens in variation 1, subvariation A are most numerous (ca. 32 examples). These are characterised by two present arched handles decorated each with three knobs, small handles below the rim and ornament in relief imitating the string on their body⁷⁸. Cauldrons of type VI emerge in the Volga and Lower Don in the 2nd century BC, while specimens dating to the 2nd – end of the 1st century BC are not many⁷⁹. The number of these cauldrons increases significantly in features dated between the end of the 1st century BC and first half of the 1st century AD, yet most frequently they are found in the Sarmatae environment of the second half of the 1st century – first half of the 2nd century AD⁸⁰. Hence these cauldrons are specific mainly to the Mid Sarmatian period. As for the

⁵⁶ DEMIDENKO 2008, 87, cat. no. 14, Fig. 81/no. 14; 152.

⁵⁷ MARCHENKO 1984, 50-52.

⁵⁸ DEMIDENKO 2008, 16, Fig. 6.

⁵⁹ See for this cauldron MAKSIMENKO 1983, 89, Fig. 27/10; DEMIDENKO 2008, 16, 87, cat. no. 15, Fig. 18/no. 15.

⁶⁰ MONAKHOV 2003, 106-107, Pl. 74/1; see also KARNAUKH/SINIKA/SERDYUK 2016, 229.

⁶¹ KARNAUKH/SINIKA/SERDYUK 2016, 227-228, Fig. 4. According to the authors all parts of the Debal’tsevo cauldron were cast at the same time.

⁶² KARNAUKH/SINIKA/SERDYUK 2016, 227, 234.

⁶³ The mention as parallel of only the vessel in T 2 G 3 at Azov leaves the impression it was made deliberately to justify the chronological framing of the “ritual hoard/deposit” at Debal’tsevo.

⁶⁴ DEMIDENKO 2008, 16, 87, cat. no. 15, Fig. 18/no. 15.

⁶⁵ For further details related to the making, traditions and innovations in the making of the Sauromatae-Sarmatan cauldrons see DEMIDENKO 2008, 33-42, 60-64.

⁶⁶ KARNAUKH/SINIKA/SERDYUK 2016, 226-227.

⁶⁷ See for this KARNAUKH/SINIKA/SERDYUK 2016, 221 sqq., Fig. 2; 3/1.

⁶⁸ See for the cauldrons in this type DEMIDENKO 2008, 17-18, 89-95, 113, 114-115, Fig. 8, Type VI.1.A, Fig. 49/2, 50-51, 52/1, 85-95.

⁶⁹ Cf. KOSTENKO 1978, 78-85, Pl. 1-2; SMIRNOV 1984, 108, Fig. 51/1; SIMONENKO 1994, 109, Fig. 7/1; SIMONENKO 2008, 55, cat. no. 2; SIMONENKO 2019, 85, Fig. 6/5; DEMIDENKO 2008, 17, 89, cat. no. 28, Fig. 85, 156; BĂRCĂ 2006a, 102-103, 196, Fig. 9/2; BĂRCĂ 2011, 43, 44, Pl. 1/1; BĂRCĂ/SYMONENKO 2009, 79-80, Fig. 21/1; MORDINCEVA 2013, 402, Fig. 3/a; MORDVINTSEVA 2013, Fig. 1/1.

⁷⁰ For their diffusion area and dating see BĂRCĂ 2007, 89-91 with complete bibliography and main expressed views.

⁷¹ For dating the *phalerae* in the stylistic group of which the specimens at Bulakhovka are also part see MORDVINCEVA 2001, 37, 64-65; MORDVINTSEVA 2001, 164.

⁷² KOSTENKO 1978, 78-85, Pl. 1-2; SMIRNOV 1984, 108-110, Fig. 51-52; SIMONENKO 1994, 109, Fig. 7; MORDVINCEVA 2001, 36, 64, 78, Pl. 31; MORDVINCEVA 2013, 402-407; MORDVINTSEVA 2013, 144-156, Fig. 1-6; BĂRCĂ 2006a, 196-197, Fig. 8-9; SIMONENKO 2019, 85, Fig. 6-7.

⁷³ Cf. KOSTENKO 1978, 78-85, Pl. 1-2; SMIRNOV 1984, 108, Fig. 51/1; SIMONENKO 1994, 109, Fig. 7/1; SIMONENKO 2008, 55, cat. no. 2; SIMONENKO 2019, 85, Fig. 6/5; DEMIDENKO 2008, 17, 89, cat. no. 28, Fig. 85, 156; BĂRCĂ 2006a, 102-103, 196, Fig. 9/2; BĂRCĂ 2011, 43, 44, Pl. 1/1; BĂRCĂ/SYMONENKO 2009, 79-80, Fig. 21/1; MORDINCEVA 2013, 402, Fig. 3/a; MORDVINTSEVA 2013, Fig. 1/1.

⁷⁴ Cf. MORDVINCEVA 2013, 402; MORDVINTSEVA 2013, 144; GLEBOV 2016, 150.

⁷⁵ Views are slightly different in terms of the dating of the Bulakhovka finds, by the end of the 2nd – early 1st century BC (KOSTENKO 1978, 78-85; DEMIDENKO 2008, 17), end of the 2nd – 1st century BC (SMIRNOV 1984, 108-110; SIMONENKO 1994, 109), the 1st century BC (MORDVINTSEVA 2013, 148; MORDVINCEVA 2013, 402-407), its first half (BĂRCĂ 2004; BĂRCĂ 2006, 2013; BĂRCĂ 2007, 91; BĂRCĂ 2006a, 197; BĂRCĂ 2009, 92; BĂRCĂ/SYMONENKO 2009, 79) or sometime during the 1st century BC (BĂRCĂ 2020, 82).

⁷⁶ SERGATSKOV 2009, 149, fig. 1/2.

⁷⁷ VLASKIN/GLEBOV/KUZ’MIN 2018, 59-60, Fig. 2/1.

⁷⁸ DEMIDENKO 2008, 17.

⁷⁹ DEMIDENKO 2008, 17-20, 25, 35. The 2nd – 1st century BC specimens and those in the first half of the 1st century AD mainly have hemispherical body with slightly arched walls in only some examples, without specimens with more ovoid body and marked shoulders.

⁸⁰ DEMIDENKO 2008, 18, 25-26, 35.

cauldrons in type VI.1.A, earliest specimens come from a series of features dated between the second half of the 2nd century BC and end of the 1st century BC⁸¹. Vessels coming from graves dated to the end of the 1st century BC – first half of the 1st century AD are not many either, most cauldrons in type VI.1.A coming from complexes dated to the second half of the 1st century – early 2nd century AD⁸². Interestingly, the specimens in the latter time interval have more ovoid body and marked shoulders.

The above is confirmed by the fact that vessels in type VI have new elements in the making technique, emerging in the first half of the 2nd century BC, which are not specific to the previous period⁸³. In fact, cauldrons in type VI, with all their characteristics, existed only in the Sarmatian period and were used mainly in territories inhabited by the Sarmatians, as well as in contact areas where they coexisted with other cultural identities⁸⁴. The large number of complexes with type VI cauldrons often discovered in association with well datable artefacts indicates that currently there is no evidence of dating any complex with such vessels to the 3rd century BC⁸⁵, even though there were and are desperate attempts to chronologically frame certain complexes with such cauldrons in this latter century⁸⁶.

Given all the above and existing finds, we believe that the VI.1.A type vessel of Debal'tsevo (Fig. 13/1) is certain evidence that the deposition of this "ritual hoard/deposit" did not occur by mid 3rd century BC as argued currently⁸⁷, while ascribing cauldron no. 1 to the Scythian culture is unjustified.

Although the analysis and dating of the Debal'tsevo complex lies much outside the scope of this paper, it is worthy of note that the dating of this "ritual hoard/deposit" relied on the golden brooch (Fig. 13/2), unfortunately erroneously ascribed and dated⁸⁸. All used arguments and parallels for its early dating seem to have been made deliberately, precisely to date the "ritual hoard/deposit" in the desired chronological period, also noted in the case of the cauldrons in this find.

Without further details, the brooch exhibits features found in certain forms specific to types in stage La Tène D1, namely, considerably elongated rectangular body, returned foot and bilateral spring with a large number of coils, not specific to brooches of La Tène C type.

The Debal'tsevo brooch was a single piece, with bilateral spring of 12 coils and external chord. The bow is in the shape of an elongated oval plate decorated with five conical projections made of twisted wire and cylinders made of twisted wire set between the conical projections, yet also with conical applications made in the granulation technique

by the spiralled wire cylinder ends, but also by the spring end. Granules also decorate the tips of the conical elements. The bow edge is decorated with a thin golden ribbed thread. On the foot and springward bow end it is decorated with an "8" motif made of thin wire attached by soldering. The returned foot is soldered onto the bow, forming an irregular rectangular catchplate. Regarding the decoration elements, their making in the filigree and granulation technique is specific to Eastern and Greek-Etruscan artistic metalworking, granulation being more frequently used in golden rather than silver adornments. Although these techniques were also well known to the Hellenistic civilization, they were not specific to the Roman and Celtic world. Since the brooch is decorated in the granulation and filigree technique used by the craftsmen of the Greek north-Pontic cities, we believe it is a product made by an artisan from one of the ancient centres in the north of the Black Sea. The large number of artefacts decorated in the technique above from the north-Pontic space of the 2nd century BC – 2nd century AD⁸⁹ is in our view confirmation to this effect.

A. K. Ambroz argued that the Debal'tsevo brooch belonged to the La Tène period. He also framed the piece in the "lebyazh'inskaya" series (series VI) of the brooch group with returned foot wound to the bow (group 15) and ovoid bow dated to the 1st century BC⁹⁰. Such ascribing was supported also by V. V. Kropotov, mentioning their emergence in the second half – last quarter of the 1st century BC⁹¹. Concerning the brooch patterns, they were sought in the environment of several cultures and regions, the result being a range from the first Iron Age to the early Middle Ages⁹². Although constructionally, the Debal'tsevo brooch resembles that in series "lebyazh'inskaya", its returned foot is glued to the bow and not wound, while the spring is formed of a larger number of coils, found only in a few brooches in series "lebyazh'inskaya"⁹³, the majority with 4 coil spring.

Confirmation that the brooch belongs to stage La Tène D1 comes from the recent find of such a golden brooch in T 2 G 1 in the Dyad'kovskij 45⁹⁴ barrow cemetery (Krasnodar land, Russia) (Fig. 13/3). It is also decorated on the elongated oval bow with three conical projections made of twisted wire and cylinders made of spiralled wire, yet also elements made in the granulation technique on the foot, chord and tip of the conical projections. The rich furnishing of the Sarmatian grave⁹⁵ dates it to the 1st century BC⁹⁶,

⁸¹ See for these finds DEMIDENKO 2008, 17, 89-90, cat. no. 28-33, 161, 163; DEMIDENKO 2007; DEMIDENKO 2010.

⁸² DEMIDENKO 2008, 17, 18.

⁸³ Cf. DEMIDENKO 2007, 53; DEMIDENKO 2008, 33 sqq.

⁸⁴ An example to this effect in the VI.1.A type cauldron of Piatra Șoimului (Calu), Neamț county, Romania (BĂRCĂ 2020).

⁸⁵ See in this respect DEMIDENKO 2007; DEMIDENKO 2008; DEMIDENKO 2010.

⁸⁶ KLEPIKOV 2008, 288-295; KARNAUKH/SINIKA/SERDYUK 2016, 221-227.

⁸⁷ KARNAUKH/SINIKA/SERDYUK 2016, 234. The attempt to date the Demidenko VI.1.A type cauldrons starting with the 3rd century BC was made by the authors publishing the "ritual hoard/deposit" of Debal'tsevo to justify its chronology, as well as its ascribing to the Scythian culture.

⁸⁸ KARNAUKH/SINIKA/SERDYUK 2016, 230-232, Fig. 6. See also SINIKA 2017, 113, Fig. no. 8.

⁸⁹ See for all finds MORDVINTSEVA/TREJSTER 2007, I, 256-271.

⁹⁰ AMBROZ 1966, 55-56.

⁹¹ KROPOTOV 2010, 159-161, Fig. 47/1.

⁹² See to this effect SKALON 1971, 56-60.

⁹³ See KROPOTOV 2010, 159-162, variation 1.

⁹⁴ GLEBOV/GORDIN 2016, 284, 288-289, Fig. 1/11; GLEBOV 2017, 52-56, Fig. 1/1). The Dyad'kovskij 45 brooch was single piece, with a bilateral spring made of 9 coils and external chord. The elongated oval bow and returned foot soldered thus formed an irregular rectangular catchplate. The bow is decorated with three conical projections made of twisted wire and cylinders made of spiralled wire, yet also elements made in the granulation technique on the foot, chord and tip of the conical projections.

⁹⁵ The grave goods also include a glass *skyphos*, a bronze cauldron (type Demidenko VI.2.B), a bronze cup (Idria type), a bronze plate, two wheel-made cups, a pottery *unguentarium*, a bronze mirror, two golden foot rings with free overlapping ends, golden dress appliques of several types, a golden pendant to which were attached several small *lunula* pendants to which add many beads etc.

⁹⁶ GLEBOV/GORDIN 2016, 282-292; GLEBOV 2017, 53, 54-55.

thus invalidating the mid 3rd century BC date suggested for the “ritual hoard/deposit” of Debal’tsevo. This early framing is refuted, as shown above, also by other artefacts in this complex. Thus, we believe that the Debal’tsevo find must be dated sometime in the 1st century BC⁹⁷, while the Scythian ascribing is unfounded, especially since for the territories between the Don and Dnieper of the 2nd – 1st century BC. Ancient written sources and those archaeological too do not supply information recording inhabitancy of significant groups of Scythians in the given territory.

The analysis of the cauldron finds in the Lower Volga shows that in the 2nd – 1st century BC specimens specific to the previous period in the region continued to be used and also that over the course of the 5th – 1st century BC, the development process of the Sauromatae cauldron types made in the two making manner was continuous⁹⁸. Interestingly, in the 2nd century BC these cauldron types emerge also in the Kuban region, which evidences the southward movement of part of the population in the Lower Volga steppes, most likely under the pressure of a new Sarmatian wave arriving from the east⁹⁹.

Thus, in the case of the Avrămeni and Bubueci cauldrons and those similar (Zolotaya kosa coastline, Novodzhherelievskaya, Ponuro-Kalininskaya orositelnaya sistema, Debal’tsevo, Kalininskaya) it is obvious they are either a continuation of ancient casting traditions or were produced sometime earlier, still in use for a good period of time after their production cease¹⁰⁰. Exhibited repair works and presence far from the territories of origin where they were made and used as well as their find together with 2nd – 1st century BC artefacts confirm their use for a longer time span.

The dating of the Avrămeni and Bubueci cauldrons must be placed, all considered, to the 2nd – 1st century BC likely only sometime in the 2nd century BC¹⁰¹. It is hard to say when specifically in mentioned period the Avrămeni cauldron was deposited in the barrow mantle. On the other hand, its deposition, as evidenced by complexes with similar cauldrons might have occurred both sometime over the 2nd century BC and between the end of the 2nd century – first decades of the 1st century BC. In the case of the Bubueci cauldron, we believe that the “ritual hoard/deposit” of which it is part does not date earlier than the 2nd century BC. Based on origin, parallels and dating of the artefacts, its framing between mid 2nd century BC and early 1st century BC seems very likely, yet a more detailed discussion of this find shall be made elsewhere.

The Velikoploskoe¹⁰² cauldron, surviving fragmentarily,

⁹⁷ Cf. GLEBOV 2017, 54.

⁹⁸ DEMIDENKO 2008, 33, 62.

⁹⁹ DEMIDENKO 2008, 62. The new Sarmatian groups arriving from the east carried the tradition of making cauldrons with hemispherical body and tapering walls towards the mouth, arched vertical handles decorated with three buttons, small handles, set symmetrically as well as body decorated midway with a belt in relief imitating string (type VI) (DEMIDENKO 2008, 62).

¹⁰⁰ The further use of certain artefacts for a long period is frequent in the environment of various cultural identities of the Antiquity, especially in the case of metallic vessels or precious metal objects.

¹⁰¹ This view was expressed following discussions on the topic of these vessels also by dr. Sergej Demidenko, whom we thank this way too for his suggestions and views for clarifying certain aspects.

¹⁰² For the find at Velikoploskoe see DZIS-RAJKO/SUNICHUK 1984, 148-161;

is larger than those at Avrămeni and Bubueci. Its body is hemispherical towards elongated ovoid with marked shoulders and walls tapering towards the mouth¹⁰³ (Fig. 14/1). The slightly thickened everted rim is 1.2 cm wide (Fig. 14/2) and repair traces are present in a few places on the body in the form of irregular outline patches. It was provided with two vertically set arched handles, of which though only small portions survived by their base (Fig. 14/1-2, 4) thus evidencing these were cast together with the rest of the body, without yet the certainty of being decorated each with three buttons or only one each. Below the handles base, on the body, is mentioned the presence of not very large projections¹⁰⁴. The biconical foot (Fig. 14/3), cast separately from the body and handles has enlarged base¹⁰⁵. The upper foot part with irregular outline juxtaposes the cauldron bottom (Fig. 14/3). The two parts seem to have been attached via the orifices on the body base and the upper part of the foot by a bronze plug made by casting, thus fixing the foot to the vessel bottom wall. Inside, the plug head is concave and seem to be irregular in outline (Fig. 14/3). Cauldron sizes are: height - 41 cm, mouth diameter - 33 cm, maximum diameter - 37.6 cm, foot height 11 cm, maximum foot diameter - 11 cm, and wall thickness - 0.3 cm¹⁰⁶.

The body shape of the Velikoploskoe cauldron resembles that of Demidenko VI¹⁰⁷ type cauldrons, emerging in the 2nd century BC¹⁰⁸. Including its sizes correspond to type VI cauldrons. Unfortunately, other elements specific to vessels in this type are missing. The attachment procedure of the foot to the body is made more coarsely. The rim shape and its making manner, as well as how the handles start from the rim are specific to Sauromatae and early Sarmatian cauldrons (types Demidenko I-III, V)¹⁰⁹. The technique and production manner of the vessel is typical to Sauromatae-early Sarmatian cauldrons.

Given the current circumstances and based on the surviving fragments it is obvious that the Velikoploskoe vessel exhibits features specific to the cauldrons types used in the last centuries BC¹¹⁰, being very difficult to ascribe with

SIMONENKO 1982, 237, 242, Fig. 1/9-10; SIMONENKO 2008, 56, cat. no. 9, Pl. 9-11; SIMONENKO 2011, 227, cat. no. 118; POLIN 1992, 53-55, Fig. 10; GROSU 1995, 167, Fig. 23, 24; BĂRCĂ 2002, 104, 105, Fig. 3-4; BĂRCĂ 2004, 35 sqq., Fig. 11-12; BĂRCĂ 2006, 370-372, Fig. 137-138; BĂRCĂ 2006a, 219-221, Fig. 45-46; MORDVICEVA/REDINA 2013, 388-393.

¹⁰³ The technological procedure of making cauldrons with hemispherical body and tapering walls towards the rim emerges in the 2nd century BC (DEMIDENKO 2008, 35).

¹⁰⁴ DZIS-RAJKO/SUNICHUK 1984, 157.

¹⁰⁵ We thank this way too dr. habil. Igor’ Bruyako and dr. Evgeniya Redina with the Archaeology Museum of Odessa for kindly facilitating access to the study of this cauldron and making available photos of the surviving fragments. We are also thankful to dr. Sergej Demidenko for kindly expressing his view on certain technical aspects.

¹⁰⁶ DZIS-RAJKO/SUNICHUK 1984, 158.

¹⁰⁷ Most of these are provided with two small handles, set symmetrically in the form of loops, connecting the rim to the body, yet are also decorated slightly above the middle body area with a belt in relief imitating the string. In this type there are also specimens which do not either have small handles or are not decorated with the string imitating belt (Demidenko VI.5.B type) dated to the 2nd – 1st century BC (DEMIDENKO 2008, 19, 113-114, cat. no. 154-155, Fig. 102/no. 155; 103/no. 154).

¹⁰⁸ DEMIDENKO 2008, 17-20, 35. String in relief (see DEMIDENKO 2008, 17-20), yet also specimens with vertical handles decorated with a knob.

¹⁰⁹ See for these vessels DEMIDENKO 2008, 15-17.

¹¹⁰ Originally, based on the published drawing, we ascribed the cauldron to a type specific to the 1st century BC – 1st century AD (BĂRCĂ 2006, 165-

certainty to a specific type. It seems to be an intermediate stage between 5th – 3rd century BC cauldrons, mainly Sauromatae and those of the early and middle Sarmatian period dated between the 2nd century BC and mid 2nd century AD. The archaic elements, like rim shape, how handles start from the rim, foot attachment system mixed with the hemispherical body shape with tapering walls towards the rim allow, in our view, for a dating *grosso modo* to the 2nd – 1st century AD, likely only sometime during the 2nd century BC. Such dating is not contradicted in our view either by the remaining artefacts in the find, yet their analysis and dating as well as the other “ritual hoards/deposits” from the territories between Volga – the pre-mountain area from the North Caucasus in the east and the Lower Danube - Prut to the west shall be discussed elsewhere.

Until then, one must note the rigidity of the chronological limits established by some authors for certain “ritual hoards/deposits”, although the valuable artefacts within some were used for an extensive period of time after their production cease, thus setting a chronological difference between their production and use date. The above are confirmed by the many finds made in various cultural environments, including the environments of the cultural identities from the north-Pontic area where older artefacts were discovered together with much more later objects. The possibility to extend the dating of certain pieces, especially within some “ritual hoards/deposits” would also result from considering the periods – sometime possible other times likely – of their burial and by analogy with other finds from different geographical areas.

Regarding the bronze cauldrons in the “ritual hoards/deposits” from the area comprised between the Volga – the pre-mountain region of the North Caucasus in the east and the Lower Danube - Prut in the west, they are characterised in their entirety by the production procedure specific to Sauromatae-Sarmatian cauldrons, none being of Scythian origin.

Their presence in territories from the western half of the Black Sea indicates they reached the area most likely subsequent to the arrival there of groups from the cultural identities environment of the steppes left to the Lower Don and the Kuban region.

Confirmation to this effect includes other artefacts from the “ritual hoards/deposits” in the western half of their diffusion area originating or with parallels only the eastern area of the phenomenon, especially in territories from the Kuban river basin and the Lower Don.

Elements and artefacts from north-west Caucasus¹¹¹ and the Lower Don region are found in territories by the Lower Danube and Prut, in both the constituents of “ritual hoards/deposits” (ex. Găvani¹¹²), and also horse burials (ex.

166), which influenced the dating of the entire complex to the first half of the 1st century BC. Such framing suggested for this “ritual hoard/deposit” approximately 15 years ago (BĂRCĂ 2006, 61-64, 161-162, 165-166, 370-372) is likely, less plausible.

¹¹¹ The presence of groups from north-west Caucasus as well as many elements and features from this region are frequent in the 2nd – 1st century BC in the Lower Don area (Cf. GLEBOV 2017a).

¹¹² See for this discovery SÎRBU/HARȚUCHE 2000, 139-153; ZAJTSEV 2007, 258-268.

Zimnicea¹¹³).

The use on a vast area of artefact classes specific to cultural identities from a particular geographical area is evidence of the collective and individual mobility, yet also show the existence of relations between different cultural groups as well the coexistence of some in certain regions for a while. The presence on a vast area of similar artefact classes indicates the possibility that at some point some became “supranational”, being utilized by individuals from different cultural groups. All considered, it is not excluded that some of the finds containing artefacts from different cultural environments¹¹⁴ had belonged to representatives of heterogeneous groups militarily dominating the north-Pontic area in certain chronological intervals of the last centuries BC. Within, a significant role, very likely, played the representatives of the cultural identities from territories in north-west Caucasus and the Lower Don.

It is certain that in the current state, unequivocal ascribing of the “ritual hoards/deposits” from the north-Pontic area to the Late Scythians¹¹⁵ is impossible to accept, especially since in the 3rd – 1st century BC, the Scythians did not inhabit good part of the territories where such complexes were discovered. These can be ascribed entirely neither to the Sarmatians (Siraci, Aorsi)¹¹⁶ nor to the Meotians¹¹⁷. The rather large diffusion area of the “ritual hoards/deposits” does not coincide with the borders of none of the archaeological cultures of the last centuries BC. Even more, some of these complexes were discovered in contact areas between different ethno-cultural groups, yet also in the territories of some different cultural groups with which those leaving them coexisted for a short period of time.

A significant part of the “ritual hoards/deposits” in territories from the eastern half of their diffusion area, as recently mentioned¹¹⁸, belong to the Sarmatians (Aorsi, Siraci)¹¹⁹. In fact, the archaeological finds of the last decades

¹¹³ ALEXANDRESCU 1983, Fig. 7-8.

¹¹⁴ Such a case is the grave at Chisten'koe (Crimea) where are found artefacts specific to the Sarmatian, late Scythian, Meotian environments and cultural identities from the central and north European space of the La Tène (ZAJTSEV/KOLTUKHOV 1997; ZAJTSEV/KOLTUKHOV 2004). The grave was dated based on the rich funerary furnishing to the third quarter – second half of the 2nd century BC (ZAJTSEV/KOLTUKHOV 1997, 55; ZAJTSEV/KOLTUKHOV 2004; ZAJTSEV 1999, 144).

¹¹⁵ For more recent views on the Scythian origin of this phenomenon see ZAJTSEV/MORDVINTSEVA 2003, 97-98; ZAJTSEV 2005, 94; ZAJTSEV 2007, 266-267; ZAJTSEV 2008, 148-150; BRUYAKO 2009, 340. For the outright view on their Scythian origin see TEL'NOV/CHETVERIKOV/SINIKA 2012, 12-13; TEL'NOV/CHETVERIKOV/SINIKA 2016, 998; TEL'NOV/SINIKA 2016, 303.

¹¹⁶ Archaeological finds of the last decades supplied enough arguments in favour of the Sarmatian origin of several “ritual hoards/deposits” dated to the 2nd – 1st century BC.

¹¹⁷ Earliest “ritual hoard/deposit” composed of item classes similar to those in some of those from the area between Volga - pre-mountain region of the North Caucasus in the east and the Lower Danube - Prut in the west comes from the Kuban region (MARCHENKO/LIMBERIS 2009, 69-74), where in fact were discovered (G 71 in the cemetery of the Novolabinskoe IV settlement) pieces (frontal appliques) which until not long ago were deemed specific only to the group of “ritual hoards/deposits” from north-west of the Black Sea (VLASKIN/GLEBOV/KUZ'MIN 2018, 63; GLEBOV/GORDIN/DEDYUL'KIN 2020, 375; VLASKIN/SIMONENKO 2020, 157, note 4).

¹¹⁸ Cf. SKRIPKIN 2017, 120-121; VLASKIN/GLEBOV/KUZ'MIN 2018, 63; GLEBOV/GORDIN/DEDYUL'KIN 2020, 374; BĂRCĂ 2020, 83.

¹¹⁹ In our view, this statement is supported also by the furnishings of several “ritual hoards/deposits” from the eastern area comprising artefacts specific

supplied enough arguments in favour of the Sarmatian pertinence of most of the “ritual hoards/deposits” dated to the 2nd – 1st century BC¹²⁰. Nevertheless, we may not exclude that some might have been left by individuals from other cultural identities (ex. Meotians or scattered groups of late Scythians).

In the western area it is more difficult to ascribe these finds with certainty to a specific cultural group. In the case of some, there are elements indicating the possibility they were related to the late Scythians or the Sarmatians, with the note that in a good part they are elements from the environment of cultural identities from north-west Caucasus, the central and north European area of the La Tène, as well as that Hellenistic. In the case of some, there is evidence that those leaving them are the representatives of the Syracian-Meotian world from north-west Caucasus. Noteworthy is that a significant part of the “ritual hoards/deposits” dated to the end of the 2nd century – 1st century BC were left most likely by the representatives of Sarmatian groups.

Whether these were the facts, the deposition phenomenon in this area, comprising harness, weaponry and military equipment pieces, metal vessels etc., should be regarded as a supracultural yet with a certain regional specificity phenomenon, inherent, to a smaller or greater extent, to the Barbarian world of the north-Pontic area of the last centuries BC. Among the multiple implications of such finds, their warlike burial goods are also indicative of conflict periods, of turmoil and insecurity in the region, due to both external and internal factors.

Sarmatian, late Scythian and Meotian elements as well as those from the cultural environments in the central and north European area of the La Tène from these “ritual hoards/deposits” indicate/suggest they belonged to warlike of heterogeneous origin, as confirmed by both the archaeological facts and the accounts in the ancient written sources. Based on the mixture of heterogeneous elements it may be also concluded that good part belong to certain representatives of the warlike elite coming from different groups, yet with rather “supranational” than ethnic identity features.

Since in these complexes harness pieces come first and because of the many weaponry and military equipment pieces present in them, we believe they must be ascribed to warlike slightly armed riders.

to the Sarmatian world of the 2nd – 1st century BC (bronze cauldrons, arrowheads with three wings and peduncle, including square, rhomboid or circular cross-section elongated peduncle, circular appliques in silver or silvered bronze with attachment loop on the interior, belt pendants in spoon shape, swords with half-moon ending handle, *phalerae* and circular silver appliques decorated with geometric and floral patterns etc.), being present also in a series of graves from the same time span. This also results from the fact that part of the “ritual hoards/deposits” from the eastern area were discovered buried in the mantle of barrows where were discovered and excavated Sarmatian graves synchronous or very similar as time with the first (GLEBOV 2016, 152-153).

¹²⁰ For recent finds see SERGATSKOV 2009; VLASKIN/GLEBOV/KUZ'MIN 2018; VLASKIN/SIMONENKO 2020; GLEBOV/GORDIN/DEDYUL'KIN 2020.

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Fig. 1. The Avrămeni cauldron (photo Ioan Iațcu).



Fig. 2. The Avrămeni cauldron (photo Ioan Iațcu).



Fig. 3. The Avrămeni cauldron (photo Ioan Iațcu).



1



2



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Fig. 4. The Avrămeni cauldron (photo Ioan Iațcu).



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2

Fig. 5. The Avrămeni cauldron (photo Ioan Iațcu).



1



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Fig. 6. The Avrămeni cauldron (photo Ioan Iațcu).



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Fig. 7. The Avrămeni cauldron (photo Ioan Iațcu).



1

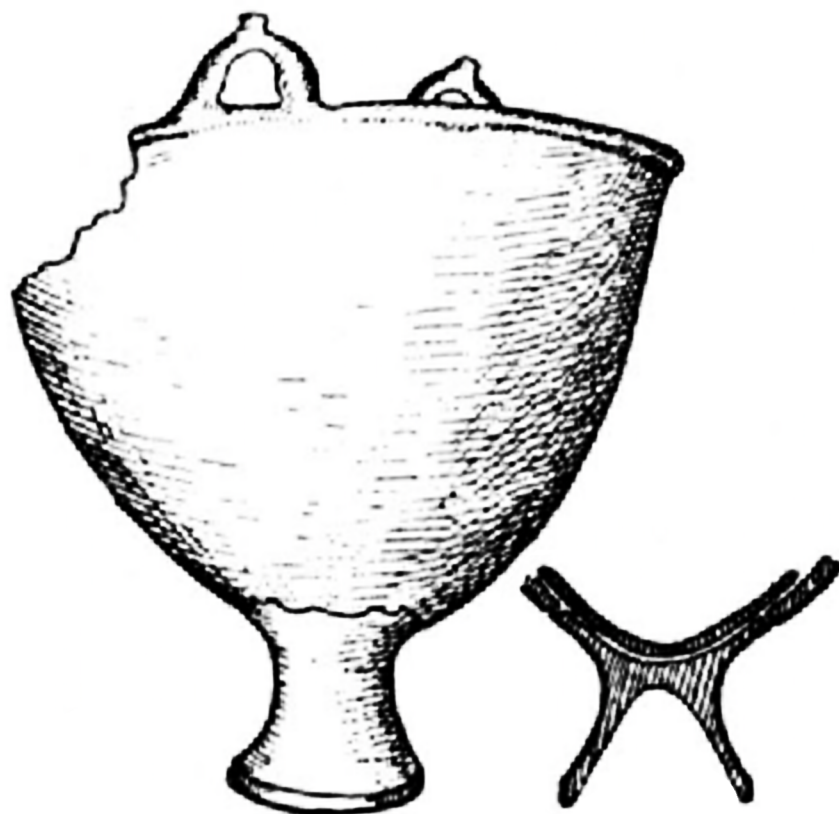


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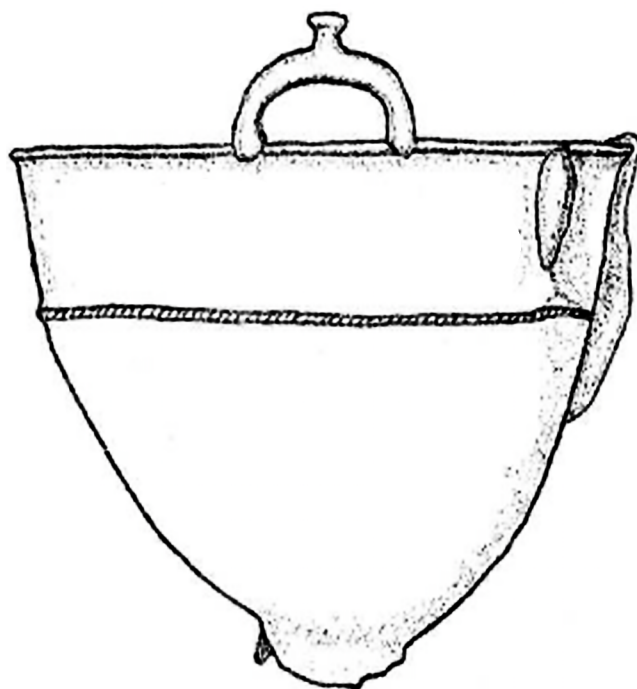


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Fig. 8. The Avrămeni cauldron (photo Ioan Iațcu).



1



2

0 3 cm

Fig. 9. The Avrămeni (1) and Novodzherelievskaya (2) cauldrons (1 – after NIȚU 1953; 2 – after SHEVCHENKO 2005).

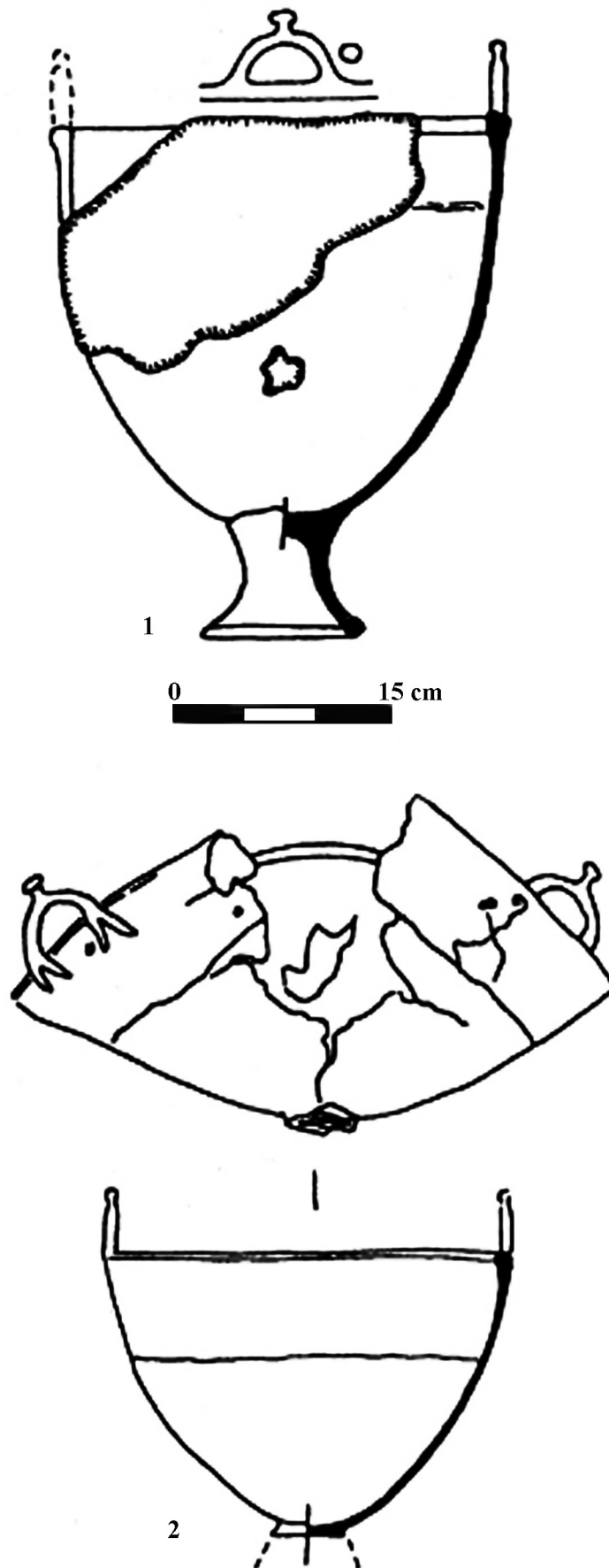
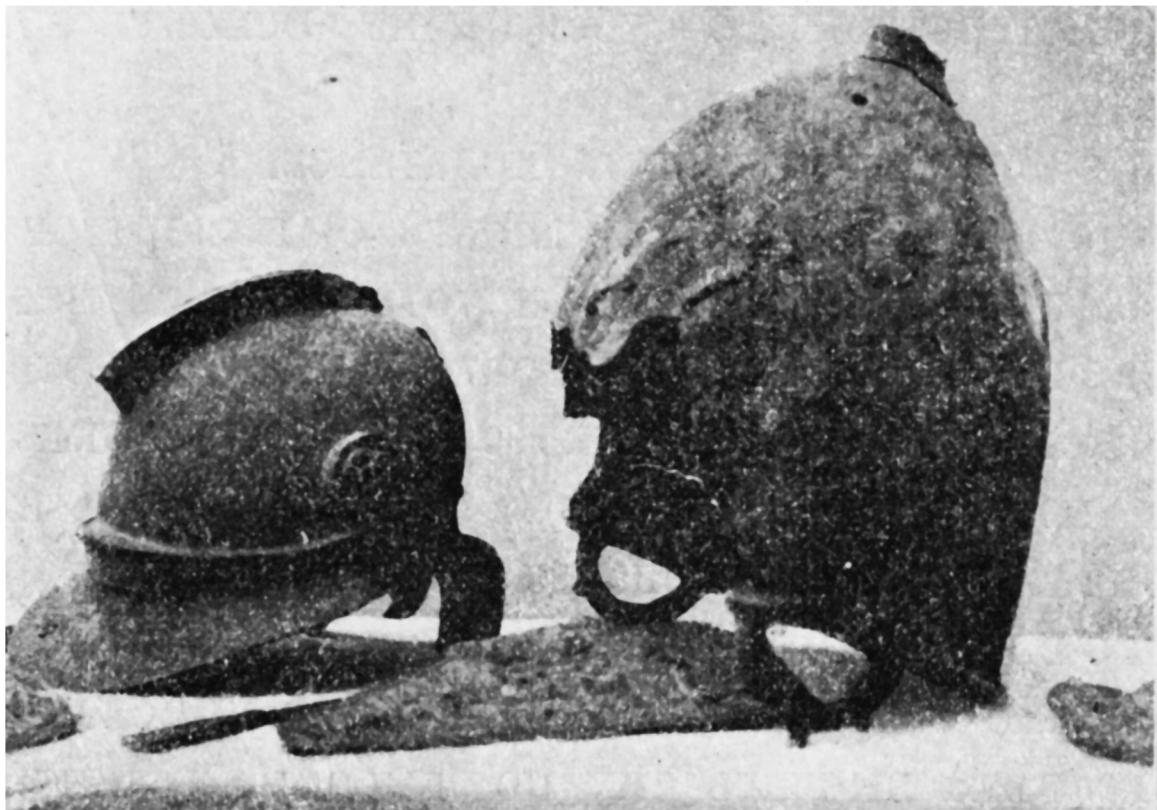
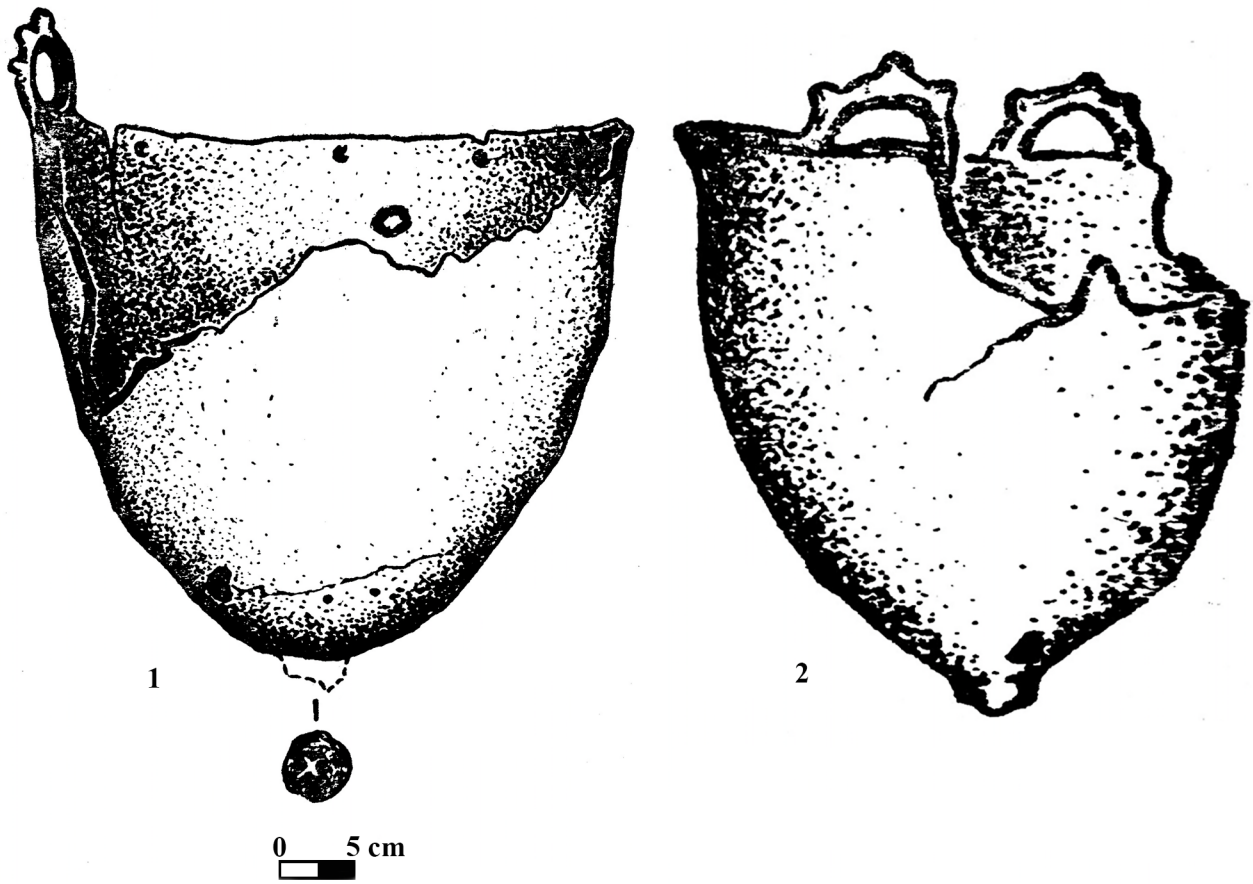


Fig. 10. The cauldrons on the Zolotaya kosa coast, Miussk peninsula (1) and T 2 G 9 at Ponuro-Kalininskaya orositelnaya sistema (2) (after DEMIDENKO 2008).



3

Fig. 11. The Bubueci cauldron (1-2 - after NEFEDOVA 1993; 3 - after SHUMANSKIJ 1910).

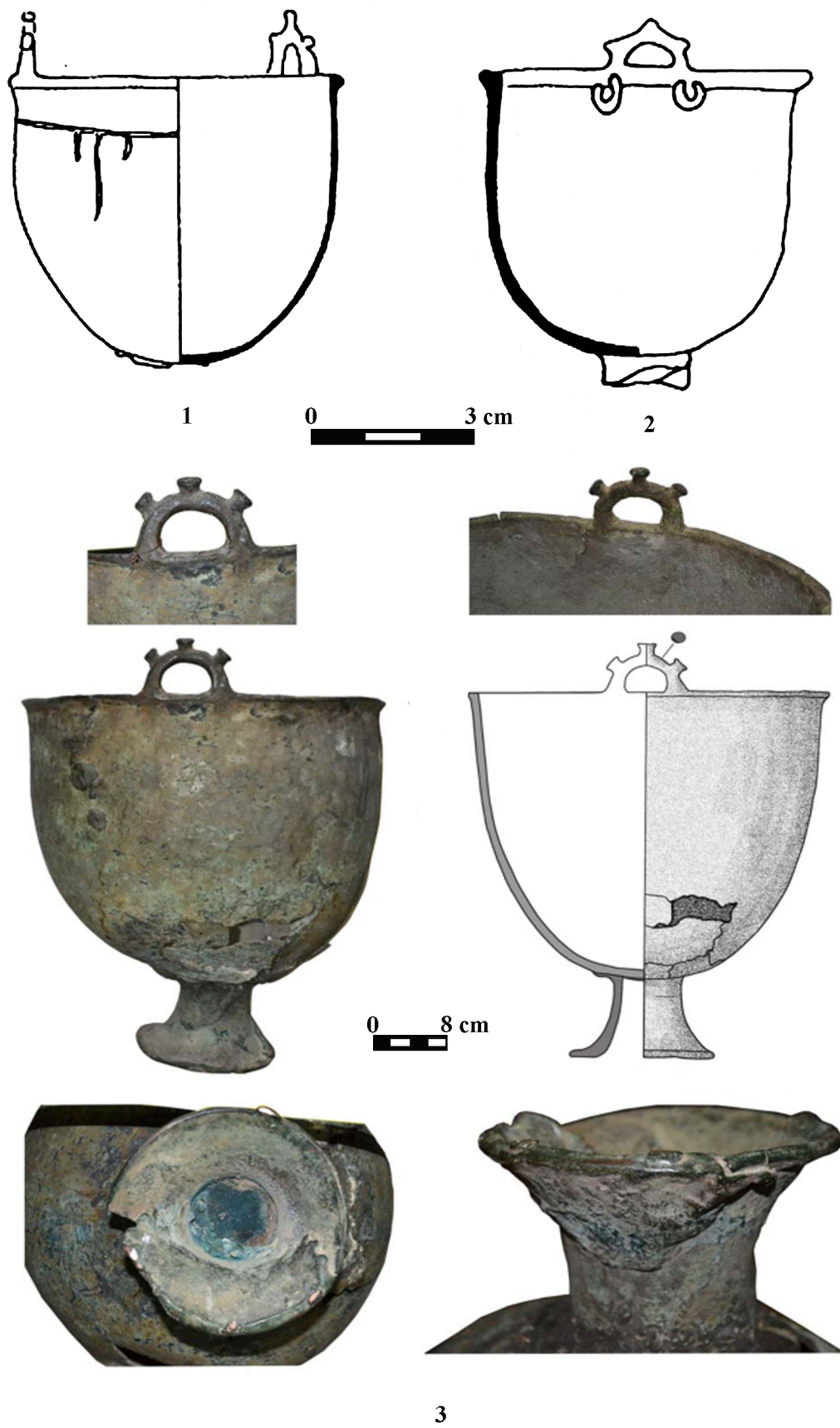


Fig. 12. The cauldrons of Kalininskaya, T 5 G 10 (1), Azov, T 2 G 3 (2) and Debal'tsevo (3) (1-2 – after DEMIDENKO 2008; 3 – after KARNAUKH/SINIKA/SERDYUK 2016).

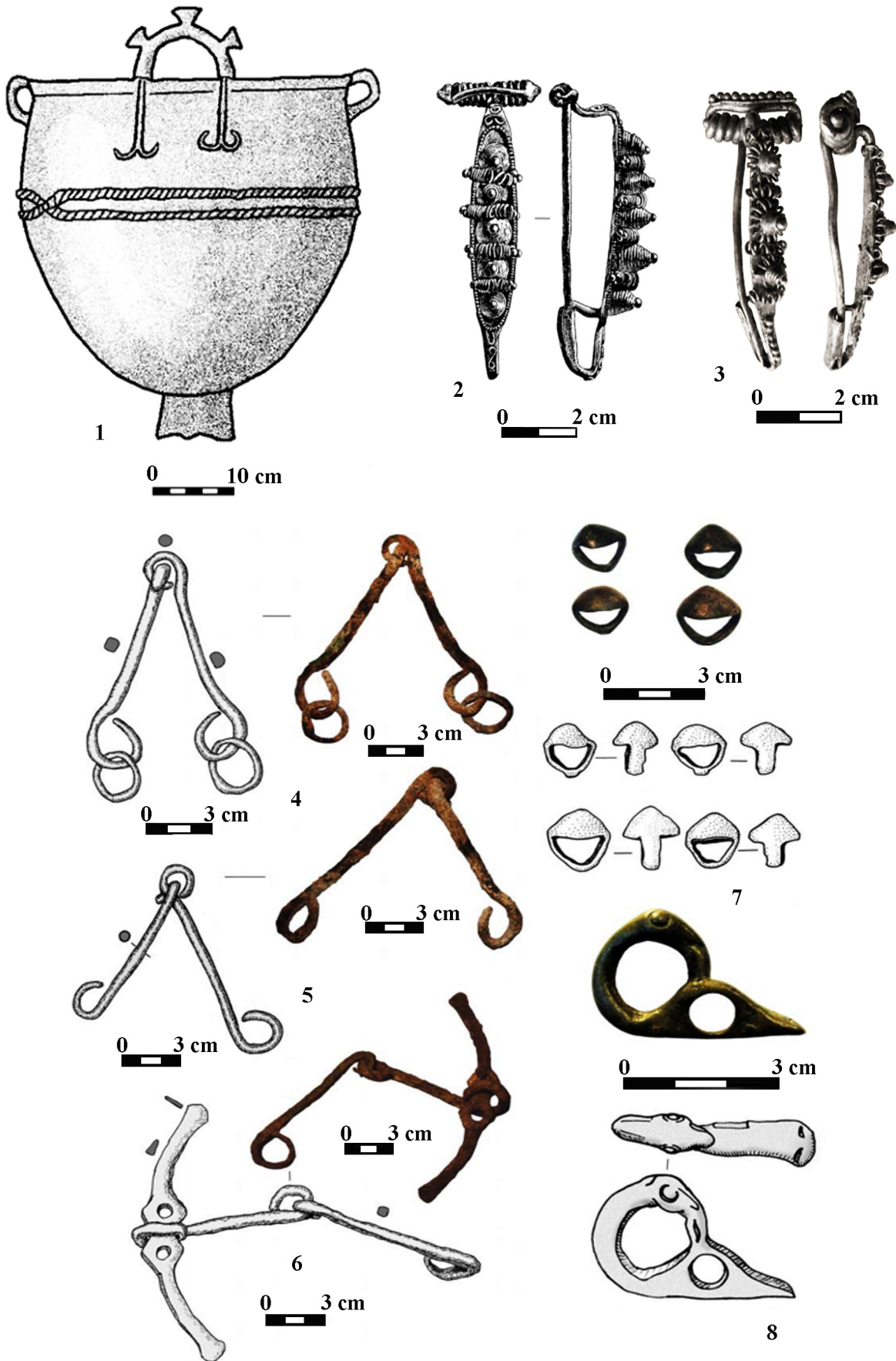


Fig. 13. Pieces from the Debal'tsevo complex (1-2, 4-8) and brooch in T 2 G 1 from the Dyad'kovskij 45 barrow cemetery (3) (1-2, 4-8 - after KARNAUKH/SINIKA/SERDYUK 2016; 3 - after GLEBOV 2017).

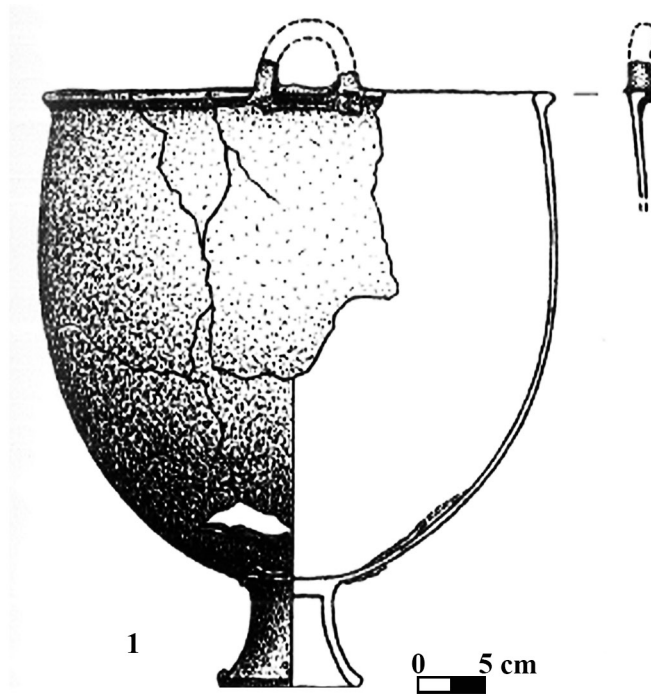


Fig. 14. The Velikoploskoe cauldron (1- after SIMONENKO 2008; 2-4 – photo O. V. Symonenko).



Fig. 15. The Velikoploskoe cauldron (photo Evgeniya Redina).

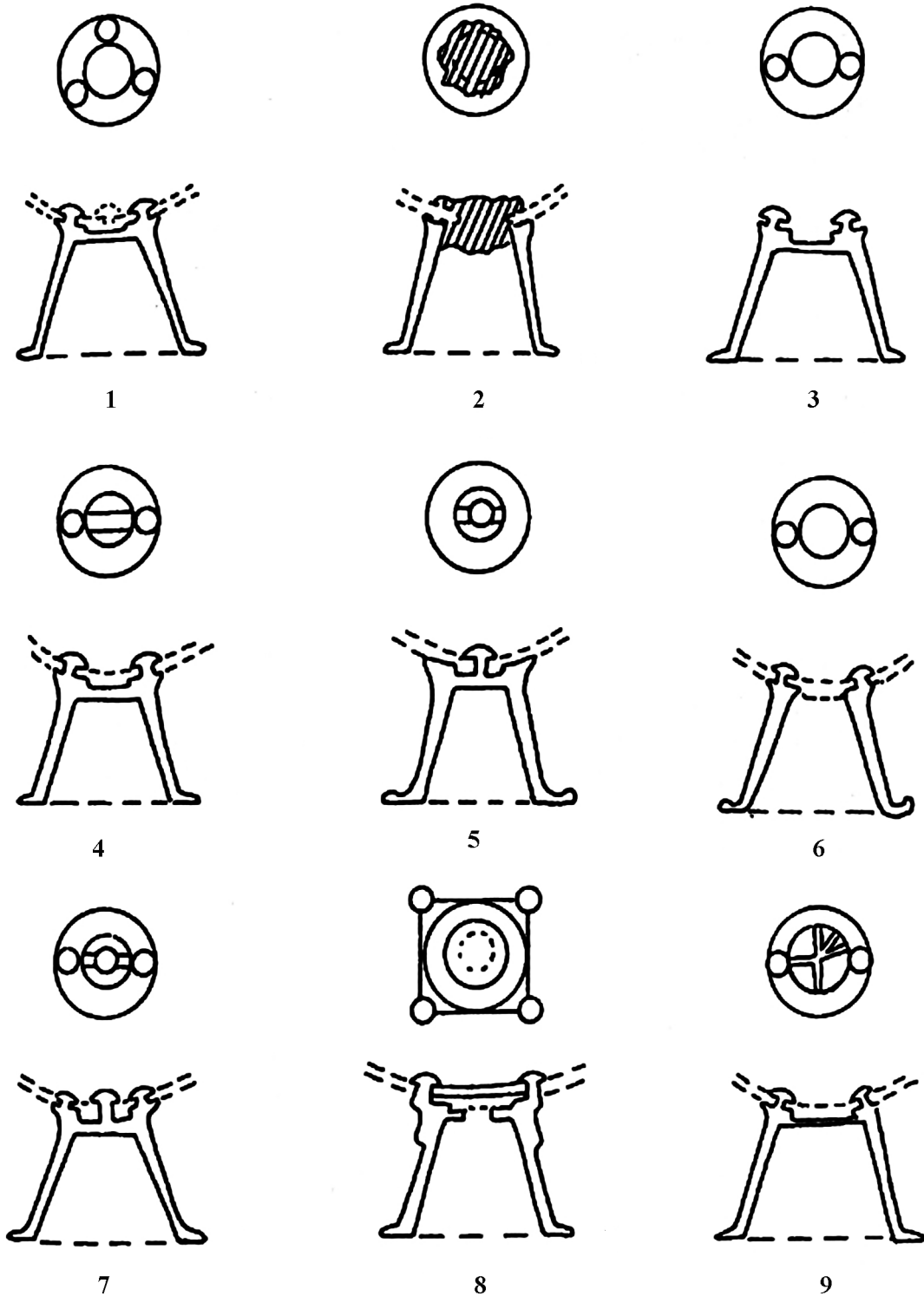


Fig. 16. Variation of foot attachment to the body of Sauromatae-Sarmatian cauldrons (after DEMIDENKO 2008).

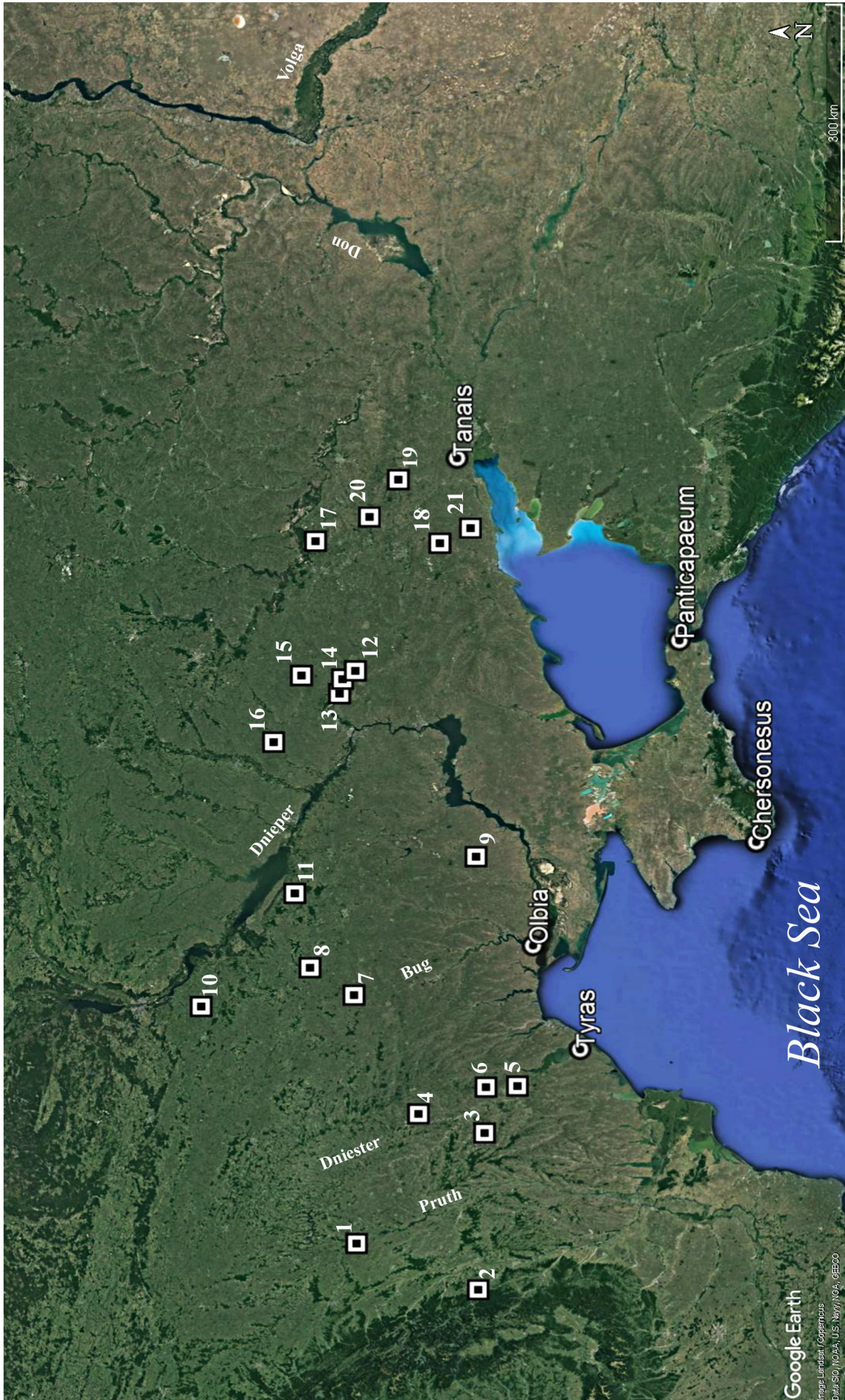


Fig. 17. Map of Sarmatian date cauldron finds from Romania, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. **1.** Avrămeni; **2.** Piatra Șoimului (Calu); **3.** Bubueci; **4.** Moca; **5.** Slobozia; **6.** Velikoploskoe; **7.** Troyany; **8.** Yaroshevka; **9.** Davydov Brod; **10.** Zapudze; **11.** Tsvetna; **12.** Boguslav; **13.** Bulakhovka; **14.** Verbkî; **15.** Terny; **16.** Pavlovka; **17.** Selimovka; **18.** Kal'mitus; **19.** Chuguno-Krepinka; **20.** Debat'tsevo; **21.** south-east Donetsk region.

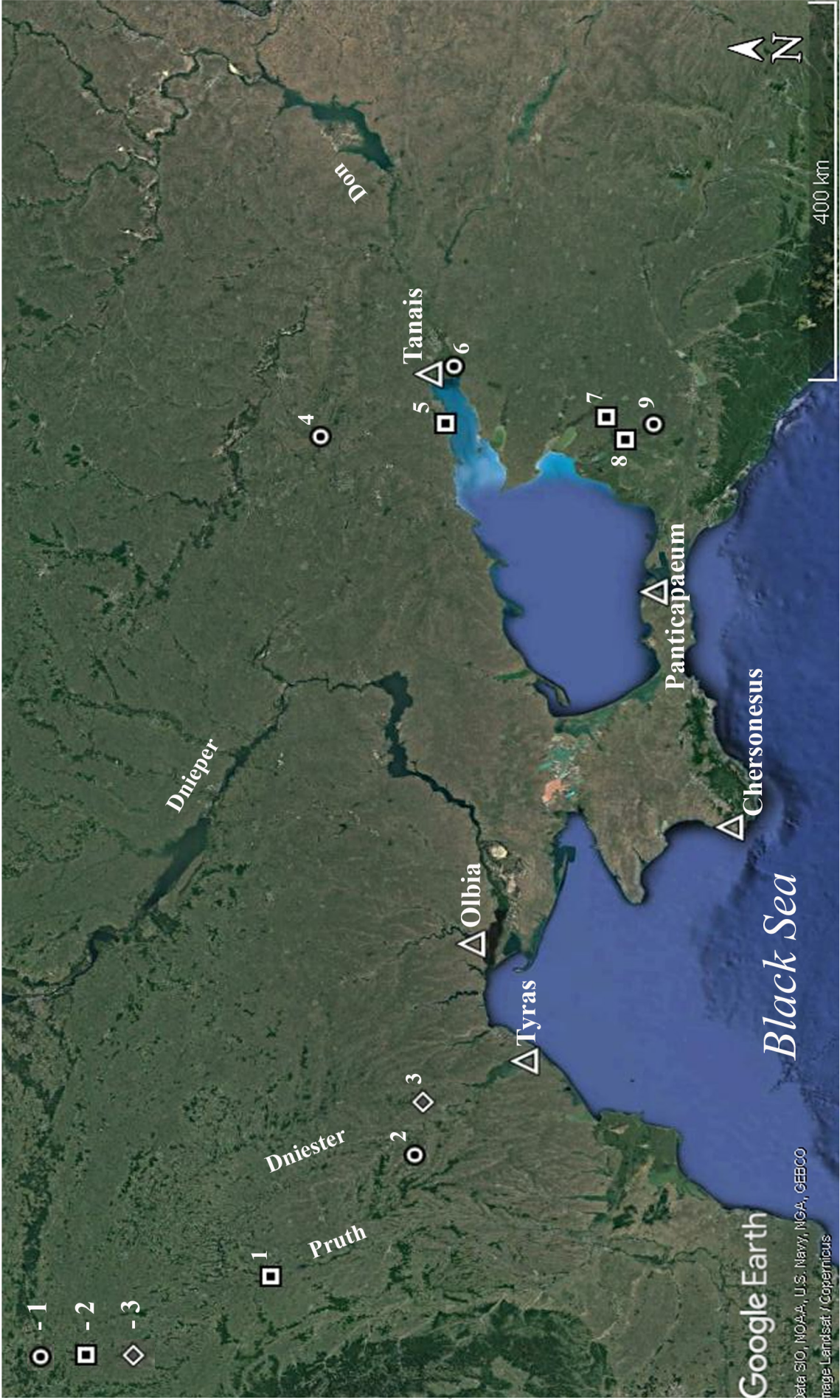


Fig. 18. Map of cauldron finds of Demidenko I.3.A type (1), II.1.B (2) and of uncertain type (3) from the north-west and north of the Black Sea. 1. Avrämeni; 2. Bubueci; 3. Velikoploskoe; 4. Debal'tsevo; 5. Zolotaya kosa; 6. Azov; 7. Novodzhelievskaya; 8. Ponuro-Kalinskaya orositelnaya sistema; 9. Kalinskaya.

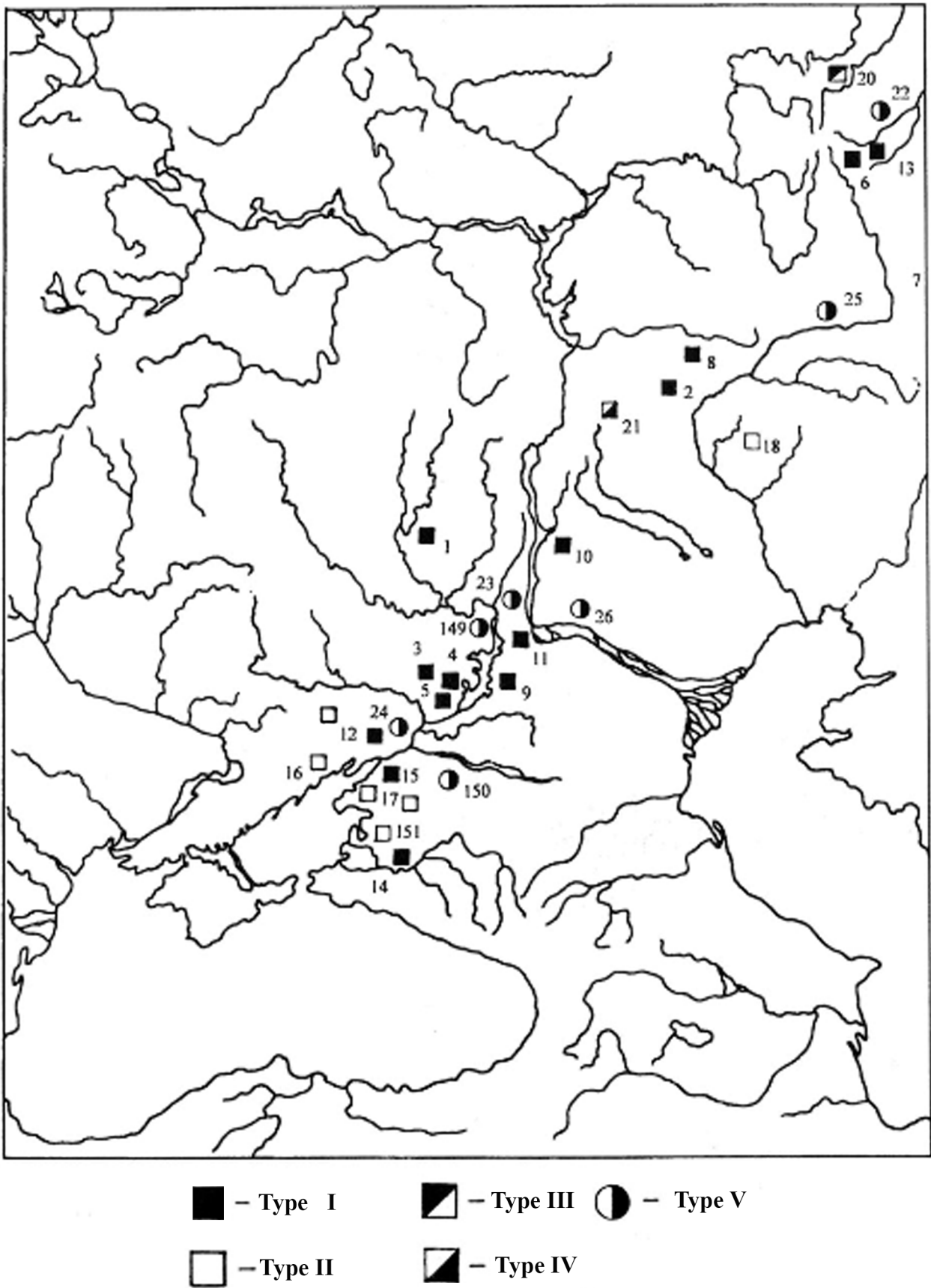


Fig. 19. Map of Demidenko I-V type cauldron finds (after DEMIDENKO 2008), with additions.