

## New Information about the Mingtepa City Monument

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### Abstract:

This article provides new information about the city monument of Mingtepa, located in the northern part of the Sogd region. The first information about the city monument of Mingtepa was recorded in the 70-80s of the last century. The conclusions are made on the basis of material artifacts obtained during excavations in the 1980s and last 2014-2017. Also presented the results of a joint Uzbek-French archaeological expedition on the survey of archaeological sites in the northern part of the Central Zarafshan oasis. Opinions about the localization of the city are expressed on the basis of written sources and new archaeological materials. On the basis of archaeological excavations, the classification of ceramic products and their interaction with the culture of neighboring territories are analyzed. Kabudanjakent, the Sogdian rustak located in the northern part of Zarafshan, and its pottery show similarities with the early medieval ceramics of Chach, Ustrushona, South and West Sugd regions, as well as the influence of the "Kaunchi" culture.

**Keywords:** Sogd, Mingtepa, Panjikent, Ustrushana, Chach, Buzmajon, Maimurg, Kabudandjakent, Zarafshan, Afrosiab, Rustak, written sources, archaeological research, Buzmajon, Maymurg, Bulungur, ceramics.

Objective, scientific study of the emergence of ancient and medieval cities between the two major rivers of Central Asia, the Amu Darya and Syr Darya, the causes of development and patterns of urbanization, the features of these processes in the socio-economic sphere and the cultural life of the time is one of the most pressing problems of archaeology.

Archaeological excavations in Mingtepa have been carried out in recent years due to the importance of studying the historical topography, urban planning and defense of Mingtepa, the peculiarities of the city's construction culture, the location, structure and level of beautification of settlements.

The first archeological excavations in the archeological monuments located in the northern regions of Central Zarafshan were carried out in the 70s and 80s of the last century by archaeologists O.M. Rostovtsev, Kh.G. Akhunboboev, G.V. Vafoev and M.Kh. Isomiddinov. During the research, more than 200 archeological monuments of the oasis, ancient and medieval, were identified and their periodic dates were clarified. Among the monuments studied, information is also given about the ruins of Mingtepa city and several monuments located around it (Rostovtsev, 1975. p. 98-102; Rostovtsev, 1980. p. 455; Akhunbabaev, 1983. p. 154-165).

In 2005-2008, the Uzbek-French joint archeological expedition continued archeological excavations in Mingtepa on the basis of a new project. As a result of archeological excavations, 358 archeological monuments in the northern regions of the Zarafshan River have been registered and mapped. According to the results of studies in the oasis 13 archeological monuments of the first millennium BC, 8 of which relate to the Achaemenid period, were discovered. Among them are 151

monuments of antiquity, more than 130 monuments of the Early and Middle and Late Middle Ages. It is acknowledged that the main part of the studied monuments is located close to the artificial irrigation networks flowing from the Zarafshan River. There is also information about the ruins of the monument Mingtepa, which originates from the Zarafshan River and is located around the main channel of the Bulungur Canal (Isomiddinov, Rapen, Makroborodov, Raevskaya, Sarimsakova, 2011. p. 2).

The medieval written sources mention six rustaks, inhabiting the northern territories of the Samarkand oasis. They are Yorket, Burnamad, Buzmajan, Kabudanjaket, Vedar and Marzban ibn Turkash. It is said that only three of these rustaks centers had mosques in Barket, Kabudanjaket and Vedar rustak in Buzmajon Rust. For this reason, all three are mentioned by Arab tourists as cities (Bartold, 1965. p.193).

There are different opinions about the six rustaks located in the northern regions of the Samarkand oasis. It has been conducted research on medieval rusts and their localization. Kh.G. According to Akhunbabayev's research, the city of Barkat is a major archaeological monument in the village of Oktepa-Metan in the present-day Bulungur district at the site of Oktepa. (Akhunbabaev, 1990.p. 26-28).

According to the Arab traveler and geographer Ibn Haukal, the thickets of Buzmajan and Maymurg were located in the Taylak and Urgut districts in the southeastern part of the modern city of Samarkand. They are even mentioned as one of the rusts of the Kesh district located in the Kashkadarya Oasis. Raimkulov's research also shows that Buzmajon and Maymurg rustaks may have turned to Kesh for some time in the 10th century (Raimkulov, Aslanov, 2012.p. 152-153).

Kh.G. Akhunboboev says that the Kabudanjaket (now Mingtepa) site was in Kurgantepa in Mingtepa, southeast of Gazira village on the border of Jambay and Bulungur districts and formed a huge complex of early and medieval monuments (Akhunbabaev, 1990. p.26-28)

The urban monument Mingtepa is located 30 km north of Samarkand, on the border of Jambai and Bulungur districts, in the middle basin of the Bulungur Canal, which originates on the right bank of the Zarafshan River. The geographical coordinates of the monument are north latitude  $39^{\circ}47'31.22$  and east longitude  $67^{\circ}10'11.77$  . The total area of Mingtepa city ruins that is now preserved is about 40 (Boliev, Rakhmonov, Badirdinov 2017 p.3-17 .), (figure 2).

It is noteworthy that until recently, the Mingtepa memorial complex was called Mingtepa and Afrosiab by the locals in the surrounding villages.

In 1979-1980, H.G. Akhunboboev conducted research to create a complex of archeological monuments of Bulungur district. During the research, 71 archeological monuments were identified and mapped in the district. Among them is information about the ruins of Mingtepa city and a number of monuments located around it. Kh.G. Akhunbabaev also drew a topographical plan of the Mingtepa monument (figure 1), (Akhunbabaev, 1983. p. 154-164).

In the summer of 2014, researchers from the Institute of Archaeology of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan, A.Kh. Atakhodjaev and S.Sh. Kubaev, conducted shallow excavations at the Mingtepa urban monument. According to the study, the city consists of three parts, the city arch, located on the southwest side of the complex. The appearance of the arch is square, 12 m high and 1.2 m from the base of the bottom. The total area of Shakhristan is about 10 people and was excavated on a separate hill on the west side of the arch. Excavations were carried out in two places (Atakhodjaev, Kubaev, 2014. p. 3-17).

**Excavation 1;** The excavations were carried out on a 5x10 site. Several graves were excavated and several archeological artifacts were collected around them. The results of the analysis of the findings

are said to date back to the Middle Ages (X-XI). Then it continued excavating at Zone 2. It is noted that the archeological artifacts from here date back to the VI-VII centuries (Atakhodjaev, Kubaev, 2014, p. 3-17).

In order to analyze the above archeological researches, to clarify the geographical location of the monument, the total preserved area and the periodic boundary, in August-September 2017, researchers of the Institute S. Suyunov, B. Boliev, H. Rakhmonov conducted archeological excavations at the Mingtepa monument.

Excavations were carried out on the south-western side of the monument, in an area measuring 10x8 m (figure 3). During the excavations, the location of one side of the room on the east side of the excavation, a wide bullet wall in the middle and two corridors in the north-south direction was determined. A number of archeological artifacts were also excavated.

The first corridor opened was a half-arch with a width of 0.8 m, which was directly connected to the defensive wall. Raw bricks measuring 52x26x10 cm were stacked horizontally in three rows at the top of the half arch. The south side of the corridor, which is 3.04 m long, is covered with a wall. The exit from the corridor is not clear. It may have been closed during the next construction period. Between the two corridors there is a wide bullet wall, the width of which is 2 m. The corridor in this direction is also connected to the defensive wall. During the opening of the marked area, it was observed that the soft layer continued downwards. The excavations did not reach the bottom, the floor (figure 4, 5, 6, 7, 8).

During the excavations, kitchen utensils, jugs, bowls, cups, pans, coppers and small jugs were collected. Among the findings are a small dish, a miniature small jug (whole) and a cup with a hemispherical reservoir (figure 9,10,11).

According to the analysis of pottery;

**Bowls;** It consists of 3 categories;

- a) the middle part of the body is extended from the arch, the disk in the vertical position, the disk - blunt bowls (figure 12, 1).
- b) the disk head of some bowls is slightly turned inward, some less turned outward, deep plates and bowls. (figure 13, 1-5).
- c) thin, conical side wall, straight disk, bowls with disk and flat bottom (figure 12-13 , 3-1).

**Jugs;** It consists of 3 categories;

- a) long straight neck, narrow neck, disk slightly inward, jugs with flanging tip bluntly pointed. (figure 13, 3).
- b) jars with a wide neck, short neck, poisonous body, the tip of the disk slightly turned outward, used for storing water (figure 12).
- c) water jugs with a wide neck, long straight neck, disk outward, the body is elongated, oval-shaped (figure 12-13, 2, 4).

**Coppers;** The next period (VII-VIII centuries) consists of 4 categories.

- a) made on a potter's circle , their disk tip turned round outwards, the abdomen being sharply enlarged as if the coppers were swollen (figure 12-13-14, 4, 3, 2, 2).
- b) made on a potter's circle, the disk of the head in the form of a bird's beak turned inward. This type of copper is adapted to close the lid to the mouth. This type of vessel has a globular shape (figure 12-13 , 5, 7, 1).

c) the disk of this vessel is turned outward by the example of a snake head, the body form is round, the side wall is thin. There are two ear handles on the side. The dishes are made on a potter's circle (figure 12-13-14 , 6, 4, 3, 4).

d) the disk of this vessel is sharply turned outward in an almost horizontal position, the tip of the disk has a sharp tip, the neck is short in the form of a finger cigar, the body consists of round coppers (figure 13-14, 1, 2, 3, 4).

The entire extant small jug is much smaller in size, although it looks exactly like the jugs themselves. Small jugs are usually made by hand from yellow clay. In many cases, dark brown is also colored with slipware. The disk is slightly bent and turned outward. Neck short, body globular (figure 12, 4). Similar small jug pots were found in the monuments of Kaliyatepa, Pardakultepe and Rasulboykultepe in the neighboring northwestern region of Ustrushna. The small jugs found in the monuments are similar to the small jugs found in the Mingtepa monument and are said to have their disks curved outward, their necks are short and their bodies are globular and round (M.Pardayev, A.Pardayev, 1998, p.58-69).

In addition, the small jug-like findings from the Mingtepa monument and their comparative analysis are similar to those of Afrosiab of a large urban monument 30-35 km south of the Mingtepa monument. For example, the disk of a small jug found in L.F Sokolovskaya excavations is circular, the abdomen is round, the size of the mouth is 5.5 cm, the bottom is 5 cm, the clay is mixed with baked pottery, the bottom is cut in a circle similarity is said to belong to a period (the date corresponds to the end of the VI century, the beginning of the VIII century) (Sokolovskaya, 2015.p.62).

Among the findings, a bowl made in a hemispherical shapedeserves special attention. In fact, the origin and development of cups are inextricably linked to bowls. Because the shape of the cups is often repeated as bowls themselves or as reduced copies of them. According to M. Kh. Isomiddinov, Greek bowl "phiale" later gave Uzbek name "bowl", and it is said that the production of this type of pottery was influenced by Greek pottery (Isomiddinov, 1993, p.29).

Excavations have fixed a cup of hemispherical shape. It is handmade of medium quality clay, the side wall is steeply inclined, the disk is straight, the bottom is flat, the interior and exterior of the vessel is reddish-brown, belongs to the early Middle Ages. A similar cup was found at the Erkurgan monument (EK-18) in the Karshi oasis (Suleymanov, 2000. p.186).

In addition, in the hemispherical form, the side wall is steeply inclined, the bottom is flat, the surface is reddish-brown, the disk is straight, the cups are in the Poikend monument shakhristan, stratigraphic second horizon of the pit. Appearance, size is almost the same (Mukhamedjanov, Adilov, Mirzaakhmedov, Semenov, 1988. p. 162-163).

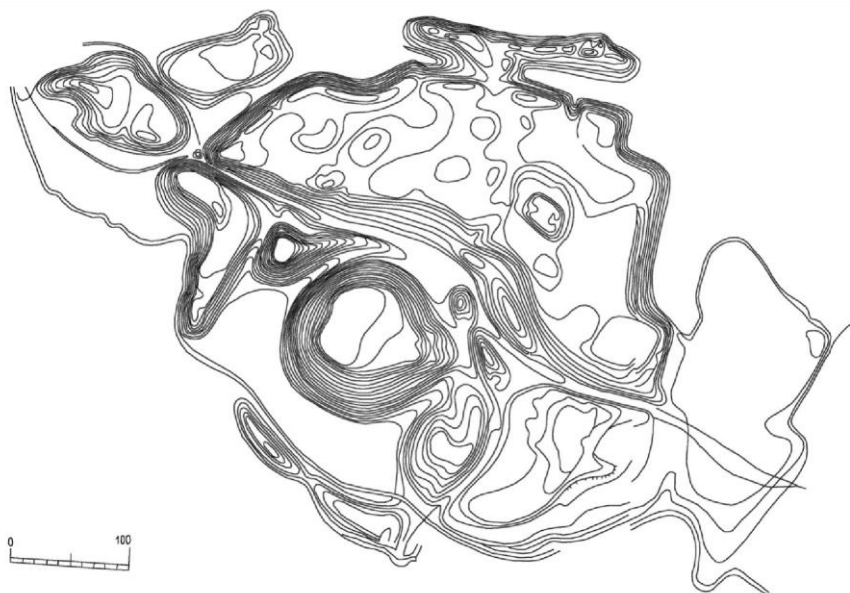
From the monument among the first pottery vessels of the Middle Ages were also found two-eared (mongdi), thick. Such pottery is similar to findings from the monuments of Kugaitepa, Khanabad and Yunusabad Oktepa of the Tashkent Oasis, as well as findings from the Chachtepa formation, Chach VI, which is a reference monument (Filanovich, 1983, p.59-61, fig,3,6).

There are also coppers, jugs, small jugs (Bolshakov, p. 99-102, Fig. 6,8-9), narrow-necked, voluminous, handle-less jugs, drinking cups, all kinds of deep dishes from the upper layers of the city of Pendjikent, Sogd province (Bentovich, 1964, p.278-293, figure. 17,18). It is subjected to comparative analysis with the first medieval pottery found at the Mingtepa monument. Comparative, material sources cited for comparison VI-VII A.D.; Dated VII-VIII cc.

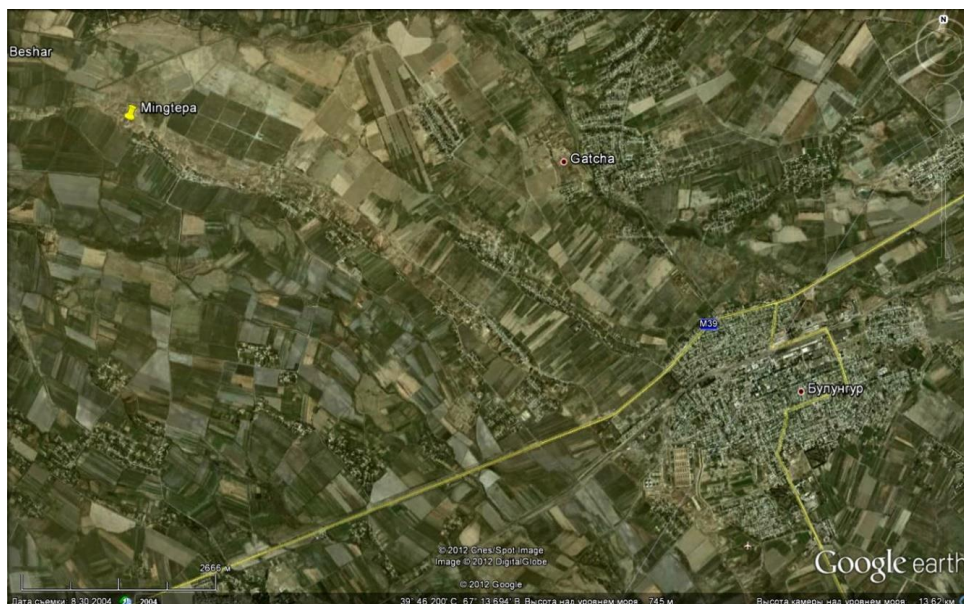
Thus, the complex of ceramics found in the Mingtepa monument dates back to the VI-VIII centuries through a large-scale comparative analysis of early medieval monuments of the Sogdian, Ustrushon,

Chach (Tashkent) oases. In particular, we can conclude that coppers, bowls, cups and plate, which are considered household items, may have been very common in the early Middle Ages, not only in Central Asia, but also in neighboring countries.

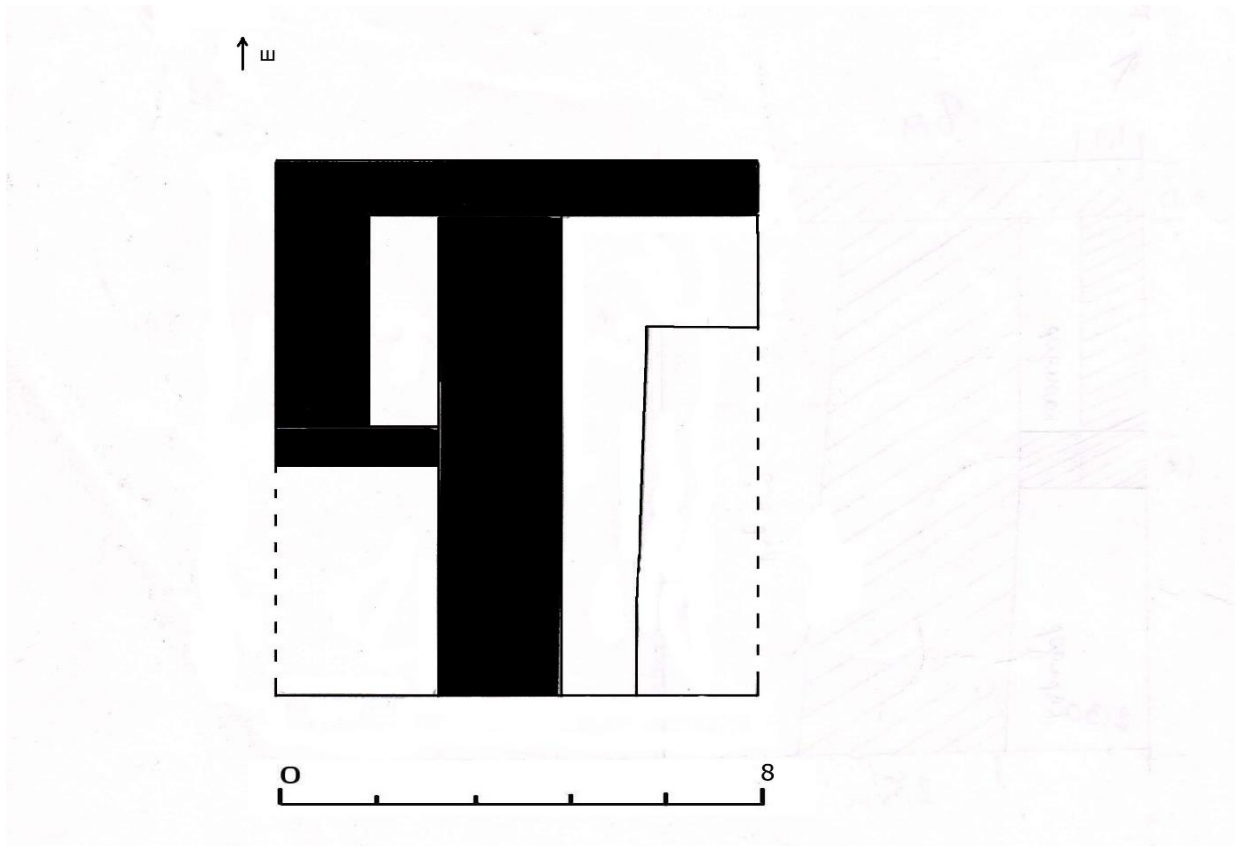
Thus, the results of the study show that the existing stoneware of the monument of Mingtepa of the VI-VIII centuries, first of all, the development of pottery craft during this period continued the local traditions of the Central Sogd (IV-VI centuries). In addition, in the early Middle Ages, the third period of the "Melon culture" in Ustrushn and other features of pottery of the Central and Southern Sogd, it is evident that the Mingtepa people had some influence on the crafts in this area. It was the first time we excavated at the Mingtepa city monument. In the coming years, the Mingtepa monument, located on a strategically important branch of the Great Silk Road, will reveal to us many mysteries of the history of the Zarafshan oasis.



**Figure 1.** Topographic plan of the Mingtepa monument (Akhunbabaev, 1983).



**Figure 2.** Aero-photography of the Mingtepa monument.



**Figure 3.** Excavation plan.



**Figure 4.** South view of the excavation.



**Figure 5.** View of the excavation from the north.



**Figure 6.** The first corridor opened in the excavation.



**Figure 7.** South view of the first corridor opened in the excavation.



**Figure 8.** View from above of the first corridor opened in the excavation.





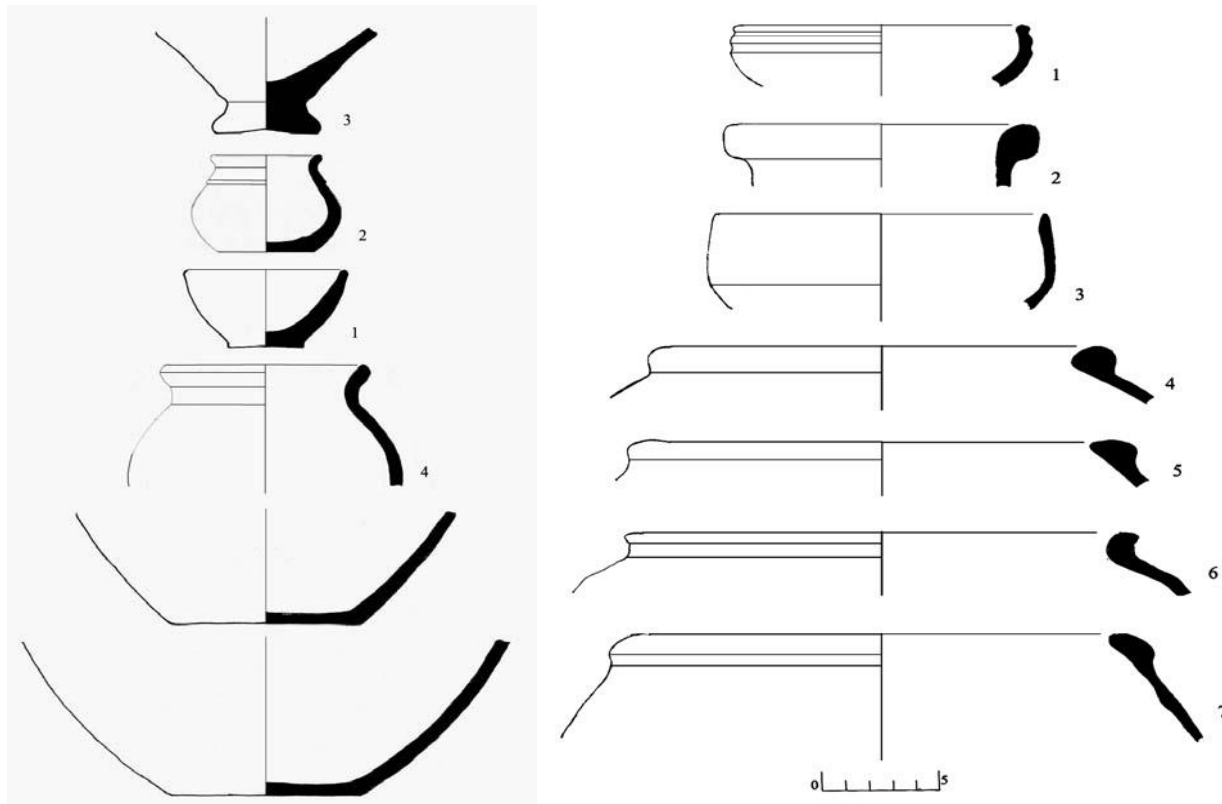
**Figure 9.** Miniature small jug.



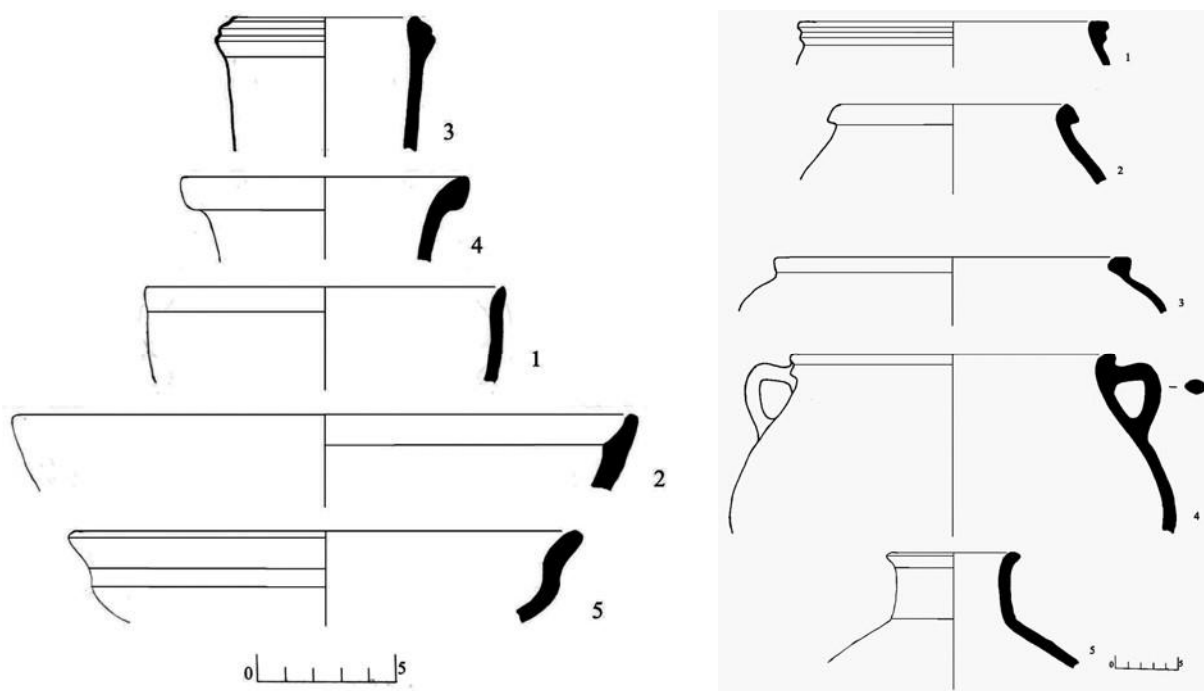
**Figure 10.** The cup is stored in the shape of a hemisphere.



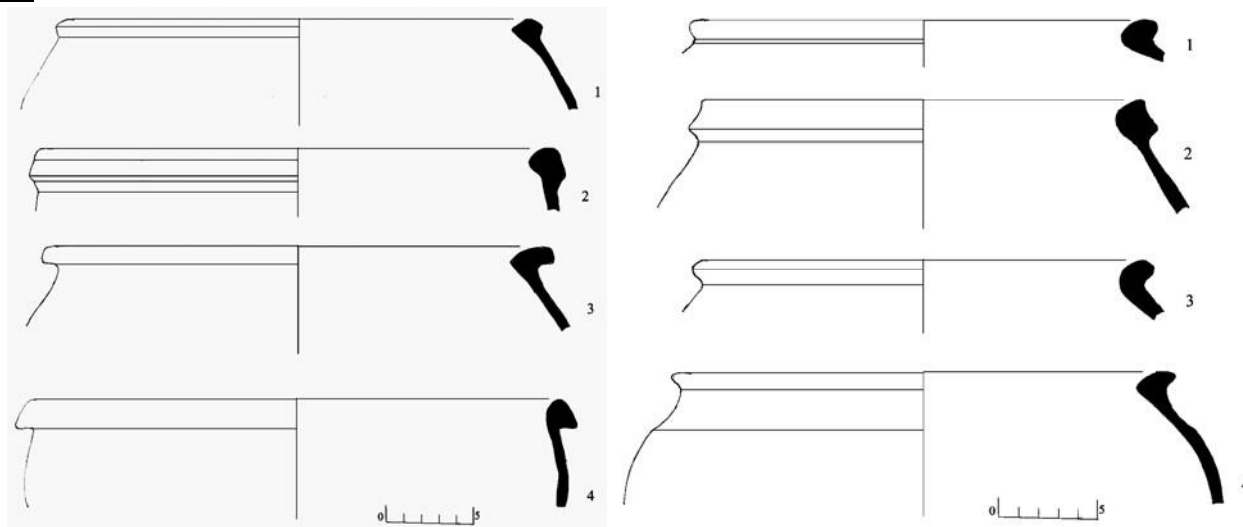
**Figure 11.** The excavation revealed ceramic vessels taken from the top of the first and second corridors.



**Figure 12.** Ceramics found in the first and second corridors uncovered during excavations.



**Figure 13.** Pottery found in the first corridor uncovered in the excavations.



**Figure 14.** Pottery found in the second corridor uncovered during the excavations.

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