AN EARLY BRONZE AGE SITE IN NORTH - CENTRAL ANATOLIA: OLUZ HÖYÜK

KUZEY - ORTA ANADOLU'DA BİR ERKEN TUNÇ ÇAĞI YERLEŞMESİ: OLUZ HÖYÜK

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ABSTRACT

In this article, the pottery fragments and small finds crafted from the various materials such as baked clay, stone, dated to the Early Bronze Age which were uncovered in Oluz Höyük. Our knowledge regarding the Central Black Sea Region which was shaped with the evidence uncovered by the excavations in İkiztepe has been increased by the data gained from Oluz Höyük which is located inland part of the region. However, since the Early Bronze Age cultural layers were located beneath the Middle Bronze Age, Late Bronze Age, Iron Age, Hellenistic Period and even the Roman and Byzantine Period strata which sometimes reaches the depth of several meters and that these strata were not thoroughly excavated until today, kept us from reaching the architectural layers of Early Bronze Age. The presence of the aforementioned layers in Oluz Höyük prevented the large scale excavation of the Early Bronze Age settlement until this day. However, the discovery of the finds important for dating process such as pottery, stone casting mold, seal and idol in the excavations of Oluz Höyük so far, points out the Early Bronze Age presence which is connected to the Central Anatolia in the settlement.

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ÖZET

Bu makalede, Oluz Höyük'te ele geçen ve Erken Tunç Çağı'na tarihlendirilen çç parçaları ile pt, taş gibi malzemelerden yapılmış küçük buluntular incelenmiştir. Orta Karadeniz Bölgesi'nde şimdiye kadar İkiztepe kazıları ile şekillenmiş olan Erken Tunç Çağı hakkındaki bilgilerimiz, bölgenin kara kesiminde yer alan Oluz Höyük'ten elde edilen yeni verilerle hızla artmaktadır. Ancak, kara kesimi yerleşmelerinin Erken Tunç Çağı kültürel katmanları üzerinde, bazen metrelerce kalınlığa ulaşan Orta Tunç Çağı, Son Tunç Çağı, Demir Çağı ile Hellenistik Dönem ve hatta Roma ve Bizans dönemleri mimari tabakaları bulunması bugüne değin çok uzun süreli kazılamayan söz konusu bu yerleşmelerin Erken Tunç Çağı mimari tabakalarına ulaşılmasına engel olmuştur. Oluz Höyük'te de söz konusu tabakaların varlığı Erken Tunç Çağı yerleşmelerinin geniş alanlarda araştırılmasına henüz olanak vermemiştir. Ancak, Oluz Höyük'te şimdiye kadar gerçekleştirilen kazı çalışmaları sırasında çanak çömlek, taş döküm kalıbı, mühür ve idol gibi tarihlendirme açısından önemli buluntuların ele geçmesi yerleşmede Orta Anadolu ile bağlantılı bir Erken Tunç Çağı döneminin varlığını göstermektedir.

İkiztepe, located on the shores of the Central Black Sea Region (Fig. 1) is a very important Protohistoric settlement which contains periods like Chalcolithic, Bronze and Iron Ages which were important and vital in the shaping of the Black Sea Region's culture. Location of the largest Early Bronze Age (3500 – 2000 BC) graveyard which was excavated to this day in İkiztepe multiplies the settlement's importance in the Anatolian Archaeology[1]. However, the data recovered from İkiztepe was insufficient in solving the problems of the Central Black Sea Region's archaeology and to learn the unknown facts. Furthermore, archaeological data recovered from İkiztepe brought forth many new problems; who first settled in İkiztepe at the end of the Early Chalcolitic Age (5000 – 4500 BC) and where they came from? Why did İkiztepe became desolate at the end of the Hittite Period (1650 – 1190 BC) and why throughout the long period of Iron Age İkiztepe was settled only in the Late Iron Age (650-600 BC)? It seems that the answers to these questions cannot be found by further excavations in İkiztepe or the archaeological surveys of any other nearby settlement.

The systematic archaeological excavation projects that started in Vezirköprü – Oymaağaç and Oluz Höyük in recent years uncovered evidences that will establish strong ties to the İkiztepe Early Bronze Age culture. The common characteristic of Oymaağaç and Oluz Höyük is that they are geographically the nearest settlements to İkiztepe that were excavated. The excavations in Oymaağaç, which was located 80km crow's flight southwest of İkiztepe, continues around the recovery of a monumental building which was discovered in the archaeo-geophysics survey and thought to be a Hittite Period temple. The excavation of the Early Bronze Age settlement[2] in lower layer seems not possible before the excavations of this building is completed first. Actually, Oymaağaç which was discovered in Samsun Region Survey Project, started by a team led by late Prof. Dr. Uluğ Bahadır Alkım in 1971 and lasted until 1978, was localised as Nerik, the holy city of the Hittite Storm God, by the members of the survey team, late Prof.Dr. Ali Dinçol and Prof.Dr. Jak Yakar.[3] The cuneiform tablet fragments which contains the name Nerik and was recovered free of the stratification by German archaeologists in the excavations that started in 2007 points how correct the historical geographical identification of Ali Dinçol and Jak Yakar in mid 1970's was.

Technical and form similarities between the cups recovered in Ulutepe (Fig. 1) near Tokat's Turhal district by the excavation undertaken by Tokat Museum in 1976 and the potteries from İkiztepe's Late Chalcolitic Age (4500-3500 BC) cultural layer; and the similarities between terracotta figurines and some metal finds from Ulutepe and İkiztepe's Early Bronze Age culture, points out a cultural relationship between İkiztepe and Ulutepe.[4] This situation shows that the cultural roots of the Central Black Sea Region, in the base of İkiztepe's Late Chalcolitic and following Early Bronze Ages, should be sought out in Yeşilırmak basin.

İkiztepe had an Early Bronze Age culture characterized in a distinctive metal crafts technology, wooden architecture tradition and handcrafted high-quality pottery. But its contemporary settlements from the southern parts of Canik Mountains is generally unknown. The discovery of it's graveyard made İkiztepe one of the best known and understood settlements of the Early Bronze Age Anatolia. Early Bronze Age, identified in the inner part of the Central Black Sea Region with the large and important settlements like Maşat Höyük[5] and Eskiyapar[6] (see Fig. 1), needs to be excavated in wider areas and with all cultural phases in order to be better perceived and understood. But in the settlements from the inner parts, culture layers over the Early Bronze Age layer ranging from Middle Bronze Age, Late Bronze Age, Iron Age and Hellenistic Period even with the Roman and Byzantine architectural layers reaches a meters long thickness and this prevents us to better understand the architectural layer of these scarcely excavated settlements. Alacahöyük and Boğazköy are exceptions to this situation with their geographic locations closer to Central Anatolia rather than the Central Black Sea Region and with their excavation histories close to a century, they were far from supplying any beneficial, tangible and useful information in respect to the region's culture.

Oluz Höyük[7] (Fig. 2) systematic archaeological excavations which started in 2007. In the light of these research a Middle Bronze Age, Late Bronze Age, Early Iron Age (Dark Age), Middle Iron Age (Early Phrygian Culture), Late Iron Age (Late Phrygian and Persian/Achaemenid Cultures) and Hellenistic Period architectural layers, consisting total of 10 meters, are found over an Early Bronze Age architectural layer.

[1] See Early Bronze Age for İkiztepe, Alkım 1979: 151-157; Alkım/Alkım/Bilgi 1988; Alkım/Alkım/Bilgi 2003; Bilgi 2000: 109-127; Bilgi 2001.

[2] Czichon 2008: 187-196; Czichon/Flender/Klinger 2006: 157-197.

[3] Dinçol/Yakar 1974: 563-582; Yakar/Dinçol 1974: 85-99.

[4] Dönmez 2007: 75-84.

[5] Emre 1979: 1-48; Emre 1996: 1-67.

[6] Özgüç/Temizer 1993: 613-628.

[7] See for Oluz Höyük, Dönmez/Naza-Dönmez 2007: 49-74; Dönmez/Naza-Dönmez İstanbul 2009: 125-170; Dönmez 2010a; Dönmez 2010b: 275-306; Dönmez 2011: 103-128; Dönmez 2012: 151-178; Dönmez 2017: Dönmez/Yurtsever Beyazıt 2013: 165 - 192.

On the other hand the plastered floor fragments (Fig. 4) that were recovered from the 9th Architectural Layer, which was the last layer of the Trench B (Fig. 3) and was excavated with the step-trench technique to understand the stratification of Oluz Höyük; stone casting mould with some missing parts (Fig. 10/3); baked clay stamp seal (Fig. 10/2) and marble idol (Fig. 10/1) found in 2012 in 2B Architectural Layer in Trench A strongly point to an important Early Bronze Age settlement at Oluz Höyük. Recovery of the rocky filling belonging to the lake floor from the culture soil with the pottery parts and small finds, found in the excavation in the said field shows that although the area contains Early Bronze Age finds it is not homogeneous.

The small pieces of potsherds found in the culture filling of 9th Architectural Layer is hand crafted and its clay has mineral and vegetal additives. The clay is generally grey and beige in color. Bulk of the pottery is coated in same color as its clay and they are generally glazed. In some examples there are speckles and color differences on the surface because of the baking. Surface colors are in the shades of beige, brown, grey and black. Some pieces are coated beige on the outside and black on the inside or vice versa. 9th Architectural Layer pottery has notched (Fig. 9/1, 3-4), thin grooved (Fig. 7/2, 9/2) and button shaped decoration (Fig. 7/3; 9/7-9) which we have encountered at İkiztepe in the Central Black Sea Region. The Early Bronze Age pottery forms are limited in type as for now, since the excavation is limited to a narrow site. Forms in question are bowls (Fig. 5), jugs (Fig. 6-8), a piece of strainer (Fig. 9/5) and body sherds (Fig. 9).

Bowls have two types: inverted rimmed and simple profiled (Fig. 5/1-3) and straight high rimmed (Fig. 5/4-5). Jugs have four types: slightly outward rimmed (Fig. 6/1-2), straight, high rimmed (Fig. 6/3-4; 7/1-4), outward rimmed and short necked (Fig. 8/1-2), outward rimmed and without neck (Fig. 8/3-5). On the outside of one of the jugs there is a horizontal, parallel, thin grooved decoration (Fig. 7/2). On some of the body sherds there are single or double, button shaped handholds (Fig. 9/7-9). On some examples there are notches (Fig. 9/1, 3-4) and groove (Fig. 9/2) shaped ornaments.

Groups that have general similarities with Oluz Höyük's 9th Architectural Layer is encountered in the settlements of İkiztepe[8], Dündartepe[9] in the Central Black Sea Region and Boğazköy[10], Alaca Höyük[11], Resuloğlu[12], Alişar Höyük[13], Ahlatlıbel[14], Asarcık[15], Karayavşan[16], Karaoğlan[17] and Koçumbeli[18] settlements in Central Anatolia.

Besides the pottery, some small finds recovered gives clues for dating. One of the said small finds is a stone casting mold used for metal casting which was found together with potsherds in Trench B in 9th Architectural Layer (Fig. 10/3). In the molting side of the casting mould, which has some parts missing, there are two casting mounts engraved for two short handled, circular shouldered daggers.

In the excavations, a marble idol (Fig. 10/1) and a baked clay stamp seal (Fig. 10/2) were found in Trench A which was dated to Achaemenid Period (425 – 300 BC). These finds are different in respect of manufacturing and form from the cultural characteristics of the layer that they have been found. The circular head of the marble idol is slightly pointed and the arms are depicted on the sides as two bulges. On the lower part of the body there are two indents which we thought to display the woman genital organ (Fig. 10/1). The closest similar idol has been found at Alaca Höyük[19] which is 80km crow's flight southwest of Oluz Höyük. Alacahöyük idol differs from the Oluz Höyük idol with the lower part of the body being round and without indents. Another similar idol was found at Karayavşan[20] near Ankara. Karayavşan idol is different with its diamond shaped lower body. Alacahöyük and Karayavşan idols are dated to the Early Bronze Age II (2700-2300 BC) which points out that the similar Oluz Höyük idol might be dated to the same period. In this context there is a possibility that at least some of the finds from Trench B 9th Architectural Layer, from the level of the plain which was an old lake bed, that we cannot determine in a homogenous condition might belong to the Early Bronze Age II period.

Again, the baked clay stamp seal which was found in the 2B Architectural Layer is another find that we thought to be dated to the Early Bronze Age. The beige colored seal, is fine glazed and well baked. The seal with the conical body and with a thread hole, has two vertical and two horizontal engraved lines that crosses one another (Fig.

[8] Alkım/Alkım/Bilgi 1988; Alkım/Alkım/Bilgi 2003.
[9] Kökten/Özgüç/Özgüç 1945: 361-400.
[10] Bittel 1970; Seeher 2006: 197-213.
[11] Koşay/Akok 1966: 81-91; Koşay/Akok 1973: 39-55.
[12] Yıldırım 2011: 11-29; Yıldırım 2012: 33-45.
[13] von der Osten 1937a; von der Osten 1937b.
[14] Koşay 1934: 3-100.
[15] Orthmann 1966: 27-88.
[16] Mellink 1966: 139-159.
[17] Arık 1939: 27-42; Arık 1948: 47-59.
[18] Tezcan 1966.
[19] Koşay 1944: Lev. CVI, 33.
[20] Bilgi 2012: Res..496.

10/2). Similar seals can be seen in Early Bronze Age settlements like Ahlatlıbel[21], Karaoğlan[22], Etiyokuşu[23]; Karataş-Semayük[24] and Bademağacı[25].

In the subject of stratification, despite having some evidences for older settlements than the Early Bronze Age, the evaluation on these diverse discoveries are continuing. The location of Oluz Höyük on the plains that connects the Yeşilırmak Basin and Kızılırmak Basin (Amasya – Suluova – Merzifon – Gümüşhacıköy Plains) explains the reasons of foundation and survival of Early Bronze Age settlements. Additionally, the gold, silver and bronze finds with superior craftsmanship that were found in Mahmatlar Village[26] which is 10km east of Oluz Höyük points out that the local people in Early Bronze Age were crafting and trading in precious metals. The stone casting mould, which until today a find encountered only in small excavation areas and the edges of settlements, points to the metal crafting at Oluz Höyük (Fig. 10/3). The mineral deposits near Merzifon which is not far from Oluz Höyük can be seen as an important economic asset which drew the Early Bronze Age people to the region.

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[21] Koşay 1934.
[22] Arık 1939; Arık 1948.
[23] Kansu 1940.
[24] Mellink 1967: Fig.56.
[25] Duru/Umurtak 2008: Res.. 9; Duru/Umurtak 2009: Res. 6.
[26] Koşay/Akok 1950: 481; Özgüç 1963: 32.



Figure 1: Principal Early Bronze Age Settlements of North-Central Anatolia. / *Kuzey - Orta Anadolu'da Önemli Erken Tunç Çağı Merkezleri.*



Figure 2: Oluz Höyük, General View. / *Oluz Höyük, Genel Görünüm.*



Figure 3: Trench B, Step Trench. / *B Açması, Basamaklı Açma.*



Figure 4: Trench B, Plastered Floor Fragments from the 9th Architectural Layer. / *B Açması, 9. Mimari Tabakada Sıvalı Taban.*

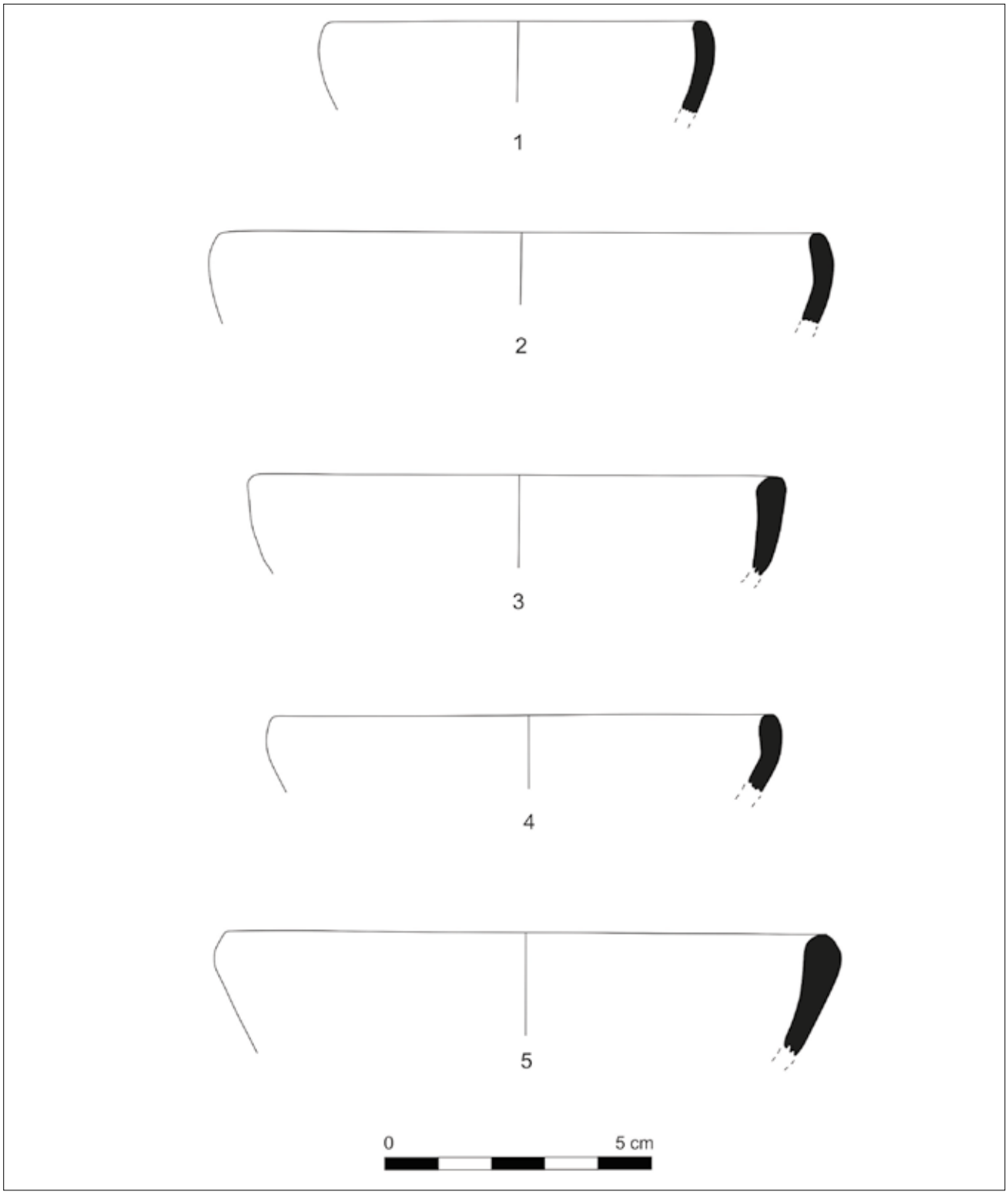


Figure 5: 1. Bowl rim sherd. Di. 9.1 cm, H. 3.4 cm, Th.0.4 cm. Dark grey paste. Vegetal and mineral tempered. Slipped in same color as paste. Moderate fired. Slightly burnished. Hand made. 2. Bowl rim sherd. Di. 15, cm, H. 2.5 cm, Th.0.5 cm. Beige paste. Fine mineral tempered. Slipped in dark grey. Hard fired. Moderately burnished. Hand made. 3. Bowl rim sherd. Di. 12.2 cm, H. 3 cm, Th. 0.6 cm. Brown paste. Vegetal and mineral tempered. Inner surface slipped in same as paste, outer surface slipped in dark grey. Moderate fired. Moderately burnished. Hand made. 4. Bowl rim sherd. Di. 12.4 cm, H. 2 cm, Th. 0.4 cm. Dark grey paste. Fine mineral tempered. Slipped in same color as paste. Hard fired. Slightly burnished. Hand made. 5. Bowl rim sherd. Di. 13.1, H. 3.2 cm, Th. 0.7 cm. dark grey paste. Vegetal and mineral tempered. Inner surface slipped in beige, outer surface slipped in same color as paste. Hard fired. Moderately burnished. Hand made. / *Çanaklar.*

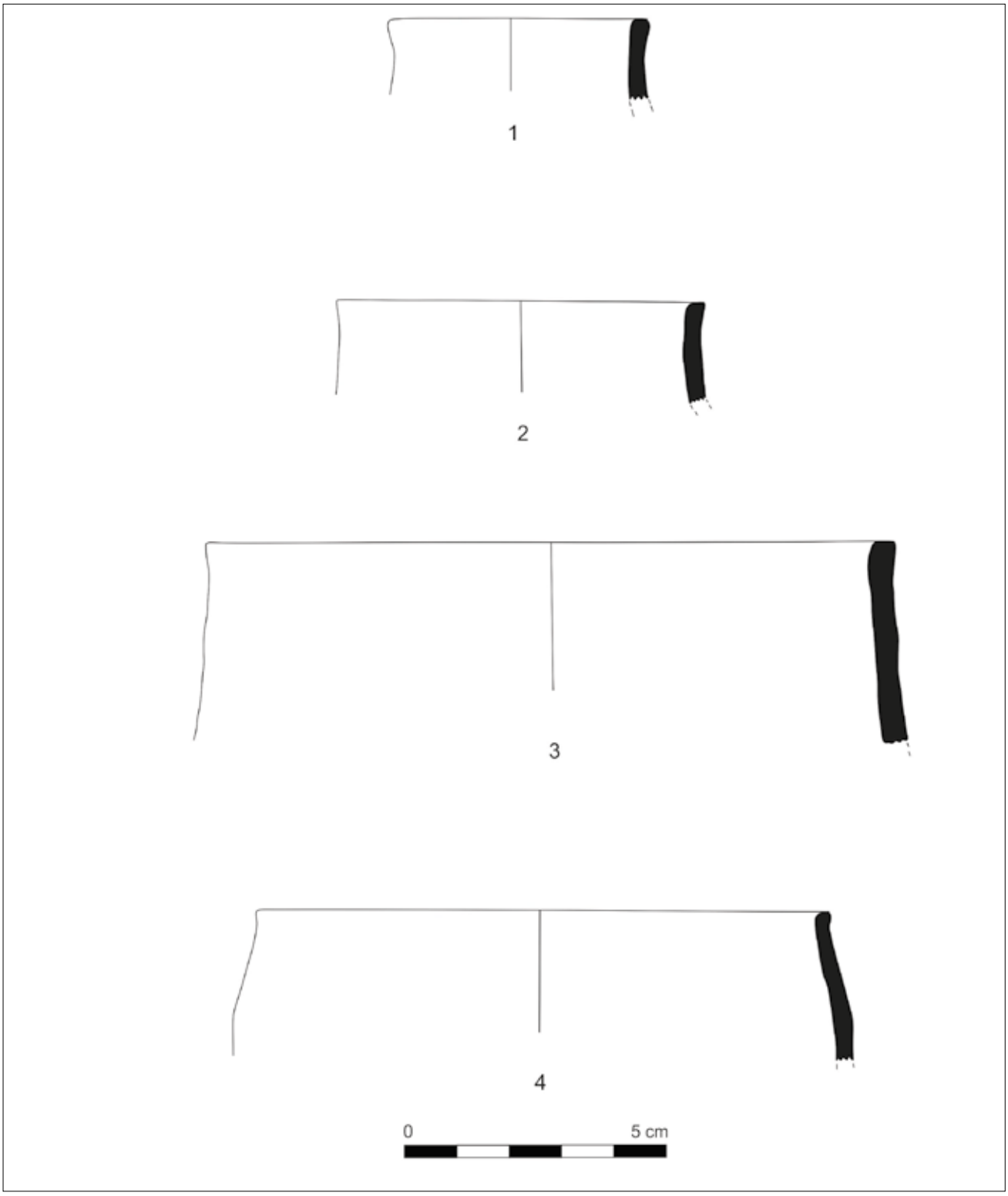


Figure 6: 1. 1. Jug rim sherd. Di. 5.2 cm, H. 2.3, Th.0.6. Dark grey paste. Mineral tempered. Slipped in same color as paste. Hard fired. Moderately burnished. Hand made. 2. Jug rim sherd. Di. 8.4 cm, H. 2.5 cm, Th. 0.4 cm. Light grey paste. Mineral tempered. Slipped in same color as paste. Moderate fired. Slightly burnished. Hand made. 3. Jug rim sherd. Di. 14, 9 cm, H. 4.4 cm, Th. 0.5 cm. Dark grey paste. Vegetal and mineral tempered. Slipped in same color as paste. Hard fired. Moderately burnished. Hand made. 4. Jug rim sherd. Di. 12.1 cm. H. 3.5 cm. Th. 0.3cm. Grey paste. Mineral tempered. Slipped in same color as paste. Hard fired. Moderately burnished. Hand made. / *Çömlekler.*

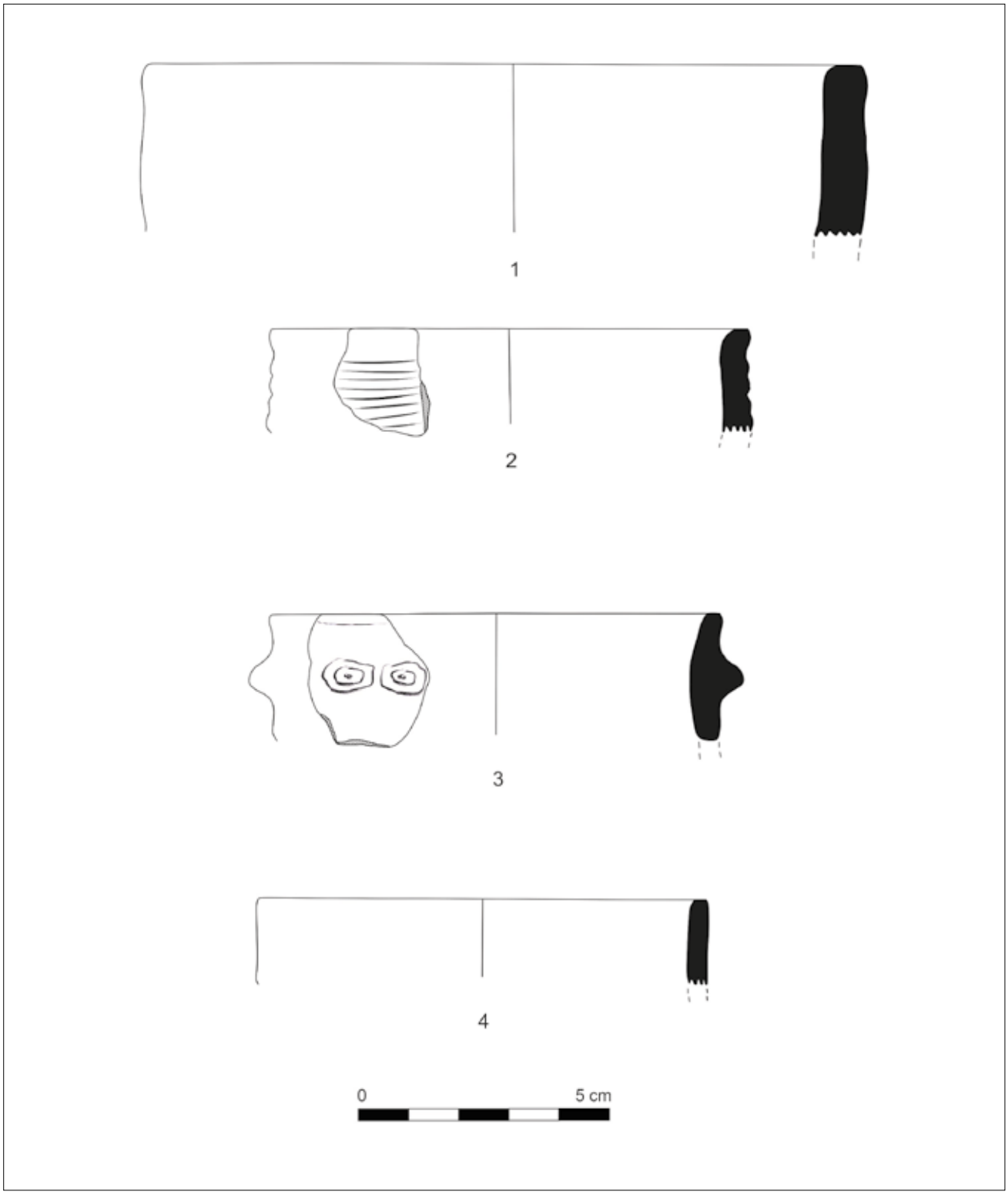


Figure 7: 1. Jug rim sherd. Di. 17.4 cm. H. 4.5 cm. Th. 1 cm. Dark orange paste. Vegetal and mineral tempered. Slipped in dark grey. Moderate fired. Slightly burnished. Hand made. 2. Jug rim sherd. Di. 10.2 cm. H. 2.7 cm. Th. 0.5 cm. Beige paste. Mineral tempered. Outer surface slipped in light grey, inner surface slipped same color as paste. Moderate fired. Moderately burnished. Hand made. 3. Jug rim sherd. Di. 10.4 cm. H. 3.3 cm. Th. 0.6 cm. Buff paste. Vegetal and mineral tempered. Slipped in same color as paste. Moderate fired. Slightly burnished. Hand made. 4. Jug rim sherd. Di. 10.2 cm. H. 2.6 cm. Th. 0.4 cm. Beige paste. Mineral tempered. Outer surface slipped in grey, inner surface slipped in same color as paste. Hard fired. Moderately burnished. Hand made. / *Çömlekler.*

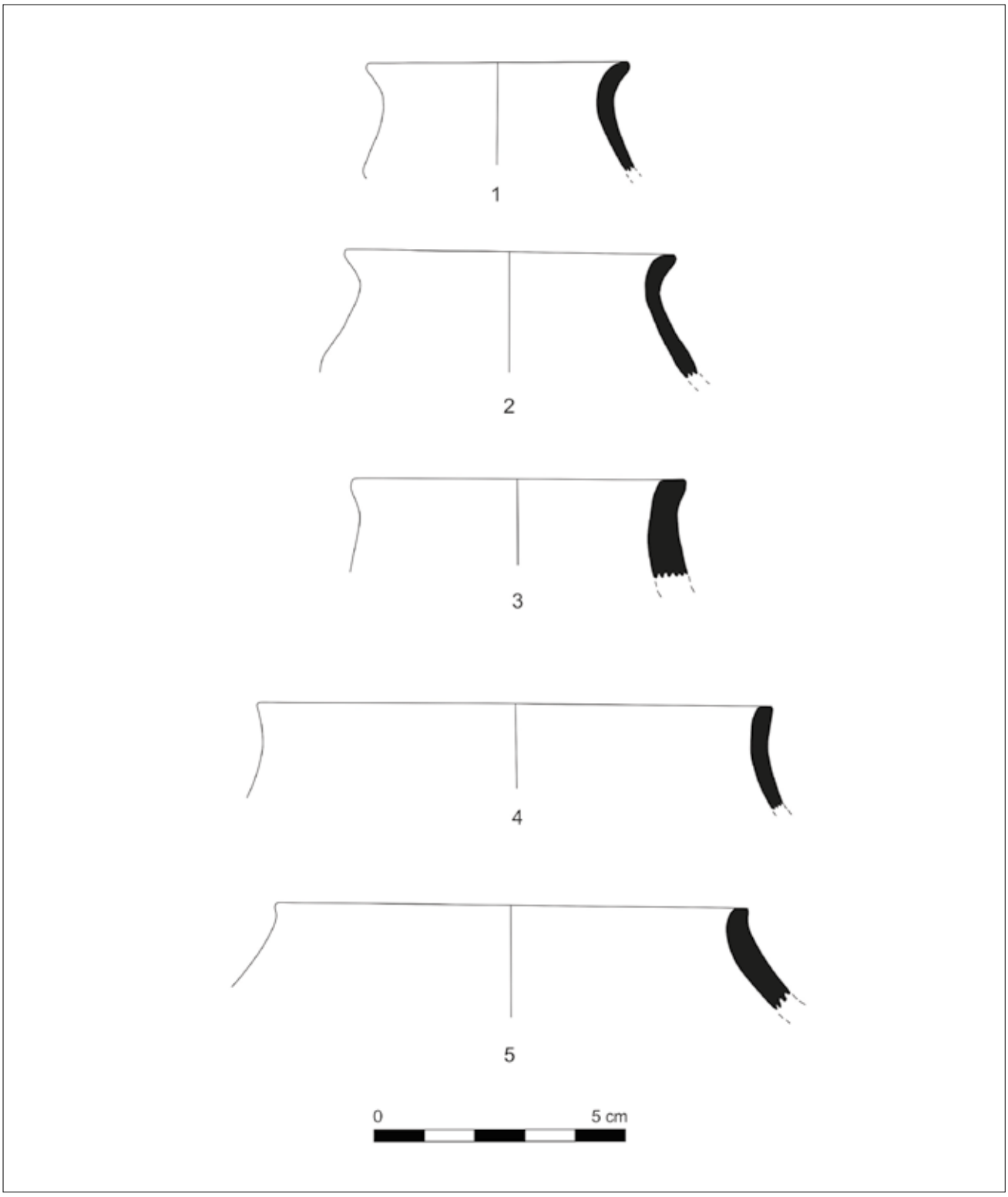


Figure 8: 1. Jug rim sherd. Di. 6.2 cm. H. 2.4 cm. Th. 0.3 cm. Buff paste. Vegetal and mineral tempered. Slipped in same color as paste. Hard fired. Moderately burnished. Hand made. 2. Jug rim sherd. Di. 8.3 cm. H. 3.5 cm. Th. 0.3 cm. Grey paste. Mineral tempered. Slipped in same color as paste. Moderate fired. Slightly burnished. Hand made. 3. Jug rim sherd. Di. 6.9 cm. H. 2.7 cm. Th. 0.7 cm. Beige paste. Vegetal and mineral tempered. Outer surface slipped in light grey, inner surface slipped in same color as paste. Hard fired. Moderately burnished. Hand made. 4. Jug rim sherd. Di. 11.2 cm. H. 2.6 cm. Th. 0.3 cm. Light grey paste. Mineral tempered. Slipped in same color as paste. Hard fired. Moderately burnished. Hand made. 5. Jug rim sherd. Di. 10.1 cm. H. 3.3 cm. Th. 0.5 cm. Buff paste. Vegetal and mineral tempered. Slipped in grey. Moderate fired. Slightly burnished. Hand made. / *Çömlekler.*

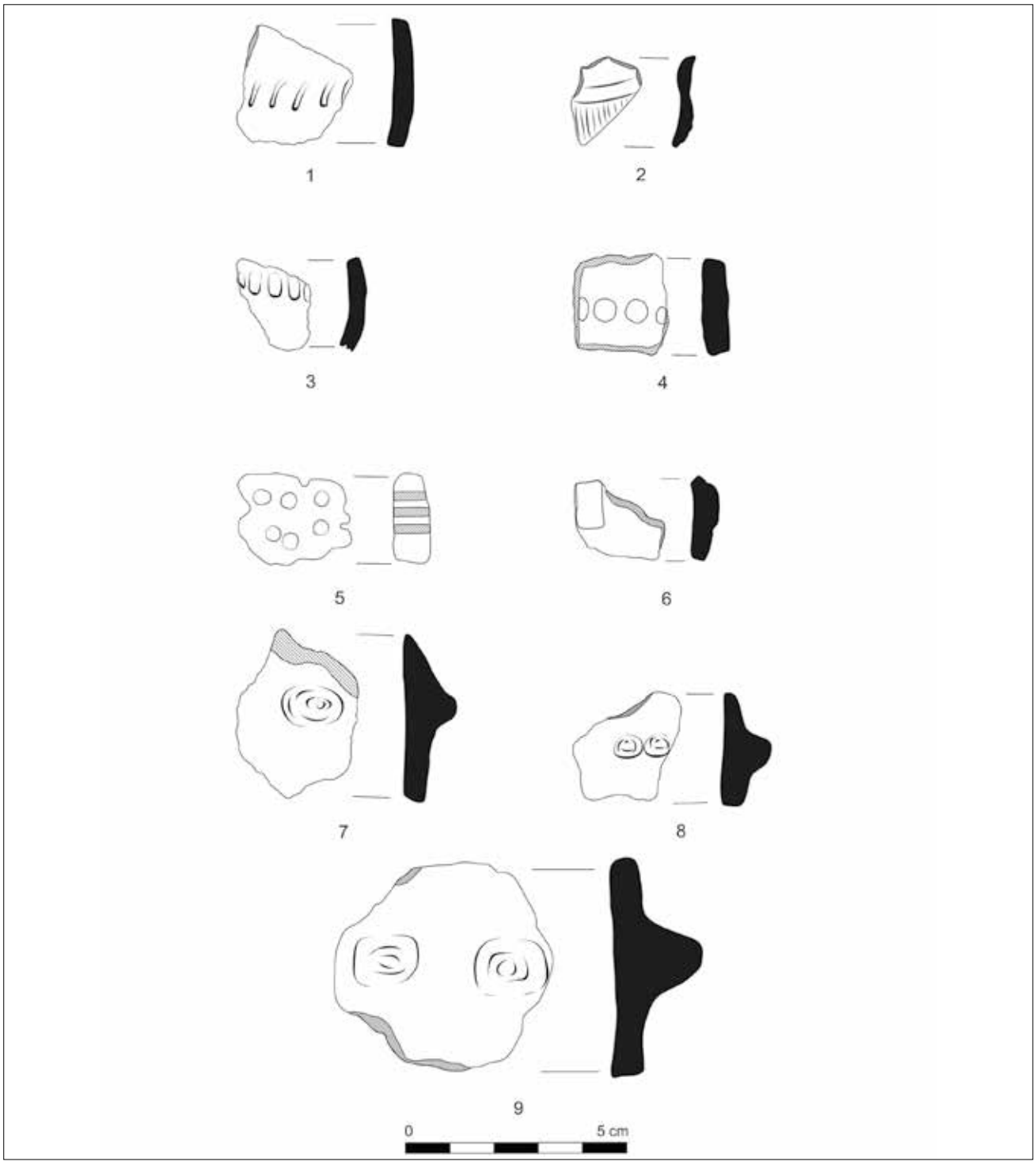


Figure 9: 1. Body sherd. H. 7.3 cm, Th. 0.5 cm. Light grey paste. Mineral tempered. Slipped in same color as paste. Hard fired. Moderately burnished. Hand made. 2. Body sherd. H. 5.1 cm, Th. 0.4 cm. Grey paste. Vegetal and mineral tempered. Slipped in same color as paste. Hard fired. Moderately burnished. Hand made. 3. Body sherd. H. 6.2 cm, Th. 0.4 cm. Dark grey paste. Mineral tempered. Slipped in same color as paste. Hard fired. Moderately burnished. Hand made. 4. Body sherd. H. 4.9 cm, Th. 0.7 cm. Dark grey paste. Mineral tempered. Slipped in same color as paste. Moderate fired. Slightly burnished. Hand made. 5. Strainer body sherd. H. 7 cm, Th. 1 cm. Buff paste. Mineral tempered. Slipped in same color as paste. Hard fired. No burnish. Hand made. 6. Body sherd. H. 4.1 cm, Th. 0.8 cm. dark grey paste. Mineral tempered. Slipped in same color as paste. Hard fired. Moderately burnished. Hand made. 7. Body sherd. H. 7.9 cm, Th. 0.7 cm. Buff paste. Mineral tempered. Outer surface in light grey, outer surface slipped in same color as paste. Hard fired. Moderately burnished. Hand made. 8. Body sherd. H. 6.3 cm, Th. 0.7 cm. Beige paste. Vegetal and mineral tempered. Slipped in same color as paste. Moderate fired. Moderately burnished. Hand made. 9. Body sherd. H. 9.4 cm, Th. 1.1 cm. Buff paste. Mineral tempered. Slipped in same color as paste. Hard fired. Moderately burnished. Hand made. / *Amorf Parçalar.*

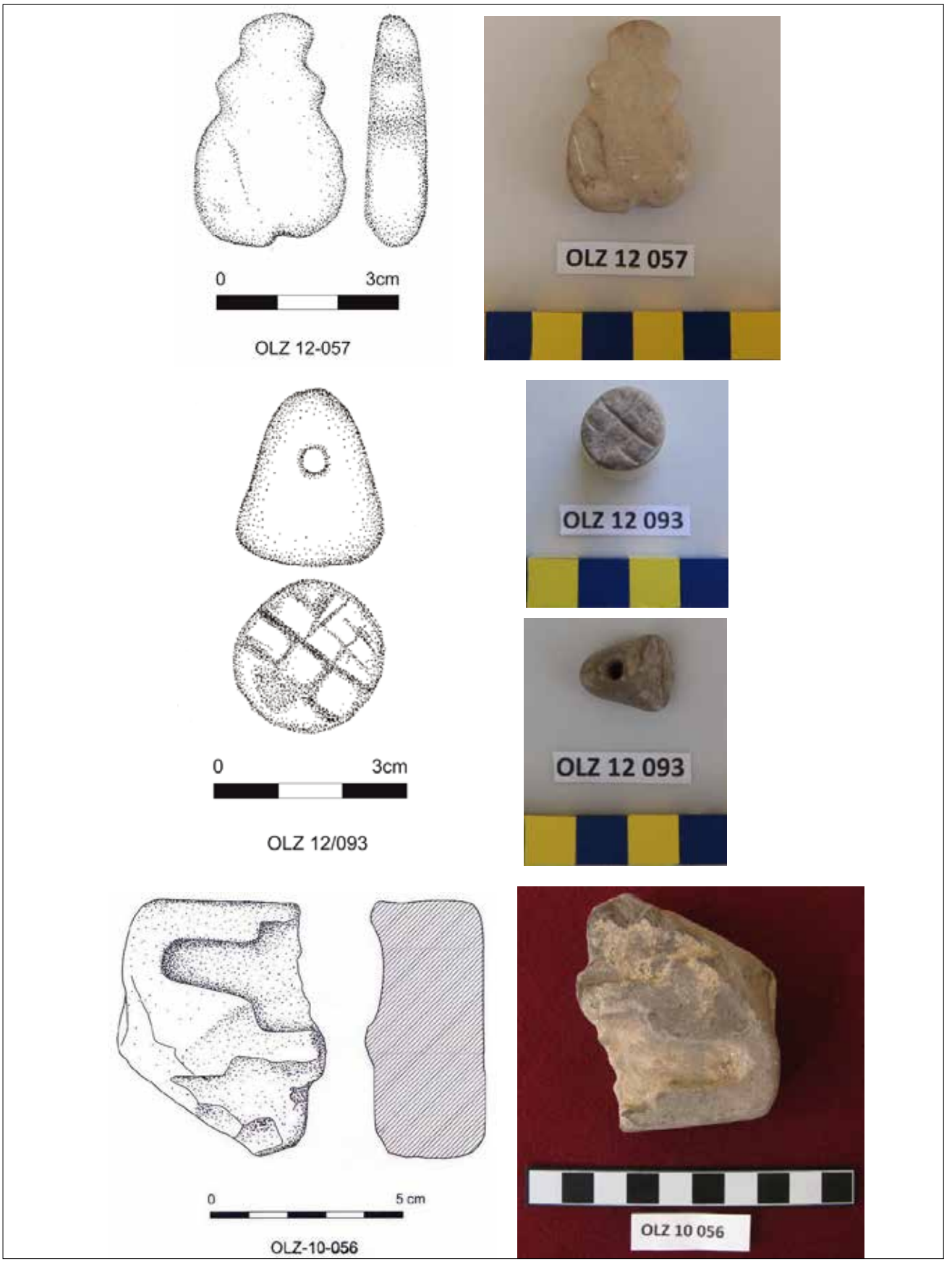


Figure 10: 1. Idol. Marble. L. 4.2 cm, W. 2.6 cm, Th. 1.1 cm. 2. Stamp seal. Baked clay. Beige paste. Hard fired. Burnished. Di. 1.4cm, H. 1.5 cm. 3. Spearhead mould. Stone. L. 6.2 cm, W. 4.3 cm, Th. 2.6 cm. / *1 İdol, Mermer; 2 Damga Mühür, Pt; 3 Mızrakucu Kalıbı, Taş.*

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