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THE LATE HELLENISTIC AND EARLY ROMAN FINE POTTERY FROM THE SANCTUARIES OF DIOMEDES IN DALMATIA

Archaeological research on the island of Palagruža and at cape Ploča has given extensive material evidence of the cult of Diomedes in the Adriatic (**fig. 1**). The excavations revealed a large quantity of pottery fragments. The majority of the pottery fragments belong to fine votive pots. Some pots are bear incised graffiti with the name of Diomedes, attested about 40 times.

Palagruža

Palagruža is a small island group situated in the centre of the Adriatic and is the most important navigational point in the transadriatic route.¹ Archaeological excavations at the central plateau of Salamandrija were undertaken in 1996 and again between 2002 and 2006. Traces of sanctuary architecture have not yet been found. There is a possibility that it functioned as an open type sanctuary or that it was destroyed by a later Roman fortress. Excavations on the south slope of Salamandrija have covered an area of 32 m². Most of the pottery fragments were found in Deposit 4050, which lies on bedrock. Deposits above this could be dated according to the pottery fragments to the Late Roman period. In Deposit 4050 38.4 % of the pottery fragments belong to Greek Classical and Hellenistic vessels, while 12.2 % are fragments of Early Roman vessels.² The rest are mostly prehistoric and belong to the Cetina culture. The fragments are quite small and difficult to distinguish according to typology. Since Deposit 4050 yielded material from different archaeological periods it is not suitable for absolute dating and our chronological considerations are restricted to cross-dating based upon technical and stylistic criteria, form and decoration and comparison with similar material found at other Mediterranean sites.

Late Hellenistic pottery from Palagruža is represented by black-gloss pottery, grey-gloss pottery and relief pottery.³ All the fragments of the **black-gloss pottery** were fired differently, so their gloss varies from very good black lustrous to chocolate brown or grey, and sometimes red. The clay also varies in colour and texture from reddish-yellow to pale and grey, and from granular to very fine, with or without impurities. Among the diagnostic fragments is a fish-plate that has a framed rosette stamp with two incised grooves around it and wide band of rouletting on the inner surface of the vessel (**fig. 2,4**). A similar fragment of a bowl with a rosette stamp has been found at Stobi, where has been dated to the 1st century



Fig. 1.

BC.⁴ They both have chocolate brown gloss. Fish-plates with hooked rim (Morel 1300 series, dated in the middle of the 2nd century BC⁵) are very common at Palagruža. A fragment of a ring foot and lower part of the body of a plate has a badly preserved gloss, and may be dated according to analogies in Valesio to the late 3rd and early 2nd centuries BC⁶ (**fig. 2,1**). Small bowls with slightly in-turned rim, horizontal or out-turned rim are also present, and these are very common around the Hellenistic Mediterranean.

¹ KIRIGIN/ČAČE 1998, 80.

² MIŠE 2005, 203 T. 1.

³ The Gnathia pottery, whose production continues in this period, will be studied separately. This kind of pottery has very distinctive decoration which can easily wash off. On small pottery fragments from Palagruža it is difficult to determine to which group of Gnathia they belong and that requires special attention.

⁴ ANDERSON-STOJANOVIĆ 1992, 23–24 Pl. 11,57.

⁵ MOREL 1981 Pl. 11–15.

⁶ YNTEMA 2001, 152–153.

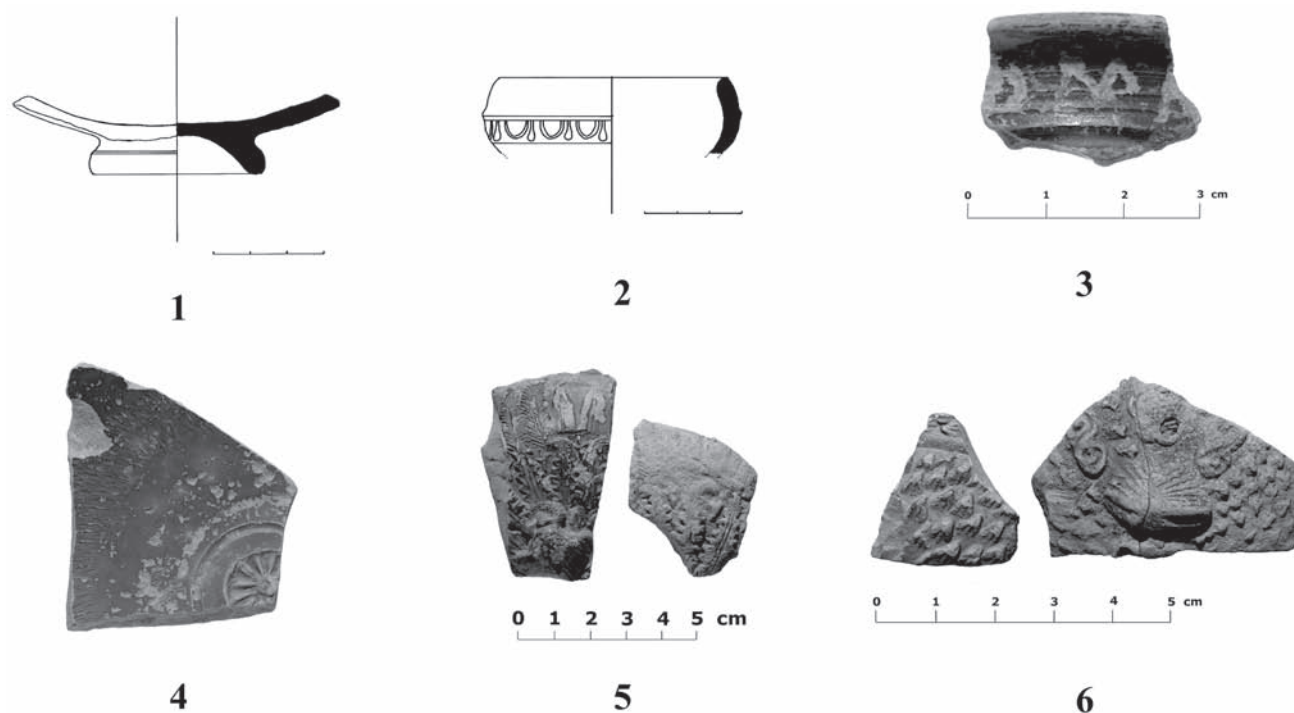


Fig. 2.

Ten fragments of **mould-made relief pottery** have been found at Palagruža. The most interesting is a fragment of a hemispherical bowl with grey clay and dark grey slip (fig. 2,5). The decoration is very neatly executed, showing palm and acanthus leaves.⁷ At the bottom there is a mask with open mouth. Similar masks have been found in Resnik near Split on the east Adriatic coast.⁸ Fragments with arrow-head decoration and shell feet are common in the eastern Adriatic⁹ (fig. 2,6). Moulds with arrow-head decoration were found in Issa and in Resnik, and we can presume that the fragment came to Palagruža from local eastern Adriatic production centres.¹⁰ One fragment with out-turned rim, almost vertical walls with grey clay and dark grey gloss may belong to deep bowl. It has an incised inscription beneath the rim of the vessel (fig. 2,3). A rim fragment of pale clay, dark brown slip and with an ovolo band belongs to an “**Ionian**” cup (fig. 2,2). Parallels have been found on the eastern Adriatic coast, at Resnik,¹¹ in Sicily at Monte Iato where they are dated at the end of the 2nd and the beginning of the 1st century BC.¹²

Among Early Roman pottery at Palagruža we found Eastern Sigillata, North-Italian Sigillata, Italian (Arretine) Sigillata, thin-walled pottery and lead-glazed pottery.

Rim-fragments of the same vessel may belong to Hayes Form 47 in Eastern Sigillata A, dated at the beginning of the 1st century AD (fig. 3,3-4).¹³ There is an incised graffito in Greek letters on the upper part of the vessel. Rim-fragments of a deep bowl are made of a granular, micaceous orange clay and have a red gloss (fig. 3,1). These fragments belong to **Eastern Sigillata** but it was very difficult to distinguish whether these are Eastern Sigillata A and/or B. This type of sigillata is not very common on the central Adriatic coast. Fragments of a **Sarius cup** without decoration shows parallels in form with Sarius-cups from Adria and Magdalensberg,

dated between the last quarter of the 1st century BC and the Flavian period (fig. 3,5).¹⁴ According to the very poorly preserved gloss and the variations in colour (from dark red to pale yellow) with no decoration on the outer surface, the closest parallels are to be found at Mrdakovica in Liburnia (north Dalmatia), also dated to the end of the 1st century BC and the 1st century AD.¹⁵ **Italian Sigillata** is not very common at Palagruža. Among the diagnostic fragments are two fragments with potters’ stamps (fig. 3,6). One has a rectangular stamp which is very badly preserved and not recognizable, but the other is showing the letter A in the first line and probably TV in the second. Rectangular potters’ stamps are common on early Italian Sigillata vessels, dated at the end of the 1st century BC and the beginning of 1st AD.¹⁶ **Thin-walled pottery** forms the major part of the Early Roman pottery at Palagruža. Numerous fragments of bodies indicate that they are mostly cups (like the Aco beaker in fig. 3,2). Large numbers of fragments belong to grey thin-walled pottery with hard fired grey clay and a darker smooth surface (fig. 3,7). They are generally dated from the 2nd century BC till beginning of the 2nd century AD.¹⁷ Fragments of **lead-glazed pottery** have a hard-fired reddish to yellow clay (fig. 3,8). The glaze is yellow to

⁷ Similar acanthus decoration WILLIAMS 1980 Pl. 25,23.

⁸ BRUSIĆ 1999 Fig. 22-33; ID. 2004 Fig. 18.

⁹ Arrow-head decoration: ID. 1999 Fig. 10;13; shell feet: ID. 1999 Fig. 27-28; similar shell feet: ROTROFF 1982 Pl. 1,2.

¹⁰ BRUSIĆ 1999, 13.

¹¹ Ibid. Fig. 39,A238.

¹² PUPPO 1995, 113 S11g.

¹³ HAYES 1985 Tav. VI,17-18; ID. 2001 Fig.2,4.

¹⁴ MAZZEO SARACINO 1985 Tav. LXXV,1,4.

¹⁵ BRUSIĆ 2000, 24.

¹⁶ HAYES 1997 Pl. 18.

¹⁷ MAIOLI 1972-1973, 106-122.

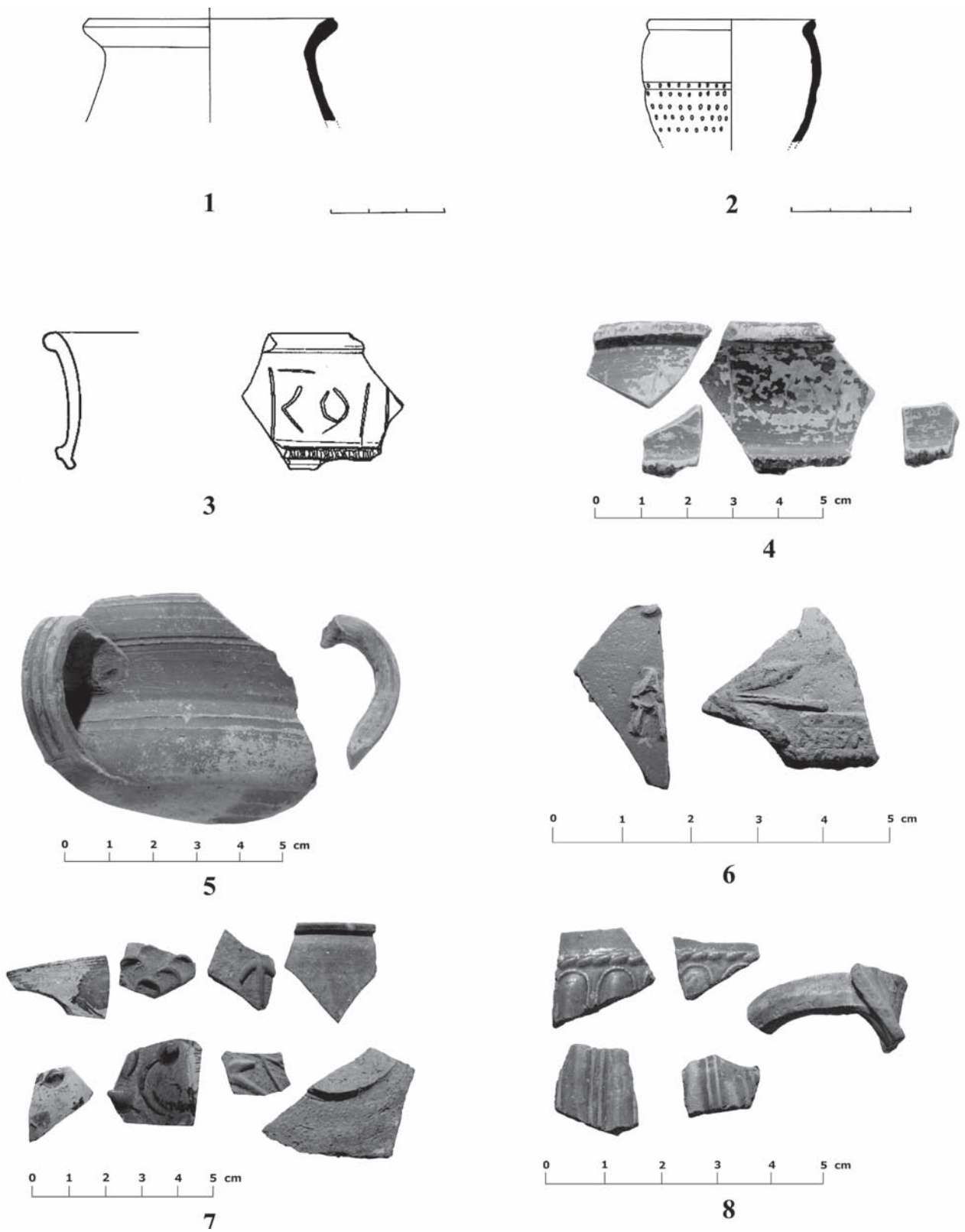


Fig. 3.

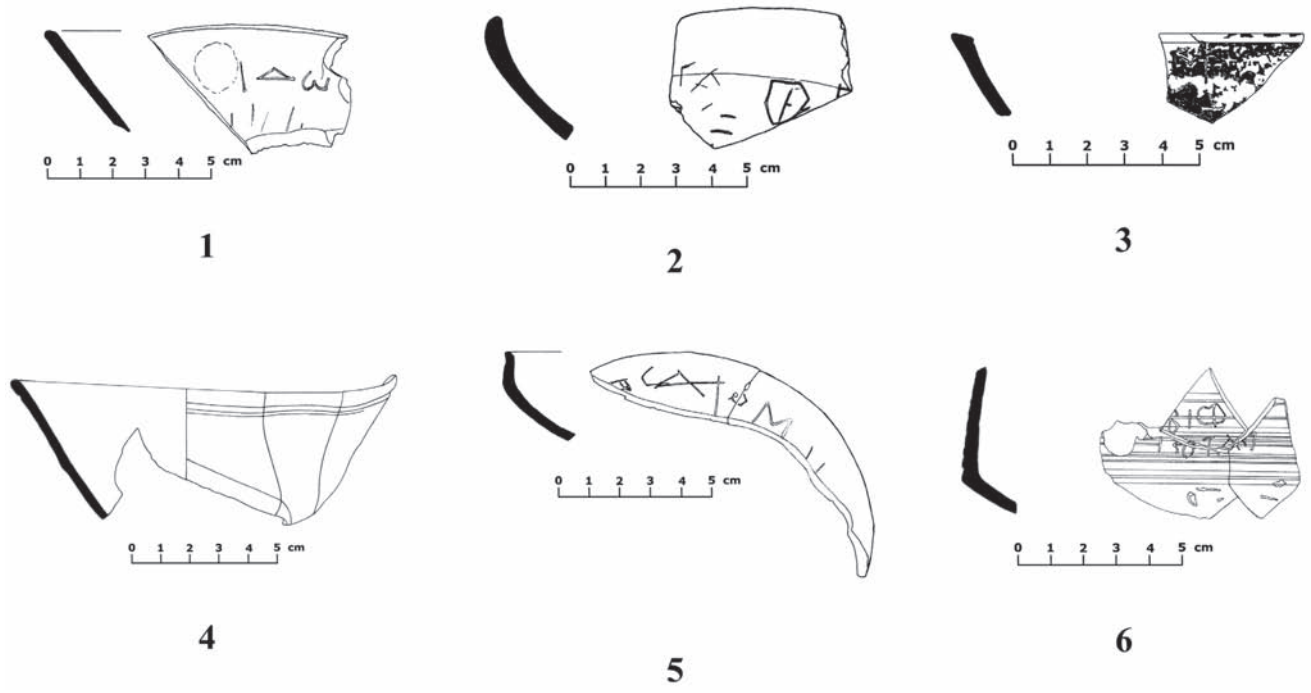


Fig. 4.

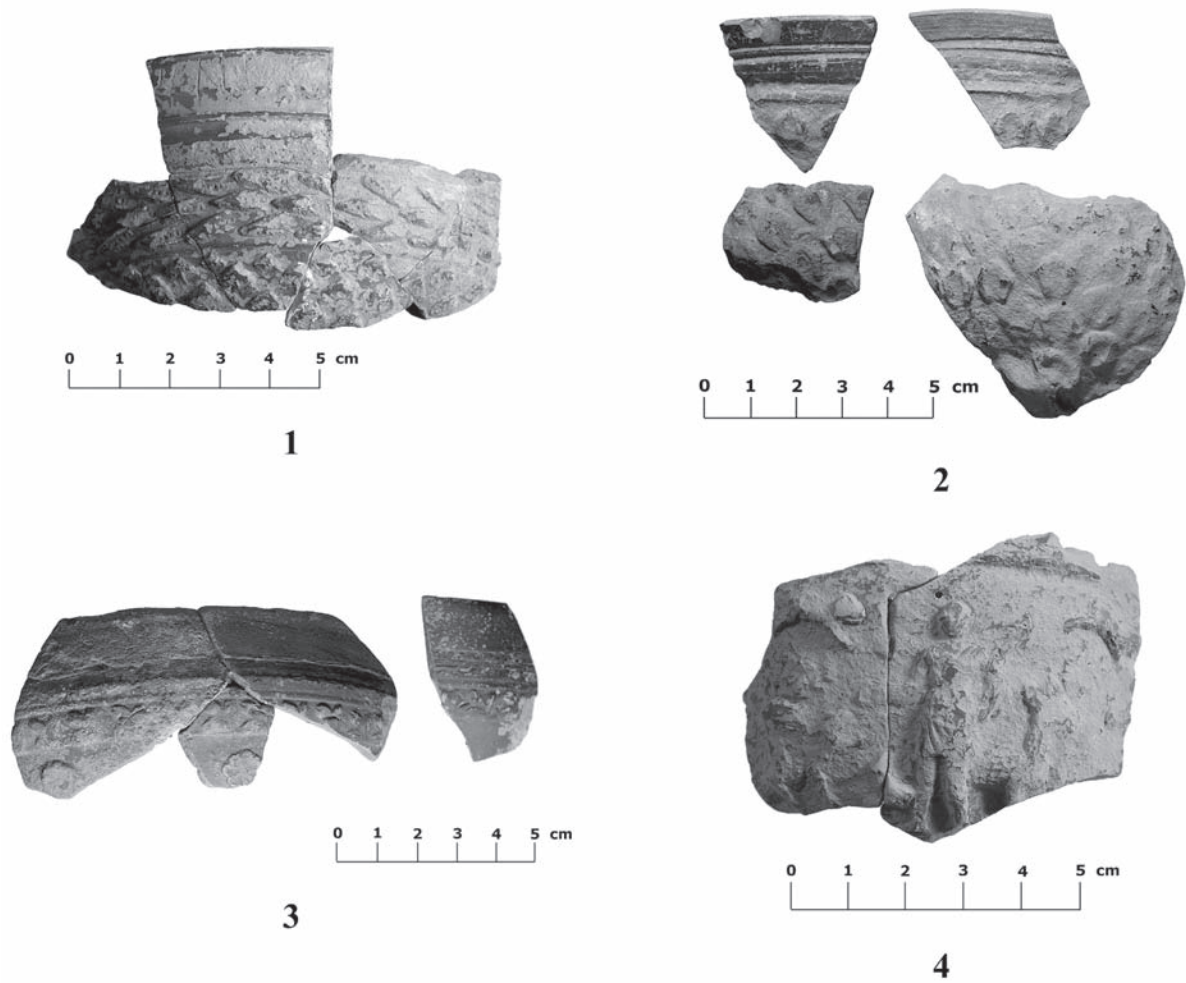


Fig. 5.

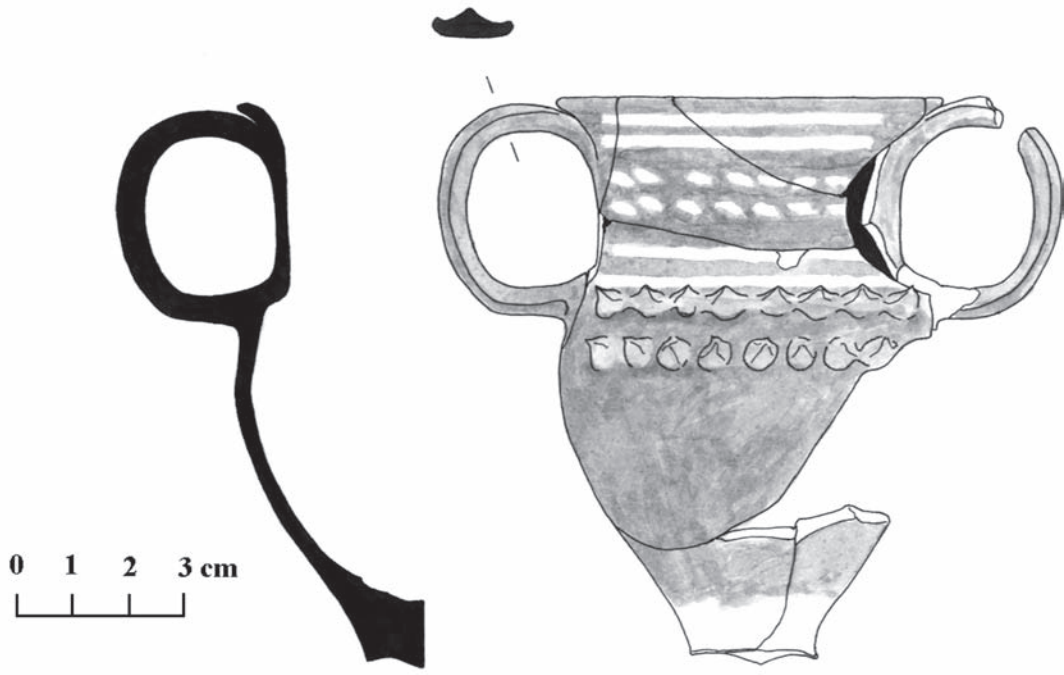


Fig. 6.

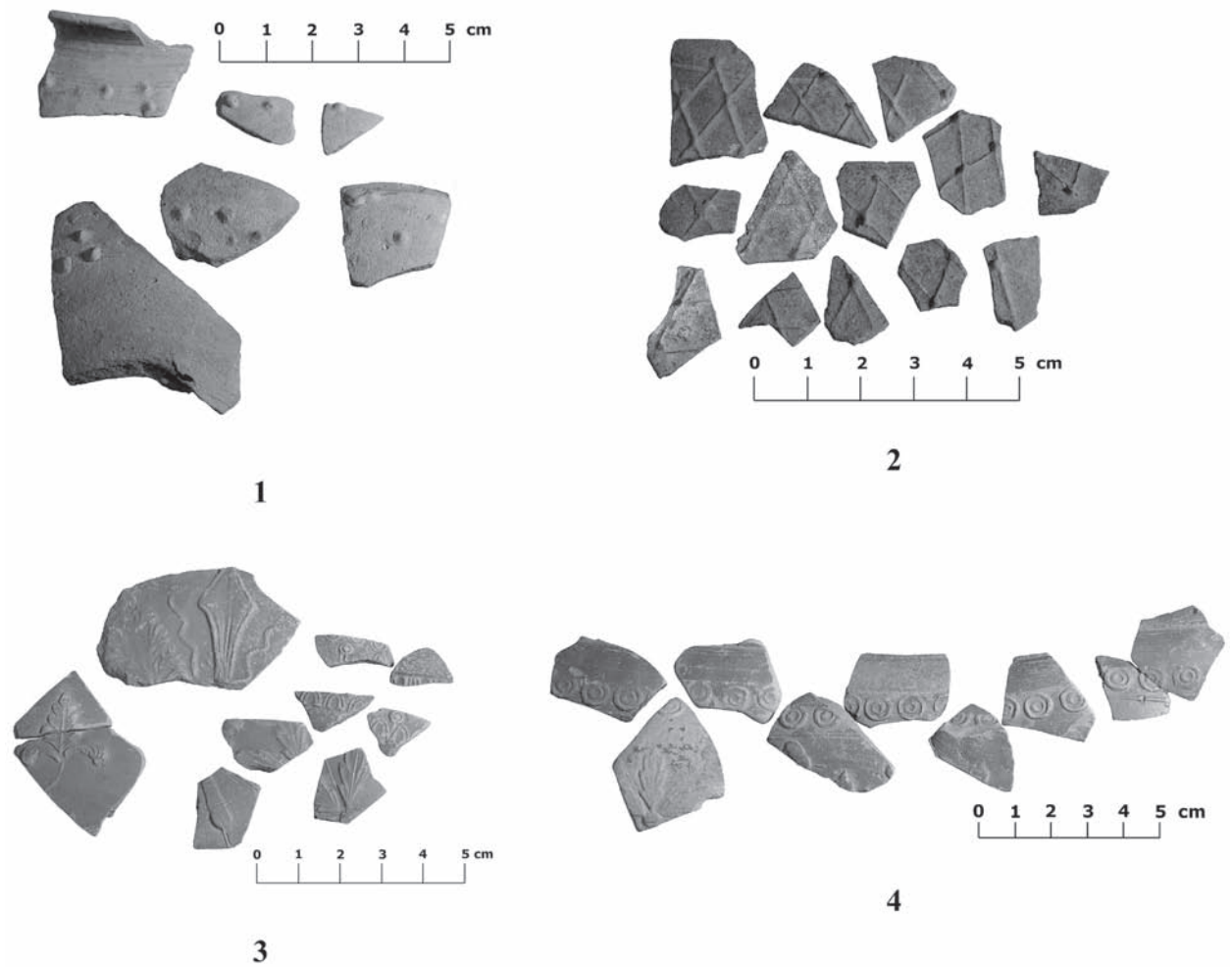


Fig. 7.

brown with traces of green colour and mould-made relief decoration. They appear from the later 1st century BC.¹⁸

Some fragments of Roman lamps were also found on Palagruža.

Cape Ploča

Cape Ploča is situated at the end of a small peninsula that represents the border between the north and south Adriatic. Here different weather systems meet, with conflicting currents and winds, which is all very dangerous for sailing boats.¹⁹

At the plateau behind the small medieval church dedicated to St John of Trogir, excavations have revealed a large quantity of archaeological material. Also traces of walls, which could belong to an enclosure, were found.²⁰

The majority of the archaeological finds consists of Hellenistic pottery: there are some 130 000 fragments. It consists mainly of fine ware, but there is also some plain ware, kitchenware and few fragments of amphorae.²¹

Drinking vessels are dominant here – *kantharoi*, *skyphoi*, bowls and cups – but there are some jugs and plates. A high percentage of the pottery is made of buff clay. There is some black gloss ware, but a brownish or reddish slip is more common. Grey clay is somewhat less common but there is no difference in forms between these two. Recent pottery analyses show the presence of local production and workshops at Vis (ancient *Issa*), *Pharos* and Resnik.²² The finds of fragments of pottery kilns, matrices and moulds for relief Hellenistic relief pottery, similarities of forms, decoration and fabric all indicate Hellenistic production in Dalmatia.

The pottery assemblage found at Cape Ploča shows mainly this Dalmatian origin and some specific local qualities. There are many forms of pottery that imitate **Campanian ware**.²³ These are: bowls with inturned, outturned and vertical rim, plates, articulated *kantharoi*, *skyphoi* and jugs (**fig. 4,1–6**). These forms come in a buff and grey clay. The texture varies from very fine to granular, with or without impurities. The slip is very good and shiny or very badly preserved in all different shades of grey, red, brown and black on the outside or inside of the pot. The colours vary due to the unequal temperature of firing. These forms are very common at Dalmatian Hellenistic sites and they are possibly produced at local workshops but more studies and analyses must be done.

Mould-made relief ware is found in numerous fragments. These are mainly made of grey clay and the hemispherical bowl with more or less everted rim is the dominant shape here but there are also some fragments of kraters. The quality of clay varies, from very hard to soft, but it is usually well-refined. The colour of slip comes in different shades of grey (**fig. 5,1**), but there is one example of a grey bowl with the reddish slip. Some fragments are made of buff clay (**fig. 5,2**) with red and brown slip, but there is no difference in shape or decoration. The decoration on the bowls is predominantly floral, with the same motifs repeating: rosettes, palmettes, lotus leaves. Lots of fragments have decoration with arrow-heads, and there are two bowls with horseshoe ornaments. At the bottom of the bowls there is a

special relief decoration usually shaped as three identical shells, sometimes between them comes a rosette. In one case the bottom is flat without decoration. The krater fragments (**fig. 5,4**) belong to bell-shaped type, which is very common at Liburnian sites.²⁴ Human and animal figures appear on these fragments, together with floral motifs.

There is only one bowl that resembles the so-called “Ionian” type (**fig. 5,3**). It is made of pale red clay, with reddish slip; it has a somewhat inverted rim and floral decoration. This type is known from other sites in middle Dalmatia and resembles examples known from Dyrrachium.²⁵

At this site **thorn kantharoi** are found in great number (**fig. 6**). They are decorated with two or three rows of thorns on the body, and some have painted decoration on the neck. About 179 fragments belong to 18–20 vessels. Nine or ten are made of light grey clay and have a slip of different shades of grey and brown. Another eight or nine pots are made of buff clay which varies from yellow to light red and brownish. The colour of slip is in different shades of red, brown or black. This type seems to be common on the east Adriatic coast.²⁶

The Roman pottery present on this site mainly consists of the thin-walled pottery and some pieces of North Italian Sigillata.

The shapes of **thin-walled pottery** are cups (**fig. 7,1–2**). The numerous fragments of bodies indicate 15 different decorated vessels. But the number of different shapes of rims and handles indicates 30 or even more cups found at the site. Most of the pottery is made of fine fabric, but there are some examples with visible impurities. The fragments of one cup are hard-fired, in section is visible red clay, and inside and outside grey-fired clay with net decoration. Another is made of pale yellow clay with incised triangles in a horizontal band. Other fragments are mainly reddish, but there are some with different fired parts, which are brown or grey. Some fragments have traces of red slip and some are polished. The decoration is applied like barbotine beads, drops, ribs, or incised ribs, triangles; or it is impressed by means of different instruments and there are some fragments with floral motives.²⁷

The fragments of **North Italian Sigillata** (**fig. 7,3–4**) are of a good quality of fabric of an orange colour and red slip with nice floral decoration. The fragments of rims indicate about 5 smaller pots. Some fragments could be ascribed to Sarius cup. It is decorated with concentric circles in a row, and below it there are palm leaves and a fragment of some floral decoration.²⁸

¹⁸ HAYES 1997, 64–66.

¹⁹ ČAČE 1997, 22–23. – BILIĆ-DUJMUŠIĆ 2002, 485–486.

²⁰ BILIĆ-DUJMUŠIĆ 2004, 123–140. – ČAČE/ŠEŠELJ 2005, 164–165.

²¹ KIRIGIN 2004, 141–142.

²² KIRIGIN/HAYES/LEACH 2002, 250. – BABIN 2004, 16.

²³ MOREL 1981, 2150; 2200; 2680.

²⁴ BRUŠIĆ 1999, 11.

²⁵ Ibid. 15. – ŠEŠELJ 2005a, 51–55.

²⁶ ŠEŠELJ 2005, 381–400.

²⁷ RICCI 1985 Tav. CII,2–4.14; CIV,9; CESARI 2002, 98–99.

²⁸ Similar MAZZEO SARACINO 1985 Tav. LXXV,6; BRUŠIĆ 1999 Fig. 44,265.

The pottery finds from Palagruža which can be connected with the cult of Diomedes could be dated from the Late Archaic and Classical periods until the early Roman Imperial period. According to the preliminary pottery analyses most of the fragments are from the Hellenistic period. At cape

Ploča the oldest finds can be dated to the beginning of the 3rd century BC, but the majority of the pottery belongs to the 2nd and 1st centuries BC. The coins found at both sites correspond to the period from the second half of the 4th century BC to the time of Augustus.

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