

New decorative engraved elements from the Serra d'Alto Culture and the relations between the Balkans, the Po valley, Trentino area and Apulia

ALFREDO GENIOLA

ABSTRACT - The signs of elements of contact between La Vela in Trento and the Serra d'Alto Culture lead us to reconsider aspects concerning both the culture and the settlements. The Manfredi hypogeum near Polignano a Mare (Bari) dates back to the middle of the IV millennium BC and possibly even earlier. Some pottery with spiral-shaped ornamentation which is not painted has recently been found. It is a demonstration of the considerable antiquity of the plastic art technique of engraving and carving in the Serra d'Alto style. The decorative pottery is somewhat different from what was found in the hypogea South of Bari and which dates back to the end of the IV millennium BC. These rock cut tombs also belong, in part, to the same culture. There is a specific form of contact which comes in the shape of a small globular vase with a short neck. This was found in La Vela in the Trentino area and in the cala Scizzo and cala Colombo hypogea near Bari. La Vela and cala Colombo are also connected by the link with human burial. This not only regards the facies mentioned above, but also the Diana-Bellavista facies which is in the Northern Tavoliere and has undergone closer topographic studies. The great neolithic tradition of the plain of Dauna may have been the base for exchanges between the North and South.

KEY WORDS: Serra d'Alto decorative elements, Comparison with La Vela

PAROLE CHIAVE: Elementi decorativi Serra d'Alto, Confronto con La Vela

Alfredo Geniola - Ist. Civiltà preclassiche, Paletnologia, Università di Bari, Palazzo Ateneo, Piazza Umberto I, I-70121 Bari

1. CENTRAL APULIA

Unusual pottery characterized by the Serra d'Alto type non painted spiral has been found in the latest excavations on the dromos of the Manfredi hypogeum near Polignano a Mare (Bari) (GENIOLA, 1996). This evidence is significant because both the pintadera and the globular short necked vase have been considered points of contact with the Serra d'Alto southern sphere (BAGOLINI, 1990). The link concerns examples of spiral shaped decorations and a specific shape of vase. The chronological tie and the more complicated problem of cultural relations are currently being studied.

If we consider the Serra d'Alto style as a whole then this specific aspect appears to be linked

to the painted decorations and their shapes. They dominate ancient, middle and partly recent times in this culture. This is principally because the line of development of the pottery is continuous. This is why the identification of some variations as phases of a sequence in an all-including development span can be justified. However, the quest for a connection is debatable since there are no clear stratigraphic comparisons. The so-called "tremolo sottile" is an exception particularly when rare, isolated and brief. There is the unanimous belief that it is distinguished by its recentness (which is probably not absolute) and that it is in some way interconnected with Diana-Bellavista elements (RADMILLI, 1974; CREMONESI, 1979).

The existence of relations with the Balkan

hinterland is demonstrated in Obre II (BENAC, 1973) by the ancient or middle one-handled Serra d'Alto type cup. This is indicative of a definite relation between the two sides of the Adriatic. The archaic background of these relations (which is represented by three-coloured pottery or by dark pottery with winding engravings) (Fig.1) is not found in the typical pure Serra d'Alto context of the Manfredi hypogeum which dates back to the IV millennium BC. The hypogeum falls within the vast Santa Barbara settlement where the clearly differentiated preceding layer contained three-coloured pottery (GENIOLA, 1997).

I would also like to add that, until recently, we were of the opinion that engraved decorations (except those related to the Danilo sphere and the Butmir sphere) (KOROŠEC, 1959; BENAC, 1973) were a characteristic of advanced phases of the Apulian Culture (GENIOLA, 1976).

The above is particularly significant when related to the comparison between distant and different areas, because once the connection between the pintadera in La Vela (BAGOLINI, 1977) and the Serra d'Alto sphere has been made then the specific chronology of this relationship will be the focus of our attention.

The discovery of new elements which are not painted in the *dromos* of the Manfredi hypogeum could pose the question of the antiquity of this decorative technique which is found on objects with different functions. This applies to both the example from the Trento area when compared to Apulian objects and to the latter when related to each other. However, there are no evident relations not even with winding shaped elements as previously seen on a stratigraphic level. This is particularly valid for the light grey fragment which has a straight intertwined pattern on the rod forming a right angle. It is inserted in the end part of a complex plastic shape with a raised spiral on both sides (Fig.2:2).

Another unusual instrument was found along the steps of the *dromos*. It is a small flat rectangular shaped panel made of dark polished clay (Fig.2:3). It has four holes on the long side; it has a plastic thickening in the middle and two parallel rows of small engraved squares below. The lower part is fragmentary but an edge has a plastic thickening and a comparison with the fragmentary object (Fig.2:4) found in the St. Angelo grotto (COPPOLA, 1996) brings the outline of a curvy pattern to mind.

A handle on an edge was found in the same area, this is a more common element in the Serra d'Alto and yet it is a prototype due to its limited detail (Fig.2:1).

Although there are many plastic handles in the Manfredi hypogeum these acquire a typical baroque abundance in the cala Scizzo (GENIOLA, 1979) and cala Colombo (GENIOLA, 1977) hypogea (even more than the short handles with animal shaped busts which are typical of the large rounded painted vases with long necks).

I am presenting a significant example (Fig.3:4) from cala Scizzo in which the flat vase is surpassed by the excessiveness of the scroll-like handle. This is the type of scroll-like or winding handle which is mainly diffused in the Tavoliere area or in the Eolie islands. However, small scroll-like handles which are usually detached from the sides of the vases are more easily found in a wider area. They are the most convincing indicators of their diffusion because they are minute and applied to vases with short or very short necks.

A flat pyx with two small plastic handles has been found in fragments in Malerba in the hinterland (GENIOLA & PONZETTI, 1987) of the Murge area and in Chiantinelle (GRAVINA & GENIOLA, 1978) in the Northern Tavoliere. These handles are a recurrent style and they have an engraved spiral outline on the sides; another clear decipherable example has been found in Layer I of cala Colombo (Fig.3:5). The short necked and bulbous shaped globular vase is widely diffused and is also found in the Trentino area (MOTTES, in press).

We found one of the above mentioned vases although it no longer had its neck or one of the handles (Fig.3:2). However, it was in the bosom of one of the buried in the collective grave in Layer VII in cala Colombo. The comparison with the La Vela context is therefore specular because of this particular association. If we consider the stratigraphic position in cala Colombo of this vase then it should be more recent than the flat pyx described above.

It is more selectively widespread because it can be found, for example, in the shelter of the Sperlinga of St. Basilio (CAVALIER, 1971) on the coast opposite the Eolie islands (with an evident area affinity with the Eolie) in the Girifalco tomb II (TOPA, 1927; TINÈ, 1964) in Calabria, and in the tombs of San Martino near Matera (INGRAVALLO, 1976). A complete example with its neck was found in cala Scizzo near cala Colombo (GENIOLA, 1996) (Fig.3:1).

The chronological aspect also has to be specified because in the South the globular shaped vase is recurrent in an advanced phase of the Serra d'Alto Culture but there is also a variety of vases.

In fact, one of the vases includes a spherical

vase (GENIOLA, 1996) which is magnificently decorated with large spiral engraving (Fig.3:3). Seven coils cover its middle and these alternate with a step-like pattern which is typical of the Serra d'Alto style forms of expression. They are framed on the shoulder by simple recurring spirals. In this case the Balkan connection is unquestionable (BENAC, 1973; KOROŠEC, 1959). There is also a complex and elaborate winding handle. The decoration is extremely miniaturized and covered in red ochre. It was carefully made with great mastery in order to create an effect of preciousness.

The presence of fragmentary small hatchets made of green stone, a raw material from north west Italy, which were found in the Manfredi hypogeum (i.e. the Archaic Serra d'Alto) is indicative of relations between the North and South (D'AMICO, in press).

The same applies to the obsidians (AMMERMAN & POLGLASE, 1997) in the hypogeum (cores, blades, cutoffs, and microlithic layers) from the Lipari area (ACQUAFREDDA *et al.*, 1996) which are also present in the span of development of the Adriatic culture. The Tavoliere, in particular, abounds in this material (GENIOLA, 1984; GRAVINA, 1985). It would appear that in the middle of the IV millennium BC and later Apulia was an important area for both receiving and perhaps even sending this raw material.

This is another implication linked to the presence of an obsidian blade (probably from the Lipari area) in La Vela. It is part of a context which is linked to Serra d'Alto by at least two other certain elements: the pintadera and the globular vase.

2. NORTHERN APULIA

The Serra d'Alto facies had a less incisive and not as long lasting effect in the Tavoliere. This may be the result of the initial clear and strong presence of the high Scaloria style (TINÈ, 1975; TINÈ & ISETTI, 1980) with three-coloured and spiral shaped patterns and also generally dark pottery with engraved winding (Fig.1) (GRAVINA, 1988). A similar situation can be seen in Salento (CREMONESI, 1979) and in the more distant Eolie Islands (BERNABÒ BREA & CAVALIER, 1980), particularly if we consider examples of engravings which are a demonstration of ancient relations.

In short, as far as we know, they create a more immediate link with the Danilo (KOROŠEC,

1959) and Obre (BENAC, 1973) spheres in the Western Balkans.

The high Scaloria style has a close affinity with the full Serra d'Alto style. An example is the so-called one-handled cup, which is often found in the central-southern part of the region and in the Matera area (PUGLISI, 1953).

The fact remains that the question of a transadriatic origin arises in this territory. A similar problem related to partial similarities, particularly as regards the presence of spiral engravings, arises for the Italian Po valley and Alpine areas (apart from the relation between the two territories in our peninsular which is more evident in some cases than others).

Painted decorations in the Tavoliere are not frequent, particularly those pertaining to the middle style of the Serra d'Alto, however later styles such as the "tremolo sottile" (GENIOLA, 1984; GRAVINA, 1984) are more widespread.

The Diana-Bellavista facies imperiously (and it would appear prematurely) asserts itself in the Dauna plain and in what is commonly considered the terminal phase of the neolithic cultural parable. This is probably linked to the significant qualitative and quantitative presence of obsidian (GRAVINA & GENIOLA, 1978). The area which was already a provider of Gargano flintstone was therefore one of the most suitable for economic and cultural exchanges between the North and South (VEGGIANI, 1972; BAGOLINI & BIAGI, 1976).

At the moment this relationship is not confirmed by specific signs like the short-necked globular vase; however, we can assume that it existed because of its logistic position.

In fact, Serra d'Alto examples with large spiral-shaped scroll-like handles (GRAVINA, 1986; GRAVINA & RONCHITELLI, 1985) and two pyxes (GRAVINA & GENIOLA, 1978) were found in Chiantinelle, a big propulsor centre. They are similar to those found in cala Colombo and are a sign of contact with the South. Besides these clear elements, a dark clay cup with straight sides decorated with recurrent spiral engravings and a coiled handle was also found (GRAVINA & GENIOLA, 1978) (Fig.4). The consistency of a strong Diana-Bellavista element in this territory clarifies any ambiguity concerning this attribution in the culture of the Daunia area.

The cup is contextualized by the comparison with the identical but inornate cup which was found in S.Martino (Matera) in a lithic tomb together with several globular short-necked two-handled vases (INGRAVALLO, 1976). The cup found in

Chiantinelle consequently represents a "trait d'union" between the areas of Apulia-Matera and the Po valley-Trentino.

These observations are furthermore supported by an analysis of the distribution of settlements which highlight selective locating.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A special thanks to the following persons: G. Zaccaro for the drawings and restoration, G. De Tullio for preparing the posters, F. Chimenti for the text, C. Palazzo Bax and S. Beck for the translations.

SUMMARY - New examples of pottery dating back to the middle of the IV millennium BC with decorative spiral-shaped engravings have been found in the Manfredi hypogeum in the S. Barbara settlement near Polignano a Mare (40km South of Bari). It is demonstrative of the great antiquity of this technique and form of expression in the Serra d'Alto style. However it is also quite different particularly when compared to the small globular short-necked vase. Two examples of these dating back to the end of the IV millennium BC have been found in the cala Scizzo and cala Colombo hypogea near Torre a Mare, just South of Bari. The spiral-shaped decoration on these is principally on the handles. This type of vase is very much like the examples in the Trento area and particularly resembles those found in La Vela because the context in which the discovery was made is similar. Two questions are therefore posed. The first concerns direct contact among different cultures in the Italian peninsula which tend to have the same Balkan reference point. The second is related to the prolonged chronology of these relations, if we consider the pintadera and the obsidian layer in La Vela and the green stones possibly extracted from the North-West in the Manfredi hypogeum.

RIASSUNTO - Nuovi esemplari ceramici con partiti decorativi spiralici incisi, risalenti alla metà del IV millennio AC, sono stati repertati nell'ipogeo Manfredi all'interno dell'insediamento di S. Barbara presso Polignano a Mare, quaranta Km circa a Sud di Bari. Essi dimostrano la grande antichità di questa tecnica e di questa modalità espressiva nell'ambito dello stile Serra d'Alto. Nel contempo però risultano ben differenziati rispetto specialmente al vasetto globulare a breve collo, di cui sono stati trovati due esemplari negli ipogei di cala Scizzo e di cala Colombo all'immediata periferia Sud di Bari, che datano alla fine del IV millennio AC. In questa forma la decorazione spiraliforme si concentra sulle anse. Il tipo vascolare trova un riscontro stringente con gli esemplari tridentini, in particolare con La Vela, con la quale confronta anche il contesto di rinvenimento. Vengono così poste la questione dei contatti diretti tra culture diverse della penisola italiana, che tende a tenere sullo sfondo il comune riferimento balcanico, e l'altra di una cronologia prolungata delle relazioni, tenuto conto anche della pintadera e della lamella di ossidiana de La Vela e delle pietre verdi dell'ipogeo Manfredi di possibile estrazione nord-occidentale.

REFERENCES

- ACQUAFREDDA P., ANDRIANI T., LORENZONI S. & ZANETTIN E., 1996 - Non destructive analytical method (SEM-EDS) to discriminate obsidian archaeological artefacts. In: XIII Int. Congr. P.P.S., Abstracts, 2, p. 214. Forlì
- AMMERMAN A. J. & POLGLASE C., in press - L'ossidiana nei siti neolitici dell'Italia settentrionale. XXXIII Riun. Sc. I.I.P.P., Trento 1997
- BAGOLINI B., 1977 - Alcune considerazioni sulla «pintadera» della Caverna dell'Erba di Avetrana presso Taranto e su un analogo oggetto proveniente da La Vela di Trento. *B.C.C.S.P.* 16: 134-138
- BAGOLINI B., 1990 - Cultura dei vasi a bocca quadrata; Il sepolcreto neolitico de La Vela di Trento. *Die ersten Bauern* 2: 225-231. Zürich
- BAGOLINI B. & BIAGI P., 1976 - Introduzione al Neolitico dell'Emilia e Romagna. In: XIX Riun. Sc. I.I.P.P., p.79-131. Firenze
- BENAC A., 1973 - Obre II. A neolithic settlement of the Butmir group at Gornje Polje. *W.M.B.H. L. III: A. Sarajevo*
- BERNABÒ BREA L. & CAVALIER M., 1980 - Meligunìs Lipára: l'Acropoli di Lipari nella Preistoria, IV. Palermo
- CAVALIER M., 1971 - Il riparo della Sperlinga di S. Basilio (Novara di Sicilia). *B.P.I.* 80: 7-63
- COPPOLA D., 1996 - Museo di civiltà preclassiche della Murgia meridionale di Ostuni (Brindisi). In: Puglia e Basilicata, Guida 11, XIII Congr. Int. Sc. P.P., p. 138-149. Forlì
- CREMONESI G., 1979 - Il Neolitico e l'inizio dell'età dei metalli nel Salento. In: AA.VV., La Puglia dal Paleolitico al Tardoromano, p. 94-121. Milano
- D'AMICO C., in press - La pietra levigata tra Neolitico e Bronzo nell'area alpino-padana. XXXIII Riun. Sc. I.I.P.P.
- GENIOLA A., 1976 - Le comunità neolitiche di Cala Colombo, presso Torre a Mare (Bari), archeologia e cultura. *Riv. Antrop.* 59: 189-275
- GENIOLA A., 1977 - Archeologia e cultura della comunità neolitica di Cala Colombo. In: AA.VV., La Comunità Neolitica di Cala Colombo presso Torre a Mare (Bari), p. 31-89. Bari

- GENIOLA A., 1979 - Il Neolitico nella Puglia settentrionale e centrale. In: AA.VV., *La Puglia dal Paleolitico al Tardoromano*, p. 52-93. Milano
- GENIOLA A., 1984 - Qualche riflessione sul Neolitico di età avanzata in Capitanata. In: VI Conv. P. P. S. Daunia. San Severo
- GENIOLA A., 1996 - The hypogea of central Apulia. In: XIII Int. Congr. P.P.S., Abstracts, 1, p. 251. Forlì
- GENIOLA A., 1997 - L'insediamento neolitico di S. Barbara. *Q. P. 1*. Bari
- GENIOLA A. & PONZETTI F.M., 1987 - Ricerche sul Neolitico delle Murge altamurane. In: XXV Riun. Sc. I.I.P.P., p.209-221
- GRAVINA A., 1984 - Caratteri del Neolitico medio-finale nella Daunia centro-settentrionale. In: VI Conv. P. P. St. Daunia. San Severo
- GRAVINA A., 1985 - Alcuni aspetti del Neolitico medio-finale nella Daunia centro-settentrionale: elementi di topografia. In: XXVI Riun. Sc. I.I.P.P. Firenze
- GRAVINA A., 1986 - Mass. Istituto Di Sangro, un insediamento del Neolitico medio-finale nella Daunia. In: VIII Conv. P. P. St. Daunia. San Severo
- GRAVINA A., 1988 - Vieste: la frequentazione neolitica medio-finale ed eneolitica. In: X Conv. P. P. St. Daunia. San Severo
- GRAVINA A. & GENIOLA A., 1978 - Insediamento Neolitico di C.no S. Matteo-Chiantinelle (Serracapriola-FG). La Capitanata, Foggia
- GRAVINA A. & RONCHITELLI A., 1985 - Il Villaggio Neolitico di C. Chiarappa. La Capitanata, Foggia
- INGRAVALLO E., 1976 - S. Martino. Il Museo Nazionale di Matera, p.67-70
- KOROŠEC J., 1959 - Neolitska naseobina u Danilu bitinju. *J.A.Z.U.*, Zagreb
- MOTTES E., in press - Influssi culturali peninsulari nel repertorio ceramico dei gruppi neolitici delle valli del Trentino. XXXIII Riun. Sc. I.I.P.P.
- PUGLISI S. M., 1953 - Nota preliminare sugli scavi nella Caverna dell'Erba (Avetrana). *Riv. Sc. Preist.* VIII,1-2: 86-94
- RADMILLI A. M., 1974 - Popoli e Civiltà dell'Italia Antica, I. Roma
- TINÈ S., 1964 - Il Neolitico in Calabria alla luce dei recenti scavi. In: VIII-IX Riun. Sc. I.I.P.P., p. 277-290
- TINÈ S., 1975 - La civiltà neolitica del Tavoliere. In: *Civ. P. P. Daunia, I.I.P.P.*, p.99-111. Firenze
- TINÈ S. & ISETTI E., 1980 - Culto neolitico delle acque e recenti scavi nella grotta Scaloria. *B.P.I.* 82:31-70
- TOPA D., 1927 - Le Civiltà Primitive della Brettia (Paletnologia). Palmi
- VEGGIANI A., 1972 - Giacimento neolitico con ceramica della cultura di Diana a Cesena nella Pianura Padana. *R.S.P.* 27:419-428

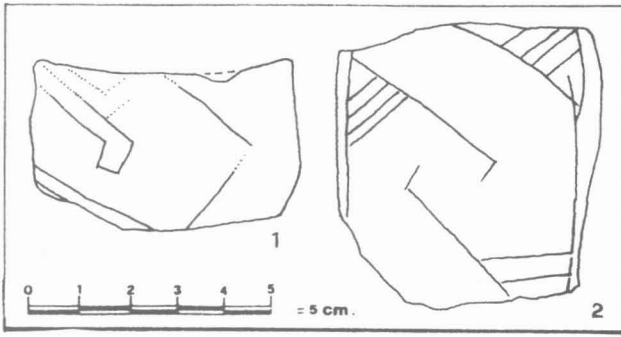


Fig. 1 - Vieste

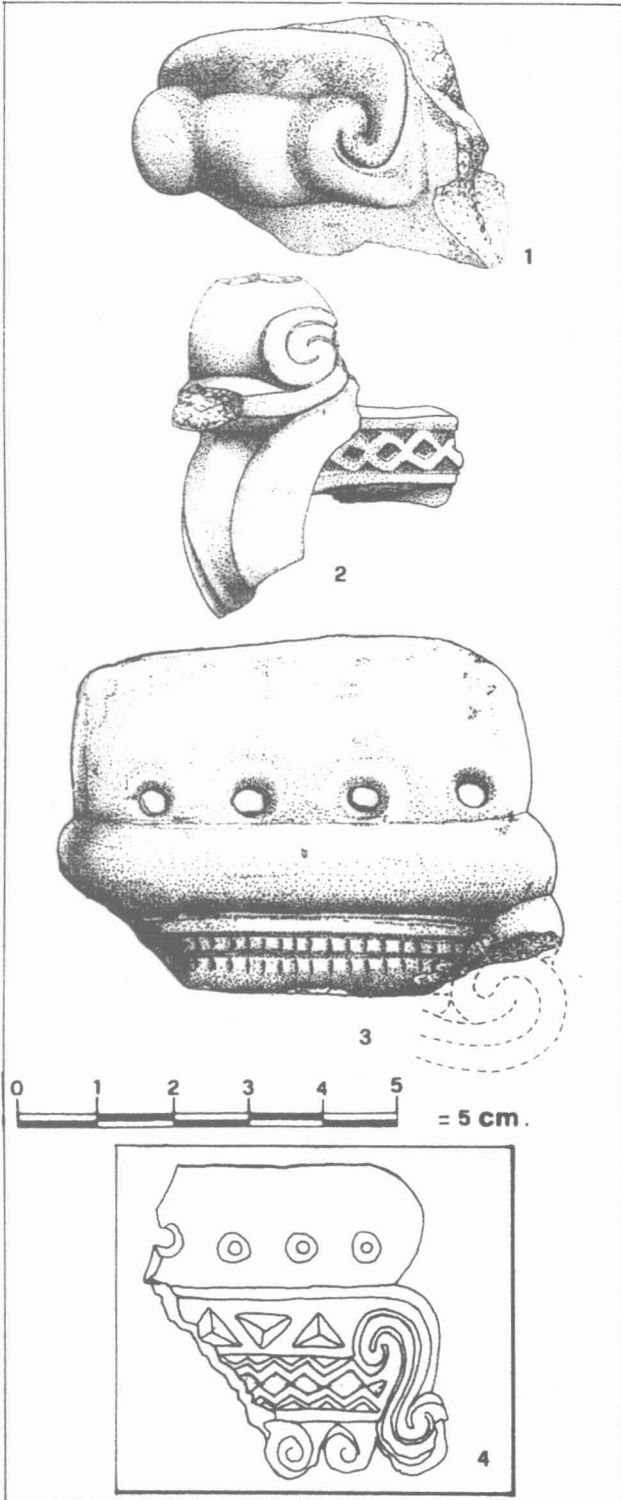


Fig. 2 - 1-3) Hypogeum Manfredi; 4) S. Angelo cave

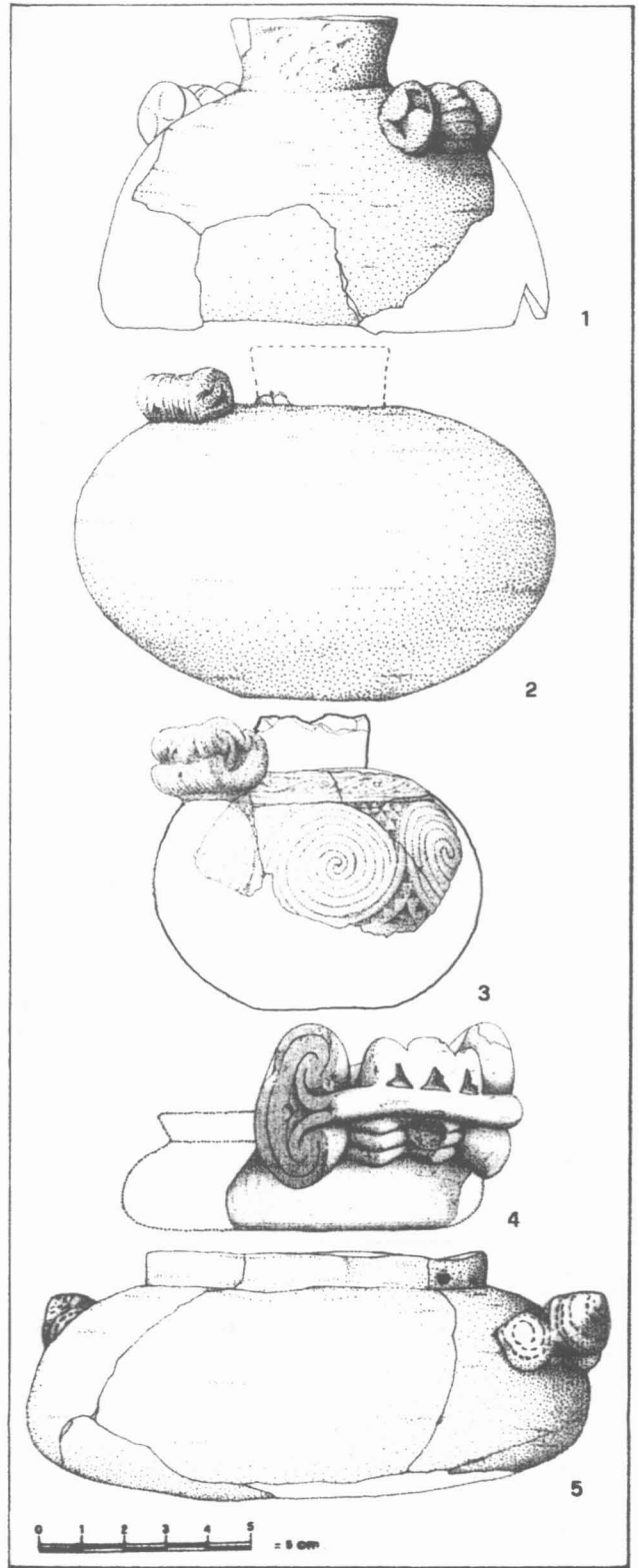


Fig. 3 - 1,3-4) Cala Scizzo; 2,5) cala Colombo

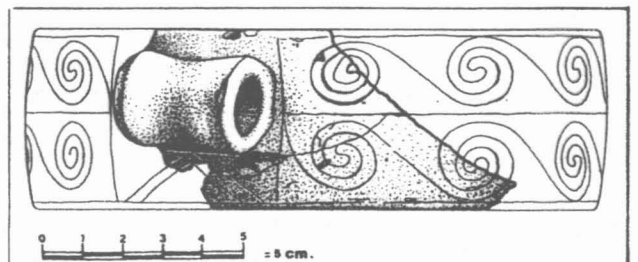


Fig. 4 - Chiantinelle