

## La Lagozza di Besnate (VA): new data from the Cornaggia Castiglioni excavations

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**ABSTRACT** - A study of the archaeological finds collected in the Lagozza site in 1953 - during a survey project carried out by Cornaggia Castiglioni - offer a quite different perspective to the traditional definition of the Lagozza Culture. Several decorated artefacts referable to the Chassey Culture have been found in the Lagozza site, while Square Mouth Pottery finds are totally lacking. Traditionally, scholars interpret these two cultures as constituent elements of Protolagozza culture. The archaeological complex has been recovered in an undamaged deposit and it is related to a single phase of the settlement. According to the presence of some Copper Age artefacts, the settlement should be dated to a final period of the Lagozza Culture. We also suggest the lake-dwelling was inhabited for an indefinable short time during the late Neolithic, as demonstrated by the thinness of the deposit. It was probably contemporary to those peninsular, alpine and transalpine groups, already characterized by the beginning of the metallurgic stage.

**KEY WORDS:** Late Neolithic, Lagozza Culture, Chassey, Square Mouth Pottery, Pottery typology.

**PAROLE CHIAVE:** Neolitico tardo, Cultura della Lagozza, Chassey, Vaso a Bocca Quadrata, Tipologia ceramica.

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The discovery of the archaeological site of Lagozza, located inside a morenic basin, date back to 1875, when the Count Cornaggia Castiglioni, the owner of the land, started the exploitation of peat. He collected many objects, without recording their stratigraphical position in the peat and later he gave some of them to the Municipal Giovio Museum in Como and some to the Museum of Natural History in Milan. Some years later some scholars like Regazzoni, Sordelli and Castelfranco turned their interest toward the peat bog of Lagozza, but at the end of the century the peat ran out and the basin was used for irrigation purposes and then, after a later drainage, it was cultivated. Materials from Regazzoni and Castelfranco's works are now at the Giovio Museum in Como and at the Sforzesco Castle archaeological collections in Milan.

After ascertaining the presence of surviving

portions of the archaeological deposit, in 1953 O. Cornaggia Castiglioni, nephew of the discoverer, started a stratigraphical research in the lake dwelling area, according to Regazzoni's directions, digging some trenches and finding some material still *in situ*. He also studied a few findings, that mostly were kept, unpublished, at the Municipal Museum of Natural History of Milan, until a very recent study (ODONE, 1998). The results of this research go together with the stratigraphical data of the Regazzoni research and are confirmed by paleobotanical analysis done by M.V.DURANTE PASA & A.PASA (1956). The deposit was not altered except for its top soil. The deposit has to be considered the result of just one phase of settlement, of a short span of time, because of the lack of a complex stratification. Consequently all the materials should be considered as a whole and ascribed to the same chronological period.

The analysis of the pottery shapes compared to the stratigraphical data shows a similar relative quantity of decorated pottery pieces (usually considered as from Chassey) between the Lagozza site and sites ascribed to the Protolagozza phase, for instance Isolino di Varese. In fact, among the ceramics examined in this contribution there are decorated brimmed dishes, open bowls, lids, and spindle whorls.

To find some chronological indications by typological analysis we have to emphasise:

- The absence of multitubular handles (anse "a flauto di Pan") among the Lagozza of Besnate materials - that is considered a typical feature in the beginning of the Chassey-Lagozza period, even though there is no stratigraphical evidence.
- The absence of Square Mouth Pottery finds, traditionally believed to be, together with artefacts referable to the Chassey Culture, the constituent elements of Protolagozza (Guerreschi, 1966-67).
- The presence of grooved decorations - on a brimmed dish and some spindle whorls - that is not typical of the Neolithic age, but of the later Copper age (Piano Conte and Baden cultures);
- The presence of pottery characterised by "brushing" treatment ("besenstricht") of the surface and the tendency of the coarse pottery to leave or make rough surfaces.

Thanks to these remarks we can guess that the cultural phase of the Lagozza settlement is following the presence of groups of Chassey-Lagozza tradition in the Po Valley. Besides, we have to suppose that this tradition has a more complicated chronological frame than we imagined. We can assume that the cultural phase of the Lagozza settlement, coming before the beginning of the Copper Age in the Po Valley (Remedello culture), is contemporary with other peninsular and transalpine cultural groups at the dawn of the metallurgical stage.

Pottery analysis (Cornaggia Castiglioni research, 1953)

**Fine Ware.** Bowls (mostly carenated), deep bowls, open bowls, globular vessels, brimmed dishes, lids, made by clay almost completely depurated, but with fine micaceous and lithic inclusions, burned in shrinking ovens that give the typical black colour. The accurate treatment of the surface and the smoothing process give the clay a bright and regular look. The sides have a variable thickness

ranging from 0,3 cm (carenated and deep bowls) to 0,6 cm (open bowls and globular vessels). They were used for eating, drinking or preserving small amount of food. Typical are the lugs usually attached in couples with vertical and horizontal holes, to hang up the pots, mostly the globular vessels. Quite singular is the dish with the rim decorated with light wavy radial grooves.

**Coarse Ware.** Big sized conical and globular vessels are made by clay with coarse inclusions. The surface treatment gives the clay a rough look. A conical vessel shows a brushed surface. The sides thickness averages around one cm, but in some containers it is over 2 cm. They were intended for use in cooking and preserving the foods. The arrangement in long line of the lugs is a typical feature of the conical vessels; on some globular vessels we can find big single elliptical lugs with just a single horizontal hole and others with multiple vertical ones.

**Other Ceramic Material.** We have a lot of kidney-shaped weights, by underdone coarse clay. We also have flattened spindle whorls, with biconvex or plane convex section. The latter of these have very often one or both sides decorated, according to geometrical patterns (radial single or multiple lines, dotted markings, grooving), with the scoring technique, while the impression technique was seldom used.

The finds' comparative analysis leads, in the case of fine ware and of other ceramic material, to comparison with other ones from the same area (Varese lakes), from the Bosisio Parini peat (LC) and from the Rocca di Manerba (BS); about the coarse pottery the affinities are not specific, even though the presence of the elliptic perforated lugs is a quite typical feature.

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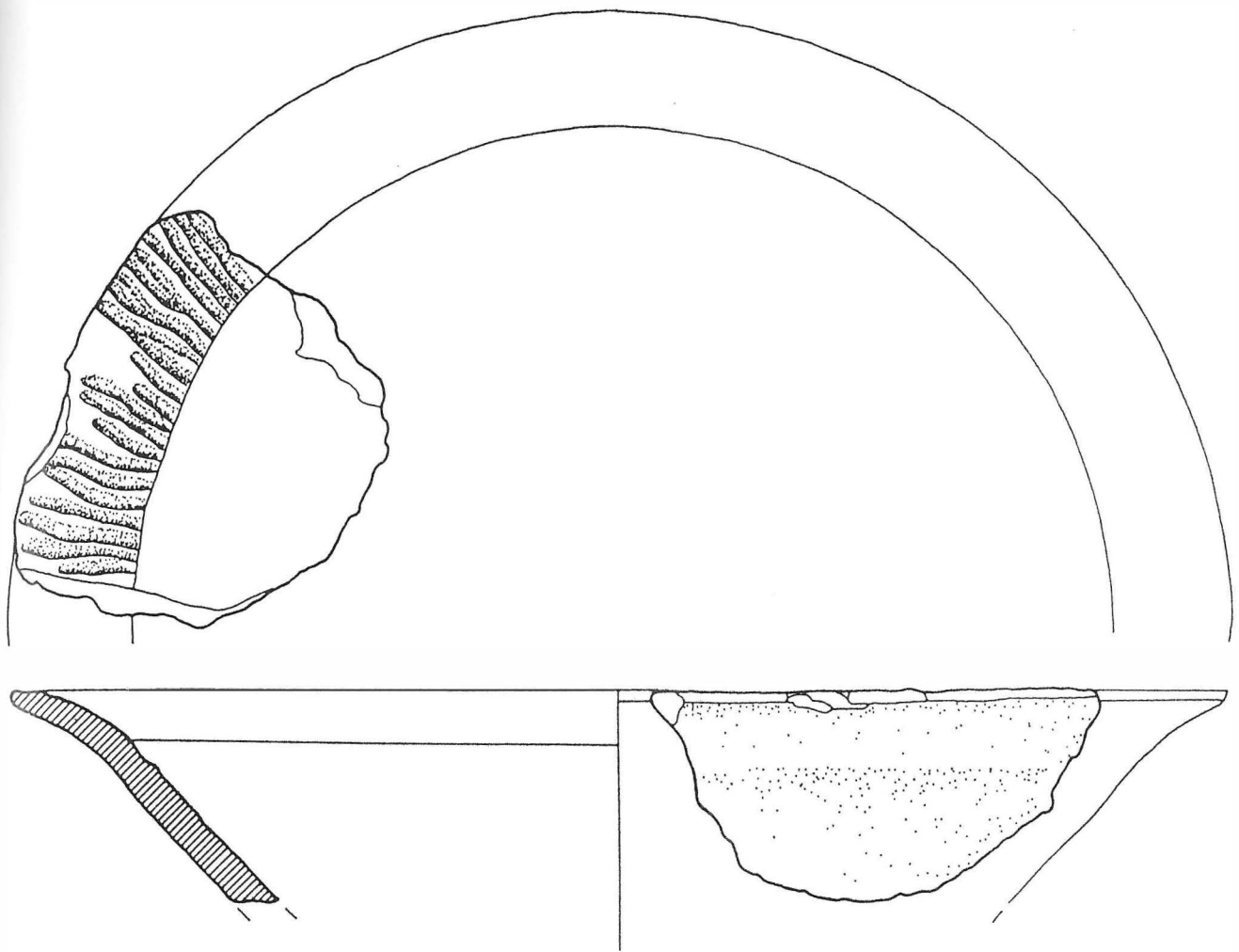


Fig. 1 - Fine ware: deep bowl with grooved decoration

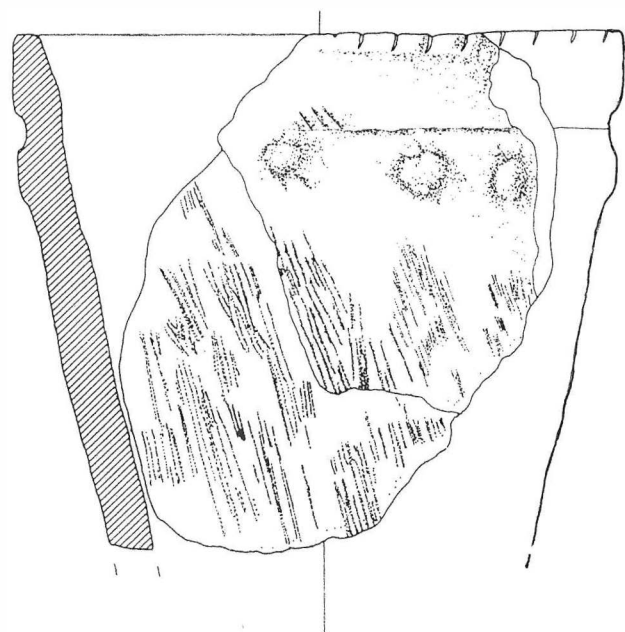


Fig. 2 - Coarse ware: conical vessel with brushing treatment of the surface

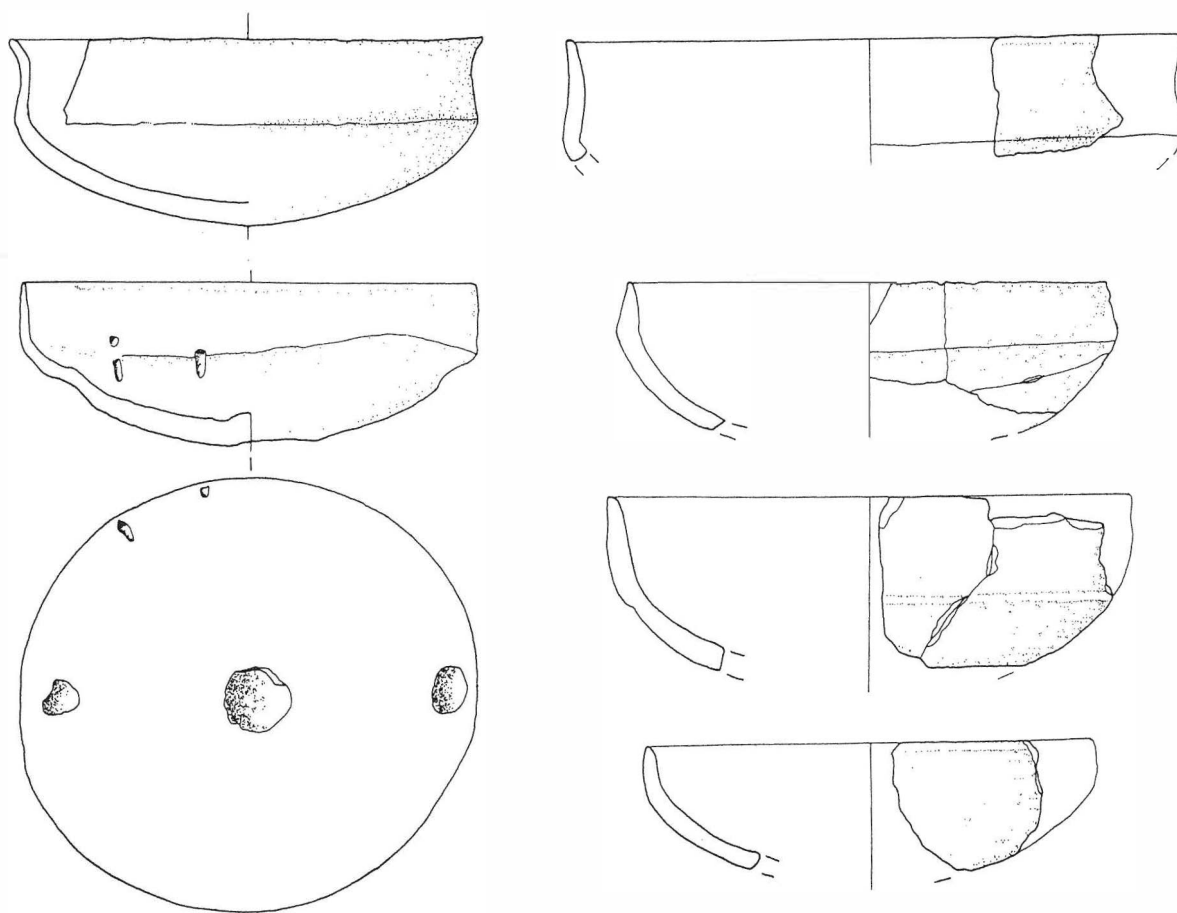


Fig. 3 - Fine ware: crenated bowls

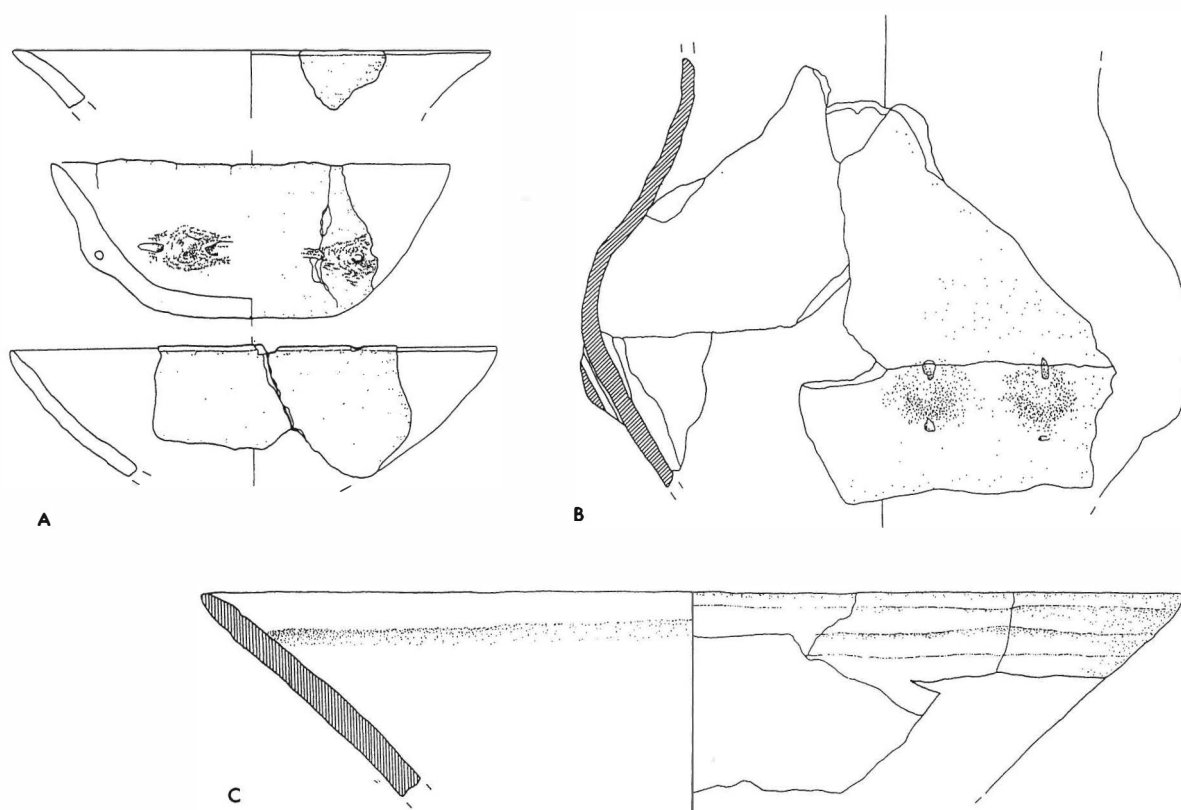


Fig. 4 - Fine ware: a) bowls; b) globular vessels; c) open bowls

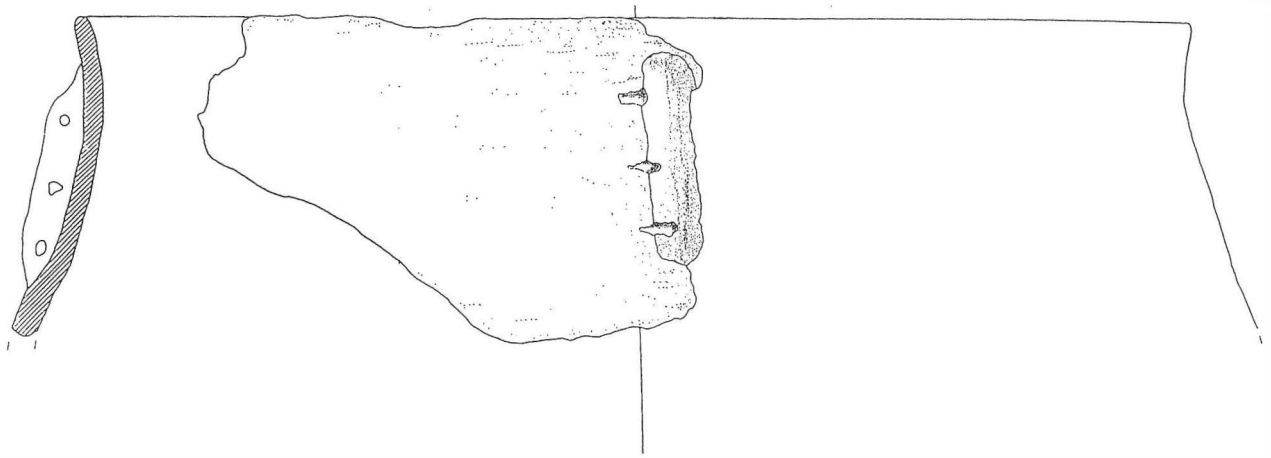


Fig. 5 - Coarse ware: big globular vessel with a vertical lug with orizontal holes

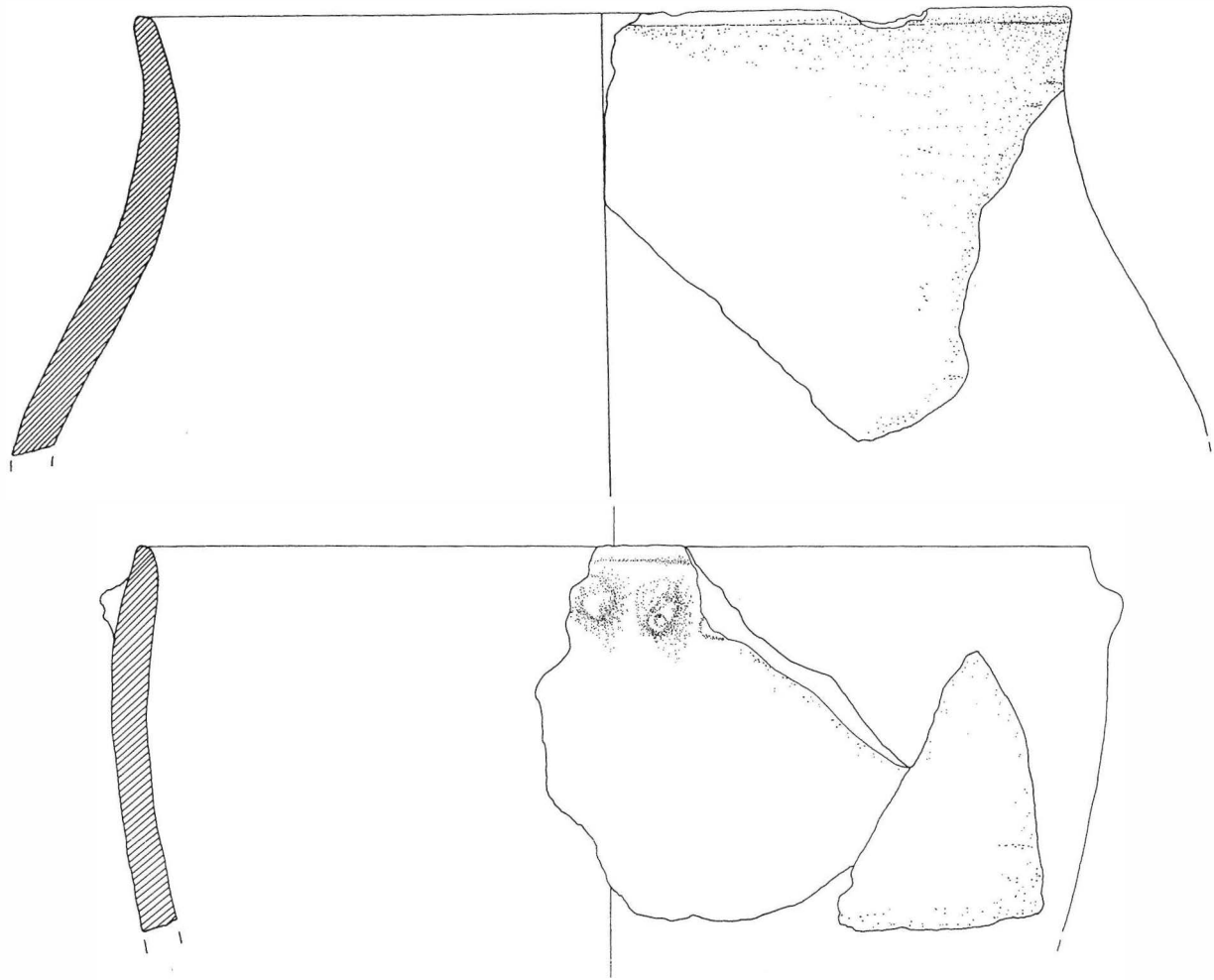


Fig. 6 - Coarse ware: globular and conical vessel

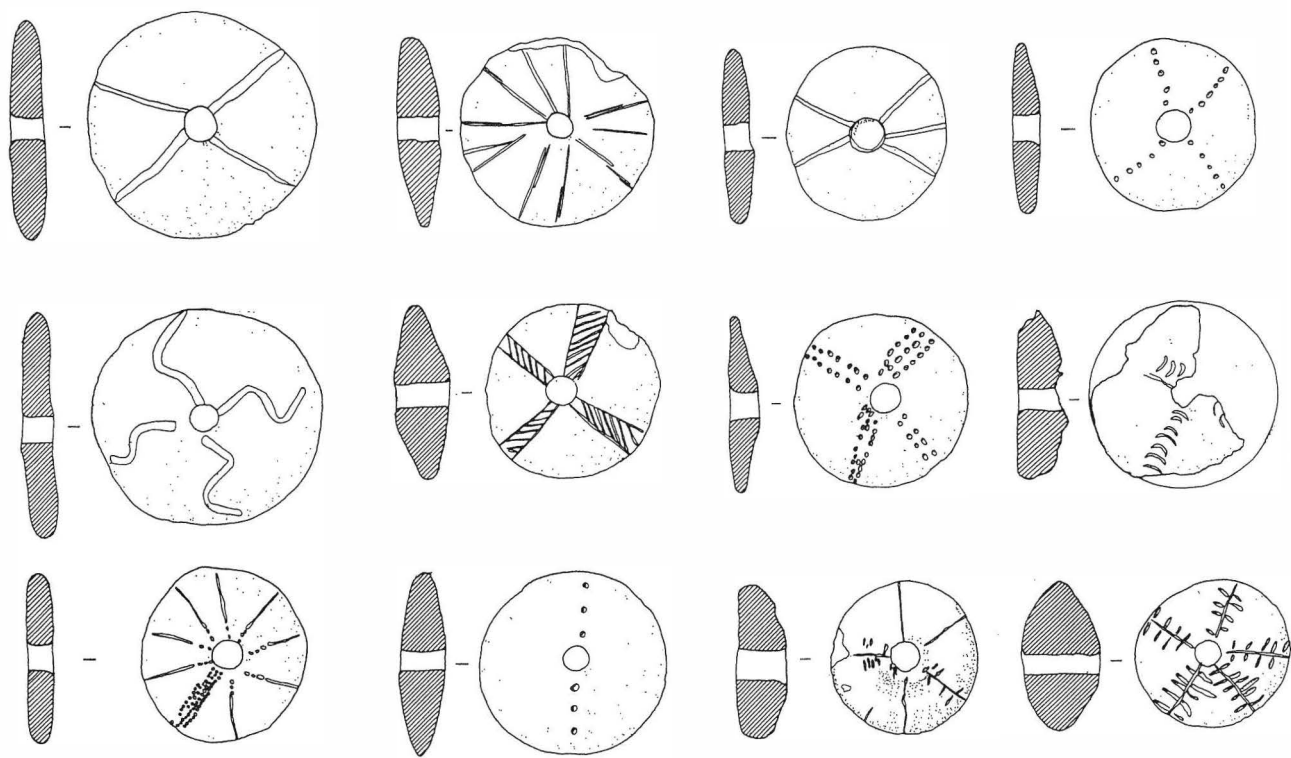


Fig. 7 - Decorated spindle whorls