

STANDING SPOUTED FUNNELS FROM POGGIO CIVITATE (MURLO)

(Con le tavv. XIII-XVI f.t.)

ABSTRACT

Excavations at Poggio Civitate (Murlo) have revealed the remains of at least 16 examples of a class of terracottas here called standing spouted funnels. They were found in the debris from the destruction of the Archaic Building, primarily in trench T-17. The degree of preserved painted decoration suggests that the funnels were painted not long before the destruction of the Archaic Building, which gives them a mid 6th century BCE production date. Currently, no other examples of this exact type have been published, and their use remains unclear.

Gli scavi archeologici di Poggio Civitate (Murlo) hanno riportato alla luce i resti di almeno sedici esemplari di un tipo di terrecotte, qui denominate standing spouted funnels. Essi furono rinvenuti nelle macerie riferibili alla distruzione del cosiddetto Edificio Arcaico, principalmente nella trincea T-17. Lo stato della decorazione dipinta conservata suggerisce una realizzazione non molto antecedente la distruzione dell'Edificio Arcaico. Questo ci permette pertanto di stabilire una data di produzione relativa alla metà del VI secolo a.C. Allo stato attuale delle conoscenze, nessun altro esempio di questo specifico tipo è mai stato pubblicato e il suo uso rimane tuttora incerto.

Ever since 1966, excavations have taken place annually at Poggio Civitate (Murlo), ca. 18 km SSE of Siena, Tuscany¹. The site has provided archaeologists with an abundance of Etruscan terracottas from the 7th and 6th century BCE. A group of 7th century buildings on Piano del Tesoro, known as the Orientalizing complex, were destroyed in a fire toward the end of the century². They are among the earliest known buildings in Italy furnished with tiled roofs and one of them, the OC2/Workshop, functioned as a production site for architectural terracottas³. After the destruction of the Orientalizing complex, a huge building was constructed in the early 6th century BCE and destroyed in the second half of the century (it will here be referred to

¹ I am very grateful to the current director of the excavations, Anthony Tuck, who not only generously provided the opportunity to publish these terracottas but who also contributed greatly to the discussions regarding their construction and use. Ingrid Edlund-Berry read a draft of the article and provided helpful comments. I would like to thank Nathaniel Barlam for illustrating, Elizabeth Frost for cleaning, Theresa Huntsman for cataloging, and Grayson Lauffenburger for photographing the objects. The finds catalog and all trench books are accessible on-line at <http://www.poggiocivitate.org>.

² NIELSEN - TUCK 2001.

³ See WIKANDER 2017 for a detailed discussion of the roof-tiles from the site.

as the Archaic Building)⁴. The Archaic Building measured roughly 60 × 60 m and had a large inner courtyard. This new building had an even more elaborate set of terracottas than the buildings of the Orientalizing complex, including four different types of frieze plaques, decorated raking and lateral simas, and acroterial statues.

While the roof decorations of the buildings at Poggio Civitate have been widely published and thoroughly discussed, many other classes of material from the site have been less intensively studied⁵. A group of standing spouted funnels in terracotta, retrieved primarily between 1969 and 1971, have remained almost completely unpublished⁶. They were found in the debris associated with the destruction of the Archaic Building and have puzzled researchers since their recovery⁷. Adding to their obscurity is the fact that very few of the fragments were originally included in the excavation's finds catalog. Most of the pieces were simply marked with trench designations and grid numbers, and then put into storage. Since most of the pieces were not recorded individually in the trench books, it is in many cases not possible to reconstruct their exact find date or stratigraphic context. However, unusually large fragments or ones preserving unusually clear traces of paint were often sketched in the trench books and can therefore be traced⁸.

No complete example has survived, but thanks to the large number of preserved fragments the shape of the standing spouted funnels can be reconstructed with some certainty (*pl.* XIII *a*). Especially important for our ability to reconstruct the full shape is no. 1, which preserves most of an upper half, as well as nos. 13 and 14, which preserve two lower halves (see catalog below). The standing spouted funnels have an upper section, which consists of a funnel with a spout. It is supported by a

⁴ PHILLIPS 1993 remains a useful introduction to the Archaic Building, while DE PUMA - SMALL 1994 contain several more detailed articles on specific aspects of the site. COPPOLARO NOWELL - TUCK - SÖDERBERG 2017 provides a more recent synthesis.

⁵ WINTER 2009 is the most substantial treatment of the Poggio Civitate roof decorations as a whole.

⁶ Their only appearance in print is in the catalog for the 1970 Florence-Siena exhibition, where no. 11 appears (PHILLIPS - TALOCCHINI 1970, p. 62, no. 131). Early interpretations based on the few fragments retrieved in 1969 and 1970 involved a reconstruction of the funnels standing on a narrow conical foot (see for example trench book EN I, p. 189). What was first assumed to be the conical foot of a funnel soon after turned out to be the tip of the hat of the well known seated acroterial statue with wide brimmed hat, but not until after the 1970 catalog had been printed. With the idea of a conical foot ruled out we can also disregard the suggestion made in the same catalog that PC 19690281 and PC 19690282 are somehow related to the standing spouted funnels (PHILLIPS - TALOCCHINI 1970, p. 62, nos. 132 and 133). These two stands are much more likely related to the cooking stands with which they were found.

⁷ Both nos. 11 and 15 were found in direct association with fragments of the seated statue acroterion PC 19710307 (see trench book EN II, pp. 151 and 183). Several funnel fragments with preserved paint were found right next to the fragment of a horse race frieze plaque PC 19710898 (see trench book EN II, p. 135).

⁸ The catalog at the end of this article includes only a selection of the best preserved fragments. Additional fragments can be found in the excavation catalog and many more can be found in storage in Murlo.

vertical tube that ends in a rounded base. In the middle of the tube is a small ridge, ca. 1,5 cm wide and ca. 0,5 cm high. The hole that connects the spout to the funnel is usually somewhat uneven, with a diameter of very approximately 5 cm.

Since no complete example exists, we do not have any exact measurement of the full height of the standing spouted funnels. From the surviving fragments a total approximate height of roughly 80-90 cm can be estimated. It is of course entirely possible that not all of them were of the same height. The variation in the diameter of the bases is, however, quite limited and they could not be much higher without becoming unstable, making it probable that they were all of roughly the same height.

The even, regular shape of the upper section and the clearly visible wheel marks on nos. 3 and 7 suggest that this part was shaped on a wheel before being attached to the other parts. The spouts were created separately and then attached to the already formed tube, as is evident from the way that several of the spouts have broken off from their tubes (see for example no. 5). The base and the tube sections were created by stacking coils of clay together. The coils can be seen clearly on the inside of the tubes and generally measure between 3 and 4 centimeters in height. No attempts were made to smooth the inside of the tubes before firing.

NUMBERS AND FIND LOCATIONS

In order to estimate the total number of the standing spouted funnels, two categories of fragments in storage were counted: tube fragments with a middle ridge and spout tips. 14 tube fragments that preserve the complete middle ridge survive, all of them coming from trench T-17 (Tesoro 17)⁹. Four smaller tube fragments with a partial middle ridge come from CA-28 and represent a minimum of two additional examples¹⁰. This brings the total minimum count of tubes with a middle ridge to 16. Fragments of spout tips, representing a minimum of 18 examples, were found in a variety of trenches, but the best preserved ones were all from T-17¹¹. The spouts found in Agger 8 and 9C are the only other ones well preserved in terms of shape, but unlike the ones from T-17, both of them have very worn surfaces and preserve no paint.

While it is certainly possible that some of the spouts could have come from some otherwise unknown type of spouted terracotta, the close correspondence in numbers between the minimum number of spouts and the minimum number of ridged tubes (18 and 16 respectively) suggest that this is not the case. Fragments from the bases present a similar spatial distribution pattern. The majority of those pieces come from

⁹ For the location of the trenches, see the plans in WIKANDER 2017, pp. 106-107.

¹⁰ The labeling on one of them is unclear and could possibly be read as CA-26.

¹¹ Number of spout tips found by trench: T-17: 8 spout tips; CA-1: 2 spout tips; CA-28: 2 spout tips; Agger 8: 1 spout tip; Agger 9C: 1 spout tip; CA 2I: 1 spout tip; T-8: 1 spout tip; T-1NR: 1 spout tip; T-6F: 1 spout tip.

T-17, some come from CA-28, and a very small number of fragments come from CA-2, CA-20 and CA-24. The great majority of all well preserved fragments (from all sections of the standing spouted funnels) were found in a 7×7 m area in the western part of T-17, directly north of the Archaic Building's north-western corner¹². This suggests that they were broken somewhere in this area at the time of the destruction of the building.

DECORATION

The standing spouted funnels preserve traces of painted decoration to a very high degree, something that is unusual for terracottas from Poggio Civitate. This means that not only was the paint in a reasonably good shape when they were broken, but also that the fragments subsequently enjoyed unusually good conditions for preservation¹³. The part of T-17 where all the painted fragments were retrieved was covered by an *agger*, a several meter high earthen construction, when excavations began in 1966. The finding of so many painted fragments supports the established interpretation that the *agger* was constructed shortly after the destruction of the Archaic Building¹⁴.

The painting technique used for the standing spouted funnels was white-on-red. The terracotta itself is orange-brown in color and was covered with a red slip before being painted with white patterns (now slightly yellowish in color). There exists a lot of variation in terms of patterns (*pl. XIII c*). Even when the same type of pattern occurs on several different examples, there are noticeable variations. For example, the most common patterns used for the tube section seem to be a lattice pattern for the lower half and Xs set between vertical lines for the upper half¹⁵. In most cases the lattice pattern ends with three lines below the middle ridge, but in the case of no. 14 there are four lines. Another example of variation can be seen in the painted triangles found on several of the bases. In most cases they are outlined in white, but they are sometimes painted solid (as in the case of no. 12). And while four triangles per base are usually used, there are cases where six appear (see for example no. 18). A certain amount of variety was clearly desired by those who produced these objects.

¹² The coordinates for this area are A-F/1-7 in the local grid.

¹³ The T-17 trench seems to have offered unusually good conditions for the preservation of paint. Other types of terracottas found there also preserve unusual amounts of paint, including pieces of lateral sima (PC 19710170), acroterial statue (PC 19710307, PC 19710357 and PC 19710713), cut-out acroterion (PC 19710823), pan-tile (PC 19710220) and frieze plaque (for example PC 19700519, PC 19710896, PC 19710903 and the find recorded in trench book EN II, p. 225, no. 16).

¹⁴ PHILLIPS 1993, p. 49.

¹⁵ Evidence for Xs on the upper half of the tube are found on nos. 1, 3, 8 and 9. Lattice patterns on the lower half of the tubes are found on nos. 11, 12, 14 and 18. Exceptions include no. 10 which preserves Xs set between vertical lines on the lower half.

PARALLELS

There currently exist no published direct parallels, neither archaeological nor iconographic, to the standing spouted funnels from Poggio Civitate. However, they can be seen as a part of a wider, well documented tradition of metal and terracotta stands in central Italy that began to develop in the 8th century BCE¹⁶. Using triangles to decorate ceramic stands and pottery was quite common in white-on-red painting in general¹⁷. Triangles also appear as cut-out decoration, for example on the bases of Orientalizing *holmoi*¹⁸. It seems possible that the bulging middle section of the *holmoi* is a kind of precursor to the small middle ridge on the standing spouted funnels discussed here, or at least that they belong to the same wider tradition of stand design. A 6th century BCE metal lamp stand from the Isis tomb at Vulci has a metal lattice work which is very similar to our decoration pattern C (*pl. XIII c*), which could suggest that this pattern was meant to imitate metal¹⁹.

The banquet frieze plaque from the Archaic Building displays a stand of a relative size comparable to that of the standing spouted funnels²⁰. There are several morphological similarities between the standing spouted funnels and the depicted stand, with the obvious difference that the stand on the frieze does not have a spout. It is also much more slender than the standing spouted funnels and is likely intended to depict a metal stand²¹.

USE

The lack of direct comparanda makes it difficult to make any firm statement regarding the use of the standing spouted funnels. They are unlikely to have been part of a roof, as was suggested early by the excavators. Since they are free standing and not attached to any type of tile (like the acroterial statues were) they would be highly unstable if placed on a roof. One might suggest that they were placed on the ground and used to catch and collect water from lateral simas, but that also seems unlikely considering their relatively low height.

The rich, painted decorations and the fact that there seems to have been at least 16 of them, suggest that the standing spouted funnels were not produced for small scale private use, but for large public events. We know that banqueting was an

¹⁶ BERARDINETTI INSAM 2001, p. 104.

¹⁷ See MICOZZI 1994 for several such examples.

¹⁸ See BENEDETTINI 1997 for several examples, as well as the *holmos* found in tomb 20 of the east necropolis at Fidenae (IAIA 2006, p. 234, no. II.248).

¹⁹ Q 3967 in BAILEY 1996, pp. 120-121, pl. 159.

²⁰ PHILLIPS 1993, p. 41, fig. 49.

²¹ RATHJE 1994, p. 97.

activity central to the expression of wealth and aristocratic identity in Orientalizing and Archaic Etruria²². Considering the similarities between the standing spouted funnels and terracotta stands from central Italy in general noted above, it is worth considering that they might have been made to hold some sort of vessel used during banquets. The presence of the spout suggest that if this was the case, it was not an ordinary ceramic or metal vessel. We are instead encouraged to consider vessels that do not normally appear in the archaeological record. One possible use for the standing spouted funnels might have been to act as holders for wine skins. But although wine skins appear for example on the Acquarossa revetment plaques type D, they are there shown being carried, and not placed on stands²³.

There are also other uses for the standing spouted funnels that could be considered, but that also seem unlikely. The funnels could have been used to filter wine or some other drink before consumption. There are certainly easier ways to do this (such as placing a portable filter directly above a krater or another vessel), but if the act was particularly culturally meaningful, that might explain why such ornate instruments were produced for the act. It is also conceivable that they served as drainage vessels for some sort of wet food product like cheese. Finally it cannot be ruled out that they were made for some sort of game or cult activity for which we do not currently have other evidence. Until any clear parallels can be found, any suggestion of their exact use remains speculative. The standing spouted funnels are an intriguing example of how people at Poggio Civitate could manifest their wealth materially and they leave us with yet another set of new questions regarding life at the site.

²² For a discussion specifically on banqueting at Poggio Civitate, see RATHJE 1994.

²³ WINTER 2009, pp. 280-281.

CATALOG

1. (PC 19711041), *pl.* XIII *b.* Trench: Tesoro 17.

Fragment preserving the part from the spout down to the middle ridge. Height 48.5 cm; max. width at top 13.8 cm. Max. diameter of tube 10.8 cm; max. width of hole at bottom 5.7 cm. Width of spout (where it attaches to tube) 9.7 cm. Middle ridge ca. 1.5 cm broad, ca. 0.5 cm high.

The fragment preserves traces of painted decoration in white-on-red. Below the upper break edge are four bands followed by a pattern of Xs set between vertical lines that cover the upper part of the tube section. Below the middle ridge are at least two bands followed by either a lattice pattern or Xs set between vertical lines.

2. (PC 19711036), *pl.* XIV *a.* Trench: Tesoro 17.

Fragment preserving almost the complete upper section. Height ca. 40 cm high; diameter at top 30.5 cm. Inner diameter at top ca. 27 cm. Diameter at bottom of tube 9.5 cm; inner diameter of tube 4.8 cm.

The fragment preserves traces of painted decoration in white-on-red. A band runs along the rim of the funnel and below it are vertical stripes, forming a tongue pattern.

3. (PC 19711035), *pl.* XIV *b.* Trench: Tesoro 17.

Fragment preserving almost the complete upper section. It is currently on display at the Murlo museum and is unavailable for measuring. Wheel marks are visible on the inside of the funnel part.

The fragment preserves traces of painted decoration in white-on-red. A band runs along the rim and is followed by a tongue pattern. Below it are four bands and finally a pattern consisting of Xs set between vertical lines.

4. (PC 19690275). Trench: Agger 8.

Fragment preserving almost the complete upper section. It is on display at the Murlo museum and is unavailable for measuring, but the catalog for the 1970 Florence-Siena exhibition states that it is 31 cm high and has an estimated diameter at the mouth of 26 cm²⁴.

The fragment does not preserve any traces of painted decoration.

5. (PC 19711039), *pl.* XIV *c.* Trench: Tesoro 17.

Fragment preserving the lower part of the upper section with an intact spout. Width of the spout (where it attaches to the tube) 10 cm. Length of spout (meas-

²⁴ PHILLIPS - TALOCCHINI 1970, p. 62, no. 131.

uring from the tip along the underside to where the tube would be) 9.3 cm. Max. diameter of tube 9.1 cm; max. inside diameter 4.1 cm.

The fragment does not preserve any traces of painted decoration.

6. (PC 19711031), *pl. XIV e*. Trench: Tesoro 17.

Fragment of the funnel section. It preserves a finished upper edge as well as a smaller finished lower edge which places the fragment directly over the mouth of the spout. Max. width 12.0 cm; max. height 12.4 cm. Max. thickness 2.3 cm; min. thickness 1.8 cm.

The fragment preserves traces of decoration in white-on-red. A band runs along the rim and is followed by a stylized vegetal pattern.

7. (PC 19711040), *pl. XIV f*. Trench: Tesoro 17.

Fragment of the upper section preserving a finished upper edge. Height 12.5 cm; width 14.1 cm. Max. thickness 2.7 cm; min. thickness 2.1 cm. The outer surface preserves wheel marks visible through the overlying paint.

The fragment preserves traces of painted decoration in white-on-red. A band runs along the rim and is followed by a stylized vegetal pattern.

8. (PC 19711032), *pl. XIV d*. Trench: Tesoro 17.

Fragment of tube section. Height 13.3 cm. Max. diameter at both ends 8.7 cm. Max. diameter of hole 3.3 cm at top, 3.9 cm at bottom. Max. thickness 2.8 cm at top, 2.7 cm at bottom.

The fragment preserves traces of painted decoration in white-on-red. Traces of a band can be seen by the bottom break edge. Above it are three Xs, each set between two vertical lines.

9. (PC 19711029), *pl. XV a*. Trench: Tesoro 17.

Fragment of the tube section preserving the middle ridge. Height 21.5 cm. Max. diameter 8.6 cm at top, 9.4 cm at bottom. Max. diameter of hole 3.3 cm at top, 4.6 cm at bottom. Max. thickness 2.9 cm at top, 2.6 cm at bottom. Middle ridge ca. 1.5 cm broad, ca. 0.5 cm high.

The fragment preserves traces of painted decoration in white-on-red. Directly above the middle ridge is a white band, followed by a pattern of Xs and lines, possibly identical to the pattern on no. 8. Directly below the middle ridge are three irregularly spaced three bands, followed by a lattice pattern.

10. (PC 19711037), *pl. XV b*. Trench: Tesoro 17.

Fragment of the tube section preserving the middle ridge. Height 19.0 cm. Max. diameter 8.8 cm at top, 11.2 cm at bottom. Max. width of hole 4.6 cm at top, 4.7 cm at bottom. Max. thickness of tube 2.3 cm at top, 3.2 cm at bottom. Middle ridge ca. 1.5 cm broad, ca. 0.5 cm high.

The fragment preserves traces of painted decoration in white-on-red. Directly above the middle ridge is a band. Directly below the middle ridge is a band followed by a pattern of Xs set between vertical and horizontal lines.

11. (PC 19711018), *pl.* XV *c.* Trench: Tesoro 17.

Fragment preserving the middle ridge and lower part of tube. Height 27.5 cm. Middle ridge ca. 1.5 cm broad, ca. 0.5 cm high.

The fragment preserves traces of painted decoration in white-on-red. Below the middle ridge are three white bands followed by a lattice pattern.

12. (PC 19711038), *pl.* XV *d.* Trench: Tesoro 17.

Fragment of lower part of tube and upper part of base. Height 33 cm; max. width 14.3 cm. Max. diameter at top 8.3 cm; max. diameter of hole 3.5 cm. Max. thickness 2.6 cm at top, 2.7 cm at bottom.

The fragment preserves traces of painted decoration in white-on-red. Below the upper break is a white band followed by a lattice pattern. Below the lattice pattern are two white bands followed by what seems to be the tops of solid white triangles decorating the base.

13. (PC 19710334), *pl.* XV *e.* Trench: Tesoro 17.

Fragment preserving a major part of the lower half. Height 45 cm. Diameter at top ca. 11 cm; width of hole ca. 5.5 cm.

The fragment preserves traces of painted decoration in white-on-red. The base section is decorated with a series of white solid triangles followed by two white bands. Over the two bands, on the tube section, is a lattice pattern.

Due to confusion during cataloging in 1971 this find was also assigned the number PC 19710243.

14. (PC 19711020), *pl.* XVI *a.* Trench: Tesoro 17.

Fragment preserving almost an entire lower half. Height 40 cm. Diameter at top 8.5 cm; width of hole 3.5 cm. Outer diameter of base 26 cm, inner diameter 18 cm.

The fragment preserves traces of painted decoration in white-on-red. Below the middle ridge are four bands followed by a diamond pattern. Below it is a band followed by a triangle pattern and finally two bands.

15. (PC 19711033), *pl.* XVI *b.* Trench: Tesoro 17.

Fragment preserving part of a base. Height 22.5 cm. Diameter 10.4 cm at top, 28 cm at bottom. Inner diameter 5.7 cm at top, 20 cm at bottom. Max. thickness at upper end 2.8 cm.

The fragment preserves faint traces of painted decoration in white-on-red. A band runs along the lower edge and above it is a pattern using diagonal lines, probably a pattern of triangles.

16. (PC 19711034), *pl.* XVI *c.* Trench: Tesoro 17.

Fragment preserving part of a base. Height ca. 22.5 cm. Diameter 10.5 cm at top, 31 cm at bottom. Inner diameter 6.3 cm at top, 24 cm at bottom. Max. thickness at top 2.7 cm.

The fragment preserves faint traces of painted decoration in white-on-red. The pattern might be a tongue pattern.

17. (PC 19711030), *pl.* XVI *d.* Trench: Tesoro 17.

Fragment preserving part of a base. Height 13.8 cm, width 24.2 cm. Max. thickness 3.8 cm, min. thickness 1.8 cm.

The fragment preserves traces of painted decoration in white-on-red. Above the bottom edge are two bands and above those is a tongue pattern.

18. (PC 19711042), *pl.* XVI *e.* Trench: Tesoro 17.

Fragment preserving part of a base. Height 22.2 cm. Max. thickness 4.9 cm at bottom, 2.8 cm at top. Max. diameter at top 10.2 cm, max. diameter of hole 4.7 cm.

The fragment preserves traces of painted decoration in white-on-red. A band runs along the bottom edge and above it is a pattern of solid white triangles. Above them are two bands and then a lattice pattern.

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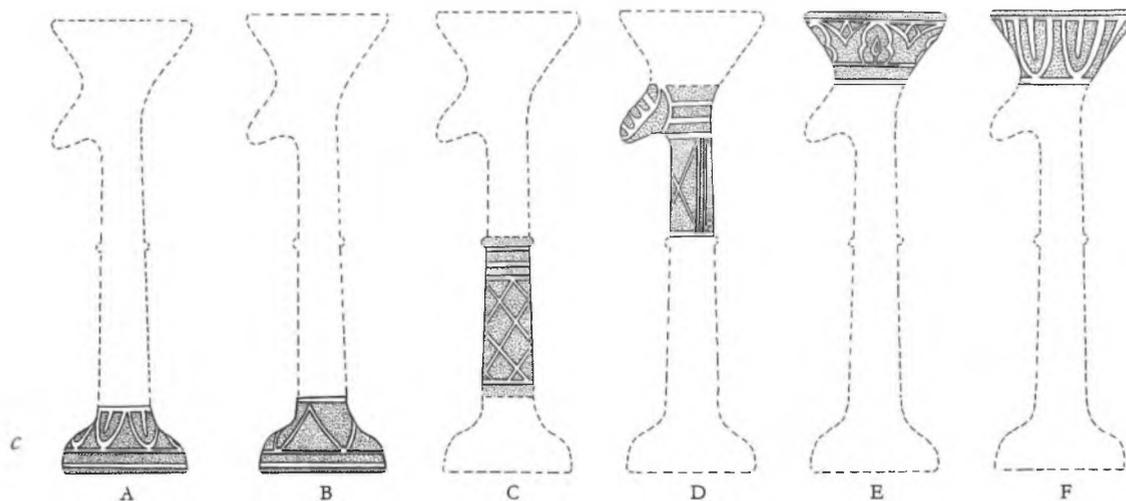
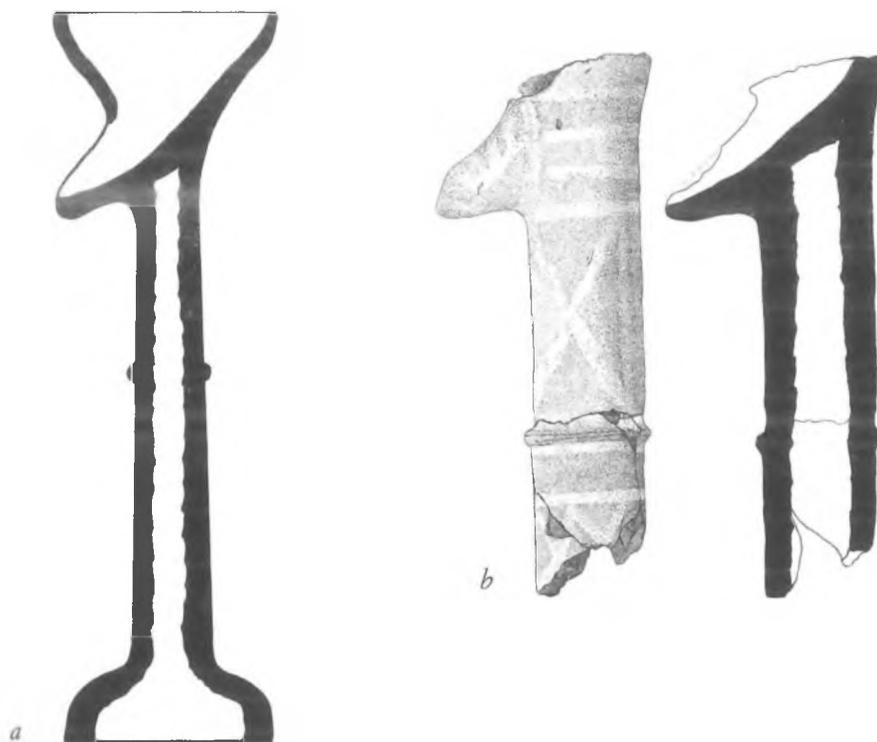
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PHOTO CREDIT

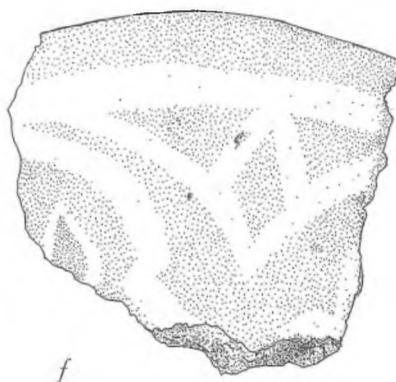
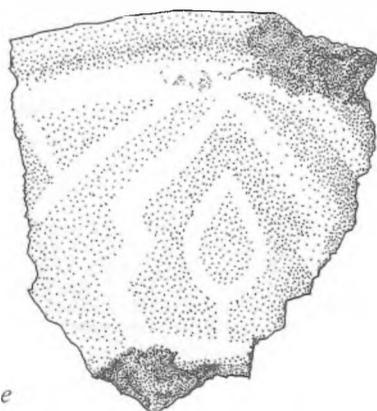
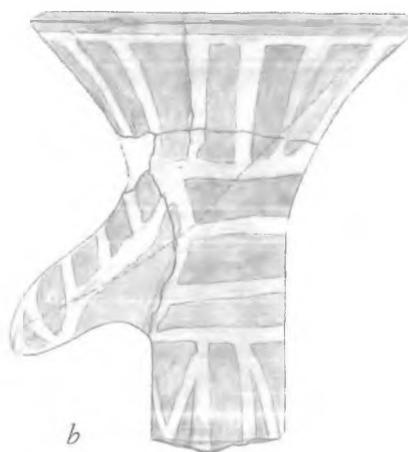
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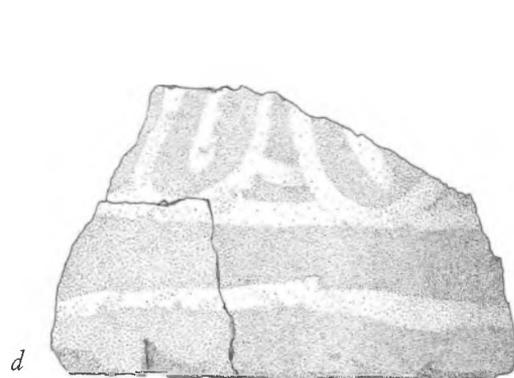
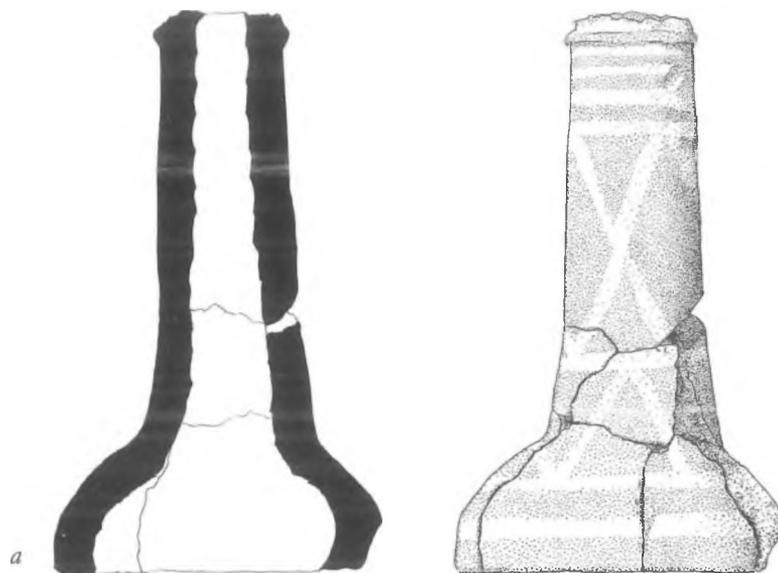
a) Reconstructed section of standing spouted funnel; *b)* Fragment no. 1 (PC 19711041); *c)* Examples of white-on-red decoration used on the standing spouted funnels. A. see no. 17 (and possibly no. 16); B. see no. 14 (or no. 12 for a variant with solid white triangles); C. see nos. 9, 11, 12, 13; D. see nos. 1, 3, 8; E. see nos. 6, 8; F. see nos. 2, 3.



a) Fragment no. 2 (PC 19711036); *b)* Fragment no. 3 (PC 19711035); *c)* Fragment no. 5 (PC 19711039);
d) Fragment no. 8 (PC 19711032); *e)* Fragment no. 6 (PC 19711031); *f)* Fragment No. 7 (PC 19711040).



a) Fragment no. 9 (PC 19711029); *b*) Fragment no. 10 (PC 19711037); *c*) Fragment no. 11 (PC 19711018);
d) Fragment no. 12 (PC 19711038); *e*) Fragment no. 13 (PC 19710334).



a) Fragment no. 14 (PC 19711020); *b*) Fragment no. 15 (PC 19711033); *c*) Fragment no. 16 (PC 19711034); *d*) Fragment no. 17 (PC 19711030); *e*) Fragment no. 18 (PC 19711042).