

Chiara Tarditi:
FRAGMENTS OF METAL VESSELS
FROM THE NORTHERN SECTOR

During the excavations in the northern sector of the sanctuary of Athena Alea at Tegea, in all areas, a considerable quantity of bronze objects and fragments were found, mostly jewellery (pins, rings) and votive sheets. These are published by Mary Voyatzis in this volume.¹

Less frequent and in poor condition are the fragments of bronze vessels; the fragments are generally very small and extremely fragile, made from very thin sheet.

Most of these fragments came from contexts with chronologically mixed materials, fills of the 4th century including materials from previous periods; consequently their date remains in most cases uncertain, between the 7th and the 4th century.² A more precise stratigraphical date can be established only for the fragments coming from the stratigraphical units D7/34 and /66, where the material is chronologically homogeneous and datable to the second half of the 7th century.³

Bowls

The most frequent shape is the hemispherical bowl, made from very thin, hammered sheet, with a small, thicker rim of triangular cross-section and a more or less clearly hemispherical body. This type is attested by some fragments large enough for the shape to be recognized, and by a great number of very small fragments of rims with remains of the body attached. None of these fragments has any decoration.

These bowls are a fairly generic type, and because of their simplicity their parallels cover a long period of time and extensive geographic contexts. It is natural for vessels of this shape to be frequently attested in a sanctuary, because of their function as drinking or libation vessels. Within the Peloponnesian area immediate comparisons are found at Olympia.⁴

¹ See section ix.

² See section iv (Tarditi), 59–68. – All dates in this section are understood as B.C.

³ For these contexts, see the account in section iv (Tarditi), 78–80.

⁴ Furtwängler 1890, 96 no. 668, pl. 35.

BrN-V 1 ***Bowl fragment*** *Pl. I*
 Rim with circular cross-section, slightly turned outwards; on the outside a small indentation below the rim. Rounded body, fairly thick sheet. Dimensions: rim Th 0.3, wall Th 0.2, H max. 3.4 cm.
 Location, F. no.: C6-C7/79-25 (the Byzantine pit).

BrN-V 2 ***Hemispherical bowl*** *Pl. I*
 More than half is preserved, but fragmentary and incomplete. Small rim with triangular cross-section, turned inwards; rounded body. Small suspension hole just below the rim. Dimensions: D 8.3, rim Th 0.1, wall Th 0.05, H 3 cm.
 Inv. no. 3716 (Tex no. 245). Location: D7/34 (7th-century debris layer).
 Date: second half 7th c.

BrN-V 3 ***Fragment of a bowl with rim and body***
 Small rim with triangular cross-section turned outwards; short oblique shoulder, rounded belly. Dimensions: rim W 0.7, rim Th 0.15, wall Th 0.05; H max. 1.6, W 3.3 cm.
 Location: D7/34 (7th-century debris layer).
 Date: second half 7th c.

BrN-V 4 ***Bowl fragment*** *Pl. I*
 Plain rim with triangular cross-section, perhaps turned inwards; the sheet of the body is very folded. Dimensions: rim Th 0.4–0.5, wall Th 0.1, H max. 4.3 cm.
 Inv. no. 4331 (Tex no. 876). Location: D7/66 (7th-century debris layer).
 Date: second half 7th c.

BrN-V 5 ***Bowl*** *Pl. I*
 Bowl with straight sides, bottom with many gaps; badly squashed. Plain rim turned outwards, without any thickening. Dimensions: rim Th 0.1, wall Th 0.05, rim H 0.4, H max. 4 cm.
 Inv. no. 3538 (Tex no. 67). Location: E6/17 (first layer with bronze objects, Late Classical/mixed).

BrN-V 6 ***Fragment of body and rim*** *Pl. I*
 Small rim with triangular cross-section, slightly turned outwards with a very thin line engraved immediately below it; rectilinear body. Dimensions: rim Th 0.3, wall Th 0.1, L 6.5, H max. 5.2 cm.
 Inv. no. 3640 (Tex no. 169). Location: D5/02 (“Couche A” trench).

BrN-V 7 ***Bowl fragments*** *Pl. I*
 Two pieces, not joining, of a bowl. Small rim with triangular

cross-section slightly turned inwards; the body begins straight. Below the rim there are two small suspension holes. Dimensions: rim Th 0.15, wall Th 0.05, L 10.4 cm.

Inv. no. 4234 (Tex no. 777). Location: D7/65 (fourth walking surface, Archaic).

BrN-V 8 *Two joining fragments of rim and body* Pl. 1

Small rim with triangular cross-section slightly turned outwards, straight body. Dimensions: rim Th 0.5, wall Th 0.1, L 9.4, H max. 1.7 cm.

Inv. no. 4330 (Tex no. 875). Location: D7/66 (7th-century debris layer).

Date: second half 7th c.

Rim fragments, not catalogued

From the stratigraphical units C6/30; C6-C7/79a; C6/80; C7/80a; C7/89; C7/92a (3 frgs); D5/02; D6, north-west corner (2 frgs); D7/14 (Tex no. 108); D7/14 (4 frgs); D7/14 – E7/19; D7/65; D7/66 (7 frgs); D9-D10 (4 frgs); E6/12 (Tex no. 156); E6/12 (Tex no. 157); E6/18 (Tex no. 144); E6/28; E6/37 (Tex no. 635); E7/20 (Tex no. 323).

Phialai

Of Oriental origin, the phialai are among the most frequently attested votive offerings in the Greek sanctuaries, because of their function as specific vessels for libations and sacrifices. They are attested from the 7th century onwards.

From the excavations in the northern sector of the sanctuary three examples of this shape have been recovered: two plain phialai (**BrN-V 9–10**) and one mesomphalic (**BrN-V 11**). The mesomphalic phiale is only partially preserved; it was simple, with a moulding surrounding the hemispherical omphalos and the plain basin. The other fragments are very small, just preserving a segment of the rim with part of the body; the presence on both of a zigzag decoration, very lightly incised on the surface, suggests that they could belong to the phialai shape, trying to imitate in a simplified way the most common decoration, of vertical lines or schematic lotus flowers that often characterizes these vessels.

This type of vessel has recently been studied systematically, as an attempt to clarify the general development of the shape and the different productions.⁵ It should be noted that the simple shape makes this kind of research very difficult.

The phialai are widely attested in many Peloponnesian sanctuaries,⁶ and as they were used for libations at private banquets they can also be found in dwelling contexts.⁷

The phialai from Tegea are very fragmentary, so it is difficult to date them and to suggest a production

area. For the mesomphalic example, similar mouldings are found on a phiale from Votonosi⁸ and on one from Olynthos,⁹ so that a period between the second half of the 5th and the first half of the 4th century may be suggested.

BrN-V 9 *Fragment of body and rim* Pl. 1

Small rim with triangular cross-section, slightly turned inwards; rectilinear body decorated with zigzag engravings. Dimensions: H max. 1.7, W 2.9 cm.

Tex no. 553. Location: C7/105 (second layer with bronze objects, Late Classical/mixed).

BrN-V 10 *Fragment of body and rim* Pl. 1

Small rim with triangular cross-section, just turned inwards; rectilinear body. 0.8 cm below the rim the body is decorated with thin zigzag engravings. Dimensions: rim Th 0.2, wall Th 0.05, W 2.9, H max. 2.6 cm.

Inv. no. 3862 (Tex no. 398). Location: D7/14 (first layer with bronze objects, Late Classical/mixed).

BrN-V 11 *Mesomphalic phiale* Pl. 2

Preserved are two joining pieces of the bottom, part of the omphalos and some body fragments; no fragments of the rim. The omphalos is surrounded by a moulding. Dimensions: D of the omphalos 4.6, wall Th 0.1 cm.

Inv. no. 3853 (Tex no. 389). Location: E7/31 (second layer with bronze objects, Late Classical/mixed).

Date: second half 5th – first half 4th c.

Miniature vessels

Among the small bronze objects recovered during the excavation there were some miniature vessels. Most of them were probably phialai, although the difference from the bowl shape is not always easily recognized.

All the fragments are made from thin hammered sheet, with just one exception (**BrN-V 16**), which is probably cast.

The presence of miniature vessels is quite normal in a sanctuary, since they were very common and cheap votive gifts. The shapes are also convenient for this context, as they are mostly phialai.

BrN-V 12 *Miniature bowl* Pl. 2

Complete. Plain rim turned outwards; hemispheric body. Small, rectangular handle with suspension hole. Dimensions: wall Th 0.05, D 1.5 cm.

Inv. no. 3553 (Tex no. 82). Location: E6/17 (first layer with bronze objects, Late Classical/mixed).

BrN-V 13 *Miniature phiale fragment* Pl. 2

Partially preserved; round wall, flat bottom. Dimensions: D 2.4 cm.

Tex no. 599. Location, F. no.: C6-C7/71e-18 (first layer with bronze objects, Late Classical/mixed).

BrN-V 14 *Miniature phiale fragment* Pl. 2

Partially preserved; small plain rim turned outwards, flat bottom. Dimensions: D 2.5 cm.

⁵ F. Sciarra, *Patere baccellate in bronzo*, Rome 2005.

⁶ Cfr. Argos, Heraion: H.F. De Cou, "The bronzes," in C. Waldstein *et al.*, *The Argive Heraeum II*, Boston and New York 1905, 279–85, pls 112–116; Perachora: T.J. Dunbabin, "Bronzes from the temenos of Hera Limenia," in H. Payne *et al.*, *Perachora I*, Oxford 1940, 148–56, pls 51–57; Olympia: Furtwängler 1890, 141–2, pl. 52.

⁷ Cfr. Olynthos: Robinson 1941, 183–4 no. 571, pls 9–41.

⁸ Cfr. J. Vokotopoulou, "Votonosi," *BCH* 99, 1975, 759–61 no. 12, fig. 20.

⁹ Robinson 1941, 183–4 no. 571.c, pl. 41.

Tex no. 438. Location, F. no.: C7/80-18 (first layer with bronze objects, Late Classical/mixed).

BrN-V 15 *Miniature phiale fragment* *Pl. 2*
Partially preserved; flat bottom with small omphalos, rounded body. Dimensions: D 3 cm.

Tex no. 698. Location, F. no.: C7/107-4 (first layer with bronze objects, Late Classical/mixed).

BrN-V 16 *Miniature phiale* *Pl. 2*
Complete, probably cast. Rim with small, dotted decoration; straight wall, convex bottom with omphalos. Dimensions: D 2.2, H 0.7 cm.

Inv. no. 3798 (Tex no. 334). Location: E7/20 (second layer with bronze objects, Late Classical/mixed).

Podanipter basin

This type of object, which is frequently found in Greek sanctuaries, is attested at Tegea by only one piece, the handle fragment **BrN-V 17**. The curvilinear course of the bottom part of the rod and the round indentation where it starts to curve indicate that this knob is the lateral end of the handle of a podanipter basin. The actual handle would have been semicircular, either decorated or plain.

Fragments from podanipter basins are found in great number among the bronze vessels from sanctuaries as well as from tombs.¹⁰ The fragment from Tegea has exact parallels with two semicircular handles ending in lateral knobs, from Athens and Delphi.¹¹ Handles with such lateral ends projecting over the rim are widely attested also in a more elaborate shape, with the handle composed of two facing animals.¹² All these examples are Greek products; the oldest ones are datable at the end of the 6th century, but most are from the early 5th, while the examples with more elaborate vegetal decoration can be dated to the second half of the 5th or the beginning of the 4th century.¹³ The piece from Tegea, with a plain surface of the knob, can be dated to the first half of the 5th century.

BrN-V 17 *Fragment of a handle from a podanipter* *Pl. 2*
Cast knob with hemispherical head and prominent central button; the rod has a circular cross-section and a ring below the knob. The preserved end is flat, to be joined with the basin; where the rod becomes flat there is a semicircular indentation corresponding to the rim of the basin. Dimensions: knob D 2.1, rod D 0.9, H 6.2 cm.

Inv. no. 3787 (Tex no. 321). Location: E7/20 (second layer with bronze objects, Late Classical/mixed).

Date: first half 5th c.

¹⁰ For a careful review of this shape see Tarditi 1996, 126–37.

¹¹ Athens: A. Keramopoulos in *ArchDelt* 1915.I, 22 no. 6, fig. 7.h. Delphi: Cl. Rolley and G. Rougemont, "Catalogue des objets de métal," *BCH* 97, 1973, 516 no. 7, fig. 24.

¹² See for handles with lion shape various examples from Cavallino, Rutigliano, Ugento and Olympia: Tarditi 1996, 30–4 and 132–3; with snake shape from Rutigliano, Athens and Delphi: *ibid.* 33–5 and 135–6.

¹³ Cfr. an example in New York: M.J. Milne, "A Greek footbath in the Metropolitan Museum of Art," *AJA* 48, 1944, 26–63.

Handles

Since handles are usually cast, they are generally better preserved in the soil than the very thin body walls which have only been hammered.

The examples found during the Tegea excavations belong to different kinds of vessels.

The fragment **BrN-V 18** is very unusual: it consists of a cast rod with two prominent rings, where the handle was originally inserted. Of the handle only a small fragment is preserved, from which it is possible to suggest that it had an "omega" shape. The rod was fixed to the basin with two small nails, one of which is preserved. Although the piece has no exact parallels, it may be suggested that it belonged to a basin or some similar shape.

The simple semicircular handle **BrN-V 19** is not typical of any specific shape and could, because of its dimensions and the joints, belong to a simple bowl or a small basin.

The handle **BrN-V 20** has a U-shape and was joined to a vessel with small, hammered nails, in such a way that its position against the body of the vase can be determined. The shape of the handle and its horizontal position suggest that the vessel might be a two-handled cup, such as a kotyle.

BrN-V 18 *Handle* *Pl. 2*
Handle fragment originally of "omega" shape. The joint is cast, of rectangular shape with two prominent rings for the insertion of the handle; simple ribs decorate the surface and the ends. Dimensions: L 8.1, H 1.4 cm.

Tex no. 783. Location, F. no.: C7/113-5 (first layer with bronze objects, Late Classical/mixed).

BrN-V 19 *Handle* *Pl. 2*
Small semicircular handle made from a rod with square cross-section. Dimensions: W 3.8, rod Th 0.4 cm.

Inv. no. 4333 (Tex no. 878). Location: D7/66 (7th-century debris layer).

Date: second half 7th c.

BrN-V 20 *Handle* *Pl. 2*
Small handle of U-shape, made from a rod with circular cross-section, round and flat ends. The small nails joining the handle to the vessel are preserved, and at one end a small fragment of the vase sheet remains. Dimensions: rod D 0.4, W 4.1, H 2.2 cm.

Inv. no. 3865 (Tex no. 401). Location: E7/31 (second layer with bronze objects, Late Classical/mixed).

Shafts

Only one fragment of a shaft has been found, which because of its long, rectangular shape and the profile certainly might belong to a patera or a strainer. The shaft is very simple, without any indication of the palmette or duck-head decoration that is a typical feature in this kind of vessels. An inscription **IEPA** is incised on the upper surface, indicating that the vessel was originally part of the sacred furniture of the sanctuary.

BrN-V 21

Pl. 2

Rectangular sheet with slightly concave long sides, becoming wider at one extremity; the opposite one is curving. The inscription **IEPA** is incised on the upper side. Dimensions: L 8.4, W 1.7–2.1, Th 0.2 cm.

Inv. no. 3803 (Tex no. 339). Location: E7/23 (layer with marble chips, Late Classical/mixed).

Spools

This category is also represented by only one example: a cast bronze spool with beaded decoration. Since there are no holes at the extremities, it was not connected with a handle; thus it was probably welded to the rim of the vessel only as a decoration.

Such bronze elements can be found on vessels of different shape. As decorations, the spools are widely attested on the rims of lebetes and basins¹⁴ and also on a group of thymiateria with hemispherical basins and tripod bases,¹⁵ probably of Corinthian production.

For the spool from Tegea, the absence of any other indications and the variety of vessels with which it may be connected do not allow a precise chronological and geographical definition. In a general way, the period of the 6th and the 5th centuries may be suggested.

BrN-V 22

Pl. 2

Spool of cast bronze, with the extremities slightly widened and decorated with some rings. The body of the spool is decorated with four beads, each separated by a couple of rings indicated by very small strokes imitating the beaded decoration. There are no visible traces of the soldering to the vessel, which might be a basin, a lebes or a thymiaterion. Dimensions: D 1.3, L 4.3 cm.

Inv. no. 3907 (Tex no. 444). Location: E7/32 (second pebble floor, Archaic).

Date: early 6th to late 5th c.

¹⁴ Cfr. an example from Ambelokipi, Athens: P. Amandry, "Collection P. Cannellopoulos: Lébès de bronze," *BCH* 95, 1971, 608, fig. 11.

¹⁵ Cfr. examples from Cavallino, Rutigliano, Olympia, Sindos: Tarditi 1996, 116–8 and generally on the shape 182–4.

Conclusions

All the materials recovered are weakly characterized, both by shape and by the almost complete absence of decoration. This greatly reduces the possibility of reaching exact conclusions on the chronology and the place of production of each piece.

All the shapes that could be recognized are very simple, and are mostly bowls and basins. These were very common in the equipment of Greek sanctuaries and were frequently offered as votive gifts.

Judging from the fragments, closed shapes such as oinochoai or hydriai seem to be completely absent. Any meaningful decoration, such as appliques, is also missing.

All the fragments are very simply made, mostly from thin hammered sheet. Such objects were possibly created by local workshops, temporary or itinerant and very simply structured; they may have been active only on special occasions like religious celebrations, when they would produce simple objects for the visitors of the sanctuary. There is good evidence for such temporary activity of metal workers in the immediate vicinity of the Geometric cult buildings, while they were standing,¹⁶ and this evidence may be relevant also for the following Late Archaic and Early Classical periods, when probably most of the bronze vessels are to be dated. We cannot, however, exclude the possibility that such objects were imported from other centres of production, or that there was a local production also of more complicated vessels. Such products are attested by the podanipter handle and the spool, which could only have been produced by a workshop equipped also for casting.

Literature:

Furtwängler 1890 = A. Furtwängler, *Olympia IV, Die Bronzen und die übrigen kleineren Funde von Olympia*, Berlin 1890.

Robinson 1941 = D.M. Robinson, *Olynthus X, Metal and minor miscellaneous finds, An original contribution to Greek life*, Baltimore 1941.

Tarditi 1996 = Ch. Tarditi, *Vasi di bronzo in area apula. Produzioni greche ed italiche di età arcaica e classica*, Galatina 1996.

¹⁶ See *Tegea I*, section **ii** (Nordquist), 157–78.

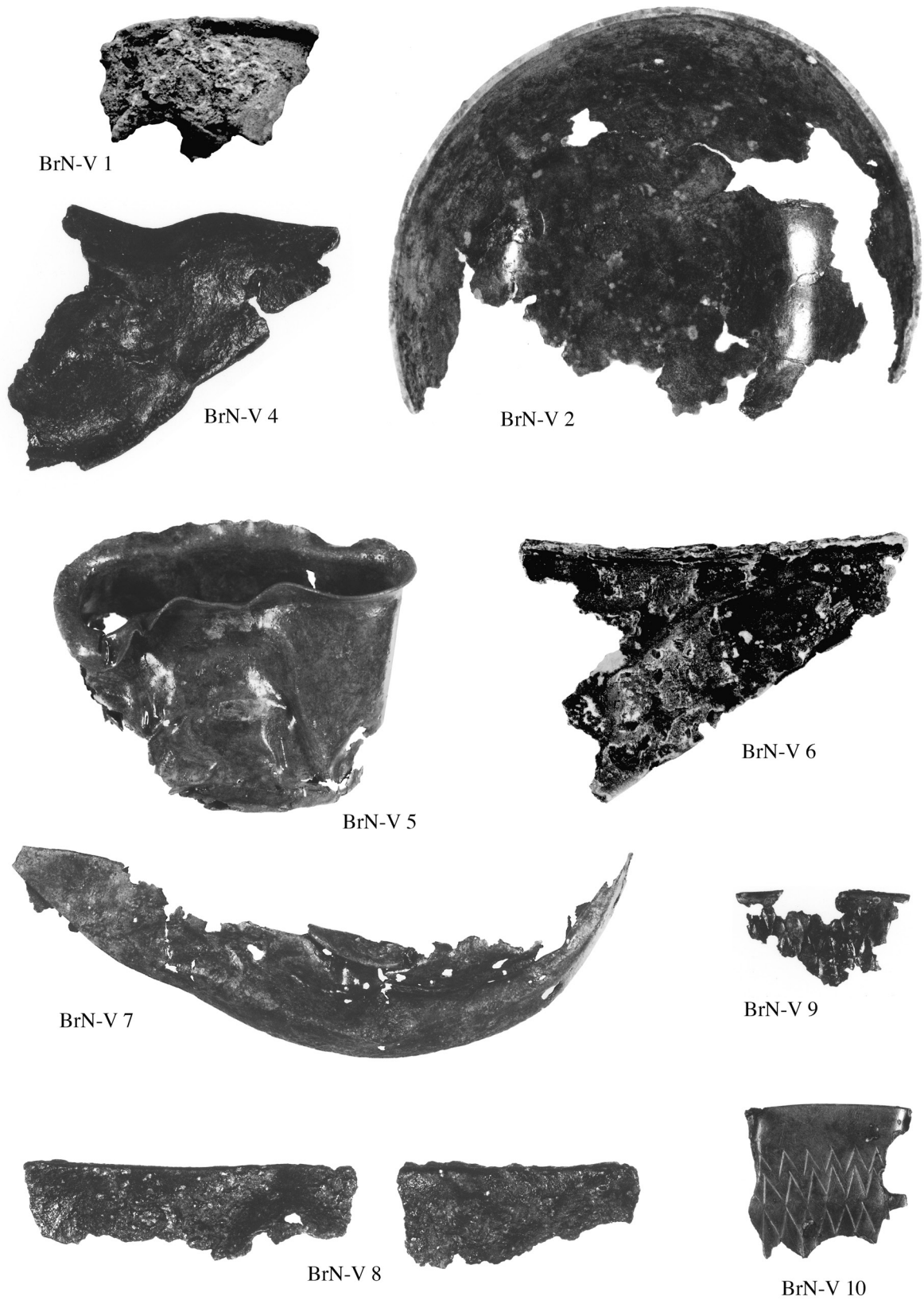


Plate 1. Fragments of bronze vessels (BrN-V 1-10).

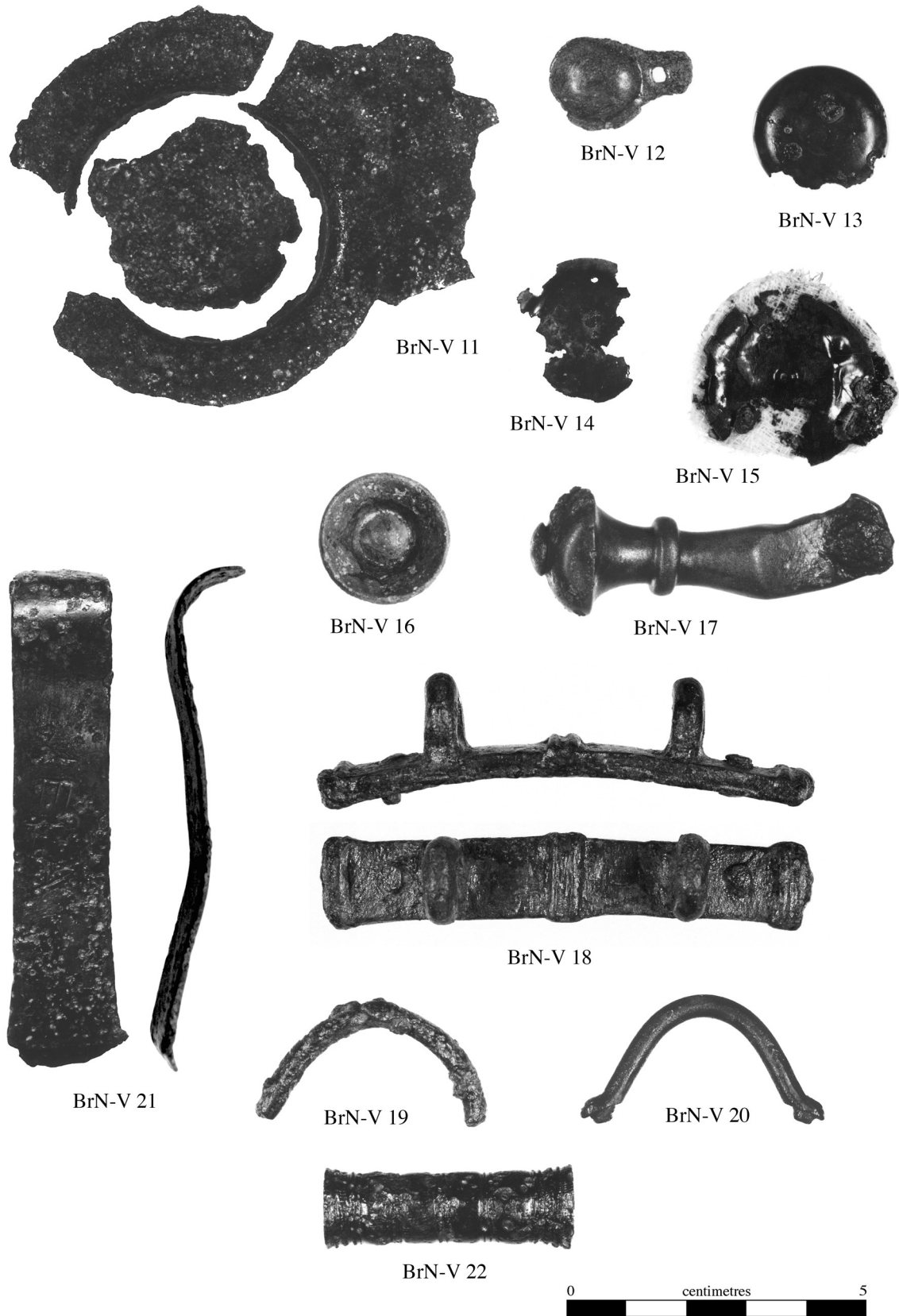


Plate 2. Bronze vessels from the northern sector (BrN-V 11–22).