



Foreigner in the kitchen: the untold story of the mobile cooking supports (*lasana*) from Emporion Pistiros

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ABSTRACT

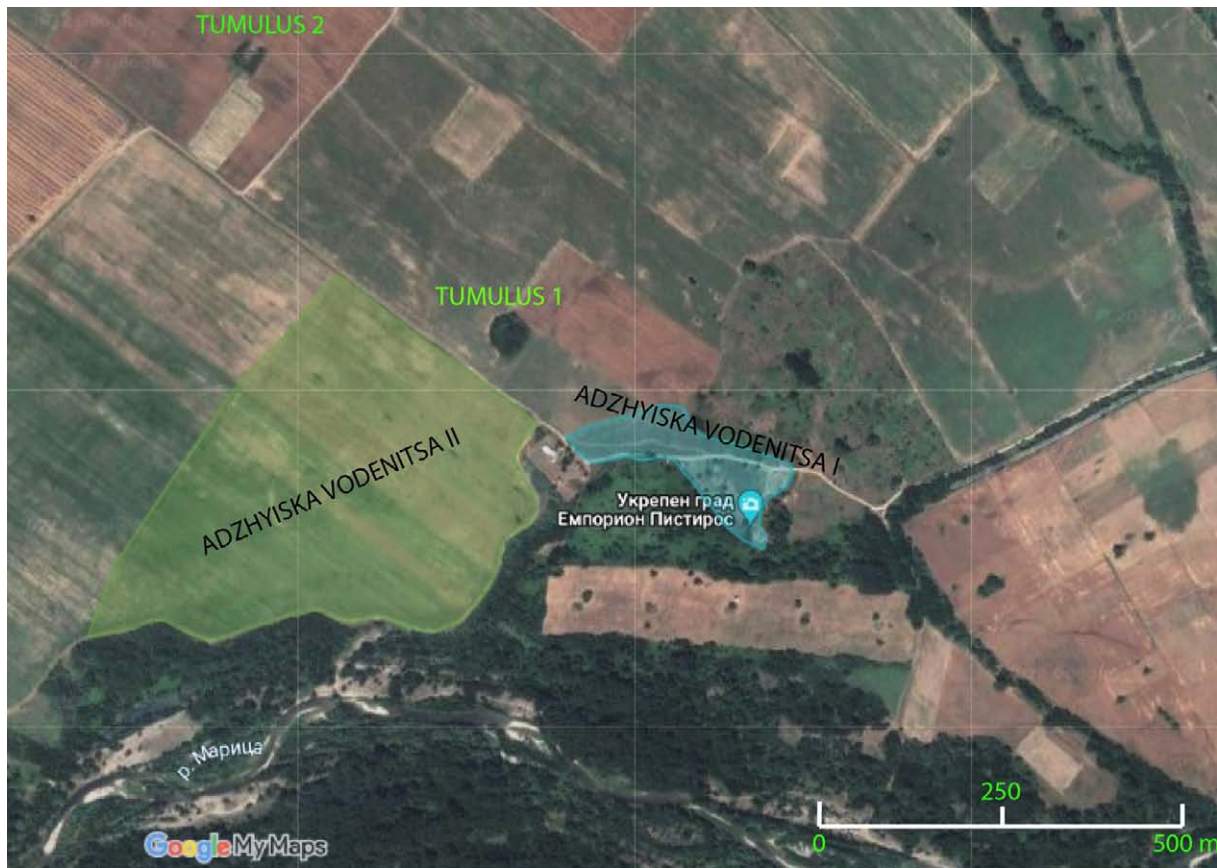
This paper reinterprets a morphologically distinct group of ceramic objects from the site of Adzhiyska Vodenitsa, situated near the town of Vetren, municipality of Septemvri, identified as *emporion* Pistiros, whose archaeological significance has long been overlooked due to their lingering identification as *tuyères de soufflet* or “bellow’s nozzles”. For a long time, they were employed by earlier scholarship as archaeological evidence serving the scholarly discourse about Pistiros as a metallurgical centre. An increasing *comparanda* from Greek *apoikiai* on the West and North Black Sea coasts, Magna Graecia, Western Mediterranean, Asia Minor, as convincingly argued by Y. Grandjean and S. Morris in 1985, have conclusively shown that these objects are better understood as mobile cooking supports or kitchen props known from the written sources as *chytropodes* or *lasana*. The spatial distribution of these objects at Pistiros is often associated with the earliest residential features in the Southeast sector, the so-called sunken dwellings or subterranean huts, situated *intra muros*, immediately south of the Bastion and close to the East fortification wall, and dated to the first half of the 4th c. BC. Their number has recently increased due to new discoveries in the Northwest sector originating from sealed deposits of domestic waste from the Classical period. Virtually unknown from other excavated settlements in Thrace, except for a single example from Apollonia Pontica, the mobile cooking supports (*lasana*) can now serve as evidence for the existence of culinary practices at Pistiros which are traditionally associated with the ancient Greek kitchen. This fact, among other things, solidifies the archaeological data for the conceptualisation of Pistiros as a Greek settlement which took off as a trading post (*emporion*) in the West Upper Thrace Valley during the Classical period prior to the Macedonian campaigns of Philip II in Thrace during the late 340s BC.

KEYWORDS

Pistiros, metallurgy, cooking ware, *lasana*, *emporion*, ancient Greek kitchen

Introduction. Emporion Pistiros and the metallurgical paradigm

Mieczysław Domaradzki (1949–1998), the discoverer and the first head of the international excavations at Adzhiyska Vodenitsa near the town of Vetren, municipality of Septemvri, identified with *emporion* Pistiros (fig. 1), conceived of metallurgy and availability of metal ore deposits in the mountainous hinterland of the site, particularly Ihtimanska Sredna Gora and the Western Rhodopes (Katinčarova-Bogdanova 1999, Abb. 1; Katinčarova 2005, Abb. 1; cf. Dimitrov, Stoychev 2018, 54–55, Map 2) as essential prerequisites for the establishment of a Thasian *emporion* in the heart of inland Thrace, following the Athenian takeover of Thasos’ silver mines in 463 BC (Domaradzki 1993, 51). He envisaged that during the early years of the site’s existence the acquired metal ores were bought off from the local communities, whereupon the *emporitai* of Pistiros organised the extraction and distribution in the region (Domaradzki 1995, 61).



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Fig. 1. 1. Emporion Pistiros and immediate surroundings: fortified compound (Adzhiyska Vodenitsa I), extra muros quarter (Adzhiyska Vodenitsa II) and Tumuli 1 and 2 (source: Google Earth with additions by the author). 2. Aerial view from south-east, with Maritsa River on the left and the town of Vetren in the background (photo P. Dimov)

During the first stage of excavations in the late 1980s and early 1990s it became clear that the considerable quantities of smelting slag (mostly iron, but also cooper), crucibles, moulds, semi-finished products, etc. seemed to dominate among the latest, i.e. Hellenistic stratigraphic deposits, predominantly in the Southeast sector of the site (Domaradzki 1993, 48–49; 1996, 23). Such artefacts in turn were

employed as archaeological evidence serving the scholarly discourse about Pistiros as a metallurgical centre, predominantly during the Early Hellenistic period. Several publications of artefacts related to metallurgical activities and, in particular, manufacture of fibulae, including a stone mould (Domaradzki 2000, 207), account for the pronounced interest in the subject (Katinčarova-Bogdanova 1996, 107; Domaradzki 1999; 2000, 205; 2002; for a recent study and overview, see Stamberova 2023, 234–235, n. 107). The subsequent publication of bronze and ceramic moulds for the manufacture of bronze appliques continued to showcase the variety of metalworking industries at Pistiros (Lazov 2002; 2013).

Later studies slightly modified Domaradzki's model by drawing attention to the presence of ceramic crucibles for melting copper alloys in the earliest deposits (sq. B22) and the discoveries of non-struck coin blanks (cf. Katinčarova 2002, 235–236, Cat. nos 1–2; Domaradzki 1993, 44) which clearly indicate that even in the Classical period Pistiros had developed some degree of metallurgical proficiency for the manufacture of bronze items, including the minting of Thracian royal coinage (Popov 2002, 86–87; 2004, 35; Lazov 2013; cf. Domaradzki 1994, 47; Taneva 2000, 51–52; Bouzek et al. 2024, 93; Dimova, Tzochet 2025, 247). So far, however, no certain traces of metallurgical furnaces have been found at Pistiros (cf. Bouzek et al. 2013, 58–59; Archibald 2013, 76, fig. E 3, pl. 18: 2).

Surprisingly, finds of *pithoi* and Olynthus mills have further solidified the debate related to metallurgy at Pistiros. It has been argued, for instance, that several *pithoi* (with no rims and shoulders) found at the back of Building no. I were recycled as water containers for metallurgical purposes during the Early Hellenistic period of the establishment (Lazov 1999, 339, 342, fig. 4; cf. Ivanova 2019, 60, 86). Several fragments of Olynthus mills found in various contexts at the site (Ivanova 2019, 72, 75, Appendix C.4; 12; 15; 30–33; 46, 47; Pl. II.4; XV.4; VI.12; XVIII.12; VII.15; XIX.15; XI.30; XXIII.30; XI.31; XXIII.31; XI.32; XXIII.32; XI.33; XXIII.33), including an upper stone of a stray find from the vicinity of the village of Akanzhievo, municipality of Belovo, were also related to the crushing of metal ores. Significantly, the metallurgical use of the latter was proven after conducting a residue analysis (Katinčarova 2005, 188–189, n. 3; cf. Ivanova 2019, Appendix C8, Pl. IV.7; XVII.7). Pinpointing the chronology of these finds, however, remains a challenge, since the majority are surface finds or from disturbed contexts in Classical and Hellenistic strata. In any case, they are associated with pit fills and only occasionally are they found in *pithoi* (Ivanova 2019, Appendix C.4; 12; 15; 30–33).

Crucibles and 'tuyères'

An important moment for the metallurgical paradigm was the publication of D. Katinčarova's typology of ceramic crucibles (fig. 2), showcasing the morphological variety of these items, which were discovered *intra muros* south of the Bastion, within sq. B17, B22, B'2 and B'7 (Katinčarova-Bogdanova 1996; Katinčarova 2002).

In addition to the ten (rounded or cylindrical) crucibles (Groups 1 and 2, here figs 2.1–2.2) (see also Lazov 2013, 217, cat. nos 12–13), D. Katinčarova distinguished 15 fragmentary specimens (Group 3, here fig. 2.3) of what she identified as *tuyères de soufflet* or “bellows' nozzles” (Katinčarova 2002, Cat. nos 11–25; figs 12.3.1–14). At this point, she followed (Katinčarova 2002, 237) the most widespread explanation first offered for the items excavated in Spain (Emporion), France (Massalia) and Italy (Ischia) (Almagro 1945, 67; Benoit 1948, 305–307; Buchner 1969, 97, fig. 26; cf. Pisani 2003, 119, n. 28), which exhibited traces of soot along the inner surface and were all found in association with metallurgical facilities (Weisgerber, Roden 1986, 18). Following the earliest attributions quoted above, even the singular presence of such *tuyères de soufflet* on sites would be cited as a proof of activities related to metallurgical workshops, as also became the case with Pistiros (e.g. Domaradzki 2002, 26; Katinčarova 2002; Bouzek 2003, 18; Popov 2004, 35; Bouzek et al. 2024, 93, nn. 38–39).

Based on stratigraphic observations and numismatic data, the alleged *tuyères de soufflet* were all

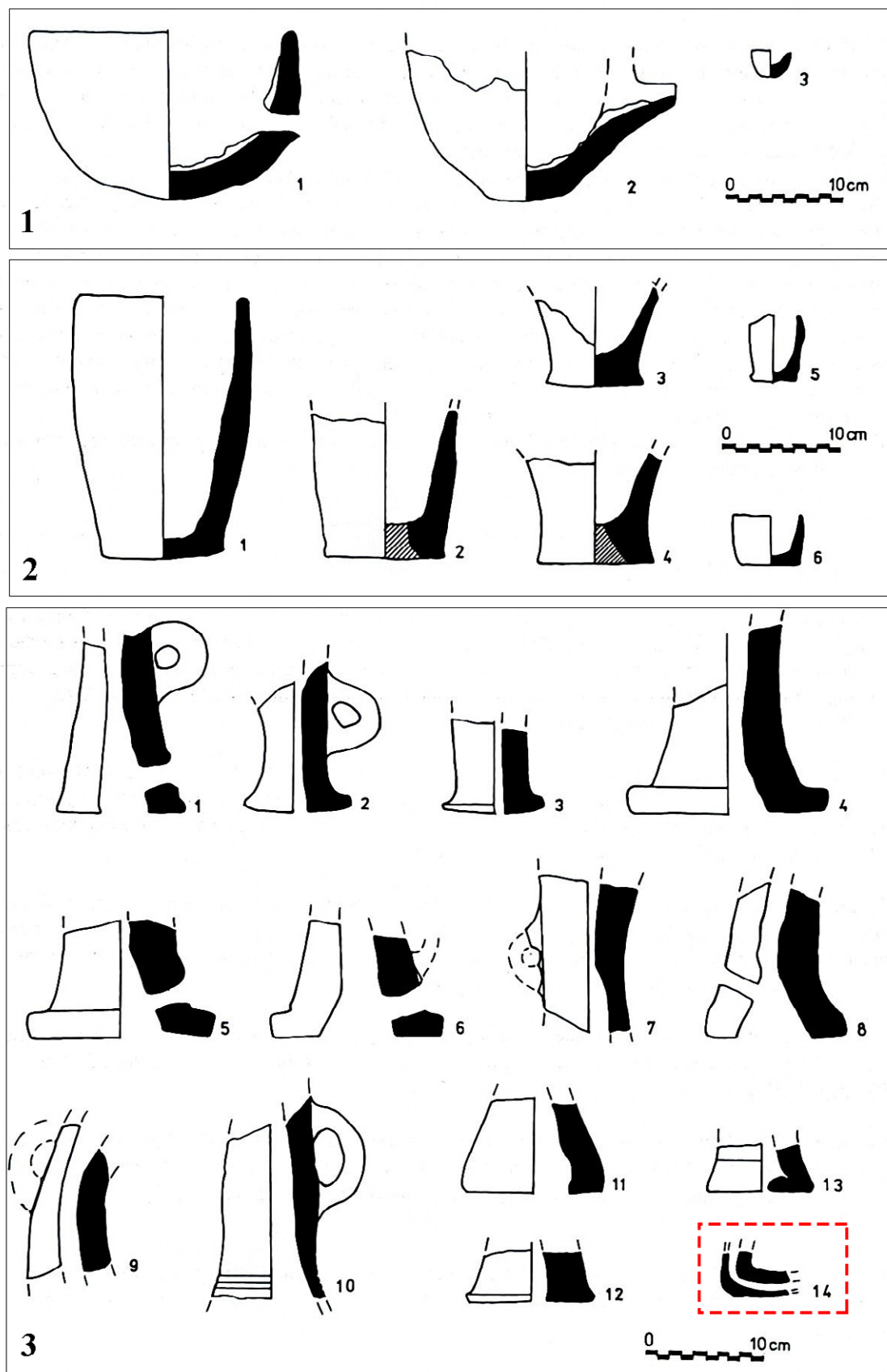


Fig. 2. Typology of ceramic artefacts related to metallurgy found at emporion Pistiros: 1. Rounded crucibles; 2. Cylindrical crucibles; 3. 'Tuyères' (after Katinčarova 2002, fig. 12, with addition by the author)

attributed to metalworking activities dated predominantly (9) to the Phase IIa and IIb (370–310 BC) (Katinčarova 2002, 237, Cat. nos 14–19, 21–22, 24) and a smaller number (5) to the Phase III (310–279 BC) of Pistiros (Katinčarova 2002, 237, Cat. nos 11–13, 20–21)¹.

Two features noted on more than a half of the objects, however, presented obstacles to Katinčarova's identification, namely the presence of lateral openings at the foot and vertical strap handles. In addition, the alleged lack of comparable examples from elsewhere, which Katinčarova erroneously asserted (Katinčarova 2002, 237), while failing to consider the available archaeological data from Thasos already used by Y. Grandjean to reject their identification as *tuyères de soufflet* (see Weisgerber, Roden 1986, 18, Abb. 22, n. 74 quoting Grandjean 1985), contributed to the uncertainty surrounding the interpretation of these curious objects at Pistiros. At the same time, the Czech excavations of Adzhyiska Vodenitsa II yielded three ceramic objects (two without holes or handles and one with a handle) found in the destruction debris in the cellar of *oikos* B, which J. Bouzek had interpreted as *tuyères* (Bouzek, Musil 2002, 68–69, fig. 3. 35.13–14; Bouzek 2003, 18, fig. 38.2). Only the example with the handle (fig. 2.3.10), however, was eventually included in Katinčarova's Group 3 (Katinčarova 2002, cat. no. 20, fig. 12.3.10; cf. Bouzek 2003, fig. 38.2).

F. Blondé's publication of the plain pottery from Thasos provided a turning point by offering fresh opportunities for understanding the ceramic assemblages from Pistiros (Blondé 2007). Most shapes of table wares and cooking pottery were compared to examples from Thasos and the Athenian Agora (see list in Bouzek 2010, 191). Among the assemblages noteworthy are portable stoves (*pyraunoi*), ovens and baking plates (Domaradzki 1996, 31 fig. 1.17, no. 43; Bouzek 2013, 153–154, Pl. 38, 1–5; cf. Krasteva 2022, 85, n. 45, fig. 19; Taneva 2013a, 34). Although the cooking vessels, such as regular and spouted *chytrai* (globular stew pots), as well as *lopades* (shallow casseroles), both of which are flanged and lidded, classified as “Brown Ware”, were interpreted as belonging to “an outside potting tradition” (Bouzek 2010, 191), certain ambivalence about their “Greek” character continued to be unduly expressed (Bozkova 2017, 143–144, 150).

F. Blondé's statement (expressed briefly in a footnote) that the ceramic *tuyères* from Pistiros (Katinčarova's Group 3, here fig. 2.3.1–13) are better understood as mobile cooking supports known from the written sources as *chytropodes* (singular: *chytropous*) or *lasana* (singular: *lasanon*) (Arist. *Peace* 890–893; Pollux, *Onomastica* 10.99; Diokles, *Mellisai*, fr. 8; Hesiod, *Works* 746; Plut. *Moralia* 7031; Aelius Moeris 250; Alciphron 3.2.3; Photius λ 10; Suda α 3246) remained unnoticed (Blondé 2007, 181, n. 132; cf. Bouzek 2010, 191)². Similarly, Blondé's re-interpretation of Katinčarova's *tuyères* as cooking props escaped the notice of a recent survey on food preparation and cooking vessels in inland Thrace dated to the 1st millennium BC (Georgieva, Filipova 2016, 287–288; cf. Krasteva 2022, 79, n. 1).

In any case, Blondé's identification of the cooking props at Pistiros opens up an unexpected line of investigation concerning the Greek nature of the culinary practices within the earliest domestic contexts at the site. Significantly, it also has profound importance for our understanding of Pistiros, the interpretation of which has always spurred heated debates and contradictory opinions (e.g. Bozkova 2017, 138–141; Tsatskheladze 2019, 13–19; Lazova 2022, 97–104; Dimova, Tzochet 2025), by pointing directly, as I demonstrate below, to the presence of non-local, essentially Greek, culinary tradition among its first settlers.

The aim of this article is thus threefold: (1) to expand in more detail on the *tuyères* re-identifica-

¹ For the purposes of this article, I have adopted the chronological periodisation of Pistiros presented with revisions in Bouzek 2016, 21–22.

² Note, however, that Blondé (2007, 181, n. 132) has mistakenly attributed D. Katinčarova's comparanda from Seuthopolis, Kabyle and Sboryanovo to the alleged *tuyères*, whereas, in fact, Katinčarova (2002, 236, nn. 14–16) has clearly linked the examples from the Hellenistic towns to the cylindrical crucibles (Katinčarova 2002, Cat. nos 6–10).

tion as mobile cooking supports; (2) to examine the stratigraphic data related to their chronology; and (3) to examine more closely and introduce new data regarding their archaeological contexts at Pistiros. Before I move on to the spatial distribution, I offer a short discussion on the significance of *lasana* within the ancient Greek kitchen.

Lasana (chytropodes)

The cooking supports are usually made of clay with a lot of temper and inclusions, similar to the coarse fabrics of cooking wares. The basic idea was to ensure that they would become not only robust but also heat resistant. To avoid cracking during the constant exposure to higher temperatures and subsequent cooling off, the clays of cooking supports was intentionally tempered with rock inclusions to increase their effectiveness to thermal shock (Ben-Shlomo 2025). After firing they would acquire red or brown colour, and eventually, due to the continuous exposure to fire when in use, they would get blackened on the inner, concave surface. They comprise four distinct parts, which were made separately: a flaring base, a cylindrical, slightly curving body, a concave top or crown and a vertical strap handle.

Wheel-made specimens are normally hollow or partially hollow, but the existence of solid examples, albeit less frequently, has been recorded as well (Pisani 2003, 125–135, Types A, B and C). The shape is consistently cylindrical throughout, with minor variations in regard to the degree of the body's bent at midpoint, the foot's moulding and the flaring crown. Often they were supplied with lateral openings close to the foot, in addition to the circular openings at the top. Their purpose has to do with allowing for ventilation during the manufacturing process in an attempt to avoid cracking (Morris 1985, 394). Dimensions cluster between 0.10 and 0.24 m in height, with bases and rims averaging 0.10–0.15 m. The presence of ventilation hole on top and lateral opening at the lower body would often confuse them with *tuyères de soufflet* or “bellow's nozzles”, which are normally attached to leather bellows and by means of a longitudinal opening used to infuse air into the fire (Tylecote 1981, figs 4–6, 12; Botwid, Pettersson 2016, fig. 10; Yahalom-Mack 2019, figs 1–4).

Recent finds of actual ceramic *tuyères* from prehistoric, Classical and Medieval metallurgical installations have confirmed that they have a straight conical body and are usually supplied only with a longitudinal opening (Lachenal et al. 2010, 554, 562, figs 6–7, 9, 13–15; Fasnacht 2018, 255–258, figs 5.1–5.4; Pl. 1; Ivanov 2023, 27, 36, cat. nos 151–170, figs 28.1–3; 41.152–165). In addition, traces of vitrification along the *tuyères'* openings or thinning of their walls would be a true sign of continuous exposure to high temperatures during the smelting process (Fasnacht 2018, 255–256, fig. 5.1). Often, *tuyères'* upper surfaces fuse with the furnace walls from the point where they were inserted onto the furnace's corpus (Erb-Satullo et al. 2020, fig. 5; Ivanov 2023, fig. 28.1–3).

In 1985 by making use of the growing body of archaeological data, ancient art and literature, Y. Grandjean and S. Morris independently demonstrated that mobile cooking supports, thus far erroneously branded as *tuyères*, should be identified with *chytropodes* or *lasana* mentioned in the Greek literary tradition (Morris 1985; Grandjean 1985; cf. Papadopoulos 1992, 206–208)³. As the ancient names suggest, and this is also confirmed by iconographic representations on Greek painted pottery, they were used as props for cooking vessels exposed directly to fire (fig. 3). The curving profile of the props, usually utilised in a set of three (fig. 4), facilitated immediate support for round-bottomed cooking pots, such as *chytrai*, *lopades* and *kakkabai*, placed directly above a fire (Sparkes 1962, 130, 136, n. 76–77; Grandjean 1985, 276–277, figs 15–16; Bats 1988, 45–50, figs 6–8). The accessibility of fire from all sides, when cooking in such round-bottomed vessels, resulted in achieving higher temperatures suitable

3 One should differentiate the plural form *lasana* from the secondary meaning of the singular form of the word *lasanon* as chamber-pot or defecation stool (cf. Morris 1985, 402, n. 34, Pl. 103:b; Roueché 2002, 264–265, 267, 274–275).



Fig. 3. A scene from the shoulder of an East Greek black-figure hydria, ca. 525–500 BC. Rome, Villa Giulia (“Ricci hydria”). Note the person on the far right who is ladling boiled meat by a kera from a cauldron placed on two ceramic supports – lasana (after Scheffer 2014, fig. 4)

for boiling meat or stews (Blondé et al. 2011, 198, fig. 3).

The discovery contexts range from everyday use in both public and domestic environments to food preparation during communal gatherings related to religious festivals in sanctuaries, e.g. Pantanello near Metapontum (Barretta 2018, 879–886) and Zone (Iliopoulou 2023, 751, n. 2, 800, 817–820, cat. nos 1–4, 830). Most recently, a couple of examples were found in the cargo of a 4th c. BC shipwreck off the coast of Žirje island, possibly produced in the Greek colony of Pharos on the island of Hvar (Grisonic, Radic Rossi 2016). Geographically, they seem to have been quite widespread throughout the Mediterranean, with finds reported from Greece (Thasos, Athens, Corinth, Isthmia, Geraki, Stra-

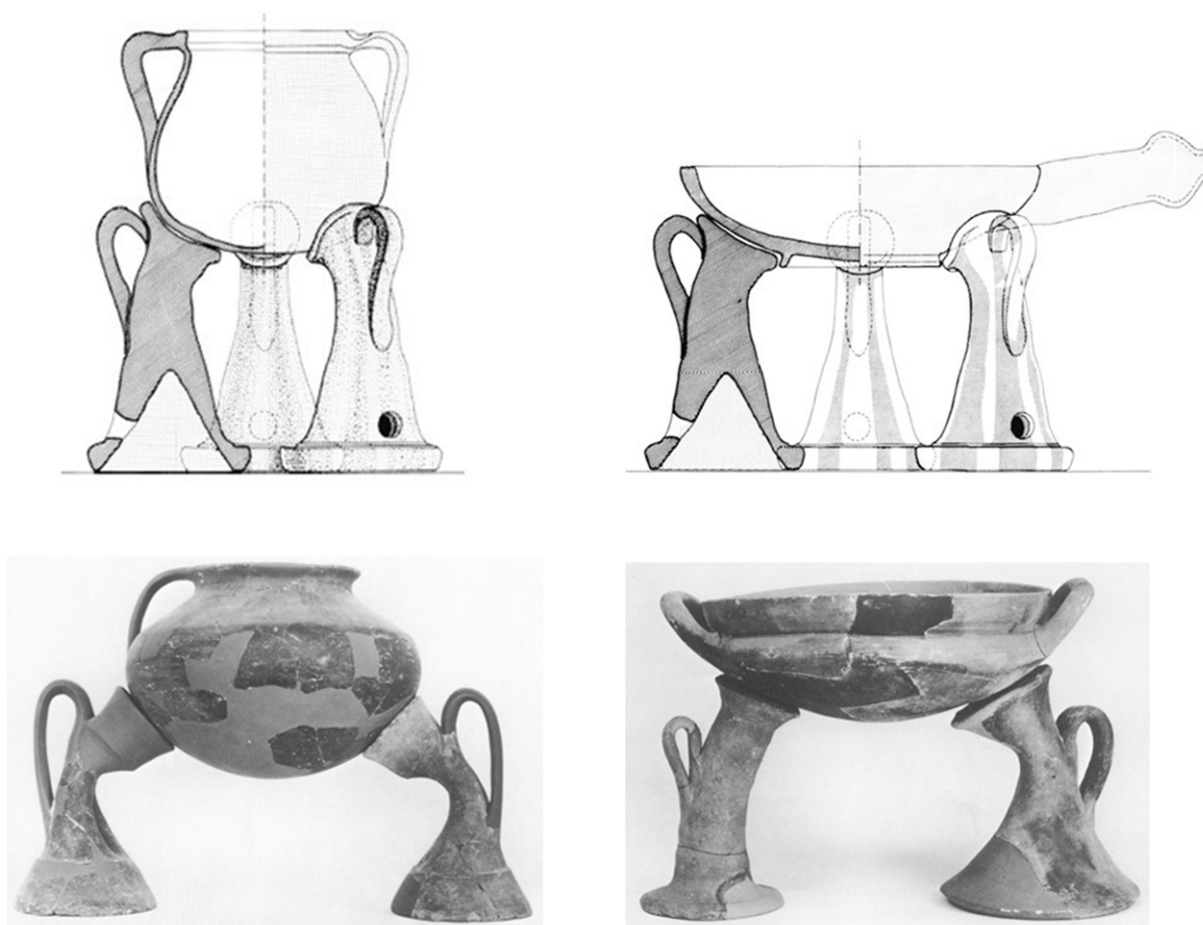


Fig. 4. Round-bottomed cooking vessels propped by three or two *lasana* from Thasos (top) and the Athenian Agora (below) (after Grandjean 1985, figs 15–16; Morris 1985, Pl. 105a–b)

toni, Abdera), Cyprus (Nea Paphos), France (Massalia, Ruscino), Italy (Ischia, Poseidonia, Camarina, Metapontum, Elea, Megara Hyblaea), and Spain (Emporion, Reixac-Ullastret) to Asia Minor (Miletus, Priene, Kolophon), Lycia (Patara) and the Northern Black Sea (Orgame, Histria, Berezan, Olbia, Gorgippa, Pantikapaion, Phanagoria, Nymphaion) (see Table in Pisani 2003, 136–150; cf. Ruiz De Arbulo 1989; Rovira 1993; Gassner 2003, 99–100, Taf. 23; Gras et al. 2004, 372, 484; Langridge-Noti 2009, 227–228, fig. 23.1e, f; DüNDAR 2021, 52, figs 6–7, 56, fig. 30, cat. no. 19; Papastathis et al. 2017, 494, fig. 5; Hayes, Slane 2022, 36, no. 105, fig. 11, pl. 2; Więch 2017, 450, fig. 12; Amicone et al. 2022, 58, 63, fig. 5; Bruns-Özgan et al. 2011, 226, Abb. 44, Nr. 45–46; Kallintzi et al. 2020, 534, fig. 8). Several objects have also been reported from sites in Mesopotamia, Bactria and Gandhara (Olivieri 2018, 133–134, figs 10–11) and Israel (Tel Dor) (Guz-Zilberstein 1995, 301–302, Photo 6.18). In only one case so far, at Hermonassa, there was found an example with a Greek graffito running along the rim, adding historical value to their study (Treister, Shelov-Kovedyayev 1989, 292–296, figs 2–3, Pl. 50a).

In terms of chronology, the peak of their use cluster within Late Archaic and Classical periods, with a few outliers from Hellenistic contexts, e.g. Histria, Thasos (Pisani 2003, 139, 144) and Tel Dor (Guz-Zilberstein 1995, 302), to be steadily ousted by the cooking stands and braziers of the Hellenistic period (Morris 1985, 401; Petre 2023, 88–89)⁴. Significant is the conclusion that the emergence of *lasana*

⁴ For the antecedents from the LBA and EIA, which are actually cooking tripods attached to the vessels themselves, see Ilieva 2021, figs 2.1–9, 3.7.

throughout the Mediterranean coincides with the spread of the Greek cuisine and culinary practices.

Archaeological contexts and date of the cooking supports (*lasana*) at *emporion* Pistiros

To fully grasp the implications stemming from the identification of these objects as household items instead of objects related to metallurgy, the majority of which date from the Classical period, further attention is needed in regard to the contextual data generated during the excavations at Pistiros. As mentioned above, the findspots show that most cooking supports were found in archaeological strata associated with the so-called “negative contexts”⁵ within the adjoining sq. B17, B22 and B’2 dated to the Phase IIa and IIb (370–310 BC) of Pistiros (Katinčarova 2002, 237). This is significant on account of the growing consensus surrounding the interpretation of these contexts as sunken dwellings or subterranean huts (Petrova 2019, 187; Bouzek, Weissová 2021, 195; Gotsev, Petrova 2023, 148, fig. 8; Bouzek et al. 2024, 88), which M. Domaradzki had first identified as „poluzemlyanki“ (Domaradzki et al. 1994, 34) or “zemljankas” (cf. Bouzek, Musil 2007, 67) in Bulgarian. In support of this hypothesis is the observation that they contained traces of burned daub, as well as hard floor surfaces which are among the defining traits of these households.

Spatial distribution of table ware shows that the greatest number of ceramic assemblages with red figure pottery (*kraters*, *pelikai*, *skyphoi*) originates from the sunken dwellings in sq. B17, B22 and B’2. Dated to the late 5th and early 4th c. BC, they also represent the earliest Greek pottery found at the site (Petrova 2018, 394, fig. 1; cf. Archibald 1996, 85–87, Table 2). It is essential to recognise then that stratigraphically they precede the amply attested evidence of metalworking activities, such as iron slag, hammers, furnace and hearth rakes, moulds and semi-finished fibulae, or even “deformed” fibulae (Stamberova 2023, 222–224, fig. 22), attributed securely to Phase III (310–279 BC), i.e. the Early Hellenistic period (Andonova 2013, 239, fig. N 2). The majority was found in pits, together with the cylindrical crucibles (Katinčarova’s Type 2; cf. Lazov 2013, 217), some of which had traces of residual copper alloy inside, and the singular example of an actual ceramic nozzle (*tuyères*), cut directly into the earlier features (Katinčarova 2002, 237, Cat. no. 25, fig. 12.3.14).

Of the 15 alleged examples of *tuyères* published by D. Katinčarova in 2002 (fig. 2.3.1–13), only one is in fact a *tuyère* or a ceramic nozzle (fig. 2.3.14) (Katinčarova 2002, Cat. no. 25, fig. 12.3.14). Although the 14 examples from Pistiros are fragmentary, the surviving parts are sufficient to determine that the majority belong to the cooking supports of the completely hollow variety (Katinčarova 2002, Cat. nos 1–4, 7–13), i.e. Type A after the typology devised by M. Pisani (Pisani 2003, 125–130). The morphology of two specimens would indicate that they were half solid (Katinčarova 2002, Cat. nos 5–6), in which case their attribution to Pisani’s Type B seems warranted (Pisani 2003, 130). The two fragmentary vessels from Adzhyiska Vodenitsa II published by J. Bouzek as *tuyères* are better identified as cooking stands based on comparanda from Thasos (Blondé 2007, 179, Pl. 69; cf. Bouzek, Musil 2002, 68–69, figs 3.35.13–3.35.14; Bouzek 2010, 191).

In sum, the reinterpretation of the *tuyères* as cooking props helps to illustrate the Greek character or the mobility of the culinary practices associated with the occupants of the sunken dwellings excavated in sq. B17, B22 and B’2. In addition, the use of these supports would imply food preparation in *chytrai*, *lopades* and *kakkabai*, examples of which have been reported from *oikos* A and *oikos* B and from the

5 The term has found currency in several publications of archaeological features related to Pistiros, mostly for situations located in the Southeast sector. A clear distinction, however, should be drawn between subterranean huts or sunken dwellings, on one hand, and pits, on the other. For the latter are often designated as “negative contexts” as well (cf. Karadzhinov 2023, *passim*).



Fig. 5. Iron flesh hooks (*kreagrai*) from emporion Pistiros – Inv. no. AMS 1.1.23 (top) and Inv. no. AMS 1.1.24 (below) (Photo archive of AM “Prof. M. Domaradzki” – Septemvri)

sunken dwellings overlain by the Southern House at Pistiros (Bouzek, Musil 2010, 27–28, Pl. 21, figs 4.72.1; 4.73.14; 4.80.4; 4.76.35; Bouzek 2010, 191).

Apart from Apollonia Pontica (Claquin 2015, 484, 488; Nedyalkov 2020, 110–113, *chytrai*: cat. nos 256–273, *lopades*: cat. nos 274–275) and the coastal site Sladkite Kladentsi in the Bay of Burgas (Balabanov, Drazheva 1985, 27, figs 22–23; see summary in Gyuzelev 2009, 98–99, 187–192), possibly an *emporion* of Apollonia (Isaac 1986, 249; Nedyalkov 2020, 16), this cooking ware remains unattested in inland Thrace during the Classical Period⁶.

A single example of a cooking support of the type found at Pistiros originates from Apollonia Pontica, discovered in a complex of buildings at the site “Morskite skali” dated to the late 5th–4th c. BC (Nedyalkov 2020, 118–119, cat. no. 302, Pl. 18, 38). Although at the time of publication it was interpreted as “candlestick” (Nedyalkov 2020, 118–119), in line with earlier identifications, such as “torches” (cf. Barretta 2018, 877, with lit.) or “taper” stands (Sparkes, Talcott 1970, 231–232, pl. 96; Morris 1985, 395, nn. 10–11), its morphology is identical with the cooking supports or *chytropodes*, known from Aristophanes and Diokles as *lasana* (Arist. *Peace* 890–893; Diokles, *Mellisai*, fr. 8).

Meat consumption and metal utensils related to cooking

The mobile cooking supports (*lasana*) facilitated direct exposure to fire for foodstuffs requiring higher temperatures to cook. The analysis on organic residues on two base sherds from Pistiros did in

⁶ *Chytrai* and *lopades* are attested in early Hellenistic deposits at Halka Bunar and Kabyle (Tonkova 2002, 153, figs 34–35; Handzhiyska 2011, 45).

fact confirm that the vessel was used as a cooking pot for preparation of meat and vegetable stew (Stout et al. 2003, 82–83). Therefore, boiling and braising of meat is a good option to conceive, especially in view of the fact that two iron flesh hooks (*kreagra* in Greek and *harpago* in Latin) have also been found at Pistiros. One originates from an unspecified square⁷, whereas the other (still unpublished) was found in sq. E19 during the first excavation campaign in 1988 (fig. 5)⁸.

The primary function of these rare kitchen utensils is often misunderstood, when the assumption is that they were utilised as spits for spearing meat to be roasted on top of an open fire (e.g. Georgieva 1999, 82; Georgieva, Filipova 2016, 283; Filipova 2019–2020, 22, n. 15). A scholiast on a passage from Aristophanes' *Equites* (772), describing it as “a hand with fingers curved”, shows beyond doubt that they were used not as spits or meat-skewers, which in Greek were called *obeloi*⁹, but as a way to take meat out of a boiling cauldron (Pritchett 1956, 295, 313). A telling example of this use is a scene on the so-called “Ricci hydria” (cf. fig. 3), a black figure hydria dated to the late 6th c. BC, where a man is fishing out pieces of meat with a flesh hook out of a cauldron supported by *lasana* over a fire (van Straten 1995, 147; Scheffer 2014, 179–180, fig. 4).

Archaeological finds of iron utensils (*kreagrai*) are known not only from domestic contexts of the Classical and Hellenistic periods, as in the case of Olynthus and Halos in Thessaly (Robinson 1941, 198–199, cat. no. 623, Pl. L; Hijmans 2003, 129, M73), but also they are recorded on inscriptions found in Greek sanctuaries, e.g. Athens, Eleusis, Olympia, Brauron, Thespiae, Menelaion, Pantanello (Barretta 2018, 882), as part of temple inventories (*IG* II² 1548, 8; Roesch, *IThesp* 38, 17–18). The sizable group of iron forks and flesh hooks from pre-Roman Dacia, which are also considered as evidence for meat consumption, feature not only a greater morphological variety, but also a later chronology, in 2nd–1st c. BC (Egri et al. 2023, 63–68, 72–74).

The implications of the new discoveries of mobile cooking supports at *emporion* Pistiros

Since 2020, excavations (figs 6–7) have begun in the area to the north-west of the East Gate (sq. E7 SE, E13 NW and E13 SE) in order to clarify the chronology and document the stratigraphy on either side of the East fortification wall (Gotsev, Nankov 2021, 413–414, figs 1–2; Gotsev et al. 2022, 465–467, figs 1–2; Nankov in press; Gotsev et al. in press).

The excavations of a drainage canal, 2.10 m wide, narrowing towards the bottom, with a preserved depth of 0.35 m, dug into the terrain and running parallel to the wall, established that its north-west end had been destroyed by the mechanised removal of soil in the 1980s. The feature was eventually backfilled (essentially a secondary but still a sealed deposit) with soil, river pebbles, animal bones (with traces of burning), and large sherds from amphorae – chiefly toes and handles. Sherds of red-figure ware, wheel-made table ware, hand-made and wheel-made kitchen ware, loom weights, and burned daub were also found in great quantities. After the canal had been backfilled, a strip of ca. 2,50–3,00 m wide running parallel to the fortification wall was paved with river stones and pebbles, in an attempt to raise the walking level and create a street pavement or a ring road inside the fortified area after the construction

7 Inv. no. AMS 1.1.23: l. 0.23 m, diam. of socket 2.2 cm, cross-section of shaft 0.8 cm. Mentioned in brief, accompanied with a line drawing, and identified as an “iron skewer” (Domaradzki 1996, 17, fig. 1.6).

8 Inv. no. AMS 1.1.24: pr. l. 0.17 m, socket is missing, cross-section of shaft 0.6–0.7 cm (unpublished).

9 They are usually hammered out of iron, have a straight body with a square cross-section and sharp pointed ends. At Apollonia one such specimen (0.50 m long) was found in a pit associated with the sanctuary of Apollo on the island of St Kirik, dated to the 6th c. BC (Panayotova et al. 2019, 48, 55, cat. no. 41). At least one unpublished example (0.29 m long) excavated in 2020 at Pistiros originates from a “negative context” in Sq. B’3 dated to the Classical period. For the excavation report, see Gotsev, Nankov 2021, 415–417.

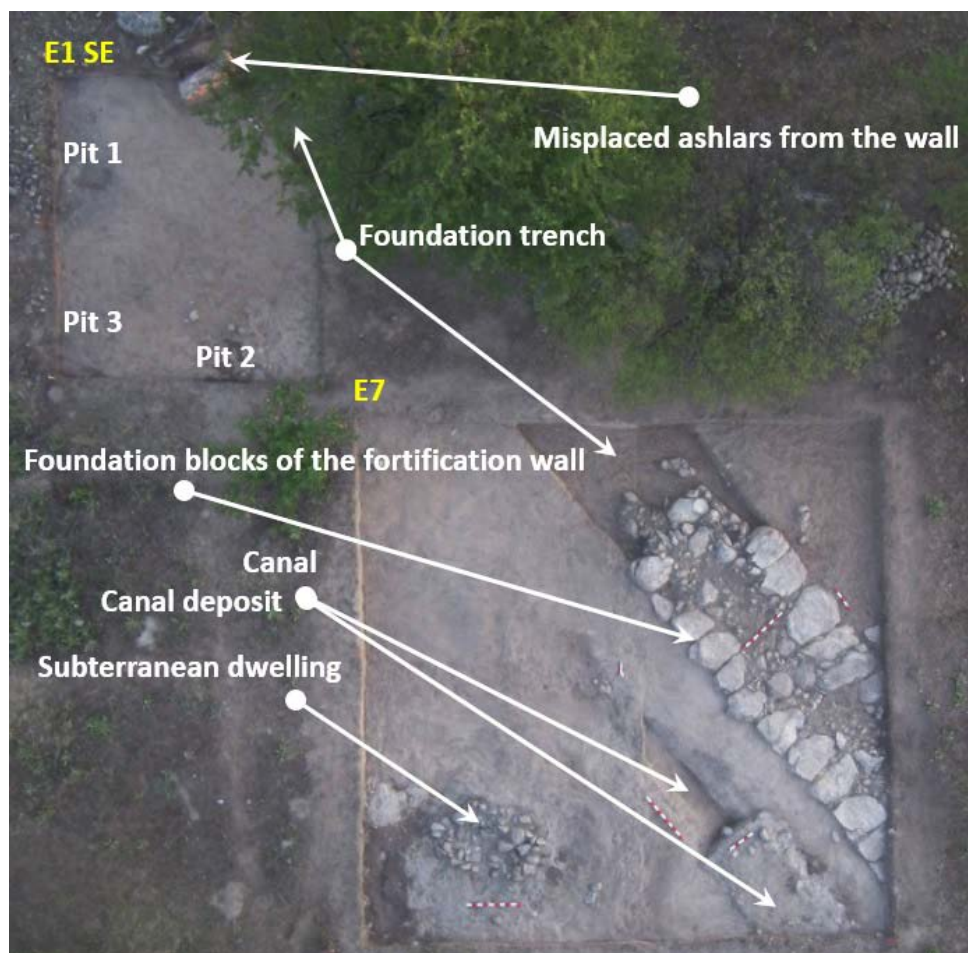


Fig. 6. Aerial photograph of the archaeological features in the Northwest sector (sq. E1 SE and E7) after the end of the 2021 season. The ceramic lasana were found in the fill of the canal excavated in sq. E7 SE (photo E. Nankov)

of the East fortification wall during Phase IIb (350–310 BC). The function of the canal during Phase I (450–370 BC) and Phase IIa (370–350 BC) is linked with the idea of gravity-driven drainage of excess water from the thus far unfortified settlement in south-east direction towards the Maritsa River.

Significantly, in 2021 and 2022 seasons among this domestic refuse inside the canal fill in sq. E7 SE there were found three fragmentary ceramic cooking supports (Cat. nos 1–3; fig. 8.1–2), which share identical morphology and clay composition with the ones already published by D. Katinčarova (Nankov, Slavkova in press). They too belong to the hollow variety (Type A after Pisani 2003, 125–130). In sum, the stratigraphy and the date of the newly excavated canal deposit indicates that the earliest date for the instalment of the pavement of river stones and pebbles, immediately following the construction of the fortification wall, had taken place sometime after the mid-4th c. BC (Gotsev et al. 2022, 467). This date, among other things, also provides a *terminus ante quem* for the use of the cooking supports at Pistiros.

In historical terms, it has become clear that the large-scale introduction of stone-built architecture, involving repurposing of previously occupied areas, at *emporion* Pistiros are associated in some form with, or are a direct consequence of, Philip II's takeover of inland Thrace in 342–341 BC (Nankov in press; cf. Delev 2015, 48–51). More importantly, the recent excavations in the Northwest sector allow us to conclude that we should not simply speak of reconstructions, as was previously assumed (e.g. Bouzek 2016, 22), but of a substantial communal investment in building projects from scratch, as well as of an implementation of a novel urbanistic concept, which led to the adoption of orthogonal planning, of

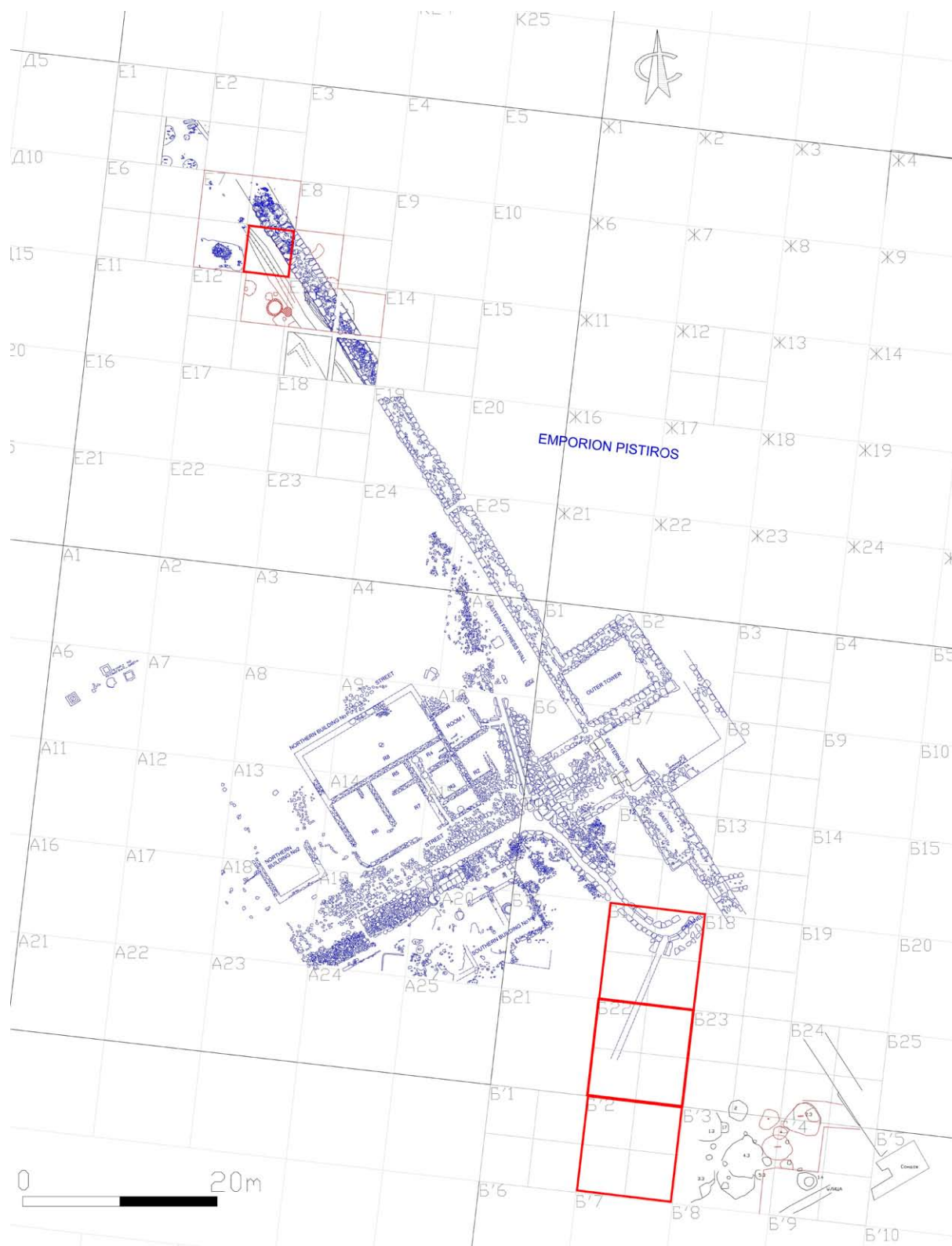


Fig. 7. A general plan of Emporion Pistiros: the findspots of *lasana* in the Northwest sector (sq. E7 SE) and the Southeast sector (sq. B17, B22, B'2) are outlined in red (V. Valchev with addition by the author)



Fig. 8. 1. Ceramic cooking supports (*lasana*) found in sq. E7 SE in the 2021 season, K/5485 (top) and in the 2022 season, K/5662 (below); 2. Ceramic cooking support (*lasanon*) found in sq. E7 SE in the 2022 season, K/5662 (photos E. Nankov)

mudbrick architecture on stone socles (both residential and defensive)¹⁰, accompanied by a large-scale utilisation of locally produced roof tiles during the early Hellenistic period (Taneva 2013b, 26–30; cf. Harizanov 2019, 106, 119, Type II/b/1). In the course of this undertaking, for reasons which remain to be established, the earliest residential units (sunken dwellings or subterranean huts), including the newly excavated canal in sq. E7 SE, E13 NW and E13 SE, were abandoned and then backfilled with domestic refuse, which abound with artefacts, including coins dated to the Classical period (Gotsev et al. 2022, 467, fig 2; Nankov in press), i.e. Phase I (450–370 BC) and Phase IIa (370–350 BC).

10 Note that the roof tiles from Pistiros have been found almost exclusively in association with Building no. I, the Southern House and the East Gate (tower and bastion). Cf. Musil 1996, 47, fig. 3.1 and the important remarks in Popov 2002, 87 and Dimova, Tzochetv 2025, 244.

Concluding remarks

To sum up, round-bottomed vessels, such as *chytrai*, *lopades*, *kakkabai* (fig. 4), cooking supports (*lasana*) (figs 2.3.1–13; 3, 8a–b) and flesh hooks (*kreagrai*) (fig. 5) are better understood as a Greek culinary set utilised (but not exclusively) for the boiling of meat onto an open fire in both private and public milieu. They account for a non-local, essentially mobile way of cooking and food preparation – a custom that has long been recognised as a defining trait of Greek cuisine (Sparkes 1962, 127, 129). They are further to be associated with the resident population of Pistiros (Thasians and/or Apollonians¹¹) mentioned in the so-called ‘Pistiros inscription’ (Hatzopoulos 2013, 16, lines 32–33: οὐδὲ Ἀπολλωνιτέων, οὐδ- [ἔ] Θ]ασιῶν, ὅσοι ἐμ Πιστίρῳ εἰσί[ν]), who built and occupied the so-called sunken dwellings or subterranean huts dating to the late 5th – first half of the 4th c. BC. Thus, the absence of fixed cooking areas or stationary hearths within these domestic spaces should not be treated as unusual, since Greek cooking must have taken place outside in the open by means of portable culinary equipment (Foxhall 2007, 239, 242).

Although no cooking supports have so far come from a primary context, mainly because the first huts seem to have been occupied for several generations and were subject to constant cleaning and refurbishments (e.g. Bouzek, Weissová 2021, 195), future excavations of sealed archaeological deposits, as the newest discoveries in the Northwest sector have shown (Gotsev et al. 2022, 467, fig. 2; Nankov in press), are likely to bring more cooking supports to light. In any case, their association with other domestic materials, albeit not from primary contexts, also shows that the establishment of the first Greek settlers at Pistiros took place well before the Macedonian expansion in Thrace.

Despite putting to rest the now obsolete interpretation of the curious ceramic objects as *tuyères*, I firmly believe that the metallurgical paradigm has been left unscathed, quite the opposite in fact, it will live on and continue to play a major role in the scholarly discourse regarding the foundation of *emporion* Pistiros. At present, we seem to have enough indisputable archaeological data to suggest that metallurgy was a backbone of the settlement’s economy throughout its historical existence. On balance, the stratification of the smelting slags indicates that bronze metallurgy of the Classical period may have been replaced by the iron industry, if judging from the considerable quantities of iron slag associated exclusively with the Hellenistic strata (Bouzek et al. 2013, 59).

Oddly enough, the belated adoption of the old/new understanding of *tuyères* as cooking supports, functioning as an indispensable tool for outdoor cooking, and exclusively so, within the ancient Greek cuisine, has inevitably brought to the surface another archaeological reason why the settlement at Adzhyiska Vodenitsa should be equated with *emporion* Pistiros. In any case, I hope that the current article has compiled enough archaeological grounds to open up new venues for research dedicated to one of the most enigmatic trade posts in inland Thrace from the Classical and Hellenistic periods.

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This paper has been long in the making and over the years I have become indebted to several institutions. The research began in early 2020 in the Getty Villa where I was a Visiting Scholar within the program “The Classical World in Context: Ancient Thrace”, and gradually the idea started to take shape, resulting in the production of the first draft. Several versions of the paper were later presented as public lectures in seminars organised by the Regional Historical Museum – Sofia (June 8, 2022), the National Archaeological Institute with Museum – Sofia (November 19, 2024) and Department of Archaeology at

11 The new archaeological evidence presented here favours an identification with Apollonia Pontica, as has already been argued on other grounds. For a discussion of the other data and earlier scholarship favouring the link to Apollonia Pontica, see Damyanov 2022, 279, n. 76.

Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” (May 9, 2025). Finally, another version with a slightly different title was presented as a poster at the Seventh Pontic congress which took place on September 26–30, 2022 at Thessaloniki, with only the abstract published in the Proceedings (Nankov 2025, 455–456).

On a more personal level, I would like to express my warm thanks to Alexey Gotsev (NAIM–BAS), as well as the colleagues at the Archaeological Museum “Prof. M. Domaradzki” – Septemvri: Vyara Petrova, Tsvetelina Slavkova and Violeta Duneva, without whose support none of this would have happened. I also am immensely grateful to Maya Nikolova (Regional Archaeological Museum – Plovdiv), whose professional expertise was crucial for making the right choices in the conservation process of the newly excavated mobile cooking supports.

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Catalogue

1. AVI. K/5485. Ceramic cooking support (*lasanon*). Two joining fragments from the base. Patches of soot on the outer surface. Pr. height – 5.4 cm and 7 cm; wall thickness – 2.5–2.7 cm; diam. of base – 0.10 m; restored diam. of vertical hole at the base – 5 cm. Coarse fabric: red clay with inclusions of sand and mica (30–40 %) – 2.5 YR 4/6; outer surface: light brownish grey – 10 YR 6/2. Context: sq. E7 SE – canal fill of dark grey soil mixed with domestic waste (252.42–252.29 masl). Date: ca. 425–340 BC (fig. 8.1).
2. AVI. K/5662. Ceramic cooking support (*lasanon*). Three joining fragments from the base. Patches of soot on the outer surface. Pr. height – 0.11 m; wall thickness – 2.7 cm; diam. of base – 0.12 m; restored diam. of vertical hole at the base – 5.5 cm. Coarse fabric: red clay with inclusions of sand and mica (30–40 %) – 2.5 YR 4/6; upper surface: light brownish grey – 10 YR 6/2. Context: sq. E7 SE – canal fill of dark grey soil mixed with domestic waste (252.26–252.13 masl). Date: ca. 425–340 BC (fig. 8.1).
3. AVI. K/5662. Ceramic cooking support (*lasanon*). Three joining fragments from the body. Partly preserved vertical handle, with some traces of sand accretions on the upper surface. Pr. height – 0.18 m; wall thickness – 2.2–2.5 cm; diam. of top part – 6 cm; diam. of bottom part – 8 cm; diam. of vertical hole at the top – 2 cm; diam. of vertical hole at the bottom part – 3.5 cm. Coarse fabric: red clay with inclusions of sand and mica (30–40 %) – 2.5 YR 4/6; upper surface: light brownish grey – 10 YR 6/2. Context: sq. E7 SE – canal fill of dark grey soil mixed with domestic waste (252.26–252.13 masl). Date: ca. 425–340 BC (fig. 8.2).

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