RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH ACTIVITY ON SOME SMALL FINDS OF THE JOINT UZBEK/ITALIAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL MISSION AT KOJTEPA, SAMARKAND (UZBEKISTAN)

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1. INTRODUCTION

The small finds presented are representative of some typical functions and activities of a settlement. At Kojtepa in the Pastdargom district, a large amount of materials have been brought to light, among which pottery fragments and vessels and a significant number of other small finds. These small finds mainly consist of spindle-whorls, pottery discs and a fragmented stone palette that have been the subject of a preliminary scientific study, with a graphic, photographic documentation and a typological differentiation based on shape, size and traces of re-use.

2. KOJTEPA

Kojtepa is located about 30 km south-west from the city of Samarkand and covers an area of 2.62 hectares. It consists of a central cone-shaped Tepe surrounded by the remains of a probable quadrangular wall and a moat. The excavation work and the study of materials were conducted by the Uzbek/Italian archaeological mission of 2008-2017 led by the Università di Napoli "L'Orientale" and the Institute of Archeology of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan. The results of the excavation seasons lead to think that the site covered a dual defensive and agricultural activity in a chronological period between the Hellenistic age (III century BC) and the early-medieval age (V-VII century AD).

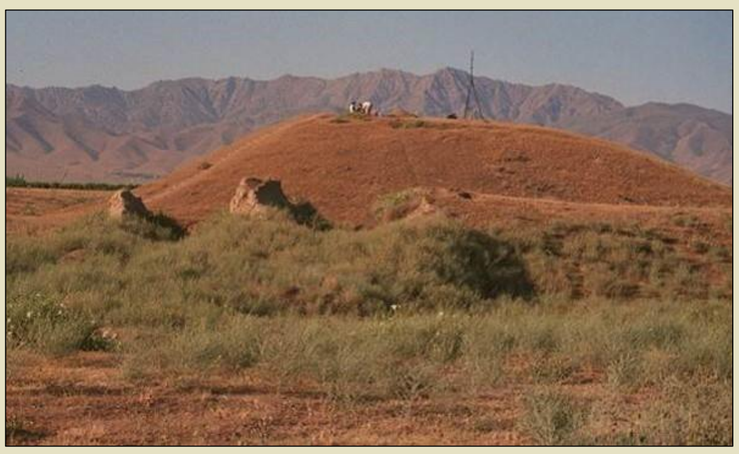


Figure 1. General view of Kojtepa as seen as from North-West

Figure 2. Structural Remains from Trench 9, 3D representation

3. METHODS OF WORK

The study of materials was mostly conducted during the 2016 and 2017 campaigns, following a method divided into several steps. The first step involved the elaboration of a graphic and photographic documentation of each individual object, subsequently the identification of the material by which it was composed (stone) or Fabric (ceramic). Then a typological identification was made on the basis of the subdivision of the pottery discs in relation to the thickness-diameter ratio and the differentiation according to the shapes. Finally, a detailed bibliographic research has been selected, for the identification of individual objects and their possible function, leading to these interesting preliminary results.

4. POTTERY DISCS

Pottery discs or "reworked sherds" are ceramic sherds of variable shapes (disc, oval, triangular, squared, irregular) coming from broken and reworked pots. Those found in Kojtepa are in total 59 elements. They present a diameter oscillating from a minimum of 2.2 cm to a maximum of 7.5 cm, and a thickness between 0.3 cm and 2.1 cm. The typological classification criteria used have been based on the diameter of the discs and the relative ratio between thickness and weight (Table 1, Table 2). The most acclaimed hypothesis by scholars about the function of the pottery discs is that of games. They tend to associate those items to throwing pieces for a outside game played such as the most modern hopscotch and *pittu*; the purpose is generally to jump on a path outlined for pick up the ball or the stone, or to shoot down a pile of overlapping discs. Another hypothesis is associated with a system of counting or storage, where probably the pottery discs were used to identify the quantity and quality of food, for a mnemonic system able to be a precursor of the most common labels.

Figure 3. Some samples of pottery discs from Kojtepa

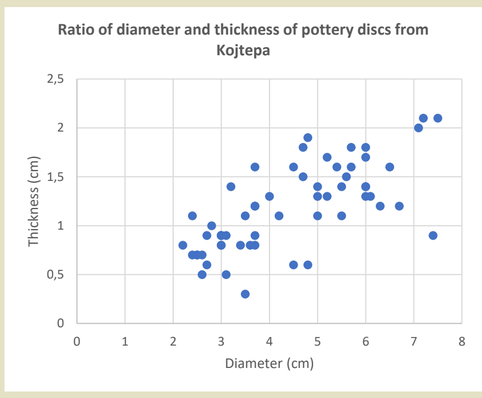
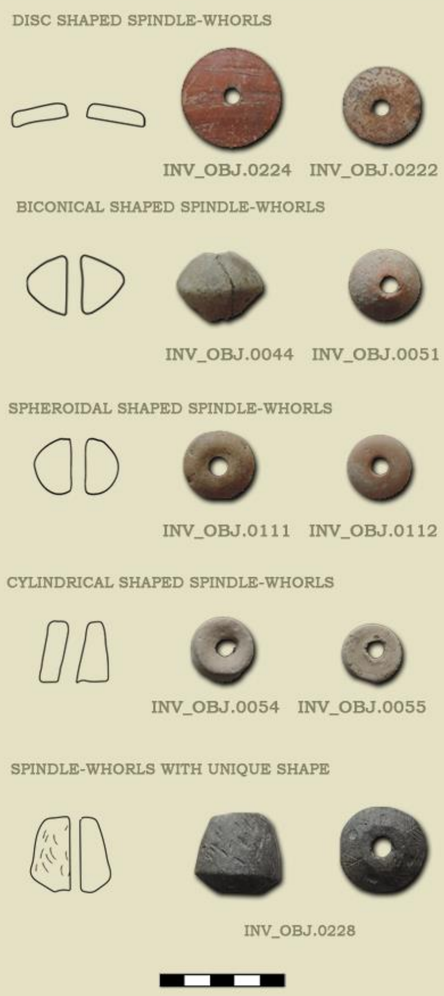


Table 1-2. Tables of ratio between thickness, diameter and weight of pottery discs

5. SPINDLE-WHORLS



Spindle-whorls are small, mostly ovoid objects made of clay, stone, wood or bone mounted on the spindle. Almost half of spindle-whorls from Kojtepa are disc-shaped (13 objects). Other forms were found in a small amount. Four whorls are biconical-shaped and four are spheroidal, only two are cylindrical. Some of them are made from potsherds, some are handmade. Their diameter ranges from 2,7 to 6,1 cm. They are from 0,4 to 1,9 cm high and their weight estimates form 5,1 gm to 38,2 gm. The perforation diameter is from 0,5 to 1,1 cm. Heaviest and wider whorls create a greater movement of inertia. Whorls from Kojtepa were used most likely to production woolen yarn. The weights of the whorls suggest that they were used to spin thin and medium thread of sheep wool, probably fat-tailed ram which originates in Uzbekistan area. The goat hair could be also considered in the case of light whorls (5-19 gm).

Figure 4. Some samples of spindle-whorls from Kojtepa

6. THE STONE PALETTE

The stone palette (Inv_Obj.0313) is a polished silicified limestone of black color, measuring 7,9 × 7,3 cm., with a thickness of 1,3 cm. It has been found in Trench 21 of Kojtepa (SU450), and presents a quadrangular shape, with a flat base (Fig. 5). The palette is partially damaged; its entire morphology has been possibly to be sketched and reconstructed. The object has been re-used; in fact one of its edges presents an artificial smoothing. The original size of this object could have been about 10,5 × 8,8 cm. The palette is characterized by the presence of seven round cavities.

This palette is quite similar to some stone palettes found in Russia (Philippovka I) in a Sarmatian context, which belonged to complete tattoo toolkits. These toolkits included also, some different needles (made of gold, iron, or bone), mineral ores with coloring properties (white chalk, red ochre), and grinding stone pebbles. Other stone palettes have been found in Near East and have been interpreted as cosmetic tools. The palette found in Kojtepa, in relationship to its size and morphology, belonged to a tattoo toolkit, too.

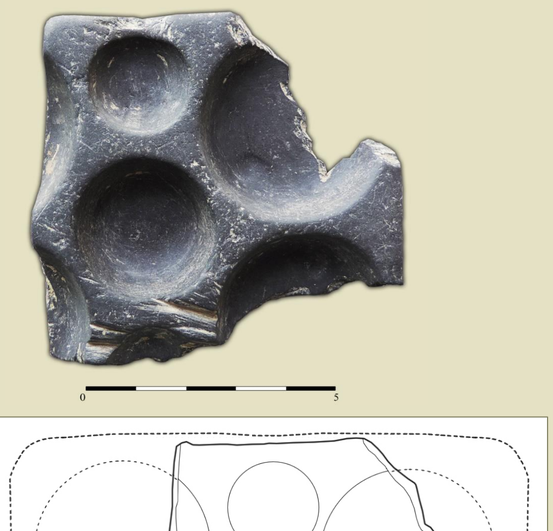


Figure 5. A fragmentary stone palette from Kojtepa with its reconstructive hypothesis

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