

# CLAY MODELS OF CHAIRS FROM TELL KOZAREVA MOGILA

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**Cuvinte-cheie:** *scaune miniaturale, eneoliticul târziu, Kozareva mogila, scenă de cult.*  
**Keywords:** *models of chair, Late Chalcolithic, Kozareva mogila, cult scene.*

**Rezumat:** *Subiectul acestui articol este reprezentat de două modele de scaune, care au fost descoperite într-unul dintre straturile corespunzând eneoliticului târziu de pe tell-ul Kozareva mogila. Acestea au forme și dimensiuni diferite și reprezintă probabil modele ale unor piese reale de mobilier, utilizate în locuințele de perioadă eneolitică târzie. În același timp, scaunul reprezintă un atribut important în reprezentarea divinităților preistorice. Numeroase statuete din ceramică reprezentate ca fiind așezate pe scaune sunt cunoscute atât în situl Kozareva mogila, cât și în alte situri eneolitice din Bulgaria. În articol se discută posibilitatea ca modelele de scaune realizate din lut de la Kozareva mogila să fi făcut parte inițial dintr-o scenă de cult.*

**Abstract:** *The subject of this communication is two clay models of chairs, which were found in one of the Late Chalcolithic horizons of the tell Kozareva mogila. They differ in their shape and size, and probably represented models of real existing furniture, part of the interiors of Late Chalcolithic houses. In the same time, the chair was an important attribute in the depiction of prehistoric deities. Numerous ceramic figurines modelled sitting on chairs are known from the Kozareva mogila tell and other Late Chalcolithic sites in Bulgaria. The possibility that the presented ceramic chair models from the Kozareva mogila are part of a cult scene is examined.*

## Introduction

The present study concerns two clay models of chairs discovered at the Kozareva mogila tell<sup>1</sup>. The site is located within the administrative territory of the town of Kableskovo, Pomorie Municipality (Burgas District). It is situated 4.5 km away from the modern-day Black Sea coast (**Fig. 1**). Cultural layers dating to the Chalcolithic, the Early Bronze Age, and the Hellenistic period have been recorded in the area of the tell. Over the past few years, the archaeological research has been concentrated in the northern sector of the settlement, with a focus on the latest Chalcolithic

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<sup>1</sup> GEORGIEVA, DANOVS 2021, p. 16–17.

horizons. The best preserved and studied is the burned Late Chalcolithic horizon<sup>2</sup>. It has been attributed chronologically to the end of Phase III of the Kodjadermen – Gumelnița – Karanovo VI culture<sup>3</sup>. A number of dwelling units have been studied in it, all of them burned down in a massive fire. During this period of its existence, the settlement functioned as an important centre for pottery production. A large number of stone and bone tools used for the forming and decoration of ceramic vessels have been found, along with pottery kilns, unfinished pots, and lumps of clay dough prepared for the production of the vessels<sup>4</sup>.

The models of chairs presented here have been found in a Late Chalcolithic dwelling (Fig. 2) which has been studied only partially, due to the circumstance that its south half falls outside the research area. It is part of the burned Late Chalcolithic horizon. The dwelling was built above-ground, which distinguishes it from the rest of the dwellings that are partly sunken. Inside the dwelling, the burned remains are poorly preserved. The building is divided in two by a row of broken quern-stones, reused in the making of a partition wall that goes along its longitudinal axis. In the eastern part of the building, there have been unearthened 15 intact vessels and several small objects<sup>5</sup>. In the western part of the building were discovered large, thick-walled vessels, stone tools, loom weights, the two chair models, as well as other finds.

## Description

The models of chairs under examination differ from each other in size and shape. This allows their distinction as representing two separate types. Their description follows below.

### 1. Model of a high back-rest chair (Fig. 3.1)

The chair has four legs and an arching back – rest with an opening in the middle. The seat and the legs are fully intact. From the back-rest are preserved only the base and uppermost part. The chair has been restored. The total height is 10 cm. The seat's dimensions are 8.5 × 7 cm. The surface is roughly smoothed. The chair is beige in color, resulting from the secondary burning in the fire that destroyed dwelling 5. The seat is slightly inclined forward. On the back of the chair, behind the seat, there are two lugs. Their purpose is most likely not decorative, but to reproduce a detail from the original wooden chair that served as prototype for the ceramic miniature replica. These lugs correspond to the projection of the horizontal wooden construction of the seat and its method of attachment to the legs and the back-rest, as a result of which it extends backwards slightly. The attachment of the separate chair segments was perhaps executed with the help of wooden joints.

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<sup>2</sup> Designated as “burned Late Chalcolithic horizon I” in the documentation of the site. It is the penultimate Chalcolithic horizon to be registered stratigraphically. The Chalcolithic horizon above it is marked as IA.

<sup>3</sup> GEORGIEVA 2003, p. 222; GEORGIEVA, POPOVA, DANOV 2018, p. 111.

<sup>4</sup> GEORGIEVA 2010; GEORGIEVA 2019.

<sup>5</sup> GEORGIEVA, DANOV 2021, p. 16; GEORGIEVA, DANOV, STAVREVA 2021, p. 302.

## 2. Model of a low back-rest chair (Fig. 3.2)

This model may be also categorized as a stool. It is of smaller size and has a more simplified form. It features four short conical legs. The seat is of rectangular horizontal cross-section and measures 3.5 × 3 cm. At one side, there is a barely visible back-rest. The total height of the stool is 3.4 cm. Three of the legs have been broken off at the moment of discovery and reconstructed with plaster. The surface is rough, grey-beige in color.

## Discussion

Clay models of tables and chairs have continuously attracted the attention of archaeologists. They hold precious information about the furnishing of prehistoric dwellings, as they are similar to actual pieces of furniture which are not found in archaeological records due to the perishable materials of which they were made. Models of chairs are discovered individually or together with sitting anthropomorphic figurines that are most often attached to them. This type is especially widespread in the anthropomorphic plastic art of the Krivodol – Sălcuța culture. Examples include the published figurines from Krivodol<sup>6</sup>, Zaminec<sup>7</sup>, Telish-Redutite<sup>8</sup>, Yunatsite<sup>9</sup> and other places<sup>10</sup>. A similar type of figurines is encountered, although less often, within the area of the Kodjadermen – Gumelnița-Karanovo VI culture<sup>11</sup>. Intact or almost intact sitting anthropomorphic figurines have been also discovered on the tell of Kozareva mogila<sup>12</sup>. Such finds are often interpreted as depictions of deities. They are presented sitting on high back-rest chairs. In such cases, the chair should be seen as a throne. The throne has a symbolic meaning, as it is an attribute characteristic of rulers and certain gods. The throne enables the person sitting on it to hold an elevated position in comparison to the others present, which emphasizes this person's status in the social hierarchy.

Less often, ceramic models of chairs are found as parts of cult scenes, together with models of houses, models of tables, anthropomorphic figurines and other objects. One of the most representative finds of this kind is the Ovcharovo cult scene (Fig. 4.1)<sup>13</sup>. It was discovered in a dwelling from building horizon IX of the tell from Ovcharovo. It dates to the first phase of the Late Chalcolithic culture Kodjadermen – Gumelnița – Karanovo VI<sup>14</sup>. The cult scene comprises 26 miniature objects. It includes four anthropomorphic figurines, nine models of high back-rest chairs similar to the larger specimen from Kozareva mogila, three models of tables, models of

<sup>6</sup> NIKOLOV 1984, p. 65.

<sup>7</sup> NIKOLOV 1975, fig. 65–67, fig. 74; fig. 101.

<sup>8</sup> GERGOV 2000.

<sup>9</sup> MATSANOVA, TERZIJSKA-IGNATOVA 2014.

<sup>10</sup> NIKOLOV 1968, p. 67; PĂTROI 2015, fig. 342, fig. 357; TASIC 1979, T. XIII–3 and other.

<sup>11</sup> ANDREESCU 2002, p. 24; p. 36; pl. 14, 1–2; pl. 31, 3–4; DUMITRESCU 1925, fig. 65; DETEW 1958, fig. 21; TODOROVA 1986, photo 139; COMȘA 1980, fig. 10 and other.

<sup>12</sup> GEORGIEVA 2023, p. 134–135, 140, 146–147.

<sup>13</sup> TODOROVA 1974, p. 5–6, fig. 1–3; TODOROVA 1976; TODOROVA *et alii* 1983, p. 91–94, pl. VII, pl. 89-pl. 90.

<sup>14</sup> TODOROVA *et alii* 1983, p. 24.

drums, and three flat altars<sup>15</sup>. Among these objects were discovered also fragments of a large clay model of a building which has not been restored due to its heavily fragmented state caused by its light firing<sup>16</sup>. H. Todorova links the scene to the cult of the sun, the moon and the natural elements<sup>17</sup>.

B. Nikolov also reports the presence of a cult scene from the Early Chalcolithic settlement at Gradeshnitsa<sup>18</sup>. It was discovered on the floor of a dwelling from the settlement's building horizon II, which is attributed chronologically to Phase III of the Gradeshnitsa – Slatino – Dikili Tash culture<sup>19</sup>. The cult scene is presented through a ceramic model of a house, two models of chairs, one model of a table, and two partly preserved anthropomorphic figurines (**Fig. 4.2**). Similar cult scenes are known also from the territory of the Cucuteni – Trypillia culture, as well as that of Poduri<sup>20</sup> and Isaiia<sup>21</sup>. As such, or as part of a similar scene, can be interpreted a collective find including a model of table, a miniature chair and a vessel found on the floor of a dwelling from level C of the settlement at Zaminec (**Fig. 4.3**)<sup>22</sup>.

The discovery situation and the accompanying finds allow us to surmise that the clay models of chairs from the tell Kozareva mogila are part of a similar cult scene. Over an area of ca. 1.5 square meters inside the building, apart from the two chairs, were found also a fragmented model of a house and two pieces of anthropomorphic figurines (**Fig. 5**). The latter comprise a head and the lower part of a leg, situation which does not permit us to state with certainty whether they belonged to one or two figurines. The specific nature of the finds gave us reason to suggest from the onset that they were parts of a set of small objects of ritual function<sup>23</sup>. It is indicative that the small items discovered (models of house and furniture, anthropomorphic figurines) are encountered as elements also in the abovementioned cult scenes from Ovcharovo and Gradeshnitsa sites. Chairs (although of another type) and anthropomorphic figurines are found in the cult scenes of Poduri and Isaiia.

The cult scene from tell Kozareva mogila appears to be incomplete. It may be suggested that to it must have belonged one or more models of tables, more anthropomorphic figurines, chairs and other objects, by analogy with other known cult scenes. The reason for this may be the low degree of preservation of the dwelling's remains, disturbed by later interventions, including animal ground holes. It is noteworthy that even the surviving objects are fragmented and missing certain parts. It is possible that other objects from the cult scene are in the unstudied part of the

<sup>15</sup> TODOROVA *et alii* 1983, p. 91–93.

<sup>16</sup> For this reason, it was only mentioned in the text of the publication of the site, but has never been presented in a graphic drawing in the multiple publications of the Ovcharovo cult scene. Similar is the fate of one model of a chair that was also not restored, according to the excavator of the site (see TODOROVA *et alii* 1983, p. 91).

<sup>17</sup> TODOROVA *et alii* 1983, p. 92.

<sup>18</sup> NIKOLOV 1973, p. 38.

<sup>19</sup> On the periodization and chronology of the settlement at Gradeshnitsa, see CHOHADZHIEV 2000; DANOV 2019, p. 122–125; NIKOLOV 1978.

<sup>20</sup> MONAH *et alii* 2003.

<sup>21</sup> URSULESCU, TENCARIU 2009, fig. 13.

<sup>22</sup> NIKOLOV 1975, fig. 103.

<sup>23</sup> GEORGIEVA, DANOV 2021, p. 16; GEORGIEVA, DANOV, STAVREVA 2021.

dwelling. We should also not exclude the possibility that the scene was already dismantled/incomplete at the moment the dwelling burned down.

The differences in the form and size of the chairs from the Kozareva mogila tell suggest that the two items had different functional and symbolic meanings. The larger specimen that may be also defined as a throne is undoubtedly among the most representative finds of this kind. This type of chairs is more difficult to make in comparison to the lower and simpler stools represented by the other model. There are no traces for the attachment of a sitting anthropomorphic figurine on the larger chair. Even if a figurine was meant to be placed upon it in the context of a cult scene, it may have been modeled separately. A similar approach may be observed in other cult scenes. The figurines were not fixed to the chairs in a stationary manner. It is possible that on the different types of chairs were placed anthropomorphic figurines of different semantic essence. The reproduction of specific details, such as the low back-rest of the stool and the lugs on the back of the larger chair, demonstrate the desire of the prehistoric person to render realistically the actual prototypes.

## Conclusion

Furniture models and small finds often are left unpublished or are not given the attention they deserve. They provide additional information about the furnishings of the dwellings and about religious beliefs, that we do not get from other finds.

The models of chairs presented here provide valuable information about the material and spiritual culture of the inhabitants of tell Kozareva mogila at the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> millennium BC. Their discovery within a dwelling context reveals their connection to domestic rites. This cult function is further emphasized by the other objects discovered in close proximity, thus giving grounds to suggest that they all belonged to one common cult scene. It is difficult to say whether the models of chairs held symbolic meanings of their own, or whether they must be viewed in the context of cult scenes, or in direct connection with sitting anthropomorphic figurines depicting deities.

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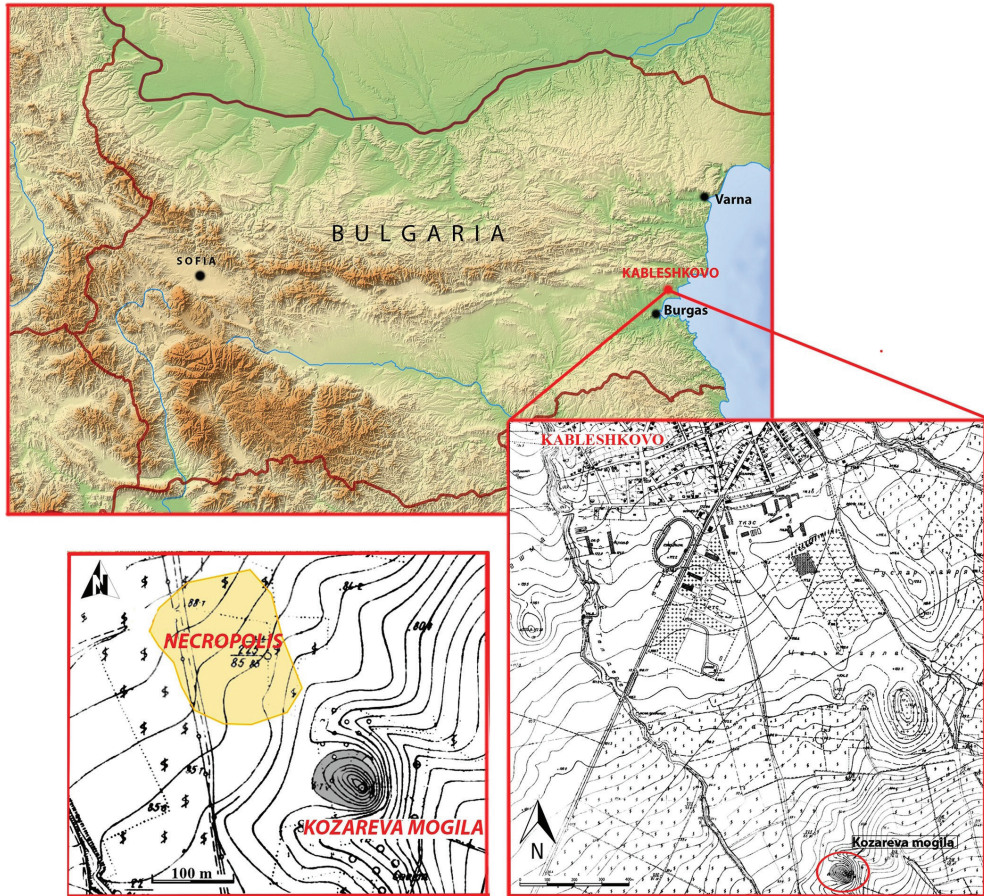


Fig. 1. Map with the location of the tell Kozareva mogila.

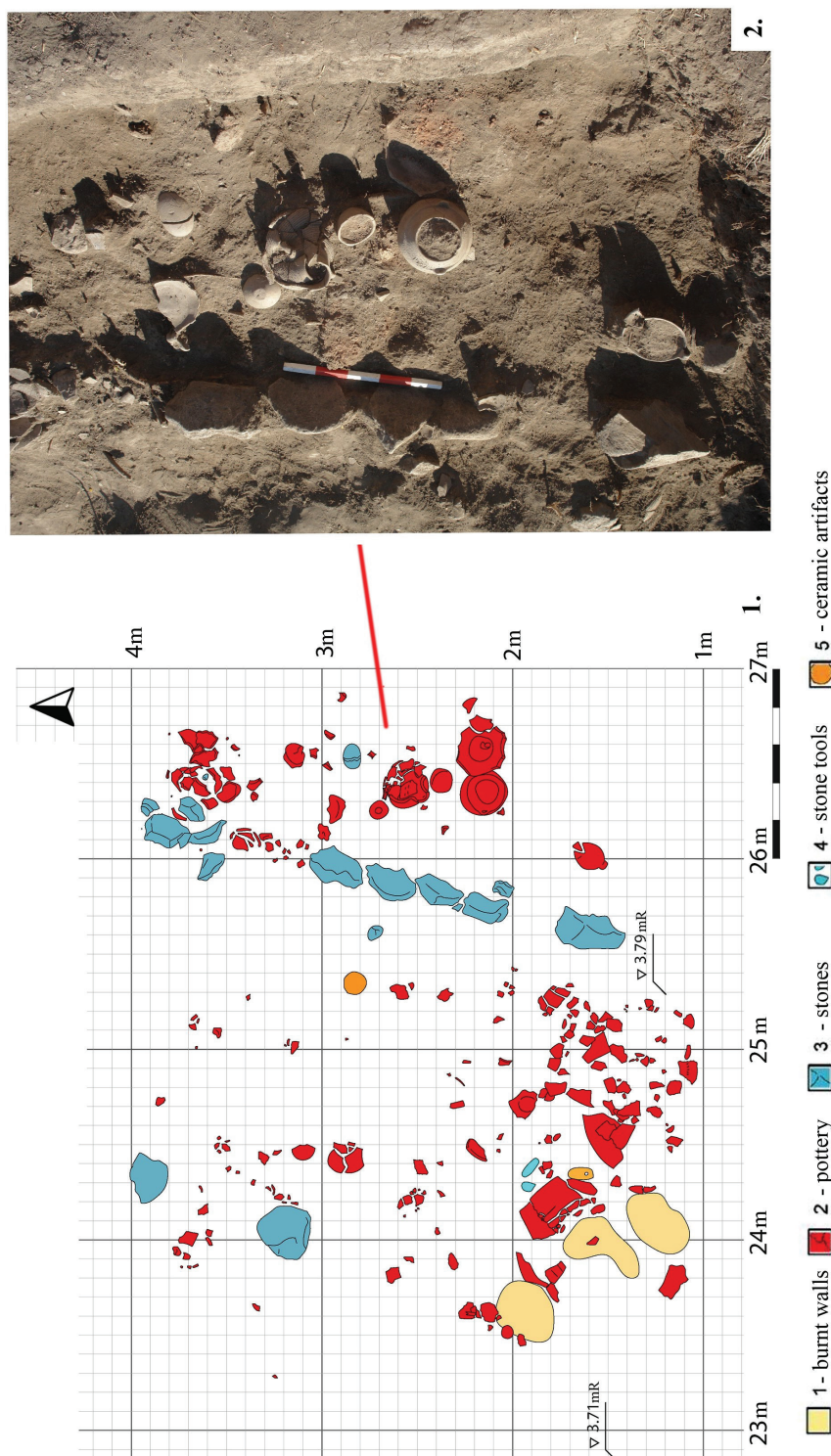


Fig. 2. Kozareva mogila. 1. Drawing of the dwelling in which the ceramic models of chairs were found (by GEORGIEVA *et alii* 2021); 2. vessels found in the eastern part of the dwelling (by GEORGIEVA *et alii* 2020).



Fig. 3. Clay models of the chairs from Kozareva mogila.



Fig. 4. Cult scenes. 1. Ovcharovo (by TODOROVA 1976); 2. Gradeshnitsa (by NIKOLOV 1973; DANOV 2019); 3. Zaminec (by NIKOLOV 1975).

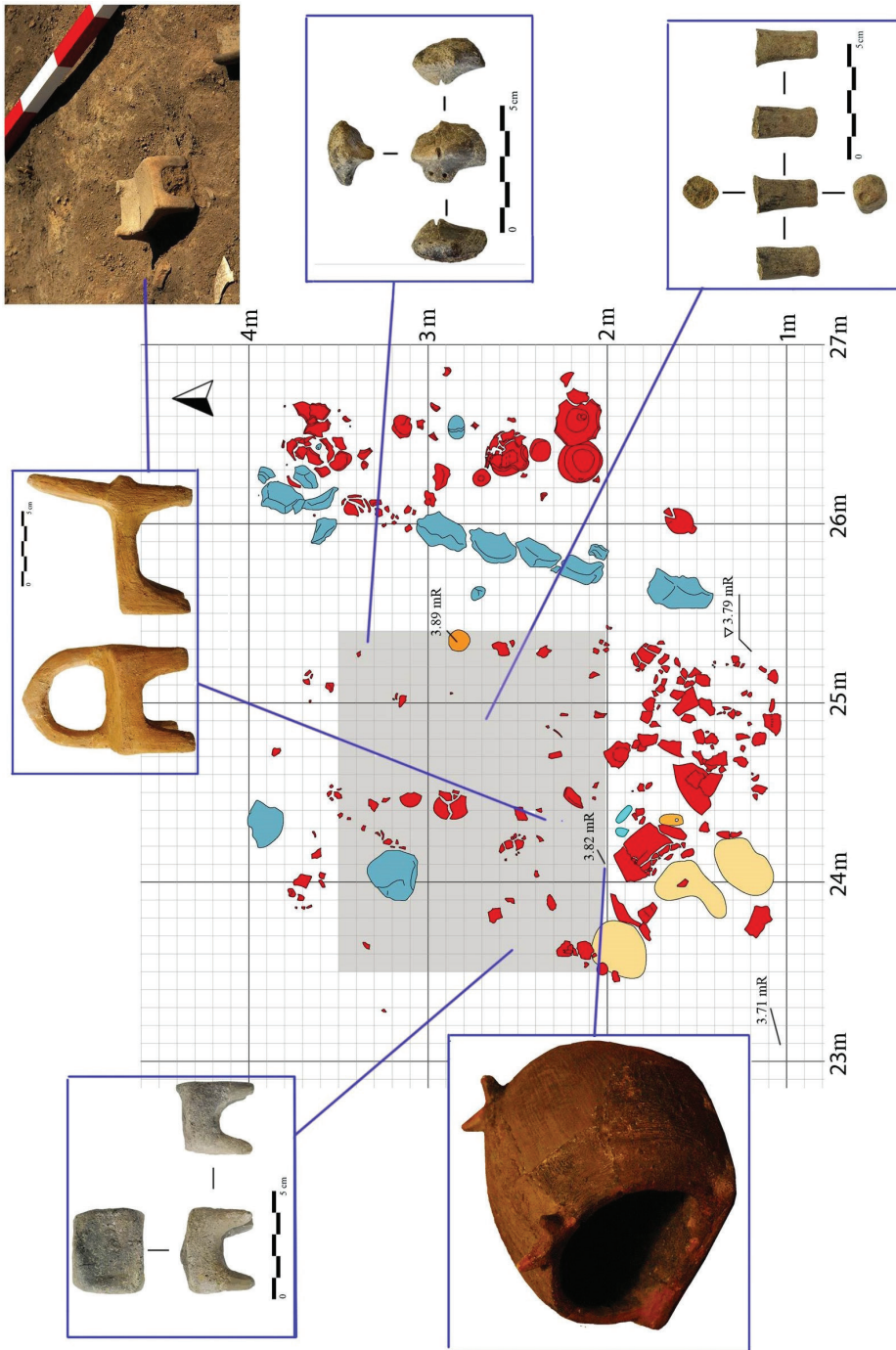


Fig. 5. Kozareva mogila. Location of finds inside the dwelling.