

FLOREȘTI-POLUS CENTER. PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

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Introduction

The archaeological investigations carried out at *Florești-Polus Center*¹ (Pl. 1) will most certainly represent a benchmark for archaeological research in Transylvania and beyond, both for the Prehistoric and Ancient period. We are taking advantage of this occasion² to reveal some preliminary observations³ regarding the investigations that we have coordinated in the framework of this program: sectors C and K5–6⁴ (Pl. 2). Because of the large area that had to be

¹ It is the efforts of many undergraduate, graduate or MA students (Magyarosi Attila, Bereczki Judith, Piroska Eszter, Derzsi Csongor, Király József, Kisgyörgy István, Balázs Bence, Kedves Timea, Demjén Andrea, Ioana Chira, Ștefan Budașcu, Oniga Erika, Kovács László, Kürti Andrea, Geréb Ádám, Puskás Henrietta, Pinkovai Bernadett, Eröss Zsuzsa) that made it possible for the archaeological research to unfold in the most appropriate conditions and allowed for the site documentation to be drafted in due time. We would like to use this opportunity to thank them, once more.

² For the first mention of the findings, see: M. Rotea, M. Tecar, Sz. Nagy, P. Pupeză, L. Săsăran, T. Tecar, *Florești-Polus Center. Arheologie și termoluminescență*, in C. Cosma, S. Varvara, M. Gligor (eds.), *Radioactivitatea mediului. Vârste absolute prin metode nucleare de datare*, Cluj-Napoca 2008, 160–180.

³ The huge amount of archaeological material could only be partially processed up to the present moment, in spite of the hard work of the archaeologists and restorers (O. Bianu, G. Turculeț, D. Sima, D. Boroș, C. Rotaru, R. Cordoș and T. Tomescu) involved in this operation. Therefore, we are not able, for the time being, to present in detail all the archaeological complexes identified (there are about 400 of them), nor can we reach any final conclusions.

⁴ Since the beginning of the investigations, in August 2006, until October the same year we were the ones to coordinate the works on the entire site. Subsequently, general coordination responsibilities were taken over by D. Alicu, Ph.D. This is being mentioned in order to explain the presence in this article of several finds from sectors A and B.

archaeologically discharged and especially due to the type of findings, the excavation technique used was a full cleaning followed by the investigation of each complex separately – in sector C, and a partial cleaning associated with stratigraphic sections in sector K, where, besides funerary complexes dating from the Bronze age or the Migration period, we found, unlike in sector C, habitation complexes – either Prehistoric or dating from the Migration period. The area investigated per se was quite impressive, stretching over 6,6 ha.

Physical – geographic framework⁵

Localization. The archaeological site *Polus Center* is situated in Florești village, on the left side of the national road Cluj-Napoca – Oradea, in the area known as *Șapca Verde*. It is bordered to the west by the Gârboului Valley, and to the south by the Răzoarele hill, which goes on to the south along the Boșorului Valley, and changes its name into the Gârboului hill.

Relief. Morphological particularities are determined mostly by the Someșul Mic river valley axis. Basically, the land physiognomy is determined by this valley, which is 1–2 km wide at the level of the floodplain and terrace I. The other terraces are present only fragmentarily. The determining factor that led to the formation of the present-day relief is the ratio between the monoclinical structure corresponding to the edge of the Transylvanian basin and the modelating action of the Someșul Mic river. The valley of the Someșul Mic river is characterized by an accumulative relief made of two levels: a lower one, measuring 2–3 m, affected by heavy overflows in heavy rain, called the Floodplain, and a second one, 4–6 m high (the second terrace) made of sands, different types of gravel and coluvial material (brought in from the neighbouring slopes) in various degrees of solidification and of grass coverage. The second terrace stretches over the centre of the village Florești and the third terrace, whose level is 20 m, is also located on the left bank of the Someșul Mic river and has steep slopes. The relief of the village is characterized by two genetic relief types, determined by the interaction between the subjacent structures and the environment conditions, to which human activity has also contributed, to a certain extent. The sculptural relief (landforms) is made

⁵ The general geographical bibliography consulted was: Monografia geografică a RPR, București 1960; P. Coteș, Geomorfologia României, București 1973; V. Mihăilescu, Geografia fizică a României, București 1980; V. Cristea, C. Baci, D. Gafta (eds.), Municipiul Cluj-Napoca și zona periurbană: Studii ambientale, Cluj-Napoca 2002.

of lower levelling surfaces (450–550), affected by (fluvial) slope processes (torrentiality, ravines, superficial land slippage). Generally, the slopes can be grouped into two types: a) subsequent slopes, with severe deteriorations and important lithologic variations, which confer a steps-like character, which can be found on the cuesta strata forming the left edge of the Someșul Mic river. These slopes are affected by short streams, having a torrential character imposing an accelerated deterioration; b) monoclinical-type slopes form the northern slope of the Feleacului hills, with running water eroding sharply into the soil, ravines, compression creep and land slippage being the main processes affecting this category of slopes. The fluvial accumulation relief is made of the wide floodplains in the valley of the Someșul Mic river, the narrow, shallow valleys of the affluent of the Someș river to the right, the shoulders of terrace IV (30–35 m) and VI (100 m) and the dejection cones and glacises from the junction of the floodplain and the slopes. The most frequent processes affecting the floodplain are compaction and suffusion. Altitudinal differences reach about 250 m.

Climate. The territory on which Florești village is situated belongs to the temperate-continental area. The mean annual temperature is +8 °C, which reveals a thermal potential slightly lower than that of the Transylvanian basin. This is due to the Someșului Valley – a depression corridor allowing for the penetration and stagnation of the masses of cold air from the NE and thus produces local temperature inversions, especially during the night. The mean minimum temperature is –4 °C in January and the mean maximum temperature is +18 °C in July, thus the difference is 22 degrees, which reveals the moderate character of the climate. The mean annual precipitation is 650 mm, with higher values in spring and summer. The dominant winds blow from the NW and the dominant direction is SW. Thus, Florești is situated in the Transcarpathian climatic province, whose specific characters are enumerated above.

Soils. The soils in the area are quite diversified for a relatively confined space dominated by the floodplain of the Someș river. The most fertile soils can be encountered on the higher, relatively dry parts of the floodplain, and are mostly made of haplic and luvic chernozems. Calcaric leptosols are strictly related to the presence of the Eocene limestone and are mostly encountered in the Pusta area and in the front of the cuesta of the river Someș. The most widespread local soils are clayey residual soils, represented by haplic luvisols taking up most of the stable slopes South from the village and by albic luvisols, which appear insularly on interfluves.

Hydrography. From a hydrologic viewpoint, the area belongs to the hydrographical basin of the Someș river. The hydrographical network is made of a

segment of the Someșul Mic river, from its origins to the confluence with the Nadăș river and the affluent flowing into it from the right: Feneșului, Vulpiei, Sânașlăului, Tăuțului (Boșorului), Gârbăului Valleys. Good quality ground water reserves are significant, both in the alluvial beds of the Someș river and its affluent, and in depth, especially in the coarse limestone beds, where the quality increases considerably.

Flora and fauna are typical of hill and mountain regions.

The Bronze Age

The Bronze Age is one of the periods abundantly represented in the finds from the archaeological investigation at Florești-*Polus Center*, be they from the Early, Middle or Late period.

For the Early Bronze Age, noteworthy in this context are the finds belonging to the Coțofeni⁶ culture, represented in the investigated area by a few isolated archaeological complexes, which will be published in detail in the near future. Among these, a few stand out in sector K5, placed along a precinct road (Pl. 2). From the very beginning, it is important to make the precision that this is not a compact cultural layer belonging to this culture, but a settlement of temporary character, characterized by heaps of archaeological material found at a distance from one to another. An identical situation has been encountered in Deva-*Lenin Str.*⁷. The pottery, which makes most of the archaeological material unearthed is mostly undecorated and belongs to the coarse and semi-fine pottery categories. From a typological viewpoint, the following must be mentioned: amphoras, large bowls, jars, two-handle pots and cups (Pl. 4–12). The ornaments are mostly made by wide and deep incisions creating the impression of grooves; also, impressed decorations and appliqué ribs are the most typical (Pl. 4–12). They are arranged as hatched bands, buried triangular frames, “fir leaf” etc. (Pl. 4–12). All these elements indicate the presence of an early stage in the evolution of the Coțofeni culture. Several sites belonging to the 1st stage of the Coțofeni culture

⁶ The dating of this culture has been drawing the attention of specialists, and no consensus has been reached up to the present moment. For some elements, see: P. Roman, *Cultura Coțofeni*, București 1976, with bibliography; M. Rotea, *Contribuții privind bronzul timpuriu în centrul Transilvaniei*, Thraco-Dacica 14, 1993, 65–86; H. Ciugudean, *Eneoliticul final în Transilvania și Banat: cultura Coțofeni*, Timișoara 2000, with bibliography.

⁷ M. Rotea, *Locuirea Coțofeni de la Deva-Strada Lenin*, Sargetia 20, 1987, 475–479.

have been discovered in Transylvania⁸, the earliest being those containing pottery decorated with grooves belonging to the same type, previously reported, from Deva-Lenin Str. or the pottery discovered most recently at the site Vinerea-Tăbârâște⁹, which still preserves the influences of the horizon Cernavodă III-Boleraz¹⁰. In relation to this horizon, the human habitation from Florești-Polus Center seems to be more recent (Coțofeni Ic after P. Roman¹¹). A few typological and stylistic elements support (fine incisions, angular band and triangles) this viewpoint (Pl. IV/4; VI/1; V/7–8).

For the Middle Bronze Age, in sector B were investigated several archaeological complexes (dwellings, pits) belonging to the Wietenberg culture (it is common knowledge that the notion was introduced following the investigation of C. Seraphin at Sighișoara-Wietenberg/Dealul Turcului, dating from 1899–1904, research carried on by K. Horedt in 1938 and I. Andrițoiu between 1991 and 1994). Monuments from this culture spread throughout the entire Transylvania and have evolved according to four different phases. Although they are extremely numerous, only about 50 sites provide archaeological material that can be worked on for relevant progressive structures. Among them, the site at Derșida – investigated by N. Chidioșan in 1963–1965, 1969 and M. Rotea in 1999–2000 – has an exceptional place in this culture's area, first and foremost because of the unique stratigraphic scale it provides. Four stages have been defined to express the evolution of the culture, whose content is different, according to the opinion of the researcher¹². Most of them contained a big amount of pottery specific to the classical phase of this culture (phase III). The various types of entwined spirals and meandres decorating the walls of the recipients are a plea in favour of this framing (Pl. 13). Obviously, the most frequent ornaments are those in relief or those with incisions shaped as bands. Seldom are surfaces separated in two, three or four areas, therefore seldom can we refer to a metope style, adopted most probably

⁸ See *supra* note 6.

⁹ C. I. Popa, *Contribuții la cunoașterea perioadei de tranziție în bazinul hidrografic al Cugirului (II)*, Sargetia 27, 1999, 51–101.

¹⁰ For this viewpoint, see: C. I. Popa, *op. cit.*, 51–101 and H. Ciugudean, *op. cit.*, 47.

¹¹ P. Roman, *op. cit.*, 36–38.

¹² For this culture, see for instance: K. Horedt, *Die Wietenbergkultur*, Dacia N.S. 4, 1960, 107–137; N. Chidioșan, *Contribuții la cunoașterea tracilor din nord-vestul României. Așezarea Wietenberg de la Derșida*, Oradea 1980, with bibliography; I. Andrițoiu, *Civilizația tracilor din sud-vestul Transilvaniei în epoca bronzului*, București 1992, with bibliography; N. Boroffka, *Die Wietenberg-Kultur*, Bonn, 1994, with bibliography; I. Andrițoiu, A. Rustoiu, *Sighișoara-Wietenberg. Descoperiri preistorice și așezarea dacică*, București 1997; M. Rotea, *Pagini din preistoria Transilvaniei. Epoca bronzului*, Cluj-Napoca 2008; Idem, *Cultura Wietenberg*, Cluj-Napoca 2009.

under the influence of other contemporary cultures. We have good analogies from the Wietenberg site of Cluj-Napoca – *Strada Banatului*¹³.

The most numerous discoveries belong to the Late Bronze Age. It is worth mentioning in this context the incineration necropolis made of over 20 graves and the inhumation necropolis belonging to the Noua culture, made of over 140 graves, both investigated in sectors C and K. The first appears as an incineration enclave in an ocean of inhumation, but we still have to get relevant arguments to be able to reveal the chronological connection between the two necropoleis, even though we are inclined to believe that their evolution was characterized by a partial synchronism.

The practice of cremating the dead and placing the cinerary remains in urns is an extremely old one and was widely used in Transylvania throughout the Bronze Age, in the Wietenberg environment¹⁴. Next to urns (Pl. XVIII/1, 3–4), in the pits of the incineration graves from *Florești-Polus Center* were found offering vessels, jewellery made of bone (pin), stone (pendant), bronze (bracelet) or gold (lockeringe). Some of these objects accompanied the deceased on the pyre (the pyre must have been in another place, away from the cemetery, because its traces have not been found). In a singular case (grave M 29)¹⁵ (Pl. XVIII/3; XIX/2), was the urn placed in a box made of shaped stone blocks; this was probably a princely “tomb”, because a gold item (the first one in a tomb of this type) was found between the charred bones of the deceased (the isolated position of the deceased in relation to the compact group of incineration tombs supports this idea, as well). The urn is a 22.5 cm tall amphora with a mouth diameter of 18 cm and with two handles. The rim is decorated with triangular impressions arranged in a “wolf-teeth” decoration pattern, with a row of simultaneous stitching placed diagonally on the mouth of the vessel, a band with circular impressing filled with horizontal S-shaped incisions and four spirals made by wide stitching, all placed on the neck and shoulder of the vessel. The gold item is a B-type lockeringe, according to Eugenia Zaharia’s typology¹⁶. We have very good analogies both from

¹³ M. Rotea, M. Wittenberger, *The ritual complex of Wietenberg Culture, Cluj-Napoca (Transylvania)*, AMN 36/I, 1999, 3–25.

¹⁴ See *supra* note 9.

¹⁵ M. Rotea, M. Tecar, Sz. Nagy, P. Pupeză, L. Săsăran, T. Tecar, *Florești-Polus Center. Arheologie și termoluminescență*, in C. Cosma, S. Varvara, M. Gligor (eds.), *Radioactivitatea mediului. Vârste absolute prin metode nucleare de datare*, Cluj-Napoca 2008, 160–180; M. Rotea, *Pagini din preistoria Transilvaniei. Epoca bronzului*, Cluj-Napoca 2008.

¹⁶ E. Zaharia, *Die Lockenringen von Sărata-Monteoru und ihre typologyschen und chronologischen Beziehungen*, *Dacia* N.S. 3, 1959, 103–134.

Transylvania (Alba-Iulia, Braşov or Moreşti)¹⁷ and from Hungary (Kölesd-
Hangospusztá or Kengyel)¹⁸, dated to the Middle and Late Bronze Age¹⁹. It is also
noteworthy that another tomb has been found-noted as M 30 (Pl. XVIII/3; XIX/2),
on the northern side of this box, containing a smaller urn. The relationship between
these two persons is impossible to sketch (the fact that they were deposited there
simultaneously and their bonding cannot be accidental) until we receive the results
of the anthropological and DNA analyses²⁰. However, what is unequivocal is the
idea of the two complexes' union.

From a cultural viewpoint, we believe that the incineration graves' group
belongs to the discoveries that we attributed to the Deva-Bădeni group²¹. The
settlement investigated by the team led by our colleague F. Marcu in the southern
part of sector B also belongs to this cultural horizon, and it must not be mistaken
for the Wietenberg III site. Viewpoints related to this archaeological entity are
divergent²², but the information available these days is increasingly abundant,
therefore a re-assessment of this subject looking through the lens of the new
discoveries is much needed.

The scarce evidence preserved from the peoples that used to practice
cremation in ancient times shows quite undoubtedly that the aim was a quick and
definitive separation of the soul from the body. The incineration of dead bodies, be
they princes or common people, is at the same time an expression of the care not
only for the deceased, but also for the living, as the latter will not be disturbed by
the presence of the former. We can ask ourselves where this practice comes from,
since it is not the easiest way to make a corpse disappear (burial is simpler and less
costly). According to some researchers, this practice would have appeared out of
practical reasons with nomadic peoples, who did not have any permanent

¹⁷ D. Popescu, *Cercetări arheologice în Transilvania*, Bucureşti 1956, 158–212; E. Sava, *Die Bestattungen der Noua-Kultur*, Kiel 2002, 44, 188, with bibliography.

¹⁸ A. Mozsolics, *Der Goldfund von Kengyel*, *Acta Arch Hung* 9, 1958, 253–263; T. Kovács, *Bronzezeitliche Schmuckgegenstände, Waffen und Goldschätze*, in *Prähistorische Goldschätze aus dem Ungarische Nationalmuseum*, Budapest 1999, 37–63, with bibliography.

¹⁹ D. Popescu, *op. cit.*, 162; E. Zaharia, *op. cit.*, 103–134; A. Mozsolics, *op. cit.*, 253–263; T. Kovács, *op. cit.*, 37–63; E. Sava, *op. cit.*, 44, 213–220; M. Wittenberger, *Cultura Noua în Transilvania*, Cluj-Napoca 2008, with bibliography.

²⁰ Anthropological analyses are about to be completed, thanks to the efforts of our colleague Sz. Gál.

²¹ M. Rotea, *Penetrația culturii Otomani în Transilvania*, *Apulum* 31, 1994, 39–58.

²² See for example: H. Ciugudeanu, *Cercetări privind epoca bronzului și prima vârstă a fierului în Transilvania*, Alba-Iulia 1997, 65–81; N. Boroffka, *Probleme ale sfârșitului culturii Otomani în Transilvania*, in *Romanian Journal of Archaeology* 1, Bucharest, 2000; M. Wittenberger, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

settlements and who could thus carry their dead with them, in pottery vessels. According to others, reasons of a religious nature must be looked for (the incineration itself could be considered an offering) which also imply a higher level of abstraction. We believe that this second opinion should be embraced in the attempt to explain the present situation²³.

As for the inhumation necropolis belonging to the Noua culture (the Noua archaeological culture notion was introduced in specialized literature by I. Nestor in 1934, having as starting point the investigation led by J. Teutsch, carried out in 1901 in Braşov), the territory occupied by this culture – more particularly this cultural complex – was extremely wide, encompassing Transylvania up to the Apuseni mountains, Moldova, Wallachia, Dobrogea and part of the Ukraine. In Transylvania, Noua culture has a specific facies, which unfolds along different phases. The first encompasses Wietenberg influences, the second is a classical one, and the third is a final stage, marking the transition to subsequent cultural realities. The settlements in Transylvania, insufficiently investigated, provide a mixed ceramic material, including contemporary cultural realities from this entire area. On the other hand, necropoleis have more unity from all points of view: the quasi-exclusiveness of inhumation graves, the fact that the deceased were placed in a squatted position on the left or the right side in plain pits, the inventory made of ceramic pots with two handles, jars, bag-type ceramic vessels, more rarely lockerings made of gold or bronze, bracelets or pins made of bronze, etc.²⁴ The last monograph dedicated to funerary discoveries encompasses 710 graves, out of which 695 are inhumation and 15 incineration graves, most of them being grouped in the area between the Oriental Carpathians and the Prut river; in Transylvania about 140–145 graves are mentioned²⁵. It must be mentioned from the beginning that it appears to be not only the largest necropolis in Transylvania, practically doubling the number of graves known for this area, but also as one of the most complex in this culture's entire areal. Unfortunately, the archaeological material has only been partially processed so far. However, some observations can be made. The deceased were placed in a squatting position and have beside them recipients of different types: ceramic pots with two handles and button, bag-type ceramic vessels, jars (Pl. XIV/1–3; XV/1–2, 4; XVI/2–3; XVII/2–6), etc. Offering

²³ M. Rotea, *Cultura Wietenberg*, Cluj-Napoca 2009, with bibliography.

²⁴ For the Noua culture, see for example: A. C. Florescu, *Repertoriul culturii Noua – Coslogeni din România. Aşezări şi necropole*, Călăraşi 1991; I. Andriţoiu, V. Vasiliev, *Câteva consideraţii asupra culturii Noua în Transilvania*, *Apulum* 27–30, 1993, 121–146; E. Sava, *Die Bestattungen der Noua-Kultur*, Kiel 2002; M. Wittenberger, *Cultura Noua în Transilvania*, Cluj-Napoca 2008.

²⁵ E. Sava, *op. cit.*, 97–108, 230, with bibliography.

vessels were placed on the bottom of the pit, in front of the skeleton, at the level of the head or thorax, more seldom at the back of the skull, in the rib area or next to the legs. The inventory of some graves also contains items made of bone, bronze or even gold, but they are few. The grave noted as M 115a (Pl. XVII/6) is included in this latter category, as it had in the skull area, more precisely at the nape of the neck, a B-type lockering²⁶ made of gold.

The grave pits have an oval or rectangular shape; sometimes they are almost square and are often marked by stones. Skeletons placed in stone circles or covered with stone mantles have also been found. As for the position of the skeleton, we have unearthed severely, moderately or slightly crouched skeletons (Pl. XIV–XVII).

The dating of the necropolis is a complex issue, which shall be discussed in detail once all the data available are fully processed. For the moment, the most certain dating is Bronze D, taking into account the inventory of pottery uncovered, but also the bronze and gold items found. At the same time, we have significant data that do not exclude the possibility to exceed this chronological interval in both senses.

The most well-known among the discovered inhumation graves²⁷ is the one named “Romeo and Juliet”²⁸, a double grave dated to the Bronze Age from a strictly archaeological viewpoint (a more precise chronological dating is still uncertain), in which the skeletons of two young people are placed one in front of the other, in a crouched position (Pl. XIV/3; XIX/1). A feature that is unique for the entire Carpathian Prehistoric area is the fact that they lower limbs are intertwined, and the entire ensemble suggests an intimate relationship, a deep feeling of unity, of love between the two. Anthropological analyses carried out by our colleague S. Gal confirm the fact that these are two teenagers (13–15 years old), a boy and a girl. Therefore, we are drawing closer and closer to the idea we have set as our working hypothesis, inspired by the title of one of W. Shakespeare’s plays. We are only one step behind, as we still lack the result of the DNA analyses, in order to eliminate the last obstacle in the way of this spectacular interpretation: the possibility for them to be brother and sister. This discovery has a good analogy in the findings of our colleague E. Menotti, made in Northern Italy, near Mantova²⁹.

²⁶ E. Zaharia, *op. cit.*, 103–134.

²⁷ Mention must be made of the fact that in the same area as the Noua necropolis, a small inhumation necropolis was researched, belonging to the early Bronze Age. The separation of the tombs without an inventory or with an atypical one has not yet been completed.

²⁸ M. Rotea, M. Tecar, Sz. Nagy, P. Pupeză, L. Săsăran, T. Tecar, *op. cit.*, 160–180; M. Rotea, *Pagini din preistoria Transilvaniei. Epoca bronzului*, Cluj-Napoca 2008.

²⁹ La Gazzetta di Mantova, 6 februarie 2007.

The Second Iron Age (3rd – 2nd centuries BC)

Generalities. The Celts' penetration inside the Carpathian arch at the mid-4th century BC sheds new light over the situation of these territories, some of which were integrated into the central-European Celtic world, but there are still many unknowns.

The Celts settled mainly in two geographic areas: the Mureș – Târnave river basin (Aiud³⁰, Bratei³¹, and Mediaș³²) and the Upper basin of the Someș river (Apahida³³, Fântânele³⁴ and Dipșa³⁵). Early artefacts – early Dux fibulae and bracelets with thicker ends or with a *Steckverschluss* – type fastening system – appear from the very beginning in the two areas mentioned³⁶, which is a clue supporting the idea that they were occupied concomitantly. The last horizon of the Celtic presence in the area can be mapped around the second half of the 2nd century BC (Panic³⁷, Pișcolt³⁸, Seușa³⁹).

³⁰ M. Roska, *A Kelták Erdélyben (Les Gaulois en Transylvanie)*, Közlemények 1–2, 1944, 55–76.

³¹ I. Nestor, E. Zaharia, *Raport preliminar despre săpăturile de la Brateiu, jud. Sibiu*, Materiale 10, 1973, 191–202.

³² I. Nestor, *Keltische Gräber bei Medias*, Dacia VII–VIII, 1937–1940, 159–182. M. Blăjan, G. Togan, *Descoperiri celtice și dacice inedite la Mediaș și în împrejurimile sale*, AMP 2, 1978, 39–51.

³³ Șt. Kovacs, *Az apahidai őskori telep és La Tène temető*, in Dolgozatok 11, 1911, 57–127. I. H. Crișan, *Materiale dacice din necropola și așezarea de la Ciumești și problema raporturilor dintre daci și celți în Transilvania*, Baia Mare 1966, 46–51, fig. 20; Idem, *Necropola celtică de la Apahida*, in AMN VIII, 1971, 37–70, pl. IX, XVI.

³⁴ L. Vaida, *Cimitirele celtice din nord-vestul Transilvaniei*, Arhiva Someșană 3, 2004, 375–392.

³⁵ K. Horedt, *Zwei keltische Gräberfunde aus Siebenbürgen*, Dacia 9–10, 1941–1944, 189–200.

³⁶ V. Zirra, *Beiträge zur Kenntnis des Keltischen Latène in Rumänien*, in Dacia N. S. XV, 1971, 171–238. V. Sîrbu, *Dacii și celții din Transilvania și vestul României*, in Fontes Historiae. Studia in Honorem Demetrii Protase, Cluj-Napoca 2006, 191–220.

³⁷ A. Rustoiu, *Fibulele din Dacia preromană (sec. II î.e.n – I e.n.)*, București 1997, 34, fig. 19/1.

³⁸ I. Nemeti, *Necropola celtică de la Pișcolt. I*, in Thraco-Dacica VIII, 1987, 49–74; Idem, *Necropola celtică de la Pișcolt. II*, Thraco-Dacica 10, 1989, 75–114; Idem, *Necropola celtică de la Pișcolt. III*, Thraco-Dacica 13, 1992, 59–112. V. V. Zirra, *Contribuții la cronologia relativă a cimitirului de la Pișcolt. Analiză combinatorie și stratigrafie orizontală*, SCIVA 48, 2, 1997, 87–137.

³⁹ I. V. Ferencz, M. Ciută, *Finds from Seușa (Alba county) belongins to Middle Latène*, in Les celtes et les thraco-daces de l'est du bassin des Carpates, Cluj-Napoca 2000, 22–50.

In the settlements and the necropoleis belonging to the Celts, materials that are not specific for their civilization were discovered (Apahida⁴⁰, Ciumești⁴¹, Fântânele⁴²), proving the existence of a native population in the area, cohabitating with the non-indigenous one. Moreover, some discoveries dating from this period have a strong local character and can be attributed to the indigenous population (Berea⁴³, Morești⁴⁴, Porț⁴⁵ and Zalău⁴⁶).

The complexes. *Pit-House 1* had an approximately circular shape, a maximum diameter of 6 m, and was buried about 0.50 m into the ground (Pl. XX). The inventory of the complex included two iron fibulae, hand-manufactured pottery fragments or made on the potter's wheel, a firedog, a spindle whorl, animal bones, as well as the lower part of a stone grinding mill.

The prevailing hand-manufactured pottery has chips crushed and mixed into the fabric, is made by oxidized and reduced combustion, most of the times incomplete, and has brick-reddish-brownish or blackish colours. The most frequent are fragments originating from medium biconical vessels, with straight or slightly curved walls, decorated with buttons and alveolar waves, or from pots with incurving rims and a pointed or slightly bulging profile (Pl. XXII/1, 3–13).

The production of the vessels made on the potter's wheel has a better quality, with sand and mica-schist as grease-removers, and very seldom graphite. The combustion is complete, completely reduced, and the colour is black – in various tones, sometimes the walls are covered in a glossy slip. The most frequently encountered shape is the bowl having a flaring rim, straight or slightly incurving, arched walls and incised lines as decoration (Pl. XXII/2). A few of the fragments come from cups with one handle, probably biconical.

⁴⁰ I. H. Crișan, *Materiale dacice din necropola și așezarea de la Ciumești și problema raporturilor dintre daci și celți în Transilvania*, Baia Mare 1966, 46–51, fig. 20; Idem, *Necropola celtică de la Apahida*, AMN 8, 1971, 37–70, pl. IX, XVI.

⁴¹ I. H. Crișan, *op. cit.*, 5–18, 33–39, fig. 3, 11–17. Vl. Zirra, *Locuiri din a doua epocă a fierului în nord-vestul României. Așezarea contemporană cimitirului Latène de la Ciumești și habitatul indigen de la Berea (jud. Satu Mare)*, StComSatu-Mare 4, 1980, 39–84, pl. VII–XLI.

⁴² L. Vaida, *op. cit.*, 375–392.

⁴³ Vl. Zirra, *op. cit.*, 39–84, pl. XLIII–XLIX.

⁴⁴ K. Horedt, *Morești. Grabungen in einer vor – und frühgeschichtlichen Siedlung in Siebenburgen*, București 1979.

⁴⁵ H. Pop, P. Pupeză, *Dacians and Celts in the Northwestern Romania*, in V. Sârbu, L. Vaida (coord.), *Thracians and Celts*, Cluj-Napoca 2006, 188–189, pl. V–VIII.

⁴⁶ A. V. Matei, H. Pop, M. Andraș, D. Băcuiet-Crișan, *Zalău – Dealul Lupului (jud. Sălaj)*, in *Cronica Cercetărilor Archaeologice din Romania (campania 2003)*, București 2004, p. 375–378; H. Pop, P. Pupeză, *op. cit.*, 185–187, pl. II–III.

In the proximity of this house, about 20 m SE, another complex took shape, *Pit-House 2*, buried 0.60 m into the ground (Pl. XXI/2). Its shape is different than the house previously described, as this has an almost square shape, with a 3.85 m long side and rounded angles. The complex was partially destroyed by a medieval building.

The material uncovered was exclusively pottery, hand-made or wheel-made, its specific features being identical to those of the material previously described, found in the previous pit-house. The material includes vessels having straight or slightly arched walls, decorated with buttons and alveolar waves, as well as bowls with inward rim, a pointed or slightly bulging profile, hand-manufactured (Pl. XXIII/1, 3, 5, 7–12). The novelty is represented by the relief decoration as a simple band. The bowl is the most widely represented type from all the types of vessels made on the potter's wheel, with a flaring rim and arched walls. What is noteworthy is the discovery of black vessel footrings made on the potter's wheel, made of a fine fabric, burn reduced, with a bulging shape, similar to a shield-*umbo*. Most of them are decorated with incised lines covering the entire diameter of the vessel, including the inside (Pl. XXIII/2, 4, 6).

An atypical bronze fibula, as well as a couple of atypical pottery fragments was uncovered from a pit, about ten metres south from the *Pit-House 2*. The precarious preservation condition of the fibula made its recovery impossible. Furthermore, no profile could be rounded off completely from the ceramic fragments.

Besides the discoveries previously mentioned, no archaeological material specific to this period was recovered, the cultural layer being almost inexistent following the mechanized intervention carried out for the construction of the commercial complex.

Chronology. As an overall, the archaeological material coming from the inventory of these complexes belongs to the 3rd – 2nd centuries BC. The only more precise chronological clue is provided by the iron fibulae in *Pit-House 1*. Such fibulae, identified in variable sizes, were discovered in almost all the sites from the La Tène period inside the Carpathian arch. They are dated to the last part of the 3rd century BC and mostly to the 2nd century BC⁴⁷.

Ethnical attribution. By analyzing only the material uncovered from the *Polus Center* area, one cannot make a precise ethnical attribution of the findings,

⁴⁷ The earliest examples from the intra-Carpathian area are to be found at Pișcolt (I. Nemeti, *Necropola Latène de la Pișcolt, jud. Satu Mare*, in *Thraco-Dacica* 13, 1992, fig. 6/3, 7/1, 9/3, 15/9, 24/1), dated exclusively to the Latène C1 period. Most of them are classified as belonging to the transition period from the Latène C1 to C2 and Latène C2 (V. Zirra, *Beitrag zur Kenntnis des keltischen Latène in Rumänien*, Dacia N. S. 15, 1971, fig. 8/7–9).

as they include both objects that have an indisputable Celtic origin (iron fibulae, wheel made bowls) and items specific to the local, Dacian-Getic environment (biconical cups, pots manufactured by hand). In fact, the recreation of the framework in which interethnic relationships evolved is difficult if only based on elements belonging to the material culture, sometimes extremely scarce. The presence in the findings of a mixed material, Celtic or autochthonous, assumes the existence of strong bonds between communities or even a common dwelling in the same settlements.

Conclusion. Without being a remarkable discovery, from the viewpoint of the general framework, the archaeological complexes from the La Tène period uncovered at *Polus Center* have their degree of importance indeed, as they bring forward new clues regarding the society from the Second Iron Age in the intra-Carpathian area, confirming once more the complexity of the ethnical relationships that were forged here throughout the 3rd – 2nd centuries BC.

The Gepidic Period

The Gepidic Period is one of the best represented, thanks to the richness and diversity of the findings identified at this site. Habitation traces were identified both by the complexes specific to a settlement and by the discovery of a large number of graves that could be dated to this period.

The settlement was located on the first two terraces of the Someș river, at the bottom of the Răzoarele Hill, avoiding the marshy soil, and ended in the area where the slopes of the hill were steeper. Following the extensive archaeological research carried out in this area, the surface on which the settlement was stretching was delimited on three sides, the only area allowing for expansion being west from the SW angle of the *Polus* commercial complex building. A kiln and a firing pit, and several other pits having various destinations and dimensions were uncovered from the area investigated by this team (sectors C and K). The number of dwellings in this area was undoubtedly higher, but the fact that they are not among the present archaeological findings is due to several factors, such as working conditions⁴⁸, the soil characteristics⁴⁹ or the intensive agricultural activity in the

⁴⁸ Due to the advanced phase of the construction works, large surfaces situated in the immediate proximity of the dwellings (under the right wing of the Polus Center Commercial Complex, the one towards Florești) could not be archaeologically researched.

⁴⁹ In some areas, due to the color of the earth, the identification of the archaeological complexes was almost impossible, they only became fully outlined at clay level.

area. Therefore, the surface dwellings and annexes were almost entirely destroyed. Their traces are marked by a big number of pottery fragments and animal bones scattered over large areas, thus excluding the possibility for archaeological complexes to be outlined.

The dwellings identified had a rectangular or quadrilateral shape, with rounded corners. Their sides were 2.40–3.60 m long, enclosing 7 to 10 m² of living space. They are all dwellings half buried into the ground, with the floor about 0.20–0.50 m lower than the ancient trampled surface. The presence of post-pits was recorded in only one case (L 2), at the mid-western side (Pl. XXIV). The lack of these post-pits implies either the fact that the roof structure was supported by wooden plates, placed on the outside⁵⁰, or the fact that walls were made of horizontal beams or intertwined rods⁵¹. In our case, such traces were not identified at the site.

The archaeological material gathered from the filling and from the floor of the dwellings is mostly made of pottery fragments and animal bones, but there are other items present as well, although to a lower extent, such as tools, jewellery and other clothing items.

Among household utensils unearthed at the site, the following can be mentioned: biconical spindle whorls made of clay, pierced cone-shaped weights made of fired clay, clustered on the floor of dwelling L 4 and probably used on the vertical hand loom. These items probably indicate the fact that this building used to be a weaving workshop. The traces of another craft were found in the dwelling area, where several processed bone fragments, among which antlers were discovered; therefore we can assume that there used to be a bone processing workshop somewhere in the area.

The jewellery items uncovered are: a fragment of an open-ended bronze bracelet, uncovered from the filling of dwelling L 6, having semicircular shape, a circular section and flattened ends decorated with two rows of incised dots and a comb, also originating from the filling of dwelling L 6. This is a bilateral bone comb with bronze rivets, discovered fragmentarily, decorated with an X-shaped vertical lines made by incision.

Only two of the uncovered pits really stand out (G 7 and L 9), both because of their dimensions and thanks to the archaeological material gathered from their

⁵⁰ D. Gh. Teodor, *Teritoriul est-carpatic în veacurile V–IX e.n.*, Iași 1978, 15; I. Mitrea, *Regiunea centrală a Moldovei dintre Carpați și Siret, în secolele VI–IX e.n.*, Carpica 12, 1980, 67.

⁵¹ C. Cosma, *Așezări și tipuri de locuință în spațiul Transilvaniei intracarpatică în secolele V–VI d.Chr.*, in S. Mitu, Fl. Gogâltan (eds.), *Viață privată, mentalități colective și imaginar social în Transilvania*, Oradea-Cluj 1995–1996, 41–42.

filling. Both had an oval shape, straight walls and straight or slightly concave footings. Their function is yet to be established, but their filling indicates the fact that ultimately, they were used as waste pits. First and foremost, the archaeological material coming from these pits is made of large quantities of pottery fragments and animal bones, several fragments of bilateral bone combs, bone piercers and needles, an iron fibula, as well as a fragment of a small handle made of a transparent, greenish glass.

The conclusion of the first hand research carried out is the fact that the complexes discovered in sectors C and K belong to a more extended habitation area stretching over a few hectares. Analyzing the plan of the resulting findings, it seems that they were at the outskirts of the ancient settlement. Taking into account the function of the complexes uncovered, we can assume that they were part of the “industrial” area of the settlement.

Besides the complexes mentioned, in the area where the parking lot of the *Polus Center* commercial centre is planned, in the vicinity of sector K5 were discovered another 13 Gepidic complexes (5 dwellings, 7 pits and a fountain). Following the first stage of the research, they were dated to the end of the IVth century – the first half of the Vth century BC⁵². The chronological delimitation, as well as the demarcation of the various habitation phases can only be made after the complete processing of the archaeological material originating from these complexes.

Necropolis. The *Polus* Necropolis can be considered among the most important evidence, attesting the Gepides’ presence in this region. Its importance increases, according to how much of it can represent the funerary area of as many contemporary or successive settlements in its immediate proximity. The necropolis belongs to the horizon of the burial “sites with graves placed in parallel rows (*Reihengräberfeld*)” that characterize the Gepidic world from the second half of the Vth century AD to the mid-VIth century.

The necropolis has not been fully researched. In some areas, due to the advanced stage of the construction works, archaeological excavations could not be carried out, and a rather big part of the area was not included in the investigation project. This future extension area (still untouched to the present moment) is situated north from the central necropolis area, delimited by the commercial centre parking lot and the DN 1 national road Cluj-Napoca – Oradea on the one hand, and the *Polus Center* foot bridge and Metro store, on the other. Due to these,

⁵² S. Cociș et alii, Florești, com. Florești, jud. Cluj, Punct: Șapca Verde, in *Cronica cercetărilor arheologice din România. Campania 2007, București 2008*, 137–138.

the necropolis extension limit could be estimated only lengthwise, having an EW orientation, on about 200 m.

The 99 graves discovered in the C and K sectors were displayed in rows, following the NS direction. Here and there, some were found grouped together, but the distance among them or among the graves that make them is not constant. These groups of graves can be the burial place of families. In cases when the outline of the pit could be discerned on the surface, most of the funerary complexes had a rectangular shape and rounded corners. The graves had been dug in yellowish clay and then filled back up with the same clay. This made the identification of the grave pits that had not been disturbed subsequently more difficult. The general orientation of the graves was WE, with small detours towards the south. The presence of coffins was noted in a couple of cases, as indicated by the clamps discovered and by the wood impression preserved in the filling and on the bottom of the pit. Traces of textile materials or skin, which could attest the existence of a shroud, have not been found. Generally, the skeletons were placed on their backs with their arms and legs stretched.

Grave pillage is a generally encountered phenomenon in this necropolis. In almost all the cases, the intervention pit was perfectly outlined in the yellowish-brownish earth filling the grave. The manner in which graves used to be signalled in ancient times has not yet been archaeologically recorded, but it is certain that these intervention pits were outlined with great accuracy on the surface of the graves, usually in the area corresponding to the chest and pelvis of the deceased, where the objects of interest would most likely be located. The exact moment in which this action took place is unknown, but the position of the bones show that at the time of the pillage, there were no ligaments left, so there must have been quite a long time between the burial and the pillage.

The skeletons of adolescents and adults are more numerous than those of babies, and those of children under 3 years of age are lacking almost completely. D. Csallány's observation according to which men, women and children were not buried in separate strips of land, but according to the chronology of the deaths⁵³ is not valid in our case. The lack of the small children category from this site cannot be explained by the acidity of the soil⁵⁴, but by the fact that children were buried outside of the cemetery, in a separate area, where no archaeological excavations

⁵³ D. Csallány, *Archäologische Denkmäler der Gepiden in Mitteldonaubecken (454–568 u.Z.)*, ArchHung 38, Budapest 1961, 295.

⁵⁴ The few graves preserved indicate the fact that the bones were truly less well-preserved, but they were by no means totally decomposed.

have been performed so far. Only one double grave has been identified, in sector C: right by the skeleton of a woman (M 17) there was that of a child (M 32) both discovered at the same depth.

Interposed graves or cases of superposition have not been recorded at this site. In some cases, the artificial manipulation of the skull was noted. The on site observations were then confirmed by the anthropological analyses, whose outcome was that this practice was widely used in the community⁵⁵. In Central Europe, deformed skulls grew increasingly numerous due to the Huns' settling down, and after their domination ended, this practice was given up on a broader scale, preserved only in some well-delimited territories, like the Tisza Plain for the Gepides, Crimea for the Goths and the northern part of the Caucasus for the Alans⁵⁶. Among the Gepides, this practice was also encountered in the Avar period⁵⁷.

Except for the undisturbed graves (these being quite rare), the funerary inventory recovered is quite modest, made of clothing items, few jewellery items and some weapons. The common inventory (found both in the graves of women and in those of men) is made of combs, knives, pottery and footwear-related items. The combs discovered at *Polus Center* are included in the category of double-toothed combs, and were made of three plates made of antlers, held together by three or more iron or bronze rivets. Some were decorated with straight lines, in an undulated or in a zigzag shape, made by incision. The knives were discovered in the pelvis area or by the legs. From the viewpoint of the shape, all items were single-edged, had a straight blade, those found in the graves of women and children being smaller. The habit of making offerings in graves is represented by the few pottery vessels usually found in the proximity of the skull. They were all made on the fast wheel, out of a fine fabric, had a greyish colour and were decorated by stamping or had a polished decoration. The presence of these vessels does not exclude the possibility of other offerings being made (not identified during the excavations) like wooden recipients or pieces of meat with no bones.

⁵⁵ The human osteologic material was analysed by anthropologist Gál Szilárd, to whom we give thanks for the information revealed.

⁵⁶ I. Hica-Cîmpeanu, A. Mureșan, *Un mormânt din secolul al VI-lea e.n. la Sighișoara*, Marisia 8, 1979, 762.

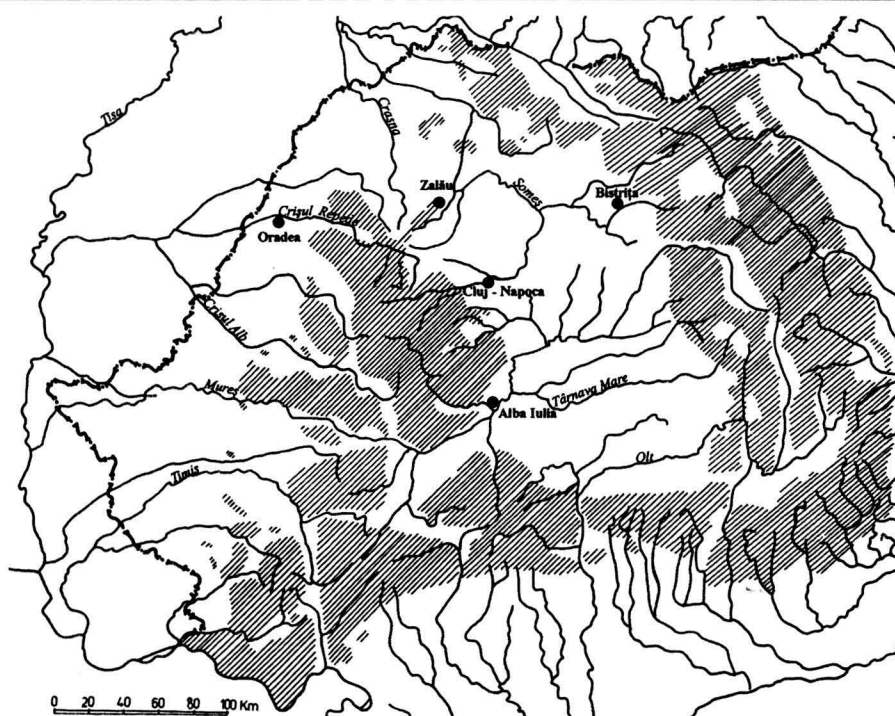
⁵⁷ I. Bóna, M. Nagy, *Hódmezővásárhely-Kishomok (kom. Csongrád)*, in Gepidische Gräberfelder am Theissgebiet I., Monumenta Germanorum Archaeologica Hungariae, Budapest 2002, 146; P. Lipták, A. Marcsik, *Kora népvándorláskori embertani leletek Kelet-Magyarországon. Újabb adatok a mesterséges koponyatorzítás kérdéséhez (Antropologische Funde in Ostungarn aus der Frühvölkerwanderungszeit. Neuere Angaben zur Frage der künstlichen Schädeldeformation)*. in A Debreceni Déri Múzeum Évkönyve, Debrecen 1976, 1977, 42, table 5.

The inventory of men's graves encompassed clothing or decoration items, weapons and household objects. Among the clothing items, buckles are the best represented. The presence of several buckles in men's graves is a widely encountered phenomenon, as 3 or even 4 types of buckles were discovered in the same grave. The biggest and the most imposing was the belt buckle, followed by a smaller one used for attaching weapons, clothes buckles, the smallest being the bag clasp. The belt buckles discovered were medium-sized and were attached by the means of two or several rivets. They were made of iron, bronze or, more seldom, silver. The presence of small bags has been confirmed both by on-site observations and by the discovery of small buckles made of bronze or silver in the pelvis area. Their inventory includes various widely-used objects, such as firesteel and flint.

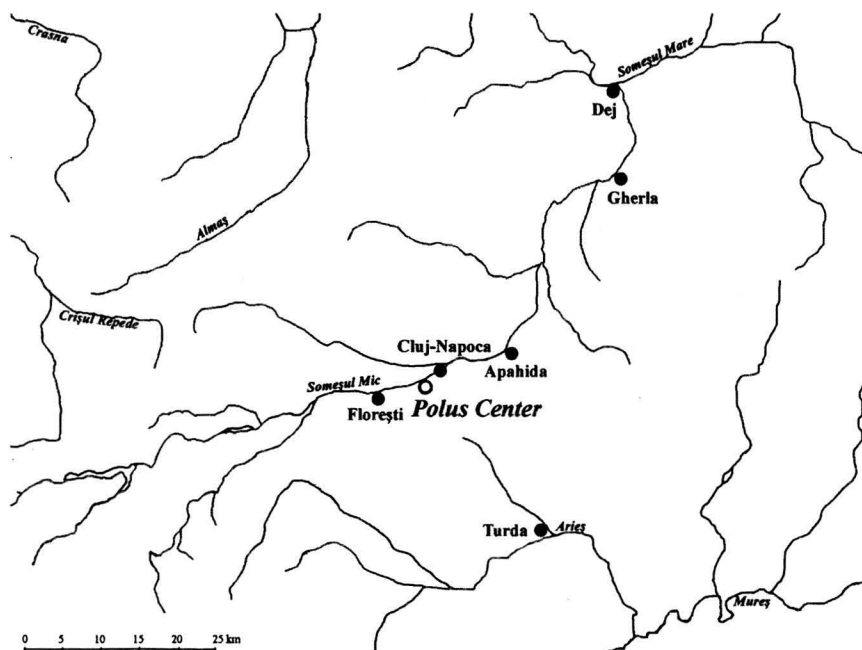
In the *Polus Center* necropolis, no fully equipped warrior was found. Defensive equipment (shield, helmet, shirts) is completely lacking from the graves' inventory. A few offensive weapons were discovered, meant to be used in close fighting (sabre, sword, spearhead and axe). Weapons used in distance fighting, represented by different types of arrowheads (two-edged or triple-edged) were uncovered more frequently.

The inventory of women's graves is richer, as proven by the few graves that had not suffered subsequent interventions. They are made of clothing and jewellery items and household objects. The jewellery unearthed encompasses crescent shaped lockeringes, made of silver and bronze, or earrings with massive polyhedral ends. The jewellery to be worn around the neck included strings of beads, made of amber or glass of various types and sizes. Crescent shape pendants were sometimes found, and more seldom silver beads. On the shoulder and in the chest area fibulae made of bronze and more seldom silver, were found. The buckles discovered in women's graves were medium-sized, and were made of bronze or iron. Women's graves also comprised spindle whorls, generally found in the pelvis area.

As for the dating, a first-hand analysis of the artefacts indicates the fact that the existence of the *Polus Center* necropolis began at the mid-Vth century AD. It was in use until the mid-VIth century AD. A final analysis of the inventory discovered will shed more light on these chronological limits.

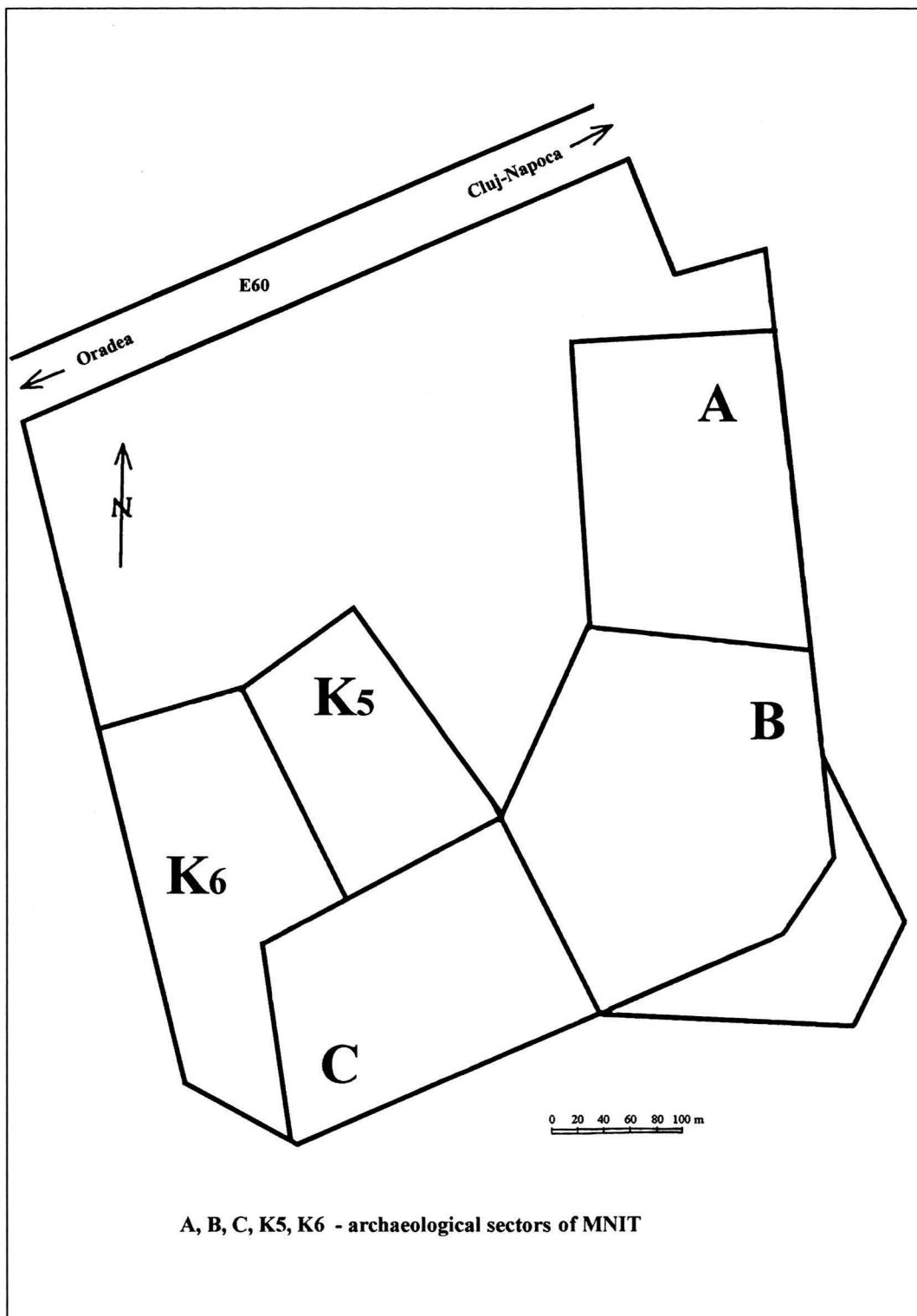


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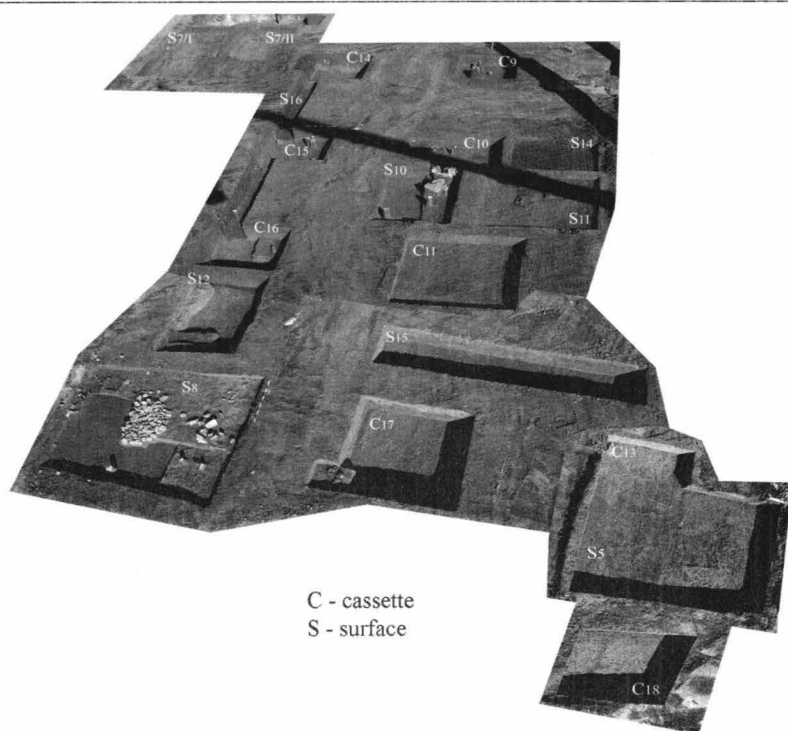


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Pl. I. 1. Map of Transylvania; 2. Map of Someșul Mic Valley.



Pl. II. Polus Center, archaeological sectors of MNIT.

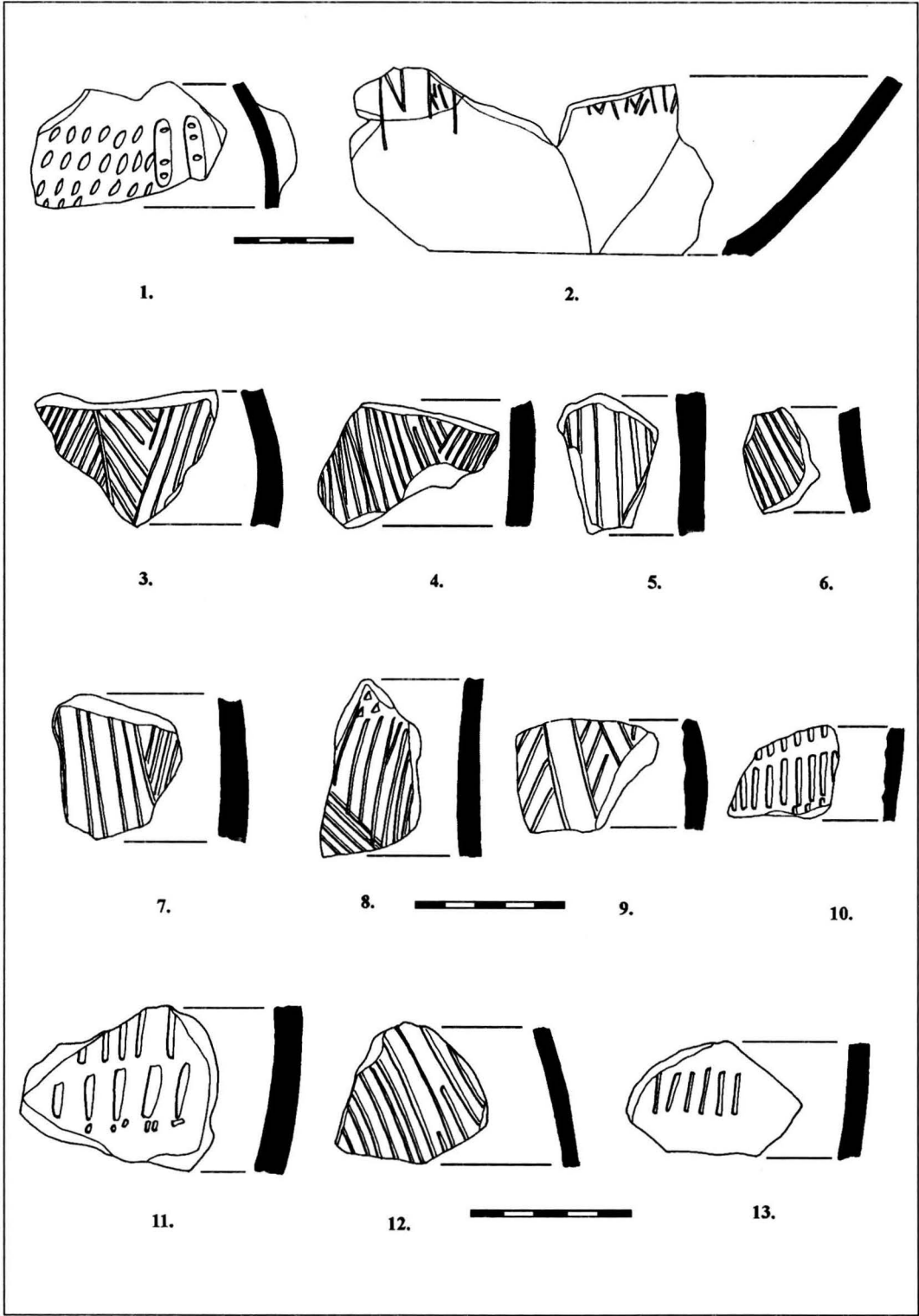


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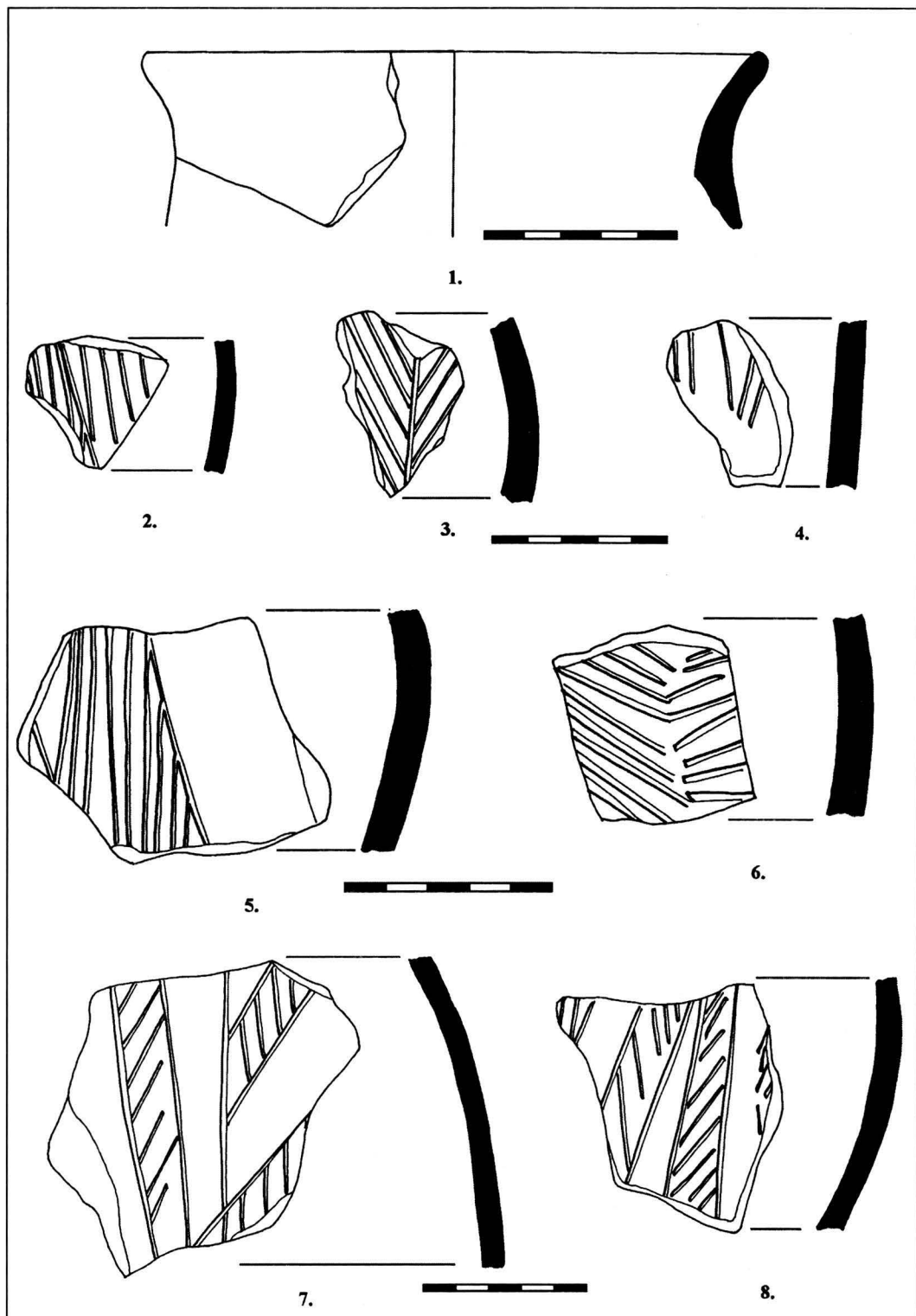


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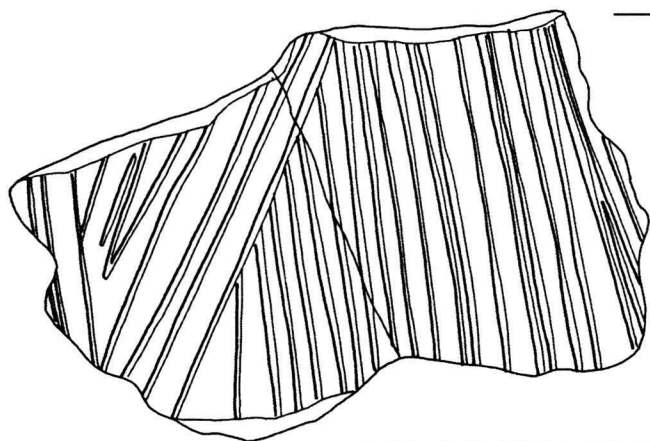
Pl. III. 1. Upper view of Sector C; 2. Partial view of Sector K6.



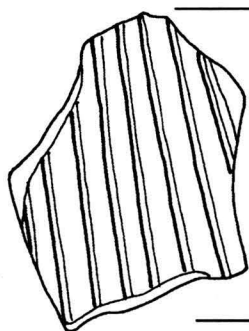
Pl. IV. Sector K5, Coțofeni Culture pottery.



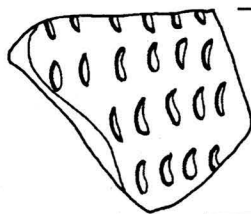
Pl. V. Sector K5, Coțofeni Culture pottery.



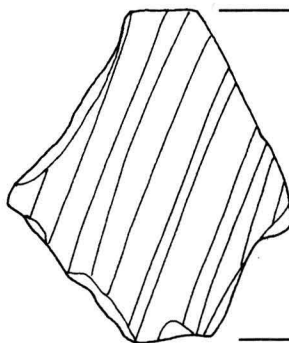
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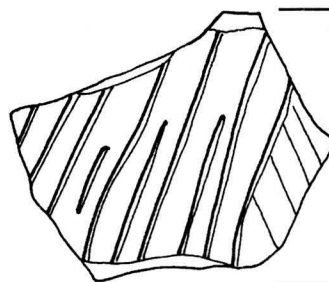
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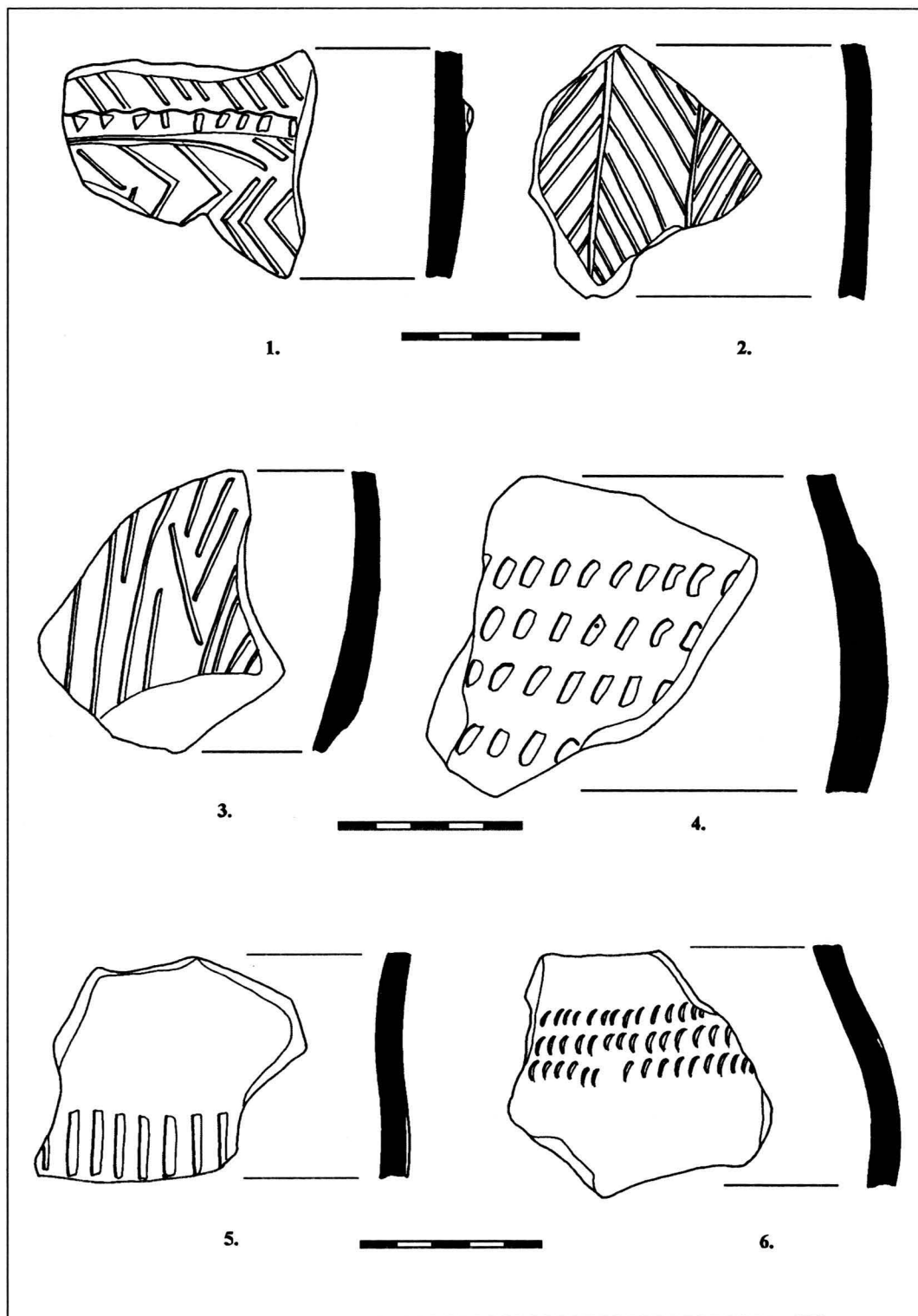
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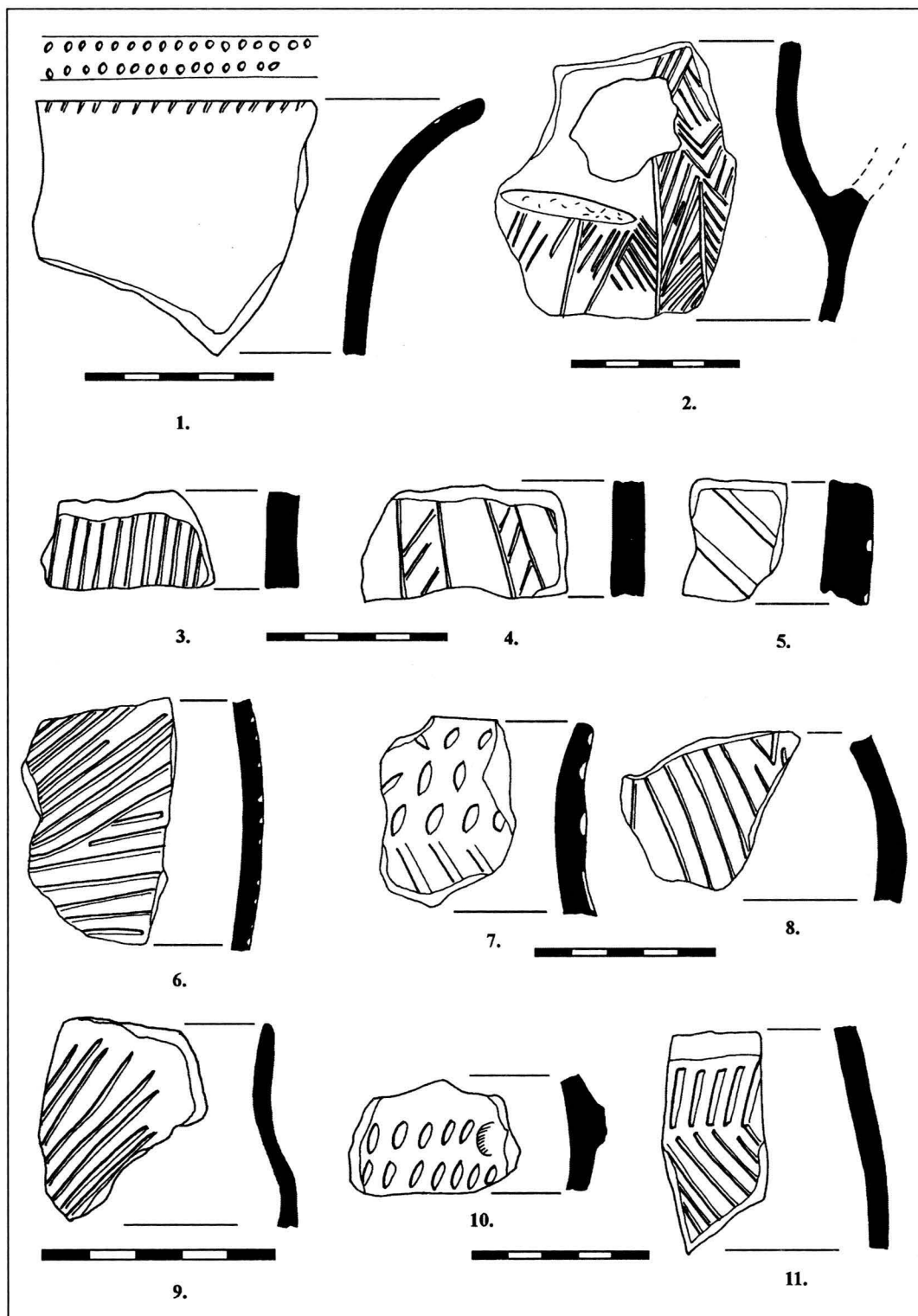
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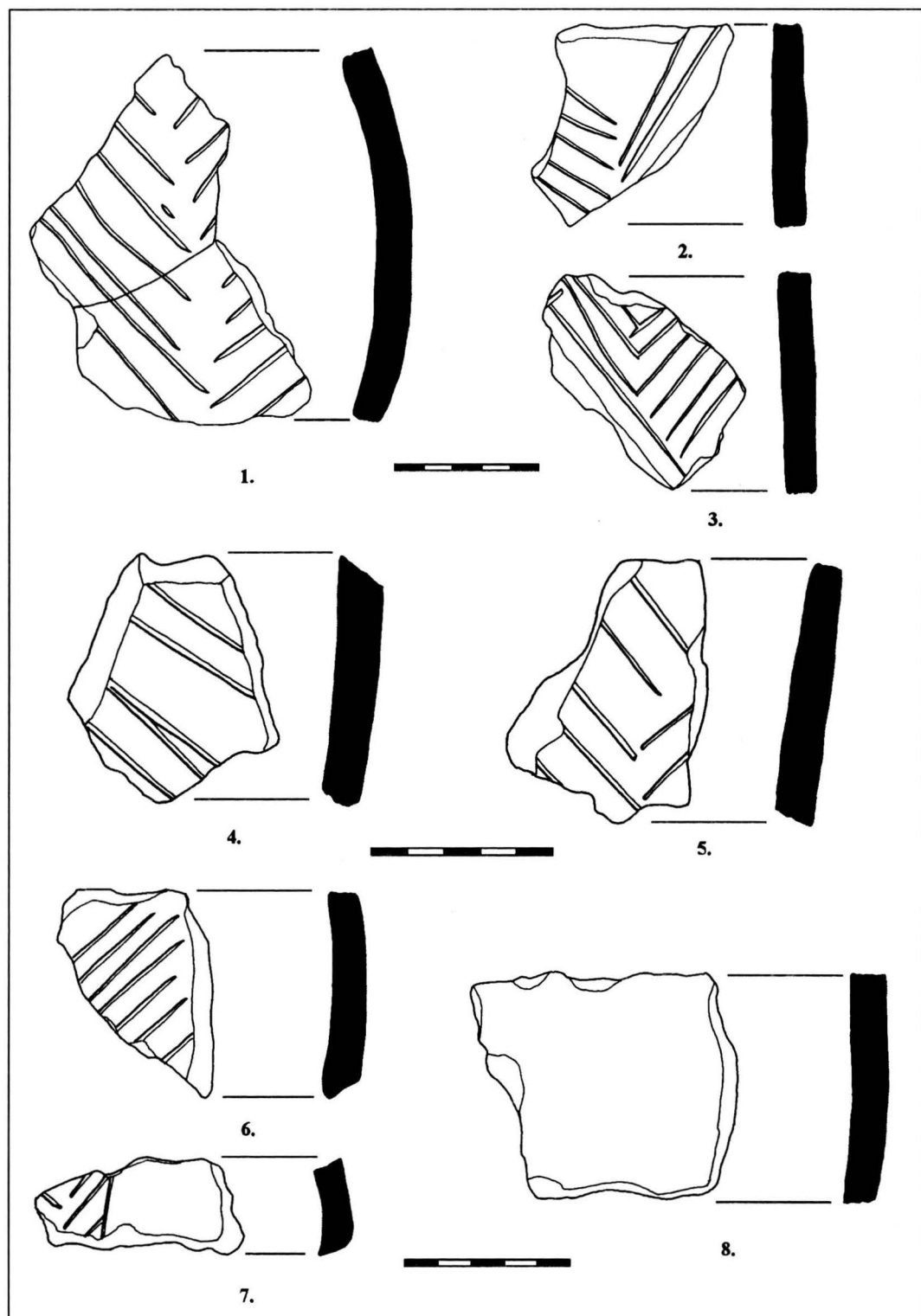
Pl. VI. Sector K5, Coțofeni Culture pottery.



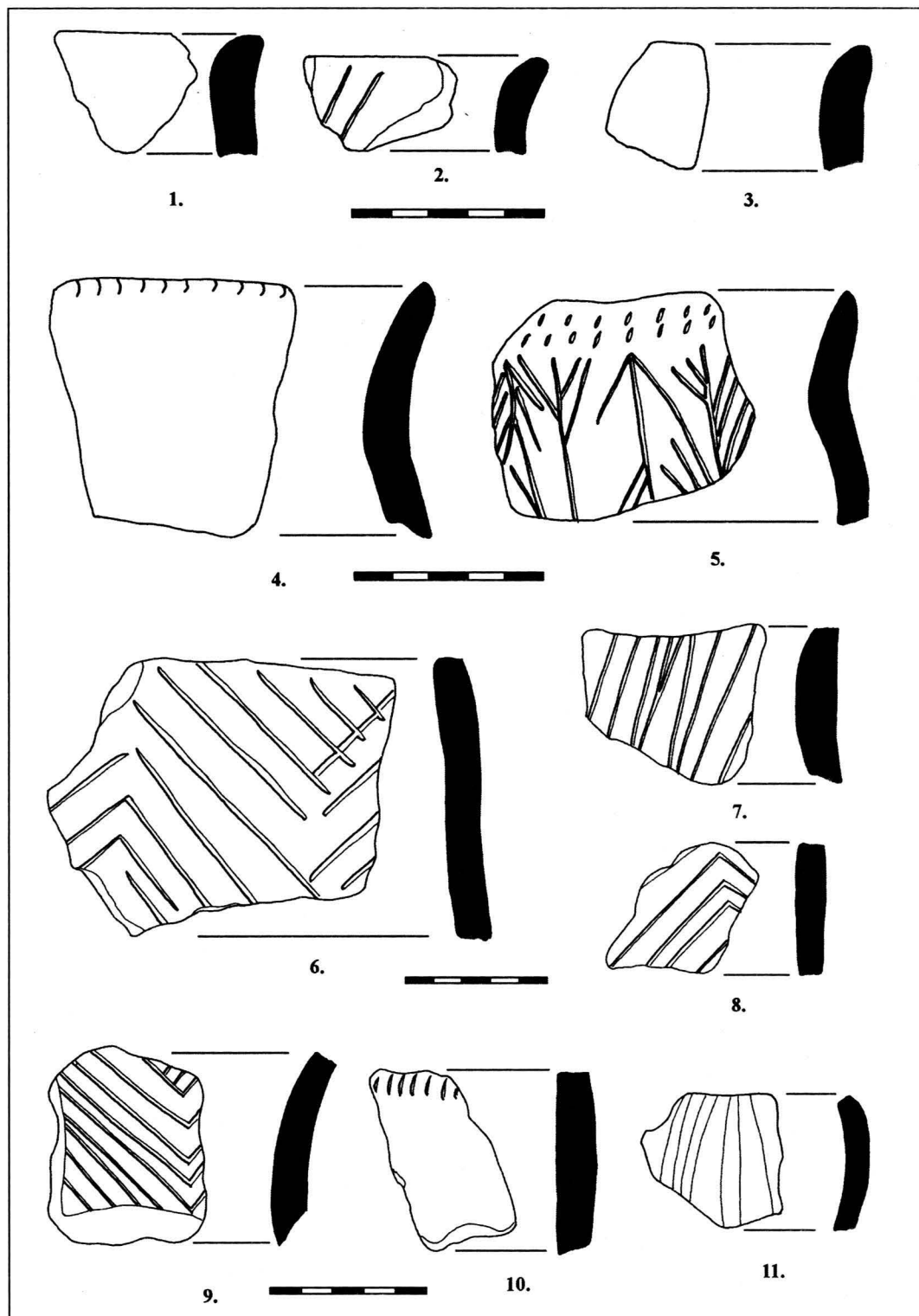
Pl. VII. Sector K5, Coțofeni Culture pottery.



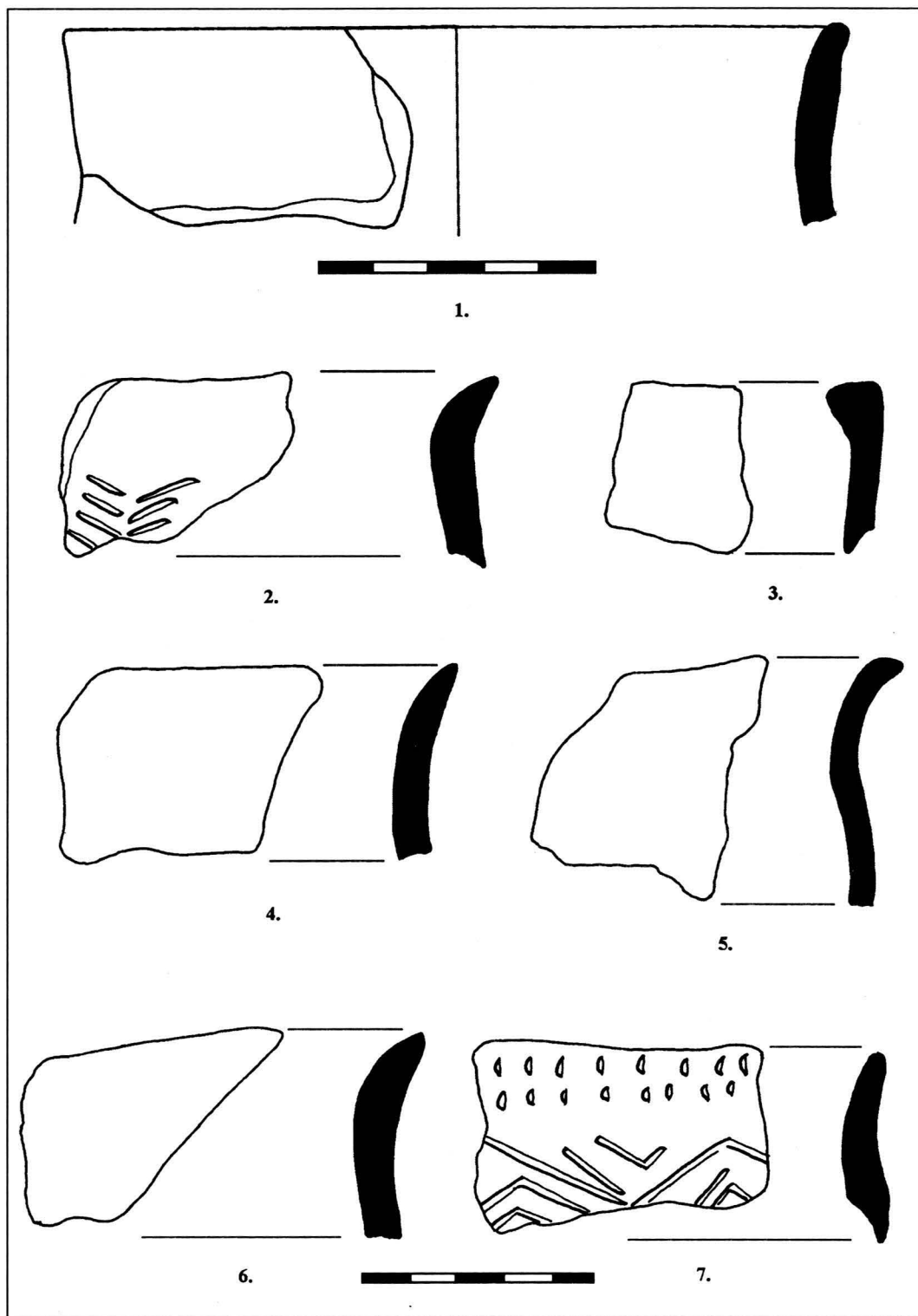
Pl. VIII. Sector K5, Coțofeni Culture pottery.



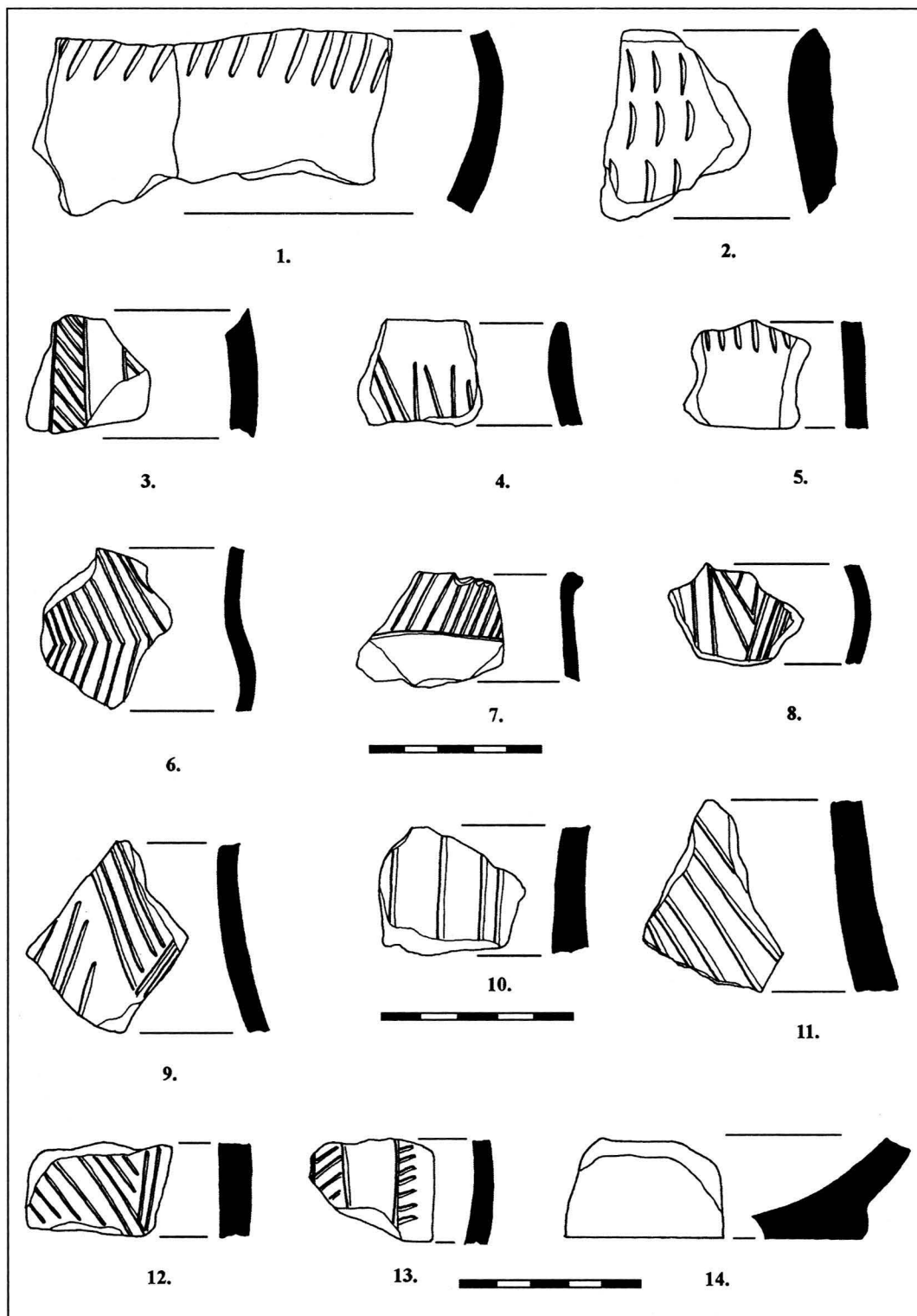
Pl. IX. Sector K5, Coțofeni Culture pottery.



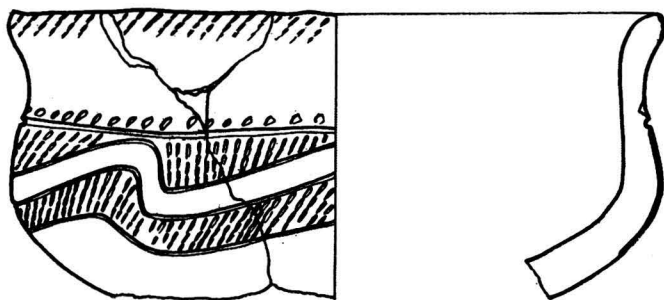
Pl. X. Sector K5, Coțofeni Culture pottery.



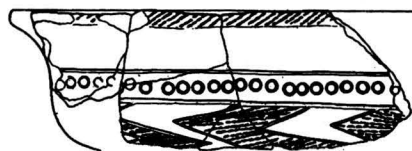
Pl. XI. Sector K5, Coțofeni Culture pottery.



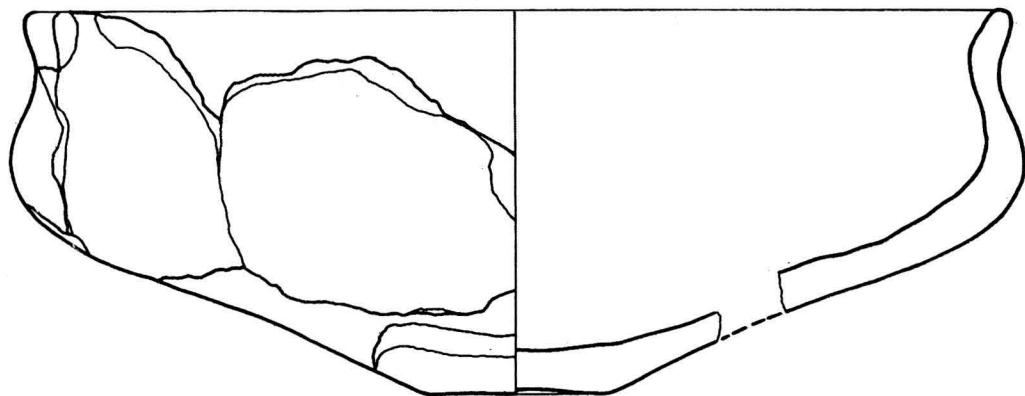
Pl. XII. Sector K5, Coțofeni Culture pottery.



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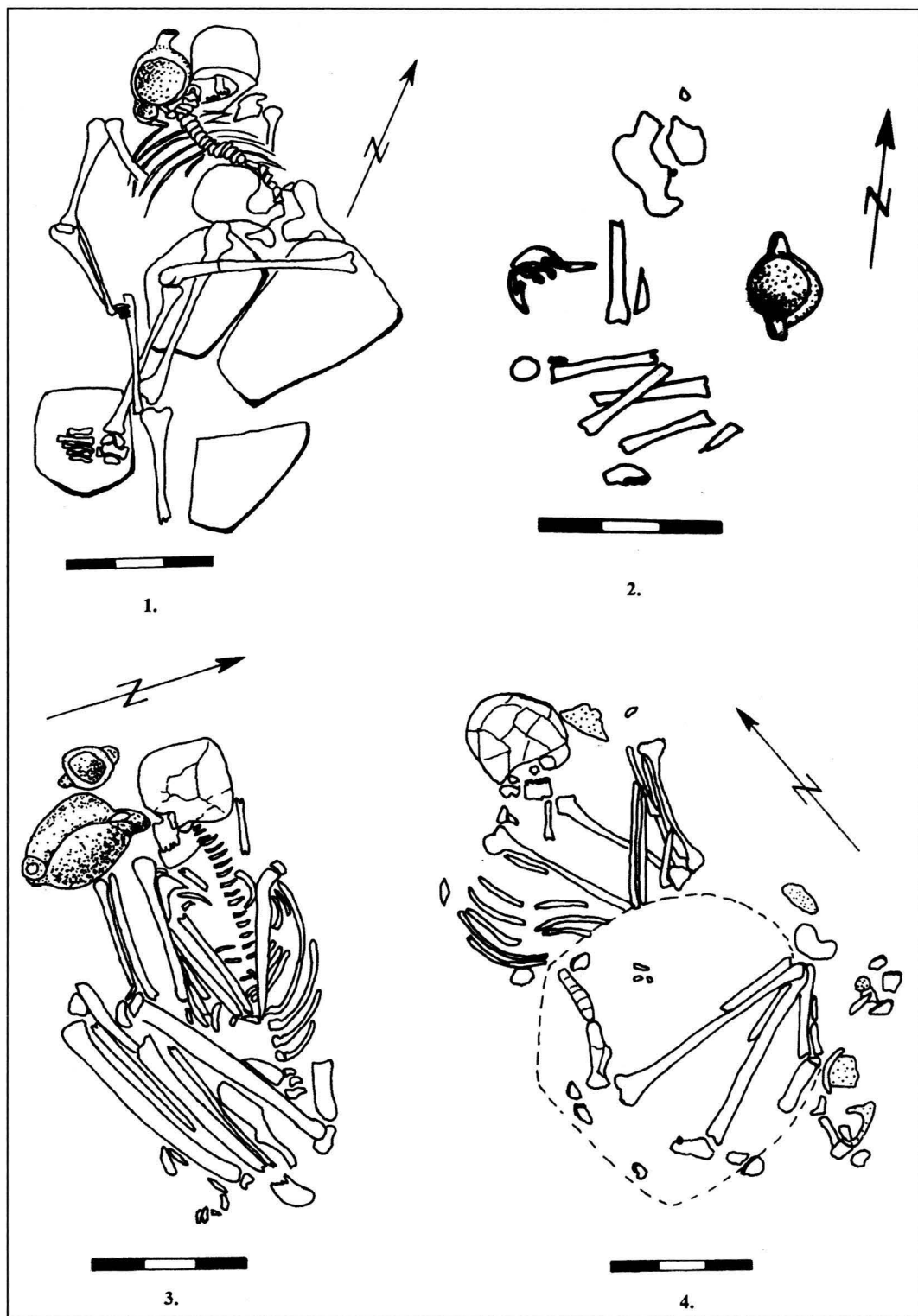


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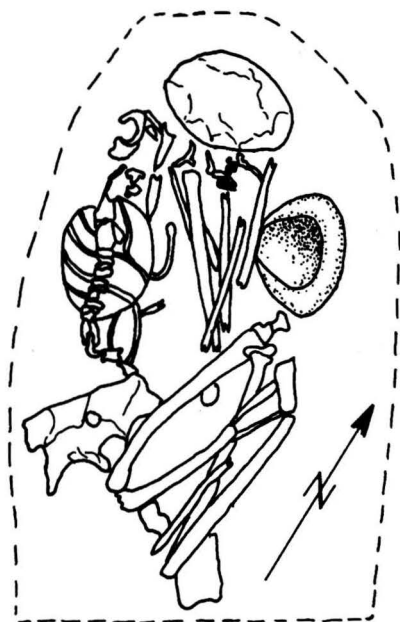


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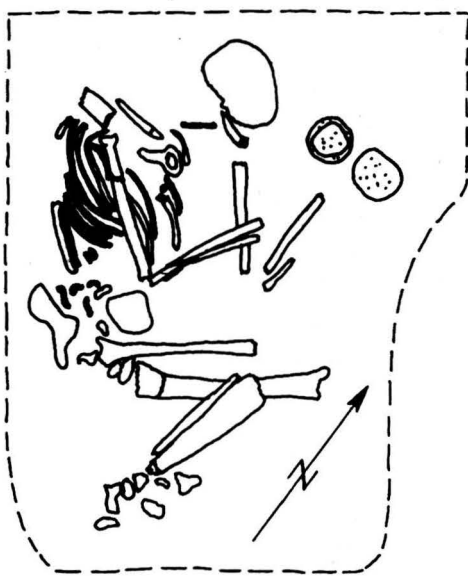
Pl. XIII. Sector B, Wietenberg Culture pottery.



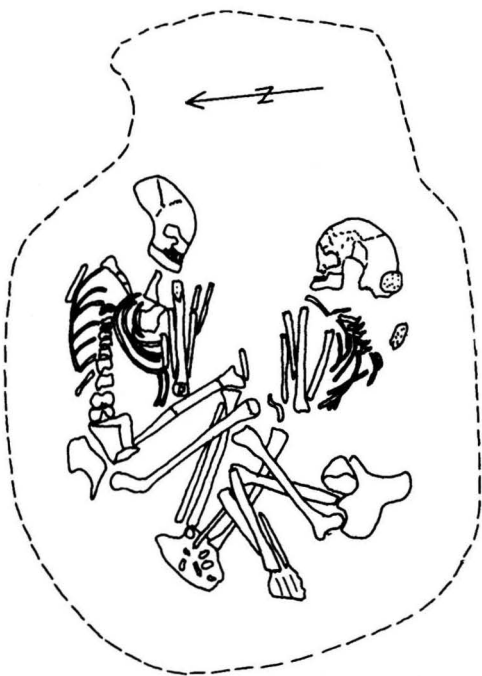
Pl. XIV. Sector C, Bronze Age graves.



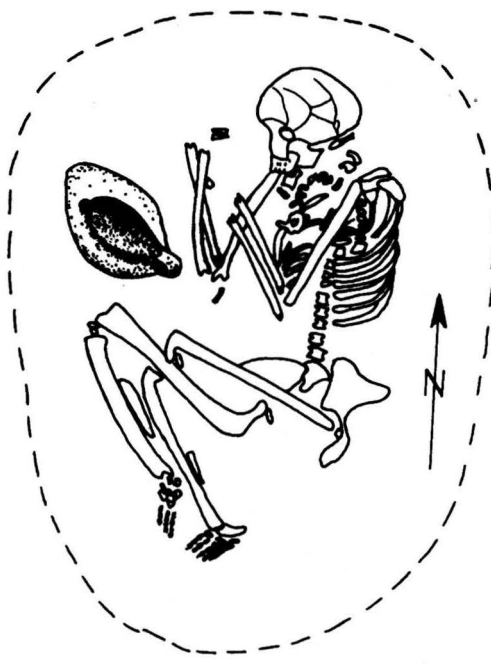
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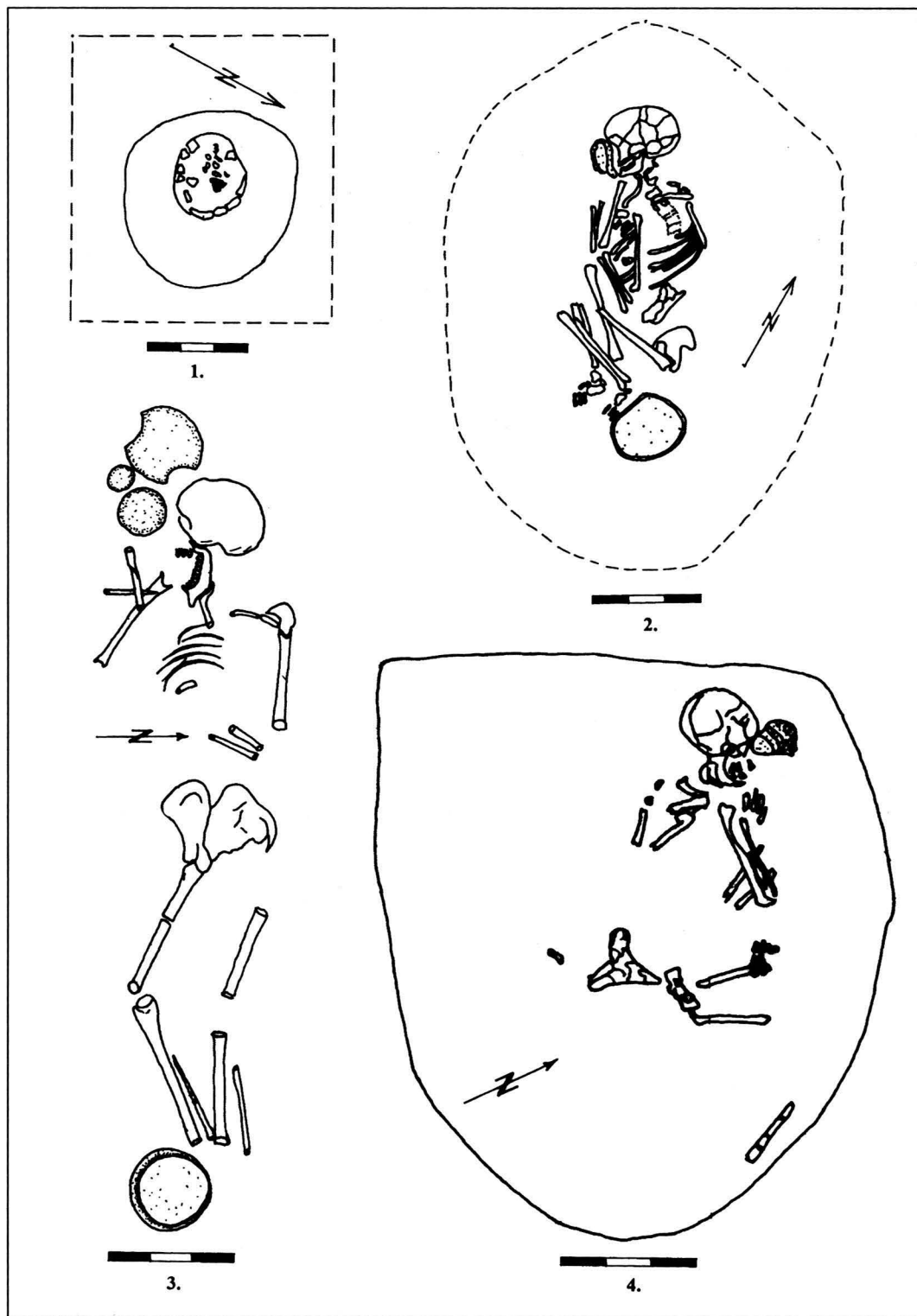


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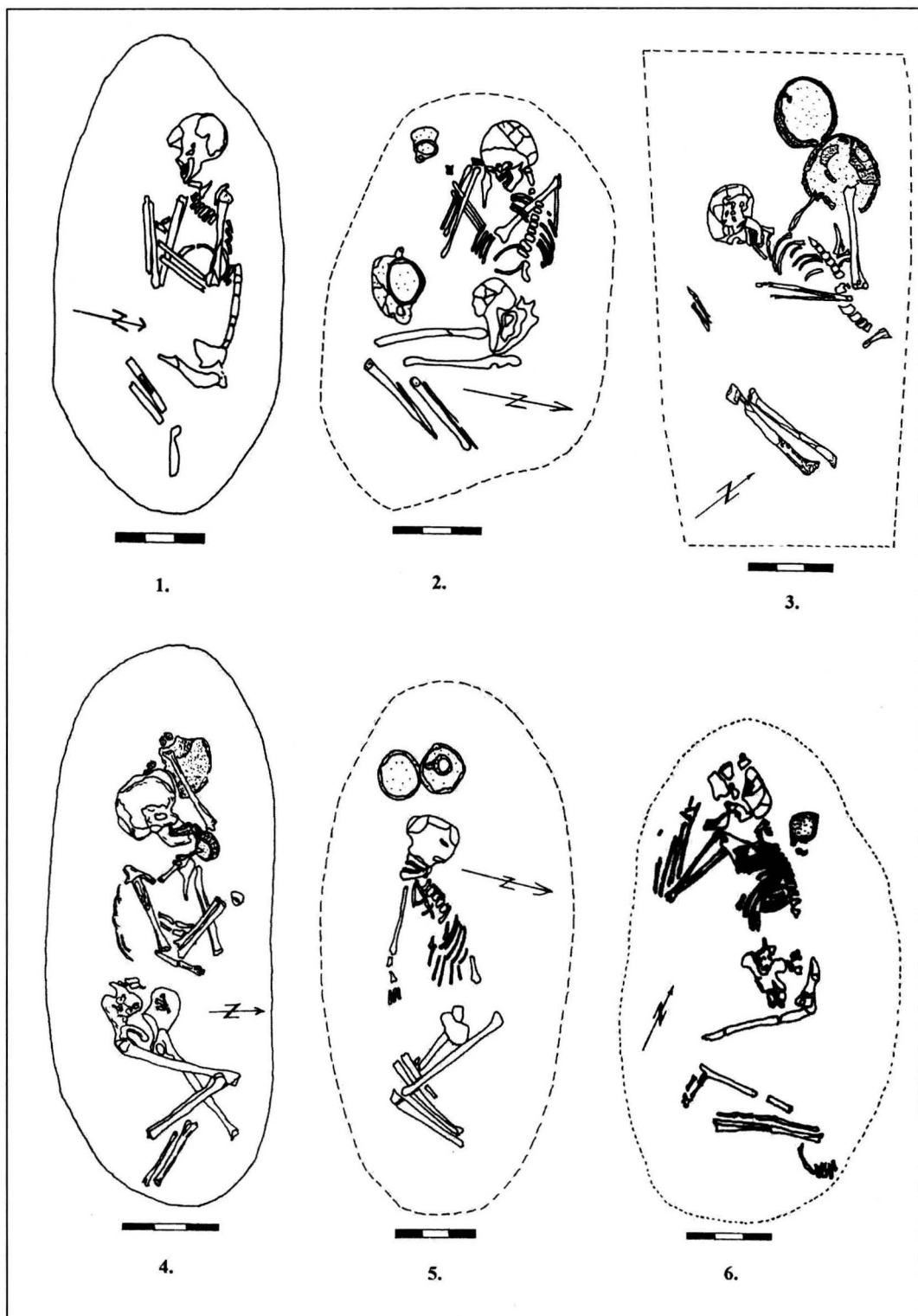


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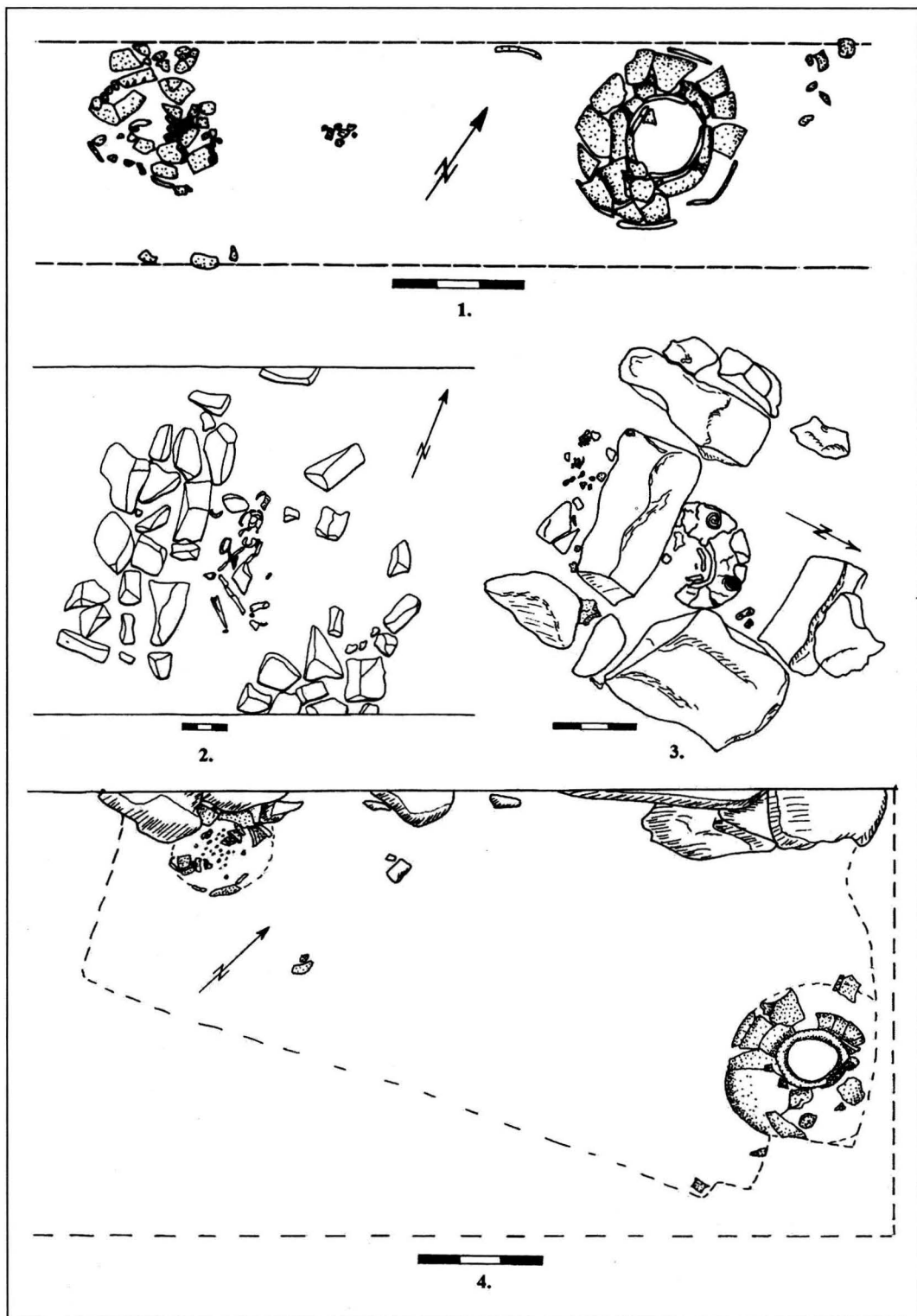
Pl. XV. Sector C, Bronze Age graves.



Pl. XVI. Sector K5, Bronze Age graves.



Pl. XVII. Sector K5, Bronze Age graves.



Pl. XVIII. Sector K6, Bronze Age graves.



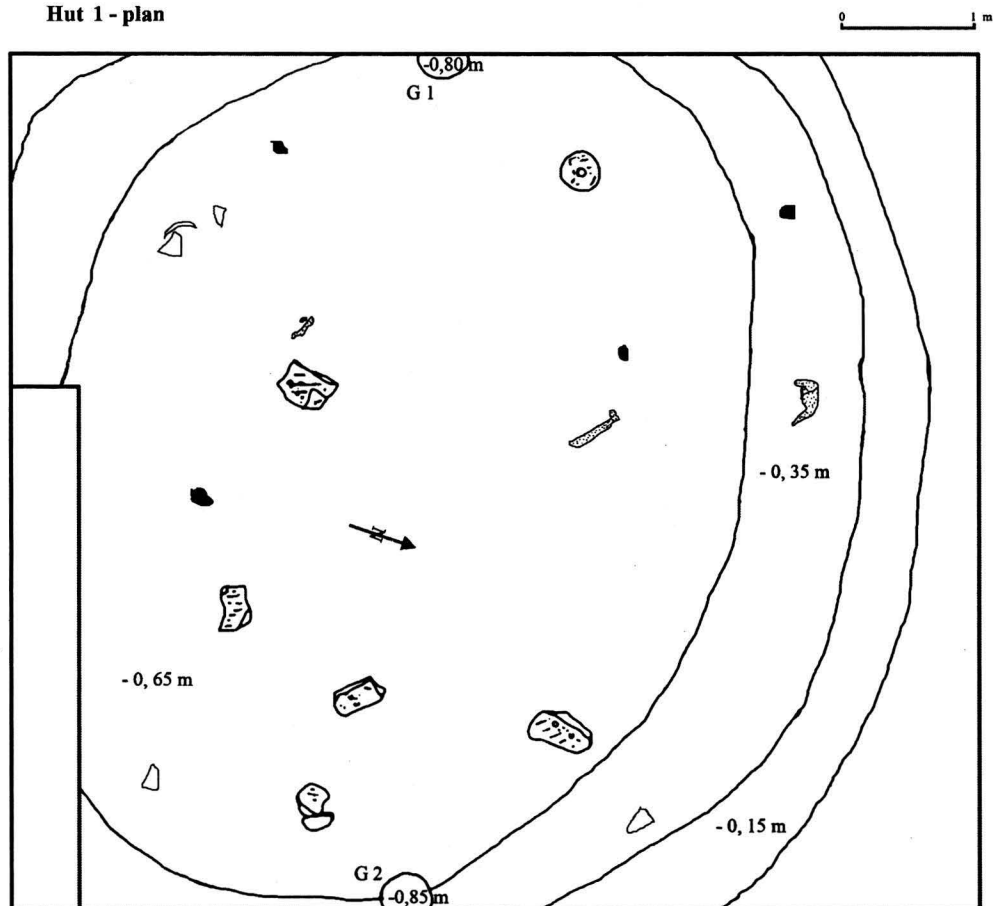
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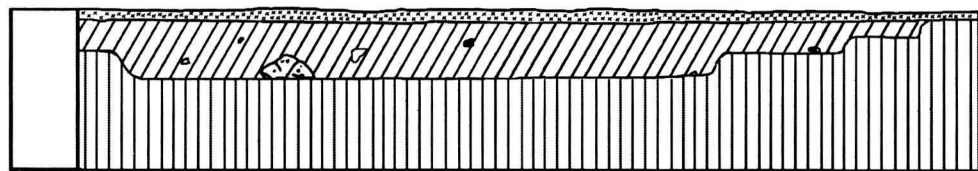
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Pl. XIX. 1. Sector C, Bronze Age grave, so called of "Romeo and Juliet";
2. Sector K6, Bronze Age grave.


Hut 1 - plan




Hut 1 - N-S profile





 - black soil

 - grey soil

 - brown soil

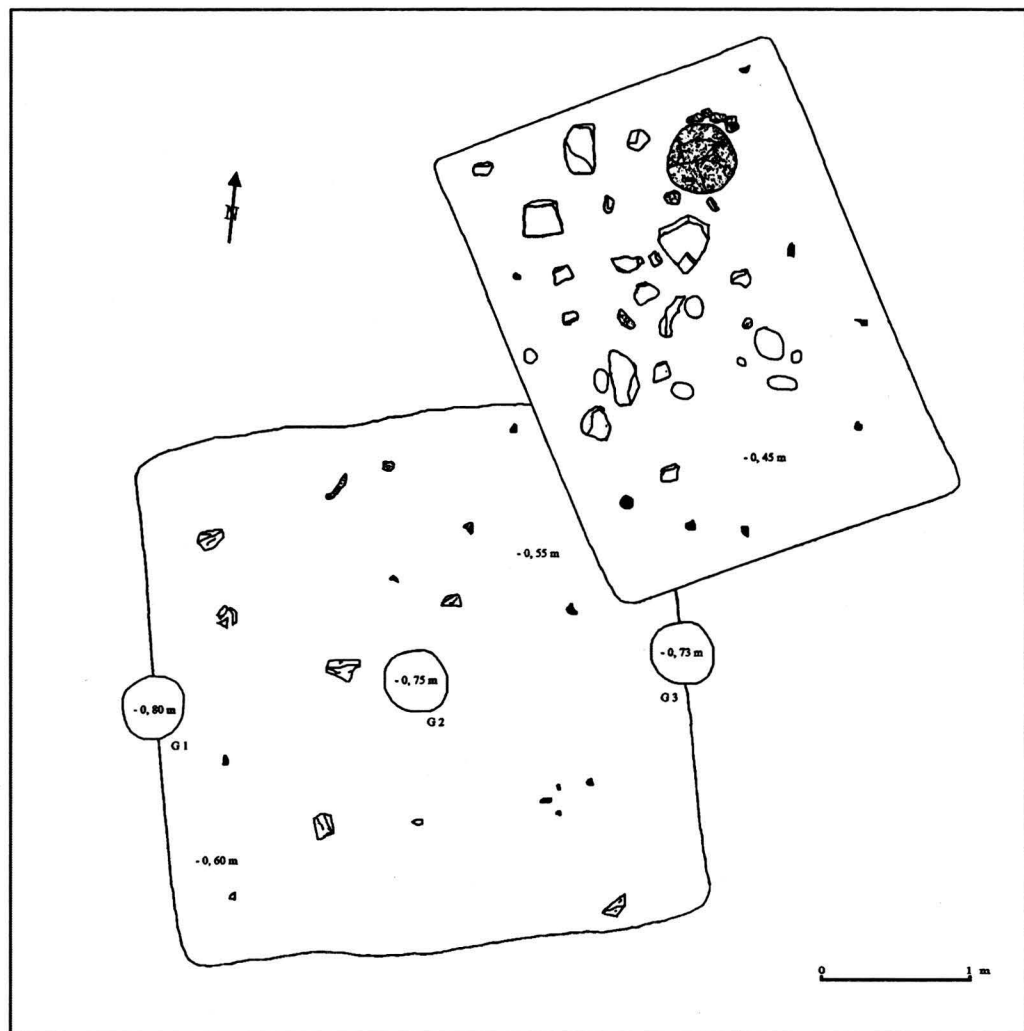
G1, G2 - pits




 - rocks

 - animal bones

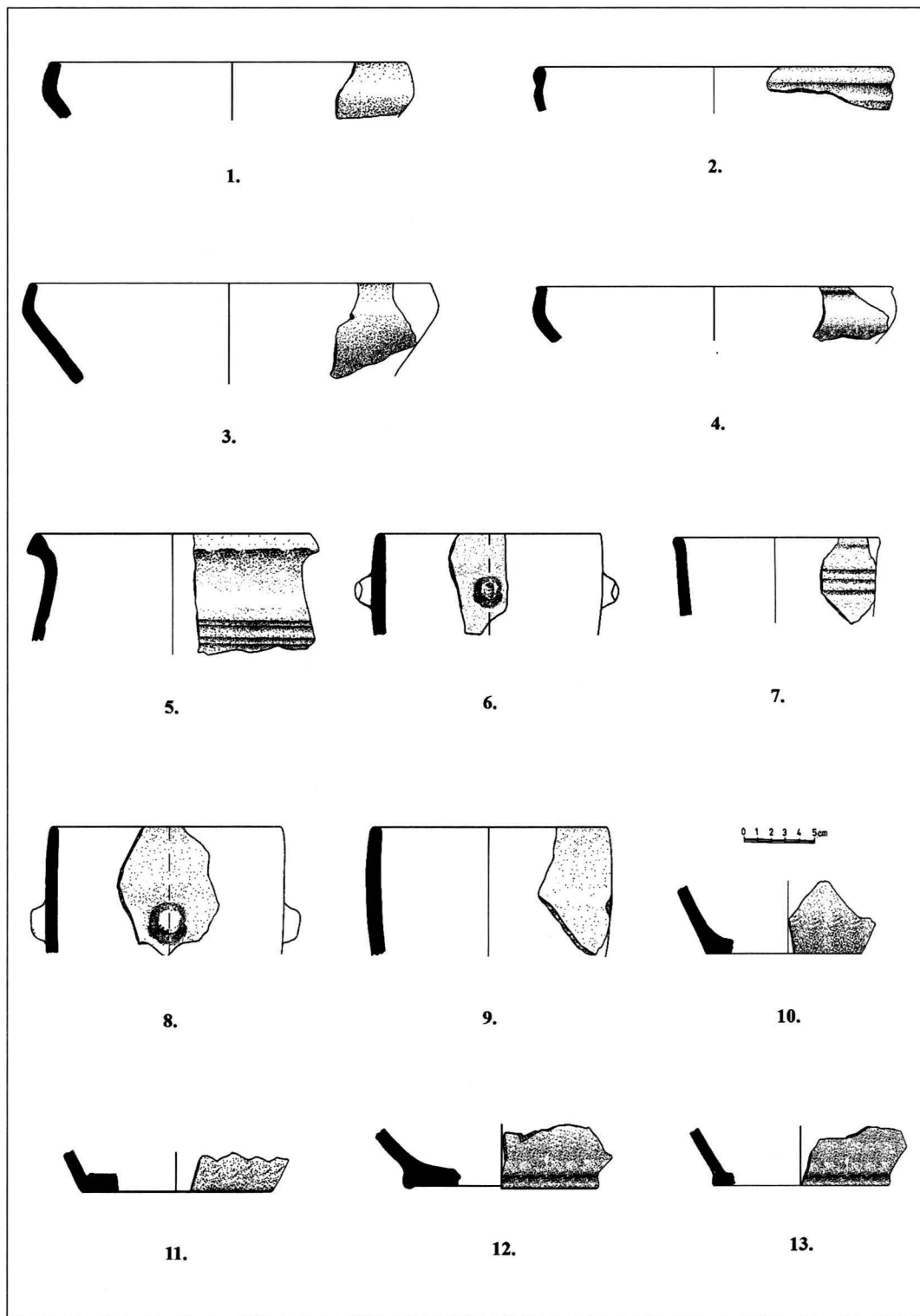
 - pottery fragments

Hut 2 - plan

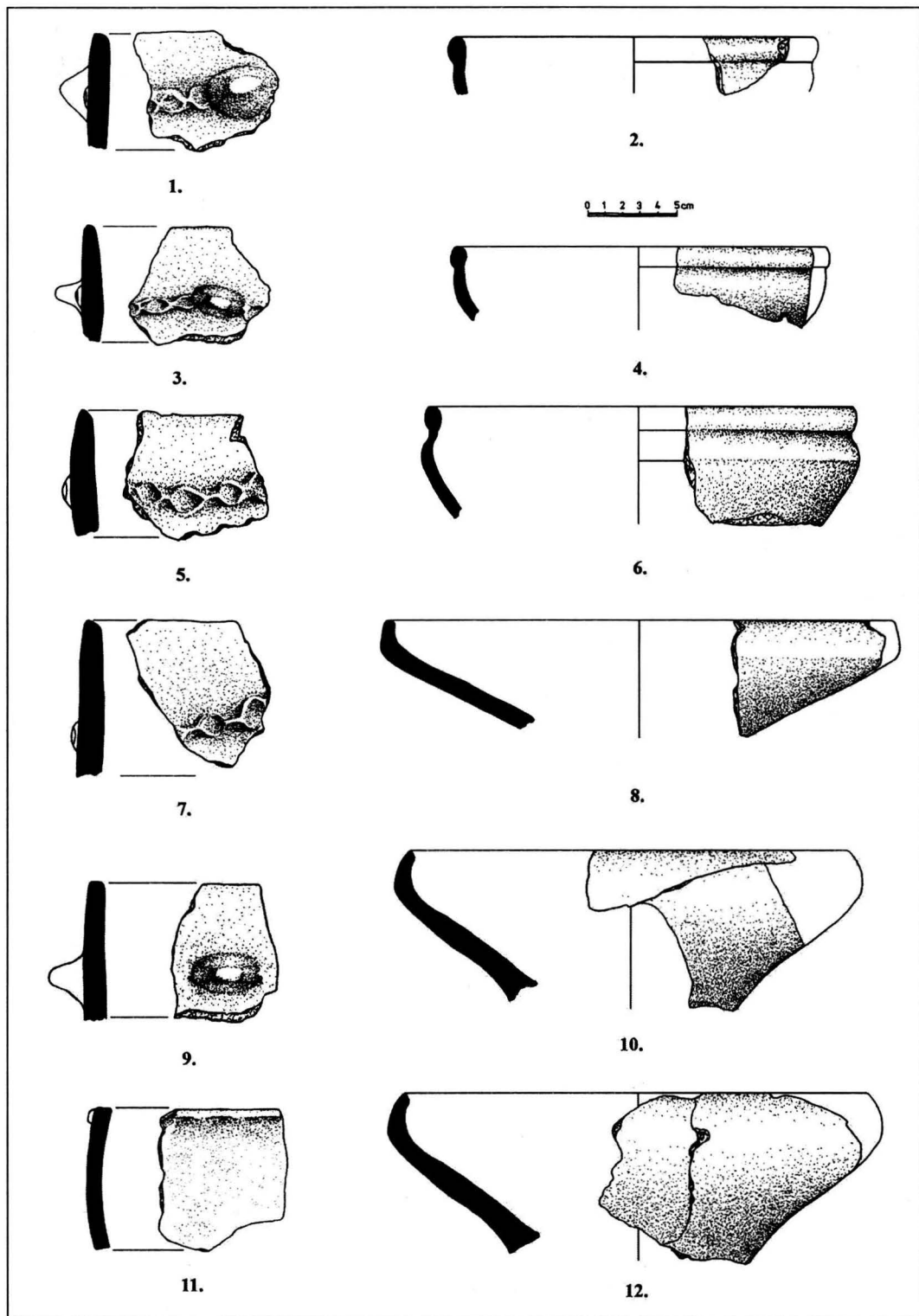


-  - rocks
-  - animal bones
-  - pottery fragments

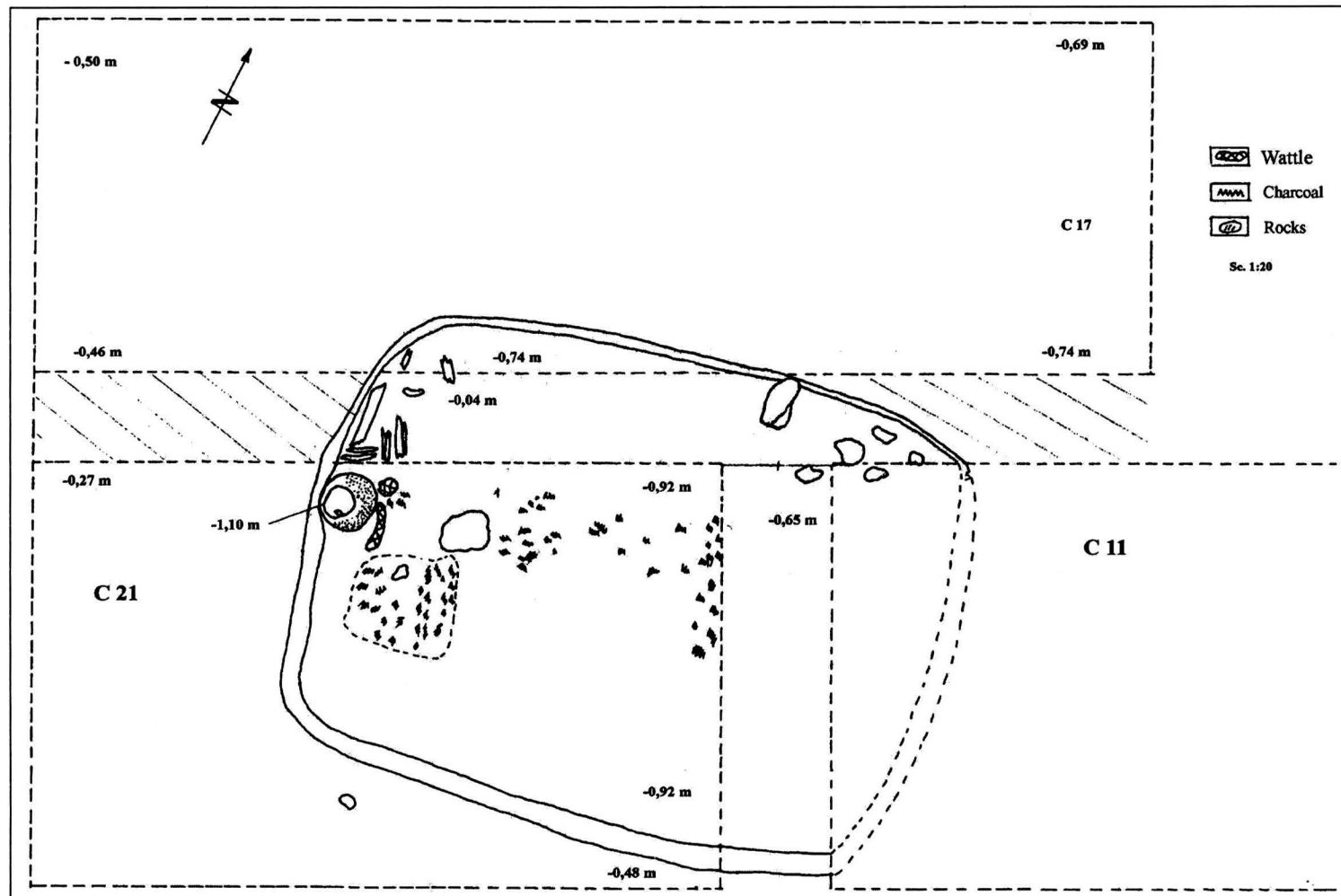
G1, G2, G3 - pits



Pl. XXII. Sector A, The Second Iron Age pottery from Pit-House 1 and Pit-House 2.



Pl. XXII. Sector A, The Second Iron Age pottery from Pit-House 1 and Pit-House 2.



Pl. XXIV. Sector K6, Dwelling L2 (plan), Gepidic period.