

THE GUARDIANS BETWEEN THE IRON GATE AND SOUTH-WESTERN TRANSYLVANIA. CASE STUDIES: THE NECROPOLISES FROM HUNEDOARA (HUNEDOARA COUNTY) AND BĂLĂNEȘTI (GORJ COUNTY)

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Abstract: During the last decade, the number of finds of the Padea-Panagjurski Kolonii type has gone up greatly, almost entirely due to the activity of owners of metal detectors („detectorists”), meaning that a new approach to this phenomenon is in order. One of the areas with many such finds is the one between the Iron Gates on the Danube and South-Western Transylvania.

In Hunedoara – *Grădina Castelului*, one has identified 34 deposits with human bones, 7 deposits of objects without human bones and 5 deposits with animal bones. The 34 deposits with humans contained the bones of 57 individuals, 9 of which were cremated and 48 were inhumed. The vast majority of those inhumed were children, 38 of them less than 7 years old and 20 less than one year old. All the cremation graves are from between the end of the 4th c. BC and the third quarter of the 1st c. BC. Most of the cremation graves are for adults and matures, but there are some children. In all cases where weapons were found and the sex could be determined, the individuals were males, mostly adults/mature, but also children.

In Bălănești, the metal-detector activities and the archaeological excavations revealed four complexes with inventories typical of the Padea-Panaghiurski Kolonii group. The inventory recovered this way includes offensive weapons (*sica* daggers, lance head) and what might be defensive gear (shield, chainmail shirt?), clothing accessories and adornments (fibulae, bracelet, buckle, chain links) and other types of items (thick nail, rod). It is interesting that there is no pottery. The funerary finds can be dated to the second half of the 2nd century – middle or second half of the 1st century BC.

It is without a doubt that, from an archaeological and cultural standpoint, they belong to the Padea – Panaghiurski Kolonii group. Ethnically speaking, they can be linked to local, Dacian warriors, given the whole set of finds from that period (fortresses, settlements, graves). Of course, the finds will be analysed in the context of all the known finds of this type from the area between the Iron Gates and South-western Transylvania.

HUNEDOARA-Grădina Castelului and Hill Sânpetru¹

The analysis of the cremation graves from the plateau in *Grădina Castelului* can offer a number of important and interesting observations and conclusions, because there is a solid documentary foundation for the following: a) a relatively large (eight) number of graves; b) finding human bones in the same area from a period of about four centuries, particularly when we take into

¹ Information's about this vestiges: Sîrbu *et alii* 2006, p. 187-207; Sîrbu *et alii* 2007a; Sîrbu *et alii* 2007b, p. 155-177 ; Roman, Luca 2012, p. 75-89; Sîrbu 2013, p. 265-295; Sîrbu, Roman 2013, p. 373-399; Sîrbu, Roman, 2015, p. 383-418.

account the extreme scarcity of funerary vestiges from the last three centuries before the Roman conquest of Dacia (106 AD), c) anthropological analyses for all the finds, d) the possibility to compare the finds from the cremation graves with both the contemporary item deposits and the children inhumations found in the same area and dating, mostly, from the 1st c. AD, and e) the many items, mostly fibulae, with a narrower dating.

Firstly, we will introduce the graves and the item deposits. Next, we will analyse their defining features. Finally, we will make some general observations.

In **Hunedoara – Grădina Castelului**, one has identified 34 deposits with human bones, 7 deposits of objects without human bones and 5 deposits with animal bones. The 34 deposits with humans contained the bones of 57 individuals, 9 of which were cremated and 48 were inhumed (Fig. 2). The vast majority of those inhumed were children, 38 of them less than 7 years old and 20 less than one year old. All the cremation graves are from between the end of the 4th c. BC and the third quarter of the 1st c. BC. Most of the cremation graves are for adults and matures, but there are some children. In all the cases where weapons were found and the sex could be determined, the individuals were males, mostly adults/mature, but also children (Sîrbu *et alii* 2007a, p. 13-106; Sîrbu *et alii* 2007b, 155-177; Roman, Luca 2012, p. 75-89; Sîrbu, Roman 2013, p. 373-399; Sîrbu, Roman 2015, p. 383-418).

Complex C75 Grave 34. The deposits were below the layer of crushed rock, in an area specially arranged, covered with a thick layer of crushed dolomite, making a small, flat rise (1.90 m along the East-West axis), marked by a discontinuous ring of medium-sized and large rocks. The area was upended over the next centuries, so we cannot tell anymore if this was a tumulus or just a thick layer of crushed rock meant to protect the funerary deposits. A pit was arranged in the dolomite for the pottery, with the bottom at a depth of 0.49 m, and then the deposits were covered with stones.

The anthropological analysis by Alexandra Comşa indicates that the cremated bones are from a robust adult, most likely a male, and from an *Infans II*, about 10 years old.

The funerary inventory most likely to be attributed to the dead consists of the two vessels in the pit and the items laid south-east of it, namely the early fibula, the appliqué, the chain link and the fragments of the helmet cheek-piece, all of them made of bronze (Fig. 3).

Inventory: a) fibula of the Dux type, with free foot, unattached to the bow, which is the earliest item from the metal inventory that can be dated precisely. It belongs to La Tène B1 or the transition from La Tène B1 to La Tène B2, namely the last quarter of the 4th c. BC. (Fig. 3/1-2), b) the small, fragmentary bronze chain-link could have been a part of the chain for attaching the early La Tène fibula); c) appliqué made of thin bronze sheet, almost square, with an orifice in the middle, decorated by stamping with a line of protuberances on the edge, around a cruciform motif; it could be a harness appliqué d) helmet cheek-piece – two bronze-sheet fragments were recovered, thinning towards the outside and with the edge curved inwards, warped by the burning; based on the shape, they are, most likely, the lower part of a helmet cheek-piece, whose type cannot be determined; e) the bi-truncated vessel is hand-made out of semi-fine clay with plenty of sand and crushed shards, put through oxidizing firing, with a chestnut-coloured glazing; the shape is bi-truncated, with a rounded shoulder, tall neck and slightly flared, flat lip and bottom; for handling, the shoulder has four oval protuberances, in the shape of a “cross”, and the bottom of the neck has four other conical protuberances (Fig. 3/6); f) the hand-made plate, has a bi-truncated body, mounded shoulder, narrowing mouth, lip oblique towards the interior and a flat bottom (Fig. 3/6).

The vessel has many analogies in the 5th-4th c. BC, east of the Carpathians (Sîrbu 2013, p. 265-295; Sîrbu, Roman 2013, p. 378-379).

Therefore, the metal items were placed separate from the cremated bones of the dead and from the offerings pottery. The rest of the items, from the following centuries, got there by accident, during the disturbances caused by the graves and deposits during the 2nd c. BC-the 1st c. AD.

Dating: end of the 4th c. BC

Complex no. 12 Grave 7. The dead and the inventory were found at a depth of 0.32-0.35 m, on an area of the rock that was relatively flat, on a thin layer of soil and crushed dolomite; the bones, spread on a surface of 0.35-0.40 sqm, were protected by a circular formation of dolomite rocks and covered with more soil and crushed dolomite. The inventory was found in various areas: the spearhead was west of the cremated bones, oriented SSW, while the curved battle knife was under it; the metal, bone and glass items were on top of or among the cremated bones; the fruit bowl fragments were above the dead, on a layer of soil 4-5 cm thick (Fig. 4).

The recovered cremated bones, burned to different degrees, are from all the body parts of a male, 21-22 years of age (Sîrbu *et alii* 2007a, p. 24-25; Sîrbu *et alii* 2007b, p. 156-157; Sîrbu, Roman 2013, p. 373-374).

Complex no. 71 Grave 31.

In a natural nook in the dolomite, on a thin layer of black-greyish soil, at a depth of 0.24-0.26 m, one found: a mug-urn, the lance-head, the sheathed dagger, the belt plate, and on the sides the belt buckle, all of them covered with a thick layer of black-grey soil, which contained small fragments of crushed dolomite (Fig. 5). The filling of the nook included small fragments of wood coal.

The anthropological analysis identified one male adult.

Inventory: a) iron lance head, with the tip in the shape of a willow leaf and a median nervure, with a long, truncated socket and an affixing orifice (Fig. 5/3); b) curved iron dagger of the *sica* type, with a blood-groove canal, rectangular handle with three affixing orifices, sleeve at the end, decorated with circular grooves (Fig. 5/1); c) scabbard which covered only the forward part of the dagger (Fig. 5/2); d) belt plate with the cored made of an iron sheet, covered with bronze foil, decorated with parallel lines on the short edges and semi-circular motifs the edges of the long sides (Fig. 5/4), e) iron buckle and a pin (Fig. 5/5); f) mug-urn is bi-truncated, wheel-made of fine clay, non-oxidizing firing, grey color (Fig. 5/6).

Dating: 150-51 BC.

Complex 70, Deposit no. 7. Given the relative proximity to C70 Deposit 7, where one has found the remains of a chainmail shirt, a sword, a shield and, probably, a helmet, all of them made of iron, plus the cremated bones of a horse and pig, we can put together complexes C70 and C71, which constitute the grave of a rider with his fighting gear. **Dating:** probably the first part of the 1st c. BC.

The cremation took place elsewhere, the inventory was split and put in two places (C70 and C71), the tomb did not have a tumulus; one aspect worth mentioning is the depositing in the mug-urn, as this is one of the rare such cases among the tombs from this period (Sîrbu *et alii* 2007a, p. 195-196; Sîrbu *et alii* 2007b, p. 157-159; Sîrbu, Roman 2013, p. 375-376).

Dating: 150-51 BC.

Complex 73, Grave 32.

The cremated bones were laid down in two separate, neighbouring sectors, in a natural nook, on top of a thin layer of brown-grey soil and, respectively, in an alveolus in the archaeological layer, both covered with black-grey sediment, grainy, with small and medium-sized fragments of

crushed dolomite (Fig. 6/3). On top of the remains of the burned bones there were pieces of wood coal.

Inventory: a) iron dagger of the *sica* type (fig. 6/2,4), b) scabbard, curved, made of an iron sheet c) iron arrowhead (Fig. 6/1), d) earring fragment (?), made of silver, e) iron belt plate, of which three fragments were preserved, f) large clamp (?) made of iron, g) truncated item (grindstone?), fragmentary, made of sandy limestone h) bronze foil fragment (Fig. 5).

The anthropological analysis revealed that it was an *Infans I* (0-7 years) (Sîrbu, Roman 2013, p. 373-376).

Dating: 150-51 BC.

Complex 74 Grave 33. The metal and the glass items, as well as the cremated bones, were laid down on an arranged surface, in two distinct clusters (Fig. 7).

Cluster 1: at a depth of 0.43-0.45 m, next to the small animal bones, one has found a fragmentary thin bronze sheet, a whole fibula, a fibula spring, a bronze pin, a fragmentary bronze rode and a fragmentary bronze bracelet.

Cluster 2: at a depth of 0.42-0.45 m, there were an iron chain-link, two bronze appliqués (Fig. 7/1-2), a bead, an iron pin, an iron belt plate with a decorated bronze plate (Fig. 7/9), a fragmentary bronze rod, then overlaid with an iron tip, two silver nail-pendants (Fig. 7/3-4), three fragmentary bronze bracelets, fragments of a helmet's cheek piece, a glass bead with an "eye", a bronze fibula, a bronze chain link, a fragmentary iron item, a bronze item, an iron arrowhead and a buckle accessory. Together with the items, at a depth of 0.35-0.45 m, there were many small bone fragments, strongly burned, most of them around the partition between S. XIII and S. XIV, with very few small pieces of wood coal.

The bone analysis showed that they were the bones of *Juvenus* (15-20 years).

The funerary arrangement was topped with a thick layer of pieces of dolomitic limestone, a layer which was oval and covered the funerary inventory in its entirety, as well as the areas immediately next to it, going downwards towards the north, along the slope (Sîrbu, Roman 2013, p. 377-378; Sîrbu, Roman 2015, p. 383-418).

Topography. As one can see, most of the cremation graves, as well as all the item deposits from the 2nd-1st c. BC, are in the southern plateau, from east to west, with a higher concentration in the eastern section.

The concentration of graves and item deposits in the same area, their spatial and chronological proximity and the associations between the categories of items from both types of finds, sometimes forming genuine fighting panoplies, constitute solid evidence and arguments in this respect (Fig. 2).

Sex and age. In C12 we find a man, 21-22 years of age, in C71 a mature man, in C75 there were two individuals, a mature man and an *Infans II* of about 10 years, in C18, C30 and C34 there were adults of unknowable sex, and in C73 an *Infans I*; C74 was a *Juvenus*. Therefore, we can notice that most of them were adults, half of which were men, but there are also children present, sometimes with weapons in the funerary arrangement. One could not determine the sex in all the cases but, in any case, no female could be identified.

Chronology. Without doubt, the earliest grave is the one in C75, from the end of the 4th c. BC. All of the other cremation graves are from between the middle of the 2nd c. BC-the middle/the third quarter of the 1st c. BC, as clearly shown by the inventory found in them.

The inventory present in the cremation graves is rich and diverse, save for three exceptions (Fig. 3-7).

The number of pottery items in the graves is very low: a mug-urn in C71, a piriform vessel, covered with a plate, probably with offerings, in C75, and two fragmentary fruit-bowls in C12, probably shattered during the funerary ceremony. In any case, they were all in rich graves, which had at least two weapons.

The offensive weapons consist, in graves and item deposits, of lance heads (C12, C24 and C71), *sica*-type daggers (C12, C71 and C73 – in the latter two cases with a scabbard), a sword (C70) and arrowheads (C24, C73 and C74).

The defensive gear in the graves and deposits consists of two helmets (C70 and C75), a shield (C70) and a chainmail shirt (C70).

Other categories very much present in the graves and deposits are the clothing accessories (fibulae, buckles) and adornments made of various materials: silver, bronze, iron, glass and bone.

Thus, one found belt plates (C71, C73 – two items, C74), buckles (C71, C74), fibulae (C46 – two items, C74 – three items !, C75), beads (C12, C25, C74, C75), nail-pendants (C74 – two copies), earrings (C25), bracelets (C18, C25, C33, C25, C46, C73, C74), chain-links (C12, C21, C46, C73, C74, C75). One could also mention the bronze appliquéés, such as those from C74 and C75.

The category of miscellaneous items includes bone handles/tubes (C12), small grind-stone (C73), clamp (?) (C73) and other iron items which were strongly oxidized and difficult to identify.

Without a doubt, the most expressive finds consist of the probable association between complexes C70 and C71 (Fig. 5), which contained the cremated remains of an adult rider and his complete fighting gear: helmet, chainmail shirt, shield, lance, sword and *sica*-type dagger. It is worth pointing out that both the riding horse and a pig were cremated. The dead was, most likely, an outstanding member of the aristocracy in the Dacian fortress on *Sânpetru* Hill. It is one of the rare cases where we have the documented fighting panoply of a Dacian rider, as well as signs of complicated funerary rituals.

Children

Position. Of the twenty-seven analysable situations, in seventeen the dead were laid down on their backs, most of them stretched, four were crouched on the left side and four on the right side, while the position could not be made out in two cases because of skeleton dislocation (Fig. 8).

Inventory. In these graves one has found dress items and jewellery: brooches, pendants, earrings, bracelets, rings, beads, in bronze, silver, gold, glass and bone (Fig. 9-10).

According their **age**, one of the interesting aspects is that all of the children under the age of seven (thirty-eight individuals), accounting for eighty percent of the overall number of dead, were inhumed, so inhumation was the only rite that applied to children.

The **sex** of the individuals could be determined in only twenty-two of the cases, twelve of which were male and ten were female, and one could perceive associations with certain kinds of items. One has found a rich and diverse inventory, with wearable items accounting for most of it, obviously, but certain characteristics depended on the age, sex and state of skeleton (Sîrbu *et alii* 2007a, p. 19-116; Sîrbu 2008, p. 71-90).

Conclusions.

We are now going to extract some conclusions.

One can distinguish several stages in the evolution of the human and item deposits in this place (Sîrbu *et alii* 2007a; p. 55-84; Soficaru, Comşa, Stan 2007, 85-106; Ştefan, Duţescu 2007, p. 129-144; Sîrbu 2008, p. 71-90; Sîrbu, Roman 2013, p. 384-386; Sîrbu, Dăvîncă 2015, p. 163-178).

From the 4th-3rd c. BC, we have only one cremation grave (C75) and a pit (C3), but these finds document the presence of a Dacian community in the area, which has not yet been located.

The 2nd-1st c. BC has yielded many cremations and inhumation graves, mostly of adults and matures, but there are some children as well. They are similar to the other graves of Dacian warriors, mostly tumulus, from the 2nd c. BC-1st c. AD, known in other parts of Dacia.

We have looked in detail, on another occasion, at the graves of children inhumed in Hunedoara, the only funerary vestiges documented with certainty from the 1st c. AD, so we will not delve into them again.

One can conclude, based on the finds made so far, that it was only between the 2nd-1st c. BC that both rites – cremation and inhumation – were used here, with obvious preferences based on age, sex and occupation/social status.

The particular importance of the necropolis from *Grădina Castelului – Plateau* is a result of its being, so far, the only one containing burials from the end of the 4th c. BC until the end of the 1st c. AD. Therefore, it directly shows the essential changes in the funerary customs of the Geto-Dacian world, visible here starting with the end of the 2nd c. BC and fully employed in the 1st c. AD (Babeş 1988, p. 3-32; Sîrbu 1993, p. 21-45), a century which yielded predominantly, if not exclusively, inhumations of small children.

Two main directions of interpretation could be settled if we take into consideration all the information at our disposal.

a) It is a necropolis where the Dacian community has applied, for four centuries, a strict „filter” for the gender, age, and social status of the deceased in order to establish the right rite or ritual performed for each. If it was an ordinary necropolis, then, in the first and second stages, they practiced the cremation only, and the deceased were warriors (including an *Infans I*), it followed a transition stage, when cremation and inhumation were practiced, for adults, teenagers and children; during the last stage, only little children were all inhumed.

b) In the last stage of functioning, that is the end of first century BC - first century AD, it has become a sacred area where only children were inhumed, after having been, for a while, exposed/decomposed. We are not aware, so far, of a similar discovery – a necropolis just for children, inhumed or cremated, for Thracians (or for the Celts from the central-eastern Europe?). However, such discoveries are well known in the Greek-Roman world.

This main funerary change might have taken place by the middle/third quarter of the first century BC: if, for a century and a half (150 -50/25 BC), almost all the deceased have been cremated, and they were warriors, all along the other century and a half (~25 BC - 106 AD), all the dead have been inhumed and almost all of them were children! We could not say, for both situations, what happened to the women and children in the first period and, with the adults, in the second period! (Sîrbu *et alii* 2007a, p. 55-84; Sîrbu, Roman 2013, p. 384-386)

HUNEDOARA-Sânpetru Hill

Sânpetru Hill is the fork in the road that follows the watercourses of Cerna and Zlaşti, which are means of communication with direct access to the iron-ore areas (Sîrbu *et alii* 2007a, p. 145-155). Any way you look at it, with a height of 306m, *Sânpetru Hill* looks like a mountain that is dominating the entire valley of Hunedoara (for instance, *The Castle's Garden/The Terrace* has 245m, while *The Castle's Garden/The Plateau* has 262m).

From the geo-morphological standpoint, *Sânpetru Hill* consists of dolomite rocks that look like an erosion promontory caused by watercourses Cerna and Zlaşti; it looks like a long and narrow ridge, with a slightly slanted profile, affected by the natural processes of erosion, mud slides and human intervention (quarries for obtaining dolomite).

On the north-western side, one has identified the base of a stone structure, the foundation of a wall from the Dacian period (Fig. 11/1-2). This structure is about 2m wide, consisting of unpolished blocks of stone. It was erected at the edge of the plateau, in an area with disintegrated, yellow-reddish dolomite. In order to obtain the flat and solid area required for the foundation, they dug through the broken rock and filled the cavities with crushed rock, using yellow soil as the binder. On the outside of the wall, they placed massive stones in order to make it more resilient. The archaeological material found in the area suggests that it was raised in the Dacian period: from the fitting out level of its foundation, there are no discoveries of Dacian material of the 1st c. BC-1st c. AD or before that.

One can say that many types of the Dacian pottery of the 1st c. BC-1st c. AD were found here, such as jars of various capacities, storage containers, rush-light cups, fruit-bowls, mugs; there are fewer bowls and plates (Fig. 11/8; 12). What stand out are the fragments from bowls with embossed decoration, which are extremely rare for the western half of the intra-Carpathian space.

The tools and utensils are represented by grinders and whetstones, piercers and bone tubes, clay spindle-whorls, knives (Fig. 11/3), a drift, large nails and an iron sickle, plus a bronze instrument. The wearable items consist of fibulae (Fig. 11/4-5) and a bronze chain link, a decorative iron appliqué, glass beads (Fig. 11/6) etc. Taking into account the entirety of the inventory here, we can say the inhabitation lasted from the end of 2nd c. / beginning of 1st c. BC until the Dacian-Roman wars (101-106 AD). The prosperity of the community relied, probably, on overseeing the exploitation of the important iron-ore deposits in the area. We need to mention that, when speaking of this Dacian community, we must consider not just the inhabitation of *Sânpetru Hill*, but also the one around the promontory, where the excavations and chance discoveries at the bottom of the plateau have unearthed a great deal of Dacian materials, proof of the existence of inhabitation complexes on the left bank of the river. The end of the Dacian inhabitation was brought about, most likely, by the Dacian-Roman wars from the beginning of 1st c. AD (101-106). This is proven by both the chronology of the Dacian inventory and the discovery of a Roman construction in Section S2, as evidenced by bricks, pottery and bronze and glass items; this could be a Roman observation post, given the strategic position of *Sânpetru Hill*.

BĂLĂNEȘTI-Dealul Mare (Gorj County)

We will briefly introduce the finds from this site, given their importance to the topic of the colloquium.

We need to specify that Vasile Marinoiu, Daniel Sana and Ștefan Georgescu (2016, p. 211-225) have already published information on the condition of the finds and on the goods that treasure hunters turned over the authorities, but without making any observation on the goods, while D. Spânu (2018, p. 228-243) published a thorough analysis on some categories of items, but without giving any data about the context in which they were found. Furthermore, the two *sica* daggers were mentioned in a volume dedicated to this type of weapon (Șirbu, Borangic 2016, p. 33, 63, 122,154). This means that we need to introduce the finds anew, because we believe that joining the two categories of information – from the field and from the typology of the goods – can advance the analysis of these funerary vestiges.

The area.

Bălănești-Dealul Mare is located 8 km east of Târgu Jiu, and vestiges were found in the south-eastern area, 4-5 m above the rest of the plateau, at the altitude of 320 m. The area is now covered by forest.

The exploration excavations were performed in the area indicated by the treasure hunters as the place where they had encountered their find. Five of the sections intersected four of the pits made by the metal-detector users.

We need to specify that the people going around with metal-detectors turned over to the museums the items that they found and indicated in the field the position of the items and the succession of the goods found in the pits.

The contexts.

Cx1. Oval pit (D=0.40 x 0.35 m; Depth=0.35 m), filled with brown-grey sediment, now disturbed. No vestiges of any kind were found. If they ever existed, unknown persons took them at a previous moment.

Cx2. Circular pit (D=0.80; Depth=0.26m), filled with a brown-grey sediment and stone. The undisturbed bottom of the pit contained coal pigments, and a small pit in north-west corner, at a depth of 0.50 m, contained small fragments of cremated bones (Fig. 13/1).

Goods: a lance head intersected with a *sica* dagger, both of them with the sharp edge to the south, while the dagger's tip was next to the fragment from an iron fibula, and under it a fibula, a buckle, an appliqué, a thick nail and fragments from a daggers sheath, all of them made of iron, plus a bronze chain link (Fig. 13/2-5; 14).

Cx3. Oval pit (D=0.76 x 0.40 m; Depth=0.24 m), filled with a brown-grey sediment (Fig. 15/1).

Goods: a *sica* dagger and, in the undisturbed part of the pit, a fragment from a fibula's arc (Fig. 15/2-3).

Cx4. Pit of an almost oval shape (D=0.80 x 0.70 m; Depth=0.32 m), previously disturbed, filled with a brown-grey sediment (Fig. 16/1).

Goods: a *sica* dagger without the handle, folded, and an iron bracelet, found at a depth of 0.30 m, towards the northern edge of the pit. Towards the southern side, at a depth of 0.20 m, there was a fibula, two earrings, two appliques and the tip of a dagger/knife, while the pit's filling also yielded a rivet (Fig. 16/2-8; 17).

Between the two clusters of goods, at a depth of 0.20m, there were some remains of cremated bones and the fragment from an atypical vessel.

Cx6. Oval pit (D=0.27 x 0.23 m; Depth=0.38 m), disturbed by metal-detector users, with the filling consisting of black sediment, that was loose and contained gravel.

Just a few cremated bone fragments were found.

No goods.

Since this complex was just 0.15m away from Cx4, it is possible that they were part of a single funerary complex.

Cx7. Oval pit (D=0.47 x 0.23; Depth=0.07m), filled with grey sediment with coal pigments.

No goods.

General observations

The vestiges were identified as a result of investigations with the metal detector by Cîrstea Valentin and Maria Doru Sorin, in the autumn of 2015. In October of the same year, they turned over to Gorj museum the items that they found and indicated the area of the complexes to the archaeologists. Also, in November 2015, archaeologists Vasile Marinoiu, Daniel Sana and Ștefan Georgescu performed excavations in this area, which generated some data on the complexes and recovered more items.

Even if we do not have some detailed observations made in the field, there is sufficient data for some comments and conclusions

Based on the stratigraphy, on the presence of cremated bones (Cx2; Cx4, Cx6) and pieces of coal (Cx2, Cx7) and on the goods (Cx2, Cx7), one can say that most of the vestiges are either graves or sites connected to the graves. Furthermore, small pieces of cremated bones were also observed on some metal goods.

The goods include diverse categories of items, many of them suggesting that warriors were buried here. Of course, we cannot be sure that the metal-detector users turned over to the Gorj museum all the items that they found. There are some differences between the number and categories of items in the two mentioned publications (Marinoiu, Sana, Ștefan 2016; Spânu 2018), but the main, representative types are the same.

Thus, the main categories of goods are:

- a) Offensive weapons: lance head, three/four *sica* daggers and a dagger sheath;
- b) Defensive gear: shield, perhaps a chainmail shirt;
- c) Clothing accessories: two fibulae, one buckle;
- d) Adornments: a bracelet, two earring, two appliques;
- e) Miscellaneous: two chain links, a thick nail, a rod.

Based on observations regarding the funerary rite and rituals, as well the whole of the goods, especially the offensive weapons, there is no doubt that the graves in question fall in the category of the Padea-Panagjurski Kolonii cultural-archaeological phenomenon.

We can only note the small number of lances, the absence of some harness pieces and of the pottery. Also, there is no certainty regarding the presence of defensive gear, since the presence of one shield seems only to be suggested by the presence of a small bent nail, and the two hemispherical buttons with attachment clamps could suggest that they belong to a chainmail shirt. But, as we already said, we cannot be sure that the entire inventory found by means of metal detectors was recovered and turned over to the museum.

Given the number of *sica* daggers, at least three warriors were buried here.

As Daniel Spânu (2018, p. 230-234) observed, what is interesting is the presence among the goods of these graves of the Kostrzewski K fibula and of the bracelet with a tubular body and filiform ends, which points to the existence of cross-regional trading along the north-east axis, as well as from the west.

Based on the chronology of some characteristic items, especially the fibulae and some clothing accessories or adornments, the vestiges in question can be dated to the last quarter of the 2nd century-first half of the 1st century BC.

In order to have more information on the importance of the passageway from the Iron Gates area to South-western Transylvania, we will further present some data on a similar finding on this route, namely that from **FLOREȘTI (MEHEDINȚI COUNTY)**².

Here, as in the case of Bălănești, the first funeral findings were identified with the help of the metal detector. Thus, in April 2014, Mr. Vasile Enescu from Voloiac, dug three excavations on *Culmea Motrului*, Florești village, recovering various pieces of funerary inventory, especially battle gear, all presenting traces of burning and intended deterioration. According to the founder's information, incinerated bones were found in only one of the excavations.

After the pieces became part of the inventory of the Museum of the Iron Gates Region from Drobeta Turnu Severin, archaeologists Neagoe Marin and Cristian Manea, employees of the said

² These findings will be exhaustively published in the paper *Dacian Funeral Findings (2nd-1st c. BC) from Florești, Mehedinți County*, by Valeriu Sirbu, Marin Neagoe and Cristian Manea (forthcoming).

institution, performed, in the summer of 2014, preventive excavations in the area³, while also making use of the information provided by Vasile Enescu.

As a result of the narrow diggings performed – only three probing sites, amounting to only 13.5 sqm, which also included the areas previously affected by Vasile Enescu, two more funerary complexes were identified, one containing incinerated bones.

Therefore, five complexes with funerary inventory were found, only two of them containing incinerated bones, most probably human, some graves also containing refuse of wood charcoal.

The inventory recovered is rich and diverse: it consists, almost in its entirety, of weaponry and fighting gear: three daggers of the *sica* type and an iron *sica* sheath/scabbard, three swords and one sword sheath, three lance heads and one shaft, three shield *umbos* and one bit. One notices the fact that there are three pieces of *sica* daggers, lances and shields (Fig. 18). In a complex, just a fragmented bit was found, indicating a knight, but it is not certain whether this deposition can or cannot be associated with any of the inventories from the other graves. All pieces had strong traces of burning and deterioration (bending or fragmenting), which evidences an obvious ritualistic intention.

Pieces for wearing are scarce: two iron bracelets in a complex, a bronze plate piece in another, and a bronze fibula found near a complex. In the miscellany category, we mention a bronze piece ("a lid") whose utility is hard to determine (Sîrbu, Neagoe, Manea 2019). The inventory recovered is specific to warriors, one being a rider.

It is unquestionable that just a small part of the complexes existent in the area has been surveyed. In fact, Mr. Vasile Enescu actually mentioned that the detector indicated numerous depositions of metal pieces in more extended area.

Based on the present information, there can be ascertained the existence of a Padea – Panaghiurski Kolonii necropolis. Judging by the ensemble of rituals and inventory, the dead were most probably Dacian warriors.

Final remarks

As the Padea-Panaghiurski Kolonii-type (Woźniak 1974) findings from Oltenia and south-western Transylvania have been extensively discussed, in what follows, we will only mention some aspects related to them.

As previously stated (Sîrbu 2007, p. 143-163; Sîrbu, Arsenescu 2006, p. 163-186; Sîrbu, Borangic 2016, p. 41-47, 131-138), there are not any Celtic settlements known after the first quarter of the 2nd century BC (c. 170-160 B.C.), north of the Danube, including in Transylvania. This leads to the question: where could the dead found north of the Danube (Oltenia), associated to the Padea - Panaghiurski Kolonii cultural-archeological group come from? Assuming that they could be Scordisci, deceased north of the Danube in battles fought in this area, then two more questions arise: whom did they fight and who buried them after the battle? At this moment, there is no written information of any battles between Dacians and Scordisci north of the Danube, so that the latter to have been victorious, thus, able to bury their dead according to their rituals. Also, there is no evidence of massive, repeated destruction of Dacian settlements and citadels in south-western Romania, as a result of some hypothetical Scordisci campaigns.

On the contrary, as informed by Strabo (VII, 3, 11), Burebista attacks Thrace and the territories at the confluence of the Sava, Drina and Danube rivers, where "*he not only laid waste the country of the Celti (Scordisci, our note) who were intermingled with the Thracians and the*

³ See the Preventive Archeological Research Report of January 1, 2015, remitted to the Ministry of Culture.

Illyrians, but actually caused the complete disappearance of the Boii, who were under the rule of Critasirus, and also of the Taurisci". It is, therefore, obvious that these battles took place south of the Danube, where the Scordisci lived, and not north of the river.

In the entire area north of the Danube where graves characteristic to the Padea - Panaghiurski Kolonii group were excavated, only Dacian-specific citadels, settlements, sanctuaries and repertories have been found. Moreover, in some cases, these graves are actually in the neighboring area of Dacian residential centers, as is the case for Cugir (Crișan 1980, p. 81-87), Hunedoara (Sîrbu *et alii* 2007a), Mala Kopanya (Kotigoroško 2009, p. 58-133; Kotigoroško 2015), or Dacian settlements, as is the case of Spahii-Câmpul Spahiului (Gherghe 2015). If we assume that there were joint raids of Dacian and Scordisci warriors in the south of the Balkans, as mentioned by certain written sources, it is obvious that their graves should be south of the Danube, and not north of the river! The presence of isolated Scordisci graves north of the Danube cannot be completely ruled out, but it needs to be documented for each case. The presence of some massive groups of Scordisci warriors that might have played a major role in the evolution of the society and in the coagulation of the Dacian political structures north of the Danube is under no circumstance evidenced (Sîrbu, Arsenescu 2006, p. 163-186).

In Spahii-Câmpul Spahiului (Gorj County), both the settlement and the necropolis with plane burial graves have been surveyed, both being dated from mid-second century to the latter half of the first century BC (Gherghe 2015). The inventory of the two sites is similar, all ceramic vessels being specific to Geto-Dacian pottery, without traces of Scordisci pottery. The presence of a few weapons and jewelry specific to the Celtic world in some graves can be explained by their being superregional goods that might have been brought in various ways in the area. Therefore, the assumption that this was a Dacian community is fully well-founded.

Unfortunately, there is little information on the citadels that guarded from the south, from the Oltenia Sub Carpathians, the access from Tg. Jiu Depression on the route to Petroșani, Hașeg, Hunedoara.

We only mention here the two citadels from Polovragi, Gorj County, in the sites of *Cetățuie* and *La Crucea lui Ursachi*, genuine "eagle nests" on the rocky left banks of the Olteț River; although there is contradictory information on their fortification types, building stages and chronology (centuries 1st BC-1st AD.), it is certain that they were intended, besides their local roles, to prevent access to south-eastern Transylvania (Marinescu 1972a, p. 79-97; 1972b, p. 5-13; 1977, p. 25-32; Glodariu 1983, p. 80-82).

The first Dacian citadel in south-eastern Transylvania, on this route, is Bănița (Glodariu 1983, p. 82-83), followed by the entire citadel complex surrounding Sarmizegetusa Regia (Glodariu *et alii* 1996).

If we take into consideration these cultural-archeological realities, we can consequently assert that, for the area north of the Danube, the inventories of the Padea - Panaghiurski Kolonii type belonged to the Dacians, and also that the hypothesis of a "migration of the Danubian Knights" to south-western Transylvania cannot be evidenced. It is more accurate to speak of the imposition and spreading of a cultural pattern inside the northern Thracian world (Sîrbu 2015, p. 13-14; Sîrbu, Borangic 2016, p. 41-49, 131-138).

The pieces, especially jewelry, of Central-European or Scordisci origin, not truly numerous, from the Dacian citadels, settlements and graves, come from trades, gifts, pillaging or marriage alliances.

Can we still discuss of the Padea-Panaghiurski Kolonii cultural-archeological group, in its essential understanding, after the foundation of the Dacian Kingdom by Burebista?

“It is more appropriate to regard this cultural manifestation as unequivocally belonging to the Geto-Dacian culture, the only one among the participants in the initial hybridization that had substantially assumed a new identity and had gradually solidified it in the shape of a powerful kingdom. The bearers of this culture were the warlords, soldiers and builders, metallurgists and crafted artisans, known in the historical sources as the Dacians” (Sîrbu, Borangic 2016, p. 47, 138).

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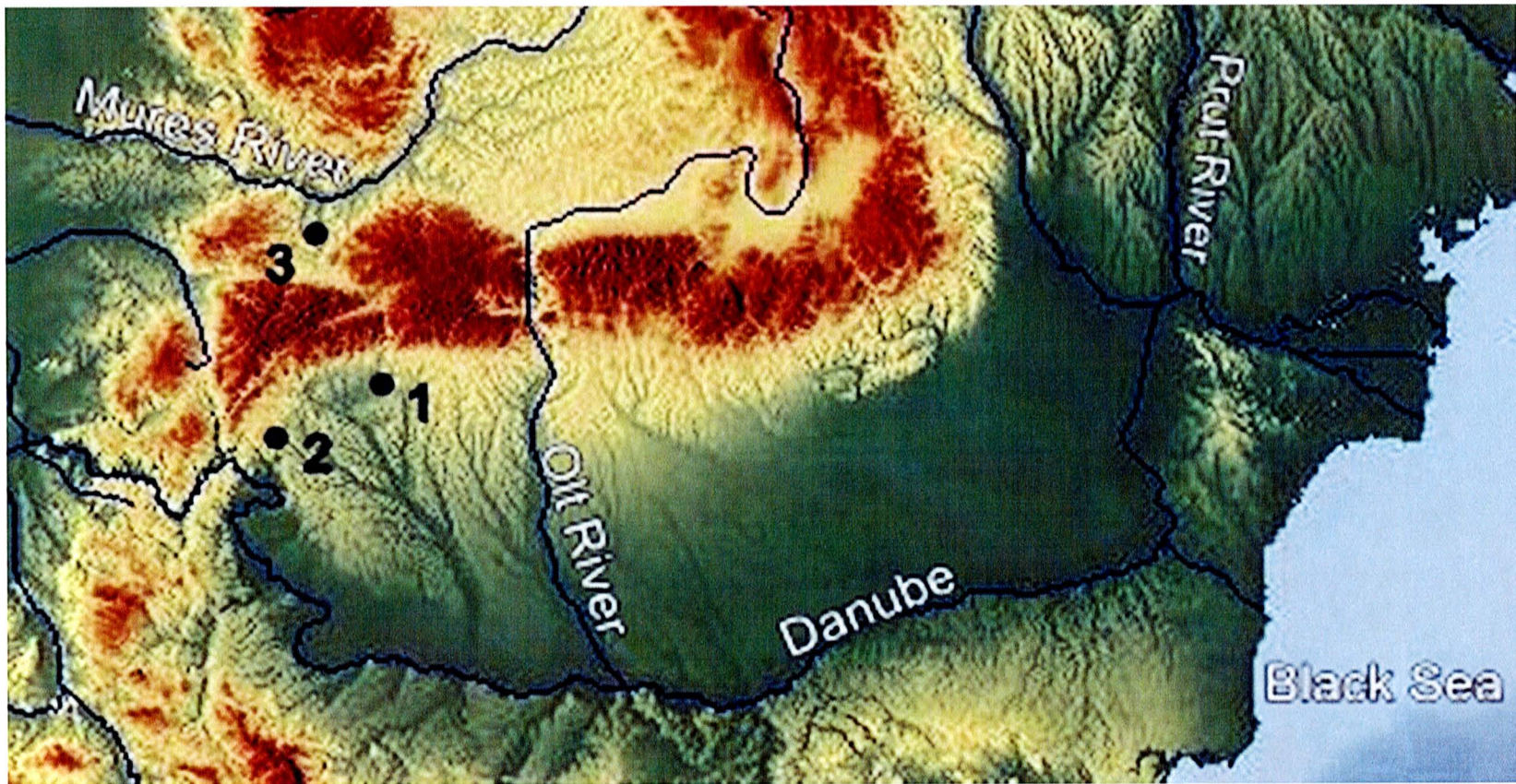


Fig. 1. List of localities: 1. Bălănești (Gorj County); 2. Florești (Mehedinti County); 3. Hunedoara (Hunedoara County).

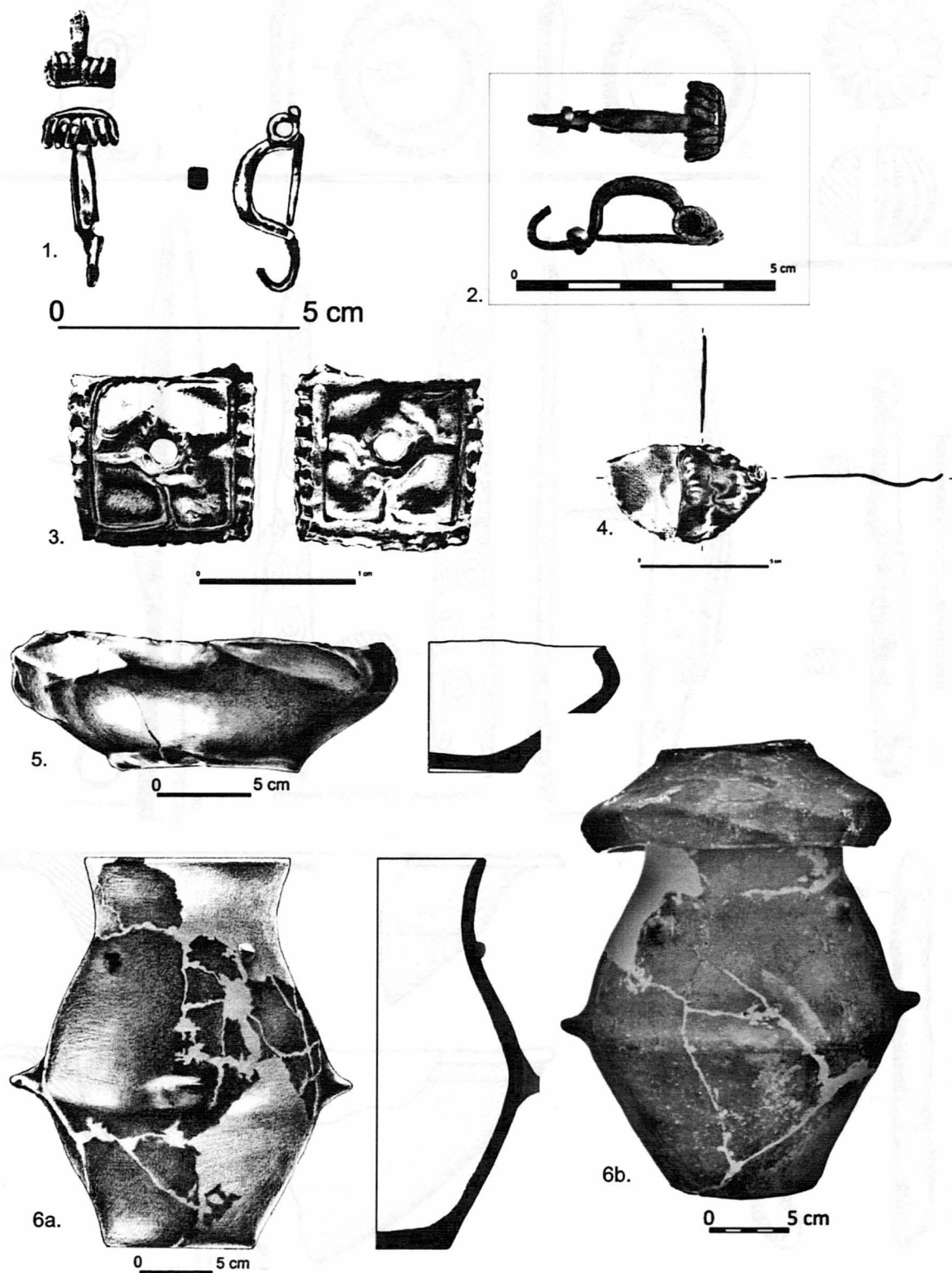


Fig. 3. Hunedoara-The Castle's Garden. C75G34 (after Roman, Luca 2012; Sîrbu, Roman 2013).

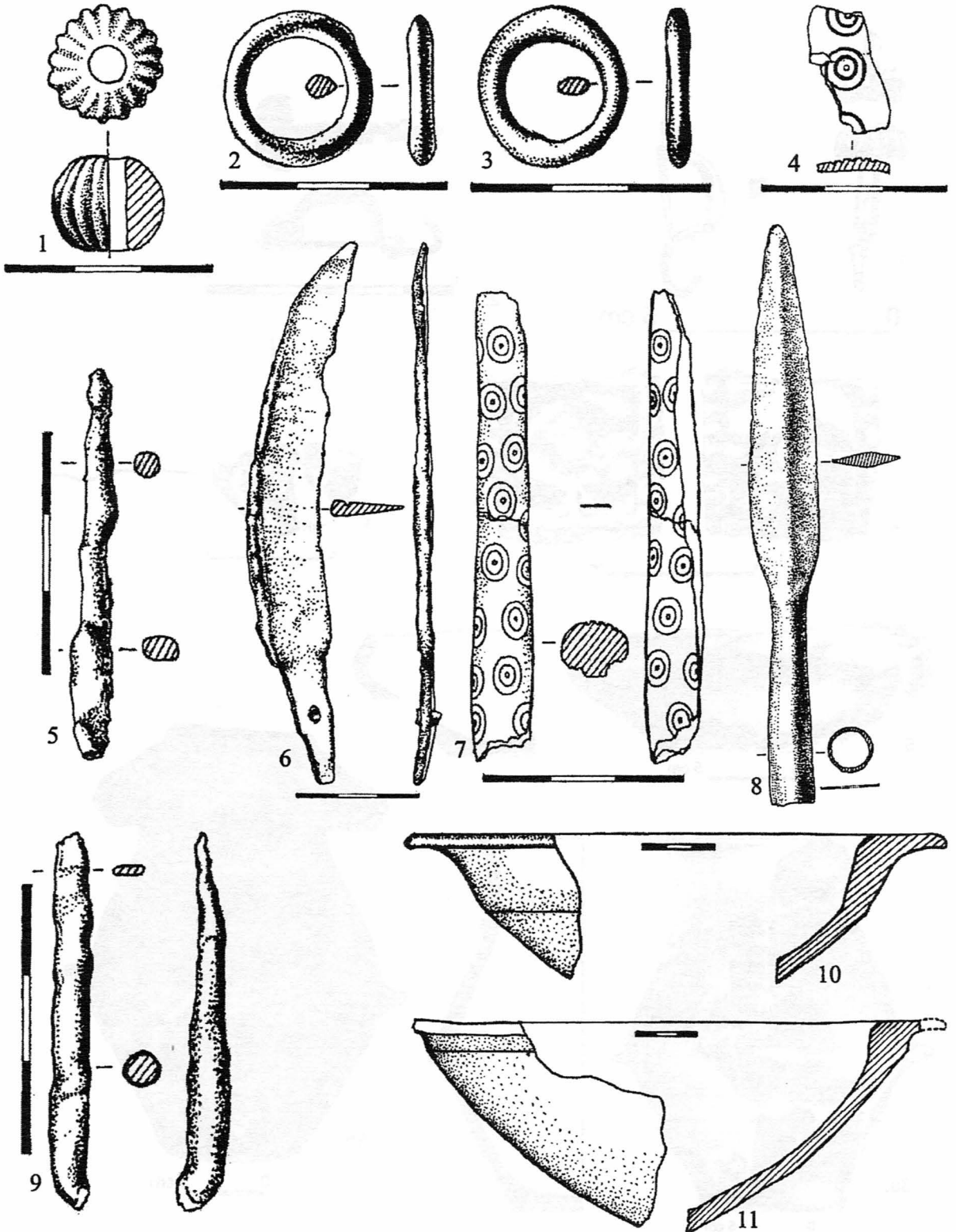


Fig. 4. Hunedoara- *The Castle's Garden*. C12G7 (after Sîrbu et alii 2007; Sîrbu, Roman 2013).

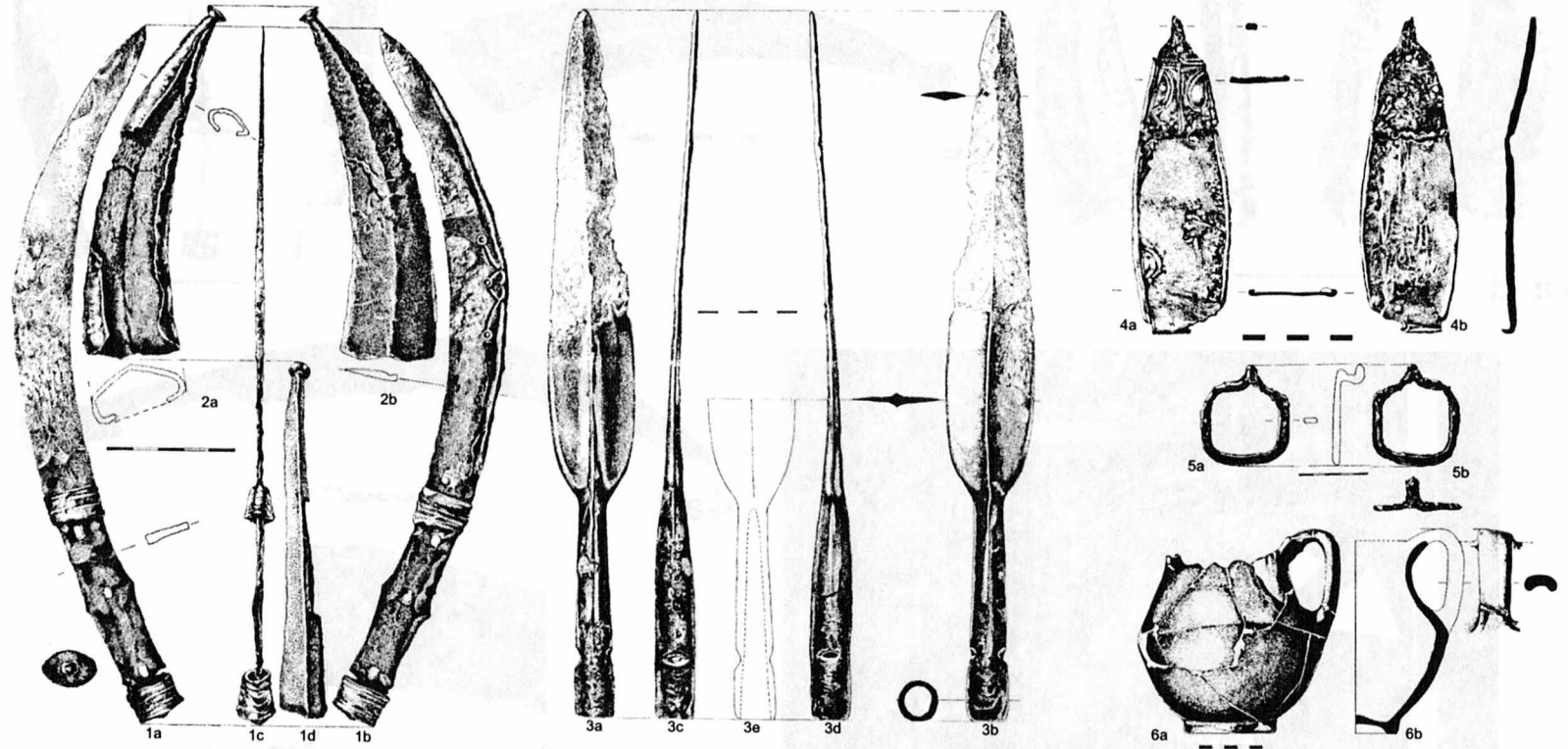


Fig. 5. Hunedoara- *The Castle's Garden*. C71G31 (after Sîrbu, Luca, Roman 2007).

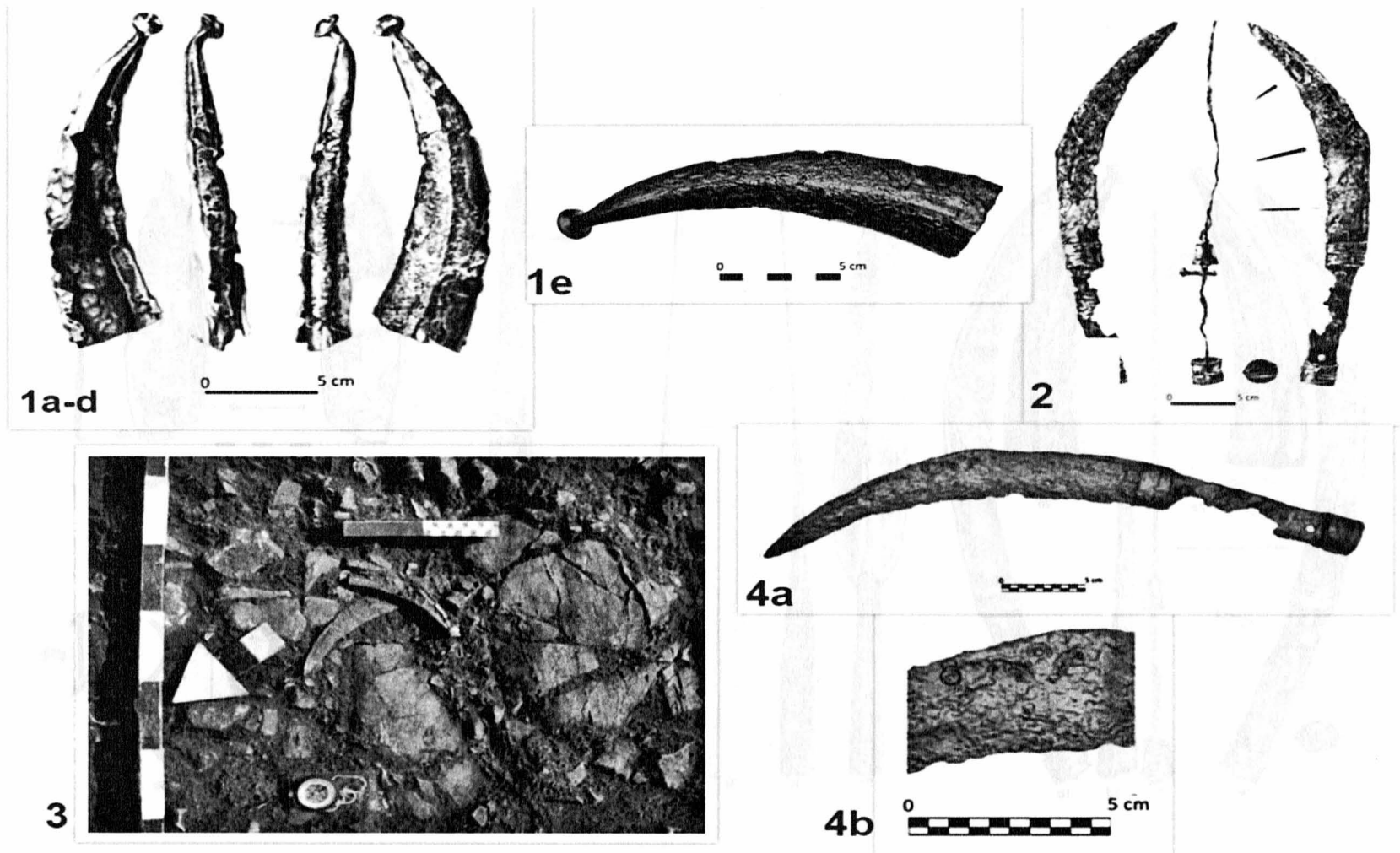


Fig. 6. Hunedoara- *The Castle's Garden*. C73G32 C75D34 (after Roman, Luca 2012; Sîrbu, Roman 2013, corrected).

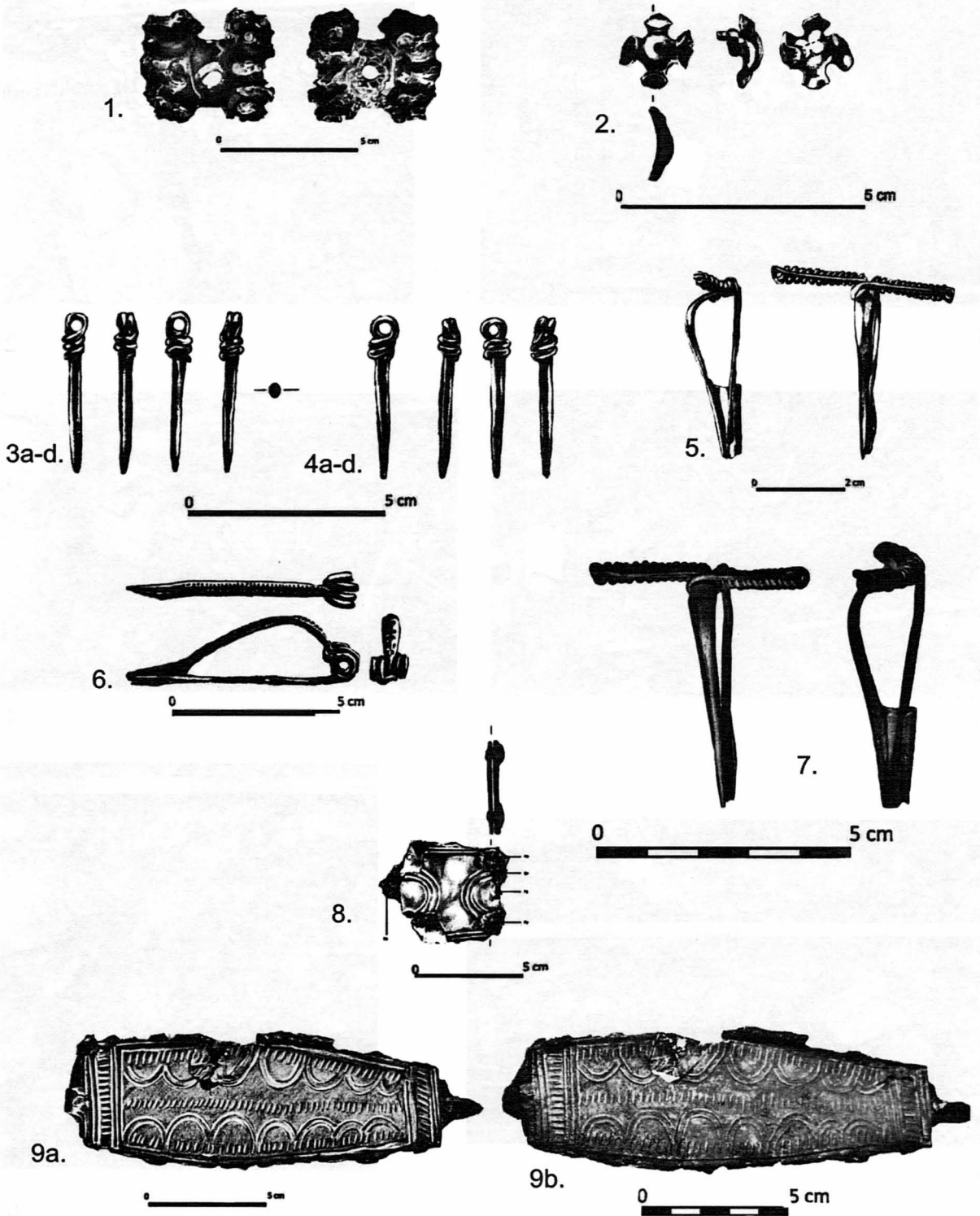
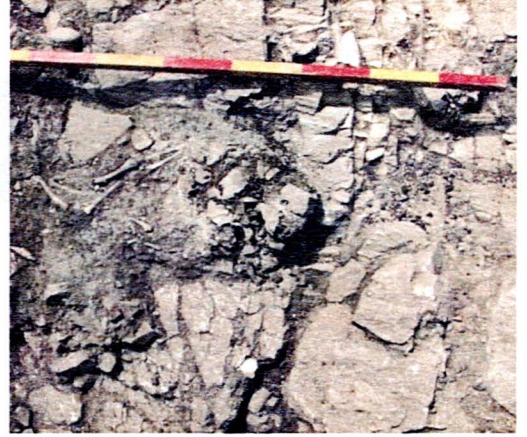


Fig. 7. Hunedoara- *The Castle's Garden*. C74G33 (after Roman, Luca 2012; Sîrbu, Roman 2013, corrected).



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Fig. 8. Hunedoara- *The Castle's Garden*. Child graves. Complexes 6 (1), 8 (2), 7 (3-4), 9 (5), 10 (6) (after Sîrbu *et alii* 2007).



Fig. 9. Hunedoara-The Castle's Garden Hunedoara-The Castle's Garden/Plateau. Items from child (1-4, 6-10, 12-16) and adult (19) graves: Dead 8 (1,9), 15a (2), 14 (3), 13b (4), 12a (6), 11a (7), 26a (8, 14), 24 (10), 7 (15), 2a (16), 27 (19) and Deposits 1 (17), 3 (11, 21) and 5 (18); 5, 20 isolated objects. 1-8, 11-13, 18-19, 21 bronze, 9 gilded silver, 10 canine tooth, 14-17 glass, 20 gold (after Sîrbu *et alii* 2007).

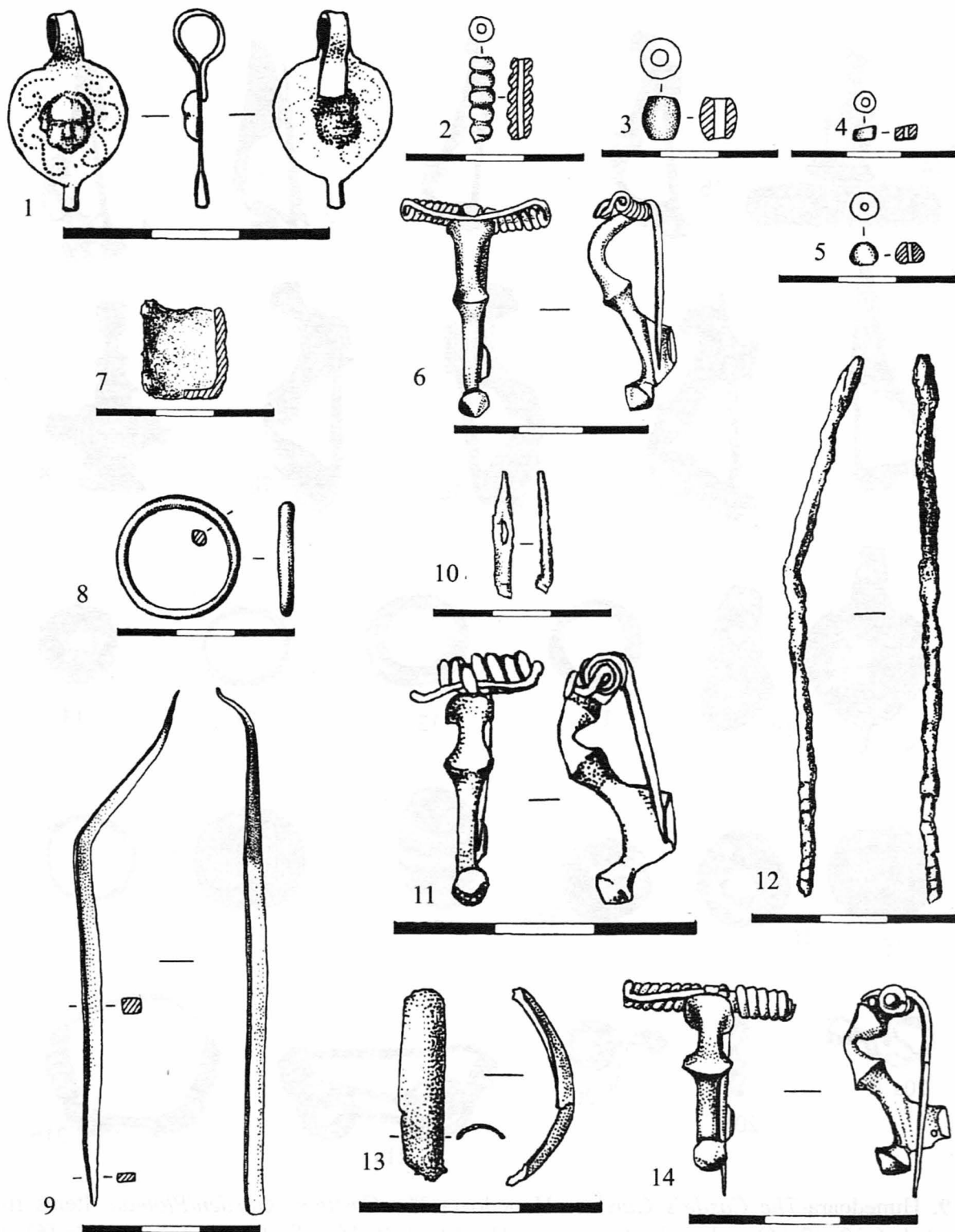


Fig. 10. Hunedoara- *The Castle's Garden* Hunedoara-*The Castle's Garden/Plateau*. Objects from child graves: Dead 8 (1-7), 9a (8), 10 (9), 11a (10-12), 12a (13-14); 1 gilded silver, 2-5 glass, 6, 8-9, 11, 14 bronze, 7, 10, 12 iron, 13 silver (after Sîrbu *et alii* 2007).

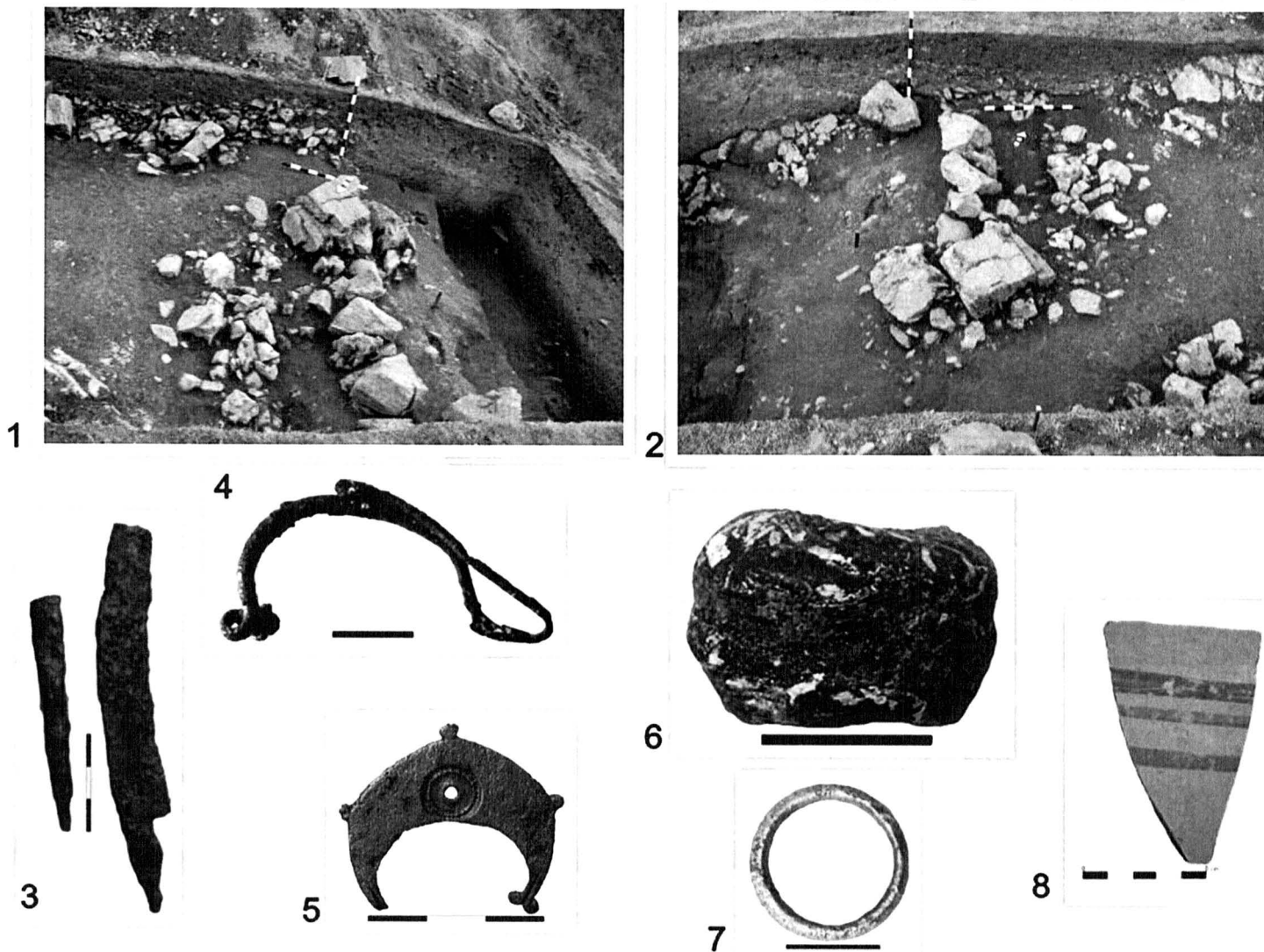
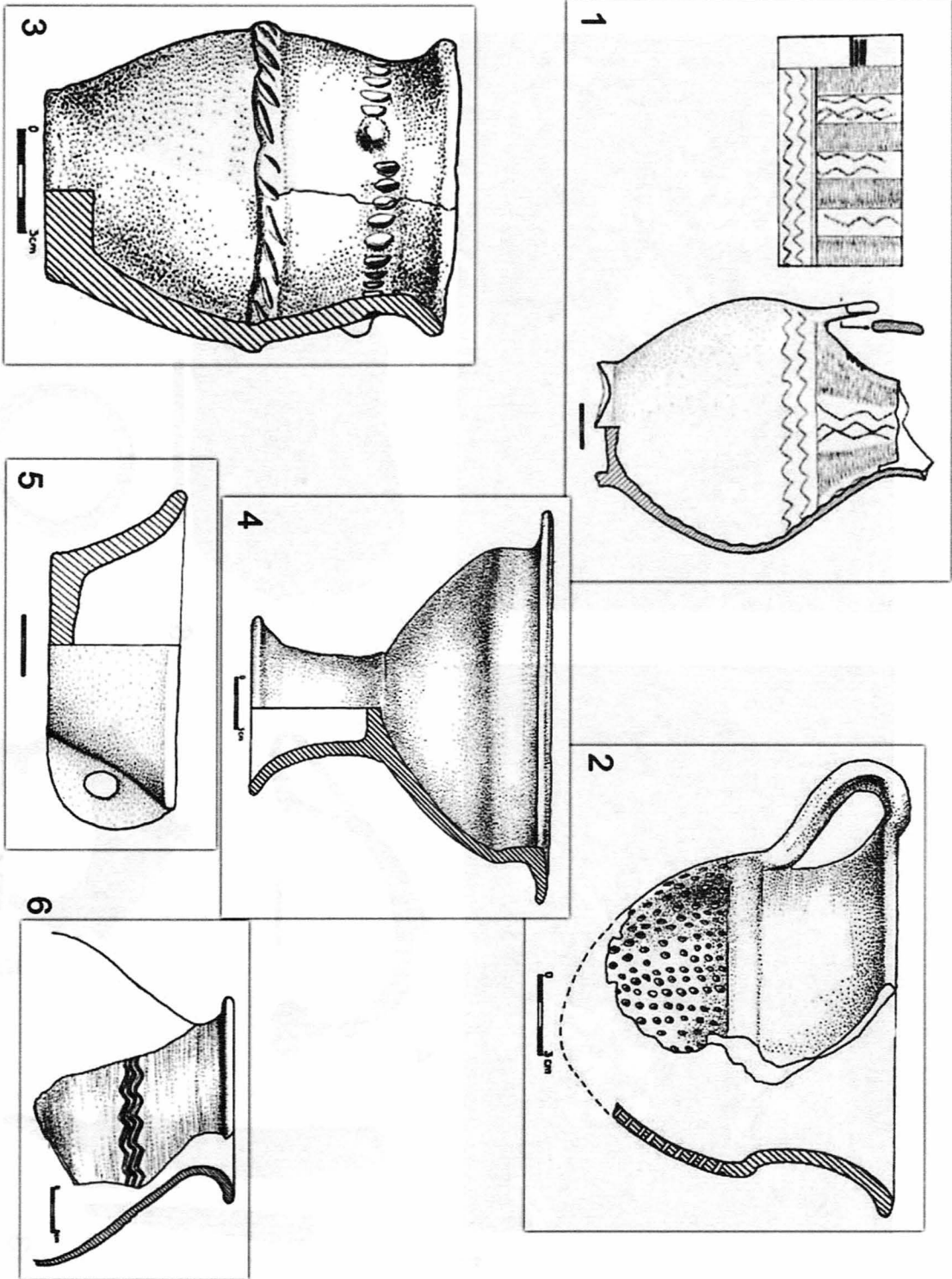


Fig. 11. Hunedoara-Sânpetru Hill. 1-2 Basement of the stone wall; 4-8 items from the complexes and the layer (after Sîrbu *et alii* 2007).



. Fig. 12. Hunedoara-Sâmpetru Hill. 1-6 Dacian pottery vessels.

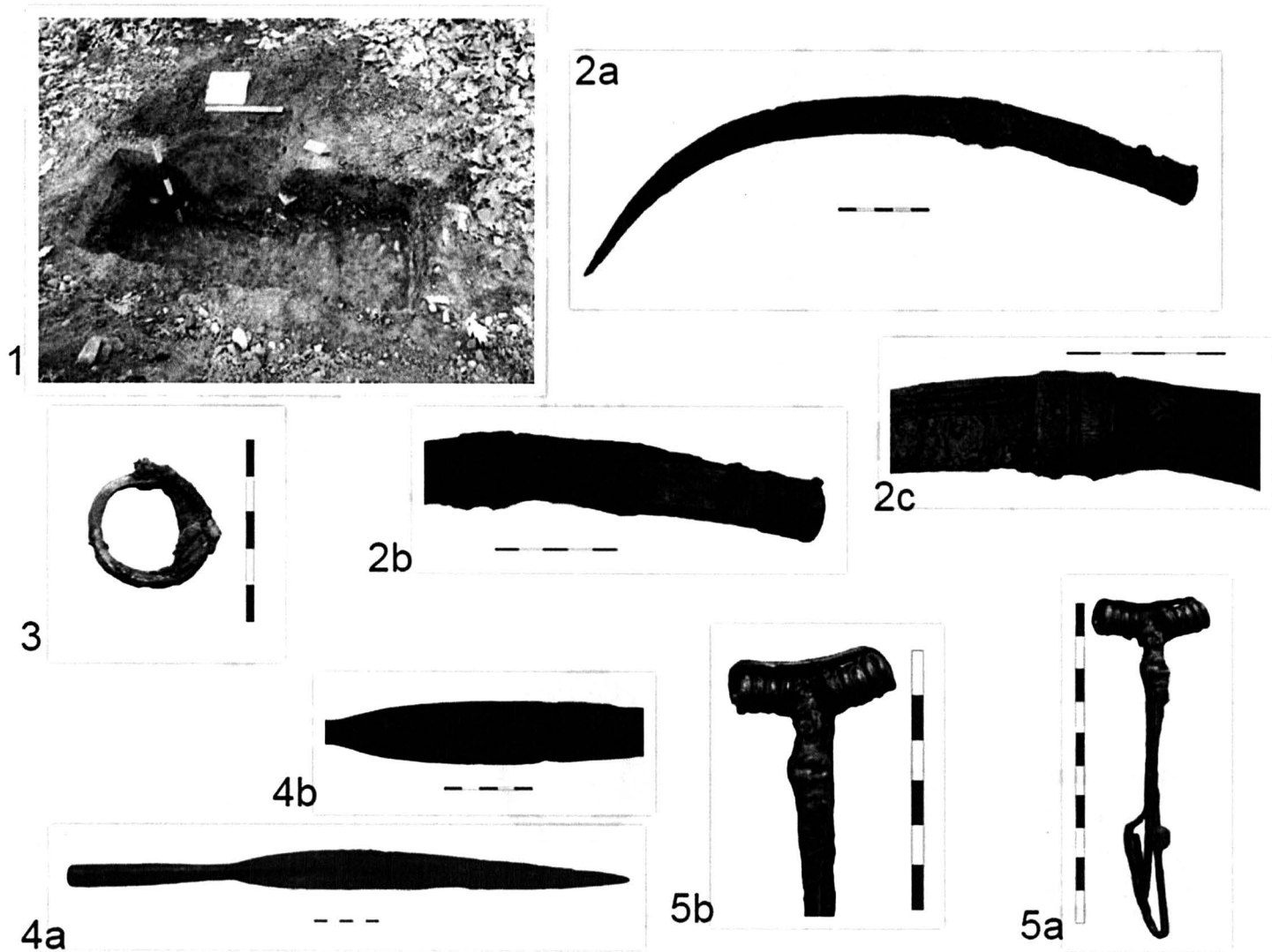
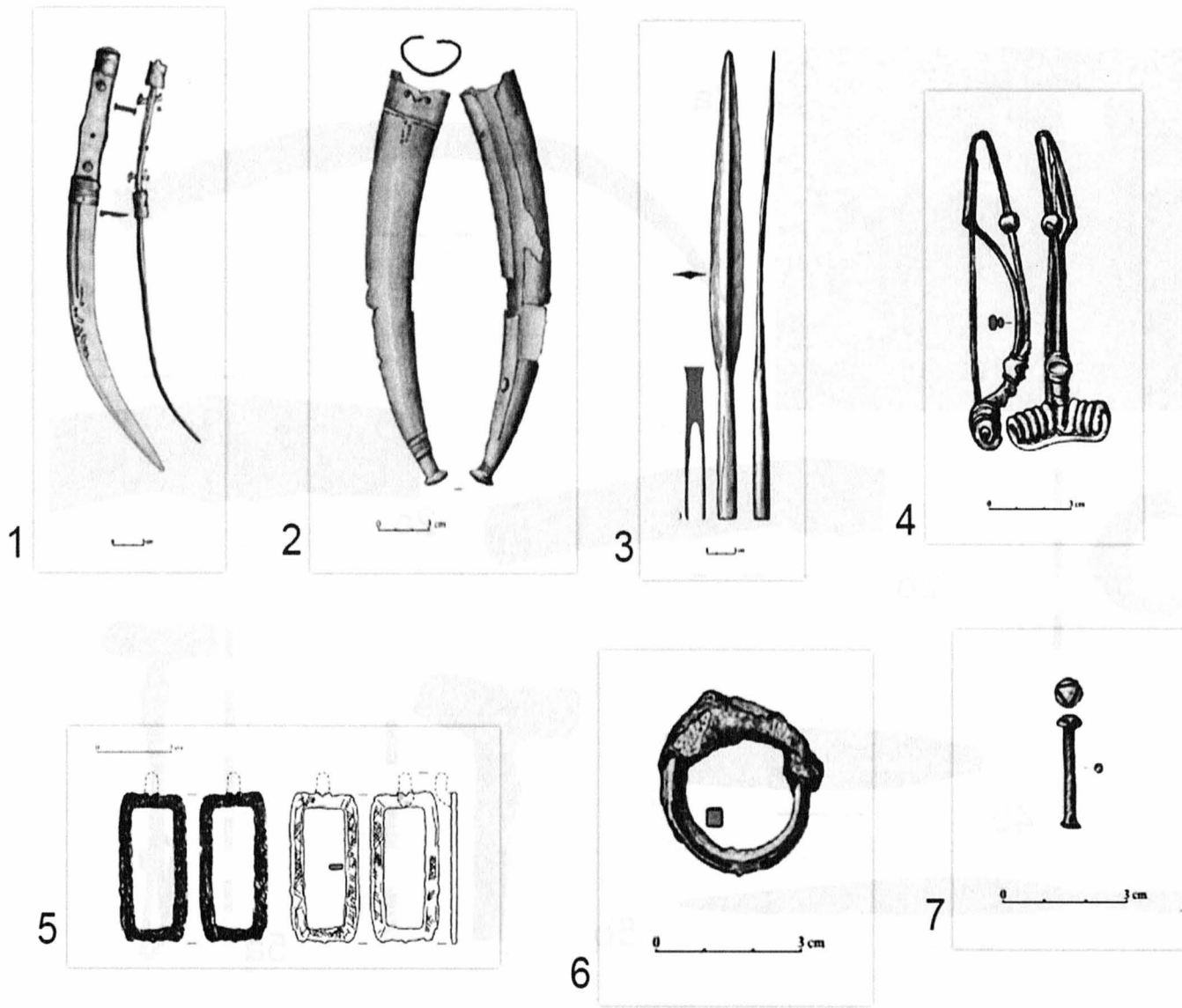


Fig. 13 .Bălănești. Complex Cx2. 1 General view, 2-5 iron items (after Marinoiu, Sana, Georgescu 2016 -1; 2-5 photo V. Sîrbu).



. Fig. 14. Bălănești. Items from Complex Cx2 (after Spănu 2018).

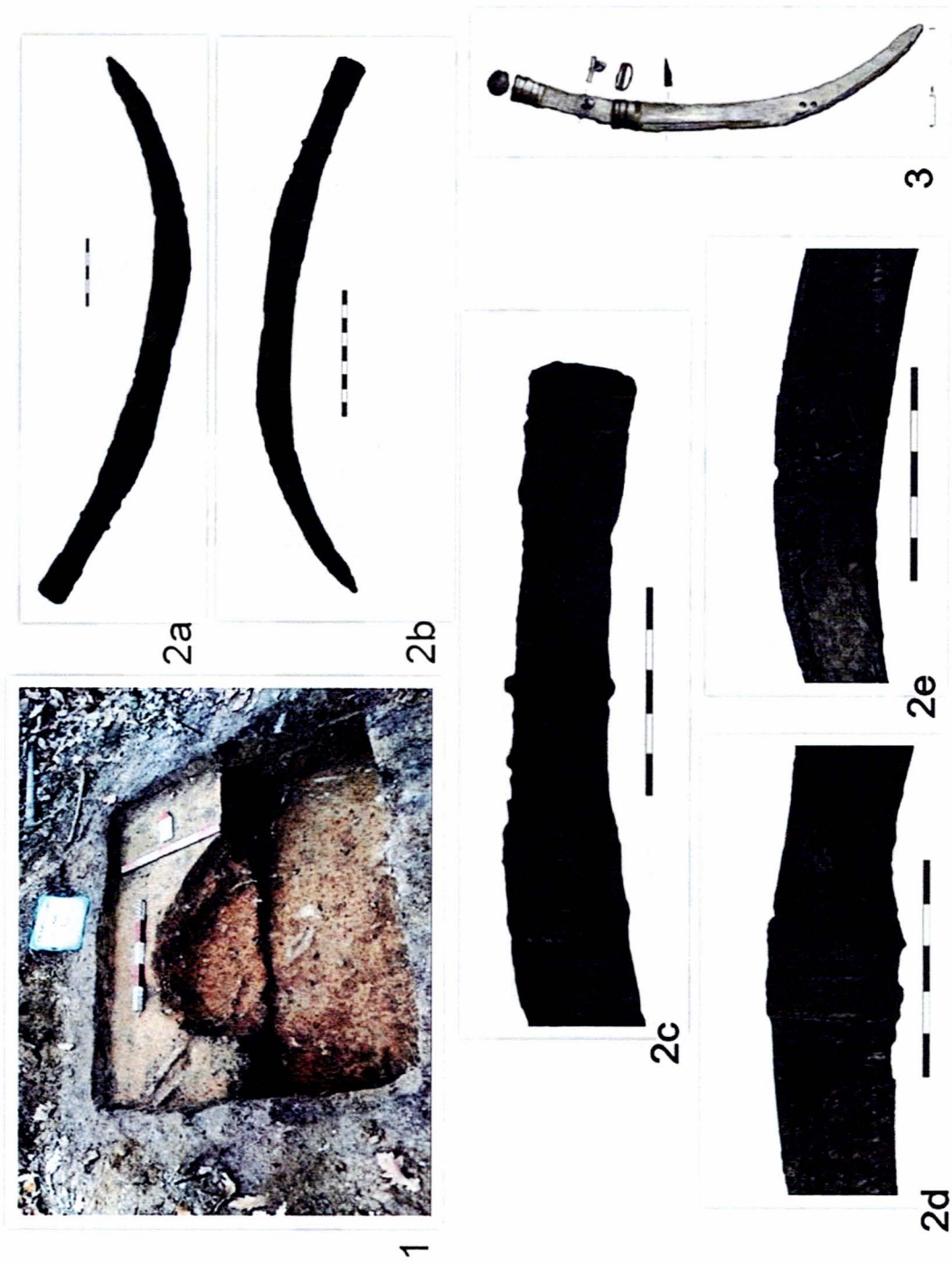
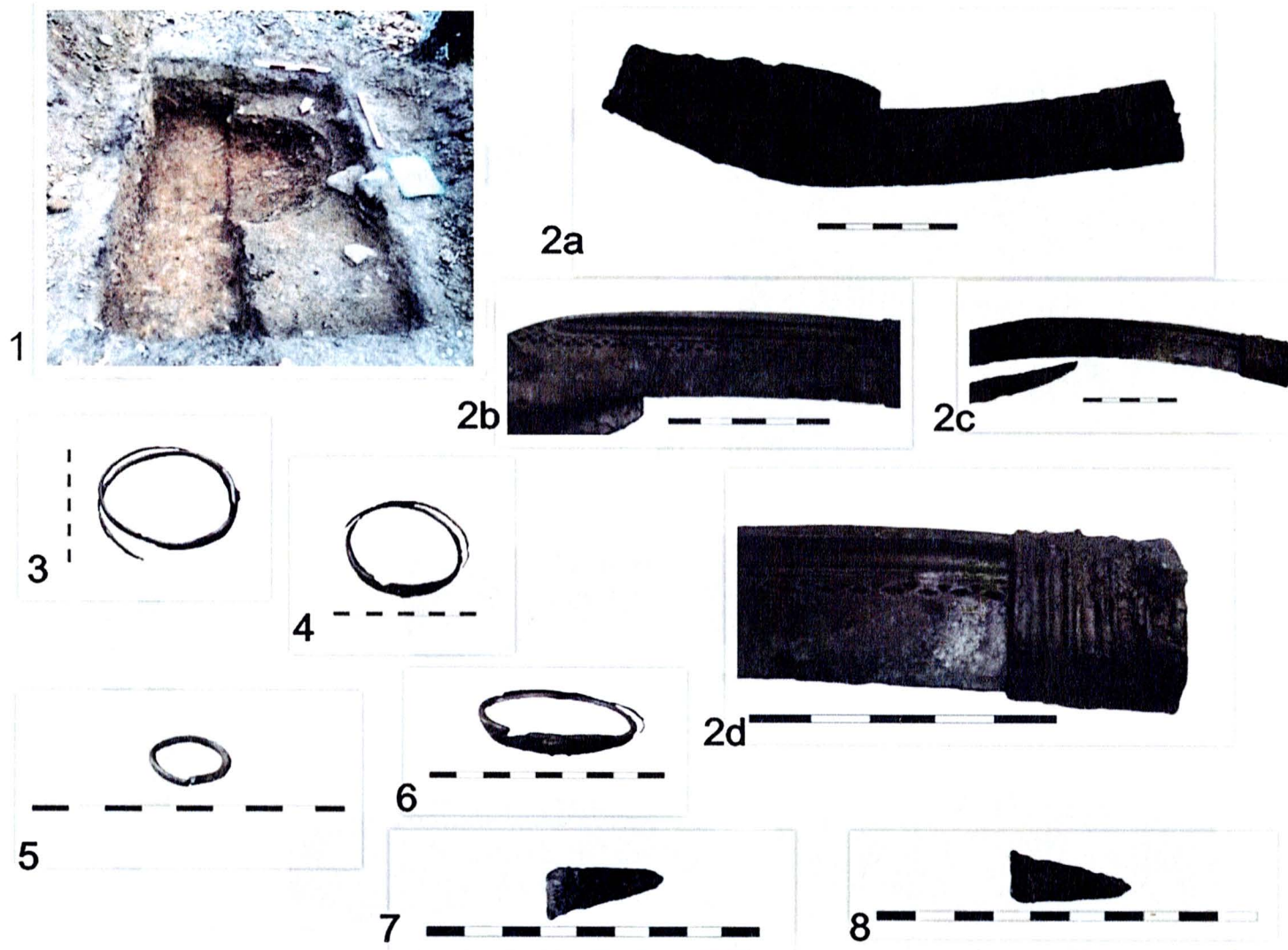


Fig. 15. Bălănești. Complex Cx3. 1 General view, 2-5 iron items (after Marinoiu, Sana, Georgescu 2016 -1; Spănu 2018 -3; 2 photo V. Sîrbu).



. Fig. 16. Bălănești. Cx4. 1 General view, 2-8 iron items (after Marinoiu, Sana, Georgescu 2016 -1; 2-8 photo V. Sîrbu).

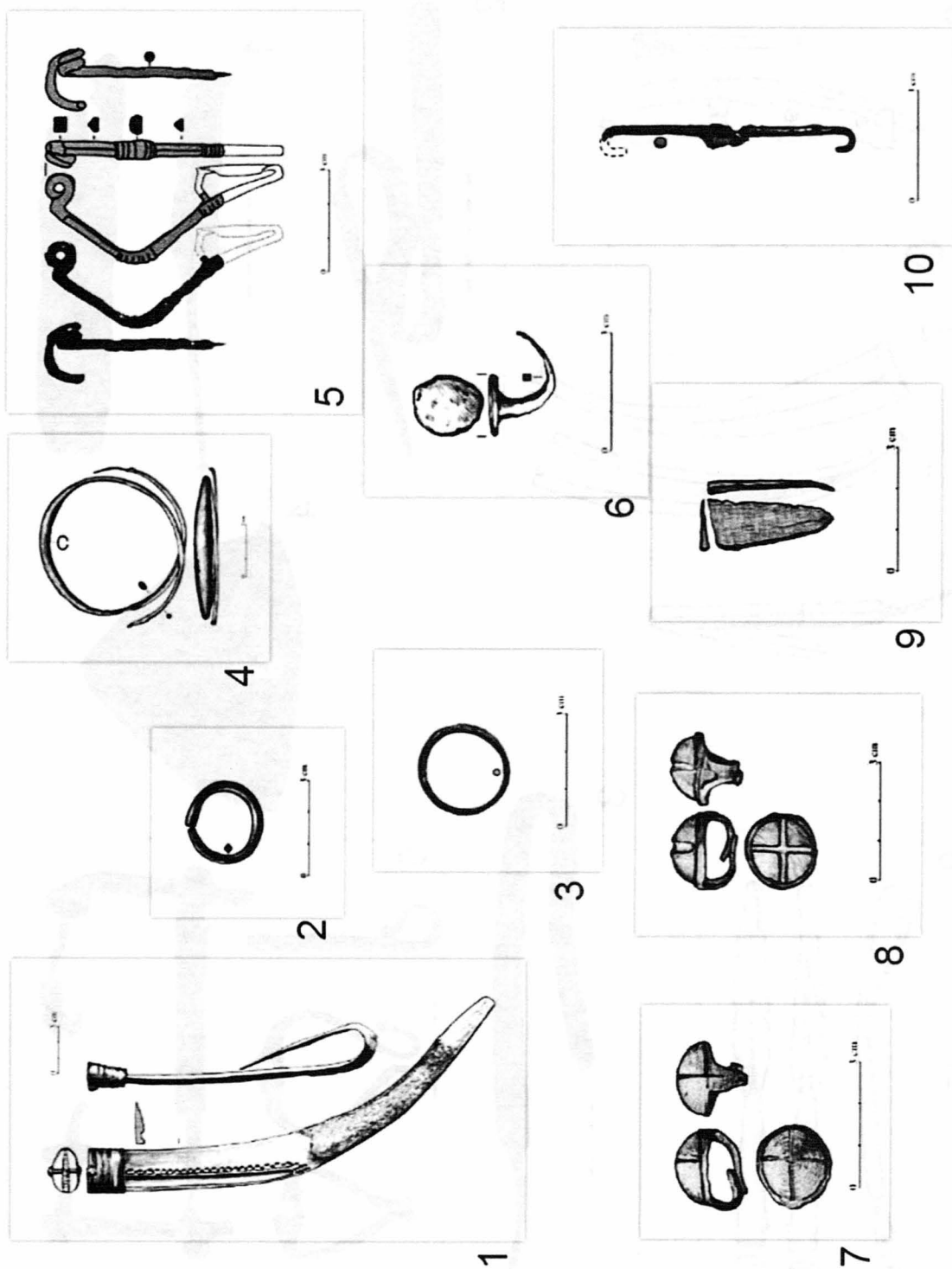
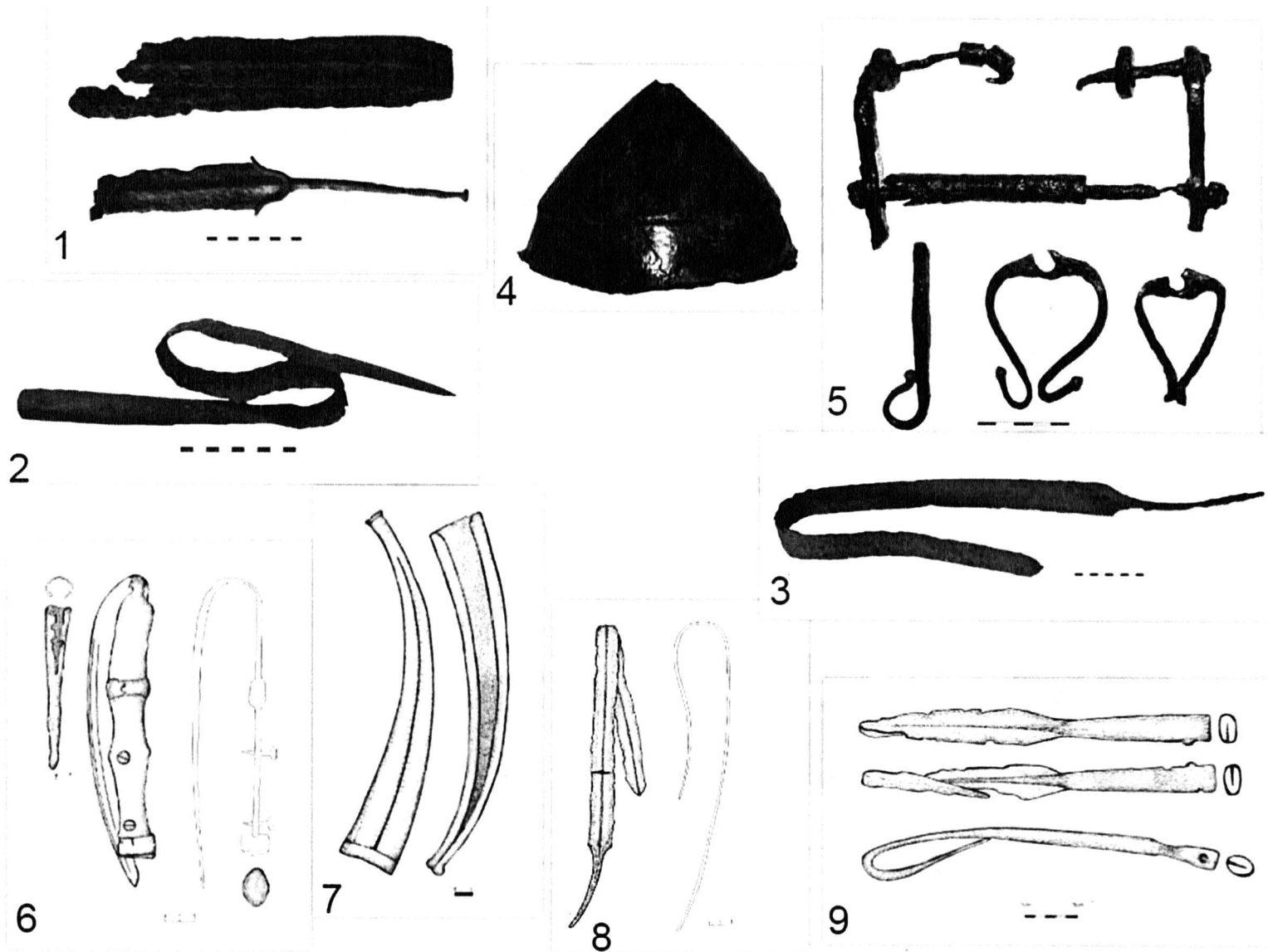


Fig. 17. Bălănești. Items from Complex Cx4 (after Spănu 2018).



. Fig. 18. Florești. Items from complexes (after Sîrbu, Neagoie, Manea 2019).