

CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING THE EARLY IRON AGE FIBULAE DISCOVERED IN DESA (2002-2016)

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Rezumat: Începând cu anul 2001, în localitatea Desa (jud. Dolj) se desfășoară cercetări arheologice sistematice în punctul „Castravița”, un grind aflat în apropierea Dunării, în dreptul ostrovului Acalia (km fluvial 766). Aici au fost cercetați până în prezent 11 tumuli de tip Basarabi, din prima epocă a fierului, în care au fost documentate 52 de morminte de înhumatie. Una din cele mai numeroase și variate categorii de descoperiri în cadrul tumulilor o reprezintă piesele de podoabă și vestimentație. În rândul acestora, de o mare importanță, mai ales din punct de vedere cronologic, sunt cele 23 de fibule din fier, bronz sau fier placat cu bronz. Toate fibulele fac parte din categoria celor arcuite cu două resorturi cu diverse tipuri de portagrafe (în formă de clepsidră, de scut beotic și triunghiulare), având bune analogii în descoperirile similare din necropolele tumulare de la Basarabi, Balta Verde, Gogoșu, Ostrovu Mare, Vajuga-Pesak, etc. Din punct de vedere cronologic, acestea se datează între mijlocul secolului VIII a.Chr. și mijlocul secolului VII a.Chr., în acest interval de timp încadrându-se și necropola tumulară de aici.

Abstract: Since 2001, in Desa (Dolj county) are systematically organised archaeological excavations at „Castravița”, a sandhill located near the Danube, opposite Acalia islet (766 river km). Until present day, here have been researched 11 Basarabi type tumuli, dating from the Early Iron Age, in which were found 52 inhumation graves. One of the numerous and varied category of artefacts is represented by adornments and clothing accessories. Within this category, of great importance, from a chronological point of view, are the 23 fibulae made of iron, bronze or of iron plated with bronze. All the fibulae are included in the category of double-looped bow fibulae with different types of catchplates (sanglass, Beotian shield or triangular), with good analogies in the similar findings from the tumular cemeteries from Basarabi, Balta Verde, Gogoșu, Ostrovu Mare, Vajuga-Pesak, etc. Chronologically, they can be dated between the middle of the 8th c. BC and the middle of the 7th c. BC, within this time range being framed also the tumular necropolis from here.

Cuvinte-cheie: Desa, tumuli, fibulă, Basarabi, prima epocă a fierului.

Key-words: Desa, tumuli, fibula, Basarabi, Early Iron Age.

Introduction

The village of Desa (Dolj county) is located at a distance of aprox. 100 km SW from Craiova, the governmental center of Dolj county, and aprox. 21 km SE from the town of Calafat, in the Danube floodplain, the river Danube being at cca. 7 km S from the village (fig.1).

The microrelief of the area is characterized, nowadays, by the existence of numerous sandhills, that rise about 7-8 meters above the general level of the floodplain, reaching in exceptional cases a height of 40 m. The vast majority of these sandhills are elongated, along a W-E axis, and parallel to the Danube, due to the prevailing western winds. Many of these dunes were fixed by black locusts and poplars plantations, but it should be noted that the wooded areas alternate with those devoided of any vegetation until the proximity of the Danube. Between these dunes are valleys, sometimes 1-2 km wide, where, with every flood of the Danube, are formed numerous sloughs, very rich in fish.

These things offered good conditions for habitation in the area since ancient times, as evidenced by the numerous archaeological discoveries made here, especially in recent years.

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A brief history of the archaeological discoveries from Desa

Information about the area's archaeological potential have existed since the second half of the XIXth century. Thus, the first data about ancient artifacts from Desa are known from the army officer Dimitrie Papazoglu, a well-known antiquarian, who, as a commander of the quarantines on the Romanian bank of Danube, visited the sector of the river S of Desa in 1864, on which occasion he was able to collect various artifacts, largely dated between the 2nd and the 5th c. AD. Unfortunately, he didn't leave any information about the exact location of the findings¹.

The subsequent archaeological information comes from Pamfil Polonic who, for the first time, localised the Roman settlement and offered the first information about a possible Roman castrum in a place locally known as „Cetatea Castravița” („Castravița Fortress”)².

In the first half of the 20th century, the archaeological information and discoveries increased. In 1911, C. Moisil mentioned seven bronze ring-pendants and a fragment of a bronze spectacle-fibula from a private collection³, considered to this day to represent part of a bronze hoard⁴, while in 1914, V. Pârvan published two Roman bronze statuettes discovered by D. Papazoglu⁵; in 1937, in the place locally known as „Petriș”, the well-known Hunnic cauldron was discovered⁶, while in the following years D. Tudor presented more data about the castrum from „Castravița” and the roman civil settlement⁷.

Oct. Toropu together with O. Stoica presented, at the end of the '60's and beginning of the '70's several findings, from the Iron Age and the Roman period, from the Danube bank, in Desa's⁸ neighbourhood.

Also, in the area of Desa, throughout the years were discovered three Roman coin hoards⁹.

The Basarabi type tumuli from Desa – „Castravița”

The „Castravița” sandhill is located on the Danube's bank, at about 7 km SW of Desa, opposite Acalia islet, nearby the 766 river km (fig.1).

Here, the excavations began in 2001 and lead to the discovery of 11 Basarabi type tumuli from the Early Iron Age (fig.2/2). With the exception of some brief reports on the first three tumuli¹⁰, the rest of the tumuli are still unpublished.

For the time being, we can only mention that these tumuli are very similar to those from Basarabi¹¹, Balta Verde and Gogoșu¹², Ostrovu Mare¹³, Moldova Veche¹⁴ and Vajuga-Pesak¹⁵.

All in all, in the 11 tumuli were discovered 52 graves, almost all of them containing inhumated skeletons in extended supine position.

¹ Tudor, 1947, pp. 45, 46-48.

² Tudor, 1947, p. 45.

³ Moisil, 1911, p. 84.

⁴ Nestor, 1934, p. 124; Berciu, 1939, pp.326, 330, fig. 221/4-5; Oancea, 1972, p. 540 and footnote 2; Petrescu-Dîmbovița, 1977, p. 165, pl. 402/19-24; Bader, 1983, p. 70, taf. 23/124; Soroceanu, 2005, pp. 21, 29, pl. 2/20; fig. 1/4.

⁵ Pârvan, 1914, pp. 64-65, pl.VIII/3, 5; IX/1a,1b.

⁶ Nestor, Nicolaescu-Plopșor, 1937, p. 178, taf. 39/3a, 3b.

⁷ Tudor, 1936, pp. 187-188, fig. 7; Tudor, 1947, pp. 45, 46, 48; Tudor, 1978, pp. 102, 223-224, 274, 378, 379, fig. 68/6; 107/3.

⁸ Toropu, Stoica, 1970, pp. 492, 499; Toropu, 1976, pp. 21-23, 34-35.

⁹ Mitrea, 1967, p. 384, no. 36; Popescu, 1996; Stîngă, Bălțeanu, 2002. The third one was discovered at the end of 2015 by a local inhabitant with a metal detector.

¹⁰ Gherghe, Ridiche, 2002-2003, pp. 16-33; Gherghe, Ridiche, 2004, pp. 112-115; Gherghe, Ridiche, 2005, pp. 137-141; Gherghe, Ridiche, 2008, pp. 130-132; Gherghe *et al.*, 2003a, pp. 115-118; Gherghe *et al.*, 2003b, pp.53-81.

¹¹ Dumitrescu, 1968, pp. 177-260.

¹² Berciu, Comșa, 1956, pp. 320-459.

¹³ Safta-Ciocea, 1996, pp. 159-190.

¹⁴ Gumă, 1993, pp. 220-223.

¹⁵ Popović, Vukmanović, 1998.

Of all the findings from these tumuli, one of the best represented category of artefacts is the one consisting of adornments and clothing accessories like torcs, bracelets, buttons and fibulae made from iron and/or bronze. Of these, the fibulae are very important as they can be used as chronological indicators for the tumuli from Desa.

Catalogue of the Early Iron Age fibulae from Desa

Abbreviations used:

Grave= Gr.

Tumulus= T

Length= L

Width= W

Diameter= D

Height= H

Thickness=Thk.

Weight= Wt.

Inventory number= Inv. no.

1. Fragmented iron fibula with a bronze plated ribbed-bow (fig.3/1).

Context: T1/Gr5 (double grave). It was discovered at 0,80 m depth and at 0,05 m W of the cranium of the inferior skeleton. The funerary inventory of the grave consisted of two iron spearheads, three fragmented iron knives, a similar fibula and an undecorated everted porringer¹⁶. Also, a lumbar vertebra from an adult *Cervus elaphus* (3-4 years) was found¹⁷.

Dimensions: L= 8,5 cm; D=0,9 cm; Wt.=23 g. Museum of Oltenia Craiova, inv. no.: I 50959.

2. Fragmented iron fibula with a bronze plated ribbed-bow (fig.3/2).

Context: T1/Gr5 (double grave). It was discovered at -0,90 m depth and at 0,28 m N from the left humerus of the superior skeleton¹⁸.

Dimensions: L=7,9 cm; D=0,9 cm; Wt.= 18 g. Museum of Oltenia Craiova, inv. no.: I 50957.

3. Fragmented iron fibula with a bronze plated ribbed-bow (fig.3/3).

Context: T1/Gr10, at cca. 0,09 m E of the cranium. Also, an inverted porringer was part of the funerary inventory of the grave¹⁹.

Dimensions: L=6,9 cm; D=0,9 cm; Wt.=18 g. Museum of Oltenia Craiova, inv. no.: I 50958.

4. Fragmented iron fibula with a bronze plated ribbed-bow (fig.3/4).

Context: beneath T2/Gr3, at an unknown depth. A bronze button was found associated with the fibula.

Dimensions: L=6,5 cm; D=0,8 cm; Wt.=23,30 g. Museum of Oltenia Craiova, without inv. no.

5. Fragmented iron fibula with a ribbed-bow and a triangular catchplate (fig.4/1).

Context: T3/Gr5, nearby the skeleton, towards NW, in the shoulder area, at -1,1 m depth. Besides this fibula, from the funerary inventory of the grave were part also a cup with a high handle, decorated with Basarabi motifs, and a fragment from an iron sword with a T-shaped handle²⁰.

¹⁶ Gherghe *et al.*, 2003a, p. 116.

¹⁷ Constantinescu, 2010, p. 37.

¹⁸ Gherghe *et al.*, 2003a, p. 116.

¹⁹ Gherghe *et al.*, 2003a, p. 116.

²⁰ Gherghe, Ridiche, 2005, pp. 138-139.

Dimensions (based on the drawing): L=10,5 cm; H=7 cm; L (catchplate)=4 cm; W(catchplate)=1,75 cm. It was not possible to identify it in the deposits of the Museum of Oltenia.

6. Bronze double-looped bow fibula with a sandglass catchplate (fig.4/2).

Context: T3, at the SSE margin of the tumulus, in the mantle, at -0,68 m depth²¹.

Dimensions: L=6,5 cm; L (between the loops)=6,2 cm; H=4 cm; L (catchplate)=2,1 cm; max. W (catchplate)=2,2 cm; min. W (catchplate)=0,6 cm; Thk. (catchplate)=0,1 cm; D (bow)=0,5 cm; D (pin)=0,2 cm; Wt.=16,01 g. Museum of Oltenia Craiova, inv. no.: I 51382.

7. Fragmented iron fibula with a bronze plated ribbed-bow (fig.4/3).

Context: T3, at the E margin of the tumulus, in the mantle, at -0,51 m depth²².

Dimensions: L=6 cm; D=1 cm; Wt.=25,93 g. Museum of Oltenia Craiova, inv. no.: I 51514.

8. Bronze double-looped bow fibula with a sandglass catchplate (fig.4/4).

Context: T4/Gr2, exactly over the T5-T7 vertebrae, at -0,64 m depth. From the funerary inventory of this grave were also part 47 bronze buttons.

Dimensions: L=5,1 cm; H=2,5 cm; D (bow)=0,5 cm; L (catchplate)=1,9 cm; W (small base of the catchplate)=1,3 cm; W (big base of the catchplate)=1,7 cm; L (pin)=4,5 cm; D (pin)=0,3 cm; Wt.=11,33 g. Museum of Oltenia Craiova, without inv. no.

9. Bronze double-looped bow fibula with a triangular catchplate (fig.4/5).

Context: T4, at the ESE margin of the tumulus, in the mantle, at -0,40 m depth.

Dimensions: L=6,6 cm; L (between the loops)=6,1 cm; H=3,6 cm; L (catchplate)=2,3 cm; W (catchplate)=1,8 cm; Wt.=14,91 g. Museum of Oltenia Craiova, without inv. no.

10. Iron double-looped ribbed-bow fibula with a sandglass catchplate (fig.4/6).

Context: T4, at the S margin of the tumulus, in the mantle, at -0,51 m depth.

Dimensions: L=7,76 cm; H=5,35 cm; D (bow)=0,8 cm; D (pin)=2,9 cm; L (catchplate)=3,3 cm; max. W (catchplate)=2,2 cm; min. W (catchplate)=1,2 cm; Wt.=31,87 g. Museum of Oltenia Craiova, without inv. no.

11. Iron double-looped twisted-bow fibula with a sandglass catchplate (fig.5/1).

Context: T4, at the ESE margin of the tumulus, in the mantle, at -0,51 m depth.

Dimensions: L=7,6 cm; H=5,1 cm; D (bow)=0,6 cm; L (catchplate)=2,8 cm; max. W (catchplate)=1,8 cm; min. W (catchplate)=0,9 cm; Wt.=24,10 g. Museum of Oltenia Craiova, without inv. no.

12. Fragmented iron bow fibula (fig.5/2).

Context: T4, nearby the center, in the mantle, at -0,66 m depth.

Dimensions: L=8,57 cm; Wt.=16,29 g. Museum of Oltenia Craiova, without inv. no.

13. Fragmented iron double-looped bow fibula, rectangular in cross-section, with a triangular catchplate (fig.5/3).

Context: T4, in the center, in the mantle, at -0,66 m depth.

Dimensions: L=7,15 cm; W (bow)=0,6 cm; L (catchplate)=2,5 cm; Wt.=17,62 g. Museum of Oltenia Craiova, without inv. no.

²¹ Gherghe, Ridiche, 2004, p. 113.

²² Gherghe, Ridiche, 2005, p. 138.

14. Fragmented iron fibula with a bronze plated ribbed-bow (fig.5/4).

Context: T4, on the ancient level, near the W margin of the tumulus, at -0,90 m depth.

Dimensions: L=6,2 cm; D (bow)=0,6 cm; Wt.=17,68 g. Museum of Oltenia Craiova, without inv. no.

15. Fragmented iron fibula with a bronze plated ribbed-bow (fig.5/5).

Context: T4, on the ancient level, near the W margin of the tumulus, at -1,05 m depth.

Dimensions: L=6,5 cm; D (bow)=0,8 cm; Wt.=29,50 g. Museum of Oltenia Craiova, without inv. no.

16. Fragmented iron fibula with a bronze plated ribbed-bow (fig.5/6).

Context: T4, at the W margin of the tumulus, in the mantle, at -0,51 m depth.

Dimensions: L=5,5 cm; D (bow)=0,7 cm; Wt.=12,53 g. Museum of Oltenia Craiova, without inv. no.

17. Double-looped bronze bow fibula, octogonal in cross-section, with a Boeotian shield catchplate (fig.5/7).

Context: T4, at the W margin of the tumulus, in the mantle, at -0,35 m depth.

The catchplate has a median longitudinal rib.

Dimensions: L= 7,2 cm; L (between the loops)=6,8 cm; H=3,9 cm; Thk. (bow)=0,5 cm; D (pin)=0,3 cm; L (catchplate)=2,5 cm; min. W (catchplate)=1 cm; max. W (catchplate)=2,1 cm; Wt.=20,96 g. Museum of Oltenia Craiova, without inv. no.

18. Iron double-looped fibula with a bronze plated ribbed-bow and a sandglass catchplate (fig.6/1).

Context: T4, at the E margin of the tumulus, in the mantle, at -0,42 m depth.

The catchplate has a median longitudinal rib.

Dimensions: L= 8,7 cm; L (between the loops)= 6,5 cm; L (fragmented pin)=5,8 cm; H=4 cm; L (catchplate)=3,1 cm; min. W (catchplate)=1,1 cm; max. W (catchplate)=2,1 cm; D (bow)=0,6 cm; Thk. (pin)=0,4 cm; Wt.=34,52 g. Museum of Oltenia Craiova, without inv. no.

19. Fragmented iron double-looped bow fibula, rhombic in cross-section, with a sandglass catchplate (fig.6/2).

Context: T7/Gr2, under the right coxal bone, at -0,50 m depth. In the same grave was discovered also a fragment of an iron knife.

The catchplate has a median longitudinal rib.

Dimensions: L=8,3 cm; W (bow)=0,8 cm; L (catchplate)=2,1 cm; Wt.=18,69 g. Museum of Oltenia Craiova, without inv. no.

20. Fragmented iron fibula with a bronze plated ribbed-bow (fig.6/3).

Context: T7, near the center, in the mantle, at -0,40 m depth.

Dimensions: L=6,3 cm; D=0,7 cm; Wt.=18,99 g. Museum of Oltenia Craiova, without inv. no.

21. Fragmented iron fibula with a bronze plated ribbed-bow (fig.6/4).

Context: T8, near the E margin of the tumulus, at -0,75 m depth.

Dimensions: L=7 cm; D (bow)=0,7 cm; Wt.=23,65 g. Museum of Oltenia Craiova, without inv. no.

22. Fragmented iron fibula with a bronze plated ribbed-bow (fig.6/5).

Context: K17/2016, at 2,84 m from the S profile and 3,52 m from the W profile, at -0,25 m depth.

Dimensions: L=6,5 cm; D=0,8 cm; Wt.=22,25 g. Museum of Oltenia Craiova, without inv. no.

23. Fragmented iron fibula with a bronze plated ribbed-bow (fig.6/6).

Context: K17/2016, at 7,60 m from the W profile and at 0,80 m from the S profile, at -0,25 m depth.

Dimensions: L=6,2 cm; D=0,8 cm; Wt.=22,05 g. Museum of Oltenia Craiova, without inv. no.

Discussion

Within the 11 tumuli from Desa, were discovered a total of 23 fibulae. Most of them are made of iron with a ribbed bronze-plated bow (13 items), while the rest are of iron (6 items) and bronze (4 items).

All the fibulae represent different variants of the well-known type double-looped bow fibula (*Zweischleifige Bogenfibeln*), which is very frequent in the Basarabi area²³.

Although the fibulae are numerous, only six of them were found in graves (T1/Gr5; T1/Gr10; T3/Gr5; T4/Gr2; T7/Gr2). The rest were found within the tumuli, at various depths. This fact can be interpreted in several ways: either they represent ritual depositions made on special occasions (funerals, commemorations or during the different stages of the elevation of the tumuli), either represent items from the funerary inventory of disturbed/destroyed graves.

Tipologically, they can be divided in the following categories:

I. double-looped bow fibulae with a sandglass catchplate;

II. double-looped bow fibulae with a triangular catchplate;

III. double-looped bow fibula with a Boeotian shield catchplate.

The first category is the most numerous, including 18 items which can be sub-divided in the several sub-types:

a. double-looped iron fibulae with a bronze-coated ribbed bow (13 items) (fig.3; 4/3; 5/4-6; 6/1, 3-6);

b. iron bow fibulae (3 items) (fig.4/6; 5/1; 6/2);

c. bronze bow fibulae (2 items) (fig.4/2, 4).

Regarding the fibulae with a bronze-coated ribbed bow (variant D after Bader or 5c after Gabrovec), in all cases the iron core was round in cross-section; while in only one the sandglass catchplate was preserved (fig.6/1). It must be mentioned also, that from the six fibulae discovered in graves, five belong to this type. The other fibulae were discovered within the tumuli, either in their mantles, either on the ancient level.

These fibulae of the so-called Vače type are to be included in the variant 5c, after Gabrovec's classification²⁴, or D (*mit rippenverziertem Bügel*), after Bader's²⁵. In the same type is to included also the iron fibula with a ribbed bow from T4 (fig.4/6)

The bronze fibulae discovered in T4/Gr2 (fig.4/4) and in T3 (fig.4/2) belong to Bader's A variant (*mit rundstabigem Bügel*), while the one from T7/Gr2 (fig.6/2) belongs to B variant (*mit vierkantigem Bügel*)²⁶.

²³ Gabrovec, 1970, pp. 5-9, k.I; Bader, 1983, pp. 71-93, taf. 47-49; Gumă, Popescu, 1995, pl. V; VI; Popović, Vukmanović, 1998, pp. 31-32, fig. 27b; Teržan, 1990, p. 215, k. 9.

²⁴ Gabrovec, 1970, pp. 27-28.

²⁵ Bader, 1983, pp. 77-78.

²⁶ Bader, 1983, pp. 77-78.

Chronologically, these fibulae can be framed between the second half of the 8th c. BC and the first half of the 7th c. BC²⁷, which corresponds to the classic phase of the Basarabi culture (phase II after M. Gumă).

Similar items have been discovered in the tumular graves from Balta Verde²⁸, Basarabi²⁹, Ostrovu Mare – „1975”³⁰, Moldova Veche – „Ostrov”³¹, Vajuga-Pesak³², in grave no.2 from Căscioarele – „Coinea I”³³, in the grave from Svinița – „Piatra Elișovei”³⁴ and the bronze hoards from Hunia³⁵ and Ghidici³⁶.

The iron double-looped twisted-bow fibula with a sandglass catchplate (fig.5/1) discovered in T4 belongs to the type 7b according to Gabrovec³⁷ or BIII (*Zweischleifige Bogenfibel mit Hoher Sandhurförmiger Fussplatte*), variant η, after Gergova³⁸.

In Romania, this type is represented only by two fragments, both missing the catchplate, from Bârsești³⁹ and Ferigile⁴⁰, while a similar fibula, but of bronze, was found in Daržanica (Bulgaria)⁴¹. Chronologically, this type of fibulae in Romania can be framed to the 7th c. BC⁴², while the one from Bulgaria can be dated between the 8th-7th c. BC⁴³.

In Desa were also discovered three double-looped bow fibulae with a triangular catchplate. Only one of them is complete – the bronze fibula found in T4 (fig.4/5), while the other two, made of iron, are fragmented, only the bow and part of the catchplate being preserved. These last two fibulae were found in T4 (fig.5/3) and in the main grave from T3 – Gr.5 (fig.4/1). Regarding the one from T3/Gr.5, it must be mentioned that it had a ribbed-bow, which, from this point of view, makes it very similar to the fibulae from Balta Verde (T12/Gr2)⁴⁴ and from Zimnicea – „Cetate”⁴⁵. Moreover, the fact that it was associated in the grave inventory with a fragmented iron sword with a T-shaped handle and a cup decorated in the Basarabi-style, allows us to synchronize this grave with the ones from Balta Verde.

Typologically, the iron fibula from T3 and the bronze one from T4 can be included according to T. Bader to his variant A of the double-looped bow fibulae with triangular catchplate (*Zweischleifige bogenfibeln mit Dreieckiger Fussplatte – mit rundstabigem Bügel*)⁴⁶, type 1c after Gabrovec⁴⁷ or Glasinac I in the classification of Al. Vulpe⁴⁸.

²⁷ Bader, 1983, p. 84; Vulpe, 1990, p. 119; Gumă, 1993, p. 228; Gumă, Popescu, 1995, pp. 259, 266.

²⁸ Berciu, Comșa, 1956, pp. 317, 338, 339, 342, 352-353, 355-356, 360, 362, 365, 369, 371, 379, 383, fig. 65/1-6; 69/1; 81/1,2; 84/1-5; 90/1,3; 101/3; 110/5,6; Bader, 1983, pp. 81, 82, taf. 27/180, 181, 186, 188-194; 28/195-204.

²⁹ Dumitrescu, 1968, pp. 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 190, 191, 198, fig. 21/5, 6; 22/6-11; Bader, 1983, pp. 82-83, taf. 28/205-210.

³⁰ Safta-Ciocea, 1996, pp. 162, 167, 168, 171, 172, 175, 177, 181, fig. 1/7a-b, 8a-b; 4/6; 5/3, 4, 7; 6/6, 9, 11; 7/5, 9; 8/9, 12; 10/1, 3; 12/11; Bader, 1983, pp. 80, 81, 83, taf. 26/173-175; 27/183-185; 28/214-216; 29/217-223.

³¹ Gumă, 1993, p. 228, pl. C/1-3; CII/15.

³² Popović, Vukmanović, 1998, pp. 31-32, pl. 7/15, 18; 9/10; 15/6; 17/2; 18/9, 10, 13; 21/3.

³³ Sîrbu *et al.*, 1993, pp. 207, 208, fig.4/1, 2a-b.

³⁴ Gumă, 1993, p. 228, pl. LXXXV/13-14.

³⁵ Stoica, Cioană, 1975, p. 562, fig. 2/3; Petrescu-Dîmbovița, 1977, p. 165, pl. 402/12; Bader, 1983, p. 83, taf. 28/212.

³⁶ Oancea, 1972, p. 540, pl. 4/6; Petrescu-Dîmbovița, 1977, p. 165, pl. 400/17; Bader, 1983, p. 83, taf. 28/211.

³⁷ Gabrovec, 1970, p. 29.

³⁸ Gergova, 1987, p. 47.

³⁹ Morintz, 1959, p. 358, fig. 4; Bader, 1983, p. 93, taf. 31/253.

⁴⁰ Vulpe, 1967, p. 143, pl. XXIII/6; Bader, 1983, p. 93, taf. 31/254.

⁴¹ Gergova, 1987, p. 47, taf. 14/179.

⁴² Bader, 1983, p. 93.

⁴³ Gergova, 1987, p. 47.

⁴⁴ Berciu, Comșa, 1956, pp. 342, 386, fig. 69/1; 126/6.

⁴⁵ Spânu, 2009, pp. 280-283, fig. 2.

⁴⁶ Bader, 1983, pp. 71-74.

⁴⁷ Gabrovec, 1970, p. 24.

⁴⁸ Vulpe, 1967, p. 69.

This type of fibula was discovered, also in Early Iron Age funerary contexts, in Basarabi (T3)⁴⁹, in Balta Verde (T12/Gr7)⁵⁰, Gogoşu (T13; T27; T34/Gr1; T40/cremation grave)⁵¹, Ferigile (T40; T74/Gr1)⁵² and Iaz – „Şuşara-Rovină”⁵³.

In general, these fibulae with a bow oval or round in cross-section are associated with double-looped iron fibulae with a bronze-coated ribbed bow in findings from Romania, Bulgaria and ex-Yugoslavia that can be dated in the middle Hallstatt period⁵⁴.

The items found in Desa seem to belong to a chronological sequence corresponding to an early phase of the Basarabi culture as represented by similar items found in the earlier graves from Balta Verde⁵⁵. Thus, we consider they can be dated in the first half of the 8th c. BC.

In the category of the fibulae with a Boeotian shield catchplate (*Zweischleifige bogenfibeln mit Böotischem Schildfuss*) or of Glasinac type only one item can be included, the bronze fibula discovered in T4 (pl.62/q). The fibula lacks any decoration of the bow and catchplate, which has only a median longitudinal rib. Taking into account that the bow is octagonal in cross-section, than we can include it in the B variant (*mit achtkantigem Bügel*) of T. Bader's classification⁵⁶. Similar fibulae, but with a decorated bow and/or catchplate, were discovered only in Gogoşu⁵⁷ and Ferigile⁵⁸.

Regarding the dating of the fibulae with a Boeotian shield catchplate, the one found in Basarabi was considered by Al. Vulpe to represent one of its latest forms, similar to those discovered in Perachora, associated with Proto-Corinthian pottery, which would indicate the second half of the 7th c. BC⁵⁹. We must also take into consideration that the fibulae with an octagonal cross-section bow are later than those with a round cross-section bow. Gross-modo, this type of fibulae can be date between the 7th and the 6th c.BC. We consider that the fibula discovered in Desa can be dated between the beginning and the middle of the 7th c. BC, if we take into consideration its features, which place it in an earlier stage of evolution of this type, and the lacking of any Ferigile type discoveries at Castraviţa sandhill.

In relation to the six fibulae found in graves, it must be also mentioned that four of them were placed in the area of the head, one was found on the vertebral column, near the chest, while another was discovered under the right coxal bone. It is not to be excluded that their position is in connection with their functionality, as it is very possible that they were used as fastenings for the clothing or textile materials in which the deceased were wrapped during their burial.

Conclusions

Taking into consideration that the fibulae from the first category are also frequent in the tumuli from Balta Verde, Basarabi, Ostrovu Mare – „1975”, Moldova Veche – „Ostrov” şi Vajuga-Pesak, excepting those from Gogoşu, enables us to consider the tumular necropolis from Desa with the above-mentioned, while the one from Gogoşu can be chronologically considered the latest.

In Desa, the double-looped bow fibulae with a triangular and Boetian shield catchplate occur less often in findings, but are frequent in the graves from Gogoşu. We consider this to be an argument in considering the tumuli from Desa to be chronologically earlier than those from Gogoşu.

⁴⁹ Bader, 1983, p. 73, taf. 24/141.

⁵⁰ Berciu, Comşa, 1956, p. 349, fig. 78/2; Bader, 1983, p. 73, taf. 24/140.

⁵¹ Berciu, Comşa, 1956, pp. 415, 425, 431, 436-437, fig. 141/2, 7; 145/5; 151/1; 159/2; 179/1, 2; 182/10, 12; Bader, 1983, p. 72, taf. 23/132, 133; 24/134, 138.

⁵² Vulpe, 1967, pp. 69, 131, 149, pl. XXIII/3, 4; Bader, 1983, p. 72, taf. 23/130-131.

⁵³ Gumă, 1993, p. 228, pl. LXI/50-53.

⁵⁴ Gabrovec, 1970, p. 27, k.VI; Bader, 1983, taf. 47.

⁵⁵ Berciu, Comşa 1956, fig. 78/1.

⁵⁶ Bader, 1983, p. 85.

⁵⁷ Berciu, Comşa, 1956, p. 433, fig. 152; Bader, 1983, p. 87, taf. 31/236.

⁵⁸ Vulpe, 1967, p. 68, pl. XXIII/2; Bader, 1983, p. 87, taf. 31/237.

⁵⁹ Vulpe, 1990, p. 119.

All the fibulae types from Desa can be dated between the middle of the 8th c. BC and the middle of the 7th c. BC. In fact, this chronological interval corresponds to peak phase of Basarabi culture as it was defined⁶⁰.

Accepting the dating of the Basarabi culture as it was proposed by Al. Vulpe, as well as the arguments above-mentioned, the fibulae discovered so far in Desa – „Castravița” permit us to chronologically frame the tumular necropolis from here between the middle of the 8th c. BC and the middle of the 7th c. BC. Thus, the tumuli from Desa represent in the current state of research the eastern most tumular necropolis in the group of those discovered so far at the Lower Danube.

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⁶⁰ Vulpe, 1965, pp. 105-132; Vulpe, 1986, pp. 49-89; Vulpe, 1990, pp. 113-120.

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Abbreviation List

AARMSI	- Analele Academiei Române, Memoriile Secțiunii Istorice, București.
AISC	- Anuarul Institutului de Studii Clasice, Cluj.
Analele Banatului	- Analele Banatului. Serie nouă, arheologie-istorie, Timișoara.
AUC	- Analele Universității din Craiova, seria Istorie, Craiova.
BCMI	- Buletinul Comisiunii Monumentelor Istorice, București.
BSNR	- Buletinul Societății Numismatice Române, București.
CCA	- Cronica Cercetărilor Arheologice din România.
CCDJ	- Cultură și Civilizație la Dunărea de Jos, Călărași.
Dacia	- Dacia. Revue d'Archéologie et d'Histoire Ancienne, Nouvelle Série, București.
Drobeta	- Drobeta. Arheologie-istorie, Drobeta Turnu-Severin.
Germania	- Germania. Anzeiger der Römisch-Germanischen Kommission des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Mainz am Rhein.
Godišnjak	- Godišnjak. Centar za Balkanološka Ispitivanja, Sarajevo.
MCA	- Materiale și Cercetări Arheologice, București.
Oltenia	- Oltenia. Studii și Comunicări, arheologie-istorie, Craiova.
PBF	- Prähistorische Bronzefunde, München, Stuttgart.
SCIV(A)	- Studii și Cercetări de IstorieVeche (și Arheologie), București.
WPZ	- Wiener Prähistorische Zeitschrift, Viena.

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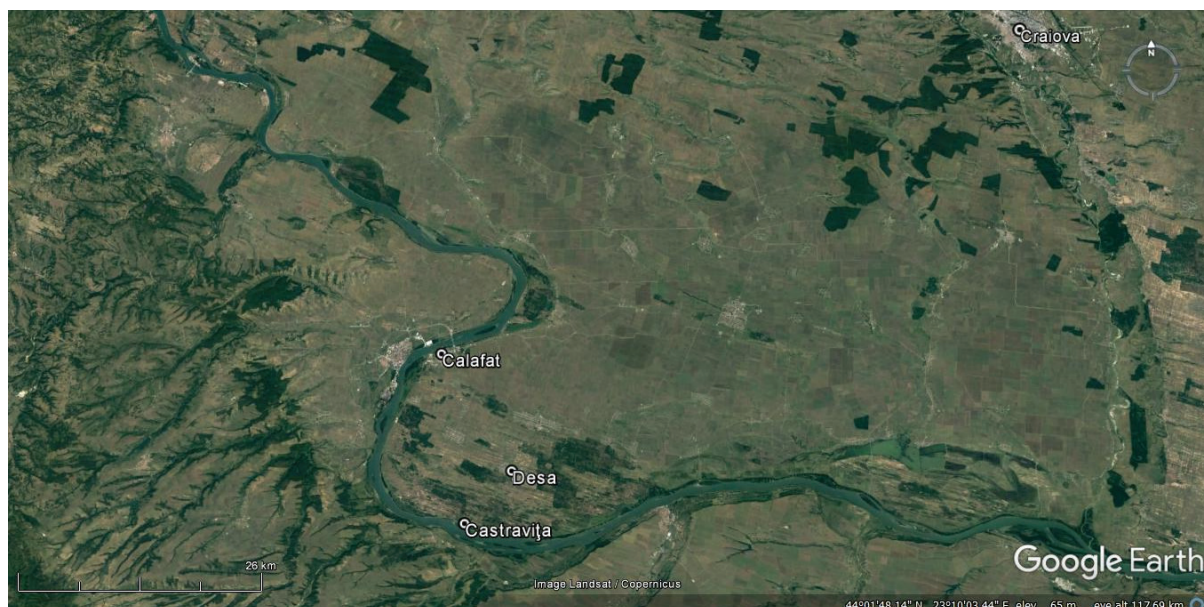


FIGURE 1

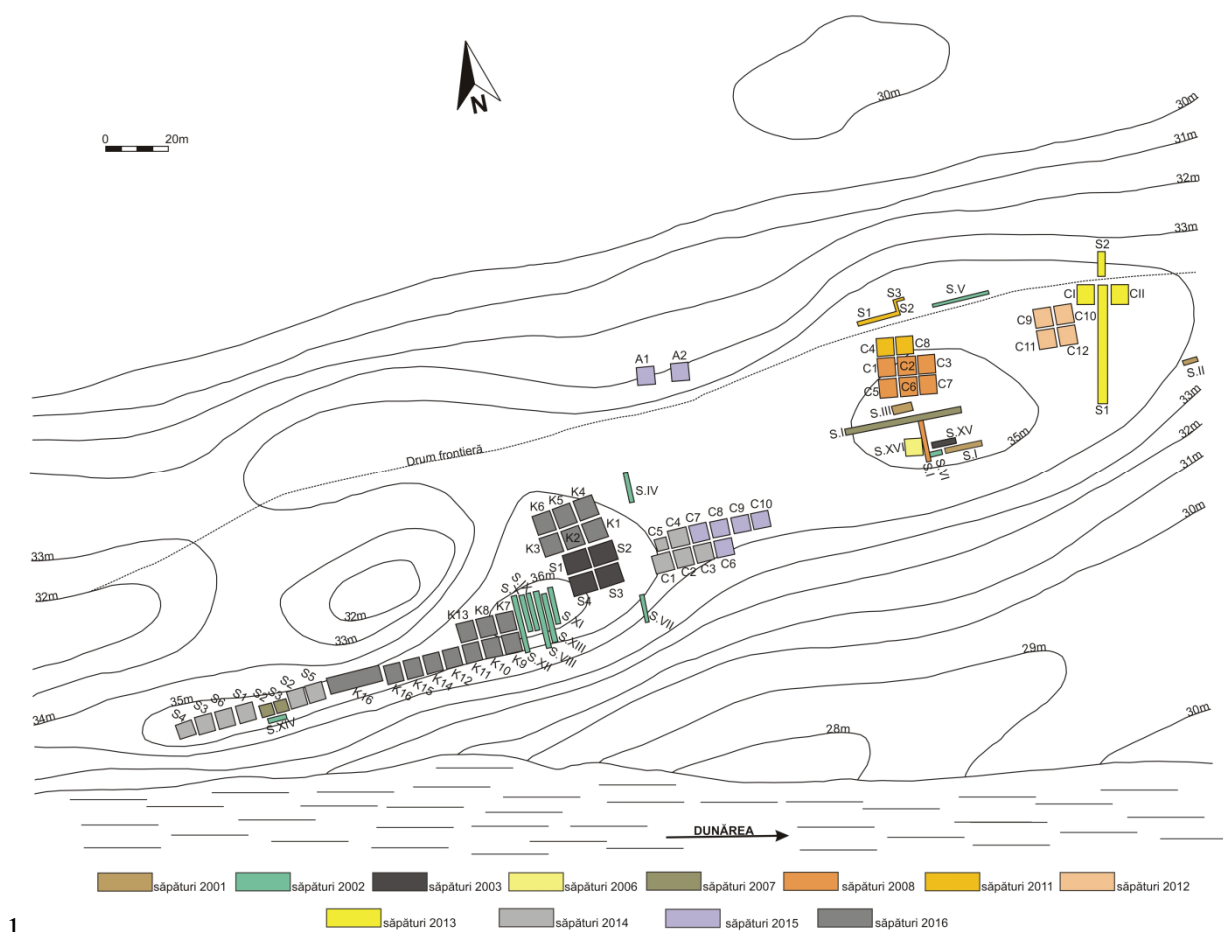


FIGURE 2

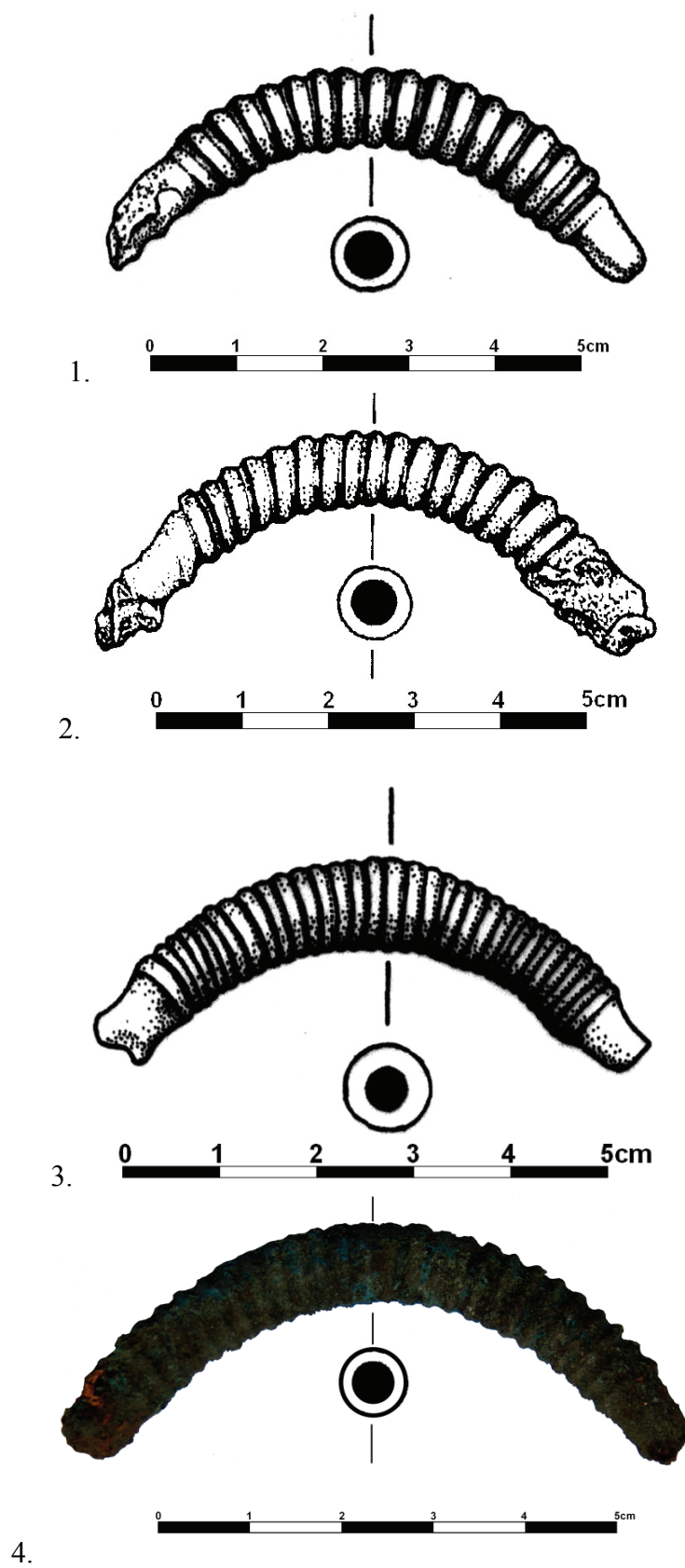


FIGURE 3

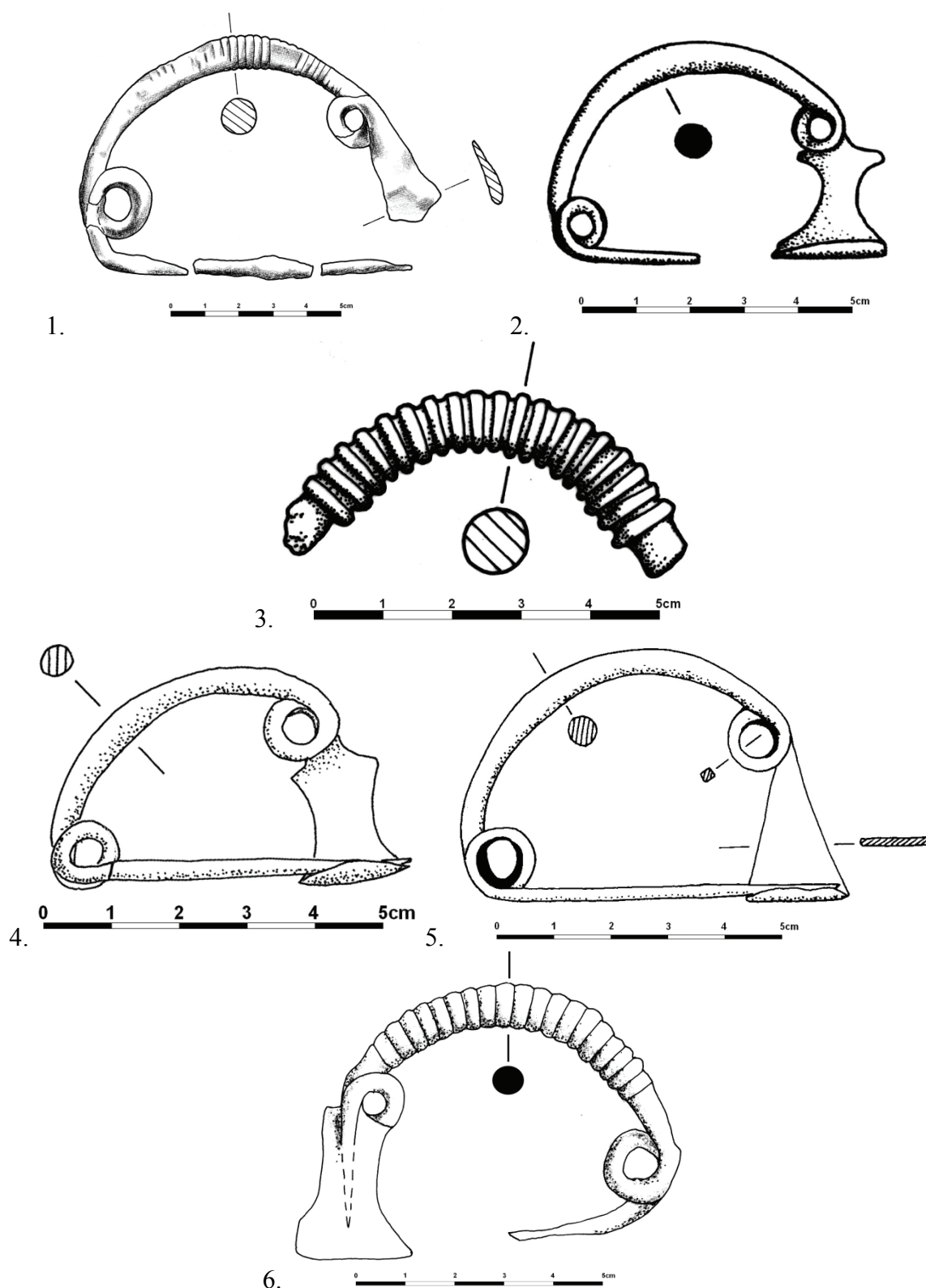


FIGURE 4

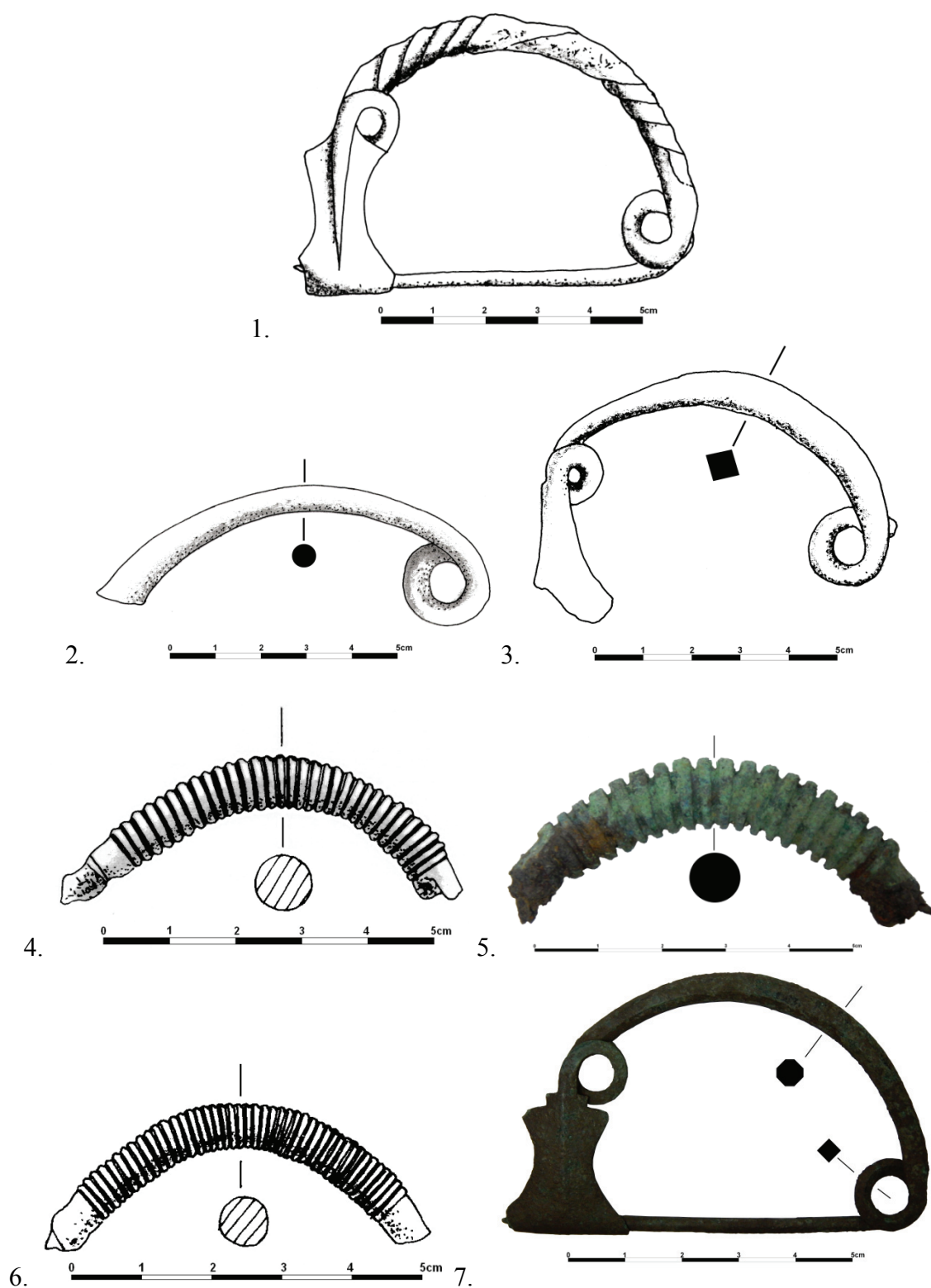


FIGURE 5

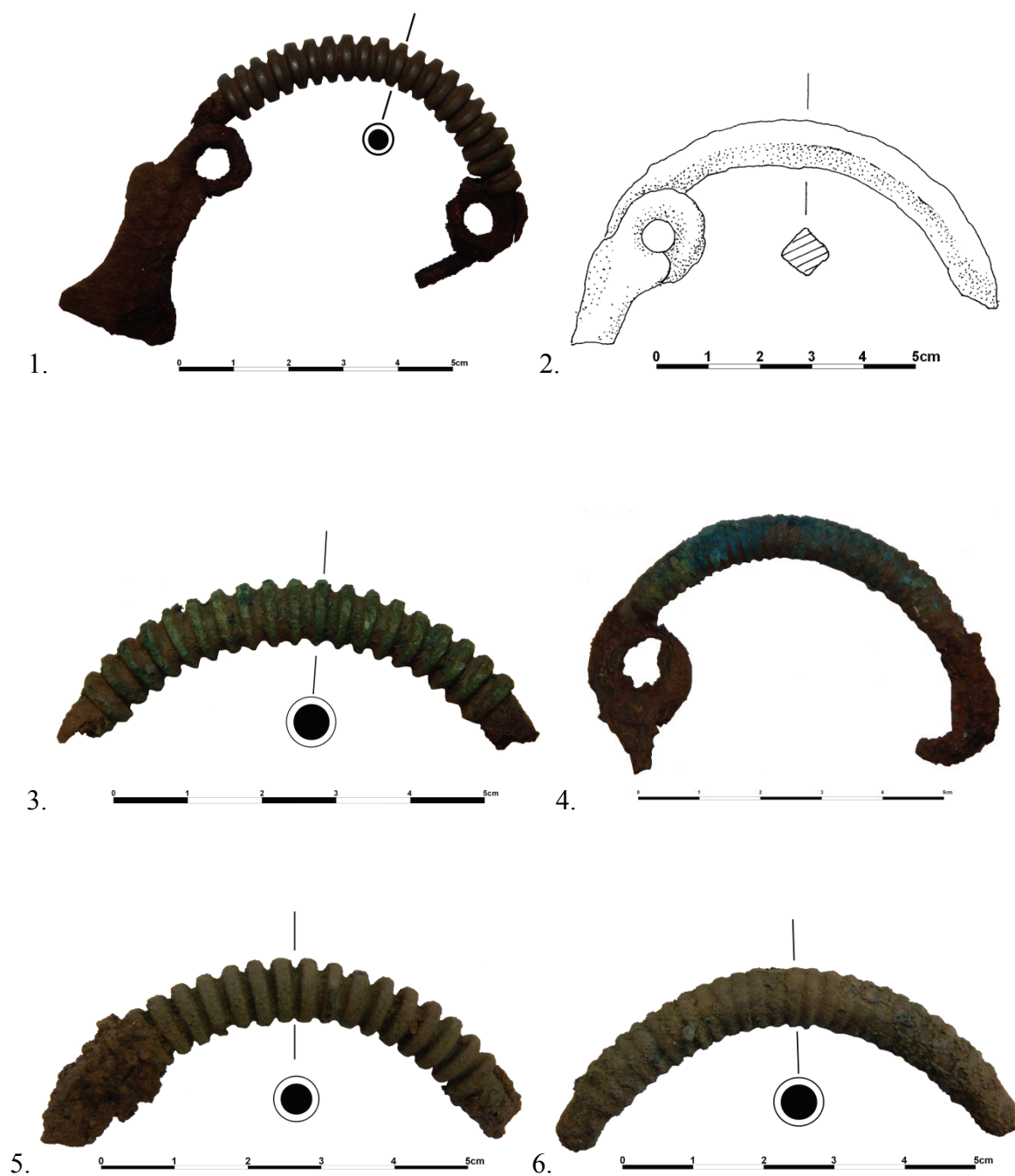


FIGURE 6