

## VERBICIOARA CULTURE END CRVENKA – CORNEȘTI FINDS IN THE SERBIAN DANUBE BASIN

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In his study of Verbicioara culture as distinct, long-lasting Bronze Age culture in Oltenia D. Berciu assumed its spreading in the territories of Rumanian Banat, northwest Bulgaria and northeast Serbia.<sup>1</sup> Chance find (from the vicinity of Kladovo) of the globular vessel with characteristics of early Verbicioara, published by D. Berciu in 1964 confirmed the presence of this culture on the right Danube bank in the Iron Gates<sup>2</sup> (Fig. 10/3). Later investigations in the Serbian Danube valley, particularly in the Iron Gates and the Ključ region revealed the existence of other sites with Verbicioara culture horizon, mainly phases II and III according to D. Berciu<sup>3</sup>. Most attention to the study of Verbicioara culture in Serbia, especially in Yugoslav Banat was paid by N. Tasić<sup>4</sup>. Accepting the opinion of B. Hansel that later phases of Verbicioara culture (IV, Va and Vb) should be distinguished as distinct groups (Govora, Virtop)<sup>5</sup> this author thinks that Verbicioara culture in our territory is represented only with two phases<sup>6</sup> or three<sup>7</sup> that corresponds with phases I-III according to Berciu. The most dilemmas relate to the third phase of this group where Tasić placed the finds of Crvenka-Cornești type. The most of Rumanian colleagues until recently considered these finds as to belong to Vatina group<sup>8</sup>. Fl. Gogoltan recently proposed the distinguishing of the new group Cornești-Crvenka<sup>9</sup> and M. Gumă even an internal periodisation of this group (three phases) in the Rumanian Banat<sup>10</sup>. New finds from Oltenia<sup>11</sup> and Mehedinți region<sup>12</sup> considerably increased the number of sites with “genuine” Verbicioara culture which as it seems should be restricted to only two phases (phases I-II after Berciu are treated together and III as final phase). New finds of the Verbicioara culture in Yugoslav Banat were dealt with by Dj. Gačić<sup>13</sup> and J. Uzelac<sup>14</sup>.

In the Yugoslav part of Banat as well as in the Rumanian Banat there is almost no pottery finds belonging to the Verbicioara culture (phases I-III after Berciu and I-II after Nica) except the finds of Crvenka-Cornești type. M. Gumă

distinguished as Verbicioara finds from Rumanian Banat only the pottery from Dubova - Peștera Climente I<sup>15</sup>. Thanks to colleague J. Uzelac we had the opportunity to study the material in the Vrsac museum, especially abundant material collected by F. Milleker before the World War I from the site Vatin - Bela Bara (Bela Voda) (Fig. 6/1-3; 7/1-5; 8/2-4,6; 9/1-3).

Only in the Vatin collection we noticed the vessels close to the finds of Verbicioara III culture.<sup>16</sup> Of particular interest are small biconical cups with two handles, narrow base and marked shift on the widest part of the body, and decorated with sheaves of thin, vertical lines on the upper part of vessel. Small globular vessels Fig. 7/1-5 with two handles which rise high above the rim and have horn-like protrusions are decorated with sheaves of inclined lines within narrow or wider horizontal bands.

However from the same site comes the pottery decorated with simple combination of hatched arched segments (usually arches with hatched background) similar to the finds from Crvenka (Fig. 6/1-3; 9/2, 3). It differs from the Verbicioara culture in fabric, surface treatment and color. It seems that almost entire repertoire of vessels that N. Tasić attributed to the Verbicioara group in Vojvodina should be attributed to the Crvenka - Cornești type of finds. Most of the finds published so far come from the excavations of the settlements Vršac - Crvenka and Vatin - Bela Bara. Sporadic, surface finds of the Crvenka type were discovered at the settlements Barice - Bugarska humka westward of Vršac (Fig. 8/5) and Pavliš - Beluca to the south of Vršac (Fig. 8/1). Single finds of small beakers decorated with the incised arches come from the settlement Omoljica - Zlatica<sup>17</sup> (Fig. 10/1) and the settlement Najeva ciglana at Pančevo and one specimen is hypothetically from Dubovac (Fig. 6/4). It is interesting that in the collection of F. Milleker in the Vršac museum is also one vessel of Crvenka - Cornești type from the site Sânpetru German (Fig. 6/5) - Munar. One-handle small beaker and some sheards with Cornești-Crvenka type of ornamentations from Foeni (allegedly Gomila Lupu) is stored in National museum in Zrenjamin<sup>17a</sup>.

Few pottery finds of Crvenka type, especially small beakers with two "ansa lunata" handles were also discovered at the multilayered settlement at Židovar. We hope that new excavations of this site will more precisely define stratigraphic position of Crvenka - Cornești pottery in relation to the substantial horizon of the Vatin culture.

In the Iron Gates and the Ključ region recently conducted archaeological excavation offered new data on the Verbicioara culture. The most significant sites with relevant vertical stratigraphy are Lepena near Boljetin<sup>18</sup> in the Gorge and Livade near Mala Vrbica<sup>19</sup> in the Ključ region.

When publishing the finds from the multilayered settlement Lepena near Boljetin greatest attention was paid to the horizon with channeled pottery of the Gava type and the finds of the Early Iron Age Bosut culture. Although some

Verbicioara culture elements were noticed, the pottery finds decorated with incised geometric motives from the earlier horizons of the settlement at Lepena were associated with pottery from the settlements Cornești, Socodor and some other finds from the late phases of Otomani and Wietenberg cultures in Transilvania. In his study of Verbicioara culture N. Tasić distinguished Lepena as one of a few sites of this culture with vertical stratigraphy.<sup>20</sup>

After revision study of documentation and archaeological material from Lepena it is possible to emend to the certain extent the stratigraphic picture about this prehistoric settlement. Four cultural strata are clearly distinguishable within 2 meters thick cultural layer. They indicate that settlement lived with larger or smaller interruptions from the end of Eneolithic until the advanced Iron Age.

Boljetin I - the earliest habitation horizon dating from the end of Eneolithic. Distinguished according the sparse pottery finds of Kostolac - Coțofeni type in the lowest layers in some of the trenches.

Boljetin II - the remains of the Middle Bronze Age settlement, 0.40 to 0.60 m thick. According to the type of pottery decoration it is possible to identify two phases: Boljetin IIa, earlier (lower) horizon with characteristics of Verbicioara III culture and Boljetin IIb, later (upper) horizon with characteristics of Crvenka - Cornești type.

Boljetin III - Late Bronze Age settlement, horizon with channeled pottery of Mala Vrbica - Hinova -Balta Verde type.

Boljetin IV - Early Iron Age settlement of the Bosut group with two phases: Boljetin IVa - Kalakača horizon and Boljetin IVb - Basarabi horizon.

Horizon Boljetin IIa is characterized by pottery decorated most often with thin incised lines forming simple geometric patterns - sheaves of vertical lines sometimes also with short incisions, small round depressions, elongated, vertical hatched triangles and so fort (Fig. 3/1-2, 4-6, 8-9; Fig. 4/1, 2, 4, 5-8). Later settlement horizon of the Middle Bronze Age (Boljetin IIb) was distinguished mainly according to the elaborately decorated pottery - incised arch motives, occasionally garlands arranged in narrow or wide horizontal fields with hatched interspace. This pottery is rather close to the finds from settlements Gornea-Pazariște, Moldova Veche - Ostrov (Spitz). Among other finds, it seems that bronze knife with curved dorsal edge belongs also to the Crvenka - Cornești horizon (Fig. 4/9).

In the course of archaeological excavations conducted in 1980 and 1981, an area of about one thousand square meters was investigated. Cultural layer, 1.10 to 1.40 (with pits to 1.60 m) is underneath the thick sand deposit. Habitation horizon determined with certainty in the entire investigated area and characterized by the remains of various constructions date from the Late Bronze Age Žuto brdo - Girla Mare culture. Immediately under this horizon is the earliest habitation layer on this site, about 0.50 m thick and with abundant pottery frag-

ments evenly scattered in the whole investigated area. However, not a single architectural feature could be attributed to this horizon. According to the characteristics of the pottery this horizon belongs to the phases II (Fig. 1/2-4; 7; 2/4, 6, 8, 9) and most probably III of Verbicioara culture after Berciu (Fig. 1/1, 5, 6, 8; 2/1, 2, 5, 6).

Among fine pottery predominate small size vessels of globular shape with short cylindrical or funnel-like neck, thin walls and of fine fabric, color being light brown, dark brown, gray and almost black. Very widespread are small band-like handles that join the rim and rounded shoulder (fig. 2/1). The surface is always well treated, usually polished and decoration reveals considerable diversity in only few techniques: incision, broomstroke or comb-like ornament and plastic band. Thin or slightly wider incisions are used in many variants of the net-like motive (Fig. 1/1, 5, 8), double parallel or radial lines which often start or terminate with circular dimples or buttons (Fig. 1/2, 3, 6; 2/1). The broomstroke or comb-like ornament predominant in the coarse pottery is also often used for body decoration of the fine pottery. The main characteristic for the majority of vessels is that all three techniques are present and identically distributed: on the upper section of the vessel is incised ornament and on the lower comb-like ornament while plastic band is under the rim or on the body.

As we already mentioned immediately above this horizon of Verbicioara culture there is the horizon of Late Bronze Age encrusted pottery. This situation indicate that pottery of Crvenka-Cornești type did not penetrate in this region of the Serbian Danube basin.

As for the other sites in the upper and lower gorge of the Iron Gates where the material belonging to the Verbicioara culture do appear, like Manastir (Fig. 5/1-6)<sup>21</sup>, Padina (Fig. 2/3,7)<sup>21a</sup>, Klisura (Fig. 5/7-11)<sup>22</sup> Ušće Porečke reke,<sup>23</sup> Kladovo,<sup>24</sup> Korbovo (Fig. 10/4)<sup>25</sup>, Ušće Jakomira,<sup>26</sup> Grabovica<sup>27</sup> these are mostly sites insufficiently explored ( limited test trenching) or only partially published.

However, according to available data it seems that certain variance could be noticed between the sites in the Gorge and sites situated downstream towards the Klju~ region. Thus on the sites in the Gorge some elements of Crvenka-Cornești type are recorded, the best evidence being the site Lepena near Boljetin while such elements are not recorded eastward of the Gorge as we have seen on the site Livade at Mala Vrbica.

Finally on the basis of the all above mentioned facts it seems that in the Yugoslav Banat prevail the finds of Crvenka-Cornești type that could be associated with Vatina culture. That is reflected not only in the presence of both material at the same sites but also in the typological likeness of pottery shapes. As for the chronological relation of the Crvenka - Cornești finds and Vatina culture it seems, for the time being, that Crvenka - Cornești finds should be considered

contemporary with the finds from Vatin III. On the other hand, the sparse finds of Verbicioara culture in Banat (Valin-Bela Buru) could be regarded as marginal phenomenon in this area. In the Iron Gates and the Kjuč region nevertheless we recorded the intensive presence of Verbicioara culture, especially in its classical phase (Verbicioara II and III) and only to some extent the penetration of Crvenka - Cornești material in the western zone of this region. Concerning chronological relations, judging by the situation at Lepena near Boljetin it seems that Verbicioara culture dates from the earlier horizon of the Middle Bronze Age while Crvenka - Cornești finds date from the later phase of the Middle Bronze Age.

### NOTES:

- <sup>1</sup> Berciu D., 1961a; 1961b, 235, fig.5
- <sup>2</sup> Berciu D., 1964, 43 sqq
- <sup>3</sup> Jevtic, Vukmanovic 1996, 283-84, Map 1
- <sup>4</sup> Tasic N., 1974; 1983; 1984
- <sup>5</sup> Hänsel B., 1976,
- <sup>6</sup> Tasic N., 1983, 68
- <sup>7</sup> Tasic N., 1984, 87
- <sup>8</sup> Radu O., 1972; Lazarovici 1977, 92-93, Morintz S., 1978, 17, Lazarovici, Sacaran 1979, 76-79.
- <sup>9</sup> Gogoltan Fl., 1993, 63; 1995, 46
- <sup>10</sup> Guma M., 1997, 117-120
- <sup>11</sup> Nica M., 1982, 1996.
- <sup>12</sup> Craciunescu G., 1996.
- <sup>13</sup> Gacic Dj., 1987, 5-7.
- <sup>14</sup> Uzelac J., 1996, 27-29.
- <sup>15</sup> Guma M., 1997, 121, Pl.XLV/1-17.
- <sup>16</sup> Milleker B., 1905, T. XVII/ 2, XVIII/6, 7a,b.
- <sup>17</sup> Grbic M., 1937, Pl.20/1,2.
- <sup>17a</sup> Marinkovic S., 1996, T. I/1, 2, 4
- <sup>18</sup> Jevtic M., 1982, 19-32.
- <sup>19</sup> Vukmanovic, Popovic, 1984, 85-87; 1986, 7-26.
- <sup>20</sup> Tasic N., 1983,
- <sup>21</sup> Brukner B., 1969, 136-139.
- <sup>21a</sup> Iovanovic B., 1971, 15, fig. 9/4
- <sup>22</sup> Letica Z., 1984, 193-194.
- <sup>23</sup> Trbuhovi} V., 1969, 103-104, Pl. XXX.
- <sup>24</sup> Berciu D., 1964, 43-50.
- <sup>25</sup> Krstic D., 1984, 101-107, fig. 81/3,4
- <sup>26</sup> Jevtic M., 1983, 10
- <sup>27</sup> Paprenica J., 1986, 363.

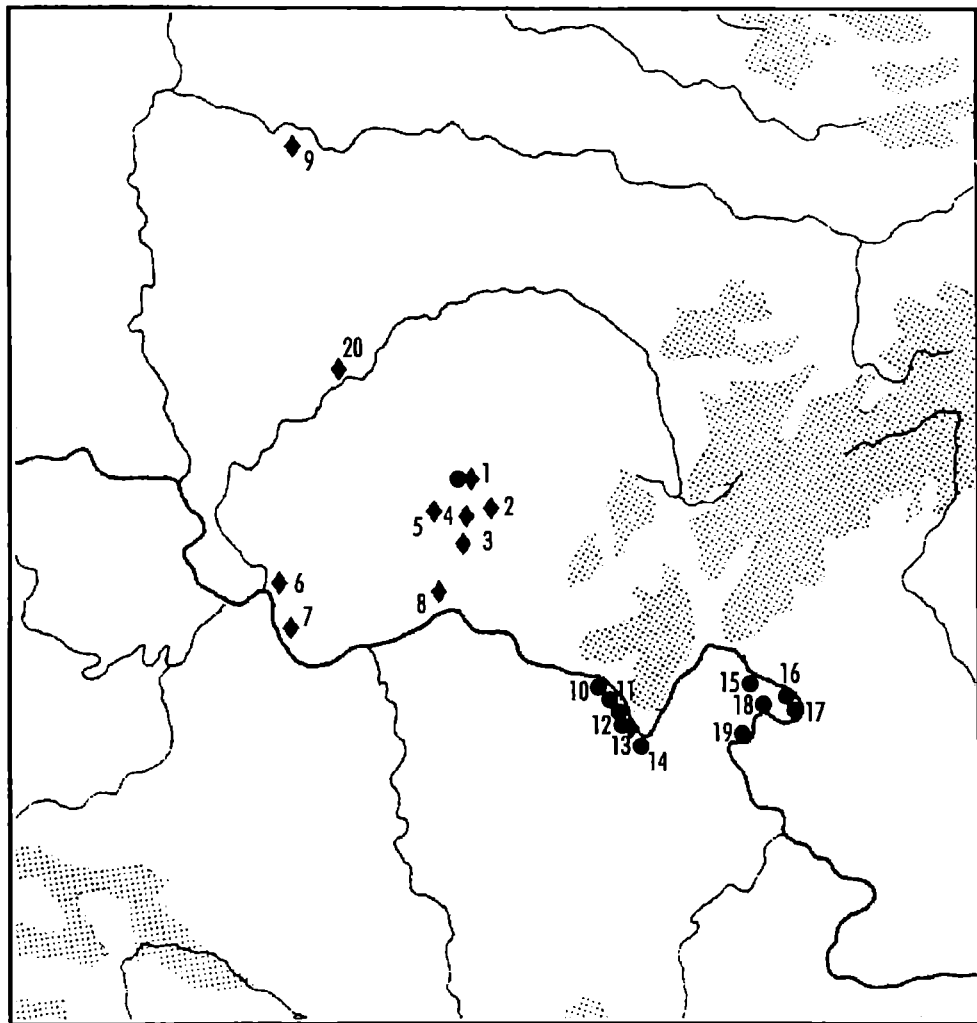
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 PJZ, *Praistorija jugoslovenskih zemalja*, Sarajevo  
 PZ, *Prahistorische Zeitschrift*, Berlin  
 SCIV, *Studii și cercetări de istorie veche*, București  
 TRÉ, *Történelmi es regészeti Értesítő*, Temesvár  
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Desene: K. Török și D. Cicios.



Map 1. Crvenka-Cornesti finds, 1-9, 20 on the map

Sites of the Verbicioara culture, 10-19.

1. Vatin-Bela Bara; 2. Vršac-Crvenka; 3. Židovar; 4. Pavliš-Beluca; 5. Barice-Bugarska humka; 6. Pančevo-Najeva ciglana; 7. Omoljica-Zlatica; 8. Dubovac; 9. Sanpetru German-Munar; 10. Manastir-Gospodjin Vir; 11. Padina; 12. Klisura kod Lepenskog Vira; 13. Boljetin-Lepena; 14. Ušće Porečke reke; 15. Kladovo (the vicinity of K.); 16. Mala Vrbica-Livade; 17. Korbova-Selište (Staro selo); 18. Ušće Jakomira; 19. Grabovica-Brzi Prun; 20. Foeni-Gomila Lupului



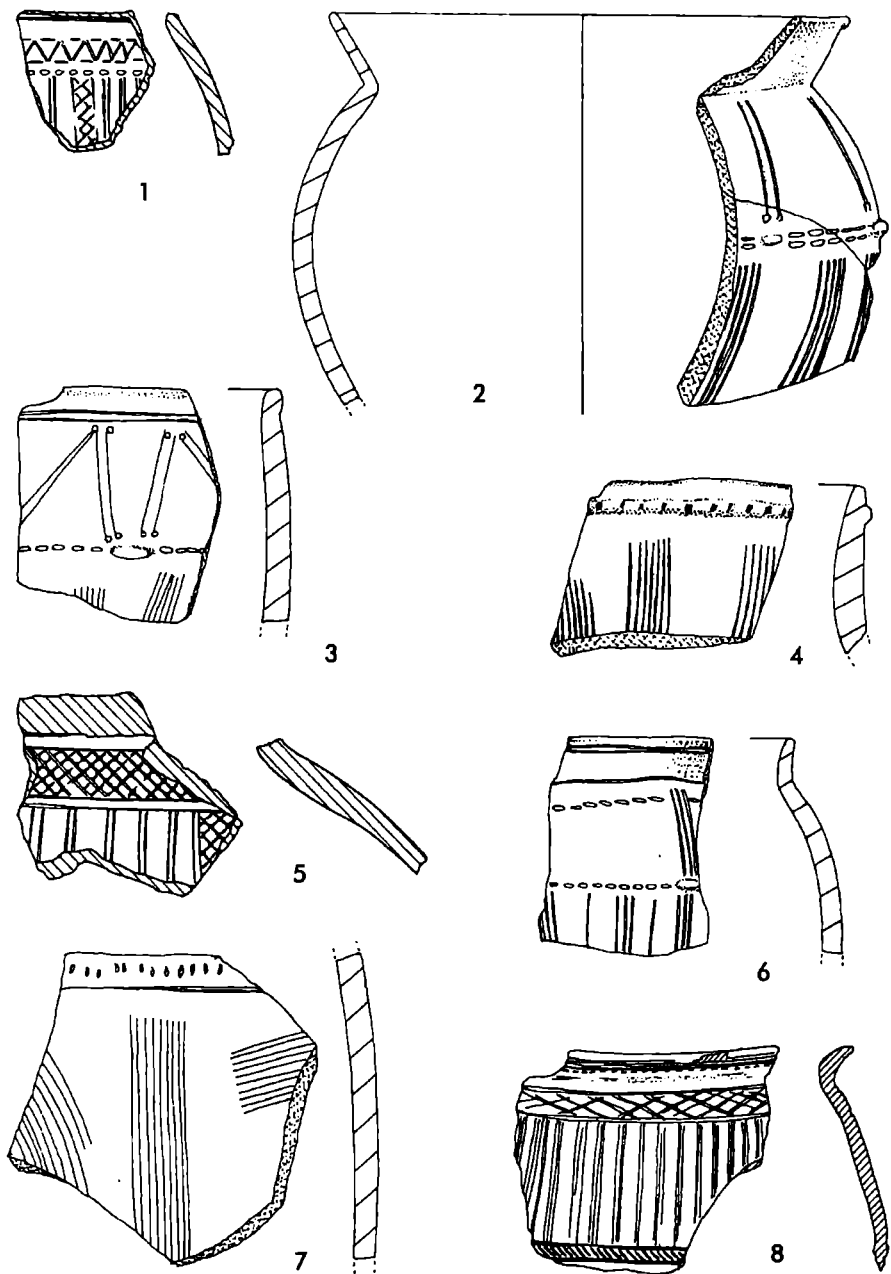
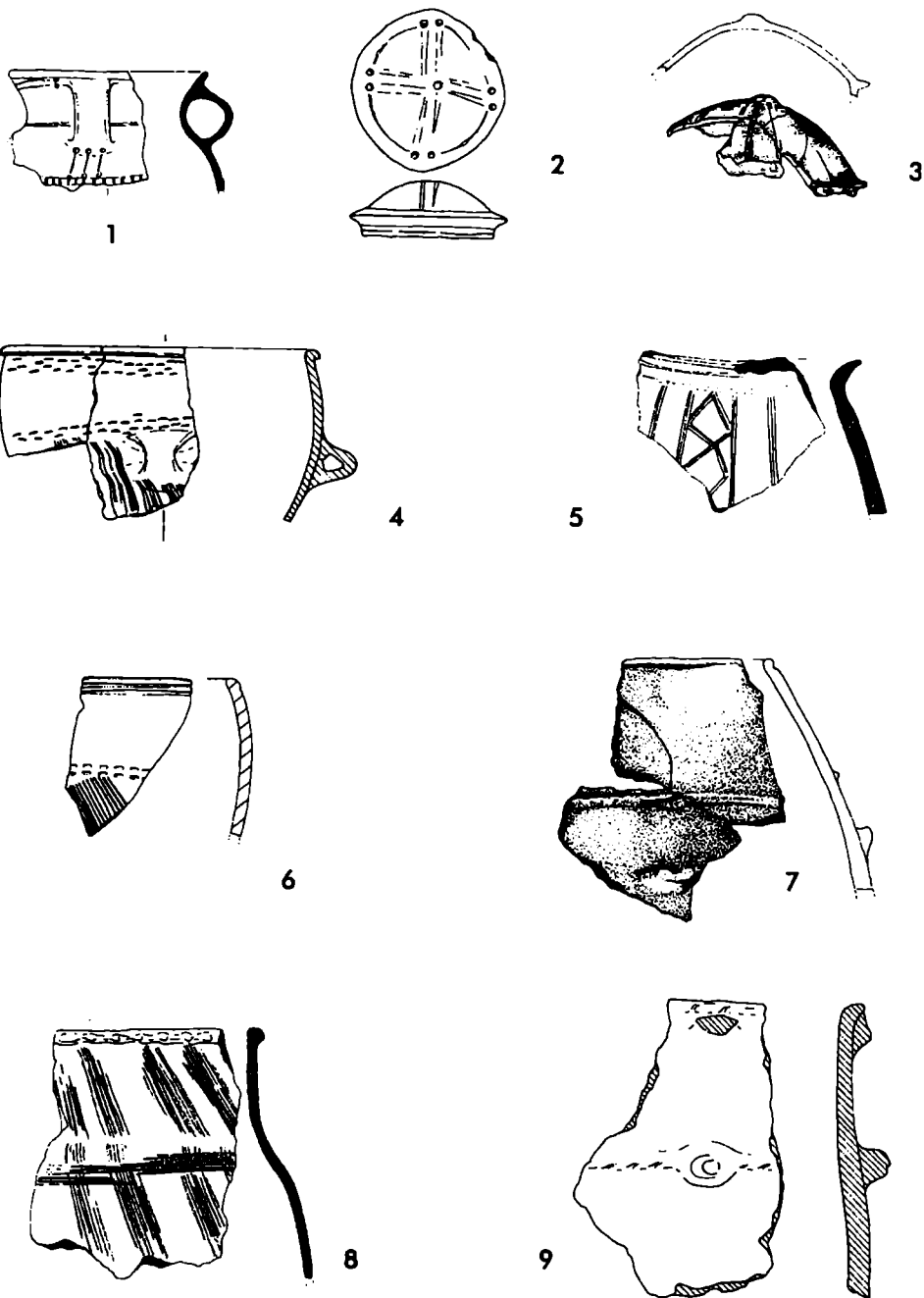


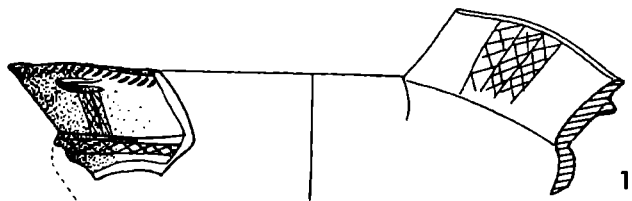
Plate I

Fig. 1-8, Mala Vrbica-Livade

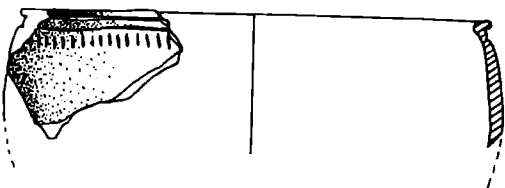


## Plate II

fig. 1,2, 4-6, 8,9 Mala Vrbica-Livade  
 fig. 3, 7 Padina (Sector II)



1



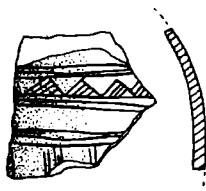
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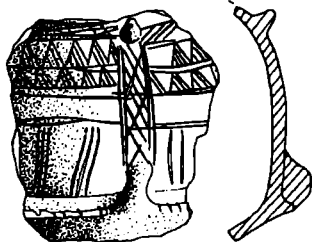
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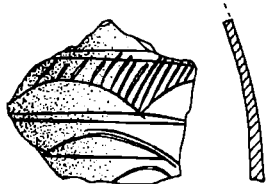
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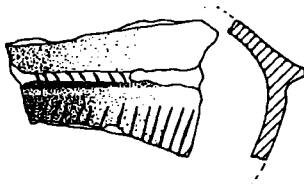
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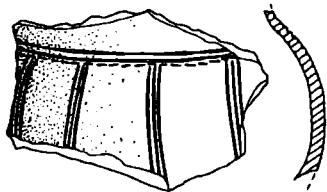
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Plate III

fig. 1-9 Boljetin-Lepena

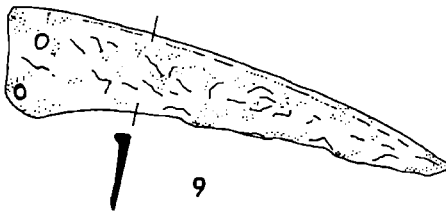
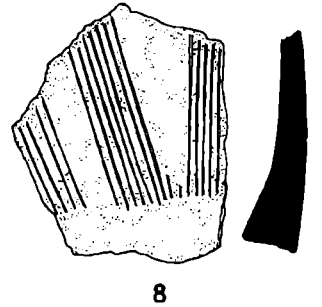
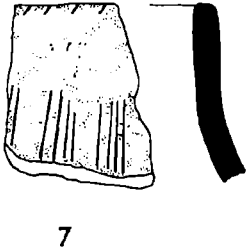
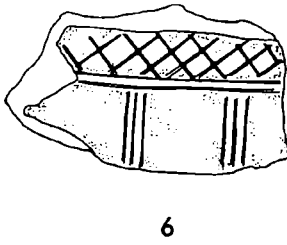
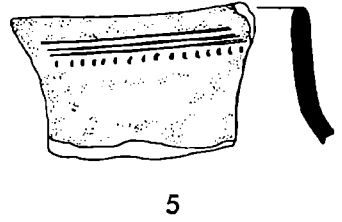
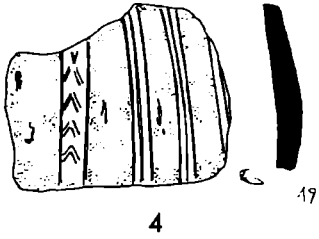
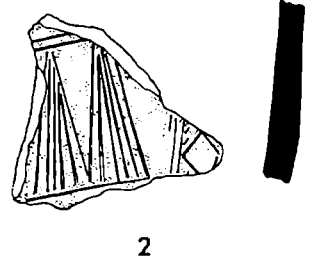
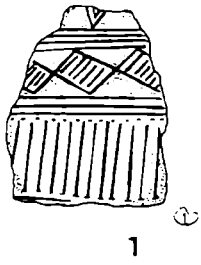
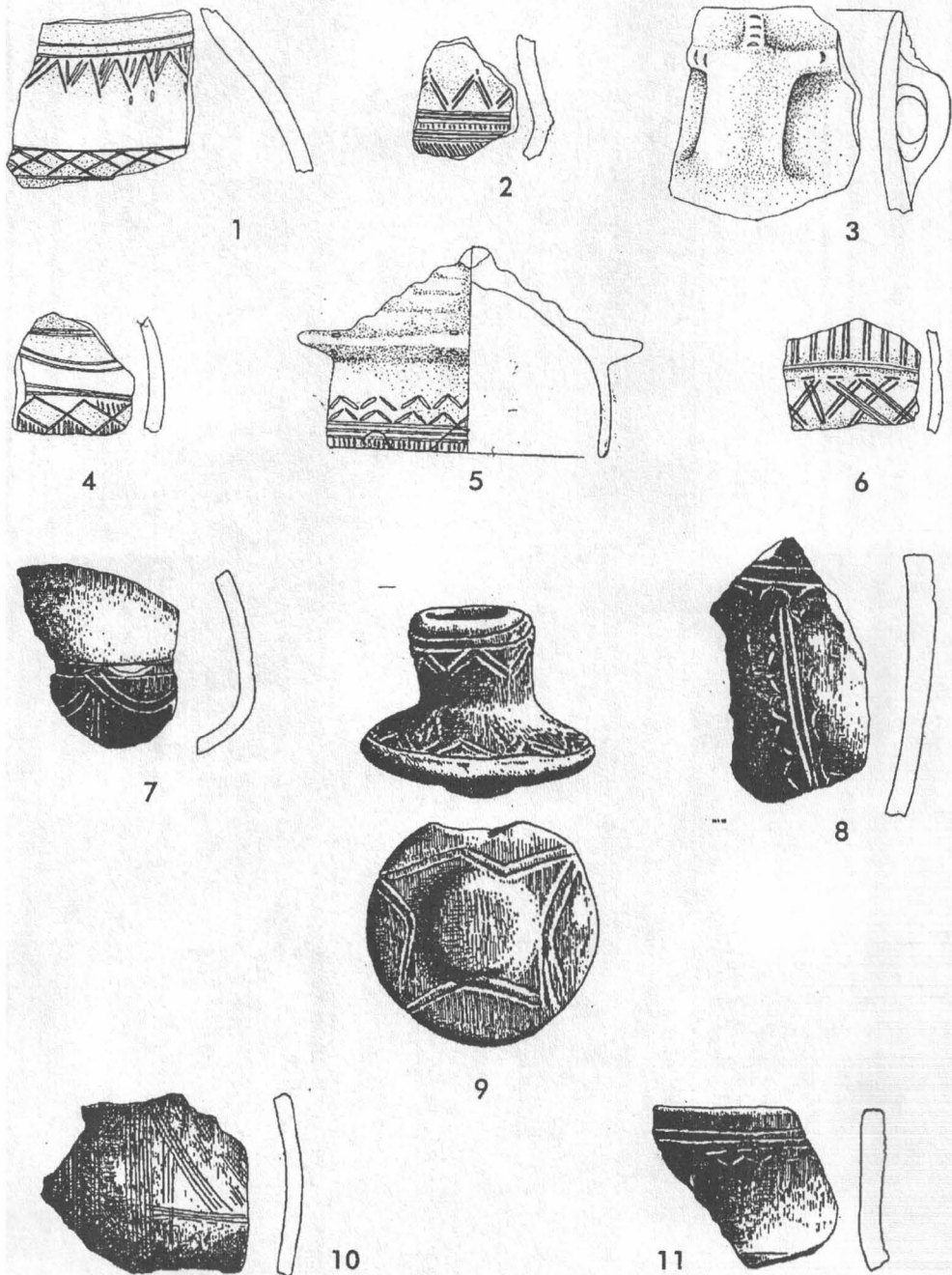


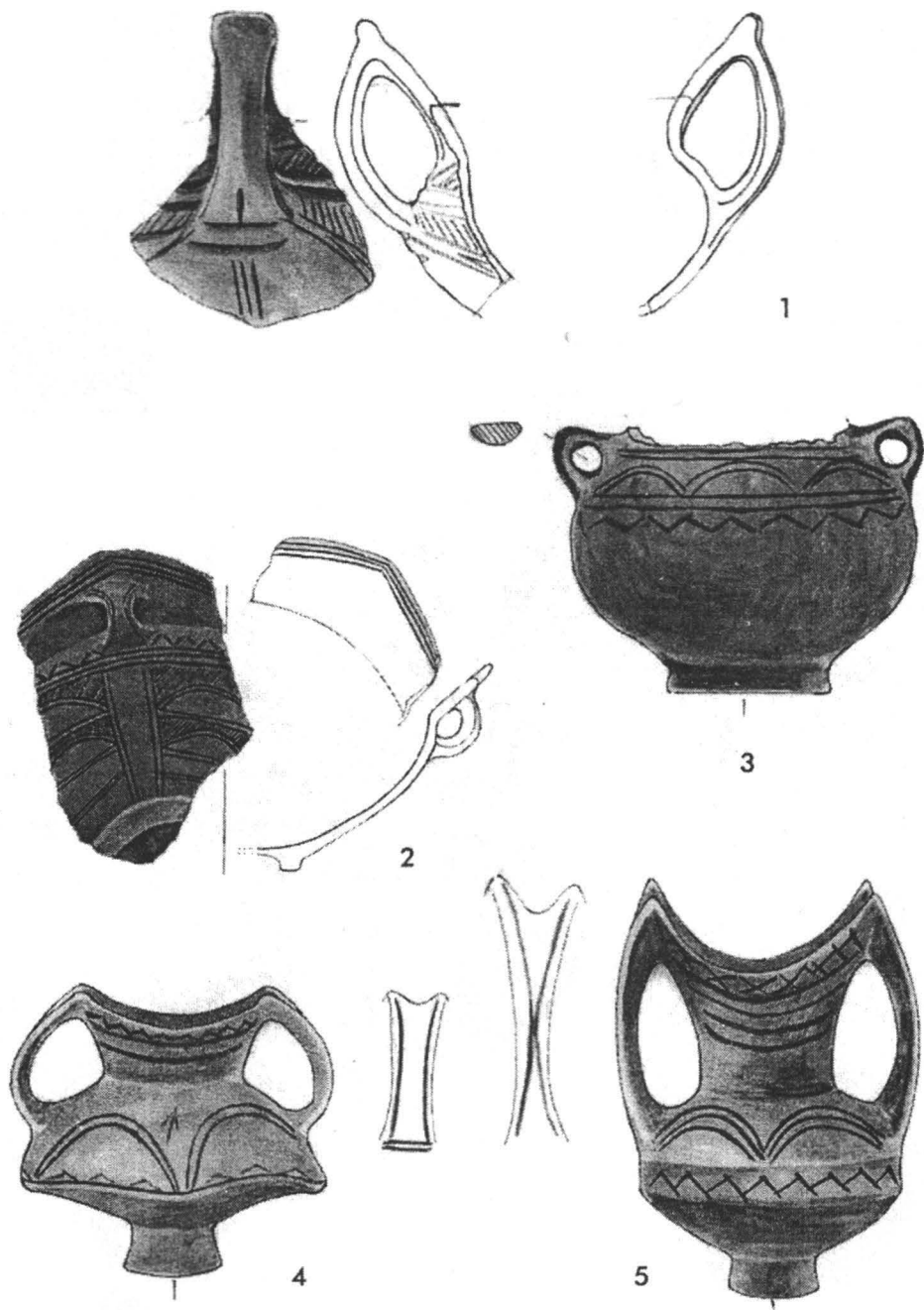
Plate IV

fig. 1-9, Boljetin-Lepena



## Plate V

fig. 1-6 Manastir-Gospodjin Vir  
fig. 7-11 Klisura near Lepenski Vir



## Plate VI

fig. 1-4 Vatin-Bela Bara

fig. 5 Sanpetru German-Munar

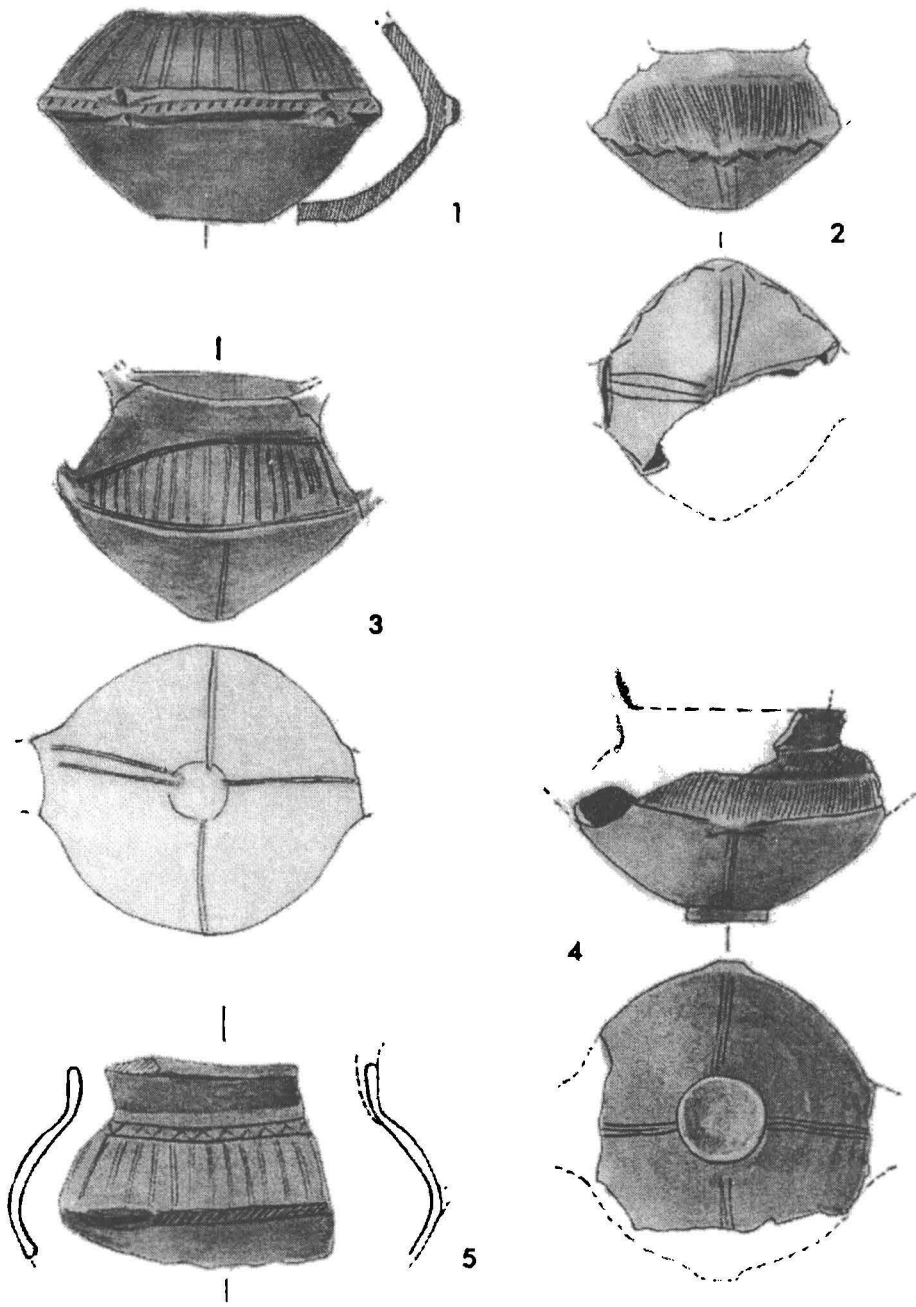
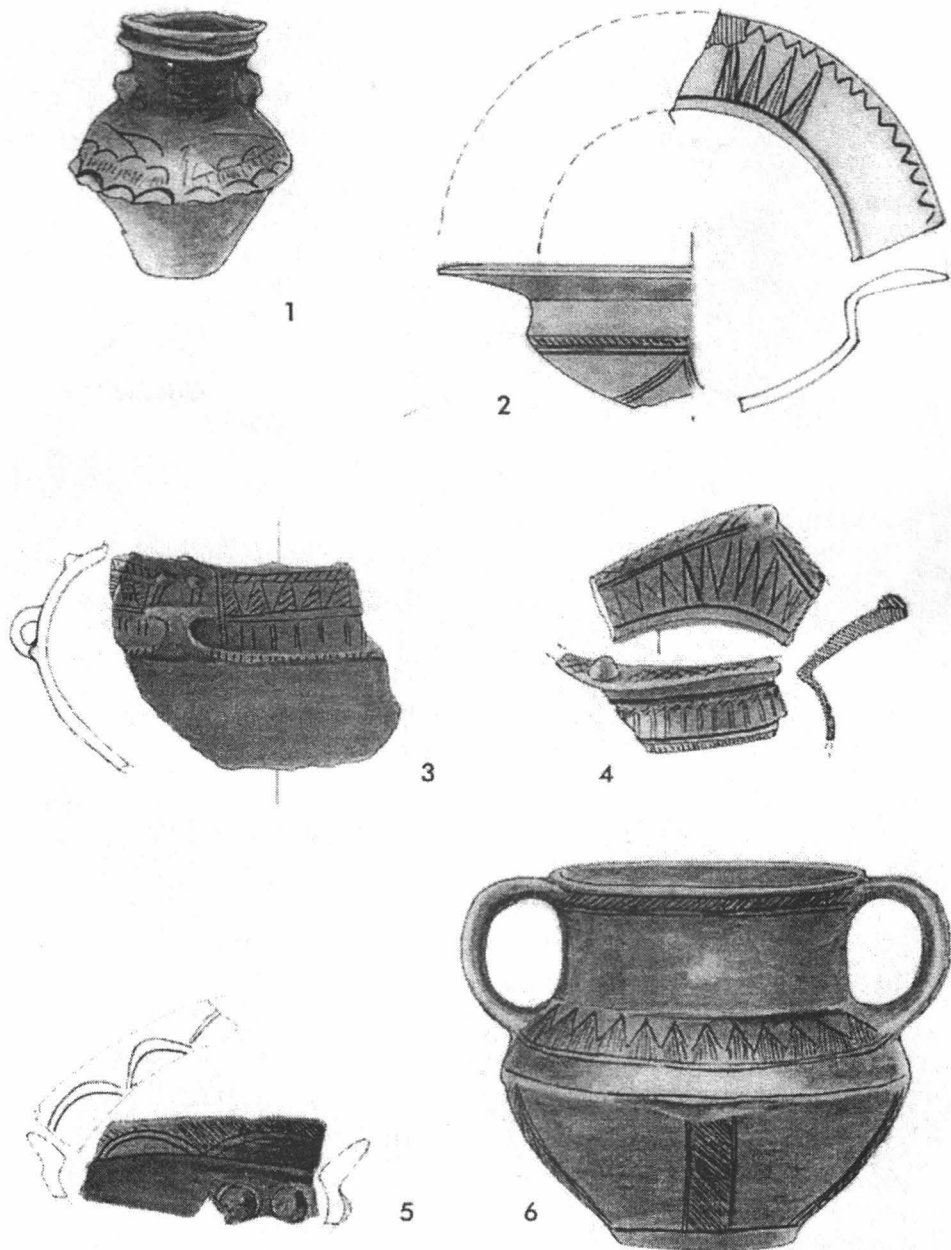


Plate VII

fig. 1-5 Vatin-Bela Bara



## Plate VIII

fig. 1, Pavliš-Beluca

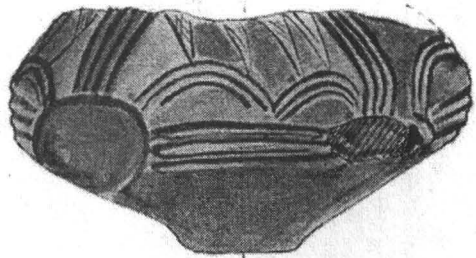
fig. 2-4, 6 Vatin-Bela Bara

fig. 6 Barica-Bugarska humka

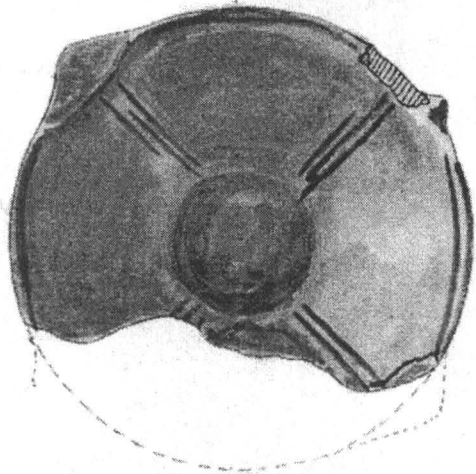




1



2



3



4

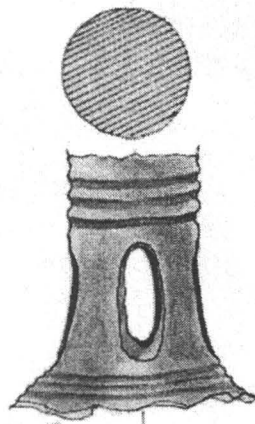


Plate IX

fig. 1-4 Vatin-Bela Bara



1



2



3



4

**Plate 10**

**fig. 1,2 Omoljica-Zlatica**

**fig. 3 the icinity of Kladovo**

**fig. 4 Korbovo-Staro selo**