

# ON THE STRATIGRAPHY OF CERNAVODĂ III-BOLERÁZ FINDS FROM THE DJERDAP AREA

Miloš Jevtić (Beograd)

In his recently published study on the history of archaeological excavations and the stratigraphy of the multi-level site of Ostrovul Corbului, situated on the very way out of the Djerdap Gorge, Petre Roman has presented an relevant information to our country, namely that the bearers of the Cernavodă III and Coțofeni (phase I-II) cultures used to avoid this area of the Danube (Roman, Păunescu 1995, 62). Although the information primarily pertains to the large island opposite Korbovo, an insight into rather scanty literature about Eneolithic sites on the Romanian and Yugoslav sides of Djerdap I and II shows that Boleráz-Cernavodă finds are quite rare on this part of the course of the Danube. Most of some 30 Eneolithic sites on the right bank of the Danube, from Golubac to Prahovo, contained in the list available in a paper submitted at the Donji Milanovac Symposium (Jevtić 1987, 22-25), are Late Coțofeni settlements, the culture which mixes with, or, more rarely, is replaced by, the Kostolac group in the area upstream from Tekija. The second in terms of diffusion is the classical Sălčuța culture (predominantly Sălčuța IIB-III phase, after D. Berciu), with sporadic Sălčuța IV finds. Cernavodă III finds have been registered in the Djerdap II area, at the site known as Vajuga-Korbovo (Krstić 1986, 148-152). Vessels decorated with whisk-like ornaments from the junction of the Slatinska river with the Danube have been wrongly ascribed to the Cernavodă III culture (Jevtić 1984, 186-188). A subsequent survey of the pottery from this site, however, has led us to the presumption that it is a smaller Early Bronze Age settlement.

Most of the Cernavodă III and Boleráz settlements registered in Serbia, in the recent literature are ascribed to a unique cultural complex coming from Danubian Yugoslavia, and to a lesser extent from the northern Central Balkans.

Predrag Medović's protective works at the settlement of Brza Vrba near Kovin, situated on the left bank of the Danube, have considerably contributed to a better understanding of the Boleráz-Cernavodă III culture in southern Banat and Danubian Serbia (Medović 1976; idem 1976a). Nikola Tasić especially in his monograph *Eneolithic Cultures of Central and West Balkans* takes credit for classifying Cernavodă-Boleráz finds in the territory of Serbia as a separate, Middle Eneolithic culture (Tasić 1975; 1981, 16-17; 1983, 27-31). Besides the well-known sites, such as Mostonga near Odžaci, Gradina on the Bosut and Brza Vrba, there is the site of Vajuga-Korbovo in the Djerdap area that has been described in this monograph as one of the best investigated Boleráz-Cernavodă III settlements in Danubian Yugoslavia (Tasić 1995, 46-47, 162).

Mostly preliminary reports have been published so far on the protective works on the bank of the Danube between the villages of Vajuga and Korbovo, concerning the sites known as Obala-Korbovo, Vajuga-Pesak and Korbovo-Pesak, i.e. Vajuga-Korbovo. First owing of all to the finds of lavishly decorated Zuto Brdo-Gârla Mare pottery from the settlements and necropolises with urns, situated on an elevated river terrace between Vajuga and Korbovo, the collecting of which has begun as early as the end of the first decade of this century (Vasić 1910), as well as to the excavations of Žuto Brdo necropolises conducted by D. Krstić (Glamija-Školska Gradina), and by D. Srejić and A. Cermanović-Kuzmanović (Korbovo-Pesak), this area of Ključ constitutes one of the best investigated protected zones within

Djerdap I and II. Large-scale trial excavations conducted by several teams from the Belgrade National Museum on the 8 km-long river terrace between Korbovo and Vajuga have yielded a fair number of prehistoric sites, from the Neolithic to the Late La Tène, although the only find published in detail is the Early Iron Age necropolis (Bosut-Basarabi culture) at the site of Vajuga-Pesak (Popović, Vukmanović 1998).

Before a brief description of Boleráz-Cernavodă III finds from the site of Vajuga-Korbovo, we shall try to point out the complex horizontal stratigraphy of Eneolithic sites along this part of the Danube's course. The horizontal stratigraphy of the Eneolithic and other sites between Vajuga and Korbovo would be much easier to follow if there was a situational plan showing all the investigated areas and relating the sites bearing similar names (Vajuga-Pesak, Korbovo-Pesak, Obala-Korbovo and Korbovo-Vajuga). It is clear that Obala-Korbovo, the site also known as Staro Selo, is nearer to the village of Korbovo, while the sites of Vajuga-Pesak, Vajuga-Korbovo and Korbovo-Pesak follow one after another from Vajuga along the line called "Pesak". Most of the trenches at all the four sites have shown simple vertical stratigraphy commonly comprising single-layer short-habitation settlements, with a cultural layer rarely exceeding 0.60-0.90 m.

Sporadic Coțofeni finds have been discovered in the trench VII at the site of Obala-Korbovo. The only published finds are a ribbon handle of a larger goblet, decorated with minuscule *Linsen* appliqués and an incised dense herring-bone pattern, as well as a *Baden type cup*, also to be attributed to the Coțofeni (II) culture (Krstić 1984). By courtesy of our colleagues D. Krstić and N. Radojčić, we have been given access to a part of the material from the sites of Vajuga-Korbovo and Korbovo-Pesak, kept in the National Museum in Belgrade, as well as the possibility of presenting in this paper a part of the unpublished material. Sporadic finds of an Early Coțofeni culture (probably Coțofeni I) have been unearthed in trench XII, layers 2 and 3, at the site of Korbovo-Pesak in 1981. We have singled out fragments of smaller pots of coarse manufacture and poor fabric, with a horseshoe-shaped handle applied below the rim and decorated with rows of fingernail impressions around the very rim and the upper part of the neck (Pl. IV/6-7).

Far more numerous are the finds at the two neighbouring sites, those of Vajuga-Pesak (Popović, Vukmanović, Radojčić 1986, 168-170) and Vajuga-Korbovo (Krstić 1986, 148-150). It is important that both sites have yielded remains of settlements belonging to an earlier (Sălçuța-Bubanji Ia- Krivodol) and a later Eneolithic culture (Coțofeni).

Classical Sălçuța (Sălçuța II-III) finds in both sites contain mainly plain, burnished pottery. The predominant forms are the bowls with an inward-turned or slant outward-turned short rim (Pl. III/2, 5), or smaller pots with a cylindrical neck and short ribbon handles at the sharp break between the neck and the shoulder (Pl. III/3). It also occurs, though rarely, decoration by roughening (thin barbotine) imprints of a finger or a fingernail, as well as rows of irregular oblique incisions, i.e. a sort of whisk-like pattern (Pl. III/4, 7). In the Sălçuța settlement layer at the site of Vajuga-Pesak two flat female figurines have been also found (*Flachidole*) (cf. Popović, Vukmanović, Radojčić 1986, 169, fig. 2). Due to the small number of published pottery finds and the fact that the typical *Scheibenhenkel* pottery is missing, it is difficult to establish whether a Sălçuța IV horizon may be distinguished in the settlement at Vajuga-Pesak, as has been presumed by the authors.

Contrary to the Coțofeni finds from Vajuga-Pesak, where predominates the pottery decorated in the style of middle and late phases (Coțofeni IIa-III) (cf. Popović, Vukmanović,

Radojčić 1986, fig. 6, 6-12), it seems that at Vajuga-Korbovo predominates decoration peculiar to the early phase of the Coțofeni I. At Vajuga-Korbovo, in the trench III/1984, near the block of trenches opened in 1981, there have been discovered fragments of pots decorated with rather rough and thin barbotine (Pl. V/8), pots with narrow bands applied below the rim and decorated with finger or fingernail marks (Pl. V/4-7), smaller conical vessels with short ribbon handles at the rim (Pl. V/3), smaller pots with a short neck and handles linking the rim with the shoulder, decorated with rows of fingernail marks (Pl. IV/5). To the group of fine pottery belong plain and wide biconical single-handle cups (Pl. IV/4) and larger biconical bowls with a shorter upper cone (Pl. IV/1-2). The fragments of pottery of finer production and thinner walls are also likely to belong to the Early Coțofeni culture. In general, they are decorated with incised net patterns, one of these hemmed by tiny punctures (Pl. V/1-2).

The position of scanty Boleráz-Cernavodă pottery finds within the stratigraphy of the site of Vajuga-Korbovo is rather difficult to establish without taking into account the entire material from this settlement. The only published material is that from the 1981 campaign, although some small-scale trial excavations were conducted also in 1980 and in 1982-1984. In the course of 1981 an area of about 360 square metres was investigated, applying the system of blocks of trenches, densely grouped over the surface measuring about 30 to 40 m. Each of the trenches has yielded a layer of settlements 0.40-0.60 m thick, containing classical Sălcuța ware. The remains of an above-ground wattle-and-daub dwelling with parts of the floor preserved and several complete vessels without decoration ( Krstić 1986, fig. 3, 4) are to be singled out. The only information concerning the location of Boleráz-Cernavodă pottery is that they were found outside the Sălcuța dwelling. The National Museum in Belgrade safeguards a smaller group of pottery finds from a few trenches (trenches III-IV, VI, VIII), which has been published by D. Krstić in *Djerdapske sveske*. Somewhat more numerous are the finds from the trench III, also containing a part of the house with Sălcuța wares. These include fragments of pots decorated with roughly executed parallel grooves, vertically placed on the shoulder, or forming a hering-bone pattern (Pl. II/3, 5-6). Quite unusual is a pot with a slightly outward-turned rim and a short conical neck, decorated with a narrow band applied at the break between the neck and the shoulder bearing finger marks, and with deeper oblique grooves on the upper part of the belly (Pl. I/4). Pots with a plastic band bearing finger marks and running round the outer edge of the rim are sometimes decorated with thin barbotine on the belly (Pl. I/5; II/2). Finer clay ware is represented by middle-sized bowls with a conical or calotte-shaped recipient and a slant outward-turned rim, decorated on the inside with very shallow and wide flutings (Pl. I/1-3).

The pottery from the site of Vajuga-Korbovo here presented does not provide a reliable answer to the question of the stratigraphic position of Boleráz-Cernavodă III finds. Only a careful spatial analysis of the entire Eneolithic material from the settlement is likely to help establish the horizontal stratigraphy and to infer the exact sequence of the registered cultures. Unlike Bubanj-Sălcuța-Krivodol habitation horizon at Vajuga-Korbovo, which is better preserved and contains the remains of larger above-ground houses, Boleráz-Cernavodă III horizon is much poorer in movable finds, which are probably attributable to a short-habitation, temporary settlement. A partial insight into the unpublished material from this site has also revealed the presence of the Early Coțofeni culture (phases I and II), which chronologically appears close to Boleráz-Cernavodă III finds. A number of coarse vessels such as deep pots decorated round the rim (or immediately below it) with narrow bands bearing finger marks (Pl.

V/4-7), fragments of pots with thin barbotine (Pl. V/7), or finer ware decorated with incised net pattern (Pl. V/1-2), as well as conical vessels with smaller ribbon handles at the rim (Pl. V/3), may constitute the new finds of Cernavodă III pottery, discovered in trenches together with Early Coțofeni ware (Pl. IV/5).

Boleráz-Cernavodă III pottery from Vajuga-Korbovo finds analogies above all with the ware from Brza Vrba near Kovin, the latter site (as well as a few other sites in southern Banat-Vršac-Kanal Mesić, Oktobra St., Vršac- Vršac-2. Kozluk, Potporanj, Banatski Karlovac-Vinogradi, cf. Medović 1976; *Eneolit južnog Banata*, Catalogue of the exposition 1986) having yielded significantly more examples of fine-production ware than Vajuga-Korbovo. Judging by the forms of vessels and their decoration, it is clear that southern Banat betrays a stronger influence of the Boleráz group, with a number of finds being close to Early Baden. If bowls with outward-turned and fluted rims are to be conceived as being one of the most spread manifestations of the Boleráz-Cernavodă III complex, coarse pots seem closer to the Lower-Danubian sites of this culture (Dobrotești, Slobozia, Almăj, Șimnic).

The finds of coarse pottery decorated with whisk-like ornament (*Besenstrich*) from the settlement at the mouth of the Slatinska river (Pl. VI/1-7), formerly attributed to the Cernavodă III culture, certainly belong to a period ensuing after the Coțofeni culture. Owing to intensive researches into Early Bronze Age cultures in western Romania conducted in the past few years, these finds may be related to the finds of the Gornea-Orlești type.

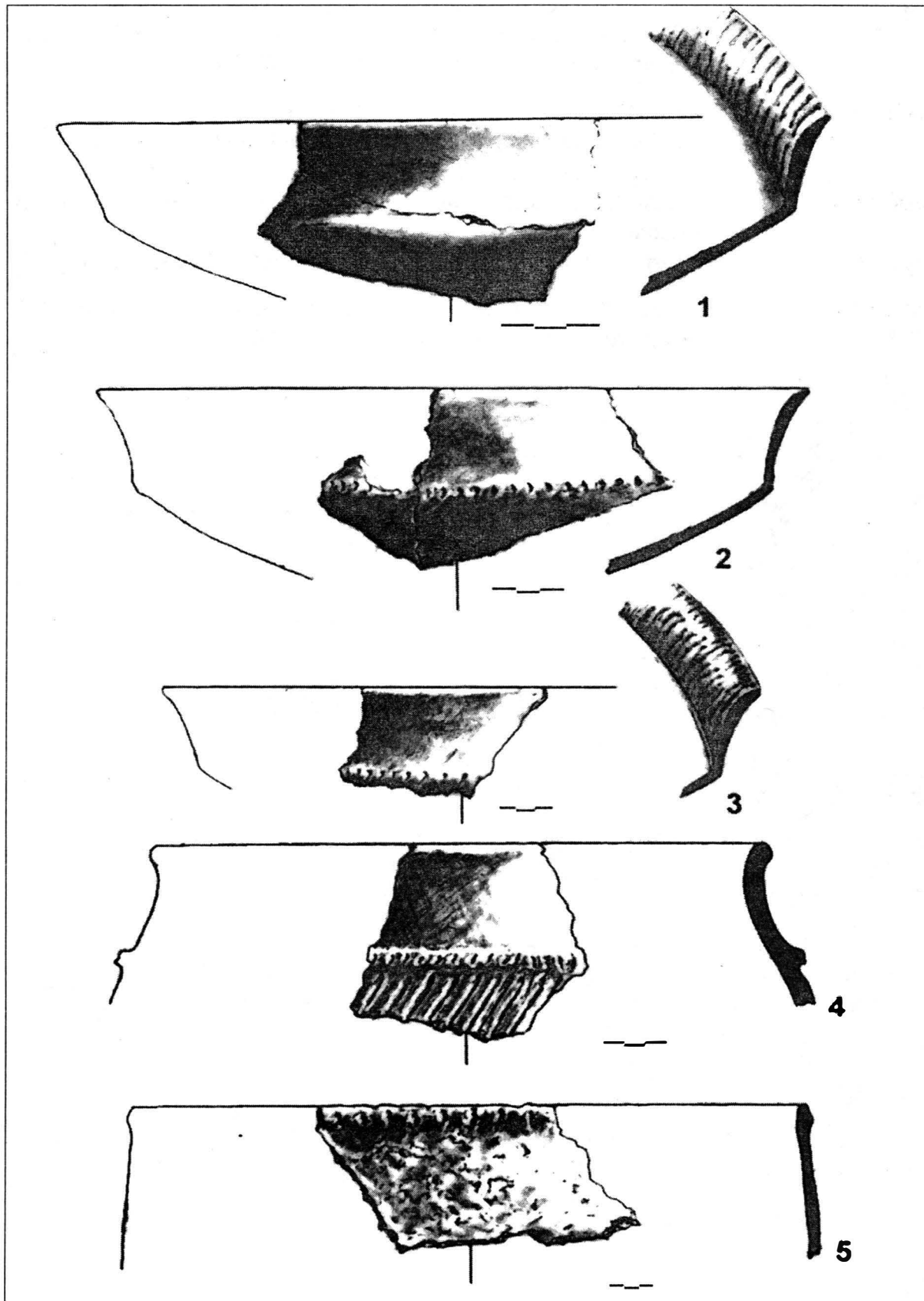
This report on the Boleráz-Cernavodă III finds in the Djerdap area may be concluded by upholding the opinion proposed by Petre Roman. The bearers of this remarkably mobile Lower-Danubian culture used to avoid this region, making only brief stops downstream from the Djerdap cataract, as has been confirmed by the material from Vajuga-Korbovo.

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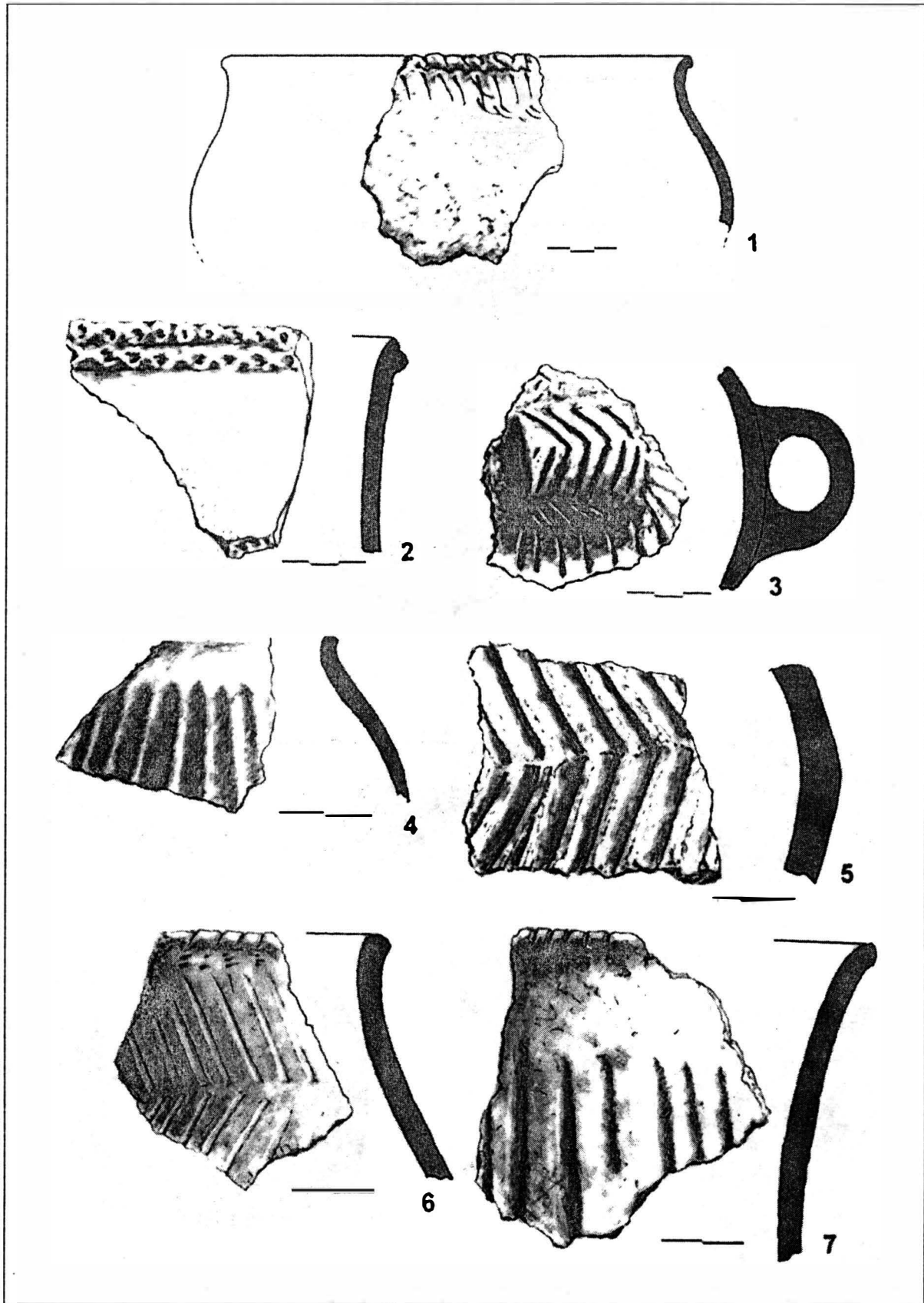
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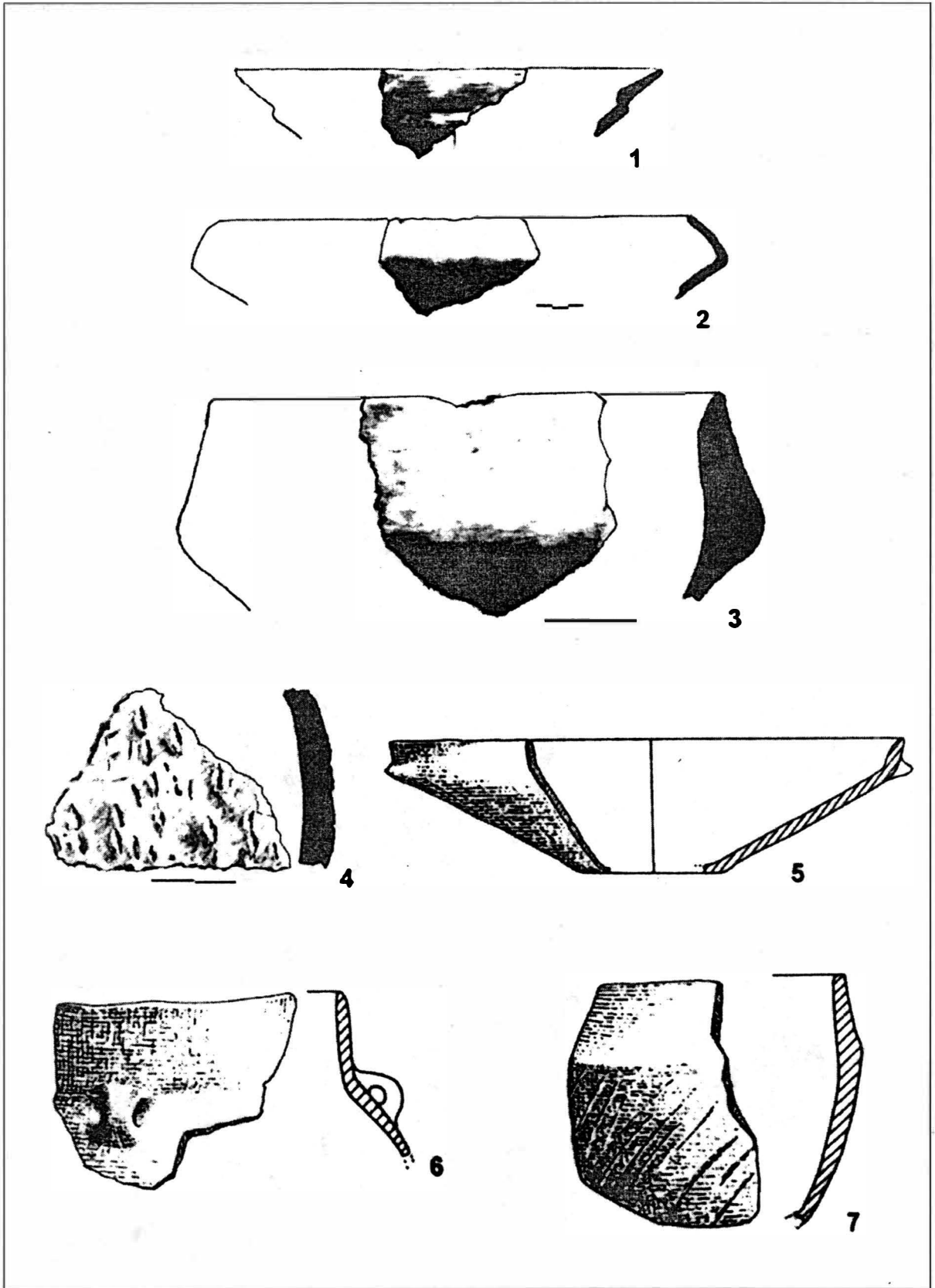


Pl.I. 1-5. Vajuga-Korbovo 1981. Pottery. Boléraz-Cernavodă III culture.

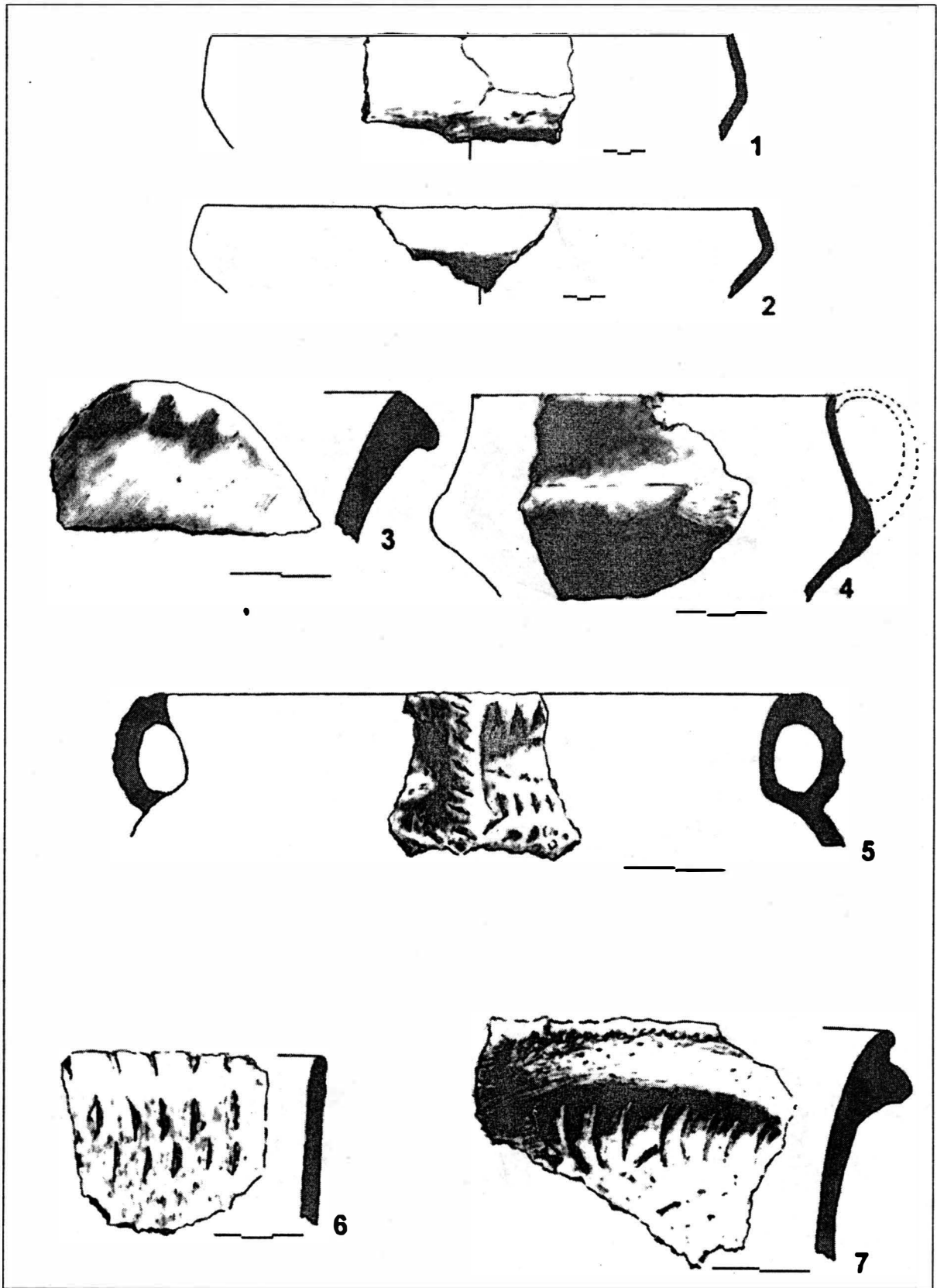


Pl. II. 1-7. Vajuga-Korbovo 1981. Pottery. Boléraz-Cernavodă III culture.

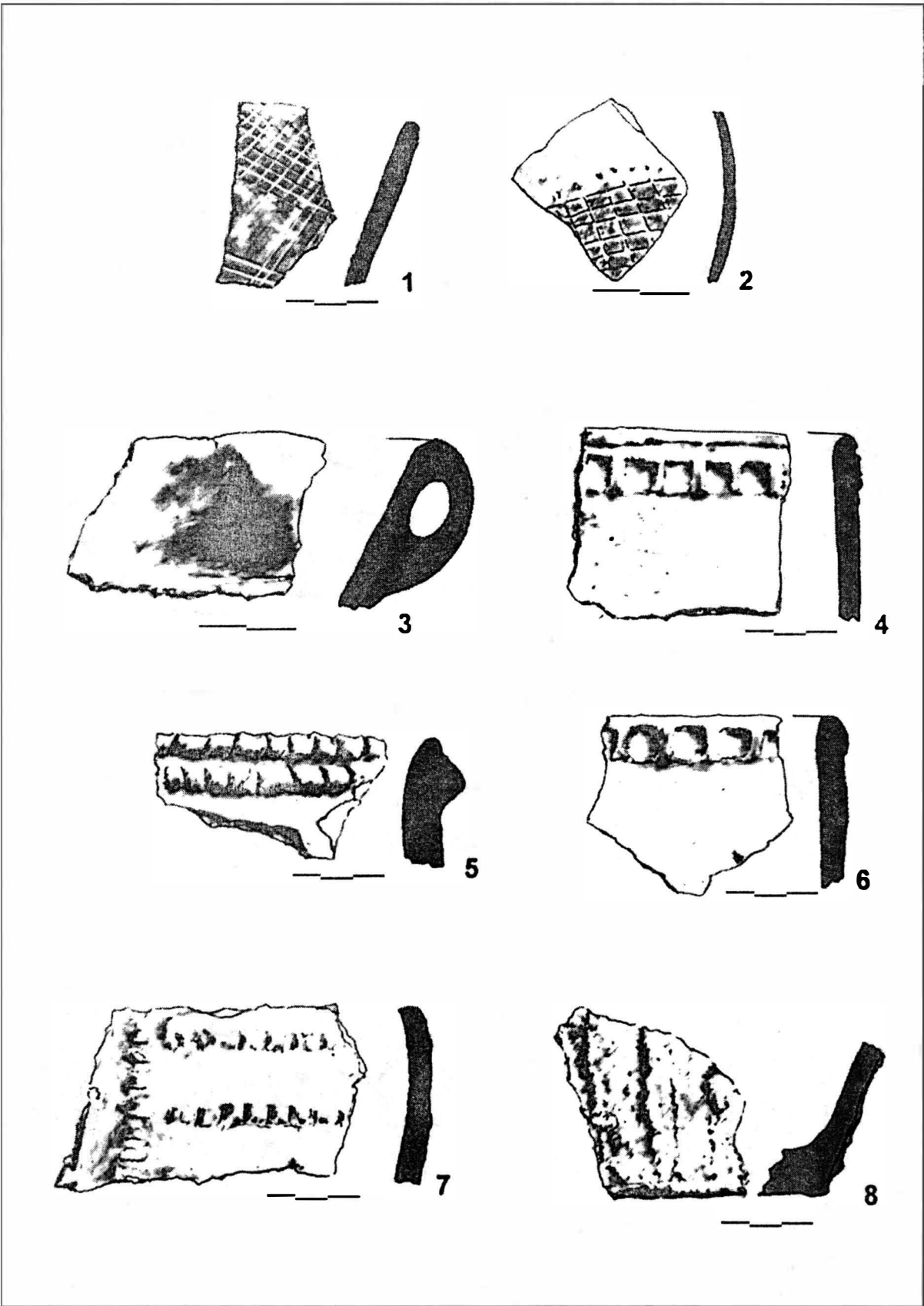




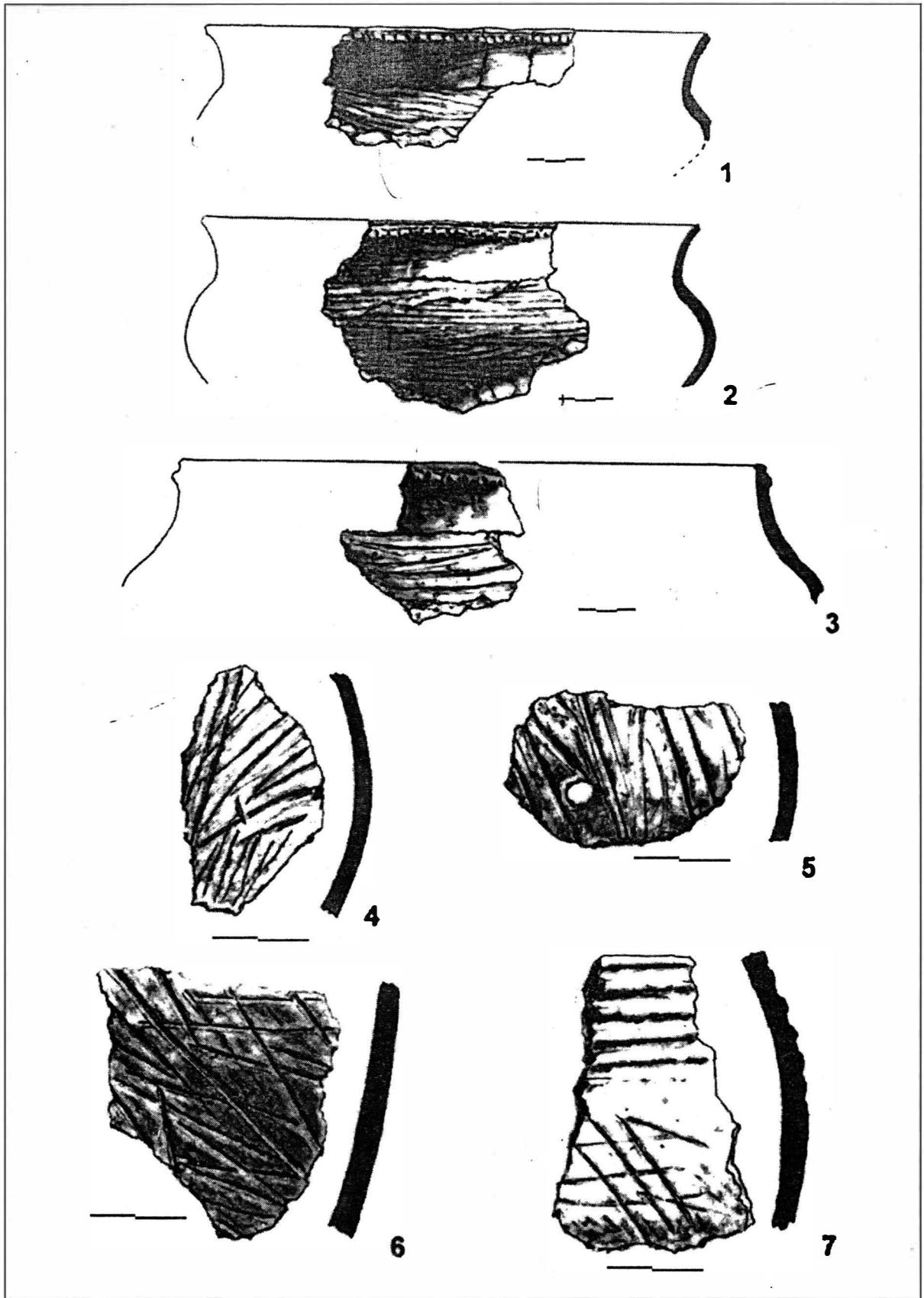
Pl. III. 1-4. Vajuga-Korbovo 1984, Trench III; 5-7. Vajuga-Korbovo 1981 (Krstić 1986, fig. 12, 13). Pottery. Sălcuța II-III culture.



Pl. IV. 1-5. Vajuga-Korbovo 1984, Trench III; 6-7. Vajuga-Pesak 1981, Trench XII;  
 3, 5-7 Coțofeni pottery (Coțofeni I or II); 1, 2, 4 probably Sălcuța II-III pottery.



Pl. V. 1-8. Vajuga-Korbovo 1984, Trench III. Early Coțofeni or Cernavodă III pottery.



Pl. VI. 1-7. Ušće Slatinske reke. Pottery. Early Bronze Age. Gornea-Orlești type.