

Warrior Burial in the Lower Course of the Yantra

by Dimitar Stantchev

Salvage archeological excavations of a tomb on the land of the village of Polsko Kosovo, district Rousse were made in 1992 (fig. 1). They were imposed by the circumstance that treasure hunters had started to dig there (fig. 2). After the treatment of the tomb surface, its sizes were considerably changed. Its diameter was now about 50 m, its height 2.00 m. The archeological research work showed the presence of one original and four secondary burials. The initial burial as well as three of the secondary ones refer to the Bronze Age. One of the secondary ones, grave No 5, has a different dating. The subject of the present announcement is the results of the study of that burial (fig. 3). The remains were found in the central part of the tomb, at about 0.4 - 0.5 m beneath the present level of the land. As the grave pit was dug into the tomb mound, its shape and size were not visible on the surface. The deceased was buried in the way of laying the corpse in a wooden housing, the traces of which could be seen both under and over the skeleton. The corpse was laid stretched on its back, west - east positioned, the head pointing to the west. The skeleton is rotten to a big extent. The bones were additionally cracked and crushed by the weight of the farming machines. The right arm was bent at the elbow, the wrist put on the abdomen. Treasure hunters' digging downwards, ruined the left arm bones, from the elbow. The legs were stretched. Sizes of the skeleton: length - 1.80 m, shoulder width - 0.37 m, pelvis width - 0.38 m. The bones of the lower extremities were crumbled.

The following things were put in the grave together with the deceased:

- a sword with remains of a wooden sheath, laid on the right side of the stomach and the chest, pointing upwards;

- a spear - only the iron point was found, with wooden particles on the plug remained from its wooden part. It was found to the right side of the skull, pointing up;

- arrows - 33 pieces, with bronze and bone points and remains of wooden parts on the plugs. They were found in a pile, tips pointing downwards, over the right side of the pelvis. The circumstance that they were found piled up on the same place, in a certain order, gives the ground to suggest that they were put in a leather quiver;

- a hone - found over the lower part of the chest; it was most likely attached to a leather belt;

- beads - three pieces were found next to the remains of the right foot;

- a pot - very fragmented, not restored. It was put behind the left foot of the deceased;

- a misshaped iron object was found next to the arrow points (fig. 4/1-8; plate I/7, II).

1. A sword, bimetal, with an iron blade and cast bronze handle. Blade length - 0.5 m, handle length - 0.125 m, biggest blade width - 0.03 m, crosspiece width - 0.122 m. Fund of the Historical Museum in Rousse, Inv. No 1432 (fig. 5, plate I/1). The Scythian swords and daggers with handles similar to the handle of the sword found in Polsko Kosovo are referred to in the literature as "frame bimetal swords". According to the classification of A.I. Meliukova, our sword refers to Sections I, 1 type¹. These are swords with a straight oblong handle end and a kidney crosspiece. According to her, this is the oldest type of Scythian swords. Other authors also share the opinion that they belong to archaic times. The

¹ Мелиукова 1964, 47.

bronze handle² is pointed out as an undeniable proof for the early origin of this weapon.

I am not aware of a perfect analogy to the sword of Polsko Kosovo; the shape of its oblong handle end, however, is identical with two bimetal swords, one of them found close to the village of Kumbult, North Osetia (the Caucasus)³, the other one was found in Liubnitse (Poland)⁴. That weapon is referred to as the oldest Scythian type swords. The crosspiece of our sword comes very close to A.I. Meliukova's definition of archaic Scythian swords⁵. It corresponds most to the similar bronze part of the sword found close to the town of Stepniak, Northern Kazakhstan⁶.

The similarities mentioned above give reasons to consider the sword from Polsko Kosovo a typical example of the oldest Scythian swords. We would like to underline that among the numerous Scythian swords and daggers found in Europe, the number of the bimetal ones is far from being big. Speaking of the territory of Middle Europe, we know about one from Hungary⁷, two from Poland⁸ and one from Romania⁹.

2. *Spear point*, iron, fletching of laurel shape, a protuberant rib in the middle ending into a cylinder plug. Sizes: total length - 0.30 m, plug length - 0.105 m, biggest fletching width - 0.07 m, plug diameter - 0.025 m. Fund of HM in Rousse (fig. 6, plate I/2).

A similar spear point was found in Grave No. 1 of Tomb II close to the village of Endge (now Tsarevbrod), district Shumen¹⁰. Close to the shape of our point is the spear point found in Tomb 4 close to the village of Belogradets, region Novi Pazar¹¹. Similar spear points are

known from the Tomb of Repiahovataya¹², Goriachevo¹³, Starshaya Tomb¹⁴, and Makeevka¹⁵. They were referred to the VII - V c. BC.

3. *Arrow points*

a) Arrow points, bronze, diamond shape, double fletching, with plugs. The plug covers one third of the total length. Sizes: length - from 0.036 to 0.042 m, biggest width - 0.013 to 0.015 m, plug diameter - 0.007 m, 15 pieces. Fund of HM in Rousse, Inv. No 1430 (fig. 7, plate II/3).

Such arrow points are known in Bulgaria from Tomb No 3 and tomb No 4 (Birds Peak) close to Belogradets¹⁶. They are also known from Grave No 1, Tomb II close to Endge¹⁷. The earliest examples of that type for Eurasia are from the Arjan Tomb, close to Tuva, dated to the second-third quarter of VIII c. BC¹⁸ and from the Chiliktin Tomb - end of the second half of VIII c. BC¹⁹. Such arrow points are usually also found in burials from the beginning of VII c. BC. Such points were found in Tomb No. 524 close to Zhabotin, the basin of the river of Tiasmin, the Ukraine²⁰, the Big Umarov Tomb, South skirts of the Ural²¹.

b) Arrow points, bronze, very similar in shape to the above mentioned ones; in the bottom part of the bushing, however, there is a long backward spike - 15 pieces. Sizes: length - 0.042 - 0.046 m, biggest width - 0.014 m, plug diameter - 0.007 m, spike length - 0.008 - 0.012 m. Fund of HM - Rousse, Inv. No 1430 (fig. 8, plate II/3).

Arrows of this type are known in the literature as "Zhabotin-Endge". These arrow points are referred to the ancient Scythian type. The closest similarity is with the arrows point of the archaic Scythian Tomb No 524 close to

² Алексеев 1980, 43; Шрамко 1984, 30 - 32; Тереножкин 1975, 28 - 29.

³ Тереножкин 1975, 28, фис. 206-7.

⁴ Bukowski 1977, Tab. XII, 1.

⁵ Мелюкова 1964, Табл. 154 - 5; 9 - 10.

⁶ Феуепрлмкп 1975, 29, Рис. 213.

⁷ Ginters 1928, Taf. 15 a.

⁸ Bukowski 1977, 354, Tab. XII; 356, Tab. XIV, 4.

⁹ Vulpe 1967, pl. XVI, 2.

¹⁰ Попов 1932, обр. 94.

¹¹ Tončeva 1980, 16, pl. IX, 3.

¹² Илинская, Тереножкин 1983, 147.

¹³ Мелюкова 1989, 336, Табл. 3132-35.

¹⁴ Илинская, Тереножкин 1983, 317.

¹⁵ Галанина 1977, 21, Табл. 718.

¹⁶ Tončeva 1980, 8, pl. III.

¹⁷ Попов 1932, 102, pl. 89; 103, pl. 905.

¹⁸ Грезнов 1980, 22; Рис. 118; Марсадорол 1985, 10 - 11.

¹⁹ Черинков 1965, 27, Табл. X; Исмагилов 1988, нр. 29, 43.

²⁰ Ильнская 1975, Табл VII₁.

²¹ Исмагилов 1988, 36, Рис. 51 - 2, 4, 6 - 18, 20 - 23, 26.

Zhabotin²² and Burial No 1 in the tomb close to Endge²³. Some of the points from Burial No 1 close to Belogradets²⁴ are similar to them, too. They are dated to the VII c. BC.

c) Arrow points of solid bone, shaped in quadrilateral pyramids, with sharpened edges and tips. The plugs are round, placed in the arrow points. Sizes: height - 0.026 - 0.027 m, plane side length at the base - 0.006 m, plug diameter - 0.004 m - 3 pieces. Fund of HM in Rousse, Inv. No 1431 (fig. 9, plate II/4). Bone arrow points are met in a wide chronological range. Such objects were found in a pre-Scythian quiver set (the tomb of Malaya Tsimbalka close to Bolshaya Belozyorka, the Lower basin of the Dnieper, the tomb close to Zolnoe in the Crimea²⁵) as well as in sets of the Scythian period²⁶. Bone arrow points are rarely met in quiver sets²⁷. They are usually found together with bronze points. Not a big number of them are known from burials of Scythian origin or from settlements in Middle Europe with traces of Scythian invasions such as Vitsina in Poland²⁸, Frata in Romania²⁹, Senetz in Hungary³⁰.

4. *Hone*. Made of fine-grain black stone, in shape of parallelepiped, with rounded plane edges, made narrower at both end. A hanging hole is drilled at one end. Sizes: length - 0.116 m, width in the middle - 0.02 m, width at the ends - 0.016 - 0.018 m, average height - 0.008 m, hole diameter - 0.005 m. Fund of HM in Rousse, Inv. No 1433 (fig. 10, plate I/7).

In ancient times, the stone hone was an important article of the weapons of a warrior. It was used to sharpen the blades. Because of their importance, hones were typical articles for warrior burials as early as pre-Scythian times³¹. They differ from the Scythian ones by their

bigger size and diligent make. Alongside with the bow, the quiver and the sword, the stone hone was also hung on the belt of the Scythian warrior.

5. *Beads*. Made of bone, round shaped, with oval round-edged planes and a hanging hole. The color is natural, varying from light yellow to fawn. Sizes: diameter - 0.01 m, width - 0.005 m, hole diameter - 0.003 m, 3 pieces, one of them intact. Fund of HM in Rousse, Inv. No 1434 (plate II/5).

Beads were used for necklaces for women and children as well as for decoration of some parts of the clothes. They were attached to the skirts and the sleeves. Because of that in the graves beads can be found next to the bones of the feet, the knees, around the remains of the arms³².

6. *A pot*, biconical shape of the body, a short, almost vertical neck, a slightly thickened edge, an even flat bottom. No decoration, gray after the firing. Fragmented and restored later. Sizes: height - 0.18 m, biggest diameter of the body - 0.20 m, mouth diameter - 0.15 m, bottom diameter - 0.12 m. Fund of the HM in Rousse, Inv. No 1435 (fig. 11; plate I/6).

7. *An iron object*, badly corroded and misshapen. Found together with arrow points. Possibly, it is a piece of a quiver facing (plate I/8).

The analyses of the burial ritual and grave articles, compared to the data drawn from similar Scythian remnants dated to the VIII - VII c. BC, give the ground to suggest that a Scythian warrior was buried in the tomb close to Polsko Kosovo in the end of the VIII or rather in the beginning of the VII c. BC.

²² Рол 1987, 20, Рис. 312 - 14.

²³ Попов 1932, 102, pl. 89; 103, pl. 90Б, В.

²⁴ Тончева 1980, 9, pl. IIIз.

²⁵ Тереножкин 1975, 54, Рис. 2412; 45, Рис. 1713.

²⁶ Галанина 1977, 34, Табл. 1518.

²⁷ Мелюкова 1964, 19.

²⁸ Bukowski 1977, pl. XXII, 4 - 5.

²⁹ Vasiliev 1980, pl. 915 - 16.

³⁰ Chochorowski 1985, Abb. 2541.

³¹ Мелюкова 1989, 307, Табл. 212 - 14.

Dimitar STANTCHEV
Historical Museum Rousse
Zdravetz-Sever, bl. Leipzig, entr. A,
7005 Rousse,
BULGARIA

³² Петренко 1967, 33.

Bibliography

- АЛЕКСЕЕВ, А.Ю. 1980, *О скифском Аресе*, АСГЭ, no. 21, Санкт Петербург.
- BUKOWSKI, L. 1977, *The Scythian Influence in the Area of Lusatian Culture*, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków-Gdańsk.
- ЧЕРНИКОВ, С.С. 1965, *Загатка золотого кургана*, Наука, Москва.
- CHOCOROWSKI, J. 1985, *Die Vekerzugkultur: Charakteristik der Funde*, Warszawa - Kraków.
- ГАЛАНИНА, Л. К. 1977, *Скифские древности Поднепровья*, САИ, Д. 1-33, Наука Москва.
- GINTERS, W. 1928, *Das Schwert der Skythen und Sarmaten in Südrussland*, Berlin.
- ГРЕЗНОВ, М. П. 1980, *Аржан: Царский курган раннескифского времени*, Наука Ленинград.
- ИЛЬИНСКАЯ, В. А., ТЕРЕНОЖКИН, А. И. 1983, *Скифия VII - IV вв. до н.э.*, Наукова думка, Киев.
- ИЛЬИНСКАЯ, В.А. 1975, *Раннескифские курганы I бесейна р. Тясмин*, Наукова думка, Киев.
- ИСМАГИЛОВ, Р.Б. 1988, *Погребение Большого Гумаровского кургана в Южном Приуралье и проблема происхождения скифской культуры I*, АСГЭ, Санкт Петербург.
- МАРСАДОЛОВ, Л. С. 1985, *Хронология курганов Алмал VIII - IV вв. до н.э.* - Автореферат дис. канд ист. наук, - Ленинград.
- МЕЛЮКОВА, А.И. 1964, *Вооружение скифов*, САИ, Д. 1-4, Наука, Москва.
- МЕЛЮКОВА, А.И. (éd) 1989, *Степи европейской части СССР в скифо - сарматское время*, Археология СССР, Наука Москва.
- ПЕТРЕНКО, В.Г. 1967, *Правобережье среднего Приднепровья в V - III вв. до н.э.*, САИ, Д. 1 - 4, Москва.
- ПОЛ, В.С. 1987, *и. Хронология раннескифских памятников*, Археология.
- ПОПОВ, Р. 1932, *Могилиште гробове при Ендже*, ИБАИ, VI, София.
- ШРАМКО, Б.А. 1984, *Из истории скифского вооружения*, Вооружение скифов и сарматов - Наукова Думка, Киев.
- ТЕРЕНОЖКИН, А.И. 1975, *Кимерийские мечи и кинжалы. I*, Скифский мир, Наукова думка Киев.
- TONČEVA, G. 1980, *Nécropole tumulaire près de village Belgradeč du VII^e s. av. n. ère*, Tracia, Sofia.
- VASILIEV, V. 1980, *Sciții agatîrși pe teritoriul României, (Agathyrsi Scythians in Romania)*, Dacia, Cluj Napoca.
- VULPE, A. 1967, *Necropola hallstattiană de la Ferigele*, București.



Fig. 1. General view of the burial mound



Fig. 2. Treasure hunters excavation



Fig. 3. Burial remnants

Legend

- ① Sword - bimetal
- ② Spear point - iron
- ③ Arrow points - bronze
- ④ Arrow points - bone
- ⑤ Hone
- ⑥ Beads - bone
- ⑦ Pot
- ⑧ Object - iron

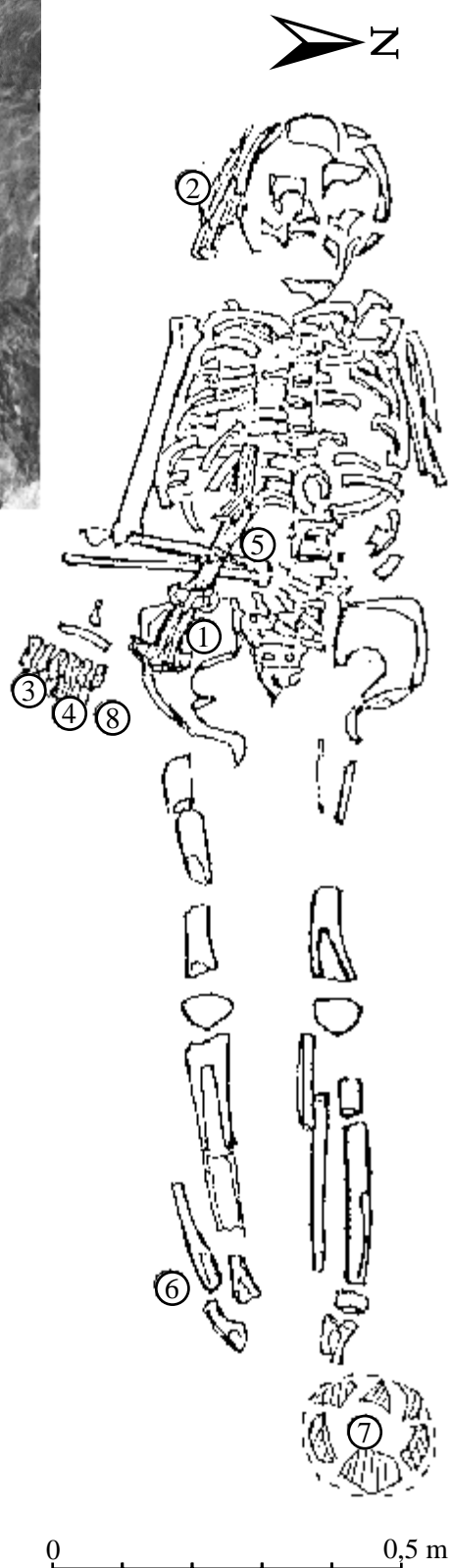


Fig. 4. The burial and the places where the objects were found



Fig. 5. Sword



Fig. 6. Spear point



Fig. 7. Bronze arrow points



Fig. 8. Bronze arrow points



Fig. 9. Bone arrow points

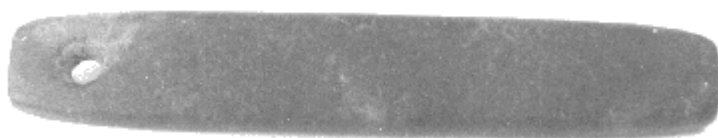


Fig. 10. Whetstone



Fig. 11. Pot

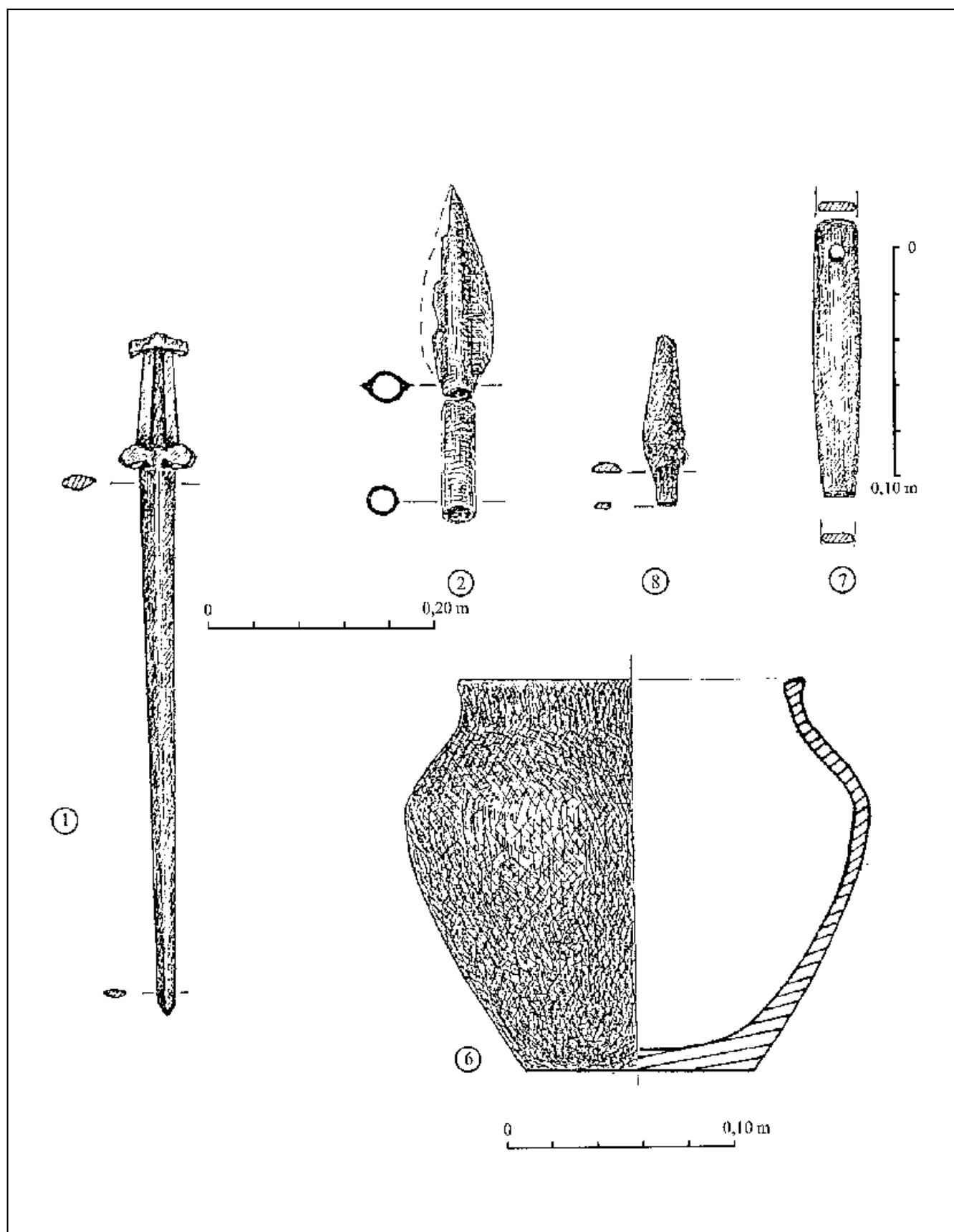


Plate I. 1 - Sword; 2 - Spear point; 6 - Pot; 7 - Whetstone; 8 - Iron object

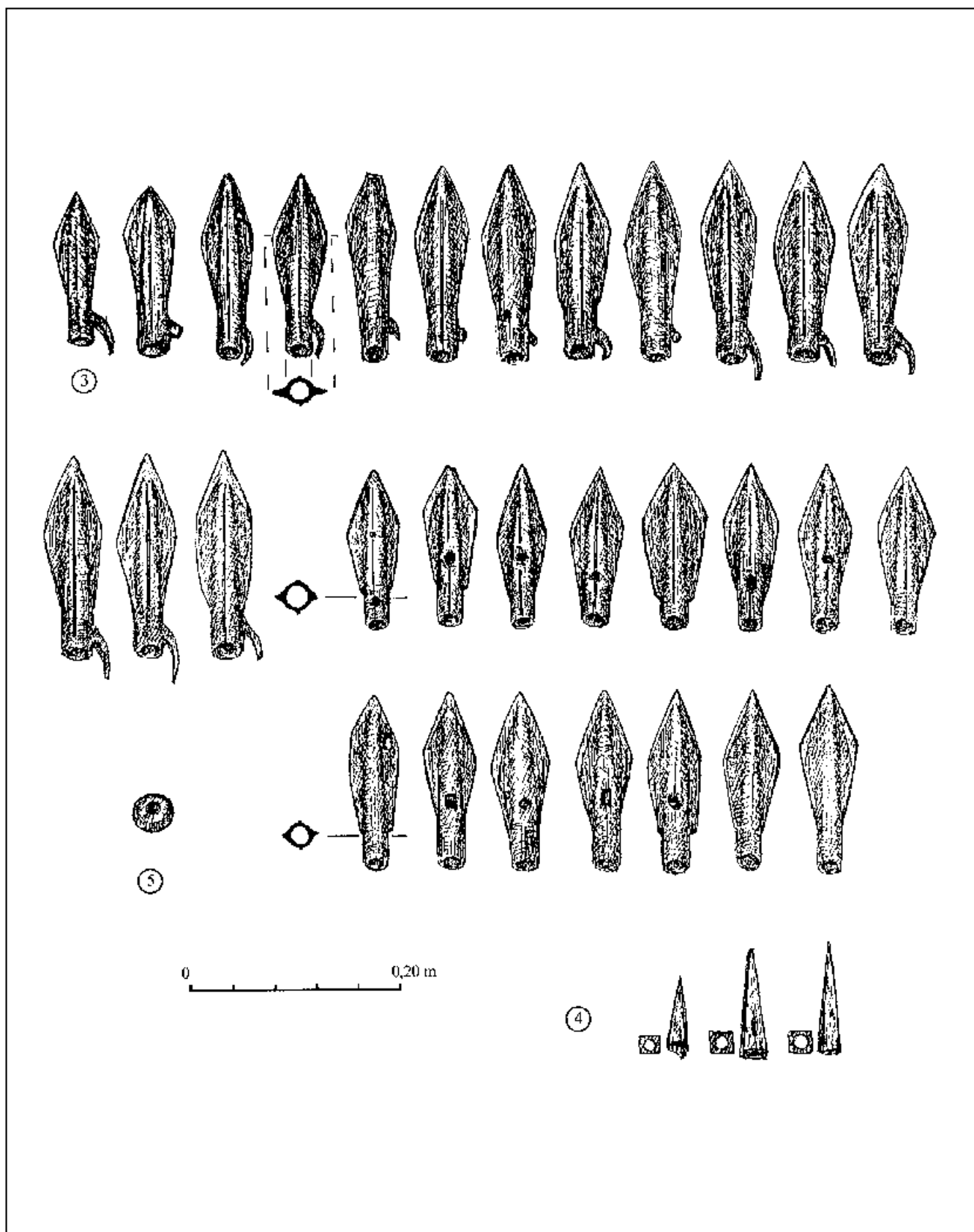


Plate II. 3 - Bronze arrow points; 4 - Bone arrow points; 5 - Bone bead