The Connection between the Tomb
and the Status of the Dead with the Getic-Dacians

by Valeriu Sîrbu

I. Introduction. As it is known, the funeral practices are expressions of the eschatological beliefs, regarding the conceptions and representations of the people/community about the "after world" but the procedures adopted for the dead also vary, according to the social status, sex, age, or cause of death (*La mort, les morts...* 1971; Breuiller 1991 – 1992; Sîrbu 1993, 21). Also, in some cases, one can distinguish certain local traditions, specific to smaller communities or, in other situations, influences can be strongly perceived, especially when members of the aristocracy are taken in consideration (Gergova 1996).

As for the geographical area, we are going to refer to the territory between the north-eastern Balkans, the Black Sea, the Dniestr and the Western Carpathians, for which the Danube and the Carpathians are the main axes. If we take into account the historical age and the half millenium period we're referring to, these geographical outskirts must be understood only as some landmarks and not borders.

The south danubian area we're taking into account comprises only the north-eastern Bulgaria on an imaginary line between Zimnicea – Velikovo Tărnovo – Varna, where the archaeological finds are very much alike the ones of Dobroudja and the Romanian Plain, where the written sources situate the Getae. (Still, we're not going to study in detail the south-danubian discoveries, as they are analysed by our Bulgarian colleague Rumen Radev, in his doctor's thesis).

More than 50 funerary discoveries have been made only in this zone (north-eastern Bulgaria), cemeteries or isolated tombs, from 5th – 3rd centuries BC, some of them in mounds (Sborjanovo, Sveštari, Braničevo, Borovo, Kralevo etc.), others flat (Ravna, Professor Iširkovo etc.).

We're referring to a half-millenium period, from the middle of the 5th century BC to the Roman Conquest (106 AD). If the latter is certain and it establishes basic changes in the funerary aspect, the former is only a mark, as there are cemeteries that "overlap" it.

Anyway, we're not going to analyse neither the cemeteries of Ferigile type (Vulpe 1967), Bârseşti (Morintz 1961, 201 - 206), Teleşti (Calotoiu 1986, 11 - 88) etc. as they belong to the final Hallstatt, nor the ones of the second half of the 1st century AD, in Dobroudja (Enisala, for example), because in this region the Roman power has already been established.

We called "getic" the tombs of 5th – 3th centuries BC, discovered in a territory between the Balkans – the Carpathians and the east-carpathian area, and "geto-dacian", the ones of 2nd century BC – 1st century AD, within the carpathian area and the extra-carpathian one as well. The names are acording to the archaeological reality that we know very well inhabitants of the areas mentioned above (Herodotus, IV, 93, Tucydide, II, 96; Strabon, VII, 3, 11, 12 etc). We will use the term "Geto-

Dacian" when discussing general matters for the La Tène period.

We did not discus here the tombs which, by all the data - rite, rituals, inventary and offerings – have belonged to other peoples who had lived in some areas and some periods, all along the carpathian – balkanic zone (Scyths, Celts, Bastarns, Sarmats, Greeks etc).

This time, we will refer only to the way the social, political and military status of the dead are reflected by the funeral discoveries in the construction type, the richness, poverty or lack of inventory and offerings, in the presence or absence of some "companions" – human or animal victims, in the funeral rits etc. The proper analysis of the funeral vestiges – areas, types, structures, origins, influences, chronology etc. will not be tackled now.

Due to the fact that the written sources concerning the eschatological beliefs and funeral practises of the Getae-Dacians are extremely poor (Herodotus, V, 8; Pomponius Mela, II, 2, 18 – 20; Solinus 10, 1), our study will be based on the archaeological findings.

The funeral vestiges that we know by now, ask for a differential study of the phenomenon, both on geographic areas and on chronological stages: a) 5th – 3rd centuries BC; b) 2nd century BC – 1st century AD (Sîrbu 1993, 39 – 42).

II. The 5th – 3rd centuries BC. When taking into consideration the information acquired so far, we can state that it is in the 5th century BC that the funeral ideology of the North-Balkan and Extra-Carpathian Getae was crystallised, afterwards, the funeral practises being kept in a relatively stable way, for about three centuries.

The available data regarding these aspects in the 5th – 3rd centuries BC are strikingly different from one region to another, so that the forwarded conclusions and hypotheses bear this mark.

Thus, if in the zone of the Lower Danube about 1400 burials are known and in the east of the Carpathians just about 270, from the inner Carpathian space there aren't any certain discoveries registered by now (Protase 1971, 15

– 82; Niculiţă 1973,   27 – 44; V. Sîrbu 1993, 41 – 42).

The cremation is the quasi-general funeral rite, over 1600 cremation burials being unearthed, while the inhumation ones that could be certainly assigned to the North-Balkan Getae number less than 250. Furthermore, excepting the royal ones, the great majority of inhumation burials are to be found in only one cemetery: Stelnica – 110 (out of a total of 223) (Conovici, Matei 1999, 109 – 110). Thus, in the other 107 cemeteries, there are only 140 inhumation tombs, while the cremation ones number 1500! We have not take into consideration the necropolis at Isaccea containing 26 inhumation only tombs, as they date in the 6th – 5th centuries BC (Vasiliu, Topoleanu 1989, 276 – 277). Both cemeteries are located in Romania, on the Lower Danube, fact that points out the local practises inside the general phenomenon of cremation.

In the tumular cemeteries of Sborjanovo-Sveštari region, the proportion between inhumation tombs and cremation as follows: in about 16 mounds excavated, they found 33 inhumed bodies, 8 cremated, plus 2 graves – cenotaphs (information R. Radev), a possible explanation being the fact that we deal here with royal and aristocratic tombs.

The archaeological findings, dated back in the 5th – 3rd centuries BC, coming from the Getic or generally from the Thracian world, account for the idea that the social, political and military status was kept even in the funeral ideology, given that the burials reflect the hierarchies.

The kings were usually buried under impressive tumuli, with complex constructions (funeral chambers, dromos with or without offerings,), sometimes with shaped blocks, some other times with bas-reliefs or painted scenes, with a lavish funeral furniture, made of gold and silver (especially parade equipment, appliqués, adornments, drinking ware etc.), often with "companions" (wives, war horses, hunting dogs), as there are, for example, the burials at Sborjanovo-Sveštari   (in Bulgaria) (Gergova

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1996), or Agighiol (Berciu 1969, 33 – 76) and Peretu (Moscalu 1989, 129 – 190, pl. 41 – 64) in Romania etc.

In the royal tomb of Sveštari, two skulls have been unearthed in the antechamber of the tomb, one of a man aged at 30 - 35, and another one belonging to a woman, 25 – 30 years old, both were of the Mediterranoid type. A closer look on the latter individual skull has pointed out the existence of a hole, consequence of a blow, probably made "with a piercing weapon" (Chichikova 1992, 143 – 163; Ivanov 1992, 133 – 142). The second burial at Sveštari, located on an upturned stone slab of the central bed, contained the bones of an old warrior, aged about 60 (Boev, Kavgazova 1992, 164 – 170).

In the royal tomb of Sborjanovo - Sveštari one could remark some after burial rituals, the meaning of which will be established : some tumuli and the funeral chambers have been demolished, the bones and the dead inventory taken, some rituals accomplished as suggested by the remains of the fire; after that, the tumuli have been rebuilt (information given by D. Gergova). It will be our duty to state if the dead bones have been deposited in other tumuli, or, just abandoned after the rituals had been accomplished. In that case, are we entitled to consider these tumuli as tombes, and the dead as buried? Or, these monumental buildings are indeed some temporary places for depositing the dead, so they are temples, where they accomplished sacred rituals of heroization and immortalization?

At Sborjanovo, in the Tumulus no.12, they have found parts from 6 individuals skeletons which formed three couples (man + woman), of different ages; in the Tumulus no.13 (fig. 2), there were bones from 3 other individuals – a man (55 years old), a middle-aged woman and a young man, 18 years old (Gergova 1992, 258 – 289).

We have found similar situations under the mounds of Kazanlyk zone, where there are a lot of magnificent graves, with remarkable funerary buildings an ornaments brit also horse burials and inventory (Kitov 1999, 1 – 20).

In Romania, at Agighiol (fig. 3), inside the funeral construction again two individuals, a male (20 years) and a female (23 years) have been found. Both the main and secondary burials have been disturbed. Yet, as the main chamber contained an inventory specific to warriors, while in the second there were just the personal belongings of a woman, it was inferred that the outstanding figure was the man (Berciu 1969, 33 – 76; Nicolăescu-Plopşor 1968).

At Peretu (fig. 4), the prince was buried in a tumulus. He was interred with the horse, dogs, a bovine and his war chariot, together with silver and ceramic vessels, as well as other pieces of inventory. There were no human sacrifices associated with him (Moscalu 1989). The bones were in ill condition. The skull and coaxial bones were missing, but the rest of the skeleton had evident male features, with strong muscle insertions. Due to the lack of specific elements, the age of the individual could not be ascertained (analyses made by Al. Comşa, unpublished data).

When rite is concerned, there is just an exception to the rule, at Cucuteni (fig. 5), where, under a huge and complicated funeral construction, it was found a poor funeral furniture (some adornment pieces, pots and ceramic fragments pertaining to Getic and Hellenistic vessels) and few cremated bones, all put together in a rectangular pit (Dinu 1995, 103 – 126).

In the present stage of research, it seems that another statement could be made about the Getic world: while the tombs of the Sborjanovo - Sveštari necropolis are imposing because of their size, by the stone chambers, the sculptured or painted decoration and the after burial rituals (but the inventory and the offerings are rather poor or even absent), the tumular tombs in the with of Danube (Agighiol, Peretu, Găvani) have a very rich and wide inventory, but no special funerary buildings.

There are certain proofs that some royal burials were constructed during the life of these

basilei. The fronts uncovered for some time, the sliding doors, with traces of repeated access, the mingling of human bones with inventory pieces, the outdoor exposure of the dead, the caryatids and painted scenes etc., like at Sborjanovo-Sveshtari, all these suggest immortalisation rites, hold long time after the dead of the high ranked individuals (Gergova 1996, 129 – 140).

These impressive funeral constructions, the inventory and lavish offerings, together with the complicated rituals, point to the "heroisation" of the kings and their burials being considered as being either the last "home" of the dead, or a temporary sacred temple (heroon) where the immortalisation rites were practised (Gergova 1996, 139 – 140; Sîrbu, Florea 1997, 41 – 42).

The fact that these "princes of gold and silver" were buried with the pompous parade equipment and sets of drinking vessels suggest that, for the common mentality, the iconographic scenes were meant to impress the living, to glorify their traditions and acts, to ensure the protection, as well as an eminent place in "the after world" (Sîrbu, Florea, 1997, 58 – 59).

The aristocracy, in which an elite can be distinguished, usually cremated their dead, the bones being buried afterwards in tumular burials, with a relatively rich furniture, with equipment and weapons, as shown by the necropolises from Zimnicea – fig. 8 (Alexandrescu 1980, 19 – 126) or Enisala – fig. 7 (Simion 1971, 63 – 129), in Romania.

Thus, the archaeological findings confirm the information we have from Herodotus, V, 8, who made the following statement: "The burials of the rich are done as follows: the dead is exposed for three days, after sacrificing all kind of animals, feasting and mourning him; then he is buried after being cremated or otherwise, inhumed; after the burial is raised, they make all kind of contests and the greatest rewards are, indeed, established for the hand to hand combat".

The common people were practising almost exclusively the cremation, the deceased being buried in flat necropolises, and the funeral

fittings, when existed, were scarce or poor (fig. 9 – 11).

The differences of inventory, sometimes pretty important, between the tombs of the flat necropolises, could express either the social status and the wealth of the dead, or some ritual mentalities, consequently the special concern for the deceased.

Usually, these are great cemeteries, starting from a few hundred burials, in which cremation detain 95%, like at Ravna (Mirčev 1962, 97 – 164), Dobrina (Mirčev 1965, 33 – 70), Bugeac (Irimia 1968, 193 – 234), Brăilița (Harțuche, Anastasiu 1968, 31 – 35; Sîrbu 1983, 17 – 25), Murighiol (Bujor 1959_1, 373 – 378; 1959_2, 325 – 330), Canlia (research Moscalu, apud Trohani, Medinceanu – Boroffka 1997), Satu Nou (Mitrea, Preda, Anghelescu 1961, 283 – 290), Slobozia (Buzdugan 1968, 77 – 94) etc. Sometimes, in the same necropolises, there were both tumular and flat burials (e.g. Zimnicea, Enisala). In most cases, the cremated remains of the individuals were placed in urns covered with a lid, together with the personal belongings, also passed through the fire.

III. The 2nd century BC - 106 AD. Very probably, during the first half of the 2nd century BC essential changes occurred in the funeral ideology of the Getae-Dacians, which fact is reflected by the findings from the Carpathian-Danubian space, where the cemeteries disappeared and the number of isolated burials decreased drastically (Sîrbu 1993, 130).

The lack of burials could not be determined by a non-consistent research and cannot be explained by or a "void of population", because the span between the 1st century B.C – 1st century AD is an age of maximal development of the Getic-Dacian civilisation, when dozens of fortresses and hundreds of settlements are known (Daicoviciu 1972; Crişan 1975; Glodariu 1983). To the question regarding the procedure used for those several million deceased individuals in the last three centuries preceding the Roman

conquest of Dacia (106 AD), especially when common people are concerned, no acceptable answer could be found and this aspect of spiritual life still remains a mystery (Sîrbu 1993, 197, 201). Yet, there are regional, distinct variants, distinguished in the funeral practices.

In south-western Romania, especially along the Danube, starting with the second half of the 2nd century and up to the first half of the 1st century BC, about 80 flat burials using the cremation rite are known, usually isolated or in small groups. Their funeral fittings consisted mostly of offensive or defensive weapons and harness pieces, some of which were Dacian ones (bits and cheek pieces, curved daggers - sica), some were Celtic (long swords, belt chains), while others had no certain ethnic assignment – spear points, shields (fig. 15). Usually, the vessels were of Dacian type (Nicolăescu-Plopşor 1948, 17 – 33; Zirra 1971, 171 – 238; Sîrbu, Rustoiu 1999, 77 – 91).

These burials have been found only in a restricted geographical region (with the core in the area of the Danube's Iron Gates), for a limited time span (±150 – ±50 BC) and the hetero-geneous funeral fittings were specific to warriors, mostly to knights. It was considered that these funeral findings had no ethnic hallmarks and they should probably belong to fighters, maybe mercenaries, from different ethnic groups - Scordisci, Triballi and Dacians – depending on the ethnic structure of the settlement to which the cemeteries belonged (Sîrbu, Rustoiu 1999, 86 – 88).

The anthropological analyses of two burials from south-eastern Transylvania, i.e. the ones at Blandiana – fig. 16 (Ciugudean 1980, 425 – 432) and Tărtăria (Ciugudean, Ciugudean 1993, 77 – 79), have surprisingly showed that the skeletons were an Infans I and an Infans II, even if the funeral fittings were represented by wea-pons and harness pieces: spear points, daggers, shield, bits and cheek pieces (analyses made by Al. Comşa, unpublished data). On the other hand, the custom of burying children with weapons existed on the territory of Romania even in the Bronze Age (Oancea et ali, 1976) and afterwards, in Hallstatt, from its late phase being well known the cemeteries of Ferigile and Tigveni (Vulpe 1969, 269 – 272; Comşa 1991, 153 – 165). Of course, this practice must have been connected with the rank of the living individuals. These children were meant to become fighters and this is why they have been buried with all the honours owed to the warriors' caste.

The analyses concerning the burials at Blandiana and Tărtăria are eloquent proofs that the attempts of inferring age, sex, social status and occupation of the dead only from the structure of the funeral furniture can be sometimes misleading.

From the 1st century BC, in southwestern Transylvania, Eastern/Central Walachia and Southern Moldavia and also from the 1st century AD in Central Moldavia, about 70 tumuli are known, out of which just 32 have been investigated. Cremated bones have been found in 24, the rest of them being cenotaphs (Vulpe 1976, 193 – 215; Crişan 1980, 81 – 87.; Căpitanu 1986, 109 – 120; Ursachi 1985, 253 – 268; Sîrbu 1994, 123 – 159)

The funeral furniture of these tumular burials with cremated bones is richer and more varied for the 1st century BC and towards the middle of the 1st century AD it completely disappeared from the findings in Central Moldavia, which fact might suggest a strong degradation of the traditional funeral rites (Babeş 1988, 5 – 7; Sîrbu 1994, 133 – 141).

As we refer especially to tumular burials, dating from 1st century BC, containing an inventory consisting predominantly of equipment, offensive and defensive weapons (helmets, body armours, shields, swords, curved knives, spear and arrow points, harness pieces and war chariots), we could infer that these were aristocratic burials, probably belonging to knights. This statement is backed up by the fact that in all cases, mature men have been found under tumuli, alone or together with other

deceased people – obviously, where the anthropological analyses have been done (Sîrbu 1994, 133).

We could appreciate that it beyond any doubt that they were Dacian aristocrats, because all tumuli were in the proximity of large Dacian fortresses and settlements and all the vessels from the funeral inventory were Dacian ones (excepting the Hellenistic receptacles).

The funeral furniture of these tumular burials is similar to the one which was found in the south-western part of Romania (the Padea-Panghiurskii Kolonii-Spahii), the difference consisting just in the type of burials - the first being tumular ones, while the latter were flat.

The Getae-Dacian unification under one single leadership - i.e. the kingdom of Burebista - the territorial expansion and the immense wealth achieved during the military campaigns against the Celts (Boii, Taurisci, Scordisci), in Illyria and Thracia, to which could be added the conquest by force or diplomacy of the large majority of Greek west-pontic colonies (Crişan 1975), are not reflected by the somptuousness and richness of the funeral vestiges.

Obviously, the replacement of "prestige" inventory (helmets, cnemids, adornments, vessels, appliqués for harness, all made of gold and silver) from the tumular burials of the 5th – 3rd centuries BC with warrior inventory (helmets, javelins and arrow points, swords and daggers, shields and body armours, all made of bronze and iron) which is to be seen in the burials of the 2nd century BC – 1st century AD, had a cultic motivation and, maybe, a political one – because the basilei constellation, in its full golden epoch, has been replaced with an aristocracy ruled by a more strict hierarchy and who obeyed to a king (Sîrbu, Florea 1997, 115 – 116).

Two tumular tombs constitute an exception from this rule. One is at Găvani (fig. 6), dating from the late IVth century BC, where the dead has been inhumed with his war gear and the harness items of several horses (Harţuche 1985, 25 – 70; Sîrbu, Harţuche 1999). The other one is at Cugir,

dating from the first half of the I^{st} century BC, where the dead has been cremated together with three horses, one war chariot and a varied attack and defence gear and weaponry (Crişan 1980, 81 – 87).

The funeral overturn is total in the case of common people, as in the time between the kings Burebista and Decebalus (50 BC – 106 AD) no necropolis is known and even the isolated burials are practically missing (Sîrbu 1993, 39 – 40)!

There is a single exception, namely, the both flat and tumular cemetery at Zemplin (fig. 14), where the Dacians continued to inhume their dead, aristocrats or common people, following traditional customs (Budinský – Krčka, Lamiová – Schmiedlová, 245 – 354). But the present cemetery is at the border of the Dacian world, Celts and Bastarns also being buried here.

The lack of burials in the central habitation area for Getae-Dacians implies the control of a central religious authority upon this territory, an observation that is also mentioned in the written sources (especially by Jordanes, 69, 71 – 72).

In fact, this occultation of the funeral findings is also accompanied by other significant changes in the realm of sacred: the appearance and generalisation of circular and rectangular sanctuaries, the intensification of practicing human and animal sacrifices, the obvious increase of figurative representations, together with votive offerings etc. (Babeş 1988, 5 – 7; Sîrbu 1993, 130).

In parallel with the occultation of the necropolises and of the traditional isolated burials, one could also detect a significant increase of funeral findings with human remnants non-cremated discovered in non-funeral contexts: thus, during the 4th – 3rd centuries, 8-9 findings are known, with 27 – 30 individuals, for the 2nd century BC – 1st century AD, there are about 25 findings, with almost 170 individuals (Sîrbu 1997, 193 – 221) (fig. 17).

Obviously, they are no usual burials, because:

a) they have been unearthed in non-funeral contexts – dwellings, pits located in settlements

or isolated ones, sacred precincts, archaeological layer;

b) in a large majority of cases there are isolated bones, parts of skeletons or entire ones found in a non-anatomical connection;

c) the inventory specific to the common burials is missing (weapons, adornments, offering vessels);

d) the majority of skeletons belong to children and the old individuals are missing;

e) a great number of subjects in some pits is also reported;

f) there are traces of violence (sectioning cuts, blows) on about 1/3 of the deceased (Sîrbu 1993, 31 – 36, fig. 3).

Only the anthropological analyses on great skeleton series will make it possible to establish if they are: a) human sacrifices (also mentioned in the written sources); b) practices of exposure/decomposing of the dead or c) hunking/dismembering operations of the corpses d) getting rid of some bodies (Sîrbu 1997, 199 – 201).

The return of the Getae-Dacians to normal funeral practises – both in the Dacia province and at the free Dacians – took place right after the Roman conquest (106 AD), when the human sacrifices ceased and when the Dacian state and implicitly the religious hierarchy have been destroyed too (Sîrbu 1993, 128).

It might be possible that the deep changes that occurred in the funeral beliefs of the Getae-Dacians from Late La Tène had an echo in the writings of Pomponius Mela (II, 2, 18). The author mentioned that "some (i.e. the Getae) believe that the souls of the dead would return on the earth, while others think that, even if they do not come back anymore, they will not die but go to more happier places: others consider that the souls, by all means are dying but it is better so instead of living. This is why, some are mourning the births and the new-born babies and, on the contrary, the funeral ceremonies are an occasion for feast and they are honoured like sacred things, by singing and dancing."

IV. Conclusions. It's a difficult approach the attempt to clear up the relations between "the living society" and "the dead community" (d'Agostino 1982, 47 – 51), both because of the opacity of the archaeological evidence, and the ignorance of the ritual acts (gestures, silences, incantations etc). More over, the goods discovered, the ones that have been kept, are also the result of a symbolisation process, because nowadays we can't know their "second" message in that community mentalities (because explicit written sources are lacking)

But, no matter how many difficulties, we have to analyse them as the grave inventory is not there by chance , but it's the result of the selection and the expression of certain messages. The funerary furniture doesn't "express" only the dead identity but also the range values – civil, ethic, religious – of their own society.

The funerary rituels were also the occasions to communicate and enforce the relationships between the members of the society, as long as the burial and the after – burial rituals were social "events".

There are striking differences between the tumular burials from the 1st centuriy BC – 1st century AD when comparing them with the royal and high aristocratic burials of the 5th – 3rd centuries BC. The aristocracy of the 1st century BC – 1st century AD has practiced cremation exclusively and continued to bury its dead under tumuli, but funeral chambers are not to be found anymore; the equipment pieces, golden and silver vessels are missing, the funeral furniture is almost entirely destroyed (burnt or fragmented) and an increase in number of the cenotaph could be also noticed etc. (Vulpe 1976, 193 – 215; Babeş 1988, 3 – 32 ; Sîrbu 1994, 123 – 159).

This phenomenon must have had, first of all, a religious explanation, namely a change in the funeral ideology (Sîrbu 1994, 135), because the poverty of the tumular burials corresponds, on the social and political scene, to the maximal development of the Getae-Dacians, to a time of structuring and hierarchisation of the local society during the reigns of Burebista-Decebalus kings.

The disappearance of the necropolises and the disturbances in the funeral traditional rules, are facts specific not only to the Getae-Dacians of the Late La Tène but they also affected a wider area, from the NorthBalkan and Carpathian-Danubian Dacia (Horedt, Seraphim 1971, 19; Getov 1982, 219 – 222; Sîrbu 1985, 86 – 126; 1993, 39 – 40; Babeş 1988, 3 – 32) up to Bohemia, Slovakia (Filip 1961) and Southern Germany (Waldhauser 1979, 124 – 156), reaching up to SouthWestern England (Wilson 1981, 127 – 169). Around this "void of burials" or the presence of extremely few ones, other people like Sarmathians, Illyrians, the rest of German and Celtic communities, continued to practice the usual funeral customs.

Of course, in our analyses we started from the premise that the funeral findings reflect directly and mechanically the social, military and political status of the deceased.

As we know, there are different opinions about placing some tombs under headings such as :"rich" and "poor", "aristocratic" or "belonging to low people" (considering their inventory and offerings) or how much they reflect the status in life or the ethnicity of the dead (Gledhill 1995; Morris 1987).

Yet, when we come to a huge tumulus, under which there are funeral chambers, sometimes painted or sculptured, when the funeral furniture, in great number and various, is made of gold and silver, when women have been sacrificed and existed traces of long lasting rituals, we are, without doubt, in the position of assigning the burial to a king or to a high rank aristocrat.

These tumuli, under which the kings and aristocrats have been deposed, were meant to be permanently into the sight of the locals, as well as of the transient people, as expressions of strength, of mastership exerted on that territory and on its resources, as centres of power which concentrated and, at the same time, irradiated authority. The tumuli were a kind of perpetuum mento about the wealth, authority and glory of the deceased – kings and high ranked aristocrats.

Also, when in some flat necropolises could nothing could be found but several cremated bones, with or without urn, with a poor or missing funeral inventory and furniture, all placed together in a simple pit, we could consider that the respective burial would have belonged to a member of a lower class.

Still, all data provided by findings - construction and funeral fittings, ritual vestiges, connections with other kind of monuments - fortresses, settlements, sanctuaries, hoards, have been taken into account and compared with the written sources.

During the 4th – 3rd centuries BC, in some regions, the concentration and association of the rich burials both with the fortified settlements and the lavish hoards, sometimes with the sanctuaries too, show a strong structuring of the society and hierachisation of the aristocracy, as well as a basilei constellation, imposing the creation of an ideology which should legitimate and justify their power (Sîrbu, Florea 1997, 54 – 92).

Besides the possible interpretations, the presence or disappearance of the funeral findings prove the deep changes that occurred in the ideology and funeral practises of the Getae-Dacians of the La Tène period, both for aristocracy and for the common people.

The funeral findings, together with other kind of vestiges, are important documents for a better knowledge of the Getae-Dacian history, in many aspects: starting from their economic condition and up to the social structures, from the political and military hierarchies up to the religious and mythological beliefs.

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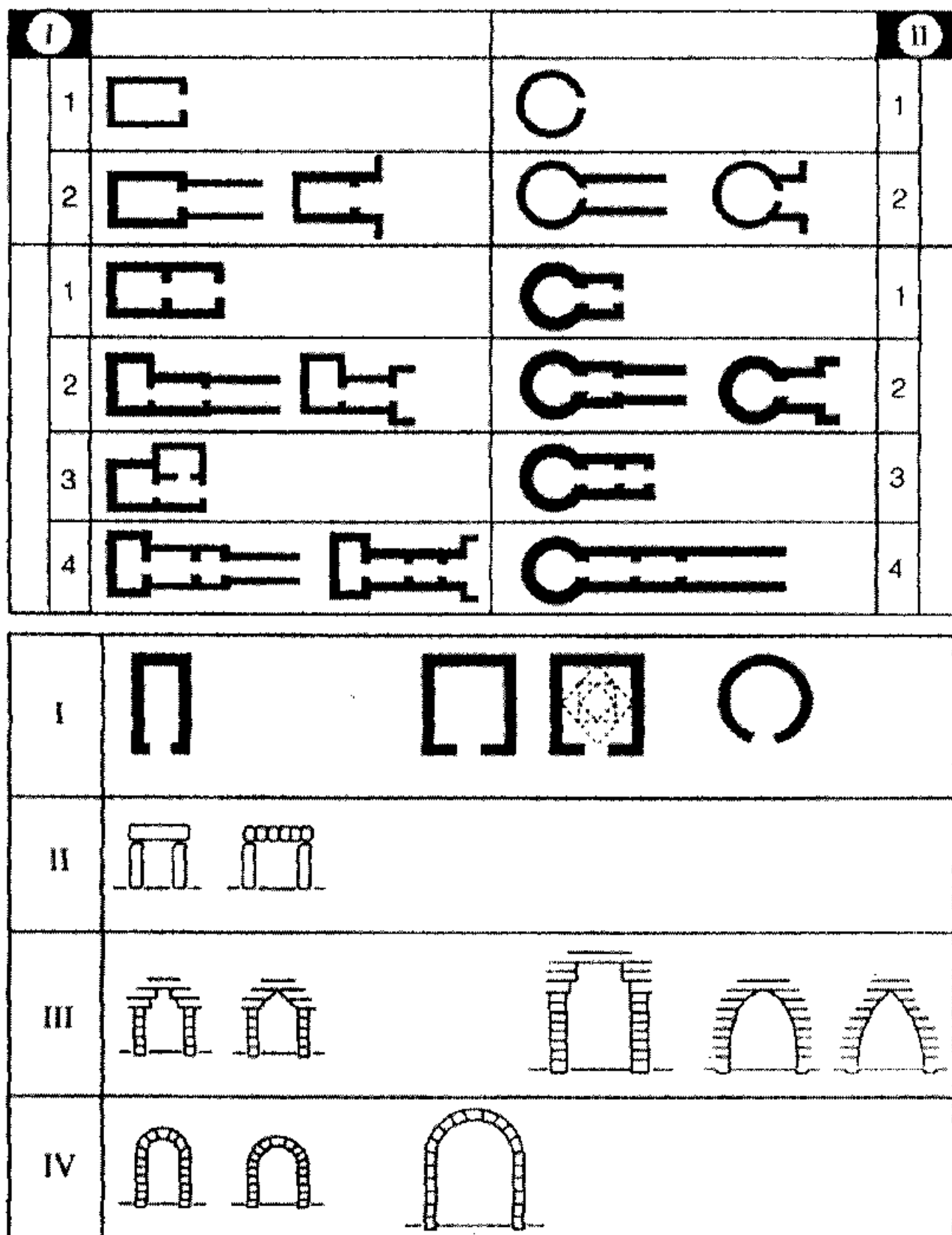
Fig. 1. 1 - Classification of Thracian chamber tombs: I - tombs rectangular chamber(s); II - tombs with round chamber(s); 2 - roofs: I - plan of chambers; II - flat roofs; III - false arch; IV - round arch (after M. Russeva 1995).
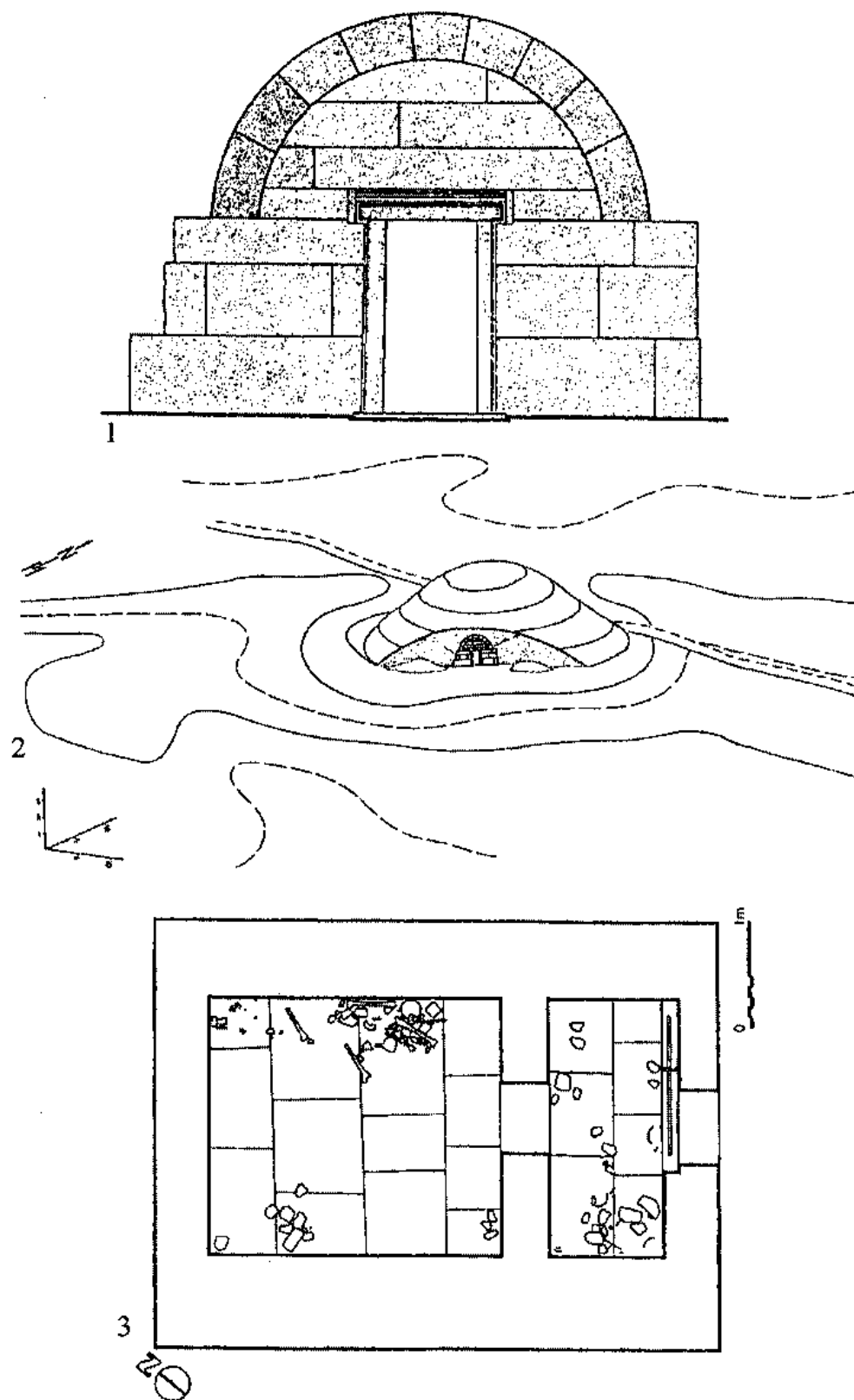
Fig. 2. Sboryanovo. The royal tomnb no. 13: 1 - the tomb facade; 2 - axonometry;
3 - the tomb plan with the finds (after D. Gergova 1996).
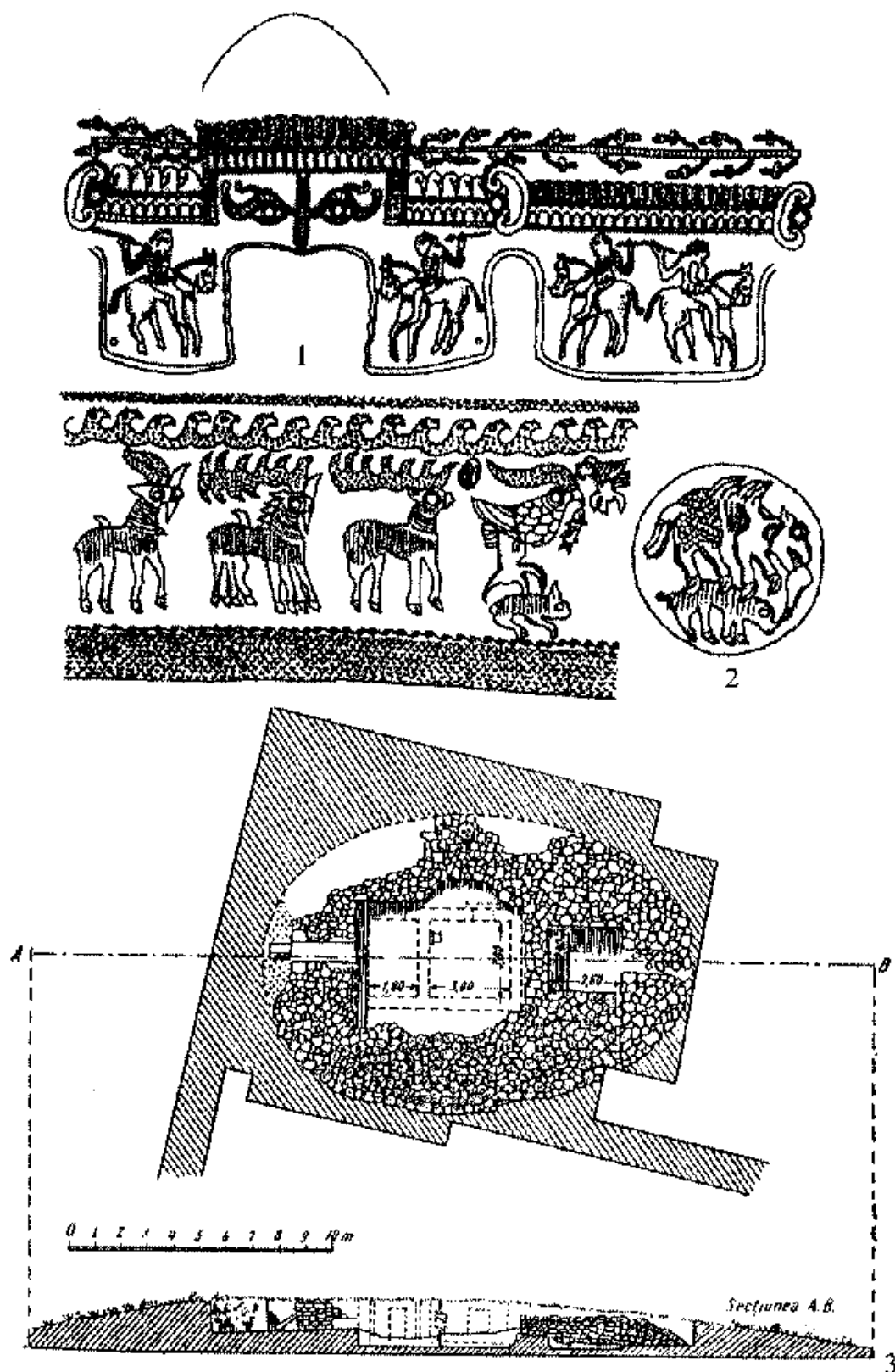
Fig. 3. The royal Getic tomb of Agighiol: 1 - helmet; 2 - goblet no. 1;
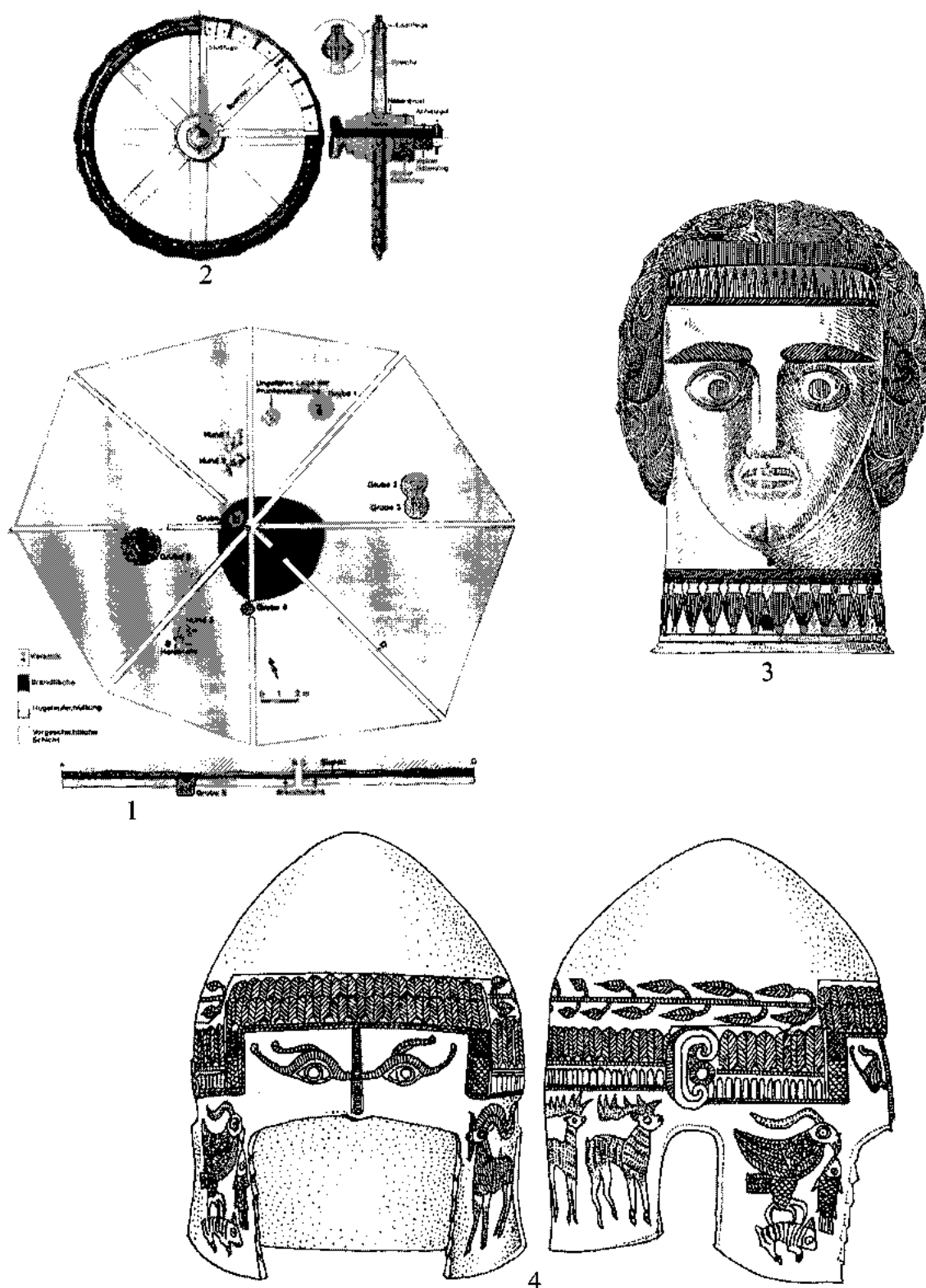3 - the plan and profile (after P. Alexandrescu 1984, D. Berciu 1969).

Fig. 4. The royal Getic tomb of Peretu: 1 - the tomb plan and profile; 2 - the reconstruction of a chariot wheel; 3 - sceptre-rhyton; 4 - helmet (after E. Moscalu 1989).
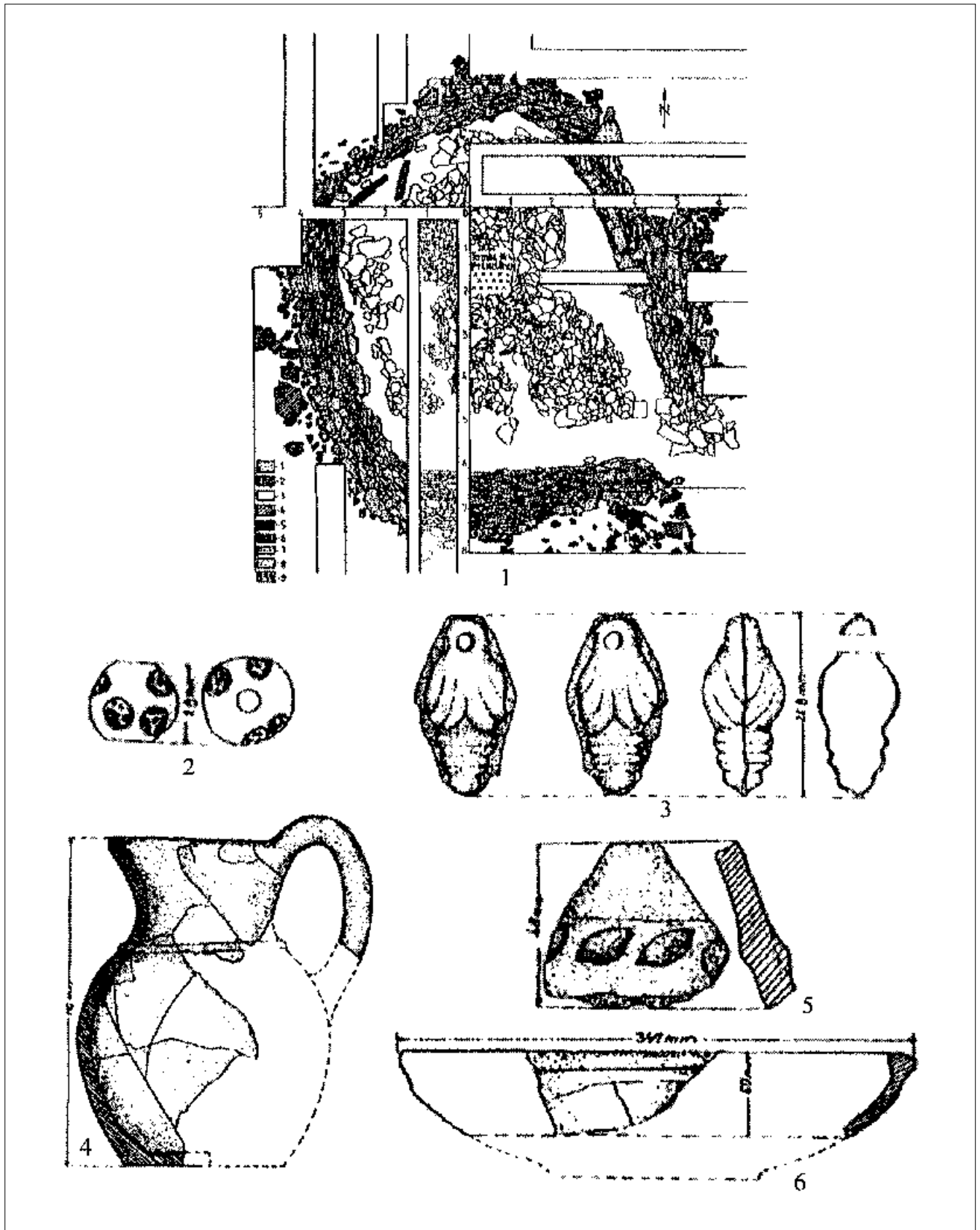
Fig. 5. The royal Getic tomb of Cucuteni: 2 - 6 - pieces of the royal Getic tomb of Cucuteni (after M. Dinu).
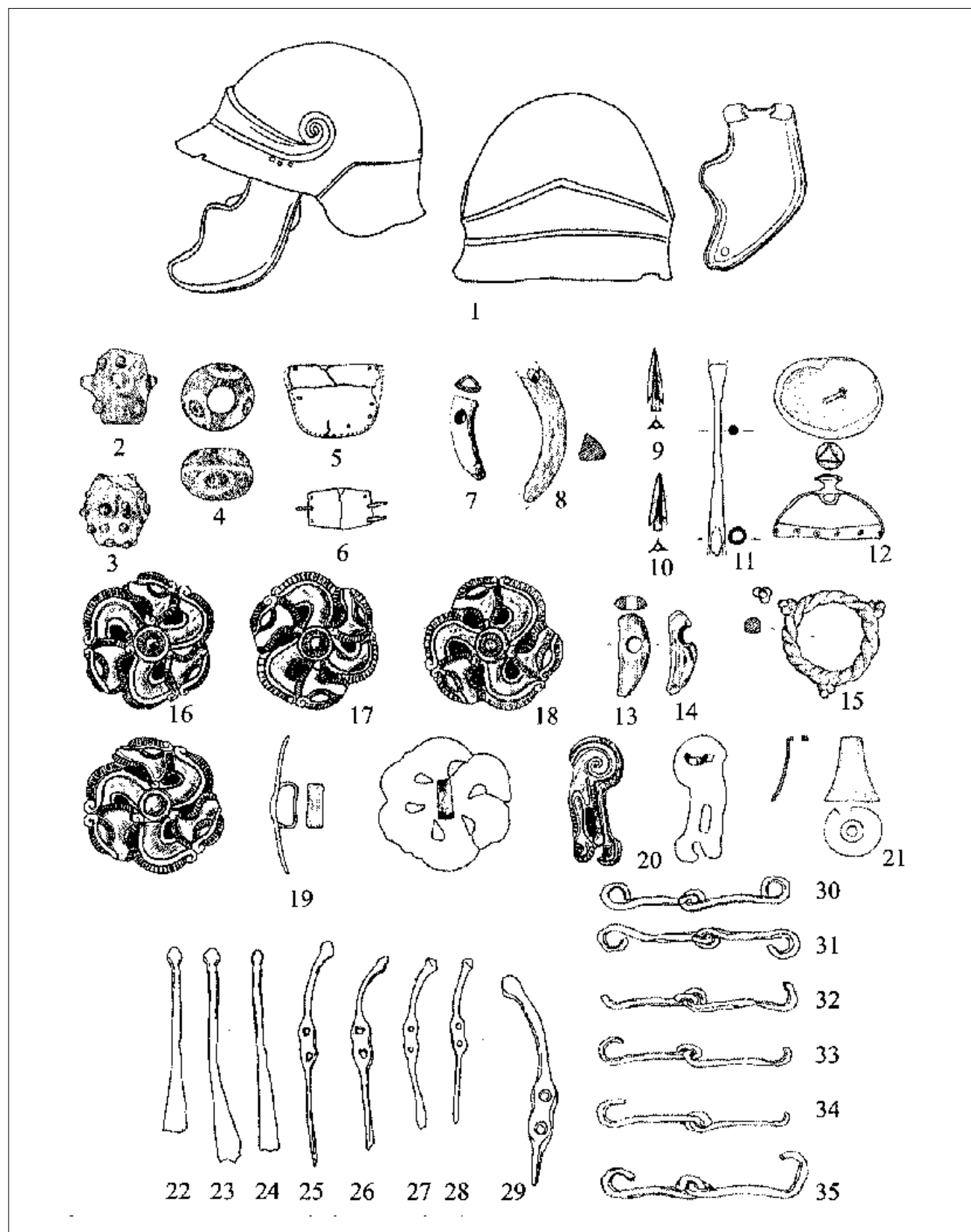
Fig. 6. The tomb of Găvani (after B. Kull 1997).
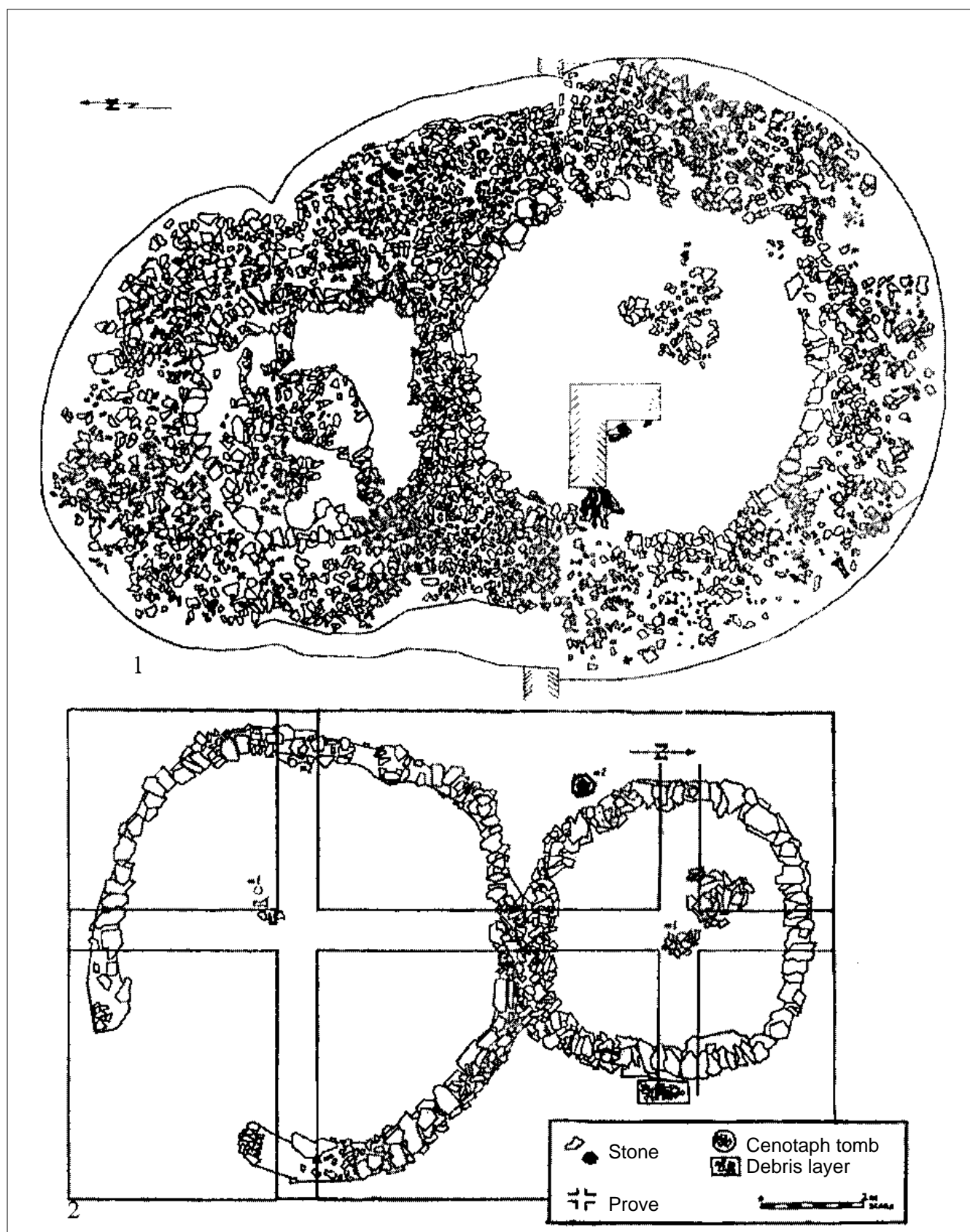
Fig. 7. Enisala. Getic tumular tombs (after G. Simion 1971).
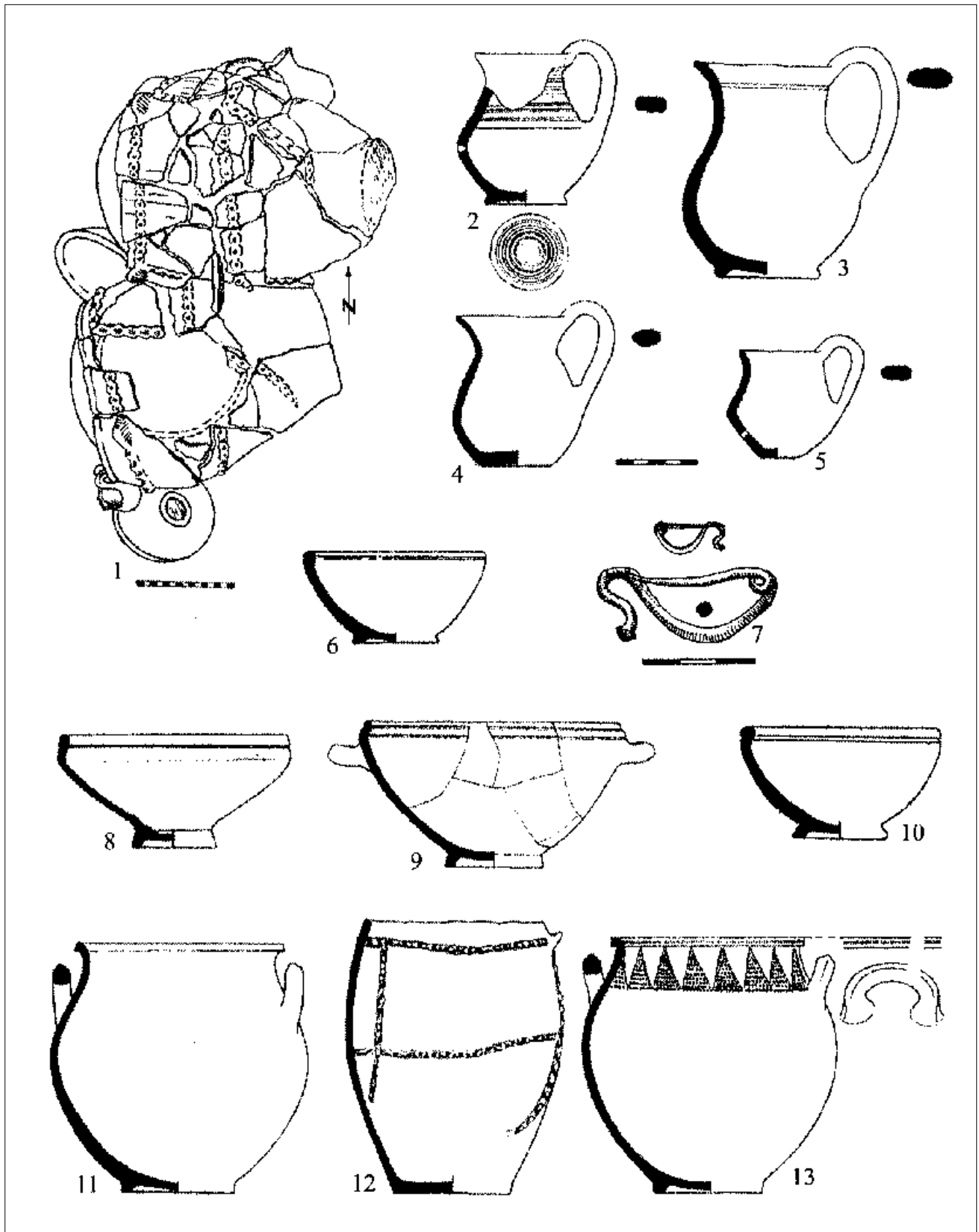
Fig. 8. Zimnicea. Plan (1) and inventory (2 - 13) of the tomb no. 3, tumulus C7 (after A. Alexandrescu 1980).
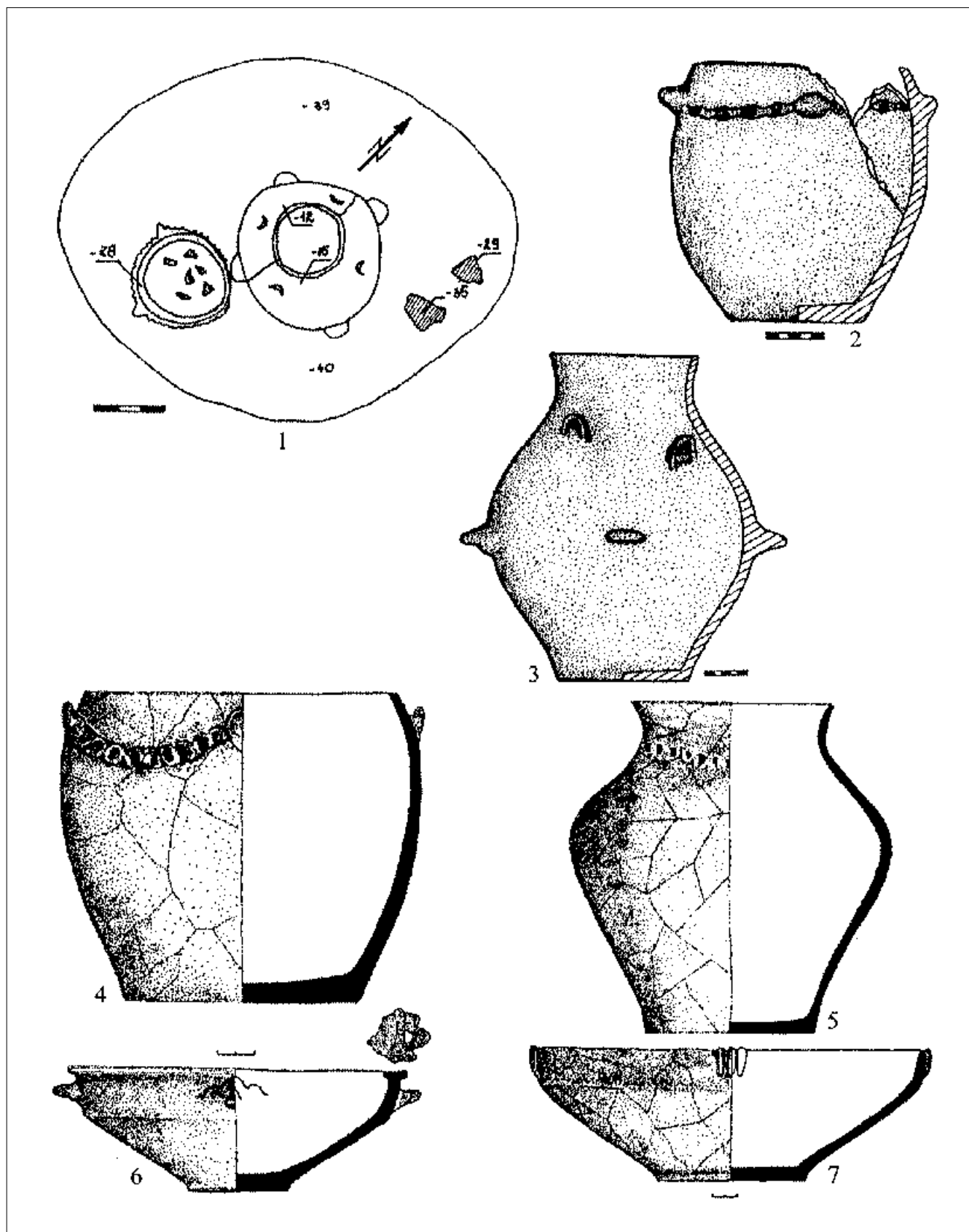
Fig. 9. Flat tombs. 1 - 3 - Coslogeni, tomb no. 11; 4 - 7 - Giurgiule ti, tombs no. 2 (4 - 5) and 5 (6 - 7)
(after V. Sîrbu 2000, T. Arn ut 1999).
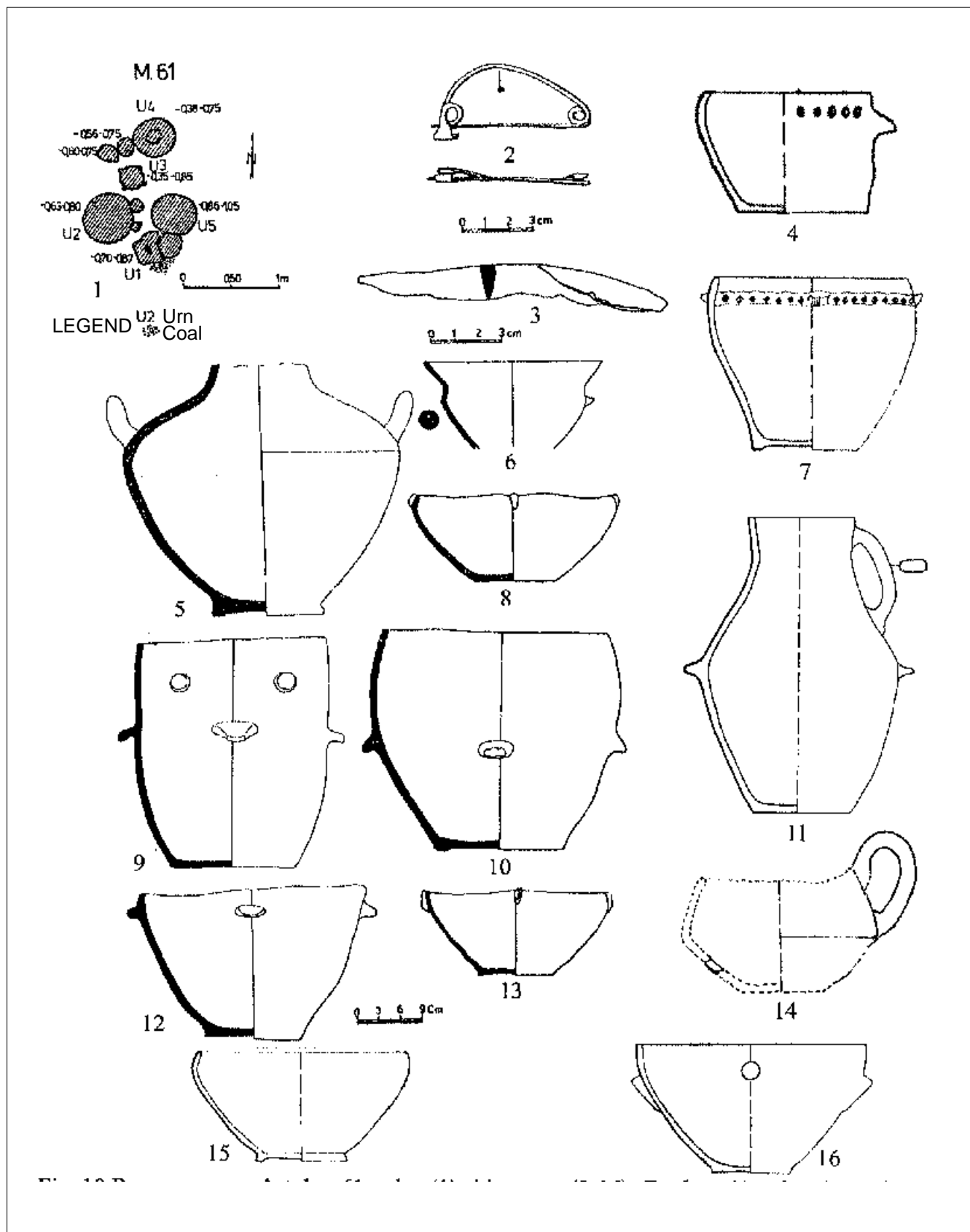
Fig. 10. Bugeac. Tomb no. 61: plan (1) and inventory (2 - 16) (after M. Irimia 1986).
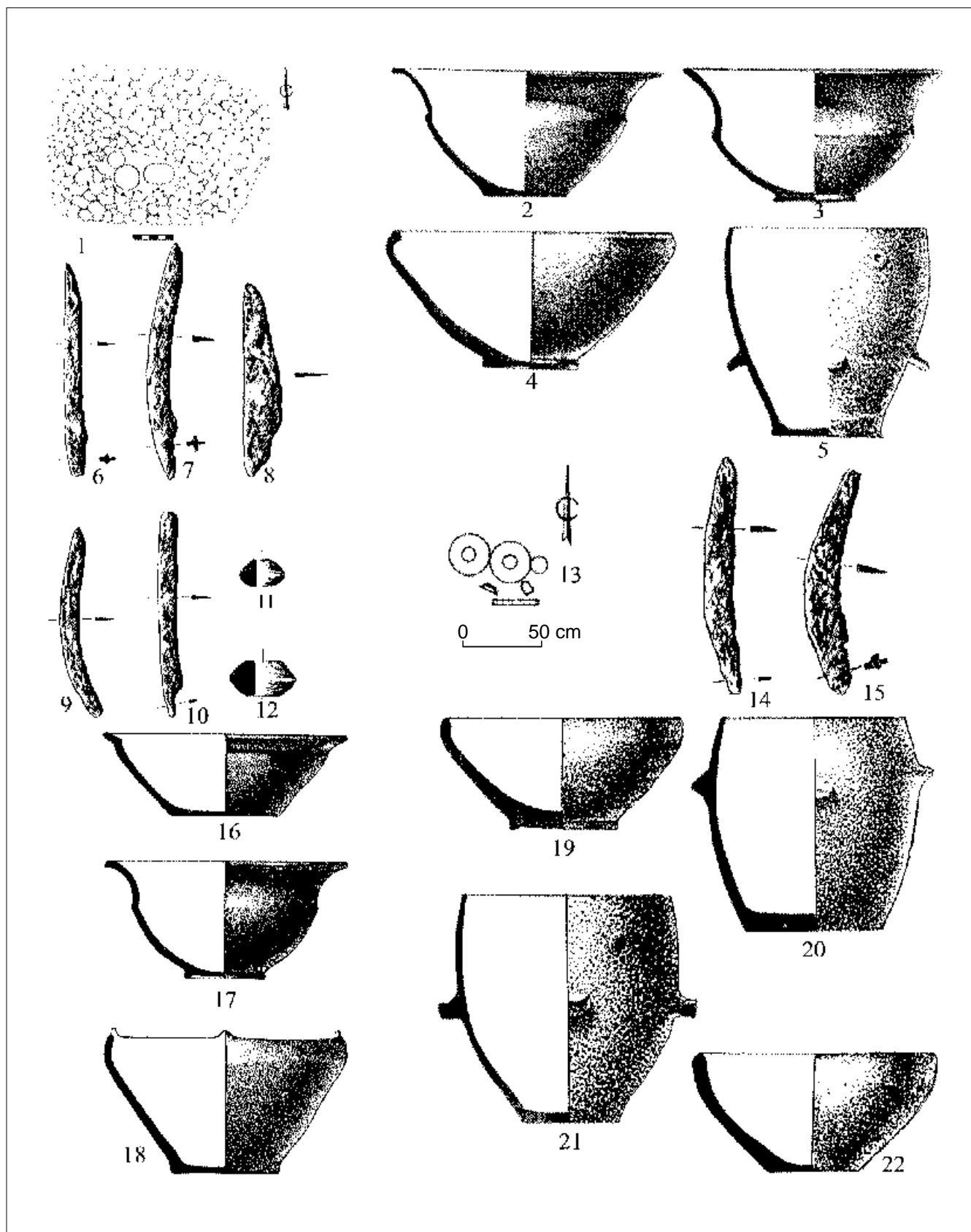
Fig. 11. Profesor Isirkovo. Tombs no. 10 (1 - 12) and 27 (13 - 22) (after R. Georgieva, I. B cvarov 1994).
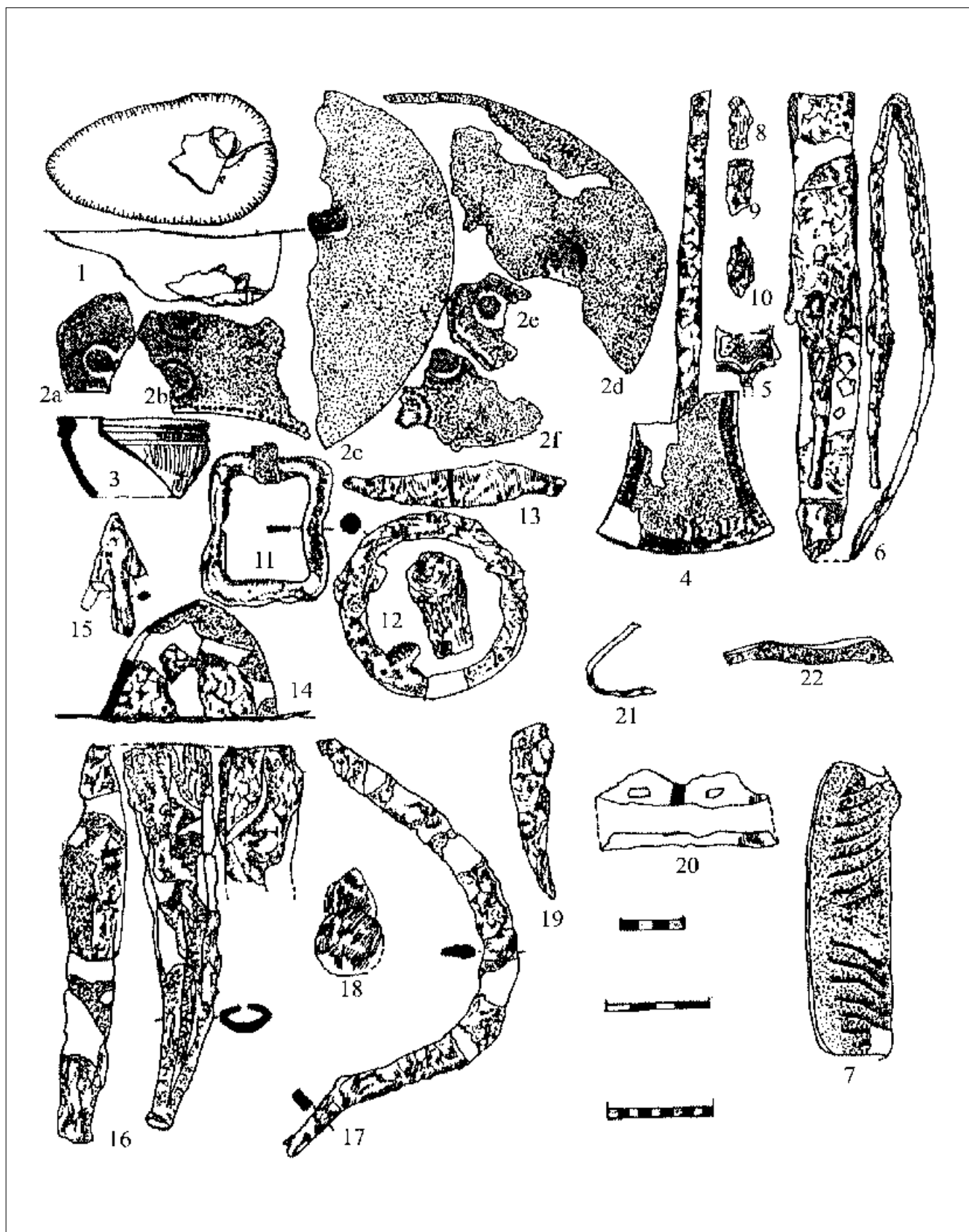
Fig. 12. Popeşti. Tumular tomb no. 4 (after A. Vulpe 1976).
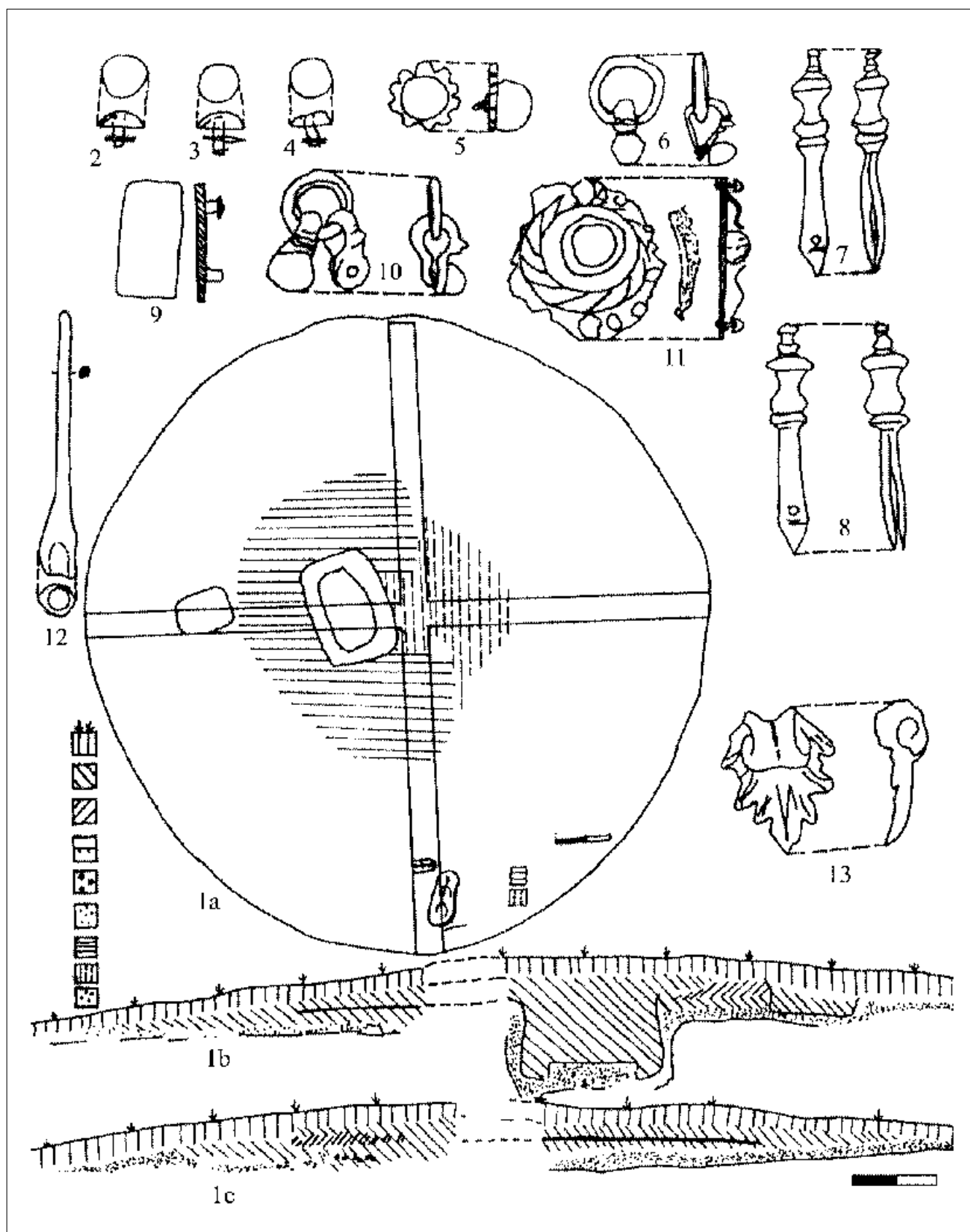
Fig. 13. Brad. Tumular tomb no. 3: plan (1a), profiles (1b - c) and inventory pieces (2 - 13) (after V. Ursachi 1987).
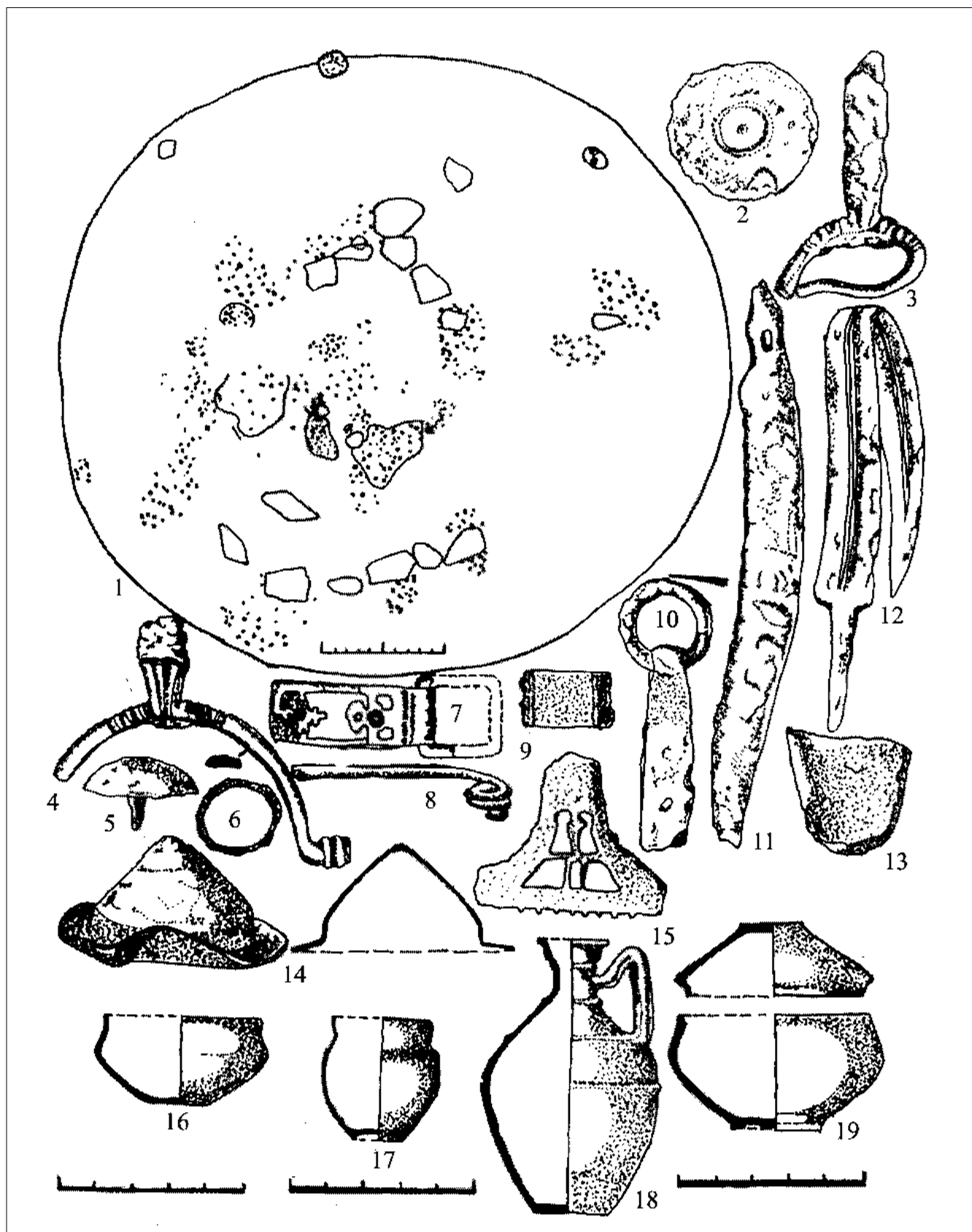
Fig. 14. Zemplin. Tumulus no. 8: plan (1) and its inventory pieces (2 - 19)
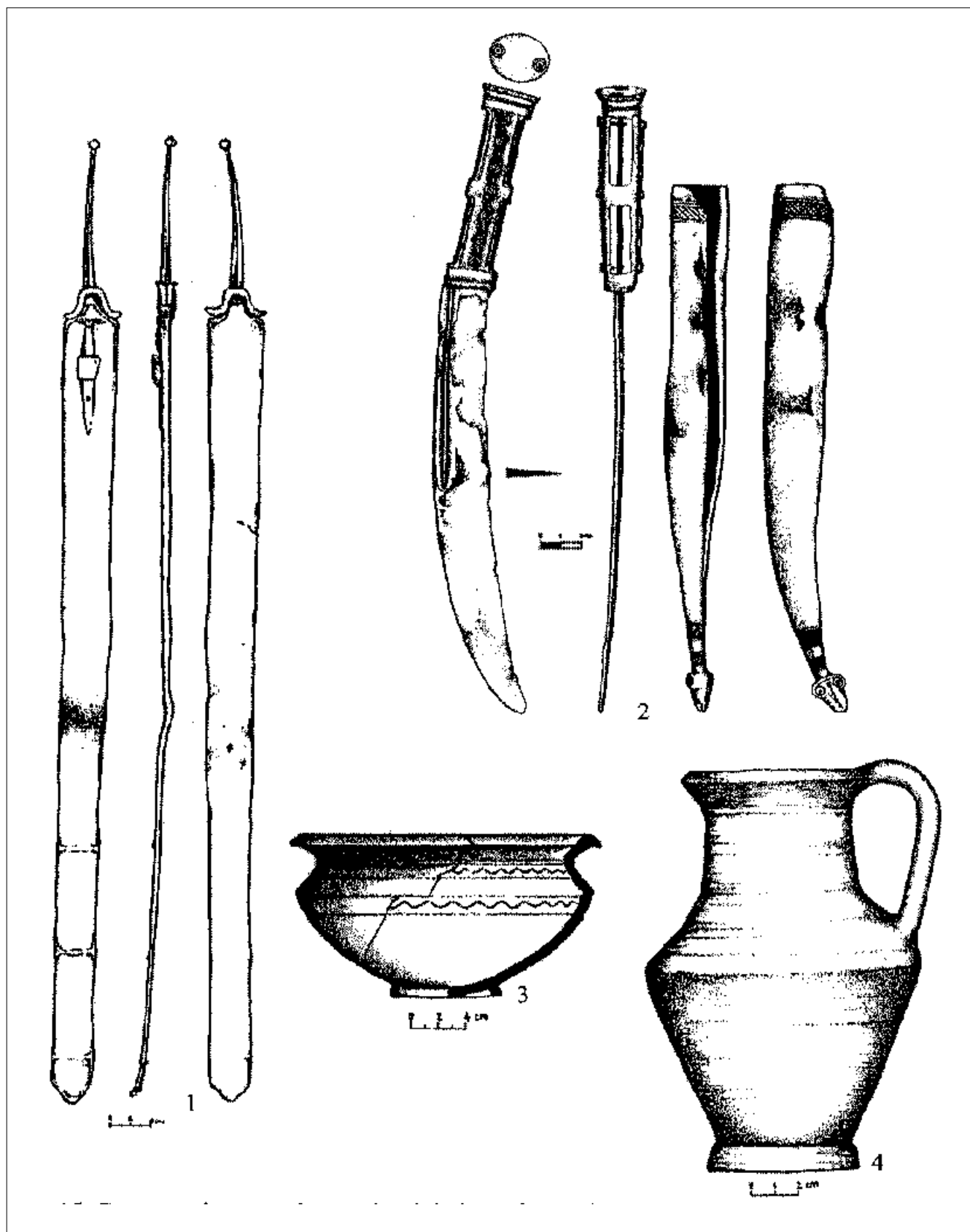(after V. Budinsky-Krcka, M. Lamiova-Schmiedlová 1990).

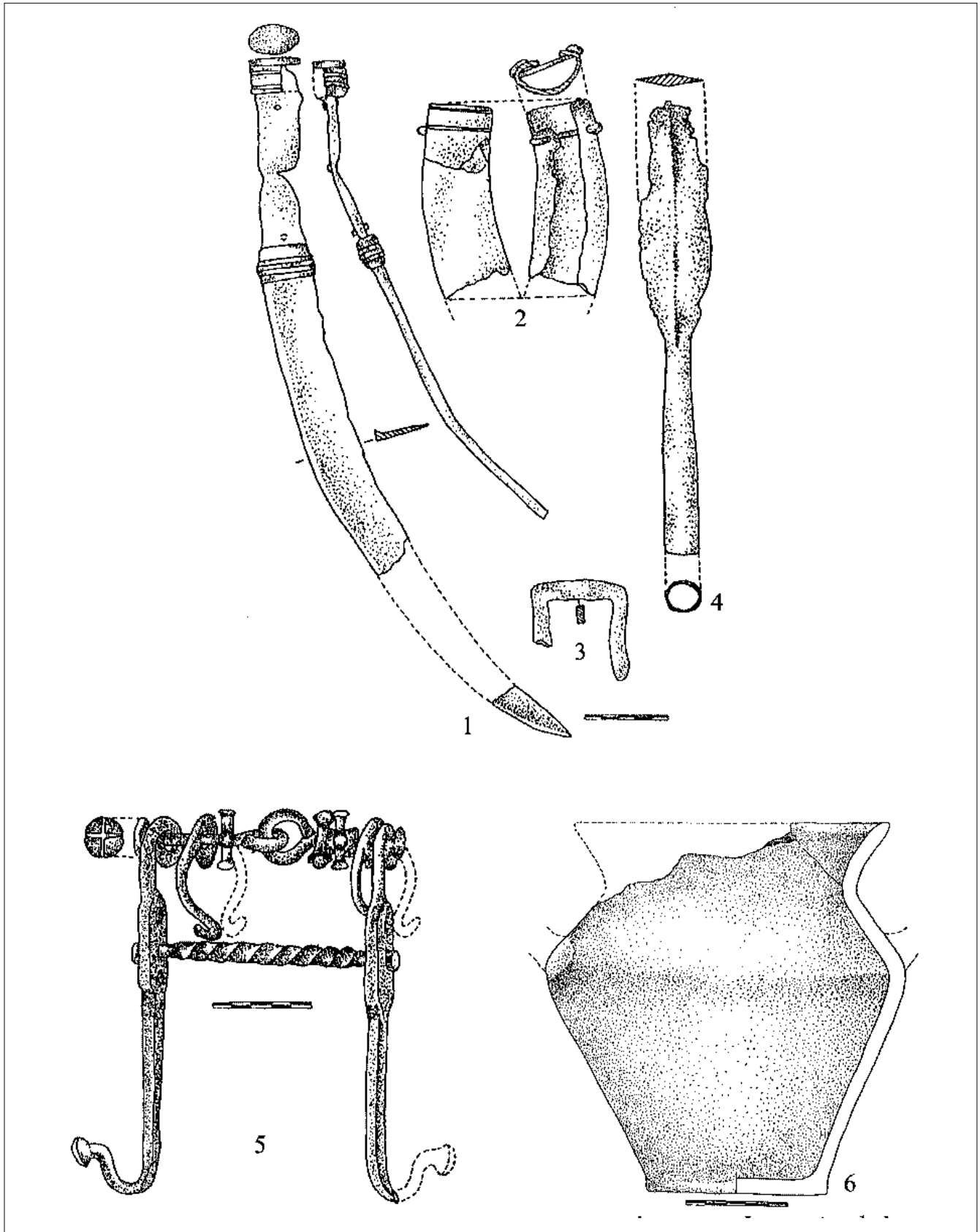Fig. 15. Corcova. Flat tomb inventory (after V. Sîrbu, A. Rustoiu, G. Crăciunescu 2000).

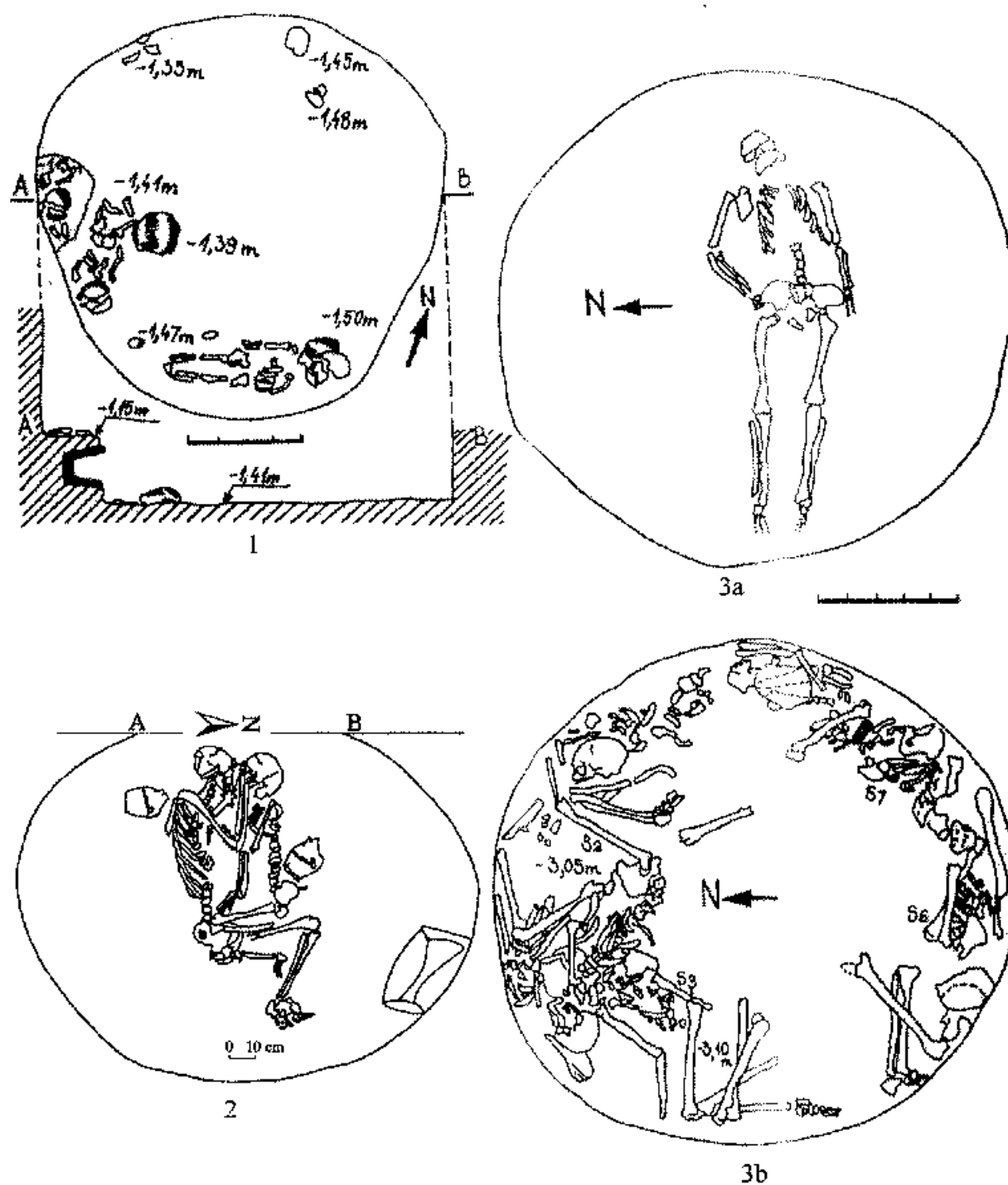Fig. 16. Blandiana. Flat tomb inventory (after H. Ciugudean 1980).

Fig. 17. Human skeletons in non-funerary contexts. 1 - Sf. Gheorghe - Bedehaza; 2 - C scioarele - uvi a Hotarului; 3a - b - Orlea - "Groapa oriental " (after K. Horedt 1956; V. Sîrbu 1996; E. Com a 1972).