

THE CHRONOLOGY AND THE CULTURAL IDENTITY OF THE INTERACTION ZONES OVER THE FRONTIERS OF ROMAN DACIA

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Cronologia și identitatea culturală a zonelor de interacțiune de dincolo de frontiera Daciei Romane

Studiul se ocupă de cronologia și stabilirea identității culturale a zonelor de interacțiune economică situate dincolo de frontierele Daciei romane. Cele două zone de interacțiune principale sunt cea din nord-vestul României, dincolo de fortificațiile de la Porolissum și cea din sud-est, în fața „limesului transalutan”. Bazele cronologiei și încadrării culturale sunt obiectele de metal, unele de proveniență romană, ca fibulele și armele, precum și ceramica. În nord-vest sunt puține dovezi databile în intervalul B1–B2a, majoritatea documentând etapa B2–C1=C1a. Atunci apar primele așezări barbare locuite și de populație din aria culturii Przeworsk, sosită dinspre bazinul râului San din sudul Poloniei. Aceeași populație mixtă daco-germanică continuă să fie documentată și în etapele C1b și C2. Analiza celei de-a doua regiuni, Câmpia Munteniei, se bazează pe reinterpretarea unor piese (fibule și ceramică) descoperite în așezarea de la Mătășaru. Autorul redefinesc cronologia celor două etape de locuire din așezare, începutul fazei Mătășaru III.1 fiind plasată în C1a, după războaiele marcomanice. Cea de-a doua fază, Mătășaru III.2, datează din C2 și continuă până în C3. Au putut fi identificate elemente culturale nordice, din cultura Przeworsk. Trăsăturile culturale ale populației sunt dacice, dar există și elemente sarmatice și germanice. Peste acest mixaj s-au suprapus puternice influențe ale civilizației romane.

În concluzie, ambele zone de interacțiune de peste frontierele romane, cea nord-vestică și cea sud-estică, au o cronologie apropiată. Etapa B2a, corespunzătoare primei jumătăți a secolului II p. Chr., este slab documentată arheologic. Locuirea începe abia în intervalul B2–C1 (C1a), ca urmare a mutațiilor produse de războaiele marcomanice. Pe lângă influența civilizației romane, în mare măsură chiar de natură tehnologică, se constată un amestec de elemente culturale daco-germanice, iar locuirea se prelungește până în C2 și C3, după abandonarea provinciei Dacia, până spre 350 p. Chr.

Key words: chronology, interaction zones, *Barbaricum*, brooches, pottery.

Concerning the interaction zones (Pl. 14) over the frontiers of Roman Dacia we have more information for the North–Western frontier. It was situated over the Meseș Mountain, a natural barrier completed with forts, milecastles and towers and used by the Romans to control the access inside the province. The geography of the region consists of hills and then begin the lowlands which continue till to the Middle Tisza river. The main regions appropriate for habitation are the valleys of the rivers Crasna, Someș, Barcău, all natural roads which linked the North–Western lands to the Transylvanian plateau. Generally, this territory was considered as the Middle and Lower basin of the Someș river¹, or even as belonging to the Upper Tisza river basin². Recently, the artifacts of the Roman imperial period from North–Western Romania (from *Barbaricum*) were gathered, but unfortunately the catalogue did not include any

¹ Stanciu 1995, 139–140.

² Oledzki 1999a.

comments on chronology and any historical interpretation³. The above mentioned repertory contains a total of 296 finds, among them 183 (62%) being settlements, 18 (6%) being funerary discoveries, the rest of 92 (32%) consisting of isolated finds including coins and hoards⁴. If we want to get a general idea on the habitat across the whole Upper Tisza river basin we have to add the 200 finds from Eastern Slovakia, over 70 in North–Eastern Hungary and around 120 sites in Transcarpathian Ukraine⁵.

The chronology of the habitat from the „Vorland” of the North–Western sector of the Dacian frontier is mainly based on several brooches, other metal items and pottery as well. At the moment there are very few artifacts which can be dated at the beginnings of the early Roman imperial period, in the 1st century AD and in the first decades of the 2nd century AD (stages B1–B2a). There are known at the moment only three Roman brooches of strongly profiled type, two having a trapezoidal foot, at Acâș and Lazuri⁶ (Pl. 1/1; 2). The third one, also from Lazuri, is of type Almgren 70/73⁷ (Pl. 1/3). Another strongly profiled brooch comes from Șimleul Silvaniei⁸ (Pl.1/4). It is very close to a brooch found at Porolissum, type Cociș 8b3b⁹, being, mostly probable, an import from Dacia. There are also some barbarian early brooches, as in the settlement at Zalău „Bulevardul Mihai Viteazul” a brooch of Almgren 84 type¹⁰ and an „Augenfibel” of type Almgren III. 53¹¹ (Pl. 1/5), both dating usually during the 1st century AD, as well as another barbarian brooch found at Lazuri and belonging to the Przeworsk culture (Pl. 1/6). The last two examples were still in use in the Eastern zone of the Przeworsk culture (Poland) during the 2nd – 3rd centuries AD¹², that means they arrived in the settlement at Zalău later, concurrently to the Przeworsk population’s appearance in the vicinity of the Roman frontier (stage B2–C1, C1a), when the transition to the late Roman imperial period began. At the moment, a continuity of living of the native Dacian population in North–West Romania from late Iron Age to the early Roman imperial period is not archaeologically attested¹³. Quite different, the population of late Iron Age, the Dacians, is well documented mixed with the population of the Przeworsk culture in Eastern Slovakia in the cemetery at Zemplin starting with the 1st century AD¹⁴. The same population, Dacian and Germanic, seems to exist in the first period of the settlement at Csengersima–Petea (border checking point between Hungary and Romania), between the 2nd to the 3rd centuries AD¹⁵.

The first barbarian settlements appeared in the „Vorland” of the North–Western sector of the Dacian frontier only in the stage B2–C1=C1a, that means after AD 160¹⁶. At the same time the first barbarian artifacts can be found inside the Roman forts from the limes¹⁷ (Pl. 2, 3, 4, 5). The area continued to be inhabited by barbarian tribes also in the late Roman imperial period (C1b and C2)¹⁸.

³ Matei, Stanciu 2000.

⁴ Matei, Stanciu 2000, 12–13.

⁵ Kotigorsko 1995, 110–112.

⁶ Matei, Stanciu 2000, nr. I/1, 27, pl. 336/1; Matei, Stanciu 2000, nr. 79/146, 60, pl. 336/2.

⁷ Matei, Stanciu 2000, nr. 79/146, 59, pl. 336/3, wrongly considered of type Almgren IV. 69.

⁸ Matei, Stanciu 2000, nr. 134/254, 81, pl. 356/3, wrongly considered of type Almgren IV. 69.

⁹ Cociș 2004, nr. 554, pl. XXXVI/554.

¹⁰ Stanciu, Matei 2004, 760, pl. IX/4.

¹¹ Stanciu, Matei 2004, 761, pl. IX/1.

¹² Stanciu, Matei 2004, 761.

¹³ Opreanu 1998.

¹⁴ Budinsky–Krička, Lamiova–Schmiedlova 1990.

¹⁵ Istvánovits, Almásy 2003, 235–237; Gindele, Istvánovits 2009, 77.

¹⁶ Stanciu, Matei 2004.

¹⁷ Opreanu 1998.

¹⁸ Opreanu 2004.

More important to our present paper is the cultural identity of the populations of the interaction zones in front of the Roman frontier of Dacia.

In the transition stage B2–C1 (C1a), the Przeworsk culture populations from South Poland and Eastern Slovakia moved over the Northern Carpathians towards the Upper Tisza river basin. The main reason of this movement is considered to be the pressure of the Goths from Northern Europe. The massive penetration of the Przeworsk populations to the Southern side of the Northern Carpathians has taken place in the period of the Marcomannic wars (stage C1a). L. M. Oledzki named this wave the „invasive horizon”¹⁹. The newcomers were of Germanic origin, as the Buri and Vandali attested in the Latin sources. They were already mixed and their material culture influenced by the Celts of the late Puchov culture²⁰ and by the Dacians. This cultural phenomenon has been generated, very probable, north of the Carpathians, as in the basin of the river San and in the Lower Beskids mountains from Southern Poland²¹. One of the regions of the Przeworsk culture having strong late Celtic and Dacian influences was the Rzeszow region.

The same Polish scholar defined a second area, situated in the „Vorland” of the Roman border, as the „settlement zone”²². It is this area we considered as the interaction zone. There are also Przeworsk finds inside the Roman forts on the Dacian limes, or inside the province, considered to belong to the „penetration zone”. Archaeological materials of barbarian origin from both mentioned zones have the same chronology, B2b/C1a, although they are of different type. As the main category of artifacts found are the brooches, we must stress that the barbarian brooches coming from the Roman forts of Dacia cannot be identified also in the barbarian cemeteries and settlements from the interaction zone from its neighbourhood; they are, however, identical to those from the Roman forts situated on the Pannonian frontier. There are little bronze brooches, belonging to the feminine barbarian costume, so they were probably worn by the Roman soldiers’ slaves, or concubines taken from the tribes of the Przeworsk culture²³.

In the interaction zone appeared in the same B2/C1 (C1a), at the end of the early Roman imperial period, barbarian settlements and small cremation cemeteries. In the grave inventories are frequent the weapons characteristic to the Przeworsk populations, as the shield bosses, with a spike of Jahn 7a type, or Jahn 9, spurs of Ginalska group E, swords, lanceheads and spearheads, some ritually damaged (Pl. 6, 7, 8). In the earliest settlements there is only hand made pottery with Przeworsk characteristics²⁴. Among the main sites emerged in this period are the settlements of Zalău – M. Viteazul Blvd., Zalău „Farkas domb”, Panic–„Uroikert”, Petea–„Vamă”, Lazuri–Lubi Tag, Medieşul Aurit, Badon, Bocşa, Doh, Hereclean, Berea, Săcueni and the cemetery at Medieşul Aurit. All were setting up as a consequence of the Marcomannic wars, probably with the approval of the Roman authorities of Dacia. Their first phase was probably between C1a to the end of C1b. Some of them continued to exist, having a second phase in the late Roman imperial period, mainly in C2 and even C3, as Zalău, Bul. M. Viteazul, Lazuri–Lubi Tag, Medieşul Aurit²⁵ (Pl. 9, 10). Others emerged only in the late Roman period, as Valea lui Mihai, Culciul Mare, Satu Mare, Zalău–Valea Măii, Curtuiuşeni²⁶. Soon after the founding of the barbarian settlements in the interaction zone, the Roman cultural influence became stronger and stronger, due mainly to the trade contacts over the frontier. Even if it is not yet very well

¹⁹ Oledzki 1999a, 114.

²⁰ Pieta 1982.

²¹ Madyda, Legutko 2001.

²² Oledzki 1999a.

²³ Opreanu 1998.

²⁴ Stanciu, Matei 2006, 591.

²⁵ Opreanu 2004.

²⁶ Stanciu 1995.

understood, an acculturation process was obviously taking place in this area. Its results can be identified in the second layer of the settlements (C2–C3), when Przeworsk culture elements almost disappeared and a new material culture with Dacian characteristics and strong Roman influences continues the former mixed one. It was called the Blazice–Bereg culture²⁷. It was identified in Eastern Slovakia, North–East Hungary and recently in North–West Romania. In Romania, inside the interaction zone over the Roman frontier, the early Dacian horizon was not identified, as in the other regions. It is possible that the Dacian component of the newcomers from the Przeworsk culture to be very strong, or it is also possible that free Dacian groups brought from the Tisza region, from other regions from Southern Poland or Ukraine, to be settled by the Romans together with the Przeworsk tribes.

At the moment are well-known only the settlements of the Blazice–Bereg culture. Most of them are continuing earlier horizons of the sites. Their main characteristics are the big rectangular wooden houses built on posts, rows of rectangular pits, the traces of iron metalurgy and numerous pottery kilns. The wheel-made pottery is mainly based on fine, gray pottery. An important part of the pottery is ornamented with stamped ornaments. The stamped ornaments and the shapes show a great Roman influence²⁸, although the chronology and all the influences are not yet studied. In North–West Romania, there are several settlements around the town of Zalău which belong, very probable, to the Blazice–Bereg culture. One of the most important is the settlement from Zalău–Bulevardul Mihai Viteazul, where rows of rectangular pits were uncovered²⁹ (Pl. 11).

The other interaction zone is situated in the Wallachian Plain, in front of the South–Eastern frontier of Roman Dacia. Even there are many excavations done in the past, the chronology of this region is not well established³⁰. The main site used by Gh. Bichir for his chronological frame of the Wallachian Plain is the settlement at Mătășaru. He established a first layer (named III.1) starting with Hadrian's reign till the first decade of the 3rd century and a second one (III. 2) during the 3rd century till to the first decades of the 4th century³¹. The most important dating evidence consists of the Roman brooches. In layer Mătășaru III. 1 were discovered two pieces of strongly profiled brooches (Pl. 12/1; 2)³², very close to Cociș type 8 a6, specific to Upper Moesia and Pannonia, only one item (Tibiscum – vicus) being surely found in Dacia³³. The brooch is dated during the first half of the 2nd century³⁴. Other two brooches belong to the „Aucissa” category (Pl. 12/3;4). The first one³⁵ is of Cociș type 14 c2, spread mainly in Southern Dacia³⁶. Generally they were dated in the Roman Empire between the 2nd century to the first half of the 3rd century³⁷, but for Dacia their chronology was restricted between Hadrian and the beginning of the 3rd century³⁸. The other one³⁹ is of Cociș type 14 d2b2, almost identical to the item found in the Roman fort at Gherla⁴⁰. The chronology of this

²⁷ Oledzki 1999c, 45–74.

²⁸ Filip 2008, 32–34.

²⁹ Matei, Stanciu 2000, Anexa 14.

³⁰ Bichir 1984.

³¹ Bichir 1984, 86–87.

³² Bichir 1984, pl. XXXVIII/1, 4.

³³ Cociș 2004, 54, nr. 194, pl. XIV/194.

³⁴ Cociș 2004, 54.

³⁵ Bichir 1984, pl. XXXVIII/3.

³⁶ Cociș 2004, pl. XLIX/697–699, 701–702, 707–708.

³⁷ Grbić 1996, 87.

³⁸ Cociș, 2004, 81.

³⁹ Bichir 1984, pl. XXXVIII/6.

⁴⁰ Cociș 2004, nr. 728, pl. LI/728.

variant is the second half of the 2nd century till to the late 3rd century⁴¹. As type Cociş 14 d comes mainly from Southern Dacia, S. Cociş supposes it was produced in local workshops somewhere in Lower Dacia⁴². The use of the brooch from Mătăşaru can be well appreciated, as it was found inside a dwelling containing a coin of Marcus Aurelius from AD 170–171, which is a certain *terminus post quem*⁴³. From the same layer Mătăşaru III. 1 are known other two iron brooches⁴⁴ (Pl. 12/5: 6). They are crossbow brooches considered specific to the Przeworsk culture at the end of the 2nd – 3rd centuries⁴⁵. Some are known also in Roman Dacia, Cociş type 36 b, dated in the 3rd century and considered as brought by a barbarian population inside the province⁴⁶. To conclude, we think there is not enough evidence to demonstrate the Mătăşaru III. 1 starts before the Marcomannic wars. The layer III. 1 contain the brooch type Cociş 14 d used in the last quarter of the 2nd century and the two iron brooches type Cociş 36 b from the 3rd century. So is hard to believe these were in an archaeological context starting with the beginning of Hadrian reign, that means more than a century. The 10 Roman coins found in Mătăşaru III. 1 are not supporting either a chronology in the early 2nd century. The only one issued by Hadrian is irrelevant, representing nothing more but a *terminus post quem*⁴⁷. So the two strongly profiled brooches are more probable in use in a later period, probably to the Marcomannic wars. Other brooch finds from Wallachian plain are an „Aucissa” brooch from the settlement at Târgşor⁴⁸, type Cociş 14 a3⁴⁹, from the 1st – early 2nd century, looking like a relict at Târgşor. The other one is an anchor shape brooch from Târgovişte–Susani⁵⁰. For Roman Dacia it was accepted the chronology established for the Roman Empire, AD 170–250⁵¹. Recently, the same author, gathering all the items from the Empire, reduced the period of usage to the first quarter of the 3rd century⁵². So nor for the other sites in Wallachia there is any consistent evidence dating before the Marcomannic wars. Coming back to the settlement at Mătăşaru, better researched, we have some interesting pottery which can be dated by analogy with other sites. A big wheel-made high bowl found in layer Mătăşaru III. 1⁵³ (Pl. 13/1) is not a Roman shape. It is shape 35 B from the pottery workshop at Igolomia (Poland), dated during the stages C1b–C2⁵⁴. The high bowl from Mătăşaru III. 1 is almost identical with one coming from the first phase of the Sântana de Mureş cemetery at Gavrilovka. The beginning of the settlement at Gavrilovka was placed by A. Kokowski in phase D of the Masłomęcz group, between AD 250–268, that means first part of stage C2 (C2a)⁵⁵. Other three high bowls of the same type are known one from the cemetery at Mătăşaru⁵⁶ (Pl. 13/2) and two from the layer Mătăşaru III. 2⁵⁷ (Pl. 13/3; 4). Other two bowls of the same shape were found in the settlement at Bucureşti–Străuleşti⁵⁸ (Pl. 13/5). One of it is

⁴¹ Grbić 1996, 87–89.

⁴² Cociş 2004, 83.

⁴³ Bichir 1984, 87.

⁴⁴ Bichir 1984, pl. XXXVIII/9; 10.

⁴⁵ Schultze 1977, 168.

⁴⁶ Cociş 2004, 142.

⁴⁷ Bichir 1984, 86.

⁴⁸ Bichir 1984, pl. XLV/1.

⁴⁹ Cociş 2004, 78.

⁵⁰ Bichir 1984, pl. XLVII/1.

⁵¹ Cociş 2004, 110.

⁵² Cociş 2006, 395.

⁵³ Bichir 1984, pl. XIX/10.

⁵⁴ Dobrzańska 1990 (2), fig. 19. I. Stanciu is wrong dating the shape from Igolomia till the stage D, a possibility which is not mentioned by the Polish scholar (Stanciu 2008, 156, note 86).

⁵⁵ Kokowski 1999, Tabelle 1, p. 189, Abb. 5.

⁵⁶ Bichir 1984, pl. XV/1.

⁵⁷ Bichir 1984, pl. XV/4; XVI/4.

⁵⁸ Bichir 1984, pl. XXIV/7, 2.

very close related to the shape 35 B in the pottery workshop at Igolomia, having also polished ornaments, unknown in the Roman provincial pottery from 3rd century Dacia. The conclusion is that phase Mătăsar III. 1 existed during stage C1b (first half of the 3rd century). Habitation started, very probable, sometime in C1a, after the Marcomannic wars. Mătăsar III. 2 represents a second phase, in stage C2 and probably C3. At the same time some cultural impulses related with the Northern Przeworsk elements can be identified. It seems, at the moment, that the chronological frame is similar with the North–Western area we have described. There is no serious evidence for dating the barbarian settlements in the early Roman imperial period (B1–B2). There are totally missing any Dacian late Latène artifacts and the strongly profiled brooches of eastern type. The emergence of the settlements can be dated only starting with the transition period B2/C1(=C1a). The settlements have also a second phase, dating in the late Roman imperial period (C2–C3). The cultural aspects are dominated by the Dacian culture, but having also Sarmatian and Germanic elements, all strongly influenced by the Roman civilization.

After the Roman province of Dacia was abandoned in the time of Aurelianus (AD 271), the cultural aspects of the former interaction zones were not immediately changed. The barbarian settlements continued to exist, as we demonstrated, in periods C2–C3, probably till AD 350, only small groups penetrating the territory of the former province, as the one identified at Șopteriu (Bistrița–Năsăud county), for example⁵⁹. After the arrival from the North of the Gepid tribes by the end of the 3rd century AD, the cultural situation of the North–Western zone became more complex. The same happened to the South–East, where the Goths settled around the middle of the 3rd century to the northern coast of the Black Sea. After the middle of the 4th century AD, the first settlements having barbarian cultural elements can be identified in the former province of Dacia. It was the beginning of the Migration period.

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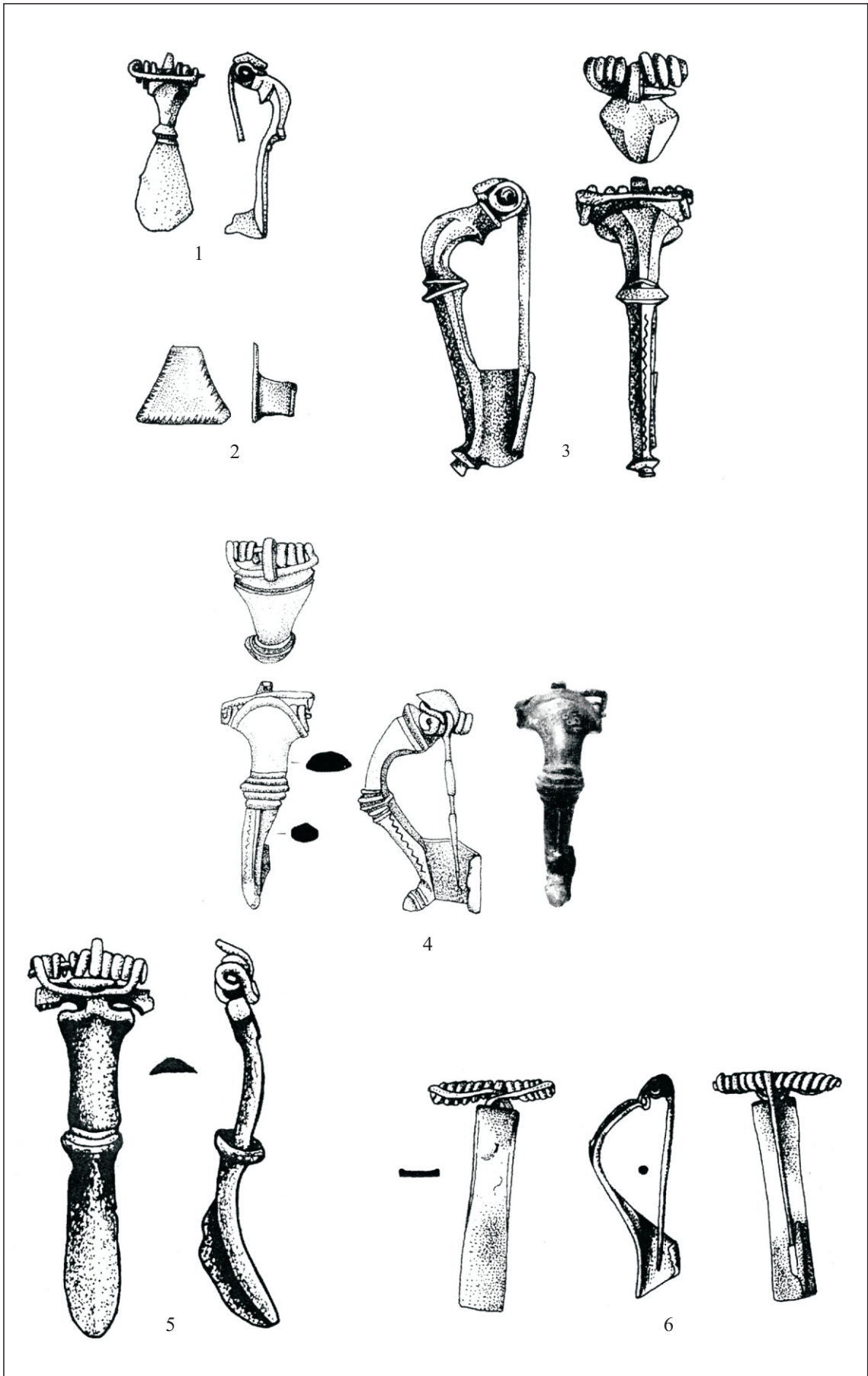
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⁵⁹ Marinescu, Mirițoiu 1987.

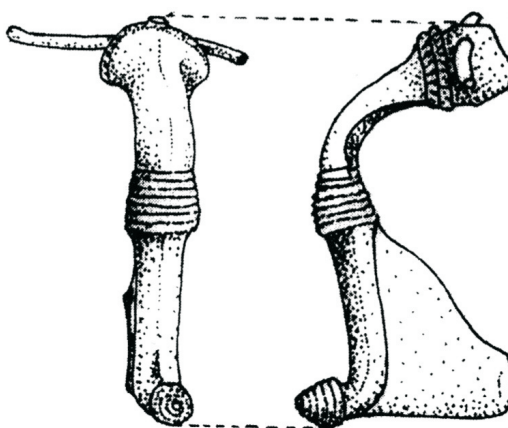
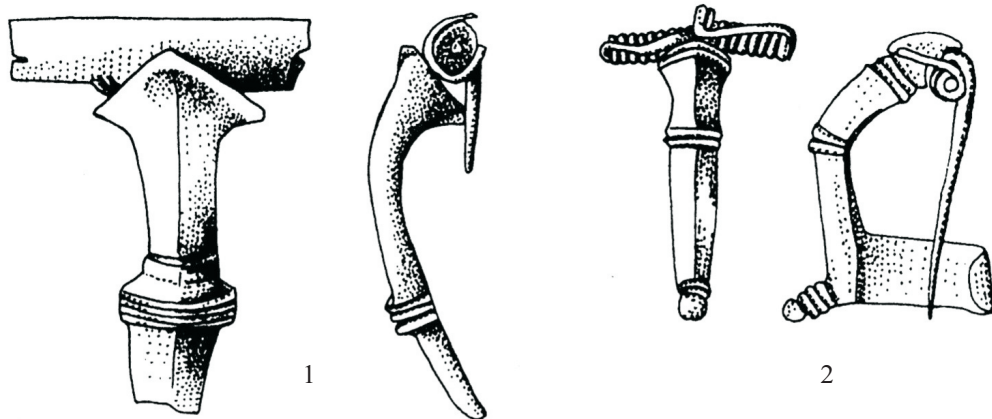
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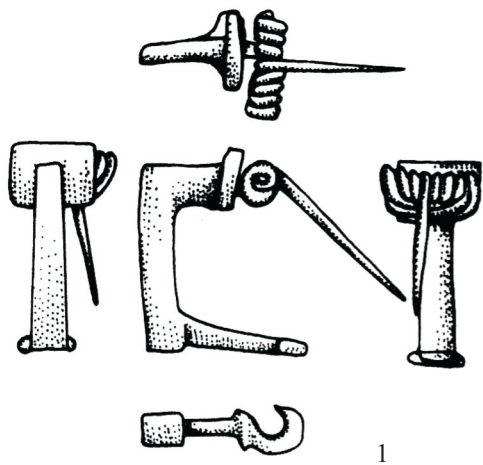
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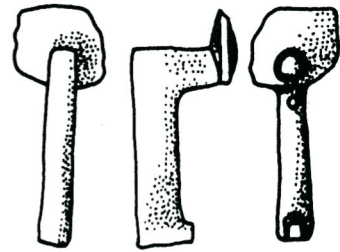


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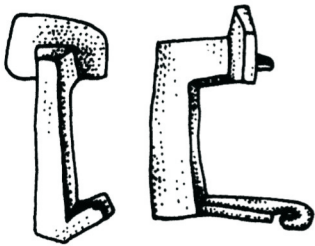




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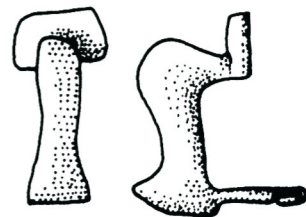
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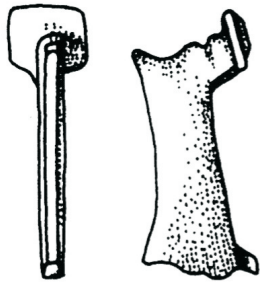
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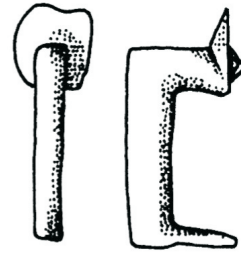
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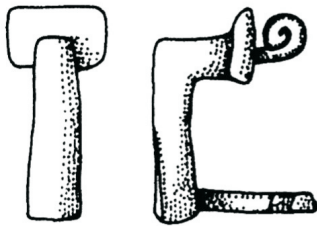
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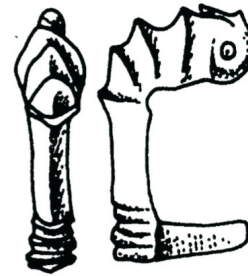
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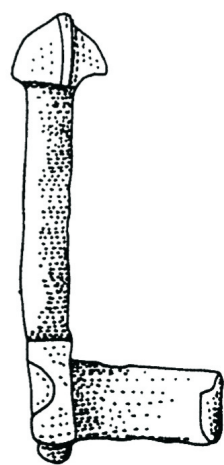
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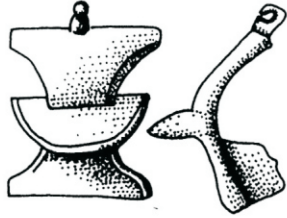


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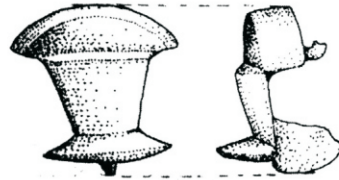


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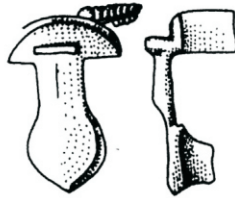
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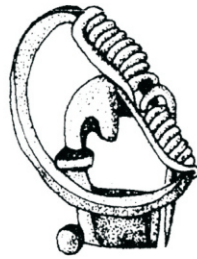
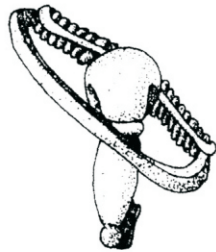
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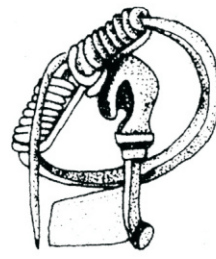
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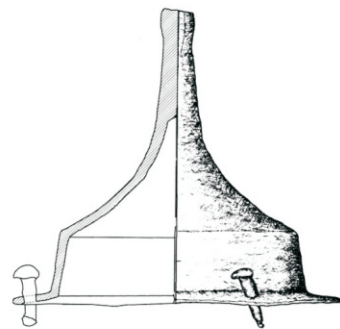
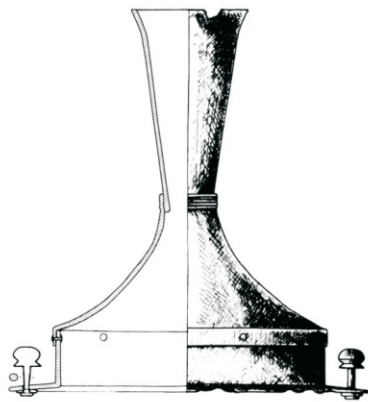
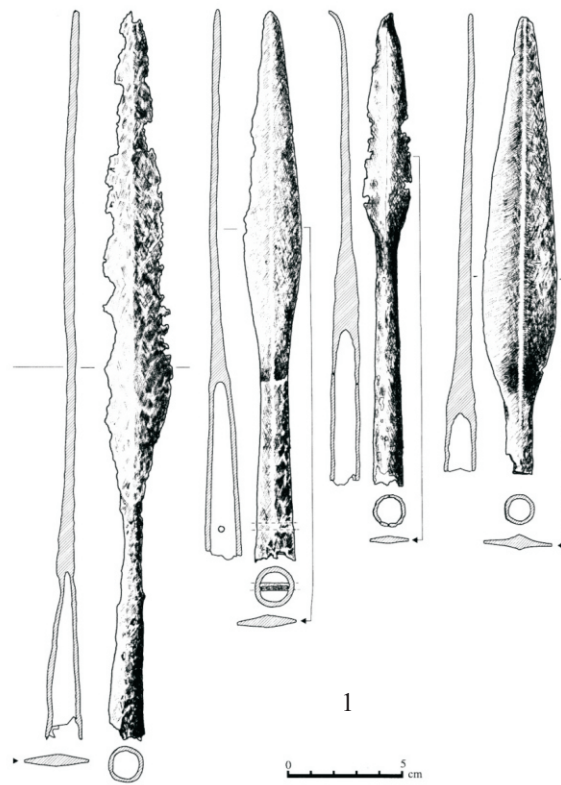


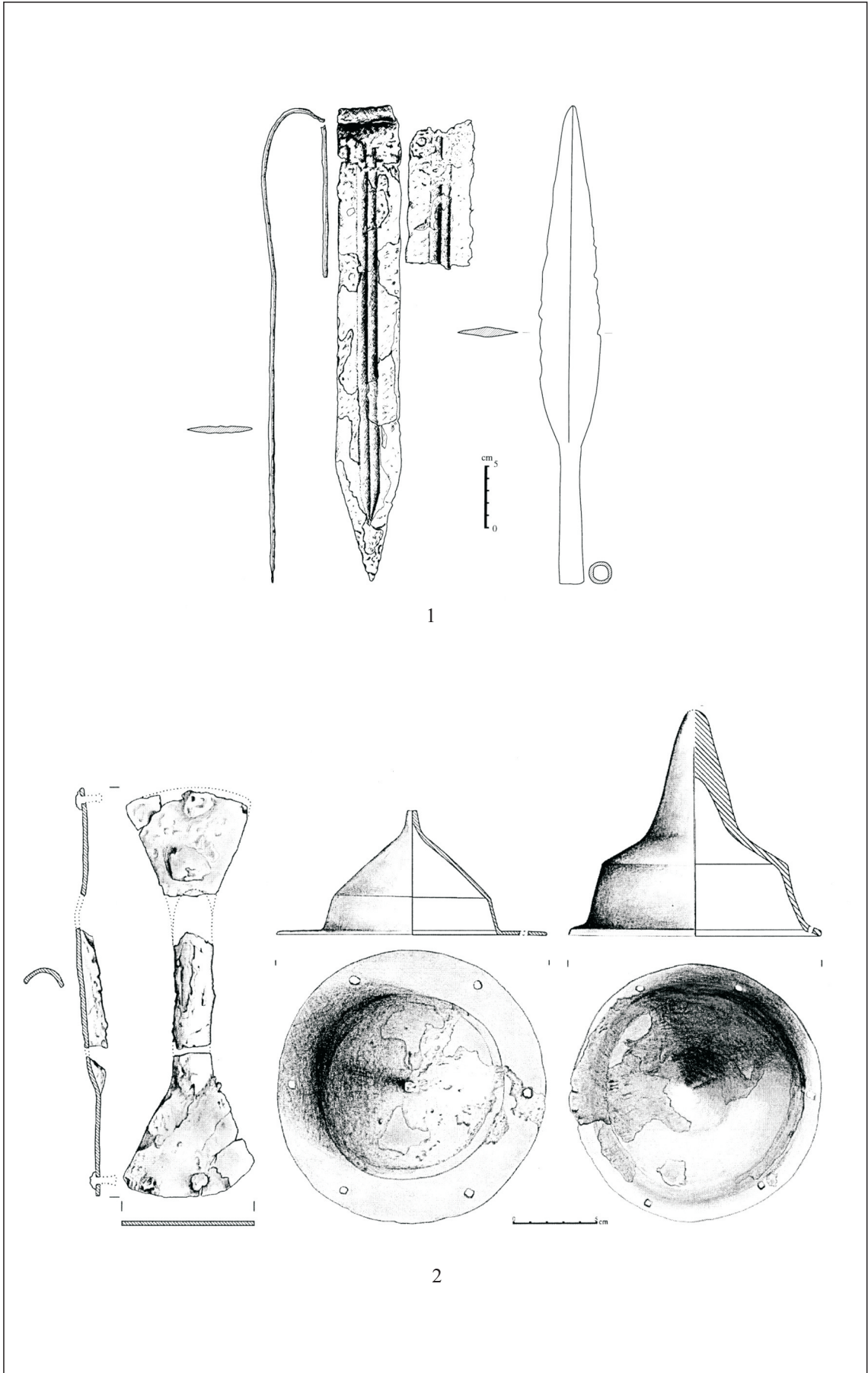
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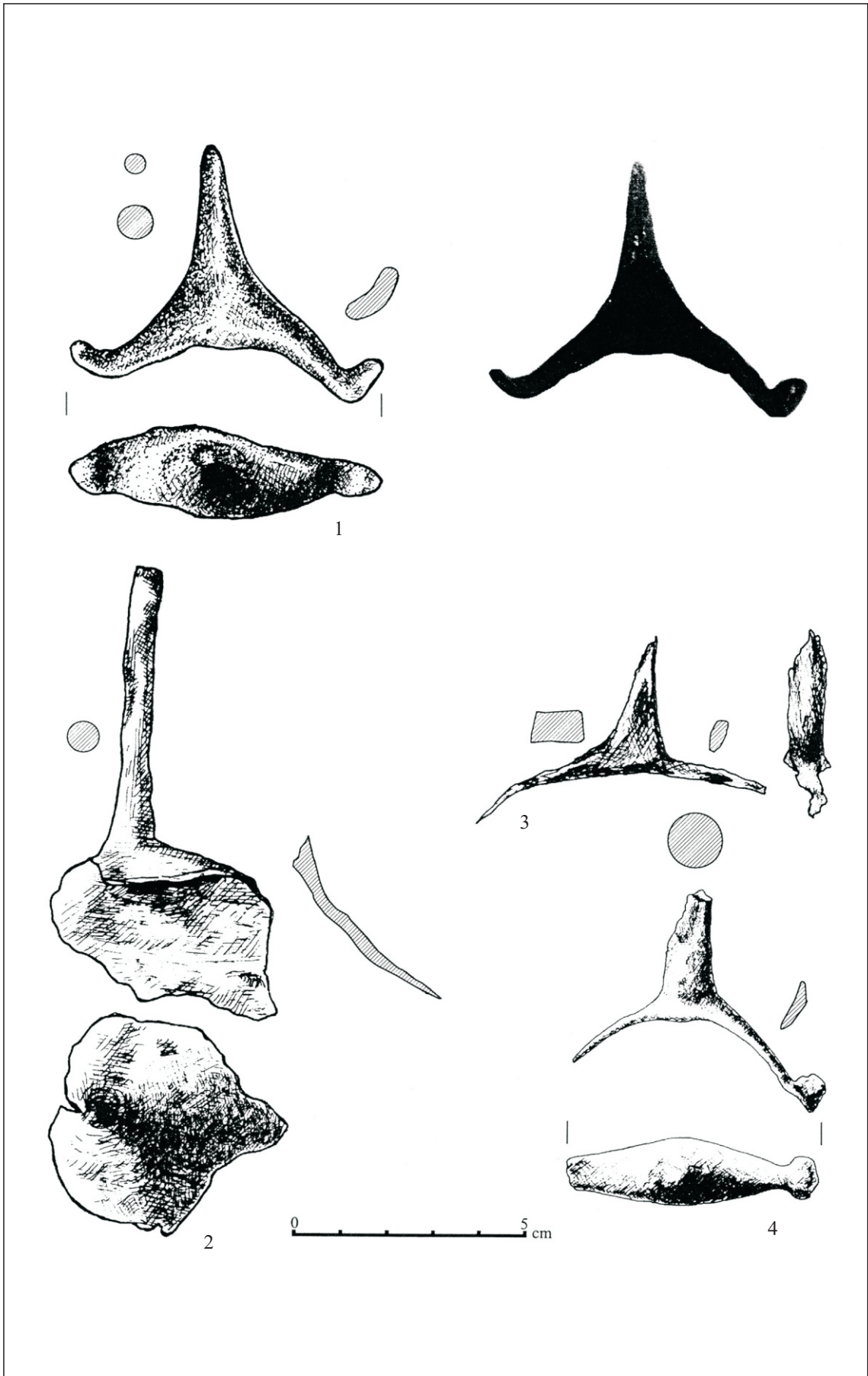


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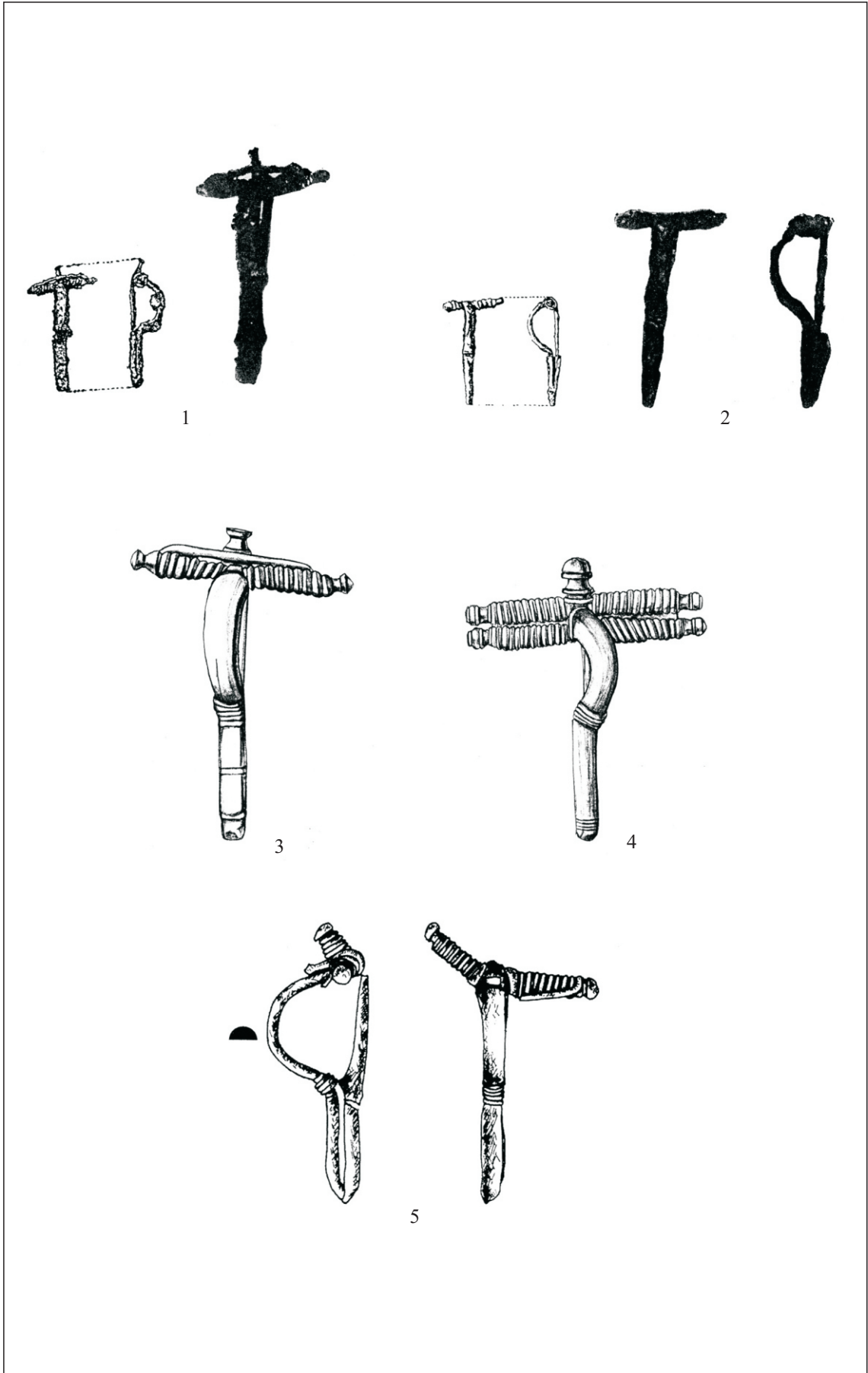


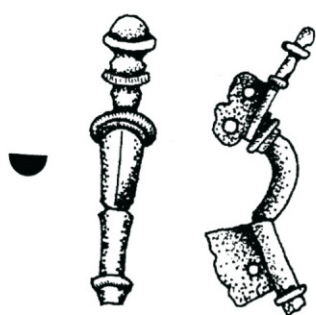






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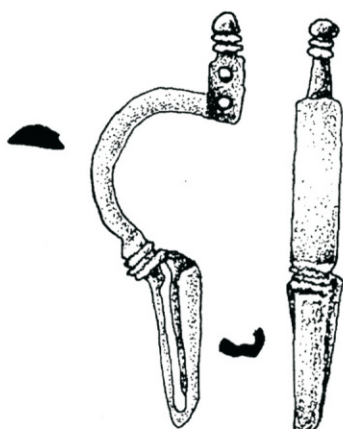




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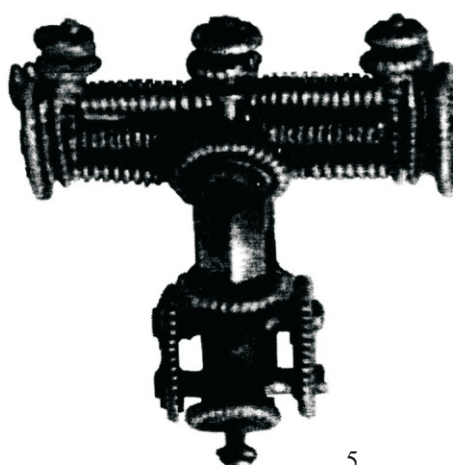
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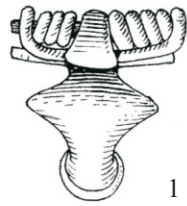
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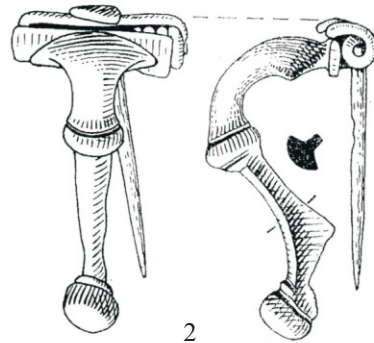
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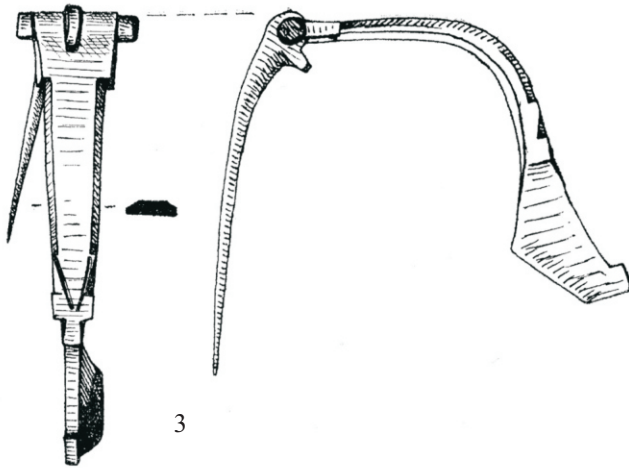
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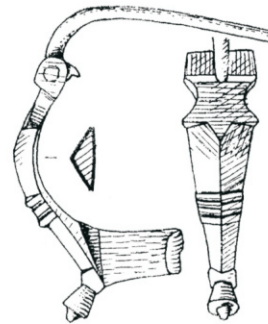
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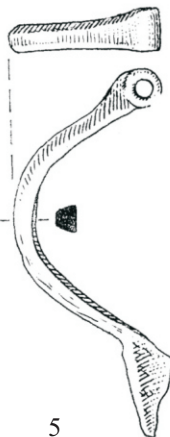
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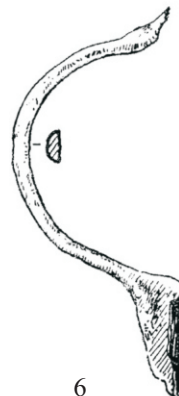
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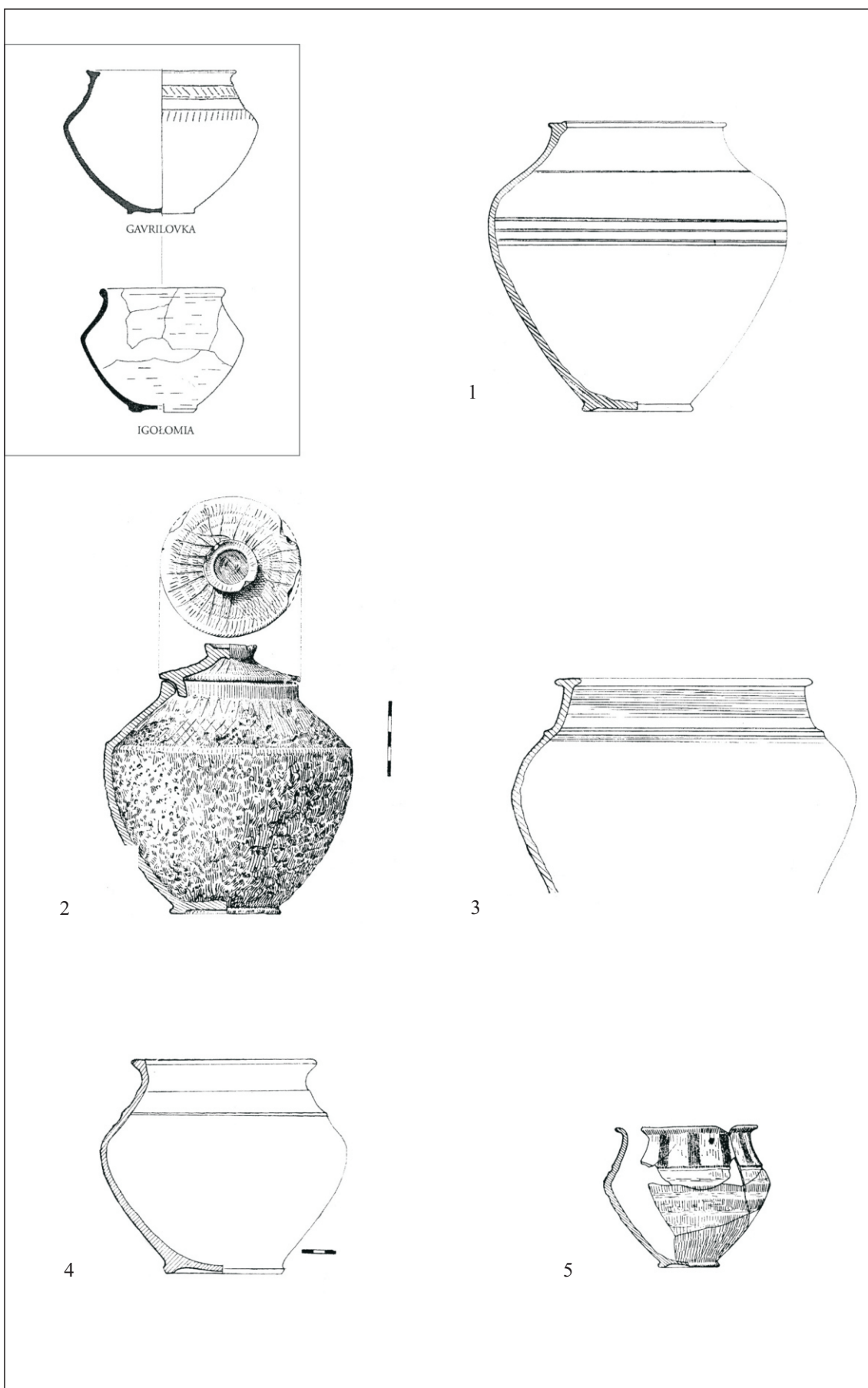
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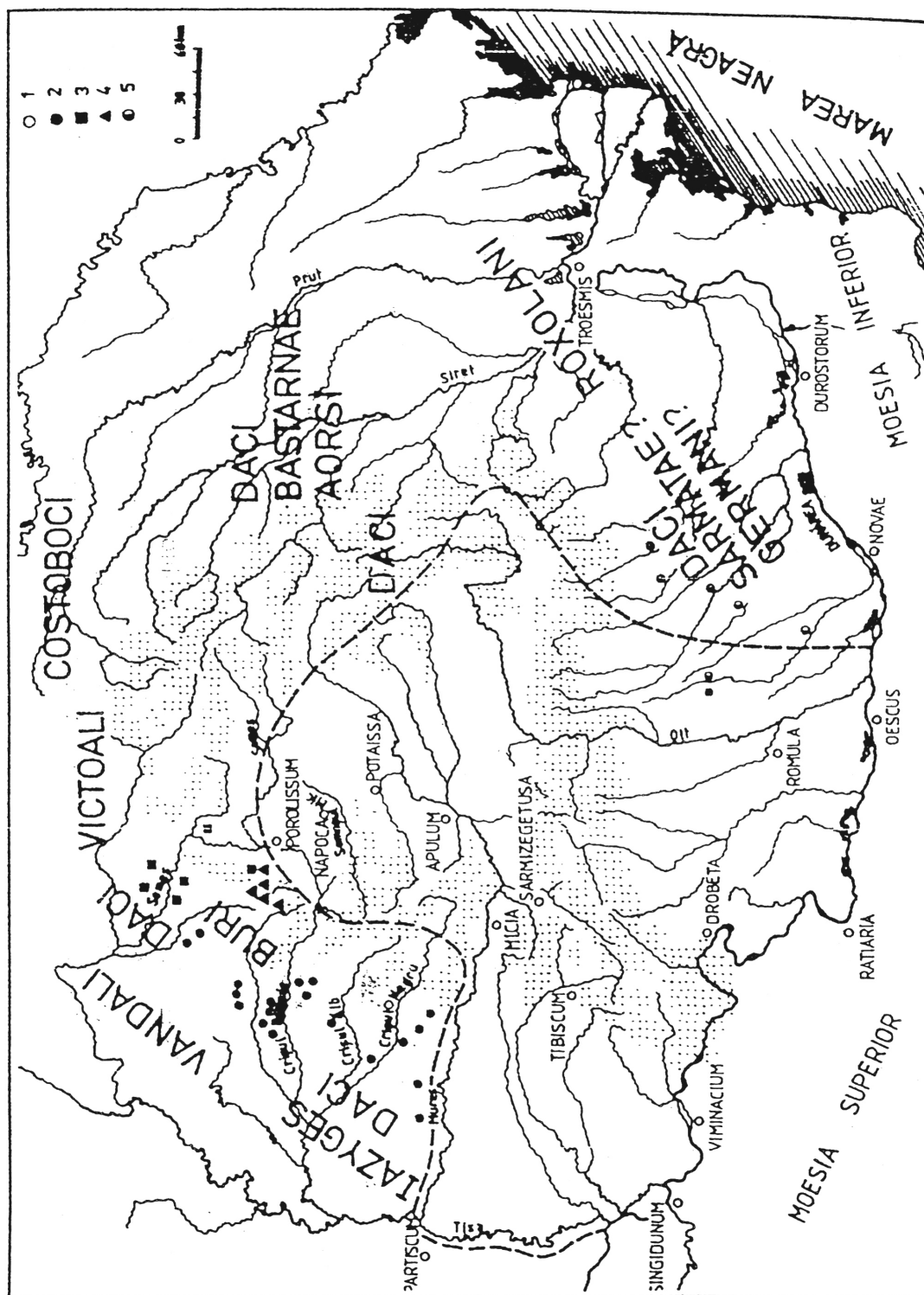


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