

NEW ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERIES OF THE CORLĂTENI-CHIȘINĂU CULTURE IN MIHĂLĂȘENI-BOTOȘANI*

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Though in the latest years several sites belonging to the Corlăteni-Chișinău Culture have been investigated and the main discoveries published, our knowledge of this period is still far from being satisfactory. As a result, any appearance of its elements, even in small quantity, contributes to the enrichment of the information heritage regarding the genesis and the evolution of the Corlăteni-Chișinău Culture.

In the period between 1983-1998, a large necropolis belonging to the Sântana de Mureș-Cernjachov Culture was systematically investigated. The necropolis was located on the plain of the Bașeu River, in the Mihălășeni Village, Botoșani District. Besides the over 520 inhumation and cremation graves of this necropolis, other different remains were discovered, some of them from the Corlăteni-Chișinău Culture. Their small quantity and the fact that they didn't come out of closed archaeological compounds can be explained not only through the disturbance provoked by the necropolis of the Sântana de Mureș-Cernjachov Culture, but also through the fact that the flooding area from the Bașeu plain offered less favourable conditions for larger and long lasting settlements.

Except for the tombs from the Sântana de Mureș-Cernjachov Culture, other remains that belong to different epochs and cultures have occasionally appeared in the trenches of the archaeological sections:

1. In S 24/1984 a silex tool was discovered. This can be attributed to the Middle Paleolithic Age, and represents a bi-facial levallois sliver, with detachments on both sides and fine retouching on certain side areas. On one of the surfaces retouching from the preparation of the hitting plan can be noticed¹ (pl. 1/1).

2. From the passage period from the Neolithic to the Bronze Age, there came to light ceramic fragments from vessels with carved decorations on the edge of the lip, belonging to the Hârșidătea-Erbiceni-Foltești Culture (pl.1/3). A middle sliver with finely retouched *encoche*s can be attributed to the same compound. It has small detachments coming from the preparation of the nucleus. The piece, in yellow silex from the Prut River, was found in S 20/1984² (pl. 1/2).

*Romanian version in *Arheologia Moldovei*, XX, p. 13-25

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3. Another epoch attested in Mihălășeni is represented by ceramic fragments of the final bronze of the Noua I Culture. These appeared in small number in the excavation trenches, without belonging to close archaeological compounds.

In several sections, marked S 20/1984, S 31/1984-1985, S 47/1988 and S 48/1988, the ceramics of the Noua Culture appeared associated with the one of the Corlăteni-Chișinău type, while in S 21/1985 and S 24/1984 only one isolated fragment of the Noua Culture was discovered. Because of the impossibility of studying the material according to the stratigraphic criterion, the fragments of the Noua type could be distinguished from the ones of the Corlăteni-Chișinău Culture, only according to peculiarities of shape and decoration. Few fragments of vessels with alveolate belt could not be determined, these belonging either to the Noua or to Corlăteni-Chișinău Culture.

The first category of the Noua Culture ceramics is constituted by commonly used vessels with rough aspect, among which it is most significant the type of jar-pot with straight or slightly convex body, rounded at the lip and at the bottom. The paste of this vessel type is porous, having sand and broken shards in its composition as degreasing. The walls of the pots are rough at the touch, with unlevellings. Only one fragment with neat surface was found. The colour of the vessels is brick red or grey with variants: brick red or grey on both surfaces, or grey on the outside and brick red on the inside. The type of jar-pot can be split into several variants.

The first is the jar-pot with continuous belt, triangular in section, and sometimes with the edge of the lip thickened towards the outside. This variant, very largely spread, can be found in the settlements, and necropolis from both phases of the Noua Culture (Florescu, 1991, *passim*).

In the second variant there are the pots with a line of holes under the lip and with continuous (pl. 2/1) or alveolate belt. Some fragments in which the holes do not entirely go through the wall of the vessel (pl. 2/3) were also included in this in this variant. Similar pots can be met in the dwellings of the Noua I phase from Trușești-Movila Șesul Jijiei (Florescu, 1991, p. 134-136, fig. 92/3) and Gârbovăț (Florescu, 1964, p. 152-153, 167, fig. 5/10; *idem*, 1991, p. 72, 93/16) as well as in the settlements of Noua II phase from Cozia (Florescu, 1991, p. 54, fig. 47/9-10) and Andrieșeni (Florescu, 1964, p. 152-153, 167, fig. 5/6; *idem*, 1991, p. 25, fig. 36/9). The pots with perforation lines and simple or alveolate belts are very rarely found in the northeast of Moldavia, only in the dwellings of Corlăteni type from Lozna and Ilieșeni (László, 1994, p. 113). Therefore it is preferable to attribute the variant found in Mihălășeni entirely to the Noua Culture.

At the same time, among the category of commonly used rough ceramics, there is also the type of bi-truncated cone-shaped vessel with curved neck and slightly opened lip. The paste is more homogenous than in the pots from the previous category, having in composition fragments of silex powder, which can also be noticed on the surface of the vessel's walls. The colour is grey with reddish spots. In this type it is also included a

fragment with carved decoration of a strip of hatched triangles, surrounded by frames placed on the shoulder of the vessel. The motif of hatched triangles with the top downwards, filled with thin oblique lines and limited in the superior part by two parallel lines, alternates with the double lined frame of triangles filled with short thin lines (pl. 1/6).

This type of vessel with motif of strip of carved triangles is currently met in the settlements and necropolis of the first phase of the Noua Culture, being attested in Corlăteni (Florescu, 1991, p. 52-53, fig. 23/3), Trușești (Florescu, 1991, p. 134, fig. 29/3-4; 31/23), Răuseni (Florescu, 1991, p. 109, fig. 36/1-2), Dorobanțu (Florescu, 1991, p. 11, fig. 40/1), Gârbovăț (Florescu, 1991, p. 69-73, fig. 64/11; 65/15, 17, 19, 21, 23), Săceveni (Florescu, 1991, p. 122, fig. 77/2-3), Brăilița (Florescu, 1991, p. 41, fig. 78/1), and Probota (Florescu, 1991, p. 107, fig. 190/9). As previously mentioned, the vessel having as decoration a strip of hatched triangles represents a component of the Belopotok-Cestița-Komarovo Culture which took part, together with other culture of the Middle Bronze Age, to the birth of the Noua I Culture (Florescu, 1991, *passim*; *idem*, 1964, p. 162, 164, 169, 181-183, 185; Morintz, 1978, p. 115, 155, 158-159).

A fragment from a pot with straight walls, the lip slightly turned outwards and a vertical handle in the shape of a thin ribbon belongs also to the category of the rough ceramics (pl. 1/4). This type of vessel could constitute a variant of the pot with convex body and vertical handles, which was largely spread in the dwellings of both phases of the Noua Culture (Florescu, 1991, *passim*). The same type of vessel, with convex body and vertical handles, is also illustrated by a fragment having a horizontal threshold, which permits the short lip from the shoulder of the vessel (pl. 2/5). The type of convex pot with vertical handles is also met in the dwellings and necropolis from Valea Lupului (Florescu, 1991, *passim*), from the Noua I phase, and Lechința de Mureș (Florescu, 1991, p. 85-86, fig. 12/10), Apahida (Florescu, 1991, p. 26, fig. 165/3, 5, 6) and Piatra Neamț (Florescu, 1991, p. 101, fig. 197/14), which belong to the Noua II phase. The horizontal threshold placed under the lip appears also at the pots with horizontal handles, as it can be seen in the similar pieces from Rotbav from the Noua I phase (Florescu, 1991, p. 113, fig. 14/8) and Doina from the Noua II phase (Florescu, 1991, p. 61, fig. 195/12). Among the category of rough ceramics there are also some fragments of larger or smaller pots, with straight walls and decoration of alveolate strip (pl. 4/4; 2/4) or line of ovoid carvings (pl. 3/5). As the latter do not have a sufficient number of defining elements, the two fragments could belong either to the Noua culture or to the Corlăteni-Chișinău Culture.

The second category of ceramics is formed of fragments of vessels of high quality and includes several variants of the type of cup with two handles. The paste of these vessels is homogenous, the walls are thin, of black, grey or reddish colour, in one cases a piece with polished external surface being found. The variants were established only

according to the handles, the fragmentary character of the pieces hindering us from a more rigorous classification.

The first variant is represented by one fragment of a cup with truncated cone shaped body, vertical neck and over raised handles with convex button. To the insertion point of the handle with the lip, on the inside of the vessel, a prominent swelling can be noticed (pl. 3/1a-c). The cup with over-raised handle and convex button is often present in the dwellings and necropolis from the Noua Culture, but close analogies are rather met in the second phase of the Noua Culture in the dwellings from Botoșana (Florescu, 1991, p. 39, fig. 26/1), Trușești (Florescu, 1991, p. 134, fig. 34/48; 35/55; idem, 1964, p. 150, fig. 8/3), Diviciorii Mari (Florescu, 1991, p. 59, fig. 167/7), and Morești (Florescu, 1991, p. 94, fig. 177/1).

The second variant includes only one fragment from a pot over-raised handles and high button (pl. 2/2). Cups with similar handles appear in the dwellings from Bârlad-Cărmidărie (Florescu, 1991, p. 34, fig. 50/1), Lichitișeni (Florescu, 1991, p. 87 - 88, fig. 52/87-88; 53/16), Tăvădărești (Florescu, 1991, p. 127 - 129, p. 61/11, 15), Gârbovăț (Florescu, 1991, p. 72-73, fig. 66/26, 29) and Cavadinești (Florescu, 1991, p. 44-45, fig. 73/7), all belonging to the Noua I phase. Similar cups from the Noua II phase are known in the dwellings from Trușești (Florescu, 1991, p. 134, fig. 35/56) and Bârlad-Prodana (Florescu, 1991, p. 34, fig. 49/2).

The third variant includes two fragments from cups with over-raised handle and slightly flattened crest (pl. 1/5; 3/2). This variant is common to both phases of the Noua Culture and is largely spread in the dwellings of this culture (Florescu, 1991, *passim*).

The fourth variant, represented by one fragment, presents the over-raised handle with sharp edges in the superior part which, probably, derives from the handles with animal motives, extremely stylised here (pl. 3/3). The closest piece to the fragment from Mihălășeni is found in the Noua I dwelling from Trușești (Florescu, 1991, p. 135, fig. 29/2). Another similar fragment from Trușești is either from a cup with over-raised handles, or from the type of pot with globular or truncated cone-shaped body. The fragment from Mihălășeni presents a large ribbon-shaped slightly over-raised handle, with the upper edge linked to the edge of the lip (pl. 3/4) and has the closest analogies with the similar pieces from the dwellings of the Noua I phase from Cavadinești (Florescu, 1991, p. 44-45, fig. 73/9) and Andrieșești (Florescu, 1991, p. 25, fig. 37/2).

As it could be noticed from the presentation of the ceramic material in Mihălășeni, the jar-pot with a strip of holes under the lip and continuous belt or only with the motif of continuous belt are often met in the dwellings and necropolis of both phases of the Noua Culture. At the same time, the type of cup with two over-raised handles from Mihălășeni, with the variants we established, is also met in the settlements and necropolis of both phases of the Noua Culture. As a consequence, the exact attribution of the material from

Mihălășeni to one of the two phases of the Noua Culture would seem difficult if we didn't have the fragment of Belopotok-Costișa-Komarovo tradition.

Since the very first fundamental study dedicated to the Noua Culture it was noticed the fact that the dwellings and the necropolis of the Noua I phase contain, especially in the ceramic inventory, elements of Monteoru, Wietenberg and Belopotok-Costișa-Komarovo tradition. In the second phase, this culture appears unitary and fully formed, the traditions of the Middle Bronze Age cultures are not present any longer (Florescu, 1964, p. 169, 179-182; Morintz, 1978, p. 154-155). Therefore, the group of ceramic fragments from Mihălășeni can be attributed to the first phase of the Noua Culture.

Besides the elements of the Noua Culture, ceramic fragments of the Corlăteni-Chișinău Culture were also discovered in Mihălășeni. These were the subject of a short note in which the main results were succinctly presented, underlining the fact they were not discovered in precise compounds and stratigraphic position (Șovan, Moscalu, 1990, p. 139-141; Ioniță, Șovan, 1995, p. 255-257). Thus, in the trenches S 20/1984, S 31/1984-1985, S 47/1988, S 48/1988 there came to light rests of ceramics of the Corlăteni-Chișinău Culture type, associated with fragments of the Noua I Culture, while in S 22/1984, S 27/1985, S 28/1985, S 29/1985 and S 38/1987 only shards of the Corlăteni-Chișinău Culture were found. These can also be divided into the category of rough ceramics and high quality fine ceramics. In the category of rough ceramics there is the type of pot with vertical walls, narrowed towards the lip and the bottom, with decoration of alveolate belt interrupted by horizontal handles in triangular shape. The few fragments that illustrate this first type form, almost each of them, a variant.

The first is provided with alveolate belt, handle and a strip of ovoid carvings obliquely disposed on the walls of the vessel (pl. 4/5); the second has a horizontal handle of triangular shape placed above the alveolate belt (pl. 4/1), the third piece has a prominent belt, decorated with oblique carvings (pl. 4/3). All the fragments of this type present thick walls due to the fact the vessels had large dimensions. The colour of the walls is reddish, brick red or grey, the paste is very porous and bad burned, with small gravel and broken shards used as degreasing. We would like to mention that errors of culture attribution are excluded for this type, as vessels with triangular horizontal handles, associated with the alveolate belt, are typical only for the cultural compound with grooved ceramics, missing from the inventory of the ceramics from the Noua Culture.

Several fragments that could belong to the high bi-truncated cone-shaped vessel with horizontal handles in semicircular shape constitute the second type from the category of the rough ceramics. The walls of the vessels are thinner than of the previous pieces, the burning is good and the paste, though porous, appears compact, with broken shards and small stones used as degreasing. On both sides, the colour is brick red or grey. Only one fragment presents traces of polishing on the outside. This type of vessel allows the determination of two variants, according to the decoration: the first has a continuous belt,

interrupted by small protuberances placed above the horizontal handle (pl. 6/1); the second variant has the same type of handle under which there is another one, slightly inclined downwards, with three sharp prominences symmetrically disposed (pl. 4/2).

The first type of rough ceramics can be met in numerous variants in the settlements and necropolis of the Corlăteni-Chișinău Culture, being a part, as far as the fragmentary material from Mihălășeni allows to say, of the type I, variant A, in the classification of A. László (László 1994, p. 112, pl. X/1-4) and of the types X-XI in the classification of Oleg Levițchi (Levițchi, 1994, p. 98-101). The fragment from Mihălășeni, with the horizontal handle placed on top of the alveolate belt could constitute a variant of the 1A type.

The second type, belonging to the rough ceramics, is represented by the bi-truncated cone shaped vessel with horizontal handles of semicircular or triangular shape. Usually this type belongs to the category of medium-quality ceramics, but the paste and the inferior quality burning determined us to place the 6 fragments discovered in Mihălășeni in the category of rough ceramics. This form can be included in the type of globular bi-truncated cone-shaped vessels, type 3, variant Cb, in the classification of A. László (László, 1994, p. 120, fig. XI/7) and in the type I in the classification of E. Moscalu (Moscalu, 1983, p. 15-31). The globular bi-truncated cone-shaped vessel or big bellied bi-truncated cone-shaped vessel, as it is also called, is attested later, in the second level of the Hallstattian settlement from Corlăteni, where the bi-truncated cone shaped pot with handles does not have the slightly opened enlarged lip, specific to this type (Nestor, 1952, p. 92, fig. 7). The presence of this bi-truncated cone shaped variant in Mihălășeni, similar to the one discovered in the second Hallstattian level from Corlăteni, raised the problem of the existence of two phases in the settlement from the plain of the Bașeu River. Yet, the material from Mihălășeni, found in small quantity and without stratigraphic precision, as well as the insufficient publication of the results from the settlement of Corlăteni (Nestor, 1952, p. 91-92), makes this assumption remain just a hypothesis. This type presents also two variants, if the decoration and the shape of the handles is taken into account: the variant with continuous belt with protuberances (pl. 6/1), with analogies in Slobozia Măgurii (Levițchi, 1994, p. 85, fig. 46/17), and the variant with horizontal handles with sharp prominences underneath (pl. 6/2). This type of handle is similar to the double oppositely disposed prominences, specific to the cultural compound with grooved ceramics.

The second category of ceramics recorded in Mihălășeni is represented by good quality vessels. The first type that can be distinguished according to the peculiarities of shape and decoration is constituted by the globular bi-truncated cone-shaped vessel with opened enlarged lip. The first variant of this type of pots, established according to their colour, includes fragments of black polished ceramic on the outside, and brick-red on the inside, with pretty thick walls from porous paste with degreasing of small stones and broken shards (pl. 5/1). The second variant presents the same peculiarities of shape and

decoration as the first one, with the difference that the walls of the vessels are brick red on both sides (pl. 5/2). This type has the usual decoration with strip of horizontal grooves, placed on the superior half of the vessel (pl. 5/1,2). Only one fragment is special through the peculiarities of its decoration which, besides the usual horizontal grooves, has under them a horizontal strip of zigzag deepened lines, reminding of the similar printed motif, specific to the Cozia Culture (pl. 6/2). The bi-truncated cone-shaped pot with large lip belongs to the type 3Ac in the classification of A. László (László, 1994, p. 119) and to the type I in the classification of Oleg Levițchi (Levițchi, 1994, p. 84-87). A lip fragment presents the usual characteristics of this type, on the outside, the colour of the walls is black and on the inside brick red. A horizontal polishing on the inside of the lip is also present.

Another type of medium quality, met in Mihălășeni is represented by a fragment of a vessel with thick porous walls that, before breaking, must have had big dimensions. The paste is black the outside and brick red inside. The inferior part is in the shape of a truncated cone and the neck is vertical. At the limit between body and neck, there is a horizontal polishing threshold that bends to form a sharp crest (pl. 6/3). One similar fragment, more complete, with open slightly enlarged lip, appears in the settlement of Trușești (Levițchi, 1994, fig 18/1).

Fragments of pots of truncated cone shape with inward lip belong also to the category of fine ceramics. The walls of the pots are thin of brick-red to grey colour, only one fragment being grey on the outside and black on the inside (pl. 7/5). A shard maintains light traces of polishing. The paste is compact, only in two rough pieces broken shards as degreasing can be noticed. The majority of the pieces are decorated under the lip with a strip of horizontal grooves, larger or thinner, deeper or less profound (pl. 7/2,4). One small fragment illustrates the motif in strip of oblique grooves (pl. 7/3), while another completely lacks decoration (pl. 7/5). Few pots present little prominent horizontal handles, of small dimensions (pl. 7/5-6). Most pots from Mihălășeni have the lip curved inwards, and in only one fragment the lip is delimited from the body through a well accomplished angle (pl. 7/2). The pots from Mihălășeni which, through their shape, execution technique and decoration peculiarities can be attributed to the Corlăteni-Chișinău Culture, have a large spreading in dwellings and necropolis, being attested in numerous variants which belong to the type 2 C, eventually variant b, in the classification of A. László (László, p. 114-115, pl. X) and to type IV, variant A, in the classification of Oleg Levițchi (Levițchi, 1994, p. 89-90).

In the category of fine ceramics there is also a fragment that can be attributed with probability to the type of hemispheric bowl with vertical lip and horizontally cut edge. The piece is black on both sides, with thin walls, slightly polished on the inside. The broken part shows a compact paste, with small fragments of stone used as degreasing. The decoration is formed of a horizontal strip with slightly carved thick lines, placed on the

outside (pl. 7/1). The hemispheric bowl from Mihălășeni, attributed by Oleg Levițchi to the type IV D (bowl-pots), finds analogies of shape with a not decorated piece from the dwelling of Mândrești (Levițchi, 1994, p. 92, fig. 24/18) and in the settlement of Brădicești (Iconomu, p. 130, fig. 1/6).

The archaeological material discovered in Mihălășeni, formed entirely of ceramic fragments, is not too numerous, but appears typical enough, as resulting from the previously made analysis, to be attributed with certainty to the Corlăteni-Chișinău Culture. Though a classification of the ceramics forms in types and variants was successfully accomplished taking into account their shape, decoration and colour of the paste, the chronological framing would seem difficult if a few elements hadn't been present, providing us with supplementary details. Thus, in the category of rough ceramics it was also discovered the type of bi-truncated cone-shaped vessel with horizontal handles of semicircular shape, with analogies only in the settlement from Corlăteni, attributed to Ha B. At the same time, a fragment of a globular bi-truncated cone-shaped pot with opened lip appeared in Mihălășeni. This is decorated with a horizontal strip with zigzag lines, typical for the Cozia culture, but having deepened lines. In this case there is a typical situation in which an element of decoration of the Cozia group was transmitted to the Corlăteni-Chișinău Culture. According to the latest results, it is admitted that the cultural group of Corlăteni-Chișinău, which starts its evolution in Ha A, is simultaneous with the Cozia Culture at the level of Ha B (11th-10th centuries BC) (László, 1994, p. 107, 129, 159; Levițchi, 1994, p. 140-148), allowing the dating of the fragments from Mihălășeni in this period. At the same time, it should be noted that among the vestiges belonging to the Noua I Culture and to the Corlăteni-Chișinău Culture from Mihălășeni there is no relation of direct succession, as the life condition on the plain of the Bașeu River offered to the carriers of both cultures the possibility to occupy this space in different chronological stages and for short periods.

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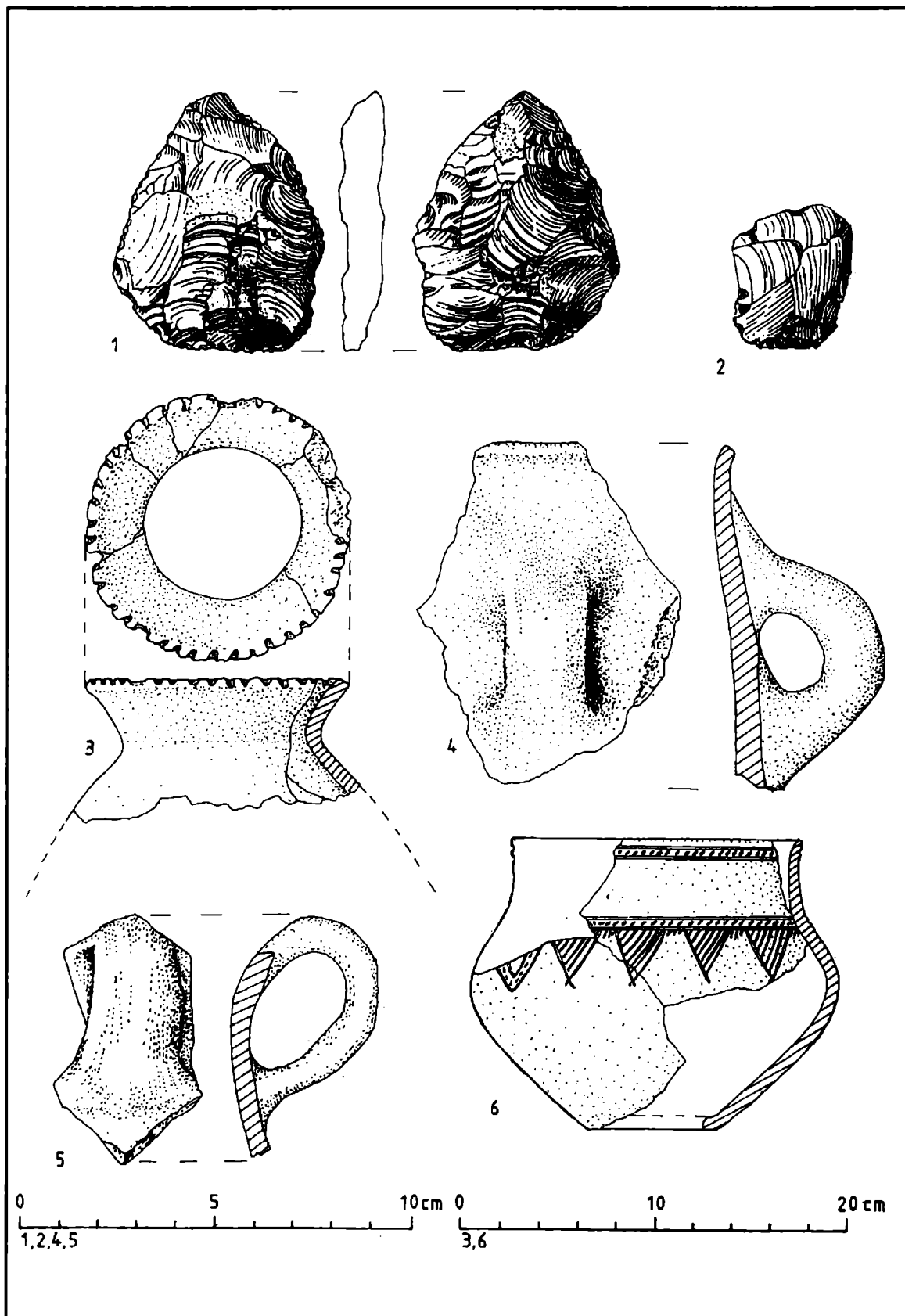


FIGURE 1

1. Silex chip from the Middle Paleolithic Age. 2. Silex chip probably belonging to the Horodișteea-Erbiceni-Foltești culture. 3. Fragment of ceramic vessel. Horodișteea-Gordinești Group. 4. Fragment of pot with vertical handle. 5. Fragment of cups over-raised handle and crest. 5. Fragments of vessel of Belopotok-Costișa tradition. Noua I culture.

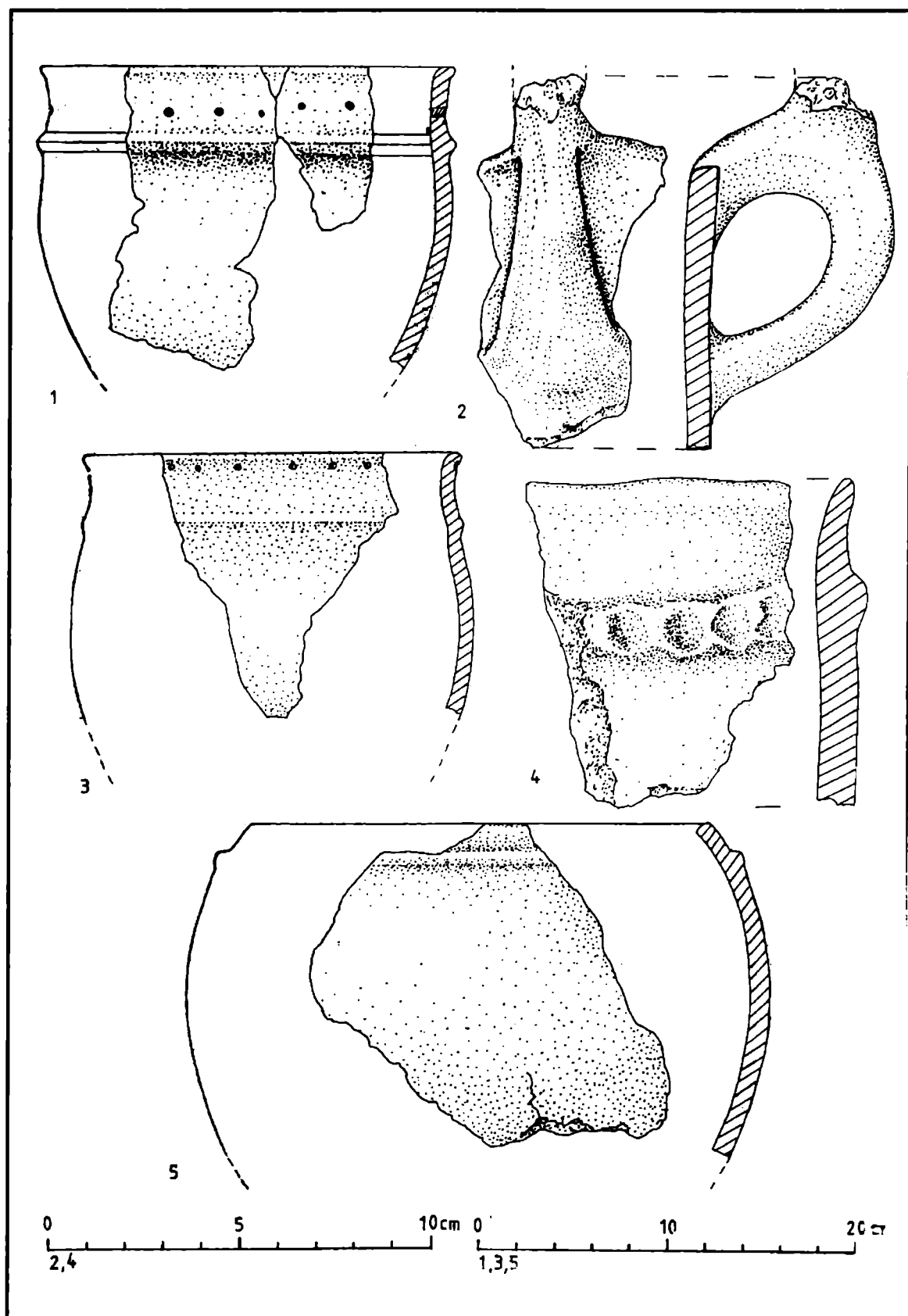


FIGURE 2

1,3. Fragments of pots with continuous belt and perforations under the lip. 2. Fragment of cup with over-raised handle and high button. 5. Fragment of pot with threshold under the lip. Noua I culture. 4. Fragment of undetermined pot with alveolate belt (Noua or Corlăteni-Chișinău culture).

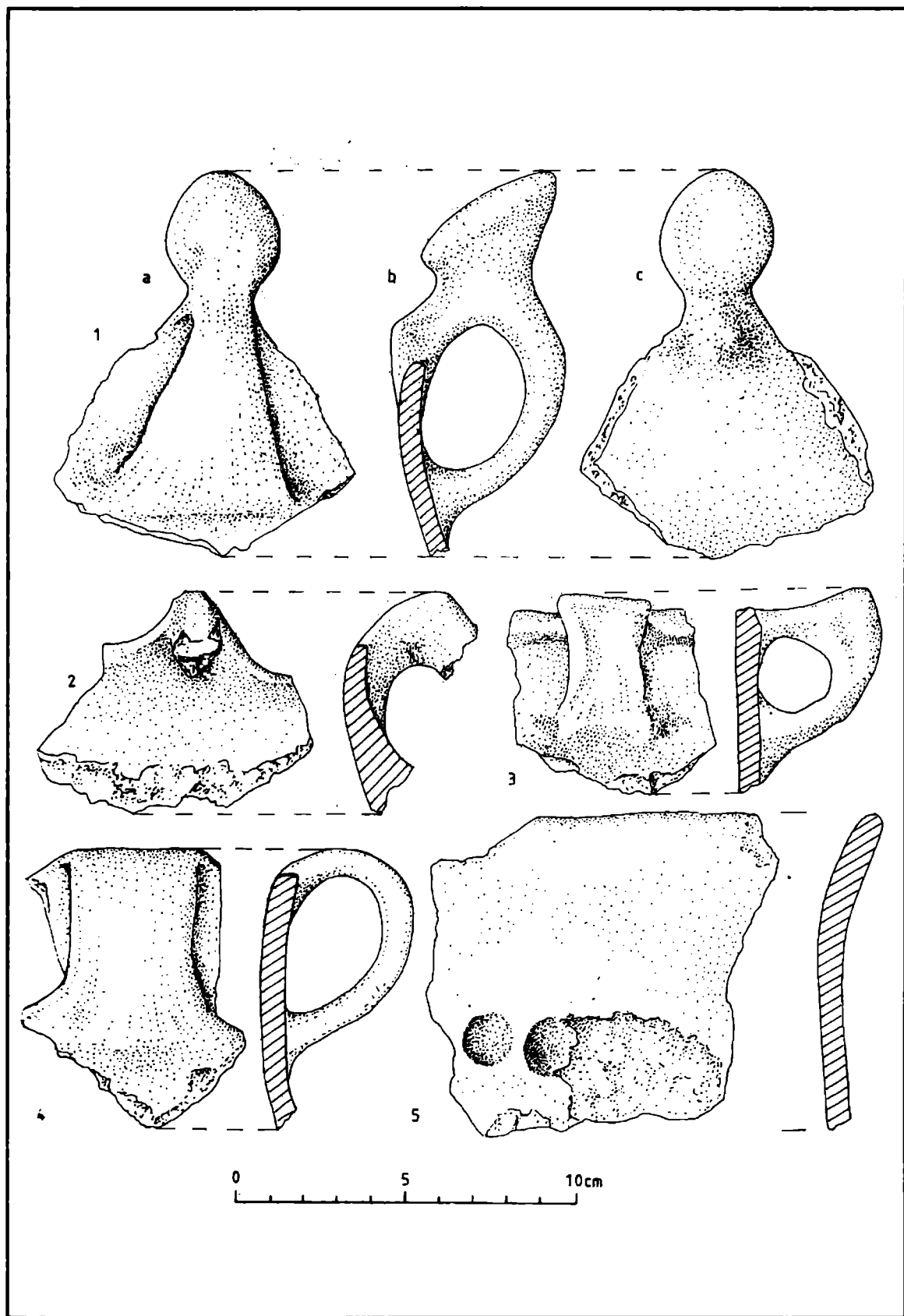


FIGURE 3

1. a-c. Fragment of cup with over-raised handles and plan-convex button. 2. Fragment of cup with over-raised handle and crest. 3. Fragment of cup whose handle represents a stylized animal. 4. Fragment of cup with large handle, slightly over-raised. Noua I culture. 5. Fragment of undetermined pot with alveolate belt (Noua or Corlăteni-Chișinău culture).

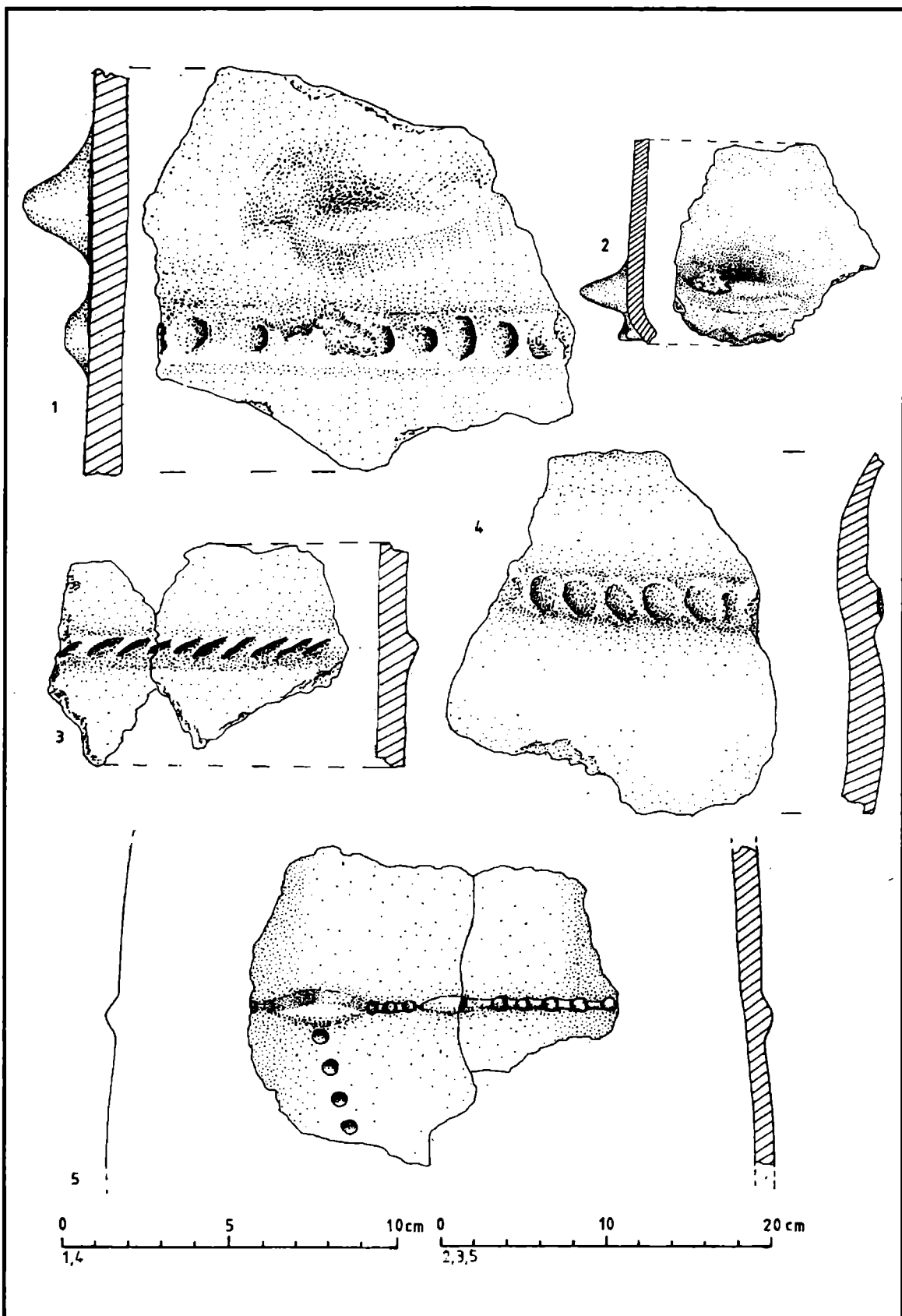


FIGURE 4

1. Fragment of pot with alveolate belt and triunggular handle. 2. Fragment of pot with handle having sharp prominences underneath. 3. Fragment of pot with crested belt. 4. Pot with alveolate belt and handles, with an oblique strip of oval grooves. Corlăteni-Chișinău culture. 5. Fragment of undetermined pot with alveolate belt (Noua or Corlăteni-Chișinău culture).

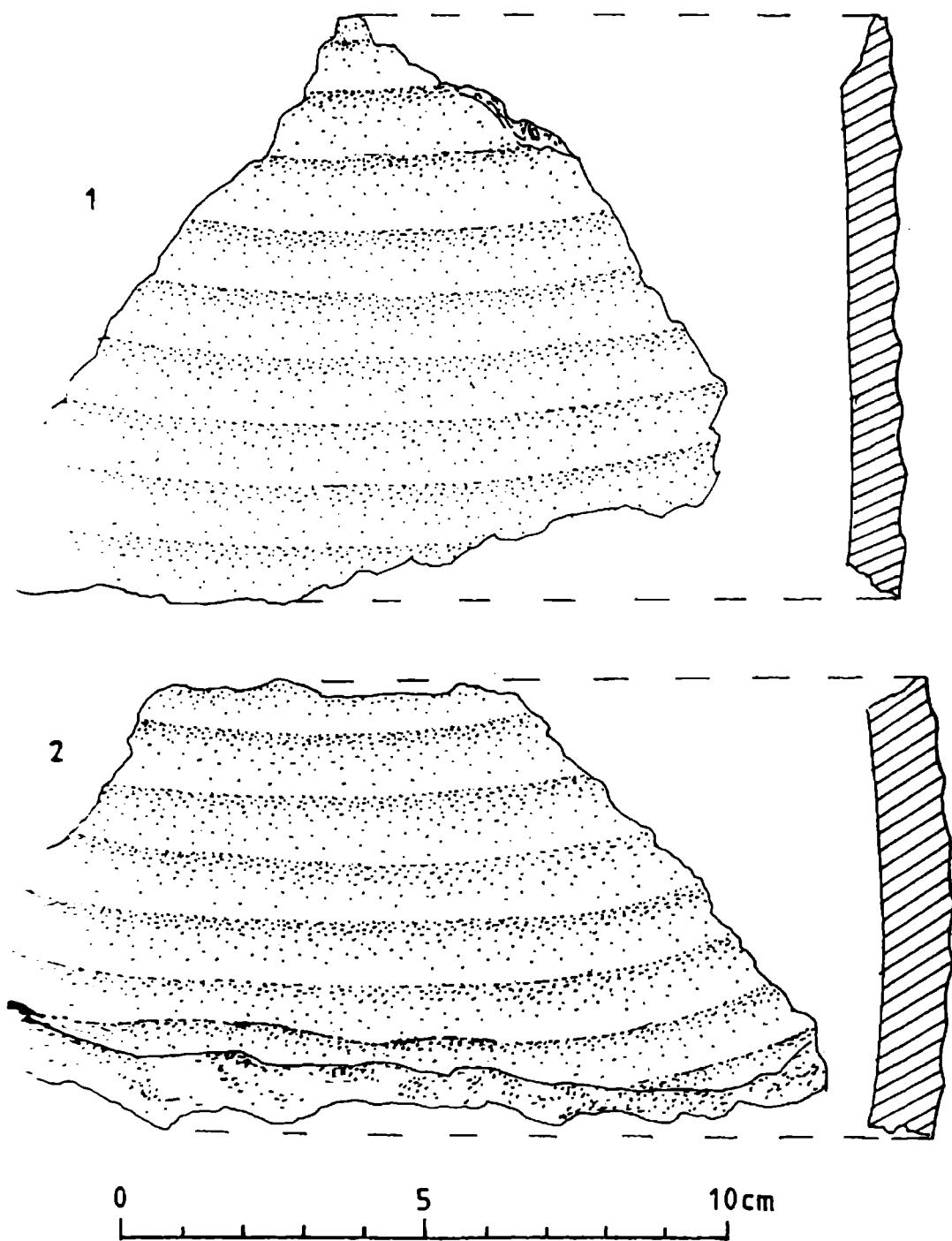


FIGURE 5

Fragments of globular bi-truncated cone-shaped pot decorated with a strip of horizontal grooves.

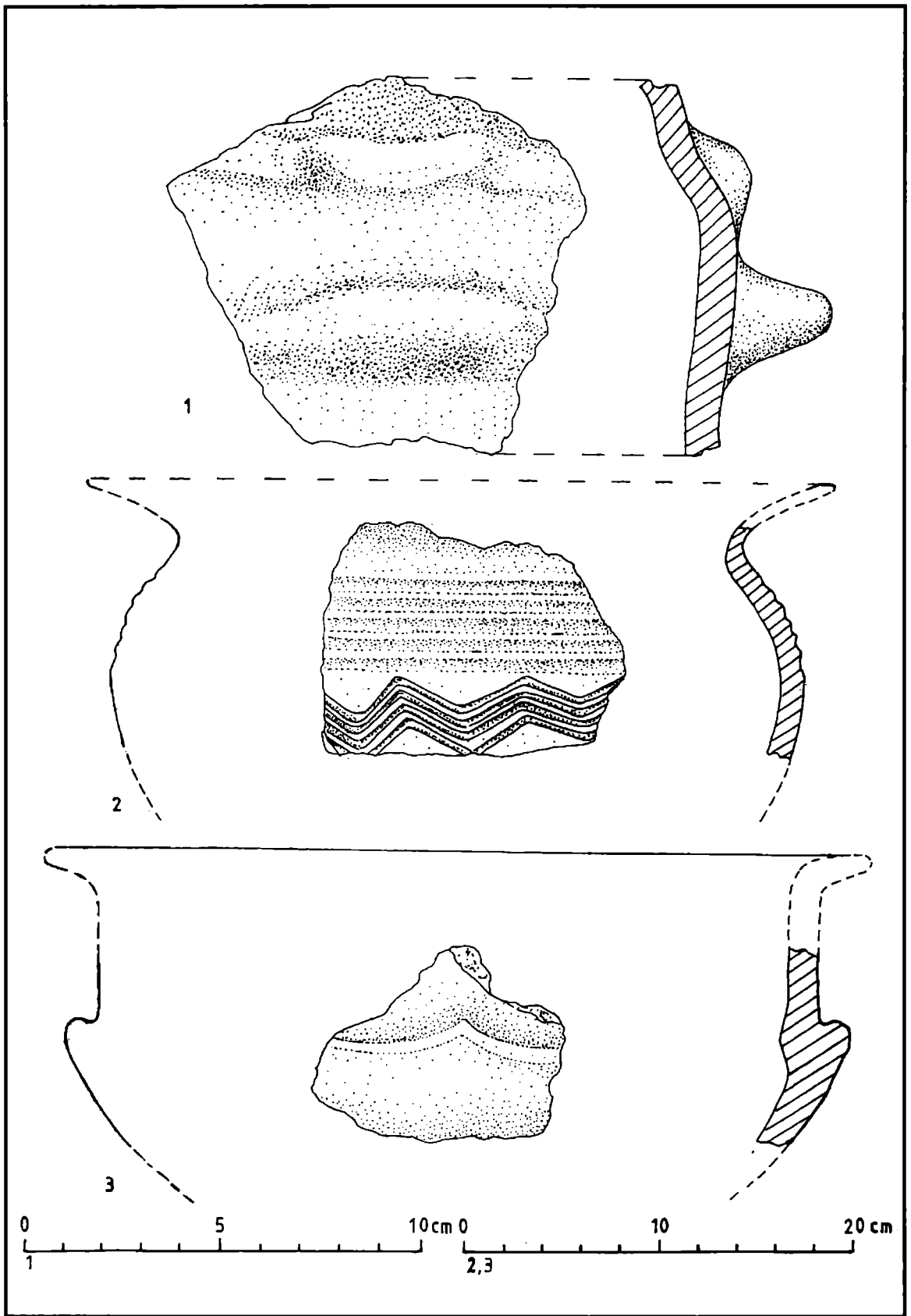


FIGURE 6

1. Fragment of vessel with continuous belt interrupted by prominences and horizontal handle.
 2. Fragment of globular bi-truncated cone-shaped pot with decoration of horizontal grooves and zigzag strip.
 3. Fragment of vessel with threshold and crest.
- Corlăteni-Chișinău culture..

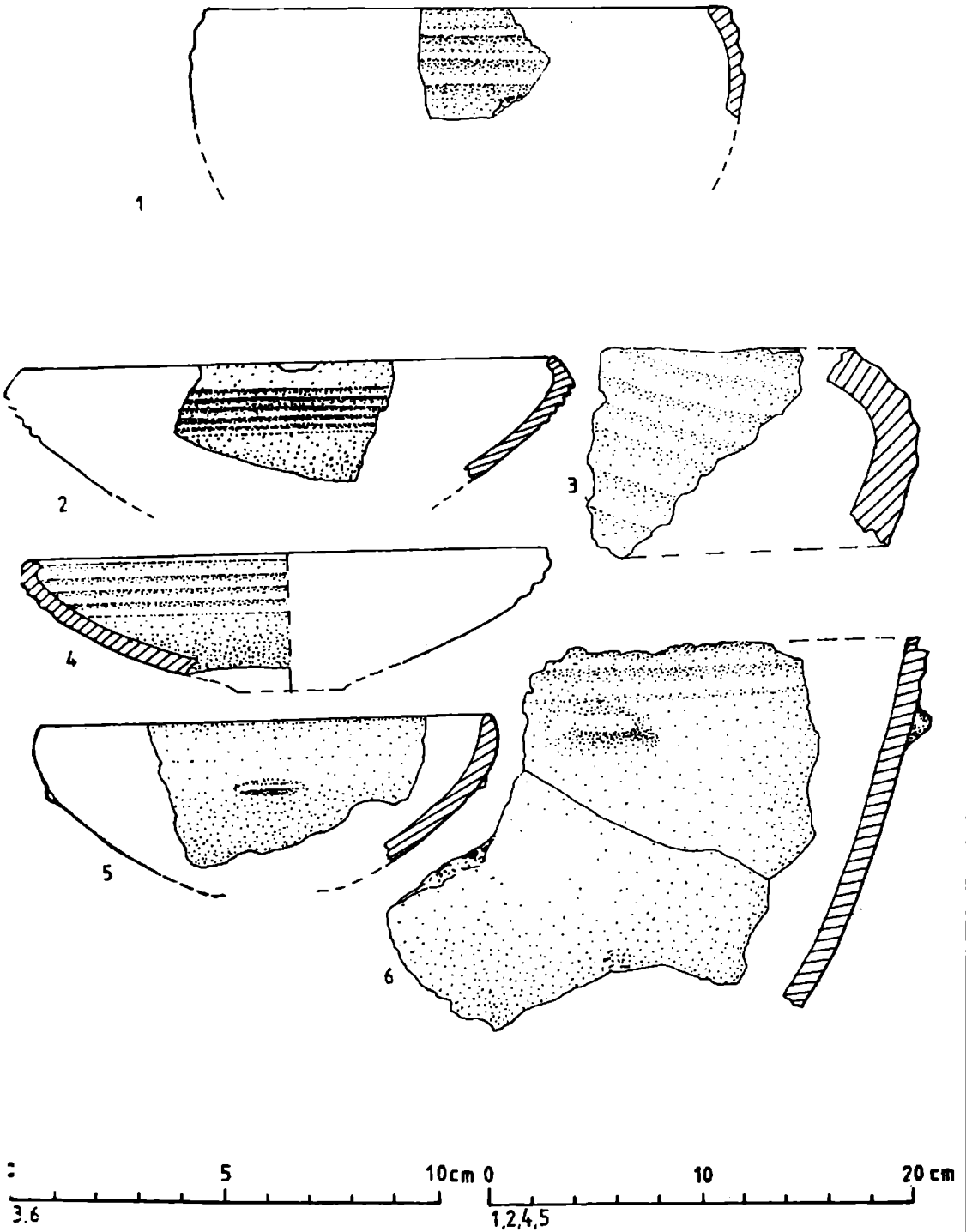


FIGURE 7

1. Fragment of hemispheric bowl. 2-4. Fragments of pots with decoration of horizontal grooves. 5-6. Fragments of pots with handles. Corlăteni-Chișinău culture.