

Contributions to the knowledge of the Late Bronze Age in north-western Transylvania. Researches from Culciu Mare*

Carol Kacsó

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In the spring of 1966, after digging drainage ditches on the road leading to the communal pasture from the southern side of the Culciu Mare village (Satu Mare county), in a place called *Zöldmező* (*Câmpul Verde*) were found many pottery fragments from different periods. They were collected by N. Codreanu, teacher at the local school, and then presented to the Institute of Archaeology of Cluj. Since that year, from September 4 to 8, under the direction of I. Glodariu a survey was performed in the mentioned place that was followed the next year by more extensive excavations, which led to partial unveiling of two settlements, one from the 3rd or 4th centuries and another from the 7th century AD¹. Late Bronze Age materials also appeared with these excavations and they are subject of this study.

Many prehistoric materials were found in only one place, namely in the ditch on the left side of the road. The ditch was straightened and deepened, in order to get stratigraphic data on the site, at the same time with opening the first control sections. The outline of a pit occurred in the sloped wall, which was further investigated by opening a small area. A relatively large amount of calcined bones came out here and around and above them, many pottery fragments came out as well, spread over an area of about 1 sqm. Lacking bone expertise, it is quite likely that the bones and at least a part of the pottery crop belonged to a cremation grave. Since the complex was greatly disturbed by the excavations made for fitting the ditch, one cannot determine whether it was a cremation grave made in a pit with calcined bones put inside and with ritually broken pottery laid in the pit or a cremation urn, perhaps covered with a lid, with offering pots. Unfortunately, nor the vessels which certainly belonged to the tomb are in a clear situation. Given the relative uniformity of the pottery discovered here, it is possible, at least theoretically, that it represents a single grave inventory. It is very likely that there may have been several graves or possibly a contemporary settlement with the grave (graves?).

A single vessel was reconstructed of the recovered ceramic fragments, namely a relatively large bowl with thick walls, slightly bulged outward, made of paste mixed with crushed shards, well fired, blackish outside on a section under the rim and yellow-reddish in the rest, black on the inside, decorated on the rim with oblique flutes in the shape of an untied turban, height 14 cm, rim diameter 39.5 cm, bottom diameter 16.5 cm, thickness 1.1 to 1.3 cm (Pl. 1/1).

Other ceramic pieces were partially reconstructed, at least graphically, namely there have been established the forms of the vessel they belonged to: the fragments of a smaller bowl, thin walls, slightly bulged outward and slightly pulled inward lip, made of paste and crushed shards, fine gravel, well fired, black on the upper outside and reddish on the remaining preserved part, black on the inside, decorated on the rim with thick and oblique flutes, rim diameter 24 (?) cm (Pl. 1/2); bowl fragment with rounded rim lacking decorations, made of paste with much fine gravel, well fired, black on the outside and on the inside (Pl. 1/3); fragments from a black cup, made of paste with very small pebbles, very good firing, easily everted rim, tapering neck, globular body, decorated with thick, vertical flutes; a small piece of a handle starting at the level of the maximum diameter of the vessel is also preserved; rim diameter 7.5 (?) cm; maximum diameter 9.5 (?) cm (Pl. 1/4); cup fragment (?) with thin walls, blackish, fine paste, good firing, rounded and slightly everted rim, short neck (Pl. 1/5), cup fragment (?) with slightly upraised

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¹ The materials found at Culciu Mare in the campaigns of 1966 and 1967 are in the Museum of Archaeology and History of Baia Mare. They have been mentioned several times, and some of them that belong to recent ages, have already been published: Popescu 1967, 531, no. 71; Popescu 1967b, 367, no. 71; Popescu 1968a, 689, no. 83; Popescu 1968b, 433, No. 83; László 1973, 583; Bader 1978, 77 sq.; Bader, Lazin 1980, 16; Lazin 1982, 123 sq., No. 1, Bader 1982, 156 sq., No. 32, Stanciu, 1995, 142 sq., No. 13; idem 1996, 75, Matei, Stanciu 2000, 43 sq., No. 55; Kacsó 2004a, 37; Stanciu 2011, 330.

handle; blackish-gray; the paste was made of broken shards; mediocre firing (Pl. 1/6); fragment of a wide and fluted rim of a tall, globular vessel; black on the outside; reddish on the inside; made of pasta mixed with crushed shards, mediocre firing (Pl. 2/1); fragments of a bowl with tall neck and globular body, decorated with wide, slightly oblique flutes; black on the outside, red on the inside; made of pasta mixed with pebbles, good firing (Pl. 2/2); vessel fragment with tall neck and arched body, decorated with wide vertical fluting; black on the outside, red on the inside; made of pasta mixed with crushed shards, good firing (Pl. 2/3); fragments of vessels with arched body, ornamented with wide vertical flutes; black on the outside, brownish-reddish on the inside; made of pasta with crushed shards, good firing (Pl. 2/4, 7); fragments of a vessel with thin walls, tall neck and globular body; decorated with vertical, oblique flutes; black on the outside, red and with traces of secondary firing on the inside; made of pasta mixed with broken shards; good firing (Pl. 2/5); fragment from the neck of a bowl, black on the outside and reddish on the inside; made of pasta mixed with crushed shards, good firing (Pl. 2/6); vessel fragment, black on the outside, red on the inside; made of pasta mixed with crushed shards; good firing, with a piece of handle where a fluting, wreath-shaped decoration started (?), partially preserved; a fluting trace is observed on the upper part of the fragment (Pl. 2/8); vessel fragment, black on the outside, red on the inside; made of pasta mixed with broken shards, mediocre firing; fit with a flattened tapering knob (Pl. 2/9); fragment of a vessel bottom with a slight *omphalos* of a black pot on the outside, reddish on the inside, made of pasta mixed with broken shards, very good firing, diameter 12 (?) cm (Pl. 2/10).

The materials described above, of which at least a part is the inventory of a grave (graves?), belong to the Gáva culture, a phenomenon with much interest to the international archaeological research, but its problems still remain to the level of discussion.

T. Bader speaks, excepting a grave, perhaps the one presented in this paper, of a settlement belonging to the Gáva culture from Culciu Mare, without specifying the point where the settlement² is located. We can only assume the place is *Kertalja* (*Sub grădini*), where extensive research was undertaken. It seems quite likely that materials belonging to the Gáva culture were discovered here, but the only vessel published from this stage of habitation of the site³ does not belong to this culture, but to a more recent culture dated to the pre-Scythian period⁴.

In order to facilitate a thorough knowledge of the pottery characteristics in the Gáva culture, I will present the other findings that date to this culture, now in the museum's collection of Baia Mare for some time. They all occurred incidentally in localities from north-western Transylvania. These localities are already registered on the spreading map, respectively in the list of discoveries of the Gáva culture, whereas materials originating from these places are discussed here⁵. However, the findings list is enriched with a few new items, which are now reported for the first time.

Sanislău, Satu Mare county. Many pottery fragments were collected from *Cserepes* place in 1955, of which several vessels could be partially restored: black vessel on the outside, reddish on the inside, made of pasta mixed with pebbles; mediocre firing; tapering neck, covered in the upper side with horizontal flutes; globular body decorated with vertical flutes at the level of its maximum diameter; provided with two (?) handles, decorated with flutes drawn where the neck meets the body; bottom diameter 12.2 cm, inventory no. 12995 (Pl. 3/1); similar vessel, with the same characteristics of colour, paste and firing, thicker walls and a stronger globular body; the preserved piece is from the place where the neck meets the body, and has a flattened prominence on it; decorated with vertical flutes, like the ones on the body; bottom diameter 15 to 15.3 cm, inventory no. 12995a (Pl. 3/2), the lower part of a large-sized

² Bader 1978, 77, 123 sq., nr. 31.

³ Ibidem, Pl. LX, 3.

⁴ The proposed reconstruction is wrong; the vessel did not have high but short neck, like the vessels with knobs from Ha B2-3, see for example Patek 1974, Pl. 1, 11; eadem 1982, fig. 20 A, 8, B, 12. Other discoveries of the same period were found in western and north-western Romania, such as those from the multicultural settlement from *Lazuri-Lubi tag* (unpublished materials of the Museum of Satu Mare, from the excavations carried out in 1994, mentioned by C. Kacsó [1995, 50 sq.]), the vessel with animal bones from the *Peștera Tunelul Uscat* cave in the Valea Sighiștelului (Sava 2010, 24 sqq., Pl. 2/6; 3), the bronze hoard from *Vetiș* (Rusu/ Bader 1977).

⁵ See László 1973, 580 sqq., fig. 1; Némethi, 1999, 107, List XII; Ursuțiu/ Gogâltan 2002, 30 sqq.

vessel, black on the outside, yellowish-gray on the inside; made of paste mixed with pebbles and broken shards, mediocre firing (Pl. 3/3); the top of a large-sized pot; reddish, with black core, made of paste mixed with pebbles and broken shards; clear traces of secondary firing, straight rim; four small tapering knobs under the rim, of which one is preserved; slightly convex walls; rim diameter 36 cm, inventory no. 11847 (Pl. 4/1); fragment of a globular, reddish vessel, paste made of pebbles and broken shards; good firing; fit with a tapering knob circumscribed by concentric flutes, inventory no. 11849 (Pl. 4/2); tapering knob of a similar vessel, inventory no. 11850 (Pl. 4/3), grey disk fragment, made of sandy paste, very good firing, seems to have had a central perforation (Pl. 4/4).

The above mentioned ceramic fragments of the Gáva culture are also referred to by T. Bader⁶, and moreover, J. Némethi states that there is a large settlement in this point which probably belongs to the Gáva culture⁷. The materials submitted here seem to originate rather from a graveyard, especially since together with the pottery, at the museum in Baia Mare came a calcined fragment of a human skull cap. A Gáva settlement and cemetery were identified in *Livada*⁸.

Ciumești, Satu Mare county. In the late 50s of the last century, in the point Ciumești II-Tökös / Bostănărie Gy. Kovács collected two Gáva fragments and materials belonging to other periods from the surface or they had been found in small surveys that we conducted here, both black on the outside, gray on the inside; made of paste mixed with pebbles and broken shards; good firing; one derived from the neck of a thin vessel, with cellular decoration, inventory no. 12464 (Pl. 4/5) and the other from the body of a large, thick walled vessel, fit with oblique flutes, inventory no. 12463 (Pl. 4/6).

In the area of this town, the Gáva materials, most likely originating from settlements, have been discovered in the places: *Legelőkút (Fântâna pășunii)*, *Nagylapos (Lăpușu Mare)* and the former CAP headquarters⁹.

Curtuiuşeni, Bihor county. Several Gáva shards found in an unspecified point from the area of the locality belong to the Kovács collection and implicitly to the Museum of Baia Mare: neck fragment (?) of a fluted vessel, black on the outside, gray-yellowish on the inside; made of paste mixed with pebbles; good firing; inventory no. 12974 (Pl. 4/7); fragment of a thick walled vessel with globular body, black on the outside, gray on the inside, made of paste mixed with pebbles and broken shards; very good firing; fit with a round threshold where the neck meets the body and with oblique flutes on the body; inventory no. 12975 (Pl. 4/8); fragments from the upper part of a jar; black on the outside, red on the inside, made of fine paste; very good firing; decorated with circular, horizontal flutes, which start right below the rounded rim; rim diameter 12 (?) cm, inventory no. 12973 (Pl. 4/9), neck fragment (?) of a fluted vessel, black on the outside, yellowish-gray on the inside; made of gritty paste, good firing, inventory no. 12991 (Pl. 4/10); fragment of a thick walled bowl, decorated with vertical flutes, inventory no. 12992 (Pl. 4/11); fragment of the everted rim of a vessel, probably medium-sized, inventory no. 12993 (Pl. 4: 12); cup fragment with easily everted rim, rim diameter 6 cm (?), inventory no. 12994 (Pl. 4/13).

A Gáva settlement from Curtuiuşeni, from the point *Égetőhegy (Dâmbul ars)* that contained materials from the museums of Săcueni and Oradea, is reported by A. László¹⁰ and T. Bader¹¹. The Gáva pottery occurred when hydrological works¹² were carried out here. There was a settlement of the Cehăluț type here, which contained Suciul de Sus „imports”¹³.

⁶ Bader 1978, 77.

⁷ Némethi 1999, 47, nr. 35 f.₂.

⁸ Bader, 1970, 209; Bader 1971, 63; Némethi 1982, 51 sqq., nr. 11, Pl. 12, 3-5, Pl. 17-19, 1-11; Bader 1983, 27, nr. 13. 14; Némethi 1999, 47, nr. 35 e₁₋₂.

⁹ Bader 1978, 77; Némethi 1982, 49; Némethi 1999, 52 sq., nr. 36 IIIa₄, VIe, IXa.

¹⁰ László 1973, 583, nr. 50.

¹¹ Bader 1978, 77.

¹² Némethi 1982, 49, nr. 6, Pl. 12, 9-10.

¹³ Chidioşan 1970, 288, fig. 1, 6-7; Némethi 1978, 103, fig. 2, 7-8. 10; Kacsó 1997, 87, nr. 3, Pl. IV, 5-6; Némethi 1999, 41, nr. 30 a₁; Kacsó 2007, 46, nr. 19; Némethi 2011, 103, Pl. 3.

A vessel hosted by the Museum of Oradea originates from this place¹⁴, of which A. László thinks it belongs to the local Gáva tradition, but already assigned to a new „pre-scythian” cultural horizon (or group), it was dated back to the Ha B2-B3 period¹⁵. For the chronology of the vessel one should consider a geographically close analogy, that is the vessel from the Hallstattian grave (M. 35) from Ciumești¹⁶.

Berea, Satu Mare county. A. From point Berea IX b-*Soltésztag* originate several pottery fragments collected by J. Kovács, which belong to the Gáva culture: vessel with globular body, fit with a handle, of which only a small part is preserved, inventory no. 9233 (Pl. 5/1); rounded rim fragment of a large-sized pot, inventory no. 9197 (Pl. 5/2); fragment of a fluted vessel, black and red coloured, inventory no. 9235 (Pl. 5/3)¹⁷. B. Many Gáva pottery fragments were collected from the surface by J. Kovács again in the point Berea XII-*Berei szőlő* (*Viile Berei*): a thin walled vessel fragment, reddish, fine paste, very good firing, decorated with wide, vertical flutes, inventory no. 10704 (Pl. 5/4), black-red vessel fragment, paste and crushed shards, good firing, decorated with wide, vertical flutes, inventory no. 10707 (Pl. 5/5), vessel fragment similar to the previous one, with thicker walls, inventory no. 10705 (Pl. 5/6), vessel fragment similar to the previous one, inventory no. 10708 (Pl. 5/7); vessel fragment; brown on the outside, yellow on the inside, pasta with crushed shards, good firing, decorated with wide vertical flutes, inventory no. 10706 (Pl. 5/8); fragment from the wide rim of a globular vessel, inventory no. 10710 (Pl. 5/9); neck fragment of a vessel decorated with wide, horizontal flutes, inventory no. 10714 (Pl. 5/10); neck fragment from a thin-walled vessel, reddish, fine paste, very good firing, decorated with wide, horizontal flutes, inventory no. 10712, 10713 (Pl. 5/11), vessel fragment, gray, fine paste, very good firing, decorated with vertical grooves, inventory no. 10709 (Pl. 5/12); thin-walled vessel fragment, dark gray, fine paste, very good firing, decorated with vertical flutes, inventory no. 10715 (Pl. 5/13); fragment of a fluted cup, brown, fine paste, very good firing, inventory no. 10703 (Pl. 5/14); fragment of an everted rim from a reddish vessel, inventory no. 10702 (Pl. 5/15); fragment from the wide, fluted rim of a grey bowl, fine paste, very good firing, inventory no. 10716 (Pl. 5/16); fragment from the upper part of a reddish bowl, fine paste, very good firing, everted rim, inventory no. 10699 (Pl. 5/17); fragment of an everted rim from a yellowish-red bowl, black core, fine paste, very good firing, inventory no. 10700 (Pl. 5/18); fragment of a low, grey cup, fine paste, very good firing, with a little bulge on the maximum diameter of the globular shape of the body, flanked by groups of slanted, incised lines, the neck is decorated with horizontal, incised lines, rim diameter 14 (?) cm, inventory no. 10701 (Pl. 5/19). Other Gáva materials from this site, also collected from the surface, are to be found in the Museum of Satu Mare¹⁸.

Gáva settlements in the area of the locality are reported in the points Berea IX-*Dolláros*, B X-*Soskás* (Măcriș) and Berea XXI-*Bodzás/La soci*¹⁹. A bowl is also assigned to this culture and it was accidentally found along a creek in the centre of the village²⁰.

The common feature to all discoveries is the presence of fluted pottery, double coloured, black on the outside, reddish, gray etc. on the inside. Most fragments come from globular large-sized vessels. The lack of hypertrophied bulges as well as the massive use of fluted decoration leads to the conclusion that these findings do not belong to the early phase of the culture, or to its final phase. They fit to the middle stage of the Gáva culture, when the western, north-western Transylvania and the neighbouring territories experienced a high density of population, whose traces are shown by an increased number of discoveries. This stage corresponds roughly to the Hallstatt A phase or to the late Bronze 3 phase.

The Gáva communities are present in Carei area most likely in the next chronological stage, Ha B1 or later Bronze 4. In this sense, the bell-shaped helmet and the Fuchsstadt bronze cup found within

¹⁴ For the similarity of names *Égetőhegy* and *Dealul Cărmădăriei* see Némethi 1999, 41.

¹⁵ László 1979, 537 sq., fig. 1, 2.

¹⁶ Zirra 1967, fig. 46, M35/III.

¹⁷ Némethi 1999, 55, nr. 37, BIXa₅ speaks of several Gáva fragments from this point, which could be at the Museum of Baia Mare. I found no other Gáva pieces in the collections of the museum than those described now.

¹⁸ Némethi 1999, 57, nr. 37, B. XII b₃.

¹⁹ Némethi 1982, 47; idem 1999, 56, nr. 37, B. X₃, 59, nr. 37, B. XXI b₁.

²⁰ Némethi 1982, 47, Pl. XIX, 12.

the Gáva settlement from Pişcolt-Öreg szőlő/Via veche²¹ stand as proof, yet the connection between these pieces and the ceramic collected from the surface²² cannot be proved without doubts.

Some ceramic pieces that were found in the settlement of Berea XII - *Berei szőlő* (Viile Berei) include a fragment of a low cup (Pl. 5/19). Cups like these appeared in several Gáva settlements from Carei area (Berveni-Kecske rét/Râtul caprei, Carei - IAS farm, Ciumeşti - Legelőkút/Fântâna păşunii, etc.)²³, and Debrecen-Haláppuszta²⁴. They are comprised in the inventory of several tumuli from the second phase of the cemetery from Lăpuş, but in the tumuli from the first phase they are lacking. Identical pieces emerged in several Suci de Sus settlements: Baia Mare-Dealul Morgău²⁵, Culciu Mare-Kertalja/Sub grădini²⁶, Nyírmada-Vályogvető²⁷, Petea-Csengersima-Vamá²⁸, Őr-Őri-tag²⁹, etc.

It is noteworthy that the fluted, black-red pottery is present in several settlements along with the Suci pottery. The fluted pottery of the settlement from Oarţa de Sus-Oul Făgetului, appears mainly in the upper level, which belongs to the Lăpuş II phase, in other settlements such as the ones in Oarţa de Jos and Nyírmada, as well as in Racâş-Gura Jernăului³⁰, Tihău-La Ciernele³¹, etc., this pottery is found in association with the excised-incised pottery. Incised pottery of the Suci type and black-red pottery were found in the Depression of Maramureş, in the settlements from Giuleşti-Valea Mestecănişului and from Bârsana-Cetăţuie in still unclear stratigraphic conditions. The aforementioned discoveries conclude that the two categories are partially contemporary ceramics³². After the Suci de Sus culture, the fluted, black-red vessels are the defining feature of ceramics.

Returning to the lower cup with upraised handle, it is obvious that it had already appeared in the repertory of the Suci de Sus pottery, in the final stage of its existence, and was taken over without modifications by the Gáva and Lăpuş communities. This type of cup is another proof, among others, of the contribution of the Suci de Sus to the emergence of the cultures and fluted ceramic groups from the Upper Tisza region.

Dr. Carol Kacso
Muzeul Judeţean de Istorie şi Arheologie
Str. Monetăriei 1-3
430406 Baia Mare
carolkacso@yahoo.de

²¹ Némethi 1972, 113 sqq. See the discussion on dating these pieces in a broader context at Schauer 1988, 181 sqq., fig. 7 (the helmet), respectively at Soroceanu 2008, 47 sq., nr. 10, fig. 3a-c, Pl. 2, 10 (the cup).

²² Némethi 1982, 51, no. 10, Pl. XVI.

²³ Némethi 1990, fig. 3, 6; 5, 5, 8; 6, 5-6; 9, 2-3, 5, 11, 2; 12, 2; 13, 7; 15, 4, 6; 22, 1-3.

²⁴ Kemenczei 1984, Pl. CXXV, 11-13, 15-16, 18-19.

²⁵ Kacsó 2005, fig. 4, 6.

²⁶ Marta/ Szőcs 2007, fig. 141.

²⁷ Toth/ Marta 2005, fig. 11, 5, 7.

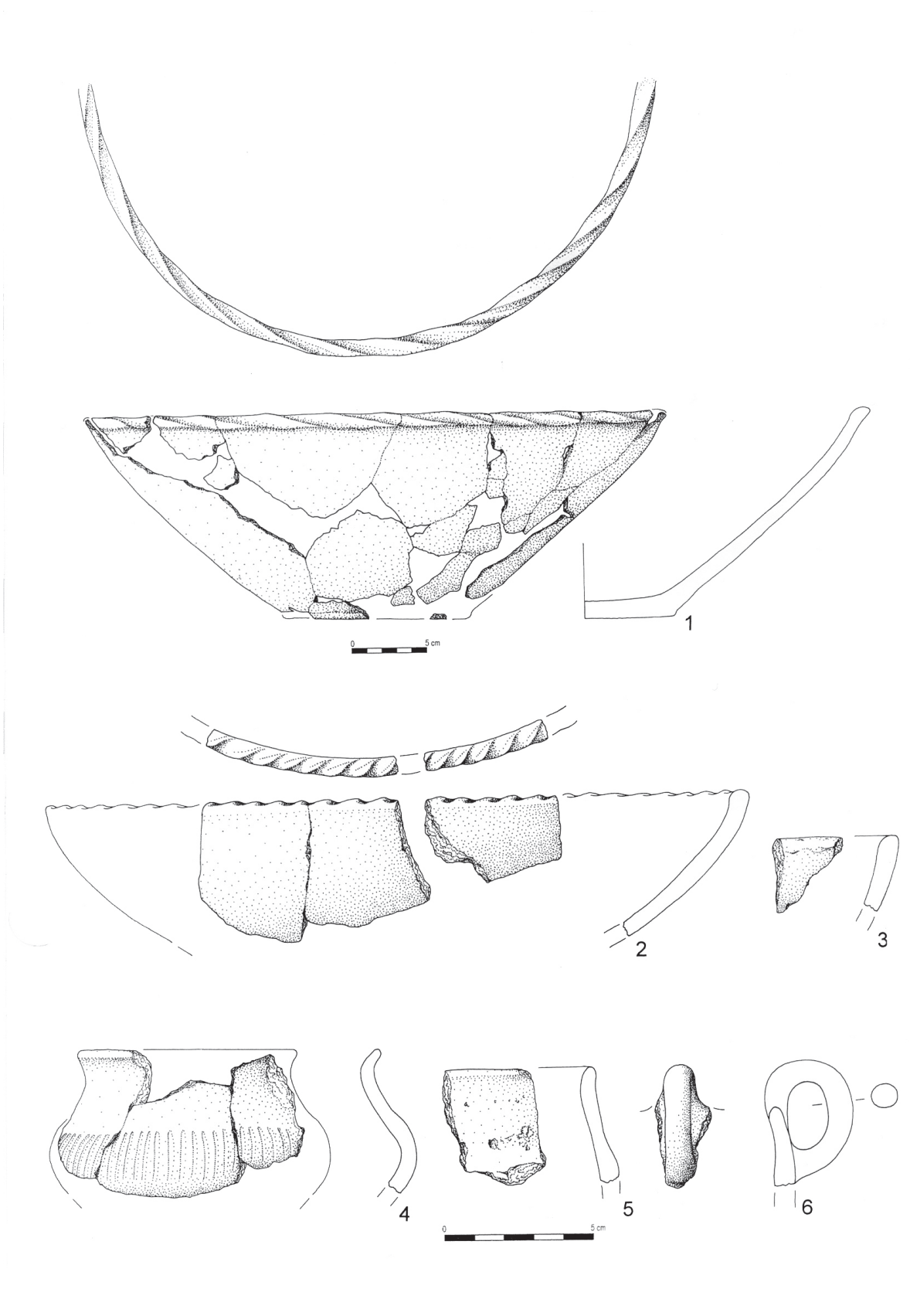
²⁸ Marta 2005, Pl. 3, 7, 9. In this settlement, this kind of cups are present in both features belonging to the Suci de Sus and Gáva settlements, see Marta 2009, Pl. 3, 11, 6, 6, 7, 1-2, Pl. 12, 5, Pl. 14, 6, Pl. 17, 3, Pl. 21, 8, 9, 12-13, Pl. 23, 11, etc.

²⁹ Nagy/ Scholz 2009, Pl. 1, 4.

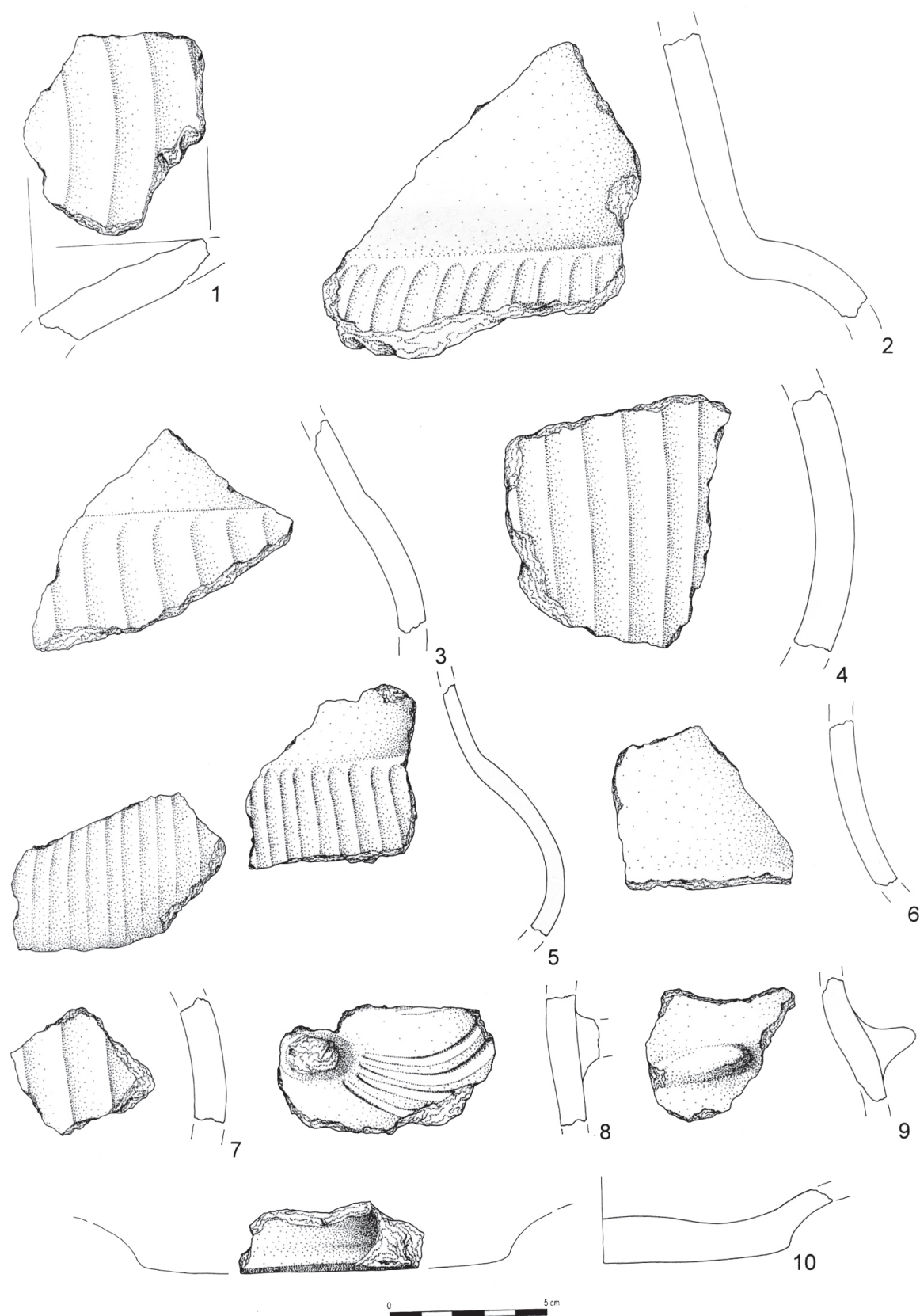
³⁰ Bejinariu 2003, 68, no. 9; Kacsó 2004b, 78 sq., fig. 4/1-16.

³¹ Bejinariu 2003, 69 sq., no. 13.

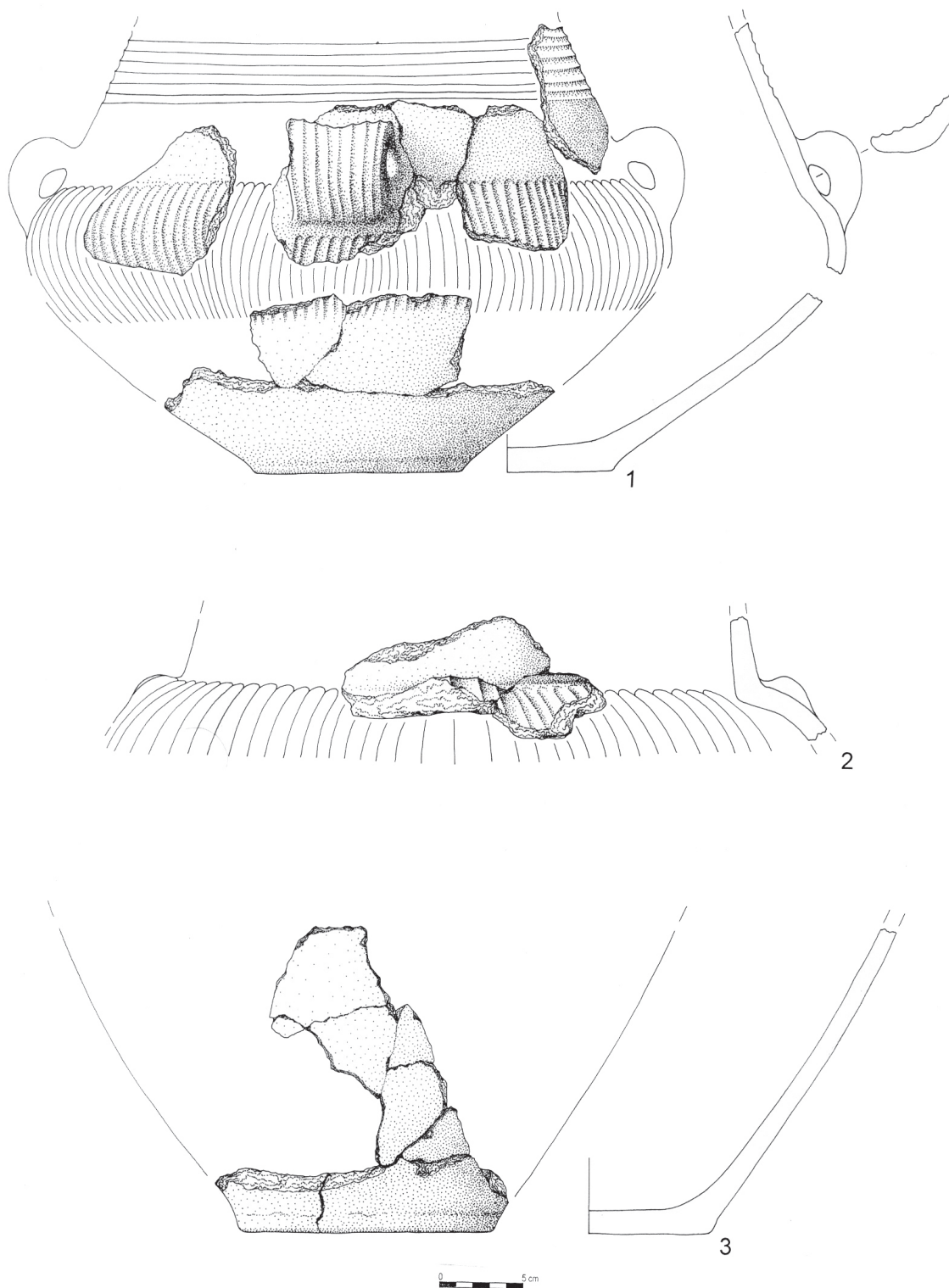
³² Kacsó 2006, note 27.



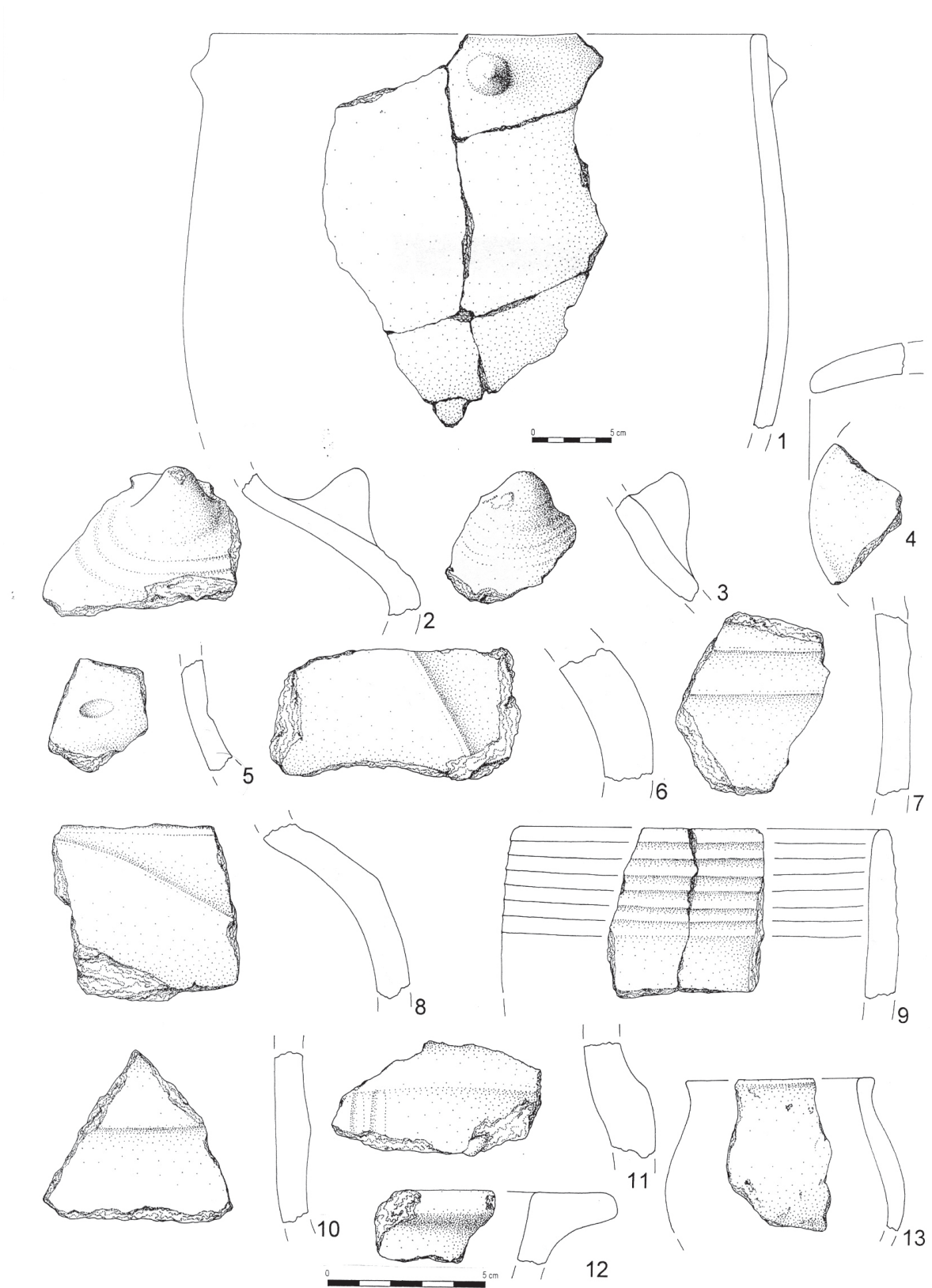
Pl. 1. Culciu Mare-Zöldmező (Câmpul Verde). Gáva ceramics.



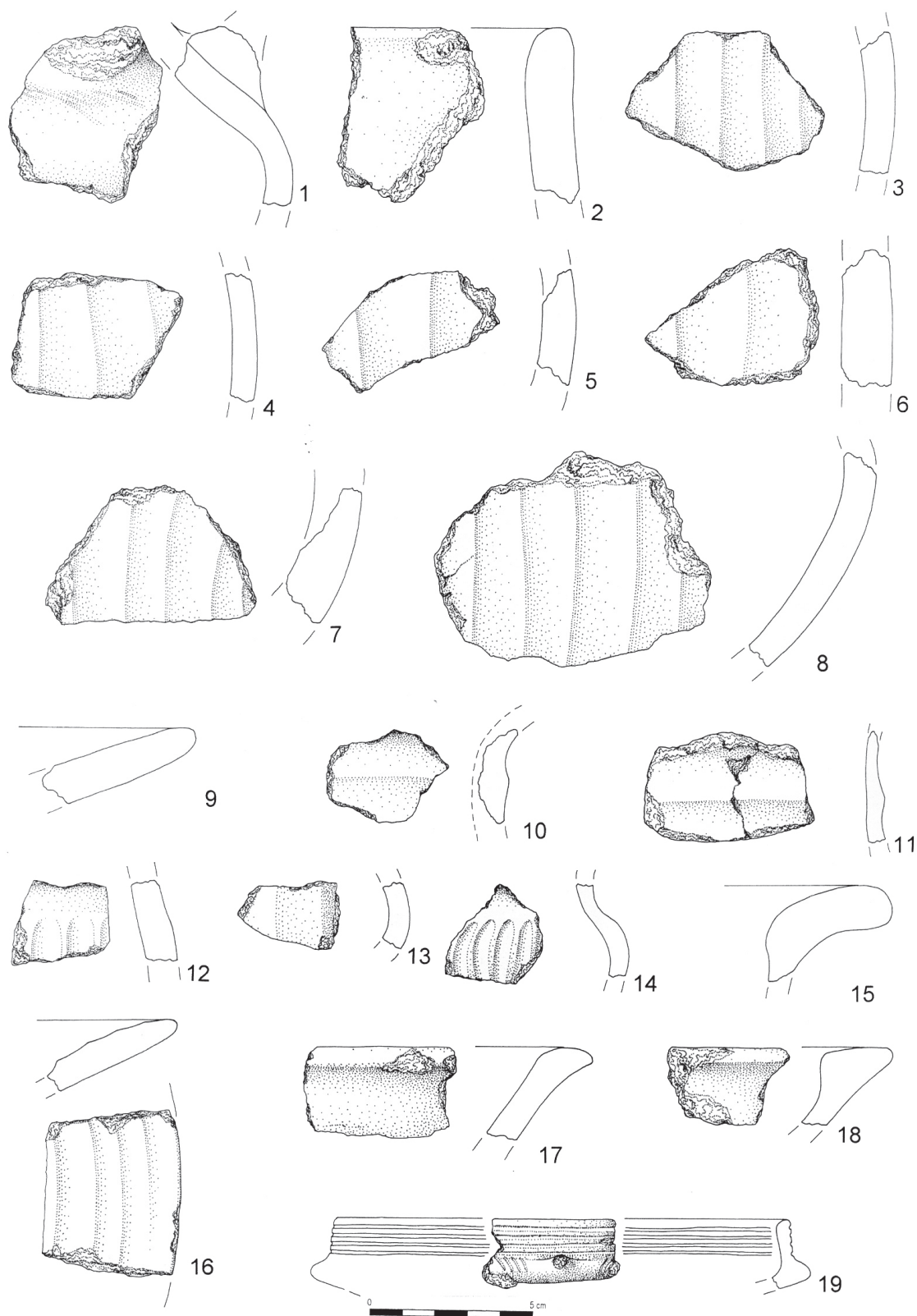
Pl. 2. Culciu Mare-Zöldmező (Câmpul Verde). Gáva ceramics.



Pl. 3. Sanislău-Cserepes. Gáva ceramics.



Pl. 4. 1-4. Sanislău-Cserepes. 5-6. Ciumești II-Tökös (*Bostănărie*). 7-13. Curtuiuşeni. Gáva ceramics.



Pl. 5. 1-4. Berea IX b-Soltésztag. 5-19. Berea XII-Berei szőlő (Viile Berei). Gáva ceramics.