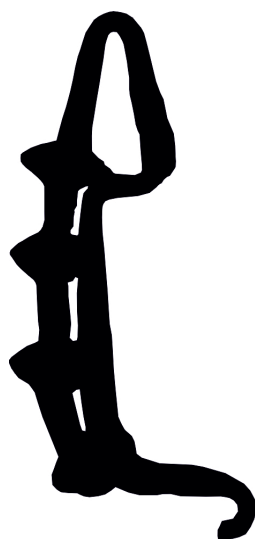


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Any correspondence will be sent to the editor:
Museum Arad
Piata George Enescu 1, 310131 Arad, RO
e-mail: ziridava2012@gmail.com

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This volume is dedicated to Tudor Soroceanu at 80 years

Acest volum este dedicat lui Tudor Soroceanu cu ocazia împlinirii a 80 de ani



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Late Copper Age archaeological sites in the area of Valea lui Mihai (Bihor county)

Zoltán Katócz

Abstract: The main purpose of this article is to compile all the information already known, as well as others that have not yet been published about the Late Copper Age pottery fragments discovered within the perimeter of the Valea lui Mihai town. These archaeological data represent a small part of an investigation conducted during 2016–2022, whose main goal was to identify in the field all sites from the Ier Region dated to this chronological period and to mark them with GIS methods. The archaeological importance of Valea lui Mihai is due also to the fact that first traces of the Baden culture in this region had been identified almost a century ago during an archaeological excavation. Over the years, other sites dated to the Late Copper Age were also mentioned in the area of Valea lui Mihai, however a lot of the information is misleading and contradictory. Therefore, I believe it is important to accomplish a study that would present all existing archaeological data in connection with the finds that belong to the Baden and Coțofeni cultures identified at Valea lui Mihai.

Key words: pottery; Late Copper Age; the Baden / Coțofeni culture; Valea lui Mihai; north-western Romania.

Introduction

In recent decades, the mapping of the archaeological sites dated to the Late Copper Age in north-western Romania was the object of several studies¹, however pottery fragments from museum collections together with the archaeological data form the inventory registers have not yet been thoroughly analysed. It is worth noting that among the first Baden pottery fragments discovered in Romania and accurately framed to the “Eneolithic” are also among those from Valea lui Mihai. These were identified by archaeological excavations conducted during the early ‘20s of the past century. Unfortunately, no further archaeological excavations have been carried out since then, which could have improved our understanding of the material culture of this period. Therefore, it is important to gather all the information related to the sites dated to the Late Copper Age from the Moca stream valley [Móka-patak], which today crosses the Valea lui Mihai town, on which many of the archaeological data are contradictory. It is worth noting that an important settlement of the Baden culture has been recently identified through systematic field surveys carried out by the local collector Toroczka Károly at the site called *Dienes*.

The first mapping of the sites dated to the Late Copper Age in the Ier Valley, the Carei Plain and the Nir Plain was done in 1978², later completed by several archaeological sites published in 1999 and 2013³. All these bibliographical data have not yet been checked in the field, which left many questions unanswered. In order to clarify a number of bibliographical contradictions, the first step was to re-identify in the field all Baden and Coțofeni sites in the Ier Region [Érmellék / Regiunea Ierului]⁴ and to establish their perimeter with GIS methods. In some cases, the archaeological materials from sites vaguely mentioned in the literature, are no longer found in the museum collections. Hence, I marked nearly 80 sites covering a chronological time span placed between the emergence of the Cernavodă III communities and the disappearance of the Baden and Coțofeni cultures from the Ier Region. The complete processing of the archaeological materials of the above mentioned cultures is in progress,

¹ Roman, Némethi 1978, 12–18; Némethi 1999, 100; Sava 2008, 55–57.

² Roman, Némethi 1978, 18–21, Fig. 6–7, Pl. I.

³ Némethi 1999, 100, 121; Némethi 2001, 299–302; Sava 2008, 54–60; Némethi 2013, 14.

⁴ The location of the archaeological sites would have been impossible without the aid and highly valuable cartographic indications of Némethi János, who in most cases had personally collected the ceramic materials of the Late Copper Age. These field surveys were conducted by the late dr. Némethi János in the ‘80–‘90s of the past century, resulting in a significant quantity of potsherds belonging to the Cernavodă III, Baden and Coțofeni cultures.

and so is the re-checking of the inventory registers of the museums where the items were stored. It was by these methods that I succeeded to explain certain unclear issues circulating for a long time in the literature. The achievement of the proposed goals is impossible without inter-regional institutional cooperation and allowed access to the desired materials.

The project concerning re-examination in the field of all sites from the north-western area of the Baden Cultural Complex, represented by the Ier Region, together with the archaeological materials from these sites has slowly been completed, while the graphical and vector processing of the drawn potsherds requires more time. I intend to present here a small part of the results of this archaeological project and discuss only the archaeological sites from the Late Copper Age located within the perimeter of the Valea lui Mihai town, without yet making an exhaustive typo-chronological analysis of these ceramic materials.

The list of the archaeological sites

The archaeological data to be presented below firstly rely on Dr. Andrásy Ernő's remarkable archaeological observations. His cultural and scientific activity as an amateur archaeologist, ornithologist, numismatist and founder of a private museum has been presented on several occasions in different studies⁵. Not long ago, his scientific legacy has been re-examined within several articles⁶ and a monograph⁷. I don't want to resume here all data about Andrásy's personality and scientific results⁸, but merely to underline that the research of this self-taught archaeologist has most clearly influenced our knowledge of the prehistoric communities from north-western Romania. The great majority of the archaeological finds from Valea lui Mihai, which reached in 1958 the collections of the Țării Crișurilor Museum of Oradea after the seizure of Andrásy's museal property, are currently labelled with several inventory numbers. Some of the items still preserve Andrásy's original numbers, over which today's inventory number was added.

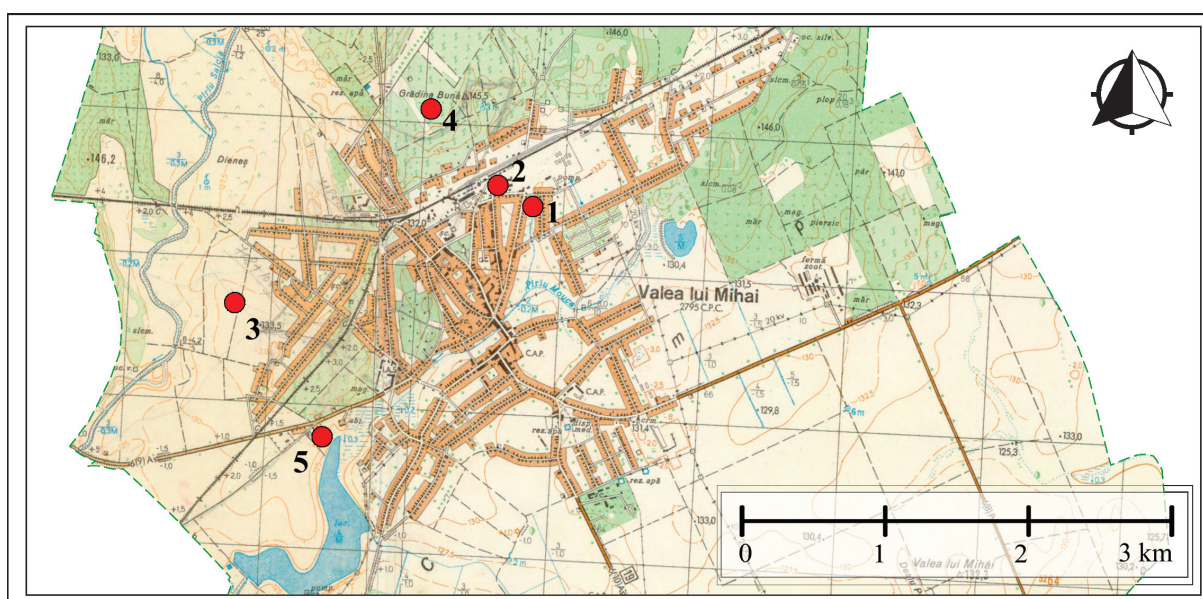


Fig. 1. The location of Late Copper Age archaeological sites identified at Valea lui Mihai (1: str. Izvorului; 2: Piața Arpád; 3: Dienes; 4: Grădina Bună; 5: Groapa nouă cu lut).

Firstly, I wish to present here those sites that Andrásy had located, whose materials still survive in museum collections at Oradea and Valea lui Mihai, together with the pottery fragments gathered from the surface of site *Dienes* by collector Toroczka Károly. In the current state of research, the

⁵ Nánási 2003, 7–18; Némethi 2013, 10–12.

⁶ Ottományi 2022, 228–233; Hágó 2022, 211–218; Istvánovits 2022, 197–206; Szócs 2022, 242–246.

⁷ Andrásy, Ottományi 2023.

⁸ Katócz, Ananie 2024, 396–399.

bibliography makes mention of five archaeological sites at Valea lui Mihai date back to the Late Copper Age (Fig. 1). After examining all the ceramic materials originating from the area of the said town, I noted that the majority are in the property of the Țării Crișurilor Museum and partially of the “Andrássy Ernő” History and Ethnographic Museum. It was also noted that, among of the five sites mentioned in literature, in only three cases was it possible to confirm the existence of the materials specific to the Baden and Coțofeni communities. The location of these ceramic fragments was checked both in the inventory registers of the above mentioned museums and in Andrássy’s personal journal⁹.

Valea lui Mihai – str. Izvorului / str. Izvor / str. Fântâniei [Érmihályfalva – Forráskút utca] = Valea lui Mihai – Grădina lui Ráthonyi [Érmihályfalva – Ráthonyi Józsefkertje]

The site lies by the northern end of the town, at ca. 250 metres south the railway line, on a small sand hill (Fig. 1/1). I would like to highlight that the site on *str. Izvorului*¹⁰ is one and the same with the prehistory settlement excavated by Roska and Andrássy in 1924 at the site called *grădina lui Ráthonyi József*¹¹, so there are not two different settlements. During the 70s and 80s of the past century, Andrássy’s journals were not available for research¹², since he had been arrested by *the Securitate* between 1958 and 1964. For this reason, these archaeological sites were wrongly separated¹³.

According to the information in Andrássy’s journal¹⁴, I find that an inhumation was firstly identified in the site of Valea lui Mihai – *grădina lui Ráthonyi József*:

„In 1924.IV.15 Ráthonyi József told me to go to his house on 58 Izvorului street because he found a skeleton and pottery fragments in the yard, while carrying the sand. Near the skull, there was a clay deep bowl, with a lamb bone inside (?). At the right hand lay a small cup. They also mentioned that many pottery fragments and burnt earth were found during the preceding days as well. I asked them to dig very carefully. The second day, they found a large urn. Inside, in the ashes, there was a necklace made of deer teeth, pieces of carved stones etc.”

Roska Márton does not provide further information on the finds made on 58 Izvorului street, in Ráthonyi József’s yard, only mentions that “two graves and a house were disturbed”¹⁵. An urn (pot) broken at its mouth and a clay cup reached Andrássy¹⁶, during the day of their find. Fortunately, the said cup (Fig. 2) has survived until today in the collections of the Țării Crișurilor Museum under inv. no. 12.375¹⁷.

Following these finds, archaeological excavations were carried out for four days between August 29 and September 2, 1924, under Roska Márton’s supervision¹⁸. Doctor Andrássy Ernő, bank director Benedek Zoltán and lawyer Jakab Ernő provided the financial support for this work. The archaeological importance of the site and its finds was confirmed at the time also by Gordon Childe¹⁹. The archaeological investigations yielded a series of finds specific to the Baden culture²⁰, however unfortunately, only a few pottery fragments survive in the collections of the museum of Oradea.

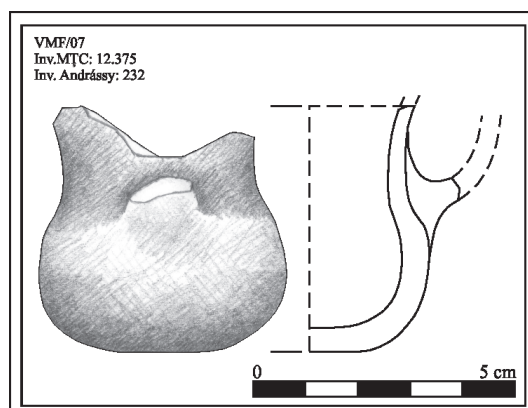


Fig. 2. Baden cup, from *str. Izvorului*.

⁹ Andrássy inv. 1932/b, 12–27.

¹⁰ Szabó 1983, 72.

¹¹ Némethi 1999, 39, 29/a3.

¹² Thus, Petre Roman and Némethi János confused the sites and mentioned separately point „a)” Roska and Andrássy’s excavation from point „b)”, site called *str. Fântâniei = str. Izvorului* (Roman, Némethi 1978, 14.). Later, this wrong information was also adopted by other repertories (Némethi 1999, 40; Sava 2008, 57, no. 79–81.).

¹³ Ignat 1973, 17; Dumitrașcu 1974, 83; Roman, Némethi 1978, 14; Bader 1978, 130.

¹⁴ Andrássy inv. 1932/b, 12.

¹⁵ Roska 1932, 73.

¹⁶ Roska 1932, 73, Fig. 12.

¹⁷ Registered by Andrássy under inv. no. 232.

¹⁸ Roska 1942, 81.

¹⁹ Childe 1929, 81.

²⁰ Roska 1924, 313; Roska 1925, 400–401; Roska 1932, 73–74, Fig. 1, 5–7; Roska 1941, 57, no. 84; Roman, Némethi 1978, 14,

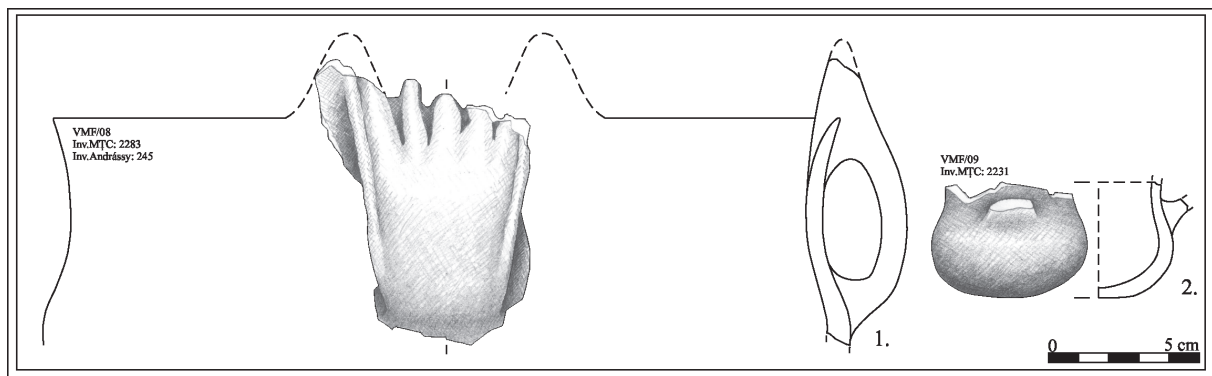


Fig. 3. Pottery fragments of the Baden culture discovered on *str. Izvorului* by Roska Márton.

During the archaeological research at *str. Izvorului nr. 56*, the lower side of a cup was discovered, the item being published by Roska²¹ (Fig. 3/2). In the register of the Oradea Museum, the origin of the pottery is recorded incorrectly, mentioning that it was discovered during Roska's excavations of 1925 at *Piața Arpad*. The cup entered the collection of the Museum of Oradea following Andrásy's arrest in 1957, yet it was registered much later, in 1973²². The museographer who completed the inventory register made a mistake, misplacing the find's location and data. It is well known that Andrásy conducted a small excavation in the site at *Piața Arpad* during 1936²³, which yielded Hallstatt materials, while Roska no longer excavated at Valea lui Mihai after 1924. Even the research of the site at *str. Izvorului = Grădina lui Ráthonyi* was an exceptional opportunity, one of Roska and Andrásy's volunteer initiatives to dig a Copper Age site, yet which would never be repeated again later at Valea lui Mihai. At the time, Roska was much more interested in the Middle Bronze Age cultures (see the excavations at Periam, Pecica, Vârșand, Otomani)²⁴. I assume that Andrásy's accumulated archaeological excavation experience, over the course of the investigations at Valea lui Mihai site together with Roska, assured the Professor from Cluj that any future archaeological excavations and finds would remain on good hands. It is necessary to underline that in 1925, Roska, was busy excavating the Cioclovina Cave (Hunedoara county) and conducting the systematic digs at Otomani – *Cetățuie* [Ottomány – *Várhegy*]²⁵, and another fourteen settlements where archaeological investigations were carried out in the same year²⁶.

Another pottery fragment (Fig. 3/1) in the inventory of Țării Crișurilor Museum under inv. no. 2283²⁷, was also discovered in the settlement at 56 *Izvorului street* and published by Roska in 1932²⁸. Andrásy, in his journal, specified on 09.IX.1924 that this handle fragment is decorated with "finger impressions", dating to the Copper Age²⁹. The piece belongs to a deep bowl with curving profile and rim diameter of ± 26 cm that may be dated to the early classical phase (IIb–IIIa) of the Baden culture.

Interestingly, the two items above (Fig. 3) were not published in the monograph discussing the Baden culture authored by Petre Roman and Némethi János in 1978. Instead, this volume mentions other three pottery fragments discovered at Valea lui Mihai – *str. Fântâni*³⁰, which still survive today in the Țării Crișurilor Museum collection (Fig. 4).

Andrásy's journal³¹ reminds two handle fragments provided with "finger" impressions dated to the Copper Age. One, is a handle fragment (Inv. ȚCM: 818/01), from a shallow bowl with a slightly curving profile, rim diameter of ± 26 cm and decorated shoulder (most likely) with a register of stamped circles (Fig. 4/1). The other handle fragment belongs to a small deep bowl (Inv. ȚCM: 818/02), with a

23, Pl. 43/3–5; Sava 2008, 57, no. 80–81; Vincze, Vincze 2021, 27, 36.

²¹ Roska 1932, 76, Fig. 4/4.

²² Țării Crișurilor Museum, inv. no. 2231.

²³ Andrásy inv. 1932/b, 13–14.

²⁴ Vincze, Vincze 2021, 27.

²⁵ Vincze 2005, 12–13; Vincze 2008, 13.

²⁶ Vincze, Vincze 2021, 98–101.

²⁷ Registered by Andrásy under inv. no. 245.

²⁸ Roska 1932, 78, Fig. 6/7.

²⁹ Andrásy inv. 1932/b, 12.

³⁰ Roman, Némethi 1978, 14, Pl. 43/3–5.

³¹ Registered in inventory by Andrásy under no. 273a+b.

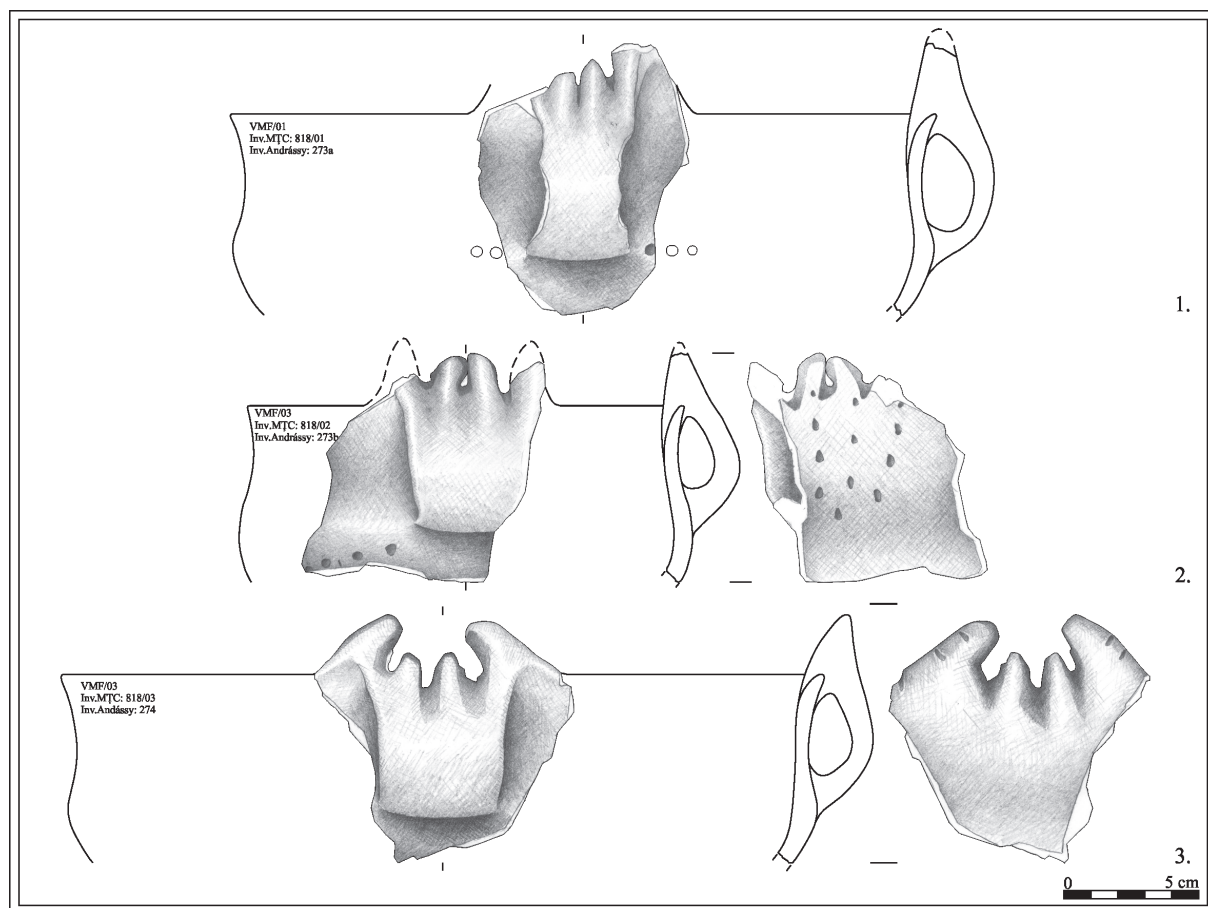


Fig. 4. Baden culture pottery fragments (*str. Fântâniei = str. Izvorului*), in the older collection originating from Valea lui Mihai.

rim diameter of ± 16 cm, decorated on the shoulder with stamped circles and probably incised lines. Interestingly, the inner part is also decorated with punched motifs composing three vertical lines (Fig. 4/2). The third handle fragment (Fig. 4/3) is described by Andrásy as decorated with “crab claws”³². This fragment belongs to a deep bowl with a curving profile (Inv. \mathcal{T} CM: 818/03) and rim diameter of ± 28 cm, while the decoration emerges only the vessel interior, being composed of a few incised lines on the edge of the projections.

According to Roska’s descriptions³³, the *str. Izvorului* site (Ráthonyi József’s yard) three houses³⁴ and a significant quantity of pottery fragments were identified. Starting from this note, I believed necessary to re-check all pottery fragments in the former collection of Valea lui Mihai. After some research, I was able to identify in the collections of the Țării Crișurilor Museum of Oradea, another three pot fragments belonging to the Baden culture (Pl. I). The first fragment is a disk knob, of a shallow bowl, most likely of globular in shape, decorated with vertical parallel incisions and on the exterior with a band of stamped circles (Pl. I/1). The fragment was registered under inv. no. 8877 (M \mathcal{T} C), while in Andrásy it appears under inv. no. 242. Another shallow bowl fragment provided still with a disk knob is decorated on the upper part with incised, parallel lines, while the bands were decorated with white and red paint (Pl. I/2). The vessel exterior is decorated with two parallel registers of stamped circles, below which there is a band of incised lines set in a “V” letter pattern. This “V”-shape decoration also

³² In Andrásy’s journal under inv. no.: 274.

³³ Roska 1932, 74.

³⁴ I believe this information must be regarded with necessary caution, as the house descriptions provided by Roska differ much from the structure of the half-sunken houses unearthed in other sites, as it may be noted in the case of Baden settlements south of Balaton (Horváth *et al.* 2007, 91–96). In north-western Romania emerge either half-sunken houses (Dumitrașcu 1968, 257–258, Fig.1.) or platforms / adobe debris (Ignat 1981, 121; Iercoșan 1991, 44–45, Fig. 1.) and in only one case, a half-sunken house with adobe walls was recorded (Marta *et al.* 2002, 127–128; Katócz 2020, 46).

appears on the shallow bowls discovered at Pişcolt – *Nisipărie* [Piskolt – *Homokos-domb*]³⁵ or Sanislău – *SMA* [Szaniszló – *MGÁ*]³⁶. The third fragment from Valea lui Mihai is a deep bowl with curving profile, rim with alveoli on the interior, and shoulder and the walls provided with a band of stamped circle and incised triangles filled with crossed lines (Pl. 1/3). The deep bowl has the inv. no. 889 (ȚCM) or in Andrásy, inv. no. 244.

Valea lui Mihai – Piața Arpad [Érmihályfalva – Árpád-tér] (Fig. 1/2)

The 1942 *Archaeological Repertory of Transylvania* mentions an axe that entered the collections of the “Oradea Museum” under inv. no. 5700³⁷. Roska quotes in fact another, previous article of his from 1932, where we find that respective axe was donated to the museum by a local, called Emeric Kocsis, and was discovered not far from the site where the archaeological excavations of 1924 occurred (referring to *str. Izvorului = grădina lui Ráthonyi József* site), the two sites lying on the same terrace³⁸. Doina Ignat mentions Neolithic archaeological materials as originating from *Piața Arpad*³⁹, yet without presenting these finds in more detail. The information was later resumed by Némethi János⁴⁰ as well.

Moreover, Roska mentioned that Andrásy had also found two compartmented shallow bowls⁴¹, with disk knobs⁴². Likely, these pottery materials are recorded in the Baden culture monograph from România⁴³. Unfortunately, they are no longer stored in the collection of the Țării Crișurilor Museum. Roska’s note related to these two pottery fragments from *Piața Arpad* (Fig. 1/2) was not used in subsequent repertories⁴⁴, although compartmented shallow bowls are items specific to the pottery making of the classical Baden phase. Nánási Zoltán underlined that *Piața Arpad* could be a potential archaeological site of the Copper Age⁴⁵. Later, Szilágyi Éva Andrea⁴⁶ resumed the archaeological data from Nánási, without yet examining the pottery materials in museum storages. We assume that these pottery materials seized from Andrásy’s Museum in 1958, to which the labels containing the findspot or the original inventory number did not survive, were mixed over the course of time with other pottery fragments and most likely discarded due to the lack of clear archaeological contexts.

Instead, in Andrásy’s journal, chapter “*My excavation notes*”, we find information related to other archaeological materials⁴⁷:

“Valea lui Mihai, Piața Arpad no. 4, in the yard, which is in the vicinity of Izvorului street no. 56 and 58, where Jakab Mihály lives, a dancing teacher. As per my wish, he excavated his yard and discovered at a depth of 130 cm, urns 285 and 296. These were covered with a plate and a cup. Ash and a few bone pieces were found inside them, while urn 258 contained bronze ornaments. On top, lay a 60 cm culture layer.”

Still from Andrásy’s journal, part “*Record of Antiquities*” we find that the excavations at *Piața Arpad no. 4* were conducted on March 28, 1936, when several objects were discovered⁴⁸, which he dated to the Hallstatt⁴⁹. Based on more recent chronological-comparative observations, the finds at *Piața Arpad no. 4* may be framed to the late period of the Bronze Age and may be most likely ascribed to the Hajdúbágyos/Cehăluț communities⁵⁰.

³⁵ Roman, Némethi 1978, Pl. 26/4; Katócz 2022, 50, 5. tábl/6.

³⁶ Iercoșan 1991, 45, Fig. 7/3, 5.

³⁷ Roska 1942, 81.

³⁸ Roska 1932, 78, Fig. 7.

³⁹ Ignat 1973, 17.

⁴⁰ Némethi 1999, 40, 29/h2.

⁴¹ Interestingly, Andrásy does not mention the items in the “*Record of Antiquities*”.

⁴² Roska 1942, 81.

⁴³ Roman, Némethi 1978, 14, 32, 43–45, Pl. 44/1–2.

⁴⁴ Dumitrașcu 1974, 82–83.

⁴⁵ Nánási 2003, 45.

⁴⁶ Szilágyi 2016, 103.

⁴⁷ Andrásy inv. 1932/b, 102.

⁴⁸ An urn (inv. no. Andrásy: 285; inv. no. ȚCM: 898); the cup which covered the urn (inv. no. Andrásy: 286; inv. no. ȚCM: 923); three bronze pendants (inv. no. Andrásy: 287–289); three “*ornaments that may be sewn*” (inv. no. Andrásy: 290–292); two “*looped buttons*” (inv. no. Andrásy: 293–294); a bronze bracelet (inv. no. Andrásy: 295); an urn (inv. no. Andrásy: 296); pottery fragments that covered mentioned urn (inv. no. Andrásy: 297).

⁴⁹ Andrásy inv. 1932/b, 13–14.

⁵⁰ Némethi 2013, 15, 22; Hágó 2022, 212, 222–223.

Therefore, it is impossible to prove with certainty the existence of Baden–Coțofeni materials in the case of this archaeological site, although the two neighbouring sites (*Piața Arpad* and *str. Izvorului*) stretch on the same terrace / land rise, which would confirm that the Late Copper Age settlement extended to the *Piața Arpad* area. The compartmented shallow bowls mentioned by Roska⁵¹ prove that the discussed sites represent one and the same archaeological site, however, we could not identify Baden culture material originating from *Piața Arpad* in any museum.

Valea lui Mihai – Dieneș / Ștrandul vechi [Érmihályfalva – Dienes / Régi strand]

The *Dieneș / Ștrandul vechi* site is located by the western city edge, in the suburbs area, on the left (eastern) side of Salcia stream [Füzék-patak]. There is an extensive terrace which has contained many archaeological finds, including Baden materials of the classical phase. Andrásy is the first to draw attention to the archaeological importance of site *Dieneș*. Later, the site is recorded in the literature through the findings from Neolithic⁵² and Bronze Age⁵³. From Andrásy's personal journal, we also find that on November 20, 1953, together with teacher Orosz Miklós, he conducted archaeological excavations at the respective site⁵⁴, digging five 1.20 x 0.80 m trenches, deep enough to observe stratigraphy. These excavations revealed prehistory pottery fragments decorated with “incisions” and decoration “in relief”⁵⁵. Unfortunately, there is not much information available relative to these pottery fragments and where the trenches were located.

The *Dieneș* site remained completely forgotten by specialists for half a century. In the mid-2000s, an enthusiast collector and self-taught archaeologist, Torockai Károly rediscovered the site. During several field surveys he collected a large quantity of potsherds that chronologically framed to several historical periods (Tiszapolgár, Baden, the Sarmatae period), as well as flakes of carved stones most likely dated back to the Copper Age⁵⁶. The *Dieneș* archaeological material specific to the Baden culture gathered between 2007 and 2010 is still in the collection of the “Andrásy Ernő” History and Ethnographic Museum⁵⁷, while the second pottery lot, gathered during 2011–2016, is stored in Torockai's personal collection. The later was presented and examined in detail from the typochronological view in a study published in 2021⁵⁸.

In this article I would like to present the Baden culture specific pottery fragments discovered at *Dieneș* by Torockai between 2007 and 2010, which remained unpublished. Looking at the clay paste, decoration type and basic typological forms of the fragments it may be confirmed that the two lots do not differ chronologically. Although the first pottery lot (collected in 2007–2010) comprises a few fragments provided with wide incisions (Pl. 4/2, 5) and oblique lines made by superficial grooving (Pl. 4/11), which would be indicative that the settlement had precedents in the Cernavodă III / Coțofeni I phase, the rest of the pottery materials (Pl. 2–3; Pl. 4/1, 3–4, 6–10) are contemporary to the Baden sites known in the Ier Valley and the Nir Plain, dated to the first phase (phase IIb–IIIa) of this culture's classical period.

Valea lui Mihai – Grădina Bună [Érmihályfalva – Bujanovics kert]

In the spring of 1957, a few pottery fragments dated to the late Copper Age were also identified in the Bujanovics family vineyard, most likely while farming works proceeded. It is worth mentioning that these fragments count among the last archaeological materials that reached the collection of the Andrásy Ernő Museum from Valea lui Mihai, as in July 25, 1958, Andrásy was arrested and sentenced to life imprisonment by the Communist regime⁵⁹. After this event, part of Andrásy's

⁵¹ Roska 1942, 81.

⁵² Némethi 2013, 13.

⁵³ Bader 1978, 130; Fazecaș 1997, 57; Némethi 1999, 40, 29.h4; Némethi, Molnár 2002, 177.

⁵⁴ The excavations were carried out in the courtyard of the house located on Bethlen street no. 2 (Andrásy inv. 1932/b, 12). For this reason, some specialists erroneously mention the site as the “Bethlen plot”.

⁵⁵ Andrásy inv. 1932/b, 119.

⁵⁶ Katócz, Hágó 2021, 29, 31, Pl. V/2–3.

⁵⁷ I would like to thank my colleague Szilágyi Éva Andrea, for providing me with the Baden pottery fragments stored in the collection of the Valea lui Mihai Museum.

⁵⁸ Katócz 2021, 15–23, Pl. II–XI.

⁵⁹ Nánási 2003, 13–14; Sóki 2017, 46.

museal collection was carried to the Regional Museum of Oradea⁶⁰. Thus, discussed pottery fragments also reached the collection of this museum, being later registered under inv. no. 9012.

The Valea lui Mihai – *Grădina Bună* archaeological site lies 500 metres north of the railway station (Fig. 1/4), by the western edge of a sandy hill, which offers good visibility of the Salcia stream valley. Avar finds were mentioned here, however the archaeological material has not been published so far⁶¹. The discovered pottery is general worked of homogeneous shape, tempered with sand and small granulation stones, their firing being incomplete. The pottery fragments display various incised motifs specific to the Coțofeni communities (Pl. 5/1, 3–7; Pl. 6), and in one case, decoration was made in the successive stitches technique (Pl. 5/2). The pottery material discovered at *Grădina bună* [*Bujanovics kert*] falls into phase II of the Coțofeni culture or possibly early phase III⁶². Even though the exact location of the finds and archaeological contexts are unknown, I believe these provide important data regarding the cultural and chronological relations between the two neighbouring communities (Baden – Coțofeni) by the Late Copper Age.

Valea lui Mihai – Groapa nouă cu lut [Érmihályfalva – Új sárgaföldes gödör]

The literature mentions some finds from the *Groapa nouă cu lut* site (Fig. 1/5), that could be dated in the Late Copper Age⁶³. After studying the inventory register of the Oradea museum I found that there were indeed two pottery fragments classified as “Baden wares”. In fact, the two mentioned vessels were erroneously attributed to the Late Copper Age.

A dark gray cup/shallow bowl, with over-heightened handle, originating from Valea lui Mihai, without information on the specific findspot and identified with inv. no. 824 (with ȚCM) and inv. no. 434 (with Andrásy) was ascribed to the Baden culture, according to the inventory register of the Țării Crișurilor Museum. The descriptions in Andrásy’s journal mention that the respective cup/shallow bowl comes from a sunken house in the *Groapa nouă cu lut* site, yet it dated to the Late Bronze Age / Early Hallstat⁶⁴ and not to the Late Copper Age as reported by the current registers of the Oradea Museum. I assume that the museographer who processed Andrásy’s archaeological materials in 1958 did neither consider the information entered in the doctor’s register-journal nor was familiar with the material culture of Bronze Age communities, so that the information related to the chronological framing was wrong. Similar cups are known from the Igrîța Cave⁶⁵ and Biharea – *Grădina CAP* site⁶⁶. Another item discovered at *Groapa nouă cu lut*, with inv. no. 823 (with ȚCM) and inv. no. 435 (with Andrásy), is according to the inventory register of the Țării Crișurilor Museum a “Baden culture cup with a wide mouth”. The ware ended up in the collection of the “Mihai Eminescu” Philology and History High school of Oradea since the 80s, however, unfortunately, could no longer be recovered. According to Andrásy Ernő’s description, it is a “a ladle-type vessel with a handle”, which belongs to the same vessel deposit as the above mentioned shallow bowl.

According to Andrásy’s journal, the two cups / shallow bowls with inv. no. 823–824 (ȚCM) were discovered by chance on August 31, 1936, while the famous deposit of wares from Valea lui Mihai – *Groapa cu lut* was found on January, 3 1954⁶⁷. Therefore, the collections of both the Oradea and the Valea lui Mihai museums do not contain any pottery fragments from the *Groapa nouă cu lut* site, which could be dated to the Late Copper Age. Although the geographical position of the archaeological site is a suitable one for the habitate of the Baden or Coțofeni culture, the lack of pottery fragments justifies the removal of this site from our repertory.

⁶⁰ Păunescu 1964, 321, note 1; Comșa 1972, 212, note 25; Némethi 2013, 19; Lakatos-Balla 2014, 215–216; Szócs 2022, 242.

⁶¹ Dumitrașcu 1974, 84; Némethi 1999, 40, 29m; Némethi 2013, 18; Istvánovits 2022, 204.

⁶² Katócz 2023, 116–117, Pl. I–II.

⁶³ Szilágyi 2016, 103.

⁶⁴ Andrásy inv. 1932/b, 19.

⁶⁵ Emódi 1980, 254–256, Fig. 6/24; Fig. 19/169

⁶⁶ Dumitrașcu, Emódi 1980, 48, Fig. 2/4.

⁶⁷ The deposit is composed of several cups and jugs and was described in a manuscript drawn up by Andrásy Ernő (Nánási 2003, 48–50, fn. 47–48.), which unfortunately remained unpublished. After the archaeological wares from Valea lui Mihai were seized, the vessel deposit of *Groapa cu lut* entered the collection of the Oradea Museum in 1958. The items, together with Andrásy’s manuscript, were studied and published by Ivan Ordentlich (Ordentlich 1965).

Conclusions

The mapping of the sites dated to the Late Copper Age in the Ier Region was the first step that had to be taken in order to better understand the habitat of the communities living during this chronological phase. Presentation of all sites in the studied region shall make the object of a future, larger scale study, as this article was intended to report Baden and Coțofeni archaeological sites within the perimeter of the Valea lui Mihai town. Upon checking the bibliographical sources, GIS data and examination of the available ceramic materials, I have noticed a series of inadvertencies.

The archaeological materials specific to the Baden culture (IIb–IIIa) were discovered during rescue excavations (*Grădina lui Ráthonyi Iosif*), most of them were lost as early as the '60s of the past century. After analysing the inventory registers and the situation in the field, I noted that the “*str. Izvorului / str. Fântâni*” site is one and the same with “*Grădina lui Ráthonyi Iosif*”, lying on a small land rise, slightly stretching north-westwards to the site called “*Piața Arpad*”. These points actually form a single archaeological site⁶⁸.

The field surveys carried out at *Dieneș* brought the largest number of Baden (IIb–IIIa) pottery materials from Valea lui Mihai. In the current state of research, I believe that the *Dieneș* site has the highest archaeological potential. According to the information received from Toroczka Károly, only typical pottery was recovered during his field surveys, so that a significant quantity of atypical pottery fragments lies still within the site's area. In the absence of modern archaeological excavations, it is difficult to say whether these are only a few archaeological features, partially disturbed by farming activities or we are indeed dealing with a long-term settlement of a Baden community.

Another site with materials dated to the Late Copper Age was identified by chance in 1957 at *Grădina Bună* during farming works. Unfortunately, the small number of pottery fragments and the find conditions do not allow us to determine the size and importance of this archaeological site. It is certain that the *Grădina Bună* site is the only one within the range of the Valea lui Mihai town where pottery fragments specific to the Coțofeni II culture were identified.

Concurrently, we could establish there are no Baden or Coțofeni pottery materials in the *Groapa veche cu lut* site. They were included in the wrong chronological phase by those who have inventoried them in the collection of the Țării Crișurilor Museum, and later entering the literature as materials specific to the Late Copper Age. In fact, these belong to the late period of the Bronze Age.

In conclusion, out of the five sites with finds specific to the Late Copper Age mentioned in the literature, two must be joined (*str. Izvorului / str. Fântâni / Grădina lui Ráthonyi Iosif* with *Piața Arpad*), while *Groapa nouă cu lut* site provided only late Bronze Age pottery materials. In the context of future research, points with archaeological potential for the study of the Late Copper Age communities could be the *Grădina Bună* and especially the *Dieneș* site.

Zoltán Katócz

The Țării Crișurilor Museum – Museal Complex
Oradea, RO
katocz.zoltan@gmail.com

⁶⁸ As we have seen, the literature uses different terms for this site. In more recent studies on finds dated to the Late Copper Age from Valea lui Mihai town, correctly of the four terms, only toponym „*Grădina lui Ráthonyi Iosif*” has been used (Németi 2013, 14; Hágó 2022, 212).

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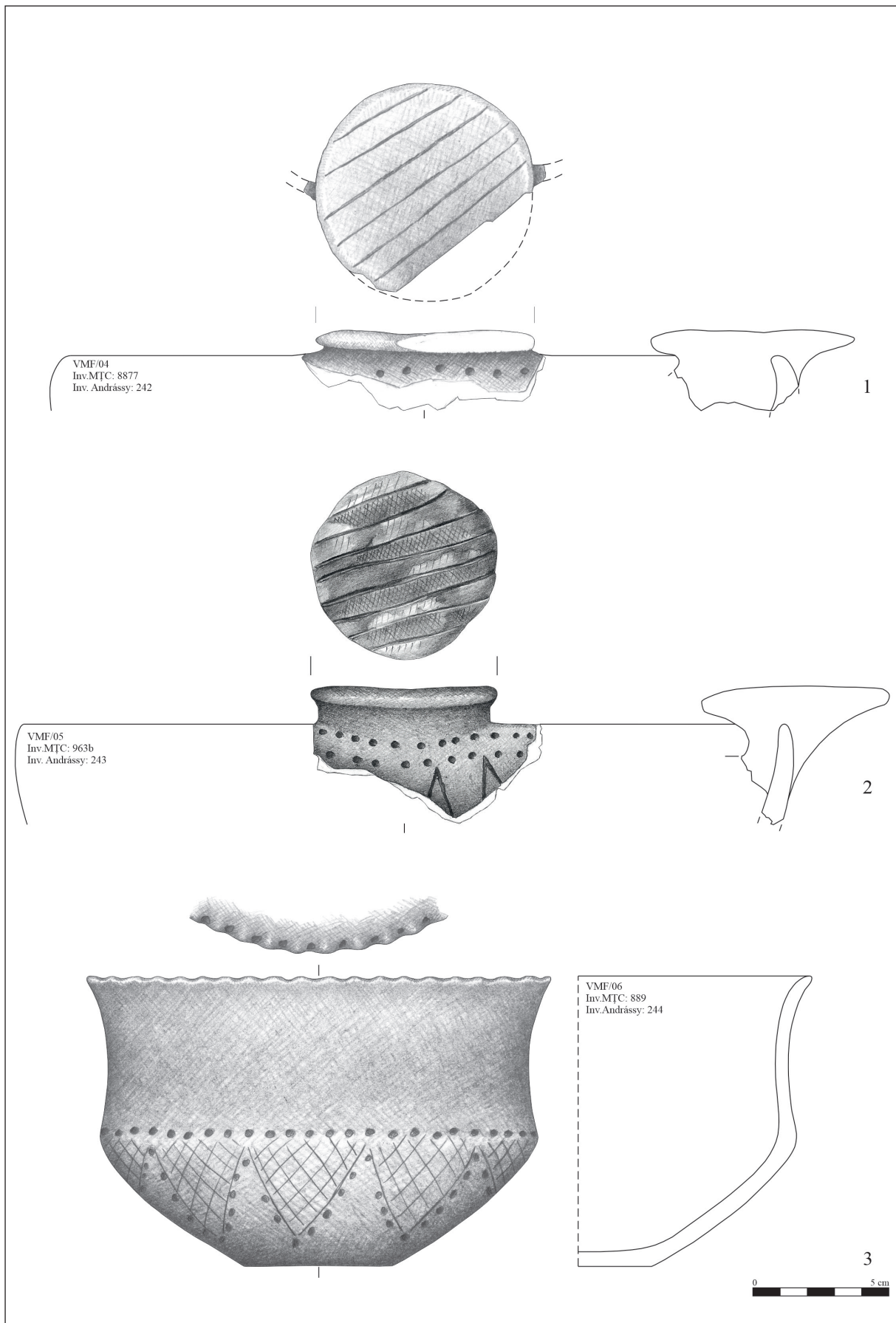


Plate 1. Pottery fragments specific to the Baden culture discovered at Valea lui Mihai in *str. Izvorului = Grădina lui Răthonyi Iosif* site, which is located in the collection of the Țării Crișurilor Museum, Oradea.

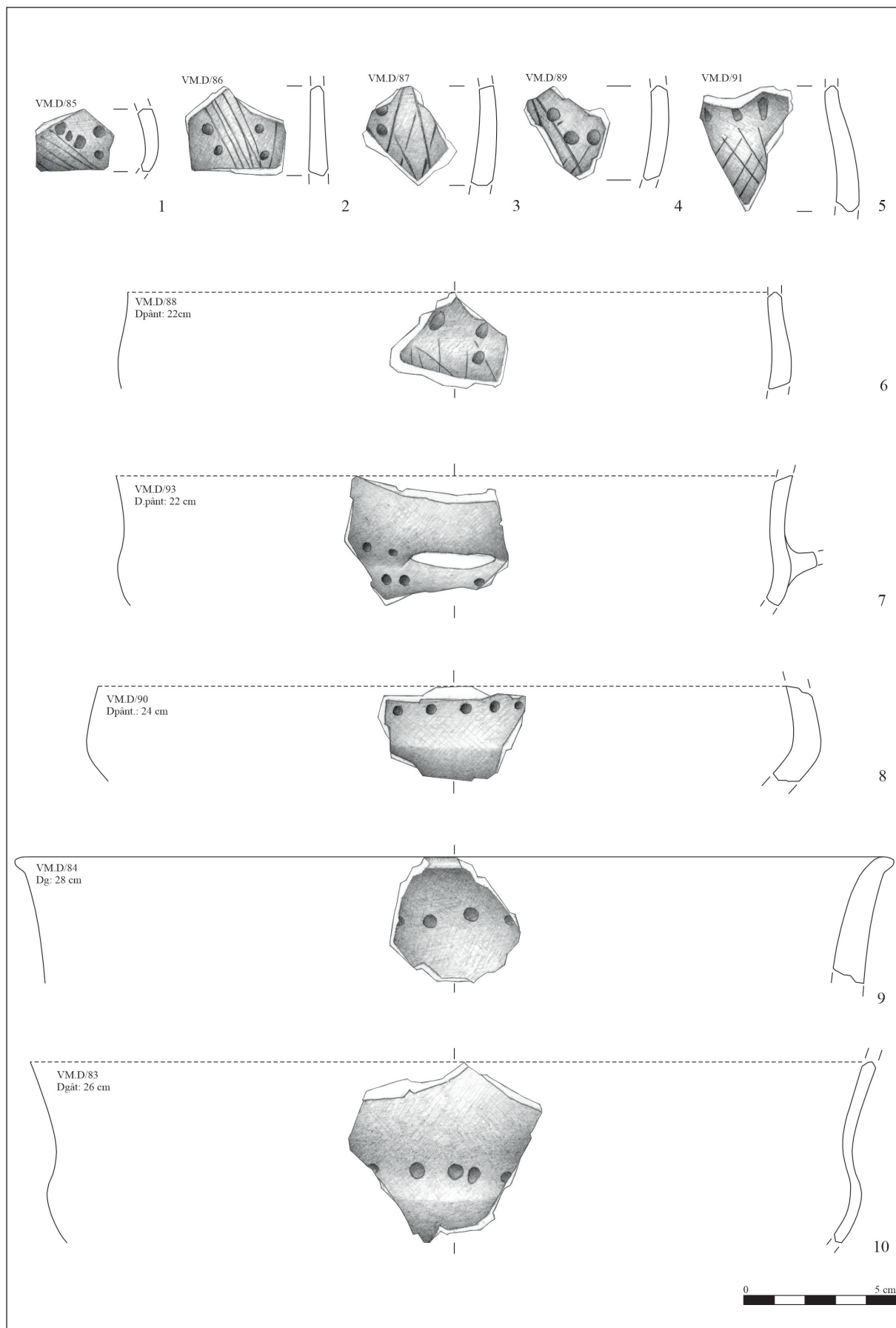


Plate 2. Pottery fragments specific to the Baden Culture, discovered in Valea lui Mihai after the field surveys carried out by Toroczkaï Károly during 2007–2010 in *Dieneş* site. The pottery is in the collection of the “Andrássy Ernő” History and Ethnographic City Museum of Valea lui Mihai.

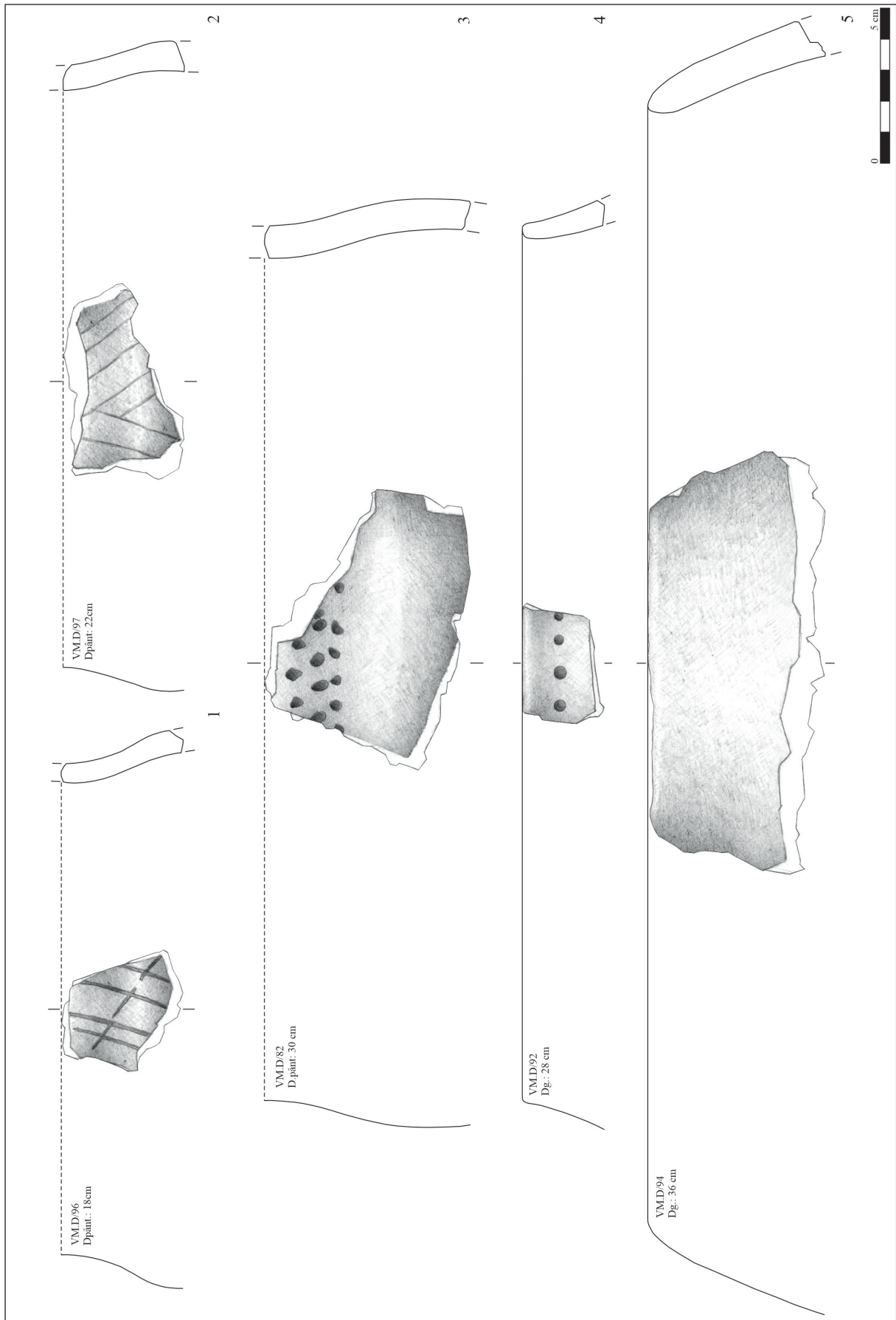


Plate 3. Pottery fragments specific to the Baden Culture, discovered in Valea lui Mihai after the field surveys carried out by Toroczka Károly during 2007–2010 in *Dieneş* site. The pottery is in the collection of the “Andrássy Ernő” History and Ethnographic City Museum of Valea lui Mihai.

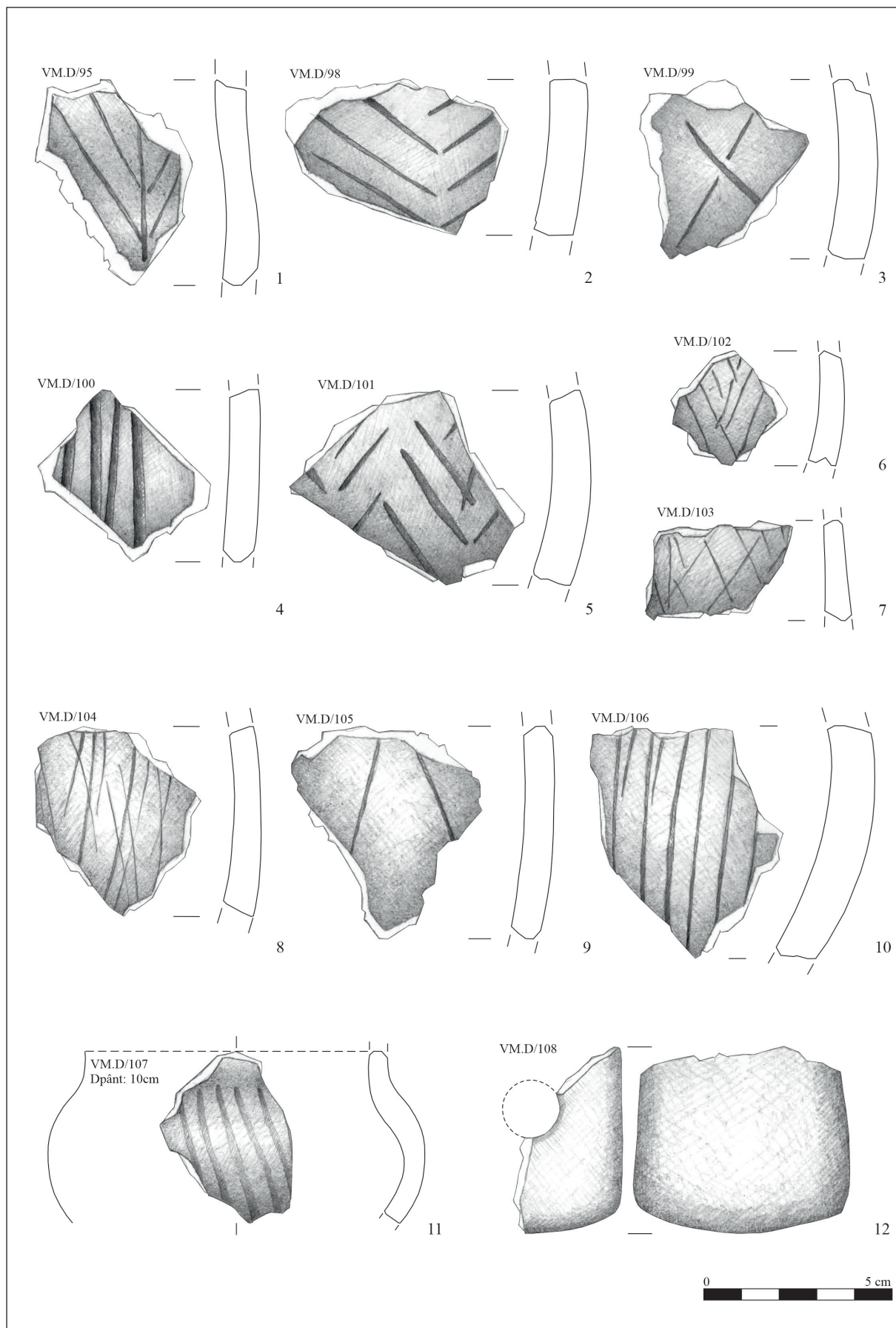


Plate 4. Pottery fragments specific to the Baden Culture, discovered in Valea lui Mihai after the field surveys carried out by Toroczka Károly during 2007–2010 in *Dieneş* site. The pottery is in the collection of the “Andrássy Ernő” History and Ethnographic City Museum of Valea lui Mihai.

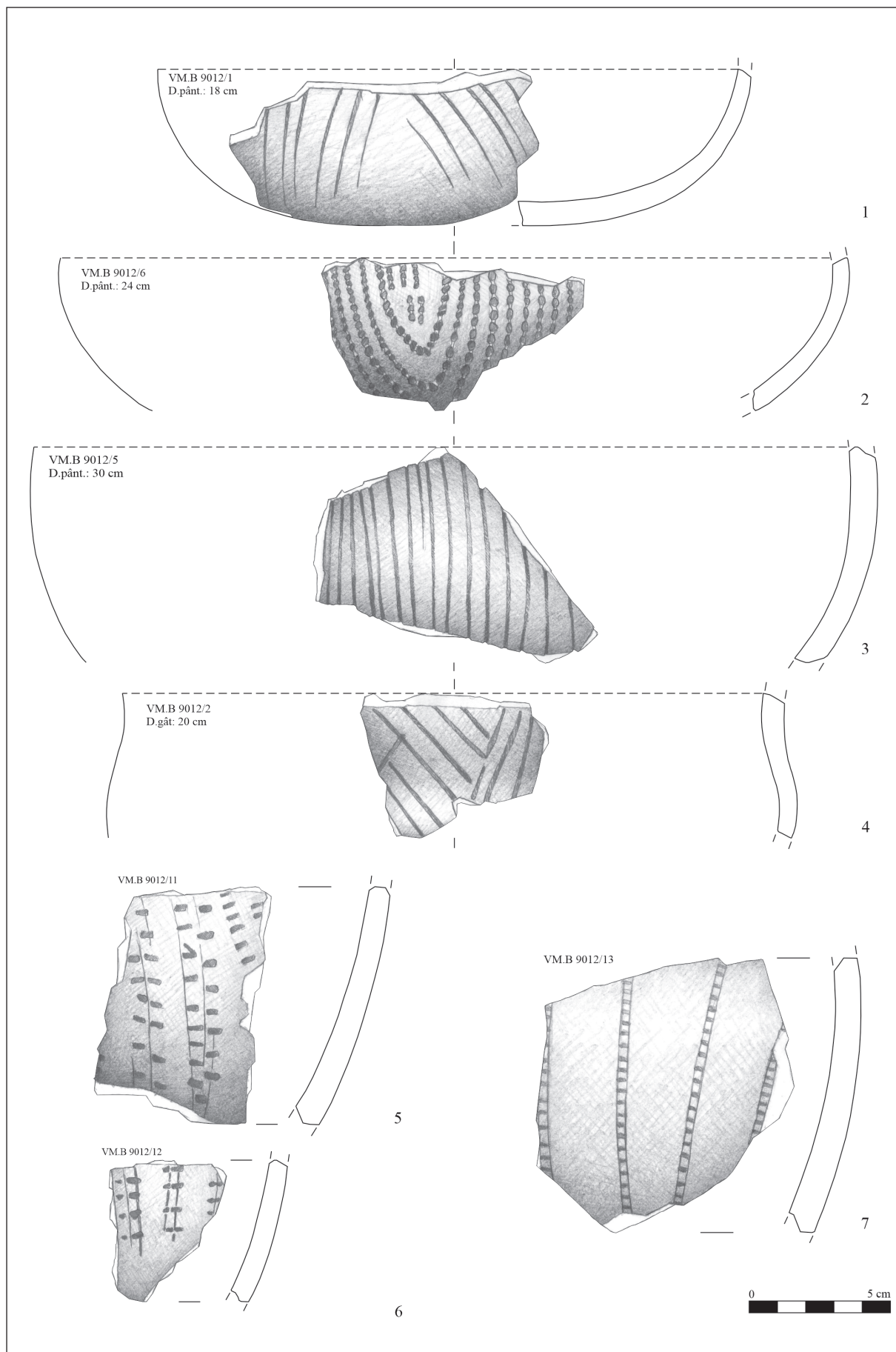


Plate 5. Pottery fragments specific to the Coțofeni culture discovered at Valea lui Mihai in *Grădina Bună* site, is in the collection of the Țării Crișurilor Museum, Oradea.

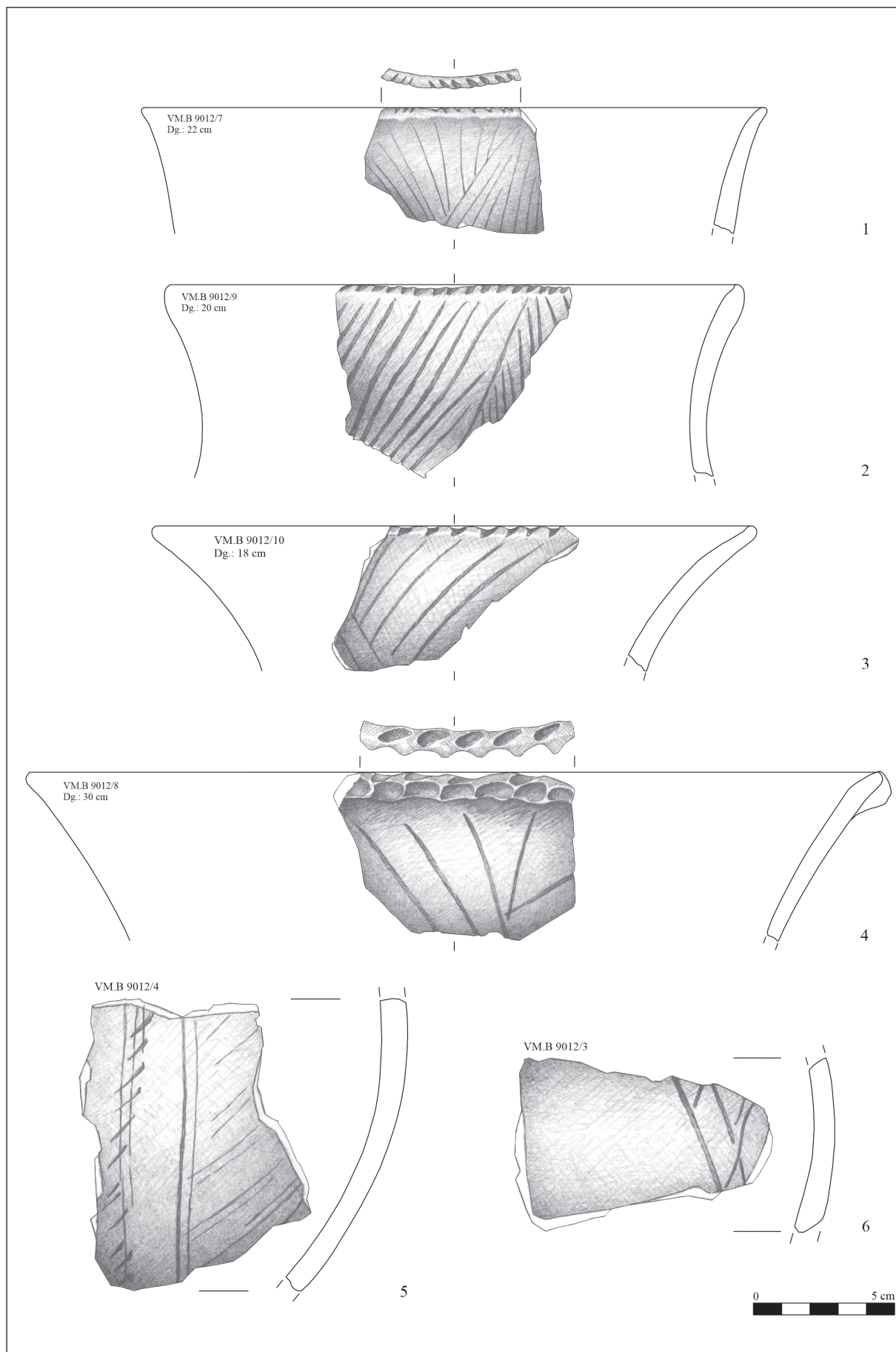


Plate 6. Pottery fragments specific to the Coțofeni culture discovered at Valea lui Mihai in site *Grădina Bună*, is in the collection of the Țării Crișurilor Museum, Oradea.

