

ZIRIDAVA
STUDIA ARCHAEOLOGICA

34

2020

MUSEUM ARAD



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34
2020

Editura MEGA
Cluj-Napoca
2020

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In Romania, the periodical can be obtained through subscription or exchange, sent as post shipment, from Museum Arad, Arad, Piata G. Enescu 1, 310131, Romania.

Tel. 0040-257-281847.

ZIRIDAVA STUDIA ARCHAEOLOGICA

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The content of the papers totally involve the responsibility of the authors.

Layout: Francisc Baja, Florin Mărginean, Victor Sava

ISSN 2392-8786



EDITURA MEGA | www.edituramega.ro
e-mail: mega@edituramega.ro

Contents

| | |
|---|-----|
| Emil Grigorescu Middle Neolithic at Oradea-Salca “Pepinieră”..... | 7 |
| Ana Fetcu, Alina Bințișan, Mihai Gligor An Early Eneolithic isolated non-adult burial from Alba Iulia – <i>Lumea Nouă</i> (Romania)..... | 25 |
| Alin Frînculeasa Earthen burial mounds and the Coțofeni Culture south of the Carpathians. The archaeological research in Ariceștii-Rahtivani – <i>Movila pe Râzoare</i> | 35 |
| Mária Bondár, Anna Szécsényi-Nagy Skull cult in the Late Copper Age..... | 91 |
| Tünde Horváth, Attila Botond Szilasi Salgótarján–Baglyas-kő: A multi-period prehistoric site and medieval castle..... | 105 |
| Călin Ghemiș The Bronze Age Shaft-hole Axe Discovered in Loranta, the Municipality of Brusturi, Bihor County..... | 119 |
| Sofia Bertea Preliminary analysis of the bronze age pottery from Dudeștii Vechi- <i>Cociohatul Mic</i> | 125 |
| Alexandra Găvan, Marian Adrian Lie A casting mould uncovered in the Bronze Age tell settlement from Toboliu. Notes on the origin and distribution of socketed chisels..... | 157 |
| Andrei Stăvilă, Alexandru Hegyi, Bogdan Alin Craiovan Non-invasive archaeological researches performed in the Middle Bronze Age settlement from Alioș-Valea Alioșu (Timiș County, Romania). Structures, chronology, and perspectives..... | 169 |
| Florin Gogâltan, Andrei Stăvilă The Late Bronze Age Settlement from Giroc (Timiș County). The 1992–1993 archaeological excavations | 189 |
| Ioan Cristian Cireap A spearhead discovered at Săvârșin – <i>Cetățuia</i> | 243 |
| Remus Mihai Feraru Feasts in Honor of Demeter in the Megarian Colonies on the Shores of Pontus Euxinus..... | 249 |
| Andrei-Cătălin Dișcă Roman Sites and Discoveries Around Potaissa (III). New Data and Clarifications Regarding the Topography of the Sites in Aiton..... | 259 |
| Sorin Nemeti, Ștefana Cristea New Reliefs Plaques from Pojejena (Caraș-Severin county) depicting the Danubian Riders..... | 277 |
| Igor’ Khrapunov, Anastasiya Stoyanova A Grave with Roman Imports in the Cemetery of Opushki in the Crimea..... | 287 |
| Norbert Kapcsos An attempt to reconstruct the chronology of the Roman and Early Migrations Period in the Lower Mureș Valley..... | 305 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Vitalie Bârcă | |
| Funerary Ditched Enclosures in the Sarmatian Funerary Ritual. Observations Regarding Their Introduction, Distribution, Use, and Dating..... | 325 |
| Călin Cosma | |
| Dwellings with Weapons from the Early Medieval Settlement in Sfântu Gheorghe (Mureş County)..... | 377 |
| Melinda Takács | |
| Late Avar Age Sites in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County..... | 411 |
| Margareta Simina Stanc, Daniel Ioan Malaxa, Dan Băcuet-Crişan | |
| The Exploitation of Animal Resources During the Early Medieval Period. Case Study: The Settlements in Popeni <i>Pe Pogor</i> and Cuceu <i>Valea Bochii</i> (Sălaj County)..... | 431 |
| Daniela Tănase, Balázs Major | |
| Preliminary Data Regarding the Archaeological Research Performed between 2016 and 2019 at the Cistercian Abbey in Igriş/Egres, Timiş County..... | 439 |
| Florin Mărginean, Tamás Emődi | |
| The Medieval Church in Iermata Neagră – <i>Feketegyarmat</i> (Arad County)..... | 455 |
| Dan Băcuet-Crişan | |
| A Medieval Knight Passionate about Dice games. The Spur Decorated with “Dice” Discovered in Aghireş <i>Sub păşune</i> (Sălaj county)..... | 479 |
| Andrea Demjén | |
| Glass Artefacts Uncovered at the Pricske Quarantine Facility (Harghita County)..... | 489 |
| Calin Ghemis, Constantin Iosif Zgardan | |
| Oradea 1703–1710 – the Blockade Coins..... | 501 |
| Abbreviations..... | 511 |

Dwellings with Weapons from the Early Medieval Settlement in Sfântu Gheorghe (Mureș County)*

Călin Cosma

Abstract: The present article focuses on three dwellings discovered in the 7th–8th-century settlement from Sfântu Gheorghe that have revealed a number of weapons. These weapons suggest that warriors lived in that settlement. The site in Sfântu Gheorghe (Mureș County) is located in the eastern border of the village, on the spot that the locals call “Pe Șes”. The three dwellings deepen into the yellow clay by 15 to 20 cm. They are surface dwellings. Their wooden walls rested on wooden soles placed at ground level, the level where the excavation of the archaeological features started. All of the dwellings were provided with fire installations. The dwellings had been affected by a strong fire while still in use. In the pits of these dwellings archaeologists discovered pottery fragments and the following weapons: a backsword, spearheads and arrowheads, spurs, phalerae, and horse bits. Most of the archaeological inventory, with strong traces of burning, was found in the layer of ash identified on the floor of the dwellings, not in the fill or in the level where the features became apparent. This contradicts the possibility that the archaeological material ended up in the dwellings subsequent to the time when the archaeological features went out of use. The dwellings in Sfântu Gheorghe date between 670 and 750 AD. The weapons, the military equipment pieces, and the elements of horse tack attest the presence of warriors in the settlement from Sfântu Gheorghe, inhabiting the three dwellings under discussion.

Keywords: dwellings; pottery; weapons; warriors; Early Middle Ages.

Topographic observations regarding the place of discovery. The first researches were performed on the archaeological site in Sfântu Gheorghe during the 1950s. Those archaeological researches were published under the title “așezarea de la Cipău-Sfântu Gheorghe” [the settlement in Cipău-Sfântu Gheorghe]¹. Subsequently, following archaeological excavations performed during the 1990s, the above-mentioned objective was localized in Iernut/Sf. Gheorghe or Iernut/Cătunul Sf. Gheorghe².



Fig 1. Geographic location of the archaeological site in Sfântu Gheorghe.

* Translated by: Ana Maria Gruia.

¹ Horedt 1955, 661–662, Pl. IV, Fig. 3/6–16.

² The excavations performed in Sfântu Gheorghe after 1990 have largely remained unpublished. For data see *Cronica Cercetărilor Arheologice din 1991–2000: Șantierul arheologic Iernut/Sfântu Gheorghe*.

The archaeological site under discussion is located on the eastern border of the village of Sfântu Gherghe (Mureș County). The locals call the spot with archaeological discoveries in Sfântu Gherghe “Pe Șes”. This is a high terrace of the river Mureș, located west from the village (Fig. 1). Thus, the correct localization of the archaeological site is in the village of Sfântu Gheorghe, Mureș County.

Stratigraphic observations. The archaeological excavations performed between 1990 and 2000 on the site in Sfântu Gheorghe were carried out on the edge of the “Pe Șes” terrace, towards the River Mureș, in the middle area of the plateau, along the N-S coordinates (Fig. 2).

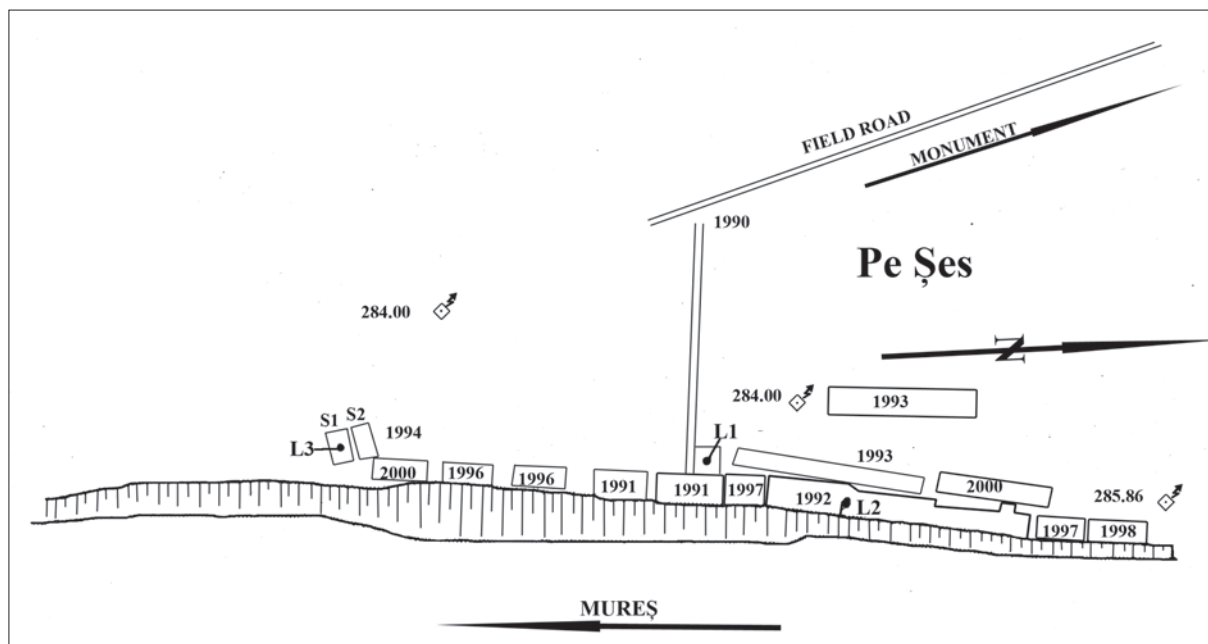


Fig. 2. On site location of the sections opened on the archaeological site in Sfântu Gheorghe.

The researches have led to the identification of several habitation layers, dated to the 1st century BC, the Roman Period, the 5th–6th centuries, the 7th–8th centuries, and the 10th–14th centuries. The culture layers that correspond to the above-mentioned time intervals are well stressed on the terrace’s vertical stratigraphy. They are almost identical in the entire area under archaeological investigation, with slight differences in the thickness of the culture layer. For each of the above-mentioned intervals the team has discovered dwellings, ovens, storage pits etc., as well as archaeological material consisting of pottery, various iron objects, and osteological remains. Over almost all of the researched area, horizontal stratigraphy has revealed the fact that each ancient or medieval habitation had disturbed the traces of the previous settlement. The more recent settlement destroyed the previous one and was in its turn devastated by the subsequent settlement, from a more recent phase.

The 7th–8th-century culture layer. Three dwellings were discovered in the chronological horizon dated to the 7th–8th centuries (Fig. 2), containing weapons, elements of military equipment, and harness items, as well as pottery in the fill³.

All three dwellings ended in a fire, as attested by the large quantities of as hand burnt adobe that formed the fill of these dwellings. The artifacts discovered in the fill showed strong trace of secondary firing, caused by contact with a very powerful fire source. The fire certainly took place while the archaeological features were still in use and not subsequently, during some other chronological sequence. Most of the archaeological material was discovered in the layer of ash, on the floor of the dwellings, and not in the fill from the upper part of the features. I believe that the latter detail eliminates the possibility that the archaeological material ended up in the dwellings after they had been destroyed by the very strong fire.

³ The archaeological material discovered in the three dwellings from Sfântu Gheorghe is preserved at the Institute of Archaeology and Art History in Cluj-Napoca.

The dwellings and the archaeological material

Dwelling no. 1/1990

The archaeological feature was discovered in area S. 1/1990. The shape of the dwelling became apparent at -1.80 m, while its floor was located at -2.00 m. It is a slightly sunken dwelling. Most of it consisted of a wooden suprastructure set on wooden soles most likely at the level where the pit started. The walls were covered in clay and the roof cover was made of reed or straw. Remains of both construction materials were discovered burnt inside the dwelling. The feature was square in shape, measuring 3.90×3.90 m. A step had been cut into the clay in the north-western corner of the dwelling, at the depth of -1.60 m. It indicates that the entrance was located on the northern side, in the north-western corner of the archaeological feature. Opposite the entrance, in the south-eastern corner, the dwelling was provided with an oven dug into the wall, with the diameter measuring 0.50 m, and with the walls covered in stone slab pieces. A small stoking pit was located in front of the oven (Pl. 1/1).

The archaeological inventory of the dwelling

I. Weapons

1. Iron backsword, fragmentary. The hilt and part of the blade have been preserved. The hilt is straight and pointy towards the end, probably fitted with a pommel. The dimensions of the item were: $L_{\text{preserved}} = 40$ cm; $l_{\text{blade}} = 3.6$ cm (Pl. 1/4).

The backsword in Sfântu Gheorghe⁴ can be included in type 2 Garam⁵ or type E. II. A/1 Csiki called “swords with straight, single edge blade, without cross-guard”⁶. G. Csiki mentions that the type in question is very frequent in the Avar world and such weapons were used during the Early Avar Period, but were more frequent during the Middle and Late Avar periods⁷. A series of weapons discovered in the Avar cemeteries from Slovakia have been dated similarly to the item above⁸.

2. Iron spearhead. Wide blade, pear leaf-shaped, oval in section. The maximum width of the blade is located approximately mid-length. Tubular socket, flared towards the end. Very close to the end the socket displays a hole for an iron rivet that perforated the shaft and contributed to its fastening in the socket. The socket is separated from the blade by a short neck, marked by the widening of the blade’s sides to the outside. The spearhead has the following dimensions: $L_{\text{total}} = 18.5$ cm; $L_{\text{blade}} = 10.5$ cm; $L_{\text{socket}} = 8$ cm; $l_{\text{maximum of the blade}} = 2.7$ cm; $D_{\text{socket}} = 2.8$ cm (Pl. 1/3).

From a typological perspective, the spearhead from Sfântu Gheorghe can be included in spearhead type P.III.A Csiky⁹. The author notes that most of the weapons of this kind from the Carpathian Basin were found in contexts dated to the Early Avar Period, but that they are also present, to a smaller degree, during the Middle Avar Period, as well as during the Late Avar Period¹⁰. The item from Sfântu Gheorghe can be included in type 2.A.2, type BC a Husár¹¹. In Husár’s typology as well one can note the fact that most of the artifacts date to the Early Avar Period. Still, there are also items discovered and dated to the Middle and Late Avar periods in the development of the Avar Khaganate in the Carpathian Basin.

II. Elements of military equipment

1. Iron spur. The item is U-shaped and one of the two arms is broken of old almost in the middle. The arms were made of a bar that is rectangular in section. The terminal of the (preserved) arm is bent towards the outside, forming a hook. The goad, made of the same bar as the body, is pyramidal and has a pointy tip. The item has the following dimensions: $H_{\text{total}} = 11.5$ cm; $H_{\text{of the spur without goad}} = 10$ cm; $H_{\text{of the goad}} = 1.5$ cm; $l_{\text{maximum of the arms}} = 1.00$ cm; $T_{\text{maximum of the bar}} = 0.2$ cm; $l_{\text{maximum between the two arms}} = 5.3$ cm (Pl. 1/2).

The spur in Sfântu Gheorghe can be included in the “Hakensporen” group, with hooks bent

⁴ For the typology and terminology of weapons for cutting, hitting, stabbing see: Cosma 2018, 32–37.

⁵ Garam 1991, 145–152, Fig. 11.

⁶ Csiki 2015, 174–179, Fig. 65, 67.

⁷ Csiki 2015, 174, 179.

⁸ Čilinska 1973, 23–24.

⁹ Csiky 2015, 38, 112–119.

¹⁰ Csiky 2015, 112–113.

¹¹ Husár 2014, 112–114, Obr. 3, Tab. XL–XLIV.

towards the outside of the two arms¹². Following the prototype of Roman Imperial Era spurs with outer hook terminals, such artifacts were adopted during the Early Middle Ages and produced in two distinct cultural areas, i.e. the Merovingian and the Baltic areas¹³. They are mainly encountered along the Baltic coast and in the Latvian-Lithuanian territories, forming the first area, and in Rhenania, where the Baltic model received Alemannic-Proto-Prussian influences and stabilized during the 7th century; from Rhenania it spread to Croatia, but also to Northern Europe¹⁴ and on the territory of Byelorussia¹⁵. The spurs discovered in Saxony, Silesia, and Scandinavia, though not numerous, have been explained through connections with the western environment¹⁶. For Little Poland, specialists believe that a Slavic tradition existed in the production of hook spurs, while for the area of Silesia historians admit influences from the Slavic regions along the Elba (present-day Saxony) in the production of spurs, including hooked ones¹⁷. Some authors nevertheless also mention the existence of a Carolingian influence in the production of spurs on the Polish territory¹⁸. The U-shape of the spur in Sfântu Gheorghe and its production technique can be encountered in Central-Western Europe. Still, in that area most of the spurs have terminals created through the inward bending of the two bar ends, a detail that excludes the inclusion of the item in Sfântu Gheorghe in one of the typological variants encountered on the sites of Central-Western Europe dated to the Early Middle Ages¹⁹.

Spurs with outer hook, relatively simple through the production technique of the strapping manner, were used for a rather long period, between the 6th/7th centuries and the beginning of the 10th century.²⁰ The spur shape and the production manner of the outer hook naturally evolved over time. The earliest items, dated to the 6th/7th – 8th centuries have an oval body, a short goad, and the out-turned terminals are rather short and separated from the two bars²¹.

The spur in Sfântu Gheorghe belongs to type I.1. Wachowski²². In the type's entire distribution area, the spur discovered in Tyniec n. Sleza, in Poland, initially dated to the 8th century²³ and subsequently dated around the year 800²⁴ is almost identical to the item found in Sfântu Gheorghe. Initially, the spur from the Polish settlement was presented as a local product that imitates the 7th century Aleman model²⁵. Subsequently, the item was reinterpreted as a Slavic product manufactured following Carolingian models²⁶. Due to the fact that the terminals of the two ends are very close to the two bars, almost attached to them, the spur was included in the Ösensporen type²⁷. The procedure of bringing the ends of the two bars very close together, even touching, was also noted in a series of spurs with in-bent hooks discovered in Moravia that belong to type IC Bialekova²⁸. Neither the examples there, nor the spur from Tyniec n. Sleza in Poland display proper holes. The technique of bringing the ends of the hooks very close together, almost touching the two bars of the spurs, precede the classical examples with holes for leathers or buckles.

The U-shaped model of the item in Sfântu Gheorghe, another useful dating criterion, is encountered among the Carolingian-origin spurs, on the Dalmatian coast, in the area of Zalavár, or in former Yugoslavia, Bohemia, and Moravia. The items from these areas, made of iron bars that are rectangular in section, plain, light-weight, with very long goad, but with the ends of the bars ending

¹² Żak 1959, 88–105; Wachowski 1986–1987, 55–56, Fig. 9.

¹³ Żak 1959, 105; Wachowski 1986–1987, 55–56, Fig. 9.

¹⁴ Żak 1959, 105; Wachowski 1986–1987, 55–56, 70, Fig. 9.

¹⁵ Sedin 1995, 162, Fig. 2/8.

¹⁶ Wachowski 1986–1987, 55–56.

¹⁷ Wachowski 1987, 524.

¹⁸ Wachowski 1987, 523–528.

¹⁹ Ruttkay 1976, 346, Fig. 72/A1; Bialeková 1977, 118–123, Fig. 2/I; Żak, Maćkowiak-Kotkowska 1988. For comparison see for example the spurs discovered on the territory of Bohemia: Profantová 1994, 60–85.

²⁰ Żak 1959, 88–105; Wachowski 1986–1987, 55–56, 70, Fig. 2; Wachowski 1987, 523–528; Poleski 1992a, 168–170, fig. 3/6–10; Poleski 1992b, 317, Fig. 1/6–10.

²¹ Żak 1959, 88–105; Wachowski 1986–1987, 52–56, Fig. 3,5; Poleski 1992a, 168–170, Fig. 3/6–10.

²² Wachowski 1986–1987, 55, Fig. 9.

²³ Żak 1959, 95, no. 22, Fig. 2h.

²⁴ Wachowski 1986–1987, 70.

²⁵ Żak 1959, 105.

²⁶ Wachowski 1987, 524–527.

²⁷ Wachowski 1987, Fig. 4/2.

²⁸ Bialeková 1977, 122.

in riveted plaques or with holes for buckles, are interpreted as chronologically subsequent to the massive bronze or iron items, decorated or plated with precious metal leaves, and are dated to the 9th century, with small chronological differences between the areas of discovery²⁹. The spur from Poland, from Tyniec n. Sleza, remains edifying for the as precise as possible dating of the item from Sfântu Gheorghe. According to the chronological identification of the first, the latter can be dated to the 8th century.

III. The pottery discovered in the pit of the dwelling consists of fragments from cooking pots made on the medium-fast potters' wheel, fragments from a handmade clay tray, and two hand mill fragments.

The pottery fragments come from at least 12 cooking pots. They were made of semi-fine fabric tempered with fine sand, but also out of coarse fabric tempered with large-grain sand. The pots are with even reduction firing, black (Pl. 1/1; Pl. 3/1; Pl. 4/3; Pl. 5/1a-b, 4) and gray (Pl. 4/1a-b), but also with semi-oxidation firing, uneven, gray-brown with brick-red spots (Pl. 2/1-2; Pl. 3/2; Pl. 4/4-5; Pl. 5/3a-b, 5). The decoration of the pots, located in the upper part, consists of networks of wavy lines (Pl. 2/1-2), networks of straight lines alternated with wavy lines (Pl. 3/1-3b), or fine networks of straight lines (Pl. 3/4-5; Pl. 4/1a), a thick wavy line followed by straight lines (Pl. 4/3), and thick wavy lines set wider apart (Pl. 5/4). The walls of the two cooking pots display an inner network of thin lines. These are most likely traces left by a working tool (small pottery broom) used for the inner finishing of the walls (Pl. 4/4b, 5/b).

There were both large and small cooking pots. The diameter of their mouths varies between 12 and 19 cm. The maximum diameter of these pots is located in the upper part of their height. Their neck is well stressed and the lip is cut straight or rounded (Pl. 2/1-2; Pl. 3/3,6; Pl. 4/3; Pl. 5/1). The bases of the pots are straight, varying in diameter between 9 and 13 cm (Pl. 2/3; Pl. 3/1; Pl. 4/1b; Pl. 5/3b).

Handmade pottery is represented by a fragment from a small clay tray made of coarse fabric tempered with large-grain sand, grayish-brown in color (Pl. 4/2).

The two sandstone fragments were once part of a hand mill used for grinding seeds or other household purposes (Pl. 5/6ab).

Dwelling no. 2/1992

The archaeological feature was discovered in area S. 1/1992. The shape of the dwelling became apparent at -1.30 m, while the floor was located at -1.50 m. It was a ground dwelling with wooden wall and roof structures. The walls were set on wooden soles, most like at the level from which the pit started. The walls were covered in clay and the roof was covered with reeds or straw. Remains of both coating materials were discovered, burnt, inside the dwelling. The construction was square, measuring 3.50 × 3.50 m. In the south-western corner it was provided with an oven in the shape of an oval hearth dug into the clay floor of the archaeological feature, measuring 0.50 × 0.30 m and -0.30 m in depth (Pl. 6/1).

The archaeological inventory of the dwelling

I. Weapons

1. Iron axe, fragmentarily preserved. Only the blade has been preserved and it is rectangular in profile. Towards the edge, the blade becomes thinner and is strongly flared, with the lower side arched more strongly than the upper side. The item has the following dimensions: $L_{\text{preserved of the blade}} = 14.5 \text{ cm}$; $l_{\text{maximum of the blade}} = 7 \text{ cm}$ (Pl. 6/4).

The axe in Sfântu Gheorghe belongs to type 4C axes from Transylvania³⁰. It can be included in one of the variants of type "balta tipus/axe/topor" suggested for the axes discovered in the Carpathian Basin³¹. Specialists mention that such axes have their origins in the Iron Age, are encountered over the entire territory and during the entire development of the Avar Khaganate in the Carpathian Basin,

²⁹ See for example: Stein 1967, I-II; Ruttkay 1976, 346-349, tip A 1-9; Bialeková 1977, 123-138, II-V; Vinski 1983, 465-501; Wachowski 1986-1987, 62-68, VI-XI; Szóke 1996, 88-96, Pl. 19/1-2, 42/5; Korošek 1999, 117 with the accompanying plates; Kouřil 2001, 241-255; Profantová 2003, 101-102 with the accompanying figures; Kavánová 2003, 369, Fig. 56.

³⁰ Cosma 2017, 118.

³¹ Szücsi 2012, 122-124, 136-137; Szücsi 2013-2014, 121-122, 140-141, 168-169. .

and are not precise ethnic or chronological indicators³². The axe found in Sfântu Gheorghe has 7th–8th centuries analogies in Lithuania³³ and Russia³⁴.

2. Iron spearhead, pyramidal in shape. The blade is narrow, oblong, and lozenge-shaped in section. The tubular socket is mostly broken and flared towards the end. The transition between socket and blade is direct, consisting of the narrowing of the socket's sides. The hole of the socket continued slightly inside the spearhead. The item has the following preserved dimensions: $L_{\text{total preserved}} = 23.5$ cm; $L_{\text{blade}} = 19$ m; $l_{\text{blade}} = 1.3$ cm; $L_{\text{preserved of socket}} = 4.5$ cm; $D_{\text{socket at the blade end}} = 2.7$ cm (Pl. 6/7).

The spearhead found in Sfântu Gheorghe isto be included in type II Csiky³⁵, P.II.B Csiky³⁶, or AC Husár³⁷. G. Csiky mentions that the spear head in question, with analogies during Antiquity, was used in the Avar world throughout the 7th and 8th centuries, with a maximum use during the latter³⁸.

II. Harness items and accessories

1. Iron bit, with the mouth piece made of two bars connected with hooks. The bars are square in section and end in a terminal ring each. The leathers loop was also preserved on one of the ends. The item has the following dimensions: $L_{\text{bars}} = 7.9$ cm, 8 cm; $Gr_{\text{bar}} = 0.7$ m; $D_{\text{socket ring}} = 4.5$ cm (Pl. 6/6).

The bit found in Sfântu Gheorghe has analogies in the Avar environment from the Carpathian Basin³⁹, the Slavic environment in Central and Eastern Europe⁴⁰, as well as in areas of Southern Europe⁴¹, in contexts dated to the 7th century.

2. Iron phalerum. The item is circular in shape. It is broken in some areas of its margin. $D = 8$ cm (Pl. 6/5). Phalera made of noble metal were discovered in Avar cemeteries dated to the end of the 7th century and during the 8th century⁴².

3–4. Iron buckles. Two iron buckles were also found in dwelling 2. The first item is a buckle with chape. It is oval in shape, with a prong rest. The chape was made of a single strap, bent over the frame. In the middle it was perforated to make place for the prong. At the ends, the chape was provided with rivet holes. The buckle measures 3.2×1.7 cm. The chape measures 3.6×2 cm (Pl. 6/3). The second buckle was rectangular, but only the loop of the prong has been preserved. The item has the following dimensions: 2.5×1.9 cm. The bar measures 0.3 mm in thickness (Pl. 6/2). Iron buckles such as those in dwelling no. 2 from Sfântu Gheorghe are items encountered in the Carpathian Basin in contexts dated to the 7th–8th centuries.

III. Gray sandstone sharpening stone, strongly used (Pl. 8/6).

IV. Pottery

Pottery fragments from about 14 cooking pots were discovered in dwelling 2. All had been made on the medium-fast potters' wheel.

The pots were made of semi-fine fabric tempered with sand, but also out of coarse fabric tempered with large-grain sand. They have even reduction firing, gray (Pl. 7/1–2), grayish-brown, black (Pl. 7/2) in color, but also uneven semi-oxidation firing, grayish-brown in color with brick-red spots (Pl. 7/ 4, Pl. 7/5ab,; 6a-b, 7; Pl. 8/1ab, 4, 7–9) or brick-red on the outside and brick-red-brown on the inside (Pl. 7/3; Pl. 8/5), or black on the inside and brick-red on the outside (Pl. 8/3).

The decoration of the pots, placed in the upper part of the body, consists of networks of wavy lines (Pl. 7/4; Pl. 8/7), networks of straight lines alternating with networks of wavy lines (Pl. 8/1a–4, 2/9a), fine networks of straight lines (Pl. 7/3, 7), or straight incised lines set apart (Pl. 7/5a; Pl. 8/8). The rim of one of the pots found in dwelling 2 is decorated with alveoli (Pl. 7/1).

³² Szücsi 2012, 122–124, 136–137; Szücsi 2013–2014, 121–122, 140–141, 168–169.

³³ Malonaitis 2001, 163–183.

³⁴ Akhmedov / Voronțov 2012, 9–54.

³⁵ Csiky 2007, 313, Abb. 4/II.

³⁶ Csiky 2015, 37, 105–108; Fig. 33.

³⁷ Husár 2014, 112–114, Obr. 2.

³⁸ Csiky 2015, 108.

³⁹ Čilinská 1966, 192; Garam 1995, 354, 358, Abb. 214/1–3; Vöröş 2015, 198–201, 204–205, Abb. 199.

⁴⁰ Kazanski 1999, 202–203, Fig. 3/6–12.

⁴¹ Bavant 2012, 143–154.

⁴² Garam 1987b, 88–93; Zábójník 2004, 53, 138, Fig. 22–23.

The cooking pots were both small and large. The mouth diameter of the latter varies between 22 and 26 cm. The maximum diameter of the cooking pots is located in the upper part of their height. Their neck is well defined and the rim is cut straight or rounded (Pl. 7/1–2, 5a). They have straight bases (Pl. 7/6; Pl. 8/5).

Dwelling no. 3/1994

Dwelling no. 3/1994 was discovered in Area S.1. The contour of the dwelling was identified at the depth of – 0.75 cm (the depth where the sterile started). The pit of the archaeological feature continued down to – 0.85 m into the sterile. The dwelling measured 3.00 m x 3.10 m, with the long axis oriented N-S. The dwelling displayed no postholes in the corners or in the middle of the sides. The corners of the feature are very slightly rounded. An entirely destroyed oven was discovered near the south-western corner of the feature. It was most likely an oven with clay walls. Few wall fragments were discovered fallen over the hearth. The latter feature, located on the level of the dwelling's floor, was rectangular and measured 0.40 cm x 0.20 cm, with the long axis oriented W-E. The lower part of the oven consisted of a crust of burnt clay measuring 0.6 cm in thickness. On top of this hearth, archaeologists discovered the fallen and crumbled clay walls. A stoking pit was identified in front of the oven, in the northern corner. The feature was rectangular in shape, measuring 0.45 x 0.20 cm, with the long axis oriented W-E. It had been dug into the dwelling's floor, with the bottom at the depth of – 1.15 cm. It was a half pit-house with the walls and the roof resting on wooden soles. The poor preservation of the oven does not allow for the reconstruction of many details regarding its exact type. It might have been an oven with clay walls. In the upper part it was probably provided with a portable clay tray (Pl. 9/1).

The archaeological inventory of the dwelling

I. Weapons

1. Iron spearhead. Wide, pear leaf-shaped blade with convergent sides, flattened oval in section. The tubular socket is flared towards the end. The socket is separated from the blade by a short and outwards arched neck. The item has the following dimensions: $L_{total} = 14.7$ cm, $L_{blade} = 8.7$ cm, $l_{maximum\ of\ blade} = 3.5$ cm, $L_{socket} = 6$ cm, $D_{socket} = 2.2$ cm (Pl. 9/5).

The spearhead in Sfântu Gheorghe belongs to type P.III.A Csiky⁴³. The author noted that most weapons of this kind from the Carpathian Basin were found in contexts dated to the Early Avar Period, but that they were also present, to smaller degrees, during the Middle and Late Avar Periods⁴⁴. The item in Sfântu Gheorghe belongs to type BD a Husár⁴⁵. In Husár's typology as well, one notes the fact that most of the items date to the Early Avar Period. Some items though were discovered in contexts dated to the Middle and Late Avar Periods in the development of the Avar Khaganate from the Carpathian Basin. The spearhead found in Sfântu Gheorghe also has analogies among such artifacts in the Slavic world dated to the 6th–7th centuries⁴⁶.

2. Iron arrowhead with tubular socket. The blade has the shape of a pear leaf, with convergent sides, oval in section. The tubular socket is flared towards the end. The tip of the socket is broken. The socket is separated from the blade by a short neck marked by the strong outwards arching of the item's sides. The arrowhead has the following dimensions: $L_{total\ preserved} = 6.3$ cm, $L_{blade} = 3.2$ cm, $l_{maximum\ of\ the\ blade} = 2$ cm, $L_{preserved\ of\ the\ socket} = 3.1$ cm, $D_{of\ the\ preserved\ socket} = 1.2$ cm (Pl. 9/2).

Arrowheads with socketing tube and leaf-shape blade such as the one in Sfântu Gheorghe, or similar to it, were found in Gepid necropolises in Transylvania⁴⁷. They can be encountered in the Late Germanic environment of the 6th–7th centuries in the south-eastern area of Transdanubia⁴⁸. The Avars adopted leaf-shaped arrowheads from the Germanics and mainly used them during the Early Avar Period⁴⁹. Even if they were not very numerous during the Post Gepid Period, arrowheads with leaf-

⁴³ Csiky 2015, 38, 112–119.

⁴⁴ Csiky 2015, 112–113.

⁴⁵ Husár 2014, 112–114, Obr. 3, Tab. XL–XLIV.

⁴⁶ Kazanski 1995–1996, 199, Fig. 1/2–3.

⁴⁷ Bârză 2010, 118; Doboş / Opreanu 2012, 46–47.

⁴⁸ Kiss 1992, I, 52, Liste 7, Karte 5, Taf. 1/3; Kiss 1996, p. 236; Bârză 2010, 118; Doboş, Opreanu 2012, 46–47.

⁴⁹ Kalmár 1945, 291; Kiss 1992, 52, Liste 7, Karte 5, Taf. 1/3; Kiss 1996, 236; Bârză 2010, 118.

shaped blade and tubular socket are set as individual type in the typology of arrows found in the Slavic-Avar necropolises of the 7th century from the Middle Danube Basin, west of the Danube, both on the left and on the right side of the river⁵⁰. Arrowheads with leaf-shaped blade and tubular socket have been discovered on a number of Slavic sites dated to the 7th–8th centuries⁵¹.

3. Iron spur. The spur is D-shape in ground plan. The bar it was made of is oval in section. The ends of the two bars are bent outwards, twisted upwards, and have thickened ends. The goad, made of the same bar as the body, is straight and quadrilateral/lozenge-shaped in section. The goad is pyramidal in shape. The item displayed traces of secondary firing. It has the following dimensions: $H_{\text{total}} = 7.5$ cm; $H_{\text{goad without neck}} = 4.9$ cm; $H_{\text{neck}} = 2.6$ cm; $l_{\text{maximum of the bars}} = 1$ cm (Pl. 9/4).

The spur from the dwelling in Sfântu Gheorghe has analogies on the territory of Transylvania in Breaza and Medișorul Mare⁵². The three spurs from Breaza, Sfântu Gheorghe, and Medișoru Mare are relatively of a simple item type that can be encountered during a relatively long period (the Dacian Period⁵³ and to a certain degree also among the Germanic spurs dated up to the 5th century⁵⁴).

The decoration technique of the items supports the dating of the spurs from Breaza and Medișoru Mare to the beginning of the Early Middle Ages. The first item was decorated with bronze inlays while the second with silver inlays. As compared to the period up to the 5th century⁵⁵, the technique in question is very often encountered over wide areas of Early Medieval Europe, but it is not a very sensitive chronological criterion for the period mentioned above⁵⁶.

Based on the shape and dimensions of the goad of the spurs from Breaza, Medișoru Mare, and Sfântu Gheorghe, the three artifacts date to a period before the 9th century. The goads were rather short before the 9th century⁵⁷. Starting with the end of the 9th century and during the subsequent period goads became considerably longer and this is an actual element of chronological identification of spurs⁵⁸. In the same context one must also note that the goads of the spurs from Breaza, Sfântu Gheorghe, and Medișoru Mare were made of the same metal bar as the body, an element that indicates in certain cases that such items are dated later, sometime between the 6th century and the beginning of the 8th century⁵⁹, by comparison to the spurs with attached goads, that are dated earlier. Also, during the 8th century, oval-shaped spurs gradually disappeared from various areas of Europe and were replaced by long U-shaped spurs⁶⁰.

In north and north-east Europe one finds examples of spurs with the ends in the shape of outer hooks, even if, due to corrosion, one of the ends in the shape of a bulb⁶¹. The items found in the above-mentioned areas, dated starting with the 7th century, provide good analogies for the shape of the body and goad of the three spurs from Breaza, Sfântu Gheorghe, and Medișoru Mare⁶². Still, there are also artifacts, such as the spur discovered on the territory of Bohemia, in Toušeň, an item dated to the 7th century, that have thickened ends, in the shape of small bulbs⁶³. Other artifacts of the same kind have coiled ends attached to the bar. They were discovered on the territory of Bavaria⁶⁴. Spurs from the latter area, found in Moos-Burgstall, have been interpreted as a derivation of the "Hakensporen"

⁵⁰ Kalmár 1945, 291; Čilinská 1973, 24; Sós, Salamon 1995, p. 73–74; Zábójník 2004, 48, 136.

⁵¹ Kazanski 1999, 200–201, Fig. 9–13.

⁵² Cosma 2013, 82–83.

⁵³ See for example: Glodariu, Iaroslavschi 1979, 126–127, fig. 73/13–16, 18–20, 25–26; Ursachi 1995, 145–146, pl. 49/1–5, 247/1–8.

⁵⁴ See for example: Žak 1959, 88–105, fig. 1; Godłowski 1994, 169–178; Kazanski 1994, 430–435.

⁵⁵ For this, see for example: Žak 1959, 88–105, fig. 1; Glodariu, Iaroslavschi 1979, 126–127; Godłowski 1994, 169–178; Kazanski 1994, 430–435; Isac 2006, 446–448, fig. 5/2a-b.

⁵⁶ See for example: Žak 1959, 88–105; Moosburgger-Leu 1971, 114–117; Ruttkey 1976, 344–352; Bialeková 1977, 103–160; Žak, Mačkowiak-Kotkowska 1988; Profantová 1994, 60–85; Kind 2002, 283–299.

⁵⁷ Žak 1959, 88–105; Ruttkey 1976, 344–352; Bialeková 1977, 103–160; Wachowski 1986–1987, 52, fig. 6–7; Žak/Mačkowiak-Kotkowska 1988; Profantová 1994, 60–85.

⁵⁸ Hilczerówna 1956; Wachowski 1986–1987, 52, fig. 6–7; Kind 2002, 288–289.

⁵⁹ Žak 1959, 88–105; Ruttkey 1976, 344–352; Bialeková 1977, 103–160; Wachowski 1986–1987, 52, fig. 6–7; Žak, Mačkowiak-Kotkowska 1988; Profantová 1994, 60–85.

⁶⁰ Žak 1959, 88–105; Ruttkey 1976, 344–349; Bialeková 1977, 135–138; Wachowski 1986–1987, 51–53, fig. 3; Wachowski 1987, 523–528, fig. 3–4.

⁶¹ For example, an item discovered in Wilno in Lithuania: Žak 1959, 95, no. 21, fig. 2g.

⁶² Žak 1959, 88–105; Poleski 1992, 168–170, fig. 3/6–10; Poleski 1992a, 317, fig. 1/6–10.

⁶³ Profantová 1994, 64–67, fig. 5.3.

⁶⁴ Freedon 1987, 522, pl. 46/11–12.

type and dated to the second half of the 7th century, more precisely towards the end of the century⁶⁵. The items from Bohemia and Bavaria are the closest analogies of the spurs from Sfântu Gheorghe, Medișoru Mare, and Breaza. According to the data presented above, the most plausible dating of the spur from Sfântu Gheorghe is the second half of the 7th century, possibly even extending to the first two or three decades of the 8th century.

4. Mobile iron bit. The two bars of the mouthpiece are funnel-shaped. The bars of the mouthpiece were made of two metal sheets, both rectangular and equal in length. They were bent in the shape of a funnel, hollow on the inside. The outer ends are larger in diameter than the inner ends. The outer ends have been cut and bent towards the inside, forming two hook-shaped loops that supported the psalia. The terminals of the inner ends are also in the shape of interlocking hooks. By bringing them together, the body of the bit displayed wide outer ends and a narrow center. No elements of the two psalia have been preserved. The item has the following dimensions: $L_{\text{of the two bars}} = 16.3$ cm; $D_{\text{large}} = 2.5$ cm; $D_{\text{small}} = 0.6$ cm (Pl. 9/3a-c).

Bits such as the one from Sfântu Gheorghe have only been discovered in a grave from the cemetery in Devínska Nová Ves, in Slovakia⁶⁶ and in Săcueni (Bihor County)⁶⁷. The latter is a stray find (probably part of a destroyed grave).

The three bits, from Sfântu Gheorghe, Devínska Nová Ves, and Săcueni are identical from a typological perspective. They differ through the material they are made of (iron – the items from Transylvania, bronze – the item from Slovakia) and through their dimensions. The psalia individualize this type of bits, though such an element was only preserved on the item from Săcueni. It is made of a ring-shaped piece of metal provided with a fan-shaped plaque. The bits from Sfântu Gheorghe and Devínska Nová Ves probably had similar psalia.

The bit from Devínska Nová Ves has a clear context of discovery that has supported its dating to the second half of the 7th century and the first decades of the 8th century. Through analogy, the two other artifacts, from Sfântu Gheorghe and Săcueni, can be dated to the same period. The dating of the bit from Sfântu Gheorghe to the second half of the 7th century and the beginning of the 8th century is also supported by the chronology of the spur with which it was associated in the dwelling. As mentioned above, the spur in question can be dated to the same interval.

II. Pottery

According to the production technique, I have identified three types of pottery in dwelling no. 2: handmade pottery; gray pottery made of the fast-turning potters' wheel; coarse pottery with oxidation or reduction firing made on the medium-fast or fast-turning potters' wheel⁶⁸.

1. Handmade pottery.

The handmade pottery fragments belong to four upper parts of cooking pots (Pl. 10/1–4) and four pot bases (Pl. 11/1–4). They were made of the same fabric, tempered with micro-gravel and only in some cases, macro-gravel⁶⁹. The pots were very well fired, with very hard walls. The pots are gray, with even reduction firing. None of the handmade pottery fragments are decorated. On the inner side of one of the fragments one notes traces of a spatula or fingers, in the shape of vertical stripes, created during the finishing stage (Pl. 10/22).

The entire lot of handmade pottery discovered in the dwelling consists of handleless cooking pots. The pots have symmetrical bodies, ovoid or bitronconic in shape. According to their upper part, one can distinguish between two types. The first consists of cooking pots with short neck, strongly arched outwards, almost obliquely, and rounded lip. The mouth diameter of items included in this type varies between 10.3 cm and 12 cm (Pl. 10/2–4). The second type consists of a small cooking pot with a tall neck and the lip slightly pulled outwards, cut straight. Its mouth diameter measures 9 cm (Pl. 10/1).

Some of the pot bases are much thicker than the upper part (Pl. 11/1–2). In others, the walls are not thicker in the lower part, proof that the potters attempted to preserve an even wall thickness from

⁶⁵ Freeden 1987, 522, 559–561, pl. 46/11–12.

⁶⁶ Eisner 1952, 38, M. 113, Pl. 29/5.

⁶⁷ Cosma 2002, 222, nr. 176, Pl. 221/1.

⁶⁸ Regarding the terminology see: Cosma 2011, 51–52.

⁶⁹ Regarding the terminology see: Cosma 2011, 51–52.

lip to base (Pl. 11/3–4). In the case of most of the cooking pots, the angle between the wall and the base is straight. Some pots display a flat base on the outside (Pl. 11/2). There are also pots that display a slight concavity of the base on the inside (Pl. 11/1,3–4). The walls of the handmade pot bases have a smaller (Pl. 3/1) or wider (Pl. 3/2–4) opening towards the upper part.

2. Thin-walled gray pottery made on the fast-turning potters' wheel.

The lot consists of three fragments from the upper part of three cooking pots (Pl. 12/1–3), six cooking pot bases (Pl. 13/1–2; Pl. 14/1–4), as well as several fragments from pot walls (Pl. 13/3–6). The pottery made on the fast-turning potters' wheel discovered inside the dwelling displays inner grooves that are finger marks left during the process of fast turning the potters' wheel⁷⁰. The pottery fragments are walls from the upper part of pots, but also pot bases. Almost all of the pots had thin walls. Most of the pots were made of fine fabric, tempered with sand (Pl. 12; Pl. 13/1,3–4, 6; 14/1,3–4). There are also several pot fragments with thicker walls, made of fabric tempered with micro-gravel (Pl. 13/2,5; 14/2).

The pottery had reduction firing and the shards are gray in color. The first ornament consists of lines incised with a sharp tip, vertical and almost parallel, on the body of the pots (Pl. 12/3; 13/5). Another ornament consists of wide vertical and horizontal grooves traced on the surface of the pots by finger (Pl. 12/1; 13/3, 5) and by spatula (Pl. 12/2; 13/4).

From a typological perspective, the pottery fragments from the upper part of the pots belong to a type of globular cooking pots (Pl. 12/3) and to pear-shaped pots (Pl. 12/1–2). The bases belong to globular cooking pots (Pl. 13/1–2; Pl. 14).

3–4. Coarse pottery, with oxidation or reduction firing, decorated, made on the medium-fast and fast-turning potters' wheel (generically also called "Danubian-type pottery")⁷¹.

1. Pottery made on the medium-fast potters' wheel⁷² is only attested by pot walls, without necks or lips, as well as a cooking pot base (Pl. 15/1–6).

2. A single pot was made on the fast-turning potters' wheel⁷³. It is a pot base with inner grooves that the potter made with his fingers while fast turning the wheel (Pl. 15/7).

Indifferent to the type of potters' wheel employed in their manufacture, the cooking pots were made of fabric tempered with large or small-grain sand. They were well fired in reduction atmosphere. The pot fragments are grayish-brown in color. A single pot has semi-oxidation firing. The outer surface is dark brick-red.

The walls of the pots are decorated with horizontal stripes consisting of wavy lines alternating with stripes consisting of straight lines (Pl. 15/4–5). Another ornament is made of stripes of undulating horizontal lines intersecting as to form "eyes" (Pl. 15/1). There are also pot fragments decorated only with stripes of horizontal striations (Pl. 15/2) or wide horizontal grooves (Pl. 15/3). The lower part of the cooking pots was left undecorated (Pl. 15/6–7).

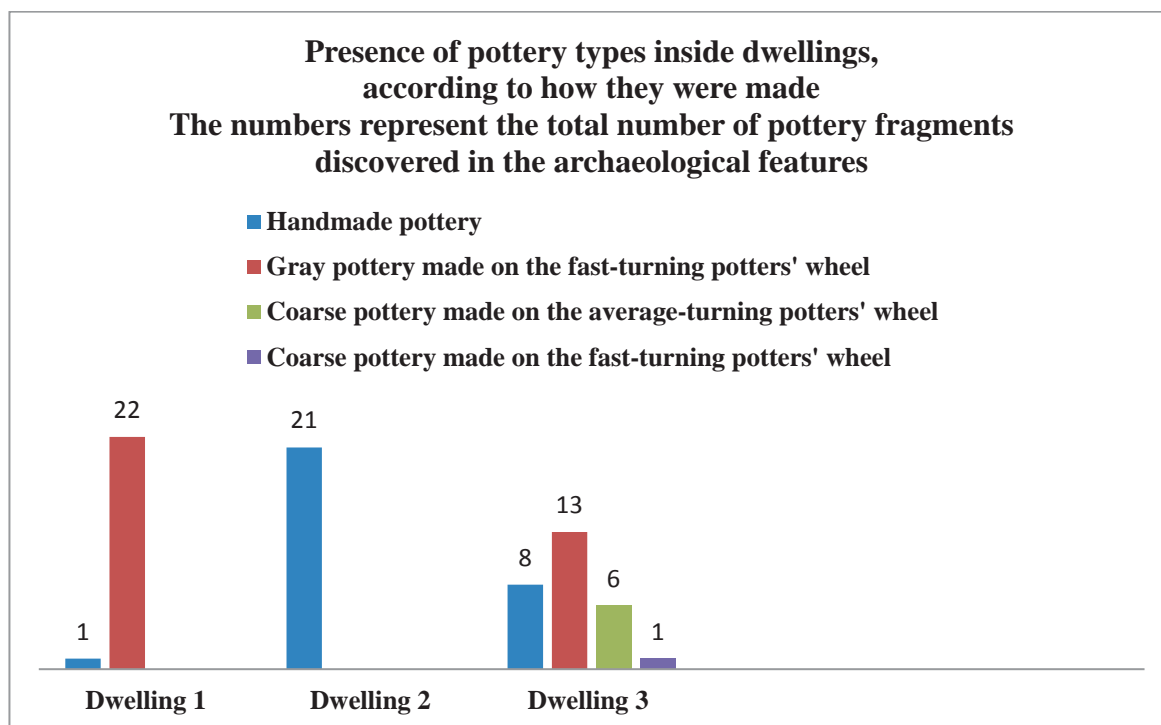
Notes on the pottery discovered in the dwellings with weapons from the settlement in Sfântu Gheorghe. The pottery discovered in the three dwellings from Sfântu Gheorghe was made by hand, on the fast-turning potters' wheel and on the slow-turning potters' wheel. As for the pottery manufactured on the fast-turning potters' wheel, one notes two types: gray pottery with thin walls and coarse pottery of the Danubian type, with thick walls. Handmade pots were only found in dwelling no. 3, while dwelling no. 1 has revealed one fragment from a small clay tray, also made by hand. Gray pottery, both with thin and thick walls, made on the fast-turning potters' wheel, was only discovered in dwelling 3. Fragments of pots made on medium-fast potters' wheel were discovered in all of the three dwellings from Sfântu Gheorghe (Gr. 1).

⁷⁰ Regarding the terminology see: Cosma 2011, 51–52.

⁷¹ Staňa 1995, 85–95.

⁷² Regarding the terminology employed describing the cooking pots according to the potters' wheel used in their production see: Cosma 2011, 51–52.

⁷³ Regarding the terminology employed describing the cooking pots according to the potters' wheel used in their production see: Cosma 2011, 51–52.



Handmade pottery from dwelling 3 in Sfântu Gheorghe has analogies dated to the 6th–7th centuries⁷⁴. The evolved shape of the upper part of the cooking pots (well-defined neck, out-pulled lip), suggest, according to the typological correspondences, that the lot should be dated to the 7th century, possibly even to the second half of the period⁷⁵.

Fine or coarse gray pottery with thin walls, made on the fast-turning potters' wheel such as the one found in dwelling 3 from Sfântu Gheorghe has analogies during the Gepid Period⁷⁶ or in the Merovingian civilization⁷⁷. The presence of fine or coarse gray pottery made on the fast-turning potters' wheel in Transylvania during the second half of the 7th century on archaeological sites still raises numerous questions. The fact that this type of pottery is attested in Sfântu Gheorghe in association with "Danubian-type" pottery⁷⁸ supports the hypothesis that it continued to be in use until the end of the 7th century.

Coarse pottery made on the slow and fast-turning potters' wheel, with thick walls, both plain and decorated, found in the north-western area of Romania and dated to the first decades of the 7th century⁷⁹, provides no typological analogies for the pottery in Sfântu Gheorghe, but it stresses the use of the potters' wheel ever since the first decades of the 7th century. The phenomenon thus also provides technological analogies for the geographic areas close to North-West Romania, such as the Transylvanian Plateau.

In Transylvania, pottery made on the medium-fast potters' wheel such as the one from the dwellings in Sfântu Gheorghe is dated at the earliest during the second half of the 7th century and is specific to the subsequent centuries. The chronological observations are made according to the dating of the pottery discovered in cemeteries⁸⁰ as well as in several Transylvanian settlements dated to the Early Middle Ages⁸¹. Pottery made on the fast-turning potters' wheel, represented in Sfântu Gheorghe by a

⁷⁴ Teodor 1978, 43–45; Vida 1999, 137–147; Kuna, Profantová 2005, 338–342; Harhoiu, Baltag 2006, 41–353; Cosma 2011, 52–61; Stanciu 2011, 171–245.

⁷⁵ Vida 1999, 147, tip IIID9, fig. 59.

⁷⁶ Bóna, Nagy 2002; Cseh *et al.* 2005; Tóth 2006; Bârză 2010, 53–72; Dobos, Opreanu 2012, 54–56.

⁷⁷ Schnitzler *et al.* 2009.

⁷⁸ Staňa 1995, 85–95.

⁷⁹ Stanciu 2011, 245–254.

⁸⁰ Horedt 1976, 35–57; Horedt 1979, 385–394; Horedt 1986, 60–66; Horedt 1987, 12–14; Cosma 2011, 61–102.

⁸¹ Zaharia 1994–1995, 301–314, 321–328; Stanciu, Matei 1994, 140–148; Cosma 2002, 35–37, 39–42; Stanciu 2011, 247–250.

pot base discovered in dwelling 3 (Pl. 7/7), is encountered in Transylvanian necropolises dated only starting with the second half of the 7th century⁸².

The types of pottery discovered in the dwellings from Sfântu Gheorghe met during a certain moment in time and this allows for the dating of the entire pottery lot from the archaeological features to the second half of the 7th century and the first half of the 8th century. The association of the three pottery types (handmade; gray, made on the fast-turning potters' wheel; coarse, decorated, wheel-thrown) has been noted ever since 1954, following the first researches performed on the "Pe Seș" plateau in Sfântu Gheorghe. Since the stratigraphic situation was not very clear, the association of the three pottery types was not valorized much from a scientific perspective. But in 1954 as well, the features or culture layer where the three pottery fragments were discovered was also dated to the 7th century⁸³.

Chronology. The three dwellings in Sfântu Gheorghe were habitation features of the very shallow pit-house type. They were square or rectangular in shape, with the inhabitable area measuring: 7.8 m² - Dwelling 1; 7 m² - Dwelling 2; and 6.10 m² - Dwelling 3. The upper structure was made of wood. The wooden walls rested on wooden soles, most likely placed at ground level, where the excavation of the pit started. They had gable roofs. The wooden skeleton of the roofs supported reed or straw coverings. The walls of the dwellings were covered in clay. The shape of the three dwellings in Sfântu Gheorghe and their hypothetic upper structure can be encountered in closer or more distant geographic areas to the archaeological site in Sfântu Gheorghe, including parts of Eastern and Western Europe⁸⁴. From a temporal perspective, the analogies cover a longer period, as they can be encountered as late as the 7th-8th centuries⁸⁵.

All three dwellings had fire installations. The first oven is of the type dug into the wall of the dwelling, with the walls and the hearth lined with stone slabs (L. 1). The second type of oven consists of an oval hearth dug into the dwelling's floor (L. 2). The third fire installation is an oven with clay walls erected from the level of the floor upwards. It is possible that the upper part of this oven was covered with a clay tray. The oven was also provided with a stoking pit (L. 3). The three types of ovens have analogies dated to the 7th-8th centuries in a wide geographic area of Europe⁸⁶.

From a quantitative perspective, the pottery made on the medium-fast turning potters' wheel is the most numerous, representing 75% of the total, followed by gray pottery made on the fast-turning potters' wheel, of Germanic origin, that represents 20%, handmade pottery that represents 3%, and thick-walled pottery made on the fast-turning potters' wheel that represents 2% (Gr. 2). Though the statistic above is not a very exact chronological criterion, it supports the dating of the entire pottery lot from the dwellings in Sfântu Gheorghe to the second half of the 7th century and the first half of the 8th century⁸⁷.

The metal artifacts discovered in the three dwellings from Sfântu Gheorghe allow one to narrow down the chronology of the archaeological features to the 670-850 period. Their dating since the end of the 7th century is supported by the spur and the bit in dwelling 3. The spearhead and phalera from dwelling 2 and the spur from dwelling 1 are representative for the first half of the 8th century.

⁸² Cosma 2011, 102-108.

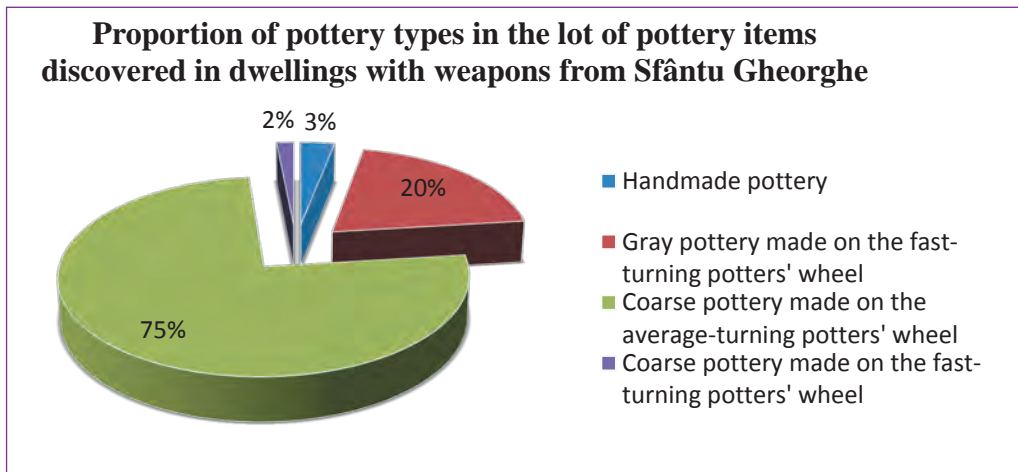
⁸³ Hordt 1955, 661-662.

⁸⁴ For the different construction systems of early medieval settlements see for example: Chapelot, Fossier 1985, 33-135; Cosma 1996, 264-274, with the bibliography; Pleinerová 2000, 35-40; Šalkovský 2001; Cosma 2002, 28-33, with the bibliography; Tóth 2006; Kuna, Profantová 2005, 324-329; Harhoiu, Baltag 2006, 19-25; Vizauer 2008, 19-118; Stanciu 2011, 110-163.

⁸⁵ For example: Chapelot, Fossier 1985, 33-135; Cosma 1996, 264-274, with the bibliography; Pleinerová 2000, 35-40; Šalkovský 2001; Cosma 2002, 28-33, with the bibliography; Tóth 2006; Kuna, Profantová 2005, 324-329; Harhoiu, Baltag 2006, 19-25; Vizauer 2008, 19-118; Stanciu 2011, 110-163.

⁸⁶ For the different types of ovens from the Early Middle Ages see for example: Cosma 1996, 264-274, with the bibliography; Pleinerová 2000, 35-40; Šalkovský 2001; Cosma 2002, 28-33, with the bibliography; Tóth 2006; Kuna, Profantová 2005, 324-329; Harhoiu, Baltag 2006, 19-25; Vizauer 2008, 19-118; Stanciu 2011, 110-163.

⁸⁷ For the dating of early medieval pottery according to the criterion of the proportion between lots with different production techniques (handmade, wheel-thrown on the fast-turning or medium-fast turning potters' wheel) discovered in the same closed feature or archaeological site, see: Stanciu, Matei 1994, 135-155; Stanciu 2000, 127-191; Cosma 2002, 35-42.



In conclusion, according to the data presented above, the three dwellings with weapons from the settlement in Sfântu Gheorghe can be included from a chronological perspective to the period between 650 and 750 AD.

Interpretation of the archaeological discoveries. For archaeologists, the discovery of several metal objects that can be attributed to a warrior besides pottery in a dwelling is exception for the simple reason that discoveries of this kind, such as those in Sfântu Gheorghe, are missing on the territory of Transylvania for the beginning of the Early Middle Ages. Weapons, military equipment items, and elements of horse tack have only been discovered so far inside graves from the cemeteries of Transylvania dated to the 7th–8th centuries.

I believe the discoveries from Sfântu Gheorghe allow for no speculation regarding the connection between the items and the existence of warriors in the early medieval settlement in the Mureş Valley. The fact that items that can be attributed to warriors were discovered in the three dwellings can be connected to a strong fire that affected the entire 7th–8th centuries settlement in Sfântu Gheorghe, including the three dwellings. The fire, demonstrated by the large quantity of ash from the pits of the archaeological features and from the culture layer, as well as the metal items and the pottery (all with strong traces of secondary firing) discovered on the floor of the dwellings and not at the level where the features became apparent, was very likely the reason why the iron items were not recovered by their owners. The fire could have been accidental, but the dwellings might have also caught fire during a military attack.

The dwellings are usual for the 7th–8th centuries. They are no different than the other dwellings from the settlement in Sfântu Gheorghe dated to the 7th and 8th centuries. Had there been no metal items that could be attributed to warriors, the features might have been included in the category of dwellings used by the common members of the community. Nevertheless, the weapons and elements of military equipment discovered in these dwellings supports the idea that warriors lived in the 7th–8th centuries settlement in Sfântu Gheorghe.

It is difficult to attribute the dwellings in Sfântu Gheorghe to any one of the ethnic groups that succeeded each other in the Mureş Valley during the Early Middle Ages. The bit discovered in the archaeological feature of dwelling no. 2 is an item that cannot be yet attributed with certainty to any single cultural environment of the Early Middle Ages. Such bits can be encountered both in the Slavic and the Avar environments. The bit found in dwelling 3 is an artifact of a type that was discovered in Slovakia in a Slavic-Avar cemetery. The spurs from dwellings 1 and 3 feature in the Slavic environment. The backsword, the spearhead, and the phalera feature in the Avar environment. The arrowhead from dwelling 3 is an item that originates in the Germanic environment and was adopted by the Avars. The spearhead from dwelling 1 is of a type encountered both in the Slavic and the Avar worlds. The handmade pottery can be attributed to the Slavic ethnic groups. The fine gray ware pottery made on the fast-turning potters' wheel found in the dwellings from Sfântu Gheorghe can be encountered in Germanic settlements.

I believe the actual ethnic identity of those who used the weapons and harness items discovered in the features from Sfântu Gheorghe is not eventhat important. The pieces of evidence that document

the presence of warriors in a settlement dated to the beginning of the Early Middle Ages in the Mureș Valley are significant.

Very few weapons and harness items have been discovered in the Transylvanian settlements that can be dated to the 7th–8th centuries. The few discovered items were only found in the culture layers of settlements. An example of this are a series of spurs discovered in Transylvania⁸⁸ or arrowheads that can be dated to the 5th–7th centuries⁸⁹. There are also exceptions to the above-mentioned rule. In the settlement from Medișoru Mare (Harghita County), a dwelling usual for the 7th–8th centuries has revealed a spur and a psalium. The silver-plated spur can be attributed to a warrior, even a leader of Slavic-origin⁹⁰. No weapons or harness items feature in Gepid settlements either⁹¹, nor do they in the settlements dated to the 7th century on the territory of Hungary⁹². On the other hand, settlements with a series of harness items that can be dated to the 6th–7th centuries have been discovered on the territory of Serbia⁹³.

The fact that no weapons or harness items were found in 6th–8th centuries settlements from Transylvania or that they are very few in the culture layers of the settlements is very usual for the era in question. The explanation resides in the fact that the military and political leaders of the Early Middle Ages, their military retinues, including the common warriors displayed their social rank through the deposition of an entire array of status symbols in their graves, including weapons and harness items. The heirs of the deceased placed in the grave all the objects that belonged to the deceased during his lifetime (jewelry items, dress accessories, weapons and harness items, in many cases clay pots as well)⁹⁴. It is thus natural that such archaeological materials are missing from the settlements. Those found inside settlements are lost objects or items that, for various reasons, their owners were unable to recover. The absence of weapons and harness items in settlements can also have other causes, such as those pertaining to the social stratification on the level of the era's communities.

The natural question is where did warriors in Transylvania live in the beginning of the Early Middle Ages and how did their dwellings look like.

The significance of the dwellings in Sfântu Gheorghe, with their archaeological inventory specific to common warriors, becomes apparent at this stage of the present analysis. Their importance derives from the simple fact that for the area of Transylvania during the 7th–8th centuries the features in question can certainly be interpreted as the habitat of warriors. The situation from Sfântu Gheorghe is singular in Transylvania among settlements dated to the 6th–8th centuries.

Warriors probably lived permanently in the settlement from Sfântu Gheorghe. The existing sources mention that after the disastrous defeat of 626 of the Avars under the walls of Constantinople, everyday life in the south-eastern area of the Avar Khaganate started to stabilize. Many of the nomad tribes went through a slow process of sedentarization, noticeable especially during the 8th century⁹⁵. Naturally, warriors did not disappear as social class in Avar society. One may presume that the common warriors in the Avar army were camped in settlements together with their families.

It is difficult to mention if during peaceful times these warriors engaged in other activities as well, such as agricultural ones, or were taken care of by the communities where they lived and only had to control or survey the area of those settlements. They fulfilled their mission in the name of a central Avar authority. The Avar elite, concentrated in small power centers located in various areas on the territory of Transylvania, controlled and surveyed the Transylvanian plateau through the mediation of Avar warriors, but also warriors of other ethnic origins⁹⁶.

For the Balkan area during the 6th–7th century one can suspect that warriors lived side by side with peasants, sharing the same settlements, in a "militarization of the rural environment"⁹⁷. Such a phenomenon might have also taken place on the level of Avar society in Transylvania. When central

⁸⁸ Cosma 2013, 79–102.

⁸⁹ Bărzu 1994–1995, 260–261.

⁹⁰ Székely 1988, 170–171, fig. 20.1; Cosma 2013, 89–90.

⁹¹ Tóth 2006.

⁹² Bóna 1973, 58–79.

⁹³ Bavant 2012, 143–144, 152–153.

⁹⁴ Cosma 2011, 121–133; Cosma *et al.* 2013.

⁹⁵ Daim 2003, 465–570.

⁹⁶ Cosma *et al.* 2013.

⁹⁷ Curta 2013, 831, 837.

authority, in this case the Avar one, became engaged in wars or plunder and looting incursions, the warriors from the rural settlements were called upon/reunited in gangs of warriors that formed the Avar army.

I believe that the three dwellings from Sfântu Gheorghe, dated to 670–750, represent the first bench mark in the reconstruction of the dwellings used by common warriors during the 7th–8th centuries in the Transylvanian plateau. The military leaders, the upper-class warriors, their wives and concubines, as well as the important members of their military retinues of 6th–8th centuries Transylvania lived in larger, better furnished dwellings, with a higher level of inner comfort (none of which have been discovered as yet). In the case of these important individuals in the era's hierarchy one can also take into consideration the existence of mobile yurts, provided with all required comfort that left few archaeological traces after they were moved.

The dwellings of common warriors and their families were much more modest as compared to those of the elites. Their use of yurts cannot be excluded in this case either, but common warriors came in direct contact with the population of the Transylvanian villages in order to control and be supported by the rural communities. It is thus natural that the common warriors in question adapted and adopted the living conditions of the communities they were defending.

The three archaeological features from Sfântu Gheorghe are an example of this. They were common dwellings, of the pit-house type, with fire installations, like the others in that settlement. I do not think one should expect that in the 7th–8th centuries villages of Transylvania common warriors lived in highly sophisticated dwellings, large or with special facilities. The reverse situation cannot be excluded in the case of the Avar leaders and their military retinues.

The modest character of the dwellings in Sfântu Gheorghe, from the perspective of their architecture or inner furnishings, lacking special elements of comfort, indicates that common warriors were used to a modest lifestyle and minimal comfort, specific to the communities of the 7th and 8th centuries in the Transylvanian Plateau.

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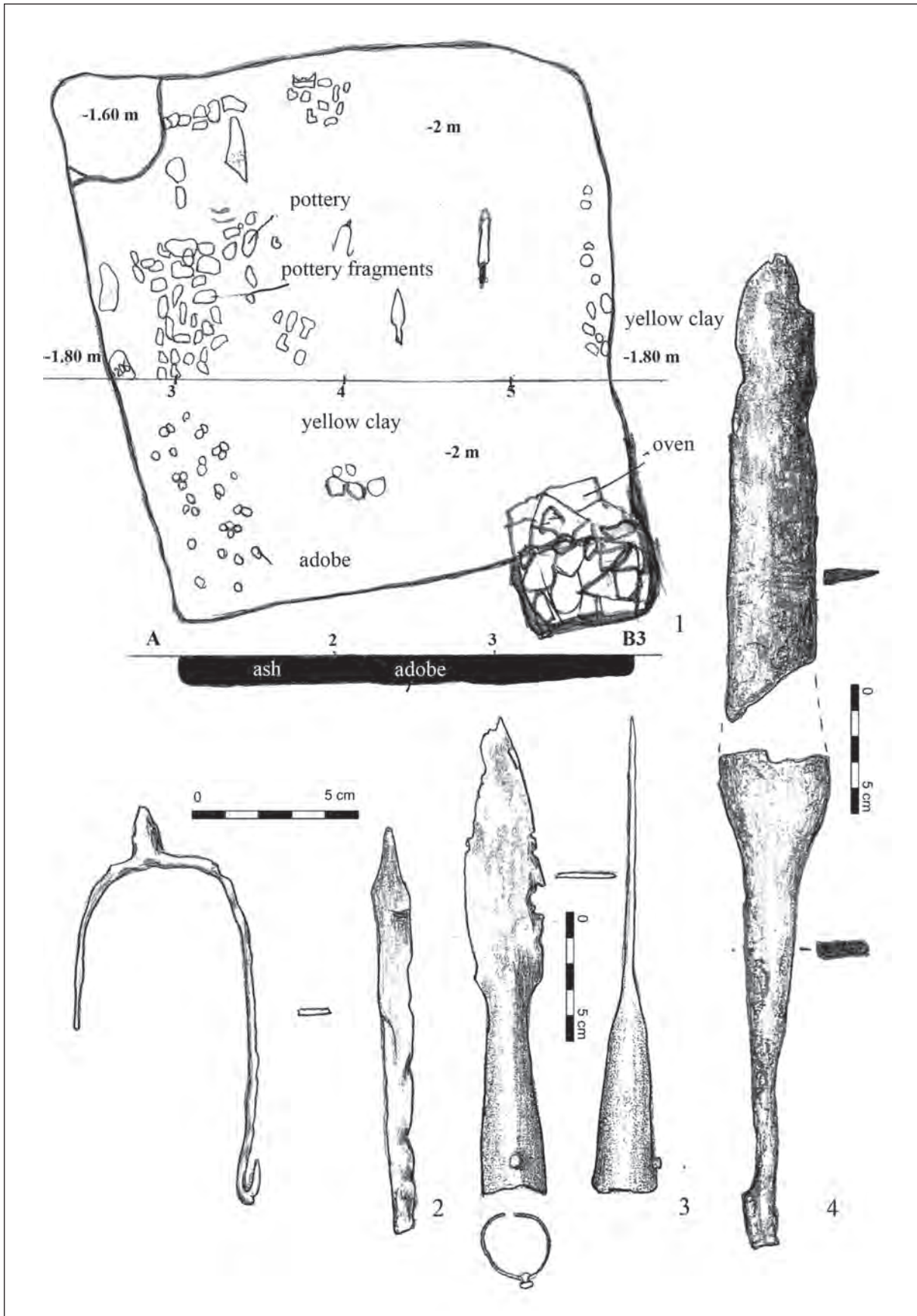


Plate 1. Dwelling 1/1990; 1 – Ground plan of dwelling 1/1990; 2

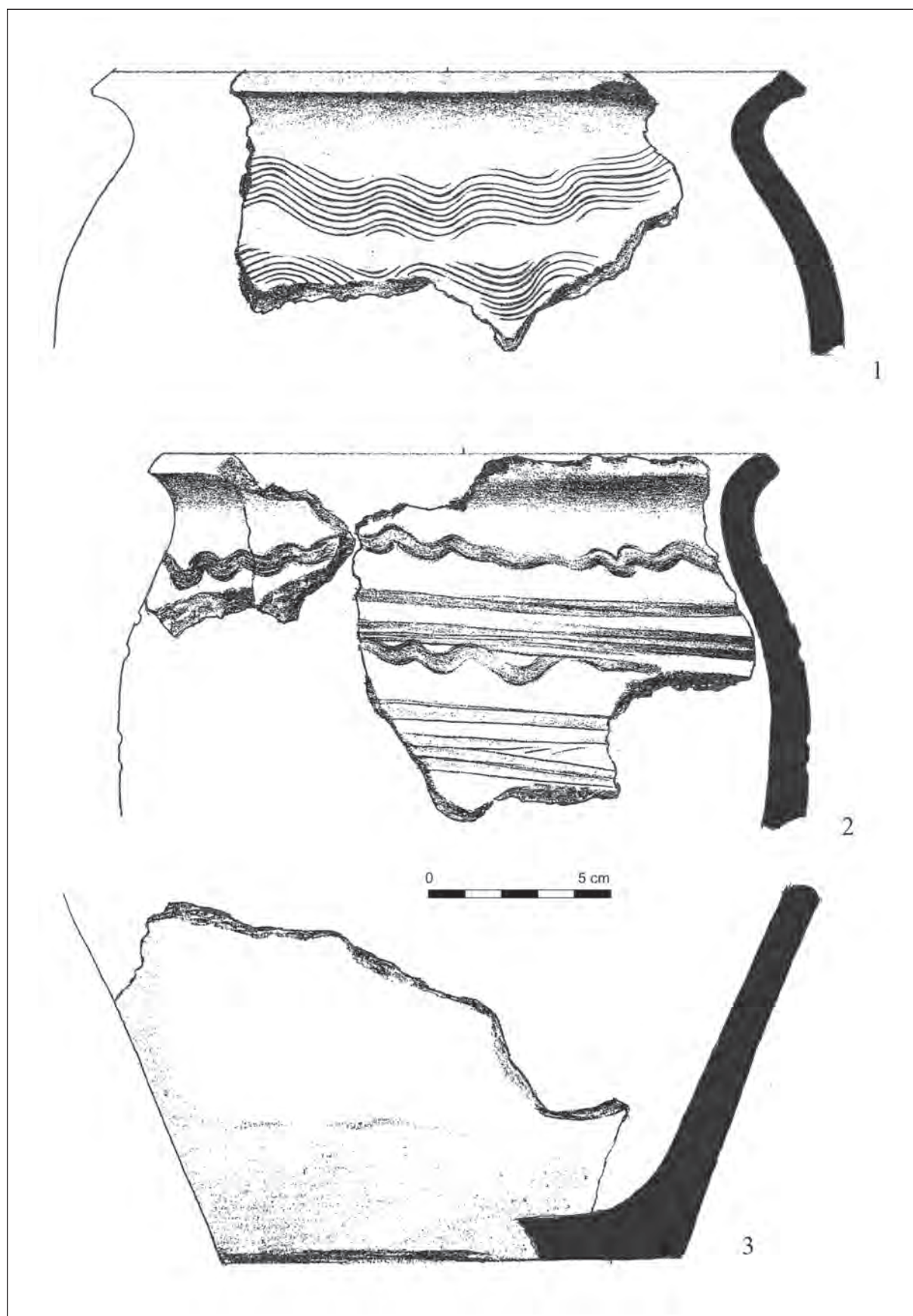


Plate 2. Dwelling 1/1990; 1-3 – Pottery made on the average-turning potters' wheel.

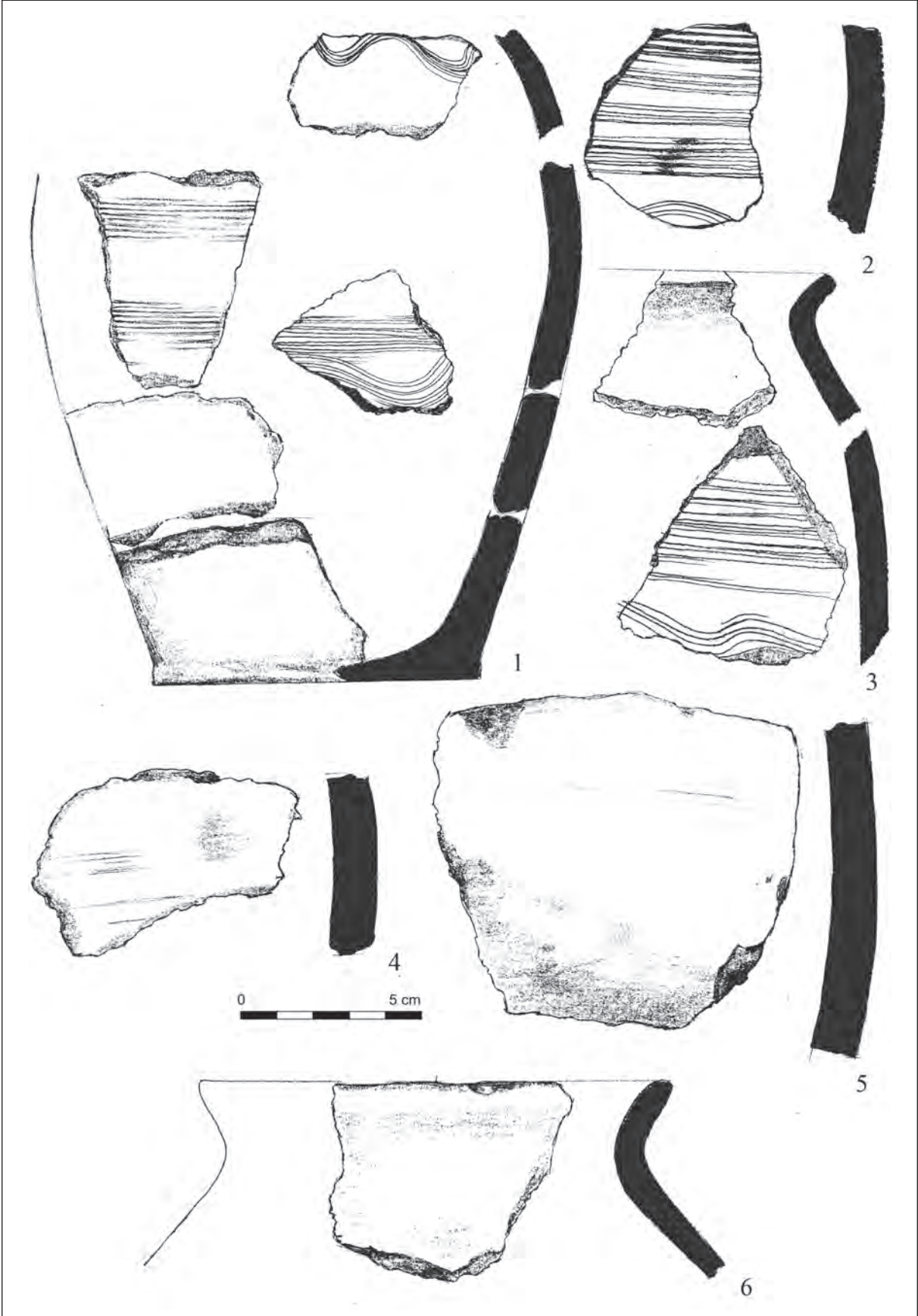


Plate 3. Dwelling 1/1990; 1-6 – Pottery made on the average-turning potters' wheel.

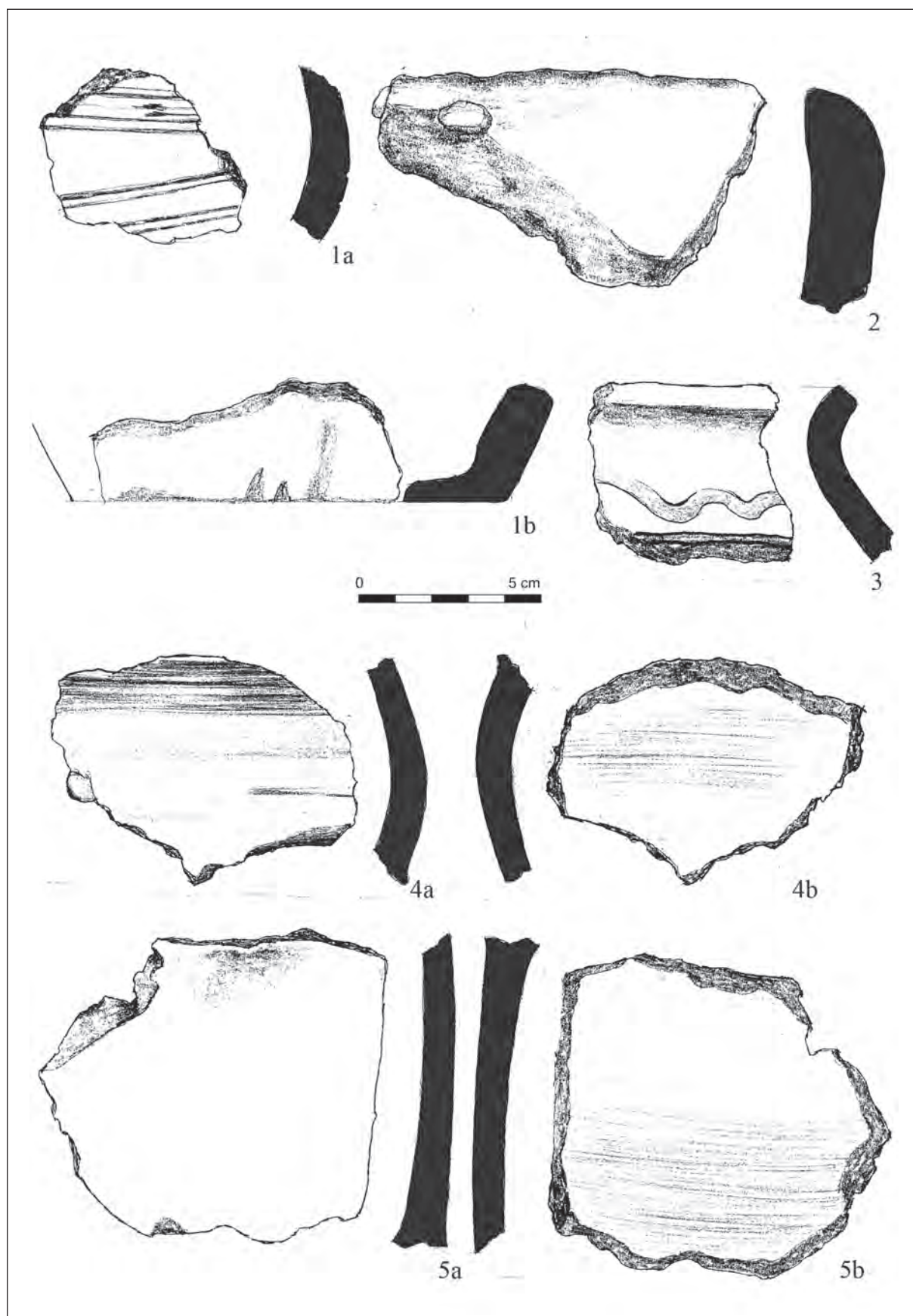


Plate 4. Dwelling 1/1990; 1,3-5 – Pottery made on the average-turning potters' wheel; 4 – Handmade clay tray.

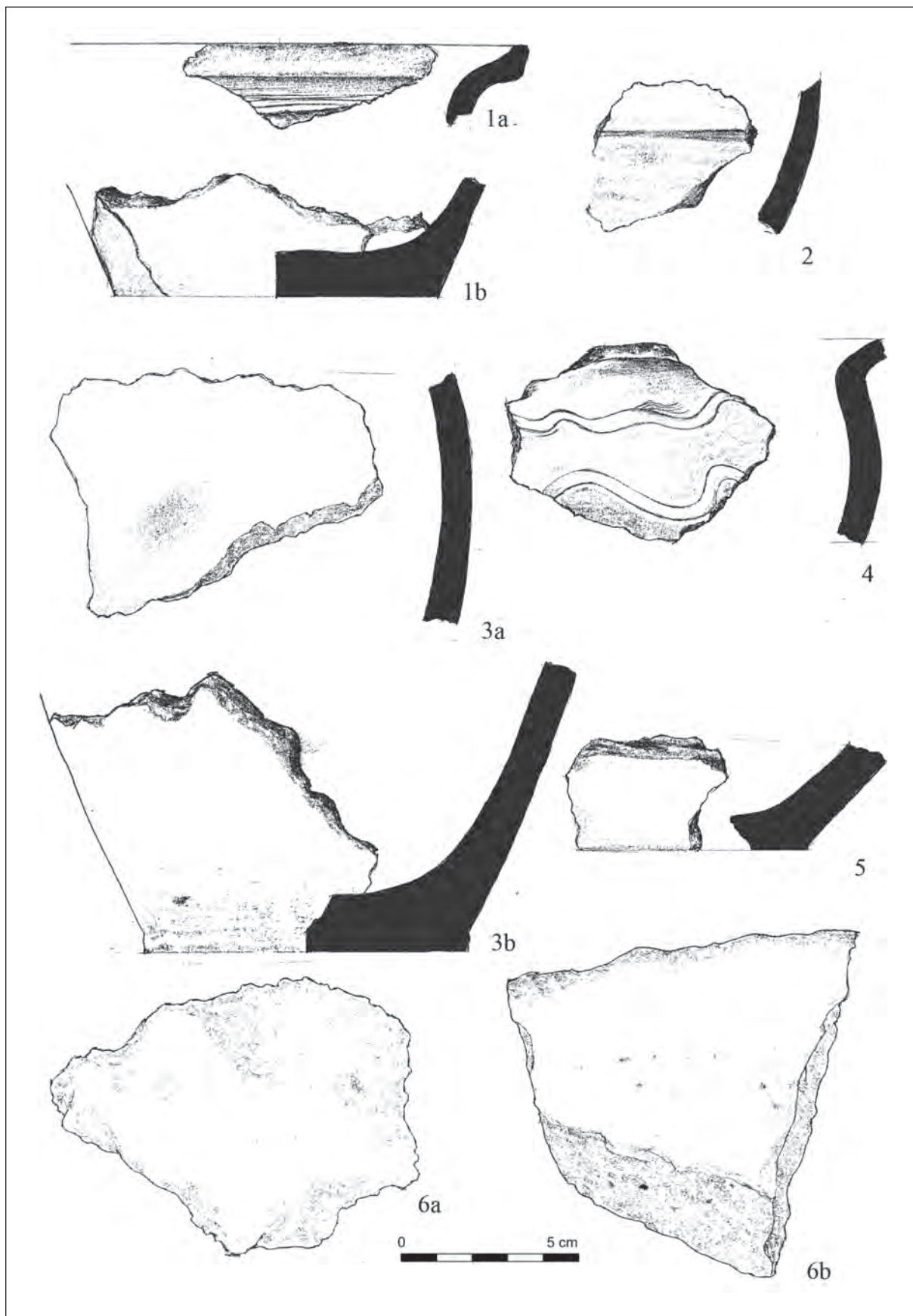


Plate 5. Dwelling 1/1990; 1-5 – Pottery made on the average-turning potters' wheel; 6 – Hand mill fragments.

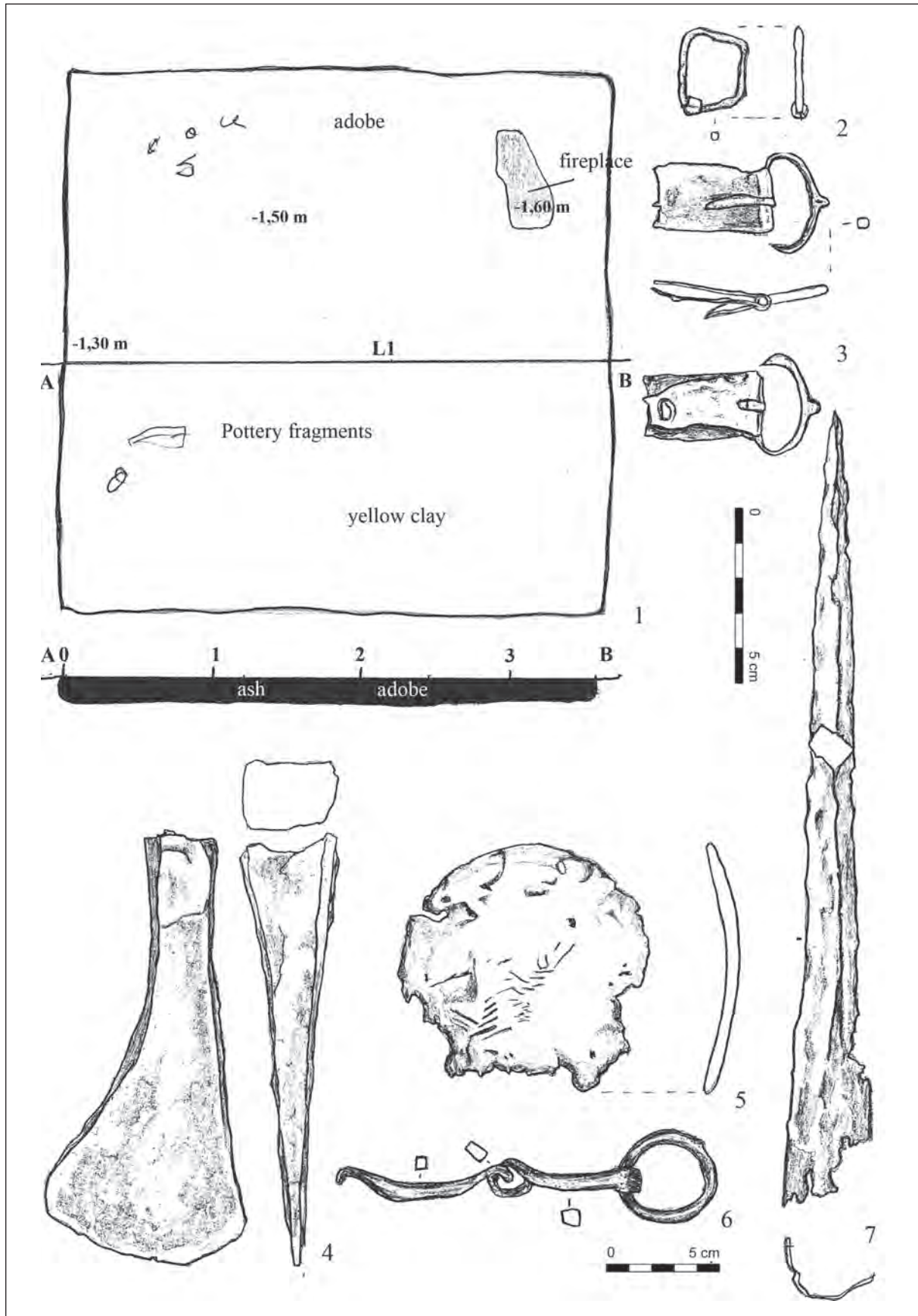


Plate 6. Dwelling 2/1992; 1 – Ground plan of dwelling 2/1992; 2-3 – iron buckles; 4 – iron axe; 5 – iron phalera; 6 – iron bit; 7 – iron spearhead.

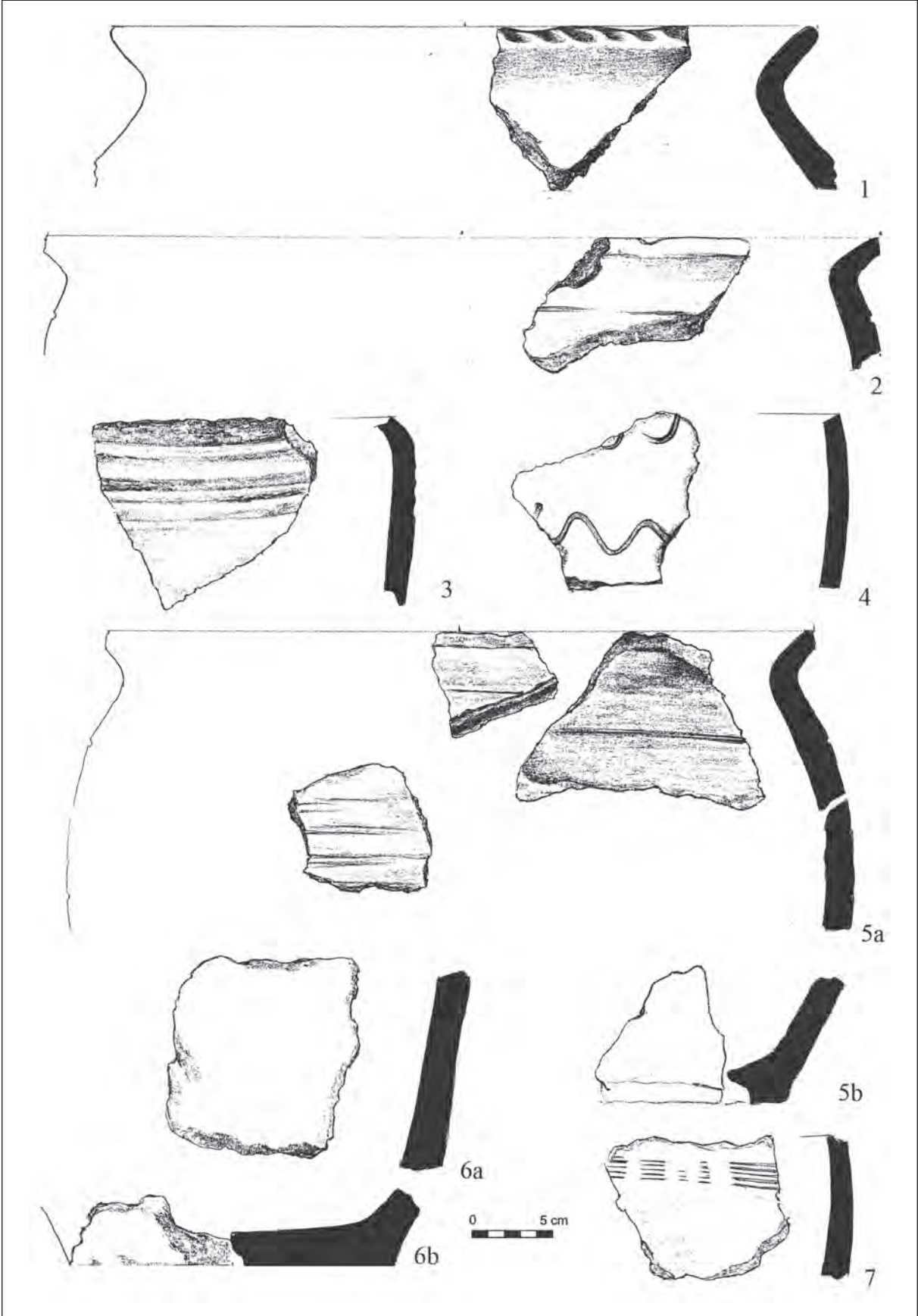


Plate 7. Dwelling 2/1992; 1-7 – Pottery made on the average-turning potters' wheel.

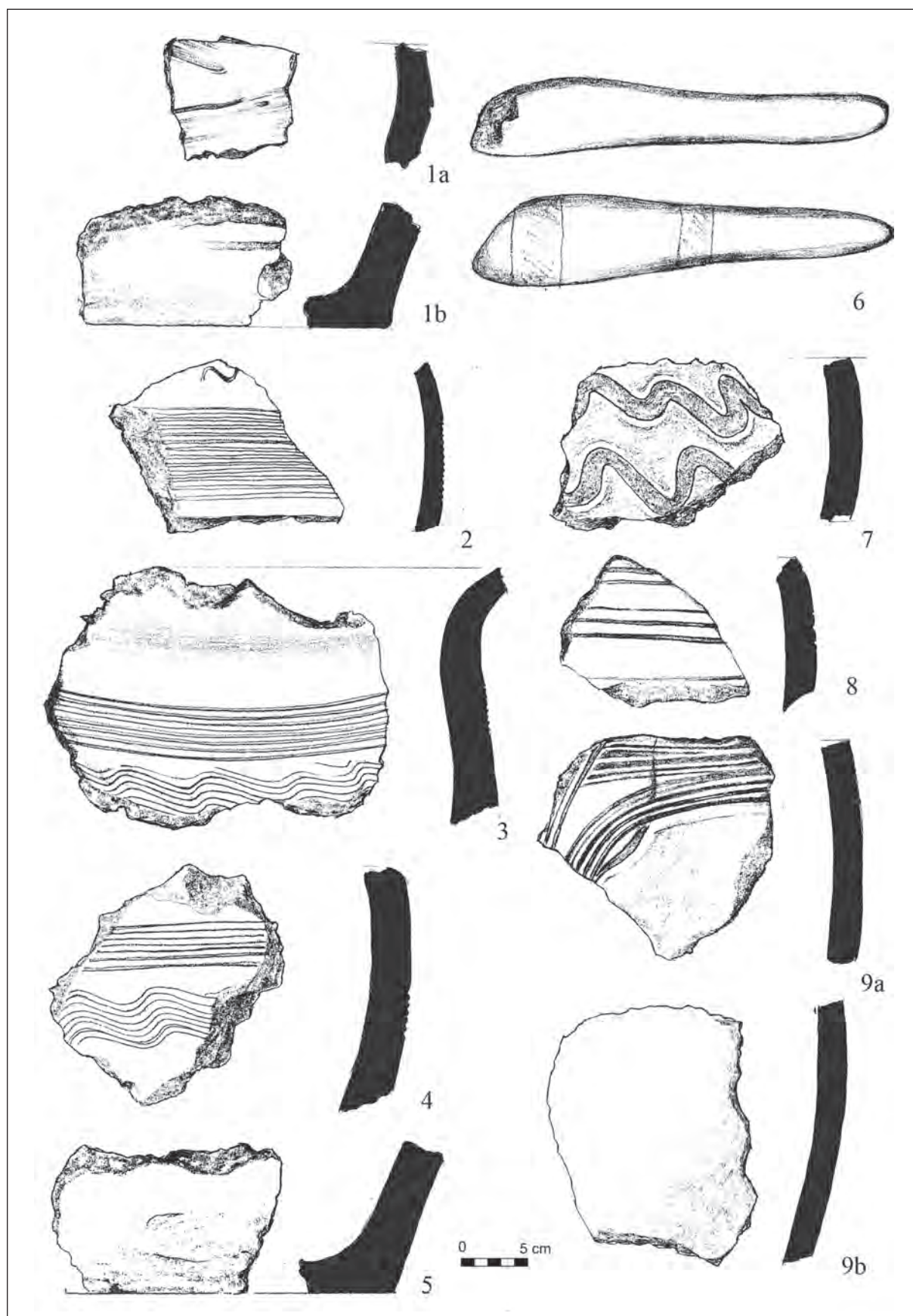


Plate 8. Dwelling 2/1992; 1-5, 7-9 – Pottery made on the average-turning potters' wheel; 6 – sandstone sharpening stones.

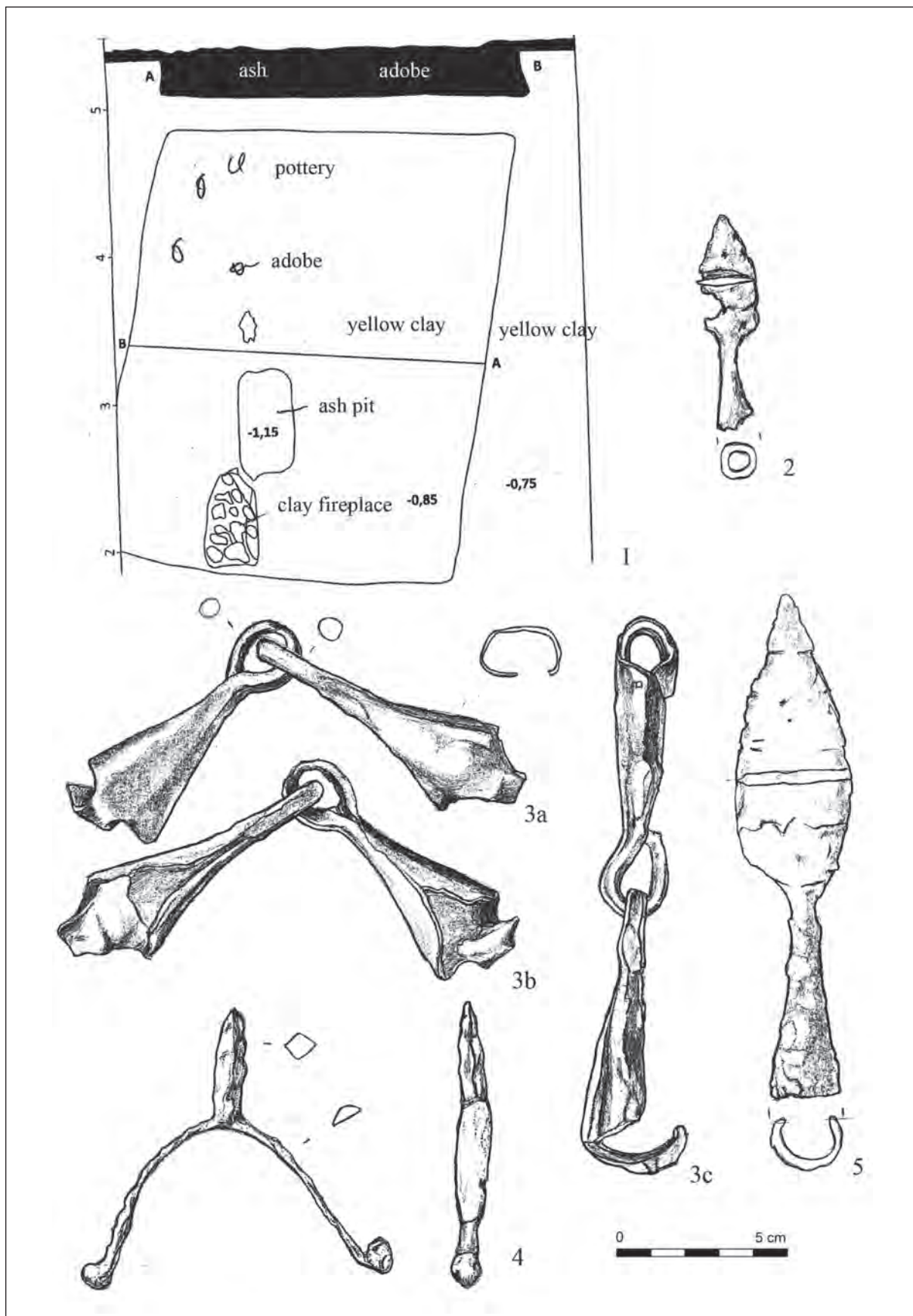


Plate 9. Dwelling 3/1994; 1 – Ground plan of dwelling 3/1994; 2 – iron arrowhead; 3a-c iron bit; 4 – iron spur; 5 – iron spearhead.

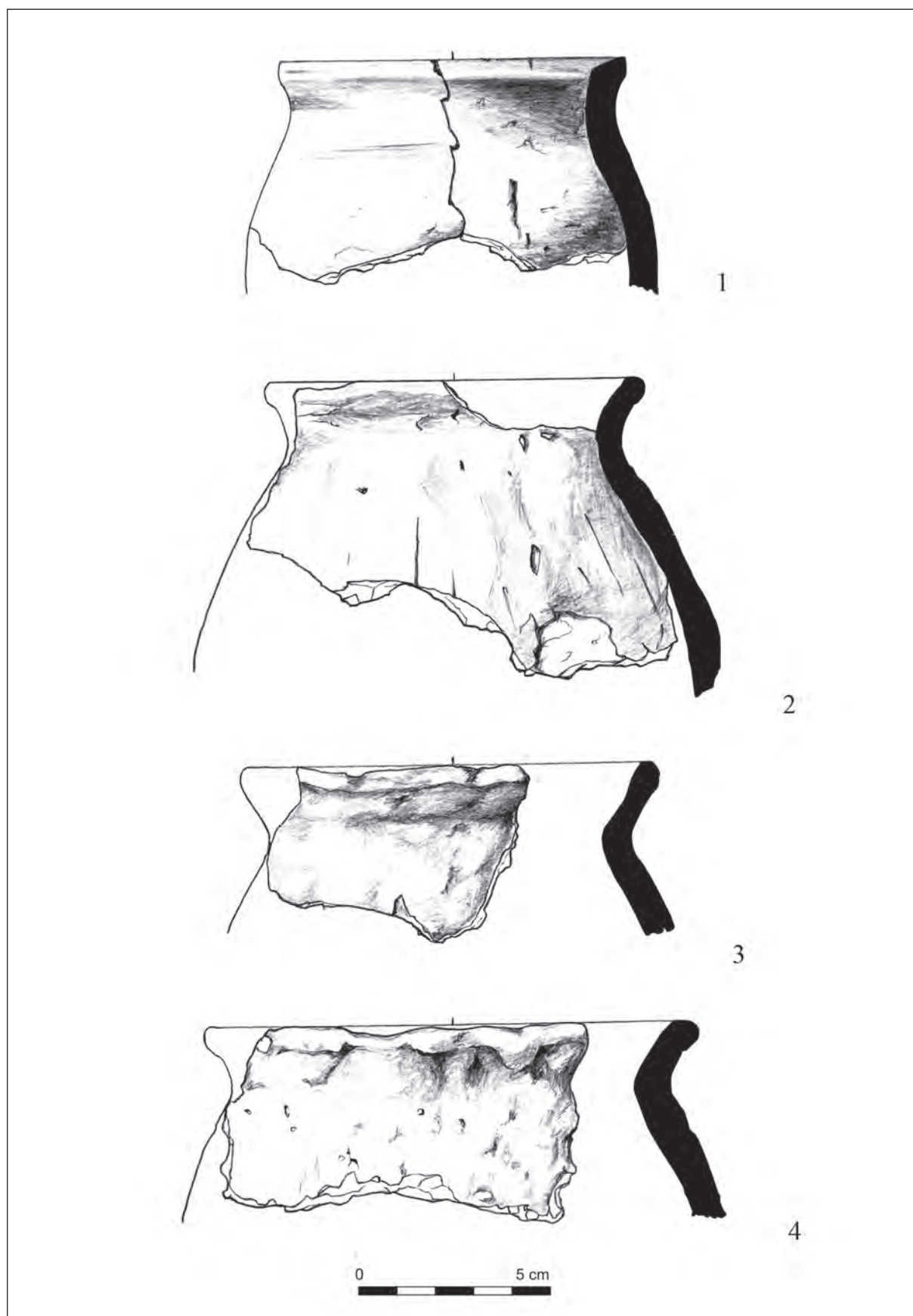


Plate 10. Dwelling 3/1994; 1 – Ground plan of dwelling 3/1994; 2- iron arrowhead; 3a-c iron bit; 4 – iron spur; 5 – iron spearhead.

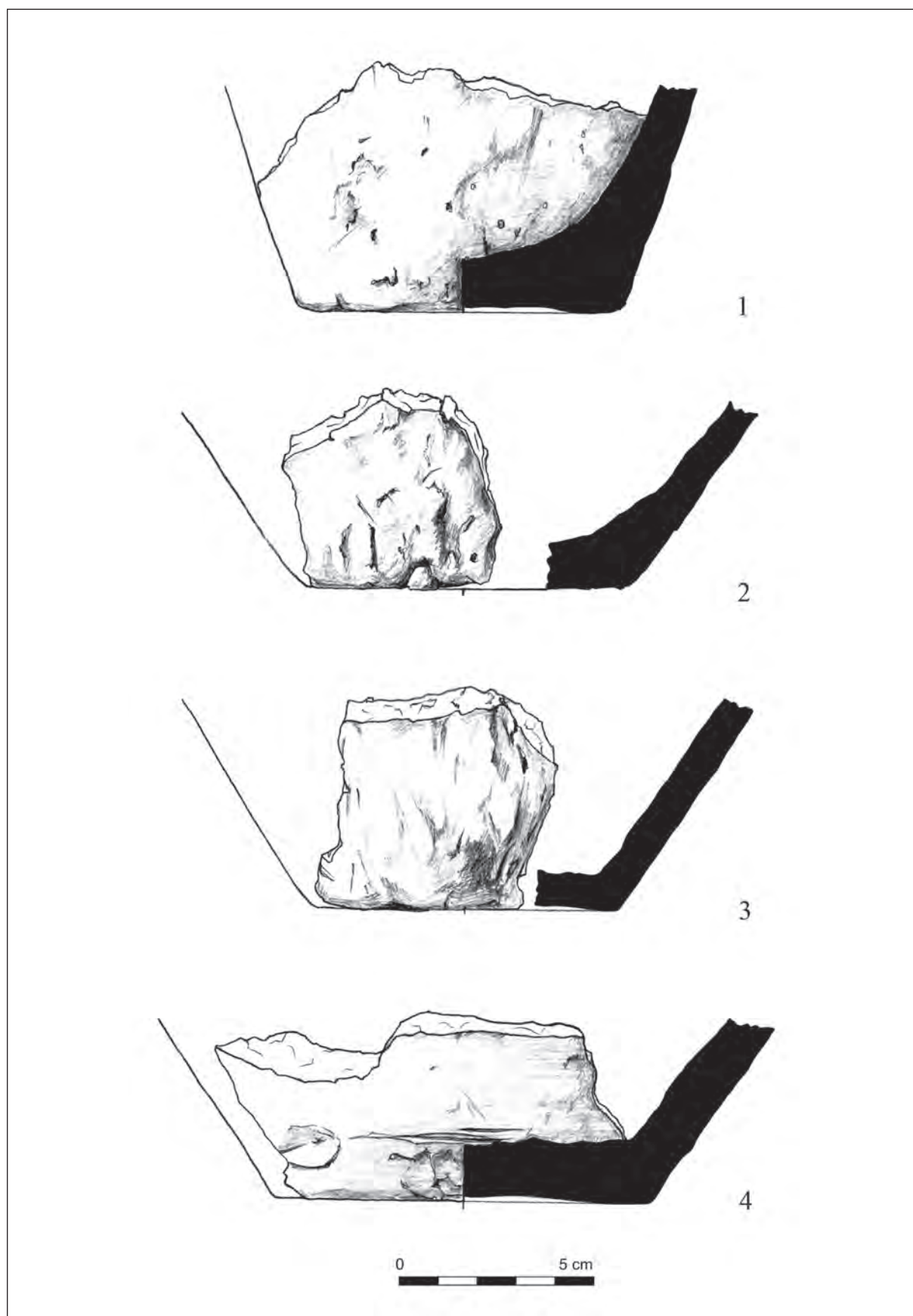


Plate 11. Dwelling 3/1994: 1-4 - Handmade pottery.

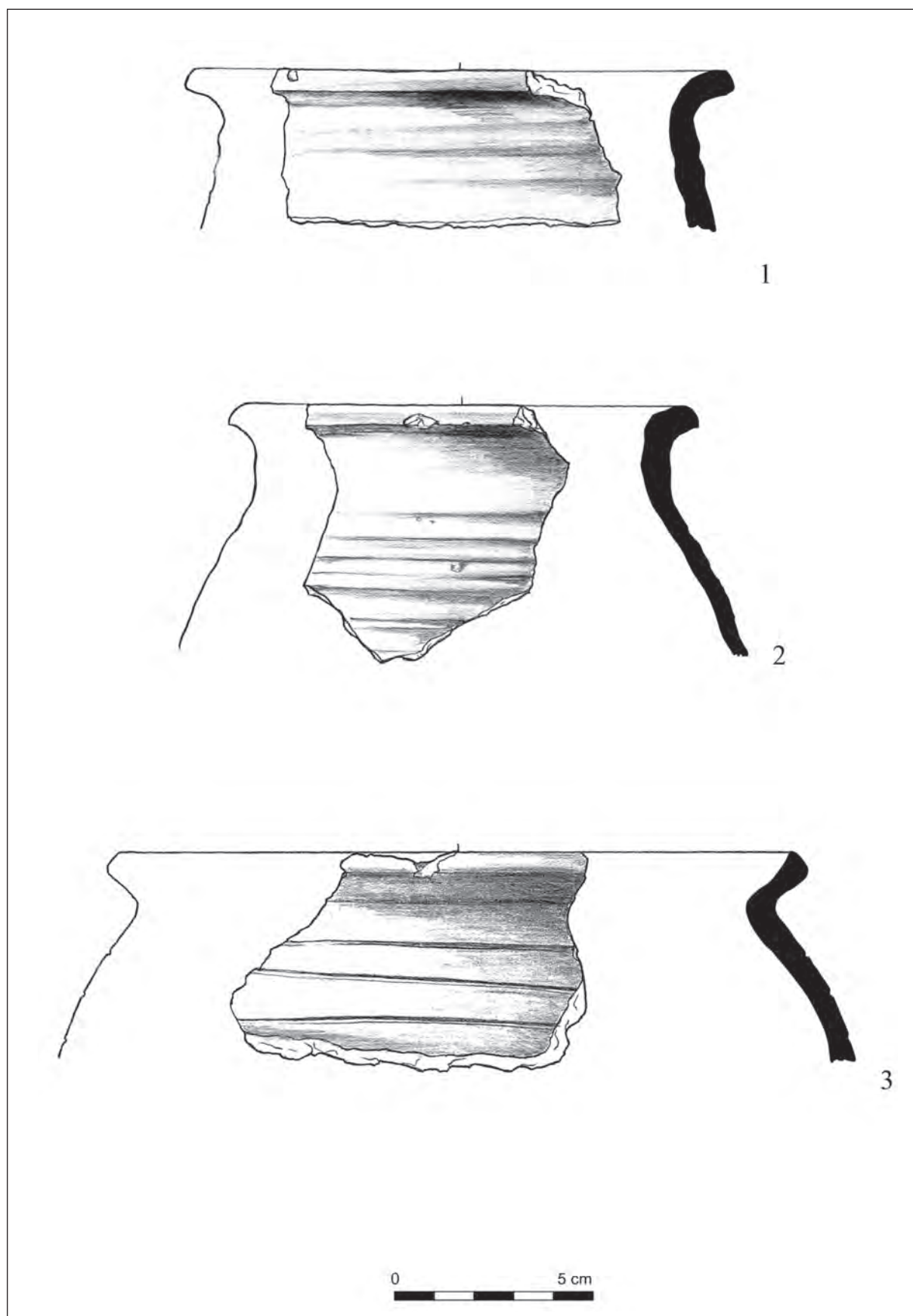


Plate 12. Dwelling 3/1994: 1-3 – Fine gray pottery made on the fast-turning potters' wheel. Pl. 13. Dwelling 3/1994: gray pottery made on the fast-turning potters' wheel: 1,3-4,6 fine fabric; 2,5 fabric with micro-grit.

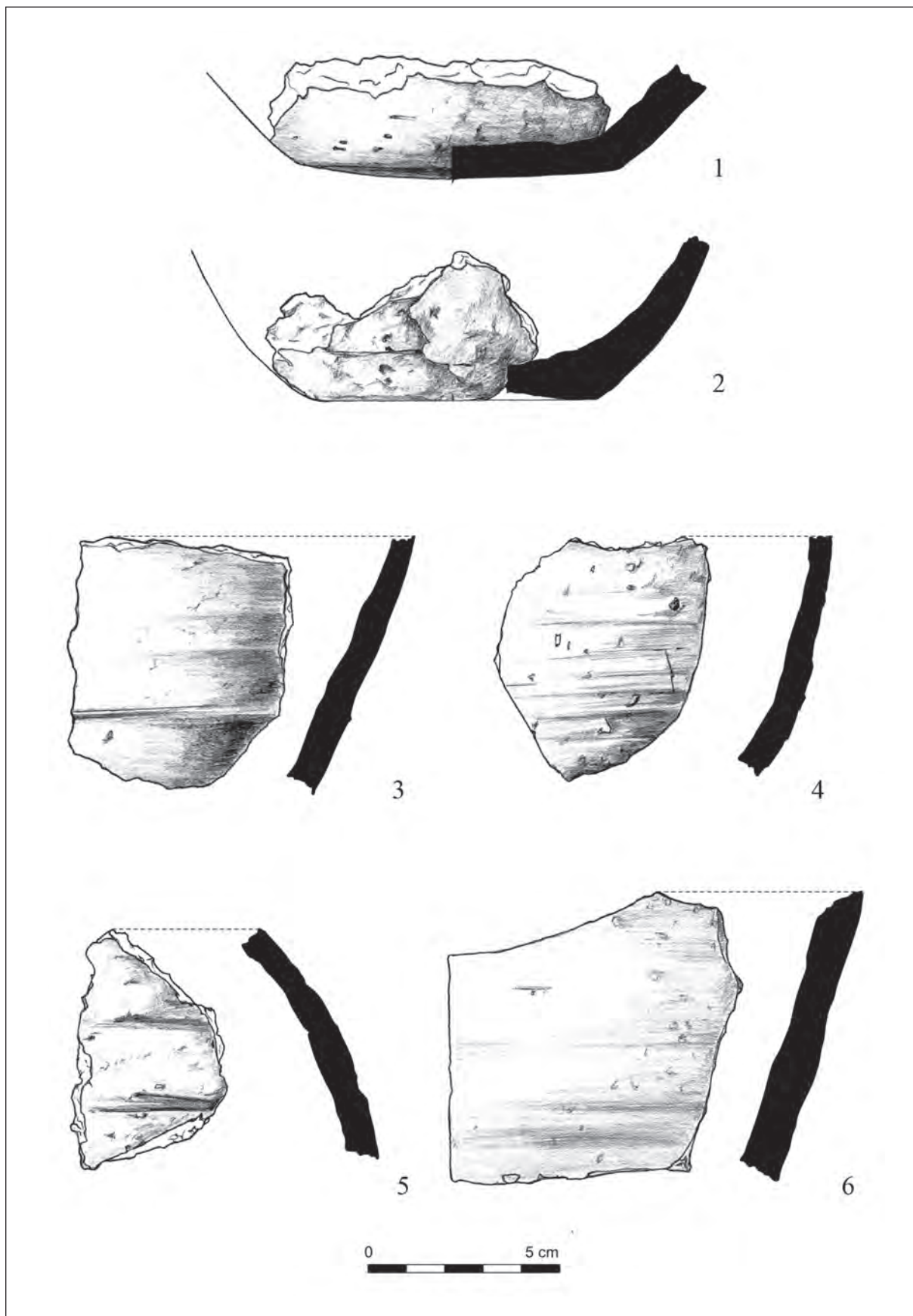


Plate 13. Dwelling 3/1994: gray pottery made on the fast-turning potters' wheel: 1,3-4,6 fine fabric; 2,5 fabric with micro-grit.

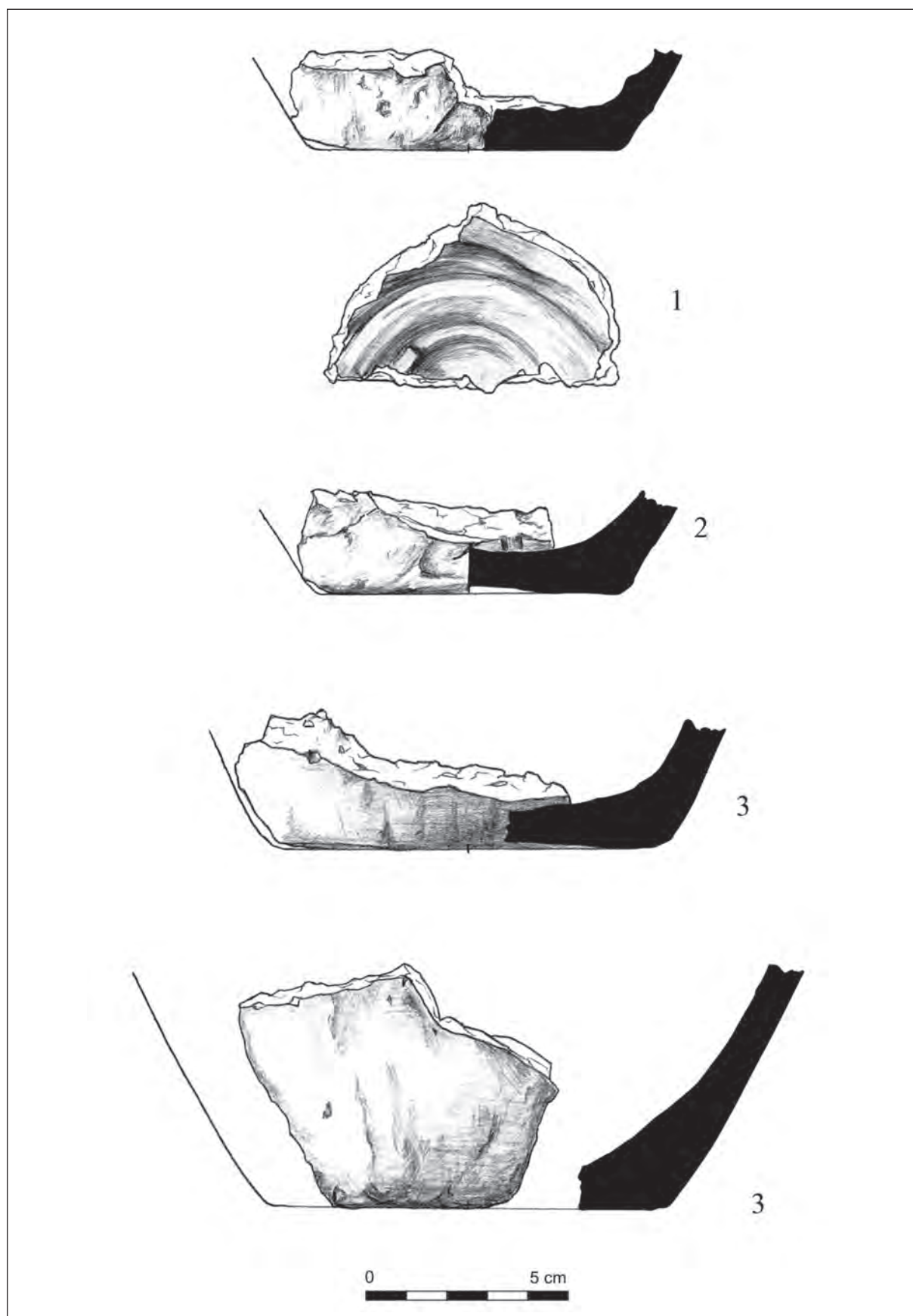


Plate 14. Dwelling 3/1994: gray pottery made on the fast-turning potters' wheel: 1,3-4 fine fabric; 2 gray pottery made on the fast-turning potters' wheel.

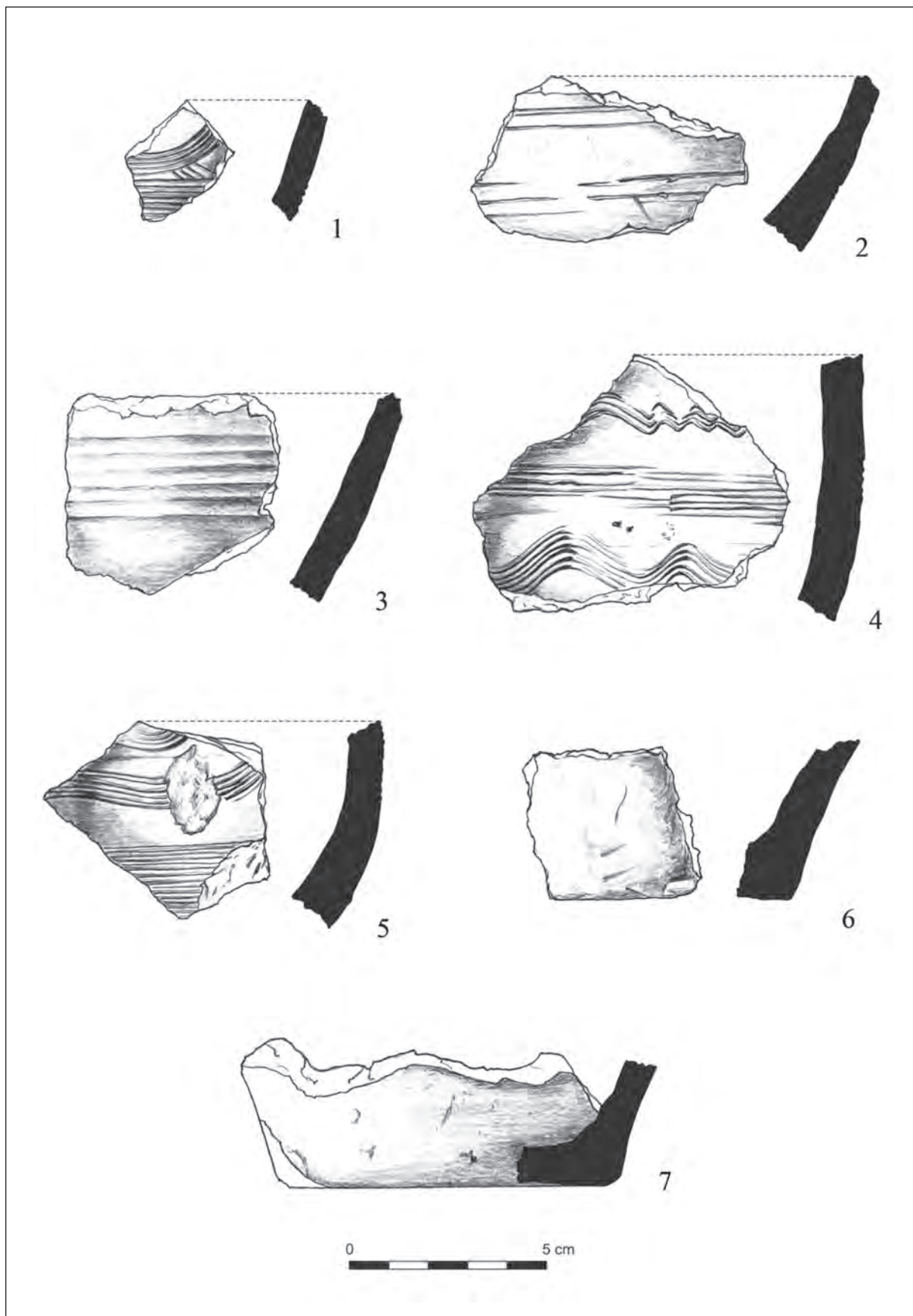


Plate 15. Dwelling 3/1994: "Danubian"-type pottery: 1-6 made on the slow-turning potters' wheel; 7 made on the fast-turning potters' wheel.

Abbreviations

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| ActaArchHung | Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae. |
| AAC | Acta Archaeologica Carpathica, Cracow. |
| ActaMN | Acta Musei Napocensis, Cluj-Napoca. |
| ActaMP | Acta Musei Porolissensis, Zalău |
| AnArchRessoviensia | Analecta Archaeologica Ressoviensia, Rzeszów. |
| AAS at CEU | Annual of Medieval Studies at CEU, Budapest. |
| Apulum | Acta Musei Apulensis – Apulum, Alba-Iulia. |
| Alba Regia | Alba Regia, Székesfehérvár. |
| Antaeus | Antaeus, Budapest. |
| Arrabona | Arrabona, Győr. |
| ArhMed | Arheologia Medievală, Cluj-Napoca, Brăila, Reșița. |
| ArchBaltica | Archaeologia Baltica, Vilnius. |
| Arch.Inf | Archäologische Informationen. |
| ATS | Acta Terrae Septemcastrensis, Sibiu. |
| ArchÉrt | Archaeologiai Értesítő, Budapest. |
| Banatica | Banatica, Reșița. |
| BBMÉ | A Béni Balogh Ádám Múzeum Évkönyve, Szekszárd. |
| BUFM | Beiträge zur Ur- und Frühgeschichte Mitteleuropas. |
| BCMI | Buletinul Comisiei Naționale a Monumentelor, ansambluri situri istorice. București. |
| CommArchHung | Communicationes Archaeologicae Hungaricae, Budapest. |
| CCA | Cronica Cercetărilor Arheologice, Comisia Națională de Arheologie, București. |
| CIL | Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum, Berlin. |
| CMA | Complexul Muzeal Arad. |
| Dolgozatok | Dolgozatok az Erdélyi Múzeum érem- és régiségtárából, Cluj. |
| Dolg. | Dolgozatok a Magyar Királyi Ferencz József Tudományegyetem Archaeologiai Intézetéből, Szeged. |
| Dolg. ÚS | Dolgozatok az Erdélyi Múzeum Érem- és Régiségtárából, Új Sorozat. Cluj-Napoca / Kolozsvár. |
| EphNap | Ephemeris Napocensis, Cluj-Napoca. |
| HOMÉ | A Hermann Ottó Múzeum Évkönyve. Miskolc. |
| JAHA | Journal of Ancient History and Archaeology, Cluj-Napoca. |
| JAM | Jósa András Museum, Nyíregyháza. |
| JPMÉ | Janus Pannonius Múzeum Évkönyve. |
| JRGZM | Jahrbuch des Romisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums, Mainz. |
| KRRMK | Kaposvári Rippl Rónai Múzeum Közleményei, Kaposvár. |
| LMI | Lista monumentelor istorice, updated in 2015. |
| MittArchInst | Mitteilungen des Archäologischen Instituts der Ungarischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. |
| MOL | Magyar Olaj- és Gázipari Részvénytársaság / Hungarian Oil and Gas Public Limited Company |
| Marisia | Marisia, Târgu Mureș. |
| NyJAMÉ | A nyíregyházi Jósa András Múzeum Évkönyve, Nyíregyháza. |
| PBF | Praehistorische Bronzefunde. Berlin. |
| Przegląd Archeologiczny | Przegląd Archeologiczny, Wrocław. |
| Rad | Jósa András Museum, Archaeological Archive |
| RégFüz | Régészeti Füzetek, Budapest. |

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| RKM | Régészeti Kutatások Magyarországon/Archaeological Investigations in Hungary, Budapest. |
| RAJ Arad | Repertoriul Arheologic al Mureşului Inferior. Judeţul Arad. Timişoara 1999. |
| RAN | Repertoriul Arheologic Naţional. |
| Sargetia | Sargetia. Acta Musei Devensis, Deva. |
| SCIV(A) | Studii şi Cercetări de Istorie Veche şi Arheologie, Bucureşti. |
| SGB | Studii de Geografie a Banatului, Timişoara. |
| SIB | Studii de Istorie a Banatului, Timişoara. |
| Slavia Antiqua | Slavia Antiqua, Poznań. |
| SlovArch | Slovenská Archeológia, Nitra. |
| SMK | Somogyi Múzeumok Közleményei, Kaposvár. |
| SovArh | Sovetskaja Arheologija, Moskva. |
| SRTM | Shuttle Radar Topography Mission. |
| StudiaUBB Historia | Studia UBB Historia, Cluj-Napoca. |
| SzKMÉ | A Szántó Kovács Múzeum Évkönyve, Pécs. |
| Századok | Századok, Budapest. |
| Terra Sebus | Terra Sebus. Acta Musei Sabesiensis, Sebeş. |
| Tibiscum S. N. | Tibiscum S. N., Caransebeş. |
| TransRev | Transylvanian Review, Cluj-Napoca. |
| ZalaiMúz | Zalai Múzeum, Zalaegerszeg. |
| ZSA | Ziridava. Studia Archaeologica. Arad. |
| Živa Antika | Živa Antika, Skopje. |