

## **A Roman Period (2<sup>nd</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> century AD) settlement from the Barcău river**

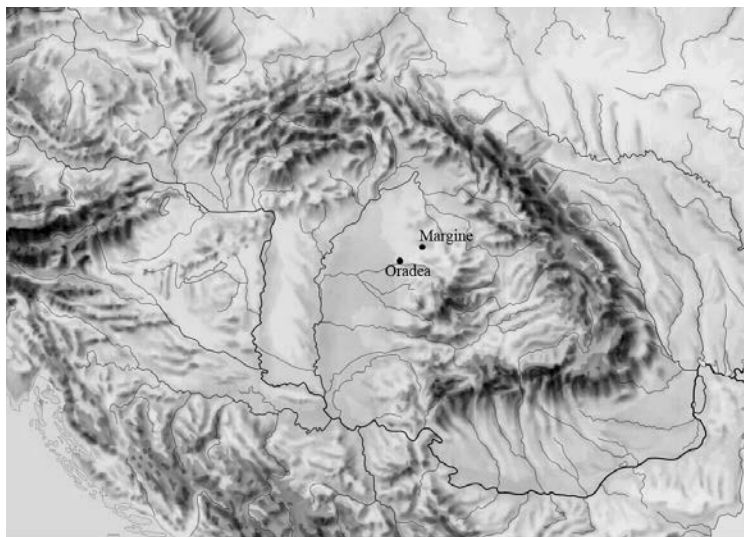
Margine, “Valea Tăniei–Țarina” (Bihor County, Romania)

Sorin Bulzan

In 2004–2007 archaeological research on the future “Transilvania”, Braşov-Oradea highway, revealed a Roman Period settlement at the site of Valea Tăniei on a high terrace of the rill Tăniei, tributary of the Barcău river (Fig. 1).<sup>1</sup> After a short period of research, we have concluded that the settlement extended to the both banks of the Tăniei’s intermittent water course (rill), but the larger part of the habitation on the left bank was investigated by another archaeological team. This study summarises just preliminary data, and the final presentation of the settlement will be offered as soon as possible.

### **The settlement area and the neighbouring zone**

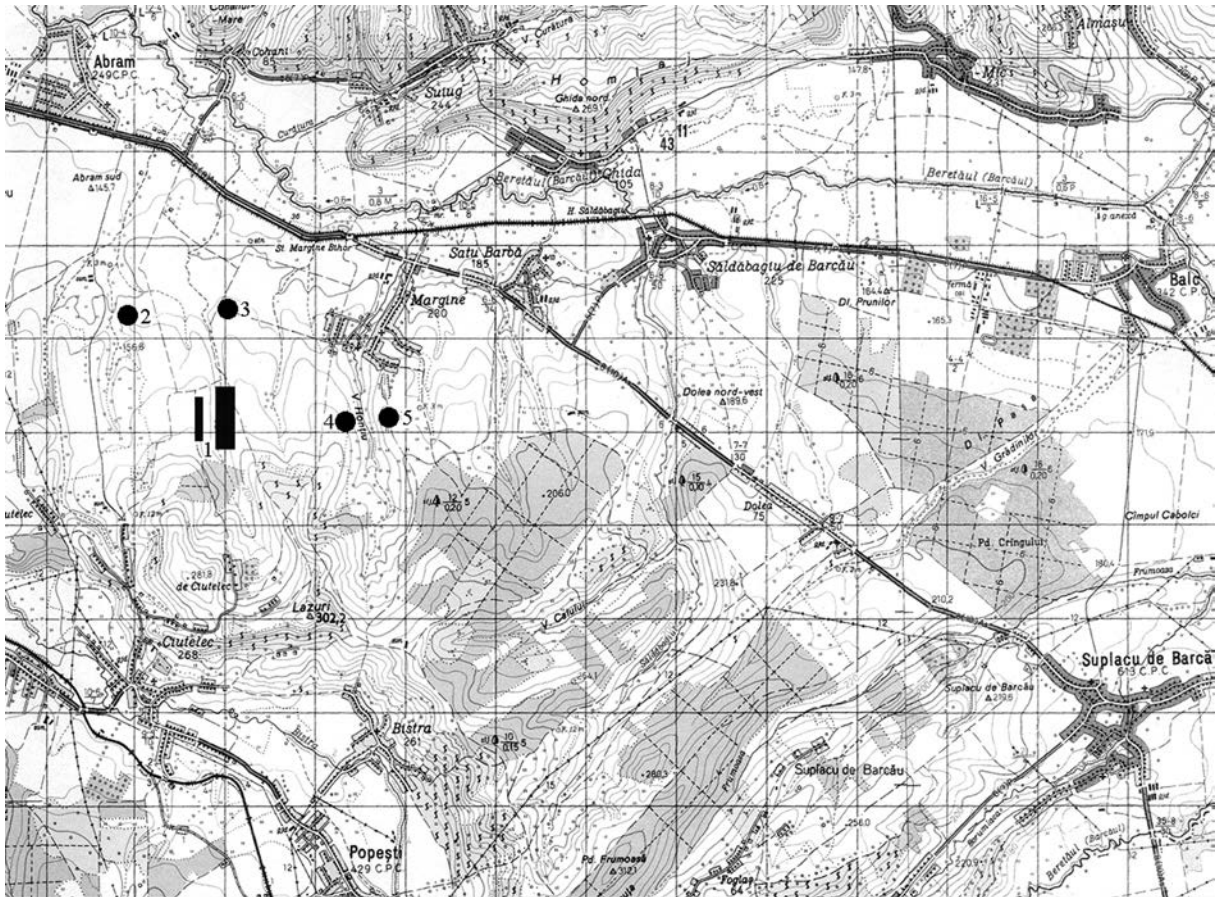
According to the survey data, the settlement was situated on a much larger surface than the one researched by the archaeological excavations. From



**Fig. 1**  
Margine, “Valea Tăniei”

**1. kép**  
Margine, “Valea Tăniei”

<sup>1</sup> The survey was made in the winter of 2004 by Sorin Bulzan and Ioan Crişan, archaeologists of “Țării Crişurilor” Museum of Oradea. Two short reports were published: DUMITRAŞCU ET AL. 2005., DUMITRAŞCU–BULZAN 2007. and a preliminary study of the settlement: BULZAN 2010.



**Fig. 2**

Margine, “Valea Tăniei” settlement and neighbouring area 1: Margine, “Valea Tăniei”, 2: settlement found during field survey, 3: Margine, “Fântâna Neamțului–Colț”, 4: Margine, “Poini (Sinica)”, 5: Margine, “Natu”

## 2. kép

Margine, “Valea Tăniei”, a telep és környezete 1: Margine, “Valea Tăniei”, 2: terepjáráson talált település, 3: Margine, “Fântâna Neamțului–Colț”, 4: Margine “Poini (Sinica)”, 5: Margine “Natu”

the edge of the excavated area it may extend as far as approximately 250–300 m to the south and ca. 50 m to the north from the line of the future highway. Probably, it was a large settlement with a total surface of 10 hectares from which just 5000 sq.m were researched with trenches.

Now we have some new information concerning the high density of the archaeological phenomena in the surroundings of the settlement (Fig. 2). Not further than 500 m to the north, on another terrace, pottery shards from the Roman Period were found at the site Margine, “Fântâna Neamțului–Colț”. At a distance of 1 km to the east, a smaller settlement near a rill was researched at the site Margine, “Poini (Sinica)” (CRIȘAN ET AL. 2005.). At another half kilometre to the east from here, a settlement at the site Margine, “Natu” was found, also at the bank of the Valea Ungurului rill (BEM ET AL. 2005., BEM–MOLDOVEANU 2006.).

At 350–400 m north-west from the settlement Margine, “Valea Tăniei”, on the eastern part of a derrick camp, grey wheel-made pottery dated to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD was also found. Out of five sites grouped in an area with a radius of 1.5 km, three ones were archaeologically investigated. The most extended settlement is presented in this article. These three Roman Period sites represent the



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4



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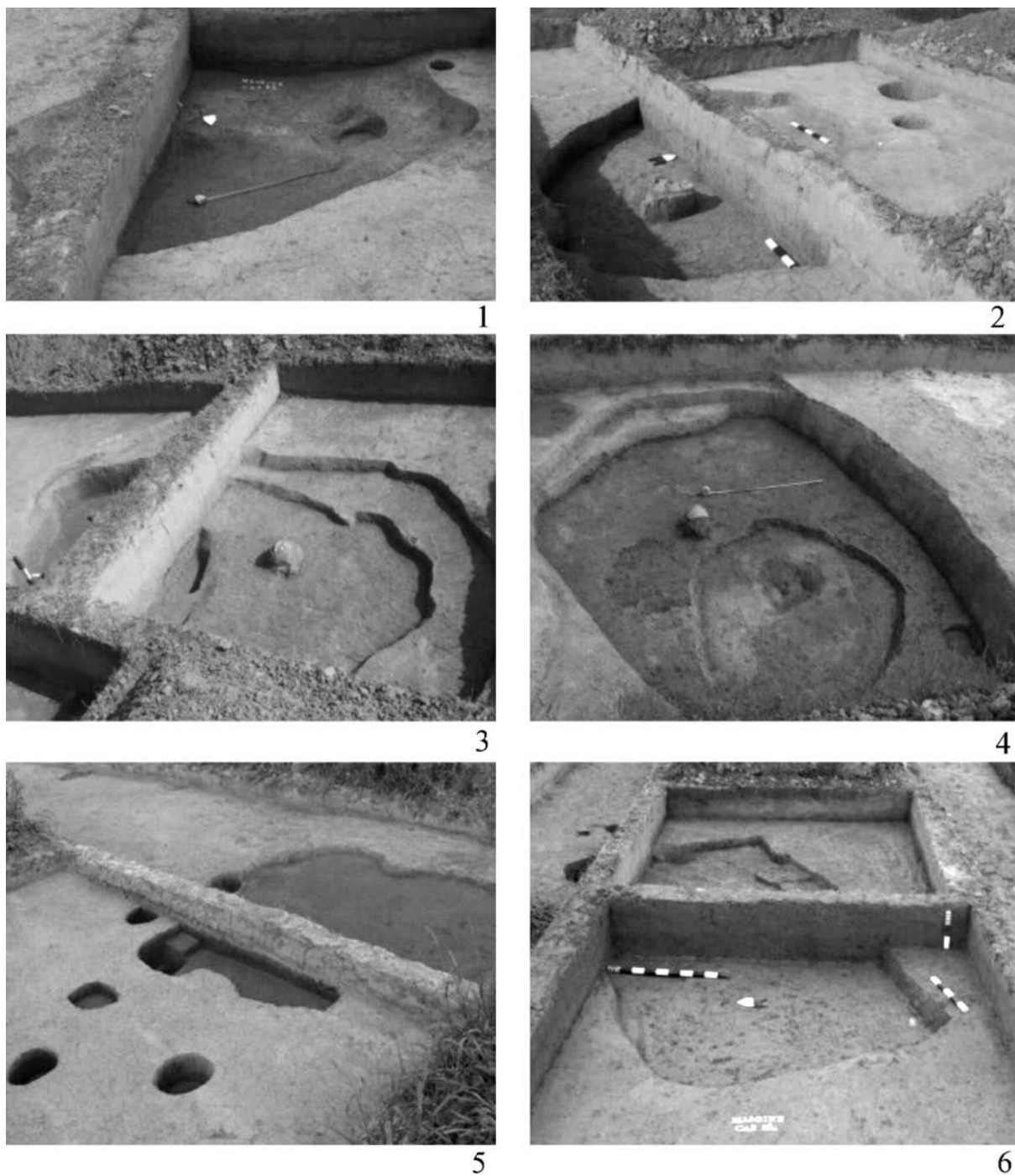
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3

**Fig. 3**  
Margine, “Valea Tăniei” 1–3: surface structures  
of the settlement, 4–5: features for storage purposes

**3. kép**  
Margine, “Valea Tăniei” 1–3: felszíni építmények,  
4–5: tároló objektumok



**Fig. 4**  
Margine, “Valea Tăniei”, buildings from the settlement

**4. kép**

Margine, “Valea Tăniei”, épületek

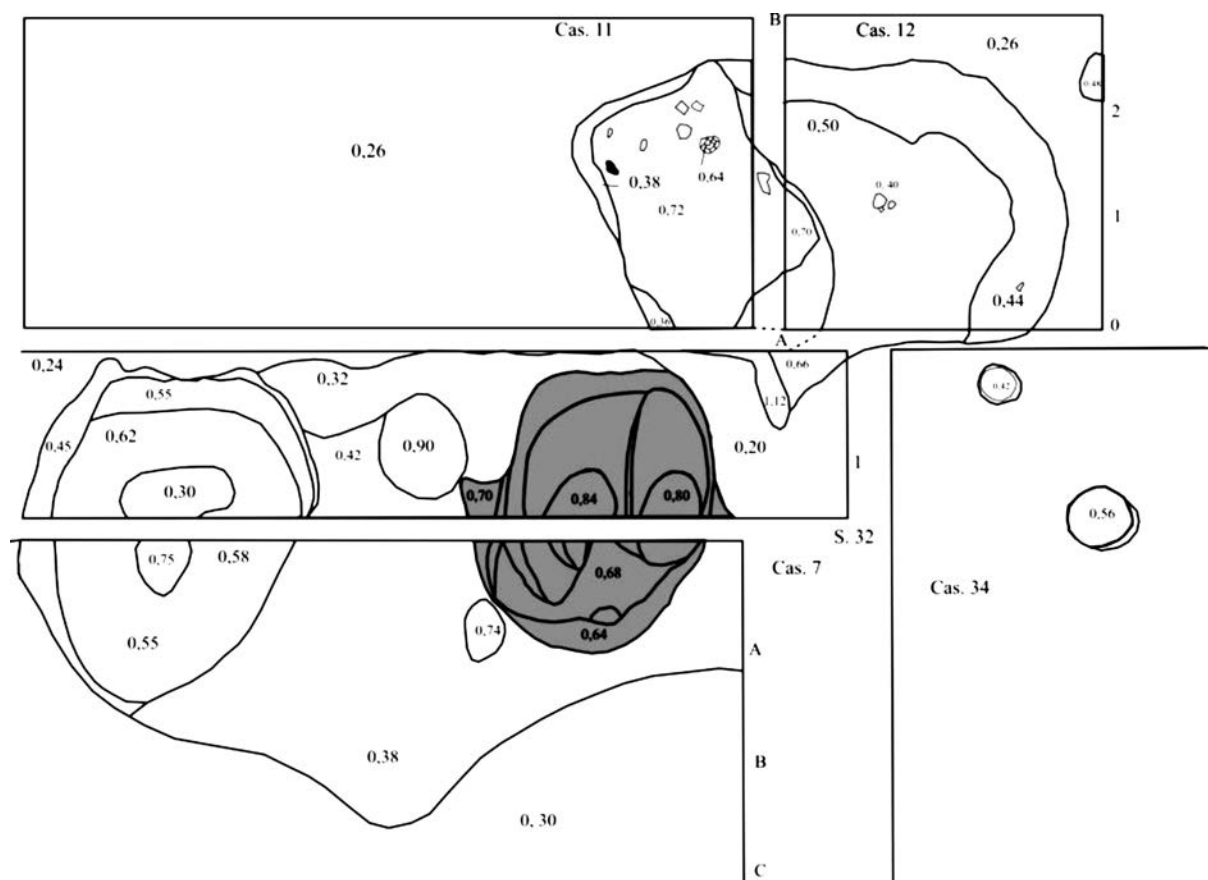
same kind of settlement and can be dated to the same period: late-2<sup>nd</sup> century – first half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. Out of five places characterised by Roman Period material, four were situated on the terraces along of the rill tributaries to the Barcău river. The distribution of the settlements on the

territory in question can indicate a high density of groups of people, most probably having kinship relations and family ties inside the settlements. We can speak of two generations of inhabitants from the last decades of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century – beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century to the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century. It is unknown how the population was initially distributed.

### Method and the stratigraphy

The only method used for the investigation of the settlement was imposed by the very fragmented ownership of the land. The state did not purchase the land until the end of the excavation and we had to dig narrow trenches normally used for diagnostic purposes. This method implies a specific internal numbering of features, trench by trench.

The stratigraphy of the site was very simple. The upper level was arable soil which partly disturbed the Roman Period settlement. So, in fact, we do not have a true cultural layer, except for the eventually most inhabited level, only the deepened structures.



**Fig. 5**

Margine, “Valea Tăniei”, dwelling no. 4 from surface 11 and 12, and a feature with traces of metallurgical activity. Grey filling marks the area with pieces of slag, iron drops and a crucible

### 5. kép

Margine, “Valea Tăniei”, a 4. épület a 11. és 12. felületen, valamint egy fémmegmunkálás nyomait mutató objektum. A szürkével jelölt területen kerültek elő a salakok, vascseppek és egy öntőtégely

### Surface structures

Surface structures became a major objective of the research after the occurrence of the large number of postholes, but, in my opinion, due to the stratigraphical situation of the site, with not entirely satisfactory results. We could not determine exactly from which phase of the building a posthole came and all that we could do was to follow the clearest alignment for wooden pillar holes. Still, considering the situation of the holes for wooden pillars, we can distinguish two main ways in which these features were used.

1. In some cases the postholes show relationship with the deepened structures (Fig. 3: 4–5), situated in their close proximity, showing more or less regular ground plans. Usually it is difficult to separate deepened and surface features, and they must be interpreted as combined type of techniques used for one or more buildings to create an entire household. It is difficult to determine the function of these complex structures, and in some cases, it is possible only based on to the artefacts discovered inside the territory marked by the postholes. The situation is different when the rows of the postholes enclosed some kind of yards around the deepened features. In this case the distance between the holes is different comparing to the previous situation. At the present stage of the research we cannot talk about the internal disposition of these features within the settlement and classify it as an ensemble of yard and household, which is more plausible, or about e.g. a settlement with a central “place”.<sup>2</sup>

2. In certain cases surface structures may properly show the outline of buildings (Fig. 3: 2, 3) sometimes supplied with deepened fireplace. In these cases the postholes enclosed elongated rectangular surfaces marked by 2, 3 or 4 rows of pillars. Sometimes the shape of the wooden pillars was preserved and shown by grey ash spots. This kind of buildings seemed to be specific for Germanic wooden constructions (Pfofenbauen) with an elongated ground plan (Hallenhäuser). In some cases, the long side of these buildings reached 10 m. In North-West Romania and North-East Hungary this type of buildings is already known from recently published excavations at Zalău–Bulevardul Mihai Viteazul (STANCIU–MATEI 2004.) Berveni and Csengersima–Petea (GINDELE 2002.). They spread from Northern Europe transmitted by the Przeworsk culture (STANCIU–MATEI 2004. with references, GINDELE–ISTVÁNOVITS 2009. 16sq.). In another case, the arrangement of postholes might indicate fence structures for domestic animals.

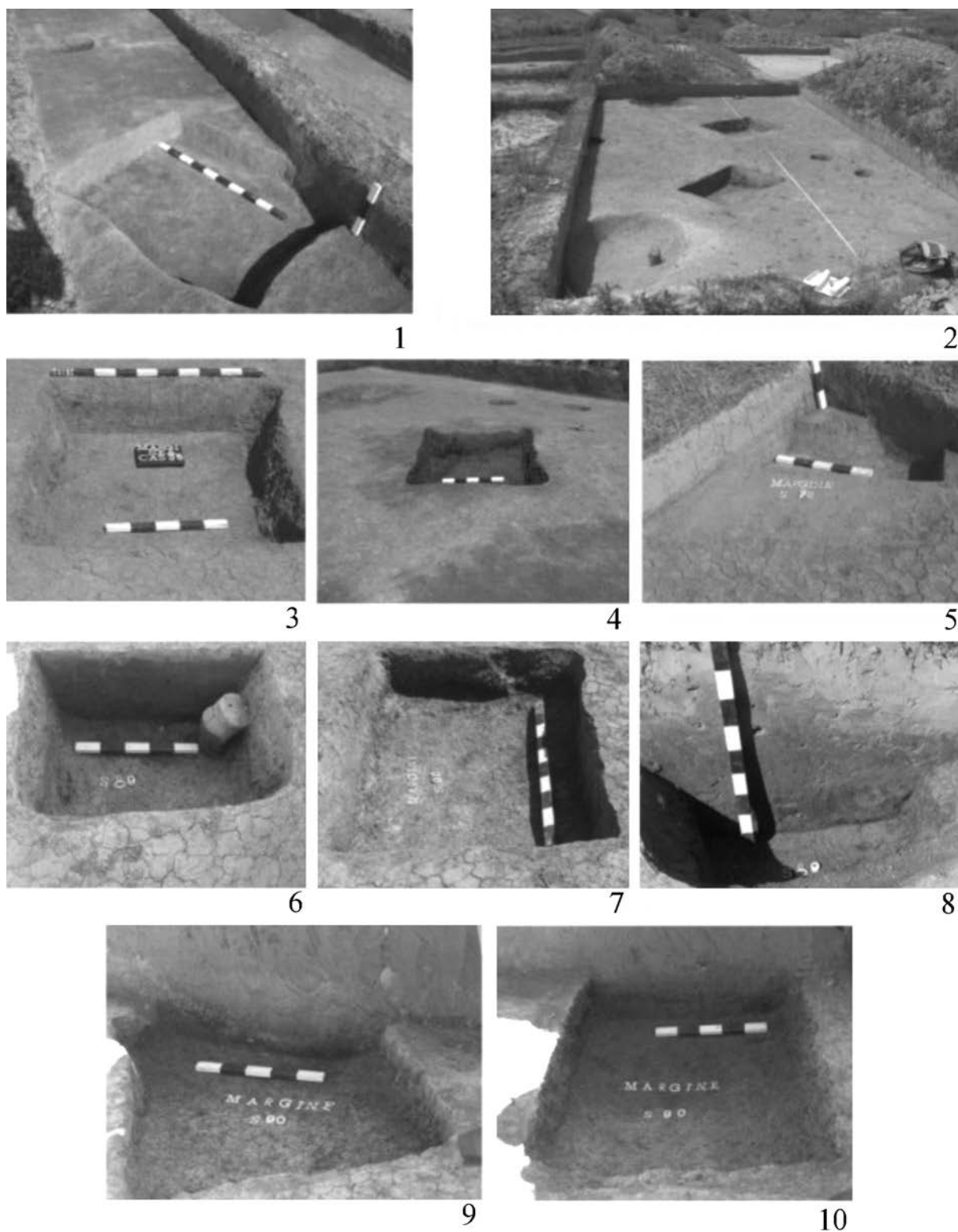
### Deepened structures

The deepened houses (in fact, only semi-subterranean) were rectangular with round shaped corners or irregular in shape (Fig. 4). The houses can be recognised on the basis of the size and shape of these structures, and mainly judging from the existence of fireplace, but all these arguments can sometimes be insufficient for the attribution of the features. There were 10 deepened houses among the features of the site. However, house no. 1, for example, can be classified as a special type of feature, a so-called Stallgrube. In this case, the building had a fireplace. This type of building was usually interpreted as storehouse, but it was also supposed to be used for dwelling in the Roman Period (VÖRÖS 1984/85. 96).

Sometimes the houses gradually deepened down to the depth of 70 cm (the bottom of a suggested fireplace of dwelling no. 4 – Fig. 5), but usually their depth varied between 12 and

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<sup>2</sup> For discussion on internal organisation of the settlements of the Przeworsk Culture in the territory of Poland, see MICHAŁOWSKI 2003. 185sqq.



**Fig. 6**

Margine, "Valea Tăniei", rectangular pits with burned edges

**6. kép**

Margine, "Valea Tăniei", téglalap alakú, átégett falú gödrök

25–30 cm. The roof was supported by wooden pillars with postholes outside of the pit (Fig. 4). Clear evidences for fire installations were discovered only in three cases, by finding *in situ* the fireplace or charcoal and hole for ash (nos. 1, 4 and 9). Many deepened structures preserved only fragments from the fireplaces: pieces of clay with imprint of pebbles on one side and smoothed surface on the other. Inside the dwellings fireplaces were destroyed, probably intentionally. Hence, these fragments could not have belonged to the walls of the houses, mostly daub with wooden imprints, which were not found in this type of constructions. The lack of the latter may indicate that these buildings were built of wood. The inside perimeter of the houses was small due to their dimensions (dwelling no. 2–4.70x3–3.40 m; no. 5–3.70x2.36 m; no. 7–2.10x3.14 m; no. 8–3.36x2.74 m; no. 9–2.60x3.56 m; no. 10–2.48x3.18 m).

Inside the dwelling assemblages there were some oval pits used for storage and found near almost each dwelling. Other features had round shape, with diameters between 3 and 4.5 m. Some of them had entrances oriented towards the sunny side. In these cases, the structure often consisted of wooden pillars situated in the deepened surface and of clay or some perishable material. Sometimes the wooden pillars flanked the entrances and in some cases were integrated in surface structures (Fig. 3: 4, 5). Find material included pottery, some pieces of iron and mould stones. The majority of the pottery was wheel-made and contained pieces used for cooking or for food storage. The mould stones also had traces of food production (e.g. grinding cereals). Storage pits were rare in the settlement. They were replaced by the already mentioned features near the dwellings. At Margine “Valea Tăniei”, but also in a wider area like the Upper Tisza Region, these buildings represent an important category of features of the Roman Period settlements, that can be characterised by the lack of storage pits (ISTVÁNOVITS 1997. 726, KOTIGOROŠKO 1995. 116). In this way, the Margine settlement is different from the Late La Tène Dacian settlements or from those discovered in Sarmatian milieu where the majority of the features consist of storage pits.

The structures with finds attesting to metallurgic activity (pieces of slag or iron blooms) are numerous, but only two of them can be directly related to workshops. The first one is an oval shaped building with several round and oval holes of different diameters (Fig. 5). Two of them were filled up with the same content, but the second one had a consistent structure because of the presence of pieces of iron slag or iron drops and a crucible. The second structure with traces of iron processing was also deepened, oval and elongated towards east. The E-W oriented long axis was almost 8 (7.98) m long, the short side was 4.5 m. It was the biggest deepened structure discovered at Margine. In the recently published settlement from Csengersima–Petea (Hungary, Romania) a similar feature was unearthed with blacksmith pincers that can refer to the workshop function of these structures (GINDELE–ISTVÁNOVITS 2009. 70, 251. feature S14/1, Pl. 218: 1, Pl. 224: 1.)

Several rectangular pits with burned edges were grouped by two or three and almost all of them, 26 of 28 researched were oriented NW-SE. Their usual stratigraphy showed a consistent level of wooden carbon covered by pieces of burned clay broken down from the side walls (Fig. 6). The dimensions of the pits vary between 0.80–1.10 m in length and 0.80–0.90 m in width. They were oriented in the same direction and, at the Margine site, in the same direction with the rectangular dwellings. On the settlement, dimensions vary from 0.80–1.10 to 0.80–0.90 m. In the Barbaricum of the Roman Period, these types of pits were found from the Ukraine in the north up to North-East Hungary and Barcău valley to the south (DUMITRAȘCU 1979., KOTIGOROŠKO 1995. 116, Fig. 69, Fig. 70, ISTVÁNOVITS 1997. 727 with references on the discoveries in Hungary, MATEI–STANCIU 2000. 51, 57–58, 95sq, Fig. 17, Figs 23–25, Figs 38–40, GINDELE–ISTVÁNOVITS 2009. 15–16, Figs 205–212). Their diffusion is almost general in the mentioned area, and similarly to Margine “Natu”, they

probably appear outside the settlements if they in fact did not belong to the waysides of the settlement (BEM ET AL. 2005., BEM–MOLDOVEANU 2006.).

The four wells were 2.2–3.2 m deep. Their diameter varied between 1.3–1.5 m.

Characteristic features of Roman Period settlements from North-West Romania are trench like structures. Their function is unclear. These are SW-NE and SE-NW oriented features with straight or arched bottoms. The maximum depth of these structures was 20 cm. Their width varies between 0.5 and 1 m. In some cases, they are flanked by postholes, that is to say, they must have had rows of wooden pillars. Their length varies between 3.5 m to a maximum of 7.60 m. The archaeological evidence is abundant: a lot of ceramics and pieces of daub. Still, we can distinguish two categories of features: some had a surface structure consisting of wooden pillars and could have been used for storing (Fig. 3). Others did not have a surface structure (postholes). Similarly to the ones in question, at other Roman Period settlements, such features do not have a well-defined function. Close analogies were found at Mochala (Ukraine) (KOTIGOROŠKO 1995. 115, Fig. 65), Beregsurány (Hungary) (ISTVÁNOVITS 1997. 737, Fig. 6), Lazuri “Lubi Tag” (Romania) (MATEI–STANCIU 2000. 54–55, Fig. 20), Csengersima–Petea (GINDELE–ISTVÁNOVITS 2009. 22, Fig. 20).

### The main characteristics of the artefacts

The find material of the assemblages consists almost entirely of ceramics. The vessels are wheel- and hand-made. Some hand-made vessels have small diameter at the bottom or sharp angles of the body characteristic for Germanic pottery (Pl. I: 3, 4, 8), while others, with elongated shape (e.g. Pl. I: 7) have sometimes specific Dacian plastic decoration. A special category is represented by characteristic Przeworsk black-polished vessels.<sup>3</sup> The majority of this pottery was used mainly for cooking, maybe also for storing and for lighting. From the point of view of the clay, three categories can be distinguished: fine, sandy and rough ones.

The majority of wheel-made pottery does not have any specific form characteristic for this settlement, except, probably, for the category of dark fine pottery, especially pots, and the fine grey bowls with sharp angles of the body at the maximum diameter. The latter feature can be the imitation of the form and taste known at hand-made pottery (Pl. III: 6–8). This category is used as tableware (bowls) and also for cooking (pots) or storing (dolia) and can be divided in two parts: fine and coarse ones. A lot of wheel-made vessels were imported from the Roman province Dacia, even the types made for common use. Like in other settlements in this region, imported Roman ware contains a number of stamped vessels (Pl. III: 1–2). Stamped pottery material included several bowls, and, in small number, pitchers. Another category of imported decorated pottery is represented by bowls with ivy leaf in relief. Some painted fragments were also found.

Iron objects are not numerous and consist of mainly tools used in the daily activities like knives or, maybe, Barbarian type of iron key. The most numerous pieces are by far the iron shells and other iron products like iron spots or pieces of slag which attest to the metallurgic activities in the settlement.

Mould stones were made of sandstone. There were also firestones made of flint and whetstones found at the settlement.

The only bronze object found at the settlement was a Barbarian two-piece fibula with inverted foot and knob at the end (Fig. 7). The dating of such fibulae was proposed to the late-2<sup>nd</sup> – first half of 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD (COCIȘ 2004. 145, 147, no. 1940, Pl. CXLI).



**Fig. 7**  
**7. k ep**

<sup>3</sup> For this category of artefacts in North-West Romania, see STANCIU–MATEI 2004. 757.

On the basis of the characteristic archaeological material, the settlement from Margine can be related to Przeworsk and, partially, to Dacian culture. The habitation might have begun in the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, phase C1a according to the Central European chronology,<sup>4</sup> but the major part of habitation belong to C1b. It ends towards the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century AD.

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<sup>4</sup> For this chronology see GODŁOWSKI 1970. 90–112; for the transition period from the early to the late phase of the Roman Period in the Barbaricum, see also, DOMAŃSKI 1992. For the chronology of the same period in North-West Romania, see STANCIU–MATEI 2004. 758sqq.

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## **Császárkori (II–III. század) telep a Berettyó völgyében**

Margine / Széltalló, „Valea Tăniei–Țarina”

(Bihar megye, Románia)

Margine / Széltalló, „Valea Tăniei–Țarina” lelőhelyről a Felső-Tisza vidékén ismert Przeworsk-dák régészeti kultúrára jellemző telep került elő. A Körösök vízgyűjtőjének legnagyobb ilyen jellegű kutatott lelőhelyéről van szó. A telepobjektumok közül kiemelhetjük a 10 sekélyen földbe mélyített lakóházat és a hozzájuk tartozó tárológödröket. A kor többi településéhez hasonlóan itt is megtalálhatók a felszíni építmények faoszlopainak sorokban elhelyezkedő nyomai, a téglalap alakú gödrök és a kutak. A telep a római kori barbaricum kronológia C1b fázisához tartozik, ami a III. század első felének felel meg.

Sorin BULZAN

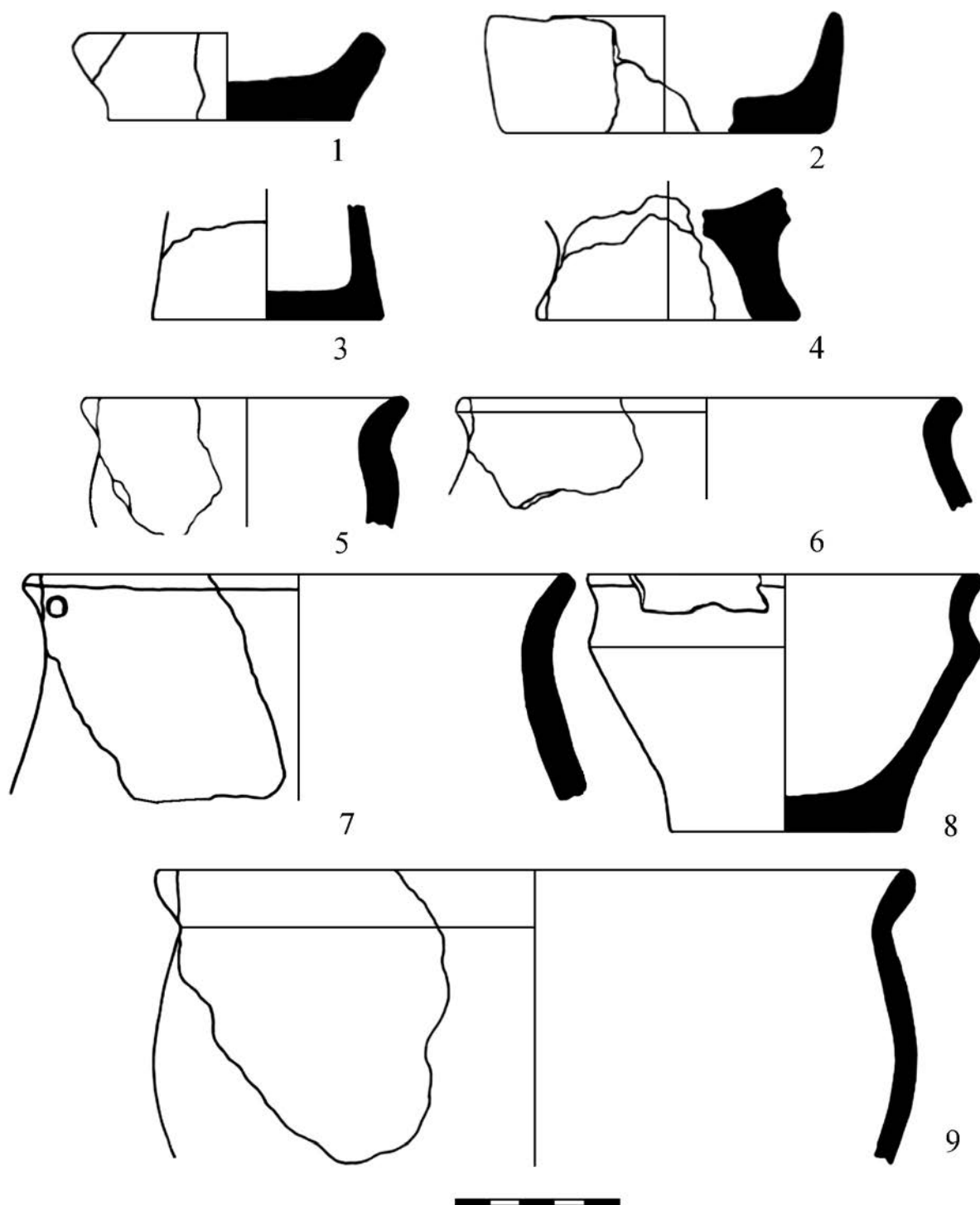
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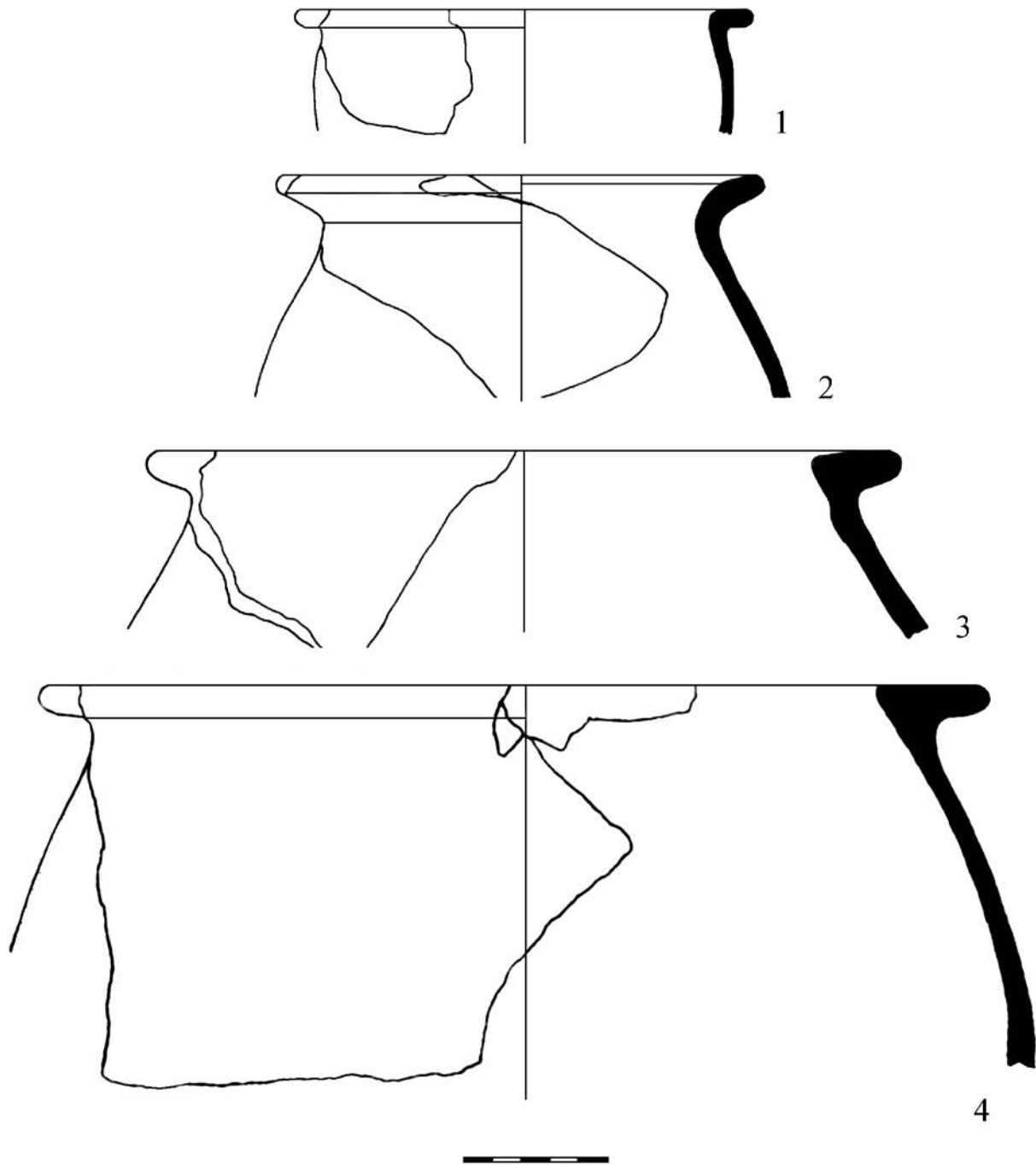


**Plate I**

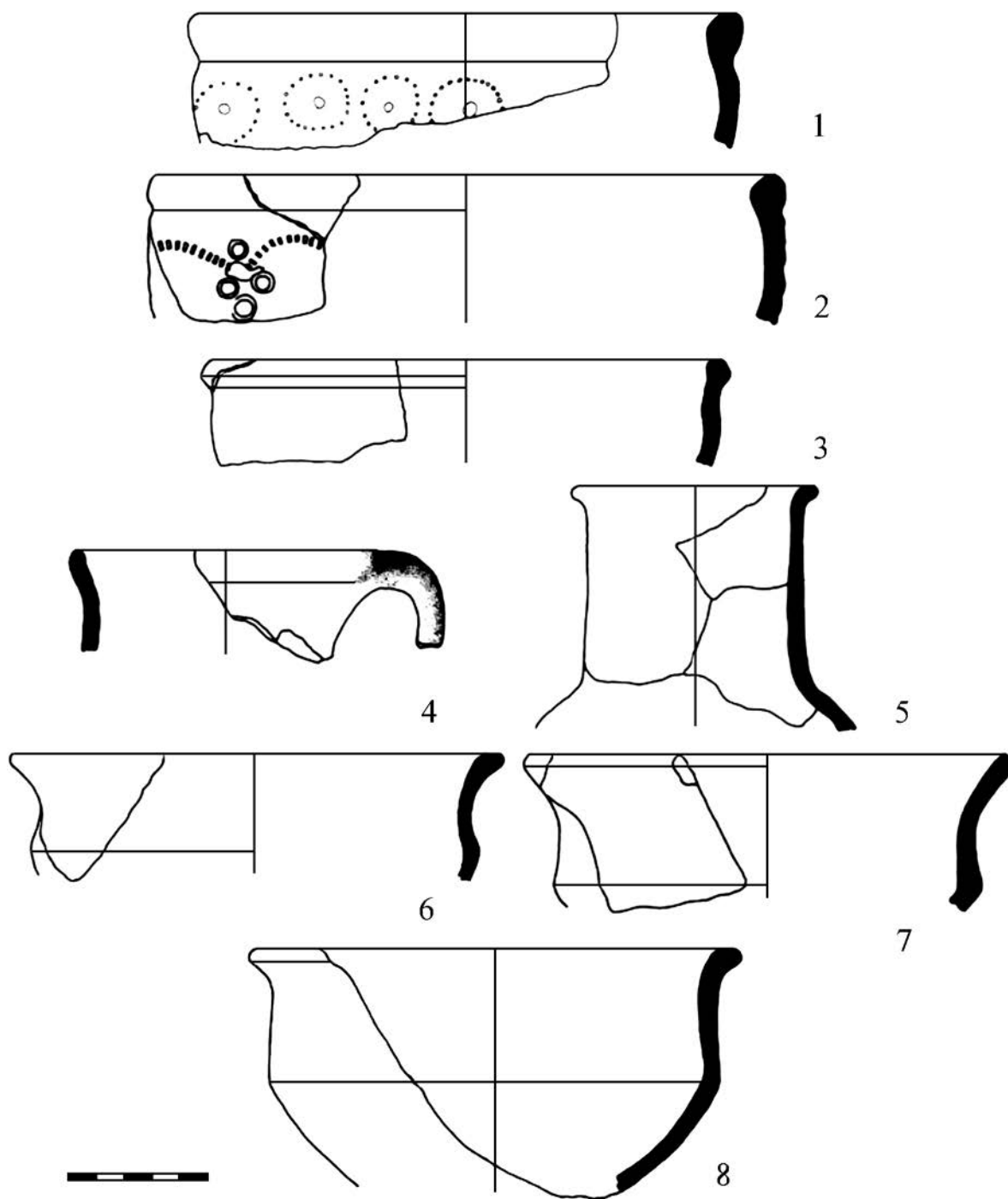
Hand-made pottery

**I. tábla**

Korong nélkül készített kerámia



**Plate II**  
Wheel-made pottery  
**II. tábla**  
Korongolt kerámia



**Plate III**  
Wheel-made pottery  
**III. tábla**  
Korongolt kerámia

