

Goderdzi Narimanishvili
Juansher Amiranashvili
Marine Kvachadze
Nino Shanshashvili

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES AT AVRANLO

The village of Avranlo is situated on the banks of the River Ktsia in Tsalka region, some 35 km from Tsalka at an altitude of 1,580 m above sea level. The old name of the village is Tezi. It was called Avranlo by the Greeks who migrated from Turkey in 1828-1829. A comparison of a map of Vakhushti Bagrationi with modern ones confirms the fact that the village was called once called Tezi, and E. Taqaishvili, D. Berdzenishvili, T. Chikovani share this opinion (Taqaishvili 1913, 45; Chikovani 1973, 16; Berdzenishvili 1982, 15).

Vakhushti Bagrationi provides some very interesting information about this area: "In Artsivani, in the Tezis Khrami, there is a monastery created in the rock by Saint Abibos of Nekresi, now empty" (Vakhushti 1973, 320). D. Berdzenishvili notes, "In fact, there are caves and two basilicas in the canyon. They bear a trace of late redecoration, although early Medieval architectural details have survived ... In the upper reaches of the Ktsia the accumulation of such toponyms as Sapitiakhsho, Rekha. Abibos Monastery gave rise to the opinion that the martyrdom of St. Abibos must have occurred at Rekha in Trialeti (near Avranlo)" (Berdzenishvili 1982, 16). K. Kekelidze considered that Abibos was punished in Shua Kartli, near Samtavisi, from where this story was transferred in the course of time to Rekha in Tsalka; then a monastery dedicated to Abibos was built there, at Rekha in Tsalka (Kekelidze 1968, 178). J. Gvasalia also agrees that the Rekha where Abibos of Nekresi was tortured is definitely the Rekha of Kartli (Gvasalia 1982, 52-53). According to D. Berdzenishvili, the section where "the cities around Rekha" is discussed speaks in favour of the Rekha in Kartli. In his opinion, such a thing must have been impossible to consider in connection with the Trialeti Rekha of the 6th century. In those times there were Urbnisi, Uplistsikhe, Kaspi, Mtskheta, where, according to Juansher's information, Abibos was finally buried (Berdzenishvili 1982, 17). However, the work "Life and Martyrdom of Saint Abibos of Nekresi" says that when Abibos "was killed and dragged to the outskirts of the city and guards were appointed to watch his body, not a single animal or bird dared to touch his greatly blissful flesh. And those guarding him left him. Then came those living in the cave near the monastery and took him and buried him with great respect" (Hagiography 1947, 107).

We think this information must indicate the Monastery of Abibos of Nekresi located in the Tezis Khrami. The "cities and castles of Bozhana" from where David the Builder marched against Anis and Karusheti, where Bagrat IV stationed his army, Khevghrma where Giorgi I died (*Life of Kartli* 1955, 291) and Sapitiakhsho are all in Trialeti. Therefore, In the Trialeti of the Early and Middle Medieval period, and in particular in the environs of Avranlo, there must have been urban-type settlements and the summer residence of kings. If the martyrdom occurred in the hot season, it is possible that Persian officials were resting here, since Trialeti used to be one of the Georgian kings' favourite resorts..

The first fundamental study of the antiquities of Trialeti was written by E. Taqaishvili. He saw caves near the village of Avranlo and noted that traces of other structures could also be seen. He thought that these were the remains of Abibos' monastery (Taqaishvili 1913, 46). D. Berdzenishvili found a Georgian inscription in the environs of the monastery, which he interpreted as: "God...have mercy...on the hermit buried here" and dated it to the 12th-13th centuries. It was presumably, in his view, from the burial of a scholar recluse living in one of the caves (Berdzenishvili 1982, 15-16).

One of the most important cultural heritage sites at Avranlo is a "Cyclopean" fortress situated in the

north-west outskirts of the village. E. Taqaishvili only noted the megalithic wall: "Along the rock there is a barrier of huge blocks heaped up on each other" (Taqaishvili 1913, 45), although he does not actually describe it.

L. Meliksed-Beg attributed a "castle-settlement of Cyclopean construction" to a site of megalithic culture (Meliksed-Beg 1938, 57). "The settlement that overlooks the river like an amphitheatre consists of three steps: 1, at the bottom of the hill; 2, on a small flat area in the middle of the slope and 3, on the top of the hill... The first, lower step or terrace consists of a long wall curved in plan, up against the hill. It is 100 m long, 3-4 m high, and in some places 4.5 m high and 2-2.5 m thick. The wall has one door near the stream. It is 1.5 m high, thick and wide. It is covered with a huge block that is 2.25 m long and 1.5 m wide. In the elongated area between this wall and the hill the only building is a small church. Next to this religious complex, to the west up to the top of the wall there are plenty of caves. Some are natural and some are enhanced. The second (middle) terrace is rectangular in shape at the middle of the slope, and is but a few metres long and wide; it is in the area of a former castle where the local residents have planted an orchard. The third (upper) terrace on the top of the hill is a comparatively larger area of the former castle. It is rectangular in plan, measuring 25 m x 18m. The wall is 3-4 m thick, and "is almost ruined" (Meliksed-Beg 1938, 57-58) (pl. II_{1,2}).

B. Kuftin carried out the first archaeological research at Avranlo in 1940 (Kuftin 1940, 14). He was planning to study "Cyclopean" structures as early as 1938. He wrote: "The archaeological investigation that we carried out gives rise to a number of problems ... connected to the relations between Cyclopean structures and the different types of burials on the valley" (Kuftin 1938, 1). In describing the Avranlo castle Kuftin noted that "the walls are of the same kind as those of the Nardevani castle, but less massive. In plan it has a more irregular outline than the Nardevani castle" (Kuftin 1940, 14). At the Avranlo castle Kuftin cut two shafts in the surface of the inner court of the castle and outside, in front of the west wall. He also cleaned the gate of the castle, but found nothing but potsherds (Kuftin 1940, 41-42). He mentions, however, that the material recovered at Avranlo differs from the pottery from Nardevani by virtue of the fact that it contains well-baked black-burnished pottery, some with a crimped exterior (Kuftin 1940, 42).

In 1941 Kuftin found an Early Iron Age and Achaemenid period cemetery in the private plot of the of the Karelov family, which extended into the plots of the Satarov brothers, and of the Karelovs and Ashkalovs. He writes that the fences of all the houses were built with tombstones set at an angle. Some of the local inhabitants kept chance find from the burials, and some unbroken items were even in everyday use. They even showed Kuftin agate and cornelian beads. The principal of the local school, S. Iordanov, gave Kuftin a bronze hook and two glazed vessels found in the cemetery, and Kuftin considered them to be analogous to the pottery found at Khojali. The latter was well dated by a bead with the name of Adadnerare on it. The Avranlo cemetery also produced a Roman silver denarius of Augustus. According to Giorgi Ashkalov, these objects had been found by his father in his own plot. Nearby, a bronze fork had also been found, which A. Karelov had taken to Leningrad (Kuftin 1948, 9).

Kuftin visited Avranlo again in 1948 and excavated two kurgans: "Kuchuk-tepe", situated in meadows north-west of the village, and the so called "teacher's kurgan" located on the road running towards the village of Gumbati. Both proved to be empty. In the same year 15 cists of the Early Iron Age were excavated in S. Karelov's garden. Some of the burials had been robbed, but others yielded pottery, bronze objects, and paste and cornelian beads (Kuftin 1948, 11). On the road leading to the village of Kushchi he investigated two kurgans; one burial was excavated on the outskirts of the village, and the finds included two ceramic vessels, a foot-shaped amulet hanging on a bronze chain, and a finger ring (Kuftin 1948, 26).

D. Mshvenieradze described the Avranlo castle in *The Building Business in Ancient Georgia* and *Building Art in Ancient Georgia*. He says that the castle is arranged in three tiers facing south towards the river. The first consists of an 80 m long wall 3 m high in places. There is a single gate 1.9 m high and 1.75 m wide cut through the wall. The gate is blocked by a monolith 2.2 m long and 1.8 m wide. In the lower tier separate monoliths measure 2.0 x 2.5 x 3.0 m. In the second tier the walls are built in three courses. Large monoliths

are placed at the edges, while the inner space is filled with small-sized stones. They measure between 0.30 x 0.30 x 0.20 m and 0.15 x 0.15 x 0.10 m. The castle is situated on the upper, third tier. It overlooks the rock to the west, south and north. A small ground is arranged to the west measuring 20.0 x 35.0 m. It is edged with large stones. The castle on the third tier measures 25.0 x 35.0 m, with walls between 4.0 and 8.0 m high. The tiers were connected by means of large monoliths. To the right of the castle there is a cave that has been enlarged. There is a space in front of the cave which is also edged with large rocks (Mshvenieradze 1959, 11). D. Mshvenieradze says that in Avranlo the second and the third tiers reveal a genuine "Cyclopean" masonry, characterized by large rocks, dry-stone masonry and an unusual mode of arrangement (pl. II_{1,2}). They were constructed so as to be difficult to demolish, but to have some flexibility in case of earthquakes. The whole subsequent conception of architecture in ancient Georgia until the Classical period was based on this principle (Mshvenieradze 1959, 13).

In 1998, with the support of the Open Society-Georgia foundation, the Trialeti Archaeological Expedition drew up a general plan of the Avranlo "Cyclopean" fortress as well as plans of upper and lower fortresses. At the same time scattered Palaeolithic and Bronze Age artefacts (of stone and pottery) were collected in the areas of the settlement and the fortress. In 2003 the Trialeti Expedition purchased a substantial collection from a local inhabitant of Avranlo, one Giorgi Ashkalov who had known Kuftin well, had taken part in the archaeological expedition carried out by O. Japaridze, and subsequently developed a personal interest in antiquities. The collection contains material of all periods from the lower Palaeolithic to the Medieval. Metal objects, in particular a metal hook adorned with a bull's head, are especially noteworthy.

In 2006 archaeological excavations were conducted in a field north of the "Cyclopean" fortress (pl. I₁). The work was connected with the BTC pipeline project, which wanted to construct a water supply system for the upper zone of villages of Tsalka Municipality. During these building works cultural layers of the settlement were damaged. With a view to defining the type, stratigraphy and boundaries of the site the expedition dug several trenches across the field north of the "Cyclopean" fortress (pl. I₂).

The river Ktsia flows south of the field. The "Cyclopean" castle is built along its deep gorges, on steep slopes and on the crest (pl. III₁). Many caves are cut in the side of the gorge. The castle is built on a small promontory with large basalt blocks and dry-stone masonry. It is washed by a large tributary to the north which flows from a stream some 1.5-2.0 km north of the castle and which seems formerly to have supplied the castle with drinking water.

The field is attached to the castle to north and west (pl. I₁), where there are signs of remains of a settlement and a cemetery. At the bottom of the mountain range at the north edge of the field there is a road which connects Avranlo with the village of Rekha, from where the road runs to the Gujaeti valley via Khando, and descends to the Bakuriani-Borjomi valley.

The original name of the Avranlo castle and its adjacent field has not been preserved. The local, comparatively newly settled Turkish-speaking Greek population call this field "Danalakh Duzhi" or "calves' field". The settlement extends across the whole field from north to south, from the "Cyclopean" castle to the metalled road. It seems to be more concentrated in the south part, near the castle, which is cut off by the gorge described above, and which divides the settlement into two parts. The field west of the gorge has been farmed for many decades.

The settlement measures 360 m from north to south, and 250 m from east to west (pl. I₁; III₂). The whole area of the settlement was divided into four lots (A,B,C,D), and these were in turn divided into plots of 18 x 24 m, which were then divided into 6 x 6 m grids; the grids were divided into 2 x 2 m sections. Four trenches in all cut across the field (pl. I₂). Trench No. 1 is situated in grid 8, plot CCLVI, lot D (pl. I₂). The trench was 4.2 m long and 2.0 m wide. On removing the humus a mound of large basalt stones was revealed. In order to estimate the type of construction, it was necessary to widen the trench in all directions, which brought the work to a halt. The trench did not, however, contain archaeological material.

Trench No. 2 was cut in lot D, in grids 2 and 3 of plot CCLV and grids 11 and 12 of plot CCXXV (pl. I₂; IV₃).

The length of the trench was 12.0 m, and the width 2.0 m. A stone mound 0.2 m thick made up of small stones was revealed at a depth of 0.3 m below the present ground level (level I), in which large basalt stones were embedded (pl. IV₁). After removing the small stone mound basalt stone walls were revealed arranged treated on one side (level II). Like the burials excavated in trenches Nos 3 and 4, they were square chamber tombs in the centre of which burials covered with a stone slab are arranged (pl. IV₂). Chamber tombs containing four burials were revealed in the trench (Nos 7-10). Due to the lack of time these burials were not excavated. Trench No. 2 was filled with earth again.

Trench No. 3 includes grid 12 of plot CXCIII, grid 10 of plot CXCIV, grid 3 of plot CCXXIII and grid 1 of plot CCXXIV (pl. I₂; VII₁). It is 9.9 m long and 4.0 m wide. At a depth of 0.2-0.3 below the present ground level a stone mound of medium-sized basalt blocks was recorded for the whole length of the trench (level II; pl. VI₁). After removing the mound, rectangular chamber tombs were revealed. Pit-graves (No. 5, No. 6) were excavated in their centre. Stones of the chamber of Burial No. 5 lay on black earth (pl. V₂). A settlement stratum was recorded at a depth of 0.3-0.4 m below this level. The house had a clay plastered floor on which many sherds were found. This stratum belongs to the Early Bronze Age. Remnants of a settlement also appeared in the area of Burial 6 (pl. V₁; pl. VI₃).

A household pit was excavated in the eastern part of Trench No. 3, in sections 5-6, 8-9 of grid 1 plot CCXXIV (pl. VI₂). The pit was covered with a stone mound 1.8m in diameter (pl. V₁). The pit is 0.8 m in diameter and 0.9 m deep. The pit was filled with stones and fragments of adobe plastering, and fragments of a large vessel were also recovered here. The pit belongs to the Early Bronze Age (see Shanshashvili, "Sites of the Kura-Araxes Culture in Trialeti", in this volume).

Trench No. 4 is situated between grid 4 of plot CXCIII and grids 2, 3, 5, 6 of plot CXCII (pl. I, 2; VII, 2; IX, 1). It is 8 metres long and 5 metres wide. Trench No. 4 revealed a situation similar to Trench No. 3. The only difference was that the Early Bronze Age level is more damaged here. Many fragments of pottery of various sizes were recorded on the floor (pl. IX, 2; XI, 4). Six burials were revealed in Trench No. 4 (pl. X), but since two of them extended into an unexcavated area, only four were excavated (Nos 1-4). In 2006 six burials were thus excavated on the field adjacent to the Avranlo "Cyclopean" fortress.

Burial No. 1 was found in grid 5 plot CXCII (Trench No. 4). The cist consists of stone slabs and is oriented east-west (pl. VIII, 2; IX, 2-3). The east wall of the cist consisted of two slabs, while the rest of the walls and the roof had only one. The cist is 0.5 m long, 0.3 m wide and 0.25m deep. There was a single occupant with the head to the north, lying in a crouched position on the left (pl. IX, 4; X; XI, 1).

The burial yielded: 1. A pottery jug with a tubular handle (pl. XIV₁), brown burnished exterior and interior and reddish fabric, made from well precipitated clay; found in the north corner of the burial; 2. Bowl (pl. XIV₂), clay, blackish-brownish exterior and interior, thin fabric; found in the south corner of the burial; 3. 5 beads, (pl. XIV₃), cornelian, found near the chest of the deceased; 4. Chain (pl. XIV, 4), bronze, again found near the chest.

Burial No. 2 is situated in grid 6 plot CXCII and grid 4 plot CXCIII (Trench No. 4).

A basalt stone mound on top of the burial measures 2.0 x 1.2 m (pl. VIII, 1). The burial chamber beneath the mound is oriented south-west to north-east (pl. XI, 2; XIII, 2) and is 1.2 m long, 1.1 m wide and 0.8 m deep. Beneath the stone mound were found asbestos stones from a threshing-board completely covering the deceased (pl. XI, 2-3).

The burial had a single occupant with the head to the south-west, lying in a crouched position on the right (pl. X; XI, 3; XIII, 1). A badly damaged bronze ring was found beneath the jaw.

The burial yielded: 1. Asbestos stones, 128 items, made of a light sort of stone of volcanic origin, grey, porous, treated on two sides. Most have a rounded back and a flattened base. 15 of them were found in the stone mound of the burial and the rest 2 beneath the stone mound laid above the deceased in courses; 3. Grind-stone, black, found at the north-west wall of the burial; 4. Flake, black obsidian, found on the pelvis of the deceased; 5. Bovine tooth, found at the pelvis of the deceased; 6. Fragments of the base of a pottery

vessel, yellowish-brownish exterior and interior, thick fabric, found near the head of the deceased.

Burial No. 3 was excavated in grid 6 plot CXCII (Trench No. 4). There was a badly damaged stone mound consisting of basalt stones (pl. VII, 2; VIII, 2; XI, 4; XIII, 2). A pit burial, 1.4 m long, 1.3 m wide, and 0.7 m deep, is oriented north-east to south west. The burial had a single occupant whose bones had been badly disturbed. The head of the deceased lay, apparently, at the south. The burial had been robbed. The bones of the deceased and grave goods were found at different levels (pl. X). Fragments of fired black pottery and an obsidian flake were found within the stone mound filling the pit-grave. A bronze ring was found on the floor in the central part (pl. XIV, 5); fireproof stone, basalt; an obsidian flake; an obsidian blade; a fragment of a clay lid.

Burial No. 4 was excavated in grids 3 and 6 of plot CXCII (Trench No. 4). A rectangular stone mound is badly damaged. It seems that the burial had a rectangular chamber consisting of very large stones (pl. VIII, 2; XI, 4). Fragments of its south (4.0 m) and west (3.0 m) walls have survived (pl. VIII, 1; IX, 1). The pit burial was covered with a huge basalt slab (2.2 x 2.1 m). The burial had been robbed, and there were no human remains or grave goods in the burial pit (2.4 x 1.6 x 0.3 m) (pl. VIII, 2; X). Fragments of a churn and other vessels, and an obsidian flake were found on the cover slab of the chamber (pl. XIV, 28-31). Fragments of fired black pottery (pl. XIV, 29-30), an obsidian flake and cattle bones were recorded on the floor of the burial.

Burial No. 5 is situated in grid 12 of plot CXCIII, grid 10 of plot CXCIV, grid 3 of plot CCXXIII and grid 1 of plot CCXXIV (Trench No. 3. pl. VII, 1).

The burial was covered with a rectangular stone mound (pl. XII, 2) surrounded by large basalt stones (3.8 x 3.1 m). The chamber tomb is oriented north-east to south-west (pl. XI, 5). After removing the stone mound of the upper level there appeared another arranged immediately over the burial pit (2.5 x 1.8 m). The mouth of the burial chamber was recorded at a depth of 0.6-0.7 m below the modern ground level. The floors of Early Bronze Age houses are also on this level (pl. V, 2).

The pit grave was cut in yellow loam and is rectangular with round corners. It is oriented south-west to north-east. It was 1.5 m long, 1.1 m wide, and 1.2 m below ground level. The burial was cut through the floor of an Early Bronze Age house. At a depth of 0.3 m beneath this level roof timbers appeared parallel to the long dimension of the burial (pl. XI, 6). The floor of the latter was recorded at a depth of 0.5 m. The burial had a single occupant with the head to the south, lying in a crouched position on the left (pl. VI, 3; XII, 2-3; XIII, 3).

The burial yielded: 1. Fragments of pottery, with a reddish exterior, interior and fabric. It was found at the level of the timber during cleaning; 2. Flake, andesite, found at the level of the timber during cleaning; 3. A bird figurine pendant, bronze (pl. XIV, 8), found at the chest area; 4. Bead, bronze (pl. XIV, 12), found at the chest area; 5. Ring, bronze (pl. XIV, 14); found beneath the skull; 6. Pin, bronze (XIV, 10); found at the chin; 7. Pin, bronze (pl. XIV, 11), found at the jaw; 8. Chain with a pendant, bronze (pl. XIV, 9), round in section; found at the left shoulder; 9. Ring, bronze (pl. XIV, 13), round I section; found at the neck; 10. 5 beads, paste (pl. XIV, 7), found at the neck and chest area; 11. 17 beads, cornelian (pl. XIV, 6), found in the neck and chest areas; 12. Bead-seal, paste; found at the left wrist.

Burial No. 6 was excavated in grid 1, plot CCXXIV (Trench No. 3). A pit grave overlaid with a stone mound (pl. XII, 1; XIII, 4). The mound was badly damaged. Like Burial No. 5, it had a rectangular chamber. West (4.0 m) and south (3.6 m) walls have survived (pl. VI, 3). In the central part of the chamber tomb there was a medium-sized stone mound which covered a burial chamber (1.9 x 1.3 m). Its floor was recorded at a depth of 0.8 m beneath the Early Bronze Age level. The burial had a single occupant with the head to the south-west, lying in a crouched position on the left. The upper part of the skeleton was undisturbed, while the lower had been disturbed and displaced and to the north part of the burial, some 0.25 m above floor level (pl. XII, 4-6). In front of the chest of the deceased there lay a bovine shoulder blade and hooves (pl. XII, 4).

The stone mound of the burial yielded: 1. Fragments of the rim and side of a pottery vessel. Grey-brown

exterior, interior and fabric; traces of a handle attachment; 2. Fragment of the round and slightly offset rim of a pottery vessel, black exterior, interior and brown fabric, containing fine-grained admixtures; 3. Fragment of rim of a pottery vessel, fired grey; 4. Fragments of the wall of a pottery vessel, blackish exterior and interior, grey-brown fabric; 5. Pottery drinking vessel (pl. XIV, 27), greyish exterior, interior and fabric; made from well precipitated clay (all the fragments were found near the lower extremities of the deceased); 6. Pot (pl. XIV, 24), grey-black exterior, interior and brownish fabric, contains fine-grained admixtures, found at the north-east wall of the burial; 7. Dagger blade, bronze (pl. XIV, 25), found in front of the chest, on a stone; 8. Spearhead, bronze, remains of a wooden shaft surviving in the butt (XIV, 15), found in the south-west corner of the burial; 9. Arrowhead, bronze (pl. pl. XIV, 20), found at the south-west corner of the burial; 10. Fragment of an arrowhead, bone (pl. XIV, 22), found at the south-west corner of the burial; 11. Pin, bronze (pl. XIV, 23), found in front of the chest, on a stone; 12. 8 beads, greenish paste (pl. XIV, 16), found at the wrist 13. 2 beads, cornelian (pl. XIV, 16), found at the wrist of the deceased; 14. Sceptre-head, antler (pl. XIV, 26), found at the south-west wall; 15-17. Three arrowheads, bronze (pl. XIV, 17-19), a thread for fastening the shaft rolled over the butt, found at the south-west corner; 18. Arrowhead, bone (pl. XIV, 21); found with *agape* bones, found to the south of the burial.

It is clear that the settlement contemporary with the Late Bronze Age burials was situated in the same field and in the same area as the "Cyclopean" fortress. Numerous fragments of pottery recovered in the area support this hypothesis. Artefacts obtained from Giorgi Ashkalov and the ceramic material collected by us (pl. XV-XX) allow the assumption that there were also settlement and a cemetery here at a later period.

In the western part of the field, near the road to the village of Rekha, there are the remains of a hill-settlement. The edge had been cut off by the road, where a thick occupation layer is clearly visible. Judging by surface finds, it is clear that it was a multi-level settlement containing mainly material of the second half of the second millennium BC.

In 2003 Giorgi Ashkalov helped us to obtain some grave goods excavated by a local resident on his land. After a survey and discussions with the finder it became clear that the burial belonged to a group of pit-graves covered with stone slabs. The burial chamber had been oriented north-west. The deceased was buried lying on the left side with the head to the north ("facing east" – as the "excavator" explained). There had been four ceramic vessels, a bronze knife, arrowheads, rings and fragments of a staff of office. The main detail of the staff, a hook, was found in front of the face of the deceased, and had a decorated band around the shaft; at 10-15 cm further to the north a bronze bull's head was recovered. There were remains of decomposed wood between the head and the band.

Grave goods recovered:

Jug, clay, fired grey; a zoomorphic handle attached to the neck and shoulder; the body decorated with relief bands and vertical lines; two snakes in relief between the vertical lines (pl. XIX, 1; XX, 2).

Jug, fired grey; made from clay with an obsidian admixture; handle triangular in section attached to the rim and the shoulder, à jour decoration on the body (pl. XIX, 6; XX, 3)

Pot, fired grey-black, made from clay with a mica admixture; shoulder decorated with three engraved lines (pl. XIX, 5; XX, 1).

Pot, clay, fired brown, with white-grained admixture; shoulder decorated with engraved lines (pl. XIX, 3; XX, 4)

Large pot, clay, fired grey; shoulder decorated with engraved horizontal, hatched lines and notches, trace of handle visible on the rim and shoulder (pl. XIX, 4)

Arrowhead, bronze, with elongated barbs and a long butt flat in section (pl. XVI, 2)

Arrowhead, bronze, with elongated barbs and long butt flat in section (pl. XVI, 3)

Knife, bronze, with a short hoop for a shaft and a nail hole on the hoop (pl. XVI, 1)

Band, bronze, with engraved vertical lines and two à jour perforations (pl. XVI, 7)

Bull's head, bronze (pl. XVI, 8)

Sceptre-like object, bronze, with a hooked end, ornamented shaft and a butt with an à jour perforation (pl. XVI, 6)

Ring, bronze, octagonal (pl. XVI, 4)

Ring, bronze, penannular (pl. XVI, 5)

Conclusion: Thanks to archaeological excavations and surveys conducted in the village of Avranlo, it became clear that occupation first began here in the Stone Age (see Sturua in this volume). A large and significant settlement emerged here in the Early Bronze Age (see Shanshashvili in this volume).

The “Cyclopean” fortress, around which the new settlement emerged, was built in the Late Bronze Age. No traces of Phase I (16th century BC) or Phase II (15th -14th centuries BC) of the settlement or the cemetery have yet been found. It is worth mentioning, however, that chance finds have included several fragments of pottery of Phase II and the of the 13th century BC (pl. XVII-XVIII), which look similar to the material of the “Central Transcaucasian” culture (Pitskhelauri 2005, pl. X, XX, XXX, XCVIII, II, XII, XIX, XCIV, CXIV, CXIX, CXXX, CLVI, CLXIII). The burial excavated in the village in 2003 belongs to the same culture (pl XVI; XIX, 1-6; XX, 1-4).

The finds from Burials Nos 2, 3-6 excavated in 2006 are similar to those of the “Samtavro Culture” complexes (Sadradsze 1997; Sadradsze 2002) and are to be dated to the 12th-11th centuries BC.

Particular attention should be paid to Burial No. 1 investigated in Trench No. 4, which is dated to the 4th-3rd centuries BC. This burial is the only site of this period at Avranlo. The jug with a tubular handle excavated in this burial is a rarity not only for Trialeti but for east Georgia too. These types of vessel mainly occur in west Georgia.

Sites of the modern era are also to be found in the village. The construction of churches starts in Tsalka region shortly after Christianity was proclaimed the state religion in Georgia. The monastery founded in the area of the Avranlo “Cyclopean” fortress in the 6th century AD had great importance for the region.

The great number of archaeological sites and the “Cyclopean” fortress point to the fact that Avranlo was situated at an important crossroads and was also significant in its own right. It was situated at a concentration of roads running from Borjomi-Bakuriani and Gori-Kareli to the south. A road diverts from the Borjomi-Bakuriani-Akhalkalaki main road, after passing the village of Tskhijvari, near Tskhratsqaro, which runs left to the east. After 7-8 km it comes to Tabatsquri Lake, then goes past it and after passing the north shore of the lake goes into a narrow gorge. The road passes Mount Tavkvtili to the south and crosses the border of Tsalka municipality at the peak of a minor pass on the slope. At 3.5 km along the road there are dozens of kurgans. The road passes Mount Shavnabada and gradually descends. Then it goes through an open field at the bottom of the east slope of Mount Egoiasar, where the old Sapitiakhsho was situated. From here the road divides into two. One runs to the village of Burnasheti, and the other to Qizil-Kilisa. The distance from Tabatsquri to the villages of Tsalka district is 20 km. From Tabatsquri the villages of Tsalka region can be approached through the Nariani Valley and along the river Ktsia, from where one can reach the villages of Khando and Rekha. Rekha can be reached via the dirt track running from Sapitiakhsho.

One more road leading to Tsalka runs through Rekha, and it runs from the Gujareti Valley and after passing Rekha reaches Avranlo. The road going into the Gujareti Valley starts near Tsaghveri, at 10 km on the Borjomi-Bakuriani-Akhalkalaki road. The motor road turns left in the centre of the village, passes through the villages of Kimotesubani, Gverdisubani, Ghvtismshobeli, Machartsqali before reaching Gujareti. The dirt track running from Gujareti goes south-east and after 4 km reaches the pass on the Trialeti mountain range, where the borders of Tsalka start. The distance from the pass to Avranlo is 10-12 km.

One branch of the road that starts near Tsaghveri turns right at 2.5 km from Kimotesubani and enters Didi Mitarbi via Patara Mitarbi, from where one can reach the Nariani Valley. Nariani is a concentration of dirt tracks running from Gverdisubani and Ghvtismshobeli. Tabatsquri Lake is west of Nariani, while the traveller using the road along the river Ktsia will reach Khando.

The Gujareti-Rekha road leads to Kareli. The dirt track from Tsitelsopeli and Machartsqali, situated in the Gujareti Valley, goes over the valleys of the Abukhalosghele and the Tqemlovanis tsqali (the Mtkvari

basin). These two rivers join at Tqemlovani. The road from this village goes to Kareli via Zghuderi. A fork from this road runs towards Gori.

From Avranlo roads run to Kvemo Kartli and Javakheti, whence one leads to the plain of Ararat and Lake Urmia and another runs past Lake Paravani and goes to central Anatolia via the Mtkvari valley.

Even though there has been quite a lot of information about sites at Avranlo for over a hundred years, no systematic or wide-scale archaeological excavations have been carried out. The material recovered here has not been published hitherto. This article is the first attempt, together with others by K. Sturua and N. Shanshashvili, at publishing material excavated at Avranlo.

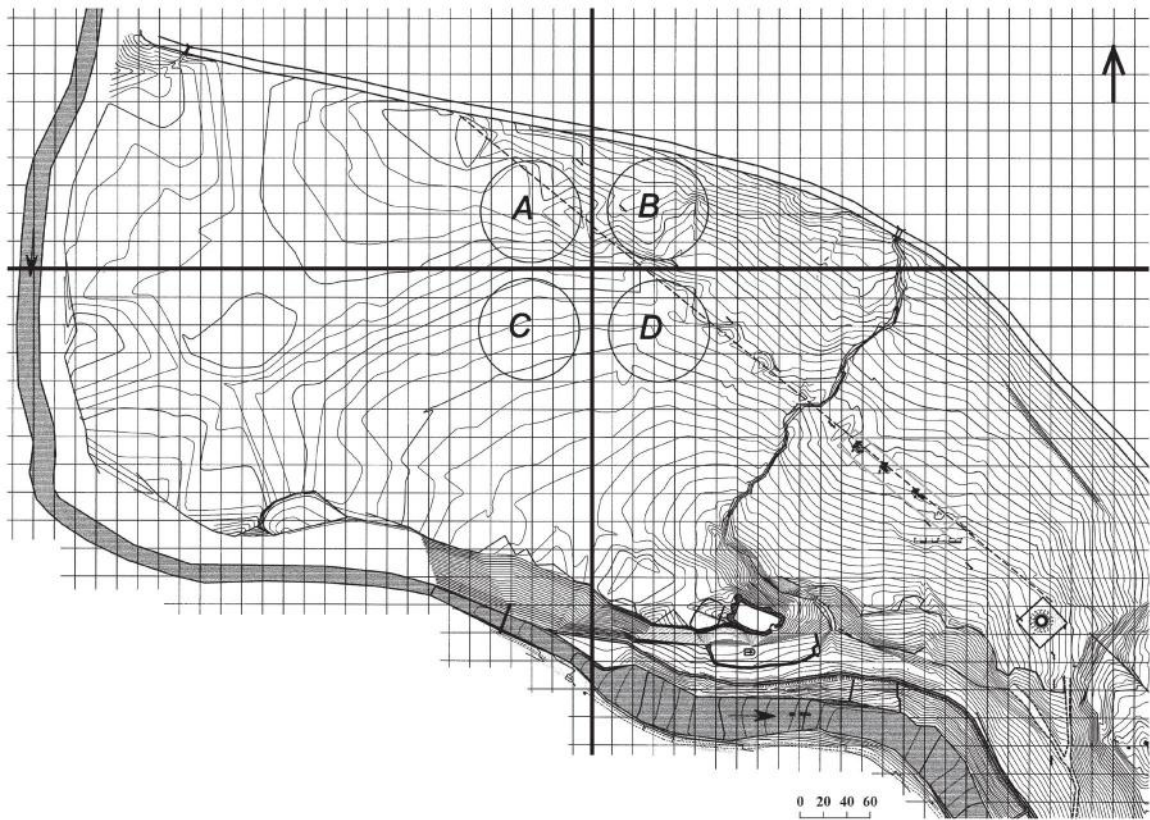
Although only minor works have been carried out at Avranlo, it still possesses great importance for the study of the ancient history of both Trialeti and South Caucasia.

Bibliography

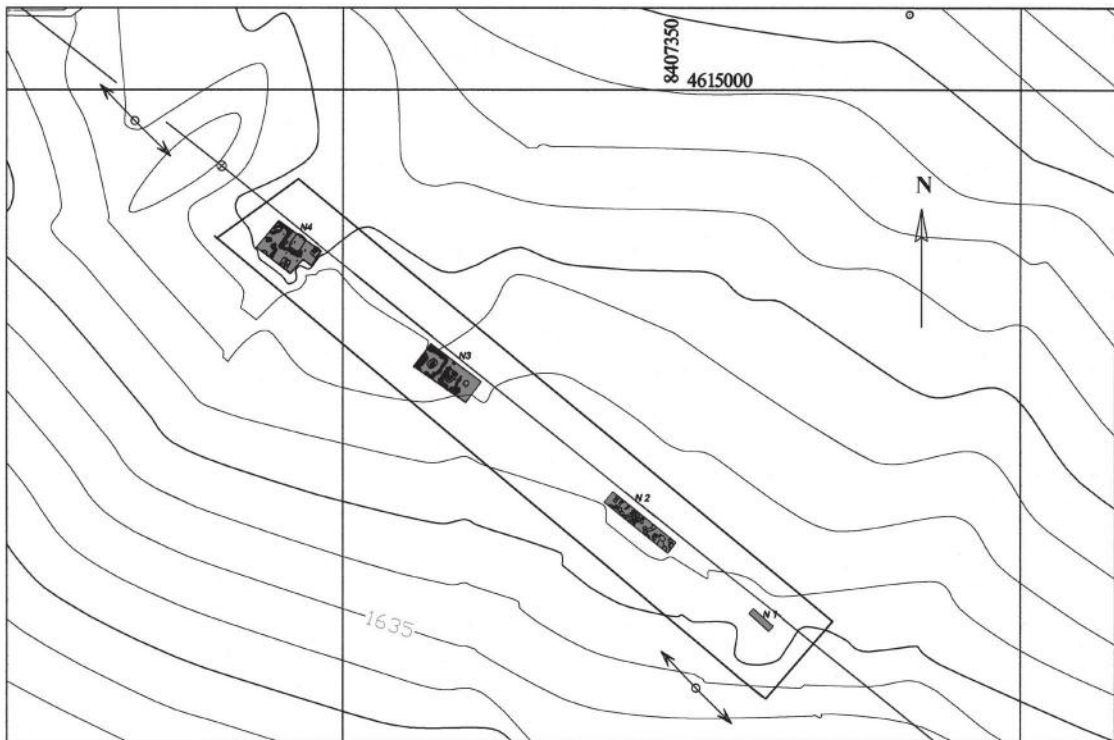
- Berdzenishvili D. 1982:** trialetis utsnobi tsartserebi (Unknown Inscriptions from Trialeti). *Collection of Georgian Historical Geography* 6, 3-28. Tbilisi.
- Chikovani T. 1973:** *Trialeti*. Tbilisi.
- Gvasalia J. 1982:** liakhvis kheobis istoriuli geografiis sakitkhebi (Problems of Historical Geography of the Liakhvi Valley). *Collection of Georgian historical Geography* 6, 29-57. Tbilisi.
- Hagiography 1947:** mokalakeoba da tsameba tsmidisa abibos nekreseli episkoposisa (Life and Martyrdom of Saint Bishop Abibos of Nekresi). *Apocrypha. Hagiography*. Tbilisi.
- Kekelidze K. 1968:** *etiudebi kartuli literaturis istoriidan* (Studies on the History of Georgian Literature). Tbilisi.
- Kuftin B. 1938:** *Dnevnik. Trialetskaya arkheologicheskaya ekspeditsiya* (Diary. Trialeti Archaeological Expedition) (Manuscript).
- Kuftin B. 1940:** *Dnevnik. Trialetskaya arkheologicheskaya ekspeditsiya* (Diary. Trialeti Archaeological Expedition) (Manuscript).
- Kuftin B. 1948:** *Dnevnik. Trialetskaya arkheologicheskaya ekspeditsiya* (Diary. Trialeti Archaeological Expedition) (Manuscript).
- Meliksed-Beg L. 1938:** *megalituri kultura sakartveloshi* (Megalithic Culture in Georgia). Tbilisi.
- Mshvenieradze D. 1952:** *Stroitelnoe delo v Drevnei Gruzii* (The Building Business in Ancient Georgia). Manuscript. Tbilisi.
- Mshvenieradze D. 1952:** *Stroitelnoe iskusstvo v Drevnei Gruzii* (Building Art in Ancient Georgia). Manuscript. Tbilisi.
- Narimanishvili G. 2006:** saphar-kharabas samarovani (Sapar-Kharaba Cemetery). *Dziebani* 17-18, 92-126.
- Pitskhelauri K. 2005:** *tsentraluramierkavkasiuri arkeologiuri kultura (dzv.ts. XIV-XIII ss.)* (Central Transcaucasian Archaeological Culture (14th-13th centuries BC). Tbilisi.
- Qaukhchishvili, S. (ed.) 1955:** *Kartlis Tskhovreba* (Life of Kartli) 1. Tbilisi.
- Sadradze V. 1997:** *samtavros samarovnis brinjaos khanis dzeglebi* (Bronze Age Sites at Samtavro Cemetery). Tbilisi.
- Sadradze V. 2002:** *mtskhetisa da misi shemogareni dzv.ts. II-I atastsleulis pirveli nakhevrის arkeologiuri dzeglebi* (Archaeological Sites in Mtskheta and its Environs of the First half of the II-I Millennia BC). Tbilisi.
- Taqaisvili E. 1913:** *Arkheologiicheskie ekskursii, raziskania i zametki* (Archaeological excursions, research and notes). *Messenger of the Caucasian Department of the Moscow Imperial Archaeological Society* 3. Tiflis.
- Vakhushiti, 1973:** *aghtsera samephosa sakartvelosa* (Description of the Kingdom of Georgia). *Kartlis Tskhovreba* (Life of Kartli) 4. Tbilisi.

Illustrations:

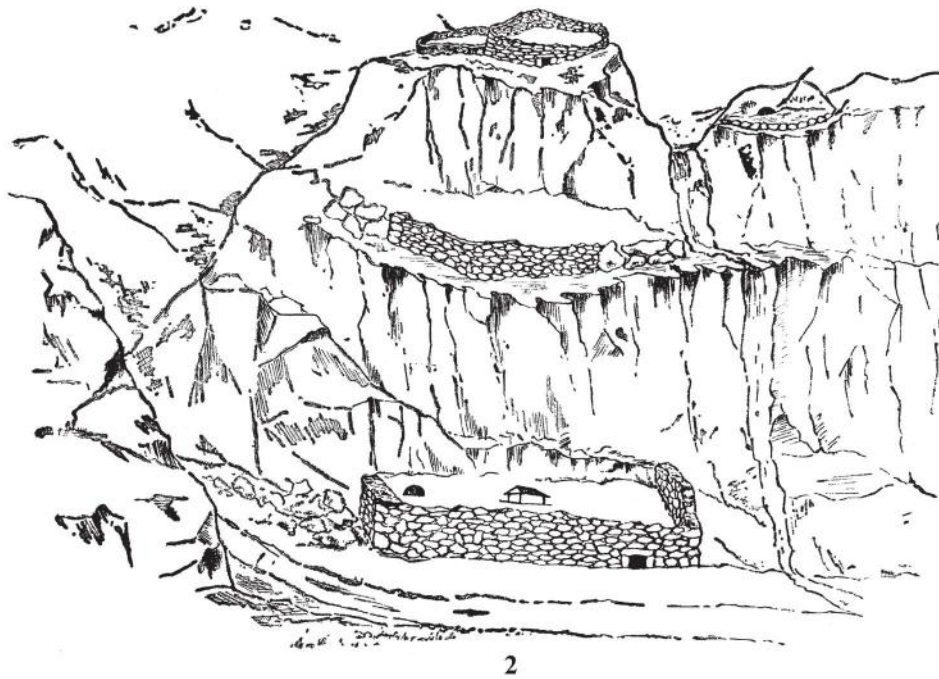
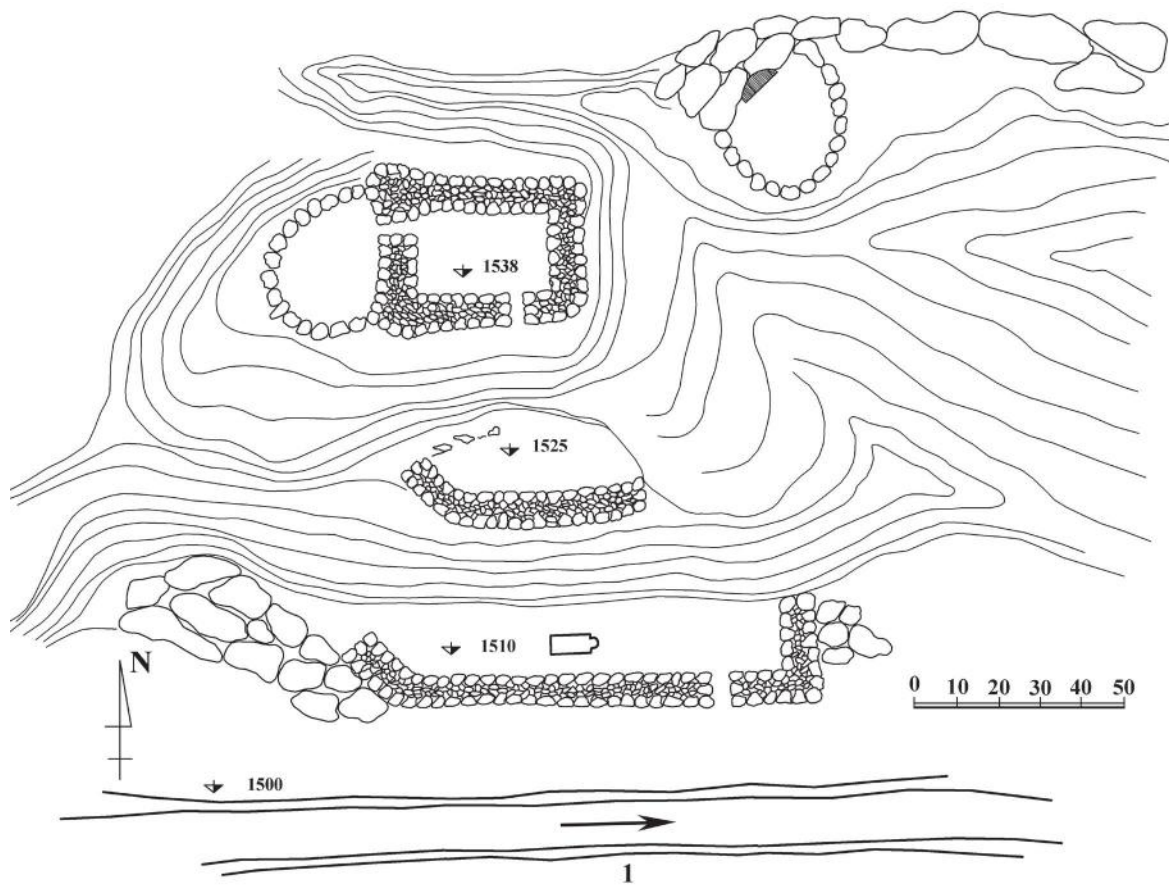
- Pl. I, 1. Topographical plan of the Avranlo "Cyclopean" fortress and settlement; 2. Distribution of investigative trenches on the settlement.
- Pl. II, 1. Plan of the fortress system by V. Tsilisani; 2. Fortress system (drawing by V. Tsilisani).
- Pl. III, 1. View of the fortress system from the east; 2. View of the settlement from the east.
- Pl. IV, 1. Trench No. 2: 1. Plan and section of level I; 2. Plan and section of level II; 3. Plan.
- Pl. V, Trench No. 3: 1. General view of level V; 2. Chamber of Burial No. 5 and the floor of the Early Bronze Age house.
- Pl. VI, Trench No. 3: 1. Plan of level II; 2. Plan and section of level IV; 3. Trench after finishing excavations. Plan and section.
- Pl. VII, 1. Trench No. 3. Plan; 2. Trench No. 4. Plan.
- Pl. VIII, 1,2. Trench No. 4. General view before opening the burials.
- Pl. IX. Trench No. 4: 1. Plan of level I; 2. Plan and section of level II; 3-4. Burial No. 1. Plan and sections.
- Pl. X. Trench No. 4. Plan and sections after opening the burials.
- Pl. XI – Trench No. 4: 1. Burial No. 1; 2,3. Burial No. 2; 4. Burial No. 3 in the foreground, Burial No. 4 in the background. Trench No. 3: 5,6. Burial No. 5.
- Pl. XII. Trench No. 3: 1. Burial No. 6. Stone-mound; 2,3. Burial No. 5; 4-6. Burial No. 6.
- Pl. XIII. 1. Burial No. 2. Plan and section; 2. Burial No. 3. Plan and section; 3. Burial No. 5, plans and sections; 4. Burial No. 6, plans and sections.
- Pl. XIV. Inventory: 1-4. Burial No. 1; 5. Burial No. 3; 6-14. Burial No. 5; 15-27. Burial No. 6; 28-31. Burial No. 4.
- Pl. XV. 1-28. Chance finds from within the Avranlo "Cyclopean" fortress.
- Pl. XVI. 1-8. Bronze material found in the burial excavated in the yard of G. Ashkalov.
- Pl. XVII. 1-40. Chance finds from within the Avranlo "Cyclopean" fortress.
- Pl. XVIII. 1-23. Chance finds from within the Avranlo "Cyclopean" fortress.
- Pl. XIX. 1, 3-6. Pottery found in the burial excavated in the yard of G. Ashkalov; 2,7-10. Chance finds of pottery from within the Avranlo "Cyclopean" fortress.
- Pl. XX. 1-4. Pottery found in the burial excavated in the yard of G. Ashkalov; 5, 6. Chance finds of pottery from within the Avranlo "Cyclopean" fortress.



1



2

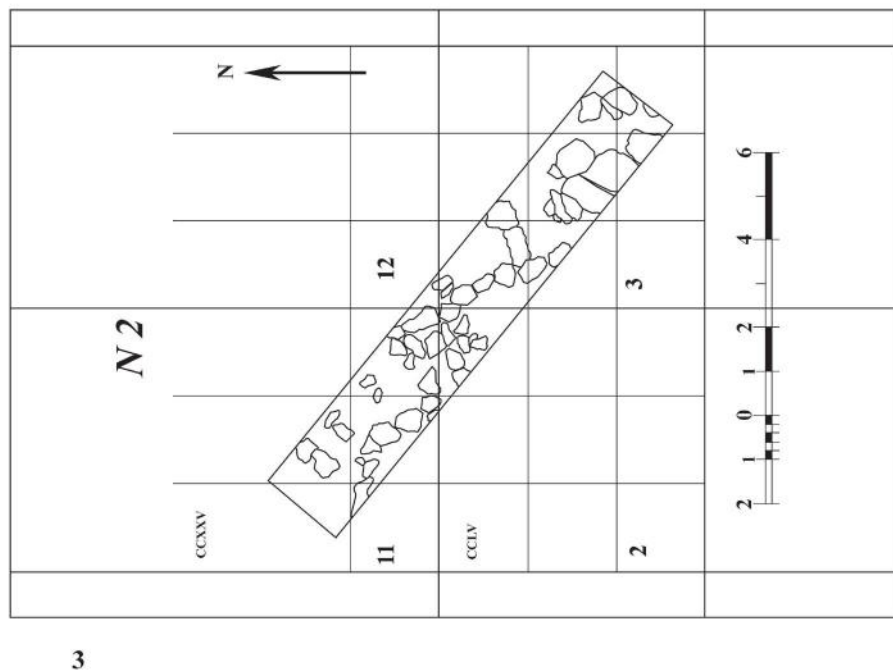
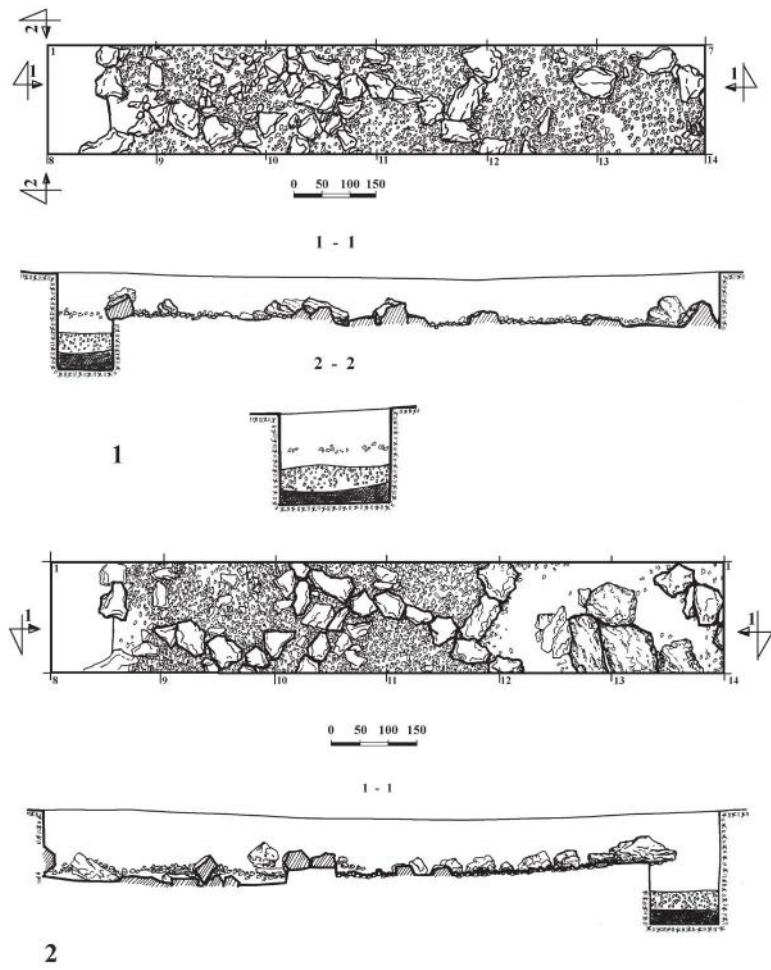


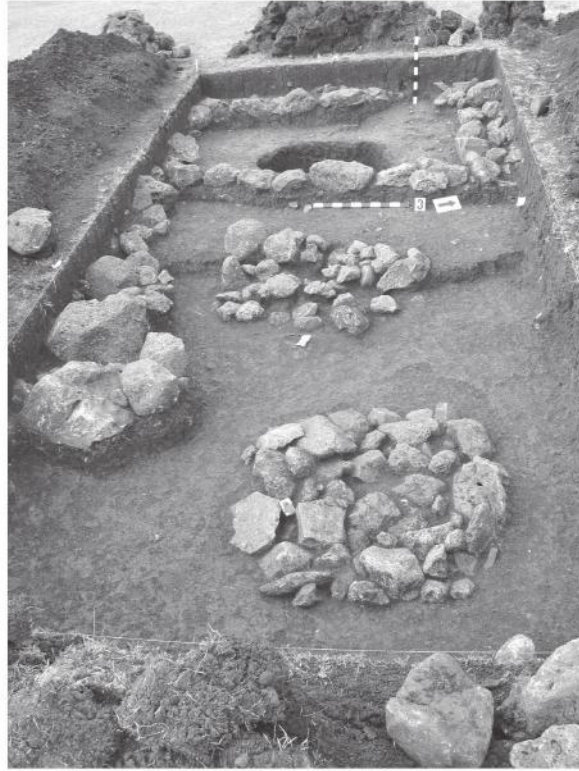


1



2

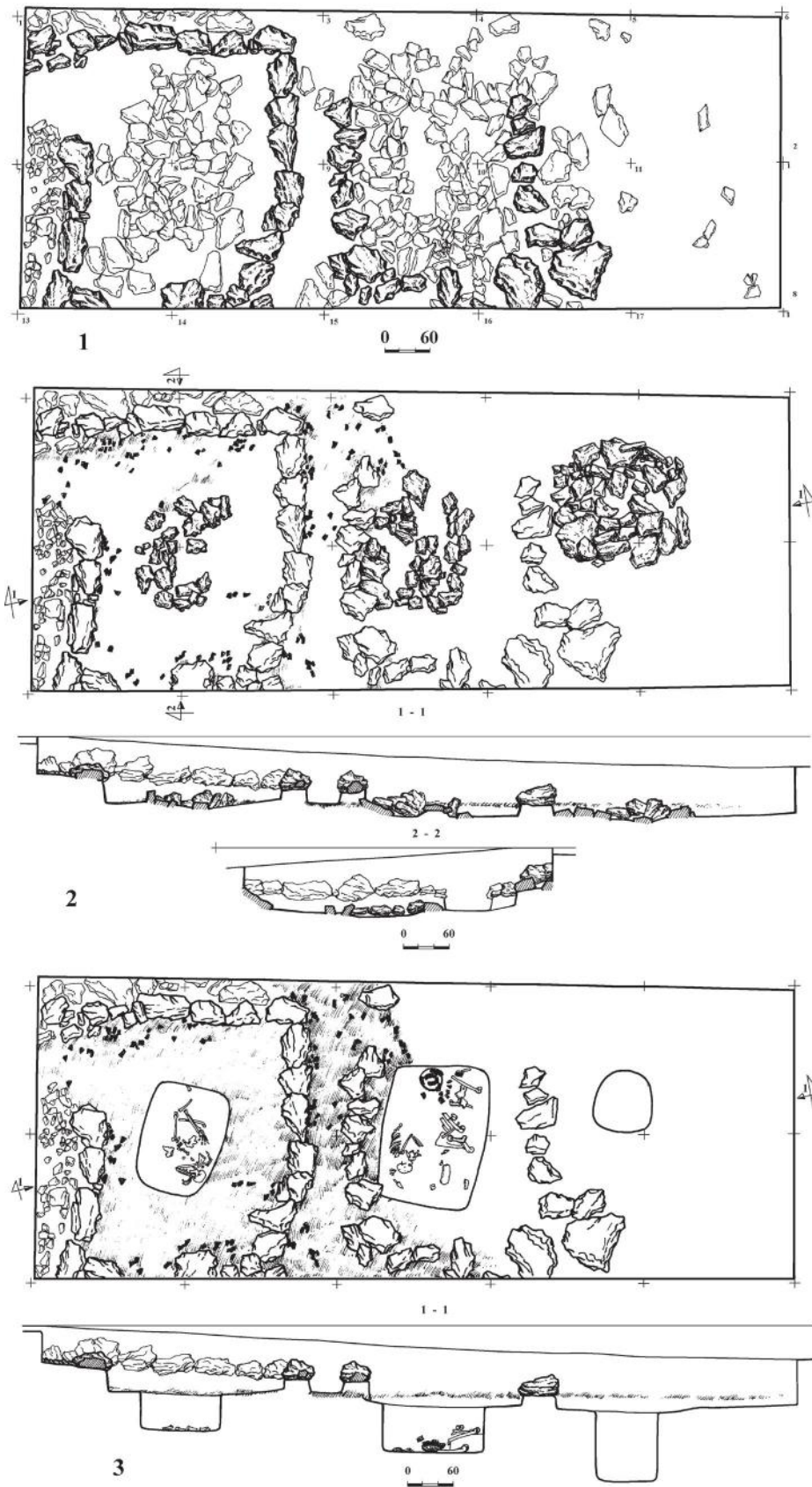


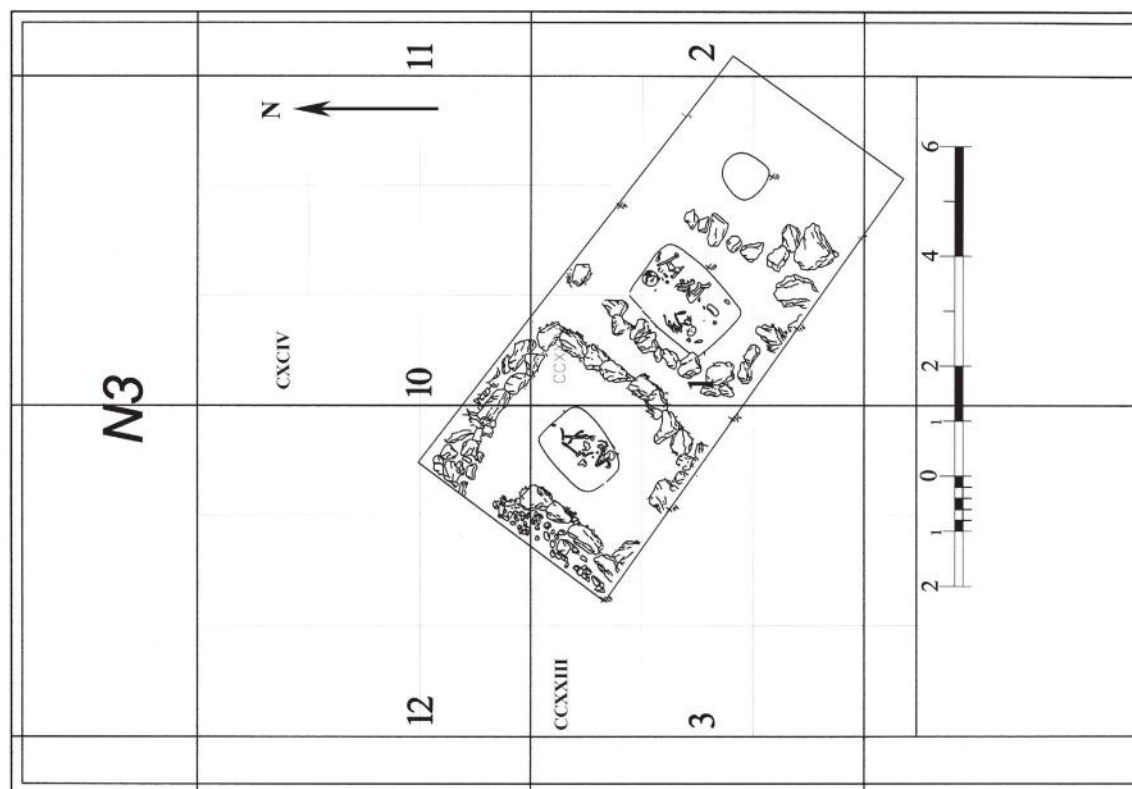


1

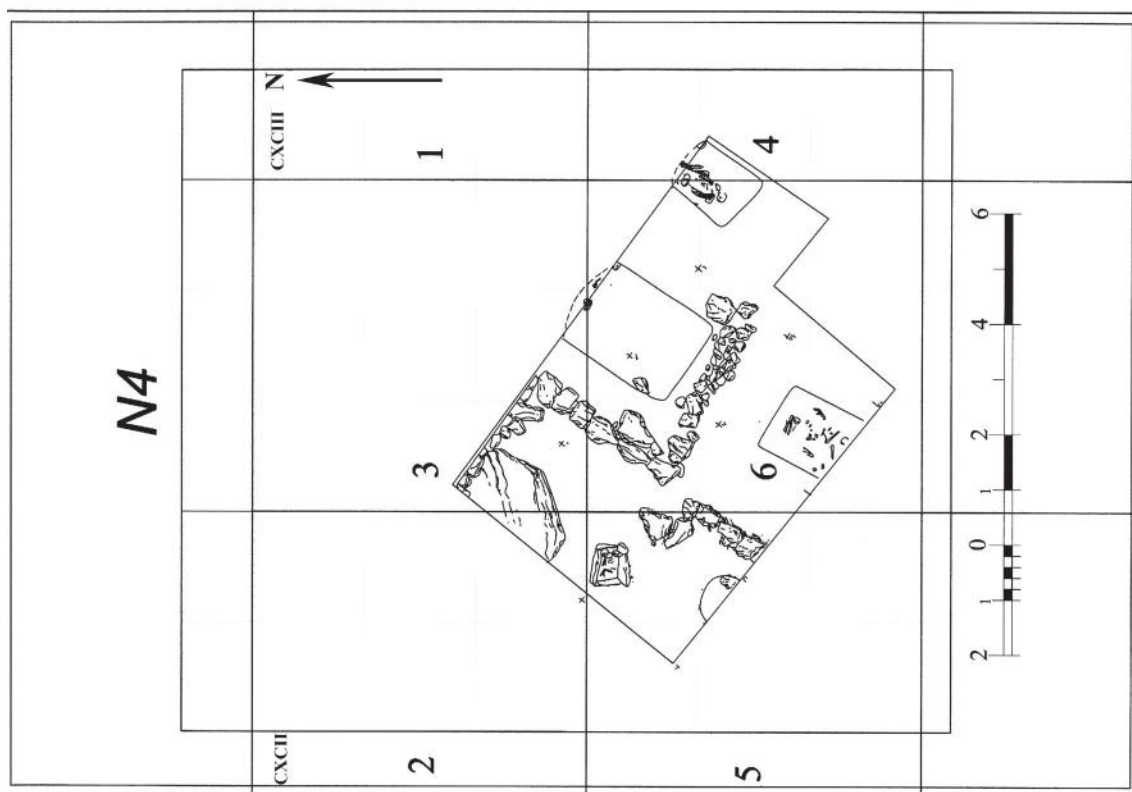


2





1



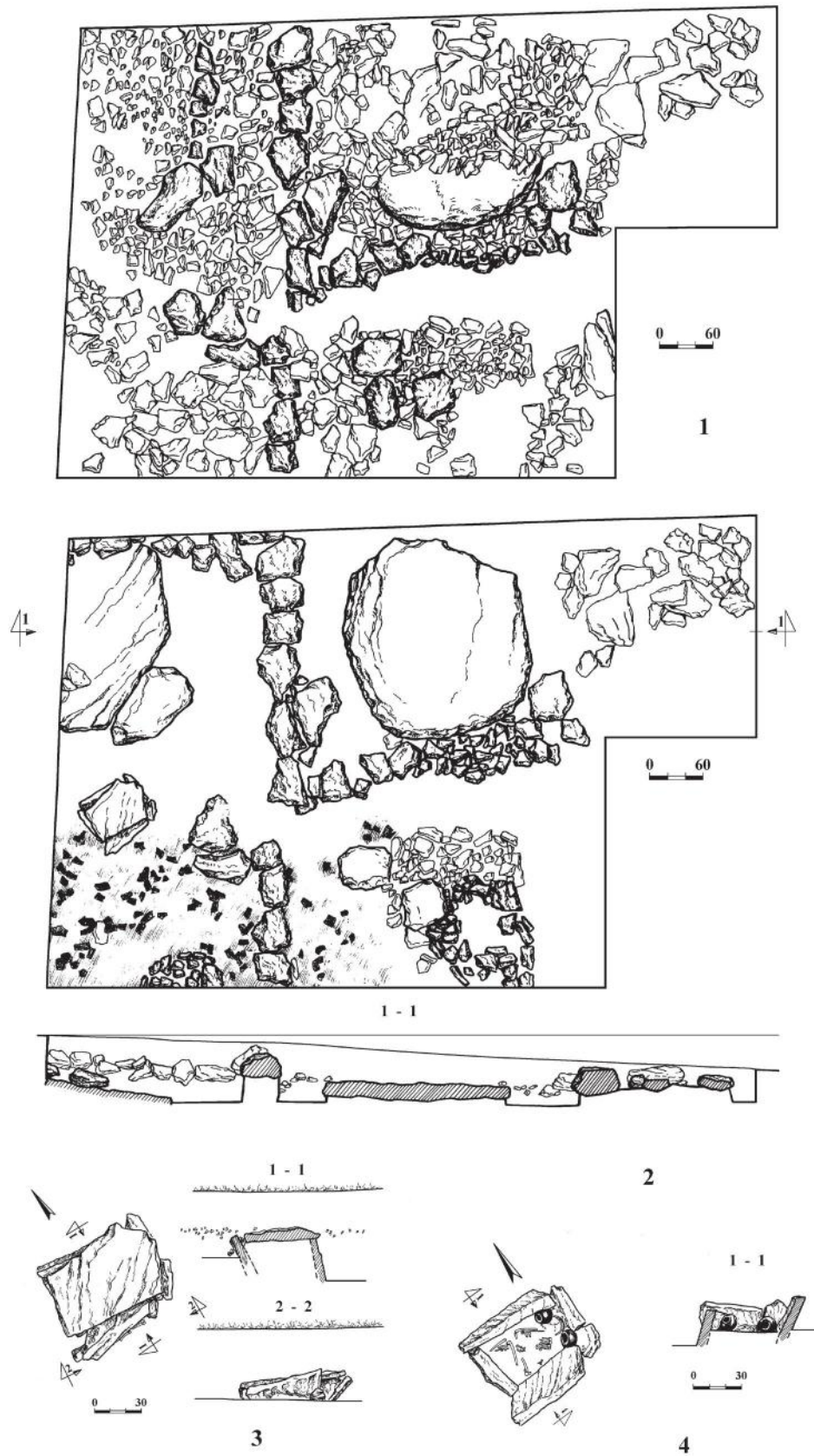
2

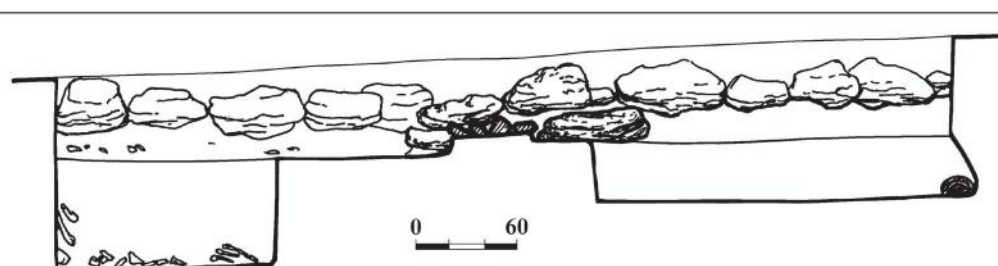
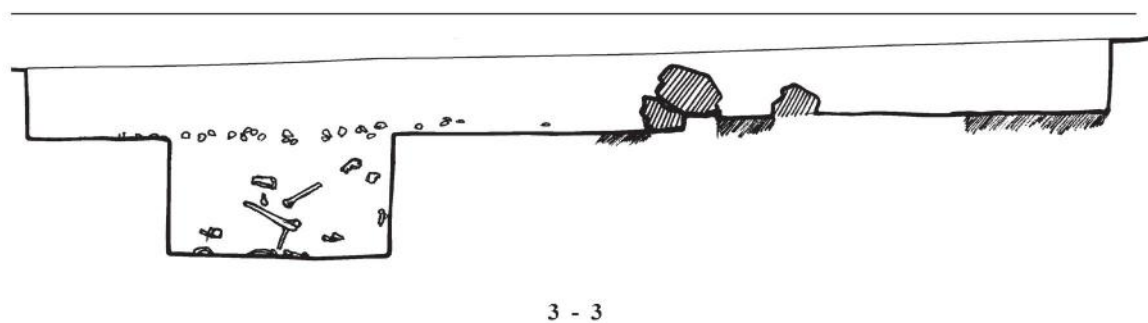
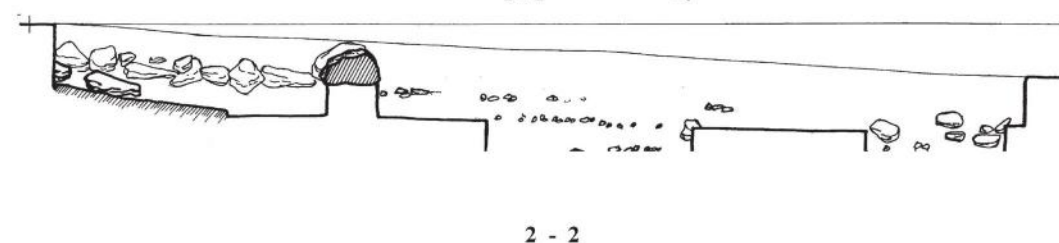
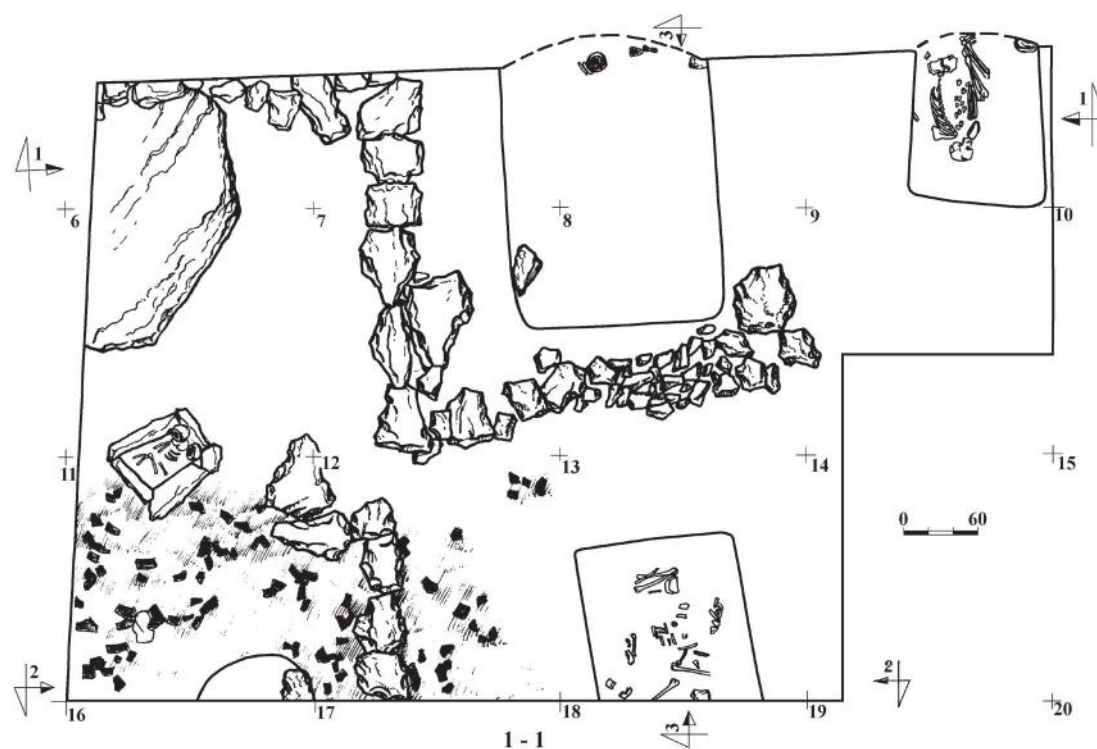


1



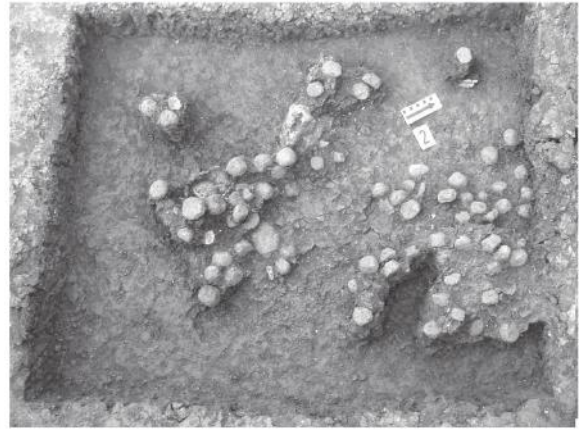
2



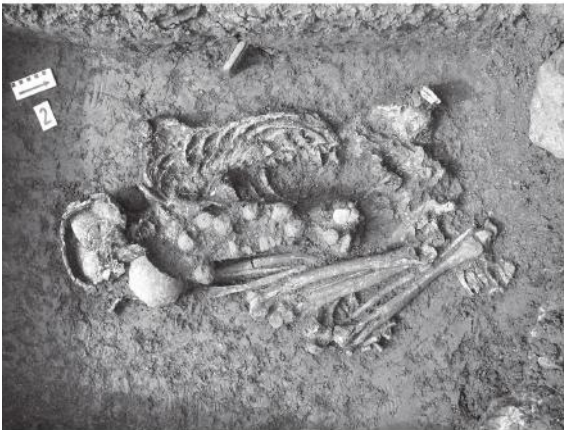




1



2



3



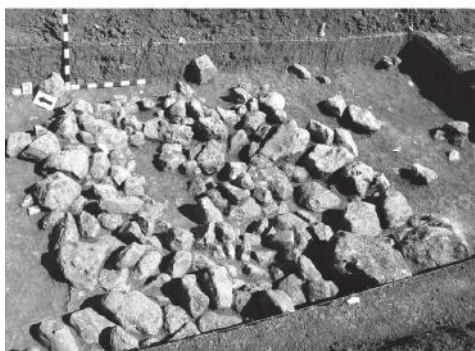
4



5



6



1



2



3



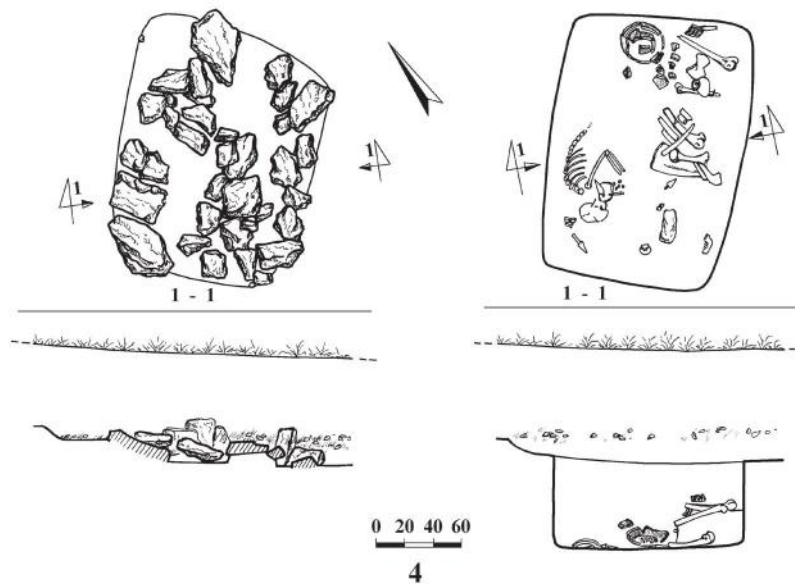
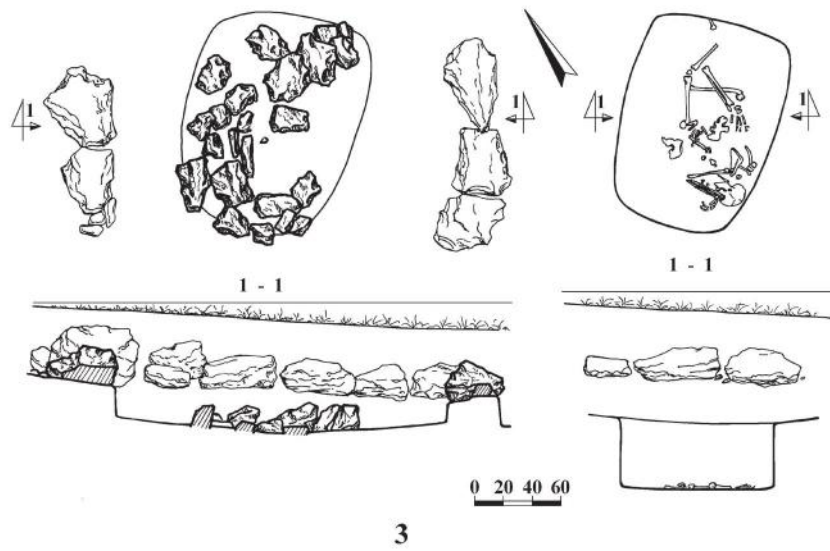
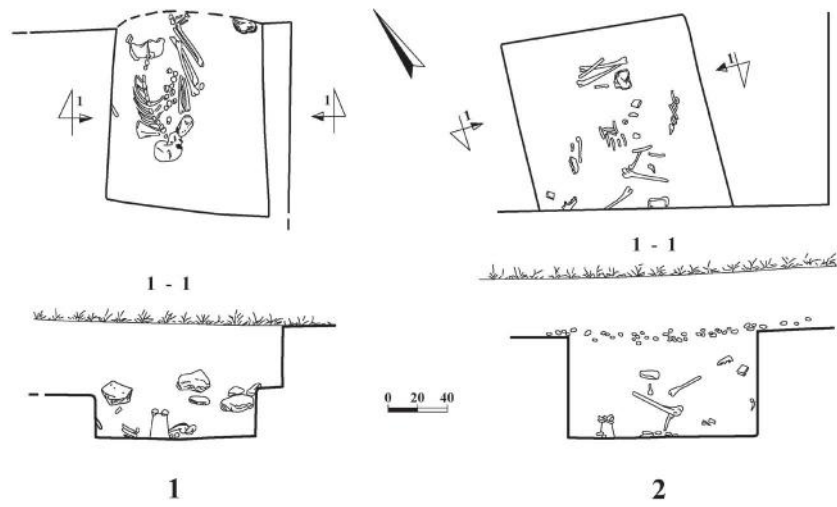
4

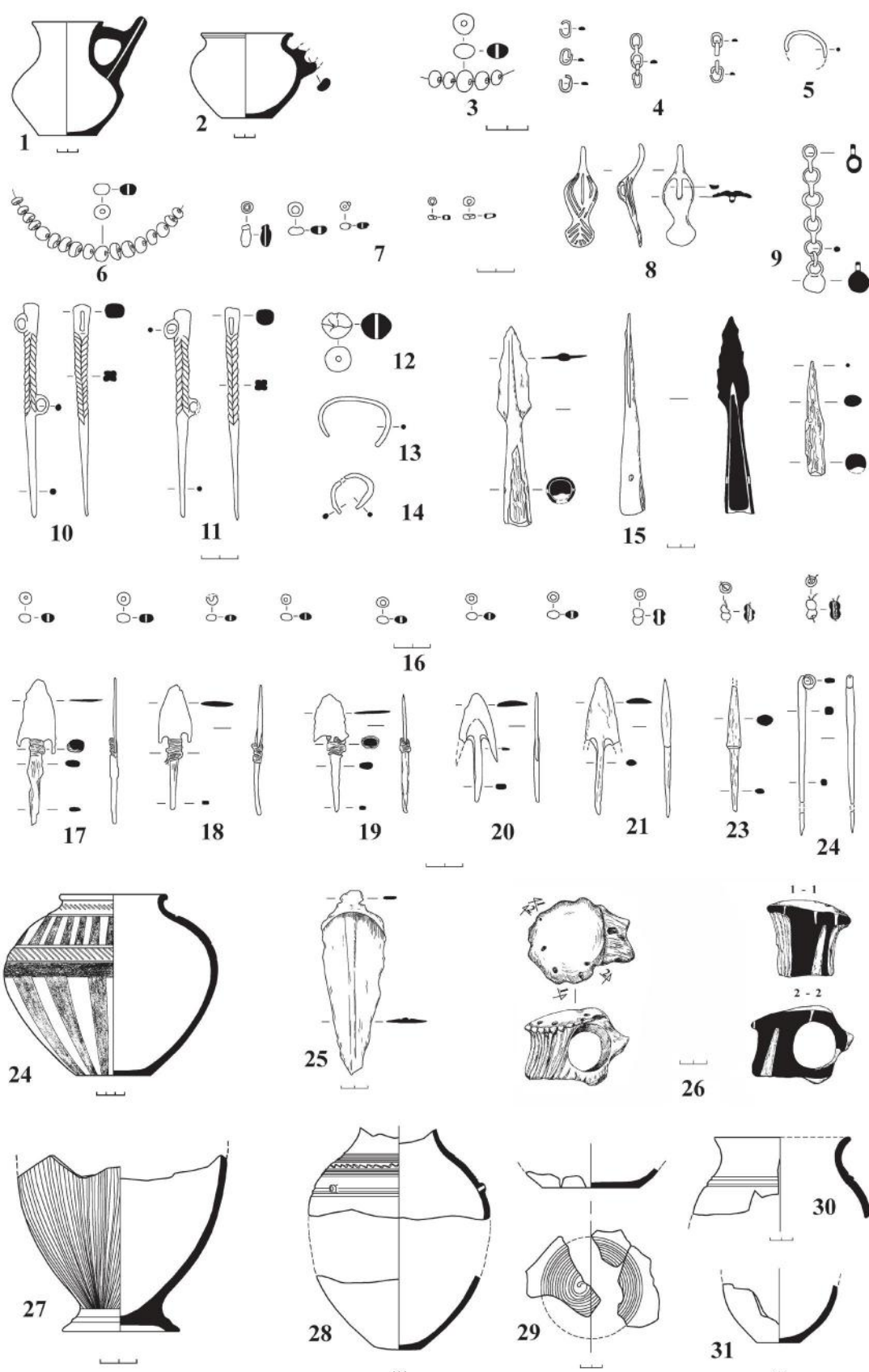


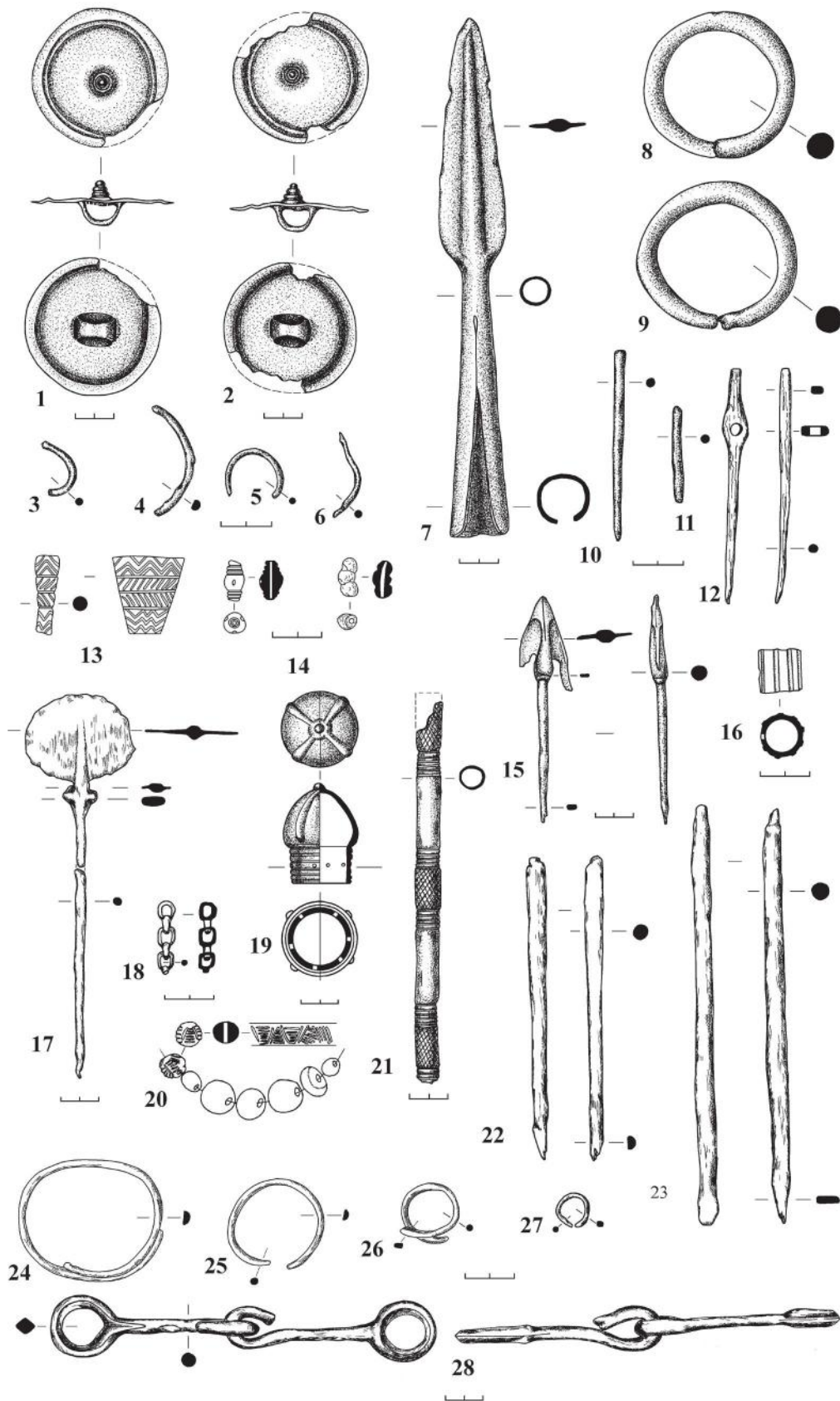
5

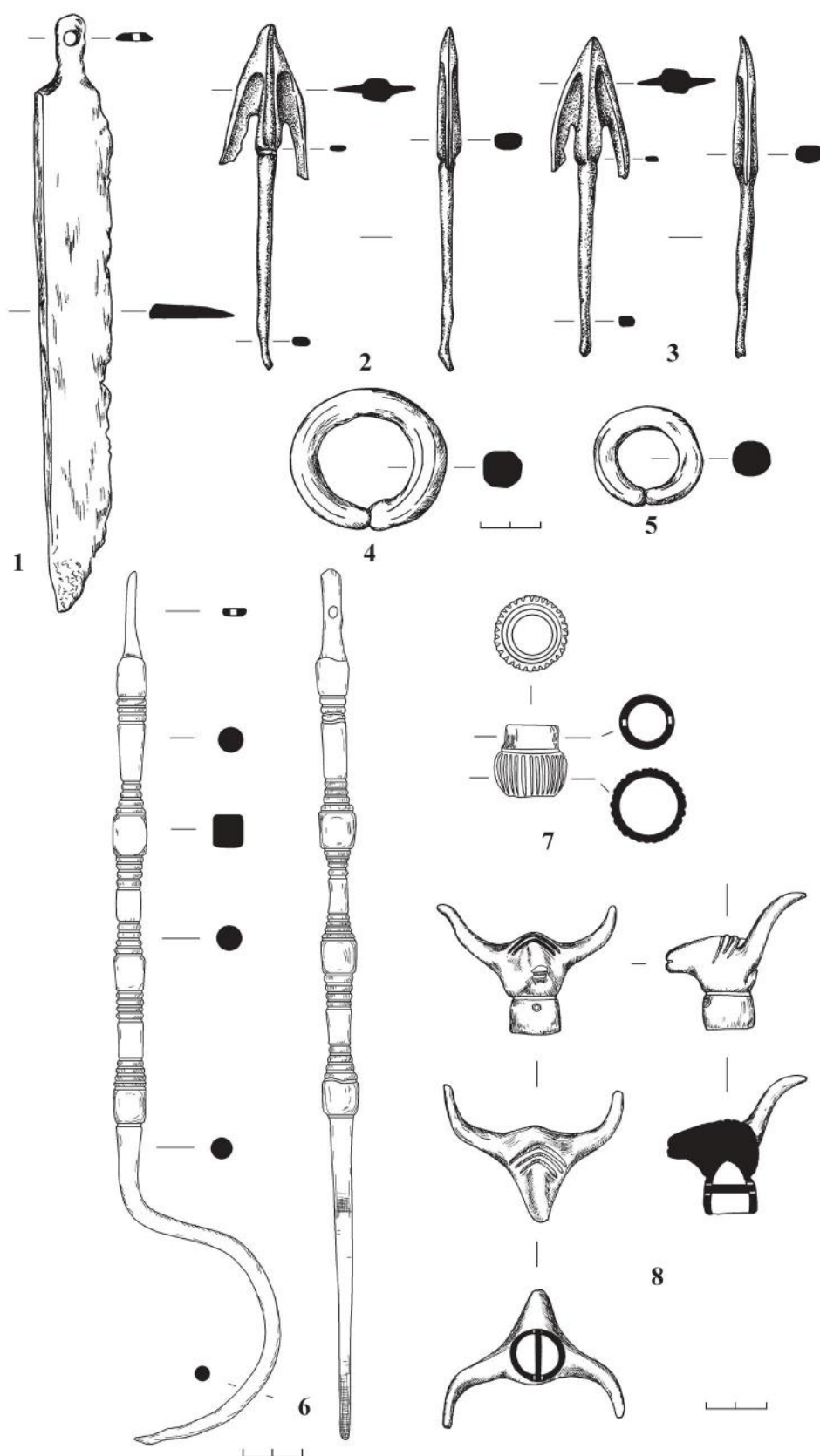


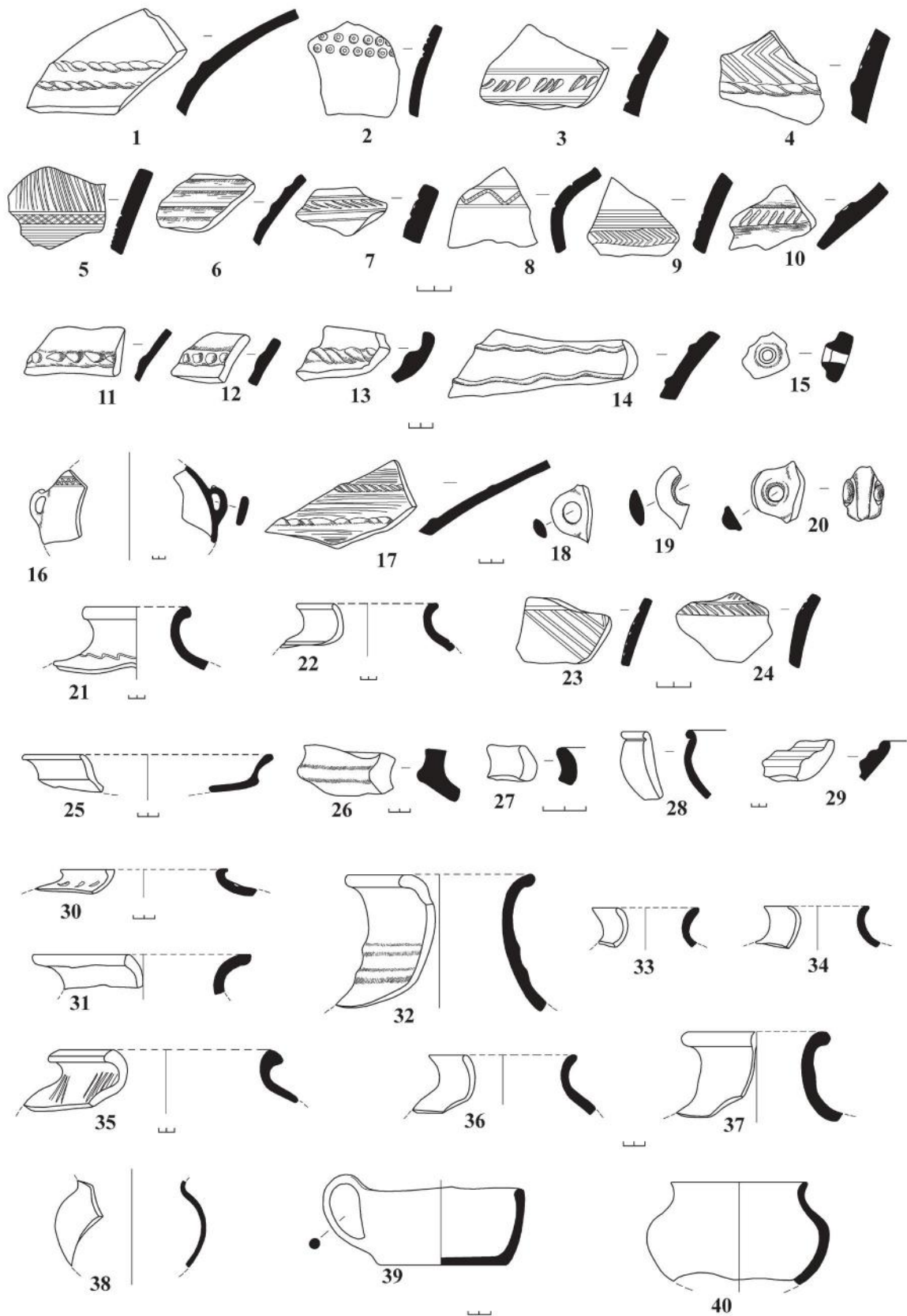
6

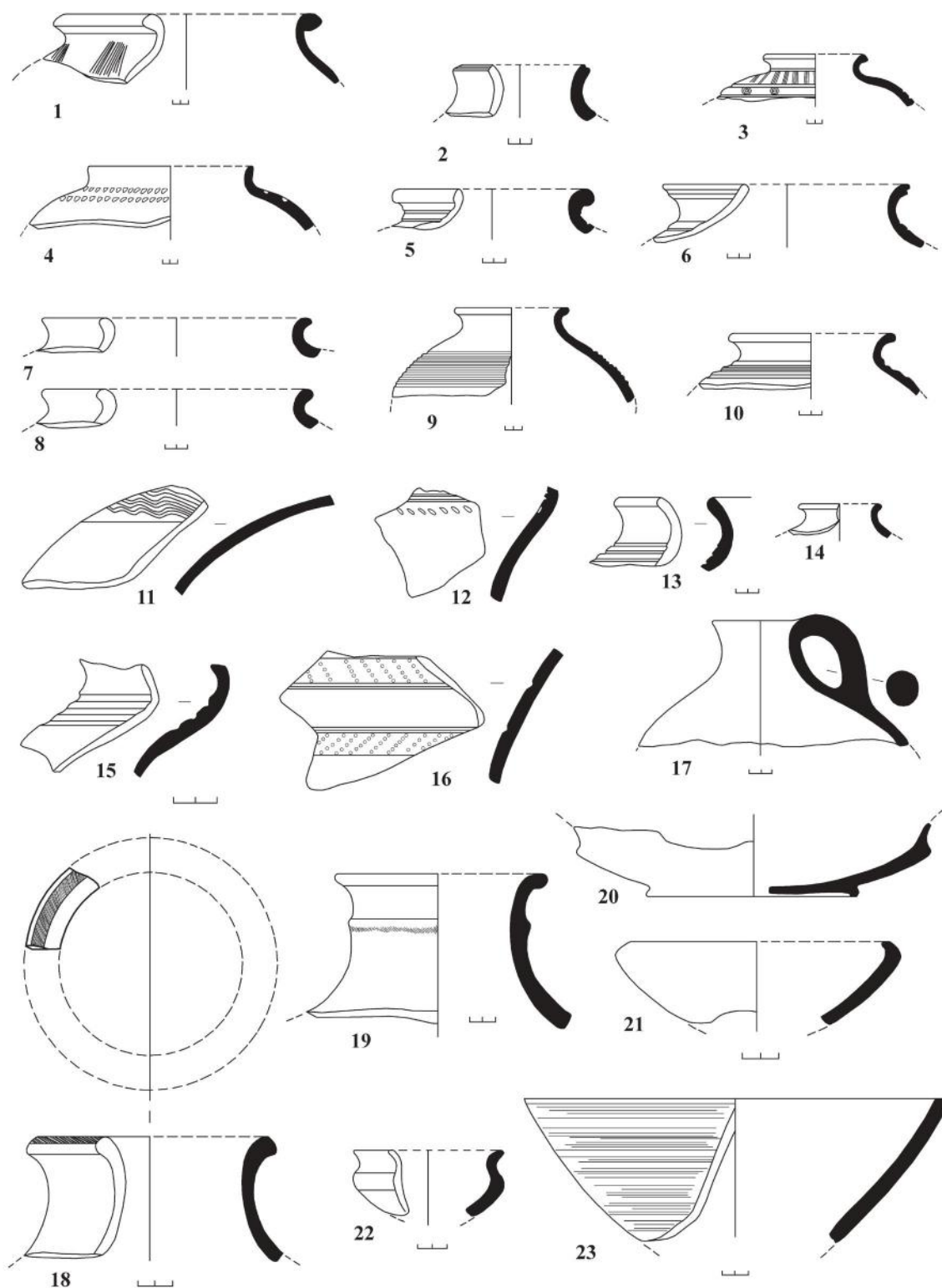


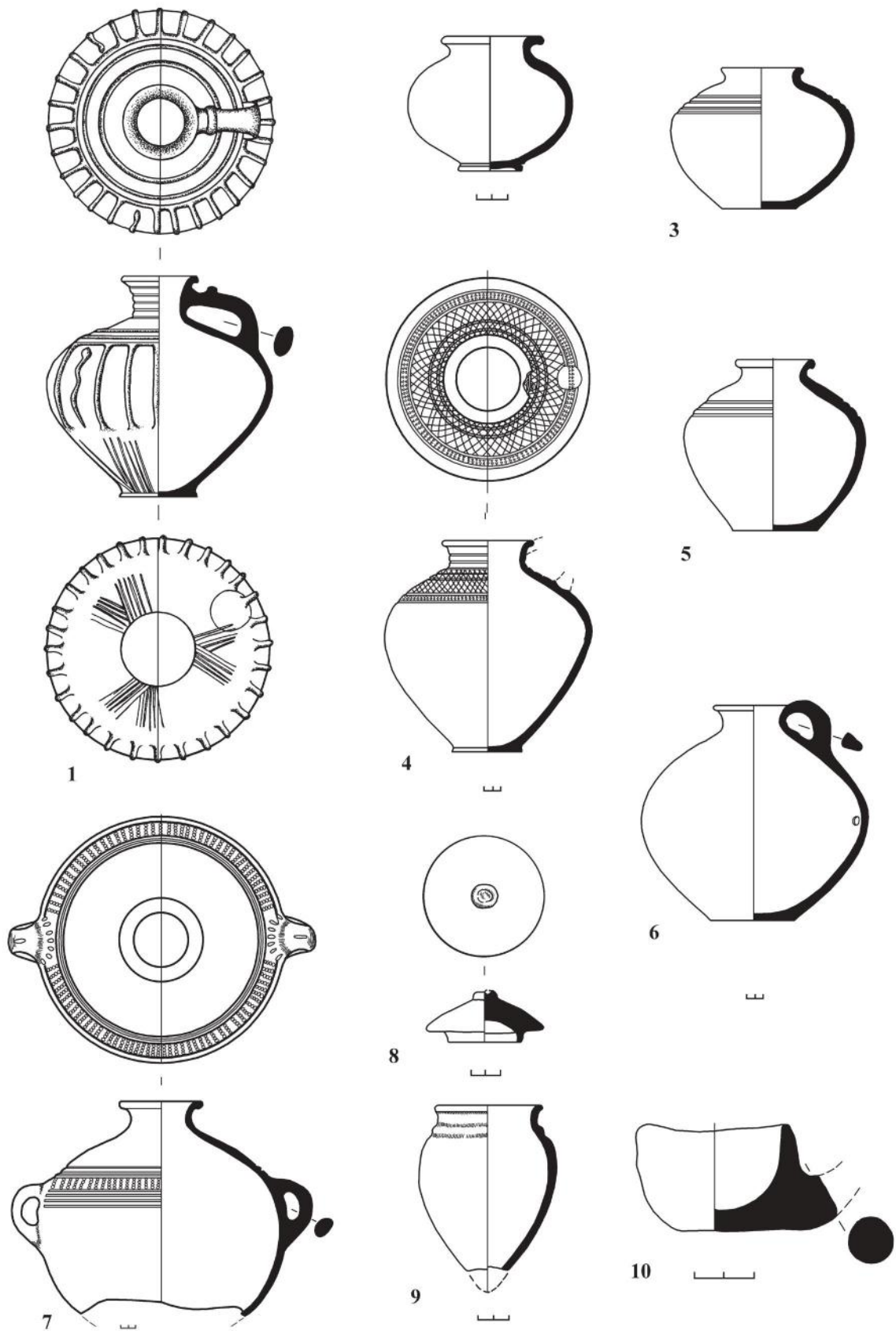






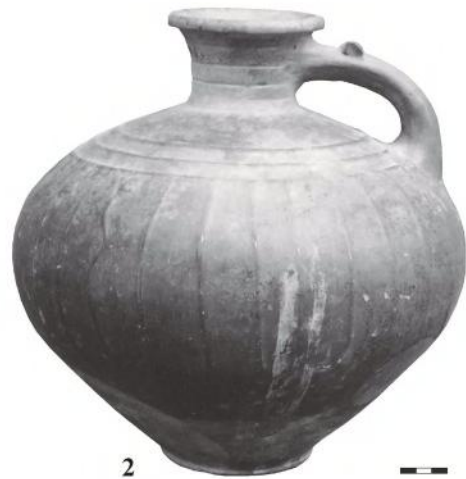




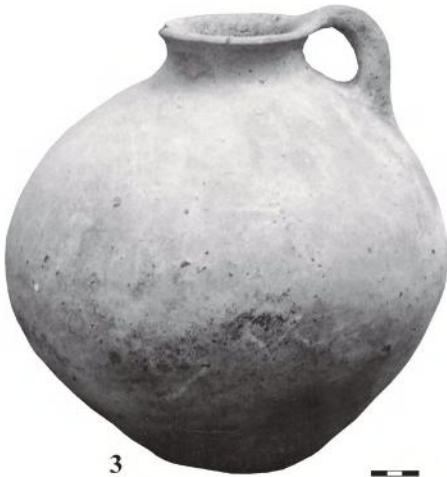




1



2



3



4



5



1



2