

RECENT DISCOVERIES BELONGING TO EARLY/MIDDLE BRONZE AGE IN CENTRAL MOLDAVIA*

BY

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KEYWORDS: EBA-MBA, Monteoru IC₄ – IC₃, Costișa, fortified settlement, Bessenstrich pottery, Noppenringe, chronology, Central european influences

Going with the discovery and specification of the cultural features, at the beginning of the 60's by professor Alexandru Vulpe¹, the Costișa culture, draw the attention on some problems referring to the rising, the inner evolution and the cultural destiny within the frame of EBA/MBA in Eastern Romania. Obviously that, in such a condition they also have appeared some attempts of explaining the location of the Costișa culture, in the ensemble of the cultural manifestations, properly to the Bronze Age in Eastern Europe. It was asserted from the beginning, based on the study of the analogies, that the new cultural group has been a part of a bigger complex, named Bialy-Potik-Komariw² which occupy the north of the Bessarabia, the Western Ukraine and the Southern Poland. So that, the Romanian alternative of this cultural complex, is known from that moment under the name of Costișa culture that in his way to south, it entered in contact with the earlier manifestation of the Monteoru culture. Up to now, the stratigraphy from the Costișa and Borlești (Neamț county) settlements has been offering the only reliable data for the chronological integration of this new type of discoveries. As it's shown by the author of the researches, the Costișa level was overlaped by a Monteoru Ic2-Ib level³. In this condition, it was admitted the formerly of the Costișa culture, on the northern part of the Central Moldavia, in relation with the Monteoru culture, as well the idea of some possible cultural contacts at the Costișa-Monteoru Ic4-Ic3 level⁴.

* This paper has been presented on the occasion of the Symposium *Bronzezeitliche Kulturscheinungen im karpatischen Raum. Die Beziehungen zu den benachbarten Gebieten*. Festsymposium für Professor Alexandru Vulpe zum 70. Geburtstag (Baia Mare, 10–13. 10. 2001). For that reason I would like to give my gratitude to Dr. Karol Kacsó for inviting me to introduce this preliminary data. It's now the time to express my thanks to Liliana Măzăreanu, Thierry Abraham, Axel van Haeren (S.C.Enzymes & Derivates Romania) in supporting, year by year, my archaeological investigations in Neamț county and especially at Siliștea. My thanks goes also to S.C. Aerostar S.A.Bacău, Professor Cornel Felea (Inspectoratul școlar al județului Neamț), Dipl. Eng. Dan Popa (S.C. Izohart S.A. Piatra Neamț) and to the family of Professor Nedelcu Mihai from Siliștea. All of them have sustained, by all means, our efforts for bringing into light our firsts tasks.

¹ Al. Vulpe, *K voprosu periodizacii bronzovogo veka v Moldove*, in *Dacia*, N.S., V, 1961, p.105–122; Al. Vulpe, M. Zămoșteanu, *Săpăturile de la Costișa (r. Buhuși, reg. Bacău)*, in *Materiale*, VIII, 1962, p. 309–316.

² Recently, Gh. Dumitroaia, has proposed a new denomination for the Costișa Culture as the Komarov-Costișa Culture (Gh. Dumitroaia, *Comunități preistorice din nord-estul României. De la Cultura Cucuteni până în bronzul mijlociu*, Piatra Neamț, 2000, p. 128).

³ Al. Vulpe, M. Zămoșteanu, *op. cit.*, p. 311–312, 314.

⁴ In fact, due to the different stages of the archaeological investigations the problem of the Costișa-Monteoru contacts has been seen at different levels. To see, for example, Al. Vulpe, *op. cit.*, p.121, fig.9; Al. Vulpe, M. Zămoșteanu, *op. cit.*, p. 315; Al. Vulpe, *Cultura Costișa/The Costișa Culture*, in *Comori ale Epocii bronzului. Treasures of the Bronze Age in Romania*, București, 1995, p.163–167; M. Florescu, *Problèmes de la civilisation de Costișa à la lumière du sondage du Borlești*, in *Dacia*, N.S., XIV, 1970, p. 51-81; S. Morintz, *Contribuții arheologice la istoria tracilor timpurii, I. Epoca bronzului în spațiul carpato-balcanic*, București, 1978, p. 112–115; Gh. Dumitroaia, *op. cit.*, p.156.

Untill recently, fewest information were added in the attempt of understanding the evolution, the destiny, but especially the cultural relation happened at the border between EBA and MBA and to which the elements of the Costișa-Bialy Potik-Komariw, Monteoru, Wietenberg, took part⁵.

But lately, due to the researches initiated in the eastern and south eastern Transylvania⁶, and in the northern part of Central Moldavia as at Lunca, Poduri and Siliștea, it have appeared new data referring to the cultural relations in the EBA and MBA of this part of Europe.

From now on, we are going to refer, only and shortly, at some results of a recent research initiated by us in an archaeological site belonging to Costișa culture and which rises some problems referring to the chronological frame, the cultural relations with contemporary and neighbouring manifestations and especially with the cultural areas located at longer distances.

The research's place is situated in north-western part of Central Moldavia, at the southern extremity of the Cracău-Bistrița depression and in the hill top area between the Siret and Bistrița rivers (at approximate 12 km from the first water way and approximate 10 km from the second one (Pls.1 and 2). Moreover, at 6 km to the north-west there is located the eponymus settlement, and also, that the researched site is located at the border between Monteoru and Costișa cultures. Furthermore, the fortified hilltop settlement is situated at the proximity of an important way of access to Transylvania, to the Ciucului depression.

The archaeological site is located on the territory of Români commune, Neamț county, in the eastern proximity of the former village of Bărjoveni (unified with Siliștea) on the *Cetățuia* hill. The property settlement occupies the northern extremity of the hill and has the altitude of 448.4 m (Pl. 2).

In plane, the settlement has triangular shape with the axe length of 110 m and the base of 75 m, being NNV-SSE oriented. To north, east and west the settlement is protected by the hill's steep slopes. Southward, in the area connected with the rest of the plateau, it was practised a moat with the actual depth of 2 m; the extremities of the moat ends on the steep slopes of the hill (Pl. 3 a, b). The premises naturally bordered also artificial too, occupies an area with an approximate size of 7000 m², but only the third part of it represents the deforested area in which were concentrated the researches from the summer of 2000 and 2001.

Even by 1940, the priest-archaeologist, Constantin Mătase pointed out the presence of some archaeological vestiges on the Cetățuia hill, information were taking over by Ștefan Cucuș, as well⁷. The systematic researches started in 2000, including the following objectives: the cultural integration of the monument, the establishing of his role within the Costișa culture, the determination of the settlement's character and the stages of it's attendance, the delimit of the inhabited area.

After two archaeological excavations some preliminary data has been offered with the occasion of the archaeological national conferences in 2000 and 2001⁸ it could be point out the following remarks: the presence of a defence ditch with the depth of 3.15 m which delimit the southern part of the settlement. The filling of the ditch consists of a mass of brown soil, having gritstones of white yellowish colour, or burned at red, pottery fragments and bone fragments. All of these were pulled out from the inner area of the settlement where we suppose it was a defence *vallum*. The gradients of the defence ditch are covered with gritstones slabs. The southern part of the ditch has fewer artefacts. In the northern part, on a length of approximate 4 m, the area is strongly disordered. It is the area were we supposed to be the defence *vallum* which in time had been destroyed, flattened and pulled out in the filling of the ditch. Most of the archaeological vestiges are concentrated in the northern extremity (inside the settlement) and consist of pottery fragments, bone remnants, some stone grinders, adobe fragments stone tools and also three hair rings of a double wires (*Noppenringe*) (Pl. 9/a, b, c).

⁵ We can only notice the excavations at Lunca, Poduri, Prăjeni. (See Gh. Dumitroaia, *op. cit.*, and the bibliography; M. Florescu, *op. cit.*).

⁶ Z. Székely, *Cultura Ciomortan*, în *Aluta*, I, 1970, p. 71–87; E. Zaharia, *Cultura Ciomortan/The Ciomortan Culture*, in *Comori ale Epocii bronzului. Treasures of the Bronze Age in Romania*, p. 151–153; V. Cavruc, *Noi cercetări în așezarea de la Păuleni (1999–2000). Raport preliminar. Prezentare generală*, in *Angustia*, 5, 2000, p. 93–102; V. Cavruc, Gh. Dumitroaia, *Descoperirile aparținând aspectului cultural Ciomortan de la Păuleni*, in *Angustia*, 5, 2000, p. 131–155.

⁷ Lately, D. Monah and Șt. Cucuș has drawn the attention as concern the uncertainly chronological frame of the artefacts from Siliștea mentioned by C. Mătasă. (C. Mătasă, *Cercetări din preistoria județului Neamț*, in *BCMI*, 97, (1938) 1940, p. 5–41; D. Monah, Șt. Cucuș, *Așezările culturii Cucuteni din România*, Iași, 1985, p. 144; Șt. Cucuș, *Contribuții la repertoriul arheologic al județului Neamț*, în *MemAntiq*, XVIII, 1992, p. 48).

⁸ N. Bolohan, E. R. Munteanu, Gh. Dumitroaia, *Siliștea, com. Români, jud. Neamț* in *Cronica. Campania 2001*, p. 229 and pl. 61; N. Bolohan, E. R. Munteanu, *Sat Siliștea, com. Români, jud. Neamț*, in V. Cavruc, Gh. Dumitroaia (coord.), *Cultura Costișa în contextul Epocii bronzului din România*, Piatra Neamț, 2001, p. 44–49; N. Bolohan, Gh. Dumitroaia, E. R. Munteanu, *Siliștea, com. Români, jud. Neamț* în *Cronica. Campania 2002*, p. 287–289 and pl. 103.

Within the same surface it was unearthed under a layer of gritstones burned at red a whole biconical pot of 26.3 cm, having the mouth flared up a little, two vertical flatted handles pulled out from the rim and attached on the shoulder (Pls.4; 5/b). The exterior surface has a dark-brown colour and it isn't decorated. Interesting to be remembered is the presence of one tiny fragment with specific Costișa motifs deposited inside the pot, near others potsherds and some fragmentary animal bones.

Approximate in the same situation it was discovered another whole pot, also under a level of gritstones, with the height of 13 cm (Pl. 5/a). This has globular shape and the rim little flared, a flatted handle starting from the rim of the pot, attached on the upper body (shoulder), where there are three conical buttons setted symmetrically. The exterior surface has the light-brown colour.

The afore-mentioned pots have their analogies with some miniature shapes in Costișa culture⁹. On the other hand, we can state for analogies with some shapes specific to the latest phase of the Early Bronze Age in Transylvania, as well¹⁰.

The pottery repertoire of the fortified settlement from Siliștea is completed by the presence of a large number of pottery fragments, representative for Costișa and Monteoru Ic3–Ic2 (Pl.6).

What makes us to pay attention to, is the discovery, in the settlement area, of three copper adornments, disposed at little distance one to another. Two of them are identical, by approximate 4.5 cm in diameter, the third one is smaller by 3.5 cm in diameter (Pl.9/a, b). All these adornments are made of copper (?) wire with thickness of 3 mm, which was bounded twice and has the ends twisted forming a point. One of this has also two little loops attached on the second fold (Pl. 9/a). The mentioned adornments were found in an archaeological context in which have appeared before Monteoru and Costișa potsherds, two stone grinders and other tools made of gritstone and bone, as well (Pl.8).

Identical samples, still fragmentary, were also found at Răcătău (Bacău district) in a pit with debris containing Monteoru Ic2 potsherds; the second one was found at Calu-Piatra Șoimului (Neamț district), without archaeological context¹¹.

Those adornments, discovered within the Costișa culture or at the border of Costișa and Monteoru culture, find their analogies into Aunjetitz culture area in Central Europe and especially in the graves or in small metallic deposits. So, we can mention a hair ring with a single spiral from Neudorf at Staatz, north of Wien, those from the necropolis of Early Aunjetitz at Abraham in Western Slovakia¹², the seven *Noppenringe* from the royal tomb at Trsteniče (Znojmo district)¹³ the fragmentary pieces founded into a grave (268) at Jelšovce (Nitra district)¹⁴, those from the grave number 61 at Mytna Nova Ves (Topol'čany district)¹⁵ and in the grave number 82 at Branč (Nitra district)¹⁶. The presence of these *Noppenringe* in Western Moldavia, within the Costișa culture might indicate the existence of some relations/contacts between Middle Danube area and the eastern Carpathians during EBA or at the border between EBA/MBA. This data can be assigned in an earlier dating of the Costișa culture with what we have known up to now. This context must be supported as well by the presence of the *Bessenstrich* pottery from Siliștea (Pl. 7/a–f)¹⁷, in an approximate rate of 25% of the whole material, pottery which can prove the existence of some interferences with similar manifestations from Transylvania and, moreover to the Middle Danube area.

⁹ V. Cavruc, Gh. Dumitroaia, *op. cit.*, 2001, pl. 26/2 and pl. 35/1.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, Pl.XII/1.

¹¹ In fact, only the sample of Calu-Piatra Șoimului represent a *Noppenringe* made of copper. Unfortunately, there are no informations about the archaeological context (M. Petrescu-Dîmbovița, *Der Arm- und Beinschmuck in Rumänien*, in *PBF*, Abteilung X, Bd. 4, Stuttgart, 1998, p. 189, Taf. 163).

¹² M. Gimbutas, *Bronze Age Cultures in Central and Eastern Europe*, Paris-The Hague-London, 1965, pl. 37, 39/6a–b.

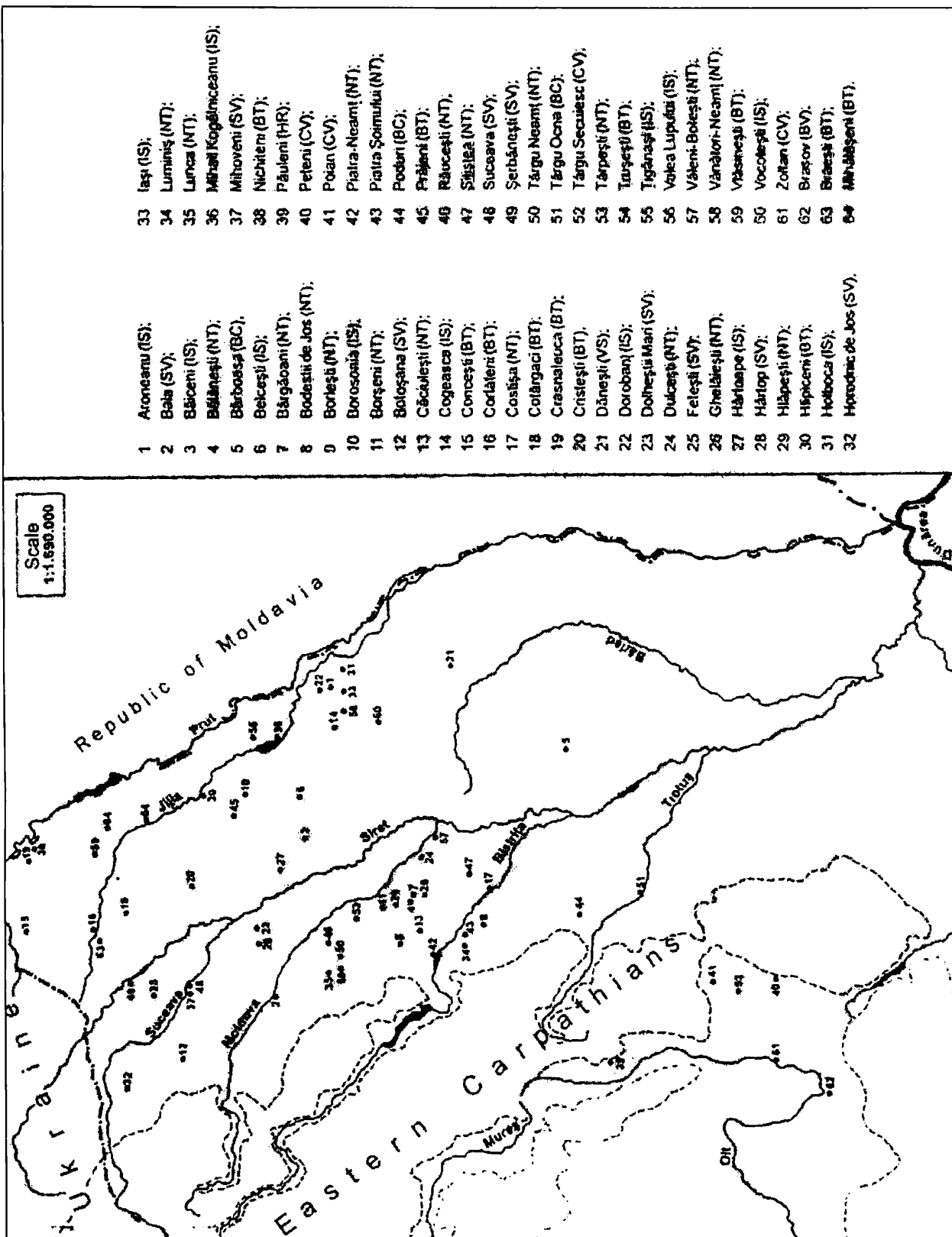
¹³ J. Peška, *Neuer Fund einer Ammanschette vom Boroticer Typus aus Südmähren*, in *Aktuelle Probleme der Erforschung der Frühbronzezeit in Böhmen und Mähren und in der Slowakei*, Hrsg. J. Batora, J. Peška, Nitra, 1999, Abb. 6/3, 6, 7, 9, 13, 14, 17.

¹⁴ J. Batora, *The Reflection of Economy and the Social structure in the cemeteries of the Chlopice-Veselé and Nitra-Cultures*, in *SlovArch*, XXXIX, 1991, 1–2, fig. 41/5, 6; idem, *Zur Problematik des Ausklagens der weidenblattförmigen Kupferindustrie im nördlichen Teil des Karpatenbeckens*, in *Studien zur Metallindustrie im Karpatenbecken und den benachbarten Regionen. Festschrift für Amalia Mozsolics zum 85. Geburtstag* (Hrsg. von Tibor Kovacs), Budapest, 1996, Abb. 3/6, 7.

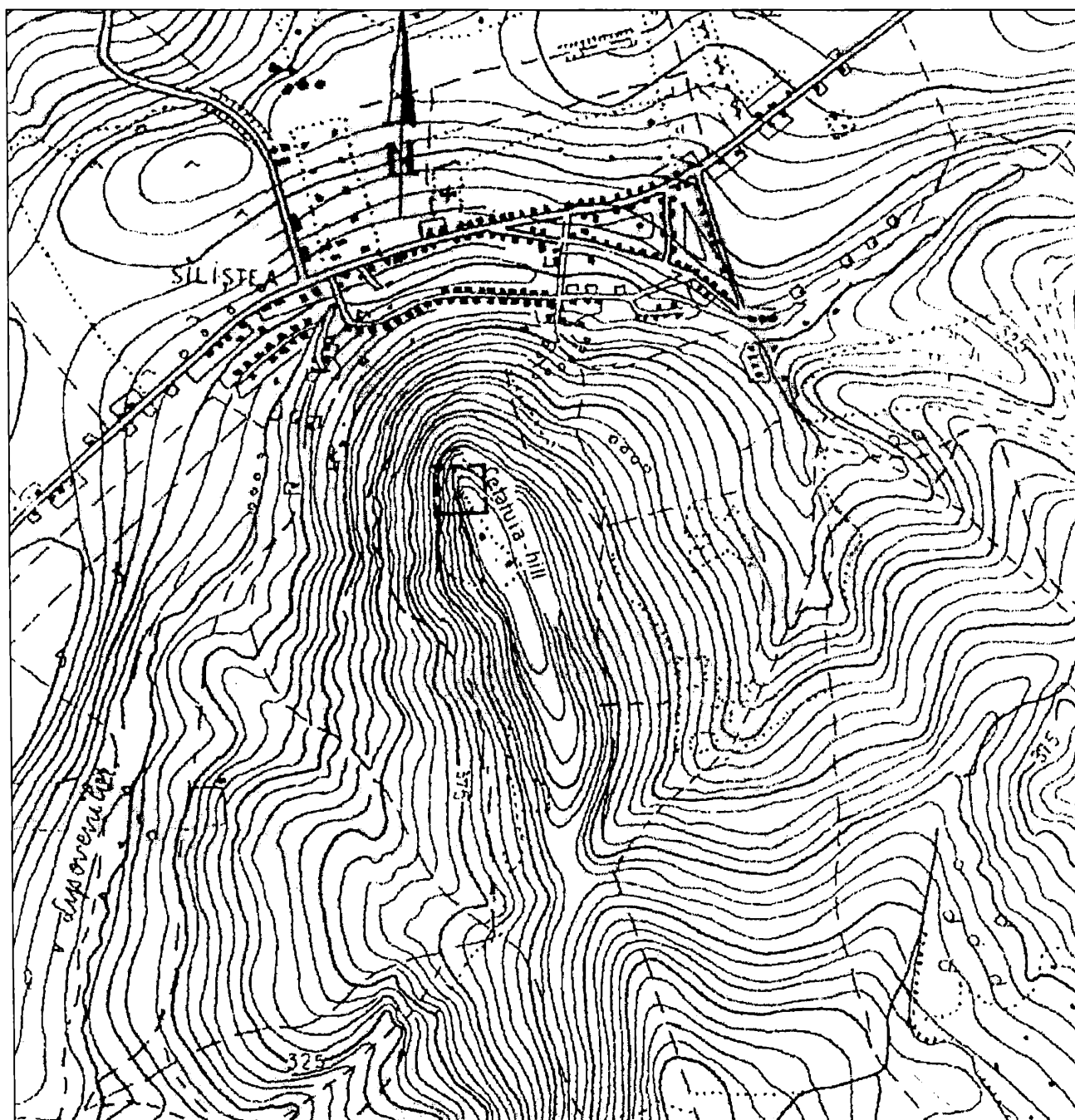
¹⁵ J. Batora, *op. cit.*, 1996, Abb. 5/3, 6.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, Abb. 7/12.

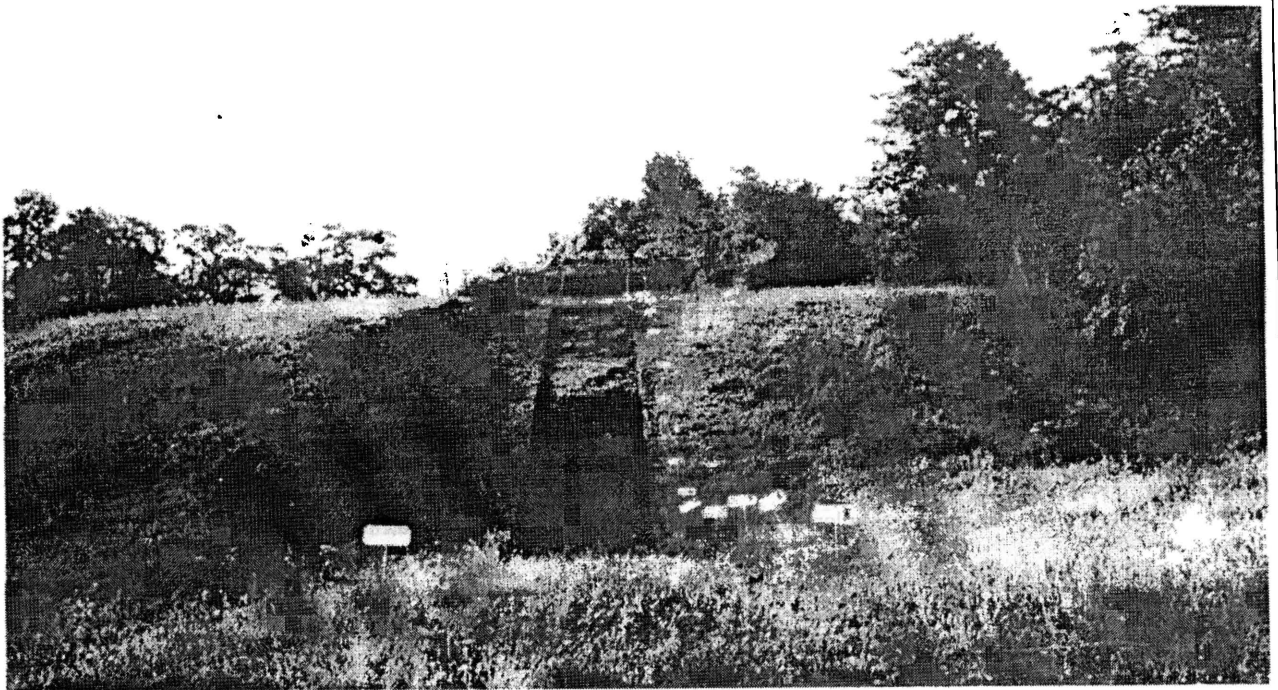
¹⁷ Actually, this kind of pottery has been unearthed in several places in Transylvania and in western Moldavia during EBA. See recently, the account as concern the presence of the *Bessenstrich* pottery within the Costișa context, east of the Carpathians. (A. Popescu, *Ceramica cu decor striat de la Costișa și Deleni*, in *Angustia*, 5, 2000, p. 203–208).



Pl. 1. Findings belonging to Costișa – Ciomortan – Komariu culture in Romania (after Covruc and Dumitroaia, 2001).



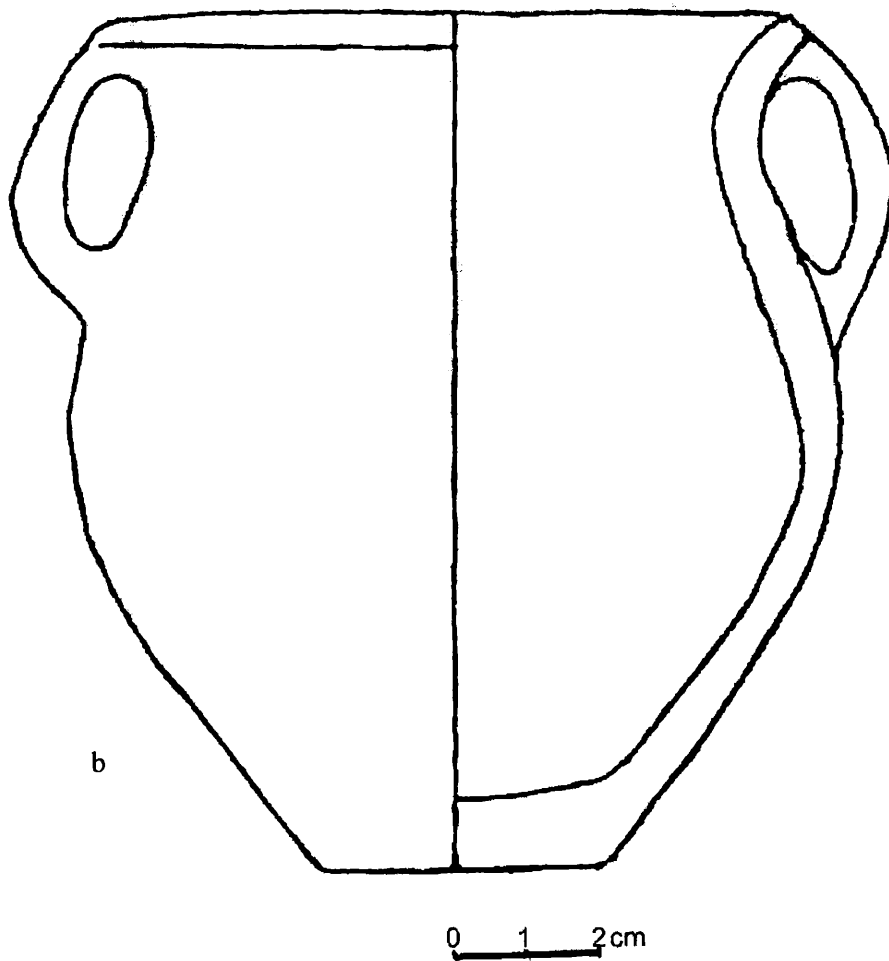
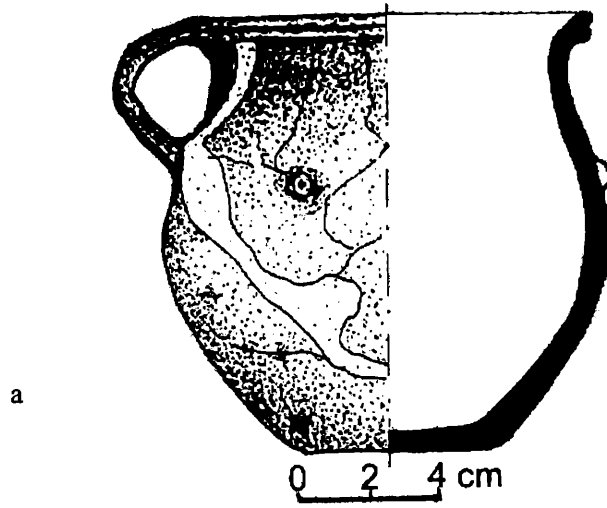
Pl. 2. General plan of the Cetățuia hill including the unearthened area.

**a****b**

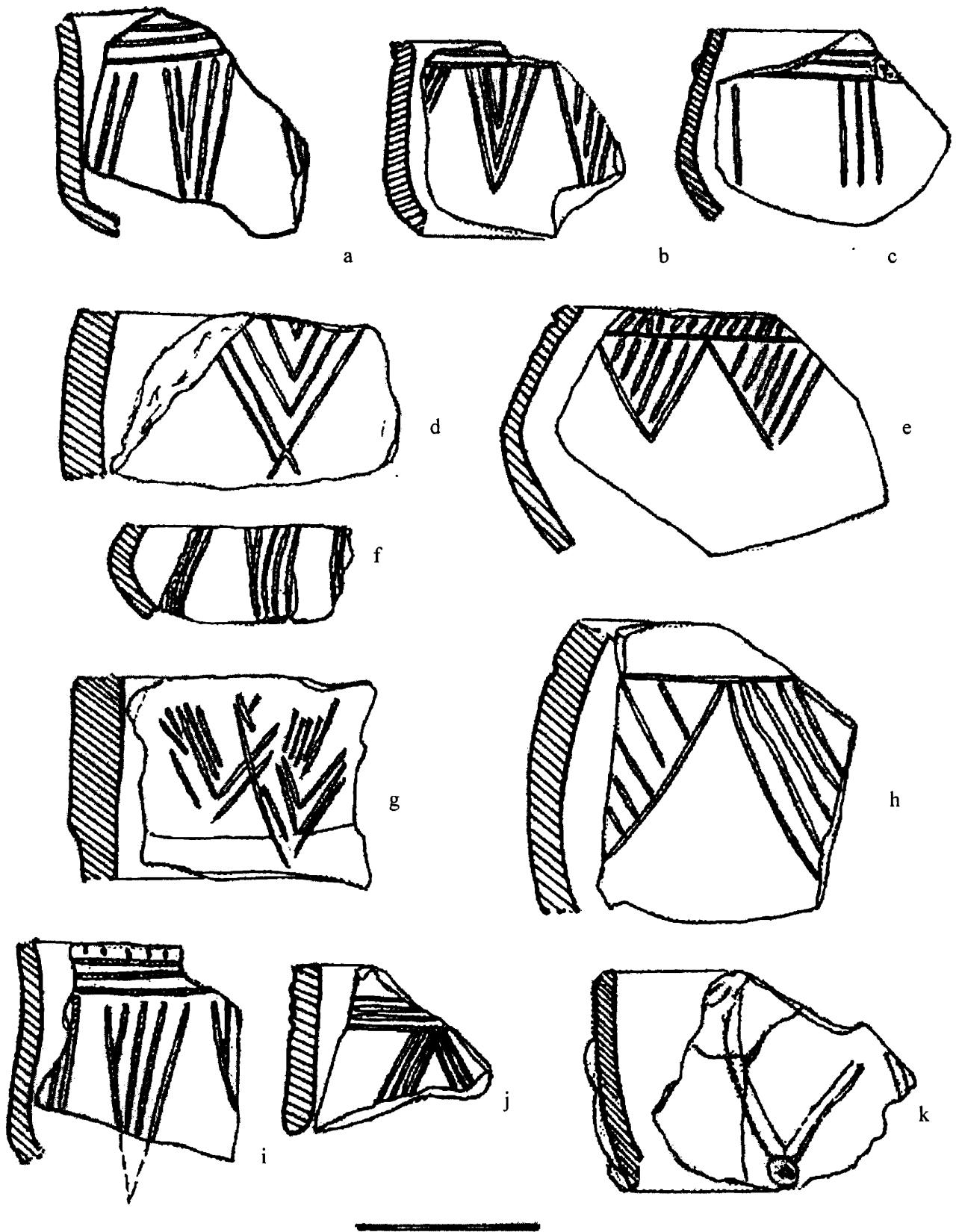
Pl. 3/a, b. General view toward the southern part (including the moat) of the fortified settlement at Siliştea.



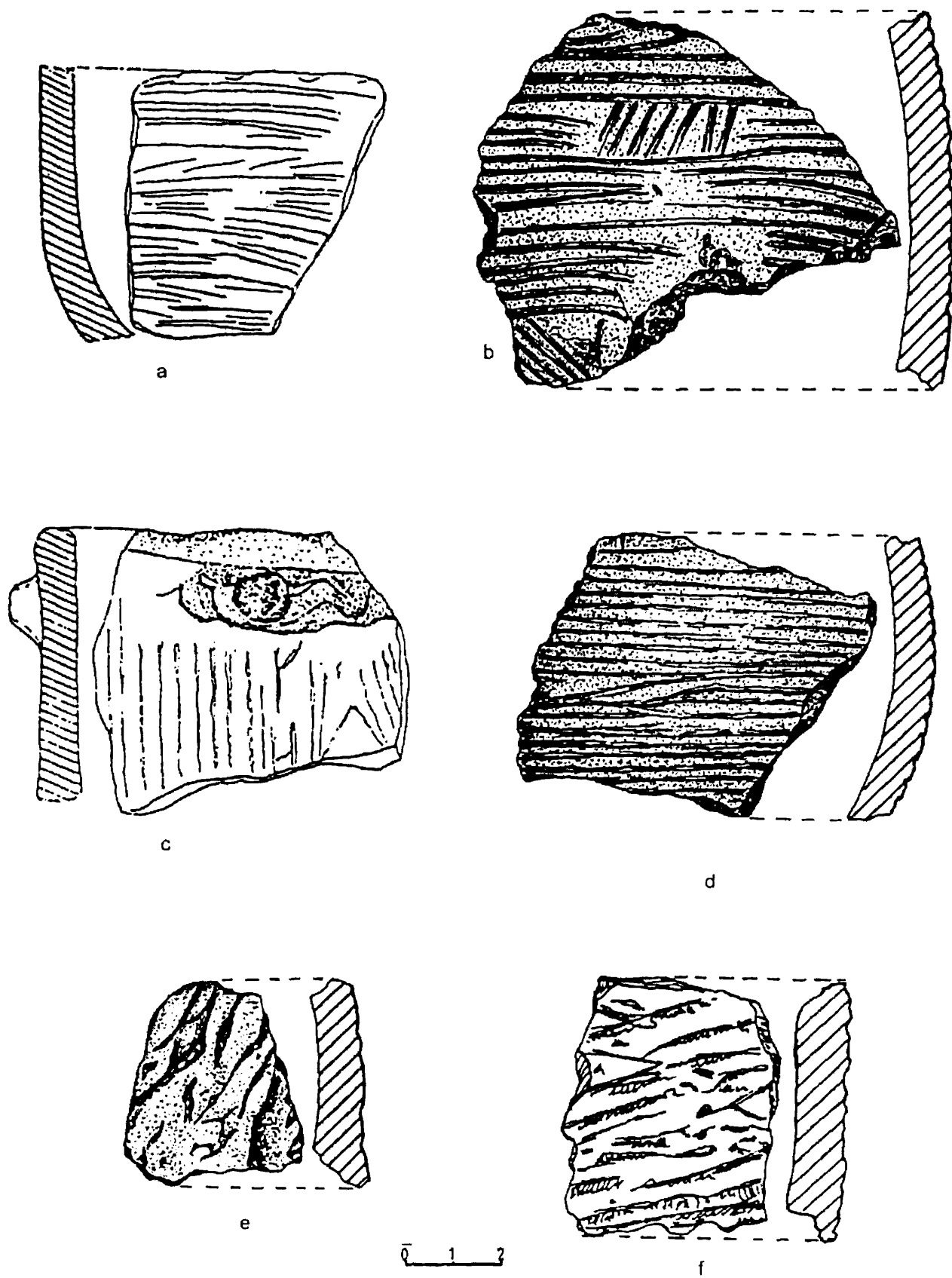
Pl. 4. Vue to the pot situated under the gritstone level.



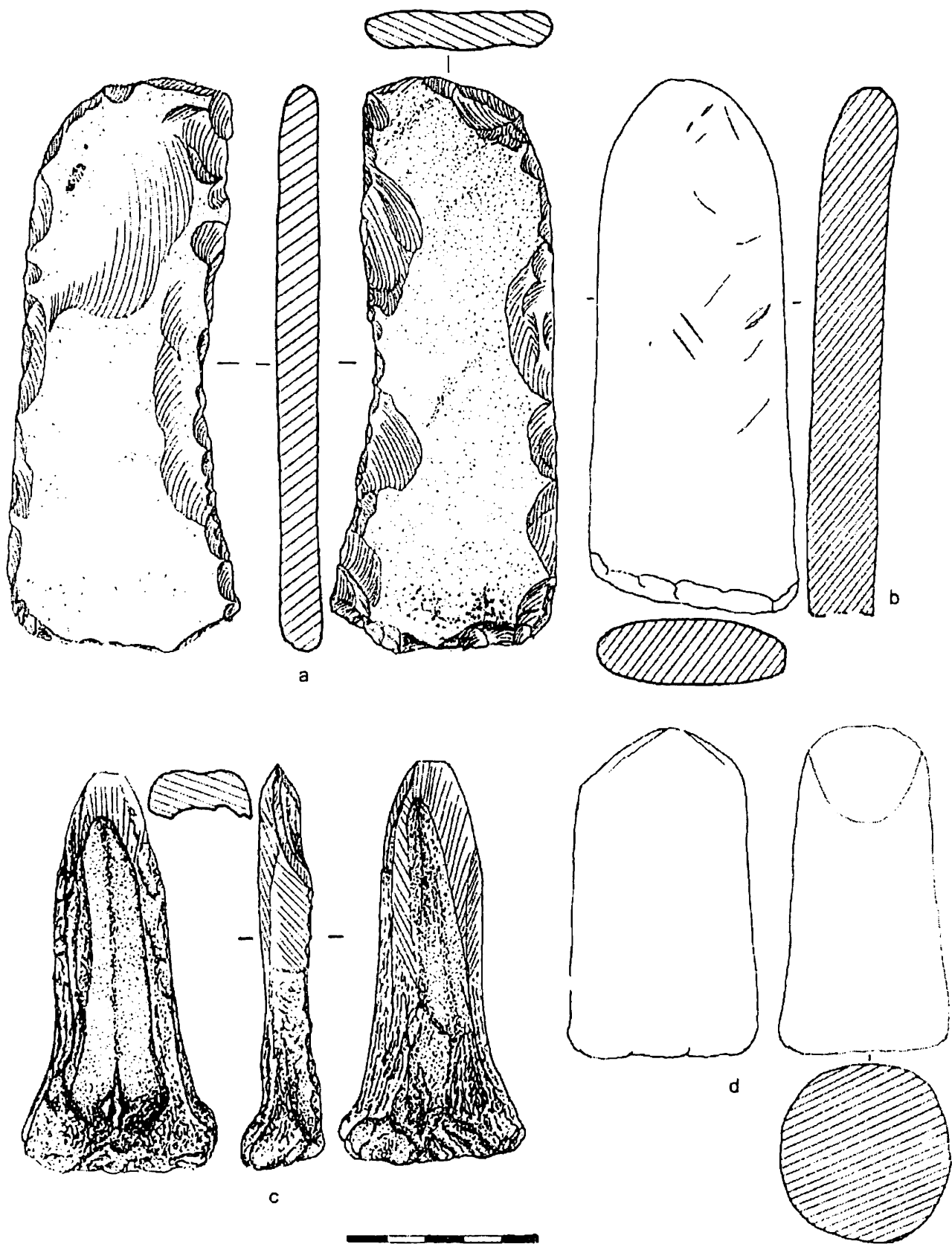
Pl. 5/a, b. Pottery of Siliştea.



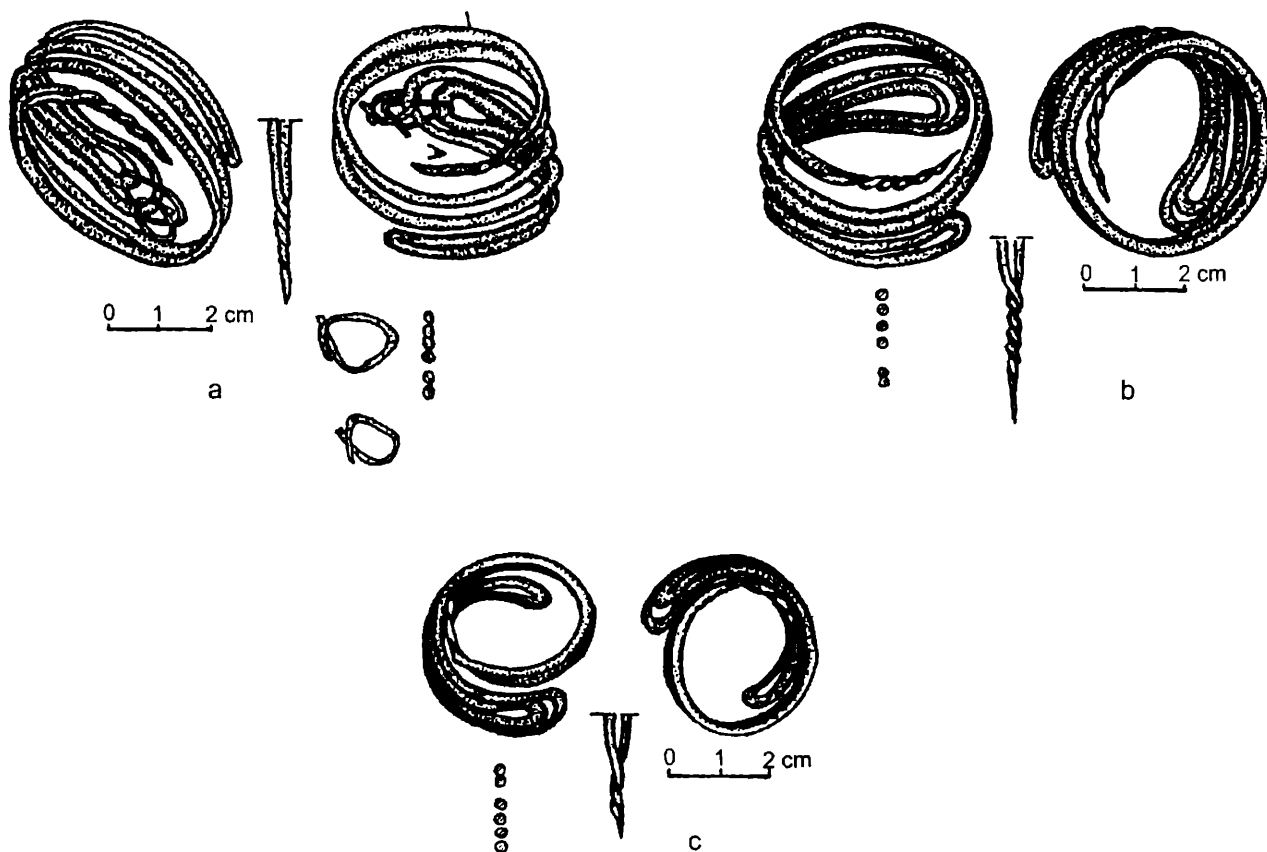
Pl. 6/a-k. Pottery sherds of Costișă and Monteoru cultures.



Pl. 7/a-f. *Bessenstrich* sherds of Siliştea.



Pl. 8/a-d. Different types of tools made of gritstone, stone and bone.



Pl. 9/a-c. Adornments (*Nopperinge*) made of copper (?) wire.

These preliminary data allowed us to emphasize some assumptions or conclusions as concern the evolution of the Costișa culture in the context of Bronze Age within the Carpathians area. So, it can be admitted the existence of some interferences between Monteoru Ic4 and the beginning of the Costișa culture, contacts intensified during the Monteoru Ic3–Ic2. Sure it is, that on the surface unearthed up to now it doesn't exist a stratigraphic superposition of Costișa and Monteoru cultures. Also the Monteoru pottery is permanently present, about 30%, without exceeding the Costișa pottery (Pl. 6).

On the base of pottery analyses¹⁸ and the presence of the three adornments of *Nopperinge* type, we could admit the idea of a Central European contribution¹⁹ in defining the Costișa culture features.

In the end we are considering that the beginning of Costișa culture according to the historical chronology, is to be dated at the very end of the third millenium or at the beginning of the second millenium B.C. at the same time with contemporary cultures in Central Europe.

¹⁸ I'm referring here to the *Bessenstrich* pottery and to the presence of some Wietenberg potsherds in Costișa and Ciomortan settlements. As far I know up to now, due to the cultural background, the pottery decorated in the *Bessenstrich* manner is to be found in a higher rate in eastern Transylvania in Ciomortan sites (V. Căvruc, Gh. Dumitroaia, *op. cit.*, 2000, p. 133). Same situation is available for the Wietenberg influences / presences in Western Moldavia (V. Căvruc, M. Rotea, *Locuirea Wietenberg de la Păuleni (Ciomortan)*, in *Angustia*, 5, 2000, p. 157–158)

¹⁹ Otherwise, this kind of relations beyond the northern Carpathians, has been seen by J. Bátor, as well. Analysing the mortuary practices, the burial evidences of the Chłopice-Veselá and Nitra cultures, he stressed for some contacts and exchanges because of raw material needs (J. Bátor, *op. cit.*, p. 139).