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# SURFACE RESEARCHES ON THE VALLEY OF THE FRĂSINET RIVER (FRĂSINETUL DE PĂDURE VILLAGE, DOBROSLOVENI COMMUNE, OLT COUNTY). I

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SABIN POPOVICI, IULIA RĂBÎNCĂ,  
LAURENȚIU COMĂNESCU, VALENTIN VOICILĂ,  
GAVRILĂ PĂLCĂU

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## ABSTRACT:

Archaeological researches developed on the Frăsinetului River valley, Dobrosloveni commune, in December 2021, revealed close up to a private lake, situated in the north-east of the Frăsinet village, a very rich area in archaeological remains. Here were discovered a lot of pottery fragments belonging of different prehistoric cultures, roman period and medieval age. Among these pottery fragments, we remark some fragments belonging to Vădastra culture with various types of decoration as: excision, incision, grooved types and pottery with incisions and Vinča points. Among Vădastra pottery discovered here, in the mentioned point, we remark a fragment probably from a cult table, decorated with incisions and Vinča points. We consider that, probably, in the mentioned area, was an important settlement of Vădastra culture. Also, we remember that here (Dobrosloveni and Fărcașele communes, Olt County) were attested a lot of important settlements of Vădastra culture. These settlements are published and are considered as reference settlements for the mentioned culture.

## ZUSAMMENFASSUNG: ARCHÄOLOGISCHE FORSCHUNGEN ÜBER DAS TAL DES FLUSSES FRĂSINET, DORF FRĂSINET, GEMEINDE DOBROSLOVENI, KOMITAT OLT. I

Archäologische Untersuchungen, die im Dezember 2021 im Tal des Flusses Frăsinetului in der Gemeinde Dobrosloveni durchgeführt wurden, enthüllten in der Nähe eines privaten Sees im Nordosten des Dorfes Frăsinet ein sehr reiches Gebiet an archäologischen Überresten. Hier wurden viele Keramikfragmente entdeckt, die aus verschiedenen prähistorischen Perioden, der Römerzeit und dem Mittelalter stammen. Unter diesen Keramikfragmenten bemerken wir einige Fragmente der Vădastra - Kultur mit verschiedenen Dekorationsarten wie: Ausschneiden, Einschneiden, Rillentypen und Keramik mit Einschnitten und Vinča-Spitzen. Wir gehen davon aus, dass sich in dem erwähnten Gebiet wahrscheinlich eine wichtige Siedlung der Vădastra-Kultur befand. Wir erinnern uns auch, dass hier (Gemeinden Dobrosloveni und Fărcașele, Komitat Olt) viele wichtige Siedlungen der Vădastra - Kultur bezeugt wurden. Diese Siedlungen werden veröffentlicht und gelten als Referenzsiedlungen für die genannte Kultur.

**KEYWORDS:** Frăsinet, ceramics, excision, cult table, Vădastra culture.

**SCHLÜSSELWÖRTER:** Frăsinet, Keramik, Exzision, Kulttisch, Vădastra – Kultur.

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## Introduction and geographical characterization

The researcher Radian – Romus Andreescu believed that the region of Oltenia is a very important one for the Neo – Eneolithic period, as proved by numerous sites discovered in this place, some of which being definitive for some of phases belonging to the mentioned period<sup>1</sup>. Some settlements situated in the plain of Romanăți were researched in the period 2006 – 2008 at the initiative of the mentioned researcher, through a project named ‘At the Beginnings of European Civilization. The Neo-Eneolithic on the Lower Danube’, with its component the Olt Valley in the Neo-Eneolithic period<sup>2</sup>. Romanăți Plain is a part of Oltenia Plain.

The Romanăți Plain or the Caracal Plain is a subdivision of the Oltenia Plain which in turn is a part of the Romanian Plain (two main plains are attested on the territory of Romania, with their subdivisions: the Romanian Plain or the Danube Plain and the Western Plain or Banato-Crișană<sup>3</sup>).

<sup>1</sup> Andreescu, Moldoveanu și Popovici 2011, 15.

<sup>2</sup> Andreescu, Moldoveanu și Popovici 2011, 21.

<sup>3</sup> Grecu 2010, Fig. 1, 14.

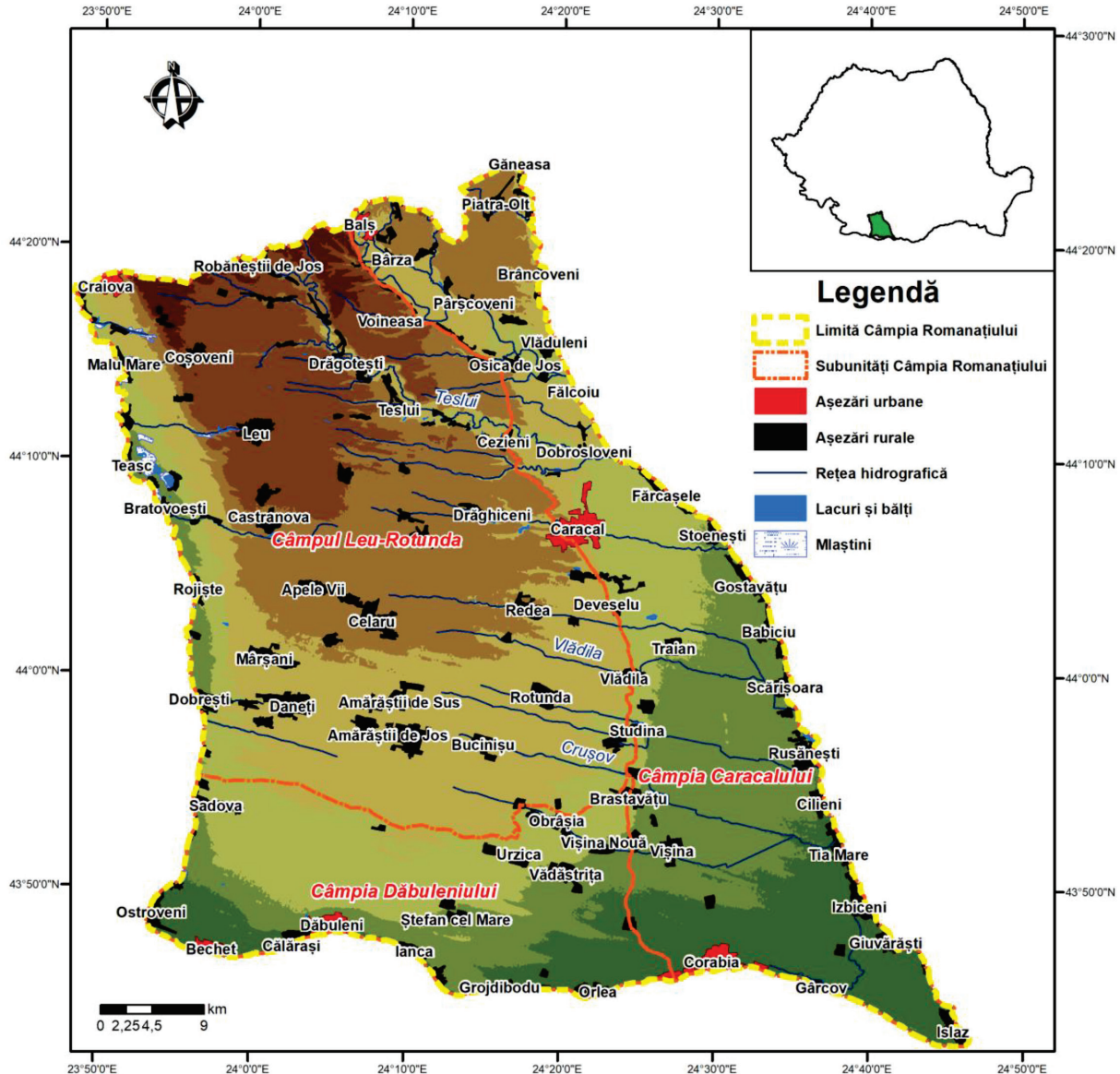


Figure 1. The Plain of Romanați with its subunits (after D.-A. Simulescu 2019, summary of the doctoral thesis, p. 5, fig. 2).

It was named by Petre Coteț the Eastern Plain and includes the territory between Olt and Jiu. The Oltenia Plain is described by the mentioned researcher as a real peninsula closely connected to the Getic Plateau in the north and in the eastern part being heated by a low step of fluvial origin, made up of meadows and well-developed terraces<sup>4</sup>. It is U-shaped, being composed of three secondary plains: the Lower Plain of Jiu, in the west, the Lower Plain of the Olt River, in the east, and the Danube Plain, between Bechet and Turnu Măgurele, in the south. The Leu – Rotunda field is seen as a wedge between the aforementioned plains and forms a special unit.

The Eastern Plain, a subdivision of the Oltenia Plain, is separated into two distinct subunits called North and South by a line that leaves from Jiu, South of Drănic and passes through Apele Vii – Dioști, Caracal – Stoenesti, to Dăneasa, on the banks of the Olt River. Thus, the northern subdivision is mainly outlined around the Olt valley, the Olteț valley, but also the Teslui valley and has as natural subunits: Jiu Plain, Leu – Dioști Field and Balș – Slatina Plain. In contrast to the northern subdivision, the southern one is seen as lacking a permanent hydrographic network, except for the Caracal stream to which we can add some watercourses with intermittent leaks, formed on the Comanca, Vlădila, Crușovu, Grădinile valleys etc., having sand dunes and valleys, mostly dry. The entire hydrographic network mentioned flows into the Olt River.

Geographically, the Plain of Romanați is situated at latitude of 44°06' and the eastern longitude of 24°21'<sup>55</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Grecu 2010, Fig. 4, [https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Câmpia\\_Română](https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Câmpia_Română).

<sup>5</sup> Coteț 1957, 27-61.

In a recent paper, researcher Daniel-Alin Simulescu describes the Romanați Plain as the eastern subunit of the Oltenia plain, the largest of these, with an area of 3156 km<sup>2</sup>. The mentioned researcher delimits the plain mentioned as being between the Jiu meadows to the west and those of the Olt and Danube to the east and to the south, and the northern limit to the Olteț piedmont is given by the alignment of the localities Craiova – Robănești – Balș – Piatra Olt – Găneasa.

From a geographical point of view, Simulescu places the Romanați plain approximately between the parallels of 43°35' and 44°25' North latitude and the meridians of 23°45' and 24°50' East longitude (Fig. 1)<sup>6</sup>.

In terms of altitude, it descends from north to south and south-east, from 190 m to the interfluvies between Jiu, Teslui and Olteț up to 25 – 30 m at contact with the Danube floodplain. You can see a descent of the altitudes starting with the centre of the Leu – Rotunda field and up to the terraces of Jiu and Olt.

From the point of view of conformation, the Romanați Plain was described by the mentioned researcher as a piedmont plain with a corrugated surface that is due to the accumulation of wind sands in the floodplains of Jiu and Danube and which is affected by the processes of deflation and accumulation that shape the areas unprotected by vegetation, especially during the vegetation period of the crops and during the periods of prolonged drought.

Within the Romanați Plain, Simulescu considers that three subunits can be outlined: the Leu – Rotunda Field, with a undulating surface, inclined from west to east, having as western limits Jiu and Olteț rivers in the north-east and the Danube terraces up to the Dobrotești – Amărăștii de Jos – Bucinișu – Crușovu alignment, in the south; The Caracal Plain, on the wide terraces of Olt and Olteț and Dăbuleni Field, on the Danube terraces<sup>7</sup>.

As for the water resources of the Romanați Plain, it is considered to be deficient, with strong oscillations of the flows, especially during the summer, regarding the rivers Teslui and Olteț. To these are added some watercourses with intermittent leaks, formed on the valleys of Comanca, Vlădila, Crușovu, Grădinile, Obârșia etc.<sup>8</sup>

### Some data about the cultural evolution of the area

The archaeological researches undertaken over time in the Romanați Plain have revealed a cultural sequence starting with the Early Neolithic and up to the Middle Ages. It is enough to recall that the Olt River, the main corridor of neolithization was the space where the Starčevo – Criș communities entered the territory of our country, followed by those of the Dudești culture, on the background of which, subsequently, the cultures of the Early Eneolithic, Vădastra and Boian were formed, in turn constituting themselves as a basis for the civilizations of the Late Eneolithic, Sălcuța and Gumelnița. Among the settlements of the Neo-Eneolithic in the plain of Romanați we mention the one from Grădinile<sup>9</sup>, for the Starčevo – Criș culture; Fărcașele – Hotărani<sup>10</sup> and Vădastra<sup>11</sup>, for the Dudești, Boian and Vădastra cultures and for the cultures of the Late Eneolithic, Sălcuța and Gumelnița, we mention only the settlement from Romula<sup>12</sup>, Reșca village, Dobrosloveni commune. An analysis on the stage of the Neo-Eneolithic researches on the lower Olt Valley, implicitly also on the Romanați Plain was carried out by the researcher Radian – Romus Andreescu in 2011<sup>13</sup>. Also, for our area, the Roman civilization was very important, and here it is enough to remember that at 7 km north of Caracal, currently the village of Reșca, Dobrosloveni commune, was the Roman city of Romula, *municipium* and *colonia*, the capital of Southern Dacia<sup>14</sup> (Fig. 2).

The object of our article is a summary presentation of a material, especially ceramic, discovered in December 2021 on the occasion of a land evaluation undertaken on the valley of the Frăsinet brook, Frăsinetul de Pădure village, Dobrosloveni commune, Olt County<sup>15</sup>. The Frăsinetul valley is located about 5 km north of Caracal, in the Romanați Plain, more precisely in the lower part of the Leu – Rotunda field (Fig. 1).

Our approach was determined by the fact that the Frăsinetul Valley was known from the specialized literature for the settlements of the Vădastra culture and not only. Here, Dumitru Berciu<sup>16</sup> and later Marin Nica<sup>17</sup>, identified a settlement of the Vădastra culture. Thus, Dumitru Berciu mentions when describing the Vădastra II level from

<sup>6</sup> Simulescu 2019. Summary of the doctoral thesis, Fig. 1, 5.

<sup>7</sup> Simulescu 2019. Summary of the doctoral thesis, 5-6.

<sup>8</sup> Simulescu 2019. Summary of the doctoral thesis, 13.

<sup>9</sup> Nica 1981, 24-39.

<sup>10</sup> Nica 1970, 31-51; Nica 1971, 5-33; Nica 1976, 97-103.

<sup>11</sup> Mateescu 1970, 67-75.

<sup>12</sup> Ștefan 2018, 109-130.

<sup>13</sup> Andreescu, Moldoveanu și Popovici 2011, 15-34.

<sup>14</sup> Tătulea 1994, 5-176.

<sup>15</sup> The field evaluation was undertaken based on the authorization 492/15.09.2021, issued by the Ministry of Culture.

<sup>16</sup> Berciu 1939, 37.

<sup>17</sup> Nica 1972, 214.



Figure 2. Settlements of Neo-Eneolithic (Grădinile, Vădastra, Fărcașele, Hotărani, Romula) and the Roman period (Romula) in the Romanați Plain, after Google Earth.

Măgura Fetelor, a level that is considered to be a distinct culture from the first level, that it is spread for the time being in Romanați and Dolj counties. It specifies that level I from Măgura Fetelor has not been found in any settlement in Oltenia, but among the settlements where level II of the mentioned culture was discovered, it also lists the one from Frăsinetul de Pădure<sup>18</sup>. A plan with the places where prehistoric objects were discovered on the Dobrosloveni valley, at the Frăsinetul de Pădure was probably drawn up by Dumitru Berciu<sup>19</sup>. Also from Frăsinetul de Pădure, Marin Nica mentions the discovery of two Neolithic cups with motifs characteristic to the Dudești-Vădastra I culture, along with Bronze Age ceramics<sup>20</sup>. A Neolithic stone hammer, along with other artifacts belonging to the Bronze and Iron Age, Roman and Post-Roman period were discovered on the Frăsinetul valley, more precisely at Frăsinet Pond in 2015, on the occasion of the field evaluation within P.U.G. Dobrosloveni, by dr. Mircea Negru and by the museologist Mihai George<sup>21</sup>. The site was inscribed in the R.A.N. of archaeological sites with the code 126736.03<sup>22</sup>. Last but not least, we mention the accidental discoveries in the mentioned area, between 2017 and 2020, especially ceramics, mainly in the space of Cezieni and Dobrosloveni commune, both in the plain of Romanați. These have been scientifically researched in 2021<sup>23</sup>. Thus, from Frăsinetul de Pădure, Dobrosloveni commune, on the Frăsinetul terrace, near a private lake, was discovered a very interesting excised ceramics belonging to the Vădastra culture that can be framed to both phases of the mentioned culture. Also, along with the Vădastra pottery were discovered some artifacts from the Bronze Age, Getic, Roman and post-Roman,

<sup>18</sup> Berciu 1939, 37.

<sup>19</sup> Răbîncă and Popovici 2021, Pl. 1; \*\*\* File 12 - Report on archaeological excavations in Fărcașele, Hotărani, Reșca, Potopini, p. 1 - Scientific researches on the ground, digging report, The Museum of Romanați Caracal, Archive.

<sup>20</sup> Nica 1972, 214.

<sup>21</sup> Unpublished material discovered by Dr. Mircea Negru and museographer Mihai George in the field evaluation for P.U.G. Dobrosloveni, Olt County.

<sup>22</sup> <https://map.cimec.ro/Mapserver/?layer=ran&cod=126736.03>.

<sup>23</sup> Răbîncă și Popovici 2021, 105-128.

such as those that can fit into what we call the Dridu culture<sup>24</sup>. All these considerations have led us to apply for a field evaluation authorization in the mentioned area in September 2021<sup>25</sup>.

### The periegesis

The field assessment was completed in December of 2021. The area targeted for evaluation was the Frăsinetul valley (Fig. 3), having as subarea the one around the private pond on the terrace of the Frăsinet stream, Frăsinetul de Pădure village, Dobrosloveni commune, Olt County, an area located about 5 km north of Caracal municipality. Thus, the researches were carried out in the mentioned area, on the following stereo coordinates 70 (Fig. 4 and Table 1):

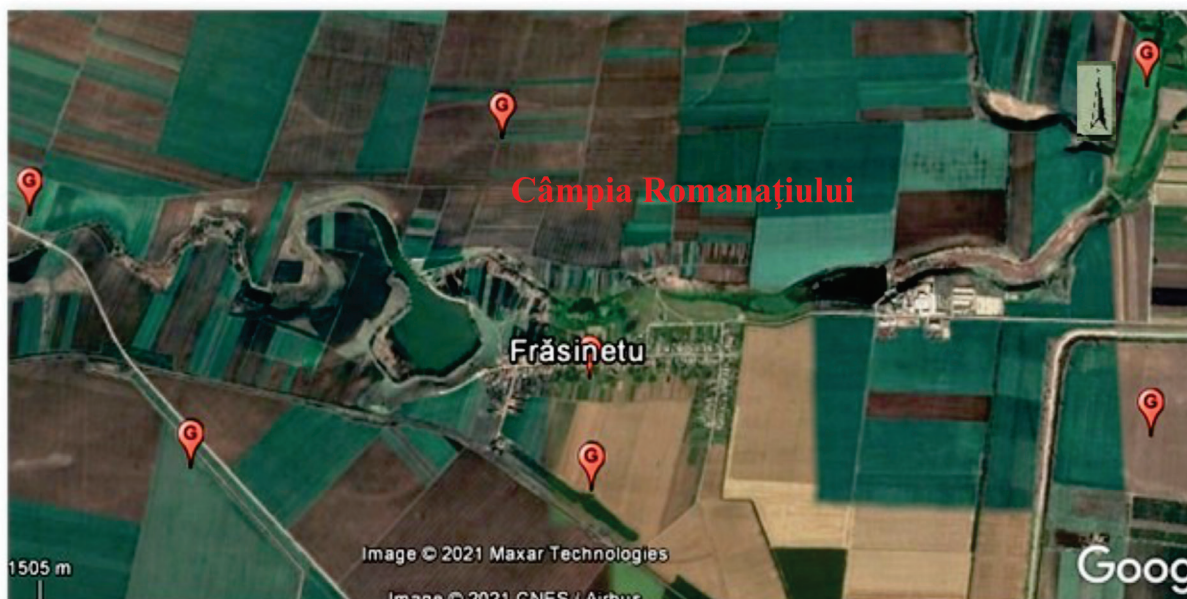


Figure 3. Frăsinetul de Pădure village, Dobrosloveni commune, jud. Olt. The area proposed for field evaluation, according to Google Earth.

Table 1. Coordinates of the investigated subarea.

Current Number	Latitude	Longitude	X	Y
1	44° 9'52.92" N	24°18'26.08" E	296338.902	444711.240
2	44° 9'50.81" N	24°18'51.25" E	296269.001	445269.901
3	44° 9'49.24" N	24°19'7.34" E	296217.516	445626.975
4	44° 9'33.12" N	24°19'12.79" E	295718.948	445743.884
5	44° 9'39.11" N	24°18'48.20" E	295915.196	444412.303
6	44° 9'23.41" N	24°18'25.24" E	295428.232	444684.780
7	44° 9'32.80" N	24°18'19.63" E	295719.127	444562.609
8	44° 9'44.47" N	24°18'14.75" E	296080.258	444457.274

After, a field evaluation report was also drawn up, which was submitted to the County Directorate for Culture, Olt<sup>26</sup>.

<sup>24</sup> Răbîncă și Popovici 2021, 106; Fig 1, Pl. 2-7.

<sup>25</sup> Archaeological diagnostic authorization no. 492/15.09.2021.

<sup>26</sup> Field evaluation report on the territory of U.A.T. Dobrosloveni, Frăsinetul village – Frăsinetul brook valley, report prepared by archaeologist specialist Dr. Sabin Popovici, responsible for researches.

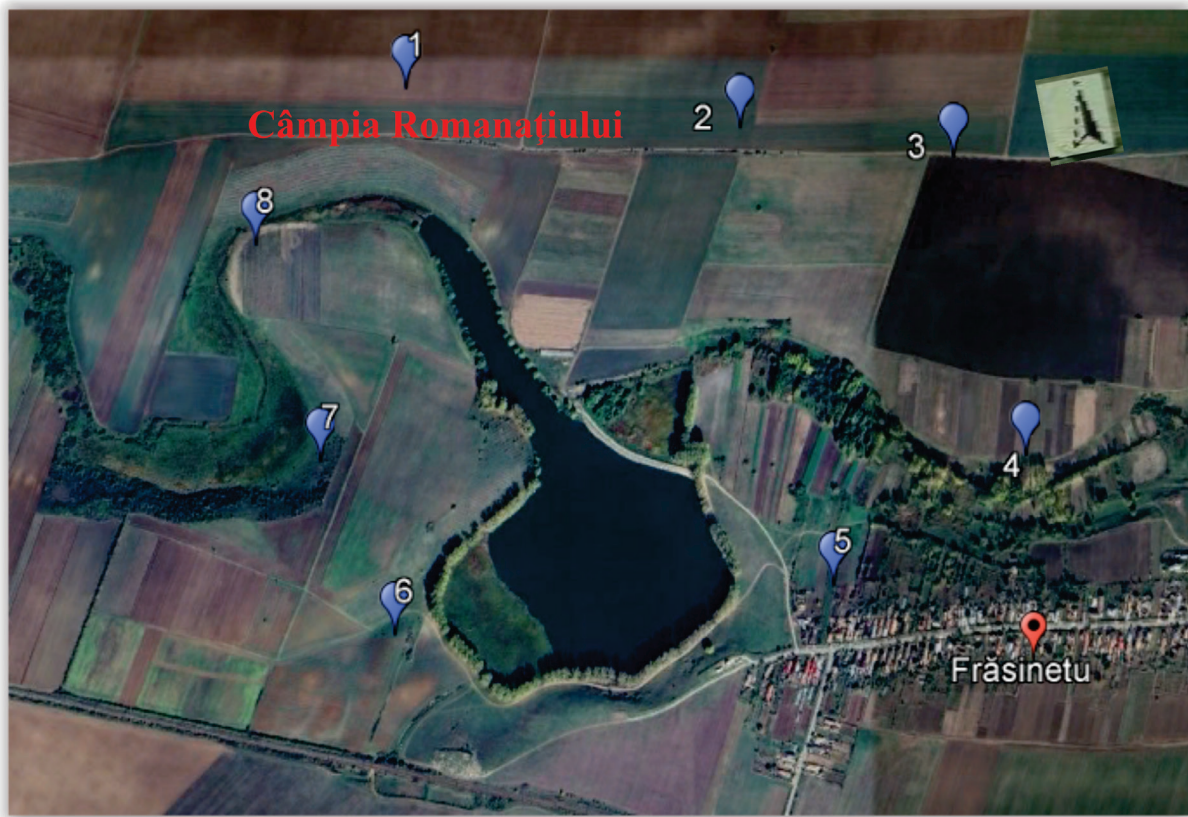


Figure 4. Frăsinetul de Pădure village, Dobrosloveni commune, jud. Olt. Subarea evaluated, by Google Earth.

Thus, in the mentioned area, more precisely in the subarea around the private pond on the valley of the Frăsinet brook, the village Frăsinetul de Pădure, Dobrosloveni commune, Olt County, was discovered an archaeological material, mainly ceramic, which indicates a cultural sequence from the Early Eneolithic, represented by the Vădastra culture until the Early Middle Ages, respectively by the Dridu culture. Very interestingly, many fragments of adobe have been discovered, which indicates an intense habitation, probably prehistoric, of the investigated area (Fig. 4). From our analysis, ceramic fragments from the Vădastra culture can probably fit into both phases of this culture (Pl. I – V). Very important is that in addition to the decorated ceramic fragments excised were discovered and some with incisions and dots, the decor known as Vinča. From this category we mention a fragment, probably of a cult table, where the decor combines the excision specific to the Vădastra culture with the incision and the points, specific to the Vinča culture (Pl. IV/1, VIII). Also, near the ceramic fragments were discovered a series of flint chips (Pl. VI) and a stone named galeț<sup>27</sup> used with a high probability when polishing the ceramics as well as a crushing stone object (Pl. VII). We also can mention a miniature fragmentary vessel, undecorated (Pl. V/3) as well as an anthropomorphic vessel cap handle, unfortunately also kept in fragmentary state (Pl. V/2). From the same place was discovered a very fragmentary pottery and generally undecorated, which due to the presence of the pebbles in the paste could probably be framed in the Bronze Age (Pl. X, XI). The Geto-Dacian period is also represented by several ceramic fragments decorated with girdles (Pl. XII). We also cannot fail to point out the presence of Roman ceramics, which can be classified in the common use category (Pl. XIII, XIV). An underground aqueduct with clay tubes that started from the Frăsinetul de Pădure valley and fed Romula, the roman bricks and ceramic fragments were known since the 80s<sup>28</sup>.

Last but not least, we mention the presence of medieval incised ceramics, which can probably be framed to the Dridu culture (Pl. XV).

<sup>27</sup> We thank Dr. Constantin Haită for determining the object.

<sup>28</sup> Tudor 1978, 229.

## Conclusions

In conclusion, if the material published by us in 2020 drew attention to the multitude of artefacts discovered in the Romanați Plain and we proposed a field evaluation in the mentioned area<sup>29</sup>, now, given the fact that in the area evaluated by us, more precisely around the pond from the Frăsinetul de Pădure, a large quantity of ceramics was discovered that practically covers a cultural sequence starting with the Early Eneolithic represented by the Vădastra culture and until in the Early Middle Ages, represented by the Dridu culture, we intend for this year to make geophysical measurements, especially in areas where a lot of adobe was discovered, in order to determine the density of habitation in the mentioned area. After, we intend, depending on the funds we will have, to carry out systematic research in the area delimited around the pond from Frăsinetul de Pădure. Also, based on the recent discoveries, we consider that it is useful to remetering the site around the aforementioned pond, a site inscribed in the R.A.N. with the code 126736.03<sup>30</sup>. Last but not least, we consider that the point around the pond from Frăsinetul de Pădure, a point that we will still call *La Baltă*, is the closest to the place identified by Dumitru Berciu in 1939<sup>31</sup> and by Marin Nica in 1972<sup>32</sup>, being with a high probability in this place. In identifying it we rely on the quantity and diversity of the Vădastra type ceramic material discovered here.

## ABBREVIATIONS

AO - Arhivele Olteniei, Craiova

AO SN - Arhivele Olteniei. Serie Nouă, Craiova MCA - Materiale și Cercetări Arheologice

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<sup>29</sup> Răbîncă și Popovici 2021, 105-128.

<sup>30</sup> <http://ran.cimec.ro/sel.asp>.

<sup>31</sup> Berciu 1939, 37.

<sup>32</sup> Nica 1972, 214.

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Taff. 2. Frăsinetul de Pădure La Baltă: 1-6. Keramik, die mit Exzision verziert ist und zu den Vădastra Kultur.

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Die Fotos wurden von der Doktorandin Iulia Răbîncă aufgenommen.

Die Zeichnungen stammen vom Meisterschüler Voicilă Valentin.



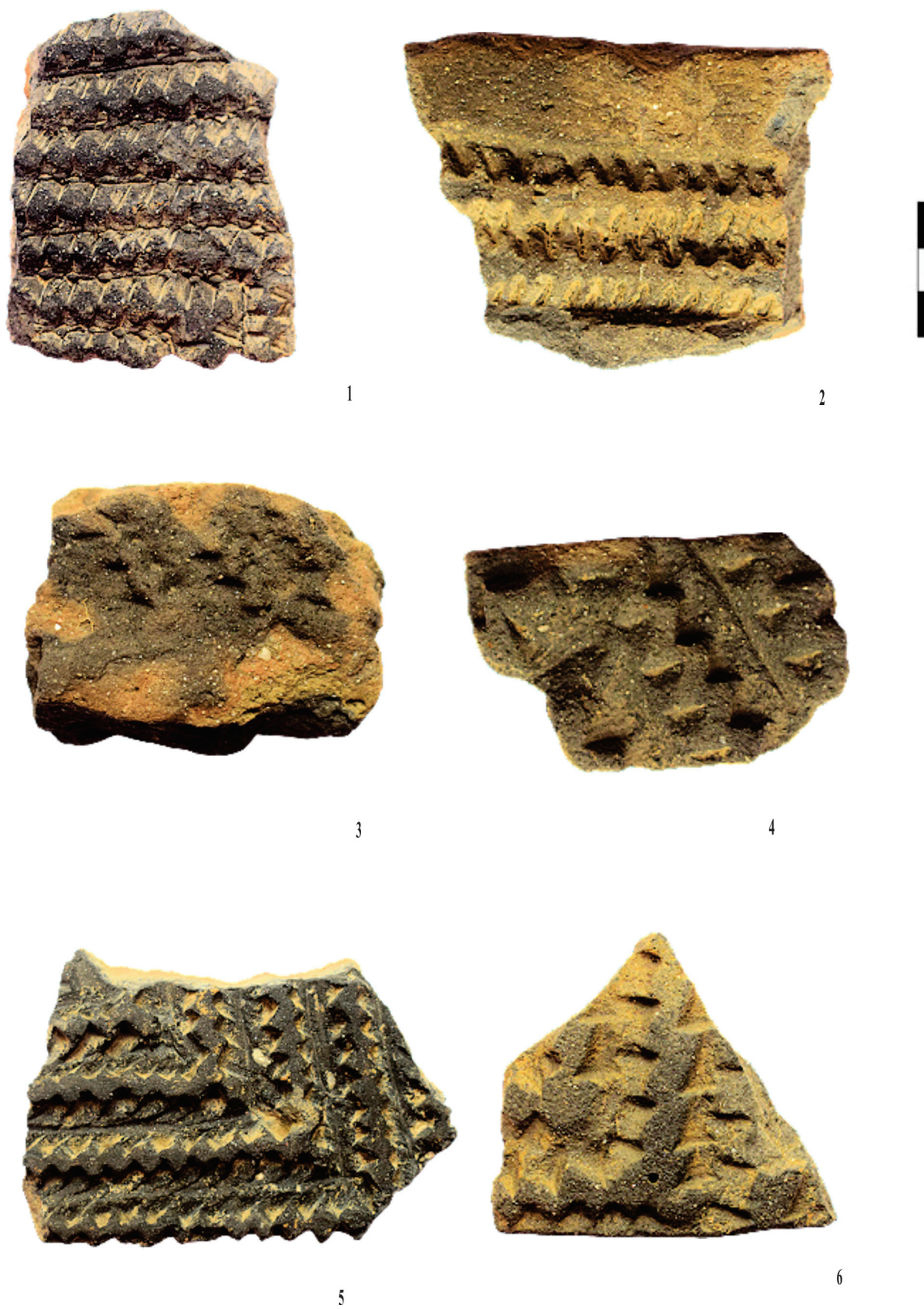
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*Pl. 1. Frășinetul de Pădure La Baltă:  
1-6. ceramics decorated with excision, belonging to the Vădastra culture.  
(photos by Phd. student Iulia Răbîncă, plates by master student Voicilă Valentin)*



*Pl. 2. Frăsinetul de Pădure La Baltă:  
1-6. ceramics decorated with excision, belonging to the Vădastra culture.  
(photos by Phd. student Iulia Răbîncă, plates by master student Voicilă Valentin)*



*Pl. 3. Frăsinetul de Pădure La Baltă:  
1-6. ceramics decorated with excision, belonging to the Vădastra culture.  
(photos by Phd. student Iulia Răbîncă, plates by master student Voicilă Valentin)*



*Pl. 4. Frășinetul de Pădure La Baltă:  
1. ceramics decorated with incisions and Vinča points,  
2-6. ceramics decorated with excision, belonging to the Vădastra culture.  
(photos by Phd. student Iulia Răbîncă, plates by master student Voicilă Valentin)*



*Pl. 5. Frăsinetul de Pădure La Baltă:  
1, 2, ceramics decorated with excision;  
3. fragmentary anthropomorphic handle;  
4. miniature fragmentary vessel, undecorated, belonging to the Vădastra culture.  
(photos by Phd. student Iulia Răbîncă, plates by master student Voicilă Valentin)*



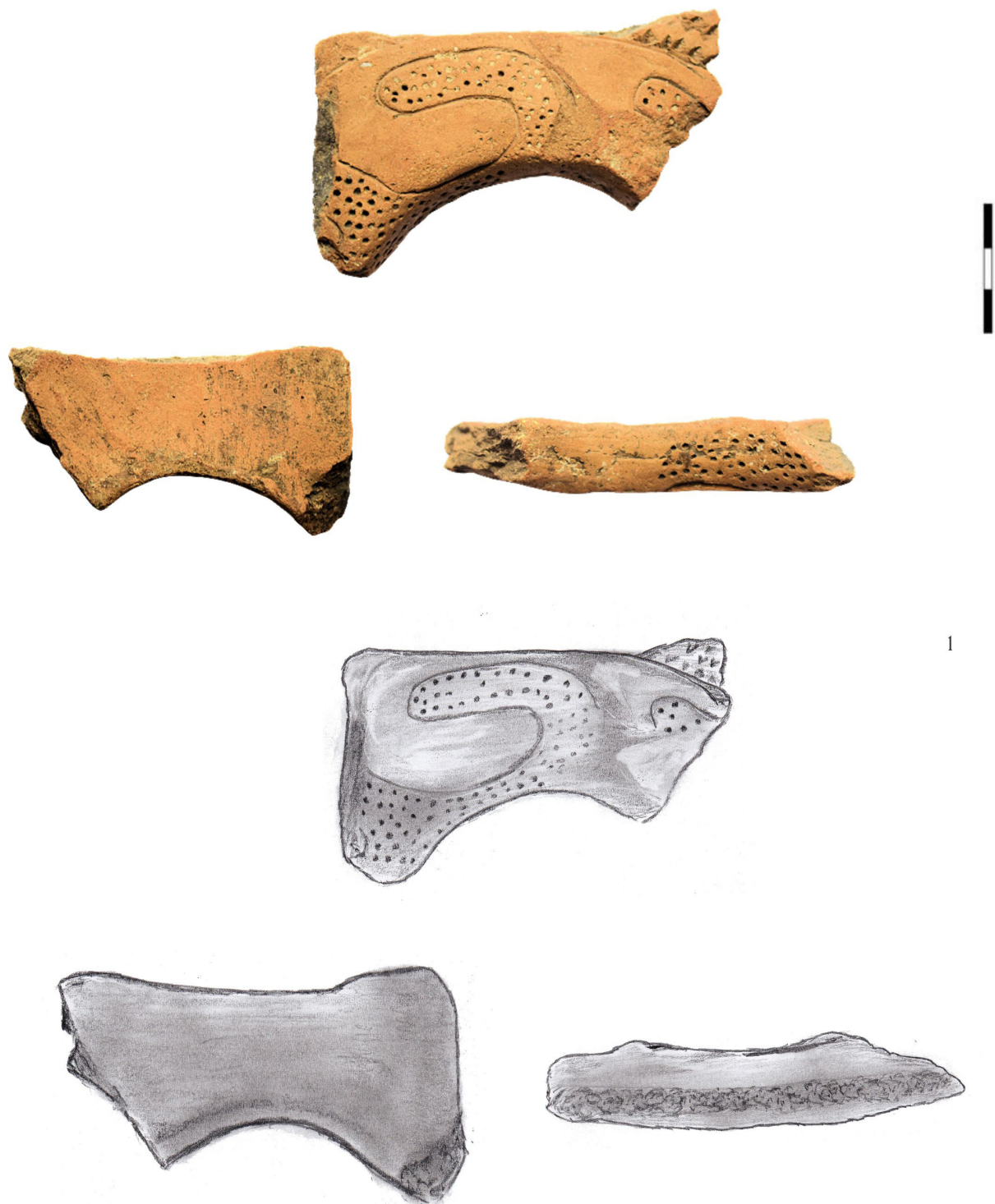
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1-6. flint tools belonging to the Vădastra culture.  
(photos by Phd. student Iulia Răbîncă, plates by master student Voicilă Valentin)*



*Pl. 7. Frășinetul de Pădure La Baltă:*

*1. galeț, used as a crushing stone object, probably belonging to the Vădastra culture.  
(photos by Phd. student Iulia Răbîncă, plates by master student Voicilă Valentin)*

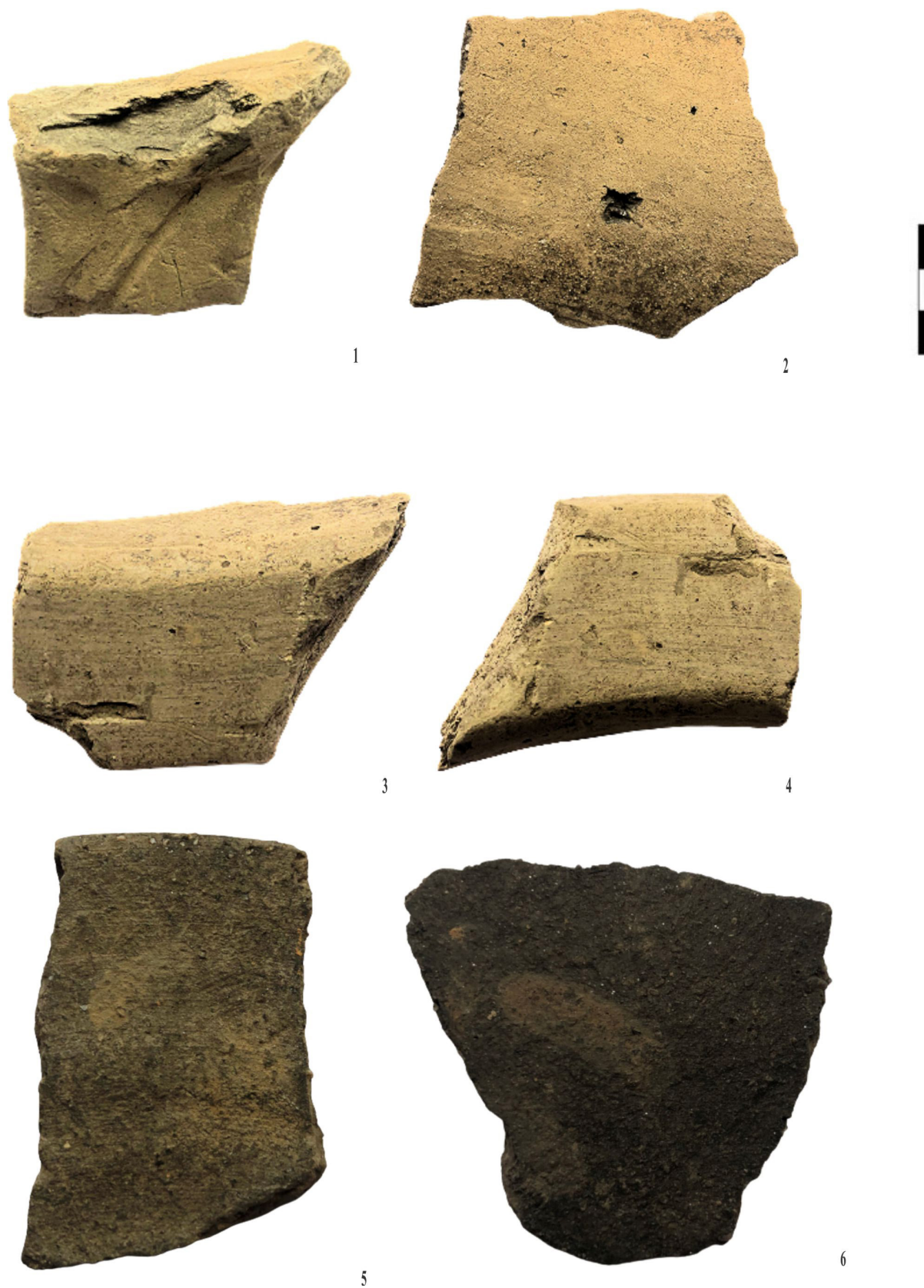




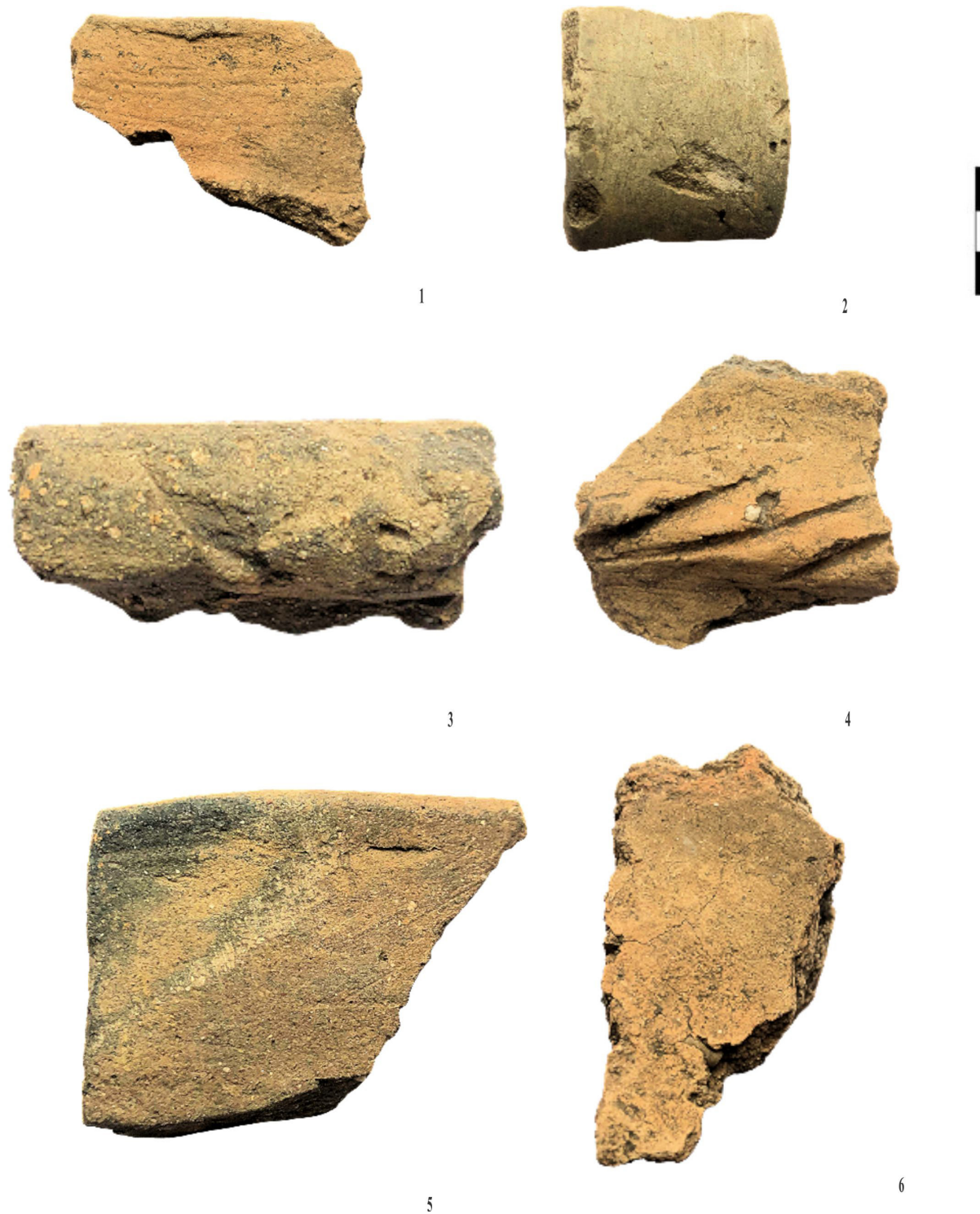
*Pl. 8. Frășinetul de Pădure La Baltă:  
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belonging to the Vădastra culture.  
(photos by Phd. student Iulia Răbîncă, plates by master student Voicilă Valentin)*



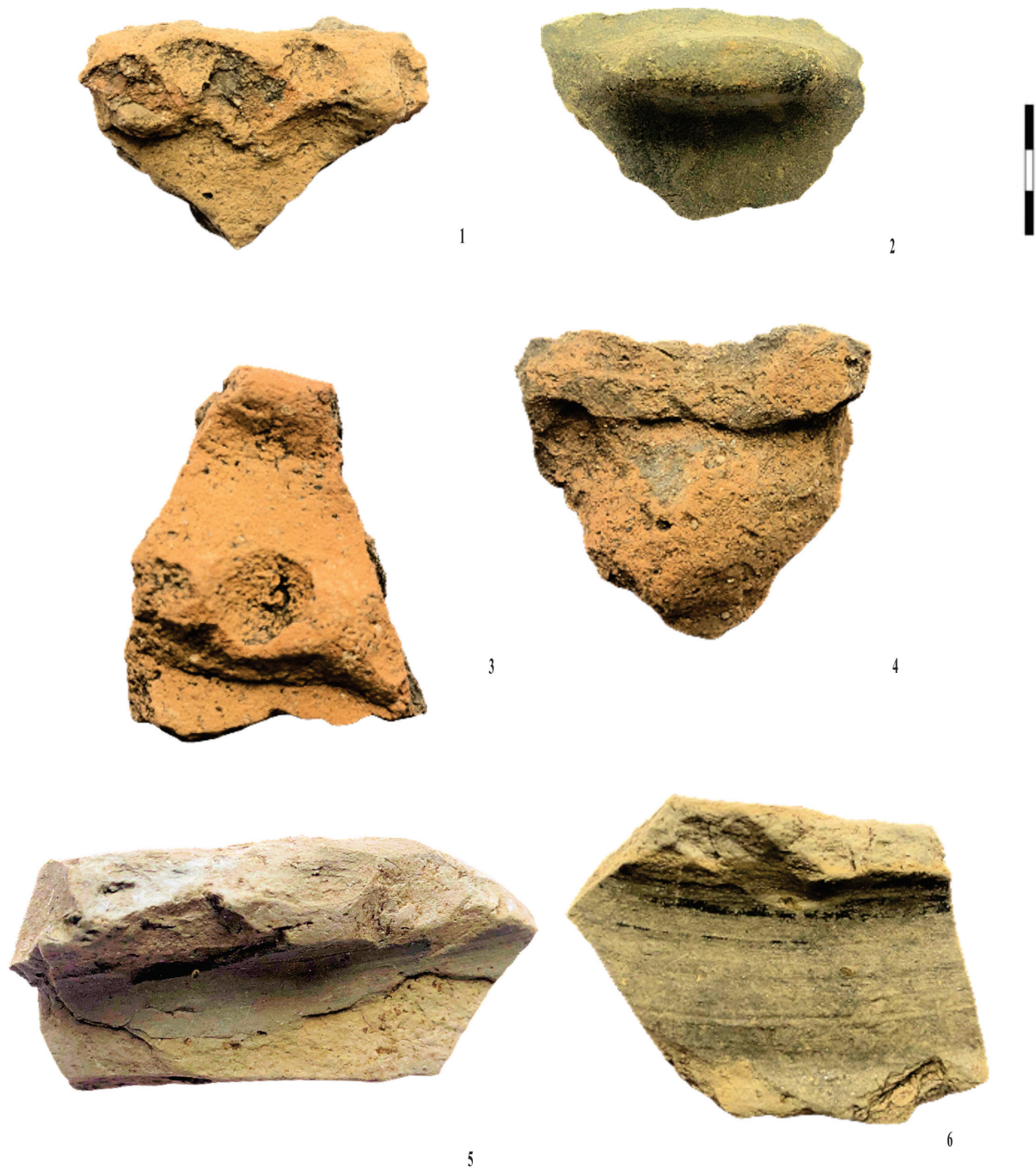
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(photos by Phd. student Iulia Răbîncă, plates by master student Voicilă Valentin)*



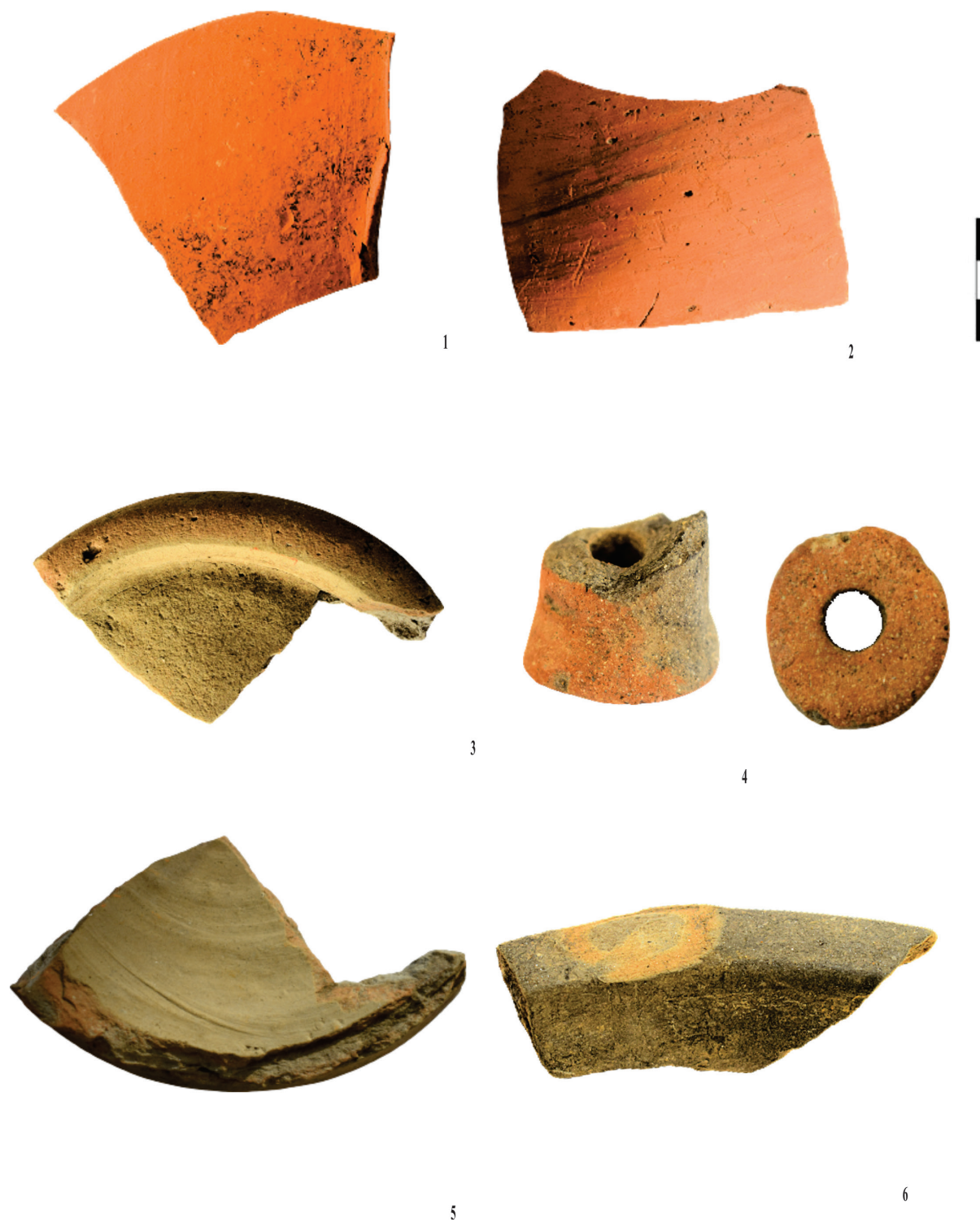
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1-6. prehistoric pottery, probably belonging to the Bronze Age.  
(photos by Phd. student Iulia Răbîncă, plates by master student Voicilă Valentin)



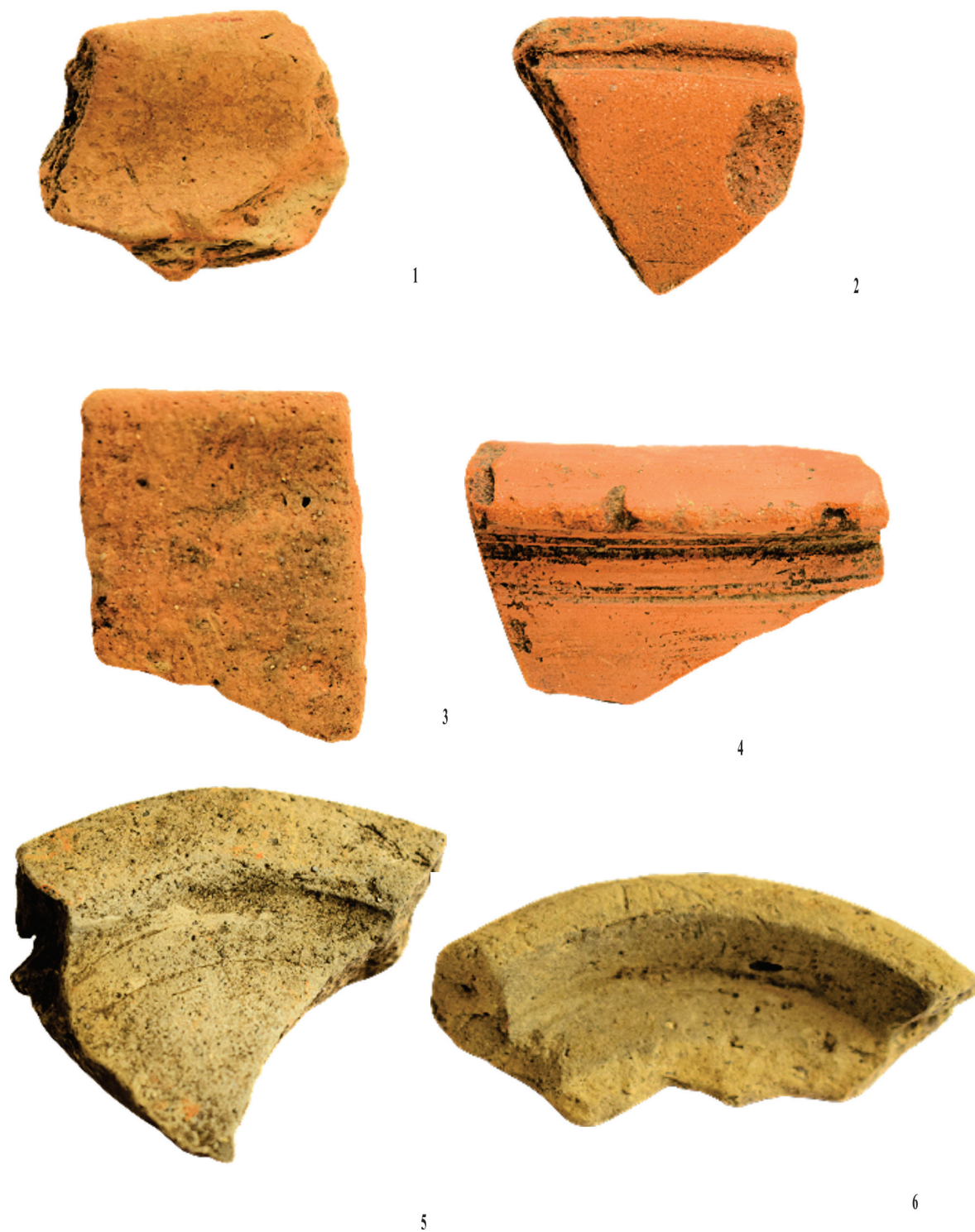
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(photos by Phd. student Iulia Răbîncă, plates by master student Voicilă Valentin)*



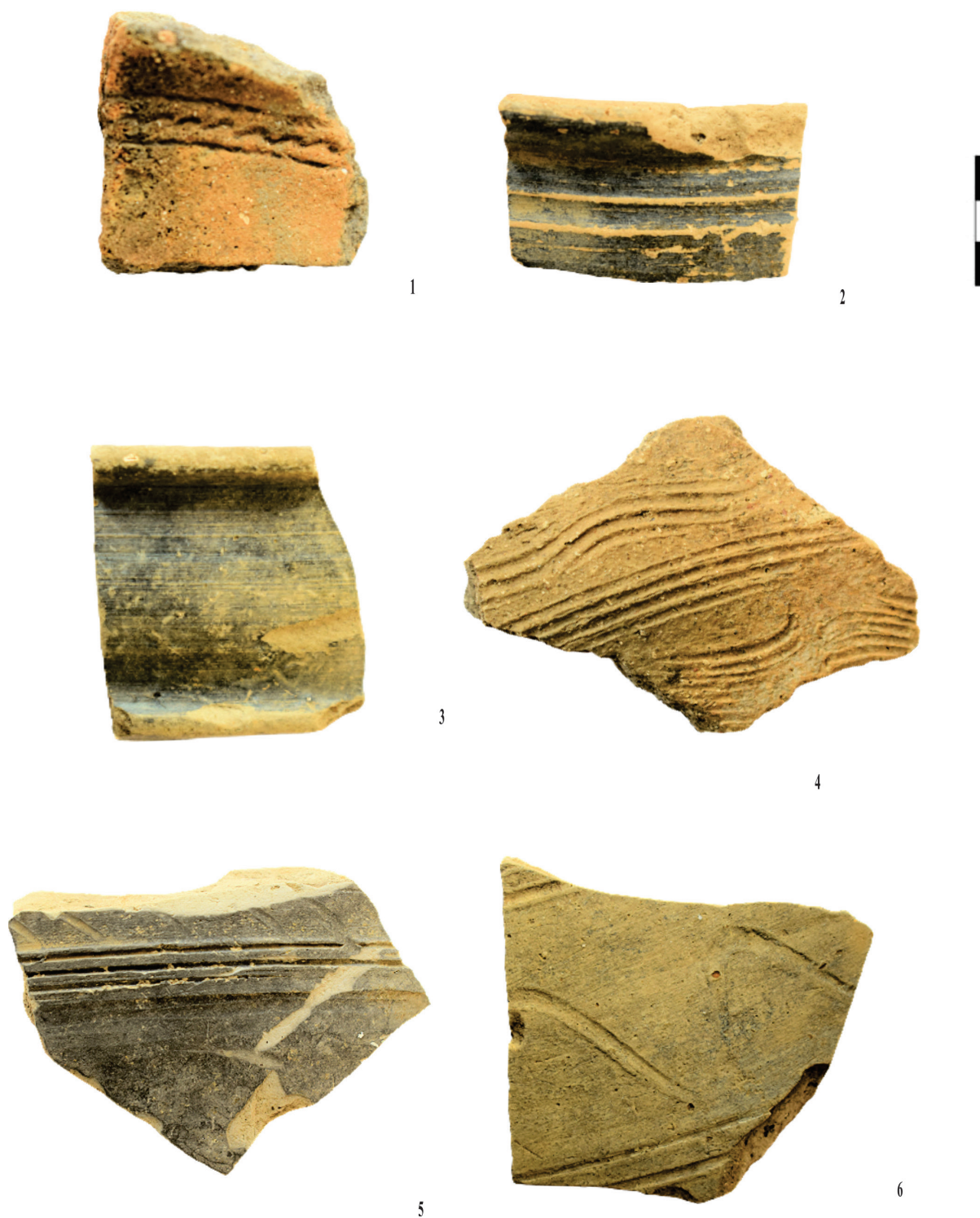
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(photos by Phd. student Iulia Răbîncă, plates by master student Voicilă Valentin)*



*Pl. 13. Frăsinetul de Pădure La Baltă:  
1-6. roman ceramics of common use.  
(photos by Phd. student Iulia Răbîncă, plates by master student Voicilă Valentin)*



*Pl. 14. Frăsinetul de Pădure La Baltă:  
1-6. roman ceramics of common use.  
(photos by Phd. student Iulia Răbîncă, plates by master student Voicilă Valentin)*



*Pl. 15. Frăsinetul de Pădure La Baltă:  
1-6. medieval pottery.  
(photos by Phd. student Iulia Răbîncă, plates by master student Voicilă Valentin)*