

# The Neolithic And the Chalcolithic Periods in Northern Thrace

## *Neolitik ve Kalkolitik Devirlerde Kuzey Trakya*

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*Klasik tanımlamayla Trakya'nın tarihöncesi devirlerinde "Kuzey Trakya" diye adlandırılan bölge, orta ve yukarı Meriç arasındaki havza ve bu nehrin kolları olan Tunca ve Arda nehirlerini kapsar. Yerleşmelerde iki ana grup egemendir: düz yerleşmeler ve höyükler. Bölgede bakır cevheri ve çakmaktaşı gibi ham maddeler oldukça azdır. Rodop dağlarının doğusunda Son Kalkolitik Devre tarihlenen küçük tapınaklar mevcuttur.*

*Yazar bölgede yürütülen tarihöncesi araştırmaların tarihçesini irdelemekte, Doğu Balkan'lardaki Neolitik gelişimin başlangıcına ve Kuzey Trakya'nın Neolitik ve Kalkolitik devirlere ait tarihlerinin güncelleştirilmesine dikkati çekmektedir. Ayrıca çanak çömlek topluluğunun nitelikleri, evler, yerleşme düzenleri, ölü gömme adetleri, insan biçimli kaplar ve heykelcikler, pişmiş topraktan sunaklar ve ev ve/yahut tapınak modelleri hakkında bilgi verilmektedir. Gene Kuzey Trakya bölgesinde Neolitik ve Kalkolitik süreçteki terimsel ayrımlar üzerinde durulmaktadır.*

Northern Thrace<sup>1</sup>, a classic region for prehistoric studies in Thrace, covers the catchment area of the Lower and Middle Maritsa River, including its tributaries – the Tundza and Arda rivers. The basic Neolithic and Chalcolithic sites types are the remains of settlements, classified in two main groups: open-air settlements and mounds (tells). The remains of raw material procurement (copper mines and flint deposits) are quite rare. In the Late Chalcolithic, there were also small sanctuaries on several peaks of the Eastern Rhodope Mountains. Until now, attention

has been focused on the mounds, whose dimensions (with height up to 18 m and diameters up to 250 m) make them the most significant sources of diverse data about the prehistoric period (Neolithic, Chalcolithic, Bronze Age).

Three antiquity loving Frenchmen conducted the first excavations of prehistoric sites in Northern Thrace in the late 19th and the early 20th century. However, V. Mikov initiated prehistoric research in the area by trenching tells Yunatsite (near Pazarcık) and Vesselinovo (near Yam-

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<sup>2</sup>Editors note: We are grateful to Mr. Kenneth Boden for his efforts to review the english text of this article.

<sup>3</sup> The term Northern Thrace (or Bulgarian Thrace) is an artificial one, similar to the names of the other two parts of the region and it is usually used for the scientific nomenclature.



bol) in the 1930s. In 1947-57, V. Mikov and G. I. Georgiev excavated a part of the Tell Karanovo (near Nova Zagora). In the 40's and 50's, P. Detev excavated the tell at Kapitan Dimitriev (near Peshtera), Jasatepe (in Plovdiv), and Bikovo (near Nova Zagora). The 60's, 70's, and the early 80's were a period in which the most intensive investigations in Northern Thrace took place. G. I. Georgiev thoroughly excavated Tell Azmak (near Stara Zagora) and Tell Kazanlık as well as the multi-layer settlement Çavdar (near Zlatitsa). M. Dimitrov thoroughly excavated mound Çatalka (near Çirpan) and trenched Tell Starozagorski Mineralni Bani (near Stara Zagora), Tell Mădretz (near Radnevo), Tell Okrăzhna Bolnitsa in Stara Zagora, and the Kalyanovetz open-air settlement (near Stara Zagora). P. Detev investigated a large part of the Muldava open-air settlement (near Assenovgrad). E. Černich and A. Raduncheva explored the Aibunar copper mines near Stara Zagora. A. Raduncheva entirely excavated Rakotovo and the Simeonovgrad open-air settlements, as well as parts of mound Sedlare near Krumovgrad, and M. Kănçev partially excavated the mound of Sădievo (near Nova Zagora) and the Hlebozavoda open-air settlement in Nova Zagora. The number of surveys decreased in the second half of the 80's and 90's. The excavations at Tell Karanovo (V. Nikolov and S. Hiller) and Tell Kapitan Dimitriev were renewed. J. Lichardus started the investigations of the Drama micro-region near Yambol. A. Raduncheva started the excavations at Dolnoslav Tell near Assenovgrad. The results of the excavations would form a reliable basis to reconstruct the late prehistoric life-way patterns of the region. However, only short reports have been published on these excavations and this makes the complex study more difficult. There are no general studies reflecting the most recent activity in the study area.

The most important, comprehensive, reliable and thoroughly or partially ac-

cessible information about excavated sites comes from Karanovo, Azmak, Jasatepe, Kazanlık, Rakitovo, Çavdar, Muldava, Kapitan Dimitriev, Drama, and Hlebozavoda. Tell Karanovo is the most important of all since its stratigraphy is the basis for the Karanovo sequence. This sequence was established by V. Mikov and G. I. Georgiev, reworked by G. I. Georgiev (Georgiev 1961), and complemented by the author of this study (Nikolov 1997a; Nikolov 1997b; Nikolov 1998a) - based on the results of the continuing Bulgarian-Austrian archaeological excavations (Hiller, Nikolov 1997). The sequence includes nine stages, the first six being related to the Neolithic, the next two - to the Chalcolithic, and the last one to the Early Bronze age. The validity of the Karanovo sequence is applicable to nearly all parts of Northern Thrace. Recently emerged evidence proves, however, that a number of specific features of the culture, which developed in the westernmost parts of the area, allow, at least for certain chronological periods, the differentiation of local cultural phenomena.

### The Neolithic Period

The conventional model of the Neolithic cultural phenomena in Northern Thrace was proposed by G. I. Georgiev in 1959/1961 and includes four successive Neolithic periods that affected the entire region. It positively influenced the way investigators have thought about the general pattern of the Neolithic in Southeast Europe, but excavations in the following two decades showed that the development of Neolithic culture in Thrace was much more varied than had been previously outlined. The "dynamic" model of the Neolithic in Thrace includes six stages (Nikolov 1993: 185-186; Nikolov 1998a) and is presented in brief as follows:

*Stage I.* The Early Neolithic pottery assemblage almost covers the whole of



Thrace, i.e., nearly the whole catchment area of the Maritsa river as well as the Upper Mesta region and (in its first phase) the Sofia Basin.

*Stage II.* The Early Neolithic Karanovo II pottery assemblage develops in the northeastern part of Northern Thrace (excluding the Kazanlık area), while the development of Karanovo I culture continues in the rest of the region.

*Stage III.* The Middle Neolithic Proto-Karanovo III pottery assemblage covers the northeastern parts of Northern Thrace while the development of Karanovo I culture continues in the rest of the region.

*Stage IV.* The Late Neolithic pottery assemblage, Karanovo III, exists in the northeastern parts of Northern Thrace while the development of Karanovo I culture continues in the rest of the region.

*Stage V.* The Late Neolithic pottery assemblage Karanovo III-IV covers almost all of Northern Thrace.

*Stage VI.* The Late Neolithic pottery assemblage, Karanovo IV, covers the northeastern parts of Northern Thrace (east from the Kazanlık-Haskovo line), while Kapitan Dimitriev pottery assemblage develops in the western parts of Northern Thrace.

The red slipped ware, sometimes painted white, is the most characteristic feature of the Karanovo I Early Neolithic pottery assemblage in Northern Thrace. The rest of the fine (thin-walled) ware is gray or brown, well or very well smoothed, decorated with plastic ornaments or in some cases with flutings, incisions, or a pattern of dots. The following shapes are among the most typical for the pottery assemblage: tulip-shaped vessels on a pedestal base, flat-based tulip-shaped beakers, vessels with a spherical body

and tall cylindrical necks, hole-mouth jars with a relatively short neck, the *wannen*<sup>2</sup> with a slightly S-shaped profile or convex sides, jar-like bowls, bowls with a rounded body, and semi-spherical plates (the last three types are often on a short cylindrical base).

The Karanovo II Early Neolithic pottery assemblage in the northeastern parts of Northern Thrace preserves almost all the features of the previous period, but the red slipped (and white painted) wares totally disappear. All other technological groups and types continue their development, though some display certain specific features; at least one new shape appears: a *wanne* on a pedestal base. Fluted and channeled decorations are also quite common.

The Proto-Karanovo III Middle Neolithic pottery assemblage in the northeastern parts of Northern Thrace preserves a lot of features typical for the preceding assemblage; the basic Early Neolithic ware types continue to exist. However, at least two new shapes appear and soon spread on a relatively wide area; they develop (though slightly modified) until the end of the Neolithic. The flat-based tall cylindrical mugs have a strip or stick-like knobbed handle, the knob being conical, cylindrical, or with concave walls. The dishes with relatively big rim diameters have a slightly thickened rim that is either undecorated or decorated with shallow oblique channelling. There are also certain indications for the appearance of small jugs. The new shapes have dark, very well smoothed or burnished surfaces. The decorative element are quite similar to the Early Neolithic ones - incised, excised, pricked dots, channelled and plastic ornamentation - though with certain peculiarities, e. g. vertical and especially horizontal or oblique wide channelling covers the entire body of the vessel, burnished bands filled with dots and compositions with such bands, round

<sup>2</sup> The author uses the German term *Wanne* (pl. *Wannen*) to describe a certain type of a straight-sided bowl. Since there is no appropriate term in English, the German word will be used in the text.



plastic appliqués with a shallow finger impression, plastic knobs, etc. The Proto-Karanovo III pottery assemblage is represented by two versions. The Karanovo II-III variant is recorded in the northeastern parts of Northern Thrace, and its range coincides with the range of the Karanovo II cultural phenomenon; the Karanovo II-III pottery assemblage shows the transition from Karanovo II to Karanovo III. Karanovo I-III is found only in Tell Kazanlık, where Karanovo II culture does not develop; the Karanovo I-III pottery assemblage possesses features typical for the transition from Karanovo I to III.

Together with the shapes from the preceding period, plates and bowls with rounded sides and open and hole-mouth jars, the Karanovo III Late Neolithic pottery assemblage from northeastern parts of Northern Thrace also includes several specific significant pottery types that represent, mainly, the grey-black very well smoothed wares or burnished wares: thickened-rim dishes on four tall cylindrical legs; deep bowls with thickened parts at the rim and a flat base; pear-shaped jugs with tall vertical handles with mushroom-shaped knobs, and flat-based on four short cylindrical legs; cylindrical mugs with tall vertical strips or stick-like knobbed handles; cylindrical or conical *wannen*; biconical bowls, whose rounded carination is in the middle of the body. The decoration, incised or channeled, is mostly on the thickened part of dishes and on bowl rims. Plastic ornaments and incisions are relatively rare (on the exterior surface of the vessel). The barrel-shaped bowl with a rough exterior surface, decorated with impressions and plastic ornaments becomes an important significant shape.

The development of the aforementioned shapes continues in the Karanovo III-IV Late Neolithic pottery assemblage, though some new shapes appear, but they most often form a new series. The

ware is usually dark, very well smoothed or burnished. The sophisticated decoration techniques from the previous period continue but new ones appear as well and the decoration gets more complicated. The re-production of tall mugs with a tall vertical knobbed handle continues, and is sometimes mushroom-shaped. The pear-shaped jugs with a tall vertical knobbed handle undergoes change; the body is often biconical and bigger than before; the vessels are flat based or on four legs of medium height. The tall vertical handle has certain peculiarities: there is a plastic or channeled decoration on the upper part of the mushroom-shaped knob and/or on the handle itself. The thickened-rim dishes have four tall legs or very wide cylindrical pedestal bases; sometimes the rim is slightly profiled upwards. The carinated plates are a new shape and become a typical element of the discussed pottery assemblage. The carination is just below the rim; the rim is specifically profiled, sometimes with channelled decoration. The base is small and flat. However, some of these vessels are flared, have a complicated rim and a tall hollow pedestal *with* vertical rectangular openings. *Wannen* are cylindrical or conical. A new series of *wannen* appears and becomes one of the most important characteristic features of the pottery assemblage: the bowler-shaped hat *wannen* with a conical body and flared rim, often decorated. The new bowls with biconical body and a shorter upper part are also typical for the assemblage. They usually have a thickened carination and thinner rim, and channeling sometimes covers the upper body part. The bowls with cylindrical upper and conical lower part are quite massive and the upper part is sometimes decorated with horizontal S-shaped relief. Deep bowls with almost cylindrical upper part and a vertical knobbed handle appear. Shallow bowls, with an almost cylindrical or carinated body on four tall cylindrical legs, are rare but a firm indicator of the period.



The Karanovo IV Late Neolithic pottery assemblage in the eastern parts of Northern Thrace shares most of the features of the previous one: cylindrical *wannen*, tall knob handled pear-shaped jugs, cylindrical mugs with tall knobbed handles, thickened-rim dishes sometimes on four tall legs, barrel-shaped bowls with plastic decoration, and carinated plates. The most typical vessels, however, are the conical plates with deeply incised decoration filled with white plaster on both exterior and interior sides, the biconical bowls, the jars with biconical bodies and relatively tall necks (sometimes with two opposite knobbed handles) and the jars covered with channelling. This last ware is dark and the surface is often coated with a smeared reddish slip and most often burnished or polished.

The Kapitan Dimitriev IV Late Neolithic pottery assemblage in the western parts of Northern Thrace preserves a lot of the elements of the preceding Karanovo III-IV assemblage. The ware is dark, black, grey-black or dark brown, very well smoothed or burnished, and rarely polished. The most characteristic forms are the carinated plates, the biconical bowls with short upper part (in both cases the carination is thickened and the exterior upper part of the body is covered with channelling), deep or shallow thickened-rim plates (the rim is often decorated with channelling or incised and encrusted lines), *wannen* with flared rims, conical plates with straight or slightly concave sides (in some cases their interior surface is covered with incised wide lines), jugs with tall handle (few examples), biconical jars with two strip handles, and big jars with cylindrical neck and two small handles (Nikolov 1999b: tabl. 4-9).

The Neolithic architecture in Northern Thrace is relatively well studied. All houses were built on the ground. The walls were made of wooden (oak) posts, fixed in the ground (at a depth of 70-90

cm) and interwoven with (hazel) twigs; both sides of the construction are daubed with clay. The gabled roof was covered with straw or reed. The buildings in the settlements were used only as living places though production activities were also performed there and, at least in some case, rituals related to the house cult. The houses were square, rectangular or slightly trapezoid in plan and consist of one, rarely two or extremely rare three rooms. There was a small number of houses (at Tell Karanovo mainly) with a small room annex attached to one of the walls. The houses were one-storey as a rule, but recent evidence for two-story houses has come to light at Tell Karanovo and Tell Kapitan Dimitriev. An earthen rampart protected some of the settlements. For some parts of the overbuilt area, a preconceived plan was followed.

The richest evidence for Early Neolithic houses comes from Tell Karanovo (at least 20 houses), from the South sector mainly (Hiller 1997). Most of them were square, rectangular, or slightly trapezoidal, and contained a single room, though a few contained two rooms; one of the houses was of the megaron type. The rest were square or rectangular, single-room or two-room (as an exception) but with an annex. The area of the single-room houses varied between 21-53 sq. m, and the two-room houses varied between 49-63 sq. m. The houses with an annex were between 45-67 sq. m. The entrance was usually in the southern or the eastern wall (except the megaron-house, whose entrance was at the western wall). The oven was usually close to one of the house walls; there were ovens in some of the annexes as well. The houses in the South sector were re-built in the same location or near the same location for centuries; they were situated along a street oriented NNE-SSW, ca. 2 m wide and paved with pebbles, sherds and animal bones. The houses in the Northeastern sector were situated along two streets cross-



sing each other, oriented along the four cardinal points, and paved as described above (Georgiev 1961: 62).

The earliest Early Neolithic villages at Tell Azmak were enclosed by an earthen rampart. The excavator (Georgiev 1967: 146-148) wrote about 23 houses (most of them single-room), which varied between 22-50 sq. m. The only exception was a big three-room building (chain-like plan), which had a total area of 109 sq. m and ovens in all premises. The interior walls of one square house were decorated with a plastic geometric composition. A massive three-partial quern with a grinding stone was unearthed in another building. Remains of ovens and clay bins were found in all houses.

The Early Neolithic layer of Tell Ok-rāzhna Bolnitsa yielded the remains of two single-room houses adjoined; both were destroyed by fire with their household inventory intact. The total area of the adjoined houses was 47 sq. m, and the entrances faced east. The numerous cylindrical bins, the quern, and the two domed ovens were very well preserved.

The Early Neolithic multi-layer settlement, Čavdar, was surrounded from its three sides by an earthen rampart, whose ends reached the bank of the adjacent river, protecting the forth side. The foundations (plans) of more than a dozen of houses were unearthed, single-room and several two-room, square, rectangular, and slightly trapezoidal in plan (Georgiev 1981: 69-81). Their area varied between 26-55 sq. m. The entrances faced south or southeast, and the oven was usually at the opposite wall.

The Early Neolithic multi-layer settlement at Rakotovo yielded the remains of at least 18 single and two-room houses, being predominantly elongated and trapezoidal in plan, and varying between 23-49 sq. m in size. They were arranged in

groups of three or four and faced the northeast or the northwest. A cult structure was found in one of them.

Part of a two-storey house was unearthed in the Early Neolithic layer of Tell Kapitan Dimitriev (Nikolov 1999a: 14-18). A big domed oven, a quern with a grinding stone to the side, and several bins were found on the ground floor. There was at least one domed oven on the upper floor. This is the earliest excavated two-story building in Southeast Europe.

The four Early Neolithic houses excavated at the multi-component settlement of Muldava were single-roomed houses, approximately square, and between 16-49 sq. m in size (Detev 1968: 13-41). They were built close to each other, and their diagonals were oriented along according the four cardinal directions.

Well-preserved houses at Tell Karanovo, in the Late Neolithic deposits, are related to the Karanovo III period. They were destroyed by fire. The two houses excavated in the Northeastern sector have specific plans (Nikolov 1997c). The first one was rectangular with a small annex attached to the eastern wall and a total area of 46 sq. m; the main room consisted of a rectangular room and an L-shaped "corridor" along its northern and western walls. The second house was rectangular, 57 sq. m; its interior was divided by two walls into a big room and two "corridors" along its northern and western walls. Part of a big burnt two-story house, rectangular in plan, was excavated in the N-S sector. The oven, the grinding stone and the bins were on the second (residential) floor, supported by a great number of posts. The ground floor had obviously been used for economic activities since no traces of structures or installations were found there.

The Late Neolithic deposits of Tell Kazanlık (Karanovo III period) yielded the



remains of four rectangular houses, varying between 38-51 sq. m. Three of them were single-room structures, and the fourth one was a three-room structure (chain-like plan) with an oven in one of the rooms.

The excavations at the Hlebozavoda Late Neolithic open-air settlement, (Karanovo IV period) revealed 15 single and two-room rectangular houses (three of them being megaron-houses), oriented predominantly N-S, the entrances face south (Kançev, Kançeva 1988). The two-room houses had an oven in one of the rooms only. The area of the houses varied between 27-54 sq. m and were situated either in groups or at a certain distance from each other.

It is hard to estimate how long a Neolithic house might have been used; it is commonly thought to be a period between 30-50 years. One thing is for sure, the periodic reconstruction of the settlement was carried out only if the settlement was destroyed or abandoned. Every building was renewed after its destruction (intentional or otherwise) in the same place and following the same approximate plan.

About seventy Neolithic burials were documented in Northern Thrace<sup>3</sup>. All of them were found within the settlements, between houses as a rule, though sometimes beneath house floors. The burials (inhumations in a flexed position) were in small and shallow grave pits (in some cases garbage pits were reused); the body placed most often on its side (left or right) and, quite rarely, on its back. The exceptions were burials where the body was placed in a flexed position on its abdomen, in an extended position on its back, and in an extended position on its abdomen. Two graves were excavated at Tell Karanovo, containing skeletal remains of many individuals, and in no anatomic order (i.e., collective secondary burials). There is evidence that secondary burials

were related to several single burials, including the rare case of a skull buried separately from the body. There is an exclusive group, the double burial of an adult and a child. The orientation of the bodies in the pit was obviously unregulated by Neolithic burial rites; orientation in all directions was documented, with slightly more bodies aligned between the West and the North. Children and old people were primarily buried in villages, with females prevailing among elderly individuals. There are very few burials of middle-aged people. The selection of people buried within the village could be related to certain aspects of the prevailing religious-mythological system; old farmers probably believed that the bodies of deceased children had to remain in the village to quickly facilitate reincarnation, and the souls of respectable adult members of the community had to likewise remain in the village to help or protect their living relatives. However, another theory also seems reasonable: individuals of lower status (mostly children and women) were buried within the village; higher status individuals were buried in a different way that required greater effort and care. Quite a few burial goods were found in graves, and almost all, without exception, in the graves of adults; there was only one object as a rule (a vessel, a bone pin, a flint tool) and, quite rarely, several grave goods (a vase and a grinding stone, a bead and a pebble, bone pins and beads; bone awls and a stone ball). No Neolithic cemeteries were found in Northern Thrace. Where and how all the other thousands of inhabitants of the area were buried is a question still awaiting an answer.

It is impossible to discuss all aspects of Neolithic culture in Northern Thrace within the framework of this paper, I will, therefore, mention just a few more elements.

Most of the Early Neolithic anthropomorphic vessels have a nearly spherical

<sup>3</sup> The summary is based on data collected by K. Baçvarov, (Baçvarov 1994) to whom I am grateful.



lower body and a tall relatively narrow neck. The details are then modelled in relief. The face is always depicted just below the rim. The nose and the eyebrows are in relief, and the eyes are usually marked by incision. In some cases, the face is shaped in relief and stands against the surface as if attached to the neck by appliqué. The mouth is rarely marked. Sometimes two or more vertical or oblique parallel lines are incised below or around the eyes. A vase presents the richest evidence from Tell Kazanlık (Georgiev 1972: Taf. VI, 1). Besides the face, the breasts, the vulva, and the arms had been shaped. One of the hands points to the genitals, and the other is raised upwards. Within the context of the Mother-Earth (the anthropomorphic vessels are related to the cult of the Mother-Earth), this pose could be interpreted as a request to the Sky God for a matrimonial alliance, i.e., the birth or harvesting of a new crop.

An anthropomorphic vessel of unusual shape was found at Tell Jasatepe and is related to the Late Neolithic (Georgiev 1961: Taf. XIII, 2). Its body consists of a tall cylindrical neck turned downward into two arched pipes (maintaining the neck diameter), both of which reach the oval flat base. The central part of the body remains hollow. The anthropomorphic face (a relief nose and eyes-incisions) is modeled below the rim.

Another type of anthropomorphic vessel is extremely rare and is related to the Early Neolithic. The only vessel, entirely preserved, came from Rakitovo (Matsanova 1996: tab. 6, 1). It is a standing hollow steatopygous anthropomorphic figure with a short upper body. The vessel is red slipped and white-painted. A relief nose is modeled below the rim. The hands are on the abdomen.

An anthropomorphic face is modeled on an Early Neolithic pot from tell Azmak

(Georgiev 1967: Abb. 7a). A relief band outlines the upper part of the face, the nose and the eyebrows are also modeled in relief, and the eyes are depicted by oval finger impressions. There are two vertical incisions below the nose that give grounds to interpret the image as a female one.

The main iconographic type of the Early Neolithic anthropomorphic clay figurines is a female figure with massive buttocks, the legs joined or slightly set apart, the upper part of the body is relatively short, narrow, and oval or flattened. The upper part of the head is flat, and the main features on the face are usually the relief nose and the incised eyes. The pubic triangle is also marked. In many cases the figurines have flat feet and could stand upright. Some figurines have their upper torso slightly bent forward. All figurines described are made of three parts: the two buttocks were modelled separately and then joined, and the upper part of the body was added later. The arms are sometimes omitted. Often they are depicted as two relatively short horizontal stumps. There are figurines with arms quite naturalistically rendered, the right hand is behind the body and reaches the haunch, and the left one is in front and holds the belly up (Georgiev 1961: Abb. 3, 1). The buttocks of the figurines are sometimes decorated with parallel-incised lines or dots. The upper part of the figurines is undecorated. The only exceptions are several figurines with an incised line or zigzag below the relief nose. This element, and some other features, closely relates the figurines to the anthropomorphic Early Neolithic vases. The figurines should be interpreted in a similar way, i. e. as images of the Mother Goddess. The Early Neolithic figurines are fragmented in almost all cases. Since they were made from three parts they could easily be broken under certain circumstances, e.g., during certain rituals.



The second Early Neolithic iconographic type includes figurines with a massive conical or prismatic schematic body, made of one piece of clay. These figurines present a schematic standing human body with some indications of anthropomorphic features. The upper part is flattened and the hair is usually marked by incision. The eyes and the relief nose are also rendered, and there are finger impressions or vertical strokes below the face. The breasts are sometimes modeled. The lower part of the body is decorated with parallel incised lines.

The Early Neolithic figurines made of white marble are relatively rare and represent a standing female anthropomorphic figure. The lower part is usually rounded and the legs are slightly set apart. The waist is relatively slender, the arms are two horizontal stumps, and the head is cylindrical and rounded. A figurine from Tell Azmak (Georgiev 1967: Abb. 11) is elaborated very carefully; it has massive buttocks and the pubis triangle is incised.

The seated anthropomorphic figurines are very rare in the Early Neolithic. They represent women. The lower part of a figurine from Tell Karanovo is decorated with dark paint.

The second Late Neolithic iconographic type includes cylindrical or prismatic anthropomorphic figurines. They have relatively small dimensions and are very schematic. The face consists of a relief nose and incised eyes. The hair is often indicated, and the body is sometimes decorated with incisions.

The lower part of the Late Neolithic figurines is schematized as a rule, the legs are added later. The waist is indicated and the upper torso is wider and relatively flat, rounded, or modeled with two short triangular stumps. The head is: (1) elongated and cylindrical with a relief no-

se, and the eyes are sometimes marked by incisions or (2) widened a little toward a cylindrical neck, and the face is modeled by two concave surfaces, the eyes are modeled in relief. Sometimes the hair is marked on the back of the cylindrical head (with horizontal incisions). Two plastic knobs mark the breasts and the triangular stumps-arms are sometimes horizontally perforated. This main iconographic type is usually covered with rich decoration, incisions and/or dots. The pubis is often indicated (the vulva is sometimes marked with a lozenge), and the neckline is marked by incisions. Incisions or bands with dots decorate the lower part of the figurine. A relatively rare version of this type has quite naturalistically rendered lower part of the body, a more rounded upper part and a cylindrical head. One of the best specimens of this version (from Tell Karanovo) represents a hermaphrodite (Georgiev 1961: Abb. 3, 2): beside the breasts the male and female genitals are modeled. The figurine is decorated with brown paint. Beside the relief nose, the eyes (and the eyelashes) and the eyebrows are indicated. The hair is marked, and a kind of braid or hanging ornament is attached to it. A wide belt, decorated with hanging ornaments, encircles the waist. A second hermaphrodite figurine was found recently (at Tell Kapitan Dimitriev). The upper part of the body is flat and widened, the legs are slightly set apart, the breasts and the male genitals are modeled.

The third Late Neolithic iconographic type unites the relatively naturalistic seated female figurines that appear in this period. They are very few in number, but their appearance indicate a change in belief about the Mother Goddess. The first version is represented by female figures sitting on a movable chair (a rounded object), and the second, in which the chair is modelled inseparably from the female body. The legs are always joined together, the upper torso is rounded, the arm-



stumps rendered, and the head is cylindrical. The most exquisite representatives of this group are two figurines from Tell Karanovo and Drama. The first figurine has a very tall cylindrical head with a relief nose and rich red and brown painted decoration. The breasts and the pubic triangle are marked. The breasts and the knees of the second figurine (Fol, Katinčarov, Lichardus 1989: Taf. 35) are marked by relief knobs, the nose and the ears are also modelled in relief. There is a shallow hole at the top of the cylindrical head.

The first male figurines appear in the Late Neolithic period. The denotation of these images was probably a man of high social status (a tribal chieftain?), worshipped while still living, or as a spirit-patron. Unfortunately, not one single whole male figurine is preserved, and several well-elaborated heads are interpreted as male.

Several marble female figurines came from the Late Neolithic sites. They represent a standing female figure with folded arm. The heads of the two figurines from Tell Jasatepe (Detev 1976: obr. 54) are cylindrical and absolutely schematic, the pubic triangle and the line separating the legs are marked by incisions. The buttocks are fat and the upper part of the body is flat. The preserved torso of the figurine from tell Kazanlık (Katinčarov 1969) seems to have been elaborated very carefully.

The Early Neolithic is the time when relief anthropomorphic images appear on the exterior surface of certain ceramic vases. They represent standing female figures with their legs thrown open and the triangle between them marking the vulva. The arms are in various positions: raised up in a gesture of adoration, one hand raised up and the other on the abdomen (pointing to the vulva sometimes), or both arms point down. The relief ima-

ges most probably represent the Mother Goddess.

The Neolithic tripods (altars) consist of bowls elevated by three or (as an exception) four legs (Vandova 1997). They are made of clay, shaped as an equilateral triangle (only a few pieces are square). The outer surface of the tripods is usually decorated with incisions or dots, almost always filled with white matter. The inner surface and the lower part of the receptacle are very often painted white (a symbol of fertility). The described female relief images on big vases are of crucial importance for the understanding of the tripod's denotation. There is an obvious parallel between these images and every single side of the tripod. The anthropomorphic images are related to the Mother Goddess, which enables the interpretation of the tripods as a symbol of the Mother Goddess's womb. Two versions of this tripod could be regarded as a good illustration of such an interpretation: tripods with a convex-shaped central part of the lower edge, and the ones with a "hanging" middle part of the receptacle.

The so-called "sling bullets" are quite common at the Neolithic sites. They are relatively small objects with an elongated symmetrically rounded biconical shape or oval and elongated with slightly pointed ends. They are made of clay and are well fired, and their cross-section is round or oval. The objects are usually regarded as sling (bolas) "bullets" but the traditional interpretation could hardly explain why the "sling bullets" are often found in groups (up to 15-20 pieces) near the oven or quern of Neolithic houses. These objects are probably seed models and were used in certain rites of the Neolithic farmers, probably in the ritual cycle, related to the sowing of cereals.

A big Early Neolithic vase in the shape of a deer came from the multi-layer settlement of Muldava (Detev 1968: obr.



25, 26). The animal is represented standing on its four legs, its neck craned and the head raised upwards; the ears, the mouth and the short antlers are modeled. There is a cylindrical neck to the opening on the back. The vase is white on red painted: two horizontal bands of the "wreath of fertility" motif on the body (the negatively executed spiral-and-meander design stands out on the white background), the neck and the legs are decorated with three white bands. It is quite difficult to interpret the vase, but the "wreath of fertility" composition has been interpreted as an ideogram of the endless solar road, and we could therefore assume that this vase is related to a solar cult. Another big Early Neolithic zoomorphic vase came from the multi-layer settlement of Rakitovo (Matsanova 1996: tab. 8). It is in the shape of a bull with a massive body, standing on four legs. There is a cylindrical neck to the opening on back. The vase is undecorated. The bull participates in the early farming religious and mythological system as a partner of the Mother Goddess.

A swastika-decorated amulet perforated in the middle and carved out of jasper came from the multi-component settlement of Kardjali (Pejkov 1986: Abb. 3). The iconography of the object has been interpreted as frog legs. Ancient belief regarded frog legs as a prevention against sterility, and helped promote normal pregnancy. On the other hand, the swastika in the clockwise direction symbolized the regenerative power of the sun. The relation between the sun and the frog is easy to see: frogs appear and disappear in a period of about 6 months, i.e., they repeat the solar cycle. The united symbol "swastika with frog legs" was obviously considered by the Neolithic farmers as possessing an extraordinary power. If the object from Kardjali had been an amulet, it would have been worn by a woman with the purpose of invoking fertility.

Stamp seals are not common finds (Makkay 1984: 11-12, 16, 30, 68). The lower part of the seal (the face) is either round, elongated rectangular, or elongated oval in shape; they have a conical handle. The face bears an incised pattern, most often consisting of wavy or zigzag lines. The spiral design – the composition consisting of short parallel strokes or a lozenge and spiral-and-meander designs – are quite rare. Stamp seals were probably used as amulets attracting luck and success.

### The Chalcolithic

The model of the Chalcolithic in Northern Thrace, proposed by G.I. Georgiev in 1959/61, includes two successive periods: Karanovo V (Maritsa) and Karanovo VI, related to the Early and the Late Chalcolithic (Georgiev 1961). The differentiating criteria, however, are not precise. A transitional phase, called Maritsa IV and related to the Middle Chalcolithic, was defined by H. Todorova based on the pottery ornamentation (Vajsova 1966). J. Lichardus shares the thesis of the two partial periods of the Chalcolithic, and the artificial assemblage of the Maritsa IV phase as being related to Karanovo VI culture (see Fol, Katincarov, Lichardus 1989: 65-70). The chronology proposed by J. Lichardus seems more appropriate from a methodological point of view since it recognizes first and foremost the change of the most dynamic element of the old artificial assemblage: pottery shape and ornamentation. The lack of concrete and specific comprehensive studies on the matter does not allow me to propose a reliable chronology for the Chalcolithic in Northern Thrace; since I regard the two partial periods as being more appropriate, I use it in this particular study. It is also difficult to define the exact territorial range of the two Chalcolithic cultures, though it is clear that at the time of Karanovo V culture, the assemblage of the westernmost parts of Northern Thrace



contains many Central Balkan elements, while at the time of the Karanovo VI culture the western region is part of a transitional zone between the two big Late Chalcolithic cultural complexes of the Central and the Eastern Balkans.

The Karanovo V Early Chalcolithic pottery assemblage includes a relatively small number of typical shapes. The body of vessels is usually rounded. The semi-spherical plates are quite common, some of which are relatively thick-walled, with lighter surface color and are decorated on both sides with incised designs filled with white matter; others are thin-walled, with dark surface (gray or gray-black) and sometimes covered with positively executed graphite-painted designs. The outer surface of the lily-shaped bowls is usually decorated with incised ornaments of a ladder type filled with white matter. The wide bowls with almost straight sides at the upper body, decorated with sets of incised lines and rows of punched depressions, are filled with white matter, and are very typical. The deep bowls have more variety: bowls with convex walls or biconical bowls with rounded carination, some of them decorated with incised lines filled with white matter and bands covered with red ochre; other bowls are decorated only with graphite-painted designs or with graphite-painted and encrusted designs. There are also spherical slightly carinated jars with short necks, decorated with incised and encrusted designs. The conical bowls with a complicated rim profile, decorated with graphite-painted designs and red ochre appear in the pottery assemblage of the western part of the region. Some of the vases have a pedestal base during the first half of the period; the incised and encrusted decoration, sometimes complemented by bands of red ochre, predominates. The positive graphite-painted designs are typical for the whole period, and especially for the second half.

The Karanovo VI Late Chalcolithic

pottery assemblage includes a greater variety of shapes. The tendency towards biconical shapes is quite obvious. The decoration covers the upper part of the body and is painted with graphite in negative execution. The incised and white-filled designs, mainly of the ladder type, are still present in the pottery during the early phases of the period. The shell-stamped decoration and nail-impressed decoration are typical of the late phases. The dishes are conical, carinated, or thickened at the rim. The bowls with a tall upper part consist of a cylindrical upper and conical lower part, and the upper part is either slightly S-shaped in profile or consists of two cylinders with nearly the same diameters. The bowls with short upper parts are biconical. There are, however, bowls with rounded carinations, sometimes with a profiled rim; the biconical bowls with a carination at the middle part of the body are common as well. The deep bowls are slightly biconical with a rounded carination or have cylinder-conical bodies; sometimes the rim is profiled. Hole-moth jars are quite common; the body is spherical or slightly biconical. There are two-handled constricted-neck jars with plastic decoration. Constricted-neck jars with two strap handles beginning from the rim and ending at the most protruding middle part of the undecorated body and the *askos* with an arched handle are typical for the latest phases. The open jars include big storage vessels with a cylindrical upper body, a conical lower body, part and a handled lid.

The Late Chalcolithic pottery assemblage in the western parts of Northern Thrace (Tell Yunatzite and tell Kapitan Dimitriev) has not been studied thoroughly; it is positive however that there are shapes typical for both the Maritsa valley and the Central Balkan region. Besides the shapes already presented, the biconical two-handled constricted-neck jars, the jars with a vertical knobbed



handle, and the tall biconical jars with two opposite horizontal arched handles are quite common. The graphite-painted decoration is relatively rare, and the positive designs and compositions are dominant.

The Chalcolithic architecture in Northern Thrace is not only more poorly known but there are also very few articles published. All buildings are constructed on the ground. The wattle-and-daub construction typical for the preceding period was used; the walls were made of wooden (oak) posts, fixed in the ground, interwoven with (hazel) twigs. Both sides of the walls were daubed with clay. Evidence for the pisé technique application has come from recent excavations (Sedlare, Drama, Yunatsite). The gabled roof was covered with straw or reed. The buildings in the settlements were mainly residential though production activities were also performed there. Evidence exists that at least in the Late Chalcolithic there were special cult buildings (Azmak, Dolnoslav). As it was in the Neolithic, the houses were square, rectangular or slightly trapezoid in plan. They consisted of one room, though rarely two or three rooms can be found. The Chalcolithic houses were usually one-story, but there is evidence for two-story buildings (Drama). An earthen rampart or a rampart and a ditch protected some villages. Only certain parts of the area followed a preconceived plan.

A considerable number of Early Chalcolithic houses were revealed during the early campaigns at Tell Karanovo, but the relevant data has scarcely been published (Georgiev 1961: Taf. XVII, 2). The unearthed houses were oriented north-south, and contained a horse-shoe shaped oven with two lateral extensions at the northern wall facing the entrance. Some houses consisted of two rooms. Traces of "streets" were recorded, and the recent campaigns at sector N-S confirmed this

evidence, though no complete house plans were unearthed in the small excavated area.

The Tell Jasatepe Early Chalcolithic deposits yielded a single-roomed building (20 sq. m) used as a workshop for the production of tools (Detev 1959: 42). The floors of at least four more houses, all of them single-roomed, were between 30-50 sq. m in size; the oven was in the middle part of the room (Detev 1976: 121). The houses were oriented on a north-south axis.

The Tell Drama Early Chalcolithic deposits yielded the remains of 45 houses, between 24-40 sq. m, with the exception of a house of 94 sq. m (Fol, Katincarov, Lichardus 1989: 53-61). The houses were oriented north-south, rectangular or slightly trapezoidal in plan, and all of them contained a single-room. They were made of wattle-and-daub construction but only the big house mentioned above yielded evidence for pillars supporting the gabled roof. There were ovens in almost all houses. Narrow "streets" were revealed between the houses as was an empty space that probably functioned as the village square. A ditch and a low rampart enclosed the village.

The data about the Late Chalcolithic architecture, obtained during the early excavations at Tell Karanovo is scarcely published (Georgiev 1961: Taf. XVII, 2). The houses were orientated in the same direction, but the oven was situated in one of the corners facing the entrance.

The Chalcolithic villages of Tell Azmak were encircled by an earthen rampart that existed in the previous period; a wooden palisade was added in the Chalcolithic on the top of the rampart (Georgiev 1969: 142-145). The Early Chalcolithic houses were arranged in rows or in small groups; they did not face the same direction. The Late Chalcolithic villages con-



sisted of not less than 20 houses, but data was published for 3 buildings only. One of them has three-rooms, is more than 100 sq. m, and is oriented on an east-west axis. The inner walls were painted with red ocher. Not a single oven or a quern was found in the house but there were benches of clay in two of the rooms. The big dimensions of the building, its central location in the village, and the peculiarities of its interior enable us to interpret it as a non-residential building. Another very large building was unearthed in the same village; it consisted of two rooms, ca. 170 sq. m, north-south oriented. The inner surface of the walls was white with ocher. Neither an oven nor a quern was found. The later village yielded a big house, ca. 80 sq. m, oriented on a north-south axis. The entrance was on the south wall, and the oven and the quern were in the north-eastern corner.

The Late Chalcolithic village at Tell Drama was encircled by a ditch and a low rampart; the ditch was 10 m wide at its widest and up to 3 m deep. Its entrance (4m wide) faced south-west. Remains of 27 single-room buildings, probably residential, were revealed (Fol, Katincarov, Lichardus 1989: 40-48; Lichardus, Fol, Getov 1996: 17-21). The houses were oriented in different directions (from north-south to northwest-southeast) and were rectangular or slightly trapezoidal. The houses were made of the traditional wattle-and-daub construction, but reed was used both for the wattle and the roof. There was evidence that some of the walls were constructed of timber and pisé. The inner surface of some walls was decorated with red paint. A specific feature was a pit, shallow but wide, under the timber floor of every house; it probably served to protect against wetness, and as a storage place.

Few Chalcolithic burials were discovered in Northern Thrace. An Early Chalcolithic female burial came from Tell Ok-

razhna bolnitsa-Stara Zagora; the skeleton Liedina flexed position. Several Late Chalcolithic burials unearthed at Tell Čatalka yielded skeletons in a flexed position; one of the burials contained a shell necklace, and another contained a stone axe. No Chalcolithic cemeteries have been found until now in Northern Thrace. The human remains of the burnt last village of Tell Yunatsite deserve special attention. Twenty-nine male, female, and juvenile skeletons with different orientations and positions were revealed under the houses, and 10 more flexed skeletons and 3 skulls were found in the space between the houses. According to the excavators' observations, the inhabitants of the village were victims of violence, since the skeletons did not bear traces of burial rites, and the flexed skeletons were buried in a hurry without grave goods.

The diversity of Chalcolithic culture in Northern Thrace prevents a detailed study within the framework of this paper. I will touch upon a few more elements.

Ore extraction and metallurgy are characteristic of the time (Černich 1978; Todorova 1986: 144-151). The main region, where oxide copper ores were exploited, is to the north of Stara Zagora. The most numerous ore vanes are recorded in Ai bunar. Their exploitation started in the Early Chalcolithic, probably as early as the beginning of the period. The ore was obtained by heating the rock with fire followed by a quick cooling with water; then the ore was extracted with stone hammers and bone tools. Traces from further processing of the ore are quite scarce; the remains of an Early Chalcolithic furnace for copper melting were found in the vicinity of Tell Okražhna Bolnitsa. The copper tools were cast in a mould and then finished by forging. Several stages are recognized in the copper production during the Chalcolithic: I - the production of small objects (pins, awls, beads, pendants); II - the production of



bigger copper tools with an unduly large amount of metal was incorporated in them (e. g. the wedge-shaped axes); III - the highly efficient production of tools made from a minimal amount of copper, and the increased variety of types (wedges, wedges-axes, hammer-axes, spear heads, awls, pins, chisels and ornaments); IV (the end of the Chalcolithic period) - this stage is characterized by the universalization of tool functions (e. g. the adze-axes appeared). The role of metallurgy in the development of Chalcolithic culture in Northern Thrace is extremely important, although it still needs to be investigated in greater depth.

Early Chalcolithic anthropomorphic figurine includes clay figures of the standing female body with the legs joined or slightly set apart, the arm and the face are quite schematic. Usually the upper part of the body is flat, with stump-like arms often decorated with incisions. The Jasatepe collection (Detev 1959: fig.75-78; Detev 1960: fig. 49) includes figurines with a rotund haunch, a slender waist, a rounded chest, and spherical head with a schematic face, made by two finger impressions. The legs are slightly set apart, and their lower part is conical and without feet. The vulva is marked in relief; the breasts are indicated by plastic knobs, sometimes a V-shaped "neckline" is incised; the place of the ears is sometimes marked by one or two perforations. The incised decoration consisted of parallel oblique or horizontal lines covering the lower part of the body; in some cases spirals were incised on the behind.

Another early Chalcolithic iconographic figurine type includes the rare seated female figure. The figurine from Tell Pazardzik (Höckmann 1968: Taf. 39) presents a woman, probably pregnant, sitting on a disk-like chair. The haunch and the shoulders are excessively wide. The breasts are small, and the back is modelled naturalistically. The legs are joined.

The hands are on the abdomen. The head is shaped as a lozenge with a schematic face. The figurine is covered with an incised decoration, emphasizing the breasts, the abdomen, and the haunch. The figurine is dressed, the neckline and the end of the dress are marked; the dress covers the knees but the pubic triangle is indicated by incisions. The figurine is interpreted as an image of the Mother Goddess.

Male clay figurines are quite rare in the Early Chalcolithic and are always fragmented. The face is modeled naturalistically to a certain extent and obviously bears portrait features; all anatomic face elements are presented, in most cases the ears have one or more often two sided perforations. The sophistication of social organization increased the ritual and mythological role of the tribal chieftain, and he probably gained priestly functions as well. It is obvious that two aspects of his activity were inseparable and probably reflected the belief that at a certain moment of the yearly cycle the tribal chieftain was also the husband of the Mother-Earth Goddess. For that reason, the male figurines can be regarded as portrait images of high-ranking representatives of the early farming community.

Early Chalcolithic culture includes some highly schematized anthropomorphic images as well. At least two flat clay figurines come from Tell Karanovo, presenting a highly stylized standing anthropomorphic figure with two legs and a head (Hiller, Nikolov 1993-1994, Abb. 10 e, f). The figurines are undecorated but the eyes and probably the navel are marked.

Late Chalcolithic standing female clay figurines are quite common (Nikolov 1988: 233-234). The body is modelled naturalistically (the haunch is slightly widened, the abdomen is big). The arms are stumps, and the head and face are schematic (the ears are sometimes marked by several side perforations, and there is a



row of dots below the mouth). Only a few figurines are either decorated with simple incised motives or the pubis is marked.

The female bust with schematic head and face, arm-stumps and a cylindrical body are quite typical for the Late Chalcolithic.

The seated Late Chalcolithic figurines are modeled separately from the four-legged chairs with a back. The body of the figurine is slightly bent backwards. The breasts, the hands on the abdomen, and the joined legs are modeled. These figurines are not decorated as a rule, but a figurine from Tell Djadovo is entirely covered with incised and encrusted decoration. The head of a figurine from Tell Dolnoslav is rounded, with a small "hat", and the hands are on the abdomen (Le premier or 1989: fig. 40). The figurine is covered with a cream slip, and the schematic face is painted with parallel horizontal red lines.

A special figurine from Tell Čatalka can be assigned to the seated figurines (Raduncheva 1976: Fig. 63). It is a schematized seated female figurine with stretched legs upon which is a small vessel; the arms hold the vessel, and the face is raised upwards. The figure of a small child is modeled on the back of the figurine. Seated female figurines with a vessel on their knees are ritually related to the rain invocation.

The standing marble figurines are typical for the Late Chalcolithic (Nikolov 1988: Abb. 60, 166, 167). The first iconographic type includes a schematized body emphasizing three main parts: head, breasts, and buttocks. The head is oval, sometimes with a small "hat" or laterally extending ears. The middle part of the body is lozenge-shaped, and the lower part is conical. The pubic triangle is also marked. The second iconographic type includes figurines that are more carefully

modeled. The head is oval, the face is presented in detail, and the ears have three or four perforations. The breasts are modeled more naturalistically, and the hands are on the abdomen. The lower part of the body is conical, and the feet are sometimes separated. The pubic triangle is marked by incisions.

A group of bone figurines in the Late Chalcolithic mirror the marble ones. These are the so-called flat bone figurines (idols) that have smaller dimensions and were probably worn as amulets (Nikolov 1988: Abb. 5). Some figurines have copper rings in the ear-perforations, a torque on the neck, a copper belt on the waist, and the lower part of the legs is covered by thin copper plates. The flat bone figurines are images of the Mother Goddess and were worn as amulets for fertility.

The Late Chalcolithic is characterized by a great variety of male figurines. The number of male figurine heads increases considerably. It is obvious that the function of male characters diversified in the Late Chalcolithic (Nikolov 1991). Unlike female images, male images represent portrait features (Raduncheva 1976: Fig. 73-77). The mouth is marked in almost all cases, and often there are some small shallow holes, which probably indicate a kind of decoration, characteristic for persons of high social rank. Female figurines, interpreted as images of the Mother Goddess also bear such decoration; obviously the represented male had the top role in her cult. There is an analogy between the same Mother Goddess's figurines and the perforations on most of the Late Chalcolithic male heads' ears. The eyes and the nose are modeled naturalistically, sometimes the eyebrows and the eyelashes are marked; some figurines are bearded and the hair is marked.

The appearance of scepters, the first specific symbols of the highest level of the social hierarchy is related to the soci-



al and ideological changes in the Late Chalcolithic. A zoomorphic scepter, made of antler was found at Tell Karanovo.

Tell Racev yielded two seated male figurines with arms stretched forward (Le premier or 1989: 20). The head of one of the figurines is preserved; the face is modeled rather naturalistically. Parts of a big standing male figurine were found at Tell Dolnoslav (Le premier or 1989: fig. 32, 34). The head is naturalistically modeled, the eyes are marked with pieces of shell, and the arms are stretched forward.

The hollow Late Chalcolithic anthropomorphic figurines could be divided into two groups: figurines with a body consisting of one piece and figurines with a movable head-lid. The first group is represented by the figurine from Tell Starozagorski bani, having very big dimensions and two faces looking in opposite directions (Nikolov 1988: Abb. 3). There is a schematic face on both sides with several side perforations, and arms folded at the abdomen. The legs are massive and separated. The double-faced figurine represents a male and a female in one body; there are breast on one of the "sides", and the figurine probably represents the idea of the indivisible responsibility of the Mother Goddess and the tribal chieftain for the fulfillment of the natural and the social cycle. There is a part missing in all figurines from the second group. A hollow male body with a modeled phallus was found at Tell Gabarevo (Nikolov 1988: Abb. 14). The left hand is on the abdomen, and the right one touches the phallus. The legs are short and massive. The figurine was obviously used in a ritual that included pouring liquid through the phallus-tubule. Most of the movable heads-lids have schematized features and represent males. The head from Tell Gabarevo is naturalistic; it is notable for the red-painted diadem on the forehead (Nikolov 1988: Abb. 68). The face of the head

from Tell Mihailovo is broad and oval with side-perforations at the ends and a relief nose, incised ellipsoid eyes, and finger-impressions below the nose.

One more group consisting of Late Chalcolithic female images should be added to the hollow anthropomorphic figurines (Georgiev 1961: Taf. XXVI, 6; Nikolov 1988: Abb. 173). They have a schematic elongated body, hollow stumps-arms in a gesture of adoration, schematized face, and the breasts are modeled occasionally. The face is marked by a relief nose, an incised mouth with a row of finger-impressions beneath, and side perforations indicating the ears. The Mother Goddess is probably pregnant, and the vertical incised bands on her body symbolize torrents of water. These figurines were probably elements related to the ritual of the rain invocation.

Flat clay loom weights with an incised sign or signs were found in Late Chalcolithic sites. Numerous weights from Tell Karanovo are marked with an incised hanging triangle lacking the base, sometimes with a short vertical stroke inside or with a lozenge with an inscribed cross. Both signs are female symbols. There are different signs on loom weights from other sites (e.g., a six-pointed figure reminiscent of a double axe but having additional knobs on a loom weight from Tell Starozagorski bani). The image could be interpreted as a bee or butterfly symbol related to the Mother Goddess. There are parallels of the specific sign on Late Chalcolithic figurines as well. The described signs impart anthropomorphic character to the loom weights and relate them to the Mother Goddess.

Late Chalcolithic sites yielded a great number of special type of bone figurines. They are made of metapodic bones and reminds one of a schematized standing human body. There are one or two side perforations at the upper end (the



"ears"). The figurines were probably worn as amulets.

There are also relatively big T-shaped anthropomorphic figurines made of bone (Nikolov 1988: Abb. 170). Their upper part (the head) is widened, the middle part (the neck) is narrow, and the lower part (the body) is bell-shaped. There are perforations for copper rings (at the "head") and attachment for clothes (at the "body").

The number of zoomorphic vessels in the Late Chalcolithic increases. There is also a change in the design of their modeling. Sometimes the upper part of the head is a movable lid, and sometimes the head-lid, covering the mouth of the vessel is missing (or probably has never existed). A Late Chalcolithic bull-shaped vessel, was found at Tell Cyrilovo; the animal is standing on its legs, the mouth of the vessel is on the forehead. Both sides of the body are decorated. The Tell Karanovo Late Chalcolithic deposits yielded a vessel shaped as an animal of unknown species (Georgiev 1961: Taf. XXXII, 5). The vessel is almost rectangular with four short legs. The nose and the eyes are modeled in relief on the head-lid. The back part of the head, the neck, and the body are decorated. The last group of vessels represents standing four-legged animals and includes the images of a hedgehog (Nikolov 1988: Abb. 8). There are several vessels of this kind. The body is rounded and densely covered with conical knobs. The modelled neck ends with an opening. These vessels probably have not had a lid shaped as a head. Bird-shaped vessels are relatively rare. A Late Chalcolithic vessel from Tell Sadievo probably represents a partridge (Nikolov 1988: Abb. 175); it has a short cylindrical neck but probably never had a head-lid. Another Late Chalcolithic vessel (from Tell Rumanya) is a schematized image of a water bird (Nikolov 1988: Abb. 47). The body is shaped as a symmetrical bowl

with an immovable lid and there is a side cylindrical relatively long neck without a head-lid.

The zoomorphic vessels also include two Late Chalcolithic "rhytons" shaped as a bull horn (Nikolov 1988: Abb. 80). They have an arched handle connecting the two ends of the vessel and are decorated with red painted rings. The two vessels were found at Tell Starozagorski bani.

A vessel with a zoomorphic body on four massive legs, a head with an opening at the top and a wide anthropomorphic face was found in the Late Chalcolithic layer of Tell Okrzehna Bolnitsa. The mouth is modeled as a spout, the nose is in relief and the ears have perforations for copper rings; the ellipsoid eyes are painted in graphite, and the pupils are marked with dots. The body of the vessel is decorated with complicated graphite painted motifs.

Early Chalcolithic altars have three or four legs, an inscribed receptacle, and zoomorphic elements - such as a protome of a ram or he-goat - attached to the rim of the receptacle (Detev 1959: fig. 82; Georgiev 1961: Taf. XX). Decoration on the out side is incised and often filled with white matter. There are also short four-legged altars with flat upper surfaces (shaped as tables).

The rectangular four-legged altars with flat upper surfaces are very typical for the Late Chalcolithic; two elongated bow-shapes eyes are incised on one of the long sides. The Late Chalcolithic figurines of the Mother Goddess often have eyes with the same shape and reconfirms the relation between these objects and the cult of the Goddess.

There are Early Chalcolithic three-legged tripods with shallow receptacles and an anthropo-zoomorphic head attached to one of the corners.



Chalcolithic clay models of houses present two main house types: a hut and a house with vertical walls and gabled roof. Depending on the dimensions, they are either hollow or have a round opening. Various architectural elements are sometimes modeled in relief, (e.g., the crossing beams forming the gable). Incised lines on the roof and the walls also mark some of the construction features. The models are likely related to the cult of the house-spirit protector, who obviously was imagined as a snake.

Oven models are typical for the Chalcolithic, especially in its later stages. They usually have a horseshoe-shape and a small platform in front of the entrance. The dome of the oven is rounded and sometimes decorated with incised lines.

Sanctuaries appear in the Chalcolithic, inclusively at some sites. Fragments of walls with a complex polychrome decoration were found at Tell Karanovo and Tell Azmak. Buildings with ritual functions were unearthed also at Tell Dolnoslav; a relief face with painted elements was found on the wall of a building. A Late Chalcolithic clay model of a sanctuary from Tell Starozagorski bani (Nikolov 1988: Abb. 17) is represented on a high hollow podium, and the "sanctuary complex" consists of a building with a gabled roof flanked by two high hollow columns widening as funnels at the top. Small clay altars were found at Late Chalcolithic sites; they are shaped as the gabled façade of a building, probably a sanctuary. Images are incised usually on both sides. Anthropomorphic protectors are modeled on an artifact from Tell Sadievo. These small altars are probably sanctuaries in miniature.

Stamped seals are not very common in Chalcolithic deposits (Makkay 1984: 13, 22, 30-31, 44). They have rounded faces and a conical handle. The images incised on the face belong to the two main

types: a spiral or concentric circles. The signs incised on the face of a big Late Chalcolithic stamp seal from Tell Karanovo (Nikolov 1988, Abb. 181) were interpreted years ago as the oldest form of writing. They are separated in four sectors by two lines crossing each other at a right angle.

## Discussion

The culture of the Neolithic and the Chalcolithic of Northern Thrace has been presented with a minimal amount of interpretation. The available evidence and the observations could be used to study the cultural phenomena and historical processes in Thrace and the vast regions of Anatolia and the Southeastern Europe. Even a short exposé on these aspects requires a special study, that is why I am going to comment on few that I consider most topical.

1. The late prehistoric period in Northern Thrace has fixed time limits: it starts with the establishment of the first sites with pottery and smoothed stone tools and ends with the late graphite painted pottery; according to the calibrated  $^{14}\text{C}$  dates it lasts at least two thousand years and covered the 6th and the 5th millennium. This period is subdivided archaeologically into the Neolithic and Chalcolithic periods. The criteria for the beginning of the Chalcolithic are derived from the pottery assemblage, i.e., the appearance of graphite painted pottery reflecting the emergence of copper metallurgy. The inner sequence and chronology of the two periods, proposed by specialists, are based on specific features of the pottery assemblage; a final version was used in this study. In the mid 80's, J. Lichardus proposed a sequence and chronology of the late prehistory in Northern Thrace, and according to his system, the Chalcolithic period includes the Karanovo VI period only (Lichardus, J., Lichardus-Itten, M., Bailloud, G., Cauvin, J. 1985: 367-



412). The relevant criteria however are not sought in the excavated evidence but are formulated on the basis of interpretation. With this cultural and historical sequence, J. Lichardus is trying to relate Northern Thrace to the Middle European model, but in fact emphasizes the differences with the Near Eastern model, which is valid for Northern Thrace. The correct methodological approach requires evidence from excavation to build chronology. The picture is complicated and what is needed is the creation of an overall concept for the sequence and the chronology of the late prehistory of the Southeast Europe.

However, the essential question about the sequence and chronology of Northern Thrace is still open. The difference between the two stages within the Chalcolithic seems to be in conformity with the facts from a methodological point of view, but specifying the criteria for the study of the Thracian pottery will provide a detailed and working subdivision.

2. The problem of continuity and discontinuity in the development of the late prehistory of Northern Thrace has been discussed many times in various publications. Almost no one doubts that there is a considerable continuity in the Neolithic and the Chalcolithic assemblages in the region. On the other hand, the assumption of two thousand-years of development without external contact seems quite illogical. There is evidence of foreign elements in the assemblages of Northern Thrace, which could be interpreted as the result of a foreign influences or an infiltration of groups from neighbouring regions. Despite this, serious demographic changes have not been demonstrated.

The only study that addresses this problem is based on the Neolithic pottery from Tell Karanovo (Nikolov 1998a: 154-161). The study supports the idea of continuous dynamic development of artifac-

tual assemblages in northeastern parts of Northern Thrace with the permanent emergence of new signs and the gradual dying out of old ones. The existing continuity is beyond any doubt but is accompanied by more or less expressive innovations. A more notable change is observed at the transition between the Karanovo I and Karanovo II periods, when the admixtures in the paste change, and the red slipped and painted pottery disappear as a technological group. All other elements, however, continue to exist unchanged.

At least four transformations of the Neolithic assemblages could be differentiated in Northern Thrace (see the sequence of the Neolithic and the territorial range of the Neolithic periods). The Karanovo variant with six stages of development is characteristic in the northeastern parts of the Thrace. The Kazanlık variant has four stages of development. The Kapitan Dimitriev variant has four stages of development and covers the western part of Northern Thrace. A variant with three stages of transformation ought to exist in the Eastern Rhodope area, but not enough evidence exists to say for sure.

3. There is no doubt that the origin of early Neolithic cultures with painted pottery in the central parts of the Balkans arrived from the South and especially from South-West Anatolia. Important evidence supporting such a thesis comes not only from the indisputable typological similarities between assemblages but the geographical link connecting the two regions, forming an enormous arch that linked the Aegean islands from the Taurus to the Carpathian basin. Two other neighboring regions - North and especially North-West Anatolia and the eastern parts of the Balkan peninsula (up to Moldavia) - remain between this "exterior" arch and the Black Sea; in contrast with the "exterior" arch, the early Neolithic



culture in the "interior" arch is characterized by dark unpainted (with few exceptions) pottery.

A number of arguments, presented in the last two decades, support the Mesta and especially the Struma valleys as routes for the distribution of Anatolian elements into the Central Balkan area (Nikolov 1989a). An assumption was made that the Early Neolithic culture in Northern Thrace penetrated through the central Balkan zone (Nikolov 1989b: 29-30). Part of the Hoca Çeşme site situated on the Maritsa estuary was excavated (Özdoğan 1993: 182-186): the results from the excavations stirred interest in the old thesis that the origin of the Neolithic in Thrace (and in the South-East Europe as well) is a result of a cultural interaction with Anatolia via the Straits.

According to the Hoca Çeşme evidence, a small group of early Neolithic farmers, bearers of a specific culture, quite different from the Thracian one, settled on the Aegean coast of Eastern Thrace, near the Maritsa estuary in the early 6th century BC. There is no doubt that this group came from the western Anatolian coast (Özdoğan 1998). As early as its establishment, though situated on a hill, the village of the Anatolian settlers was surrounded by a massive stone wall. The first two village development phases yielded small round houses, with walls of stone or stone and timber construction. The vessels have flat bases, orange-red or black slipped, and are undecorated. The plan and the character of the village changed during the third phase, though the stone enclosure wall was still in use. The houses were similar to the ones in the Thracian inland - rectangular in plan with walls made of wattle-and-daub. Red slipped and white painted vessels - typical for the Thracian inland - appear.

The Hoca Çeşme assemblage has also been found at the eponymous site at the Maritsa estuary in Thrace. Only one site

dating to the first half of the 6th Millennium - Yarımburgaz cave near Istanbul - was excavated in Eastern Thrace (Özdoğan, Miyake, Özbaşaran Dede 1991: 66-74). It was inhabited by an early farming group, belonging to the Fikirtepe culture from Northwestern Anatolia. Elements of Hoca Çeşme influence are only observed in pottery technology (e.g., specific colours and burnishing). The nearest sites of Karanovo I culture to Hoca Çeşme are the ones in Krumovgrad and Kardjali in the East Rhodope area. Two sherds similar to the ones from the Hoca Çeşme phases I and II were found at Krumovgrad (Stefanova 1998: fig. 2 2,3). The head of a female clay figurine of an Anatolian type was found in Makri, Western Thrace, near the Maritsa estuary (Efstratiou 1993: fig. 10 C). The find has no reliable stratigraphic position but could be related chronologically to the Makri I layer, contemporary with the late stages of Karanovo I culture. For the present, there is no other evidence supporting a probable distribution of Anatolian characteristics in Thrace.

The assumption of a migration route from Anatolia to Europe via the Straits and Thrace was made several decades ago. In the 80's and 90's, evidence supporting the idea of a stream of people flowing from Anatolia via the Aegean to the Central Balkan zone was revealed, but another thesis was proposed, namely the one for the distribution of early farming Karanovo I culture in Thrace moving from west to east, i.e. from the Upper Maritsa valley to the Maritsa estuary (Nikolov 1989b: 29-30). The results from the archeological excavations in Eastern Thrace in the 80's and especially at Hoca Çeşme in the early 90's definitely rejected the thesis for large-scale migrations of early farming groups via the Straits in the early 6th millennium BC. The founders and the inhabitants of Hoca Çeşme were settlers from Western Anatolia who settled down on the uninhabited Aegean



coast but obviously met the hostile neighbourhood of the Karanovo I culture. To provide for the security of their people they had to erect and keep in repair a stonewall enclosure, an unfamiliar phenomenon in Thrace until the Early Bronze age. Nevertheless, in Hoca Çeşme phase III, the assemblage was "thracianized" to a considerable extent, i.e., it adopted many characteristics of the surrounding Karanovo I culture, and later on the Anatolian settlers were obviously entirely assimilated.

The painted Early Neolithic pottery is distributed from west to east in Thrace and reaches the Lower Tundza and Maritsa valleys (in some cases even further east) with a certain delay in comparison

to the Central Balkan zone. For that reason, the duration of the painted pottery period in Northern Thrace varies in the different parts of the area: it is longest in the western provinces, and shortest in the northeast. The painted Early Neolithic pottery dies out gradually, but in the opposite direction, from east to west. The dark Neolithic pottery appears first and has its longest life in the northeastern parts of Northern Thrace, and its shortest life in the west. The origin of the dark unpainted pottery must be sought in the "interior" arch mentioned above, i. e. in the so-called Circumpontic zone (Nikolov 1998b). The gradual distribution of this pottery in Northern Thrace is not related, however, to ethnic and demographic changes<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> The text was translated in English by Tatiana Stefanova (Archaeological Institute with Museum-Sofia), to whom I am deeply indebted. For certain number of the colour photos I am obliged to the friendly help of Nikolai Genov, the rest were made by the author (3-5, 10, 14, 18, 34). The drawings are made by J. Kostova (art assistant in the Archaeological Institute with Museum-Sofia in the 60-s) (plates 1-3, 10-12, 14, 17, 19-21, 23), Austrian students at the Salzburg University, participating in the Bulgarian-Austrian team excavating tell Karanovo (plates 4-9, 15, 16, 18), by S. Goshev (plate 13), N. Vassileva (plate 22) and G. I. Georgiev (plate 24).



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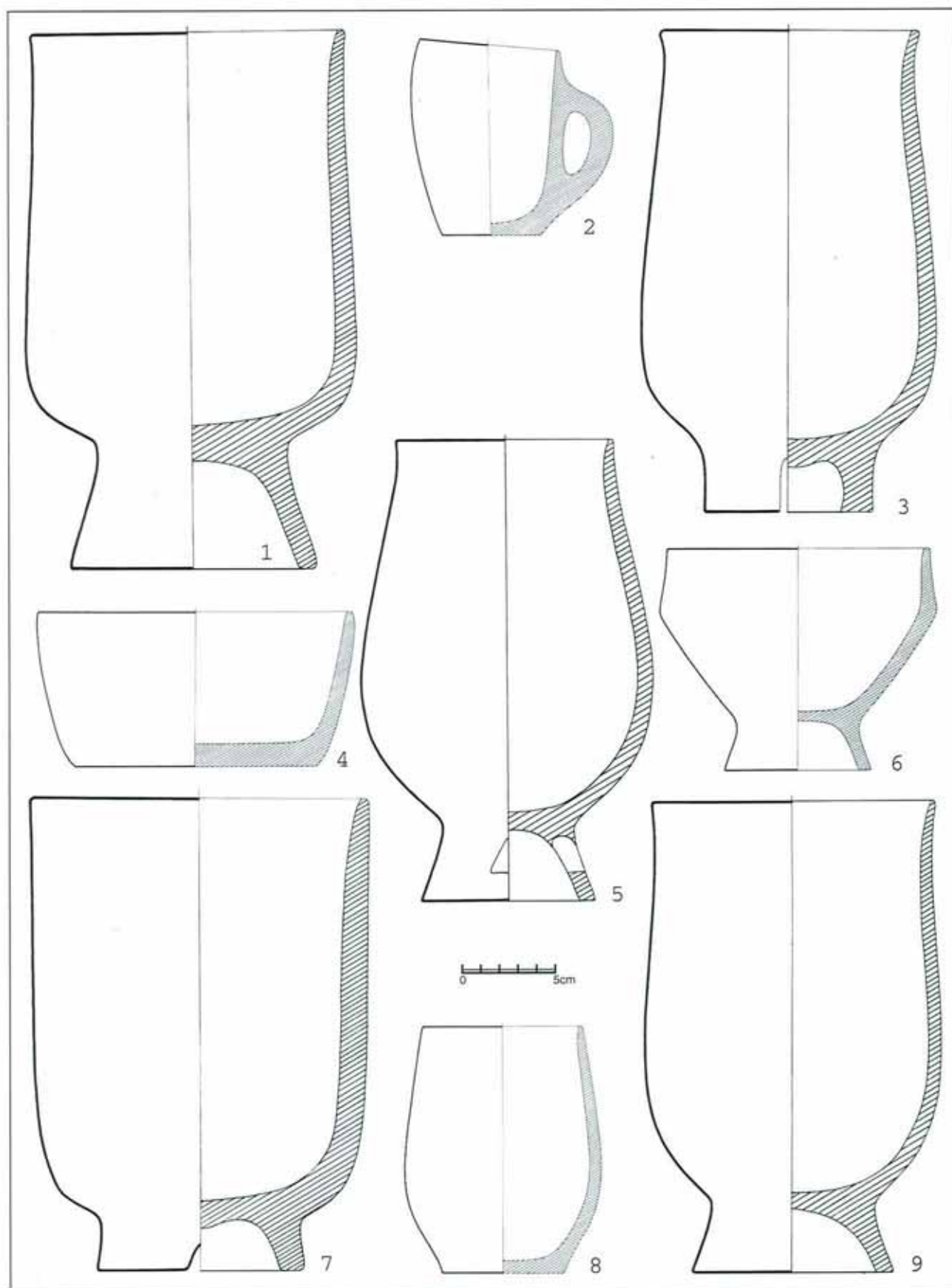


Plate 1. Tell Karanovo, Nova Zagora region. Pottery. Early Neolithic.



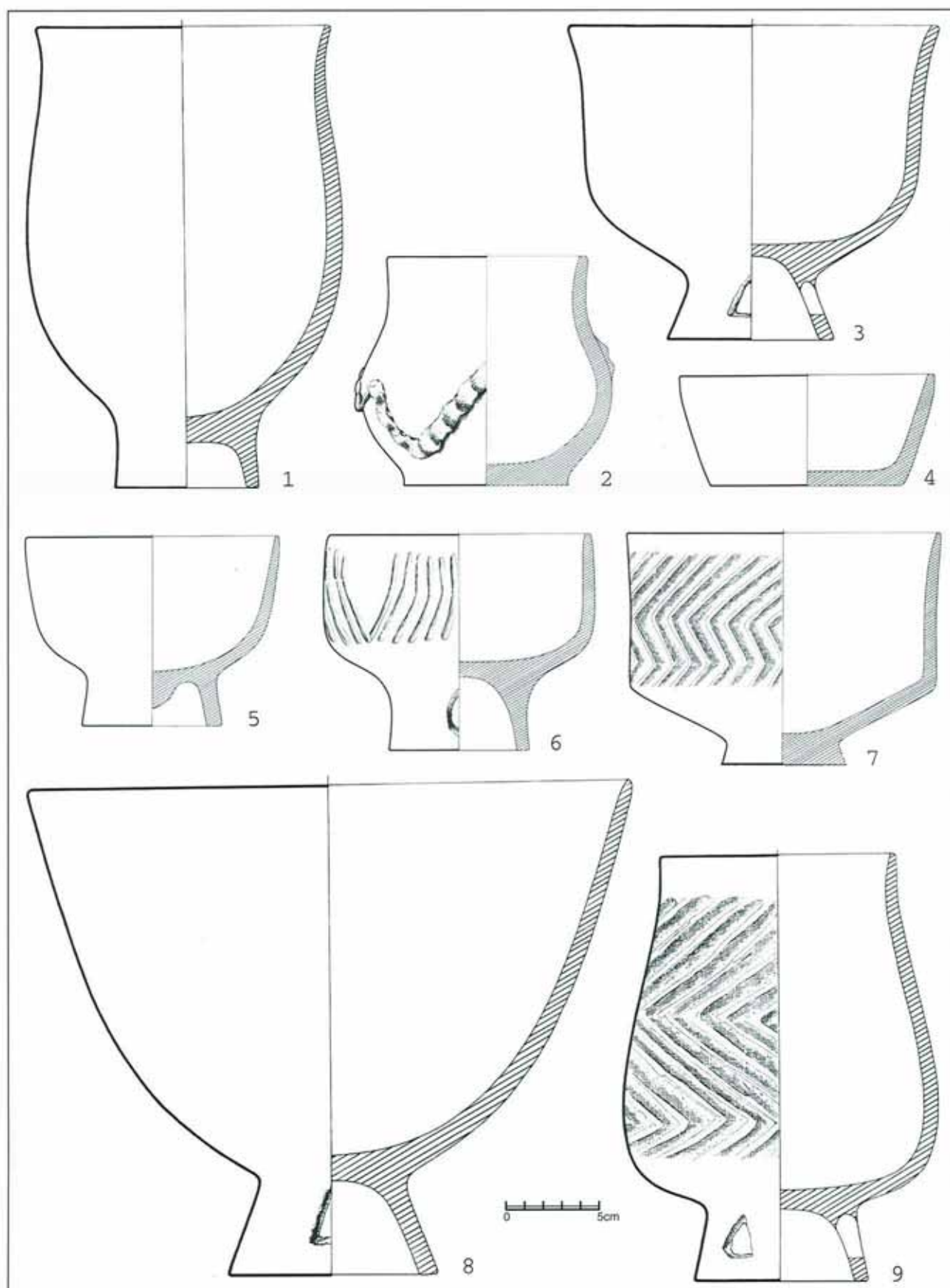


Plate 2. Tell Karanovo, Nova Zagora region. Pottery. Early Neolithic.



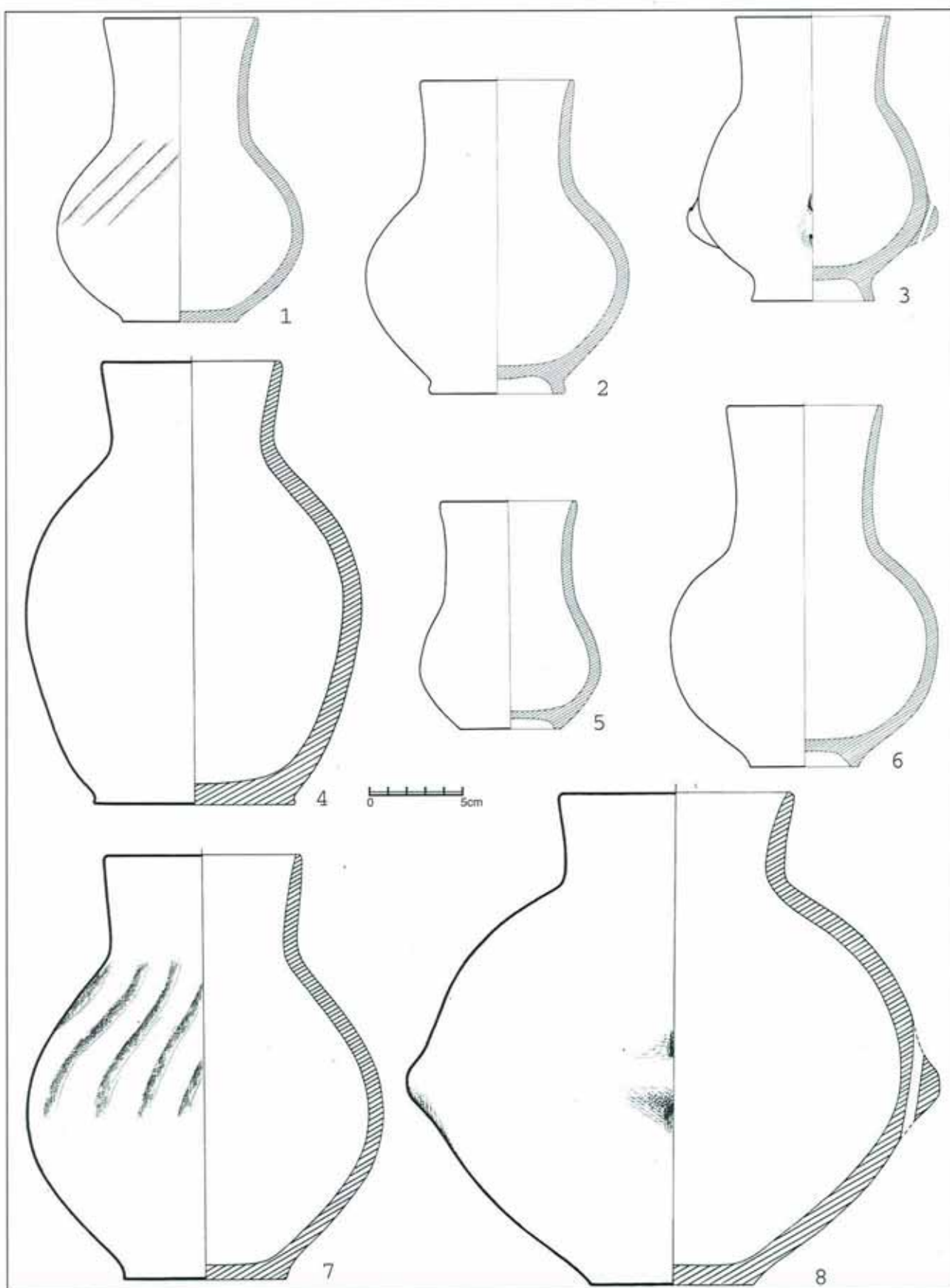


Plate 3. Tell Karanovo, Nova Zagora region. Pottery. Early Neolithic.



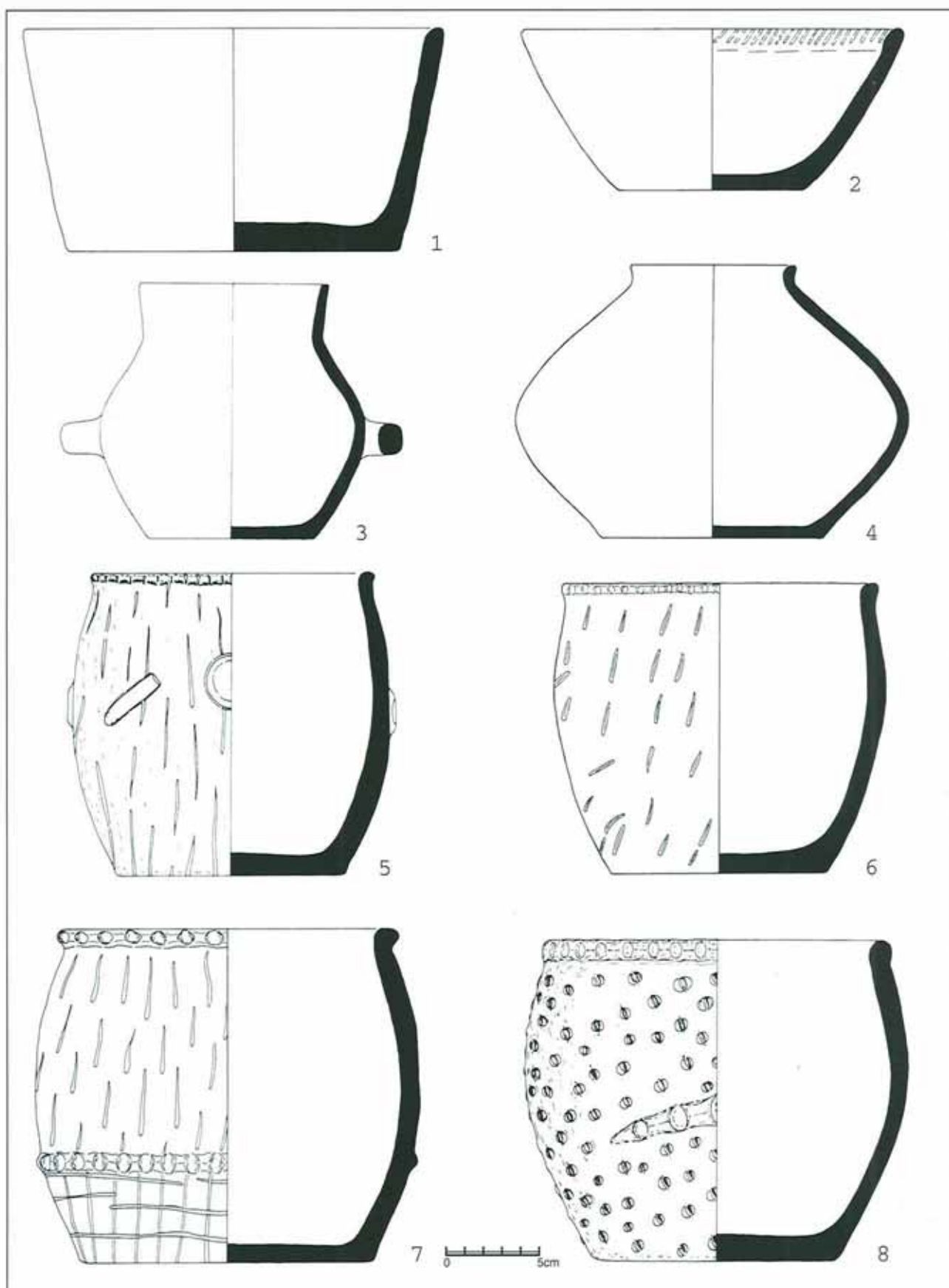


Plate 4. Tell Karanovo, Nova Zagora region. Pottery. Late Neolithic.



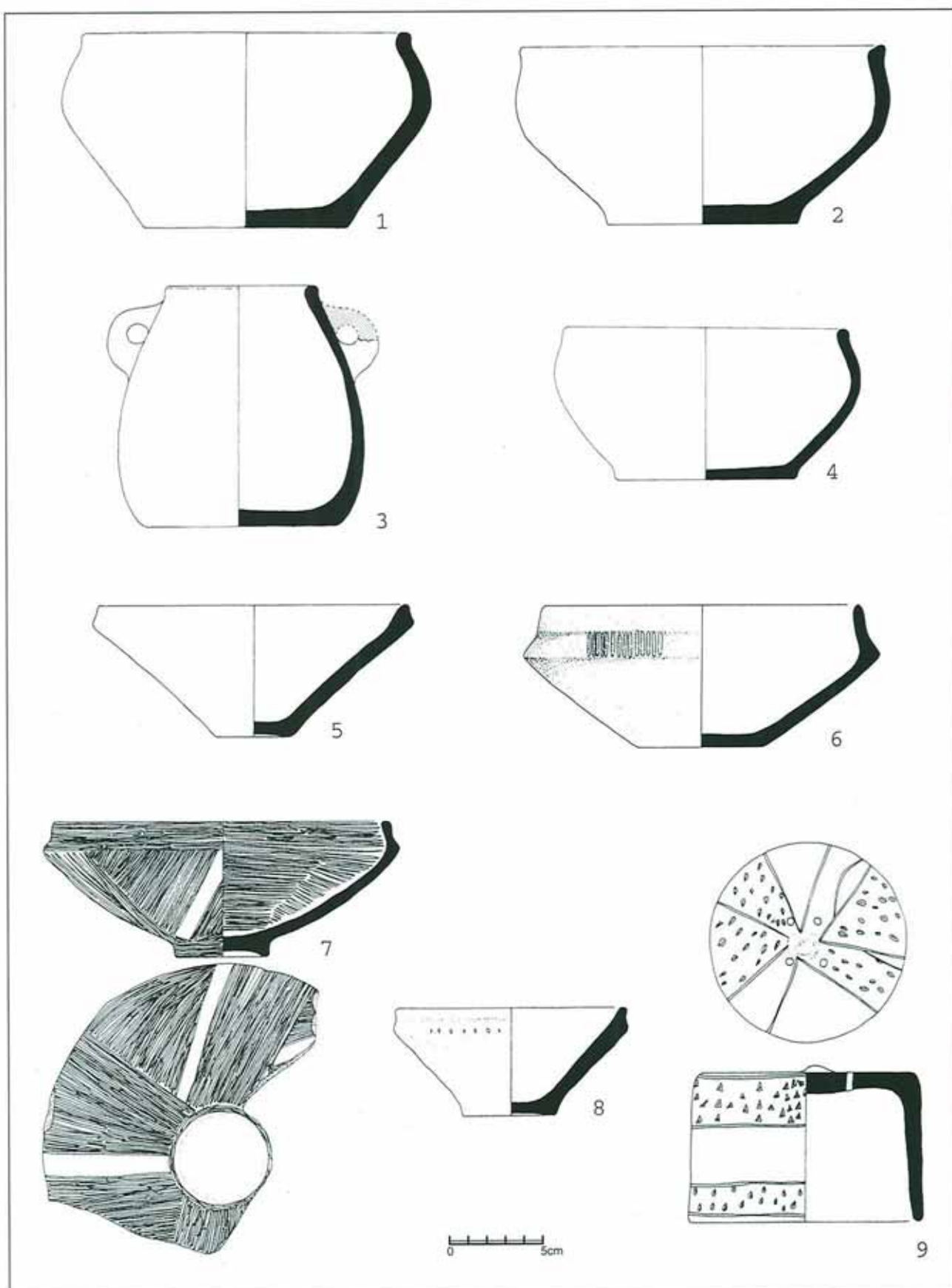


Plate 5. Tell Karanovo, Nova Zagora region. Pottery. Late Neolithic.



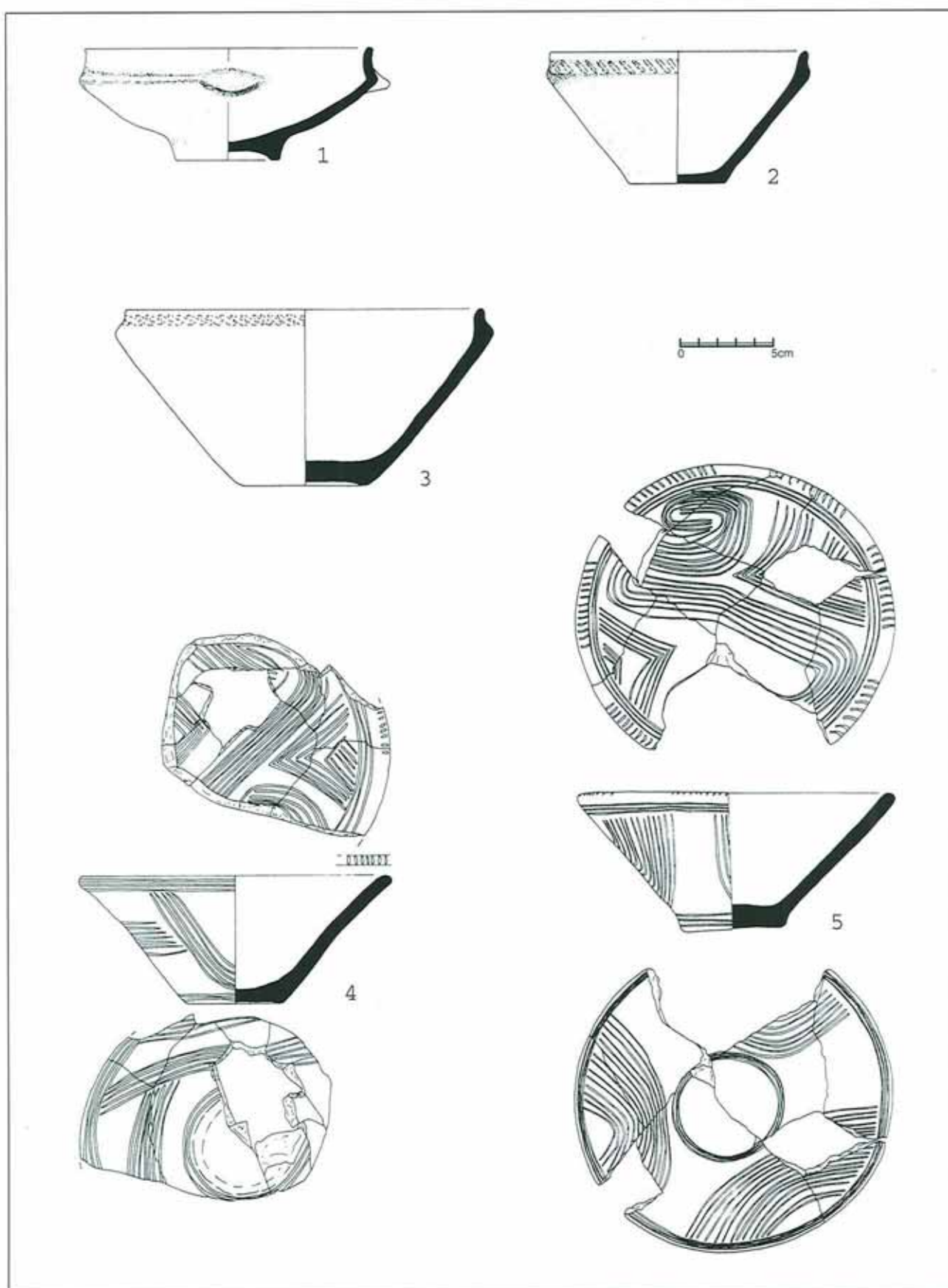


Plate 6. Tell Karanovo, Nova Zagora region. Pottery. Late Neolithic.



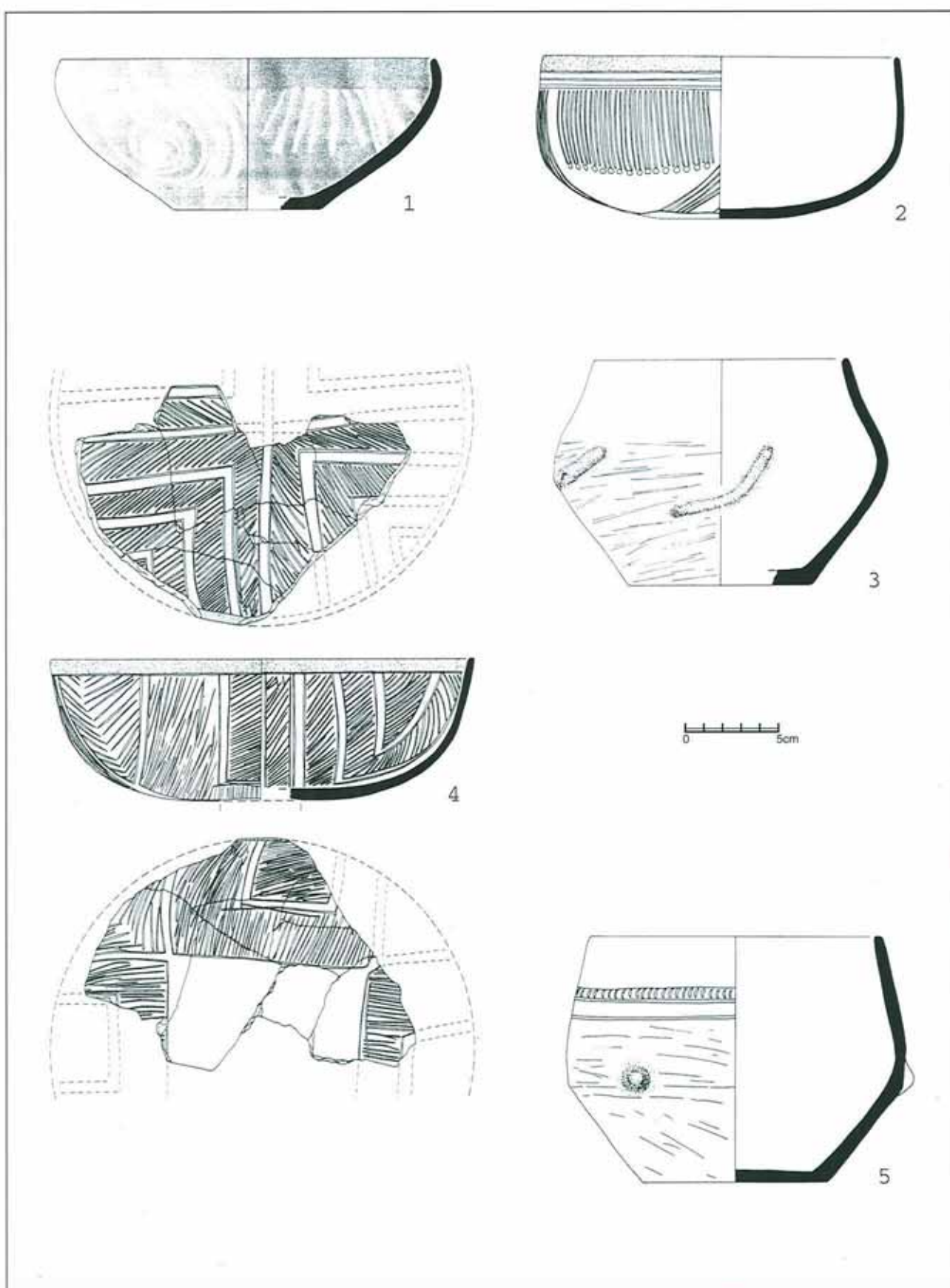


Plate 7. Tell Karanovo, Nova Zagora region. Pottery. Early Chalcolithic.



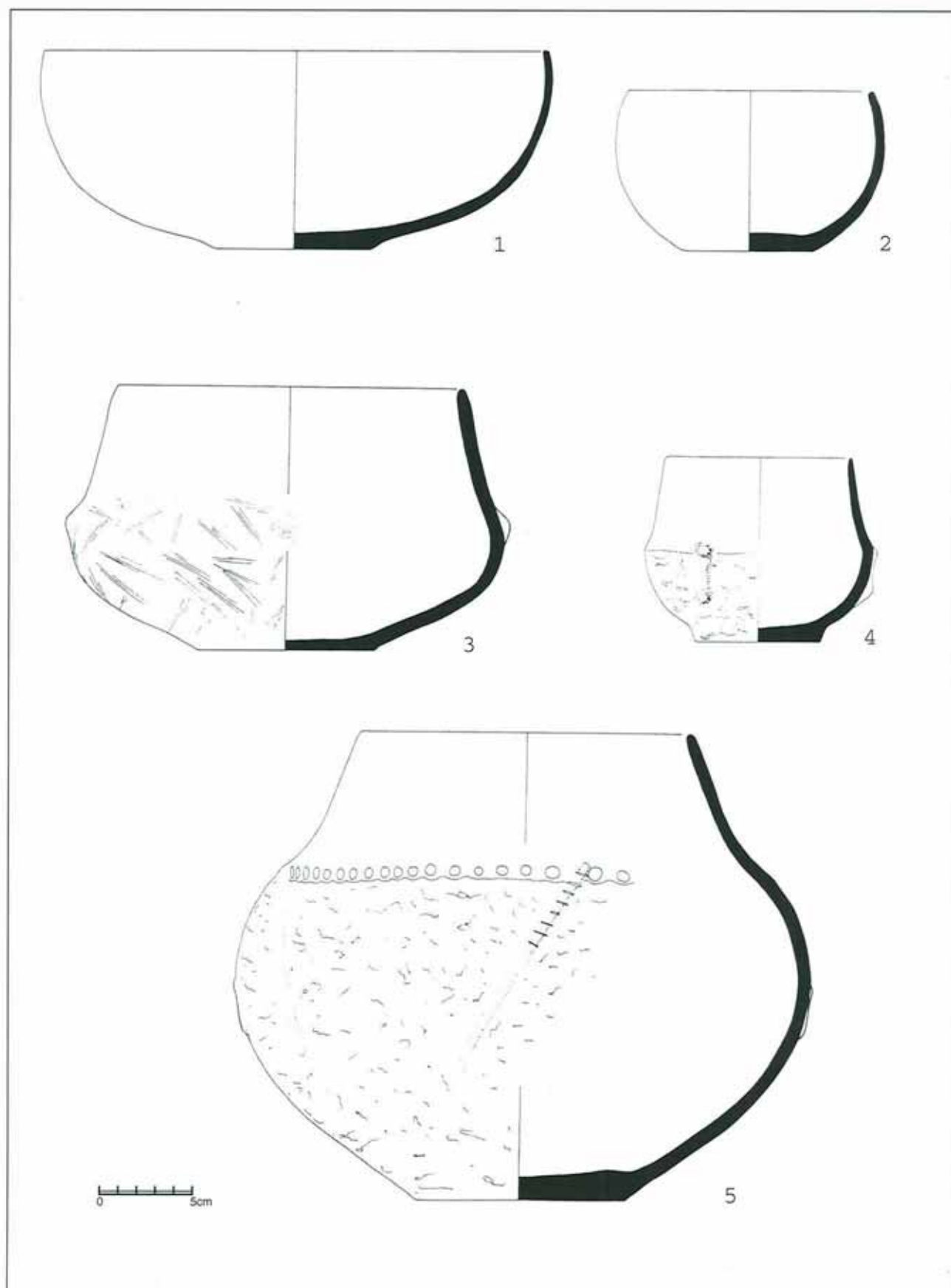


Plate 8. Tell Karanovo, Nova Zagora region. Pottery. Early Chalcolithic.



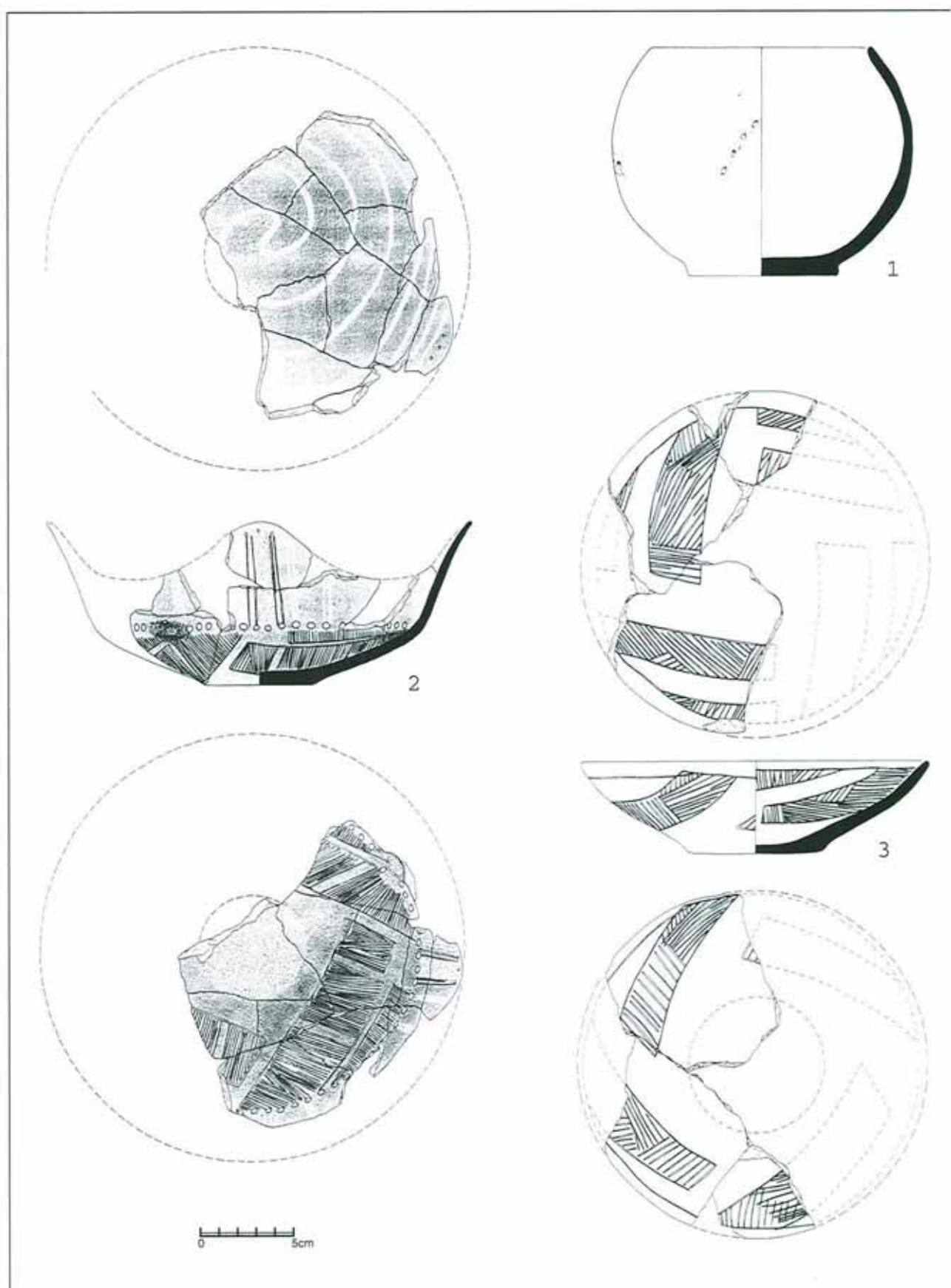


Plate 9. Tell Karanovo, Nova Zagora region. Pottery. Early Chalcolithic.



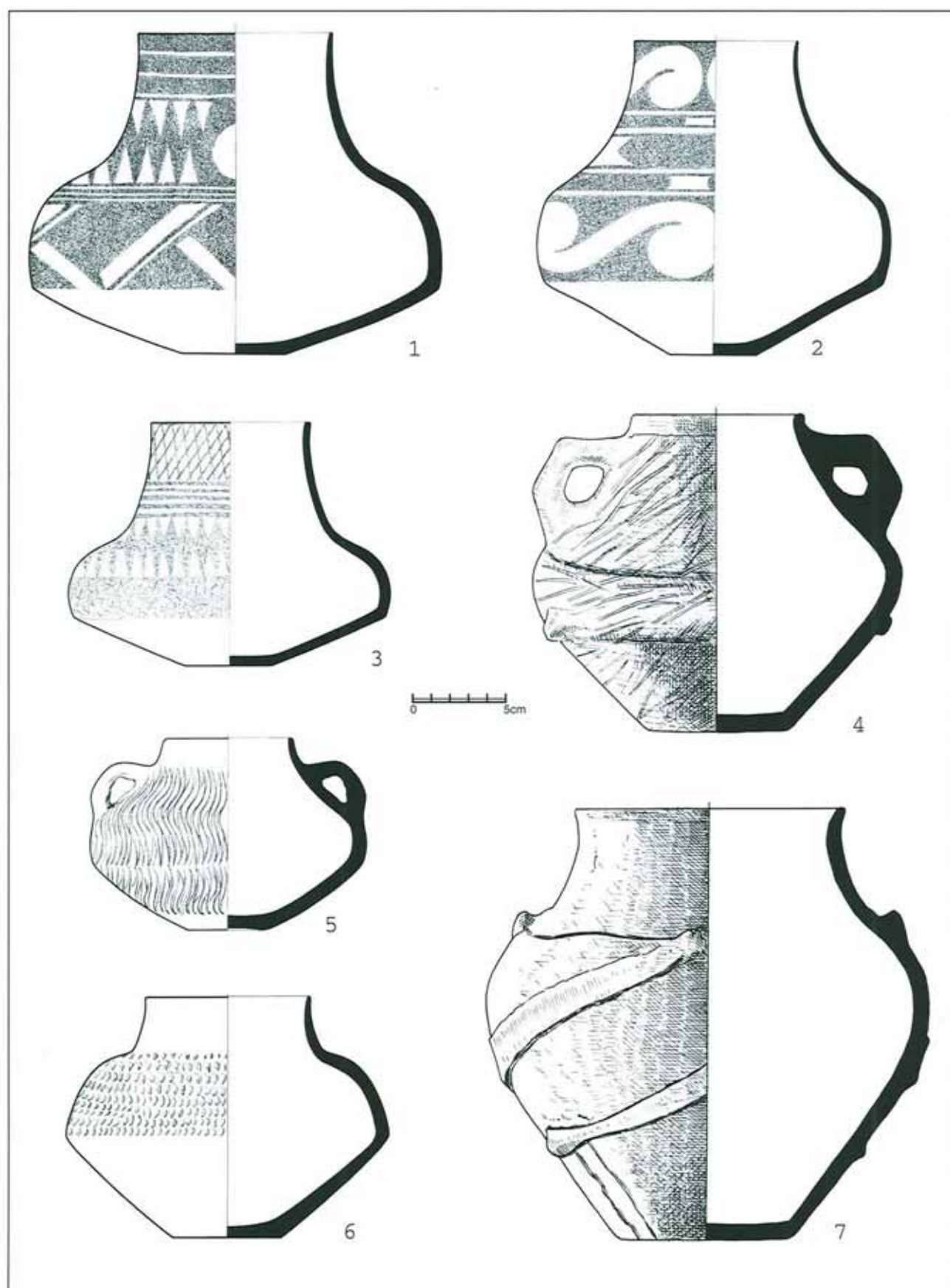


Plate 10. Tell Karanovo, Nova Zagora region. Pottery. Late Chalcolithic.



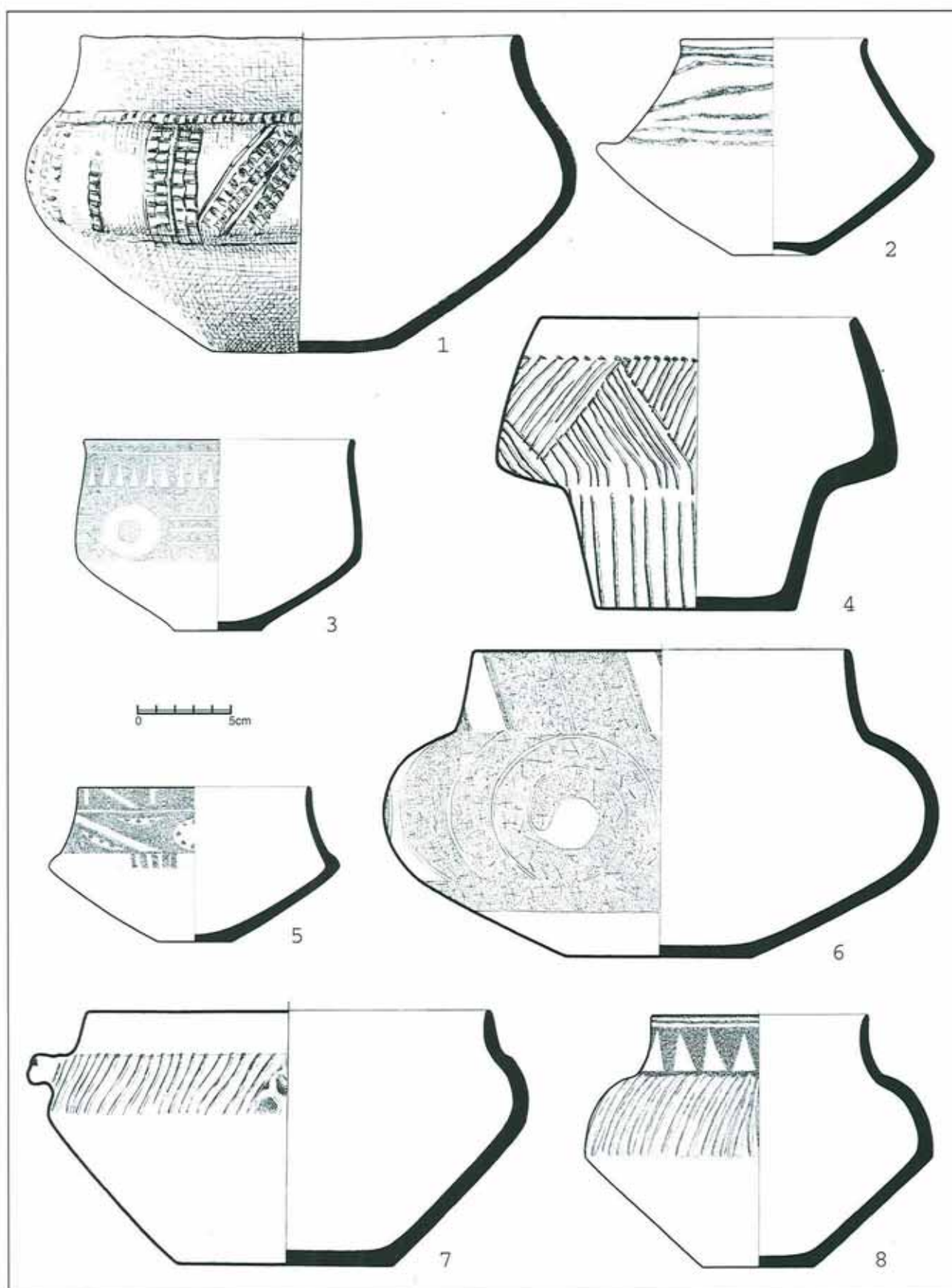


Plate 11. Tell Karanovo, Nova Zagora region. Pottery. Late Chalcolithic.



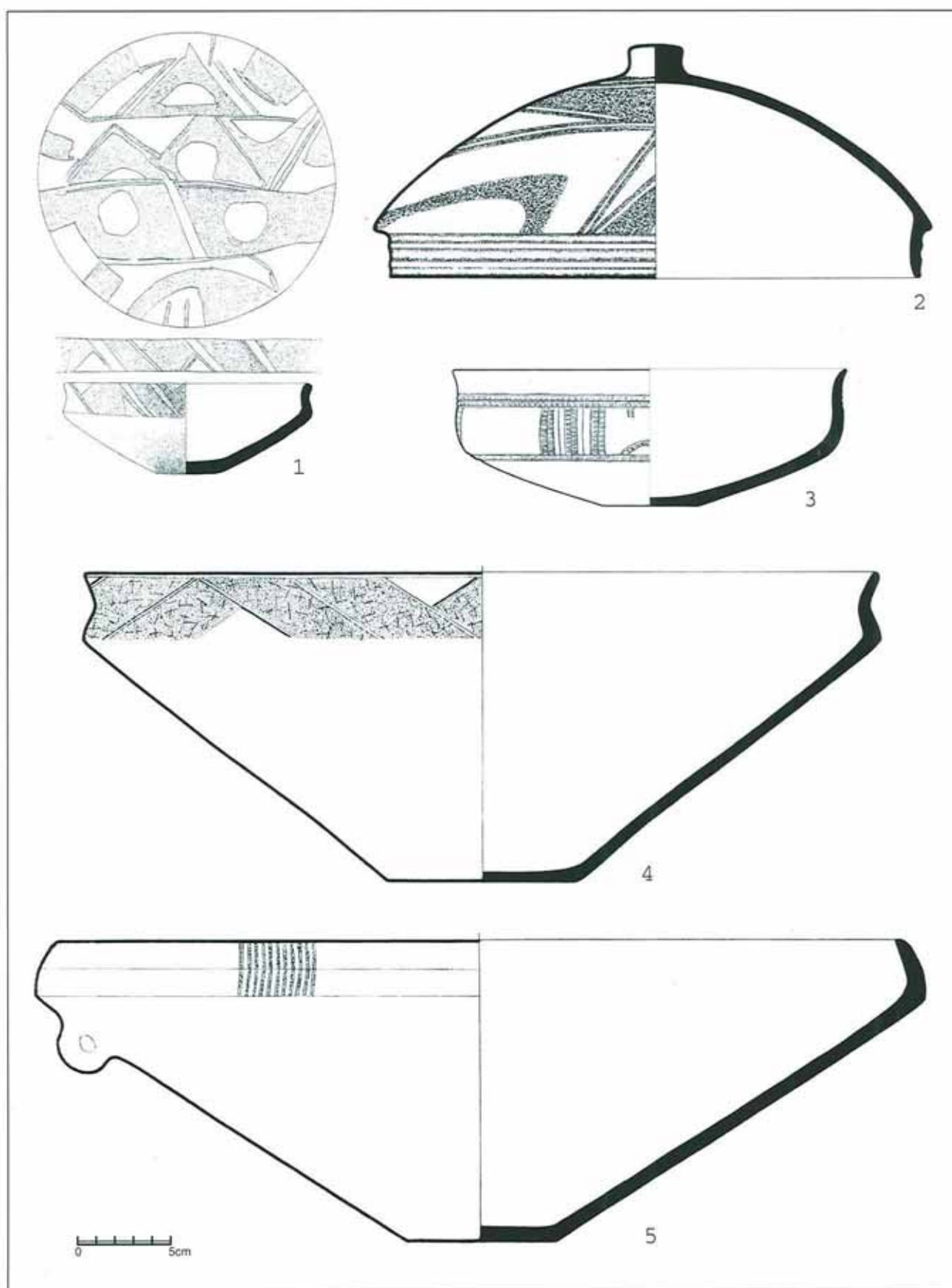


Plate 12. Tell Karanovo, Nova Zagora region. Pottery. Late Chalcolithic.



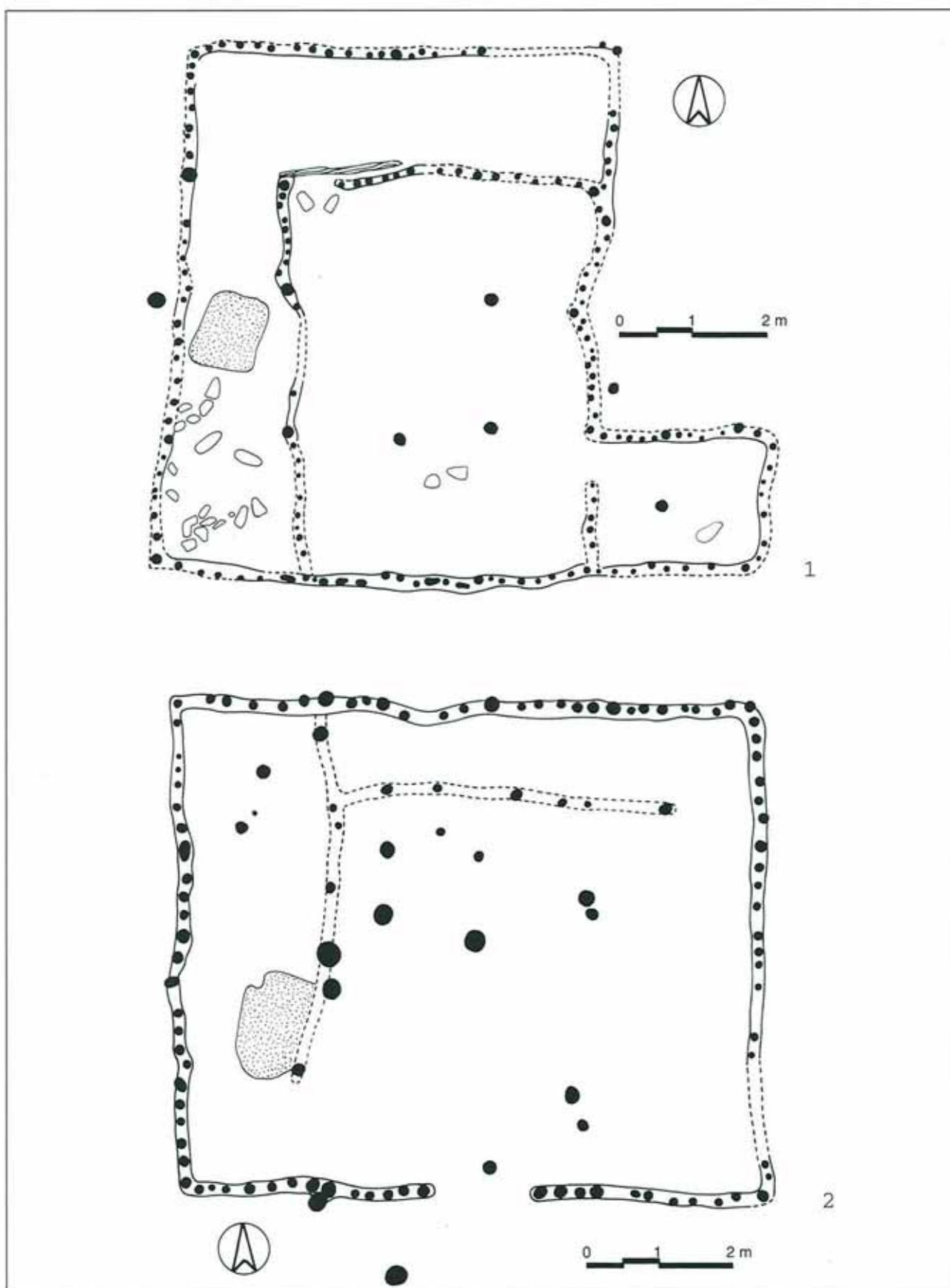


Plate 13. Tell Karanovo, Nova Zagora region. Plans of two houses. Late Neolithic.



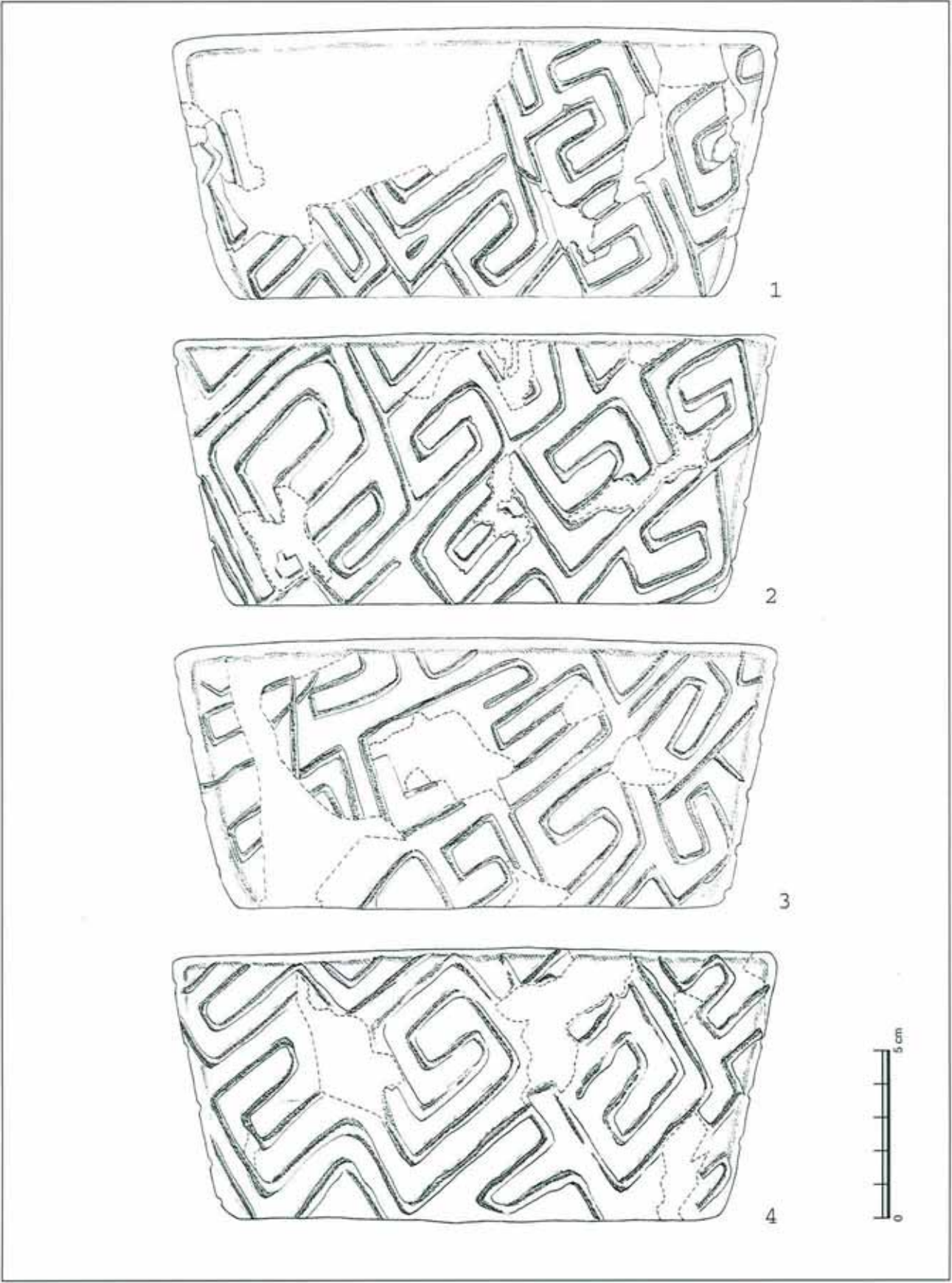


Plate 14. Tell Karanovo, Nova Zagora region. Ornamentation on a square pot. Early Neolithic.



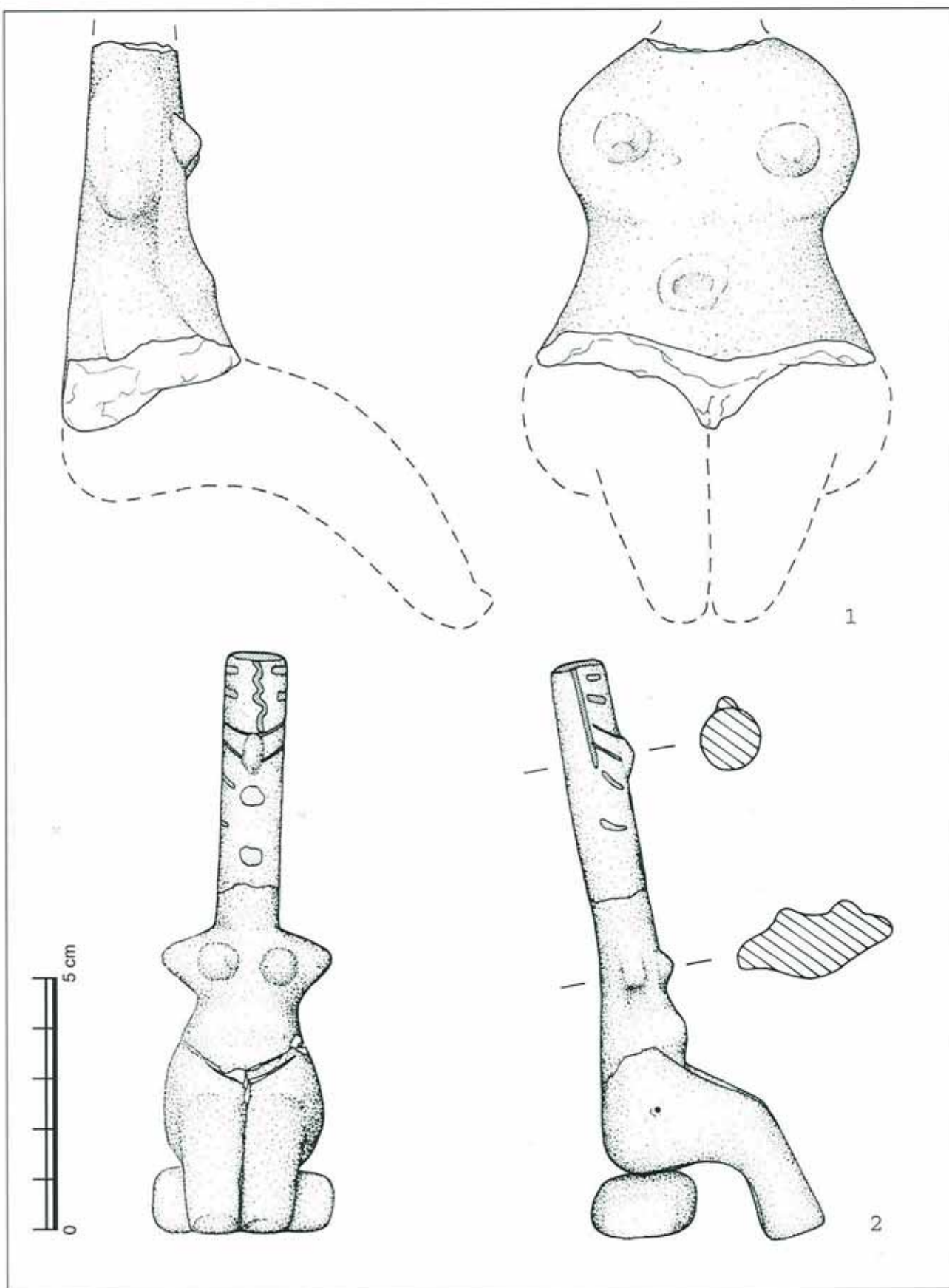


Plate 15. Tell Karanovo, Nova Zagora region. Anthropomorphic clay figurines. Late Neolithic.



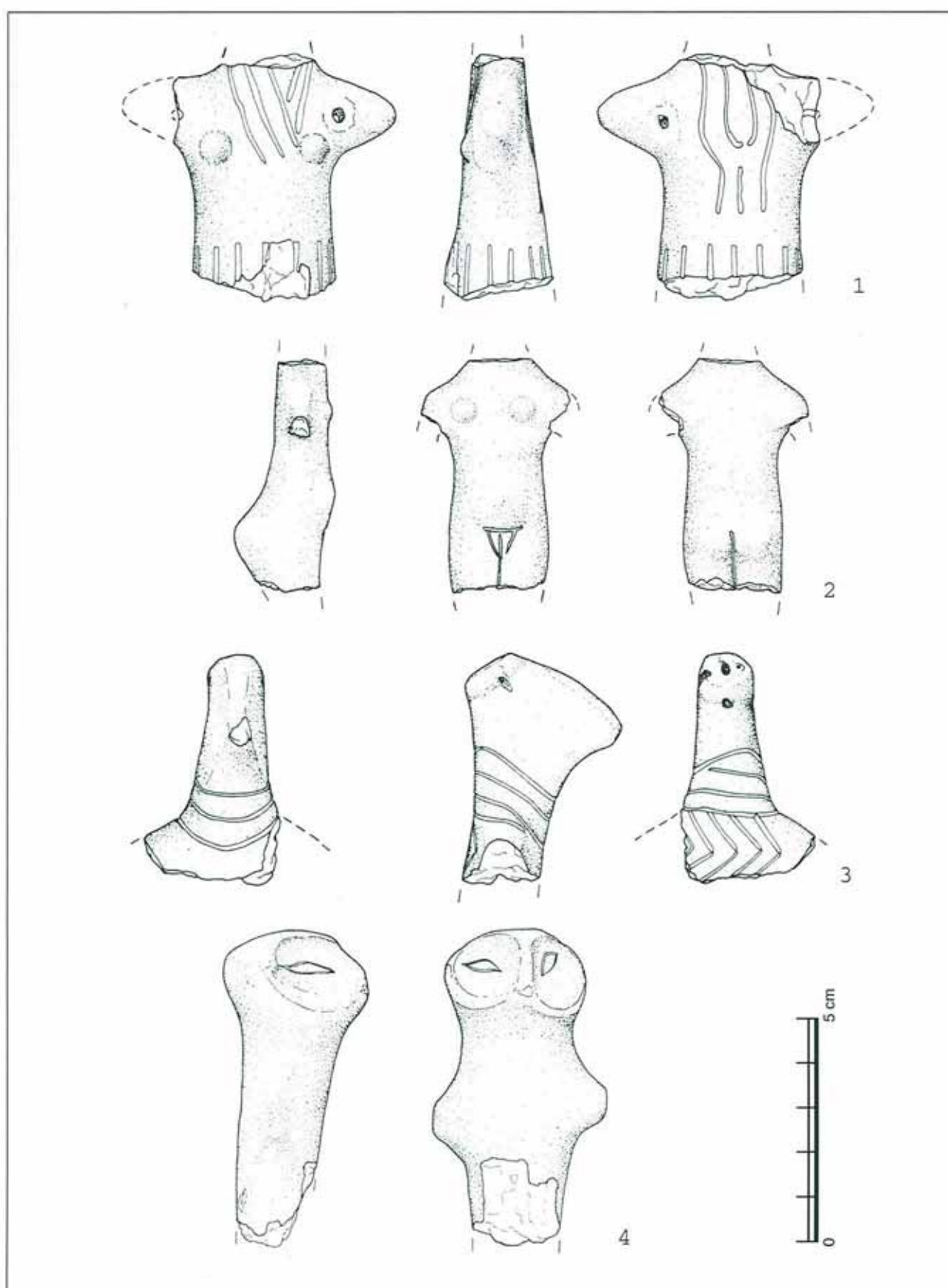


Plate 16. Tell Karanovo, Nova Zagora region. Anthropomorphic clay figurines. Late Neolithic.

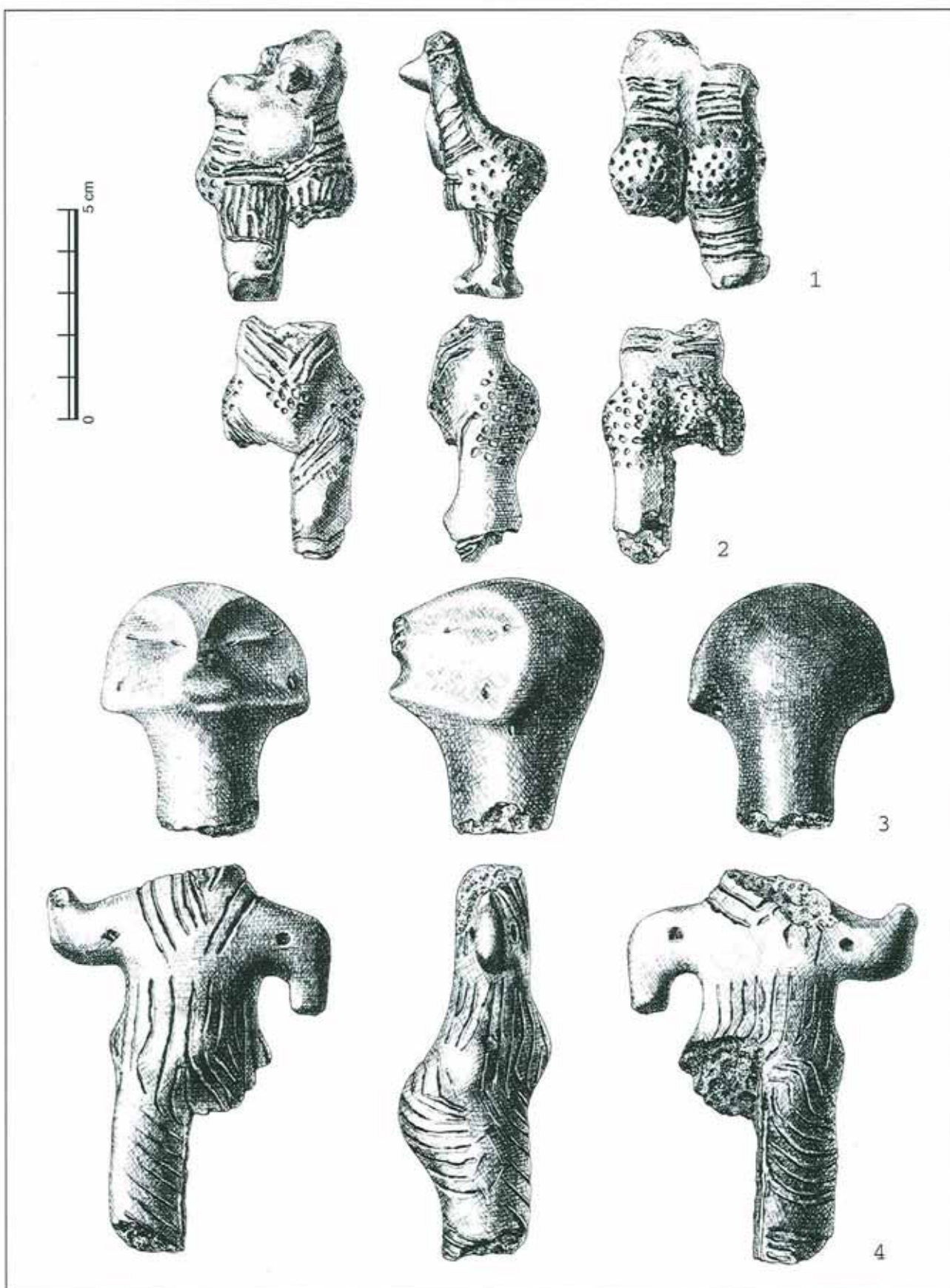


Plate 17. Tell Karanovo, Nova Zagora region. Anthropomorphic clay figurines. Late Neolithic.



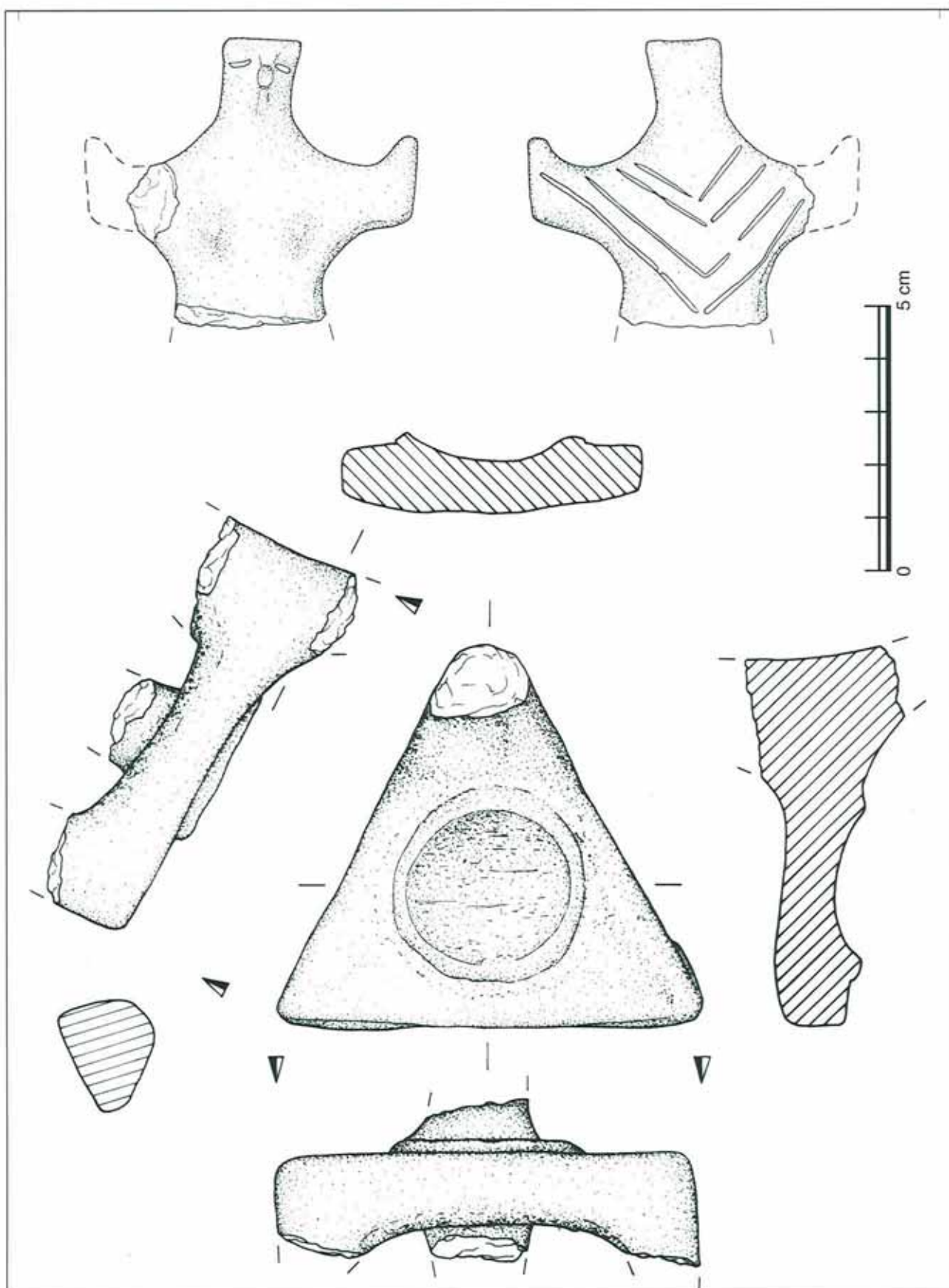


Plate 18. Tell Karanovo, Nova Zagora region. Anthropomorphic clay figurine and clay altar. Early and Late Chalcolithic.

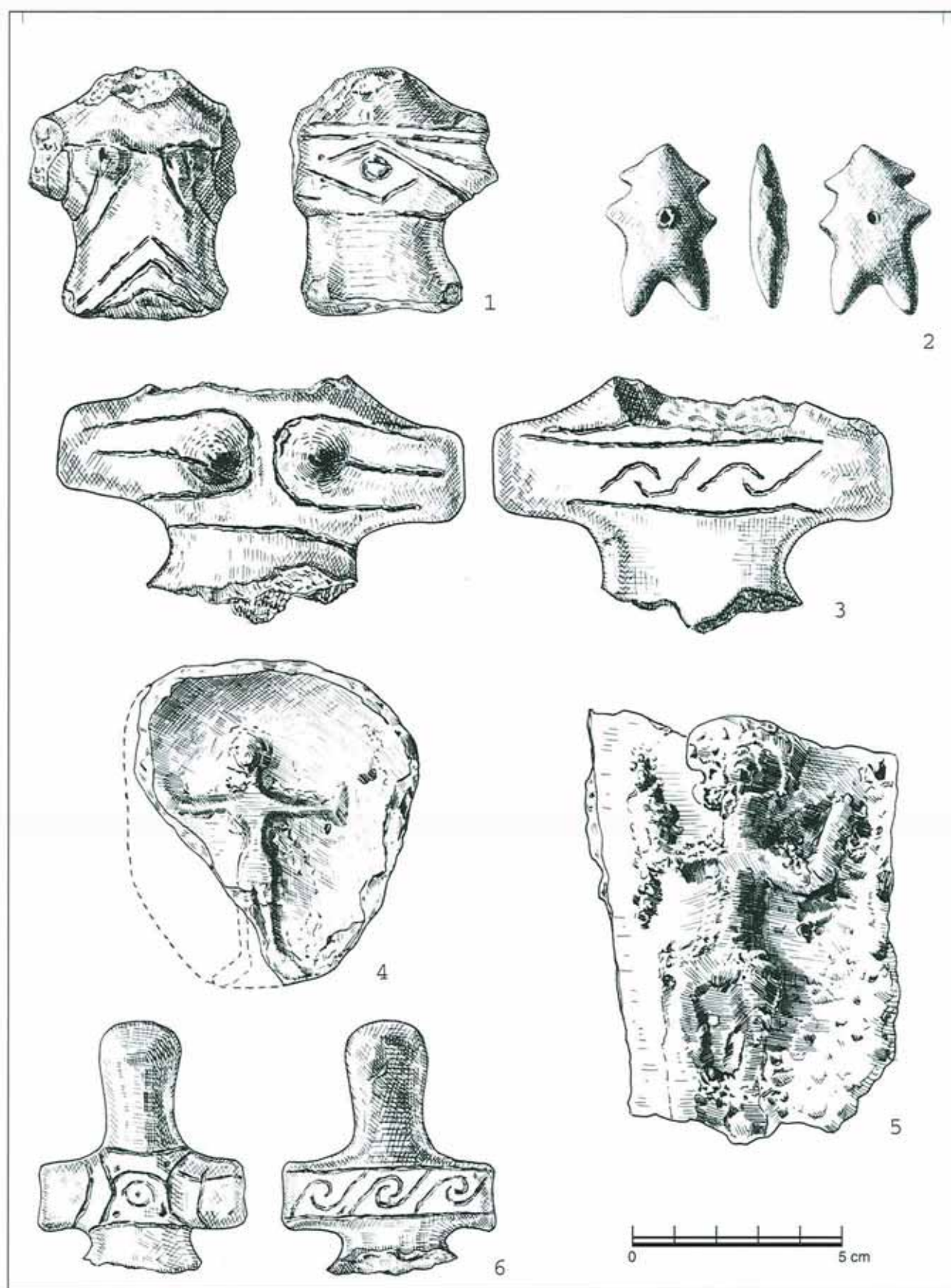


Plate 19. Tell Karanovo, Nova Zagora region. Anthropomorphic clay figurines and anthropomorphic relief images on pottery. Early Chalcolithic.



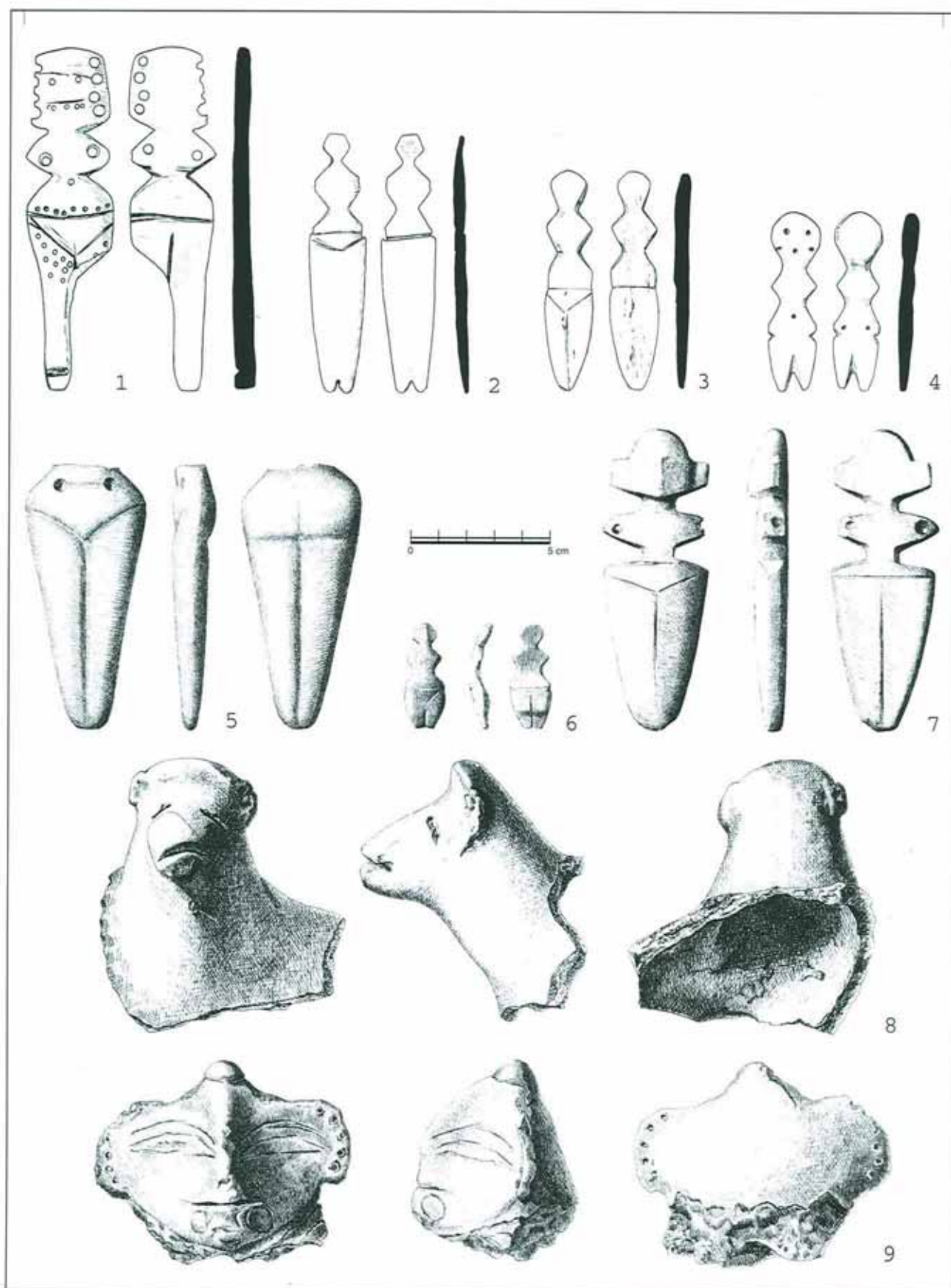


Plate 20. Tell Karanovo, Nova Zagora region. Anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figurines made of marble, bone and clay. Late Chalcolithic.

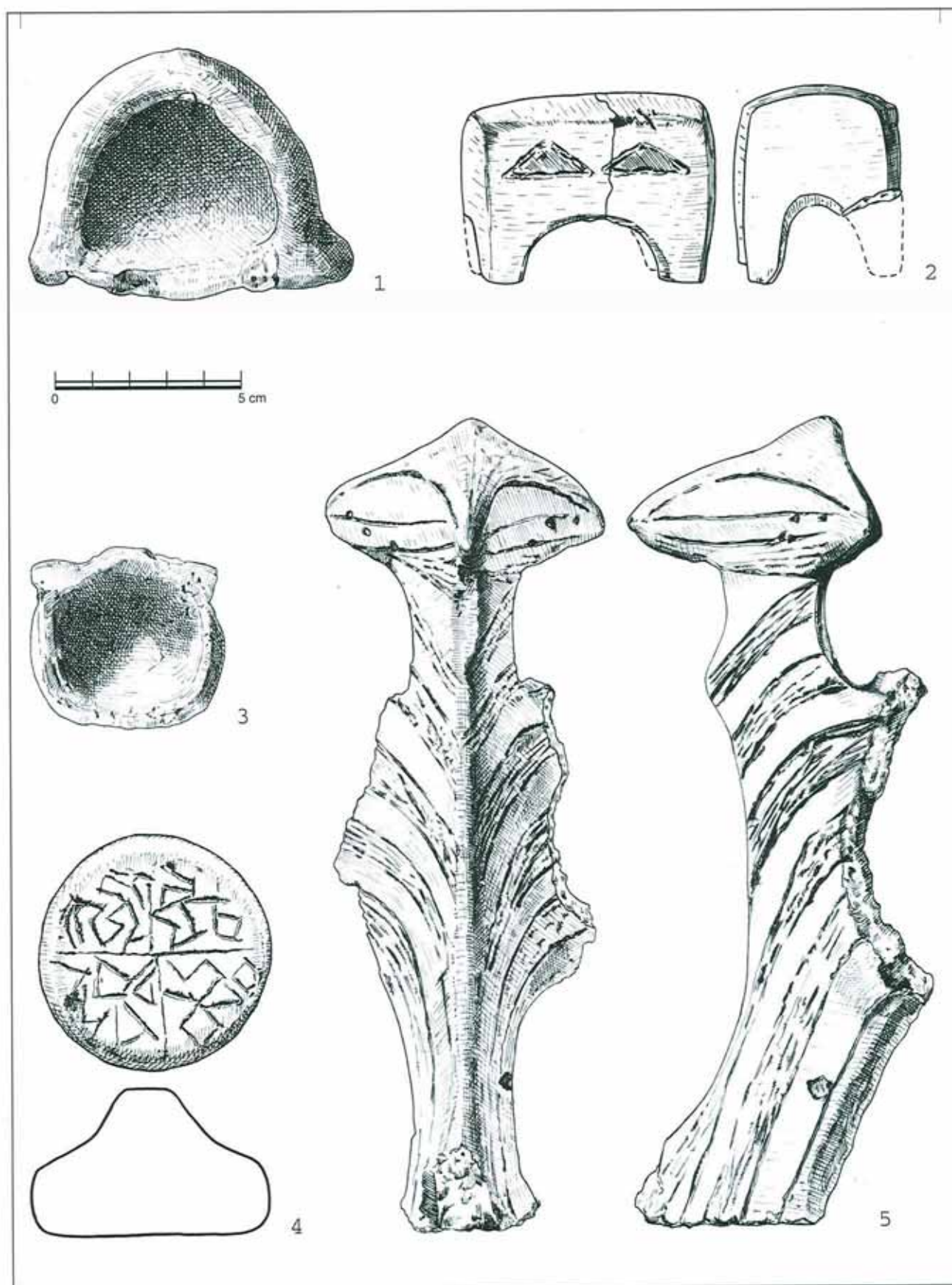


Plate 21. Tell Karanovo, Nova Zagora region. Oven models, a stamp seal with engraved signs, a tripod and part of an altar. Late Chalcolithic.



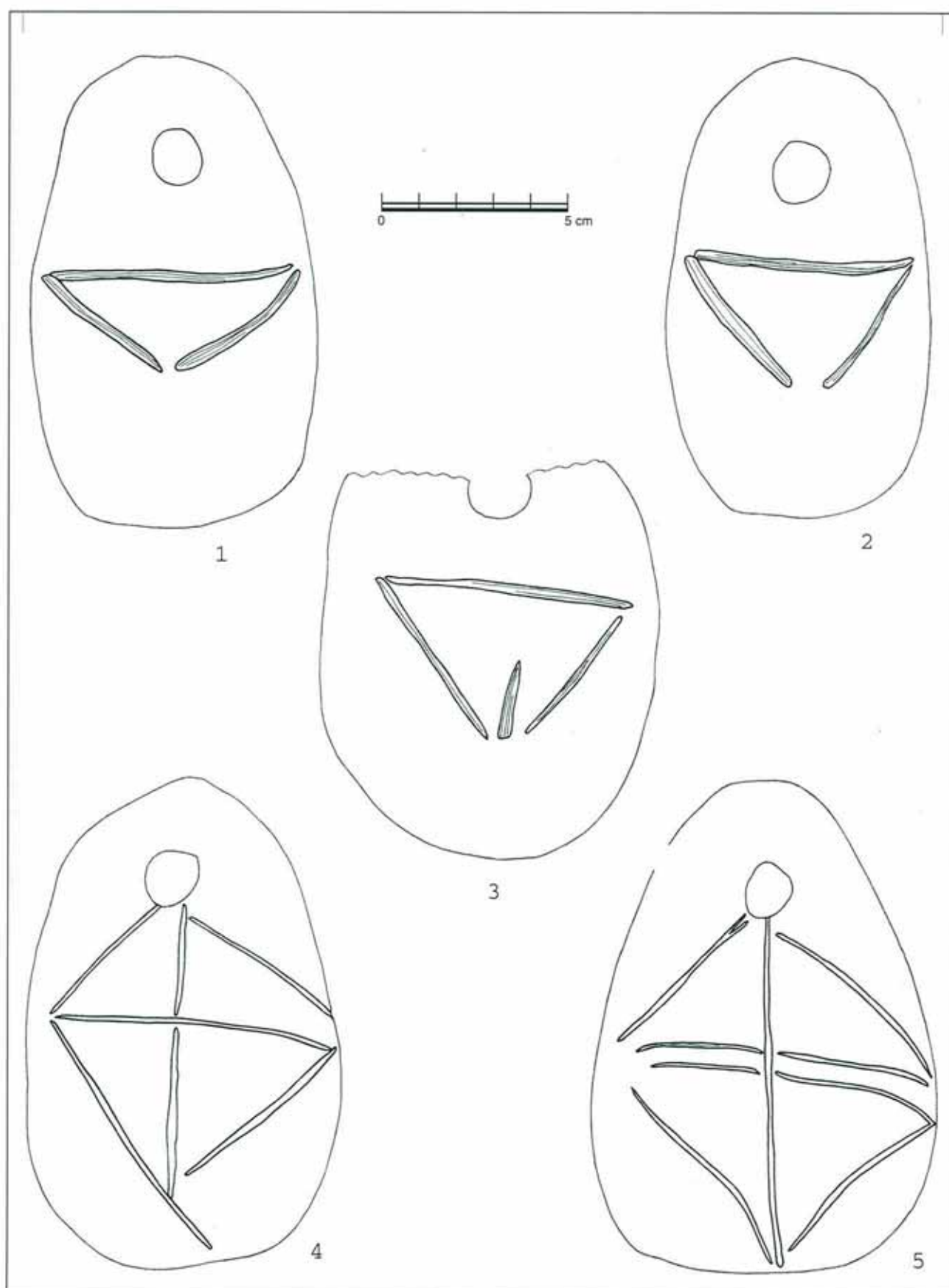


Plate 22. Tell Karanovo, Nova Zagora region. Clay loom weights with anthropomorphic features. Late Chalcolithic.

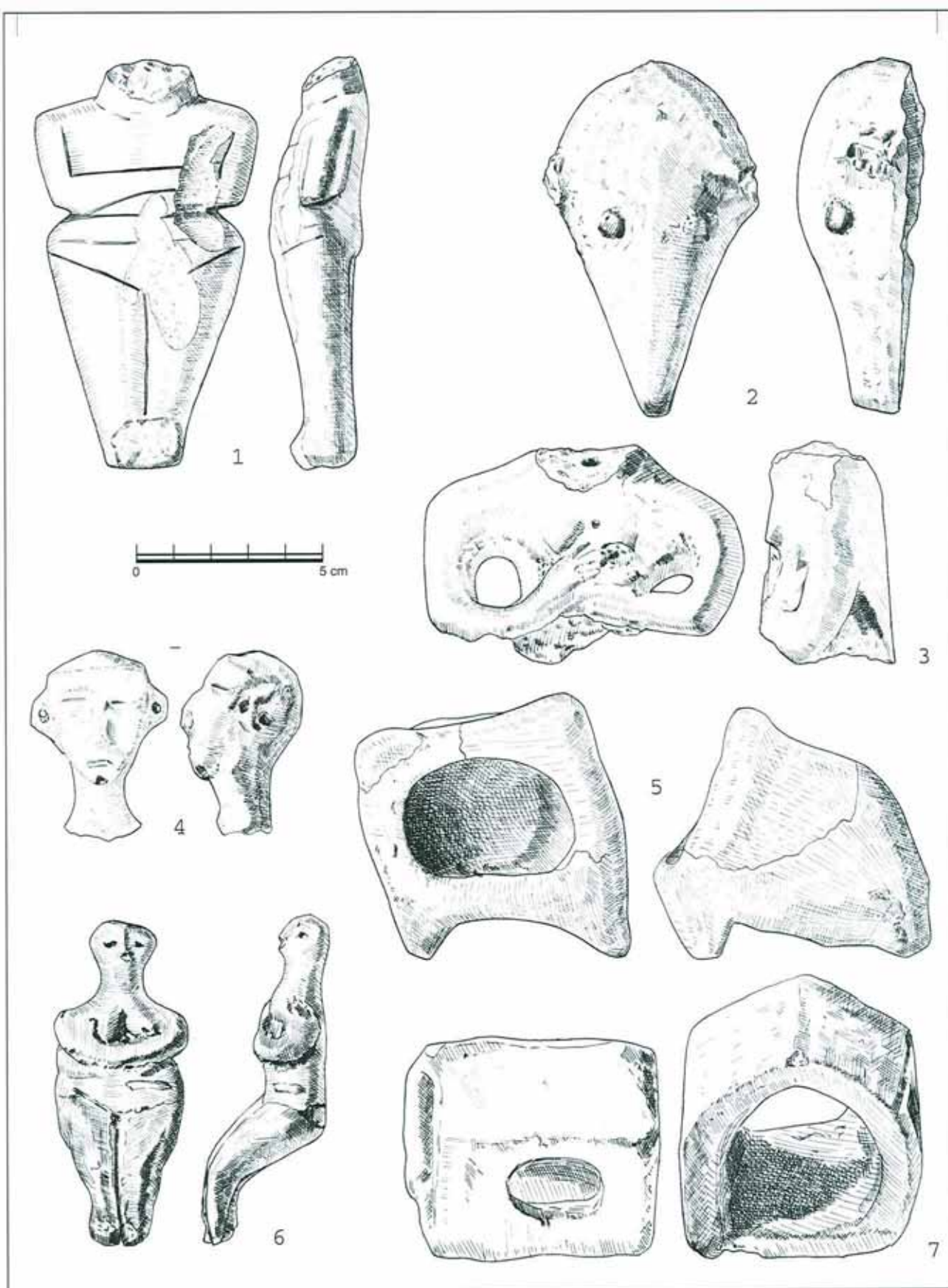


Plate 23. Tell Azmak-Stara Zagora. Anthropomorphic clay figurines, anthropomorphic marble figurine, zoomorphic lid, clay oven models. Late Chalcolithic.



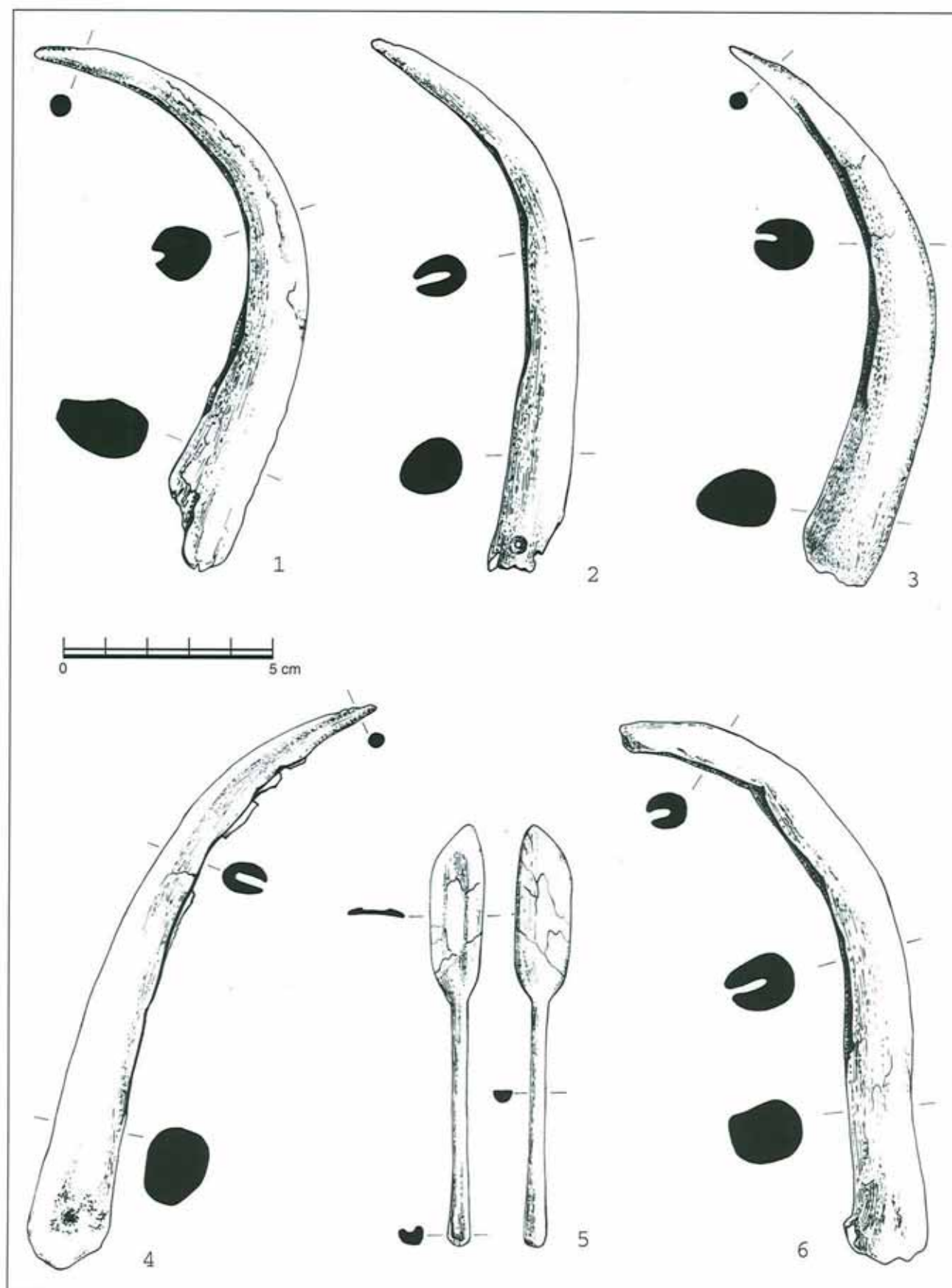


Plate 24. Tell Kazanlık. Sickles made of antler and a bone spoon. Early Neolithic.



1. Tell Djadovo, Nova Zagora region (before excavation).





2. Tell Karanovo, Nova Zagora region (Northeast sector).



3. Tell Karanovo, Nova Zagora region.  
White painted pot. Early Neolithic.



4. Multi-layer site Çavdar, Zlatitsa region.  
White painted pot. Early Neolithic.



5. Multi-layer site Çavdar, Zlatitsa region. White painted pot. Early Neolithic.



6. Multi-layer site Rakitovo. White painted pot. Early Neolithic.



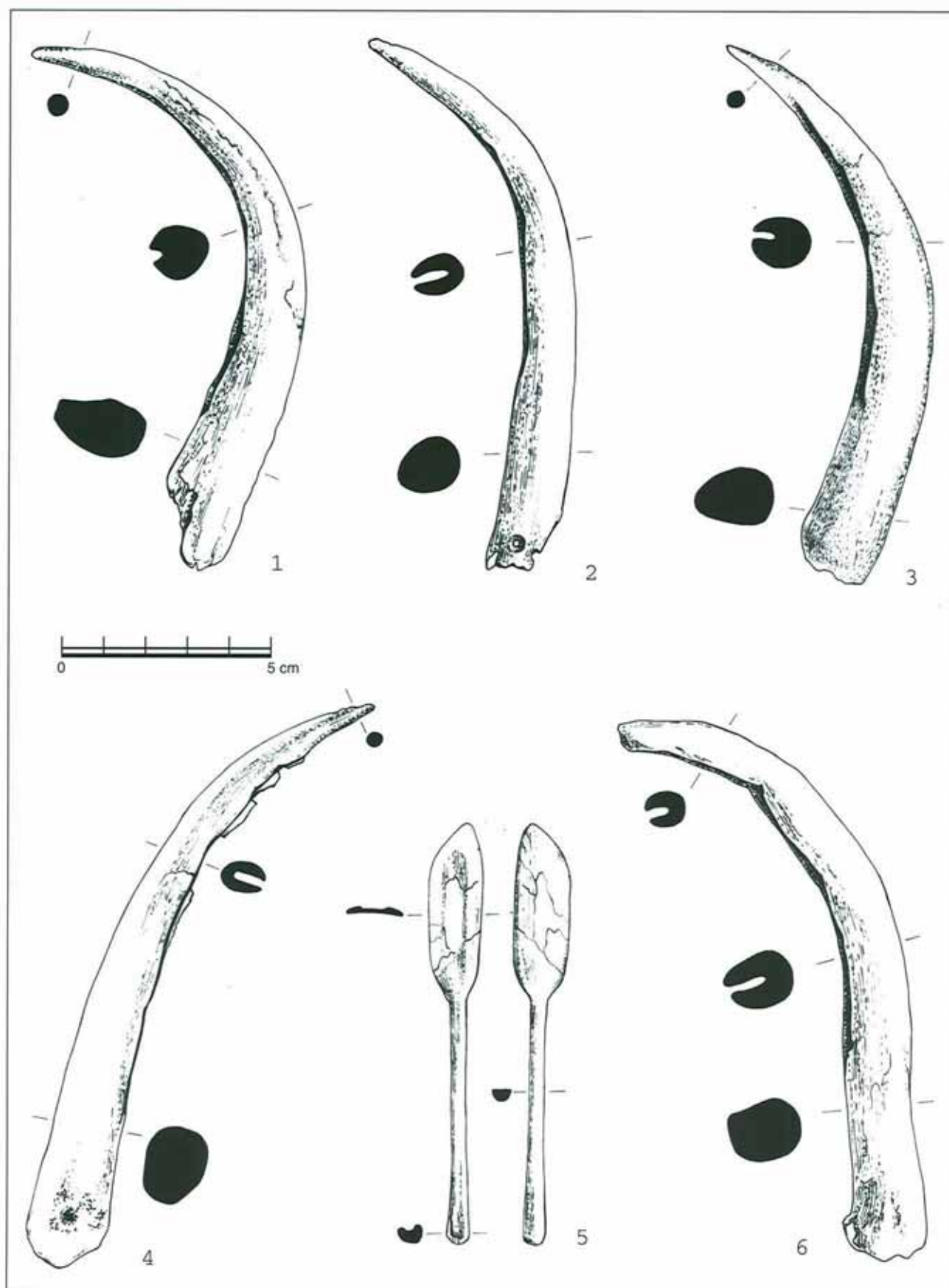
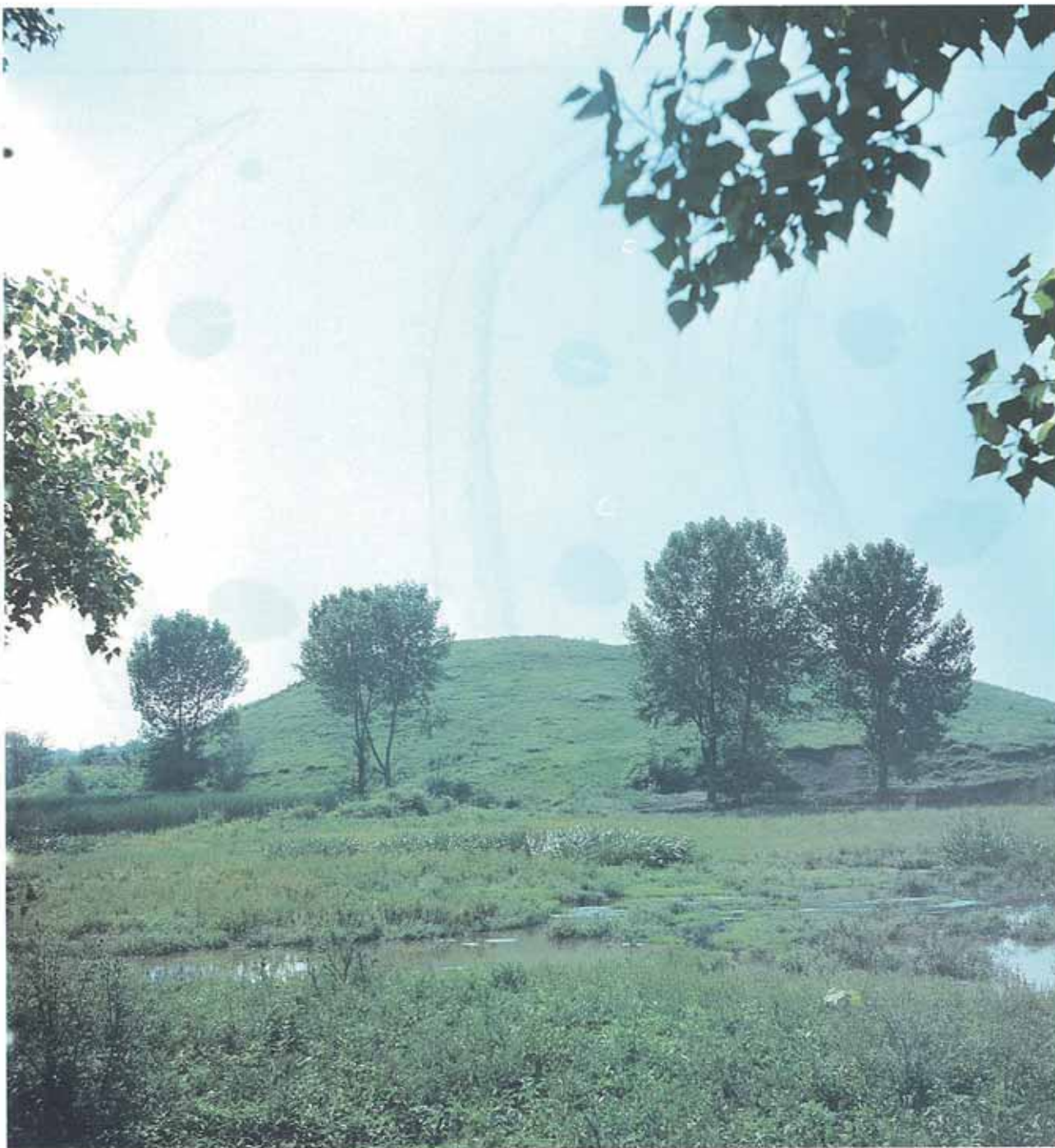


Plate 24. Tell Kazanlık. Sickles made of antler and a bone spoon. Early Neolithic.



1. Tell Djadovo, Nova Zagora region (before excavation).





2. Tell Karanovo, Nova Zagora region (Northeast sector).



3. Tell Karanovo, Nova Zagora region.  
White painted pot. Early Neolithic.



4. Multi-layer site Çavdar, Zlatitsa region.  
White painted pot. Early Neolithic.



5. Multi-layer site Çavdar, Zlatitsa region. White painted pot. Early Neolithic.



6. Multi-layer site Rakitovo. White painted pot. Early Neolithic.





7. Multi-layer site Rakitovo. White painted pot. Early Neolithic.



8. Multi-layer site Rakitovo. Anthropomorphic white painted pot. Early Neolithic.



9. Tell Kazanlık. Anthropomorphic pot. Early Neolithic.



10. Tell Karanovo, Nova Zagora region. Lid. Early Neolithic.



11. Open-air site Eleshnitsa. Head of a leopard clay figurine. Early Neolithic.



12. Open-air site Eleshnitsa. Clay seed models ( the so-called sling "bullets"). Early Neolithic.





13. Tell Karanovo, Nova Zagora region. Sickles made of antler with flint blades. Early Neolithic



14. Tell Karanovo, Nova Zagora region.  
Pot. Middle Neolithic.



15. Tell Jasatepe-Plovdiv. Pot. Late Neolithic.



16. Tell Jasatepe-Plovdiv.  
Anthropomorphic pot. Late Neolithic.



17. Tell Kapitan Dimitriev-Peshtera.  
Pot. Late Neolithic.

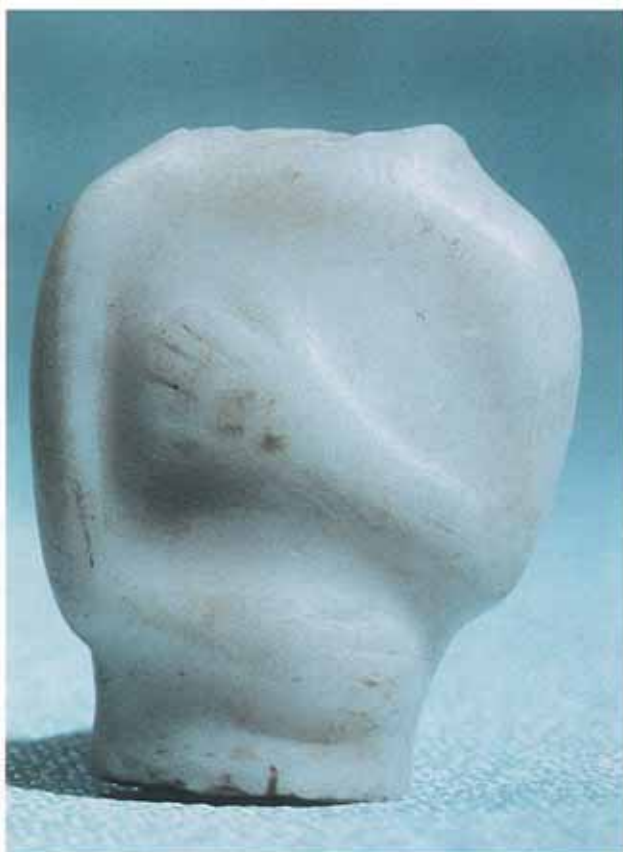


18. Tell Bereketska-Stara Zagora.  
Anthropomorphic pot. Late Neolithic.



19. Tell Karanovo, Nova Zagora region. Lid.  
Late Neolithic.





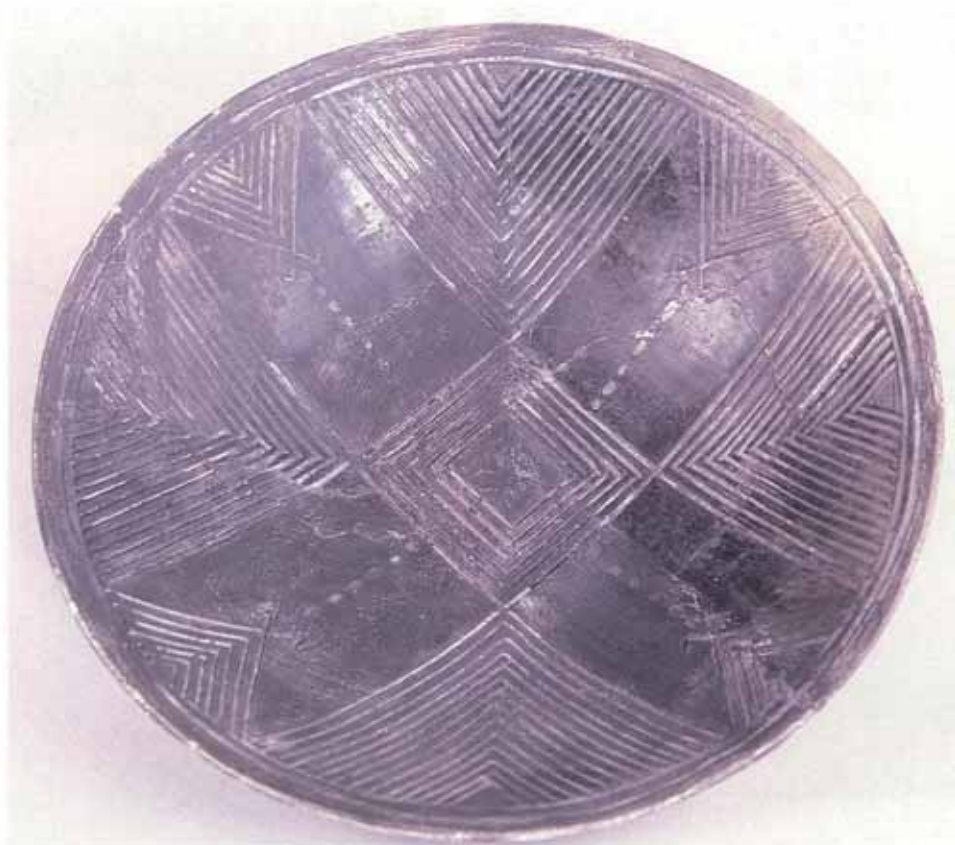
20. Tell Kazanlık. Part of a marble anthropomorphic figurine. Late Neolithic.



21. Tell Karanovo, Nova Zagora region. Part of a marble anthropomorphic figurine. Late Neolithic.



22. Open-air site Giok tepe-Haskovo. Head of a clay figurine. Late Neolithic.



23. Tell Karanovo, Nova Zagora region. Pot. Early Chalcolithic.



24. Tell Karanovo, Nova Zagora region. Pot. Early Chalcolithic.





25. Tell Jasatepe-Plovdiv. Pot. Early Chalcolithic.



26. Tell Pazardcik. Clay figurine. Early Chalcolithic.



27. Tell Kapitan Dimitriev-Peshtera. Clay altar. Early Chalcolithic.



28. Tell Jasatepe-Plovdiv. Pot. Early Chalcolithic.



29. Tell Karanovo, Nova Zagora region.  
Pot. Late Chalcolithic.

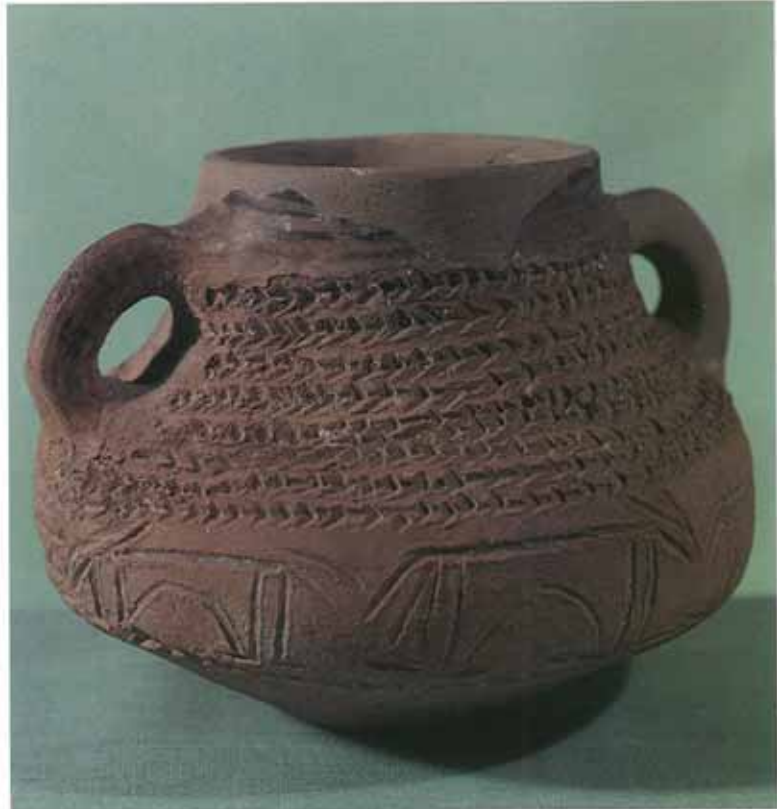


30. Tell Karanovo, Nova Zagora region.  
Pot. Late Chalcolithic.





31. Tell Karanovo, Nova Zagora region.  
Zoomorphic pot. Late Chalcolithic.



32. Tell Starozagorski bani, Stara Zagora  
region. Pot. Late Chalcolithic.



33. Tell Starozagorski bani, Stara  
Zagora region. Anthropomorphic  
pot. Late Chalcolithic.



34. Tell Karanovo, Nova Zagora region. Head of anthropomorphic clay figurine. Late Chalcolithic.



35. Tell Azmak-Stara Zagora. Clay anthropomorphic figurine. Late Chalcolithic.



36. Tell Dolnoslav, Assenovgrad region. Head of anthropomorphic clay figurine. Late Chalcolithic.





37. Tell Dolnoslav, Assenovgrad region. Anthropomorphic clay figurine. Late Chalcolithic.



38. Tell Starozagorski bani, Stara Zagora region. Marble anthropomorphic figurine. Late Chalcolithic.



39. Tell Kazanlık. Bone anthropomorphic figurine. Late Chalcolithic.



40. Tell Pazardcik. Clay "mask". Late Chalcolithic.



41. Tell Dolnoslav, Assenovgrad region. Zoomorphic clay figurine. Late Chalcolithic.



42. Tell Starozagorski bani, Stara Zagora region. Clay model of a temple. Late Chalcolithic.





43. Tell Karanovo, Nova Zagora region. Clay oven model. Late Chalcolithic.



44. Tell Dolnoslav, Assenovgrad region. Clay phallus. Late Chalcolithic.