

KRZYSZTOF DĄBROWSKI

KALISZ AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD IN THE ROMAN PERIOD

Investigations concerning the Roman period in Polish territories consider the position of Kalisz very important. Among the several reasons of its prominence a reference in Ptolemy's "Geography", dating from the half of the 2nd century and determining the situation of the spot Kalisia would be in first place. The eminent Polish historian Jan Długosz is ready to identify Kalisia with the oldest Kalisz. This has prompted very early quite particular interest in Polish and foreign historical research concerning the town's past.

J. N. Sadowski¹ published in 1876 a paper containing a complete summing up of the results acquired by a close examination of all possibilities of identifying Kalisz with Kalisia, mentioned in Ptolemy's work. The author skillfully stresses the advantageous position of Kalisz, lying in the junction of crossing communication tracks. His attempt of solving the Kalisia problem upon a wide background of comparison, availing himself simultaneously of research in various fields of science, aroused lively interest. The following authors whose views were published in the twenties and thirties and also quite recent years of our century deserve special attention: W. Antoniewicz,² J. Kostrzewski,³ T. Lehr-Spławiński,⁴ K. Majewski,⁵ K. Tymieniecki,⁶ W. Łęga.⁷ They all continue to weigh earlier problems concerning Kalisia. The dissertation of B. Biliński,⁸ summing up the previous discussions, has a quite special meaning for this interesting problem. The newest interpretation of philological sources and the results of ethnological and archaeological research have allowed a universal confrontation of debated problems and a conclusion that the identification of Kalisia and Kalisz is nearly certain. K. Moszyński⁹ has put forward a different concept opening the question whether Kalisia does not happen to be of Celtic origin. His opinion opposed to that of Lehr-Spławiński and Biliński, deserves special attention, in connection with the development of research meant to clear up the matter of Celts staying in Poland, and of the influence of Celtic

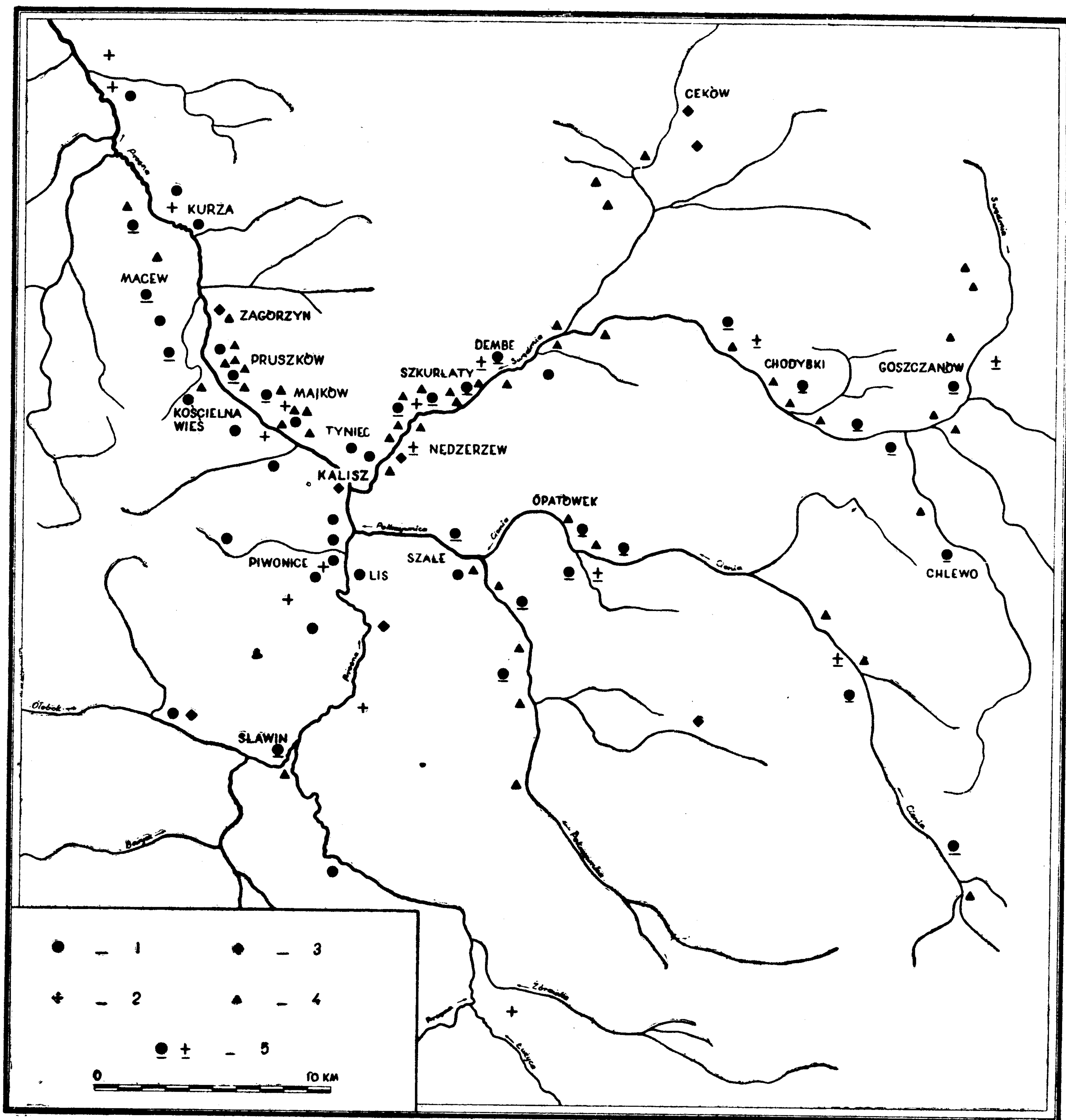


Fig. 1. Map of settlements in the area of Kalisz and its surroundings in the Roman period, 1st—5th century A.C.

1 — settlement; 2 — burial ground; 3 — hoard; 4 — site having an undefined character; 5 — sites determined according to the results of surface investigations

culture upon these lands.¹⁰ The interpretation of scanty literary witnesses dealing with Slavonic lands, will still certainly arouse many a discussion.¹¹ We shall therefore further consider the results of archaeological research carried out in the area of Kalisz and its neighbourhood. The claim of B. Biliński, demanding intense excavation research leading to the localization and identification of Ptolemy's Kalisia, seems justified. The carrying out of his postulate started in 1950.¹² Methodical digging works conducted in and around Kalisz in the years 1950—1960 were to determine whether this region offers any traces of settlement

reaching the Roman period, fit to be associated with Ptolemy's transfer. As all earlier research was conducted on a small scale, source information characterizing conditions of settlement in Kalisz was very scarce. A register of about 200 sites from a late La Tène and Roman period has allowed to detect several main features of settlement in this region.¹³ Settlements and burial grounds were placed on hillsides slightly inclined to the south. The sites' surface was mostly large, covering from one or two to several hectares. Airline distance between particular spots is insignificant, measuring from 0,5 to 3 km. The sites examined are scattered chiefly along the rivers Prosna and its right affluent Swędrnia. Sites of the Roman period appear very seldom in areas lying at a certain distance from rivers. This might be explained by the fact of forests covering these parts of the land.

We have noticed that the ancient settlers were interested in choosing sandy ground for building and avoided clay under-soil.

Excavation works on a large scale were conducted in several sites: in settlements lying in the town's limits, the quarters Tyniec and Dobrzec and its nearest neighbourhood: the villages Piwonice and Lis, district Kalisz.

The set of sites in Piwonice composed of 3 settlements and one burial ground has certainly a leading position in the scope of research and diversity of acquired material. The burial ground, almost totally destroyed by the erection of the village, was situated between the three settlements, and had been probably availed of by all of them.

The settlement of site 1 has been thoroughly examined upon an area of 6,900 sq.m. which would be only 1/3 part of its surface. Diligent excavation works very soon indicated that the investigation of one settlement only, demands an effort of several years and a concentration of large funds. Therefore, not giving up a chronological and stratigraphical recognition of other objects, detailed research has been applied to one settlement only, in the aim of acquiring data characteristic for settlements of the Roman period. It is worth mentioning that no settlement of that time has been till now thoroughly investigated either in Poland or in neighbouring countries, therefore the material acquired mostly in burial grounds presents only a partial source of information. Investigation carried out in site 1 of Piwonice¹⁴ has supplied some knowledge of a very poor stratigraphy of the Roman period. Beneath a layer of cultivated soil we find a culture stratum of mean density 0,30—0,50, further untouched sand with deep sunken parts of buildings, stoves, pits etc. Traces of a lively settlement, the beginnings of which may reach Lusatian culture of the 4th Bronze Age or Hallstatt period, lasting as far as the 11th—12th century, have been found in several sites. Their keeping is very bad, owing perhaps to their scattering in spots especially convenient for settling.

The example of Piwonice described above throws some light upon the character of settlement between the 1st century B.C. and the 5th century. Undefined

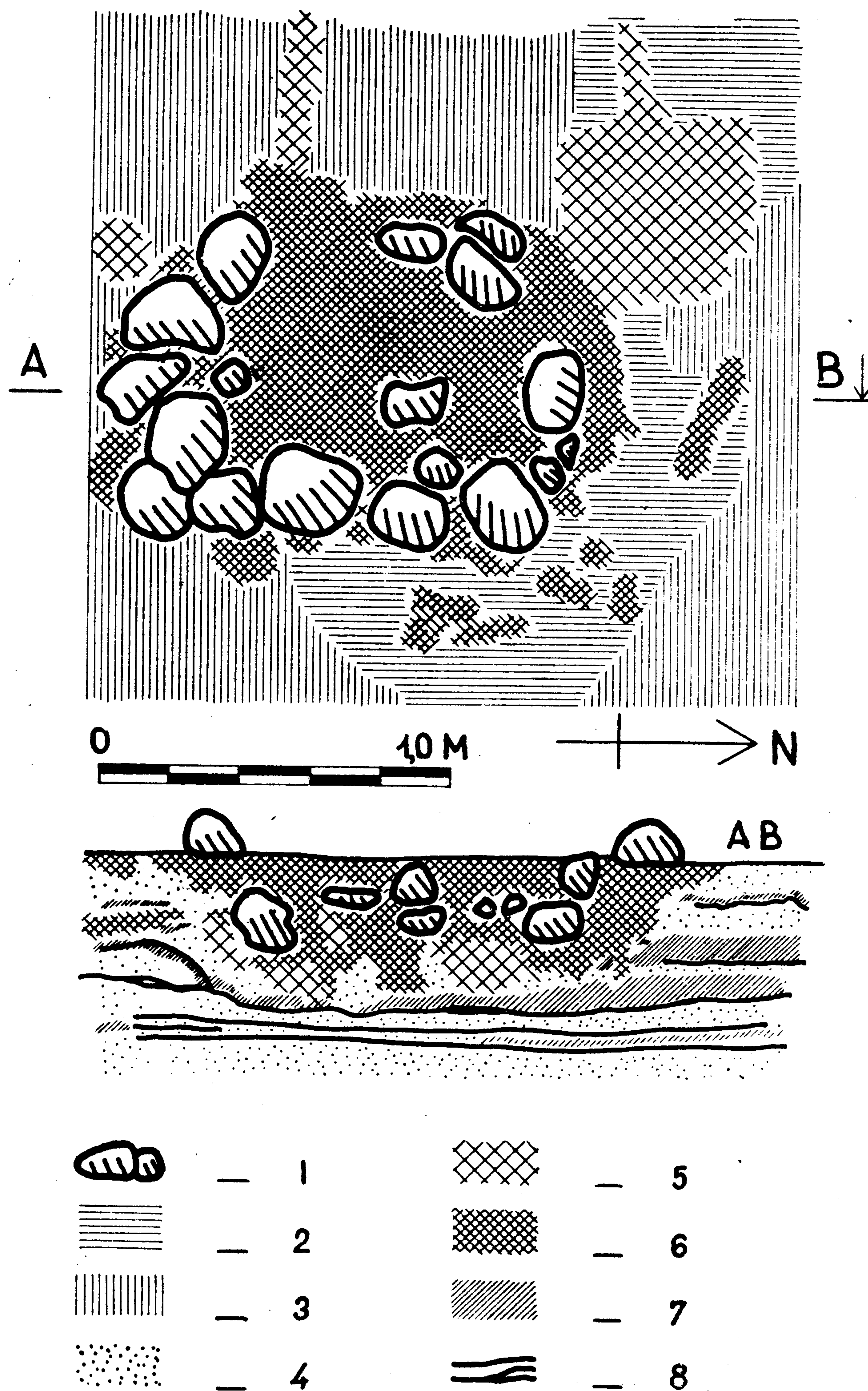


Fig. 2. Sample of hearth built in stone. (According to K. Dąbrowski drawn by W. Szymanowski)

1 — field stones, 2 — brown tinted soil (culture layer), 3 — brown-yellowish sand, 4 — yellow sand and black-tinted soil, 5 — black stuff filling the hearth pit, 6 — yellow-orange sand, 8 — limonite

settlements, loosely covered with dwellings were built in the same places at different later periods. The density of building was not equal. According to measurements one house might cover *c.* 3 ares surface in a period of close habitation, and 22.5 ares when buildings were widely scattered. In loose configuration we notice that houses were built along an east-west axis, facing the south with long walls in order to gain more light and heat from the sun. In the 1st century B.C. and the 1st *post Christum* buildings either stood over the level or were

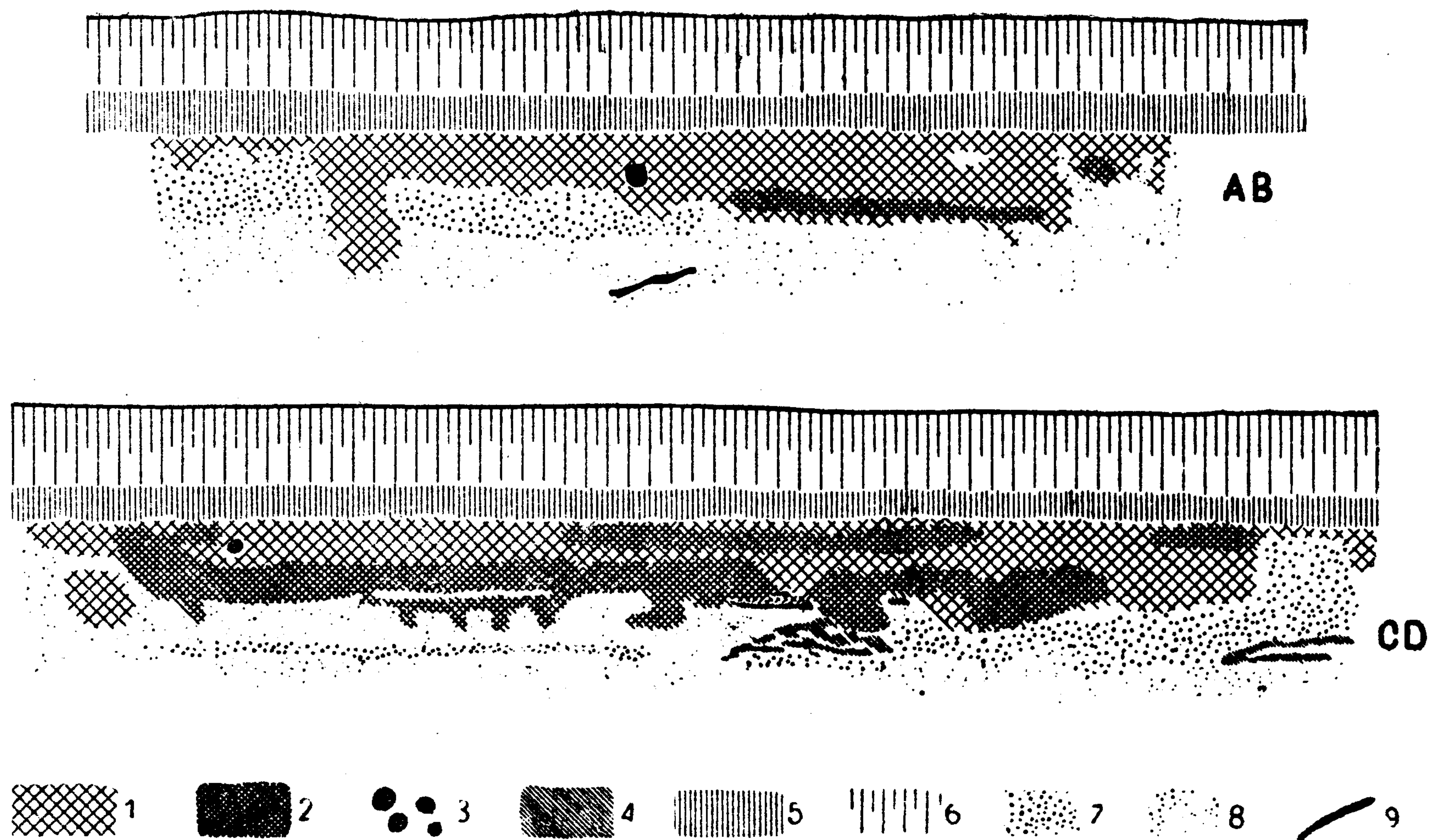
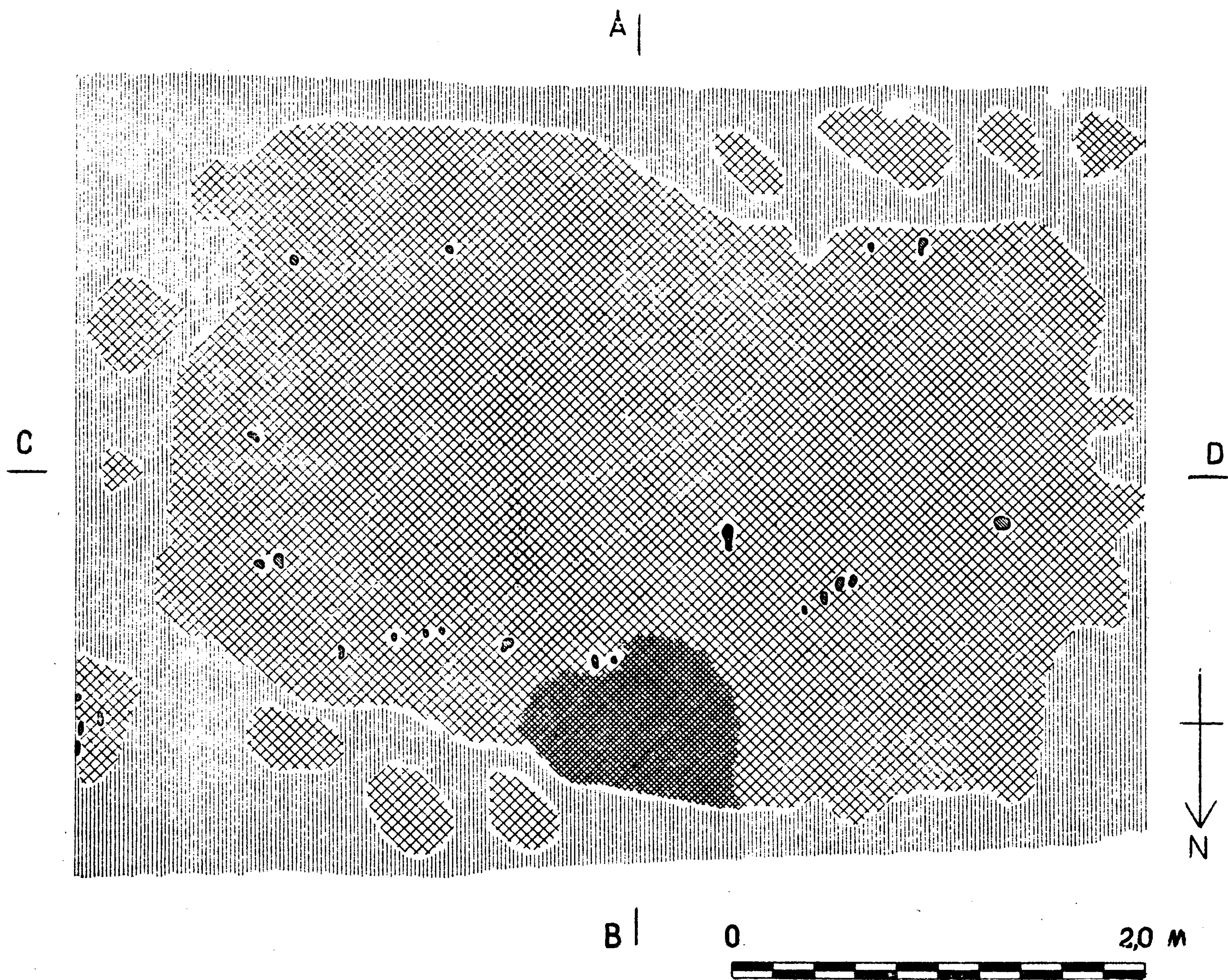


Fig. 3. Remains of a dwelling building in Piwonice. (According to K. Dąbrowski; drawn by W. Szymanowski)

1 — dark-grey stuff filling the building's inside, 2 — black-stuff filling the hearth pit, 3 — stones, 4 — yellowish-brown sand, 5 — brown-tinted soil (culture layer), 6 — arable soil, 7 — sand mixed with dark-grey tinted soil, 8 — deep, firm yellow sand, 9 — limonite

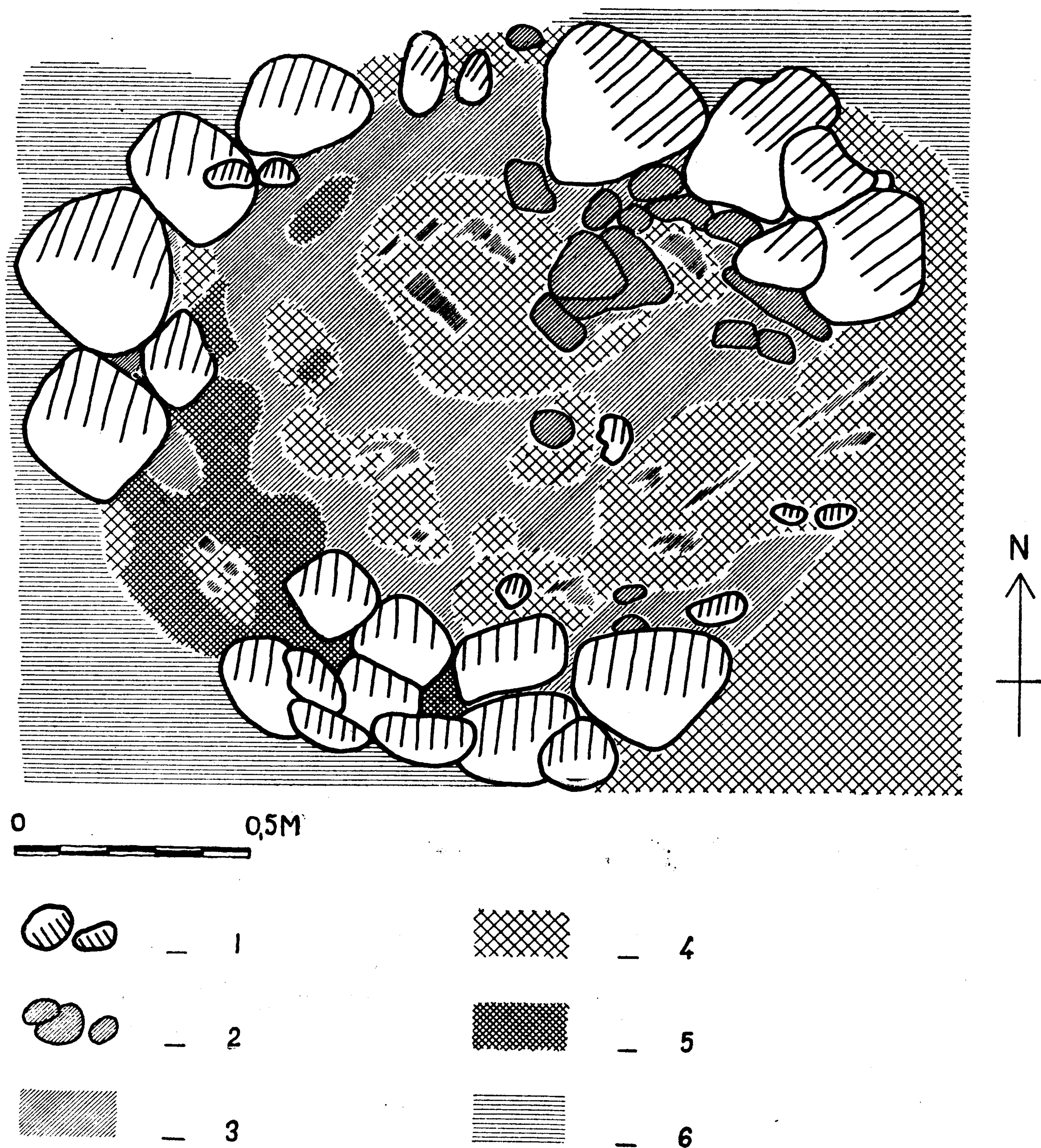


Fig. 4. Remains of baker's oven. (According to K. Dąbrowski; drawn by W. Szymanowski)

1 — field stones; 2 — blocks of daub, 3 — charcoaled clay, 4 — brown tinted soil (culture layer), 5 — black stuff filling hearth pit, 6 — brown tinted sand

half sunken into the earth, in some cases dug-outs 1—1,5 m. deep under the former settlement level served as dwellings. From the 2nd century onwards we meet level or only shallow sunken buildings. The average surface of a dwelling house traced on the basis of scanty remainders, used to have from 12—48 sq.m. The living space must have been some 20% smaller on account of thick walls. In many houses hearths or baking ovens, or both were found, in others smelting furnaces indicated their destination. Most of these objects i.e. hearths, baking ovens, smelting furnaces and household pits are found between the buildings or on the settlement's outskirts. This has been noted in Tyniec (one of the town Kalisz quarters) Piwonice and Lis, as well for late La Tène as for Roman

settlements, throughout the several following centuries. Household duties must have been accomplished mostly out of doors on account of mean indoors space and general life conditions. Loom weights made in clay have sometimes kept grains of corn telling the cultivation of rye, wheat, barley, oats and millet. Horses, cows, sheep, goats, pigs and dogs were kept and reared, the scanty amount of wild animals' bones (stag, deer, boar, beaver, bear, elk, wild goose and duck) proves that hunting did not play a significant role as far as food supply was concerned. Vessels, clothes, carpenter's works were produced only for the use of every particular household. On the contrary, iron metallurgy, smithery and non-iron works were a specialized manufacture. When examining the master work in horn and bone, we may suppose that some people were specialized in this art. In several houses of the Piwonice settlement traces of horn manufacture confirm this hypothesis. Also tanner's and furrier's workshops have been discovered. The latter manufacture must have reached a certain level, for a lively fur trade and fur export to distant lands demanded perfect handling and execution. We are, however, always short of source information concerning this matter.

Roman imports certainly concentrated in the region of Kalisz have a remarkable meaning in the problem of Kalisia. Coins appearing in hoards (the Kalisz hoard presents a number of some 2000 Roman denars) or single specimens found in dwellings and hearths are most frequent. Excavation works in these whereabouts allow to believe that Roman coins may have had periodically current value also outside the boundaries of the Roman Empire.¹⁵ Small pieces of glass bowls, *terra sigillata*, glass beads, objects in bronze and silver, fragments of wheel-thrown vessels from the Danube zone are specimens of foreign origin most frequently found here. An exception would be a two-coloured chalice discovered in a building dating from the 5th century.¹⁶

Contrary to materials found in settlements the number of imports is more significant in grave inventories; especially "chieftains" graves offer a large and rich collection of imported objects. The disposition and frequency of foreign objects confirm the supposition that part of a main "amber road" ran through the region of Kalisz, along the river Prosna and then Swędrnia, and indicate that this area may have played the role of an important trade emporium owing to its junction situation.

When summing up the results of archaeological works in Kalisz and its surroundings, we have to state that their concentration in selected settlements was explained by a general insufficiency of research on Roman settlements. And although only the first phase of investigation, designed to take a large swing, is described above, it is certain that it has supplied important material to the study of the Roman period in Poland and has allowed the forming of an only acceptable view concerning the problem of Kalisia. The distinct concentration of a large number of settlements in the area of Kalisz and its near surroundings, active between the 1st century B.C. and the 5th century allows to presume a large

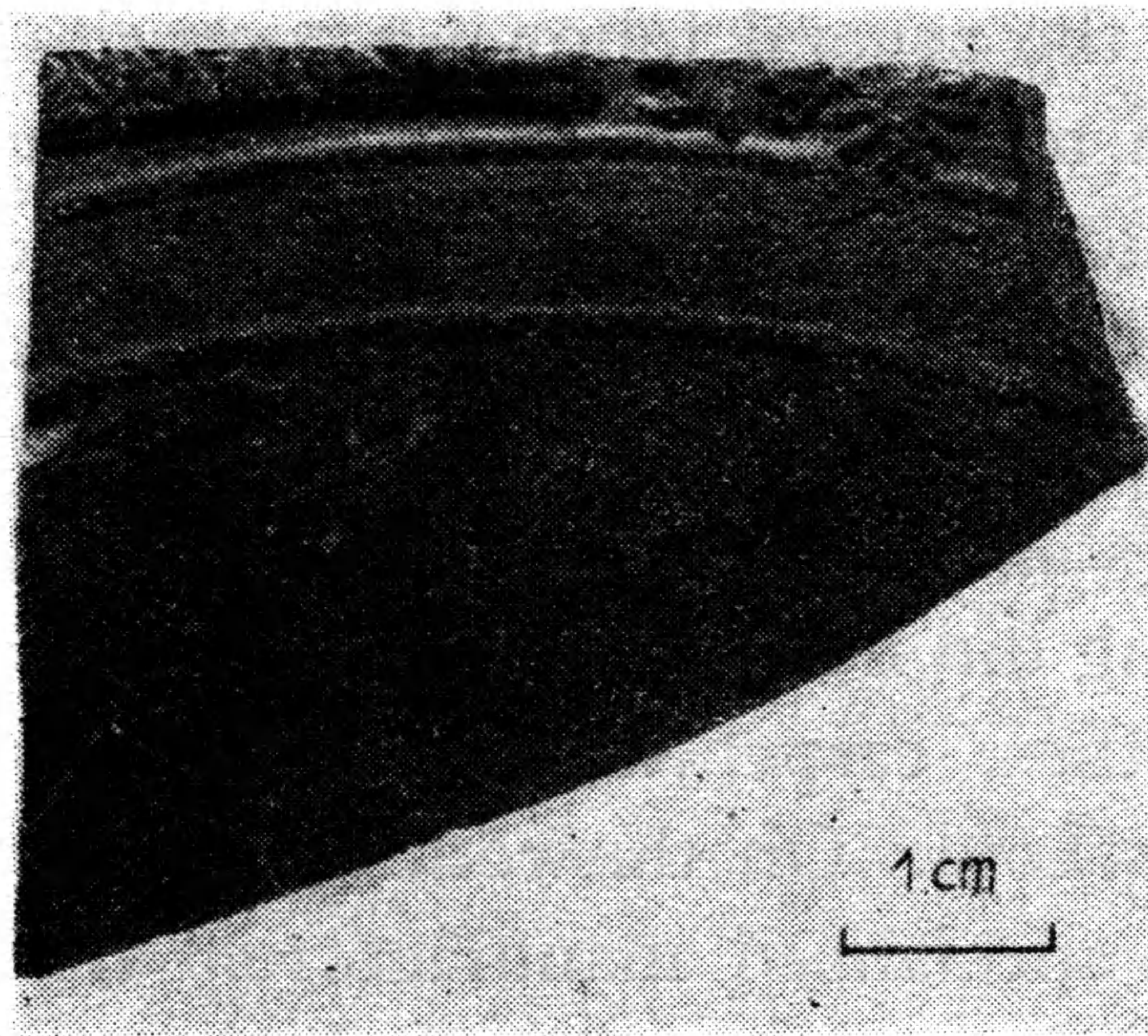


Fig. 5. Fragment of pottery *terra sigillata*. Januarius II of Lezoux, dating from A.D. 150—180. (Phot. T. Biniewski)



Fig. 6. Piece of amber discovered in hearth in Tyniec, town-quarter belonging to Kalisz. (Phot. T. Biniewski)

complex of settlements bearing the name Kalisia. Further research demanding a longer time and indispensable background of comparison may show whether the complex possessed its central, larger ruling spot. Philological and ethnological research will be helpful in the confirming of such a hypothesis.¹⁷ In relation to former endeavours of solving the Kalisia problem we may admit that

the results of recent excavation works have supplied large evidence offering possibilities of a new interpretation.

In the general problem of Roman influence spreading over Polish lands, research in the region of Kalisz is very important and several disciplines of science are tending to localize in this area Kalisia mentioned in Ptolemy's chronic. Therefore all archaeological sources discovered here not only help to evaluate social and economic conditions of the first centuries, and trade contacts of Polish territories with the Roman Empire, but allow to expect a verification of the reference contained in Ptolemy's work and thus judge the exactitude of information concerning Slavonic lands that had managed to reach the borders of the Roman Empire.

An interpretation of settlement materials dating from the Roman period will allow to establish elements determining differentiation of fortune and professional specialization, particularly in the scope of metallurgy. This phenomenon is especially distinct between the 2nd and the 5th century. Settlements coming from that time are distinct for the very large and rich equipment of single buildings (sometimes weapons) generally situated in the centre of settlements. Growing transformations of economic and social structure concerning the population of Polish lands in the Roman period are confirmed by rich findings in several thoroughly investigated burial grounds and many thousands graves.¹⁸ The results of investigation seem to confirm conclusions concerning the fall of the clan system in the Roman period and the beginning of a process giving birth to primitive State organizations in Polish lands. A universal examination of certain problems connected with the Roman period and discussed above, will no doubt be helpful to the solution of many controversial points concerning the origin of the Polish State.

NOTES

¹ J. N. Sadowski, *Drogi handlowe greckie i rzymskie przez porzeczka Odry, Wisły, Dniepru i Niemna do wybrzeża morza Bałtyckiego* [Greek and Roman Trade Routes Across the Odra, Vistula, Dniepr and Niemen Tributaries Leading to the Baltic Coasts], Kraków 1876, p. 2.

² W. Antoniewicz, *Archeologia Polski* [Archaeology of Poland], Warszawa 1928, p. 148.

³ J. Kostrzewski, *Pradzieje Polski* [Prehistory of Poland], Poznań 1949, p. 191.

⁴ T. Lehr-Splawiński, *O pochodzeniu i praojczyźnie Słowian* [The Origin and Forefatherland of Slavs], Poznań 1946, p. 142.

⁵ K. Majewski, *Importy rzymskie na ziemiach słowiańskich* [Roman Imports in Slavonic Lands], Wrocław 1949, p. 23.

⁶ K. Tymieniecki, *Ziemie polskie w starożytności* [Résumé: *Les origines de l'ancienne Pologne*], Poznań 1951, p. 457, and references.

⁷ W. Łęga, *Handel między państwem rzymskim a Pomorzem nadwiślańskim od I w. n. e. do VI w. n. e.* [Roman Trade with the Vistula Pomerania from the 1st Century B. C. to the 6th Century], "Przegląd Archeologiczny", Vol. X, 1958, p. 8.

⁸ B. Biliński, *Kalisia Ptolemeuszowa* [Rés.: *Kalisia de Ptolémée*], "Archeologia", Vol. V, 1955, p. 101.

⁹ K. Moszyński, *Pierwotny zasięg języka prasłowiańskiego* [The Original Area of Ancient Slavonic Language], Wrocław 1957, p. 267—268; J. Kostrzewski, *Gdzie była pierwotna siedziba Słowian* [The Slavs Most Ancient Abode], "Z otchłani wieków", Vol. XXIV, 1958, No. 2/3, p. 171.

¹⁰ J. Rosen-Przeworska, *Problem pobytu Celtów w Małopolsce* [The Problem of the Celtic Culture in Little Poland], "Archeologia Polski", Vol. I, 1957, p. 35.

¹¹ T. Milewski, *Dwa ujęcia problemu granic prasłowiańskiego obszaru językowego* [Two Conceptions of the Problem of the Preslavonic Language Territory Borders], "Rocznik Slawistyczny", Vol. XXI, part I, 1960, p. 73.

¹² Archaeological works in the area of Kalisz were conducted by the managers of "Research Concerning the Origin of the Polish State, the Headquarters of Excavation Works in Kalisz". From 1954 onwards it is the Archaeological Station of the Institute of History of Material Culture of the Polish Academy of Sciences who has taken up all further research.

¹³ K. Dąbrowski, *Kalisz w starożytności* [The Ancient Times of Kalisz], in: *Szkice z dziejów Kalisza*, Wrocław 1960, p. 13 and references contained there.

¹⁴ K. Dąbrowski, *Osadnictwo z okresów późnolateńskiego i rzymskiego na stanowisku 1 w Piwonicach, pow. Kalisz* [Settlements of the Late La Tène and Roman Period at Piwonice, the Kalisz District], "Materiały Starożytne", Vol. IV, 1958, p. 7—89 (and references); K. Dąbrowski, R. Kozłowska, *Dwie osady z okresów późnolateńskiego i rzymskiego we wsi Piwonice pow. Kalisz* [Two Settlements of the Late La Tène and the Roman Period at Piwonice, Kalisz District], "Materiały Starożytne", Vol. V, 1959, p. 283—328.

¹⁵ K. Dąbrowski, A. Krzyżanowska, *Odkrycie denarów w osadzie z okresu rzymskiego w Piwonicach pow. Kalisz* [Discovery of Roman Denars in a Roman Settlement in Piwonice, the Kalisz District], "Wiadomości Archeologiczne", Vol. XXII, 1955, No. 2, p. 198—200.

¹⁶ K. Dąbrowski, J. Karwowska, *Metoda konserwacji szkła rzymskiego na przykładzie kielicha ze wsi Piwonice, pow. Kalisz* [The Method of Preservation of Roman Glass], "Wiadomości Archeologiczne", Vol. XX, 1954, No. 2, p. 179—185.

¹⁷ B. Biliński, *Dwa świadectwa antyczne...* [Two Ancient Sources...], in: *Osiemnaście wieków Kalisza*, vol. II, Kalisz 1961, p. 12.

¹⁸ K. Godłowski, *Studia nad stosunkami społecznymi w okresach późnolateńskim i rzymskim w dorzeczu Odry i Wisły* [A Study of Social Conditions in the Late La Tène and Early Roman Period in the Odra and Wisła Basin], Warszawa—Wrocław 1960, p. 7—117.