

SOME CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT STONE BUILDING IN *BARBARICUM* DURING THE LATE ROMAN PERIOD

This study examines the evidence regarding the settlements of the Late Roman period found in the Dniestr basin, which include stone buildings. Such buildings dated to the first centuries A.D. were first identified by M.Iu. Smiško near Komarovo, in a Sântana de Mureș-Černjachov settlement. After World War II, E.A. Rikman began excavations at Sobari, and in 1981 the settlement at Cimișeni was found. They both contain stone buildings. Though excavations continue at Sobari and Cimișeni, and the settlement at Komarovo was never fully and adequately published, I will try to present a summary of the knowledge we now have about stone buildings in *barbaricum* during the Late Roman period. In doing so, I was encouraged by the increasing number of such features identified in various other settlements¹.

The settlement at Komarovo (Kelmency county, Černovcy district, Ukraine)² was found in 1956 and excavated in 1956-1957 and, again, in 1974, by M. Iu. Smiško. The preliminary archeological report was published in 1964³. Glass finds from Komarovo were used by various interdisciplinary studies and published separately⁴. On the excavations of 1974 we only have some brief notes⁵. The site is located on the right-bank tributary of the Dniester river, cove-ring an estimated area of 4.8 hectare, of which only 1612 square m were excavated. Smiško found five dwelling-houses, six independent hearts, a pottery shop, a pit for rubbish disposal, and a stone building. The latter has a rectangular plan (6 x 6.90 m) with a deep foundation of large stones without mortar (fig. 1). Some remains of stone pavement were found. It consisted of flag-stones set in a bed of gravel. Both pavement and foundation convinced Smiško that he has discovered a stone building, something quite uncommon at that time for Sântana de Mureș-Černjachov settlements. On the basis of fragments of daub infilling, Smiško believed that the superstructure must have had a gabled roof of wood and wattle. Artefacts recovered from the building's floor included fragments of a large amphora (nearly 1 m long) found near the western wall (fig. 6.7), fragments of a large *dolium* near the southern wall, a crucible (fig. 7.12) and of iron vessel, all

found near the southern wall. The small scale of the excavations, as well as the inadequate publication of its results make it impossible to draw any conclusions from the arrangement of features within the settlement. It seems, however, that the five houses and five hearts, most probably belonging to a glasswork shop, were located on the eastern side of the settlement, while the pottery shop was found on its western side. The stone building was in the middle of the settlement. Artefacts recovered from the settlement include tools, dress accessories, coins, pottery, animal bones, and a significant quantity of glassworking debris. Other finds of glass included fragments of green, purple, and yellow glass vessels, small pieces, probably from windows, and beads. Glassworking may have been associated with some tools found in the settlement (fig. 3.17), as well as the iron vessel found in the stone building. Most of the ceramic remains indicate a wheeled pottery typical for Sântana de Mureș-Černjachov settlements, with only fragments of hand-made pottery (fig. 6; 7). A significant number of bricks and tiles was also recovered (fig. 2), but none in the stone building, thus suggesting that the bricks and tiles may have been reused for the construction of the houses, east of the stone building. On the sole basis of glass finds, Šcapova argued that the glassworking shop may have been built before the stone feature⁶. Her research also showed that glass finds could be divided into two groups: those of local origin and imported glass. Most of the glass finds produced on the site has no colour, being blown in coniclike molds (fig. 5), and decorated with flutes or glass appliquéés (fig. 4). According to G. Rau, such glass was produced mostly during the second half of the third century A.D.⁷. In spite of a considerable number of vessels of the local production, there is not too much variation in form, which could be interpreted as indicating a short life of the glassworking shop. Window fragments recovered from the settlement were also of local production, being cast in flat molds, a technique used until the late third century⁸. But glassware with polished decoration may be dated to the second and third quarters of the fourth century.

The settlement at Sobari (Soroca county, Republic Moldova) was found in 1950 by G. B. Fedorov⁹, but excavations began only in 1962. E.A. Rikman carried three subsequent campaigns in 1962, 1965, and 1971¹⁰. Excavations were resumed in 1990 under the direction of Ion Niculiță¹¹. The site is located not too far from the present day village, and it covers an estimated area about 30 hectare¹². Until now, excavations only recovered some 800 square m, with eight dwelling houses, a pottery shop¹³, and a stone precinct with a stone building in its middle. The defenses were only recognizable by the deep trenches dug to rob the curtain wall foundations. They enclose an almost rectangular area, of some 0.4 hectare. Since the southern wall of the circuit has not been identified, it is difficult to assess the exact shape of the enclosed area. Robber-trenches suggest that the foundation were of 0.60 m deep. Where the foundations were not robbed, the texture of the wall could be studied. It consists of large slabs of limestone and granite. According to the local reports, a wall height of 1 m was still visible before 1950.

The stone building, built at about 10 m from the northern curtain, had a rectangular plan (9.80 x 18 m), with the long walls running on an east-west direction (fig. 8). Only the foundations of the building survived. It was subdivided into two, unequal rooms (5.40 x 7.30 m to the west and 7.30 x 9.90 m to the east) by a party-wall, which is clearly visible in plan. The two rooms communicated with each other through the door, of 1.60 m wide. Both rooms had clay floors. The building was surrounded at some distance (1.50 to 2.00 m) by stylobates with sixteen bases. Each base had a small slot, probably used for supporting wooded posts (fig. 9). Walls were made of limestone flags and bricks roughly mortared. The mortar used for the walls contains sand and fireclay. Most bricks were rectangular in plan (fig. 10), but some were square. A large number of roof-tiles were recovered from the building (fig. 11). The manner in which tiles were arranged on the roof indicates the so-called "*Laconian technique*"¹⁴. The wooden structure of the roof was assembled with iron cramps, a great number of which were found in both rooms (fig. 12). Remains of the beams burnt *in situ* were also recovered on the floor. Fragments of window glass were found, and were apparently produced by being blown in a cylinder and then unfolded in sheets¹⁵. The total area covered by fragments of glass recovered so

far is 450 square cm. A distribution plot identified a concentration of glass finds near the eastern wall of the house. A surprising feature of the building is that it did not have any heating facility.

The dating of the building is secured by fragments of glass, which, according to the spectrographic analysis of Iu. L. Șcapova, clearly indicates the Late Roman period¹⁶. D. B. Harden argues the "*cylinder-technique*", which was apparently used to produce the window glass found at Sobari, only appears in the late third century¹⁷. A fragment of glass beaker belonging to Rau's type "*Sântana de Mureș*"¹⁸, dated between 351 and 375¹⁹, was found on the building's floor (fig. 13.2). The building also produced fragments of gold sheet decorated with scales (fig. 13.1), found together with a small bronze plate and two bronze nails (fig. 13.3). They were all mounted on the saddle bows (fig. 14), as indicated by similar finds from the Eurasian steppes²⁰ belonging to I. P. Zaseckaia's type 2, dated to the late fourth and early fifth century²¹. The closest parallels are those from the burial at Kiziliarskaia Balka, near Melitopol', in Ukraine, from Concești (Romania), those from burials VIII and IX at Novogrigor'evka, in Ukraine, that destroyed at Kalinin, in Crimea, and that from burial no. 2 (mound no. 8) at Kubei, near Odessa (Ukraine)²² (fig. 15.A-F).

All pottery fragments recovered from the building belong to the wheeled category. Most of them were amphorae²³ fragments belonging to Opaiț's type C-I, dated to the second half of the fourth century²⁴. Other sherds belong to the grey gritty ware, which is characteristic for Sântana de Mureș-Černjachov settlements and cemeteries, dated to the fourth century.

Rikman noted that the building's foundation cut through the preceding level, which is also characterized by Sântana de Mureș-Černjachov pottery. He claims that at the moment of the building's construction, the area was occupied by a fairly large settlement. Although these observations cannot be checked out against the stratigraphical evidence published so far, new research has shown that the stylobates, the floor and the base of the building's walls, all belong to the same stratigraphic sequence. It is on this level that the remains of the superstructure collapsed after a fire destroyed the building.

It is worth mentioning that not too far from the settlement at Sobari, on the Dniester river's bank, a hoard of Late Roman coins was accidentally found in 1970. It includes only solidi

from Theodosius I (392-395), minted in Constantinople²⁵.

The settlement at Cimișeni (Chișinău county, Republic Moldova) is located 2,5 km west from the village. Field surveys covering an area of about 2 hectare produced pottery fragments and stones²⁶. The only excavations performed at Cimișeni by M. B. Ščukin in 1981 revealed, however, the foundations of a stone building²⁷. It was a rectangular feature, built in limestone (fig. 16). Ščukin estimates its size at about 10 m width and 21 m length. The building was subdivided into three rooms, only two of them being excavated. One was of 5 m wide and 10 m long, the other was of 8.20 m wide and 10 m long. The estimated size of the third room is 7.80 x 10 m. A relatively large break into the southern wall may be due to either robbing activities or to the entrance. Unlike Sobari, the foundation and the walls of the building at Cimișeni were made of limestone flags mortared without fire-clay. Because the foundations present irregularities and sometimes even lack of stone flags, Ščukin argued that they have been built by throwing stones in a bath of white mortar. He also claims that the walls were made of wood and wattle. His argument is based on a concentration of daub filling and wattle remains outside the northern wall²⁸. A simple, stone-built hearth (0.80 x 0.84 m) was found in the central room. A second hearth (0.40 x 0.42 m) was recovered at some distance from the south-eastern corner of the building.

Artefacts recovered from the excavated rooms include a fragment of a glass beaker with polished facets belonging to Straume's group 1 B²⁹ (fig. 17.1), a bronze bracelet with bent ends and an iron bracelet with shake-shaped ends (fig. 17.2-3). The latter could be dated to the late third and fourth century. The excavation also produced a fragment of an amphora with a grafitto of four Greek letters (ΝΘΟΥ)³⁰, and bead grey stone. The latter has been interpreted as "magic" pendant attached to the sword's handle³¹. All this archeological evidence points to the dating to the second half of the fourth century.

An important aspect of the stone buildings revealed by recent research in the Republic Moldova and the neighbouring area is that such features appear in association to Late Roman, non-fortified settlement. Indeed, there is no evidence that stone buildings had military functions, despite the presence of a precinct at Sobari. But the latter is exceptional among all

other similar buildings in contemporary Europe, particularly because of its colonnade and the use of glass windows. Rikman pointed to the fact that the precinct at Sobari has only three sides, either because the entire complex was abandoned before being finished or because the precinct had no military function. The plan of the complex at Sobari is similar to the one of stone buildings (so-called "*villae*") discovered in the Middle Danube region³². Just as those in Bratislava-Dúbravka and Cífer-Pác, the building at Sobari was built in the middle of a "*barbarian*" settlement. Just like Sobari, the stone building at Stupava, Bratislava-Dúbravka and Cífer-Pác were surrounded by defenses of stone (Stupava, Bratislava-Dúbravka) or by a wooden rampart (Cífer-Pác). I suggest therefore that Sobari is another example of a "*Roman-style*" building outside Roman frontiers. Through its general layout, the building at Sobari is vaguely reminiscent of the so-called "*churches without apses*", which may raise the question whether or not it fulfilled any religious function³³. In any case, it is clear that the stone building at Sobari was inspired by the Roman architecture, to which its colonnade clearly points. Claims to a particular social status may have been formulated through this building, in the same way the presence of a porticoed courtyard or a triclinium is interpreted as indicating an "*aristocratic*" Roman house. The question of the building's owner is a very difficult one. Was he a "*tribal chief*", as Boris Magomedov suggested³⁴, or a Roman adviser of some *foederati*? The presence of a golden sheet mounting the saddle bows may indicate, in any case, a person of high social status. The same may be true for the owner of the stone building at Cimișeni, with its plan so similar to the buildings found in the north-west area of the Black Sea³⁵. Further archaeological research on the site may confirm this idea.

All three cases discussed could be fairly well dated to the second half of the fourth century. It has been argued that at Komarovo, the stone building postdates the glassworking shop, as suggested by the amphora found on the building's floor. Ščapova based her argument on the dating of the glass finds. It is, however, evident that the stone building employed glass artefacts produced in the shop sometime during the third century. If the other houses could be dated later, during the second half of the fourth century, we may presume that at that

time, the stone building had already lost its primary function, being used as a storage area, as suggested by both the absence of a heating facility at the presence of amphoras and dolia. But the absence of an adequately published report, with a clear stratigraphic sequence makes any speculation very doubtful.

Why were those stone buildings built where they were? A mapping of all known cases shows a relation between such buildings and trade routes connecting the Baltic Sea area and the Danube frontier. Šćukin has argued that these trade routes have already emerged in the second half of the first century as important

avenues for exports of Roman artefacts to *barbaricum* in exchange for amber. Intensive trade along the Dniester route seems to have been encouraged by the inception of Sântana de Mureș-Černjachov settlements in the area between the Dniester and the Danube³⁶. There is no evidence that the status of those inhabiting the stone buildings at Komarova, Sobari, or Cimișeni derived in any way from controlling these trade routes, but it can be a coincidence that all three sites located along these avenues of trade to which Ammianus Marcellinus alludes in famous passage concerning Munderich.

Note

1. At Aleksandrovka and Bašmatka, on the Lower Dniepr river, and at Gorodok, on the Southern Bug river. A Černjachov complex of buildings was found at Kamenka-Ančekrak, on the Black Sea coast. See MAGOMEDOV 1995, 133. Third- to fourth century 'villae' were found in the Middle Danube area as well, at Dúbravka, Cífer-Pác, and Milanovce. See KOLNÍK 1986b.
2. SMIŠKO-ŠČAPOVA 1975.
3. SMIŠKO 1964.
4. BEZBORODOV 1964; ŠČAPOVA 1964; ŠČAPOVA 1978.
5. ŠČAPOVA 1983; SMIŠKO-ŠČAPOVA 1975.
6. ŠČAPOVÁ 1978, 241.
7. RAU 1975.
8. ŠČAPOVA 1983, 146.
9. FEDOROV 1960, 271 nr. 194.
10. RIKMAN 1970; RIKMAN 1975a, 205-214.
11. NICULIȚĂ 1996; NICULIȚĂ/BANARU 1995; NICULIȚĂ/POPA 1994; POPA 1992; POPA 1997.
12. POPA 1992, 31.
13. BOBRINSKIJ 1991, 174-175.
14. BRODRIBB 1987, 99.
15. ŠČAPOVA 1978, 241.
16. RIKMAN 1970, 196; RIKMAN 1975a, 211, note 66-67; ŠČAPOVA 1983, 146.
7. HARDEN 1959, 9-10, 16.
8. RAU 1975, Taf. 2-3, Abb. 9.
9. ŠĆUKIN/ŠČERBAKOVA 1986, 194.
20. WERNER 1956; DMITRIEV 1979, 158; BÓNA 1991; ZASECKAJA 1994; ANKE 1998.
21. ZASECKAJA 1994, 46-50.
22. ZASECKAJA 1994; ANKE 1995; ANKE 1998.
23. RIKMAN 1975a, fig. 27.8.
24. OPAIT 1996, 59-60, pl. 11.4.
25. NUDEL'MAN 1976, 50, nr. 2, 59 nr. 9.
26. RIKMAN 1975b, 118, nr. 471.
27. ŠĆUKIN 1989; ŠĆUKIN 1991.
28. ŠĆUKIN 1991, 224.
29. STRAUME 1987, 29 and Taf. 3.81.
30. BÖTTGER 1981.
31. WERNER 1956, 26; HAGBERG 1967, 43-44, fig. 22-23; ŠĆUKIN 1991.
32. See about: PITTS 1987; KOLNÍK 1986a; KOLNÍK 1986b; KOLNÍK 1990.
33. POPA 1997.
34. MAGOMEDOV 1995
35. MAGOMEDOV 1987; MAGOMEDOV 2001; 19-24; POPA 1999a; POPA 1999b.
36. ŠĆUKIN 1991; ŠĆUKIN 1999.

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Abstract

Considerații privind construcțiile de piatră din Barbaricum în Epoca Romană Târzie

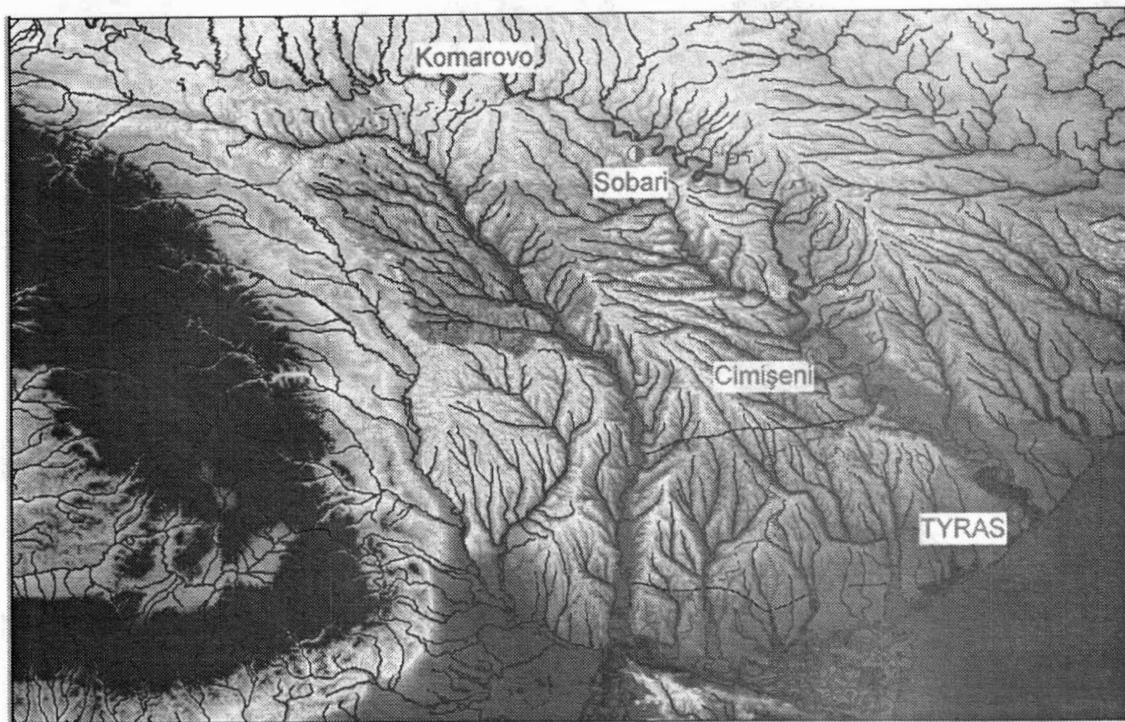
Până în prezent, în bazinul râului Nistru ne sunt cunoscute trei așezări de epocă romană în care s-au descoperit urme ale elementului arhitectural provincial-roman: Komarovo (rajon Kelmency, oblast' Černovcy, Ucraina), Sobari (județul Soroca) și Cimișeni (județul Chișinău).

Discutarea tehnicii și tehnologiei de construcție, a materialelor de construcție, precum și a cronologiei edificiilor de piatră de pe malul drept al Nistrului, indică prezența aici a elementelor provincial-romane. Acest fapt, alături de dislocarea în afara limesului roman, apropie complexele de pe Nistru de amintitele deja "*stațiuni romane din barbaricum*" din zona Dunării de Mijloc.

Examinând problema prezenței construcțiilor de piatră în Europa perioadei romane, constatăm că edificiile construite în stil roman (sau eventual după model provincial-roman) și dispuse în afara granițelor imperiului, sunt un fenomen general, specific nu numai culturii Sântana de Mureș-Černjahov; ele fiind cunoscute după izvoarele arheologice de-a lungul limesului, de la așezările chorei olbiopolitane și până la Dunărea de Mijloc, iar după informația lui Amm. Marcellinus referitoare la casele suebilor construite *in ritu Romano*, până în preajma limesului renan [Amm. Marcellinus XVII, 1, 7]. Suntem de părere că aceste construcții nu reflectă un fenomen de origine locală, ci rezultatul influenței civilizației provincial-romane asupra populațiilor din imediata apropiere a limesului.

Tradus de Ivan Suciuc

Alexandru Popa



Planșa / Plate 1

Dispunerea geografică a așezărilor analizate.
Geographical position of the analyzed settlements.

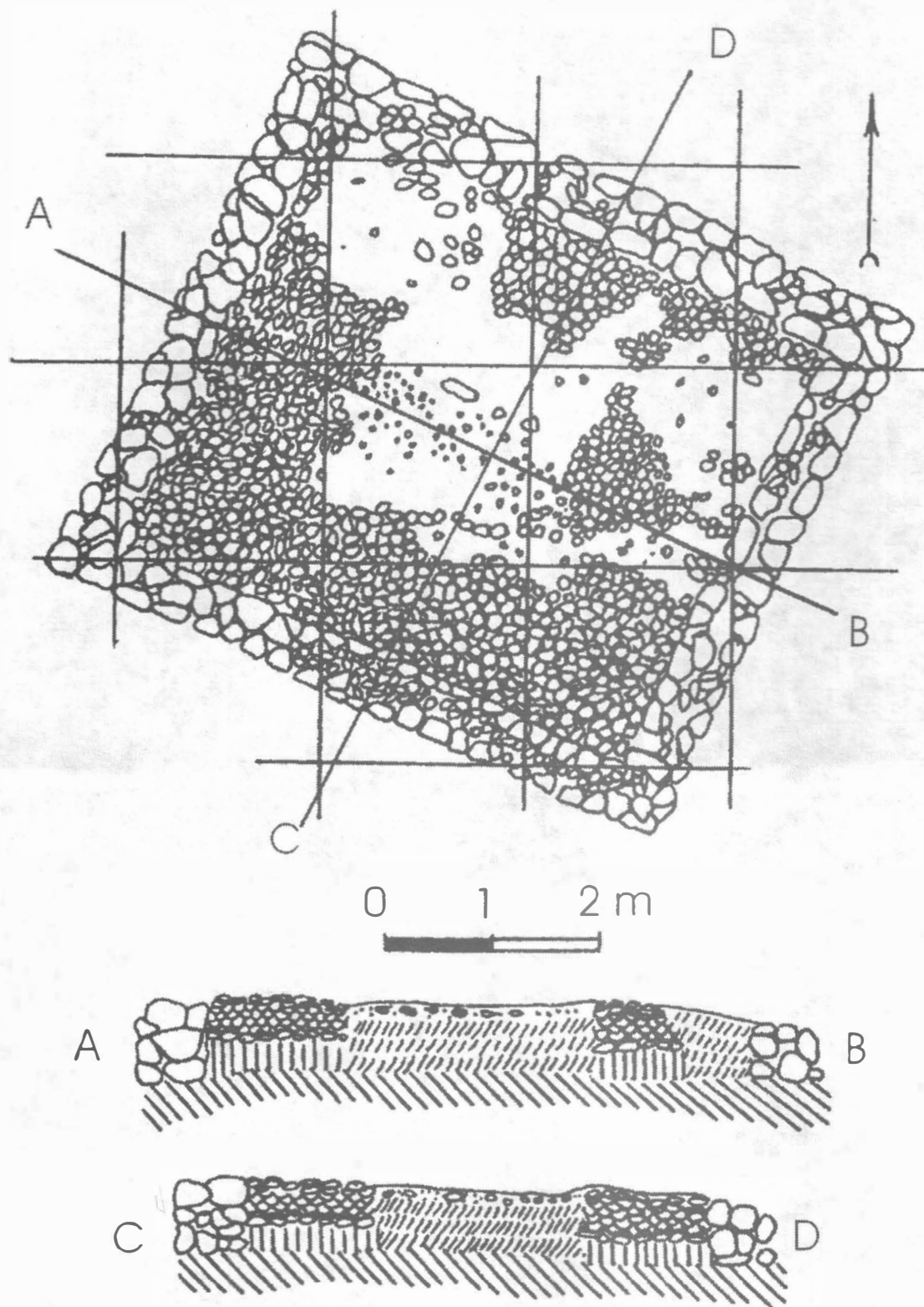


Figura / Figure 1
Komarovo (apud Smiško).

Planul și profilele construcției de piatră. 1. piatră; 2. piatră mărunță; 3. prundiș; 4. strat de pământ depus sub podeaua construcției; 5. humus antic; 6. loess.

Stone buildingscheme and profiles . 1. stone; 2. fine/small stone; 3. gravel; 4. layer of earth laid under the floor of the building; 5. antique humus; 6. loess.

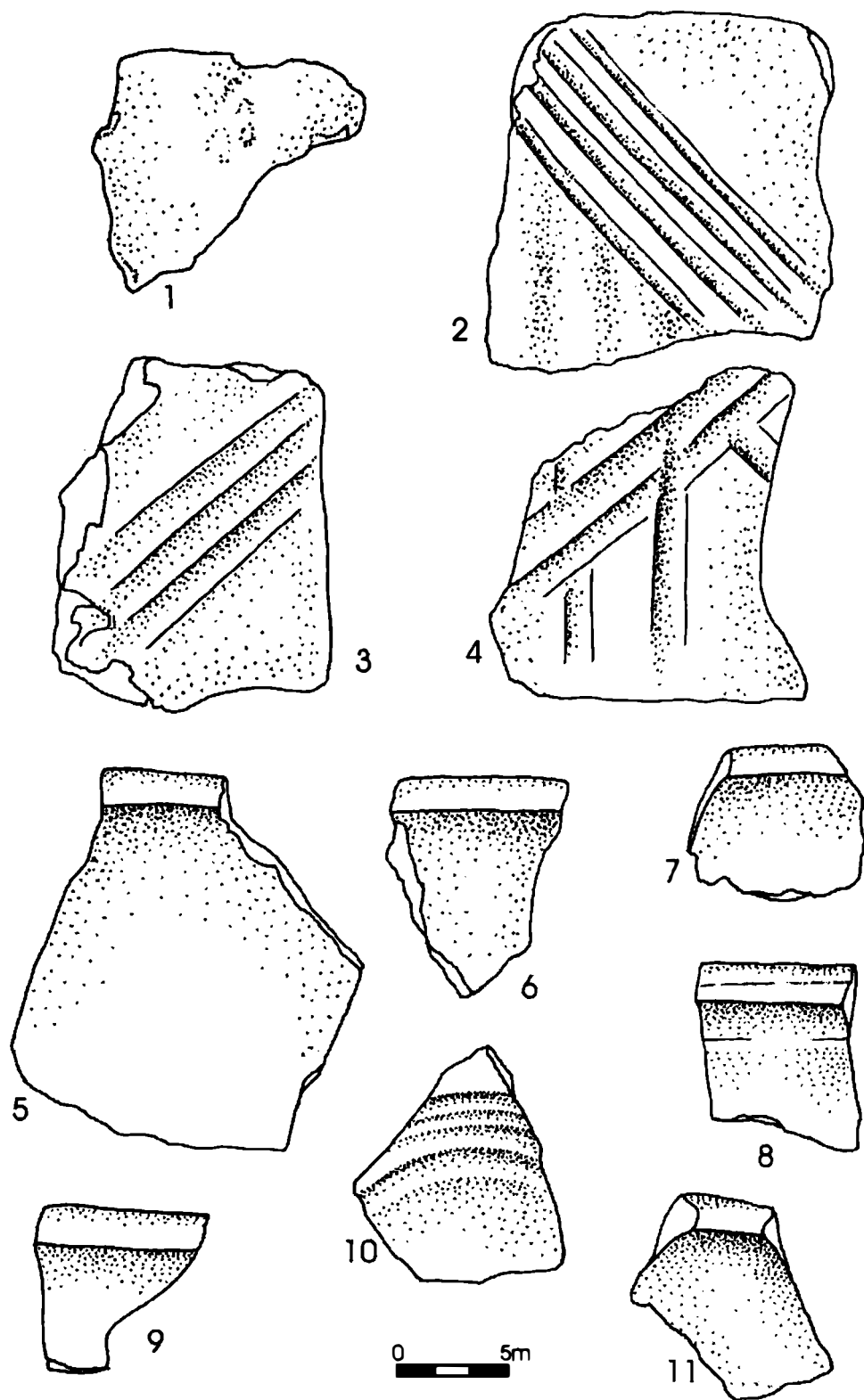


Figura / Figure 2
Komarovo (apud Smiško).
Fragmente de țiglă și cărămidă din așczare.
Tile and brick fragments from the settlement.

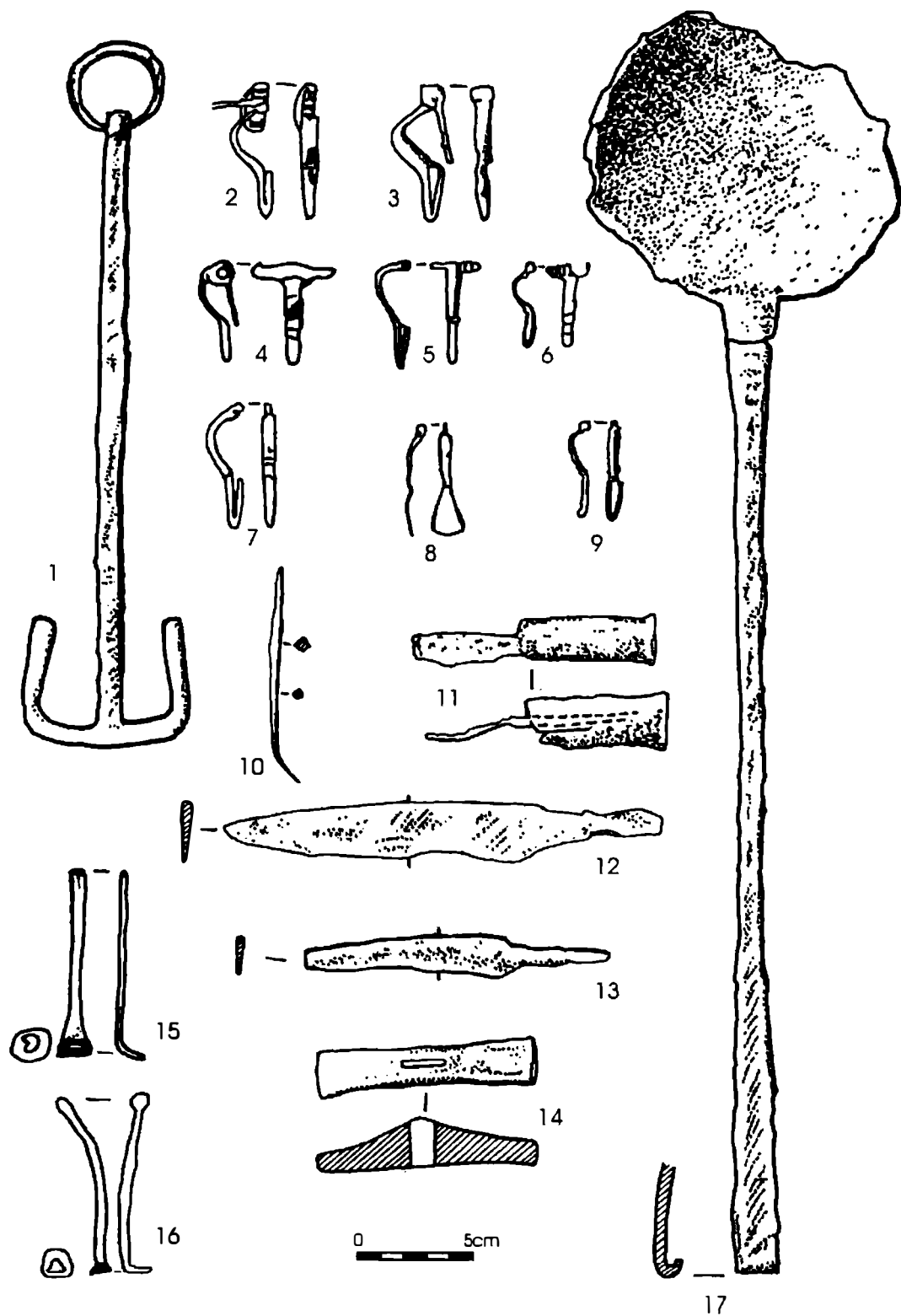


Figura / Figure 3
 Komarovo (după Smiško)
 Obiecte de metal descoperite în așezare.
 Metal objects discovered in the settlement.



Figura / Figure 4
Komarovo (apud Săpova).
Fragmente de vase de sticlă de import.
Pots fragments made of imported glass.

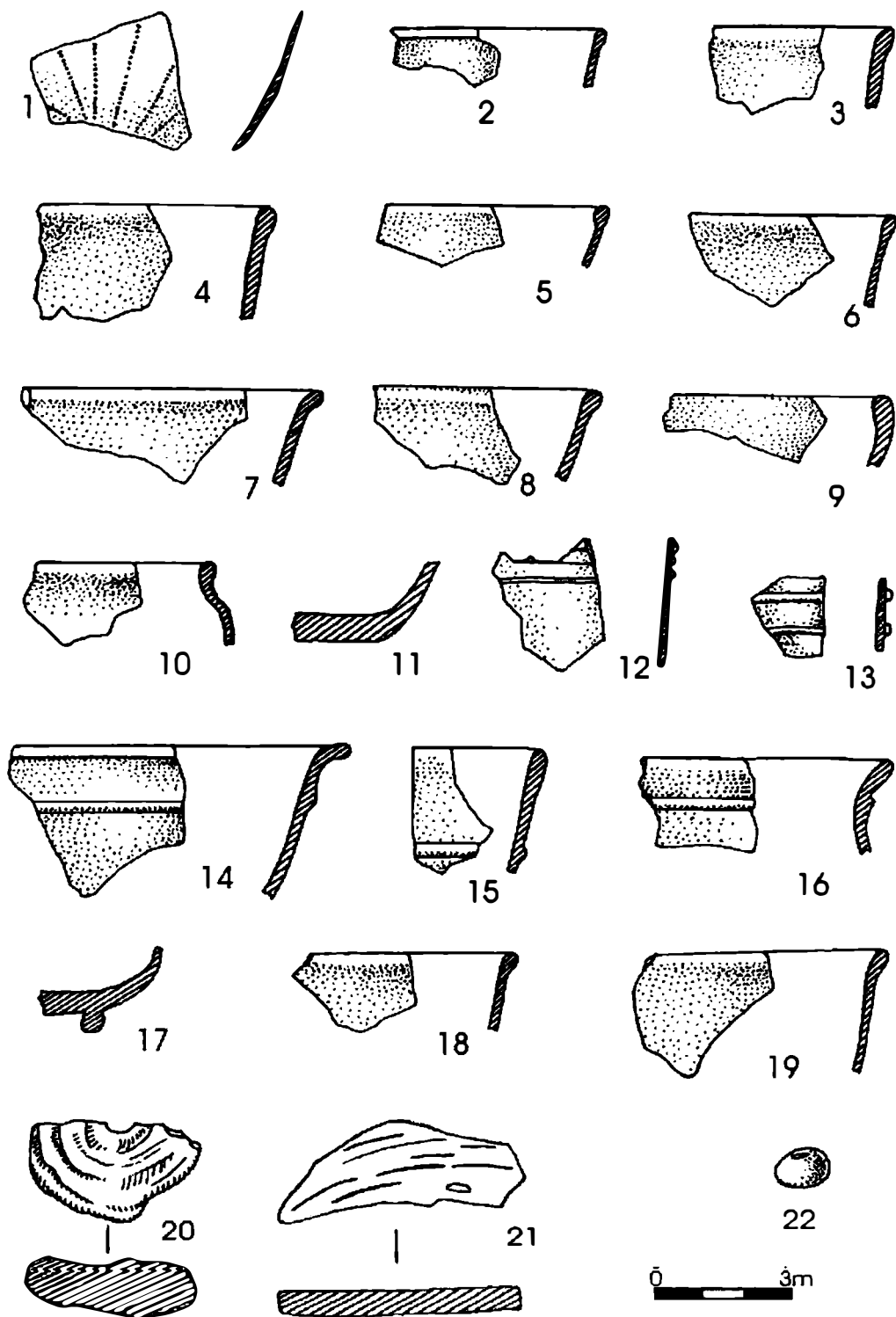


Figura / Figure 5
 Komarovo (după Șcapova)
 Produse ale producției locale de sticlă. 1-20, 22. fragmente de vase; 21. mărghiță.
 Products of the local glass production. 1-20, 22. pots fragments ; 21. bead.

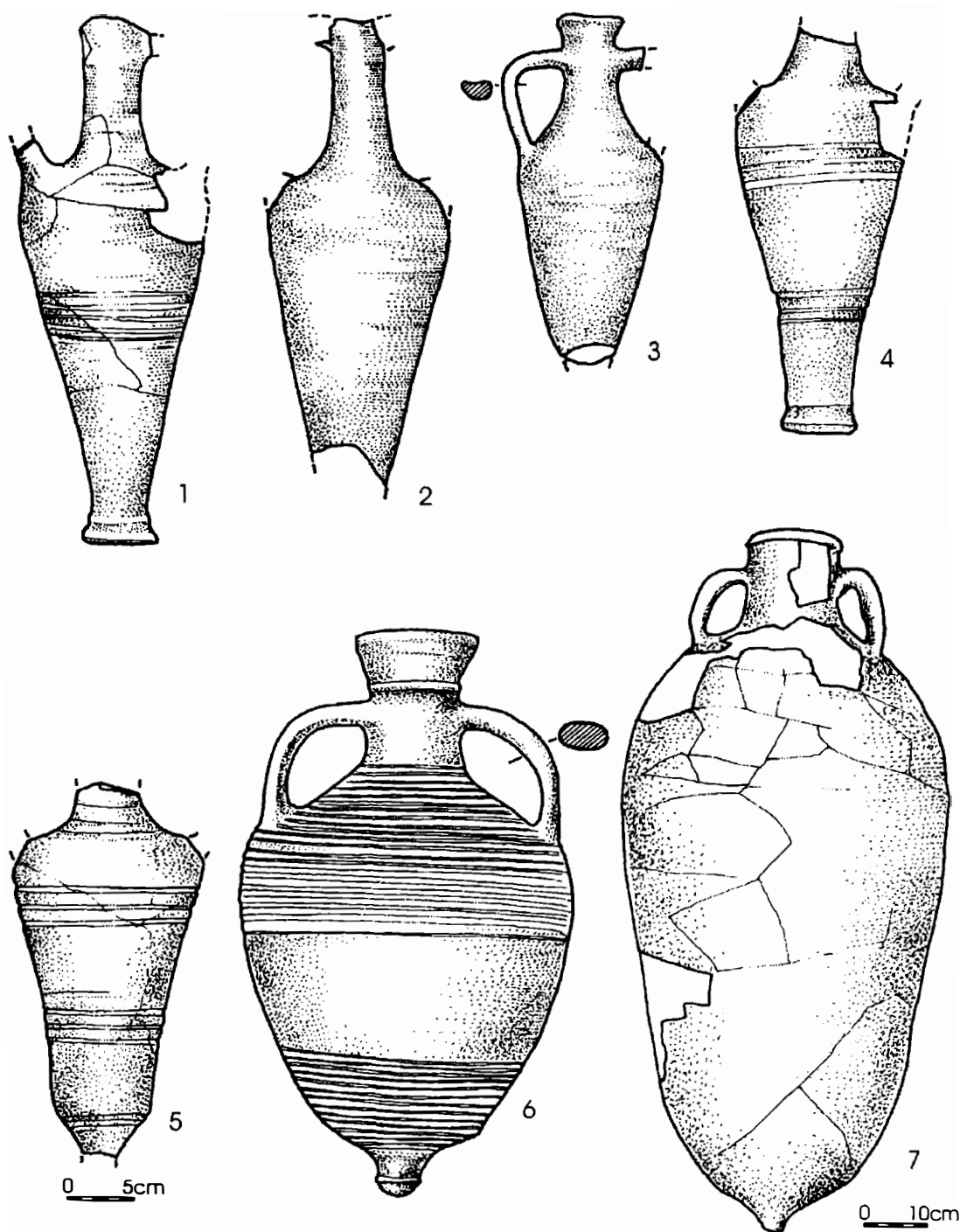


Figura / Figure 6
 Komarovo (apud Smiško)
 Fragmente de amfore descoperite în așezare.
 Amphoras fragments discovered in the settlement.

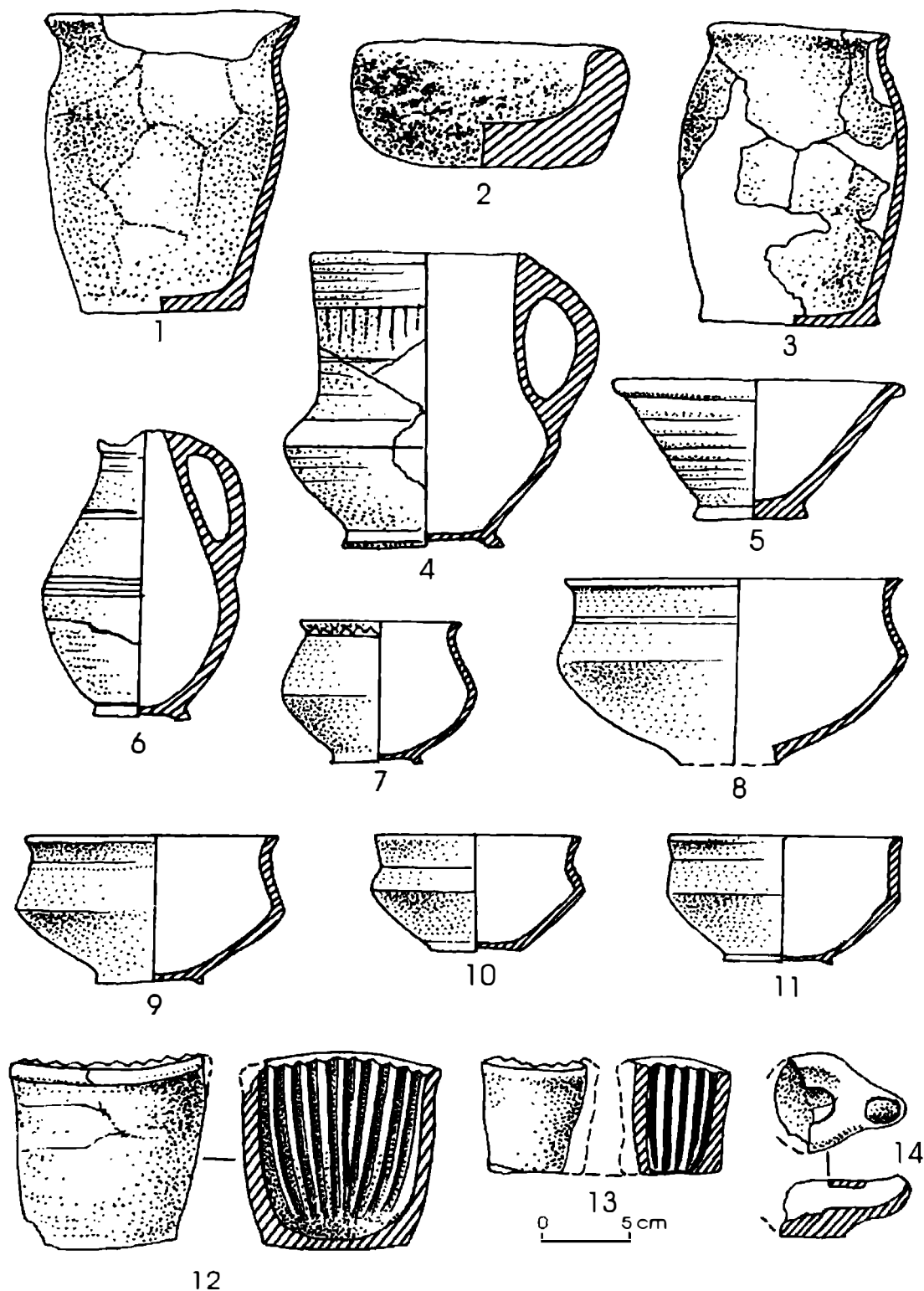


Figura / Figure 7
 Komarovo (apud Sniško)
 Vase ceramice din aşezare.
 Ceramical pots from the settlement.

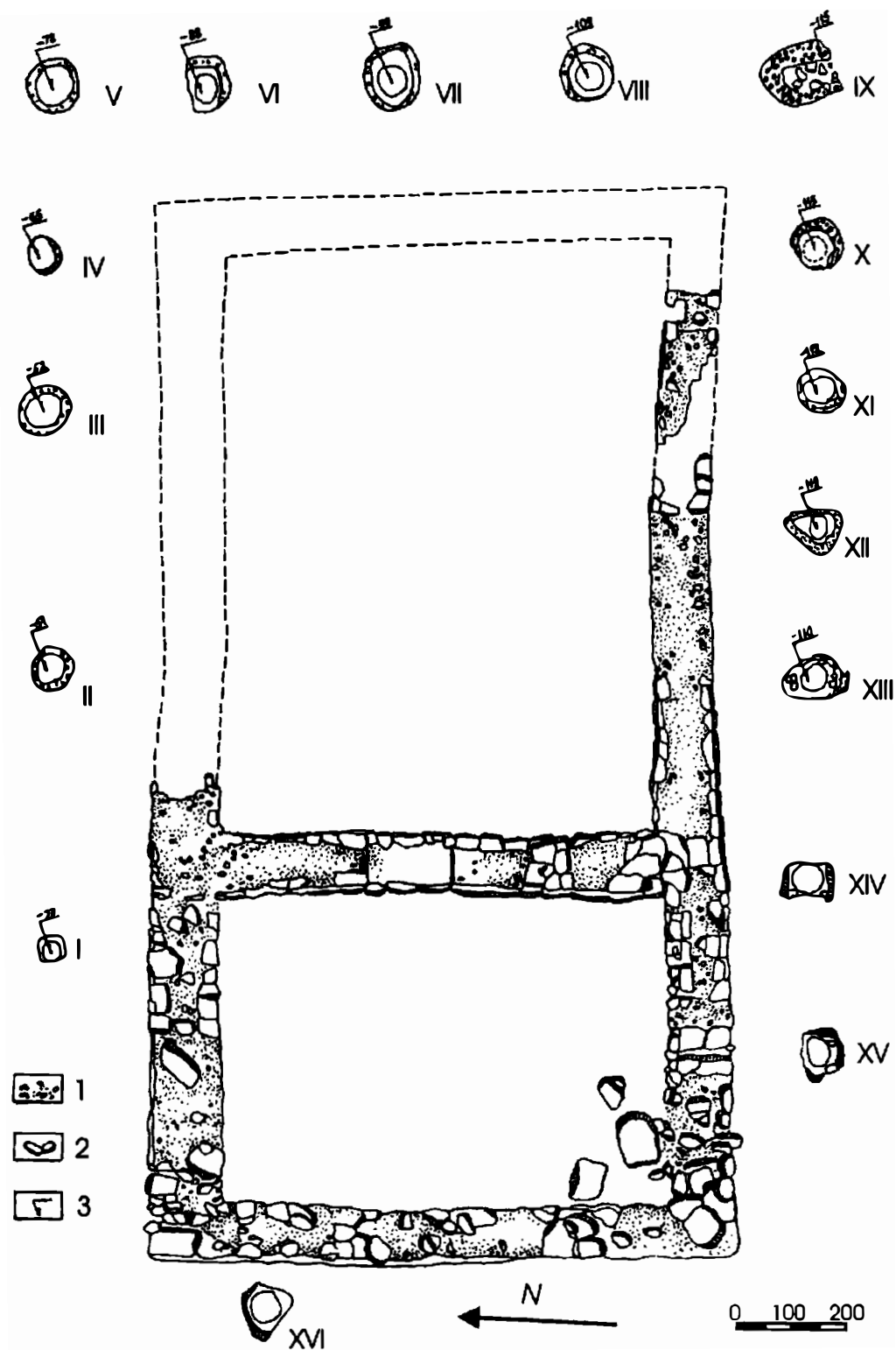


Figura / Figure 8
Sobari.

Planul construcției de piatră (1. mortar; 2. piatră; 3. adâncimea bazelor de coloană).
The scheme of the stone building (1. mortar; 2. stone; 3. the depth of the basis of columns).

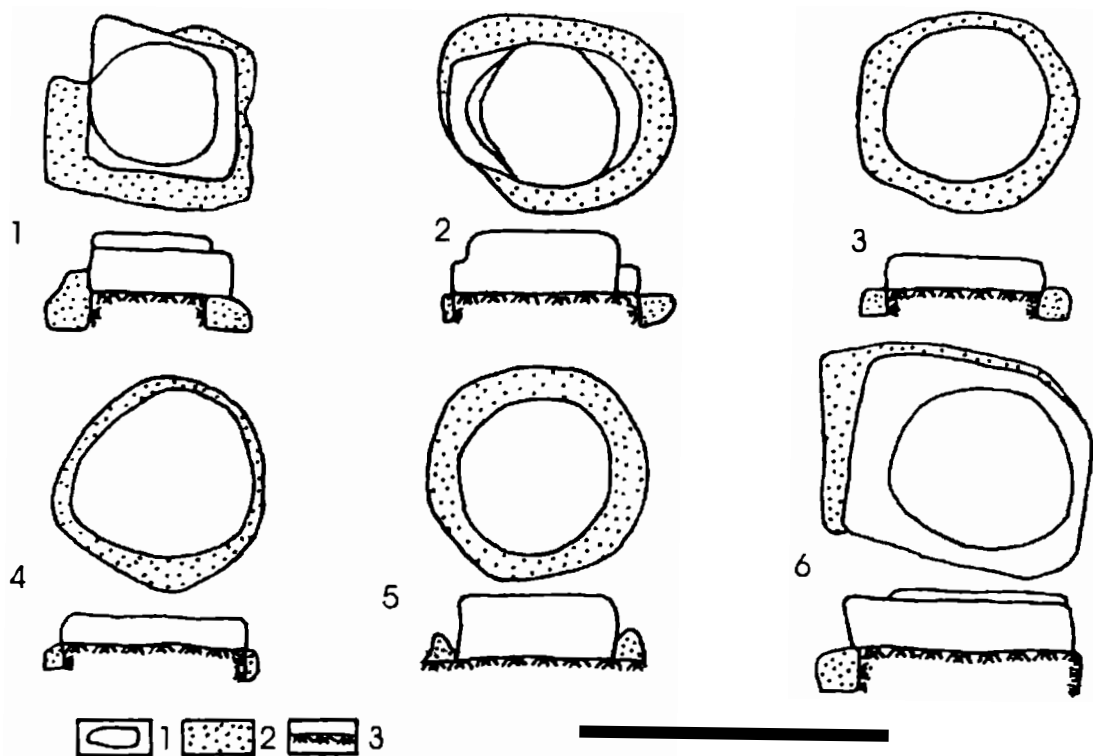


Figura / Figure 9
Sobari
Baze de coloană.
Basis of columns.

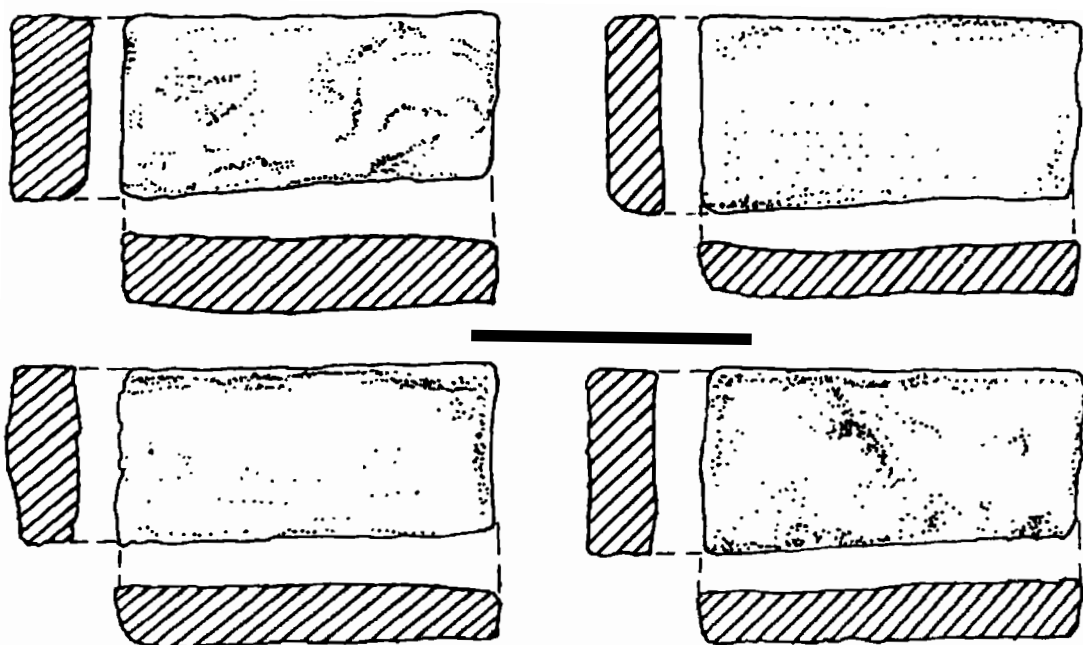


Figura / Figure 10
Sobari
Căramidă dreptunghiulară.
Rectangular brick.

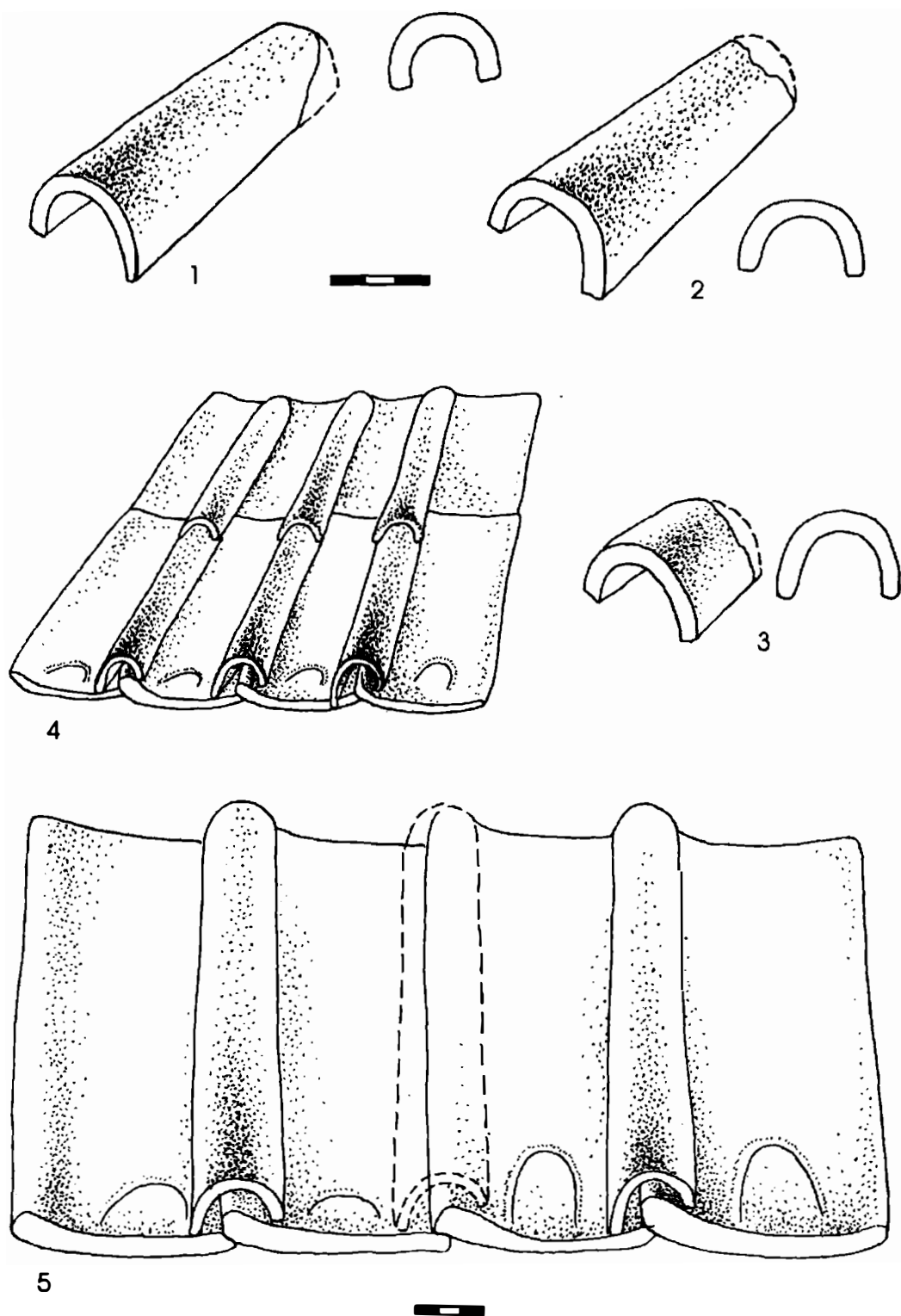


Figura / Figure 11

Sobari

Fragmente de țiglă (1-3) și reconstituirea presupusă a modului de îmbinare a lor pe acoperiș.
 Fragments of tiles (1-3) and other presumed reconstruction of their method of joining on the roof.

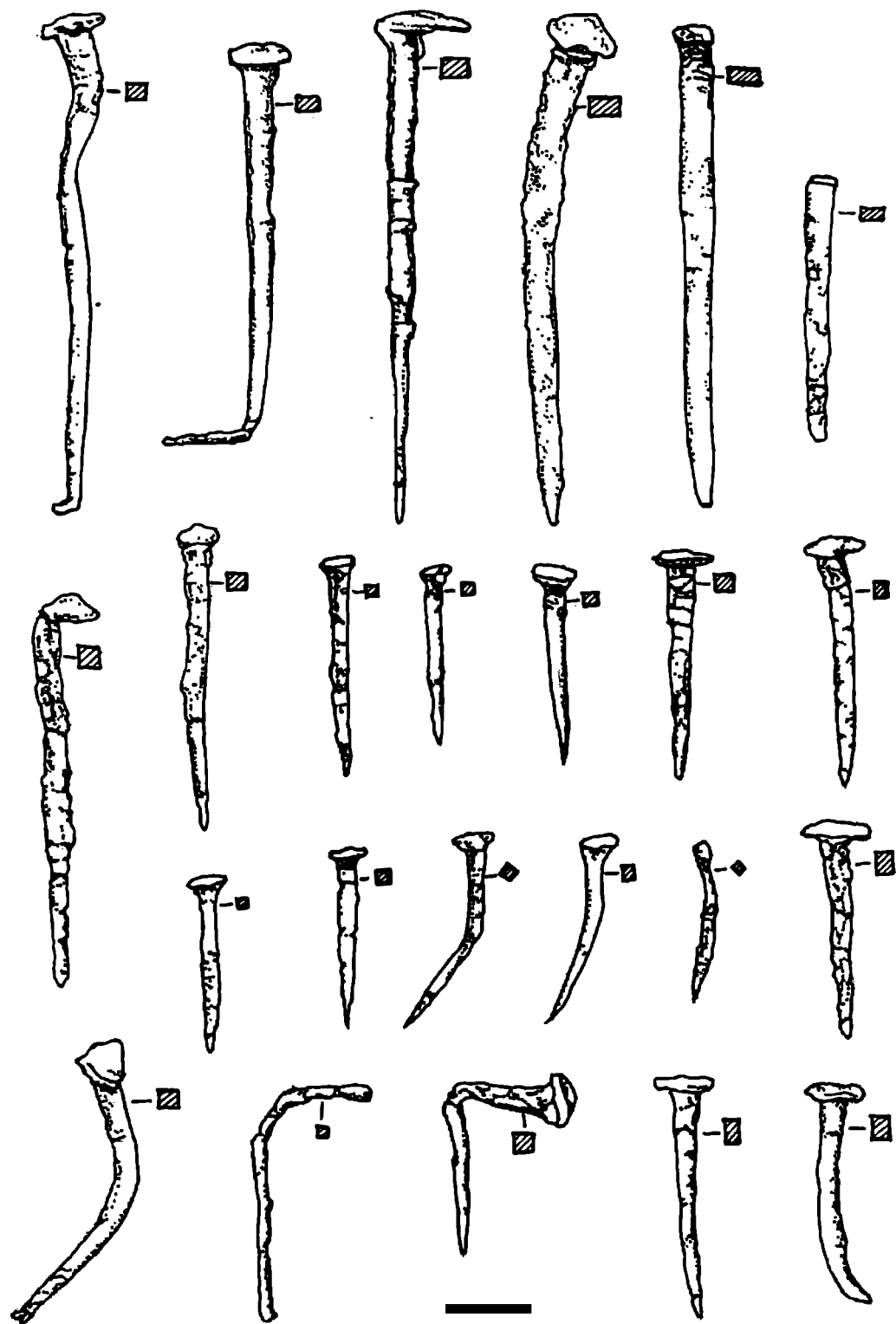


Figura / Figure 12
Sobari

Cuie de piatră din ruinele construcției de piatră.
Stone nails from the stone building ruins.

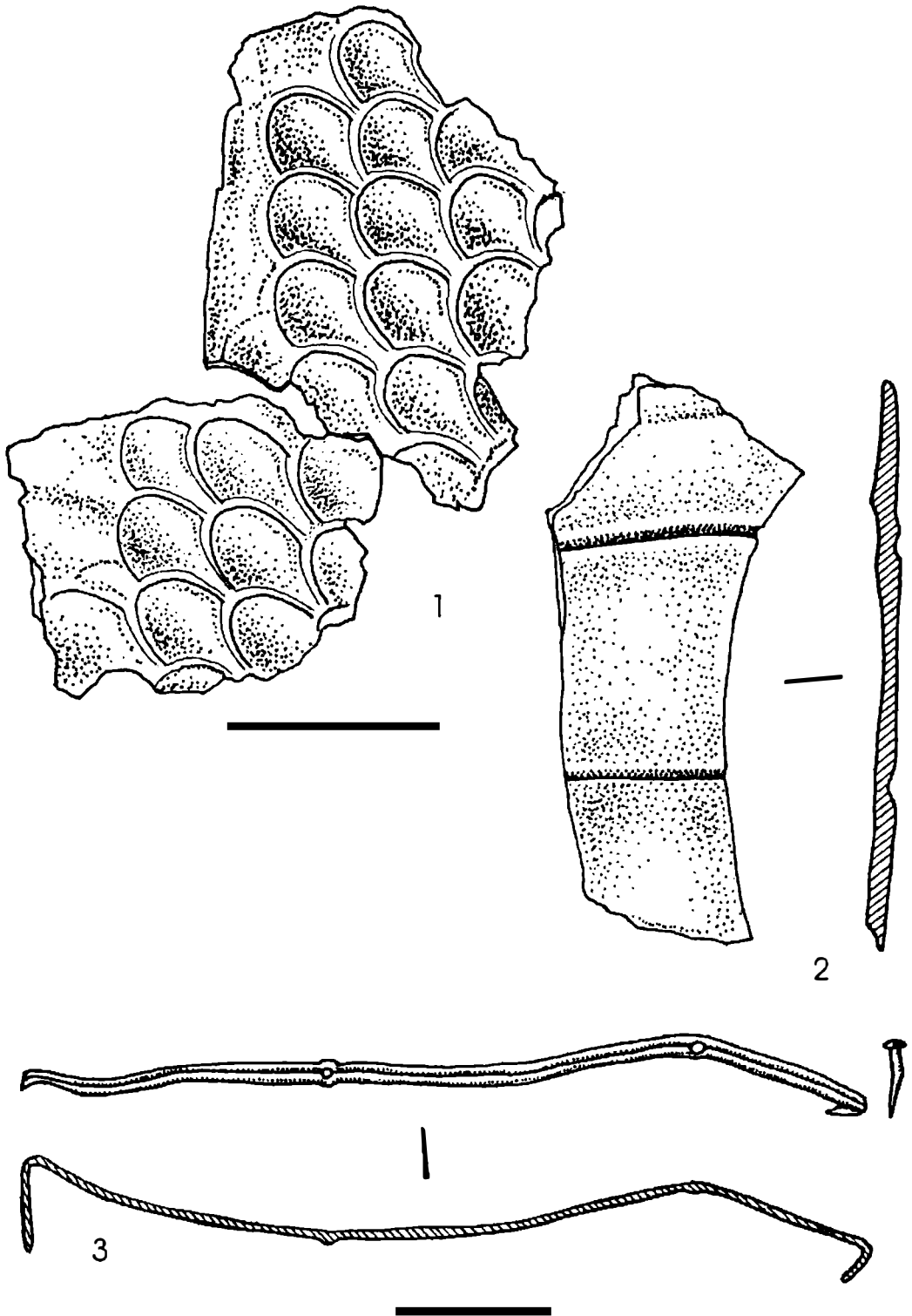


Figura / Figure 13
Sobari

1. Folie de aur cu decor imprimat; 2. fragment de palhar de sticlă; 3. bară de bronz cu nitul de fixare.
1. golden blade with printed scenery; 2. fragment from a glass made glass; 3. bronze bar with fixing rivet.

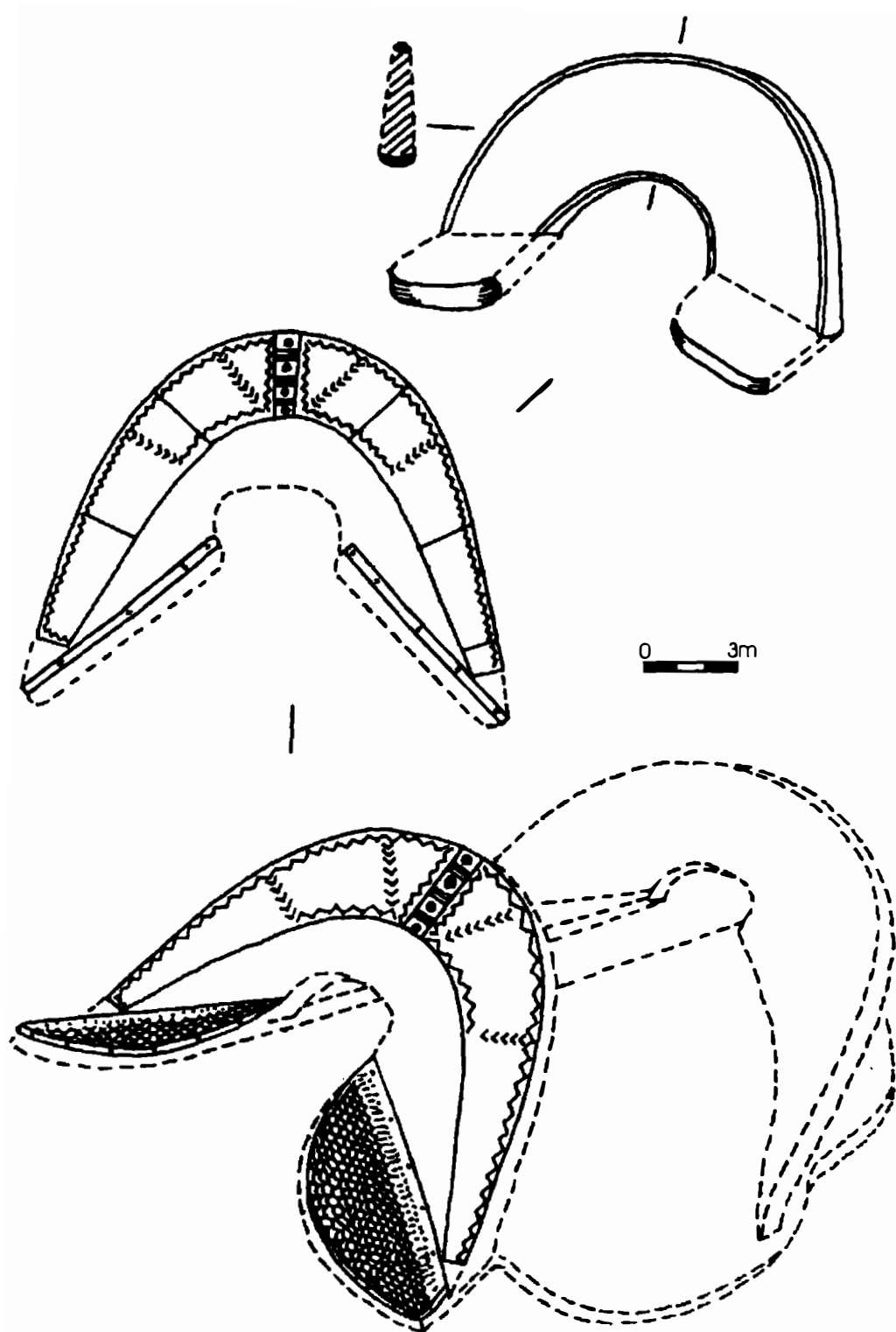


Figura / Figure 14

Reconstituire de șea de călăreț din epoca migrațiilor.
Reconstruction of a saddle from the era of migrations.
 (apud Bóna)

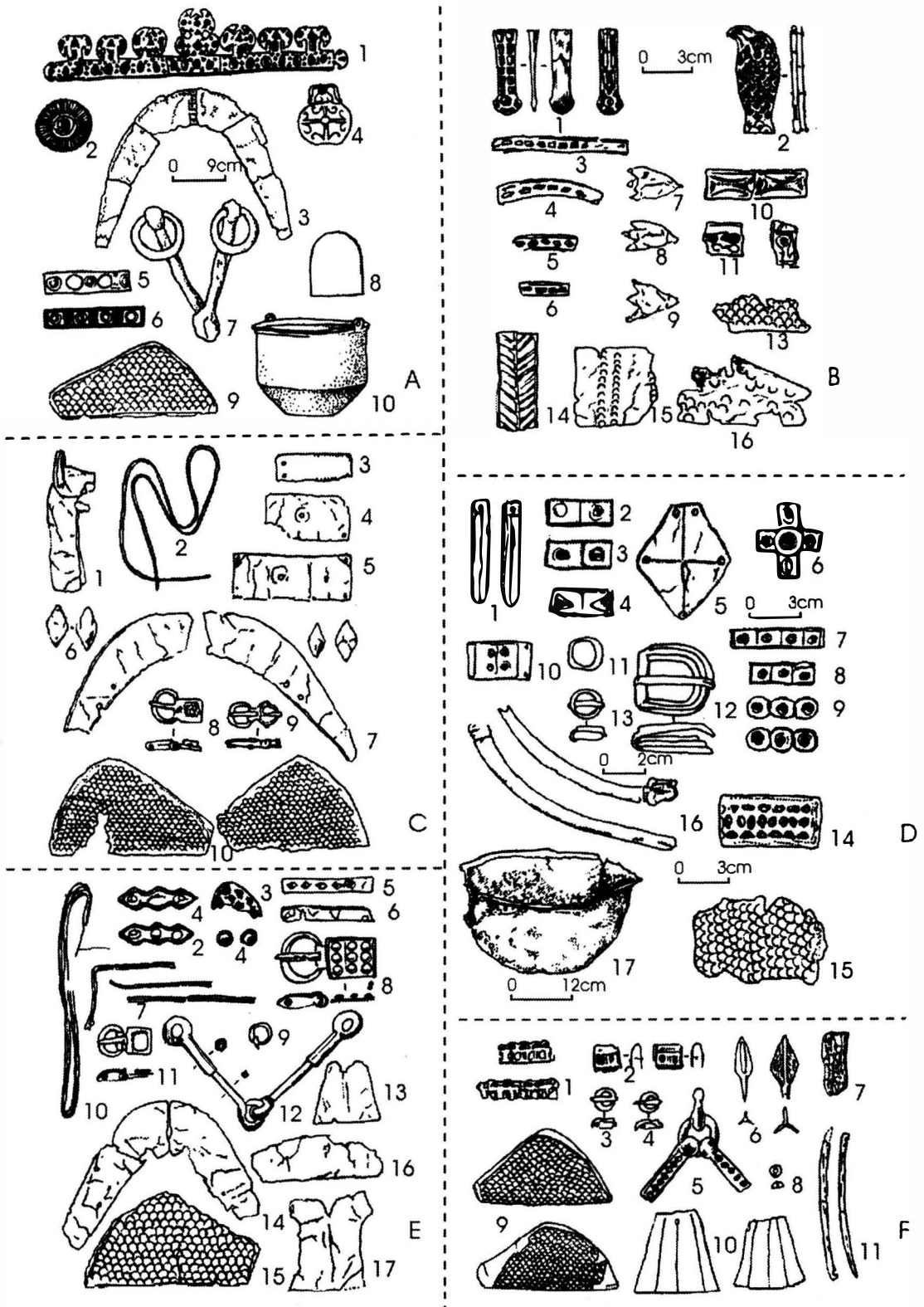


Figura / Figure 15

Fragments of golden leaf from complex funerary from the era of migrations.

Funeral piles golden blades fragments from the era of migrations.

A. Kiziljarskaja Balka; B. Concești; C. Novogrigorovka - mormântul/tomb IX; D. "sovohoz Kalinin";
E. Novogrigorovka - mormântul/tomb VIII; F. Kubej.

(apud Zaseckaja)

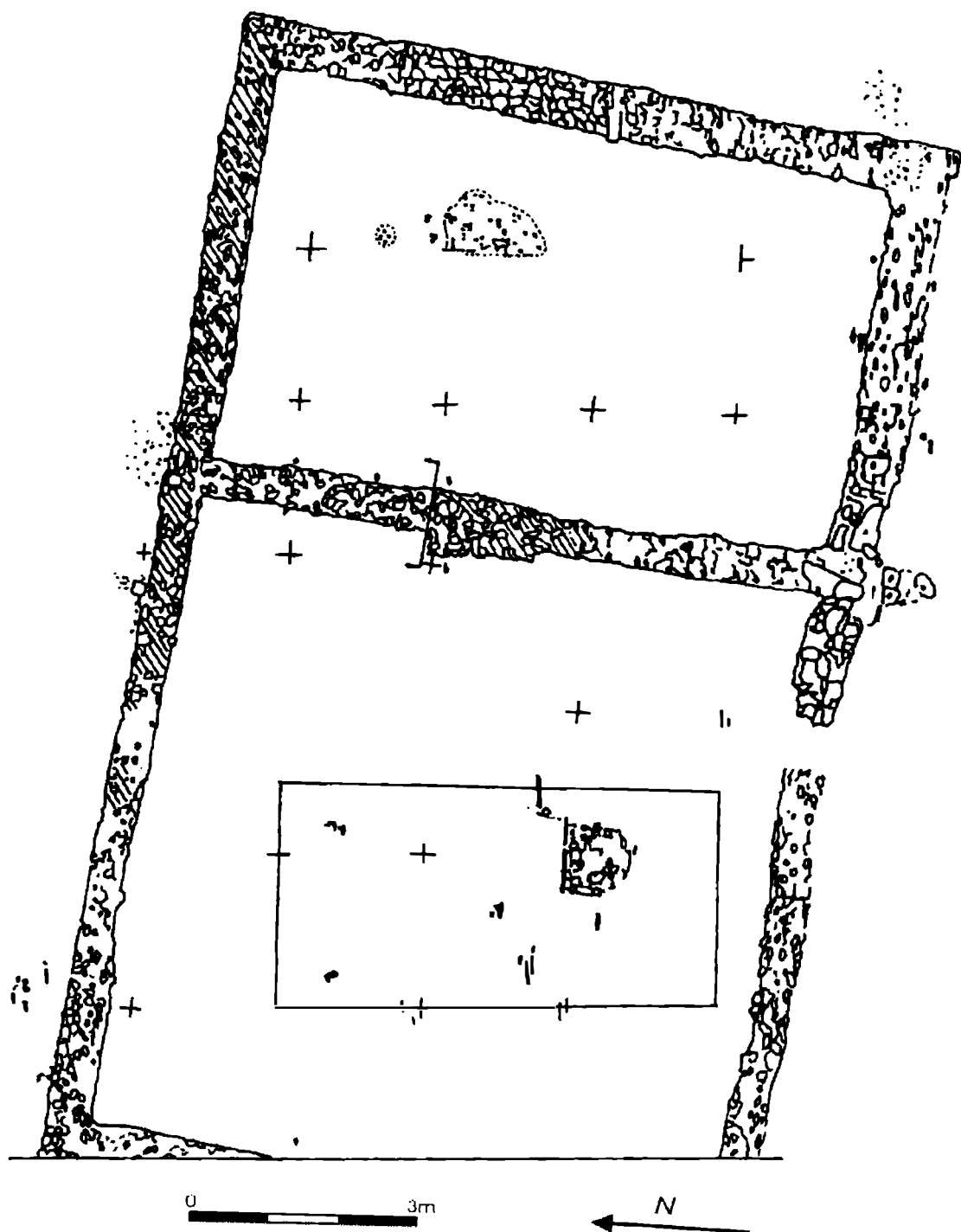


Figura / Figure 16
Cimișeni (după Șeukin)
Planul construcției de piatră.
Stone building scheme.

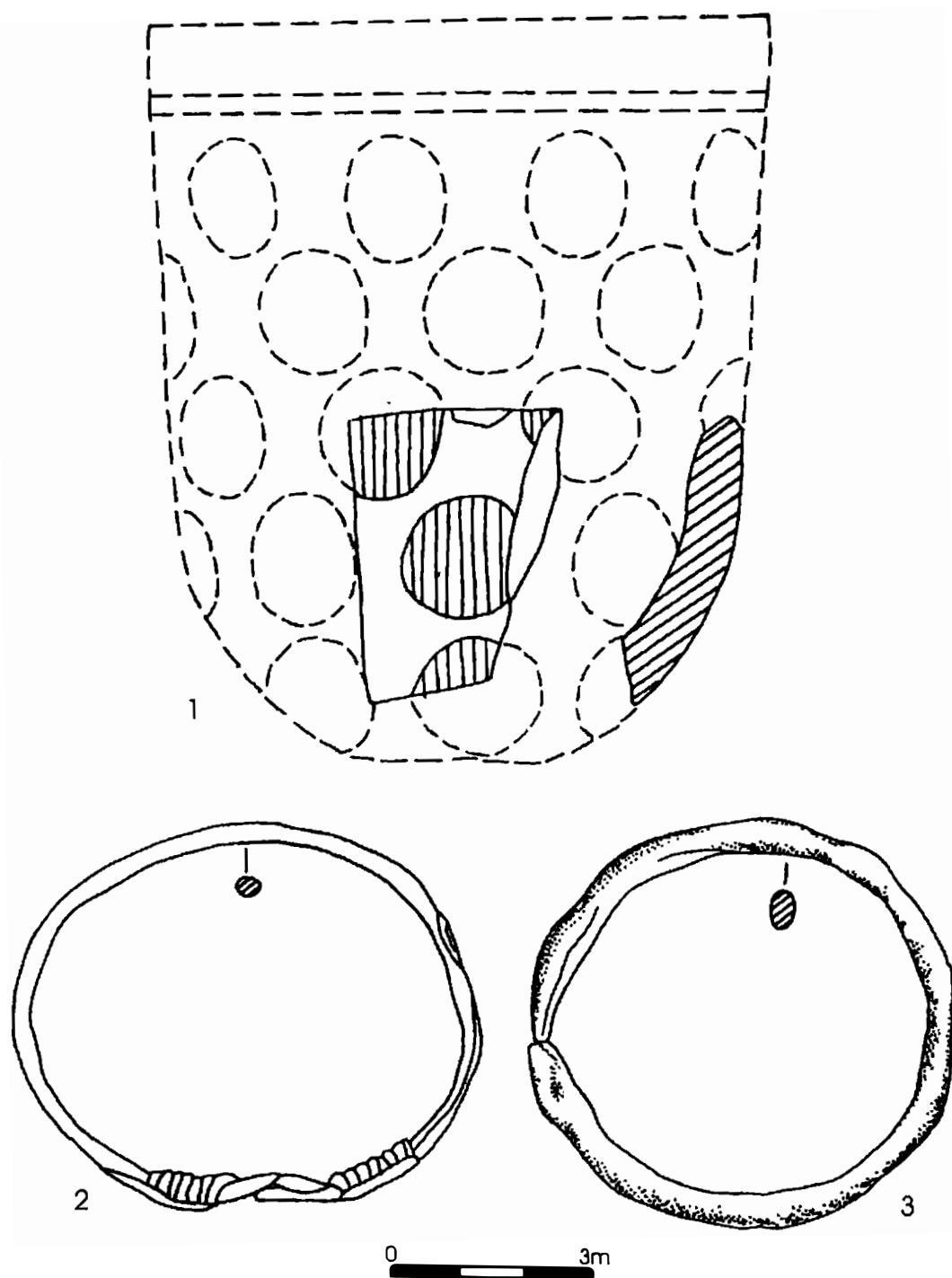


Figura / Figure 17
Cimișeni (după Șeukin)
1. fragment de păhar de sticlă; 2. brățară de bronz; 3. brățară de fier.
1. fragment from a glass; 2. bronze bracelet; 3. iron bracelet.