

The fortification Saharna - La Şanṭ

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A l'ouest de la localité Saharna, le district Rezina, sur le plateau nommé par les indigènes „La Şanṭ”, on a fait des recherches à deux enceintes fortifiées. L'une avait des dimensions plus grandes (307×254 m) et elle a été fortifiée par un rempart défensif. La deuxième a été emplacée à l'extrême du nord de la première enceinte et représente une acropole d'une forme demi ovale avec les dimensions 175×60 m. La celle a été fortifié par un rempart en bois, en pierre et en sol. Sur l'acropole on a été découvert un four, 9 fossés pour les provisions, ainsi que un divers matériel archéologique, qui permet l'encadrement de l'habitat dans les IV-III siècles av. J.-C.

Location. Defensive elements

The fortification is located westward of Saharna region, Rezina town, Republic of Moldova, on the bank of the depression called “Valea Crac” (fig. 1/2), in the immediate vicinity of (fig. 1/1) Saharna Mare (I. Niculiță, A. Zanoci, T. Arnăut, 2007, p. 27-62) and Saharna Mică (I. Niculiță, T. Arnăut, A. Zanoci, 2004, p. 195-196). The archaeological investigation at this site started in 2003 (I. Niculiță, A. Zanoci, V. Moldovan, 2004, p. 92-99; A. Zanoci, V. Moldovan, 2004, p. 130-138) and continued in 2006-2008 (A. Zanoci, M. Băt, 2007, p. 287-298; A. Zanoci, M. Băt, 2008, p. 253-266; A. Zanoci, M. Băt, 2008a, p. 26-27).

As a result of corroborating the satellite pictures (Google Earth) and the data obtained through field research was determined that 2 fortified precincts existed on the plateau at the point Saharna-La Şanṭ. The first had a polygonal irregular form with the size 307×254 m (fig. 1/3). It was limited by the steep slopes of the depression from north and west and by an artificial defensive system from south and east, represented by a ditch making a semicircle with a total length of 458 m. The ditch traces are visible only at the edges, were it has

9 m width and 0,6-0,9 m depth, the rest of it was leveled due to agricultural works. Still its presence is attested by the satellite photographs and by the difference in vegetation during spring and summer.

The second fortified precinct has a semi-oval form with the approximate dimensions of 175×60 m (fig. 1/3) and was located on the north-eastern extremity of the first precinct. Therefore, the fortification was protected from north by the natural steep slope of the ravine and from west, east and south – by an artificial defensive system which is represented actually by an elevation of 1,6-1,7 m and a width at the foundation of 12-14 m (fig. 1/4).

A ditch and 4 pits disposed in 2 rows at a distance of 1,0-1,7 m one from another were discovered as a result of the investigations conducted 2003 (fig. 2/1) in the western part of the defensive system. The 0,3 m width and 0,15 m depth ditch was discovered on a length of 2,3 m. The pits had around 0,3 m in diameter and 0,2 m in depth. Stones with the dimensions of 30×20×15 cm and 80×40×20 cm mixed with burned soil and fragments of burned beams were uncovered between the pit rows and in their immediate proximity. The pit rows, the stones, the burned soil, and the fragments of burned beams indicated the presents of a defensive construction. It consisted of two beam rows placed buried vertically stuck together by other horizontal beams. The remaining holes were filled in with stones of different sizes and soil.

During the investigations conducted in 2008 (fig. 2/2-5) in the central part of the defensive system were discovered as well the remains of a construction made of wood, stones and earth. It is documented by the presence of seven pits, of burned wood fragments, of burned soil, and of a considerable number of stones. The pits, cylindrical in form, had a diameter of 0,2-0,3 m and a depth of 0,15-0,20 m and were arranged in 3 almost parallel row at a distance of 2,1 m and, respectively, 0,4 m one from another. Wooden pillars were fixed inside the pits forming thus a complex made of 3 paraments. They were enforced at their foundation by horizontal beams of wood for resistance, fact attested by fragments of carbonized wood uncovered at the base of the construction. In the space therefore created the soil was rammed and filled in with stones resulting in a genuine wall. According to the stratigraphic data the pillars from the third row – the closest to the precinct, was smaller then the others. Therefore it might be assumed the creation of a step from the inside giving access to the defensive wall.

At a distance of 2,7 m before the wall were found the remains of a ditch. As a result of the archaeological investigations was established that the ditch was dug in the mother rock and had a 2,2 m width in the upper part and a 0,5 m depth against the ancient stepping level. The modest proportions of the ditch do not correlate with the characteristics of a defensive element; they more likely indicate its use for water drainage.

It could be concluded on the basis of the presented data that a citadel/acropolis of small dimensions, permanently inhabited, as well as a space for refuge with sporadic remains of habitat existed as Saharna-La Şanț.

Complexes. The archaeological inventory

The archaeological investigations were conducted especially on the acropolis where a furnace, 9 provision pits transformed later into garbage pits and a varied archaeological inventory were found.

The furnace (fig. 3/1) was discovered under the shift of the enclosure wall. The ruins were disposed on a quadrilateral area of 0,94×0,74 m. The hearth was 5-7 cm thick and was situated on a layer of limestone fragments with the average size of 0,15×0,10×0,05 m. Remains of the furnace walls and arch were discovered in a 0,10-0,15 m layer in the northern and western parts. On the hearth and among the remains of the furnace were discovered fragments of handmade vessels (fig. 4/1, 2) dated with 4th-3rd centuries BC.

The pits (fig. 3/2-10) were discovered at the depth of 0,4-1,0 m from the present stepping level, being bell- or cylindrical-shaped. The bell-shaped pits had a 0,95-1,2 m opening diameter and a 1,42-2,0 m foundation diameter and a 1,1-1,45 m depth.

The cylindrical-shaped pits had 1,0-1,6 m in diameter and 0,5-1,5 m in depth. The filling of the pits consisted of different shades of soils, fragments of burned clay, animal bones, and vessel fragments of different forms and sizes (fig. 4/3-18).

A rich and varied archaeological material was discovered both within the complexes and in the cultural layer of the settlement which has been divided according to its use into: tools, weapons, jewels and ceramic.

The tools found at the settlement Saharna-La Şanț were made of bone, stone and clay.

The tools from bone are represented by a fragment of spatula (fig. 5/1) used by the potters smooth the surface of the vessel.

From the category of *stone tools* is highlighted a stone hand mill and two whetstones. The hand mill (fig. 5/10) was a component of a grindstone piece with the thickness of 8,5. The hand mill surface shows usage traces which indicate its long use. Whole specimen and fragments of hand mills are known at Butuceni (I. Niculiță, S. Teodor, A. Zanoci, 2002, fig. 65/3), Mășcăuți “Dealul cel Mare” (A. Zanoci, 2004, fig. 14/1, 2) etc. The whetstones (fig. 5/11, 12) were made from grindstone as well and had a parallelepipedic or ellipsoidal shape. Their length varies from 8,0 to 10,5 cm, the width – 3,3 cm and the thickness – 1,4-2,9 cm. Similar pieces were discovered at the nearby settlements – Saharna Mare (I. Niculiță, A. Zanoci, T. Armăut, 2007, fig. 21/6)

and at other Thracian-Getic monuments – Butuceni (I. Niculiță, S. Teodor, A. Zanoci, 2002, fig. 64/6, 7, 9, 10), Mășcăuți “Dealul cel Mare” (A. Zanoci, 2004, fig. 14/3, 4) etc.

The clay tools are exclusively represented by spindles (fig. 5/2-6). They have a bi-conic form, their height varies between 1,1 and 2,9 cm, the maximum diameter – from 2,5 to 4,6 cm and the hole diameter – from 0,6 to 0,9 cm. The discovered objects have multiple analogies at the Thracian-Getic sites from Butuceni (I. Niculiță, S. Teodor, A. Zanoci, 2002, fig. 61), Mășcăuți “Dealul cel Mare” (A. Zanoci, 2004, fig. 13/1-5), Holercani (M. Kašuba, 2006, fig. 5/1, 4), Alcedar (V. Haheu, 1998, fig. 5/18, 19) etc.

The weapons are represented by a spear muff and an arrowhead. The spear muff (fig. 5/8) with a 1,7 cm diameter was made from an iron piece 0,1 cm thick and was preserved on a length of around 8, 2 cm. A similar muff was discovered in grave no. 211 from Danceni necropolis (V. Lapušnjan, 1979, p. 114, fig. 41). Spearheads with comparable muffs were attested at necropolis from Ferigile (A. Vulpe, 1967, p. 64, pl. XX) dated with the 6th-5th centuries BC and also in a series of burials from the north of the Black Sea (A. Meljukova, 1964, p. 42-44, fig. 14/5, 8) dated with the 5th-4th centuries BC. The arrowhead (fig. 5/9) was made from bronze and had 3 wings. The object had a hole along the socket. Such discoveries are widely spread at the Tracian-Getic monuments from the immediate vicinity – at the fortress Saharna Mare (I. Niculiță, A. Zanoci, A. Nicic, S. Matveev, 2003, fig. 41/6), at the civil settlement Saharna “Dealul Manastirii” (I. Niculiță, A. Nicic, 2007, fig. 3/3) and at other more distant settlements as Mateuți (M. Kašuba, V. Haheu, O. Levițki, 2000, pl. XLVI/5), Butuceni (I. Niculiță, S. Teodor, A. Zanoci, 2002, fig. 68/4), Poiana (S. Teodor, 1999, fig. 68/9) etc.

The jewels are represented by a bead (fig. 5/7) made of clay. It was cubic in shape with the length of the sides of 1,5 cm and had a hole with the diameter of 0,3 cm.

According to the technology **the pottery** discovered at Saharna-La Şanț in 2 categories: hand made and made using the potter's wheel.

From cultural-chronological viewpoint the hand made pottery is divided in two groups.

The first group includes pots made of a clay mixture with chamoite and pounded limestone. They were incompletely and unevenly burned; the color varies from dark brown to black. Most of the recipients have a polished surface. The number of ceramic fragments belonging to this group is quite small, only 26 being known at present. They were part of dishes, pots and cups. Dishes. It is noticeable a fragment from a dish with the edge slightly curved towards the interior and the roundish rim (fig. 5/13), decorated with an oblique groove in the upper part. It was determined as a result of the graphical

reconstruction that the rim diameter was 31 cm. Similar dishes were discovered at the Hallstatian settlement from Hansca (I. Niculiță, 1981, fig. 1/9), the necropolis from Stoicani (M. Petrescu-Dîmbovița, 1960, fig. 9/4), were they are dated with the 10th-9th centuries BC.

A certain interest among the pot fragments present a pot fragment with flared rim (fig. 5/16) and a fragment from a recipient with the vertical neck and thickened rim (fig. 5/15), both decorated with an alveolar girdle.

Bowls/cups are represented by a decorated fragment with stamped horizontal lines (fig. 5/17) and an ornament with vertical incisions (fig. 5/18). Multiple analogies among the assortment of Cozia-Saharna culture (M. Kašuba, 2000, fig. LI/9, 13; LXX/4; LXXII/10 etc.) are known for the ceramic fragments that belong to this group.

The pottery that belongs to the second group was made from clay paste with pound shivers as degreasing agents and was unevenly burned. The color varies from brickish to dark-brown. In that ceramic group we distinguish elements from dishes, pots and lids.

The dishes are represented by many fragments from vessels different forms and dimensions. We can distinguish several types of dishes according to the profile:

- Dishes with an almost conic body. The upper part, easily roundish and inclined towards the interior, is ornamented with oblique girdles (fig. 5/14). Dishes with a similar ornament are known from the discoveries at Alcedar (V. Haheu, 1998, fig. 11/14), Glinjeni "La Şanṭ" (M. Kašuba, V. Haheu, V. Levițki, 2000, pl. VIII/7, IX/7) etc.;
- Dishes with a conic body and the upper part inclined towards the interior (fig. 5/19). Similar fragments were discovered Glinjeni (N. Gol'ceva, M. Kašuba, 1995, tab. LXXXV/5), Alcedar (V. Haheu, 1998, fig. 11/6) etc.
- Dishes with a conic body and the upper part either vertical or rounded towards the interior, ornamented with perforated segment-shaped supports as handles (fig. 5/20). Similar vessels were discovered at the Hansca-Limbări settlement (I. Niculiță, 1987, 166, fig. 22/6), Huși-Corni (S. Teodor, 1981, p. 191) etc.
- Dishes with roundish body, the upper part vertical and flared rim (fig. 5/21). Similar analogies of these pots are known at the Thracian-Getic fortress from Butuceni (I. Niculiță, S. Teodor, A. Zanoci, 2002, p. 48, fig. 92/2, 93/1). The pots are also known mainly by fragments and that makes quite difficult to determine precisely to which kind of pots they belong. Still, among the uncovered fragments, pieces belonging to the curved-shaped or bell-shaped pots. The pots with a curved body had a short or vertical neck, with exterior-oriented rim (fig. 6/1, 3, 4). Some of them are ornamented with alveolar belts along the rim (fig. 6/1), with alveolar rows (fig. 6/2) or prominences on the neck. In some cases (fig. 4/1-6) it was

possible to determine the rim diameter of these pots which is between 12,8-30,5 cm. Such vessels have similes at the settlements from Butuceni (I. Niculiță, S. Teodor, A. Zanoci, 2002, p. 48-49, fig. 80, 85, 86), Potârca (I. Niculiță, S. Matveev, E. Potângă, 1999, p. 328-330, 336), Glinjeni (M. Kašuba, V. Haheu, O. Levițki, 2000, pl. XII/4, 5), Holercani (Kašuba, 2006, fig. 4/3, 4), Hansca-Lutărie (I. Niculiță, 2004, p. 213, fig. 3/6), Bunești (V. Bazarciuc, 1983, p. 250, fig. 8/1, 2) etc.

The bell-shaped pots (fig. 6/5-9) have medium sizes, large mouth, rounded walls, and a narrow and flat bottom. The decoration consists of alveolar belts (fig. 6/5, 7), oblate and cylindrical prominences (fig. 6/6), or alveolar belts in associations with oblate prominences (fig. 6/9). It was determined after the graphical reconstruction that the diameter of their rim was around 11,5-27,0 cm. These pots are widely spread at the Getian monuments from Ofatinți (A. Meljukova, 1954, p. 66, fig. 31/1-3, 6, 7), Holercani (M. Kašuba, 2006, fig. 4/1, 6, 7), Butuceni (I. Niculiță, S. Teodor, A. Zanoci, 2002, fig. 81/4, 5), Mășcăuți “Dealul cel Mare” (A. Zanoci, 2004, fig. 17), Ibănești (P. Șadurschi, Em. Moscalu, 1989, p. 196, fig. 5/1) etc.

The lids are also represented only by fragments (fig. 6/10, 11). They are flat with a roundish edge; the thickness varies between 1,5-2,6 cm and the diameter – 17-22 cm. Their analogies are known at the Thracian-Getic sites from Butuceni (I. Niculiță, S. Teodor, A. Zanoci, 2002, fig. 100/1-3), Solonceni (M. Kašuba, V. Haheu, O. Levițki, 2000, pl. XVII)

According to its provenience the *ceramics made using the potter's wheel* is autochthonous or imported.

The autochthonous pottery is represented by a handle fragment (fig. 6/13), made of fine clay paste with sand impurities. The burning is reductive and uneven; the color is grayish. This fragment is similar to those discovered at Poiana (S. Teodor, 1999, p. 73, fig. 40/2), Brad (V. Ursachi, 1995, pl. 275/1) etc.

The imported ceramics is known exclusively by amphorae fragments: a rim fragment, 69 wall fragments and 3 handle fragments.

The fragments were part of recipients worked from a paste of fine clay with sand impurities or mica and tiny black particles (pyroxene). Their burning is complete and uniform. The color is brickish-red or orange-yellow. The rim fragment (fig. 6/12) belonged to an amphora from Pontic Heraclea and is dated with the middle of the 4th century BC. A handle fragment discovered in pit no. 7 originates as well from a Pontic Heraclea amphora dated with the 4th-beginning of the 3rd century BC. Other two handle fragments belonged to Thassos amphorae, one (fig. 6/14) dated with the last quarter of the 4th century BC and the second (fig. 6/15) with the 4th-middle of the 3rd century BC.

Chronology

The earliest habitat on Saharna „La Şanṭ” plateau is indicated by the cup fragments with stamped and incised ornament (fig. 5/17, 18), by the dish fragment decorated with grooves (fig. 5/13) which according to the analogies from Hansca and Stoicanî can be chronologically attributed to the 10th-9th centuries BC. The existence of a Hallstatian site at the point „La Şanṭ” is possible because of the presence in this period in its immediate vicinity of the settlements from Sahama „Dealul Mănăstirii” (I. Niculiță, A. Zanoci, A. Nicic, S. Matveev, 2003, p. 243-244) and Sahama Mică (I. Niculiță, T. Arnăut, A. Zanoci, 2004, p. 196).

The spear muff (fig. 5/8), the dish fragment ornamented in the upper part with oblique belts (fig. 5/14) discovered in the cultural layer and the fragments from recipients identified in pit no. 6 confirm the existence of an early Thracian-Getic level in the 7th/6th-5th centuries BC by analogies with the fragments attested at Glinjeni (N. Gol'ceva, M. Kašuba, 1995, fig. LXXXIV/1; LXXXIII), Matronino (S. Bessonova, S. Skoryj, 2001, p. 125, fig. 38/2).

Nevertheless, the majority of the ceramic fragments discovered both in the cultural layer and in closed complexes frame entirely in the chronological period of the 4th-3rd centuries BC, data which is supported by the Thassos and Pontic Heraclea amphorae fragments as well.

Conclusions

The settlement from Saharna-La Şanṭ was populated most intensely in the 4th-3rd centuries BC, when the closed complexes and the biggest part of the archaeological material found in the cultural layer are attested. In this timeframe, at an uncertain date, the fortified settlement and the fortresses from Saharna Mare (I. Niculiță, A. Zanoci, T. Arnăut, 2007, 27-62), Saharna Mică (I. Niculiță, T. Arnăut, A. Zanoci, 2004, p. 195-196), Saharna-Hulboaca (G. Smirnov, 1949, p. 195) and Saharna-Revichin (A. Levinschi, S. Covalenco, E. Abâzov, 2002, p. 41-48) were part of the defensive line having the mission to protect the Thracian-Getic communities from the right bank of Middle Nistru.

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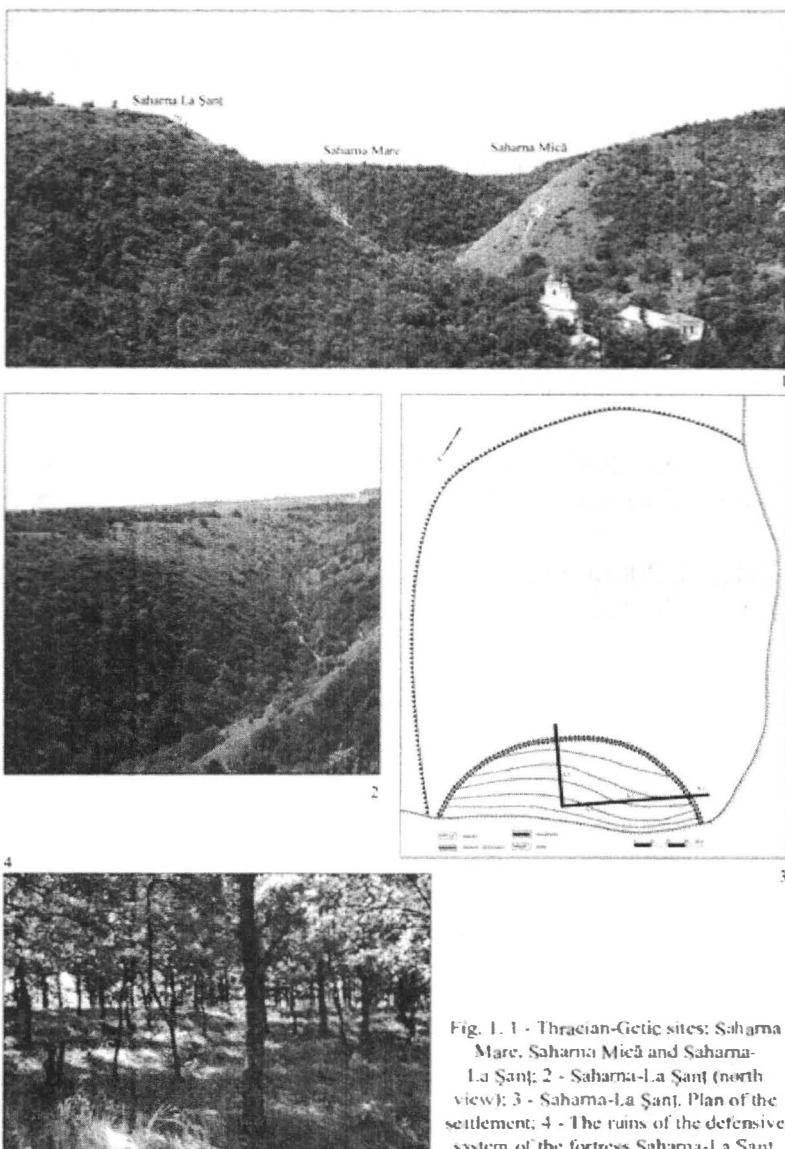
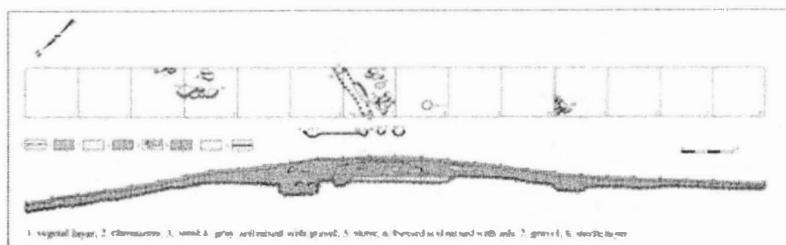
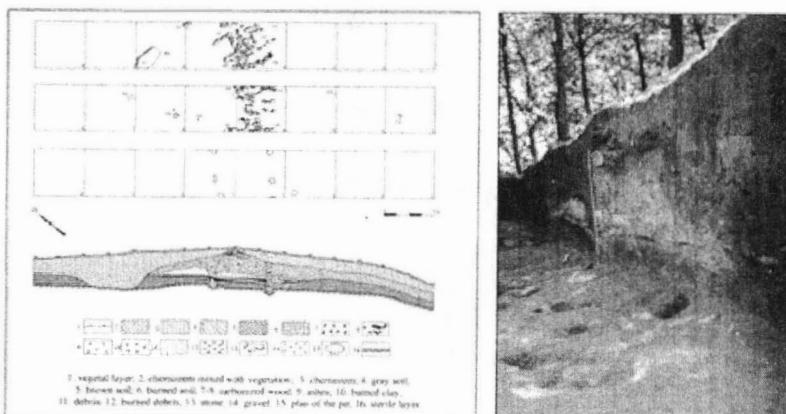


Fig. 1. 1 - Thracian-Getic sites: Saharna Mare, Saharna Mică and Saharna-La Shanț; 2 - Saharna-La Shanț (north view); 3 - Saharna-La Shanț. Plan of the settlement; 4 - The ruins of the defensive system of the fortress Saharna-La Shanț.



1



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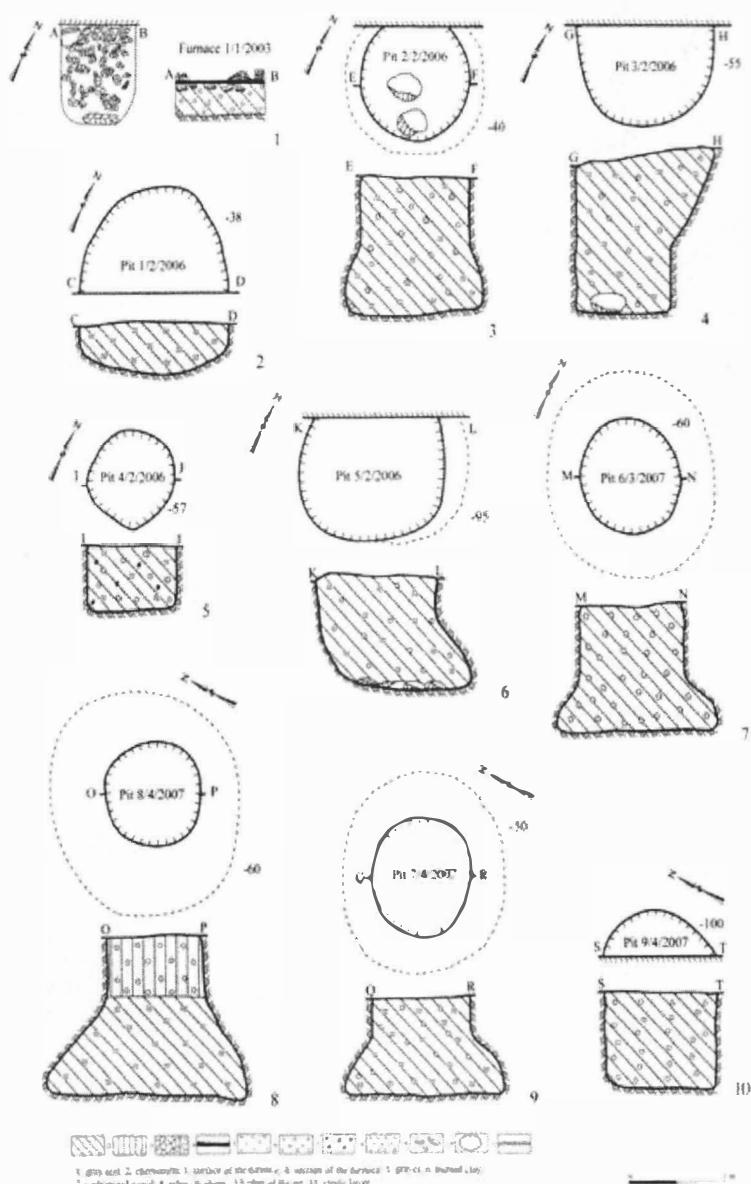


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Fig. 2. Saharna-La Şanț, 1 - Plan and profile of the wall 1; 2 - Plan and profile of the wall 5; 3 - Dig 5 (north view); 4-5 - Stones from the construction of the rampart.



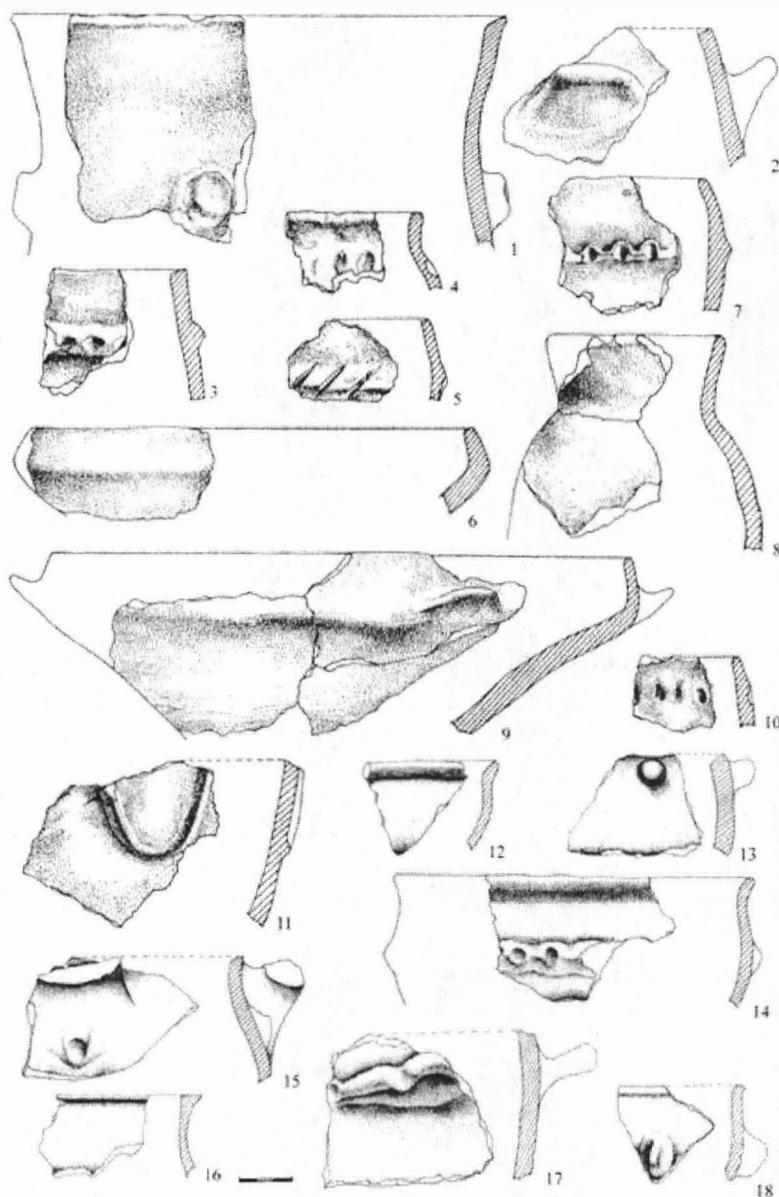


Fig. 4. The inventory of complex: 1-2 - furnace 1/1/2003; 3 - pit 1/2/2003; 4-6 - pit 2/2/2003; 7 - pit 3/2/2003; 8-11 - pit 4/2/2006; 12-13 - pit 6/3/2007; 14-15 - pit 7/4/2007; 16-18 - pit 8/4/2007

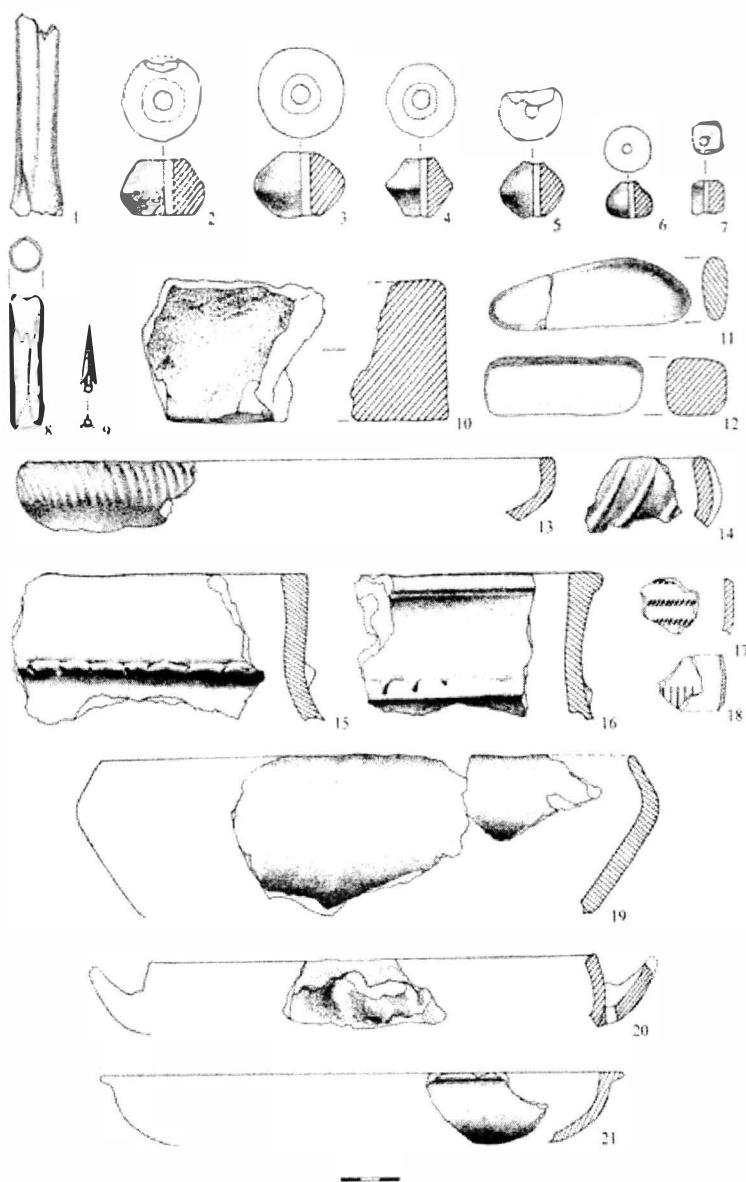


Fig. 5. Saharna-La Şanț. 1-9 - Individual finds. 10-21 - moulded ceramics.