

THE END OF GRAD NEAR ŠMIHEL POD NANOSOM (NOTRANJSKA, SLOVENIA). THE ROMAN ARMY AND THE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY

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Izvleček

[Zaton Gradu pri Šmihelu pod Nanosom (Notranjska, Slovenija). Rimska vojska in skupnost domačinov]

Najdišče Grad pri Šmihelu slovi po pomembni najdbi rimskega republikanskega orožja, izkopanega okoli leta 1890 na območju severozahodnega vogala gradišča. Najdiščne okoliščine najdbe so v podrobnostih nejasne, ni pa sporno dejstvo, da so predmeti ležali blizu skupaj. Zato je najdba označena kot zaklad. Datacija, predvsem pa interpretacija orožja sta vedno znova izziv za raziskovalce. Med orožjem iz zaklada je najbolj natančno mogoče datirati pilume s širokim in ploščatim nasadiščem za toporišče, ki so jih rimski vojaki uporabljali v 2. st. pr. n. št. V zadnjih desetletjih so iskalci s pomočjo detektorjev kovin našli nove najdbe rimskega orožja, največ svinčene izstrelke za pračo. Ti predmeti so sočasni s predmeti iz zaklada. Menimo, da je bilo republikansko orožje uporabljeno v napadu na Grad pri Šmihelu. Po padcu gradišča so Rimljani orožje večinoma pobrali, nekaj (predvsem manjših predmetov) pa je obležalo na prizorišču. Pobrano orožje so zbrali na kup (zaklad) in ga morda obredno zažgali, kar bi bilo močno simbolno dejanje in bi obeleževalo tako rimsko vojaško kot ritualno nadvlado. Gradišče na Gradu pri Šmihelu si po rimski osvojitvi ni več opomoglo.

Ključne besede: Slovenija, Šmihel pod Nanosom, gradišče Grad pri Šmihelu, mlajša železna doba, 2.–1. st. pr. n. št., arheološke najdbe, rimsko republikansko orožje

Abstract

The archaeological site at Grad near Šmihel is well-known for the find of Roman Republican weapons, excavated around 1890 at the northwest corner of the hillfort. The circumstances of the find are unclear in detail, but there is no doubt that the weapons were recovered close together and have therefore been interpreted as a hoard. In contrast, the dating and even more so the interpretation of the weapons are a topic that researchers tackle again and again. The temporally most narrowly diagnostic items of the hoard are the pila with a wide flat tang, which the Roman soldiers used in the 2nd century BC. The new finds of Roman weapons, mostly lead slingshot, unearthed in recent decades with the help of metal detectors are contemporary with the items from the hoard. The weapons are believed to have been used in an attack on Grad near Šmihel. After the fall of the hillfort, the Romans collected much of the weaponry, while some, mostly small artefacts were left at the site. The collected weapons were placed in a pile (hoard) and possibly ritually burnt, which would have been a powerful symbolic act to mark the Roman military and ritual supremacy. After the Roman conquest, the hillfort on Grad near Šmihel never recovered.

Keywords: Slovenia, Šmihel pod Nanosom, hillfort on Grad near Šmihel, Late Iron Age, 2nd–1st century BC, archaeological finds, Roman Republican weapons

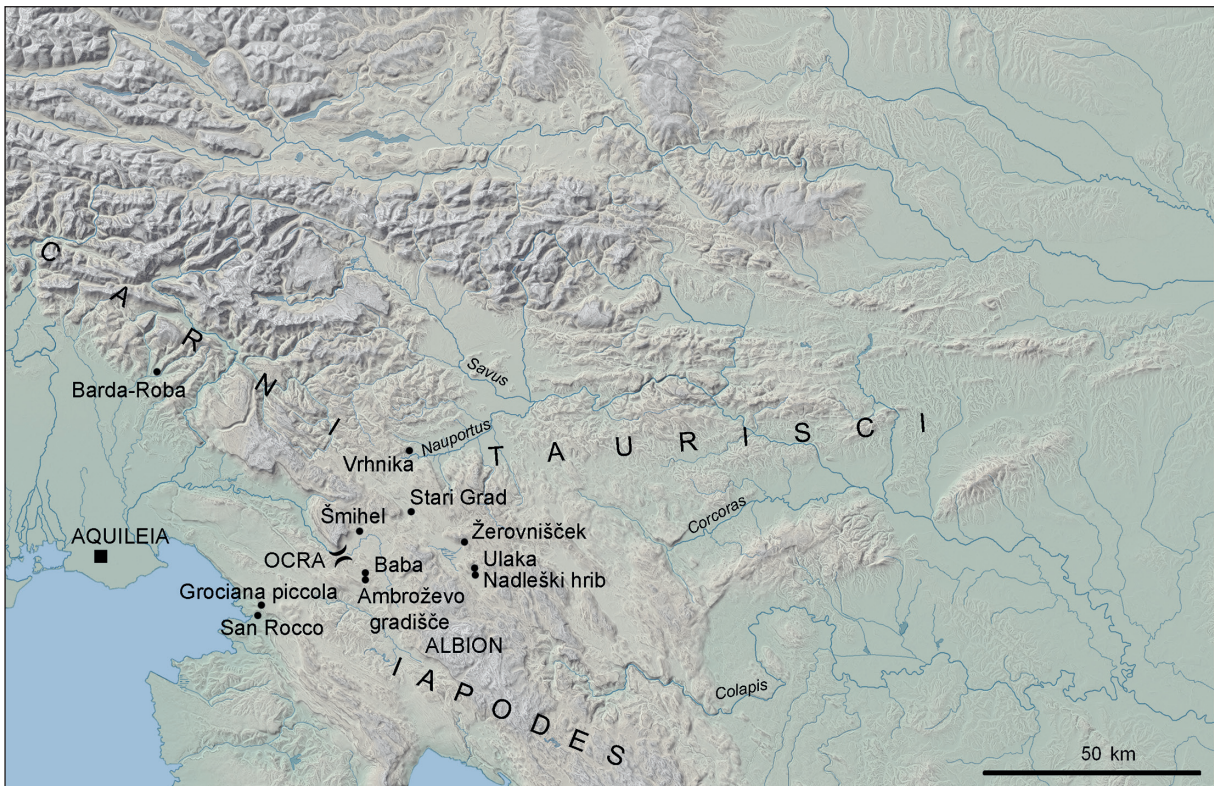


Fig. 1: The area between Aquileia and central Slovenia in the 2nd and 1st centuries BC. Selected toponyms/ethnonyms according to ancient written sources and sites.

In this district here have disappeared, on the coast-line, Irmene, Pellaon, Palscium, Atina and Caelina belonging to the Veneti, Segesta and Ocra to the Carni, Noreia to the Taurisci.

C. Plinius Secundus, N. h. 3, 131

INTRODUCTION

The area north of Šmihel pod Nanosom holds several archaeological sites (Figs. 1; 2). Among them is the elevation with a flat top called Grad (summit at 648 m asl), which holds the remains of a prehistoric hillfort (Figs. 2: 1; 6). The hillfort was a central Iron Age settlement in this part of the Notranjska region (SW Slovenia) and one that controlled the important pass at Razdrto and the roads that led across it.¹ Its importance is reflected in its size (with 9 ha, it is the second largest

¹ At the junction of the Julian and Dinaric Alps, ancient literary sources give the name Ocra that referred to the pass (area of present-day Razdrto), mountain (modern-day Nanos) and settlement (probably the hillfort on Grad near Šmihel). Strabo aptly illustrates the strategic importance of the pass by describing Ocra as the lowest part of the Alps that extended from Rhaetia to the Iapodes (Šašel 1974, 9–17; Šašel 1977; Horvat, Bavdek 2009, 19–22).

of the 62 hillforts of the Postojna topographic region²), the associated Iron Age cemeteries (Fig. 2: 4–7) and the possible Iron Age cult place.³ This paper uses the name Grad near Šmihel to refer exclusively to the settlement (hillfort), while the name Šmihel is used to refer to the whole archaeological complex that comprises the hillfort on Grad, the cemeteries, the probable cult place and the adjacent elevations of Žlovberski vrh (Figs. 2: 2; 6) and Mačkovc (Fig. 2: 3).

Around 1890, some 500 iron artefacts were dug up at the northwest corner of the hillfort. Most are Roman weapons and comprise pila, sword, artillery bolts, arrowheads, spear butts and simple tanged bodkins

² The largest one is the hillfort at Šilentabor with a surface of 9.8 ha (Laharnar 2022, 359, Table 1).

³ For the last overview with relevant literature, see Laharnar 2022, 33–45; on the presumed cult place, see Laharnar 2022, 45, 262–267, Fig. 4.4.

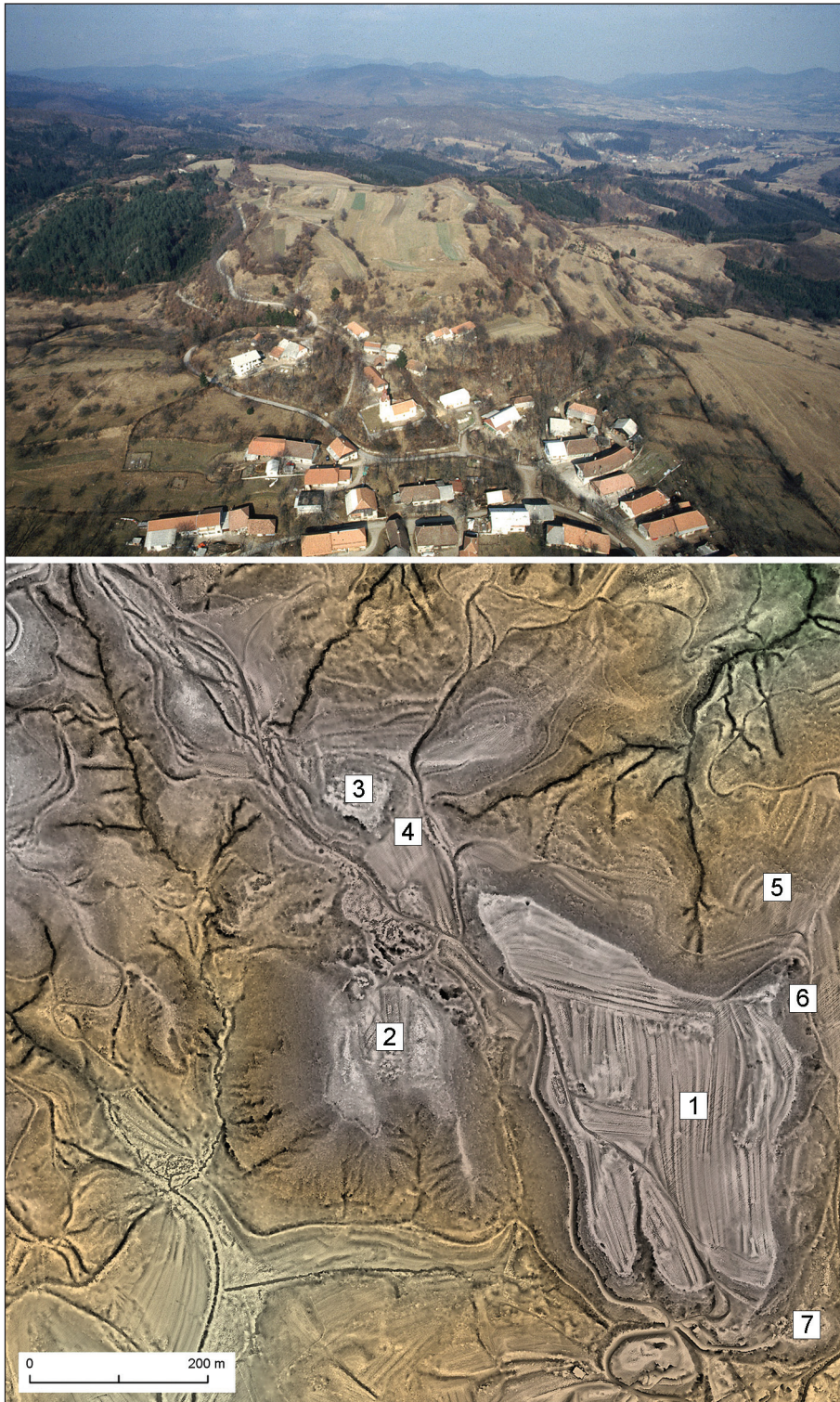


Fig. 2: Sites north of the village of Šmihel pod Nanosom. Northward view of the site above, LiDAR-derived north-oriented visualisation below: 1 Grad (hillfort), 2 Žlovberski vrh (Roman siege camp?), 3 Mačkovc (stray finds of Roman Lamboglia 2 amphorae, see *Fig. 8:* 12–14), 4 Pod Mačkovcem (Iron Age cemetery), 5 Za Polšno (Iron Age cemetery), 6 Pod Kaculjem (Iron Age cemetery), 7 Grudnovno posestvo (Iron Age cemetery).



Fig. 3: Šmihel pod Nanosom – Grad. Roman Republican weapons (selection): 1 pila, 2 sword, 3 spear butts, 4 simple bodkins, 5 arrowheads, 6 artillery bolts, 7 lead slingshot. Kept in the National Museum of Slovenia.

with asymmetrical heads (Fig. 3: 1–6).⁴ They came to light close to one another, hence they were interpreted as a hoard.⁵

⁴ Horvat 1997; Horvat 2002; Istenič 2015, 16–17, Figs. 9–10; Bernardini, Duiz 2021, 28–29, 106–107; Figs. 9–10; Laharnar 2022, 35, 37, Figs. 3.2, 3.5.

⁵ The 'hoard' may originally also have included a helmet (now lost), three La Tène swords, La Tène tools (see below) and different small items (Horvat 2002, 163, 168–170, Pls. 1: 2–3; 17–18; Figs. 9–10). The circumstances of the finds are not clear; part of the artefacts reportedly lay on top of the hillfort's rampart, several hundred items together in a deep hole, while the others are believed to have been col-

The hoard of Roman weapons has been linked with the end of the hillfort on Grad.⁶ The opinion that prevailed until the 1970s was that the weapons were associated with the activities of the Roman army in the time of Octavian's Illyrian wars in 35–33 BC.⁷ Mitja Guštin, author of the relative chronological framework for the Iron Age in the Kras and Notranjska, also shared

lected by repeated digging 3–5 m deep into the rampart (Horvat 2002, 120–126, 151–153).

⁶ Gabrovec 1975, 151.

⁷ For the history of research, see Gabrovec 1975, 151 and Horvat 2002, 118–122, 150–151.

this opinion and attributed the weapons to his Late La Tène phase of Notranjska VIII.⁸

Jana Horvat published comprehensive studies of the Roman weapons from Šmihel. Her basic premise was that the weapons were for the most part contemporaneous and she initially dated the assemblage to the 2nd century BC, i.e. a time after the foundation of the Roman colony in Aquileia (181 BC) and before the establishment of a Roman post at Razdrto (late 2nd or early 1st century BC).⁹ Peter Connolly accepted such dating in his study on *Pilum, gladius and pugio in the Late Republic* and proposed a more precise dating to 175 ± 10 years BC on the basis of the form of the pila.¹⁰

In a later, supplemented publication, Horvat based the dating of the Šmihel weapons primarily on the typological and chronological analysis of the early forms of pila with a flat tang that closely resemble the pila from the late 3rd or first half of the 2nd century BC.¹¹ She linked the Roman weapons with the first Roman efforts to secure control over the Amber Route and the battles between the Roman army and the indigenous population.¹²

Mitja Guštin and Andrej Gaspari were critical of such an early dating. They proposed, albeit without offering supporting argumentation, that the Roman weapons were connected with the military events between 220 and 80 BC. They also noted that finds speaking of Grad near Šmihel being inhabited into the Late La Tène period.¹³

Our publications accepted Horvat's initial, broader dating and connected the Roman weapons from Grad near Šmihel with a Roman attack that occurred after the foundation of Aquileia in 181 BC and before the late 2nd or early 1st century BC.¹⁴

The text below summarises Horvat's main findings with regard to the dating of the Roman weapons and other Roman finds from Šmihel and discusses new evidence. It evaluates the evidence on Late Iron Age settlement, i.e. the material culture of the indigenous population with the basic premise that the Roman weapons, most of the other Roman artefacts and the last of the La Tène finds largely chronologically coincide and date to the time when the hillfort on Grad near Šmihel was abandoned. It also presents the hypothesis on Šmihel as an Iron Age cult place, a role that may also have been associated with the deposition of Roman weapons and individual votive acts performed after the Roman conquest.

⁸ Guštin 1973, 486, 492, Fig. 3: 21–22, 25–26.

⁹ Horvat 1997, 117.

¹⁰ Connolly 1997, 41–44, Fig. 2.

¹¹ Horvat 2002, 129–132, 145–155, Pls. 2–6; 7: 1–3.

¹² Horvat 2002, 142–143, 159; thus also Bernardini, Duiz 2021, 32–33, 106–108, Figs. 9–10.

¹³ Guštin, Gaspari 2005, 356–357.

¹⁴ Laharnar 2015, 11; Laharnar 2022, 38, 41, 325.

WEAPONS AND OTHER ROMAN FINDS

The most diagnostic finds for dating the Roman weapons from Šmihel are the pila with a wide flat tang (Fig. 4).¹⁵ The accepted opinion is that such pila, despite the typological differences between the known examples (see below), correspond with the 'heavy' pila featured in the writings of Polibius (lived roughly from 200 to 118 BC).¹⁶ Having said that, it is difficult to unambiguously correlate the archaeological evidence with Polibius' descriptions.¹⁷

Jana Horvat distinguishes between three types of flat-tanged pila from Šmihel.

The first type consists of fourteen examples with a length of 22–30 cm, two rivet holes, a square-sectioned shank and mostly a large flat point (up to 6 cm) with prominent barbs. Most of these have a roughly rectangular tang, two an oval one and two an hourglass-shaped tang (Fig. 4: 1–4).¹⁸

The second type comprises seven 33 to 40 cm long pila with a rectangular tang that has a single rivet hole and notched flanges folded in different directions, as well as a square- or rectangular-sectioned shank and a point smaller than that of Type 1 (up to 4.3 cm), but with small barbs (Fig. 4: 5–8).¹⁹

The greatest number, most likely eighteen pila, form Type 3. They have a rectangular tang with two rivet holes, a length predominantly greater than of Types 1 and 2 and measuring 44 to 57 cm. The longer edges of the tang have semicircular notches and four flanges folded in different directions. The shank is round-sectioned and the point either flat and triangular with slight barbs or four-lobed (Fig. 4: 9–12).²⁰

The third type of flat-tanged pila from Šmihel is closest to those from the fortified Iberian settlement at Castellruf, in Catalonia (Fig. 5: 7–8).²¹ A masonry building on Castellruf, measuring 4.4 × 3 m and probably a blacksmith's workshop, yielded five pila (two placed so as to form a cross) and possibly three or four pilum heads.²² The publication is not clear whether the pila were lying on the ground or in a layer of debris that covered the ground²³ and associated with the violent destruction of the settlement around 200 BC.²⁴

¹⁵ Horvat 2002, 129, 154.

¹⁶ Horvat 2002, 138, 156–157, Fig. 26; Bishop, Coulston 2006, 52–53.

¹⁷ Bongartz 2015, 747.

¹⁸ Horvat 1997, 110, Fig. 3; Horvat 2002, 129, 154, Pls. 2; 3: 1–4; Figs. 6: 4–5; 11–12.

¹⁹ Horvat 1997, 110, Fig. 4; Horvat 2002, 129, 154, Pls. 3: 5–6; 4; Figs. 13–14.

²⁰ Horvat 1997, 110–111, Fig. 5; Horvat 2002, 129, 154, Pls. 5–6, 7: 1–3; Figs. 6: 2,3; 8; 15–17; 18: 2.

²¹ Horvat 2002, 130, 154.

²² Álvarez Arza, Cubero Argente 1999, 125–126, Fig. 3.

²³ Álvarez Arza, Cubero Argente 1999, 125–126, Fig. 3: 5.

²⁴ Álvarez Arza, Cubero Argente 1999, 126, 140.

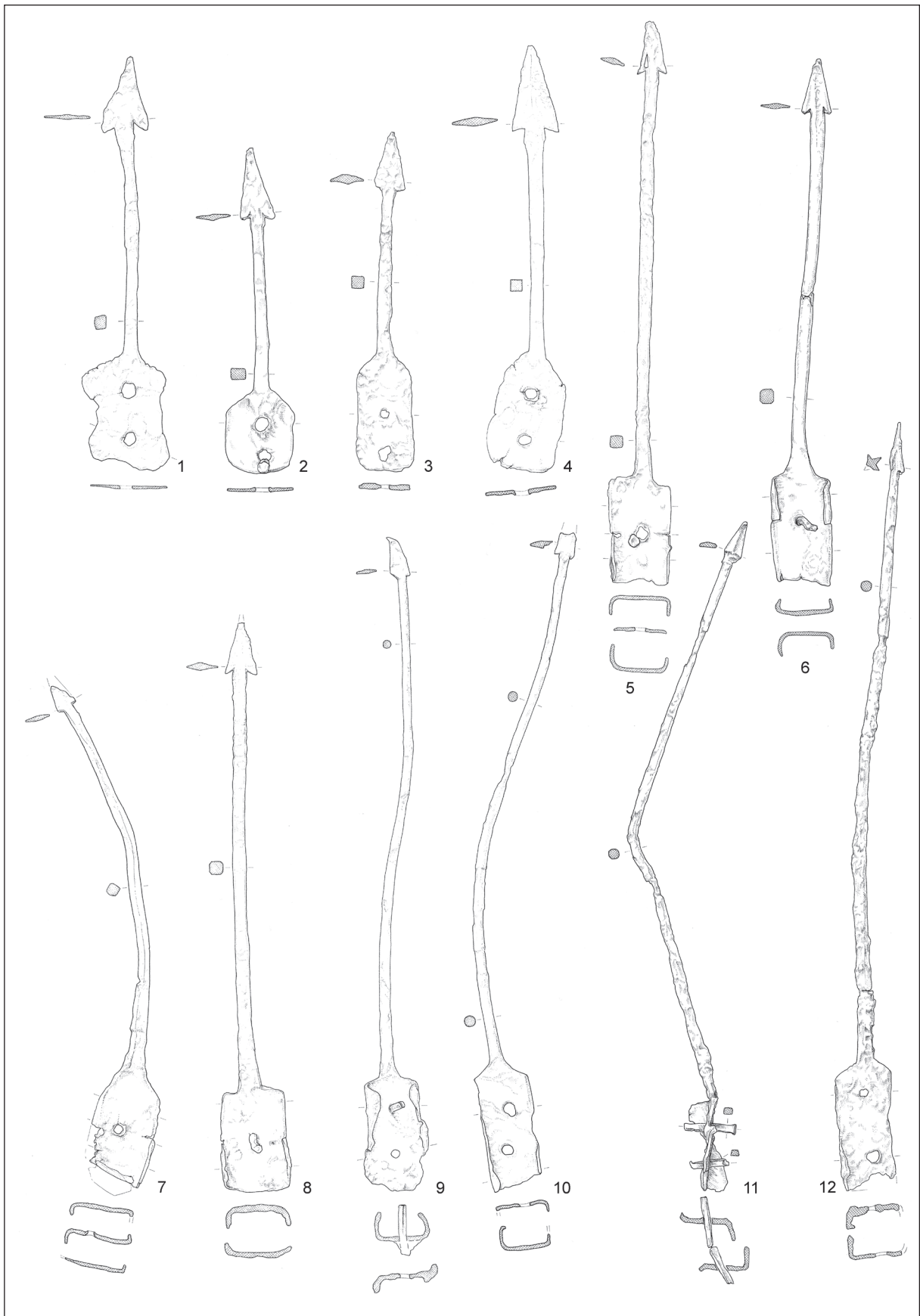


Fig. 4. Šmihel pod Nanosom - Grad. Selection of pila with a flat tang of Horvat Types 1 (Nos. 1-4), 2 (Nos. 5-8) and 3 (Nos. 9-12) (adapted from Horvat 2002, Pl. 2-7). Iron. Scale = 1: 4.

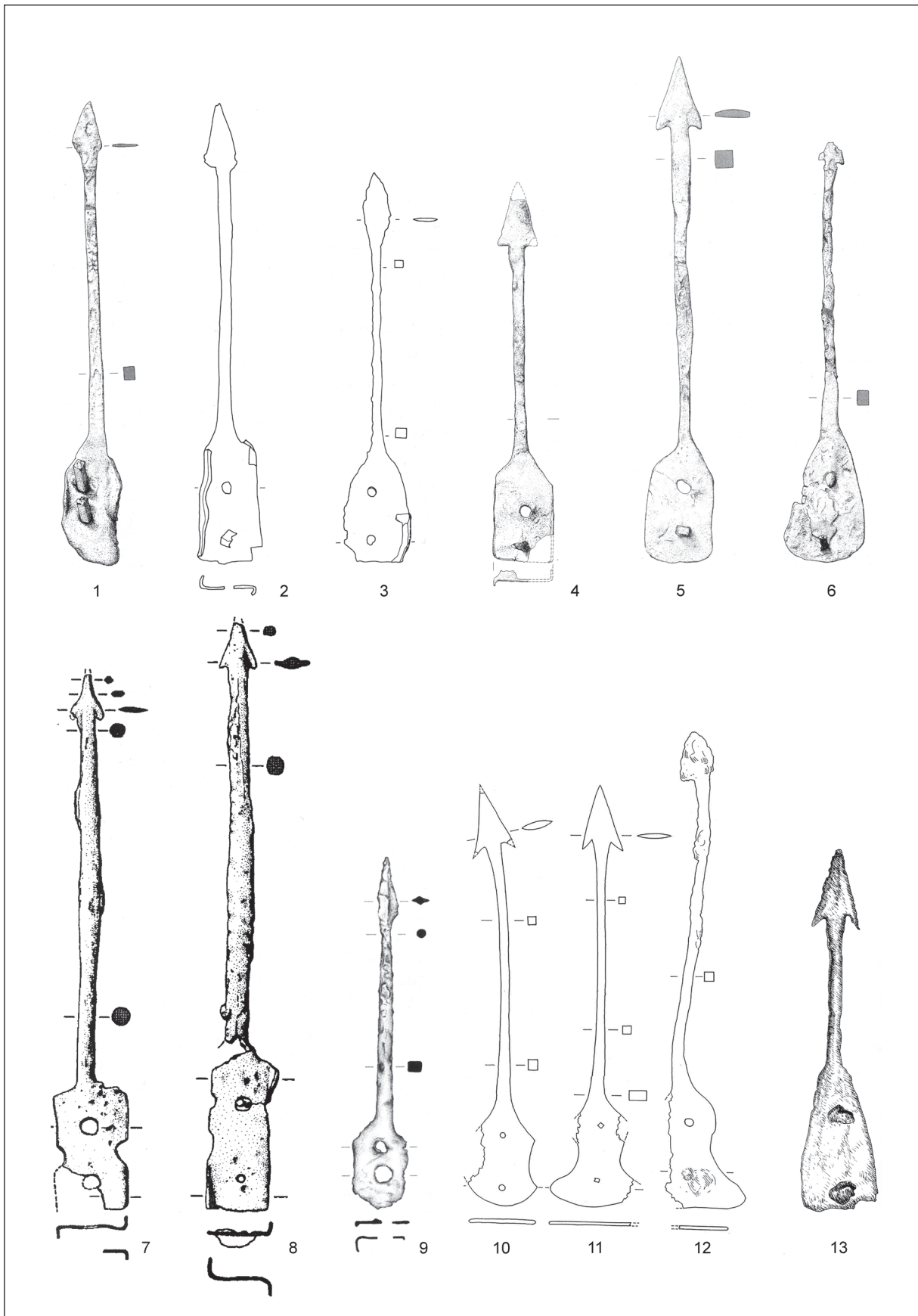


Fig. 5: Pila with a flat tang. 1–6 Talamonaccio (from Luik 2000, 270–272, Fig. 1–2), 7–8 Castelruff (from Álvarez Arza, Cubero Argente 1999, 132, Fig. 4: 2–3), 9 Cerro de las Albahacas (from Bellón Ruiz et al. 2015, 320, Fig. 3), 10–12 Ephya (from Baatz 1982), 13 Entremont (from Willaume 1993, 126, Fig. 149). Iron. Scale = 1: 4.

Similar to the Type 2 flat-tanged pila from Šmihel (although shorter and with two rivet holes) is a pilum found on the slope of Cerro de las Albahacas near Santo Tomé in Andalusia (Fig. 5: 9).²⁵ Together with other military equipment, coins and other finds from the site, it is believed to represent the remains of the Battle of Baecula fought between the Romans and the Carthaginians in 208 BC.²⁶

Jana Horvat noted a similarity between two Type 1 pila from Šmihel (one of the examples in Fig. 4: 1) and those found in the vicinity of the ancient city of Ephyra, in Greek Epirus (Fig. 5: 10–12), that share an hourglass-shaped tang.²⁷ The pila from Ephyra were found together with other weapons and metal artefacts (parts of catapults, artillery bolts, tools, iron ingots) in a fortified building not renovated after the Roman destruction in 167 BC.²⁸

There are also similarities between some of the Type 1 pila from Šmihel (Fig. 4: 1–4), and the pilum from the oppidum at Entremont in Provence (Fig. 5: 13).²⁹ The Romans conquered this oppidum around 125 BC and the settlement was finally abandoned around 90 BC.³⁰

The flat-tanged pila of Types 1 and 2 from Šmihel are similar to those of Luik's Variants 1 (Fig. 5: 1–4)³¹ and 2 (Fig. 4: 5–6)³² from Talamonaccio (ancient *Telamon*) in Etruria. Around sixty pila were found in the temple area on the hill of Talamonaccio. Many were found towards the end of the 19th century, some form part of a private collection and at least thirty were unearthed during the 1960s excavations and were scattered across the layers of burnt debris in the temple ruins.³³ Archaeological evidence shows that the temple was torn down and abandoned soon after 100 BC, possibly during the civil wars fought between Sulla and Marius in the 80s BC.³⁴ The pila are therefore contemporary with or earlier than the time when the temple was abandoned. There is no archaeological evidence to support the hypothesis that the items were Roman votive offerings after the famous Battle of Telamon, fought against the Celts in 225 BC,³⁵

or even the remains of a funerary monument erected in honour of the fallen Roman soldiers.³⁶

The parallels presented above show that the Type 1–3 pila from Grad near Šmihel can be dated between the late 3rd/early 2nd and the late 2nd/early 1st century BC. Dating the flat-tanged pila from Šmihel to the 2nd century BC is supported by the fact that the assemblage of pila from Šmihel includes neither pila or pilum-like spearheads from the 4th or 3rd century BC nor later forms from the 1st century BC.³⁷

Precisely dating the other forms of Roman weapons from Šmihel is much more of a challenge, but the socketed pila, spearheads, artillery bolts, arrowheads, sword, helmet (now lost)³⁸ and lead slingshot³⁹ could all have been used in the 2nd century BC.

The metal-detecting activities conducted in the last two decades on Grad near Šmihel revealed other pieces of Roman weapons, namely arrowheads,⁴⁰ artillery bolts,⁴¹ and lead slingshot (Fig. 3: 7).⁴² Arrowheads and artillery bolts are of the same forms as those recovered in the 19th century.⁴³

The Roman weapons and other artefacts found in the 19th century were found close together at the northwest corner of the hillfort rampart, whereas the metal-detector finds of Roman weapons were scattered across the northern half of the hillfort and outside of it, across the northern and north-western slopes (Fig. 6).⁴⁴

The lead slingshot from Šmihel are of different shapes and sizes and mostly weigh between 30 and 60 g. In their weight, they differ from the lead slingshot unearthed on the nearby sites in Notranjska, namely Baba near Slavina, Ambroževo gradišče near Slavina, Stari grad above Unec and Ulaka above Stari trg pri Ložu, which are associated with the activities of the Roman army in the middle or second half of the 1st century BC and mostly weigh more than 70 g.⁴⁵ The examples from Šmihel include the double-pyramidal Völling III form characteristic of the first third of the 1st century BC or earlier. The geographically closest parallels for the Völling III slingshot come from Barda-Roba in Friuli,⁴⁶

²⁵ Quesada Sanz et al. 2015, 319, 326–327, Fig. 3: 9459.

²⁶ Bellón et al. 2015.

²⁷ Horvat 1997, 113–115; Horvat 2002, 131, 155.

²⁸ Dakaris 1964, 51–54 (generally on the site and date of the building); Baatz 1982, 212–213 (= Baatz 1994, 147–148); Völling 1997, 97, Fig. 11 a–b; Luik 2000, 272–274, Fig. 3.

²⁹ Luik 2002, 275, Fig. 6; Quesada Sanz et al. 2015, 326.

³⁰ Willaume 1993, 124–126, Figs. 146–150 (in addition to the flat-tanged pilum, the site also yielded a socketed pilum, spear butts and artillery bolts); Congès 1993, 162–163 (on the dating of the site after ceramics); Armit, Gaffney, Hayes 2012, 191–192.

³¹ Luik 2000, 269–271, Fig. 1; Horvat 2002, 130–131, 155.

³² Luik 2000, 271–272, Fig. 2: 1–2.

³³ Vacano 1988, 46–49, Fig. 5, Pl. 11; Luik 2000, 269.

³⁴ Vacano 1982, 29–30; Connolly 1997, 41; Luik 2002, 272; Horvat 2002, 131, 155.

³⁵ Vacano 1988, 53–54; Luik 2002, 272; Horvat 1997, 115;

Horvat 2002, 131, 155.

³⁶ Nijober 1991, 26–27.

³⁷ Horvat 2002, 132, 155.

³⁸ Horvat 2002, 132–133, 155.

³⁹ Horvat 2002, 143–145, 159–160.

⁴⁰ Laharnar 2022, 40, Pl. 1: 16–19.

⁴¹ Laharnar 2022, 40, Pl. 1: 7–15.

⁴² Švajncer, Švajncer 2020, 119; Laharnar 2022, 39–44, Fig. 3.7; Pls. 1: 20–25; 2: 26–34.

⁴³ Laharnar 2015, 11–12.

⁴⁴ Data and descriptions provided by the two finders (archives of the Archaeological department in the National Museum of Slovenia). We have no location details on the finds of weapons published in Švajncer, Švajncer 2020.

⁴⁵ Laharnar 2011, 353–355, 370–371, Fig. 10.

⁴⁶ Tagliaferri 1986, 125, 132, Pl. 27; Istenič 2019, 275, Note 20.



Fig. 6. Šmihel pod Nanosom – Grad and Žlovberski vrh, view from the east. Findspots of Roman Republican weapons: hoard (1); more than ten lead slingshot (2), scattered artillery bolts, arrowheads and lead slingshot (3), stray slingshot finds (4) (modified from Istenič 2015, 17, Fig. 10).

which are likely linked with the activities of the Roman army in the late 2nd and early 1st centuries BC⁴⁷ or soon after 79 BC.⁴⁸

The trial trenching at the north-western corner of the hillfort on Grad near Šmihel revealed sherds of at least two Lamboglia 2 wine amphorae (Fig. 8: 10–11).⁴⁹ The triangular rim on one of the sherds (Fig. 8: 10) indicates an early form of these amphorae,⁵⁰ which was produced on the west and north coast of the Adriatic from the last quarter of the 2nd century roughly to the third decade BC.⁵¹

Grad also yielded a Roman denarius minted in 75 BC.⁵² The coin is worn and may therefore be connected with a later human presence that is also associated with the finds of two coins from the 1st, four coins spanning from the 2nd to the first half of the 4th century AD⁵³ and other stray finds.⁵⁴

In addition to the hillfort on Grad and its cemeteries, the archaeological complex at Šmihel includes the elevation of Žlovberski vrh (646 m asl) west of Grad (Figs. 2: 2; 6), where amphorae and Roman common ware were reportedly found.⁵⁵ The 646 m high hill of

Mačkovec, to the northwest of Grad (Fig. 2: 3), revealed sherds of Roman Lamboglia 2 wine amphorae⁵⁶ that include triangular-rim sherds of their early form (Fig. 8: 12–14).

The two hills only yielded Roman finds, which is significant, particularly in view of the concentration and distribution of the Roman weapons and the topographic situation that suggest the Roman offensive strategy involved both elevations (Fig. 6);⁵⁷ the ramparts on Žlovberski vrh may be the traces of a Roman siege camp.⁵⁸

EVIDENCE OF THE LAST LATE IRON AGE SETTLEMENT

According to the established chronology proposed by Mitja Guštin, the Late Iron Age in Notranjska and the Kras comprises the Notranjska VII and VIII phases.⁵⁹ The Notranjska VII phase corresponds with LT C according to the central European chronology (from the 3rd century to 150/130 BC), while Notranjska VIII corresponds with LT D (from 150/130 BC to the beginning of the Augustan period).⁶⁰

Dating to Notranjska VII at Šmihel are graves with the brooches of the Middle La Tène construction

⁴⁷ Chiabà 2007, 54.

⁴⁸ Istenič 2019, 275.

⁴⁹ Horvat 2002, 153, 160, Pl. 19: 7–8.

⁵⁰ Cf. Horvat, Bavdek 2009, 84–89, Fig. 55.

⁵¹ Horvat, Bavdek 2009, 83–84.

⁵² *FMRSI* III, 50–1; Horvat 2002, 144, 160.

⁵³ Horvat 2002, 145, 161.

⁵⁴ Horvat 2002, 145–147, 161–163, Pls. 20: 2–5, 7; 21.

⁵⁵ Horvat 2002, 147, 162.

⁵⁶ Horvat 2002, 170, Pl. 19: 9.

⁵⁷ Laharnar 2015, 13–14, Fig. 3; Istenič 2015, 17, Fig. 10.

⁵⁸ Laharnar 2022, 327–328, Figs. 3.2–3.4.

⁵⁹ Guštin 1973, 480–486.

⁶⁰ Laharnar 2022, 268–271.

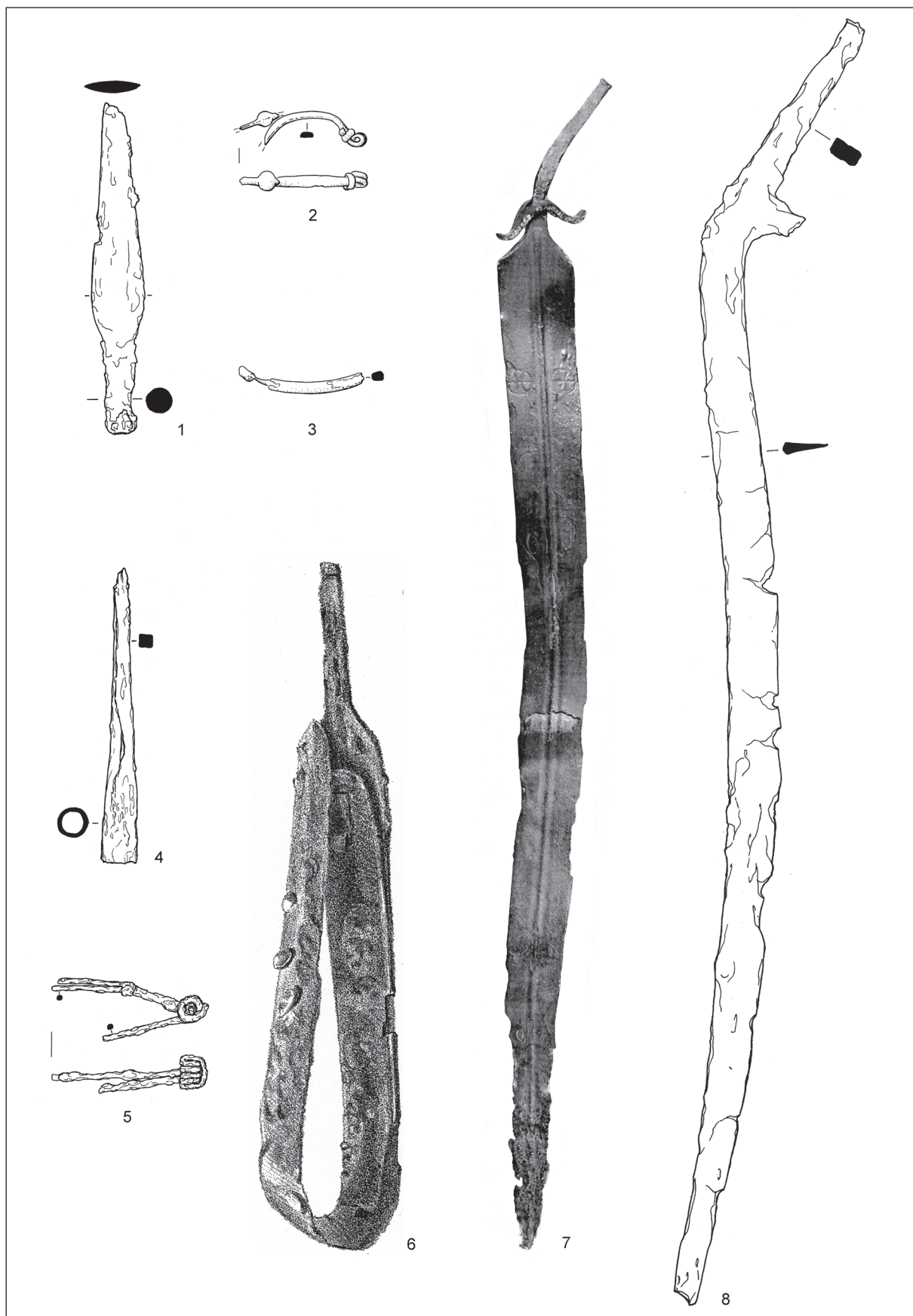


Fig. 7: Šmihel pod Nanosom. 1–3 Za Polšno, Grave 116 (from Guštin 1979, Pl. 53: 13–15), 4–5 Za Polšno, Grave 119 (from Guštin 1979, Pl. 54: 6–7), 6 (from Hoernes 1888, Pl. 4: Fig. 3), 7 (from Horvat 2002, Fig. 9), 8 (from Guštin 1979, Pl. 85: 1). 2–3 bronze; 1, 4–8 iron. Scale = 1: 3.

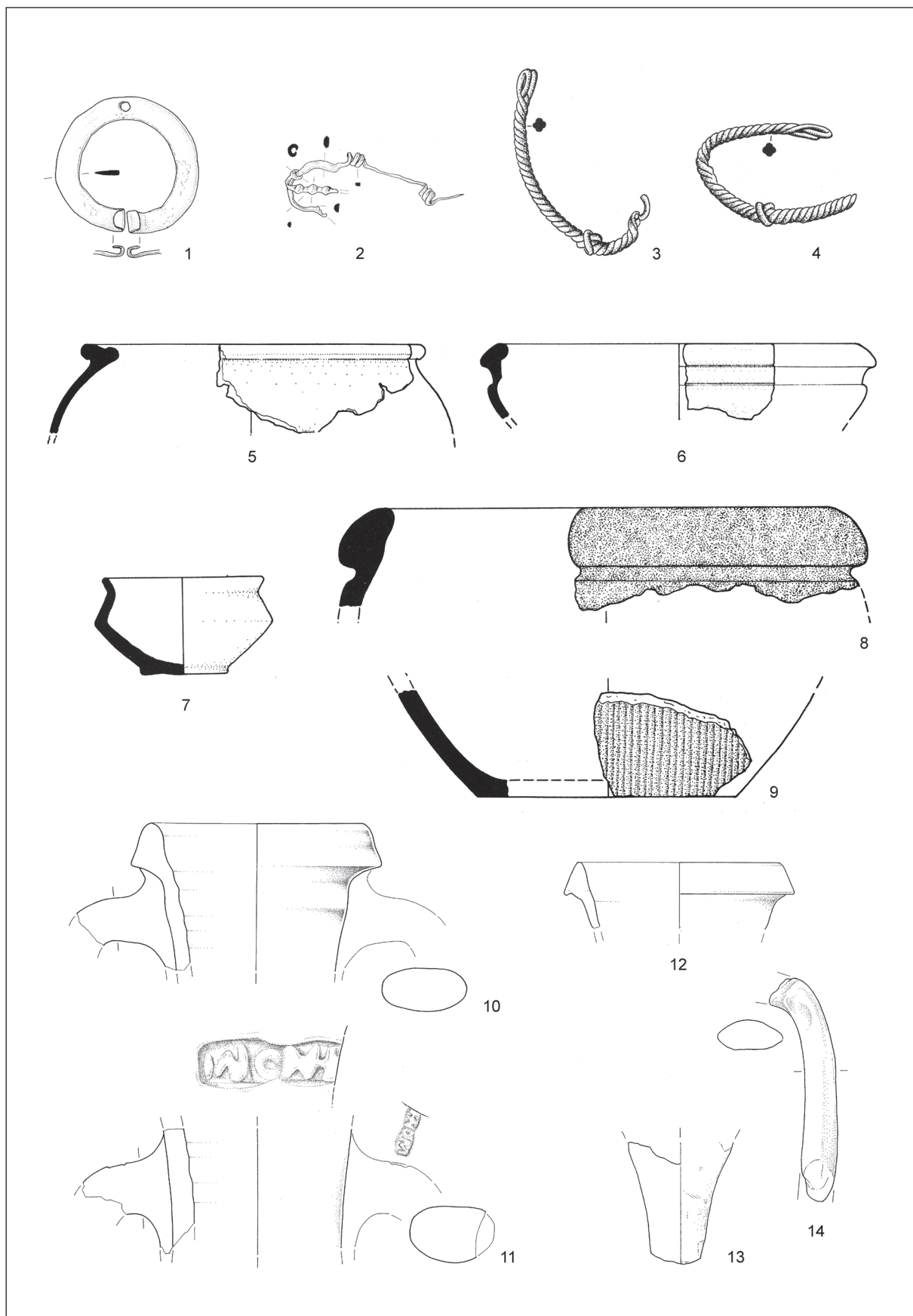


Fig. 8: Šmihel pod Nanosom. 1 Za Polšno cemetery (from Horvat 2002, Pl. 20: 6), 2 (from Horvat 2020, Pl. 20: 1), 3–4 (from Guštin 1979, Pl. 65: 9–10), 5–9 possibly Grad (from Guštin 1979, Pl. 71: 4, 6, 8, 9), 10–14 (10–11 Grad, 12–14 Mačkovc, from Horvat 2002, Pl. 20: 7–9). 1–4 bronze; 5–14 pottery. Scale = 1 : 2 (1–4), 1 : 4 (5–14).

(Šmihel – Mačkovc Graves 68 and 70, Šmihel – Za Polšno Graves 92, 99, 97, 114, 116, 117 and 119)⁶¹ and rare stray finds of Middle La Tène military equipment.⁶² The latter include a sword from the LT C2 phase with a wheel-shaped stamp (*Fig. 7: 7*).⁶³ The sword may be a grave good; the crack and the absence of patina in the middle of its blade indicate the sword may have been bent in this spot, which is a feature typical of La Tène funerary finds and only later straightened.⁶⁴ A La Tène sword and scabbard bent in this manner was found in the Šmihel – Za Polšno cemetery; it was part of the collection of Count Ernst Windischgrätz (*Fig. 7: 6*).⁶⁵

Graves Za Polšno 116 and 119 point to a LT C2 date. Grave 116 held a fragment of bronze ring jewellery (*Fig. 7: 3*), an iron spearhead (*Fig. 7: 1*) and a bronze Kastav type brooch of the Kastav variant (*Fig. 7: 2*).⁶⁶ Such brooches are seen as elements of the northern Adriatic costume and are characteristic of Istria and north-eastern Caput Adriae.⁶⁷ Grave 119 held an iron wire brooch of the Middle La Tène construction with a low bow and a spring with an external chord (*Fig. 7: 5*), as well as an iron socketed square-sectioned point (*Fig. 7: 4*).⁶⁸

The stray finds from the area of the Šmihel – Za Polšno cemetery include a single-edged sword with an offset hilt (machaira) of the Ljubljanska variant (*Fig. 7: 8*). This machaira variant probably dates to the Late Iron Age.⁶⁹ The example from Šmihel could be contemporaneous with the horizon of graves with iron wire brooches of the Middle La Tène construction or, by comparison with the machaira from the Most na Soči – Repelc site (Grave 25),⁷⁰ dated to the Late La Tène period (LT D).

There are no known grave groups of the Late La Tène LT D phase and the Roman period at Šmihel, only stray finds unearthed during the excavations in the 19th century⁷¹ or later with the help of metal detectors.⁷² These finds include an annular brooch of the Posočje type (*Fig. 8: 1*).⁷³ Brooches of this type from the graves at Idrija pri Bači date to LT D1 (150/130–70/60 BC),

though they also occur in later graves as items of an earlier date.⁷⁴ One example was also found in a layer of the second habitation phase at the Vrhnika – Stara pošta site dated from the late 2nd to the middle of the 1st century BC.⁷⁵

The same dating is attributable to a Picugi type brooch,⁷⁶ with the decoration of three knobs on the foot suggesting it belongs to the Aquileia variant (*Fig. 8: 2*). The brooch of the Aquileia variant in Grave 1 at Idrija pri Bači has been dated to LT D1, though such brooches were likely worn throughout the Late La Tène period.⁷⁷

Twisted torques with three knots (*Fig. 8: 3–4*) were common in the 2nd and even more so the 1st century BC.⁷⁸

It is possible that the hoard of Roman weapons from Šmihel also included iron tools.⁷⁹ A winged conical hoe (*Fig. 9: 1*) is similar to the Late La Tène (LT D) hoes from Posočje, but these are more markedly curved compared with the Šmihel example.⁸⁰ Axes with one-sided wings (*Fig. 9: 3*) are also frequent in the Late La Tène contexts in Posočje, but they are a form of long duration that already appeared in the Early Iron Age.⁸¹

The two tools with wings continuing into a conical blade (*Fig. 9: 4*) were likely used as ploughshares.⁸² They are similar to the central European La Tène, mainly Late La Tène narrow conical ploughshares unearthed in settlements and hoards.⁸³

Gerhard Jacobi noted that the bronze miniature ploughshares from the hoard of miniature weapons and tools at Talamonaccio (*Ripostiglio del Genio Militare*) formally belonged to narrow ploughshares.⁸⁴ This hoard came to light not far from the temple and the above-mentioned pila.⁸⁵ Interestingly, the ruins of the house in Ephyra also revealed a variety of iron tools and utensils alongside pila and other Roman weapons.⁸⁶ These utensils include an iron meat fork with a twisted

⁶¹ Guštin 1973, 480, Pls. 13: 6, 14: 3–4; Guštin 1979, Pls. 50–54; Gaspari, Mlinar 2005, 173, 182, Note 15.

⁶² Laharnar 2022, 268, 271, 323–324, Fig. 4.18.

⁶³ Horvat presumes it may have formed part of a hoard of Roman weapons (Horvat 2002, 127–128, 134, 153, 155, 169, Figs. 9–10).

⁶⁴ Drnić 2015, 25, Note 84; Laharnar 2022, 45–46.

⁶⁵ Hoernes 1888, 230, Pl. 4: Fig. 3.

⁶⁶ Guštin 1979, Pl. 53: 13–15.

⁶⁷ Guštin 1987, 50–51; Blečič Kavur 2009, 200, Fig. 2; Orlić 2011, 195.

⁶⁸ Guštin 1979, Pl. 54: 6–7; on the dating of the brooch, see Laharnar 2022, 270, 273.

⁶⁹ Gaspari, Mlinar 2005, 176–180, 184–186, Fig. 6.

⁷⁰ Mlinar 2020, 80, 93, Figs. 59–60, Pls. 24C, 25.

⁷¹ Guštin 1979, Pls. 59–72; 75–76; 77: 1–2; 78–79; 84–86.

⁷² Laharnar 2022, Pls. 1; 2: 26–34.

⁷³ Horvat 2002, 144, 160, Pl. 20: 6.

⁷⁴ Guštin 1991, 40, Fig. 22, Pls. 6: 9, 10: 10; 20: 4; Božič 1999, 75, Fig. 5: 3; Laharnar 2018, 235, Fig. 12: 13.

⁷⁵ Vojaković, Bekljanov Zidanšek, Toškan 2019, 103, 119, Pl. 4: 49.

⁷⁶ Horvat 2002, 144, 160, Pl. 20: 1; cf. Orlić 2011, 198–199, 205, Pl. 3: 3.

⁷⁷ Guštin 1991, 38.

⁷⁸ Righi 1982, 18; Guštin 1991, 48–49, Fig. 25: 8; Gamba-curta 2018, 100–113.

⁷⁹ Horvat 2002, 140–141, 157–158.

⁸⁰ Božič 2007, 230–233, Fig. 2: 5.

⁸¹ Božič 2007, 233.

⁸² Horvat 2002, 140, 157.

⁸³ Jacobi 1974, 67–70, Fig. 21: 5, Pl. 27: 470–471; Rybová, Motyková 1983, Fig. 24: 5; Müller 1997, Fig. 1: 2; Pieta 2010, 230–232, Fig. 103: 3–5.

⁸⁴ Jacobi 1974, 70; on the hoard of miniature artefacts from Talamonaccio, see Montelius 1904–1910, 920–922, Pl. 205.

⁸⁵ Vacano 1988, 11–18, Fig. 1.

⁸⁶ Dakaris 1964, Pls. 47b, 48b, g, d, 49, 50a, g.



Fig. 9: Šmihel pod Nanosom – Grad. La Tène iron tools: 1 – conical hoe, 2 – hoe, 3 – axes, 4 – ploughshares. Kept in the National Museum of Slovenia.



Fig. 10: Šmihel pod Nanosom. Burnt fragments of brooches, other jewellery and sheet metal from the probable cult place (not precisely located). Kept in the National Museum of Slovenia.

shank,⁸⁷ which is very similar to the forks from the hoard found at Vrhpolje near Kojško (LT D)⁸⁸ and Grave 17 at Idrija pri Bači (LT D2 and Middle Augustan period), respectively.⁸⁹

The winged hoe with a broad blade (Fig. 9: 2) also has no close parallels among the finds from Notranjska and the neighbouring regions. A very similar hoe has been found in the Late La Tène hoard of tools at the Gottwaldovo námestie site in Bratislava.⁹⁰

Celtic coins came to light at Šmihel. Of these, a large silver coin of an unknown type and a small Tauriscan silver coin of the Karlstein type survive.⁹¹ Large Celtic silver coins and the corresponding small silver coins were in circulation south of the Karavanke Mountains from the mid-2nd century BC onwards.⁹²

The stray pottery finds from Šmihel include sherds of 'Celtic' pottery. They are fragments of jars and dishes,

some of graphite ware, that include sherds with a thickened and inturned rim, sherds with a groove at the rim-body junction and sherds with combed decoration (Fig. 8: 5–9). This pottery has parallels from Middle–Late La Tène and Late Republican contexts, for example from the Roman post at Mandrga (late 2nd and early 1st century BC)⁹³ and the Vrhnika – Stara pošta site from a layer dated from the late 2nd to the middle of the 1st century BC.⁹⁴

To sum up, the stray finds from Šmihel include few items from LT D1, while those exclusively from LT D2 and the Augustan period are almost completely absent. Šmihel yielded neither pieces of the Late La Tène Notranjska costume (Notranjska variants of the VIII Certosa brooches, brooches with a lozenge-shaped bow, *Palmettenfibeln*, belt chain pendants in the shape of a human head) nor contemporary Italian products (such as Almgren 65, Nauheim, Alesia, Jezerine brooches) that are otherwise characteristic finds in nearby hillforts.⁹⁵

⁸⁷ Dakaris 1964, Pl. 47g (far right); Völling 1997, 96, Fig. 11a (far left).

⁸⁸ Božič 2007, 233–234, Fig. 2: 4.

⁸⁹ Guštin 1991, 16, 66, Pl. 17: 6; on the dating of Grave 17 from Idrija pri Bači, see Božič 2008, 106–108.

⁹⁰ Paulík 1970, 48–49, Fig. 15: 3.

⁹¹ Horvat 2002, 144, 160.

⁹² Kos, Šemrov 2003.

⁹³ Horvat, Bavdek 2009, 80–82, 93–96, Fig. 122, Pls. 7: 11; 8: 3; 29: 11–12; 30: 13–15.

⁹⁴ Vojaković, Bekljanov Zidanšek, Toškan 2019, 102–103, 119–120, Pl. 2: 29–31.

⁹⁵ Laharnar 2022, 270–305.

ROMAN WEAPONS AND THE IRON AGE CULT PLACE

The interpretation of the Roman Republican weapons from Grad near Šmihel is not an easy one. Jana Horvat presented three possible interpretations: i) as weapons used in laying siege and assaulting the hillfort, ii) as a collection of scrap metal used for repairs or reuse and iii) as a votive hoard.⁹⁶

In a previous paper, we argued that the weapons were used in the Roman siege and assault on the hillfort.⁹⁷ We furthermore propose that the hoard of weapons and the weapons scattered across the site and recovered using a metal detector should be tied to the same event. After having conquered the hillfort, one can imagine that the Romans collected the large pieces and the shafted weapons, but left the smaller pieces (such as slingshot) scattered across the northern half of the hillfort and its northern and north-western slopes.⁹⁸

The collected weapons may then have been intentionally deposited at the site of the victory and conquest of the most important hillfort in the region, and the assemblage intended as a votive act⁹⁹ or as a commemoration of victory.¹⁰⁰

Ancient texts reveal that the Romans¹⁰¹ and their contemporaries¹⁰² observed the custom of collecting (*congeries armorum*) and ritually burning weapons after victories in battles.

The most characteristic ancient memorials of victory are *tropaia*, which the victors would set up at the site of the battle they had prevailed in. According to ancient literary sources, it was a custom practised since the time of the Greco-Persian Wars.¹⁰³ The Greeks distinguished between 'primary' or perishable memorials, usually with a wooden stake or tree trunk in an anthropomorphic form wearing a cuirass, helmet and other weapons, and 'secondary' or permanent monuments built of stone. The latter are not relevant for the interpretation of the Šmihel hoard. The only archaeological find of a perishable memorial is the *tropaion* from the 4th century BC, kept in the Staatlichen Antikensammlungen in Munich, which is likely linked with a commemoration of a victory from the time of the Roman conquests of the South Italic peoples.¹⁰⁴

Raimon Graells i Fabregat notes that we should distinguish between *tropaia* and offerings of weapons in sanctuaries as observable in ancient literary and archaeological evidence. *Tropaia* were erected at the battle site and comprised complete and undamaged weapons. They were sacred and untouchable. They were not to be moved and repaired, but rather left to the elements and decay. In contrast, the weapons offered in temples and other cult places were usually intentionally destroyed, frequently burnt and in some cases fixed to walls; these weapons could be moved and taken from the sanctuary, possibly even reused.¹⁰⁵

At Alesia (Mont-Auxois near Alise-Sainte-Reine in Burgundy), Roman and Celtic weapons came to light in the ditches of the Roman siege works. The greatest concentration was dug up in the 19th century in the area of the siege works northwest of the oppidum, at the foot of Mont Réa, the possible site of the decisive battle during the siege of Alesia in 52 BC.¹⁰⁶ It is possible that these weapons are actually the remains of one or more *tropaia* erected after the fall of Alesia and the victory over Vercingetorix.¹⁰⁷

The hill of Döttenbichl in the Bavarian Alps revealed artefacts that bear witness to the Roman military endeavours in the final decades BC.¹⁰⁸ Part of the Roman militaria from the hill probably originate from the battle fought between the Rhaetii and the Roman army in the second decade BC or the Alpine campaign of the Roman army in 15 BC.¹⁰⁹ According to one of the interpretations that Werner Zanier proposed, the conflict may have occurred in the area of a sacred grove or a Rhaetian cult place in a natural setting. Part of the weapons was burnt and intentionally destroyed, which led Zanier to believe that the weapons were collected after the battle and offered in a ritual or consecration of the sacred place.¹¹⁰

We may see the collected and burnt Roman weapons from Grad near Šmihel in a similar way. In connection with this, we should emphasise that Šmihel was not only an Iron Age centre with a large hillfort and cemeteries, but also a cult place of importance at least from the Late Hallstatt period onwards. Evidence of this can be seen in the numerous finds of cut and heavily burnt artefacts, mainly Certosa brooches, rings and other jewellery from the collection of stray finds recovered in the 1880s (Fig. 10), which closely resemble the content of the Iron Age burnt-offering cult places in Notranjska, Posočje, Friuli and the Alps. Some of these cult places did not fall into disuse with the arrival of the Romans,

⁹⁶ Horvat 2002, 141–142, 158–159.

⁹⁷ Laharnar 2015, 12–14.

⁹⁸ It would have been difficult to retrieve the lead slingshot after battle, as they usually penetrate the ground (cf. Laharnar, Šmit, Ravbar 2011, 76–77).

⁹⁹ Horvat 2002, 141–142, 158–159; Laharnar 2015, 13–14.

¹⁰⁰ Laharnar 2015, 14.

¹⁰¹ Tagliamonte 2016, 163–172.

¹⁰² E.g. Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, 6, 17.

¹⁰³ Baitinger 2011, 139–140.

¹⁰⁴ Graells i Fabregat 2019.

¹⁰⁵ Graells i Fabregat 2019, 531–534.

¹⁰⁶ Sievers 2001, 125, Fig. 3.

¹⁰⁷ Sievers 2001, 197–198.

¹⁰⁸ Martin-Kilcher 2011, 51–52, Fig. 22.

¹⁰⁹ Zanier 2016, 546–549.

¹¹⁰ Zanier 2016, 552–559.

but continued to the end of the Roman period.¹¹¹ Setting up a memorial of victory in the shape of a pile of ritually burnt weapons in a place that was a religious centre of the local population would thus have been an act of great symbolism on the part of the Romans; it would mark Roman military and ritual supremacy.¹¹²

The rare stray finds that postdate the Roman weapons indicate that the cult place may have remained in use after the Roman conquest and end of the settlement on Grad near Šmihel. These stray finds include coins (75 BC, 1st century), fragments of two *kräftig profilierte* brooches (Almgren 67 and Almgren 67/68), foot fragment of a brooch probably with two knobs on the bow (Fig. 10: bottom) and possibly some chronologically latest La Tène forms such as Late La Tène tools (Fig. 9).

CONCLUSION

The contribution proposes that the Roman Republican weapons from Grad near Šmihel (Figs. 3; 4) were those used in the attack that the Romans mounted on the hillfort. The hypothesis is that, after conquering the hillfort, the Romans collected part of the weapons (hoard), while the other part remained scattered on the site (small stray metal-detector finds).¹¹³ The collected pile of weapons was then ritually burnt, which would have been a powerful symbolic deed, possibly connected with a ritual dominance of a local cult, the existence of which at Šmihel can be seen in the Iron Age small finds (Fig. 10).

By conquering Grad near Šmihel, the Romans assumed military control over the pass at Razdrto (*Ocra*). This was an important military achievement that ensured the safety of the Roman colony in Aquileia, which was the only Roman city in the north-eastern Adriatic for almost a century and a half after its foundation in 183/181 BC (Fig. 1).

The dating of the Roman attack based on archaeological evidence rests on two premises: i) that the Roman Republican weapons from Grad near Šmihel are contemporary, ii) that parallels for the pila with a wide flat tang date them between the late 3rd and the early 1st century BC.

The geopolitical context as provided by ancient authors¹¹⁴ suggests that the Romans carried out the attack on Grad near Šmihel at the time of establishing the colony in Aquileia (186–183/181 BC) or in the decades after, but before setting up posts near the pass at Razdrto (Preval, Mandrga, Sušec) in the late 2nd century BC.¹¹⁵

After the Roman assault, Grad near Šmihel did not recover and the hillfort was abandoned. The rare latest Late La Tène finds and Roman items from the late 1st century BC and the 1st century AD may be associated with visits to the cult place that remained in use after the settlement had been abandoned.¹¹⁶

It would also appear that the conquest of the pass at Razdrto and the fall of Grad near Šmihel brought about a pause in the Roman advances in the area and further eastwards, which only continued after several decades if not a whole century. Archaeological evidence indicates that the Romans resumed campaigning in and around the hillforts of Notranjska east of Razdrto (Fig. 1) from the late 70s BC onwards (Baba near Slavina, after 74 BC), probably in the time of Caesar's proconsulship and during Octavian's Illyrian Wars (Stari grad above Unec, Žerovnišček, Ulaka and Nadleški hrib).¹¹⁷

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¹¹¹ Laharnar 2022, 263–269, with references in Note 715.

¹¹² A similar interpretation has been put forward for the base of a statue found at Škocjan and dedicated to the Emperor Augustus. The inscription formula includes the word *sacrum*, which leaves little doubt as to a cult nature of the monument. It is most likely a monument of the Imperial cult in a place with a strong local cult tradition. The monument of the state religion would thus represent symbolic supremacy over the sacred place of the indigenous communities (Šašel 1975–1976, 611; Slapšak 1999, 153).

¹¹³ Laharnar 2015, 12–14; Laharnar 2022, 324–327.

¹¹⁴ On the historical circumstances following the incursion of the 'Gauls from beyond the Alps' in Venetia in 186 BC and at the foundation of Aquileia in 181 BC, see Šašel Kos 1997.

¹¹⁵ Horvat, Bavdek 2009; Horvat 2015, 277.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Gradič above Kobarid (Laharnar, Štular, Mlinar 2015, 244–246; Horvat 2018, 347).

¹¹⁷ Horvat 2015, 278; Laharnar 2022, 354–365.

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