

GRAD NEAR REKA, GRADIŠČE IN CERKNO, AND VRH GRADU NEAR PEČINE – PRE-ROMAN PLACES OF WORSHIP?

Janka ISTENIČ

Izvleček

[Grad pri Reki, Gradišče v Cerknem in Vrh gradu pri Pečinah – predrimška kulturna mesta?]

Članek obravnava prazgodovinske in rimske najdbe, ki so starejše od okoli leta 35 pr. Kr., s treh najdišč na Tolminsko-Cerkljanskem (Grad pri Reki, Gradišče v Cerknem, Vrh gradu pri Pečinah). Najdbe nakazujejo, da so do rimskega vojaškega napada in osvojitve (verjetno v prvem letu Oktavijanovih Ilirskih vojn, 35–33 pr. Kr.) na teh najdiščih domačini izvajali verske obrede.

Avtorica domneva, da so imela ta tri najdišča pomembno vlogo v skupinski zavesti predrimskih prebivalcev; to in dejstvo, da so najdišča na naravno dobro zavarovanih legah, jo je vodilo k domnevi, da so bili ti trije kraji središča vojaškega odpora proti rimski vojski ter da bili zadnje točke, ki so jih domačini branili.

Glavne besede: Grad pri Reki, Gradišče v Cerknem, Vrh gradu pri Pečinah, prazgodovinska kulturna mesta

Abstract

The paper presents and discusses prehistoric and Roman finds from Grad near Reka, Gradišče in Cerkno, and Vrh gradu near Pečine in the Tolmin-Cerkno area (Posočje region, western Slovenia) that predate the Roman assault and conquest of the three sites in the first year of Octavian's Illyrian wars (35–33 BC). The finds suggest that, before the Roman conquest, the local population performed religious rituals at these sites.

The author argues that the three sites were of great importance for the identity of the pre-Roman population and that they became the central and perhaps last points the local population defended.

Keywords: Grad near Reka, Gradišče in Cerkno, Vrh gradu near Pečine, pre-Roman cult places



Fig. 1: Map showing the geographic position of 1) Grad above Reka, 2) Gradišče in Cerkno and 3) Vrh gradu near Pečine.

INTRODUCTION

Three naturally well-protected sites in the Tolmin-Cerkno area (Posočje region, western Slovenia), namely Grad near Reka with its surroundings, Gradišče in Cerkno and Vrh gradu near Pečine, were already published in 2005 and 2015. These two papers discussed the metal-detector finds of Roman missiles and other militaria (brooches and hobnails of military footwear), Roman coins and other items that indicate a Roman military assault. The comparative analysis of the finds suggested the assault can be dated to the fourth decade BC. Even more precisely, the Roman coins, the wider historical context, and the fact that Appian (*Illyr.* 16,47) mentioned the *Carni* (their territory included the Tolmin-Cerkno area) among the tribes defeated during Octavian's Illyrian wars strongly suggest the Roman military action should be dated to the beginning of the Illyrian wars, i.e. to 35 BC. For the Romans and the safety of Italy, pacifying the hinterland of the Soča Valley was of crucial importance before undertaking further military campaigns towards the southeast (Istenič 2005; Istenič 2015).

The main purpose of this paper is to shed light on the significance the three sites had not for the Romans, but rather for pre-Roman communities, with the focus on pre-Roman and Roman finds that are believed to predate 35 BC.

GRAD NEAR REKA (Figs. 1–5)

In 2002, a bronze situla was brought to the Archaeological Department of the National Museum of Slovenia, filled to the rim with earth and small stones mixed with cremated human remains.¹ If the reported information on its findspot is correct, it was found on the steep eastern slope of Grad near Reka, about 25 metres below the edge of the summit terrace (Fig. 2: 2).² The conservation procedure carried out in the museum revealed that the situla contents were not intact; the finder may have emptied the vessel to inspect its interior.

It is difficult to date the situla from Grad near Reka (Fig. 3) on its formal characteristics alone. At the time of the first publication, the similarities in the design (without considering the handle attachment) and technological details with the situlae from Trentino and Veneto in Italy suggested it was made in a small workshop in Veneto in the 4th century BC.³ For the shell-shaped handle attachment, there were two known parallels. One came from the Venetic sanctuary at Lagole di Calalzo and the other from Magdalensberg (Carinthia, Austria), but neither came with information that would allow for a precise dating. The sanctuary at Lagole di Calalzo was

¹ Turk et al. 2009, 48–57, Figs. 2, 3.

² Acc. No. 2002/1.

³ Turk et al. 2009, 51–54.



Fig. 2: Grad above Reka, 1) the area where most of the small finds were reportedly found, 2) the presumed findspot of the inscribed situla, 3) the location of the Late Iron Age cemetery, and 4) Poliško polje. View towards the west. (Photo Jože Hanc, © National Museum of Slovenia.)

in use from the 6th century BC into the Roman period and the settlement at Magdalensberg is dated from the 1st century BC to the first half of the 1st century AD.⁴

The situla as a whole, together with the handle attachment soldered to it, has a close parallel in the recently published and heavily damaged situla from Staol di Curago (Belluno province, Veneto, Italy).⁵ The published photograph shows a well-preserved lid associated with a vessel, of which only the cylindrical neck, beginning of the shoulder with handle attachments, and the handle survive, the last with bent ends inserted into the holes on the upper side of the handle attachments. The only publication of the site known to us shows that it is a necropolis heavily damaged through ploughing. The excavations unearthed three urns and several artefacts that include coins from the 1st to the 4th century AD. In connection with the urns, the publication mentions coins of Trajan and brooches, but is silent on the contents of the situla with shell-shaped attachments. The lid is roughly flat with a vertical rim and a ring handle, and is very similar to the lid of a Late Republican copper alloy situla with a rounded shoulder and two handle attachments in the shape of a pair of dolphins found at Polpet at the River Piave (some 8 km NE of Belluno).⁶ The Late

Republican situla from Polpet with the attachments in the shape of a dolphin pair corresponds with the Eggers Type 18, which began to be produced in the last third of the 2nd century BC.⁷ The situla and the lid from Staol di Curago thus reveals that the situla from Grad near Reka is likely much later in date than presumed in the 2009 publication, suggesting it was likely made in the late 2nd or the early 1st century BC. It was probably buried on the slope of Grad prior to the Roman attack in 35 BC.

The situla from Grad near Reka bears an inscription on the shoulder. It was made with a writing instrument (stylus) or a knife and consists of 16 letters of the Venetic alphabet. Eichner and Nedoma attributed the inscription to the regional group of the Venetic alphabet named Type Idrija. They considered it consisted of the name of a person (man or woman) followed by a female name (referring to a god or a person) in the dative and assumed it was from the 4th century BC.⁸ Luka Repanšek agreed with Eichner and Nedoma that palaeographic characteristics clearly placed the inscription in the group characterised by two inscriptions from Idrija pri Bači (Is 1 and Is 2; he called it the Posočje group rather than the Idrija type). In his opinion, the palaeographic characteristics of the inscription indicated it was not

⁴ Turk et al. 2009, 53.

⁵ Padovan 2018, 134, Fig. 54.

⁶ Padovan 2018, Fig. 47.

⁷ Cf. Bolla, Boube, Guillaumet 1991, 13–15, Figs. 6–8; Laharnar, Mlinar 2022, 545, 562–563, Fig. 5, Pl. 8: 2.

⁸ Eichner, Nedoma 2009, 66–71, Figs. 1, 2.

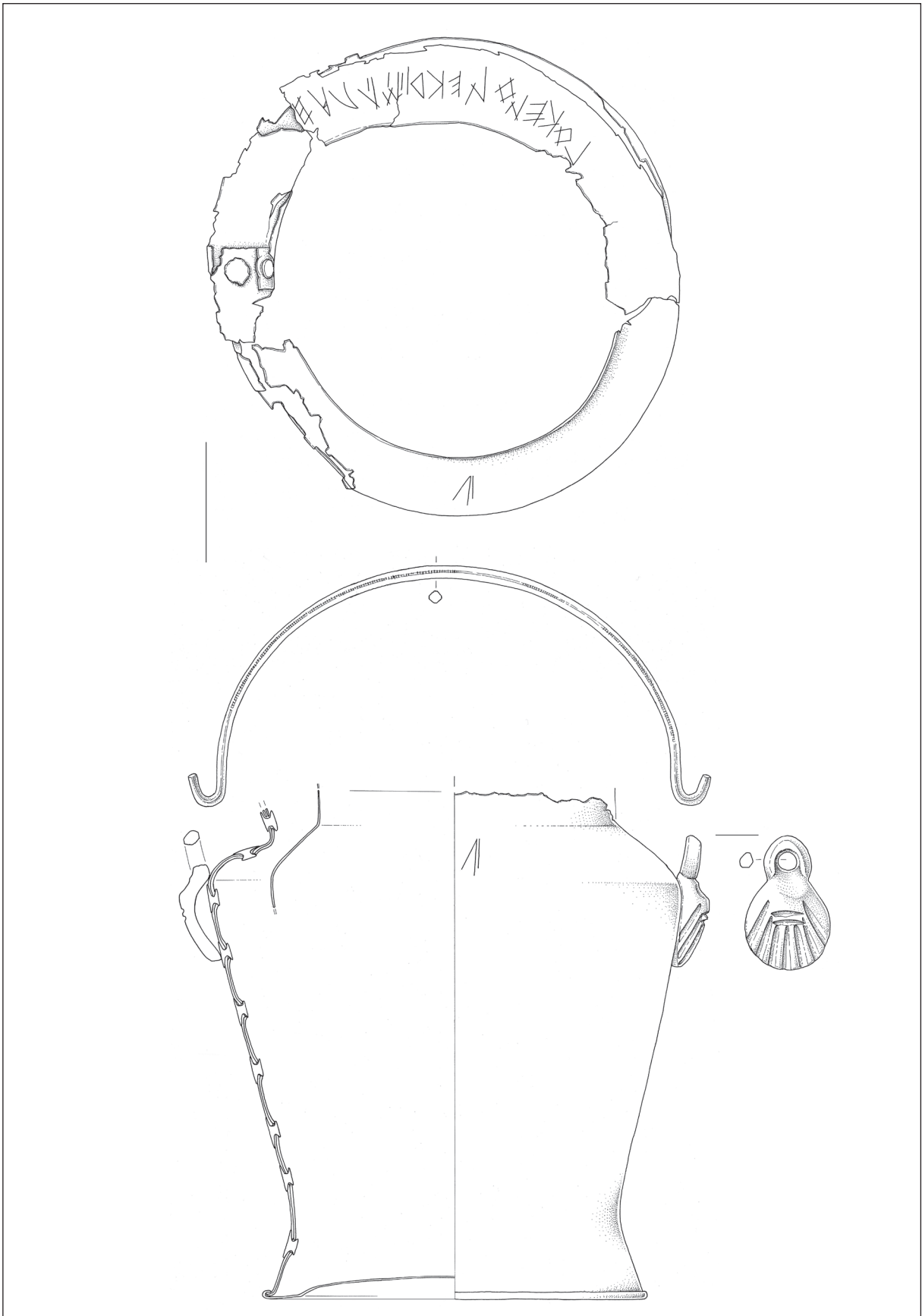


Fig. 3: Grad above Reka, copper alloy situla with an inscription in the Venetic alphabet. Scale 1: 2.

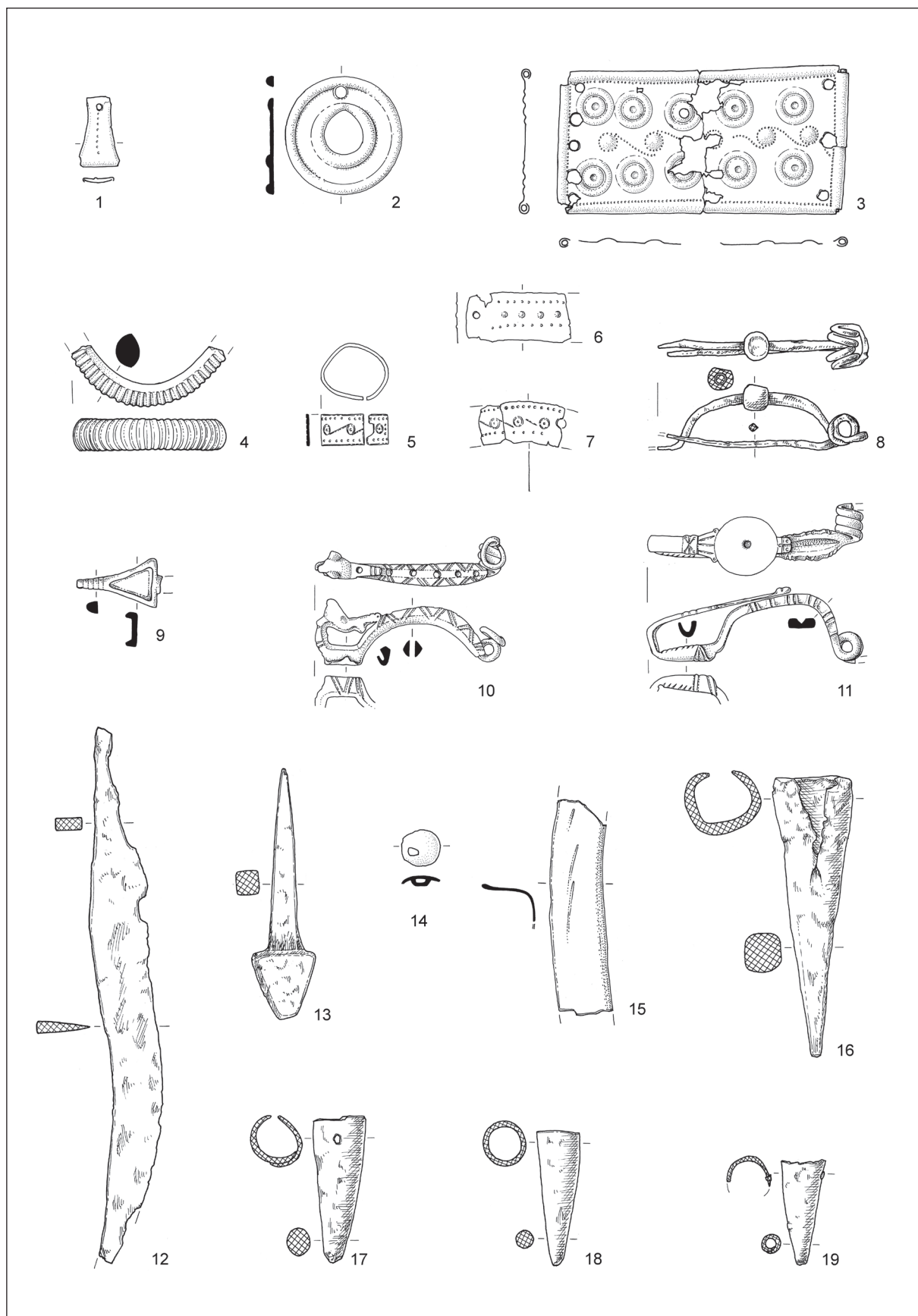


Fig. 4: Grad above Reka, Iron Age small finds. Copper alloy: 1–7, 9–11, 14, 15; iron: 8, 12–13, 16–19. Scale 1:2.

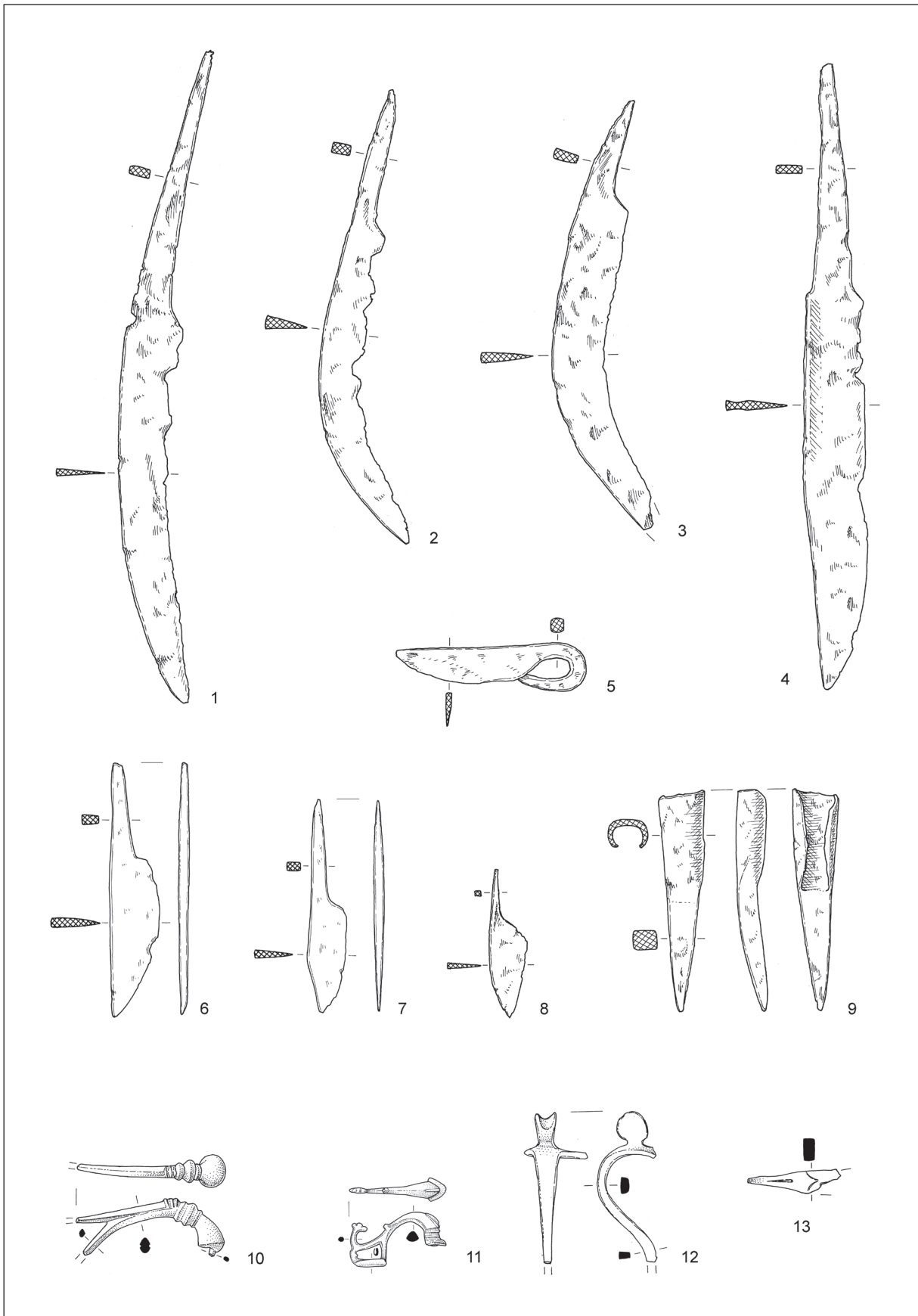


Fig. 5: Grad above Reka, Iron Age small finds. Iron 1–9; copper alloy 10–13. Scale 1:2.

earlier than the 4th century BC, but could be much later. He interpreted the inscription as consisting of a male personal name in the nominative singular and the name of a goddess in the dative singular.⁹

The cremated human bones found in the situla probably belonged to a woman, 26 to 35 years old, and were C14-dated¹⁰ (at the 2-sigma level, i.e. 95.4% probability) to 165BC/AD 69.¹¹

The sites that revealed inscriptions in the Venetic alphabet of the Idrija or Posočje type are located, with one exception (Ženjak in north-eastern Slovenia), in the area along the River Soča and in the Tolmin-Cerkno hills (north-western Slovenia),¹² which suggests that the inscription on the situla from Grad was probably made in the wider area of the site.

The proposed new dating of the situla from Grad between the late 2nd century and 35 BC corresponds with the C14 dating of the bone remains found inside the vessel (165 BC/AD 70). With this, the hypothesis that a several-centuries earlier situla was used for burial¹³ lost its principal supporting argument.

In addition to the situla, people using metal detectors collected several other Iron Age and Late Republican items on top of Grad near Reka and on its steep slopes descending towards the Kozarska and Poličanka rivulets (Figs. 4, 5).

Hollow trapezoidal pendants of sheet copper alloy very similar to that in Fig. 4: 1 were common in the later part of the Early Iron Age (6th–4th century BC) and were suspended from belts, brooches, cult rods, and horse gear.¹⁴ The fragment of a cast copper alloy ribbed bracelet or anklet (Fig. 4: 4) is of a type relatively common in the (female) costume in the Early Iron Age in Dolenjska.¹⁵ The cast circular copper alloy pendant (Fig. 4: 2) has parallels among contemporary small finds that mostly came from graves.¹⁶

The sheet copper alloy rectangular plate in Fig. 4: 3 is decorated with embossed dots and concentric circles, as well as chased straight or wavy lines of tiny, hardly visible notches about 0.5 mm long, and only about 0.1 mm deep. On all four sides, its ends are folded around a thin lead wire. Both shorter sides are bordered with small holes of two different sizes, consisting of five smaller (diameter c 3) and three larger ones (diameter c

5 mm). We have not found a close parallel for the item, but several features point to its Early Iron Age date. One is the technical detail of a thin copper alloy sheet folded around a lead wire, which occurs on the rims of copper alloy situlae and other Early Iron Age vessels.¹⁷ The motif of simple embossed dots¹⁸ and concentric circles,¹⁹ as well as the chased straight and tiny wavy lines have parallels in objects of situla art and other Early Iron Age items.²⁰

The fragments of thin sheet copper alloy (Fig. 4: 5–7) with chased decoration have parallels from the Early Iron Age sites in Posočje, Notranjska and Dolenjska.²¹

For several items, typo-chronological features indicate a Late Iron Age date (3rd to 1st century BC).

One of these items is an iron brooch of the Middle La Tène construction with a spherical knob at the foot-bow junction (Fig. 4: 8), which is probably from LT C1 or LT C2 (late 3rd to mid-2nd century BC) and has geographically closest parallels from Notranjska, Dolenjska,²² and Posočje.²³ The triangular part of the copper-alloy fragment in Fig. 4: 9 was probably originally filled with enamel and the whole fragment inserted in an iron brooch of a LT C2 type.²⁴ The brooch in Fig. 4: 10 is characteristic of the Idrija group.²⁵ Brooches of the same type as that in Fig. 4: 11 are common and known from the sites of the Idrija group, but also from other regions.²⁶

The battle knife with a curved blade (Fig. 4: 12) has close matches in two La Tène D1 graves from the Posočje region (Gradec near Krn, Grave 1 and Idrija pri Bači, Grave 1).²⁷ It is uncertain whether this knife type remained in use after LT D1. The object in Fig. 4: 13 has parallels among Late Iron Age spear-butts.²⁸

Prehistoric items that cannot be dated more precisely include a “bronze button” with a loop on the

¹⁷ Laharnar, Mlinar 2022, 554, 564–566, Pl. 8: 1; Tecco Hvala, Dular, Kocuvan 2004, Pls 7: 5, 8: 8, 9: 3, 12: 1, 85: 16, 108: 7; Sonja Perovšek and Matjaž Bizjak, Department of Conservation and Restoration, National Museum of Slovenia, pers. comm.

¹⁸ Turk 2005, Figs. 4, 21, 24, 65, 68, 27, 71, 80, 88; Kastelec, Mansuelli, Kromer 1965, Pls 10–12, 38.

¹⁹ Turk 2005, Figs. 4, 8; Kastelec, Mansuelli, Kromer 1965, Pl. 62.

²⁰ Turk 2005, Figs. 22, 24, 71; Kastelec, Mansuelli, Kromer 1965, Pls 6–8, 26.

²¹ Guštin 1979, Pl. 24: 18, 26, 31, 36, Pl. 68: 16, Guštin 1991, Pls 23: 8, 24: 18; Tecco Hvala, Dular, Kocuvan 2004, Pl. 30: 2/24, 1, 2, 2/27, 1, 2, 3, 4, Pl. 40: 2/52, 1, 2.

²² Laharnar 2022, 270, Pl. 31: 32.

²³ Guštin 1991, Pl. 4: 5.

²⁴ Gleirscher 2009, 152, Fig. 5: 10. Cf. Laharnar 2022, 272.

²⁵ Guštin 1991, 36, Pls 6: 11, 9: 11, 13: 3, 24: 7; Mlinar 2020, 71, 72, Fig. 48, Pl. 43: 5–8.

²⁶ Mlinar 2020, 71, 72, Pl. 43: 3–4.

²⁷ Laharnar, Mlinar 2022, 560, Pl. 2: 9.

²⁸ Cf. Donat, Righi, Vitri 2007, 95, Fig. 7: 2; Gleirscher 2009, 149, Figs. 5: 3, 9: 3; Guštin 2017.

⁹ Repanšek 2022, 602, 609, Note 35.

¹⁰ Turk et al. 2009, 54, 56–57.

¹¹ The dating reported in Turk et al. 2009 refers to 1-sigma (68% probability) and to the calibration in 2008.

¹² Repanšek 2022, 601–603, 610, 612–615 (sites in NW Slovenia: Idrija pri Bači, Grad near Reka, Berlotov rob near Šentviška Gora, Gradič above Kobarid – two inscriptions, Vrh Gradu near Pečine; one site in NE Slovenia: Ženjak near Negova).

¹³ Thus in Eichner, Nedoma 2009, 71.

¹⁴ Laharnar 2022, 256.

¹⁵ Laharnar 2022, 254; Božič 2018, 189–190.

¹⁶ Laharnar 2022, 257, 658–660, Pl. 12: 19.

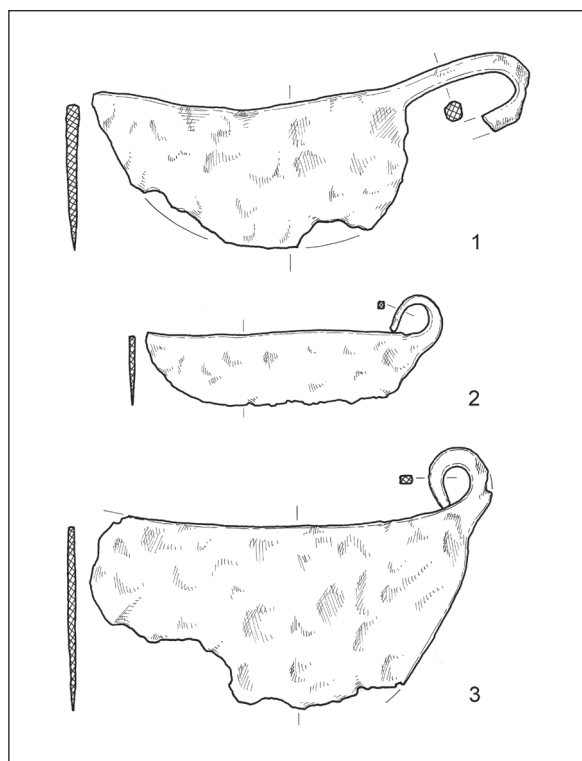


Fig. 6: Razors from Drnovo near Krško (1), Gradišče near Suhadole (2) and Vinji vrh above Bela Cerkev (3). Iron: 1–3. Scale 1:2.

underside (Fig. 4: 14), which was part of personal attire in the Late Bronze, Early and Late Iron Ages,²⁹ as well as a rim fragment of a presumed copper alloy vessel (Fig. 4: 15).

The typological characteristics of the spear-butts in Fig. 4: 16–19 and the knives in Fig. 5: 1–4 do not offer clues as to their prehistoric or Roman date.³⁰ The same applies to the 68 mm long iron object in Fig. 5: 5, probably a razor. We did not find parallels for it among the typical Roman razors,³¹ but a similar object (Fig. 6: 3) is known from Vinji vrh above Bela Cerkev³², where pre-Roman and Roman graves were found.³³ Further parallels come from the hillfort on Gradišče near Suhadole (near Litija)³⁴ (Fig. 6: 2), and presumably from

one of the Roman cemeteries at Drnovo near Krško/Nevidunum or its surroundings (Fig. 6: 1).³⁵

The slightly curved blade on the item in Fig. 5: 9 suggests it is probably not a ploughshare,³⁶ but a miniature pointed hoe of a local form known from LT D sites in the region of the Rivers Soča, Tolminka, and Idrijca (western Slovenia).³⁷

The items in Fig. 5: 6–8 are most probably miniature coulters; their form was presumably inspired by the natural-sized coulters.

The earliest surviving coulters are from the Late La Tène period and they become more numerous in Roman times.³⁸ Several publications deal with coulters and other iron parts of primitive ploughs,³⁹ but there is as yet no typology that would provide a tool for reliably dating individual items. The longevity of the form of iron plough components is clearly discernible in finds from the Gallo-Roman sanctuary at Aiseau-Prezles (Belgium), where more than 720 ploughshares, miniature and natural-sized, of the same type came to light in all layers, indicating that a single type of ploughshare existed throughout the time when the sanctuary was in use, i.e. from the last quarter of 1st century BC to the 4th century AD.⁴⁰ The custom of offering miniature coulters at the site might be related to the continuation of pre-Roman practices, as the local population (descendants of the Eburones and Aduatuques decimated by Caesar) presumably predominated in the associated settlement.

In the case of the coulters from Grad near Reka (Fig. 5: 6–8), the back of their tang is of an even width along its whole length or tapers slightly and as such clearly differs from the coulters regarded as characteristic of the Late Roman period, in which the back of the tang widens towards the upper end.⁴¹ The tang and blade back in the coulters in Fig. 5: 6 form a straight line, while there is a knick in this line in the coulters shown in Fig. 5: 7, 8; neither of these features is chronologically diagnostic and occurs from the Late Iron Age to the Roman period and later.⁴² The form of the tangs, characterised by the even width or slight tapering of their backs, therefore seems to suggest that the miniature coulters from Grad near Reka are pre-Roman or Early Roman (Late Republic or Principate).

²⁹ Petru, Petru 1978, 66, Pl. 20: 8 (surviving length 106 mm).

³⁰ In ploughshares, the blade is straight (not curved) in longitudinal section (Božič 2007, 230, 231, Fig. 3).

³¹ Božič 2007, 230, 231, Fig. 2: 2.

³² Hanemann 2014, 169–170, with references.

³³ Fries 1995, 58–66; Hanemann 2014, 160–189; Henning 1987; all with references.

³⁴ Paridaens 2019, 152–157, 158, Figs. 8–11.

³⁵ Henning 1987, 61, Type E3; Božič 2005, 345. Miniature coulters of this type were found in the region of Gorenjska, more precisely one at the hillfort on Straža (Horvat 2015, 181) and several at Dunaj near Jereka (Gabrovec 1966, 249–249, Pl. 1: 9–12, 14–16).

³⁶ Fries 1995, 58–66.

²⁹ Laharnar 2009, 105, Pl. 2: 22, 26.

³⁰ Dolenz 1998, 67–69, Pl. 8: M57–M76; Fingerlin 1986, 895/21, 906/15, 963/5 etc.; Harnecker, Mylo 2011, 3, 33, Pl. 16: 2297; Horvat 2015, 192, Pl. 1: 17–19; Mlinar et al. 2018, Cat. Nos 49, 62.

³¹ Cf. Boon 1991; Garbsch 1975.

³² Stare 1973, 77, Pl. 49: 8 (length 118 mm).

³³ Stare 1973, 16.

³⁴ NMS, Inv. No. R 18906 (no context; found by an unauthorised amateur using a metal detector); the razor is 78 mm long.

We should mention that agricultural implements are common goods in the graves from the final part of the Late Iron Age in Posočje⁴³ and are also numerously represented in two hoards from the same period;⁴⁴ we may presume this reflects a great significance and symbolic value that the implements had for the population of Posočje towards the end of the Late Iron Age.

The items attributed to the Late Republican period up to about 70 BC according to typo-chronological criteria include a brooch of the Almgren 65 type (*Fig. 5: 10*),⁴⁵ the “dolphin type” brooch (*Fig. 5: 11*),⁴⁶ and the handle fragment of an Idrija type copper alloy jug (*Fig. 5: 12*).⁴⁷

From the same period or perhaps earlier is the presumed horizontal handle terminal of a Roman vessel (*Fig. 5: 13*) such as a Pescate type ladle,⁴⁸ or an Aylesford⁴⁹ or Monterfortino type pan.⁵⁰

The objects show no traces of fire damage, neither can we see any reliable traces of any other kind of intentional damage; some objects, however, only survives as small pieces.

GRADIŠČE IN CERKNO

In addition to the prehistoric artefacts published in 2015, consisting of a spearhead, four Early Iron Age pendants, and several Late Iron Age items (a brooch of the Idrija group, a hoe, and a scythe; *Fig. 7: 2–9*),⁵¹ a copper alloy pendant or appliqué in the shape of a wheel with four spokes and a ring in the centre (*Fig. 7: 1*) was also found at the site. A mould for casting similar items, presumably found at Šmihel (precise findspot unknown),⁵² suggests this object dates to the Iron Age.

In analogy to the small finds from Grad near Reka, the assemblage of the pre-Roman finds from Gradišče in Cerknò also allows the supposition that a cult place of the pre-Roman population existed here at the time of the Roman assault in 35 BC and earlier.⁵³

VRH GRADU NEAR PEČINE

The Early Iron Age finds (later part, 6th to 4th century BC) from this site include part of a copper alloy clatter sceptre, two feet of Certosa brooches, half

of a hollow globular pendant, and a hollow trapezoid pendant (*Fig. 8: 4–8*).⁵⁴

The artefacts from the Late Iron Age (3rd–1st century BC) consist of a silver votive plaque with a Venetic inscription, four brooches of the regionally characteristic types, and a fragment of a sword scabbard (*Fig. 8: 9–14*).⁵⁵

The site also yielded three previously unpublished miniature coulters (*Fig. 8: 1–3*); their similarity with those from Grad near Reka indicates a dating to the pre- or Early Roman (the very end of the Republic or the Principate) period.

These finds suggest an Iron Age cult site at Vrh gradu.⁵⁶ Some of them, such as the fragment of the sword scabbard (*Fig. 8: 10*) and the brooches (*Fig. 8: 11–14*), might be related to the people who defended the site against the Roman attack in 35 BC.

DISCUSSION

Situlae with inscriptions are relatively frequent finds in the pre-Roman graves and sanctuaries of north-eastern Italy. The example from Grad near Reka was reportedly found on the eastern slope of the site that has so far revealed no funerary finds despite the fairly intensive activity of unauthorised metal-detectorists; the situla is therefore not likely to have been associated with a cemetery. Furthermore, a Late Iron Age cemetery was excavated in proximity, some 300 meters to the east, near the River Idrijca (*Fig. 2: 3*).⁵⁷ Burying the cremated remains of a woman inside a situla, onto which a presumably votive inscription was carved either at the site or in its vicinity, thus points to religious practices of the local pre-Roman inhabitants on Grad.

An example of such practice, i.e. a Late Iron Age (LT D1) cremation urn burial inside a sacred place (in this case of the *Brandopferplatz* type), has recently come to light at Berjač above Podbela (Breginjski kot, western Slovenia).⁵⁸

Votive offerings and objects used in cult rituals have also been recovered from sanctuaries and other sacred places associated with the Veneti or the Venetic influence. These offerings show great diversity, ranging

⁵⁴ Mlinar et al. 2018, 40–42, Cat. Nos 32, 34–36, 38. For *Fig. 8: 7* cf. Božič 2011, 242–244, Figs. 6.2: 1, 6.3.

⁵⁵ Istenič 2015, 49, 50, Pl. 5: 1–5; Mlinar et al. 2018, 44–49, Cat. Nos 40, 45, 52, 53, 60. For *Fig. 8: 9* cf. Božič 2011, 257–259, Figs. 6.2: 14, 6.17; for *Fig. 8: 12, 13* cf. Božič 2011, 253–265, Fig. 6.23: 3; and for *Fig. 8: 14* cf. Mlinar 2020, 72, Pl. 44: 14.

⁵⁶ Božič 2011, 265; Istenič 2015, 50; Mlinar 2016; Mlinar et al. 2018, 40.

⁵⁷ Reka near Cerknò: Guštin 1991, Pls 29–37. Fourteen cremations, excavated in 19th century, include two that suggest indigenous men served in the Roman army in the Early and/or Middle Augustan period (Istenič 2013, 24, 25, Figs. 2, 3).

⁵⁸ Fabec et al. 2021, 71–72.

⁴³ Guštin 1991.

⁴⁴ Božič 2007.

⁴⁵ Istenič, Šmit 2007, 141; Božič 2008, 145, Tab. 5.

⁴⁶ Božič 2008, 83–84, Fig. 42: 5.

⁴⁷ Laharnar 2022, 286 (with references).

⁴⁸ Laharnar 2022, 286 (with references).

⁴⁹ Feugère, De Marinis 1991, 89–100, Fig. 2: 3.

⁵⁰ Bolla, Castoldi 2016, 130, Fig. 10.

⁵¹ Istenič 2015, 44, Pl. 1: 67.

⁵² Hoernes 1888, 227, 239, Fig. 54.

⁵³ Istenič 2015, 52; Mlinar 2016.

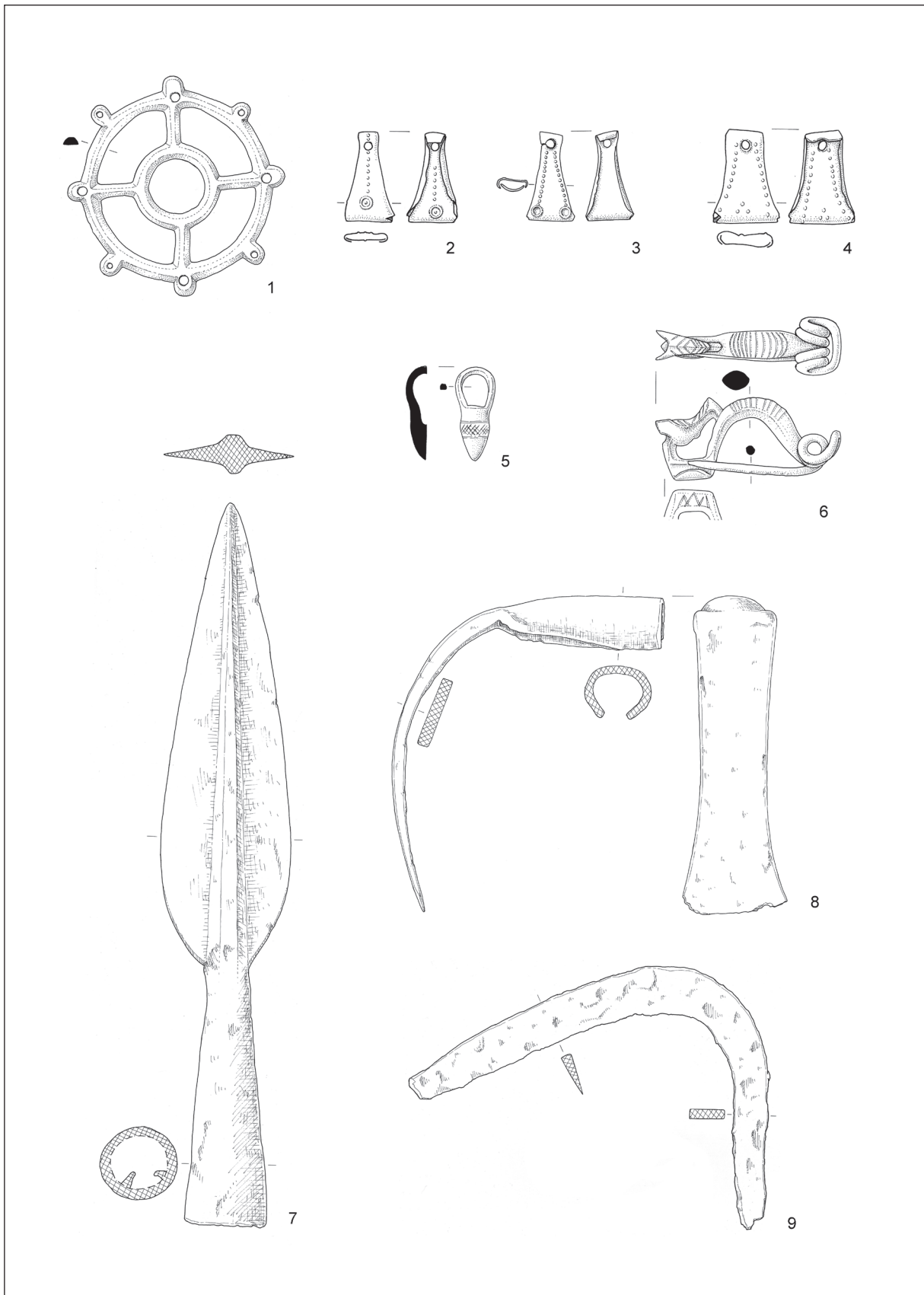


Fig. 7: Gradišče in Cerkno, Iron Age small finds. Copper alloy: 1–6; iron: 7–9. Scale 1:2.

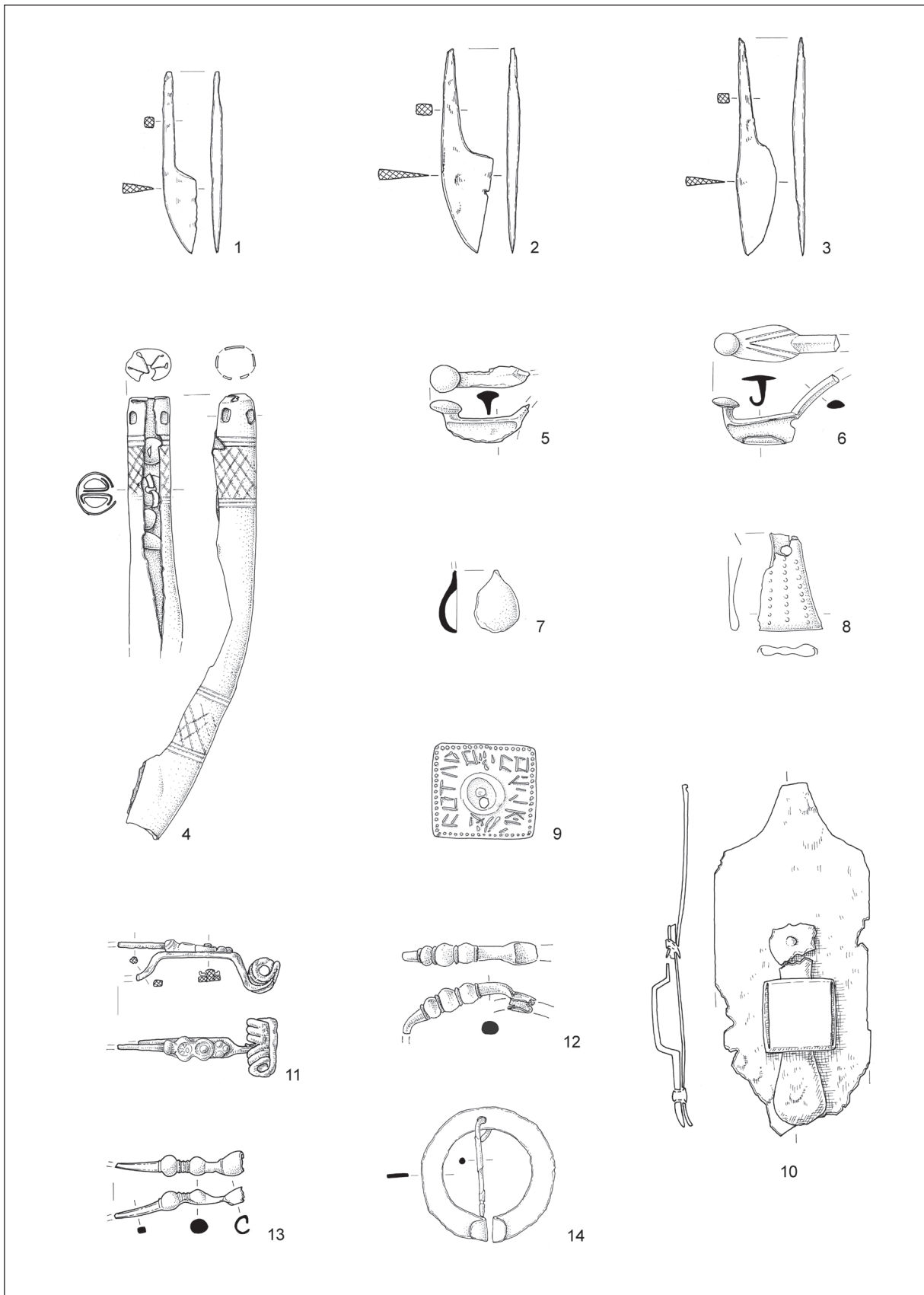


Fig. 8: Vrh gradu near Pečine, Iron Age small finds. Iron: 1-3, 10; copper alloy: 4-8, 12-14; iron and copper alloy: 11; silver: 9. Scale 1:2.

from votive plaques and statuettes to common personal items that include some with intentional damage. The offered items frequently bear inscriptions.⁵⁹

Numerous parts of brooches and other pieces of the costume (often fragmented), as well as glass beads and other items, some of which show clear traces of fire damage, are known from the cult sites of the *Brandopferplatz* type.⁶⁰

The three sites in the Tolmin-Cerkno area (Grad near Reka, Gradišče in Cerkno, Vrh gradu near Pečine) have also revealed miniature objects. The typological criteria of the three miniature coulters and the hoe show they can be attributed to pre-Roman times or the Late Republic/Principate.

Miniature votive items are common finds in the Venetic sanctuaries or in sanctuaries with a strong Venetic influence. They include miniature bronze pieces of weapons (shields, spearheads), which may originally have been parts of votive statuettes, and miniature pottery, but there are no agricultural implements.⁶¹

In contrast, miniature agricultural implements as votive offerings are known from Talamonaccio (Etruscan Telamon). The small finds from the Etruscan and later Etrusco-Italic temple constructed in the second half of the 4th century and demolished at the beginning of the 1st century BC⁶² include a miniature copper alloy model of a primitive plough with a yoke. It seems probable that the offerings accumulated there over a long period, perhaps throughout the time the temple was in use.

At the same site, Italian military engineers found a hoard of votive offerings in 1892, in the centre of an oval stone enclosure. The hoard of more than 25 copper alloy miniature objects comprises weapons (a helmet of the Etrusco-Italic type, a sword, two lances, several shields, double-sided heavy tools), knives, and agricultural implements consisting of hoes, a sickle, a primitive plough, and a ploughshare.⁶³ The helmet seems to be related to the Etrusco-Italic type, which formed part of the Roman armament from the 3rd to the first third of the 1st century BC.⁶⁴ The miniature sword is reminiscent of the Greek double-edged hoplite sword that the Roman army adopted in the Republican times and used to the later 3rd century.⁶⁵ The hoard includes an LT D1 (c 130/120–80/60 BC) brooch, presumably the latest narrowly dated object from the hoard. The custom

of offering miniature agricultural gifts to the gods at the site might be related to the strong Roman influence in the region of Talamonaccio from the end of the 4th century BC onwards.⁶⁶

In Roman sanctuaries, miniature objects such as weapons, axes, vessels, and tools were common offerings; ex-vota of (miniature) ploughshares and other agricultural items were presumably connected to fertility rites.⁶⁷

Miniature double-sided tools (axe/adze), one of iron and the other of copper alloy, also came to light during the recent excavations at Ig-Pungert (Slovenia); the iron tool in the topsoil and the copper alloy tool in a settlement layer from the last century of the Late Iron Age or the Roman period.⁶⁸

In conclusion, it seems that the small finds pre-dating 35 BC from Grad near Reka have parallels at cult sites of the Veneti, the Etruscans, and the Romans, or at cult sites under their influence, as well as in the geographically close Iron Age cult sites at Berlotov rob on Šentviška planota⁶⁹ and at Tonovcov grad near Kobarid.⁷⁰ This suggests that Grad near Reka was also an Iron Age cult site. The same has been established for Vrh gradu near Pečine and assumed for Gradišče in Cerkno. The findings speak in favour of the view that the three sites were dedicated to the cult rituals of the local Iron Age population. In the case of Grad near Reka, we may assume the associated settlement was located on Poliško polje (a small plateau southeast of the Police village, roughly a kilometre northwest of Grad near Reka; Fig. 2: 4), while in the case of Gradišče in Cerkno and Vrh gradu near Pečine the settlements were presumably on the terraces of the gentler (southern or eastern) slopes, respectively. The three sites were presumably of great importance for the identity of the pre-Roman population; this and the fact they were well-protected against attack may be the reasons they became the central and perhaps last points the locals defended.⁷¹

Acknowledgements

My gratitude goes to Jana Horvat (ZRC SAZU, Institute of Archaeology) and Federico Bernardini (Ca' Foscari Venezia, Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici and Multidisciplinary Laboratory, The Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics) for their invaluable comments to the text.

⁵⁹ E.g. Fogolari, Gambacurta 2001, 227, 231, 235–245, Cat. Nos 321, 322, 324, 325, 347–355; Donat, Righi, Vitri 2007; Gambacurta 2013; Zaghetto, Zambotto 2005; Božič 2011, 262.

⁶⁰ Božič 2011, 266.

⁶¹ Fogolari, Gambacurta 2001, 107: 11, 12, 117: 36; Jablonka 2001, Pls 127: 7, 128: 1–4.

⁶² Vacano, Freytag 1982, 27–53.

⁶³ Montelius 1904, 920–922, Pl. 25.

⁶⁴ Istenič 2018, 278.

⁶⁵ James 2011, 48.

⁶⁶ Vacano, Freytag 1982, 30.

⁶⁷ Paridaens 2019, 156–158. Generally on miniature Roman votive offerings: Kiernan 2009.

⁶⁸ Petra Vojaković (Arhej – Arheološke raziskave), personal communication.

⁶⁹ Mlinar et al. 2018, 17–19, 38, 40, sl. 11, Cat. Nos 28–31, 37, 41–43, 45–47, 51, 57–59, 61.

⁷⁰ Božič 2011.

⁷¹ Istenič 2015, 52.

Dragan Božič (formerly Institute of Archaeology, ZRC SAZU) brought to my attention the publication of the situla from Staal di Curago and the great similarity between its lid and the lid found at Polpet at the River Piave.

Several colleagues from the National Museum of Slovenia have been helpful in preparing the paper. Boštjan

Laharnar was of invaluable help in interpreting the objects, providing references, and offering constructive comments regarding the early version of the paper. Ida Murgelj made the drawings and lay-out of *Figures 1–7*. Helena Bras Kernel edited the bibliography.

Andreja Maver translated the text into English.

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Janka Istenič
 Narodni muzej Slovenije
 Prešernova cesta 20
 SI-1000 Ljubljana
 janka.istenic@nms.si

