

A ROMAN PERIOD SUNKEN HOUSE FROM BELADICE¹

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The present study discusses the inventory of finds from a sunken house that decayed in the last third of the 3rd c. or the first half of the 4th c. The feature was investigated in 2010. The backfill layers contain a relatively large number of archaeological finds – pottery, glass, bronze, iron, bone and antler artefacts. Specifically, the collection of finds includes a coin, bone and bronze needles, spindle whorls, an amulet, iron knives, nails and fragments of tools. The analysis of pottery shows that the majority of ceramics were used for dining purposes while larger vessels – storage containers – are rare. Only a minor part of the pottery finds from the feature are Roman imports. Special attention is paid to the iron amulet box and the fragment of a clay vessel with a rooster-like (or hen-like) spout. The research together with other surveys in the Upper Žitava region corroborates the view that – contrary to previous beliefs – the region was densely settled from the end of the 2nd c. to the 5th c.

Keywords: Western Slovakia, *Barbaricum*, Late Roman Period, sunken house, Germanic and Roman finds.

A significant part of Karol Pieta's research interests was focused on the study of the Roman Period and the Migration Period. Together, almost forty years ago, we researched an important settlement dated back to the 3rd–5th c. in Nitra-Párovské Háje (Pieta/Ruttkay 1997). In 2009 and 2010, in turn, together with our colleagues, we had an opportunity to investigate a similar settlement in Beladice in the Upper Žitava Region. Out of respect for Karol Pieta, we would like to present one of the features discovered in this interesting settlement complex.

In 2009 and 2010, rescue excavations took place along planned R1 expressway Nitra – Selenec – Beladice – Tekovské Nemce (Fig. 1). One of the most

significant archaeological discoveries was made on a spot of 'Beladice junction', a site known since 1990 (Ruttkay/Ruttkayová 1992, 92). During the excavations, a part of the extensive, polyculture site endangered by the construction works was explored. A significant fragment of the explored area was covered by a settlement from the Roman and Migration Periods. Based on preliminary analysis, the settlement included 88 features – 10 sunken houses, 12 deep storage pits, 6 free-standing furnaces (including a pottery kiln) and unspecified pits and free-standing postholes (Ruttkay *et al.* 2015). Among other things, the excavations provided a remarkable collection of finds from the Roman and Migration Periods (Fig. 2). Still, however, it remains uncertain whether the settlement was used continuously during these periods.

The site is located on the left bank – facing south – of the Bocegaj creek in Dolina, partly in the floodplain. The micro-region abounds in archaeological sites (Bednár/Ruttkay 1991; Ruttkayová/Ruttkay 2015). Traces of prehistoric and early historic settlement can be found mainly on the opposite bank of the valley. Thus, it seems likely that in the Roman and Migration Periods both banks of the creek were inhabited.

The research in 2009 and 2010 was hampered by complex climatic, particularly pedologic, conditions on the site. Yellow-brown clayish layers



Fig. 1. Beladice. Localization on the map of the Slovak Republic.

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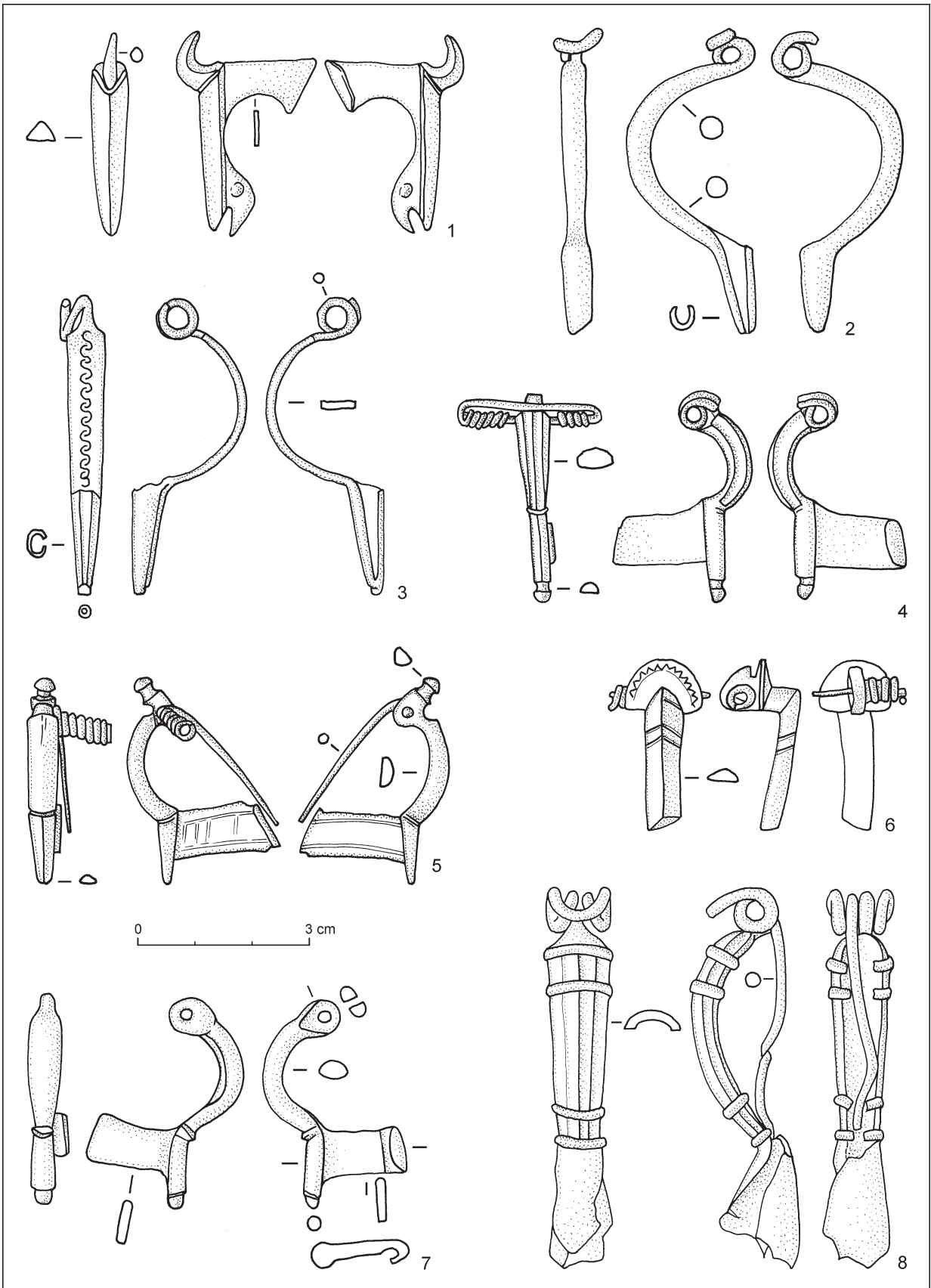


Fig. 2. Beladice. Selection of finds from different features from the site.



Fig. 3. Beladice. Plan of the eastern part of the site.

alternate here with a black-brown layer, mainly in the eastern part of the site. Apparently, in this (eastern) part of the site, there were no features. Since the layer below the topsoil contained finds, it was clear that the layer is not a subsoil. Thus, despite that the layer was on the limit of the construction works depth, we decided to explore the site using a network of trenches. As a result, we were able to identify numerous, originally 'invisible' features. Due to a considerable number of tangibles, feature no. 175 holds a special place among the discoveries (Fig. 3). The feature was captured thanks to trenches no. 110 and 111.

DESCRIPTION OF FEATURE NO. 175

A rectangular sunken house with slightly rounded corners (Fig. 4). Dims.: 420 × 480 cm, depth measured from the discovery level 82–102 cm. The longer side is oriented along the NE–SW axis. On the flat bottom, we found 7 postholes: one in the middle of each of the shorter walls and two by each of the longer walls. The posts had diameters of 18–22 cm while the postholes were 38–62 cm wide. The postholes bottoms were captured at 42–62 cm below the floor level. The floor/bottom was made

of smeared clay. In the western part, there was a red-burnt oval surface. On the eastern side, in turn, between a couple of postholes, there was an arched protrusion.

Finds were discovered at various levels of the backfill – i.e. slightly moved compared to the original position. In many cases, it was possible to match pottery shards from the upper layers with those from the bottom. Most likely, the finds reflect the activities of the settlement inhabitants around the feature during the Roman Period.

Finds

Bone and antler

1. Fragments of deer (?) antlers (inv. no. 029454_DP_2143a). Dims.: L. 7.61 cm (Fig. 5: 6).
2. Fragments of animal bone? (inv. no. 029454_DP_2143b). Dims.: L. 10.1 cm (Fig. 5: 7).
3. Fragments of a deer (?) antler (inv. no. 029454_DP_2884). Dims.: L. 8.4 cm (Fig. 5: 5).
4. A bone stick-shaped needle (inv. no. 029454_DP_2440), the needle butt is slightly widened and flattened. The item is circular in inter-section and has a pointed tip. Dims.: L. 10 cm (Fig. 6: 16).
5. A bone comb (inv. no. 029454_DP_2442), fragments of semi-circular plates of a three-layer, multi-part comb.

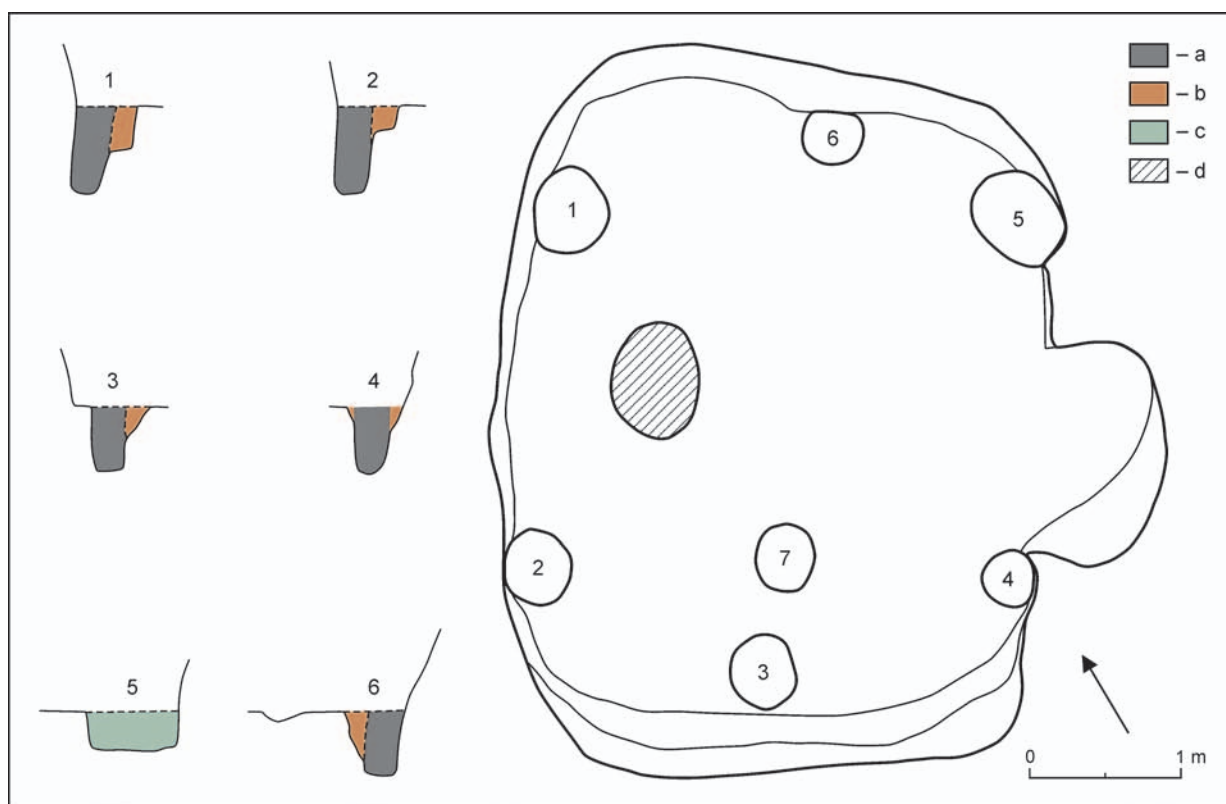


Fig. 4. Beladice. Feature no. 175. Legend: a – traces of the original post (grey); b – original post-hole (brown); c – not clear situation, possibly damaged by rodents; d – burned area.

The outer plate is decorated with concentric circles arranged in the shape of the X-letter (analogy Stráže: Zeman 2001, fig. 4: 19). In the middle plate, there was a preserved iron rivet. Dims.: L. 8.5 cm, mass 6.369 g; L. 7.5 cm, mass 7.385 g (Fig. 6: 7).

Metal

6. A coin, antoninianus – Salonina (253–268), Galenius' wife (inv. no. 029454_DP_1882). Obverse: bust of the Empress with a tiara and a typical contemporary hairstyle, SALONINA AVG. Reverse: female silhouette (Juno?) holding, probably, a bowl in her left hand and a sceptre or a cornucopia in the right hand, inscription: IVNO... AVG. Dims.: D. 2.1 cm, mass 3.056 g, composition: Sn 3.509, Ag 27.851, Pb 1.814, Cu 65.876 (Fig. 6: 6).
7. A bronze fitting (inv. no. 029454_DP_1897) with a hanging ring and a profiled body formed as a profiled knot. Composition: considerable addition of main elements – Sn 11.075, Pb 16.053, Zn 4.656, Cu 65.603. Dims.: L. 3.5 cm, mass 3.005 g (Fig. 6: 4).
8. A silver conical clamp (inv. no. 029454_DP_1900) made of a gilded silver plate twisted into the shape of a cone. Its narrower side is attached to (inserted into?) a profiled ring. Composition: a considerable addition of main elements – Sn 10.072, Ag 51.364, Au 32.253, Cu 3.229. Dims.: L. 2.3 cm, mass 1.783 g (Fig. 6: 1).
9. A bronze needle (inv. no. 029454_DP_1898), circular in inter-section and slightly arched. One tip is narrowed and pointed while the other is thicker, rounded and has a narrow oval opening. Composition: considerable addition of main elements – Sn 27.922, Ag 0.406, Pb 0.661, Au 0.198, Zn 0.428, Cu 68.855. Dims.: L. 6 cm, mass 0.908 g (Fig. 6: 15).
10. A bronze (?) wire (inv. no. 029454_DP_1902a) thin and circular in inter-section, deformed. One end of the wire was hooked. Composition: considerable addition of main elements – Sn 2.036, Ag 0.113, Pb 0.733, Au 1.080, Zn 1.048, Cu 91.127. Dims.: L. 4.7 cm, mass 0.264 g (Fig. 6: 2).
11. A fragment of a bronze item (inv. no. 029454_DP_1901) is an arched small rod, circular in inter-section with a bold tip (?). Dims.: L. 3.2 cm, mass 3.816 g.
12. A bronze plate (inv. no. 029454_DP_2439). A buckle fastening plate, thin rectangular plate bent in the middle and joint with two bronze rivets. Composition: considerable addition of main elements – Sn 12.669, Ag 0.334, Pb 2.661, Zn 8.146, Cu 70.800. Dims.: 2.3 × 1.7 cm, mass 3.356 g (Fig. 6: 3).
13. A fragment of a bronze/copper plate (inv. no. 029454_DP_2452), thin rectangular plate (from a vessel?) covered with green patina. Composition: considerable addition of main elements – Sn 0.013, Ag 0.064, Pb 0.588, Zn 0.137, Cu 98.095. Dims.: 5 × 1.7 cm, mass 3.475 g (Fig. 6: 8).
14. An iron container, amulet box (inv. no. 029454_DP_1883). The cylindrical container is closed with a lid firmly attached to the container (due to corrosion?). In the middle of the lid, there is an arched ring made of

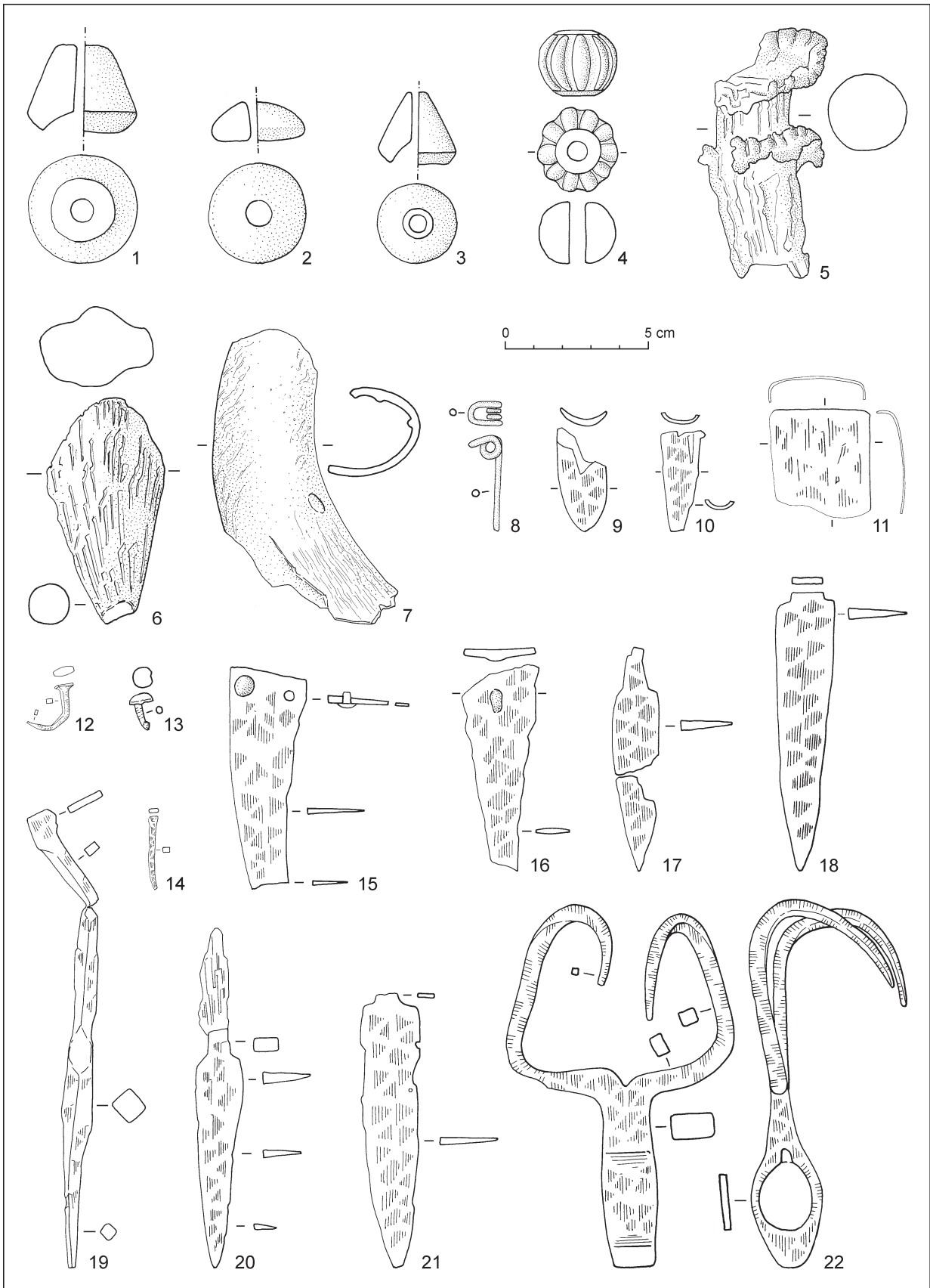


Fig. 5. Beladice. Feature no. 175. Selection of finds. 1-4 – ceramics; 5-7 – antlers/bone; 8-22 – iron.



Fig. 6. Beladice. Feature no. 175. Selection of finds.



Fig. 7 Beladice. Feature no. 175. Amulet box.

bronze wire used for hanging and locking (?) the item. Dims.: H. 2.6 cm, diam. 3–3.3 cm (Fig. 7).

15. An iron 'fork' (inv. no. 029454_DP_2045) with a clamp fastening the tool to a wooden handle. Its flat side splits into two (probably not secondarily) bent teeth. Dims.: L. 13 cm (Fig. 5: 22).
16. An iron tool (inv. no. 029454_DP_1926). A surgical (?) tool, rectangular in inter-section with a split-tip and a square thorn. Dims.: L. 15.8 cm, mass 29.517 g (Fig. 5: 19).
17. A fragment of an iron brooch (inv. no. 029454_DP_2449) with a quadruple winding, upper bow and a fragment of a pin. Dims.: L. 3.2 cm, mass 1.981 g (Fig. 5: 8).
18. A fragment of an iron wire/nail (inv. no. 029454_DP_1902b) a small rod rectangular in inter-section. Dims.: L. 1.8 cm, mass 0.34 g.

19. An iron nail (inv. no. 029454_DP_1903) with a flat, shield-like head and a thorn circular in inter-section. Dims.: L. 5.9 cm, mass 4.272 g.
20. An iron nail (inv. no. 029454_DP_1906b) wider in the upper part and a thorn rectangular in inter-section. Dims.: L. 4 cm, mass 4.93 g.
21. An iron nail (inv. no. 029454_DP_1907) with a flat square head and a thorn square in inter-section. Dims.: L. 4.9 cm, mass 5.133 g.
22. An iron nail (inv. no. 029454_DP_1911a) with a flat narrow rectangular head and a thorn square in inter-section. Dims.: L. 5 cm, mass 4.75 g (Fig. 5: 12).
23. An iron item – sickle? (inv. no. 029454_DP_1905), a slightly bent (sickle-like) plate with an iron rivet and an opening for another rivet on one end. Dims.: L. 7.1 cm, mass 17.036 g (Fig. 5: 15).
24. An iron item (inv. no. 029454_DP_1906a), a triangle plate with an opening for a rivet. Dims.: L. 7.1 cm, mass 15.47 g.
25. A fragment of an iron drill tip (inv. no. 029454_DP_1911b). Dims.: L. 3.6 cm, mass 6.737 g (Fig. 5: 9).
26. An iron rivet/nail? (inv. no. 029454_DP_2450) with a shield-like head and a short thorn bent at the end. Dims.: L. 1.3 cm, mass 0.762 g (Fig. 5: 13).
27. An iron nail (inv. no. 029454_DP_2451) is a small rod, rectangular in inter-section. Dims.: L. 5.1 cm, mass 4.251 g (Fig. 5: 14).
28. An iron item (inv. no. 029454_DP_2393), a square plate fitting with bent edges and a small round opening. Dims.: 3.8 × 3.5 cm, mass 6.429 g (Fig. 5: 11).
29. An iron knife (inv. no. 029454_DP_1908), a flat tang with a fragment of a wooden handle. Dims.: L. 11.2 cm, mass 13.985 g (Fig. 5: 20).
30. An iron knife (inv. no. 029454_DP_1909), a fragment of a flat tang. Dims.: L. 9.7 cm, mass 18.160 g (Fig. 5: 18).
31. An iron tool (inv. no. 029454_DP_1910), a fragment of a blade with a tip. Dims.: L. 3.4 cm (Fig. 5: 10).
32. An iron knife (inv. no. 029454_DP_1927), a blade. Dims.: L. 9.1 cm, mass 13.486 g (Fig. 5: 21).
33. An iron knife (inv. no. 029454_DP_2453) with a bent spine and a flat tang. Dims.: L. 7 cm, mass 7.736 g (Fig. 5: 17).
34. An iron lump (inv. no. 029454_DP_2446). Dims.: 1.6 × 1 cm, mass 3.690 g.

Glass

35. A fragment of a glass vessel (inv. no. 029454_DP_1881), thin, transparent glass with light-green or blueish reflexes, irregular. Its outer side is decorated with arched glass threads (rivets). Dims.: 3 × 2.1 cm, mass 2.147 g (Fig. 6: 9).
36. A fragment of a glass vessel (inv. no. 029454_DP_1913), thicker, transparent (colourless) triangle piece of glass. On the front, decorated with plastic trim. Dims.: 3.7 × 1.2 cm, mass 2.585 g (Fig. 6: 10).
37. A fragment of a dark blue bracelet (inv. no. 029454_DP_1914), type 13 according to Venclová (Březinová 2018, 55, fig. 3: 13). A fragment of a ring with two central ribs decorated with a white zigzag line. Dims.: L. 2.2 cm, W. 0.8 cm, mass 1.557 g (Fig. 6: 13).
38. A fragment of the rim of the bottom of the glass vessel (inv. no. 029454_DP_1915). A ring-like bolded bottom of a glass. Type? Thicker transparent glass of greenish

colour and bent. Dims.: L. 3 cm, W. 1 cm, mass 3.492 g (Fig. 6: 12).

39. A glass bead (inv. no. 029454_DP_1921), blue opaque glass, flat square shape with rounded corners. In the middle, there is an opening. Dims.: $2.2 \times 1.4 \times 0.7$ cm, mass 3.236 g (Fig. 6: 11).

Pottery

40. A clay spindle whorl (inv. no. 029454_DP_1930), conical with longitudinal edges (faceted), black. Dims.: H. 2.8 cm, mass 38.430 g (Fig. 5: 1).
41. A clay spindle whorl (inv. no. 029454_DP_2443), spherical, decorated with vertical grooves, dark-grey. Dims.: H. 2.2 cm, mass 16.198 g (Fig. 5: 4).
42. A fragment of a clay spindle whorl (inv. no. 029454_DP_2444), conical, dark-grey (Lengyel culture?). Dims.: H. 2.5 cm, mass 6.420 g (Fig. 5: 2).
43. A fragment of a clay spindle whorl (inv. no. 029454_DP_2445): conical, dark-grey. Dims.: H. 1.5 cm, mass 5.769 g (Fig. 5: 3).
44. A fragment of clay vessel (inv. no. 029454_DP_1929), a rooster head (hollow) with a fragment of a comb preserved. Round indentations – eyes – and a fragment of a beak. Brick-colour. Dims.: H. 5 cm, W 4 cm (Pl. IV: 1).
45. A clay foot (inv. no. 029454_DP_1928), a vessel foot, full, cylindrical. Grey-brown colour. Dims.: H. 6.3 cm (Lengyel culture?).
46. A reconstructed vessel (Pl. I: 12).
47. A reconstructed vessel (Pl. I: 3).
48. *Terra sigillata*, 9 pcs (Pl. IV: 2, 4–10).
49. Pannonian brick-coloured pottery, 9 pcs (Pl. IV: 3).
50. Pannonian grey pottery, 7 pcs (Pl. IV: 11, 13).
51. Fine-grained grey pottery made with pottery wheel, 13 pcs (Pl. IV: 14).
52. Coarse grained light grey made with pottery wheel, 27 pcs.
53. Hand-made pottery, 893 pcs (Pl. I–III).

Other

53. A stone chip (inv. no. 029454_DP_2441), a narrow white blade made of flint? Dims.: L. 3.6 cm, mass 1.492 g.
54. Resin (inv. no. 029454_DP_2457), a small lump and irregular pieces of black (charred) resin. Dims.: 1.2×0.9 cm, mass 0.366 g, 0.66 g, 0.013 g (Fig. 6: 14).

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The sunken house represents type III according to *T. Kolník* (1998, 145) or type C1 according to *A. Leube* (2009, 147, 148, fig. 99) or type B2 according to *E. Drobežar* (1997, 22, 23) – a very popular type in the region spanning from the Spree in eastern Germany to eastern Slovakia (*Varsik* 2011, 28). The type of feature is the most typical Roman construction in the Germanic milieu in southwestern Slovakia. Typically, a tongue-shaped protrusion/niche in the south-eastern wall is interpreted as an entrance (*Kolník* 1998, 145). However, it cannot be ruled out

that the space where a heating device stood. The latter hypothesis is corroborated by numerous excavations (e.g. Nitra-Párovské Háje) which revealed that exactly on this spot ash accumulated, often in a shallow basin-like recess. An additional post in the feature axis could indicate that the dwelling was reconstructed or that its interior was divided. Similar arrangements are known from other sites (Nitra-Párovské Háje, Branč: *Kolník/Varsik/Vladár* 2007, fig. 7). Also, in many cases, posts were more densely arranged along the longer middle axis or in the middle of the feature. In the latter case, the post could have been added due to the construction being unstable.

With an internal area of 20.1 m², the feature belongs to those larger in the Germanic milieu. On the site, there were other sunken houses with areas ranging from 12.5 to 26.2 m². In sites around Bratislava from 4.5 to 25.5 m² (*Varsik* 2011, 30). The house floor was repeatedly smeared with a clayish layer, often unevenly. There was a relatively large number of small (diam. 3–7 cm) pointed holes in the floor. Similar holes are common also on other sites. However, their function is still not satisfactorily explained. The arrangement of the holes provides no clues as to their function. It seems possible that the holes are remains of activities requiring fixing some tools to the floor (yarn spinning?). On the other hand, the holes could drain water from the floor.

The postholes were placed close to the sunken house walls. In the profiles, we were able to identify an original counter of a post (Fig. 4). The posts were flat on the bottom or slightly rounded and their diam. was between 18 and 24 cm. The only exception is posthole no. 3 with a diam. of 62 cm. However, the original contour of the post was not captured. A preliminary analysis of coals indicates that the feature was built of oak.

A heavily charred oval area indicates that there was a fireplace there. Since the floor itself was not charred, it seems unlikely that the house was burnt. On the other side, it is unlikely that there was an open fire in the house without any cover. Indeed, in similar features, portable heating devices were used (*Kolník/Varsik/Vladár* 2007, 19).

We have no evidence of whether the walls had log or wattle and daub construction. An analogy from Nitra-Párovské Háje corroborates the latter hypothesis. The light could enter the interior through 'sliding windows' in underground parts of the walls.

The most interesting find among bone and antler items is the fragment of the three-layer comb with a semi-circular hand and iron rivets (Fig. 6: 7). Combs are relatively common finds in Germanic graves but appear also in settlements. Due to their chronological sensitivity and aesthetic appeal,

combs belong to the most important bone and antler products. According to T. Zeman, the comb from Beladice belongs to the largest group of three-layer multi-part combs with semi-circular hands with the toothed middle part fixed by outer plates (Thomas, type I). In this group, decorated specimens are considered younger (Thomas 1960, fig. 27–30; Zeman 2001, 113, 114). The combs appeared from the 3rd c. to the mid-4th c. and only exceptionally in the 5th c. (Kolník 1961, 253, 254; Lamiová-Schmiedlová 1964, 197; Pernička 1967, 72; Thomas 1960, 92; Zeman 2001, 114). The outer plate of the comb from Beladice was decorated with concentric circles arranged in the shape of the letter X. A comb from Krakovany-Stráže had a similar ornament (Zeman 2001, fig. 4: 19).

Bone needles (Fig. 6: 16) with a stick-like butt are present already in the Roman Period stage B2. Since then, we observe a considerable development of needle shapes. At the beginning of the younger Roman Period, in stage C1, stick-like needles were decorated with a mesh or a motif of engraved concentric circles commonly used on combs. Starting from stage C3/D1, needles gradually disappear from the archaeological material (Zeman 2001, 123, 125, fig. 8: 36, 37, 53). Simple bone needles belong to common finds in Germanic settlements. Most likely, their appearance is related to leather and cloth processing.

Previous research showed that homemade production of simple bone and antler items was common in virtually every Germanic settlement. On burial grounds, we find mostly toiletries and fragments of attire. In the Roman Period, the production of such items could be relatively advanced (Zeman 2001, 110). The oldest site with indirect traces of bone processing in Slovakia is a feature from a settlement Nitra-Mikov dated back to the 1st–2nd c., where awls and ready-made bone needles were found (Pieta 1993, 86). Traces of bone processing – raw material, semi-products and waste – were found also in settlements in Abráham (Kolník 1981, 133, 134), Stupava (Turčan 2005, 295), Pobedim (Kolník 1962, 349) and Vajnory (Varsik 2012, 256).

The backfill of the feature contained a considerable number of metal finds. One of the most interesting finds is the iron container, amulet box (Fig. 7), with a bronze wire (chain?) used for locking the item. In the literature, the find is referred to as casket (Kietlínska/Dąbrowska 1963, 191), bronze cylindrical casket (Jaskanis 1977, 304), case (Bursche/Chowaniec 2001, 41), powder box (Bichir 1973, 111). Unlike capsule-shaped pendants (smaller and firmly joint), amulet box can be easily opened and closed. A movable lid is linked with the item by a chain (wire). The wire passing through the box indicates that it did not contain liquids (Fig. 7). Numerous specimens,

including the one from Beladice, are decorated. The decorations mainly comprised embossed dots, rounded grooves, zigzag lines (Zemplín, grave 123), concentric circles, rosettes or fish motifs. Some specimens are decorated with miniature bucket-shaped pendants, bells or rings hung to the bottom of the main body of an item. Undecorated specimens are known mainly from Scandinavia and the Wielbark Culture (Czarnecka 2010, 232). They could be part of necklaces, attached to belts or serve as pendants (Czarnecka, 2010, 229) and were used to store various substances or items. Possibly, they had some cult or 'magical' function (Czarnecka 2010, 232). According to Wamers (2003, 620), similar containers in the Roman Empire were used to store medical ointments, cosmetics (pigments) or for various cult reasons. Also, in the *Barbaricum*, they could have similar functions. Most often, they are made of bronze plate and only exceptionally of silver or iron (Bursche 1998, 175, 176; Czarnecka 2010, 229). Thus, the iron specimen from Beladice could be considered unique. So far, we were unable to analyse the capsule contents. Tomography shows that it contained some non-liquid substance. The movable lid indicates that whatever the content was, it could be extracted or replaced. This suggests some perfumes or magical, protective substances.

In *Barbaricum*, similar items are known from rich female graves (or graves with female equipment) but were found also in children (girls?) graves. There, they are considered imports from the Roman provinces (Kietlínska/Dąbrowska 1963, 191). They were worn by children from upper social strata, boys before maturity (?) – *toga virilis* – but are not strictly related to one cultural milieu. Most commonly, they are found in Scandinavia and the Wielbark Culture. Several items are known from the Elbe region and the Bogaczewo Culture, single items appear in the Przeworsk Culture and among western Germanic peoples. Amulet boxes were found on cemeteries in Karpow attributed to the Poieniști-Vârteșcoiu Culture. Two specimens are known from Zemplín and are related to the presence of the Dacians. Similar items were found in graves of Sarmatian women in Hungary and Serbia but also Hunnic graves. The majority of amulet boxes – from the Sarmatian milieu to the Scandinavia – are dated back to stages B2/C1–C1a and the beginnings of stage C2 (Czarnecka 2010, 233, fig. 2). Only uniquely, they are attributed to stage B1 (grave 13, Zemplín: Budinský-Krička/Lamiová-Schmiedlová 1990, pl. II: 12, 13) and B2 (grave 123, Zemplín: Peškař 1972, 80). K. Czarnecka mentioned further analogies from younger sites and points to their common presence in the Merovingian (6th–7th c.) and Anglo-Saxon burial grounds. According to the author, such contain-

ers are universally used items, present in various regions of the Roman Empire and the *Barbaricum* (among numerous cultural and ethnic groups – from the Sarmatians, Dacians, Germanic peoples to the Balts) and are indicators of female and children (girls) grave furnishings (Czarnecka 2010, 234).

Feature 175 contained four fragments of iron knives (Fig. 5: 17, 18, 20, 21) and a small piece of a fifth blade. Interestingly, there was a fragment of a wooden handle on one of the knives which are rare in our environment (Fig. 5: 20). Apart from the small blade piece, all other finds could be unambiguously attributed to the type of knives most common in Slovakia and the *Barbaricum* during the Roman Period. Those were even knives with a flat tang and a blade offset at both sides – type 1 according to Droberjar. The blade, however, could be offset at the right angle, obtuse angle or obliquely (Droberjar 1999, 113). Knives, as common tools (or weapons), were used by men and women as confirmed by their presence in both male and female graves. Knives themselves have low chronological value mainly due to their simple shape being relatively stable during longer periods (Lamiová-Schmiedlová 1969, 482). Their dating is possible indirectly thanks to the presence of other finds in a feature (fibulas, bronze vessels or pottery). A find of a collection of knives in combination with craft tools (drill, scalpel?, etc.) indicates that handicraft production – perhaps wood processing – took place close to the feature.

The iron item resembles a ‘fork’ with two teeth (Fig. 5: 22). However, there is no matching socket. Consequently, the item function remains uncertain. Possibly, it could be part of vehicle construction. So far, we know only one distantly parallel item from Branč (Kolník/Varsik/Vladár 2007, pl. 173: 3).

The bronze needle (Fig. 6: 15) are usually found in the Germanic milieu in settlements and graves. An interesting collection of 33 needles comes from a Germanic settlement in Cífer-Pác, the site ‘nad Mlynom’ (over the mill). The site is interpreted as a seat of a Quadi, pro-Roman Germanic duke (Kolník 1999, 132–135) dated back to the third and fourth quarter of the 4th c. (Kolník 1986, 419). Most needles – made of bronze – were used for sewing and were 4–10 cm long (Štolcová/Kolník 2010, 481).

The silver/bronze antoninianus (Fig. 6: 6) of Salonina (253–268), Galenius’ wife provides important information concerning the dating of the backfill layers. Apparently, the feature decayed not before the second half of the 3rd c. The unique find of the coin of emperor Gallienus’ wife may be associated with the conflicts between the Romans and the Germanic people in the ‘50 s and the ‘60 s of the 3rd c. (Stoklas 2020, 147). As an analogy, we could refer to a hoard of the last silver coins minted during the

reign of Gallienus, Salonina coins and Valerian II from the Roman fortified camp Comagena (Tulln, Austria). On that site, there are two catastrophic horizons documented, including one dating back to the year 258 (Stoklas 2020, 146). The Germanic threat was imminent until the mid-‘60 s of the 3rd c. Finally, there are also records confirming an expedition of Gallienus to Carnuntum. Therefore, it is possible that amidst similar conflicts, the coin as well as other imports could fall into the hands of the Germanic warriors.

Feature 175 contained also a set of glass finds: fragments of vessels and beads (Fig. 6: 9–13). An antique type – the fragment of La Tène bracelet (Fig. 6: 13) was found there as well. It corroborates the view that Celtic products were used during the Roman Period. The fragment of a glass vessel (Fig. 6: 9) could be part of a goblet. Similar goblets made using a similar technique are known both from Cologne and Rome (Hrnčiarik 2013, 61). The square blue glass bead with rounded edges has few parallels (Fig. 6: 11). A smaller green bead from grave 29 on a bi-ritual cemetery from the late Roman Period in Brulino-Koski has a similar shape (Kempisty 1968, fig. 36) and is dated back to phase C1b–C2 (Stawiar-ska 1987, 88, 89). A distant analogy is provided by a find from Chotín dated back the stage B2/C1–C2 (Březinová 1994, 98).

Pottery

960 pottery shards were found in the feature. Noteworthy, the collection of pottery is very fragmented with only a few shards matching and only three vessels reconstructed. Predominantly, it is kitchen pottery and is divided into two basic groups: made in hand (93.3%) and on a potter’s wheel (6.7%). Only 8 shards could be attributed to the prehistoric intrusion.

Local hand-made pottery

Hand-made pottery is usually referred to as local – Germanic. Among the shards, bowls and pots (or vase-like vessels) predominate. The analysis of rim types shows that the feature contained at least 61 bowls and 46 pots (vase-like vessels). 39.7% of pottery were made of fine-grain material with an addition of smaller stones (up to 2.6 mm, sometimes also larger). The colours ranged from brown to grey-black with the surface being unsmoothed. 41.5% of pottery were made from fine-grane material with addition of smaller stones with the smoothed surface (sometimes both sides). 11.1% of pottery shards were made of a very finer material with smoothed

– often highly polished surface, usually ranging from grey to black (engobe). The remaining 3% – small bowl-like items – were made of finely-floated material, polished to achieve black-metal gloss. Predominantly, the collection contains smaller vessels, bowls up to 8 cm high and pots/vessel-like items up to 20 cm. Medium pot-like items ranging from 20 to 30 cm are rare. Storage pots – larger than 30 cm – are exceptional (4 vessels). Bowls could be divided into 6 main groups:

- conical with straight, slightly obtuse walls, occasionally with stick-like rim (Varsik IB);
- conical with a slightly inward rim (Pl. I: 6; Varsik IA);
- conical with a clearly inward rim (Varsik IA);
- semi-circular bowls (Varsik IC);
- segmented bowls with a cylindrical neck (Pl. I: 4; Varsik II);
- shallow bowls/plates with a sharp profile and rounded bottom (Varsik II).

Most bowls/cups were rather low. Sharp profiles are rarer while rounded bottoms dominate. There was also one omphalos, which could point to an older settlement horizon from the 2nd c. (*Beljak 2010b*, 145; *Knápek/Šedo 2016*). Taller, deep bowls with the short neck are typical for the second half of the 2nd c. (*Varsik 2011*, 59) were absent. Occasionally, there were bowls with a sharp profile and a rounded bottom (Pl. I: 4) characteristic of assemblages dated back to the 2nd c. and the first half of the 3rd c. (*Kolník/Varsik/Vladár 2007*, pl. 3: 12; 8: 9). The vast majority of bowls is undecorated. Very few were decorated with fine grooves, engraved waves, shallow etchings, plastic etched trimmings or mock barbotine (Pl. I: 5). The, geographically, closest example of a real barbotine-decorated item is known from Branč – a semi-circular bowl dated back to stages B2, B2/C1 (*Kolník/Varsik/Vladár 2007*, 25, fig. 21: 1).

Among pots, S-shaped profiled forms with the widest part of the belly around the middle of a pot height, rarer in the upper third, were most common (Varsik IV, resp. Droberjar 1000–1900). Sometimes, the pots were decorated with engraved ornaments (Pl. I: 12, 13; II; III): usually bolder etches, various combinations of notches, crescent and triangle scratches, square punches and branch-like ornaments. Rarely, there were fine (thin) grooves. In one case, the pot was decorated with multiple bundles of waves and sometimes a simple horizontal wave. Larger, oval recesses are typical of younger, Germanic pottery (*Kolník/Varsik/Vladár 2005*, 316). One of the pots was decorated with a *Rädchenverzierung* (ger.) triangle (not square) ornaments (Pl. II: 13). Stamping was used in only two cases – a round or slightly oval rosette (Pl. III: 2, 4) with analogies

known from a site in Šarovce (*Beljak 2010a*, fig. 16: 9, 10). This could be a reflection of similar decoration applied on grey Pannonian pottery, which became widespread in northern Pannonia in the third century (*Krekovič 1981*, 351; *Maróti 1990*, fig. 1: 18–20). Rims were decorated relatively often (12%). Usually with various types of oblique grooves and once with a wave. One item was decorated with so-called wolf teeth – i.e. a hatched or punched ornament in the middle of triangle frames.

The function of a coarse-grained cylindrical foot(?) remains unknown. The collection of local pottery contains only a few items typical of the B2 stage. Similarly, we observe no analogies to items typical of the second half of the 4th c. All these corroborate dating the finds back to the 3rd or the first half of the 4th c., i.e. the late Roman Period stages C1 and C2.

The hand-made zoomorphic vessel (Pl. IV: 1) – originally used as an application on some specific vessel – is noteworthy. It resembles a rooster head (part of the comb is missing) with the beak used as the spout. The material indicates the item was locally produced. The closest analogy could be found in Jakuszowice in Poland (*Kaczanowski/Rodzińska-Nowak 2000*, fig. 4) in a feature unambiguously dated back to stage C2. The Jakuszowice feature publication refers to numerous analogies (*Kaczanowski/Rodzińska-Nowak 2000*; *Rodzińska-Nowak 2006*). The function of this zoomorphic vessel with a spout is unclear. It could be a child's toy. More likely, however, it was related to some cult rituals involving pouring some liquid from a vessel. The latter is further corroborated by the fact that roosters, domestic fowls and, generally, birds were significant aspects of ritual imagery of the Barbarians (*Kaczanowski/Rodzińska-Nowak 2000*, 110).

Roman provincial pottery

The smallest group consists of imported Roman provincial vessels. The group could be further divided into 5 subgroups: *terra sigillata*, Pannonian brick-coloured pottery, Pannonian brown-grey pottery, fine-grained grey pottery and coarse-grained grey pottery.

Terra sigillata is represented by only 9 items (Pl. IV: 1, 3–9), Dragendorf 37 bowls, two egg-and-dart decorated shards (however, in one case, it could be either a poor-quality egg-and-dart decoration or an imperfect stamping). A small, extremely thin-walled shard is most likely a fragment of a cup-like vessel (Pl. IV: 3). One of the shards (Pl. IV: 5) – Westendorf III belong to the Kempten group. It has not yet been identified from the territory of *Barbaricum* and is also unknown in the Roman provinces,

except for Kempton determined by E. Droberjar). According to Kellner, it is related to the Westerndorf III workshop, which is dated to the second part of 3rd c. (Kellner 1962, 124, 125, fig. 1: 4; pl. 8: 4–6). So far, we were unable to classify a small fragment with a relief ornament (Pl. IV: 7). In stage C1, a considerable import of Westerndorf and Rheinzabern *terra sigillata* started (Varsik 2011, 31).

Shreds of a Pannonian brown-grey pot comes, most likely, from one ring-bowl with the rim diam. of 21 cm (Pl. IV: 10), characteristic mostly of the second half of the 2nd c. (Beljak/Kolník 2007, 140) and but also occurs in the 3rd c. (Varsik 2008, 300; 2011, 53, fig. 27) and one small thin-walled bowl (or a cup) with a clearly curved rim with a diam. of 6 cm (Pl. IV: 12). The other seven shards cannot be assigned to any specific type.

The Pannonian brick-colour pottery is represented by 9 shreds. Original forms cannot be defined. One of the shards is a fragment of a ring-like bottom (diam. 10 cm), most likely from a taller jug (Pl. IV: 12).

The find of grey, slightly coarse pottery belongs to the most interesting pottery finds. It is a fragment of a storage vessel with a horizontally curved rim (Pl. IV: 14; Droberjar 2022, *in press*; Petznek 1998, foldpl. 1: type 3.4). Just below the neck, the vessel was decorated with horizontal lines. Specific forms of those vessels were already at the end of the 2nd c. The most intense development started at the end of the 3rd c. Other shards attributed to this group were decorated with fine grooves on the outside and, generally, clear horizontal lines on the inside. Other 14 shards cannot be linked with any specific type of vessels. Finally, 15 shreds, which cannot be linked with specific types of vessels, represent fine-grained grey well burnt pottery.

The above description shows that – compared to other published assemblages from Slovakia – feature 175 contained only a limited amount of pottery imported from Roman provinces (Varsik 2011, 48, tab. 3). This could indicate weak relations with the Roman provinces. However, the so-called small finds (mainly glass and the coin) challenges the hypothesis. Most pottery items belong to relatively long-lived forms (Droberjar 1997, 43; Varsik 2011, 56–68) with the greatest occurrence in the 3rd c. A limited amount of Pannonian pottery could corroborate the view of E. Krekovič concerning the decline of this pottery popularity in stage C2 (Krekovič 1981, 354, 361). A few shards show links with the pottery from the end of the 2nd c. (*Rädchenverzierung* decoration, *barbottino*). This applies, for instance, to the reconstructed vessel with analogies from the wooden-soil camp in Iža and the ornaments on small bowls/cups

(*Rajtár* 2015, 389–391). The entire collection shows no common features with pottery used after the mid-4th c. (e.g. *Turčan* 2018, 288–292). E. Droberjar notices that *Krausengefäß* vessels could inform the analysis of products transported in them to the Germanic milieu (Droberjar 2022, *in press*). Indeed, they were certainly not imported solely as pots. The composition of the ceramic finds indicates that, at least until the last third of the 3rd c., Germanic settlers preferred smaller vessels, usually table ceramics. Rarely, they used ceramic vessels for storage or transport. For those purposes, they clearly used other, possibly wooden containers or leather bags. Primarily, the pottery found in Beladice was used for dining. Less often it was used for cooking and only exceptionally for food storage or transport.

CHRONOLOGY

The vast majority of the finds come from the feature backfill and, most likely, are unrelated to the feature original function. Some of them seem to reflect the developments in the second half of the 2nd c. (roulette decoration, omphalos). However, the finds show little resemblance to assemblages dated back to the end of the 2nd c. (Beljak 2010b, 146). Large amounts of the pottery have its origin in C1–C2 in the Danube region (Varsik 2011, fig. 27) and central Bohemia region (Droberjar/Prostředník 2004, pl. 22) Informed by typological analogies and the Saloninas (†268) antoninianus – which marks at least the lower time bound – we can determine that the inventory was put in the backfill, roughly, in the third quarter of the 3rd c. or first half (closer to the beginning) of the 4th c. The decay, thus, could be related to stages C2/C3 (according to Godłowski) or the early phase of stage C3 (according to Tejral) of the Roman Period chronology.

The Bocegaj valley in Roman Times

The research in Beladice as well as other researchers over the last 40 years fundamentally changed our understanding of the Upper Vah region in the first half of the first millennium. Although the still widely used settlement map published in 1998 shows four settled areas (*Rajtár* 1998, map 2), now we are aware of the existence of 64. Also, in the Bocegaj valley, archaeological sites are relatively densely distributed. Approximately 1,800 m to the east, on a north-facing slope over the confluence of the Bocegaj and the Drevenica, there are clear traces of a settlement certainly attributable also to the 2nd c.

(Ruttkay/Ruttkayová 1992, 92). Another site is located to the north, on the left bank of the Bocegaj creek (Ruttkay/Ruttkayová 1992, 92). 100 m to the south-east of the reservoir and 100–200 m to the south of the creek, on the right bank of the Bocegaj, a large collection of wheel-made pottery, imported *terra sigillata* and somehow fewer examples of hand-made Germanic pottery were found (Bednár/Ruttkay 1991, 27). Approximately 800–1,300 m to the east of the Baratsko grange, on the right bank of the Bocegaj, there is another site attributed to Roman times with Roman Period wheel-made pottery (Ruttkay/Ruttkayová 1992, 92). A similar density of Germanic settlements is observed in most parts of the Upper Vah region (Ruttkayová/Ruttkay 2015, 30).

Two Roman marching camps were found on the southern bound of the Upper Žitava region, only 12 km to the south of the Beladice site (Bátora et al. 2012). Perhaps, it is just a matter of time, when, as T. Kolník expects similar camps will be discovered in the Nitra region (only 15 km to the west of Beladice) or the Vah region in the Želiezovce – Šarovce area (35 km to the south-east) with a considerable concentration of finds dated back to the 2nd and 3rd c. During the Marcomannic wars at the end of the 2nd c., Roman marching camps in the Žitava region were used to control lands with a denser Germanic settlement. The settlement density in the 3rd c. in the Žitava region indicates that the Romans' presence there had had no long-term effects and the Germanic settlement flourished. Consequently, we can conclude that the Upper Žitava region – compared to other parts of the Danube region – was extremely densely settled from the mid-Roman Period until the Migration Period.

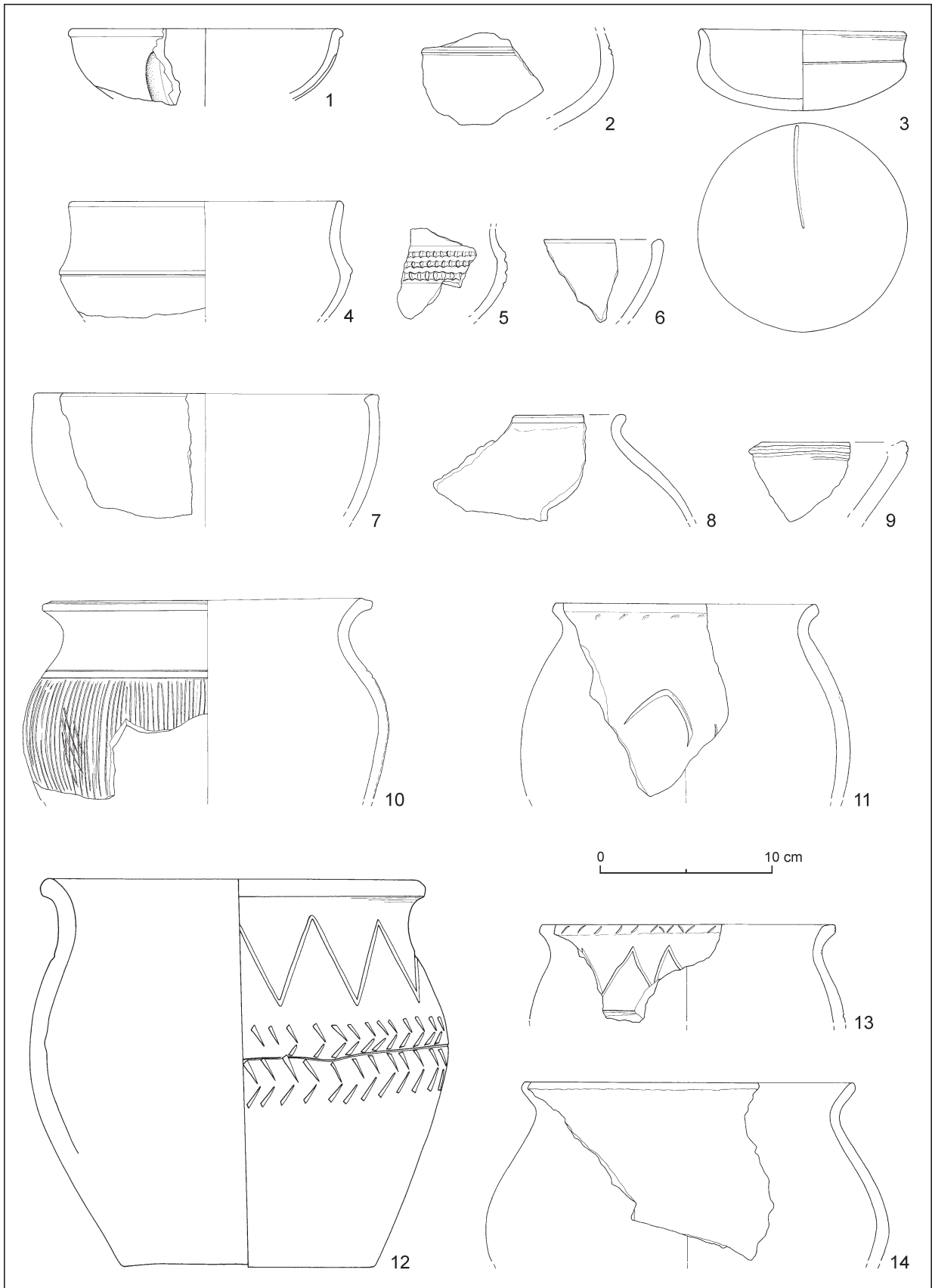
CONCLUSIONS

Feature 175 from the Beladice site researched in 2009 and 2010 provided a relatively large collection of finds that shed light on the life of the Germanic community in the 3rd c. Numerous imports in the feature itself and other features on the site indicate that the Germanic people maintained intense contacts (either in a state of conflict or peace) with the

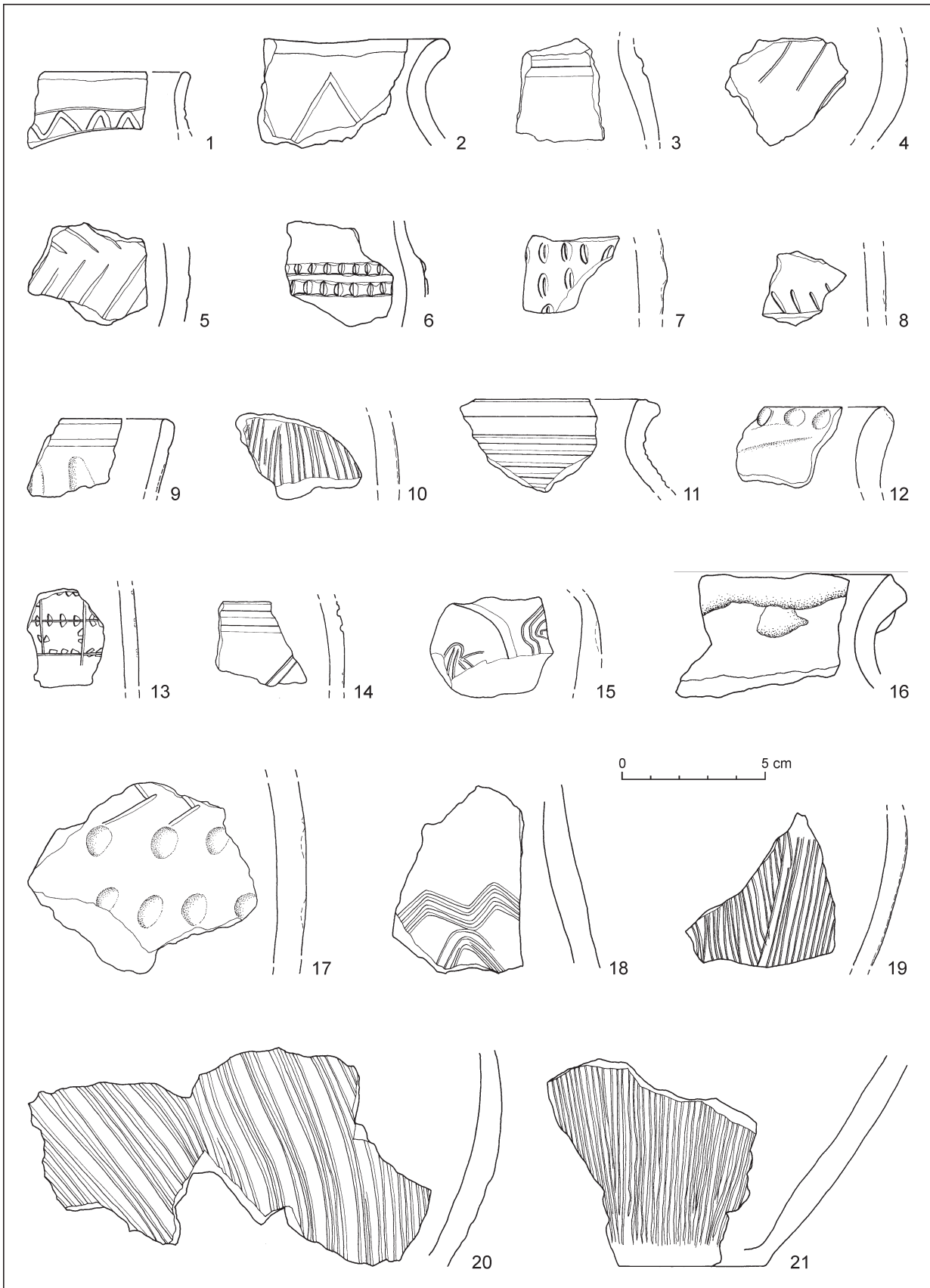
Roman provinces. The presence of fragments of glass vessels and a large number of smaller vessels – certainly elements of the tableware – shows that the Germanic people put great emphasis on the dining quality. Possibly including wine consumption (Varsík 2009). The unrest that disturbed the northern border of the Roman Empire after the mid-3rd c. suggests that, probably, products from the Roman provinces could get into the Žitava region through the war-time looting.

The investigated sunken house (hut) was a standard dwelling in the early Roman Period. The finds indicate that the backfill contained artefacts from the next period – from the end of the 2nd c. to, most likely, the beginning of the 4th c. A minimum number of prehistoric finds (despite the frequent occurrence of prehistoric features in the area) indicates that the feature was gradually backfilled after it had decayed (no distinct layers were observed). The relatively large collection of pottery and small finds point to the variability of the material culture and the predilection for imported items – either glass or metal products. Two finds deserve exceptional attention: the zoomorphic vessel depicting a rooster head and the iron capsule. Both could have magical functions but we cannot preclude that the capsule was used also for storing fragrant substances. Ceramic finds indicate that the inhabitants preferred smaller vessels, most likely used for dining. Supplies were stored rather in wooden containers or leather bags. The feature analysed here helps to reconstruct the Germanic people lives in the early Roman Times in the Upper Žitava region.

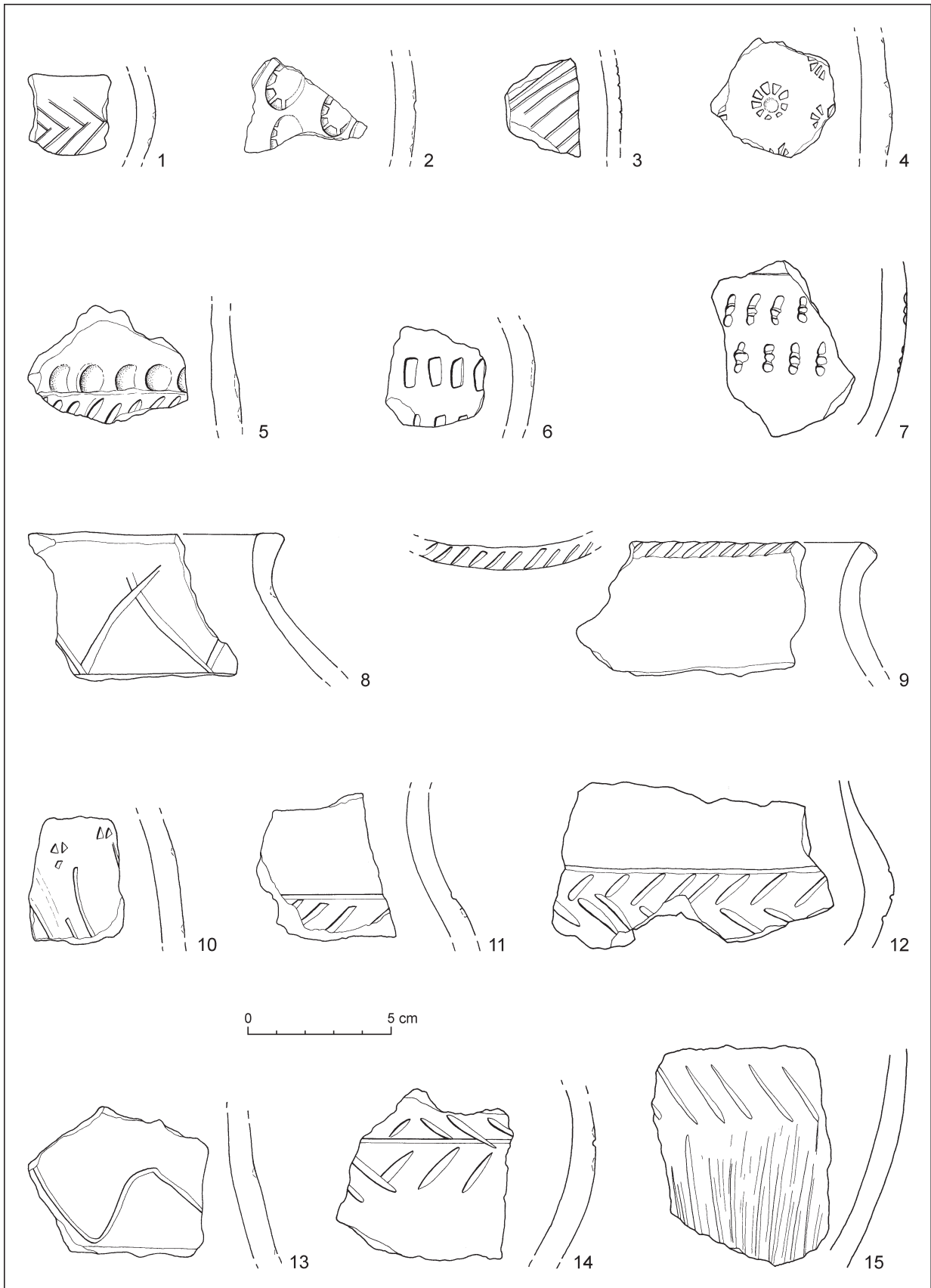
The feature, as well as the entire site, supplements the dense Germanic settlement network in the Upper Žitava region from the mid-2nd c. to the turn of the 4th and 5th c. This questions older claims about the only sporadic presence of the Germanic people in the area. The abundance of sites in this relatively small area shows a radically different picture. Possibly also this dense settlement network contributed to the decision about building two Roman marching camps in nearby Vráble at the end of the 2nd c. The presence of the camps, however, did not interfere with the development of the Germanic settlement activities.



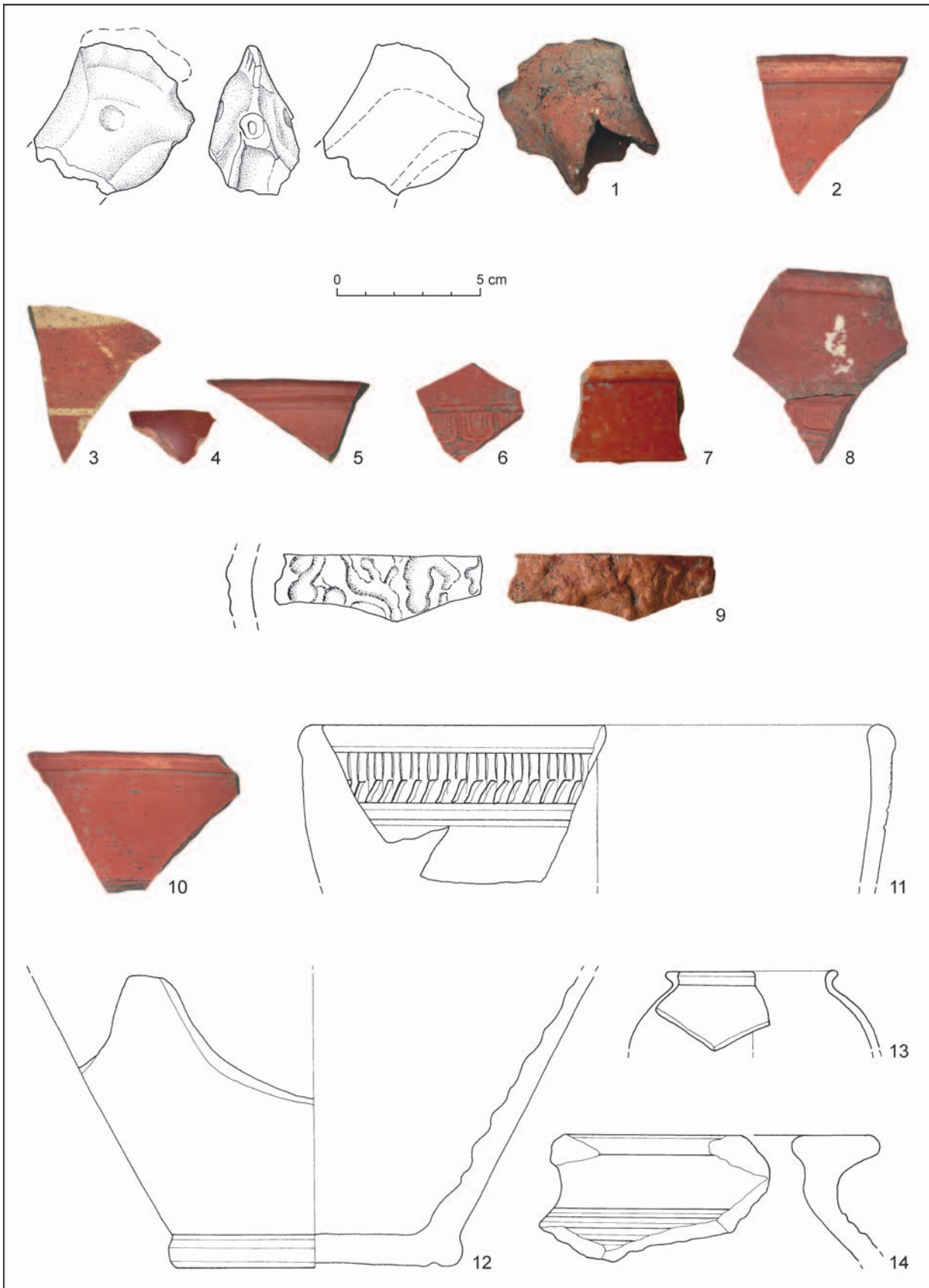
Pl. I. Beladice. Feature no. 175. Hand-made pottery.



Pl. II. Beladice. Feature no. 175. Hand-made pottery, decoration variants.



Pl. III. Beladice. Feature no. 175. Hand-made pottery, decoration variants.



Pl. IV. Beladice. Feature no. 175. 1 – hand-made pottery; 2–14 – Roman provincial pottery.

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