

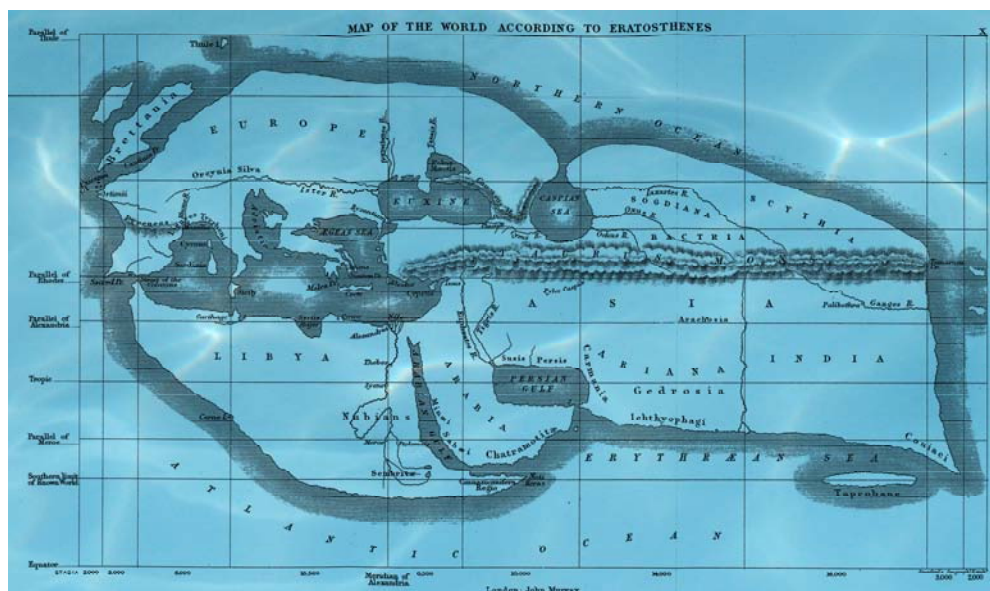
LRCW3

Late Roman Coarse Wares, Cooking Wares and Amphorae in the Mediterranean

Archaeology and archaeometry
Comparison between western and eastern
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THE LAST PHASES OF THE SETTLEMENT AT TONOVCOV GRAD (SLOVENIA) THE CERAMIC EVIDENCE

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This contribution analyses the Late Antique pottery from Tonovcov grad near Kobarid in Western Slovenia, particularly the second (lasted from the end of the 5th and during the entire 6th century AD) and the third phase (probably 8th and 9th century). Among the imported material in the second phase various types of Eastern Mediterranean Amphorae are represented. The coarse pottery shows similarities to the material from the settlements in Friuli. In the layers of the third phase the absence of imported pottery is noticeable. The coarse wares from those layers are modest. The majority of the vessels (especially pots) are unornamented and the coarse manufacture shows the traces of uncontrolled firing. The analogies could be found at the early Medieval sites both in Friuli and Central Slovenia.

KEYWORDS: TONOVCOV GRAD, SLOVENIA, FRIULI, AMPHORAE, COARSE POTTEY, LATE ANTIQUITY, EARLY MIDDLE AGES.

Tonovcov grad, an fortified hilltop settlement is situated upon a naturally very well protected hill above the Soča River in Western Slovenia (Fig. 1). The settlement used to control the passage through this important strategic region just before gateway into Italy. Due to its exceptional strategic position, the hill was settled through many periods, from the Mesolithic through to the Middle Ages (Ciglencečki 1994, 1997).

The importance of the settlement increased particularly during the Late Antiquity when it controlled an important Roman road leading from *Noricum* towards *Forum Iulii* (Čedad - Cividalle) and to the northern Adriatic ports.

Excavations on the hill have been ongoing since 1993. Since then remains of two houses, a sacral complex and a water cistern have been discovered (Ciglencečki 1994, 2005; Modrijan 2007).

During the Late Antiquity the settlement displayed two phases. First phase lasted from the end of the 4th to the middle of the 5th century and the second phase from the end of the 5th to the beginning of the 7th century. The third phase was placed in the Early Middle Age.

The purpose of this article is to discuss the second and the third phase. The first phase one will be used as a framework.

The architectural remains of the first phase of the settlement which, judging from the findings, lasted from the end of the 4th and throughout the first half of the 5th century, were almost completely destroyed by the construction of later structures. At that time the settlement functioned as a military post (Ciglencečki 2005, 95) at the rear of the *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum*, the defence zone that protected Italy (Šašel 1970-1971; *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum* 1971).

Despite of the poorly preserved architectural remains, the pottery finds from the first phase are quite numerous and rich. The imported ceramics are mostly of African origin. The transport amphorae of type Keay 6 (Keay 1984, 119), Keay 25G (Keay 1984, 184) and Keay 26 (*spatheion* 1 after Bonifay 2004, 125) have been recognized (Fig 2. 4-6) and among the African Red Slip Wares the types of Hayes 32/58 (Hayes 1972, 96) and Hayes 61B (Hayes 1972, 100) (Fig 2. 1-3). The eastern Mediterranean imports are also present with the LRA 3

amphorae. The presence of African material could be, as per the other settlements in the rear of the *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum*, connected with the organised state supply for the military (Vidrih Perko 2000; Vidrih Perko and Župančič 2005, 522).

The coarse pottery of the first phase shows richness of forms and ornaments (Fig. 2. 7-12). The dishes are ornamented with different sorts of wavy lines (including the belts of wavy lines, fig. 2. 12) and impressions (Fig 2. 11). The common ornamental technique is also combed decoration, many times connected with wavy lines. The analogies for the forms could be found over the entire Eastern Alpine area although some ornaments (especially the belts of wavy lines) seem to be a local characteristic of the South Western Slovenia at the time.

The settlement at Tonovcov grad reached its peak during its second phase at the end of the 5th and during the entire 6th century AD. The settlement was protected by a defensive wall and it contained dwelling houses, water cisterns and a sacral part. The sacral part was composed of three small parallel churches with narthexes. The last renovation of the churches was in the mid-6th century, at the time when the Byzantines conquered the Ostrogothic kingdom in Italy and annexed this area to the Byzantine state. One piece of evidence for this rebuilding is the finding of the small *spatheion* with a coin of Emperor Justinian. It was found near the altar of the central church.

As the variety of the Eastern Mediterranean Amphorae shows, the trade with the Mediterranean area was still alive at that time. The amphorae of types LRA 1, LRA 2, LRA 4 and LRA 5/6 are represented on Tonovcov grad in the layers of the second phase (Fig 3. 1-9). All those amphorae are common 6th century finds in the northern Adriatic coastal settlements like Koper, Piran, Savudrija, Fazine and Grado (Cunja 1996, Pl. 25. 287-288, Pl. 26-28; Vidrih Perko and Župančič 2005, Fig. 4-7; Kajfež and Josipovič 2000, Pl. 3. 1-3; Pl. 6: 1-3; Gaspari *et al.* 2007, Pl. 11; Malaguti *et al.* 2007, Pl. 1). In a smaller number they were also found at the settlements in the mainland of Slovenia and Friuli (Villa 1998, 275-288; Vidrih Perko and Župančič 2005, 523; Mason 1998, Pl. 2).

The small and entirely preserved late *spatheion* from the central church (Fig. 3. 10) belongs, according to the Bonifay's typology, to the variant A dated at the end of the 6th century (Bonifay 2004,

127). The second, not quite as well preserved *spatheion* (Fig. 3. 11) was found in the ruination layer of the house. This *spatheion* probably belongs to the variant C according to Bonifay, dated in the second half of the 7th century. The small *spatheia* are common finds at the settlements of the second half of the 6th and in the first half of 7th in Slovenia (Knific 1994, Pl. 6, 7; Cunja 1996, Pl. 28. 301-308) and Friuli (Mackensen 1987, Fig. 43. 5-18; Villa 1998, 280, Fig. 3. 3; 6. 1-6). They have been found both on the seaside and in mainland (especially on the fortified hilltops). Such positioning is strongly connected with the Byzantine strategic points in this area during the Byzantine – Gothic wars and after the Byzantine annexation of this area (Mackensen 1992, 247, 251; Knific 1994, 224).

One fragment of the amphora is attributed to the Samos-Cistern type (Fig. 3. 12). This type is concentrated in the coastal area of the northern Adriatic and its hinterland (both in Slovenia and Italy) and also in Campania (Italy) in the second half of 6th and in the first half of 7th century (Arthur 1990, 280, Fig. 4). They are mostly present, like small *spatheia*, at the Byzantine *castra* and at the other strategically important fortified hillforts (Arthur 1990, 280).

The finds of African Red Slip Wares in the second phase on Tonovcov grad are rare. The only identified types were one example of type Hayes 99 (Fig. 3. 13) and probably one, poorly preserved example of type Hayes 104 or Hayes 105. The eastern sigillata is represented by only one example of LRC ware, supposedly of type Hayes 3F or 3G (Fig. 3. 14). These types are the characteristic finds of the second half of the 6th century in this area (Prötzel 1996, 55).

The quantity and diversity of the Mediterranean imports (especially amphoras) at the end of the 6th and at the beginning of the 7th century at Tonovcov grad could represent an organised supply of the Mediterranean products.

The coarse wares in the second phase show the reduction of forms and ornamental techniques (Fig. 4. 5). The shapes with thickened rim (Fig. 4. 3-9), mostly unornamented, are prevalent amongst the pots. These types of pots are common in Invillino settlements at that time (Bierbrauer 1987, Pl. 120-122). The bowls (Fig. 4. 10-11; Fig. 5. 1-6) are less numerous than in the first phase, but some new forms, like plates and platters (Fig. 5. 7, 8) also appear in the second phase. Amongst the ornament the single wavy lines are prevalent. The ornament of wavy line belt has almost disappeared and the impressed ornament becomes rare. However some new ornamental techniques appear in the time of 6th century. An example of this is the plastic cord on the base of the vessels (Fig. 3. 9-11). This ornament is widely represented through the South Eastern Alpine area both in the Late Antiquity (Lusuardi Siena and Negri 2007, 185, t. 1) and in the Early Middle Ages (Knific 2002, 123, Fig. 20, 22, 26).

The facture of the pottery becomes coarser as in the first phase. The majority of the vessels were made on the slow wheel.

The material is similar to the material from Friuli. The connections with the Central and especially with the Eastern part of Slovenia seem weaker.

The settlement at Tonovcov grad was abandoned towards the end of the 6th or at the beginning of the 7th century. The buildings were partly demolished. At this point in time the Soča Valley was still under the Lombard rule (Štih and Peršič 1981, 337; Ciglencečki 2001, 193), however no evidence of the Lombard pottery production was found on the hill.

In the Early Middle Ages the ruins of partially demolished

buildings were re-inhabited. The remains of this inhabitancy are rare. They can be seen as burned layers both in the big house and in the water cistern. In the central church also the remains of a modest fireplace with the remains of some ceramic pots were found.

The absence of imported pottery in those layers shows that the trade connections with the Mediterranean area were completely broken. This can also be seen in mainland of Friuli (Lusuardi Siena *et al.* 2004, 79) and Slovenia at that time. Some coastal settlements however show organised state supply until the 9th century (Vidrih Perko and Župančič 2005, 524).

The coarse wares from those layers are modest. Among the pots, the only shapes found are the ones with the long neck and markedly everted rim (Fig. 6. 1-4). These shapes of pots are known both from Friuli (Villa 2003, tav. 2. 1, 2, 4) and from central Slovenia (Ciglencečki 2000, 65, 140, Fig. 146; Pleterški and Belak 2002, 100: 8, 102; Turk 2002, 82) in the Early Middle Age.

Bowls are rarer as in the former phases. Flat, cone-shaped dishes are prevalent (Fig. 6. 5-6). Also one poorly preserved kettle was found (Fig. 6. 7). Such kettles are common finds in western Slovenia (Pleterški 2008, t. 19. 4-6) and northern Italy (Bierbrauer 1987, t. 124. 10; Lusuardi Siena *et al.* 2004, 88, Fig. 13. 1, 2) in the 9th and 10th century.

The majority of the vessels (especially pots) are unornamented. Only one pot and some bowls are decorated with single wavy lines and horizontal incisions.

The facture of those vessels is of a poor quality. Most of them show traces of uncontrolled firing. Their surface is porous as a consequence of the organic additions in the clay, sometimes also burnishing. The burnishing surface is common at the early Medieval sites in Central and Eastern Slovenia. This can be interpreted as an evidence of contact between the Romanized autochthonous inhabitants and the Slavs (Pleterški and Belak 2002, 102).

Although the absence of imported pottery makes the dating of this phase difficult, the similarities with the material from Friuli and Slovenia and also some metal finds (Carolingian strap end and Avarian belt fitting) point to the last phase on Tonovcov grad being between the 8th and 9th centuries.

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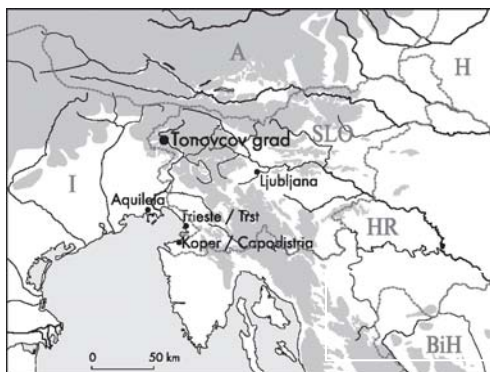


Fig. 1. Map showing the position of Tonovcov grad.

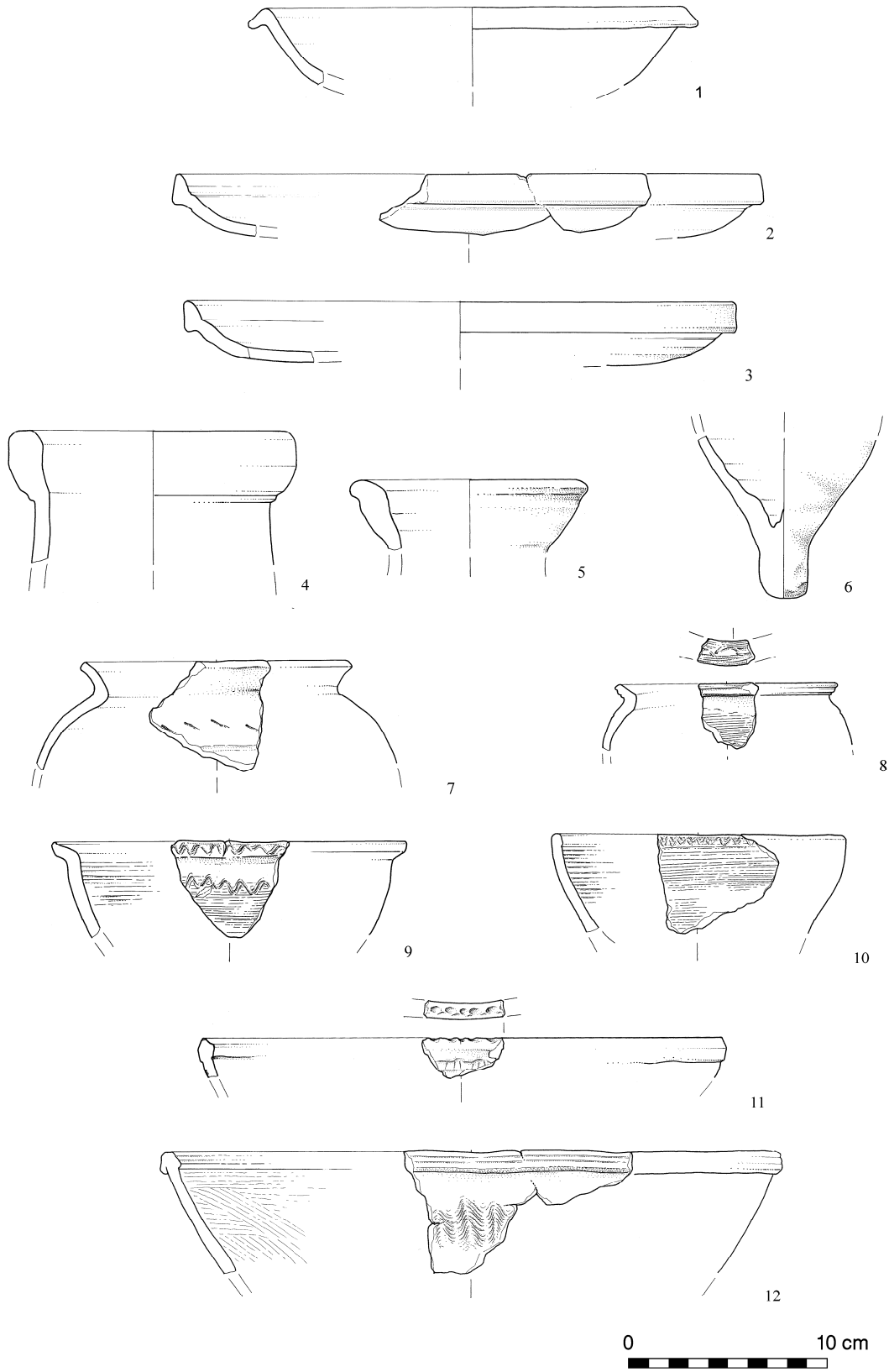


Fig. 2. Tonovcov grad, selection of imported and coarse pottery from the first phase.

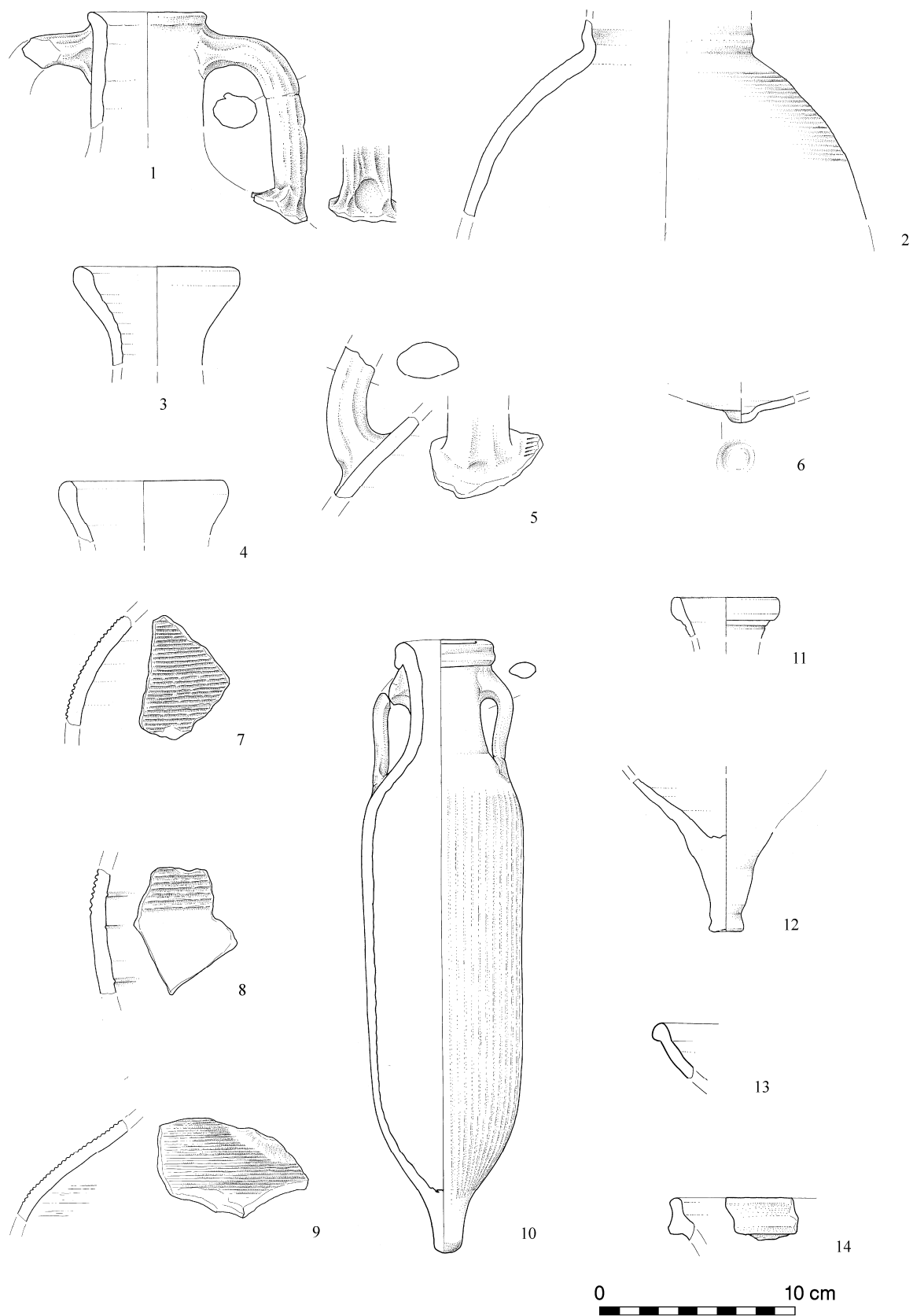


Fig. 3. Tonovcov grad, selection of imported pottery from the second phase.

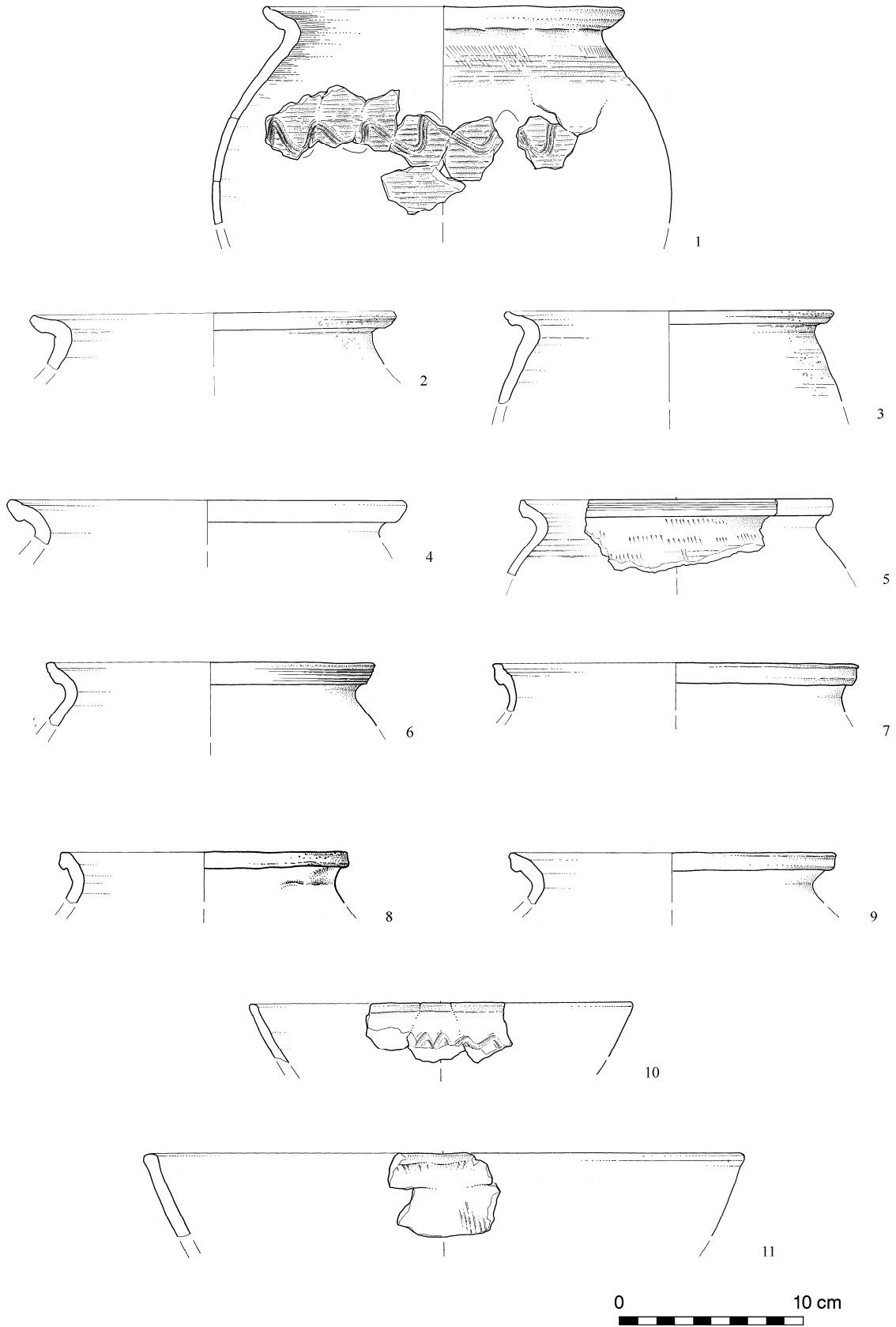


Fig. 4. Tonovcov grad, selection of coarse pottery from the second phase.

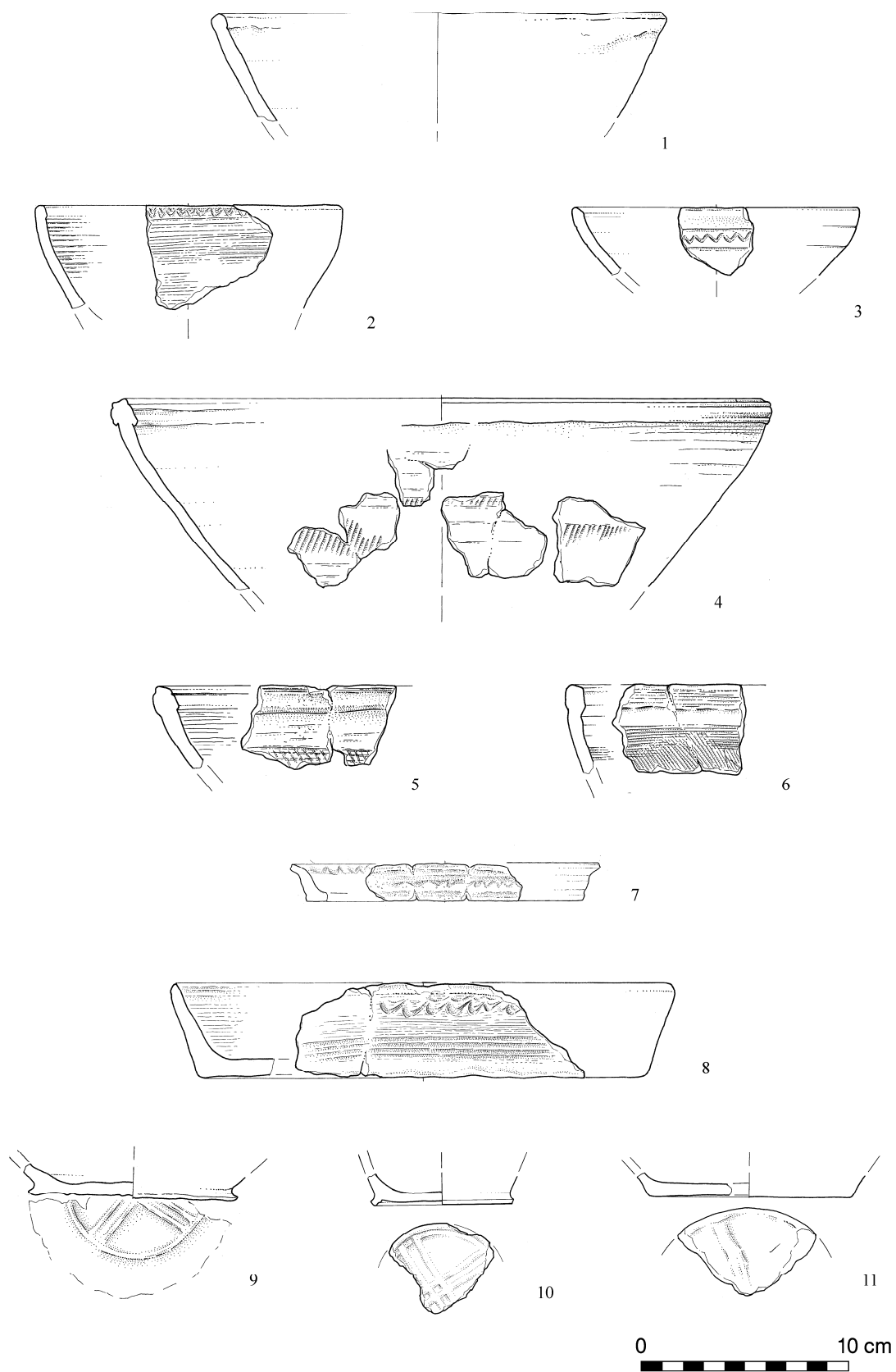


Fig. 5. Tonovcov grad, selection of coarse pottery from the second phase.

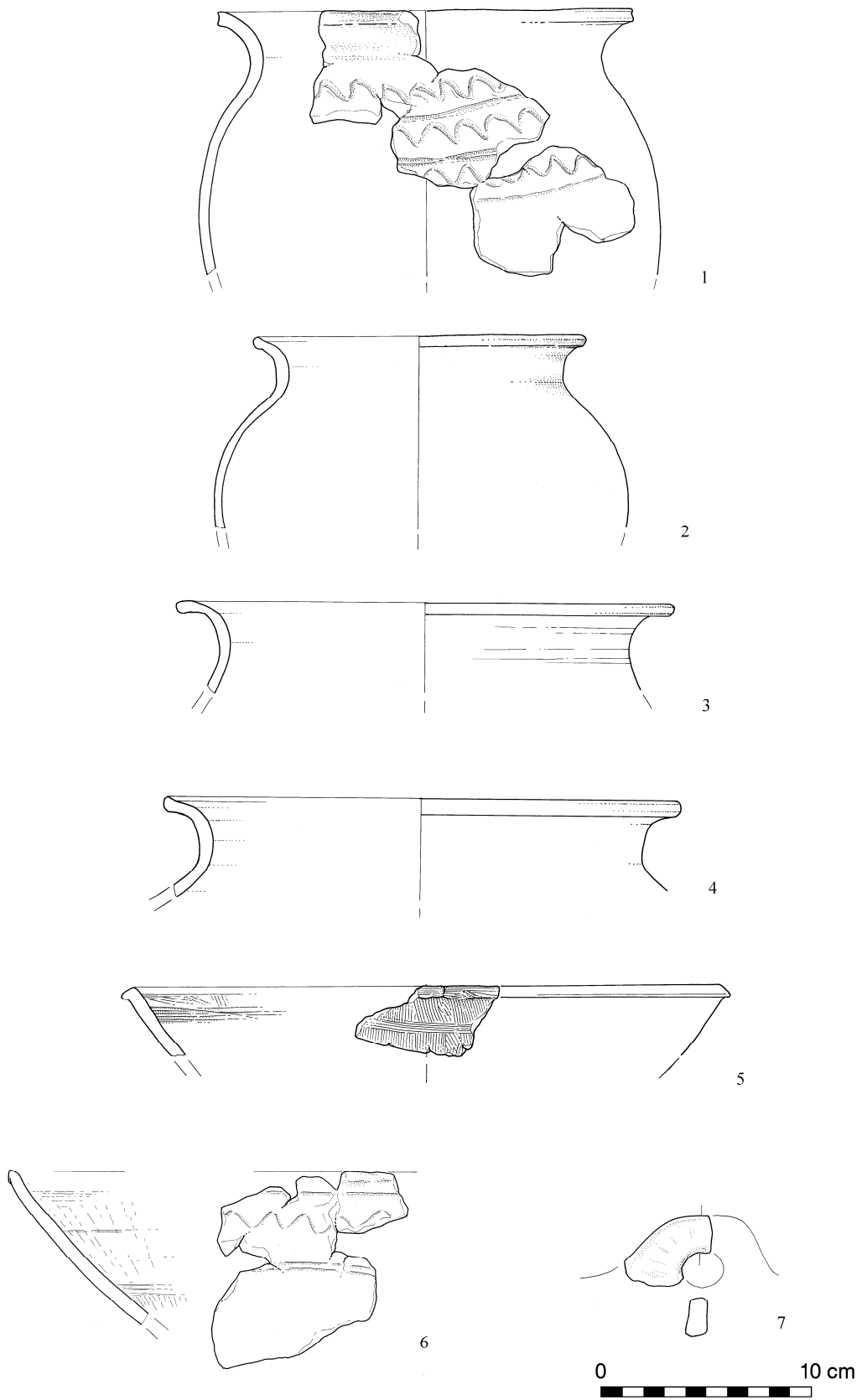


Fig. 6. Tonovcov grad, selection of coarse pottery from the third phase.