



Vestnik **XXVII**

SLOVANI, NAŠA DEDIŠČINA

Uredili Judita Lux, Benjamin Štular in Katharina Zanier

OUR HERITAGE: THE SLAVS

Edited by Judita Lux, Benjamin Štular and Katharina Zanier



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Early medieval Slavs in Styria – A first archaeological search for traces

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Abstract: Our knowledge of early medieval settlements in Styria is generally sparse, especially from an archaeological point of view, and even several major building and infrastructure projects in recent years have changed little on that fact. In my contribution I will give a brief overview of the oldest archaeological evidence of early medieval Slavic pottery, features and settlements in Styria. Those few sites, some of which have only been excavated recently, can be dated back to the 7th century. I will primarily refer to the objects of St. Ruprecht an der Raab (dist. Weiz), Komberg (com. Hengsberg, dist. Leibnitz), and Enzelsdorf (com. Fernitz-Mellach, dist. Graz-Umgebung). A stratum of early Slavic settlements, as suggested for historical and toponymical reasons from the second half of the 6th or early 7th centuries, cannot yet be stated either by settlement or grave assemblages. Furthermore I will cast a glimpse at Styrian finds and features from the period between 450 and 650 AD that bridge the gap between the older Late Antiquity phase (LA I, 300 to 450 AD) and the Early Middle Ages (starting around 600 AD).

Keywords: Enzelsdorf, Komberg, St. Ruprecht an der Raab, Styria, Slavic pottery, 7th century

Zgodnji Slovani na avstrijskem Štajerskem – prvo arheološko iskanje sledi

Izvilleček: Naše poznavanje zgodnjerednjeveških nasebin na avstrijskem Štajerskem je precej slabo, zlasti z arheološkega vidika, in niti številni obsežni gradbeni in infrastrukturni projekti v zadnjih letih niso prinesli občutnih sprememb. V prispevku bom podal kratak pregled najstarejših arheoloških dokazov o zgodnjerednjeveškem slovanskem lončarstvu, strukturah in nasebinah na avstrijskem Štajerskem. Teh nekaj najdišč, od katerih so bila nekatera izkopana šele pred kratkim, lahko umestimo v 7. stoletje. Osredotočil se bom na predmete, najdene v krajih St. Ruprecht an der Raab (okraj Weiz), Komberg (občina Hengsberg, okraj Leibnitz) in Enzelsdorf (občina Fernitz-Mellach, okraj Graz-Umgebung). Faze zgodnjerednjerske poselitve iz druge polovice 6. stoletja ali začetka 7. stoletja, ki jih nakazujejo zgodovinski in toponimski podatki, še ni mogoče potrditi z rekonstrukcijo nasebin ali grobov. Poleg tega bom preletel še štajerske najdbe in strukture iz obdobja med letoma 450 in 650, ki zapolnjujejo vrzel med zgodnjo fazo pozne antike (od leta 300 do leta 450) in zgodnjim srednjim vekom (z začetkom okoli leta 600).

Ključne besede: Enzelsdorf, Komberg, St. Ruprecht an der Raab, avstrijska Štajerska, slovansko lončarstvo, 7. stoletje

Introduction

In Styria, archaeology tells us little about early medieval settlements. Even major building projects in the last decade could not change this, even though there were, for example, extensive excavations prior to the construction of the Koralm railway route. At least in the Weitendorf–Wettmannstätten area in Western Styria, parts of an early medieval settlement, dating to the second half of the 8th and the 9th century, were discovered (Gutjahr 2011, 137–191). Most of the early medieval settlements in Styria (around 7th to 10th century) can only be identified by a few shards as indicators for colonization, and have not been further explored scientifically. And of the settlements we do know, only small areas have been properly investigated. We know hardly anything about their structure and layout. Some of the sites I am referring to were researched about 30 years ago, for example St. Ruprecht an der Raab (dist. Weiz) and Komberg (com. Hengsberg, dist. Leibnitz), while others have only been excavated recently, like Enzelsdorf (com. Fernitz-Mellach, dist. Graz-Umgebung). I will come back to them later. Furthermore, in 2006 we found a settlement site possibly dating

back to the 7th century at the so-called Rasental field in Unterhaus (com. Wildon, dist. Leibnitz). Unfortunately, it has been heavily damaged due to centuries of agricultural usage. There are also a few finds and features from early medieval fortifications or *forts/curtes*, for example from the Kirchberg at Deutschfeistritz (dist. Graz-Umgebung; Gutjahr 2006, 277–344), the Ulrichsberg near Deutschlandsberg (dist. Deutschlandsberg; Lehner 2004, 99–148), the Wildon Schlossberg (dist. Leibnitz; Kramer 1992, 41–82) and – discovered only recently – from the so-called Tanzboden at the Schwanberg castle hill (dist. Deutschlandsberg; Schrettle 2012, 393). But chronologically, the finds from these sites are outside the scope of this article.

Late Antiquity/Merovingian Age

Before I discuss the settlement features with their basically ceramic finds from the early phase of the Styrian Early Middle Ages, I will cast a brief glance at the preceding period, Late

Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages, covering 200 years between 450 and 650 AD (LA II and Merovingian Age (Modrijan, Milavec 2011, 12 f.). Quite astonishingly, the corpus of finds from that period is pretty manageable. Apart from a few early migration-period elements from the inhumation graves at the Frauenberg near Leibnitz (Steinklauber 2003, 489–495; Steinklauber 2012, 127–132) and a few items from *Flavia Solva* (a bird-shaped fibula, 450 to 500 AD or around 500 AD, and probably four lead seals from the Eastern Roman Emperor Markianos, 450–457 AD; Seibt 1974, 61–82; Wassiliou, Winter 2000, 92–96; most recently Gutjahr 2015, 76; 101 f., note 21), the following finds – most of them connected to an unclear provenance – are all we currently have: At the Kirchbichl near Rattenberg (com. Fohnsdorf, dist. Murtal), a “Franco-Alemannic” bird-shaped fibula (about 470 to 490 or first half of the 6th century, as to the dating variants see Gutjahr 2019, in press) and a chip-carved bow fibula of the Prša-Levice type have been found, the latter manufactured in the Danubian/Eastern Germanic region. An iron crossbow fibula of the Siscia type dating back to the second half of the 5th/first half of the 6th century was discovered 130 years ago at the strategically important Kugelstein near Frohnleiten (dist. Graz-Umgebung; Figure 1). Furthermore, a Merovingian-age bronze equal-armed bow fibula was found in Mantscha (550 to 650 AD, com. Hitzendorf, dist. Graz-Umgebung). There are also a thickened bangle with a pearl-band ornament and hollow body from the Leoben region, dating to the middle of the 7th century, two Late Antiquity pigeon fibulae (Hohenberg near Aigen/Ennstal, dist. Liezen, 5th to 7th cent.; Nowotny 2005, pl. 4: 45, grave 15) and a disc-shaped fibula with an inscribed cross (Grötsch, com. St. Nikolai im Sausal, dist. Leibnitz, 6th/7th cent., unpublished) from early medieval graves dating to the 8th/9th centuries (Figure 2). A *folllis* issued by Emperor Justinian (538/39) from Annaberg near Leoben (dist. Leoben) is – aside from perhaps two *solidi* from Eppenstein (com. Weißkirchen in Steiermark, dist. Murtal), issued by Emperor Leo I – the only Byzantine coin find in the 20th century located with any certainty. Not a single one of the 16 Eastern Roman and Byzantine coins (Leo I to Ioannes II Comnenus) currently known in Styria can, however, be placed in an archaeological context. Considering their unclear provenance, none of these coins make a powerful argument for early Byzantine activities in Styria (for the above-mentioned findings see Gutjahr 2015, 77; Gutjahr 2019, in press; Schachinger 2006, 221, 239 f.; the few early medieval coins of Styria are currently subject to revision). As far as architecture is concerned, we have discovered the scattered remains of a large, well-appointed early-Christian church at the temple plateau on the Frauenberg near Leibnitz that was possibly built in the late 5th or early 6th century (Schrettle 2011, 41–48; Schrettle 2014, 51–58; Gutjahr 2019, in press). Unfortunately, we have not been able to excavate any other traces of human colonization around the (likely) church site from the same time period (graves, settlement traces or findings of the later 5th or 6th century, Gutjahr 2015, 100, note 16). The only exception is the remnant of a hose heater of a Roman building. A charcoal sample from its heating channel revealed a radiocarbon dating of 420 to 600 AD (2σ, 95% probability), suggesting there may still have been a settlement on the Frauenberg in the second half of the 5th century, and perhaps even later (Hinker 2008, 55 f.).

Most of modern-day Styria belonged to the old Roman province of *Noricum mediterraneum* and, later, at least constitutionally to the Ostrogothic Empire. Still, it is not quite certain if the *Pólis Norikón*, the territory 547/48 allotted (or, at least in the aftermath, contractually legitimized) to the Lombards by the Byzantine rulers, included parts of what is now the federal state of Styria. Contemporary archaeology cannot make a case for the presence of either Ostrogothic or Lombard groups of civilians or even military troops in the area. We do not even know of any scattered finds that would allow us to assume trade-related or political contacts with Ostrogoths, Lombards, or Franks. The few items we have give no evidence at all of Styria’s ethnic identities or its political or territorial affiliation in the later stages of Late Antiquity (LA II). Only three of the objects mentioned above can be put in a larger geographical and cultural context. The Prša-Levice fibula from Rattenberg was part of the female garb in the mid-Danubian region in the second half of the 5th century. Terjal argues that these fibulae fit into the emerging post-Attilian mid-Danubian society which, “in principle, arose from indigenous Danubian traditions and the integrated Eastern Germanic/horse-mounted nomadic heritage as well as Late-Antiquity traits” (Terjal 2008, 268, own translation). Thickened bangles like the one found in Leoben were Italic products, but widely used in Western Avaria – which, by the way, gives evidence of contacts between the historically important regions of Western Pannonia and Lombardy. The bangle from Leoben also suggests trade routes between the two realms running through Styria. Siscia fibulae, finally, were quite common in the southeast Alpine regions and were worn by the Roman or Romanized populations, as Milavec pointed out recently (Milavec 2009, 228 f.). There are hardly any ceramic finds from the Late Antiquity or Early Migration period. A few shards from Graz-Straßgang were radiocarbon-dated to between 550 and 660 AD, but are, judging from their appearance, probably most likely Slavic ceramics (Hinker 2008a, 729). At this time we do not know if the astonishing lack of features and finds from this period represents an archaeological research problem or historical reality. In any case, it is striking that the otherwise fairly well-documented activities of Lombards, Ostrogoths, early Avars and other *gentes* in the eastern Alpine regions and its adjacent areas have not left a single trace in modern-day Styria. Archaeologically, we cannot even provide evidence for any persistent Roman population in the area, even though it is safe to assume that some elementary continuity of settlements did take place. It is an open research question if, and if so, to what extent Styria took part in the transformation of settlement and economic structures in the Eastern Alpine area and the Pannonian region during Late Antiquity and the Migration period. It is also unclear to what extent Styria was affected by the movements and shifts of different ethnic populations (Romans, Germans etc.). Pending further research, it is likely that – due to the geographical embedding of the area in the better explored regions of western *Noricum mediterraneum* (Carinthia, East Tyrol), Pannonia and northeast Slovenia – Roman roads and other infrastructure were still in use even though there is no archaeological evidence yet pointing to this assumption. We should not make the mistake of thinking that from the mid-fifth century onward Styria was devoid of people. But

we cannot verify any persistent administration, organization, order, or state authority the way we can in the western part of *Noricum mediterraneum* or in modern-day Slovenia, owing to the existence of central sites and the building of churches up until the 6th/early 7th century. But it is safe to assume that some Roman or Romanized population remained in the country – that much can be deduced from the tradition of pre-Roman toponyms.

Early Middle Ages I (approx. 600 to 750 AD)

Most historians agree that the Slavs settled in what was to become Styria at the latest in the decades around 600 AD, perhaps already in the second half of the 6th century, particularly, if we assume that the Bavarian-Slav conflicts of 592 and 595, mentioned by Paul the Deacon, took place in the Drava valley in *Noricum mediterraneum*. Strangely enough, we still cannot grasp them archaeologically in their oldest Central European cultural manifestation. So far we have found neither settlements nor grave assemblages from what is called the “Prague Culture”. There is a complete lack of early Slavic cremation burials and urns of the Prague type in Styria, with the possible exception of a cremation grave excavated decades ago at Wohlsdorf near Wettmannstätten (dist. Deutschlandsberg; Gutjahr 2015, 79; unfortunately missing) and the scattered find of a rim fragment at a former Roman *villa* in Kleinklein (com. Großklein, dist. Leibnitz), which can most likely be related to a small pot of the Prague type.

In the second half of the 7th century, things get clearer, particularly as far as ceramics are concerned, but this emerging colonization horizon is limited to Western respectively mid-Styria. In particular, there are pit assemblages from Komberg, St. Ruprecht an der Raab and Enzelsdorf which I will briefly discuss below, including a brief description of the finds.

1. Komberg (plate 1)

The shards from Komberg originate from a settlement pit that was excavated during a pipeline construction (TAG II) in 1987. It is the oldest quite comprehensive complex of early medieval finds in Styria, located on a southern slope, a little below the top of a ridge following the valley of the Kainach river (390 m above sea level).

In the basically rectangular pit (2.20 by 1.40 metres) there were ceramic fragments of a few pots with simply-formed rims and a disc-shaped spindle whorl fragment. The porous fragments pl. 1: 1–2 are heavily tempered with coarse, organic material. The tempering of the fragments pl. 1: 3–4, both belonging to the same pot, consists, aside from a few organic elements, of individual and partly larger pebbles. The surfaces of the shards are dominated, in a strongly nuanced way, by the colors reddish brown (pl. 1: 1, 3–4) and light brown (pl. 1: 2). The fracture of the shards is grey to dark grey, in some parts with a tendency to almost black.

The ceramic shows an unsteady shaping and surface treatment and appears to have been manufactured merely freehand. Only the clumsy decoration of a band of wavy lines on the larger pot fragment pl. 1: 1 may hint to the still inexperienced use of a very simple turntable (for illustrations of the ceramics see Hebert 1996,

fig. 1, fig. 4a–c, e). The pit may have yielded a few more ceramic fragments but these are currently not findable in the owner’s depot (for permission to publish the Komberg shards I would like to thank the Burgmuseum Archeo Norico, Deutschlandsberg, and Univ.-Doz. Dr. Bernhard Hebert, BDA/Wien).

An older radiocarbon analysis from a charcoal sample dates the Komberg pit to the years 664 to 880 AD (OxCal 4.2, 2 σ , 95.4% probability). The ceramic fragments, I would suggest, can be dated to the middle of the 7th or possibly to the second quarter of the 7th century – if you compare them, for instance, with the shards from Enzelsdorf which appear typologically more developed and can be dated as far back as the mid-7th century by modern radiocarbon data (see below).

From their appearance, the fragments from Komberg correspond with phase-2 ceramics of the Slovakian chronology according to Fusek (first half of the 7th century/turn of 6th to the 7th centuries up to the second third of the 7th century; Fusek 1994, fig. 71–72, pl. 2) and with horizon I of the Moravian chronology according to Macháček (second half of the 6th century to first half of the 7th century; Macháček 2000, 37, 39–41) – so there are consistencies as far as chronology is concerned.

The discrepancy between the archaeological dating and the dating by means of natural sciences can be explained by the almost unknown stratigraphy of the pit assemblage. It is possible that the ceramic shards originated from a layer at the bottom of the pit, while the charcoal sample was taken from a layer connected with the subsequent filling of the pit at a later time (Gutjahr 2019, in press).

2. St. Ruprecht an der Raab (plates 2–3)

In 1989, during the construction of a gas pipeline, two features – later named SR 5 and SR 12 – were discovered near St. Ruprecht an der Raab (dist. Weiz). The site is located on a flood-protected terrace approximately 650 m southeast of the confluence of Weizbach and Raab rivers, some 1200 metres from today’s village centre.

SR 5 was an oblong pit, 4.00 by 1.50 metres, 20 centimetres deep, with rounded edges, and east-northeast/west-southwest oriented. A charcoal analysis from 1990 dates the pit at 621 to 867 AD (OxCal 4.2, 2 σ , 95.4% probability; see Figure 3)

SR 12 was a basically oval-shaped pit (4.00 by 1.70 metres), a little deeper than SR 5 (40 centimetres maximum) and almost exactly west/east oriented. A charcoal analysis from 1990 dates the pit at 770 to 1020 AD (OxCal 4.2, 2 σ , 95.4% probability; see Figure 4).

The purpose of these pits is unknown. They may have been pit houses, judging from the layout, but no hearths or furnaces were found. There is also no evidence of craft activities. So my suggestion is to call them – in a neutral way – settlement pits.

Among the finds were a few spindle whorls, a grinding stone and, possibly, a millstone fragment, five glass beads, a few animal remains from cattle and sheep or goat, as well as fragments from approximately 30 ceramic pots, differing in wall thickness and treatment but similar to each other in terms of shard quality (temper, surface, fraction) and burning.

The fragments are mostly evenly sorted, tempered organically, and possess carefully smoothed surfaces with a few holes due to the dissolution of organic particles during the burning process. Technologically, two kinds of ceramics can be distinguished. The minority was simply handmade without any mechanical aid, while

the majority was formed with a pivoted turntable (possibly an early version of a hand-pottery wheel or Germ. *Handtöpferscheibe*). On a base fragment in SR 5, the imprint of an axle journal (Germ. *Achszapfen*) can still be seen, suggesting the use of some mechanical device.

The ceramic finds of St. Ruprecht consist entirely of pots. Most of them are not decorated, but there are – on the shoulders and, possibly, the bellies of some vessels – a few uneven horizontal and vertical indentations as well as a band of flat and steep wavy lines. Parallels can be found in Slavic pottery primarily east and northeast of Styria. Judging from analogies with the Slovakian, Moravian, Lower Austrian and Western Hungarian findings, I would date the St. Ruprecht shards to the second half or the last third of the 7th century. The fragments correspond with phase-3 ceramics of the Slovakian chronology according to Fusek (Fusek 1994, fig. 73–74, pl. 2) and horizon II (interpolated) of the Moravian chronology according to Macháček, which in absolute-chronological data means approximately the second half of the 7th century (Macháček 2000, 37, 39–41). The mixed inventory (ornamented and unornamented), the appearance of archaic ornaments (the vertical indentations, see pl. 2 : 6–7) and the appearance of only very few entirely handmade vessels also support this theory. Furthermore, the two pots, pl. 2 : 6–7, reveal – in their outline – similarities with the oldest Slavic ceramics of the Prague type, so the late 7th century (at the latest the turn of the 8th century) is a fairly safe bet.

The five glass beads from pit SR 12 – four millet seed beads (*Hirsekornperlen*) made of opaque black glass and half a twin-eye bead made of grey-greenish brown, spotted glass, applied with three yellow dots – fit quite well in this time frame. According to Pasztor, the twin-eye beads were fashionable from the second half of the 6th to the first third of the 8th century, with their heyday between 570 and 680 AD. Some lead residue in the pit suggests that there may have also been one or more small lead beads (I would like to thank the Universalmuseum Joanneum, Archäologie & Münzkabinett, Graz (Dr. Marko Mele), for permission to publish the St. Ruprecht findings; for more detail about St. Ruprecht an der Raab see Schipper 1996, 71–76 and Gutjahr 2019, in press).

3. Enzelsdorf (plates 4–5)

Enzelsdorf, part of the municipality of Mellach, is located on the left bank of the Mur river, some 20 kilometres south of Graz.

The archaeological site (390 m above sea level) is situated on a spacious terrace of 500 by 400 metres, with a panoramic view to the southwest and west, 80 metres above the Mur river and 70 metres above the village of Enzelsdorf.

In 1998, a waste pit on the terrace was thoroughly examined, revealing ceramics from the 10th century and also a lot of archaeobotanical samples such as beans, rye seeds and peach stones. (Gutjahr 2004, 165–182; Thanheiser, Walter 2004, 183–190).

In spring and late summer 2014, three early medieval objects were excavated by the Kulturpark Hengist association. Object/pit 1 was rectangular with rounded edges, 3.65 by 2.05 metres, with a maximum depth of 33 centimetres, and west/east oriented. Object/pit 2, to the south of object 1, was also rectangular with rounded edges, but significantly smaller (2.00 by 0.45 to 0.70 metres) with a maximum depth of 36 centimetres, and northwest/southeast oriented (Figure 5). A few months after the discovery

of these pits, a third early medieval assemblage was found on a lot to the west of the original excavation site (excavation Kulturpark Hengist; see Figure 6). It was a pan, filled with erosion layers (7.50 by 6.00 metres, maximum depth 0.47 metres), and is called object 3.

In pits 1 and 2, we found the fragments of two disc-shaped spindle whorls and more than 200 ceramic fragments; 31 of them could be used for reconstruction drawings and were included in the find catalogue (3 of them from object 2). The complex consists entirely of pots, with the exception of a Late Antiquity lid fragment. The ceramics were tempered with organic material; sometimes, carbonate and sand were used. Technologically, all pots were free-formed but with some turntable usage at least for the rims. They were decorated with a band of wavy lines and horizontal indentations, sometimes even combining the two motifs (pl. 4: 21), which is quite common in the Early Middle Ages. Ceramic ware entirely handmade without any mechanical aid was not present in this small find complex.

The Enzelsdorf shards fit well into the range of 7th century Slavic pottery. Their rim profiles correspond with phases 2 and 3 of Fusek’s Slovakian chronology (approximately 7th century) and with horizon II according to Macháček’s so-called middle-Danubian ceramic chronology (second half of the 7th century). They can also be connected to the groups S2 and V2 of the Eastern Alpine region according to Pleterski (Pleterski 2010, 158, 238–239, 247–248). We can also find analogies to the Enzelsdorf shards in their geographical vicinity, for instance in Prekmurje/Übermurgebiet and in mid-Styria (Bekić 2016, 34–142, in particular 105–125).

The archaeological dating of the findings from Enzelsdorf to the second half of the 7th century, based on formal analogies, is confirmed by radiocarbon data from pit 1, which, with a probability of 95% (2 σ), covers the period 640 to 680 AD (as to the pits 1 and 2 see Gutjahr 2015a, 73–91, especially 80).

In object 3 (stratigraphic units 11 and 20), but also as scattered finds, we found early medieval ceramic fragments from more than 20 vessels, quite similar to the finds in objects 1 and 2 (compare pl. 4: 14 with pl. 5: 24) in temper, form, style, surface, color and ornament. We can therefore assume a dating to the second half of 7th century as well. Additionally, the stratigraphical units of object 3 yielded archaeobotanical finds (particularly rye seeds, cone wheat grains, spelt grains, emmer grains) and some animal bones (mainly small ruminants). A recent radiocarbon analysis of a charred grain kernel yielded the periods from 675 to 780 AD and 790 to 870 AD (2 σ , 95% probability). The latter period is clearly irrelevant to the dating of our material. The radiocarbon date supports the above-cited assumption of dating the finds to the (later) 7th century. However, taking into account a certain consistency in the shapes of vessels, a temporal expansion into the first half of the 8th century seems possible.

The Enzelsdorf ceramic complexes excavated in 2014 may be small in quantity, but they are significant nonetheless since pottery from the second half of the 7th century has not been found very often so far (Gutjahr 2015a, 80–82; 82, note 51).

It is fair to assume that there was a settlement on the terrace above modern-day Enzelsdorf from the 7th century onwards, continuing possibly until the early 11th century. But because of the relatively small excavation, it is impossible to say anything about the size, structure and dynamics of the settlement. Modern-day Enzelsdorf evolved, in any case, in the early high-medieval

period on the banks of the Jakobbach stream a little further downhill (Purkarthofer 1984, 10–23, 29 f., fig. on p. 17; Kustrin, Gutjahr 2004, 171–174).

Interpretation

So far, we can only determine a very small Slavic colonization context with ceramic finds from the (second half of the) 7th century in Styria, and this is limited to Western respectively mid-Styria (Gutjahr 2002, 155 f.; Gutjahr 2015a, 83; Gutjahr 2019, in press). There are archaeological locations at Komberg, St. Ruprecht an der Raab, Enzelsdorf, Fernitz-Mellach (dist. Graz-Umgebung), Graz-Straßgang and Aichegg near Stallhofen (dist. Voitsberg) as well as at Unterhaus (com. Wildon, dist. Leibnitz) – the findings from this site are yet to be analyzed properly – Kleinklein (com. Großklein, dist. Leibnitz) with early medieval ceramics from a Roman *villa*, and Kalsdorf (dist. Graz-Umgebung) with early medieval ceramics from a Roman *vicus*. Probably also a few ceramic fragments from a feature (most likely a pit remnant) from Unterpremstätten (dist. Graz-Umgebung), excavated in 1996 in the course of the building of a shopping centre, indicate an early medieval settlement. A wall fragment, handmade without any mechanical turntable and ornamented with a band of wavy lines and horizontal indentations, was dated to the 7th or 8th century. Additionally, some fragments (entirely handmade, porous surface, organic temper) from the hilltop settlement on Lethkogel hill near Stainz (dist. Deutschlandsberg) could also originate from the 7th century. Possibly also a pit with early medieval shards from Schönberg (com. Hengsberg, dist. Leibnitz) could be mentioned here (Oberhofer 2012, 76, 115, 381, pl. 50: K1, K2; see Figure 7).

It is remarkable that early medieval ceramics are frequently found at the sites of Roman *villae* or *vici* (Haslach an der Stiefing, com. Ragnitz, dist. Leibnitz, 7th/8th cent.; Kalsdorf, Kleinklein). As for now, it is unclear whether some recognizable Roman structures were still in use or if people simply had similar topographical preferences.

In any case, we know there were early medieval settlements on both sides of the Mur river. We just cannot say anything about their size and function. Topographically, the settlers preferred sites away from the rivers, close to the valley’s edges (Enzelsdorf, Komberg, 60 to 80 metres above the valley bottom), flood-protected terraces along the rivers (St. Ruprecht an der Raab, Kleinklein) or hillside situations (Fernitz).

This is pretty much all we know about Slavic immigration to, or more precisely, about colonization activities in, modern-day Styria in the 7th century. We do not know whom they met upon arriving; if there were still remnants of former Roman or Romanized populations present, living off the land and producing ceramics. We can assume a slow process of assimilation or amalgamation, but we do not know for sure because of the lack of written sources and poor archaeological evidence.

We do not even know from where the Slavs arrived. Bekić (Bekić 2012, 34 f.) thinks that the Slavs ended up in Croatia by travelling via the Moravian gate, the Burgenland, the Vas/Eisenburg and Zala regions, Prekmurje/Übermurgebiet and Medimurje/Murinsel. In doing so, they may have encountered Styrian soil. In the case of St. Ruprecht an der Raab, an immigration from Pannonia (the Raab river upwards) seems plausible. But it is

also possible, taking into account very early radiocarbon dates (early 6th century) from Prekmurje/Übermurgebiet, that the Slavic colonization originated in the south, up the Mur river, and gradually spread to the secondary valleys (Guštin, Pavlovič 2013, 217–221, especially 219–220; Pavlovič 2015, 59–72; Bekić 2016, 181). It is, of course, not to be excluded that immigration both in the east and in the south took place at the same time or in succession. From the second half of the 7th century onwards, a densification of colonization is clearly noticeable (Guštin, Pavlovič 2013, 218).

In any case, recent archaeological activity and research has proven that there were at least some Slavic settlements in 7th century Styria. But it is imperative to continue work on this topic, for instance by conducting research excavations at the promising site of Fernitz-Mellach, in order to increase our knowledge about Slavic colonization in the early Middle Ages, and, above all, about the medieval origins and genesis of the modern-day federal state of Styria.

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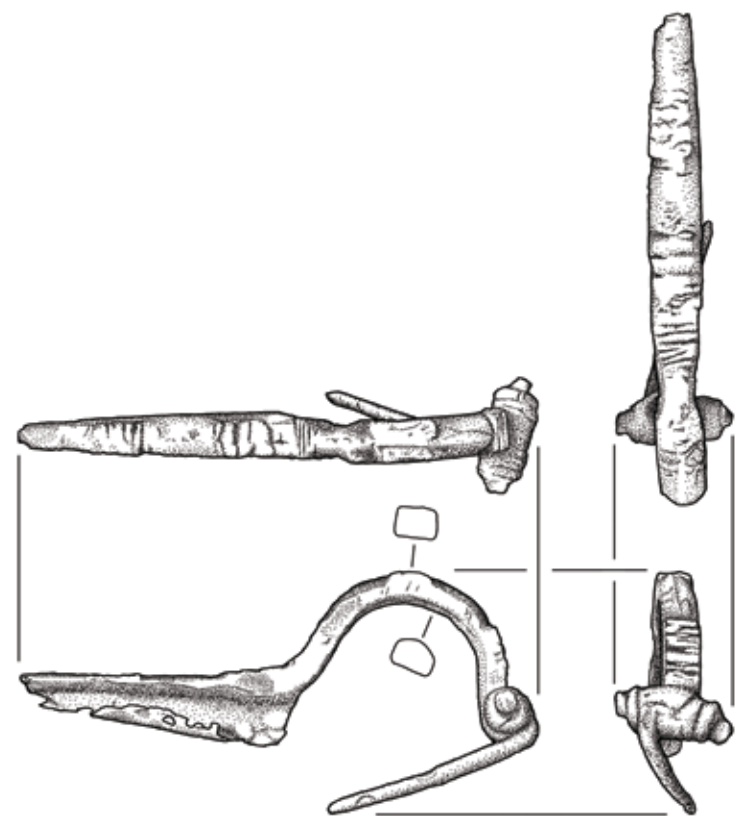
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1. Drawing of iron crossbow fibula of the Siscia type from Kugelstein near Frohnleiten (graphic: Johanna Kraschitzer, Graz; Universalmuseum Joanneum, Archäologie & Münzkabinett, Graz)



3. St. Ruprecht an der Raab. pit SR 5 (photo: Universalmuseum Joanneum, Archäologie & Münzkabinett, Graz)



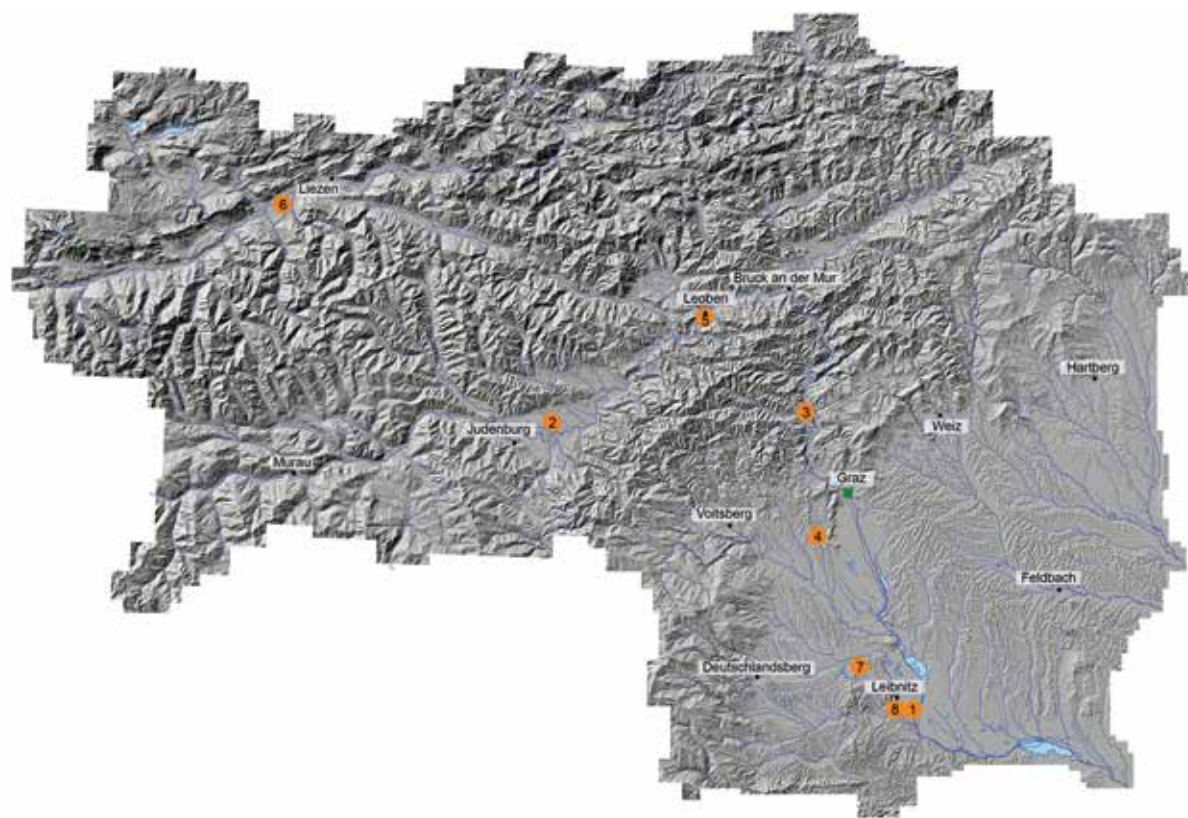
4. St. Ruprecht an der Raab. pit SR 12 (photo: Universalmuseum Joanneum, Archäologie & Münzkabinett, Graz)



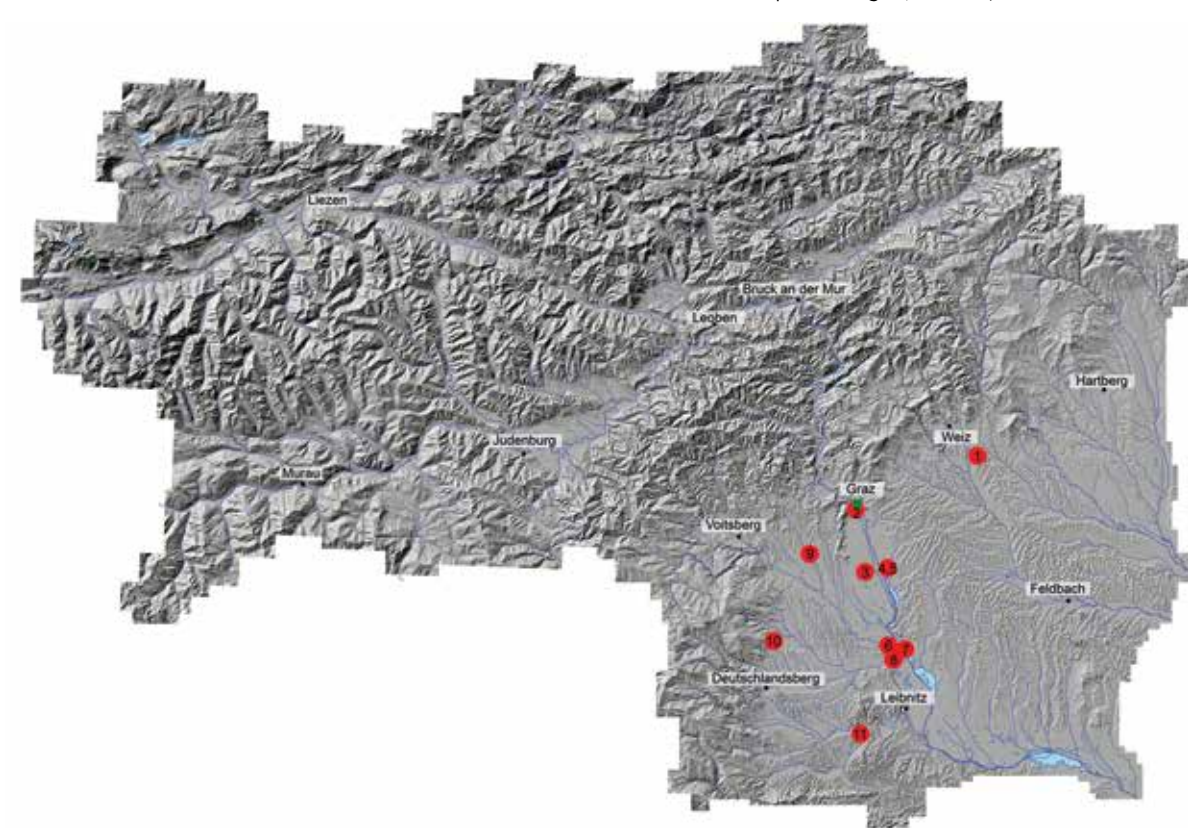
5. Enzelsdorf. pits 1 and 2. DOF 1 (photo: Christoph Gutjahr, St:WUK-Kulturpark Hengist, Wildon)



6. Enzelsdorf. object 3. DOF 2 (photo: Martina Trausner, St:WUK-Kulturpark Hengist, Wildon)



2. Map showing the locations of the finds (circle) and features (square) dating from about 450 to 650 AD (not including coin finds): 1. Flavia Solva; 2 Kirchbichl near Rattenberg; 3. Kugelstein near Frohnleiten; 4. Mantscha; 5. Leoben area; 6. Hohenberg near Aigen/Ennstal; 7. Grötsch; 8. Frauenberg near Leibnitz (GIS Styria; editing: Christoph Gutjahr, St:WUK-Kulturpark Hengist, Wildon)



7. Location of early medieval sites in Styria with ceramic finds dating to the (second half of the) 7th century: 1. St. Ruprecht an der Raab; 2. Graz-Straßgang; 3. Kalsdorf; 4. Fernitz; 5. Enzelsdorf; 6. Komberg; 7. Wildon-Unterhaus (Rasental); 8. Schönberg; 9. Aichegg/Stallhofen; 10. Lethkogel hill near Stainz; 11. Kleinklein (GIS Styria; editing: Christoph Gutjahr, St:WUK-Kulturpark Hengist, Wildon)

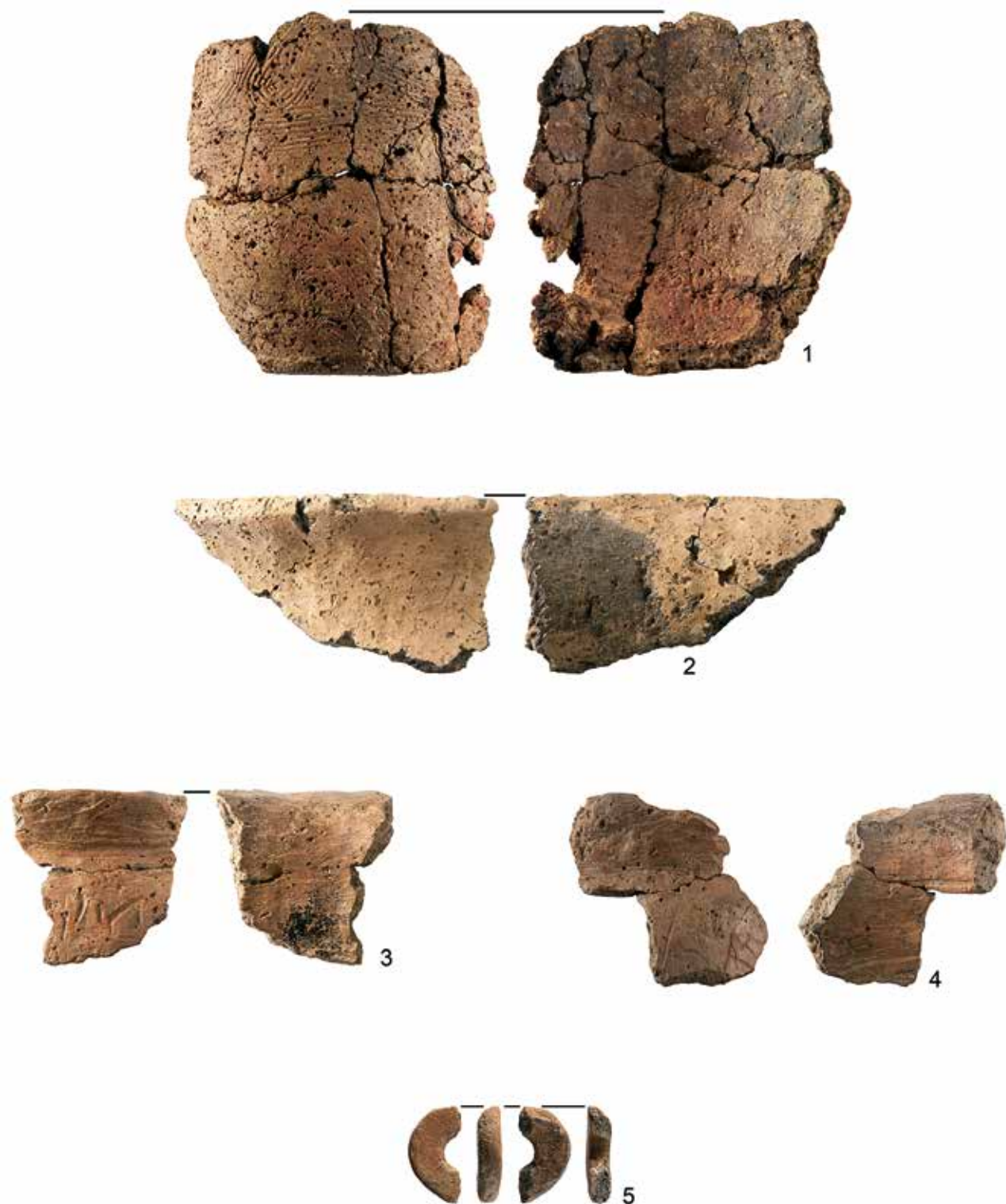


Plate 1. Komberg, 1–5, ceramic. Scale 1:2 (photo: Johanna Kraschitzer, Graz; Burgmuseum Archeo Norico, Deutschlandsberg)

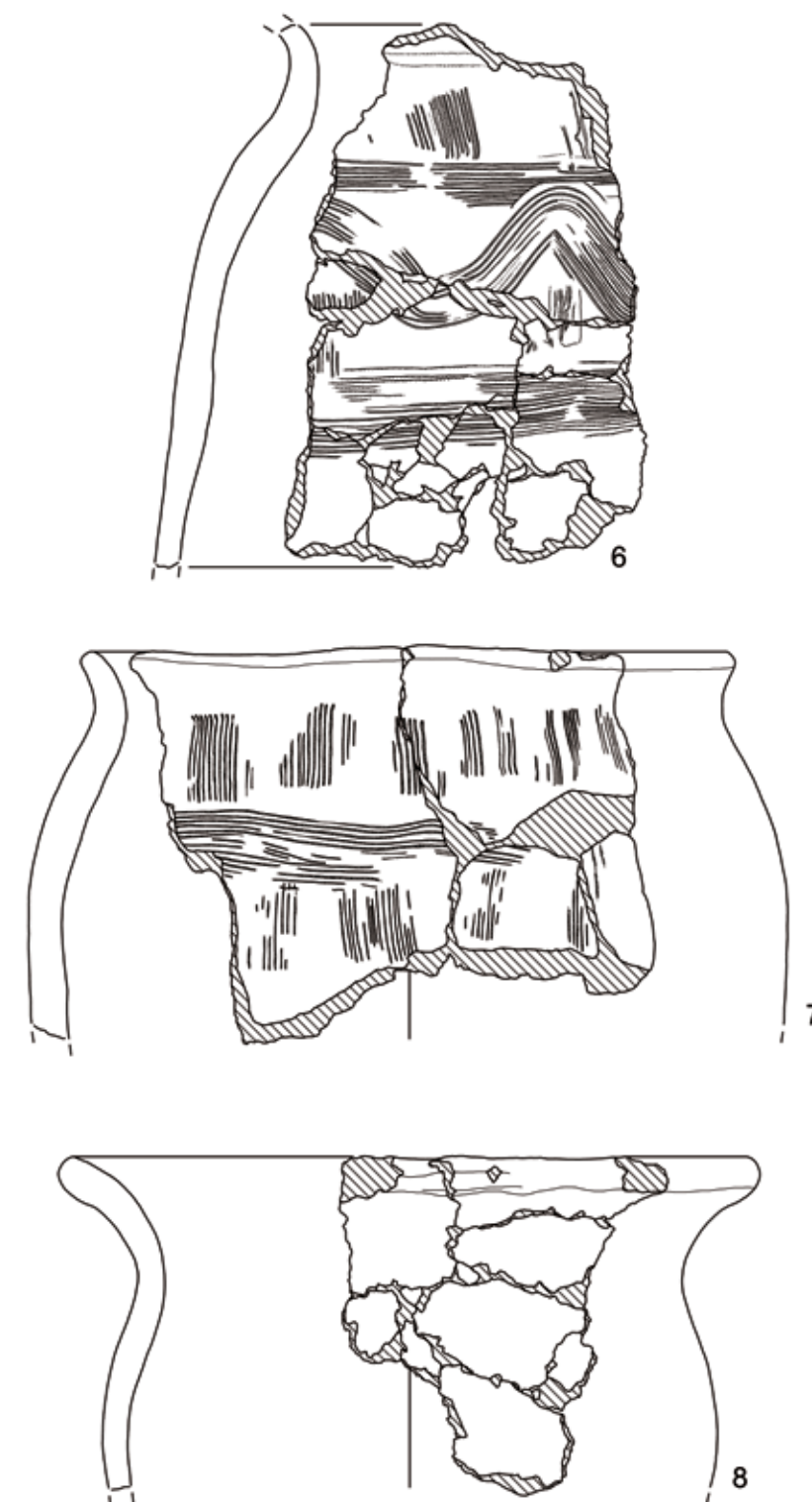


Plate 2. St. Ruprecht an der Raab, pit SR 5. 6–8, ceramic. Scale 1:2 (drawing: Johanna Kraschitzer; Universalmuseum Joanneum, Archäologie & Münzkabinett, Graz)

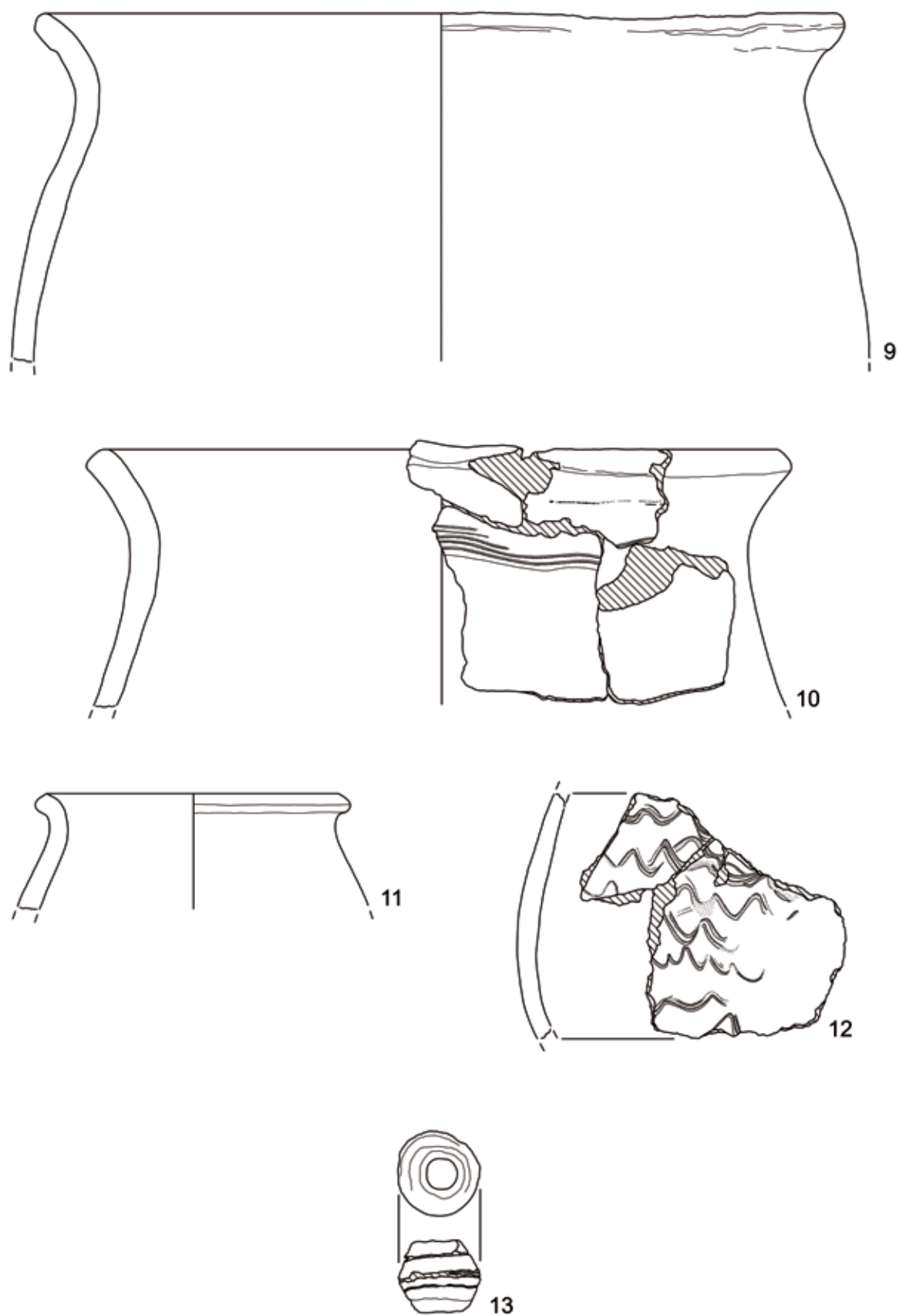


Plate 3. St. Ruprecht an der Raab, pit SR 12. 9-13, ceramic. Scale 1:2 (drawing: Johanna Kraschitzer; Universalmuseum Joanneum, Archäologie & Münzkabinett, Graz)

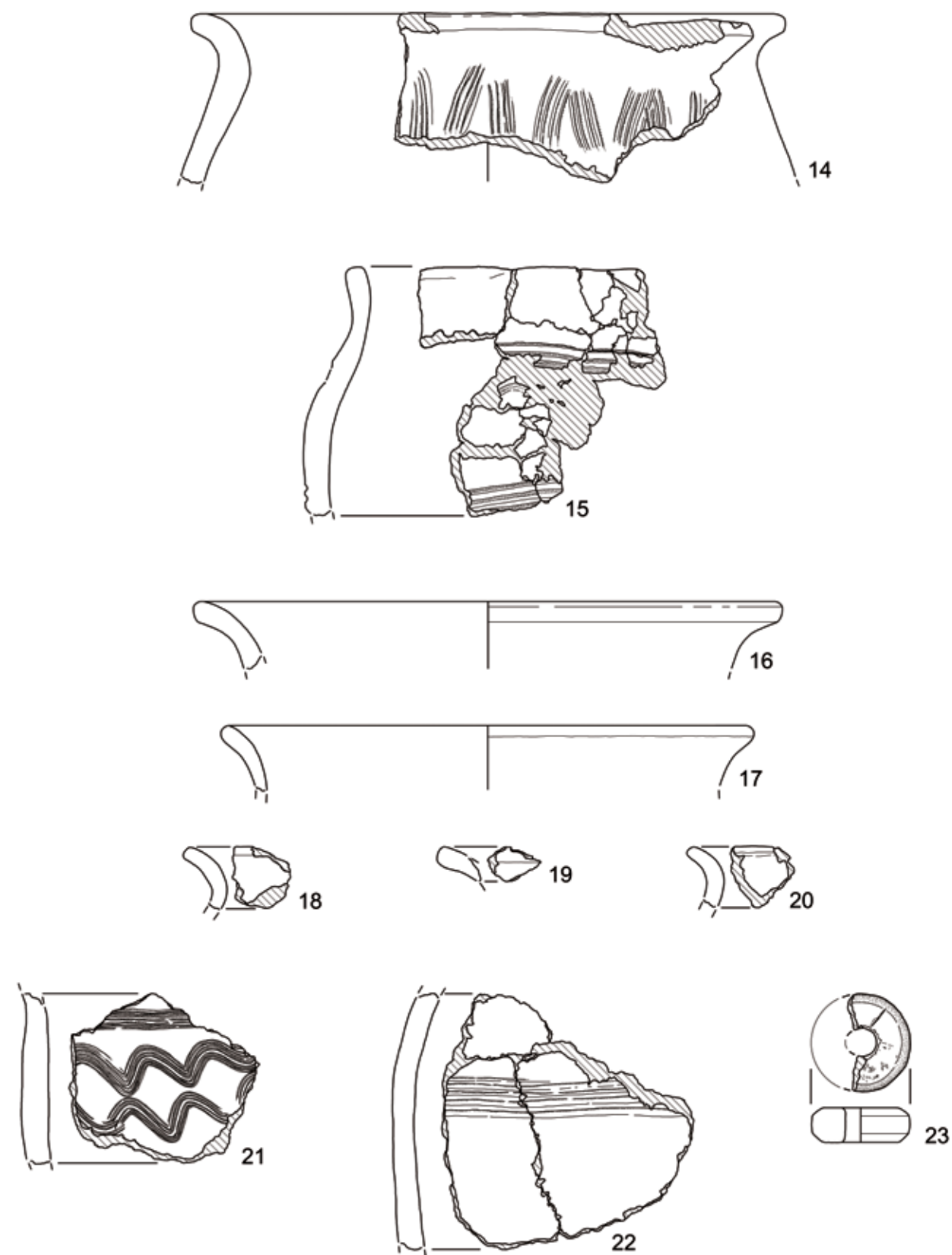


Plate 4. Enzelsdorf, pit 1, 15-21, 23; pit 2, 14, 22, ceramic. Scale 1:2 (drawing: Johanna Kraschitzer; St:WUK-Kulturpark Hengist, Wildon)

Arheološka slika slovanske poselitve Prekmurja

UDK/UDC: 903/904(497.411)(=16)

Izvleček: Med letoma 2000 in 2002 so bile na poljanah južno od Murske Sobot pri arheoloških izkopavanjih na avtocestni trasi odkrite številne ostaline slovanske poselitve. Z novjšimi arheološkimi izkopavanji, ki so potekala med letoma 2013 in 2017, pa se slika slovanske poselitve Prekmurja še dopolnjuje. Preprosta bivališča – zemljanke –, katerih starost je bila ugotovljena z radiokarbonskim datiranjem vzorcev oglja, odvzetih iz nekaterih izmed njih, so nastala na našem geografskem območju ob koncu 6. stoletja. Na ta čas kažejo tudi arheološke analize, saj so ključni dokazi za tako zgodnjo naselitev Slovanov pri nas tipi odkritih zemljank in peči ter drugih gospodarskih objektov in še zlasti značilna lončenina t. i. praškega tipa, ki predstavlja prvo fazo poselitve. Sledita še druga faza v 8. in 9. stoletju ter tretja faza v 10. in 11. stoletju, vendar se tip stavb ni bistveno spreminjal, ostale so zemljanke s spremnimi objekti. Značilna je zavrtina luknjičava in peskasta lončenina. Iz druge faze poselitve je znano tudi žgano grobišče pri naselju Popava II pri Lipovcih, s konca druge in iz tretje faze poselitve pa so znani skeletni grobovi na Novi tabli in Na Plesi pri Murski Soboti. V drugi fazi poselitve so pogosti predmeti avarskega izvora. Izkopanine so pomembna novost pri raziskovanju zgodnje slovanske poselitve oz. širjenja Slovanov v smeri proti zahajajočemu soncu tako v okviru slovenskega kot tudi širšega srednjeevropskega prostora.

Ključne besede: Prekmurje, zgodnji Slovani, naselbine, slovanska lončenina, grobišča, avarske najdbe, radiokarbonsko datiranje

Archaeological picture of the settlement of the Slavs in Prekmurje

Abstract: Numerous remains of Slavic settlement were discovered during archaeological excavations along the planned route of the motorway in fields south of Murska Sobota between 2000 and 2002. More recent archaeological excavations between 2013 and 2017 have further complemented the picture of Slavic settlement in the Prekmurje region. Simple dwellings of the dugout or earth-house type, whose age has been established through radiocarbon dating of charcoal samples taken from some of them, appeared in our geographical area at the end of the sixth century. This period is also indicated by archaeological analyses, since the key evidence for such early settlement by Slavs in this area comes from the types of earth-houses, ovens and other structures discovered to date and, above all, from characteristic pottery of the so-called Prague type, which represents the first phase of settlement. This was followed by the second phase in the eighth and ninth centuries and the third phase in the tenth and eleventh centuries, although the type of buildings did not change significantly and earth-houses with ancillary structures continued to be used. Wheel-turned pottery of a sandy and porous texture is typical. Known remains from the second phase of settlement include a burnt grave near the Popava II settlement (near Lipovci), while inhumation graves from the end of the second phase and from the third phase have been discovered at the Nova Tabla and Na Plesi sites near Murska Sobota. Artefacts of Avar origin are common in the second phase of settlement. Archaeological finds are an important new element in the research of early Slavic settlement or the westward expansion of the Slav peoples, both in the context of Slovenia and more broadly in the central European context.

Keywords: Prekmurje, early Slavs, settlements, Slavic pottery, burial sites, Avar finds, radiocarbon dating

Uvod

Poselitvena slika Prekmurja se je zaradi številnih arheoloških terenskih raziskav v zadnjih dveh desetletjih skorajda v vseh arheoloških obdobjih v mnogočem dopolnila ali pa celo povsem spremenila. To velja zlasti za obdobje zgodnjega srednjega veka, saj so bila v Prekmurju odkrita prva slovanska naselja in pripadajoča grobišča (slika 1).¹

Med letoma 2000 in 2002 so bile na poljanah južno od Murske Sobot pri arheoloških izkopavanjih na avtocestni trasi odkrite

številne ostaline slovanske poselitve. Preprosta bivališča – zemljanke –, katerih starost je bila ugotovljena z radiokarbonskim datiranjem vzorcev oglja, odvzetih iz nekaterih izmed njih, so nastala na našem geografskem območju ob koncu 6. stoletja. Na ta čas kažejo tudi arheološke analize, saj so ključni dokazi za tako zgodnjo naselitev Slovanov pri nas tipi odkritih zemljank in peči ter drugih gospodarskih objektov in še zlasti značilna lončenina t. i. praškega tipa. Izkopanine so pomembna novost pri raziskovanju zgodnje slovanske poselitve oziroma širjenja Slovanov v smeri proti zahajajočemu soncu tako v okviru slovenskega kot tudi širšega srednjeevropskega prostora.

¹ Avtorji fotografij so Tomislav Vrečič, Branko Kerman, Samo Tanacek in Dejan Šumak, arhiv Pomurski muzej Murska Sobota. Avtor načrtov: Iztok Petek, arhiv Pomurski muzej Murska Sobota.

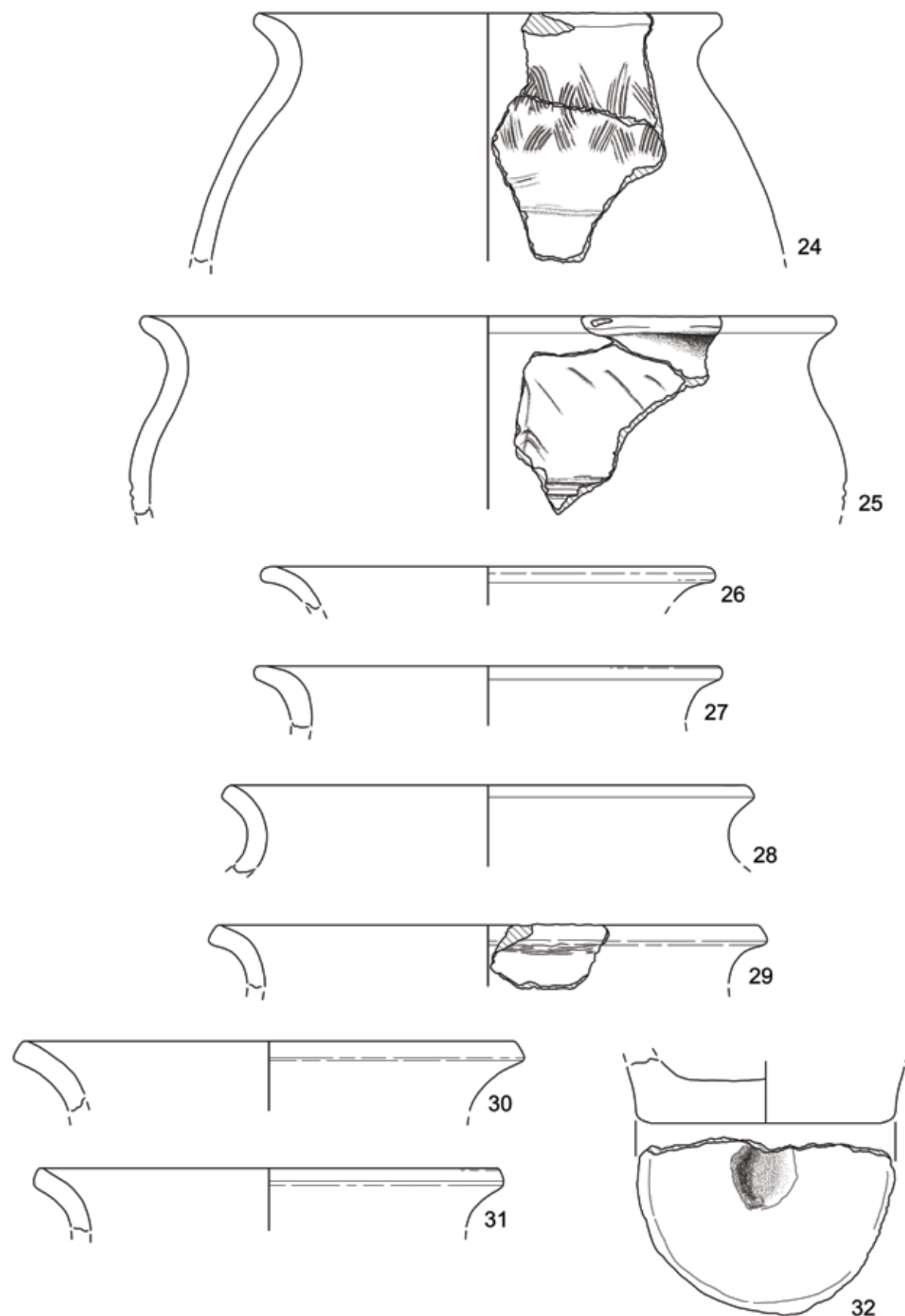


Plate 5. Enzelsdorf, object 3, 24–32, ceramic. Scale 1:2 (drawing: Johanna Kraschitzer; St:WUK-Kulturpark Hengist, Wildon)