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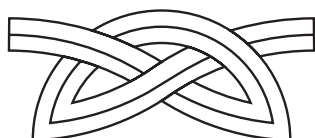
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# Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo (south-east Slovenia): Preliminary report on archaeological research in 2011

# Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo (jugostočna Slovenija): preliminarni izvještaj o arheološkim iskapanjima 2011. godine

Prethodno priopćenje >  
Prapovijesna arheologija  
Preliminary report >  
Prehistoric archaeology

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The archaeological site of Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo has been known to the professional community since the mid-1980s, following the chance discovery of a stone tool at the location. Between 2007 and 2011, three archaeological surveys were conducted in response to planned construction interventions for the Krško Hydroelectric Power Plant. This article presents a short preliminary report on the 2011 excavations conducted by the company Arhos d.o.o. Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo is a multi-period site where the remains of a Neolithic settlement, traces of an Early Iron Age burial mound and an early medieval settlement, and evidence of modern land use were discovered in 2011. Furthermore, it is highly probable that the site was also inhabited during the Early Bronze Age, as indirectly indicated by numerous fragments of Litzen pottery found in secondary contexts. Although occupation at the Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo area spans various periods, the Neolithic settlement is particularly notable among the preserved remains. It is distinguished not only by the abundance of material but also as the only lowland settlement discovered to date that is enclosed by a double palisade.

Arheološko nalazište Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo poznato je u arheologiji od sredine 1980-ih godina, kad je tamo pronađena kamena alatka. Između 2007. i 2011. godine provedena su tri arheološka istraživanja zbog planiranih građevinskih zahvata za potrebe Hidroelektrane Krško. Ovaj rad donosi kratak preliminarni izvještaj o iskapanjima koja je 2011. godine provela tvrtka Arhos d.o.o. Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo je višeslojno nalazište na kojem su 2011. godine otkriveni ostatci neolitičkog naselja, tragovi grobnog humka iz starijeg željeznog doba, rano srednjovjekovno naselje te tragovi modernog korištenja zemljišta. Osim toga, nalazište je vrlo vjerojatno bilo naseljeno i tijekom ranog brončanog doba, na što neizravno ukazuju brojni ulomci *Litzen* keramike pronađeni u sekundarnim kontekstima. Iako naseljavanje područja Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo obuhvaća različita razdoblja, među sačuvanim se ostacima posebno ističe neolitičko naselje. Ono se ne odlikuje samo brojnošću materijala, nego i time što je jedino otkriveno nizinsko naselje ograđeno dvostrukom palisadom.



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## Introduction

The Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo archaeological site<sup>1</sup> is situated on the periphery of the Krško-Brežice Plain in south-eastern Slovenia (Map 1). It lies on the southern boundary of the settlement of Dolenji Leskovec, on the left bank of the River Sava (Fig. 1).

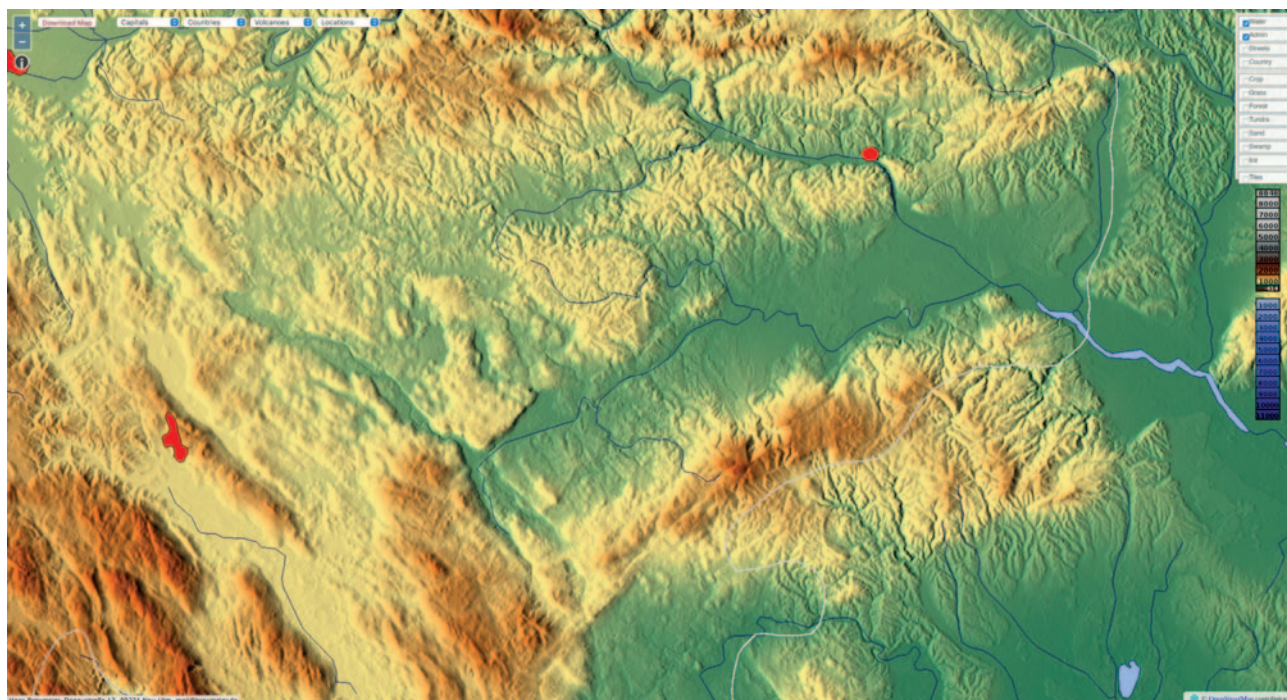
The site was first identified as a potential archaeological location following the accidental discovery of a prehistoric stone tool in the mid-1980s (Trenz 1985: 15–18). Systematic archaeological investigations commenced in 2007 as part of the planned interventions for the Krško Hydroelectric Power Plant. The investigation was conducted by the company Arhej under the leadership of Rene Masaryk (Masaryk et al. 2007). Based on the results of archaeological soundings, which confirmed the site's existence and tentatively delineated its boundaries, excavations were carried out on part of the site in 2009. These excavations were undertaken by a team from Tica Sistem d.o.o., led by Rok Klasinc (Klasinc et al. 2010). The 2009 campaign did not cover the entire site, but only a small portion, specifically the priority areas for construction work: the area of the lower terrace intended for the excavation and widening of the Sava riverbed, the location of the planned Dolenji Leskovec wastewater treatment plant, and the route of the scheduled maintenance road along the railway line. Following the 2009 excavations, most of the site remained

unexplored (Jovanović et al. 2012: 19). Due to the planned construction of the Krško Hydroelectric Power Plant reservoir, which would impact the Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo site, the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia required the execution of preliminary archaeological research prior to construction. Archaeological excavations were carried out by a team from Arhos d.o.o. between 7 July 2011 and 18 October 2011, under the leadership of Alenka Jovanović. Despite the 2011 campaign, only part of the site was explored, specifically the area along the southern and south-western edges of the plateau (Jovanović et al. 2012: 14–15) (Fig. 2).

## Geographical and geological overview of the site

The site is located within the settlement of Dolenji Leskovec in south-eastern Slovenia, situated south of the road and railway line on a river terrace at a bend in the River Sava, at a location known as Za Savo (Map 1; Figs. 2–3). The area encompasses a low, flood-prone terrace, which extends as a narrow strip immediately adjacent to the present-day channel of the Sava, and an upper terrace, which rises above the river to form a plateau. This plateau covers 28,000 m<sup>2</sup> and is relatively flat. It is bordered by the River Sava to the south-west and south, and partially to the east, while a hill slope delimits the plateau area to the north. According to a detailed geological report on the location prepared by Tomaž Verbič (Verbič 2012: 2–8), it is likely that during the Neolithic occupation,

<sup>1</sup> In the Register of Cultural Heritage of the Republic of Slovenia, the archaeological site is registered as Dolenji Leskovec – Arheološko območje Za Savo under EID 22114



Map 1 Map of Slovenia with the location of the Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo site. State border marked with a light grey line (map source: OpenStreetMap®, Open Database License; made by: A. Ogorelec)

Karta 1 Karta Slovenije s položajem nalazišta Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo. Državna granica označena svijetlosivom linijom (osnova: OpenStreetMap®, Open Database License; izradio: A. Ogorelec)



Fig. 1 Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo. The area of the archaeological site on a digital orthophoto (©Agencija za okolje; made by: Jovanović et al., Arhos d.o.o.)

Sl. 1 Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo. Područje arheološkog nalazišta na digitalnom ortofotu (©Agencija za okolje; izradili: Jovanović i sur., Arhos d.o.o.)

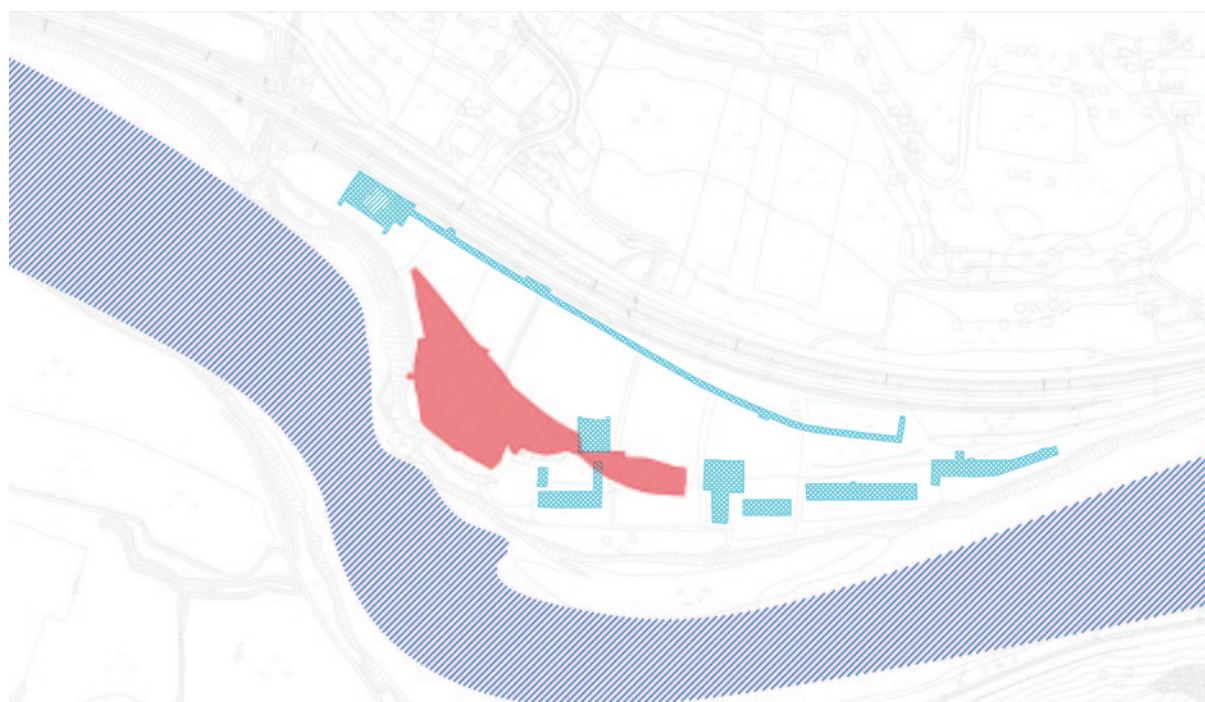


Fig. 2 Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo. Site area with marked archaeologically investigated areas on a topographic map, M 1:2000; blue –2009 excavation; red –2011 excavation (made by: M. Vujasinović, Arhos d.o.o.)

Sl. 2 Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo. Područje nalazišta s označenim arheološki istraženim površinama na topografskoj karti, M 1:2000; plavo – iskopanje 2009.; crveno – iskopanje 2011. (izrada: M. Vujasinović, Arhos d.o.o.)

a minor channel of the River Sava flowed beneath the ridge of the upper terrace. Additionally, a smaller stream, which still flows from the north through Dolenji Leskovec today, was present in this area.

The site area is subject to flooding. On the upper terrace, a thick layer of alluvial sand from the River Sava covered the remains of the Neolithic settlement. It is assumed that this does not represent a single alluvial event; rather, it is likely that significant, and probably multiple, episodes of erosion

and alluvial deposition occurred before the sand sealed the archaeological remains. Erosional activity can be inferred from the absence of soil horizons, or at least of pronounced occupation surfaces at the site. The archaeological features recorded represent the remnants that were not destroyed by floodwater and erosion. Given the absence of pebbles in this sandy sediment, it is assumed that the water flow was relatively low-energy, consistent with flood inundation (Verbič 2012: 2–8).



Fig. 3 Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo. Sectors 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8. The area of the sectors before the start of the archaeological excavation. View from the east (photo by: A. Jovanović, Arhos d.o.o.)  
Sl. 3 Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo. Sektori 4, 5, 6, 7 i 8. Područje sektora prije početka arheoloških iskopanja. Pogled s istoka (snimila: A. Jovanović, Arhos d.o.o.)

## Archaeological excavations in 2011 and their results

The 2011 archaeological excavations covered an area of 7,000 m<sup>2</sup>, which was divided into eight sectors. Sector 1 encompasses the lower terrace along the River Sava, specifically the transition from the lower river terrace to the upper terrace (plateau) in the easternmost part. Sector 2 covers the area to the west, including the immediate edge of the upper terrace, while Sectors 3–8 occupy the upper terrace itself. For the purpose of mapping the distribution of finds and samples, a coordinate system was applied throughout the excavation area. To ensure the integrity of the site archive, this grid was based on the existing relative coordinate system established during the 2009 excavations by the company Tica Sistem d.o.o.<sup>2</sup> (Jovanović et al. 2012: 20).

Due to logistical constraints and the need to coordinate with simultaneous construction work involving the excavation and widening of the riverbed adjacent to the River Sava, the archaeological excavations were conducted in stages rather than simultaneously across the entire site. In all sectors, excavation commenced with the mechanical removal of topsoil and modern overburden, followed by the manual stratigraphic excavation of archaeological

layers and features. In certain areas, excavation extended into geological strata to verify the presence of earlier settlement deposits beneath the thick layers of Sava alluvial sand. The site's stratigraphy was verified through multiple test trenches.

All discovered layers and features were systematically recorded using standard archaeological procedures. For the graphic component of the documentation, computer-generated plans of individual layers and/or features were produced using a total station within the Gauss-Krüger coordinate system. All stratigraphic units were documented using the full range of conventional archaeological recording methods, including written descriptions on SU forms and systematic photographic documentation. The photo-planning method was used for graphic documentation, generated from digitally captured images that were rectified and georeferenced to a grid of geodetically surveyed points; several profiles were additionally drawn by hand (Jovanović et al. 2012: 20–21).

### Results

Archaeological excavations at the Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo site in 2011 revealed a stratigraphic sequence that was divided into eight phases. *Phase 1* encompasses the site's basal layers, consisting of sandy-pebble Sava deposits and dolomite bedrock, which form the geological substrate. The layers and features attributed to *Phase 2* testify to the earliest

<sup>2</sup> The coordinate system had an origin of  $x = 535033.253$ ,  $y = 93656.713$  in the Gauss-Krüger projection (Jovanović et al. 2012: 20).

human occupation of the area, which, given the context, is of Late Neolithic character. The structures and features of *Phase 2* were cut into the layers of *Phase 1*; they varied in shape and size and were filled with deposits containing abundant Late Neolithic ceramic and lithic material. Layers containing Late Neolithic finds overlying the geological base are also assigned to *Phase 2*. The flood sediment and destruction layers attributed to *Phase 3* were rich in Neolithic material and sealed the Neolithic layers and features of *Phase 2*. The deposits attributed to *Phase 3* represent natural sedimentary layers accumulated on the plateau during flooding, accompanied by soil formation and the erosional degradation of Neolithic remains. Consequently, *Phase 3* reflects a disruption in the occupation of the Late Neolithic settlement. *Phase 4* was defined on the basis of abundant fragments of Litzen pottery recovered from secondary contexts. Although no corresponding Bronze Age layers or features were identified, the quality and quantity of the Litzen pottery is believed to confirm the presence of a Bronze Age phase at the site. Poorly preserved skeletal remains were uncovered on the south-western edge of the upper terrace, indicating the presence of an Early Iron Age burial mound, designated as *Phase 5*. Overlying the layers of *Phase 3* and the deposits of *Phase 5*, a

slowly accumulated layer, SU 024, formed across the entire plateau (*Phase 6*), representing the gradual formation of soil following the prehistoric use of the space. Several negative features, which were cut into the *Phase 6* layer, attest to the early medieval settlement of the plateau (*Phase 7*). A layer of topsoil and traces of modern and recent land use (*Phase 8*) sealed the early medieval settlement features (Jovanović et al. 2012: 22) (Fig. 4).

Among all the archaeological remains discovered at Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo in 2011, the remains of the Late Neolithic settlement (*Phase 2*) were the most abundant and significant, and therefore warrant more detailed consideration.

### Remains of the Neolithic settlement

The earliest attested occupation dates to the Late Neolithic. The layer overlying the geological substrate, along with several features, was attributed to the Late Neolithic period (*Phase 2*), based on associated finds. The remains of the Neolithic settlement were identified only on the upper terrace; no evidence of Neolithic occupation was recorded on the lower terrace adjacent to the River Sava.

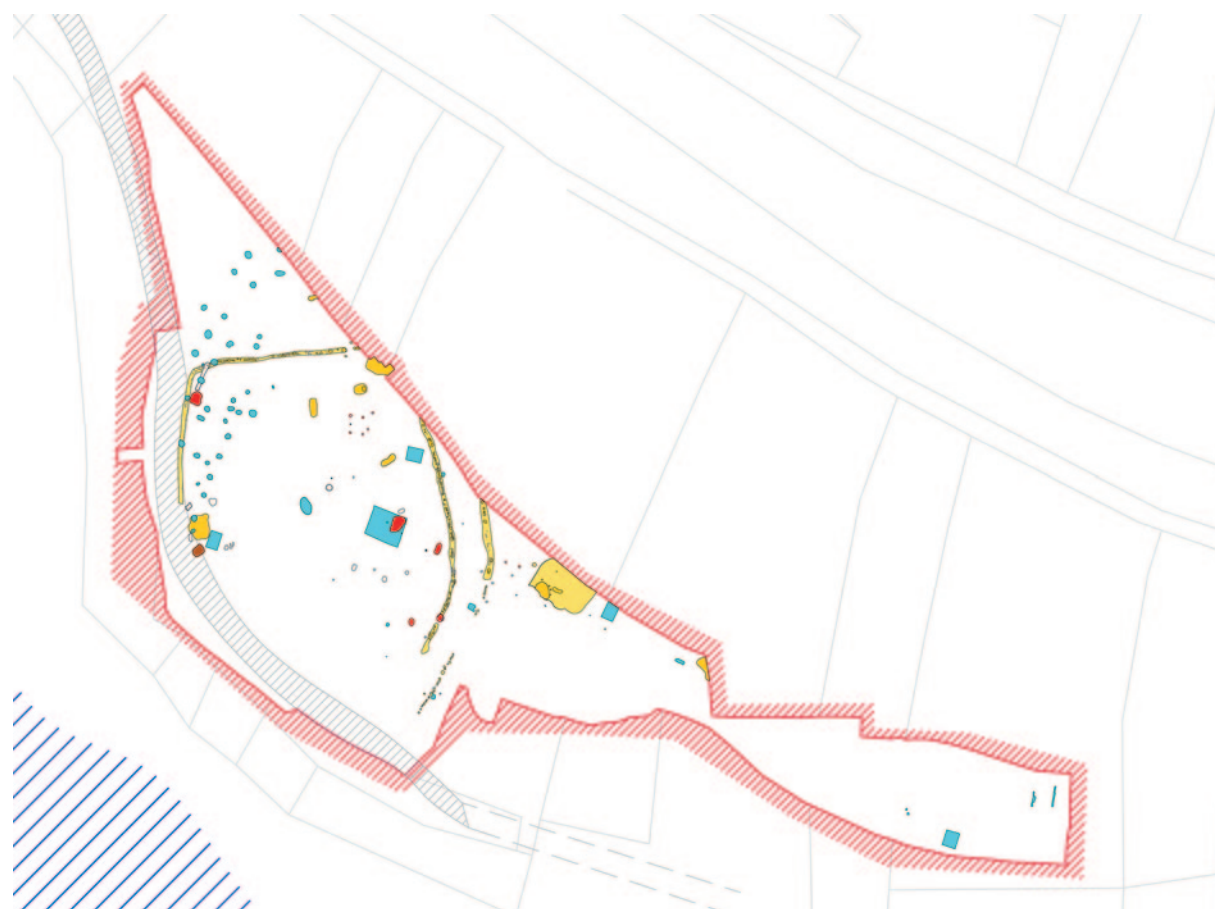


Fig. 4 Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo. Composite ground plan of the features and their preliminary chronological assessment, M: 1000; yellow – Neolithic; brown – early Iron Age; red – Middle Ages; blue – recent; uncoloured – undetermined (made by: M. Vujanović, Arhos d.o.o.)

Sl. 4 Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo. Zbirni tlocrt objekata i njihova preliminarna kronološka procjena, M 1:1000; žuto – neolitik; smeđe – starije željezno doba; crveno – srednji vijek; plavo – recentno; neobojeno – neodređeno (izrada: M. Vujanović, Arhos d.o.o.)

Overlying the geological substrate, a relatively thick layer<sup>3</sup> formed, representing the remains of a former paleosol. Based on the associated finds, this is interpreted as representing the earliest phase of Neolithic settlement. Most Late Neolithic features were cut into this layer, with the exception of *Features 5* and *6*.<sup>4</sup>

The Neolithic features were classified morphologically into postholes, pits, and ditches. Certain postholes, pits, and ditches formed spatial clusters. These clusters enabled the correlation of individual groupings and the definition of architectural or structural units.

Distinct traces of linear ditches containing postholes, along with posthole alignments, were identified, delineating a larger area likely oval in plan. These features are interpreted as the remnants of a wooden palisade. Based on their dimensions

3 SU 055 represents a 0.27 to 0.40 m thick layer of dark yellowish-brown silty clay with charcoal fragments, extending across the entire excavation area of the plateau. A small number of scattered Neolithic finds were recovered from this layer, comprising 54 sherds of Neolithic pottery and nine lithic artefacts (Jovanović et al. 2012: 24).

4 *Feature 5* was cut into layer SU 111 (a greyish-brown silty clay with inclusions of fine gravel and charcoal fragments, containing 164 sherds of Neolithic pottery and 66 lithic artefacts). *Feature 6* was cut into layer SU 632 (dark yellowish-brown sandy loam with inclusions of fine gravel and charcoal, which contained 10 medium-sized pottery sherds, a few animal bones, and 104 lithic artefacts). Both layers, like SU 055, are interpreted as paleosol remains, but exhibit more intensive traces of human activity, which is to be expected given their proximity to the Neolithic structures.

and fills, certain features were interpreted as the remains of larger, probably domestic structures (*Features 4–7*).<sup>5</sup> However, due to poor preservation and indistinct deposits, their exact form, extent, and construction remain uncertain.

In certain instances, the boundaries were diffuse and barely discernible, particularly around *Features 6* and *7*. *Feature 7*, specifically, may not represent a cut feature, but rather a slightly sunken layer exhibiting traces of intensive activity. This interpretation may also apply to *Feature 6*. The smaller features, such as the pits, may have functioned as refuse or storage pits. However, a definitive interpretation must await the results of post-excavation specialist analyses of the artefacts and environmental samples.

The following section provides further detail on the remains of the Neolithic palisade and *Feature 5*, which was likely situated within the enclosure (Fig. 5).

#### *Remains of the wooden palisade*

Among the remains of the Late Neolithic settlement (*Phase 2*), the most significant discovery is the wooden palisade. The location and configuration of the ditches and posthole alignments indicate an oval enclosure surrounding part of the settlement (Fig. 5). The palisade remains

5 The Neolithic features excavated during the 2011 campaign were designated with numbers 4–7, continuing the sequence established during the 2009 excavation (Klasinc et al. 2010; Jovanović et al. 2012: 25).

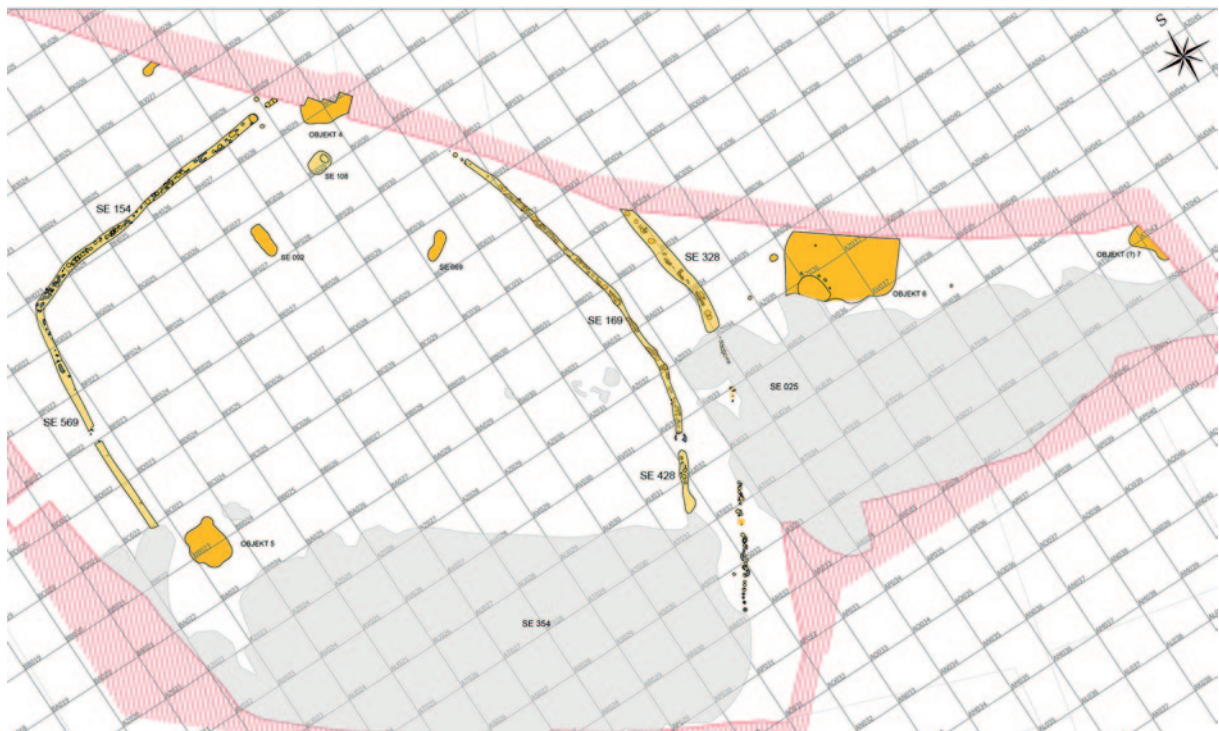


Fig. 5 Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo. Ground plan of the Neolithic structures: features and pits, M 1 : 200 (made by: M. Vujasinović, Arhos d.o.o.)  
Sl. 5 Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo. Tlocrt neolitičkih struktura: objekti i jame, M 1:200 (izrada: M. Vujasinović, Arhos d.o.o.)

are exceptionally well preserved. The eastern section comprises two parallel, oval-shaped ditches, each containing postholes, alongside a separate alignment of postholes without a ditch, representing the inner and outer circuits of the palisade. The northern and, potentially, the western sections consist of a linear ditch with postholes and a distinct alignment of postholes (Fig. 5). No remains of the southern perimeter were identified; consequently, the total area of the settlement enclosed by the palisade remains unknown.

The remains of the eastern side of the palisade consist of a linear ditch containing postholes<sup>6</sup> (Fig. 6a-b) and an alignment of 32 separate postholes<sup>7</sup> with no traceable ditch. These features constitute the outer circuit of

the palisade<sup>8</sup> (Fig. 5). A second linear ditch<sup>9</sup> with postholes, running parallel to the former structure, represents the inner circuit. The outer and inner circuits are approximately 5.8 m apart (Jovanović et al. 2012: 26). Larger stones were recovered from around and above the majority of the postholes;<sup>10</sup> these are interpreted as the remains of packing or structural elements used to reinforce the stability of the wooden components of the palisade.

Traces of the outer circuit of the palisade were identified only on the eastern side (Fig. 5). The inner circuit, however, comprised two separate

6 In ditch SU 328, the remains of postholes SU 100, 330, 326, 085, 087 = 102, 351, and 130 were discovered, confirming the presence of wooden posts (Jovanović et al. 2012: 26).

7 SU 510, 514, 529, 533, 516, 518, 527, 531, 535, 537, 549, 547, 545, 543, 541, 539, 653, 676, 655, 672, 665, 667, 674, 669, 647, 657, 645, 649, 661, 659, 663, 619 (Jovanović et al. 2012: 26).

8 Charcoal from SU 129 (posthole SU 130 within ditch SU 328; Poz-109876) was radiocarbon dated, yielding an age of 5670 ± 40 BP. The radiocarbon dates were obtained for the permanent exhibition *Najstarejše zgodbe s stičišča svetov/The Earliest Stories from the Crossroads*, prepared by the National Museum of Slovenia (Narodni muzej Ljubljana) (Turk, Turk 2019).

9 SU 169 and SU 428 (Jovanović et al. 2012: 26).

10 SU 521.



Fig. 6a Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo. Neolithic settlement, palisade remains – eastern side, outer ring. View of part of the linear ditch SU 328, behind the outer ring of the eastern side of the palisade. View from the south (photo by: I. Patarčec, Arhos d.o.o.)

Sl. 6a Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo. Neolitičko naselje, ostanke palisade – istočna strana, vanjski prsten. Pogled na dio pravocrtnog jarka SJ 328, iza vanjskog prstena istočne strane palisade. Pogled s juga (snimak: I. Patarčec, Arhos d.o.o.)



Fig. 6b Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo. Neolithic settlement: palisade remains – east side, outer ring. View of the partially emptied section of linear ditch SE 328 behind the outer ring of the east side of the palisade. View from the north (photo by: A. Nadander, Arhos d.o.o.)

Sl. 6b Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo. Neolitičko naselje: ostanke palisade – istočna strana, vanjski prsten. Pogled na djelomično ispražnjen presjek pravocrtnog jarka SJ 328 iza vanjskog prstena istočne strane palisade. Pogled sa sjevera (snimak: A. Nadander, Arhos d.o.o.)

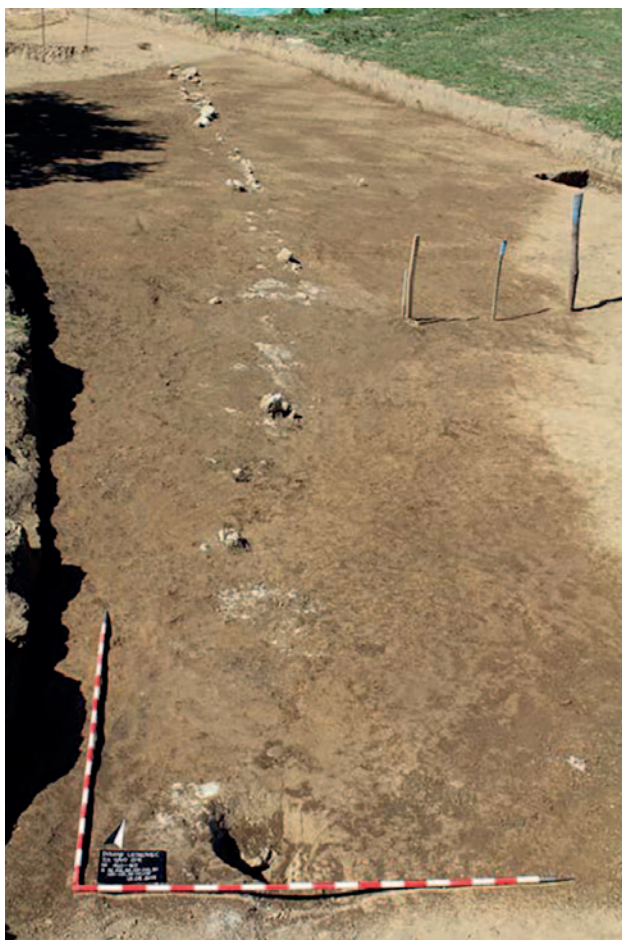


Fig. 7a Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo. Neolithic settlement: palisade remains – eastern side, inner ring. View of traces of stone elements of palisade structure in linear ditch SU 169. View from the southeast (photo by: I. Patarčec, Arhos d.o.o.)

Sl. 7a Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo. Neolitičko naselje: ostanci palisade – istočna strana, unutarjni prsten. Pogled na tragove kamenih elemenata palisadne konstrukcije u pravocrtnom jarku SJ 169. Pogled s jugoistoka (snimak: I. Patarčec, Arhos d.o.o.)



Fig. 7b Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo. Neolithic settlement: palisade remains – eastern side, inner ring. View of linear ditch SE 169 with emptied posts and partially emptied backfill. View from the north (photo by: S. Žumer, Arhos d.o.o.)

Sl. 7b Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo. Neolitičko naselje: ostanci palisade – istočna strana, unutarjni prsten. Pogled na pravocrtni jarak SJ 169 s ispražnjenim ukopima stupova i djelomično ispražnjenom ispunom. Pogled sa sjevera (snimak: S. Žumer, Arhos d.o.o.)

linear ditches<sup>11</sup> containing postholes (Fig. 7a–b): one relatively short, the other significantly longer and slightly curvilinear.<sup>12</sup> The longer ditch continued beyond the limits of the excavation area. The shorter linear ditch was oriented northwest–southeast and, given its trajectory, might have merged with the longer segment; however, they were not connected. The gap between the two ditches is interpreted as intentional, possibly serving as an entrance (Jovanović et al. 2012: 27–28). As with the outer circuit, clusters of larger stones were found within the inner circuit,

11 SU 169 and SU 428. In ditch SU 169, postholes SU 228, 230, 232, 234, 236, 201, 238, 240, 205, 242, 244, 199, 246, 248, 197, 250, 195, 332, 320, 334, 336, 338, 286, 193, 191, 318, 189, 293, 295=187, 340, 185, 083, 425, 448, 440, 438, 456, 454, 452, 450, 446, 436 and 434 were discovered, attesting to the presence of wooden posts (Jovanović et al. 2012: 27).

12 Charcoal from SU 186 (posthole SU 187=295 within ditch SU 169; Poz-109771) was radiocarbon dated, yielding an age of 5740 ± 40 BP. The radiocarbon dates were obtained for the permanent exhibition *Najstarejše zgodbe s stičišča svetov / The Earliest Stories from the Crossroads*, prepared by the National Museum of Slovenia (Narodni muzej Ljubljana) (Turk, Turk 2019).

situated around and above the postholes, indicating that stone packing was used to reinforce the stability of the wooden palisade components.

The remains of the inner circuit on the northern side of the palisade consist of a linear ditch containing postholes<sup>13</sup> (Fig. 5; 8) and a separate alignment of postholes lacking any traces of an associated ditch<sup>14</sup> (Fig. 5; 9). As observed on the eastern side, there was no connection between the linear ditch and the separate posthole alignment. This interruption is interpreted as intentional, possibly serving as an entrance or passageway. In the vicinity of this presumed entrance, two postholes<sup>15</sup> were identified, which may have formed an integral part of the entrance structure on the

13 In the fill of linear ditch SU 154, numerous traces of posts of various sizes were detected: SU 221, 282, 171, 203/224, 226, 280, 252, 254, 266, 268, 270, 256/272, 274, 276, 258/278, 260, 596, 571, 573, 575, 598, 600, 612, 567, 577, 565, 589, 579, 591, 602, 604, 587, 608 and 581 (Jovanović et al. 2012: 29).

14 SU 128, 135, 115/126 (Jovanović et al. 2012: 29).

15 SU 096 and 094.



Fig. 8 Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo. Neolithic settlement: palisade remains – northwest side. View of the backfill traces in linear ditch SU 154. View from the southwest (photo by: S. Žumer, Arhos d.o.o.)  
Sl. 8 Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo. Neolitičko naselje: ostanci palisade – sjeverozapadna strana. Pogled na tragove ispune u pravocrtnom jarku SJ 154. Pogled s jugozapada (snimak: S. Žumer, Arhos d.o.o.)

northern side of the palisade. Large to medium-sized stones were recovered both within and outside the ditch. While these were scattered irregularly over the postholes, in some instances they formed distinct structural arrangements packing the posts. Parallel to the inner circuit structures on the northern side, poorly preserved traces of an elongated trench were identified, which may represent the remains of the outer circuit.

The remains of the western side of the palisade consist of extremely poorly preserved traces of a linear ditch extending south-north, which possibly represents a continuation of the northern ditch. The boundaries of this ditch were poorly defined and difficult to discern. They may have been destroyed by the erosive action of the River Sava, given their location along the western edge of the plateau (Jovanović et al. 2012: 29–30).

Situated within the area enclosed by the palisade were the remains of probable residential buildings (*Features 4–5*), two sunken structures of indeterminate function, and the remains of a pit or similar feature. These remains are concentrated in two distinct areas within the enclosure. As *Feature 5* constitutes the most prominent example of the features discovered, it is described in greater detail below.

#### *Feature 5*

Situated on the western edge of the excavation area, one of the most significant Neolithic structures, labelled as *Feature 5*, was identified. Given its location, it is assumed that *Feature 5* was situated within the western sector of the palisade enclosure, although this is difficult to confirm due to the absence of direct evidence for the palisade in this specific area.



Fig. 9 Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo. Neolithic settlement: palisade remains – north western side. Cross-section of the posthole SU 128. View from the south (photo by: I. Patarčec, Arhos d.o.o.)  
Sl. 9 Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo. Neolitičko naselje: ostanci palisade – sjeverozapadna strana. Poprečni presjek ukopa za stup SJ 128. Pogled s juga (snimak: I. Patarčec, Arhos d.o.o.)

The central component of *Feature 5* consisted of a pit<sup>16</sup> of irregular quadrangular shape, with rounded corners, sloping irregular sides, and an uneven base (Fig. 10a–b). This pit, measuring 4.38 × 3.81 m with a depth of 0.31 m, was cut into the paleosol. Three distinct pits<sup>17</sup> were cut into the central area of *Feature 5*. The first was cut along the southern edge; it was oval in plan, with sloping sides and a flat base, measuring 1.71 × 1.2 m and 0.10 m in depth. The second was situated in the northern

half of the central area; it was also oval in plan, with sloping sides and a flat base. It measured 0.77 × 0.75 m with a depth of 0.10 m and was filled with dark greyish-brown sandy loam containing charcoal fragments but no finds. The third pit was located in the north-eastern corner; it was oval in plan with uneven sides and a concave base, measuring 1.15 × 0.70 m with a depth of 0.22 m. It was filled with dark, greyish-brown silty loam containing charcoal, seven medium-sized pottery sherds, and a few lithic artefacts. These pits were sealed by the deposit that filled the entire area of *Feature 5*. This fill consisted of dark brown silty clay with inclusions of medium-sized

<sup>16</sup> SU 583.

<sup>17</sup> SU 625, 627, and 629.



Fig. 10a Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo. Neolithic settlement: *Feature 5* – view of partially removed backfill SU 582. View from the west (photo by: A. Nadander, Arhos d.o.o.)  
Sl. 10a Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo. Neolitičko naselje: objekt 5 – pogled na djelomično uklonjenu ispunu SJ 582. Pogled sa zapada (snimak: A. Nadander, Arhos d.o.o.)



Fig. 10b Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo. Neolithic settlement: *Feature 5* – view of SU 625, SU 627 and SEU 629 at the bottom of SU 583. View from the west (photo by: A. Nadander, Arhos d.o.o.)  
Sl. 10b Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo. Neolitičko naselje: objekt 5 – pogled na SJ 625, SJ 627 i SJ 629 na dnu SJ 583. Pogled sa zapada (snimak: A. Nadander, Arhos d.o.o.)

gravel, larger stones (limestone, sandstone, and river pebbles), and charcoal, as well as 1,131 small, medium, and large fragments of Neolithic pottery, a few bones, 154 lithic artefacts, and a bone tool. Irregular patches of darker colour were observed within the fill of *Feature 5*. These were integral to the deposit, distinguished only by a slightly higher concentration of finds and organic inclusions (Jovanović et al. 2012: 32–34). Situated on the western edge of the excavation area, one of the most significant Neolithic structures, designated *Feature 5*, was identified. Given its location, it is assumed that *Feature 5* was situated within the western sector of the palisade enclosure, although this is difficult to confirm as the palisade has not been preserved in this area.

In the archaeological contexts attributed to *Feature 5*,<sup>18</sup> a total of 2,730 pottery sherds, 38 ceramic ladle fragments, and 352 stone tool fragments were recovered.<sup>19</sup> The large number of lithic finds is predominated by stones serving primarily as raw material for tool production; conversely, finished tools and flakes represent a smaller proportion. Among the tools, axes made of green serpentine are notable (Fig. 11).<sup>20</sup> Based on a preliminary examination of the ceramic finds, the assemblage from *Feature 5* consists of diverse vessel forms (Pl. 1–5). Within the ceramic collection, there are numerous fragments of bowls and dishes (Pl. 1: 1–9; 2: 1–7; 3: 1), occasionally featuring handles (Pl. 1: 3–5)

18 The selection does not include finds from layer SU 497, which represents the rubble layer overlying *Feature 5*, or from layer SU 632, which represents the remains of the occupation surface adjacent to *Feature 5*. These layers are indirectly related to the feature but cannot be considered integral components of it.

19 In *Feature 5*, several animal bones or fragments thereof were also recovered, including remains of *Bos taurus* L., *Ruminantia*, *Sus scrofa* sp., *Bos taurus primigenius* Boj., *Cervus elaphus* L., *Sus scrofa ferus* L., *Canis familiaris* L., *Ovis aries* L., and *Capra hircus* L. (Hincak 2011).

20 A detailed analysis of the stone tools has not yet been conducted; consequently, more precise data is unavailable.



Fig. 11 Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo. Stone axe from SU 582 (*Feature 5*) (photo by: S. Olić, Arhos d.o.o.)  
Sl. 11 Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo. Kamena sjekira iz SJ 582 (objekt 5) (snimak: S. Olić, Arhos d.o.o.)

or spouts (Pl. 1: 6–7; 2: 7). The ceramic assemblage is dominated by bowls and dishes of simple conical (Pl. 1: 1, 3–4) and hemispherical (Pl. 1: 2, 5–9) forms, although biconical shapes also occur (Pl. 2: 1–2, 7; 3: 1). In some instances, dishes feature thickened internal walls (Pl. 2: 2–5), while certain open forms exhibit ring bases or are pedestalled (Pl. 2: 6). Pots of various sizes and forms are also represented (Pl. 3: 2–7; 4: 1–4). The assemblage from *Feature 5* includes, for example, small barrel-shaped pots with handles (Pl. 3: 2), pots with short, thickened, rounded rims (Pl. 3: 3–6) – occasionally with handles (Pl. 4: 2) – and larger biconical pots (Pl. 4: 3–4), potentially featuring simple flared rims (Pl. 4: 3, also Pl. 3: 7; 4: 1). These pots are frequently heavily decorated with various motifs executed via awl impressions (Pl. 3: 3, 5; 4: 1) or a combination of incised lines and awl impressions (Pl. 3: 4, 6–7; 4: 2–3). In some instances, pots are decorated solely with individual appliqués located on the widest girth of the vessel (Pl. 4: 4). The ceramic assemblage of *Feature 5* also frequently contains fragments of ceramic ladles (selection in Pl. 5: 1–4). These ladles typically feature a horizontally perforated socket or lug, designed for the insertion of a wooden handle. They may be undecorated (Pl. 5: 1) or richly decorated with incised lines and awl impressions forming various motifs (Pl. 5: 2–4). The pottery from *Feature 5* is generally manufactured from medium- to fine-grained fabrics and is occasionally coated with a thick red clay slip (Fig. 12), although the preservation of this slip is often poor. The ornamental motifs on the examined ceramics are predominantly executed by impression with an awl or stick (Pl. 3: 3, 5; 4: 1; 5: 2, 4), or by a combination of impressions and incisions (Pl. 1: 1, 8–9; 2: 7; 3: 1, 4, 6–7; 4: 2–3; 5: 3); vessel walls may also be embellished with appliqués of various shapes (Pl. 2: 1–2, 5; 4: 4).

Analogies for the pottery from the Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo site are identified at numerous sites dating to the first half of the 5<sup>th</sup> millennium BC.



Fig. 12 Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo. A fragment of a pot with a red coating, decorated with awl impressions. SU 582 – *Feature 5* (photo by: S. Olić, Arhos d.o.o.)  
Sl. 12 Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo. Ulomak lonca s crvenim premazom, ukrašen ubodima šilom. SJ 582 – objekt 5 (snimak: S. Olić, Arhos d.o.o.)

However, for the purposes of this preliminary review, the focus is restricted to those sites geographically closest to Dolenji Leskovec and those yielding the most comparable material from archaeologically well-defined contexts.<sup>21</sup> At nearby locations on the Krško–Brežice Plain, analogies are present at sites such as Col near Podgračeno and Čatež – Sredno Polje. At Col near Podgračeno<sup>22</sup>, for example, dishes with spouts (Dolenji Leskovec: Pl. 1: 6–7; 2: 7; Col: Horvat 2020: G10–G11, G13–G14), simple conical dishes (Dolenji Leskovec: Pl. 1: 1, 3–4; Col: Horvat 2020: G18–G19, G21), and hemispherical dishes (Dolenji Leskovec: Pl. 1: 2, 5–9; Col: Horvat 2020: G6, G16) are all represented. Biconical dishes (Pl. 2: 1–2, 7; Pl. 3: 1) recovered from Dolenji Leskovec share similarities with examples from Col (Horvat 2020: G4, G20, G57–G58, G96–G97, G101). Dishes featuring ring bases are also attested at both sites (Dolenji Leskovec: Pl. 3: 1; Col: Horvat 2020: G5, G9). Larger biconical pots with simple flared rims, comparable to a relatively well-preserved specimen from Dolenji Leskovec (Pl. 4: 3), are likewise represented in the ceramic assemblage at Col near Podgračeno (Horvat 2020: G66, G71–G72). Ceramic ladles constitute a standard component of Neolithic material culture in the territory of present-day Slovenia; they are present at both sites, although the examples from Col near Podgračeno are predominantly undecorated (Horvat 2020: G145–G153).

Another relevant site situated near Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo is Čatež – Sredno Polje, which has been subject to more extensive investigation. Numerous Late Neolithic settlement remains, yielding a rich assemblage of both ceramic finds and stone tools, were discovered within well-defined archaeological contexts; a comprehensive sequence of 23 radiocarbon dates is also available for the site (Guštin 2005: 15; Guštin et al. 2005; Tomaž 2010; 2022).<sup>23</sup> Dishes of simple conical, hemispherical, or biconical forms, comparable to those from Dolenji Leskovec, are present at Čatež – Sredno Polje (conical: Tomaž 2022: G214, G215, G2051, G2053; hemispherical: Tomaž 2022: G4, G667, G888, G1736; biconical: Tomaž 2022: G855–G857, G2054, G2831).

However, it should be noted that these forms are relatively rare; the assemblage is instead dominated by biconical dishes with widely flaring, obliquely everted rims<sup>24</sup>. Dishes featuring handles or spouts are also documented at Čatež – Sredno Polje (handles: Tomaž 2022: G224, G242, G1729, G2835; spouts: Tomaž 2022: G858, G1243, G1552; handles and spout: Tomaž 2022: G1869; G2232), although their forms differ from the specimens recovered at Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo (Pl. 1: 3–5; 1: 6–7; 2: 7). Ring bases on dishes and other open vessels are present at both Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo (Pl. 2: 6) and Čatež – Sredno Polje (Tomaž 2022: G772, G1046, G1072, G1533 etc.). Among the finds from Čatež – Sredno Polje, certain pots exhibit similarities in shape to those from *Feature 5* at Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo. For example, a pot with a short, thickened, rounded rim and handles, similar to an example from Dolenji Leskovec (Pl. 4: 2), is recorded in context PO 93 at Čatež – Sredno Polje; however, the latter possesses a slightly everted rim and is undecorated (Tomaž 2022: G1335). While pots with short, thickened, rounded rims (Pl. 3: 3–5) are uncommon at Čatež, biconical pots (Pl. 4: 3–4) – potentially with simple everted rims (Pl. 3: 7; 4: 1) – are standard components of the assemblage (Tomaž 2022: for example, G265, G875, G1329–G1330, G1337–G1338, G1493, G1563 etc.). Nevertheless, a direct analogy in both form and decoration to the specimen from Dolenji Leskovec (Pl. 4: 3) is difficult to identify; the pot from PO 96 bears the closest resemblance (Tomaž 2022: G1663). At both sites, fragments of ceramic ladles are numerous (Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo: Pl. 5: 1–4; Čatež – Sredno Polje, for example: Tomaž 2022: G131–G132, G268–G275, G735–G736, G954–G957 etc.). However, it appears that the ladles from Dolenji Leskovec are more frequently heavily decorated (Pl. 5: 2–4) and appear exclusively in the form with a horizontally perforated socket. In contrast, at Čatež – Sredno Polje, ladles with solid handles are also present (Tomaž 2022: G1257, G2701). Decoration on the pottery from both sites is achieved primarily via impression and incision, and to a lesser extent by appliqué, yet significant differences exist. At Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo, modified awls were generally used for impressing, whereas the majority of the decorated pottery at Čatež – Sredno Polje features fingernail impressions. Furthermore, at Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo, decoration combining awl impressions and incision is very common, whereas at Čatež, the combination of fingernail impressions and incision, while present, is less frequent. Preliminary examination also suggests that red clay slip is more prevalent at Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo, and its preservation is significantly better, which may be attributed to either a higher original quality of the slip or more favourable post-depositional conditions. Considering the partially examined material from Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo in comparison to that from Čatež – Sredno Polje, it can be concluded that while

21 Sites such as Dragomelj (Turk, Svetličič 2005; 2022), Drolovka near Kranj (Korošec 1956; 1960; Guštin et al. 2005b), Mali Grad above Kamnik (Sagadin 2005), Gradišče near Stiška Vas (Velušček 2005), Resnikov Prekop (Korošec 1964; Tomaž, Velušček 2005; Velušček 2006), Gradec pri Mirni (Dular et al. 1991), Škocve near Dolsko (Kramberger 2024, Kramberger et al. 2024), and others are excluded from this comparative analysis, as they fall beyond the scope of this preliminary text.

22 From Col near Podgračeno, a single radiocarbon date was obtained from a charcoal sample from SU 11, sq. 182/3 (associated with *Feature 1* of the 1<sup>st</sup> settlement phase). This analysis dates the context to  $5165 \pm 35$  BP (KIA-21323). However, the author considers this date problematic, noting that finds from layer SU 11 suggest a timeframe in the second half of the 44<sup>th</sup> century BC (corresponding to the 6<sup>th</sup> settlement phase of the Moverna Vas site) (Horvat 2020: 120).

23 Absolute dates, with one exception, fall between 4899 and 4545 cal BC. Taking into account the  $2\sigma$ -range, this represents an absolute timeframe between 4954 and 4460 cal BC; the majority of dates undoubtedly fall between 4800 and 4600 cal BC (Tomaž 2022: 136).

24 These dish forms represent more than 95% of all dishes at Čatež – Sredno Polje (Tomaž 2022).

the assemblages are partially comparable, numerous differences persist. Based on these preliminary observations, it is evident that the material culture of nearby sites, all dated to between 4900 and 4500 BC, can differ considerably, perhaps less in morphology than in decoration and manufacturing techniques. Further specialist analyses of the material culture from Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo, currently underway, will serve to confirm or refine these preliminary observations. However, when seeking analogous pottery at more distant sites from the first half of the 5<sup>th</sup> millennium BC, primary attention must be drawn to Ponikve near Trebnje (Ravnik, Tica 2018)<sup>25</sup> and Stoperce in Haloze (Kramberger et al. 2023: 39–124).

At Ponikve, bowls and dishes of simple conical (Ravnik, Tica 2018: G64, G694), hemispherical (Ravnik, Tica 2018: G10–G11, G805), and biconical forms (Ravnik, Tica 2018: G16–G17, G18, G223–G226, G700, etc.) are recorded, encompassing examples with handles (Ravnik, Tica 2018: G770 (?), G795) and spouts (Ravnik, Tica 2018: G20–G21, G23, G235–G236). Pots with short, thickened, rounded rims, occasionally featuring handles (Pl. 3: 3–6; 4: 2), are also a component of the ceramic assemblage from Ponikve (Ravnik, Tica 2018: G197, G199; examples with slightly less thickened rims: G314, G623). A fragment of a pot with a simple rim and rounded neck from Dolenji Leskovec (Pl. 3: 6) finds its closest analogies in specimens 200 and 625 from habitation pit 3 (Ravnik, Tica 2018, G200, G625). Furthermore, the large biconical pot with handles (Pl. 4: 3) is morphologically most similar to Jar 179 from habitation pit 2 (Ravnik, Tica 2018: G179), although the latter lacks preserved handles and does not exhibit identical decoration. At Ponikve near Trebnje, numerous ceramic ladles are recorded (Ravnik, Tica 2018: G36–G44, G266–G276, etc.); however, unlike those from Dolenji Leskovec, these are predominantly undecorated. Additionally, ladles with solid handles are also present at Ponikve (Ravnik, Tica 2018: G706). The decoration on the pottery from Ponikve (Ravnik, Tica 2018) is executed in a manner similar to that from Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo, utilizing primarily incision and awl impressions, or a combination of both. At the site of Stoperce in Haloze, in addition to settlement remains dating to the Early and Middle Eneolithic, a pit (SU 128)<sup>26</sup> was discovered in 2009 containing pottery that exhibits significant similarities to the Late Neolithic pottery of the Sava group of the Lengyel culture (Kramberger et al. 2023: 43). Within this assemblage, analogies to the ceramic material from *Feature 5* at Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo can be identified. At Stoperce, hemispherical (Kramberger et al. 2023: T. 1: 12) and biconical dishes (Kramberger et al. 2023: T. 2: 1–2) are recorded,

occasionally featuring handles (Kramberger et al. 2023: T. 2: 3). In some instances, dishes or pedestalled vessels exhibit thickened internal walls (Kramberger et al. 2023: T. 1: 3), paralleling examples from Dolenji Leskovec (Pl. 2: 2–5). The assemblage from Pit 128 at Stoperce includes pots with short, thickened, rounded rims, also featuring handles<sup>27</sup> (Kramberger et al. 2023: T. 3: 1, 4), as well as larger biconical pots (Kramberger et al. 2023: T. 2: 10; 3: 6–7, 12; 4: 1–4), potentially with simple everted rims<sup>28</sup> (Kramberger et al. 2023: 3–4, 8). According to Kramberger and associates, the pottery form Pit SU 128 is manufactured from very fine-grained and fine-grained fabrics, with over 30% of the analysed pottery exhibiting a red clay slip (Kramberger et al. 2023: 94); this suggests distinct production techniques compared to those observed at Dolenji Leskovec.

Comparisons to the ceramic material from Dolenji Leskovec are also identified in Bela Krajina at the site of Moverna Vas<sup>29</sup> (Tomaž 1999: T.MV1–T.MV42). In the earliest settlement phases of the Moverna Vas site, bowls and dishes of simple conical (Tomaž 1999: T.MV2: 5–6; T.MV28: 3, 6), hemispherical (Tomaž 1999: T.MV1: 1, 7–8; T.MV28: 7), and biconical forms (Tomaž 1999: T.MV16: 2; T.MV17: 4; T.MV18: 1; T.MV33: 2) are recorded, including examples with handles (Tomaž 1999: T.MV2: 4; T.MV33: 3–4) or spouts (Tomaž 1999: T.MV2: 1; T.MV3: 1–2; T.MV19: 1; T.MV28: 4). Very shallow open dishes featuring appliqués and thickened inner walls (resembling Dolenji Leskovec: Pl. 2: 5) find direct analogies in the earliest phase of Moverna Vas (Tomaž 1999: T.MV5: 2). Furthermore, ring bases on dishes or other open vessels are also present at Moverna Vas (Tomaž 1999: T.MV28: 1; T.MV34: 2). Pots of similar form to those from Dolenji Leskovec are also present in the ceramic assemblage of Moverna Vas; for example, pots with short, thickened, rounded rims, occasionally featuring handles (Tomaž 1999: T.MV11: 3).<sup>30</sup> It is also worth noting that at Moverna Vas, as at Dolenji Leskovec, ceramic vessels were decorated with incision and awl impressions – most frequently in combination – or with appliqué. Surface slips ranging from red to red-brown are also

25 Two archaeological contexts at Ponikve near Trebnje were also radiocarbon dated. Analysis of sample LTL5583A (SE 111 – habitation pit 2) yielded an age of 5556 ± 45 BP, and analysis of sample LTL5585A (SE 141 – habitation pit 2) yielded an age of 5547 ± 45 BP (Ravnik, Tica 2018: 77, fig. 123–fig. 124).

26 For Pit SU 128, a charcoal fragment (Beta-339594) was dated, yielding a conventional age of 5690 ± 30 BP. This calibrates to 4547–4458 (68.3% probability) or 4609–4450 cal BC (95.4% probability) (Kramberger et al. 2023: 66).

27 At Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo: Pl. 3: 3–6 and Pl. 4: 2.

28 At Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo: Pl. 4: 3–4, also Pl. 3: 7 or Pl. 4: 1.

29 Moverna Vas is one of the better-dated Neolithic sites in Slovenia, with 37 available dates: 27 derived from charred organic residues on vessels and 10 from charcoal samples (Sraka 2016: 71). Analyses and Bayesian modelling indicate that the 2nd settlement phase, representing the oldest Neolithic phase at the settlement, likely began between 4945–4805 cal BC (68.2% probability) or 5070–4740 cal BC (95.4% probability). The settlement is interpreted as having been continuously inhabited for a period of 585–840 years (68.2% probability) or 520–1085 years (95.4% probability). Following a hiatus in occupation, the final habitation occurred during settlement phase 9b, which commenced between 3129–2930 cal BC (68.2% probability) or 3365–2910 cal BC (95.4% probability) and concluded between 2905–2800 cal BC (68.2% probability) or 2920–2625 cal BC (95.4% probability) (Sraka 2016: 80–81).

30 Ceramic ladles are present in the ceramic collection from Moverna Vas as well; however, they were not included in the 1999 analysis (Tomaž 1999).

commonly present on Moverna Vas pottery and are generally well preserved. Near Moverna Vas, across the border in Croatia, lies the Neolithic site of Ozalj – Stari Grad, which exhibits numerous affinities with sites in Bela Krajina. Among the pottery discovered at Ozalj – Stari Grad, hemispherical (Težak-Gregl 2005: find 10) and biconical dishes (Težak-Gregl 2005: find 14), as well as dishes with handles or spouts (Težak-Gregl 2005: finds 1, 3), display similarities to the pottery from Dolenji Leskovec. Furthermore, one specimen resembles a pot with a short, thickened, rounded rim and handles (Pl. 4: 3; Težak-Gregl 2005: find 20). Ceramic ladles, a standard component of the Neolithic repertoire across Slovenian territory, are also present at Ozalj – Stari Grad (Težak-Gregl 2005: finds 31–33, including examples with solid handles). As observed at Moverna Vas, the pottery from Ozalj is frequently coated with a thick, high-quality red slip (Težak-Gregl 2005).

As evident from the foregoing analysis, the material culture of various sites dating to the first half of the 5<sup>th</sup> millennium BC exhibits both similarities and significant differences. Sites in the continental part of Slovenia from this period are generally associated with the Lengyel culture. In the publication *Prvi poljedelci / First Farmers*, Mitja Guštin attributed these sites to the Sava group of the Lengyel culture (Guštin 2005: 7–22). He further suggested a potential regionalization of the Lengyel culture, noting that sites in Bela Krajina and eastern Slovenia display a slightly different material culture (Guštin 2005: 14). Today, the “Sava group of the Lengyel culture” is a relatively established term, encompassing sites from the first half of the 5<sup>th</sup> millennium BC located along the River Sava and its tributaries (Tomaž 2010; 2022; Velušček 2011a; 2011b; Turk, Svetličič 2022: 29–49; Kramberger et al. 2023: 71–72; 2024: 334–337; Ravnik, Tica 2018), as well as certain sites in eastern Slovenia (Kramberger et al. 2023). However, as our preliminary comparative analysis<sup>31</sup> has partially demonstrated, the material culture across these sites is not entirely homogeneous. Although the ceramic vessels exhibit morphological similarities (i.e., similar vessel shapes), the frequency of specific forms varies considerably between sites. Furthermore, there are discernible differences in ornamental techniques and production processes – specifically regarding the quality and quantity of surface slips. These variations are evident even at contemporaneous sites within the same region, such as Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo and Čatež – Sredno Polje, as well as across continental Slovenia. It is notable that the assemblage from Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo shares

greater affinities with collections from Moverna Vas, Ponikve near Trebnje, and Stoperce in Haloze than with that of Čatež – Sredno Polje, despite the fact that the latter two geographically the closest.

## Conclusion

The Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo site constitutes one of the most significant Neolithic sites in Slovenia. Currently, it represents the only known lowland Neolithic settlement with an enclosure in continental Slovenia. This makes it unique. Furthermore, the site contributes valuable insights into the dynamics and preferences governing pottery production within specific Late Neolithic societies.

Although the site was excavated in several campaigns over a decade ago, the results have thus far reached the professional community only through publications of partial data (Hlad 2015; Sraka 2016: 103–116; Turk, Turk 2019: 98–99). A comprehensive monograph presenting all available data is currently in preparation.

This article presents the preliminary results of only a portion of the field research conducted in 2011. These results demonstrate that many complex issues regarding Late Neolithic material culture remain unresolved. A preliminary analysis comparing a selection of finds from Dolenji Leskovec with those from contemporary sites – situated both in the immediate vicinity and in more distant regions of Slovenia – indicates that this material culture is not homogeneous. Instead, distinct preferences in the production and usage of ceramic vessels are evident. Crucially, the observed diversity does not appear to be strictly correlated with the geographical regions of the sites, as previously suggested (Guštin 2005; Tomaž 2010), thus necessitating the development of alternative explanatory models.

Consequently, a thorough analysis of the Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo site archive is a priority. This must encompass data not only from the 2011 excavation but also from other campaigns. Such comprehensive studies are essential to understanding why the material culture of contemporaneous sites within the confined region of Krško-Brežice exhibits such significant differences, particularly when certain findings display closer affinities to those from geographically distant sites.

31 Bine Kramberger and associates have recently suggested that, based on pottery analysis, the definition of the Sava group of the Lengyel Culture requires revision (Kramberger et al. 2024: 264). They argue that the sites in Bela Krajina do not differ from those in the Posavje region, Ljubljansko Barje, and SU 128 in Stoperce (north-eastern Slovenia) regarding pottery production methods, decoration, and ceramic forms. Instead, they propose that three variations of a single pottery style (Sava group Ia-b, II) should be recognised (Kramberger et al. 2024: 264). Indeed, these hypotheses will require further investigation in the future, incorporating new data.

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# Sažetak

Arheološko nalazište Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo smješteno je na rubnom dijelu Krško-brežičkog polja u jugoistočnoj Sloveniji. Nalazi se na južnoj granici naselja Dolenji Leskovec, na lijevoj obali rijeke Save, uz cestu i željezničku prugu koje povezuju Sevnicu i Brestanicu.

Nalazište je prvi put prepoznato kao potencijalna arheološka lokacija sredinom 1980-ih (Trenz 1985: 15–18), a sustavna arheološka istraživanja započela su 2007. godine u sklopu planiranih zahvata za Hidroelektranu Krško (Masaryk et al. 2007) te su nastavljena 2009. (Klasinc et al. 2010) i 2011. godine (Jovanović et al. 2012). U ovom radu predstavljeni su samo preliminarni rezultati jednog dijela terenskih istraživanja provedenih 2011. godine.

Nalazište se nalazi unutar naselja Dolenji Leskovec u jugoistočnoj Sloveniji, južno od ceste i željezničke pruge, na riječnoj terasi na okuci rijeke Save, na položaju Za Savo. Područje se sastoji od dviju riječnih terasa: niže, poplavne donje terase, koja se proteže u uskom pojasu neposredno uz današnje korito rijeke Save, te više gornje terase, koja se izdiže iznad rijeke kao plato.

Arheološka iskopavanja 2011. godine obuhvatila su površinu od 7000 m<sup>2</sup>. Za mapiranje distribucije nalazi i uzoraka na cijelom području iskopavanja korišten je koordinatni sustav temeljen na postojećem relativnom koordinatnom sustavu iskopavanja iz 2009. godine (Jovanović et al. 2012: 20).

Arheološka iskopavanja na nalazištu Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo 2011. godine ustanovila su stratigrafski niz podijeljen u osam faza. Faza 1 predstavlja geološku podlogu nalazišta. Faza 2 obuhvaća neolitičke strukture različitih oblika i veličina te svjedoči o najranijem ljudskom korištenju prostora. Gornji konteksti faze 2 sadrže slojeve poplavnog sedimenta klasificirane kao faza 3, koji potvrđuju prekid u životu kasneolitičkog naselja. Faza 4 definirana je na temelju fragmenata *Litzen*-keramike u sekundarnom položaju unutar mlađih depozita. Kao faza 5 zabilježeni su depoziti starijeg željeznog doba na jugozapadnom rubu platoa. Iznad poplavnog sedimenta i slojeva šute s obilnim neolitičkim materijalom formirao se sloj koji je prekrpio cijelo područje platoa (faza 6), dok ranosrednjovjekovno ili srednjovjekovno naselje faze 7 definiraju strukture ukopane u sloj prethodne faze. Iznad sloja humusa utvrđeni su tragovi modernog i recentnog korištenja prostora, koji su pripisani fazi 8 (Jovanović et al. 2012: 22).

Među svim arheološkim ostatcima otkrivenima na nalazištu Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo 2011. godine, ostatci kasneolitičkog naselja bili su najbrojniji te su zahtijevali nešto detaljniju obradu.

Najraniju fazu neolitičkog naselja definira sloj SJ 055, koji predstavlja ostatke nekadašnjeg paleotla u koje je bila ukopana većina neolitičkih struktura. Neolitički objekti, ukopani u geološku podlogu, morfološki su klasificirani kao ukopi stupova, jame i jarci. Neki su ukopi stupova, jame i jarci sačinjavali

pravilne prostorne skupine. Te su skupine omogućile povezivanje grupa i definiranje arhitektonskih ili građevinskih jedinica. Također su bili vidljivi jasni tragovi linearnih ukopa sa stupovima te nizovi ukopa za stupove koji omeđuju šire područje vjerojatno ovalnog tlocrta. Navedeni su nalazi protumačeni kao ostatci palisade. Položaj i oblik jaraka upućuje na ovalnu palisadu koja je ograđivala dio neolitičkog naselja. Od palisade je sačuvana istočna strana, koju predstavljaju dva paralelna ovalna jarka, svaki s ravnim jarcima i ukopima stupova te nizom ukopa stupova; sjeverna strana, koja je ravni jarak s ukopima stupova i niz ukopa stupova; te vjerojatno i zapadna strana. Budući da ostatci južne strane palisade nisu otkriveni, nepoznato je koliki je prostor bio ograđen palisadom. Unutar područja omeđenog palisadom nalazili su se ostatci vjerojatno stambenih objekata (objekt 4 i objekt 5), dvije ukopane strukture nepoznate namjene (SJ 090 i 092), te ostatci jame ili objekta (SJ 069 i 073).

Na temelju dimenzija i sastava ispuna, neki su ukopani objekti protumačeni kao tragovi većih, vjerojatno stambenih struktura (objekti 4–7). Manji objekti većinom su klasificirani kao jame. U nekim slučajevima, sastav ispuna upućuje na to da su služile kao otpadne ili spremišne jame. Ipak, pouzdano se tumačenje može dobiti tek kad se nakon iskopavanja obave specijalističke analize pokretnih nalaza i uzoraka iz okoliša.

Na zapadnom rubu polja iskopavanja otkrivena je jedna od najvećih neolitičkih struktura, označena kao objekt 5. S obzirom na lokaciju objekta 5, pretpostavljamo da se nalazio na zapadnoj strani palisade, premda je to teško dokazati s obzirom na to da palisada na ovom dijelu nije sačuvana.

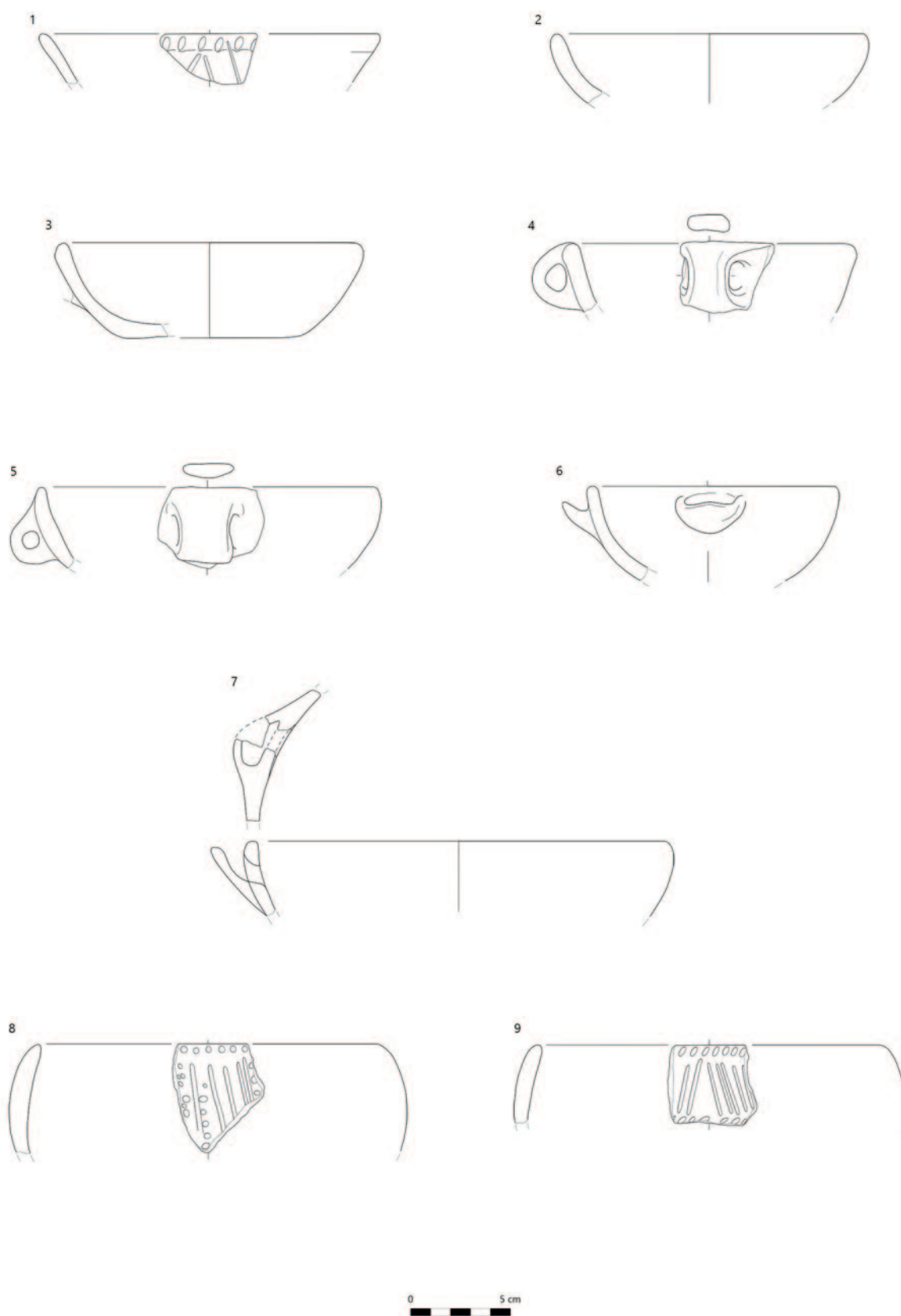
Baza objekta 5 bila je ukopana jama nepravilnog četvrtastog tlocrta, zaobljenih rubova, kosih nepravilnih stijenki i nepravilnog neravnog dna. Unutar najveće jame prepoznato je nekoliko dodatnih jama. U svim arheološkim kontekstima koji se pripisuju objektu 5 otkriveno je ukupno 2730 keramičkih ulomaka, 38 ulomaka keramičkih žlica i 352 ulomka kamenih izrađevina. Među brojnim otkrivenim kamenim artefaktima prevladava kamenje koje se uglavnom može definirati kao sirovina za proizvodnju kamenog alata, dok obrađeni alati i odbitci čine manji udio. Preliminarnim pregledom keramičkih nalaza može se utvrditi da se keramički repertoar objekta 5 sastoji od posuda različitih oblika (T. 1–5). Keramika sadrži brojne ulomke zdjela i plitica, ponekad s ručkama ili lijevcima. Plitice u nekim slučajevima imaju podebljane unutarnje stijenske, a neke posude otvorenih profila imaju prstenasta dna ili podnožje. Tu su i lonci različitih veličina i oblika (T. 3: 2–7; 4: 1–4), primjerice manji bačvasti lonci s ručkama, lonci s kratkim, zadebljanim i zaobljenim obodima, ponekad također s ručkama, te veći bikonični lonci, eventualno s jednostavnim proširenim obodima. Osim toga, lonce relativno često krase razni bogati motivi izvedeni ubodima šilom ili kombinacijom urezanih linija i uboda šilom. U nekim

slučajevima lonci su ukrašeni samo pojedinačnim plastičnim aplikacijama na najširem dijelu posude. Keramika sadrži i mnogo ulomaka keramičkih žlica (T. 5). Keramika je općenito srednjeznata i finožrnata, te je ponekad prekrivena debelim crvenim glinenim premazom, iako je taj premaz mjestimice prilično loše očuvan. Ukrasi na analiziranoj keramici pretežito su izvedeni utiskivanjem šilom ili štapićem, odnosno kombinacijom urezivanja, dok su stijenke posuda eventualno bile ukrašene i aplikacijama različitih oblika.

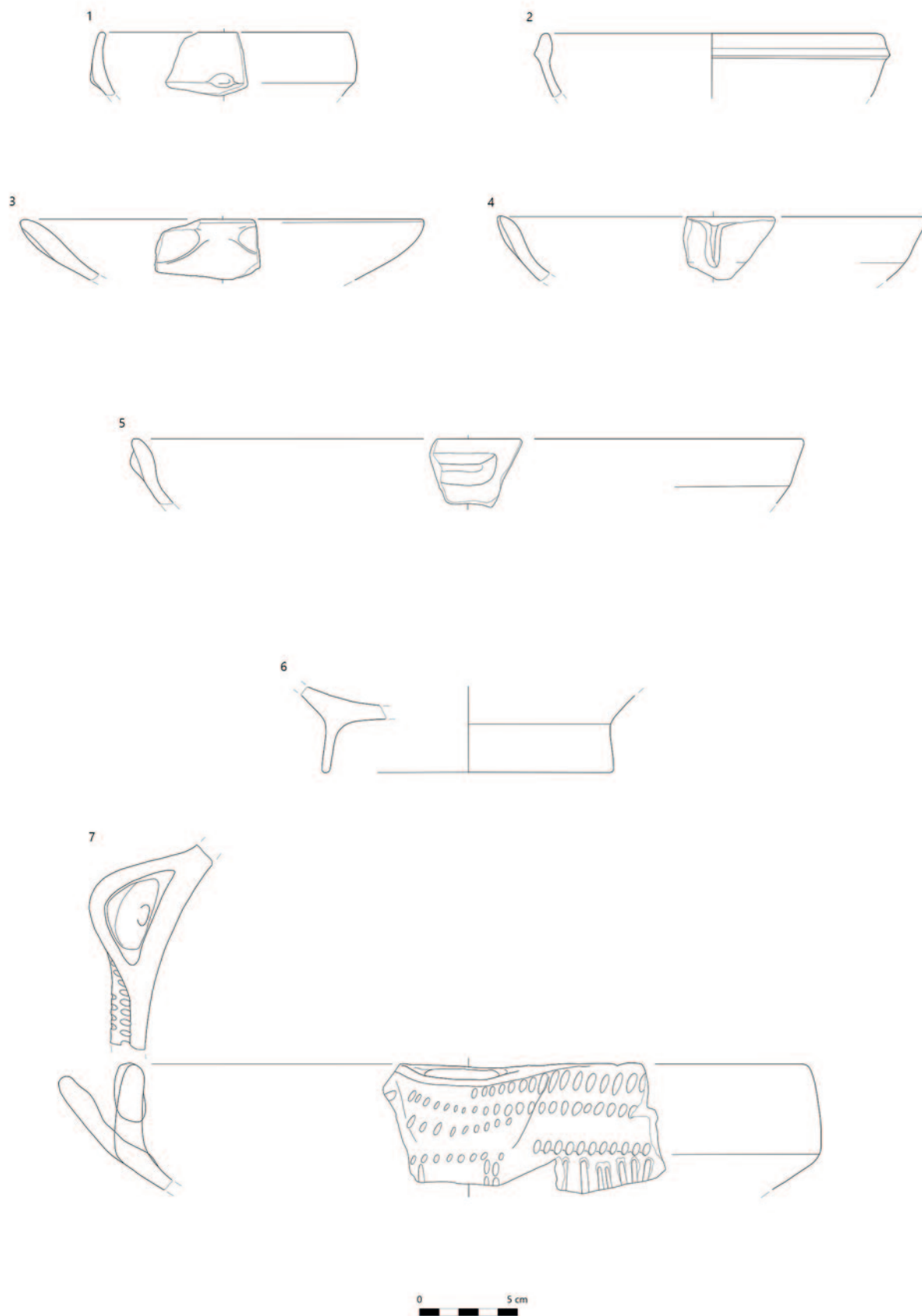
Analogije za keramiku s nalazišta Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo nalaze se na istodobnim nalazištima iz prve polovice 5. tisućljeća pr. Kr., kao što su Col kod Podgračena (Horvat 2020), djelomično Čatež – Sredno polje (Tomaž 2010; 2022), Ponikve kod Trebnja (Ravnik, Tica 2018), Stoperce u Halozama (Kramberger et al. 2023: 39–124), Movernavas (Tomaž 1999), Ozalj – Stari grad (Težak-Gregl 2005) itd. Naša kratka preliminarna komparativna analiza pokazala je da materijalna kultura različitih istodobnih nalazišta ima sličnosti, ali i bitnih razlika. Keramičke posude doista se čine sličnima, barem s oblikovnog aspekta (slični oblici posuda), međutim njihova učestalost na različitim nalazištima znatno varira; također su vidljive razlike u tehnikama ukrašavanja keramike, kao i bitne razlike u proizvodnim postupcima (kvaliteta i količina premaza na keramici itd.). Navedene se razlike javljaju na istodobnim nalazištima unutar iste regije, ali i na cijelom području kontinentalne Slovenije. Pronalazimo više sličnosti između zbirke s nalazišta Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo i lokaliteta Movernavas, Ponikve kod Trebnja te Stoperce u Halozama, nego između nalazišta Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo i Čatež – Sredno polje, iako su potonja dva geografski najbliža.

Dakle, analiza je pokazala da materijalna kultura nije toliko homogena kao što se pretpostavljalo, nego da se razlikuje po načinima proizvodnje i uporabe keramičkih posuda. Po svemu sudeći, uočena raznolikost nije nužno vezana uz regije u kojima su nalazišta smještena, kao što se smatralo ranije, pa će biti potrebni drugi modeli tumačenja.

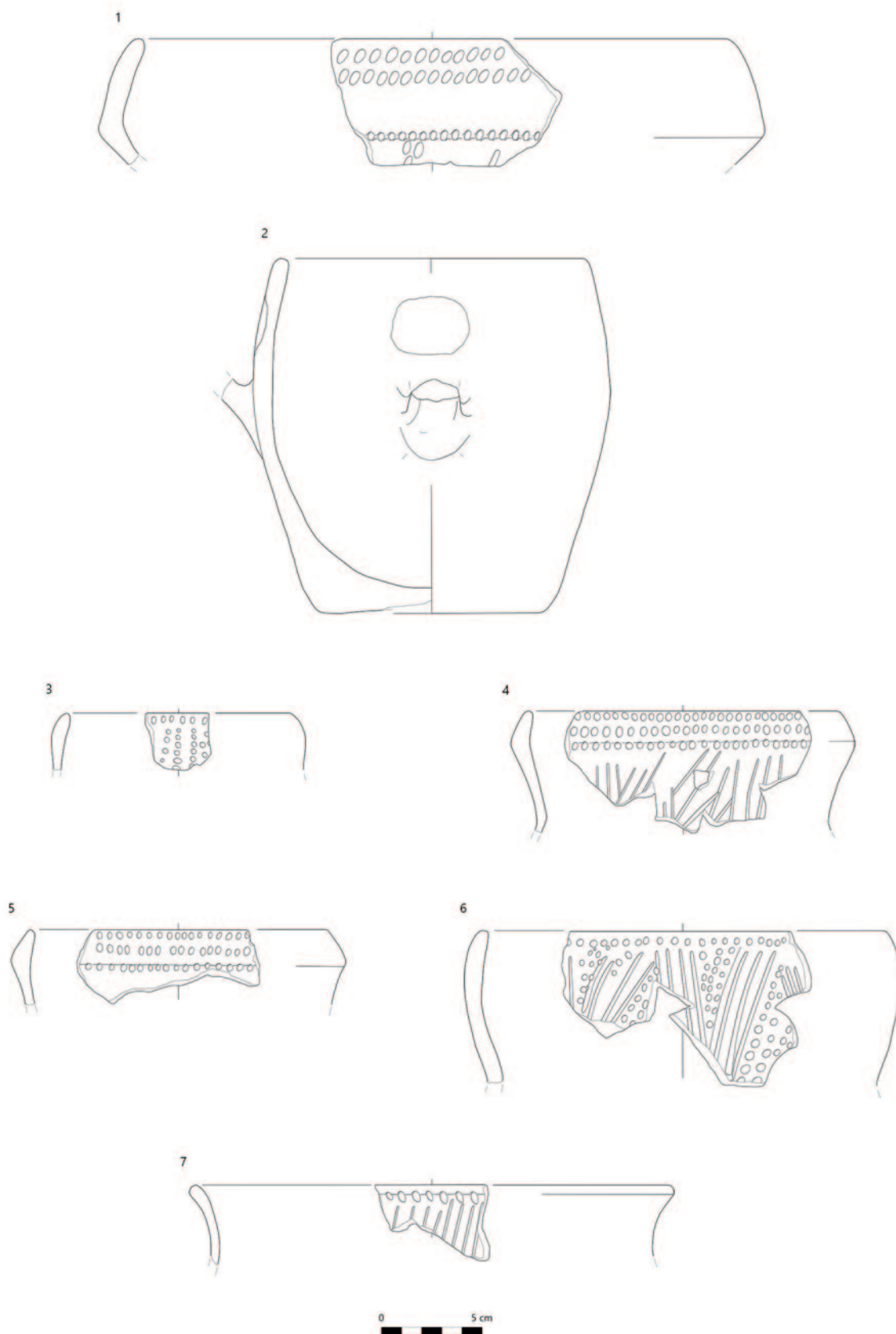
U svakom slučaju, prvo bi trebalo temeljito analizirati arhivsku građu nalazišta Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo. To obuhvaća podatke ne samo iz iskapanja 2011. godine, nego i iz ostalih istraživačkih pothvata. Takve studije možda pomognu da se objasni zbog čega se unutar male regije Krško-Brežice toliko razlikuju materijalne kulture istodobnih nalazišta, dok su istovremeno ti nalazi sličniji onima s geografski udaljenih lokaliteta.



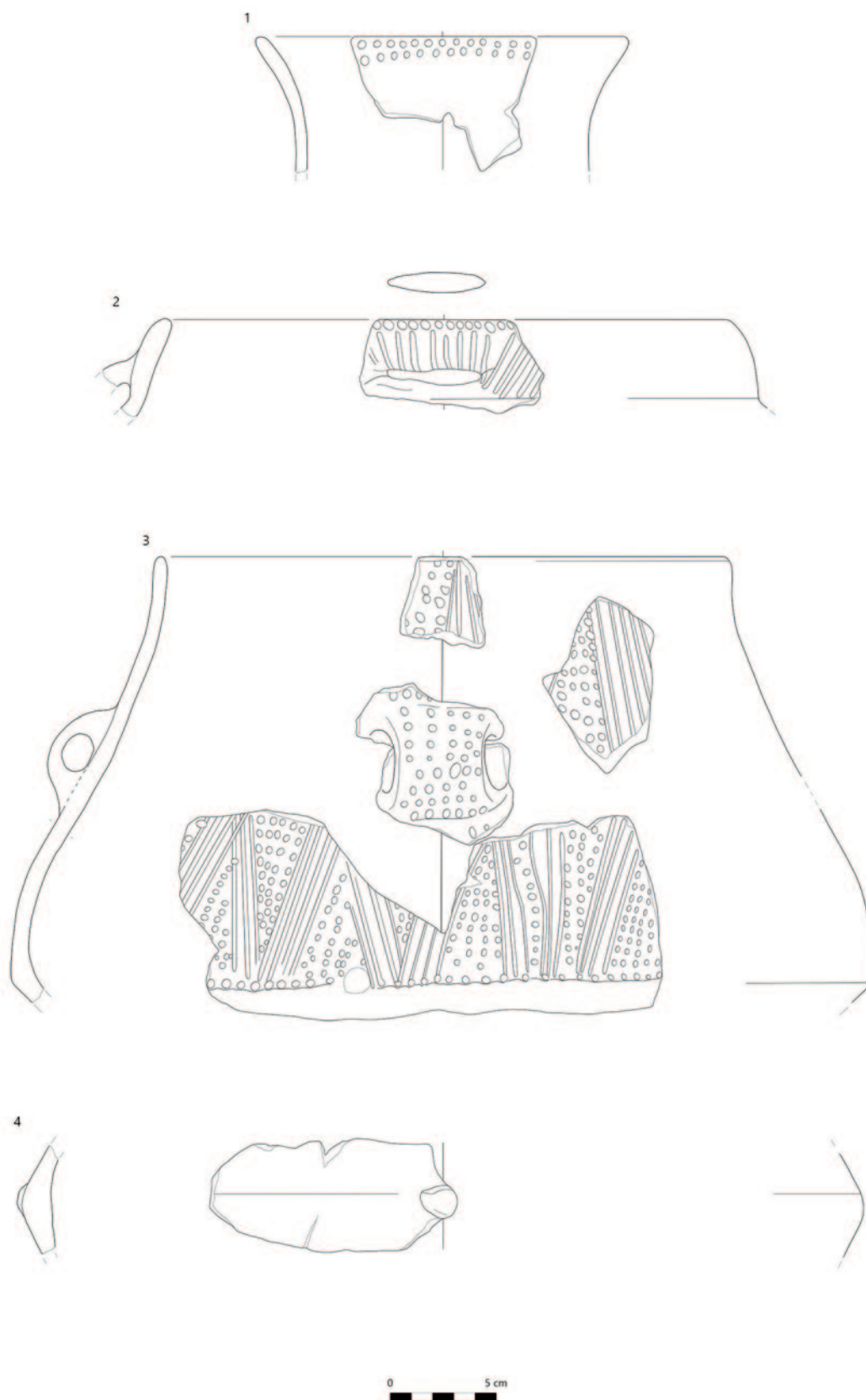
Pl. 1 Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo. Selection of ceramic finds from *Feature 5* (drawings: J. Hrustel for Arhos d.o.o.; made by A. Ogorelec)  
T. 1 Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo. Izbor keramičkih nalaza iz objekta 5 (crteži: J. Hrustel za Arhos d.o.o.; izrada: A. Ogorelec)



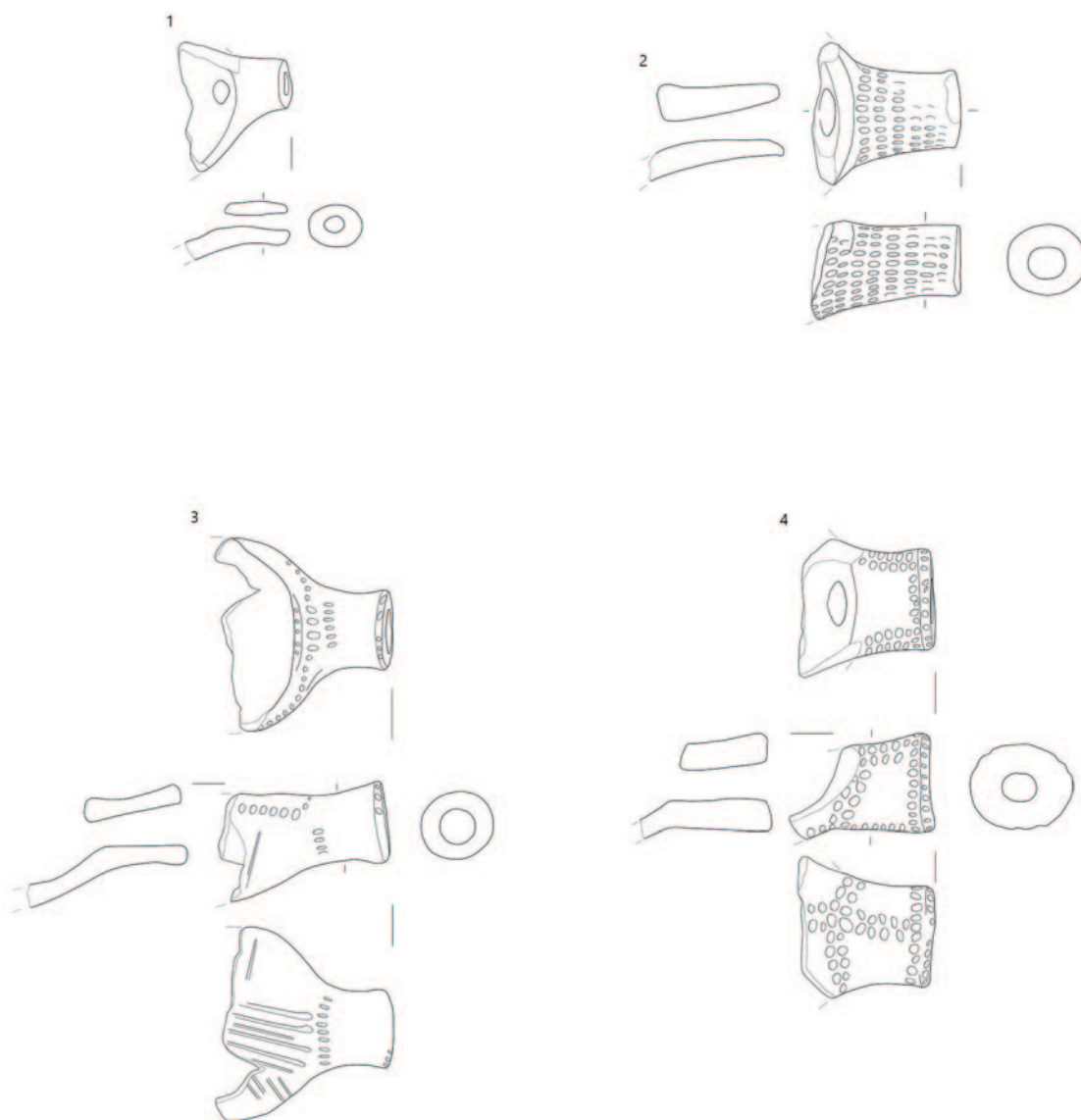
Pl. 2 Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo. Selection of ceramic finds from *Feature 5* (drawings: J. Hrustel for Arhos d.o.o.; made by A. Ogorelec)  
T. 2 Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo. Izbor keramičkih nalaza iz objekta 5 (crteži: J. Hrustel za Arhos d.o.o.; izrada: A. Ogorelec)



Pl. 3 Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo. Selection of ceramic finds from *Feature* 5 (drawings: J. Hrustel for Arhos d.o.o.; made by A. Ogorelec)  
T. 3 Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo. Izbor keramičkih nalaza iz objekta 5 (crteži: J. Hrustel za Arhos d.o.o.; izrada: A. Ogorelec)



Pl. 4 Dolenji Leskovec - Za Savo. Selection of ceramic finds from *Feature 5* (drawings: J. Hrustel for Arhos d.o.o.; made by A. Ogorelec)  
T. 4 Dolenji Leskovec - Za Savo. Izbor keramičkih nalaza iz objekta 5 (crteži: J. Hrustel za Arhos d.o.o.; izrada: A. Ogorelec)



0 5 cm

Pl. 5 Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo. Selection of ceramic finds from *Feature 5* (drawings: J. Hrustel for Arhos d.o.o.; made by: A. Ogorelec)  
T. 5 Dolenji Leskovec – Za Savo. Izbor keramičkih nalaza iz objekta 5 (crteži: J. Hrustel za Arhos d.o.o.; izrada: A. Ogorelec)