

# The earliest occupation of Rača Cave on the island of Lastovo in the context of the Late Neolithic of the eastern Adriatic coast

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This paper discusses the earliest phase of occupation in Rača Cave, located in the southeastern part of the island of Lastovo. To date, Rača Cave is the only known Neolithic site on the island. Although it was the subject of earlier excavations carried out in the 1940s and 1950s, recent archaeological research conducted by the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb, in collaboration with affiliated institutions since 2021, has provided new data and archaeological material. Analysis of the pottery assemblage, which includes sherds decorated in the characteristic style of the Hvar culture, places this horizon within the Late Neolithic period of the eastern Adriatic coast. This chronology is further supported by radiocarbon dating. In addition to pottery, the excavations have yielded numerous other archaeological finds, including stone artefacts, which are also examined in this study.

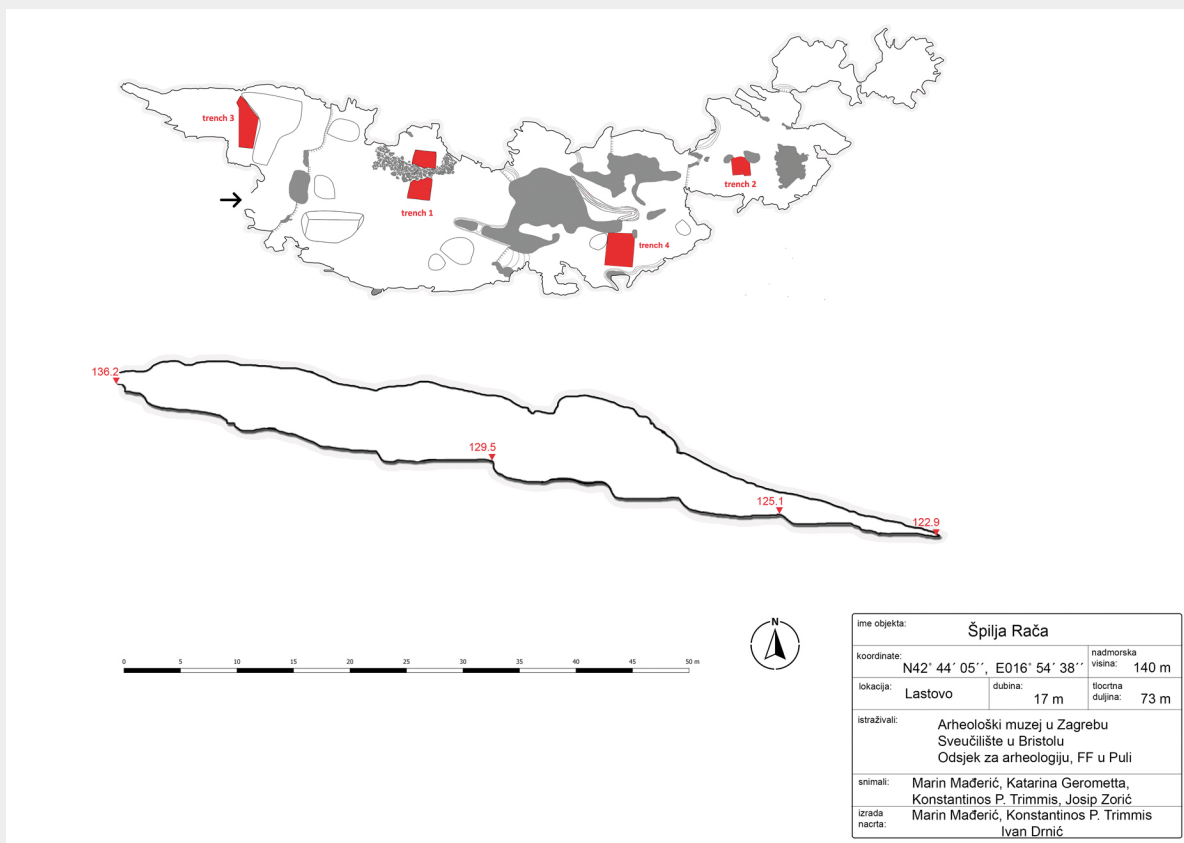
**Key words:** Lastovo, Rača Cave, Late Neolithic, Hvar culture, pottery, stone artefacts

## ► Introduction

Rača Cave, situated in the southeastern part of the island of Lastovo (Fig. 1), has long been recognized as an important prehistoric site, including a Late Neolithic horizon, although earlier research was rather limited. The first excavation was conducted by Antonio Mario Radmilli in 1942, while he was still a student at the University of Padua. The finds were later published in several papers, the most important being *L'isola di Lagosta nella preistoria* (1955), in which he established a chronological sequence of the layers in Rača Cave, beginning with the Neolithic period and characterized by incised and painted pottery that would later be identified as belonging to the Hvar culture by Grga Novak. Furthermore, in 1953, Novak conducted a brief excavation to the left of the cave entrance, revealing a 1.40 m deep cultural layer starting from the Late Neolithic and lasting to the Hellenistic and Roman period (Novak 1955).



▲ Figure 1. Position of Rača Cave (M. Maderić)



▲ Figure 2. Map of Rača Cave (M. Maderić, I. Drić, K. P. Trimmis)

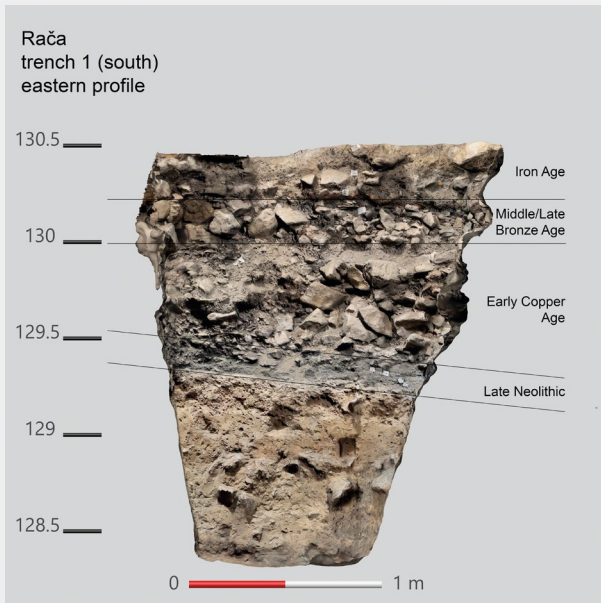
Recent archaeological excavations in Rača Cave on the island of Lastovo, carried out since 2021 by the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb in collaboration with affiliated institutions, have revealed a more complex stratigraphy that confirms the cave's diachronic use from the Late Neolithic through Late Antiquity and into the post-medieval period (Drnić and Brkić Drnić 2023; Drnić 2024). The earliest layers associated with human occupation were uncovered in Trench 1, located in the central part of Chamber 1, and are attributed to the Late Neolithic Hvar culture, as suggested by previous investigations (Fig. 2). In Trench 4, situated in Chamber 2, only a few diagnostic sherds decorated in the Hvar pottery style were recovered, mixed with typical Late Copper Age ceramics of the Ljubljana–Adriatic pottery style, dating to the first half of the 3rd millennium BC. Trench 2, excavated deep within the cave's third chamber, did not yield traces of Late Neolithic material, but contained Late Copper Age deposits, including human remains placed in small pits and in their immediate vicinity. Excavations in Trench 3, situated adjacent to Grga Novak's earlier trench at the cave entrance, are still in an early phase and have so far yielded only material from the Late Iron Age (4th–1st century BC). Sieving of sediment from Novak's excavation produced several stone artefacts, including a large leaf-shaped point that may belong to the Late Neolithic occupation of the cave (Fig. 13), although attribution to the Copper Age is equally plausible.

### ► Pottery analysis

Stratigraphic units associated with the Hvar culture—including units 52, 53, 54, 58, 60, 61, 65, 66, 78, and 79—yielded a variety of archaeological material, with ceramic potsherds being by far the most prevalent, alongside lithic artefacts, animal bones, and shells (Fig. 3–5). The ceramic assemblage is characterized by a very high fragmentation rate. For this reason, the majority of potsherds are undiagnostic and will be included only in general statistical analysis. Diagnostic potsherds are identified based on the presence of specific vessel parts—such as the rims, bodies, bases, and/or handles—as well as decorative elements which, in the case of the Hvar culture, include burnishing, painting, incision, impressing, channelling, incrustation, and plastic bands. Although burnishing has often been described merely as a method of surface treatment aimed at improving the functional characteristics of vessels, its aesthetic component should also be regarded as a decorative element. Therefore, this paper will also address burnishing as a decorative technique. Based on macroscopic analysis, the pottery vessels were most likely produced locally from calcareous clay. The fabric fineness varies from coarse cooking ware to more refined tableware, yet limestone and calcite inclusions of varying sizes are present in the majority of the fragments.

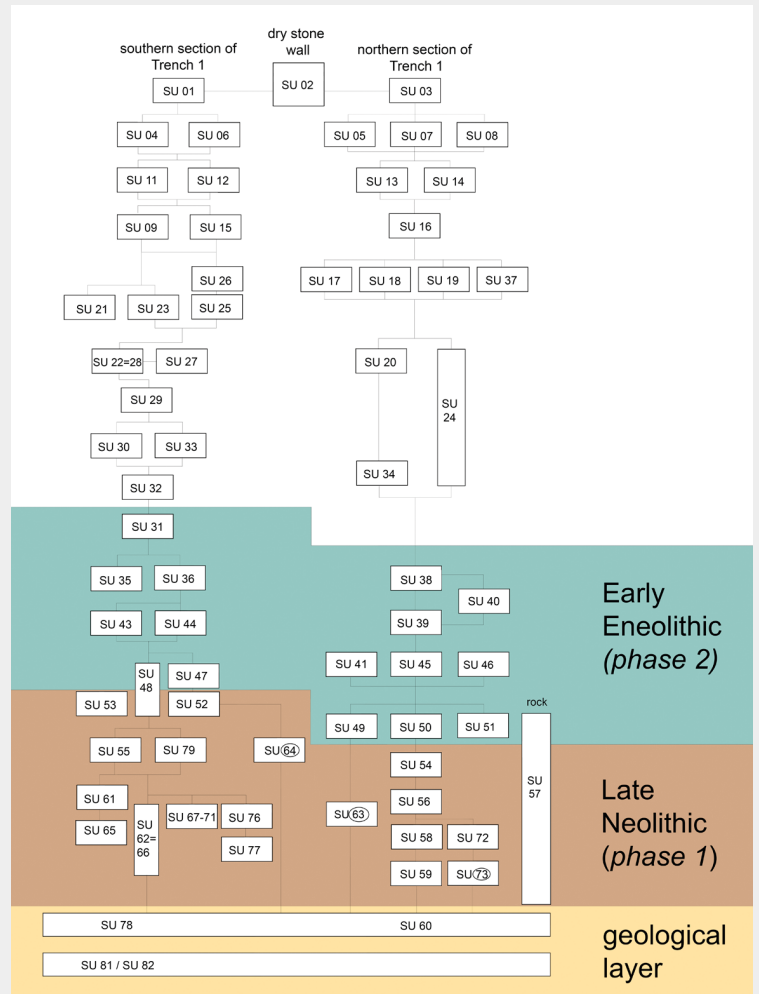


▲ Figure 3. Trench 1 (M. Maderić)



▲ Figure 4. Eastern profile of Trench 1 (M. Maderič, I. Drnić)

► Figure 5. Harris matrix of Trench 1 (I. Drnić)



## Decoration techniques

A total of 1936 potsherds were recovered from the aforementioned layers, of which 17.4% (337 fragments) are classified as diagnostic (Fig. 7a). Interestingly, 77.15% (260 fragments) of all diagnostic potsherds from the Hvar culture layers were decorated with either a single decorative technique or a combination of burnishing, painting, incising, impressing, channelling, incrustation, and plastic bands (Fig. 8a). As with other southern Dalmatian Hvar culture pottery assemblages, a significant proportion of potsherds exhibit the typical dark burnished surface (Čečuk and Radić 2005: 150; Forenbaher and Kaiser 2008: 47, 68–71). While the majority are black, reddish-brown and beige variants are also represented. The use of the burnishing technique to create more complex decoration is evidenced by a single potsherd adorned with a burnished net-like motif (Pl. 4: 4). After burnishing, incision represents the predominant decorative technique among potsherds from all stratigraphic units (Pl. 1: 2, 5; Pl. 3: 1, 2, 4; Pl. 4: 5, 6; Pl. 6: 3, 6). The decoration patterns consist of abstract geometric motifs, including rectilinear, curvilinear, and spiral lines, while more complex compositions, such as stylized triangles and rhombic shaped motifs, appear less frequently (Pl. 1: 3; Pl. 2: 7, 9, 10; Pl. 4: 2; Pl. 6: 10). Painted decoration—probably the most distinctive and recognizable feature of Hvar culture pottery—is also well represented (Pl. 4: 3, 5, 8; Pl. 6: 8, 9), including its more complex variants, such as outlined decoration and the crusted technique (Pl. 1: 7, 8; Pl. 2: 1, 2, 8; Pl. 3: 3; Pl. 5: 1, 2). Due to the decoration technique, which involves the application of paint after firing, the adherence of the paint to the vessel surface is often compromised (Forenbaher and Kaiser 2008: 47). As a result, a significant number of potsherds exhibit pattern designs or

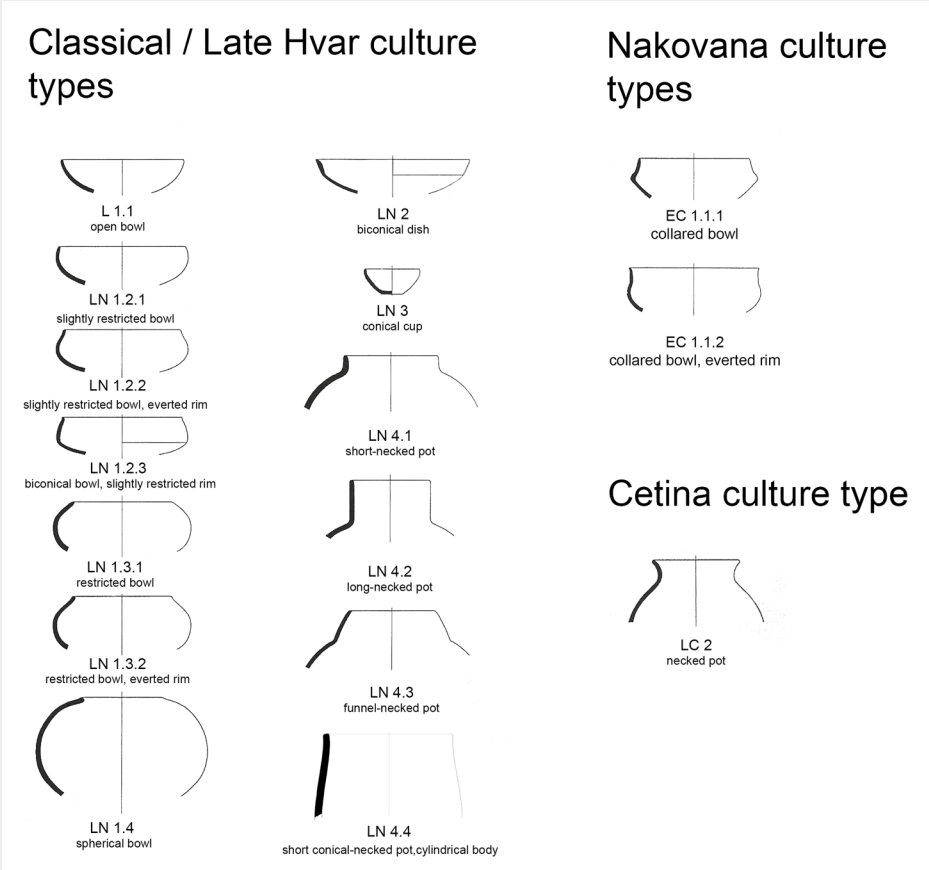
surfaces that partially or completely lack their original painted colours. The pigments used include shades of red, white, brown, and black. A particular decorative style, characteristic of the Classic phase of the Hvar culture known as outlined decoration (Forenbaher and Kaiser 2008: 69), is also present in the pottery assemblage from Rača Cave. This style combines painting, incising, and burnishing techniques: geometric motifs were first incised and subsequently painted and burnished in different areas of their backgrounds. Although less common, other decoration techniques, including impressing (Pl. 3: 6; Pl. 4: 7), incrustation (Pl. 1: 7, 8; Pl. 2: 8; Pl. 4: 3; Pl. 5: 1), channelling (Pl. 4: 9), and horizontal plastic bands (Pl. 6: 7), were also employed (Fig. 8b).

## Typological analysis

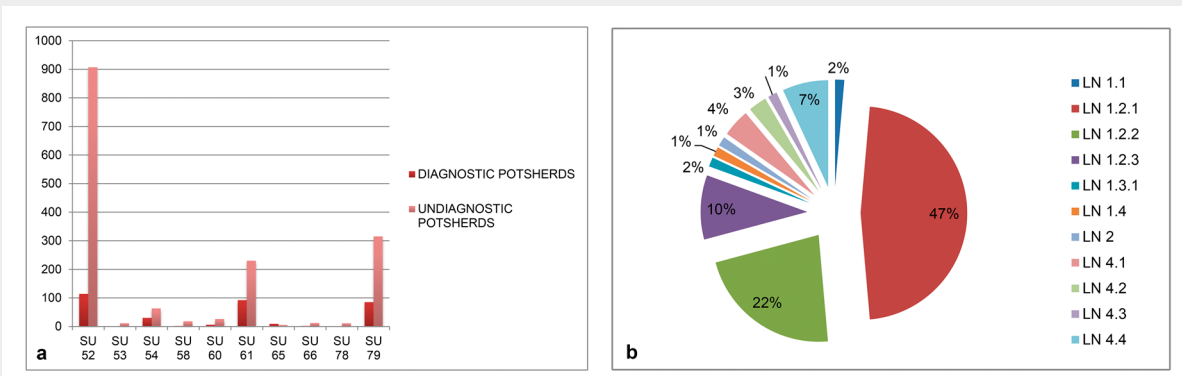
Based on the typological analysis of the diagnostic potsherds, the pottery assemblage comprises only three vessel forms—bowls, pots, and biconical dish—with bowls representing the predominant type (Fig. 7b). Since all base fragments, except for a single omphalos base, are flat and lack diagnostic features, the typology relies primarily on rim fragments. Moreover, the typological framework of Hvar culture pottery from Rača Cave follows that established for Grapčeva Cave on the island of Hvar (Forenbaher and Kaiser 2008: Fig. 11, 45; Fig. 16, 59; Fig. 17, 63). The predominant bowl types include two variants of slightly restricted bowls (LN 1.2): one with a simple rim (LN 1.2.1) (Pl. 2: 2; Pl. 3: 3, 5, 6; Pl. 4: 3; Pl. 5: 1, 2; Pl. 6: 1, 3, 4) and the other with an everted rim (LN 1.2.2) (Pl. 1: 7; Pl. 2: 1, 8; Pl. 4: 2; Pl. 6: 5). This is not surprising, given that slightly restricted bowls constitute the most characteristic Late Neolithic form, being the most common vessel type at other Hvar culture sites as well, including Grapčeva Cave (Forenbaher and Kaiser 2008: 68). Another variant of slightly constricted bowls, characterized by a biconical body (LN 1.2.3), is represented by only a small number of specimens (Pl. 1: 8; Pl. 6: 2). Similar to Grapčeva Cave, where only several potsherds of the open bowl type have been found, just a single potsherd has been identified as belonging to this bowl type (LN 1.1) (Pl. 4: 1), which is considered a Middle Neolithic vessel form (Forenbaher and Kaiser 2008: 42). Furthermore, the assemblage yielded two additional rare typological finds from Rača Cave—a single rim fragment of a spherical bowl (LN 1.4) (Pl. 1: 5) and a rim fragment of a biconical dish (LN 2).

Pots are represented by approximately a dozen specimens. All pot forms defined in the Forenbaher-Kaiser typology are present, each represented by a few sherds: short-necked pots (LN 4.1) (Pl. 1: 1, 2; Pl. 3: 1), long-necked pots (LN 4.2), and funnel-necked pots (LN 4.3) (Pl. 1: 3). In addition to this established typology, a previously unrecognized pot type was identified within the Rača Cave assemblage—LN 4.4—which comprises pots with short conical necks and cylindrical bodies (Pl. 3: 2, 4; Pl. 5: 3; Pl. 6: 6).

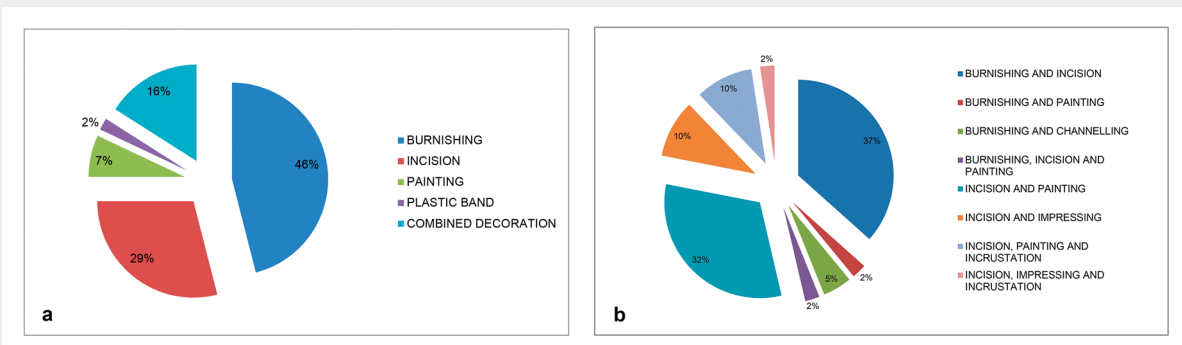
Several potsherds representing typical Nakovana forms and the earliest phase of the Cetina culture are also present within the pottery assemblage from stratigraphic units 52 and 79. Stratigraphic unit 52 has been defined as a transitional layer between the Late Hvar and Early Nakovana phases. A single potsherd from stratigraphic unit 79 belongs to the characteristic Early Nakovana type—a collared bowl with a simple rim (EC 1.1.1). This bowl type is also present in stratigraphic unit 52 (Pl. 2: 4), together with another variant of the form—a collared bowl with an everted rim (EC 1.1.2) (Pl. 2: 3, 5). In addition to the material from stratigraphic unit 52, which can be attributed to the Hvar and Nakovana cultures, two potsherds should be recognized as belonging to the earliest phase of the Cetina culture. These specimens have been identified as fragments of a necked pot (LC 2) (Pl. 1: 4; Pl. 3: 7).



▲ **Figure 6.** Typological classification of Late Neolithic, Early Copper Age and Early Bronze Age pottery from Rača Cave according to the Forenbaher and Kaiser typology (2008), with the addition of a proposed new type (LN 4.4) (K. Brkić Dričić).



▲ **Figure 7 a.** Statistical analysis of Late Neolithic pottery from Rača Cave; **b:** Typological analysis of Late Neolithic pottery from Rača Cave (K. Brkić Dričić).



▲ **Figure 8 a.** Decoration techniques on Late Neolithic pottery from Rača Cave; **b:** Combined decorations on Late Neolithic pottery from Rača Cave (K. Brkić Dričić).

## ► Stone artefacts

A small number of knapped stone finds have been collected from the earliest excavated layers in the Rača Cave on the island of Lastovo, which can be ascribed to the Neolithic Hvar culture. Trench 1, the only one with Late Neolithic layers, yielded a total of 159 artefacts – 3 polished, the rest knapped.

Two of the polished artefacts (a fragment of an axe and a small axe), along with the majority of knapped stone tools, have been attributed to later periods. However, a fragment of a hammer (Pl. 7: 12) can be associated with the Late Neolithic phase at Rača Cave. Due to its fragmented state and the preservation of only the partially square end, it is not possible to determine whether the hammer originally had a perforation for hafting. The dimensions of the artefact are as follows: length 4.8 cm, width 3.6 cm, thickness 2.8 cm, and weight 60.1 g. Polished stone hammers are a common find on prehistoric sites, exhibit considerable variation in form, and were primarily used for striking (Antonović 2003: 56).

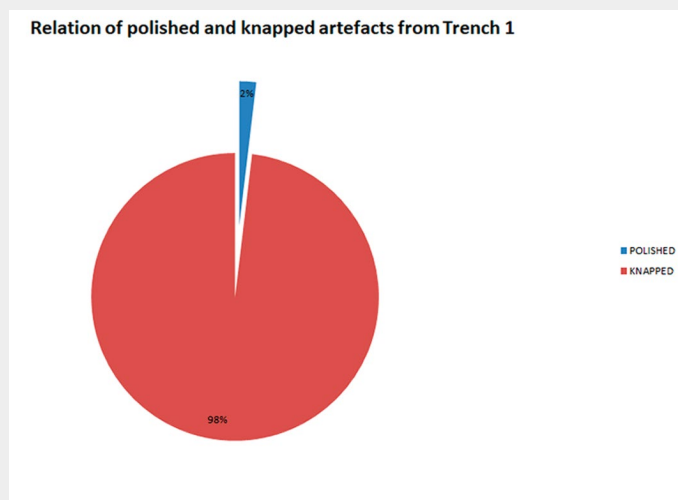
Out of the 156 knapped artefacts from Trench 1, 30 can be dated to the Neolithic, 105 to the Eneolithic, 10 to the Bronze Age and 5 to the Iron Age period respectively, while 6 artefacts were recovered from mixed layers (Fig. 10).

The earliest layers from the Rača Cave yielded a total of 30 finds from five stratigraphic units (52, 54, 61, 78 and 79), and the technological and typological analysis of these stone tools will be presented here.

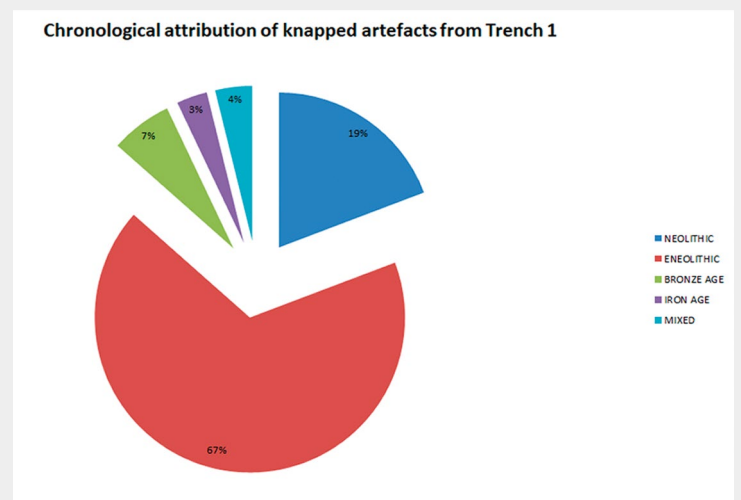
### Analysis of knapped stone tools

Knapped stone tools are typically divided into four main technological categories: cores, tools (artefacts with a retouch), debitage (unretouched flakes and blades), and debris (shattered or indeterminate fragments). In the Rača assemblage, tools account for the majority of finds, representing 83.33% (25 artefacts). Debitage makes up 6.66% (2 artefacts), while debris constitutes 10% (3 artefacts). Cores were not recorded in the earliest layers at Rača Cave (Fig. 11).

Debitage includes all pieces with clearly identifiable dorsal and ventral surfaces, lacking retouch, and measuring more than 15 mm in either length or width. Both specimens (SU 61 and SU 52-8) have a length-to-width ratio of less than 2 and are classified as flakes. The dorsal surface of one artefact has a tiny amount of cortex (less than 1% of the surface).



▲ Figure 9. Relation of polished and knapped artefacts from Trench 1 (A. Đukić)



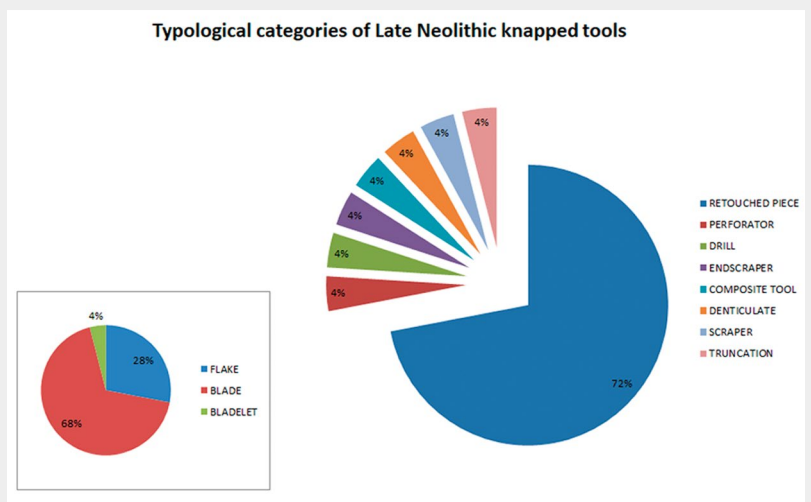
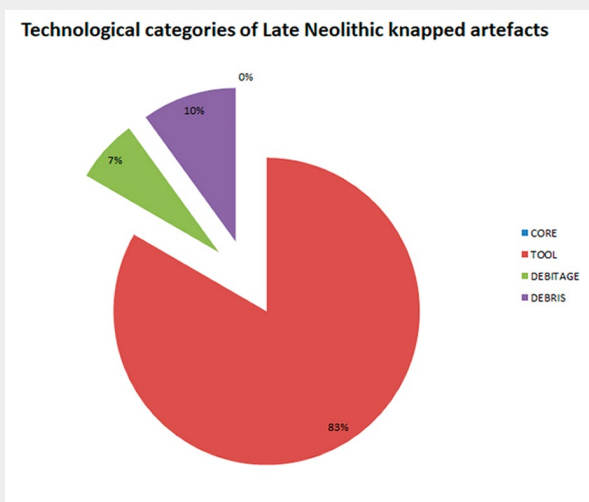
▲ Figure 10. Chronological attribution of knapped artefacts from Trench 1 (A. Đukić)

The debris category comprises three artefacts, i.e. three shapeless fragments of broken stone (one from SU 78 and two from SU 79). The dorsal surface of one piece displays partial cortical coverage (approximately 60% of its surface).

The tool category includes all artefacts exhibiting clear evidence of retouch. The earliest layers from Rača Cave yielded 25 tools in total. Of these, seven were produced on flakes, seventeen on blades, and one on a bladelet (Fig. 12). Cortex was recorded on the dorsal side of five tools (20%). The proportion of cortex varies between artefacts, but generally averages around 15%, with one exception – a retouched piece made on a primary decortication flake, which displays about 80% of surface coverage.

In total, seven distinct tool types were identified within this assemblage. Retouched pieces constitute the majority, representing 68% of the assemblage (18 artefacts; six on flakes, 11 on blades and one on a bladelet). The remaining tool types are each represented by a single specimen (4% each): perforator (SU 52-1; on a flake, where the distal part is shaped into a perforator: Pl. 7: 11), an end scraper (SU 52-2; on a blade, continuous, partially-double sided fine flaky retouch on the lateral edges; Pl. 7: 7), a composite tool (SU 52-12; on a blade; a fragment of the distal part of an end scraper with fine two-sided retouch on the proximal side), a denticulate (SU 52-7; on a blade, continuous fine flaky retouch on the distal and right edge; Pl. 7: 7), a scraper (SU 61-2; on a blade, continuous fine flaky retouch on the distal and lateral edges; partially double-sided on the left edge; Pl. 7: 8), a drill (SU 52-6; on a blade, fine flaky retouch on the distal and lateral edges; Pl. 7: 10), and a truncation (SU 52-5; on a blade, fine flaky retouch on the distal and lateral edges). Retouched blades are the most common tool class (11 retouched pieces and seven tools out of the 25; i.e. 72%).

Most of the artefacts were made on prismatic blades with trapezoidal (Pl. 7: 1, 2, 5, 7-8, 10) or triangular cross-sections (Pl. 7: 3), which corresponds with the findings from contemporaneous caves on the surrounding islands, for example in Nakovana on Pelješac, where a trend of using prismatic blades has been recorded since the very beginning of the Neolithic, becoming increasingly more common, and increasingly modified into tools as the Neolithic progressed (Forenbaher and Perhoč 2017: 22). Retouched blades, or blade fragments, such as these ones from Rača Cave, appear there in the Middle Neolithic, while in the Late Neolithic and later periods they represent the dominant tool type (Forenbaher and Perhoč 2017: 31).



▲ Figure 11. Technological categories of Late Neolithic knapped artefacts (A. Đukić)

▲ Figure 12. Typological categories of Late Neolithic knapped tools (A. Đukić)

## Production, use and disposal of knapped stone artefacts

The assemblage of knapped stone artefacts from the Late Neolithic phase of occupation at Rača Cave is relatively small and offers limited insight into the production processes. According to the stages of the *chaîne opératoire* as defined by Karavanić (2004, 68–69), the procurement phase (Phase 0) is entirely absent from this context. Phase 1, represented by flakes, blades, and platelets completely covered by cortex, is likewise missing. Phase 2 is represented by blades and flakes partially covered with cortex, recorded on 7 out of the 30 artefacts in the assemblage (23.33%), the most notable being a primary decortication flake (Pl. 7: 6; about 80% coverage), and a piece of debris (about 60% coverage). The central production phase (Phase 3) includes artefacts without cortex, and is the most prominent in this assemblage (23 out of 30, or 76.66%). Debris could correspond to any stage of the production sequence, while the final stage is represented by the discarding of artefacts.

The complete absence of early production phases suggests that these artefacts were introduced to the site in their finished form rather than produced locally. Furthermore, there is no evidence of *in situ* knapping (such as small chips, flakes, or failed attempts at shaping blades). This pattern indicates that the artefacts were likely brought to Rača Cave as completed tools, which were then repaired or modified when they became less functional.

Signs of use are visible in the form of small, irregular retouch, likely resulting from intensive tool use. However, due to the very low density of artefacts relative to the excavated layers, it is not possible to draw firm conclusions about the patterns of their deposition.

Although small in number, this assemblage of knapped stone artefacts displays characteristics comparable to contemporaneous Late Neolithic assemblages from the Adriatic region. For example, in Neolithic Phase 4 at Nakovana (Pelješac), a high frequency of tools was recorded, retouched blades dominate the assemblage, flakes were used to produce perforators or were simply retouched, and bilaterally retouched artefacts outnumber those with unilateral retouch (Forenbaher and Perhoč 2015). Comparable features are also observed in the Neolithic layers of Žukovica Cave on Korčula, where laterally retouched prismatic and trapezoidal blades and bifacial points comprise the majority of tools, accompanied by end scrapers and drills (Forenbaher and Perhoč 2020). Similarly, Horizon G at Pupičina Peć exhibits a ratio of blades/bladelets to flakes (3.5:1) that is similar to that from Rača Cave (3.16:1), with both assemblages showing a predominance of tools made on bilaterally retouched prismatic and trapezoidal blades (Forenbaher 2006). Further parallels can be drawn with Phases 1 and 2 at Grapčeva Cave (Hvar), which display a similar frequency of formal tools and a preference for prismatic blades (Forenbaher 2006). Certain similarities are also evident in Phase 3 at Vela Peć near Vranje (Istria), particularly in the use of flakes for producing perforators and the application of fine bilateral retouch (Forenbaher and Nikitović 2007–2008).

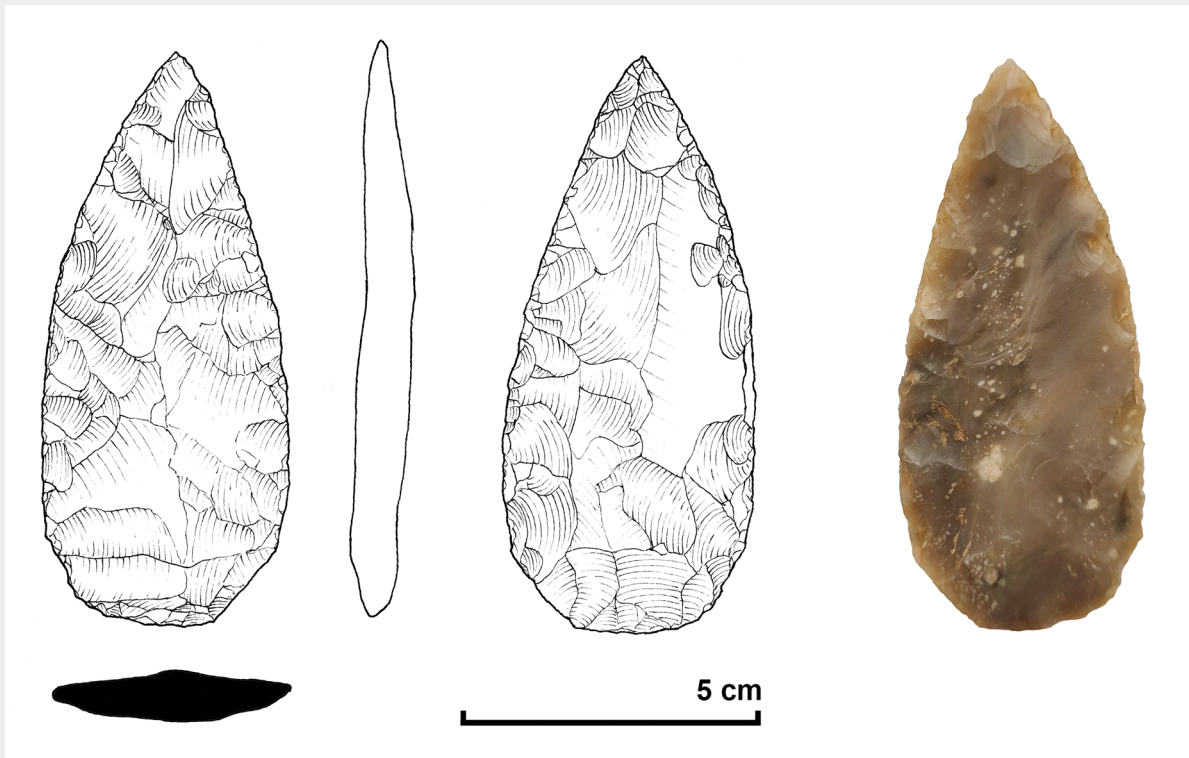
### Leaf-shaped point

Four artefacts with bifacial, i.e. two-sided, retouch stand out among the knapped stone tool assemblage from Rača Cave. These are artefacts that have been retouched on both the dorsal and ventral side with the use of a shaping technique that can be used to produce choppers, leaf-shaped points or arrowheads (Inizan *et al* 1999: 43). In Rača, this technique was used to produce three arrowheads and one leaf-shaped point (Fig. 13). Unfortunately, the point and one of the arrowheads were found outside of the archaeological context.

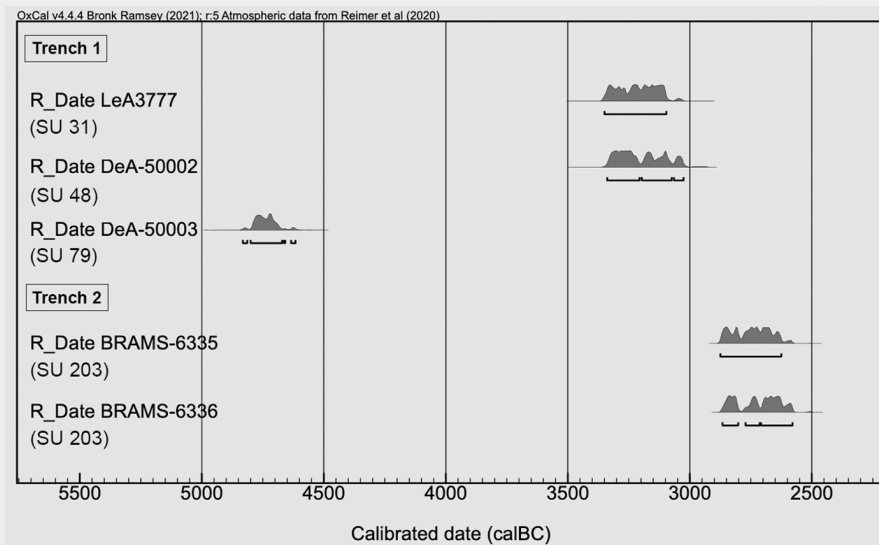
The largest, and arguably most interesting, bifacial artefact from the Rača Cave was discovered in an ashy “layer” adjacent to Trench 3 (in sediment discarded from the trench during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century excavations, and therefore cannot be chronologically defined)<sup>1</sup>. The item measures 9.9 cm in length, 4.3 cm in width, 0.9 cm in thickness, and weighs 47.45 g.

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<sup>1</sup> Trench 3 was placed north of the cave entrance, next to a previously excavated trench that was made by Grga Novak's team in 1953. The aim of research in Trench 3 is to revise the older excavation and collect new data that will enable the correction of the chronological-cultural framework that Novak set for this part of the cave (Drnić 2024: 42).



▲ Figure 13. Bifacial point from Rača Cave (M. Galić, I. Drnić)



▲ Figure 14. Radiocarbon dating of the layers of Rača Cave

This is an exceptionally rare type of artefact in this part of the Adriatic, and can be compared to a single, somewhat analogous, find discovered in the Jami na Sredi Cave on the island of Cres in the 1960s (Miroslavljević 1967, 82, fig. 1, fig. 2). It is an object that was found in a rather unclear context (the author mentions Neolithic and Mesolithic finds), and which, according to stylistic characteristics (willow leaf shape) and production technique (bifacial thinning of the object, special processing at the edge and micro-processing at the very edge), was defined as an Aurignacian point. The dimensions of this object are truly impressive – length: 15.2 cm; width: 3.5

cm; and thickness: 1 cm (Miroslavljević 1967, 82, fig. 1, fig. 2). The find from Cres is slightly more than 5 cm longer than the find from Lastovo, but the biggest differences are visible in the method of manufacture and the quality of raw material processing. Namely, the find from Cres is significantly thinner and more elegant, and has some visible traces of the use of the pressure technique – including small, regular, thin, shallow and somewhat parallel flake scars with almost no ripples, that are generally localized on the distal end of the point. Such traces were not established on the find from Rača Cave. It is difficult to speak about the origin, purpose and possible use of the object. Bifacially processed stone artefacts are rare in prehistoric contexts in the Adriatic, and their presence may indicate a role that goes beyond a purely practical function. Instead of everyday use, such objects may have served as symbols of prestige, identity or social status – perhaps even in ritual or ceremonial contexts. Given the technical complexity of the manufacture and, often, the distant origin of the raw material, it is possible that they were made for a specific purpose, in order to visually communicate the power, knowledge or connections of the one who owns them. In this sense, the find from Rača, as one of only two known leaf-shaped bifacial points from the Croatian islands, is particularly significant because it represents a rare material trace of technology and symbolism that only appears marginally. Its presence on the island may indicate occasional contacts with more distant communities, the transfer of specific knowledge, or even individual movements of craftsmen, thus gaining value beyond its functionality – as an indicator of social exchange, prestige, or identity within the local community.

## ► Absolute dating

At the current state of research, five radiocarbon dates are available for the prehistoric layers of Rača Cave (Fig. 14). The oldest date, 4840–4610 cal BC ( $5864 \pm 31$ ; DeA-50003), was obtained from an animal bone collected from stratigraphic unit 79 associated with pottery of the Hvar culture from Trench 1. This places the dated stratigraphic unit within the classic phase of the Hvar culture (Forenbaher *et al.* 2014).

The Late Neolithic horizon in Trench 1 is followed by a thick occupation horizon with several stratigraphic units containing Nakovana-style pottery. Two radiocarbon dates are available for stratigraphic units 48 (3340–3020 cal BC /  $4469 \pm 30$ - DeA-50002) and 31 (3350–3090 cal BC/ $4500 \pm 28$  - LeA3777). These dates, obtained from animal bones associated with finds of characteristic material culture, point to a possible human presence in Rača during the Early Copper Age of the eastern Adriatic coast (Forenbaher 1999-2000; Forenbaher *et al.* 2014).

The last two dates were obtained from human bones collected in Trench 2, located in Chamber 3, and suggest possible inhumations in the Late Copper Age, around 2857 cal BC (BRAMS-6335 and 6336).

## ► Conclusion

Although Rača Cave was already known as a Late Neolithic site, recent excavations, combined with analyses of the material culture and absolute dating, have provided a more detailed picture of the cave's earliest occupation, beginning in the early 5th millennium BC, as well as of the broader settlement history of the island of Lastovo. To date, no other Neolithic sites have been identified on the island; only a few stray finds of pottery and stone artefacts collected from various fields vaguely suggest the possible existence of open-air sites (Della Casa *et al.* 2008). Research at other cave sites on the island, such as Jama pod Pozalicu and Hrastovska Cave, have only recently begun and so far has yielded ceramic material dating from the Middle/Late Bronze Age and later periods. The only earlier finds, dating to the Early/Middle Neolithic, are known from the island of Sušac, which belongs to the Lastovo Archipelago and served as one of the key points along the route from the Gargano Peninsula in Italy to the eastern Adriatic (Forenbaher and Perhoč 2015; Forenbaher 2021).

Typical Hvar-culture pottery style, alongside lithic artefacts made from Gargano chert recovered from Rača Cave, clearly demonstrates that the Late Neolithic community of Lastovo was fully integrated into both eastern Adriatic and trans-Adriatic communication networks. Although the name of this particular pottery style specifically references the island of Hvar, there is currently insufficient archaeological evidence to suggest that the Hvar culture

originated or began spreading from the island itself (Forenbaher 2002). Besides Grapčeva Cave (Forenbaher and Kaiser 2008), archaeological material attributed to the Hvar culture has also been discovered at several other southern Dalmatian sites, including Markova Cave on the island of Hvar, Vela Spila and Žukovica Cave on the island of Korčula (Čečuk and Radić 2005; Radić 2008), Bubnjevača Cave near Makarska, Turska Cave in Jesenice near Omiš (Tomasović 2002), several potsherds from Krajičina Cave on the island of Vis (Kaiser and Forenbaher 2002), and Rača Cave on the island of Lastovo.

At the transition from the 5th to the 4th millennium BC, the Hvar pottery style organically evolved into the Nakovana pottery style of the Early Copper Age on the eastern Adriatic coast, as suggested by the thick occupation layer excavated in Trench 1, but also transitional layers of Vela Spila and Grapčeva Cave (Čečuk and Radić 2005; Forenbaher and Kaiser 2008).

### Najranije naseljavanje špilje Rače na otoku Lastovu u kontekstu kasnoga neolitika istočne jadranske obale

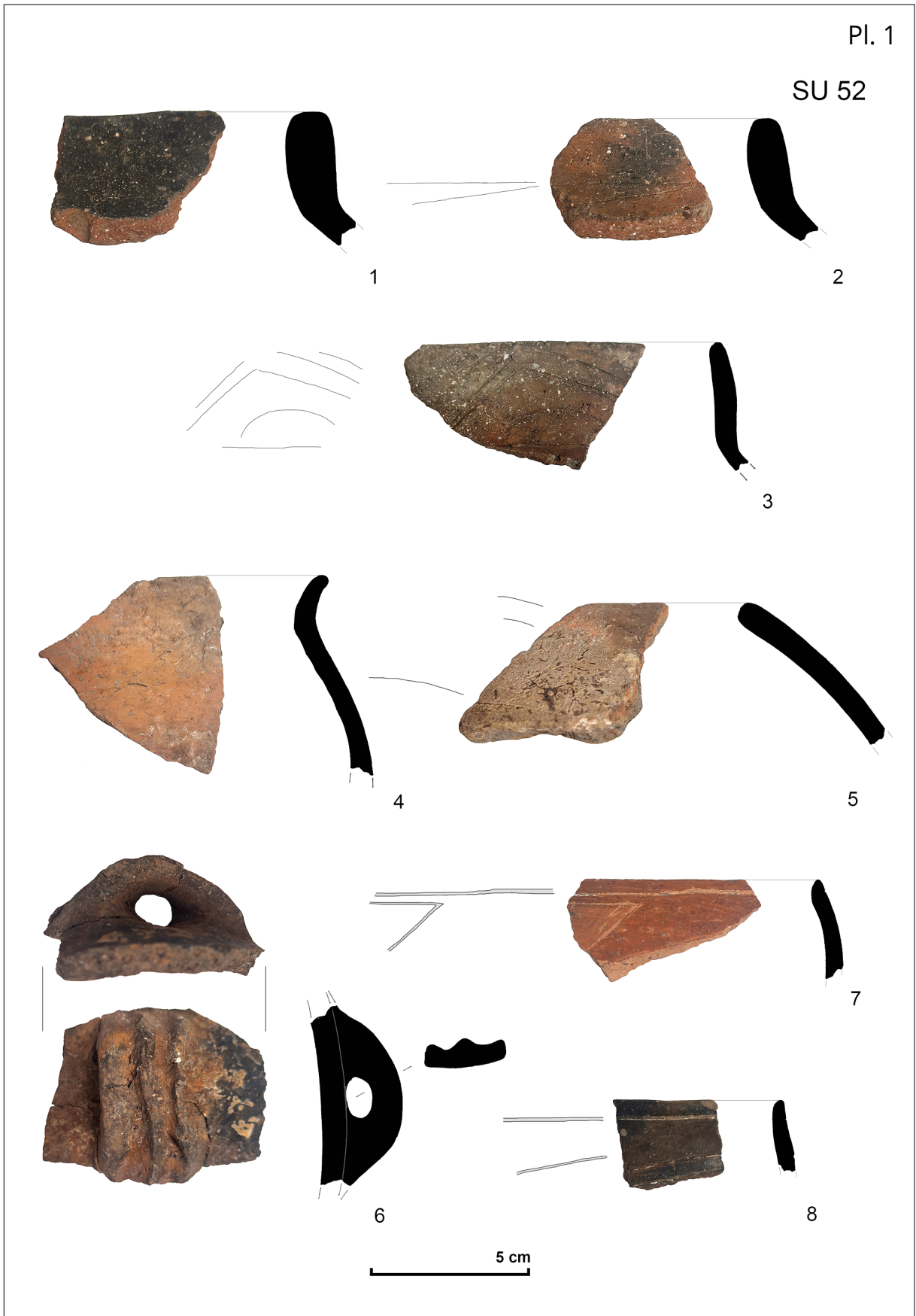
Ovaj rad obrađuje najraniju fazu naseljenosti špilje Rače, smještene u jugoistočnom dijelu Lastova, koja predstavlja jedino poznato neolitičko nalazište na otoku. Iako je špilja bila predmet ranijih iskopavanja provedenih tijekom 1940-ih i 1950-ih godina, novija arheološka istraživanja koja od 2021. godine provodi Arheološki muzej u Zagrebu u suradnji sa suradničkim institucijama donijela su nove podatke i arheološki materijal. Analiza keramičkog skupa, koji uključuje ulomke ukrašene u karakterističnom stilu hvarske kulture, smješta ovaj horizont u kasnoneolitičko razdoblje istočne jadranske obale. Ova kronološka atribucija dodatno je potvrđena rezultatima radiokarbonskih datiranja. Uz ulomke keramičkih posuda, iskopavanja su rezultirala i brojnim drugim arheološkim nalazima, među kojima se ističu kamene izrađevine koje su također predmet analiza u ovom radu.

**Ključne riječi:** Lastovo, špilja Rača, kasni neolitik, hvarska kultura, keramika, kamene izrađevine

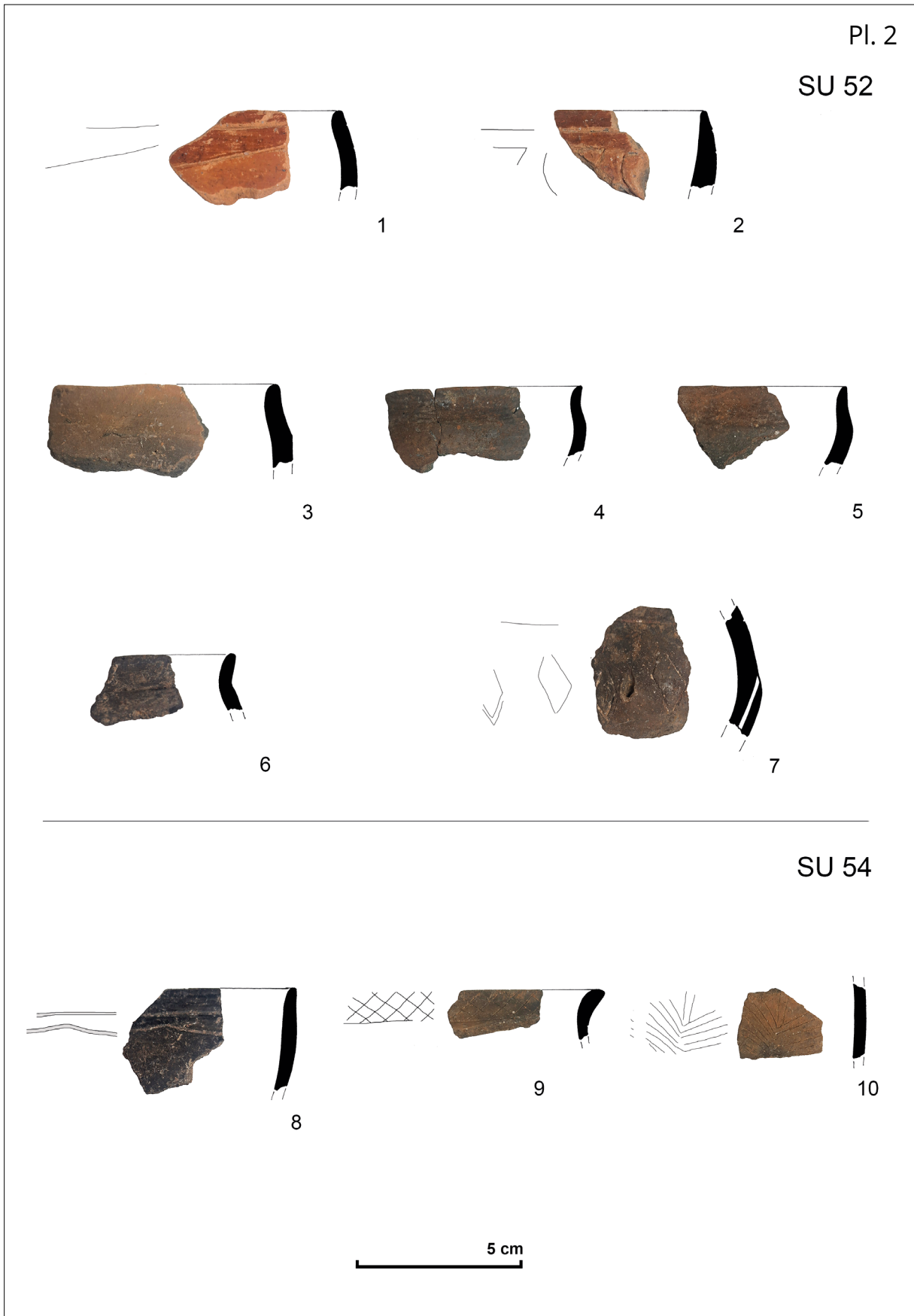
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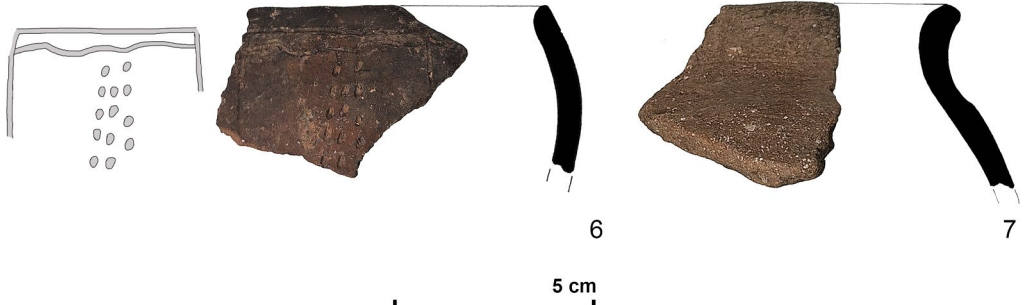
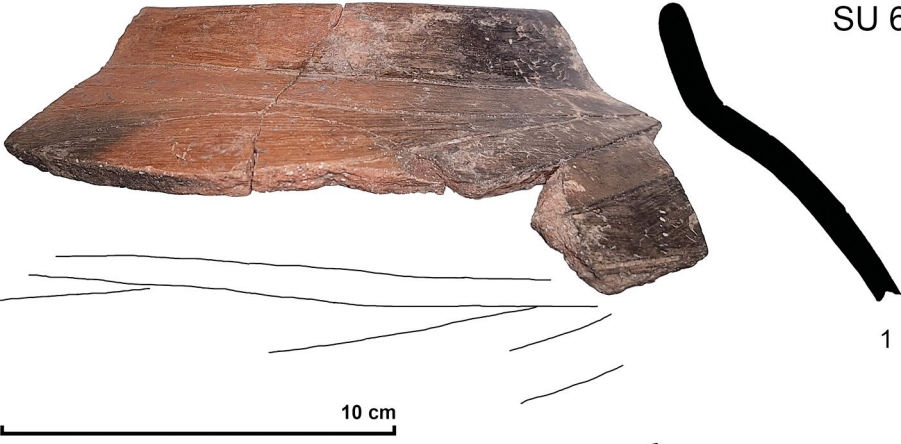
▲ Plate 1. (Kristina Brkić Drnić, Miljenka Galić, Ivan Drnić)



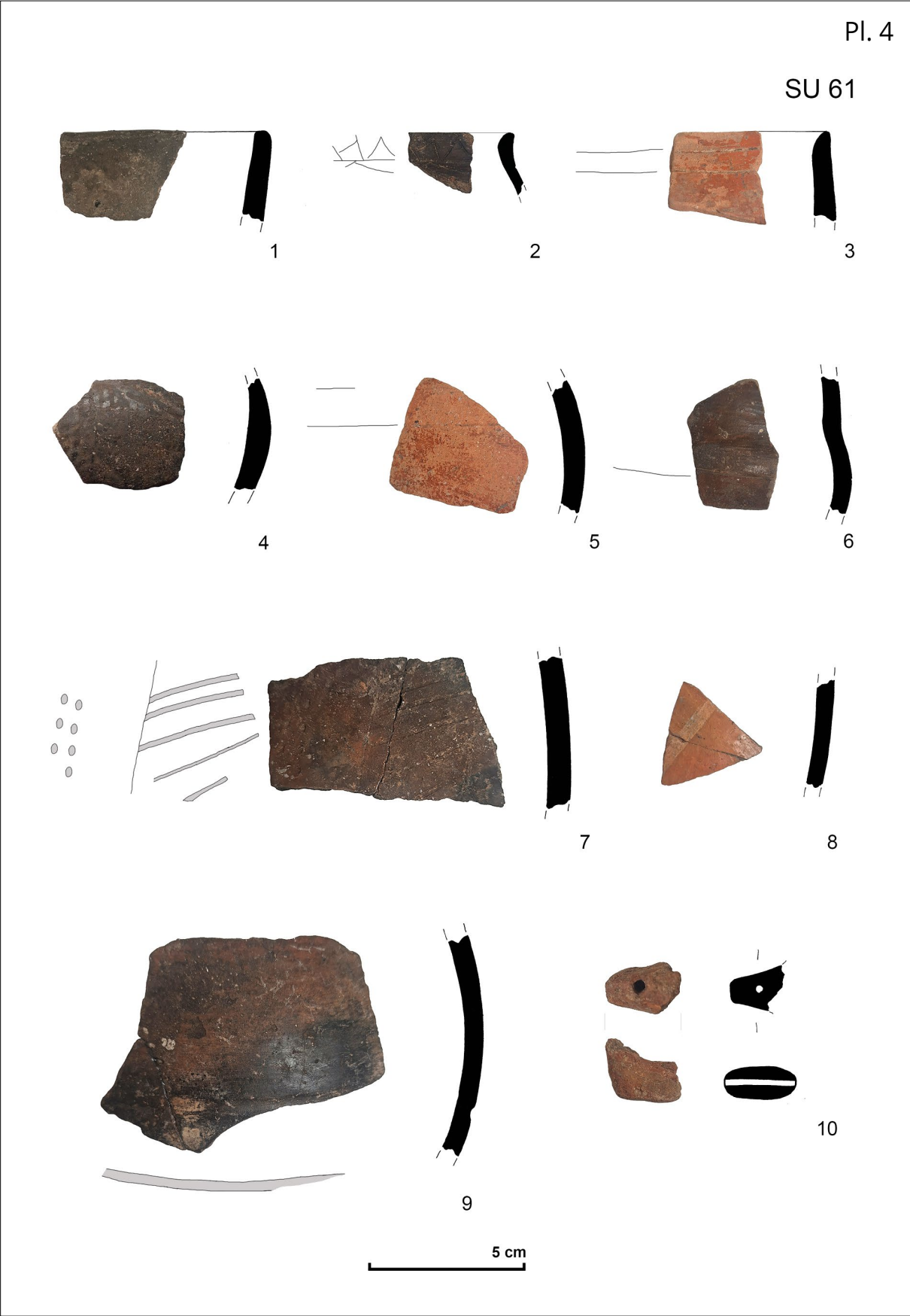
▲ Plate 2. (Kristina Brkić Drnić, Miljenka Galić, Ivan Drnić)

Pl. 3

SU 61



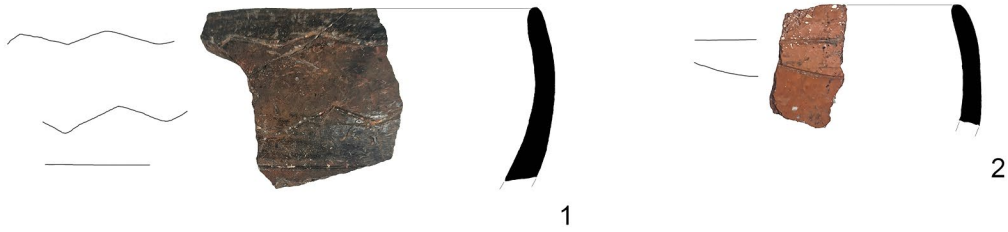
▲ Plate 3. (Kristina Brkić Drnić, Miljenka Galić, Ivan Drnić)



▲ Plate 4. (Kristina Brkić Drnić, Miljenka Galić, Ivan Drnić)

Pl. 5

SU 65

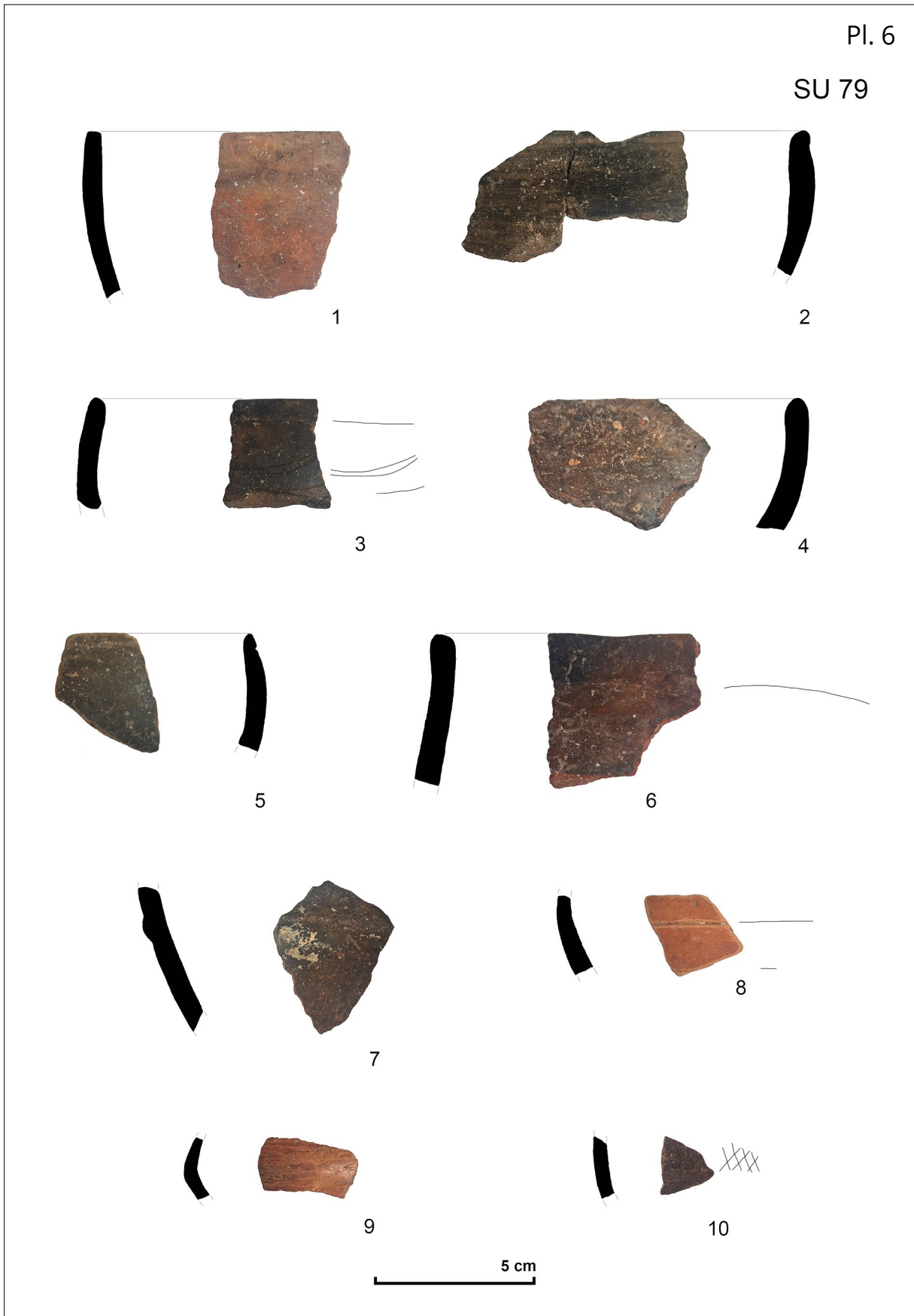


SU 66



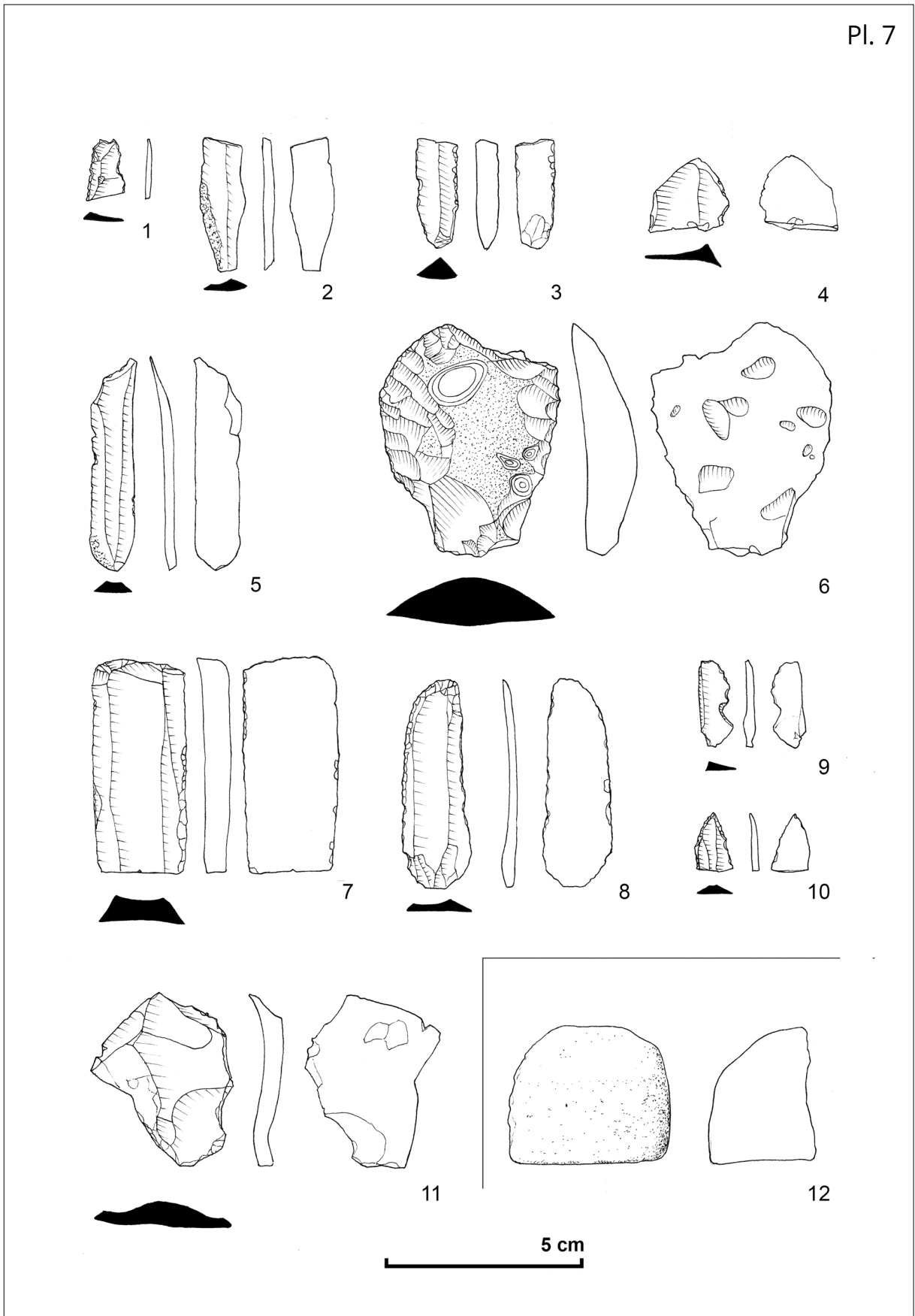
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▲ Plate 5. (Kristina Brkić Drnić, Miljenka Galić, Ivan Drnić)



▲ Plate 6. (Kristina Brkić Drnić, Miljenka Galić, Ivan Drnić)

Pl. 7



▲ Plate 7. Selection of Late Neolithic knapped stone tools from Rača (SU 52, SU 61) (Miljenka Galić, Ana Đukić)