

# Pottery from the Bribir – Štale cemetery excavation

## A contribution to the knowledge of Medieval pottery of the Vinodol Valley (NE Adriatic, Croatia)

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Bribir - Štale in 1913  
(courtesy of Vinodolska Općina Municipality)

In 2021, the Institute of Archaeology conducted a rescue excavation in the southwest segment of the cemetery at the Štale site, located just outside the Medieval fortified settlement of Bribir in the Vinodol Valley (northeastern Adriatic, Croatia) (Fig. 1). The excavation revealed approximately 90 graves, most of which showed evidence of subsequent depositions and other post-burial disturbances due to the intense use of the area for burial. Therefore, the actual number of buried individuals is likely higher. Radiocarbon dating of the earliest and latest phases of burial suggests that this part of the cemetery was in use between the late 11<sup>th</sup> and the 15<sup>th</sup> century. This dating is supported by the discovered jewelry, which was virtually the only find associated with the burials. Earlier data tentatively suggests a possible earlier date for the graves destroyed during building works in the 1950s.



A total of 238 pottery sherds were found within the infill of several graves and in the sediment into which they were dug (Tab. 1). Most of the sherds belong to walls of coarse ware vessels, while fine ware is found very sporadically. The presence of these sherds could not be linked to the graves themselves, as no fully preserved vessels were found associated with any of the deceased. Moreover, during the period discussed here, pottery was regionally no longer used as grave goods. Therefore, the reasons for its presence within the cemetery remain unclear, but it does offer an insight into the pottery circulating in the Vinodol Valley during the High Middle Ages. Identified shapes of coarse ware are pots, lids, and bowls, subdivided into several types. Fabrics are varied in color and types of inclusions (which are always present, but in different quantities), while surfaces of better-preserved sherds indicate smoothing and sometimes burnishing.

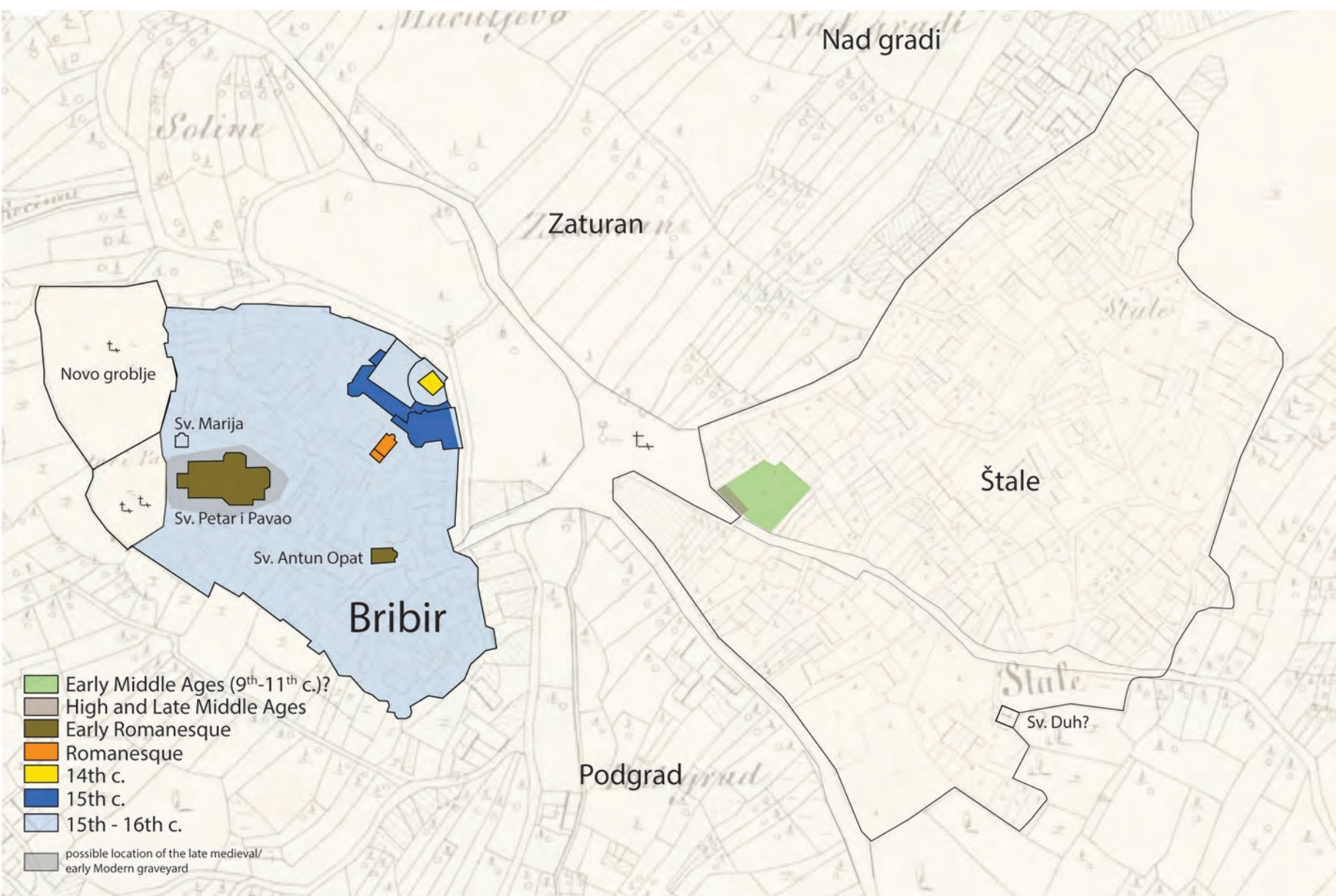
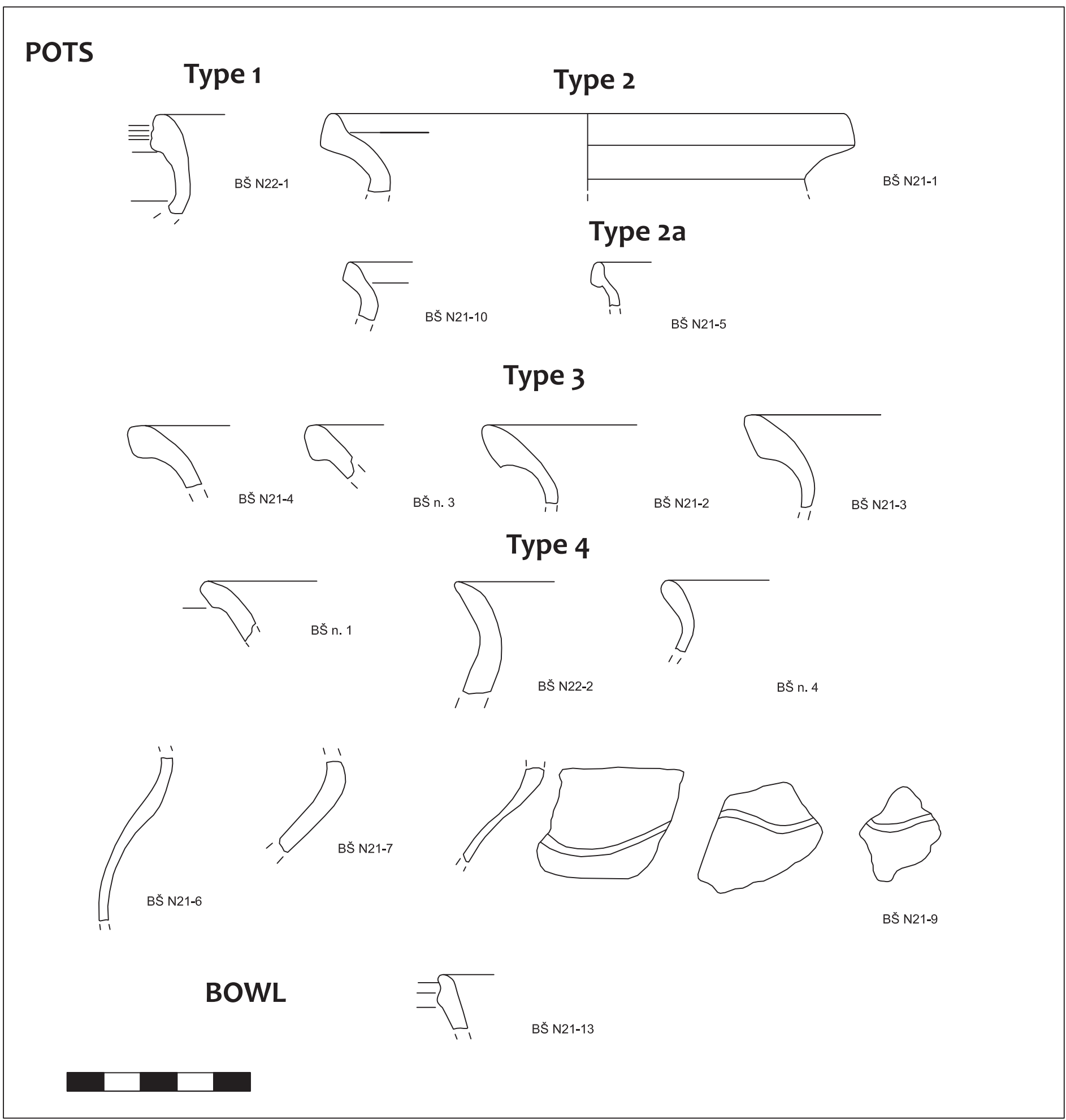


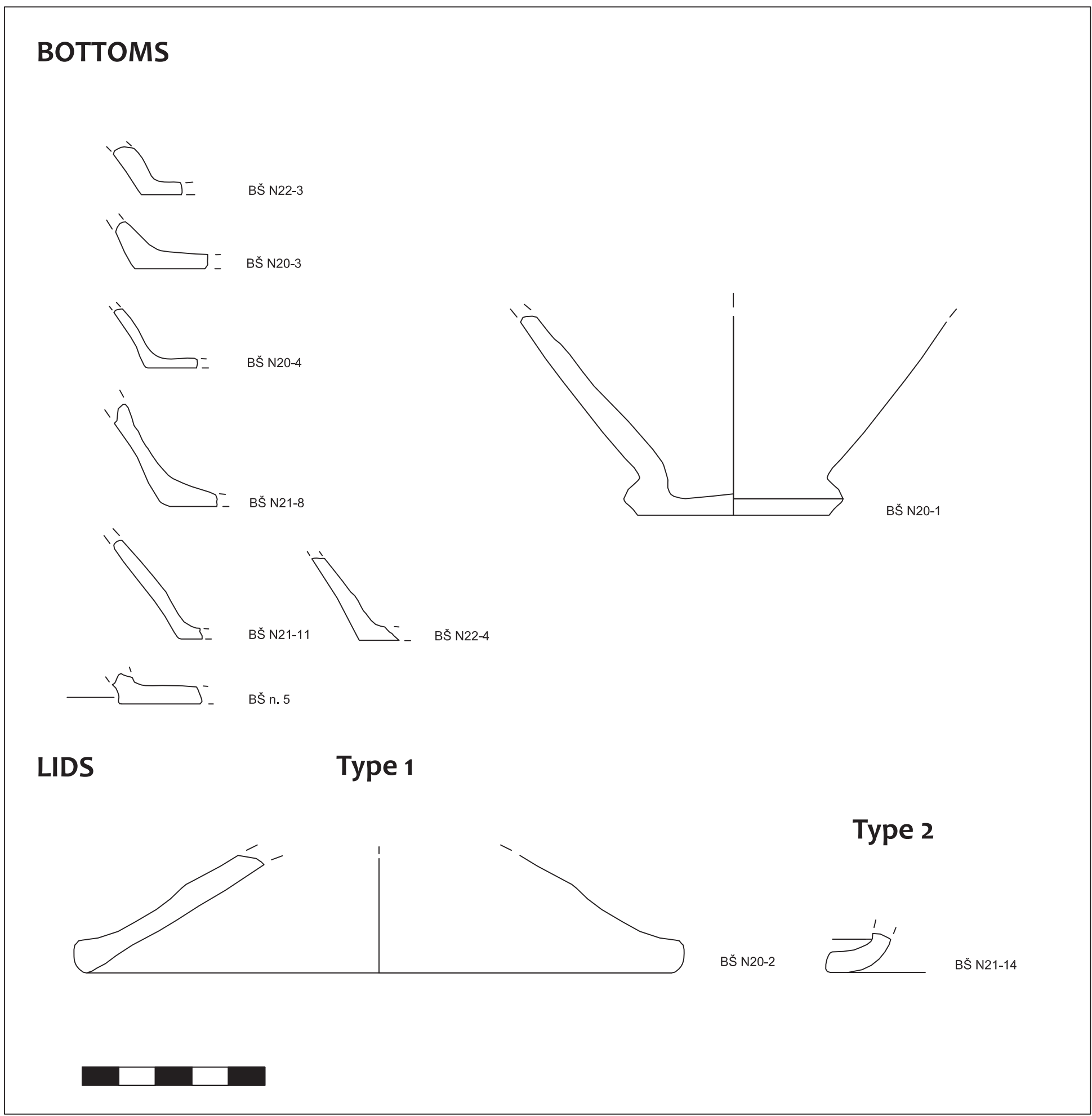
Fig. 1 - Reconstruction of the Medieval landscape of Bribir

US	G	N/U num.	Description	Walls	Rims	Bottoms	Drawing	TOT.
11	/	U144	Coarse ware	7				
71	16	1	U69	Coarse ware	1	1	n. 4	
134	25a	U234	Coarse ware	2				
69	16	U68	Coarse ware	7				
82	17		Coarse ware	2				
11			Coarse ware	7	1	4	n. 3	
100	23	1	U136	Glazed		1	n. 2	
11	Near G8		Coarse ware	4				
119	25		Coarse ware	5				
119	25		Glazed ware?	1				
85	17		Coarse ware	3		1		
237	64		Coarse ware	1				
11			Coarse ware	2	1		n. 1	
125	27		Coarse ware	3				
		U240	Coarse ware	2				
260			Coarse ware	1				
11			Coarse ware	5				
86	18	U106	Coarse ware	3				
11			Coarse ware	1				
		U242	Common ware	2				
37	10	U44	Pottery	3				
193/194		N20	Coarse ware	10	1	6	N20/1-5	
193		N21	Coarse ware	71	8	8	N21/1-14	
193		N21	Coarse ware - wall with incised wavy decoration	4				
193		N21	Coarse ware - wall with wavy decorations and sherds of same fabric	9				
Chance find			CBM - roof tile		1			
Chance find			Common ware	15		1	n. 5	
193	84/85/86	N22	Common ware	29	3	3		
20	9		Common ware	2				
TOT.				199	15	24		238

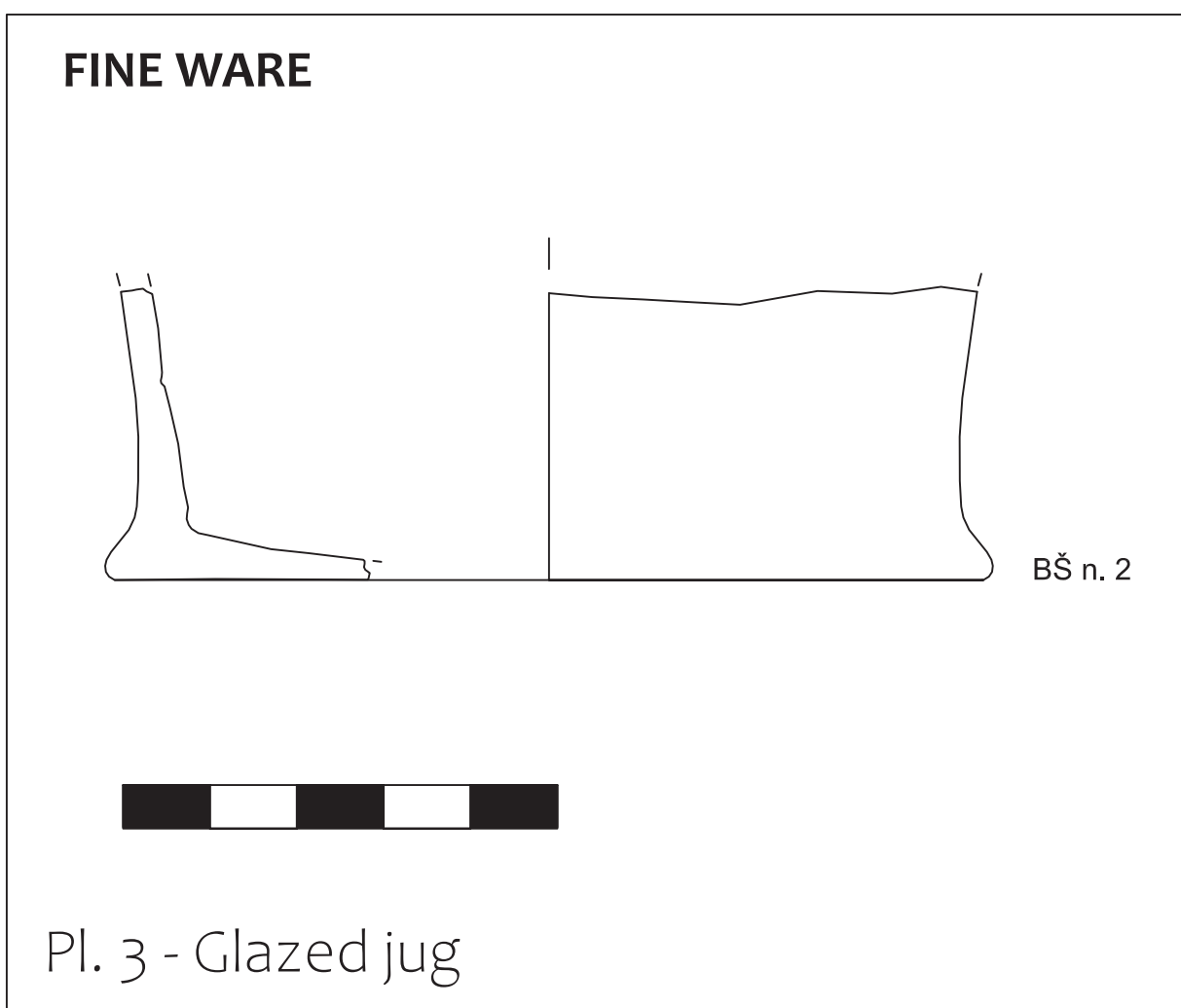
Tab. 1 - Quantification of the pottery



Pl. 1 - Pots - rims, walls, decorated walls; Casserole/Bowl



Pl. 2 - Bottoms; Lids



Pl. 3 - Glazed jug

Fragmentary and the ubiquitous difficulty of precise typological identification of coarse wares renders the study of this material challenging, especially within a regional context that lacks in-depth studies of Medieval coarse wares. Nevertheless, identified shapes find general analogies in the NE Adriatic region and Northern Italy. Type 2a pots are present at forts Badanj (Matejčić 1976-78) and Lopar (Novi Vinodolski) in the Vinodol valley, where the bowl rim finds analogies as well (Vrančić, Janeš 2020). Rims of Type 3 and simple everted rims such as Type 4 - N22-2 have been recognised in 11<sup>th</sup>-century layers at Petrapilosa in Istria (Višnjić 2019), while some variants are present in the Friuli area throughout the early Middle Ages (Castagna, Spagnol 1996). There, analogies for Type 2 are also present, suggesting a similar, 11<sup>th</sup> c. date, though the use of pots with rims with a groove for the lid seems to be somewhat longer (Gonnella et al. 2022). Evidence from Friuli might point towards a later date (14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> c.) for Type 1 pots. Single wavy decorations are present at Strančice cemetery in the Vinodol, though on differently shaped pots. Dating of the earliest pottery, and its context of recovery might point towards a different use of this area before it was designated as an extramural burial ground, possibly within the 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> c., while the modes of deposition of the possibly later shapes are still unclear.



Fig. 2 - Decorated sherds

