

## AMBER PROCESSING AND EXCHANGE AT THE LA TÈNE CULTURE SETTLEMENT IN SAMBOROWICE (POW. RACIBÓRZ / PL)

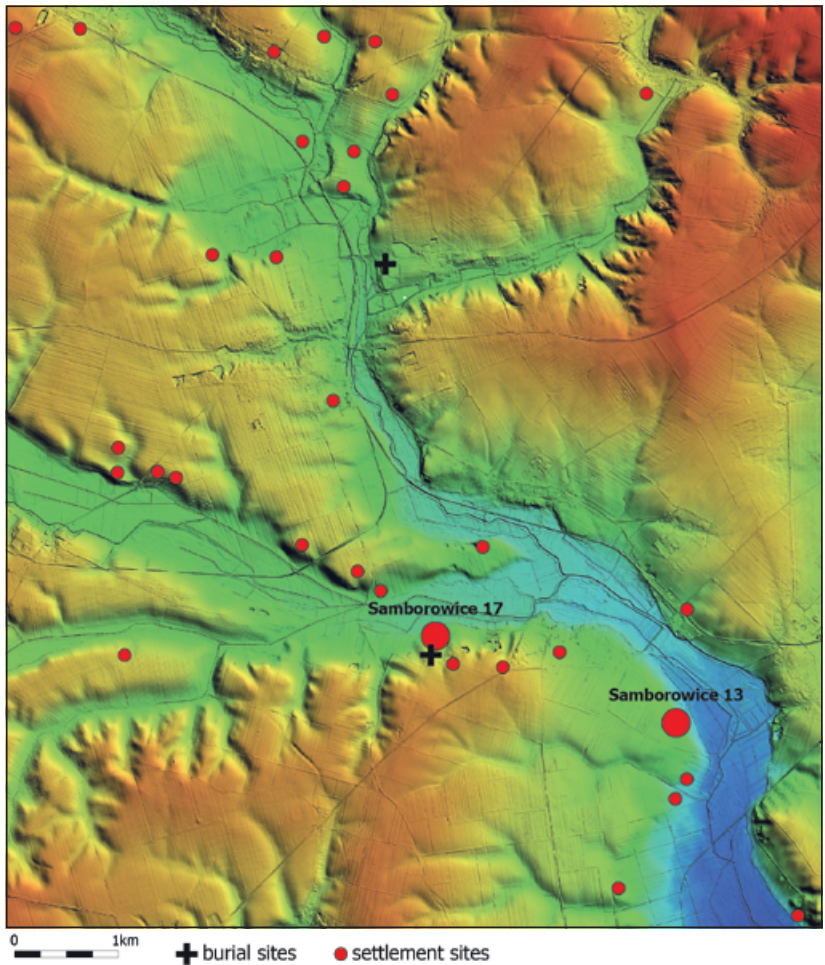
Long-distance amber trade is a subject that is often cited in the academic literature of Iron Age archaeology as a catalyst for a variety of intercultural contacts and connections. In many cases, it provides a rather simple and convenient explanation for several complex problems. This contrasts with the »hard data« on the procurement, processing and exchange of this raw material. This is particularly evident in the La Tène period, where the number of amber finds obtained, processed and distributed by the Celtic inhabitants of Central Europe is relatively small. Nevertheless, it is the representatives of the La Tène culture who should be seen as the community that initiated the long-distance exchange around the famous Amber Road, the operation of which is generally associated with the Roman period. The finds from Samborowice in Upper Silesia are part of the evidence supporting this hypothesis.

The area of Samborowice village (pow. Racibórz, woj. śląskie/PL) is the subject of interdisciplinary research on La Tène culture, which since 2012 has been conducted by the Silesian Museum in Katowice and the Institute of Archaeology of the University of Wrocław. In addition to the intensive field reconnaissance of the entire settlement micro-region, located in the basin of the Troja and Psina rivers (a left-bank tributary of the Oder) (Dulęba/Soida 2017), the excavation research focuses on sites 13 and 17 where remains of settlements of the La Tène culture have been discovered (**fig. 1**). These sites are typical examples of rural settlements which existed throughout the Upper Silesian enclave of the La Tène culture (**fig. 2**), the beginning of which is dated to the LT B1 phase. The decline is synchronised with the LT C2 phase (Dulęba 2019a, 150–153 **fig. 3**). Using magnetic geophysical surveys (Dulęba et al. 2015; 2016), we know that at these multiphase and multicultural sites, the settlement of the La Tène culture is extensive. It consists of buildings typical of this period, concentrated in isolated farmsteads. Agriculture and farming were the foundation of the economy of the local rural communities of Celtic people (Dulęba et al. 2021a; 2021b). The excavations conducted so far have provided data showing that the local community also engaged in a variety of crafts, with pottery, weaving, metallurgy (bronze object casting and iron smithing) and amber working at the top of the list. The latter of which will be presented in more detail in this article.

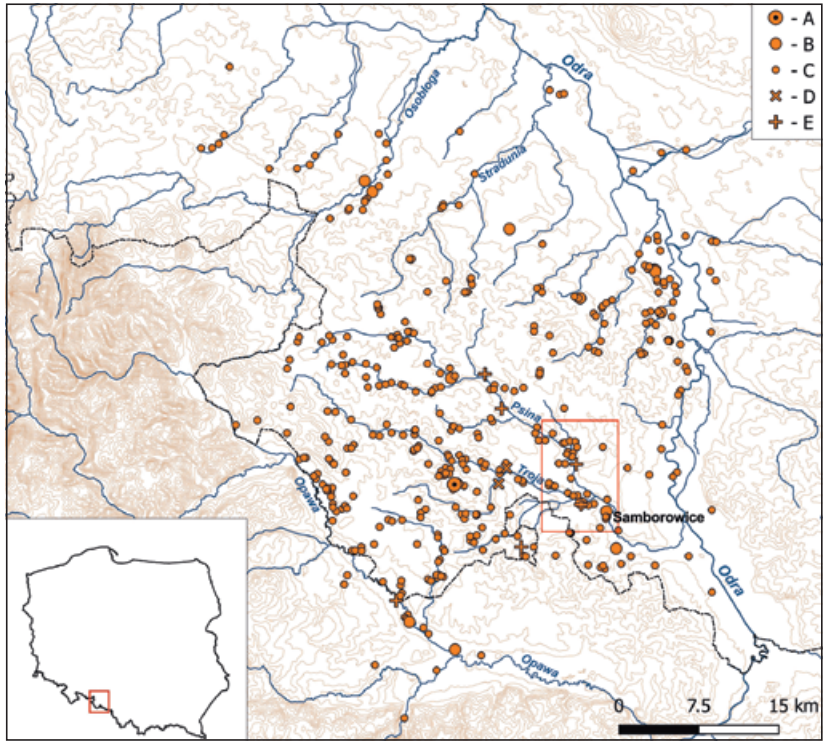
### CONTEXT OF FINDS – DESCRIPTION OF SITES AND FEATURES

#### Site 13

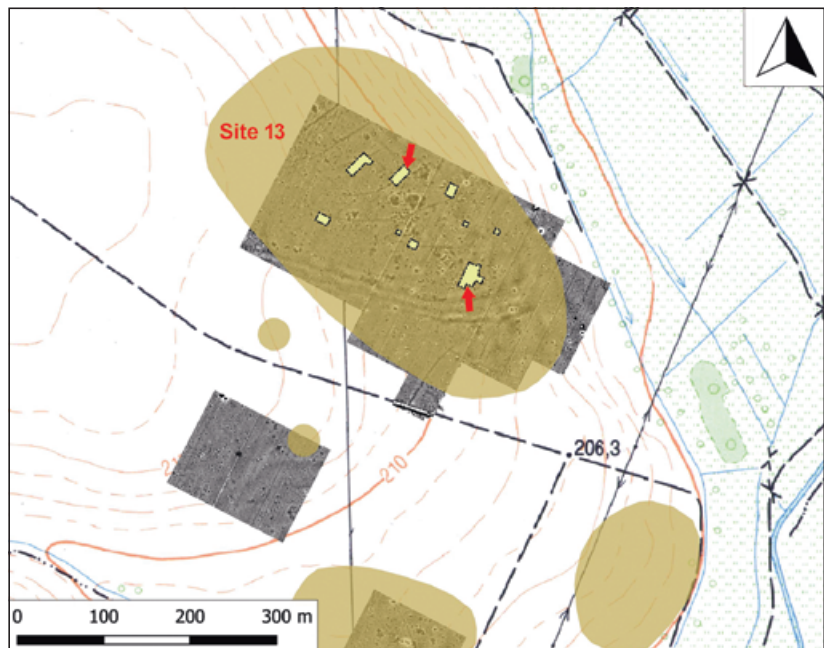
Traces confirming amber processing come from site 13, which is located in the eastern part of the Samborowice village precinct. It is an extensive multicultural site of at least a dozen hectares. Buildings from the La Tène period have so far been confirmed in three separate clusters, which correspond to separate village homesteads (**fig. 3**). Within one of the farmsteads (**fig. 4**) the well-preserved remains of a pit-house, designated as feature 85, were discovered (**figs 5–6**). It was distinguished from the other buildings of this type by its slightly larger-than-average size (about 6.5 m × 3.7 m) and a peculiar »bench« carved into the loess ground, located along the longer wall from about its centre to the southwest corner of the pit-house. This



**Fig. 1** Map of the La Tène culture sites in the Samborowice micro-region. – (Map J. Soida).

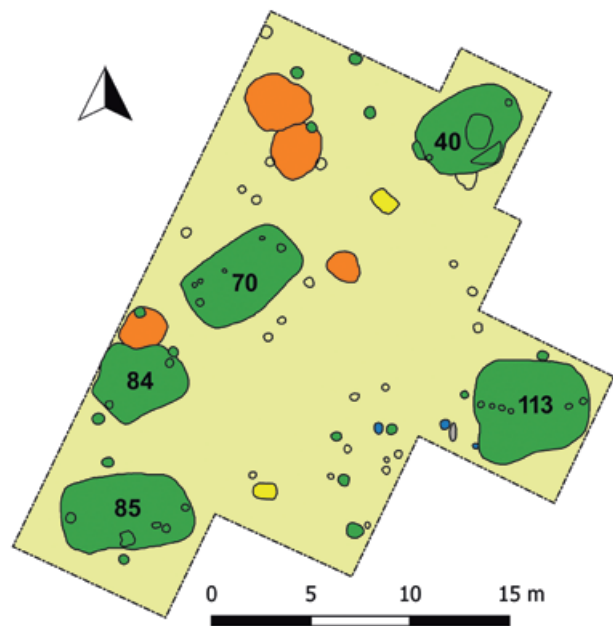


**Fig. 2** Map of La Tène culture sites in Upper Silesia: **A** central agglomeration. – **B** settlement identified by excavation research. – **C** trace of settlement. – **D** cemetery. – **E** single grave. – (Map P. Dułęba).

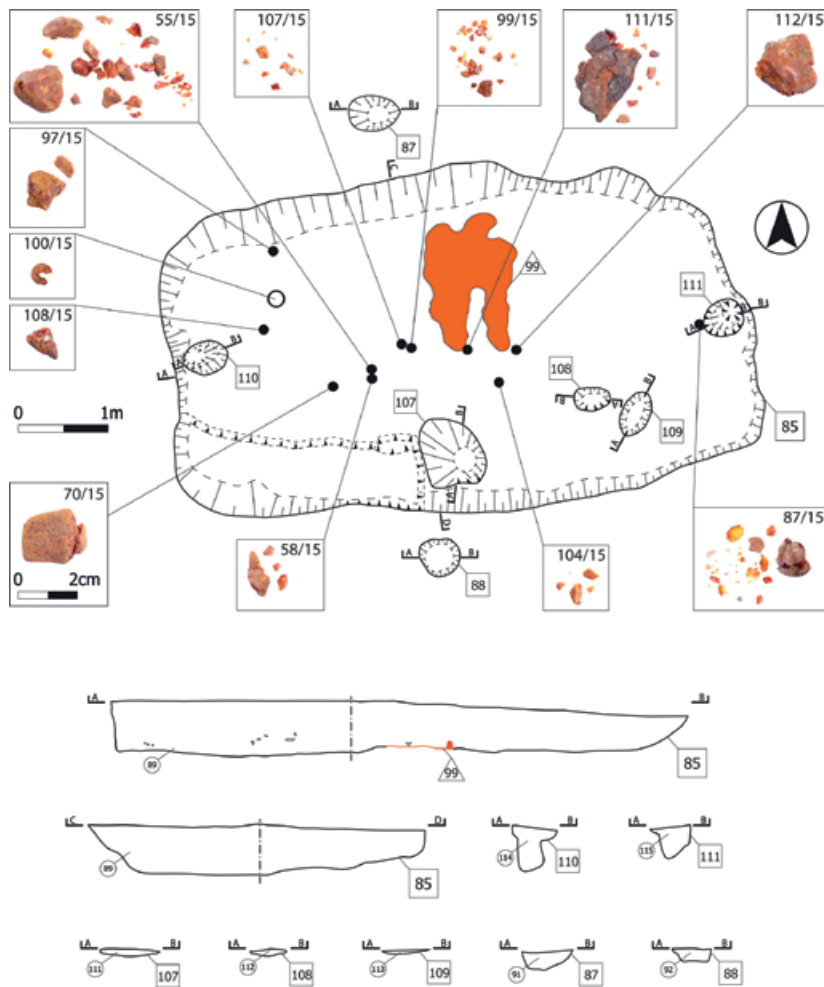


**Fig. 3** Plan of site 13 in Samborowice. The beige colour indicates the area of archaeological sites located on the basis of surface prospecting. The red arrows mark the research trench where buildings 85, 113 and 202 were discovered. – (Plan P. Dulęba / M. Mackiewicz / J. Soida / P. Wroniecki).

building, like most features of this type known from the Silesian area, was oriented with its longer axis on an east-west line. In the central part of the feature, traces of a fireplace were noted, in the form of a strong burn-through of the loess ground. Several smaller features were also distinguished in the bottom of the fill's negative, at least four of which were post relics. Two of them (features 110 and 111) were located at each of the short ends of the feature. Originally, they were probably part of a structure based on two posts, which carried a ridge beam, which in turn supported a roof truss. In the fill of feature 85, in addition to fragments of pottery vessels, metal ornaments, parts of clothing, stone and clay items, there were pieces of raw amber (fig. 7, 1–11). There was also a fragment of an amber bead (figs 7, 12; 8, 5 – see catalogue). Most of the amber was discovered in the bottom parts of the feature, in its western and central sections, near the fireplace. The location of their deposition does not appear to be accidental. For any manual work that requires precision and concentration, adequate lighting is essential. The workplace of an amber craftsman making small-sized beads had to be well-lit. The source of light was the fireplace and the workstation must have been in the area of the aforementioned bench. Which may also have served as a seat, used during amber processing. The finds presented here are the remains of a single workshop associated with a single production cycle. Such sites, as shown by well-studied Late Neolithic sites from the Vistula Fens area (Mazurowski 2014, 68–69), are dominated by production waste, cortical



**Fig. 4** Plan of the excavation in the eastern part of site 13 in Samborowice. The La Tène culture features are marked in green. – (Plan P. Dulęba).



**Fig. 5** Plan and profiles of feature 85 at site 13 in Samborowice with marked finds of raw amber. – (Plan J. Soida).

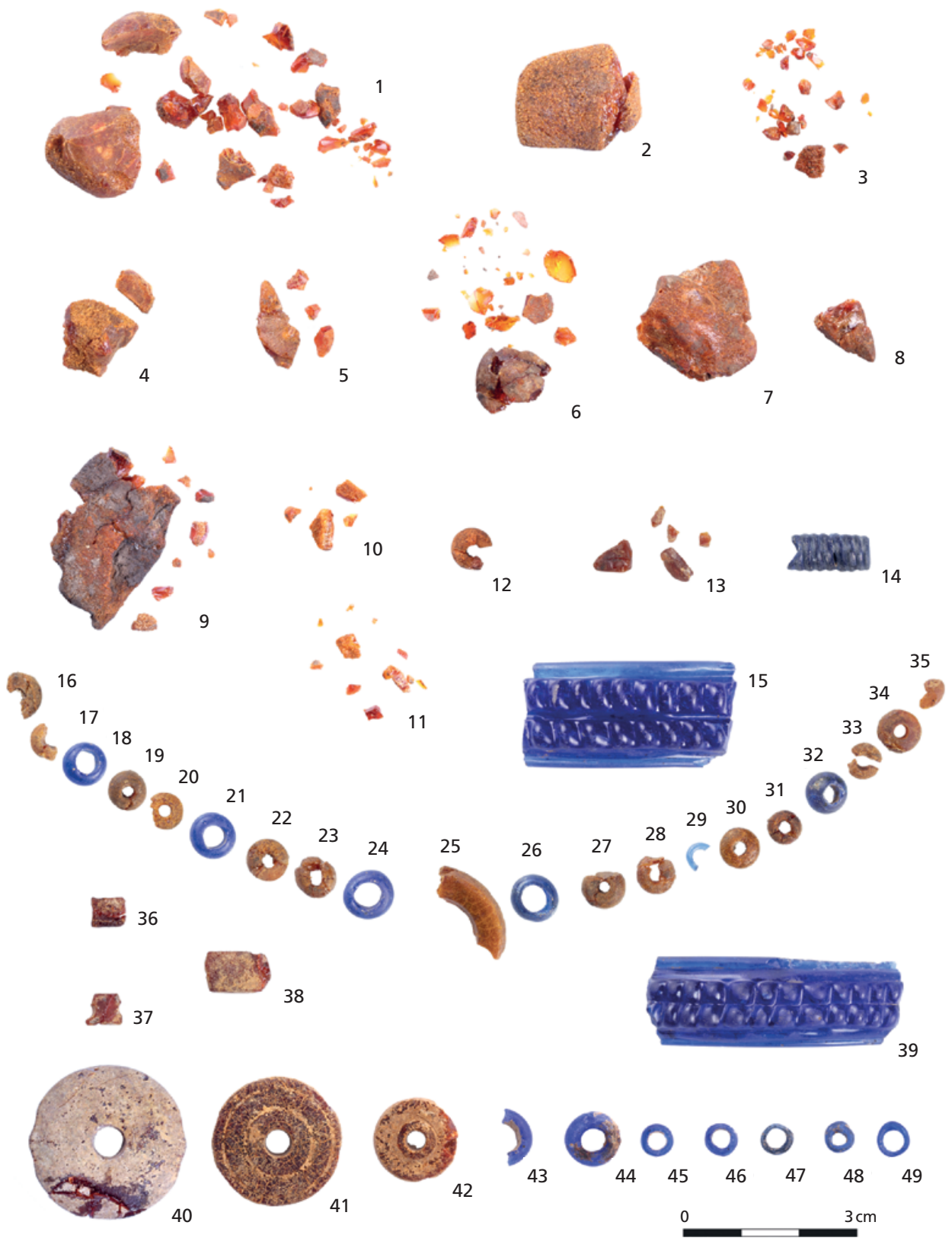


**Fig. 6** Negative of the fill of feature 85 at site 13 in Samborowice. – (Photo J. Soida).

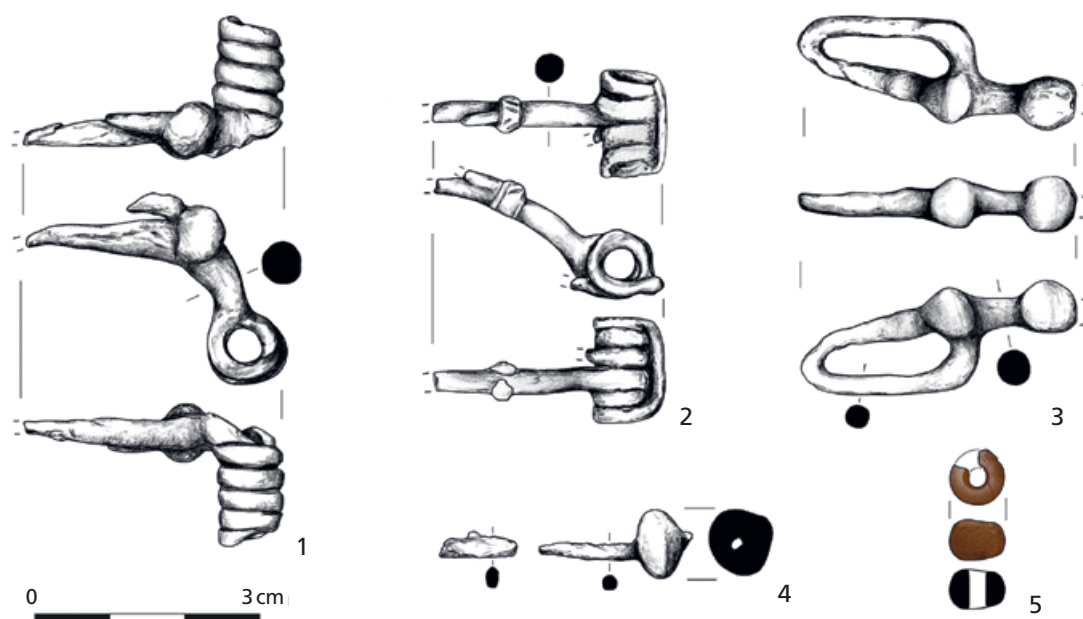
shells and flakes, damaged half-products. Finished products occur in negligible numbers, usually from 0–0.2 % of all finds.

Approximately 15m northeast of feature 85, within the same homestead, remains of another pit-house were uncovered, designated as feature 113. A weaving workshop was situated within this feature (Dulęba et al. 2020), as evidenced by more than a dozen loom weights deposited in two rows, directly on the bottom of the feature. There, a cluster of glass and amber beads was also found in the bottom section (figs 7, 16–35; 9, 5–24). Almost all of them rested in a small space, which suggests that they came from a single necklace. One piece differs significantly in shape and size from the others (fig. 9, 11). Although it was only preserved fragmentarily, in about one quarter of its size, we can reconstruct its outer diameter to be 2.5 cm.

150m northwest of the farmstead, which included features 85 and 113, two pit-houses and one resource cavity of the La Tène culture were discovered during the past research season in 2023 (fig. 10). In the fill



**Fig. 7** Amber and glass artefacts from sites 13 and 17 in Samborowice. – (Photos J. Soida). – Scale 1:1.



**Fig. 8** Selected artefacts from feature 85 at site 13 in Samborowice. – 1. 3–4 iron. – 2 iron and bronze. – 5 amber. – (Drawings N. Lenkowiak). – Scale 1:1.

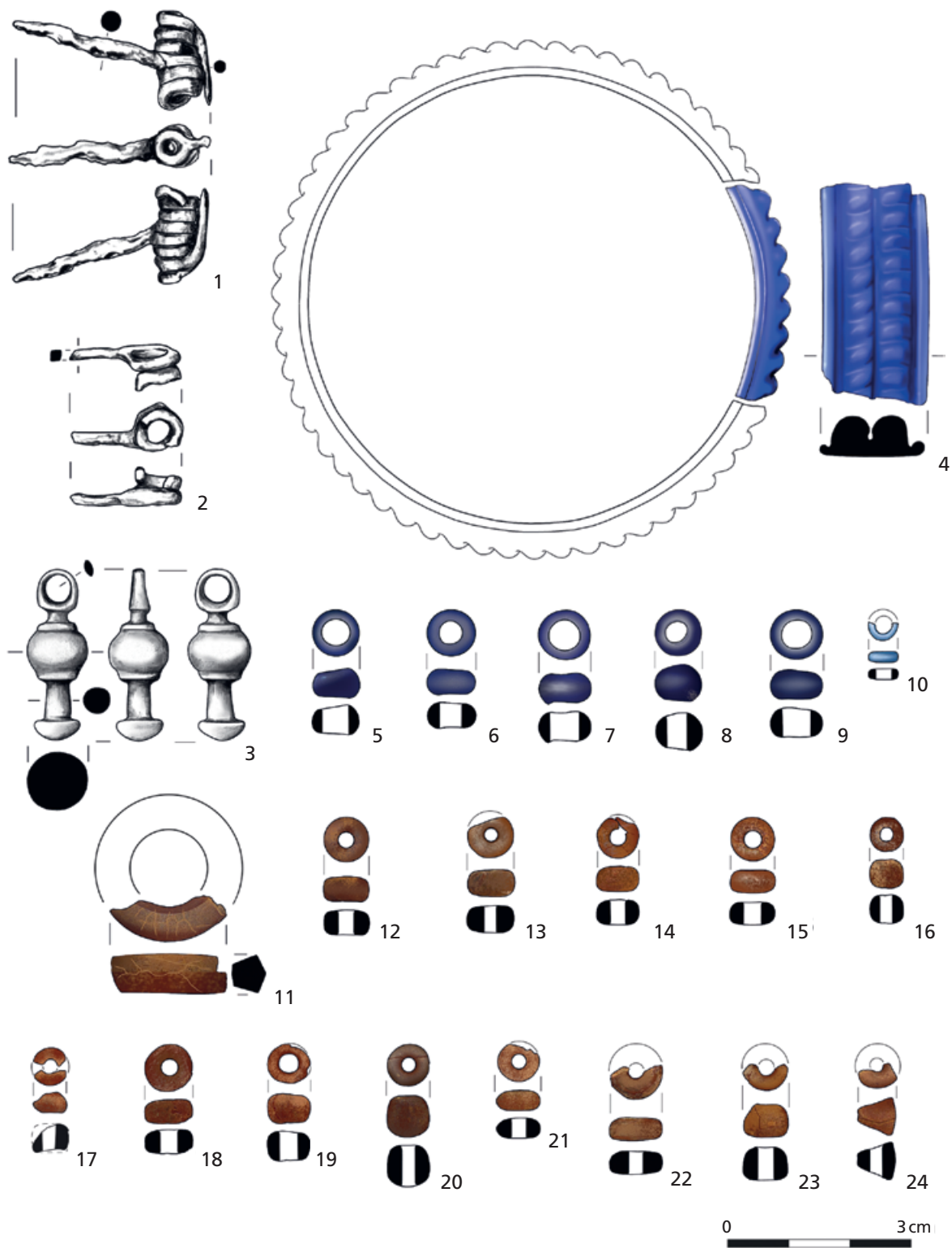
of one of these features (feat. 202) an amber object was found (figs 7, 13; 20, 8). It is a destroyed bead or a fragment of a spacer from a necklace. The researchers also found a glass bead in the form of a spirally wound tube of blue cobalt glass (fig. 7, 14).

### Site 17

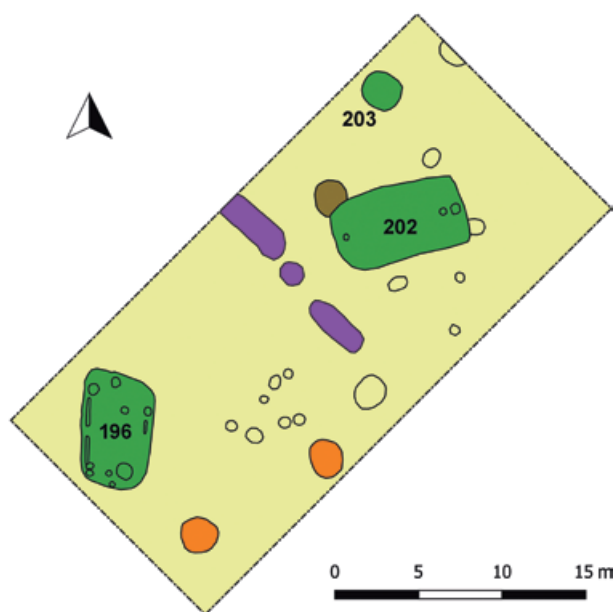
Further traces related to the use of amber were found at site 17 (fig. 11), which is approximately 2.5 km to the northwest and located on the high fluvial terrace of the Troja River. Here the majority of the La Tène culture settlement studied so far also consists of pit-houses. The buildings at site 17 are more compact in character than those at site 13, which is probably due to the small area of the promontory, which cuts into the river valley, where the site is located. In this location, stratigraphic relationships were observed which indicate at least two phases of use of this site in the La Tène period. The buildings form two or three distinct clusters, which we can interpret as separate farmsteads. One farmstead was formed by pit-houses 13, 14 and 15 (figs 12–13). Pit-house 15 was built across an older building, numbered 16. Buildings 13, 14 and 15 should be considered as single-phase features, based on the materials from the fills. In the fill of building 13, a collection of glass and amber beads was found, probably forming a single necklace (figs 7, 36–49; 14, 2–14). It consisted of at least seven glass beads made of cobalt blue glass; three amber circular spacers (fig. 15) with diameters of 2.6 cm, 2.1 cm and 1.4 cm; two perpendicular amber spacers and one rectangular bead or spacer with a hole running along its height (see catalogue).

### Beads, Ring-shaped Pendants and Spacers

Amongst the finds of amber ornaments known from settlements inhabited by Celtic people, the predominant findings are small beads. The reason for this may be the perishability of this material, when subject



**Fig. 9** Selected artefacts taken from feature 113 at site 13 in Samborowice. – 1–2 iron. – 3 bronze. – 4–10 glass. – 11–24 amber. – (Drawings N. Lenkow). – Scale 1:1.



**Fig. 10** Plan of the excavation in the western part of site 13 in Samborowice. The La Tène culture features are marked in green. – (Plan P. Duřeba).

to mechanical damage or high temperatures. From the example of the amber items from the fills of features 113 and 202 on site 13, the post-depositional conditions, in which this raw material resided, are also of great importance. It is noteworthy that amber beads appear mainly as parts of necklaces, almost always accompanied by beads made of blue glass. A feature of the Early and Middle La Tène period is the appearance in women's graves of single, relatively large (about 2.5–3.5 cm in diameter), pieces of circular ring-shaped pendants made of amber. These were worn on bronze or (rarely) silver chains (catalogue of finds – see Duřeba/Markiewicz 2023, 328–332). These items may indicate that amber acted as a kind of talisman. In the Greek and Roman world, amber was attributed apotropaic significance and healing properties. These objects have been found in La Tène culture burials from all over Central Europe, with the highest concentration observed along the central Danube River, in the area of southwest-

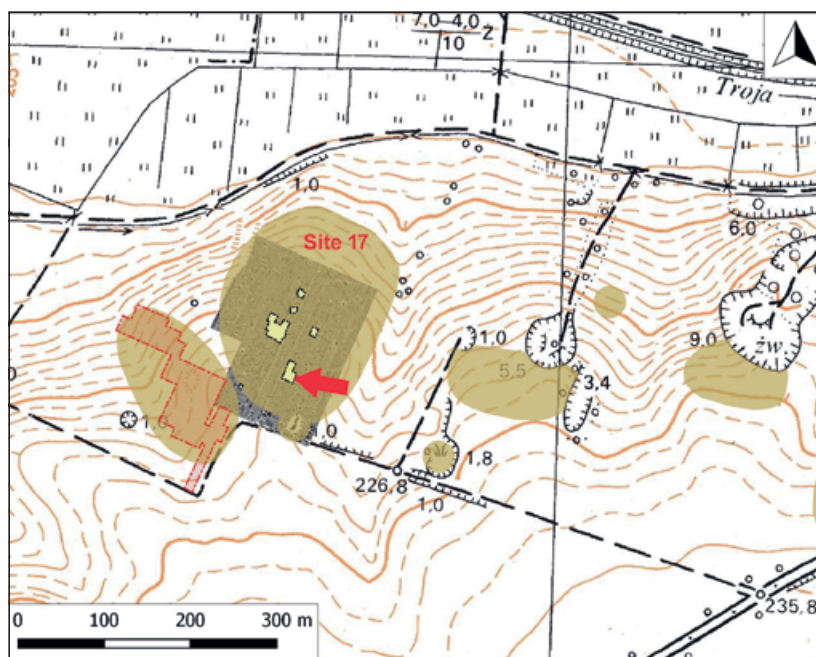
ern Slovakia (Duřeba/Markiewicz 2023, 316–317 fig. 5). The circular ring-shaped pendant piece from feature 113 is one of the few relics of this type to come from a settlement site.

The circular spacers fitted with perpendicular holes, found in pit-house 13, are unusual in the La Tène culture. Similar objects made of amber are only known from a few sites in Europe, such as those found in the Czech Republic at a settlement in Dolní Břeřany (okr. Praha-západ/CZ) (Čiřmář 1994, 604 fig. 2, 2) and at an oppidum in České Lhotice (okr. Chrudim/CZ) (Danielisová 2010, 66 pl. 3, 12). We also know of a few cases of graves from Austria and Germany in which objects of this type were deposited (Moosleitner et al. 1974, 74 pl. 172, 1; Polenz 1982, 60 fig. 4, 18; Krämer 1985, 88–89 pl. 23, 5. 8). The chronology of these burials indicate that these objects should be dated to the LT C2 phase.

Most of the objects described above were made with a lathe, as indicated by their regular shape and characteristic furrows and grooves visible on the surface. Numerous finds of amber objects, made with a lathe, have been found in graves from as early as the Hallstatt period (Stahl 2006, 26). This technology was also used in the La Tène period, as most clearly evidenced by wooden objects excavated from Neuchâtel Lake at the famous site of La Tène (Ct. Neuchâtel/CH) (Vouga 1923, pl. XXIX) and from the settlement excavated in Dürrnberg (Bez. Hallein/AT) (Stöllner 1991, 265 fig. 9, 2). The most similar, in terms of technology, are the circular beads of various sizes which come from the remains of an amber workshop (feature 514) uncovered during recent research at the La Tène period settlement found in Nēmčice nad Hanou (okr. Prostějov/CZ) (kindly provided by Dr. Ivan Čiřmář, UAPP Brno). It is worth mentioning that amber, unlike wood or bone, is a brittle material. Thus it requires great precision to be able to make small objects from it. The craftsman who produced such objects probably had to be a person experienced in working with a variety of materials. The much simpler to produce quadrilateral necklace spacers found in Samborowice are unique to the La Tène culture environment. Such four-sided spacers were produced as early as in the Hallstatt period, as exemplified by the impressive necklace discovered in grave 67 at the cemetery in Dürrnberg (Moosleitner et al. 1974, pl. 130, 6). The closest analogous remains, chronologically matching the pieces found from Samborowice, are the remains that were recently found in a cremation grave in Jiřkovice (okr. Brno-venkov/CZ)



**Fig. 11** Plan of site 17 in Samborowice. The beige colour indicates the area of archaeological sites located on the basis of surface prospecting. The red dotted line marks the outline of the excavations at the Lusatian culture cemetery. The red arrow marks the research trench where building 13 was discovered. – (Plan P. Dulęba / J. Soida / P. Wroniecki).

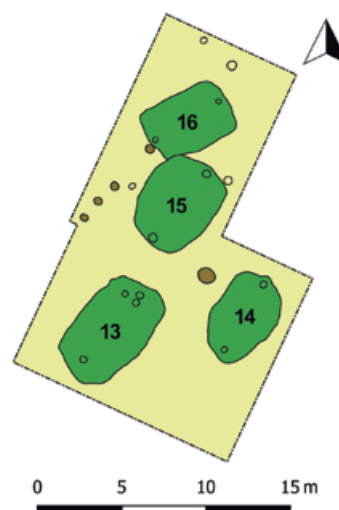


(Čižmářová 2022, 143 with photo). This burial also contained a circular spacer piece, similar to those described above, and may be dated to an older phase of the Middle La Tène period (kindly provided by Dr. Hana Čižmářová, MZM Brno).

### Characteristics of the Context – Pottery Vessels

All of the finds of raw amber and objects made of amber came from the interiors of structures that were remains of pit-houses. In their fills were also deposited large quantities of other materials, especially ceramic vessels made using differing technologies. This is typical for settlement sites in the Moravian area, characteristic of the fourth and fifth settlement horizon classification developed by Jiří Meduna (1980, 142–145 figs 19–20). Approximately 70 % of the vessel fragments from these sites are workshop pottery. They are primarily graphite tempered vessels which are typical to the area, forms of pots traditionally called *situlae*. Some of them are decorated with pit-comb decorations. These vessels sometimes account for as much as 30–40 % of all pieces made on the potter's wheel. A distinct contrast can be seen with features from an earlier settlement phase, dating to the Early La Tène period, in which hand-crafted pottery dominates.

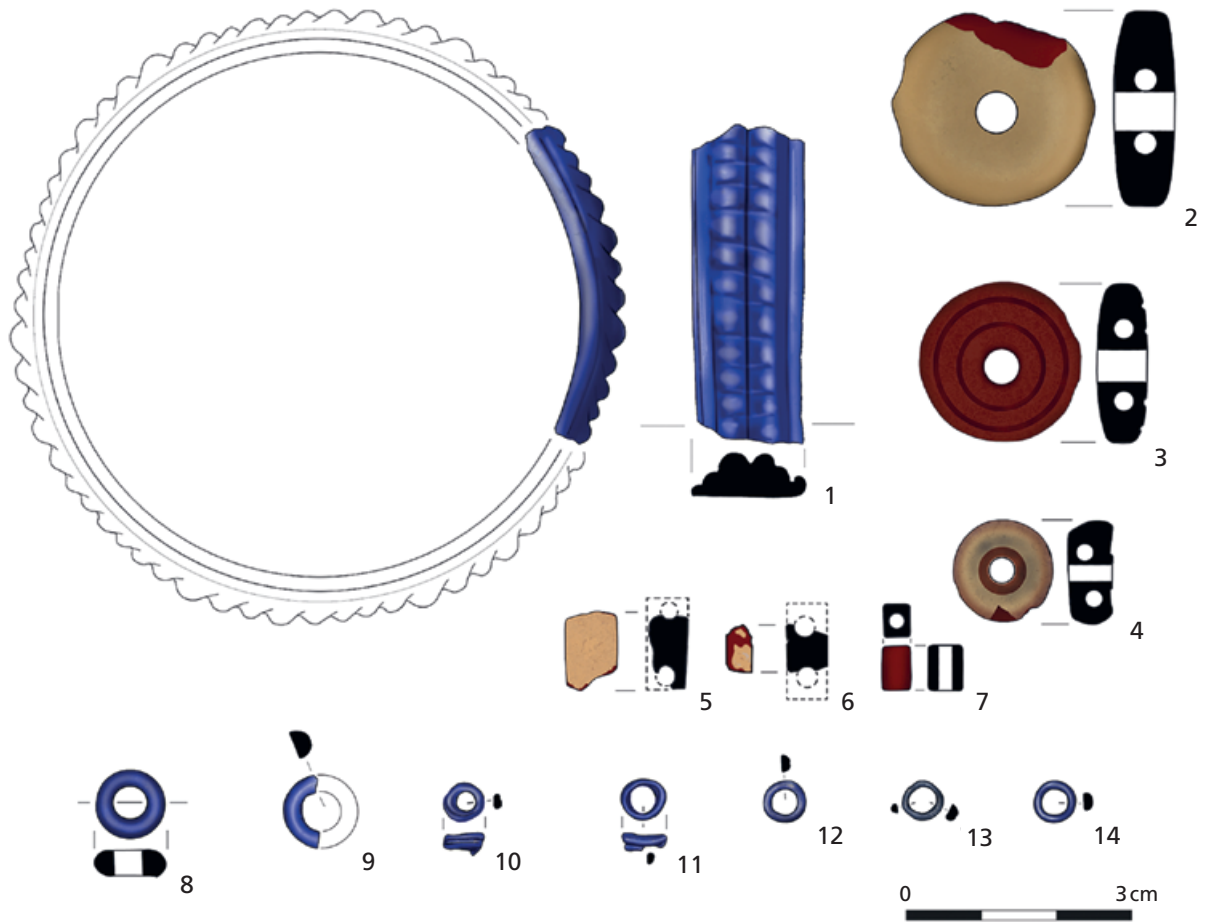
The fill of feature 13, from site 17, is the location of fragments of graphite-tempered vessels. These are decorated with a malleable shaft on the neck with stamped decoration in the form of crescents (or an inverted letter C) (fig. 16, 15, 17). This type of vessel decoration is typical of graphite tempered pottery found



**Fig. 12** Plan of the excavation in the south-eastern part of site 17 in Samborowice. The La Tène culture features are marked in green. – (Plan P. Dulęba).



**Fig. 13** Negatives of the relics of pit-houses 13, 14 and 15 at site 17 in Samborowice. – (Photo J. Soida).



**Fig. 14** Selected artefacts taken from feature 13 at site 17 in Samborowice. – 1. 8–14 glass. – 2–7 amber. – (Drawings N. Lenkow). – Scale 1:1.

**Fig. 15** Circular amber spacers found in feature 13 at site 17 in Samborowice. – (Photo R. Wyrwich).

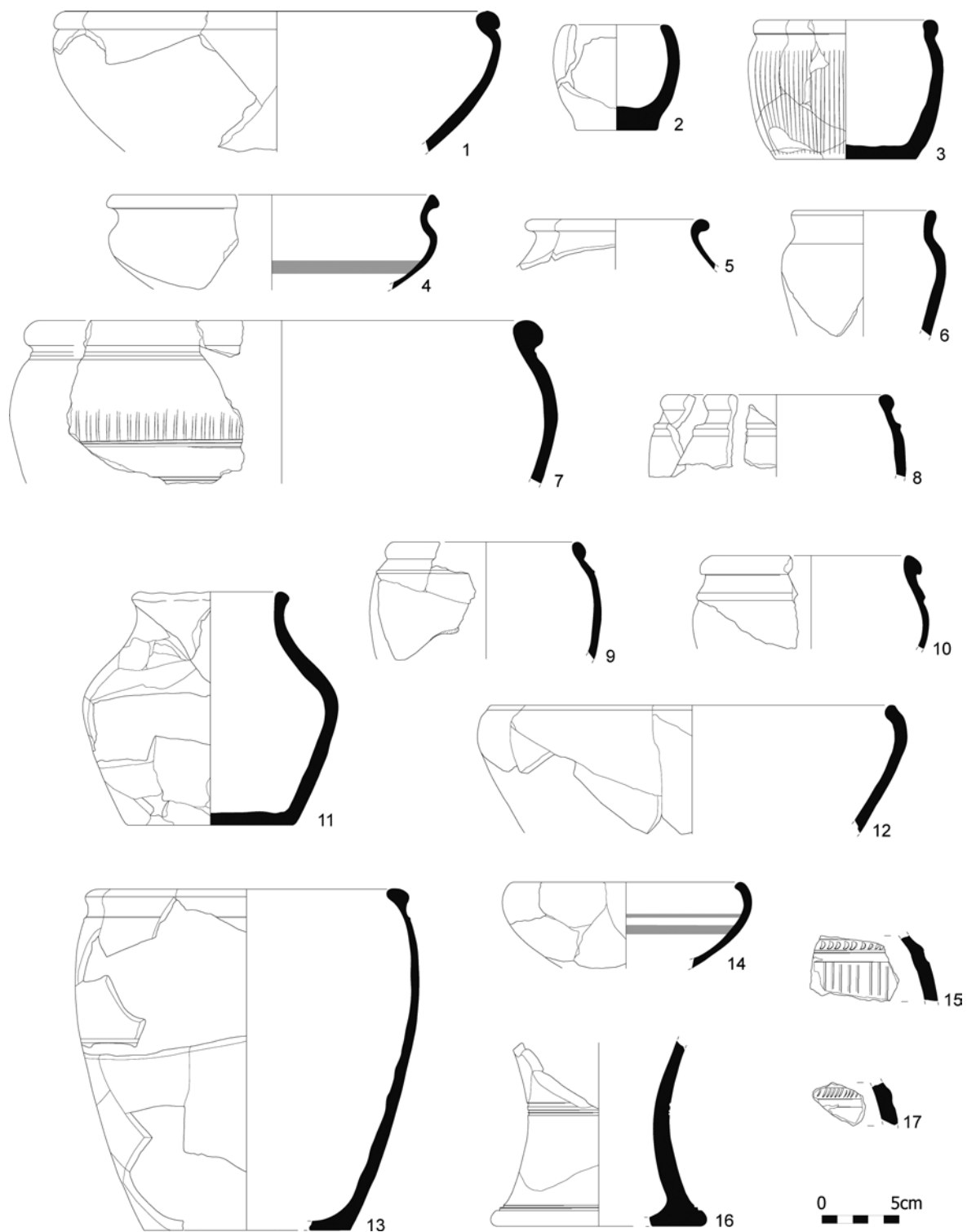


commonly in the Moravian area, especially in its central area – the Hana River basin (Hlava 2008, 218–221 map 4b). Outside this area, it is found in large numbers only in Upper Silesia and western Lesser Poland. Vessels decorated in this manner are found in features dated to phases LT B–C (Meduna 1980, 103). Specific forms of graphite tempered *situlae* (fig. 16, 6), including a vessel decorated with a pit-comb decoration separated by horizontal strips of polishing (fig. 16, 7), are associated with the younger horizon of ceramic production, dated from the LT C2 phase.

Similar decorated vessels are known from the Czech and Moravian area, from locations dating to the LT C2 (Hlava 2004, fig. 9, 8) or LT C2/D1 (Waldhauser 1977, fig. 13, 1) phases. Wheel-made vessels are most prevalent – mainly bowls with an s-shaped (fig. 16, 4) or, less frequently, with a semicircular profile (fig. 16, 14), fired in a reducing atmosphere. These are the most common vessel forms, which had long been used by the local La Tène culture community throughout the eastern Celtic lands. The lower part of a full-footed goblet was also encountered at feature 13 (fig. 16, 16). These vessels, found mainly in locations dating back to phases LT B2–C2, were equally likely to be placed in graves. They are found mainly in Lower Austria, Moravia, Upper Silesia and Lesser Poland (Meduna 1980, 84–85; Dułęba 2014, 189 fig. 5).

In the ceramic inventory from feature 85, the pieces made on the wheel stand out. These have a form which exactly matches other vessels found in the Carpathian Basin (Meduna 1980, 82). Particularly noteworthy is a vessel described in the literature as a *Flaschenvase* (figs 17; 18, 2). It has been preserved fragmentarily – from the edge of the spout to a height slightly below the greatest diameter of its body. It was fired in an oxidising atmosphere. The outer surface was decorated with a series of polished grey bands from about 1.5–5 mm in width. Other forms found in feature 85 which are not found in Silesia or Lesser Poland and which are rarely present in Moravia and Lower Austria, include also a small bowl with a prominently bulging and low-set body (fig. 18, 13). A fragmentarily preserved piece from feature 113 also has a similar origin and is a type of a flask with the largest body diameter, located below mid-height (fig. 19, 6). Such vessels are very common finds on sepulchral sites (Benadík 1957; 1983; Bujna 1989; 1995) and somewhat less common in settlements (Březinová 2000, pls 103, 11; 105, 2; 171, 9; Szabó et al. 2007, 242 pls XX, 18; XLIV, 7; XLIX, 7; CV, 4; CX, 4; Tankó 2020, pl. XXII, 23) in the northern part of the Carpathian Basin.

In the fill of feature 202, among the bowls with sinuous and semicircular profiles (fig. 20, 1. 3–4) typical of the Middle La Tène period, there was a piece (fig. 20, 2) distinguished by its somewhat squat shape with a low-set and clearly marked body that is similar to ceramic forms known from the Carpathian Basin (Březinová 2000, pls 10, 8; 38, 12; 92, 1; 97, 8; Tankó 2020, pl. IX, 22). Some of the bowls were decorated by glazing the inner parts of the surface in the form of straight and wavy lines, which are characteristic of the Middle La Tène period (Meduna 1980, 104). Dating to the younger stage of this period may be supported by a fragment of a graphite tempered *situla* (fig. 20, 6), a rather unusually shaped, sharply truncated body, the largest diameter of which equals the diameter of the spout.



**Fig. 16** A selection of pottery vessels from feature 13 at site 17 in Samborowice. – (Drawings P. Dulęba / J. Soida). – Scale 1:4.

## Characteristics of the Context – Small Finds

The chronology of the groups presented in this article is determined by the fragmentarily preserved objects that were found in the fills of the pit-houses. In the case of feature 85, these were fragments of four pieces of iron brooches of the Middle La Tène period (**fig. 8, 1–4**), three of which have been preserved in a condition that allows for a more detailed description.

The first item is a fragment of a large fibula with a massive, probably rectangular bow and a wide cord (from one side only). As many as five coils have been preserved, over which there is a characteristic cap (**fig. 8, 1**). Also preserved is the clip of the foot with the bow, which has the form of a massive knob on

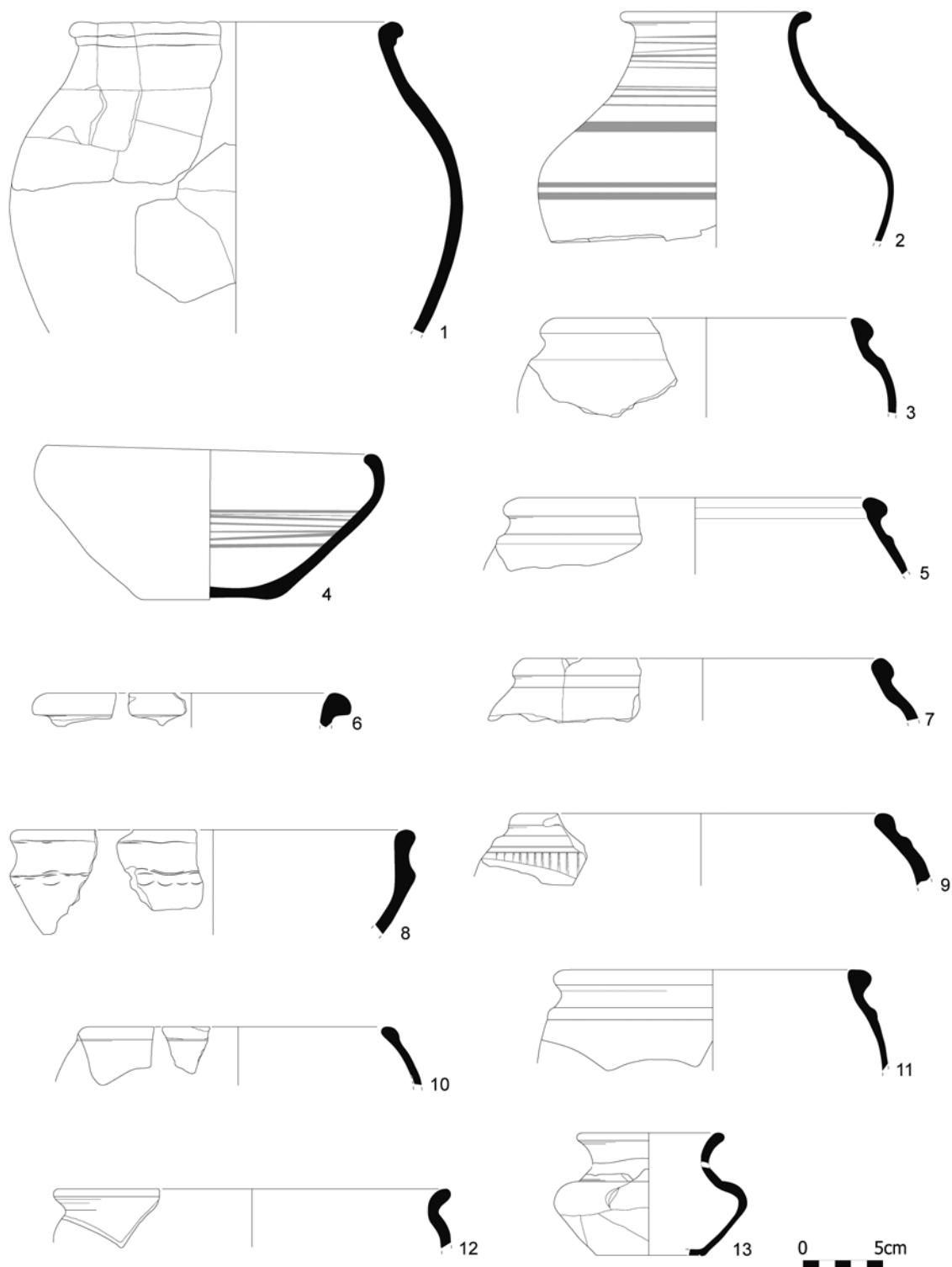
the globe element. Brooches equipped with this type of cap, whose function was probably to strengthen the cord structure, are known from only a dozen or so pieces from the Moravian area, Upper Silesia and western Lesser Poland (Dulęba 2014, fig. 7). Two similar pieces are included in the collection of the, so far published, objects from Nĕmčice nad Hanou (Čižmář et al. 2018, pl. 4, 67. 70). The best analogies to this piece are fibulae from cremation graves in the Moravian region, most notably pieces from burials in Čechůvki and Slatinky (okr. Prostějov/CZ) (Čižmářová 2017, pls 56, 10; 66, 7). The brooch from the grave at Slatinky is distinguished by a very long, twelve-coil cord and a massive, four-sided bow. The fibula from the grave in Čechůvki has an identical shape of the clip between the bow and the foot. Complete pieces of fibulae of this type come from a cremation cemetery in Ponětovice (okr. Brno-venkov/CZ) (Čižmářová 2011, pls 37, 4; 40, 22). They constitute burial objects from the youngest La Tène graves known to date from the Moravian area. They are linked to the seventh horizon of flat cemeteries in Rupert Gebhard's classification – the LT C1b phase (Gebhard 1989, 118–127).

The second brooch from feature 85, which is only partially preserved, is a bimetallic object. The iron bow is provided with a bronze clamp, additionally decorated with crimping (**fig. 8, 2**). The absence of half of the bow and foot makes it difficult to conduct a typological classification, but it seems to be a piece similar to the fibulae of group 15 according to Gebhard (1991, 17 fig. 5). Large brooches of this type are found from the end of the Early La Tène period through the entire LT C1 phase (Gebhard 1991, fig. 42). In the case of the piece from Samborowice we can argue for dating it back to the very end of this time section, as indicated by the placement of the foot/bow clip very close to the cord, a feature of pieces from the LT C1b stage (Waldhauser 1987, 176 pl. 4, 110).

The third item is a small iron brooch, decorated on the double-globe element – on the foot and at the clip between the foot and the bow (**fig. 8, 3**). Three quarters of this fibula has been preserved (the fragment is about 3.5 cm long), which allows for an estimate that it was, at most, about 6 cm long. Brooches decorated with two on the globe elements are less common than the pieces which could be classified as group 13 or 15, according to the typology of Gebhard. A strikingly similar brooch was found in an upland settlement discovered in Slatina nad Bebravou (okr. Bánovce nad Bebravou/SK) (Pieta 2008, pl. 4, 3). The piece from Samborowice resembles closely the K-B type in the detailed classification by Jozef Bujna (2003, 81 fig. 61). This researcher indicates that the fibulae of this type represent the youngest burials from the area of south-



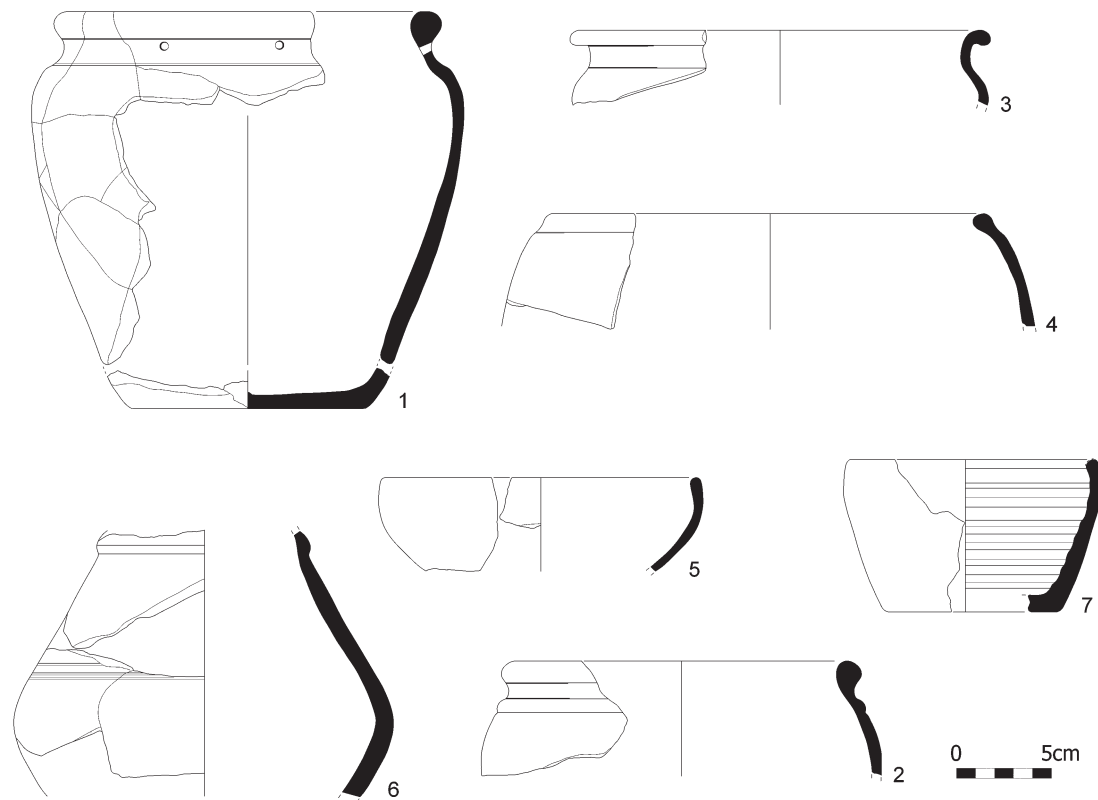
**Fig. 17** Vessel from feature 85 at site 13 in Samborowice. – (Photo R. Wyrwich)



**Fig. 18** A selection of pottery vessels from feature 85 at site 13 in Samborowice. – (Drawings P. Dułęba / J. Soida). – Scale 1:4.

western Slovakia, dating back to the LT C1c stadium (Bujna 2003, 91–93). This corresponds to the LT C1b phase according to Gebhard (1989, 91 fig. 31).

The fourth piece, preserved only fragmentarily, is a foot decorated with a large globe element (fig. 8, 4). It is not suitable for further detailed analysis.



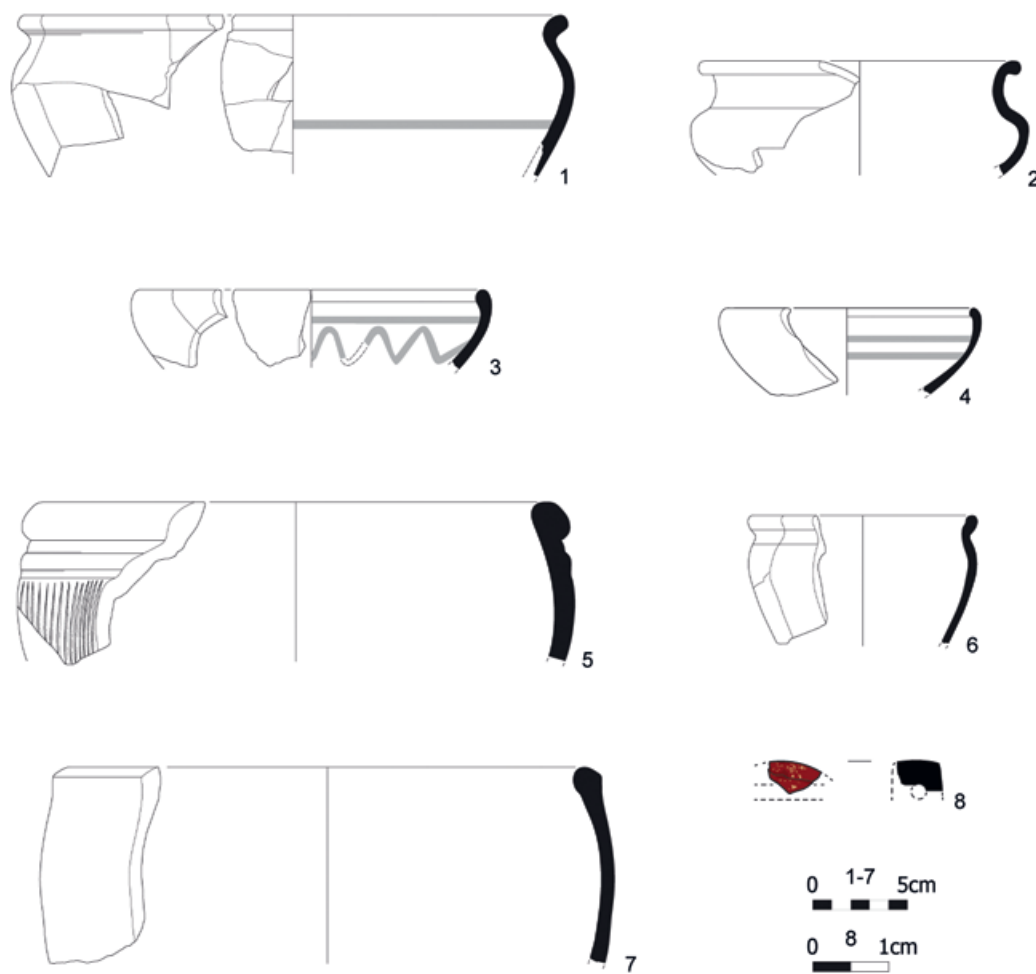
**Fig. 19** A selection of pottery vessels from feature 113 at site 13 in Samborowice. – (Drawings P. Dulęba / J. Soida). – Scale 1:4.

Two small fragments of iron brooches (**fig. 9, 1–2**), which it is not possible to determine typologically, and a bronze pendant (**fig. 9, 3**) which was the end of a girdle-chain, were found in feature 113. This pendant is an item found amongst the extremely rich collection of this type of material from central settlements, such as Nowa Cerekwia (pow. Głubczyce, woj. opolskie/PL) or Nĕmčice nad Hanou. Girdle-chains equipped with pendants of this type are common throughout the Middle La Tène period (cf. Bujna 2011, 125–145).

The dating of feature 113 is based on the finding of a fragment of a cobalt blue glass bracelet (**figs 7, 15; 9, 4**). It is a piece belonging to group 13, according to Thea Elisabeth Haevernick's typology, more specifically to group 13a (Karwowski 2004, 31–32; Venclová 2016, 51–52 pl. 7). This is the most common type of a glass bracelet in Central Europe, which was produced mainly in the LT C1b stadium but also occasionally appears in the LT C2 phase, including on the oppida (Venclová 2016, 52 fig. 50; Čižmářová 2022, 98–99 fig. 57).

In feature 13, at site 17, the amber relics were accompanied by a fragment of a similar glass bracelet (**figs 7, 39; 14, 1**), which should be considered as part of group 13e (Venclová 2016, 53 fig. 34). It differs from other group 13a pieces in the presence of two additional ribs. Such noticeably wider pieces belong to younger forms, dated back to the LT C2 phase (Rolland 2021, annexe 2).

The objects deposited in the fills of all the previously presented features (both sites surveyed in the Samborowice area) clearly indicate the same point in time for all of the sites mentioned so far, in which the presence of amber products has been noted. In the case of feature 13 from site 17, an additional argument of a chronological nature is the observed stratigraphy. It probably constituted a relic of a farmstead that intersected a slightly earlier feature (pit-house 16), which can be tentatively dated to LT B2–C1 phases. All sites where amber objects have been encountered so far functioned from the LT C1b stadium and were still in use until the LT C2 phase when the local settlement of the La Tène culture came to an end.



**Fig. 20** A selection of pottery vessels from feature 202 at site 13 in Samborowice. – (Drawings P. Dulęba / J. Soida). – 1–7 scale 1:4; 8 scale 1:1.

## REGIONAL CONTEXT

The two sites studied in Samborowice, along with the sites discovered in Nowa Cerekwia, are currently the best-studied La Tène culture settlements in the area of the Upper Silesian settlement cluster (fig. 21). The site in Nowa Cerekwia is a unique place. This settlement, which was studied through excavations in the pre-war period and in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Czerska 1976), was unfortunately largely destroyed due to the exploitation of basalt deposits. Nevertheless, surface research conducted at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, during which metal detectors were used, yielded a significant number of metal ornaments and parts of clothing, silver and gold coins, glass items, as well as imported goods from areas of the Mediterranean world (Rudnicki 2014).

This makes Nowa Cerekwia an exceptional craft and trade-related agglomeration in Upper Silesia which, together with similar sites discovered in Roseldorf (Bez. Hollabrunn/AT) in Lower Austria and in Moravian Némčice nad Hanou, formed a network of settlement centres along the corridor of the so-called Amber Road (Militký 2018, 284 fig. 36). Nowa Cerekwia was one of the ancient communication hubs on this road. Glass, saprolite, bronze, silver and gold were imported from the south and west. The latter raw material is present at the Nowa Cerekwia settlement in the form of cut bars of pure gold, as well as in the form of

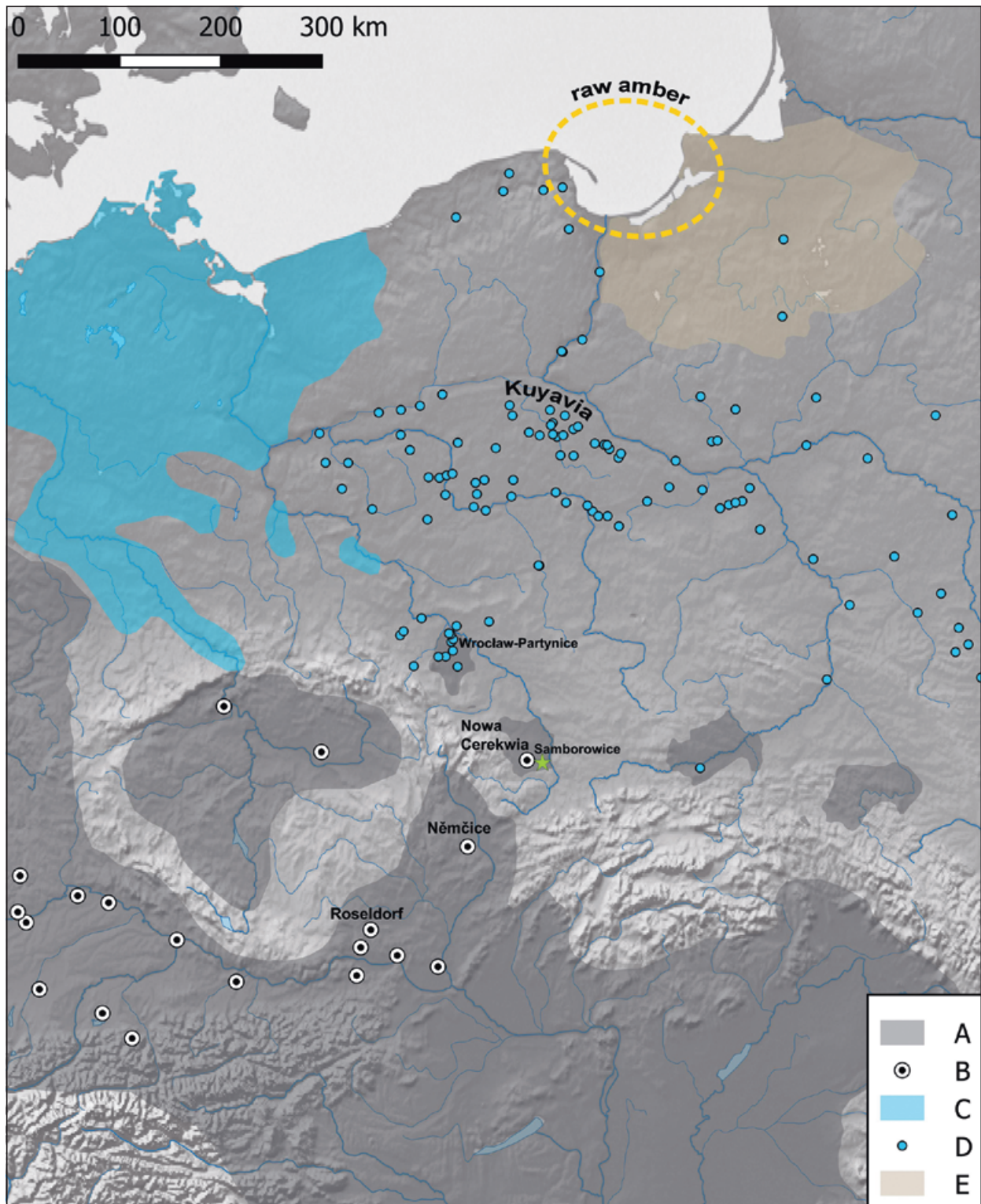


cut convex and flat mints. Spectrographic analysis<sup>1</sup> of these has shown that they were cast from an alloy of gold, silver and copper. Similar material has been found at other central settlements. This suggests that the Celts must have refined the raw material from which the coins, with a very high concentration of gold, were made (Militký 2018, 323–325). Another raw material, the extraction of which was important for the local community, was graphite. This was added in large quantities to the ceramic mass of locally produced vessels. The question of the origins of this raw material is still open. It could include imports from distant areas of the Czech Basin or southern Moravian region, as well as from nearby areas in the Sudetes (Jeseniki). Graphite tempered pottery from Upper Silesia and Lesser Poland is the subject of specialised analysis, which is currently being carried out as part of the ongoing project. The relatively small amount of amber that was discovered at Nowa Cerekwia, compared to the settlements studied at Samborowice, is most likely caused by the fact that the location was explored only to a limited extent – the part which was not destroyed by the quarry. It seems more likely that the unprocessed amber went first to the central settlements and from there it was sent further south (including to the agglomeration at Němčice nad Hanou in the Moravian region, as evidenced by recent finds – Čižmář et al. 2022, 203–205 fig. 5D). Only a portion reached smaller settlements, such as Samborowice, which housed amber workshops presumably operated to serve the needs of the local population.

### AMBER TRADE IN THE LA TÈNE PERIOD

The raw amber, which was traded in the La Tène period, is the so-called succinite. The largest deposits of this are still obtained from the southern coast of the Baltic Sea – from the Gdańsk Bay to the Sambian Peninsula (Kosmowska-Ceranowicz 1995). In prehistory amber was mainly obtained by picking it up from seaside beaches; collecting it from the ground surface on the shores of lakes and rivers and in natural exposures of geological strata. In the Middle La Tène period, the area directly adjacent to the amber sites was inhabited from the east by the people of the West Baltic Barrow culture and from the west by representatives of Germanic communities, identified with the Jastorf culture and later with the Oksywie culture (fig. 21). It was they who, through their kin (first the population of the Jastorf culture and then the Przeworsk culture) living in the central part of contemporary Poland, transported this raw material to the south and exchanged it with the Celts. Evidence for this is most clearly demonstrated by the famous deposits (caches) of stored raw amber found in the area of Partynice near Wrocław, cited in the literature. These finds have recently been subjected to a new study and a thorough revision (Dulęba/Markiewicz 2021). The conclusion of which is that the moment of deposition of this raw material occurred considerably earlier, which must have taken place in the LT C1b–C2 phases and can therefore be synchronised with the last stage of the existence of the La Tène culture in Upper Silesia. Trade along the corridor of the Amber Road may have possibly been in the nature of »down-the-line trade« (Renfrew 1975, 43–45). An important role in this trade was played by the region of Kuyavia, where intensive settlement is recorded at the time in question. The number of imports from the Celtic milieu is exceptionally high there, hence the speculation in the earlier literature, which further research has shown to be unfounded, about the existence of a stable Celtic settlement there (cf. Kokowski 1991 – further literature there).

The physical presence of representatives of the Germanic cultural circle, alien to the local Celtic community, in Upper Silesia is evidenced by the findings of finished fragments and half-finished *Kronenhalsringe*, which were found in the area of Nowa Cerekwia (Rudnicki 2014, 43. 52. 64 fig. 6, 18–19). Vessels with forms typical of Germanic cultures make up a significant percentage of the settlement features from the mentioned site (analysis of the artefacts in the collection of the Muzeum Śląska Opolskiego in Opole). This



**Fig. 21** The cultural situation in the area of modern Poland and border lands in the Middle La Tène period. – **A** La Tène culture. – **B** central settlements of the La Tène culture. – **C** Jastorf culture. – **D** finds characteristic of the Jastorf culture. – **E** West Baltic Barrow culture. – (Map P. Dułęba).

phenomenon, on a much smaller scale, can also be observed in the better-studied rural settlements in this region of Poland, where single fragments of Germanic pottery are regularly found.

The evidence of amber finds, which were discovered in a well-documented chronological context, supports the thesis of the reactivation of the amber trade following the collapse of local La Tène cultures that still existed from the Hallstatt period (Dulęba/Markiewicz 2023, 314). For the trade contacts to be revived, a stable settlement network was required, guaranteeing the free movement of goods and human groups. Undoubtedly, such a situation in the vast area of the Vistula and Oder basins took place in the Middle La Tène period, especially in the LT C1 phase. This is clear not only in the proportion of uncovered materials in relation to the Early La Tène period, but also in their nature. At issue here are metal objects, tools, ornaments and parts of clothing, as well as ceramics made on the potter's wheel, typical of the Middle La Tène period, which dominate the finds discovered at the settlement sites. It is difficult to say whether the importance of the amber trade in the La Tène period has been somewhat exaggerated. On the one hand, there is only a small amount of raw amber and objects made from this material found. On the other hand, a steady increase in this material has been observed in recent years. Perhaps, the relatively small source base, so far discovered, has been influenced by the change in funerary customs during the Middle La Tène period, precisely when the restoration of the Amber Road was taking place. It is worth adding that the local Germanic communities were not interested in amber products, which are extremely rare on sites from this period (Bochnak 2014, 174–175; Dulęba/Markiewicz 2023, figs 8, 11).

It should be remembered however that the trade route was not only trading in succinite but was also distributing products made of bronze, silver, gold, glass, saprolite and probably other products, such as salt, which are elusive in the archaeological record. Salt exploitation in the vicinity of modern Cracow is confirmed to have taken place in the Hallstatt period (Kadrow/Nowak-Włodarczyk 2003). In the case of finds from settlements dating to the La Tène period (e.g. site 11 in Wieliczka, pow. Wieliczka, woj. małopolskie/PL – Jodłowski 1971, 147), this is highly doubtful. However, the sheer fact of the existence of a distinct settlement cluster in the vicinity of the salt springs in the area surrounding modern Wieliczka is quite significant, especially if we take into account that the exploitation of the salt springs leaves very few material traces (Bochnak 2014, 177–178). The comparison of the salt and amber exchange is important and informative because both substances are quite fragile and unstable. The transport of even very large quantities of these substances could have left minimal traces, and it is only thanks to happy accidents such as the discoveries at Wrocław-Partynice that we can realise the importance of this exchange for Iron Age communities.

Amber ornaments were not only a distinctive element of women's clothing in Upper Silesia in the Middle La Tène period, but were an easily transportable commodity that was equivalent to exchange. Amber is a piece of a peculiar »puzzle« that makes it possible to reconstruct, at least in some sections, the course of this route. Indeed, the absence of raw amber and amber objects in the Middle La Tène period in the remaining settlement clusters of the La Tène culture in southern Poland is significant (Dulęba/Markiewicz 2023, fig. 3). The area of Upper Silesia, especially the Głubczyce Plateau, was strategically the most important place for the La Tène culture that inhabited this part of contemporary Polish territory. It was from here that the control of such an important trade route could, for geographical reasons, be carried out most effectively.

## Acknowledgements

The paper is part of a research project entitled »The Lords of the Amber Road. Studies on the craftsmanship, trade and long-distance contacts of La Tène culture societies from southern Poland«

(2019/34/E/HS3/00049) financed by Narodowe Centrum Nauki (National Science Centre). The authors would like to thank John Watters for the language correction.

## CATALOGUE OF AMBER FINDS

### Feature 85, site 13

raw amber lumps: inv. no. 55/15 – 2.56 g, fig. 7, 1; 58/15 – 0.22 g, fig. 7, 5; 70/15 – 1.47 g, fig. 7, 2; 87/15 – 0.62 g, fig. 7, 6; 97/15 – 0.56 g, fig. 7, 4; 99/15 – 0.30 g, fig. 7, 3; 104/14 – 0.08 g, fig. 7, 10; 107/15 – 0.05 g, fig. 7, 11; 108/15 – 0.22 g, fig. 7, 8; 111/15 – 1.52 g, fig. 7, 9; 112/15 – 1.36 g, fig. 7, 7.

amber bead: inv. no. 100/15 – Ø 0.7 cm, 0.09 g, figs 7, 12; 8, 5.

### Feature 113, site 13

amber ring-pendant: inv. no. 16/16 – Ø 2.5 cm (reconstructed), length of the preserved fragment 1.7 cm, width 0.6 cm, 0.43 g, figs 7, 25; 9, 11.

amber beads: inv. no. 8/16 – Ø 0.7 cm, 0.1 g, figs 7, 22; 9, 12; 9/16 – 0.7 cm, 0.14 g, figs 7, 27; 9, 13; 10/16 – Ø 0.7 cm, 0.09 g, figs 7, 28; 9, 14; 11/16 – Ø 0.7 cm, 0.1 g, figs 7, 30; 9, 15; 12/16 – Ø 0.6 cm, 0.1 g, figs 7, 31; 9, 16; 13/16 – Ø 0.6 cm (reconstructed), 0.08 g, figs 7, 33; 9, 17; 14/16 – Ø 0.8 cm, 0.12 g, figs 7, 34; 9, 18; 15/16 – Ø 0.7 cm, 0.13 g, figs 7, 23; 9, 19; 17/16 – Ø 0.6 cm, 0.17 g, figs 7, 19; 9, 20; 18/16 – Ø 0.7 cm, 0.07 g, figs 7, 20;

9, 21; 19/16 – Ø 0.8 cm (reconstructed), 0.12 g, figs 7, 16; 9, 22; 20/16 – Ø 0.7 cm (reconstructed), 0.08 g, figs 7, 17; 9, 23; 21/16 – (only a small fragment!), 0.04 g, figs 7, 35; 9, 24.

### Feature 202, site 13

fragment of a quadrangular bead/spacer: inv. no. 30/23 – 0.7 cm × 0.6 cm, 0.13 g, figs 7, 13; 20, 8.

### Feature 13, site 17

circular spacer: inv. no. 7/19 – Ø 2.6 cm, width 0.9 cm, 3.76 g, figs 7, 40; 14, 2; 15.

circular spacer: inv. no. 14/19 – Ø 1.4 cm, width 0.7 cm, 0.74 g, figs 7, 42; 14, 4; 15.

circular spacer: inv. no. 15/19 – Ø 2.1 cm, width 0.8 cm, 2.22 g, figs 7, 41; 14, 3; 15.

fragment of a quadrangular bead/spacer: inv. no. 16a/19 – 0.7 cm × 1 cm, 0.34 g, figs 7, 38; 14, 5.

fragment of a quadrangular bead/spacer: inv. no. 16b/19 – 0.6 cm × 0.3 cm, 0.07 g, figs 7, 37; 14, 6.

quadrangular bead/spacer: inv. no. 17/19 – 0.4 cm × 0.6 cm, 0.07 g, figs 7, 36; 14, 7.

### Note

1) A portable Bruker spectrometer – the Tracer 5i model – was used for spectrographic research. They show that the coins were made of pure gold as well as gold contaminated with silver 0.2–3.3 % and copper 0.2–0.6 %, while lamps of gold were

contaminated to a much greater extent with silver, up to about 43 % and copper up to about 18 %. A detailed analysis will be presented in the monograph of the Nowa Cerekwia site, which is currently being prepared.

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### Zusammenfassung / Summary / Résumé

#### Bernsteinverarbeitung und -austausch in einer Siedlung der Latènekultur in Samborowice (pow. Racibórz/PL)

Bernsteinschmuck und Spuren der Rohbernsteinverarbeitung wurden bei Feldarbeiten in zwei Siedlungen in Samborowice, Oberschlesien, entdeckt. Anhand der Begleitfunde (Keramik, Glas, Metallschmuck und Teile von Kleidungsstücken) lassen sie sich in die frühe Phase der mittleren Latènezeit datieren. Die Funde stammen aus gut erhaltenen Gebäuderesten und deuten darauf hin, dass die dort lebenden Menschen sowohl nach Süden – mit den keltischen Nachbarn des Karpatenbeckens – als auch nach Norden – mit den Bewohnern des germanischen Kulturkreises – Handel trieben. Einige der in dieser Arbeit vorgestellten Bernsteinobjekte wurden mit Hilfe einer Drehbank hergestellt, was auf ein hohes Niveau der lokalen Bernsteinhandwerker hinweist.

#### Amber Processing and Exchange at the La Tène Culture Settlement in Samborowice (Pow. Racibórz/PL)

Amber ornaments and traces of raw amber processing were discovered during fieldwork in two settlements located in Samborowice, Upper Silesia. Based on the accompanying finds (pottery, glass, metal ornaments and parts of clothing), they can be dated back to the early stages of the Middle La Tène period. The finds come from the well-preserved remains of buildings, which indicate that the people who lived there took part in trade directed towards both the south – fellow Celtic communities of the Carpathian Basin – as well as to the north – communities of the Germanic cultural circle. Some of the amber objects presented in this work were made using a lathe, indicating considerable sophistication on the part of local amber craftsmen.

#### Travail et échanges d'ambre dans un habitat de la civilisation de La Tène à Samborowice (pow. Racibórz/PL)

Des bijoux et des traces de travail de l'ambre brut furent découverts lors d'investigations dans deux habitats à Samborowice en haute Silésie. Les objets qui leur étaient associés (céramique, verre, bijoux en métal et parties de vêtements) peuvent être datés de la phase précoce de La Tène moyenne. Ils proviennent de vestiges d'habitations bien conservés et indiquent que les habitants faisaient du commerce tant vers le sud – avec leurs voisins celtes du bassin des Carpates – que vers le Nord – avec les habitants de la zone culturelle germanique. Certains objets d'ambre présentés dans ce travail furent fabriqués à l'aide d'un tour, ce qui démontre le niveau de dextérité des artisans locaux.

Traduction: Y. Gautier

### Schlüsselwörter / Keywords / Mots-clés

Latènekultur / Siedlung / Bernstein / Verarbeitung / Kunsthandwerk / Austausch / interregionale Kontakte  
 La Tène culture / settlement / amber / processing / craftsmanship / exchange / inter-regional contacts  
 Civilisation de La Tène / habitat / ambre / travail / arts décoratifs / échanges / contacts interrégionaux

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