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## TOMB GROUPS FROM THE NECROPOLIS OF COSEANETTO (UD)

### Characteristic forms and contexts in a small rural community

#### The site

The rural necropolis of Coseanetto (Coseano-UD) is situated in the north-western part of the upper Friuli plain, not far from the first slopes of the Tilaventino morainic amphitheatre and about 300 m away from the Roman settlement to which it was related (dated between the half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC and the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD).

The necropolis, very likely only a part of it, was archaeologically investigated in two different campaigns, in 2005 and 2010, by ARχE Company<sup>1</sup> under the scientific supervision of the Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici del Friuli Venezia Giulia (S. Vitri and R. Micheli)<sup>2</sup>. The investigations led to the discovery of twenty-four tombs, showing the rites of both cremation and inhumation. Eighteen cremation tombs were excavated, all of them simple pits dug in the soil, lined with large pebbles on the sides; they were positioned in the northernmost sector of the necropolis. Three of the inhumation burials had elongated graves with walls reinforced with medium sized pebbles, while the other three had more refined rectangular graves with a bed of roof tiles and, in the best preserved one, also the upper part of the walls in bricks connected with mortar. The tombs were arranged in parallel arrays and an elongated area in the central part of the necropolis, where no tombs could be detected, was hypothetically interpreted as a road passing through it (**fig. 1**).

#### The finds

All the pottery finds of the tomb groups of the necropolis are taken into consideration in this study; the majority of them, quite obviously, come from the cremation graves. Although the state of conservation of the vessels was poor, limited to the sole lower part of the vases because of the damage provoked by agricultural works, it is striking to note how the tomb groups



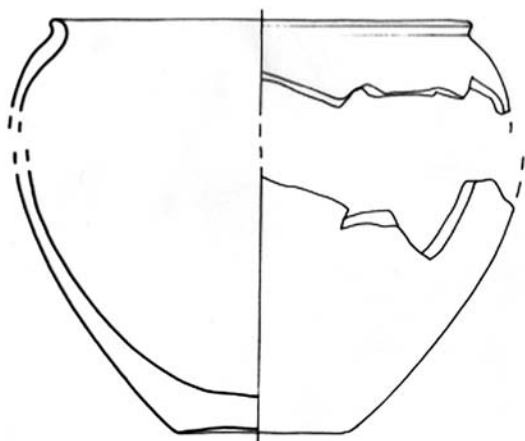
**Fig. 1.** Overview of the part of the necropolis excavated in 2010. The incineration tombs are in the northern part of it, the inhumation graves start at the end of the first trench and are the only type attested in the second trench. The dashed lines mark the supposed road or path passing through the tombs.

present some uniformity. Fine ware is poorly represented, attested only by few examples of carinated cups and beakers in thin walled pottery, not very refined in quality (**fig. 2**). Cups in refined ware imitating ESB form Hayes 75 B are well attested in more samples from both cremation and inhumation tombs<sup>3</sup>

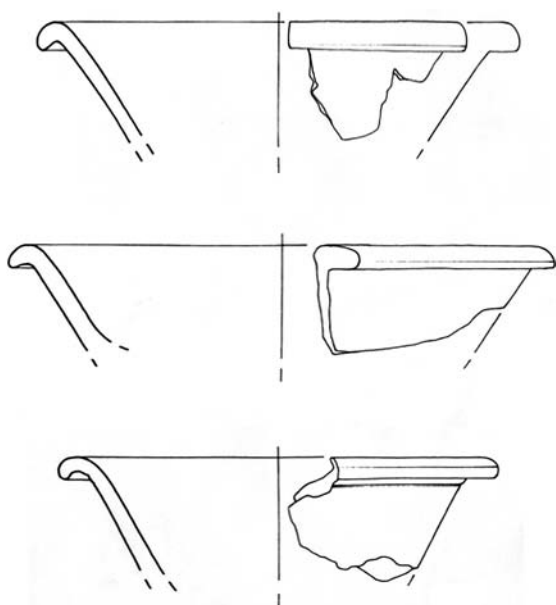
<sup>1</sup> MANDRUZZATO 2005; CIVIDINI 2012, 53-57. Three other inhumation tombs were brought to light a little more northwards of this site and could possibly have been related either to the same community or to another nearby settlement, MANDRUZZATO 2008.

<sup>2</sup> We warmly thank the two inspectors from the Soprintendenza, S. Vitri and R. Micheli, for allowing us to study and publish here the data on the findings from the 2010 campaign, even before the publication of the excavation report, which will appear in vol. 4 of the Notiziario della Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici del Friuli Venezia Giulia. All the drawings are by Giuliano Merlatti.

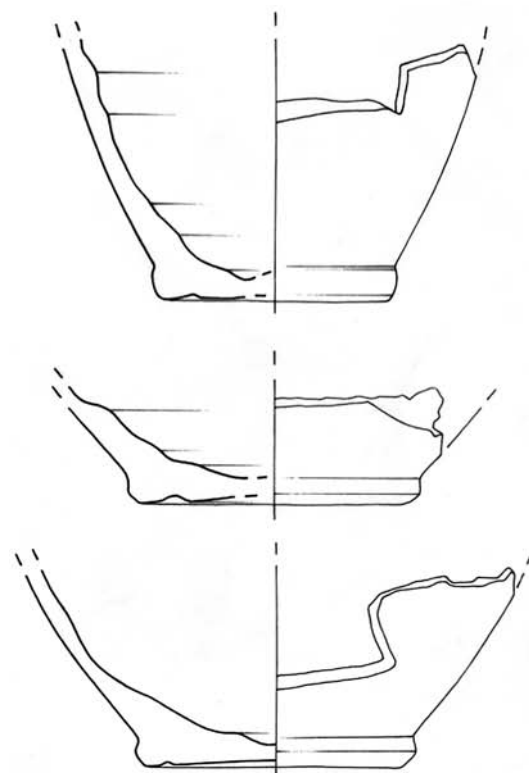
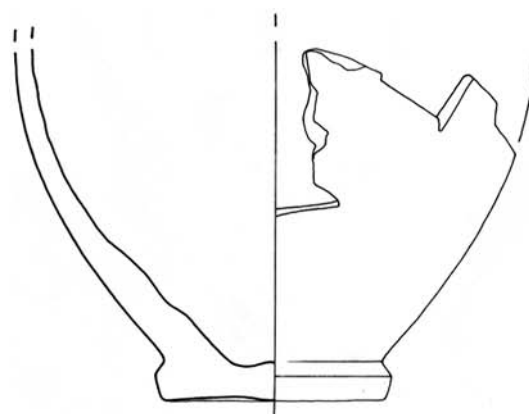
<sup>3</sup> CIVIDINI 2012, 139. A summary of the distribution of Eastern Mediterranean pottery in Friuli is in P. MAGGI, La distribuzione delle sigillate di produzione orientale nell'arco adriatico nord-orientale: problemi di metodo. In: S. Cače/A. Kurili/F. Tassaux (textes réunis par), Les routes de



**Fig. 2.** Small jar imitating thin walled pottery, made of refined common ware. – Scale 1:2.



**Fig. 3.** Cups in refined common ware imitating form Hayes 75 B in Eastern Sigillata B dated from 70/75 to 129 AD. – Scale 1:2.



**Fig. 4.** Bases of common ware vessels, very likely olpai or jugs. – Scale 1:2.

(**fig. 3**). Containers in common and coarse ware are always present, but the typology is limited to a few standardized forms. Unfortunately the vases are too badly preserved to consent a better typological classification. The olpai are predominant among the vessels in common ware; they present ceramic bodies very similar in colour and composition. The colours varies from pinkish orange to yellow, there is very often a certain amount of mica and the consistency is soft and dusty to the touch. The shape is characterized by a globular profile and the presence of a concentric groove outside the foot (**fig. 4**). Small jars/beakers are the most common form

in coarse ware, worked out with the fast wheel, but rather rough and with dark brownish-black fabric<sup>4</sup> (**fig. 5**).

A jar decorated with an applied trail with impressions has also some combed horizontal lines on the body. It was among the grave goods of tomb 15, used for nine successive depositions, and can be dated between the second half of the

<sup>1</sup> *l'Adriatique antique. Géographie et économie* (Bordeaux 2006) 179–194.

<sup>4</sup> These beakers are attested in the necropolis of Osoppo, always in the morainic amphitheatre: see CIVIDINI 2013, 81. They are also documented in the burial finds in Lombardia: see, e. g., L. PASSI PITCHER (ed.), *Sub ascia, Una necropoli romana a Nave* (Modena 1997) 33,10. The chronology is fixed from the Augustan period to the Flavian period. A comparison is possible with similar pottery found in Poetovio. See J. ISTENIČ, *Poetovio, the western cemeteries I. Grave-groups in the Landesmuseum Joanneum* (Graz/Ljubljana 1999) 114–115.

2<sup>nd</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>5</sup> From the same tomb comes a bowl with thickened rim and with a flattened upper part and body decorated with horizontal and vertical comb lines. It could be dated between the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>6</sup> Glass presence is limited to only three vases. Fragments of a cup with tubular rim, Isings form 44, dated to the second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, and of the foot of another unidentifiable vessel were found in two of the cremation graves, while a cylindrical cup with applied foot, form Isings 85, dated from the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD, was among the grave goods of the multiple inhumation grave Tomb 15. All the lamps found are *Firmalampen* (fig. 6). The oldest example, form XA with PVLLI stamp on the bottom, could be dated from the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD<sup>7</sup>; another similar lamp, with a close chronology but with a poorly preserved stamp LLC, was very likely part of the tomb group for one of the first deceased buried in Tomb 15<sup>8</sup>, while the second sample from the same grave is a form XC lamp and should belong to one of the later occupants of the grave. The stamp of FORTIS, probably the largest manufacturer of *Firmalampen* in Italy with his principal atelier in Mantua, is represented only by one example.

A number of metal objects complete the tomb groups, such as iron knives and unidentified tools, rings, hob-nails<sup>9</sup> used in military dress and occasionally, though very seldom, in Friuli Venezia Giulia by agricultural workers (fig. 7), some larger nails probably related with coffins because attested only in inhumation graves, and some bronze coins, datable between the Flavian age and the first decades of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD. A small number of bone pins, with a very simple globular head, have been found in one of the inhumation graves.

The analysis of the context gives an overall impression of a small community, where luxury goods were extremely rare: not even a single glass unguentarium, a very common item among grave goods of the 1<sup>st</sup> and early 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, was found, all the ceramic vessels are likely of local production and most of the tomb groups are composed of only one or two vessels (fig. 8). It looks as though still in the early imperial age the inhabitants of this site weren't very open to external influences, possibly also because of economic reasons, and at the same time, among the goods they could afford, some specific forms were particularly favoured, the characteristics of which might indicate a single source of supply.

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<sup>5</sup> See C. BASSI/G. ACHILLINA/R. OBEROSLER, *La via delle anime: Sepolture di epoca romana a Riva del Garda (TN)*. Museo Alto Garda 2011 (Garda 2011) 140 tav. 3,24.

<sup>6</sup> See T. CIVIDINI, *La ceramica grezza di Castelraimondo tra tardoantico e altomedioevo: le forme aperte*. In: S. Menchelli/S. Santoro/M. Pasquinucci/G. Guiducci (eds.), *LRCW 3. Late Roman Coarse Wares, Cooking Wares and Amphorae in the Mediterranean: Archaeology and Archaeometry 3. Comparison between Western and Eastern Mediterranean*. BAR Internat. Ser. 2185 (Oxford 2010) 559–566.

<sup>7</sup> This stamp is not very common in Friuli Venezia Giulia, only three lamps bearing his name were found in Aquileia: BUCHI 1975, 138–139.

<sup>8</sup> Also in this case the location of the workshop of this potter was very likely somewhere in Northern Italy; but his contacts with our region seem to have been stronger since samples of his products have been found: BUCHI 1975, 111–112.

<sup>9</sup> See, e. g., FALESCHINI ET AL. 2009, 161,10; 168,16; J. ISTENIČ, *Evidence for a very late Republican siege at Gard near Reka in Western Slovenia*. *Carnuntum-Jahrb.* 2005, 77–87.

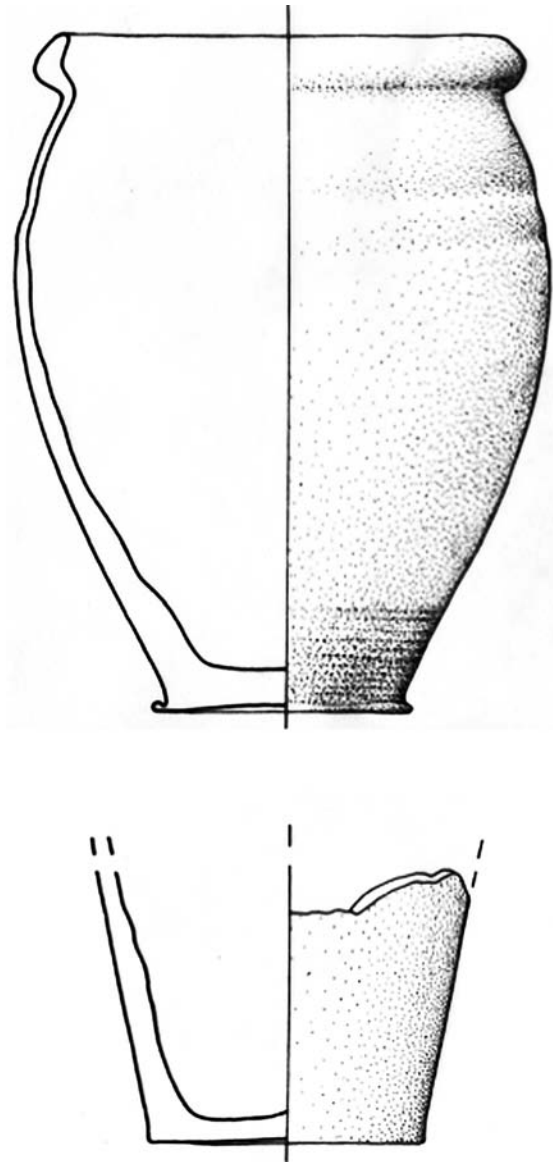


Fig. 5. Small jars or beakers in coarse ware. – Scale 1:2.

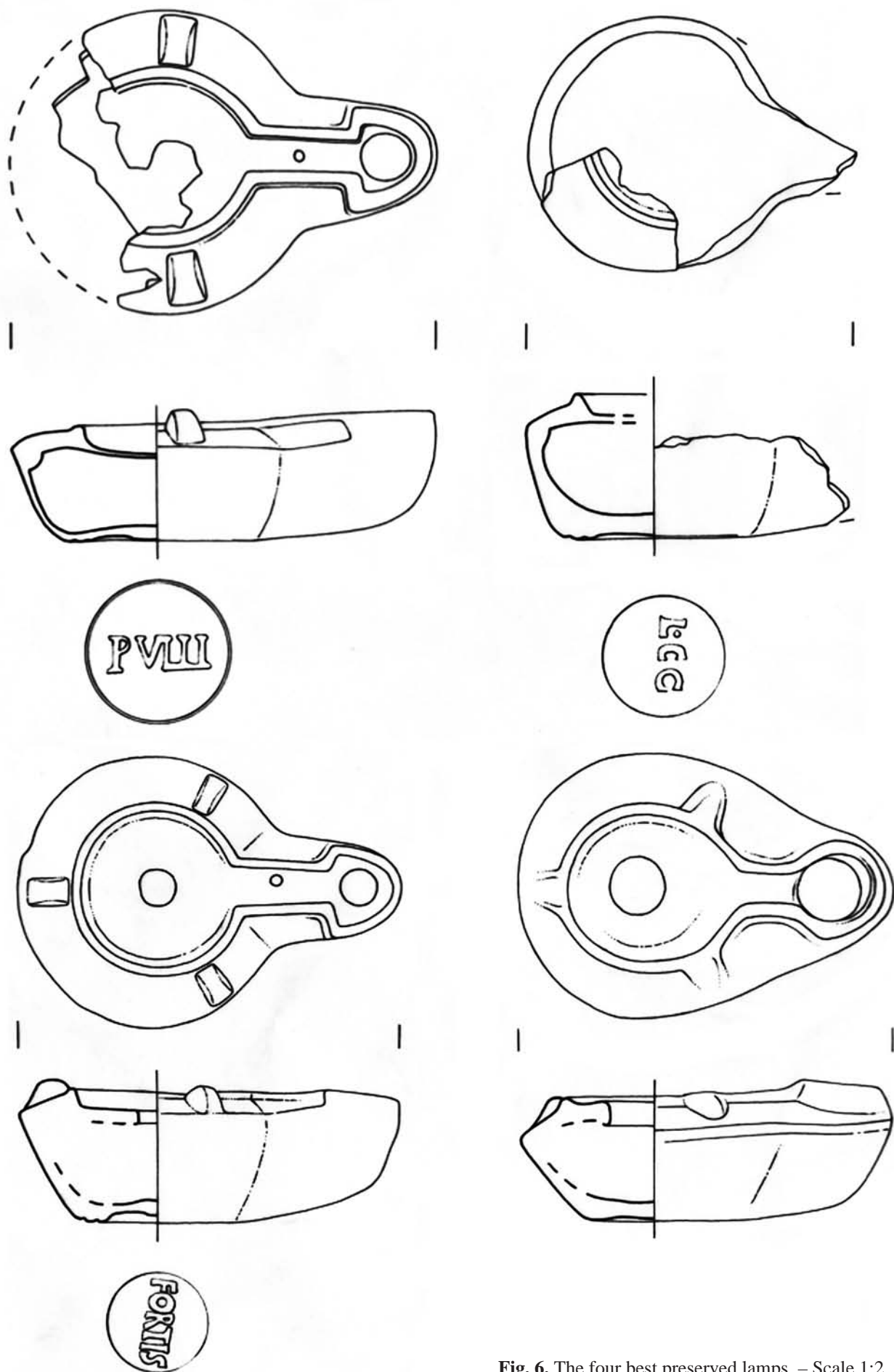


Fig. 6. The four best preserved lamps. – Scale 1:2.





Fig. 7. Some examples of bronze shoe nails. – Scale 1:1.

TOMB GROUPS														
	T1	T2	T5	T6	T7	T8	T9	T10	T11	T15	T17	T19	T20	T21
Thin walled beaker	1													
Thin walled cup				1										
Cup imitating ESB		1											2	
Common ware beaker								1	1					
Common ware jar				1										
Common ware olpe				1	2	1					1	1		1
Common ware ribbed jug										1				
Common ware jug						1								
Coarse ware bowl										1				
Coarse ware jar											1			
Coarse ware decorated jar										1				
Small coarse ware jar	1				1						1			
Firmalampe							1			2	1		1	
Glass cup IS 44							1							
Glass cup IS 85										1				
Glass base				1										
Bronze earring						1								
Iron tool				1	2	1	1				1			
Shoe nail				12	3	9	2						3	
Other purpose nail										7		1		
Coin			1						1					
Bone pin										5				



 inhumation tomb  
 cremation tomb

Fig. 8. Composition of the tomb groups divided between cremation and inhumation burials.

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