

# Frattesina

50 anni dopo

## Olle – oval pots with a short everted rim from the cemeteries at Frattesina (IT) and Ljubljana (SI). The same shape yet different use within the funerary practices?



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### Introduction

The cemeteries at Frattesina (IT) and Ljubljana (SI) are one of the most outstanding necropolises with several hundred burials (Fig. 1). Different cemetery areas (in the case of Frattesina Narde I and II, Fondo Zanotto and in the case of Ljubljana see Fig. 2: 2, 5, 6, 8, 11) are located on the left and on the right banks of the rivers Po and Ljubljanica in the vicinity of the contemporary settlements (Fig. 2). Since the cemeteries at Frattesina are well known to a wider archaeological public, we would like to focus our research and presentation on the cemetery at Ljubljana - Dvorišče SAZU (the courtyard of building of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts) (Fig. 2: 5).

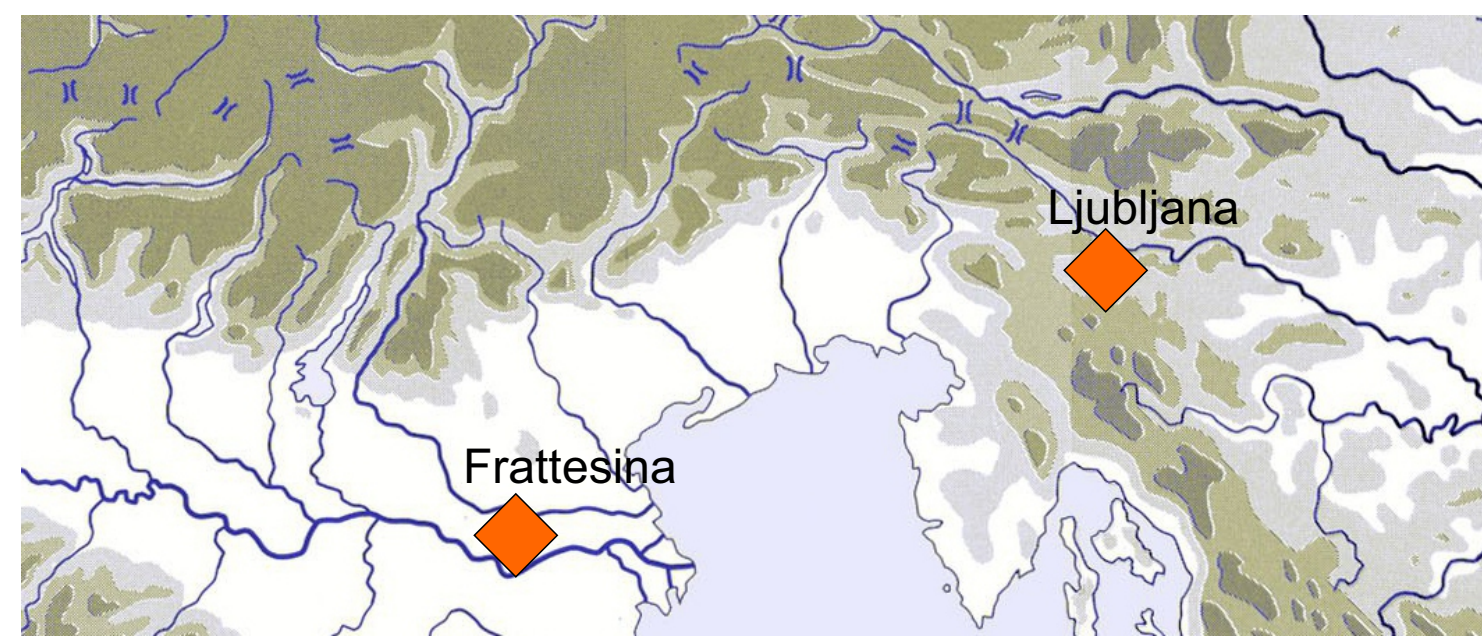


Fig. 1 Location of the sites Frattesina and Ljubljana.

Systematic excavations of the cemetery in Ljubljana were conducted at intervals from 1948 onwards (Stare 1954; Puš 1971; Puš 1982). This cemetery is a typical Urnfield period necropolis with more than 300 cremation graves in which a uniform mode of burial, that is, cremation, persisted throughout several generations. The re-analysis of the complete cemetery records together with new radiocarbon dates showed that the oldest graves should be placed as early as the 13<sup>th</sup> century BC or in the Br D period (Škvor Jernejčič 2014; Škvor Jernejčič *in press*), whereas the interments continued without a noticeable interruption throughout the Early and Late Urnfield periods (from Ha A to Ha B1–B2) and all the way to the Early Iron Age (Ha B3–C1). In the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC the number of the graves drastically diminishes. Moreover, it seems that a temporary cessation of burials on the cemetery grounds can be observed (Škvor Jernejčič 2014, 237–238; Škvor Jernejčič 2017, 153), which is coincident with the more long-term break of settlement records in the habitation area of Tribuna (Vojaković 2014; Škvor Jernejčič, Vojaković *in press*).

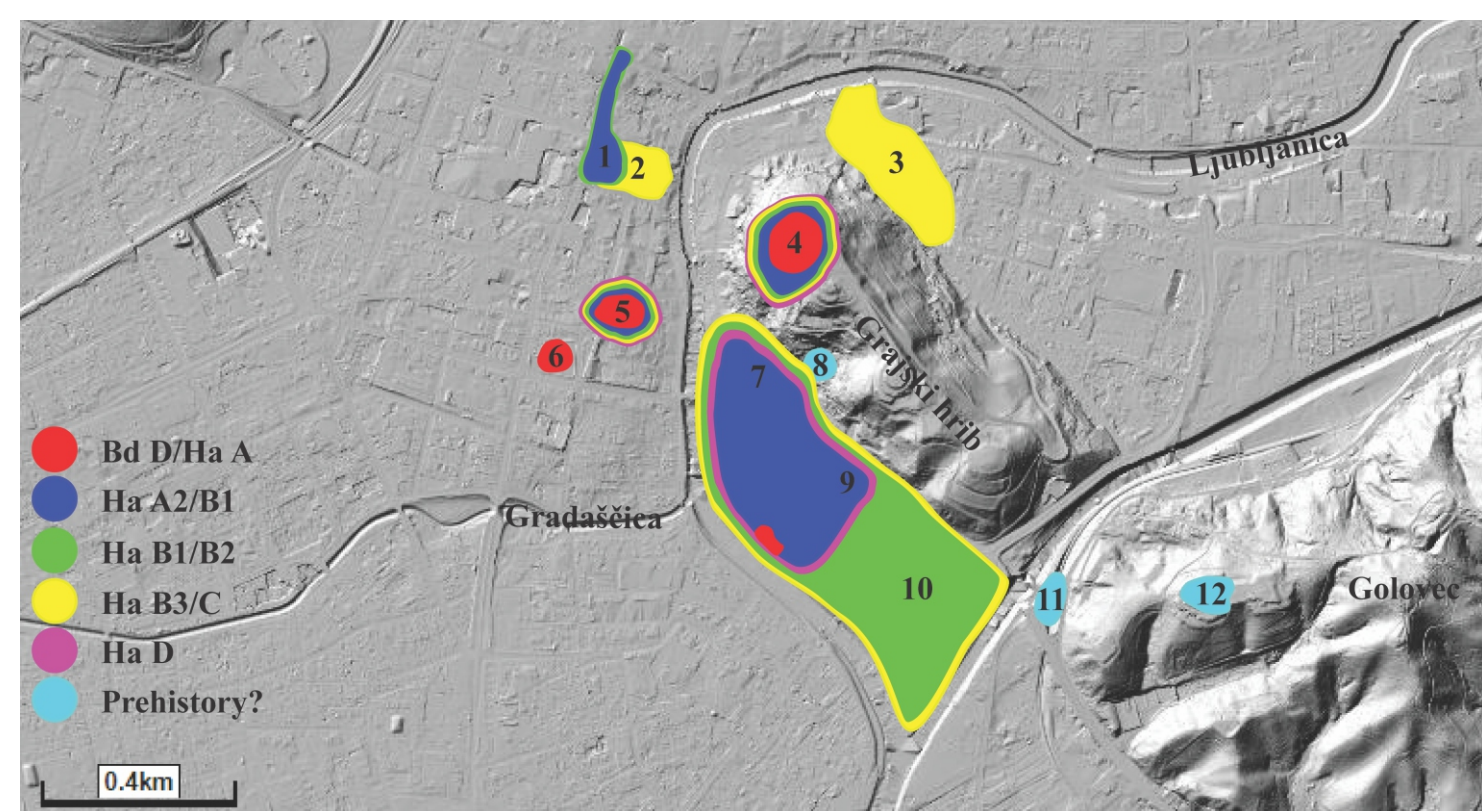


Fig. 2: Late Bronze and Early Iron Age locations at Ljubljana. Settlements: 1–Slovenska and Čopova ulica; 2–Kongresni trg and Park Zvezda; 3–Kopitarjeva and Streliška ulica; 4–Grajski hrib; 7–Gornji and Stari trg; 9–Tribuna; 10–Prule area; 12–Golovec. Cemeteries: 2–Kongresni trg and Park Zvezda; 5–Dvorišče SAZU; 6–National and University Library II; 8–St. Florian church; 11–area near Karlovski most (after Škvor Jernejčič, Vojaković *in press*).

### Frattesina versus Ljubljana

Besides the manner of burial itself - cremation, there are many similarities among archaeological objects from both cemeteries of Frattesina and Ljubljana taking into account bronze, glass items, grave-goods as well as funerary attires. These similarities in the presence of this particular types of metal or glass objects can indicate similar “fashion”, funerary attires, customs or even “dress codes” of the Late Bronze Age communities living in both areas. Since we are dealing here with *olle*, we would like to mention just a few examples. Semilunate-shaped razors of Obleskovic type and razors of Fontanella type are distributed from the hoard of Limone (LI) as the most western site, towards north-east across the Po plain, Veneto, Istria and all the way to the south-eastern Alpine region and up to Morava region in Czech Republic. It is interesting that only in Frattesina both types of razors are attested (Blečić Kavur 2014, fig. 76).

It is interesting, that in the Grave 11 from Ljubljana beside of the razor of Obleskovic type also a trapezoidal bone bead has been found (Fig. 3: 1-2). The bead is namely similar in shape to amber beads of the Allumiere (type 7) according to Negrone Catacchio *et al.* (Fig. 3: 3-4), which have been discovered also in Frattesina itself (Negrone Catacchio *et al.* 2000). Further similarities can be traced also as regards the circular glass beads “with eyes” that were discovered both in Frattesina as well as Ljubljana (Blečić Kavur 2014, fig. 29).

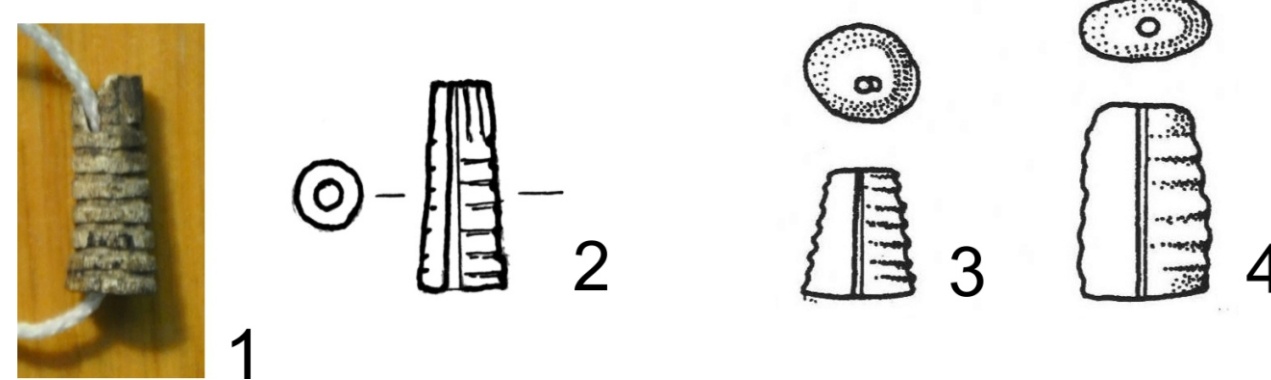


Fig. 3 1-2 Bone bead from the Grave 11 at Ljubljana; 3-4 Amber beads Allumiere type 7 (after Škvor Jernejčič 2014; Negrone Catacchio *et al.* 2000).

### Olle in the context of funerary practices

Interestingly, there are also many similarities concerning the shape and decorations of particular types of vessels between both sites. One of those are *olle* – smaller or rarely bigger oval pots with a short everted rim (Figs. 4, 6, 7). According to the typology of C. Colonna this vessels are classified as *olle* types 1, 2 and 3, that are characteristic for the phases I-III / *Bronzo Finale* (?), 2 and 3 (Colonna 2006, 163-164, 171, 180, 469-470, tav. 245-246). This dating corresponds well with the appearance of this pots in Ljubljana, where they are dated in the period of Ha A2/B1 and also Ha B1-B2 (Škvor Jernejčič 2014, 43-47, Figs. 4.35-4.37).

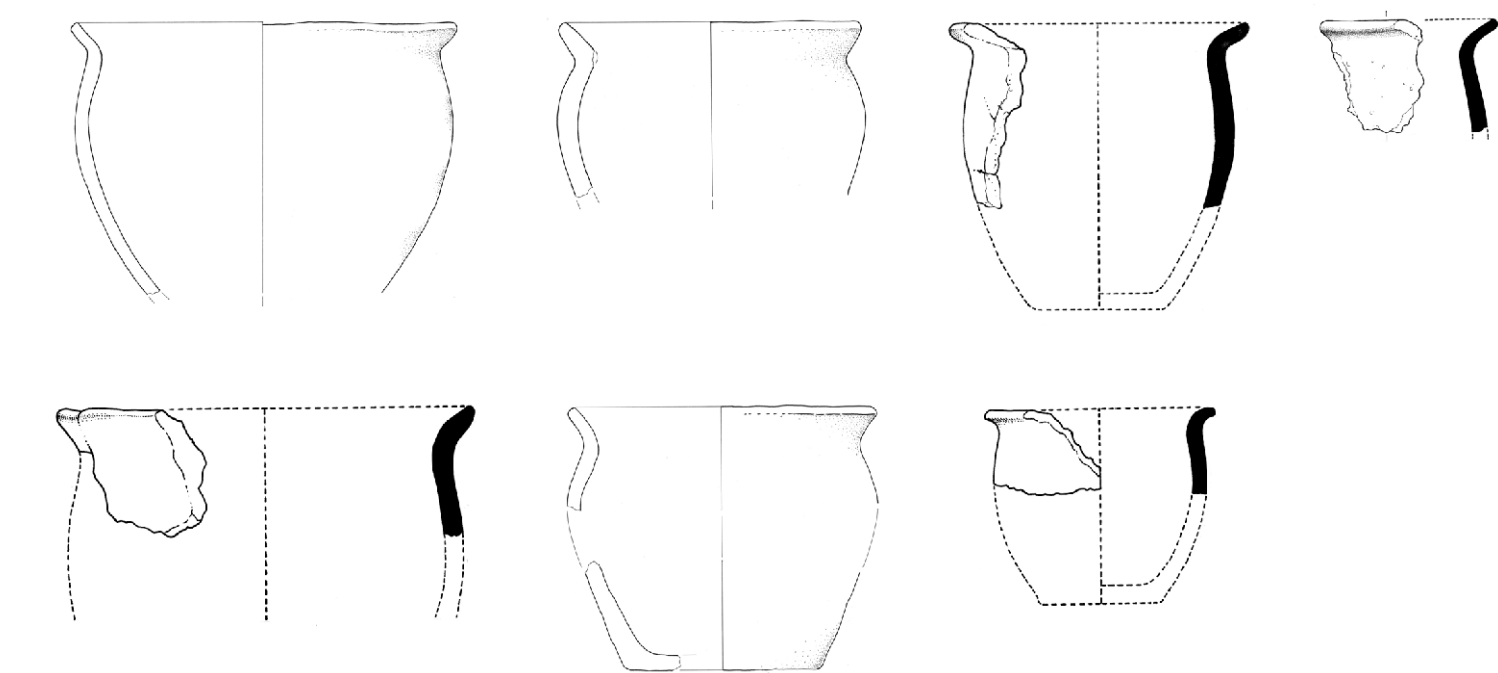


Fig. 4 *Olle* from the cemetery at Ljubljana - Dvorišče SAZU (Graves 8, 28, 316, 317, 322, 311 and 318) (after Škvor Jernejčič 2014).

The analysis of *olle* from Frattesina and Ljubljana showed remarkable differences as regards the use of those vessels in the funerary practices on both sites. In Ljubljana, the pots with a short everted rim – in some cases featuring a rib decorated with impressions (Fig. 6) – never served as urns. All are fragmented and most are made of coarse-grained clay and resemble cooking pots. Some sheards even show secondary firing. They appeared almost exclusively in the S-E and E parts of the cemetery, most of all in cremations without an urn (Fig. 5). These particular fragments of the vessels were found – according to the anthropological analysis results – not only in children graves, but also in the graves of young and adult persons (Fig. 5). The only exception is a vessel from the Grave 42 (Fig. 7C), which was deposited intact and served as an urn. In the view of bronze grave-goods the Grave 11 most probably represents a double grave of potentially two female persons, as it contains two double-cross belt buckles, a fragment of a ring and a button (Stare 1954).

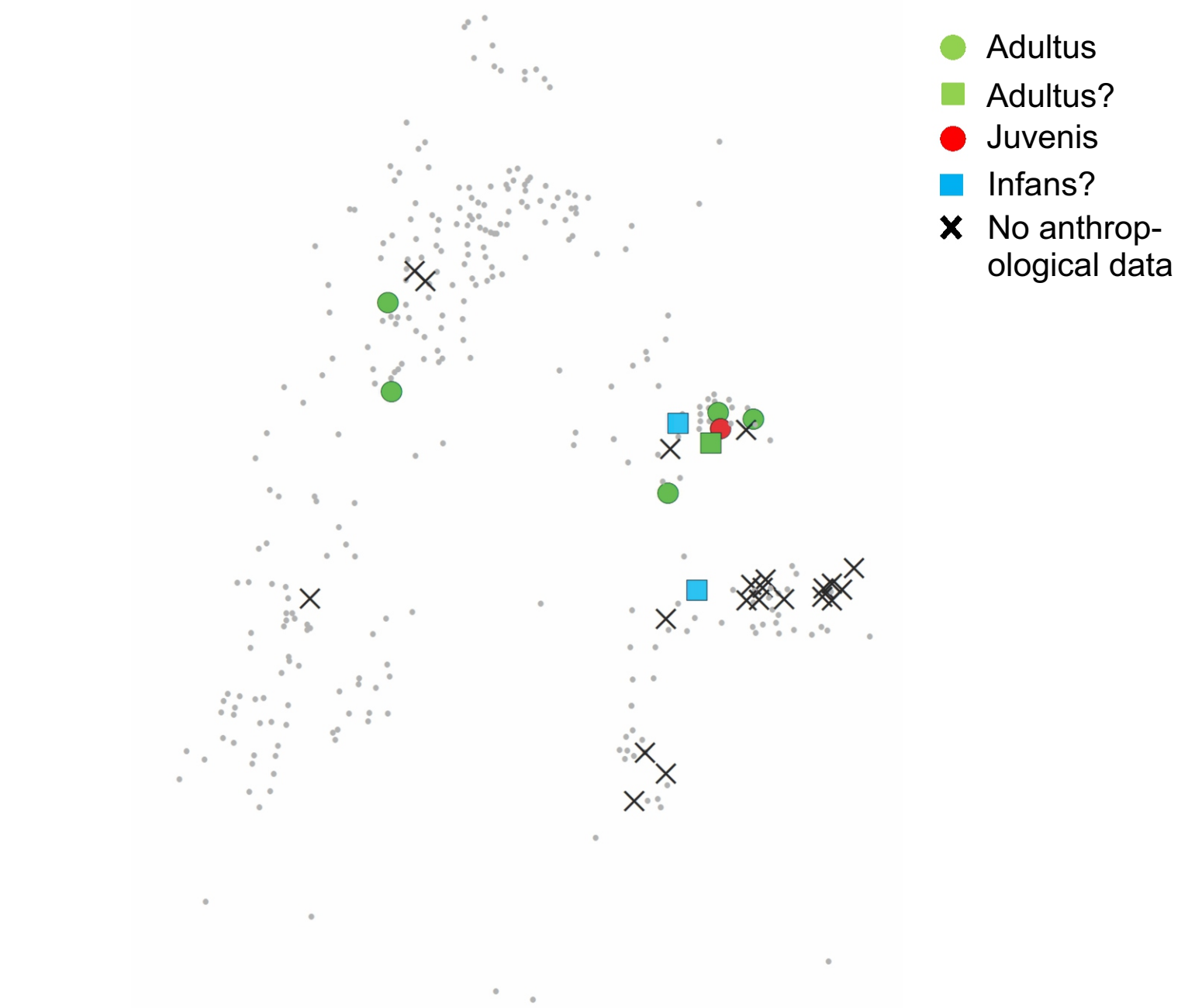


Fig. 5 Ground plan of the cemetery at Ljubljana. The presence of *olle* are indicated according to the age of deceased.

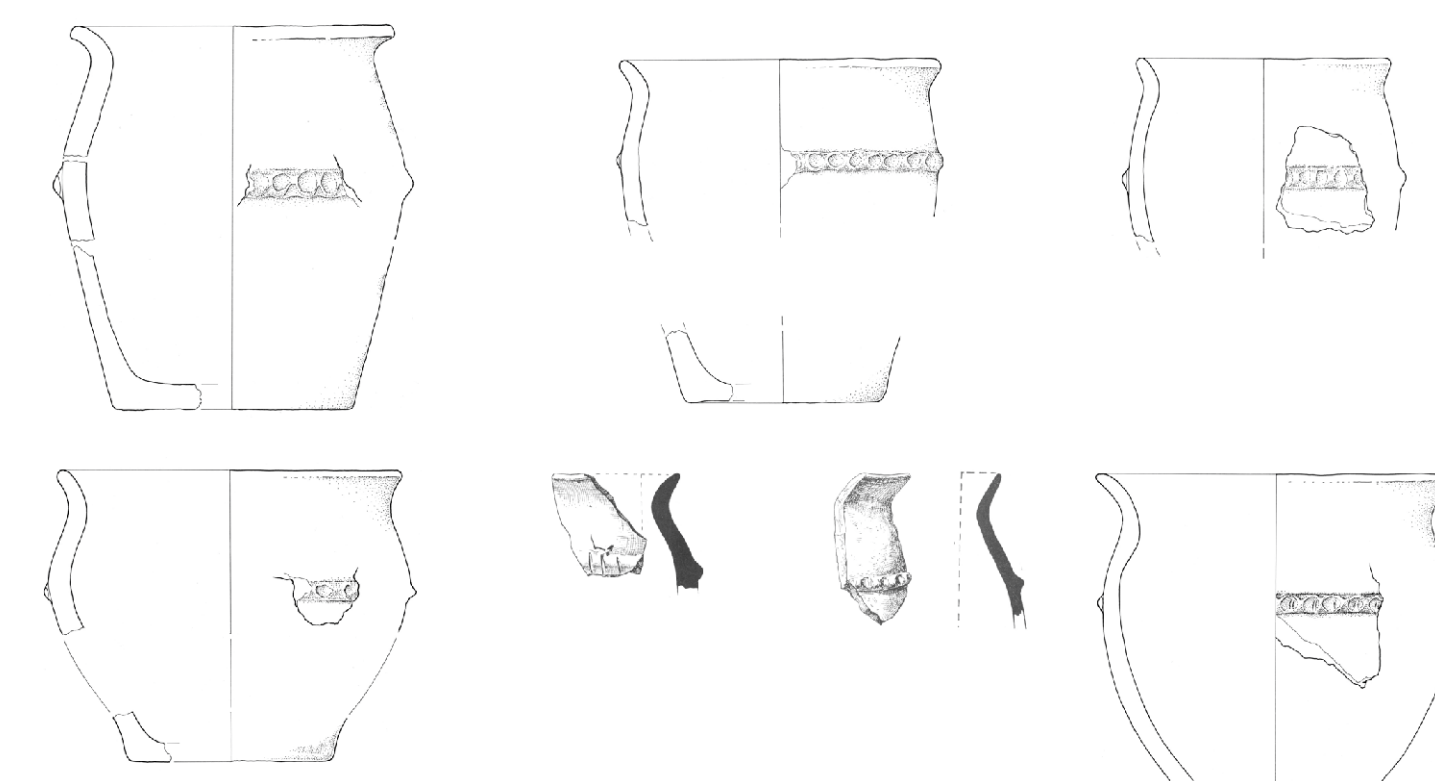


Fig. 6 *Olle* from the cemetery at Ljubljana - Dvorišče SAZU (Graves 309, 54, 52, 34, 58, 27 and 40) (after Škvor Jernejčič 2014).

In Narde, however, the same types of pots served always as urns. Particularly interesting is the fact that only children were buried in those vessels (Figs. 7A, 7B) (Il villaggio di Frattesina 2009, 69, 72), revealing a function and practice different to that in Ljubljana. They can be decorated with a cordon with impressions and are made of coarse-grained clay. However, they were deposited in graves in one piece and never in fragments. In most cases, this pots appeared in graves where only ceramic was found (Fig. 7A). Exceptional are for example the Graves 41, 52 at Fondo Zanotto or Graves 281, 506 and 518 at Narde with extremely rich female attire (De Min 1982; Salzani 1990/91). In the Grave 518 at Narde, a vessel (urn), different glass beads and a fragment of bronze bracelet with rhomboid cross-section were found (Fig. 7B). The same type of bracelets are known also for Ljubljana and other sites in NE Slovenia, as well as from Istria (Puš 1971; Stare 1975; Müller-Karpe 1959; Mihovilić 1972). This is another indication of vivid intercultural contacts between communities living on the territories from the Po plain up to the fringes of the south-eastern Alps in the Late Bronze Age.

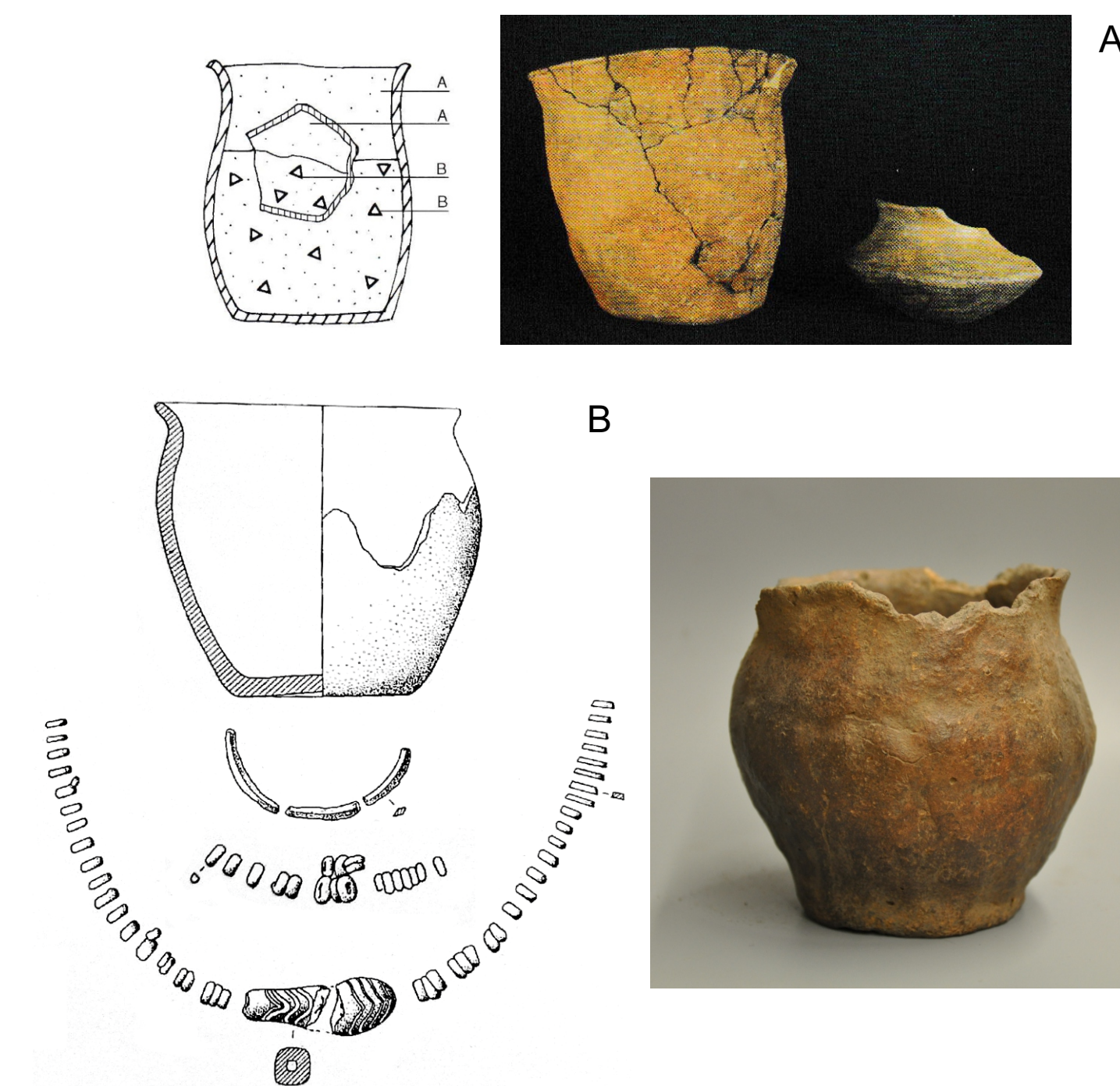


Fig. 7 A Grave 94 at Narde II; B Grave 518 at Narde I; C The olla from the Grave 42 at Ljubljana (after Salzani, Colonna 2010; Salzani 1990/91; Škvor Jernejčič 2014).

We can conclude that in Ljubljana this type of vessels served in special funerary practices either before, during or after the burial. However, such specific implementation in the context of funerary social practice was not recorded in Frattesina, where *olle* served as urns. Thus their function to carry or to protect the cremated bones of the deceased was very different than in the case of the Ljubljana cemetery. The ritual of breaking the vessels on the pyre or above the grave itself either during or after the burial, can be understood as a part of particular funerary rituals (possibly offerings, libations, feasting etc.) that were practiced after death (chaos) to ensure a renewed order in the society (Fig. 8).

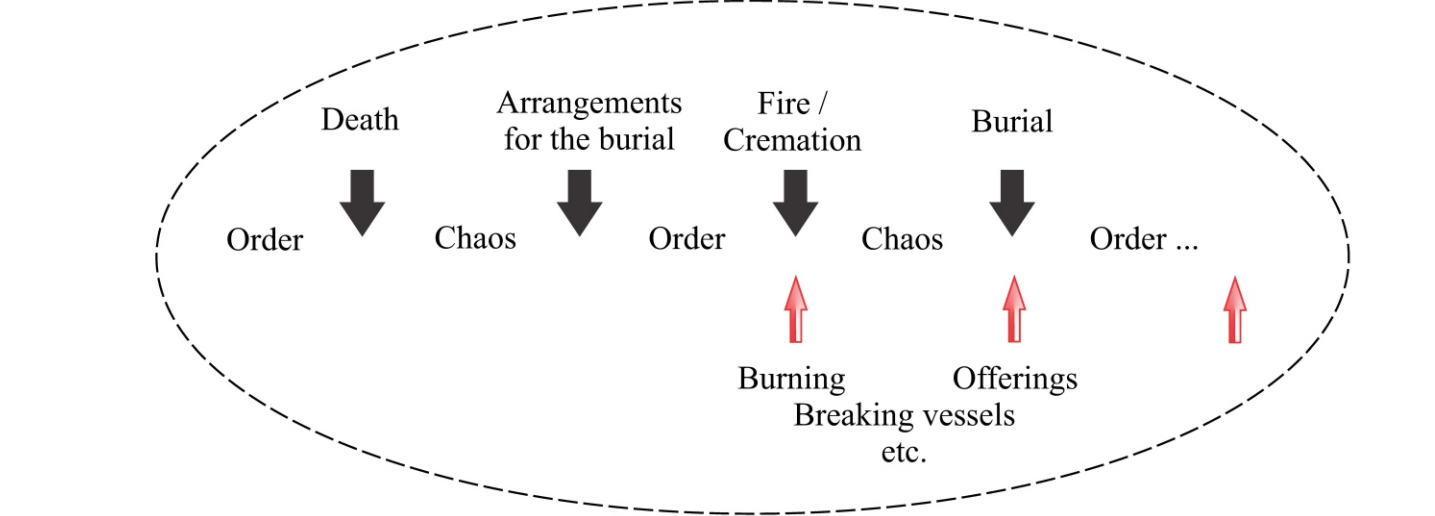


Fig. 8 Schematic presentation of the sequences before the death and after the burial (modified after Nebelsick 2016, Fig. 1/1, 1A).

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