

The Tell Banat Settlement Complex during the Third and Second Millennia BCE

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This paper presents the occupational history of the Tell Banat Settlement complex during the third and second millennia BCE.¹ The term “settlement complex” refers to Tell Banat itself, Tell Banat North, Tell Kabir and Jebel, or Tell Bazi (fig. 1). These sites were all occupied at approximately the same time. Tell Saghir, a nearby site, was not excavated. Although sherds from Saghir were small, highly abraded and generic, and there was little that was unambiguously diagnostic, surface collections indicate it may have had second as well as mid-third millennium occupation. A fragment of a Euphrates Banded Ware chalice from Saghir provides the third millennium connection, while a high frequency of comb-incised wavy line decoration warrants attribution to the second millennium.

By mutual agreement, the directors of the two adjacent excavations at Tell Banat – McClellan and Porter² for the northern part, and Otto and Einwag for the southern part – have agreed that the site can best be referred to in

the third millennium as Banat/Bazi, and in the second millennium as Bazi/Banat, on the grounds of the relative extent of each area in the two periods. Whether either site constituted the center, or seat of authority, is up for debate in the third millennium, and depends in large part on the nature and function of the public architecture situated in the center of Tell Banat and on the top of Tell Bazi (OTTO 2006a). It is absolutely clear however in the second millennium that the center was Bazi itself. It is also clear that in both millennia, Banat/Bazi and Bazi/Banat formed a continuous whole, the orientation of which, however, shifted considerably over time (fig. 2).

The first traces of occupation at the Banat/Bazi settlement complex are confined to two specific locales, and they indicate an unexpected origin to the site. At Tell Banat North, and in Area C at Tell Banat, stand two mortuary mounds (fig. 2), and there seems to have been centuries of enhancement focused on these two structures that shaped the nature of both architecture and occupation at Banat (PORTER 2007/8). Traces of other circular features adjacent to Tell Banat North (fig. 3), and in the village of Banat (fig. 4), suggest that initially there was a field of small burial mounds scattered across this area, two of which were selected out for enlargement. Why those two, we do not know. What we do know is that settlement grew up not only around them, but over them. An early phase of the mortuary mound in Area C lies underneath the earliest public building at the site, Building 7. As early though as the public architecture - earlier in fact, given there is a level beneath Building 7 full of

1 The excavators wish to thank the Syrian Arab Republic Department of Antiquities in Damascus and Aleppo for permission to work at the Banat settlement complex from 1989 to 1999.

2 I also wish to thank Adelheid Otto for her kind invitation to participate in the 2012 conference in Mainz and the warm hospitality provided by Otto and Einwag on that occasion. We have all enjoyed a stimulating relationship over these many years, in which our differing theoretical perspectives have served to put our respective conclusions to the test. This has only enriched the interpretative outcomes of each project.

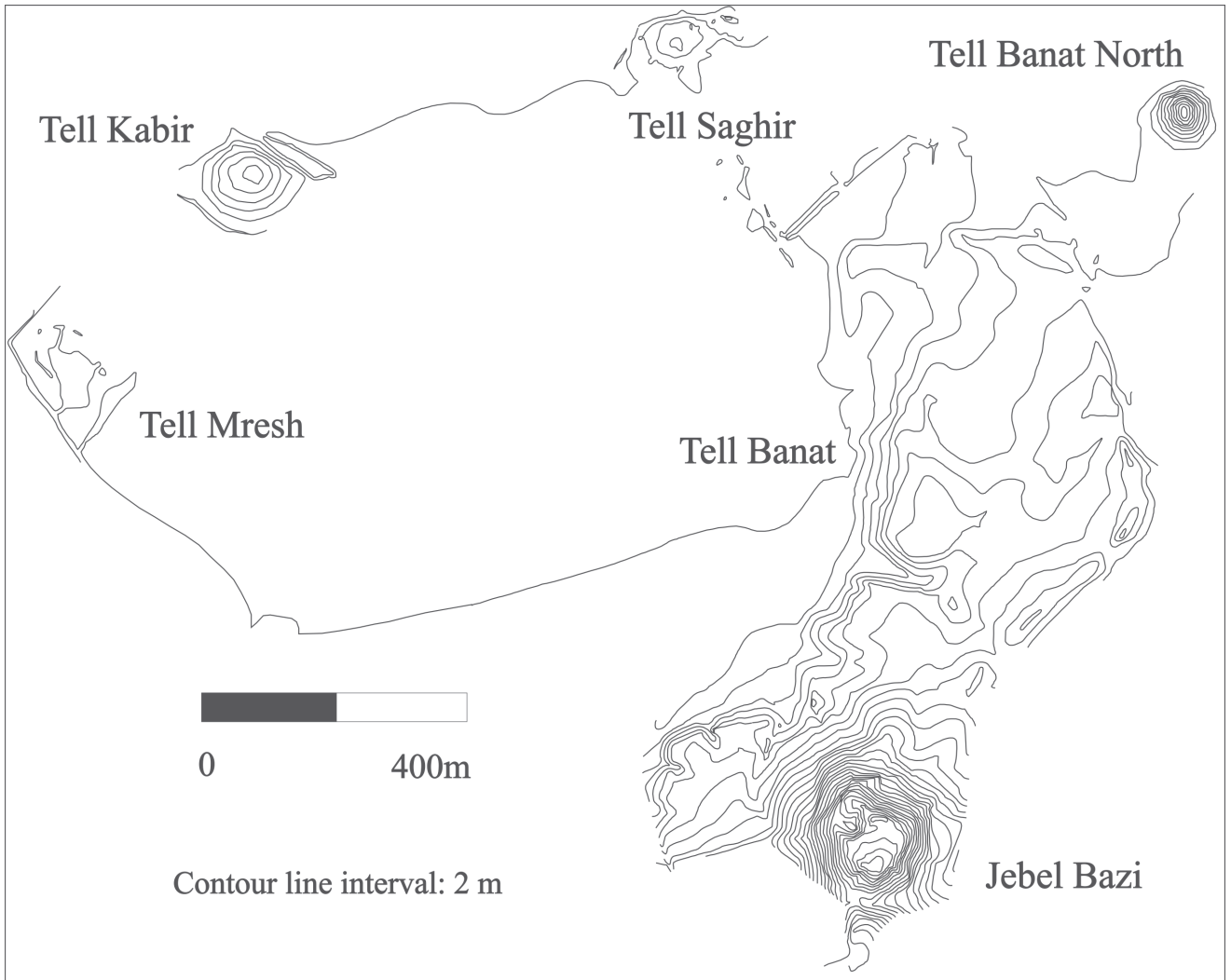


Fig. 1: The Tell Banat Settlement Complex.

slag, ash and some wasters – is the presence of pottery manufacturing that may have begun in order to supply the mortuary practices associated with the initial burials here (PORTER 2002a).

The excavated remains of the subsequent first full occupation phase at Banat, Banat Period IV, or Early Middle Euphrates III (2700/2600-2450 BCE), consisted of at least one, and possibly two, public structures (fig. 2): Building 7 in Area C, and another in Area F, where two large plastered plinths were recovered in a 10m × 10m square. There was also at this time an extensive pottery manufacturing area, excavated in Area E, D, and perhaps also found in G, although the date of the latter is not yet certain (PORTER & McCLELLAN 1998), and a shaft and chamber tomb, Tomb 1 (PORTER 1995a). It is possible that the settlement occupied a greater extent at this time, and may have included Tell Bazi, but this is not attested. Phase B of Tell Banat North dates to this period.

In Banat Period III, Early Middle Euphrates IV (2450-2300 BCE), the town reached its spatial maximum. Occupation of this period was found from Area F to Area A (fig. 4), and there was an extra-mural shaft and chamber tomb, Tomb 2, recovered from the area between Tell Banat and Tell Banat North. Phase A of the White Monument at Tell Banat North belongs to this period. Moreover the three public buildings of this time – Building 6, the temple at Tell Kabir³, and, in my estimation, the structure on the top of Tell Bazi – are connected by common construction features that suggest they are all part of the same project of expansion. Therefore, whatever the nature of

3 Although the temple at Kabir was not founded on virgin soil, and there were indications of occupation beneath it, nothing definitive was reached in excavation that would allow us to claim Period IV use of the site, let alone control of it by Banat at this time.

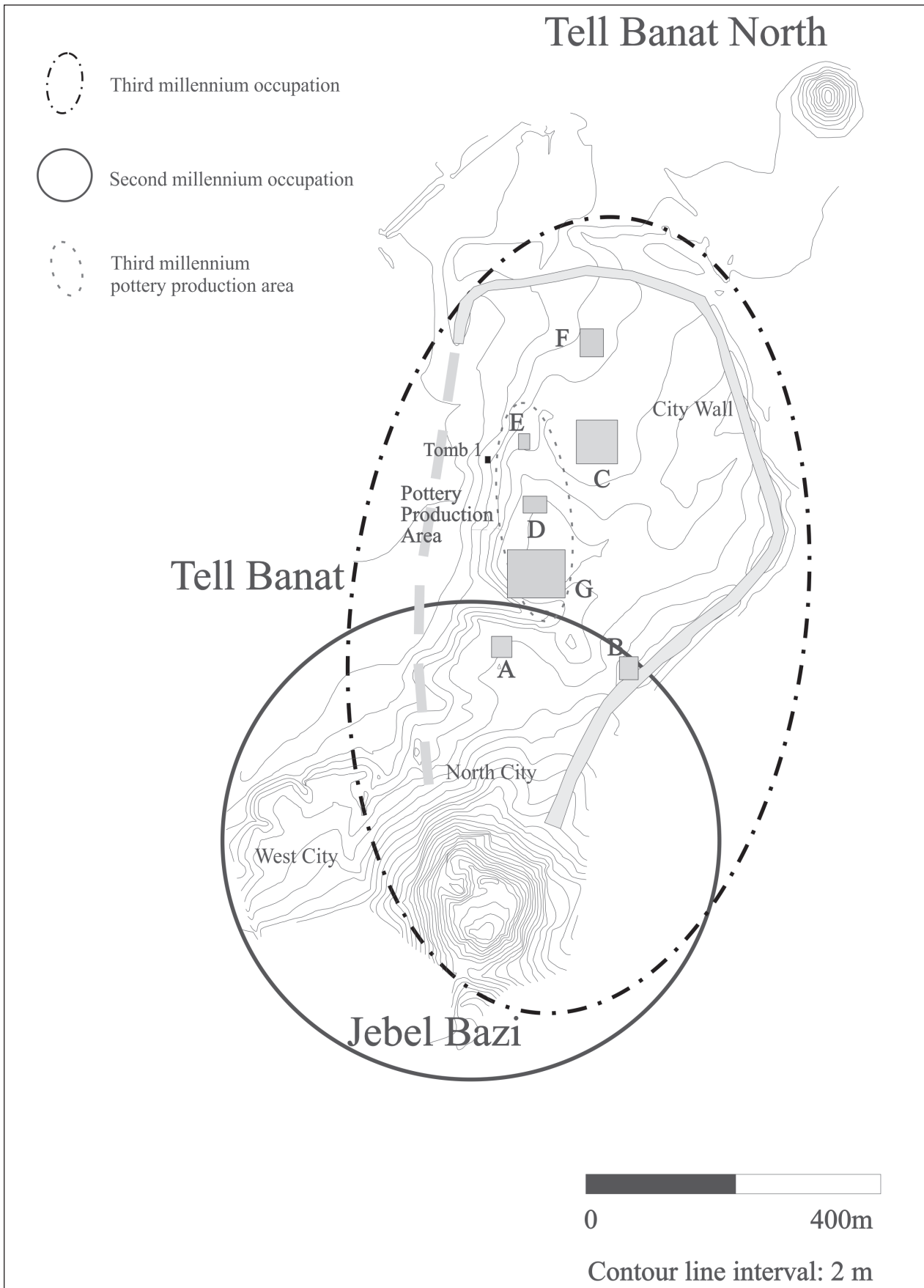


Fig. 2: Banat/Bazi and Bazi/Banat: the Extent of Occupation in the Third and Second Millennia.

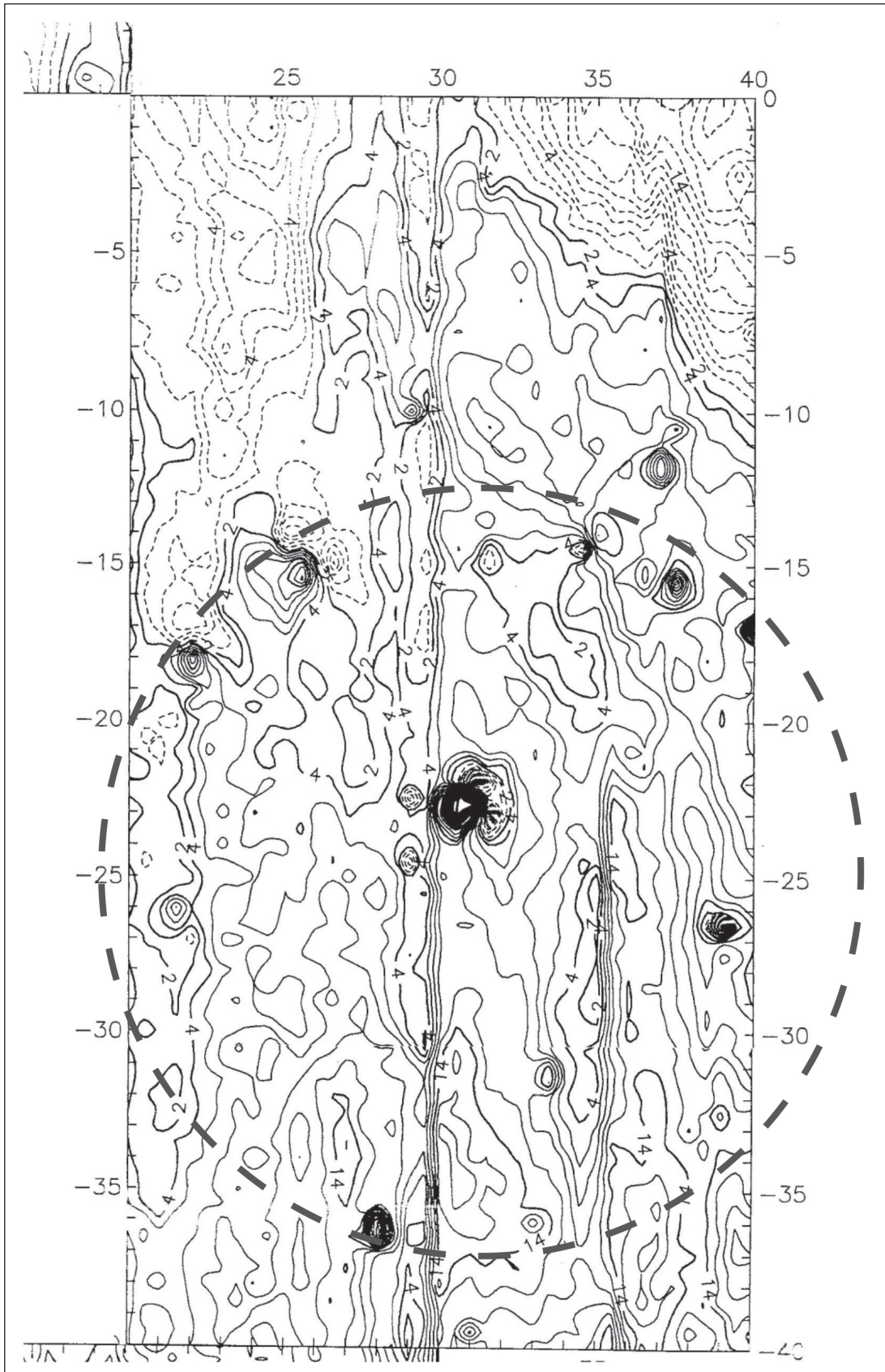


Fig. 3: Magnetometer Evidence for Circular Feature Adjacent to Tell Banat North.

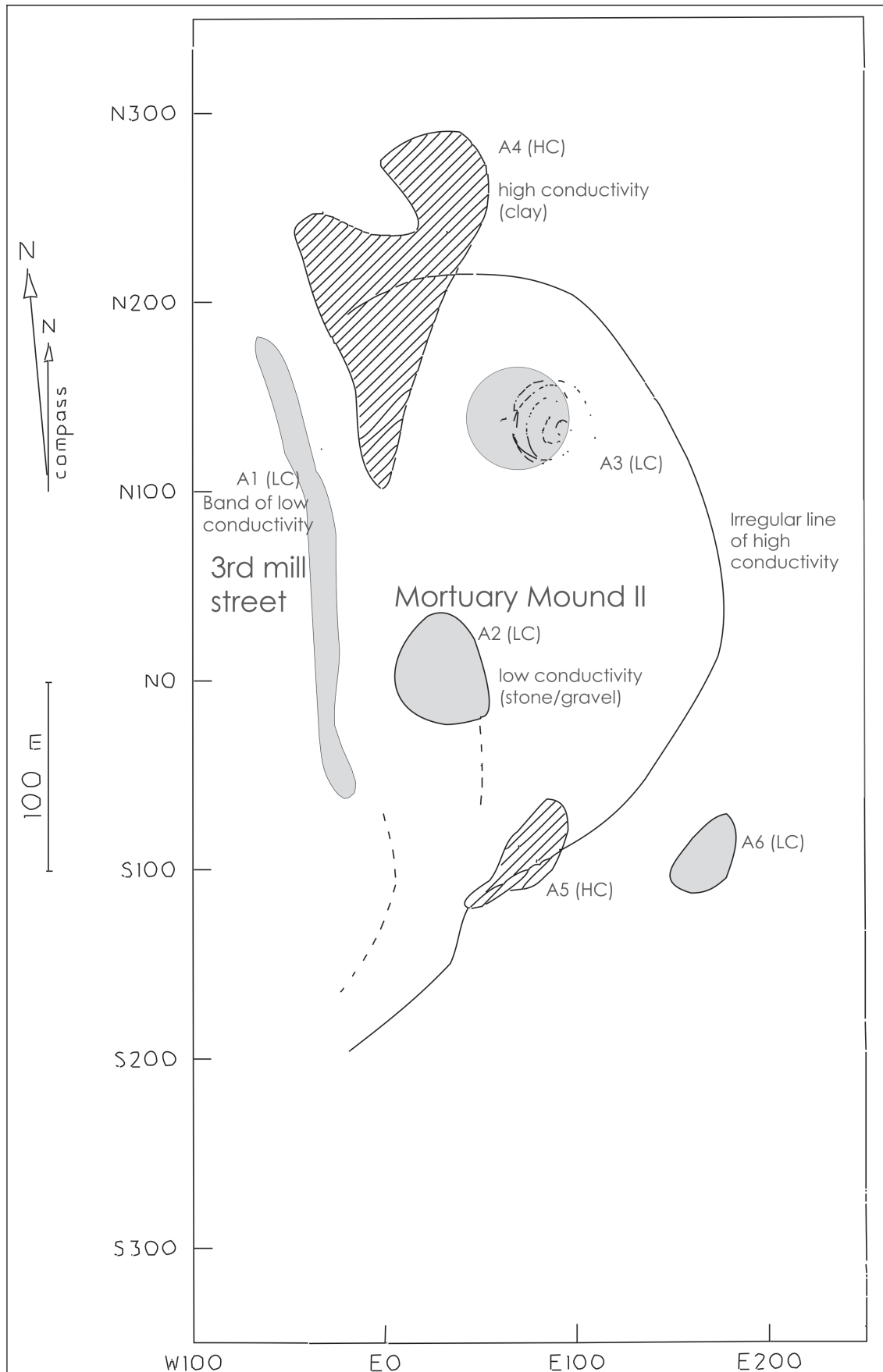


Fig. 4: Magnetic Anomalies in Area C: Mortuary Mound II and Associated Features.

authority at Banat/Bazi at this time, it extended over this entire area. Then the main mound of Tell Banat was abandoned, and although Otto and Einwag estimate that occupation on top of Bazi continued after this event, the fine chronological synchronization of these two parts of the settlement has yet to be established. Since the remains of Banat Period III were all over the surface of the site, and in many cases floor levels had eroded away, it is impossible to know if this was a sudden destruction or a gradual retraction or abandonment. At Tell Kabir the temple was left standing, the roof collapsed sometime after, and a series of pits were dug through the collapse debris and into the thick crushed limestone floor. The remaining walls eventually crumbled on top of the pits. This phase of abandonment is called Banat Period II, 2300-2100 BCE. At around 2100 BCE, in Banat Period I, a new level of settlement was established at Kabir, which continued to attest to occupation in the Middle and Late Bronze Ages of the second millennium (PORTER 1995b).

The central mound of Banat however was never reoccupied. No evidence either from surface survey or from excavation was found for the second millennium north of the indentation in the topographic plan that marks the modern road to the east (fig. 1), that is from Area G on, with the possible exception of a pit in Area D containing some bronze bracelets and a plaque figurine of a naked female holding her breasts.⁴ So in the second millennium, it was a much circumscribed site compared to its third millennium predecessor, concentrated as it was on the mound of Bazi and its lower flanks in the later period.

Banat Period IV – the Mid-Third Millennium Remains

The interpretation of the sequence in Area C presented here is completely different to the reconstruction published in earlier reports (PORTER & MCCLELLAN 1998; PORTER 2007/8). The construction of Period IV in Area C is now understood as a series of expansions centered on the underlying tumulus, Mortuary Mound II. A noted feature of this area was the massive and circumscribed gravel deposit some 60 meters in diameter (fig. 3) that was initially called a platform. This deposit intervened between the mortuary mound and Building 7 and be-

cause of the pit dug through it from beneath Building 7, it was not really clear what the relationship between all three was. It was eventually decided that the platform was to level off this area as a preliminary to further construction or decommissioning the monument beneath. Building 7 was assumed to have been built *over* the platform. However this reconstruction left several unresolved issues, notably the absence of any architecture over much of the gravel. An alternative reconstruction, recently proposed by McClellan, makes far better sense of the stratigraphic and architectural relationships. We now understand the gravel deposit to be in itself an enlargement of the mound, while Building 7 is built *around* it as a monumental façade (fig. 5).

Building 7 was constructed over three terraces rising up and down North to South and East to West, but its central element was an entranceway rising to the uppermost terrace on which was situated at least two column bases still present in the vicinity of their original location. Excavations in the area revealed a column foundation in the gravel, right next to one of the column bases.

The columns demarcate the apex of the mound, which was obviously of a much gentler slope than White Monument B at Tell Banat North. It is thus an open question as to whether the gravel was part of a plan for enlargement that was never completed, if it was designed as a low-rising mound, or if Building 7 was always intended to flank it. Whatever the case, Building 7 was certainly not meant to diminish it, but was a further monumentalizing of the structure, perhaps even a buffer, inhibiting access to the mound (as for example PELTENBURG 2007/8). Yet passage to the top of the mound seems to have been open via the monumental entranceway. If there was any barrier to movement through here, it would have lain under the modern mosque, for no trace of a gateway was found in the excavated areas.

The central element of the entranceway was the baked brick plaza. The plaza had various installations suggestive of ritual performance and may have been completely covered with bitumen at one point. There was no trace of any wall between Building 7 and the uppermost terrace behind it, which was always puzzling. Hence the term “façade” for Building 7. These rooms, which were largely empty of remains, seem to be ceremonial-ritual in function. Apart from the entrance way there was a second room with a baked brick floor, two narrow rooms, one with banquette intact, and a strange 4m square shaft cut at least 12 meters into the mound. The shaft was stone-lined for five of those meters. It may perhaps have been a well, but since we have other wells in the complex, which were round, earth-cut and brick-edged, this seems unlikely. Given the mortuary nature of this area, the shaft

4 While these have usually been called Ishtar figurines in the past, this attribution has been effectively undermined by Assante (2006). Extremely common in the second millennium, the mould of such a figure from third millennium contexts at Titris Hoyuk does raise the possibility that these objects from Banat belong to the third millennium (LANERI 2002, 24-5).

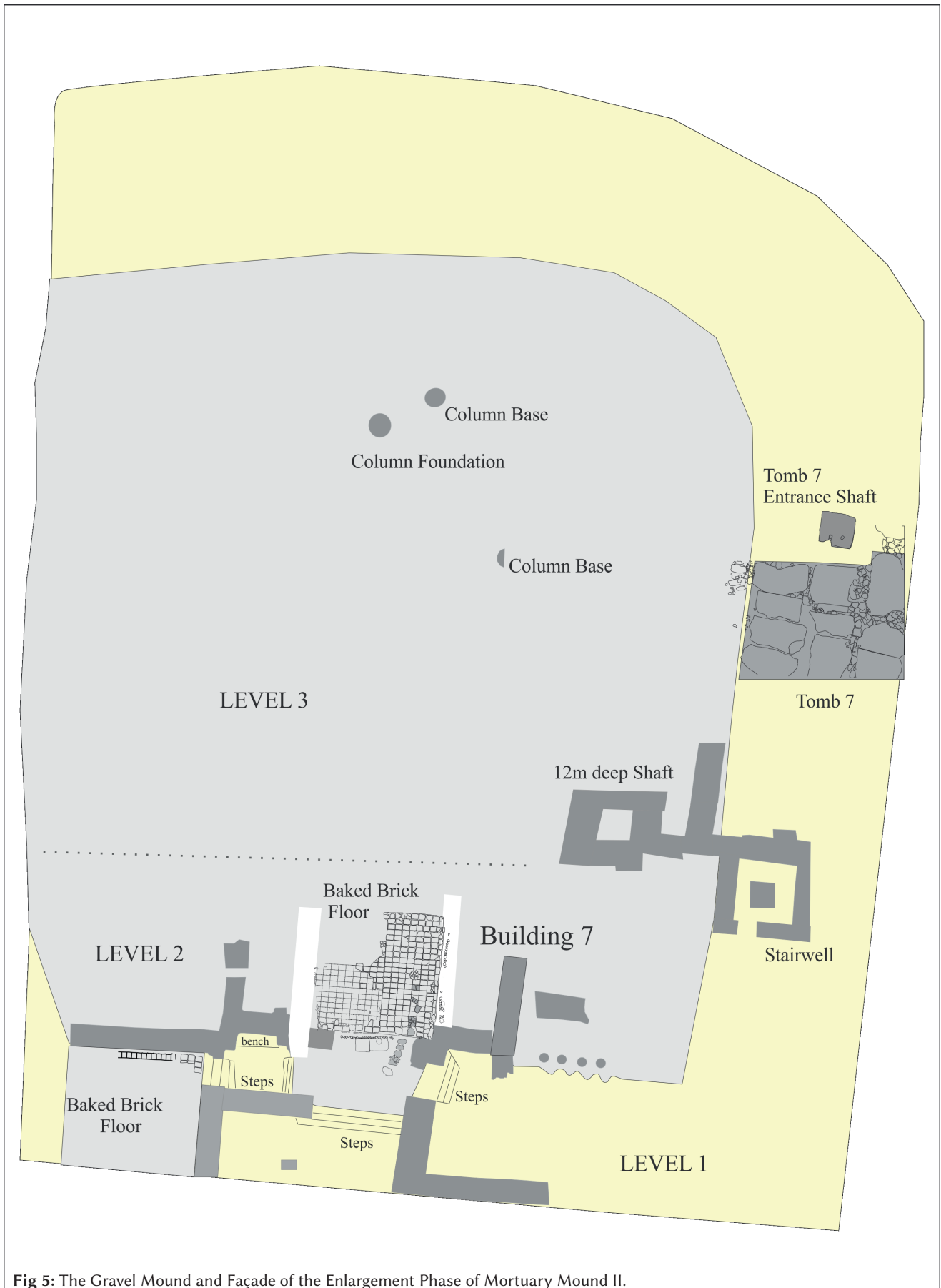


Fig 5: The Gravel Mound and Façade of the Enlargement Phase of Mortuary Mound II.

is perhaps a passage to the Netherworld (KELLY-BUCCELLATI 2002). Unlike other such structures though, it was completely empty, at least as far as we got, for at 12 meters the water table was broached and excavations ceased. The shaft was associated with a small square room in the center of which was a stone plinth. We have suggested that this was a stairwell. The extant height of the shaft indicates it stood well above floor level, and perhaps the stairwell was to access the shaft from a second story.

To the east of the shaft, and to the southeast of Building 7, was Tomb 7, dug into an open space on the southern flank of the mound. Constructed in a pit cut into the gravel, the roof of this tomb formed part of the courtyard in Banat Period IV. Its short shaft rose above the outdoor surface level and was capped by a single stone slab pierced with two holes in order to open and close it. The tomb contained five rooms decorated with window niches, was built of stone dressed on the inside and mortared with bitumen, and had a baked brick floor coated with bitumen (McCLELLAN & PORTER 1999; PORTER 2002b; PORTER 2007/8).

Area C was approximately the lowest point of the site. On its west, the terrain rises upwards to a ridge on which was located a series of kilns, rooms and pottery workshops laid out in delineated, but unroofed outdoor spaces (PORTER & McCLELLAN 1998). These continued to the south of Area C, in the excavated section, Area D. Continually modified, as such work places usually are, there are several features worthy of note in Area D. One, the organization of production was completely different to that in the subsequent periods, which was more like the industrial arrangement we expect, in large part because the Period IV spaces were not purely for work. They also seem to have been residential. In addition, there were several pits and dumping areas for refuse from the kilns, and the quantity of pottery pulled out of this area is staggering. At the same time, the ceramic repertoire from this area is remarkable for its limited range of plain simple ware jars. Area D also obviously produced Euphrates Banded Ware as one nearly complete reconstructed example was found in the collapse of an earlier phase of Kiln 3. Figurines and model wagons were baked in these kilns too.

Kilns were scattered in and around buildings that contained cooking hearths (a couple with pots still in them), tannours, spindle whirrs, grinding stones and numerous postholes. In contrast, the later workshops of Area G did not have any cooking hearths, kilns were separated out from workshops, and the functions of pottery production and other industrial activities were concentrated in these spaces.

In Area G, a long line of kilns of the same type as those in Area D underlay Period III remains, and they

may date to Banat Period IV. It is however possible these date to Period III, kilns go out of use and are moved frequently so that activities may expand over them. While typical of Period IV shape, the absence of kilns in the same levels of Period III workshops is problematic. There is though another kiln type that belongs to Period III – small and square, with flat stones at the bottom, one was found in the topmost levels of D, full of pottery dating to this period. Another was located in Area A.

Banat Period III- the Later Third Millennium Remains

In Area G the density of features associated with pottery manufacture and other productive activities left little room for residential habitation. A plastered basin with drain was probably used for levigating clay, and several large jars installed in the floor may have contained water. Tournettes and other tools, especially spindle whirrs, were quite common, but there were few postholes evident anywhere.

There were at least two phases of use in the Period III remains of Area G. Again, changes were constant, but at one point the area caught fire, a common hazard in these kinds of places, and stacks of two kinds of vessels waiting to be baked were smashed to pieces by the collapsing roof. Here too piles of wood were burnt, so badly that they were unidentifiable. In one section of Area G, piles of spindle whorls next to multiple tournettes provide clear evidence of textile production as a significant activity; in another, beads, bead blanks and stone drills were found. From this same building came the incised Bull-Man Pot, Goat Boy Pot and a rather undistinguished limestone statuette (PORTER 2015).

Stacks of unbaked hemispherical cups and bowls, wasters and a kiln separator found in the third millennium levels of Area A and dating in general to the same time as Area G suggests here too we have production on an industrial scale. Both the possibilities that there was a) a continuous zone of pottery production from G – even perhaps D – through to A in Period III, or b), that the industrial area shifted southward over time, are feasible. The chronological resolution is not fine enough to be sure either way.

In Area F the large public building was replaced by a series of small houses. Extensive traces of walls throughout this area demonstrate that here was the residential quarter. In Area C another major change was evident. Building 7 was replaced by Building 6, a quite different structure, built on an entirely different scale, and oriented in a different direction. The walls were much thicker, the stones that comprised them much larger, but these walls were

only foundations. Great effort had been made to eliminate the terrace system, elevating the level of the building to the *equivalence* of the upper terrace, but not above it – this would imply that Building 6 did not extend over the upper terrace where the column bases were found, but was built around, in the same manner as proposed for Building 7. This meant that in some places the foundations were 2.5 to 3 meters tall. They had been placed directly on the floors of Building 7 in many instances, raising the Building 6 levels well above remnant walls of the earlier structure. But this presents us with something of a contradiction – on the one hand there was no brick collapse level between the walls of Building 6 and the floors of Building 7, and the latter were very clean at this point, suggesting that there was little time lapse between the end of Building 7 and the construction of Building 6; on the other hand what happened to the walls of Building 7 if there was not enough time for them to disintegrate and perhaps erode away? It seems pretty clear that Building 7 was dismantled, not knocked over and leveled, the foundations raised and the spaces between walls filled in, often with a gravelly mix. The bricks then, if salvagable, may have been reused in the new structure or carted away for some other purpose. This in turn suggests a planned, internal alteration in the architecture of Area C. Moreover, the treatment of Tomb 7 is also indicative of a certain continuity during change. What then, was, the relation of Building 6 to the mound? Were there floors belonging to this building that went over the top level of the mound that subsequently eroded away? Possible, because as noted above, most floors from this level have long gone. Only a small patch of flat flagstones mortared by bitumen was recovered when a modern house was moved from one part of Area C to another. This flooring was adjacent to the extant top of the wall, and both formed the surface on which the inhabitants of the modern house lived.

We have no way of knowing whether the column bases on the top of the gravel mound in fact belong to Building 6 or Building 7. The only evidence that suggests an answer is the presence of a column drum as a secondary addition to Tomb 7. This piece had been added to a doorway to support the roof, then cut away on one side *in situ*, no doubt because the resulting entrance was too confined (plate 1a). Unless such columns were plentiful, it seems likely this was a reuse of a column from the now defunct Building 7, and that the need for this addition was a result of another change rendered by the builders of Period III: the burying of Tomb 7 under another thick layer of gravel. The weight thus loaded onto the roof may have required the further support not only of this column, but the lintel on the other side of the central chamber (plate 1b). The tomb was also filled with pot-

tery belonging to this later period, and additional graves were placed around it.

The gravel that is used with such abandon at Banat probably comes from the *wadi* behind the village and its removal may have had a dual purpose. Although the *wadi* was dry most of the year, during occasional rainstorms it directed runoff waters toward and around Banat and the village from time to time flooded. In the early 90s there was an especially severe episode of runoff when, after being diverted around the site, in part by the extensive third millennium ramparts, in part by a modern bulldozer, waters from the wadi emptied into the fields in the river plain to the west. Also portions of the northwest corner of the Banat settlement were flooded just beyond the point where the city wall ended. Almost every spring the government sent a bulldozer to dredge accumulated gravel in the wadi on the east and north sides of the site. Perhaps earlier inhabitants solved the problem in a similar way.

In earlier publications it was thought that Building 6 reused the brick plaza as its central entranceway, but plastering over it. This is no longer argued to be the case. However, although the second building was reoriented, and it was level with the top of the mound, its central axis was in the same place as that of the first, – a very large entrance hall leading from the street to the center of the mound. The gap in the north south wall here does not seem to have been robbed, but rather was an opening through to the gravel. If Building 6 was constructed over the gravel mound, it must have had a very large central area, for there were no traces of walls, robbed or otherwise delimiting the top of the mound. Alternatively, like Building 7, it was wrapped around the gravel mound.

While Building 6 represents some significant changes to the earlier structure, it had much in common with the temple *in-antis* at Tell Kabir in terms of construction style and techniques, including deep foundations and heavy floors. Moreover, the long rooms of Building 6 are exactly half the dimensions of the single room of the temple *in-antis*. The architectural parallels between Buildings 6 and 1 are borne out by ceramic comparisons which indicate both structures belong to Period III, as does White Monument A, the final enlargement of Tell Banat North. The temple *in-antis* – Building 1 – was excavated long before the buildings of Area C came to light, when construction practices were not so clear. The very deep stone walls, almost three meters from the crushed lime floor to their base, and the extremely regular strata within them raised the possibility, with some uncertainty, that the building had at least two phases of use. Earlier reconstructions suggested that in the first phase, the walls were made only of stone and floors were of packed

earth or brick collapse, frequently re-laid. When the floor level had risen sufficiently, a mudbrick superstructure was added and a heavy floor of crushed limestone covered with white plaster was added. This is incorrect. It is now clear that exactly as in Building 6, the stone walls are foundations only, and that there was only one occupation phase of the building, the only question being whether the horizontal strata were fill for the building or earlier floor levels that the foundations were dug into. One reason that the horizontal deposits were argued to be floors of Building 1 was the fact that they ran right up to the walls. That is, there were no traces of a foundation cut. This would suggest that these layers were fill deposited after the walls were built, exactly after the fashion of Building 6. The intent then, in both cases, was to raise the height of the building. The result, intended or not, was to enhance its monumentality to a significant degree. There may also have been a defensive purpose to this practice (and see OTTO 2006a).

This revised understanding of the construction of Building 6 and Building 1, the temple at Kabir, then raises questions about the dating of the different levels found within the walls of Building 1 as published in 1995. There are a few changes to report. The material from the limestone floor itself belongs to Period III as initially argued, while the limited material from beneath the limestone floor is also clearly attributable to Period III now the sequence is better known (PORTER 2007a).

Banat Periods II-I: the EB-MB Transition at Tell Kabir.

Evidence for the end of the third millennium occupation of the Tell Banat portion of this settlement is unfortunately limited and ambiguous, since the site suffered erosion rather than deposition in the aftermath of its demise (but see OTTO 2006a for a proposed explanation). With the exception of two or three sherds (out of thousands) that are common in the next phase, Banat Period II, the ceramics for the latest levels in areas C and G date unequivocally to Period III, but there is no associated collapse, destruction or dismantlement to go with this date. The floors of Area C are gone, the rooms of Area G were destroyed by fire, yes, but this is just as likely to be a localized event associated with pot making, common in these facilities, as it is a site-wide destruction. Similarly in Area A, where second millennium remains at the very southern end of Banat rest immediately on top of ashy material containing unbaked Period III whole vessels (see PORTER & McCLELLAN 1998, 51). While the presence of ash might be considered evidence of destruction, the fact that it contained wasters, kiln separators and stacks

of complete unbaked vessels, but little burnt brick material, might equally indicate the debris typical of a kiln dump or perhaps another localized fire resulting from carelessness with kiln ashes.

Area A confirms the pattern evident elsewhere at Banat – that the last level of third millennium remains were on the surface of the site and eroded over time, rather than were covered by further accumulation. Of course this leaves open the possibility that traces of a small-scale occupation dating to the next centuries, Banat Period II, 2300-2100 BCE, might also have been eroded, and there is a slight possibility that this was the case in Area G. Here is where the evidence from Tell Kabir comes into play (PORTER 1995b). The pits dug into the floor of the temple there, mentioned earlier, are themselves indicative of some kind of activity in the area. It is impossible to characterize the nature of occupation elsewhere on this basis. They might reflect a temporary occupation, but they are regularly shaped and regularly distributed across the floor of the temple in as much as was dug here, and might also reflect a systematic storage system on the edges of a slightly smaller town. Whatever the case, occupation at Banat itself was severely curtailed, and whether that meant the withdrawal of an overarching power left Kabir under its own auspices in Period II, by 2100 a prosperous settlement was in place that might be characterized as “middle class” (PORTER 2007b). Unlike the later houses of Area A, and even Bazi West, the Kabir houses of Banat Period I, 2100-2000/1900, do not show signs of activities other than food preparation and consumption, with perhaps ritual moments evident in the incense stand and burner and some of the pots that lined the walls of Room 2. The rooms are, by and large, spacious, and activities segregated. Of particular note is the painted room, where the walls were decorated by thick white spots (PORTER 1995b). To the rear of the building was a smaller space we fondly called the drinking room. This contained a very large storage jar, strainer and a group of cups.

The ceramics of Room 2 proved to be very important, in that they established a relationship between the Early and Middle Bronze assemblage that until that point had been considered quite distinct in the north (PORTER 1999; 2007a). Not only were forms traditionally considered diagnostic of each period side by side on the same floor, and sometimes stacked within each other, but evolutionary relationships between many other types could be established so that the dissimilarities between the assemblages of each period were no longer so marked. Moreover the Kabir material establishes direct continuity with the Banat ceramics so that the life of forms and wares can be traced over a six hundred year period.

This level was destroyed by a heavy conflagration coming from the east. Walls fell towards the west, down the slope of the site and only towards the east of the excavation unit, in square 1206, was there enough depth to preserve the next level. In terms of ceramics there is a good deal of continuity suggesting that rebuilding took place soon after the destruction. Cooper publishes some of this material as transitional in her 1998 discussion, but there is too little sherdage from this level, which lies above the wall of the Phase six, to be sure whether it belongs to the same time or is MB proper. Then there is a gap – one created by the circumstances of excavation rather than occupation. The upper levels of every trench at Kabir were badly disturbed by a later cemetery, so this meant for the material above the transitional stage in the sounding of the western slopes that there was almost no recoverable architecture and few materials could be reliably dated to the various phases of the first half of the second millennium. In the trenches opened on top of the site, where the transition from the Middle Bronze to Late Bronze is possibly represented, we simply did not get deep enough to establish whether Middle Bronze occupation was continuous or discontinuous. The Late Bronze material is again badly chopped by graves, so there is no definable architecture to recover, and it is possible the pottery of this phase is accordingly mixed.

Banat Period 0:

Second Millennium Remains in Area A.

Immediately on top of the Period III remains in Area A are the floors of Banat Period 0. Period II, representing the transition from the third to second millennium, was not in evidence in Area A. Period I covers the fragmentary Middle Bronze remains excavated at Kabir. Area A is the location of domestic occupation in Period 0, and it is presumed that this Late Bronze habitation is a direct continuation of the “north city” of Bazi. Of course that is *not* to also presume that the Banat and Bazi habitations are identical, if only because things may change toward the outer edges of the settlement. One of the most obvious differences is in the quantity of materials found in the Banat buildings. While fitted with standard equipment such as tannours, hearths, and large pots set into the floor, and with a body of ceramics that fit, as might be expected, well within the Bazi assemblage, these houses simply do not have the range, nor extraordinary quantity, of the objects recovered from their counterparts at Bazi (Orton 2006b). This is possibly because Area A was a comparatively small exposure, with more richly equipped houses lying unexcavated. Or it was possibly because

the north settlement in general was not as affluent as the West City. Or perhaps the people living on the very fringes of the town were poor. There are grinders, mortars and pestles of course, some small macehead-like objects, but little jewelry (a few beads from poor proveniences only) and a few scraps of metals, with the exception of one broken bronze pin. This discrepancy may simply be a matter of preservation, since Area A was in an area of modern habitation and subject to disturbance. The western flank of Bazi, however, was regularly ploughed.

In fact the answer may prove to lie in a different issue altogether. McClellan (nd) demonstrates that there is a discernible difference between houses at Bazi that have a high quantity of basalt/stone objects such as grinding stones and pounders, and a low quantity of beads, and houses that have a high quantity of beads and a low quantity of basalt and stone. The Banat houses fit into this first group. The significance of the difference is, as McClellan discusses, problematic- it might be chronological, social or functional – or some combination of the three. As will be seen in the discussion of the pottery below, there is some reason to question the chronological relationship between the Banat houses and the main occupation of the north city at Bazi. One of the reasons this issue is significant is because it gives us some data on the growth of settlements with perhaps sociological implications. It would not be surprising if the town grew over time, expanding outwards, with Banat Area A merely representing the end of that process. If, on the other hand, it could be demonstrated that there is a chronological difference between stone houses and bead houses, then it would be the case that households were established with significant open spaces around them, filling in with time as the population expanded. To what degree families clustered together in the same locales would have to be established by another method.

The Banat quarter is divided into two main buildings either side of a narrow alley that ended to the south in Room 10 (fig. 6), notable for the four-footed basalt bowl and stone pounder/pestle found against the north wall. Unfortunately the stratigraphy of this street and its relationship to the buildings on its western side is unclear, in part due to the shallowness of the deposits. It is not possible to say which of the two northeast - southwest walls that mark the western limits of the street, marked A, A₁, and B on the plan (fig. 7), were its original edge. Both walls rested on what appeared to be the same surface,⁵ indicating that they were in any case built not long

5 Which is to say that any difference in surface level was undetectable.

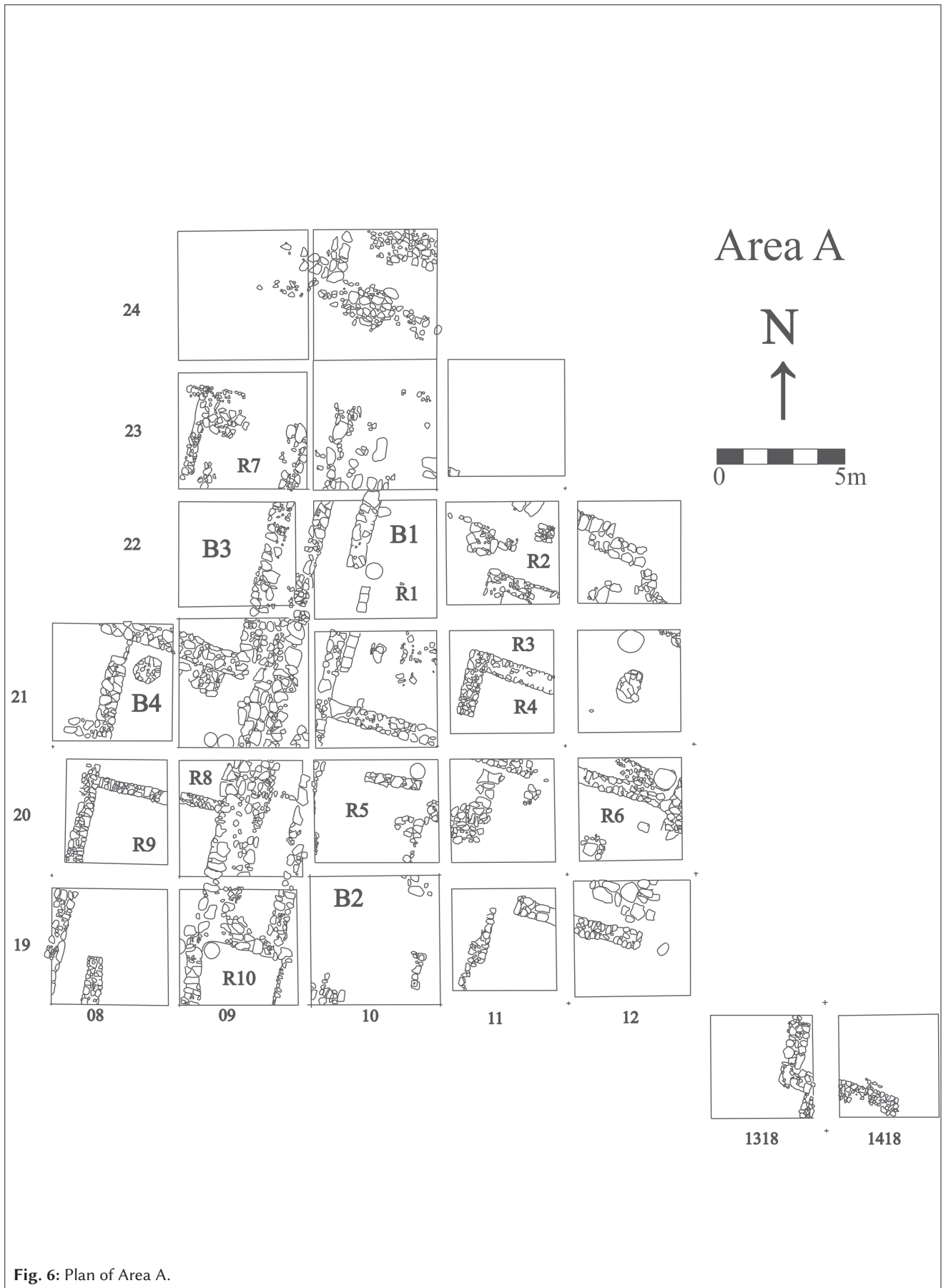
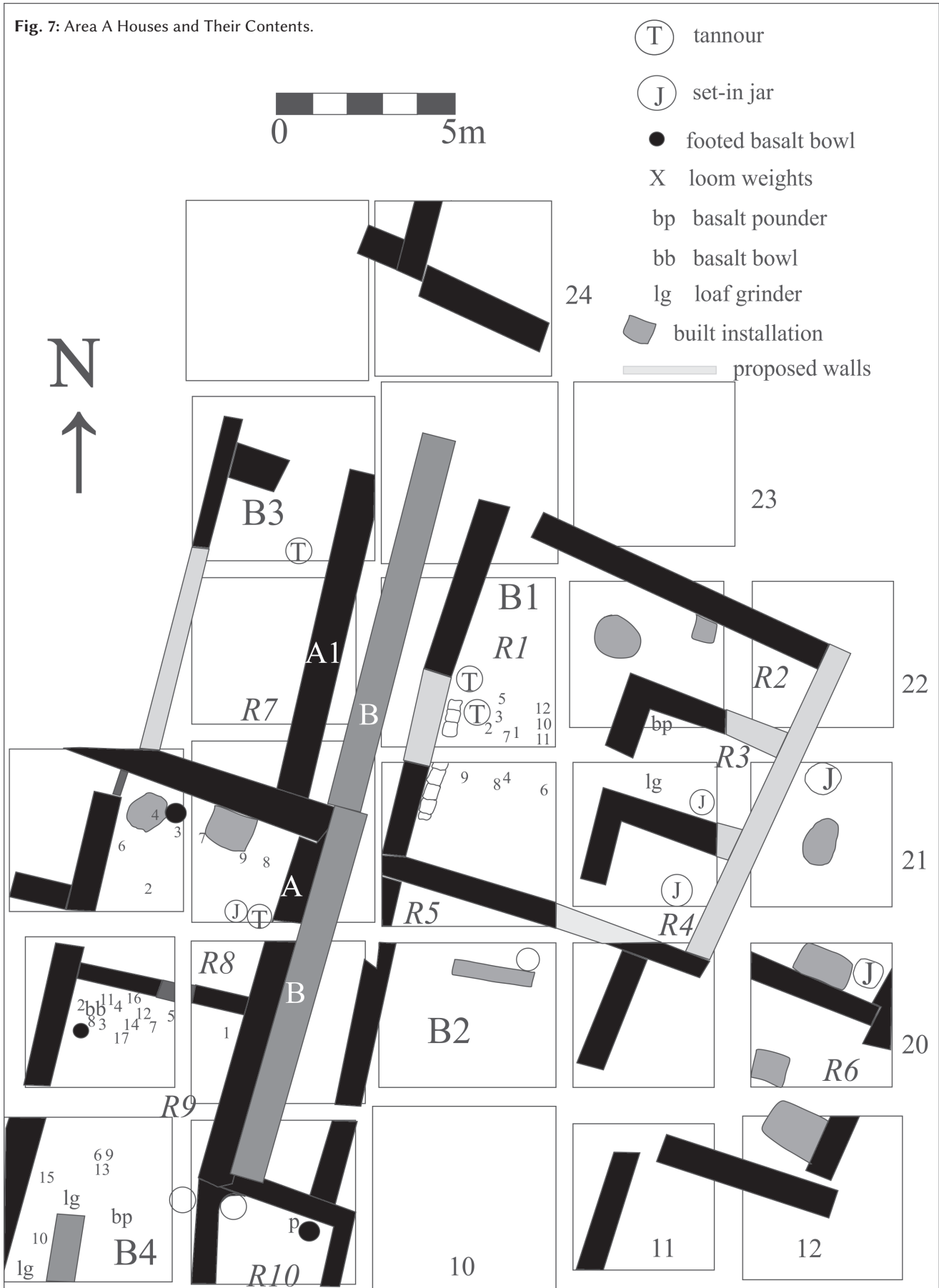


Fig. 6: Plan of Area A.

Fig. 7: Area A Houses and Their Contents.



one after the other. While the possibility cannot be altogether discounted that part of this wall is simply collapse, details of the configuration render this unlikely. It appears that one wall was built up against the other. The purpose for the remodel, in whichever direction it went, is not apparent.

Three basic construction scenarios are proposed (fig. 8). In Scenario One, the middle wall, Wall B, was the earlier. Supporting this argument is the fact that Wall B is bonded into the northern boundary of Room 10, which means that if, as in Scenario Two, wall A were earlier, there would have been no form of termination, nor continuation, to the southern end of the alley. If Wall B was earlier, Room 9 of Building 4 would have had an entrance in its northern wall.

In Scenario Two, where Wall A is the original, any doorway into Room 8 from the north would be very narrow, essentially jammed into the corner formed by the eastern wall of Building 3, and Wall A1 – unless of course Building 3 was later than Building 4. It is assumed that the portion of wall protruding to the west in square o821 is an interior wall, and not an external buttress, the doorway in the westernmost northeast-southwest wall therefore giving passage way between two rooms. If so, Building 4, as far as excavated, appears to be the mirror image of Bazi's Haus 7 (OTTO 2006b 162-3, also houses 20, 41 and 43), where the entrance from the outside was through the smaller side room. In Building 4 therefore, it would have been through the unexcavated room in square o721.

If Wall B was the original boundary, then Room 8 would seem to have been entered through another room, Room 7, suggesting that Building 4 and Building 3 were the same structure. Unless Scenario Three was the case, where Wall B was the earlier wall to B4, but A1 was the original wall to Building 3. In this scenario Building 4 and Building 3 are separate structures, Building 4 is entered through a very narrow, secondary alley, abutting the equally narrow alley on the east. Perhaps the most feasible version of this scenario is where Building 3 is a later addition in what was previously an open space or courtyard, thus resulting in a not entirely sensible arrangement of parallel walls. On the other hand, the wall that forms the eastern boundary to Building 3 may have been bonded with the north wall of B4, so that they would have been built at the same time.

A fourth scenario that might explain Wall A1 is suggested by Haus 34 at Bazi. Here two closely adjacent walls are interpreted as forming the base of a series of steps to the upper floor (OTTO 2006b, 207-8).

The alley that bisects Area A branched off a broader, east-west street to the north (fig. 7). A corner of a struc-

ture on the north side of this street was recovered, very similar to the corner of another structure located on the southeast edge of the excavation area. Both locations were quite rich in pottery (fig. 15), although there was no secure stratigraphy here – as is evident on the plan, there was quite a lot of disturbance in the northern end of the area, while in the southeast, excavations did not reach below the uppermost material. In some buildings however, three layers were discernible: two dating to the Late Bronze Age, one to the Early Bronze.

It should be noted here that the pottery illustrated in the accompanying figures is neither the complete assemblage from each room/layer, nor necessarily representative of the main types, numerically or functionally. They are simply those vessels recovered from secure stratigraphic contexts with the most complete profiles. Unfortunately, because of all these factors, it is not possible to make any chronological or functional distinction between the upper and lower layers within each rooms. It is possible however, to make preliminary comparisons between the rooms in the two main Area A buildings and those of the Bazi structures.

Building 1 Area A

The closest parallel to Banat Building 1 to be found at Bazi is Haus 42. Essentially square, the building is subdivided into one large rectangular room, Room 1, with three small rooms (rooms 2, 3, and 4) located on the east side. In the middle room of Bazi Haus 42 is a small stone pediment abutting the northwest wall. In the northern most of the three rooms in Banat Building 1, Room 2, is a similar construct that would, if the wall was still intact, have abutted the northeastern wall of that room. The interior face of Room 1's western wall was plastered, and as is common at Bazi, was lined by a bench.

Consisting of two levels, the uppermost, or latest, layer of Room 1 contained a single bead, a basalt quern, stone pounder and limestone "mace-head" as well as several deep bowls, an open bowl, neckless storage jar and a two-handled, narrow-necked vessel (fig. 9). This level was characterized by heavy burning and a good deal of mud-brick collapse, areas of which were thick with broken pots. This layer could represent the materials from a second story or from on top of the roof, collapsed onto the floor as has been suggested by Otto (2006b) for Bazi. However there was nothing unambiguous in this material at Banat as to placement (that is, pots on top of the collapse) that precludes a secondary floor level within a single-story building either, for collapsing walls not only break the pots below them, but may cause them to bounce a little also, resulting in a mélange of both, even,

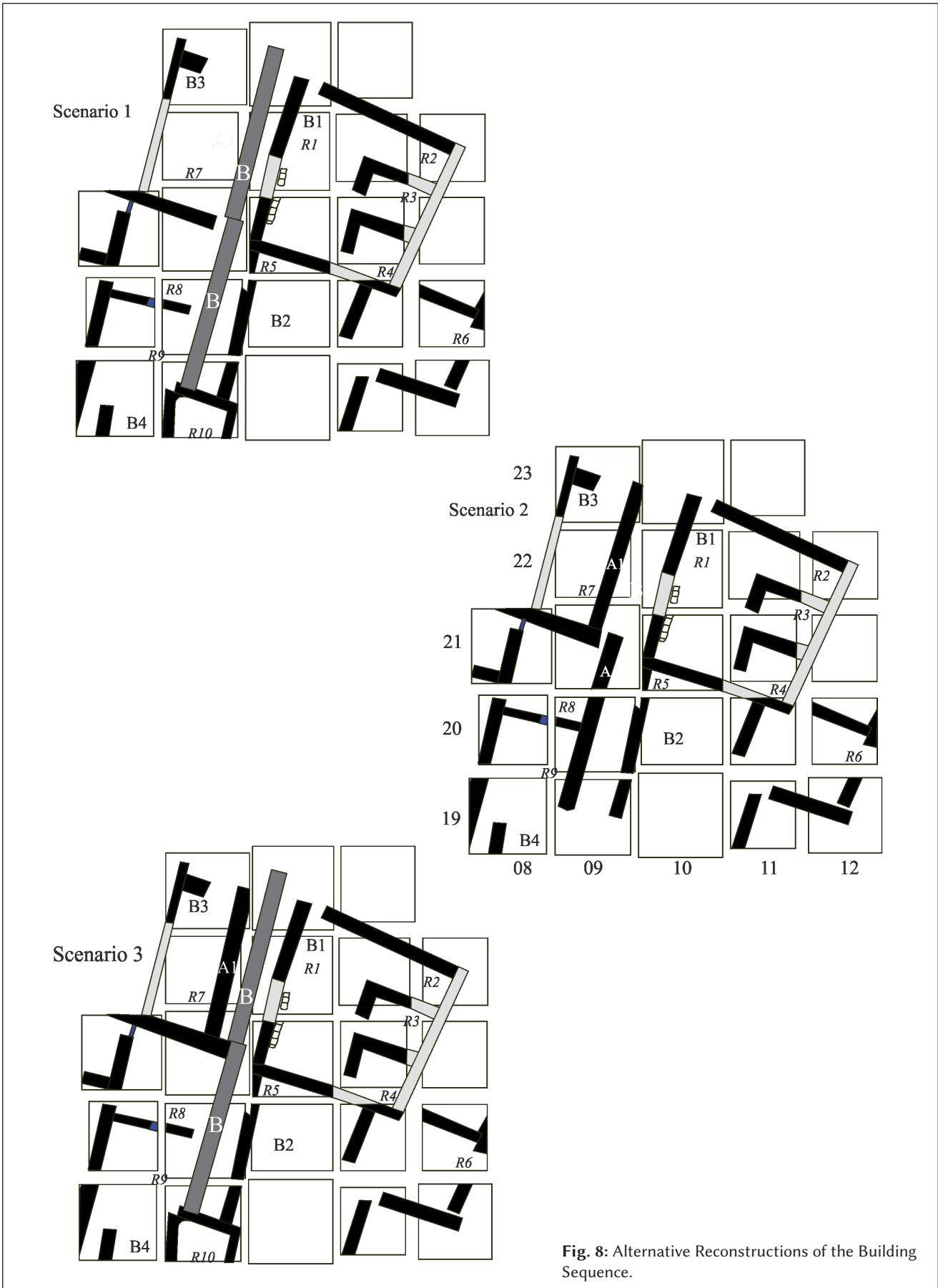


Fig. 8: Alternative Reconstructions of the Building Sequence.

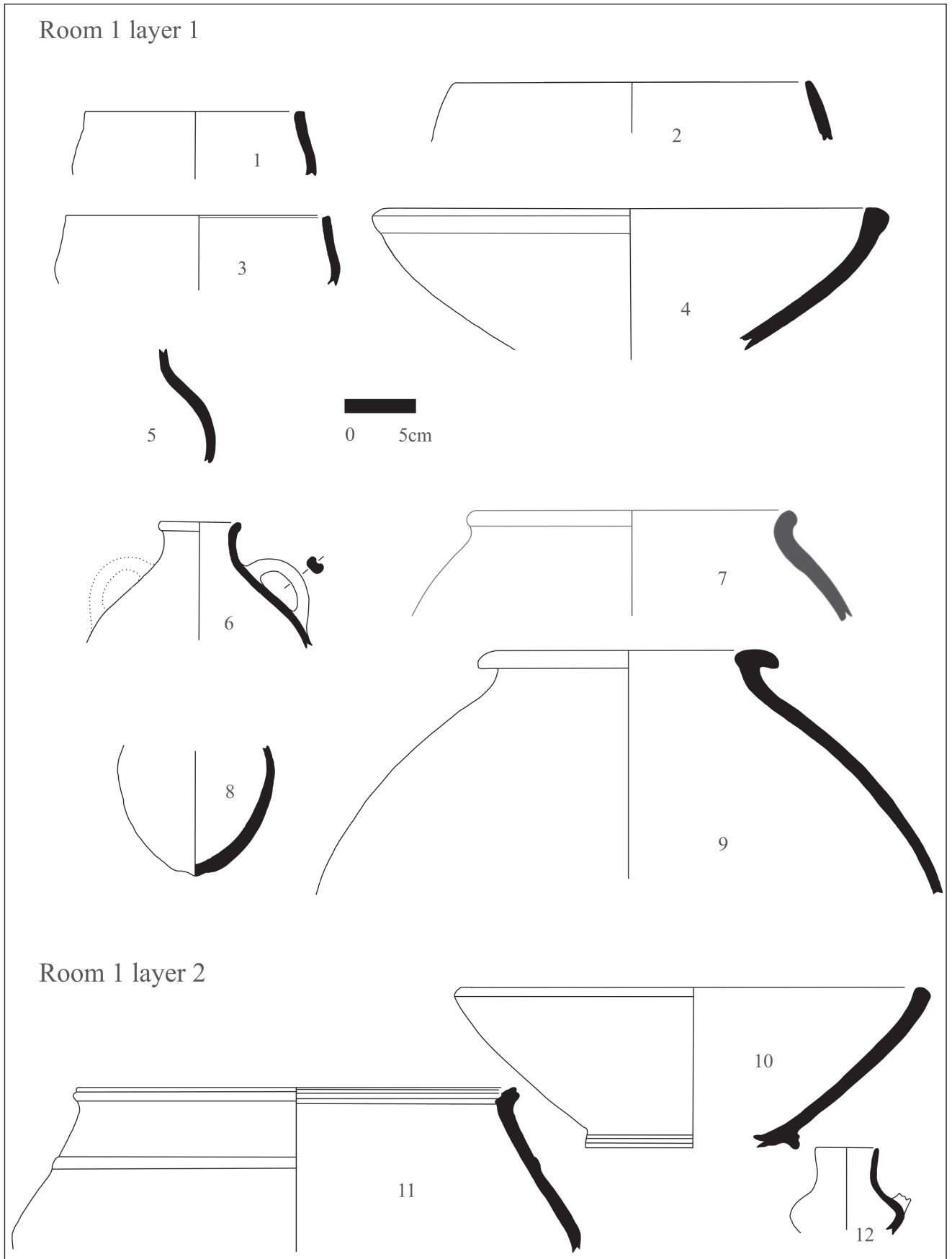


Fig. 9: Pottery from Building 1, Room 1.

on occasion, an inversion of materials. A tannour was found in this level, which might argue against an upper floor.

Beneath this latest level was an equally heavily burnt layer with patches of stone paving and a set-in storage jar, a large quantity of pottery clustered in different areas, only a few pieces of which are shown here (**fig. 9 layer 2**), significant quantities of animal bone, and a large mortar. A shell bead and pierced stone object was found in the ashy covering over the floor. Immediately beneath this floor lies the third millennium ashy material containing slag and wasters.

The space labelled Room 2 in Building 1 was ill-defined and poorly preserved. Room 3 on the other hand provided considerably more material. As with Room 1, Room 3 had two layers of use but there is no evidence of burning here. A loaf grinder and some basalt fragments were recovered from the upper layer as was a complete bronze pin in the northwest corner. This level also included a very large storage jar in southern end of the room.

Building 4

West of the alleyway was Building 4. Consisting of at least two rooms, but very possibly with three to be found on the western side, this is the structure typified by Bazi Haus 7 (also houses 20, 41, and 43). Room 8 was square, had a doorway through the west wall, and contained a small podium or table adjacent to the north wall that might be the basis of a stairway, a work/table surface or a “cult” podium. In this regard it differs from the Bazi parallels, because none of those rooms had such a construct, and only houses 41 and 43 had possible evidence of steps in this room (although in neither case were the stairways built around a stone platform). Room 9 was rectangular, with its long axis running northeast-southwest. It contained the richest repertoire of pottery found in Area A, shown in **figures 10-13**, including the only painted vessel (**fig. 11**).

Three layers of occupation were recovered in these rooms too: two Late Bronze, and one Early Bronze, level. In the northeast corner of Room 8, in front of the stone plinth in the lower level were the three small vessels illustrated in **figure 14**: nos. 7-9.

Just west of the doorway into Room 8 were three basalt rings, often labeled loom weights for want of any precise understanding of their function (cf. OTTO 2006b, 106). East of the doorway was a tripod basalt bowl, found next to the vessel shown in **figure 14**, no 4. Slightly to the south of this was the corrugated open bowl, **figure 14**: no. 2 and to the southwest, no. 6, the large jar bottom. South of this was the open bowl, **figure 14**, no 3.

In the upper level of Room 9, several vessels were smashed in the area of a rectangular basalt bowl in the northwest corner of room. The numbers of the illustrated vessels are placed on the plan of figure 7, but apart from knowing that they came from this corner, in the spatial relationships shown, we cannot be sure of their exact original placement. Slightly south of this cluster was a footed basalt bowl. The southern end of Room 9 included a pierced bivalve shell and a stone pounder.

In the lower level (locus 77 of Room 9), two loaf grinders were located around the wall protruding from the south into the middle of the room. There was a large paved area found to the northeast of this wall. Beneath these Late Bronze materials lay the EB hemispherical bowls (PORTER & McCLELLAN 1998, 50-1).

Pottery

As noted above, the vessels illustrated in **figures 9-16** (many previously published in McCLELLAN 2006),⁶ are by and large simply those with the most complete profiles⁷ and few conclusions can be drawn from them. Nevertheless, some observations may be made. For example, while the absence of Bazi vessels at Banat means nothing, the absence of Banat vessels at Bazi, where a nigh-on complete corpus of room contents was recoverable, may be significant. For comparison I am using Otto's 2014 typology of the vessels from the West City of Bazi, and all type numbers and illustrations referenced here are to be found in that publication. I diverge somewhat from Otto's (2014, 94) position on the relationship between the contents of the Banat houses as excavated (I cannot comment on the materials exposed by receding dam waters in 2007), and those of Bazi. There are some differences between the assemblages that may prove significant, depending on, first, the relationship between the West city and the North city, and second, on one's understanding of the process of pottery manufacturing (see below). While most vessels have clear parallels in the Bazi assemblage, not all do, although I note that the possibility remains that there are parallels simply as yet unillustrated or unpublished. I leave it to Otto and Einwag to make the necessary corrections.

6 The drawings published here supersede those of the 2006 publication.

7 The intention was of course to complete the drawings of Area A pottery at a future date as part of a systematic study of the later periods at the Banat settlement complex. However the intervening war, and reported damage to the project storerooms means this is now impossible.

A case in point is comprised by the three small deep bowls in the upper layer, Layer 1, of Room 1, **figure 9**: nos. 1-3, with wide mouth, no neck, in-turned body-rim, or plain, tapered or very slightly everted rim. The smallest of these, no 1, almost fits within the size range of the handled cup form, Otto's Type 5, and the in-turned wall may be compared to that of example Bz 25/35:61 (OTTO 2014, 98). However these forms are unlikely to be those of cups, and the curve towards the base on the Banat bowl occurs too high on the wall to match the Bazi examples.

Nor is there a good parallel to be found for **figure 14**: no. 7, the bowl from the lower layer, Layer 2, in Room 8. Although its plain, nearly vertical rim is similar to those of Otto's Type 7, the flat base, hint of carination and straighter sides distinguish it from this group (OTTO 2014, 99). In addition, while large storage jars are sometimes difficult to type (as McClellan, this volume, has pointed out), a number of jars with narrow necks of medium height found in Area A do not correspond to Bazi types (unless they are considered large versions of Type 13 without handles). These are **figure 12**: nos. 10, 13 and **figure 13**: no. 16. An exception is **figure 12**: no. 14, which corresponds to Otto's Type 18- large jar Bz 22/28 16:7 (OTTO 2014, 107), though on the Banat vessel the curve to the base occurs much lower than on the Bazi pot. Otto's Type 13 is represented at Banat by **figure 16**: no. 10.

Even those Banat vessels that fit conceptually within the Bazi typology diverge in small details. For example **figure 14**: no. 9 is in body shape and rim identical to Bz 26/37:7 (OTTO 2014, 96) but it lacks the ridging of the Bazi pot. **Figure 12**: no. 12 has a similar form to Bazi Type 2, Bz 25/35:62 (OTTO 2014, 96) but the shoulder is less pronounced, the rim is everted only and not thickened on the inside, and it has a handle. It is also much larger. **Figure 16**: no. 9 belongs to Bazi Type 3, but again lacks the ridging of its closest parallel, Bz 25/36: 53 (OTTO 2014, 97). The Banat jug, **figure 14**: no. 5, has a far more rounded body than any of the jug or juglet forms represented in multiple types at Bazi. **Figure 10**: no. 6 is far wider than Bz 22/31:10 (OTTO 2014, 106), the curve of the wall far more sinuous and higher on the body. There are many more comparisons to make, but this is not intended as an exhaustive study.

Otto (2014, 94) remarked that the Banat pottery is identical to that of the West City, and further, that the material from the North city, including the adjacent portion of Banat, observed by her when the waters of the Tishreen Dam ebbed was also identical to the West city. While these disparities may be typologically insignificant, typologies are merely heuristic devices for the convenience of the archaeologist. They reduce vast ceramic repertoires into comprehensible categories; they

agglomerate forms into statistically meaningful quantities (McClellan this volume). They are rarely based on consideration of how potters actually work, nor are they constructed in a way that informs about the practice of pottery production, let alone consumption, since for most archaeologists the object of a typology is to reduce the calculable variables, conflating difference into manageable entities. Typologies are subjective, certainly, but more than this, they mask what may be slight, but telling, differences.

Just what those differences might tell us depends on one's theoretical perspective on how potters work and how pottery forms are reproduced. It is certainly not my task here to develop a methodological process to accomplish the definition of an individual potter's work, but I do intend to raise some questions it would profit us to ponder. Collapsing variation into a single type is predicated on one or more of several assumptions, some more valid than others. One is the object of study: diachronic change. Another is that micro-scale ceramic chronologies are not possible. Yet another is that the potter is irrelevant, perhaps because he or she lacks agency, or perhaps because form rather than practice determines the potter's efforts. Some seem to assume that potters are not masters of their craft, being governed by some external combination of technical limitation (the clay, the wheel) and social constraint (*habitus*) that means they are unable to produce a series of identical pots; that ancient potters are somehow more like modern ceramic artists, each vessel an individual accomplishment rather than merely an act in a series of acts.

In fact ancient potters are just as likely to be highly skilled professionals, no more or less driven to maximize efficiency and productivity than modern commercial potteries. Potters have repertoires and sets of techniques in which they are proficient, and which they are able to execute at speed. For the sake of efficiency they may produce pots in batches of kind (whether or not the numbers constitute mass-production), making identical vessels time after time (as McClellan observed when studying potters on the Lebanese coast in the 70s and as Porter noted on a visit to a pottery workshop in Aleppo in the 90s). In the ceramic manufacturing zones of third millennium Banat there is certainly evidence of this, especially in Area G, where two separate piles of very large quantities of unbaked pots awaiting firing were found. Each pile contained only one form. Divergence in the vessels in each pile was not just slight, it was miniscule, consisting of a few millimeter's difference in rim diameter or wall curvature. This is quite different to divergence in issues such as whether the shoulder of the vessel is carinated or rounded, whether the body elongated or

squat. That identical replication of pottery form is a feature of production is not always obvious, is a product of the fact that pottery is usually collected at the point of consumption, and so does not mirror production.

The third millennium unbaked cups from Area A (PORTER & McCLELLAN 1998, fig.17: 1-6) reveal another dimension to the potter's actions. Found stacked one inside the other, the plain hemispherical cups have identical bodies, but each rim is slightly different. Is the individual potter deliberately employing a varying technique each time, or has the output of more than one potter working on the same form at the same time been collected together? Moreover potters will use the same rim technique on a range of vessel types. Potters, like painters, writers, musicians and other artisans have "tells", or signatures, and perhaps the slight variation we see in the execution of certain types represent just such tells. Individual potters will make the same form as each other, whether synchronically or diachronically, but they will each make that form in some subtle way their own. For the sake of efficient artistry the potter may make the same body, varying the rim, or use the same rim on a variety of vessels. But do two potters produce identical pots, even when trying to?

All of which is to say that the discrepancies between the Area A pottery and the Bazi assemblage should not be minimized but given due consideration, even if that consists only of expanding the comparanda. Yet I suggest that these discrepancies will prove more than a result of the selective process for illustrations of a type. Apart from the individual differences exemplified above, there is at least one general characteristic that distinguishes a considerable portion of the Banat Area A material from the Bazi material – the bodies of the Banat vessels are far more rounded, less angular, than the Bazi material, and those vessels with complex curvature are far more sinuous. I would dismiss the possibility that this is a function of the modern artists' rendition of the materials; those who drew the pottery from both sites are equally expert in duplicating the precise features of the vessel.

It may however be a function of differences between the North City of Bazi and its West City. We will not now be in a position to clarify this through further study of the North City, but there are some other avenues to pursue. An interesting question to address as part of any future study would be the degree of consistency/variation within the Bazi types, or, rather, since typing is an idiosyncratic process and includes variation by most definition, the question should properly be, how often is the exact form replicated at Bazi. Precise morphological comparisons between Banat and Bazi could be taken much farther, and indeed would profitably include sites from further afield.

The point here is that these discrepancies are in fact puzzling. By rights, if the Banat Area A houses are simply a continuation of the Bazi occupation, there should be no differences at all in the ceramic assemblage, or in any other detail. At the very least they suggest there may in fact be a distinction between the North City, if Banat Area A may stand for the North City, and the West City at Bazi, a distinction perhaps to be explained by separate sourcing of ceramic materials for each neighbourhood. That is, the differences between Banat ceramics and Bazi ceramics, subtle though they may be, indicate that each neighbourhood was either supplied by its own potters, a proposal born out by the recovery of at least one small kiln in each area, or, if from the same workshop, at a different point in time. Of course the former suggestion does not preclude the latter, and there are several interesting issues arising from the design and location of the kilns recovered in both the West and North cities. But whether at base a socio-economic distinction or a chronological one, there are some significant implications to be pursued, not least of which is a comparison of the organization of pottery production from the third to second millennium.

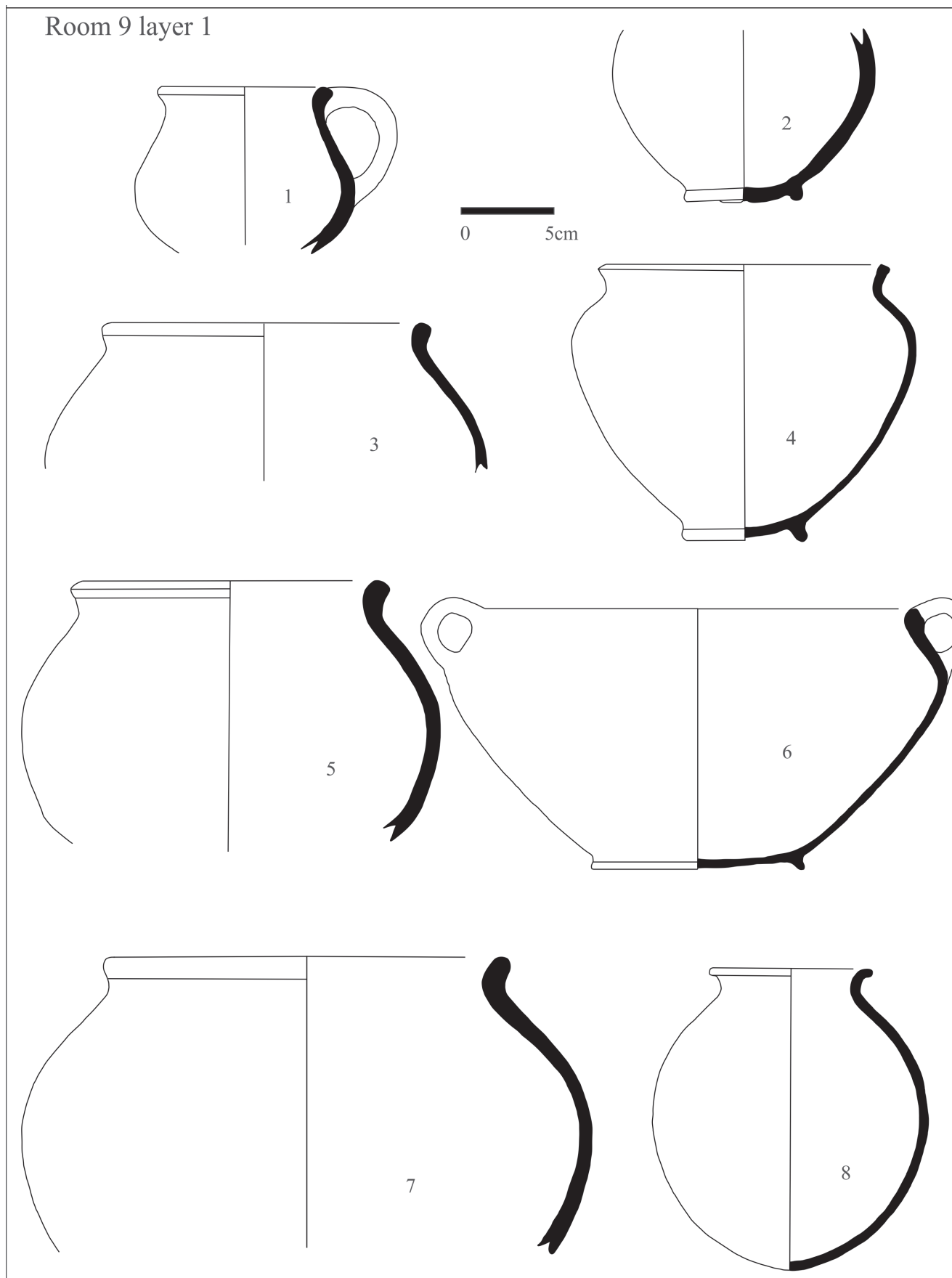


Fig. 10: Pottery from Building 4, Room 9.

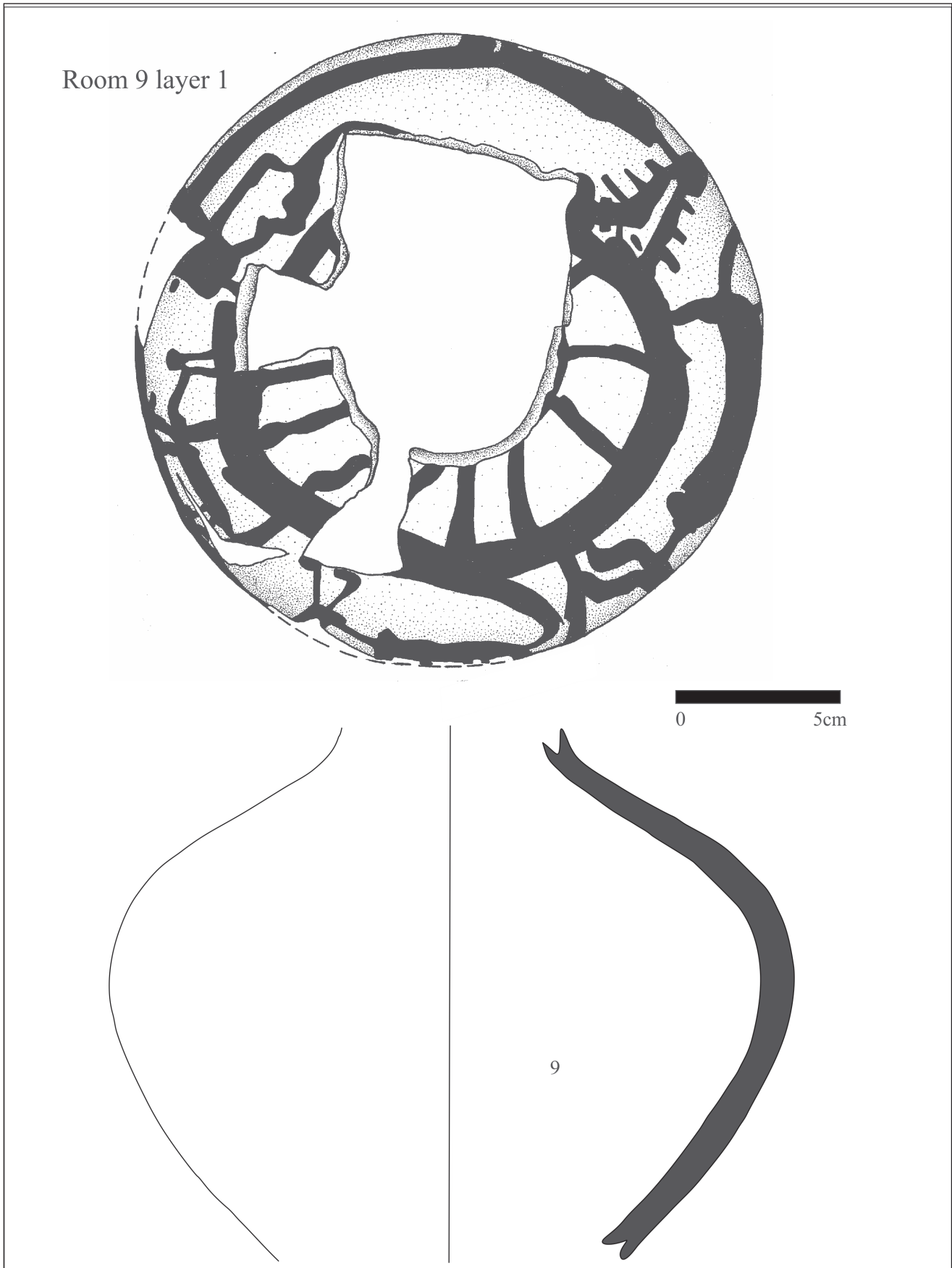


Fig. 11: Painted Vessel from Building 4, Room 9.

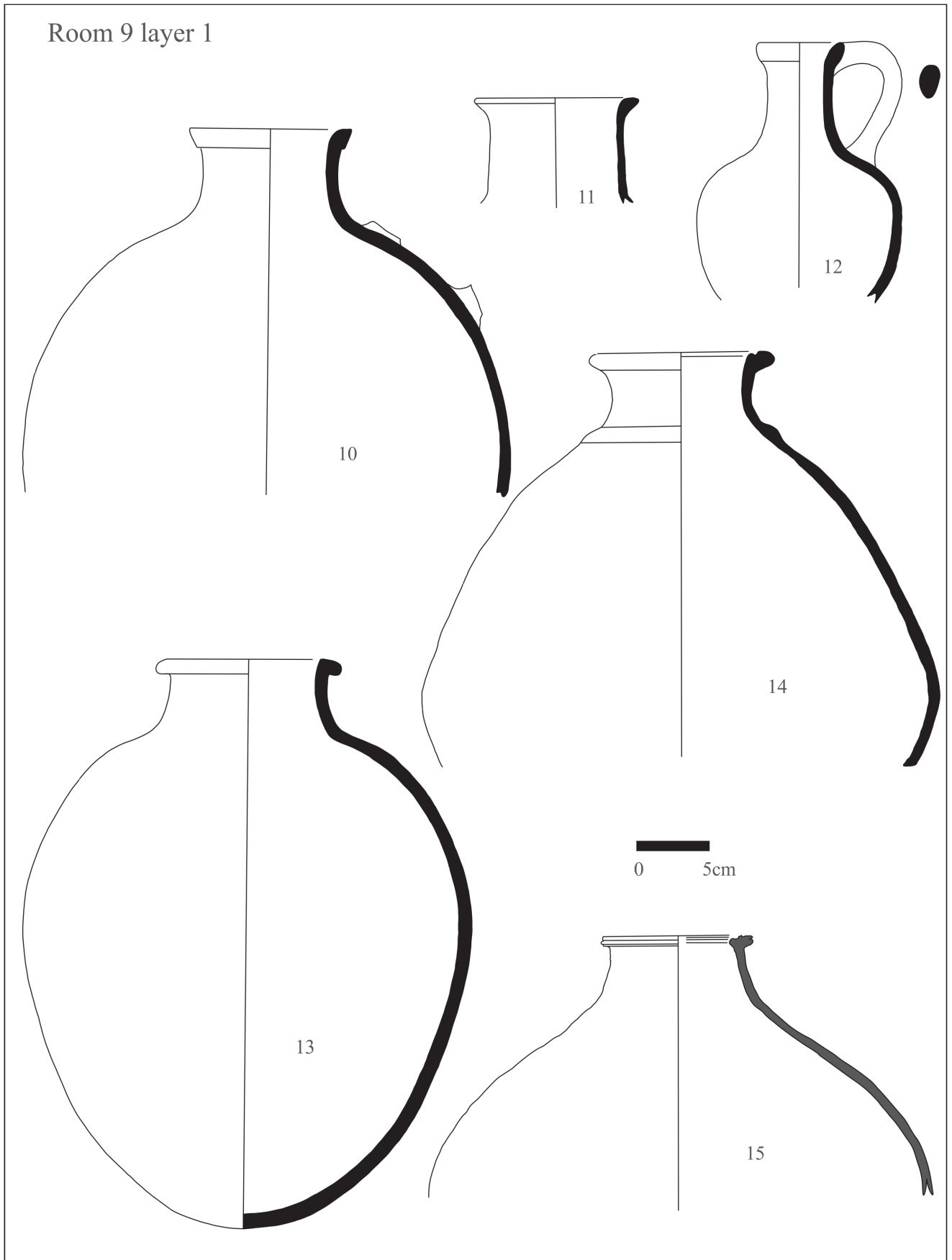


Fig. 12: More Pottery from Building 4, Room 9.

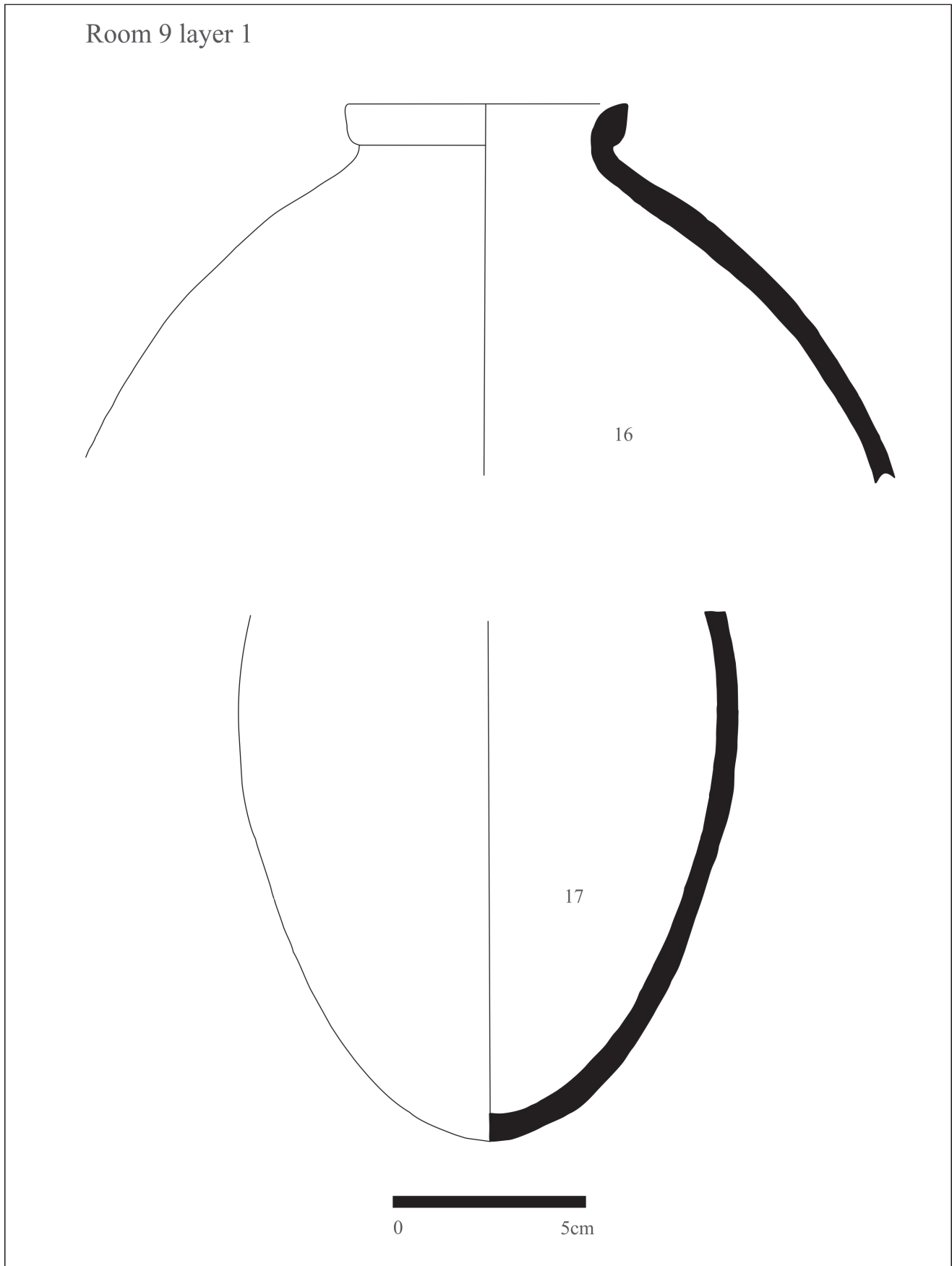


Fig. 13: More Pottery from Building 4, Room 9.

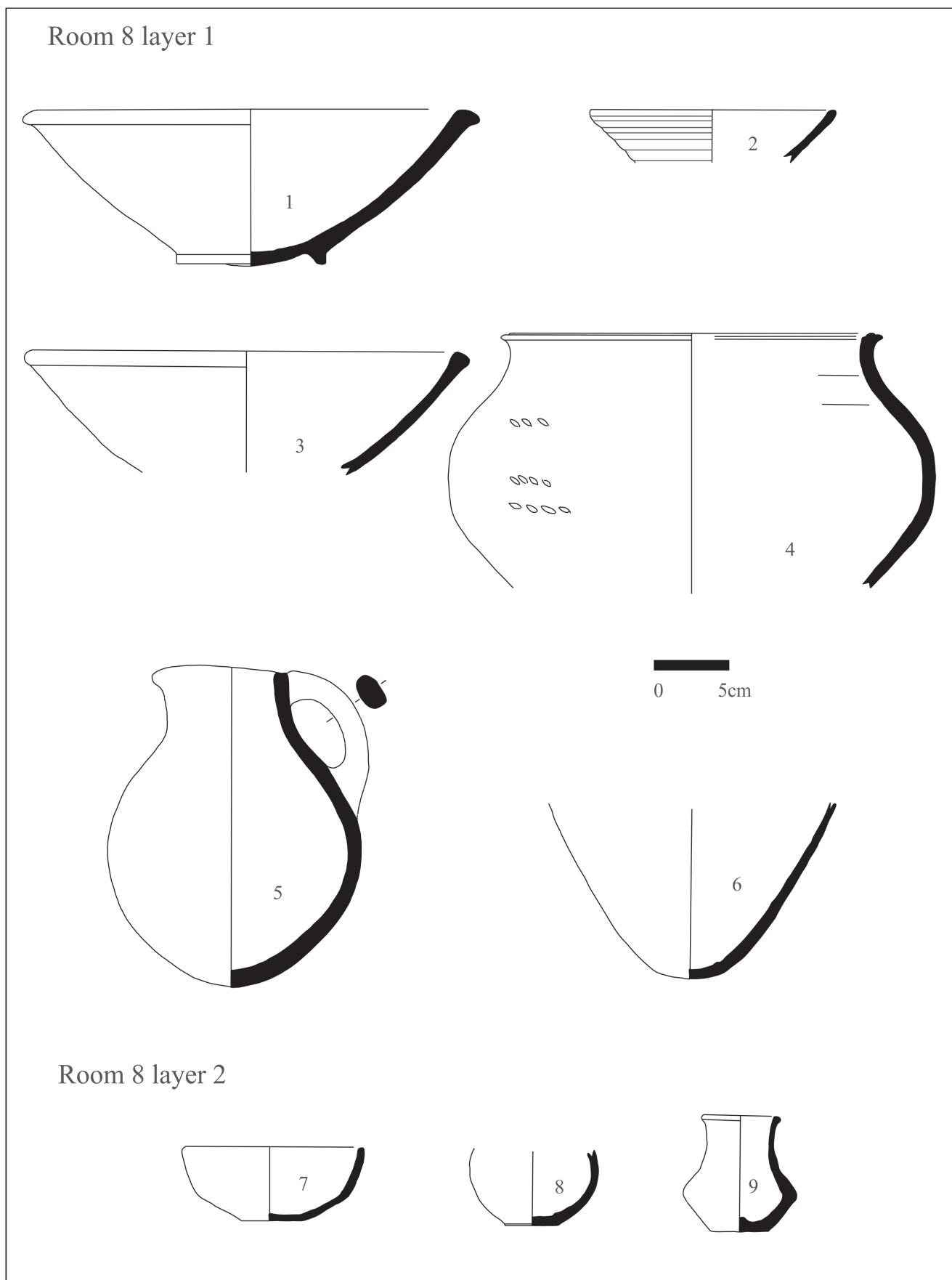


Fig. 14: Pottery from Building 4, Room 8.

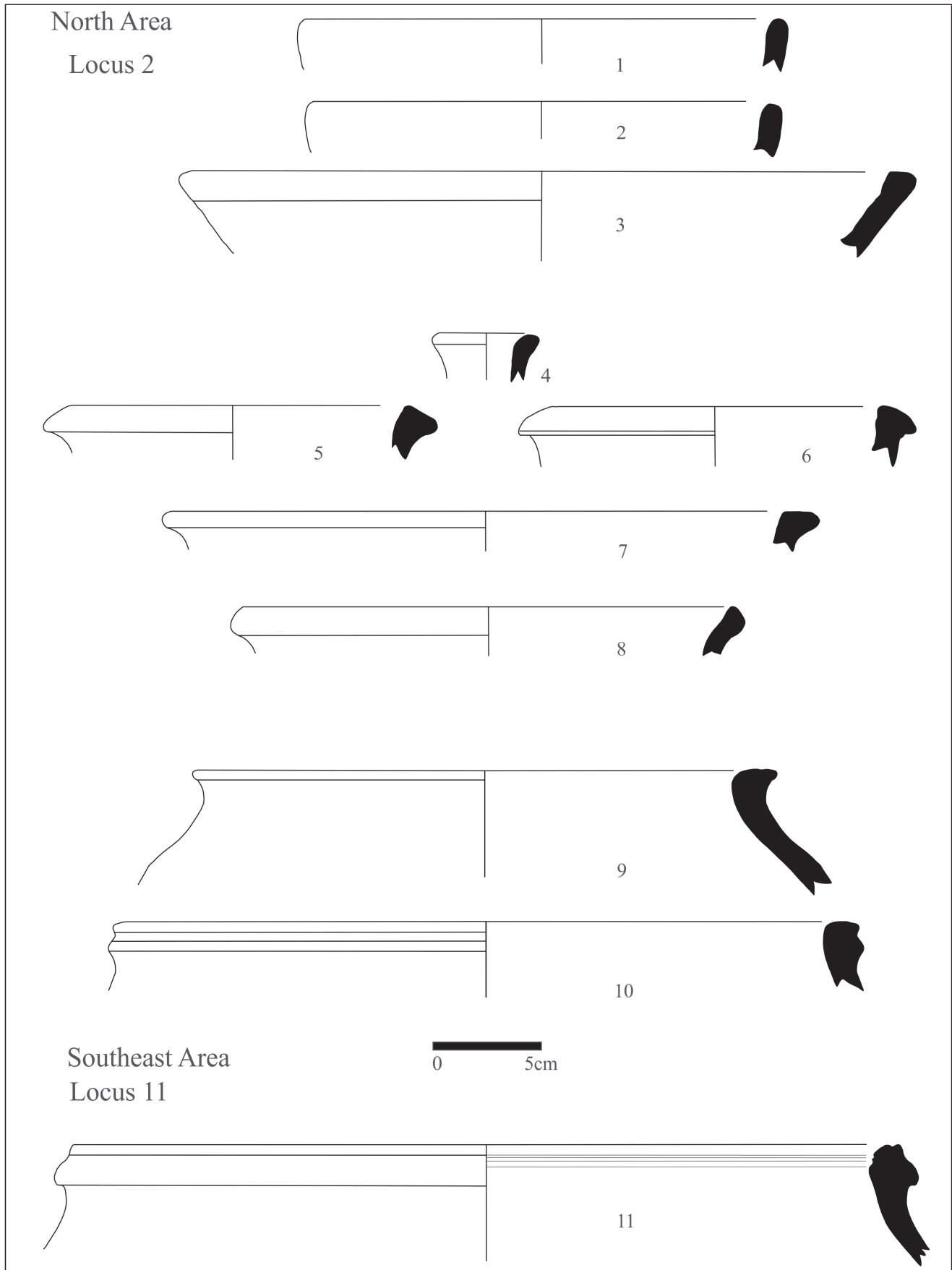


Fig. 15: Pottery from North and Southeast Squares in Area A.

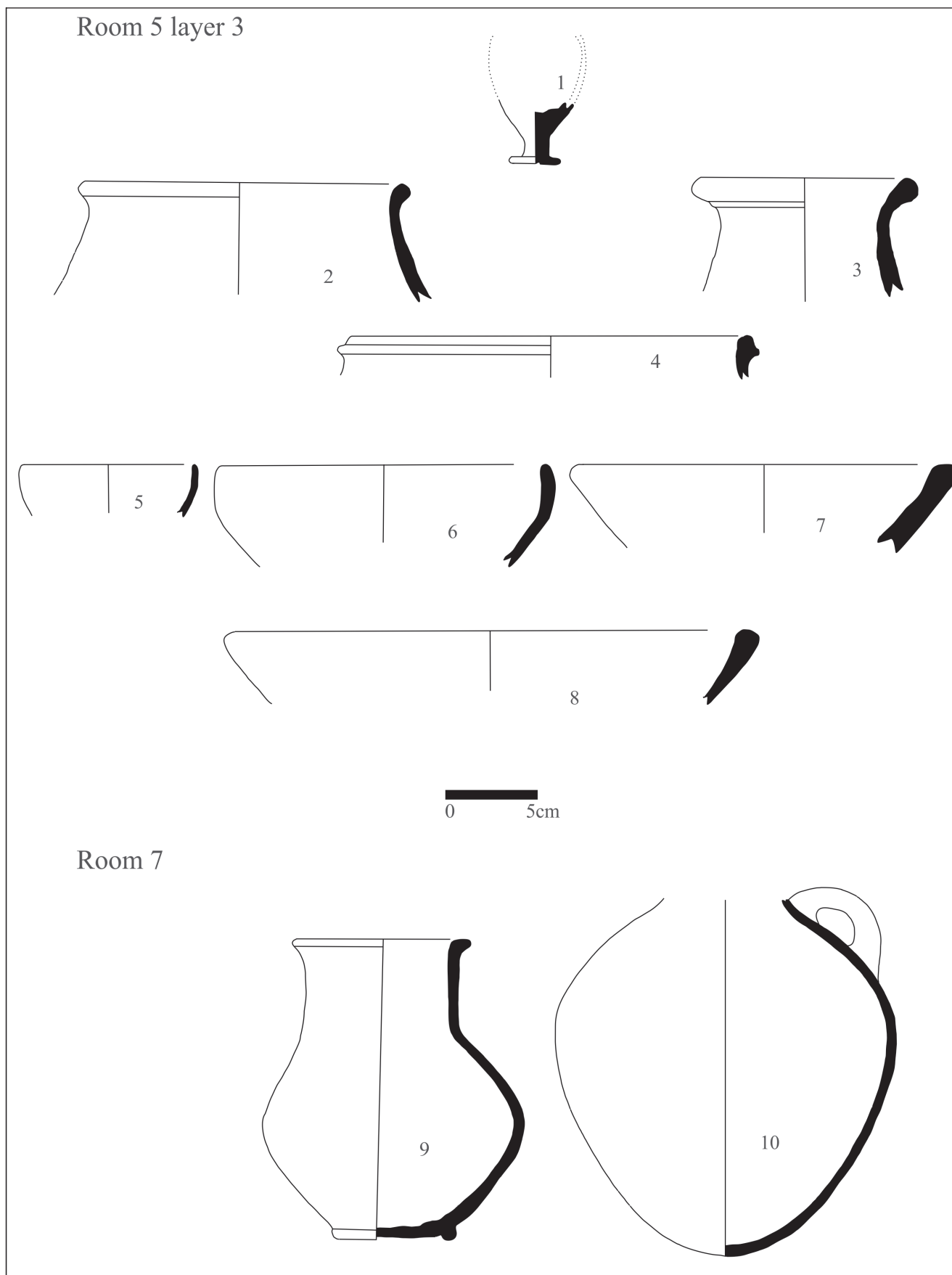


Fig. 16: Pottery from Building 2, Room 5 and Building 3, Room 7.

Catalogue of Figures 9-16

Figure No	Drawing No	Book No	Square No	Locus	Figure No	Drawing No	Book No	Square No	Locus
9:01	1219	16	1022	24	15:09	1035	11	1024	2
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9:03	0	16	1022	24	15:11	1222	11	1318	11
9:04	1265	16	1022	36	16:01	1029	11	1019	31
9:05	1261	16	1022	24	16:02	1025	11	1019	31
9:06	1286	16	1022	36	16:03	1030	11	1019	31
9:07	1262	16	1022	24	16:04	1028	11	1019	31
9:08	1272	16	1022	36	16:05	1231	11	1019	31
9:09	1290	16	1022	36	16:06	1230	11	1019	31
9:10	1277	16	1022	45	16:07	1232	11	1019	31
9:11	1263	16	1022	45	16:08	1229	11	1019	31
9:12	1260	16	1022	45	16:09	1294	8	820	42
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15:05	1040	11	1024	2					
15:06	1041	11	1024	2					
15:07	1197	11	1024	2					
15:08	1044	11	1024	2					

Plate 1



a: Cut-Down Column in Entrance to Chamber C, Tomb 7.



b: Added Entrance to Chamber F, Tomb 7.

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