

Pottery Marks from the Expedition to the Dead Sea Plain

Pottery Marks

The principle kinds of incised and impressed marks which form individual designs on pottery excavated by the Expedition to the Dead Sea Plain fall into three groups. They may be identified as punctate, split reed, and incised. All three kinds were found on the tomb pottery; the first two groups are principally from tombs, while as usual at Early Bronze sites, incised sherds were found at the town sites as well. The tomb pottery presents the opportunity to look at whole vessel types from closely dated tombs.

This study will look at these three types of pottery marks – their date, when they appear, and their patterns of use. This leads to consideration, however inconclusive, of their purpose.

Punctate

Punctate designs,¹ probably made by a round pointed instrument such as a reed, appeared on 29 vessels from the 1965 and 1967 Lapp campaigns as published in the first volume of the Expedition to the Dead Sea Plain (Schaub and Rast 1989: FIG. 152). They were all from EB IA tombs, on all types of vessels, and principally from four tombs. From the Rast-Schaub excavations, 24 vessels and two sherds with punctate designs came from EB IA tombs (FIGS. 1-2). In addition seven vessels came from EB IB tombs (FIG. 3). There were a few sherds with what may be punctate marks found at the town sites, but they have yet to be studied.

Several contrasts may be made between the two series of EB IA punctate vessels, those published and those from the later excavations. The “designs” from the latter

are simple horizontal, slanted or vertical punctate lines, or combinations of them, and sometimes grouped. In general they are not as interesting as those found in 1965-67.² The designs from the later excavations are found on a variety of jars (medium-large, medium-small, and small)³ on large, medium, and small bowls, and two juglets. They occur frequently on jar handles (eight examples) and twice on bowl handles. In two instances these are ledge handles, in other cases, strap. On four other vessels they are placed in relation to the handles, above, below, or around. The designs on and around handles form horizontal rows. Those on the walls or shoulders of vessels tend to be more vertical. From the Lapp excavations in only two cases is the design on or in relation to the handles.⁴

Several of the EB IB vessels which have punctate designs exhibit distinct EB IB characteristics.⁵ A spouted large deep bowl has punctate marks on the plain ledge handles and on top of the spout as well as around the rim (FIG. 3:2; Schaub 1981: FIG. 16:22), and a small jar, which has a punctate pattern on its high neck, has two handles which reach above the rim (FIG. 3:1; Schaub 1981: FIG. 11:3). Finally, there are elaborate designs on the handle as well as the cup of two beak-handled spoons (FIG. 3:3,4; Schaub 1981: 71-72, FIG. 6:12-13).

Of the 29 vessels from the Lapp excavations, 20 were from four tombs (A 3, A 47, A 71W, and A 72NW); three of these tombs are of the later group of EB IA tombs and six pots with punctate designs were from other late EB IA tombs.⁶

The 26 EB IA punctate designs from the Rast-Schaub excavations, represent 17 different tombs. Only A 89SE

¹ Punctate *designs* do not include the very common punctate marks below rims, usually completely around the vessel, on large bowls and many juglets in EB IA tombs.

² Cf. Schaub and Rast 1989: FIG. 152, especially the long-necked animal, no. 28.

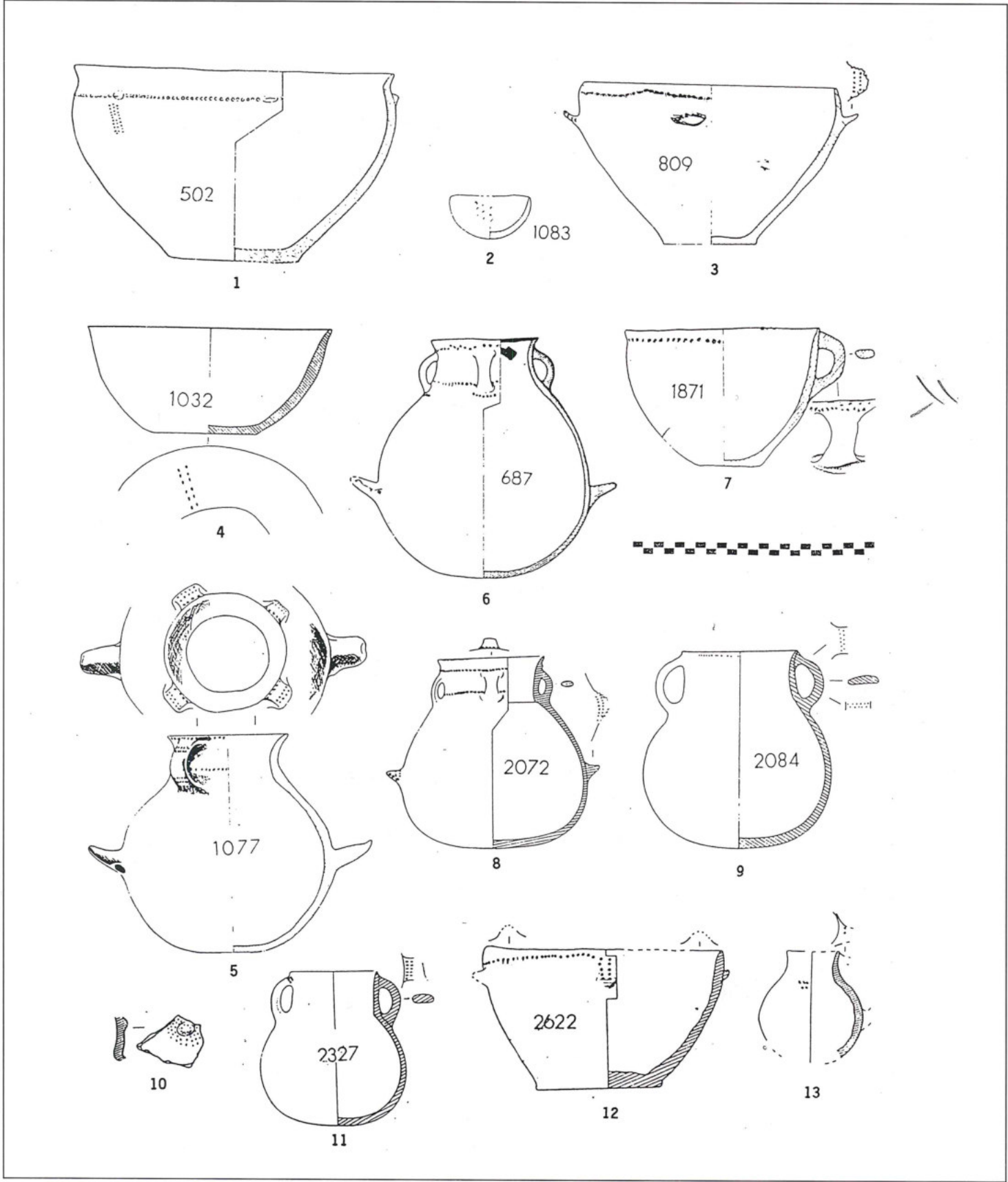
³ From the early excavations the marks were only on medium-large jars.

⁴ Schaub and Rast 1989: 263, no. 15 is on a jug handle, and no. 29 also has punctate decorations on the ledge handles as well as the punctate design on the neck (microfiche [mf.] FIG. 368:1). Not included are juglets from any of the excavations which have a line of punctate marks on their handles which

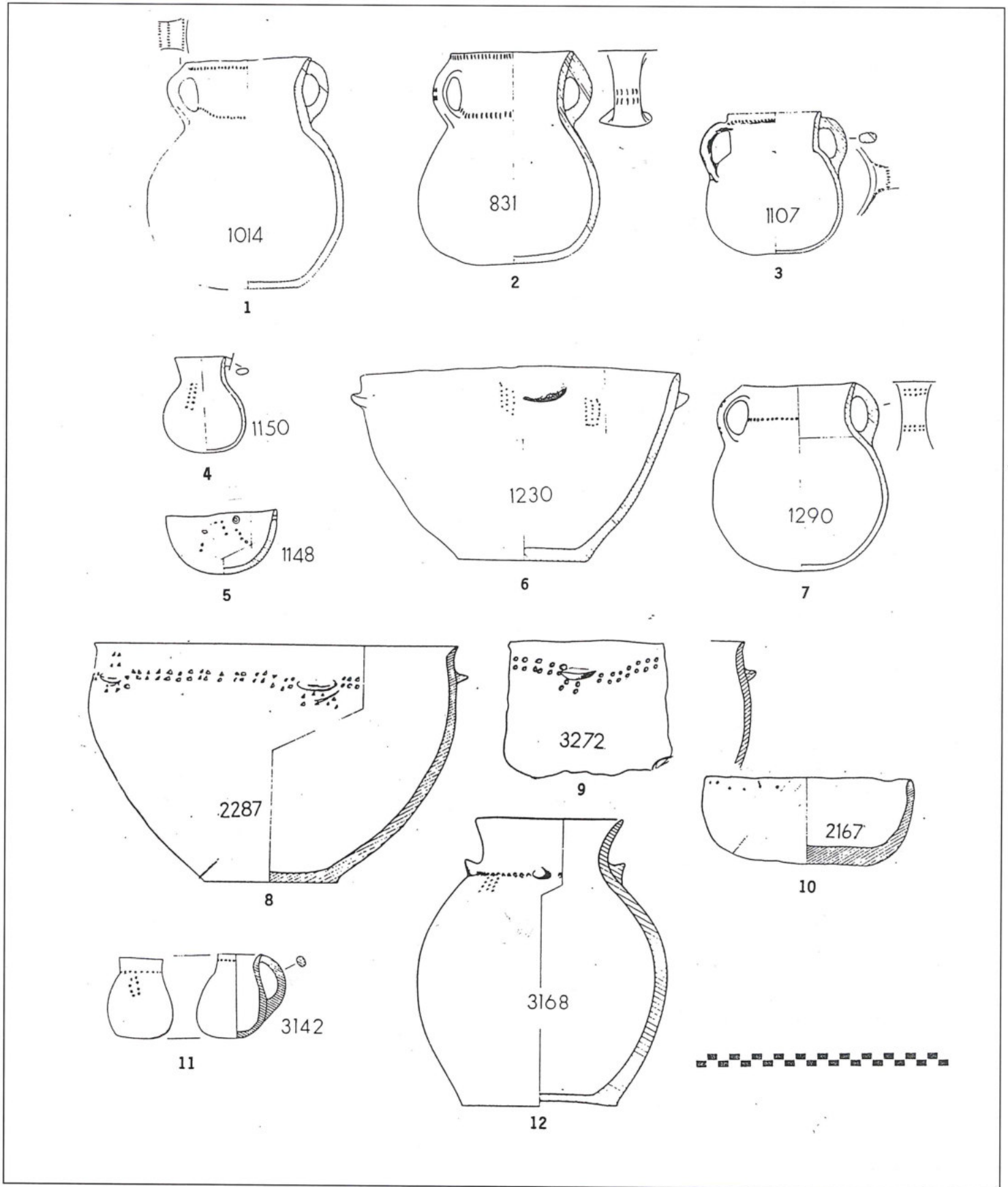
seem to serve a functional purpose (pp. 260-261). However, it might be worth noting the two lines of punctate lines vertically on the edges of juglet #91213 from A 68SE, (mf. FIG. 335:9), the punctate lines on the handles of jar #90200 and bowl #90145 from A 6N (mf. FIG. 315:7, 317:6), the punctate lines above and below the handle of jar #91692 from A 81E (mf. FIG. 356:5) and below the handle of jar #91735 from A 82SE (mf. FIG. 364:3).

⁵ For a summary of the EB IB characteristics at Bāb adh-Dhrā', see Schaub and Rast 1989: 73-74.

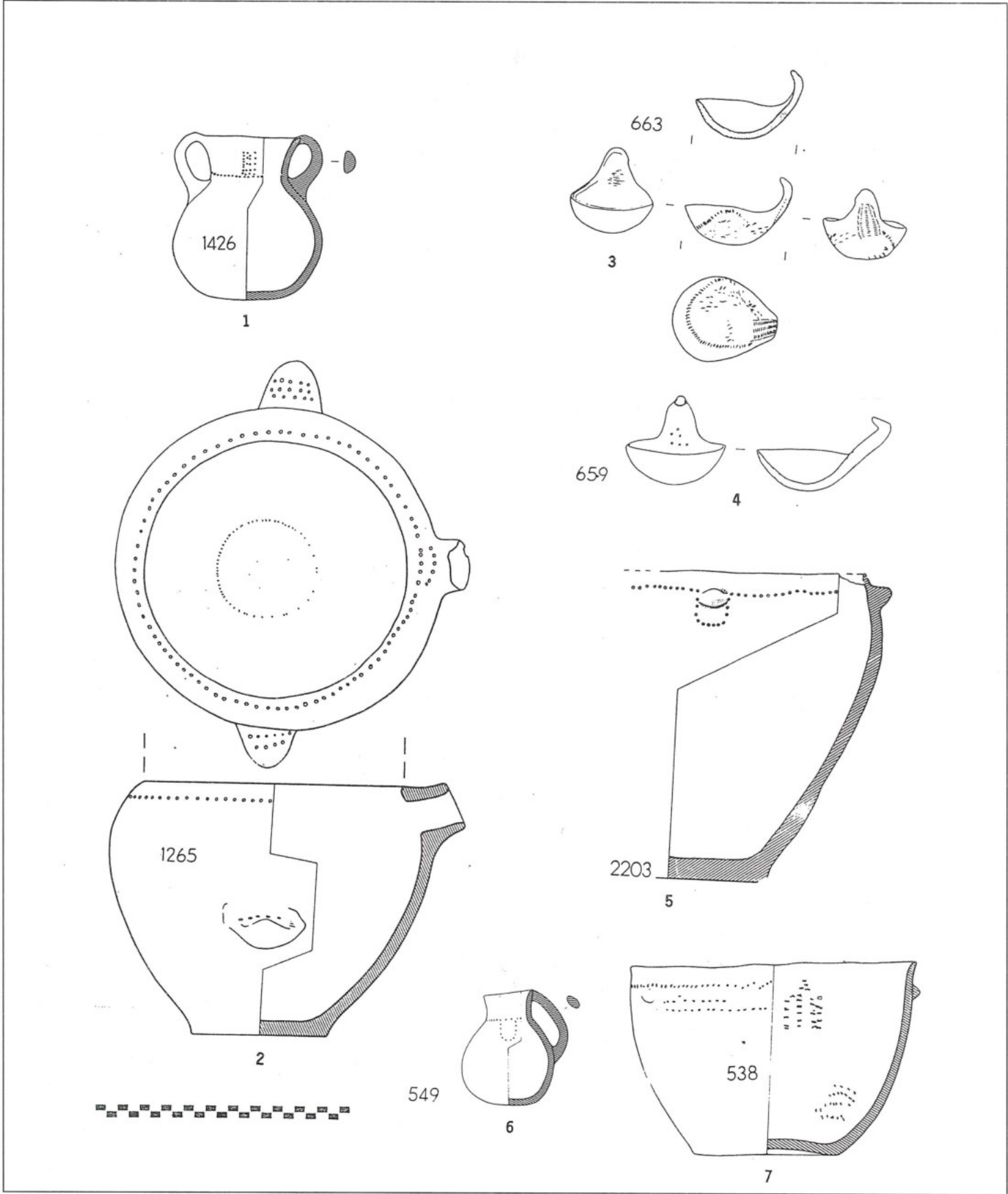
⁶ The tombs are grouped chronologically, Schaub and Rast 1989: 29.



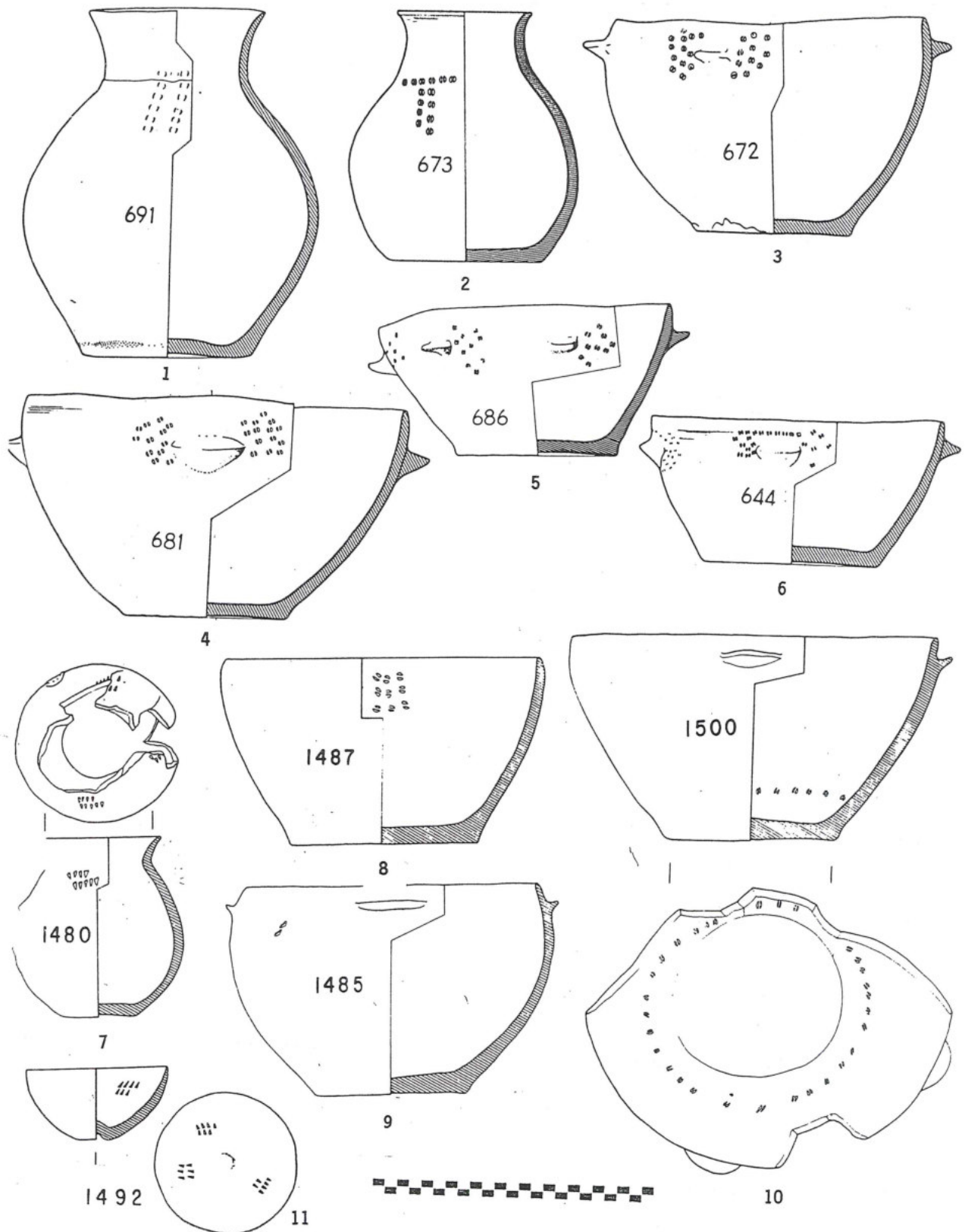
1. EB IA tomb pottery with punctate designs from the excavations of the Expedition to the Dead Sea Plain (Rast-Schaub excavations).



2. EB IA tomb pottery with punctate designs from the excavations of the Expedition to the Dead Sea Plain.



3. EB IB tomb pottery with punctate designs from the excavations of the Expedition to the Dead Sea Plain.



had as many as four pots with punctate marks; chambers 89NW and A 107W had three, 89NE and A 111N, two.

The seven EB IB designs came from four different tombs, two each from A 88L, A 100N, and G2. The single pot came from A 104. These tombs will be noted again when we consider the other decoration types.

Parallels to these punctate designs from other sites of the Early Bronze Age are not plentiful. There are punctate designs at Jericho on small bowls⁷ and juglets⁸ from Tomb A 94, which dates close to but preceding the EB IB tombs at Bāb adh-Dhrā' (Schaub 1981: 76). Most of the designs at Jericho are on the inside of small bowls, as are some on the similar bowls at Bāb adh-Dhrā' (Schaub and Rast 1989: FIG. 152: 5, 6, 16, 25). The Jericho designs are also varied, sometimes hardly more than a row of a few shallow holes.

The punctate decoration above a ledge handle at Tall Umm Hammād should be noted (Helms 1986: FIG. 12:12).⁹ At least three ledge handles from the Bāb adh-Dhrā' cemetery have punctate designs on them (A 83 #91785, A 80W #809, A 105NW #2072). The Tall Umm Hammād vessel is from "Stage 2" which Helms dates to EB IA, Jericho Proto-Urban A (Helms 1986: 37, 44).

Markings on EB holemouth pots from Megiddo (Guy and Engberg 1938: FIG. 7: P4524 and P4526) may be punctate marks (EB IB?), but there are no vessels of this type with the punctate designs in the Bāb adh-Dhrā' repertoire.

A fragment of a narrow-necked jug from Tall al-Fār'ah (North) Tomb 6 has what appears to be punctate lines on its shoulder (de Vaux 1951: FIG. 1:7).¹⁰

Very interesting are three quadrupeds (animals) in punctate on sherds published from Ghassūl as well as an elaborate design on the neck of a large jar (Mallon 1931: FIG. 61: 1-3, 7). This recalls the animal on the wall of a jug from Tomb A 82E (Schaub and Rast 1989: FIG. 152: 28). The Ghassūl sherds are from the Ghassulian culture, predating the Dead Sea Plain material.

The few parallels to the punctate design is probably due to the small amount of material contemporary with the early tombs of the Bāb adh-Dhrā' cemetery which have been published. The uniqueness of the Bāb adh-Dhrā' tombs is once again apparent.¹¹

Split Reed

The second type of decoration appears on pots in only three EB IB tombs from the Bāb adh-Dhrā' cemetery, and comparative material is lacking. The design is also

impressed by a pointed instrument. It is characterized by marks always appearing in pairs as if made by a split reed, and has thus been designated the "split reed" type (FIG. 4).

The three tombs were all excavated by Rast and Schaub and include twelve vessels with the split reed design. Six are from Tomb A 100N, five from G 1, and one from G 2. It should be noted that Tombs 100N and G 2 also had vessels with punctate designs.

Three of the designs are on the shoulders of handleless jars and the rest are on bowls. From A 100N two split reed patterns are on jar shoulders (FIG. 4:1,2; Schaub 1981: FIG. 5:2, 3), and the other four are around the handles of bowls (FIG. 4:3-6; Schaub 1981: FIG. 7:1-4). The third split reed pattern on a jar shoulder came from Tomb G 1 (FIG. 4:7); the other bowl designs were on the walls of large or medium large deep types except for one small bowl from Tomb G 1 (FIGS. 3:7, 4:8-11).

The various groupings of split reed marks usually form vertical rows. Five times the pattern is repeated on more than one place on the vessel. This occurs in each vessel type: the handleless jars, the deep bowls, and the interior of the small bowl.

Incised Marks

Tomb Pottery

From the Lapp excavations, five pots from EB IA tombs had incised marks on them. Three of the four tombs represented belonged with the latest EB IA tombs. The fourth, Tomb A 72NW was classed with the middle-range group (Schaub and Rast 1989: 29). Two small bowls from Tomb A 47 had incised circles in the interior on their bases.

All three EB IB tombs excavated by Lapp, A 13, A 43, and A 53, had pots with incised marks; 12 were from A 43. Schaub and Rast excavated four EB IB tombs in 1977 (A 100N, A 88L, G 1 and G 2), and Tomb A 104 in 1979 (FIG. 5).¹² All of these had at least one pot with an incised mark, with A 88L having 14. The two tombs with the most incised pots were A 43 with 12 out of 74 pots with incised markings (16%) and Tomb A 88L with 14 incised out of 95 pots (15%). This is approximately 10% of the EB IB pottery found in the tombs. Half the pots in Tomb A 43 were medium-large jars, while all the 14 incised A 88L pots were bowls, 12 of them large to medium-large deep types. The A 43 designs were varied, but many of them were modifications of a "U" design. All the marks on the A 88L vessels were 1, 2, or 3 crossing or touching lines. They were on the walls or in-

⁷ Kenyon 1960: FIGS. 9:16; 10: 3-5, 7, 10; 11:5, 14, 25.

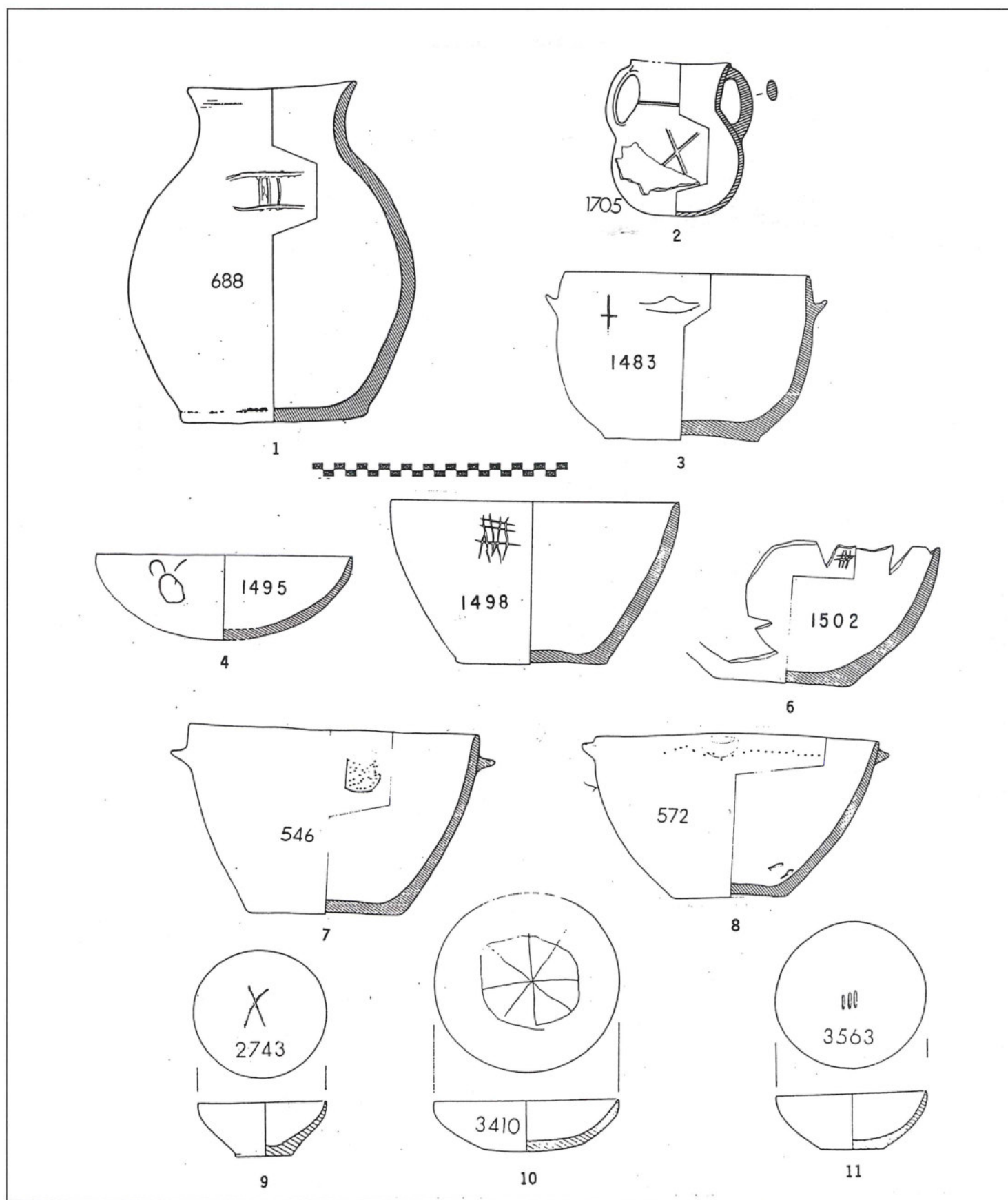
⁸ Kenyon 1960: FIGS. 12:14, 27, 28; 13:7.

⁹ Helms (p. 38) relates this vessel to Bāb adh-Dhrā' types: "... a generic relationship prevails which might indicate parallel development from a common source."

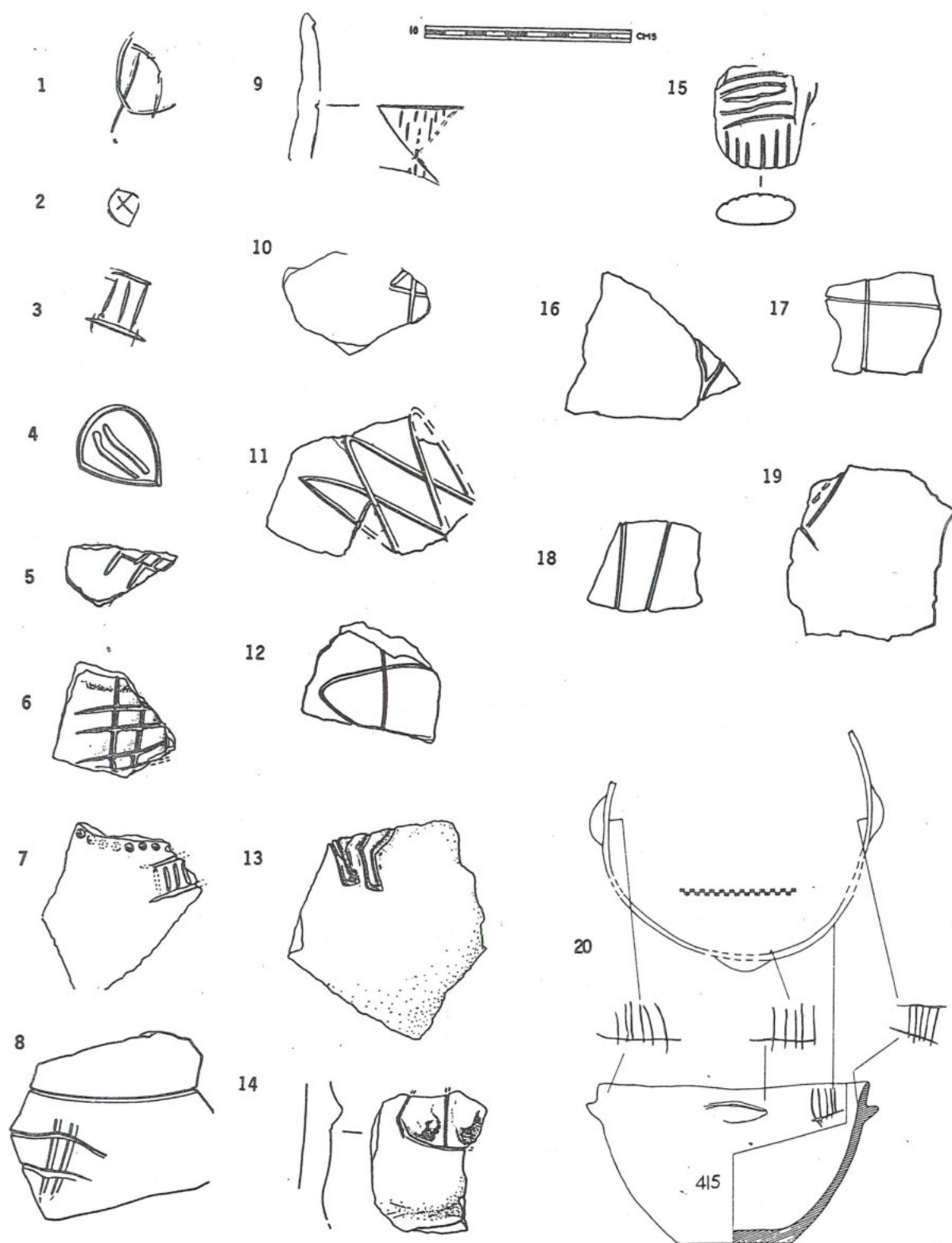
¹⁰ See Schaub 1981:75-76 for the dating of the Tall al-Fār'ah tombs and narrow-necked jugs.

¹¹ Cf. Schaub 1981: 69, 71.

¹² See the catalogue for figure references for the tomb pottery published in Schaub and Rast 1989 and Schaub 1981.



5. EB IB and EB II-III tomb pottery with incised marks from the excavations of the Expedition to the Dead Sea Plain.



6. Sherds with incised marks from the excavations of the Expedition to the Dead Sea Plain.

terior bases of the bowls.

All the pots with incised marks from Tombs G 1 and G 2 were on the walls of deep medium-large to large bowls. The pots from A 13, A 53, A 100N and A 104 included two jars, two juglets, and a small bowl. Their designs were linear and circular variations.

The three small bowls from EB II-III Charnel House A 22 had incised markings on their interior bases. Their designs varied.

The cemetery sherds were from a juglet and a large vessel. At least the first was probably a common cemetery type.

Town Site Pottery

Incised marks on pottery from the town sites, Bāb adh-Dhrā' and Numayra (FIG. 6), have been found infrequently; only 30 from all seasons of excavation have been recorded. Most belong to the EB II-III occupation, and the majority probably appear on large jars. It is estimated that 17,000 diagnostic sherds have been registered from the town site excavations, so those with incised designs are a very small percentage.

It is possible to determine that four sherds are from large necked jars, two are from holemouths, and one each from a small jar, a jug, a juglet, and a medium-small bowl.¹³ A very large deep bowl or basin with four sets of incised marks was partially reconstructed (FIG. 6:20). One incised mark is on a ledge handle. Twelve sherds must be from large vessels, probably jars with necks such as the two complete vessels with incised marks from Numayra.¹⁴ Two sherds are too small to determine the kind of vessel from which they came or much about their incisions.

Of the sherds only five contain the complete incised mark (FIG. 6:1-4)¹⁵. There are enough of 17 other designs to be significant (FIG. 6:5-15). The remaining seven are incised lines too incomplete to determine if they are merely strokes or are designs (such as FIG. 6:16-19).

The marks made include X's, ovals with lines in them, occasional triangles, cross line patterns, and various other crossing or touching lines usually at right angles. One sherd has what appear to be the fore and hind legs of an animal, and two sherds have a pair of knobs

with incised marks around and between them.

To consider comparable incised markings to the Bāb adh-Dhrā' tomb pottery, we must once again look at Jericho. The small EB IA bowls from the Bāb adh-Dhrā' cemetery have a variety of markings on their interior bases: principally circle designs, linear variations, and X's.¹⁶ Jericho Tomb A 94, dated between the Bāb adh-Dhrā' EB IA and EB IB tombs, also has all three types on small bowls.¹⁷

The Bāb adh-Dhrā' juglets had an assortment of marks on their shoulders and bodies, from short dashes, U shape, and a linear pattern, to an elaborate circle and line design.¹⁸ Some juglet handles had incised horizontal lines on them. Jericho Tomb A 94 has typical EB IB juglets (whose handles reach above the rim) with crosses and linear designs on their walls and other designs on and below their handles (Kenyon 1960: FIGS. 12 and 13). It should also be noted that a Bāb adh-Dhrā' juglet handle from the town site has an incised X near its top (BD 81 19.2.37.7349).

The Bāb adh-Dhrā' large bowls found in the EB I tombs are generally unparalleled in other cemeteries, but there is a large bowl from Jericho Tomb A 13 which has incised crossing lines on its interior wall, the exact pattern on two Bāb adh-Dhrā' Tomb 88L bowls (Kenyon 1960: FIG. 22:1; Schaub 1981: FIGS. 12:2, 13:5). The Jericho and Bāb adh-Dhrā' tombs are contemporary (Schaub 1981: 76).

Except for Jericho, incised marks are lacking or rare in other published EB I tomb pottery.¹⁹

When we turn to pottery excavated from *talls* or town sites, the variety and frequency of incised marks on Early Bronze Age pottery has long been noted. Petrie, Bliss and Macalister all published many "pottery marks" from their early explorations and excavations, often without distinction as to site or period.²⁰ At some Palestinian sites incised marks have appeared very frequently on Early Bronze Age pottery: Tall al-Ḥiṣi, 'Arād, Yarmouth and Tall Ḥalaf.²¹ When Early Bronze Age pottery is published from almost any site, some pot marks are shown on sherds. Incised marks which are similar to almost any of the marks we have cataloged from the Expedition to the Dead Sea Plain can be found on other Early Bronze

¹³ See catalogue where the vessel type is indicated and full descriptions of the vessels and marks are given as far as it is possible.

¹⁴ Since these are domestic vessels and not found in the tombs, their use and purpose probably should be separated from the tomb pottery incised marks. See below.

¹⁵ Also #.7349, see catalogue.

¹⁶ Circle designs: A 43, Schaub and Rast 1989: FIG. 40:5,8, EB IA; also on interior wall (A 43, FIG. 183:13) and exterior wall (G 1, #1495, EB IB); linear variations: A 188L, Schaub 1981: FIG. 15:3, 7, EB I B; and X's: in EB II-III tomb A 22, #2734, and #3410 (within a circle).

¹⁷ Note especially Kenyon 1960: FIG. 9: 24, 15, 17.

¹⁸ Short dashes: EB IA, A 72 NW, Schaub 1981: FIG. 84:3; U shape: EB IB, A 13, Schaub and Rast 1989: FIG. 129:6; linear pattern: EB IB, A 53,

Schaub and Rast 1989: FIG. 145:16, and also a juglet sherd from the cemetery, BD 77 ATT9.6 #754; elaborate circle and line design: EB IB, A 43, Schaub and Rast 1989: FIG. 134:9.

¹⁹ Azor (Ben Tor 1975: FIG. 6:3) has a cup with incised decoration on its rim and handle.

²⁰ Petrie 1891: PL. V:48-50; Bliss 1898: 21, 23, 25; Bliss and Macalister 1902: PL. 29; Macalister 1912: PL. 190.

²¹ Ḥiṣi: beginning with Petrie and Bliss' and Macalister's publications of pot marks, most of which come from Ḥiṣi (see n. 20), more recently, Fargo 1979: 27, 38, FIGS. 4, 5; 'Arād: Amiran 1978: PL. 112 *et passim*; Yarmouth: de Miroschedji 1988; Tall Ḥalaf: verbal communication from Joseph Seger.

Age sites. Except for the patterns we will note below concerning all the tomb pottery marks, no particular conclusions can be drawn. However, a few incised marks which appear with particular regularity on some types of vessels and some that are particularly interesting will be discussed.

It has often been noted that the marks occur frequently near the rim on holemouth jars (Fargo 1979: 27). Often the mark is a simple X as on a sherd from Bāb adh-Dhrā' (cat. no. .7089) and possibly on another fragmentary holemouth rim with a partial stroke (cat. no. .6077). These occur at Ḥiṣi, Yarmouth, 'Arād, Wādī al-Yābis and Tall Umm Ḥammād ash-Sharqiya,²² but it should be noted that holemouths with a variety of other designs are probably more frequent.

Particularly interesting is the X on the ledge handle of a sherd from Bāb adh-Dhrā' (cat. no. .5491).²³ Punctate designs on ledge handles occurred on some of the Bāb adh-Dhrā' tomb pottery (see above). The X alone or sometimes within a circle or with other strokes is also fairly common on the interior bases of bowls in the tomb pottery at Bāb adh-Dhrā' and Jericho.²⁴

There are several trident designs on EB IB tomb pots from Bāb adh-Dhrā' (Schaub and Rast 1989: FIG. 153: 32, 33, 38). Variations of the trident occur at 'Arād near the rim of two holemouth jars and on the bottom of a bowl, and on a Ḥiṣi sherd.²⁵ This symbol was found on Chalcolithic vessels at Ghassūl and Nahal Mishmar.²⁶ Petrie has many examples of tridents among the incised pottery marks he published from Egypt (Petrie 1901; 1902). In the First and Second Dynasties he considers them the *ka* hieroglyph when it consists of two raised hands (tridents) sometimes with other symbols.²⁷ When the single tridents are cruder signs and not linked to hieroglyph, he relates these "signatory" to later numeral systems.²⁸ Emery also shows a number of trident marks which he considers entirely disconnected from the hieroglyph of the First and Second Dynasties (Emery 1961: 201, FIG. 121).

Handles are a common place for pottery marks to appear.²⁹ An X appears near the top of a juglet handle from the Bāb adh-Dhrā' town site (cat. no. .7349). More interesting is a jug handle from the surface of the town site (FIG. 6:15) which has five horizontal lines between two

vertical lines. Helms found a variety of "symbols" on jar and jug handles from the Umm al-Bighāl EB IV cemetery and he was able to rank them by volume, and further, hypothesize that such series may exist for northern Palestine/Transjordan and southern Lebanon.³⁰

One incised design from Bāb adh-Dhrā' (FIG. 6:13) almost certainly depicts the fore and hind legs of an animal although the sherd is broken off above them. Incised animals are found on Jericho Tomb A94 small bowls,³¹ but the stick figures are a totally different style and the Bāb adh-Dhrā' sherd is probably from a large vessel. From Megiddo animals are said to be scratched on pottery after firing.³² Animals do not seem to be commonly incised marks during the Early Bronze Age.

Finally attention should be directed to two sherds from the town site (FIG. 6:14 and cat. no. .0059) with two knobs encircled, one with a vertical line between the knobs, the other with short dashes between them. They probably come from large vessels. FIG. 6:14 is broken (intentionally?) to look exceptionally like a woman's breasts. Knobs, singly or in pairs, are not unusual on Early Bronze Age pottery.³³ Several knobs from Bāb adh-Dhrā' tomb pottery had punctate designs around them,³⁴ and a complete pithoi from Shaykh Muḥsin in the Southern Sinai had two pairs of incised knobs one of them decorated with incised lines (cross lines between knobs) on its shoulders (Beit-Arieh 1986: 34, FIG. 9:5). Finally, from Ghassūl (Chalcolithic) came a round-based jar with two projecting knobs (or nipples?) with incised lines between them which may represent an incised garment or necklace.³⁵

Summary

The pattern of designs on the tomb pottery is most revealing. The punctate designed pottery appeared mainly in EB IA tombs with only seven vessels of a total of 63 coming from EB IB tombs. On the other hand the split reed design appeared only on 12 EB IB vessels. Incised marks also appeared mainly on EB IB vessels, appearing on 37 EB IB pots out of a total of 45 incised marks from the tombs. Five of the remainder were on EB IA pots and three were from an EB II-III Charnel House.

Eight EB IB tombs from the Bāb adh-Dhrā' cemetery have been excavated and approximately 370 pots have

²² Ḥiṣi (Fargo 1979: FIG. 4:4), Yarmouth (de Miroschedji 1988: PL. 39: 9, 10), Wādī al-Yābis (Mabry and Palumbo 1988: FIG. 8:37), Umm Ḥammād (Helms 1984: FIG. 16:1), and 'Arād (Amiran 1978: PL. 112: 7-10, FIGS. 8:24, 19:12, 45:17, 51:8, 54:31).

²³ A plain ledge handle from Megiddo has two short incised dashes (Guy and Engberg 1938: PL. 6:12).

²⁴ See above and n. 17; also Calloway 1980: FIG. 61:28.

²⁵ Amiran 1978: PLS. 46:6, 19:6; 23:7; Fargo 1979: FIG. 5:d.

²⁶ Mallon 1931: PLS. 3:4, 1:4; Mallon *et al.* 1934: PL. 37:4, 6; Bar-Adon 1971: 57, no. 27.

²⁷ Petrie 1901:47, PL. LV C: 27-48; 1902: 30, PLS. XLVII-XLVIII.

²⁸ Petrie 1901: PL. LVI: 330-346; 1902: 31, 32, PLS. LIV-LV.

²⁹ Punctate marks on handles are considered functional by Schaub (see above and Schaub 1981: 261).

³⁰ Helms 1987a: 46-48; Helms and McCreery 1988: FIGS. 8-12.

³¹ Kenyon 1960: FIGS. 9:1, 10:6, 11:4; also juglet FIG. 13:12.

³² Engberg and Shipton 1934: FIG. 10:K-S, Stage VI.

³³ For example, Kenyon 1960: FIG. 14:10; Ben Tor 1975: PLS. 14:4-5, 20:3, FIG. 37:9-10; Amiran 1978: FIG. 41:18; de Vaux 1951: FIGS. 4:7, 6:11, 12:6.

³⁴ Schaub and Rast 1989: FIG. 152: 11, 14, and a sherd from Tomb A 107S.

³⁵ Mallon *et al.* 1934: PL. 53; Elliot 1977: FIG. 5:4.

been recovered from them (TABLE 1). Fifty-four vessels or about 15% of them had punctate, split reed, or incised marks. All eight tombs have some pots with designs. Tomb 100N had all three types and the biggest percentage of decorated pots, nine out of 40 or approximately 22%. This tomb and G 1 had most of the split reed designs; most of the incised designs came from A 43 and A 88L. Pottery marks are characteristic of the EB IB tombs although in some tombs as few as 5% of the vessels had them. Most chambers favored a particular type of mark, but the variety is significant.

Table 1. "Decorated" vessels of EB IB tombs.

A 13	20 vessels	5%	with marks:
	1 incised		
A 43	74 vessels	16%	
	12 incised		
A 53	29 vessels	7%	
	2 incised		
A 100 N	40 vessels	22%	
	2 punctate		
	6 split reed		
	1 incised		
A 88L	95 vessels	15%	
	2 punctate		
	14 incised		
A 104	40 vessels	5%	
	1 punctate		
	1 incised		
G 1	40 vessels	20%	
	5 split reed		
	3 incised		
G 2	30 vessels	13%	
	1 punctate		
	1 split reed with punctate also		
	2 incised, 1 with punctate also		

Significance or the Meaning of the Pottery Marks

Finally it is necessary to consider the significance or the meaning of the pottery marks. This has long been considered by archaeologists, and various suggestions will be briefly reviewed.

The marks occur on all parts of both large and small vessels: the handles, below rims, on shoulders and mid-body, and bases, and on the interior as well as exterior walls and bases of bowls. They are incised both before and after firing, but our concern has mainly been with the former. Those made after firing are less durable, could be made on broken potsherds, and their use much more widespread. Those incised before firing are much more likely to be intentional.

Petrie publishes hundreds of marks made on Egyptian pottery (1901; 1902). He considers some "unquestionably hieroglyphs; others are probably connected with the signs used by the earlier prehistoric people; and many can scarcely be determined" (Petrie 1902: 29). The hieroglyphic signs³⁶ belong to the First and Second Egyptian dynasties, and are crude arms (*ka*), birds, serpents, fishes, and such. The linear signs³⁷ according to Petrie certainly go back to early prehistoric times and "continued to be used until the alphabets of the Mediterranean were selected from them" (Petrie 1901: 47) and he relates these "signatory" to the "system of geometrical signs used from prehistoric to Roman times in Egypt, and also in other countries around the Mediterranean" (1902: 31). Of their alphabetic use in later stages the Phoenicians only selected a few for numerical purposes according to Petrie (1902: 32).

Emery also distinguishes between the Egyptian "incised texts on pottery vessels executed before firing," which, he says, "should not be confused with pot marks" (Emery 1961: 199, FIG. 119) and the pot marks or "signary" which are "entirely disconnected with known hieroglyphs" (p. 201, FIG. 121). The latter's purpose he still considered a matter of debate, although not haphazard marks. He did not think they could have been owners' marks or potters' signature because the same groups of signs were used over more than a hundred years. He thought they could possibly indicate the workshop in which the pots were made, but different groups of signs on pots made from the same clay source did not make this likely. The system of marking was not confined to one locality, but all over Egypt (Emery 1961: 201).

Commenting on the marks from Ghassul, Mallon suggested that the Ghassulians were on the verge of the development of writing, and compared some of the motifs to the Minoan script of the second millennium B.C. (1931: 267-270).

Bliss and Macalister note that some of the marks they publish from Ḥiṣi bear a certain resemblance to the old Hebrew letters of *tau*, *shin*, and *resh*, but "the rest of the signs are purely arbitrary", and antedate the "earliest known forms of Phoenician writing" (1902: 82-83). However, it should be noted that the proto-Sinatic inscriptions, date nearly a millennium later than many of the signs we are dealing with.

More recently other suggestions have been made as to their use. In their publication of the Megiddo tombs, Guy and Engberg suggested that short strokes or impressions might indicate the number of measures of grain contained in holmouth vessels (1938: 12). Holland, commenting on those found in his excavations at Tall as-Swayḥāt in Syria (1977: 54-55), notes that they might in-

³⁶ Petrie 1901: PLS. LV, A-C; 1902: PLS. XLIV-LI.

³⁷ Petrie 1901: PLS. LV C, D; 1902: PLS. LII-LVIII.

dicating measures of grain on large jars, but this could not hold true for similar marks on small bowls and cups unless they were used for measures. He compares the Swayhāt marks with others, such as those from Ḥiṣi (Bliss 1894: 21, 23, 25), and thinks they possibly may indicate some numbering system generally accepted by pot manufacturers. Matthers has argued similarly as Schmandt-Besserat demonstrated that geometric symbols were an early form of account keeping in Mesopotamia (Fargo 1979: 38).

Helms argues for a system of marks on jug handles in relation to vessel volume throughout the northern and central areas of Palestine/Transjordan and Southern Lebanon during the latter part of the third millennium B.C., based on his finds in an EB IV cemetery at Umm al-Bighāl, near 'Ammān (1987a: 46-48). He limited his analysis to repeated symbols. He does not consider this a totally new invention but adapted from more sophisticated practices which existed at that time (1987a: 48).

The report from the first three campaigns of the French excavations at Yarmouth indicates that about 10% of the holemouth jars had pottery marks (de Miroshedji 1988: 76; Nodet 1988: 125, n. 2). Nodet then suggests that the marks may have been made before firing in order to keep account of their serial production. Every tenth jar would have been marked.

The Marks on the Pots of the Expedition to the Dead Sea Plain

All of the above suggestions have merit in their own context, and it is possible that several are correct. However, it should be noted that in each case, evidence is based on specific sites or circumstances in date or area, often on a limited number of vessel types, and almost always on specific types of signs. It is therefore unlikely that any of the above suggestions are helpful in reference to the Expedition to the Dead Sea Plain.

Most of our marks are on tomb pottery. Specifically, most of the tombs with these vessels can be dated toward the end of EB IA or to EB IB. Among these tombs, it is difficult to establish a pattern of particular marks or even a constant percentage of vessels that are marked. Rather, it can be said, that characteristic of some EB I tomb groups and all EB IB tombs are decorations on vessels, and preference is shown within a chamber for a particular type of decoration (EB IA tombs: punctate; EB IB, split reed: Tomb 100N; incisions of particular types: Tomb 43 – U variations, Tomb 88L – crossing lines), or a combination of the various types (Tomb G 2). In other words, for the tomb pottery, it can probably be said that the pottery marks were for decorative purposes, perhaps

a preference of a family or clan.

The marks on the Expedition to the Dead Sea town site pottery are not numerous or consistent enough to make any firm hypothesis. Most of the marks seem to be on large necked jars,³⁸ such as the two complete vessels from Numayra, but there are a number on other vessel types. Different designs are represented, but only the X appears more than once. Given the limited evidence, the purpose for the pottery marks from the town sites of the Dead Sea Plain can scarcely be determined.

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³⁸ Except in the two cases, the ware is not typical of holemouth ware (coarse, and usually dark, brown or reddish-brown, with brown or gray surfaces [cf. Nodet 1988: 125]).

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Catalogue

PUNCTATE

*Lapp Excavations*Schaub/Rast 1989:
fig.

Tomb A 3	90038	jar	0161.13.62.1 ¹	on shoulder	2 horiz. rows with vert. crossing	12:1, 152:1
	90026	bowl	0526.53.10.15	ext. wall	horiz. row with 2 vert. below	13:2, 152:2
	90057	bowl	0532.00.10.16	ext. wall	vertical row	13:8, 152:3
	90062	bowl	0547.53.12.16	ext. wall	2 vert. rows, diagonal crossing	13:5, 152:4
	90047	bowl	0773.00.12.20	int. wall	2 vertical rows	14:13, 152:5
	90027	bowl	0772.00.11.20	int. wall	2 groups of 3 short vert. rows	14:9, 152:6
Tomb A 6E	90191	bowl	0772.00.11.20	ext. wall	2 uneven groups of two vert. rows	316:13, 152:7
	90145	bowl	058 .53.12.12	ca. handle	ca. knob of 3	315:7
Tomb A 9	90362	jar	0161.00.41.14	shoulder	3 rounded vertical rows	29:3, 152:8
Tomb A 47	91530	jar	0161.00.42.12	shoulder	small circle enclosing marks	38:1, 152:9
	91548	jar	0161.54.61.16	neck	short vert. rows between raised dots	38:2, 152:10
	91513	bowl	0521.52.12.16	ext. wall	circles around & beside knob	39:3, 152:11
	91534	bowl	0516.52.12.16	int. wall	small circle	39:4, 152:12
	91550	bowl	0572.00.12.20	int. wall	small pointed oval	40:1, 152:13
	91549	bowl	0706.51.12.30	ext. wall	around knobs	40:2, 152:14
Tomb A 65E	91040	jug	0454.21.62.20	handle	2 horizontal rows	329:3, 152:15
Tomb A 65W	91044	bowl	0772.00.12.20	int. wall	2 diagonal rows	330:16, 152:16
Tomb A 65S	91028	bowl	0581..00.12.15	ext. wall	short horizontal row	45:4, 151:17
Tomb A 71W	91246	jar	0161.00.61.12	upper wall	cross	70:3, 151:18
	91278	juglet	0454.21.62.20	below rim	short slanting rows	71:9, 151:19
	91294	bowl	0572.00.12.20	int. base	2 rows	75:4, 151:20
Tomb A 72NW	91469	juglet	0474.21.42.20	shoulder	V shape on raised band	84:5, 151:21
	91478	juglet	0494.24.62.20	shoulder	oval with flat top, line inside	84:12, 151:22
	91431	bowl	0502.55.11.12	ext. wall	3 vertical rows	85:1, 151:23
	91489	bowl	0728.53.11.32	ext. wall	loops from rim	87:4, 151:24
	91441	bowl	0772.00.12.20	int. base	group and row	87:14, 152:25
Tomb A 75	91576	bowl	0742.00.12.20	ext. wall	2 vertical rows	352:7, 151:26
Tomb A 81S	91670	jar	0161.11.12.16	upper wall	3 horizontal rows	360:1, 151:27
Tomb A 82E	91724	jug	0444.22.62.20	wall	quadruped	363:3, 151:28
Tomb A 83	91785	jar	0161.13.62.16	neck	3 rows	368:1, 151:29
				ledge handles	4 rows	

¹See Schaub and Rast 1989: 5-8 for the explanation of these pot descriptions.

POTTERY MARKS FROM THE EXPEDITION TO THE DEAD SEA PLAIN

Excavations of the Expedition to the Dead Sea Plain

						fig.	Schaub 1981: fig.
Tomb A 78SW	502	bowl	0502.54.62.15	ext. wall	3 vert. rows below rim	1:1	2:3
Tomb A 79W	1083	bowl	0772.00.12.20	ext. wall	3 vertical row	1:2	
Tomb A 80W	809	bowl	0512.11.52.15	on handles	2 horizontal rows	1:3	
Tomb A 89NE	1032	bowl	0533.00.12.13	int. wall	2 vertical rows	1:4	
	1077	jar	0164.31.62.30	on 4 handles	2 horiz. rows top & bottom	1:5	
Tomb A 89NW	1014	jar	0164.21.62.30	on handle	3 horiz. rows on top	2:1	
	831	jar	0235.21.62.30	on 2 handles	2 horiz. rows on bottom	2:2	
	1107	jar	0264.22.61.31	on handle	horizontal row on top	2:3	
Tomb A 89SE	1150	juglet	0485.21.62.20	shoulder	2 vertically slanting rows	2:4	
	1148	bowl	0772.00.12.20	ext. wall	3 varied vertical rows	2:5	
	1230	bowl	0522.51.12.15	ext. wall	2 sets of 3 vert. rows near handle	2:6	
	1290	jar	0234.21.62.20	2 handles	2 horiz. rows on top & bottom	2:7	
Tomb A 100W	687	jar	0164.32.62.20	4 handles	row below handles	1:6	
Tomb A 102S	1871	bowl	0577.21.12.13	on handle	row top handle	1:7	
Tomb A 103	1714	bowl	small	ext. wall	3 rows		
Tomb A 105NW	2072	jar	0144.33.62.20	ledge handles	2 horiz. rows top handle	1:8	
Tomb A 105SE	2084	jar	0164.21.62.20	on handle	2 horiz. rows top & bottom	1:9	
Tomb A 107W	3272	bowl	straight-sided	rim & handle	2 irreg. rows below rim & handle	2:9	
	2287	bowl	0526.51.62.16	rim & handle	2 irreg. rows below rim & handle	2:8	
	2167	bowl	0573.00.12.30	below rim	2 short vertical row crossing irregular row	2:10	
Tomb A 107S		sherd		knob	on and around knob	1:10	
Tomb A 108NE	2327	jar	0224.21.12.20	on handle	2 horiz. rows top	1:11	
Tomb A 108SW	2622	bowl	0580.51.12.15	below rim	around and loop to knob handle	1:12	
Tomb A 111N	3142	juglet	0495.21.62.20	shoulder	loop below row below rim	2:11	
	3168	jar	0161.54.62.16	shoulder	3 vert. slanting rows from neck	2:12	
Tomb G 4		juglet rim & wall sherd		shoulder	2 short rows	1:13	
<i>EB IB Tombs</i>							
Tomb A 88L	1426	jar	small, 2 handles	neck	4 vert. rows	3:1	11:3
	1265	bowl	large deep	handles, spout	1 to 3 hor. rows on spout, 2 handles	3:2	16:22
Tomb A 100N	633	spoon		ext., handle	"feather" incisions, all ext., some int.	3:3	6:12
	659	spoon		int. handle	6 grouped	3:4	6:13
Tomb A 104	2203	bowl	large deep	rim & handle	irreg. row below rim, loop below handle	3:5	
Tomb G 2	549	juglet		shoulder	loop before neck row	3:6	
	546	bowl	large deep	ext. wall	with incised loop		
	538	bowl	large deep	int. wall	4 irregular horiz. rows, lower int. wall 3 irregular vertical split reed rows near rim also punctate rows below rim	3:7	

SPLIT REED

						fig.	Schaub 1981: fig.
Tomb A 100N							
	691	handleless jar	on shoulder	2 vertical rows		4:1	5:2
	673	handleless jar	on shoulder	2 vertical rows below one horizontal		4:2	5:3
	672	deep bowl	ca. knob-ledge handle	3 vertical rows each side		4:3	7:2
	681	deep bowl	ca. knob-ledge handle	scattered group each side		4:4	7:1
	686	deep bowl	ca. knob-ledge handle	scattered group beside at least 3 handles		4:5	7:4
	644	deep bowl	ca. knob-ledge handle	2 scattered groups beneath horizontal row		4:6	7:3
Tomb G 1							
	1480	handless jar	on shoulder	2 short rows 3 times on shoulder		4:7	
	1487	deep bowl	interior wall	3 vertical rows of 3		4:8	
	1485	deep bowl	exterior wall	1 set near rim		4:9	
	1500	deep bowl	interior around base	single row all around		4:10	
	1492	small bowl	interior wall	3 groups of two rows		4:11	
Tomb G 2							
	538	deep bowl	interior wall	3 irregular vertical rows near rim 4 horizontal punctate rows lower wall also punctate rows below rim		3:7	

INCISED

EB IA

						Schaub/Rast 1989: fig.
Tomb A 9	90346	jar	0161.32.62.16	mid-body	short vertical line	29:4
Tomb A 47	91539	bowl	0771.00.12.20	interior base	circle	40:5
	91543	bowl	0771.00.12.20	interior base	circle	40:8
Tomb A 72NW	91475	juglet	0484.21.62.20	mid-body	3 short vertical lines	84:3
Tomb A 65W	91888	jug	top missing	ext. base	X	330:14

EB IB

Tomb A 13	91931	juglet	1495.24.61.20	on shoulder	U	129:6, 152:30
Tomb A 43	90897	jar	1141.24.62.14	upper body	upside down U with 5 strokes inside	134:1, 152:41
	90826	jar	1161.00.62.15	above mid-body	U	133:4, 152:31
	90863	jar	1161.00.62.16	above mid-body	two U's with line through	133:3, 152:38
	90841	jar	1161.12.61.16	above mid-body	Y with stroke, or U with line through	133:2, 152:33
	90894	jar	1161.12.62.16	shoulder	U	133:1
	90881	jar	1164.21.62.20	shoulder	squared U	133:6, 152:40
	90866	juglet	1275.00.61.20	body	vert. line, loop & 2 lines top, 1 bot.	134:9, 152:39
	90830	bowl	1533.51.11.16	exterior wall	upside down U, middle line & 3 lines	136:2, 152:32
	90846	bowl	1535.00.11.16	exterior wall	large U	137:4, 152:36
	90845	bowl	1537.53.11.16	exterior wall	half circle with lines	136:4, 152:35
	90844	bowl	1547.53.11.16	exterior wall	slanting line with 5 lines crossing	137:3, 152:34
	90856	bowl	1775.00.12.15	interior wall	circle with short line from	138:13, 152:37
Tomb A 53	91926	juglet	1484.24.61.20	mid-body	2 horiz. lines with 3 vert. between	145:16
	91914	bowl	1742.00.11.20	interior base	circle with line within	146:8

fig. Schaub
1981:
fig.

EB IB

Tomb A 88L	1174	bowl	large deep	int. below rim	2 horiz. lines with 4 vert. between	13:6
	1198	bowl	med-large deep	ext. below rim	1 horiz. with 3 vert. lines below	12:3
	1209	bowl	large deep	int. base	1 line with 3 crossing lines	14:2
	1285	bowl	medium deep	ext. wall	2 horiz. with 2 crossing vert. lines	12:2
	1286	bowl	med-large deep	ext. wall	2 horiz. with 2 crossing vert. lines	13:5
	1308	bowl	large deep	int. wall	2 horiz. lines with 4 vert. between	13:4
	1310	bowl	large deep	int. base	1 line with 2 crossing lines	15:1
	1314	bowl	large deep	ext. wall	2 horiz. lines with 3 vert. between	14:3
	1328	bowl	med-small deep	int. base	2 lines with 5 crossing lines	15:3
	1329	bowl	large deep	int. base	1 line with 4 crossing lines	14:1
	1387	bowl	large deep	int. base	2 crossed lines at right angles	13:2
	1407	bowl	small deep	int. base	3 wavy lines	15:7
	1441	bowl	large deep	int. base	1 line with 3 crossing lines	15:2
	1443	bowl	large deep	int. base	2 lines with 4 crossing lines	13:1
Tomb A 100N	688	jar	medium	shoulder	2 horiz. lines with 3 vert. between	5:1 5:1
Tomb A 104	1705	jar	small	mid-body	X	5:2
Tomb G 1	1483	bowl	med-large deep	ext. wall	2 lines crossing at right angles	5:3
	1495	bowl	medium shallow	ext. wall	some circle with 2 short curves lines above	5:4
	1498	bowl	med-large deep	ext. wall	3 horiz. lines crossed by 4 irreg. vert.	5:5
	1502	bowl	large deep (?)	ext. wall	2 horiz. lines crossed by 3 vert.	5:6
Tomb G 2	546	bowl	large deep	ext. wall	U with punctate within	5:7
	572	bowl	med-large deep	int. wall	2 short dashes	5:8

EB II-III

Tomb A 22	2743	bowl	small	int. base	X	5:9
	3410	bowl	small	int. base	circle with 4 crossed lines within	5:10
	3563	bowl	small	int. base	3 dashes	5:11

fig.

Sherds from Cemeteries (EB I)

754	BD 77 ATT9 2 .6	juglet shoulder		horizontal line crossing 3 vertical	
755	BD 77 ATT9 .2.4	large vessel	ext. wall	oval with line crossing - complete	6:1

Vessels from Town Site, Numayra (EB III)

2866	NU 81 NE 3-1.147	large jar	ext. wall	wavy diagonal line & short vertical - complete	
3721	NU 83	large jar	shoulder	4 vert. lines crossing 2(?) horiz. lines - complete	

Sherds from Town Site, Bāb adh-Dhrā' (mainly EB II-III)

	BD 75 F2.7*	small jar?	ext. wall	wide double line crossing narrower double line	
415	BD 75 F1*	very large deep bowl	below rim, by 3 handles	5 lines crossed near end by 1 line twice, 6 by 1 once, & 5 by 2 at ends once - reconstructed	6:20
770	BD 77 III.2.47	small jar	shoulder	oval with X through - complete	6:2
778	BD 77 F4 .7*	large vessel	ext. wall	2 triangles in X shape with short lines within	6:9
1709	BD 79 IV.1.20	large vessel	ext. wall	X with line across top	6:10
1849	BD 79 XII.11.5	large vessel	neck	2 knobs encircled with line between	6:14
1850	BD 79 IV.1.49	large vessel	ext. wall	legs of animal?	6:13
1937	BD 79 XII.11.15	large jar	shoulder	at least 3 horiz. & 3 vert. crossing lines	6:6
1939	BD 79 XII.11.18	large jar	shoulder	partial ladder beneath punctated row	6:7
1941	BD 79 XIII.2A.64	large vessel	ext. wall	short lines either side horizontal line	6:5
2096	BD 79 XIV.4.165	large vessel	ext. wall	two zigzag lines crossing	6:11
2177	BD 79 XIV.3.112	large vessel	ext. wall	two partial lines	6:18
2317	BD 79 XIV.4.178	large vessel	ext. wall	partial oval(?) with line through	6:12
.0059	BD 79 XIV.3.32	large vessel	shoulder	2 knobs encircled and short lines within	
.5907	BD 79 XIII.2A.96	small sherd		partial line	
.8786	BD 79 XII.11.33	large vessel	ext. wall (?)	two partial lines crossed at right angles	6:17
2837	BD 81 surface	jug	handle	5 horiz. and 5 (partial) vert. lines	6:15
2846	BD 81 IV.3.56	large vessel	ext. wall	two fragmentary lines with short lines	6:19
3007	BD 81 IV.5.50	large jar	shoulder	2 vert. lines with 2 lines crossing	6:8
.4757	BD 81 XVI.4.104	bowl	ext. below rim	partial horiz. lines and 1 vert.	
.5344	BD 81 XVII.1.276	small sherd		partial line with short bend	
.5491	BD 81 XVII.1.88	ledge handle	on handle	X	
.6077	BD 81 XVII.2.309	holemouth	below rim	partial vertical line	
.7089	BD 81 XIX.2.47	holemouth	below rim	X - complete	
.7349	BD 81 XIX.2.37	juglet	top handle	partial X	

Sherds from Town site, Numayra (EB III)

1944	NU 79 SE 4-1 .81	large vessel	ext. wall	two partial lines forming one	6:16
2178	NU 79 SE 4-2.31	large jar	ext. wall	4 lines forming rectangle with center line, complete	6:3
3004	NU 81 NE 5-2.24	large vessel	ext. wall	pointed oval with 2 lines within - complete	6:4

*Area F vessels are EB I.