

TELL ABU AL-KHARAZ
THE SWEDISH JORDAN EXPEDITION 1992
THIRD SEASON PRELIMINARY EXCAVATION REPORT

by
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Preface

Excavations were carried out at Tell Abu al-Kharaz from 5 October to 13 November 1992. Tell Abu al-Kharaz lies north of Wadi al-Yabis in the Jordan Valley about 4 km east of the River Jordan (see revised plan, Fig. 1a, b).

The director of the expedition, as during the previous years, was the author from Gothenburg University in Sweden. The rest of the excavation team consisted of the curator of the Irbid Archaeological Museum and representative of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan, Mr. Hikmat Ta'ani, who also acted as trench master and foreman in the field; Mr. Richard Holmgren, University of Uppsala, Sweden, trench master and assistant field director, acting also as photographer and draughtsman; Mr. Torbjörn Jansson, MA, University of Gothenburg, trench master; Mr. José Gallart, LSU Graduate School of Anthropology, Louisiana, USA, trench master; Mr. Elias Markou, Nicosia, Cyprus, architect and draughtsman; Mrs. Laila Qutami, MA, assistant trench master, and Mr. Hussein Mahmoud Ali, MA, assistant trench master, both recommended by the Department of Antiquities. The team was further supported by Mr. Mohammed Darwish, Mr. Badri Madi Abu Isa and Mr. Hassan Rahmi Abu Sami. Twenty-five skilled workers from Pella and Ma-share' were employed.

I would like to express my great gratitude to their R.H. Prince Raad bin Zeid and Princess Majda Raad bin Zeid for their whole-hearted support of *SwedJordEx*. Thanks to the generous assistance of the Department of Antiquities and its Director General, Professor Safwan Tell, the excava-

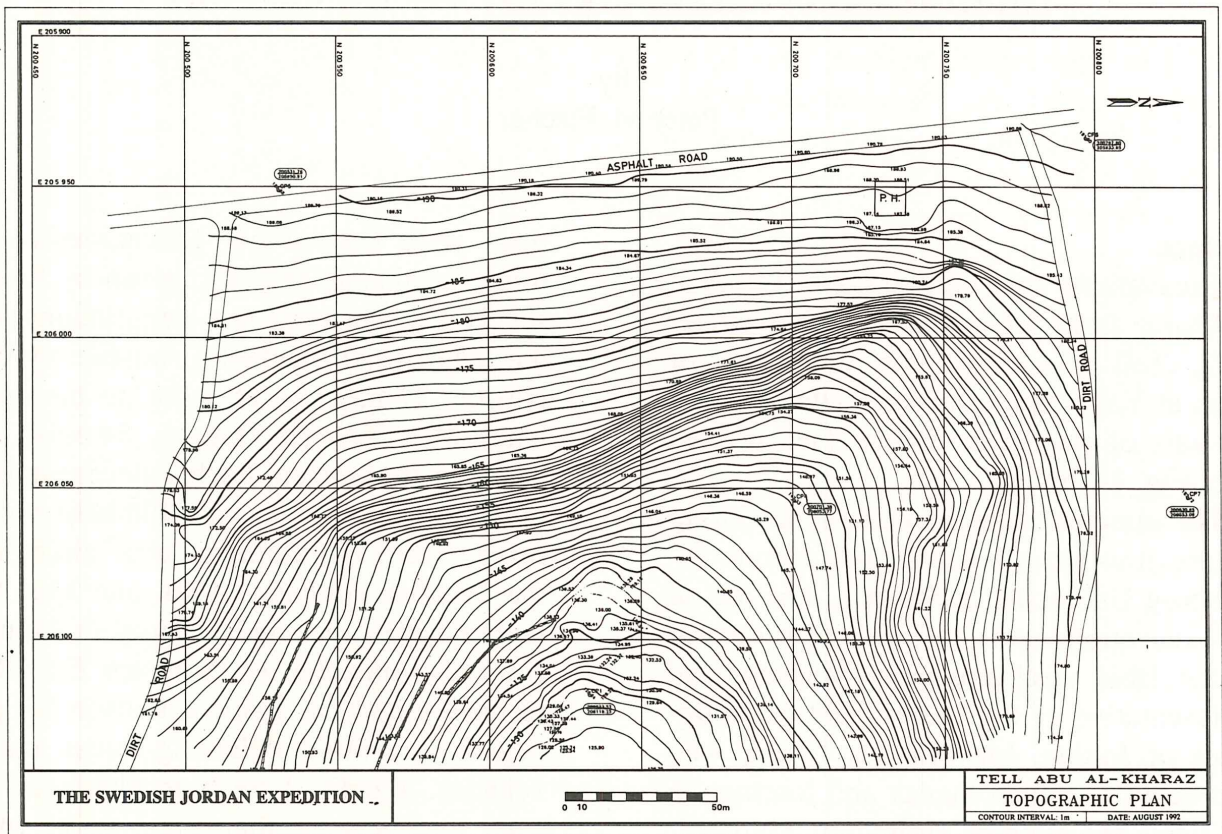
tions were carried out efficaciously. Extremely valuable help was given by Professor Tell in ensuring that negotiations with the land owner reached a satisfactory conclusion. Thanks are also due to his excellence Mr. Christian Bausch, Swedish ambassador in Amman, for his sincere interest in the project. Further valuable help was received from Ulf Bejmar, local director of the Swedish company ABB, and Mrs. Stefania Khalifeh, Icelandic consul in Amman. I am also indebted to Professor Em. Basil Hennessy and Dr. Pamela Watson for permission to rent the Pella Dig House and the vehicles. Finally I wish to thank all the team members for their hard work, which greatly contributed to the successful execution of the excavations.

Financial support was given by BITS, the Swedish Government Agency for International Technical and Economic Cooperation, and the private company Polylys Com, Gothenburg, Sweden.

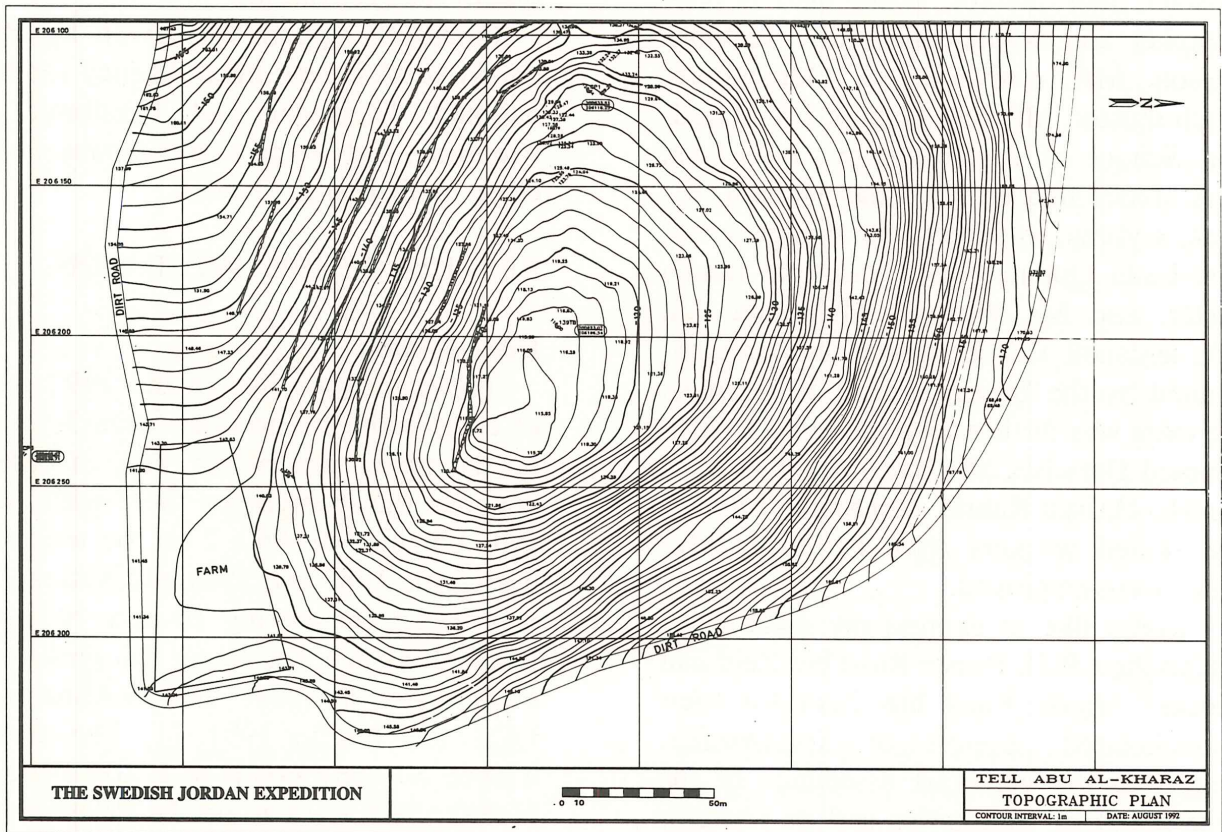
RESULTS OF THE 1992 SEASON

Introduction

The main objective of the 1992 season of excavation was to open Area 3, an area on the upper part of the Tell, in order to compare the stratigraphy there with the results obtained in Area 2 on the west slope during the 1989 and 1991 excavations. The new trench, measuring 10 m x 10 m, was labelled Trench XI. Using the grid system established in 1989, the coordinates are QQ27 (see Fischer 1991: 71). The centre of Trench XI corresponds to E 206 141.5 and N 200 658.5 + 0.5 m on the Palestine Grid Coordinate System (see plan, Fig. 1b).



1b. Topographic plan of the eastern part of Tell Abu al-Kharaz.



1a. Topographic plan of the western part of Tell Abu al-Kharaz.

Trench XI was further divided into the four Subtrenches XI A, B, C and D, each 4.75 m x 4.75 m, separated from each other by 0.5 m wide baulks. As the excavations progressed, it became necessary to expand to the west. A new trench was opened, Trench XII in Grid PP27, measuring 8 m x 3 m. During the second half of the campaign Trench VII C, partly exposed in 1991, was completely excavated (Fig. 2). Information concerning excavation and sampling techniques, and electronic support, may be found in the preliminary reports previously published in *ADAJ* (Fischer 1991; 1993).

In the description below the results are presented period by period from Colluvial soil. Three main periods are represented by substantial layers: Iron Age, Late Bronze Age and Early Bronze Age.

Colluvial Soil

The colluvial soil is about 20-40 cm thick. In T XII, Wall 92, a construction approximately 2.2 m wide, was found embedded in an ashy-grey layer of loose soil. The remaining part of the construction is the lowest course of a now destroyed wall. The west part of the wall is made up of a row of large stones, with medium-sized and small stones to the east providing a level surface for the next course.

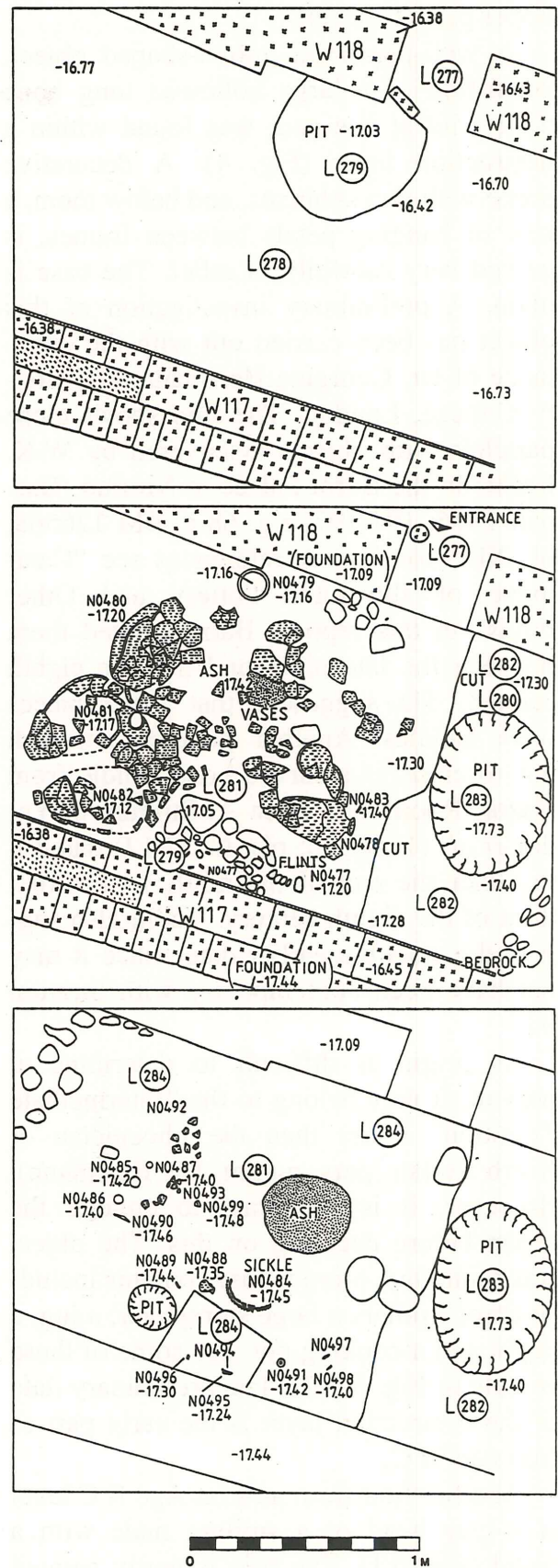
The pottery is a mixture of sherds from all existing periods so far found at Tell Abu al-Kharaz. The most recent sherds derive from the Late Roman and Byzantine periods.

This single construction can be tentatively dated to the Late Roman/Byzantine periods, which would make it the most recent construction yet found on the tell.

Iron Age

Iron Age II (Figs. 3, 4, 5:1-3, 6:1)

The Iron Age II C period is well represented in all trenches. A system of thick and well-constructed walls was exposed. Their dimensions suggest that they formed



2. Room in Trench VII C: upper, intermediate and lower loci (on bedrock).

part of a defensive system encircling the upper part of the tell.

A well-preserved goblet-shaped object, consisting of a large hollowed long bone with a lid at one end, was found within a destruction layer (Fig. 4). A decorative scene with two sphinxes, and below them, a row of hanging petals between frames, is carved very carefully in relief. The base is plain. A preliminary investigation of this object has been carried out with the assistance of Dr. Georgina Herrmann, University College, London. The find shows close parallels with objects discovered by W.K. Loftus in the Burnt Palace at Nimrud (Barnett 1975: 196-197; e.g. 68 a, BM 126568, pl. XLI; for further references see "Catalogue of Illustrated Pottery and Other Finds" in this report). Barnett dated them between the late ninth and the late eighth century. He suggested that these pieces were handles. Another parallel, although not so close, is a carved bone handle from Hazor, Room 47a, Area A, Stratum 6. Yadin *et al.* (1958: 16; pls. CL, CLI) dated it to either the end of the ninth, or the first third of the eighth century. Yadin also suggested a possible earlier date, since it may not have been contemporary with Stratum VI.

Its origin is difficult to determine at present. It may belong to the "Intermediate Tradition" rather than the Phoenician or North Syrian (pers. comm. Dr. Herrmann). However, it is important to enlarge the group before deciding on this. The object was found in a room whose contents included among others a large storage jar, a jug, a juglet and a cooking pot (see some of these vessels in Fig. 5:1-3). The preliminary date of the destruction layer is the early part of Iron Age II C.

Another find from an Iron Age II C level is a clay head of a smiling male with a beard (Fig. 6:1). The face is partly painted red. The object is possibly a part of an anthropomorphic vessel. In style it quite

closely resembles the Greek-Cypriot kouros type; it may have been exported from Cyprus or made locally. An amphora of a probable Cypro-Phoenician provenance was also found.

Iron Age II A-B is also represented. Further studies of the excavated material are necessary in order to learn more about the earliest part of Iron Age II.

Iron Age I (Fig. 5:4-6)

For the first time strata belonging to the Iron Age I were exposed at Tell Abu al-Kharaz. Solid walls and stone pavings should be ascribed to this period. A preliminary conclusion is – since Iron Age I findings are mainly confined to the upper tell – that there is an Iron Age I citadel. The stone walls are very likely part of the citadel's defensive system.

Late Bronze Age (Fig. 6:2)

The extensive building activities throughout the Iron Age have unfortunately destroyed intact Late Bronze Age strata within the upper part of the Tell. Many walls built during the Late Bronze Age were later reused by the Iron Age people. Pottery consists of Late Bronze Age I material, exemplified by the Chocolate-on-White ware, and vessels belonging to the Late Bronze Age II. Imported Late Bronze Age II pottery is represented by a Cypriot White Slip II milk bowl and a Mycenaean sherd of a flask very likely dating from the Late Helladic III A 2 period. A pendant seal of white stone with a remarkably naturalistic ibex-tree motif should be mentioned among the small finds (Fig. 6:2).

Early Bronze Age

Early Bronze Age II

Within the Early Bronze Age II different phases can be distinguished: phases of "squatter" occupations succeeding a "main phase" of intensive occupation (cf. Fischer 1993).

Squatter phases (Figs. 7 and 8): The latest EB II occupation takes the form of squatter occupation, certainly of short duration. The squatters are perhaps a group of people from the destroyed city who occupied the ruins of their former homes. An ash layer showing the final destruction of the EB II city covers the scanty architectural remains from this squatter period. The walls are built of mud bricks on stone foundations. They are orientated northeast/southwest. Many of them are reused walls from the preceding period.

The pottery does not differ much from the pottery of the preceding period: bowls and lamps, platters, jugs and juglets that include vessels of the Abydos type, and storage jars (see especially the objects from Locus 101, a room in Trench XI B, Fig. 8). A shallow bowl, slipped and randomly burnished, shows perforations: it was evidently used as a strainer (Fig. 7:3). It should be pointed out that jars with flaring rims outnumber vessels from the preceding phase of which those with the collar-like rims are most frequent. As far as surface treatment is concerned, the pottery includes slipped and burnished wares, wash wares, and wares with no surface treatment at all.

Main phase (Figs. 9-12): The remains of this period are covered with an impressive destruction layer, at some spots approximately 1 m thick (cf. the Early Bronze Age II destruction layers from Tell es-Sa'idiyeh; Tubb and Dorell 1991: 79-85; see also Fischer 1993). The destruction layer contains disintegrated and burnt mud bricks, and charcoal. It covers well-constructed houses which are orientated northeast/southwest. They are separated by streets carefully covered with small pebbles. The walls are built of mud bricks on stone foundations. Their dimensions vary between 0.6 - 0.9 m.

The room in Trench VII C, Area 2, of which a brief description follows, may be considered a typical room of this phase (see

Fig. 2). The dimensions given are approximate. The walls are 0.8 m wide and preserved to a height of 0.9 m enclosing a space of 3 x 4 m. The room is entered from the northeast via an entrance 0.8 m wide. The threshold is 0.3 m high and built upon the stone foundation of W 118, one of the enclosing walls. The walls are constructed of mud bricks upon a stone foundation of 1 to 3 levelling courses of stones with an average height of 0.2 m. The dimensions of the mud bricks vary, however 40 x 20 x 8 cm is an average size. The walls are carefully plastered on the inside. The hard-packed and smoothed floor curves up the walls and contains patches of plaster. It may once have been entirely plastered. In the northwestern part of the room there is a tiny wall which certainly had the function of levelling the floor within this sloping area. A niche is formed immediately to the right of the entrance by some circularly arranged stones at floor level. The stones may have served as a pot-stand for the almost globular hole-mouth jar discovered close to them. Opposite to the entrance along the south-western wall there is a stone bench 1.2 x 0.6 m. On this bench a number of shells were found together with bone and stone tools.

Numerous objects were found in this room, some of which were *in situ* and others somewhat moved from their original position due to the collapse of the roof and the upper part of the walls (Fig. 9:1-4, 8; Fig. 10:2-3; Fig. 11:2-4). The majority of the vessels fell in a northeast to east direction. Bowls, platters, jugs and juglets were found, but a variety of storage jars predominated. The eight storage jars consist of six with collar-like rims, one with an upright rim, and one hole-mouth jar; none of the vessels has a flaring rim. The jar with the upright rim has ledge handles and a yellow and black band-slip decoration. The surface treatment of the other vessels is similar to that of the pottery from the succeeding

phase (see above). Other small finds from this room are an excellent finished stone mace head, flint blades, basalt spindle whorls, worked bone tools and a bronze chisel. Another find, the first of its kind at the site, is a sickle (in the course of the excavations two other similar sickles were found in Trench XI B, Area 3). It has seven flint blades, which were very probably fitted by means of a perishable glue into notches of a piece of curved wood, parts of which were still intact.

The function of the room seems to be a combined store and kitchen/work-room, very likely used to prepare the food.

Interesting finds from another part of the excavations (Trench XI A, Area 3) include a stand with four fenestrations, with a rope decoration in relief and two ledge handles (Fig. 10:4), and a spouted jar (Fig. 10:1). One ware which differs from the common coarse Band-slip ware should be mentioned: the well-leigated clay is hard-fired; the clay is light yellowish-brown, the slip is yellowish-white, and the decoration is the typical diagonally intersecting red to brownish-lilac bands. There is one bowl or platter belonging to this group, which otherwise mainly consists of sherds of larger vessels. It is possibly an imported ware.

Two samples from large carbonized wooden beams excavated in Trench XI were taken for dendrochronological investigation. They were sent to the Malcolm and Carolyn Wiener Laboratory for Aegean and Near Eastern Dendrochronology, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York. The result of the analyses is negative: one piece is of the diffuse-porous type, probably acacia, which

cannot be used for dendrochronological analyses because of indistinct tree-ring boundaries; the second piece is conifer, but does not contain enough tree rings.

The pottery assemblage incorporates objects which can be dated to the Early Bronze Age I B and also to the Early Bronze Age II. On the basis of comparisons with the 1991 material and the study of the shapes and surface treatment a tentative date for this phase is the Early Bronze Age II A. This tentative date is based mainly on vessels related to the Abydos and Metallic Burnished wares (Fischer and Toivonen-Skage, in press), and on the numerous large storage jars with collar-like rims.

Early Bronze Age I

No interpretable architectural remains from this period could be found in 1992. However, there is no evidence of a break between this and the succeeding period.

The presence of two wares may serve as an indicator of Early Bronze Age I B: the Painted ware and the Grey Burnished ware. The presence of Band-slip and Grain-wash wares alone could not be used as an indicator of Early Bronze Age I. These were also found in the succeeding phases (see also Fischer 1993).

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CATALOGUE OF ILLUSTRATED POTTERY AND OTHER FINDS FROM AREA 3

Description/abbreviations: identification number (trench/stratum/locus/find number), shape, HM (hand-made pottery includes techniques such as pinching, drawing, mould-modeling and coiling; no further distinction is made in this report), WM (wheel-made pottery includes wheel thrown and turntable pottery; see above), fired hard (H), medium (M) or soft (S), colour of clay, core, inclusions (refer to the Wentworth scale; Wentworth 1922; 1933), slip (SS=self slip) and surface treatment, and some parallels; see also Fischer 1991 and 1993 for further parallels.

Fig. 3. *Iron Age II*.

1. XIB1L6N0500, krater, WM, M, grey, yellowish-brown core, medium coarse with multicoloured inclusions, red slip on upper part of vessel; cf. Hazor V A, Yadin *et al.* 1960: pl. LXXXIV:2.
2. XIC2L15N0507, jug, WM, M, buff, fine, red slip, three circular incisions; cf. Megiddo IV, Lamon and Shipton 1939: pl. 3:92.
3. XIC2/3L15N0510, jug, WM, H, buff, medium coarse with multicoloured inclusions, SS.
4. XIC2/3L15/1, jug, WM, H, buff, very fine, light yellowish-brown slipped and burnished, decorated with reddish-brown bands.

Fig. 4. *Iron Age II C (early)*.

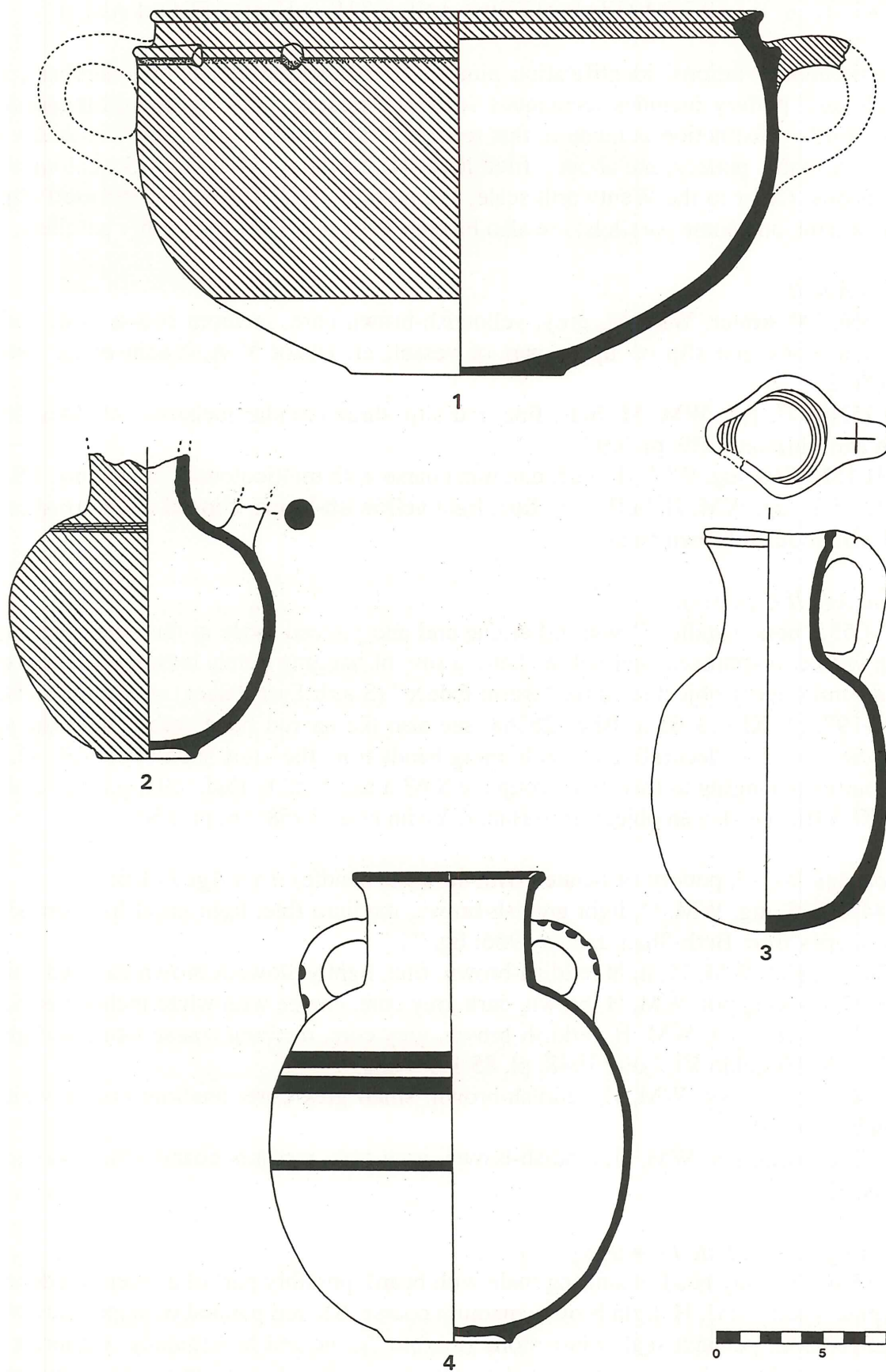
XII3L84N0553, bone handle (?) with lid at one end and pierced twice at the other end; decorative scene with two sphinxes, and below them, a row of hanging petals between frames; cf. the shape of a similar ivory object from the "Burnt Palace" (South-East Palace) at Nimrud in Barnett 1975: 196-197, pl. XLI, S 68 a, BM 126568; see also the carved bone "tube" with the sphinx motif and the crisscross decoration of the framing bands from the same site in *ibid.*: pl. XLVII, S 70; other pieces belonging to this style group are S 63 a and S 63 b. *ibid.*: 196, p.1 XL, and S 67, *ibid.*: pl. XLVIII; see also an object from Hazor, Yadin *et al.* 1958: 16, pl. 150.

Fig. 5. *Iron Age II* (1-3, pottery associated with the bone handle); *Iron Age I* (4-6).

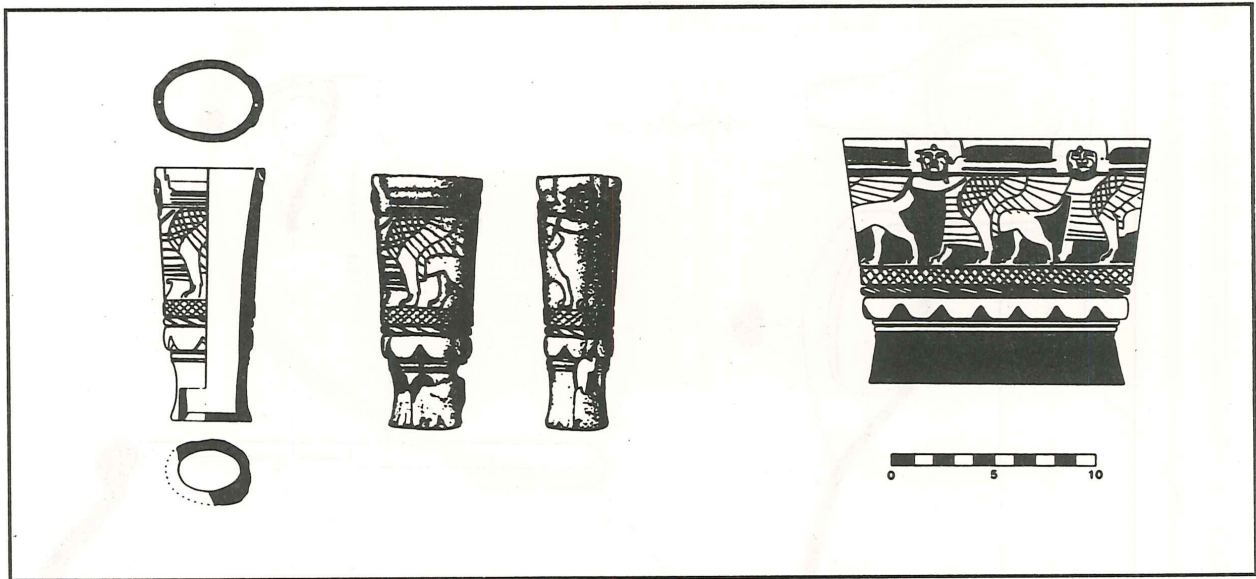
1. XII3L84N0545, jug, WM, H, light greyish-brown, medium fine, light greyish-brown slip; cf. similar shapes from Beth-Shan, James 1966: fig. 71.
2. XII3L84/2, juglet, WM, M, light reddish-brown, fine, light yellowish-brown slip, red painted.
3. XII3L84/3, cooking pot, WM, H, brown, dark grey core, coarse with white inclusions, SS.
4. XID6/1/3, cooking pot, WM, H, reddish-brown, grey core, medium coarse white and grey inclusions, SS; Megiddo VI, Loud 1948: pl. 85:16.
5. XID6/1/4, cooking pot, WM, H, reddish-brown, small grey core, medium coarse white and grey inclusions, SS.
6. XID6/1/2, cooking pot, WM, H, reddish-brown, grey core, medium coarse white and grey inclusions, SS.

Fig. 6. *Iron Age II* (1); *Late Bronze Age* (2).

1. XID2L13N0504, clay head of smiling male with beard, possibly part of a wheel-made anthropomorphic vessel, HM, H, light brown, medium coarse, SS, red painted on upper part of face.
2. XID4L51N0532, pendant-seal, white stone (marble ?), pierced horizontally, elaborate motif with two naturalistic ibices, a tree and flowers; see e.g. the discussion on the palm-tree and ibex motif in Amiran 1970: 161-165.



3. Iron Age II.



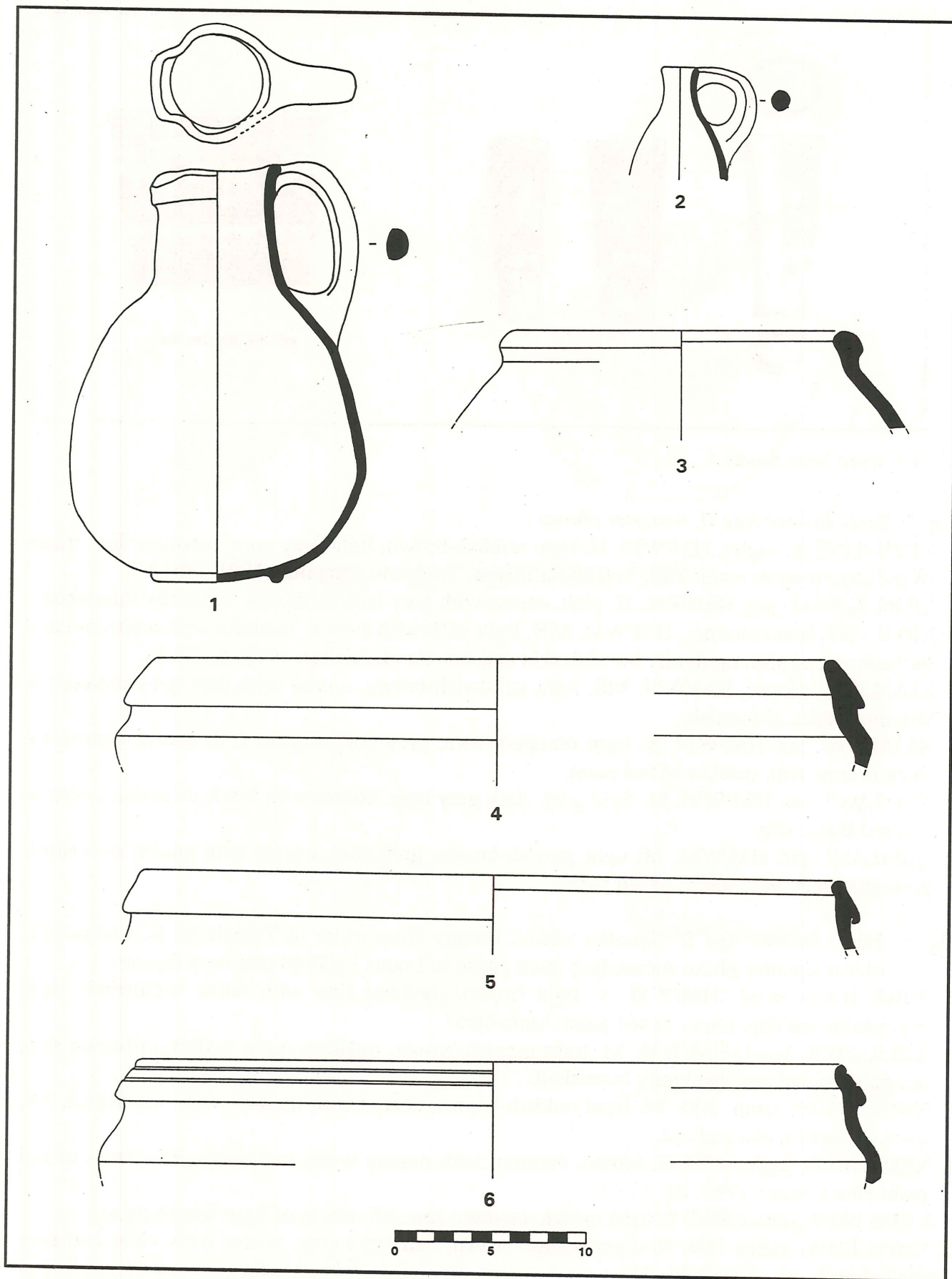
4. Carved bone handle.

Fig. 7. *Early Bronze Age II. Squatter phases.*

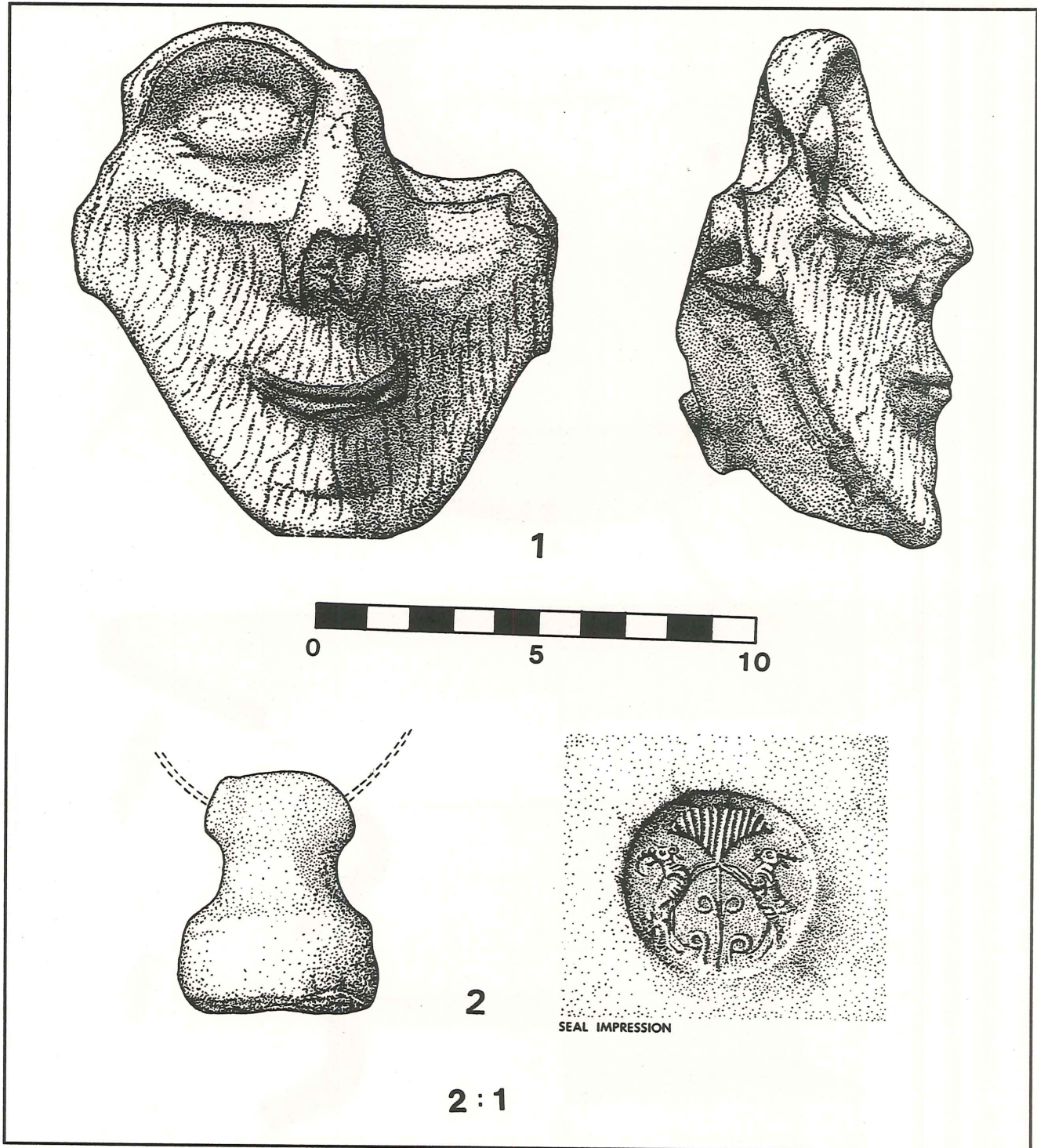
1. XIB3L63N536, juglet, HM/WM, H, light reddish-brown, light grey core, medium fine, traces of red slip or wash inside rim; Tell es-Sa'idiyeh, Tubb and Chapman 1991: 50:14.
2. XID6L81N542, jug, HM/WM, H, pink, coarse with grey inclusions, SS, vertically burnished.
3. XIB4L77/1, bowl-strainer, HM/WM, MH, light yellowish-brown, medium with multicoloured inclusions, red slip, randomly burnished in and out; Arad, Amiran 1978: pl. 22:61.
4. XIA5L89/1, platter, HM/WM, MS, light yellowish-brown, coarse with dark grey inclusions, red slip, traces of burnish.
5. XIA5L96/4, jar, HM/WM, S, light orange-brown, grey core, coarse with quartz inclusions, thick orange slip, patches of red paint.
6. XIA5L96/2, jar, HM/WM, M, light grey, dark grey core, coarse with black inclusions, orange and red Band-slip.
7. XIB4L92/1, jar, HM/WM, M, light greyish-brown, grey core, coarse with quartz inclusions, pinkish orange slip, traces of red paint.

Fig. 8. *Early Bronze Age II. Squatter phase.* Pottery from room in Trench XI B, Locus 101; oldest squatter phase succeeding main phase in Locus 110/140 (see next figures).

1. XIB5L101/6, bowl, HM/WM, S, light brown, medium fine with white inclusions, light greyish-brown slip, traces of red paint, burnished?
2. XIB5L101/5, bowl, HM/WM, M, light greyish-brown, medium, light yellowish-brown slip, red paint in and out, randomly burnished.
3. XIB5L101/10, lamp, HM, M, light reddish-brown, coarse with mainly white inclusions, SS, trace of soot on rim and out.
4. XIB5L101/9, juglet, HM, S, brown, medium with mainly white inclusions, SS, traces of red paint (see Fischer 1993: fig. 12:6).
5. XIB5L101/7, juglet, HM, S, light brown, medium fine, SS, traces of light brown paint.
6. XIB5L101/8, juglet, HM, M, light orange-brown, light grey core, coarse with white and grey inclusions.



5. Iron Age II (1-3, pottery associated with the bone handle); Iron Age I (4-6).



6. Iron Age II (1); Late Bronze Age (2).

7. XIB5L101/2, jar, HM/WM, MH, light yellowish-brown, coarse with grey and white inclusions.
8. XIB5L101/1, jar, HM/WM, M, light brown, coarse with grey and black inclusions, yellowish-pink slip, reddish-brown wash.
9. XIB5L101/3, jar, HM/WM, M, greyish-brown, coarse with multicoloured inclusions, light yellowish-brown slip, red wash.

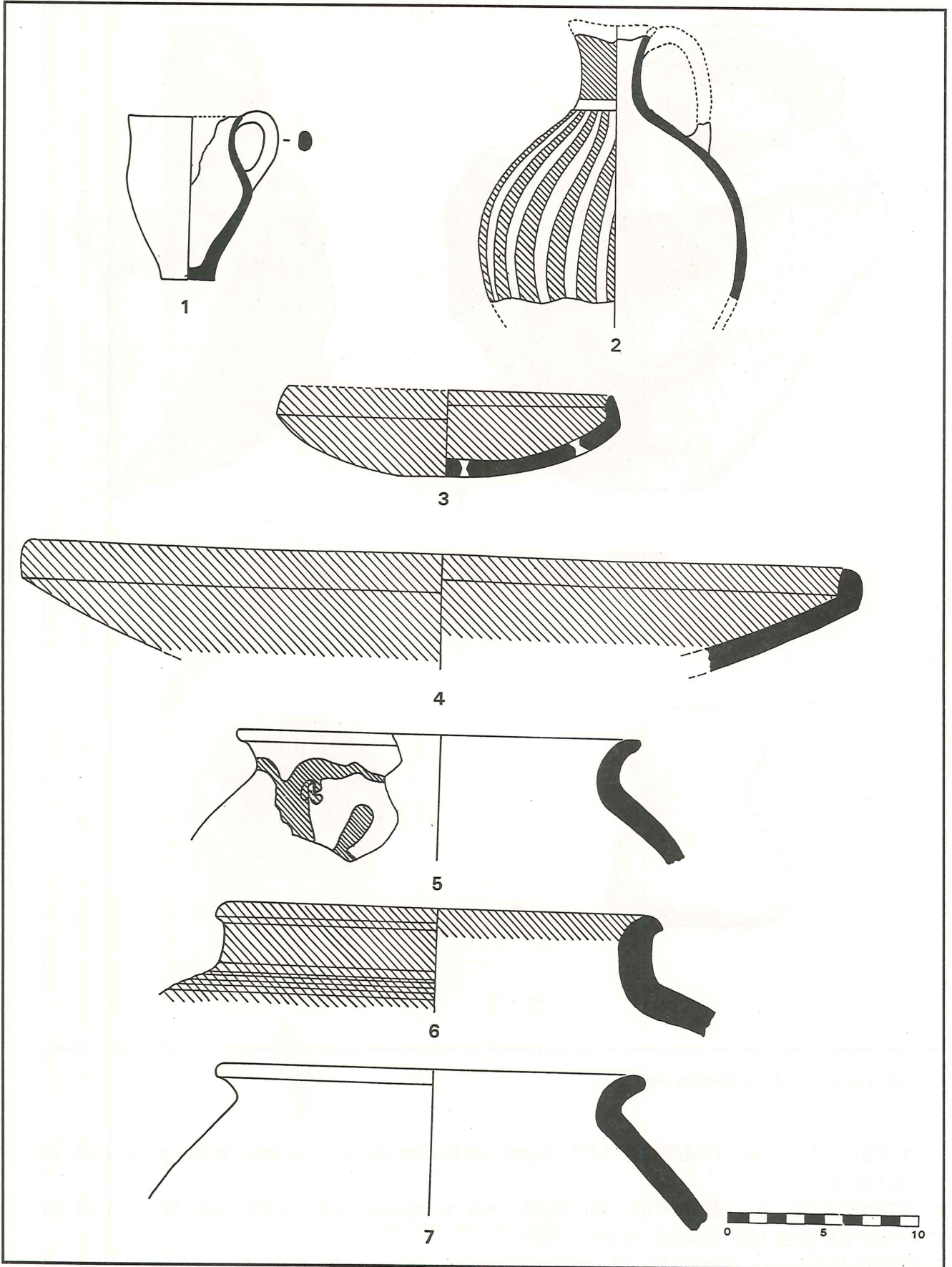
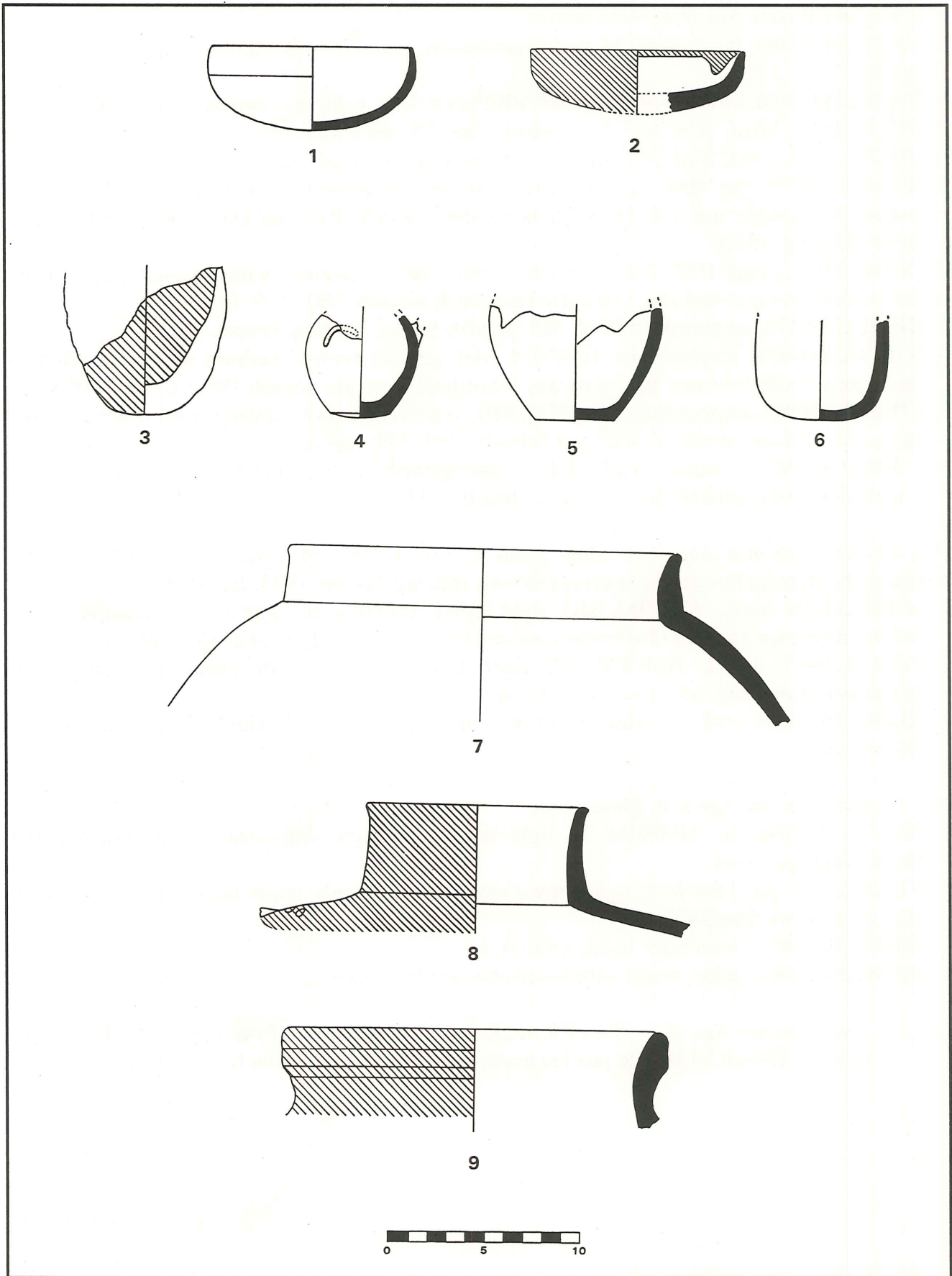


Fig. 7. Early Bronze Age II. Squatter phases.



8. Early Bronze Age II. Oldest squatter phase. Pottery from room in Trench XI B, Locus 101.

Fig. 9. *Early Bronze Age II A. Main phase.*

1. VIIC8L281N485, bowl, WM, M, yellowish-brown, fine, yellowish-brown slip, randomly burnished.
2. VIIC8L281N486, bowl, WM, M, yellowish-brown, fine, yellowish-brown slip, red wash out.
3. VIIC8L281/1, bowl, WM, MH, light brown, fine, SS, red wash out.
4. VIIC8L281/2, bowl, WM, MH, light brown, fine, SS, red wash out.
5. XIB6L110N574, jug, HM, M, light brown, coarse with white inclusions, pinkish-red slip, net pattern burnished; Bab edh-Dhra', Schaub 1981: 115,6; Bab edh-Dhra', Rast and Schaub 1989: 324, fig. 195:1.
6. XIB6L140/1, jug, HM, MS, greyish-brown, medium-coarse with medium-large white inclusions, orangish-red slip, vertically burnished; Schaub 1981: 115, fig. 19:2.
7. XID8L128N578, amphoriskos, HM, MS, greyish-brown, medium coarse, SS.
8. VIIC8L281N488, amphoriskos, HM/WM, MH, greyish-brown, medium with multicoloured inclusions, reddish-brown slip, vertically burnished; Rast and Schaub 1981: 115, fig. 19:8.
9. XIB6L147N595, amphoriskos, HM/WM, MH, yellowish-brown, medium with white and grey inclusions, SS, red wash; cf. Rast and Schaub 1989: 399, type 2294.
10. XIB6L110N573, juglet, HM, MH, light greyish-brown, medium-coarse with white inclusions, light pinkish-brown slip, vertically red burnished.

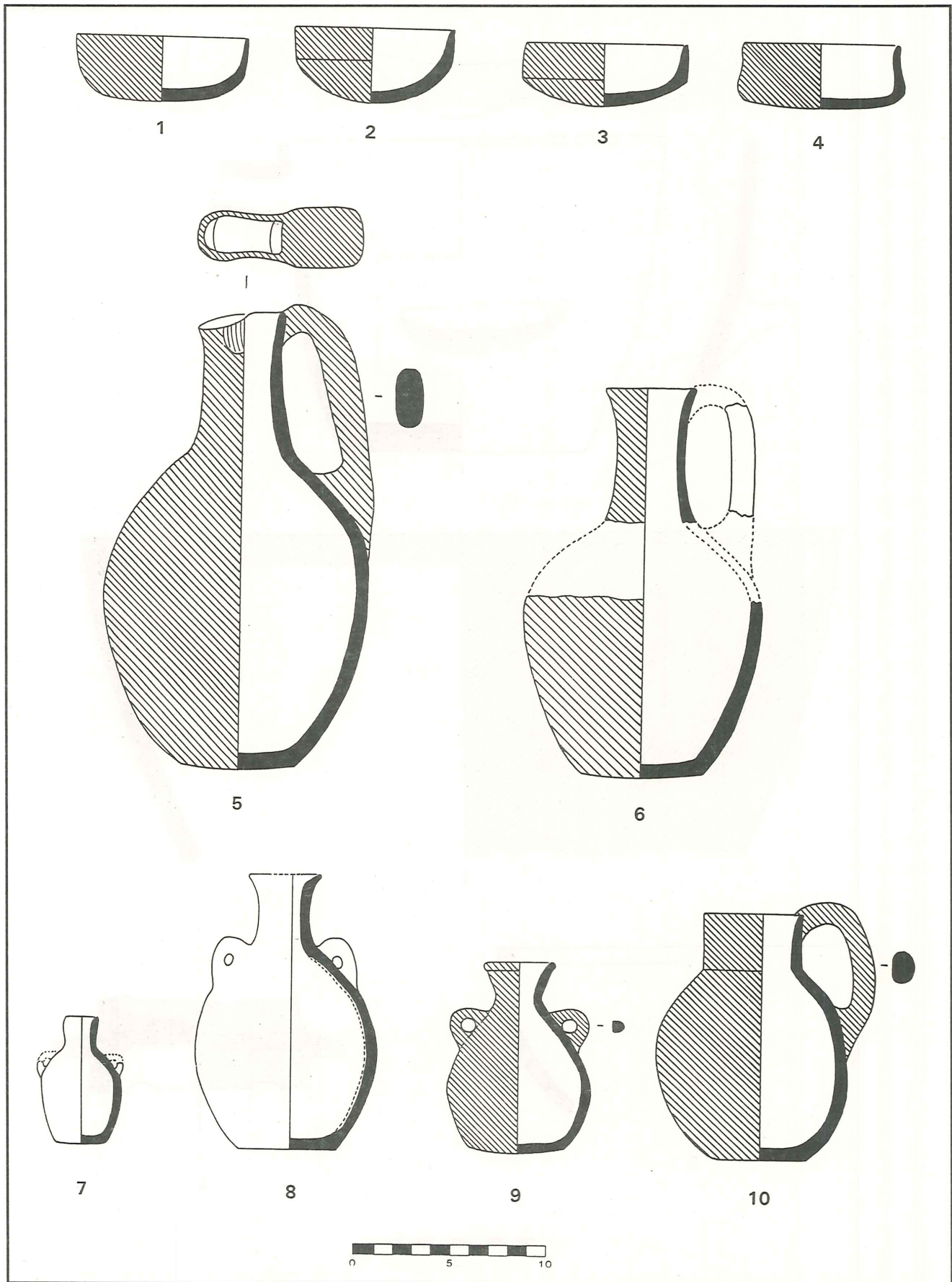
Fig. 10. *Early Bronze Age II A. Main phase.* 1. XIA7L136N588, spouted jar, HM, M, grey, coarse with white inclusions, light orange-brown slip; see Fischer 1993: fig. 13:4.

2. VIIC8L284/6, basin, WM/HM, MH, light brown, coarse with large white inclusions, light yellowish-brown slip, red Grain-wash out and inside rim; Arad, Amiran 1978: pl. 23:23.
3. VIIC8L284/7, bowl, HM/WM, H, light brown, coarse with grey inclusions, light yellowish-brown slip, traces of brown wash.
4. XIAW116, stand, HM, H, yellowish-brown, medium-coarse with white and grey inclusions, SS, red wash.

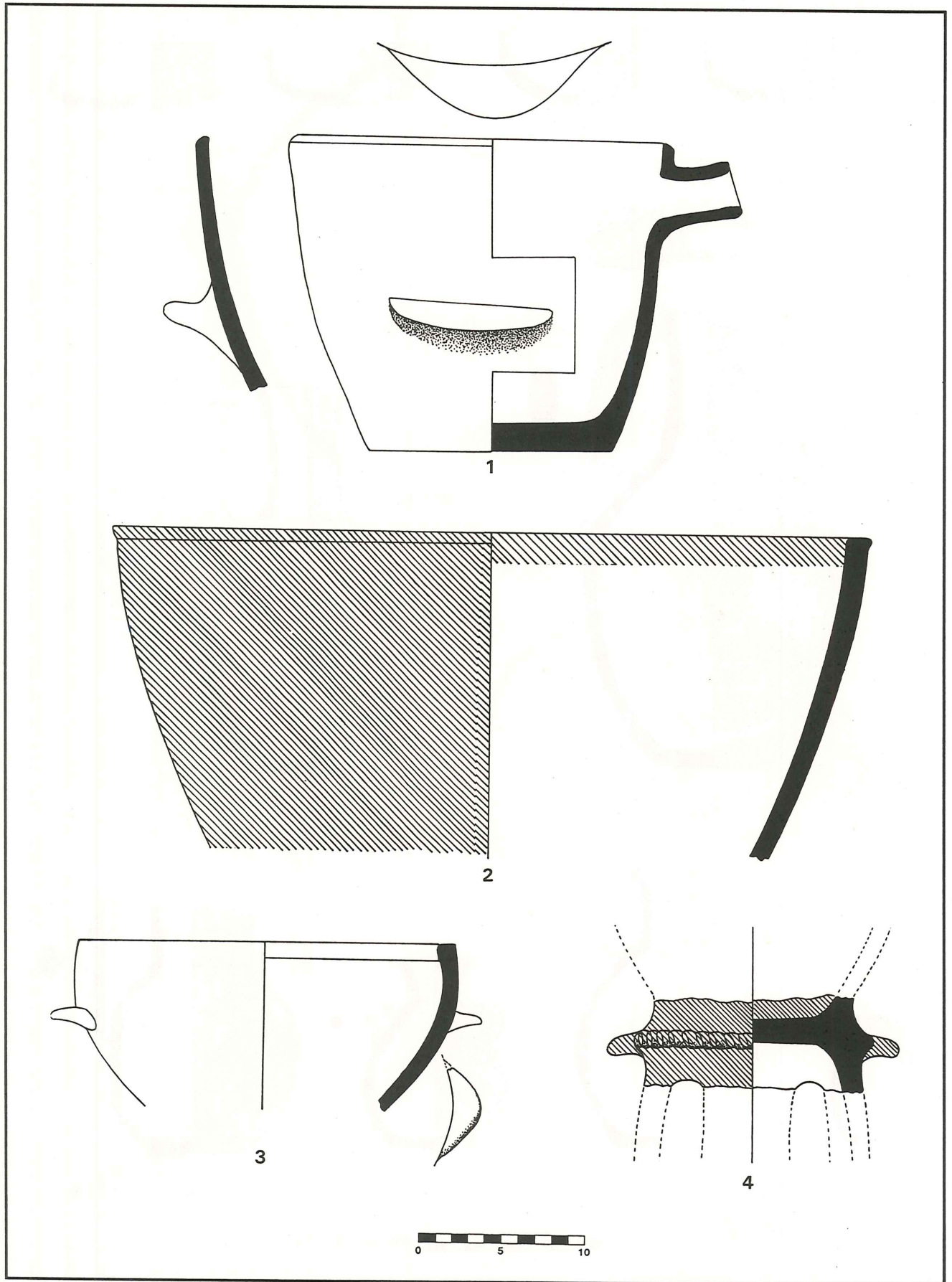
Fig. 11. *Early Bronze Age II A. Main phase*

1. XIA7L136N586, jar, HM/WM, H, light brown, medium with white inclusions, SS, red Grain-wash; pot mark.
2. VIIC8L281/3, jar, HM/WM, light brown, coarse with mainly white inclusions, light brown slip, dark brown Band-slip.
3. VIIC8L281N499, stone mace head, white stone.
4. VIIC8L281N484, sickle, wood with seven attached flint blades.

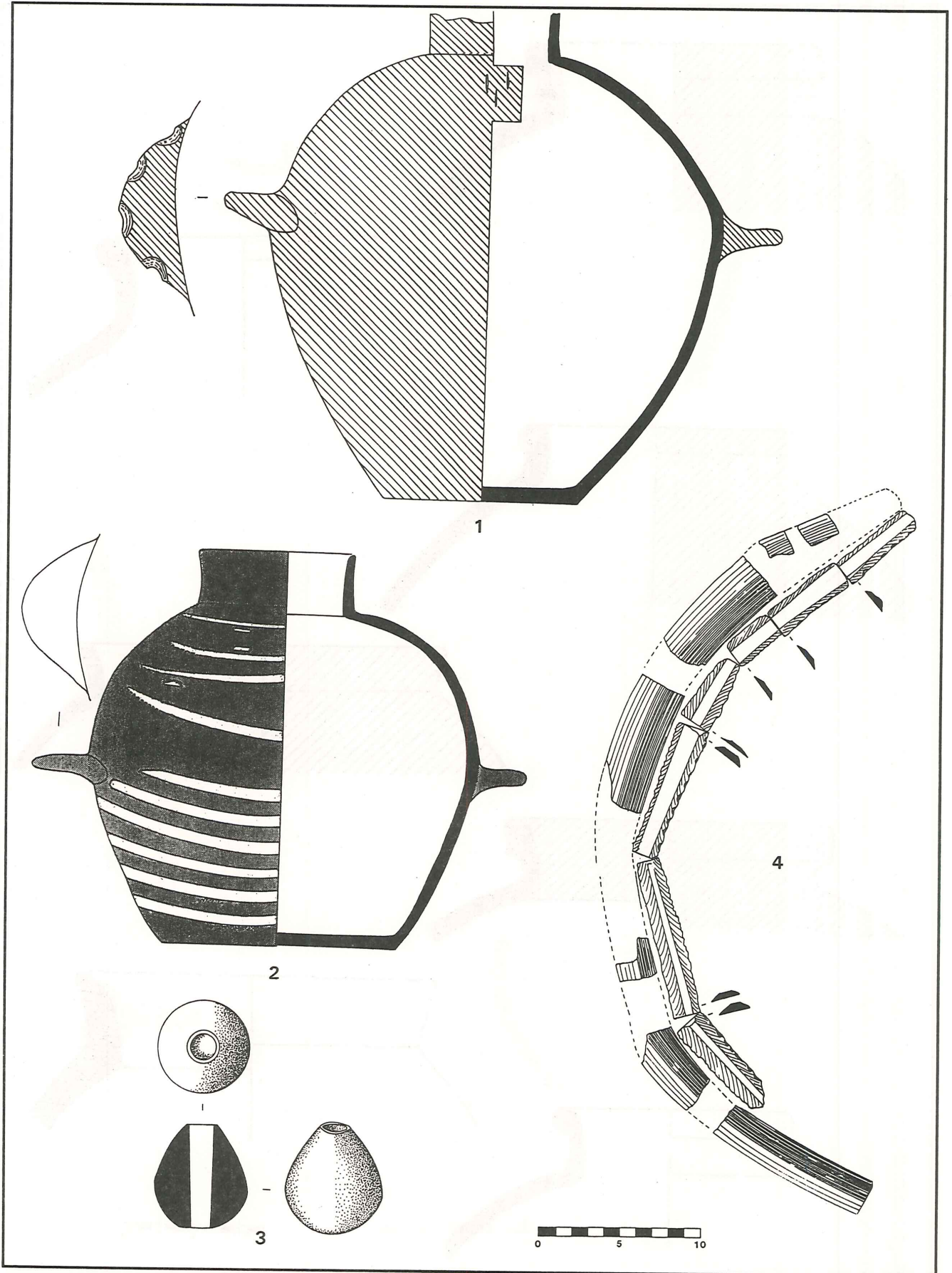
Fig. 12. *Early Bronze Age II A. Main Phase.* Rims of complete jars from Loci 110/140, a store room in Trench XI B. The jars are under restoration; description forthcoming.



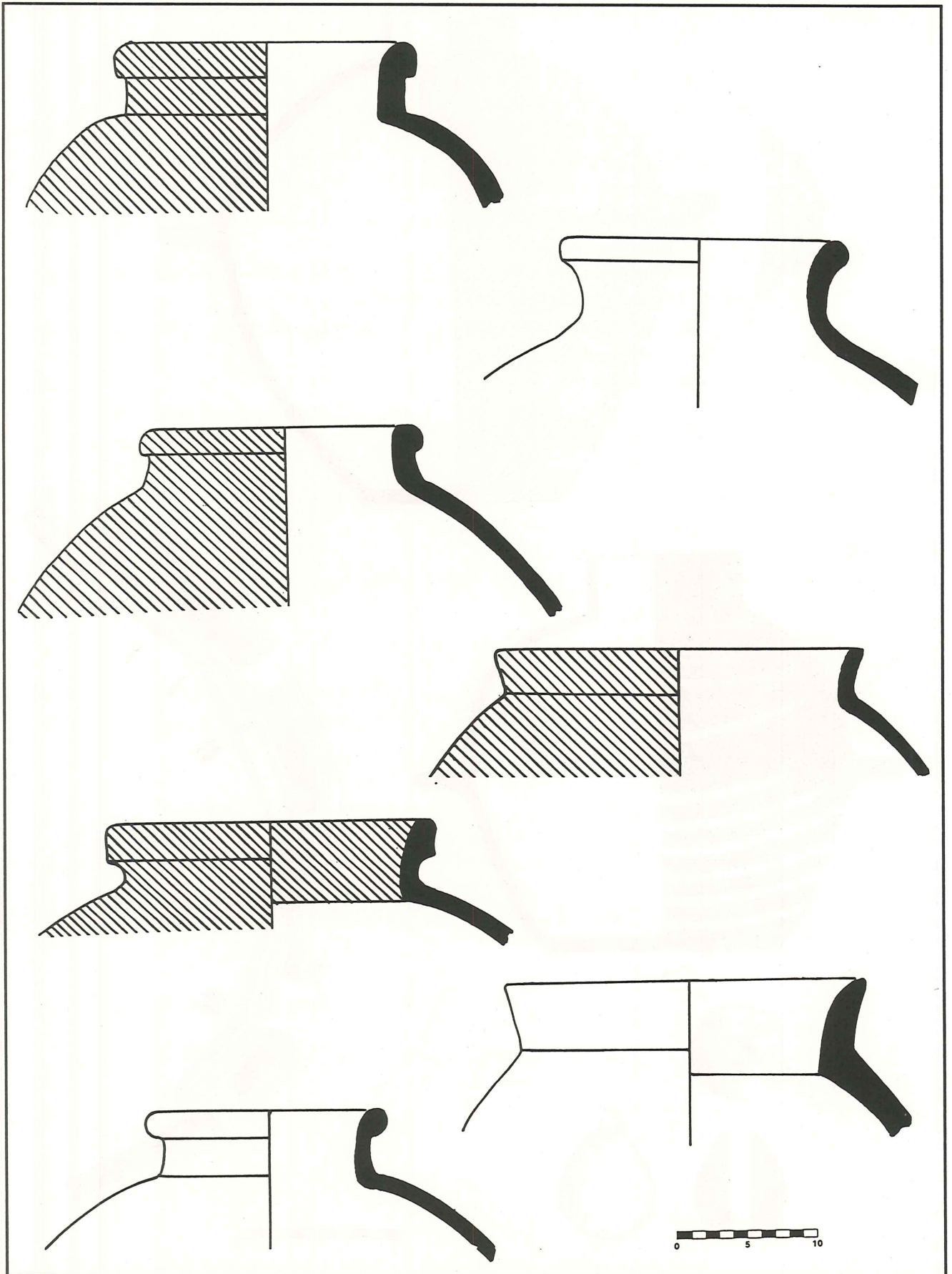
9. Early Bronze Age II A. Main phase.



10. Early Bronze Age II A. Main phase.



11. Early Bronze Age II A. Main phase.



12. Early Bronze Age II A. Main Phase. Rims of complete jars.

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