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**ABSTRACT**

The importance of archaeological excavations is that they provide us with important information about ancient times through the study of architectural remains and archaeological finds of different types and materials, whether pottery, seals, metals, stones, bones, etc. They are studied and documented in order to gather more knowledge regarding these societies. Each era has unique features that differ from the other in terms of architecture or various archaeological finds. Sometimes there is an archaeological overlap between successive eras. Tell Abu al-Dhahab is one of the distinctive archaeological sites in al-Hammar Marsh. It was among the goals of the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage within the Marshes Revitalization Project. This research sheds light on the results of archaeological excavations of the third season to continue to uncover the temple building and conduct a test probe between the main stone building and the temple building on the western side, and to complete the contour map of the site. I would like to point out here that through the archaeological excavations in the previous two seasons in Tell Abu al-Dhahab, a part of the residential neighborhood built of mud bricks was revealed to us, which included a group of rooms of varying dimensions, a number of archaeological floors, a large group of diverse archaeological finds, and a number of graves below the floor level in basin shapes made of pottery. The stone building was also revealed, as it included a large hall leading to a number of halls, rooms built with large, trimmed stones and plaster, and the walls of the main hall that were decorated with spiral columns.

### Introduction:

The two geological professors (Lees and Falcon) published an article in 1952 in the British Geographical Magazine stating that there is no historical evidence that the head of the Arabian Gulf was once far from its current limit and that the Tigris, Euphrates, and Karun rivers did not work to build a delta moving forward, but rather that all that the matter is that it is unloading its load of alluvial deposits in the southern section of the alluvial plain and that the basin occupied by this section has decreased and is continuing to decrease due to the weight of the alluvial deposits and due to subterranean (tectonic) movements followed by a decrease in that region without the water disappearing above the ground. They argued that there is a balance between the rate of subsidence and the amounts of alluvium that were deposited in the basin, which made the region maintain its natural condition without any change in its appearance. This is the basis for the current marshland area in southern Iraq and the head of the Arabian Gulf was in ancient times. Dry land and the subsidence that occurred as a result of (tectonic) movements covered the ruins of cities and villages that existed in those areas with the waters of the marshes and the coastal waters of the Gulf.

The land of the current Al-Himar Marsh was cultivated 1,300 years ago as dry land, then the Mesopotamians invaded around 629 AD. As a result, dams and irrigation projects were destroyed, as well as the reason for the rivers diverting from their original courses. The southern regions turned into vast swamps and marshes, and this marsh area remains in its condition to this day, despite the ar-



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rival of thousands of tons of alluvial deposits there every year, the theory that subsidence (tectonic) continues in the basin of this low plain is supported, which allows the process of alluvial deposits to continue without this leading to the basin rising above sea level<sup>(1)</sup>.

#### The site:

Tell Abu Al-Dhahab is located to the southeast of Suq Al-Shuyoukh District - Dhi Qar Governorate, and is considered one of the important and large archaeological sites in this region. It can be reached through three roads, the first of which is Al-Karmashiya Road, which is adjacent to a train railway

(Baghdad - Basra) It is a bumpy road, but recently, the railway company is raising and leveling this area to extend a second railway line parallel to the previous railway towards Basra Governorate, as this road is 38 km away from the center of the district. The road passes through the new Hawar area, where there are many buffalo breeders on both sides of the road. The second road is the Wafa River Road, which lies along the river. It is a bumpy, unpaved, and uninhabited road. It takes about an hour and a half to reach the site when traveling on this road. The third is the international road (Baghdad - Basra) after crossing the checkpoint and Tal Al-Lahm area, passing near the northern Sabah oil fields, and then through the village of (Al Rashid) until reaching the site, where the length of the road is 78 km.

Several archaeological hills are spread throughout this area. To the northwest of Tell Abu al-Dhahab lies a train station, and Tell al-Shuwayriyah, a large hill with a train track dividing it into two halves. It is bordered to the west, near the Wafa River, by Tal al-Jadida, and to the north-



east, and near the security road, lies a dirt dam. Tal Abu Rabab, south of the New Marsh, is 1 km away, and its level fluctuates from time to time<sup>(2)</sup> according to the amount of water entering it (Satellite photo A). This marsh has a second name (Al-Maleh Marsh), which is an extension of the Al-Himar Marsh. After the drying that the marsh area underwent, many archaeological sites appeared in the marsh areas in the governorates of (Basra - Maysan - Dhi Qar) that were submerged in marsh water<sup>(3)</sup>.

#### Site Shape:

The hill is approximately oval, with dimensions of (900) meters from east to west and (300) meters from north to south. It rises above the adjacent plain by (5.83) meters, and its highest point is at the stone construction (Photo No. 1). It is spread over the surface of the site. Among the pottery fragments were the bases and rims of jars, plates, and broken bricks measuring 33 x 33 x 7 cm and 34 x 17 x 10 cm, in addition to small molten blocks in large quantities on the southern and northern sides of the hill, along with small fragments of copper.

The site is penetrated from the northern side by the Karmashiya pit, heading from east to west, and another connected to it, extending from north to south, dividing the hill into two parts.

(Satellite photo B) The digging was done to great depths, and huge amounts of pottery fragments are scattered on the shoulders of these graves<sup>(4)</sup>. The process of digging these graves caused great damage to the archaeological site.

In the western part of the site, specifically in the southern highlands, the floor is covered with a thick layer of ash, and pieces of pink, black, and white stone are

scattered on the surface. As for the pottery shards, they do not differ in their general shape from the pottery discovered in previous excavations, although there is a difference in some pottery shards with gray clay. Many traversed pottery basin graves close to the surface (Photo No. 2) and bricks measuring (25 x 16 x 6) cm were seen.

#### Excavations:

Excavations in the previous two seasons at Tell Abu al-Dhahab, which were concentrated at the highest point of the hill, revealed the central building, which is a rectangular building that includes the central courtyard, which is characterized by spiral columns and some large rooms. This building is built with limestone and the binding material plaster (Photo No. 3). Then, it expanded towards the east. Excavations revealed a building decorated with architectural elements such as those that characterize it.

The ancient Iraqi temples include the element of the entrances along with the entrances that decorate the external walls, especially the southern wall. Additionally, the entrances to the southern rooms correspond with one line, the thickness of the walls, the display of a number of niches, and the use of the method of covering the faces of the walls and decorating them with bricks, leading to us calling this the temple building (plan the temple).

The excavation work plan that was drawn up for the third season of 2013 in Tell Abu Al-Dhahab, and given the short time for this season, the work was focused as shown below:

1- Continue to uncover the point of the temple towards the north and northeast and complete excavations in the rooms in which excavations were not completed in previous seasons.



2- Make a contour map of the western part of Tell Abu Al-Dhahab.

3- Opening a test probe on the southern side, at the point where the temple walls meet with the stone-built building unit, to determine the synchronization of the builders.

Based on Administrative Order No. 3/13337 dated 8/5/2013, the Tal Abu Al-Dhahab excavation mission<sup>(5)</sup>, was formed. The mission began its work at the site<sup>(6)</sup> on 8/27/2013. We will discuss our excavation work according to the work plan listed above in some detail:

#### Temple point:

At the beginning of the excavations, the work was directed to cleaning and preparing the excavation points from the accumulated dust from the previous season. Some important rooms, including the preserved part of room 16, are 11.70 meters long, and to start the implementation of the excavation plan for this season and continue excavations in the northern and northeastern sides of the temple.

Given the importance of the discovered rooms and the large number of archaeological finds discovered in each room, we will talk about each room separately. A building of this size and this quantity of archaeological finds indicates the importance of the region and the density of its population in that period.

#### Hall No. 16:-

Located within the contour square (q-r8-9), excavations in this hall revealed large collections of archaeological pottery finds and pottery fragments, along with two large vessels next to the eastern wall. The northern wall of the room was determined to be (3.30) m thick so that the length of the hall would be (22.20) m and width (5.50) m, which extends north



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and is considered one of the distinctive and rare rooms in terms of area and archaeological finds, which are spread densely at the floor level. At the level of the first floor of the first floor, specifically at the northwest corner of the hall, a large amount of ash was revealed, 15 cm thick, interspersed with pottery fragments, pieces of animal bones, and fish bones, along with a large number of charred date pits and a spindle disk. Also revealed at this point was a furnace with a diameter of 50 cm. At the level of the first floor, with an oval jar adjacent to it at the same corner. Near the northern wall, he uncovered a group of adjacent archaeological finds, represented by large, oval-shaped jars with wide rims, in addition to small jars and plates. Due to the large area of this room and its abundance of pottery, the mission was keen to keep it in its place for documentation and use, and then it would be removed (Photo No. 4). With the continuation of excavation work at the level of the second floor of the same layer, a second oven was revealed adjacent to the previous oven (Photo No. 5), at a depth of 1 m above the surface, with a diameter of 70 cm, and 30 cm below the level of the first oven. At the same level, other groups of pottery were revealed that did not differ in their shape and clay. According to the previous report, near the oven, quantities of charred date pits were also revealed (Photo No. 6), which may have been used as fuel, along with the presence of animal and fish bones. What is noticeable about the floors of this room is that they descend in level from the northern and southern sides towards the center of the room, becoming deeper at this point, and they are floors smeared with clay. At the level of the second floor of the first floor and next to the western



wall (Photo No. 7), he revealed a cylindrical seal made of light red stone and some small and large plates, and near it, he revealed small fragments of brick glazed in light yellow. This hall has three entrances. The first is from the south side, leading to Room No. 15, and is 1.30 m wide. The second is a closed entrance at the westernmost wall to the south, with a width of 1.10 m. It leads to Room 10. It has a threshold built of bricks, and a conical plate is used as a hook for the door. The third entrance leads to a room No.18 on the northern side. The western wall of the hall, the southern part of which is visible, and near the entrance, the wall is covered with two rows of bricks measuring 30 x 20 x 8 cm. This covering appeared, in contrast to the previous rooms, which extended in the same direction below the level of the second floor and in the form of inlets and inlets. The largest part of the remaining wall was not revealed except by descending next to the wall until the level of the second floor of the first floor, perhaps the upper part was removed in this area because it was encroached on at the time. This building extends in one straight line from Room No. 7 and Room No. 15 to Room No. 16. Near the western brick wall, he revealed a grinder made of sandstone, oval in shape, 70 cm long and 34 cm wide. It was used for grinding grains, but it was broken into two halves. Near it, he revealed two small shards that were also used for the same function, all of them at the level of the first floor of the first layer (Photo No. 8). ).

In Room 16, six-floor levels were determined at the northeastern corner by digging a small probe with dimensions of 1 x 1 m and measuring these levels to the surface of the site (Figure 2), which are as follows: -

1st Level (0.70)M

2nd Level (1)M

3th Level (1,29)M

4th Level (1,45)M

5th Level (1,53)M

6th Level (1,67)M

All of these floors are covered with ash, and this indicates renovations and continuous habitation. These floors are interspersed with ash, pottery fragments, and the bones of terrestrial animals. The thickness of the ash was different from the other floors, as it reached 7 cm. The sixth floor is a clay floor, and on its level, a small jar with a small protruding solid base and fragments of pottery plates were found. Part of this floor was broken and descended, as burials differed on this floor. It consisted of blocks of clay and clean, unburned dirt, devoid of pottery fragments. As for the walls, It keeps coming down.

#### Room No. 7:-

It falls within the contour box (Q-11-12). It is a room approximately square in shape, 6.50 meters long and 6 meters wide. It has an entrance at the western wall overlooking the main courtyard of the temple. This entrance has a door arch made of stone at the level of the second floor of the first floor. As for the threshold of the entrance, it is a thick layer of plaster. It goes back to the first floor, (Photo No. 9). The second floor is from the first layer, so it is at a depth of 80 cm. The excavation continued in this room and revealed the third floor made of mud, along with a large group of pottery, concentrated in the middle of the room at the level of this floor, and the walls of the room continued to descend. As for the mud that was uncovered on the floor of the room,



it is a wall that together is square, minus a side, and also continues to descend. The size of the brick is 30 x 20 x 10 cm. All of the discovered pottery is located at the level of the third floor (Photo No. 10). Some of the clay blocks that cover the pottery have traces of reeds, papyrus, and mats, and they are remnants of the fallen ceiling inside the room. After removing the archaeological finds, a corridor consisting of two rows of bricks measuring (30 x 20 x 8) cm was revealed extending from the western entrance of the room towards the eastern entrance (Photo No. 11). This room has another entrance that leads to Hall 14, located at the eastern wall, its width (1.80) m. Due to the large number of archaeological finds at the level of the third floor of the first layer, it was discovered completely shattered and the pottery fragments mixed together. Excavation work in this room revealed two rows of bricks adjacent to the western wall, the foundations of which remained and the upper part removed, and that these bricks cover the wall from this side, as is the case with all the rooms that share this wall, such as rooms 15 and 16.

#### **Hall No. 14:-**

It is a large rectangular hall located within the two contour squares (R - S - 11 - 12). It is entered through the eastern entrance of Room 7 and another entrance linking it to Room No. 13 from the east. It was revealed through excavation work that the burial of this room consists of blocks of pure clay spread throughout the hall, while the pottery fragments are very few. After continuing the excavation, it was revealed that a brick wall extends from the western wall towards the east, noting that this wall goes back to the first floor. The evidence is that the wall stands



at the level of the western wall and that the main walls of the hall continue to descend. In this hall, he uncovered a rectangular bench built of brick measuring (30 x 20 x 8) cm, and plaster was used as a binding material (Photo No. 12). The bench is located near the eastern entrance, which leads to room No. 13 in the middle. It is 1.65 m long, 1.10 m wide, and 1 m high. The bench has a staircase consisting of three steps, making its shape similar to the pulpit. Excavation continues for the purpose of fully revealing the bench, revealing a conical plate in front of it. A small fruit stand, and next to it to the south, a medium-sized cylindrical jar was revealed, as well as a tar basket with traces of matting on it. At the northern wall, a niche 10 cm deep and 1 m long was revealed, plastered with plaster (Photo No. 13).

From what was revealed in rooms 7 and 14, it can be said that they are among the important and sacred rooms. In room 14, the bench or pulpit was used in the first and second floors. It is possible that this bench is the base of a statue of the god worshiped in this location, due to the large size of the bench. It indicates that the statue of the god may have been of a large size, or it may have been used as a pulpit. All of these ideas are opinions associated with the continuation of digging and excavation in this hall, with other evidence of the importance of this hall being the paved corridor in Hall 7, which consists of two rows of bricks leading to the entrance, which leads to Room 14, noting that the entrances are located on one axis.

#### **Hall No. 18:-**

It is located within the two contour squares (R-S-8-9). It is one of the large and important rooms. Its borders were re-



vealed, and it is parallel in its extension to Room No. 16, with a length of 25.20 m and a width of 5 m. Through scraping and descending with the walls, at a depth of 20 cm, a large number of archaeological finds were revealed in the southern part of this hall (Photo No. 14). Due to the length of this room and its abundance of archaeological finds, the room was divided into several squares, each square 4 meters long, and descended to floor level. He uncovered a large storage jar next to the southern wall surrounded by large groups of pottery, oval in shape and in different positions, in addition to various other groups spread throughout this square, including a large funnel with small jars, and a small scraper with a curved top made of copper. All these pottery are located on the level of the first floor, covered with ash, revealing a quantity of charred date pits at a depth of 1 meter above the level of the surface of the hill. At the level of this floor and next to the eastern wall, half of its glazed bricks were revealed in yellow and slightly greenish color (Photo No. 15). In the burial of the room and after the expansion six small jars with spherical bodies were found, a copper ring, a broken animal tusk, and a quantity of broken animal bones. A large, oval-shaped storage jar was found in the middle of the room. He identified the northern wall of this room, which is parallel to the wall of room 16. He revealed at floor level a shard of brick interspersed with circular openings and in other shards rectangular openings. He revealed a similar model in Tal Asmar, made on a large piece of brick, in addition to its use in many places in the present. Among the heritage buildings, especially in the city of Erbil, wood was used, interspersed with holes used as windows<sup>(7)</sup>.

Rooms 16 and 18 are similar in terms of area, the thickness of the walls, and even the shape of the floors. At the edges, the level of the first floor is 1 m, and 1.5 m in the middle, because the floor slopes towards the center on both sides, and the floor is completely covered with a layer of ash that includes many pottery fragments and a group of Animal bones and a collection of pottery were uncovered, including small jars, most of which were missing the rims of the spouts, revealing many dishes. In the middle of the hall, a large, bell-shaped funnel was revealed, all of its parts perforated at the small base, and prominent hoops running around it on the body. In the northeastern corner of the room, large, smashed jars were found.

Large amounts of dust were removed, and the mission's opinion was to keep all the antiquities that were uncovered until their full excavation was completed, to come up with a clear picture of the nature of these rooms and their proper use. The work was hard, as the amount of dust removed from room 18 was approximately (168.75) m<sup>3</sup>, and this is a large amount for one room. For this reason, the large area of this hall and the previous one, 16, work on them took a long time<sup>(8)</sup>. (Photo No. 16).

#### Hall No. 19:-

It lies within the contour box (S-8 - 9). It is one of the large halls, which is no less important, in size, and abundance of archaeological finds discovered in it than rooms 16 and 18, in addition to the fact that it is parallel to them. The boundaries of this hall were revealed after removing a layer of dust 30 cm thick, with a length of 20.25 m and a width of 5.90 m. The hall was divided into several squares with a length of 4 m. At a depth not far away,

the craters of jars were revealed next to the southern wall. Under these jars, a pebble was revealed large, almost oval-shaped, with a large collection of pottery that included jars and plates of various sizes and shapes.

(Photo No. 17). Among the finds were the remains of cylindrical shapes, which were baskets, and they were coated with bitumen, and this is the remaining material, with the diameter of the largest being 52 cm and a second diameter of 42 cm (Photo No. 18). He revealed two bricks.

It measures 33 x 33 x 5 cm, while the second one measures 30 x 20 x 8 cm. The floor of this room is covered with ash, and thus it resembles the floors of the previous rooms, which belong to the first floor. The depth of the floor on the southern side is 70 cm, and then it slopes towards the center of the room significantly from the northern and southern sides, so that its level in the middle becomes 1.60 meters. The excavation work was very difficult due to the moisture in the soil as a result of heavy rains in the area in the previous days. Next to the western wall, he uncovered a large, cylindrical vessel used to store foodstuffs. It has a wide mouth with a diameter of 64 cm and a wide rim. The body has prominent hoops running around it, while the base is ring-shaped (Photo No. 20). In the burial of this room, in the middle of it, broken bricks were found containing circular holes in a pattern revealed in room 18, where together they form a small window.

#### **Room No. 10:-**

It is one of the rooms, a small part of which was revealed in the previous season, and work on it was not completed at the time, which required the mission to reveal it completely. It is located with-



in the contour square (Q-9), and it turns out that it is parallel to Hall 16 from the western side, but not its size. Excavations in this room revealed some shattered pottery, especially plates, in the burial of the room. One of them had red clay upside down on its mouth, containing fragments of animal bones inside it. The burial of the room consisted of blocks of pure clay, the same of which was discovered in several other rooms. Expose the floor at a depth of 80 cm from the surface. The room is 9.50 meters long and 4.50 meters wide. The room has an entrance at the southern side overlooking the central courtyard of the temple, with a width of 1.40 meters, and a second entrance closed with bricks on the eastern wall that leads to Room 16. The western wall contains from the inside a corridor 2.25 m long and 20 cm wide, as well as another corridor at the southern wall, which is part of several corridors extending along this main northern wall of the courtyard, which is shared with the adjacent rooms 10 and 11, in which these corridors and entrances are located. As for the eastern wall, a long entrance was displayed in it 3.60 m long and 1 m wide. The floor of this room is covered with mud, and at the bottom, at a depth of 10 cm, a layer of fine sand mixed with many shells and snails was revealed.

#### **Room No. 21:-**

It is located within the contour square (P-Q - 7 - 8) to the north of Room No. 10 and parallel to Room No. 16 from the northern side (Photo No. 21). After scraping off the upper layer and removing the dust, its walls were determined, and they are approximately the same measurements as the previous room, No. 10. At the eastern wall there is a 1-meter-deep bench built with bricks measuring (30 x



18 x 7 cm). Connecting to this building is a wall that extends parallel to the northern wall of the room and faces toward the west, outside the borders. This room was buried in a thick layer of ash, with some archaeological finds, along with a large group of animal bones, an animal doll, and a piece of bone sewn with a group of plates and small jars, in addition to a small parchment shard with cuneiform writing on it. He revealed the level of the first floor of the first layer at a depth of 50 cm. At its level and near the southwestern corner, he revealed a rectangular ball used for cooking, 2 m long and 1.5 m wide, interspersed with two 25 cm wide basins that were covered with ash (Photo No. 22).

#### The Sensor:-

As part of the excavation work plan for this season in Tel Abu al-Dhahab, a probe was opened at the southern side of the point where the temple building meets the main building (the stone building) to determine the relationship between the two buildings and determine the historical period for both (Photo No. 23). The sensor is located within the contour box (M-14). Part of the contour square was identified, which includes part of the external wall of the temple and part of the external stone building wall, measuring 5 x 5 m. Our work on the probe achieved its purpose and reached new facts. After cleaning the surface of the probe and starting excavation work, the main southern wall of the stone building was uncovered. Large rectangular stone blocks were used in its construction, measuring between 35 and 65 cm in length. A wall built of brick measuring 27 x 20 x 7 cm and another measuring 30 x 20 x 8 cm was revealed. The wall was 1.05 m and

3 m long. It extends to the south, but it is broken due to encroachments. With the continuation of excavation, it revealed an extension of this wall, which extends to the west, outside the western limit of the probe. This wall stops at

The stone wall of the main building, with a gap of 10 cm between them (Photo No.24) is an evidence that the stone building is older than the temple building. The walls of the other building units on the southern side, in addition to the brick wall, have reached their end at a depth of 3.50 m. As for the built-up wall with the stone, it continued to descend to a depth of 5 m, where we were unable to continue exploration due to the appearance of groundwater. This probe revealed eight levels of floors, including mud floors and other plasters, which are as follows:

The first floor: The level of this floor was revealed at a depth of 20 cm. It is 10 cm thick and begins to slope slightly towards the south. The burial includes quantities of broken stone and brick, along with broken pottery. The level of this floor is the same as the floor discovered in the first season of stone construction.

The second floor: It was discovered at a depth of 90 cm from the level of the first floor from the north side, and it slopes south to a depth of 1.5 m. It is a clay floor topped with a layer of fine sand, interspersed with quantities of shells and snails. This burial resembles the burial found in the courtyard and rooms of the stone building.

The third floor: It is a plaster floor that was uncovered at a depth of 60 cm from the previous one. It slopes south to become more than 1 m. It is topped with a layer of pure clay blocks and ends at the

southern wall, which is built with bricks.

The fourth floor: It is a plaster floor on which pottery and brick fragments rest, and it is at a depth of 45 cm from the third floor.

The fifth floor: It was discovered at a depth of 55 cm from the previous one. It is a plaster layer 3 cm thick, and the burial covering is made up of blocks of pure clay.

The sixth floor: It was discovered at a depth of 40 cm from the fifth floor and at a depth of 3.25 m from the surface. It is a plaster floor with a thickness of 7 cm. Part of this floor was broken at the northwestern corner and it was found that the stone wall continues to descend.

The seventh floor: As the probe continued to descend, at a depth of 4.50 meters, this floor was revealed to be covered with plaster, and at a depth of 1 meter, above the previous floor, topped with sand similar to beach sand. At this level, a pottery shard of a small jar with a small protruding base, solid and unstable, was revealed (Photo No. 25).

The eighth floor: At a depth of 5 m, a plaster floor level was revealed. At this level, groundwater began to appear, becoming an obstacle to work, which forced us to stop at this level (Photo No. 26).

I would like to point out here that the excavation work at the probe point has given us some answers to questions that were constantly being asked, namely (see sensor section):

1- The discovery of some archaeological finds and pottery fragments at the level of the floors is evidence that settlement at the site and this point continued from the same time period of the ancient Babylonian era. The evidence is that the shapes of the pottery pieces did not differ in the site or the temple



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or in point No. 2, where the excavation work was carried out. It is in the first season.

2- That the level of the walls in the probe stood at the border of the southern outer stone wall of the stone building, with a gap separating them by 10 cm, is evidence that the stone building is the oldest temple building preserved so far.

3- The discovery of many plaster floors, especially on the first floors, is further evidence that the stone building is the oldest to date.

### Contour map:

As part of the excavation plan for this season at Tell Abu al-Dhahab, a contour map of the western part of the site was made, as there was a trowel as shown in (aerial photo A-B) and (contour map), which divided the archaeological site into two parts, eastern and western, which caused great damage to the site. This part of the site is the largest area of the eastern part. It was interconnected with squares measuring 10 x 10 meters and linked to the previous map of the eastern part. It was found that the hill takes an oval shape with an extension of a steep rise from the southern side and is surrounded by flat lands on which many pottery shards are spread. The area is (103) dunums, and its highest point is (4.5 meters). The pottery shards do not differ in shape from the archaeological finds in the eastern part, with the presence of copper shards. The southern heights of the hill are covered with a thick layer of ash. Many pieces of pink stone and others in black and white are spread across the surface of the site. As for the brick pieces, they are of different sizes, including 25 x 16 x 6 cm. Among the surface finds are fragments of pottery with gray clay, as well as the presence of large stone pieces and some basin-shaped pottery graves (Photo No. 2).



### Archaeological finds:

Despite the short period of the excavation season for this season, the excavations at Tell Abu Al-Dhahab and for the third season, specifically at the temple point, revealed large groups of archaeological finds, the largest percentage of which is pottery of various sizes and shapes. The rest are some cylinder seals, copper pieces, and some scattered finds. Detection of archaeological finds at the temple point and within the first layer.

### The Jars:

The jars take first place among the pottery discovered this season, which varied in shapes and sizes, including oval jars.

(Photo No. 32, Fig. No. 3 A,B,C) These jars are characterized by wide mouths, the neck is short or somewhat long, and the edge of the mouth is wide or thick, interspersed with sunken grooves or simple grooves, some of which reach six grooves at the shoulder. This is a feature that distinguishes all jars, whether they are large or small, while the bases of large jars are convex. The jars are distinguished by their brown clay, and some of them are red. All the pottery was devoid of decoration and color, except for the presence of some simple incisions made on the bodies of three of the large jars, including an inscription in the shape of a spike with a triangular base bearing the number (720), and other incisions made with a sharp tool on the body of the jar numbered (609), representing an incomprehensible shape. It consists of wavy lines and two other lines whose end resembles a head and a hemispherical-shaped line. On one of the jars, he wrote two verses (Fig. No.4).

Other types include a large group of small jars that are bulbous or pear-shaped, have a long neck and a wide mouth, and

are characterized by a small, prominent base, or they have a circular base that is flat or has a slight concavity, and they are also characterized by the presence of a light groove or a prominent collar at the top of the shoulder. Due to the thin section of the nozzle and neck, it was revealed that most of them were missing completely or partially (Photo No. 33, Fig.No. 5 A,B).

### Spherical jars:

This type of jar was characterized by a wide mouth and a thick, rounded rim with convex bases. The neck was short, and the bottom of the rim was decorated with grooves or a stem that ran around the body. These jars are in large and medium sizes. One of these jars has a wide rim. The function of using this type of jar is for cooking, as evidenced by the presence of traces of burning at the base area, as in the jar bearing the field number (585), which is medium in size and is approximately the same size. One of the distinctive jars is the one bearing the number (665), as two protrusions are facing each other at the edge of the crater (Photo No. 34 A,B, Fig. No. 6).

### Cylindrical jars:

They are medium-sized jars, ranging in height from 28 to 33 cm. They are almost cylindrical and flow towards a convex base. They are characterized by a long neck, a wide mouth, and a wide rim interspersed with sunken grooves around which most of these jars are made of red clay (Photo No. 35, Fig.No. 7).

### Bell shapes:

In this season and previous seasons, a large group of this type of utensils was uncovered, and it seems that their discovery was concentrated in the temple area only, as they were not found in Point No.



2, which was worked on in the first season, and this indicates that their use was limited to the temple, given The presence of a small hole at the protruding circular base indicates that it was used as a funnel for pouring liquids, noting that its trace was attached to the large oval-shaped jars, especially in the halls used for storage in the temple (Photo No. 36). The number of vessels discovered this season reached seven, and they were distinguished by their varying sizes, with a wide mouth and a wide rim, and on the body were multiple sunken grooves or prominent hoops running around it. The largest funnel holds the number (717), with a height of 39 cm and a diameter of the nozzle of 34.5 cm. It was discovered in good condition at the level of the first floor from the first floor and approximately in the middle of room No. 18 (Photo No. 37, Fig.No. 8).

#### Plates:

A group of plates of varying sizes and shapes were revealed, accompanied by groups of jars at the point of the temple and the level of the floors belonging to the first floor. These plates were characterized by a conical shape, with a wide mouth, and the rim was interspersed with a stem that revolved around it, while the base was circular and flat (Photo No. 27, Fig. No. 1 A,B). It also revealed many small cone-shaped dishes. One of the distinctive plates is the plate bearing the field number (588). The difference is at the top of the body, where a deep stem intersects it, and the edge is wide and slanted outward (Photo No. 28). Another plate similar to the previous one bears the number (735). The difference is that this plate has a base, toroid in shape. Among the largest plates is the one bearing the



number (442), as it is distinguished by its thick rim and is interspersed with three recessed wheels around which the plate revolves with red clay. The diameter of the crater is 29.6 cm and its height is 21.8 cm (Photo No. 29). Among the small plates is the plate bearing the number (650), which is a hemispherical plate with green clay, with a diameter of 9 cm and a height of 4 cm (Photo No. 30). In one of the dishes, which bore the number 426, there was a discovery of brown-colored materials inside. A sample of this material was taken for analysis and to determine its nature. It was discovered at the level of the third floor of the first floor, in the middle of room No. 7, with a group of jars.

#### Cups:

He revealed a small number of medium-sized cups with almost cylindrical shapes and wide mouths. The base is circular and flat, and in the middle of the body there is a groove or grooves running around it (Photo No. 31, Fig. No. 2). Among the distinctive cups is the one bearing the field number (443). It is a small, conical cup with a wide mouth and a thin rim slanting outward. The base is circular in shape, prominent and flat, and has a brownish-reddish tint.

#### Various pottery:

He uncovered a group of various pottery finds that included a cylindrical vessel with a wide mouth, a thick rim interspersed with a stem, and a large, flat circular base (Fig. No. 9), in addition to two pottery covers, one of which was circular in shape and had a loop in the middle, and another small one with a rectangular shape, one side of which was curved and with a loop in the middle. The highest is used for lamb with red clay. He also revealed a number of supports or



holders for jars, some of which are small and some of medium size. They are almost cylindrical in shape with wide rims. The smallest size of the jar holder is 6 cm high and the spout measures 10.7 cm (Fig. No. 10). In room No. 18 and next to the eastern wall, a fragment of brick glazed in yellow was also revealed.

#### Metals:

The Tell Abu Al-Dhahab site is considered one of the sites rich in metals, especially copper. In the first season, especially at excavation point No. 2, large aggregates of various shapes were uncovered. However, this season, at the temple point, a few pieces of copper were revealed. In room 16, a 4-meter scraper was found and a poison with a sharp beginning and a curved end. Two copper nails with a triangular cross-section were found in the same room (Fig.No. 11). In Room No. 19, a spiral-shaped copper ring was found under the jars near the southern wall. A helical copper ring was also revealed under the jars in Room No. 18. Among the superficial artifacts are a copper piece with an incomplete, curved shape, 11 cm long and 2 cm thick, a gold earring with a circular shape, and some thin, irregularly shaped, small-sized gold pieces also made of gold.

#### Cylinder seals:

Seals themselves are always important in terms of shape and inscriptions, evidence of trust, and the authenticity of the document in many economic transactions. The seal is a representative of identity and a means of verification to control and guarantee the most important transactions. In the Mesopotamian civilization, the written document and the seal formed a bond of control and trust that remained in effect for thousands of years<sup>(9)</sup>. Through

the scenes of cylinder seals, it has provided us with many topics about daily life, including religious and animal scenes, in addition to people's clothing, their gatherings, and many other topics. Three cylinder seals were found this season made of stone. The first cylinder seal is dark red in color and is engraved with a scene of a person sitting on a chair with four lines of writing in front of it. It was found in Room No. 16, and the second seal bears the number (754) representing a religious scene on the right side. A standing person holds an ax in his right hand and the other hand is pressed to his chest, with the symbol of a plow in front of him. Another person may be a god or someone of religious rank wearing a long dress. His left hand is pressed to his chest and he holds an indistinct object in his right hand. In front of him stands a person wearing a military uniform, wearing short overalls, something in between, and a small naked woman. On the third seal, a scene was engraved on it, representing, from the right, a rectangular shape resembling a building. Its front, resembling a tree, had its ends represented in the form of circles, and in front of it was a standing woman, with the right hand raised toward the tree, wearing a long dress. A small part of the seal was missing and 3 cm long. The other seal is made of transparent white stone and is not made (Photo No. 38).

#### Animal bones:

The discovery of animal bones in the archaeological site enables specialists in this field to know the economic situation, trade-in and exchange of animals, and this, like pottery, enables us to determine the time period. Hundreds of thousands of years ago, they relied on hunting, and after killing the animal, they made use



of the meat, skin, horns, and even bones and used them in their daily lives to make some tools. Knowing the type of animal is very easy, but determining its type is difficult for the other type. This is done by studying (the head, teeth, limbs, ends of bones, and spine).

Excavations at Tell Abu Al-Dhahab this season revealed a large group of animal bones, including a large bone fragment representing an incomplete hip joint with a length of 9.4 cm. It was uncovered along with other pieces at the level of the first floor of the first floor of Room 16, and another bone representing part It consists of a leg and a bone representing part of an animal's leg with a pointed end. A small bone represents the vertebra of a specific animal, and the teeth of a large animal, which are double teeth. Among these bones is a complete tusk belonging to a small pig<sup>(10)</sup> and a large, curved tusk with two sharp ends. He also revealed some snails and shells, including a white shell with dark lines in the form of bands. Among the artifacts discovered that were made of bone was a small stitch, 6 cm long and 5 mm thick. Among the artistic pieces that were distinguished by their mastery of decoration was a bone fragment of an animal's leg, 16 cm long, on which was engraved the shape of a woman. The eyes were represented by small, window holes, while the eyebrows and mouth were grooves. The upper part of the head is like the hair within a frame interspersed with intersecting lines, in addition to the hair on the backside. As for the middle of the body and the lower part, it is decorated in the form of a frieze in the form of intersecting grooves. This piece was revealed at the level of the first floor with the groups of jars in the room. No.19 parts of which are missing and



broken into several pieces. Cleaning and maintenance work has been completed at the mission headquarters (Photo No. 39, Fig.No. 12).

#### Various finds:

A fragment of a clay inscription with cuneiform writing and small marks was revealed. It was found at the level of the first floor of the first floor and next to the western wall of Room 21. After the heavy rain that fell on the site, it revealed to us some surface artifacts that included four black weight stones with a small weight duck (Fig.No. 13), in addition to various beads, along with the head of an animal puppet. Among the distinctive archaeological finds were pieces. Made of brick, interspersed with holes, some circular and some rectangular

However, unfortunately, it is incomplete, as it was intended to be used as windows in buildings, as they rarely appear in archaeological sites. Through excavations carried out by the Oriental Institute in Chicago in Tel Asmar in the year 1932-1933, specifically in (private houses), a window similar to the one we mentioned was revealed, interspersed with nine circular holes. This type of window has been used until now, as it can be seen in heritage houses in Iraq, especially in the city of Erbil<sup>(11)</sup>, and the difference is the use of wood in its manufacture (Fig. No. 14).

#### Conclusions:

This season's excavations at Tell Abu al-Dhahab, specifically at the excavation point and the test probe point (between the stone building and the temple building on the southern side), revealed a number of important conclusions that can be summarized in the following points:

1-Through excavation work this season and previous seasons, it was revealed



at this point that it is a temple building through the availability of architectural elements, which are distinguished by the use of the entrances and entrances in the external wall on the southern side and their use also in the walls of some of the interior rooms. As well as the entrances, which are located on one axis, in addition to the presence of the central courtyard, the entrances of which are distributed on the southern, eastern and northern wings. There were a number of large benches in Room No. 6 built with mud in the previous two seasons. However, in this season, a distinctive bench was revealed, built with bricks and plaster was used in its mortar. It has a staircase consisting of three steps in Room No. 14, and it is likely a base of a large statue, as well as the presence of a number of Niches are distributed in some rooms of the temple. The mission believes that this temple will be one of the largest temples if completed in Wadi Mesopotamia.

2-The site dates back to the ancient Babylonian era, based on the archaeological finds discovered so far.

3-Three very large rooms were revealed in terms of area and archaeological finds, each one measuring 22.5 meters in length and 5.5 meters in width. They are rare in terms of the abundance of archaeological finds, especially pottery, of varying sizes. This indicates that there are special rooms in the temple to store food materials, including liquids. Which are returned to the temple or are gifts, and this indicates that the economic reality of the population was distinct.

4-Choosing the probe point on the southern side of the exterior and at the point where the temple building meets the stone building showed that the last build-

ing wall continues to descend to a depth of 5 m and is built with stone material. At this depth, groundwater began to appear. As for the wall built with bricks, it stops at the level of the stone wall with the presence of A separator with a width of 10 cm and ends at a depth of 3.5 m. In light of these data and evidence, it can be said that the stone building is considered the oldest in relation to the temple building. Eight levels of floors have been identified, all of which go back to the first level. This is clear evidence that denies all opinions that state that this building dates back to more recent periods.

5-By conducting a survey of the western part of the hill and viewing many diverse archaeological finds, indications that the site is rich in archaeological finds are clear, especially after the rainfall and the appearance of archaeological finds (seals, gold pieces, weight stones, and various other archaeological finds).

#### **Suggestions:-**

The mission came up with a number of important proposals that must be taken into consideration seriously and studied well for the benefit of this important archaeological site. It can be summarized in the following points:-

1. Continuing archaeological excavations at Tell Abu al-Dhahab, uncovering the entire temple building, and opening an excavation point in the western part of the site to know the rest of the layers and cultural roles of the site.

2. Study the issue of the shoulders of the trowels, because the excavation in them has reached deep levels, which greatly harmed the archaeological site, and work on sifting them because they contain many archaeological finds and preparing a study of them.





3. Increasing the financial allocation for excavation because the site is very difficult in terms of architectural overlap and requires opening other points for work. An example of this is opening a large probe with dimensions of 20 x 20 meters to reach the virgin land, and this in itself requires a large number of workers and diggers with work equipment.

4. Working to preserve the preserved buildings, especially the spiral columns that were discovered in the walls overlooking the central courtyard of the stone building, either by maintaining them as quickly as possible or by working on roofing them to protect them from natural factors, as is the case in many important archaeological sites that were roofed in many places. From the countries of the world, knowing that our location is no less important, we have our first experience in roofing the archaeological sites in Tel Abu Al-Dhahab.

5. Due to the location of Tell Abu al-Dhahab in a remote area, we often faced difficulty in reaching it due to rain, which forced us to walk through mud to reach the site (Photo No. 40). Therefore, in the future, the mission will need to be equipped with a modern car.

#### Endnotes

1-Dr. Sousa, Ahmed (The history of the Mesopotamian civilization in light of agricultural irrigation projects, archaeological finds, and historical sources), vol. 1, p. 85.

2-This statement confirms what the people of the region said, that Tel Abu al-Dhahab was completely submerged, and what appeared to be part of the summit, and they used to move around in this area with their boats in previous periods.

3-This is evidence that the area of the

marshes in ancient times was not this large, and many settlements were spread throughout it.

4-The goal of the process of draining the marshes is to control the opponents of the former regime, who took the marsh area as their refuge, so they worked to dig many graveyards in the 1980s, reclaim the lands, and distribute them to the tribal sheikhs for cultivation.

5-The mission consists of Messrs. Muhammad Saleh Attiya (head of the mission) and the membership of Ali Nasser Marza - Amer Abdel Razzaq - Adel Shahid Fadal - Suhail Jaloub Abbas - Youssef Abbas Jassim (administrative) - Laith Talib Khazal (accountant).

6-After we arrived at the site, it became clear that it had been trespassed at point No. 2 by two people riding a motorcycle, the marks of which were visible. Specifically, in the hall that precedes the tomb hall, they believe that they will find archaeological pieces. Using a pick and screwdriver, they break the plaster floor with... Some of the brick walls were vandalized. Even the tent was not spared, as they vandalized the vaulted sewers, believing them to be graves. These violations occur because the site is located in a remote area and is not guarded.

7-See the source oic - 17 Excavations of the Oriental Institute in Iraq, for the season 1932-1933, p. 14.

8-On the night of the tenth of November, very heavy rain fell that lasted about half an hour, causing the area surrounding Tell Abu al-Dhahab to sink for more than half a meter, making the area a large swamp, which in turn led to the entire excavation drowning, and the discovered rooms became water tanks due to... The direction of rain torrents towards the excavation



area. Because of these rains, the process of reaching the site has become very difficult, even for workers, walking and penetrating the area confined between the Wafa River and the railway and from there to the site, and the distance is estimated at more than 1500 meters. Because of these conditions and the difficulty of arriving food and other materials, and completing the excavation work plan for this season on time, which required the mission to decide to reside on the site, continue the excavation work, and empty the excavation of rainwater. Note that the water level of the northern excavation has risen greatly, which has negatively affected the excavation through groundwater that appears after every water withdrawal from the halls. (A picture showing the drowning of the excavation work, Picture No. 19)

9-Daniel T. Potts, *Mesopotamian Civilization - Material Foundations*, p. 363.

10-The mission worked to open a special record containing all the finds of these bones, their descriptions and measurements, in addition to drawing them and delivering them to the museum to be studied in the future by specialists in this field

11-Iraq Excavation of Oriental Institute(1932-1933) page 14

#### References:

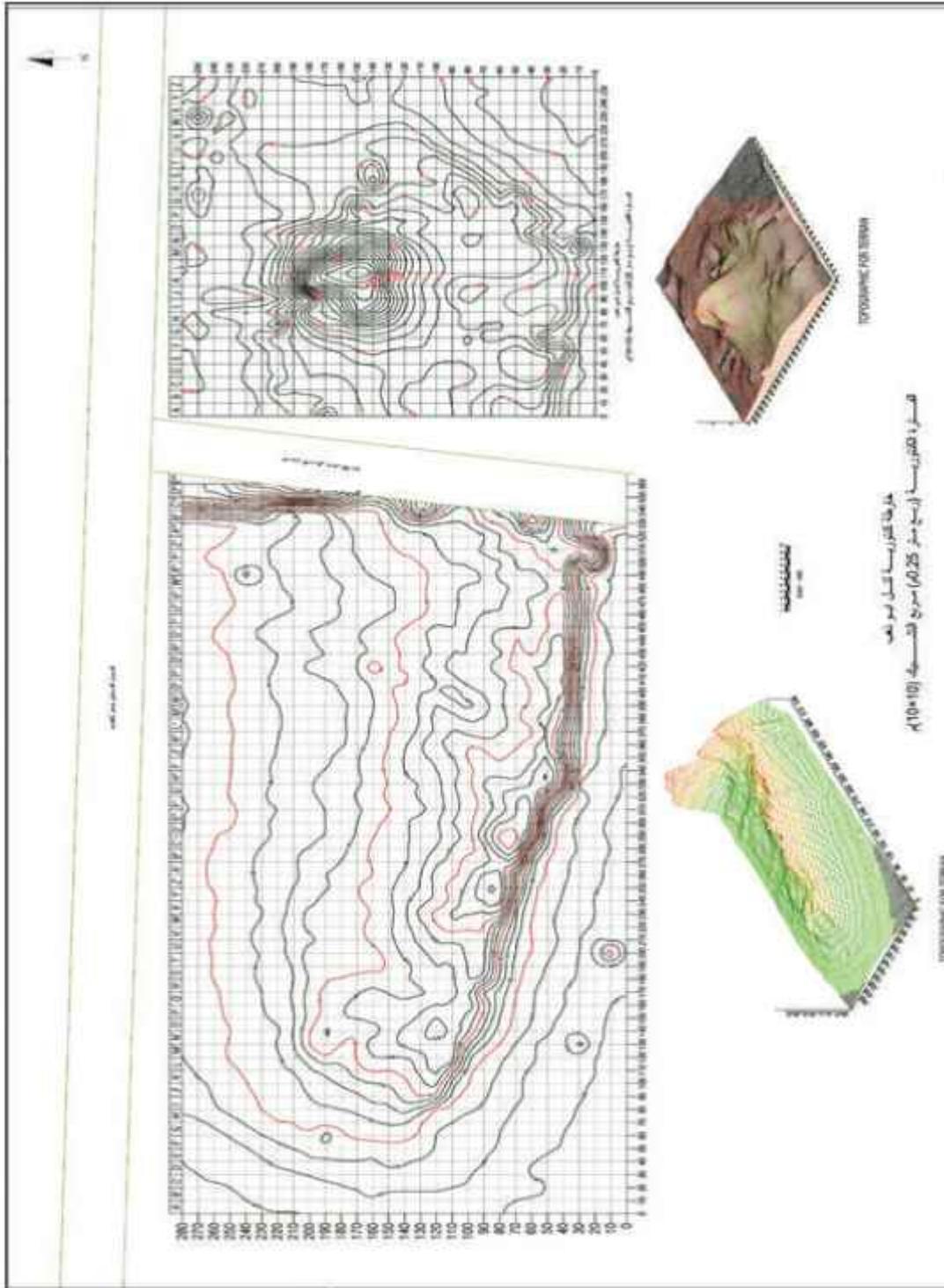
1. Dr. Sousa, Ahmed (The history of the Mesopotamian civilization in light of agricultural irrigation projects, archaeological finds, and historical sources), vol. 1.
2. OIC - 17 Excavations of the Oriental Institute in Iraq, for the season 1932-1933.
3. Daniel T. Potts, *Mesopotamian Civilization - Material Foundations*.
4. Iraq Excavation of Oriental Institute(1932-1933).



Photo (A)



Photo (B)



Control map

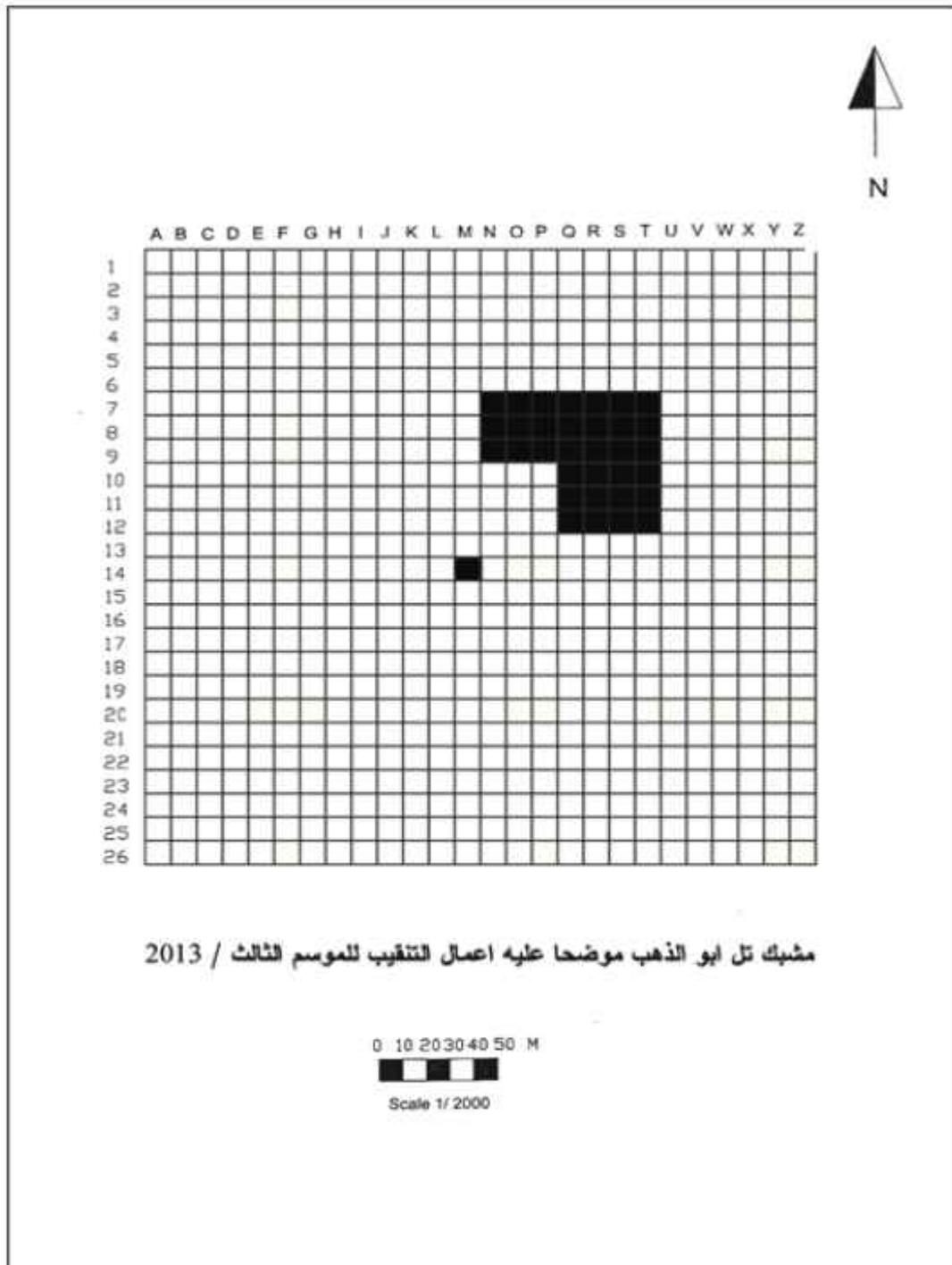


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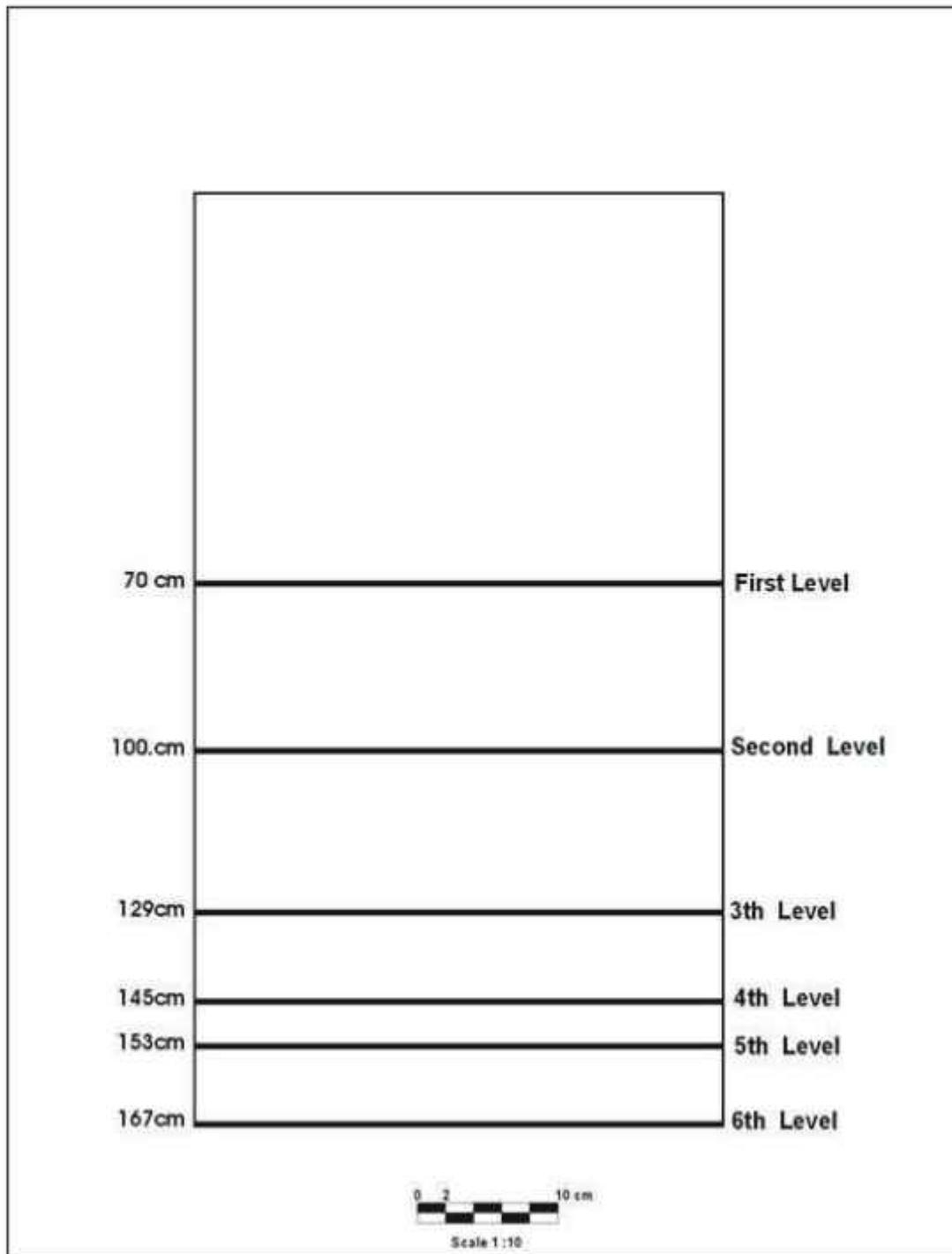
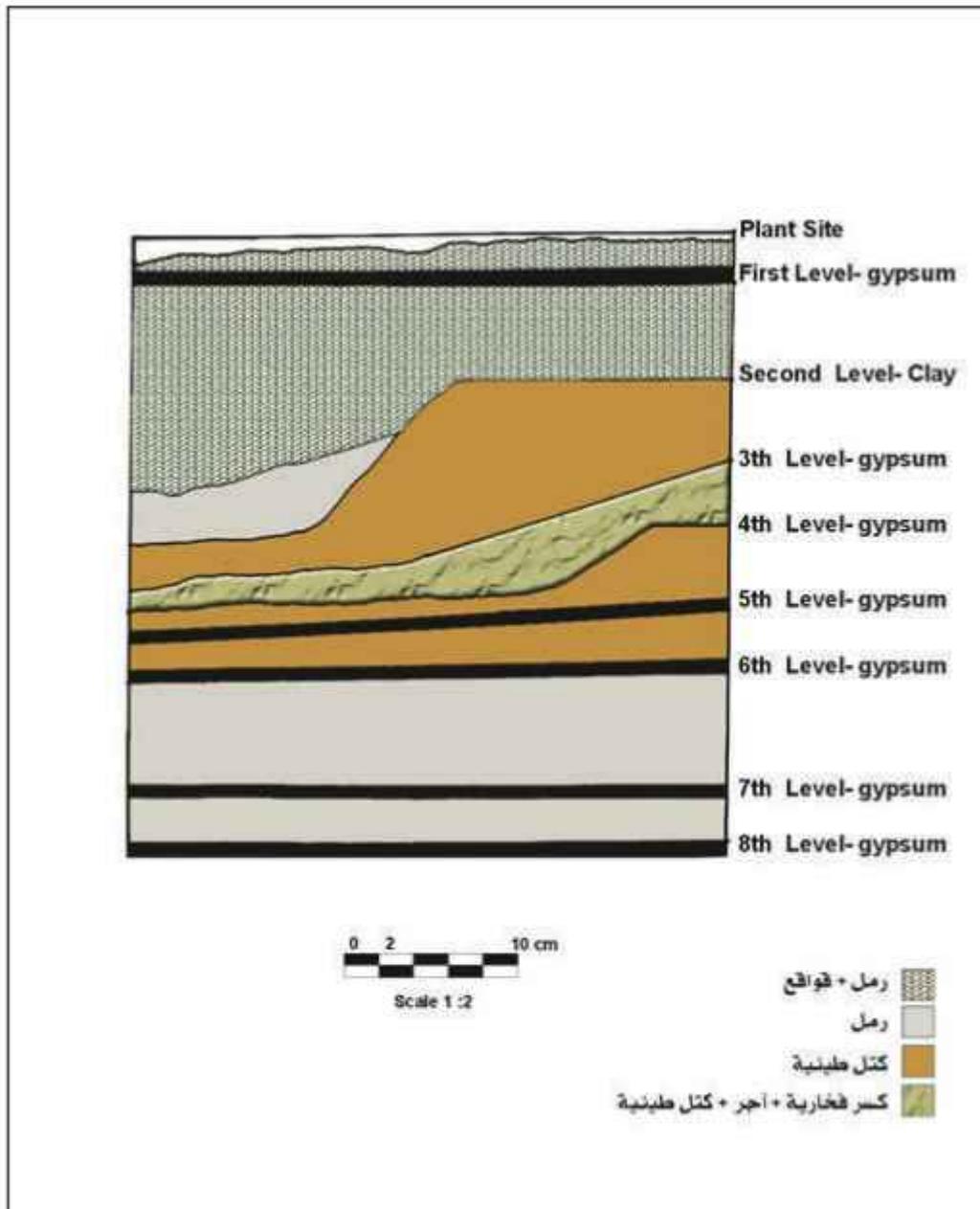
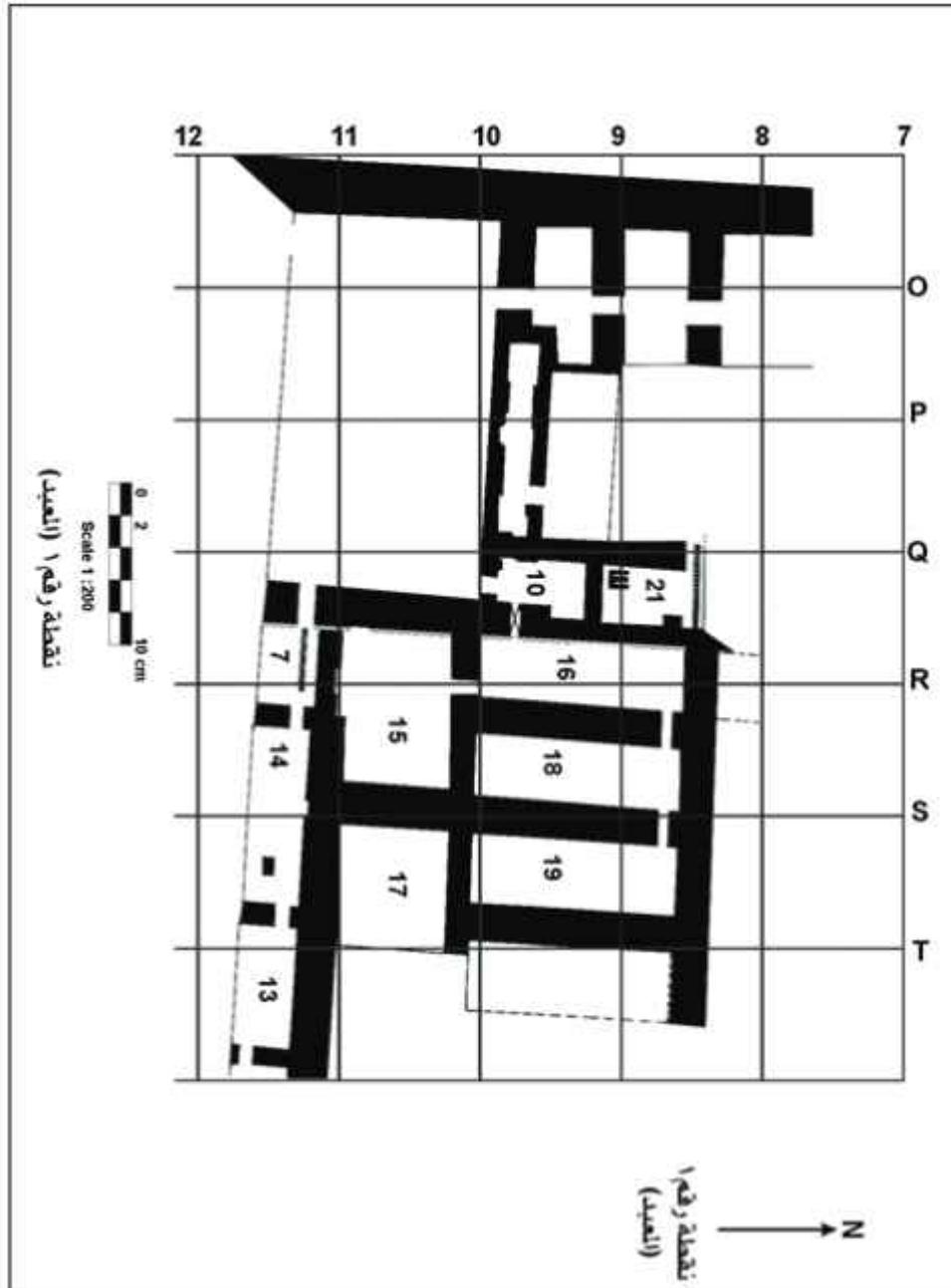


Fig. No. (2)



The sensor between the stone building and the temple building



Plan the temple

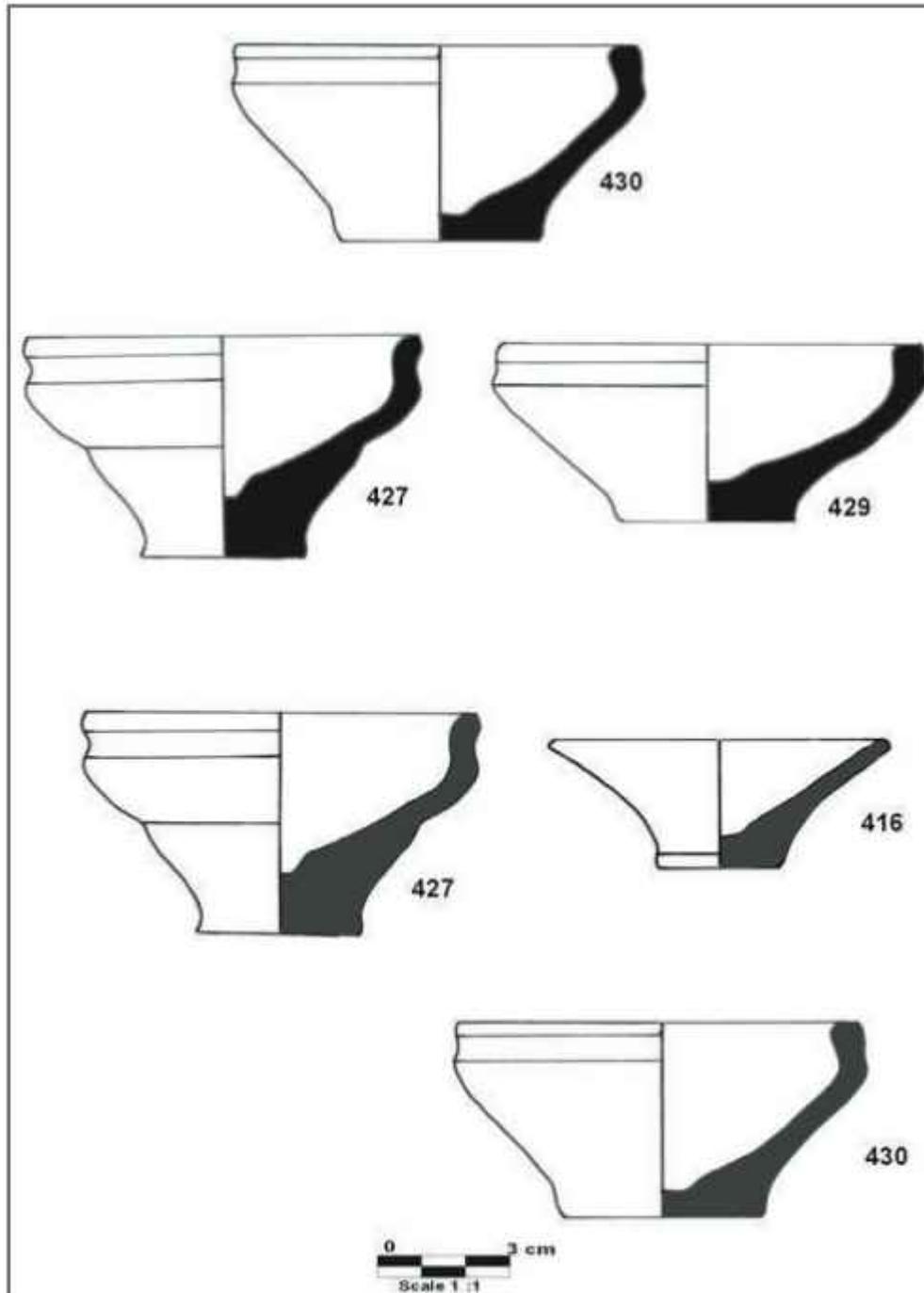


Fig. No (I-A)

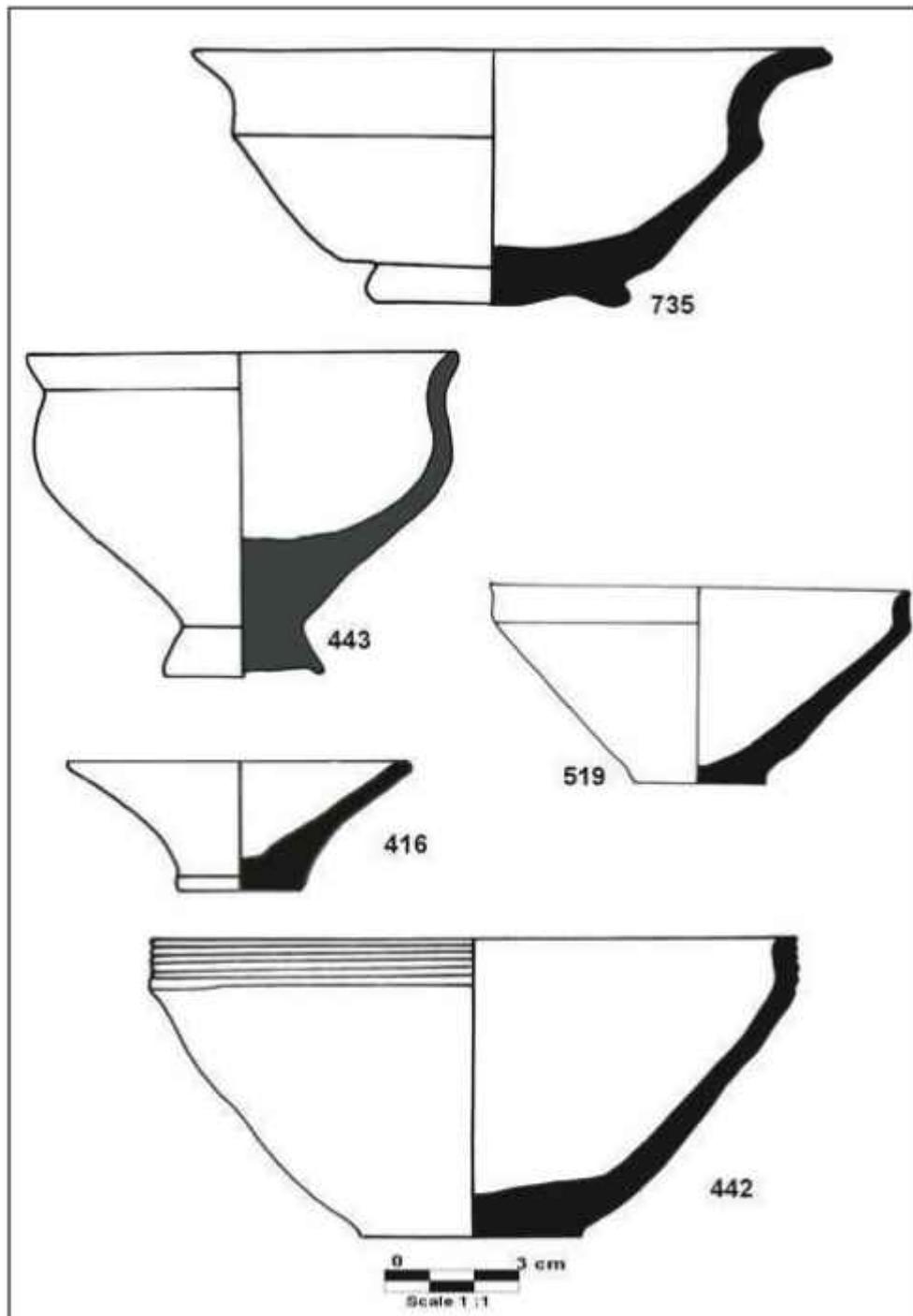


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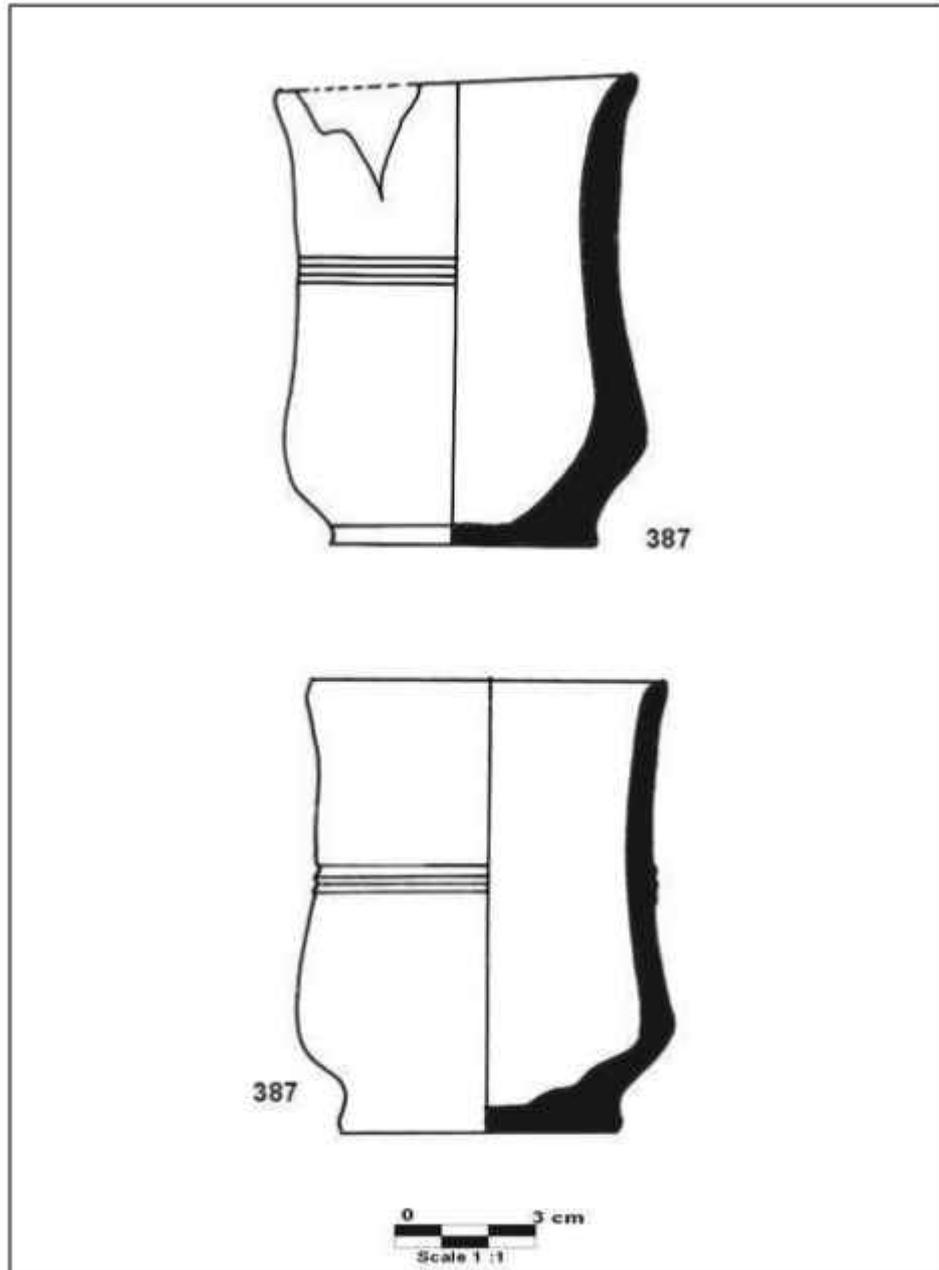


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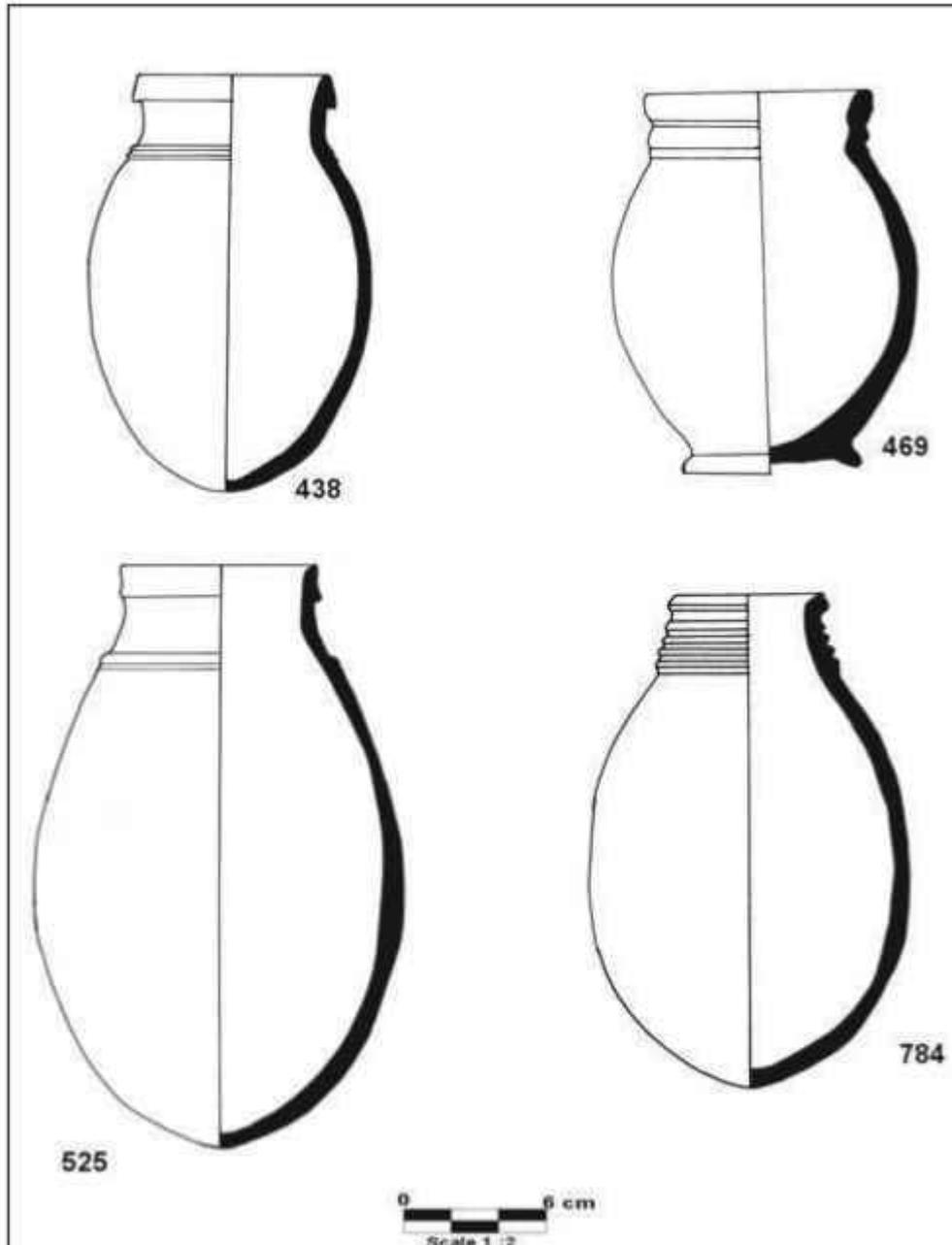


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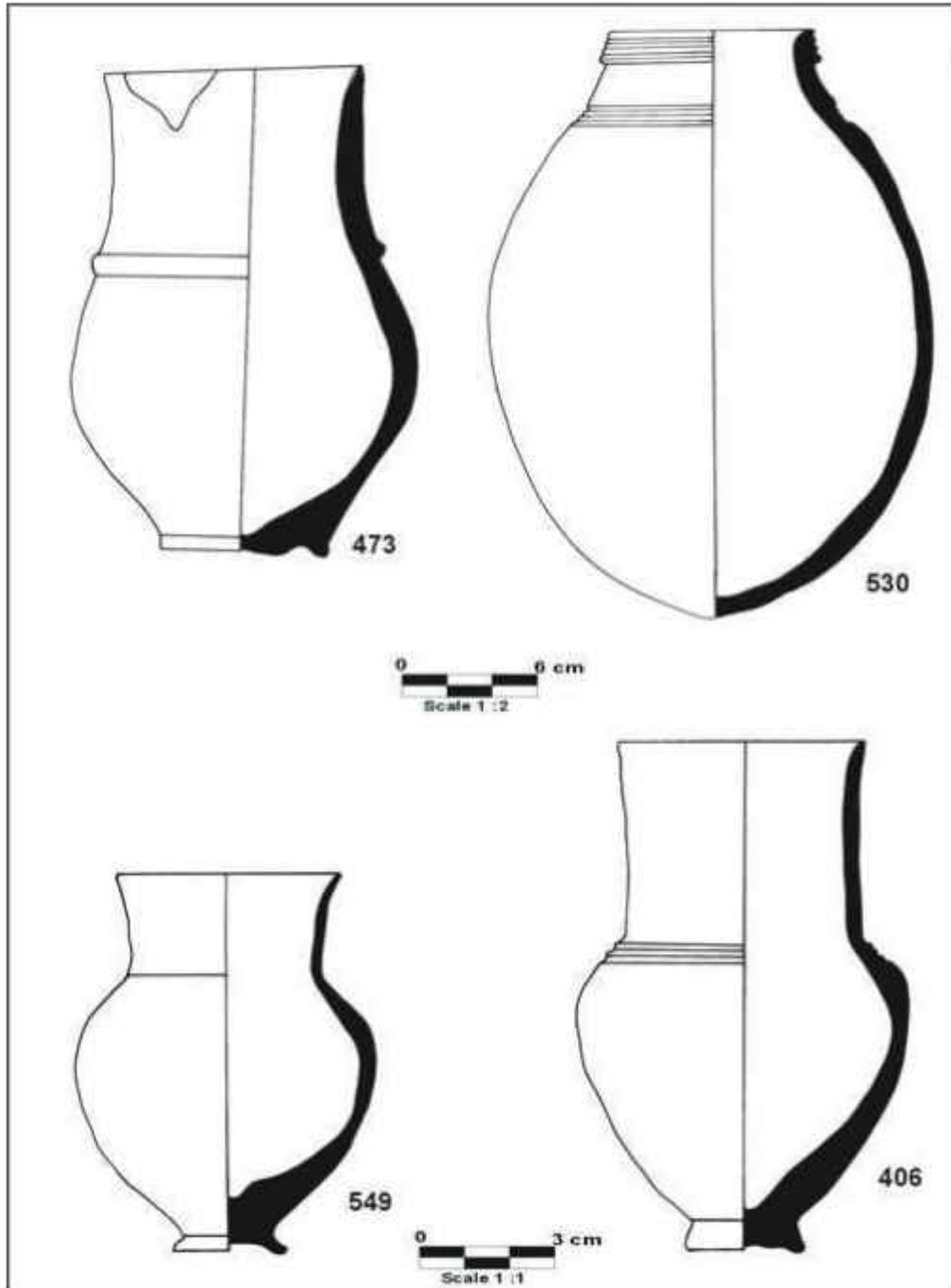


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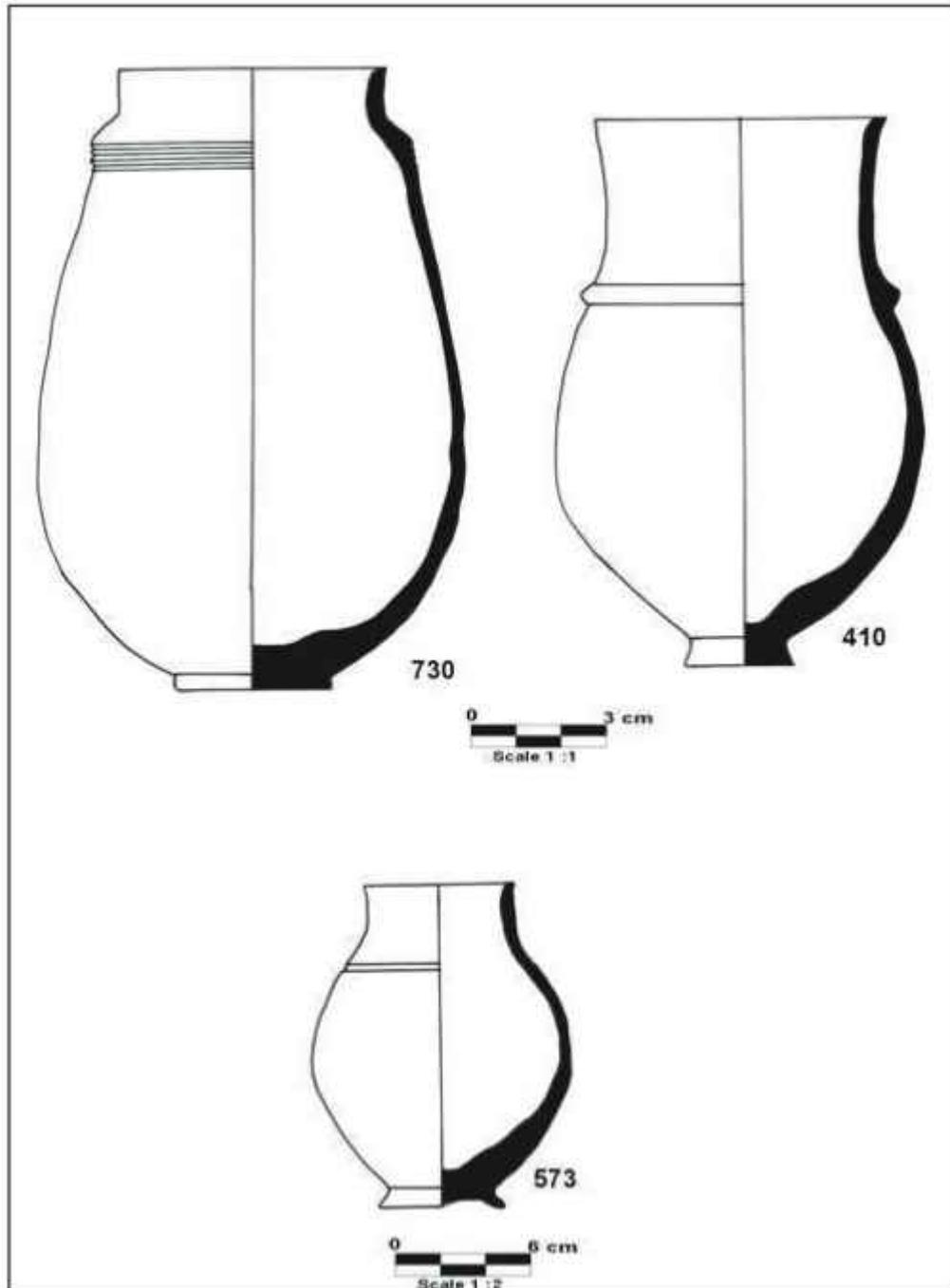


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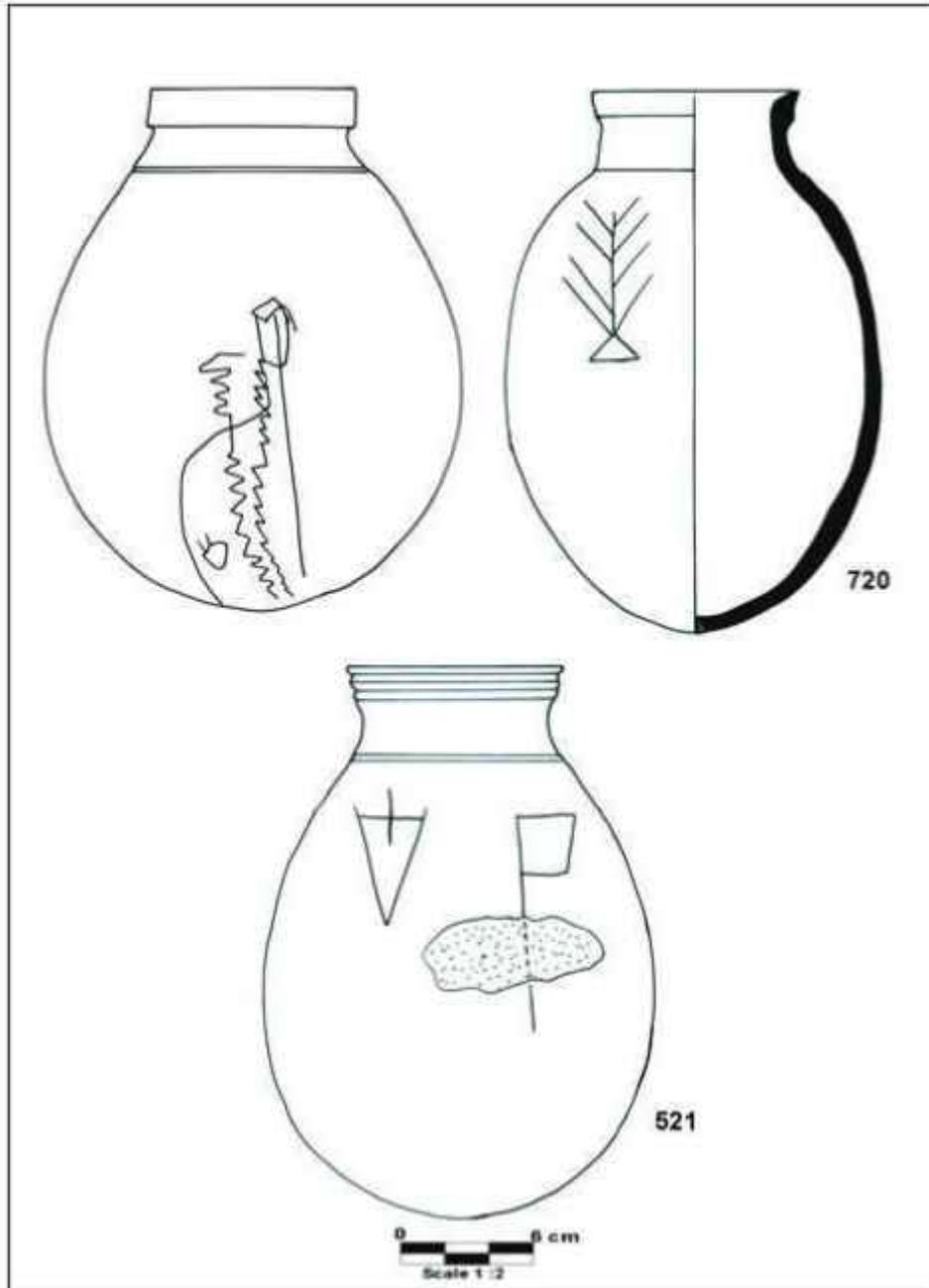


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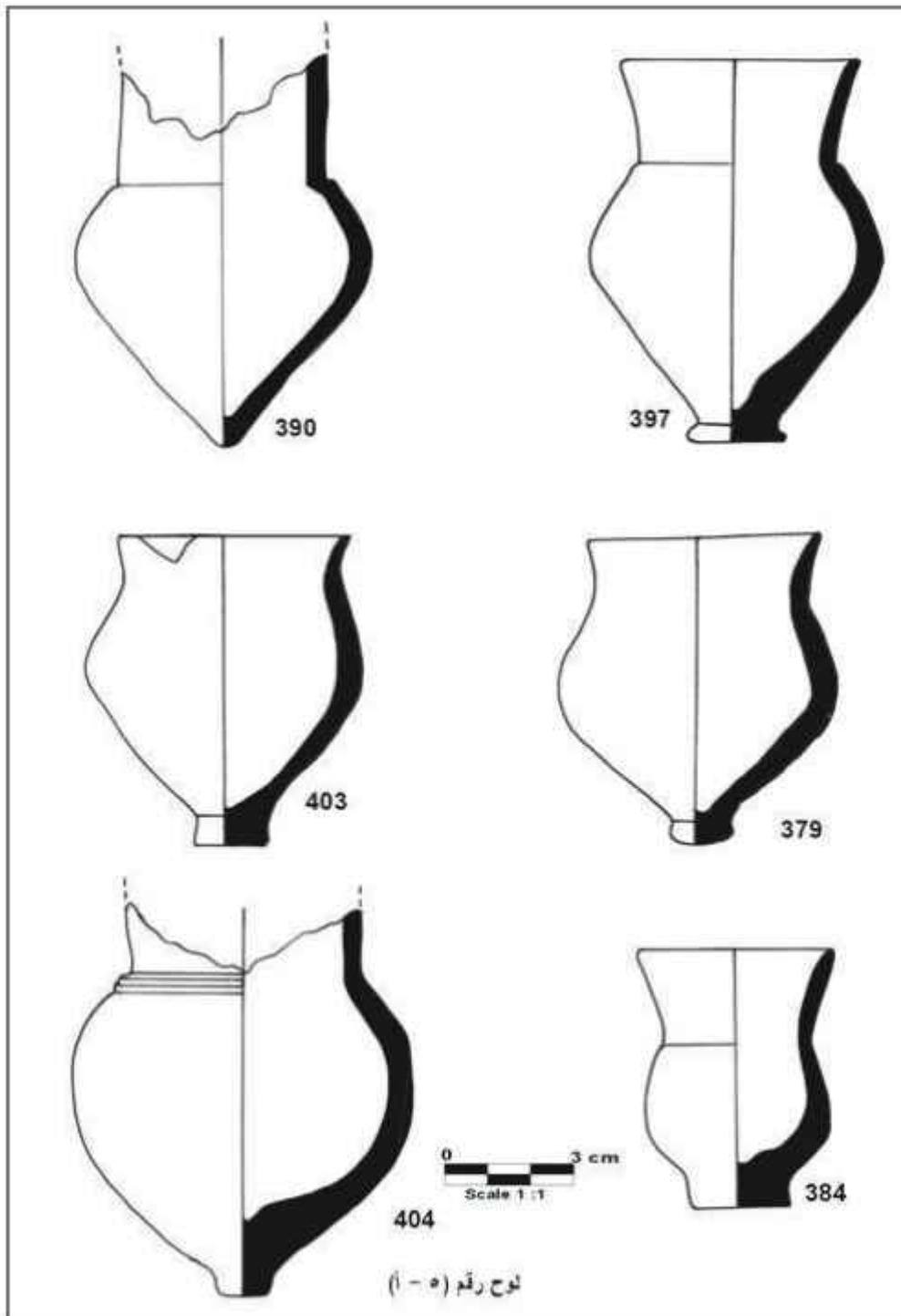


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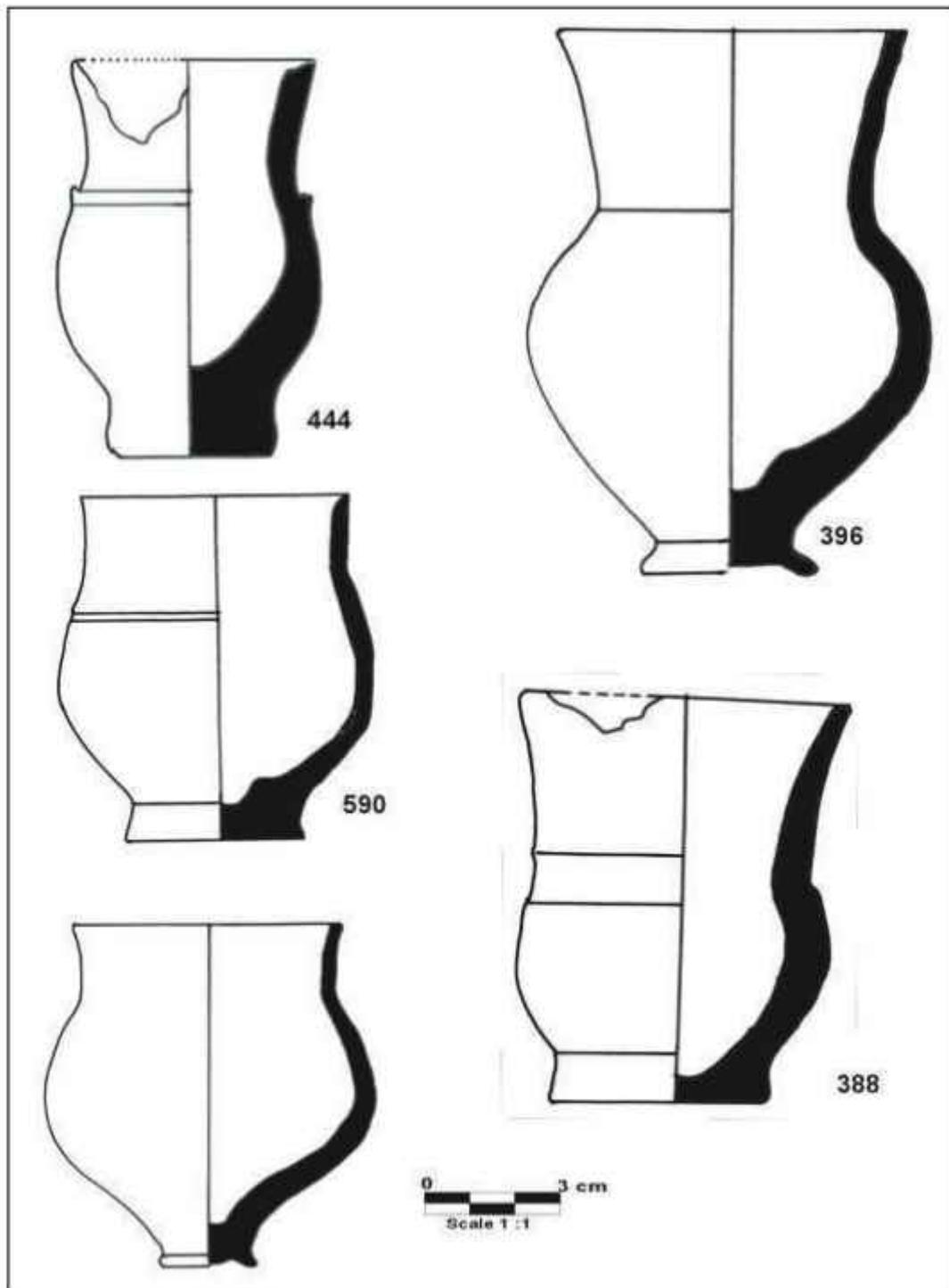


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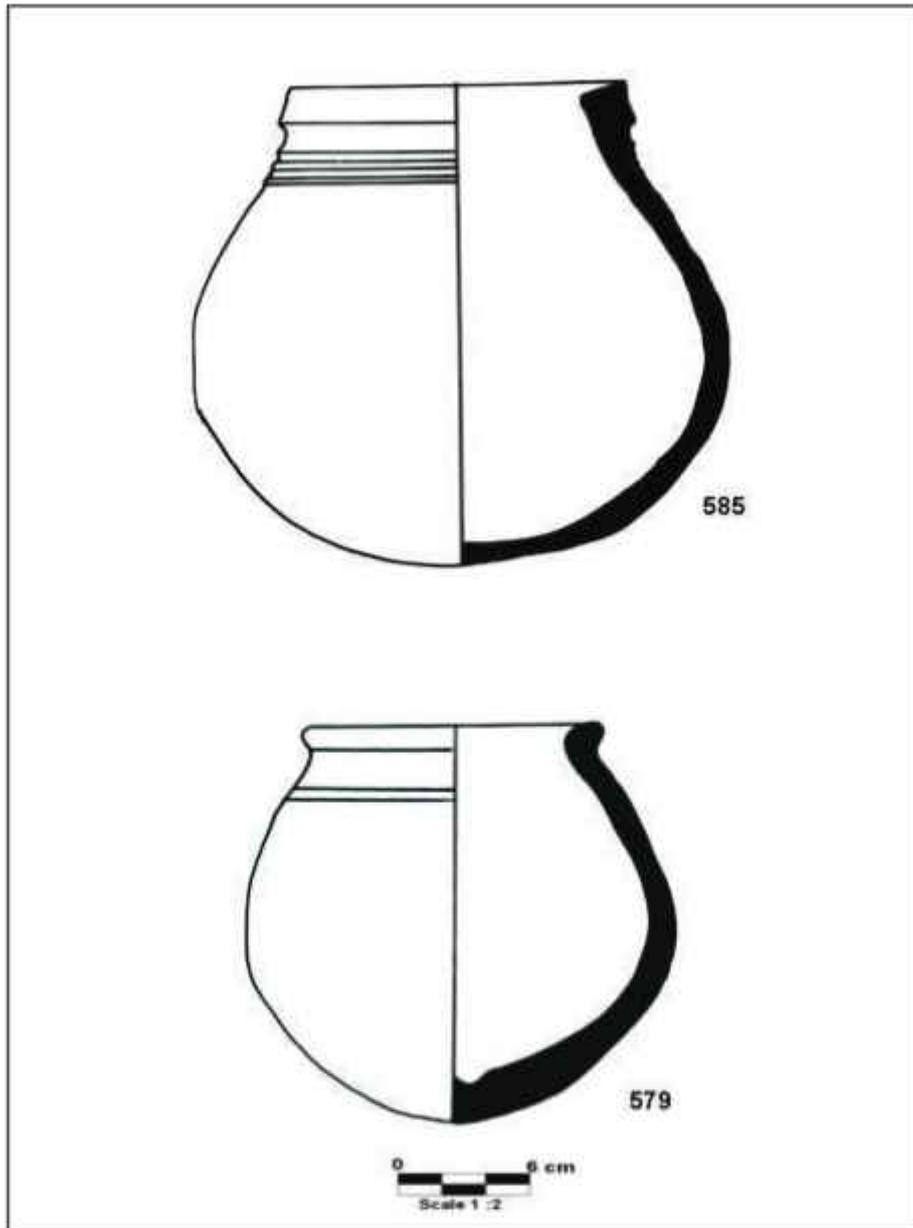


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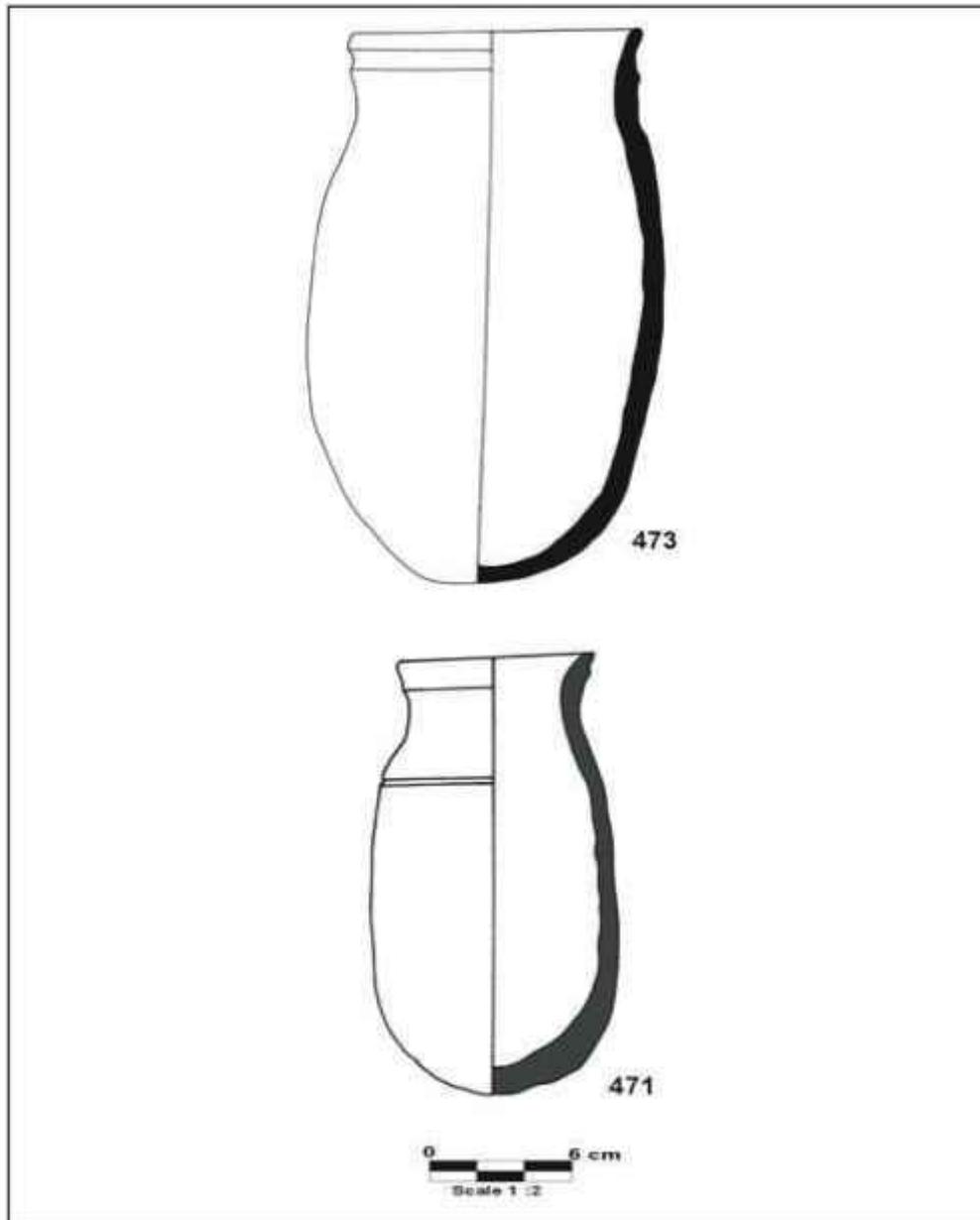


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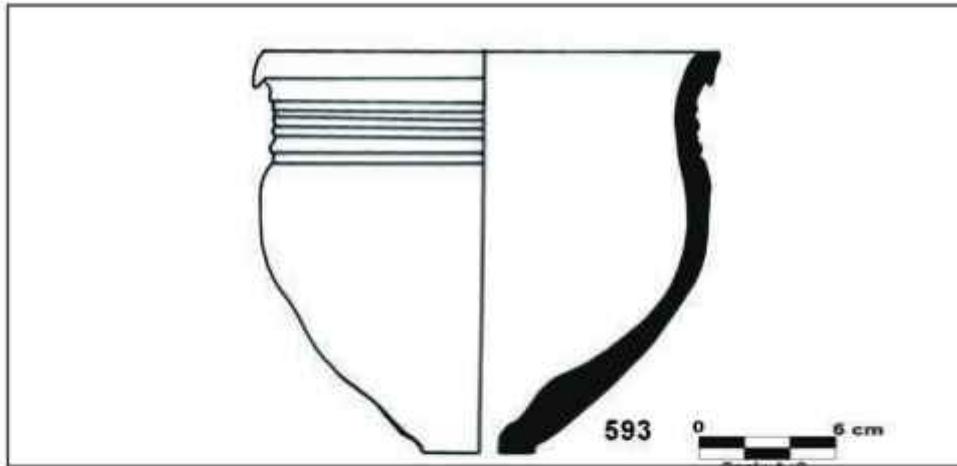


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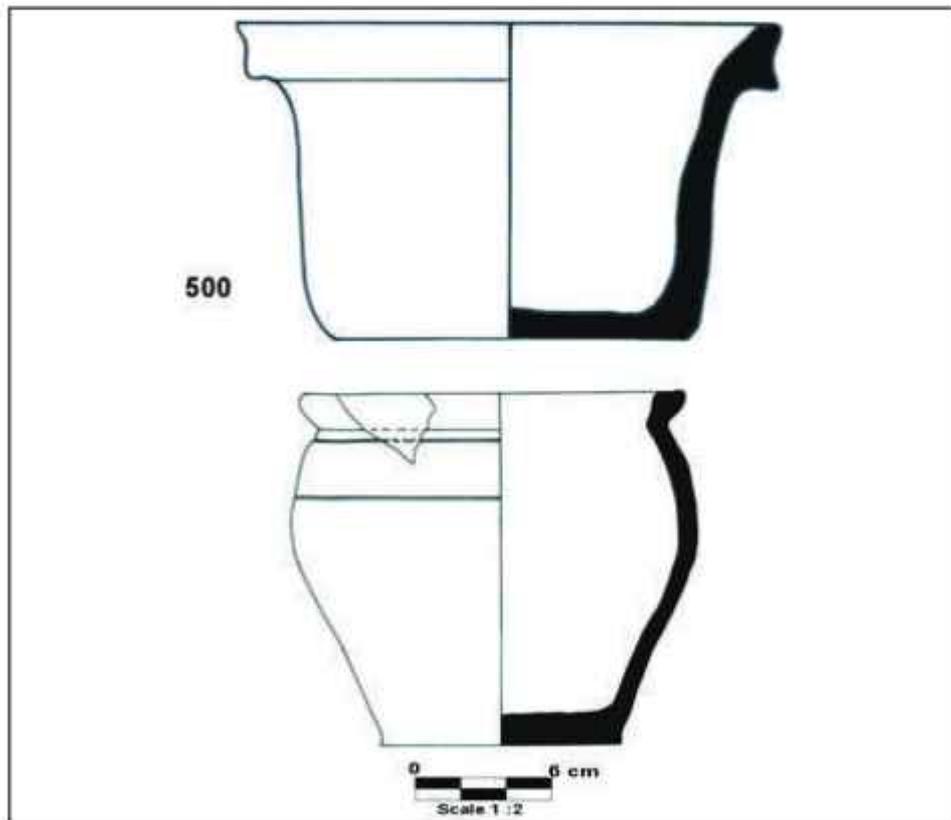


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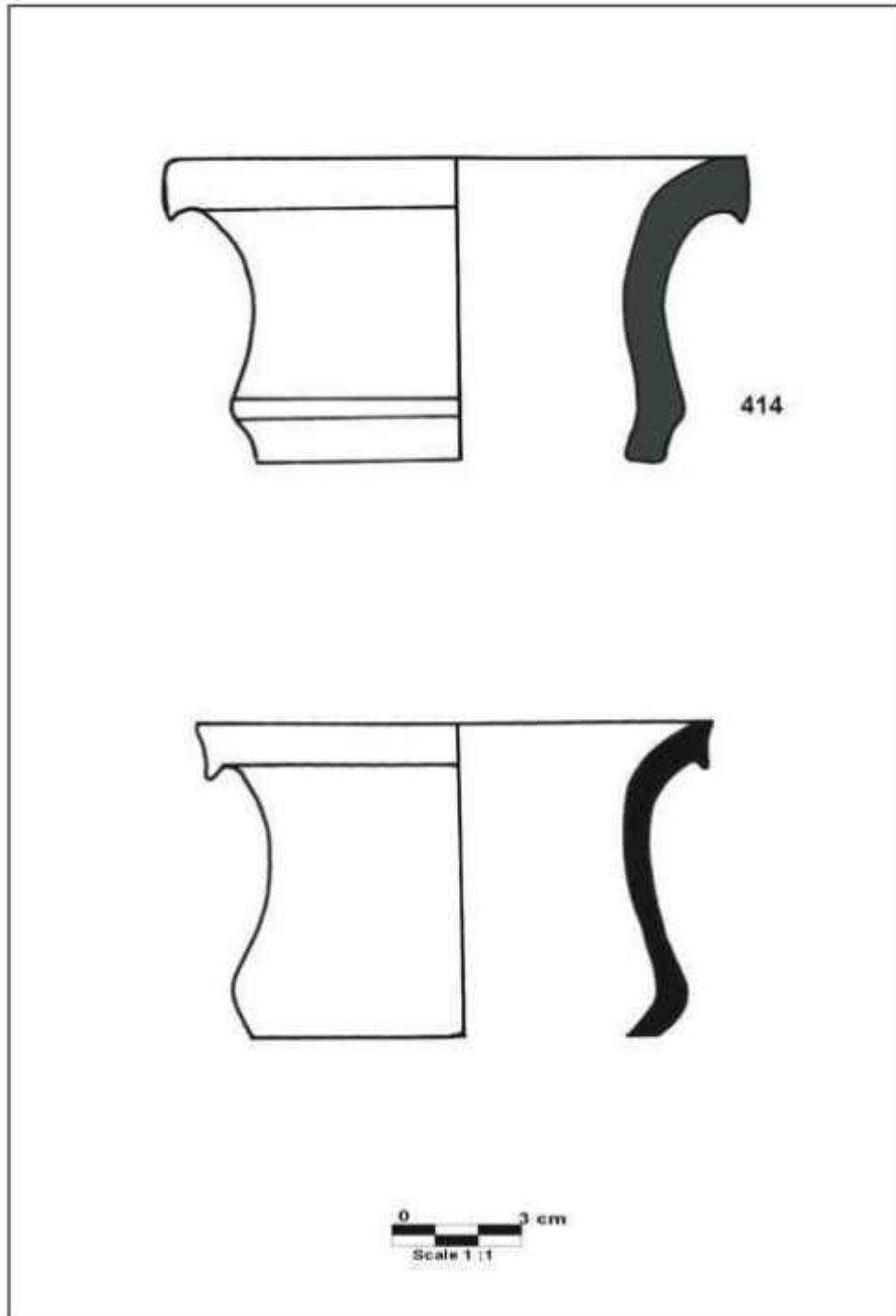


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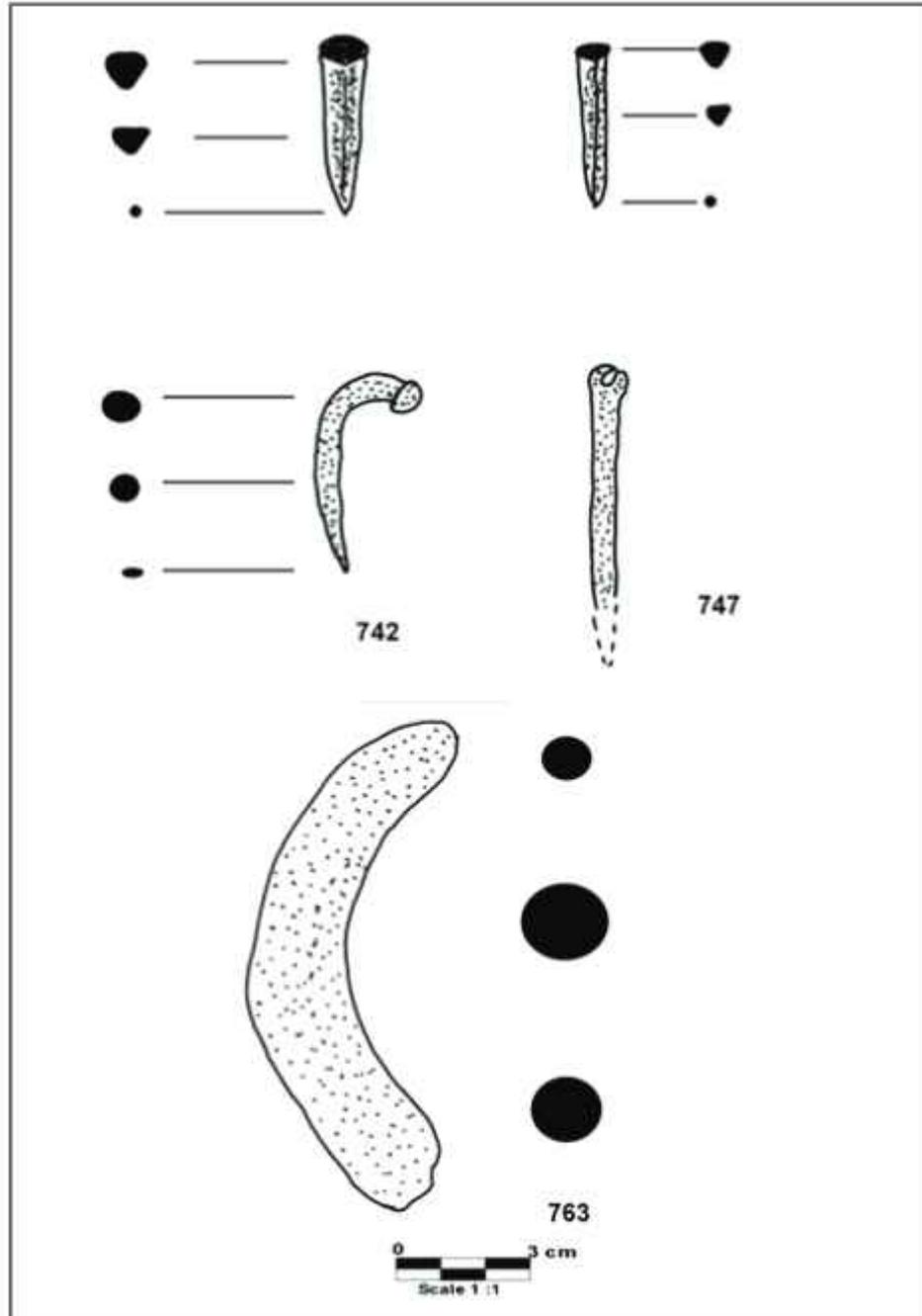


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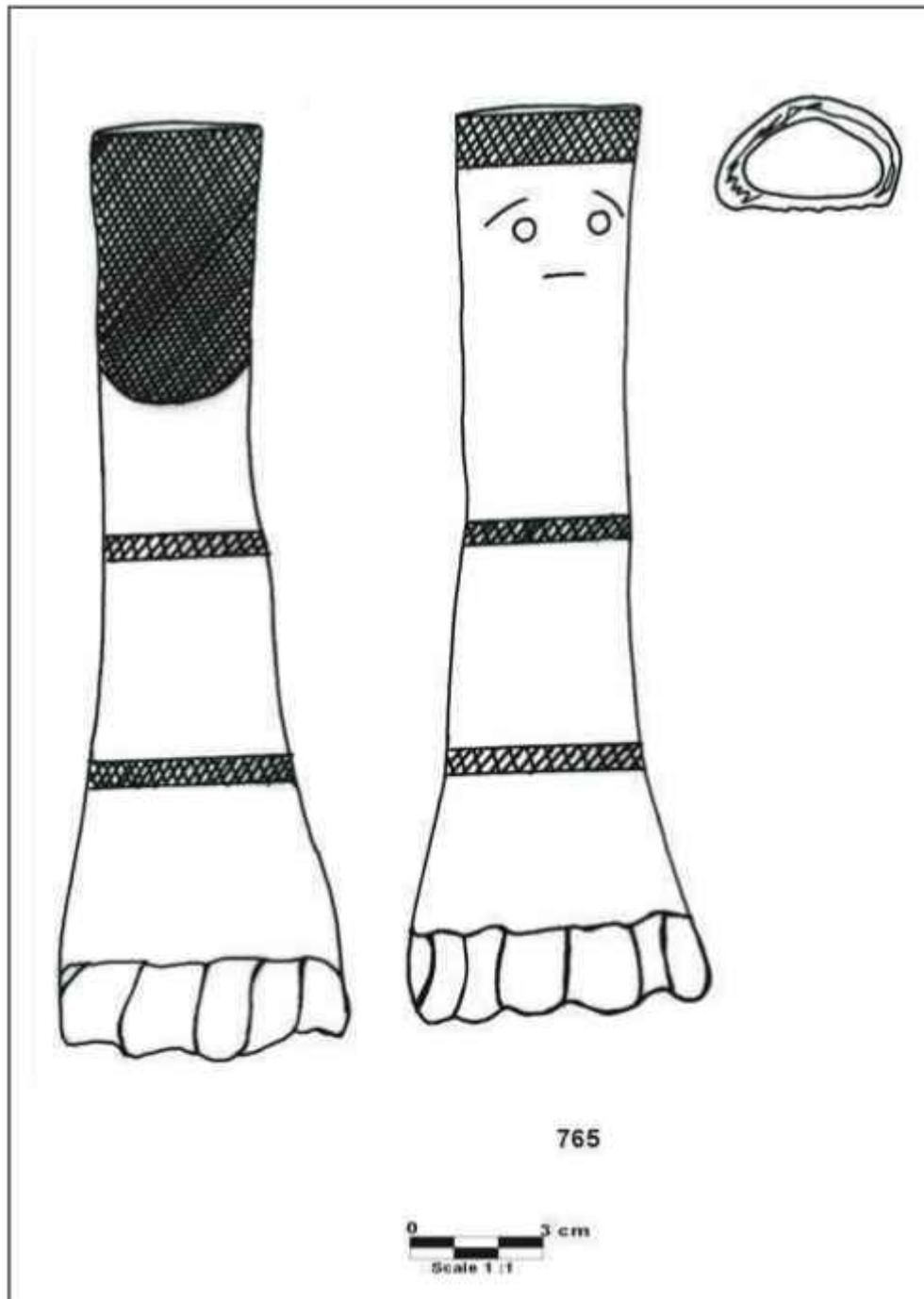


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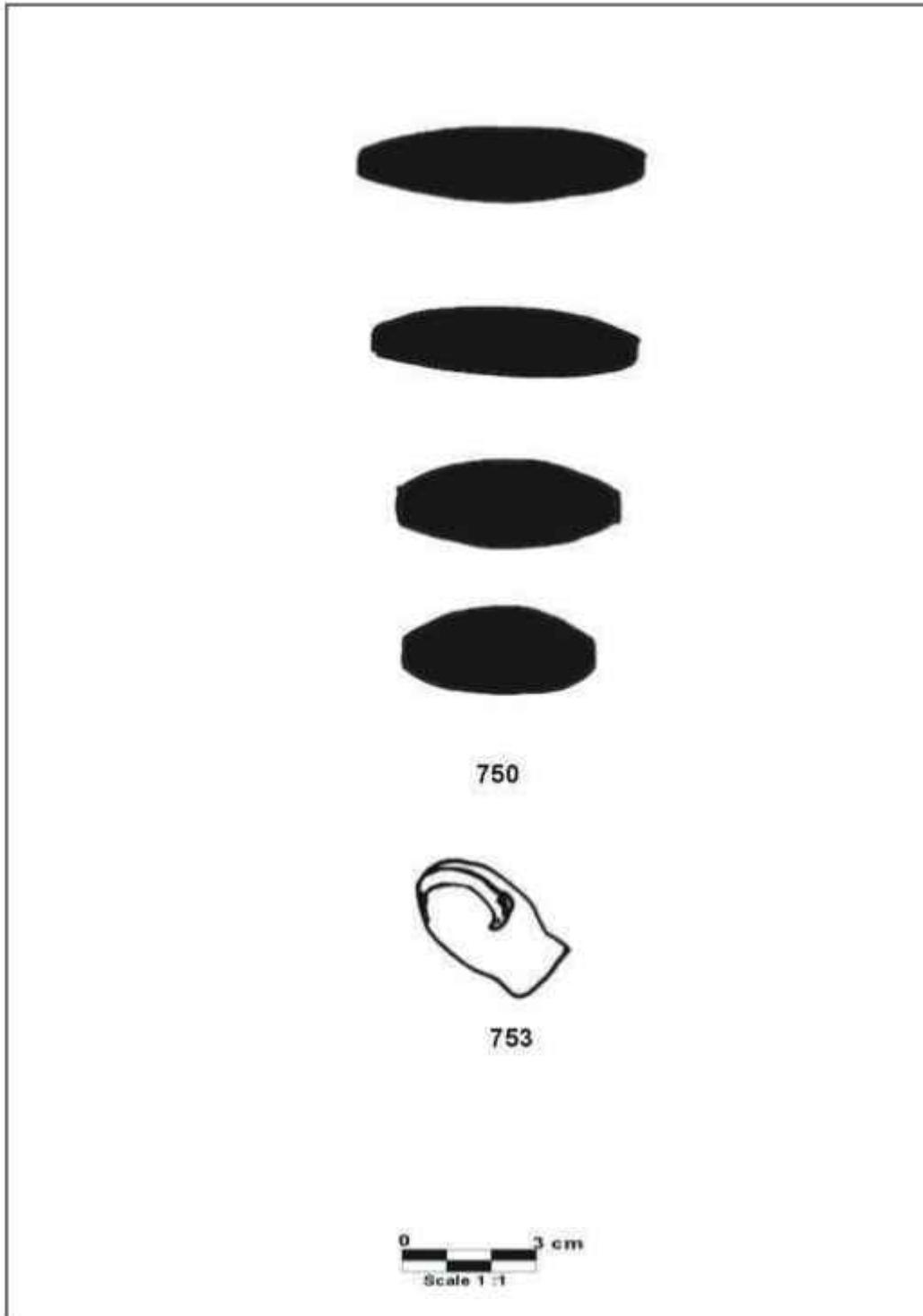


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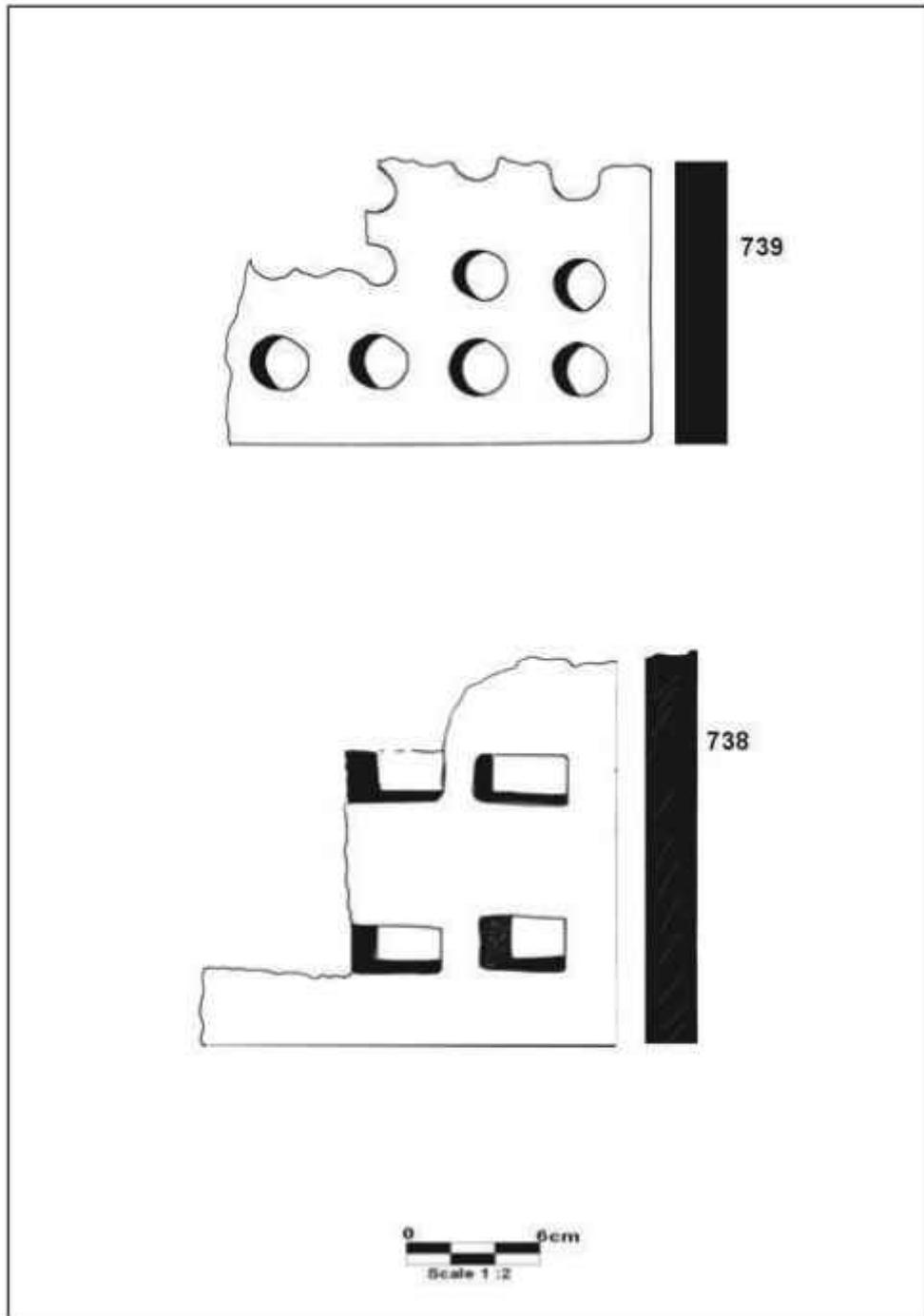


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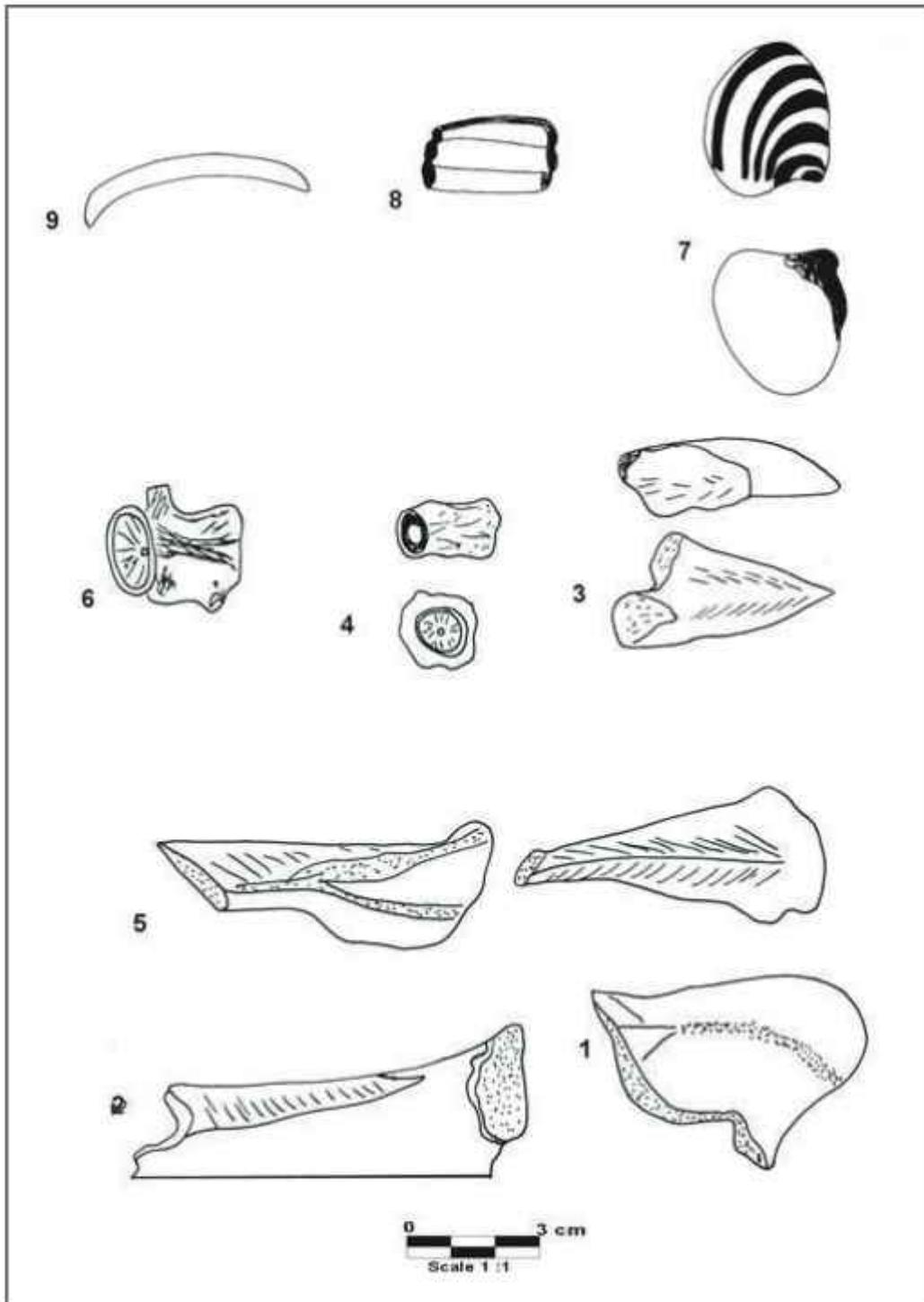


Fig. No (15)



Photo (1)



Photo (2)



Photo (3)



Photo (4)



Photo (5)



Photo (6)



Photo (7)



Photo (8)



Photo (9)



Photo (10)



Photo (11)



Photo (12)



Photo (13)



Photo (14)





Photo (15)



Photo (16)



Photo (17)



Photo (18)



Photo (19)



Photo (20)



Photo (21)



Photo (22)



Photo (23)



Photo (24)



Photo (25)



Photo (26)



Photo (27)



Photo (28)



Photo (29)



Photo (30)



Photo (31)



Photo (32)



Photo (33)



Photo (34)



Photo (35)

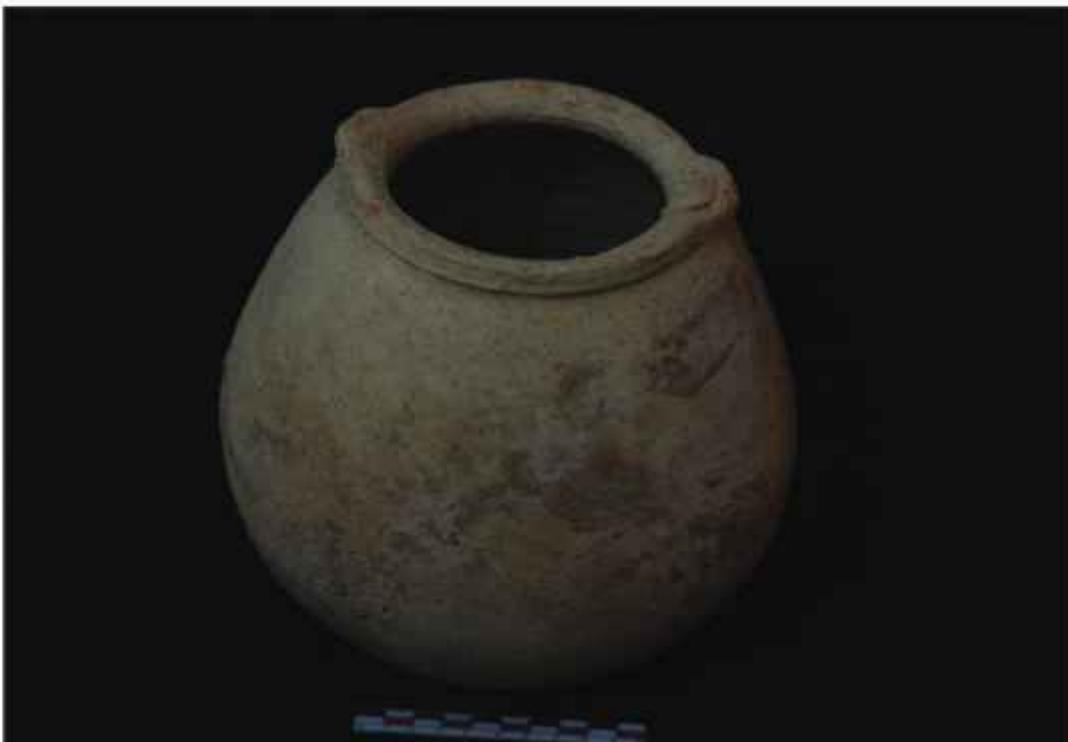


Photo (36)



Photo (37)



Photo (38)



Photo (39)



Photo (40)



Photo (41)



Photo (42)



Photo (43)



Photo (44)