

**SIDON:  
A MUD BRICK BUILDING AT THE  
CLOSE OF THE THIRD MILLENNIUM  
BC.**

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1-2 View of  
Sidon's mud brick  
building.

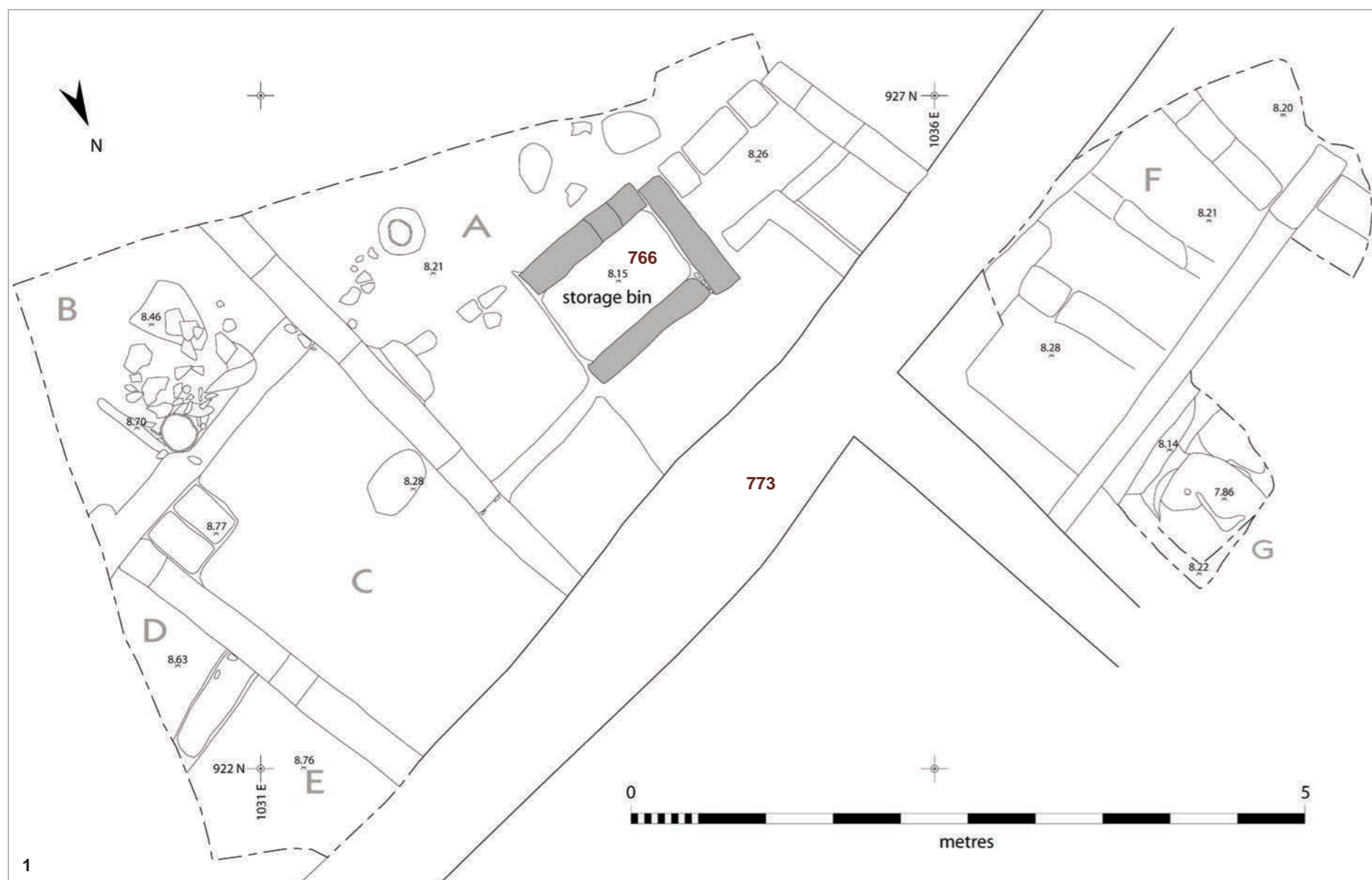
A mud brick building excavated in the 2003 campaign re-defines Sidon's third millennium cultural history at the end of the Early Bronze Age (stratum 6). Although most of the Early Bronze material from the 1998-2001 seasons has been published<sup>1</sup>, recently found pottery from inside the mud brick building sheds a new light on the end of the third millennium in Sidon. The assemblage shows a clear continuity of material culture whilst newly emerging shapes and types of pottery became recognizable.

The building (fig. 1-2), 20 m long and 12 m wide was divided into five separate rooms. Beginning from the west, the first room measures approx-

imately 12 m x 12 m. It is bordered on its northern side by a clay brick wall (773) which also serves as internal wall to other rooms in the excavated area. All the walls apart from 773 are made of mud brick. Where defined, the bricks measured 1.20 m x 60 cm. The building was divided into 7 areas (A-G). A, B, F and pit G are specialized storage<sup>5</sup> areas. Evidence of burning on the floor in areas A, B and G along with *in situ* pottery on the floors indicates domestic activity although no grinding tools or other preparation tools or work surfaces were encountered.

**Area A, (fig. 3, 5)**

Its western area was subdivided by mud brick partitions forming rectangular storage bins approximately 2 m x 3 m. Only one of these storage bins was found intact. Its walls are approximately 60 cm wide and were constructed of mud brick which had been burnt a bright orange. The joins of the wall have small stones locking the mud bricks together. The interior of the bin has rounded corners and is lined with white lime plaster 2 to 3 cm thick. To the south of this bin, a large amount of *in situ* pottery (pl. 8) was found. The mud brick east wall of this area is adjacent to a base (a sort of pilaster) measuring 1.50 m x 60 cm. Area B is located on the other side of it.



Area B (fig. 4)  
is part of a room measuring 4.50 m x 6.00 m. It contained storage jars



Area D (fig. 1)  
is part of a room approximately 2.80 m x 2.50 m abutting area C on the east side.



Area E (fig. 6)  
is a room partially excavated measuring at least 4 m x 4 m. Wall 773 functions as the northern wall of this area.

Area F (fig. 1)  
lies to the west of areas A, B, C, and D, on the other side of the continuing mud brick wall 773. In area F small interior spaces were found. These included four small rectangular rooms approximately 3 m x 3.50 m with areas similar in size to storage bin 766. There was however no sign of plaster on the floor of these storage bins.

Pit G (fig. 1 & 7) was separated from area F by a clay brick wall. It was a plaster-lined pit with remains of red and black patches of burned earth.



placed in a storage area defined by two upright stones (one had fallen over). The floor within this room is dark red with black ashy patches, indicating more intense burning activity than in the area A room. This implies domestic activity had taken place here; one not associated with the overall fire visible in area A. Jars and jugs were found *in situ* (pl. 15 & pl. 16, 1).

Area C (fig. 1)  
is a room laying north of area B. It measures 5 m x 7.5 m and had a sort of "bench", (context 746) constructed with mud brick slabs 60 cm x 1.20 m each in the south-east corner of Area C. The floor was covered by white lime plaster.

3 & 5 Storage bin in area A.

4 Area B.

6 Area E.

## ECONOMIC AND FUNCTIONAL ASPECT



7 Pit G.

The distribution of pottery in its quantitative aspect (a large amount of storage jars suggesting a store room or hole mouth jars suggesting a probable domestic area etc...) is an indication as to the function of the rooms. In Sidon this distribution is rather homogeneous. Platter bowls and open vessels in general are not the most common vessels found<sup>2</sup>. Closed vessels, namely jars and jugs, are numerous. Area B is probably a specialised storage area. Evidence of burning on the floor in areas A, B and E along with *in situ* pottery on the floors indicates domestic activity although only one grinding stone and one quern were found in area B.

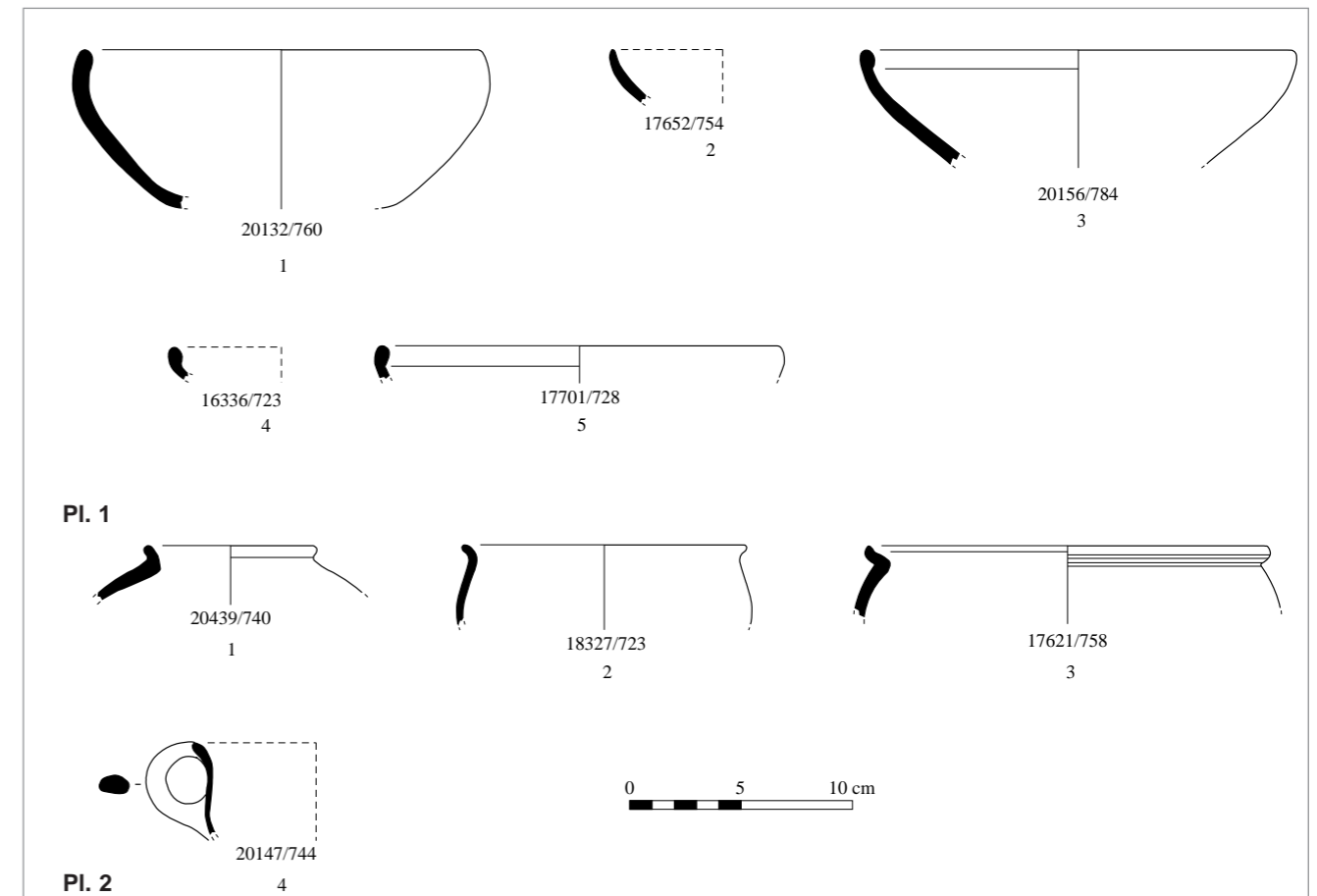
## THE POTTERY

### Types previously encountered

#### Bowls and platter bowls (pl. 1-2)

Most types had already been seen, namely: hemispherical bowls (pl. 1, 1) straight-sided platter bowls (pl. 1, 2-5), and fine deep bowls (pl. 2, 1-4)<sup>3</sup> all found at Sidon from stratum 3 (EB IIA) onwards<sup>4</sup>. One bowl (pl. 1, 1) with an incurved rim is comparable to similar types from Tell Arqa<sup>5</sup> and Ras Shamra<sup>6</sup>. Bowls with an everted rim (pl. 2), an inside flange with a

depression under the rim (pl. 2, 3)<sup>7</sup> appeared in Sidon's stratum 5 (EB IIIA)<sup>8</sup>. Only one carinated bowl was found (pl. 2, 4). Platter bowls with "rolled-in-rim" (pl. 1, 3-5) are found in stratum 5 (EB IIIA)<sup>9</sup>, one platter bowl/tray with an everted upper-wall is comparable to another from stratum 6 (EB IIIB)<sup>10</sup>.



#### Jars and jugs (pl. 3-7)

Most types, flaring simple everted rims (pl. 3), thickened with a flattened inside rim (pl. 4), curving rolled rims (pl. 5; 6) with a drooping lower edge<sup>11</sup> (pl. 7) were previously found in Sidon<sup>12</sup>.

#### Hole mouth jars (pl. 8-11)

The most distinctive type and a hallmark of the end of the Early Bronze Age at Sidon is the hole mouth jar. The shapes are descended from contemporary Syrian examples with comparisons to the Ebla<sup>13</sup> - Hama milieu<sup>14</sup> where they are the standardized production of the end of the third millennium BC<sup>15</sup>. Plain hole mouth jars with a ridge under the rim (pl. 11) are also found at Tell Arqa in EB III and are according to J.-P. Thalmann comparable to Hama<sup>16</sup>. This type is also found in EB IIIA at Tel Yarmouth<sup>17</sup>.

#### Bases (pl. 12-13)

Most of the bases are flat with the exception of one degenerated stump base (pl. 13, 14) and one stump base (pl. 13, 15). The transition from base to body in flat bases is either rounded or sharp. Some of the bases have a distinctive corrugation/combing<sup>18</sup> on the surface of the vessels<sup>19</sup> (pl. 12, 5, 7, 9-12).

8 Jar S/3201. Emergence of new types

9 Jar S/ 3200.

10 Jug S/ 3202.

There are a number of innovations that appear in the pottery assemblage and new shapes are introduced. These are:

- Jars with pattern combing (fig. 8-9, pl. 14).
- Jugs with a pointed or degenerated stump/button base (pl. 15, 3-4).
- Small carinated cups with everted rim (fig. 11, pl. 16).

10

#### Jars

Large two-handled egg-shaped jars with flat bases and flaring rims with a combed decoration on the outside have previously been found at Sidon<sup>20</sup>. Jar S/3201 (fig. 8) is a two-handled egg-shaped jar with out-turned rim and flat base but differs from the others in that the combing applied on the surface is regular, with alternating horizontal and vertical bands. The vertical combing is however only limited to the central part of the vessel<sup>21</sup> and is comparable to similar jars from Gizeh and Matmar; dating to Egypt's fourth Dynasty<sup>22</sup>.

Jar S/ 3200 (fig. 9, pl. 15) without handles is a heavier and more voluminous shape. It has incised moulding at the intersection of neck and shoulder. The zig zag combing is much more elaborate and appears at Byblos<sup>23</sup> only at the end of EB III<sup>24</sup> and is found in Egypt only during the Sixth Dynasty<sup>25</sup>.



#### Jugs

Jug S/3272 (pl. 15, 3) with marked shoulders and a pointed spiked base is comparable to Byblos type A11<sup>26</sup> dated to the end of the Early Bronze Age (period K III/K IV). As at Byblos the surface has no cross-hatching but the base is more pointed than Byblos' KIII examples.

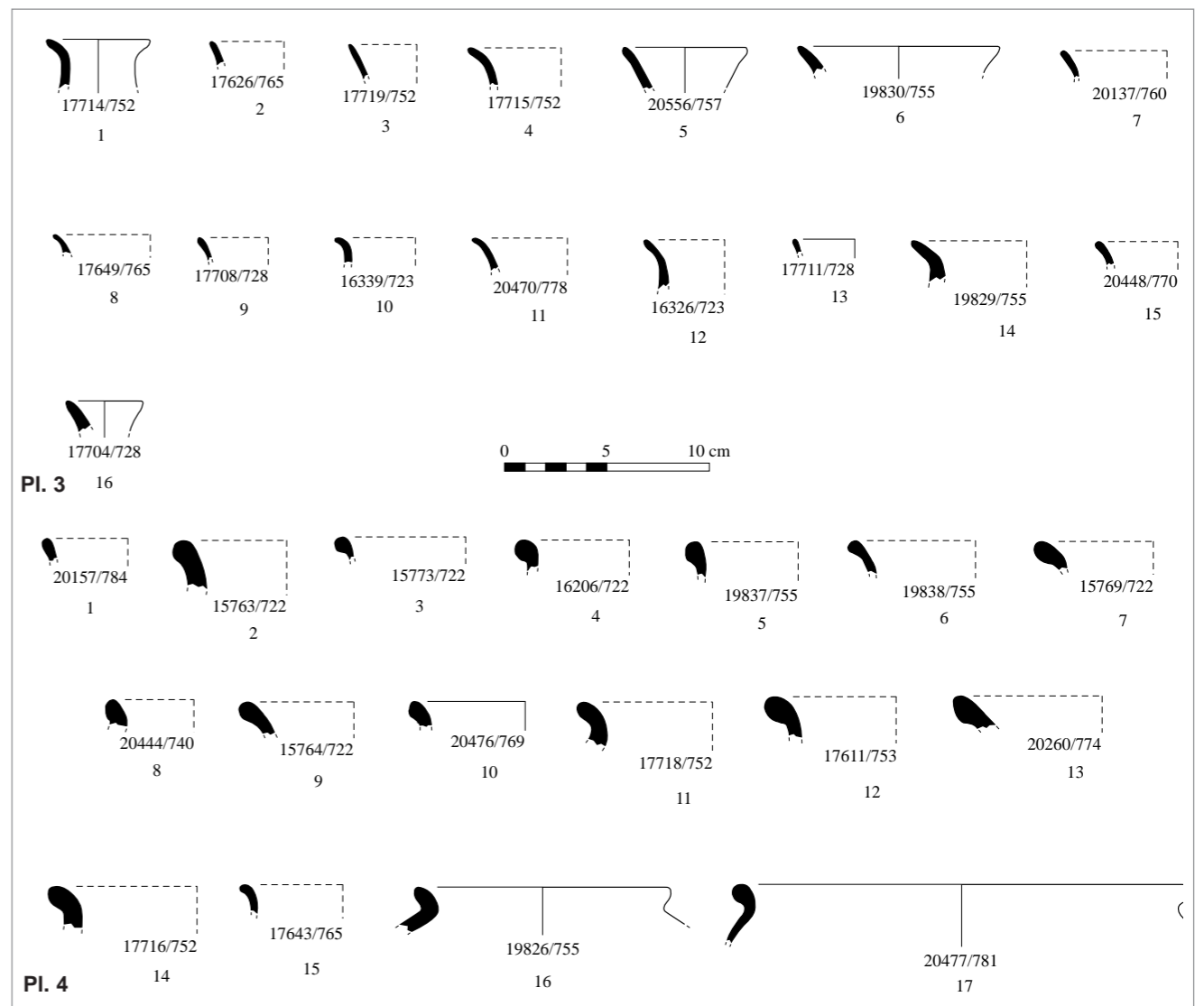
Jug S/3446 (pl. 15, 4) with its small "button" base<sup>27</sup> comparable to Byblos type A 22<sup>28</sup> is a transitional phase between the Early Bronze Age piriform juglet and the Middle Bronze Age juglet. Similar examples from Tell Hesi and Tell Halif have been described as degenerated stump-based piriform juglets<sup>29</sup>.

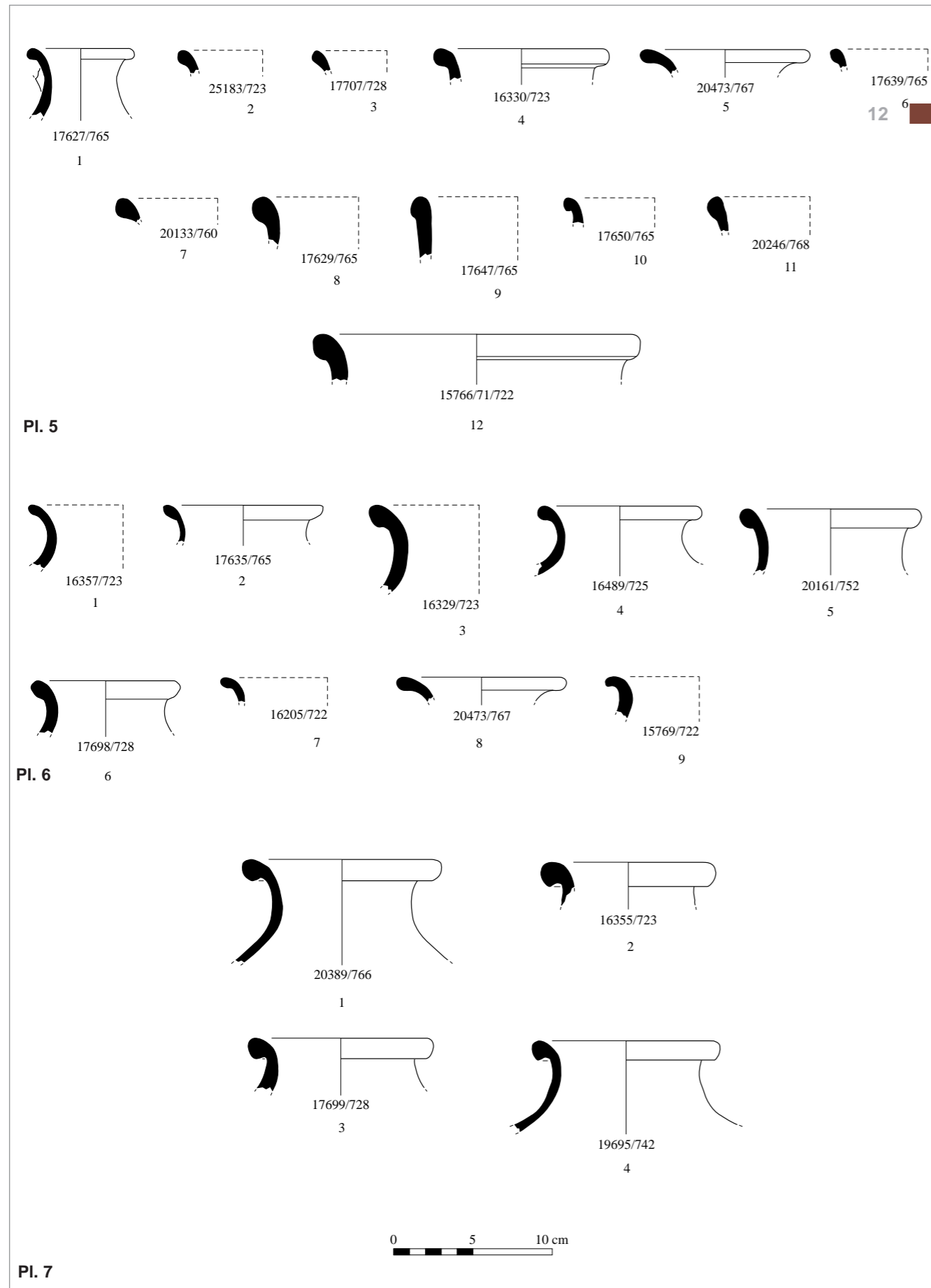
Narrow-necked jars which tend to widen at the juncture of the body and which narrow toward the flared rim<sup>30</sup> (pl. 15, 2) are an EB IV feature.

Jug S/3202, (fig. 10, pl. 15, 1) is a common shape from EB II onwards, with an oval body in almost perfect symmetry balanced between the two halves of the body<sup>31</sup>. One loop-handle springs from the flaring rim to just above the widest point of its



11



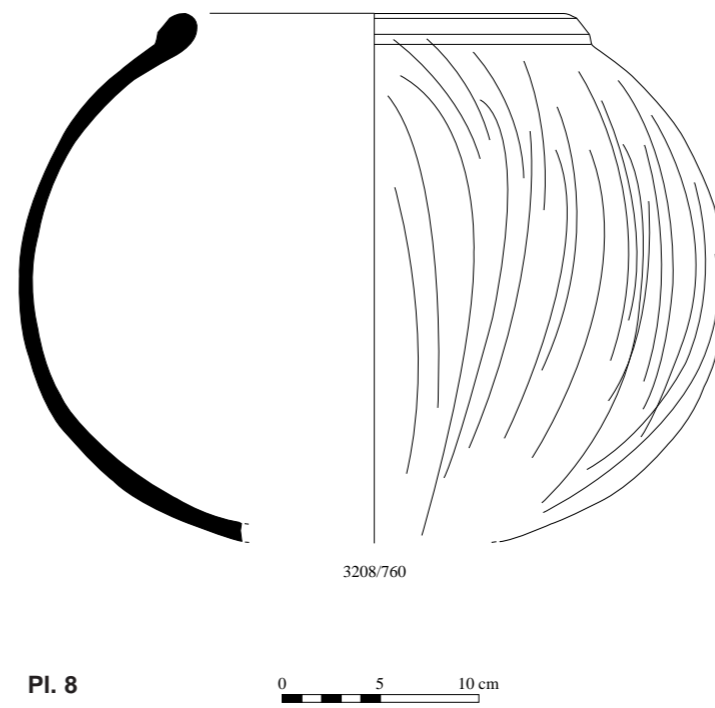


11 Cup S/ 3274. girth, the base is slightly smaller in diameter than the neck and it has combed decoration.

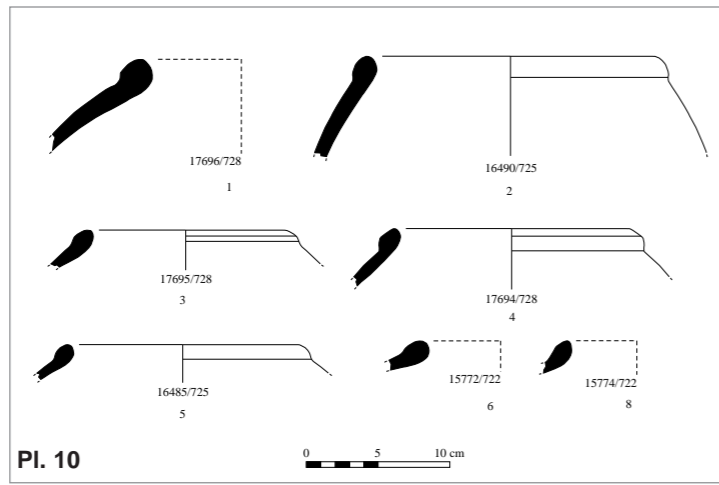


**Cups**  
 Cup S/3274 (fig. 11, pl. 16, 1) and cups pl. 13 16, with or without an oval handle are a new type at Sidon. These cups with flat base and in-turned rim only find close parallels in Tell Arqa phase R (EB III) <sup>32</sup>. Other cups are found in Byblos and are sometimes associated with a votive context <sup>33</sup>. Cups were only found at Sidon in this mud-brick building. Further investigation of the Early Bronze Age levels will allow us to assess their exact function.

**Conclusion**  
 Previous interpretations presented at a British Museum conference on the “close of the Early Bronze Age in the Levant”, argued that there was no EB IV period at Sidon <sup>34</sup>. This was based on the conclusion that there was no break in urban life between two urban eras <sup>35</sup>, the lack of change in both, settlement patterns and demographic balance and the fact that no clear new ceramic styles were found.



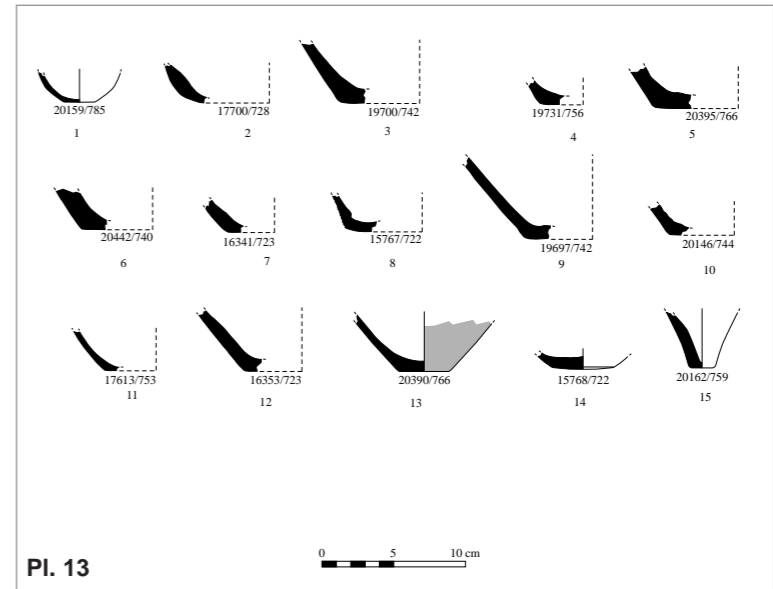
Sidon's mud brick building was destroyed in a fire but no other destruction has so far been encountered. Instead the constant occupation has been stressed all along with pottery shapes which are a continuation of the earlier material found on site. New pottery shapes were found in this mud brick building together with the overwhelming continuity of other types. Despite the appearance of these new shapes, no obvious breakdown in urban life was observed and the building was covered by the thick layer of sand from the beginning of the second millennium BC <sup>36</sup>. Based on these indications a revised label for the last phase of the early Bronze Age at Sidon remains unlikely (see also p. 21).



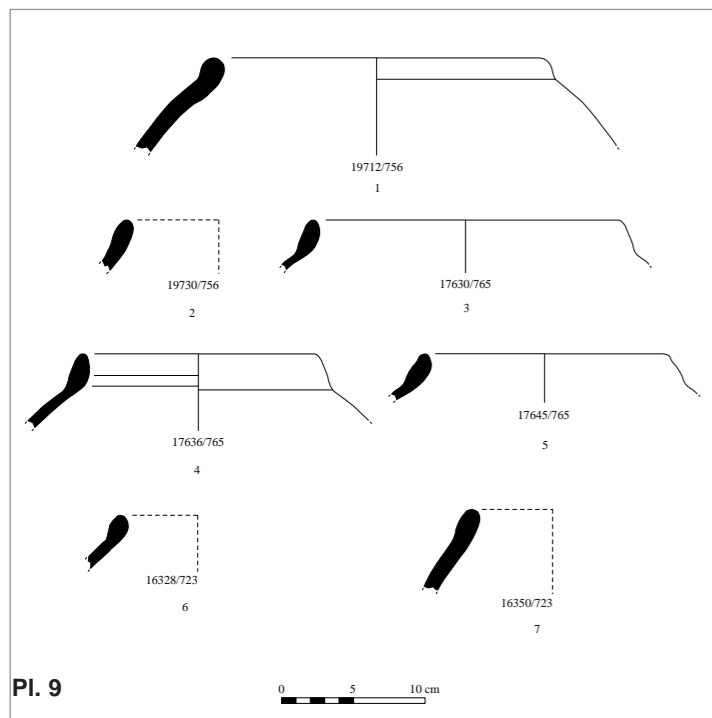
Pl. 10

Plans are drawn by Hugh Barnes & James Osborne and scanned by Guy Hopkinson.

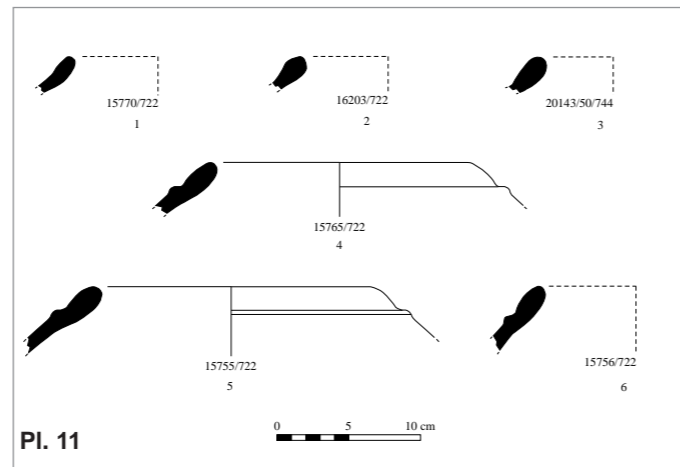
Pottery is drawn by Norma Sfeir-Khoury and scanned by Ramy Yassine.



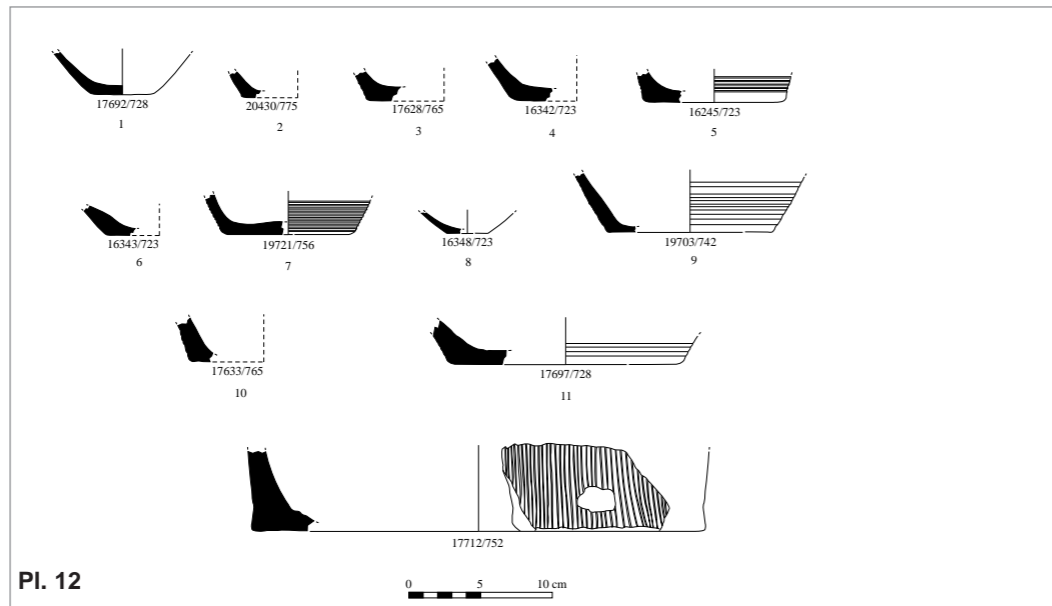
Pl. 13



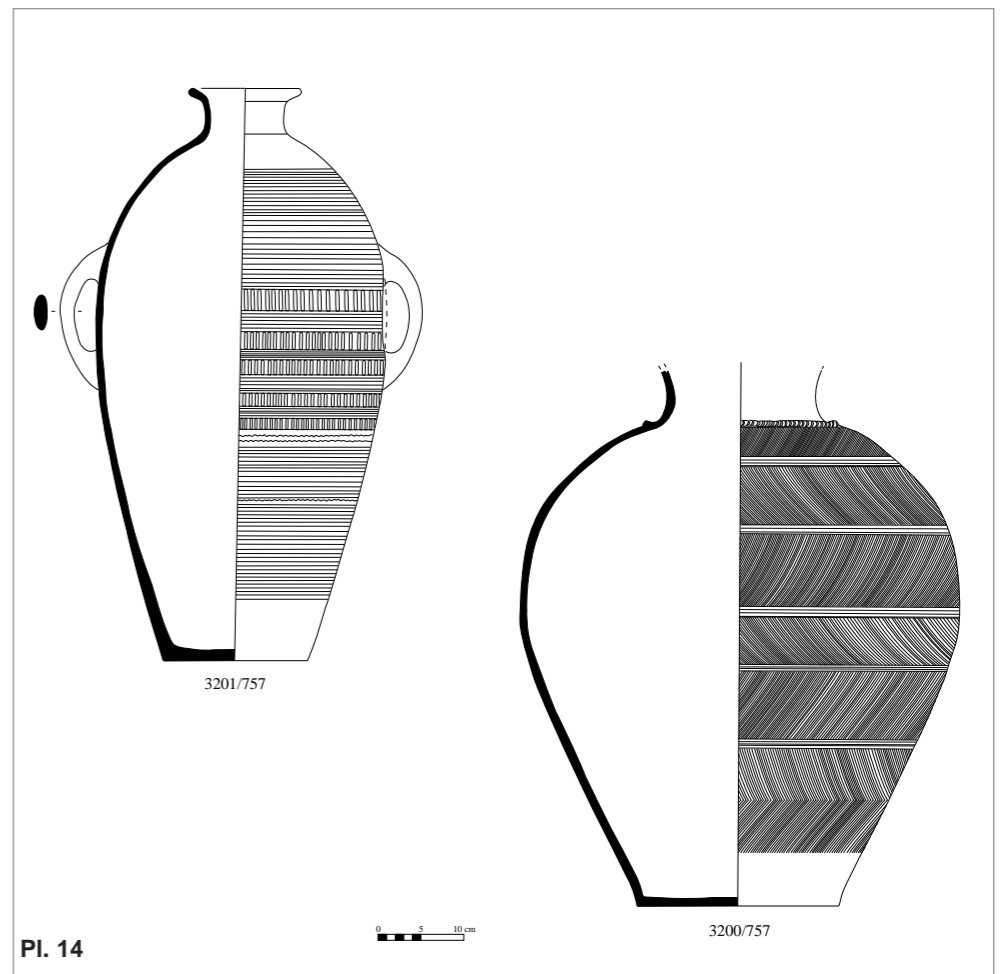
Pl. 9



Pl. 11



Pl. 12



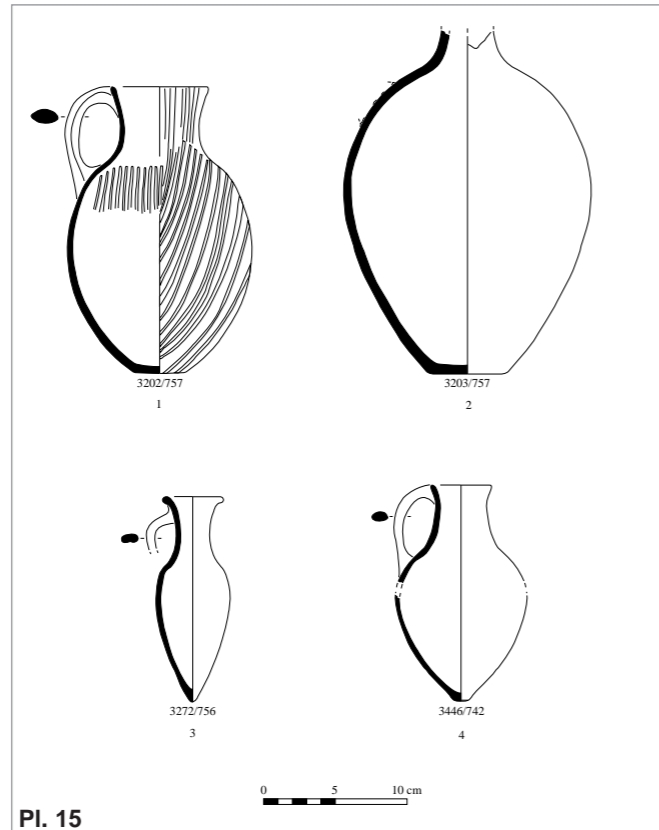
Pl. 14

**NOTES**

- 1 C. Doumet-Serhal, 2006.  
 2 C. Doumet-Serhal, 2006, p. 58.  
 3 One bowl with a groove also in found in Sidon stratum 6, pl. 105, 10, stratum 6, p. 189, finds comparisons in Tell Arqa, J.-P. Thalmann, 2006, pl. 47, 39, phase R, p. 113-114, fig. 41.  
 4 C. Doumet-Serhal, 2006, p. 8, 21.  
 5 J.-P. Thalmann, 2006, type C 6 phase R (EB III, 2700-2400), pl. 46, 12.  
 6 J.-C. Courtois, 1962, p. 437, fig. 25, F, Ugarit Ancien 3.  
 7 For comparison see J. - Courtois, 1962, fig. 30, c, Ugarit Ancien 2.  
 8 C. Doumet-Serhal, 2006, p. 48, pl. 50, 51.  
 9 C. Doumet-Serhal, 2006, p. 48.  
 10 C. Doumet-Serhal, 2006, p. 51, pl. 108, 18.  
 11 J. B. Hennessy, 1867, pl. IX, 93 a, EB IIIB, p. 15.  
 12 C. Doumet-Serhal, 2006, from stratum 4 to stratum 6, for ex. p. 46.  
 13 S. Mazzoni, 1985, fig. 4. 2-4; fig. 5. 1, 2, 4, 9; fig. 7. 9.  
 14 S. Mazzoni, 2002, p. 78.  
 15 S. Mazzoni, 2002, p. 78.  
 16 J.-P. Thalmann, 2006, fig. 44, p. 116.  
 17 P. de Miroshedji, 1988, p. 197, p. 27, 16.  
 18 S. Mazzoni, 2002, p. 76.  
 19 C. Doumet-Serhal, 2006, p. 49.

- 20 C. Doumet-Serhal, 2006, pl. 90, 1; 109, 1.  
 21 S. Mazzoni, 1987, p. 147.  
 22 S. Mazzoni, 1987, 147.  
 23 M. Saghieh, 1983, pl. XLIII, 7564 bis, JI/JII; 7592, p. 120-121; fig. 116, 7595, p. 121; 7623, p. 123, fig. 114.

- 33 M. Saghieh, 2006, p. 97, 115.  
 34 C. Doumet-Serhal, (forthcoming). 16  
 35 I. Finkelstein, 1996, p. 115; G. Palumbo, 2001, p. 233-234.  
 36 C. Doumet-Serhal, 2004, p. 89-90.



Pl. 15

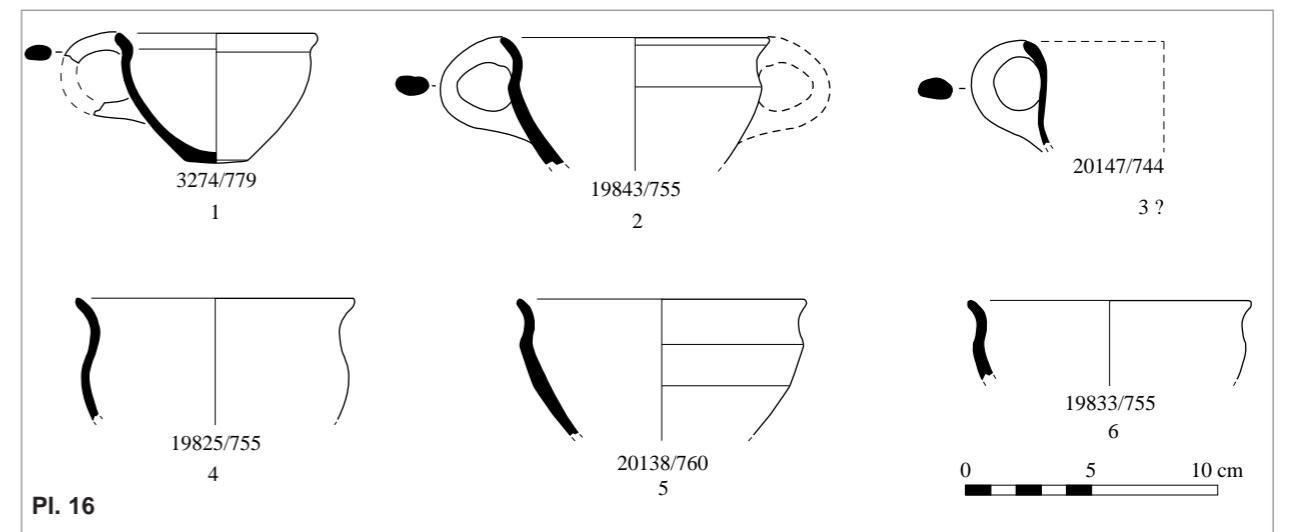
- 24 S. Mazzoni, 1987, fig. 23, 24-25, p. 149.  
 25 S. Mazzoni, 1987, p. 149.  
 26 M. Saghieh, 1983, pl. XXXVI, 5101, p. 92.  
 27 J. B. Hennessy, 1967, p. 15, pl. IX, 92, EB IIIB.  
 28 M. Saghieh, 1983, pl. XLIV, 130, JI/JII, p. 95.  
 29 J. D. Seger, 1989, p. 130-131, fig. 8-8, 9.  
 30 S. Richard, 1980, p. 17.  
 31 R. Amiran, 1969, p. 61-62.  
 32 J.-P. Thalmann, 2006, p. 112-113, pl. 47, 6-14.

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Pl. 16