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Aarhus University, Ceramics in Context
June 13th, 2016

CERAMICS IN CONTEXT: MIDDLE ISLAMIC POTTERY FROM THE NORTHWEST QUARTER OF JERASH

CERAMICS IN CONTEXT PROJECT: HTTP://PROJECTS.AU.DK/CERAMICS-IN-CONTEXT/
DANISH-GERMAN NORTHWEST QUARTER PROJECT: HTTP://PROJECTS.AU.DK/INTERNATIONALJERASHEXCAVATION/

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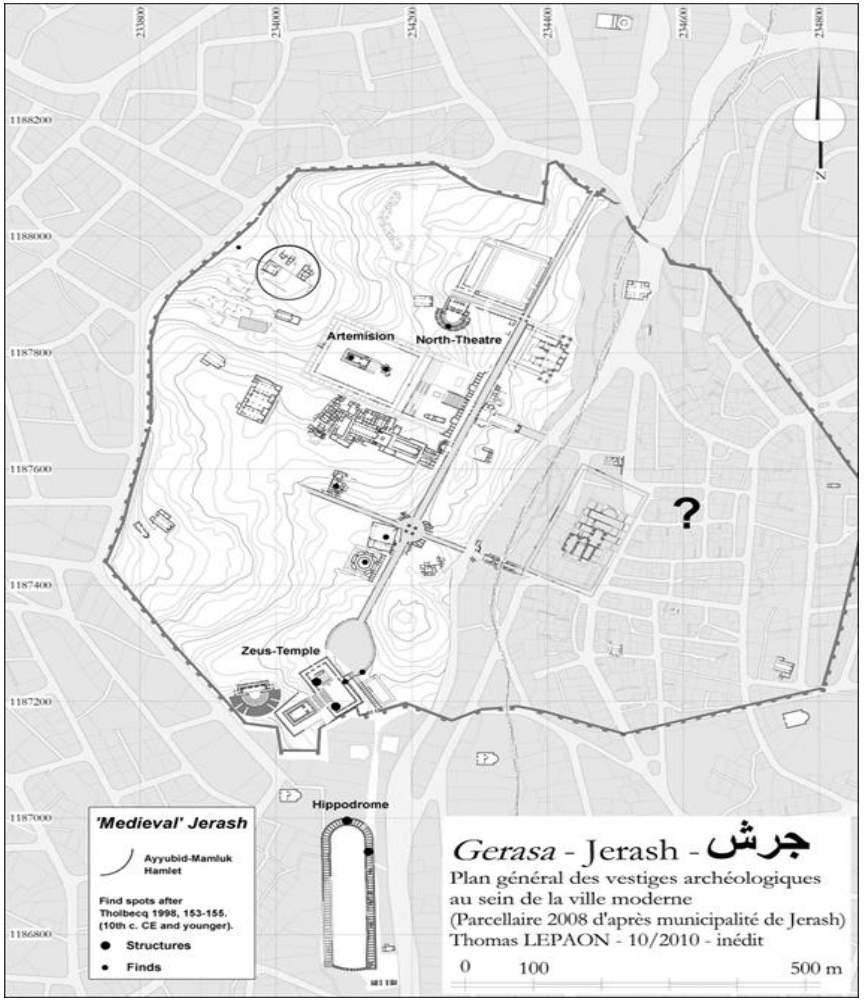
SUMMARY

- Introduction to the Study Area and Research Questions/Aims.
- Ceramics in Context Project:
  - Pottery from Trench D, Evidence 9
  - Pottery from Trench E, Evidence 17
  - Daily Life Objects of a Room in Trench D
- Overview of Middle Islamic Pottery in the Northwest Quarter
- Conclusions and Future Research

Mediterranean Sea
LEBANON
Damascus
SYRIA
IRAQ
ISRAEL
Haifa
Jarash
West Bank
Amman
SAUDI ARABIA
SAUDI ARABIA
ISRAEL
Jordan
International boundary
Governorate (muḥāfaẓah) boundary
National capital
Governorate (muḥāfaẓah) capital
Railroad
Expressway
Road
A governorate has the same name as its capital except where noted.
0 25 50 Kilometers
0 25 50 Miles
Lambert Conformal Conic Projection, SP 29° 47' N / 33° 55' N
*Israeli occupied with current status subject to the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement – permanent status to be determined through further negotiation.
Israel proclaimed Jerusalem as its capital in 1950, but the US, like nearly all other countries, maintains its embassy in Tel Aviv.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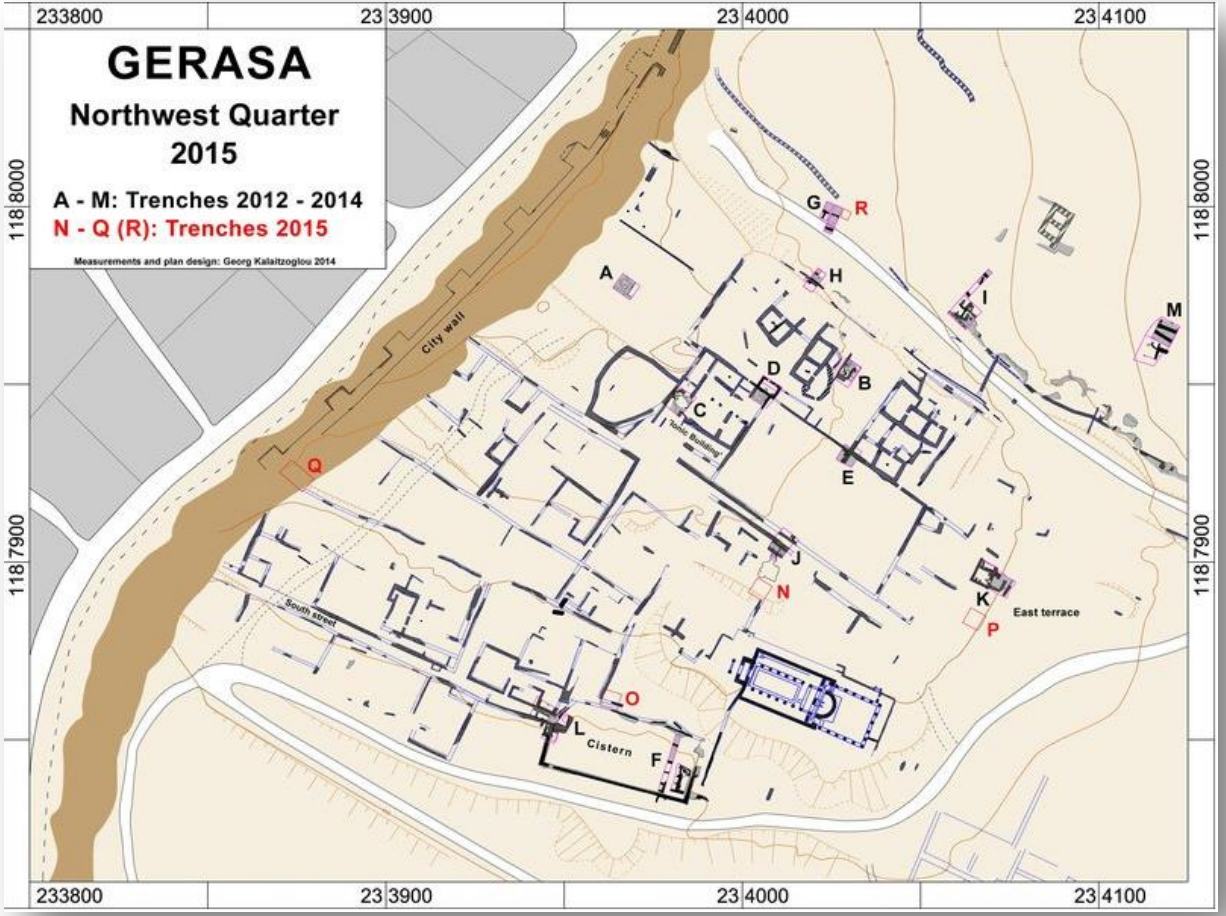
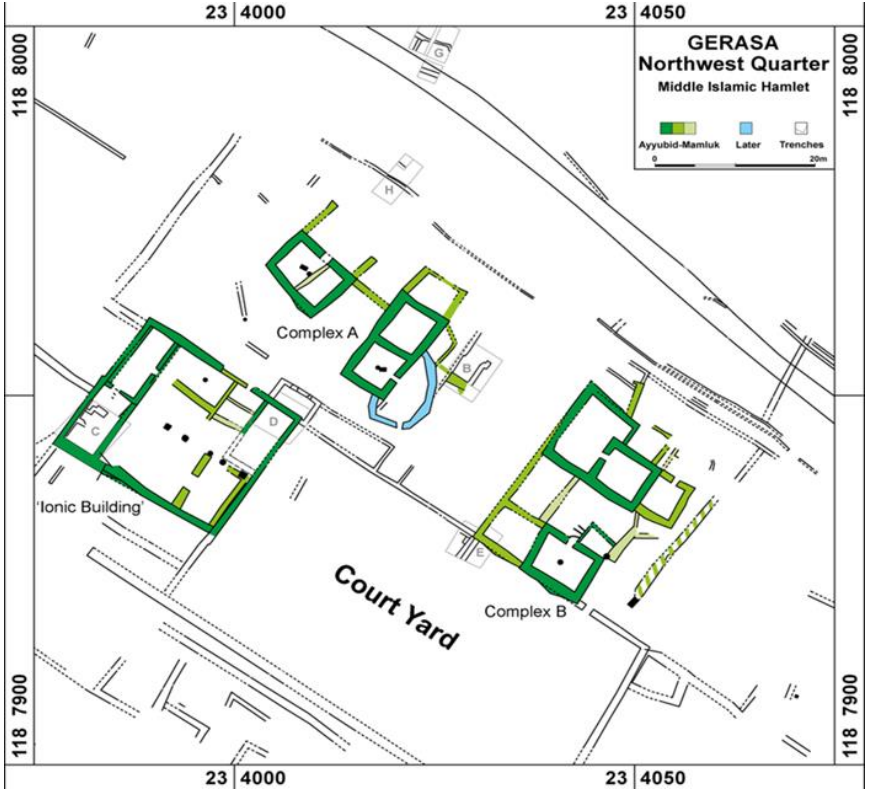
Artemision
North-Theatre
Zeus-Temple
Hippodrome
?
'Medieval' Jerash
Ayyubid-Mamluk Hamlet
Find spots after Tholbecq 1998, 153-155. (10th c. CE and younger).
Structures
Finds
Gerasa - Jerash - جرش
Plan général des vestiges archéologiques au sein de la ville moderne
(Parcellaire 2008 d'après municipalité de Jerash)
Thomas LEPAON - 10/2010 - inédit
0 100 500 m

Areas Excavated as of 2015 (Danish-German Northwest Quarter Project)



Layout of Middle Islamic Hamlet

- Settlement in NW Quarter continues well into the Middle Islamic period.
- Consists of larger, and more representative courtyard house ("Ionic Building") connected to two other complexes (A+B).
- Complex A and B have both one room houses and several agglomerated rooms.



CERAMICS IN CONTEXT PROJECT

- The discovery of both Middle Islamic pottery and a substantial node of Middle Islamic settlement laid the foundations for the present PhD project.

- As part of the *Ceramics in Context* project, my research aims to examine the ceramic material of the Middle Islamic complex contextually in order to better understand the settlement history across the hilltop of the Northwest Quarter of Jerash.

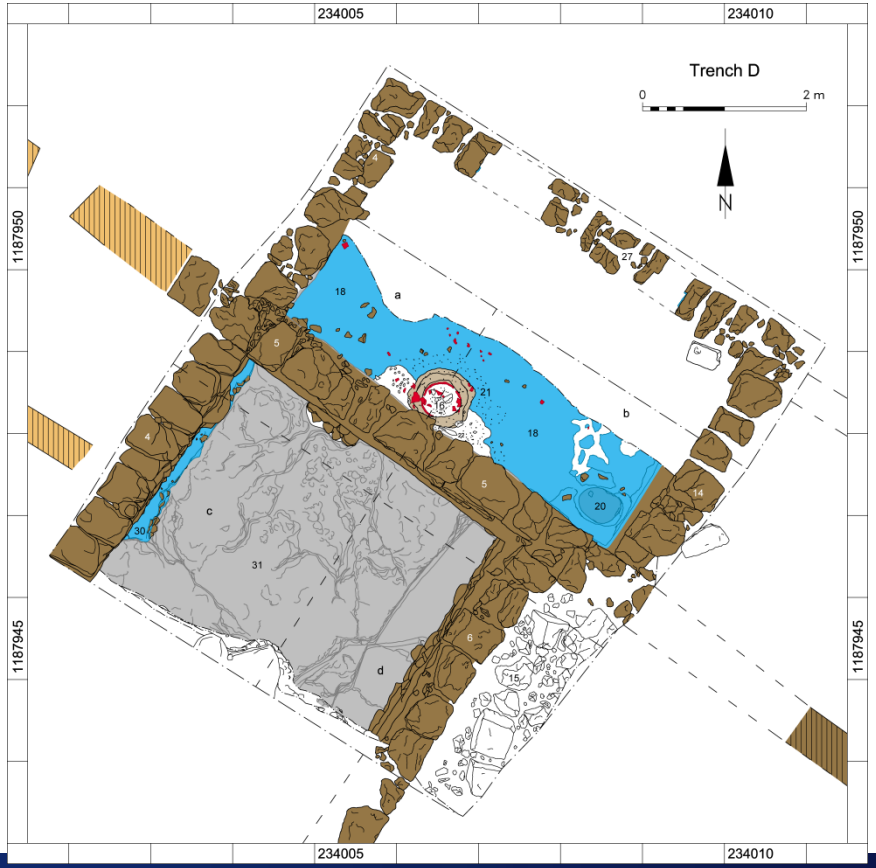
RESEARCH QUESTIONS/AIMS

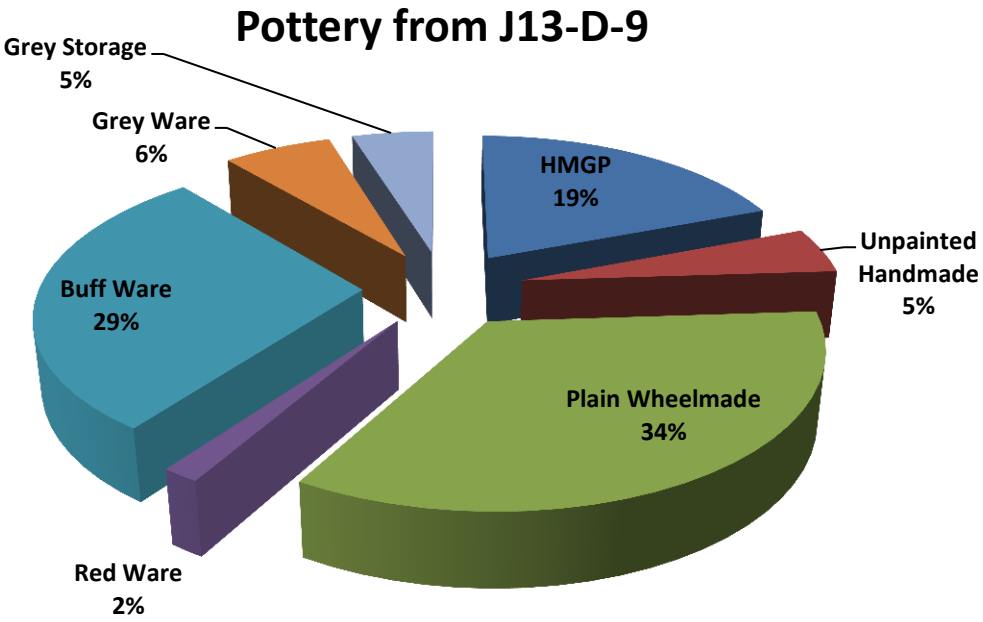
1) Does the settlement in the Northwest Quarter relate to the node of Middle Islamic settlement at the Temple of Zeus or agriculture activity south of the hill?
2) Can a chronological sequence be created for the Middle Islamic pottery in Jerash?
   - Can chrono-typological variations be identified throughout the hamlets 3 phases of development in order to better date M.I activity in both Jerash and surrounding regions?
   - Attempt to better understand Middle Islamic wheelmade plain wares.
3) Through contextual analysis, what can we learn about daily life, settlement history, production, and demographics?
4) Beyond form and function, explore how pottery is treated and used by actors in the past, thus providing insight into social life during this much less understood period of history.
5) By analyzing the pottery both contextually and empirically, is it possible to understand the role of Jerash within a larger regional framework across both time and space?

POTTERY FROM TRENCH D, EVIDENCE 9 (EXCAVATED 2013)

Trench D-Evidence 9

- 1 of 4 evidences consisting of the collapse and decay deposits inside the house.
- South of the wall (ev. 5), evidence 9 covers further collapse layers and the walk-on level.
- Greyish soil and stones, with a substantial amount of Middle Islamic finds:
  - Handmade (HMGP and unpainted)
  - Buff Ware
  - Wheelmade Plain and Grey Wares
  - Metal Utensil?




Pottery from J13-D-9
Grey Storage
5%
Grey Ware
6%
HMGP
19%
Unpainted
Handmade
5%
Buff Ware
29%
Plain Wheelmade
34%
Red Ware
2%

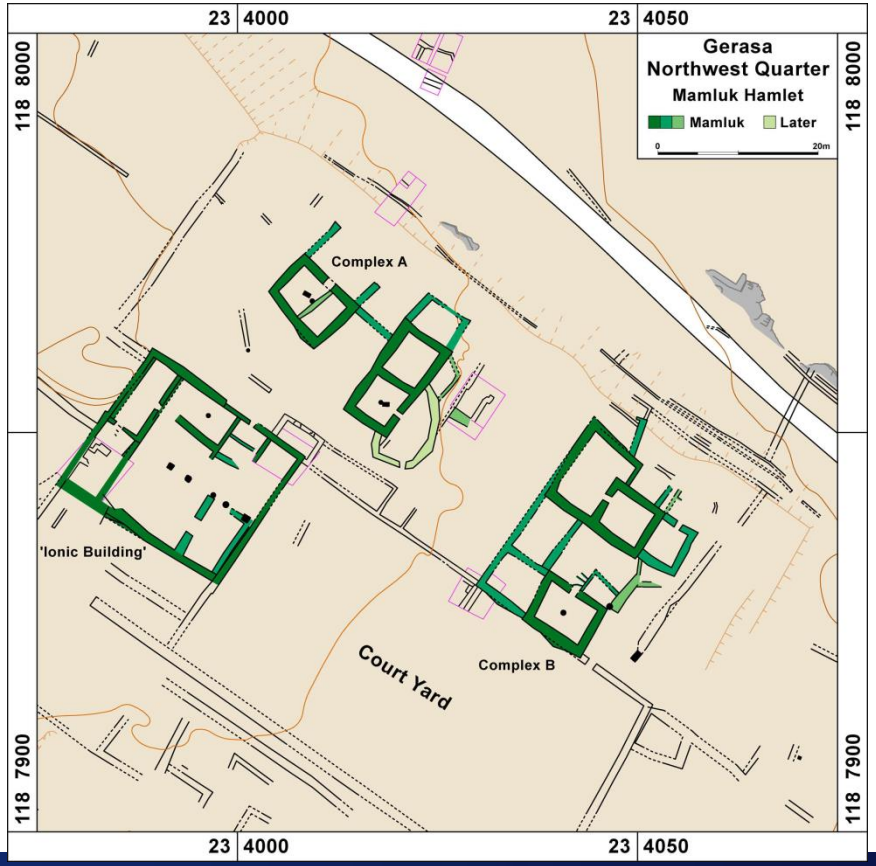
J13-Da-9
exc.: 11/08/13
reg.: 14/08/13

J13-D-9
exc.: 29/07/13
reg.: 31/07/13

J13 - D - 9
exc.: 28/07/13
reg.: 30/07/13

Pottery Join to Trench E (ev. 17)

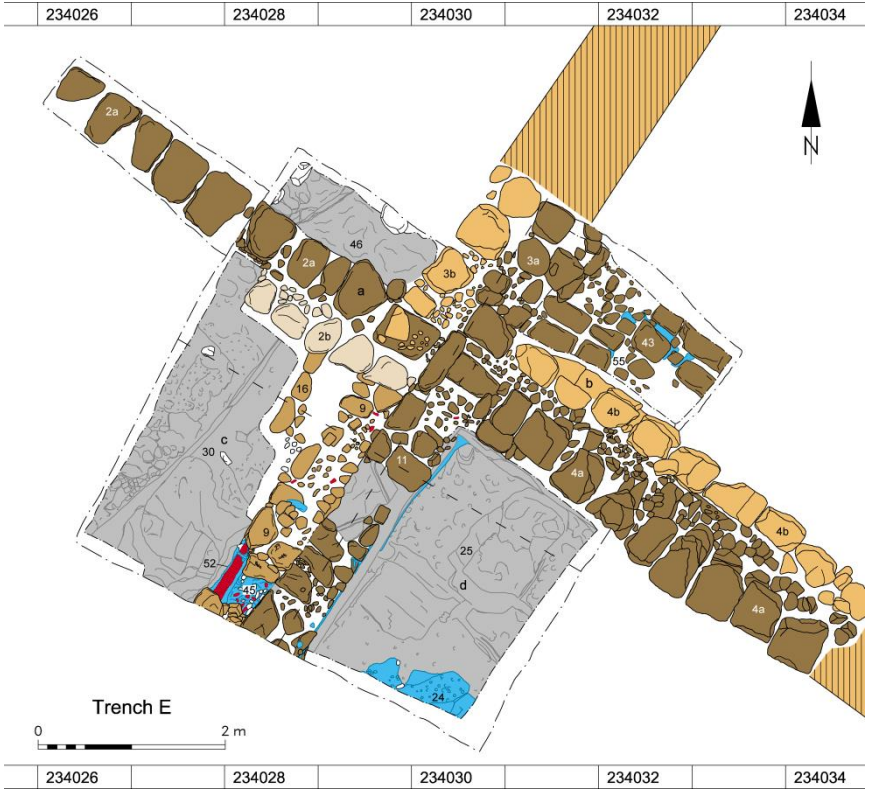
- Trench D and E are not only linked by an architectural feature (the E-W running wall), but also by the pottery.
- Evidence for the relationship between the “Ionic Building” and complex B.
- As an individual context, ev. 9 is both situated within and linked to wider activity across the hilltop where a substantial Middle Islamic complex was planned and realized.

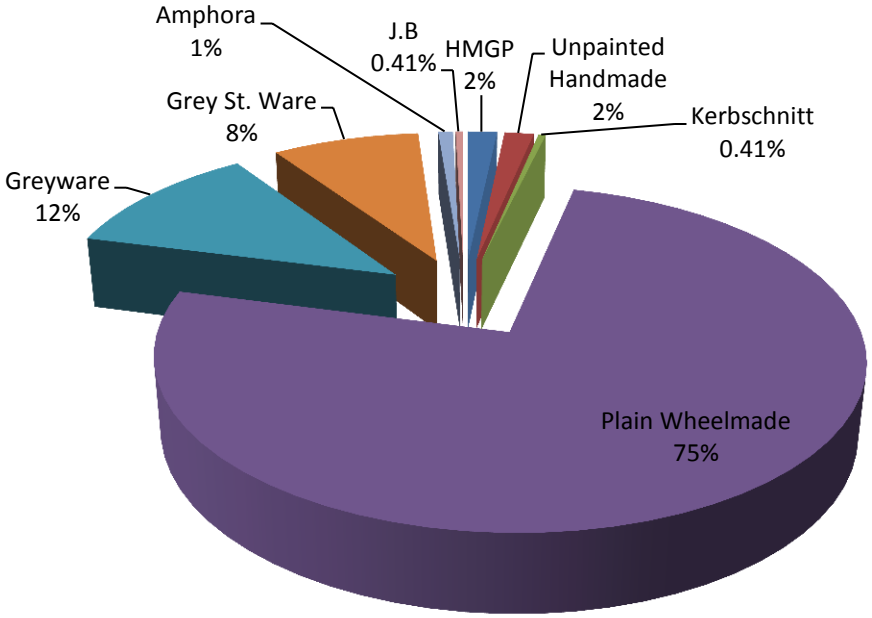


POTTERY FROM TRENCH E, EVIDENCE 17 (EXCAVATED 2013)

Trench E-Evidence 17

- Soil Layer in the interior of the Middle Islamic building, under both stone collapse and surface soil.
- Intrusions from earlier periods due to modern disturbances and soil movement.
- Fewer diagnostic finds in comparison to Trench D (ev. 9)





Pottery from J13-E-17

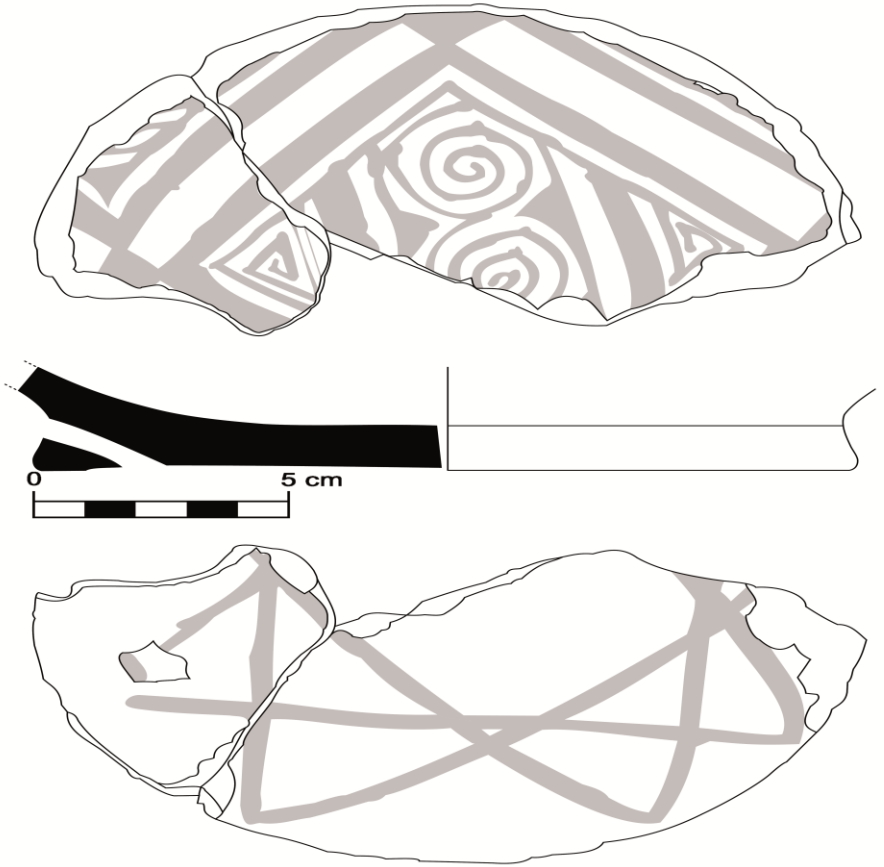
13-Eb-17
exc.: 04/08/13
reg.: 05/08/13

20 cm

Understanding the pottery join

- Recognizing what the link might represent:
  1) Can result from same context running across more than one excavated area.
  2) Sequence of closely spaced actions.
  3) Sherds can also be disturbed and redeposited (i.e.) residual sherds or parts of the same vessel may reappear due to reuse of object in a new way.

- Discussion on my preliminary interpretations...



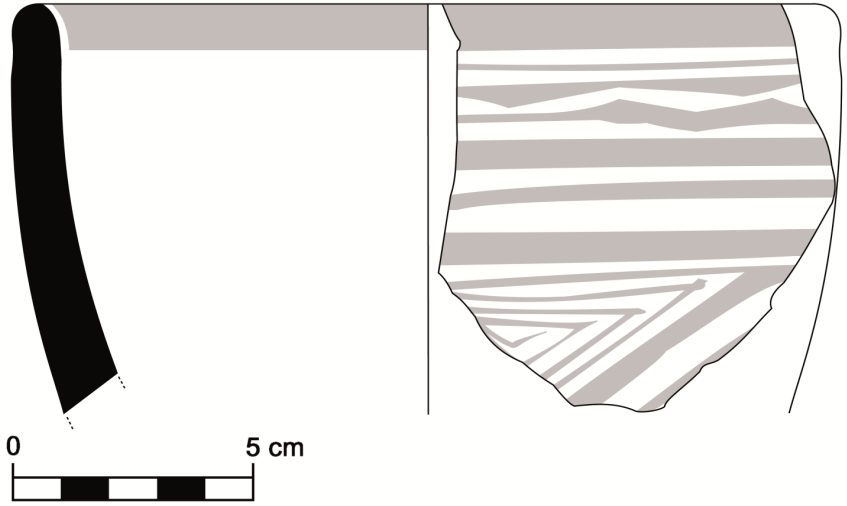
POTTERY AND DAILY OBJECTS FROM A ROOM IN TRENCH D

ROOM IN TRENCH D

- Evidence 9, and related collapse/deposits (ev.8,10, and 11) , covering the walk on level (ev. 23) both have documented pottery joins between them and consist of similar pottery types.

- By examining the pottery within these contexts closer, it provides a snapshot of the pottery inventory for the room.

- Only a conservative estimate, based upon pottery forms and size of diagnostic sherds (for ex. % of rim remaining), the historical reality likely included more vessels.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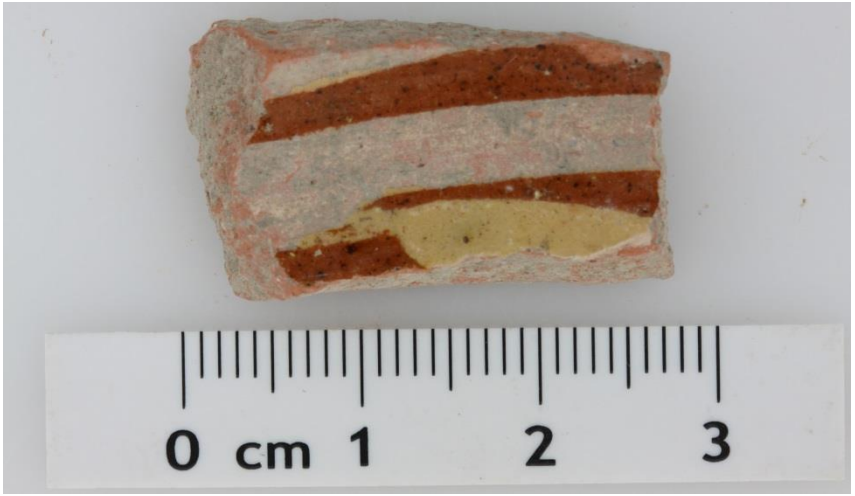
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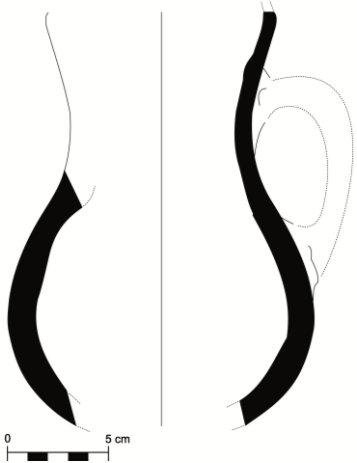
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ROOM INVENTORY 1/2

- Pottery
  1. 3-5 wheelmade bowls (incl. Buffware, plainware, dark greyware).
  2. 3-4 shallow handmade bowls and 2-3 deeper handmade bowls (primarily painted).
  3. At least 1 large 46cm serving dish.
  4. Elephant ear handle for either a cooking pot or serving dish?
  5. 2 plain handmade mini-bowls, 1 with a lid. Very small, container for sugar or oil?
  6. At least 2 HMGP jugs with handle and spout.
  7. 1-2 handmade painted plates.
  8. 1 open form slip painted glazed sherd, import from Palestine.
  9. 1 coarse grey storage container.
  10. 1 handmade mug or cup.

ROOM INVENTORY 2/2

- Bones: Many sheep/goat, little cow and bird, and a handful of pig.
- Possible metal utensil
- 1 pierced pearl bead (part of jewelry?)
- Amber bead
- Several glass black beads
- Metal jewelry (bracelet)
- Many unidentifiable corroded copper coins just above walk-on levels
  - Small metal weight, (possibly for weighing coinage?)
- Multi-colored painted plaster (wall paintings)

The Room in Trench D: Conclusions

- Wide range of pottery types. In comparison to other areas, the room in trench D mostly contains open forms (70-80%)
- Implications of glazed ware, beads (pearl, glass, amber), and multi-colored wall paintings.
- Possible interpretations on the room's function…
- The "Ionic Building's" role within the lager Middle Islamic hamlet and social life.

OVERVIEW OF MIDDLE ISLAMIC CERAMIC MATERIAL ACROSS THE NORTHWEST QUARTER

HANDMADE GEOMETRIC PAINTED WARE

FABRICS

10 cm

10 cm

10 cm

10 cm

20 cm

5
4
3
2
1
0
cm

5
4
3
2
1
0
cm

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10 cm

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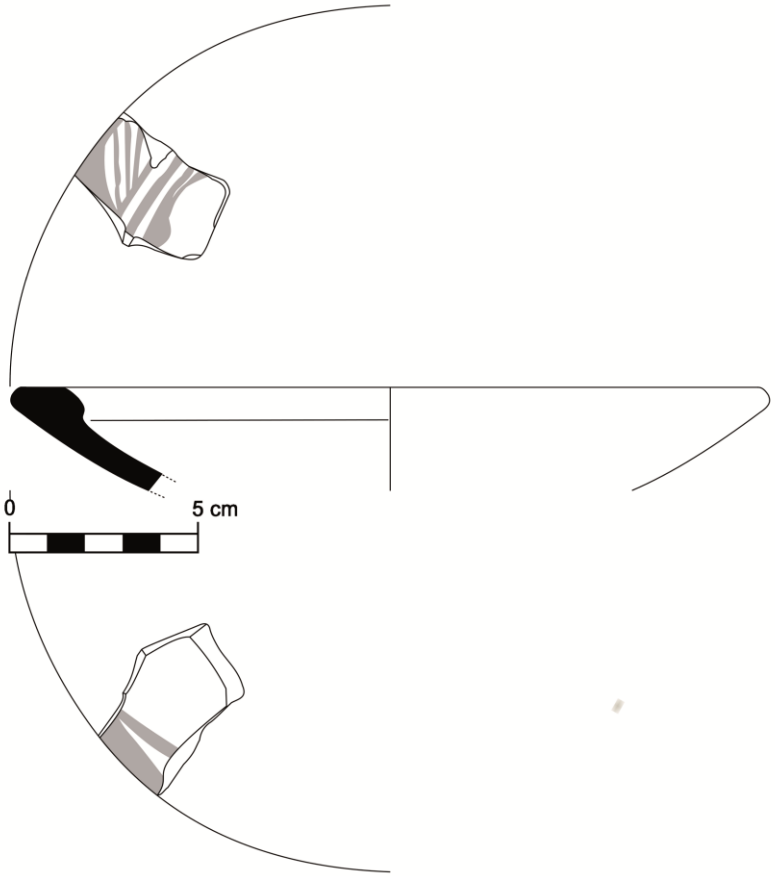
0 cm 1 2 3 4 5

10 cm

10 cm

10 cm

20 cm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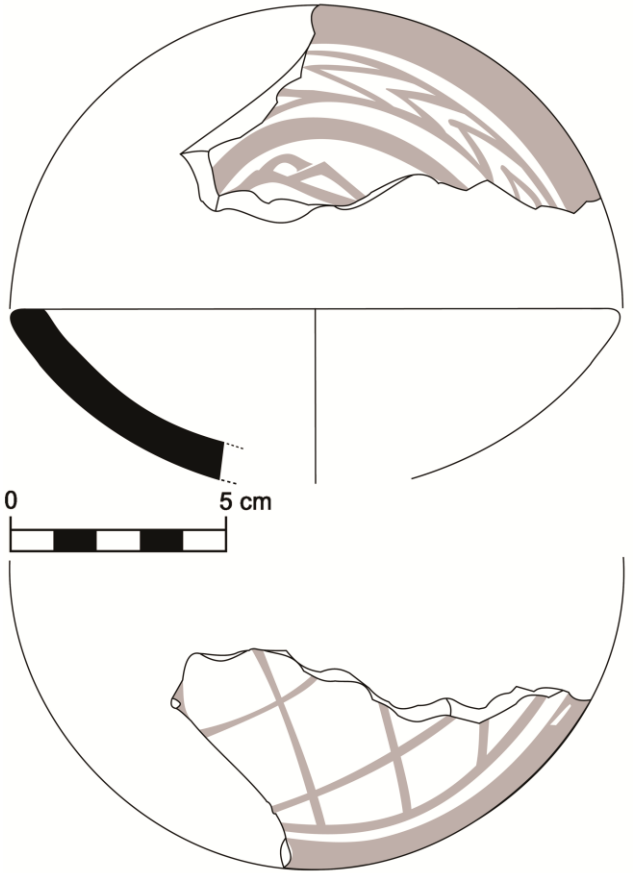
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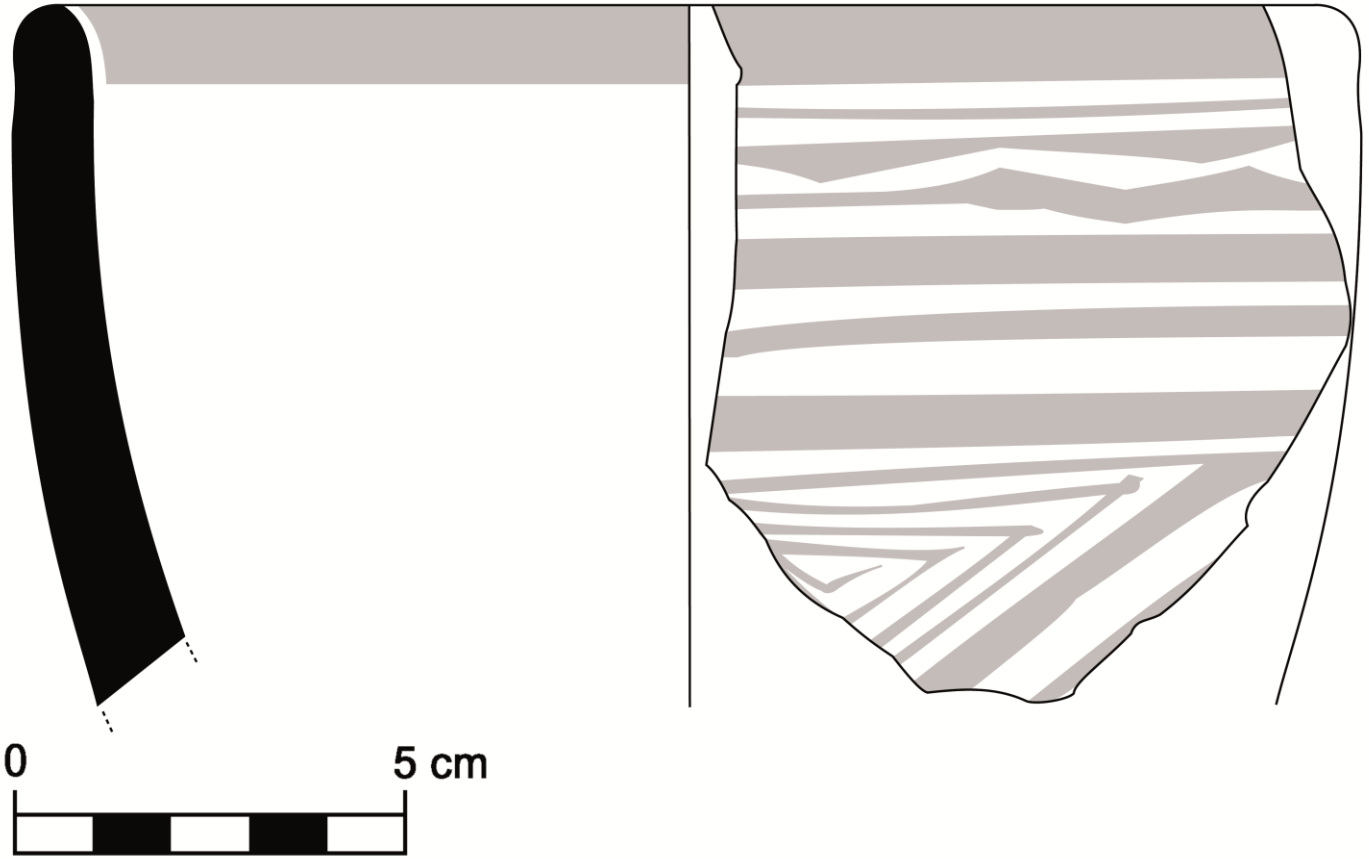
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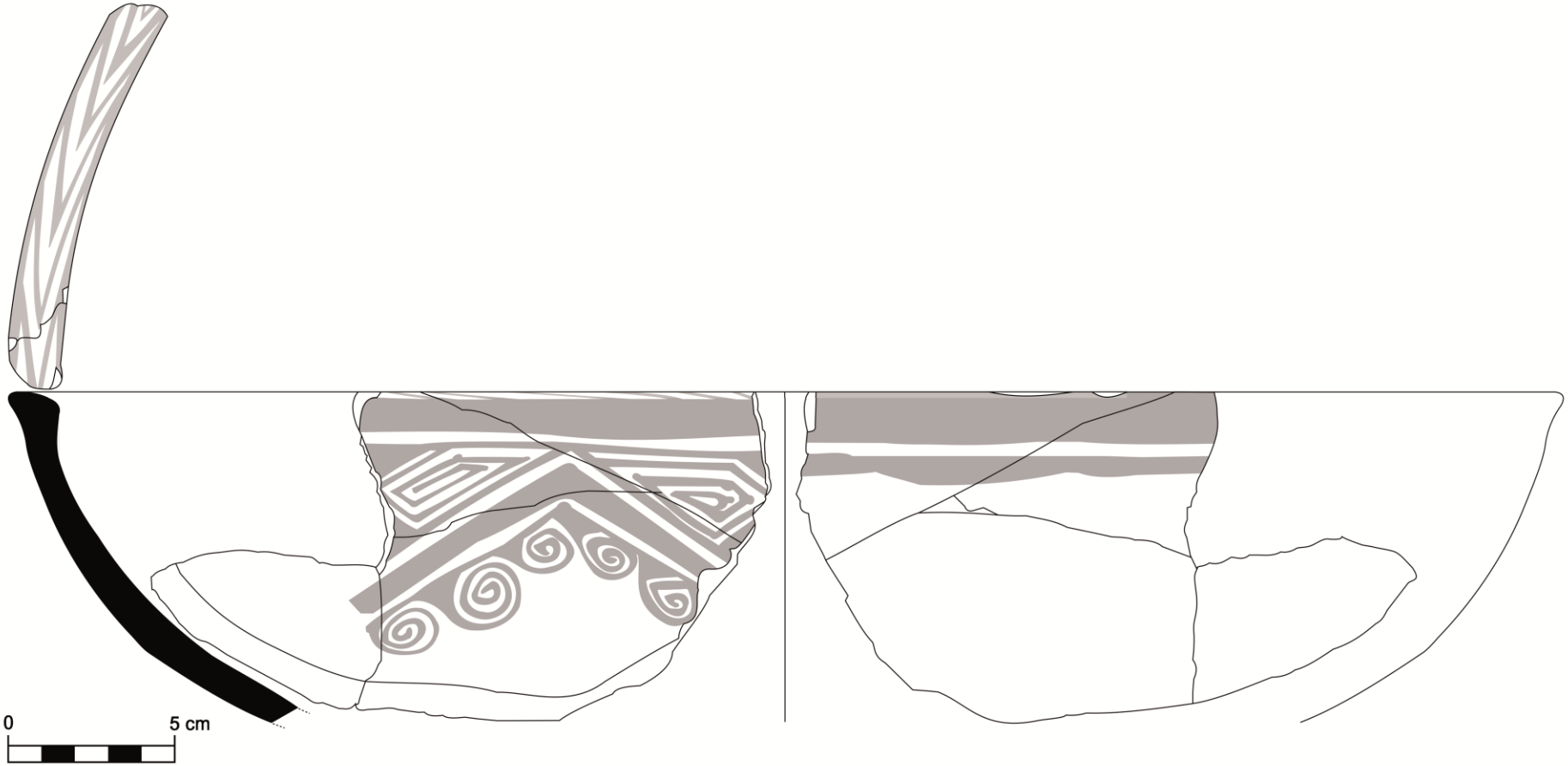
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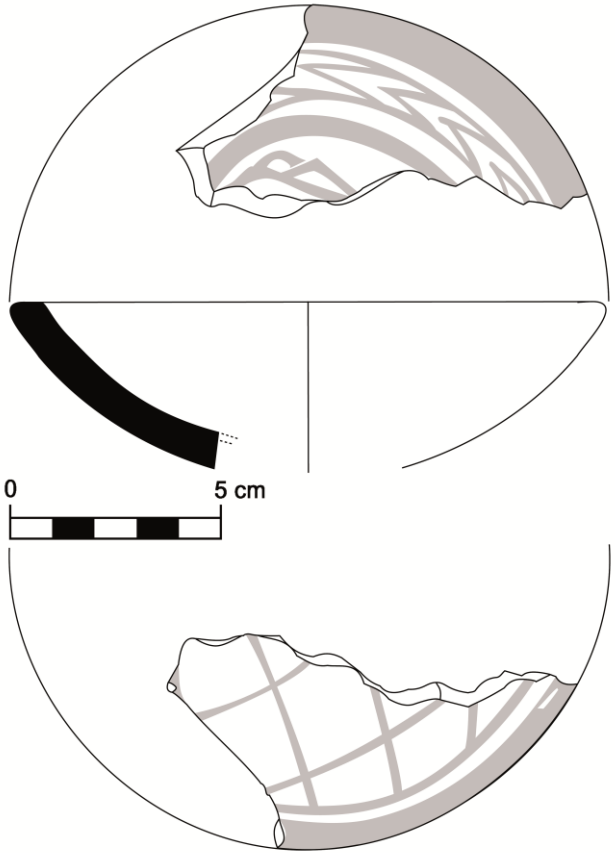
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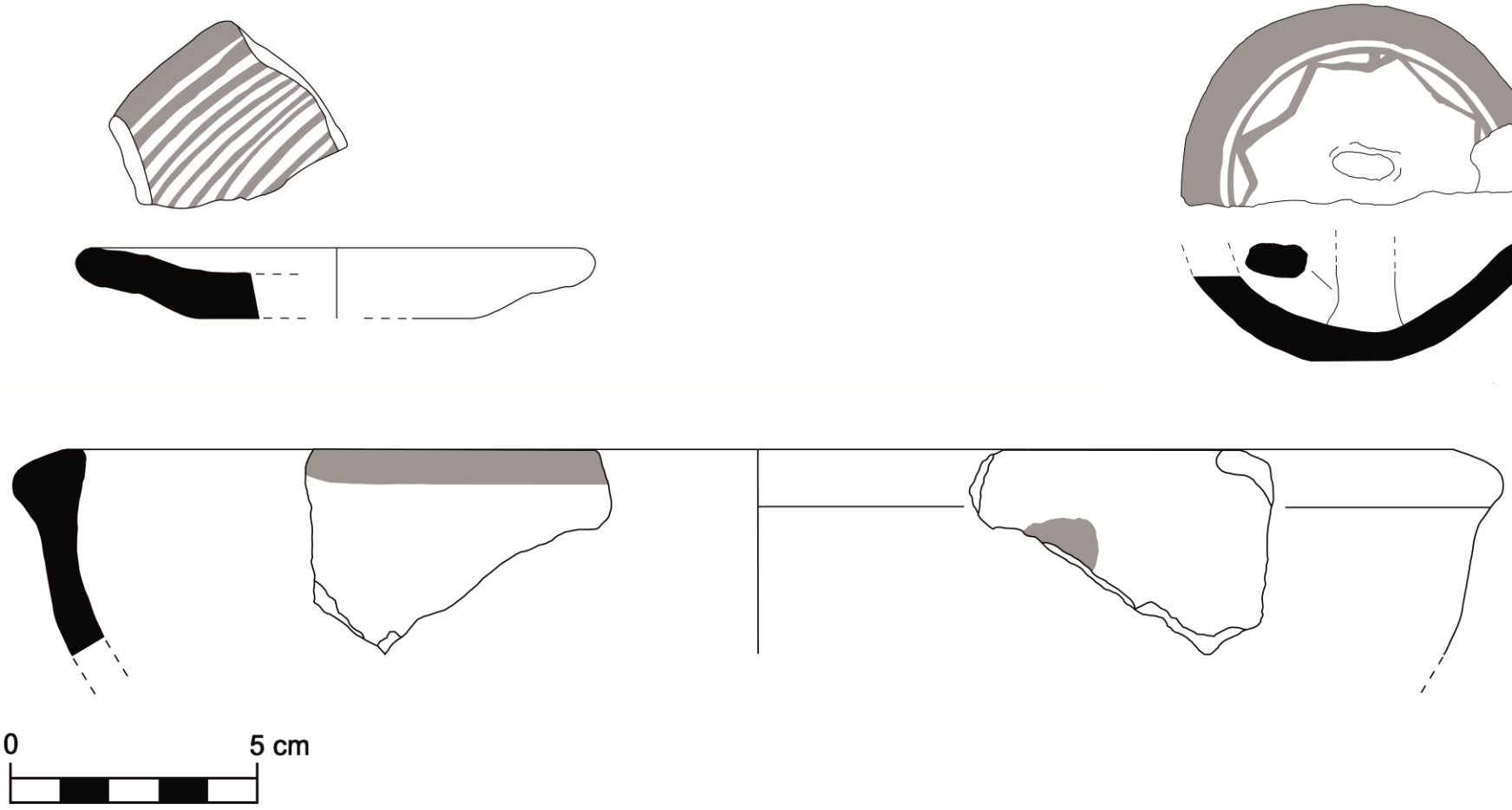
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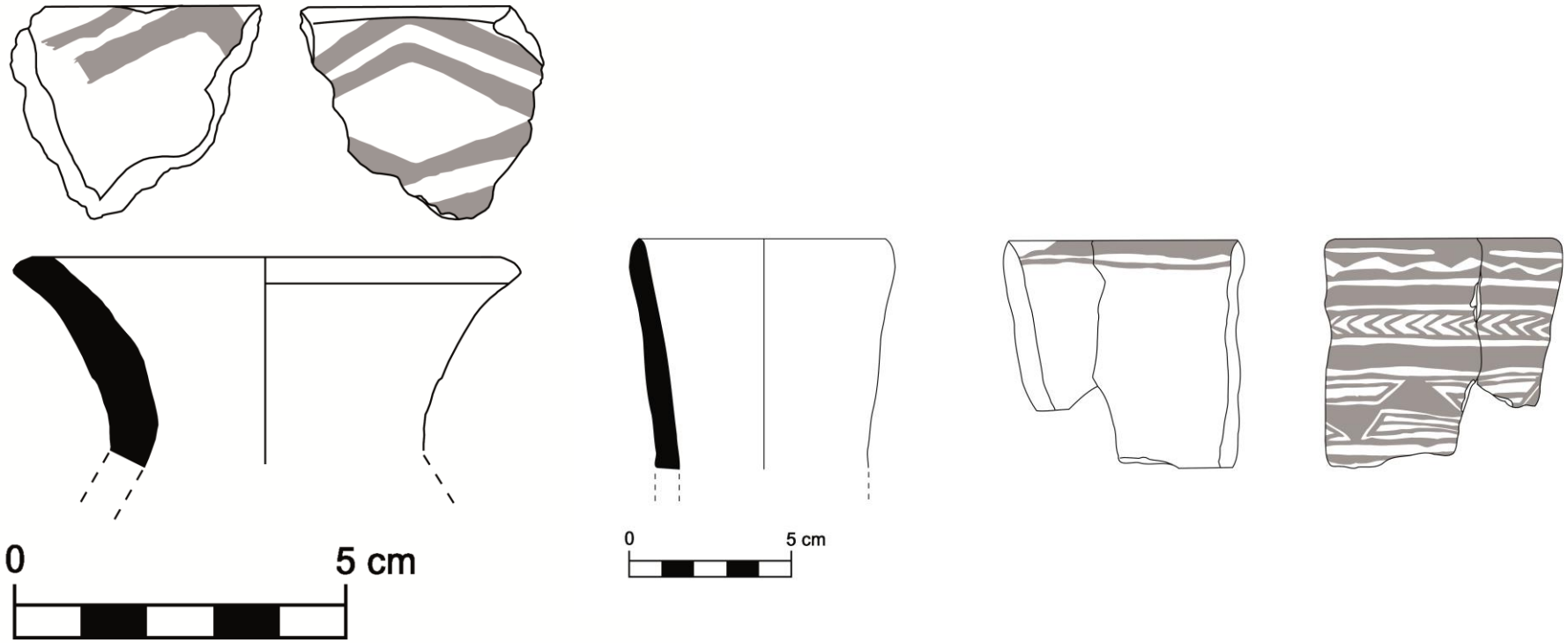
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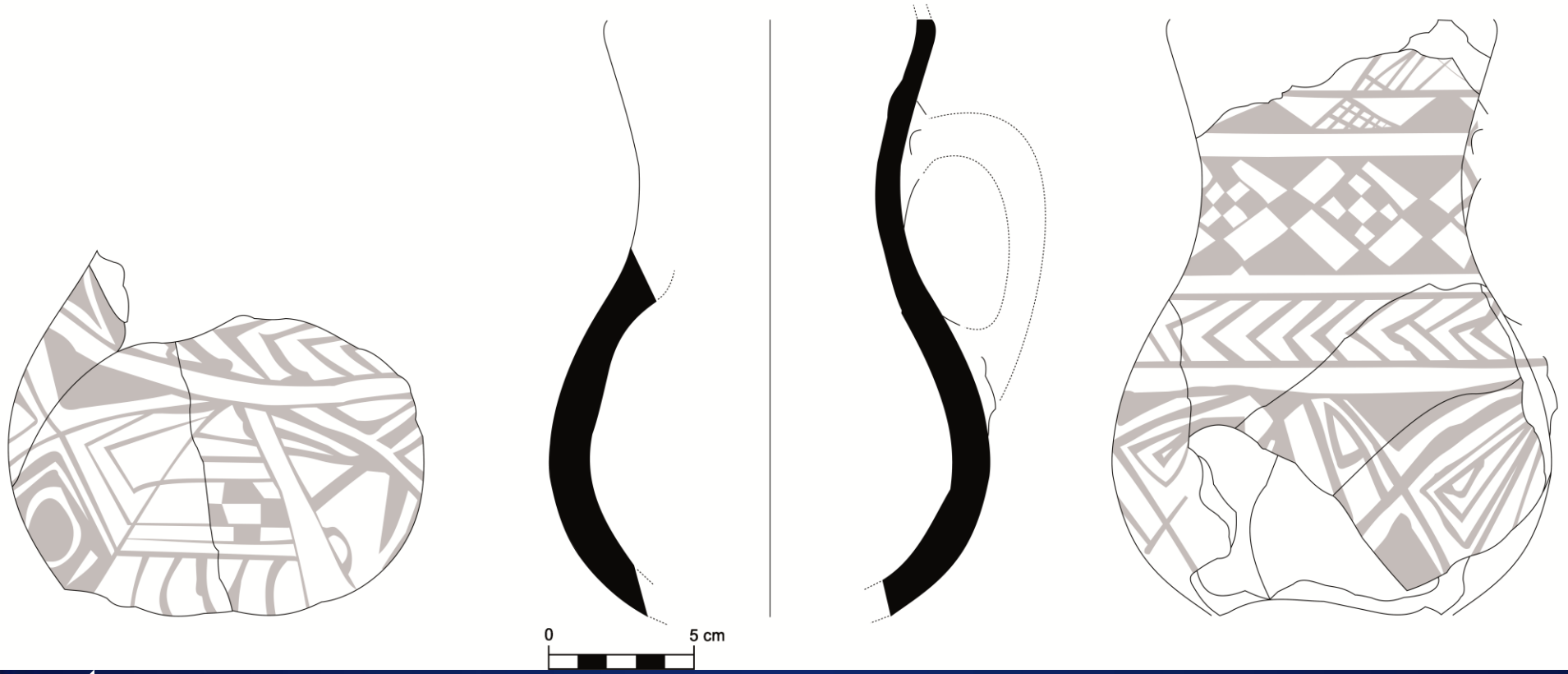
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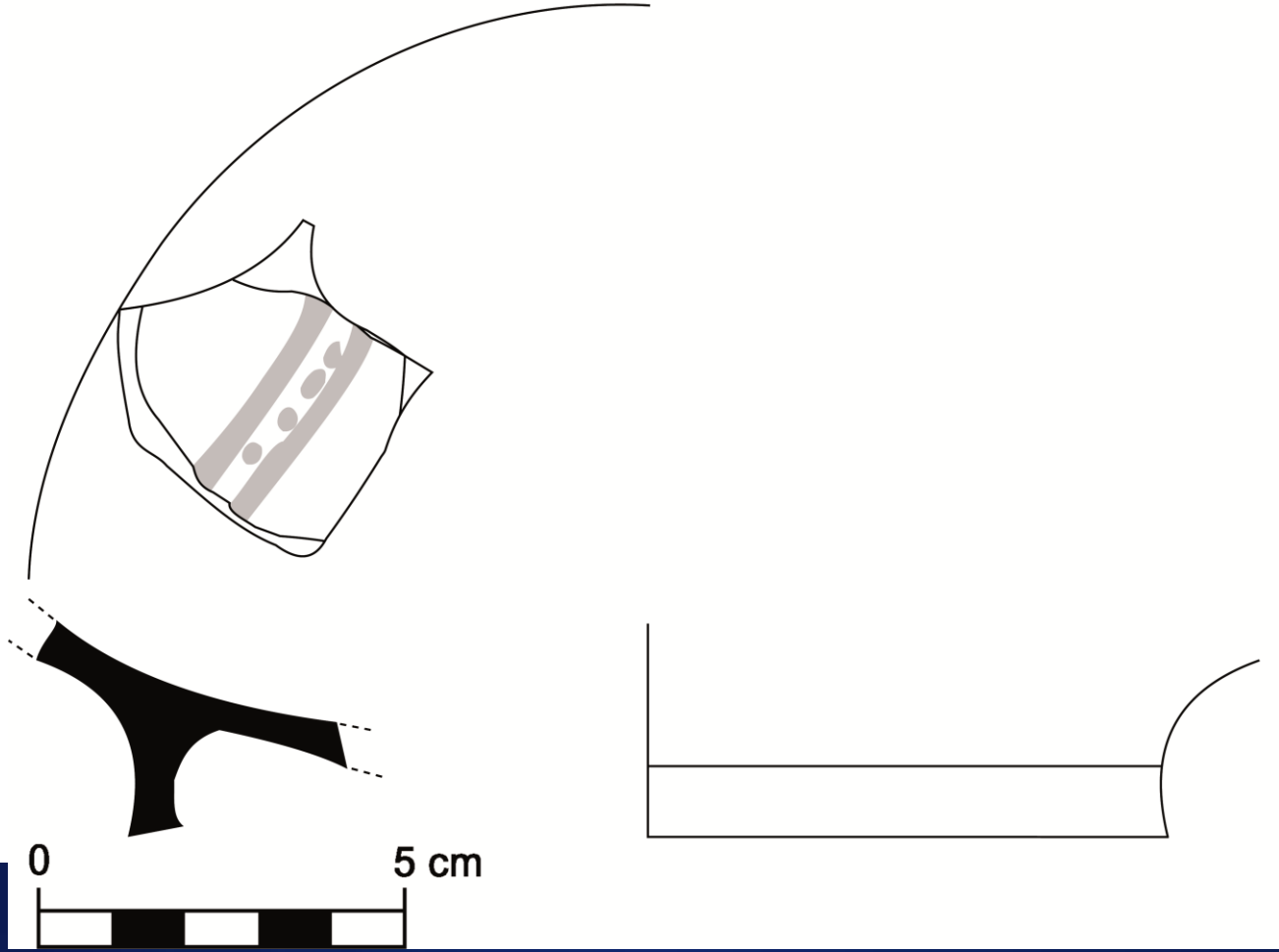
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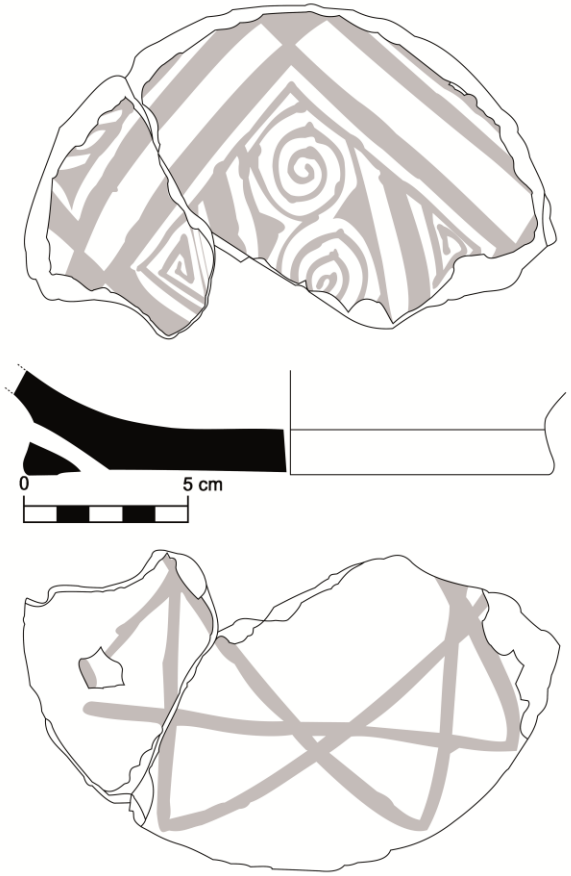
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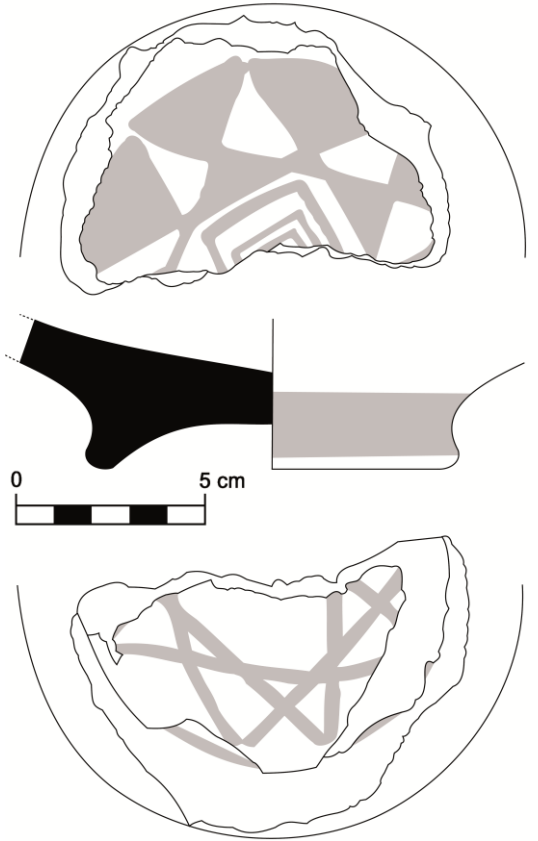
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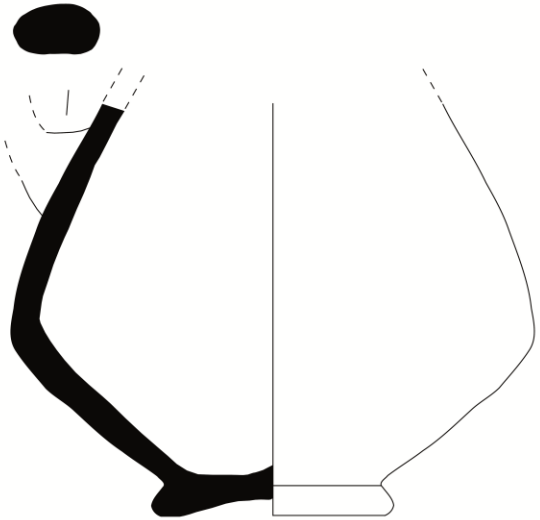

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13-D-25
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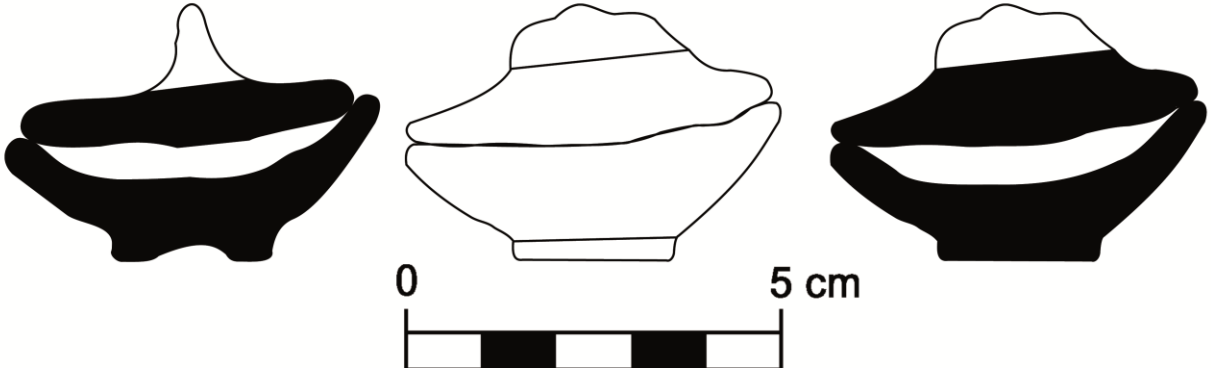
reg.: 21/08/13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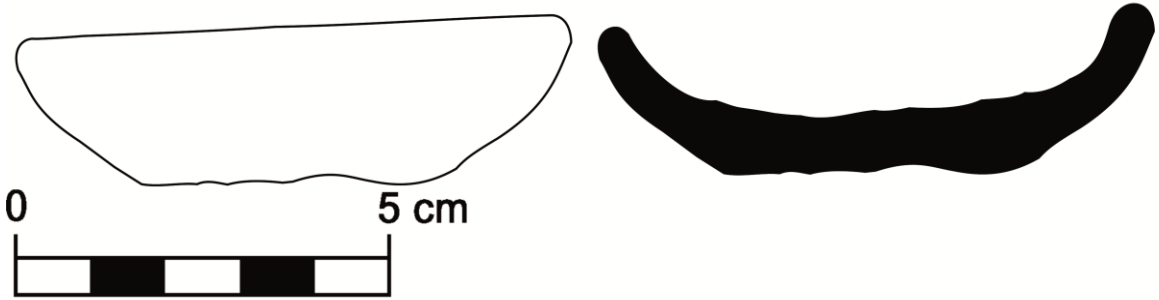
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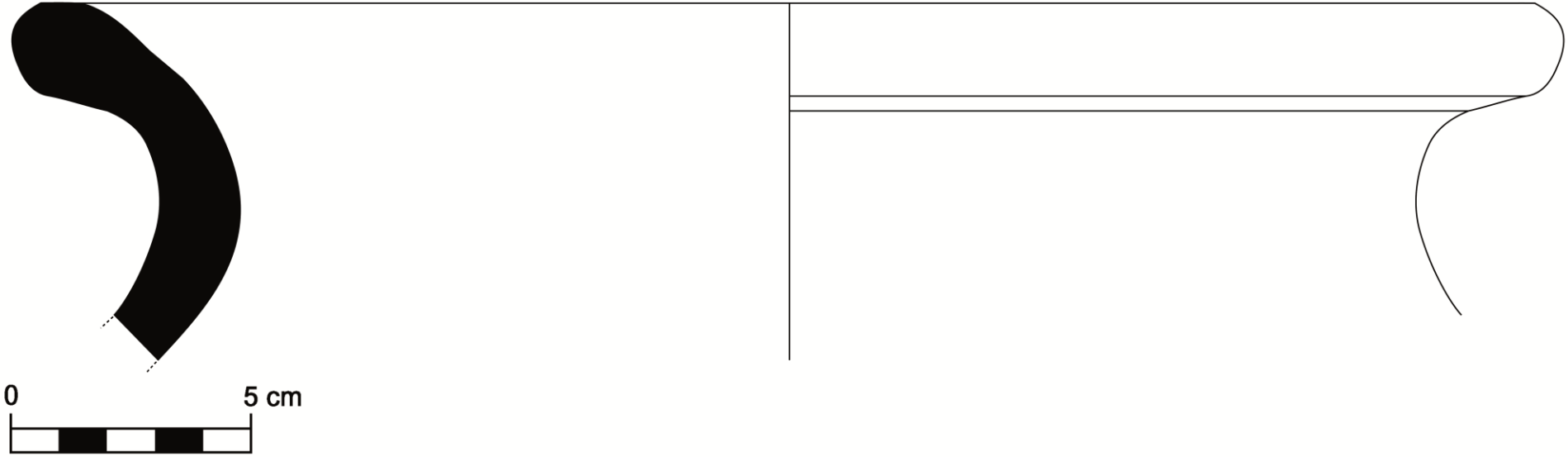
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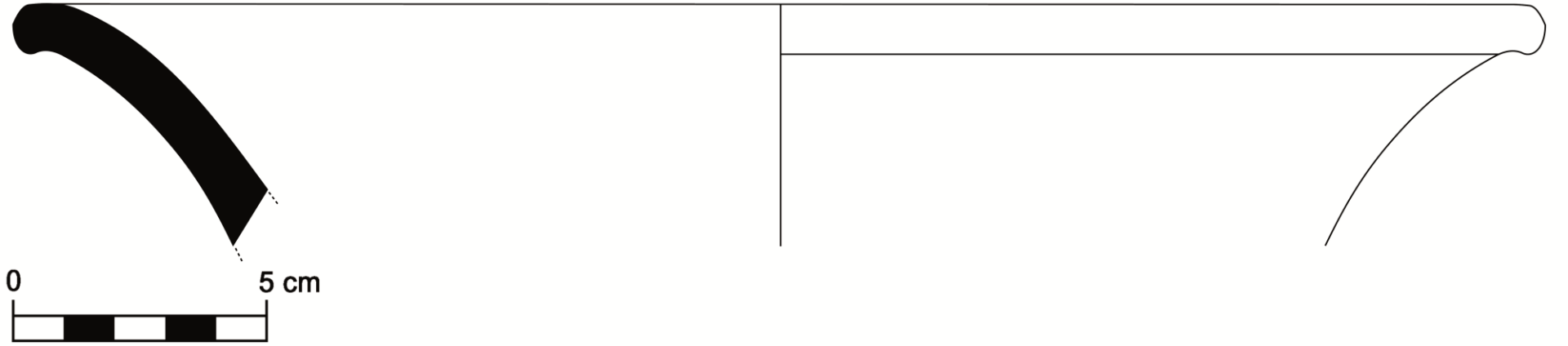
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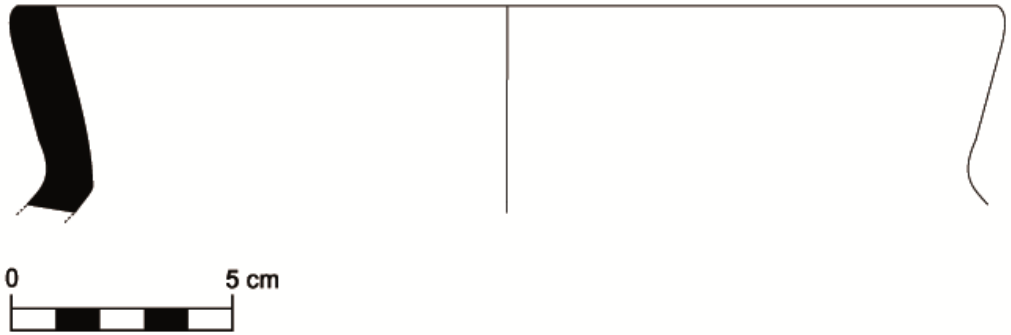
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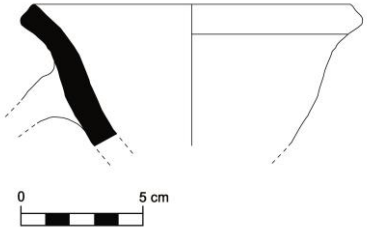

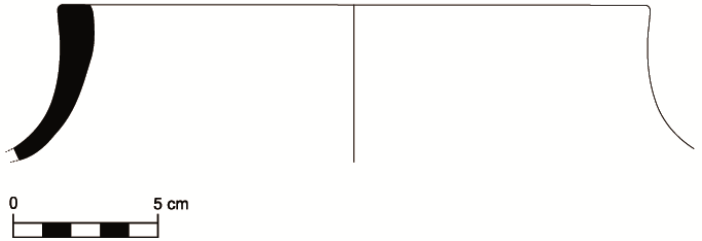

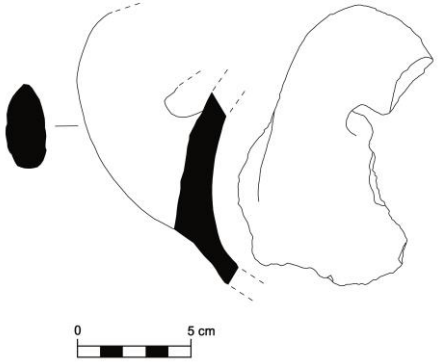

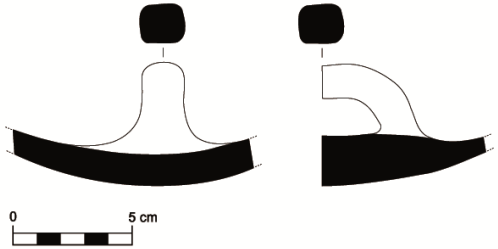

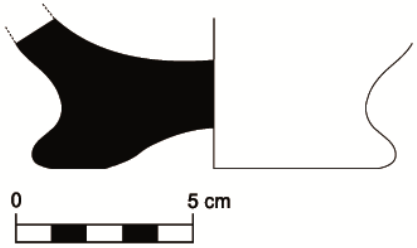

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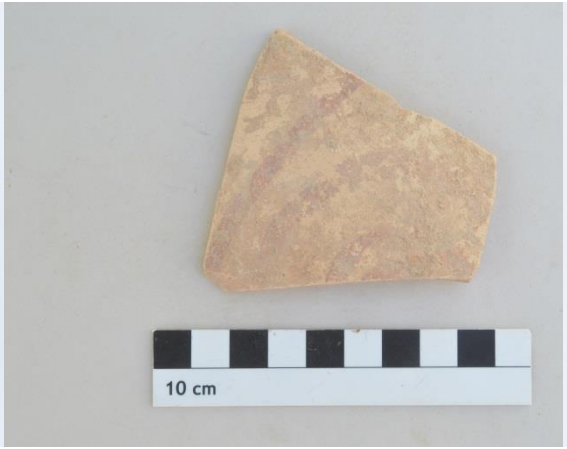
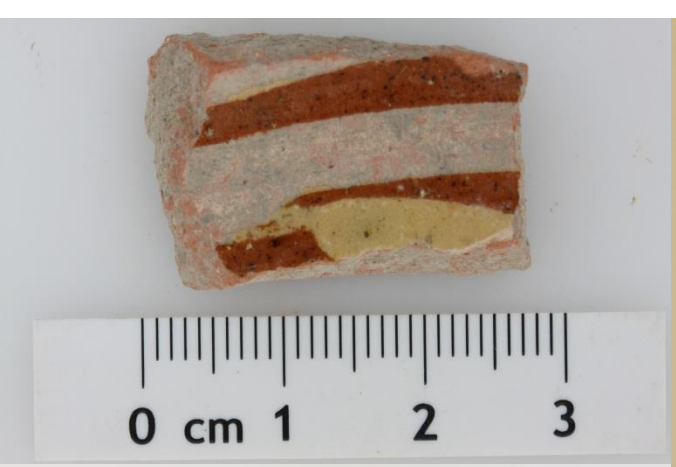
WHEELMADE POTTERY



KERBSCHNITT WARE

GLAZED WARES



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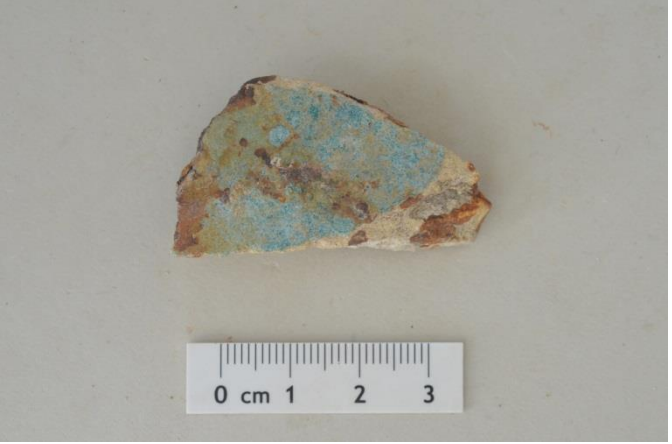
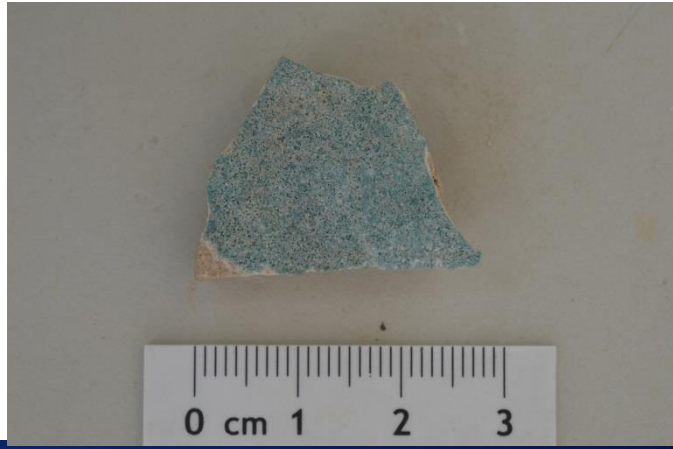

0 cm 1 2 3

0 cm 1 2 3

10 cm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Middle Islamic Lamp?

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

- Initial assessment of pottery appears to hint at an early Middle Islamic (Late Ayyubid/Early Mamluk) date for the construction of the Hamlet.
- Further excavation is required in order to get a better grasp of the pottery changes throughout the hamlet's three phases of development.
  - A trench is planned for the upcoming 2016 campaign, within a part of the larger courtyard house where the two layers of walk-on levels may be better protected from disturbances, and it may help to shed light on chronological changes of the ceramic material.
- By analyzing the ceramics both empirically and contextually, and also in relation to the wider regional context, my project aims to better understand both the settlement history and urban lifestyle of this newly discovered Middle Islamic settlement in Jerash.

RECAP: RESEARCH QUESTIONS/AIMS

1) Does the settlement in the Northwest Quarter relate to the node of Middle Islamic settlement at the Temple of Zeus or agriculture activity south of the hill?
2) Can a chronological sequence be created for the Middle Islamic pottery in Jerash?
   - Can chrono-typological variations be identified throughout the hamlets 3 phases of development in order to better date M.I activity in both Jerash and surrounding regions?
   - Attempt to better understand Middle Islamic wheelmade plain wares.
3) Through contextual analysis, what can we learn about daily life, settlement history, production, and demographics?
4) Beyond form and function, explore how pottery is treated and used by actors in the past, thus providing insight into social life during this much less understood period of history.
5) By analyzing the pottery both contextually and empirically, is it possible to understand the role of Jerash within a larger regional framework across both time and space?

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- CERAMICS IN CONTEXT PROJECT: HTTP://PROJECTS.AU.DK/CERAMICS-IN-CONTEXT/
- DANISH-GERMAN NORTHWEST QUARTER PROJECT: HTTP://PROJECTS.AU.DK/INTERNATIONALJERASHEXCAVATION/